

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch s rink

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Body

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Ally McCoist has urged Rangers players and staff to put the club s interests ahead of their own.

As the Ibrox outfit remain £31m in debt and in search of a new owner, several key players are out of contract in the summer. McCoist himself, along with manager Walter Smith, and Kenny McDowall, the first-team coach, is working without a contract.

Smith has already warned that, unless a buyer is found, the situation may worsen in the summer, with players having to leave, and McCoist believes that Rangers long-term future is more significant than those of individuals.

Some of the boys have got contracts up and they never mention it; they just get their work done. They ve got to be concerned, it s natural, but they re handling it really well. And they appreciate that the welfare of the club is the most important thing.

The team s ambitions have so far remained unscathed by the financial uncertainty, with Rangers 10 points clear at the top of the Clydesdale Bank Premier League, in the final of the Co-operative Insurance Cup next month, and playing St Mirren in the Active Nation Scottish Cup fifth-round replay at Ibrox tonight.

McCoist insists this success is a form of diversion, as the team and staff are so focused on playing obligations that other concerns are banished.

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If you let it get to you, then it would matter, but you can't let it, he **says**. You have to come **in** and do your work, plan and prepare for the games, and look at the players. You owe it to the players and, of course, the support to stay focused and get the team ready. That **s** not difficult. The other side of it is something we could do without, but we've all got a job to do, which we love.

Rangers v St Mirren. Pages 2,3

Mark McGhee was last night spat at as he walked from the dugout to the dressing room following Aberdeen **s** exit from the Active Nation Scottish Cup at the hands of first division Raith Rovers.

The Pittodrie manager, stunned and shocked by the vitriol of the home support at the end of what he described as the worst result **in** more than 800 games as a coach on both sides of the border, **said** that he was prepared to accept the criticism as the club once more limped out of a cup competition to a team from the lower leagues.

McGhee, disgusted by his side **s** ineptitude against the Fifers, understood how the fans felt considering that **in** recent years Queen **s** Park, Queen of the South, Dunfermline Athletic and Dundee have all beaten Aberdeen **in** either the Scottish or Co-operative Insurance Cup tournaments.

This is without any shadow of a doubt, the worst result and I don't mean this with any disrespect to Raith Rovers, they firmly deserved their win **in** the 800-odd games I've had as a manager, he **said**. I've lost play-offs and all that, but I've lost doing well.

This was the worst result of my managerial career and that walk from the dugout to the tunnel was the most humiliating experience of my life. **In** any circumstance it was awful and I told the players they set me up for that. It is unacceptable.

There was stuff getting thrown, a couple of scarves and bits of paper. I took my time walking down there because I wanted them to have their **say**. I felt they deserved to vent their anger and they deserved the opportunity to vent it to me. I **s** not something I'm going to dwell on. I'm going to use it as an incentive and I don't want to accuse anyone nor do I want any inquiries or post-mortems as to who spat or who threw paper or who was shouting.

We deserved it. I had a part to play **in** it as well, of course, so I'm not innocent. As much as I wasn't out there not going for headers or not going for tackles I still had a part to play because before the game I had an opportunity to talk to them. Clearly, I didn't get my message to them right so I was part of it and I deserve the stick the players deserve. I am prepared to accept it.

Will the players **bring** me down? That won't happen.

Meanwhile, John McGlynn, the Raith manager, was ecstatic with his side **s** deserved win through Gregory Tade **s** goal on the hour mark.

He **said**: I am so proud of the players. **In** the build-up to this game we had blow after blow with the car accident to Mark Campbell then **in** the warm-up Dougie Hill getting injured. Then, 25 minutes into the game Johnny Russell had to come off. It **s** amazing what our players have achieved. It was my best-ever result.

Ally McCoist has urged Rangers players and staff to put the club **s** interests ahead of their own.

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The most important thing is the club, not what s going to happen to myself or Kenny or indeed, any of the players whose contracts are up, McCoist says. Of course that s important to us as individuals, but we have to accept that it s not the most important thing.

Some of the boys have got contracts up and they never mention it; they just get their work done. They've got to be concerned, it s natural, but they're handling it really well. And they appreciate that the welfare of the club is the most important thing.

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McCoist still has ambitions to be a manager but refuses to look ahead to a potential scenario of replacing Smith during the summer. The future is so uncertain at Ibrox that the greater concern is why a buyer has so far not made a serious bid for the club.

It mystifies you up to a point but, at the same time, there would be legitimate reasons, McCoist says. The current [financial] climate we're just coming out of would be a major factor. Four or five years ago, there might have been people queueing up to buy it.

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LADY Gaga swept the board at The Brits last night with a Medusa-style white wig, face covered by a lace veil and mask in a tribute to her friend and mentor, fashion designer Alexander McQueen, who died last week. As she picked up her first gong, for best international female artist, Lady G referred to McQueen by his Christian name when she said: Thank you Lee McQueen. Report - page 5.

AMERICAN billionaire tycoon Donald Trump has lifted the lid on detailed plans for the Scottish golf course development that has sparked so much controversy. Members of the public will, for the first time, be able to see how Trump proposes to transform Menie estate in Aberdeenshire into a world-class golf resort.

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TWO senior officials with a public transport quango at the centre of an expenses row have been paid almost £30,000 in travel claims for using their own cars.

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) chairman Alistair Watson resigned earlier this week on health grounds after details of his other expenses were revealed.

Now one of his former colleagues, South Lanarkshire Labour councillor David McLachlan, has come under scrutiny after claiming £17,544 for travelling 35,650 miles in his role as vice-chairman equivalent to travelling almost one-and-a-half times around the world.

Mr Watson claimed £10,756 for 21,818 miles over the same 2006-09 period.

Their mileage expenses compare to just £1,355 for 2,749 miles claimed by SPT s other vice-chairman, North Lanarkshire Labour councillor David Fagan.

The organisation, which co-ordinates public transport in the Strathclyde area, has been under pressure since officials were called to account for £117,573 of claims. Almost £50,000 was used to fund foreign fact-finding trips over the past three years, while chief executive Ron Culley, who earns £129,000 a year, spent £6,500 dining in restaurants.

Questions have also been raised over a trip to Manchester made by three senior officials in May 2008 that coincided with Rangers' appearance in the Uefa Cup final.

Mr McLachlan, who lives in Hamilton, earns about £16,000 as a councillor in addition to an SPT salary of more than £11,000. Mr Watson, of Cardonald, Glasgow, was earning £20,295 as SPT chairman and is also paid almost £16,000 for being a Glasgow city councillor.

An SPT spokesman said the men had, on average, three or four meetings a week on SPT business at its headquarters in central Glasgow as well as frequent other meetings with member councils and stakeholders in Scotland and England.

He added: Any travel by car for councillors has to be approved by SPT s chief executive. Exemptions to allow car travel are usually granted when time commitments with council business limit travel options or when car sharing can be more cost-effective.

Glasgow SNP councillor Graeme Hendry, who has already called for an investigation by spending watchdog Audit Scotland, said the inquiry must now be widened. He said: I am astounded at the level of these mileage claims, which beggar belief when you consider that SPT s role should be to promote and improve public transport.

It would seem it has been a do as I say and not as I do attitude to public transport. I would hope that Audit Scotland will look into this as part of their investigation.

You have to question if these men have been at all efficient when travelling to meetings and events. Why haven't they been making more use of public transport since they're supposed to be promoting it?

It would be fascinating to see where all these journeys took them. This is not promising for SPT. Since these have been authorised it sounds like there has been a very lax attitude towards looking at the expenses system as a whole.

None of the men returned calls from The Herald.

THE family who owned a care home where 14 elderly residents were killed in a blaze were warned over fire safety a full year before the tragedy, an inquiry into the incident has heard.

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Health and safety consultant James Reid told the owners of Rosepark care home that there was a high risk to life because staff at the premises in Uddingston, near Glasgow, had not carried out regular fire drills.

Mr Reid s claims were made in a report following an inspection in January 2003, one year before the fire, during which it was also found that some fire alarm points were blocked by wheelchairs and Zimmer frames.

Despite his recommendations, records earlier shown to the Fatal Accident Inquiry apparently indicated that not all of them were carried out before the fire on January 31, 2004.

Yesterday the inquiry was told that Mr Reid reported to the home s joint owners, Thomas, Anne and Alan Balmer, after a formal investigation of the premises.

The report said: At the time of this assessment it was established that you did not have in place a suitable and sufficient health and safety policy with supporting documentation.

Mr Reid, who trained as a fire safety inspector in the British military and in the Scottish Fire Service Training School, advised them to hold full drills including partial evacuation at least every six months.

A drill took place within a month of the report being submitted, but records recovered after the fire and shown to the inquiry last week revealed a gap of 11 months before the next test was carried out, weeks before the blaze.

Only three practice runs were carried out in the three-and-a-half years running up to the inspection, the documents said, and staff working night shifts have previously told the inquiry that they had no experience of fire drills.

Asked by advocate-depute James Wolffe whether it would be important for all staff to take part in drills, Mr Reid, 51, replied absolutely, adding: It s more important for night staff ... I always emphasise how important it is to have a night fire drill.

Rosepark was given a rating of 500/1000 for fire drill performance on a hazard scale used by the health and safety inspector, who was employed on a quarterly retainer to assist with policy at the home. This was by far the most serious failing in its safety policy, he told the inquiry. The blockage of some fire alarm points was ranked second worst, with a score of 350/1000.

Other fire safety problems included the storage of paint in an inappropriate place and the fact that some fire extinguishers had the pins retaining their clips missing.

The inquiry continues.

THE cash-strapped Church of Scotland is making redundant nearly half of all staff in the department responsible for its 128-year-old magazine Life and Work.

Also to be axed are employees at publishing arm St Andrew Press and the Scottish Storytelling Centre. Three regional offices in Glasgow, Perth and Inverness are to close in a bid to reduce the Kirk s £1.2m deficit. The Unite union is very concerned at the proposals.

Job cuts Page 4

A SEX offender has had his case continued after he claimed in court that a ban on him watching pornography was a breach of his human rights. Martin Jones, who is deemed to be a high risk to women and children, is accused of breaching the strict terms of his supervised release order after being caught viewing pornography. Jones was jailed last July for stalking a 12-year-old girl.

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MANCHESTER United striker Wayne Rooney netted two goals at the San Siro after the Red Devils came back from a goal down to beat David Beckham's AC Milan 3-2 in the Champions League last night. Beckham's free-kick was volleyed in by Ronaldinho for an early Italian lead before Scholes levelled for United before half-time. Rooney then scored twice, before Clarence Seedorf bagged Milan's second.

Sport

RAITH Rovers striker Gregor Tade entered the history books with a stunning strike to dump Aberdeen out of the Active Nation Scottish Cup at Pittodrie last night. The French striker bulletted his 58th-minute strike into the roof of the net to give his side a quarter-final tie at Dundee but defeat was greeted with boos from the home support as scarves were thrown onto the pitch.

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Lady Gaga s a Brit over the top

Ally McCoist s career at Rangers has brought distinction, but he does not always seek prominence. In discussing the club s financial plight, he stresses that his concerns are those of a supporter, rather than the team s assistant manager. As ever with McCoist, without being mawkish, his sentiment is provocative.

He can remember a time when the best that Rangers could aspire to was qualifying for the Uefa Cup by beating Motherwell in the final game of the season. That was May 1986, just as the Graeme Souness revolution was about to begin in earnest. The championship then was a nostalgic ambition.

Walter Smith was concerned enough about Rangers' immediate prospects, if a buyer does not emerge for the club, to speak out recently. He warned, with gravity, of the team s situation worsening in the summer. With several players nearing the end of their contracts, the threat is of a form of asset-stripping that would leave the squad deeply compromised.

The future at Ibrox is uncertain, and McCoist is cautious about imagining how it might unfold. His natural ebullience is enough to keep the bleakest thoughts at bay. But then his association with the club stretches back beyond the times when it has been his employer, so he applies a perspective that is solemn.

It s only a worry for me because it s my football club, he says. It has been since I was a wee boy and it s thousands of other people s football club and it s the same concern to them. The most important thing is the club, not what s going to happen to myself or Kenny [McDowall] or indeed, any of the players whose contracts are up. Of course that s important to us as individuals, but we have to accept that it s not the most important thing. I'll survive.

Almost 24 years ago, Rangers needed the audacity of Souness s haughty aspiration, and significant funds, to drastically redefine the club s limits. McCoist was part of the team that had been languishing in mediocrity before the radical impact of the new manager, with Smith at his side, led to the arrival of such established players as Terry Butcher and Chris Woods. I remember those days, I was involved in those days, I was probably the reason for those days, McCoist grins as he recalls the 85/86 season when Rangers finished fifth.

The humour is, as always, waggish and selfless. There is poignancy in the recollection, though, because of fears that Rangers' circumstances Sir David Murray seeking a buyer and Lloyds Bank wishing to recoup their £31m debt could return the club to a position of such indifference. The scenario is daunting, but remote since the gap between the Old Firm and the rest of Scottish football is now more pronounced.

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I couldn't see that [situation recurring], but to be brutally honest that s maybe because I don't want to look at that bigger picture, McCoist says. It s not through ignorance, I just think we'll be okay. I'm half-full rather than half-empty. You don't know what the future s going to hold, but I would be hopeful that it didn't become that.

If there is agitation in the minds of the players and staff at Murray Park, it is suppressed by a profound sense of purpose. Having endured the consequences of economic upheaval, the squad has reduced in size and so become concentrated in its motivations.

The intent of the players can sometimes seem a little devout, but then it is a form of diversion. Significant figures such as Kris Boyd, Nacho Novo, Kirk Broadfoot and DaMarcus Beasley are all out of contract in the summer, but there have been no histrionics at Ibrox. Rangers have lost only one league match all season, are 10 points clear at the top, play in the Co-operative Insurance Cup final next month and face St Mirren tonight in the Active Nation Scottish Cup fifth-round replay.

Some of the boys have got contracts up and they never mention it, they just get their work done, McCoist says. They've got to be concerned about it, it s natural, but they're handling it really well. The welfare of the club is the most important thing, all the players will tell you that. In an ideal situation it would have been sorted out sooner rather than later. But the most important thing is that when it does get done, it s done right and done properly, so the club is in a better state and far healthier. As impatient as we all might be, we have to accept it, because it s so important to so many people.

There is a touching superstition to McCoist, so that he avoids talking of a potential treble, or even directly addressing his own prospects of succeeding Smith. The Rangers manager is thought to be considering the summer as the right time to leave and many believe his assistant is the likely replacement. Such an outcome depends upon who is in charge of the club, of course, and McCoist is content enough to praise the job Smith is doing now.

I've got ambitions to be a manager, he says. But if you had to be under anybody in these unfortunate circumstances, Walter would be the one.

The heartfelt sincerity, and sheer irrepressibility, of McCoist is vital, too.

Somewhere amid all the excitement surrounding the arrival of Robbie Keane et al, Shaun Maloney has become the forgotten man of Parkhead.

The willingness of Tony Mowbray to adopt a more fluent approach to the game should have given Maloney fresh impetus, but injury has again contrived against him, limiting his first-team appearances under Mowbray to just 16.

His absence extended beyond five months and despite suffering a setback on his recent return to training, his former team-mate, Steve Guppy, believes he will yet breathe fresh life into Celtic's s ailing title challenge.

It has been hard and I do feel for him, Guppy told The Herald. He is the most dedicated footballer I have played with or worked with so I hope that sooner or later he can put all these injuries behind him and get back to the player he was.

I have no doubt he will come back stronger. Everyone gets injured in the game, it just comes with it. Shaun has maybe been unlucky in that they have all come at once, but there is no doubt in my mind he will put all that behind him and he will be a big player for Celtic this season and in the future.

Guppy, who moved to Celtic from Leicester City in 2001 to rejoin Martin O'Neill and collected a league winner's s medal during his stay, also has sympathy for the challenges that Mowbray is facing in his debut season in the Clydesdale Bank Premier League.

While Mowbray's s promise of an easier-on-the-eye method of winning games has come to fruition, defensive frailties have undermined his challenge. Guppy urges the Celtic fans to have patience and continue to buy into the Mowbray mantra.

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He said: Everyone must understand that it is not an easy job. It is one of the toughest jobs in football. When I met him, you could tell he was a guy with class and I really hope that he gets it right. It is such a difficult job but you earn the right to manage such a team and he did that at West Brom so he knows what he is doing. I am sure before long they will be exactly where everyone wants them to be.

At a massive club like Celtic there are always expectation levels, you have to win every game. Tony is a successful manager; otherwise he wouldn't be in charge of Celtic. Sometimes it just takes time to work. I wouldn't have thought Robbie Keane would have gone to Celtic so he obviously believes in what is going to happen there.

Guppy is taking his first tentative steps into management with Major League Soccer side Colorado Rapids. He is assistant to the former Wycombe midfielder, Gary Smith, and after a 19-year career during which he was capped for England, he is enjoying life on the other side of the fence.

Former players often talk of how they miss the game once they have been forced to hang up their boots but Guppy is enjoying an unexpected new lease of life.

I hadn't given a lot of thought to it to be honest, he said. I sort of stumbled into it in many ways. I have only been doing it for two years now, so I am still learning my way but I am really enjoying it. The prospect of working with professionals every day is a good one.

I played until I was 39 so I had a good crack at it, to be fair. There is nothing like playing, but the coaching side of things is very involved, it takes up a lot more of your time than playing so you don't really have time to stop and think about anything. I don't miss it as much as I thought I would because there is just so much to do.

History, it seems, is not on St Mirren's side. You have to go back to 1926 to find the last time the Paisley club beat Rangers in a Scottish Cup tie they went on to win the tournament for the first time and back to 1991 to find the last time they triumphed at Ibrox.

An opportunity to end both those records presents itself this evening when the sides meet in an Active Nation Scottish Cup fifth round replay, with St Mirren perhaps a touch aggrieved at not having progressed in Paisley 11 days ago having enjoyed the better of the chances.

Even with reduced gate prices, including free entry for under-16s, tonight's replay provides a much-needed financial boon for both clubs. Of greater incentive, though, is the chance to make it through to a quarter-final tie at home against Dundee United.

There will be many who will feel St Mirren's chances of doing so may have already passed. Rangers, after all, have lost only once domestically in the best part of a year and survived a tricky away tie at Hamilton in the previous round only to prosper in the replay on home soil albeit requiring extra-time to do so.

Walter Smith's side will be strong favourites but can expect to be pushed all the way by a St Mirren side who dominated against Dundee United last weekend only to lose two late goals and all three points. Gus MacPherson hopes his side can take heart from that performance and from their encouraging display in the original tie.

We have to play like we did in the first game, insisted the manager. We need to show the same type of attitude and we have to play with a belief that we can get a result.

MacPherson was at Ibrox on Sunday to take in Rangers' 3-0 defeat of Hibernian and, while impressed with what he saw, the St Mirren manager preferred to keep his focus on his own team.

In every game we play it's about St Mirren, not about the opposition, he added. We have to perform, no matter what system we play and we have to compete in order to get a result. But we trust our group and in the last five or six weeks I can't fault them in terms of their effort and commitment. I'm sure we'll get all that in abundance again.

MacPherson hopes to have Steven Robb available this evening after the winger turned in arguably his finest performance in a St Mirren shirt against United at the weekend. Robb limped off towards the end of that game but

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should be available. I picked up cramp but hopefully I'll be all right, he **said**. It **s** just down to a lack of games because my last start was a few weeks ago, so it took its toll a bit but I should be okay for the games coming up. Now it **s** a case of trying to get more consistency into my game.

Rangers, undefeated domestically **since** losing to Aberdeen **in** November, will provide stiff opposition but Robb remains optimistic that St Mirren can somehow pull off an upset.

Rangers are on a good run and I think they are 19 games unbeaten, he acknowledged. I watched them on Sunday and they are an impressive side. All we can do is concentrate on our own jobs but if we can create enough chances against them, then you never know.

SEX And The City star Sarah Jessica Parker arrives at a New York Fashion Week event as the newly appointed chief creative officer and president of the US fashion label Halston. The 44-year-old actress wore a bronze tunic over black trousers. Picture: AP

POPE Benedict has condemned the Irish **child** sex abuse scandal as a heinous crime and called on the country **s** bishops to display the courage needed to restore the Catholic Church **s** moral credibility.

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However, victims and their families **said** the talks were a failure after the Pope did not rule on whether to accept the resignations offered by several bishops for their role **in** the scandal, which the church admitted last year, or on those who are refusing to resign.

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Ray Gosling, 70, said during a TV programme that he smothered his partner, who was in terrible, terrible pain in hospital.

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In another interview after the Inside Out programme was screened, Mr Gosling said: We had this agreement if it got like that, I would end his life, and that is what I did. If there is a heaven he would look down and be proud of me.

The BBC has been criticised by anti-euthanasia campaigners for not telling police about the confession, but has said it was under no legal obligation to do so.

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AN elderly woman has died after a blaze at her home in Ayr. Strathclyde Fire and Rescue were called to the scene by the pensioner shortly before 5pm yesterday after she became trapped inside the building. Six firefighters tackled the fire and managed to rescue the woman from the property, but she died at the scene. She has not yet been named.

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SCOTLAND winger Thom Evans is to have a second operation this week on the neck injury that ended his season.

The Scottish Rugby Union **said** it will aim to build on that carried out after Evans was hurt during Saturday's 31-24 Six Nations defeat against Wales **in** Cardiff.

Team doctor James Robson **said** the surgeons are delighted with his progress and that the procedure will provide further stabilisation to his neck.

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THE Illusionist is nothing less than an animated love letter to Edinburgh, a gorgeous evocation of the city **in** hand-drawn 2-D that captures its beauty, its quirky charm, and the lovely, pulsating glow of its winter light.

The follow-up to Frenchman Sylvain Chomet's celebrated Belleville Rendez-Vous is a departure from that film's bizarre, baroque inventiveness, yet just as perfectly realised. The animation is sublime, and the story a gentle, moving fable about a man whose traditional trade as a magician, even **in** the late 1950s setting, is becoming anachronistic.

Adapted from a script by Jacques Tati, this starts **in** Paris, where the illusionist Tatichoff is struggling to find an audience. He packs his top hat and tricks and heads to London, only to find that audiences there are more interested **in** the new rock 'n' roll than his rabbit out of a hat. When Billy Boy and the Britoons take the stage, Tatichoff heads for Scotland.

Though the magician's performance **in** an island pub goes well, the appearance of a juke box prompts another move, to Edinburgh.

It is **in** these sequences that the film's pastel-shaded animation soars to amazing heights, Chomet and his team presenting a city at once recognisable and with a period hue that makes it particularly magical.

A convicted sex attacker will no longer face prosecution for allegedly breaching a court order aimed at stopping him offending.

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John Bermingham was due to face two charges of breaching an interim Sopo by using public service vehicles during school travel times.

But judges at the Court of Criminal Appeal in Edinburgh were told yesterday that there would be no further proceedings against him over the charges.

Bermingham, 43, had planned to mount a human rights challenge against the restrictions. But advocate-depute Iain McSparran told the judges: There shall be no further proceedings on that indictment.

He said the decision followed a change in the conditions applied to the order on Bermingham, which no longer includes the public transport ban he was alleged to have breached, and taking into account the time he spent on remand prior to being released on bail last year.

Bermingham was jailed for nine years in 2002 for attempting to rape an 11-year-old girl in Edinburgh.

AN animated film that evokes the spirit of late 1950s Scotland has been hailed by critics as a potential classic after its premier.

Sylvain Chomet s The Illusionist, about an old-fashioned entertainer in Edinburgh who struggles to find his place in the world as his public deserts his act in favour of rock * roll, was described by one member of the audience at the prestigious Berlin International Film Festival as a beautiful and affectionate portrayal of the era.

Chomet, whose last feature Belleville Rendez-Vous was nominated for an Oscar, is based in Edinburgh and spent £8 million on the project.

The reaction in Berlin was that it was money well spent.

Hannah McGill, artistic director of the Edinburgh International Film Festival and former film critic of The Herald, said: The film is a joy and I think Chomet is a genius. The charm and detail that people loved in Belleville is all there.

What s more, I felt incredibly touched and proud to see Scotland presented so beautifully and affectionately.

The film, animated in hand-drawn 2-D, was primarily made at Chomet s animation studio Django Films, above a pub on Edinburgh s George Street.

Adapted from an unproduced script by the legendary French actor and director Jacques Tati, the storyline takes place in Edinburgh and Iona after the lead character arrives from Paris in an attempt to change his luck.

However, the director revealed Edinburgh almost didn't feature at all as the original script sent him to Prague.

Chomet said: The story originally took place between Paris and Prague. And I wanted that changed to Paris and Edinburgh. I fell in love with Edinburgh when I presented Belleville Rendez-Vous there. I found the city a magical place there s something about the constantly changing light. And so my wife Sally and I decided to move to the city and set up a studio.

I had lived in Montreal when making Belleville Rendez-Vous and, as a result, there is a very Canadian feel to that movie. I believe it s important to live in the same environment you are trying to animate, because your inspiration is then all around.

There is a story strand that takes place in a remote village, where the community gets electricity for the first time. I thought that isolation would fit one of the Scottish islands. I initially looked at Mull, which led me to the isle of Iona, its small neighbour in the Inner Hebrides.

When I read the island s local history I was astounded to discover that at exactly the same period in which the Tati story is set, the islanders had a party to celebrate the arrival of electricity from the mainland. So it was 100%

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historically accurate. It also made perfect sense for the illusionist to be playing in these last outreaches of vaudeville.

Chomet s insistence on hand-drawn 2-D graphics stems, the director said, from his love of the classic Disney movies of the 1960s, such as One Hundred and One Dalmatians. Some viewers in Berlin suggest that his film is a fable that deserves to be mentioned in the same breath.

A sex offender has claimed in court that a ban on him watching pornography is a breach of his human rights.

Martin Jones, who is deemed to be a high risk to women and children, is accused of violating the strict terms of his supervised release order after being caught viewing pornography.

However, Jones, who is also known as Miller, claimed the order banning him from using any computer or watching pornographic material was not valid.

He had his bail continued and the case the first of its kind to challenge the terms of a supervised release order will be heard at Perth Sheriff Court in two months' time.

Jones was jailed for 18 months last July for stalking a 12-year-old girl and leaving her traumatised.

He was also placed on a supervised release order for nine months after release. The order is said to have been breached.

And he was also placed on a Sexual Offences Prevention Order (Sopo) for the next five years and banned from being alone with any child under the age of 17.

The Sopo also bans him from living in a home with any child, living with any other sex offender and entering parks or school grounds for the same period.

The case comes just days after The Herald revealed that the number of sex offenders returned to prison for breaching Sopos between 2007-8 and 2008-9 has almost doubled.

New research found that there has also been an increase in the number of convictions for serious violent or sexual offences in every community justice area in Scotland.

Jones was on supervised release upon being freed from jail and social workers who said there is nothing they can do to prevent him posing a danger to the public imposed a ban on porn and computer usage.

Solicitor John McLaughlin, defending, said: This presents as a fairly straightforward matter where it is a breach of a supervised release order.

The problem identified is whether the conditions imposed are reasonable in terms of the powers contained in the law for the social worker to order Mr Miller to comply with.

There may be an attack on it in terms of Human Rights legislation or by way of a Devolution minute. I don't think this has raised its head in any other set of circumstances.

We have written to the social work department asking for information about certain information they had which led to the condition being imposed.

There is no mechanism for one to review a condition which has been imposed. It must be a reasonable condition so the position is that, from a human rights or devolution point of view, you can attack it as unreasonable.

Mr McLaughlin said the issue only came to light after the condition was imposed and then breached by Jones, when he was allegedly found viewing pornography.

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It was the type of hubris that deserves to be captured in a song. Businessman Sir Ian Wood has been left red-faced after a picture of Annie Lennox appeared in a glossy brochure promoting plans for a new civic heart for Aberdeen.

The oil tycoon has pledged £50 million of his own cash to kickstart the City Square project which will see Union Terrace Gardens turned into a mini-Central Park.

But the former Eurythmics singer is publicly opposed to Sir Ian's £140m proposals to raise the city centre gardens to street level.

Earlier this month, Ms Lennox blasted the idea, claiming Aberdeen had already lost too much of its cultural heritage to bulldozers and urged residents to save the gardens. She said the people of the north-east should prevent the green space being ripped out and concreted over.

It has since emerged that Ms Lennox's image has been used in a brochure which describes the project. An image of her performing is used to illustrate the idea that the square could be used to stage concerts.

On Tuesday, the City Square project team admitted that the brochure was being phased out following the embarrassing gaffe.

However, Ms Lennox branded the so-called endorsement ironic. She said: They clearly assumed it would be fine by me, as it makes it look as if I'm endorsing their vision when I wasn't even asked, they just went ahead in any case.

Nicola Moore, who is running the City Square consultation, confirmed the leaflet was being replaced.

She said: We certainly didn't intend to suggest that Ms Lennox supported the City Square project.

We used an image we thought showed the type of venue that the new civic space could host.

Aberdeenshire Council was given a special audience with Sir Ian on Monday at its Woodhill House headquarters during which he talked through his plans and answered questions on the project.

In a separate interview, Sir Ian hit out at Ms Lennox's earlier comments. He said: In Annie Lennox's young days, Union Terrace Gardens probably was very different to how it is now.

I would ask her to come and see how under-utilised it is and the unsightly views there. It is a real architectural blight.

Arsene Wenger has no intention of using Arsenal's injury crisis as an excuse should his side fail to achieve a positive result against FC Porto at Estadio do Dragao this evening.

The Frenchman is without five first-team regulars for the trip to Portugal, with goalkeeper Manuel Almunia, Russian playmaker Andrey Arshavin and centre-half William Gallas the most significant absentees, leaving the 18-man travelling party somewhat lighter than usual.

Alex Song, the Cameroon midfielder, and the Croatia striker, Eduardo have also stayed in London but Wenger claims being low on numbers should not be an issue for the Barclays Premier League side, who did not have a game at the weekend.

It is difficult to say how long they will be out, said the Arsenal manager. But it is not a serious concern. The concern is that the players who are here perform at their best tomorrow. It is part of the season that you do not always have all the players available to select the team but I am not bothered by that.

With Gallas unavailable because of a calf problem, veteran former captain Sol Campbell could be in line for his first European appearance for the club since captaining them in the 2006 Champions League final against Barcelona.

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The 35-year-old has been used just twice since returning to the club but Wenger believes the former England international still has plenty to offer.

Sol s experience can be important, said the Arsenal manager. For a central defender, it is a bit special [to still be playing at 35] but, as long as you are hungry to work hard to keep yourself fit and you are not bothered by injuries, then a central defender can play three or four years longer than a striker.

Arsenal s domestic title hopes have been reborn after Chelsea and Manchester United dropped points in the last set of Premier League matches.

Wenger, though, knows full well his depleted team face a stern test of their European credentials against the Portuguese champions, beaten 1-0 here by Chelsea in the group stages and by Cristiano Ronaldo s wonder strike for Manchester United in last season s quarter-final.

It is always difficult in Porto they always have a team who is committed and technically very good, said Wenger, whose side have yet to win in Porto, following a 2-0 defeat when they had already qualified in December 2008 and a goalless draw four seasons ago.

You respect a team like Porto because you know they will always give you a good game. It is the last 16, a cup draw, so it is always tight. We have 180 minutes where we have to be on top and no-one can predict what will happen.

David Moyes expects to be without midfielder Marouane Fellaini for the rest of the season and to add to the frustration of the Everton manager their Europa League hopes are hanging in the balance.

Moyes side seemed to shrug off the loss of Fellaini, who needs ankle surgery, by racing into a two-goal lead against Sporting Lisbon, thanks to Steven Pienaar and Sylvain Distin. However the game took a dramatic twist with four minutes remaining when Miguel Veloso scored from the spot in this round of 32 first leg match.

The penalty was awarded after Distin had floored Liedson as he tried to surge forward, and the defender was sent off in the process. It means Everton now face a difficult return match in Portugal a week on Thursday after looking so comfortable for so long.

Fellaini will again be looking on from the sidelines after being hurt in a challenge with Liverpool s Sotirios Kyrgiakos, who was sent off in the derby.

Fellaini is not good, Moyes said. He has an injury similar to Robin van Persie and that could keep him out for six months. We will not be sure until the operation takes place. He has played really well this season and been part of the reason behind our improvement. He has been a big miss to us already.

Moyes could not hide his disappointment at the way they let Sporting back into the tie. Pienaar made the breakthrough in the 35th minute with a good finish after being set up by Tim Cahill, who came off with a calf injury. Distin extended Everton s lead in the 49th minute after goalkeeper Rui Patricio flapped at Leighton Baines corner.

The perspective of the game changed, Moyes said. I thought we were more liable to win 3-0 than 2-1. We looked as though we were trying to conserve our energy rather than going for another goal.

We did enough to be 2-0 in front and I did not see a goal coming. But it was not to be. We are disappointed we have not seen the job through, which we should have done. We gave Sporting an opportunity when it looked as though they might not have one.

David Beckham had to settle for second best as the team he loves overcame the one he plays for in the San Siro.

Two second-half goals from Wayne Rooney installs last season s beaten finalists as favourites to book a place in the Champions League quarter-finals. Not even the concession of a third-minute opener for AC Milan, created by

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Beckham for Ronaldinho, could stop Sir Alex Ferguson's troops, although they were forced to endure a nervy finish after Clarence Seedorf hauled Milan back into the tie five minutes from time.

It took a fortunate Paul Scholes effort to bring United level before the break. But after surviving another spell of Milan pressure after half-time, Rooney stamped his class on the contest, scoring his first two European goals of the season to take his tally to 25.

It hadn't started well for United, Patrice Evra's attempt to clear setting Ronaldinho up, although Edwin van der Sar had the shot covered before it deflected off Michael Carrick and ended up in the opposite corner.

For an old team, Milan clearly had something left. Their passing had United twisting and turning, looking for all the world like a team on the edge of a very big cliff, not knowing precisely where the bottom was. Ronaldinho, Luca Antonini and Klaas Jan Huntelaar twice came close to finding Van der Sar's net again. If a couple of them had gone in, Ferguson could not have complained.

As it was, apart from Beckham, the only other Class of 92 graduate on the pitch was about to make a decisive contribution. Scholes has peppered the intervening years with a number of goals that will be admired decades from now. This was not among them. Swinging at Darren Fletcher's low cross, Scholes missed the ball completely with his right foot, the ball striking him halfway up the shin of his standing left. What could only be described as a freakish deflection not only took it the six yards to Dida's goal, but right in the bottom corner, giving the Brazilian no chance of keeping it out.

Milan's response was admirable, given what a blow that away goal was, United's first in five away games against a European heavyweight. Andrea Pirlo forced a one-handed save out of Van der Sar with a 30-yard free-kick, then the 39-year-old Dutchman required every inch of his massive frame to flick a goalbound Ronaldinho effort round the post.

Yet in that one stroke of good fortune for Scholes, it seemed the destiny of the tie had been shaped and a minute after what turned out to be an inspired substitution, Rooney broke his European duck.

Antonio Valencia, who had just replaced Nani, was the provider, sending over a cross from the right that allowed Rooney to steer a header back over Dida into the opposite corner.

Now the age in Milan's legs began to tell. And when Fletcher chipped another delightful ball into the area, Rooney stole between the centre-backs to head home once more.

It seemed a win and progress was assured, so Ferguson will be livid at the Seedorf effort five minutes from time that ensured an uncomfortable ending and gives Milan a flicker of hope for the return in three weeks' time, when Carrick will be unavailable following his dismissal deep into stoppage time.

Laryea Kingston could make his Hearts return this weekend but only if he matches word with deed and convinces manager Jim Jefferies that his attitude has changed.

The Ghanaian is poised to play in a bounce match tomorrow after missing two months with a hamstring problem. The 29-year-old last played for Hearts in mid-December due to a hamstring problem and a combination of injury and a fall-out with Csaba Laszlo, the former manager, has restricted his appearances to just five this season.

However, Jefferies insists every player has a clean slate but he wants to see renewed commitment from the playmaker.

I've had a chat with Larry and we know the problems, Jefferies said. He's got to remember that I'm one of these managers who will soon know, with the experience I've got, if he's genuine. I'm sure he is.

It will be good for everyone if he complies with the demands. It's about playing for the team and working hard. He seems keen enough to do it and forget what's gone on.

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch's rink

He s like the rest of them who are out of contract. They have this period to show me they want to play for the club and that they've got something to offer.

Billy Reid, the Hamilton Academical manager, has received mixed news ahead of Saturday s trip to Hearts.

While captain Alex Neil and James Wesolowski are both expected to return from hamstring problems, new signing Dougie Imrie will serve a one-match suspension after collecting a sixth booking of the season in the 1-0 defeat to Motherwell 11 days ago.

The loss of the 26-year-old compounds Reid s attacking problems, with top scorer Mickael Antoine-Curier out following knee surgery, but confidence is high among the New Douglas Park side after a narrow defeat on their last visit to Tynecastle.

We lost a penalty and the second goal straight after that the last time there but it s a game we feel we can go there and take something from, he said.

Such optimism is helped by the return of midfielders Neil and James Wesolowski. The Australian has played only half an hour in and aborted comeback attempt last month since being injured in the 2-0 defeat to Celtic on Boxing Day, while Neil has played just eight league games this season because of separate hip and hamstring injuries.

Reid added: I'm fairly hopeful both will be ready. It s been really disheartening for me that they have been out because they are the engine room of the team.

Peter Houston is hoping to have his cake and to eat it.

Craig Levein s decision to leave Dundee United to become the new Scotland manager could have left his former assistant out of work and wondering where the next pay cheque was coming from.

Instead, Houston is now facing up to a possible future that includes combining the manager s role at Tannadice with a part-time position as Levein s assistant with the national team. No wonder he could barely keep the smile off his face at Hampden yesterday.

That [outcome] would be perfect, he said. After showing initial reluctance to step into Levein s shoes, Houston is thriving as interim manager at United. Should they continue in a similar vein and finish the season in at least fourth place in the Clydesdale Bank Premier League, Tannadice chairman Stephen Thompson may offer the 51-year-old the job on a permanent basis in the summer, while also graciously permitting him to join up with Levein for international matches.

