

woodside freepress

Spring Edition 2011

Oot n About

The Voice of the Community

Ranger Walks

In Your Area

Pete the Punk

The Vulture Of Culture



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Editorial

Here comes the sun here comes the spring and here comes your community magazine, The Woodside Free Press. We are pleased to inform you that it is now going out to all households in Woodside absolutely free of charge. Of course if you have a problem receiving this edition please download one from www.shmu.co.uk or contact us so we can arrange to get one to you. As we are now Woodside wide, we are keen to get more articles from different people and organisations working or living in the area so don't be shy and let us know if you are interested in sharing a story or some information or if you just want to get involved. Thanks to all our contributors to this edition for the continued support in improving a great community asset.

The front cover of a beautiful flower bursting in to bloom captures the season and shows a bit of optimism of sunny days ahead in these difficult financial times. This edition of the Woodside Free Press is perhaps the same as it reflects on some of the hardships being faced but shows there are still opportunities and positive things happening in your Woodside area.

We are always looking for contributors and that means each and every one of you are very welcome to share your news and views about anything that makes you happy, mad, sad or glad.

Contact Denise on 515013 or email denise@shmu.org.uk





“Flit Like” Youth Flat

No, you haven't been seeing things. The Nursery became the Youth Flat and now it's been turned back to a domestic house. Meanwhile the Youth Flat moved next door to the old Credit Union at 22b Sandilands Drive. It was probably the easiest flit in history – no need for expensive removal vans, just a trolley and some of the strongest teenagers in the area.

So now the Flat is up and running and open for business. At the moment it's the base for four regular youth groups, two lunch clubs, a drop-in session and occasional use by other groups for meetings, cooking sessions, etc. We are always looking at ideas on how we can engage better with youths and what services we need to provide. We are continually chasing funding to improve the services and increase the support we can offer. Young people themselves will soon be involved in fundraising as they aim to reduce the costs of their summer residential break. It's hoped they will be bag-packing at two major supermarkets within a week.

This summer two of the younger teenagers will be going on an island adventure to the Isle of Raasay on an outdoor adventure of a lifetime where they will meet new friends and see the most stunning landscapes.

They will take part in scary and challenging activities and come home with unforgettable memories and funny stories that will build their confidence and make them stronger people. So if you're in the supermarket and you see a nice young lad or lassie asking to help pack your bag, please be generous, it could change their life.



Oot n About

Two jolly wifes fae the Woodside Freepress, armed with paper, pencil and a camera, went oot n about asking fellow Woodsiders a question. We chose one that people in general could readily answer. The idea was to give us a chance to interact more with the community, as this is what the magazine is about. The question we asked was, "If you were given £50 to donate to a charity, which one would you choose?"

Not only was the experience enjoyable it was pleasantly surprising. The question was answered nae bother ata but as we and the participants relaxed, views on other things came to light. Some were quite funny, some detrimental to Aberdeen and Woodside; all fair opinions. One young lassie we interviewed was concerned that teenagers did not have a voice. Other comments heard included: politics, unemployment, dog fouling and choked drains. Some of these issues will be explored in a future Freepress.

Let's read what our interviewees had to say on their chosen Charities....



Jean "Any charity that is involved with the blind would be my choice."



Marta & 5 Yr Alexandra. "British Red Cross. I donate to this charity on a regular basis."



Zeb "Children in Need. They are the most important people. They are our future."



Hannah "Something to do with children. I'm not sure which charity but

aiming for the young teenager. They need more options."



Ruairidh "I would share it evenly between charities for young people and domestic abuse."



Kirsty "I would share it between the elderly and Cancer Research.

Having cared for the elderly in the past, I think it's important that we support them. A close family member died of cancer."



Colin "Cancer Research. That seems to be the one most advertised on TV."

Russ "I would give my £50 to a local animal charity. I feel that money raised for bigger organisations sees a large part of your contributions being used on salaries. At least if you go local, your donation stays local."



Carol "Breathe Easy Aberdeen. This is part of the British Lung Foundation. We don't get any funding. People don't seem to be sympathetic to lung problems. They think it's always caused through smoking. This is not true. I've had problems since I was a kid."

Suzie "Anything but animals and children! They are the ones that get most funding."

Thanks a bunch folks. Nice meeting you!

WORD 11

10 – 15 May 2011

The Word Festival takes place every year on the University campus. It's open to the general public and is just on our doorstep!

