

John Preece – photographer – 1957 -2023

John Preece, who was “our” photographer for more than a decade, was an integral part of The Edinburgh Reporter team, and we are very sad that he has died suddenly, aged 65.

I am not quite sure how we first met – he just seemed to appear at some point in the dim and distant past, and never went away again. He took photos mainly of sport – the internationals at Murrayfield were his favourite, (the free lunch was one highlight of course), but then the SRU stopped handing out press accreditation to more than a handful of photographers. Undaunted, John went to many Edinburgh Rugby matches instead, and if you are a fan then you will have enjoyed his articles and his photos of which we are sharing but a small selection here. He also covered hockey of all kinds – and polo at Dalmahoy.



Edinburgh Rugby v Leinster Rugby,
Murrayfield, Edinburgh, 16th Sept. 2016
Guinness PR012

Edinburgh 20 – Leinster 33

PHOTO John Preece



John also went to Stewart's Melville home matches. We are told that players and referees looked to see if they featured in his photos on the Monday after any matches. One player said on Stewart's Melville Facebook page: "One of the many highlights as a player was checking if you were lucky enough to feature in John's excellent photos after a game."

Another comment said: "Please extend the condolences of Edinburgh Rugby Referees' Society to John's family. Our members often delighted in seeing themselves in John's photos - as long as they showed the refs in a good light! John will be very much missed."

President, Bill McNie, wrote this about him when he advised the club of the sad news. He said: "John has been taking photos at Inverleith since 2009 - if memory serves me correctly, he initially asked if he could take some photos at a game against Dundee High for the 'Courier'. He then went on to have photos from Inverleith published in 'SCRUM' magazine and, latterly, for the online 'Edinburgh Reporter' newspaper.

"As a proud son of Linlithgow, John didn't have any real links to Stewart's Melville but he and the club just seem to have 'got on' for the best part of 14 years. His stunning action shots have recorded both good times and bad at Inverleith and have been a cornerstone of our web and social media presence ever since that has been a thing.

"He was a friend to many of our players and supporters and we will miss his pithy comments as he darts along the touchline to keep up with play.

"He also did match reports on our games for the 'Reporter' - that's why, along with his impressive array of camera equipment, he always packed a wee voice recorder so he could note significant passages of play and scorers."

And that is exactly what he did. His previous career as an analytical scientist with the NHS, and his attention to detail

in that role, stood him in good stead for this kind of thing. I asked him many times to explain how, when taking photos, he could also watch the match. He replied that he took a lot of photos of the score board, and I think he may have mentioned recording his notes, but he made it all sound pretty easy.



Edinburgh's Damien Hoyland climbs high to claim the ball.
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Final Fling, Princes Street Gdns, Edinburgh, 1st Jan 2023

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WORDS

He also undertook some of the writing about other subjects on our website. He said words were not really his thing (the pithy comments on his text messages and WhatsApp would beg to differ) but he did an excellent job of making sense of many articles about arts and events.

He absolutely loved The Edinburgh International Book Festival, and of course the fact that it meant hanging out with other photographers in the tent in Charlotte Square, but equally loved going to Valencia with Scottish Hockey in early 2017 – the women's team that is. And just last September he was delighted to be back out at the Climbing Arena at Ratho to photograph the athletes scurrying up walls there.



IFSC World Cup Lead and Speed Climbing, EICA Ratho, 11th Sept. 2022

Day 3 – Lead Finals

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Brian Cox – Edinburgh International Book Festival – Day 17,
Edinburgh School of Art, 29th Aug 2022
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Nick Barley Director of Edinburgh International Book Festival
PHOTO J L Preece

The Tattoo was another event which he liked – but latterly he was beginning to prefer the inside set up shots at theatre or ballet performances. Our December front page is an example of that. John said he was disappointed that the photo call was not held in the theatre, but he got an amazing shot as you can see.

Waving goodbye

Party friends take on
Atlantic challenge
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Tenement tales

Writer pens social history of
Southside residents
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It's a wrap

Spotlight on shopping
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O'Rourke tribute
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the Edinburgh Reporter

December 2022

EDINBURGH'S LOCAL NEWSPAPER...A CAPITAL READ FROM START TO FINISH



Scottish Ballet presents the frozen fable of The Snow Queen

By PHYLIS STEPHEN

THE SCOTTISH Ballet are making a song and dance about winter this December in their production of *The Snow Queen*. Following its sell out run in 2019 the story which is inspired by the Hans Christian Andersen fairytale comes to the Festival Theatre.

This is the same story upon which *Frozen* is based so will be familiar territory to most children and young people.

