

# #NeuReekiesXmasKracker – 17th December, Central Hall



Photo by Ryan McGoverne

Central Hall had a surreal vibe when the Neu! Reekie! gig took place there last week.

An avant-garde, experimental evening of spoken word, poetry, readings and music, this is a nuance to Edinburgh's cultural scene which has significantly shifted since it was founded five years ago.

Packed to the rafters with music and literary aficionados as well as their usual cult following, we were immediately entertained by Tam Dean Burn's reading of *Little Junky Rabbit's Christmas*. Accompanied by a trippingly dark screening, and discordant guitar, along with Tam's festive attire and shades, we were immediately transported back to decades previous, should the beatniks of the sixties and seventies been so proficiently technologically adept.

Liz Lochhead, aware of her crowd, commenced her set with *In Praise of Old Vinyl*, which aptly received a fantastic response, suitably summing up the crowd at this diverse, literary event. This was swiftly followed by performances from successful indie-folk Scottish-based musicians, Stina from Honeyblood, Withered Hand's Dan Wilson and Hailey Beavis, as well as the wonderfully passionate Emma Pollock and RM Hubbert. Dark humour, luscious Italian flawless vocals, multi-coloured tights, Santa hats and acoustic guitars took to the stage, providing a wonderful transition from Lochhead to WHITE. Reminding us of the magical collaborative *Fairytale of New York*, Pollock and Hubbert's efforts were awed, rekindling memories of albums such as the *Ballad of the Book*. It was

time, however to hush the murmur of the audience with a face-slapping tale from one of Edinburgh's most renowned tale-tellers.



Photo by Ryan McGoverne

Irvine Welsh came to the stage reading a new Frank Begbie episode in Leith post-*Trainspotting* and a spell in the art world. Wearing black jeans, black beanie and black t-shirt, there is a monotonous, droll sound to Welsh's voice, evocative of the misogynistic, erroneous character, which seems to please the crowd. As expected, the entertainment was revved up a few notches, with WHITE's frantic drumming and guitar-sound pleasing the Franz Ferdinand lovers amongst the crowd, before Hektor Bizerk took to the stage.

Vibrating, thrusting their hip hop into the crowd, the Glasgow act perfected the end to this vibrant programme of performance, retaining a liveliness that saw most onto a bus to the after party. It's exciting to think what Neu! Reekie! organisers, Kevin Williamson and Michael Pederson have in store for 2016, as the night evidently shows that they don't scope out boundaries; they wish to knock them over.

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**Edinburgh's Christmas –  
#streetoflight finishes on  
Christmas Eve – but still**

# Loads to see!



Underbelly have organised Edinburgh's Christmas for the last three years and they have tried to introduce new things every year. This year the biggest event they have introduced is the Virgin Money Street of Light.

There are 60,000 lights on the structure which has illuminated the High Street during two shows each night but which finishes tomorrow on Christmas Eve. The light display is synchronised to the music, and it has proved to be a spectacular and popular addition to the calendar of events.

We met up with Charlie Wood of Underbelly to find out what is still on in Edinburgh after the successful light installation goes out for the last time. The new addition to Edinburgh's Christmas launched on St Andrew's Day and runs till tomorrow on Christmas Eve.

The specially designed architectural installation of 60,000+ lights stretch along the Royal Mile, from City Chambers to the Tron Kirk. Audiences enter a stunning canopy of light, rising up to 19 metres high and listen to specially commissioned recordings from choirs from across Edinburgh – all synchronised to the lights.

- The music comes from the Edinburgh Festival Chorus, the Edinburgh Gay Men's Chorus, the Edinburgh Police Choir and the Edinburgh Royal Choral Union.
- The Edinburgh Festival Chorus sing extracts from Stella Natalis and Joy To The World (Karl Jenkins) accompanied by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Christopher Bell.
- The Edinburgh Gay Men's Chorus sing Gaudete (Traditional), The Flood (Take That), Suddenly I See (KT

Tunstall), Jolene (Dolly Parton), I Wanna Hold Your Hand (The Beatles) and Deck The Halls (Traditional).

- The Edinburgh Police Choir sing One Day Like This (Elbow), Don't Stop Me Now (Queen), Get Lucky (Daft Punk/Pharrell Williams) and Hallelujah (Leonard Cohen).
- The Edinburgh Royal Choral Union sing extracts from The Messiah (Handel) accompanied by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Michael Bawtree.
- The event runs for 25 days from 30 November to 24 December 2015. There are two shows a day, Monday – Saturday at 6.30pm and 8.15pm, Sunday at 5.30pm and 7.30pm each lasting approximately 20 minutes.
- Tickets are free of charge, and 5,000 tickets are issued for each show, giving a total capacity over the event of 250,000 people.
- Virgin Money Street of Light has been made possible with the support of Virgin Money and is part of Edinburgh's St Andrew's Day celebrations with support from Scotland's Winter Festivals. The Virgin Money Street of Light is supported by the Royal Mile Business Association.

Last year the Christmas and New Year events created an economic impact of £241.1 million for the city. Just under 1 million visitors came to Edinburgh during the six weeks specifically to enjoy the Christmas and Hogmanay events.

Elsewhere in the city there are still many Edinburgh's Christmas events to enjoy till 4 January. This includes Circa's Beyond at the Spiegeltent in St Andrew Square. Acclaimed international circus company Circa are making their Edinburgh's Christmas debut, having wowed at Edinburgh's Fringe with Wunderkammer, Close Up and Beyond.

"Get up close and personal in our magical 1920s Spiegeltent with extraordinary circus performers and enter a beautiful and bewitching world. This intimate, red-curtained realm draws us into a cabaret, a zoo, an asylum... and a stage."

The full Edinburgh's Christmas programme is [here](#).



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# Five things you need to know today Edinburgh



**Forth Road Bridge reopens to cars today**

**Public banned from Calton Hill**

**Flybe looking forward to Christmas**

**Festival Theatre in 2016**

**Church provides Christmas hampers**



The Forth Road Bridge will be open to vehicles except HGVs from this morning.

Operating company Amey confirmed that temporary repairs had been completed. Transport Minister Derek Mackay praised the team involved in the repair work who have worked around the clock to get the bridge reopened.

The main points from the update on Forth Road Bridge repairs are as follows:

- Bridge to reopen to all vehicles bar HGVs and abnormal loads from 6am tomorrow (Weds)
- Installation of steel splint to repair the cracked member is complete
- Detailed load testing of the bridge is complete

- HGVs account for 32 per cent of the weight the bridge normally carries despite making up approx 9 per cent of overall traffic
- Splints continue to be installed at other seven truss end links as a precautionary measure – this work can be safely completed with the bridge open
- Full inspection of FRB is 90% complete with no material defects detected – remaining inspection will continue until early January and can be safely completed with the bridge open

Work has been completed to repair the cracked member through the installation of a steel splint, as planned. As previously announced, this splint repair was always intended to be interim in order to allow the bridge to be safely re-open to traffic pending a permanent repair being carried out. Since completion of the interim repair, the member in question has been thoroughly load tested, monitored, and results gathered through the use of strain gauges. These sophisticated devices have been installed for the first time on the bridge and provide live and accurate data on strains, stresses and rotations within this area of the bridge.

The results from this monitoring show the bridge can now be safely reopened to all traffic, except HGVs and abnormal loads. This means that the bridge will be open to over 90 per cent of the traffic that uses it. Independent engineering experts have analysed the findings and agree with Amey's assessment that loading the bridge with HGVs could result in stress to the truss end link. They agree the best way to mitigate against this risk is to exclude HGVs from using the bridge until the permanent repair is in place. This will take around six weeks to complete and, subject to favourable weather conditions and no further defects being identified, the bridge should reopen to HGVs in mid-February. Ministers and officials will now discuss with hauliers the operational support that can be offered to them during the period when they cannot access the bridge.



Transport Minister Derek Mackay said:

“I am pleased that we are now able to reopen the bridge to 90 per cent of traffic, well ahead of schedule. Following rigorous testing and inspection of the temporary repair, experts have recommended the bridge is now ready to open to all traffic except HGVs. With the temporary solution now in place, the remaining work to install the long term repair can safely proceed without the need for a full closure. The repairs will be carried out with overnight lane restrictions on the bridge.

“For the complex and detailed interim repair to have been completed in this timeframe is a tribute to the highly skilled and dedicated staff who have worked 24/7 since December 3rd. Since the closure was put in place, weather conditions have been mainly favourable and the team have been able to complete the repair work in good time.

“This has been an unprecedented challenge. We can’t lose sight of the fact that many people have been inconvenienced by the closure. While that is deeply regrettable, I would like to thank the transport operators who pulled out all of the stops to put on extra services. In fact, I am pleased to announce that ScotRail have decided to continue the additional 05:52 Fife train given the popularity of the service, for as long as demand is evident.

“We have said all along our focus was on reopening the bridge as soon as possible and so today’s news is very welcome. However we understand that there will be considerable disappointment that the bridge will require to remain closed to HGVs for a few more weeks. While HGVs account for 9 per cent of overall traffic on the bridge, they represent 32 per cent of the weight the bridge carries. We therefore have no choice but to accept the recommendation of the engineers.

However, we will now work with hauliers to discuss what operational support will be available to them during the period when they cannot access the bridge. Engineers predict that following the permanent repair at the failed north east tower location, and subject to favourable weather and no further defects being identified, the bridge should reopen to HGVs by mid-February.

“In addition to the interim repair on the cracked member, splints are being installed on the other seven members as a precaution. Of these, work is already complete at four and the remaining three will be completed, subject to weather, by the end of December. There is no reason for the bridge to remain closed while this work is completed. The other seven members have also been inspected and load tested and no issues have been discovered. However strain gauges will also be attached to these members to gather accurate data on their performance.

