

woodside free press

Spring Edition 2012

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Editorial

Hello and welcome to the spring edition of the Free Press 2012. I must apologise to Woodside residents who have not received the last two editions, we have had major distribution problems which we hope are now behind us.

As you can see we have come back bigger and stronger than ever with this bumper 24 page special.

Read about your local services, upcoming events and activities and hear some views on local and National issues. We are a community magazine keen to air the views of residents. If you have another view point please let us hear about it. In this edition we are pleased to introduce some new contributors to the Free Press and hope some more will come forward in the near future For more information please contact Mark Lovie at the Woodside Fountain Centre on 524926 or Mary Clare at SHMU on 515013.

FUNDED BY



New Art session for Children

FFCP and White Space are going to work together to create a new activity for local youths. The Art Group will run on a Monday afternoon 4-6pm at the new Youth Flat on Sandilands Drive. So if you know some young people p3 to p7 who enjoy being creative, and live in the area, then get in touch with Mark now - 01224 524926



Bill Massie - one of your local City Wardens

ABERDEEN CITY WARDENS

The City Warden scheme started in January 2009 by Aberdeen City Council. We currently operate with 10 Senior City Wardens, 56 City Wardens, 1 Co-ordinator, 1 City Warden Officer and 1 Community Safety Manager.

The role of the City Warden is to provide a flexible service responding to the needs of the Community, Environmental Issues/Fly Tipping, Graffiti, Dog Fouling complaints and the Free Flow of Traffic.

All staff are highly trained to provide a robust service for issues raised by people in your community and maintain high visibility patrols working pro-actively and sometimes with other partner agencies which include Grampian Police, Housing, The Asbit Team, Environmental Health, Grampian Fire & Rescue etc. We strive to forge links with the community by way of visiting schools, nurseries and extra curricular activity clubs.

Some City wardens have recently trained as Bikeability Trainers

which replaces the Cycling Proficiency testing and allows them to go into schools and deliver this training to pupils. At times we are invited to attend at nurseries and speak to infants about our role in the Community when they are covering topics such as 'People who help us'.

It is always good to pop in past the local children's after school club and various youth groups - if only to say hello, as well as being set a challenge by those who attend - sometimes to be beaten on the Wii! It's always rewarding when the children acknowledge you in the street by your name.

We are in the process of setting up City Warden drop-in sessions in your area, these will be held by Ally Greenwood in the Woodside Fountain Centre. The date and time will be posted in the Centre and a leaflet drop will be made. We hope to encourage as many people as possible to attend. We are a very good link to many departments and agencies of the council so if we can't help personally, I'm sure that we know

someone who can, so please come along, even if it is just for a cup of tea and a chat.

Wardens are very approachable and easily identified in their high viz fluorescent jackets and hats bearing the blue and white checked band which displays the Aberdeen City Council logo. We like to mirror a friendly face and aspire to help where we can.

Areas patrolled are Woodside and Tillydrone, with two teams who strive to make themselves available for contact, ensuring reassurance is provided to members of the Community and tackle problems that matter most to local residents.

City Wardens patrol the City each day from 7 am until late.

Please feel free to approach us with any concerns you may have in your Community.

Email citywardens@aberdeencity.gov.uk Phone Central - 01224 653310

Tai Chi

For anyone interested in finding new ways of dealing with life's little ups and downs, I would suggest they give Tai Chi a try. The Fersands Tai Chi class runs on Thursdays at the Woodside Community Centre at 12 - 1pm. You'll meet a bunch of friendly people who will make you most welcome. Brian, the teacher is not only good at teaching but for a slow coach, like me, he gives space to learn, not always at your side when he sees you doing a wrong move. Gently but firmly, I think his motto is - well for me anyway. The advanced pupils are quite happy to stop and repeat moves again, when he picks up that the less knowledgeable needs more help. I enjoy it immensely. So

what is Tai Chi? Below is a rough summary of what I have grasped.

As far as I'm aware, although Tai Chi is a martial art, it is usually practiced for its health benefits, like managing tension and stress. It involves relaxation and meditation with soft flowing movements yet, performed precisely. The actions use learned or controlled force rather than brute strength. Karate and Kung Fu are seen as hard martial arts. The Chinese also believe that Tai Chi has certain psychological effects too that can help you understand yourself better.

Chi is an ancient Chinese idea conveying a form of energy. According to the philosophy



of Tai Chi, this energy or chi flows throughout the body but can become blocked. Chinese medicine and Tai Chi masters believe that if the flow is blocked, a person can become ill. In Britain the most common ways of freeing the flow is through acupuncture, Tai Chi and Qi Gong.

If you would like to find out more and try it out you can come along to a special free 5 week course starting on Thursday 19 April 12 noon at the Fersands Tai Chi class. Contact Mark Tel: 524926

Reiki in the Community

Sceptical, like many others with a doubting attitude, I was asked if I wanted to take an appointment that someone had at the last minute cancelled with Reiki Master/Teacher May Paterson. This was at Portal Community Centre, Tillydrone, that was still open at this time. I would be using one of the computers in the lounge and would start a conversation with people while they waited for their treatment. "Goodbye May, I will see you next week as I have another appointment," I would hear them say on leaving.

"Oh that was great, I feel so much better within myself" or "I've a spring in my step." "I would cancel an appointment somewhere else rather than miss this one," were among many comments. Apprehensively for a few seconds I lay on that therapy table, but this thought soon vanished. This session passed so

quickly and I felt most of the things that I had heard others praise about their session. "Yes" I did make another appointment then.

So what do I get out of Reiki sessions I hear you ask. Physical - that back-pain and other aches would diminish to a smaller degree or be removed. Emotional - no more hasty decisions and I now take a step back and look at the big picture. Mental and Spiritual - credibility and self-worthiness in oneself.

