rtobe

Quarterly: Spring 2020
Delivered in and around Portobello; circulation 12,500

Also available online on www.porty.org.uk

• NEW ALL-COLOUR ISSUE Porty Profile

Community clean up **P4**

P2

Pottery decorators **P**5 Gannets and hares **P7**

The independent voice of Portobello Your Community Newspaper produced by local people since 1980.

PERMANENT ROAD CLOSURES PROPOSED

FOR most of the period when Brighton Place was having its setted surface replaced, Brunstane Road was closed to through-traffic at the railway bridge. This temporary measure came to an end when the Brighton Place work was completed, and Brunstane Road reopened to two-way traffic in December 2019.

The temporary closure was popular with many people living on Brunstane Road, some of whom have since campaigned for it to be closed on a permanent basis. However, this provoked opposition from residents in the Coillesdene area, who experienced an increase in traffic in their residential streets during the temporary closure. The prospect of Brunstane Road being permanently closed has also prompted concern about increased traffic volumes in the Brighton and Rosefield area.

The City of Edinburgh Council is now attempting to balance these competing



interests by considering longterm traffic management options for the whole 'Joppa triangle' area. During the temporary closure, the council undertook a traffic survey in the Coillesdene area, followed by a community event at which local people could express their views on possible solutions.

Feedback from the event indicated support by its residents for closing Brunstane Road, while also recognising the concerns of Coillesdene residents. The majority of residents

elsewhere in the area, however, do not support the closure. There was some support for other options for Brunstane Road, including making it oneway or imposing parking restrictions.

recently circulated a briefing note outlining a proposed new traffic management approach that the Transport and Environment Committee will be invited to consider in May. If agreed, it would be implemented on a trial basis for up to 18 months.

Council officials have

Feedback received during this period would form part of an evaluation that would precede any decision on whether to make the scheme permanent.

Under the proposal, Brunstane Road would (as in 2019) be closed to all motor vehicles in both directions at the railway bridge. There would also be restricted options for motorists wishing to drive through the Coillesdene area. Coillesdene Crescent would be closed to all motor vehicles at the iunction with Milton Road East. Between Milton Road East and Coillesdene Avenue, Milton Drive would be oneway (southbound only) and Milton Terrace would be one-way (northbound only). Milton Drive would also be one-way (northbound only) from Coillesdene Avenue to Seaview Crescent.

A petition calling for "a full comprehensive public consultation" on these proposals has reached over 500 signatures. See bit.ly/ roadconsult.

TOWN HALL FOR LEASE

PORTOBELLO Town Hall was closed in July 2019, mainly due to deterioration of the ornate ceiling and the risk of falling plasterwork. Survey reports estimate that investment in excess of £1m would be needed for renovation, which the City of Edinburgh Council says it can't currently provide. In addition, although the building had been available for bookings, the council says it had been significantly subsidised due to running costs exceeding income. The council is now investigating whether anyone - private business, social enterprise, a charity or a community group has a proposal for a sustainable use of the building.

Following a public meeting in August 2019, a small group from the local community have formed a sub-committee under the Action Porty umbrella to pursue a community-based approach to the Town Hall. An expression of interest has been submitted to the council to that effect. The community will be fully consulted on what they see the building being used for in the future and the committee is collating views already received.

ACCOLADE FOR PORTOBELLO

PORTOBELLO has been awarded best Neighbourhood 2020 in the UK and Ireland by the Academy of Urbanism. The award recognises the strength of Portobello's community and individuals to create diverse and positive change: "... especially when there is a real commitment and passion for the local neighbourhood by its residents."

The Academy of Urbanism promotes and celebrates what makes places great and shares the lessons it learns to improve towns and cities across Europe.

BRIGHTON PLACE UPDATE

THE re-opening of Brighton Place, scheduled for the end of November, was delayed for three weeks due to extra work that was not in the original contract. This also slightly increased the final cost, as Councillor Maureen Child says: "After consulting the Council's head of finance, I can confirm that the final contract price was £784,469, not the £1.1 million budget figure that keeps being quoted in social media. With extra work, e.g. at Southfield Place, the final out-turn figure is likely to be of the order of £805,000".

