

Re:Vu

News and reviews

OUT OF TOWN

A town with a view

THERE is something very special about Portpatrick ... If you were travelling to Ireland during Victorian times, all roads and train lines heading west across Dumfries and Galloway would have led to the harbour port of Portpatrick, a mere 21 miles away from the Emerald Isle's popular mainland.

As ships got larger, however, and the prevailing westerly wind continued to bluster across the Northern Channel, Portpatrick lost much of its passing trade. The quarries closed, the trains stopped and enterprise began to dwindle as the ferries left for a safer harbour inside the sheltered shores of Loch Ryan.

It took the imagination, and considerable wealth, of a forward-thinking family in the late 1800s to revive the harbour town and reinvent its status as a tourist destination.

The legacy of the Orr-Ewings still survives today as Portpatrick remains an attractive, vibrant and fascinating place to take time out and thoroughly enjoy a part of Dumfries and Galloway that is naturally beautiful and, in the main, unspoiled by indiscriminate tourism companies.

It is a great shame that most tourists who travel west through this region are heading for destinations across the Irish Sea – there are so many places in Dumfries and Galloway that remain hidden to the world but have so much to offer.

Sitting on the western shore in the north part of the Rhins of Galloway, Portpatrick is easily accessible by road and bus from Stranraer.

This area of the region has the highest level of sunshine in Scotland and its clement climate supports an array of tropical plants that give the place a touch of the Mediterranean.

The town has been built into the steep hillside around a picturesque harbour and a sparkling blue sea and the gently rolling landscape of the Ards Peninsula, just over 20 miles away, smudges the fringes of the horizon.

There is a wealth of places to eat, drink and be merry on the quayside, with a plethora of bars, pubs and restaurants serving some of the finest food in south west Scotland.

On the south side of the harbour, up another steep hill, sits the Mount Sydney Hotel, with stunning views northward to the harbour and westward over the Irish Sea.

For a portion that would make a greedy person weep with joy, the menu serves some Scottish traditional favourites as well as an impressive choice of Italian dishes. The cod and chips is a firm favourite with the locals, while the delicate flavours of the moules marinière with a few slices of garlic bread is a Hobson's choice for shellfish lovers.

Portpatrick has an interesting quayside, with shops selling local art, curios and even life-size resin gorillas and an excellent cup of coffee can be had in Main Street.

The town's rich history is naturally displayed in its former lighthouse, the ruins of Dunskey Castle, the crumbling old church and battered harbour walls and all the locals have a tale to tell of Portpatrick's bountiful past.

This is a sea fisherman's and golfer's paradise, with angling trips going out regularly to reefs and open water and a choice of golf courses nearby.

At the northern part of the harbour, avid walkers will take the first steps on the 212-mile hike across the Southern Upland Way and yomp past some of the most dramatic coastal scenery in South

ern Scotland.

Just a few minutes up another very steep hill, along the side of the golf course (watch out for the cry of "Fore") lie Port Mora and Port Kale where cliffs and rocks give way to shallow blue waters and almost sandy beaches with caves and waterfalls to explore.

For the real beach lover, Sandhead lies about 10 minutes' drive south of Portpatrick. This is three glorious miles of pure sand and sea that will keep the kids busy all day.

Finding accommodation in Portpatrick is easy, unless you get there during Lifeboat Week (end of July) or the folk festival (September) where booking in advance is essential. Otherwise, there is a wealth of hotels, guest houses and bed and breakfasts (with or without a hill) all offering quality accommodation at reasonable prices.

For those who prefer to do it all themselves, Portpatrick has many holiday homes and self-catering accommodation for individuals to families and large groups.

Leeds businessman Graham Fletcher built a small development of houses at the top of the Old Military Road in 2007. His company, Portpatrick Holidays, has since gone from strength to strength.

Run by two local lasses Tracy Gracie and Kim Stevenson, Portpatrick Holidays LLP's main office is situated on Main Street. The business has six properties to rent, all boasting four-stars from the Scottish Tourist Board. The accommodation is luxurious, well-appointed and designed for space and comfort, with magnificent views over the harbour and Ireland.

Graham recently purchased a large plot of land between the putting green and the golf course and phase one of a 56-home development on the northern hill-top behind the Portpatrick Hotel is almost complete. These eco-style houses will be available in short- or long-term rentals or to purchase.

Now 56 homes in such a small town may seem like unwanted urban sprawl in a relatively unspoiled location, but Graham, who is passionate about Portpatrick, has thought long and hard of ways in which the development could prove an asset to the community and not a burden.

Apart from using local tradesmen and sourcing most of his building products within the region, Graham is hoping to attract families and young people back to Portpatrick by including a number of affordable homes within the development.

Portpatrick Holidays works closely with the hotels and businesses around the area with a view to providing a holiday to suit the needs of as wide a range of clientele as possible.

For a special winter deal, for example, and for groups of four and over, the company is offering three nights' accommodation with a three-course meal at the Mount Stewart Hotel for £95 per person, giving the word "hospitality" a whole new dimension.

Relaxing in a friendly environment, taking in the ease of rural life where a watch is something you leave at home with the laptop and the stress, it is easy to see why, once they have found it, most people return again and again to Portpatrick for that little bit of "something special."

