

# BILLOTHIAN

THE VOICE OF SPORT

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## Sixty years of The Club

### THE SPORTING AND FITNESS INSTITUTION

that was the Edinburgh Club before morphing into "The Club" is celebrating 60 years since it was founded by judo legend, George Kerr, CBE, who is a 10th dan.

Birthday tributes and congratulations have been pouring in, some from those who have been members almost since the club's inception in Hanover Street, moving on to Hillside Crescent before finding a home in West Bowling Green Street, Leith, where fitness instructor Davina French took over the reins from George in 2019.

Despite the change of ownership George Kerr, now aged 86, still drops by to monitor junior judo and that is only to be expected according to Derek Kerr (no relation) who, as a teenager in 1965, joined what was the capital's first club of its type.

"I have experienced both continuity and change. It was all about George but obviously in a good and positive way. George set the culture and made it feel as if it was 'our' club" said Derek.

He went on to note how business trends were recognised and introduced with such innovations as the personal trainer, jacuzzi, squash and ladies only classes featuring pop mobility and Zumba all based around the central core of judo where George excelled.

Indeed, the Edinburgh Club might not have happened far less flourished had jealous international rivals not successfully opposed George's entry into the 1964 Olympics while European champion on grounds that he had "professionalised" himself through coaching.

The snub seemed to galvanise George, now the President Emeritus of Scottish Judo, in a business sense and many who never set foot in the Edinburgh Club will recall his cheeky marketing campaigns with banners hanging outside premises proclaiming slogans such as "if you like a little chocolate on your biscuit join our club" - a blatant reference to a popular



George Kerr is a bit of an Edinburgh institution himself

advertising slogan at the time adopted by a major food company.

Partly due to George Kerr's charisma famous figures from the world of sport and entertainment would drop by.

These included Edinburgh-born footballer Graeme Souness, swimmer Sharon Davies and the late Hibs and Scotland star Erich Schaedler.

Davina French recalls Ray Wilson, front man from the band Genesis in succession to

Phil Collins, working out at the club.

Today, in the new premises, fitness instructors include Tom Philip, a Scotland rugby internationalist with a glowing future until injury cut short his career.

What others say about the Edinburgh Club.

Pauline Kerr (George's wife and herself a fitness specialist) said: "We've taken The Club through all the phases and crazes of the past six decades: from the huge popularity of squash to the aerobics boom of the 1980s with leg warmers and leotards; on into the 90s with step, spinning and body-pump; and onward again to pilates, personal training, sport-specific workouts and Zumbas."

Tricia Donald who is a long-standing member said: "My late husband, Crawford, was trained, encouraged and inspired by George Kerr at The Edinburgh Club and gained his University Blue for Judo.

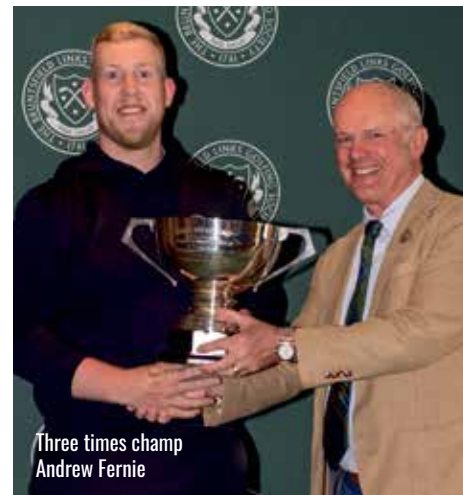
"My key memories are of energy and laughter combined with a friendly atmosphere and professional training."

Scott Bisset, fitness manager, said: "George Kerr is easily the most charismatic person I've ever known, and the facilities and the atmosphere he created at The Edinburgh Club were unique. Always much more than a gym, a place for connecting people and making friends."

Ogilvy Gray said: "My late wife, Anne, was a member and also George's accountant. This was in the late 1980s. She had to work hard to keep George's accounting practices in line; he said she was one of the few women who frightened him.

"Anne persuaded me to join not long before the Hillside Crescent club closed and we all moved down to West Bowling Green Street. We had great times."

Do YOU have any memories? Let us know.



Three times champ Andrew Fernie

### Bossing Bruntsfield

ANDREW FERNIE won the Bruntsfield Links Golfing Society championship for the third successive year when he defeated Michael Rolland 5 and 4 in windy conditions.

Andrew is pictured receiving the Chiene Cup from club captain, Graeme Taylor.

### Secondary schools athletics

ALMOST 100 PUPILS displayed their athletic ability as the Edinburgh Secondary Schools Track and Field competition returned for the first time in seven years.

The S1-S3 competitors ran in either the 100m or 600m races, while everyone participated in the shot putt and long jump at Meadowbank Sports Centre.

Edinburgh Academy secured the most points in the S1 category, while the combined team of St George's and Merchiston Castle won the S2/S3 event.

