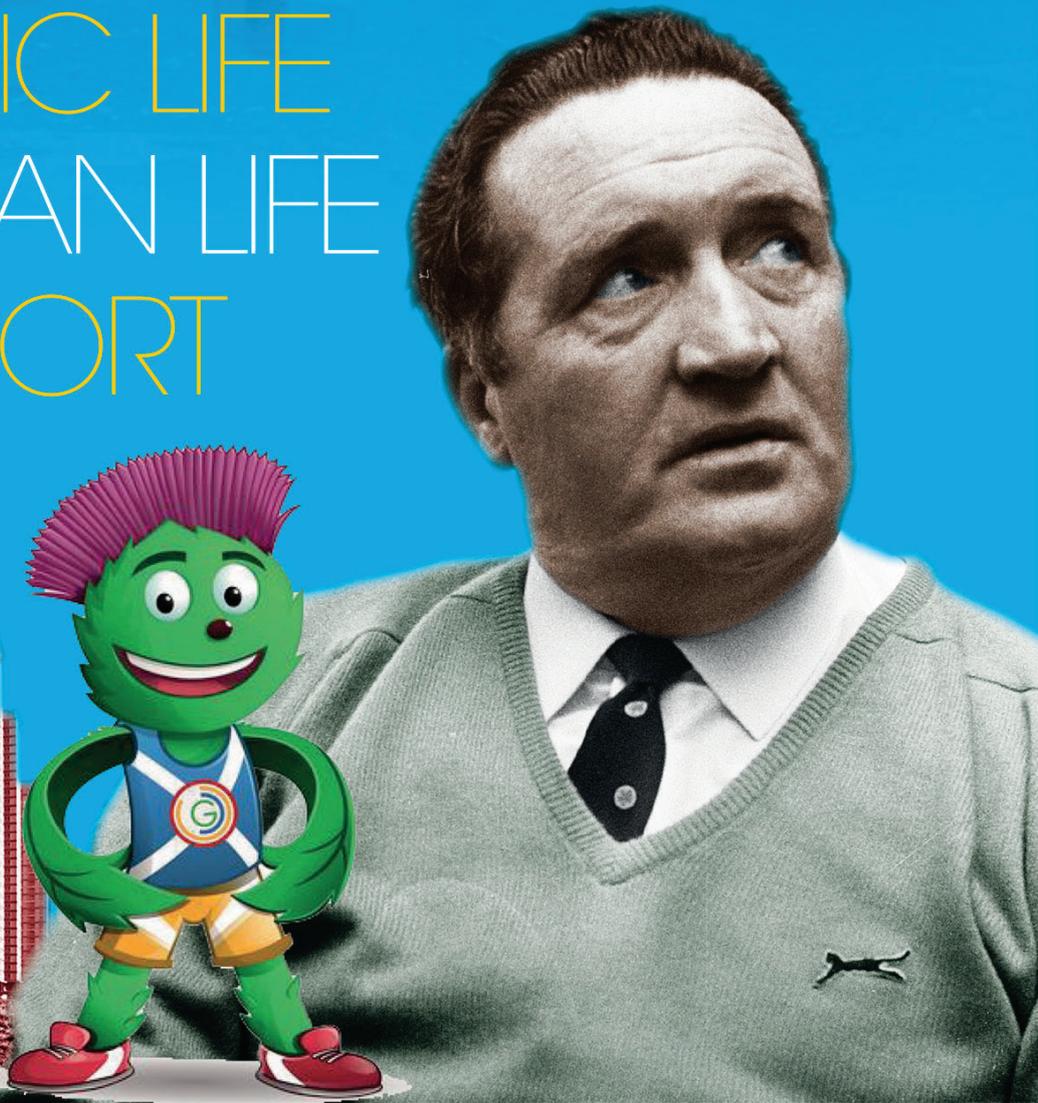


ICSBOKS

THE BEST OF 25  
YEARS OF  
**THE SCOTTISH  
REVIEW**  
**ISSUE 8**



GLASGOW  
PUBLIC LIFE  
URBAN LIFE  
SPORT



# The Best of 25 Years of the Scottish Review

Issue 8

Glasgow  
Public Life  
Urban Life  
Sport

Edited by  
Islay McLeod

ICS Books

To

*Kenneth Roy, founder of the Scottish Review, mentor and friend,  
and to all the other contributors who are no longer with us.*

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GLASGOW

# Official vandals

Jack McLean

2000

It is now an axiom that if you want to see the glories of Glasgow you look up the way. Generations of Glaswegians knew full well that their city was jam-packed with wonders in stone though few others did. There was a tendency to dismiss Britain's most Victorian city and certainly its most American one because of the dreadful reputation of it. A sort of dreich northern Naples. Slums and despair without the sunshine. True, a very large number of architects throughout the world knew that Glasgow housed a splendour of buildings. Sir John Betjeman, as early as the 1930s, extolled the city itself for its amazing adventures in ashlar and sandstone. To the cognoscenti, Scotland's only real city was an amazing place.

Calling Glasgow American is a bit of a cliché too. Arnold Kemp, former editor of *The Herald*, himself an Edinburgh man, recounts the story of his early days in Glasgow when he asked for a particular restaurant as his destination and the cab driver told him he knew where it was. 'Corner of Hope and Bath' said the hack driver, as if it was out of a New York movie.

In fact, there is an American feel to Glasgow for a variety of reasons. One is that the population are as polyglot as many an American city. Nearly half the population are of Irish origin, 40% are of Highland origin. There are 12,000 of Italian background, even more Asian people mainly from the Punjab, though there is a vibrant Chinese community too. Poles and Lithuanians abound. Up till the early 1970s, Glasgow had the largest Jewish community in Britain outside of London.

It was also, like American cities, a very young one. Starting off as a small settlement on the banks of the Molendinar (not the Clyde as most people think), it remained a small and well-set out town until the astonishing expansion in the 19th century when industrialisation, rising out of the proximity of iron and coal and the widening of the Clyde itself, made Glasgow prosperous. And then the building began. It began simply because it was young and there was trade and minerals and especially there was water. The opening in 1859 of the astounding feat of engineering that was the Loch Katrine project by which pure water was transported 35 miles away into this now sprawling city meant that Glasgow was virtually free of cholera and typhus. In a nation in which epidemics were annual throughout every city in the land, one which wasn't susceptible was bound to grow and Glasgow did.

Edinburgh has justifiably the New Town to be proud about but Edinburgh is an old city. In many ways, Glasgow was the new way forward for world architecture. Like the emerging American (and Australian) cities, Glasgow went towards a grid street system which to this day makes it an easy city to understand. And it created an entirely new way of building

called the steel frame method. Glasgow wasn't the first city to do this but it was the first to be systematic in erecting its buildings in this way. It was to be copied throughout the world and led to the skyscrapers of New York and especially Chicago.

There is a reason for bringing Chicago into this. It is the first thing a Glaswegian remarks upon when he visits the Windy City in the US: that it looks awfy like Glasgow. This countered by any Chicagoan if and when he visits Glasgow. Chicago in Scotland, he thinks bemusedly. There is a reason for this too and that is that it was Glasgow architects who were brought to Chicago. The steel frame building (actually there was a wee bit of a precedent for this: there exists in Glasgow the very first prefabricated cast-iron building in the world, Gardeners Warehouse in Jamaica Street, copied by a number of Chicago architects) was to revolutionise building everywhere.

The most influential firm of architects was the Glasgow company J and J Burnett, a firm later to employ Charles Rennie Mackintosh, which had many commissions in America but chiefly in Chicago. But long before then there had been a plethora of gifted architects in Glasgow. The Adam brothers had been here and, of course, there was Alexander 'Greek' Thomson, now gratefully increasingly recognised by a larger public, James Gillespie Graham who designed much of the Blythswood area, and the Galts, and many more. The fact was that Glasgow was teeming with architects for more than a century up until the disastrous inter-war years of the 20th century and the even more calamitous post-Second World War decades when municipal zeal, penury, stupidity, arrogance, and watchchain socialism put paid to a great many glories of the Victorian munificence.

But every Glaswegian knows this. Even young children are aware of the vanished city for their parents and grandparents too have told them. It is good to dwell on the subject not least because there is hardly a Glasgow councillor who will ever admit to any malefaction on the part of themselves or their predecessors. Sometimes they come out with lame excuses such as 'after the war the priority was housing' or 'the money wasn't available' or 'we listened to the architects and the planners'. In the latter case, they may have had a point for many of the same architects and planners were only too anxious to meet the brief of building cheap and building plenty. And building high.

Especially building high in residential accommodation. Glasgow has more municipal housing than any other city outside of the then Eastern bloc of Europe and almost every imaginable folly was put into place. There had been some housing schemes such as Knightswood and Mosspark built during the wars on the Garden City model, terraced houses with green space, but after the Second World War another folly was put into place. That was to get rid of the tenements, and create a wasteland of the inner city residential areas. Nothing can better exemplify the stupidity of the policy of decantation than the horror of the Gorbals.

Gorbals was, in my childhood, a livid scar, a jumble of decaying hovels amid buildings of considerable character, a maze of sewage-strewn wynds and wide and spacious streets. No matter. The old Corporation destroyed it all, or as much as they could before the money for

their vandalism ran out. As late as the 1970s, they had pulled down a world-admired Greek Thomson terrace in Eglinton Street for no other reason than, 'Why, it was old: it was Victorian'. An empty shell of a Greek Thomson church yet lies not far away, a rebuke in itself, and now an eyesore worried over by architects and aficionados.

A tragic irony is that in the Gorbals itself, part of the 'miracle of the Gorbals', the decision had finally to be made to demolish, to blow up, the so-called award-winning Queen Elizabeth flats designed by the so-called greatest architect of his age, Sir Basil Spence. The tragedy is that, in blowing it up, a bystander, a middle-aged local resident, was killed by flying fragments of concrete. The flats had been uninhabitable since they had been constructed. Following complaints by the tenants about insufferable dampness, a councillor once famously countered this by telling the hapless residents that it was their fault. He said the tenants were, and I quote, 'breathing too hard'.

Yet the city has survived – though most inhabitants, save the architects and councillors who appear to remain unrepentant over their misdeeds of the past, are dreadfully conscious of what the city has lost over the years of architectural carnage. No other city in Scotland had the wealth of Victorian architecture which Glasgow possessed; no other city in England either. But no other city has been able to retain as much of it because Glasgow ran, thankfully, out of steam and money and put an end to the wanton destruction though much had been lost. Later in the 1980s, thank heavens, sense prevailed and refurbishment started. I live myself in a listed terrace which was saved at the last moment from demolition and is now one of the most magnificent tenemental terraces in Europe (it is a rather unlikely little piece of Parisian elegance), but that would have gone in the 1970s had the money not run out.

The city survived to become the City of Architecture last year and almost deserved the accolade. I say almost because the complacency is still there, embedded in the City Council consciousness. The Year of Architecture should have been a triumph. It wasn't. Overseen by a gifted administrator (and architect), Deyan Sedjic, the celebrations were muted by lack of cash, lack of insight, lack of vigour.

A number of buildings and projects have fired the imagination in the last decade or so and this, combined with the marvels of the Victorian and Edwardian builders, gave a legitimacy to the title which Glasgow had won, in the same way that Scotland's largest city was surely entitled to bask nine years previously in the award of the European City of Culture. But in much the same way that the city fathers dismantled the achievements of that proud year (as they had dismally dismantled the site of the Garden Festival, another scene of temporary triumph), the Year of Architecture proved a damp squib, a sputter instead of a cracker. If you had talked to most architects in Scotland in 1999 they would have told of their frustrations over the year, one which should have signified much. True, there has been very little actual building, or at least much of large-scale significance, though architects were designing some spectacular interiors from re-scaping older, once derelict, buildings from loft conversions to the still excellent Princes Square, to a great many new

pubs and restaurants. There is plenty of imagination being shown by architects (though not as yet town planners in Glasgow) but what should have been a showcase year for Glasgow did not take place.

Perhaps this is yet another sign of the malaise which has befallen a city which less than a decade ago was undeniably leading every other city in the UK and at which the old rival, Edinburgh, cast such envious eyes. Certainly, the optimism and the enterprise we saw in the late 1980s in Glasgow has receded beyond what one could have believed possible nine years ago. We know that government funding has had much to do with that, as well as the new Edinburgh parliament and the effects of such suzerainty. We know too that the dead hand of the resurrected corpse of the old Glasgow Corporation has much to do with it. But a few years ago there was the Mayfest and folk festivals, the Art Fair, many another durbar ongoing.

Today, the only sign of life engendered by this council is the ever increasing barriers on roads, for both drivers and pedestrians. There is, it is true, a great deal of scaffolding going up, new hotels and office blocks being built. What for? you may ask. Who is going to come here anyway? As result of the lack of foresight and a reluctance to promote commerce, much of Glasgow is also awash with For Sale and To Rent signs on shopfronts. The roads policy, designed to deter car drivers from entering the city, has created empty shops almost everywhere outside of the city centre itself.

And here lies the paradox of last year's City of Architecture. We didn't show much of it and we didn't celebrate it. There was practically no coverage of it despite the best efforts of architects themselves, let alone that of a lot of citizens only too anxious to tell visitors of the riches of the city's buildings. It has often been said by commentators that Glasgow has a capacity for re-inventing itself. Former Lord Provost Pat Lally took every opportunity to tell all and sundry that. He also never failed to tell you to look up when in Glasgow and discover the edifices which surround you. You would be as well – for there is not much to see on the ground in Glasgow these days.

# No mean city?

Jack McLean

2000

When I was about 10, we went down for a holiday with my Auntie Muriel in of all places Weston-Super-Mare, where Lord Archer is the resident peer. It was then a blowsy but quite rich Somerset resort, not too Blackpool, but not too Herne Bay. It seemed to me and my brother very English, though we liked the actual locals, if not the yokels. The West Country people were just grand. The majority of the owners of everything, shops, hotels, houses even, were Londoners or south-east immigrants and they weren't very nice at all. This was of course the early 1950s, perhaps a year after the coronation and the people of the south-east weren't nice, though they were by and large nicer than they are now, which is hard to take.

But anyway, and this is a long introduction, my brother and myself were in a little grocer's shop, where we could get ice lollies, and it was in a part of the area where my aunt lived, next to the big houses and the tennis clubs where doubtless a hundred Miss Joan Hunter Dunns could be copiously found. It was very bourgeois and extremely sedate and nothing like the dark, black Glasgow from which two little Glaswegian urchins could have stemmed.

The bucolic grocer behind the old-fashioned counter asked us where we were from. True, we did have Scottish accents. But we were clad in the ubiquitous khaki shorts and ankle socks and open neck short-sleeved shirts. We could have come out of Enid Blyton; just about to bugger off to Kirrin Island with bottles of ginger pop and bloody muffins, doubtless still for tea.

In short, we were perfectly acceptable. But we weren't when we replied to this kindly chap behind the counter of his parochial little emporium. Because we told him that we came from Glasgow, in Scotland. His reply took even two wee Scots boys aback. He gasped, the old fool, and expostulated: 'Oh! What a terrible place to come from!' Both the khaki-shorts wearers were bound to be bemused by this. For a start, he didn't know just how terrible the actual bit we did come from was, and secondly he didn't realise what a very beautiful place Glasgow was. What we didn't realise at all was that, despite the area in which we then lived, we had been sheltered from the most dreadful slums of Gorbals by a father who had been reared in them.

When I was seven and my young brother less, we moved from the little village of douce Cathcart to Townhead, the oldest part of Glasgow city and I have never forgotten it. It was like being Dickens in the blacking factory. I have never recovered from it. I will never stray from a city: like Dickens I am city bred. But not the blackness; not ever again.

My father resented us moving back to the slums, though he still hankered after a return

to the Gorbals of his childhood. Alright for him as it was. He'd left the Gorbals when he was 16 to fight for the British Army in exotic China, back in the early 1920s. He knew the Gorbals of his childhood and liked to go back with us on Sabbath days, seeing friends, especially his Jewish friends because of course the Jewish shops were open on Sundays. We used to go down to Michael Morrison's shop on Shabbat and get hot egg-bread, and bagels, and poppy-loaf and go back across over the ferry or under the old underground tunnels.

You think this is giving you the old oil; the Ralph Glasser, the Molly Weir? Well it's not really. It is giving you the background. For the reason why that old shopkeeper, that dreadful English poujadiste, had turned upon two little Scottish boys, from Glasgow, then the second largest city in Britain, the once Second City of Empire, was because Glasgow had then a dreadful reputation and most of it centring around the area the nation, indeed Europe, knew as the Gorbals. And because of the squalor and especially the violence, the Gorbals was the Wild West. Dan Duryea, Randolph Scott, not really. The district was Fagin, Bill Sykes, and murdered Nancy, set in 1950. And it was myth, and the myth surrounded Glasgow and still does.

For one of the great mythologies and legends about Glasgow is that it is an extraordinarily violent city, a byword for violence, like Marseille or Naples or Chicago. It is certainly a working-class city, set in a largely industrial proletarian acreage, that of the west central industrial belt. But the myth of Glasgow's violence, despite enough evidence to suggest it may be true, is myth.

The largest number of crimes of violence per head of population in the UK may well surprise you a little. You would expect Belfast, would you not, to take that accolade? Well you'd be wrong. London has, of course, as you would expect, a high level of reported violence, but it pales into insignificance with, say, Birmingham or Manchester. Actually, Luton's figures are not good. But if you want to know the most dangerous cities to find yourselves in their town centres at night you have to try out what seem the most unlikely or damn-near it. Cardiff is one. The other is, what else, in the West Country, next door to Weston-Super-Mare, Bristol. There you are then. There's a turn up for the books.

But it was the books, especially one of them, which gave the reputation to Glasgow for the psychopathology of itself, for the fierce violence of its streets. The one book in particular was *No Mean City*. A novel which has probably cost Glasgow billions of pounds of investment by outside sources over the last half century. It became a bestseller and a lurid one, and worst of all it set the city in its own cultural aspic for damned near ever.

When Glasgow started looking splendid, during the year when it was the City of Culture in 1990, journals from near and far said that Glasgow had finally dismissed the image of this bloody book. When a few years later the ridiculous councillors and policemen revived the myth of Glasgow's violence, the book came back. It is a badly-written book in fact, but was ghosted by an English journalist, H Kingsley Long, employed on a Glasgow newspaper, who simply rewrote a piece of drunken observation by a Glasgow butcher, Alexander McArthur. McArthur died a decade and a half later, of alcohol abuse. But his abuse, and

especially Long's, of the city of Glasgow and the Gorbals in particular was crucial in the way that the world saw this once wealthy city. In the case of the Gorbals, it was disastrous.

When the Gorbals was a mere village in the mid-17th century, it was commandeered by the Hutcheson brothers and was planned as a suburb. The south-side of the city expanded of course and the Gorbals and its satellites became rather respectable. Wide streets, proper sanitation, schools, churches, parish developments. But by the early 19th century the Irish immigrants and the often even poorer Highland people came to move into what had been hitherto a spaciouly laid-out area. And then, of course, the Jewish immigrants from Russia. In 1831, there were only 47 Jews in Glasgow, mainly Dutch or German, almost all living in the quite prosperous Garnethill area of north-west Glasgow. By 1916, there were over 6,000 Russian and Polish Jews in Glasgow – almost all on the south-side, mainly in the Gorbals.

This should have been the catalyst for the same sort of street gangs which developed in New York and Chicago and Philadelphia. I am inclined to believe that, though some criminality certainly developed, the absence of any one prominent group from any sizeable area meant that serious crime did not develop as it did in other cities. Especially because the Italian immigrants came at a later date, were largely from the north of Italy, especially Lucca and Barga, rather than the lawless south where there was an organised Mafia, and because there were business opportunities in a city which was expanding beyond what the wealthy commercial merchants had experience of.

Here. This is sounding like sociology, or at least some kind of social history. It is what it is. Also, I am straying from what I want to say. Which is that violence and Glasgow go together in the public, and certainly tabloid, mind and it has no business doing so. This is why I mentioned the Gorbals in the first place. The title *No Mean City*, in case you didn't know and I'll bet you didn't actually, is a quote and a grand one at that from the lips of St Paul: 'For I a Jew from Tarsus, a citizen of no mean city and I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the People'.

Well, Long and McArthur did speak to the people and they should have held their tongue. For a start, even in the Depression years, the period in which this novel is set, the Gorbals was never as bad as the book depicts. Sure the conditions were, but the people weren't. There was violence of course, fuelled by the drunkenness which goes along with poverty and despair, and there were street gangs, and open fighting did occur. But on nothing like the scale which this depiction insisted upon. And, too, there were considerable achievements made by many Gorbaliens, in education, the arts, and especially in business. The Woolfson empire started here. As did the Weinstock's. You cannot manage this in an environment so lost in despair.

Later, the new Gorbals emerged and tried hard to dispel the images of the disastrous novel, and another piece of fiction, Robert McLeish's play *The Gorbals Story*. By now, the wide streets had gone and almost all the tenements. And the hub of it all, Gorbals Cross, had disappeared. So did the heart of it. When I was a child and then a young man, the

Gorbals had been a vibrant community with some of the safest pubs in the entire city. Clean and well-kept pubs like The Seaforth, The Citizens, The Diadem, Danny's Bar, The Tirconnel, all these were decent little places in which the men – they were virtually all-male pubs – behaved themselves. There was a reason for that and I can verify it for I worked as a barman in a couple of those bars. The reason was that in the Gorbals if you were barred from a pub the word went round the entire area and you were barred from them all.

For a time, the violence for which Glasgow had been noted and had been mythologised by, abated very considerably. Indeed, the rest of the UK began to forget the old 'No Mean City' tag. And then, in the mid-1960s, it flared up again and the reputation returned. This time the culprits were mere youths, kids from the new outlying housing estates, the 'schemes'. No pubs, clubs, cinemas, no sports grounds, no recreation, but plenty of work and decent enough wages to go into the city centre and wreak a bit of havoc on a Saturday night.

It was certainly quite bad for a while. I remember coming back to Glasgow after some years away in London and finding the gang culture in full swing. Such street gangs – almost all from the schemes – like the Toy, the Tongs, the Fleet, became for a while a genuine danger, especially to other young people.

This was the era when the hardman began to flourish again. Jimmy Boyle, Coalie Beattie, Toe Elliot among a number, became well-known, and even notorious. But these hardmen were very much different from the marauding youths for they were professional criminals such as you will find in every city. Yet they helped too to stigmatise the city, especially in the eyes of other Scots. I find it difficult to forgive the attitudes, for instance, of many people from Edinburgh towards Glaswegians whom they think of often as flyboys and hard tickets when I also see them lionising Jimmy Boyle.