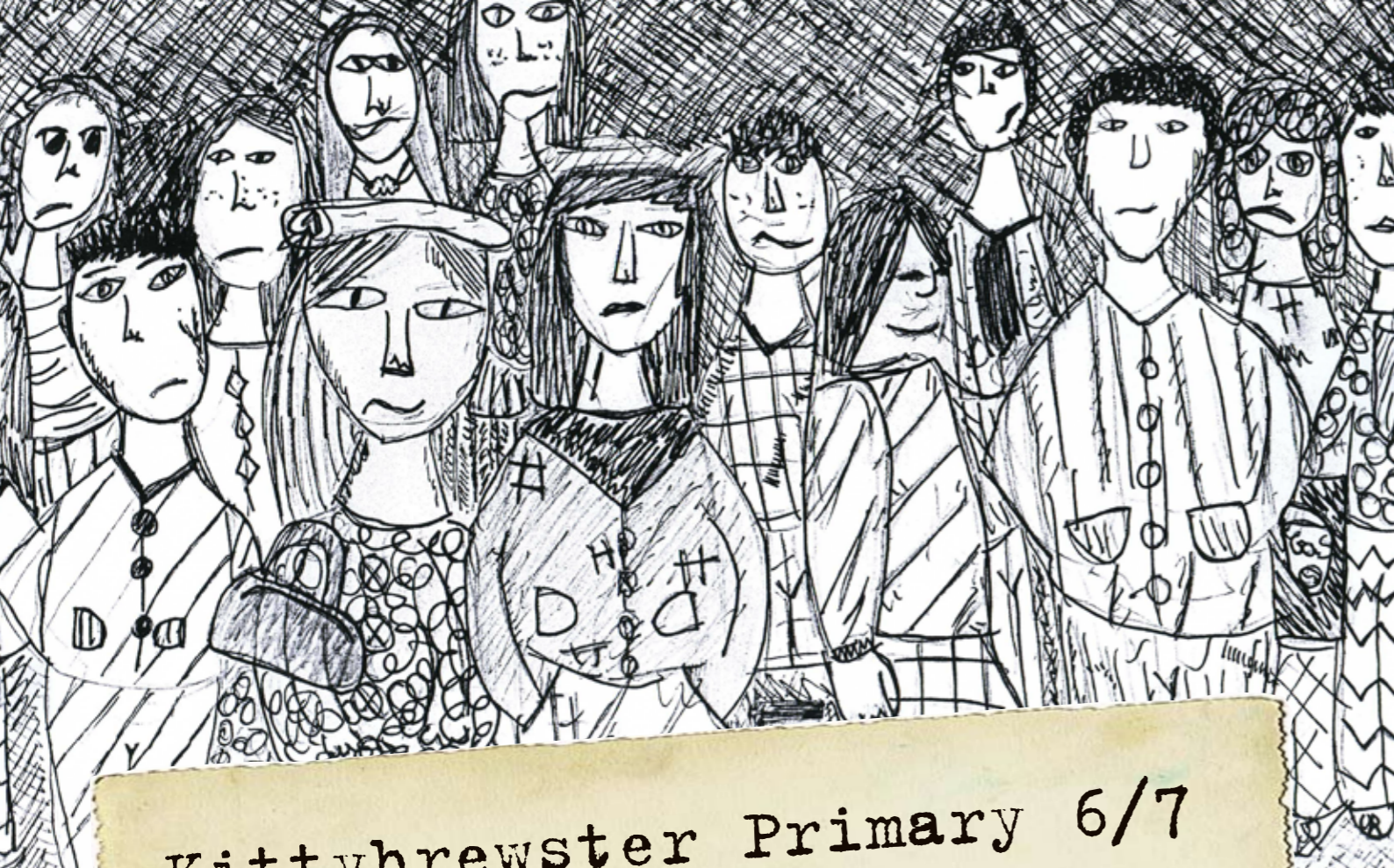
On the 26th February 2011 at Woodside Fountain Centre six people, myself included, went through First Degree Traditional Usui Reiki and two others at level Two Degree. Many thanks must go to Fersands Community Project also Printfield Flat, Tillydrone Flat and Hilton Community Centre for the use of their premises to further our training.

Late last year we acquired with



the kind permission of the tenants at Fountain Grange the use their common room. This now lets us be based at one place. Giving residents of Tillydrone, Woodside, Printfield and Hilton a focal point, rather than here or there on what was available. On the 5th of November 2011 the first six were trained up to Degree Level Two. Another six have achieved First Degree.

So are you prepared to give it a try because appointments are available on alternate Wednesdays mornings 10 -12.00 and Thursdays evenings 7.00 - 9.00pm at Fountain Grange - just give Louisa Brown a phone 01224-489832 to book an appointment.



Kittybrewster Primary 6/7 WW2 PROJECT

Dear Diary 25th September 1939

Today was horrible. I was happily sitting in the kitchen peeling potatoes for my potato soup when the eerie, ghostly air raid siren screeched loudly. I was scared for my sister because she was out at the shop. Robert, Mark, Christina and I dashed out to the garden and into our Anderson shelter.

I was terrified and all the time we were in the shelter I kept my hand on my silver locket, which contained a picture of Anne.

I was so relieved when the all dear siren played and Anne returned that I threw my arms around her and I couldn't help but do a little happy dance. For now, at least, we were all safe.



I HAVE ENJOYED DOING THE TOPIC OF WORLD WAR 2. I LIKED DOING THE ANDERSON SHELTERS AND I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO GOING TO THE GORDON HIGHLANDERS MUSEUM. I LEARN NEW THINGS EVERY DAY
ALANA

I really liked making Anderson shelters and I liked singing World War 2 songs. It was really fun. I'm also looking forward to going to the Gordon Highlanders Museum. Sara