“Since closure of the bridge was put in place it has also undergone a thorough health check. A painstaking inspection has been carried out involving over 65 rope access inspectors and drone footage to identify any other defects. The inspection is 90 per cent complete and no material defects have been identified. It will be concluded by early January and there is no reason to keep the bridge closed while this is completed.”



There will be no public access to Calton Hill on 31 December as part of arrangements for [Edinburgh's Hogmanay](#) 2015/16.

The decision has been taken by The City of Edinburgh Council with the support of Police Scotland and Unique Events, who produce Edinburgh's world-famous Hogmanay celebrations on behalf of the Council.



In recent years, an increasing number of spectators have chosen to visit Calton Hill throughout the evening of 31 December, and in particular to watch the Midnight Fireworks. However the hill is unlit and uneven under foot and the closure will ensure members of the public are kept safe on the night.

In addition, Calton Hill is used as a firing site for the secondary midnight fireworks display. Edinburgh's Hogmanay Fireworks are best seen from a distance and event organisers recommend that people select a suitable vantage point.

Councillor Richard Lewis, Festivals and Events Champion for the City of Edinburgh Council, said: "Edinburgh is famed for its midnight-moment fireworks and we are lucky to have so many fantastic vantage points from which to enjoy them.

"The draw of spectators to Calton Hill is understandable and the view undeniable – which is why the Torchlight Procession to herald the start of the three-day Edinburgh's Hogmanay festival entices 10,000 torch bearers and 20,000 visitors on 30 December. Edinburgh's Hogmanay invests in stewarding and additional lighting to help people stay safe during the Torchlight Procession and this year's display will be just as dazzling.

"New Year's Eve is the busiest night of the year in our city centre. The safety of the public is our key priority and as Calton Hill is used as a fireworks zone, it will be closed during the Hogmanay celebrations. The gates will shut at around 7pm on Hogmanay through to 1am on 1 January.

"There are plenty of other vantage points in the city to view the fireworks from Inverleith Park to the Meadows but the best place to soak up the New Year atmosphere and to view the display remains the official Edinburgh's Hogmanay Street Party. Tickets are disappearing quickly so people planning to attend should book fast."

The charitable [Torchlight Procession](#) is led by the Lord Provost and follows torch carriers as they illuminate the city through the city centre to a spectacular fireworks finale on Calton Hill on Wednesday 30 December. Vouchers for Torches are available to purchase in advance priced at £12 including booking fee from [Edinburgh's Hogmanay](#).



Given the extensive and widely publicised planned rail shutdowns that will not only severely impact travel across the UK but also add to the usual chaos on gridlocked roads over the upcoming holiday period, Flybe, Europe's largest regional airline is gearing up for a particularly busy time as people seek alternative ways to quickly and conveniently travel to their destination.

December 25<sup>th</sup> will also mark another important milestone for the airline when it operates for the first time on Christmas Day, with 12 flights in total from Birmingham and Manchester to Amsterdam and Paris Charles de Gaulle to meet public demand for these two popular European routes.

Regional customers instead are seeking alternative options of travelling via Flybe's London City services from Aberdeen, Belfast City, Edinburgh and Exeter or direct into London Gatwick from Cornwall Airport Newquay to ensure making their longer haul connections.

Book your FlyBe flights [here](#).



At the Festival Theatre in 2016, the season's dance programme starts on 22 January with the welcome return of **balletLORENT** and their dark, seductive take on the story of **Snow White**. **Phoenix Dance Theatre** take to the biggest stage

in Scotland on 5 March; **Northern Ballet** are here with their dance adaptation of Orwell's **1984**; the incredible **Netherlands Dans Theater 2** are back in April, the impressive **BalletBoyz** are back in May, and **Scottish Ballet** are set to thrill with David Dawson's production of ***Swan Lake***.

More details here on the [website](#).



A local church is preparing Christmas hampers for dozens of people in need.

Members of Central Church in Tollcross, Edinburgh, have been busy assembling food and gifts for the families it helps through the CAP Debt Centre, run in partnership with UK charity Christians Against Poverty.

"It has been a bit of a military operation these the past few days," said CAP Centre Manager, Mairi Giles.

"We've had people shopping, gift wrapping and packing 50 boxes. People of all ages have been involved the production line which has been great fun and we'll be working on the distribution to make sure everyone on our list gets some treats delivered.

"We know it's hard on a strict budget especially this time of year but we hope this helps people feel something of the real Christmas – which is a message of love for all of us."

In the past year, the debt centre has helped 34 new families all of whom were struggling to pay their creditors.

CAP Centre Manager Mairi Giles said: "Unless you've been there yourself, or you've known someone close in crisis debt, it's hard to describe just how difficult it can be.


“Debt rarely comes along by itself. It’s often accompanied with a loss of job, health problems, relationship breakdown along with no heating or no food, depression or even suicidal feelings.

“It can be a long road to recovery but our hope is these hampers will help our clients to feel encouraged along their journey to debt freedom.”

To donate to CAP’s hamper appeal see [capuk.org/Christmas](http://capuk.org/Christmas)

To get help with problem debt, contact CAP on 0800 328 006 or via [capuk.org](http://capuk.org)



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## Hibernian Development Squad 2-1 Falkirk



Hibernian’s Development Squad beat Falkirk 2-1 win at Ainslie Park last night thanks extending the team’s unbeaten run in the SPFL Development League to four games.

Oli Shaw opened the scoring in the 16th minute but Tony Gallacher equalised just before the break. Jack Breen grabbed

a late winner in the 89th minute.

Afterwards Hibernian's U20 Development Coach, Joe McBride told the club website: "I thought in the first half an hour, we were terrific, really on the front foot, playing at high intensity, we were aggressive, created chances – we just didn't take as many of them as we would have liked".

"When we lost the goal, I think we fell out of it a bit, but we stuck at it, and it was a great goal to win the game.

"I thought all the boys did well at different points tonight, but Adam Watson in particular, was terrific in my opinion.

"The performance of the team at St Mirren 4 or 5 weeks ago, was good despite the defeat and since then we've got better and better with each game."

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## Top tips for the perfect Christmas Dinner from Stuart at Dine



**Stuart Muir and Paul Brennan recently opened their brand new city centre venue Dine.**

Stuart is former executive chef of Forth Floor Restaurant, Bar & Brasserie at Harvey Nichols Edinburgh so he knows a thing or two about food. Anxious to help during the next day or two when you undertake the dinner of the year, he has prepared a few helpful hints to assist:



## Top Tips for the Perfect Christmas Dinner

- If you want to add an unusual twist to a traditional Christmas meal, a great place to start is to surprise with the sides. Brussel sprouts are completely taken for granted and can be made more interesting with just a little love and imagination. Try gently roasting Brussels sprouts in sage and onion butter, sprinkled with garlic crisps for an extra kick and serve with your show-stopping turkey.
- For dessert, keep it mouth-wateringly simple with Pain perdu with cinnamon and turn Christmas pudding on its head with Christmas pudding ice cream served with whisky prunes.
- A Stromboli is a quick and easy way to make the most out of your leftovers, just pull the turkey meat, mix with Cajun spice and tuck in! Leftover sprouts also make the perfect bubble and squeak that just gets better and better.
- Home-made spiced cranberry chutney is a nice festive touch to the dinner table and equally makes a thoughtful and delicious gift. Enjoy it with a good goat's cheese.
- Roast partridge is my personal favourite game to cook with during the festive season, and a part of our Festive menu at Dine. A tasty alternative to Christmas turkey, we recommend serving with home-made cranberry chutney, creamed sprouts, glazed carrots, baby leeks and, of course, goose fat roasted potatoes.

Dine presents a new benchmark in the city, introducing a fresh, relaxed brasserie-style dining and drinking venue, featuring a premier champagne and cocktail lounge in the heart of Edinburgh.

Bookings for Dine can be made by T [0131 218 1818](tel:01312181818), E [restaurant@dine.scot](mailto:restaurant@dine.scot) or online at [www.dine.scot/book-now](http://www.dine.scot/book-now).

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## Wester Hailes underpass reinstated after nearly 20 years



Today marked the end of a long campaign led by Wester Hailes Community Council when the newly reinstated underpass linking the Healthy Living Centre to the shopping centre was reopened. The passage is to be called Harvesters Link.

The walkway was closed in 1996 and even when the new Healthy Living Centre was opened in 2013 it became clear that the underpass would have to be reinstated. But the problem was who would pay for it?

The members of the community council have been tireless in their campaign to ensure a safe and step free link was reopened for all using the new Healthy Living Centre. The arched walkway lies underneath the railway just outside the Wester Hailes rail station, but as local MSP Gordon Macdonald explained safety was essential. He said: "The Community Council have been working hard as a team to produce an outcome that will have benefit for the whole community."

"They were insistent that this underpass would not create the same problems as others in the area such as the one on the Calder Road.

"This underpass has open sightlines which is much safer and it connects key areas such as the Healthy Living Centre and the shops."

Vice Chair of the Wester Hailes Community Council Anne Denhom performed the ceremony before a small crowd of those who have been involved throughout the campaign. The group then sought refuge from the rain the Healthy Living Centre where they enjoyed soup from the vegetables grown in the local Edible Estates projects.

[The Edinburgh Reporter News](#) from [Phyllis Stephen](#) on [Vimeo](#).







Sadly the Chair of Wester Hailes Community Council John Aitchison was unable to be at the ceremony because of ill health, but the group sent him a very personal message!



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# Counting the real cost of Christmas

✖ While we always consider the cost of Christmas in bare financial terms, and as an overall figure, its impact reaches far beyond the bottom line.

This has been explored in detail recently by a fascinating [Xmas unwrapped](#) feature on the bingosites.net website, which has delved beyond festive household spending figures to count the true cost of Christmas. The results of this insight are fascinating and also informative and consumers look to reduce the burdens associated with Christmas.