The ballet opens with the Snow Queen in her palace surrounded by the icy pieces of an enchanted mirror and then moves between the palace and the fairytale forest. Of course there is a hapless pair of young lovers who were parted by a spell, and of course the Snow Queen's sister, the Summer Princess flees the palace leaving The Snow Queen home alone.

The ballet runs (with some special inclusive performances) until 10 December in Edinburgh and then continues in Glasgow until 8 January.

Choreographed by Christopher Hampson and designed by Lex Brotherton it is a love story to warm hearts before the panto with Allan Stewart, Grant Stott and Jordan Young takes to the same stage to make 'em laugh this Christmas in a temporary move from The King's.

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'The Gift' Photo call, Festival Theatre, Edinburgh 15th Dec 2022

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Living in Linlithgow did not prevent him from turning up at press calls all over the city, just that he could not be at early morning calls. He parked somewhere in Murrayfield (probably at the stadium!) or out at the Park and Ride at Ingliston, then walked into the city centre with his backpack, even tramping all the way to Portobello on at least one occasion to everyone's amazement and amusement.

Our library of photos has been much enriched by his skill and effort in getting along to the many press calls over the years. He also made some of these his own thing.



A tackle from the Scotland v Japan match at BT Murrayfield March 2018 PHOTO John Preece

He forged a relationship with The Scottish Gallery and covered all their exhibitions.

Tommy Zywn, a Director of the gallery said: "John was courteous, friendly, and approachable and had a gifted eye for finding the right shot. He had an innate ability to put artists at ease and was well liked by all of us at The Scottish Gallery, and his fellow photographers. He will be missed."

The Corner Shop cover PR for many of the events in Edinburgh. Susie and Magda of Corner Shop said: "John always put a smile on your face at photo calls – calm and easy-going, lovely to chat to and dependable. Through The Edinburgh Reporter, he often covered important stories overlooked by others. Those of us at Corner Shop who had the joy of spending time with John will miss him greatly."

I only wish that he could have heard some of the kind tributes that I have had sent to me by many of the other press photographers, who, on hearing of his untimely death, praised this "nice guy" for his photographic talents.

He would have just shrugged his shoulders I am sure, but I don't think he knew how good other professional snappers

thought he was.



Beats on Pointe, Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh 7th Aug 2022

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ScottishVarsity-Men-EURFCvStAndrews-210919 PHOTO Jax MacKenzie

As a member of Linlithgow Camera Club for the last decade or so his profile [there](#) shows off some of his wit and humour.

He wrote: “I use a variety of Canon equipment including Canon’s 1DX II DSLRs and EOS ‘R’ mirrorless, coupled with a selection of both Canon and Sigma lenses

and enjoy the luxury – retired, no mortgage, few really bad habits – of being able to choose the most suitable kit for any particular job. I also have a digital Hasselblad which I’m going to use for... eh, stuff. But I really, really wanted one.....”

Jackie MacKenzie, Secretary, Linlithgow Camera Club, writes: “John was the longest serving member of Linlithgow Camera Club and he brought a vast wealth of photographic knowledge to the club. What he enjoyed most was helping and encouraging new members, he was very generous with his time and nothing was ever too much trouble.

“His great talent was spread across many different genres of photography, but sports and the arts were where he shone most.

“The club entered many of his images in external photographic competitions and they were always awarded with high marks. The club won’t be the same without his witty blogs and his ability to spot a sloping horizon in members’ landscape photographs even when no-one else spotted it! He will be greatly missed.”

Memories

Rosemary Kaye who writes for The Edinburgh Reporter about the arts remembers John: “I knew John through The Edinburgh Reporter – indeed we first met on a Reporter narrowboat trip to Wester Hailes, an expedition for which I still have the t-shirt.

“In the months and years that followed, John and I went everywhere, from art exhibitions at Holyroodhouse and The Queen’s Gallery to Book Festival events in Charlotte Square, and Fringe plays in the back rooms of seedy pubs. I wrote the

reviews, John took the photos, and along the way we had a lot of laughs. With his dry sense of humour he made everything so much more fun.

“John was always so helpful, particularly in sorting out my numerous issues with technology, my inability to get photos the right way up (I can still hear him saying ‘only use your phone in *portrait!*’ (Or was it landscape? Sorry John...), my very great ability to forget how the TER website worked, and my frequent late night panic emails about everything from font sizes to featured images. ‘All sorted’ was inevitably his calm and reassuring reply.

“This summer, after all the upheavals of the past two years, I hope to return to festival reviewing. I thought John would be there alongside me, snapping away, chatting away, and generally being John. I am so sorry that this was not to be. He will be hugely missed.”