There is something for all ages – popular authors, music, art, poets, science, films, children's shows and the much-loved Reading Bus.

The schools programme runs 10-12 May, adult events 13-15 May and kids' events 14-15 May. Pick up a programme or go online now. The kids' events are FREE and are booked up really early. Why not get together with a few friends and have a day out?

Spring into action

with Spring Clean Aberdeen

It's that time of year again when our thoughts turn to spring cleaning our homes and Aberdeen City Council invites you to think bigger and help Spring Clean Aberdeen.

Whether you are a resident, student or worker in Aberdeen you can spring into action, pick up litter and make a difference to the city during the annual city-wide Spring Clean in April.

Clean-ups are a great way of bringing people together. Young and old alike can roll up their sleeves together to show that they care about their neighbourhood. Everyone can take part, from individuals to schools, community groups and businesses.

Environment Services co-ordinates Spring Clean Aberdeen and can provide clean up equipment, and will arrange for the collected rubbish to be taken away. All you need to do is pick and bag the litter.

For more details, or to get help organising an event call 08456 080919, or email cleanaberdeen@aberdeencity.gov.uk.

Spring Clean Aberdeen is part of the National Spring Clean drive organised by Keep Scotland Beautiful. Useful information about how to organise a clean-up can be found on the campaign's website at www.keepsotlandtidy.org/springclean.

Give your kids a Healthy Start

FREE milk, fruit, veg and vitamins for you and your family....

Healthy Start is a UK-wide government scheme to help you give your family the very best start in life. If you're pregnant or have a young child under four you could get Healthy Start vouchers worth £3.10 a week for you and your child.

The vouchers can be spent on milk, fruit, veg and formula milk at your local shops and supermarkets or your local CFINE outlet, plus you'll get coupons for free vitamins too.

Are you either:

- 10 or more weeks pregnant
- Have a child under four *and*
- In a low income family, receiving benefits or tax credits *or*
- Pregnant and under 18 (even if you don't receive benefits or tax credits)

Yes?

Then you could be entitled to Healthy Start vouchers. To find out more: Ask your local midwife or health visitor or call the Healthy Start helpline on 0845 607 6823.

www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Personal View

of Murray Court and Fullerton Court

I personally have lived in Murray Court for the past five years and it has been a great experience. I enjoy my flat on the 7th floor which has views of the Lads' Club pitches from one window and from the other a view of the beach looking out along Great Northern Road. In a field looking over the railway line, I see deer and rabbits, and – although I haven't seen him – there is a fox and various birds fly around. The view is also stunning from areas of Fullerton Court as well. I feel I am lucky to be here.

Murray Court has a notice board as you come in the door with all the information of what's on in the building, local news, how to contact your councillors, information about what's on in Aberdeen for Senior Citizens etc etc. Fullerton Court has a notice board with similar information.

Both buildings have a planned schedule of activities which residents are encouraged to participate in. It is entirely voluntary and you can choose to come or not. Some do and some don't.

The Warden or Senior Carer is in charge of the building and looks after us very well. We all miss the regular ones



when they have time off – but that's life isn't it. You can't have it all rosy all the time.

There are regular carers who look after the residents who need help with dressing and personal care. We also get called by intercom every morning to see if we are alright. It's a caring system. Who could ask for anything more!?

Elsie Rennie

REIKI

REIKI IN THE COMMUNITY

Reiki (pronounced Ray-key) is a Japanese word meaning Universal Life Energy, an energy which is all around us. The treatments are non-intrusive and the recipient lies or sits fully clothed while the practitioner gently places hands in specific locations on the body.

A new group has been formed in the Woodside and Tillydrone areas. Five eager students, two helpers and an inspiring teacher met in the Woodside and Fountain Centre for a free day-long Reiki I course at the end of February. This is the first stage of a shared vision for bringing Reiki healing to the wider community.

Local folk already have an opportunity to enjoy healing sessions at the Printfield Project and the Tilly Flat. Therapist May Patterson had this to say, "It is always really busy and sometimes people have to wait a long time for an appointment. I've often thought that it would be wonderful if I could teach people in the area to use Reiki to help themselves and their families and now it's happening at last!"

Now let's skip several stages and jump a few months into the future: We have already held another Reiki I training and a Reiki II training and now have practitioners qualified to go out into the community. Maybe you'll meet us in a sheltered housing complex or at a mother and toddler group. Maybe you'll come along for our open sessions or we'll visit you in your home if it's difficult for you to get out and about.