## The True Cost of Christmas in the UK

With this in mind, (and without being too bah humbug!) here is a brief insight into the true cost of Christmas and the immense challenges facing citizens during the hectic festive period: –

### The cost of Preparing for Christmas in Advance

In fundamental terms, [the average British household spends £868](#) during the festive period. In addition to this, over 59% of people make significant financial adjustments in order to comfortably afford Christmas, with men in particular likely to reduce outgoings and make sacrifices in order to create the necessary disposable income. This trend is apparently more prominent in regions such as Belfast and Birmingham in the UK, while it can create a more significant financial burden

heading into the New Year.

This type of sacrifice is a serious consideration for households, especially when it impacts on the payment of bills and debts.

### **The Loss of Sleep**

In addition to this, a further 45% of citizens also reported to losing sleep in the build-up to Christmas. Interestingly, individuals aged between 18 and 24 cited a lack of sleep as the most common symptom of the busy Christmas period, as they suffer with anxiety and the challenges posed by funding the necessary festivities. 30% of older consumers also confirmed that the spectre of Christmas and its unique challenges made them feel physically sick with worry.

### **The Development of Stress and Anxiety**

There is a fine line between stress and positive energy, and while the unique nature of the festive period excites the majority of consumers it also creates huge stress for others. Worryingly, 20% of consumers claimed that the expectations and pressures associated with the three-day Christmas holiday generated huge levels of stress, primarily as they looked to source suitable gifts within a given budget and time frame.

At this point, it is important to remember the core values of the season and attempt to relax wherever possible prior to Christmas.

Happy Christmas to you all!

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# Scotland on the way to meeting 50% renewables target



The Scottish Government announced today that the 2015 target of producing half of our electricity from renewables has almost been met a year ahead of schedule.

Renewables are now the single largest contributor to electricity generation in Scotland at a record 38 per cent of total output – higher than both nuclear at 33 per cent and fossil fuels 28 per cent for the first time, statistics published today have revealed.

Renewable sources delivered 49.7% of gross electricity consumption in 2014 – up from 44.4% in 2013.

Renewable generation in 2014 was up 11.9 per cent on 2013 (which was a previous record year for renewables) and accounted for a record 38 per cent of total Scottish generation. Scotland generated 49,929 GWh of electricity in 2014 with renewable electricity generation delivering 18,962 GWh.

Scottish renewable generation made up approximately 29 per cent of the total UK renewable output in 2014. Scotland continued to be a net exporter of electricity, exporting 23.7 per cent of generation in 2014.

Welcoming the figures, Energy Minister Fergus Ewing said:

“The historic agreement reached at the global climate change summit in Paris earlier this month sends a signal of certainty about the global economy’s low carbon future, in the same way as Scotland did through our world-leading climate legislation in 2009.

“Today’s figures show that Scotland’s renewables sector is stronger than ever and our early adoption of clean, green energy technology and infrastructure was the right thing to do. It is fantastic news that renewables are now Scotland’s biggest electricity generator, and that nearly half of gross electricity consumption comes from renewables.

“Despite damaging policy changes from the UK Government, we will continue to harness – and bolster – Scotland’s renewables potential, both in generation and infrastructure. At the end of Q3 2015, there was 7,504 MW of installed renewables electricity capacity in Scotland, an increase of 4.6% over the year.

“Devolved administrations, like the Scottish Government, will be strong drivers of a progressive climate agenda. Today’s figures show that a low carbon economy is not just a practical way forward, but that green energy plays a crucial role in the security of Scotland’s energy supply. ”

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# Five things you need to know today Edinburgh



**Planning application for site on King’s Stables Road**

**Edinburgh on Film**

**Botanics at Christmas**

**University staff donate food to homeless**

**Sign up for an evening class**

A city centre site, which has lain vacant for a number of years, is set for major regeneration, creating a landmark development and breathing new life into a neglected part of the Grassmarket.

[Read more here.](#)



We try to do our bit to preserve a little of our city's history by filming as much as we can around Edinburgh and putting our interviews and other films on [Vimeo](#) and [YouTube](#) but if you have not yet discovered the British Film Institute Player then you are in for a treat.

They have a great film about Edinburgh in 1933 [here](#) which you can watch for free along with many others. They also have other films which you can pay to view. Something to bookmark for the holidays ahead!



Take note if you are planning a festive walk. The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is closed on Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

## **Garden & Gateway opening hours :**

November to January: 10am – 4pm

February and October: 10am – 5pm

March to September: 10am – 6pm



(l-r) David and Jennifer Gosling, volunteers at the Salvation Army Church and Jennie

Anthony, allocations administrator for the University of Edinburgh

Staff from the University of Edinburgh have been getting into the Christmas spirit by donating almost 200 food items to homeless people and others across Edinburgh.

Jennie Anthony, Allocations Administrator at the University of Edinburgh's Accommodation, Catering and Events service, appealed to colleagues to donate food as part of this year's Christmas Food Hamper Appeal. The annual appeal, organised by the Salvation Army charity, aims to provide the vulnerable and homeless across the UK with food over the Christmas period.

Mrs Anthony put a call out colleagues at the beginning of December for packaged, non-perishable food items such as pasta, chocolate, tinned soup and sweets for the homeless community and other vulnerable groups in Edinburgh.

After a steady stream of donations from staff across the service, she gave the food items to husband and wife, David and Jennifer Gosling, church leaders at the Edinburgh City Salvation Church.

Mrs Anthony said: "Christmas is a time for sharing and helping those most in need, and that's why we were delighted to be able to give this donation of food to the Salvation Army to provide essential help to those who really need it in December.

"Most of the food items handed in we take for granted every day, but may mean the world to someone who doesn't have regular meals to look forward to. All of the staff at the University of Edinburgh's Accommodation, Catering and Events services really rallied around this appeal and we hope that it helps the Edinburgh City Salvation Church to spread some happiness this Christmas."



Yes we know they are called Adult Education Classes now and not evening classes, but they do mainly take place in the evening and they are opportunities for self-improvement and socialising.

Here is the brochure:



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## Three new transport bosses in Edinburgh



Transport for Edinburgh have recruited a new Chief Executive, Lothian Buses have a Managing Director and Edinburgh Trams have appointed a General Manager following the departure of Tom Norris.

George Lowder MBE has been appointed Chief Executive of Transport for Edinburgh, Richard Hall has secured the Managing Director role at Lothian Buses and Lea Harrison will be General Manager at Edinburgh Trams.

All three appointees will be expected to build on the performance of the existing award-winning and highly rated services, whilst also contributing to the Capital's ambition to have one of the greenest, healthiest and most accessible transport systems in northern Europe by 2030.

**Lesley Hinds, Chair of Transport for Edinburgh and Transport Convenor for the City of Edinburgh Council, said:** "We expected

that these positions would attract high calibre candidates and we weren't disappointed. Transport for Edinburgh and the city it serves are major attractions for some of the best in the UK transport profession and I'm delighted that we have secured such exceptional interest.

"Our new senior team will be pivotal in supporting the transport infrastructure we need but also the wider economy. I wish George, Richard and Lea all the very best in their new roles and I look forward to working with them as a team as we continue to push Edinburgh's integrated transport agenda."

**Jim McFarlane, Chair of Lothian Buses and Transport for Edinburgh Board Member, said:** "Hundreds of thousands of residents, workers and visitors rely on our buses every day and we are proud to provide them with one of the best city operations in the UK. With Edinburgh growing in popularity as a place to live, work and visit, our services are crucial to the smooth running of the city.

"We also have ambitious plans to further improve the quality of our fleet, making our services cleaner and greener. So, we are delighted to be able to appoint Richard, who has vast experience and excellent leadership credentials, to lead the whole Lothian Buses team to further success."

**Charles Monheim, Chair of Edinburgh Trams and Transport for Edinburgh Board Member, said:** "Lea comes to Edinburgh Trams with a wealth of operational experience in the industry that stretches right back to his days as a tram driver. His work with the Nottingham tram stands him in good stead to come to Edinburgh to build on foundations laid over the last 18 months of service.

"The trams have become an established and valued part of city life and will remain a crucial part of the long-term transport vision for the city. Working with sister company Lothian Buses as part of Transport for Edinburgh, Lea will lead and inspire

our team to even more success.”

Each of the positions will report to the Chair of their respective board, with the Managing Director of Lothian Buses and the General Manager of Edinburgh Trams also having ‘dotted line’ accountability to the Chief Executive of Transport for Edinburgh. The Managing Director of Lothian Buses and the General Manager of Edinburgh Trams will sit on the respective boards and the Chief Executive of TfE will attend all three boards.

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## **Edinburgh’s Christmas revels at charity fundraising**



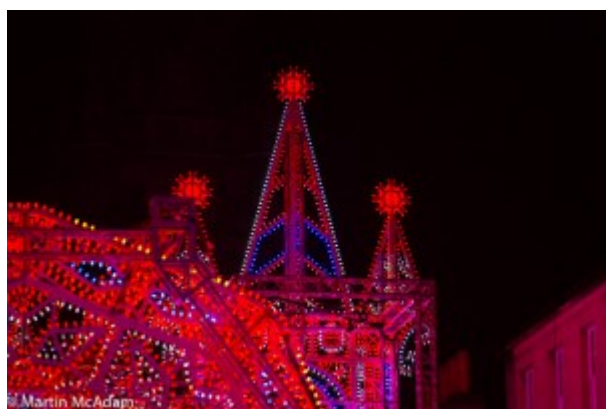
Big-hearted Christmas revellers at Edinburgh’s Christmas are helping boost charities – with thousands of pounds already raised – and now have the chance to do more, just by having a wonderful time at Edinburgh’s Christmas.

Organisers of Edinburgh’s Christmas, Underbelly, confirmed that more than £8,800 has already been raised for Cancer Research UK Kids & Teens from online donations via Edinburgh’s Christmas website and bucket collections at Light Night. And visitors to the Virgin Money Street of Light have donated a further £2,500 to Waverley Care.