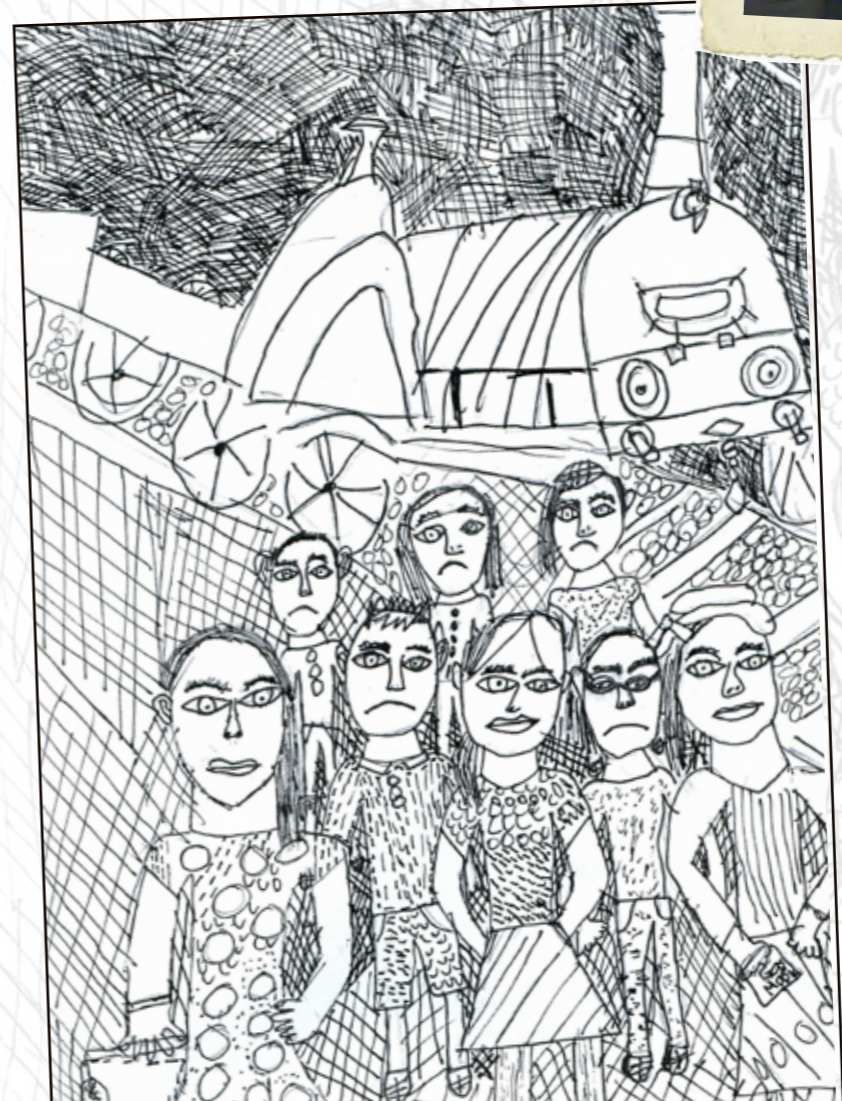
I have really enjoying learning the World War 2 songs in music and I also enjoyed acting out the families in World War 2 in drama. Chloe R

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I LEARNT ABOUT THE ANDERSON SHELTERS AND THE GAS MASKS. I ENJOYED WEARING THE GAS MASK. I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO THE TRIP WE'RE HAVING TO THE GORDON HIGHLANDERS MUSEUM TOO.
MACHAELA

I have enjoyed writing stories about a wartime family and I am looking forward to learning more about what it was like for Jewish families in World War 2.
Jasmin D.

I HAVE ENJOYED LEARNING ABOUT WORLD WAR 2. I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO GOING TO THE GORDON HIGHLANDERS MUSEUM AND I LIKED DOING THE WORLD WAR 2 SONGS IN MUSIC.
TEGAN

I AM ENJOYING DOING WORLD WAR 2. I ENJOYED MAKING THE ANDERSON SHELTERS AND WRITING THE DIARIES. I AM REALLY ENJOYING THIS TOPIC.
PAULINA



I enjoyed making the Anderson shelters
Sagita



SCOTS WHA -HAVERING

The future referendum on Scottish Independence is on the horizon and the Free Press would like to get involved in the national debate. The Editorial Group decided to get the ball rolling by inviting local writer Dougie Thomson to air his views on this complex subject. If you would like to have your say, please contact Mark - 01224 524926

I am not proud to be Scottish. I am not proud to be British, European, or proud to have white skin. I'm scarcely proud to be a human being, nasty, brutish and cruel species that we are.

I am not patriotic. The dying embers of what little patriotism I have left briefly bursts into flame when the Scottish football team takes to the field, but in general flag waving tartanry leaves me cold. I will not kill or die for my country. Any reference to Willie Wallace or the Duke of Wellington moves me to tears of laughter.

I don't even know what a country is. The map of Europe has been drawn and re-drawn so often that the concept of country is a very nebulous one indeed. In any case, multi-national corporations and finance sweep across national boundaries with the indifference of the wind. Mass migration and modern communications have increasingly diluted national characteristics. And when I hear talk of an independent country I'm all at sea (so to speak.) It's all Greek to me.

This might give the impression that I am therefore a shoe-in for a No vote in the proposed referendum. Not a bit of it. I'm all for it.

It's got nothing to do with the Bannockburn versus cost-benefit analysis arguments we're to hear (endlessly) over the next two years.

Firstly, Scotland is a country like any other (far older than most) and deserves a seat at the tables of the United Nations and European Union, just as the Denmarks and Slovenias do. I don't accept the argument that Scotland has more punch as part of the United Kingdom. We've had more than enough of British punching.

Secondly, please spare us these dreadful Tory Governments. I have some sympathy for the view that we will be 'abandoning' northern and urban England to the sorry fate of permanent Conservative rule, and I know that I have more in common with the Geordie or Scouse everyman than that yon birkie ca'd a lord wha struts and stares about his estate annihilating the wildlife. But an independent Scotland might spur them on to forms of devolution of their own. All forms of de-Westminstering are a good thing.

Lastly, I love this corner of northern Europe we call Scotland. Its landscape, literature and history are things I have explored all my life. Scotland should rise and be a notion again.

I accept that all this is confused and contradictory. This is hardly surprising. I am, after all, a Scotsman.

FERSANDS FAMILY CENTRE

RUN AROUND GYM FOR UNDER 5'S.

Fersands Family Centre hope to soon offer some new services to families all over Woodside. They want to encourage parents/ carers to come together for a mother and toddlers session and a children's play and exercise session.

The children at Fersands Nursery already have fun at the Kinder gym session where they can run around, have fun on bikes, climbing frames, tumbling mats etc. We hope that this will be a popular attraction for many other young children too. Come and take your children along for some exciting but safe play.

A new "Mum & Toddlers" may also be great to get parents and children out of the house and meeting each other in a safe and pleasant surrounding.

If you want to join up, go to the Woodside Centre and speak to the Family Centre workers Faye/ Julie or Mark 524925

KEEP FIT FOR ADULTS

Who's up for a weekly keep fit session?

A once a week work out in Woodside? For adults of all ages shapes and sizes.