PORTY PROFILE No. 75 WHITSON JOHNSON

BORN in 1924, Whitson Johnson has always lived in Portobello. He was the youngest of eight children and a twin, and his family lived in Bath Street. He was clearly a young entrepreneur, as on summer Saturday mornings he would take his guider (homemade go-kart) up to Portobello station to take holidaymakers' suitcases to their lodgings for tips and arrange to collect them for the return journey. He believes he was "so lucky



to be brought up in Portobello in the 1920s and 30s when Portobello was so busy in the summer, especially during the Glasgow holidays."

He attended Towerbank Primary School then Portobello Higher Grade School. He was in No. 2 Old Parish Scouts and was a leader for three years. He was "never out of the swimming baths" as he had a card from the Scouts which allowed him into the baths for a penny after school. He left school aged 16. The headmaster often sent boys up to Craigmillar Creamery to find work and Whitson was given a job there as an office boy.

In 1942 he volunteered for the RAF Volunteer Reserve. He trained in codes and ciphers, where he had to learn to touch type in three weeks, and then completed flying training. He was stationed in Burma and India where he celebrated his 21st birthday in Chittagong. The British ladies made him a birthday feast of cornflakes, tinned peaches and tinned Carnation milk -"It was great." Whitson was one of the oldest veterans at the 2019 Remembrance Sunday service in Edinburgh, which he says he was privileged to attend.

After the war he returned to the creamery as an office boy, progressing to Assistant Commercial Accountant. Unilever took over the company, which made margarine, re-branded it as Wall's and started making ice-cream. Eventually the factory was moved and Whitson left to work for Scottish Gas as an accountant. He married Rita in 1950, having known her since she was 10 years old. He has two daughters and a son and has lived in the same house since 1957.

Whitson says, "Portobello was a great place to grow up in. It will always be a great place." Margaret Munro



HERE AM 1?

VINTAGE BALL

THE Edinburgh Big Beach Busk has teamed up with the Aviation Preservation Society Scotland for a Spring BBQ (2-5 pm) and Vintage Ball (7-10 pm) on Saturday 7 March at Bellfield. Music will include post-war swing and trad jazz. Tickets are £15 / £8. Details here bit.ly/VintageBall.

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THE Edinburgh cycle hire scheme, sponsored by 'Just Eat', has put in a new stance at the Joppa end of the Promenade. There is also one at the foot of Kings Road. For more information see edinburghcyclehire. com

SECURE bike parking facilities are planned in Bath Street, Eastfield, Kings Road, Marlborough Street, Pittville Street, Portobello High Street, and Promenade Terrace.

PORTOBELLO Bookshop was the inaugural winner of National Book Tokens Newcomer of the Year. The shop opened in July 2019.

IN December's UK general election, Tommy Sheppard (SNP) was re-elected as MP for Edinburgh East with 48% of the vote and a 7% swing from Labour. The other candidates were Sheila Gilmore (Labour, 27%), Eleanor Price (Conservative, 14%), Jill Reilly (LibDem, 7%) and Claire Miller (Green, 4%). Turnout was 69%.

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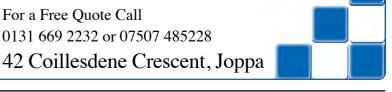
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COMMUNITY COUNCIL

PORTOBELLO

Community Council hold open meetings at 7.30pm on the last Monday of the month at Portobello Baptist Church Café, 189 Portobello High Street. We are here to represent your views in decisions that will affect our area. In the coming months we will be asking for your views on The City of Edinburgh Council's City Plan 2030, so that we can make sure Portobello continues to be a great neighbourhood.

You can take part and see what else we are up to at www.portobellocc.org and in the library. To add an item to the agenda email: secretary@portobellocc.org, or write c/o the library.

Laurie Berrie, Engagement Officer

EASTER TREATSimnel Muffins

- 3 -

400g plain flour

115g caster sugar

3 tsp baking powder

150g marzipan, finely chopped

55g flaked almonds

115g melted butter

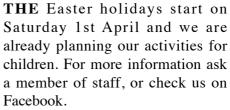
1 medium egg

200ml semi-skimmed milk

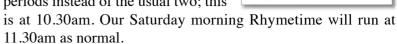
115g icing sugar

Chocolate mini eggs to decorate

Mix together the flour, sugar and baking powder. In a separate bowl, combine the marzipan and almonds and add half to the dry ingredients. Whisk the butter, egg and milk together and gently add to the mixture. Spoon into 12 muffin cases and sprinkle with the remaining marzipan and almond mix. Bake for 20-25 mins (190C, fan 170C, gas 5). When cool, mix the icing sugar with a little water and spread over. Top with chocolate eggs. Enjoy!