All that will need to wait, however. For now, Houston s Scotland contract stretches to just one match, the friendly against the Czech Republic on March 3. As a passionate Scot, he hopes that his role will be extended to take in the forthcoming qualifying campaign for the 2012 European Championships, the fixtures for which will be decided in Madrid on Friday.

There is a frisson of excitement surrounding the national team just now following the acrimony and apathy prevalent towards the end of the George Burley era. Houston, a modest player who flitted around the lower leagues in an understated career, can feel it too, and hopes to be a part of the management team that leads Scotland to a major finals for the first time in 14 years.

I was never good enough to play for Scotland, he said matter-of-factly. As a Falkirk player in the first division for 10 years you're never going to make the Scotland team. If I get into the Scotland set-up and am able to help with the European Championships that would be the pinnacle.

People always say coaching and management is a poor second to playing, but that s not how I'm feeling just now. I'm very excited and very pleased to hopefully be involved with Scotland in the long term.

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If we qualify for the Euros I know how much it will mean to the nation being a Scotland fan myself. I remember when Scotland qualified for finals. It s been a while now so it would be great to do it again and I don't think it s beyond us.

Levein has joked that being Scotland manager is a cinch as long as you don't have to play any games, but even those who did not initially support his appointment will surely have been impressed with the methodical, thorough manner in which he has gone about his business.

Houston, who was Levein s assistant at Hearts, Leicester City and United, gave further insight into the man many are hoping can lead Scotland from the wilderness. Any repeat of the Bevvigate scandal seems highly unlikely.

There s no chance the players will mess with him, he insisted. In the early stages of us working together I quickly learnt what he wanted and made sure it was done. He s not shy in telling his staff if they're not doing something right, including myself. If I was ever slack in the past he wasn't long in telling me.

So I think players will want to play for him and he'll quickly gain their respect. There won't be any nonsense. There is a huge challenge ahead and with the Tartan Army cheering them on they'll get a team that gives 100%.

Houston was a youth coach at Hearts just as the national manager s injury-plagued career was coming to an end. Even then, Levein s leadership skills were starting to become apparent.

I was in charge of the youth team and used to take them up to the gym. Craig s knees were knackered but he used to punch a speedball for 45 minutes at a time. Have you ever tried that? See if you can do it for a couple of minutes.

When I took the youth players up Craig showed them how to do it and guys like Robbie Neilson, Scott Severin and Kenny Milne couldn't wait to get up to the gym to see Craig. In many ways he was coaching even then, not in a football sense but teaching others good habits.

* Tickets for Scotland v Czech Republic, at Hampden Park, on March 3 are available now. Call: 0844 481 1818 Web sales: www.ticketlink.co.uk/scotlandtickets Visit: SECC Box office and Hampden

Kevin Kyle insists he is prepared to play with pain between now and the end of the season even if it means not getting any sleep.

The Kilmarnock striker has been hampered by a problem around his lower stomach, which he is hoping to have diagnosed this week, and the 28-year-old admits unbearable pain has kept him awake at night.

Jimmy Calderwood, the Rugby Park manager, has lessened Kyle s workload to ensure he can play matches and the striker is determined to put off an operation until the summer.

It s a nightmare to sleep because it s so much pain, I don't enjoy it but if it means fighting through pain, it needs to be done, said Kyle of what he thinks could be a hernia, stress fracture or abductor muscle problem.

Not training and just trying to get through games is not ideal. I would love nothing more than being 100% and chasing down players but some days are good and some days are bad. The manager knows that and that s why maybe I might not train until Tuesday and won't train on Friday.

I will fight tooth and nail to do my best for him; It s something I might be able to manage until the end of the season but it s not ideal by any stretch of the imagination.

final ad if required for Kirk funding story

The Scottish Storytelling Centre employs 12, although some posts are jointly funded by partners including the Scottish Arts Council. The Kirk was unable to say how many it funds directly.

A GAMEKEEPER shot a protected buzzard and stockpiled outlawed poisons to target more to prevent them eating baby pheasants on an estate.

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Keeper Graham Kerr was caught red-handed with one bird of prey he had slaughtered and admitted he was planning to kill more of the buzzards.

Perth Sheriff Court was told that Kerr had decided to take on the buzzards after they started killing the pheasant chicks being bred on Redmyre Estate in Abernethy, Perthshire.

As well as using a rifle to kill one bird, Kerr had obtained banned poisons which would cause the buzzards slow and agonising deaths, the court was told.

Kerr, 53, from Dundee, admitted intentionally killing a wild bird, by shooting it with a rifle on Redmyre Estate in September 2009.

He also admitted possessing the pesticides carbofuran and alpha-chloralose which contained prescribed active ingredients, and has been ordered to attend court for sentence.

Sheriff Robert McCreadie said: Anyone employed as a gamekeeper would be aware of restrictions there now are on the damage and destruction of wild birds. Anyone in that position would be expected to know it was illegal.

Gordon Casey, regional officer for Unite, said: We are formally involved in the consultation. We are very concerned at the proposals within the organisation and we will be challenging them with the Church at every opportunity.

We have held a meeting of our members and they were all equally concerned at the whole future of the Mission and Discipleship department.

MICHELIN-starred chef Raymond Blanc has criticised the TV industry for sensationalising food.

Blanc, 60, who is back on the small screen with his first cookery programme in 13 years, said cuisine had disappeared from so-called food programmes in recent years.

The renowned French chef said he had turned down ITV show Hell s Kitchen and the BBC s Strictly Come Dancing which has featured fellow cookery star Gary Rhodes as a contestant.

Blanc told the TV Times: I did a lot of shows in the 1980s, but I chose to stop because TV started sensationalising food.

I could have done Hell s Kitchen (which features Blanc s former trainee Marco Pierre White) or Strictly Come Dancing, but I refused.

Blanc, who fronted The Restaurant, said: I don't want to be remembered as a prima ballerina; nor do I want to beat people around the head. That s not cuisine it s sensationalism.

The chef, who moved to England in 1972, is currently sharing his tips, techniques and recipes on BBC2 in his new series, Raymond Blanc: Kitchen Secrets.

Asked why he was doing a cookery series, he said: I want to promote pure food and I think the time is right. People are moving away from the fast-food lifestyle and are becoming more responsible consumers and cooks.

The last season of The Restaurant, in which couples competed for the opportunity to go into business with Blanc, was criticised by viewers over the choice of winner, while the couple who won the first series handed over control of their restaurant after just six months.

THE mystery of the human body's ability to protect itself against cancer and genetic disorders has been uncovered in new research.

A study of cell reproduction by scientists at the University of Dundee revealed a clever mechanism which ensures healthy chromosomes are passed on effectively to prevent disease.

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The 46 chromosomes that make up human cells all carry vital genetic information and must be precisely copied and separated as we grow.

If the process is disturbed it can cause disorders such as Down s syndrome.

Researchers describe a blindfold handshake between microtubules or threads which capture chromosomes and pull them apart into new cells.

Professor Tomo Tanaka said that scientists previously had little idea how the process was carried out so efficiently.

SONY Ericsson breached advertising rules during the launch of a mobile phone which exaggerated its ability to use Facebook, a watchdog has ruled.

The TV ad showed a woman using the Satio phone to take photos and then showed the screen displaying icons for several applications, including the networking site Facebook.

But a viewer complained after buying the phone and finding it did not come with the Facebook application, which seemed incompatible with the handset.

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) upheld the complaint, ruling that Sony Ericsson s use of the Facebook logo was likely to mislead viewers.

Sony Ericsson said software problems meant the phone could not run Facebook when launched.

STAFF are to be axed at the Church of Scotland body that recruits new members and is behind Christian education as the fallout from the Kirk s financial woes continues.

The Church is trying to reduce its £1.2 million deficit and the 44-strong department has been warned it will be reduced to just 24 after the revamp.

Three regional offices in Glasgow, Perth and Inverness are to close with eight job losses and the number of posts across the council will also be reduced although the Church declined to say which other areas would be hit.

The consultation comes as a separate review into the long-standing magazine to investigate the meaning and place of an editorially independent Life and Work in relation to the mission work of the Church continues.

Concerns over the review and consultation have already been raised internally as the magazine does well for the Kirk, with a circulation of over 30,000, and is the best-selling monthly religious title in the UK with a six-figure net surplus last year.

However insiders said despite it being a key tool for communication with congregations, it is not gaining any new readers.

St Andrew Press is the publishing house of the Church of Scotland, with a catalogue of around 200 titles, ranging from books that explore the Christian faith to histories and biographies.

Part of the role of the Scottish Storytelling Centre, which is owned by the Kirk, is to teach people how to interest children and adults in Biblical studies.

The Church s director Dr Donald Smith courted controversy earlier this year when he insisted Robert Burns is a greater Scottish icon than Kirk founding father John Knox at a time when religious commentators had raised the apparent lack of commemoration of this year s 450th anniversary of Knox s Reformation of 1560.

A recent review of the department, called the Council of Mission and Discipleship, found that its core objective of defining the overall mission of the Church was not being achieved effectively and efficiently .

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Departmental convener Reverend Mark Johnstone said: There is a need for Mission and Discipleship to have a clear vision and purpose and we feel that has been lost in recent years. Too many of our areas are operating in isolation from each other, with a repetition of work taking place as a result.

The Kirk said employees of the council were informed of the consultation process and all will have the opportunity to comment on the proposals before any final decisions are taken.

The trade union Unite has also been invited to take part in the consultation.

Mr Johnstone added: The proposals involve a reduction in the number of employees we have across the board. At the moment we have 44 posts and under the proposals that would reduce to 24.

I recognise that this will be a difficult and uncertain time for many of our employees but we are committed to working with them to ensure that any changes are managed sensitively.

It is important to state that this is not about the performance of individual people or posts but about the overall shape and effectiveness of the council.

Gordon Casey, regional officer for Unite, said: We are formally involved in the consultation. We are very concerned at the proposals within the organisation and we will be challenging them with the Church at every opportunity.

We have held a meeting of our members and they were all equally concerned at the whole future of the Mission and Discipleship department.

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STAFF at an animal rescue centre were amazed when a lost cat found its way there despite having its head stuck in a food can.

The pet was discovered by workers at the centre in Fife with a Whiskas tin lodged up to its neck.

The Scottish SPCA, which runs the unit, said the female must have been scavenging and got her head stuck. They say she was lucky not to have been hit by a car.

Colin Seddon, manager at the centre in Middlebank, Dunfermline, said: Luckily no damage was done and the little cat was very pleased to be freed from the discomfort that comes with having your head stuck inside a tin can. We think it s likely that she was scavenging and came across this discarded tin of cat food.

The cat wandered into the centre on Sunday morning and, after being checked over, was transferred to the Scottish SPCA s rescue unit in Balerno, Edinburgh.

The animal charity said it is possible she was dumped by someone who thought the unit was a re-homing centre. Local inquiries have not tracked down her owner.

Mr Seddon said: She is a friendly and well-looked after cat and she was wearing a distinctive black collar with green cats' eyes imprinted on the material.

Because she s in such good condition, we'd hope that she s simply lost.

If that is the case, then we'd encourage her owner to contact our animal helpline (03000 999 999) to get their lucky black cat back.

The charity said the incident highlighted the threat posed to animals by discarded cans and other litter.

THE MacNeil of Barra, the 46th clan chief who could count US President Barack Obama among his former students, died yesterday at the age of 80.

Ian Roderick MacNeil was a former law professor at a university in Chicago.

He lived in Edinburgh, but kept a house on Barra, where his clan had been for over a thousand years.

In 2004 he gave 9000 acres of the island, as well as fishing and mineral rights, to Scottish ministers with a view to it being passed on to the community.

IT is the music awards ceremony which unlike its more sedate transatlantic cousin the Grammys has earned a reputation for drawing out the anarchic side of pop.

Last night s 30th Brit Awards marked a coming of age for the star-studded ceremony with a spectacular round of live sets and (relatively) well-behaved stars.

Lady Gaga swept the board, but ditched plans to turn up on stage in a wrecked car to perform her hits including Poker Face in favour of a low-key performance that included a tribute to her friend, the late fashion designer Alexander McQueen.

The only serious blip during the two-hour live show came from Oasis frontman Liam Gallagher who took to the stage determined to take a swipe at his brother and former bandmate Noel.

Accepting Oasis s award for the Brits album of 30 years for their record (What s the Story) Morning Glory?, he pointedly avoided thanking Noel, who forced the band s split last year when he walked out, blaming Liam s violent and verbal intimidation.

Gallagher told the crowd: Listen kids ... the best bands in the f***** world live forever, before hurling a microphone into the audience. As he left the stage, host Peter Kay remarked: What a k***head.

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Cheryl Cole provided one of the high points of the evening as she braved the stage following allegations about her footballer husband Ashley Cole to perform her hit Fight for this Love.

Meanwhile, after being introduced by Kay as New York s answer to Sue Pollard , Lady Gaga took the stage wearing a huge white wig and veil to perform a low-key version of Telephone on the piano, which she dedicated to McQueen.

Meanwhile, one-time enfant terrible of British pop Lily Allen showed no sign of nerves as she opened the night by descending on to the stage on a replica bomb to the sound of air raid sirens.

The 24-year-old went on to take the award for British Female Solo Artist.

Although Allen s performance went smoothly, the show suffered minor teething problems when the audio faltered as host Kay arrived on stage. He was followed by former glamour model Sam Fox, whose notorious presenting skills with Mick Fleetwood in 1989 spelled the end of its live broadcasts.

Fox, who presented the award for most memorable performance of 30 years to the Spice Girls, said: I better get it right tonight. I don t want you to hold it against me for the next 20 years, before the show appeared to suffer a second technical hitch.

The event was a far cry from the first ever Brits in 1977, when Michael Aspel handed the Best British Male to Cliff Richard and Best British Group to The Beatles.

British Female Solo Artist: Lily Allen

British Male Solo Artist: Dizzee Rascal

British Breakthrough Act: JLS

British Group: Kasabian

Mastercard British Album: Florence And The Machine, right, Lungs

British Single: JLS, Beat Again

Critics Choice: Ellie Goulding

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DUMBARTON 2

STIRLING ALBION 4

Stirling albion bounced back from a nine-goal defeat in their last outing at Ross County to move back into second place after a cracking encounter at Strathclyde Homes Stadium.

Allan Moore's men took the lead after a lightning raid in the first minute which ended with Scott Robertson side-footing David McKenna's cross into the net. The lead lasted for only two minutes when Mick Dunlop lobbed the ball into the box and Ben Gordon rose to nod home.

The game continued in an open fashion and Albion took the lead on 11 minutes with a stunning strike from Chris Aitken, who volleyed in from 22 yards after a McKenna cross had been headed clear.

Aitken rattled the bar shortly afterwards and he added a third on 34 minutes when the ball broke to him at the edge of the box.

Dumbarton got back into it right on half-time when Roddy Hunter ignored claims of offside to blast home from close range but Stirling restored their two-goal advantage four minutes into the second period when Robertson picked his spot from the edge of the box.

GRANT Smith, son of SFA chief executive Gordon, yesterday joined first division club Ross County. The 29-year-old midfielder had been playing in Singapore and Australia since leaving Dundee United in 2007.

He's a very experienced player who is comfortable in a number of positions and adds something different to the squad already in place, which is exactly what we need, said manager Derek Adams.

Dunfermline are facing a striker crisis after top scorer Andy Kirk tore his hamstring. The 14-goal Northern Ireland internationalist is facing at least two weeks out. Jim McIntyre is already without long-term injured pair Graham Bayne and Steven McDougall, leaving only himself and David Graham as forwards.

Jim Leighton, the former Scotland goalkeeper, has joined ambitious Highland League side Huntly as goalkeeping coach.

When the opportunity arose, I didn't have to give it too much thought, he said. I'm delighted to get involved. I will give the position 100% commitment and try to impart some knowledge and help the club's three goalkeepers improve.

Gregory Tade wrote himself into the Raith Rovers history books with a stunning strike to dump Aberdeen out of the Active Nation Scottish Cup last night.

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch s rink

The French striker, a cult hero with the Stark s Park fans, bulletted his 58th-minute strike into the roof of the net to give book his side a quarter-final tie at Dundee and send a sizeable visiting support home in joyous mood to Fife.

The defeat was greeted at the end with boos from the home support, incredulous that this was the team that put four goals past Celtic just three days earlier. It is now the fifth time in three seasons that Aberdeen have exited the domestic cup competitions to lower-league opposition.

In truth, it was no more than they deserved. Their performance bordered on pathetic and while they pummelled the Raith defence for long spells in the second half, they lacked the cohesion of the visitors who looked considerably more comfortable on the ball.

John McGlynn didn t have his troubles to seek in the build-up to this tie. Three of the players who participated in the first game at Stark s Park 10 days ago were unavailable to him for last night s game. Mark Campbell is recovering from a car accident, Laurie Ellis was injured, and Dougie Hill, already nursing a back problem, exacerbated the injury during the warm-up. Midfielder Stephen Simmons moved back to compensate for Hill s absence. He looked decidedly uneasy in the early stages, however, as the hosts exerted pressure and showed an eagerness to prove that their failure to go through to the quarter-finals when these sides last met was a fluke.

Steven MacLean, who hit two Aberdeen goals in last weekend s 4-4 draw against Cetic, came close to firing his side into an early lead with a ferocious volley which David McGurn, the Raith goalkeeper did well to stop.

The visitors refused to be flustered, preferring instead to adopt a patient approach. Their 1000-strong support seemed reasonably content in the driving rain and sub-zero temperatures to go along with such tactics. They did, though, have to accept an early blow when Johnny Russell, hurt in a challenge with Darren Mackie, was forced off after just 25 minutes, Darren Smith replacing him and causing concern in the Aberdeen defence with a thundering shot from the edge of the area and offering Jamie Langfield the chance to show his worth with a diving save on to his left-hand post before it was. Moments later, Tade cursed his luck as he failed to connect with Smith s cross to the back post.

Mackie headed wide shortly before the break and that was as good as it got for Aberdeen in the first half. And, while they upped the tempo at the start of the second, it was the Fifers who struck with a blistering goal in the 58th minute.

The Smiths, Kevin and Darren linked up down the right and when the latter skipped past a ponderous Jerel Ifil and fired a low ball across the six yard box, Tade was first to pounce bulleting his shot into the net.

There was the inevitable onslaught from Aberdeen, though their work lacked the control of Raith, and hinted at desperation as they sought an equaliser. There was, though, a decided lack of discipline and shape to their play with too much emphasis on high balls into the penalty area, not the hallmark of would-be Scottish Cup finalists.

QUEEN OF THE SOUTH 3

AYR UNITED 0

QUEEN of the South rekindled their faltering title hopes with this easy win against 10-man Ayr.

The Somerset Park side had started brightly but their hopes nosedived when Craig Samson was red-carded in 16 minutes for a foul on Paul Burns who was about to pull the trigger. Mark Roberts was sacrificed to make way for substitute goalkeeper Stephen Grindlay, who had no chance as Stewart Kean doubled the punishment from the spot.

The Dumfries outfit went on to dominate possession and a patient build-up almost brought reward when Rocco Quinn and Bob Harris created an opening for David Weatherston whose shot was deflected wide. Weatherston, who had earlier rattled the bar with a header, was then denied by Grindlay.

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch's rink

The depleted visitors struggled to get out of their own half and frustrations spilled over when Steven Bowey was booked for scything down Burns.

At times Queens players were queuing up to take pot shots at Grindlay but a lack of composure in front of goal kept the visitors in contention.

United almost made their hosts pay for missed chances when a Tam McManus header was well saved by Scott Fox. Instead Queens made the points safe when Stephen McKenna s header trickled over the line.

And Weatherston added the goal of the game when he beat two defenders before drilling a left-foot shot low into the net.

annan ath v albion rovers

The hosts will welcome back Mike Jack and Scott Anson as they go in search of a first win in five matches and the three points that would move them into sixth place above the Cliftonhill side.

Albion Rovers, meanwhile, have more concerns with defenders Phil McGrath and Mick O Byrne suspended, and Steven McKeown and Chris Boyle are sidelined by injuries. Todd Lumsden, the player/assistant manager, could start in a recast back four.

LAST NIGHT

* UEFA Champions League

Knockout Round 1 first leg

AC Milan 2 Manchester United 3

Ronaldinho 3 Scholes 36

Seedorf 85 Rooney 66, 74

Att: 80,000

AC Milan Dida, Bonera, Nesta, Thiago Silva,

Antonini (Favalli 38), Beckham (Seedorf 72), Pirlo, Ambrosini, Pato, Huntelaar (Inzaghi 77), Ronaldinho. Subs: Abbiati, Gattuso, Flamini, Abate.

Booked: Ronaldinho

Manchester United Van der Sar, Rafael Da Silva (Brown 90), Ferdinand, J Evans, Evra, Nani (Valencia 64), Carrick, Scholes, Fletcher, Park, Rooney.

Subs: Kuszczak, Neville, Owen, Berbatov, Gibson.

Sent off: Carrick (90). Booked: Rooney, Carrick

Referee Olegario Benquerena (Portugal)

Olympique Lyonnais 1 Real Madrid 0

Makoun 47 Att: 40,500

Olympique Lyonnais Lloris, Reveillere, Cris, Boumsong, Cissokho, Toulalan, Govou, Makoun, Pjanic (Kallstrom 78), Delgado (Michel Bastos 89), Lopez (Gomis 81). Subs: Vercoutre, Ederson, Gassama, Gonalons. Booked: Govou

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch's rink

Real Madrid Casillas, Arbeloa, Sergio Ramos, Albiol, Marcelo (Garay 46), Mahamadou Diarra, Alonso, Granero, Kaka, Higuain (Benzema 64), Ronaldo.

Subs: Adan, Gago, Raul, Lassana Diarra, Drenthe. Booked: Arbeloa, Alonso

Referee Martin Atkinson (England)

* UEFA Europa League

Last 32 first leg

Everton 2 Sporting Lisbon 1

Pienaar 35 Veloso 87pen

Distin 49 Att: 28,131

Everton Howard, Neville, Yobo, Distin, Baines, Donovan, Arteta (Rodwell 78), Osman, Pienaar, Cahill (Yakubu 62), Saha (Bilyaletdinov 83).

Subs: Nash, Vaughan, Gosling, Coleman.

Sent off: Distin (86).

Sporting Lisbon Rui Patricio, Abel, Tonel, Daniel Carrico, Grimi, Mendes, Veloso, Izmailov, Fernandez (Carlos Saleiro 66), Joao Moutinho (Djalo 66), Liedson. Subs: Tiago, Anderson Polga, Adrien Silva, Vukcevic, Bruno Pereirinha. Booked: Joao Moutinho, Daniel Carrico.

Referee Darko Ceferin (Slovenia)

* Active Nation Scottish Cup

Round 5 Replay

Aberdeen 0 Raith Rovers 1

Att: 8153 Tade 58

Aberdeen Langfield, Foster, Diamond (Young 46), Ifil, Paterson, Mackie, McDonald, Kerr, Aluko, MacLean, Paton. Subs: Nelson, Grassi, Marshall, Fyvie. Booked: Paterson

Raith Rovers McGurn, Wilson, Murray, Sloan, Ferry, Williamson, Walker, Simmons, Tade, Russell (Darren Smith 25), K Smith (Weir 75). Subs: O Connor, Wedderburn. Booked: Tade, Murray, Ferry

Referee D Somers

Irn-Bru Scottish League

* Division 1

Queen of the South 3 Ayr United 0

Kean 19pen

McKenna 57

Wetherston 70 Att: 1721

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch s rink

Queen of the South Fox, McMillan, Harris, Lilley (McKenna 46), Reid, Burns, Scally, Quinn, Weatherston (McParland 73), Kean, Holmes (Knight 77). Subs: McAusland, Andrews. Booked: Lilley, Scally

Ayr United Samson, McGowan, Easton, Campbell, Bowey, A Aitken, Roberts (Grindlay 17), Kenneth Connolly (Woodburn 77), Keenan, Mendes, McManus (McKay 67). Subs: Borris, Mitchell.

Sent off: Samson (16). Booked: Roberts, Bowey

Referee A Muir

P W D L F A Pts

Dundee 23 12 8 3 33 20 44

Ross County 21 11 6 4 32 24 39

Inverness Caledonian Th 22 10 7 5 36 22 37

Queen of the South 21 10 6 5 35 20 36

Partick Thistle 23 10 5 8 36 28 35

Dunfermline Athletic 21 8 6 7 31 27 30

Raith Rovers 20 7 5 8 20 25 26

Morton 21 7 0 14 24 40 21

Ayr United 19 2 6 11 12 32 12

Airdrie United 21 2 5 14 19 40 11

* Division 2

Dumbarton 2 Stirling Albion 4

Gordon 4 Robertson 1, 49

Hunter 45 Aitken 12, 34

Att: 595

Dumbarton Vonacek, Chisholm, Dunlop, Gordon, C Smith, Craig (O Donoghue 46), Chaplain, McStay (Clark 65), Murray, Carcary, Hunter (Wyness 46).

Subs: White, McNiff. Booked: Dunlop, C Smith

Stirling Albion Christie, Robertson, Graham, Allison, Forsyth, Taggart (Corr 90), Murphy, Aitken (Gibson 75), O'Brien, Byrne, McKenna (Mullen 82).

Subs: Hogarth, O'Neill. Booked: Robertson

Referee S McLean

P W D L F A Pts

Alloa Athletic 22 12 5 5 27 18 41

Stirling Albion 19 10 6 3 36 26 36

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch s rink

Cowdenbeath 22 10 6 6 33 23 36

Brechin City 21 9 7 5 32 19 34

Dumbarton 20 8 4 8 29 34 28

Peterhead 20 8 3 9 25 30 27

Stenhousemuir 22 6 8 8 25 24 26

East Fife 22 6 7 9 28 31 25

Arbroath 22 5 5 12 21 36 20

Clyde 20 4 3 13 15 30 15

* Division 3

Forfar Athletic 1 Elgin City 0

Harty 89 Att: 402

Forfar Ath Brown, McCulloch, Tod, Bishop, Tulloch, M Fotheringham (Sellars 46), Mowat, I Campbell, Watson (Gordon 63), R Campbell (Harty 62), Templeman. Subs: Curtis, Deasley. Sent off: Tulloch (90). Booked: Watson, R Campbell, Bishop, Mowat

Elgin City Gibson, Niven, Kaczan, MacDonald, Nicolson, G Morrison, David W Craig, Frizzel, MacAulay, Gunn (Crooks 56), Sutherland.

Subs: Dunn, Edwards, Cameron, David A Craig.

Sent off: MacDonald (90). Booked: MacDonald

Referee J Beaton

P W D L F A Pts

Livingston 22 15 3 4 43 18 48

East Stirlingshire 20 14 2 4 29 20 44

Forfar Athletic 20 10 6 4 34 21 36

Berwick Rangers 22 10 4 8 32 27 34

Queen s Park 22 8 4 10 25 32 28

Albion Rovers 19 5 8 6 15 17 23

Stranraer 20 6 5 9 25 31 23

Annan Athletic 19 5 6 8 18 21 21

Elgin City 21 4 6 11 25 38 18

Montrose 21 1 6 14 16 37 9

* Barclays Premier League

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch s rink

Stoke City 1 Manchester City 1

Whelan 72 Barry 85

Att: 26,778

Stoke City Sorensen, Huth, Shawcross, A Faye, Higginbotham (Collins 46), Delap, Whitehead, Whelan, Lawrence (Diao 60), Sidibe, Fuller (Beattie 80). Subs: Begovic, Kitson, Pugh, Sanli.

Sent off: A Faye (53). Booked: Whelan, Fuller, Diao

Manchester City Given, Richards (Zabaleta 81), Toure, Lescott, Garrido (Wright-Phillips 60), Adam Johnson (Petrov 86), Vieira, De Jong, Barry, Santa Cruz, Adebayor. Subs: Taylor, Bridge, Onuoha, Ireland. Booked: Vieira, De Jong, Barry

Referee Alan Wiley

P W D L F A Pts

Chelsea 26 18 4 4 61 22 58

Manchester United 26 18 3 5 62 21 57

Arsenal 26 16 4 6 61 30 52

Manchester City 25 12 9 4 48 33 45

Liverpool 26 13 5 8 43 27 44

Tottenham Hotspur 26 12 7 7 45 26 43

Aston Villa 25 11 9 5 32 19 42

Birmingham City 25 10 7 8 24 26 37

Everton 25 9 8 8 35 36 35

Fulham 26 9 7 10 30 28 34

Stoke City 25 7 10 8 24 28 31

Blackburn Rovers 26 8 7 11 26 43 31

Sunderland 25 6 8 11 32 42 26

West Ham United 25 5 9 11 32 40 24

Wolverhampton Wanderers 25 6 6 13 21 42 24

Wigan Athletic 24 6 6 12 26 49 24

Hull City 26 5 9 12 25 51 24

Burnley 25 6 5 14 25 50 23

Bolton Wanderers 24 5 7 12 29 46 22

Portsmouth 25 4 4 17 20 42 16

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch s rink

* Coca-Cola Championship

Blackpool 2 Middlesbrough 0

Ormerod 30, Campbell 90

sent off: Edwards 61 Att: 7936

Bristol City 1 Leicester City 1

Clarkson 90 Dyer 90

Att: 13,746

Cardiff City 1 West Bromwich Alb 1

Whittingham 8pen Zuiverloon 45

Att: 20,758

Derby County 5 Preston North End 3

Jones 34og Parkin 10

Commons 50 Sedgwick 62, Brown 90

Hulse 64, 77, Barker 68 Att: 26,993

Nottingham Forest 1 Sheffield United 0

Earnshaw 4 sent off: Henderson 46

Att: 22,076

Peterborough Utd 3 Ipswich Town 1

Dickinson 47 Murphy 9

Frecklington 63

Morgan 85 Att: 9428

Plymouth Argyle 1 Swansea City 1

Johnson 87 Pratley 46

Att: 9,185

Scunthorpe United 2 Barnsley 1

Hooper 50 Bogdanovic 78

Hayes 90 Att: 5648

Sheffield Wednesday 0 Doncaster Rovers 2

Ward 40

Att: 22,252 O Connor 64og

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch s rink

P W D L F A Pts

West Bromwich Albion 31 17 9 5 62 32 60

Newcastle United 30 17 9 4 49 21 60

Nottingham Forest 32 16 10 6 47 24 58

Swansea City 31 12 14 5 28 22 50

Cardiff City 30 14 7 9 56 36 49

Leicester City 30 12 11 7 37 30 47

Sheffield United 32 12 9 11 44 43 45

Blackpool 32 11 11 10 48 40 44

Middlesbrough 32 12 8 12 43 36 44

Doncaster Rovers 30 10 10 10 37 36 40

Coventry City 31 10 10 11 35 41 40

Derby County 31 11 6 14 38 44 39

Barnsley 31 11 6 14 40 48 39

Preston North End 31 10 9 12 37 45 39

Watford 29 10 8 11 41 43 38

Bristol City 31 8 14 9 35 43 38

Scunthorpe United 31 10 6 15 37 56 36

Queens Park Rangers 30 8 10 12 41 48 34

Sheffield Wednesday 31 9 7 15 36 49 34

Crystal Palace 29 11 10 8 33 31 33

Ipswich Town 30 6 15 9 35 44 33

Reading 29 8 8 13 32 46 32

Plymouth Argyle 30 8 4 18 28 42 28

Peterborough United 32 5 9 18 36 55 24

* Coca-Cola League 1

Carlisle United 1 Huddersfield Town 2

Anyinsah 90 Novak 6, Rhodes 56

Att: 5236

Leeds United 1 Walsall 2

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch s rink

McSheffrey 54 Mattis 46

Att: 18,941 McDonald 81

Yeovil Town 0 Colchester United 1

Att: 3469 Odejayi 38

P W D L F A Pts

Norwich City 31 20 6 5 67 33 66

Leeds United 30 18 8 4 52 24 62

Colchester United 31 17 8 6 48 31 59

Charlton Athletic 31 15 12 4 54 35 57

Swindon Town 29 14 11 4 47 37 53

Millwall 30 14 10 6 43 30 52

Huddersfield Town 30 14 9 7 54 33 51

Milton Keynes Dons 30 14 4 12 43 42 46

Bristol Rovers 30 13 3 14 38 46 42

Walsall 30 10 10 10 38 36 40

Brentford 29 9 11 9 31 30 38

Carlisle United 30 9 10 11 42 42 37

Leyton Orient 30 9 9 12 40 45 36

Yeovil Town 31 8 11 12 40 43 35

Southampton 28 11 11 6 47 32 34

Southend United 30 8 8 14 33 42 32

Hartlepool United 30 8 8 14 37 47 32

Oldham Athletic 28 8 8 12 24 34 32

Exeter City 31 7 10 14 34 46 31

Gillingham 31 7 9 15 31 43 30

Brighton & Hove Albion 30 7 9 14 35 49 30

Tranmere Rovers 30 8 6 16 26 48 30

Wycombe Wanderers 31 5 9 17 32 57 24

Stockport County 29 3 8 18 25 56 17

* Coca-Cola League 2

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch s rink

Hereford United 2 Aldershot 0

Lincoln City 2 Accrington Stanley 1

Morecambe Town 3 Burton Albion 2

* Northern Ireland.

Carling Premiership

Ballymena United 1 Glenavon 0

Kelbie 90pen

Cliftonville 3 Lisburn Distillery 0

Boyce 65, C Scannell 76, McMullan 79

Linfield 2 Coleraine **4**

Ervin 50pen Patterson 40, 47

McAllister 81 Gibson 42, 80

TOP 6 P W D L F A Pts

Cliftonville 27 15 5 7 54 33 50

Linfield 26 14 6 6 56 31 48

Glentoran 27 13 8 6 42 31 47

Crusaders 27 13 5 9 37 37 44

Coleraine 26 13 3 10 59 44 42

Dungannon Swifts 27 11 8 8 41 40 41

TONIGHT (7.45pm unless stated)

* UEFA Champions League

Knockout Round 1 first leg Bayern Munich v Fiorentina, FC Porto v Arsenal

* Active Nation Scottish Cup

Rd 5 Replay Rangers v St Mirren

Clydesdale Bank Premier League St Johnstone v Hibernian

Irn-Bru Scottish League

* Div 3 Annan Athletic v Albion Rovers (7.30)

* Barclays Premier League Wigan Athletic v Bolton Wanderers (8pm)

* Coca-Cola Championship Crystal Palace v Reading (8pm), Newcastle United v Coventry City

* Coca-Cola League 2 Notts County v Grimsby Town

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LATE RESULTS

* SFL RESERVE LEAGUE CUP

EAST SECTION

Cowdenbeath 1 Arbroath 1

Dempster 28 Urquhart 85

Ian Murray admits he need look no further than his manager for inspiration as he bids to emulate John Hughes' rise from Hibernian supporter to player and then manager.

Murray has agreed a new two-year deal to stay with his boyhood heroes and, at 28, should still have many years left in his career when that draws to an end in 2012.

However the former Rangers player already has his sights set on a move from pitch to dugout when he does hang up his boots.

He has begun coaching one night a week at East of Scotland side Coldstream and has been backed by Hughes to enjoy future success in management

I eventually want to go into management but, hopefully, I've got as many years as possible still in football, he said. I would hate to cut short my playing career to go into management because I still believe playing is the best thing and management is second best.

So I want to play for as long as I can, keep myself fit and train as well as I can and if I can keep myself in and around a first-team at SPL level then I would be delighted.

At the same time, I'm helping out down at Coldstream in the East of Scotland League once a week and, hopefully, that is with a view to maybe helping out here at the start of next season with one of the younger sides.

There s no doubt Hibs would be the club you would want to manage if you were a Hibs fan, the same goes for any fan of any club.

Hughes was delighted to secure his vice-captain on a new contract and urged the remaining first-team players wanting deals to prove they deserve to join him.

Hughes is still to make up his mind on whether to offer striker Abdessalam Benjelloun, midfielder Patrick Cregg and keeper Yves Ma-Kalambay new terms.

It s absolutely fantastic that we've got Ian Murray tied up because he s Hibs through and through and he s got the qualities to take us where we want to go, Hughes said.

He s had a wonderful season up until now and, in the next two years, if he keeps giving me what he s given me this year then great.

We've also got Benji, Maka and Cregg out of contract in the summer but at this moment in time we're not looking at that. You're saying to them, Go and show me what you've got.

I felt Benji on Sunday revelled in playing at Ibrox and he s maybe found himself a little bit unfortunate, along with Patrick Cregg, to find himself out of the team. But the two of them are everything you want at the club and there won't be too many leaving this club, not after what they've given me.

St Johnstone midfielder Liam Craig will always hold Hughes in high regard after he brought him back to Scotland to kickstart his career, but that certainly won't be on his mind tonight.

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch's rink

Edinburgh-born Craig began his career at Ipswich Town and captained the youth side to victory in the 2005 FA Youth Cup final over Southampton. But after he found it difficult to break into the first team, Hughes brought him to Falkirk in January 2006.

John Hughes was great with me, he said. I still speak to him when I see him. I still have a good relationship with him and Chipper [Hughes' No.2 Brian Rice]. I never say a bad word against the two of them because it was those two who brought me back up to Scottish football and gave me my chance to play.

Hibernian can move to within two points of second-placed Celtic if they win, but the hosts are seeking to increase their seven-point lead over Falkirk at the other end of the table.

Craig added: We want to build on our league position [ninth]. We've got a great team spirit and we want to finish as high up the table as possible. But I think this season if we were to finish 11th it would be a success your first year in the SPL is always the hardest, especially when we've been out of it for so long.

Hibs have shown this season what kind of team they are. Having worked with John, they'll be definitely up for the game tonight. It will be a hard match for us.

THE Scottish Government yesterday defended its stewardship of higher education in the wake of a report which warns of growing financial pressures on the sector.

A spokesman for Michael Russell, the Education Secretary, said increases in public funding, higher student numbers and greater student support were all benchmarks of the Government's support for the university sector.

The comments came after The Herald revealed a raft of financial concerns identified following the economic downturn.