We have heard that there is a demand for a regular exercise group and we want to start one up soon, possibly on a Friday morning. Do you think this would be popular?



Help us Protect our Garden!

The Family Centre & Nursery have a lovely garden space, which the children love to play and explore in.

We are happy that any children in the community can use this area and enjoy it just like the children do at the Family Centre.

On many occasions now, the garden has been vandalised, nails have been hammered into the climbing frame, plants and equipment have been destroyed and there has been graffiti of an inappropriate nature painted on the walls. The families and staff at the family centre have put lots of work into this area, and would like to ask for your help in looking after this space.



Please help us keep our garden nice and safe for your children to play in.

Thank You!

WOODSIDE NETWORK

Mind, Body and Soul 24th of March 10.30 - 2pm

The Woodside Network has a "Health and Wellbeing" sub group which aims to improve health services in the local community. The group is currently planning a health fair in the Woodside Fountain Centre for the 24th of March 10.30 - 2pm approx. The group wants to bring together a range of health service

providers and attract a large number of Woodside residents.

They organised a very successful day two years ago and want to reproduce an event which is enjoyable and exciting and improves public access to valuable services. Some of the attractions booked so far include;

Free Raffle • Face Painting • Kids dance class • Adult keep fit • Indian Head Massage • Laughter Yoga • Hand Massage & Nails • Reiki sessions Fruit bags • Soup kitchen • Tea and Coffee & and lots of information!

Come along and take part in the fun!

Housing, Environment and Community Safety sub group

Recent Issues Raised:

Q. What can I do if the communal bin is overflowing and pickup is not due?

A. Please contact Environmental Services on 0845 608 0919 for an extra pickup.

Q. What do I do with my old suite or table?

A. Call Environmental Services on 0845 608 0919 to arrange a pickup.

Q. What will this cost?

A. There is no charge for the first four items per year for Council housing residents. (a three piece

suite counts as three items) Other residents will be charged for this service - call the above number for information. (Four items count as one pickup.)

Q. What is being done about the traffic going through red lights at the pedestrian crossings on Great Northern Road?

A. Police have been monitoring these crossings and drivers have been caught and reported to the Procurator Fiscal. A visible police presence at these crossings has been a deterrent. Patrols will continue to be alert to this concern.



Sahail our local sub-postmaster at Woodside Post Office has expressed his thanks to the Network for our assistance in getting the pavements repaired in front of his premises. Customers have appreciated the removal of this hazard!



Please befriend Woodside Network on facebook! We need your input to make this a community resource. We also have a website for the more formal information about the Woodside Network. www.woodsidenetwork.wordpress.com



Health Issues in the Community

It's official! Participating in courses and activities is good for our mental health and wellbeing and there are plenty of activities to choose from on our doorstep!

Six local people took part in a course which was run by Pathways and funded by the NHS and came to this conclusion after researching the subject and conducting a survey of seven local groups. Their survey showed the majority of participants enjoy greater self-esteem and confidence and feel less stressed. Other benefits included improvements in physical health, education, social connections and happiness.

The group presented their findings to an invited audience of health professionals, community workers

and local residents.

These findings are confirmed by Five Ways to Wellbeing, a study commissioned by the UK government. Five messages were developed to reflect kinds of behaviour that people can undertake to improve their mental health and wellbeing:

CONNECT (with people) • BE ACTIVE • TAKE NOTICE (nature/ small joys) • KEEP LEARNING • GIVE (through kind acts/ volunteering)

Come along to the Woodside Network Mind Body and Soul Event and find out more about how you can improve all aspects of your health and wellbeing.

See our facebook page Woodside Well.

Fersands Food Coop

Fresh fruit, fish and food at good prices sort of explains the Fersands Food Initiative at the Woodside Centre. The organisation is soon to increase its opening times from 9am till 3:30pm Monday to Friday (the shop used to close at 1pm.) The new opening times are only

possible due to the hard work and commitment of the volunteer team who run the show. There are now seven helpers giving up their time to provide a friendly service. Please come along and visit the food coop the next time you pass the Centre. You may be surprised to see what we can offer.

Woodside Winter Task Force

Will you be a good neighbour and help to keep our pavements and paths safe this winter? Anyone wishing to volunteer for the Winter Taskforce please come along to the Woodside Fountain Centre any snowy, or icy morning at 10am. Weekends volunteers especially welcome!

We have the equipment - all you have to do is provide the brawn! For further information please contact Gordon Donald

Tel 01224 488781

Housing Hello....



"Hello my name is Dianne Murray and I am a Senior Housing Assistant with Aberdeen City Council. I currently work with a team of six Area Housing Assistants and one Clerical Assistant, we are based in the Woodside Fountain Centre alongside the Customer Access

Point. The properties we manage range from bedsits to sheltered to large family homes.

The job is extremely varied covering all aspects of estate management which can be anything from offers of accommodation to dealing with anti-social behaviour, repairs and child/adult protection.

The role is changing to encompass additional responsibility for arrears, we will be out and about even more than we are at the moment so that people will be able to discuss any debt concerns with us face to face. It is vital that when someone notices they

have fallen into debt (Housing or otherwise) that they make contact with us so that we can assist in finding ways to help. No one will make any judgements or make people feel uncomfortable, quite the opposite, it is an advantage to all if we can help. It is costly for both the tenant and the Council to pursue cases to court so if this can be avoided it saves us all.

I have done this job for 22 years and still find each day a challenge in many ways but never predictable and never ever boring!"

Kind regards, Dianne



Beware of Scams

A few months ago someone tried a scam on me with an unregistered text message. I was informed that my mobile phone had won £45,000 in Microsoft Mobile Promotion. The instructions were for me to e-mail them at a certain address. 'Aye' I thought 'That'll be right.'

To be truthful, a few years back, I would have been very excited to hear this news and yes - I would have probably answered it. But things have moved on since then though.

So what do I think they wanted? To congratulate me, take my bank details then clean out my account? Plant a virus in my computer, then at a later date offer to get rid of it at a cost of 'An arm and a leg?' Where did they get my number? Who knows? What I do know is that we are becoming a lot wiser, partly due to those unfortunate people who were caught out when these types of scams first started. Luckily for the likes of me they had the courage to tell us.

If you have any concerns about scams, Consumer Direct advises that you should not act on the information asked for. Contact them on 08454 840506 of phone Action Direct 03001232040. Like the nice chap at Consumer Advice said 'if it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is.'