The monies raised for Cancer Research UK Kids & Teens will be used for research into cancers affecting children, teens and young adults, ultimately seeking cures and kinder treatments for young people facing cancer.

Underbelly have announced their plans for the 12 Days of Christmas Fundraising Campaign to ensure that Edinburgh's Christmas continues to play its part in spreading goodwill:

- □ As part of the 12 Days of Christmas Fundraising Campaign, Edinburgh's Christmas will make 500 tickets available per day at half-price for the event's most popular attractions and will then donate the value of those tickets to Cancer Research UK Kids & Teens. The attractions and shows for which tickets will be available are the Big Wheel, the Star Flyer, both ice rinks and the critically acclaimed shows Circa's Beyond and Stick Man. The scheme runs from December 23 to January 4 (other than Christmas Day when the sites are closed).
- □ From December 23 to January 4, Cancer Research UK Kids & Teens Donation Stations will be located at the Edinburgh's Christmas box offices in East Princes Street Gardens and St Andrew Square, where visitors can leave unwanted gifts or presents of their own. The presents will then be sent to a Cancer Research shop, generating more needed income for the charity. Edinburgh's Christmas will give a free hot chocolate voucher for every present donated.







Tickets will be available immediately at [edinburghschristmas.com](http://edinburghschristmas.com), using the voucher code #12daysedxmas. They can only be booked online and are subject to availability. The EH postcode discount cannot be applied to this offer.

Oliver Startin-Field, from Cancer Research UK Kids & Teens said: “Our ambition is to double the amount we spend on childhood cancer research over the next 5 to 10 years, to accelerate progress and find new cures and kinder treatments. The money raised by taking part in Edinburgh’s 12 Days of Christmas campaign is a brilliant way to be a part of making this possible.”

Charlie Wood, director of Underbelly, producer of Edinburgh’s Christmas added: “We are delighted to be supporting the fantastic work of Cancer Research UK in developing new and kinder treatments for young cancer sufferers. Edinburgh’s Christmas is rated as one of the top 10 places to enjoy the festive season in the world and we know that our customers are big-hearted, and we’re expecting a big take up of these tickets for our most popular attractions and shows.”

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# Almond councillor resigns from Liberal Democrat Group

✖ Alastair Shields was elected to the City of Edinburgh Council in 2012 as a member of the Liberal Democrat Group representing the Almond Ward. Following his deselection as candidate for the 2017 council elections at the end of last week, he has decided to resign from the group and the party, meaning that he will sit as an Independent councillor for the remainder of the council term.

Councillor Shields has also confirmed he will stand as an Independent candidate in the 2017 elections against the newly selected Liberal Democrat candidate, Kevin Lang. Lang stood in the Westminster election in 2009 and in the Holyrood election in the Edinburgh North and Leith constituency.

Shields will join former SNP councillor Councillor Jim Orr to sit at the far end of the City Chambers where they will both sit as individuals, leaving the remaining two Liberal Democrats, Paul Edie and Robert Aldridge to carry the LibDem colours. In the last administration the Liberal Democrats formed a coalition with the SNP, but their numbers dwindled to 3 following the derailment of the tram project. The Council Leader, Jenny Dawe and Transport Convener Gordon Mackenzie were among the casualties.

Councillor Shields has shared with us the text of his resignation statement:

*"I accept the result last night but as far as I'm concerned I presented a strong record of action and a set of realistic objectives to the Almond Liberal Democrat membership and the majority chose to go for someone else.*

*"Moving forward, I have officially resigned from the Liberal Democrat Council Group on the City of Edinburgh Council, and*

also call time on my entire Party membership. I spent a long time working as I believed to be the type of Councillor the Liberal Democrats needed and proclaim about at party conferences and on peoples doorsteps: hard working, standing up for community empowerment, fighting local causes for the purpose of fairness and justice...

"De-selection has left me confused about what the Liberal Democrats want so I'll just leave them to it.

"For the minority that voted for me: thanks, it's a shame we didn't pull though... But as least I'm still your Councillor. And on that comment, while no longer a Liberal Democrat Councillor, time cannot rest on this recent event and there are many out there I must continue to work hard for, irrespective of this outcome.

My duty from here exists to carry on representing the ward as an Independent member. In addition, with my hunger for doing the best for the people of Almond, I now announce that I will be putting myself forward as an Independent candidate in the 2017 local elections.

I fully relish that challenge with all the hard work I have put in since being elected and the vast knowledge I hold over what the ward needs, what the residents want, and what local community groups and organisations hold dear to their interests. A lot is happening right now, and I'm here to continue taking it on.

Can I finally make clear that my decision has no reflection upon my relationship with former Group colleagues Councillors Paul Edie and Robert Aldridge, both of whom I am very grateful for their support over the last few years.



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# NHS advice on food safety

NHS 24 is reminding people to be vigilant about food safety this Christmas.

The call comes as part of NHS Scotland's Be #Healthwise This Winter campaign which aims to help people protect their friends and family from illness over the festive and winter period.



Professor George Crooks is NHS 24's Medical Director: "No one likes to feel unwell, especially at Christmas, so we encourage people to not only be prepared for any minor ailments but also to make sure that people know how to avoid easily preventable health issues.

"For example, that could be as simple keeping raw and cooked meats apart to the more simple problem of over indulgence leading to stomach pains or hangovers. Cooking food properly is just one part of the equation, making sure a frozen turkey or other meat is defrosted safely is just as vital. Defrost too quickly and you can give bacteria a great breeding ground. Make sure you use a separate chopping board when preparing raw meat and wash it thoroughly afterwards. Likewise, we shouldn't wash poultry as it can do more harm than good, splashing bacteria around your kitchen. But you should wash your hands – especially after handling raw food



"For those concerned about drinking over the holidays, the best way to treat a hangover is to avoid getting one! Alcohol causes the body to dehydrate and can have an impact on overall

energy levels. It makes it easier for regular drinkers to catch colds, plus alcohol is quite calorific so it can be a significant contributor to weight gain.

“If you are out for a long night or party, try to alternate alcoholic drinks with water or fruit juice and have something to eat before you go out. If you do find yourself suffering the morning after the night before, isotonic drinks to replace lost sugars and minerals combined with rest and paracetamol, easier on the stomach than aspirin or ibuprofen, is the best cure.”



General advice and information on how to stay healthy this winter can be found at [www.nhsinform.co.uk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk) along with a handy A-Z of illnesses. You can also like our page on Facebook (search NHS 24) and follow us on Twitter @NHS24

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## Development plans for empty site at King's Stables Road



Plans have been unveiled for a mixed use development which includes student flats at a site on King's Stables Road which has been lying empty for a number of years.

The joint development by Peveril Securities and Campus Development Management has been made possible by the two companies entering into an option agreement with the City of Edinburgh Council

The proposed major development will include a hotel; studios, one and two bedroom flats (including 25 per cent affordable housing); student accommodation, a new public square with café to the foot of King's Bridge and an arts facility.

The development also includes the current nightclub site and includes improved and enhanced public realm, including new routes and courtyards throughout, in-line with the character of the Old Town.





The current mix of buildings on the site – formerly Council offices, storage premises and workshops – have lain vacant since 2009 and were put on the market last year by the Council, who deemed them surplus to requirements.

The developers believe that the scheme, with its arts facility, will complement the Council's wider aspirations for a new cultural quarter on the site of Argyle House and the linking of Castle Terrace with the Grassmarket and West Port.

King's Stables Road has been identified by the Council as one of 12 "priority" development sites seen as crucial to the

Capital's economic future.

Peveril Securities is already active in the capital, working with Standard Life on a development in St Andrew Square to deliver office, retail and residential. This is due to be completed in June 2016.

Extensive community consultation has been undertaken on proposals for the King's Stables Road site, including two rounds of exhibitions, ensuring the local community were well aware of and have played a part in shaping the proposals.

Knight Frank has been acting as advisers on the purchase of the site.

Commenting on the proposal, Charles Vyvyan from Campus Development Management, said:

"This corner of the Grassmarket has lain neglected for a number of years, and these exciting proposals will breathe much-needed life into this part of the Old Town, providing a hotel, student accommodation, flats and facilities to accommodate and promote the arts.

"It was also pleasing to be able to incorporate the current Nightclub site into our proposals, a fact welcomed by the community, which has allowed us to improve public realm.

"We were highly sensitive to the fact that the site is within the UNESCO World Heritage site boundary, and as we worked our way through the planning process engaged closely with the local community, updating them on our proposals and listening to their feedback.

"We also want to ensure that the local; community and stakeholders have plenty of further opportunity to comment on the proposals, and have invited the Council to extend the period for commenting on the planning application until later in January, to take account of the Christmas and New Year

holiday period.”

All the plans can be viewed [here](#).

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# Council approve development of 199 homes at Donaldson's College



Planning permission was approved by The City of Edinburgh Council for the redevelopment of the Category A Listed Donaldson's College last week.

Working in partnership, City & Country will restore and convert the majestic Playfair building, whilst CALA Evans will create a range of contemporary homes in the surrounding grounds.

The permission allows for 115 new properties sited within the Playfair building, ranging from one to three bedrooms and 84 newly built two and three bedroom homes, designed in a crescent shape to the rear of the Playfair building. The sweeping South Lawn that faces Wester Coates will be retained as an open, landscaped area.

As part of the proposals there will be 402 cycle parking spaces for residents, whilst car parking for both the Playfair building and the new build crescent will be sited underground,

totalling 364 allocated residents spaces and a further 26 for visitors.



Helen Moore, Managing Director of City & Country, commented: “We are extremely pleased that The City of Edinburgh Council has approved our plans for this truly majestic building.

“City & Country has a long and distinguished history working with incredibly inspiring and challenging architectural assets and the Playfair building is no different, sitting amongst some of the very finest buildings in the UK.