We only run one weekday Rhymetime over school holiday periods instead of the usual two; this



LIBRAR

Libraries have teamed up with the Hey Girls charity to help address the issue of period poverty by providing free pads and tampons in all libraries. These are now available to pick up from Portobello library. Just help yourselves.

For 5 and 8 year olds we have our Storytime on Tuesdays at 4pm. Ian will be here every week, entertaining us all with a brand new batch of magical stories.

Are you elderly or disabled, love reading but struggle to visit the library or know someone who is? We have a fortnightly service that will bus you into the library for books, a cup of tea and a chat. We can also deliver books to your home. If you are interested, do call us on 529 5558 and ask about our Library Link and Housebound services.

The library book group meet on the first Monday of the month when we will be discussing the following books:

6th April: Birdcage Walk by Helen Dunmore.

4th May: Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert.

1st June: Burial Rites by Hannah Kent.

All books will be available from the library.

Paul Hudson

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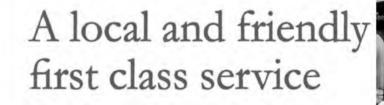
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NOW is a good time to set seeds. A windowsill is ideal for starting off, with perhaps one small tray for veg and one for flowers. A pinch of seed is all that is needed, so sow four rows in each and keep them moist with tepid water from a spray gun. Once the seedlings have leaves, pot them up into larger seed trays or individual pots. Harden off, first in a cold room then outside, covering if frost threatens, before planting out. Large pots 30cm across can hold a variety of plants.

Weed beds thoroughly, to save time later and make room for new plants, leaving pernicious weeds to dry out before putting on the compost heap. Make comfrey tea to feed tomatoes and anything that fruits, by immersing the leaves in a bucket of water for a few weeks. Nettle tea is best for plants that need a lot of nitrogen, such as potted lemons.

Gardening is about experimenting with colour, form, new plants and so on, so try something new. I am trying Peruvian apple which is a form of tropaeolum tuberosum, a flowering plant with edible tubers. I tasted it and liked it. I'll let you know if it's worth growing.

IN December PEDAL sponsored a workshop at Bellfield to further explore community initiatives that will counter the effects of the climate emergency. One aim has been to reduce the harmful effects of



traffic, but without much success. Maybe this is an area where action can only be taken on a city-wide basis.

The Choices for City Plan 2030 is being consulted on at the moment, along with the City Mobility Plan which aims to ensure that people of all abilities can get around the city without owning a car. Proposals include more car sharing, car clubs, bike hire and integrated public transport. Drop-in sessions are being held until 19th March and consultation closes on 27th March, so find out what is being proposed and have your say on this crucial part of our lives. For more information go to http://bit.ly/citymobility plan.

We all want a better future and the Wassailing at the Orchard helps by blessing the trees with cider and singing songs, some ancient, some hot off the press, to encourage a plentiful harvest later in the year. Does it work? Who knows - but it is wonderfully enjoyable and gives the 60 or so participants some hope.

Stephen Hawkins PEDAL - Portobello Transition Town

HEALTH MATTERS

KINDNESS MATTERS, **CIVILITY MATTERS**

THE Christmas 2019 British Medical Journal suggests that kindness is an underrated currency in healthcare. Many of us are living with longterm conditions that aren't going to go away, no matter how much medicine we use. The comfort of human kindness from healthcare staff and from all the people around us can make things easier to bear. We all know that kindness matters. People never forget how you made them feel. As a patient, as a daughter, as a doctor I know this to be true.

An NHS poster I saw recently said "Civility Saves Lives". There is growing research and now evidence showing that clinicians lose time worrying when someone is rude. They are less effective, provide poorer care and make more errors. This is also true when they witness rudeness. We know that the team we work in is as important as the task we do. We all get tired, stressed and can feel unwell, and I know I could do better.