Ask anyone who either lives or visits there and they will all tell you: "There is something very special about Portpatrick ..."

There most certainly is: it is everything about Portpatrick that makes it very special, you just have to see it to realise.



OFF THE SHELF

A Blonde Bengali Wife

— by Anne Hamilton

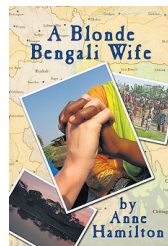
FOR Anne Hamilton, a three-month winter programme of travel and "cultural exchange" in a country where the English language, fair hair, and a rice allergy are all extremely rare, was always going to be interesting, challenging, and frustrating.

What they didn't tell Anne was that it would also be sunny, funny, and the start of a love affair with this often overlooked area of Southeast Asia.

A Blonde Bengali Wife shows the lives beyond the poverty, monsoons, and diarrhoea of Bangladesh and charts a vibrant and fascinating place where one minute Anne is levelling a school playing field "fit for the national cricket team," and then cobbling together a sparkly outfit for a formal wedding.

Along with Anne are the essential ingredients for sidekick: a travel-savvy Australian sidekick, a heaven-sent adopted family, and a short, dark, and handsome boy-next-door.

Anne's adventures take her to the dusty clamour of the capital Dhaka,



the longest sea beach in the world at Cox's Bazaar, the verdant Sylhet tea gardens, and the voluntary health projects of distant villages.

She amasses a lot of friends, stories ... and even a husband.

A Blonde Bengali Wife is the "unexpected travelogue" that reads like a comedy of manners to tell the other side of the story of Bangladesh.

It led to her manuscript being noticed by literary agent Dinah Wiener. Anne said: "I think her first words to me were: 'This book is not commercial. I might never sell it, but I'm passionate about it, and it really makes me want to go to Bangladesh'."

Between her travels, Anne currently lives in Edinburgh where she is working on a novel whilst studying for a PhD in Creative Writing at Glasgow University. She celebrated the birth of her first child in August 2010.

Royalties from the sale of A Blonde Bengali Wife will go to benefit Bhola's Children, a home and school for orphaned and disabled children on the island of Bhola.

Available in print and several ebook formats and can be found at Amazon. Published by LL Publications.

SONIC HEADLINES

Disney's Tinkerbell and the Great Fairy Rescue – Nintendo DS

ANYONE who believes in fairies and an enchanted land cannot fail to enjoy Disney's Tinkerbell and the Great Fairy Rescue on Nintendo DS.

Although it is tailored towards children it certainly brings out the little girl in older gamers too! What little girl captivated by the Disney Fairies and the hit film of the same name could not fail to love sewing together flower petals to create a dress?

There are a lot of activities packed into the game, from dressing up to collecting special seeds and even a spot of cooking to go with the charming storyline.

You get to create your own fairy and are tasked with growing your own summer garden for the big end of season tea party. Flying around Pixie Hollow you have to try out various levels and find treasure boxes hidden around the game. The graphics and music are truly amazing.

Tinkerbell and the Great Fairy Rescue, developed by Disney Interactive

Studios, is ideal for all young girls who would enjoy such a magical and wonderful adventure.

101 in 1 Megamix Sports – Nintendo DS

NOT one but one hundred and one addictive sports mini-games are ready to play on Nintendo's legendary hand-held.

This definitive gamers' collection will keep the little darlings busy for months after Christmas with a wide assortment of all-time favourites like bowling, boxing, volleyball, tennis, basketball and some unique sports like tossing the caber, traction kiting, capoeira, street luge and so much more that there's practically no end to the fast-paced sports action.

Players of all ages can enjoy hours of endless fun completing challenges and earning points and spending them to unlock tons of new stuff that just keeps on coming.

Simple, addictive and totally engrossing, score points, earn medals, win races, beat personal bests and genuinely go for gold!

Sonic Head

winwinwinwinwinwin

Spectacular give-away

DUMFRIES opticians Specsavers in the Loreburne Centre has teamed up with the Standard to offer its young readers the chance to win a pair of Mr Men specs (including single vision Pentax lenses and an eye examination), a £25 book token and a Mr Men goodie bag.

A runner-up will receive a Mr Men goodie bag.

The Mr Men frame collection has consistently been Specsavers' best selling range of kids' glasses.

The opticians is now also using the successful Mr Men link with its latest advertising campaign.

Mr Happy and friends are promoting Specsavers' biggest ever free offer – customers that spend £69 and above on a pair of glasses get to choose an additional free item from a list of six. It includes a range of different

lenses, contact lenses or a second pair of glasses.

To celebrate the Mr Men partnership the Specsavers store in Dumfries is holding a fun day tomorrow, including a prize draw and giveaways.

To be in with a chance of winning simply tell us in which centre the Dumfries Specsavers store is situated.

Send your answer, together with your name, age, address and daytime contact number (phone or email) to Specsavers competition, The Standard, Park Lane, Dumfries, DG1 2AX, to reach us no later than Friday, November 5.

Entrants must be under 12 years of age.

The winner and runner-up will be chosen by a random draw and notified by post.