“The apartments will be carefully woven into the historic fabric of the building to provide genuinely unique places for people to live. Sited within the Edinburgh World Heritage Site, we are pleased that our plans demonstrate the ambitions we have to breathe new life into this icon of Scottish architecture and we cannot wait to get started.”

Landscape proposals for the site have also been submitted which seek to enhance the mature landscaping at the site’s perimeter. The new build crescent will have private garden areas to the rear, whilst the Playfair building’s internal courtyard will serve as a private open space for residents with the remainder of the open spaces communal.



The proposed alterations to the Playfair building are mostly internal and include the conversion of currently redundant basement and attic spaces. External alterations to the building are located on the inner courtyard side including new dormers and roof terraces, a change of windows to doors and the landscape proposals for the internal courtyard.

David McGrath, Managing Director of CALA Homes (East) said: “We’re absolutely delighted that city planners have approved

our proposals and are now very much looking forward to delivering top quality homes at very special location.

“Donaldson’s is a magnificent site and therefore its restoration is quite rightly a very high-profile project and one which we are proud to have been driving forward for a number of years.

“Throughout the community and council planning consultation process it has been very reassuring to see how committed everyone has been to seeing this site restored.

“We held a series of public consultations about the updated proposals, which were first approved in 2007, and listened carefully to extensive feedback. The local community all stated how important it is to see this building secured for future generations and we can now looking forward to making this a reality.”

Donaldson’s College boasts a rich history. Formerly Donaldson’s Hospital, the building was constructed between 1842 and 1851 after its benefactor, James Donaldson, bequeathed all of his property to build and found a hospital for children after his death. The striking design is the master work of renowned visionary architect William Henry Playfair, whose other famous work includes the National Monument and the National Gallery of Scotland.

During construction of the palatial building, it is said that Queen Victoria expressed her jealousy that the landmark building outclassed some of her own palaces. The building’s first use was a hospital for orphans, before turning into a specialist school for deaf children. The school relocated to Linlithgow in 2008.

The site enjoys a prime location in the prestigious Wester Coates area of Edinburgh and is close to all the facilities and amenities of the city centre. Haymarket Railway Station is short walk away and provides regular services throughout



Scotland and south to London, whilst Edinburgh International Airport is approximately 13 miles away, offering a wide range of domestic and international flights.

The City Bypass and central Scotland motorway network are also within striking distance and the streets surrounding the development are characterised by striking Victorian and Edwardian villas.

For more information visit: [www.cityandcountry.co.uk](http://www.cityandcountry.co.uk) or [www.cala.co.uk](http://www.cala.co.uk).

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## New Town Therapy – go on and pamper yourself

*Enjoy a little discount on TLC at New Town Therapy on us!*

New Town Therapy is a hidden gem in Edinburgh's city centre – nestled in the basement of a Dundas Street tenement the salon's frontage is unassuming and minimal. Indeed, you would be forgiven if, like me, you missed it the first time.



For the spa-savvy among us, NTT doesn't have the superficial 'luxury' we might expect from a centre-of-town Spa – there's no plush velvet or fluffy carpets or glasses of bubbles on arrival. No breathy-voiced receptionist in a lab coat, nor the signatory chiming music that usually hails ones entry into the spa. But don't be put off by the lack of glitzy aesthetic when you walk through the doors: instead, note the considerate staff; greeting you with a welcoming smile and a genuine interest in your well-being. There is something much more

substantial – and valuable – on offer here.

Intrigued? Ever the willing guinea-pig I went for a full-on pamper day to find out what makes NTT stand out from the crowd.



Within minutes of my arrival I was sat on a comfortable couch, a cup of herbal tea in hand, and my therapist, Barbara, in front of me; pen and client information form at the ready! I was asked about any existing health concerns, medications and my reasons for being there. Most importantly – I was asked what I wanted to achieve from my treatments. All too often a spa treatment is a quick pick-me-up with not too much thought or consideration for the individual going on. Barbara instantly made it clear that it was her job to make sure the treatments were going to benefit me in a substantial and measurable way that were specific to me. This was a proper therapist-client consultation, make no mistake.

From my personal preferences to my genetic code – Barbara took a genuine and passionate interest in my health. It got me thinking about it too: what about that twinge down my leg that's been bothering me? And those knotted shoulders? And that rough bit of skin on my cheek? Would Barbara know how to tackle it all?

We kicked off with a manicure as Barbara was keen to test out her new Vinylux polishes. I also sampled some of her own home-made body butter which was massaged into my hands and arms (bliss) leaving them soft and hydrated. Miracle no.1.

I opted for a clear pink with a hint of sparkle at Barbara's suggestion, which she skilfully applied. Then it was straight into the footbath. Hot bubbling water with magnesium salts eased the sore spots and softened up the skin a treat before another go at Vinylux; this time a deep, sassy red. Et Voila! An absolutely flawless application (and the best I've had

yet). As we were there for the long-haul I came prepared: a fifteen minute break to put my feet up with a magazine and a top-up of herbal tea allowed time for the polish to set whilst I chomped on some lunch (Costa's gluten free festive Wrap – not bad!) I also caught up with NTT's owner, Merelle Aydim, sports massage therapist and lash extension guru. Merelle filled me in on NTT's ethos – essentially she wanted to set up a business that provided everything under one roof. Here you will find massage, skincare, pilates, yoga and all the usual beauty treatments you would expect, to name but a few. Merelle looks to take on therapists who are madly passionate about what they do – it's no surprise that in its short 8 months it has grown its client base substantially.



After lunch it was on to the fun part (or is that the science part?) as Barbara asked me to stick my head in a strange sci-fi-esque tube complete with little black curtains and a bundle of flashy bulbs. The purpose of this machine (the *Observe 520*) is to look at different levels of your skin which it does by using different wavelengths. The most pronounced photo revealed the UV damage in my skin. Being a very pale redhead with freckles (thanks universe) I expected to see a fair bit of damage but I was still totally shocked. Barbara showed me photos of her own skin and her colleagues beforehand so the comparison was pretty stark. I take good care of my skin – I try to eat right, drink right and protect with an SPF50 in the summer, so seeing my be-speckled, avatar face, has really motivated me to start doing more for my skin. I now have a whole new SPF regime recommended to use vigilantly for summer and winter!

Next up I was taken to the treatment room to get cosy for my facial and massage. Dermaividuals is the skincare range of her choice. She has worked for twenty years in this industry and it has taken her a long time to find a range she really

believes in (she also uses Environ). The products are coined as 'skin-similar' having a 'sheet-like' structure, much like our own skin.

After my facial I could see why Dermaviduals is the choice range. Since my facial I have converted to Dermaviduals after 16 years of faithfully using the same high-end skin-care range. The steps she used were: cleansing with DMS cleansing milk; exfoliating with a mixture of the enzyme peel (papaya extract) and Dermaviduals treatment gel (salicylic acid based) to gently break down the bonds between the dead skin cells on the surface. She then applied a blend of various nanoparticles to suit my dry, sensitive skin, mixed together with a vitamin A based gel. The penetration was enhanced using sonophoresis – gentle sound waves from a metal appliance which create microscopic indentations in the skin's surface – allowing molecules to pass through the surface of the skin. A strange tingling feeling spread over my skin and made my ears buzz – but it was not unpleasant.

Then a thick layer of Vitamin serum mask was applied over the gel blend, which was for additional hydration and nourishment. The treatment concluded with a deeply relaxing facial massage using the DMS massage cream.

It all sounds a bit technical, and I have to admit to having studied a bioscience degree myself a long time ago and having worked in top-end skincare, so I knew that she was hitting the nail on the head. Barbara took a genuine and passionate interest in the science of my skin – and how else would she know which products it really needs? For the skin nerds among us it's a relief to know you are in such capable hands. Barbara writes a [blog](#) all about skin science which is definitely worth a look.

To top off my blissful day I had a body massage with a blend

of essential oils which boost immunity and get the energy going. As I'm asthmatic, some targeted massage along my lung meridian (what's that you say?) was applied. A little bit of reiki was also included – Barbara is trained in these therapies and so she sometimes chooses to include a little with her massages. I found it to be deeply relaxing and I felt very peaceful following the treatment, so I'm glad she did. I'm looking forward to my next visit already.

*[tweet\_box design="default"]The Edinburgh Reporter readers can take advantage of a special discount.*

`[/tweet_box]`

*One hour Dermaviduals Prescriptive facial for £35 (usually £60), valid until 31 January 2015.*

*To book call 0131 557 6741 and quote 'The Edinburgh Reporter'.*

New Town Therapy: <http://www.newtowntherapyedinburgh.com/>

# Witnesses sought after

# serious assault in Ferry Road Drive



Police are appealing for witnesses following a serious assault which happened shortly after 3.30am on Sunday morning in Ferry Road Drive.

A 34-year-old woman exited a car in the area to speak with a friend at which time she became involved in an altercation with a male and female.

The male then pushed and struck the victim to the face and a 40-year-old man then also exited the car to intervene.

At this time the suspect repeatedly punched and kicked the man to the head and body before he and the female left the area.

Officers then responded along with the Scottish Ambulance Service and it was established the male victim had sustained a serious injury to his jaw.

The female victim suffered minor injury to her face.

Anyone who can assist police in tracing the suspect is asked to come forward.

He is described as white, mid-twenties, 5ft 8ins tall with a medium athletic build, light-coloured shaven hair and wearing white trainers and a dark tracksuit with light piping down the arms, legs and across the back.

Detective Constable Iain Wallace from the Violence Reduction Unit at Gayfield Police Station said: "During this attack the male victim suffered a painful injury to his jaw, which will require further treatment and the female victim was also left injured and distressed.

“We are keen to hear from anyone who can help us identify the man responsible and would ask anyone who recognises his description to contact police immediately.

“In addition, members of the public with any further information relevant to this inquiry should also get in touch.”

Those with information can contact Police Scotland on 101 or alternatively, the charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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## **Elderly woman robbed in Calder Road**



Police are appealing for witnesses after an elderly woman was robbed in Calder Road around 2.15pm on Sunday.