The Scottish Funding Council document highlights fears over reductions in public funding, a decline in income from charities and business corporations and lower returns on investments.

In addition, it details increasing pressure on support funds, an increase in pension scheme liabilities and a collapse in the value of property as key factors.

The report states: The economic conditions are already starting to impact on the university sector and ... the financial prospects are less certain. The challenge for institutions is to maintain financial and institutional sustainability.

Yesterday, the spokesman for Mr Russell said: This Government believes access to education should be based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, and that universities are a crucial engine of economic growth.

That's why, despite Labour's cut of £800 million in the Scottish budget next year, we are delivering an extra £35m for universities a real terms increase of 2.1%, on top of the real terms increase we delivered in 2009-10.

What's more, we have expanded the number of university places, with an additional 7,500 this year alone, and abolished the back-door fees students in Scotland had to pay under Labour.

However, opposition politicians said the warnings from institutions made it absolutely clear the SNP's current approach was unsustainable.

Claire Baker, higher education spokeswoman for the Scottish Labour Party, said: Under this SNP Government we are seeing a crisis develop in higher education with universities likely to be forced to turn away talented students, struggle for funding and have to make redundancies.

We urgently need a full independent review of the sector to find a way out of this crisis.

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch's rink

Meanwhile, Murdo Fraser, Scottish Conservative Party higher education spokesman, called for an independent review: There are real and serious challenges ahead for higher education in Scotland and, perhaps, some people are only now realising the extent of the problems we face.

Alistair Watson (ex-chair)

Glasgow City Council

Council salary: £15,797

SPT salary: £20,295

Mileage: 21,818

Expenses: £10,756

Davie McLachlan (vice-chair)

South Lanarkshire Council

Council salary: £15,838

SPT salary: £11,163

Mileage: 35,650

Expenses: £17,544

David Fagan (vice-chair)

North Lanarkshire Council

Council salary: £16,036

SPT salary: £11,163

Mileage: 2749

Expenses: £1355

THE latest controversy over mileage claims by top officials at Strathclyde Partnership for Transport comes just two days after its chairman Alistair Watson resigned.

But it s not the first time officials in Scotland s largest transport quango have hit the headlines for reasons not connected with running the transport system.

In October 2008, they were criticised after an investigation by our sister paper, The Sunday Herald, revealed they had been accepting thousands of pounds worth of junkets from bus companies, train operators and consultants.

In the preceding three years Mr Watson, who quit on health grounds on Monday, accepted around 55 items of hospitality including football matches.

Chief executive Ron Culley, who has been off work for six weeks with a heart condition, accepted 40 items of hospitality over the same period including a France v Scotland match in Paris and a Neil Diamond concert.

Between 2006, when the body was set up to replace the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive, and last year, officials raked in more than £520,000 in expenses.

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch's rink

Of that £117,573 was spent on foreign trips by a handful of top officials including Mr Watson and Mr Culley. This included £49,195 to destinations including China, India, Italy and the **United States**.

Mr Culley, who is paid £129,000 a year, flew to New York at a cost of £2,450 where he stayed **in** the Algonquin Hotel, a favourite with film stars.

The role of the publicly-funded organisation, which runs Glasgow's Subway, is according to its website, to deliver transport solutions for all modes of transport across the region and is at the centre of the region's transport planning, analysing all travel needs and developing the transport system for now and the future.

However, although it helps subsidise buses, deregulation of the buses and the creation of Transport Scotland and regional transport partnerships means it has much less responsibility than its predecessor.

And while its officials have been globetrotting at the taxpayers' expense, it asked the 700 staff it had **in** January last year to apply for redundancy and it is also cutting some services. Last month it announced it would stop running the Renfrew Ferry to save £400,000 a year.

In September, figures showed the number of people using the Subway fell by 14% **in** the previous two months.

SPT **says** 96% of trains run on time but it is regularly criticised for trains running late or breaking down.

Last spring Mr Culley **said** a £20 million improvement plan for the network was a case of fur coat and no knickers. The plan was to give five stations a makeover **in** time for the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

The Subway needs £100m for new carriages and signalling but does not have the money.

However, it is due to put forward modernisation plans which could cost up to £400m.

Although a prime mover **in** the attempt to build the Glasgow Airport Rail Link (Garl), which it had taken from concept to design stage, it lost responsibility for it and the project was taken over by Transport Scotland.

During the row over the cost of Garl, Transport Scotland claimed that SPT had not factored **in** major aspects of work to relocate infrastructure at the airport. It was also criticised for delays and cost over-runs on the Partick Interchange rail and underground project **in** Glasgow.

It may now be facing its greatest test as there are **said** to be growing tensions between the body and Glasgow City Council over the pace of progress **in** preparing transport links for the Commonwealth Games.

NICOLA Sturgeon indicated to patients at a Glasgow clinic yesterday that she will not be resigning over fraudgate.

As she ploughed on with official commitments after her toughest week **in** office, the Deputy First Minister and Health Secretary visited the Revive MS Support centre **in** the north of the city.

During a meeting with centre clients, multiple sclerosis sufferer John Munro, of Kirkintilloch **said** to Ms Sturgeon: I hope you have not written a letter, a resignation letter. Ms Sturgeon replied: No, don't you worry.

It may have been an off-the-cuff remark during an informal tour of the centre, which will benefit from £36,000 **in** Government funding this year, but it is the first time that Ms Sturgeon has publicly referred to last week's controversy.

Then, it emerged that she had urged a sheriff not to give a custodial sentence to a constituent, Abdul Rauf, who had been convicted of conning the benefits system of £80,000.

Rauf was jailed **in** the 1990s for stealing £58,624 **in** pension and benefits payments while he was a sub-postmaster **in** Edinburgh.

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch's rink

Labour is calling for Ms Sturgeon to resign over what leader Iain Gray has described as an appalling error of judgment, although First Minister Alex Salmond has backed his deputy 110%.

Yesterday, she declined to answer questions on last week's drama, **saying** only that she was due to make a statement to parliament next week. Although she appeared pale and slightly subdued during the visit, she happily chatted with patients who gave her a warm welcome.

Instead, the Health Secretary pressed on to meet those at the centre. Tom Friel, 54, an MS sufferer, **said**: I think it's disgusting the way this has all been blown out of proportion. The man admitted his guilt and she was drawing attention to his health condition. That's what her job is. Is she not supposed to help a constituent because she is the Health Secretary?

MPs could face paying back thousands of pounds **in** profits on taxpayer-funded second homes, but this will not apply at Holyrood where action was taken sooner to end the perk.

Sir Ian Kennedy, chairman of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, **said** gains from rises **in** second home values should not be retained by MPs from outside central London who are permitted to claim back the interest on second home mortgages.

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Over the past five weeks, IPSA has held public meetings and received 2,703 responses.

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Sir Richard **said**: I believe the UK's record budget deficit does pose a serious risk to our recovery.

It would be damaging if we lost the confidence of the markets through delayed action and saw interest rates have to go up steeply.

GERRY Adams's wife has undergone surgery for cancer, it was revealed last night.

The Sinn Féin leader **said** he and Colette received news of the disease a month ago.

That was a huge shock, he told a party selection convention **in** west Belfast.

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch's rink

He said last Thursday s operation went well and she was in good spirits.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the medical and health staff and our own doctor for their good work, he added.

There were no other candidates standing and he was unanimously selected to represent the party at this year s Westminster elections. He led a campaign for his brother Liam to hand himself in to face sex abuse allegations and his family has also been rocked by revelations that his own father, Gerry Snr, was an abuser.

THE latest controversy over mileage claims by top officials at Strathclyde Partnership for Transport comes just two days after its chairman Alistair Watson resigned.

But it s not the first time officials in Scotland s largest transport quango have hit the headlines for reasons not connected with running the transport system.

In October 2008, they were criticised after an investigation by our sister paper, The Sunday Herald, revealed they had been accepting thousands of pounds worth of junkets from bus companies, train operators and consultants.

In the preceding three years Mr Watson, who quit on health grounds on Monday, accepted around 55 items of hospitality including football matches.

Chief executive Ron Culley, who has been off work for six weeks with a heart condition, accepted 40 items of hospitality over the same period including a France v Scotland match in Paris and a Neil Diamond concert.

Between 2006, when the body was set up to replace the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive, and last year, officials raked in more than £520,000 in expenses.

Of that £117,573 was spent on foreign trips by a handful of top officials including Mr Watson and Mr Culley. This included £49,195 to destinations including China, India, Italy and the United States.

Mr Culley, who is paid £129,000 a year, flew to New York at a cost of £2,450 where he stayed in the Algonquin Hotel, a favourite with film stars.

The role of the publicly-funded organisation, which runs Glasgow s Subway, is according to its website, to deliver transport solutions for all modes of transport across the region and is at the centre of the region s transport planning, analysing all travel needs and developing the transport system for now and the future.

However, although it helps subsidise buses, deregulation of the buses and the creation of Transport Scotland and regional transport partnerships means it has much less responsibility than its predecessor.

And while its officials have been globetrotting at the taxpayers' expense, it asked the 700 staff it had in January last year to apply for redundancy and it is also cutting some services. Last month it announced it would stop running the Renfrew Ferry to save £400,000 a year.

In September, figures showed the number of people using the Subway fell by 14% in the previous two months.

SPT says 96% of trains run on time but it is regularly criticised for trains running late or breaking down.

Last spring Mr Culley said a £20 million improvement plan for the network was a case of fur coat and no knickers. The plan was to give five stations a makeover in time for the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

The Subway needs £100m for new carriages and signalling but does not have the money.

However, it is due to put forward modernisation plans which could cost up to £400m.

Although a prime mover in the attempt to build the Glasgow Airport Rail Link (Garl), which it had taken from concept to design stage, it lost responsibility for it and the project was taken over by Transport Scotland.

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During the row over the cost of Garl, Transport Scotland claimed that SPT had not factored in major aspects of work to relocate infrastructure at the airport. It was also criticised for delays and cost over-runs on the Partick Interchange rail and underground project in Glasgow.

It may now be facing its greatest test as there are said to be growing tensions between the body and Glasgow City Council over the pace of progress in preparing transport links for the Commonwealth Games.

THE Scottish Government yesterday defended its stewardship of higher education in the wake of a report which warns of growing financial pressures on the sector.

A spokesman for Michael Russell, the Education Secretary, said increases in public funding, higher student numbers and greater student support were all benchmarks of the Government s support for the university sector.

The comments came after The Herald revealed a raft of financial concerns identified following the economic downturn.

The Scottish Funding Council document highlights fears over reductions in public funding, a decline in income from charities and business corporations and lower returns on investments.

In addition, it details increasing pressure on support funds, an increase in pension scheme liabilities and a collapse in the value of property as key factors.

The report states: The economic conditions are already starting to impact on the university sector and ... the financial prospects are less certain. The challenge for institutions is to maintain financial and institutional sustainability.

Yesterday, the spokesman for Mr Russell said: This Government believes access to education should be based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, and that universities are a crucial engine of economic growth.

That s why, despite Labour s cut of £800 million in the Scottish budget next year, we are delivering an extra £35m for universities a real terms increase of 2.1%, on top of the real terms increase we delivered in 2009-10.

What s more, we have expanded the number of university places, with an additional 7,500 this year alone, and abolished the back-door fees students in Scotland had to pay under Labour.

However, opposition politicians said the warnings from institutions made it absolutely clear the SNP s current approach was unsustainable.

Claire Baker, higher education spokeswoman for the Scottish Labour Party, said: Under this SNP Government we are seeing a crisis develop in higher education with universities likely to be forced to turn away talented students, struggle for funding and have to make redundancies.

We urgently need a full independent review of the sector to find a way out of this crisis.

Meanwhile, Murdo Fraser, Scottish Conservative Party higher education spokesman, called for an independent review: There are real and serious challenges ahead for higher education in Scotland and, perhaps, some people are only now realising the extent of the problems we face.

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Alistair Watson (ex-chair)

Glasgow City Council

Council salary: £15,797

SPT salary: £20,295

Mileage: 21,818

Expenses: £10,756

Davie McLachlan (vice-chair)

South Lanarkshire Council

Council salary: £15,838

SPT salary: £11,163

Mileage: 35,650

Expenses: £17,544

David Fagan (vice-chair)

North Lanarkshire Council

Council salary: £16,036

SPT salary: £11,163

Mileage: 2749

Expenses: £1355

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NICOLA Sturgeon indicated to patients at a Glasgow clinic yesterday that she will not be resigning over fraudgate .

As she ploughed on with official commitments after her toughest week **in** office, the Deputy First Minister and Health Secretary visited the Revive MS Support centre **in** the north of the city.

During a meeting with centre clients, multiple sclerosis sufferer John Munro, of Kirkintilloch **said** to Ms Sturgeon: I hope you have not written a letter, a resignation letter. Ms Sturgeon replied: No, don t you worry.

It may have been an off-the-cuff remark during an informal tour of the centre, which will benefit from £36,000 **in** Government funding this year, but it is the first time that Ms Sturgeon has publicly referred to last week **s** controversy.

Then, it emerged that she had urged a sheriff not to give a custodial sentence to a constituent, Abdul Rauf, who had been convicted of conning the benefits system of £80,000.

Rauf was jailed **in** the 1990s for stealing £58,624 **in** pension and benefits payments while he was a sub-postmaster **in** Edinburgh.

Labour is calling for Ms Sturgeon to resign over what leader Iain Grey has described as an appalling error of judgment, although First Minister Alex Salmond has backed his deputy 110% .

Yesterday, she declined to answer questions on last week **s** drama, **saying** only that she was due to make a statement to parliament next week. Although she appeared pale and slightly subdued during the visit, she happily chatted with patients who gave her a warm welcome.

Instead, the Health Secretary pressed on to meet those at the centre. Tom Friel, 54, an MS sufferer, **said**: I think it **s** disgusting the way this has all been blown out of proportion. The man admitted his guilt and she was drawing attention to his health condition. That **s** what her job is. Is she not supposed to help a constituent because she is the Health Secretary?

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Professor Mike Pittilo MBE, principal of Aberdeen **s** Robert Gordon University, passed away **in** the early hours of Tuesday morning.

Mr Pittilo, 55, had been ill but had continued to work up until last week.

His sudden passing was **said** to be a shock to colleagues and students on the Aberdeen campus.

Prof John Harper, acting principal, **said** his late colleague **brought** direction to the institution and had nurtured a warm rapport with staff and students alike.

He added: We ve lost an inspirational leader who will be sadly missed.

Our thoughts are very much with his wife, Carol, at this time.

Mr Pittilo joined the university **in** 2005 following a career **in** life sciences and was awarded an MBE last year for his services to health.

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THE raven a bird branded an omen of death has been cleared of being responsible for declining numbers of wading birds in the uplands.

A study by the RSPB and the Aberdeen University s Centre for Environmental Sustainability (Aces) found the raven, forever linked with the Tower of London, was not to blame for a fall in the numbers of many species of threatened wading birds, including lapwing, dunlin, golden plover, snipe and curlew, which have declined by up to 50% in the past 25 years.

The raven was blamed because at the same time its population has recovered in many parts of the UK.

These patterns, together with the fact that ravens will eat the eggs and chicks of upland waders, led some to suggest ravens are the cause of wader declines.

The dwindling numbers of breeding waders and wild game birds means that, in 2007 and 2008, 15 sporting estates applied to Scottish Natural Heritage for licences to kill ravens to protect wild game birds.

However, Professor Steve Redpath, director of Aces, said: This research found no strong evidence to suggest that ravens were responsible for changes in wader numbers.

A businessman who set up a secret tryst with a female wedding guest faces being placed on the sex offenders register after making a pass at a stranger in a bizarre case of mistaken identity.

Company owner John Harkess bombarded a woman with sexually suggestive chat as she paid for her shopping in Tesco.

He thought she was the guest he had arranged to meet in the supermarket.

But he was so drunk he did not realise the woman he was chatting to was a total stranger.

Harkess, 42, who runs a tiling company already has long-term partner.

Perth Sheriff Court was told that Harkess had sidled up to Catherine Young and said: I'm going to give you one.

But he was unaware she was a stranger and the woman he was meant to meet was elsewhere in the supermarket.

Solicitor John McLaughlin, defending, said: He is extremely embarrassed by the incident. He was well under the influence of alcohol and this was entirely a case of mistaken identity.

The person he thought he was speaking to was someone entirely different than the one he was actually speaking to.

He accepts it would have had a distressing effect on this lady as she was the wrong person.

He had been in contact with a lady at a wedding before this and thought the lady at Tesco was the one he had spoken to on an earlier occasion.

Mr McLaughlin told the court Harkess had been drinking and spoke to the lady, arranging to meet at Tesco for a chat.

He said: He saw the person he thought he was meeting. He thought the comments he made were banter between him and someone he believed would be receptive to that type of conversation.

However, Mr McLaughlin said that after Harkess had left the store he contacted by the person he was looking for and she indicated she was somewhere else within Tesco.

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Ms Young told staff she was scared and she was given an escort to her car.

Harkess had said to Ms Young: Have you been behaving? No you haven't.

I have been watching you. You have been flaunting yourself around the shop. You are stunning. I'm going to give you one.

Harkess, of Thriepland Wynd, Perth, admitted breaching the peace by making comments of a sexual nature to Catherine Young in the Tesco store, Crieff Road, Perth, on November 6.

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Sheriff Michael Fletcher fixed a hearing on whether or not Harkess should be placed on the sex offenders register and deferred sentence until next month.

ONE of the greatest sporting rivalries of modern times, the one-upmanship battle between Sebastian Coe and Steve Ovett, is to be brought to life on film, it has been announced.

The pair enjoyed a domination of middle-distance running three decades ago as they set world records and collected Olympic medals.

Now the BBC is developing a movie version of their fight for supremacy. Coe now Lord Coe is the London 2012 chair and the film is expected to be released before the next summer Olympics are staged.

British movie-makers struck gold when they tackled an earlier era of athletic prowess with Chariots Of Fire, which won four Oscars in 1981. The film, about British runners at the 1924 Olympics, won best film and best adapted screenplay for Colin Welland s script among its haul.

The BBC is working with AL Films, whose producers were behind the BBC1 hit Small Island.

Coe and Ovett first met on the track in their senior careers at the European Championships in 1978, a race that would set the scene for the battles to come. Ovett finished second to East German Olaf Beyer, with Coe third.

The pair jostled for titles and famously went head to head at the Moscow Olympics in 1980.

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Ovett, who struggled with injury, amassed one Olympic gold to Coe s two, one of which came from the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

British writer William Davies, based in Los Angeles, will write the screenplay.

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They examined the results of statin trials involving more than 90,000 people to assess the link between the treatment and type two diabetes.

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IT might not offer immediate comfort to Scotland supporters but even while Dan Parks was orchestrating a masterclass against Wales, his potential successor, Frazier Climo, was performing with similar panache at Millbrae.

The New Zealander has gained plaudits for the consistent quality of his displays, culminating in his role as catalyst for Ayr's meritorious victory over Birmingham & Solihull in the British & Irish Cup last weekend. And the 22-year-old could soon be assuming a similar role for Glasgow, after confirming he will begin training with Sean Lineen's side at the conclusion of the RBS 6 Nations, when the Warriors began planning for life without Cardiff-bound Parks.

Indeed, with the 48-times capped Australian edging ever closer to the exit, it should provide solace to Scots that the wheels are already in motion for Climo to advance to the professional ranks and the Magners League next season.

Both Lineen and Andy Robinson have been in regular contact with Kenny Murray, the Ayr coach, about the emerging No.10. Although he might not be eligible to represent Scotland until 2012, he is exactly the sort of player blessed with an all-round attacking game and sound grasp of tactics as well as being a robust tackler and redoubtable kicker whose abilities will surely benefit Glasgow in the future.

I have been in Scotland for more than 18 months now and I regard it as my second home, said Climo, a product of the New Plymouth Old Boys club in his native land, But I know I have to prove myself to the Glasgow coaches before I can even think about anything higher.

It's flattering to be linked with Scotland but I owe it to Ayr to repay the faith they have shown in me by trying to help them retain their Premiership title for the rest of the season and that is my first priority.

The people at Millbrae have been fantastic, and we have a tremendous community spirit, and a lot of the credit for that is down to Kenny. He is a top bloke, with loads of ideas, he constantly thinks outside the circle and he is 100% honest, so you always know where you stand with him. Ever since I touched down, he has backed me to the hilt and that has been very important.

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That symbiosis has proved instrumental to Ayr's recent heroics, both in domestic competition and amid the inaugural British & Irish Cup, where Murray's charges have gained commendable victories over Rotherham and Birmingham – the latter a comprehensive 49-14 triumph last weekend, with Climo dominating proceedings by claiming 24 points.

In the first half, we probably played as well as we have done during my time at the club and we put more than 30 unanswered points on the board, so this new tournament has been a really good innovation, said Climo. It has got folk at the club looking forward to more big games against non-Scottish opponents and we have Pontypridd up here next, and I gather that there are hundreds of Welsh fans planning to travel up, so it should be a great experience.

An engaging character with a vibrant personality, it can only be hoped that Climo's candour isn't viewed as a negative the closer that he gets to the professional set-up. On the contrary, whether discussing his ambitions or focusing on the significant progress he has made since 2008, what burns through is his unbridled passion for rugby.

I just want to be playing, whether it's at stand-off, full-back, the wing . . . whatever, so even being associated with a side such as Glasgow is a fantastic opportunity, said Climo. I've done a lot of training in the gym during the winter, and we have a heavy backlog of fixtures in the next few months – as many as 13 or 14 games between now and the start of May – but things are going really well and the more challenges there are, the better. I didn't know what to expect when I first arrived, but I love being here and I want to keep aiming to raise my standards.

He is named after the boxer, not the comedy psychiatrist. Yet, whatever offers may be placed on the table by the Scottish Rugby Union, Climo's response is: I'm listening.

* Melrose players Ben Allen and Nicola Halfpenny model a one-off Army-style camouflage jersey which the club will adopt during the sevens season in support of British Forces serving overseas. The limited-edition strip, designed by Melrose kit sponsor Kukri Sports, will also be available to the general public on a first-come basis, with the club making a donation to Poppy Scotland for each jersey sold.

The jersey can be pre-ordered at www.melroserugbyshop.co.uk or by phone on 01896 822993.

A good few years have passed since Scotland delivered on its reputation as a hotbed of brilliant back-row play, but the talk in Cardiff on Saturday evening was that Glasgow's so-called Killer Bs – Kelly Brown, John Barclay, and Johnnie Beattie – had just put in a performance to stand comparison with the best of John Jeffrey, Finlay Calder and Derek White, the unholy trinity who did such ruinously effective service in Scotland's Grand Slam side of 1990.

Not that Barclay was looking at it that way in the immediate aftermath, when the pain of defeat snatched from the jaws of victory was compounded by fears and uncertainty over the fate of Thom Evans, who had just been rushed to hospital.

Has the cold light of day made the loss any easier to accept? It is a question Barclay cannot yet answer, for any pride he might take from Scotland's performance over the first 70 minutes is heavily qualified by the gruesome reality of what happened thereafter. In his struggle to reconcile the game's two overarching themes, sleep has not come easily for the 23-year-old flanker.

I've been trying not to think about it, but I haven't slept well since the game, Barclay explains. I just can't stop thinking about it. I can't figure out what happened. In the end, I think it was a combination of injuries and the fact we had just 12 guys on the pitch at the finish. We just couldn't get our hands on the ball. We had a lot of guys playing out of position. But we were our own worst enemies to some extent.

In acknowledging that Scotland might have played smarter rugby in the last few minutes, Barclay refuses to dwell on the decision to put the restart that followed Wales' equalising penalty into play, rather than Row Z of the stand. There's no guarantee that we would have got the ball out because we didn't really have a kicker on at that point, he shrugs.

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch's rink

Like the rest of Scotland's home-based players, Barclay has been given this week off. In the heart of the hectic schedule of the Six Nations these days are vital for resting bodies bruised and battered by two fierce Tests, but the mental wind-down is just as important.

It s probably a good thing that we have this time, says Barclay. I think the mood might have been quite low at training if we had had to go in. This has given the guys a chance to go away for a few days and get their minds right off rugby because what happened at the weekend was such a massive, massive disappointment.

And yet, it was still an effort that had critics purring over Scotland's overall performance, the individual display of Dan Parks at fly-half and the collective contribution of Barclay, Beattie and Brown. Those aspects of the game might not have surprised Glasgow supporters who have watched them at work at Firhill this season, but Barclay admits to satisfaction that they could take their recent form into the Test arena.

I haven't actually watched a video of the game yet, Barclay admits. I felt I was involved pretty heavily throughout, but it was one of those games where everyone in the team played pretty well.

I thought Kelly had a particularly great game, as good as I've ever seen him play. Johnnie has been playing well since autumn, he s just in this really rich vein of form right now. It s great fun playing alongside guys who are playing so well, especially when they're my clubmates.

And just a little poignant, too. Scotland might have found a back row of uncommon quality, but Glasgow are on the point of losing one. Already, it has been confirmed that Brown will be leaving to join Saracens at the end of this season, while rumours continue to swirl that Beattie will also be taking his leave of the city before too long.

We're all quite different players and we do quite different things on the pitch, say Barclay of the loose forward blend. When you know what each person is going to be doing it allows you to get on with your job a bit better.

It is a wee bit sad that it s breaking up, but it was never going to go on forever. It was always going to happen at some point. It s sad that Kelly is going, but then there are other guys at Glasgow who have been championing at the bit to get their chances and maybe they'll come through now.

Leonardo Ghiraldini last night warned Scotland their Six Nations fortunes are about to slide from bad to worse.

The Italy captain thinks he could not have picked a better time to lead his men into battle against Andy Robinson's side who, he believes, will be on a physical and psychological low in the wake of their heartbreaking defeat by Wales in Cardiff and the resulting horrendous injury list.

He is also convinced the Italians earned a major confidence boost by going so close to beating England last Sunday.

The tough Treviso hooker said: We have great belief in our potential and strength, which was underlined at the weekend. Against Ireland in Dublin we were disappointed with our performance, but against England we worked hard.

And now we can go into the match against Scotland with genuine hope that we can get the result we want and steer ourselves clear of the Wooden Spoon.

Scotland were involved in an amazing game against Wales, but after what happened in the last few minutes it will be very difficult for them to be in the right frame of mind to face us.

They will also be without Thom Evans, Chris Paterson and Rory Lamont, three of their most dangerous players.

Ghiraldini was backed up by the Italy coach, Nick Mallett, who said: The team has never changed their positive approach, despite the long-term injury to first-choice captain Sergio Parisse.

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Leonardo has done a good job in his absence and we have a very special group of guys. I was very proud of the way they performed against England and although there is still a lot of work to do, we can go into the game against Scotland with real confidence.

Alun-Wyn Jones is to undergo surgery on an elbow injury today and has been ruled out of Wales Six Nations campaign. The lock suffered a chipped bone and ligament damage during Wales' victory over Scotland on Saturday and will be out for six to 12 weeks.

Meanwhile, Andy Powell has vowed to fight to get back into the Wales team after he was dropped from their squad yesterday. The 28-year-old was suspended after he was arrested and charged for driving a golf buggy while unfit through drink after the weekend win over Scotland.

Thom Evans will undergo a second operation on his neck. The 24-year-old wing suffered a serious injury after colliding with the Wales full-back, Lee Byrne, during Scotland's 31-24 defeat at the Millennium Stadium on Saturday.

He had surgery that evening but surgeons have decided a second procedure will be required later this week before he is released from University Hospital, Cardiff.

The Scotland team doctor, James Robson, has played down fears Evans' career might be under threat. Thom has been heartened by the many messages of support he has received from around the world. The surgeons are delighted with his progress. Thom and his mum met with the surgeons last night and has opted to undergo a further procedure later this week, which will enhance the surgery that has already taken place and provide further stabilisation to his neck.

This procedure is optional and Thom could have decided to have it done at a later point, or not at all. He s decided to go ahead now and that should help with the whole recovery process. The same surgeons who performed the initial operation will undertake this procedure.

Kenny Baillie, Glasgow's chief executive, said: We are all delighted that Thom is improving and in good spirits. Many messages of support for Thom have been sent to the Warriors over the last 48 hours and I would like to thank everyone who has taken time to call and write in.

Evans was one of three players to suffer tournament-ending injuries on Saturday, with full-back Chris Paterson and fellow wing Rory Lamont also requiring hospital treatment.

Paterson picked up a kidney problem that was expected to sideline him for eight to 10 weeks. Dr Robson, who will return to Cardiff today, said: Chris is continuing to make a good recovery. He is hopeful of being released from hospital either later today or tomorrow. Then he would remain in Cardiff for a few days' rest before travelling home.

Lamont has been seen by an orthopaedic surgeon to assess his knee ligament injury and has undergone a scan at an Edinburgh hospital. He will be re-assessed in light of the results later this week.

Jerry Flannery's participation in the remainder of the RBS 6 Nations championship will be decided at a disciplinary hearing in Dublin this morning.

Flannery has been charged with an alleged kick on the France winger, Alexis Palisson, 23 minutes into Ireland's defeat in Paris on Saturday.

If the citing is upheld, the Munster hooker faces a minimum four-week suspension which would rule him out of Ireland's games against England and Wales.

A NEW online TV streaming service which brings shows from the BBC, Channel 4 and Five together on a single site has been launched.

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SeeSaw went live with more than 3,000 hours of content including The Apprentice, Shameless and Neighbours and with presenters Jeremy Clarkson, Trisha Goddard and Gordon Ramsay appearing side by side under one brand.

Unlike services such as BBC's iPlayer or Channel 4's 4oD, which broadcast their own content, SeeSaw has partnerships with BBC Worldwide, Channel 4, Five and independent production companies.

SeeSaw's controller John Keeling **said**: It's like having an enormous buffet ... you can either just snack on it and catch up on what you've missed or gorge yourself with an entire season - it's absolutely at your fingertips and your control.

SeeSaw was born after a similar venture by the BBC, ITV and Channel 4, under the working title Project Kangaroo, was blocked by the Competition Commission. SeeSaw's parent company Arqiva, paid £8m last July for Kangaroo's assets.

Mr Keeling, with more than 20 years in the industry working for Sky, MTV and UKTV, reckons this year will see the breakthrough of TV on demand.

He **said**: This is the tip of the iceberg. It feels to me like it did 20 years ago when I was at Sky and multi-channel TV was just beginning and you saw satellite dishes sprouting on people's homes like mushrooms.

This way of watching television will be on TVs from this year. One of the fastest-selling electronic goods is an HDMI cable which connects a laptop to the back of the TV and, bingo, you're online and your TV has become an enormous monitor for your laptop.

The service is currently free, funded by adverts. However, SeeSaw plans to introduce a pay model for high-profile US dramas.

A FATHER campaigning for a better deal for disabled **children** has failed in a bid to challenge the law.

A judge at the Court of Session in Edinburgh rejected Stephen Meek's claim that denying mobility payments to anyone under three years old is a breach of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Lord Brodie ruled it was for the Westminster Parliament to decide age limits and picking the third birthday as a cut-off point was not irrational.

An earlier hearing heard how Mr Meek and his wife, Wendy, gave up work and exhausted savings to look after their son, Justin.

The Lanark couple claimed that if the law restricting the £45-a-week mobility payments was fairer, as many as 7000 **children** in the UK would benefit.

WITH his long grey hair, busker Matthew Dyet was well known for playing the guitar and mouth-organ. However, one year ago today he vanished and has not been seen **since**.

Now police have released video footage in the hope it will help jog memories of people who may have seen Mr Dyet **since** he went missing from his home town of Eyemouth in Berwickshire.

The 58-year-old was last seen at 5pm on Tuesday, February 17, 2009, when he and his cross-collie dog, Jack, were caught on CCTV leaving Costcutters on the High Street of the coastal town.

Jack was found in Mr Dyet's back garden on the day his owner went missing.

Since then there has been no trace of Mr Dyet, and he has not made contact with any relatives or friends.

Mr Dyet was originally from Edinburgh and started living in the Berwickshire area around 2003.

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Inspector Janice Etherson of Lothian and Borders Police **said** yesterday the renewed appeal formed part of a wider ongoing investigation into his disappearance.

Although there has been no suggestion of foul play, the case involving Mr Dyet is being taken seriously.

An extensive sweep of the rugged coastline was carried out at the time.

Police were joined **in** searches by units from the coastguard, including two lifeboats, as well as an RAF rescue helicopter from Boulmer **in** Northumberland, and the Border Search and Rescue Unit, the south-east of Scotland **s** area mountain team.

Initial searches concentrated on the shore, cliffs and shore paths, and later moved inland.

Inspector Etherson **said**: This is by no means a closed case, and it is disappointing to have no new leads, one year **since** Matthew Dyet disappeared. His disappearance is very much out of character, but there have been no confirmed sightings **since** last February, despite extensive investigation and media coverage.

This case will not close until we can provide some answers for Matthew Dyet **s** family and friends.

He was well known locally as a busker, so we are trying to jog people **s** memories today to find out if anyone has any more information that could be helpful to us.

We won't give up hope of finding out exactly what happened a year ago, and will continue to do all we can until we do.

We would appreciate any information at all, no matter how insignificant they might think it is. It could be that piece that we are looking for.

Mr Dyet is described as being around 5ft 9in, with long, grey hair, and was wearing a blue jacket and a grey or beige jumper with faded jeans when he was last seen.

He was well known **in** the Killies area near his home, and regularly walked his dog at Killies Green which is close to the coastal cliffs.

Police **said** he was regularly seen busking, playing mouth-organ and guitar, **in** Berwick, Galashiels and other towns.

Mr Dyet **s** dog has **since** been found a new home.

During the investigation police have conducted door-to-door inquiries, and followed up initial contacts from members of the public, as well as conducting leaflet drops around the Scottish Borders and with other police forces around Scotland and England.

A NEW price comparison website has been launched to raise money for Oxfam.

The Compare for Good website enables users to search for the most competitive deals on a range of products, such as insurance, loans and utilities.

But at least two-thirds of the commission the site raises when people take out a product through it will go to fund Oxfam **s** work, with the rest of the money covering the site **s** running costs.

Oxfam believes it is the first time a not-for-profit organisation has entered the billion-pound price-comparison site market **in** this way.

Earlier this year, the **group said** it had seen a 15% drop **in** the level of goods donated to its 700 charity shops across the UK, blaming the economic downturn for the slump **in** donations.

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Actress Joan Collins, who launched the website, said Compare for Good offered people a win-win opportunity, as they could save themselves cash, while also raising money for charity.

An Asian tycoon who promised to donate more than £8 million to help fund a new state-of-the-art medical school at St Andrews University has failed to come up with a single penny towards the pioneering development.

The pledge by Malaysian Vinod Sekhar, one of the Far East's most successful entrepreneurs, was announced in a blaze of publicity, but more than two years on, Scotland's oldest university has received nothing.

The multi-millionaire he counts actors Mel Gibson and Bruce Willis as good friends vowed to fund the new School of Medicine and Sciences to the tune of £8.25 million as a memorial to his late father, Dr B C Sekhar, who was an iconic figure in Malaysia's history, and the pioneer of the country's rubber and palm oil industries.

Yesterday, the university said it was still getting assurances from Mr Sekhar that he would honour the promise of the largest single donation ever made to a Scottish university.

A spokesman said, We continue to receive assurances from Vinod Sekhar that he will honour the long-standing promises he has made to the university.

We are now moving to commission and fit out the building ahead of its scheduled opening in September of this year.

The new £45 million school will lead collaborative research in areas such as cancer, health psychology and infectious diseases.

BLOOD, sin and the power of sound will be major themes at this year's Edinburgh International Science Festival.

The festival, from April 3-17, will include a Blood Bar for children at the City Arts Centre where they will be able to indulge their fascination with the red stuff by enjoying gruesome activities such as making blood-curdling scabs.

There will also be a state-of-the-art sound lab on St Andrews Square, Sonic Dreams, where visitors will be able to relax surrounded by 3D sound.

Visitors are also invited to an evening of audience participation focusing on the seven deadly sins, during which they can find out for which of those they have most natural talent.

DAMIEN HENDERSON

Transport Correspondent

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COUNCILS efforts to keep roads ice-free during the recent cold snap have met with a frosty response from motorists and pedestrians who believe gritting programmes left out smaller routes and pavements.

In a poll of more than 20,000 of its members, the Automobile Association found three-quarters thought local authorities had dealt with the cold weather not very well or not at all well while only a quarter rated efforts to clear minor roads of ice as acceptable or better.

The view of work carried out to make pavements safe was even worse, with 86% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction with councils' performance.

But there was widespread praise for the response to ice on the main roads in the council network during the historic cold spell in December and January, suggesting efforts to combat the lowest temperatures recorded in 30 years and utilise over-stretched stocks of gritting salt had concentrated on these key routes.

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A quarter of those polled **said** councils had responded very well on their local main roads, with a further 55% **saying** they had performed reasonably well or satisfactorily and less than 20% **saying** they were not happy.

Stockpiles of salt were driven perilously low over the holiday period, prompting several Scottish local authorities to warn that they risked running out.

The most prolonged cold spell **in** three decades cost the economy around £600 million per day, according to the Federation of Small Businesses.

Edmund King, the AA **s** president, **said** more could have been done to keep some local roads and pavements safe. The AA warned of our concerns over salt supplies **in** the autumn and we would like to see more resilient winter weather plans for the future. We must remember failure to keep roads and pavements safe can have a profound effects on the economy, the health service, insurance claims and general mobility.

Cosla, the umbrella organisation representing Scottish councils, rejected suggestions that not enough had been done. Its president, Pat Watters, **said**: It has to be remembered that what we were dealing with was an extraordinary spell of weather the longest and coldest sustained period for 30 years.

Scotland **s** councils did a fabulous job during difficult times and did everything they could to keep the roads network open, people safe and to maintain services to the public.

Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson has also rejected accusations there was an inadequate response to the record temperatures and that rapid responses had ensured that salt was delivered to council areas where stocks were running low.

Lauren Laverne apologised to listeners after up-and-coming indie band Freelance Whales swore live on air during her daytime BBC radio show.

The New-York based **group** were taking part **in** what was billed as their very first live UK radio session on Laverne **s** BBC 6 Music programme.