In Glasgow, there is no such feeling about Boyle, even if he has reformed. Glaswegians simply remember such criminals as a bloody nuisance and a disgrace to decent working-class people. In truth, they always did. The citizens of this no mean city do not approve of hooligans or tally men (protection racketeers) or moneylenders or house breakers. Far from it. If you ask me, there is more disapproval in Glasgow for such anti-social behaviour than elsewhere. For in Glasgow we live too close to each other for errant acts to go unobserved. The Edinburgh bourgeoisie have hardly ever seen the peripheral estates where the lumpen proletariat lives. In Glasgow, you could hardly help but notice.

Yet, undeniably, Glasgow finds it hard to shrug off its violent image which is not surprising considering how often violence is a focus for London journalists who come up here looking for the gangs. (I was once approached by a hack from the metropolis who asked me if I could find a shebeen for him to write about. 'Are ye daft?' I told him, 'There are pubs and clubs here open till four in the morning. What would a shebeen be there for?') The focus has also been made, far too often, by playwrights and novelists who find an easier drama to be made out of low life.

The truth is that though Glasgow is hardly renowned for its toffs, it is for its solid middle

class in business and professional life. Among those, at any rate, who know the city.

But the fantasy about its violent past and present does not go away easily. The municipal authorities do not help and neither do the political representatives. But the real Glasgow has a plethora of private art galleries, theatres, places of entertainment. Edinburgh ladies come to Glasgow to shop. It also has an ease between the social classes you will find in no other British city (save perhaps, oddly enough, another Scottish city, Dundee). And yet the myth stays on.

I'll bet if you go down to Weston-Super-Mare and into a wee shop you will still get the shopkeeper with the same opinion as the adult who told two small Glaswegians how violent the city they came from was. Well he'd be wrong, as wrong as the ignoramus who insisted on just that all those years ago.

# The 19th floor: an asylum seeker's life in Glasgow

Kenneth Roy

2008

Mujdeh Yousef, 31, is from the city of Kabul, Afghanistan. Her father was an architect, her mother a teacher. In 2000, Mujdeh and her husband felt so oppressed by the regime in Afghanistan that they fled the country with their two small children and sought asylum in Britain. This is her story, as told to Kenneth Roy.

*You left Afghanistan towards the end of 2000. What was life like in the country in the years before you finally fled?*

Afghanistan had been having wars since the mid-1970s. I had seen little peace myself. I was born in a war and grew up in a war. During the communist regime, things were probably better in Kabul than in the rest of the country. Life went on as normal. But then the Taliban came. 1996. I was married that year in June. The Taliban arrived in Kabul in December.

*What was your situation?*

My husband ran a bookshop. I was not really doing anything, but was hoping to go to university once the civil wars had ended.

*How dramatic and swift was the impact of the Taliban in the city?*

Overnight things changed. We turned on the radio and the Taliban were announcing the changes they would like to see. They said they wanted to promote an Islamic society – or their view of an Islamic society. A woman should stay at home, could only leave the home if she was accompanied by a male. Things that you used to do – listening to music, wearing make-up, even the colour of clothes you wanted to wear – you could no longer do. The women should wear burkas and the men should grow beards and wear traditional clothes. Any example of Western culture was banned. Even flying kites for the children. Anyone not obeying these rules would be taken to the Ministry for Promoting Virtue. That's what they called it. People were dying of hunger, women were begging in the streets, but all they cared about was the promotion of virtue.

*How practical was it for women to stay at home?*

Not at all practical for women who had no male support, who had lost their husbands in the civil wars. They suffered the most because you could see them begging in the streets. They had no choice – they had to support their children. Fortunately enough, I had a husband to accompany me. But for the women who had no male support, it was terrible. They were taken to the Ministry for Promoting Virtue. And questioned.

*What about the education of women?*

Banned immediately. Girls who had been attending school were not allowed to return. The ban also affected women attending college or university. Education of women at any level was banned.

*What reason did they give?*

How can you find reason in ignorance? There was no reason in it.

*But how did they justify it?*

They said it would protect the dignity of women. How can education be undignified?

*What were your feelings about all this?*

At first anger and frustration. Then, slowly, depression. Hobbies you used to enjoy were no longer possible. The TV had to be hidden in the house. Your CDs and tapes and musical recorders had to be hidden too in case the Taliban came. They did spot-checks and would break up anything they didn't approve of. Even photographs on the wall. They said that any images were forbidden.

*What was the atmosphere among neighbours?*

An atmosphere of fear. Fear of being betrayed. The trust was gone. You couldn't tell anybody the truth about your situation. You would see that your next-door neighbour had gone without saying goodbye. It was so scary to see the houses around you emptying.

*Where had the people gone?*

To Pakistan at first. Then, if they were lucky enough, somewhere else.

*What is your view of Islam as interpreted by the Taliban?*

First of all I don't count the Taliban as Muslims. They know nothing about Islam. Nothing they did was Islamic. They were just brainwashed in Pakistan, trained for a purpose, a mission.

*What do you think of the poor reputation of Islam in this country?*

The poor reputation has been built by both sides – by extremists and by the Western governments to justify their actions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

*What is the essence of Islam?*

It's a complete religion – a continuation of the Old and New Testaments. Islam is a way of life, a principle of life. Oh, I wish people could understand the reality of Islam. How peaceful it is, what a complete way of life it is. Unfortunately, not many people know about it. All they know is what they read and see in the news – Islam connected to extremism. To me, if you're extreme, if you could go out of the frame of Islam, there's no more Islam.

*When did you decide that life in Afghanistan was no longer tolerable?*

By 2000, I had two daughters – two and three years old. I couldn't bear the thought that they would never be educated, that they would be illiterate.

*And so in circumstances that we won't go into, you were able to escape Afghanistan and you and your family flew to this country. To London.*

We arrived at Heathrow Airport in February 2001. We told them we didn't have passports. We waited for a while and then they questioned my husband. They wanted to confirm that we really had come from Afghanistan, so he was asked questions about the country. I was waiting outside with the children. I was so nervous and tired. I remember looking out of the window and it was snowing. We stayed that night at the airport – on benches – because it was too late to take us anywhere. They gave us sandwiches and some milk for the children. The next morning, they took us to an accommodation centre somewhere near London. We were happy to have a roof over our head. We were so desperate for sleep.

*How was the accommodation?*

It was okay. A room with a sink. We shared a bathroom with others on that floor.

*What were you told was going to happen?*

We were told we should check the lists on a board every day. One day – we'd been there about a month – we did see our names and it said we would be going to somewhere called Glasgow.

*Had you ever heard of Glasgow?*

No. We were told it was another city in Britain. We were told it was the second largest city in Britain. A few days later, we were transported overnight in a coach to Glasgow with other families.

*Why overnight?*

They said they wanted to avoid any media. That's why they did it secretly overnight.

*How did you feel about this journey?*

It was scary. You couldn't see anything, you didn't know where you were going, and the bus never stopped. A long journey. About 10 hours.

*What happened when you arrived in Glasgow?*

It was about eight in the morning. We arrived in this registration office and we waited. One by one, the families were taken by a caseworker from the Home Office support team and given their new address and a key.

*And what was your new address?*

The place we're still living in six and a half years later. High rise flats in Glasgow.

*What was your first impression of the flats?*

I'd never been that high before! Nineteen floors and we were right at the top. Inside the flat it was okay and we were so pleased to have somewhere of our own, our own kitchen and bathroom. In that sense, we were happy.

*What advice were you given?*

The caseworker said: 'This is your new home. You will be here temporarily. Once you get your indefinite leave to remain you will be able to move from this flat, but until then you'll be here'. He took my husband out and showed him the post office and the shops.

*Were you given any money?*

We were given £30 in cash and £100 in vouchers. A few days later, we wanted to go to Great Western Road where there are shops selling halal meat and so we took the bus. My husband put a note in the machine, I think it was a 20, and he was waiting for the change to come from the other side of the machine, but it never did, and the bus driver said, 'I'm sorry, you can't get your change'. That was for the one journey to Great Western Road.

*When did you realise you were in Scotland?*

The first day – from all the signs in the streets. Bank of Scotland, so many signs with the word Scotland. And we couldn't understand what the driver and the caseworker were saying to each other on the way to the flats, so we realised we weren't in England any more.

*Had you heard of Scotland?*

Of course, on many occasions. So many jokes! There was a programme on the radio in Afghanistan. They would tell jokes and always the jokes were about Scotland. The context was always that Scots were mean. I'm sorry!

*Could you understand English?*

I could understand what they were saying in London, but in Glasgow not a word. In the next few days, I would go to the park and sit there listening to the local children, hoping to catch a word. I became convinced they weren't speaking English at all.

*Did you receive any support in those early days? Did anyone call to say hello?*

No. The caseworker left us with a list of places that we could get food and clothing with our vouchers, and a list of colleges.

*But you didn't receive a visit from, say, a church or voluntary organisation?*

Nothing like that.

*What about the neighbours?*

I still don't know my neighbours. There's a barrier between us and the neighbours for some reason.

*Who are they?*

On the 19th floor, single men who didn't look approachable.

*Were they hostile?*

I wouldn't call them hostile.

*Were you threatened in any way?*

Some comments were written on our door, but we didn't know who was responsible. Racist comments. Signed triple K. We didn't know what that meant. When I went to college, somebody explained that it meant Ku Klux Klan. We found that pretty scary, especially when the lift didn't go to the 19th floor, only as far as the 18th. We had to walk up one stair and I was always terrified, always thinking that somebody might be there to harm us. I would never let the children go up that stair on their own. I don't trust the area we live in, unfortunately.

*You were moved later?*

After five years, they moved us to the 12th floor, where we still live. It's a little bit better there.

*Did you know when you arrived in Britain that asylum seekers weren't allowed to earn a living?*

No, we assumed we would be able to work. It was a shock, but we thought our case wouldn't take long, maybe six months, and then we'd be granted indefinite leave to remain and we'd be able to move from the high rise flats and get work. That was the hope we had in the beginning.

*But nearly seven years later, you're still waiting. Your life is still in limbo.*

I know.

*What has caused these endless delays?*

I think you should ask the Home Office. Nobody knows.

*What did you want to do in this country? Did you have a specific ambition?*

In Afghanistan, I was forbidden from attending university, so I hoped to pick up my

education where I'd left off. But then I realised I couldn't go on to higher education because of the fees. Before, I couldn't be educated because I was a woman. Now, I couldn't be educated because I was an asylum seeker. So it was always one label or another.

*But somehow you did eventually manage to get to university in Scotland.*

I managed it because I'm a very determined person, very optimistic, and I always believe there must be a way. I always thought Britain valued education. Education, education, education! I thought there must be some truth in this! So I worked really, really hard and I knew I had to work harder than anyone else in the class because there was no other way than through my efforts.

*You went to college to begin with?*

Anniesland College first, then Langside College. They were very kind, the lecturers let me do a full-time course although I was only registered part-time. That was a great help, actually. My work paid off and I finished my HND with 12 merits, the highest level of merits in the social science department. I won an outstanding achievement award and then an adult learner's award. These two awards helped me secure a scholarship in the University of Strathclyde, where the staff were very sympathetic, and I don't pay any fees.

*How many asylum seekers are studying at the university?*

There are only three of us. One was detained a month ago. An Albanian girl, very bright I believe. I don't know if she has been released. So there's no guarantee that an asylum seeker can go to university in this country and be safe from the threat of detention.

*What are you doing at university?*

Sociology and history. I'm about to enter my fourth year.

*How have your daughters adapted to life in Scotland?*

My children just live in another world. They don't know about any of these problems. They don't even know they're asylum seekers. One day they asked me what asylum seekers are. I said to them, 'Oh, they're people who've just arrived. They're not like us. We've been here a long time'.

*How do they get on at school?*

Very well. They're both in top groups and their teachers are very pleased with them.

*Do they have Glasgow accents?*

Oh, yes. Sometimes I don't understand what they're saying. I say, 'This isn't English'. And they'll say, 'No, it's Scottish!'

*Has your husband adapted as well as the children?*

He hasn't coped very well. He's in a state of – I don't know – almost seven years of not being able to work for a person who has worked all his life, who always had a routine in his life, it's very hard. In Afghanistan, there's no social security. Everyone has to work, everyone has to earn their own wages. For this reason, there's a sense of shame in getting money for nothing here. Men feel it.

*How much money do you receive from the state?*

£149.49 a week. No vouchers now. All in cash.

*Your precarious status means that you could be thrown out of the country at any moment. If that happened, how would it happen?*

They could detain us at the reporting centre where we have to go every month. They could ask us to come with the whole family and detain us there. From there, we would be sent to Dungavel detention centre and they would arrange our tickets and send us back. That's the usual way nowadays. But still the dawn raids continue, although not so many. They would go early in the morning to the families, forcibly open the door if necessary, handcuff the adults, and take them to the airport straight away. I have heard of families dragged out in their pyjamas. There was one family with a baby. The mother asked if she could change the baby. She was told no. They would change the baby.

*I think most people assume these practices had stopped, that there were no longer dawn raids. No, no, they continue.*

*Do you live in a constant state of fear?*

Yes. Seven years on, we still don't feel that this is where we will be living, that this is our home. Seven years, it's such a long time.

*What happened to the rest of your family?*

My mum and my sister went to Denmark, where my brother had gone during the Soviet years. They were granted indefinite leave to remain, but things were easier for them. The thing was, their case was probably stronger. My mum and sister had no male to accompany them in Afghanistan, my father having died, whereas I had my husband to accompany me.

*What is the mood of asylum seekers in Glasgow?*

Very, very frustrated. A lot of the people I know are highly qualified, very decent people, but unfortunately they're not allowed to work, and they're not even able to send their children who are finishing school to higher education. They do feel that they should be allowed to work, even if in the end they're not granted indefinite leave to remain. I don't understand the British Government's position on this. It would benefit the government,

and it would trigger less conflict between the host community and the asylum-seeking community, and it would benefit the families, of course, if asylum seekers were allowed to work. And even if they had to return to their own countries, at least they wouldn't be going back de-skilled.

*If you were granted indefinite leave to remain, what would you do with your life?*

I have studied all these years and hopefully I would get a job. I don't mind where. As long as I was a useful person and as long I was benefiting society in some way, I wouldn't mind where I worked.

*If, however, you were forced to return to Afghanistan, what would await you there?*

We would be left at the airport, and we wouldn't know where to go. We don't have anything left because we had to sell everything to make money to come here. Our house, our possessions, everything went. So if we were sent back, we'd have to start from zero in a war zone, a country which has seen wars for the past three decades. How can you expect that country to do something for you?

*Would you be safe?*

Of course not. How can you return with children to a country such as Afghanistan?

# Graveyard of the rich

Barbara Millar

2009

The view from my Glasgow hotel room was peaceful. As it should have been – it was overlooking the Ramshorn kirkyard. The flat grave slabs were lightly dusted with snow. Crocuses were just beginning to peek their purple heads around the forbidding iron 'cages', designed to thwart the grave-robbing 'Resurrectionists'. All was still, tranquil.

The kirkyard – Glasgow's oldest – is, along with the church crypt, the last resting place of some of the city's most celebrated sons. Located in the heart of the once thriving and prosperous Merchant City, the wealthy and their families were happy to pay more to be buried in 'Paradise'. Reading the inscriptions provides a fascinating snapshot of an 18th-century Glasgow elite... millionaires and misers, philanthropists and misanthropes, those at the cutting edge of the day's technology – and, naturally, bankers. But as well as holding the dust of various luminaries, it also protects secrets.

In the Fleming family lair, but without anything to signify his occupation of it, is Pierre Emile L'Angelier, a 33-year-old from Jersey, whose name, perhaps, is significantly less familiar than that of his scheming lover, Madeleine Smith. Pierre died of arsenic poison, after consuming a cup of cocoa (the third, the previous two made him ill but still he went back for more) delivered through Madeleine's Blythswood Square bedroom window, a seemingly thoughtful gesture on a cold night, but one designed to end Pierre's threats to expose Madeleine's lack of virtue to her strict father, after she ended their liaison when another beau made a better marriage offer.

He died in agony and Madeleine's subsequent nine-day trial hit the headlines – as did the sensational verdict of 'not proven'. Madeleine went on to live to the grand age of 92. Pierre went to the Ramshorn kirkyard. It is likely that the true story of her hand in that pitiful death may never be revealed.

Perhaps the most celebrated of the Glasgow 'Tobacco Lords', John Glassford, described by novelist Tobias Smollett as 'one of the greatest merchants in Europe', is a neighbour. The flamboyant, ambitious Glassford started trading in tobacco in 1750 when he was 35 years old, and quickly built up an enormous fleet of 25 ships to ply the lucrative trade across the Atlantic. He ran tobacco stores along the east coast of North America and some £500,000 passed through his hands – a formidable amount of money at that time. He had a country house out at Milngavie and a town house, the Shawfield Mansion, on the corner of Trongate and what is now, appropriately, Glassford Street.

He also had interests in a stocking manufacturing company, a dyeing and printing works, a tannery and a couple of banks, the Glasgow Arms and the Thistle. But he was a hopeless gambler – literally – and died with enormous debts. Quite unlike another kirkyard

occupant, millionaire banker, Robert Carrick, who started out as a junior clerk in the Ship Bank and ended up as its manager and a partner. He lived, frugally, above the shop, although he also had a country mansion at Mount Vernon. But, despite amassing a fortune of over £1m, he had a deserved reputation as a miser, who died 'a grim old bachelor, without leaving one plack or one penny to any of the charitable institutions of the city'.

This is in marked contrast to John Anderson, known to his students at Glasgow University – where he was professor of natural philosophy, with a special enthusiasm for physics – as 'Jolly Jack Phosphorus' because of his love of experiments, especially if they involved fireworks and explosions. Friend of James Watt, Anderson was a liberal educator, who wanted to provide 'useful learning' for working-class people. He offered non-academic evening lectures, open to men and women, and, when he died, bequeathed a large amount of money to found Anderson's Institution – today evolved as Strathclyde University.

A public servant who was responsible for clearing and landscaping Glasgow Green, to create a public park, also resides at the Ramshorn. James Cleland was Superintendent of Public Works and later wrote *The Annals of Glasgow*, providing a history of the city's public services, societies and institutions, although it was published many years later than the books produced by the Foulis brothers, Robert and Andrew, who were once within the kirkyard but are now deep under the tarmac of Ingram Street, victims of the road widening in the 1820s, and now remembered by a plaque with their initials.

The Foulis brothers were Glasgow University's printers and were recognised for producing very accurate editions of Latin and Greek classical works. Intent on publishing a totally accurate version of Horace, they employed six highly experienced proofreaders but, even so, their final 'immaculate' version came out with six misprints. In 1753, they founded an academy of art in Glasgow – Scotland's first – where pupils learned the techniques of drawing, engraving, painting and sculpture.

Entrepreneur David Dale, who established the New Lanark cotton mills on the banks of the River Clyde, rests within the Ramshorn confines. Exceptionally for his time, Dale provided education and care for his workers, an approach extended by his son-in-law, Robert Owen, to whom Dale sold the mills. He provided financial assistance to the new Royal Infirmary and was a director of the city's poorhouse. His father-in-law was a director of the Royal Bank of Scotland in Edinburgh and Dale opened the first RBS branch in Glasgow. I looked closely, but – surprisingly – could see no sign of the ground having been disturbed by rapid body-revolving movements below.

But certainly the strangest thing to have been interred in the Ramshorn kirkyard is a single leg. The leg was found in the garden of a house in Candleriggs and the owner of the house consulted the Ramshorn minister about what to do. Eventually, the leg was laid to rest – without ceremony, without stone, without inscription, because, the minister insisted, he could not be sure it was a Christian leg.

# Red Road: a victory for the people

Seán Damer

2014

You knew there was something seriously wrong with Glasgow City Council's plan to televise the demolition of the Red Road flats to celebrate the start of the Commonwealth Games when 10 architectural academics from Glasgow School of Art wrote to *The Herald* to complain about it. For it's architects who give other architects medals and prizes for designing such monumental monstrosities as Red Road, the Gorbals high rise flats, Hutchensontown 'E', and the Sighthill high rise flats.

David Grevemberg, the CEO of Glasgow 2014, just didn't get it, did he? The Red Road high rise flats constituted a colossal housing failure, not a success, and you don't celebrate failures. The proposed spectacle smacked of bread and circuses, and insulted former tenants of these high rise flats, the asylum seekers who still live there, and the intelligence of the people of Glasgow.

As far as the previous tenants who contracted asbestosis from the insulation are concerned, it was a sick joke. It is small wonder that as of Sunday 13 April, 17,000-plus people had signed an online petition protesting against the spectacle as crass and tasteless. The decision to abandon the proposed demolition is a significant and welcome victory for the people of Glasgow.

Apologists for the demolition talked of the warm appreciation of pioneer tenants of Red Road of the new flats with their central heating, hot and cold running water, separate kitchen and a bathroom, and extolled their 'community spirit'. But this argument forgot a couple of stark realities. The first is that many of these tenants came from grotesquely overcrowded or slum tenement housing with outside toilets; it is hardly surprising that their initial reaction to their spacious new flats was one of delight. The second is that these tenants brought their community-spirit with them from their old tenemental neighbourhoods, only to see it destroyed by the brutalism of the design, and the frequent breakdown of the lifts.

As many commentators observed, blowing up all the remaining Red Road high rise flats bar one retained for asylum seekers, sent an unmistakeable message to the latter: this is the only kind of housing fit for people like you. And what about the asbestos in the block reserved for them? Has it been removed? As one of these very asylum seekers commented recently on television, 'It's ridiculous'.

However, there was a deeper and more sinister message lurking under the proposed demolition, and beaming it onto huge screens in Celtic Park. Whether they will admit it or not, there has been a systematic attack on social housing – what used to be called council housing – by both the present and Tony Blair's governments. In the days in 1972, when Red

Road was first tenanted, it was the norm for British working people to expect decent council housing; that was an essential provision of the welfare state. Nowhere was that more true than Glasgow.

The salience of such housing for the Clydeside working class derived from its half-century of active struggle – through the ILP, the 1915 Glasgow rent strike, and the Clydebank rent strike of the 1920s. The coalition government seems committed to destroying this provision. It seems to want to signify social housing as a residual tenure category fit only for the wretched of the earth: asylum seekers, refugees, drug-addicts, the physically and mentally-ill, the homeless.