Even in Portobello, recently identified as the UK's best neighbourhood to live in, I think about our receptionists who are our front line and who receive and witness incivility more than they should. Our wonderful community is our family and we should look out for each other, as our kin. Dr Portia Bella

COMMUNITY IN ACTION

A small group of volunteers, mobilised by Cllr Mary Campbell, spent two weekends clearing and litter picking along Christian Path. In recent years the council has been unable to prioritise this kind of maintenance, so some local people, like 15-month-old Stan who is pictured here, have taken it upon themselves to do the work. One of the volunteers, Fiona Dick said: "I'm here to try and clean up Portobello, because I think it is



worth it really, and so I can bring my kids up somewhere nice. It frustrates me to see it go to rack and ruin and it's a good calorie burn as well." When asked why she was helping, Caitlin, who is in primary one at Duddingston Primary School said: "Because it's good for the council and it's good for Portobello."

LESS WASTE

INDEPENDENT cafes and restaurants in local communities, including Portobello and Joppa, are to receive support to reduce their use of disposable cups, bottles, stirrers, sachets, straws and serving ware. This will be funded by Zero Waste Scotland via its environmental charity partner Changeworks. For details see: bit.ly/ zerowasteportypack

Cllr Kate Campbell

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CIIr MARY CAMPBELL

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- 3rd Friday of the month, 9.30-10.30am, at Magdalene Community Centre

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## THE DECORATORS OF PORTOBELLO

SINCE October 2019, I have been working on the artist residency The Decorators, part of Art Walk Projects Land Mark programme. My residency was based on the former site of the Buchan & Co Thistle Pottery, Bridge Street. As it draws to a close, I reflect here on the work which culminated with the celebratory decorators' tea party on 29th February and the artworks now installed in the kilns and surrounding area.

I focused on women who worked as decorators for the pottery in the late 1960s. Mostly in their teens, the women painted thistles, among other motifs, near the present-day kilns site. Each decorator had her own mark that she would put on the bottom of pottery she decorated. In 1972, Buchan's closed the Portobello site. Some of the women ceased to be decorators at around this point, either through redundancy or moving on to married life. On my site visits, I was struck how



the history and work of the decorators were invisible.

Margaret Munro, Portobello Heritage Trust, had interviewed Mairi Fortuna, one of the decorators, in 2017. With Margaret's help, I met Mairi late last summer. Along with sharing her memories, Mairi showed me photographs that captured herself and others at work and play (see above). She quickly spread the word about

the residency, which led to meetings with three other decorators, and a wealth of memorabilia that included personal photographs, union cards, redundancy notices and, of course, examples of their work. Memories of friendships as well as working conditions were recurring themes that included detailed descriptions of painting thistles. Irene Kozok, who worked at the pottery from

1966 to 1972, told me, "... now, if I close my eyes I can still do it. So, I've never forgotten how to actually paint the thistles on the pots...".

My residency makes visible this social history through the final artworks on location. Interview extracts from three decorators can be heard in the kiln on 7th and 8th March. Chalk logos map out the area of the decorators' workshops nearby, and one of Mairi's photographs is a large photo-banner, also on Bridge Street. A large banner, wrapped around the kiln under restoration, includes the names and signs of all the decorators who have either taken part or been remembered by my interviewees. By working directly with women who were once decorators at Buchan's pottery, the final artworks of my residency aim to make visible their memories of life and work in Portobello. For more information go to www. artwalkporty.co.uk Nicky Bird

#### **REBUILD ON HOLD**



Photo: Andrew Mylne

PORTOBELLO Heritage Trust has been informed by a council official that the rebuild of the 1906 kiln has been put on hold due to the "budgetary financial restrictions" currently in place at the council. A contractor has been selected. but has been asked to hold the price until the new financial year, when the rebuild will be reviewed. Both bottle kilns are Scheduled Ancient Monuments and are the last two surviving large-scale commercial pottery kilns in Scotland. As such, the council, under the direction of Historic Environment Scotland, is obliged to maintain and preserve them.

Similarly, the reinstatement of the municipal clock onto the Baptist Church building may also be placed on hold due to "budgetary constraints".