How much will this cost you? We will ask for a £2 donation to cover the costs of insurance, future training and equipment.

If you would like to have a chat, find out more and maybe get involved please phone Louisa Tel: 489832



Ranger Led Health Walks

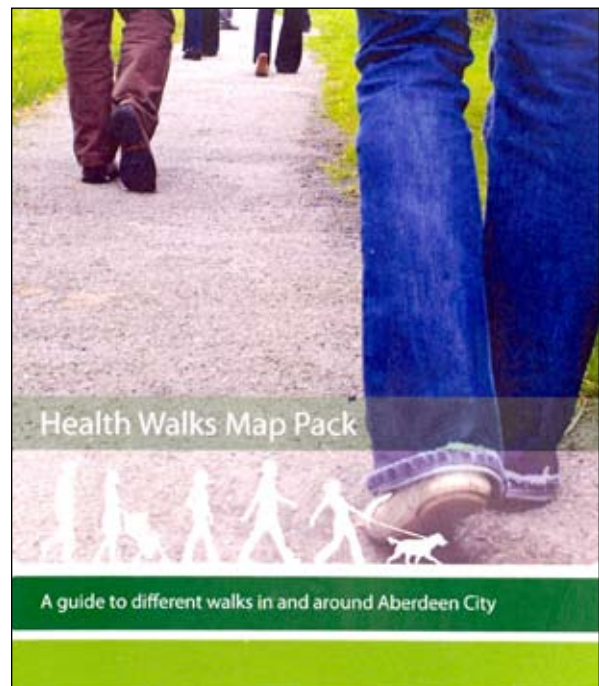
Hi, my name is Ruth Bone, I'm a Countryside Ranger with Aberdeen City Council. This spring and summer I will be leading a series of short walks around 9 areas in Aberdeen. I will be using the Health Walk Map Packs devised by Woodland Community Ranger Stephen Bly in conjunction with NHS Grampian and Forestry Commission Scotland.

The health benefits of walking are well documented and include disease prevention, weight management and positive mental health promotion.

So why not join me for an easy-paced 2 mile walk along Woodside on Thursday 21st of April at 2pm? We will meet at the car park by Persley Walled Gardens off Mugiemoor Road.

Please wear sensible shoes and bring waterproofs and/or sun cream depending on the weather, a bottle of water and any medication (eg. inhalers) that you may require. If you have any health issues please speak to your GP before signing up for the walk.

For more information about the walks and/or map packs or to book on to the walk please call the Ranger service on 01224 897400. Our full list of events can be seen at...



www.aberdencity.gov.uk/rangerservice

Proposed Woodside Health Centre

Many local residents have asked what's happening with the plans for the proposed health centre beside Woodside Fountain Centre.

This is still being actively progressed. A planning application was submitted to Aberdeen City Council in November

2010 but NHS Grampian are not yet in a position to provide an authoritative article to the Free Press.

We hope that news will appear in the next Free Press on this exciting local development.



Woodside Community Centre Junior Club

Tuesdays 6-7.30pm: please contact Angela 01224 277073 for further information.

I went along to the Junior Club to meet the volunteers and children: Lots of activities were going on and everyone was having fun. Some children were working on their puppet show for the Woodside Gala. I took lots of photos but the football shots were a bit of a challenge!

Dorothy, the club leader said: "There are nine volunteers altogether – five from my family! The longest serving volunteer? Meg, Deborah, Eileen, Angela and I all started about the same time – 12 years ago!"

HATS OFF TO YOU ALL – YOU'RE DOING A GREAT JOB!

But enough about adults, let's meet some of the kids!

Profile Megan, Age: 11
Member: 3 years (This is my last year)
Miss most: football and Caitlyn (because she stays in Oldmeldrum now and I only see her when she comes here.)

Reasons for coming: It's cool! There's a play-scheme in the summer and we go on lots of trips like Landmark and the Safari park. It's really cheap and it gives my Mum and Dad a break!!

Profile Caitlyn, Age: 11
Member: 6 years (This is my last year)
Miss most: Megan and Kelsey. I used to stay in Woodside but now this is the only time I see them.
Reasons for coming: Most of my family volunteer in the club. We get Arts and Crafts and learn how to make stuff. I meet up with my mates and meet lots of different people and make new friends. It's fun!