In this perspective, the semiology of the demolition of the Red Road high rise flats was plain: council/social housing is simply not worth the money or the effort. The construction of new, imaginatively designed social housing on a humane scale is a waste of time. Therefore, to televise this demolition and associate it with the Commonwealth Games was quite simply obscene. The people of Glasgow have demonstrated clearly what they thought of this obscenity.

# A failure of stewardship at the art school

David Black

2014

Now that the smoke has cleared from Garnethill and the outpouring of grief has given way to grim reflection, we should spare a few moments to consider the matter of Scotland's crass indifference to its historic buildings.

Perhaps I should qualify that. It isn't so much the Scottish people who are cavalier about their built heritage as its various establishments. The heroic firefighters of Cowcaddens and the people of Glasgow in general have shown their love of Charles Rennie Mackintosh's greatest masterpiece in their reaction to its destruction. The tears streaming down Muriel Gray's face said it all.

Or did they? Let's just briefly think the unthinkable. I have never actually met Ms Gray, though she once bid against me at an auction for a rather nice chair, which I certainly don't hold against her. Her CV includes a stint working at the Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, where she is remembered with some affection.

On the other hand, her recent career saw her serve as vice-chairman of the international jury which selected Steven Holl as the architect to design Glasgow School of Art's fashionable new building, and she was a member of the development trust for phase 2 of the school's Garnethill campus development. Six months ago, she was appointed chairman of the board of governors of the college. Muriel Gray, in other words, carries at least some of the burden of responsibility here.

Somehow, while Charles Rennie Mackintosh's internationally acclaimed masterpiece was languishing for want of enough money to fit a fire prevention sprinkler system, around £50 million was found to build a gruesome modernist iceberg across the street, a building eerily reminiscent of those Brobdignian cruise liners which cast dark shadows over such places as Venice and Key West.

This particular hulk, which was disgracefully supported by Historic Scotland, was steered into its moorings under the captainship of the art school's then director and general high-flying arts apparatchik, Dame Seona Reid, after whom Holl's arid and sterile structure has been named – the final sickening touch.

It almost beggars belief that such an amount of money was being squandered on a new building which, according to one critic, has been 'modelled with all the subtlety of an out-of-town multiplex', while right next door, one of the world's most important art nouveau buildings lacked an adequate fire prevention system.

I wouldn't be quite so charitable in my own description of Steven Holl's bling institutional trophy, myself. It might be a great corporate HQ for a Silicon Valley IT company, or a cool airport hotel somewhere in Scandinavia, but in grid-iron historic

Glasgow, where it brazenly confronted one of the most aesthetically sublime buildings in Scotland, its 'see me Jimmy' architectural ethos is nothing less than an act of urbicide, to use a word coined by another New Yorker, Jane Jacobs, who spent much of her life campaigning against such architectural horrors. I'm also not so sure that its visually anaesthetised dental laboratory ambience will be inspiring future generations of artists and designers in quite the way that Toshie's now incinerated masterpiece did.

Other questions inevitably arise, including one thankfully hypothetical one. If students and staff had perished in this fire like so many garment workers in a third world sweatshop, would members of the board of governors and executive officers have been hauled up on charges of corporate culpable homicide? With such ornaments of the great and the good as Sir Muir Russell on the board, that would have been quite a sobering prospect.

More to the point, how did this fire actually start? The firemaster's report hasn't been filed yet, but if the information that it was a student's installation project which went wrong is even half-way accurate, then we should ask ourselves how it comes about that some uber-fashionable Blue Peter-type indulgence made from highly inflammable material was being spatchcocked together under one of the most beautiful rooms ever created.

The death by neglect of the Mackintosh library isn't simply a Glasgow issue. Nor, for that matter, is it restricted to the distracting infantile obsession with expensive architectural modernism which seems to afflict our trophy-hunting academic establishment. True, they are all-too-easily mesmerised by the PR of international starchitects like Steven Holl, who espouses something called a 'phenomenological approach' to his creative methodology, which apparently is all about man's existentialist and bodily engagement with his surroundings, and has its roots in the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who was noted for, amongst other things, introducing Jean-Paul Sartre to the joys of Marxist-Leninism.

The importation of such specious baloney is akin to a Scottish version of a cargo cult, in which our credulous rulers become all wide-eyed and zombified in the presence of high-falutin hokum. As Henry McLeish once said, it's time to cut the crap.

The key word here is neglect. Scotland is manifestly failing to protect its historic built patrimony, and not only in Glasgow, though the perennial neglect of the buildings of another of its great sons, Alexander 'Greek' Thomson, and a harebrained scheme to clear the statues from George Square has done little to enhance the civic reputation.

In Elgin, Morayshire, a listed building by Robert Adam is now seriously at risk because of the wanton neglect of its owner, which happens to be the local council. Grant Lodge gains great additional interest if it is indeed true that it was built by a local stonemason, Collen Williamson, who went on to mortar a brass plate on the foundation stone of the White House, Washington DC – this had his name, as builder, engraved alongside that of 'George Washington, President'.

In other words, Elgin's Grant Lodge could be the built precursor of one of the world's most famous houses. Somehow this doesn't seem to cut much mustard with the councillors of Elgin. When the (unlawfully) neglected building was damaged by fire in 2003, the

council, as trustee (sic), simply subsumed the £140,000 insurance money into general spending after carrying out a few temporary repairs.

In Perth, meanwhile, the stunning Edwardian City Hall, which is in perfectly good condition, is the subject of a spirited demolition campaign by the local council, supported – almost unbelievably – by local MP Pete Wishart, who also happens to be the SNP culture spokesman at Westminster. The problem here was that the council itself screwed up when it assigned a lease to a London-based developer which had no money, and it seemed to think the best way to squirm out of its embarrassment was to destroy the evidence, namely the building itself.

It then intended to create a 'piazza' – somewhat laughable in a city which already has more public open space per head than any other. Historic Scotland, which should, of course, be excoriated for cravenly supporting Holl's excrescence in Glasgow, has been valiantly holding the line against the philistines in Perth, and somewhat redeemed itself.

It would be nice if Historic Scotland would go in for a bit of self-redemption in Edinburgh, where it was notably supine in the case of both the post-fire reconstruction of the Cowgate/South Bridge site and the redevelopment of the so-called Caltongate site, where the MD of the development company which wanted to demolish listed buildings on the Royal Mile also happened to be a commissioner of English Heritage. Somewhat dismally, the council has given support to a follow-up scheme on the same site which it described as 'not ugly enough' to be turned down. This is in the heart of a World Heritage Site, where the criterion should be 'is it good enough?', to which the answer in this case could only have been a resounding 'No'.

At least Caltongate and the Cowgate site had the benefit of some publicity – something which has been less in evidence in what is, by any objective analysis, the most shocking case of all – the proposal to tear down most of the south-side of St Andrew's Square, the eastern axis of James Craig's 1769 Edinburgh New Town, which had its mirror image in Adam's Charlotte Square. Strangely enough, the day after Standard Life announced it would have to consider its position as a Scottish-headquartered company in the event of a 'Yes' vote, it trumpeted that it would be a backer in the £75 million scheme to bastardise St Andrew's Square, close by its investment office at No 1 George Street.

How very odd to be pouring money into a country you're thinking of abandoning. In any event, it seems happy to bankroll Aussie property investor Stockland Halladale's scheme to clear all buildings to the east of Sir James Burnet's A-listed rear elevation of the former R&W Forsyth department store.

Even odder is the intention of fashionable Glasgow-based architect Gareth Hoskins, OBE, to demolish two B-listed stone facades in the centre of the parade on the grounds that they are, in his view, 'incapable of adapting to current and future requirements'. Certainly, one of them seems to be suffering from what an architect friend of mine refers to as 'pro-active neglect' as water now seems to be pouring down its main elevation, helpfully damaging the B-listed stone.

Mr Hoskins intends to replace them with a facade concealed behind a series of vertical fins of unimaginable ugliness which will help to screen out sunlight from the interiors – a tad unnecessary on a north facing elevation in windswept Edinburgh, one might have thought. To describe the Hoskins' scheme as 'a-contextual' barely does justice to its brute philistinism, which not only involves the total destruction of two B-listed edifices, but will also allegedly entail the demolition and lookalike reconstruction of Sir William Kininmonth's 1960s Scottish Provident building – an unusually well-mannered and thoughtfully designed intervention for its period.

At a recent World Heritage seminar in Edinburgh, I compared the city's situation to that in Dresden, Germany, which was recently stripped of its World Heritage status after it built a bridge outside an urban matrix which was, and continues to be, magnificently restored in the wake of Allied carpet bombing at the close of the Second World War.

The desecration proposed for B-listed buildings in the heart of James Craig's New Town is an aesthetic crime of a far greater order, yet when I raised the question, no-one made any effort to answer it, except to say that the conservation approach in Edinburgh should be tackled in a 'holistic' manner, whatever that means. UNESCO seemed happy to be beastly to the Germans, but for some reason when it comes to criticising Edinburgh they seem willing to countenance such thuggish destruction.

There's another question, too. Is it actually legal, under national and international law, for Scotland to desecrate and destroy its supposedly protected listed buildings in this way? After all, we have legal obligations under such international protocols as the Faro and Granada Conventions, not to mention our own legislation. Perhaps it's time to call in the lawyers and instigate a few exemplary prosecutions.

# Underneath The Arches: a story of death and public money

Kenneth Roy

2014

## 1.

The Arches boasts that it is 'one of Glasgow's top cultural hubs, meeting places and hang-outs' and that 'from ground-breaking theatre to huge name DJs and hot new bands, [it] breaks down any traditional notion of what an arts venue should be'.

The collapse there, and subsequent death, of 17-year-old Regane MacColl, apparently after consuming ecstasy, a class-A drug, inevitably challenges any non-traditional notion of what an arts venue should be, especially one so loyally championed by Scotland's cultural, media and political establishments.

The Arches, which occupies a cavernous space under Glasgow Central Station, enjoys the patronage of no less a figure than the oracle for all seasons, Liz Lochhead. It includes on its board of directors Stuart Patrick, chief executive of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, Bailie Liz Cameron of Glasgow City Council and Professor Deirdre Heddon of Glasgow University, as well as the familiar collection of consultants, cultural entrepreneurs and networkers.

Other than a brief statement of condolence, we have heard precious little from the management. The police investigation continues and it is too early – perhaps years too early – to say whether there will be a fatal accident inquiry into Regane's death two weekends ago. Meanwhile, the regular club nights have been suspended – though not for long; business as usual will resume next week.

There are two immediate questions: why a schoolgirl, who could not have been mistaken for someone older than her years and may have looked even younger, was admitted to an over-18s club; and what was being done before her death to discourage the use of drugs at the venue. These are serious questions for the directors – all of them.

In the immediate aftermath of Regane's death, a journalist familiar with club culture, Gregg Kelly, wrote frankly: 'Quite simply, drugs are everywhere in Scotland's night scene and the ease with which young people can acquire them is shocking... When you step into these clubs and note the high cost of alcohol, the queues at the bar and the gallons of free water being handed out, you can bet your bottom dollar a high percentage of those present will be using class-A drugs'. According to Mr Kelly, £10 buys two or three ecstasy pills.

His article did not specifically mention The Arches, but nor did he exclude it from his general observations.

To judge by their blogs on social media, many of the more articulate punters at The Arches like what they find there. But in the wake of Regane's death, the more critical posts have acquired a sharper focus:

'If you truly love music, do yourself a favour and avoid this place... I was left with ringing in my ears for about a week. The concrete floor is so unforgiving that your legs and back ache after half an hour. The drink prices are extortionate.'

'Need to be drunk to enjoy, queues for the bar huge.'

'Way too warm. Convinced there was a fault with the air conditioning.'

No doubt the same things, and worse, are said about many nightclubs in Scotland. But The Arches is no ordinary nightclub. A schoolgirl is dead; and she is dead after a visit to an establishment which enjoys charitable status and whose board is studded with prominent names.

Were the directors of The Arches aware of the complaints by customers? Did they know that some young visitors to the dark underground space felt that it was intolerably hot, that hearing could be impaired by exposure to the noise, and that bar prices were regarded as unacceptably high? And, if they did know, how were they addressing these issues – and others?

There is not a hint of concern in the charity's most recent annual report. On the contrary, the directors state that 'club nights are an important part of the programme – an important source of revenue', that they have 'a strategic role to play in the audience development strategy' and that 'clubbing is an essential cultural activity for thousands of young people'.

The small print in the financial statements underlines the commercial value of this unusual charitable activity: club bar sales in the last financial year (2012-3) exceeded £1 million. No doubt the water came free.

## 2.

When The Arches was founded in 1991, its creator devised the idea of club nights as a practical way of supporting the venue's artistic ambitions.

The creative side of the charity has its admirers – including, presumably, the Scottish makar, Ms Lochhead. One supporter wrote recently: 'Over the last two decades theatre fans have had mackerel spat at them by green-eyed mermaids, watched plays performed in toilets, and witnessed a woman borne from a giant onstage womb. Contortionists, choirs, a man popping bread from a toaster strapped to his head – I've seen it all within The Arches' walls'.

From the start, then, the revenue from clubbing subsidised the arts programme. The profits from booze are ploughed back into theatre, visual art, live music and some outreach activities. This ingenious arrangement seemed to be working well – until it all went tragically wrong.

But the company's financial report tells a rather different story. Last year, 93,669 people attended club nights at The Arches. In remarkable contrast, only 18,826 people attended theatre and performance events and the number of such events declined from 138 to 84.

The profits from the club nights fall far short of meeting The Arches' costs. The charity is

a 'foundation' client of the national funding agency, Creative Scotland, meaning that the commitment to bankrolling it is long-term. Last year, The Arches received a basic grant of £358,550 from Creative Scotland.

We have discovered, however, that it received further subsidies of £380,584 from the same taxpayer-funded source – increasing its take to £739,134. Glasgow City Council's annual contribution – a mere £81,220 – brings The Arches' public subsidy to a staggering £820,354 in 12 months.

When the police complete their investigation, and the shocking impact of the death of Regane MacColl begins to fade, there will be a longer-term question about the future of this venue. If it wishes to continue as a nightclub, drawing most of its clients and much of its revenue from a high-risk commercial trading activity, what is its entitlement to massive public funding for the rest of what goes on in that building? And what is its entitlement to charitable status?

The Arches says it is proud to be part of 'a creative, modern city, where anything can happen'. Sadly, something just did.

# Down in Cadogan Street, a reckoning of human pain

David Donnison

2014

In a country where, despite promised recovery, many people are still going through very hard times, we should all find opportunities for talking with those who have to depend on the state for survival.

What they are experiencing is being done in our name and at our expense. If we rely only on the rhetoric of our political leaders and the newspapers that support them for our understanding of what is happening at the underside of the British state, we shall be grossly misled.

We need the evidence of experts now researching that bleak landscape. I'm a regular attendee at seminars and conferences where researchers present their findings. They have taught us that we have in Britain one of the most punitive social security systems in the Western world, withdrawing benefits from many people who have no hope of finding a job. They tell us that the bedroom tax, cutting the housing benefits of families judged to have one more bedroom than they need, does not work and never could. In most places, we don't have enough smaller dwellings to enable these tenants to find smaller homes within reach of work they can do. These are among the families that resort to food banks to feed their children; and other researchers are telling us that food banks are now one of our main sources of malnutrition. Man-made malnutrition.

We also need to hear the voices of people living under the harrow of what is still called the 'welfare state': people with the expertise of experience. Long after I have forgotten the scientific data presented at conferences on poverty, I still recall these voices.

There was the woman who had to miss her regular interrogation about her struggles to find a job because her child had been badly bitten by a neighbour's dog and she had to take her to hospital. She found time to phone the office with this news. But when she reported there a few days later, her interrogator denied having received this message and told her that her benefits had been cut off. Appealing this decision, she eventually got them reinstated, but only after waiting many months for a hearing.

I recall another woman who sought help from a food bank after going through an experience of this kind. She gave up when she found that her bus fares to and from the bank and the electricity required to microwave the food she was given there would cost more than she could afford. It is the voices of these women, not the tables of figures, that ring in the heads of the audience as they leave such meetings.

My own most vivid glimpses of this system come when I accompany friends to interrogations about their capacity for work that are held each week in Glasgow's Corunna House in Cadogan Street. Nothing I say at these interviews is ever recorded. Things like:

'I've known him for 20 years and can tell you that on a good day he's capable of doing all the things you are asking him about (things like getting up and dressed, going to the shops, cooking and eating a meal...). But on a bad day, he's not. And he gets a lot of bad days'. The computer programme the interrogator has to use is designed to exclude such evidence.

Most Scottish conferences on poverty now give a voice to those experiencing it. The Poverty Alliance and the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, on whose meetings I have reported in this magazine, do this very effectively. 'Nothing about us without us', is the principle they try to follow. But lest we forget that principle – as some still do – I offer you a poem I wrote some years ago after returning from a different kind of meeting.

### ***The Poverty Trade***

*Turning out dutifully to a conference on poverty,  
I find the hall filled with dark suits, brief-cases,  
shiny shoes, laptops and well-groomed hair.*

*Overheads twinkle with pie-charts, figures,  
statistical analyses of markets in meltdown,  
unemployment, repossessions, debt and despair.*

*With bureaucrats'-speak – 'countrywide roll-out  
of target-led programmes' – you can smell the MBAs,  
know the poor won't intrude in this technocrats' lair.*

*Down the road in Cadogan Street  
another crowd in another hall,  
tremulous with tics and smell of strain,*

*await interrogation by dismal doctors  
who hide behind screens as they click their keyboards,  
assembling a reckoning of human pain.*

*In the road outside, bedraggled folk  
await their fate, worry about bills,  
dragging on fags in the falling rain.*

*Who will be compelled to compete for jobs –  
flotsam in the labour markets' falling tide –  
to earn, at best, the minimum wage?*

*For every winner there will be more losers  
stranded on the shore, hope destroyed,  
struggling for sustenance and soured by rage.*

*Where is the anger? Who will brandish a banner?  
Paint the posters? Drill the drummers?  
Marshal the marchers? Raise a clamour?*

*Not a hope...  
Just compute more equations,  
call another conference. More graphs on the screen,  
more dismal figures will suppress the anger.*

*So mobilise the laptops, write another paper,  
send emails flickering to bring them together –  
and make sure the poor are politely banned.*

*If you speak discreetly there's a living to be made,  
promotion to be won, in the poverty trade.  
Keep your nose clean. Publish.*

*...and be damned.*

# A tragic story of hubris

Eileen Reid

2018

On 15 June, Glasgow School of Art's Mackintosh building was finally completely destroyed by fire. I remember well my first day of work there in March 2000. I was awestruck by my new surroundings. My favourite space was the library, as it was for so many people. I cried in 2014 at its destruction.

As with the first, in retrospect relatively minor, fire there has been an outpouring of grief. It is a tragedy for Glasgow, Scotland, GSA and everyone past and present associated with it. But this time, there is also anger. I've been thinking about what the late, great architectural historian Gavin Stamp would have been saying today. He would have been saying that it was an obscene and avoidable act of destruction. And he would have been right.

People are cautioning, correctly, against attributing blame prior to the investigation. But much of the anger is about GSA's refusal to take any responsibility – for either fire. Of course, an investigation must take place to determine the cause of this latest disaster; but the immediate cause isn't the crucial point. The real question is, why? And why twice?

Two press statements have been released by GSA. Both seem to abrogate responsibility, saying: 'The Mackintosh building was undergoing a period of restoration following the fire in 2014, with management of the site under the control of main contractor Kier Construction Scotland and was not part of our operational estate'. Kier responded in a statement last night claiming it had an 'agreed' fire safety strategy.

The chair of GSA, Muriel Gray, rather more subdued than in 2014, tweeted that she had received 'beautiful' responses. But there is nothing beautiful about this tragedy. The destruction of one of the world's most precious architectural gems is an act of violent, ugly, careless destruction. And for that – regardless of whatever the new investigation finds – GSA bears at least some responsibility.

In truth, the seeds of the Mack's destruction were sown long before both fires. Members of staff and alumni who raised issues about the safety of the building for years prior to 2014 had to remain tight-lipped after the first fire, or be condemned as churlish in the wave of sympathy and grief.

Fire experts are shaking their heads in disbelief. Where, they ask, was the full modern preventative technology that exists for life safety and property protection? Why, as reported, was there only one security guard on site – located in a Portakabin outside the building?

Tom Inns, the director of GSA, announced in 2014 that lessons would be learned and that the school had been working hard on its health and safety procedures. As to the fire

report, Inns went on to say: '[It] is very detailed about how the fire spread; that gives us a lot of new knowledge that we need to take on board'.

But the 'knowledge about how the fire spread' had been known for decades. Gordon Ross, a senior technician at GSA for 17 years, routinely carried out fire assessments with the then clerk of works, David Stark. Ross repeatedly warned that GSA was at serious risk of fire from the old heating system which used wooden ducting to take warm air from a boiler room in the basement to the rest of the building. That system should have been closed to prevent it funnelling fire from the basement to the roof in less than five minutes. Ross and Stark recommended strongly that these 'wooden chimneys' be blocked off and a sprinkler system fitted. Their recommendations were not implemented.

To be fair, management is not entirely to blame, even if it's tempting to do so in anger. Few institutions are located in, or responsible for, a World Heritage Site. However, why weren't these recommendations implemented during the £8m refurbishment of the building in 2008?

You might argue that the Mackintosh building is not 'the GSA', but it is. A reputation as one of the finest art schools in the world is directly attributable to that building and the outstanding creative community that has emerged from it. Its magnificent interior, against which the annual degree show was curated, was the real star of the show.

And therein lies part of the problem. The degree show was an annual nightmare for the estates department, the Mackintosh curator, the health and safety officer, and many others. Year after year, concerns were vocalised about the damage inflicted on the building – actual and potential. But apart from a few minor adjustments and eye-rolling, little was done, and the interests of the building were often sacrificed for artistic freedom. The fine line between use and abuse was raised repeatedly, and in many cases crossed, none more so than prior to the 2014 fire. Why did the management of GSA, despite warnings, allow a student to combine expanding foam with a hot projector in the basement of so precious a building?

A former health and safety officer has reported to me that, following the fire, he became aware that the student whose project caused the incident had been told by members of staff, including a head of department and an estates electrician, to stop working with flammable aerosols. The consequences could have been much worse: students and staff vacating the building were minutes from inhaling deadly fumes. This was avoided by the prompt and brave action of a member of the academic staff.

When I worked there, prior to the 2014 fire, I (and other colleagues) noticed a perceptible whiff of disdain for Mackintosh in GSA's strategic push to be all things contemporary. Only since the 2014 fire has there been an upsurge in the school's promotion of research focused on his genius and masterpiece.