But during the segment one band member used the phrase f***** awesome when describing what audiences could expect when the **group** play.

Laverne, who also fronts the BBC **s** Culture Show, told the **group**: You can't **say** that, and apologised to listeners, before getting the band to play their session.

A BBC spokeswoman **said**: During the show a member of the band used inappropriate language for which Lauren immediately apologised.

MOTORISTS and pedestrians who believe gritting during the recent cold snap left out well-used roads and pavements have given council efforts to keep routes ice-free a frosty response.

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Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson also rejected accusations there was an inadequate response to the record temperatures and that rapid responses had ensured that salt was delivered to council areas where stocks were running low.

A LEGAL high drug linked with the recent death of a woman has been banned by pub and club chiefs in a city.

The move in Aberdeen comes amid growing health concerns over the substance mephedrone, commonly known as Bubbles, which has become popular among young people as a recreational drug.

Any customers caught with the drug in bars or nightclubs in the Granite City now face a ban by trade body Unight Aberdeen.

A woman died at a house in Dunfermline last month after she was thought to have taken Bubbles, according to police.

The Scottish Government has written to the Home Office calling for the drug to be banned as responsibility for banning or re-classifying drugs ultimately lies with Westminster.

Mephedrone is sold legally as a plant fertiliser.

Health chiefs said there is little scientific research into the long-term effects of mephedrone which can cause anxiety and paranoia in some users.

Unight Aberdeen chairman Mark Donlevy said: This ban sends a clear message to our patrons that we will not tolerate drugs of any kind and anyone caught with mephedrone will face a ban not just from one establishment, but all of them.

Elena Baltacha continued her superb run of form with a straight-sets victory over Renata Voracova in the first round of the Cellular South Cup in Memphis yesterday.

The 26-year-old British No.1 rose to a career-high ranking of 70th yesterday after winning the \$100,000 ITF Dow Corning Classic at the weekend.

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After travelling from Michigan to Memphis, Baltacha showed no signs of fatigue from her heavy schedule as she swept past her Czech opponent 7-5, 6-1 yesterday.

In a tight first set, the eighth seed was pegged back after a couple of early breaks but a break in the 11th game proved decisive.

She then rattled off six games in a row in the second set against the world No.115 to seal her progress in style.

Baltacha faces Canadian qualifier Valerie Tetreault in the second round of the WTA Tour event, with the incentive of a likely meeting with top seed Maria Sharapova for the winner.

Anne Keothavong, the British No.3, also advanced to the second round after upsetting Kristina Barrois, the sixth seed from Germany. The 26-year-old Londoner, in her second tournament back after a six-month lay-off with a knee injury, overcame Barrois 6-1, 6-3 to set up a second-round clash with the Portuguese teenager, Michelle Larcher de Brito, who saw off the American qualifier, Madison Brengle, 6-3, 6-3.

Royal Troon has been pushed back on the Open Championship rota because of a clash in 2014 with the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and the Ryder Cup at Gleneagles, and the Open that year has been awarded instead to Hoylake.

With St Andrews hosting the Open every five years and likely to be the venue in 2015, that means 2016 is the earliest Royal Troon, which last staged the world's oldest major in 2004, could play host again.

It is the second time in recent years that the Open rota has been altered because of another sporting event, with Royal St George's taking the 2011 Open instead of Royal Lytham to avoid a championship at the Kent course clashing with the Olympic Games in London in 2012. Lytham, much more distant from London, is to take the 2012 Open instead.

David Hill, the R&A's director of championships, said yesterday: Royal Liverpool is a fantastic Open Championship venue and it has always been the intention of the championship committee to return swiftly following the success of 2006.

Recognising that the Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup add to a busy Scottish sporting calendar in 2014, we took the view that the Open would return to England that year.

It means that after the Open at St Andrews this July, the Open will be held in England in three of the following four years, broken by Muirfield in 2013.

Given that the Open generally comes to each of the nine venues once every 10 years with the exception of St Andrews taking it every five years, it is possible to take an educated guess that the running order after Hoylake will be: 2015 St Andrews, 2016 Royal Troon, 2017 Carnoustie, 2018 Royal Birkdale, 2019 Turnberry, and 2020 St Andrews.

Ken Arthur, the captain at Royal Troon, said yesterday: We are not in any way upset or surprised because it was extremely unlikely that the 2014 Open would be held here or, indeed, anywhere else in Scotland due to other major sporting events taking place that year.

There is no fixed cycle as far as I am led to believe and, hopefully, we will see the Open back here soon after 2014.

It will be the 12th time that Royal Liverpool Golf Club, alias Hoylake, will host the Open. It returned to the rota in 2006 after an absence of 39 years when Tiger Woods became the first back-to-back Open champion since Tom Watson in 1983 in front of 230,000 people, a record attendance for the championship in England.

It was a victory memorable for the way Woods, with just one exception, kept his driver in the bag and played for position on the fast-running, sun-baked brown fairways.

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch s rink

We are delighted that the Open is returning to Royal Liverpool after a relatively short period of time, added Hill. **in** 2006, Hoylake showcased links golf at its best and players, spectators and officials were united **in** their praise for the course, and for the venue as a whole.

Colin Montgomerie has identified the big-hitting Spaniard, Alvaro Quiros, as the kind of player he would love to have **in** his European Ryder Cup team that will try to regain the trophy from the US **in** Wales **in** October.

The 27-year-old will meet Canadian former Masters champion Mike Weir **in** today **s** first round of the WGC-Accenture Matchplay Championship **in** Arizona **in** a tournament which captain Montgomerie **said** he would be watching every shot of as his team starts to take shape.

Montgomerie noted that Quiros had been present on the leaderboards of all three tournaments **in** the recently completed Gulf Swing 11th **in** Abu Dhabi, second **in** Qatar and sixth **in** Dubai and although he had risen to world No.30 he was still not **in** an automatic selection position for the 12-man team.

He is someone I want to see mature into a Ryder Cup player and I have to **say** that every time I see him play, he is doing just that, **said** Montgomerie **in** his latest captain **s** blog on the European Tour website.

I m delighted with his progress and his form **in** the Gulf is exactly the sort of consistency I m looking for.

Because of having to go **in** the envelope at last season **s** Vivendi Trophy after the injury to Anthony Wall, he was bitterly disappointed not to be able to play **in** the singles because I know he wanted to show me his potential **in** that realm and he wasn t allowed to do that. However, trust me, he is someone that everybody should watch.

This will be the only matchplay event **in** which Montgomerie **s** would-be Ryder Cup players will be involved before the team is finalised **in** August at the conclusion of the Johnnie Walker Championship at Gleneagles, and because of that he has a burning interest.

We had a finalist last year **in** Paul Casey while Ross Fisher made the semi-finals and Rory McIlroy the quarters, so let **s** hope this year we can again have a good representation into the latter stages, **said** Montgomerie. This is a great opportunity for all European players to show me, **in** a matchplay format, just exactly what they can do and I will be watching every shot hit. I ll be looking out for the results of all of the European players but also, and perhaps even more importantly, how they achieve those results.

I want to see guys who show guts and determination, guys who are maybe two or three down with four or five holes to play but who battle back to win. It doesn t matter if that **s in** the first round or the final, trust me, I ll be taking note of it.

Don t get me wrong, the 8&7, 7&6 wins are great and show a player is playing well, but it is the matches which are tight and where a player comes out the other side that are crucial, and the ones which could be key **in** shaping my team.

Montgomerie enthused about the form of European players **in** the Middle East, particularly the winners, Germany **s** Martin Kaymer, Swede Robert Karlsson, and Spaniard Miguel Angel Jimenez, the last named who **in** the past has insisted on an espresso coffee machine, and a ready supply of Rioja and cigars **in** the team room.

For Martin and Robert, it was great to see them back **in** the winners circle after spells out **in** 2009 with injury. Martin had shown a bit of form towards the end of last season with a couple of top-10s but I know Robert was a little worried, not having been near a top-30 **since** he came back from his eye problem, **said** Montgomerie.

And what can I **say** about Miguel? Some players just seem energised **in** a Ryder Cup year and he is definitely one of them. I already have an espresso coffee maker on standby for the team room at Celtic Manor because I have a feeling I might just need it.

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch's rink

Montgomerie noted players like Lee Westwood, McIlroy and Ian Poulter coming into form and he was especially pleased at seeing Casey back to fitness after his injury of last season. Intriguingly, if he and Quiros win their first-round matches in Arizona they will go head-to-head in the second round.

Today features three all-European matches Luke Donald against Graeme McDowell, Westwood against Chris Wood and Oliver Wilson against Jimenez. In a format of play that identifies only winner and losers it will be dog-eat-dog just like it will be in the Ryder Cup.

No Tiger Woods, no Phil Mickelson. Surely then no better opportunity for Lee Westwood to win his first World Golf Championships title. Except for one thing.

In nine previous attempts in the Accenture Match Play he has never been made it beyond the second round, let alone all the way to a title now worth almost £900,000. So poor is Westwood's record that when five-year-old daughter Poppy asked when he would be back home from Tucson, Arizona, the world No.4 had to laugh.

Historically Thursday, optimistically Monday, he said, adding that both Poppy and eight-year-old son Sam then looked at him quizzically.

Never before, though, has Westwood been the second seed. He has been lifted to that lofty perch not only by his own stellar form, but also by Woods staying out of sight of the world since his private life went into meltdown and then Mickelson deciding he was not going to play this week either.

It is only a couple of years since Westwood, who faces Chris Wood in the opening round tomorrow, considered skipping the event as well because the long journey had yielded so little reward.

It s debatable, but I had no tournament on the week before and nothing the week after, he said. I think it s worth being here because it s a prestigious title, there s plenty of world ranking points and we don't get to play much match play.

Everybody s capable of shooting a 63 or 62 out there and that can happen against you, so you need a few breaks. You're going to play poorly one round this week and hopefully when you do the other guy plays a little bit worse. But on the reverse side of the coin you can shoot 65 and lose.

Westwood's main target for this season is, of course, a first major but, asked where he would rank a World Golf Championship win, he said: Just behind a major and the money list. I like the money list [he won that for a second time in November] because it shows consistency over a whole year. But it s certainly only just a tier below that.

RICKY BURNS claims he never doubted his capacity to aspire to the level of world champion against Roman Martinez. But the Commonwealth super-featherweight title-holder was mightily relieved all the same when he learned promoter Frank Warren was trying to broker a deal to stage his contest with the WBO champion in Glasgow.

The Coatbridge fighter's sense of relief was understandable, given past history and litany of complaints made by British boxers that they were the victims of dodgy refereeing and biased judging on their travels abroad.

Given that Burns had originally seemed destined to challenge Martinez in Puerto Rico the champion's backyard on March 20, any concerns were justified, based on the memory of the misfortune which befell Ken Buchanan, the former world lightweight champion. Older devotees will recall that Buchanan was the victim of a blatant low blow by Roberto Duran in their 1972 contest which went unpunished and contributed largely to his demise as champion.

But Burns should have far fewer concerns if, as is hoped, Warren is successful in persuading Martinez's handlers to accept a tempting offer to travel to Scotland.

I am delighted because home advantage is a big thing and if the fight happens in Glasgow so much the better, Burns said yesterday. I would be quietly confident of beating him wherever we fight but I think it will turn out to be a much fairer contest.

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch's rink

If I had been forced to fight in Puerto Rico I would probably have had to knock him out to earn a draw. You hear stories about how hard it is for British fighters to get the decision abroad, no matter how well they box, and that was a concern.

I knew in my heart I would have to win just about every round in Puerto Rico, which I believe I am capable of doing, to get the decision and even then it might go against me and that was worrying. So this is a huge boost and I just hope the deal can be done because it would be great for me and for Scottish boxing.

However, Burns concedes that it will be the toughest test of his career. I will have to produce the performance of my life, but I am more than capable of doing that, he said. The classier the opponent the better I fight.

I have been training hard but due to the original switch in dates I had to take my foot off the gas or risk burning out. But I will step up my sparring again as soon.

Meanwhile, Alex Morrison, Burns' manager, has been tasked with finding a suitable venue, with the Kelvin Hall the likely preferred choice.

THE Government's chief law officer has decided not to challenge the sentences handed down to two brothers who sadistically tortured two young boys.

Last month the attackers, now aged 11 and 12, were sentenced to indefinite detention with a minimum term of five years for the brutal assault in Edlington, South Yorkshire.

The Attorney General, Baroness Scotland, was urged to refer the sentences to the Court of Appeal.

But in a statement she said: The judge was clearly correct to impose indeterminate sentences of detention and I agree with his analysis and with the minimum terms he set.

There was public outcry over the sentences, with commentators and children's charities suggesting it was wrong that the boys could be released before their 16th birthdays.

Lady Scotland called in the case papers, but rejected the suggestion that the jail terms were unduly lenient.

In a statement she accepted the case was truly shocking, but she said five years was the very least the boys would serve.

They will only be released when the risk they pose to the public is seen as acceptable, she said.

Sentencing the pair at Sheffield Crown Court, Mr Justice Keith described the crimes as truly exceptional.

They were carried out for no reason other than that you got a real kick out of hurting and humiliating them, he said.

THE grandfather of a Scout leader killed during a mountain expedition has said that the teenager died doing something he loved.

Stephen Young, 18, was on an walking trip on Creag Meagaidh, between Spean Bridge and Newtonmore, when he fell through a cornice - an overhanging ridge of snow on the mountain - on Monday afternoon.

The youngster, who had previously raised almost £2,500 for charity by spending 365 nights camped out in the garden of his home in Borough Green, near Sevenoaks, was airlifted to hospital in Fort William but was pronounced dead on arrival.

A fatal accident inquiry into Stephen's death is now expected to be held.

His grandfather James, 70, said: It's a complete and utter disaster. It's an awful blow, he was only 18. I can't believe it happened, it's absolutely horrendous.

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He was a very active lad, very outgoing. These things happen, I'm afraid. At least he died doing something he loved.

Stephen's mother Judy, 42, a teacher, and his uncle, Andrew, 45, who is in the Royal Air Force, were part of the group on their annual trip to the Cairngorms, but were further down the mountain and are not thought to have seen the accident.

Stephen, an assistant Scout leader and the youngest trustee of Kent Scout County, hoped to pursue a career in film production.

Messages of condolence were left on the Facebook page of Kent Scouts, with one poster saying Stephen was a truly great guy and an inspiration to Scouting.

In another online tribute page, one user wrote: In a world where we are quick to condemn the younger generation, Stephen was someone who disproved this generalisation in spades. He was everything that others should be and the world is a poorer place without him.

Simon Carter, a spokesman for the Scout Association, said: For his age he was a great leader. He was doing the things he loved with the people he loved.

I have spoken to the people who are with his mum, who is obviously devastated. It is still so raw for her that she doesn't want to say anything at the moment.

Earlier reports had suggested that Stephen was swept away by an avalanche but it later emerged he fell through the shelf of snow.

Mark Diggins, of the Scottish Avalanche Information Service, based at Glenmore Lodge, said: It is a tragedy. My understanding is that they were on the tops coming down from the Creag Meagaidh and as they were approaching a place called the Window, which is a sort of exit, he fell through a snow cornice.

Stephen spent all of 2007, including his holidays, sleeping in a tent to raise money for the children's hospice Demelza House in Kent.

Ted Gladdish, chief executive of Demelza Hospice Care for Children, said yesterday: Our heartfelt condolences go out to his family and friends.

Meanwhile, police in Iceland will investigate an accident in which a Scots mother and her 11-year-old son became lost during a trip to the Langjokull glacier. They had become separated from the group amid worsening weather conditions and temperatures as low as -10C.

The woman flipped over a snowmobile and used it to shield them from the blizzard until rescuers arrived. She was treated in hospital while the boy returned to a hotel with his father and brother.

Police and the travel agency which organised the tour are to investigate the incident.

A SNIFFER dog which has been involved in high-profile cases in the UK and abroad located the grave of a missing man on the Orkney island of Sanday, a murder jury was told yesterday.

FBI consultant Martin Grime told the High Court in Glasgow that he and his springer spaniel dogs, Eddie, Keela and Morse, were called in by Northern Constabulary in the hunt for Bob Rose, who disappeared on June 6 last year.

Mr Grime told prosecutor Alex Prentice QC that one of the dogs, Eddie, who is trained to detect dead bodies, reacted when he was taken to sand dunes at Sty Wick on June 24 last year.

He said: His normal reaction is to bark. On this occasion he started to dig. As soon as he started to dig I called him back.

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The jury heard that a thin metal probe was then put into the spot Eddie indicated before a forensic anthropologist was called in to excavate the scene.

The jury was told that a body was found at the spot Eddie had indicated.

Mr Grime, 52, who described himself as a forensic canine consultant, is an adviser to the FBI in America and lectures and trains sniffer dogs there.

He has also been involved in high-profile cases in the UK and abroad.

Mr Grime told the court that Eddie's nose is so sensitive that if someone touched a dead body and then touched a piece of paper before hiding it, Eddie would be able to locate the paper using his sense of smell.

Note to desk: Just found out that PA got the ages of Stephen's family wrong. Can we correct it in the copy please?

Andrew is 45 and Judy is 42.

ends

PLANS to overhaul Glasgow Housing Association's complicated rent system have been put on hold, it has been revealed.

The association said last August that it was going to change the way it sets rent for its tenants, promising to make it simpler, fairer and easier to understand.

The move, which would affect 60,000 tenants, prompted protests from tenants who would have been left worse off.

After four months of consultation, the GHA board now says it needs to do more work on the plan after listening to and taking on board views of its tenants and stakeholders.

The GHA Board says it has decided to further review the rent structure after assessing feedback from intensive consultation carried out last year.

During that consultation period hundreds of concerned tenants signed a petition calling for the plan to be binned.

But GHA maintained its position that the restructure would leave a majority of tenants better off.

More than 9,000 people responded to the consultation, with most agreeing with the restructure's aim of making rents fairer, simpler and easier to understand.

GHA's original proposals to change the rent structure in 2011 would have put properties into 11 bands, based on their size and type. The rents of 51% of tenants would have decreased, with 49% increasing.

THE UK's first dedicated consultant for teenagers suffering from blood cancers including leukaemia has been appointed in Glasgow.

Dr Nicholas Heaney will take on the role of consultant haematologist for adolescents, dividing his time between two Teenage Cancer Trust units at the Beatson and the Royal Hospital for Sick Children at Yorkhill.

The post was created by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde in response to demand from teenage patients who said they wanted a service tailored to their age group as opposed to being treated alongside much younger children.

Teenagers can develop some of the rarest and most aggressive forms of cancer and experts say the emotional upheaval of adolescence can make a diagnosis even more difficult to cope with.

Specialists say young people have a much better chance in their fight if they are treated by teenage cancer experts, in an environment tailored to their needs.

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Dr Heaney, 36, a Glasgow University graduate, said the post would allow him to lead research into teenage forms of cancer, which is lagging behind research involving paediatric and adult cases.

He said: One of the things we would be looking at is to see whether teenagers are eligible to enter new trials.

At the moment there is a gap between paediatric and adult trials and there is recognition that we need to look at this age gap. For example, it is recognised that adolescents can suffer more side effects from treatment than children.

According to the Teenage Cancer Trust, there are more than 2,000 new cases of cancer in people between the ages of 13 and 24 each year in the UK.

Simon Davies, chief executive of the trust, said: We know young people have a much better chance in their fight against cancer if they are treated by teenage cancer experts, in an environment tailored to their needs.

In Scottish NHS patients wait five weeks on average for cancer treatment from the time the illness is first suspected, official statistics showed yesterday.

The amount of patients who began treatment within two months (62 days) of an urgent referral was 96% between July and September last year. This is slightly up on the previous quarter and above the Government target of 95% which has now been met for a year.

BRIAN DONNELLY

THE first Ceilidh Culture Street Fair is to be held this year in the Scottish capital as the traditional arts festival enters its eighth year.

The Ceilidh Culture events celebrate traditional arts, including music, song, dance and storytelling, in Edinburgh and this year expands to run from March 26 to April 18, the festival will this year include its very own street fair.

Castle Street will host to a wide range of stalls with food and drink, crafts, fashion and music, all celebrating Scotland, From Friday April 2 to Monday April 5,

The programme features some of Scotland's most accomplished musicians and was launched at Whiski (CORR) Bar in Edinburgh's Royal Mile yesterday.

The line-up includes singer and musician Mairi Campbell, who shot to international fame when her haunting rendition of Auld Lang Syne featured on the soundtrack of the 2008 Sex and the City movie; folk singer/songwriter Caragh Nugent; and celebrated city piper Louise Marshall Millington.

One of the top acts on the programme is English folk star Kate Rusby, who is making her Ceilidh Culture debut this year. Kate will appear at the Usher Hall on Sunday April 18.

Another highlight is four-piece Scottish band Hobotalk, who have toured across Europe, appearing on the bill with The Verve, Madeleine Peyroux, Gomez and Don McLean, to name a few. Hobotalk will play The Voodoo Rooms on Friday April 16.

Meanwhile, the popular Ceilidh Club will host acts such as accordionist Sandy Brechin and his band the Jimi Shandrix Experience at The Lot on Tuesday April 13.

Steve Cardownie, Festivals and Events Champion for the Edinburgh, said: Ceilidh Culture is a real celebration of all that is wonderful about the traditional arts in Scotland.

The festival brings together a dazzling line-up from more than 30 contributors, proudly showcasing homegrown talent alongside international acts.

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This year we are delighted to announce the first ever Ceilidh Culture Street Fair, which will be held over the Easter weekend.

Mairi Campbell, who hopes to launch her first solo album at The Voodoo Rooms on Friday April 16 and will perform with choir Sangstream at Augustine United Church on Friday March 26 **said**: I love this festival, it truly is a people's folk festival and I can think of no better place or time to showcase my first solo album.

Scottish NHS patients wait five weeks on average for cancer treatment from the time the illness is first suspected, official statistics showed today.

The level of patients who began treatment within two months (62 days) of an urgent referral was 96% between July and September last year.

This is slightly up on the previous quarter and above the Government target of 95% - which has now been met for a whole year.

An Aberdeenshire Council spokesman **said**: We can confirm we have received a masterplan for the Menie development, along with a related application for the championship golf course element of the scheme.

These documents are required as part of conditions outlined **in** the original planning consent, and will now be assessed by planners **in** consultation with various statutory bodies and others. Members of the public will also have the chance to view and comment on the plans.

CREDIT card interest rates have hit a 12-year high despite historically low Bank of England base rates, new research has found.

The average APR on plastic now stands at 18.8%, up four percentage points **since** the recent low of 14.8% **in** February 2006, according to figures just released by personal finance website Moneyfacts.

It comes as another report indicates the reliance placed on credit cards by British consumers - a survey by price comparison firm moneysupermarket.com suggests that one **in** five adults have three or more cards.

Furthermore, around 14 million people use credit cards to pay for day-to-day expenses, a survey of more than 2,000 Britons indicated.

It means borrowers could be hit by heavy interest repayments over the coming year - a time when many are suffering as a result of the economic conditions.

Moneyfacts' research found that credit card rates have steadily crept up despite the Bank of England slashing its interest rate **since** the onset of the economic downturn.

In February 2008, the average APR charged on cards stood at 16.8%, at a time when the base rate was set at 5.50%.

This jumped to 17.7% a year later, with providers adding a further percentage point on average rates **in** the following 12 months.

The current rate - the highest **since** February 1998, comes at a time when the Bank of England base rate is recorded at 0.50%.

DONALD Trump has lifted the lid on detailed plans for the Scottish golf course development that has sparked so much controversy.

Members of the public will, for the first time, be able to see how the American billionaire proposes to transform Menie estate **in** Aberdeenshire into the resort.

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The masterplan, which has been submitted for consideration by Aberdeenshire Council, includes an 18-hole golf course built amid the sand dunes which the course designer **said** would provide the most dramatic, stimulating, invigorating stretch of golf anywhere I have seen **in** my career.

An aerial view of the development shows a hotel, holiday homes and a residential village **in** addition to the course itself.

Mr Trump **said**: This is another significant step towards our goal of building the world's greatest golf course and resort **in** Aberdeenshire.

The billionaire has already set his sights on turning the golf course into an Open venue and has recruited groundsman Paul O Connor, the driving force behind Carnoustie for 20 years, as the first manager of the championship resort on the Menie Estate.

Dr Martin Hawtree, who has worked on Carnoustie and Muirfield and designed the 18-hole course on Menie, **said**: The golf course will lack for nothing. The landscape framework of the site comes close to an ideal. There is nothing missing and the layout as conceived would contain no weak holes.

Mr Trump, whose mother was born on Lewis, selected the Menie Estate **in** March 2006. Environmental activists feared the project would have an adverse effect on the dunes, which are designated a site of Special Scientific Interest.

Residents who face being removed from their homes to make way for the development have objected, but the application has received unprecedented support from the business community. It was given the go-ahead after a public inquiry.

A spokesman for Trump International **said** yesterday that detailed plans for environmental, landscaping, construction and infrastructure were now complete.

Gareth Hoskins, director of Glasgow firm Gareth Hoskins Architects, added: The masterplan establishes a framework for both the resort and residential community that is about creating well-designed places and ensuring ease of movement and accessibility both for the surrounding communities and the wider public.

A spokesman for Aberdeenshire Council **said**: We can confirm we have received a masterplan for the Menie development, along with a related application for the championship golf course element of the scheme.

These documents are required as part of conditions outlined **in** the original planning consent, and will now be assessed by planners **in** consultation with various statutory bodies and others. Members of the public will also have the chance to view and comment on the plans.

The masterplan can be viewed at an exhibition at the Udney Arms Hotel **in** Main Street, Newburgh, on March 12 and 13.

SO Donald Trump has taken another significant step towards our goal of building the world's greatest golf course and resort. You sure can't accuse the great man of hiding his light under a bushel.

With erstwhile Carnoustie groundsman Paul O Connor on board **in** Aberdeenshire alongside architect Martin Hawtree, who has involvement **in** four Open Championship courses on his CV, it is not difficult to see where The Donald is going. He wants the Open there. Oh, and the Ryder Cup as well.

With barely a sod cut, the course is being hailed, breathtakingly, as better than Muirfield, Turnberry, Carnoustie, St Andrews Old Course, Royal Troon, Loch Lomond, Gleneagles: places all oozing with history and tradition, and that's just **in** Scotland.

Frankly, I can't see the understated body that is the R&A taking the Open to a course called Trump International Golf Links any time **in** the current geological period, even if it does fit all requirements.

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Mr Trump wants to dedicate the links to the memory of his mother, Mary MacLeod. That being the case, he could have called it The MacLeod, instead of making it a monument to himself.

I have no doubt it will be a very good golf course, but the world s greatest? Let s see the course finished first, and please start looking at something more modest and realistic for an opening event, like the Tartan Tour s Northern Open.

Douglas Lowe is The Herald s golf correspondent

1968 Jean-Claude Killy of France, one of the greatest alpine skiers of all time, won his third gold medal at the Winter Olympics in Grenoble. Victorious in the downhill, the giant slalom and the slalom, he equalled Toni Sailer s record of winning three gold medals at one Games.

2008 Andy Murray claimed his fifth ATP Tour title, beating Croatia s Mario Ancic 6-3, 6-4 in the Open 13 final in Marseille.

1 Devon Loch, owned by the Queen Mother and ridden by Dick Francis, inexplicably fell just yards from the finishing line in the 1956 Grand National. What was the name of the horse who won the race?

2 Which famous stadium is 100 years old on February 19?

3 The first official Winter Olympics took place in which country in 1924?

4 Name the five clubs David Beckham has played for.

5 Who did Bangladesh play their first Test match against in 2000?

today

Football Champions League, last 16, first leg, Porto v Arsenal ITV1, 7.30pm; Bayern Munich v Fiorentina Sky Sports 2, 7pm. Active Nation Scottish Cup fifth-round replay, Rangers v St Mirren Sky Sports 1, 7.30pm.

Winter Olympics Vancouver Games Eurosport, 6.25am, 6pm; BBC2, 6.30pm, 11.20pm.

Cricket Second Test, fourth day, Kolkata, India v South Africa Sky Sports 1, 3.55am.

Golf WGC-Accenture World Match Play, Arizona Sky Sports 1, 7pm.

tomorrow

Football Europa League, last 32, first leg, Liverpool v Unirea Urziceni Five, 7.30pm; Villarreal v Wolfsburg ITV4, 5.30pm; Ajax v Juventus & Panathinaikos v Roma ESPN, from 6pm.

Winter Olympics Vancouver Games Eurosport, 6pm; BBC2, 11.20pm.

Cricket Second Test, final day, Kolkata, India v South Africa Sky Sports 1, 3.55am.

Golf WGC-Accenture World Match Play, Arizona Sky Sports 2, 7pm.

Darts Premier League, Bournemouth Sky Sports 1, 7pm.

Racing Dubai Sky Sports 1, 3pm.

Answers 1 ESB; 2 Old Trafford; 3 France (Chamonix); 4 Manchester United, Preston, Real Madrid, the Los Angeles Galaxy, AC Milan; 5 India.

Claudia Pechstein, the five-time Olympic speedskating champion, has appealed again to the Court of Arbitration for Sport in a late, desperate bid to compete at the Vancouver Games despite her doping ban.

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Writing on her website, the 37-year-old German said she has appealed to the CAS ad-hoc division in Vancouver, and has also filed charges against the International Ice Skating Union for suppressing evidence in her case.

The ad-hoc division is set up 10 days before an Olympics to consider requests for arbitration against a decision if the claimant has exhausted other avenues, or time, for appeal.

Pechstein has always denied doping and never failed a drug test but was banned by the ISU for two years for abnormal blood readings.

Andrew Musgrave admits his fate in today s cross-country sprint lies in the lap of the gods after struggling to find his feet on his Olympic debut.

Having blown hot and cold in the build-up, the Huntly skier hauled himself up from 60th position to finish 55th in the 15km individual freestyle. Musgrave took 36:32.4 minutes to complete the course and has enjoyed only 48 hours rest before returning to the start line for the dash.

The opening round showed that I have improved but it was nowhere near my best, said the 19-year-old. I think I am going to need more time than I have to get myself to where I want to be. While I performed better than I have been it did confirm what I suspected. I am still not in my best shape but hopefully by the longer distance races later next week I can get back up to my best.

Andrew Young, his fellow Huntly competitor, used his 48-hour break to redraw his blueprint after admitting his tactics failed in the opening event. The 17-year-old son of British cross-country team coach Roy Young started in 71st but slipped back into the field and finished in 74th position in 38.45.1 minutes.

It wasn't too great in the first event I worked on tactics and stuck to them but I don't think that worked out, said Young. I don't know what it was maybe I got a cold or something but I just couldn't ski as fast as I wanted to and that is a little bit annoying. I've had a look though and I'll change what needs to be changed.

Ben Kilner, the Banchory snowboarder, will make his Olympic bow four years later than first planned in the men s halfpipe qualifiers this evening. Kilner missed out on a place to Turin in 2006 by a single World Cup result but is regarded as an outside medal chance after claiming bronze in his final preparation event.

I have nothing to lose out there, Sean White is the huge favourite but behind that I think anything can happen, he said. Perhaps people won't be looking for me but that will play into my hands.

Elise Christie, meanwhile, will hope to keep her 500m short track speed skating medal bid alive when she goes in the quarter-finals tonight. I'm still just aiming to enjoy the whole event but the further I can go then the more races I can do and the more experience I will gain, said the Livingston skater. If I can keep getting through then I stand as good a chance as anyone else.

Britain s brightest alpine skiing medal hope Chemmy Alcott will make her long awaited start today in the downhill event. Bad weather had delayed the start of the event and the six-time national champion admits she s desperate to get going.

We've had a really busy schedule and then we've been hanging about a bit, said Alcott. It isn't ideal but I'm just looking forward to starting, she said.

* Lloyds TSB, proud partner of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and supporter of Team GB. Visit LloydsTSB.com/London2012

David Murdoch and his world champion team had a disappointing start to their Olympic campaign yesterday, going down 4-6 to Sweden s Niklas Edin in their opening round-robin game.

After they took the lead with a single in the second end, the GB quartet Ewan MacDonald, Pete Smith and Euan Byers, as well as Murdoch never dominated and allowed the Swedes to dictate play.

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They let the Swedes score two in the third end and then, after blanking the next two ends, Murdoch went further behind in the sixth when his attempted double take-out just failed, leaving a Swedish stone counting for a steal of one and a score of 3-1 to Sweden.

The British team scored a single in the seventh and then two in the ninth to close the score to 4-5, but Edin took out a British counter in the tenth for a 6-4 win.

Murdoch said, I think we were half-an-inch off making a hell of a lot of shots today, and that was pretty much the tale of the tape. If I had made my double in the sixth, it would have been a different game; we would have been two up and cruising. But it wasn't going to be today, we rubbed a few guards and we didn't get our rocks in the places we wanted them to be to put them under pressure .

Third player MacDonald agreed with his skip s appraisal. That was absolutely not how we wanted to start, it was one of those games . . . an inch or two here or there and it s different. We didn't play that badly, but things just didn't run for us today. We had two or three good chances, and that would have made a big difference. We've just got to regroup and come back firing tomorrow .

Although disappointed to lose his opener, Murdoch tried to put the result in perspective. It s pretty much the norm for us to lose the first game in a championship . . . maybe it s a good thing .

Looking forward, he added: We're not even looking at what the other teams are doing just now, it s all about ourselves and this is a long event. We didn't play as offensively as we wanted to there, we just need to be sharper, get a few more rocks in play, and trust our skill.

Our goal is to get to the semi-final, and if that means being in first place or fourth we don't really care, but it s going to be a tough week, with a lot of good teams .

The British men now sit out the second round-robin session before facing France in their next game this afternoon.

In the women s event, Eve Muirhead s rink face China, the world champions, this morning having been given a bye in yesterday s opening round-robin.