Church Panto Review

I remember tentively suggesting that it might be an idea for the church community to present a Christmas Pantomime. The various children's groups were enthusiastic, although some of the adults did need some gentle persuasion to take part in the cast or back stage. However, there was one person who desperately wanted to remind himself of years past when the grease paint profession might have been his vocation. Along with our Reverend Markus, Bob Rylie agreed to be the ugly sisters Hyacinth and Lowercynth. Decked out in a Pink wig and matching attire Bob really looked the part. I am sure his bowling buddies had a fine time pulling his leg. (Would that have been the red leg or the green one?) Black pigtailed, wonderful over-the-top make-up, yellow and black striped tights and dresses to match, a wardrobe fit for the Queen made our minister almost unrecognisable.

Of course the script had to have a twist. I wrote it in the Doric tongue. (I was perhaps a little ambitious - maybe!) Thank goodness a few of the participating adults had not forgotten our local dialect. I think, in the end we had managed to end with a mixture of English, Scots, German and American accents. Did it matter - not a whit, everyone enjoyed the experience. EVENTUALLY! Not all was perfect but with a cast of youngsters from 3-81 it is difficult to have everyone's attention at the same time.

For the first time in many years the church family pulled together to produce a drama that was once a part of church life produced by the late Mr Logie and his wife Jessie. (Jessie is still very much involved in the choir, guild and general organisation of everyday church life.) The Panto allowed us to open the doors to the wider



community who are beginning to realise how much our church has to offer. I am proud that the Christmas Panto has brought together our people who have worked hard together back and front stage, regardless of how daunting the task in order to have a focus at Christmas, bring all religions and races together at one of the most important times in the Christian calendar. This will not be a one-off production. In December 2012 we will be tackling another panto (every rehearsal is a panto!!). We are going to perform 'The Snow Queen'. We are already looking forward to rehearsals that start in September.

Watch this space!!!!

June Smith, Panto Director

Summer Street Development

The vacant VSA care home in Summer Street has been sold at last. Planning permission has been granted for change of purpose to student accommodation comprising 20 bedrooms and 5 new parking spaces. Work has already begun.

Residents are, on the whole, pleased that the building will be put to use but are a bit apprehensive about noise. John Webb, the new owner and local developer, confirmed his intention to use the building to house his contractors and does not

foresee any noise issues.

The garden area (located in the middle of the mix of sheltered and amenity cottages which are owned by Castlehill Housing) was included in the sale as this was also owned by VSA. This has concerned residents affected by this.

John Webb is very happy for residents to have full access to this area and is meeting with Castlehill representatives to formalise this agreement. Such a large building deserves a name and John is leaning towards Fountville House.



shmuTRAIN

shmuTRAIN delivers employability & skills development courses to support people into work, education or training. Radio and film are used to help develop core skills such as communication, confidence and team work.

Focused employability training supports people to produce a CV, develop job search and interview skills, meet with local employers and visit their premises, increase motivation and the chances of sustaining either work, training or education. Positive Transitions is a 12 week course including radio & video training for 16-19 year olds who are

not in education, employment or training. shmuWORKS is a 6 week course including radio training for 18-25 year olds who are not in education, employment or training.

Individuals can contact SHMU directly to sign up for Positive Transitions or shmuWORKS, or can be recommended through a local project or agency.

To find out more about these opportunities please contact Chrissie on 01224 515013, email chrissie@shmu.org.uk or text the word 'TRAINING' followed by a space and your name to 60300

Woodside TV coming to a computer near you soon...

Shmu is launching the YTV training programme in association with Creative Identities in March 2012 and are looking for young people from Woodside to get involved. The project will give you the opportunity to take part in hands on TV and Video training led by professionals from the industry, with the ultimate goal of producing and broadcasting your very own live TV show on shmuTV's forthcoming internet TV channel. So if you, or someone you know, are between 12 and 19 years old, are interested in getting involved in making television and live in Woodside, then get in touch with Simon on 01224 515013 or send an email to ytv@shmu.org.uk



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



Splash out this Easter

Fersands and Fountain Community Project is to run Holiday Activities over the Easter period. One of the planned activities is a free swimming course.

This great opportunity will allow the younger kids to go swimming every day for one week so they can quickly pick up confidence in the water and learn the proper strokes from the enthusiastic swimming instructors.

Of course swimming will just be one of many attractions on offer, there is always an Easter Treasure Hunt and other exciting outings. If you live in the Fersands and Fountain area and are interested in swimming lessons or other activities for your children you must get your child registered. So get up to the Woodside Fountain Centre where forms are available now.



Maja on Song for Success

Fersands Youth Music have found a possible talent of the future in a teenage singer/songwriter Maja. The fifteen year old from Woodside has been a regular at Fersands youth groups for over a year and has always been asking about singing lessons, so she was the first one to come along when they started four months ago. Fersands have been working with music charity 'Music for You' Their singing teachers Lauren and Tina have been offering voice coaching, performance skills and song writing lessons on a Monday evening.

Lauren said, "As Maja has such a talent and has been working hard, we've been helping her record a CD of original songs."

Maja said, "I'm really enjoy it, they have given me more confidence and are teaching me

how to sing the songs by singing them for me first. Now I'm getting to record my own CD!"

Maja has already done a few performances at school and through lessons with 'Give Kids a Chance.'

Claire Bradshaw, who is in charge of the youth activities at Fersands commented, "It's great to see a young woman benefit so much from these fantastic resources. If there are any young singers or musicians out there or young people that want to learn a musical instrument we may be able to make it happen for you. Come and speak to us and find out what we can do."

If you are interested in learning more about music or singing lessons get in touch with Claire @ Fersands on 524928.



COMMUNITY CENTRE UPDATE

Tuesday night past, I strolled down to the Woodside Fountain Centre to meet Dorothy, one of the volunteers, who had agreed to show me round. My knowledge of whats on offer was limited, so this was a chance for me to find out more.

Tuesday is the night to have some fun if you're a junior. Children between the ages of 5 to 12 are always welcome. The cost is only 50p and runs from 6pm to 7:30pm.

When I arrived, Dorothy was busy recording the kids names, taking their entrance and tuck shop money. She knew who they all were.