In the early noughties, the powerful communications team expunged GSA's headed writing paper, with its depiction of the Mackintosh façade, replacing it with something bland, generic and completely forgettable. Their response to the fire in 2014 was magnificent in its own way. While experts grew frustrated that the causes of the 2014 fire

were not being handled transparently, GSA pushed a narrative of phoenix from the ashes. Medals were given to fire-fighters, and Brad Pitt was enlisted to the cause. Much-needed funding was generated. But the official narrative was far from the whole story. Very serious questions remain.

I was recently told a small but significant detail. In September 2014, GSA held a symposium about the rebuilding of the library. Chaired by the BBC's Stuart Cosgrove, it was intended to inform the construction and restoration plans. Where was the symposium held? House for an Art Lover? Glasgow Atheneum? No, it took place in Venice, apparently to coincide with the Biennale. The costs of this extravagance raised eyebrows at the time, but such was the hype that few spoke up. One Glaswegian attendee was scathing, and told me: 'It was an obscene junket'.

The punishment for hubris is its inevitable downfall. The Mackintosh building was built for painting and sculpture. Its wooden interior – soaked in linseed oil and turps for 100 years – had survived cigarettes, the Second World War, and even toasters. What it was unable to withstand was not only fire, but hubris, flammable aerosol cans, and, with tragic irony, restoration.

# Let Glasgow car parks flourish

Bill Paterson

2018

A paraphrase: 'To lose one library could be regarded as a misfortune, to lose two looks like carelessness'.

In the case of the Glasgow School of Art, Oscar Wilde might well have thought twice about that perfect epigram. The destruction by fire of the original library in 2014 looked very much like carelessness first time around.

However, for some reason it seemed wrong to question why flammable materials and overheated projectors were allowed to remain unsupervised in studios deep inside one of the most unique and valued working art schools in Europe.

A work of art in itself, but in many ways a tinderbox. Studios and corridors floored and panelled in wood, oak beams and veneer, steeped in decades of paint and linseed oil, needed constant vigilance. Especially when electrical equipment and extension cables were thrown into the mix. A vigilance surely well worth paying, for the inspiration the building gave its students and for its place in the hearts of the people of Glasgow.

Surely that vigilance was constantly in place. Surely that first fire was a misfortune. Surely it was just an unavoidable accident that could have happened anywhere, at any time.

The loss of the library and a good deal more in that first fire was such a profound shock that the pain could only be eased by making sure that this exquisite building would rise again from the ashes.

The heroism and skill of the firefighters who saved the bulk of the building became the only good news story of the catastrophe. They gave those who loved the building the resolve to move on. Questions of security and mundane issues like sprinklers and general carelessness were brushed aside and blame seems to have been airbrushed out of the picture. Probably very necessary, as the heartache eased and the fundraising began. After all, it wouldn't help the cause to admit that a cavalier attitude to the building's fragility contributed to that first conflagration.

A year after the fire, I presented a little programme for Channel 4 and stood in the devastated library to interview one of the project leaders. Work was just about to begin in earnest on its restoration. I asked if all the monies were in place and the insurances guaranteed. I received a swift affirmative.

I was also given the distinct impression that there would be no further discussion of causes or blame. We should move swiftly on. After all, I was presenting a lightweight early evening programme and wasn't an investigative journalist. I should be perfectly content with these reassurances. In fact I was, and I shared the optimism that in a few years' time

we would be standing in a complete facsimile of Mackintosh's masterpiece. Maybe not the perfect solution but by far the best that could be hoped.

I also assumed that, as in so many areas these days, 'lessons had been learned', and that there had been real soul-searching for the cause and the spread of the fire. Such a trauma should, and would never be allowed to, happen again. We now know it was wrong to make such an assumption.

It's one of Glasgow's rather unique glories that its most important buildings are not castles, fortifications or aristocratic palaces. Apart from the perfect but modest cathedral, Glasgow's chief architectural glories reflect its industrial and commercial history. We have all been quietly proud that our city's most internationally significant building was not something built for war, domination or ostentation, but an art school. A building that was a unique and inspiring work of art, and which would help others to create more unique and inspiring works of art. Just as its founders had intended.

That's why the loss of the Glasgow School of Art is like a true bereavement to all of us. The building stood as a symbol of what all Glaswegians saw as the best side of their city. A building that Mackintosh topped with his version of the city's coat of arms. 'Let Glasgow flourish' indeed.

I first visited the school around 1964 as a trainee quantity surveyor. I had a friend working with the architects Keppie Henderson, the firm entrusted with the care and maintenance of the building. They were the descendants of Honeyman Keppie Mackintosh who had designed and built the original.

Ironically, my friend, also called Bill, was overseeing the installation of hefty fire doors in the lower corridors. They were about four inches thick, very dark brown to match the original panelling, and with a group of small square windows to echo the typical details of the building. Whether they were the same fire doors that were rumoured to have been wedged open on the day of the 2014 fire, I couldn't tell you, but they were pretty substantial.

Visiting Bill during lunchtimes gave me a unique chance to explore the wonders of the school. It seared itself into my subconscious and stayed there. Quite simply, I was just so proud that this miraculous building was in Glasgow and had been built by a Townhead man who had lived round the corner from my school in Dennistoun.

At that time the Mackintosh cult, now almost overwhelming in the city, was in its infancy. Few people, even in my surveying office, could have named more than one of his buildings. Apart from the art school, most of his buildings were under threat from neglect or worse. One example which older readers might remember was the 'Mackintosh Gift Shop' in Ingram Street. It was one of Miss Cranston's tea rooms, stripped of its furniture and with its woodwork varnished in a sickly yellowish brown. Those diarrhoea tones summed up the respect it received. For years it was crammed with trinkets and tartan souvenirs. The site was demolished for the Ingram Hotel where Stakis compensated with a few 'Mackintosh' features in plastic and coloured glass: the earliest known example of

'Mockintoshery' as that fine campaigner Murray Grigor first coined. Nevertheless, over the years things improved.

His pioneering buildings, from Queens Cross Church to the wondrous Scotland Street School, were rescued from neglect and a whole world of reproductions and exhibitions created an industry which has earned many people infinitely more wealth than Mackintosh ever saw.

As so often in Glasgow, great things have been done as well as crazy things. The Lighthouse, carved out of Mackintosh's tower for the old *Glasgow Herald* building, is a miraculous use of the viewpoint and has given superb exhibitions of his work in a spectacular context.

The House For An Art Lover in Bellahouston Park is a bit ersatz but it has the bold ambition to recreate one of his unbuilt projects. The 150th celebrations of his birth are ambitious and exciting, even if they must now be marred forever with tragedy, and some of the crazy things are still with us.

The glass towers of the Scotland Street School had a few years of fame when they were dramatically visible from train and motorway. It was something to look forward to on the way to Paisley. Not any longer. Glasgow City Council threw up the Shields Road park and ride multi-storey car park. Not adjacent, not nearby, but slap bang opposite. The school's extraordinary facade is now hidden from travellers and visitors from around the world who stare in disbelief at the rows of vehicles that fill their view.

The Queen Margaret College, an early work, has been released from its tomb inside the old BBC building. Judging by photographs, it's a shoddy-looking job and drowned out by the 21st-century junkitecture of the 'prestige apartments' next door. As always with Glasgow and Mackintosh, you win some and you lose some.

The whole city's fabric, not just Mackintosh's, seems to be constantly teetering on the edge of triumph or farce. We've always been prepared for the worst but the loss of the art school is beyond our fears.

With the possibility, at the time of writing, that the ravaged stonework may have to be completely demolished, we need to learn exactly what happened on the evening of 15 June 2018.

Why the fire started.

Why it wasn't detected until too late.

Who carries the can?

No assumptions this time.

# Scotland's lost city

Gerry Hassan

2018

Glasgow hasn't had to look far to seek its troubles of late. There has been the devastating Glasgow School of Art fire, followed by the seeming abandonment of Sauchiehall Street businesses and residents. And if that weren't enough, in the last week there have been concerns that the acclaimed arts and cultural venue, the Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA), shut since the GSA fire, faces the prospect of closure.

The CCA has played a vital part in the cultural story of the city. It began life as the Third Eye Centre, opening in 1975, where it gave a whole host of emerging and radical artists a platform, providing a hub for debate, exchange and hanging out. This morphed into the CCA in 1992, and subsequently the space was overhauled to create a stunning atrium with a cafe, along with a cinema space and music venue. Over a dozen businesses and enterprises rented and used space, in a rich eco-system which made it a place to go for interesting conversation, an unusual art exhibition or film, or just food and drink.

Today, the CCA has been shut for nearly three months. It feels unloved and even forgotten. Francis McKee, director of CCA, is careful what he says in public, but on the most basic levels of support he feels let down. In the time it has been shut, not only the public, but also staff, have not been allowed in, apart from the briefest site visit by McKee. This visit found that the CCA building had suffered damage due to water leakage, including that of one of the gallery's ceilings, one art piece in this space, and a video screen. McKee says that 'the ceiling will need to be repaired, the video screen will need to be tested to see if it's also sustained damage, and the artist's studio has costed the piece at £3,000 for replacement'.

If tradesmen could enter with an official escort, the building could be repaired and secured; it isn't even, as McKee points out, at the side of the premises on Scott Street nearest to the GSA. But building control, part of the council, will not allow it. On top of this, there is the human cost, with staff who work in the building worried about their futures, with the viability of many small businesses under threat, and no sign of an entry date from the authorities.

Maybe on its own the CCA story might not seem to matter, but to many it forms part of a bigger picture and not one that is positive. Joyce McMillan commented: 'If the CCA goes, after the shocking closure of the Arches, Glasgow can wave a last goodbye the huge reputation as a City of Culture it won in 1990. Truly hope this great arts centre, founded by the late Tom McGrath and others as the Third Eye, can be saved'.

This is a city which feels in places a bit lost and yearning for direction and leadership. The new SNP administration and council leader Susan Aitken have good intentions, but

they have been knocked by events and the need to firefight; they have also had to deal with summer social media spats with a host of Glasgow opposition MSPs (Pauline McNeill, Frank McAveety, Anas Sarwar, Adam Tomkins) spearheading a defence of Rangers FC and a proposal for a fan zone across from Ibrox: all of which produced an avalanche of online abuse at Susan Aitken and her deputy David McDonald.

There are also internal tensions and conflicts between a new generation of councillors eager to do things differently, and a senior council officialdom who have only worked under Labour one-party rule. All over the city there seems to be an inability to communicate, connect and reach out, which people often lay at the door of the council, but is actually about a deeper malaise.

There are numerous actors in this mix. There is the role of the GSA and their invisible public leadership: director Tom Inns and chair Muriel Gray. Neither of them have been very vocal in public. More critically, there has been minimal support for the wider local community who have suffered as a result of the fire. There has been no articulation of a deeper GSA civic responsibility to the city, their neighbours, and institutions such as the CCA with which the GSA is intrinsically interwoven, sharing common projects and personnel.

Residents adjacent to the art school had to leave their homes on the night of the fire, and were prevented from entering them for more than 70 days. In that time, they had to borrow everything they needed from friends and family, and find accommodation and support elsewhere – away from the policed exclusion zone. This seemed to fly in the face of the compassionate front the city likes to present to the world. Similarly, Sauchiehall Street businesses have taken enormous hits, with some still closed, some already gone and others unsure if they will ever re-open.

The truth is that Glasgow has been drifting for years. You can feel it in the air, in the streets, the cracked pavements, the debris of crumbling buildings, the state of the city centre and iconic architecture such as the Alexander 'Greek' Thomson-designed Egyptian Halls on Union Street which are a national disgrace. There are many things the city does well: it is a buzzing place for night life, as a live music venue, and it does big things, such as the Commonwealth Games and recent European Championships, with aplomb. It is also true that as the city centre struggles, local neighbourhoods, a short walk or a bus or taxi ride away, take its place for socialising and shopping – from Finnieston to Dennistoun and Strathbungo.

I love Glasgow and I have loved living in it for over 25 years. Although a Dundonian, I consider myself an adopted Glaswegian – and that the city has adopted me. I would never want to talk the city down, or to paint its challenges in black and white.

Yet, we have seen retreat after retreat in recent years. The closure of The Arches three years ago, the wonderful labyrinth of cultural and social activities under the arches of Glasgow Central station, brought into being by Andy Arnold, was a national tragedy. The Arches was that rare beast – a multi-disciplinary space combining commercial and

publicly-subsidised arts and culture, which because of the mix could afford to take risks. Its closure was an act of brazen, ignorant council cultural vandalism which occurred under the watch of Labour and then leader Gordon Mathieson, and was not reversed by Frank McAveety.

The Arches did have problems; in its club nights there was a drug culture and one very public fatality just before its closure, but the licensing committee seemed to act with indecent haste, strangling and suffocating a venue with an international reputation. If there ever was an act of philistinism, this was it.

Now, to cap it all, there are unsubstantiated rumours that the controversial G1 Group, headed up by Stefan King, who own several Glasgow venues (including Arta, The Corinthian, Polo Lounge) are interested in taking a significant space in The Arches: part of it at the moment being a 'continental' food hall. It seems all too predictable, and points to Glasgow leaders not really understanding the uniqueness of fuzzy, messy, idiosyncratic, independent cultural spaces. Places such as The Arches and the CCA contributed hugely to Glasgow's sense of itself as somewhere special, with international pull and profile beyond football.

What Glasgow is missing is local champions and civic leadership. This isn't just down to the current council, who have inherited a backlog of problems, institutional indifference and neglect, and are hemmed in financially. But with the decline of the *Evening Times*, a paper which traditionally saw itself as an advocate for the city, and an absence of any kind of citizens' or independent cultural voice, you can almost feel the void and vacuum.

Glasgow has wealth, commerce and innovation, but it is also in places struggling. It needs to find a new role for itself, new ideas and new voices. It has lost its sense of swagger and self-confidence, which might be no bad thing, given there was a downside to that, but has become riddled with doubt and division. There is too much party point-scoring, with for years the SNP and others laying every problem at the foot of Labour, and now people doing the same to the SNP who are barely in the door. Step forward Tory MSP Adam Tomkins, last week claiming in the *Evening Times*: 'Sauchiehall Street is dying on the SNP's watch'. The reality is that Sauchiehall Street's problems long predate the GSA fire and everyone, Tomkins included, knows that.

People love and care for this city. It is time to show this and act upon it with words and deeds. We need people to reach out and reconnect, have conversations and even disagreements, which go beyond the party partisan, and bring into the mix the missing voices and alternative stories to that of Glasgow plc. We need institutions to step up and take civic responsibility and accept that the council can't do everything. We need a people's Glasgow – one which draws from the best of the city's tradition but that ultimately is down to the people of this city. Do we really care enough to do something?

# Glasgow Govan: the seat that rocked Scotland

Gerry Hassan

2018

In 1988 Scotland was a very different place. Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister, the poll tax was yet to be implemented, and there was no Scottish Parliament. Then along came the Govan by-election – a seat that produced a political sensation and set of shockwaves that reverberated throughout Scottish and UK politics – with an impact years after the event.

Exactly 30 years ago this weekend – on 10 November 1988 – Jim Sillars, ex-Labour MP, left-winger and powerful orator, won the seat from Labour in a high-profile campaign. It was not always assumed that this would happen. Labour had polled well in the previous year's General Election, winning 50 of Scotland's 72 seats, but soon the 'fighting 50' became known as the 'feeble 50,' with the SNP querying what Labour's strength in numbers was able to do to protect Scotland.

All of this came live in the contest, but still Labour remained favourites. What decisively shifted voters was the energy and dynamism of Sillars and his campaign, alongside a haphazard and badly-judged Labour campaign, which exuded complacency and was also harmed by UK Labour's lack of understanding of Scotland. Lots of specifics seemed to aid this: the two TV debates between the candidates badly exposed the limitations of the Labour candidate, Bob Gillespie – a SOGAT trade union official and father of Bobby Gillespie, lead singer of Primal Scream. Gillespie had not been the choice of the party leadership in Scotland or the UK – both of which attempted to blame him personally for the defeat – but he was an easy target and scapegoat, and the party's problems and SNP positives were about much more than one individual.

Sillars turned a 19,509 Labour majority into a 3,554 SNP majority – on a 33.1% swing from Labour to SNP. The major issues which drove voters were the poll tax – which was due to come into effect on 1 April 1989 in Scotland, one year earlier than England and Wales – and the effectiveness of Labour in opposing the Thatcher Government in Scotland. Govan gave the SNP a fillip then, which the party misread, thinking that the tide of history was flowing in its direction and that Labour were on the ropes.

The SNP refused at the outset of the following year to take part in the cross-party Scottish Constitutional Convention, something that the party now prefers to ignore, and for which at the time it paid a cost. This SNP decision aided Scottish politics post-Govan moving, from one disappointed with Labour inaction to one where the SNP paid a price for not contributing to a united anti-Tory front. And it confirmed that hubris and misreading the verdict of voters was not the property of one single party.

Some would argue that Govan did not change much in the long-term. After all, Jim Sillars' tenure in the seat proved shortlived, and Labour's Iain Davidson won Govan back in

the following General Election in 1992. Subsequently, Labour won big in Scotland and across the UK in 1997, and legislated for a Scottish Parliament with the first elections in 1999.

This would be to ignore the undoubted lasting influence of this talismanic result, which goes further and deeper than the immediate impact. Most profoundly, Govan gave the SNP hope. It came after almost a decade of SNP retreat from the events of 1979. That year had seen Scotland's inconclusive first devolution referendum, the SNP (along with the Liberal's) vote for the Thatcher vote of no confidence which brought down the Callaghan Labour Government, and the SNP reduced from 11 to two seats in the subsequent election.

This SNP sense of hope gave them the belief that they could challenge Labour in their west of Scotland heartlands from the left, and expose what they saw as Labour hypocrisy – pretending to be on the left to win Scottish votes – and impotence – where their Scottish mandate was not translated into standing up to the imposition of unpopular Tory policies.

It brought the democratic deficit – how Scotland was governed – and how that intertwined with the poll tax, centre stage. It showed that the former in particular was not, as some Labour stalwarts openly claimed, only the preserve of Hillhead and Morningside middle-class socialists (which wasn't considered to be a good sign) but had traction in such places as Govan and amongst working-class voters.

All of the above contributed to Govan showing the first signs of birth of the modern SNP as we have come to know it. This was a party which was unapologetically going after Labour as the dominant party in the country and doing so from the left. It was also the first time in years in which the SNP showed that it could run a campaign with professional polish, combined with genuine enthusiasm and a hunger to win. The party was to be able to return to such qualities in latter years.

Govan also had a huge political effect in deepening the main divide for the dominance of Scottish politics, making it one between the Labour Party and SNP. This may seem uncontroversial to many now but was a major political achievement for the SNP, considering the 1979 implosion for the party and the difficult elections of 1983 and 1987.

Jim Sillars' Govan victory exemplified this. He was an ex-Labour MP, who left the party over its lukewarm support for devolution in the 1970s, set up his own party to aid self-government, and when that failed, joined the SNP post-1979. Sillars carried with him the hatred of many Labour members, who regarded him as a turncoat and sellout by leaving the party and joining the nationalists. He reflected this week that: 'I have always been regarded as a traitor, but I have just had to wear that over the years'.

Sillars, looking back on Govan, believes it had a long tail of influence: 'In my view, Govan inevitably led to the creation of the Scottish Parliament once there was a Labour Government in power. I don't know if Labour has ever genuinely believed in devolution, but they tried to use it as a means of blocking the SNP's road to independence'.

Sillars' victory was aided by his astute reading and understanding that the SNP's challenge to Labour should not see nationalists insult the Labour Party generally, but

instead respect the values and ideals of the Labour movement. This approach forbade going after individual Labour politicians in an over-the-top way which questioned their character or motivation: an argument Sillars had laid out in his memoir published two years previously, *Scotland: The Case for Optimism*.

This was the way Sillars campaigned in Govan and won. Yet, in the immediate aftermath of his victory, such was his excitement and the febrile nature of Scottish politics, he forgot his own wise words. His rhetoric became much more partisan and personalised in how he criticised Labour and Labour politicians, aided by Labour's attitude towards him and the amount of abuse he faced.

Govan may today seem part of a distant, long gone Scotland. This was a world where by-elections mattered, where Westminster was the main focus of politics, and where the SNP were insurgents and even outsiders. The world is very different today.

Yet Govan helped to end that old world of Scottish politics and herald in the new. It made the democratic question of how Scotland was governed central to everything, from the poll tax to how to tackle inequality and the poverty that then, and today, still scars much of Govan and areas like it. It could even be argued that it lit a slow-burning fuse which undermined and contributed to the decline of Scottish Labour and the establishment of the SNP as the leading party of the country.

Part of Scottish politics still to this day lives in the shadow shaped by Govan 30 years ago this weekend, and begs the question as to whether the dynamics and priorities created in response to the Scotland of the late 1980s are suited for 21st-century Scotland.

Govan captured the political headlines and imagination all those years ago, as did the style and panache of Jim Sillars and his victory, but maybe it is time to put the enmity which defines Labour-SNP relations into the past and find a different politics. This would require a political awakening as vivid and vibrant as Govan to happen, and in that sense, the impact of this tumultuous by-election still matters to this day.

# In search of the Empire Exhibition

David Torrance

2018

I've always been fascinated by large structures that no longer exist. Those that have left behind partial traces of their previous existence fascinate me even more, for it provides something tangible with which to imagine what once was. Usually it's ruins – last month, I happily explored colonial Jamestowne in Virginia, where little more than brick outlines remain of the first English settlement – but I find more contemporary remains particularly captivating, not least the Empire Exhibition of 1938.

This took place in Glasgow's Bellahouston Park, which is today home to House for an Art Lover (conceived, but never built, by Charles Rennie Mackintosh), a sports centre, some tennis courts and a strip of pleasant woodland. But 80 years ago, the park was covered with strikingly modernist buildings representing Scotland, the UK and its then dominions.

The purpose was primarily economic, a showcase for domestic and imperial trade when Scotland was still recovering from the Depression of the early 1930s. But it was also an outlet for a multi-faceted sense of national pride, with Scotland presented as a proudly distinct part of the UK and, simultaneously, an integral part of the mighty British Empire. Despite an horrendously wet summer, it attracted 12 million visitors.