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## **AMNESTY** - LOCAL NEWS

THE Portobello Group of Amnesty International entered the new year as active as ever. Last year saw the group initiate and collect 1,309 actions on cases of human rights abuse being handled by AI.

Our first stall of the year, at Portobello Market on1st February, attracted a positive response, with 71 postcards signed, urging the Egyptian judiciary to properly investigate the tragic case of Giulio Regeni, an Italian PhD student whose mutilated body was found in a ditch outside Cairo in 2016. A further 27 signatures were collected, demanding reforms in UK domestic abuse legislation to give greater protection to migrant women in this country.

Forthcoming events include a ceilidh, being run with other Edinburgh AI groups, at St Columba's Catholic Church, Upper Gray Street, on Saturday 7th March. In Portobello itself the local group's ever-popular Book Sale and Coffee Morning will be in Bellfield on Saturday 25th April.

AI Portobello meets on the second Monday of the month in Portobello and Joppa Parish Church hall from 7.30 till 9pm. All welcome. Jim Gilchrist

> TRIBE Porty has a few new classes and events for you to try. We have regular Pilates with Sabrina, physio-led Pilates and Hatha yoga with Christina and Friday evening Pilates with Penny. Sabrina also holds two Conquer Gravity classes a week.

We have loads of classes for mum and baby, including Daisy Baby Massage, Baby Yoga and Daisy Birthing for expecting mums. There is Baby Fit with Lisa and a new class called Sweaty Mama, both are fitness classes with your little one.

Don't forget our regular workshops, Emotional Wellbeing Coaching, Writer's Retreat, Mindful Parenting, Gong Relaxation and Trigger Point.

Lastly, our Urban Market will be on the first Sunday of every other month. The next one is on Sunday 3rd May, and runs from 12-5pm. There will be makers, street food and more. For more information see tribeporty.org/whats-on/ Dani Trudeau



#### **BELLFIELD**

#### BELLFIELD EVENTS

2020 at Bellfield started in a flurry of enquiries and bookings, including for several weddings this year and next. Our regular classes are going from strength to strength and we are delighted to be welcoming some new ones, including Spanish, baby massage, a functional

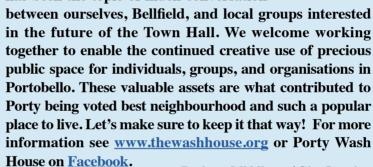
fitness training session, a writing class and Friday morning yoga.

We also have a couple of fundraisers on the horizon as homeless charity Raised Voices present an evening of comedy and musical interludes on 28th March.

On 31st May we will welcome back A Spoonful of Vintage with another fantastic line up of hand-picked authentic vintage and mid-century traders. There will also be a pop-up café and a rockin' DJ set, entry just £1 and children go free. For more information go to Bellfield.scot

Sarah Cockburn

THE last few months have been a busy time for The Wash House, with a sharp increase in bookings since the closure of the Town Hall. The future of Porty's public spaces, how to ensure their continued access and multi-use, has been the topic of much conversation



Barbara Middleton / Gica Loening



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A MUSICAL EVENING by the group Kailyard from South Leith Church: Wed 1st April, 7.30pm, Portobello and Joppa Parish Church. Tickets £7 incl. refreshments from 657 3401, email to office@ portyjoppachurch.org or at door. Proceeds to Heart for Art, a Crossreach project.

PORTOBELLO HERITAGE TRUST AGM: Tues 14th April, 7.30pm, in the small hall at Bellfield. Followed by an illustrated talk on The Decorators by Nicky Bird, looking at the female decorators who worked in Buchan's Thistle Pottery.

**CAR BOOT SALES** (Rotary Club of Portobello): Suns 29th March, 26th April, 31st May, Newcraighall Station car park. Cars arrive 8am. Double pitch £10 - all fees to charity. Enquiries to 07789220583.

**CARBOOT SALE:** Sun 26th April, 10am-2pm, Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home, 26 Seafield Road East, EH15. £15 per pitch, table hire £8. To book call 0131 669 6331, visit edch.org.uk/events or email fundraising@edch.org.uk

#### PORTOBELLO MARKET:

First Sat of the month, 9.30am-1.30pm, Brighton Park. Organic fruit/veg, plants, meat, bakery, crafts, coffee, snacks. See portobello. market@live.co.uk.