Other volunteers on this night were Aileen, Angela, Debra, Leslie Ann Laura and Scot. With so many people giving their time, this means that the kids can have

a host of different things to choose from, including football, pool, arts and crafts, toys, computers, wii and play-station. Funding is raised by themselves. The good news is that one company's two partners each donate £500 per year for which they are very grateful. Good on ye guys!

The other activity on Tuesday night at the centre is Zumba, starting at 7:10pm, finishing at 8pm. The cost is £4.

Dorothy has been at the community centre for about 29 years and is involved in many different things. She loved kids and has great pleasure in seeing them grow up and move on, then welcoming the next new intake. She says that to be involved in this continuity gives her a god feeling. They also run a play-scheme in the Summer school holidays.

Exercise Boxing Fit for 16 plus is on a Thursday night. It lasts from 6:30pm to 7:30pm and costs £2 and for those who enjoy bingo, you can go along on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday finishes between 9:30pm and 9:45pm as they play a flyer. Raffles are on sale too.

I also learned from Dorothy that the centre does full breakfast, including tea and toast on a Monday and Friday at 9am until 11:45am for £3. They also do lunch on a Monday at noon to 2pm, again for £3.

The café part is a large room with a pool table, computers and a toy corner where the younger children can play. The centre is a social network for people to relax and enjoy company. Why don't you go along and see for yourselves?



Pete the PUNK the vulture of culture

It seems so long ago, yet only yesterday, really, my 20-something mum leading me along Spa Street, up the steps between St. Mark's and His Majesty's, round the brow of the Trainie Park (as Union Terrace Gardens was known) and onwards to the old Trustee Savings Bank on Union Terrace itself.

I was eight. We were going to open my very first bank account. We went up a broad flight of marble steps into a high-ceilinged room with a line of panelled booths along the back wall. It was all very impressive and old-fashioned but these were more innocent times, long before bank tellers took to sheltering behind armoured glass; money-laundering legislation that could make opening a bank account a fraught affair was also some distance away. In those days, you didn't need seventeen different forms of ID before they would even look at you. A birth certificate was quite enough, thank you, and opening an account meant you and the bank entered into a very straightforward contract. You paid in your money, they invested it. The bank made a profit and paid you regular interest in exchange. Handsome as it may seem in these straitened times when most ordinary bank accounts receive no interest at all, my childhood savings actually earned in the region of 8% per annum. It was all very simple and above board - and everybody was happy.

This mutually beneficial arrangement trundled along unscathed for a couple of decades then along came the 80s, when it all began to go horribly wrong. Thatcher's Tories swept to power and brought with them a culture of "Me" where greed was good and all moral compass was lost. Money, money, money was everything, and if the movies of that era were to be believed, bankers were no longer the avuncular figures of yore but high-flying whizzkids with expensive suits and drug habits to match. Such images were no doubt tinged to some degree by Hollywood hocus, but there's no denying that this period marked the financial world's first openly narcissistic embrace of a recklessness eventually so profound that, 30 years on, it has brought the world economy to its knees. One result is that bankers and financiers are no longer respected leaders but 21st century bogeymen despised by the public, pilloried by the press and berated by politicians of all hues. Unfortunately, political pressure on the banks to clean up their acts has proved largely cosmetic. Stripping the knighthood from ex-RBS chairman Sir Fred Goodwin was crassly tokenistic and did little to appease public indignation but, when it comes to taking any real measures against an obscene bonus culture, prime minister David Cameron has been remarkably slack. Why is that? Well, that's how it's always been. The rich stick together, the rest of us suffer endless cuts and social injustices designed to maintain the ever-widening gap between the haves and the have-nots. The last thing the Tories and their fat cat pals want to see is any sort of social equality. Their egos couldn't stand it.



That same arrogance has caused more than its fair share of trouble in Aberdeen of late. Just as the city was set to gain an iconic new arts centre that would have served the dual purpose of regenerating the sadly neglected Union Terrace Gardens, multi-millionaire/local boy made good Sir Ian Wood stepped forward with an offer of £50m towards the creation of a new civic square on the same site. While not denying the generosity of this offer, several alternative city centre sites could benefit hugely from such a windfall without our near-bankrupt council having to borrow at least £70m to finish the job. That he chose instead a UTG site a mere hairsbreadth from massive regeneration independent of his offer suggests Wood just could not bear to see such priceless real estate slip through the fingers of the local business community. Such an interpretation is validated by a swift examination of building magnate Stewartie Milne's rabid support for the City Garden Project. With planning permission to build a ghastly glass office complex on the Triple Kirks site, it's not hard to see the financial attractions the CGP holds for Milne, who has publicly slated the project's opponents as "selfish" and "narrow-minded". This sort of behaviour is to be expected from CGP supporters promoting their ill-conceived project with an unedifying concoction of distortions and lies, but a viable alternative does exist. Balmoral Group MD Jimmy Milne has questioned many of the outlandish statements emanating from the CGP lobby, particularly the claim that 6,500 jobs will be created. Instead, he and his associates have offered to establish funds to refurbish the Gardens, a solid financial framework that will restore them not just to their former glory but, by employing just a little of the flair and imagination that went into making us the Oil Capital of Europe, can also secure for our city a vibrant, cultural heart worthy of the 21st century and beyond. Now, that's something Aberdeen really CAN afford!

Dear Julie....



Hi, my name is Julie and I have worked as the Family Support Worker at Fersands Family Centre for just over a year. I provide support to Parents with children under the age of 5 years. This support can include: support in relation to promoting positive parenting, education/employment issues, benefit advice, budgeting, debt management, support with housing issues, advocacy, legal issues, promoting self-esteem and confidence, introducing you to the area and helping you meet new people. This list is not exhaustive as support can be tailored to suit individual need.

A range of workshops, group sessions and coffee mornings will also be held at the centre throughout the year. I have recently started a parenting programme in conjunction with Family Learning – "I'm a Parent, Get Me Out of Here." "Parenting is one of the hardest jobs in the world which doesn't come with a manual. This 6-8 session course offers parenting skills and tips to positively enhance your role as a Parent/Carer."

Dear Julie

I am a single parent who has just moved to Woodside with my 2yr old daughter. I don't know anyone and I'm scared to come out at night as it is so noisy and dark where I live. I am going mad sitting in all day and I know it's no good for my girl, what can I do?