Google images of the exhibition and you'll find the Scottish Pavilion North (dedicated to public services in Scotland) and the Scottish Pavilion South (focusing on the past and future of Scotland). Both were designed by the leading architect Sir Basil Spence and flanked a 'Scottish Avenue' which led to the Palace of Art, now the only surviving building in situ at Bellahouston Park.

It is now a sports centre, which I visited on Friday as part of a day-long search for what remains of the Empire Exhibition. The day had begun on the outskirts of Edinburgh, after someone told me on Twitter that contents from the Church of Scotland Pavilion had ended up at Carrick Knowe Parish Church. Sure enough, when I emailed the church asking to take a look, they happily agreed to let me see the baptismal font and bowl, lectern and pulpit, all of which found new homes in Saughton when the exhibition closed.

From there, I took several trains to Stevenston in North Ayrshire and, a 25-minute-walk later, found myself amid the eerily deserted remains of Nobel Enterprises at Ardeer. There, in a small wooded area, I located the distinctively Dutch Baroque gables of the former South African Pavilion, which was moved after the exhibition and eventually became the staff canteen at ICI Ardeer.

I had hoped to get inside – videos on YouTube show that this was once possible – but all the entrances had been crudely sealed with breeze blocks, most likely on safety grounds. What ICI called 'Africa House' is now in a pretty sorry state, but then it was intended, like

much of the exhibition, as a temporary structure. That it's still standing eight decades later is remarkable, although its future is uncertain.

The last of three surviving exhibition structures now stands at Prestwick Airport, the cavernous Palace of Engineering now forming part of Spirit AeroSystems. Apart from the remaining Palace of Art, meanwhile, there are a couple of other exhibition traces in Bellahouston Park, including a granite obelisk which reads: 'This stone marking the site of the Empire Exhibition of 1938, was unveiled by King George VI on 9th July 1937, when His Majesty and Queen Elizabeth paid the first visit of their reign to the City of Glasgow.'

If you continue up the hill and into the woodland itself, you'll reach a modest hedgerow marking out the base of what was once the 'Tower of Empire', the exhibition's iconic 'brand' image and looking like something out of a contemporary science fiction movie. It was designed by Thomas S Tait, who oversaw the exhibition while simultaneously working on St Andrew's House in Edinburgh. A panel nearby doubtless explains all this, but it's been vandalised beyond legibility.

My last port of call was an unlikely one for someone as football averse as I: Celtic Park. There, in the boardroom display cabinet, sits the 'Empire Exhibition Trophy', a solid silver model of the Tait Tower. A tournament was held to tie in with the exhibition, with four teams from Scotland and four from England contesting the straight knock-out competition. Watched by a crowd of more than 82,000 at Ibrox Park, Celtic defeated Everton 1-0 at the final on 10 June 1938.

A football-enthusiast friend directed me to a song called *Willie Maley*, again on YouTube, which includes the lyrics:

*In '38 there was a show,  
Glasgow was the place to go.  
A model of the tower was football's prize.  
England sent four of the best,  
They didn't meet with much success,  
'Cause the trophy ended up in Paradise.*

The Empire Exhibition also spawned an incredible array of merchandising, much of which can now be found on eBay. There, models of the Tower of Empire inspire fierce bidding wars (I recently acquired a small Bakelite version, still in its box); last month someone listed a huge, three-foot-high version in black slate, although this quickly disappeared, one assumes as a result of a private bid its seller could not refuse. My desk in London now bulges with badges, tea cups, books and a handsome colour supplement produced by *The Glasgow Herald*. Neville Chamberlain negotiated what he believed was 'peace in our time' as the 1938 exhibition neared its end, and indeed it would come to symbolise a Scotland, United Kingdom, and Empire, that would be transformed by the Second World War that followed. In that sense, such exhibitions capture a moment in time: that in 1938 came 50

years after Glasgow's first International Exhibition at Kelvingrove, and half a century before the Glasgow Garden Festival, which I attended as an 11-year-old. Like its predecessor in Bellahouston Park, little of that survives, although its Clydesdale Bank tower was dismantled and re-erected in, of all places, north Wales.

# Central to Glasgow, that's Glasgow Central

Gillean Somerville-Arjat

2019

Although born in Glasgow, each time I arrive from Edinburgh, I feel I'm in a different country. Something in the atmosphere. A more spontaneous openness. Complete strangers talk to you. They welcome you with a smile, making you feel you belong to the human race. But don't get above yourself, mind.

I've many family links with the city, dating from childhood, but my longest association with it was in the late 1970s, working for four years in the academic registry of Strathclyde University. It wasn't a happy time. Not Glasgow's fault. I was emotionally uprooted. A broken relationship in London. Several family deaths. An oppressive working environment. I remember reading A L Kennedy's collection of short stories, *Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains*. I loved the title, and the bleak lives of her unremarkable protagonists resonated.

Priced out of the trendy academic hinterland of Byres Road, I lived in a modest tenement room and kitchen in Shawlands. My local railway station was Crossmyloof, two stops from Central Station on the southern route that winds out to East Kilbride via Thornliebank, Giffnock, Clarkston, Busby and Hairmyres. Crossmyloof was known then for its ice-rink, the first indoor one built in Scotland in 1907. It closed in 1986 to make way for a supermarket. Its name intrigued me. Something to do with crossing one's palm with silver. The origin is disputed, but two suggestions focus on Mary Queen of Scots on her way to her final military defeat at the Battle of Langside in 1568. Either an encounter with a gypsy fortune-teller before the battle or a defiant claim by the queen afterwards. A nearby corner pub, the Corona, has a sculpture of a hand, its raised palm bearing a cross.

I sought social refuge in the university's lively theatre group, run at that time by the immensely talented Hugo Gifford, younger brother of Professor Douglas Gifford of Glasgow University. Hugo died tragically young a few years later. I knew about the group from a powerful production of the medieval play of *Everyman* I'd seen performed in St Mary's Cathedral, Palmerston Place, during the Edinburgh Festival some years before.

While working at Strathclyde, I was involved with some other memorable productions. Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* and an adaptation of Charles Maturin's 1820 novel, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, stand out. It was one of the few bright spots during those four sad years. It didn't banish the blues, but it kept me sane. I often went home late in the evening, delaying my lonesome return. I remember crossing the echoing emptiness of Central Station towards my train one misty February evening, carrying a box containing a small portable colour television. It was bulky rather than heavy and, with no-one to help, involved continual stops for a rest, exacerbating my sense of loss and isolation.

One of the better programmes on the new BBC Scotland channel has been its documentary series on the work of the staff at Glasgow's Central Station. Nothing bleak there. It's resolutely upbeat. Everyone smiles. Even when trains to Edinburgh refuse to move. Or there's an expectation of thousands of fans en route to Mount Florida for a celebrity gig, or Scottish Cup Final match at Hampden, and a dearth of staff to deal with the huge last minute queue for rail tickets.

Everyone on the staff seems to be related to everyone else. One station attendant counted 10 members of his family currently working at the station. Another is 'married to the Voice', the woman who announces the train departures. Perhaps that contributes to the apparent harmony of the team. Everyone understands everyone else. The accents, the tones of voice, the banter. 'It's more like a family than a job.'

Susan, the station manager, sporting a waterfall of jet black hair, wants her station to be top dog in the National Rail passenger survey. She's been there before and has a trophy to prove it, but this year Central comes in at sixth. She's gutted. 'That's a fail,' she says, the smile quivering. What can she do? More seats. More bike-parking places. But can she find the space?

One feature the station does have is a piano on the concourse. Anyone can play, so they do. A man from Nottingham in a tweed jacket dons a tartan bonnet and ginger wig and settles down to play *Good Morning* with aplomb. Craig, a young conductor on the TransPennine Express to Manchester Airport, limbers up on it before he starts his shift. A refugee from Wishaw, he has seven guitars and a piano in his single bed Glasgow flat. *Layla* by Derek and the Dominos is his signature piece. But for one of the women at the information desk the piano is frustrating. Most people play one of only four different tunes, not always well, and sometimes very loudly, so she can't hear her customers.

Paul, a tall man with an Old Testament beard, is the station's resident tour guide. 'Central to Glasgow, that's Glasgow Central' is his motto. He's been there for 20 years and knows stuff. He knows the main concourse gradient was a deliberate form of Victorian crowd control. He knows there are 48,000 panes of glass in the longitudinal ridged and furrowed roof: 'the epitome of Victorian virility. Biggest was best'. The panes were painted black during the war to fox the Luftwaffe and later replaced. He loves descending to the Victorian lower level under the noisy escalators and wandering for hours in 'the land that time forgot'. It was opened in 1896 and closed off in the 1960s. Now it lies dusty and derelict, like a location from a Craig Robertson crime novel, the old arches regularly punctuated by the modern suburban trains, their windows lit up, moving southwards through the gloom. A veritable exercise in time travel.

Floyd is an English springer spaniel trained to detect explosives. His police handler's security checks take him on a 15-mile walk round the station each day. Floyd stops at a red case left outside the ticket office. No, it isn't dangerous. Just left there momentarily by an octogenarian former railway guard who should have known better. Turns out he's a veteran of the Cameronian Scottish Rifles en route with some old mates to a veterans' garden party

at Buckingham Palace. Spontaneously, they join in a recitation of Laurence Binyon's *For the Fallen* to entertain the friendly officer.

Central Station was opened on 1 August 1879 by the Caledonian Railway, on the site of a village called Grahamston, summarily evacuated to make way for it. Currently, it handles in excess of 32 million passengers annually – 100,000 per day. It's Scotland's largest and busiest station, running over 950 trains daily to more than 160 stations on the national rail network. On Cup Final day they budget for 4,500 fans. When it's Beyoncé and Jay-Z, or Ed Sheerin, they anticipate 10-14,000 fans and lay on special trains. In a summer heatwave during study leave in Scottish schools, scores of exuberant hormonal teenagers board the trains down the Ayrshire coast to Irvine or Troon.

Things do go wrong. Storm Hector, otherwise referred to as 'Hurricane Bawbag', blows up. Gusts in excess of 70 miles per hour cause havoc. Trees on the line. A trolley on the tracks. Damage to overhead wires. Trains and drivers end up at opposite ends of where they need to be. Another day, the brakes on the Edinburgh train won't budge. Crowds are redirected from platform to platform and not everyone's happy. One expansive guard with a distinctive bleached hairstyle declaims in stereo: 'If there's one thing I hate, it's an unhappy passenger'. A colleague demonstrates their whistle routine and adds a jazz riff for good measure. Against regulations, he has an image of a saxophone discreetly printed on the back of his orange overalls.

Another day the tracks overheat, causing points failure. So at night, when the station is closed, a posse of workmen paint the rails white, reducing the heat by 5%, so less risk of points failure. Delays cause consequences. 'People are here to move. We're here to move them.' Even if it involves hiring taxis to take people as far as Lockerbie or Carlisle.

The old romance of steam engines, the Turneresque clouds of steam, the atmosphere of Edwardian crime novels, has long gone. But there are still trainspotters about, as a grandfather and grandson testify. 'I like the sound, the colours and travelling on them,' the small boy says.

The staff take great pride in their work: 'A snapshot of the universe'. 'A town within a city.' 'If you like people-watching, this is the job for you.' 'Organised chaos, but we make it work.' 'No job too big or small.' Monday is pigeon check day. Up on the roof, seagulls dive-bomb any inspectors foolhardy enough to emerge during the breeding season. 'Every day something happens, so you have to be ready for anything.' There are medical incidents and drunken episodes. 'Glaswegians like a good swally,' a man sings joyously to the camera.

Sajid from Pakistan retires after 45 years. While down under the Hielanman's Umbrella, in the Blue Lagoon chippie on Argyle Street, Nizar from Syria ladles fish and chips to takeaway customers during Ramadan, philosophically allowing himself to be bossed by his female manager, who has taught him all the Glesca lingo he needs to combat culture shock, serve Justin Beiber incognito and survive with an engaging smile.

# PUBLIC LIFE

# Scotland's secret judges

Kenneth Roy

2009

It is not always necessary to commit a crime before you are compulsorily detained against your will. If you are considered to be so mentally ill that you require to be kept in hospital, often for a very long period, and to have drugs administered to you without your permission, then you may become the subject of a 'Compulsory Treatment Order' under the Mental Health Act. To borrow the popular term, you may be sectioned.

Until recently, it was a sheriff who approved such orders. The name of the sheriff was public knowledge. There was a certain comfort in this knowledge.

In October 2005, a new enlightenment was introduced in Scotland, 'a pioneering approach' to mental illness. Instead of a sheriff sitting alone, the tribunal came into being: a three-person panel consisting of a legal person, a medical person, and a lay person. Such was the volume of cases, the weight of mental illness afflicting our society, many such panels were required. A new publicly-funded organisation, the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland, with its own executive agency, was set up by the Scottish Government at a cost of almost £10 million a year. The tribunal, in its own words, 'makes decisions, and issues orders, regarding the long-term compulsory care and treatment of people with mental disorders'.

The new bureaucracy is based in a business park in Hamilton. It employs 84 people and has a chief executive who earns £60,000 a year. It claims to provide 'a responsive, accessible, independent and impartial service'. Its creation is said to have marked 'a fundamental change in the way decisions are made'.

Like all bureaucracies, this one is addicted to jargon. Straight out of Orwell, we have functionaries called 'Hearings' Clerks' who 'advise participants with regard to logistics'. Needless to say, there are 'core values', one of them being to 'engage proactively with stakeholders'. The tribunal, so often woolly in its use of language, is however explicit about its powers: '... if you receive a citation to attend the hearing then you must attend the hearing. It is an offence to refuse or fail, without reasonable excuse, to comply with a citation'.

Presumably in an attempt to appear less intimidating, the tribunal's website offers several definitions of mental illness. Under the perplexing heading 'Learning Disability', we are reassured: 'In its milder form, an individual might have a bout of depression and be "fed up" but can manage to lift their spirits and go on with their day to day lives'. What being fed up has to do with learning disability, only the tribunal can say.

An advocate, Eileen Davie, was appointed first president of the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland. In November 2007, it was announced that she had quit her job several years before the expiry of her term of office; *The Herald*, reporting her unexpected departure,

suggested she had had 'a row' with a member of the tribunal named Joe Morrow. Nothing more was heard of this speculation. Dr Morrow was then appointed interim president, an appointment confirmed in October 2008.

Who is Dr Morrow? There is a photograph of him on the tribunal's website, but no accompanying biography. He is quoted in the annual report: 'Mental health is a complex area and there are inevitably issues which arise as we strive to provide the legal wrapping for the treatment of people who are at a stage in their life where they are vulnerable'. The campaign for plain English, as it searches for examples of best practice, need not trouble itself with the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland.

I have discovered that at the time of his appointment Dr Morrow was a Labour councillor in Dundee. Earlier this year he resigned his seat in order to concentrate on his other commitments. A solicitor by profession, he is said to be interested in cooking, travel and rare breed farm animals. His appointment to the tribunal is part-time: the commitment expected by his employers is between 10 and 15 days a month.

The president is paid for his work. The question is: how much?

I emailed the tribunal and put this simple question. I asked also how much the panel members are paid. I was given the latter figures, but I have still not been told how much Dr Morrow is paid. No matter: I unearthed the information from a Scottish Government press release dating back to the time of his appointment. His daily rate is £620. If he works 10 days a month, the minimum, he earns £74,400 a year. If he works 15 days a month, he earns £111,600. Ten days a month would make him the second highest-paid part-time chairman in Scottish public life; 15 days a month would make him easily the highest.

I have been unable to find any record of how much he has actually received in the last 12 months. Perhaps, in the public interest, the tribunal should tell us.

The performance of the executive agency supporting the tribunal's work has not inspired confidence. In the accounting year which ended 31 March 2008, it incurred costs of £9.7 million, £1.7 million more than the amount allocated by the Scottish Government. This serious over-spend was explained by the 'higher than expected' number of tribunals. But the Auditor-General for Scotland raised wider issues in a report on the governance of the organisation.

I have read his report. For three successive years, he found that the agency did not have 'sufficient permanent financial expertise within its own staffing establishment to support effective financial management'. He found, for example, that there was no register of fixed assets. He found that included within the accounts was a long-term liability of £100,000 for the former president's pension – 'an unusual arrangement', the Auditor-General noted. More seriously, from the point of view of patients, he identified a risk that statutory deadlines for the hearing of tribunals would not be achieved. None of these findings attracted much media attention; nor did the recent, unexplained decision that the administrative arm of the tribunal would cease to be an executive agency and instead be absorbed into the core services of the Scottish Government.

The successive presidents of the Mental Health Tribunal cannot be held responsible for defects within the organisation. The president is responsible for the judicial functioning of the tribunal, not for its financial and administrative systems. But the judicial functioning itself has not been above reproach. A woman named Elizabeth Byrne, who had received a compulsory treatment order (and thus been deprived of her liberty), appealed to have the order revoked. Ms Byrne's solicitor was given only 10 minutes to look at the case papers, a state of affairs described by Sheriff Principal James Taylor, who was hearing the appeal, as 'little short of astonishing'. He concluded that the tribunal had breached the woman's human rights: a remarkable judicial indictment of a public body. Again, there was little or no media interest, yet the general problem brought to light by the case of Elizabeth Byrne has continued to surface. As recently as March this year, it was reported that the tribunal was failing to allow sufficient time for cases to be prepared.

The tribunal, in reply to such allegations, invariably points to its heavier than anticipated caseload. This, however, is no-one's fault but the tribunal's. It estimated that there would be between 2,500 and 3,000 hearings a year; it soon became obvious that the actual number would be 3,500. In 2007-08, compulsory treatment orders accounted for 57.5% of all hearings. This figure represents 2,000 human beings, all of whom are subject to the considerable powers of the tribunal.

When I became aware of the disturbing, mostly undocumented record of the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland, and its now disbanded executive agency, I decided to establish the names of the individuals who serve on the tribunal. I assumed this would be a simple matter. I assumed this for two reasons: these are public appointments, made by the Scottish ministers; and they are appointments which impinge directly on the liberty of Scotland's most vulnerable people.

I was encouraged by a statement of NHS National Services Scotland, when the tribunal was set up four years ago, that 'a list of those appointed as members of the tribunal is now available at the Mental Health Tribunal website'. NHS National Services Scotland helpfully advised potential users which link to click. I then went to the tribunal's website, clicked the recommended link, but found only a short general description of the three categories of membership. The promised names were missing.

Puzzled by such an obvious omission, I emailed the tribunal and asked for the names. At this stage, I expected to receive them. Instead, I got the following reply: 'We have approximately 400 members of the tribunal and would need to contact all of them asking their permission to disclose the details you have requested'.

I took this as a refusal, an interpretation confirmed by subsequent events. So I decided to refer it to the Information Commissioner for Scotland with a specific question: is the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland obliged under the Freedom of Information Act Scotland to supply the names of its members? I received two replies, including a fairly detailed one. In view of the importance of this case, we are publishing them; they make interesting reading for anyone who believes that the term 'freedom of information' means

what it says. In effect, the view of the Information Commissioner is that the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland, as a 'judicial agency', is not covered by the legislation and that it has no duty under the act to issue the names of its members. I seemed to be back to square one.

But not quite. I returned to the tribunal's website and discovered something that I had not spotted on earlier visits: a search facility. I typed in the words 'Names of the tribunal members' and up they came: the names of 118 'Legal Panel Members'; 112 'Medical Panel Members'; 134 'General Panel Members' – a total of 364 names. I took the precaution of printing the list.

The following exchange of emails then took place:

KR: I have, with some difficulty, accessed the names of all your panel members from your own website and am interested to know why information which is freely available on the website is subject to 'permission' from the members when a journalist requests the same information.

MHTS: It is my understanding that the list of members was removed from the website some time ago so I would be grateful if you would tell me how you actually accessed them.

KR: I am amazed by your reply. Our administrator will forward the link to you within the next few minutes. The list is available by using the search facility on your website.

MHTS: Thank you for pointing that out. This list will be removed from our website.

The fact that the tribunal was unaware of what was on its own website – indeed what it obviously regards as the most sensitive part of the site – does nothing to dispel the unfavourable impression created by the public utterances of the Auditor-General for Scotland and the Sheriff Principal of Glasgow. To put it plainly: if the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland is unable to manage efficiently the contents of its own website, and requires the media to point out what is on it, is it possible to be wholly confident about other aspects of its operation? Sheriff Principal Taylor used the words 'little short of astonishing' to describe his own experience with this body. The same words apply to my own experience.

But there is a much larger issue involved here. It is the issue of openness and accountability in Scottish public life.

When the tribunal was established, there was no suggestion that the names of the tribunal members would be withheld from the media or from the public in general. On the contrary, as I have pointed out, NHS National Services Scotland invited anyone interested to visit the tribunal's website for these names.

My first questions are: at what stage did the tribunal change its policy and decide that, notwithstanding the inept management of its website, it would rather not divulge the names of its members?; and why was this change of policy introduced?

My next questions are: given the transparency demanded of other public bodies in Scotland, does the tribunal consider that it enjoys some special status?; if so, why?

This is a body which makes life-changing decisions about the freedom of individuals. The importance of its work is no doubt reflected in the fee structure: £620 a day for the

part-time president, £430 a day for the legal members, £387 a day for the medical and lay members. This level of remuneration for part-time appointments is generous compared with other public bodies, as we will show later. It is important to bear in mind that the enormous annual bill for employing these people is met by the public. For this reason, but much more vitally for the welfare of patients, the public has a right to know who they are.

It seems the public has no such right. It seems that the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland is beyond the law. We have entrusted the lives of our most vulnerable citizens to an unelected group of 364 which meets in panels of three behind closed doors, consigning men and women to mental institutions, some for life, and yet wishes to keep its own identities secret. This is a public disgrace.

# Private houses

Kenneth Roy

2009

Our campaign for more openness in Scotland's non-departmental public bodies (loosely known as quangos) seems to be yielding positive results. Following our stand-off, *SR* and the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland are now on speaking terms. I have received a letter from its head of administration, Paul Smart, confirming that although the tribunal is not subject to the Freedom of Information Scotland Act, its administration (as part of the Scottish Government's Justice and Communities Directorate) does have a duty under the legislation. Whatever else it is, freedom of information ain't simple.

The official explanation for the removal of the 364 names from the tribunal's website is 'unfortunate administrative confusion'. Mr Smart assures me that it was never the intention for these names to be kept secret. He assures me that 'steps have now been taken' to improve the tribunal's procedures. He further assures me that the names have been reinstated on the website and helpfully provides a link to the complete list.

Questions remain. Why was the list removed from the website in the first place? When was it removed – before or after April 2009, when the tribunal's administration became subject to disclosure requirements? Why was it removed twice – first so ineptly that I could still access it by using a search facility, then with clinical efficiency as soon I expressed an interest in obtaining the names officially? Why was the list not restored until *SR* complained formally to the Scottish ministers?