They are then back on the ice against the Olympic champions, Sweden, in what is a very tough initiation at this level for 19-year-old Muirhead and her team of Jackie Lockhart, Kelly Wood and Lorna Vevers.

athletics

Cross Country

* Speyside Runner North District League. Final Round, Elgin

Men. Seniors 1 B Livesey 32.01, 2 K Greig 34.20, 3 P Rogan 35.14 (all Forres). Veteran: R Arbuckle (Keith & District) 36.23. Teams: 1 Forres 392, 2 Moray Roadrunners 356, 3 Inverness 346. U17: 1 D Shand 23.52, 2 J Little 25.43, 3 M Goodfellow 26.16 (all Moray RR). Team: Moray RR 297. U15: 1 C Campbell (Inverness) 17.51, 2 R Murdoch (Caithness) 18.02, 3 P Urquhart (Inverness) 18.11. Team: Inverness 291. U13: 1 L Holmes 12.18, 2 A Couper 12.22, 3 R Gollan 12.30 (all East Sutherland) . Team: East Sutherland 297. U11: 1 G Patterson (Forres) 5.41, 2 C Thom (Inverness) 5.41, 3 C Koick (East Sutherland) 5.56. Team: Inverness 282

Women. Seniors 1 G Cormack (Moray RR) 25.12, 2 M Davie (Forres) 26.12, 3 J Bannerman 26.27. Veteran: S Gollan 26.43 (both Inverness). Teams: 1 Forres 290, 2 Inverness 289, 3 Moray Roadrunners 282. U17: 1 K Rogan (Forres) 20.24, 2 S McKinnon 21.25, 3 H Paterson 25.40 (both Caithness). U15: 1 E Dunnet 17.57, 2 O Dunnet 19.08 (both Caithness) , 3 M McLennan (Inverness) 19.54. Team: Caithness 295. U13: 1 H Campbell 13.56, 2 A Ross 14.06 (both Inverness) , 3 E McRae (East Sutherland) 14.10. Team: Inverness 295. U11: 1 K McLeod 6.13, 2 M Flockhart 6.18, 3 H Kerr 6.26 (all Inverness). Team: Inverness 297

* Clydesdale Harriers 6½-mile Ch ships, Clydebank

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Men 1 P Carroll 40.58, 2 G Dick 42.00, 3 I Robertson 43.47. Veteran: D Halpin 44.30. U20: 1 5 mile3s 1 R Nelson 31.13

Women 1 P McCrossan 46.46, 2 M McCallum 49.21, 3 K Scott 50.06

* Dumbarton AAC 8¼-mile Ch ships, Dumbarton

Men 1 A Fleming 57.25, 2 C Martin 75.50, 3 T Golcher 76.04. Veteran: T Kelly 77.54

Women 1 C Kelly 68.26. Handicap: C Kelly

* Garscube Harriers Ch ships, Mugdock Country Park, Milngavie

Men (6 miles) 1 B Melby 35.22, 2 M Consani 37.49, 3 E MacKay 39.35

Women (4 miles) 1 A Winship 27.39, 2 L Devine 28.50, 3 L Chisholm 28.51

* Maryhill Harriers Ch ships, Mugdock Country Park, Milngavie

Men (6 miles) 1 M McCartney 43.49, 2 S Jones 46.18, 3 J McCartney 48.13

Women (4 miles) 1 C Jones 30.53, 2 M Peebles 40.35

* Springburn Harriers Ch ship, Milngavie

Men (6 miles) 1 A Callan 40.30, 2 J Owens 46.55, 3 A Hill 47.41

* Victoria Park City of Glasgow Ch ships, Mugdock Country Park

Men (6 miles) 1 M Ashby 41.24, 2 C Sheridan 44.37, 3 K McVey 47.49

Road Running

* Ayr Seaforth Winter Series, 5k, Ayr

Men 1 F Rae 16.47, M Ducrot 17.15, 3 A Rae 18.37. Vet: L Baker 18.59. U20: E Webster 19.01

Women 1 T McIntosh 19.29, 2 L Hill-Stirling 19.44, 3 G Geates 21.10. U20: E Vallely 21.52

basketball

* BBL Ch ship

Milton Keynes Lions L Worcester Wolves L

* BBL Trophy. Quarter-finals

TODAY. Guildford Heat v Cheshire Jets (7.30)

cricket

* First Test (day 2 of 5)

Hamilton. New Zealand 553-7 dec (M Guptill 189, B McCullum 185, Rubel Hossain 5-166), Bangladesh 87-1 (Tamim Iqbal 56no)

* Second Test (day 3 of 5)

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Kolkata. South Africa 296 (H Amla 114, A Petersen 100, Z Khan 4-90) & 6-0, India 643-6 dec (V Sehwag 165, VVS Laxman 143no, M Dhoni 132no, S Tendulkar 106)

* First One-Day International

Nairobi. Netherlands 219-9 (R ten Doeschate 109no), Kenya 221-4 (R Patel 92, A Obanda 61). Kenya won by 6 wkts

duathlon

* Edinburgh RC Winter Duathlon Series Rd 2, Kirkliston. (run 2.5k, cycle 10k, run 2.5k)

Men 1 I Grant (Team Herbalife) 50.50, 2 C Dougherty (East Kilbride RC) 52.04, 3 F Boyne (West Lothian Triathletes) 53.36. Veteran: G May (Castlegrey Skull) 54.48

Women 1 M Captieux 62.27, 2 K Hiersemenzel 64.35 (both Edinburgh Uni Triathletes) 3 E Lowden (Glasgow Wheelers) 65.10. Vet: S Gray (Ayrodynamics Triathletes) 65.42

golf

* Hi5 Pro Tour, Polaris Condado Open (Par 72), Murcia, Spain

Rd 1. 70 M Evans (Eng), P Doherty (Sco), F Fritsch (Ger), M Thorp (Nor), E Aquilera (Spa)

71 M Ervasti (Fin), A Belt (Eng) 72 F Widmark (Swe), M Harrison (Eng), P O Hanlon (Irl), S Boyes (Eng), P Erofejeff (Fin), E Saltman (Sco), J Ruth (Eng), M A Martin (Spa), J Busby (Eng)

Other Scots. 76 S Clark 77 Z Saltman

* Murcia Ladies Open, Hacienda del Alamo Golf Resort (Par 72), Murcia, Spain

Final Totals. 144 A Boulden (Maesdu) 75 69, K MacDonald (Nairn Dunbar) 72 72. Boulden won with better second round)

147 C Douglass (Brocket Hall) 70 77

judo

* A bronze for Matthew Purssey, the U90kg player based in Edinburgh, and silver for Tom Reed, U81kg from England, were the best British performances from the 12-strong teams at the men s World Cup in Vienna and the women s in Budapest at the weekend.

netball

* GNA Glasgow District League, Week 17

Div 1 Bellahouston 59 Bishopbriggs 31, Harmony Row 42 St Stephens 27, Strathclyde Uni 30 Glasgow Uni 20

Div 2 Dumbarton Harp 31 Glasgow South Saltires II 27

Div 3 Helensburgh 38 Eastbank II 35, St Mirren 20 Eastbank 32, Strathclyde Uni III 19 Cumbernauld II 42

tennis

Sony Ericsson WTA Tour

* Premier. \$2m Barclays Dubai Ch ships, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch s rink

Rd 2 (1) C Wozniacki (Den) bt D Cibulkova (Svk) 6-2 7-6 (7-2), S Peer (Isr) bt V Razzano (Fra) 6-2 6-2, (11) M Bartoli (Fra) bt A Dulgheru (Rom) 6-2 6-1, (8) Li Na (Chn) bt M J Martinez Sanchez (Spa) 7-6 (9-7) 2-6 6-4, (3) V Williams (US) bt S Lisicki (Ger) 6-2 6-3, O Govortsova (Blr) bt (14) F Schiavone (Ita) 6-4 6-4, A Pavlyuchenkova (Rus) bt T Garbin (Ita) 4-6 6-1 6-2, D Hantuchova (Svk) bt (5) E Dementieva (Rus) 6-4 1-1 rtd, (6) J Jankovic (Srb) bt A Rezai (Fra) 4-6 6-4 7-5, (12) V Zvonareva (Rus) bt K Flipkens (Bel) 6-0 6-0, (q) A-L Groenefeld (Ger) bt (q) A Molik (Ger) 6-4 6-4, (4) V Azarenka (Blr) bt K Bondarenko (Ukr) 4-1 rtd, (7) A Radwanska (Pol) bt A Sevastova (Lat) 6-3 6-3, (10, wc) F Pennetta (Ita) bt A Petkovic (Ger) 6-3 6-3, (q) R Kulikova (Cze) bt (wc) S Voegelé (Swi) 6-3 6-0, (2) S Kuznetsova (Rus) bt A Medina Garrigues (Spa) w/o

* International. \$220,000 Cellular South Cup, Memphis, Tennessee, USA

Rd 1 (1) M Sharapova (Rus) bt S Perry (US) 6-0 6-2, V Tétreault (Can) bt M Niculescu (Rom) 6-3 6-4, (8) E Baltacha (Sco) bt R Voracova (Cze) 7-5 6-1, (3) K Kanepi (Est) bt A Rus (Ned) 6-0 6-4, (wc) N Vaidisova (Cze) bt L Granville (US) 6-4 6-2, A Keothavong (Eng) bt (6) K Barrois (Ger) 6-1 6-3, M Larcher de Brito (Por) bt (q) M Brengle (US) 6-3 6-3, (wc) A Tomljanovic (Cro) bt K Kucova (Svk) 6-4 6-4, K Sprem (Cro) bt (4) L Hradecka (Cze) 6-4 6-4, S Arvidsson (Swe) bt M Domachowska (Pol) 5-7 6-4 6-3, L Osterloh (US) bt S Dubois (Can) 3-6 6-4 6-4

* International. \$220,000 XVIII Copa BBVA Colsanitas, Bogotá, Colombia

Rd 1 (1) G Dulko (Arg) bt M Johansson (Swe) 6-4 6-4, E Gallovits (Rom) bt L Domínguez Lino (Spa) 6-2 6-1, P Cetkovska (Cze) bt (wc) B Botto (Per) 6-4 7-5, (6) S Zahlavova (Cze) bt A Panova (Rus) 6-3 6-2, (wc) C Castaño (Col) bt (4) P Hercog (Svn) 7-5 6-2, P Parmentier (Fra) bt (q) C Dentoni (Ita) 6-3 6-2, R de los Ríos (Par) bt M Zec Peskiric (Svn) 6-4 6-1, (5) A Kerber (Ger) bt S Fichman (Can) 6-3 3-6 6-4, (8) A Parra Santonja (Spa) bt O Savchuk (Ukr) 6-7 (4-7) 6-4 6-2, P Mayr (Aut) bt (wc) P Zabala (Col) 6-1 6-3, S Soler Espinosa (Spa) bt L Wienerova (Svk) 3-6 6-4 6-2, (3) S Errani (Ita) bt A Yakimova (Blr) 6-0 6-4, (7) K Zakopalova (Cze) bt L Albanese (US) 4-6 7-6 (7-2) 6-1, M Koryttseva (Ukr) bt (q) L Pous Tio (Spa) 6-3 1-6 6-1, M Duque Marino (Col) bt (q) G Arn (Hun) 2-6 6-0 6-3, (q) K Antoniyshuk (Ukr) bt (2) C Suárez Navarro (Spa) 6-1 6-4

ATP WORLD TOUR 250

* \$1.1m Regions Morgan Keegan Ch ships, Memphis, USA

Rd 1. Singles (3) R Stepanek (Cze) bt (q) K Anderson (SA) 7-5 4-6 6-4, E Gulbis (Lat) bt (q) R Kendrick (US) 6-4 6-4, (q) R Sweeting (US) v (5) T Berdych (Cze), (6) J Isner (US) bt (q) R Harrison (US) 6-1 7-5, J Nieminen (Fin) bt D Sela (Isr) 6-2 7-5, I Karlovic (Cro) bt B Becker (Ger) 7-6 (8-6) 7-6 (7-4), E Korolev (Kaz) bt (7) P Kohlschreiber (Ger) 7-5 7-5, L Lacko (Svk) bt (wc) B Reynolds (US) 2-6 7-6 (8-6) 6-4

Doubles R Hutchins (Eng) & J Kerr (Aus) bt (4) M Damm (Cze) & F Polasek (Svk) 6-3 7-6 (9-7)

* 512,750 Open 13, Marseille, France

Rd 1 S Stakhovsky (Ukr) d S Bolelli (Ita) 6-3 3-6 6-4, M Llodra (Fra) bt (q) E Roger-Vasselin (Fra) 6-7 (5-7) 6-3 6-4, (8) J Benneteau (Fra) bt (q) S Bohli (Swi) 7-6 (7-5) 7-6 (7-3), A Seppi (Ita) bt A Clement (Fra) 7-6 (7-2) 7-5, O Rochus (Bel) bt (5) G Simon (Fra) 7-5 6-2, (ll) I Marchenko (Ukr) d (q) R Bemelmans (Bel) 4-6 6-3 6-2, J Ouanna (Fra) bt D Istomin (Uzb) 6-4 1-6 6-3 [Ouanna replaced C Rochus (Bel)]

* 475,300 Copa Telmex, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Rd 1 (1) D Ferrer (Spa) v S Greul (Ger), F Gil (Por) bt P Luczak (Aus) 6-2 6-4, M Granollers (Spa) bt (q) D Junqueira (Arg) 6-1 6-2, (6) I Andreev (Rus) bt F Fognini (Ita) 7-5 7-6 (7-4), D Nalbandian (Arg) bt P Starace (Ita) 6-2 7-6 (7-2), (q) P Andujar (Spa) bt O Hernandez (Spa) 6-4 6-1, (5) A Montanes (Spa) bt P Cuevas (Uru) 6-2 6-2, (wc) C Moya (Spa) bt (q) F Vollandri (Ita) 6-2 7-5, J I Chela (Arg) bt R Gasquet (Fra) 7-6 (7-3) 7-5, L Kubot (Pol) v (4) J Monaco (Arg), (q) S Ventura (Spa) bt D Koellerer (Aut) 6-4 6-2, M Daniel (Bra) bt P Lorenzi (Ita) 6-1 6-3

ATP CHALLENGER

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch's rink

* 106,500 Gemax Open, Belgrade, Serbia

Rd 1. Singles A Bogdanovic (Eng) bt J Reister (Ger) 6-7 (5-7) 6-3 6-**4**

Doubles I Dodig (Cro) & F Moser (Ger) bt (1) J Marray (Eng) & J Murray (Sco) 6-**4** 7-6 (7-**4**), I Bozoljac (Srb) & J Delgado (Eng) bt (3) T Bednarek & M Kowalczyk (Pol) 7-6 (11-9) 7-6 (7-5)

golf

Wallace Booth s quest to gain a foothold in the pro game has led to the Comrie rookie entering the PGA EuroPro Tour s qualifying school in April, writes Nick Rodger.

The Eisenhower Trophy winner, who joined the paid ranks after last September s Walker Cup, has already failed in his bid for both a European and an Asian Tour card over the past few months and will now have to build his career on the third-tier circuit.

Booth is on US mini-tour duty in South Carolina this week at the Palmetto Hall championship where he is joined in the field by former Scottish Youths champion Joel Hendry and Inverness exile Russell Knox.

* Denis Durnian, the former Scottish Senior Open champion, has revealed that he is fighting cancer. The 59-year-old from Wigan, a three-time winner on the European Senior circuit, was diagnosed at the end of December and is undergoing treatment.

Durnian won the Scottish Senior title at the Roxburghe in 2002 but his return to the Kelso course two years later almost ended in tragedy when he suffered a heart attack before the start of the third round.

* Gavin Dear s Alps Tour debut was halted on the starting grid yesterday when the first round of the £50,000 Open de Mogador in Morocco was delayed due to high winds and heavy rain. Officials were hoping to tee-off the championship later in the day but Dear, playing in one of the final groups, was facing a struggle to complete his round.

* Glasgow s Chris Kelly made a winning start to 2010 as he led a Scottish one-two-three in the Glenmuir Vilamoura Pro-Am in Portugal. The former Scottish PGA champion reeled off rounds of 66, 68 and 69 for a 14-under 203 and won by two shots from Hayston s Stephen Gray. Craig Lee, last year s Tartan Tour No 1, finished third on 212 while Colville Park s Sam Cairns shared 10th on a 218.

* Stirling University student Kelsey MacDonald was pipped in a card play-off for the Murcia Ladies Open at the Hacienda del Alamo Festival in Spain, writes Colin Farquharson. The Scottish under-21 girls champion for the past two years tied with Welsh international Amy Boulden on level par 144, with MacDonald shooting a pair of 72s while Boulden had rounds of 75 and 69. The Welsh woman, like MacDonald a member of the Great Britain & Ireland preliminary squad for the Curtis Cup match in June, was declared the winner by virtue of having the better second round.

badminton

Scotland suffered a disappointing 2-3 defeat from Ukraine in Group E on the opening day of the Uber Cup European qualifying in Warsaw in Poland, writes Elspeth Burnside. Linda Sloan and the doubles pair of Imogen Bankier and Emma Mason collected points for the Scots, but Scottish champion Susan Egelstaff and 16-year-old Kirsty Gilmour both lost their singles and Jillie Cooper and Sloan lost the final doubles.

In the other Group E match, France, who face Scotland today, beat hosts Poland **4-1**.

David Murdoch and his world champion team had a disappointing start to their Olympic campaign yesterday, going down **4-6** to Sweden s Niklas Edin in their opening round-robin game.

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch's rink

After they took the lead with a single in the second end, the GB quartet Ewan MacDonald, Pete Smith and Euan Byers, as well as Murdoch never dominated and allowed the Swedes to dictate play.

They let the Swedes score two in the third end and then, after blanking the next two ends, Murdoch went further behind in the sixth when his attempted double take-out just failed, leaving a Swedish stone counting for a steal of one and a score of 3-1 to Sweden.

The British team scored a single in the seventh and then two in the ninth to close the score to 4-5, but Edin took out a British counter in the tenth for a 6-4 win.

Murdoch said, I think we were half-an-inch off making a hell of a lot of shots today, and that was pretty much the tale of the tape. If I had made my double in the sixth, it would have been a different game; we would have been two up and cruising. But it wasn't going to be today, we rubbed a few guards and we didn't get our rocks in the places we wanted them to be to put them under pressure.

Third player MacDonald agreed with his skip s appraisal. That was absolutely not how we wanted to start, it was one of those games . . . an inch or two here or there and it s different. We didn't play that badly, but things just didn't run for us today. We had two or three good chances, and that would have made a big difference. We've just got to regroup and come back firing tomorrow.

Although disappointed to lose his opener, Murdoch tried to put the result in perspective. It s pretty much the norm for us to lose the first game in a championship . . . maybe it s a good thing.

Looking forward, he added: We're not even looking at what the other teams are doing just now, it s all about ourselves and this is a long event. We didn't play as offensively as we wanted to there, we just need to be sharper, get a few more rocks in play, and trust our skill.

Our goal is to get to the semi-final, and if that means being in first place or fourth we don't really care, but it s going to be a tough week, with a lot of good teams.

The British men now sit out the second round-robin session before facing France in their next game this afternoon.

In the women s event, Eve Muirhead s rink face China, the world champions, this morning having been given a bye in yesterday s opening round-robin.

They are then back on the ice against the Olympic champions, Sweden, in what is a very tough initiation at this level for 19-year-old Muirhead and her team of Jackie Lockhart, Kelly Wood and Lorna Vevers.

golf

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1968 Jean-Claude Killy of France, one of the greatest alpine skiers of all time, won his third gold medal at the Winter Olympics in Grenoble. Victorious in the downhill, the giant slalom and the slalom, he equalled Toni Sailer s record of winning three gold medals at one Games.

2008 Andy Murray claimed his fifth ATP Tour title, beating Croatia s Mario Ancic 6-3, 6-4 in the Open 13 final in Marseille.

1 Devon Loch, owned by the Queen Mother and ridden by Dick Francis, inexplicably fell just yards from the finishing line in the 1956 Grand National. What was the name of the horse who won the race?

2 Which famous stadium is 100 years old on February 19?

3 The first official Winter Olympics took place in which country in 1924?

4 Name the five clubs David Beckham has played for.

5 Who did Bangladesh play their first Test match against in 2000?

today

Football Champions League, last 16, first leg, Porto v Arsenal ITV1, 7.30pm; Bayern Munich v Fiorentina Sky Sports 2, 7pm. Active Nation Scottish Cup fifth-round replay, Rangers v St Mirren Sky Sports 1, 7.30pm.

Winter Olympics Vancouver Games Eurosport, 6.25am, 6pm; BBC2, 6.30pm, 11.20pm.

Cricket Second Test, fourth day, Kolkata, India v South Africa Sky Sports 1, 3.55am.

Golf WGC-Accenture World Match Play, Arizona Sky Sports 1, 7pm.

tomorrow

Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch s rink

Football Europa League, last 32, first leg, Liverpool v Unirea Urziceni Five, 7.30pm; Villarreal v Wolfsburg ITV4, 5.30pm; Ajax v Juventus & Panathinaikos v Roma ESPN, from 6pm.

Winter Olympics Vancouver Games Eurosport, 6pm; BBC2, 11.20pm.

Cricket Second Test, final day, Kolkata, India v South Africa Sky Sports 1, 3.55am.

Golf WGC-Accenture World Match Play, Arizona Sky Sports 2, 7pm.

Darts Premier League, Bournemouth Sky Sports 1, 7pm.

Racing Dubai Sky Sports 1, 3pm.

Answers 1 ESB; 2 Old Trafford; 3 France (Chamonix); **4** Manchester United, Preston, Real Madrid, the Los Angeles Galaxy, AC Milan; 5 India.

Claudia Pechstein, the five-time Olympic speedskating champion, has appealed again to the Court of Arbitration for Sport **in** a late, desperate bid to compete at the Vancouver Games despite her doping ban.

Writing on her website, the 37-year-old German **said** she has appealed to the CAS ad-hoc division **in** Vancouver, and has also filed charges against the International Ice Skating Union for suppressing evidence **in** her case.

The ad-hoc division is set up 10 days before an Olympics to consider requests for arbitration against a decision if the claimant has exhausted other avenues, or time, for appeal.

Pechstein has always denied doping and never failed a drug test but was banned by the ISU for two years for abnormal blood readings.

athletics

Cross Country

* Speyside Runner North District League. Final Round, Elgin

Men. Seniors 1 B Livesey 32.01, 2 K Greig 34.20, 3 P Rogan 35.14 (all Forres). Veteran: R Arbuckle (Keith & District) 36.23. Teams: 1 Forres 392, 2 Moray Roadrunners 356, 3 Inverness 346. U17: 1 D Shand 23.52, 2 J Little 25.43, 3 M Goodfellow 26.16 (all Moray RR). Team: Moray RR 297. U15: 1 C Campbell (Inverness) 17.51, 2 R Murdoch (Caithness) 18.02, 3 P Urquhart (Inverness) 18.11. Team: Inverness 291. U13: 1 L Holmes 12.18, 2 A Couper 12.22, 3 R Gollan 12.30 (all East Sutherland) . Team: East Sutherland 297. U11: 1 G Patterson (Forres) 5.41, 2 C Thom (Inverness) 5.41, 3 C Koick (East Sutherland) 5.56. Team: Inverness 282

Women. Seniors 1 G Cormack (Moray RR) 25.12, 2 M Davie (Forres) 26.12, 3 J Bannerman 26.27. Veteran: **S** Gollan 26.43 (both Inverness). Teams: 1 Forres 290, 2 Inverness 289, 3 Moray Roadrunners 282. U17: 1 K Rogan (Forres) 20.24, 2 **S** McKinnon 21.25, 3 H Paterson 25.40 (both Caithness). U15: 1 E Dunnet 17.57, 2 O Dunnet 19.08 (both Caithness) , 3 M McLennan (Inverness) 19.54. Team: Caithness 295. U13: 1 H Campbell 13.56, 2 A Ross 14.06 (both Inverness) , 3 E McRae (East Sutherland) 14.10. Team: Inverness 295. U11: 1 K McLeod 6.13, 2 M Flockhart 6.18, 3 H Kerr 6.26 (all Inverness). Team: Inverness 297

* Clydesdale Harriers 6½-mile Ch ships, Clydebank

Men 1 P Carroll 40.58, 2 G Dick 42.00, 3 I Robertson 43.47. Veteran: D Halpin 44.30. U20: 1 5 mile3s 1 R Nelson 31.13

Women 1 P McCrossan 46.46, 2 M McCallum 49.21, 3 K Scott 50.06

* Dumbarton AAC 8¼-mile Ch ships, Dumbarton

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Men 1 A Fleming 57.25, 2 C Martin 75.50, 3 T Golcher 76.04. Veteran: T Kelly 77.54

Women 1 C Kelly 68.26. Handicap: C Kelly

* Garscube Harriers Ch ships, Mugdock Country Park, Milngavie

Men (6 miles) 1 B Melby 35.22, 2 M Consani 37.49, 3 E MacKay 39.35

Women (4 miles) 1 A Winship 27.39, 2 L Devine 28.50, 3 L Chisholm 28.51

* Maryhill Harriers Ch ships, Mugdock Country Park, Milngavie

Men (6 miles) 1 M McCartney 43.49, 2 S Jones 46.18, 3 J McCartney 48.13

Women (4 miles) 1 C Jones 30.53, 2 M Peebles 40.35

* Springburn Harriers Ch ship, Milngavie

Men (6 miles) 1 A Callan 40.30, 2 J Owens 46.55, 3 A Hill 47.41

* Victoria Park City of Glasgow Ch ships, Mugdock Country Park

Men (6 miles) 1 M Ashby 41.24, 2 C Sheridan 44.37, 3 K McVey 47.49

Road Running

* Ayr Seaforth Winter Series, 5k, Ayr

Men 1 F Rae 16.47, M Ducrot 17.15, 3 A Rae 18.37. Vet: L Baker 18.59. U20: E Webster 19.01

Women 1 T McIntosh 19.29, 2 L Hill-Stirling 19.44, 3 G Geates 21.10. U20: E Vallely 21.52

basketball

* BBL Ch ship

Milton Keynes Lions L Worcester Wolves L

* BBL Trophy. Quarter-finals

TODAY. Guildford Heat v Cheshire Jets (7.30)

cricket

* First Test (day 2 of 5)

Hamilton. New Zealand 553-7 dec (M Guptill 189, B McCullum 185, Rubel Hossain 5-166), Bangladesh 87-1 (Tamim Iqbal 56no)

* Second Test (day 3 of 5)

Kolkata. South Africa 296 (H Amla 114, A Petersen 100, Z Khan 4-90) & 6-0, India 643-6 dec (V Sehwag 165, VVS Laxman 143no, M Dhoni 132no, S Tendulkar 106)

* First One-Day International

Nairobi. Netherlands 219-9 (R ten Doeschate 109no), Kenya 221-4 (R Patel 92, A Obanda 61). Kenya won by 6 wkts

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duathlon

* Edinburgh RC Winter Duathlon Series Rd 2, Kirkliston. (run 2.5k, cycle 10k, run 2.5k)

Men 1 I Grant (Team Herbalife) 50.50, 2 C Dougherty (East Kilbride RC) 52.04, 3 F Boyne (West Lothian Triathletes) 53.36. Veteran: G May (Castlegrey Skull) 54.48

Women 1 M Captieux 62.27, 2 K Hiersemenzel 64.35 (both Edinburgh Uni Triathletes) 3 E Lowden (Glasgow Wheelers) 65.10. Vet: S Gray (Ayrodynamics Triathletes) 65.42

golf

* Hi5 Pro Tour, Polaris Condado Open (Par 72), Murcia, Spain

Rd 1. 70 M Evans (Eng), P Doherty (Sco), F Fritsch (Ger), M Thorp (Nor), E Aquilera (Spa)

71 M Ervasti (Fin), A Belt (Eng) 72 F Widmark (Swe), M Harrison (Eng), P O Hanlon (Irl), S Boyes (Eng), P Erofejeff (Fin), E Saltman (Sco), J Ruth (Eng), M A Martin (Spa), J Busby (Eng)

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Final Totals. 144 A Boulden (Maesdu) 75 69, K MacDonald (Nairn Dunbar) 72 72. Boulden won with better second round)

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Sony Ericsson WTA Tour

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Rooney steals the limelight; Barclay still feels Cardiff pain Bad start for Murdoch s rink

* International. \$220,000 Cellular South Cup, Memphis, Tennessee, USA

Rd 1 (1) M Sharapova (Rus) bt S Perry (US) 6-0 6-2, V Tétreault (Can) bt M Niculescu (Rom) 6-3 6-4, (8) E Baltacha (Sco) bt R Voracova (Cze) 7-5 6-1, (3) K Kanepi (Est) bt A Rus (Ned) 6-0 6-4, (wc) N Vaidisova (Cze) bt L Granville (US) 6-4 6-2, A Keothavong (Eng) bt (6) K Barrois (Ger) 6-1 6-3, M Larcher de Brito (Por) bt (q) M Brengle (US) 6-3 6-3, (wc) A Tomljanovic (Cro) bt K Kucova (Svk) 6-4 6-4, K Sprem (Cro) bt (4) L Hradecka (Cze) 6-4 6-4, S Arvidsson (Swe) bt M Domachowska (Pol) 5-7 6-4 6-3, L Osterloh (US) bt S Dubois (Can) 3-6 6-4 6-4

* International. \$220,000 XVIII Copa BBVA Colsanitas, Bogotá, Colombia

Rd 1 (1) G Dulko (Arg) bt M Johansson (Swe) 6-4 6-4, E Gallovits (Rom) bt L Domínguez Lino (Spa) 6-2 6-1, P Cetkovska (Cze) bt (wc) B Botto (Per) 6-4 7-5, (6) S Zahlavova (Cze) bt A Panova (Rus) 6-3 6-2, (wc) C Castaño (Col) bt (4) P Hercog (Svn) 7-5 6-2, P Parmentier (Fra) bt (q) C Dentoni (Ita) 6-3 6-2, R de los Ríos (Par) bt M Zec Peskiric (Svn) 6-4 6-1, (5) A Kerber (Ger) bt S Fichman (Can) 6-3 3-6 6-4, (8) A Parra Santonja (Spa) bt O Savchuk (Ukr) 6-7 (4-7) 6-4 6-2, P Mayr (Aut) bt (wc) P Zabala (Col) 6-1 6-3, S Soler Espinosa (Spa) bt L Wienerova (Svk) 3-6 6-4 6-2, (3) S Errani (Ita) bt A Yakimova (Blr) 6-0 6-4, (7) K Zakopalova (Cze) bt L Albanese (US) 4-6 7-6 (7-2) 6-1, M Koryttseva (Ukr) bt (q) L Pous Tio (Spa) 6-3 1-6 6-1, M Duque Marino (Col) bt (q) G Arn (Hun) 2-6 6-0 6-3, (q) K Antoniychuk (Ukr) bt (2) C Suárez Navarro (Spa) 6-1 6-4

ATP WORLD TOUR 250

* \$1.1m Regions Morgan Keegan Ch ships, Memphis, USA

Rd 1. Singles (3) R Stepanek (Cze) bt (q) K Anderson (SA) 7-5 4-6 6-4, E Gulbis (Lat) bt (q) R Kendrick (US) 6-4 6-4, (q) R Sweeting (US) v (5) T Berdych (Cze), (6) J Isner (US) bt (q) R Harrison (US) 6-1 7-5, J Nieminen (Fin) bt D Sela (Isr) 6-2 7-5, I Karlovic (Cro) bt B Becker (Ger) 7-6 (8-6) 7-6 (7-4), E Korolev (Kaz) bt (7) P Kohlschreiber (Ger) 7-5 7-5, L Lacko (Svk) bt (wc) B Reynolds (US) 2-6 7-6 (8-6) 6-4

Doubles R Hutchins (Eng) & J Kerr (Aus) bt (4) M Damm (Cze) & F Polasek (Svk) 6-3 7-6 (9-7)

* 512,750 Open 13, Marseille, France

Rd 1 S Stakhovsky (Ukr) d S Bolelli (Ita) 6-3 3-6 6-4, M Llodra (Fra) bt (q) E Roger-Vasselin (Fra) 6-7 (5-7) 6-3 6-4, (8) J Benneteau (Fra) bt (q) S Bohli (Swi) 7-6 (7-5) 7-6 (7-3), A Seppi (Ita) bt A Clement (Fra) 7-6 (7-2) 7-5, O Rochus (Bel) bt (5) G Simon (Fra) 7-5 6-2, (Il) I Marchenko (Ukr) d (q) R Bemelmans (Bel) 4-6 6-3 6-2, J Ouanna (Fra) bt D Istomin (Uzb) 6-4 1-6 6-3 [Ouanna replaced C Rochus (Bel)]

* 475,300 Copa Telmex, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Rd 1 (1) D Ferrer (Spa) v S Greul (Ger), F Gil (Por) bt P Luczak (Aus) 6-2 6-4, M Granollers (Spa) bt (q) D Junqueira (Arg) 6-1 6-2, (6) I Andreev (Rus) bt F Fognini (Ita) 7-5 7-6 (7-4), D Nalbandian (Arg) bt P Starace (Ita) 6-2 7-6 (7-2), (q) P Andujar (Spa) bt O Hernandez (Spa) 6-4 6-1, (5) A Montanes (Spa) bt P Cuevas (Uru) 6-2 6-2, (wc) C Moya (Spa) bt (q) F Vollandri (Ita) 6-2 7-5, J I Chela (Arg) bt R Gasquet (Fra) 7-6 (7-3) 7-5, L Kubot (Pol) v (4) J Monaco (Arg), (q) S Ventura (Spa) bt D Koellerer (Aut) 6-4 6-2, M Daniel (Bra) bt P Lorenzi (Ita) 6-1 6-3

ATP CHALLENGER

* 106,500 Gemax Open, Belgrade, Serbia

Rd 1. Singles A Bogdanovic (Eng) bt J Reister (Ger) 6-7 (5-7) 6-3 6-4

Doubles I Dodig (Cro) & F Moser (Ger) bt (1) J Marray (Eng) & J Murray (Sco) 6-4 7-6 (7-4), I Bozoljac (Srb) & J Delgado (Eng) bt (3) T Bednarek & M Kowalczyk (Pol) 7-6 (11-9) 7-6 (7-5)

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Andrew Musgrave admits his fate in today s cross-country sprint lies in the lap of the gods after struggling to find his feet on his Olympic debut.

Having blown hot and cold in the build-up, the Huntly skier hauled himself up from 60th position to finish 55th in the 15km individual freestyle. Musgrave took 36:32.4 minutes to complete the course and has enjoyed only 48 hours rest before returning to the start line for the dash.

The opening round showed that I have improved but it was nowhere near my best, said the 19-year-old. I think I am going to need more time than I have to get myself to where I want to be. While I performed better than I have been it did confirm what I suspected. I am still not in my best shape but hopefully by the longer distance races later next week I can get back up to my best.

Andrew Young, his fellow Huntly competitor, used his 48-hour break to redraw his blueprint after admitting his tactics failed in the opening event. The 17-year-old son of British cross-country team coach Roy Young started in 71st but slipped back into the field and finished in 74th position in 38.45.1 minutes.

It wasn't too great in the first event I worked on tactics and stuck to them but I don't think that worked out, said Young. I don't know what it was maybe I got a cold or something but I just couldn't ski as fast as I wanted to and that is a little bit annoying. I've had a look though and I'll change what needs to be changed.

Ben Kilner, the Banchory snowboarder, will make his Olympic bow four years later than first planned in the men s halfpipe qualifiers this evening. Kilner missed out on a place to Turin in 2006 by a single World Cup result but is regarded as an outside medal chance after claiming bronze in his final preparation event.

I have nothing to lose out there, Sean White is the huge favourite but behind that I think anything can happen, he said. Perhaps people won't be looking for me but that will play into my hands.

Elise Christie, meanwhile, will hope to keep her 500m short track speed skating medal bid alive when she goes in the quarter-finals tonight. I'm still just aiming to enjoy the whole event but the further I can go then the more races I can do and the more experience I will gain, said the Livingston skater. If I can keep getting through then I stand as good a chance as anyone else.

Britain s brightest alpine skiing medal hope Chemmy Alcott will make her long-awaited start today in the downhill event. Bad weather had delayed the start of the event and the six-time national champion admits she s desperate to get going.

We've had a really busy schedule and then we've been hanging about a bit, said Alcott. It isn't ideal but I'm just looking forward to starting, she said.

* Lloyds TSB, proud partner of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and supporter of Team GB. Visit LloydsTSB.com/London2012

PLS REPLACE DIG ABOUT WOMAN BEING ATTACKED IN BRADFORD

SCOTLAND winger Thom Evans is to have a second operation this week on the neck injury that ended his season.

The Scottish Rugby Union said it will aim to build on that carried out after Evans was hurt during Saturday's 31-24 Six Nations defeat against Wales in Cardiff.

Team doctor James Robson said "the surgeons are delighted with his progress" and that the procedure will "provide further stabilisation to his neck."

By way of deception, thou shalt do war. So goes the motto of Israel s overseas intelligence service Mossad.

Should the agency turn out to be responsible for the killing in Dubai of Hamas commander Mahmoud al-Mabhouh, it will remind many of the story depicted in Steven Spielberg s movie Munich.

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Based on true events, the film tells of a Mossad assassination squad sent out to retaliate for the kidnap and murder of 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics by Palestinian terrorists.

Like the film, recent events in Dubai have once again highlighted the controversial issue of state-sponsored killings as part of a counter terrorism strategy.

While Israel has never officially acknowledged having a policy of targeted assassinations, in the years since the Munich massacre, Mossad is said by intelligence analysts to have continued its policy of striking back overseas whenever and wherever it deems necessary.

It s unlikely that such strikes would be restricted by international borders, or the territorial and legal constraints of any foreign state. Many such Israeli missions are said to be undertaken by the Metsada, a highly secret department within Mossad that operates combatants.

Security experts say that within the Metsada is the Kidon (a Hebrew translation of the word bayonet): a specially trained elite assassination unit.

Each hit team is said to comprise four members. One acts as the target locator and is tasked to keep tabs on the victim s movements. Another is the transporter, charged with getting the team safely away from the killing area. The remaining two will be the shooters, or those that will execute the hit.

THE recording studio immortalised by The Beatles' album of the same name has been put up for sale by its owners. EMI is seeking buyers for Abbey Road studio in London, a mecca for fans who pose for photographs imitating the Fab Four on a zebra crossing outside the studio.

SCOTS rugby player Thom Evans is to have a second operation on the neck injury sustained in the game against Wales on Saturday. Doctors said it would provide further stabilisation.

DUNDEE FC director Calum Melville launched a marathon attempt to raise £50,000 for ill children in Scotland. He has started training for the Bank of America Chicago Marathon to raise cash for the Children s Hospice Association Scotland.

A WOMAN in her 20s has been arrested on suspicion of murder after a three-year-old girl was found dead at a house, police said. Officers discovered the youngster s body at a property in Milverton Road in the Erdington area of Birmingham at 5.30pm on Saturday.

MEMBERS of a suspected hit squad blamed for the assassination of a Hamas commander in Dubai used fake British and Irish passports.

Police in Dubai named 11 Europeans including six on British passports and three Irish they hold responsible for killing Mahmoud al-Mabhouh. But the Foreign Office said yesterday the UK documents were fraudulent and officials in Dublin said they hadn't issued passports in the names.

Dubai police released the names and photos of the alleged gang, along with their apparent nationalities according to the passports. They also did not rule out involvement from Israeli intelligence service Mossad.

Those travelling with UK documents were named as Michael Lawrence Barney, James Leonard Clarke, Jonathan Louis Graham, Paul John Keeley, Stephen Daniel Hodes and Melvyn Adam Mildiner.

The Foreign Office launched an inquiry after revealing the passports of the suspects were fake, raising the possibility they were using stolen identities. A spokesman said: We believe the passports used were fraudulent and we've begun investigating.

Melvyn Adam Mildiner, 31, one of the men identified by the Dubai police as a suspect, was shocked when a journalist reached him on the phone in Israel and read him the information released by Dubai officials.

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Mildiner, who said he holds a British and an Israeli passport, confirmed the name and the passport number matched his but said the date of birth was a few days off.

He said he did not know how anybody obtained his UK passport, which was issued in 2001 and never reported lost.

The Irish Foreign Office said they had no record of passports being issued under the names released in Dubai Gail Folliard, Evan Dennings and Kevin Daveron. A spokesman added the passport numbers appeared to be counterfeits as they had the wrong number of digits and contained no letters.

Al-Mabhouh, a founder of Hamas's military wing, died in his luxury hotel room near Dubai International Airport on January 20. It is claimed he was suffocated. Hamas pointed the finger at Israel, blaming Mossad the country's secret service for carrying out the hit.

Al-Mabhouh was wanted by Israel for his role in the 1989 kidnapping and killing of two Israeli soldiers.

Israeli officials also pointedly accused al-Mabhouh of helping smuggle rockets into the Gaza Strip, the coastal Palestinian territory ruled by Hamas.

But officials outside Dubai said at least two Palestinians linked to the case were in Dubai custody, leaving Hamas and its rivals trading bitter accusations.

LUCY Mack was in the Argyle Street branch of bookseller Waterstone's when the heavens opened outside, and folk were running in all directions to get shelter from the rain.

Two ned-like chaps ran into Waterstone's, stopped in their tracks, looked around, and one declared: Aw, naw, it's a bluidy bookshop, before both ran back out into the rain.

CLASSROOM conversations, continued. A Hamilton reader tells us that the minister was talking to her daughter's primary class about Easter and asked the seven-year-olds why Jesus died on the cross.

Expecting an answer along the lines of: So we'd all be saved, he was left temporarily speechless when one of the sweet-faced tots replied: He bled to death.

GLASWEGIANS can be so cruel. A reader catching a late train home watched as a young chap was being slagged by his mates about his new girlfriend.

People say she's very foxy, he said, defending his paramour.

That's only because she rakes through the bins at night, a so-called pal hooted back.

A READER in a branch of fast-food supplier McDonald's heard a woman with a young son ask if they did Miserable Meals.

When the staff member asked if she meant a Happy Meal, the woman replied: Well, I'd get him a Happy Meal, but he's been a miserable wee sod all day.

READER Margaret Wright in Glasgow tells us about her driving instructor husband taking a foreign student out on Sunday. The pupil asked at the end of the lesson if he knew where he could find a bookie.