Profile Sandy, Age: 8
Member: 3 years
Favourite Bits: Football! It's fun and it keeps you fit. The big boys and girls get to play first and then the little ones. I get to play with both because I'm big for my age and I'm brave if I get knocked down.

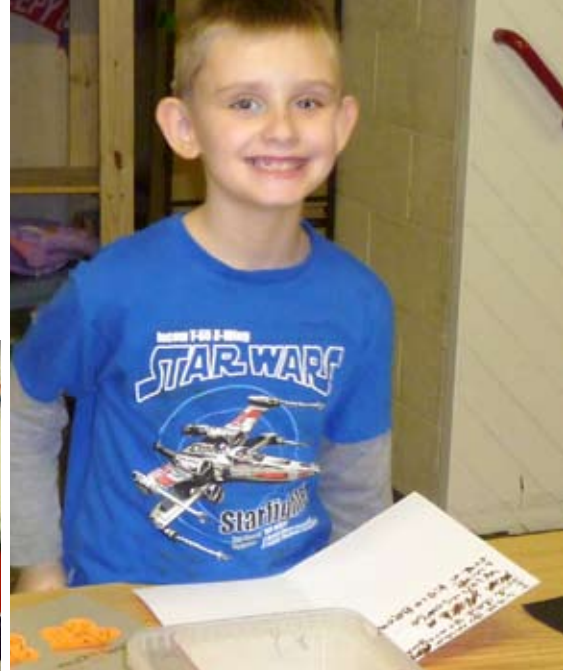
Profile Gregor, Age: 6
Member: 1 year
Favourite Bits: Lego – lots and lots of Lego. Sometimes I build castles with Bobby. I have Lego at home but it's more fun when I have someone to play with. I like football too. I like to score goals.

Profile Bobby, Age: 6
Member: 1 year
Favourite bits: Xbox FIFA 11. It's a football game and you try to score goals against the other team and you have to save goals too.

Profile Ellie, Age: 6 (nearly 7)
Member: 2 years
Favourite bits: Drawing pictures – all sorts of pictures. I beat Nanny at shuffle-board and she said she won't play me ever again but she doesn't mean it!

Profile Logan, Age: 10
Member: 3 weeks
I used to live here and I came to the club. Then we moved away and now we're back!
Favourite bits: Xbox Kinect. I like the jumping and waving and the football machine. I knew Sandy and Bobby before but now we can play more together.

Profile Leah, Age: 5
Member: 10 months
Favourite bits: Football in the hall, but the little ones don't get so long as the big ones. I like playing with the dollies with the other Leah and I like making cards for my Gran and my boyfriend on Valentine's Day!



Pitchy to be moved

The “Kick About” area on Marquis Rd is to be moved to allow the new Woodside Medical Practice to be developed. NHS Grampian will supply a new more modern “Multi Use Games Area” (muga) with five aside football goals and a basketball court. It will be sited near the play area on Ferrier Crescent, side by side with the play area. It will be smaller than the old one (about two thirds of the size) and will be closer to houses. It will be surrounded by a fence approx five feet high. The metal fence, goal posts and basketball hoops will be durable as will the tarmac playing surface. Many Woodsiders will remember kicking a ball around the “Pitchie” in the twenty eight years it has existed and will be sad to see it go. Youngsters who use it now may also be sad to see it replaced. Some parents may be worried about the location of the new one? What do you think? Will the new one be better? What would you like to see in it? If you a have any ideas about the new football and basketball court in Ferrier Crescent please

get in touch with Mark Lovie at Woodside Fountain Centre - 524926 or one of the youth workers at the youth flat at 22b Sandilands Drive.





Woodside Network News

Meetings of the Network and the sub groups are open to any Woodside resident. For more information or to raise an issue please contact:

David Henderson

07814 689788 • dhenderson@gawab.com

Gordon Donald

07760 842274 • gordonrobertdonald@yahoo.co.uk

Kit Trail

01224 276788 • printfield@printfieldproject.co.uk

Mark Lovie

01224 524926 • mark@fersands.org

At the November 2010 meeting it was decided to instigate practical ventures for the benefit of Woodside and to raise the Network's profile:

Woodside Winter Taskforce: This was highly successful and greatly appreciated. Although it was hard work, the nine volunteers (from teenager to Senior citizen) kept cheerful. They estimate they put in a total of 52 work hours between them and emptied the grit bins faster than the Council could fill them up again! An elderly resident had this to say, "The lane was like a bottle – very dangerous and really scary. The Council aren't doing anything now. The Winter Taskforce are doing a very good service for the community."