It seems we are entitled to ask for an internal review; tempting as it is to go for it, we will leave it there. Basic principles of access to public information have been asserted. Anyone can now see who is serving on the tribunal's panels. It seems reasonable to suppose that the same 'confusion' will not arise again.

In short: enough is enough.

Do not assume, however, that the Mental Health Tribunal was some aberration, an exception to the otherwise gloriously visible public life of Scotland.

Difficult as it is to believe, there is a quango even less communicative than the tribunal has been until now. It is called the Private Rented Housing Panel. My suspicions were aroused (m'Lud) when there was very little about it in the Scottish Government's online directory of NDPBs and anyone in search of a list of the members was advised to go to the panel's own website. Naturally, I went without delay. It is a colourful little site; models pretending to be landlords and tenants have been hired to provide photos of a range of satisfied clients. It all looks clean and accessible.

The trouble is, there's almost nothing there.

At the risk of sounding like a friend of the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland, I must

acknowledge that, although the names of 363 of the 364 tribunal members went missing from its website, there was at least a photo of Dr Joe Morrow, its head-honcho. Not so with the Private Rented Housing Panel. Despite the Scottish Government's assurance, there is no central list of members on the panel's website. The names of the president and secretary are not given; nor those of the 38 members (although some can be found by accessing individual adjudications). The panel is funded by the Scottish Government and makes judgements on questions of rent in the burgeoning private market. Yet it appears to feel no sense of responsibility to communicate basic, easy-to-find information about who's running the show.

What does this say about the Private Rented Housing Panel? Perhaps it should be re-named the Terribly Private Rented Housing Panel.

It was the Scottish Government, not the panel, which gave me the name of the president. She is Isabel Montgomery, a solicitor. For her work with the panel, she is paid a fee of £20,568 a year from public funds. There is a solicitor called Isabel Montgomery who serves on the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland; I believe they are one and the same. But it is not really good enough that the inquirer has to rely on the Scottish Government for such information.

The issue with the Private Rented Housing Panel is more serious than simply a shyness about names. I clicked on 'Annual Reports' in the expectation of being able to download the information I was after. Surprise surprise, the panel, although it must have published at least one annual report since it was established in 2007, hasn't got around to posting it on its own website. So, bizarrely, we have a page called 'Annual Reports' without any annual reports.

Last week, I emailed the panel and requested the names of its members under the Freedom of Information Scotland Act. I was told the panel secretary was on annual leave until Monday. Monday came and went; I emailed again. On Tuesday, after this prompt, the names arrived. But again, it has required some determination to discover essential facts about a publicly funded body whose work impinges on the lives of many people. It shouldn't be like this. In the interests of transparency in Scottish public life, I hope that when I re-visit the website of the Private Rented Housing Panel, I will find the names of its members and the latest annual report available for downloading. But I'm not holding my breath.

Someone who runs a public body of greater significance than the Private Rented Housing Panel wrote privately to me with his assessment of the problem. He says he believes the Scottish Government expects NDPBs to be responsible for providing relevant, up-to-date information on their own websites; as *SR*'s campaign has identified, some are failing to do so. In his view, there needs to be greater consistency all round. He has undertaken to raise the matter with the Scottish Government.

Meanwhile, our campaign continues.

# We're in it for the money

Kenneth Roy

2009

On my first visit to Shetland, I fell in love with it on sight. Wandering down the main street of Lerwick, it seemed magically different, borrowed from another time, another place.

When I went back, it was mob-handed with a film crew from the BBC. We arrived one evening in winter and went straight to the hotel. It had never heard of us and, although it was quite a large hotel by island standards, we were assured there was nothing doing. I learned later that the oil companies (for this was at the height of the boom) booked out most of the place for their execs, but that the rooms were often empty. Whatever the explanation for the mix-up, we found ourselves in Lerwick with nowhere obvious to stay.

I knocked on the door of the only person in the islands whose name I knew. It was a Mr Graham. I had never met him, but was familiar with his literary and journalistic work; he was a teacher by profession, perhaps a headteacher. I explained our predicament and, within minutes, Mr Graham had arranged for the four strangers from the BBC to stay in the homes of local people. I have never forgotten the hospitality of the Shetland islanders that night.

I tell this little story to show that I bear no animosity towards Shetland; quite the reverse. But it seems that these feelings of affection may not be mutual. The love affair has turned sour.

For half a year, we have been banging on about secrecy in Scottish public life. Our concerns were formalised some time ago in the campaign we call 'Open Scotland' – an attempt to convince anyone who cares to listen that there is a need for greater transparency about who does what and how much they are paid from the public purse for doing it.

Part of this campaign has been directed at secrecy over top management salaries in the NHS in Scotland. We have identified no fewer than seven NHS boards – half the total – which fail to disclose in full in their annual accounts the salaries and/or pension details of their senior people. This is unacceptable. I am surprised that anyone in public life should find it acceptable. It is unacceptable in principle for a very simple reason: the public is entitled to know how much the people running the National Health Service are earning. It is unacceptable in practice for an equally simple reason: there is a sense of dismay at the level of what are crudely termed 'fat cat salaries', particularly in the NHS.

The Prime Minister has expressed his personal dismay and insisted that the salaries of the top public sector earners throughout the UK, some of whom he considers are being paid excessively, will be posted on government websites: that these people will be named and, by implication, shamed. But, given the lack of co-operation at a high level, this may be easier said than done. The Auditor-General for Scotland, Robert Black, told *The Herald* a

few months ago that the *Scottish Review* was mistaken in its belief that he was compliant in the refusal of so many NHS managers in Scotland to reveal their salaries or pensions; Mr Black's position is that he wishes there to be complete transparency but is powerless to insist on it.

Despite this discouragement, we press on. Last December, we filed a freedom of information request to NHS Shetland, one of the seven NHS offenders and incomparably the worst. Its chief executive, Sandra Laurenson, is the only chief executive in Scottish public life who refuses to divulge salary. We asked for the salary and pension details of Ms Laurenson and several others. The board had 20 working days to respond to this request. Its flat refusal within three hours suggested, not only a lack of poise, but an absence of any serious consideration. We were informed brusquely that this was personal information covered by data protection. We were not surprised by this response and asked for an internal review of the decision. Same result.

In late January, we appealed to the Scottish Information Commissioner. A few days ago, we received a helpful reply from Donald Thomson, the officer assigned to our case. But when I say that it is helpful, I do not mean that it is reassuring; simply that Mr Thomson has carefully set out the legal position. He confirms that information regarding an individual's salary and pensions arrangements is personal information as defined in the Data Protection Act. The executives at NHS Shetland, and the many other public officials of a secretive nature, are entitled to withhold this 'personal information' unless – and here is the essential caveat – the applicant seeking the information (in this case, the *Scottish Review*) has legitimate interests in obtaining it and the disclosure is necessary to achieve these legitimate interests.

Mr Thomson, very fairly, is giving us an opportunity to state our legitimate interests and to say why they outweigh those of the six individuals named in our request. We intend to do so – fully. But they can be summarised in a single sentence. Our legitimate interests are identical to those of the public's.

NHS Shetland has told Mr Thomson plainly that the *Scottish Review* does not have a legitimate interest in obtaining the information. It has gone further and suggested that our only interest in publishing the information 'on a news website' is the hope that the website will attract more interest as a result. How did NHS Shetland arrive at this remarkable assumption? As Mr Thomson himself acknowledges in his letter to us, the board 'did not contact you to ascertain what you considered to be your legitimate interests'. Why not?

But let's consider the assumption, for what it's worth. We are in this for the commercial advancement of the *Scottish Review*. In effect, we are in it for the money.

It is almost flattering to be described as a news website. I suppose we do occasionally report news: but only news we have discovered for ourselves. Most of the time, however, we do what we have been doing for the last 15 years, and for most of that time as the official publication of an educational charity called the Institute of Contemporary Scotland: we promote discussion of the social, economic and cultural issues facing Scotland in

accordance with ICS's articles of association. Part of our remit, according to these same articles, involves research into these same social, economic and cultural issues.

Anyone who wishes to confirm what I say – NHS Shetland could have done so, even within the two hours 37 minutes it took to respond negatively to our freedom of information request – only has to consult the 'Office' section of this website where the relationship between the *Scottish Review* and the Institute of Contemporary Scotland, and the charitable nature of both, is explicitly stated and explained. Unlike Ms Laurenson, we receive no public funding for this work. We depend on the generosity of public-spirited individuals, who are listed on this website in the Friends of the *Scottish Review* section. Could we be any more transparent?

As for 'attracting more interest' in the *Scottish Review* by the publication of Ms Laurenson's salary, I have good news for NHS Shetland. Whenever I write about freedom of information questions, the number of hits this column receives dips significantly. Mention 'Megrahi' or 'Purcell' and the number of hits increases significantly. The old theory that names sell papers continues to be true. If we wanted to attract more interest in the *Scottish Review*, we would drop this campaign at once.

But we won't.

# Sausage rolls and a £10 voucher

Kenneth Roy

2009

These are the stories of two Scotlands.

The latest chapter in the first story took place in one of two remaining occupied dwellings in an otherwise derelict block in Fountainwell Road, Glasgow. An old couple, Mr and Mrs Daly, marooned there, refuse to budge until their landlord, Glasgow Housing Association, offers them a decent alternative. For more than two weeks, we have been pressing the association to act. Finally, yesterday afternoon, Mr and Mrs Daly received a visit from a housing officer. After the meeting, I spoke to Mr Daly on the telephone.

'Did they offer you compensation for the loss of the CCTV cameras?' (As owner occupiers, they had paid £2,000 towards the cost of installing them.)

'Yes, we were offered £500 and we've accepted.'

'It doesn't sound much.'

'Well, we had the use of them for 12 years until they removed them. I think £500 is fair.'

'What happens when the two of you are evacuated on Saturday?' (They are being moved out for 24 hours as a safety precaution: the multi-storey blocks adjoining their own two-storey block are being demolished.) 'Have they given you any assurances?'

'We'll be taken to a hotel in the city centre. They say that when we arrive at the hotel we'll be given sausage rolls and a voucher to cover our meals until breakfast on Sunday.'

'How much?'

'£10 each.'

'Again, it doesn't sound much.'

Mr Daly laughed bitterly.

'The last time we were moved out, we only got a fiver.'

'What was said about a permanent move?' (They have already rejected a notorious local ghetto.)

'They're coming back later in the week with a map.'

'That sounds promising. So you get to choose roughly where you want to live?'

'We're hoping.'

After this conversation, I thought about the sausage rolls and the £10 vouchers and what they say about this first Scotland, the Scotland of the poor, but also what they say about the second Scotland, the statist society which doles out the sausage rolls and the £10 vouchers. Mrs Daly is still attending hospital regularly, having lost the sight of an eye because of a stroke two months ago. Mr Daly is a veteran of that filthy, forgotten war in Korea, from which young men returned never to be quite the same again (I speak from personal experience of my own uncle). I thought about the destiny of their lives in a changed and

deeply stratified city; and about the map of that city. Then I thought about the cheque for £500 and of the old couple's insistence that this was fair. Fair. Who talks of fairness now? Perhaps it is only the inhabitants of this first Scotland, the Scotland of the poor, who have an exact grasp of the meaning of fairness.

And I thought how pathetically grateful people are for the least expression of human respect.

I have also been involved this week in the story of the second Scotland, the statist society, sometimes known as the establishment. I have discovered – I should have realised this long ago, but for some reason it has come as something of a shock – that, although the establishment thinks nothing of interfering in other people's affairs, indeed regards it as its duty to do so, occasionally bearing sausage rolls in the process, it is not so keen on other people interfering in its own affairs.

The establishment does not wish to be disturbed. So it was bad enough, but containable, that this small-circulation online magazine published a survey of Scotland's highest earners in the non-departmental public sector. But then it was picked up by the national press, and the same disquieting league table appeared all over *The Herald* with personal photographs – the picture library must have had its busiest day in years. In the words of our friends at *The Herald*, 'noses were out of joint'. I did not ask which noses and how badly re-arranged the noses were; some things are better left to the imagination. But the point was reaffirmed and is worth repeating. The establishment does not wish to be disturbed.

We could not supply a figure for the highest earner in NHS Shetland. It is almost certainly Dr K Graham, the medical director, who is on between £170,000 and £180,000 a year, equivalent to £6 for every man, woman and child in the Shetland Islands, but we could not be sure because two of Dr Graham's colleagues, the chief executive Sandra Laurenson and the director of public health Sarah Taylor, refused to disclose their salaries in their own board's annual accounts.

Sandra Laurenson has told a local news agency: 'I haven't done it [revealed her salary] because it is an individual choice, but if people think this is an issue in the public interest, I will, of course, consider that'. She added that NHS chief executives in the Scottish islands were 'in the lowest range of chief executives' pay'. What does all this mean? Sandra Laurenson has not, in fact, explained why she refuses to reveal her salary. She has said only that it was her choice not to do so. She remains coy about the actual figure. I will take an informed guess and state that she is earning comfortably in excess of £100,000 a year from the public purse. If she disagrees, she is free to correct the figure.

We have a problem in Scotland. Of course, it is a wider problem, it infects the whole of UK society, but I am concerned only with Scotland. The discussion following the publication of our league table has centred around the comparison between the vast sums being paid to senior managers in the NHS and the very much lower salaries elsewhere in the non-departmental public sector. This is understandable. The comparison is quite shocking. The privileged position of the NHS is quite shocking. The failure of the First

Minister to condemn it, when given an opportunity to do so by the leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, is quite shocking. But there is a deeper issue. The true comparison is not between one branch of the public service and all others, but between the public service and the majority of the Scottish people.

The gulf has become too wide. It is now so wide that it will only feed the already corrosive public disenchantment with the state and its institutions. A former senior civil servant at the Scottish Office (as it then was) wrote privately to me earlier this week. 'The main story [from *SR*'s survey] is that it is not just bankers who have unrealistically raised income. The gap between the top and the front line has been increased, at peril to sustainability, by greed at the top. This will not go away.'

He is right. This will not go away. On Saturday, the two Scotlands will meet in a Glasgow hotel. One will hand the other sausage rolls and a £10 food voucher.

# Nicola and the doctors

Kenneth Roy

2010

When I first inquired into the affairs of that obscure body, the Scottish Advisory Committee for Distinction Awards (SACDA), I soon discovered that its public face – indeed its very name – had been carefully designed to conceal more than it ever revealed. Distinction awards for what?, I wondered. It became clear that they were for one profession and one profession only: a narrow group within the profession at that. They were awards recognising 'outstanding professional work' by NHS consultants – graded A+ (the elite), A and B. The names of the recipients – hundreds of them, with new names added each autumn – were listed on SACDA's website, but – surprise, surprise – there was no mention of actual dosh. This inevitably aroused suspicion that there was something inconvenient about the figures; either that the awards were embarrassingly small or embarrassingly large. I tended to favour the latter theory.

So I sent an email to SACDA requesting a link on its website to the current value of each award. A few days later, NHS National Health Services (not SACDA) gave me the figures but no link to the website. My correspondent said that the site was being 'reviewed'. I replied that I no longer accepted what was claimed on the website – that these figures were there to be accessed. Later that day, NHS National Services added the figures to the site. I would describe the exchange of correspondence between us as cool in tone: I formed the impression that the people at SACDA were unaccustomed to awkward inquiries from journalists. But at least it is now possible to find out what the chaps in the white coats – there aren't many award-winning chapettes – receive on top of their basic salary. To be precise: A+, £75,889; A, £55,924; B, £31,959.

I confess that, in my innocence, I imagined that these were one-off, good boy awards for older consultants (the average age of recipients is 51). I was not alone in this assumption; it was shared by at least one health correspondent who contacted this office. On the contrary: if, at the age of 51, you receive a distinction award of £75,889, you get it for life and it counts towards your pension. Assuming, then, that you retire at 65, your distinction award is worth a total of £1,062,446, a booty met from public funds. There is then the small matter of your salary – around £100,000 a year – and nothing in the rules to stop you doing private work as well. All in all, it is a hugely advantageous set-up, made all the more jolly by the composition of the committee dishing out the loot. It is heavily dominated by NHS consultants, all of whom are themselves beneficiaries of the scheme.

After SR's initial revelations, a journalist from a national newspaper called us. We confirmed the information we had published, assured him it could be stood up. He sounded interested and said that he would be getting in touch with the Scottish

Government. When he called back, he was less enthusiastic about the story. He said the Scottish Government had assured him that the bonuses went to the consultants' employers, the area health boards. I explained that, strictly speaking, this was true, but that the employers then passed on the money to the consultants as part of their salary. But the official briefing had implanted a doubt: I was not surprised when the newspaper in question failed to follow up *SR's* investigation. Perhaps the journalist could not accept that anyone would be paid a bonus of £76,000 a year, every year until retirement, from public funds. It does sound a little implausible. He had forgotten that we are dealing here with the NHS.

The essentially secretive nature of SACDA has been only slightly dented by this magazine's insistence on basic transparency. Next to nothing is known about the committee's methodology. No adequate explanation has ever been offered for the very low number of female consultants (only 71 in the scheme's history) receiving distinction awards. And, of course, no other category of NHS staff is entitled to these awards: not the overworked junior doctors, nor the under-paid nurses. In its secrecy and its exclusivity, this scheme is a national disgrace, particularly at a time when the NHS is stretched to breaking point. We have argued for months that it ought to be radically amended or scrapped.

That is why Nicola Sturgeon should be wholeheartedly supported for her proposal to abolish the scheme and replace it with a less expensive system which would reward staff across the health service. As a practicable starting point, the Scottish Health Secretary favours freezing next year's budget for the awards, not only in Scotland but throughout the UK, so that one country does not gain a recruitment advantage over another. We go further and suggest that the scheme is suspended: that, while the annual bonus to existing award-winners is maintained pending review, no new awards are made this year. Gordon Brown's response to Nicola Sturgeon's initiative will be a test for the Prime Minister. Mr Brown has recently expressed his distaste for excessive pay at the top of the public sector. Will he now put his lack of money where his mouth is?

# The only people in Scotland with nothing to say

Kenneth Roy

2014

## 1.

If it is true that a quarter of the photographs ever taken have been taken in the last year, it could be equally true that a quarter of all the opinions ever expressed in Scotland have been expressed in the first four months of this year. We are drowning in them. Still, there is a perverse satisfaction to be derived from the silence of the few people who have nothing – or next to nothing – to say for themselves.

It is just a pity that these are the people who are running the show, the daily grinders of the executive machine, upon whom we should reliably depend for understanding – and occasional enlightenment.

Here are two current examples of how little these important people have to say for themselves.

A few weeks ago, the *Scottish Review* published new information about the appeal by St Margaret's Children and Family Care Society, a Glasgow-based adoption agency, against a decision of OSCR, the charity regulator, to revoke its charitable status on the grounds of discrimination against same-sex couples. Many were surprised when the appeal was upheld and the agency was allowed to go on discriminating in this way.

On 2 April, we revealed that the chairman of the tribunal which heard the appeal was himself closely associated with – indeed the secretary of – an organisation which is strongly opposed to civil partnerships and gay marriage. We questioned whether a decision on so sensitive an issue of public policy should have been made by someone with partisan connections and invited the Scottish Charity Appeals Panel to consider whether a conflict of interest had arisen in this case.

There have been two developments since then. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has described the tribunal's decision as 'mistaken in its understanding' and 'not easy to follow'. EHRC has written to St Margaret's advising it to ensure that applications from couples in civil partnerships are treated without unlawful discrimination. It is hard to say whether St Margaret's has adapted its selection policy in the light of this advice. Its website has been down for some weeks.

In the second development, the National Secular Society issued a statement calling SR's disclosure 'worrying' and announced its intention to raise the matter of the tribunal chairmanship with the Scottish Government.

These interventions are welcome, though it would be fanciful to imagine that anything will come of them. But what of the tribunal itself? We wrote to the secretariat on 31 March,

giving it an opportunity to respond publicly before we published the story. By 2 April, publication day, we had heard nothing, and said so.

Later that day, however, we received this reply from David Inglis, secretary of the tribunal:

*Dear Mr Roy*

*Please accept my apologies for not replying to you sooner.*

*I can confirm that the secretariat has no comment to make on this matter.*

*Kind regards*

*David*

The kind regards are reciprocated, but it was not really kindness we were after. It was a clarification, even a justification, of the appointment – a degree of public accountability. But the tribunal wasn't prepared to engage. Mr Inglis was saying nothing.

## 2.

Last winter, the *Scottish Review* drew critical attention to another issue of public policy – the deeply intrusive nature of a questionnaire circulated to children in Perth and Kinross schools.

As a result of our campaign in support of the objecting parents, some success has been achieved. The questionnaire was referred to the Scottish Government's analytical services division ahead of its roll-out to schools in other parts of Scotland. The offensive content has been considerably toned down.

But serious issues remain. One of them concerns the reliability of the published data collected from individual schools. For example: according to the survey, only 27% of children attending Comrie Primary School reported 'good school engagement' compared with 54% in the local authority area as a whole, and only 41% rated 'school work important' compared with an average of 59%.

These were terrible results – the worst of any primary school in the area – but Perth and Kinross Council promptly published them on its website. The bemused local community felt entitled to challenge this move, particularly as the results flatly contradicted the official schools inspection conducted only five months earlier. The inspectors were glowing in their praise of the school, remarking on its 'positive, caring and inclusive learning environment' and the 'commitment, teamwork and leadership skills' of the pupils.

Understandably, the parents chose to believe the favourable verdict of the national schools inspectorate and to reject the damning one of a survey conducted by a charity based in south-west England and paid for by the council. Dr James Irvine, an eminent physician and fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, wrote to *SR* pointing out that a few rogue answers in a small cohort (only 44 at Comrie) could throw survey findings seriously askew. He said that the council should not be publishing results over which there were so many doubts.

The parents, fearful that their much-loved primary school, and the community in general, were getting a bad name, have been pressing the local authority for months to withdraw the Comrie report from the council website.

The Scottish Government's analytical services division had this to say on the publication of the survey results: 'While we recognise that head teachers will have an interest in school level results and that this is likely to be useful in planning services and support within individual schools, it is the recommendation [of analytical services] that local authorities give careful consideration as to whether these are made publicly available'.