The 77-year-old victim was walking towards a bus stop in the area when two men approached her.

At this time one of the men grabbed the woman's handbag before the pair made off from the area.

Officers are now urging anyone who can assist with their inquiries to come forward.

The suspects are both described as being white, in their teens, around 5ft 2ins tall with medium to stocky builds and wearing dark hooded tops. One of the males was carrying a large green rucksack.

Detective Constable Mark McGraw from Corstorphine Police

Station said: "This was a very distressing experience for the victim but thankfully she was not left injured as a result.

"We are keen to hear from anyone who was in Calder Road on Sunday afternoon and remembers seeing anything suspicious or who can help us identify the suspects.

"In addition anyone with any information that can help with our investigation is also asked to contact police immediately."

Those with information can contact Police Scotland on 101 or make an anonymous report to the charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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## **Robbery at Greggs bakery on Restalrig Road South**



Police are appealing for information following a robbery at a Greggs bakery which happened around 2.30pm on Sunday on Restalrig Road South.

A man entered the premises and demanded money from staff, before taking a three-figure sum from the till.

The suspect is described as white, slim build, around 5ft 5in, possibly early 20's with an Edinburgh accent.

He was wearing a light grey coloured full zip hooded top with the hood up and white coloured ties, dark grey coloured jogging bottoms, grey and white coloured trainers, black coloured scarf covering the bottom half of his face.



Detective Constable John McShane said: "Several members of the public walked past the store whilst the suspect was waiting outside the shop.

"We're appealing for people with any information to get in touch."

Those with information can contact Police Scotland on 101 or alternatively the charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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## **Ticket arrangements for Hibs v St Johnstone semi-final at Tynecastle**



Hibs have announce the ticket arrangements for the semi final of the Scottish League Cup presented by Utilita against St Johnstone at Tynecastle Stadium on Saturday 30 January.

The club have received an allocation of approximately 11.5k tickets. Tickets for this match will be sold over 4 waves based on the following points:

10am Wednesday 6th -12th January: 180 points (approx. 8000 supporters)

10am Wednesday 13th – 17th January: 90 points (approx 10000 supporters)

10am Monday 18th January: 1 point (approx. 20000 supporters)

10am Friday 22nd January: General sale

These numbers are approximate and are accurate at time of publishing (21/12/15).

Tickets will be restricted to one per client reference number. Fans buying for more than one person, including supporter groups, all those in the group will require the qualifying number of points. The Ticket Office will not be able to sell a ticket to anyone who does not have the required number of points at that time. Ticket waves are subject to ticket availability.

### **Ticket Prices**

Wheatfield Stand – £20 Adults/£5 Under 16s

Gorgie Stand – £20 Adults/£5 Under 16s

Main Stand – £20 Adults/£5 Under 16s

### **Disabled Supporters**

Tickets for the Disabled Sections are limited therefore the club has asked that any supporter in the 180 points or above threshold that wishes tickets for this match apply no later than Tuesday 29th December.

### **Ticket Prices:**

Wheatfield or Gorgie Stand

Adult Wheelchair & Carer – £15 per pair

Child Wheelchair & Carer – £3 per pair

Blind & Ambulant Section – Wheatfield Stand Only

Adult & Carer – £15 per pair

Child & Carer – £3 per pair

At this time Hibs are not be able to confirm if parking can be provided until they have received confirmed numbers of

disabled parking passes being made available.

The Ticket Office will contact supporters to let them know when the tickets are available for collection or posting. At this time the club should be able to confirm if you have been allocated parking at Tynecastle.

Any remaining tickets will be opened up to those with 90 points

Fans should contact the Disabled Helpline 0131 656 7066 or call 0844 844 1875 option 2 or e-mail

[disabledtickets@hibernianfc.co.uk](mailto:disabledtickets@hibernianfc.co.uk) to apply.

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## At the Scottish National Gallery from New Year's Day – Turner in January



In keeping with a long-standing tradition now stretching over a century, New Year's Day at the Scottish National Gallery will be marked by the opening of *Turner in January: The Vaughan Bequest*, an annual display of works by the artist Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851).

An outstanding collection by one of the great masters of British painting was bequeathed to the Gallery in 1900 by Henry Vaughan, a London art collector with a passion for Turner and a connoisseur's eye for quality.

Vaughan stipulated that the 38 exquisite works – which

encapsulates the artist's entire career – could not be subjected to permanent display, since continual exposure to light would result in their fading. Instead, these precious works were to be exhibited to the public “all at one time, free of charge, during the month of January”, when daylight in Edinburgh is at its lowest levels.

Faithfully following Vaughan's request, all of the works will be exhibited and *Turner in January* runs throughout the month, providing a welcome injection of light and colour during the darkest month of the year.

Clara Govier, Head of Charities at People's Postcode Lottery (PPL), said: “This is the fourth year that players of PPL have supported *Turner in January* at the Scottish National Gallery, and we're thrilled – even as relative newcomers in the grand scheme of things – to be involved in such an established tradition. It's great for players to see that their valuable support is helping to provide thousands of visitors – some who come to see the exhibition every year, some for the very first time – with the opportunity to keep playing a part in this wonderful legacy”.

Recognised as perhaps the greatest of all British artists, Turner was born in London in 1775 and proved himself as an accomplished draughtsman while still a youth, exhibiting at the Royal Academy at the tender age of fifteen. He was a prolific and innovative artist who went on to exploit every possibility of the watercolour medium to create stunning land- and seascapes.

Travelling widely, at first with sketching tours in England, Wales and Scotland and then later across Europe, Turner gathered material for masterful watercolours and oil paintings, discovering the awe-inspiring mountainous landscapes which became a major pre-occupation in his work.

Many of the works in the display reveal a youthful Turner's

artistic talents, such as the early wash drawings of the 1790s, while others show how this skill would come to be fused with the peripatetic lifestyle which dominated Turner's life and career, resulting in colourful and atmospheric watercolour sketches of Continental Europe, such as *Chatel Argent, in the Val d'Aosta, near Villeneuve* (after 1836) and *Falls of the Rhine at Schaffhausen, Side View* (about 1841).

In his lifetime, Turner also managed three trips to Venice, first arriving there in 1819. The Vaughan Bequest features six of the artist's stunning views of the city. In *The Piazzetta, Venice* (about 1835), one of Turner's most spectacular Venetian studies, the Doge's Palace and renowned St. Mark's Basilica are dramatically illuminated by a bolt of lightning, an effect innovatively created by the artist by scratching away to reveal the paper once he had painted on it. Often, Turner would use his thumbnail and is reputed to have grown like an 'eagle-claw' for such a purpose.

His third and final visit to the city in 1840 would see the artist produce a series of incredible works in which light itself appeared to have become the main subject, such as in *The Grand Canal by the Salute, Venice* (c.1840) and *Venice from the Laguna* (1840) where Turner's consummate mastery of atmospheric lighting effects is clearly demonstrated.



As with many artists at the end of the 18th Century, for Turner the vastness and tumultuous conditions of nature inspired senses of awe and terror. This life-long fascination – of the savageness of elemental forces – poured out of Turner's art, namely in the form of avalanches, storms and mountainous seas. This can be seen in works from the bequest, such as *Loch Coruisk, Skye* (1831-4), with its miniature human figures set against a grand, stretching backdrop of painted swirls.

Turner's *Heidelberg* (c. 1846), a glowing, almost hallucinatory image of the ancient university town on the Rhine and one of his finest late works, will also be on display.

Also joining those from the bequest is the work *East View of Fonthill Abbey, Noon* (1800), a romantic view of the Gothic novelist William Beckford's extraordinary cathedral-like mansion in rural Wiltshire, which was accepted by HM Government in lieu of inheritance tax in 1988 and loaned to National Trust for Scotland at Brodick Castle.

### TURNER IN JANUARY 2016:

#### THE VAUGHAN BEQUEST

1–31 January 2016

Scottish National Gallery

The Mound, Edinburgh EH2 2EL

0131 624 6200 | Admission Free

#NGSTurner

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# Vocal is looking out for carers this Christmas



For many carers the festive season can be a time of additional stress as they can find themselves without the usual support from friends, family and public services.

This year, VOCAL is going to do something different! The VOCAL Edinburgh carer centre will remain open on **28th, 29th and 30th December 2015** from 9am-5pm for a special programme of events and services to ensure that carers have somewhere to go, access to support and someone to talk to when they need it.

Carers are invited to pop in for a cuppa and a chat at the free Carers' Cafe or to attend workshops including meditation, arts & crafts and Laughter Yoga – no booking necessary! There will also be a SMART Recovery Family & Friends meeting for those affected by someone else's addiction on Tuesday 29th Dec 2-4pm.

Workshops, meetings and the Carers Cafe are all free to unpaid carers and will take place at the VOCAL Edinburgh Carer Centre, 8-13 Johnston Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2PW

[embeddocurl="http://www.theedinburghreporter.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/DoSomethingDifferent.pdf" download="all"]

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## Millions use Edinburgh Trams



It has been reported this morning that Edinburgh Trams carried over 5 million passengers last year surpassing all predictions.

The number of people using the tram has gone up by 12% on last year and Edinburgh Trams say that all the predictions used in their business models were lower than actual figures.

The tram service launched in May 2014 and is making more income than predicted at the time.



Chair of Transport  
for Edinburgh –  
Councillor Lesley

## Hinds

Councillor Lesley Hinds, Chair of Transport for Edinburgh, said: "These latest figures demonstrate the continuing popularity of Edinburgh Trams and add to the success of our first year of operations, which saw almost five million passengers ride the trams. We now want to build on this success for the future of the service, as we look to extend and develop the network to provide for even more people in Edinburgh."