Then there was the man who heard about the Taskforce and was inspired to clear his neighbour's path when he was clearing his own. "I suppose it just hadn't occurred to me that I could do that!" The plan is to get more people involved in the future. So listen out for the rallying call sometime in October or November!

Woodside Spring Clean: Can you think of a spot in Woodside that could do with a bit of a tidy up? Is it

down your street, that lane at the back, a bit of open ground, a shared garden area or the play-park? We want you to nominate areas that need a bit of TLC. By the time you read this we are hoping to have started in some areas with the help of local groups, schools and businesses, but you still have time to get involved with Spring Clean Aberdeen! I'm assured it's good fun! Aberdeen City Council will provide safety vests, gloves, tongs, etc. and afterwards uplift our black bags and other found items.

Kittybrewster and Woodside Primary schools, Fersands Youth Groups, Bairds Pharmacy and Printfield Area Forum have already taken this on board and are planning a Spring Clean in their areas. Go to www.keepsotlandtidy.org/springclean to see what's going on. Watch out for lots of photos in the next edition of the Woodside Freepress too!

Contact: Louisa 489832 for more information or to nominate an area.

**Woodside Gala, 25 June 2011, 11am - 3pm
Deer Road Park**

A Gala group was formed at the beginning of January and we have been meeting once a fortnight at the Woodside Fountain Centre. The purpose of the Gala is to bring members of the community together, promote local services and encourage community participation in local matters. (With experience gained, we'll be able to hold a bigger event in 2012!)

We have lots of ideas how we can make this a fun day but if you have any brainwaves...

**Contact: Gordon Donald 07760 842274
gordonrobertdonald@yahoo.co.uk**

Spring Fire Safety Advice

It's the time of year when everything starts to come back to life outside, the nights get lighter and the days get warmer.

You may have read in the papers that throughout Scotland there have been several fires in the home. Some of these have resulted in the tragic loss of lives – three within the Grampian area since January. There has also been an increase in injuries caused by fires. Don't let this be you.

Here is some advice to help keep you safe when you're cooking:

Never leave cooking unattended to answer the phone or the door.

Don't cook when you have been drinking.

Make sure you regularly test your smoke alarm to see if it is working. If it does not work or you do not have any fitted then please contact us for a free home fire safety visit. During the visit, which only takes around 20 minutes of your time, we can supply and fit a 10 year battery smoke alarm free of charge.

With the continued cold and bad weather, a reminder for those of you who have and regularly use an open fire don't forget to have your chimney swept each year to prevent the build up inside which can result in fires.

Tel: 01224 696666, Text "Fire" to 61611, Email: info@grampianfrs.org.uk Or visit www.grampianfrs.org.uk

Whose Money Is It Anyway?

As we all know money is tight and getting tighter. Does trying to make ends meet make you want to cry? Would you like to get some tips on solving your own personal credit crunch?

If the answer is yes, then our 3 week course will offer you the practical help and tips on how to manage your financial affairs. There is a free crèche available for this course.

To book onto the nearest course to you or for more information phone the Family Learning team on 487822.

STEPS TO WORK

Steps to Work

A second Steps to Work event was held at Woodside Fountain Centre on Wednesday 16th March. This followed on from a successful first Steps to Work at Seaton Community Project on 1st of March. Both events were organised by St Machar Learning Partnership. At each event local people from the St Machar area were able to speak to a wide range of services and employers who could support them to get into work. Local people got information on: volunteering, training, community learning, CVs & applications, enterprise, training



schemes for school leavers, work placements, benefits...

Alona Murray, Principal
Community Learning Worker

MUSIC, MAGIC & MAYHEM!!!!

Fa's in their Eyes

Friday April the 22nd 2011 @ the Forum in Aberdeen

Come along and enjoy a night of music, magic and mayhem.... as our stars take to the stage for the second year running as part of Family Learnings/ Peer Projects fundraising event 'Fa's in their Eye's'.

Last years event raised over £1,300, which has helped to support local parents to volunteer with the PEER Project, gain skills and access training in their move towards further education or employment.

So why not come along, sit back and enjoy an evening of star studded entertainment with some of the best of Aberdeens local talent. From comedy to magic this show has it all.....