Other high schools taking part were Firrhill, Broughton, James Gillespie's, Portobello, Drummond, George Heriot's, Queensferry, Erskine Stewart's Melville, Currie and Wester Hailes.

Members from the Eric Liddell Community were on hand to present the medals, as well as prizes for the 12 pupils who displayed the values of compassion, integrity and passion cherished by Liddell, the 1924 Olympic 400m champion and Christian missionary.

Organiser Grant Sheldon, of the Edinburgh Junior Athletics Development Group at Edinburgh Leisure, paid tribute to the 96 competitors.

He said: "The overriding feeling was that it was a good start of something that has to continue into future years. The schools want to build on that and get the rest of the Edinburgh schools involved too."



Duddingston champs

### Scott steps up to claim Duddingston crown

SCOTT SPEAKMAN is a first time winner of the men's championship at Duddingston Golf Club after beating Gary Thomson 2 and 1 in the final.

Clare Macrae successfully defended the ladies title

against previous winner Gillian Chalmers while John Shepherd added the seniors title to a Championship gained a few years ago.

First time winners were Ben Kelly (juniors) and Jason Coughlan (B section).

## Firrhill High School under 13s enjoy league and cup double

FIRRHILL HIGH SCHOOL footballers have enjoyed a season to remember winning both the Edinburgh under-13 A League and also the League Cup.

Captained by Connor Henderson with Aaron Wood his vice captain, Firrhill boasted an impressive league record of 13 wins and two draws from their 16 matches.

That left them two points clear of Craigmount HS at the end of the competition with a goal difference of + 53 (80 goals for, 27 against).

Coached by parents Keith Leslie and Mark Hughes, it was the first time the Firrhill boys had taken the shield outright having shared the accolade honours with Boroughmuir High School in 2009.

In the League Cup there was a semi-final win over Royal High (5-0) before Portobello were edged out 3-2 in the final, also at Meggetland.

Firrhill's football is administered by PE teacher Ross Monaghan, who said: "The team are certainly well placed to continue their success in the under-14 A league next season.

"They are very together as a team and I personally have never had a team so committed to working for each other.

"Another key factor in the success has been the two parent coaches who have shown



Firrhill are victorious

tremendous commitment in giving up time to help out every weekend."

Back row, left to right Mark Hughes (coach), Callum Morrison, Al Turner, Calum McGregor, Connor Henderson, Robert Finlayson, Brodie

Reid, Alex Leslie, Xavier Padilla, Keith Leslie (coach).

Front Angus Findlay, Max Hughes, Howie Gall, Sam Stewart, Rudy Gray, Finlay Murray, Kami Mahmood, Aaron Wood.



Kempster collects trophy

## Ratho golf winners

JAMES KEMPSTER receives his trophy from club captain Iris O'Neill after winning the Ratho Park golf club championship.

Other winners were Phillip Thomson (B), Graham Ross (C), Lisa Kilpatrick (Ladies silver), William Barr (junior) Steven Black (senior) and John M Wilson (gents super senior).

## Northern men off to nationals

NORTHERN BOWLING CLUB'S men's four have qualified for the finals of the national championships at Ayr from 27 July to 3 August after an 18-9 victory over Tanfield at the Queensberry club.

And in a remarkable tour de force

down Warriston way the women's section came within a match of the finals when they finished runners-up to Craigentiny. It was only recently that a ladies section was re-constituted after a lapse of almost 150 years.



Men - left to right - Gordon Wilson Snr, Darren Prentice, Euan Craig, Gordon Wilson Jnr



Ladies - left to right Julie Henderson, Sylvia Watson, Carolyn Young, Fiona Ord

## Seven Hills Race

TANIA COCKBURN (424) leads Portobello Running Club colleague Fen Parry (615) and Carnethy's Alan Hogg (100) through the Blackford allotment section of the annual Edinburgh Seven Hills Race in the photo right.

This event is described as a combination of road-running, cross-country, hill-running, and urban orienteering and it takes place over a 14.3 mile course featuring 2,200 feet of ascent/descent.

The race was won by Corstorphine AC's Julian Barrable in a time of 1hr 39 mins and 32 secs with Charles Houston (Hunter's Bog Trotters) second and Fearghas Thomson of Aberdeen third.

Morag McClelland won the women's race for the third consecutive year in 2:00:59, with Katie Carter second and Lizzie Wastnedge third. All represent Hunter's Bog Trotters.

Gillian Carr (Moorfoot) was first over-45 female with Seona Burnett (Harmeny) finishing first in the over-55 category.

Michael Smith (unattached) won



the M50 category, with James Mayers of Musselburgh winning the M60, and Jimmy Hudson (unattached) winning the men's +70.

The race, launched in 1980,

begins on the Castle Esplanade and then takes in Craiglockhart Hill East, Blackford Hill, Arthur's Seat, Braid Hill, Corstorphine Hill before eventually finishing on Calton Hill.