Ian Craig, Chief Executive of Transport for Edinburgh, said: "Edinburgh Trams continues to go from strength to strength and this is because of a huge effort from the team over the past two years. Our first year of operations was a big success and a time of much excitement but the real test is sustainability and continuing high quality operations.

"The service we're delivering is great, it's highly reliable and, as a result, we're seeing more passengers get on board than last year. Edinburgh Trams is getting more popular and we want to make sure that trend continues for the benefit of the city."

More passengers now use the Park and Ride at Ingliston where numbers have gone up by 60% on last year. This is the preferred route of choice for those coming into the city from the west.

During the busiest week of all for Edinburgh Trams over 137,000 used the tram during the Festival in 2014. Events at Murrayfield have benefitted from the convenient tram stop and attracted over 10,000 more passengers there during rugby matches and the Foo Fighters concert.

Earlier in 2015 Edinburgh Trams received a 95% overall customer satisfaction rating following an independent UK wide survey by Passenger Focus which operated with 99% service



reliability. This means that reliability and satisfaction levels are among the top performing public transport operators in the UK.

✖ Further success came in October when Edinburgh Trams secured Edinburgh Trams the Operator of the Year award at the 2015 Light Rail Awards following a successful first sixteen months of service. Edinburgh Trams was also shortlisted at both the Scottish and UK Transport awards.

The tram team carried out a successful six week 'red-eye' trial to service earlier departures from Edinburgh Airport. More than 1200 additional passenger journeys were recorded. A trial of mobility scooters has been prepared and will take place from early 2016.

Between them, tram drivers and TSAs completed more than 82,000 journeys over 2015 covering 649,073 miles up and down the route. Trams have now covered 1,041,728 miles in service since May 2014.

There were approximately 4.92 million passenger journeys on Edinburgh Trams during its first year of operations to May 31 2015, around 370,000 ahead of target set before launch. Launched on Saturday 31 May 2014 at 5am, Edinburgh Trams also surpassed revenue targets set out in its business model by around 3%. Concessionary card holders accounted for 10.9% of passengers which is well within the Councils budget which was set to ensure that Edinburgh's card holders get free travel on the tram.

Full financial details for 2015 will be published through the annual reporting process.

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# Christmas Gift Ideas from the Rae Macintosh Musicroom

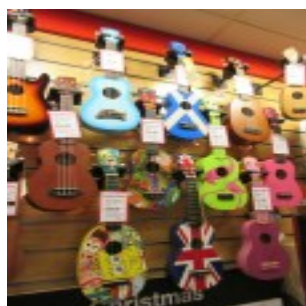


If you have a musician in your family you may think you've seen every music-related item there is to see; a visit to the excellent **Rae Macintosh Musicroom** in Shandwick Place will soon prove you haven't.

Whether you want to spend £5 or £500, the Musicroom offers a huge range of gifts, from maracas to mugs, teapots to telecoustic guitars and djembes to ducks (yes, ducks...).

Ukuleles are this year's must-have musical instrument – portable, easy to learn (or so I'm told...) and available here in a multitude of colours and styles from £22.50. Lots of music and 'how to' books too.

The Musicroom hosted a ukulele workshop with none other than the amazing **Tricity Vogue** this summer; you can read The Edinburgh Reporter's article about it [here](#).





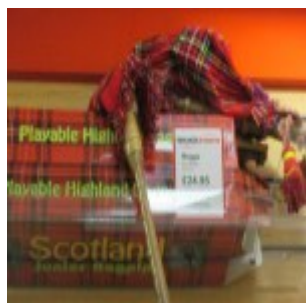
Vinyl has made a big come back; for those too young to have a record player (and those too short sighted to have hung on to their old one) the Musicroom has a selection – including the GP0 Attache in its rather cool case and the immensely retro GP0 Memphis.



If your musician loves the musicals, the shop has a great selection of scores – everything from *Mamma Mia* to *Les Miserables*, *Wicked* and *Frozen*, with many offered on a Buy One, Get One Half Price deal. And naturally there's also an immensely comprehensive stock of sheet music of all kinds, with a particular emphasis on the Scottish.



Instead of that horrendous talking toy, why not get your children their first musical instruments? The Musicroom has junior guitars from £39.99, tambourines from £6.99 and maracas from £10.99 – it's still noise, but who knows? Your offspring might turn out to be the new Eric Clapton. They've even got junior bagpipes...ideal for waking up Daddies – and that special instrument of torture beloved by music teachers everywhere, the descant recorder. Anyone for *Three Blind Mice* at 5am on Friday?



The Musicroom does, of course, cater for the serious musician too, with guitars – including the Fender CD60, on special offer at £129 – saxophones, clarinets, keyboards, trumpets and plenty more, plus music stands, gig bags and all the plectrums, reeds and mutes you'll ever need.





And if you want something a little bit alternative, how about an African drum (from £12.99), a *guiro* (that's wooden frog to you and me) (from £8.99) or, for the Christmas Meditator, a beautiful singing bowl (£28.99)?



But perhaps you're looking for something smaller – a stocking filler, or a little gift for the musician who has everything? These Nanoblocks were going down a storm when we visited the shop; there are also lots of mugs, socks and pens, kitchen equipment (guitar spatula anyone? piano teapot? or what about some *Too Hot To Handel* oven-gloves?), guitarists' soaps and saxophonists' handcreams.



Best of all may be the chocolate pianos and (if you happen to share my juvenile sense of humour) this paddling of rubber ducks. I'm sure Mozart would be flattered. (The gold one is Strauss. Apparently.)





**Rae McIntosh Musicroom** is at **41 Shandwick Place**, tel: 0131 221 0041. The shop also holds a database of local **music teachers** and offers a **re-stringing service** on instruments, with a usual turnaround time of about an hour.



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## **Serious assault during altercation in Queen Street**



Police are appealing for witnesses after a serious assault on

Queen Street which happened around 2.30am on Sunday when a man approached a 33-year-old woman and engaged her in conversation.

A 34-year-old man whom she was previously then joined them, and an altercation took place between the two men.

Two men, who are believed to have known the suspect, have then approached the group and attempted to calm the situation.

The woman's companion was then assaulted and sustained a serious facial injury. He was taken to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

The suspect and two men were last seen heading down Queen Street Gardens East.

The suspect is described as white, 5ft 11inches tall, aged 20-30, with a stocky build and a local accent. He had short fair hair and stubble. He was possibly wearing a grey-coloured jumper with thin black stripes.

One of the men who intervened is described as white, 6ft 2inches tall, in his early 30s, with a slight build. He had short ginger hair and was clean-shaven. He was wearing a white t-shirt and dark trousers.

The second man is described as white, 5ft 8inches tall, in his early 30s, with a slight build. He had short dark hair and stubble on his face. He was wearing a grey-hooded jacket and dark jeans.

Detective Constable Alison Wyllie said: "This was a violent attack which has left the victim requiring ongoing treatment, and we're conducting extensive enquiries in order to trace the suspect.

"I would ask anyone who may have seen the assault, or recognises the description of the suspect or the two witnesses, to get in touch."



Anyone with information is asked to contact Police Scotland on 101 or contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

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# Five things you need to know today Edinburgh



**Delays possible finalising council budget**

**Inverleith Park gym equipment**

**West End elephant**

**Fundraising for Sick Kids**

**Rick Astley at The Queen's Hall**



The City of Edinburgh Council may need to consider delaying the finalisation of the city's 2016/17 Budget due to the severity of the local government settlement announced earlier this week.

Edinburgh's proposed settlement figure sees a headline revenue reduction of some 4.5%, which is double that which was anticipated prior to Wednesday's announcement.

Council Leader, Andrew Burns, said: "A reduction in revenue funding of the scale now being proposed, will undoubtedly have a negative impact on a whole range of vital services that local government is responsible for delivering: the children in our care, the elderly struggling with dementia whom we look after, and vulnerable adults whom we assist daily; all these individuals rely on the support that only a council can

provide.

"Of course we will continue to work with our colleagues in COSLA, to try and reach an improved negotiated settlement, but given the Scottish Government has confirmed their final Budget will not be approved by Parliament until the end of February, we may now have to seriously consider delaying the finalisation of the city's own budget for 2016/17."

Council Deputy Leader, Sandy Howat, added: "A revenue cut of this scale would be very damaging for jobs and services within Scottish local government generally, and here in Edinburgh specifically – the harsh reality is that this will translate to real job cuts that hit real families, in real communities throughout our capital city. Everyone will be hurt by this.

"The City of Edinburgh Council is already facing significant workforce reductions, and very challenging budget decisions – Wednesday's announcement makes all of that even more difficult, and we may well need to consider delaying the finalisation of our own budget for the city."



Are you interested in having gym equipment in Inverleith Park that is particularly suitable for older / less mobile people? Friends of Inverleith Park are looking for help to make it happen! You can donate and read more at the following website: <http://www.mypark.scot/edinburgh/>



Edinburgh's West End welcomed an exotic new resident as part of a drive to establish the city's 'plinth' for public art last month.

Baby Elephant, by Scottish sculptor Ronald Rae, has been installed on the corner of Hope Street and Princes Street, which has been earmarked as a space for visiting art by the Council.

The three-tonne, life-sized sculpture follows close on the hooves of the Kelpies maquettes, [which occupied the corner over summer](#).

Rae, who also created the Lion of Scotland in St Andrew Square, loaned the Baby Elephant to Edinburgh to highlight the

endangered status of the Asian elephant, of which there are only around 2500 left in the wild.

Have you seen it? Will you share some photos with us if you have?



Edinburgh restaurateurs Maria and Rosario Sartore raised £2000 for The Edinburgh Sick Kids Friends Foundation by hosting a traditional Italian Sunday lunch and a raffle at their Italian restaurant, Locanda de Gusti.


Maria Sartore commented: *"Rosario have I have 4 children, all of whom have been cared for at Sick Kids, either for minor procedures, appointments and long term aftercare. We wanted to thank all the doctors, nurses and staff for their care, support and dedication, by raising funds for the foundation. Our Italian Sunday lunch was a great day for a great cause."*



Did you know Rick Astley is playing at the Queen's Hall next April?