Encouraged by this official guidance, one of the parents wrote to the chief executive of Perth and Kinross Council, Bernadette Malone, repeating the request that the Comrie report should be removed from the council website. She received this reply:

*I have discussed your email and would advise that the Council's position in regard to this survey has not changed.*

There is no clue in this 20-word response to the nature of the discussion. Did Ms Malone have time, in the 24 hours that elapsed between the receipt of the request and her reply, to give 'careful consideration' to the advisability of publishing disputed data? How many councillors had given it careful consideration – or *any* consideration?

From Ms Malone's two-line dismissal of the request, there is no way of knowing.

### 3.

These are just two examples of how public Scotland operates. No doubt they are replicated hundreds of times a day. They say nothing reassuring about the quality of engagement between the administrators of our public life and the people they are paid to serve.

In neither case we have quoted was there even a token attempt to provide any explanation or context for decisions made on the public's behalf. In both cases, 'No comment' was in effect the *only* comment. In the brave new Scotland, the one with such an enormous conceit of itself, is this really as good as it gets?

# Board rigid

Kenneth Roy

2014

## 1.

A survey by the *Scottish Review* reveals that, despite repeated assurances of greater diversity in appointments to official boards, public life in Scotland is still dominated by a tiny charmed circle.

We selected a core group of two dozen influential bodies with responsibilities as disparate as health, welfare, education, the economy, justice and the environment, and then examined the composition of their policy-making boards. This core group has places for a total of 212 non-executive directors, all of whom are appointed and regulated by the Scottish ministers.

Of the 212 seats, no fewer than 81 (38%) are occupied by people with more than one public appointment. The extent of the inter-connection and overlap is remarkable. Only one of the group of 24 – Creative Scotland, the national arts funding agency – has a board free from association with any other board; and it may be no coincidence that Creative Scotland's is the only board in the group whose members are unpaid.

We found five national bodies – Care Inspectorate, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Scottish Police Authority, Scottish Social Services Council, and VisitScotland – in which a majority of the board are picking up taxpayer-funded fees from at least one other public body.

These facts make a mockery of the Scottish Government's periodic undertakings to enlarge the number of people taking part in public life. The truth is that the same names crop up in list after list and that some have been around so long that they have become semipermanent fixtures, moving seamlessly from one quango to another.

## 2.

Last month, Garry Coutts, a former councillor in Edinburgh and Highlands, was appointed chair of the relatively new Children's Hearings Scotland. Before Mr Coutts' arrival, it had already had what might tactfully be described as a troubled history.

Rather than award the chairmanship to a fresh face, some symbol of referendum year and its potential in the minds of so many, the Children's Minister, Aileen Campbell, signed off the appointment of Mr Coutts on a daily rate of £195 for eight days a month – an annual remuneration of £18,720.

Mr Coutts has been round the block. Until recently, he was chair not only of the Scottish Social Services Council (better known as the triple SC) on a retainer of between £20,000 and £25,000 a year (the annual accounts are no more specific) but chair of NHS Highland

on £29,640 a year. Last year, his term of office at the triple SC came to an end, leaving a hole in Mr Coutts' busy schedule.

He has now resumed his public double life, still picking up £29,640 a year from NHS Highland and with £18,720 a year guaranteed from Children's Hearings Scotland for the next four years – a total annual remuneration of £48,360. Could the Children's Minister, despite her inexperience, not have found someone else to run Children's Hearings Scotland, leaving Mr Coutts to devote his energies to NHS Highland?

Carole Wilkinson, a former senior civil servant, puts even Garry Coutts in the shade with a trio of appointments: the chair of Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) on £20,000 a year for two days a week, and membership of both Scottish Qualifications Authority (£4,600 a year) and NHS Education for Scotland (£8,000 a year). Ms Wilkinson should have demitted the chair of SCRA at the end of April, but there is no word of a successor on the organisation's website. Could it be that she is about to be reappointed? It would be par for this thinly populated course.

Another busy woman is Jeane Freeman, once aide to Jack McConnell, a former First Minister of whom little is heard these days. The same could not be said of Ms Freeman, a leading figure in Women for Independence, whose career has blossomed. She earns £24,960 a year for chairing the National Waiting Times Centre Board, £290 a day from the Judicial Appointments Board and £300 a day from the Scottish Police Authority. It is unclear how many days are involved.

It seems that there are so few women in Scottish public life, even in these enlightened times, that Ms Wilkinson and Ms Freeman have to share most of the burden between them. What is left can be safely entrusted to Professor Alice Brown, whose CV of offices past and present is a mighty document of modern Scotland.

At the moment, Professor Brown has only one public appointment. But it's a juicy one. John McClelland, her predecessor as chair of the Scottish Funding Council (for higher education), was expected to survive on £34,866 a year. When Professor Brown took over, the rate for the two-day-a-week assignment immediately jumped to an inflation-busting £46,488 a year.

### 3.

If Scotland votes Yes on 18 September, and Mr Salmond assembles his 'Team Scotland' to take us to the promised land, it will undoubtedly include several of those all-too-familiar names from the tired repertory company of Scottish public life, a company that has scarcely shifted a prop or executed an exit in the 15 years of a devolved parliament.

The first independent government will then have to create several new public institutions (as well as maintaining the existing ones), duplicating for Scotland the work done at present by bodies with a UK-wide remit. Where are the people of idealism, energy and public commitment to come from, beyond the present troupe of old stagers? There are two possibilities. Either such people do not exist, or they do exist and are not being appointed. Which is it?

## **Appendix: The group of 24**

The first figure is the number of board members who hold more than one public appointment regulated by the Scottish ministers. The second figure is the number of board members who hold only one public appointment regulated by the Scottish ministers.

Care Inspectorate: 5, 4  
Children's Hearings Scotland: 2, 5  
Creative Scotland: 0, 11  
Healthcare Improvement Scotland: 1, 7  
Highlands and Islands Enterprise: 5, 5  
Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland: 3, 7  
Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland: 3, 5  
NHS Education Scotland: 2, 4  
NHS Health Scotland: 4, 4  
NHS National Services Scotland: 2, 3  
Scottish Ambulance Service: 3, 6  
Scottish Enterprise: 3, 8  
Scottish Environment Protection Agency: 1, 9  
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service: 7, 5  
Scottish Funding Council: 3, 4  
Scottish Housing Regulator: 4, 4  
Scottish Legal Aid Board: 3, 9  
Scottish Natural Heritage: 3, 5  
Scottish Police Authority: 8, 5  
Scottish Qualifications Authority: 2, 6  
Scottish Social Services Council: 6, 4  
Skills Development Scotland: 2, 6  
State Hospitals Board for Scotland: 4, 1  
VisitScotland: 5, 4

# URBAN LIFE

# The sectarian west

Jack McLean

2000

What made my first encounter with sectarianism, I mean Scottish religious sectarianism, I mean Catholic versus Protestant, so very odd was that it was me who was odd. I'd never encountered it until I was in my early 20s and had moved up from London, an expat Scot suddenly in Lanarkshire. I had become an uncertificated teacher of art in a school in Hamilton, a town which was in fact rather middle-class, at least for Lanarkshire.

I was brought up first in Glasgow's douce Cathcart, where religion of any kind counted less than getting a house. We had a prefab and nobody noticed what your second name was (an important cursor in identifying your origins). Later we moved to Townhead where Highland and Irish Catholics lived in housing conditions worse than you could find in Naples and if the non-Catholics went to different churches, well the menfolk went to the same pubs and the women saw each other in the same steamies of a Friday night.

Do not fondly imagine that there was some kind of roseate idyll much celebrated by the likes of Molly Weir and other pundits who had long since left the Glasgow of reality. There must have been bigotry in the streets of my neighbourhood, but decent people didn't exercise it and my father, an agnostic ex-United Free Presbyterian chap of Western Isles origin married to my mother, part Jewish and part Cornish Methodist, never came out with any divide at all. I never heard the bigotry in my house.

And then I was sent to Allan Glen's School, a heavily selective establishment where, because there was no religious education practised, a lot of Catholic boys were sent. (Later, I was to discover that priests would rather Catholic boys and girls went to 'Junior' secondaries than a 'Proddy' senior secondary. There were few Catholic senior secondaries and in truth a number of the less educated priests, many brought over from Ireland in the 1930s, did not see further and higher education as necessarily a good thing.) But Allan Glen's had a lot of Catholic boys and nobody ever quite knew who they were anyway. We had a lot of Jewish boys too and they were a lot easier to identify because they had their own kosher dinners and *schul* after lessons were over. And so I knew nothing really about the sectarian divide. This sounds to a lot of Glaswegians as if I am making it up, but it's true.

I didn't find religious prejudice in London either. Sure there was a sense of a divide between English and Celts like myself and Irish and Welsh people, but there was a divide between southern English and northerners as well. In the Glasgow of my boyhood, I knew that there was a difference in some social mores within a variety of communities; different schools, churches, even aspirations. Heavens, there were Highland communities in Glasgow in which people from different islands kept to themselves. Let alone Irish people

from Donegal, long since settled in Scotland, who kept to their own friends and families originally from small villages separated by a few miles.

But what I didn't discover until I entered the dark lands of Lanarkshire were the hatreds and the flights of fancy of the Catholic-Protestant schism. I did not, in fact, know the origin of the conflict. I had never learned it from the knees of parents or relations or even friends. But in Hamilton and beyond I discovered blind bigotry. Papes and prods, taigs and Orange bastards, were words bandied about at will, even by educated, professional people. It was a revelation and I found it both very disturbing indeed and difficult to take seriously, if that does not seem a contradiction. Sometimes there was an irony intended, perhaps a rough humour. Sometimes it seemed all too real.

I also began to discover the very real resentments which Roman Catholics in particular harboured against what many of them still vaguely considered as the host community. There was no question that many Catholics were discriminated against in job opportunities and in the field of education. The skilled trades were often kept primarily for the non-Catholic population: especially in the old heavy industries of engineering, shipbuilding, and iron and steel. Even the newer lighter engineering such as the emergent automobile production tended to place non-Catholics in work. This is 30 years ago and less.

The professions – law, medicine, the financial sector – were awash with those of the Protestant conviction. This could lead to ludicrous situations. A solicitor of my acquaintance once applied to a well-known 'Catholic' firm to start his apprenticeship after taking his law degree. Aware that he was a non-Catholic, he was also blessed with the name 'Kelly' and after being offered the job was grateful for the opportunity to join this well-known Glasgow-based firm. On completion of the job interview he was asked a last question. 'Mr Kelly,' enquired the distinguished lawyer, a well-regarded and devout Catholic, 'what school did you go to?' This is an old shibboleth asked of West of Scotland citizens. He thought quickly on his feet. 'St Allan Glen's,' he replied. He got the job too.

This may well be considered anecdotal evidence: most of the evidence of this sectarianism is; but it is there all the same. It stretches from both communities and often beyond – into communities who have no or little religious connections at all. You can hear it within Jewish and Asian groups as well. Yet the truth is that it reverberates throughout the West of Scotland. But not elsewhere. When the composer James MacMillan spoke about sectarianism in his native land he was being a little unfair to large tracts of the country.

A friend of mine, a retired police commander who had resolutely refused to join the Freemasonry because in the Strathclyde context it was associated in his mind with a Protestant dominance in the force, told me that he went to school in Arbroath, where a sizeable number of his classmates spent an hour each Friday morning attending a separate religious service and he thought it was because they were Polish. (There was and is a large Polish and Lithuanian community there.) It was only when he came to Glasgow at the age of 15 that he realised they had been Catholics, for Angus had no separate denominational

schools. To this day, Grampian has no separate education, and yet there are a large number of Catholics in that region. Are the Roman Catholics of Grampian less worthy Catholics? Hardly, one would think.

Though the widespread idea of religious bigotry and sectarianism is much associated with what was once the Scottish Protestant majority – the virulence of the Orange Order and its flaunting parades is a sufficient testimony to that – the truth is a little more complicated. Indeed it is possible that, while anti-Catholicism is common enough among many non-Catholics, often in an unspoken but assumed manner, many Catholics, including people of such lapsed Catholic origin that they could hardly be described as being of that church, seem to wish to perpetuate long-held and by now inappropriate bitterness.

The atavism which yet surrounds that focus for sectarianism – football (largely the Rangers and Celtic clubs) – is much in evidence among a great number of Catholics who would otherwise find their sometimes jocular references to a tribalistic separatism unacceptable. I once walked out of a dinner at which I was making a speech because of the constant singing of sectarian songs. ('Have you seen a handsome Hun? Oh, no. Oh no.') It was held in a university hall in front of graduates. I'd have walked out of a similar gathering in which the equivalents were chanting 'Up to our knees in Fenian blood...'. In fact, surely one of the worst elements about QC Donald Findlay's singing of sectarian Orange-flavoured songs wasn't simply that an educated man should not have sung them – he shouldn't have known the words. But it does work both ways.

And it is not good enough to say, in mitigation, that Catholics have suffered much discrimination at the hands of what was for long the Protestant majority. It is time to recognise that such discrimination, though still there in pockets, is nothing like as widespread or effective as it once was. Since the break-up of most small businesses, such discrimination cannot prevail in any truly significant way. With the development in the post-war years of a new Catholic bourgeoisie, this has to be recognised.

At the same time, we should note that such grievances as James MacMillan adumbrated recently must be answered too. MacMillan hails from Ardrossan in Ayrshire, from one of the three towns, where sectarianism is rife and endemic. Nobody would have taken the composer's vapouring very seriously were it not for the fact that he is a classical musician. The bourgeoisie takes 'serious' music seriously; for once it took allegations of religious bigotry seriously too. Yet MacMillan saw this bigotry as entirely one-sided. From his side, this might seem justifiable. There are Orangemen who see it from their side too.

Why a non-Catholic should, for instance, pay his taxes for an educational system which actively promotes a religion which is anathema to him hardly seems reasonable. You don't think so? Well, look at the pinboard in any Scottish school staffroom. You will find the lists of promoted posts for which a teacher may apply pinned on the staffroom wall. You will discover that to be a principal teacher of history or religious education or a deputy headteacher or even the head himself, you will have to be a Roman Catholic to apply for the job in a Catholic school. That's official – though in reality the chance of a non-Catholic

being appointed to a promoted post in most Catholic schools is more than slight.

Glasgow, and worse still Lanarkshire, possesses a siege mentality among many Catholics by which the Labour councillors – and they are almost all Labour – are almost all Catholics. They are in fact chosen as candidates because of their religion. For many years the old Gorbals municipal ward posed a problem for the Conservative and Unionist Party: it was very difficult to find a Tory who was a Catholic. The Tories would eventually find a chap with an Irish name to stand for them. It didn't matter very much, for Gorbals returned a Labour candidate every time anyway, not because of whatever policy he expressed but simply because he represented the Catholic community.

In West of Scotland politics, this remains so to this day. In business, it has long gone. Even in the greatest focus for sectarianism – football – it has disappeared. In a recent radio play by Ulsterman John McDaid, I was amused to hear the argument from one of the characters – a Catholic priest who supported Rangers – that the Glasgow club renowned for its Protestant support was Catholic. The reasoning by the character was that Rangers employ all these Italians. 'That's where Rome is, that's Catholic, that's us,' says the character. 'That Celtic are full of them Swedes and Proddies.'

But in politics the bigotry remains, often unnoticed by large numbers of non-Catholics outside the West of Scotland. Certainly the Blair-led chaps at Millbank would never realise that Helen Liddell, for instance, found herself in a political contest in Monklands where she stood for John Smith's old seat in which the Protestant-Catholic divide was more important than any social policy. Religious identity is a major factor in the politics of Lanarkshire and Ayrshire, and Glasgow.

To a large number of you out there, readers throughout Scotland, in Perthshire or Orkney, in Dumfries or Dalgety Bay, this will sound odd, as odd as I found religious bigotry when I first encountered it at a strangely late age. Most middle-class educated non-Catholics are scarcely aware of the sectarian principles by which many West of Scotland inhabitants live their lives. Far too many educated middle-class Catholics allow the nonsense to imbue their attitudes. The time has surely come for the sense of Catholic grievance to be exorcised. The time has surely come for non-Catholics to apologise in retrospect for their once all-consuming triumphalism. But I suspect it will not be in my lifetime.

# Winding me up

Anne-Marie McManus

2002

As soon as I got off the bus in Victoria Road – I'd taken the first one that turned up at Union Street – I remembered this place. When I was about 21, I came over here to Shawlands for pub crawls. You don't have to walk miles between pubs in Victoria Road – there's a stretch where they're practically door to door. But things were different then. Seven years ago I was young, free and single, with no children. I am now a responsible mother who doesn't drink. And if you believe that, you'll believe anything.

Into a small cafe to line my stomach. It's got a woman's name above the door. Susan's cafe. It doesn't look promising from the outside, but inside it's brightly decorated in fuchsia. I order coffee to take the blue tinge out of my lips, and macaroni cheese and chips. There are 12 tables, each with flowers and unlit candles.

I go into my bag and take out *The Sun*. It's Saturday 26 October, and you-know-who (telly celebrity, not supposed to name him) is on the front page yet again with more allegations of sexual assault or date rape. He has been on the front pages for about five days, with no sign of the tabloids losing interest.

I'm brought back to earth by an old woman called Mary asking if she can sit opposite me. I have no objections but I'm a bit curious as I'm the only other person in the cafe.

'Hello, hen. Whit's yer name? Only I haven't seen you here before.'

What brings her over? Nosiness – or loneliness?

I explain I'm here to gather materials for an article.

'So you haven't moved here, hen? Just as well, this place isn't what it used to be.'

'How?'

'The young team are fightin'.'

I'd better explain. 'Young team' is Glaswegian for young people from a certain scheme. Though, occasionally, it might be 'young mob'. Say I'm from Springburn – which I am – I would refer to the young people of Blackthorn Street, where I used to live, as the 'young team'. It's always in a bad sense that the phrase is used. Schemie talk.

'What young team?'

'The Pakis and the white boys are fightin'.'

'You mean Asians,' I correct her.

'Aw, ye're no' one 'o they social worker types who says a Paki's no' a Paki when they are?'

I tell Mary that she's being offensive, as well as politically incorrect.

'You come here wi' yer fancy talk, telling me what to say.'

'Look, I apologise if I've upset you. But it's offensive to use that language. Offensive not just to Asian people, but offensive to me.'

By this point, the two waitresses – young girls of about 18 and 22 – are listening to the argument but not saying anything.

'Ye canny fart these days without it being politically incorrect,' Mary says. 'There's ma pal. See you later.'

She's a typical old Glaswegian woman: bigoted. Stubborn as hell, refusing to back down or apologise. That's me sounding ageist, but it's true. I suppose I should try to see it just for a minute from their point of view. They look at people coming from abroad, opening up shops, making a good living. A lot of it is jealousy.

One of the waitresses breaks her silence. 'She's an opinionated old bag. Just ignore her.'

And the macaroni cheese is lovely. It tastes a lot like my mum's. Across the road to a small, old man's pub. There are a lot of old man's pubs in Glasgow. I like them. I feel more comfortable in men's company.

There are five men at the bar, all over the age of 60. Good, at least I won't be hassled with young guys trying it on with me. I order a double vodka and coke. Then I go up to the bar and ask one of the old men for a light. At that, nearly all of the old men go into their pockets for a light, but the one I ask first comes up trumps.

'There you go, I've no' seen you in here before. Then again, the wimin don't come in till night, and I've usually been carried home by then. My name's Geordie, by the way. What's a nice girl like you doin' drinkin' yersel?'

I toy with the idea of telling him that I'm here to pick up dirty old men, but resist.

'Oh, I was just fed up sitting about the house.'

He offers to buy me a drink. I say I'm okay, but he insists, in the way the men of his generation do. Vodka and coke, thanks. He goes to the toilet, and the other men around the bar tell me he is trying to get me drunk so that he can take advantage of me. Though 'take advantage of me' isn't really what was said. It was a bit cruder.

Geordie returns from the toilet, downs his whisky and water in one gulp, and announces he is going to the bookies.

After he's left, I say to the others: 'I thought he was supposed to be trying to get me drunk'.

But they were only trying to wind me up. That's the old Glasgow man in a nutshell: wears a tammy, likes a pint and a wee whisky with it, goes on about the price of a pint, enjoys a bet, expects his tea on the table when he comes in (at whatever hour), sees himself as the breadwinner while the woman stays at home, talks about when he was in the war and how he left school at 14 to go to work, repeats his stories endlessly as if it's the first time you've heard them, believes that yous don't know what music is these days, smokes about 40 a day (80 if it's Woodbines), loves his football and reminiscing about the old Celtic and Rangers teams, talks to anybody, reads *The Record* and the *Evening Times*, winds me up.

SPORT

# The man with the minneola

Kevin McCarra: a profile of Jock Stein

1995

In 1970 my great-uncle, a kindly man, agreed to start taking me to Celtic matches. He preferred to set off long before the buses became rowdily congested with supporters and usually the turnstiles had still to open when we arrived. There was even an occasion when we beat the manager to his own ground. In consequence, I have a tenacious memory of watching Jock Stein, with the pitching gait imposed by a bad ankle, making his way from the car park to the main door.

Curiously, my recollection of him in the great public moments is much more vague. All the triumphs, when the crowd would at last coax him onto the pitch for an ovation after some trophy-winning game, have merged in my mind. As a 12-year-old, the jubilation seemed so inevitable that I would not have been surprised to find Celtic's clinching of the league championship printed in my pocket diary alongside public holidays and every other dependable event. Stein's presence was the guarantee. So the mere sight of him going to his work reassured me. A lot of grown-ups shared the feeling.

Our heroes are just a spare set of parents and we treat them in exactly the same fashion. At first, they seem beyond reproach but soon enough we decide that they are in fact beyond the pale. Idolatry can only be sustained for as long as our supplies of innocence and ignorance last. In our teens, we all get the hang of sneering. With luck, though, it becomes possible, much later, to relish the people we viewed with such distaste. Was it Mark Twain who remarked, upon returning to his family after years away, that he was amazed to discover how much his father had learned? Jostled and harried along by our own lives, we find our way back to admiration. It is healthier than hero-worship.

Stein's record does, of course, deserve reverence. Racking up nine successive league championships with Celtic and winning the European Cup itself is an imposing feat. The real glory, though, lay in the tenor of his team in that period. They had élan, brio, gusto; that quality that can appear as foreign to us as the terms we apply to it. The poet Iain Crichton Smith has said that Hugh MacDiarmid's poetry and Celtic's defeat of Inter Milan in 1967 were the two elements of contemporary Scottish life which had wholly impressed him. This remark only appears affected until you try to dispute it. At their peak, Celtic were hungry for the comparison with every other club in the world. Of how many other Scottish institutions could you say as much?