It sounds as though you are pretty isolated at the moment and having a 2 year old child means that it is not possible for you to go out and socialise in the evenings. However, having a wee one can open up a whole new host of daytime opportunities for you, hopefully allowing you to get to know other parents in the area, whilst allowing your child to have fun with other children. Firstly, I would be delighted to meet with you if you would like to drop into the Family Centre for a coffee and a chat. At the Family Centre we have a range of groups for children of different ages, including nursery provision, 2s groups

and groups for babies and 1 year olds. There is also a Stay and Play group being run at the Woodside Fountain Centre on a Monday which allows you to spend time with your wee one doing craft activities, messy play etc. Additionally, I have recently started an "I'm A Parent, Get Me Out of Here" course which is great for picking up parenting hints and tips, as well as being very sociable. We also hope to have a Peep group up and running in the not too distant future. Hopefully, this gives you a flavour of what we have to offer, but if you would like further information, please do not hesitate to phone or visit me at the Family Centre.

Dear Julie,

I am scared of my boyfriend. It all started off great and he's been really good to the kids. However after he moved in for a few months we had a couple of crazy rows and he ended up hitting me. I know I said nasty things to him but I'm scared that this will increase in the future, what should I do?

Firstly, I would just like to say that there is NO excuse for domestic abuse as I get the feeling from your letter that you are blaming yourself for having said some 'nasty things' to your boyfriend. You are right to be concerned that there may be a repeat of this sort of behaviour, putting yourself and your children at risk. You don't say in your letter, whether the children witnessed the assault and how old they are, but clearly it would be extremely detrimental to the wellbeing of the whole family, should such violence continue and may well raise child protection concerns. Ultimately, you need to choose whether you want to continue to be in

a relationship with this man. Has he spoken to you about the assault? Is he showing any signs of remorse? Would he benefit from anger management? Has he been under any particular stresses lately? To make an informed decision, you would need the answers to these and many other questions. I would be happy to meet with you to discuss the situation further and perhaps signpost you to other organisations e.g. Womens' Aid, Domestic Abuse Liaison Officers, Caledonia Project. It goes without saying that in the meantime, if there is a repeat of this sort of behaviour or a threat of it, you ought to contact the police.

I am sure you are feeling overwhelmed by the financial pressures you are experiencing and perhaps cannot see 'a light at the end of the tunnel.' Often people in these situations bury their head in the sand and hope it will all go away – unfortunately it never does. However, you have taken the first important step to sorting things out by seeking advice. In my opinion, your priority is to try to come to some arrangement with your gas and electricity company in order to keep your supply on. I would also considering moving your credit card debts to a new card with an interest free deal.

Since, I do not know the level of your debt, job prospects etc it is hard for me to say whether or not you are at a stage where you may consider bankruptcy as an option. I would highly recommend that you take copies of all your bills, threatening letters etc to the Citizens Advice Bureau who will advise you more fully on the best way forward. Representatives from the CAB hold a surgery at the Woodside Fountain Centre so please phone and make an appointment. We also have the St Machar Credit Union in-house which may also be of help to you either now or in the future.

Dear Julie

I'm in so much debt I don't know what to do. I've reached the limit on two credit cards and I'm due big electric and gas bills not to mention unpaid bank loans. I have started getting threatening letters and don't know how to explain my situation to them, can you help me?



CRUIVES - A resident's letter

Dear Freepress,

I am writing with some concern about the ancient CRUIVES situated approx two miles upriver from the mouth of the river Don. These man built islands of granite blocks once used to trap fish, their age or contractors are unknown. The earliest mention I can find with regard to the Cruives is in The Charter of King Robert the Bruce, dated 10th December 1319, which granted to the Burgesses and community of the Burgh of Aberdeen the forest of Stocket.... The Cruives, also the Don.

This was later confirmed by Queen Mary on 15th September 1553 and King Charles 1 on 1st September 1638.

I can find no archaeological study that has been done on the Cruives to understand the engineering genius or find out who they were built by.

"Straightening walls of the Don pre-date the Charter".

My concern arose in viewing the planning application that Aberdeen city Council has put forward for the "third Don crossing". In their plans they have chosen to use these ancient monumental structures as the foundation for the bridge.

In my view these man-made islands pre date our history records and may even be Stone Age.

I would invite the University of Aberdeen to carry out some research on them. With the construction of cramped affordable housing along reclaimed sandy river and stream beds, I would ask the Scottish government to look at what would happen if damage was done to these monumental islands which also determine the course of the

river. I would ask the National Trust for Scotland to protect these as a place of archaeological and scientific interest.

Ed - Fascinating history on our doorstep please let us know how you get on with these bodies (Scottish Government etc) as I'm sure our readers would be interested to hear.



Benefits Advice



Hello, my name is Maureen Davidson. I am a Benefits Advice Officer at Aberdeen City Council working in the Housing and Environment Department.

The role of the Benefits Advice Service is to ensure tenants are aware of the wide range of benefits that they may be entitled to and assist people in making those claims.

The benefit system can be very confusing and many people don't know where to start. For some completing claim forms can prevent claiming and for others it can be the thought of having to phone the relevant 08** numbers.

Lately there has been a lot of publicity about proposed changes to the benefits system which may cause concern to people already in receipt of benefits and for those who are in the process of claiming.

Problems with benefits can result in problems with rent arrears and cause a lot of issues for tenants.

Ensuring you are claiming all you are entitled to can help. Please feel free to get in touch.

I will be working out of the Woodside Fountain Centre every second Monday from 10am until 4pm.

During March 2012 the dates will be the 5th and 19th.

Drop in during these times or alternatively my office number is Aberdeen (01224) 522709.

An Angry letter...

It's about time we hid a noise pollution police patrolling this streets. I'm sick tae death o being bombarded by bawling music we folk in cars. Yer stannin it the lights waiting for the green man tae cross the road and a moron draws up in a car, ah the windaes are shut but a rackit still comes oot o it. They sit staring in to mid air wi a blank look in their faces. As far as I'm concerned I dinna think they've got ony working brain cells. An ither thing, fit about ma civil liberties an ma personal space, I'm sure it must come under some criminal offence. Fit I wid de is mak Sunday a traffic free zone and the noise pollution police wid hae the powers tae fine the folk on the spot and haul oot the radios fae the cars. I wid allow buses tae run on a Sunday so folk can get about bit ats a. I feel so strongly about this I'm going tae write tae Brussels my sel and get them tae de something about it. If they dinna dae anything about the situation I'm gan tae deal wi it myself. I've got spray paint, a baseball bat, a flame thrower and I've been practicing in mi garden and I've now got a pile o charcoal but being bit o an artist I can use that. My aim wi the flame thrower is so good I can reach the bottom o the garden so look oot morons, Im coming!