For more information and ticket sales please contact Louise at Family Learning on 487822 or email enquires@familylearning.org.uk



Woodside *Writers Group*

As reported in the last edition of the Free Press, there are now quite a few adult classes at the Woodside Fountain Centre. One of the most popular meets every Monday at 6.30pm. Woodside Writers are a group of residents interested in learning more about creative writing. The group have been building in numbers over the last few weeks and there were eight keen writers present last Monday. The group have agreed a little evening routine where they look at some writers' work for the first fifteen minutes and then do a little exercise to get everyone scribbling and using their imagination. Everything is pretty light hearted and friendly and all writers are very supportive of each other. The group always have a few laughs and a cup of tea during the two hour session. The Community Project has applied for funding so they can continue after April. They

hope to involve more people by taking groups to different literary events and holding a short story competition open to everyone in Woodside. We will try to get more writers reading stories on the radio and presenting articles for the fabulous Free Press. We would also like to invite successful writers around to speak to the group about their inspiration, their work methods and how they got started.

So, if you are interested in trying to do a little bit of poetry or writing a short story or any other form of the written word, please get in touch so we can arrange to see you at Woodside Writers group. Alternatively you can enter the competition and you may win a prize!!! Hopefully in the next edition you can read some of the group's work, and let us know what you think.

MEET COMPUTER GEORGE

COMPUTER GEORGE IS NOT ACTUALLY A COMPUTER. HE is just a man with an aptitude for I.T. who can show you the best way to handle the machines. He can teach you to twitter, get you to google, help you to type and eventually maybe skype. George is great at working with complete beginners as his regular eight or nine students agree. George works

for Adult Literacy team to put on a class at the Woodside Fountain Centre every Thursday from 10 -12; come along and learn at your own pace. We supply all the equipment and the lessons are completely free. Don't put it off any longer, you haven't got an excuse not to go – so we'll see you next Thursday then!

Instant Neighbour forced to change as cuts hit hard

Although September 2010 saw the end of the contract Instant Neighbour held with the council for the delivery of furniture and electrical goods to tenants, the organisation remains committed to assisting as many people as we can. We've had to change how we do this and have begun selling items at as low a charge as we can to cover costs including premises, vans and staff. Instant Neighbour intends to remain in the local area to provide its services to as many people as it can.

Some will have heard that I (Sophy Copland, Chief Executive) am moving on from Instant Neighbour. I leave on 8 April to take up a new post in Edinburgh. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone – the Board, staff, volunteers, clients, sponsors and supporters – for making my seven years at Instant Neighbour enjoyable, challenging and extremely rewarding! I will miss you all. In the meantime, we are now open for the SALE of goods on TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY and THURSDAY of EACH WEEK between 10am and 3pm. We also run a once monthly Saturday Sale and these are advertised by leaflet drop and posters across the local community.

You can help us to help you by donating:

Your time: we offer a number of volunteering opportunities. Please contact our volunteer co-ordinator, Ian Armstrong, to discuss how you can help us.

Your used carpets and purchasing replacements from us – we can arrange collection and fitting. To view our stock please call the number below.

Non-perishable food e.g. tins of soup, beans, packets of rice, biscuits. If you are struggling to manage to buy food we can help individuals on an emergency basis.

Furniture and electrical goods: these will be passed on, for a small charge, to people who need assistance in establishing and sustaining a home.

Baby equipment: our Safe & Sound project provides child safety and baby care equipment to local families.

What else do we do?

PAT (Portable Appliance Testing): the only charity-run PAT service in NE Scotland. Our high standard service offers full electrical equipment testing at low prices. Phone to arrange a FREE estimate.

JOINER – Our experienced joiner is available to undertake any domestic task e.g. installing doors. Phone to arrange a FREE estimate.

For further information regarding any of the above services or to arrange your FREE estimate please call **01224 489955** or email info@instantneighbour.co.uk

Oh, doggy-doo... you are the sleaziest!

There's a tune by psychobilly legends The Cramps that goes: "Oh doggy-doo, you are the sleaziest"... a song steeped in the band's dark, anarchic humour but also addressing a seemingly universal problem.

Let's face it: it's disgusting. A health hazard. Illegal. So why are we still plagued with dog fouling on our pavements, lanes and play areas?

There are many responsible dog owners in the Woodside area. We see them enjoying walks with their furry friends while also respecting the rights of others. They stand guard ready to scoop up the dog poo and dispose of it safely.