He has a brand new album to promote and will include the capital on his UK tour.

Tickets (in case this is of interest to you for a wee last minute Christmas present!) [here](#).

 Sign up here for a daily email from The Edinburgh Reporter  
! [mc4wp\_form]

If you are reading this article in print and would like to visit The Edinburgh Reporter website then simply scan the QR code here with a smartphone or tablet.



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# David Gray praises character of Hibs' team-mates



Hibs' captain David Gray has praised the character and team spirit of his team-mates during yesterday's Championship victory over a stuffy Queen of the South at Easter Road.

The players knew that league leaders Rangers had been beaten by Falkirk before the game started and that a victory would take them level on points at the top of the table but for long spells it looked as though they would have to settle for a share of the points.

The winning goal came in controversial circumstances in the last minute of time added on. The ball struck Queens' winger Kyle Hutton on the face and he stayed down, forcing the referee to stop play when the ball was at the other end of the field. Hutton then 'recovered' hoping that he would not have to leave the field of play, but his plea was rejected and he had to go off.

At the other end of the field, the referee played a 'drop ball' which landed at the feet of Liam Fontaine who passed to John McGinn on the left wing. McGinn did well to beat his marker before sending a long cross field pass to Henri Anier who did well to control the ball before setting Gray up on the overlap. The former Manchester United player somehow found the energy to beat the Queens' full back before sending in a perfect cross which Dominique Malonga headed into the ground and bouncing up into the net.

The goal sparked angry scenes from the 'Doonhamers' who

surrounded the referee and the ill feeling carried on after the final whistle.

Speaking immediately after the game to Cliff Pike of Hibs TV Gray said: "It, once again, shows the character and the team spirit that we have got at the minute and sets it up nicely for next week.

"Obviously I'm delighted to get the win and at one stage you were thinking 'is it gonna come?', but in the last ten minutes I felt we really pushed on. The fans were great and really spurred us on. It was a relief to get the goal.

"It took an eternity to get over the line and I thought it might go over the bar, but I think Dom (Dominique Malonga) and Henri (Anier) when they came on really changed the game. They were more physical up there.

"Dom has shown how to deal with being left out the team. he was disappointed to be left out today but that is how to react to being left out and he has come on and won us the game. It shows the strength in depth we have in our squad at the moment and it really sets us up for next week."

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**Police name pedestrian who**

# died on A1 near Torness



Police in East Lothian have confirmed the identity of the female pedestrian who died on the A1 near Torness on Wednesday (16th December 2015) as 67 year old Patricia Rose Grey from Newcastle.

A police spokesperson said: "Officers would like to thank the public and media for their responses to our witness appeals, we have now traced the stationary vehicle seen at Thurston Manor junction.

"Inquiries into the full circumstances are ongoing"

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## Rugby – Stewarts-Melville v Watsonians, BT National League, Div 1.

*Watsonians stay on top with win at Inverleith*



For parts of Saturday's Edinburgh derby at Inverleith, the casual observer would have wondered which of Watsonians and Stewarts-Melville were leading the BT National League's Division 1 as the top side travelled all the way to Ferry Road to play the team in ninth.

Playing into a stiff breeze, the home side were out of the traps from the off and deep into the visiting 22, winning an

early penalty for crossing, which Mike Hanning saw over for the three points.

However, while they were still patting themselves on the back, Watsonians scored the first try of the match. Centre, DJ Innes carried the ball over halfway and, just before the tackle came in from his opposing number, Sebastian Trotter, he got the pass away to No. 13, Scott Mcleod, putting the outside centre through a huge hole in the opposition defence. He carried into the 22, where he passed the ball onto the accompanying full back, Scott McKean. Stew-Mel's Sean Murchie made the tackle but McKean's momentum took him over for the score. Andrew Chalmers missed his kick but Watsonians were into a 7-3 lead.

By 20 minutes in, Watsonians had increased their tally to 19. The first of the two tries followed a period of Watsonians possession, driving deep into the home half of the field. Keeping the ball moving, Watsonians eventually found themselves within range and No. 8, Matt Coles then received the ball which saw him crashing over for the second try. Chalmers successful conversion then took the lead out to 12-3.

Four minutes later, they had their third.

Once again, Watsonians drove upfield from the off, but Stew-Mel were keeping them at bay and holding territory when the 12/15 combination struck again. Another offload got McKean up into the line and quick recycle ball from a tackle found wing, Mark Bertram who sailed through under the posts for the second visitor's try. Once again, Chalmers slotted the conversion for a 12-3 lead 15 minutes in.

Once possession was secured from 'Sonians restart clearance, Stew-Mel went to work.

Sean Murchie ran the ball back into the visitor's half before handing over to No. 8, Adam Howie. His offload put No. 6, Hugh

Lindsay through, but his run was brought to a halt by Torrie Callandar. However, his tackle was deemed to be too high for the referee's liking so, once the momentum was stopped, the advantage was played and Stew-Mel went for the lineout.

Fortuitously, the loose throw – blame the wind – found Lindsay and recycled ball from the resultant ruck was handed to No. 5. Alexander Rappestad, who took half the Watsonians' pack with him for the touch down.



Hanning kicked his second successful kick of the day and, a couple of minutes from the away side's third try, the home side were up to 19-10.

The remainder of the half was played out without further additions to the score board, but Stew-Mel, probably, had the upper hand in the run down to the break.

The second half started well for Watsonians, and they came close to scoring five minutes in, but the attack was held out and possession eventually turned over.

But on 53 minutes a successful penalty in the difficult conditions from Chalmers stretched the lead to 22-10.

Then it was Stew-Mel's turn to switch on the pressure. Another loose lineout, once again, fell into friendly hands and the wave of attacks began. Firstly, Hanning was put through five metres out and the stand-off battled his way over the line. The combination of Innes and McKean grappled with Hanning on the floor, but he struggled round and grounded the ball. Unfortunately, the ref had already decided he had been 'held up' so awarded a five-metre scrum rather than the try.

Another couple of scrum followed, with Hanning almost getting clear again, but the ball was eventually turned over and cleared upfield.




The 65<sup>th</sup> minute then saw the bonus point try for Watsonians. A fairly simple passing move from near half way, put Rory Steele into space enough for the wing to gallop 20-odd metres in for the try. With the wind whistling round the south side of the Inverleith stand, Chalmers kept the ball low for the conversion and added the points for a 29-10 lead.

The home side now took up the cudgel again and, in a series of penetrating moves, shifted the match into 'Sonians' 22. Winning a succession of penalties in the five metre zone, the pack rumbled and battered their way to the line, eventually finding a gap for Michael McDonald to burrow through for the try. Hanning scored the conversion, but the game was over and, with a bout of fisticuffs and a red card for Fraser Strachan for overuse of the boot in a ruck to gee up the support for the final few minutes, the match drew to a close, 29-17 to Watsonians.

*Images from the match will appear [here](#) over the next few days.*

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## Fife Man in Epic Journey?

 *One suspects The Edinburgh Reporter's Mike Smith has been partaking in some early Christmas 'festivities' of an alcoholic nature so the story below should be taken with a suitably sized serving of salt. Or should it...?*

Major Tim Peake hit the headlines last week with his journey into space but next week will see a Scot embark on an equally trying adventure which will test his resilience to the full.

On Thursday, Major Trauma will set out on a journey which is expected to see him away from home for up to six months as he

boards a train at Leuchars hoping to arrive at Edinburgh Waverley at some point in 2016.

Major Trauma spoke exclusively to The Edinburgh Reporter.

"This isn't something I've decided on a whim" he said. "I'm not foolish enough to just turn up at the station without a ticket and hope to enjoy a hassle-free journey to Scotland's capital city.

I have an important meeting scheduled in Edinburgh in 2016 and with the Forth Road Bridge being closed and travelling from Fife to the capital taking longer than the Space Mission to the International Space Station, I knew I had to give myself plenty of time for the journey. By leaving the day before Christmas I hope to have a decent chance of arriving for the meeting at a relatively early stage of 2016"

Planning ahead has been a crucial part of his preparations. "I purchased my ticket several months ago but I know I'm still unlikely to get a seat as it's probable an elderly woman will be sitting in my reserved area not realising this is for me. With this in mind, I fully expect to spend some time in cramped conditions with limited privacy. I don't know how long it will take me to get to my destination but I've told my wife not to expect to see me again before June.

I've taken my mobile phone and laptop but the Wi-Fi access is very limited on some of these trains so I don't know whether I'll be able to keep in touch with them."

Major Trauma said he had trained for his journey by travelling on the Fife Circle and he believes the primitive conditions he endured there would stand him in good stead.

"It's going to be difficult" he continued, "but I've undergone extensive training. I know I will encounter horrific conditions – points failure, leaves on the line, signal problems, drunks on the line at Inverkeithing – but the

journey will give me valuable insight into whether there really is intelligent life out there in the rail network.

What I will need to get used to in my long journey is the blackness of the view from the train. Dark, bleak, desolate and a feeling of emptiness – but I'm hoping we won't be in Kirkcaldy too long..."

Asked what he will miss most in the months ahead, Major Trauma said that, apart from his wife and children, the thing he would miss more than anything would be proper nourishing food.

"I know I will need to adapt to the tasteless, almost inedible fare on offer" he said, "but this is a horrible necessity I will need to overcome. As well as the food, being in a cramped environment with little room to move and conditions completely lacking in heating and atmosphere will be challenging as well as dangerous with the real threat of scalding hot coffee being spilt over me as I try to clutch at a polystyrene cup tossed in my direction."

With the Forth Road Bridge closed, Major Trauma's trip will be a daunting one. The Edinburgh Reporter will look to make contact with him again for an update on his epic journey as soon as possible – probably around Easter...