Yours, Miss Mona Lott

ED - I strongly urge you to put down your flame thrower and go and have a nice cup of tea and think about buying a large pair o ear muffs. On a serious note noise disturbance complaints can be answered again by the council environmental services 08456080919.

NEW FERSANDS YOUTH FLAT OPENS AFTER LONG STRUGGLE

It hardly seems a year since I was reporting in these pages on the bitter fight taking place to save the Sandilands youth flat from closure. That was a battle royal unfortunately lost, but after a lot of hard work from all sides of the community, a sparkling new facility has risen like a phoenix from the ashes.

After much negotiation, the council eventually decided the way forward was to decant the various youth groups (from premises practically custom-made for youth work) into the flat next door vacated when the Credit Union and Food Co-op moved up the road to the modernised, newly-extended Woodside Community Centre.

When this second property was eventually leased to the Fersands and Fountain Community Project (FFCP), it quickly became clear the place was a health and safety nightmare.

Between dodgy wiring, a misplaced boiler, walls crumbling behind seven layers of woodchip and a carpet curling up at the edges with dirt and old age, much work would be required to bring the premises up to scratch.

Then fate took a hand. Michelle Herd of the Northsound *Cash for Kids* programme introduced youth flat manager Claire Bradshaw to Karen Clark of the the Enterprise North East Trust, a meeting that resulted in a collaboration called *Community Challenge*.

Plans were drawn up, contacts made, and after a rocky start followed by a long, hard journey via planning permission etc., the now completely refurbished premises are up and running again.

Speaking to the Free Press, Claire Bradshaw said: "A project of this nature can define a community. Local businesses and residents pulled hard together to put something back into one of Aberdeen's prime regeneration areas.

"That they did so wholeheartedly by supporting the renovation of a rundown property in the heart of Sandilands Drive proves there's no lack of community spirit here. I'd like to thank every single person that donated time, labour or materials to help us bring this project to such a successful conclusion".

Looking around the spruced-up premises - painted by the kids themselves - new toilets and a kitchen have been fitted and, apart from the obligatory dart board and pool table, several computers and a big screen are available.

The youth flat aims to provide young people aged 12-25 with free information, informal education and activities. This is a place learn new skills and a safe place to hang out with friends. Long may it run.



Access Points

The council face in the community.

Do you know about the Customer Access Points?

There are three Customer Access Points in Aberdeen situated in Kincorth, Mastrick and Woodside. They are a gate way to a wide range of council services for the residents of Aberdeen; the accessible face of the council in our communities. At the Customer Access points we try to deal effectively with any requests and enquiries to your satisfaction giving you answers immediately where possible.

Using a Customer Access Point residents are able to pay their rent and council tax, report a housing repair and buy school dinner tickets all in one trip. This is obviously a huge benefit for the cities residents; however it is not only convenience that the Customer Access Points can deliver:

Multiple services on offer

There is a huge range of services on offer, including:

- Additional waste bin applications
- Applying for Disabled

- Badges (Blue and green)
- Applying for Access to leisure
- Applying for an Accord Card /National Entitlement Card;
- Bioliners for your food waste caddies;
- Booking a bulky item uplift;
- Dog waste bags for sale;
- Making a Goodapple Housing application;
- Making garden maintenance payments;
- Pay any Aberdeen City Council bill;
- Paying any parking fines due;
- Paying Rent and Council Tax;
- Reporting a housing repair;
- Reporting road/pavements defects;
- Reporting street light faults;
- Sale of Multi journey tickets for the community bus
- Sale of school dinner tickets; All payments can be made with cash, debit and credit cards (1.6% admin fee charged) and cheque

Advice and information The team also offers advice and information on:

- Parking permits;
- Council housing and council tax forms

- School clothing and footwear applications;
- Education Maintenance Allowance;
- Recycling and bin collection Calendars;
- Parking/garage/allotment spaces.

Dedicated teams

The teams at the Customer Access Point take pride in their work and take their role in community life seriously. The teams are multi-skilled and well trained providing a polite, welcoming and efficient service.

Contact details

Kincorth Customer Access Point
Provost Watt Drive, Kincorth, Aberdeen AB12 5NA
Phone: 01224 872572
Email: CAPKincorth@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Mastrick Customer Access Point
Spey Road, Aberdeen AB16 6SH
Phone: 01224 788503

Woodside Fountain Centre
Marquis Road, Aberdeen
Phone: 01224 524920
Email: woodsideCAP@aberdeencity.gov.uk



APARDION,

A LEOPARD'S QUEST

The Reading Bus has published its fifth commercial book, **Apardion, A Leopard's Quest**. The book tells the tale of a gentle leopard spirit from the Northern Lights. In his quest to discover if Aberdeen should be his place of birth, Apardion visits 14 heritage landmarks and discovers secrets from the past. With a royal foreword by Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Rothesay, the book's author is Sheena Blackhall and the beautiful illustrations are created by Julie Lacombe.

Pupils from schools across Aberdeen have been tasked with researching the 14 heritage sites and translating their findings into film animations, podcasts and e-Pubs to expand the information in the book and communicate the history of the city. By June 2012, all the landmarks will be populated with these colourful and engaging resources.

Schools in the St Machar Community have adopted two landmarks: King's College Chapel and Footdee. All the primary schools have been onboard the bus for storytelling sessions from Grace Banks and Sheena Blackhall as well as going on journeys of discovery to the two landmarks.

Their findings have now been web mounted on the Apardion website <http://apardion.com>

Log in and enjoy the fantastic podcasts and the wonderful films these young people have created.

AVC Media Enterprises are the media partner for this project and have worked with The Reading Bus to also produce an Apardion i-phone application which can be downloaded for free from i-tunes.

Apardion, A Leopard's Quest costs £5.99 and can be bought online on the apardion website.