Unfortunately there are a few owners who just don't care if you or your children step in their dog's doings. They don't care if your shoes or carpets are ruined. They don't care that they are risking the health of your children. They don't care that they are breaking the law.

Dog poo can carry several harmful infections, the worst being *Toxocara Canis*, a roundworm which infects dogs and puppies. Children can easily be infected by coming into contact with roundworm eggs. These eggs can cause stomach upsets, sore throats and asthma - and if the worm gets into the child's eye it can cause partial or total blindness.

So what can we do to protect our families and our environment? Well, here's a list of actions I've taken (and keep on taking).

Call City Wardens Tel: 653310 to alert them to the problem. (They have the power to issue a fixed penalty



notice of £50. If this goes unpaid and the issue goes to court the fine can go up to £1000!) Stop the City Wardens on their rounds and point out the problem.

Call the Dog Wardens Tel: 523737 to report the problem. Give a description of the culprit (human) and their dog and where they live. (If you know the person's name and actual address even better.)

Call Environmental Services Tel: 08456 080919 to request a clean-up. (Also use this number for litter problems.)

I've bought a can of Poop Freeze - it does what it says on the can, which makes cleaning-up a lot less messy! There are also dog repellent gels but Jeyes fluid disinfects and de-odorises the area and that discourages the dogs as well.



Station House Media Unit (shmu) is situated just off Great Northern Road in the old Station House Community Centre, Woodside. We offer free access to, and training in video and radio production, and magazine and online publications to residents of all ages living in Seaton, Woodside, Middlefield, Tillydrone, Torry, Northfield and Cummings Park.

t 01224 515013 | e info@shmu.org.uk | www.shmu.org.uk

shmuTRAIN

shmuTRAIN delivers a vibrant, contemporary and visionary training/skills development programme, using community and digital media as a meaningful and stimulating medium to increase the chances of young people (14:19) of moving into employment, education or training.

The initiative offers 2 programmes; an Early Intervention programme aimed at education, targeting the 14:16 year-olds showing early indications of not having a positive post-school destination; the second, Positive Transitions offering a range of 'hands-on' training opportunities for those in the 16:19 MCMC category.

To find out more details on the next Positive Transitions course contact Chrissie on 515013.



Early Interventions at St Machar Academy

As part of the Early Intervention programme, our tutors have been working with pupils from St Machar Academy providing radio and music training.

This programme has proved to be a success in the schools therefore we will continue to work along the St Machar Academy in partnership.

Welcome Gordon!

SHMU would like to welcome back Gordon Nicolson.

Gordon, a SHMU volunteer, who presents the Go With The Flow show at 10pm on a Monday was in a serious accident in December. Gordon was in a critical way, and was in hospital for over 6 weeks. However, a good few months on and Gordon is recovering well and is even back doing his radio show. SHMU caught up with Gordon a few weeks after he returned, we asked him what it was like to be back at SHMU, to which he replied ' I was excited to be back at SHMU, but when it came to doing my first show after being off for such a long time, I was extremely nervous. But I'm glad to be back and presenting my old show again.'

Well done Gordon, were so glad to have you back on the SHMU team!



If you fancy getting involved at shmuFM and would like to get free radio training, please phone 01224 515013, or email training@shmu.org.uk. You can also text us on 60300 - start your message with training, leave a space and then leave your name. Whatever way you get in touch, someone will be in contact with you ASAP.

Don't forget, Woodside has its very own radio show, Woodside on Wednesday, on shmuFM. The show is presented by Dougie Thomson who talks about all things Woodside.

You can tune in to Gordon, Dougie and all the other presenters on shmuFM 99.8FM and via the website www.shmu.org.uk



Pete the the vulture of culture

PUNK

My bank manager leans across the table. "So," she draws, baring her teeth encouragingly, "For just £12.50 a month this new account offers you insurance on your mobile phone, camera etc. plus holiday insurance anywhere in the world except four places. Do you travel at all, Mr. Thomson?"

"Oh aye," says I, "I'm just back fae Cuba".

Her eyes widen knowingly. "Oooh," she says: "I'm right glad we got Cuba out of the way, Mr. Thomson, that's one of the places we don't cover".

"Whyever not?" I ask.

"Well," she confides, lowering her voice as if the devil Castro himself is in the room. "It's very dangerous. I'm told tourists have to stay in their compounds at all times in case they get beaten up and robbed".