John took budding photographer, Louise Montgomery, under his wing. Louise said: “I did a bit of photography mentoring with him and he was often in contact about any photography-related opportunities he thought might be of interest and showed great kindness in his willingness to teach/help. He’d actually been in touch just a wee before he died, so I am quite shocked to hear this news.”

John is survived by his son Allyn, daughter Keri and son-in-law Cameron. He was really proud of his children and their achievements, and spoke of them often.

Funeral details will follow.



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The Book of Life, Churchill Theatre, Edinburgh, 13th Aug 2022
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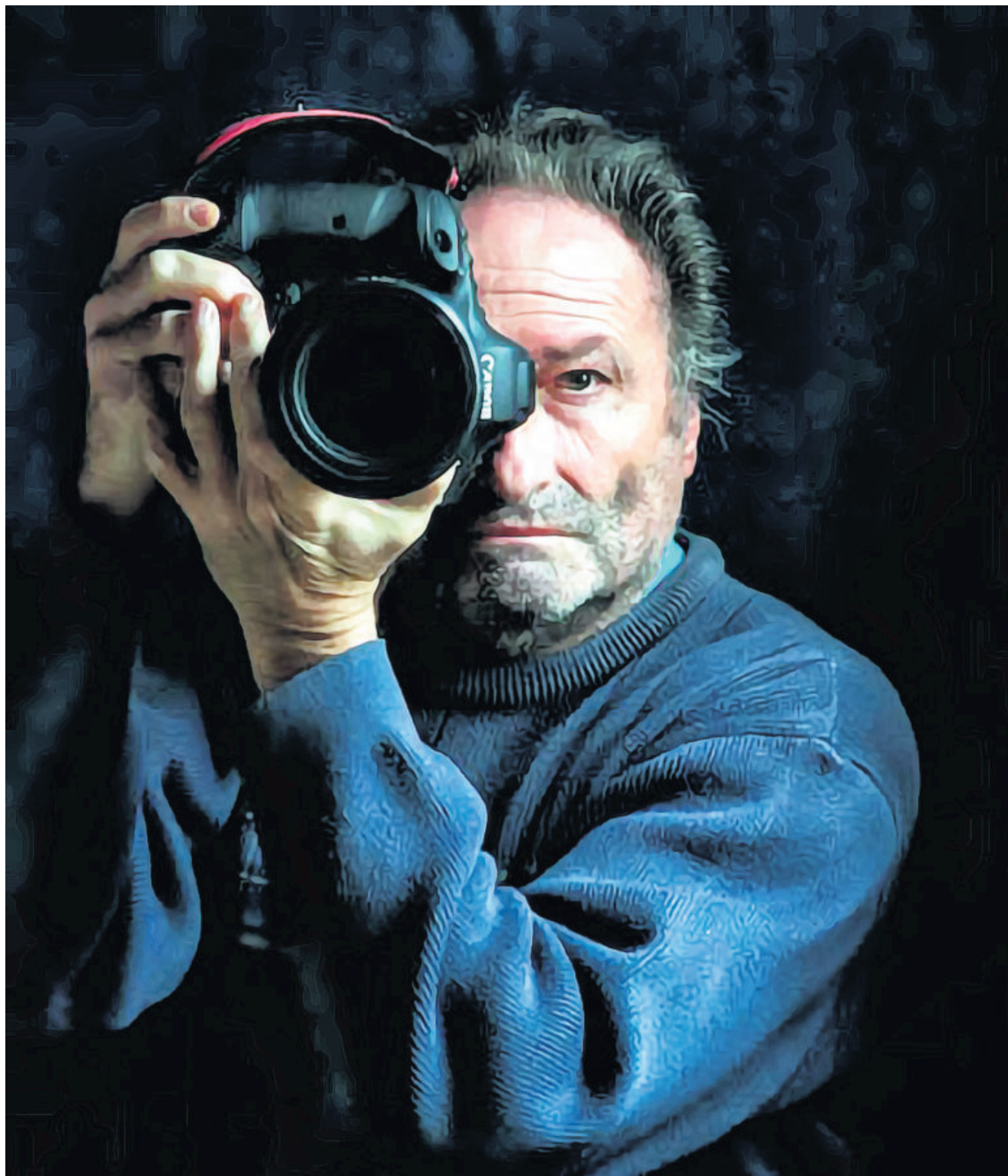
The Lord Provost Robert Aldridge at the Forget-Me-Not-Garden Opening, Lauriston Castle, Edinburgh, 26th Sept 2022 © 2022 J.L. Preece



Stew Mel 1XV v Dundee RFC – Tennents Nat 1 – 12.11.22 – PHOTO
Jax MacKenzie



John on the left with his trusty cameras at our Instameet in Riddle's Court in 2018.



John Preece took this photo of himself – and of course reversed it so that the words were legible.