Her husband's chatty reply that he didn't think they were open on a Sunday, and that his student didn't look like someone who gambled, brought a puzzled look and the reply: It's Valentine's Day. I need to get my wife a bouquet.

AH, the power of the social networking site Facebook. A regular user of Linlithgow railway station found his nerves being frayed by a damaged door on the waiting room which constantly slammed shut and flew open at regular

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intervals, and so he set up the Facebook group Will somebody at Linlithgow station please fix the door that keeps banging?

After attracting 61 members, the group can now report that the door has just been fixed.

Or as one of the group posted: If only the Burmese generals were members of Facebook, maybe they would release Aung San Suu Kyi.

WHY do folk who run television companies, asked the philosopher in the golf club the other day, assume that people who are deaf are also insomniacs.

Warming, soothing tea. A social event, a pick-me-up, a comforter. Tea is a great social leveller, given to both vicars and builders alike.

It is a cure-all and a cause for celebration on its own, but hitch it to the wagon of afternoon cake and you have an altogether brighter star.

There is something innately civilising about afternoon tea. One, for it must be one and not you, cannot slouch at a table set properly for tea.

One cannot wear jeans or sneakers, sport ragged nails or unkempt hair. Not in the face of delicate china, weighty silver, a tablecloth like a bride's skirts and a three-tier cake stand.

Even stripped bare of all its frippery, afternoon tea is a winner for that one central reason: cake. Cake is one of life's quiet glories. I, for one, have never met a cake I did not like. Chocolate cake, carrot cake, Victoria sponge and hummingbird. Mmm. Cake's one downfall is that, in polite company at least, you cannot have it all.

With cake comes choice. Chocolate or carrot. Victoria or hummingbird. Just one slice. Not so afternoon tea. It is the switherer's delight. A three-tiered tower of pure pleasure.

Sandwiches? Try a finger of each. Scones? Crumpets? Sultana bread? Have a wee taste of all.

And, then, top tier. Glorious, tooth-melting, stomach-plumping top tier of cake in many varieties and no need to feign restraint. Time for tea is an apt phrase indeed. Afternoon tea comes in miniature courses that cannot be rushed but plead to be savoured. The tea itself is a hot punctuation, slowing the meal to take an hour even two.

If I had the skill to arrange my words into neat stanzas, I would write sonnets for the ritual of scones, cake and tea.

This is not in praise of afternoon tea; it is a love song.

This is intriguing. Ms Pauline Hanson, formerly an adornment to Australia's House of Representatives, has said she fancies retracing ancestral footsteps by moving to Britain. It seems that our way of life, Australian-style, is no longer to her taste. So another hopeful immigrant could soon be heading this way.

The intriguing part is that Hanson once had a unique selling point as leader of the briefly electable One Nation party: she didn't care for immigrants. In fact, in her maiden parliamentary speech in Canberra in 1996, she claimed that Australia was in danger of being swamped by Asians. There was as much chance of that, in fact, as there was of Hanson being overwhelmed by a sense of irony.

Nevertheless, she is thought to hold dual citizenship. She says she loves England and Ireland, particularly having often attacked multiculturalism the culture. She, meanwhile, hopes to escape over-regulation, increasing taxes and lack of true representation in Britain? and anticipates no problems. She is probably right about that.

A good old family welcome for an anti-immigrant immigrant would be no more surreal, after all, than our own government's border policies. Hanson doesn't seem to be hard up, she speaks the language, after a fashion, and she hails from what was once called the white Commonwealth, otherwise our kith and kin. It would make her the perfect supporter for all our tough-but-sensible immigrant incarceration measures.

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Jim Murphy, the Scottish Secretary, would find that piece of whimsy deplorable, no doubt. After all, he has just told BBC Radio Scotland that he didn't come into politics to remove families who come to our country seeking a better life. One day he will tell us why he did come into politics. Meanwhile, with a heavy heart, he finds himself endorsing the dawn raids, the incarceration of children in the Dungavel camp and the casting of families into peril.

Murphy feels really bad about it: let there be no mistake about that. He does not enjoy the fact that families are removed when they fail to meet the criteria. When he has time in his next major Glasgow speech on immigration, he will no doubt explain and justify those criteria. For now, it seems, there is a more pressing problem.

That would be those unnamed persons who believe we can operate an open-door policy. Or, as one of those ever-shy sources close to the minister told the Times, these are people who seem to believe that they must take the side of every failed asylum-seeker. They do not seem to believe that you need to maintain public confidence in an immigration system.

That would be the SNP, then. It is, after all, the only party capable of containing reckless ministers who never, it is alleged, support forced deportations. The Nats are the target and this, it appears, is to be the flavour of Scotland's General Election campaign. First, Murphy advocates cash prizes for anyone informing on benefit fraud, now he puts in a good word for Dungavel. Inspiring.

We shouldn't pick on the Scottish Secretary, necessarily. Some might have thought the election would turn on the economy, recession, unemployment and the boring old public finances. But the appearance of immigration on the agenda when polling day approaches is an old British tradition. If nothing else, it has the effect of destroying any hope of rational therefore, inconvenient debate.

Western Europe needs immigrants. The demographic trends birth rates steady or falling, populations ageing are clear. History shows, meanwhile, that those seeking a better life will generally work damned hard for it, and instil the virtue in their children. They also have a habit of enlivening the culture in ways that Pauline Hanson might fail to appreciate. But as to swamping those already here, themselves often the descendants of immigrants? Hardly.

Against those benefits stand some hard facts. A great many people in Asia and Africa would grab that new life in Europe if they could. As the climate goes to hell, their numbers will increase. The continent can cope easily enough, but if one country becomes easier to reach than the others the cry of anti-immigrant campaigners in every country there would be problems. There is no point in pretending otherwise.

Recession, equally, is liable to alter calculations. Before the crash, Britain was accommodating an influx of migrant labour though not asylum-seekers with no great fuss. Most soon understood that those workers were needed, and that they were doing jobs for which there were few takers among the indigenous population. There was ample evidence, nevertheless, that wages in some sectors were being suppressed as a result, though I don't remember ministers fretting over that.

In any case, the east Europeans had another advantage: they were as white as Pauline Hanson. That category contains precious few of the asylum-seekers who fail to meet Murphy's criteria. Race, not economics or national security or social planning, is what makes immigration potent in Britain. Ask yourself: how long would Dungavel stay in operation if its inmates were poor white New Zealanders?

So the Scottish Secretary gives us his very thoughtful speech with its unimpeachable bullet-point: you can't let everyone in. True. But to avoid misunderstandings, particularly as an election approaches, you can distinguish between those seeking asylum and economic migrants. You can say why your criteria are calibrated to political calculations. You can stop excusing racism as misgivings. You could even say why Scotland is an ideal second home for those fleeing misery.

But here's an authentic irony. Most of those who seek asylum here would jump at the chance to pay their £720 and sit New Labour's citizen test for the sake of that prized passport. Native-born, with all the trimmings, I need not ever submit to such very British indignities. The Queen will have to wait for my loyalty oath.

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As to the reality behind the euphemisms, the facts behind all the fear-mongering and the coded speeches? Muslims, those demonised folk, at present constitute 2.7% of the population of these islands. Pauline Hanson wouldn't even notice them.

FINAL TEST Vangipurappu Laxman crafted an unbeaten 143 to put India in position to retain the world No.1 ranking and revive memories of his epic innings against Australia in 2000-1.

Laxman shared in India's record seventh-wicket stand of 259 against South Africa with captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni (132 not out), which put India in sight of a series-levelling victory in the second and final test at Eden Gardens.

India posted 643 for six declared to take a lead of 347 on the third day after resuming on 342-5. South Africa were six without loss at the close.

Laxman hit a 281 at the same venue to help India script a sensational turnaround after following on to end Australia's 16-match winning streak.

I really feel happy whenever I do well and bail the team out of tough situations, Laxman said.

Newcastle

Southwell

IN SCOTLAND Plans for an SPL-style split have been abandoned after feeder clubs voiced concerns over the idea, writes William Dick.

The Scottish National Cricket League had hoped to introduce a 14-team Premiership and a Championship featuring 16 sides with both divisions dividing into smaller groups. However, clubs from the Western Union, East and Border Leagues and Strathmore Union have forced a rethink.

Stewart Oliver, the league secretary, explained: There was a lot of concern expressed that clubs would not know who or where they were playing later in the season. Many SNCL clubs have 2nd and 3rd XIs who play in the feeder leagues and their fixtures are determined at the start of the season.

Clearly what we were planning would have had an effect on ground availability and made life impossible for some clubs to plan ahead. We have taken on board these concerns and come up with another solution.

The new proposal involves two divisions of 16 teams, all playing each other once. However, the season will be expanded to 18 games using a complex seeding system based on the previous season's performance.

Clubs voted 18-12 in favour of change last year and have been given until Friday to comment on the latest proposal. However, there will be no further vote and it is understood the current plan will be implemented from 2011.

David Coulthard has tested for the Mercedes DTM team, fuelling speculation he could return to racing in the German series this year.

The 38-year-old Scot, Britain's highest pointscorer in F1 history, hinted last year he could be tempted to return to racing, in the prestigious DTM championship.

Coulthard retired from Formula One at the end of the 2008 season and has since been working for the BBC as a race commentator. Despite attempts by series chiefs to play down Coulthard's two-day test in Spain at the end of last week as non-binding, clearly a role with Mercedes is an option.

Coulthard drove the AMG Mercedes C-Class at the Monteblando circuit in Southern Spain, re-establishing a link with his previous employees.

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The Twynholm-born driver raced for the manufacturer in F1 between 1996 and 2004.

Interestingly, if he was to pen a deal, he would team up with fellow Scot, Paul di Resta. He combines duties as F1 test and reserve driver for Force India with driving for Mercedes in the DTM.

Speaking of the Scot's involvement in Spain last week, DTM officials stated: Coulthard's test shouldn't be regarded as a hint to potential involvement of the Scot in the 2010 DTM series.

At the Autosport International show in January, Coulthard himself commented that the DTM might be a possibility for the future.

* Top drivers are not expecting another Brawn-like phenomenon of the kind which stunned Formula One last year. Ferrari, Mercedes, Red Bull and McLaren will be the forces to be reckoned with in 2010, they forecast on Tuesday.

Last year Brawn, which has become Mercedes, rose from the ashes of the departed Honda to conquer the constructors' championship and help Jenson Button to the drivers' title. But this year the new big four appear to be ahead of the rest.

I think McLaren, Mercedes and Red Bull are the teams which we have to pay the most attention to, new Ferrari driver Fernando Alonso said ahead of the third official pre-season testing session starting in Jerez today. It's impossible to choose one, we just hope none of the three are as competitive.

Seven-times champion Michael Schumacher, who has come out of retirement to race for Mercedes, is pleased with his team's progress in testing so far.

I am fully convinced that we have a car that is able to fight for the championship, he told www.formula1.com.

Where we are exactly is hard to say. This is especially true for me as I don't have the data from last year's car, added the 41-year-old.

Fellow German Sebastian Vettel is hoping for drier weather this week than at last week's Jerez test. I felt pretty happy in the car, said the Red Bull driver. The weather was too changeable, so we did a little bit of work, but there's a lot more to come.

THE two horses who fought out a great duel that was forgotten in the Denman drama in the Aon Chase at Newbury made their own headlines yesterday after bookies made them joint favourites for the Grand National at Aintree.

Tricky Trickster, trained by Paul Nicholls, and Niche Market, handled by Bob Buckler, were separated by a head having taken over the lead following Denman's blunders on Saturday.

They are locked together again at 11st 4lbs in the weights announced yesterday for the National, and Ladbrokes and Boylesports make them equal favourites at 12-1.

Nicholls, who has never won this prize, despite sending out 44 runners since 1992, has four other candidates this time but Trickster is most fancied.

He declared himself happy with the seven-year-old's weight, saying: He's gone up 3lb but that won't make any difference. He's a big, strong horse and he should improve. In the Grand National, 3-5lb won't make a difference and a lot more it is down to luck.

Buckler was less satisfied about Niche Market's weight. He has gone up 4lb for his run in the Aon, which seems a lot, said the trainer. The plan is to go to Aintree but the owner is keen on the William Hill Chase [at Cheltenham] first so he could take that.

Albertas Run, Madison Du Berlais and Notre Pere top the weights on 11st 10lb, while last year's winner Mon Mome is allotted 11st 7lb, a 7lb rise on his winning weight.

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Comply Or Die, successful in 2008, is on 11st 5lb and 2006 Cheltenham Gold Cup winner War Of Attrition, who has been successful over hurdles recently, was handed 11st 1lb.

However, he will miss the race as trainer Mouse Morris is unimpressed by the weight his former Cheltenham Gold Cup winner has been asked to carry. I think with that weight they are basically saying they don't want us to run, he said.

Morris had hoped to take in the Ladbrokes World Hurdle at Cheltenham before going on to the National, but he was disappointed with the handicapper.

If [joint top-weight] Albertas Run is rated 164 and we are getting 9lb, that means he s rating us 155. I entered our horse in a handicap chase at Sandown the other week and they rated him 149, so I don't know how they've come up with 11st 1lb.

More immediately, if Musselburgh passes a 7.00am inspection, there is some decent fare to be seen at the East Lothian meeting this afternoon.

In The Scottish Racing Handicap Hurdle, Palomar (3.50) looks to have a big chance following a good second in the Scottish Triumph Hurdle on this track.

* Selection

Musselburgh 3.50 Palomar

THE Howard Johnson trained Quwetwo is set to take on Zaynar as he makes his return in tomorrow s Morebattle Hurdle at Kelso.

The seven-year-old won two of his three starts over timber last season, his only defeat coming in the Ballymore Novices Hurdle at Cheltenham.

Johnson had hoped to go novice chasing with Quwetwo this season, but the weather has halted his progress. He'll go to Kelso, all being well, as we've decided it s too late in the season to go chasing with him, said Johnson.

He must have missed 10 entries over fences this season because of the weather and we've decided we might as well save him so he s a novice next season. He'll obviously be taking on Zaynar at Kelso and we'll just see how he gets on there before we decide where we go next with him.

At the moment I wouldn't want to be going beyond about two and quarter miles with him as he s all speed.

1972 Volkswagen broke the record held by the Model T Ford by selling the 15,007,034th production model of the Beetle.

1982 Death of jazz pianist

and composer

Thelonious Sphere Monk, instrumental

in the development

of bebop .

2009 President Barack Obama signed into

law a \$787bn (£553bn) stimulus package aimed at pulling the US economy out of recession.

Let the train take the strain, disc jockey Jimmy Savile used to intone in the iconic 1970s TV advertisement for British Rail. Two men who do not appear to have followed his advice are Labour councillors Alistair Watson and

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David McLachlan, despite holding positions as chair and vice-chair of Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT), a body dedicated to encouraging the use of public transport.

Now they have been rumbled, thanks to information obtained by The Herald. The councillors, who live in Glasgow and Hamilton respectively, have claimed more than £28,000 for car use in connection with SPT over three years. In a single year, Mr McLachlan managed to chalk up more than 15,000 miles at a cost to the public purse of nearly £7500. (Mr Watson resigned on Monday on health grounds, after being caught up in a row about overseas trips.)

These claims are not illegal but they imply a culture of entitlement that is abhorrent at a time when drastic spending cuts are costing hundreds of public sector jobs. There is an onus on elected politicians to make every penny count under such circumstances. Audit Scotland must examine these claims and ask why they were not challenged, especially when other board members, including the other vice-chair, were billing the public purse for less than one-tenth of what Mr McLachlan was claiming. Were all these journeys really necessary?

Is this the remnant of a culture that tends to develop when one party in this case, Labour has held sway in an area for so long that it begins to treat it as its fiefdom?

When councillors were unpaid, turning a blind eye to small perquisites was understandable but that no longer applies. These men receive around £16,000 as councillors and additional payments of £20,295 and £11,163 respectively for their SPT work.

These revelations merely add grist to the mill of those who argue that SPT has outlived its usefulness. It is a mere shadow of the body from which it emerged (Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive), having been shorn of both control over buses and responsibility for rail.

This left SPT with the subway and a rather strange assortment of other remits, including bus shelters and school transport. It has been much criticised for cost overruns on the interchange between rail and underground at Partick Station, and questions remain over the quality of SPT management.

The most obvious question to ask these councillors, charged with encouraging others to use public transport, is why they so conspicuously failed to take their own advice. One good thing about taking public transport is that it gives one time to think.

here s a question: is Barclays £11.6bn annual profit good or bad news? Answer: both. On the plus side, it should generate a Barclays cheque for £225m made out to the Treasury to pay the one-off 50% levy on bonuses exceeding £25,000. In turn, this suggests Chancellor Alistair Darling s estimate of a total take of £550m from this windfall tax was uncharacteristically conservative. Good news for taxpayers. Secondly, yesterday s figures show that the bank s capital cushion of rainy day money is in a much healthier state than a year ago.

On the downside, most people will regard the news that Barclays 22,000 investment bankers will enjoy an average £95,000 each in annual bonuses as profoundly bad news. Plus ca change?

Where is the justice when reckless bankers are largely to blame for the global recession that has dealt misery and unemployment to so many? To rub salt in the wound of Joe Public, the inflated profits from Barclays investment banking arm, BarCap, are largely the result of the economic climate created by government rescue packages.

Though Barclays chose not to take a bailout from the UK Treasury, its share price was in the doldrums and it was part of the concordat on interbank lending that kept the global banking system going last January. Also, with rock-bottom bank lending rates and much of the previous competition uprooted or pruned back, it has rarely been easier to generate fat profits.

The facts that CEO John Varley will once again manage to get by on his basic annual salary of £1m or so and some of the investment bankers bonuses are deferred are hardly relevant. What is to stop the conditions that created the current recession recurring? Precious little.

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Barclays stated ambition is to become the world s biggest investment bank. If such a bank foundered, what is to prevent it doing to the UK economy what Icesave did to Iceland? Mr Varley strove last week to convince the Treasury Select Committee that big banks are no riskier than little ones. But the potential burden on the taxpayer of saving the former is unsustainable, while the failure of a small bank would not threaten the entire banking system.

It is also time to reconsider the issue of banking structures. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, bankers and brokers were often indistinguishable, facilitating the sort of uncontrolled speculation that resulted in the Great Depression.

Last month US President Barack Obama suggested reinstating parts of the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act that separated commercial and investment banking. To date in Britain, only the Liberal Democrats have supported the idea. There are big issues to consider. Would plain vanilla banking attract the investors it would need?

How would taxpayers retrieve the stakes they were obliged to take in UK banks? Would old-fashioned banking mean the return of old-fashioned queues for mortgages and other loans?

These are big considerations but, as the LibDem peer Lord Oakeshott observed yesterday: British taxpayers are insuring a boy racer in a Ferrari when it should be just a careful driver in a family saloon.

Patricia Routledge, actress, 81; Baroness (Ruth) Rendell of Babergh, crime novelist, 80; Barry Humphries, alias Dame Edna Everage, 76; Julia McKenzie, actress, 69; Rene Russo, pictured, actress, 56; Lou Diamond Phillips, actor, 48; Michael Jordan, basketball great, 47; Michael Bay, film director and producer, 45.

I read with some puzzlement what purports to be a reasoned argument from Labour s health spokesman, Dr Richard Simpson (Letters, February 15) on the proposed minimum pricing for alcohol.

First, we have a series of selective quotations from health professionals all supporting minimum pricing, yet all, in Dr Simpson s view, undermining their own arguments.

One wonders why the entire health lobby is so supportive of minimum pricing. Is it part of the evil teetotal world conspiracy or could it just be that they have looked at the evidence and made up their minds overwhelmingly on that evidence?

Dr Simpson then bangs the drum for effective measures while carefully proposing precisely none.

And what is one of those measures? It is price. The very measure which he has repudiated in his opening.

Let us reiterate once again: minimum pricing may not be ideal or, indeed, the sole method by which alcohol consumption can be regulated but it is the only one within the power of the Scottish Parliament.

Dr Simpson s only proposals seem to be a continuation of the policies that have led us to our current mess.

It is these incoherent mumblings of the make me pure but not yet sort that would have a barman sternly pouring Dr Simpson into the street at closing time.

Hugh Andrew,

10 Newington Road, Edinburgh.

There will be an attempt this week on the world record for stealing mobile phones. The Mobile World Congress is being held in Barcelona and thieves will be working round the clock to relieve delegates of their iPhones indeed any phones.

Serious efforts will also be made to separate the 50,000 visitors of wallets, money clips, laptops, suitcases and anything that isn't nailed down. There is a legend that if you drink from the Canaletes fountain on Las Ramblas you will always return to Barcelona. The new version is that once you have been robbed more than half a dozen times you will definitely give the Catalan capital a miss.

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Thieves, pickpockets and muggers form a long queue to predate upon guiris, which is the local name for tourists. They wait for you on the train from the airport and on the metro.

Barcelona is a centre of excellence for train robbers. I escaped this week s attempt on my pockets. A bruiser with an array of chib marks tried to corral me against the metro carriage door. His wee pal approached, with a plastic shopping bag covering his hand to disguise his planned dexterous emptying of my pockets.

I managed to scarper before they could jostle me when the train stopped at the next station. In Barcelona, when you ve been jostled, it s a fair chance you ve been pickpocketed.

Later, walking down the main street of my own quiet and safe barrio, I was stopped by a bloke who held out a euro and requested change for the phone. I gave him the change. He buggered off without giving me the euro. Mugged for less than a quid.

There are many scams of which the most outrageous is to pull down a guiri s shorts, take advantage of the confusion and make off with his wallet.

Barcelona city council seems impervious to the visitors misery. It is a horrible feeling to be robbed. It is worse to see children in tears after father has been rooked of credit cards and holiday money. Sadly, there is not a lot you can do against Barcelona s thieves. They will get you eventually.

One risk is avoidable: don t sit down for a coffee or beer on Las Ramblas.

The cafés are more efficient robbers than the pickpockets.

The headline on your editorial (Public sector must share the pain , February 15) is part of a widespread call from the three main political parties and others to ensure that ordinary public sector workers pay for a financial crisis not of their making.

My union rejects any suggestion that public sector workers should pay for this crisis. The Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) has consistently pointed out that tax avoidance, both legal and illegal, amounts to as much as £120bn per year. If New Labour focused its energies on closing tax loopholes and allowing staff in the Inland Revenue to pursue fat-cats for these sums instead of cutting jobs in HMRC, this would go a long way to solving the nation s financial problems.

PCS members have already suffered significantly under New Labour, with 80,000 jobs shed in the civil service, damaging public services in the process , and pay rates have fallen alarmingly.

One in five PCS members earns less than £15,000 and last year many government departments were forced to increase staff wages in order to comply with minimum wage legislation.

There are plans to freeze pay and intensify the pain further. Civil servants carry out vital public work and another round of job losses will damage services, particularly for pensioners, the sick and disabled.

Of course we could all make different choices. Figures published recently showed the gap between rich and poor at its widest since 1945. This government could take real action by levying meaningful taxes on the wealthy who have enjoyed a bonanza since New Labour came to power. It could also bring an end to the damaging and expensive wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and cancel the planned renewal of the Trident missiles.

If these choices were made, and the fat-cats were pursued for their unpaid taxes, then the public finances of UK PLC would be radically different.

Gerry McMahon,

Assistant Secretary,

PCS DWP Glasgow North Branch,

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Granite House, 4th Floor, 31 Stockwell Street, Glasgow.

In many ways, J S Morrison s letter (Cuts illustrate the levels of over- manning , February 16) raises a number of pertinent points. What is not clear from the present round of cuts is how many of those leaving are in jobs that have vanished and how many of those leaving are deemed to be no longer fit for purpose.

Every effort should be made to retain staff whose raison d'être is public service. Where it exists, the attitude If you do not like the service, then tough must be eradicated. I would suggest that council officers who cannot come to terms with being public servants should be invited to seek new challenges.

Hopefully, after this round of cuts the quality of the services provided by local authorities will improve year on year.

It is not the number of workers but the quality of the staff that determines the level of service.

Thomas L Inglis,

7 Menzies Avenue, Fintry.

According to Archbishop Mario Conti (Conti speaks out against Margo MacDonald s assisted suicide Bill , heraldscotland.com, February 15), assisted suicide should remain a criminal offence as the good of society demands that it be not changed .

I do not understand what good to society would result in the refusal of an individual s request for assisted suicide within a strict legal framework.

The archbishop contends that Ms MacDonald s assisted suicide Bill is wrong in principle. It may well be wrong in his opinion. I am sure the Abortion Act was wrong in principle to him. We do, however, have a well-established legal abortion framework which works with little, if any, abuse.

Why should a similar legal framework for assisted suicide not function equally well for those individuals who may choose to use it?

None of us can be guaranteed as a right a dignified death, as the daily toll of war, illness, murders, road traffic accidents and natural disasters attest to.

Surely, for the good of society, we should have the right to a life with dignity as defined by the individual.

We should have the personal choice to have our life terminated by assisted means when we know that our destiny is to live a life that would be physically tortuous and undignified.

Most of us know at what stage we personally would rather be dead than live an inhumane existence.

The archbishop used the old phrase: Hard cases make bad law.

I would argue that it s not the hard cases that make bad law rather, it s the lack of reasoning, logic and context in which the legal decisions/norms/principles/rules were arrived at. Another old phrase springs to mind: The law is an ass.

Teresa Crawford,

131 Shuna Street, Glasgow.

Paris police say the daughter of Kiev s mayor was robbed of £4m worth of jewellery as she travelled to Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport.

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An official with the Paris police says a man broke into the luxury car that Kristina Chernovetska was in as it stopped on a highway north of Paris and then stole her purse. The official says Ms Chernovetska reported the Monday incident to police and said the bag contained the valuable rings and earrings.

The police official was not authorised to be named, according to police policy.

The Ukrainian embassy was contacted by French police about the incident but neither the embassy nor Kiev office of mayor Leonid Chernovetsky would comment on the situation.

How many of us have not made an error of judgment, even when we believed we had carefully considered all the relevant factors? How many of our political leaders have done this, and continue to do it, to the detriment of their constituents? How many of our Westminster MPs have made these errors intentionally and benefited financially from their acts?

We are still suffering from the errors of judgment made by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. How many of our MSPs in the opposition benches have done such a good job at Holyrood as Nicola Sturgeon? Your columnist Brian Currie correctly states that it is time to move on (Sturgeon s mistake: it is time to move on , The Herald, February 16).

It seems Ms Sturgeon feels she has made a mistake with her letter in regard of Abdul Rauf, and, after Holyrood reconvenes, I expect she will admit it was an error of judgment she will remember and regret for the rest of her life.

I am sure she has learned her lesson and that her future actions will be very carefully assessed prior to implementation. However, she does not require to resign from her post as either Deputy First Minister or Health Secretary.

Perhaps politicians at all levels of government should learn from this and ensure such lapses become a rarity.

Ian F M Saint-Yves,

Dunvegan, School Brae, Whiting Bay, Arran.

In his letter (February 16), Brian Fitzpatrick he states: Ms Sturgeon provided [Mr Rauf] with a character reference, and urged a particular disposal on the sheriff: a non-custodial sentence.

I have read Ms Sturgeon s letter several times, as helpfully published in full by The Herald. I can find no sign of a character reference, only a brief description of Mr Rauf s poor health and family situation. Nor is there any evidence of urging a non-custodial sentence, only a polite request to consider alternatives, as the sheriff is presumably bound to do in any case.

This is clearly a trivial matter blown out of all proportion by the opposition parties desperate to capture the scalp of a highly successful government minister. As Brian Currie suggests in his column, it is now time to move on.

By the way, is this the same Brian Fitzpatrick who is a leading member of the Scottish Labour Party and the parliamentary candidate for Strathkelvin and Bearsden in the forthcoming election? Perhaps he was too modest to mention this when signing his letter.

Iain A D Mann,

7 Kelvin Court, Glasgow.

IT IS time we moved on and considered for a change all the good deeds done by the hard-working Deputy First Minister. For the past two weeks, Nicola Sturgeon has been castigated by the press, lawyers and others. There is nobody as capable as Ms Sturgeon on the opposition benches, which is probably why they are so anxious to get rid of her. Should she go, it will be a major loss to the NHS.

Donald J Morrison,

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20 Haig Street, Portknockie, Buckie.

One had thought that the attacks on Nicola Sturgeon were over until the letter from advocate Brian Fitzpatrick. This is surely not the same Brian Fitzpatrick who is a former failed Labour Party candidate.

Marion Anderson,

Station Road, Langbank.

Far from being a sign of recovery and a cause for celebration, reports of house price rises should act as a warning for the problems yet to come (Housing market begins recovery , The Herald, February 16).

While many homeowners may welcome an apparent boost to their property values, they may find it increasingly difficult to realise any benefit. Taken alongside stagnating wages, increasing unemployment and a collapse in house-building, price rises are an indication of housing scarcity, rather than recovery.

Low interest rates and lender forbearance are only temporary measures. Without proper leadership, Scotland and Britain will sleepwalk into a second wave of repossessions and evictions, and sow the seeds of the next boom and bust cycle.

As we look towards the General Election, politicians of all parties must be challenged on how they will deliver the recovery we need, rather than the recovery we are getting. A bolder vision for an equitable housing market is needed: one that lets people choose an affordable home to rent, supports first-time buyers into sustainable homeownership and views housing as a place to live rather than an investment.

Graeme Brown,

Director, Shelter Scotland,

6 South Charlotte Street, Edinburgh.

What a contrast in two items in The Herald (February 15). One young man is, rightly, applauded by Ron Ferguson (Devil s in the detail on keeping the Sabbath) for taking a stand in defence of one of the great institutions that preserved family life and gave hard-working people a charter of liberty to relax and recharge for another strenuous week. Euan Murray, the Scotland prop forward, has rediscovered the Sabbath rest.

A pity Mr Ferguson had not taken issue with the exploitation of our bin men by forcing them to work on Sundays. Glasgow City Council is creating social problems instead of solving them.

On another page, George Monbiot called for the resignation of Sir Ian Byatt as chairman of the Water Industry Commission for Scotland because he questioned statistics being officially advanced (Calls for sacking of climate change sceptic from water regulator board). Are the inmates indeed taking over the asylum?

As more and more evidence comes to light of the crooked science and political pressure behind the global warming hysteria, men such as Mr Monbiot need to show a bit more proportion in their statements if they don't want to discredit totally their green agenda.

When we now know of the false claims and manipulation of dubious statistics by many climate change advocates, we begin to think that these apostles of green fundamentalism do not deserve our respect. Sir Ian could be considered less than competent if he did not exercise his freedom and seek all well-based views of climate change.

David S Fraser,

191 Sandyhills Road, Glasgow.

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I feel there is a positive picture emerging with councils close to reaching the Scottish target of 40% by the end of this year (Councils failing on recycling target, The Herald, February 16). Your report highlights that the average rate across Scotland is already at 39%, with still quite a few months to go before the deadline.

However, there is a concern regarding some of the consistently poor performing councils. It is understandable some island authorities may have particular issues with dispersed populations, but it is difficult to understand why Glasgow performs so poorly. I can only imagine that it was a political decision by the current leadership not to invest in recycling and to continue to slash essential services while making money available for landfill tax fines.

Mags MacLaren,

2 Avondale Drive, Paisley.

The jigsaw is finally coming together. With the appointment of Andrew Dixon, Creative Scotland has at last got its chief executive, and, by the sound of it, one with a decent pedigree and no unnecessary Scottish baggage. He is not a man who will have to spend much time wondering how to fill his day.

There is a massive job to be done managing the change from the surviving component parts of Scottish Screen and the Scottish Arts Council to an entirely new agency that will also incorporate the creative industries and require to forge meaningful partnerships with bodies as disparate as Scottish Enterprise and Cosla. It s not a task for the faint of heart. And, because of the blood already spilled and the assorted delays in the start date, he'll also have to deal with unwelcome levels of impatience and cynicism.

Nevertheless, the possibilities in the new structure remain exciting. Dixon has already indicated that he sees the agency s role as being a rallying cry for the cultural sector in Scotland and there is currently a huge amount of vibrancy across all the art forms worth shouting about. But there is another piece of that jigsaw that is almost as crucial and mustn't fall victim to the dead hand of bureaucracy.

One of the most important relationships Dixon will make is with the incoming chair of the new Creative Scotland board. (The advertisements for that post, and for board members, are due within days.)

How that second major appointment is handled is vital to Dixon s success. The last thing he needs is a chair selected on the basis of forms tidily filled, boxes neatly ticked and a history suggesting their interest in the arts is more about getting their moniker on the right letterheads or pitching for a gong than rolling up their sleeves. Yet there s a danger the process normally employed to appoint to public sector boards could attract the irretrievably dull and repel the interestingly dynamic.

We have a system overseen by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Scotland (Ocpas) designed to ensure fairness, transparency and competency, and to screen out numpties and nepotism. Admirable ambitions, but not necessarily appropriate for every appointment in every case.

Dixon emerged via a search that included the use of head-hunters, and arguably the same should be true of his chair. At the least, in tandem with self-referring applicants, there should be a trawl of other likely contenders based on their track record, passion for the arts and likely chemistry with the chief exec.

To be brutal, the kind of person and personality required for this absolutely pivotal role is not likely to list sending for application forms as his or her hobby of choice. Once identified and wooed, they can be subject to the necessary due diligence and, ideally, should be part of the interview panel for the rest of the board. Ocpas has a number of built-in safety mechanisms, one of which is the use of skilled assessors to ensure proper processes have been followed.

Fair enough. But there are times when the process seems to be the administrative tail wagging the dog of ambition; more geared to anticipating and avoiding complaints from failed applicants than identifying originality the corollary of our risk-averse culture. For instance, you might assume that any assessor would examine the interview process following the panel s recommendation.

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But no. The assessor is actually on the panel. How do you assess your own judgment objectively?

What Creative Scotland needs is a chair with drive, charisma, strategic talent and good interpersonal skills. What it needs is a board not picked to cover every possible cultural base you can always access expertise when you need it but a lean body whose members display knowledge and commitment and can leave any personal hobby horses tethered outside the door. An early quote attributed to Mr Dixon was that he loathed bureaucracy, form-filling, jobsworths and negativity.

Say it again, Sam.

How anyone can object to the new body scanning procedures at airports (New row over airport scanners , The Herald, February 16)?

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has **said**: While we acknowledge there is a legitimate aim for this invasion of privacy For goodness sake, the proposal is not to scan people buying a loaf of bread. If you are going up to 35,000ft and your safety is at stake, there can be no exceptions.

Privacy is something no individual has much entitlement to when passenger conduct and absence of weapons contributes so profoundly to a safe flight. I think most people would reflect seriously about going on a flight where someone **s** faith let them board without a scan.

Bill Brown,

46 Breadie Drive; Milngavie.

I m sure it will be a great comfort to the relatives of those killed **in** the next plane bombing that the rights of the bomber to privacy were respected. Respect for personal privacy is something we should all have, but the rights of those who don t want to be blown up **in** mid-air should also be considered. Faced with current threats, the new scanners represent a least worst option. It means giving up something entirely intangible **in** exchange for enhanced security. Objectors should not be allowed to put the lives of others **in** jeopardy. If any traveller refuses to be scanned, they should be invited to seek alternative means of transport.

Tim Downie,

19 Upper Crofts, Ayr.

THE age of a Florida man arrested for robbing three banks unarmed. He took \$600 **in** each heist and **said** he needed the money to pay his home mortgage. James Bruce also **said** he planned to pay back the money.

THE age of Brazilian woman Geisy Arruda, bullied by fellow students and expelled by her university for wearing a miniskirt, who has had the last laugh by being transformed into a star of Rio **s** annual carnival.

ON this day **in** 1904, opera Madama Butterfly received its premiere at La Scala **in** Milan.

Written by Giacomo Puccini, the opera, which is split into three acts, was based **in** part on the short story Madame Butterfly by John Luther Long.

According to one scholar, the opera was based on events that actually occurred **in** Nagasaki **in** the early 1890s.

Madama Butterfly was very poorly received when it premiered, despite the presence of such notable singers as soprano Rosina Storchio, tenor Giovanni Zenatello and baritone Giuseppe De Luca **in** the lead roles. This was due **in** large part to the late completion and inadequate time for rehearsals.

Puccini then revised the opera, splitting the second act into two parts and making other changes. On May 28, 1904, this new version was performed **in** Brescia and was a huge success.

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CARLY Simon, pictured, is giving fans and film-makers an opportunity to have some fun with one of the biggest mysteries in pop music: who is the narcissistic target of her 1972 chart-topping tune You're So Vain?

The singer/songwriter has launched a competition seeking the first official video to accompany the song, either the original or the acoustic version released last year.

Announcing the competition, Simon said: People ask me all the time why is there no video of this song, I think it s that people were so busy asking me who the song was about that nobody thought to make a video of it.

SRU should listen to car park concerns

I totally agreed with Kevin Ferrie s column on Scotland s declining home support (February 11).

Every year I would be at the two home games in the car park midday for a 3pm kick off. Family and friends would come from all parts to join in the sociable atmosphere.

We would then take up our expensive seats to endure often the least enjoyable part of the day before returning to the car park for post-match drinks and chat.

I would have been happy to pay £20 to park and can't believe that the SRU do not have the wherewithal to install temporary parking strips to protect the pitch. I have written to them on many occasions pointing out that my views are shared by many and I will not be back.

Stewart W. Wyllie, Crieff

My wife is a debenture holder and we too have given up going because of the parking, or rather the lack of it. I thought that when the ground was given planning approval for upgrading the West Stand there was a proviso that they had to provide parking for 4000 cars? Clearly this has been ignored or do the powers that be hope/think everyone has forgotten?

Murrayfield was always about more than rugby, it was part of the social calendar, meeting old friends, enjoying a lunch out the back of the car, letting the children have a game of touch rugby and then the post-match debates.

Alistair Hems, via email

When is a sport not a sport? Some rules

A sport is not a sport unless results can be determined using a calculator, a tape measure or a stopwatch. This would exclude synchronised swimming, ballroom dancing, ski jumping, and boxing.