I gawp, open-mouthed at such utter garbage flowing from an apparently intelligent person. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, I'm more than a little bit angry that thinly-veiled Yankee propaganda should be so casually trotted out as official Clydesdale Bank policy these days, and that's because Cuba is a very special place.

Apart from the culture, which is everywhere and freely available to everyone, it has universal education with high literacy rates and a renowned health service the envy of many of the world's so-called developed countries.

It's true the vast majority of Cubans don't have two pennies to rub together and life for most is a daily struggle - a direct result of an American blockade lasting more than half a century. But they really are a friendly bunch who'd do anything to help you - all gratuities gratefully accepted, of course - and whether strolling along Obispo in Havana's winter sunshine or exploring its grimy, impoverished backstreets in the dark of night, I never had any worries about my personal safety.

Given the USA's ongoing oppression of Cuba, it's very disappointing to hear Barack Obama banging on about the country's treatment of political prisoners. No one can say the island's human rights record is perfect, but more political prisoners have been released recently and, besides, it's not like the Yanks have any room to talk.

Should we have forgotten the vengeful excesses of Guantanamo Bay already? The images of blindfolded, orange-clad prisoners being abused in the US enclave - by an ironic twist of history sited at the southern tip of Cuba - will linger in our memories long after Cuba's alleged misconduct has been forgotten.

Cuba's great crime is the same as Nicaragua's a few decades later: it fought and drove out a US-backed dictator, installing instead a socialist government concerned with the welfare of all the island's inhabitants. If there's one thing gives Yanks the heebie-jeebies it's socialism. You only have to look at the trouble Obama's had trying to reform American health care to see that.



Street serenade...

But let's not go on about politics. It gives a truer picture of modern-day Cuba to say that just two or three minutes after taking my first, hesitant steps into the Havana twilight, I plank myself down at a kerbside cafe and the fella above is giving me *Guantanamera* for all he's worth. The wee man beside him fetches me a can of Coke and I'm happy as a pig amongst... well, you know....

It's the same everywhere I go. Whether minding my own business over a cup of coffee in some narrow, bustling thoroughfare in Habana Centro or strolling by the bullet-scarred frontage of the Santa Clara Libre Hotel - which saw heavy fighting during the revolution - I never know just when some ad hoc salsa band will spring out of the woodwork and strike up a tune.

Passers-by prick up their ears when this happens and more often than not they will dump their shopping on the pavement and get dancing. Suddenly there's a carnival going on. People of all ages join the fun and the atmosphere is simply superb.

Another night I'm passing the Casa de Cultura on Santa Clara's Parque Vidal when a troupe of dance students pour out, stopping the traffic with a 20-minute impromptu performance. None of this is unusual.

Despite the hand-to-mouth existence of many, Cubanos have a massive zest for life and love to party. They, the people, are Cuba's greatest asset. I'm very glad I made it while Fidel Castro still lives. No one knows just what will happen when he finally goes, but if Cuba can keep the corrupting influence of the United States at arm's length then surely there will be better times ahead.

Striking up a conversation on my last day with four lovely matrons who work at the Victor Hugo museum, they ask if I speak any Spanish at all. Seasoned now, I assure them that I do, indeed, have all the Spanish a man could ever need. They are intrigued. 'What is that?' they ask. I smile, giving my broadest wink and say: 'Gracias, senorita'.

WOODSIDE GALA

25 JUNE 2011

11AM - 3PM DEER ROAD PARK

(Planning is still ongoing but here's a taste of what's going to be a great day for all the family!)

WE START WITH A GRAND OPENING BY A SPECIAL CELEBRITY, THEN...

FREE ENTERTAINMENT AND FUN FOR ALL • LIVE MUSIC
BE INTERVIEWED ON SHMU LIVE
STREET DRUMMERS (HAVE A GO) • FREE RAFFLE
PUPPET SHOWS (HAVE A GO!) • DRAMA • VARIOUS STALLS
TAI CHI DEMONSTRATION • NEW & NEARLY NEW CLOTHING
BADGE MAKING • FREE FRUIT TASTING
ORGANISED GAMES/ACTIVITIES • FACE PAINTING
READING BUS • TEAS AND COFFEES • BAR-B-Q
WOODSIDE v KITTYBREWSTER SCHOOLS
FOOTBALL CHALLENGE