#### PAMOJA FASHION:

Quality Clothes/Accessories, first Sat of the month, 10am-1pm, St John's Church Hall, Brighton Place. Supporting partnerships between schools and communities in Scotland and Tanzania.

SING IN THE CITY rock'n'pop choir, The Wash House, Thursdays, 10am-noon. For a free trial contact hello@ singinthecity.com No audition required.

#### **PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY CHOIR:**

Weds, 7.15-9.15pm, Baptist Church Hall, Portobello High Street.

PORTYBELLAS, a small a Capella women's singing group: alt. Tues, 7.30-9pm, Moulsdale House, Milton Road (Edinburgh College), no singing experience needed. For details email: jane@gn.apc.org

# NATURE NOTES







THERE are two contrasting appearances that mark the true start of spring for me: Brown Hares and Gannets.

Boxing hares must be one of the most enduring images of the season. It's also one of the most misunderstood, as it's not generally males fighting for superiority amongst themselves, but females fighting off

unwelcome advances from unsuitable suitors. Hares are unmistakeable once seen, larger than their rabbit cousins, with powerful back legs, and visible in fields near Edinburgh with a little patience. Try Dalkeith Country Park, or even fields around Gilberstoun or Fort Kinnaird.

Gannets, meanwhile, are

returning from their African winter break, and arriving at the Bass Rock in their thousands. Scotland accounts for 40% of the world's Northern Gannet population, with the Bass Rock hosting the world's largest colony, which David Attenborough once described as one of the natural wonders of the world. They're easy to spot from the shore, while you're on a meander along the prom. A flash of white, they arc high in the air, before folding their wings back to plummet into the water for fish, like a death-defying high-diver.

Other things to look out for are frogspawn around ponds, Great Spotted Woodpeckers drumming and seals bobbing.

Anthony Robson

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## IN THE SADDLE



THE winter season began for Portovelo with the Christmas social at the Espy, featuring a slap-up meal, an awards ceremony and a cycling-themed quiz. The main organiser was David Shand, who was rewarded for his efforts by being awarded Club Member of the Year. Other awards recognised those who have contributed most to club rides, or who had improved most over the year.

With spring on the way, Sunday rides have started again at the earlier time of 8am (having started at 9am over the winter), meaning routes become longer and more varied. In another month or so, mid-week rides are likely to resume. Preparations are also well under way for the annual "weekender" in June, this time visiting Pitlochry.

Portovelo cyclists have had club kit for years, but can now demonstrate "brand loyalty" by purchasing a bidon (water-bottle) in club colours. The company who supplied them threw in a few extra, and we're offering these free to new members who join one of our rides. If you're tempted, why not check out what's involved on our website, portovelo.com? Andrew Mylne

## EDINBURGH BEACH VOLLEYBALL

EDINBURGH Beach bring it more beach volleyball Volleyball Club (EBVC) are embarking on an exciting year as they continue to grow interest in not only beach volleyball, but all kinds of outdoor activities on the beautiful sands of Portobello beach. This year the club, based in the heart of the community, are hoping to

than ever before.

They have recently received investment from sportscotland to grow the club and improve their services for the community. EBVC are very much looking forward to these developments as the summer approaches.

Lynne Beattie

## PORTOBELLO FOOTBALL **ACADEMY**



Portobello Football AcademyUnder 13s.



Portobello Football AcademyUnder 14s.



The 2010 7-a-side team in their new strips.

The club is starting a new team for players born in 2009. Contact Scott Bonar on 07402 99921 for details.

AFTER our successful campaign to retain Portobello 9-hole Golf Course, Portobello Golf Club are looking for new members to come along and give the great game of golf a try. We currently have players with handicaps ranging from 1 to 32, so all abilities are catered for - why not give it a go? Get your handicap and start friendly or serious competition. We have a full schedule of events over the year, including 9 and 18 hole competitions as well as club single and doubles competitions, some fun and some serious. Our season starts on 1st April (no joke), with annual subscriptions set at £30, though Green fees are not included. Club application forms can be found with the starter at Portobello Golf Pavilion. We would be delighted to see you out on the course.

Lyall Scott

#### WHERE AM I?

From page two.

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