John Dickson, Stirling

Nothing like continuity

Including the national team, there are 13 top football management posts in Scotland. We have now seen 11 new appointments. There s nothing like a bit of continuity, is there?

Alan Smith, Uddingston

The march of women across the sporting landscape continues relentlessly. They are even going to court, laying siege to traditional male bastions and accusing the International Olympic Committee of being like the Taliban.

The IOC professes to encourage female participation, but a reputation for chauvinism was reinforced when they blocked the introduction of women s ski jumping at the Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

A group of female jumpers took the organisers to court in a bid to have a women s event introduced, or the male one cancelled. When they lost, they appealed, citing Canada s charter of rights and freedoms. British Columbia s

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Supreme Court ruled it was discriminatory and contrary to the charter, but not illegal. Then a suit in the Canadian Supreme Court failed, when a judge ruled the court had no jurisdiction.

So interest shown in the opening Olympic event on Friday had more than the usual edge. For the record on the K95 hill was held, whisper it, by a woman: American Lindsey Van. Male honour was salvaged, marginally. Only two of the 51 competitors beat Van's record.

One of the prime movers in the lawsuit, Van said she was disappointed but not surprised by the court verdict. The inaugural women's world champion claims the IOC are in breach of their own charter, and characterised them as like the Taliban of the Olympics.

The IOC has made a concession, however. Women's ski jump will be included at the Winter Youth Olympic Games in 2012, and Innsbruck will consider full inclusion for 2014.

There were just 11 women among the 258 competitors at the first Winter Olympics in Chamonix, in 1924. An Austrian, Herma Planck-Sabo, won the first women's winter gold, in figure skating. A Norwegian, Sonja Henie, was eighth. She went on to win the event three times, collecting more Olympic and world titles than any other skater ever, before becoming a millionaire Hollywood film star.

Henie had to go to the edge of the ice and ask her coach what to do next when she was an 11-year-old competitor in Chamonix in 1924. But sport granted her entry to a world in which she set an earnings benchmark that today's sport competitors, male or female, still struggle to match.

When she died in 1969 she left \$47.5m, worth something in excess of \$370m today. That's roughly double the total combined career prize money to date of the two biggest male and female sports earners: Tiger Woods, Rodger Federer, Serena Williams and Annika Sorenstam.

However, serious wealth based on sport has its roots in the first Winter Games, and women's growing role in sport can be charted through their participation.

Fifty years ago, at Squaw Valley in the US, there were 144 women among 665 athletes, and 301 from 1423 when the Winter Olympics were last in Canada (Calgary, 1988). In Turin four years ago there were 960 women among the 2508 entries. Total figures for Vancouver are not yet available, but with the addition of ski cross for women, they could top 1000.

To grasp the scale of change, consider this: in 1906 Home Secretary Viscount Gladstone attempted to enact a bill in the all-male parliament, banning women from dangerous sports. It was prompted by the death of Lily Cove, a female parachutist. The notion of curbing women's sporting horizons seems preposterous today. There were some 30,000 first-time parachute jumpers in Britain last year, of whom some 40% are believed to be female.

Women have made their mark in bullfighting and rodeo riding. Tanya Streeter voted the world's perfect athlete and Ellen MacArthur have surpassed men in free diving (without oxygen) and endurance sailing respectively, and when Paula Radcliffe set the women's world best in the marathon, she was faster than any UK male all that year.

Jane Couch won five world boxing titles, but only after beating the British Boxing Board of Control in a restraint of trade action. And Muriel Naughton, first woman to ride over National Hunt fences, used the Equal Opportunities Act.

Recent British teams have drawn close to parity of the sexes, something inconceivable even 20 years ago. The 51-strong British Olympic team in Vancouver contains 24 women, 28 of the 60-strong GB athletics team at last year's world championships in Berlin were female, and 17 out of 40 at the last world swimming championships, in Rome.

Scotland's three recent highest ranked athletes are female: Steph Twell, Elidh Child and Lee McConnell. They were all in the Berlin team, but there were no Scottish men.

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Three of the major Glasgow Sports person of the Year awards went to women: Sports person of the year Catriona Matthew first Scottish woman to win a golf major young sports person Kirsty Gilmour (badminton) and student athlete Laura Bartlett (hockey).

Yet the nation's sport pages reflect a huge bias towards male sport. We're happy to make this small contribution to balancing the account.

Van claims the IOC are in breach of their own charter and characterised them as like the Taliban of the Olympics

Vatican putting wartime archives on Internet Eds: UPDATES with details, background, ADDs byline. By VICTOR L. SIMPSON, Associated Press Writer VATICAN CITY (AP) - The Vatican plans to make some of its World War II archives available on the Internet soon to calm down the controversy over Pope Pius XII's actions during the Holocaust. The Vatican's newspaper announced the plan, saying it will "render service to the historic truth," and officials said Tuesday the material will be accessible soon. However a panel of Jewish and Catholic scholars who examined the 11 volumes of material a decade ago concluded that more information was required to decide whether Pius did everything he could to head off the Nazis' efforts to exterminate European Jews. Some Jews and others contend Pius should have done more, and are angered by Pope Benedict XVI's recent decision to move Pius closer to sainthood. The Vatican's daily newspaper L'Osservatore Romano said Gary Krup, an American who heads the Pave the Way Foundation, which seeks to strengthen Catholic-Jewish relations, was behind the online initiative. It quoted him as saying that the Pius XII papacy "has become a source of friction." Benedict sparked renewed outrage among Jewish groups in December when he signed a decree on Pius' heroic virtues, paving the way for him to be beatified once a miracle attributed to his intercession is confirmed. During a visit to Rome's main synagogue last month, Benedict didn't mention Pius by name but said the Vatican "itself provided assistance, often in a hidden and discreet way" to Jews during the war. Benedict said Catholics acted courageously to save Jews during World War II. The panel of Catholic and Jewish scholars that examined the material said it suspended its work because the Vatican had not released all of its archives from the World War II years. The Vatican has said those archives won't be catalogued and ready until 2014 at the earliest.

Adviser to Americans admits link to Salvador case Eds: RECAPS previous. For global distribution. AP Photo XLAT101 By BEN FOX, Associated Press Writer SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP) - The former legal adviser to a group of American missionaries jailed in Haiti on child kidnapping charges is now the focus of a manhunt in the Dominican Republic. Dominican police and U.S. agents are seeking to detain Jorge Puello, who acknowledged Monday that he is wanted in El Salvador for alleged involvement in a human smuggling ring in the Central American country. In a call from an unknown location, Puello told The Associated Press he was innocent of the accusations and that he and his Salvadoran wife had taken in young women from the Caribbean and Central America who had been abandoned by smugglers. Salvadoran authorities want to prosecute Puello and his jailed wife for allegedly luring women and girls into prostitution with bogus offers of modeling jobs. "I'm planning to go to El Salvador to tackle this problem," Puello said in a phone call arranged by his mother at his childhood home in the Dominican Republic. "I am not afraid to face the music." Each new detail emerging about the past of the 32-year-old seems to add to the embarrassment and discomfort of the American missionaries that Puello volunteered to help, and who are still awaiting release from a Port-au-Prince jail. On Monday, a Haitian prosecutor said a power outage delayed his printing of a recommendation to release the 10 Americans charged with child kidnapping. Because Tuesday is a national holiday, he doesn't expect the judge to issue a decision until Wednesday morning. In the phone call with the AP, Puello said he had fled the Dominican Republic to avoid arrest. The Dominican National Police, working with Interpol, said it had conducted several raids and interviews Monday in an attempt to locate Puello and detain him on the Salvadoran warrant. U.S. federal agents also went to his mother's house over the weekend. Dave Oney, a Marshals Service spokesman in Washington, said authorities are trying to determine if Puello is a man with a similar name and physical description wanted for a 2002 parole violation. Puello's statement that he had left the Dominican Republic was immediately cast in doubt by his mother, Ana Rita Puello, who refused to vouch for her son's whereabouts. Informed that Puello said he had left the country, she looked surprised. Asked if she believed he fled, she shook her head and smiled. "I don't want to answer," she said. Puello's recent behavior has only stoked doubts about his identity and other aspects of his life. He falsely portrayed himself as a lawyer in the Dominican Republic. He wrongly claimed to be the leader of the country's Sephardic Jewish community. And he initially told reporters he had never been to El Salvador, but now says he has deep connections

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to the Central American country, including five children there. Arrest warrants identify him as Jorge Anibal Torres Puello. Around Santo Domingo he was also known as Jorge Torres, Yoram Torres and Jorge Migdal. The Americans in Haiti, detained for allegedly trying to take 33 children out of the country without proper documents after the earthquake, knew him as Jorge Puello. Puello says his role in the case is as a misunderstood do-gooder who volunteered to help the detained Americans after reading about their case on the Internet. "If you see somebody dying and you can help you can't just not help because you have a past," he said. "I have been helping people since I was a kid." Born in Yonkers, New York, Puello spent his early childhood years in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico after his parents divorced, according to his mother, a 49-year-old activist with a small political party and the operator of a preschool at the family home. Later, Ana Puello married Franco Cerminara, a businessman from Italy, and they moved to South Florida. "That's when Jorge began to go wrong," said Cerminara, now retired. The couple showed a photo of a young Jorge in a starched white military academy uniform in the Dominican Republic. But as a 15-year-old in Miami, they said, he began dating a stripper, who was a single mother and 10 years older than him. He soon left home for Philadelphia, where Cerminara said he was convicted of bank fraud and later moved to Puerto Rico to work as a hotel receptionist. At some point, he apparently served in the U.S. military. A family photo shows him in fatigues standing next to two Army trucks. Puello said he served in the Army from 1996-2000 but gave no further details. About four years ago, he emerged in Santo Domingo saying he wanted to establish a Sephardic Jewish community. Cerminara and Ana Puello said everyone in their family is Catholic and that Jorge Puello converted on his own. "He is Jewish by conviction," she said. "He practices the religion and believes it in his heart." The Dominican Republic is home to about 50 Jewish families, a tightly knit and low-key community that includes Sephardim and Ashkenazim, and some had doubts about the new arrival, said Isaac Lalo, secretary of the Centro Israelita de Republica Dominicana, the main synagogue. Jorge Puello began identifying himself as the "newly elected president of the Jewish Communities of Dominican Republic" in a Jewish newsletter and elsewhere even though he was never elected to any such role and had no congregation. "This guy has nothing to do with our community," Lalo said. "Sephardic Jews don't just set up a community out of the blue." Puello at some point moved to El Salvador with his Salvadoran wife, Ana Josefa Galvarina, who is jailed in El Salvador. He said that he ran a business converting cars to run on propane gas. He said in the interview that he and his wife took in young women abandoned by smugglers, with the cooperation of the immigration ministry, but that the migrants tired of the house rules and he dropped them off at a bus station with money for a ticket home. He said they told police they had been trafficked by Puello to punish him. "They made it all up," Puello said of his accusers. He says he's eager to go back and fight the charges and join his children, now staying with their grandmother. It was his Salvadoran lawyer, he said, who told him to leave the country and avoid arrest. "He said not to get in trouble right now, not to get arrested until he can fix everything." --- Associated Press writers Dionisio Soldevila in Santo Domingo and Mike Melia in San Juan, Puerto Rico contributed to this report.

THE main development bank for Latin America says the January 12 earthquake that ravaged Haiti might have caused \$14 billion (£9bn) in damage.

The preliminary study released yesterday says the earthquake could be the deadliest and costliest disaster on a list that dates back four decades.

Economists with the Inter-American Development Bank used figures including death-toll estimates of 200,000 to 250,000 to calculate that damage could be worth anywhere from \$7.2bn to \$13.9bn, figures higher than the country's gross domestic product.

The authors also warn that in past disasters, personal wealth remained 30% lower 10 years after the events even with large amounts of international aid.

Meanwhile, a Haitian judge has said he will deepen his inquiry into the actions of 10 American missionaries accused of kidnapping children following media reports that a legal adviser working with them was under investigation in El Salvador for suspected human trafficking.

The questions surrounding Dominican Republic national Jorge Puello appeared to be complicating the case against the Americans, despite initial indications they would be freed.

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El Salvador authorities are reportedly investigating whether Puella is the same person suspected of running a trafficking ring that recruited women and girls and forced them to work as prostitutes. AP

LANHAM: US President Barack Obama is making \$8 billion in federal loan guarantees available for the first new US nuclear power plant in nearly three decades, underscoring the administration's efforts to reduce dependence on foreign oil.

Mr Obama, pictured, said the plant in Burke County, Georgia, would create thousands of construction jobs. He called it only the beginning of efforts to develop safe, clean energy-efficient technologies.

His announcement also shows the political weight the White House is putting behind the effort to use alternative energy sources to reduce US dependence on foreign oil and other fossil fuels, and create jobs.

SCIENTISTS may have solved the centuries-old mystery of how King Tutankhamun died, after revealing that he suffered complications from a broken leg made worse by malaria.

The most extensive study ever of the Egyptian Pharaoh's mummy found he also had other health problems, including a cleft palate and club foot, and may have walked with a cane.

DNA testing and CT scans of Tutankhamun and his family have been carried out over the past two years amid widespread speculation he was murdered, fuelled by a hole in his skull.

A 2005 CAT scan ruled that out, finding the hole was probably from the mummification process. The scan also revealed the broken leg.

Tutankhamun, who became pharaoh at the age of 10 in 1333BC, ruled for just nine years at a pivotal time in Egypt's history.

It is believed his father was Akhenaten, the pharaoh who tried to revolutionise ancient Egyptian religion to worship one god while his mother was a sister of Akhenaten.

The newest CAT scans and DNA tests revealed a pharaoh weakened by congenital illnesses who died after complications from the broken leg aggravated by severe brain malaria. The team said it isolated DNA of the malaria parasite the oldest such discovery.

In an article published by the study team in the American Medical Association, the researchers said: A sudden leg fracture possibly introduced by a fall might have resulted in a life-threatening condition when a malaria infection occurred.

Tutankhamun had multiple disorders. He might be envisioned as a young but frail king who needed canes to walk.

The studies also disproved speculation that Tutankhamun and members of his family suffered from rare disorders that gave them feminine attributes and misshapen bones. AP

Pope Benedict XVI has urged Irish clergy to be courageous in confronting the paedophile priest scandal that has rocked the Catholic Church, but has taken no action on victims' demands that he force top bishops to resign.

The Vatican statement came as the Pope and Irish bishops ended an extraordinary meeting on the crisis meant to restore the trust of Irish Catholics shaken by revelations of decades of clergy sex abuse and cover-up.

A Vatican spokesman, the Rev Federico Lombardi, said following the summit that the Pope shares the outrage.

Asked if the issue of resignations came up, Rev Lombardi said it was not addressed.

He also defended the Pope's representative in Ireland for refusing to testify to politicians about decades of systematic cover-up by the Church hierarchy.

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The Pope called the sexual abuse of children a heinous crime and a grave sin which offends God.

During the two-day summit behind closed doors at the Vatican, anger flared in Ireland over the refusal of papal envoy Archbishop Giuseppe Leanza to appear in the Irish parliament.

Archbishop Leanza, who participated in the summit, told politicians in a letter: I wish to inform that it is not the practice of the Holy See that apostolic nuncios appear before parliamentary commissions.

He has faced heavy criticism in Ireland for ignoring letters from two state-ordered investigations into how the Church suppressed reports of child abuse by parish priests and in Catholic-run residences for poor children.

Meanwhile, the Vatican plans to make some of its Second World War archives available on the internet to try and quell the controversy over Pope Pius XII's actions during the Holocaust. The move will render service to the historic truth, and officials said yesterday the material will be accessible soon. AP

GENEVA: Libya is refusing to issue visas for visitors from nearly every country in Europe in a bizarre escalation of a dispute that began when Swiss authorities arrested the son of Moammar Gadhafi on suspicion of assaulting his servants.

The new restrictions prevent everyone from oil executives to tourists from Europe's passport-free zone of 25 nations from visiting Libya, and Libyan visas already granted are also no longer valid.

The move comes amid attempts by the country to shed its image as an international pariah and attract investment from Western companies.

"There are ongoing conversations with the Swiss and Libyan authorities," said Michele Cercone, an EU spokesman. "The commission hopes that a diplomatic solution can be found."

Associated Press writer Robert Wielaard in Brussels contributed to this report.

MILAN: A bus carrying French students on a school trip to Florence overturned on a Tuscan highway, killing one student and two adults, highway police said.

The bus jumped the guardrail and landed down an embankment on the highway near the town of Massa, about 60 miles north-west of Florence, according to Italian media.

Video broadcast on Italy's Sky Italia news channel showed firefighters climbing on the overturned yellow bus wedged between an embankment and a tree.

More than 20 passengers were treated in hospitals, while the rest were being cared for by civil protection officials.

None of the injuries was said to be life threatening.

BAGHDAD: The US military says the number of troops on the ground in Iraq has dropped below 100,000 for the first time since the 2003 US-led invasion.

Army 1st Lt Elizabeth Feste said that as of Tuesday there are 98,000 troops in Iraq.

That is a significant drop from the roughly 140,000 troops in the month after the invasion, and a decline of about 70,000 since the height of the 2007 surge in which tens of thousands were deployed.

The declining number of troops signals the US is sticking by a plan to reduce its number of combat troops in Iraq to 50,000 by the end of August.

The military will pull out fully by the end of 2011.

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Search teams have located one black box from the two trains that crashed near Brussels, a find that could help reveal the cause of the tragedy that killed 18 people and injured more than 170.

One train driver survived the crash but he sustained serious injuries and is not yet healthy enough to be questioned, railway officials **said**.

The Eurostar and Thalys high-speed train services from London and Paris to Brussels will be suspended for a third day today and other train drivers **in** Belgium yesterday held a wildcat strike that left thousands of commuters without their normal transport.

Rescue teams picked through the wreckage of the commuter trains that collided on Monday **in** one of the deadliest rail accidents **in** Belgian history. AP

AFGHAN and US forces yesterday traded gunfire with insurgents shooting from haystacks **in** poppy fields as Nato forces progressed against increasingly fitful resistance **in** the Taliban stronghold of Marjah.

Insurgents tried but failed to **bring** down an aircraft with rocket-propelled grenades as attack helicopters fired missiles at enemy positions, including a machine gun bunker.

Marines and Afghan troops, who pushed through four days of sniper fire and homemade bombs, finally linked up with units that had been airdropped into the town **in** the first hours of the offensive.

Three more Afghan civilians were killed **in** the assault, Nato forces **said**.

The deaths **in** two separate incidents come after two errant US missiles struck a house on the outskirts of Marjah on Sunday, killing 12 people, half of them **children**. Afghan officials **said** three Taliban fighters were **in** the house at the time of the attack.

In the first of two fatal incidents yesterday, Afghan men came toward Nato forces and ignored shouts and hand signals to stop, Nato **said**. Troops opened fire and killed them. The third death occurred after two Afghan men were caught **in** the crossfire between insurgents and Nato forces. Both were wounded but one survived and received medical treatment.

About 15,000 Nato and Afghan troops are taking part **in** Operation Moshtarak, the massive offensive around Marjah. One Afghan soldier, one American and one Briton have been killed **in** the offensive.

Marine officials **said** the resistance seemed to be becoming increasingly disorganised. We're not seeing co-ordinated attacks like we did originally, **said** spokesman Captain Abraham Sipe. We're still getting small-arms fire but it's sporadic, and hit-and-run tactics.

However, a Taliban spokesman claimed that insurgents retained control of the town and coalition forces descended from helicopters **in** limited areas of Marjah and now are under siege.

US forces continued with house-to-house searches, removing bombs and booby-traps as they moved through town. Inside some compounds squads found small doses of heroin, a Taliban photo album with fighters posing with AK-47s, and large propaganda wall paintings of insurgents shooting down helicopters.

As the Nato offensive aims to break the Taliban influence **in** southern Afghanistan, the militant **group** received another blow with the news of its top military commander's arrest **in** Pakistan.

Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the **group's** No. 2 leader behind Afghan Taliban founder Mullah Mohammad Omar and a close associate of Osama bin Laden, was captured **in** the port city of Karachi. It is thought he may have been arrested as many as 10 days ago.

In an incident unrelated to the Marjah offensive, a Nato air strike **in** neighbouring Kandahar province killed five civilians and wounded two. Nato **said** they were mistakenly believed to have been planting roadside bombs.

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Elsewhere in Helmand province, Nato and Afghan forces killed more than 10 militants while pursuing a Taliban commander in Washir district, west of the Marjah area. AP

HUNTSVILLE: A man who was at a university faculty meeting when a professor allegedly began shooting her colleagues says the woman charged in the attack began firing without warning.

Associate professor Joseph Ng said he was one of 12 people at the biology department meeting on Friday at the University of Alabama-Huntsville, where three people were killed and three wounded.

Ng said the meeting had been going on for about half an hour when Amy Bishop got up suddenly, took out a gun and started shooting at each one of us.

She started with the one closest to her and went down the row shooting her targets in the head, he said.

Bishop, a Harvard-educated neurobiologist, was arrested and charged with one count of capital murder and three counts of attempted murder.

Killed were Gopi K Podila, the chairman of the Department of Biological Sciences, and professors Adriel Johnson and Maria Ragland Davis. Two were wounded Professor Joseph Leahy is in a critical condition and Stephanie Monticciolo is in serious condition. Luis Cruz-Vera was released from hospital.

Ng said the meeting was held around an oval table. The six people on one side were all shot.

The remaining five, including myself, were on the other side of the table [and] immediately dropped to the floor, he said.

Toyota has said it plans to temporarily cease production at two assembly plants while it grapples with massive recalls in the US.

Toyota spokesman Mike Goss said a plant in San Antonio, Texas, had scheduled production breaks for the weeks of March 15 and April 12. A plant in Georgetown, Kentucky, has scheduled a non-production day on February 26 and may not produce vehicles on three more days in March and April, he said.

Toyota has recalled 8.5 million vehicles globally during the past four months because of problems with accelerator pedals, floor mats and brakes. The company's vice president Bob Carter said on Monday that about 500,000 of the 2.3 million vehicles recalled over a potentially sticky accelerator pedal had been repaired. AP

Dundee Concert for Haiti, Fat Sams, Saturday, 7pm

What do you get if you combine members of Dundee's two top current bands, The View and The Law? The brilliantly named Laviewall tops the bill at this charity bash (tickets £15 from Groucho's record store) and Michael Marra, Tommy Reilly, The Hazey Janes, Roddy Hart (left), Boogalusa, Luva Anna and many more quality talents are also lending their support to the cause.

WHEN Alasdair Beatson invited violinist Pekka Kuusisto to join him in his four-concert series in Perth, the pianist knew exactly what he was getting into. They have worked together before, and if anyone can read the Finn it's Beatson. None the less, as he said recently: With Pekka, there is no safety net.

And that is the knife-edge scenario which confronted a busy Perth Concert Hall on Monday as the young Finn produced some of the most spontaneous and out-of-the-box violin playing and musical interpretation I have heard.

It's not as though the repertoire was from the far side of the moon: Stravinsky's Suite Italienne is standard; Prokofiev's Cinq Melodies are a little further out; and Ravel's Violin Sonata is extremely famous within its field, especially its blues and perpetual motion finale.

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But what Kuusisto did with it all was fresh and unpredictable. There were no templates, no predictable strategies. At one moment in the Stravinsky he was playing in period style, the next with sweet tone, then with full-on passion, then at the threshold of audibility, and finally barnstorming rambunctiously.

Within all this, the dynamic palette he drew on was the size of a mural: I have never heard such an audacious range of dynamics, this was creative re-invention.

Alasdair Beatson, super-alert and locked into Kuusisto, was magnetic: the colours the pianist found in the Prokofiev were as rich and emotional as the music itself.

The Ravel, from both of them, was a miracle of performance. And then, in one of Bartok s Rumanian Dances, Kuusisto made the violin sound like a bagpipe. How? I have no idea, but he did. Astounding.

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HHHHH

THE sixth edition of the Glasgow Film Festival opens tomorrow with celebrated French auteur Jean-Pierre Jeunet s latest film, Micmacs, a comic caper that pits a gang of good-natured garbage-collecting oddballs against a pair of evil international arms manufacturers. That s quite a coup for the GFF, given it s the first film in five years from the man who charmed the world with his wonderfully quirky 2001 romantic comedy, Amelie. That film, of course, propelled not only Jeunet but also his gamine star, Audrey Tautou, to international fame. It was, however, Jeunet s feature debut, the post-apocalyptic comedy Delicatessen, made way back in 1991, that originally made cinema-goers sit up and pay attention to this gloriously inventive filmmaker.

Speaking in advance of his expected appearance at the GFF s opening night gala, Jeunet, 56, tries to clarify the tricky to translate the title of his new film thus: It s hard to explain, but, depending on context, it means a mixture, a mish-mash, but it is also a little bit shady. You know underhand, intrigue, scheming, like a shady concoction. But it s always used in a humorous way.

The exact meaning of the title might remain elusive, but mish-mash is quite a good way to describe the film, which Jeunet has peppered with references to the old movies and classic cartoons that have inspired all of his films. The Bogart and Bacall film noir The Big Sleep is in there, as are Disney s Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Jeunet also invokes his own films, recreating the memorable saw-and-cello musical duet from Delicatessen and splicing in a blink-and-you ll-miss-it appearance from Tautou in Micmacs final moments. Micmacs comes across like a homage to both Delicatessen and Amelie, something which will, no doubt, prove to be a particular delight to Jeunet s legions of fans.

Yes that s true, Jeunet says in response to the suggestion that Micmacs recalls his first film and his most popular one. I suppose because Guillaume [Laurant, Jeunet s regular co-writer] and I approach each subject in the same way, by filling up this box with our own experiences and locations and things we loved as kids and characters and notions. Our projects might always overlap a bit, because they come from within.

Jeunet first had the idea to make a film about weapons dealers back in 1995 when he was editing his second film, the dark Dickensian fantasy The City of Lost Children. Finding himself sitting in a restaurant one lunchtime next to a group of pleasant, smartly-dressed engineers from a nearby arms firm, Jeunet couldn t help thinking of all of the pain and suffering they were responsible for. They all claim to work in the defence department, Jeunet says, and not, as I say, the attack department, which is an incredible way to keep their conscience clear. But even though these men, this industry, intrigued me, I wanted to make a comedy, and so the story of this gang of scavengers against the businessmen of death appealed to me.

Micmacs scavengers are seven oddballs who live in a cave built from rubbish on a Paris garbage dump. Their names, Calculator, Elastic Girl, etc, describe a special ability each is endowed with, and this motley crew is led into battle against the killer barons by the film s hero, a hobo named Basil, whose father was killed by a mine built by one of the arms firms and in whose brain is lodged a bullet made by the other. Intent on making the chairmen of the

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firms pay for what happened to him and his father, Basil sets about playing a series of pranks on each aimed at provoking them to declare war upon one another.

Jeunet initially wanted the diminutive, cherub-faced Moroccan-French actor Jamel Debbouze (who had a supporting role in *Amélie*) to play Basil. However, the hard-working star of *Days of Glory* dropped out of *Micmacs* shortly before shooting was due to commence, citing a need to take a break from work. So Jeunet approached the French comedian, actor and writer-director Dany Boon, whose south of France-set regional comedy from 2008, *Welcome to the Sticks*, made him a huge star in his home country. Although Dany is totally different from Jamel, Jeunet says, I knew he would be perfect. As soon as he put that big brown woollen jumper on, he was like a big teddy bear and I knew it would work.

In any event, Jeunet continues, it s not the first time he s turned a casting crisis into a golden opportunity. The same happened with Audrey [Tautou] for *Amélie*, he reminds me. Originally we wanted Emily Watson, but she declined and Audrey stepped in. Now, Jeunet says, who could imagine anyone else other than Audrey as *Amélie*? Luckily, fate always seems to smile on me and lead me to the right place.

Jeunet s not wrong there. *Delicatessen* and *The City of Lost Children* led him to Hollywood, where he was hired to inject some new life into the ailing *Alien* franchise. His *Alien: Resurrection* turned out to be the least memorable instalment of the sci-fi/horror series, but its very mixed reception did send him straight back to France, where he and Laurant set to work on the film, which would later earn him five Oscar nominations. *Amélie* is my favourite film, Jeunet says proudly. I put my soul into that, my own life, and my own story.

After the two films he made with Tautou, Jeunet was offered *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. This time, however, he declined to sign on to a franchise. It was to be a lot of work and not my vision. A film takes a long time out of your life and you have to be totally convinced to take that journey. Thankfully, Jeunet wasn't. If he had been, we might not now have *Micmacs*.

Micmacs premieres at Glasgow Film Theatre tomorrow. Read Alison Rowat's review in *The Herald* tomorrow.

ON stage, rehearsals have reached a crucial phase and decisions have to be made. Do the dancers want to wear socks? If so, do they want black socks or white socks? Is that a voice asking for odd socks? It s not a trivial matter, because as everyone involved in getting this new Scottish Dance Theatre (SDT) piece ready for its premiere knows when an audience is on the look out for visual clues, such details can't be left to chance. Especially when it s a work like *NQR*, with its provocative exploration of difference.

NQR, by the way, is the medical acronym for Not Quite Right. And, as you might expect with a company as attuned to issues of dance and disability as SDT, the socks are really just a footnote. What s going to challenge the whole concept of a 'right' aesthetic is the presence of Marc Brew and Caroline Bowditch, both of them professional dancers and both of them wheelchair users. It s not, in fact, the first time that SDT has staged an integrated company piece. In 2007, they commissioned *Angels of Incidence* from choreographer Adam Benjamin, a co-founder of the pioneering CandoCo company. The piece toured extensively as part of the company's mixed programme: this meant that audiences who might have shied away from watching dancers in wheelchairs found themselves having to adjust their preconceptions as new dynamics in partnering only became possible because one of the performers had wheels to put in motion.

Bowditch was, herself, a key part of this production. At one school's workshop, in Eastleigh, a young primary pupil hailed her as being 'this queen in a throne, with everyone wanting her to notice them and let them ride on it with her'. It was a gorgeous description of Bowditch and the way she can totally command a space, not because of her wheelchair but because of her personality, her focus and her presence. Since then, she s become part of SDT's outreach programme as the company's Dance Agent for Change, using her own considerable experience as a performer and choreographer to encourage others not just audiences, but people with disabilities to think in terms of possibilities, not limitations. Frankly it can be hard enough to get audiences in to see contemporary dance, says Bowditch with a decidedly cheeky grin. They probably have an idea what ballet looks like, even if they never go but contemporary? They're not familiar with it, so why bother? And that s even before we've got on to the bit about the wheelchairs.

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As for persuading other disabled folk to join in movement classes? That was yet another challenge that Bowditch successfully confronted with customary energy and panache. As a dancer with brittle bone disease, Bowditch had first-hand knowledge of the risks involved in pushing your body in new and demanding ways. But you only have to see Bowditch on stage, and in her element, to realise that dancing is her gift.

For Janet Smith, SDT s artistic director, that gift with all its connotations of difference, challenge, resourcefulness and grit makes Bowditch and now also Marc Brew, the company s recently appointed associate director fellow, invaluable as collaborators on NQR. I love collaborations anyway, she says. Watching someone else s work, being part of a collaborative process it s really a chance to see the world through someone else s eyes. And both Marc and Caroline are bringing so much that is fresh and new to us. Caroline has these ideas that are thrillingly theatrical but she s also wonderfully questioning about things. She'll look at something and be asking, what are we showing? What are we telling here? It s keeping us out of our comfort zone and that s true, too, of the explorations we're making with Marc s movements. What he does, in a couple of the sections, is on the floor and in one sense it is a limitation in terms of what the non-disabled dancers can do. But limitations are what feed creativity. Instead of dancers assuming that they're going to be dashing everywhere, they're having to feel their way into a different kind of physicality. Instead of the dancers with disability having to imitate movements that weren't really made for them, we've looked at things from their perspective. So sometimes it s their vocabulary that takes the lead.

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With these thoughts racing through everyone s mind, Not Quite Right as a phrase moved away, to encompass some of the everyday stuff that, as Smith laughingly points out, has us picking on all kinds of aesthetics and deciding that what we see, or hear or taste, isn't just so ... it s not quite right. Cue those sock choices and canny costume designs that will underscore the choreographic themes. NQR is one half of a double bill of new work that will tour extensively this spring Ben Duke s intriguing dance-theatre piece, The Life and Times of Girl A is the other.

Scottish Dance Theatre premieres both works at Dundee Rep tonight, running until Saturday.

WHEN Alasdair Beatson invited violinist Pekka Kuusisto to join him in his four-concert series in Perth, the pianist knew exactly what he was getting into. They have worked together before, and if anyone can read the Finn it s Beatson. None the less, as he said recently: With Pekka, there is no safety net.

And that is the knife-edge scenario which confronted a busy Perth Concert Hall on Monday as the young Finn produced some of the most spontaneous and out-of-the-box violin playing and musical interpretation I have heard.

It s not as though the repertoire was from the far side of the moon: Stravinsky s Suite Italienne is standard; Prokofiev s Cinq Melodies are a little further out; and Ravel s Violin Sonata is extremely famous within its field, especially its blues and perpetual motion finale.

But what Kuusisto did with it all was fresh and unpredictable. There were no templates, no predictable strategies. At one moment in the Stravinsky he was playing in period style, the next with sweet tone, then with full-on passion, then at the threshold of audibility, and finally barnstorming rambunctiously.

Within all this, the dynamic palette he drew on was the size of a mural: I have never heard such an audacious range of dynamics, this was creative re-invention.

Alasdair Beatson, super-alert and locked into Kuusisto, was magnetic: the colours the pianist found in the Prokofiev were as rich and emotional as the music itself.

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The Ravel, from both of them, was a miracle of performance. And then, in one of Bartok s Rumanian Dances, Kuusisto made the violin sound like a bagpipe. How? I have no idea, but he did. Astounding.

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HHHHH

THE sixth edition of the Glasgow Film Festival opens tomorrow with celebrated French auteur Jean-Pierre Jeunet s latest film, Micmacs, a comic caper that pits a gang of good-natured garbage-collecting oddballs against a pair of evil international arms manufacturers. That s quite a coup for the GFF, given it s the first film in five years from the man who charmed the world with his wonderfully quirky 2001 romantic comedy, Amelie. That film, of course, propelled not only Jeunet but also his gamine star, Audrey Tautou, to international fame. It was, however, Jeunet s feature debut, the post-apocalyptic comedy Delicatessen, made way back in 1991, that originally made cinema-goers sit up and pay attention to this gloriously inventive filmmaker.

Speaking in advance of his expected appearance at the GFF s opening night gala, Jeunet, 56, tries to clarify the tricky to translate the title of his new film thus: It s hard to explain, but, depending on context, it means a mixture, a mish-mash, but it is also a little bit shady. You know underhand, intrigue, scheming, like a shady concoction. But it s always used in a humorous way.

The exact meaning of the title might remain elusive, but mish-mash is quite a good way to describe the film, which Jeunet has peppered with references to the old movies and classic cartoons that have inspired all of his films. The Bogart and Bacall film noir The Big Sleep is in there, as are Disney s Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Jeunet also invokes his own films, recreating the memorable saw-and-cello musical duet from Delicatessen and splicing in a blink-and-you ll-miss-it appearance from Tautou in Micmacs final moments. Micmacs comes across like a homage to both Delicatessen and Amelie, something which will, no doubt, prove to be a particular delight to Jeunet s legions of fans.

Yes that s true, Jeunet says in response to the suggestion that Micmacs recalls his first film and his most popular one. I suppose because Guillaume [Laurant, Jeunet s regular co-writer] and I approach each subject in the same way, by filling up this box with our own experiences and locations and things we loved as kids and characters and notions. Our projects might always overlap a bit, because they come from within.

Jeunet first had the idea to make a film about weapons dealers back in 1995 when he was editing his second film, the dark Dickensian fantasy The City of Lost Children. Finding himself sitting in a restaurant one lunchtime next to a group of pleasant, smartly-dressed engineers from a nearby arms firm, Jeunet couldn t help thinking of all of the pain and suffering they were responsible for. They all claim to work in the defence department, Jeunet says, and not, as I say, the attack department, which is an incredible way to keep their conscience clear. But even though these men, this industry, intrigued me, I wanted to make a comedy, and so the story of this gang of scavengers against the businessmen of death appealed to me.

Micmacs scavengers are seven oddballs who live in a cave built from rubbish on a Paris garbage dump. Their names, Calculator, Elastic Girl, etc, describe a special ability each is endowed with, and this motley crew is led into battle against the killer barons by the film s hero, a hobo named Basil, whose father was killed by a mine built by one of the arms firms and in whose brain is lodged a bullet made by the other. Intent on making the chairmen of the firms pay for what happened to him and his father, Basil sets about playing a series of pranks on each aimed at provoking them to declare war upon one another.

Jeunet initially wanted the diminutive, cherub-faced Moroccan-French actor Jamel Debbouze (who had a supporting role in Amelie) to play Basil. However, the hard-working star of Days of Glory dropped out of Micmacs shortly before shooting was due to commence, citing a need to take a break from work. So Jeunet approached the French comedian, actor and writer-director Dany Boon, whose south of France-set regional comedy from 2008, Welcome to the Sticks, made him a huge star in his home country. Although Dany is totally different from Jamel, Jeunet says, I knew he would be perfect. As soon as he put that big brown woollen jumper on, he was like a big teddy bear and I knew it would work.

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In any event, Jeunet continues, it s not the first time he s turned a casting crisis into a golden opportunity. The same happened with Audrey [Tautou] for Amelie, he reminds me. Originally we wanted Emily Watson, but she declined and Audrey stepped in. Now, Jeunet says, who could imagine anyone else other than Audrey as Amelie? Luckily, fate always seems to smile on me and lead me to the right place.

Jeunet s not wrong there. Delicatessen and The City of Lost Children led him to Hollywood, where he was hired to inject some new life into the ailing Alien franchise. His Alien: Resurrection turned out to be the least memorable instalment of the sci-fi/horror series, but its very mixed reception did send him straight back to France, where he and Laurant set to work on the film, which would later earn him five Oscar nominations. Amelie is my favourite film, Jeunet says proudly. I put my soul into that, my own life, and my own story.

After the two films he made with Tautou, Jeunet was offered Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix. This time, however, he declined to sign on to a franchise. It was to be a lot of work and not my vision. A film takes a long time out of your life and you have to be totally convinced to take that journey. Thankfully, Jeunet wasn't. If he had been, we might not now have Micmacs.

Micmacs premieres at Glasgow Film Theatre tomorrow. Read Alison Rowat s review in The Herald tomorrow.

Dundee Concert for Haiti, Fat Sams, Saturday, 7pm

What do you get if you combine members of Dundee s two top current bands, The View and The Law? The brilliantly named Laviewall tops the bill at this charity bash (tickets £15 from Groucho s record store) and Michael Marra, Tommy Reilly, The Hazey Janes, Roddy Hart (left), Boogalusa, Luva Anna and many more quality talents are also lending their support to the cause.

ON stage, rehearsals have reached a crucial phase and decisions have to be made. Do the dancers want to wear socks? If so, do they want black socks or white socks? Is that a voice asking for odd socks? It s not a trivial matter, because as everyone involved in getting this new Scottish Dance Theatre (SDT) piece ready for its premiere knows when an audience is on the look out for visual clues, such details can't be left to chance. Especially when it s a work like NQR, with its provocative exploration of difference.

NQR, by the way, is the medical acronym for Not Quite Right. And, as you might expect with a company as attuned to issues of dance and disability as SDT, the socks are really just a footnote. What s going to challenge the whole concept of a right aesthetic is the presence of Marc Brew and Caroline Bowditch, both of them professional dancers and both of them wheelchair users. It s not, in fact, the first time that SDT has staged an integrated company piece. In 2007, they commissioned Angels of Incidence from choreographer Adam Benjamin, a co-founder of the pioneering CandoCo company. The piece toured extensively as part of the company s mixed programme: this meant that audiences who might have shied away from watching dancers in wheelchairs found themselves having to adjust their preconceptions as new dynamics in partnering only became possible because one of the performers had wheels to put in motion.

Bowditch was, herself, a key part of this production. At one school's workshop, in Eastleigh, a young primary pupil hailed her as being this queen in a throne, with everyone wanting her to notice them and let them ride on it with her. It was a gorgeous description of Bowditch and the way she can totally command a space, not because of her wheelchair but because of her personality, her focus and her presence. Since then, she s become part of SDT s outreach programme as the company s Dance Agent for Change, using her own considerable experience as a performer and choreographer to encourage others not just audiences, but people with disabilities to think in terms of possibilities, not limitations. Frankly it can be hard enough to get audiences in to see contemporary dance, says Bowditch with a decidedly cheeky grin. They probably have an idea what ballet looks like, even if they never go but contemporary? They're not familiar with it, so why bother? And that s even before we've got on to the bit about the wheelchairs.

As for persuading other disabled folk to join in movement classes? That was yet another challenge that Bowditch successfully confronted with customary energy and panache. As a dancer with brittle bone disease, Bowditch had

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EVEN if an individual who had never listened to Midlake had been present in the ABC as they took the stage, it would not have taken long to decipher what sort of band the Texan seven-piece are. With five of their number sporting beards and checked shirts prominent, an evening of Lady Gaga-esque vaudeville pop seemed unlikely. That proved true, yet Midlake s well-crafted paeans to 60s and 70s rock were mostly full of quality.

If their breakthrough record, The Trails of Van Occupanther, paid homage to the 70s, material from the recently released Courage of Others called to mind a folksier approach, particularly as vocalist Tim Smith spent part of the set seated. However, there were still flurries of hard drumming and lengthy, Led Zeppelin-styled guitar work too. They were stamped all over the robust The Horn, and Young Bride was another stand-out, taking full advantage of the drummer McKenzie Smith and his varied, sometimes subtle, often thunderous, playing.

There were other highlights too. The chugging Roscoe, their most well-known number, was a foot-tapping trek through Fleetwood Mac rock, but it was the exhilarating instrumental climax to Core of Nature and the strident Children of the Grounds that resonated the most.

Yet while the bulk of the Courage of Others numbers were fine, they also proved somewhat similar, blending into each other. The group also proved prone to delving into lengthy, workmanlike jams too often, which proved that you can sometimes have too much of a good thing, while their lack of showmanship also ensured it was easy for the mind to wander.

The majority, however, may not have been flashy but was still effective.

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SCOTS playwright DC Jackson (The Wall, The Ducky) has earned a reputation for producing the noughties equivalent of the sort of big-hearted, tweeless and very funny Caledonian comedies that made John Byrne, Liz Lochhead, Bill Forsyth and Rab C Nesbitt creator Ian Pattison such household names. His latest play, an office farce set in the unisex toilets of a company called Jiffy Corps, is no exception.

The set-up is as old as the hills the Hollywood Hills that produced a raft of American screwball comedies from the 1930s on, that is. And as gold standards go you can't get better than that. Though Shakespeare might claim to know a thing or two about the comedy of errors that can beset the best romantic intentions.

Here new office girl, accountant Sally Mallow (a very sexy Lisa Gardner), finds herself the tug-of-war object of affection between two of her colleagues: Lanky Benny Hill on Viagra Randy Burley (Johnny Austin) and decent fellow Dex Sexington (Richard Conlon). True to screwball form, Randy and Dex contrive to make their pursuit as confusing and difficult as they can by inadvertently swapping identities.

Packed with top-notch one-liners, this is fast-paced, laugh-out-loud fun in which director Kenny Miller coaxes some deliciously first rate performances from his cast Austin in particular is an immoral joy.

If it's touchstones you're after let's just say that while Randy, Dex and Sally are busy sorting out their true feelings in the unisex loos, elsewhere at the Jiffy Jam office party you imagine Tony Randall, Doris Day, Rock Hudson and Phil McCann from The Slab Boys are all busy dealing with troublesome trysts of their own.

Sponsored by Heineken.

HHHH

A HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN 100 OBJECTS

Radio 4, 9.45am/ 12.30am

Neil MacGregor's journey backwards through time reaches China with an examination of the significance of the Zhong ritual bowl from 3000 years ago. And at 4pm on the same station, Thinking Allowed, which never fails to provoke debate, looks at piracy: Laurie Taylor reports that in 2005 the Motion Picture Association of America claimed that the movie industry lost \$2.3bn in revenue to piracy. But he also discovers that the crime is nothing new. He presents evidence dating back to the 17th century.

Shrink Rap

More4, 10pm

A NEW series of Australian clinical psychologist Dr Pamela Stephenson's compulsive talk show kicks off with an encounter with Heather Mills, surely the most irritatingly self-promoting subject on earth. Mills exclusively reveals (huh?) details of her unhappy childhood, the accident in which she lost her left leg below the knee, and surprise! her divorce from Paul McCartney.

But perhaps we should be more sympathetic. After all, Mills's mother abandoned her when she was just nine years old, and died at 47. Distressing enough for anyone, but Mills and her siblings were left to cope with being brought up by an unpredictable and obsessive father. She becomes visibly emotional when she tells how her mother died just after they were briefly united.

In previous series of the televised therapy show Stephenson (wife of Billy Connolly) has interviewed a variety of interesting (aka perplexing) personalities for the purpose of offering her expert advice, and hoping they'll go away better prepared to face the world. These include Stephen Fry, Sharon Osbourne, Sarah Ferguson, Robin Williams and Chris Langham. Here she valiantly attempts to explore how Mills's childhood has influenced her subsequent life. She probes Mills about her sexuality and the power it has given her over men, her career as a glamour model and her ill-fated marriage to McCartney.

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As much as those who didn't know us want to dismiss it, those who were really around us know we were very, very in love, Mills says. I was pursued for quite a few months. It was very flattering. How could you say no? Aha. So the ghastly and all too public fallout from that famously ill-fated union was not her fault, then?

Ramsay s Kitchen Nightmares USA

Channel 4, 9pm

Gogsy (he of the newly line-free chin) is back for a third series of the American reality show, so he must be doing something right, even though the launch of this series was postponed due to US President Barack Obama s State of the Union address.

In this episode, he spends his usual week at a failing restaurant, this time in rural Whitehouse, New Jersey. Mother and daughter owners Adele and Cheryl are stuck in a tropical-themed rut but their restaurant is far from paradise. They struggle to get on with their staff and hate Gordon with a passion. Will this nightmare ever end?

Material Girl

BBC 1, 10.45pm

The final episode of the fashion romcom, and following bad reviews from Ali s debut at Fashion Week (engineered by Davina and Mitchell), she and Marco head to Paris to try to sell her collection to buyer and fashion legend Sylvie Montrose.

In order to secure her fab new deal, Marco must agree to let her go.

Charity campaigner;

Born May 16, 1947; Died January 19, 2010.

DOREEN Don, who has died aged 62, was chairperson of the Glasgow charity, Breast Cancer 2000. Although a strong family person she always thought of others and was the first to offer assistance to any in distress or trouble. Her first charity work was helping to raise funds for the Western kidney unit.

Seventeen years ago, she was diagnosed with breast cancer but, due to the care she received at the Western Breast Care Unit and the Beatson Oncology Centre, she overcame the disease.

Initially, she became a committee member of the Bearsden charity The White Lily Fund, where she assisted fundraising. Her desire was to give something back to the units that treated her and in March 2000 she set up Breast Cancer 2000.

As chairperson, she was a driving force and, next to family, it was her life. Her ambition was to donate £1m to fund research into breast cancer and for patient care. Some £700,000 has been raised to date.

Only three months ago she was devastated when she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. She bore the illness with dignity but realised that on this occasion she would not be able to overcome the disease. Despite this, she remained focused on the efforts of the charity.

She is survived by her husband, Alistair, her son and daughter, and four grandchildren.

Maybe Edward Thomas s observations are a little premature for this time of year, though there are some intimations of spring. Strange he should opt for white violets rather than snowdrops as harbingers Lesley Duncan

But These Things Also

But these things also are Spring s

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On banks by the roadside the grass

Long-dead that is greener now

Than all the Winter it was;

The shell of a little snail bleached

in the grass: chip of flint, and mite

Of chalk; and the small birds' dung

in splashes of purest white:

All the white things a man mistakes

For earliest violets

Who seek through Winter s ruins

Something to pay Winter s debts,

While the North blows, and starling flocks

By chattering on and on

Keep their spirits up in the mist,

And Spring s here, Winter s not gone.

25 YEARS AGO

SCOTTISH local authorities would be compelled to put services such as street cleansing and school meals out to public tender under government proposals. The government s plans were attacked by Councillor Ken Fagan, vice-president of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, who claimed Mrs Thatcher and her ministers were ideologically obsessed with theories of privatisation.

50 YEARS AGO

ALTHOUGH excess demand may be avoided, it will be more difficult to keep prices stable this year, according to a survey of economic conditions in Britain published by the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation. It was unlikely that Britain s economy would again benefit from falling import prices.

Psychiatrist;

Born November 2, 1929; Died January 4, 2010.

DR JOHN Hope Henderson, who has died aged 80, was a distinguished psychiatrist and mental health pioneer.

Born in Galashiels, his secondary schooling was at Central Secondary School in Aberdeen and Melville College, Edinburgh. His medical training at Aberdeen University and subsequent postgraduate work led him to become both a member (then fellow) of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and a Fellow of the Faculty of Public Health Medicine and the Royal College of Physicians.

Throughout his career he managed to combine both perspectives, being a highly regarded psychiatrist, but also having the vision to put this in the context of mental health and wellbeing within the community. Dr Henderson s adoption of a holistic approach was radical.

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After completing medical training in 1955, he was sent on National Service to Kenya with the Royal Army Medical Corps. On his return he concentrated on his psychiatric training, spending six years in Aberdeen under the guidance of Prof Malcolm Miller. From 1963-69 Dr Henderson was consultant psychiatrist and physician superintendent at Bilbohall Hospital in Elgin.

He moved to a similar post at Bangour Village Hospital in Broxburn, where he contributed to the post-graduate training programme at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital. His humane approach, his wit and his broad perspective influenced and inspired many juniors.

Dr Henderson moved away from direct clinical practice into an advisory role, becoming principal medical officer in mental health at the Scottish Home and Health Department. Here he helped develop the special unit at Barlinnie Prison.

His expertise took him further afield as World Health Organisation regional adviser on mental health, working first in south-east Asia, based in Delhi (1976-80), then in Europe, based in Copenhagen (1980-85).

His most important work in this period was to advise on the psychiatric de-institutionalisation programme in Greece and Romania, following the revelation of horrendous conditions and practices, and he continued to contribute to this project over the next 20 years.

In 1985, he returned to the UK as medical director at Saint Andrews Hospital, Northampton, until his retirement in 1993.

For the next 16 years, he dedicated his life to improving the rights of the mentally ill across Europe.

He started his retirement as an active member and then president of the European Council of the World Federation for Mental Health and then becoming a co-founder of Mental Health Europe, an umbrella organisation for NGOs. He remained active as special adviser to Mental Health Europe until a few months before his death. In Scotland, he chaired InterMinds, a charity helping to support organisations working with service users in developing areas, especially Romania and the former Soviet Union.

Dr Henderson helped change the direction of public mental health in Europe, broadening the horizons away from illness to include anti-stigma work, suicide prevention and mental health promotion. Scotland has been commended on its work in this direction over the past few years and he was very proud to give a presentation at the WHO ministerial conference on mental health in 2005.

This impressive career was matched by three other passions. First, his love of sport (rugby, as player, referee and follower; mountain-climbing; and watersports). He also had a love of gardening, cooking and fine wine, and meeting friends and colleagues.

Most importantly he was close to his family: Toshie, his wife of 52 years, four sons, 10 grandchildren and two step-grandchildren.

SANDRA GRANT

BRITAIN S top shares closed sharply higher yesterday as Barclays led a banking sector rally after its 2009 forecast-beating results while oils and miners were buoyed by firmer commodity prices. The FTSE 100 ended up 76.59 points, or 1.5%, at 5,244.06, extending gains into a second consecutive session after closing 0.5% higher on Monday.

Barclays was the top blue-chip riser, up 6.8%, after saying it had started the year well and beating expectations with a 2009 profit of more than £11.6 billion following strong performance at its investment banking unit.

Lloyds Banking Group rose 4.7% and Royal Bank of Scotland added 5.3%. Both are scheduled to report results next week.

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RBS **said** it was selling the non-US assets of its RBS Sempra Commodities joint venture to JPMorgan for \$1.7 billion.

HSBC and Standard Chartered also gained, they put on 1.6 and 2.5% respectively.

At the moment equities are still providing a decent return compared to other instruments, which is why the market **s** still well supported, **said** Philip Gillett, sales trader at IG index.

Whether or not this rally still has further to go I am not sure. I still think we are **in** for a sideways period.

A gauge of manufacturing **in** New York state rose **in** February as inventories jumped, the New York Federal Reserve **said in** a report on Tuesday.

The news added to the feel-good factor and boosted demand for commodities as prices **in** metals and crude oil surged as the US dollar weakened.

Miners Eurasian Natural Resources, Vedanta Resources, Randgold Resources and Fresnillo were among the best off, rising 3.9 to 5.2%.

Anglo American climbed 3.8% after selling its Tarmac construction businesses **in** France, Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic to Eurovia, a unit of France **s** Vinci.

BHP Billiton put on 3.1%, also helped by an upgrade to buy from ING, while Rio Tinto added 2.5%.

Oil and gas producers Royal Dutch Shell, BP and BG **Group** climbed 1.6 to 2.2%.

Selected defensive stocks were lower as appetite for risk remained strong. Imperial Tobacco was among the top FTSE 100 fallers, dropping 1.7%, while British American Tobacco was down 0.9%.

InterContinental Hotels was the biggest blue-chip faller, off 2.9% after the world **s** biggest hotelier **said** trading would stay tough until business travellers returned **in** greater numbers.

JP Morgan Chase has agreed to buy the non-US assets of RBS Sempra Commodities for \$1.7 billion (£1.4bn) **in** cash **in** a deal that will challenge the dominance of Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley and Barclays Capital **in** raw materials trading.

The New York-based investment bank **said** it would purchase RBS Sempra **s** global oil trading unit, its profitable metal trading business and European power and gas assets. RBS Sempra Commodities will retain its North American natural gas and power, Edinburgh-based Royal Bank **said**. The deal is set to be completed **in** the second quarter of the year.

The sale of RBS Sempra Commodities a joint venture between Royal Bank of Scotland, which was rescued by the UK Government, and US utility **group** Sempra Energy was sparked by a European Commission state-aid ruling last year ordering Royal Bank to divest its stake.

JP Morgan had initially considered buying the whole joint venture for about \$4bn, but dropped the plan because of the large overlap between RBS Sempra **s** business **in America** and its own current trading activity. On top of this, the Obama administration **s** clampdown on banks proprietary trading pushed JP Morgan to buy only the non-US activities.

The commodities operations will become part of JP Morgan **s** global commodities business, which is headed by Blythe Masters.

DEVRO, the Scottish company that makes sausage skins and other products for the food processing industry, has announced sizzling preliminary results for the year that ended on December 31, 2009.

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The business reported a 76% surge in pre-tax profit, as global demand for edible collagen casings grew by more 5% in the year, particularly in the developing economies of China and Latin America.

I am very pleased to report a second year of profit growth, chairman Steve Hannam told The Herald. The performance improved throughout the year and resulted in an increase in operating profit before exceptional items of 33% compared to 2008.

Pre-tax profit surged to £26.94m, from £15.34m a year ago. Profit before tax and exceptional items was up 33.6% to £25.1m from £18m in the previous year. Earnings per share, before exceptional items, were 11.5p, up from 8.2p a year earlier. Full-year revenue grew 20.4% to £220.41m from £183.13m in the previous year.

In the year, sales volumes of edible collagen casings increased by 6% year-on-year. Volumes of distributed products increased, but other products, including collagen gel, were down, the company said.

The firm has achieved price increases during the year averaging 3% on a constant currency basis.

Operating profit for the year increased to £29.19m from £17.12m in the previous year. Operating margin improved to 12.4% from 11.2% reflecting increases in sales prices and the improvement in manufacturing.

The Moodiesburn-based company is a geographically diversified, solid performer. Its market has held up better than other consumer-focused areas and it seems to be dealing effectively with the challenges, such as rising raw material and energy costs, that have come its way while continuing to seek out new markets.

This has driven investor enthusiasm. Its shares yesterday rose 1.5%, or 1.25p, to 150p,

Devro dominates the UK market for collagen food products used in casing for sausages, salami, hams and other cooked meats and also owns businesses in the Czech Republic, Australia and the United States.

The company closed an old factory in the Czech Republic that was built in the 1930s and opened a more efficient plant, saving about £2m annually, the firm said in previous results.

Devro employs about 1,000 people in the Czech Republic. It has seen strong growth in developing economies such as China and Latin America, where Mexico is its biggest market. The company is also in a strong position in Brazil and Chile. It has, however, made little headway in India where many people do not eat meat but performed well in Japan, Hannam stated. He said the group s two Scottish factories at Moodiesburn and Bellshill were working flat out to meet demand. We have seen really good performance there, he said.

Commenting on the outlook for 2010, Peter Page, chief executive, said: Devro s markets are resilient at a time of economic uncertainty, and we view 2010 with confidence.

The board is proposing a final dividend of 3.575p, bringing the total for the year to 5p, which is 12% higher than last year.

CRAIG Wilson sold 356 light prime hogs at Ayr on Monday to average 179p/kg, 779 medium weights to average 187.2p, and 439 heavy ones to average 173.1p.

Four hundred and ninety-three cast ewes averaged £52.46.

Lawrie & Symington sold 28 dairy cattle at Lanark on Monday to a top of £2080 (twice) for Holstein heifers in milk to average £1350.

Twenty-eight prime heifers sold to 199p/kg and averaged 176.6p (+10.6p on the week). Assuming Scottish beef type cattle kill out at 58% that average price equates to 304.5p/kg dead weight. To convert any of the prime cattle prices quoted divide them by 0.58.

The 26 prime bullocks forward sold to 184p/kg and averaged 157.8p (-0.6p).

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Twenty-nine beef cows sold to 153p and averaged 105p, while 66 dairy cows sold to 112p and averaged 91p. 2082 prime hogs sold to 229.8p/kg and £100/head to average 189.3p (no change). 212 light ewes averaged £50.43 (+£7.13), while 196 heavy ewes averaged £78.14 (+£10.47).

Craig Wilson sold 24 prime heifers at Ayr yesterday to average 167.1p/kg and 27 prime bullocks to average 151.9p.

Fifty-six dairy cows averaged 107.7p, whilst 107 beef cows averaged 88.9p.

Walls Marts had a plainer show of 1592 prime hogs at Castle Douglas yesterday that sold to 213.9p and averaged 181p. Three hundred and seventy-four cast ewes and rams saw horned ewes especially in demand and sold to £87 for Suffolks, £83 Texels, £78 Mules, £76 Cheviots and £70.50 for Blackfaces.

Following Monday's successful sale of pedigree Simmental bulls it was the turn of the pedigree Charolais to go through United Auctions ring at Stirling yesterday. They sold to a top of 26,000gns and averaged £6072 for 163 sold (+£10).

THE annual pace of retail sales growth in Scotland slowed sharply from 4.3% in December to 2.8% last month the worst rate recorded in any January for four years.

The 2.8% growth rate recorded by the Scottish Retail Consortium was, however, more than double the 1.2% year-on-year increase in January in the UK as a whole. This was the first time since August last year that the year-on-year pace of sales growth north of the border exceeded the UK-wide rate of increase recorded by the British Retail Consortium.

Annual growth in Scotland of non-food sales, the more discretionary element of spending, slowed from 3.3% in December to 0.9% last month.

The Scottish Retail Consortium said that the coldest January since 1979 ensured the clothing category had its strongest month since last April, when sales were boosted by sunny weather around Easter. Winter coats, jackets, knitwear and warm accessories all sold well last month.

However, there was much less interest in homewares and do-it-yourself projects.

Richard Dodd, head of media at the Scottish Retail Consortium, said: After a decent December, this is a disappointing result but not a disaster. Generally, people just didn't want to go out shopping in the extreme weather if they didn't have to. Food sales did well early in the month as people stocked up and demand for winter wear took clothing to its best result since last April but there was much less interest in things like homewares and DIY.

Noting the impact of the return of the VAT rate to 17.5% from the temporary 15% rate on January 1, Dodd said: The VAT increase had pulled some sales forward to December but the good news is (that) total sales in Scotland still grew twice as fast as for the whole of the UK.

He added: Customers are nervous about their own finances but Scottish retailers will be hoping January's weaker performance is mainly about the weather rather than anything more fundamental.

On a like-for-like basis, which strips out the beneficial impact of expansion of space and signals how retailers are faring as opposed to the state of overall consumer spending, Scottish retail sales value in January was down 0.6% on the same month last year. This was, as with total sales, the poorest year-on-year comparison for any January for four years.

STAGECOACH, whose Scottish bus operations include Highland, Bluebird, Strathclyde, Fife, and West Scotland, has appointed a new Scottish director for its bus division.

Sam Greer began his career in 1984 as an apprentice mechanic with the then Scottish Bus Group.

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He also worked for London Metrolink and Strathclyde Buses before joining Western Scottish in 1992 as depot engineer.

Following Stagecoach s takeover of Western Scottish, he was appointed engineering director of Stagecoach West Scotland in 1997, and in 2006 became managing director.

The 41-year-old will take over at the beginning of May as regional director Scotland following the retirement of Tom Wileman, and will have overall responsibility for the entire Stagecoach network, including the Scottish Citylink joint venture.

His appointment means he will join the Stagecoach UK Bus management team with responsibility for health and safety, environment, engineering and purchasing.

Wileman began his career in the industry with the Scottish Bus Group in 1972.

After joining Stagecoach in 1990, he went on to become managing director of six Stagecoach companies around the UK including Bluebird before being appointed to head up Scotland in 2008.

Wileman said after hearing of his new appointment: I m extremely proud of the success Stagecoach has achieved in attracting more people on to greener, smarter bus travel.

have had jobs. They owe the UK community big time.

Varley said: As an industry, and indeed as a global economy, in the autumn of 2008, we were right on the brink and governments and central banks and supervisors intervened in a way that saved the system. We should never forget that fact.

When we think about remuneration it s important that we acknowledge those things and it s clear to me that the bond of trust between banks and their customers and stakeholders has been damaged by the experience of the last three years.

So banks have to be sensitive to the issue of how they lend and they have to be sensitive to the issue of how they pay.

It s important in those circumstances, and recognising also that governments have helped the banking system as much as they have over the course of the last couple of years ... that banks and bankers show that they understand ... and behave accordingly.

Varley said Barclays had committed to lend £11bn to UK businesses and households in 2009 but had lent £35bn.

Excluding a £6.3bn gain on the sale of Barclays Global Investors to Blackrock and other one-offs, underlying profits more than trebled to £5.6bn, 5% ahead of analysts expectations.

BarCap increased profits 89% to £2.5bn, helped by the acquisition of the US operations of Lehman investment bank.

UK retail banking profits fell to £612m from £1.369bn.

UK commercial banking profits fell by 41%, to £749m, due to rising defaults and falling asset values. Barclaycard profits fell by 4% to £761m.

Barclays paid a 2009 dividend of 2.5p and signalled future annual payouts would be over 4.5p per share.

Shares in Barclays closed up 7%, 18.7p, at 293.75p.

JAPAN may be renowned for an economic lost decade which began in the early 1990s but, when it comes to technological advancement, it continues to waste absolutely no time.

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Such obsession with developing technology is obvious at the Panasonic Centre in the Tokyo Bay area and during a visit to electronics giant Sony s gleaming glass-and-metal high-rise headquarters in the Japanese capital s Shinagawa quarter.

This focus on technology is, however, as much a necessity as an obsession. Successful development of new ideas will be crucial to the future of a Japanese economy which depends heavily on exports and is facing increasingly fierce competition from its Asian neighbours.

Long established players such as Panasonic and Sony are facing intense competition these days from South Korean manufacturers Samsung and LG, at the top end of the flat-screen television market for example.

Japan, much like Scotland, has seen this emerging excellence from South Korea in decades gone by in the shipbuilding sector.

All the while, China and Taiwan are producing huge quantities of cheaper, flat-screen televisions under a mind-boggling variety of brands. The strength of the yen against the Chinese renminbi is not helping Japan s efforts to compete against China in the electronics arena.

Faced with the South Korean challenge at the top end of the market, and the emergence of ever-greater price-based competition from China and Taiwan, Panasonic and Sony

have no choice but to strive to continue a reputation for delivering the most advanced and reliable technology which Japan earned in the 1980s.

Japanese car giant Toyota s recent troubles are not helpful to the reputation of the country s technology, and are currently causing some angst in this regard. Toyota has had to recall hundreds of thousands of its environmentally-friendly 2010 Prius cars worldwide because of a glitch in the braking system and millions of other vehicles recently over problems with accelerator pedals.

However, if anyone is tempted to think Japan is going to yield its now decades-long reputation for producing some of the world s finest technology without a fight, a tour of the Panasonic Centre would likely change this view.

The centre features the future living room . You might think you've seen it all before, and even that Disney s Epcot theme-park in Florida did it decades ago but, even in today s environment in which technology advances at breakneck speed, Panasonic s vision of the future is something of a jaw-dropper.

Guided to a seat in this future living room, a seat much like any other seat, you face a wall. A wall like any other wall, not surprisingly, with a television screen on it.

The female guide notes that the television is part of the wall, and not separate. At this point, things still seem fairly unremarkable.

Then things begin to become impressive. With a wave of the arm, the screen extends across the entire wall.

There is then a demonstration of how a member of the household can operate the life wall from a distance by hand movements, being recognised as a specific user and being able to choose from a personalised menu.

This might enable this person to play video which she downloaded previously, for example, or to view photographs which can be uploaded from a digital camera to the life wall in seconds.

Another gesture at the wall brings up a bookcase showing the covers of various titles, again taking up the entire wall. An animal picture book is selected, and the pages turn using a touch-activated table in front of the seat.

Animals are selected using the same touch-table.

After about half a dozen are selected, they are put in order across the entire wall by order of size, then speed, and finally life span.

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There is also a demonstration of instant video communication on the giant screen, with a person in another room, with no time-lag and remarkable clarity. A picture of Mount Fuji is put up as a backdrop in the other room, to highlight the fact that this communication could be with another user many miles away.

Windows are created on the life wall to show different views, and different patterns of wallpaper are displayed with further gestures of the hand.

ACROSS town at Sony, the technological wizards are also trying to anticipate or even shape future lifestyles as they dream up the consumer goods of the future.

Howard Stringer, the first non-Japanese leader of Sony, has highlighted the raft of competition faced by the company because of its presence in a wide range of market sectors. He compares Sony with a department store.

As well as the challenges which Sony faces in the flat-screen television market, the company must compete with US innovator Apple in areas such as personal computing and music. In cameras, Sony faces competition from manufacturers including fellow Japanese company Canon and in the computer games market, Sony has to take on pioneering Kyoto-based giant Nintendo.

A visit to Sony's headquarters highlights the Japanese company's energetic attempts to make technology better, bigger or smaller depending on whether you are talking about hand-held televisions or cinema-style, high-definition 3D images.

Sony is at the cutting edge of improving television coverage of baseball, an extremely popular sport in Japan, with a 40-kilogramme home run camera which uses air pressure for ease of movement. It has developed HD super-motion camera technology which takes 90 rather than the normal 30 frames per second and thus provides better slow-motion replays. Sony's cameras will also be used to shoot 3D footage at the forthcoming football World Cup in South Africa this summer.

Sony also makes movie cameras, for George Lucas of Star Wars fame among others.

Its cameras are also used to record operations in medical theatres, albeit with a few adaptations. The light on the camera which shows filming is in progress must not be the conventional red colour, so it is not confused with a developing emergency during an operation. The television screen and the controls around it have been adapted to ensure an entirely flat surface which can be wiped clean easily.

Sony has developed a line speaker, a transparent cylinder with what looks like a wire or string, to ensure the quality of sound is the same regardless of your position in a room, although these do not come cheap. And its 4K cinema projection offers a picture with five times the number of pixels which are in full HD technology on new television sets, at 4096 x 2160 instead of 1920 x 1080.

However, it is not only in the electronics sector that tomorrow's world is being pursued today. Japan has been at the forefront of emerging green energy technology.

The Tostem Housing Research Institute's eco house on the outskirts of Tokyo boasts zero carbon dioxide emissions and features solar-panel power and an electric car in the garage.

Tostem, which plans in time to roll out such homes across Japan through a franchise system, is even proposing that the electric car will eventually double as the battery which stores energy for the house during periods of peak sunlight.

This model home is branded Eyeful a name which is aimed at portraying transparency of pricing.

The house combines the ancient and modern aspects of Japanese culture. It features a Japanese tea ceremony room but also a small desk space just off the kitchen which might enable a person preparing a meal to check a recipe online.

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Japan knows it must adapt to survive in the new world economic order in which it has to deal with the inevitability of being overtaken by China as the world's second largest economy. The challenges ahead are significant.

But the slew of innovation such as that which can be seen from a whistlestop tour of Panasonic, Sony, and Tostem will be vital to Japan's efforts to maintain its reputation as a technological leader in the face of intensifying competition. So will a turnaround by Toyota.

THREE Turkish oil company executives have been fined £1.16 million for insider dealing in shares of London-listed Heritage Oil, the Financial Services Authority said. Genel Enerji chief executive Mehmet Sepil was fined £967,005 the largest fine handed to an individual for market abuse.

CORPORATE governance at Optos, the Scottish eye-care group, has come under fire from watchdog Pirc for the fourth successive year, writes Simon Bain.

Pirc has refreshed previous concerns about remuneration, director independence and a £560,000 pay-off to former chief executive Thomas Butts, ahead of the company's annual meeting.

Pirc says Optos's performance share plan has only one performance measure, encouraging undue focus on one aspect of performance; the vesting targets are not sufficiently challenging; and there is a risk of excessive payments being made for average or indeed below average performance.

It also notes no disclosed requirement for executive directors to build up a shareholding in the company.

Pirc says two directors are entitled to full vesting of share awards before any change of control, subject to targets in service agreements being met, and the payment to Butts amounted to 165% of his 2008 salary, far in excess of our view of best practice of one year's salary and benefits.

It says non-executives Anne Glover and Patrick Paul together own 26.5% of the shares, which means the board may not safeguard all shareholders.

Optos has said it maintains high levels of compliance through accurate disclosure, and the non-executives in question are regarded as independent.

ANNUAL UK consumer prices index inflation surged from 2.9% in December to 3.5% in January forcing Bank of England Governor Mervyn King to write an explanatory letter to the Chancellor.

King told Alistair Darling that the Bank's latest inflation report suggests that the underlying pressures are on the downside.

And the Bank Governor attributed the pick-up in inflation to the return of the VAT rate to 17.5% from a temporary 15%, surging oil prices, and the impact of the weaker pound.

King must write to the Chancellor when benchmark annual inflation moves more than one percentage point in either direction from the 2% target set by the Treasury.

The 0.6 percentage point jump in the annual CPI inflation rate between December and January was the second-largest monthly increase since comparable records began in 1996. The largest monthly jump in the annual CPI rate, of one percentage point, occurred between November and December last year.

However, the annual CPI inflation rate in January was in line with City forecasts.

Core annual CPI inflation, excluding energy, food, alcohol and tobacco, edged up from 2.8% in December to 3.1% in January.

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Jonathan Loynes, chief European economist at consultancy Capital Economics, noted that the CPIY measure of inflation, which excludes the impact of indirect taxes such as VAT, plummeted from 2.8% in December to 1.9% in January.

He declared: It looks like retailers offset much of the effect of the tax increase by cutting ex-VAT prices.

Loynes believed the January inflation data might actually be the first sign that the vast amount of spare capacity in the economy is starting to weigh down on underlying price pressures .

He added: While it is clear that worries about the inflation outlook are not about to disappear, January s figures should help to reassure the MPC (Monetary Policy Committee) that the current upward pressure will prove to be short-lived and that inflation will eventually drop back sharply.

BARCLAYS chief executive John Varley acknowledged the massive support given to the banking sector as the company unveiled bumper profits and huge bonus payouts for its investment bankers.

The giant lender announced that pre-tax profits surged by 92% to £11.6bn in 2009, from £6.1bn in the previous year, and said it had made a strong start to 2010.

Barclays will pay bonuses averaging £95,000 to staff in its BarCap investment banking arm for 2009 and much more to some people.

The bonus pot includes £1.5bn for discretionary cash payments and a further £1.2bn for awards that vest over three years, which can be clawed back.

Noting that the share of BarCap s revenue distributed as bonuses fell to 38% from 44% in 2008, Varley claimed Barclays had exercised appropriate restraint. Varley and Bob Diamond, who heads BarCap, have waived their entitlement to a bonus for 2009.

However, the results announcement stoked fresh controversy about banks activity amid the credit crunch and the related recession.

Barclays super-profits show that banks win in both good times and bad, said Brendan Barber, general secretary of the TUC.

Paying huge bonuses when people are still losing their jobs and business cannot get the loans they need because of a crash made in the finance sector goes against every concept of fairness.

Peter Hughes, chief executive of Scottish Engineering, said just because Barclays did not receive a direct bail-out from the Government did not mean it could be exempt from criticism for paying lavish bonuses.

The bank had benefited from massive taxpayer bail-outs that involved the Government taking stakes in rivals like Royal Bank of Scotland.

It has also been helped by official measures to boost liquidity including £250bn official guarantees of interbank lending by eligible institutions such as Barclays.

Barclays certainly benefited from the the bail out of others, Hughes told The Herald.

If it had not been for the £250bn bail out not only would they not have had bonuses they would not

subdeck in here and here and here and here and here please

BANKS are still failing to provide affordable funding for Scotland s engineering businesses despite repeated official attempts to help kick-start lending.

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Peter Hughes, chief executive of Scottish Engineering, **said** the organisation had been inundated with complaints from members regarding extremely unhelpful behaviour by banks.

Our industry has been reassured so often that the banks, which we recently bailed out, would be more than willing and able to loosen their purse strings so that funding would be available to help Scotland **s** businesses.

I am hearing from company executives who are working their socks off that this is not happening.

The Institute of Directors **said** six **in** 10 businesses seeking loans **in** 2009/10 were rejected by their bank.

Singling out Bank of Scotland for criticism, Hughes **said** banks were charging bloated fees and overdraft rates.

He **said** some companies felt that banks were interfering with running their business and requiring them to provide unnecessary information.

A spokesman for Bank of Scotland **said**: We strongly dispute these allegations. As part of our SME Charter, we have made pledges to help ensure firms have clear information and certainty about the finance they receive.

These include a pledge that the margins we charge over our cost of funding will only increase where there has been a material increase **in** risk.

The bank **said** that arrangement fees on loans and overdrafts will not be greater than 1.5% of the overall value of the facility.

THE value of decrees against Scottish businesses reached record levels **in** 2009, according to figures from the Registry Trust the not-for-profit company which maintains judgment and decree information **in** the public interest.

The total value of commercial decrees rose by 74% to a record £11.5 million. Similarly, the number of decrees against businesses shot up by 53% to reach 7946.

ROYAL Dutch Shell, the big UK-Dutch oil **group**, announced yesterday that it has frozen pay for its chief executive Peter Voser and other top managers following a shareholder revolt last year, writes Douglas Hamilton.

In May, 60% of Shell **s** shareholders voted against its remuneration report at its annual meeting.

Shell **said** the salaries for its chief executive and chief financial officer were being frozen until 2011, adding that it wanted to demonstrate appropriate restraint **in** the current economic environment.

Hans Wijers, chairman of Shell **s** Remuneration Committee, told its investors of its new measures **in** a letter that has been published on its website. The company **said** Voser (pictured), and chief financial officer Simon Henry, had salaries that were 20% lower than their predecessors.

We will require a mandatory deferral of 25% of any annual bonus into the firm **s** deferred bonus plan, Mr Wijers **said, in** addition to a voluntary deferral of up to a further 25% it had previously outlined.

Shell will also award bonuses based on how well projects are delivered, rather than its previous measure of total shareholder return.

Last week, the company reported a sharp fall **in** profits between October and December last year because of falling demand for oil from a weak global economy.

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