The thrift of Stein's achievement also appealed to our national character. His great Celtic teams were fashioned almost entirely from players who had cost the club nothing. Following his appointment as manager, in 1965, of a decidedly dishevelled club, he organised and inspired a talented but despondent set of footballers. Although Stein had no

interest in aping the appearance, lifestyle and attitude of the suave continental coaches, his mind, where the game itself was concerned, was at least as sophisticated. The rudimentary tactics employed before his arrival on the Scottish scene were the result of tradition rather than thought. He, however, while in charge of Celtic's reserve team at the beginning of his managerial career, was attempting to introduce the 4-2-4 system Brazil had employed shortly before the 1958 World Cup.

If not an innovator, Stein was at least up to date. He had the stamina to keep pace with his curiosity, relentlessly travelling to watch even the most inconsequential match in case there was something to be learned. A tendency to insomnia also allowed plenty of time for reflection. The intelligence was paired with intuition. 'You need 11 voices for 11 players,' Willie Knox, then the manager of the potent Auchinleck junior team, once said to me. Stein had that gift of tongues, knowing the perfect words and tone for each individual, whether it be his right-back Jim Craig, a graduate in dentistry, or his well-meaning, self-destructive, maverick winger, Jimmy Johnstone.

Anyone of Stein's background and ability, however, is always in danger of being engulfed by myth. For those who like a good yarn, he was the lad from humble origins who had achieved international fame. Stein's early employment as a miner ensures that writers are just as besotted with his tale. He had 12 years in that job, working down Bothwell Castle pit, and the occupation was always part of his identity. Ken Gallacher's engrossing biography, told solely in the words of those who knew Stein, describes his behaviour during a strike in the Second World War. He handed over to a union official, Mick McGahey, the couple of pounds he had earned while playing for Albion Rovers on the Saturday because he did not think it right that he should have even that money while his work-mates had nothing. Over 40 years later, Stein was observed cramming somewhat larger sums into the NUM collection can during another strike.

The labour could never have been easily forgotten. Stein, in an era before pithead baths, would come home filthy. His large frame also meant that he was covered in the scratches collected as he inched his way to the seams. Hugh McIlvanney, in an article written for *The Observer* a few days after Stein's death in 1985, records his description of life as a miner: 'There's nothing as dark as the darkness down a pit, the blackness that closes in on you if your lamp goes out. You'd think you would see some kind of shapes but you can see nothing, nothing but the inside of your head. I think everybody should go down the pit at least once to learn what darkness is'.

Stein was recommending an encounter with the reality of the work. He wanted a proper understanding of its harshness, but I wonder what he would have made of the sentimentality with which the mining industry is viewed now that, in effect, it no longer exists. There is a middle-class yearning to think of miners as noble savages, as if the severity of their lives made some sort of authenticity inevitable. The agonising work, we like to think, must have forced people to make common cause and discover a camaraderie unknown to us in our cosy, shameful offices. This line of thought is dangerous. It leads us

to mourn the passing of a barbaric occupation when we should be regretting only the loss of the jobs it created.

Perhaps the sharing of danger and privation did bring out the best in many people. Stein always retained a special regard for miners. It would be a mistake, though, to assume that the pits were filled with muscular socialists who could be depended on to treat their fellow men with open-hearted generosity. No doubt Bothwell Castle in Stein's time contained its share of flawed, disreputable humanity. Certainly, no-one would mistake Lanarkshire for the New Jerusalem. Sectarianism washed round Stein and his impermeability to it was one of his most appealing features. According to most accounts, the dismay in Burnbank never abated that this son of a Protestant family should give his immense talent to a Catholic club.

Ludicrous rumours were devised by men who wished to suggest the utter inappropriateness of Stein's presence with Celtic. When he returned from Llanelly to sign for them as a player in 1951 it was persistently whispered, for example, that he had a tattoo of King Billy on his chest. Two decades on, there was a mischievous player at the club who liked to refer casually to this 'fact' when he knew there were gullible fans eavesdropping on the conversation.

Celtic will always reflect their origins in the Catholic community but when Stein was manager he came close to removing the sectarianism and making the club accessible to anyone, of whatever faith, who could appreciate thrilling football. It is an oversimplification to believe that he could have achieved so much by being a typical product of the mines. The employment had its effect on his character but the degree to which he differed in attitude from the people in his community was just as important. Power suited Stein. He had a senior civil servant's gift for cunning and strategy. His famous rages after a provocative incident have been lovingly recorded but those who observed him over the years believe that his emotions were never truly unfettered. The anger would be deployed for a purpose and it could be contained when expedient.

In his autobiography, *Action Replays*, Archie Macpherson describes an episode in Switzerland in 1980 when Stein, the late Tommy Younger, then president of the Scottish Football Association, and other SFA officials were having a meal. Younger embarked on a diatribe, which he had clearly been brooding over for some time, denouncing Stein's record with Scotland and telling him that his predecessors had been sacked for just such lame performances. The manager responded with mildness, suggesting only that it might be better to have a discussion in a more private setting. For Macpherson, the episode encapsulated Stein's loss of vitality in the later part of his life. Perhaps so, but the manager hadn't always recognised the need for compromise and accommodations. Sean Fallon, his assistant with Celtic, remembers being kicked under the table by Stein at a board meeting because he was about to say something candid and ill-advised.

Stein's personality allowed him to exude or withhold warmth as he wished. Ruthlessness was a well-mastered part of his repertoire. Two journalists have told me how, on first

encountering Stein as callow youths, he chose to mock them in front of their colleagues at a press conference. This was policy more than malice. Stein was attempting to plant inhibitions which might later be of service to him. During his leaden years in charge of Scotland, there was remarkably little direct criticism of him in the newspapers. He had earned respect, but you wonder whether that journalistic reticence did not also stem from fear of him.

It was not only the press who felt the weight of his authority. Some time after his death, a pair of former Celtic players were walking towards a supporters' club where they were due to speak. 'How could we ever tell them what a bastard he was?' said one to another. Footballers, admittedly, are not reliable witnesses. Almost every player's career ends in some form of rejection. There was, however, an unarguable harshness about some of Stein's dealings with his men. Willie Wallace, after five years with Celtic, was wakened one morning at the Seamill training camp and told he must speak to some Crystal Palace officials because he was to be sold. There was no word of thanks and no explanation. Stein was also a remorseless negotiator when faced with players he did wish to retain. Jim Craig earned £35 a week in 1965 and, after the European Cup and all the championships, was on just £52 when he left seven years later.

In the task of controlling the budget, the manager was assisted by the system of contracts which applied in football at that time. In essence, a player remained the property of the club for as long as it wished. Stein was at home with those draconian, uncomplicated regulations. His spartan taste expressed itself in the very look of his players. Never mind Sergeant Pepper and flower power, his team was compelled to stick to the short back and sides and to wear a grubby training kit which made it absolutely clear that football was supposed to be a form of manual labour. The only escape from austerity lay in the matches themselves, where the impudent energy of the late 1960s might be put to good use. In that decade, whether with Dunfermline Athletic, Hibernian or Celtic, Stein was the ideal manager. He was old enough to control ebullient youth and young enough to still understand it.

That equilibrium cannot last for long although Stein maintained it with more success than most. Even so, the later years brought an inevitable decline. Most people consider that the car crash that nearly killed him in 1975 deeply affected his temperament. He required a year to recuperate and when he did return to Celtic his old certainty had gone. Perhaps an accident which drives a steering wheel into your chest can make everything which had seemed solid appear fragile and provisional. Stein was, to all intents and purposes, eased out of Celtic Park in 1978. He became Leeds United manager, but remained at Elland Road for just 44 days. Although it was the Scotland job which lured him back, one could not have imagined Stein settling in England. By then, he was too much embedded in the culture of Glasgow and Lanarkshire.

The energy and confidence continued to ebb away from Stein in his years in charge of the national side. He added an efficiency which took the team to a place at the 1982 World

Cup, and the 1-1 draw with Wales on the night of his death virtually ensured their qualification once again. His Scotland, though, thrilled no-one. Perhaps Stein lacked players of sufficient quality, but you suspect he would have achieved far more had he been given the job at the beginning of the 1970s. He had once been delicately attuned to the mood of supporters but was now capable of blundering. After a 1-0 defeat by England in 1982, he said the result had not mattered since the game was just a warm-up for the World Cup. As one of the 80,000 who had paid heavily for a ticket, I know just how exasperating Stein's words were. Astoundingly, the SFA even apologised in its annual report.

Stein was also finding it difficult to understand his own players. It perplexed him, for instance, that Steve Archibald should choose to ignore the menu at dinner and instead ask for smoked salmon as his starter. Footballers were becoming wealthy and sophisticated. It was a development that did not agree with Stein. One might sympathise with him to some extent but it was his job to adapt to the circumstances which arose. What, after all, did it really matter if Maurice Johnston liked to sport an earring or Charlie Nicholas thought it the height of fashion not to wear socks? Stein's failure to accept these oddities may have indicated he was losing the mental suppleness he required.

And yet there is something intensely moving about these closing years of his life. The snap and the dash were gone but still he struggled to retain his great reputation. The thought of failure must be all the more intolerable when you have had well over 20 years of unstinting success. Stein fought decline with every resource he possessed. Enough expertise remained to nudge Scotland towards its expected place in the World Cup, but defeats took a terrible toll of Stein. Wales won 1-0 at Hampden in March 1985 and Stein spent the next six months agonising over the draw Scotland would now require from the return match in Cardiff.

Before setting off for that game, he uncharacteristically cleared his muddled desk of all outstanding business. His health was failing but a residue of guile remained. For that international with Wales, on 10 September, Stein felt that Davie Cooper of Rangers would be the decisive player but only introduced him as a substitute in the second half when the frenzy of the struggle was beginning to pass. Cooper proved effective against tiring opponents and Scotland, thanks to his equaliser from the penalty spot, collected the required point. Jock Stein's last match had bowed to his will like so many before it. At full-time, eager to be in the dressing room, he rose from his seat in the dug-out but then collapsed. Stein died of the heart attack not long after.

In those last years, football must have been a matter of great strain and small reward. Yet his time as Scotland manager made a deep impression on the people who knew him at the SFA. There was a certain mellowness about him by then. An old adversary, the SFA secretary Ernie Walker, became an unexpected friend. Detached from the day-to-day routine of training footballers, Stein turned a benevolent nosiness on the staff around him, always eager to find out about their lives. Humdrum, almost domestic, details suggest a man at peace.

Stein could often be heard singing some Sinatra standard as he got into the lift. He is also recalled leaning against a radiator in a back office, relishing the opportunity to revisit some old disputes in the company of a former referee, Jack Mowat. The curious duties of a Scotland manager were also attended to. Upon being asked to write to a boy who had broken both his arms while pretending to be Tarzan, Stein sent a letter which included a suggestion that Kenny Dalglish might be a better role model.

Despite the worries of the post, there was time for Stein to indulge his aptitude for fellowship. On his way to work one morning, he was listening to a discussion on the Jimmy Young programme about the minneola, a cross between a tangerine and a grapefruit. Soon he was in the office asking everyone if they knew what a minneola was. Some guessed at a musical instrument and most were nonplussed. When Stein at last explained, there were a few who did not believe him. The Scotland manager reached for the *Yellow Pages*, called Malcolm Campbell's and disappeared. Eventually, he returned carrying a paper bag. Those who had taken his word for its existence were given a minneola. The doubters had to make do with an orange. Placing your trust in Stein always was the wisest course.

# Hot dogs and wet necks

Tess Ferguson

2011

There are almost as many kinds of rain in Scotland as there are snow in the Arctic, and on Saturday, it was the fine kind that penetrates every crevice, combined at times with sleet-like shards. At Glebe Park, an old-school football ground in Angus, some 3,700 people assembled to watch the second division home side take on the mighty St Johnstone in the quarter finals of the Scottish Cup.

That morning, staff had woken to find the ground covered in snow, and a message was posted on the club website, calling for volunteers with snow shovels. At 11am, the pitch passed its inspection but, combined with the driving rain, this left a soggy surface on which 22 men would do their best to remain upright.

Sensible fans found their way into stands behind each of the goals while pub-bound stragglers from out of town filed along the two-tier concrete terraces, those at the front hanging over a metal bar inches from the pitch. This is football spectatorship as it used to be and, on a sunny day, how it should be.

Onto the skiddy surface charged Brechin City in bullish scarlet, and the first half was notable for their dogged ravaging of the Saints' box, hungry for a place in the semis. As half-time approached, the rain was beginning to seep under faded blue scarves and trickle down the visitors' necks as Brechin's persistence paid off and a hasty tackle won them a penalty. The ball pounded into the net, but an encroachment on the box caused the referee to demand a retake. The second time, the devilish reds foxed the keeper again to go ahead.

By now, the queue at the Portakabin serving meat pies and hot dogs had reached unprecedented lengths, and staff used to catering for a couple of hundred did their best to keep up with demand. It was here, away from the warm huddle of the terraces, that people became aware of the cold that had seeped into them, of the pain that had infiltrated toes and fingers. A young boy voiced what everyone else felt, desperate sobs bubbling beneath the hood of his anorak as his father gently admonished him for having refused a second pair of socks. Before the last pies had been served, Saints had equalised and the wet-faced boy was momentarily lifted from his gloom.

By the time everyone had resumed their optimum viewing positions, the aptly named Danny Invincible chose his moment to power a header into the roof of the net for Saints, putting them ahead for the first time amid jubilation.

The linesman continued his crab-like scuttle back and forth along the muddy trench that had formed at the side of the pitch over three-quarters of a season. In the closing minutes of the game, Brechin slotted a goal home in open play, to the joyous relief of their new-found fans, entailing a replay in 10 days' time.

This is a world far removed from that exacerbated by celebrity culture, and any players' wives or girlfriends who were present remained swaddled anonymously against the cold. Here, celebrity is well-earned, through sporting talent and punditry, and avowedly local. What the match lacked in glamour was more than made up for in romance – in the pre-match scramble for scarce tickets, in the miles travelled by the visitors, in the bodies pressed together, willing their teams to contest the coveted cup, and in the blessed refuge from Old Firm vitriol. Now that warmth has returned to the extremities, the memory of this match will live on.

# Playing politics through football

Dominic Brown

2013

This is an article about football, sort of. Only it's not just about football, because football, per se, isn't all that important, not even to me. It's really an article about how power operates and how politics are played out in the seemingly inconsequential decisions and encounters that shape our lives.

Celtic FC is in trouble, and not only because of the disturbances at Motherwell. The other cause is the display, by a relatively small section of their supporters, of pictures of Bobby Sands and William Wallace, accompanied by 24 words inviting the reader to compare and contrast.

Powerful people are unhappy. UEFA, the relevant governing body, proscribes 'the use of gestures, words, objects or any other means to transmit any message that is not fit for a sports event, particularly messages that are political, ideological [or] religious'. Celtic's position is that 'only football-related displays [will] be permitted and that any political display' will be outlawed.

My own politics don't matter, although it may be relevant that I don't support the IRA. Nevertheless, the positions of both Celtic and UEFA raise some pertinent questions; in particular, who decides what is political? In addressing this certain observations are apparent. The more powerful always tell the less powerful that things 'aren't political'. The more powerful always want us to believe that the way things are, including their own power, is 'natural', cannot be changed, and shouldn't be challenged.

I want to look at how these fairy tales operate through football. Because football, for good or ill, is important in our land. It's a rare Scottish politician who ignores football. It's perfectly reasonable for a football club to say 'when you visit our stadium, there are certain standards of behaviour that you must observe'. A governing body is entitled to make a similar stipulation. What's insidious is the assumption that everyone agrees what is 'political'.

Football lionises the self-proclaimed 'socialism' of people such as Sir Alex Ferguson, Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, because Sir Alex Ferguson's socialism is the kind that's intensely relaxed about the leveraged buyouts of venerable clubs. Presumably, Sir Alex Ferguson's 'socialism' isn't political. Because football, you see, is above politics.

Football, they'd like us to believe, is the place we go when we want to hide from the really important things. However, there's something not quite right about this, because examples abound of the inseparability of football and politics. Celtic, for example, is proud of its principled stance back in 1968 when the club was a real European force, of refusing to fulfil

a fixture against Ferencvaros of Hungary, a country complicit in the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia days earlier. Celtic's stance was accommodated by UEFA, who, in a non-political move, remade the first-round draw to ensure that clubs from western Europe wouldn't have to play clubs from the communist east. How non-political can you get?

And we don't have to go that far back. If politics are to be separate from football, then should football accept the odd couple of shillings (give or take a few hundred million pounds each year) from Sky TV, owned by Rupert Murdoch, whose newspapers 'win' elections?

If politics are to be separate from football, then why is it okay for Celtic to have members of the House of Lords on the board, but not for the fans to display the picture of a former MP? Is it because the former are unelected? Or, eh, maybe, because there's one law for the powerful (in a strictly non-political way, of course), and one for...

If politics are to be separate from football, then why do FIFA rules state that the World Cup must be presented by the head of state of the host country? Jorge Rafael Videla, for example, President of the Argentine junta, kidnapper of babies and a torturer sentenced to life imprisonment for the deaths of political prisoners, was deemed a fit and proper person to present the World Cup after the 1978 final. Keep this in mind when you're trying to figure out what's meant by 'non-political'. And, although the suits routinely hear the anthems, have they ever actually listened to the lyrics of *La Marseillaise*, or the Algerian national anthem? Or even *Flower of Scotland*?

If 'non-football' issues are to be kept away from games, should the sport be used to raise money and awareness for causes such as acute leukemia, as happened recently? Or to feed the hungry in the east end of Glasgow?

Visiting Celtic's website, one finds the logos of multinational companies whose business is smoking, or alcohol, or gambling. When our children take an interest in football, they are confronted with such brands, in a way that insidiously suggests that smoking, drinking and gambling are desirable. All three activities are subject to restrictions originating in the political sphere. All three use football to 'normalise' themselves. Football's 'non-political' posture makes this easy for them.

I once heard football described as 'the most important secondary thing in the world'. This, for me, is accurate. We love the game, no matter which club is ours. But if we ignore the wider aspects (and few politicians do), then all that's left is 22 men kicking a ball up and down a field. The allegiance of many is not primarily to their club's legal entity, but to something bigger, greater and more beautiful. Something which companies such as Celtic buy into; hence the expression 'A Club Like No Other'.

To protect the share price, the Celtic directors will make the kind of compliant noises they always do on these occasions, although as individuals they are no doubt sincere. In the minds of the suits, Celtic are indeed a club like no other, and football's a sport like no other, some of the time. But never forget, it's an advertising slogan, just like the other substance-free catchphrases about football's non-political opposition to racism and child labour. (Customers are advised to read the small print, exclusions apply.)

When something is described as 'non-political', you can be sure that powerful interests are being threatened. You can be sure that what's really being said is 'there is only one legitimate way to think about this issue'. Earl Haig poppies are 'non-political'. The monarchy is 'non-political'. I would rather not have to listen to songs about the IRA when I go to Celtic Park. And there's no doubt that the recent display will harm the club. But football, like everything else, is riddled with politics. Assuming exclusive rights to dictate what is and isn't political is about as political as it gets.

# The cyclist who threw up over the mic

Walter Humes

2014

Along with thousands of others, I have been enjoying Scotland's successes at the Commonwealth Games. I prefer to do so from the comfort of my own home as I have a limited tolerance of noise and crowds.

For many people, the atmosphere or 'buzz' of a live event is a major part of the pleasure, but my ideal vantage point is a comfortable armchair with a ready supply of drinks and snacks. It has the added attraction of allowing me to shout abuse at some of the more irritating television presenters without any fear of reprisals.

The event got off to rather a shaky start, with the first 15 minutes of the opening ceremony being described by many as positively 'cringe-making'. It was later claimed by the artistic director that the beginning was deliberately tongue-in-cheek, a 'camp and kitsch' take of a traditional ceremony.

An alternative view was expressed by one wag on a social networking site who remarked, 'Maybe the original plan to kick off with the demolition of the Red Road flats wasn't such a bad idea after all'. For me, the stars of the opening were the Scottie dogs who led each of the national teams as they paraded round the Parkhead stadium. I was particularly impressed by the one who staged a sit-down and had to be carried round – a non-conformist after my own heart.

However, once the sporting events got under way, any reservations about the opening ceremony were quickly swept aside. The glorious weather which marked the first few days contributed to the mood of excitement and expectation. Early Scottish success in cycling and swimming, most notably Ross Murdoch's surprise gold medal in the 100 metres breaststroke, added to the national feeling that here was something we could all celebrate.

Other sports which normally attract limited media attention received good coverage by the BBC. I found myself watching judo bouts – which produced more medals for Scotland – without managing to understand either the rules or the scoring system. However, I remained resistant to the charms of rhythmic gymnastics – the version that involves skilful manipulation of ball, hoop or ribbon at the same time as performing graceful athletic moves.

As I write this, the athletics programme is in its early stages and Scotland has reasonable hopes of increasing its medal total in track and field events. The presence of Olympic champions and world record holders such as Usain Bolt and David Rudisha will add to the spectacle on the splendid running track at Hampden Park, one of many examples of successfully completed construction projects in preparation for the games.

While I greatly admire the dedication, skill and achievements of top-class sports men

and women, I am always left with a number of questions which make me rather uneasy. Participation in sport is recognised as being good for your health and that is certainly true for people who take modest amounts of regular exercise.

But for those who push themselves to the limits, there is often a high price to pay in terms of injuries, some of which may lead to permanent damage. In this sense, elite sport is not particularly healthy. Especially in those pursuits which call for high levels of power and strength, the muscle development required – which sometimes seems to verge on the grotesque – may well have long-term consequences when the exercise regime is discontinued. Just look at the sagging torsos of many retired rugby players.

I also wonder at what point a desire to be the very best in any given field may become an unhealthy obsession, a form of compulsive disorder which perhaps serves to exclude other interests and aspirations. By the very nature of competitive sport, there are bound to be more losers than winners, and even for those who do very well there must be many disappointments along the way.

Coping with adversity can, of course, be a test of resolve and character but what of the aspirants who never quite make it? I don't know of any studies which look at those who have been selected for elite training programmes but who never achieve stardom. What is it that causes them to drop out? Do they lack the discipline required to get to the very top? Are they simply not 'hungry' enough for success, as some coaches might maintain? Or is it perhaps that they decide they would prefer a better balance in their lives and want more time to devote to other things such as career or relationships?

Then there is the media circus which now surrounds the world of sport. That constitutes another set of pressures, largely driven by commercial imperatives. As soon as an event is over, competitors have to face cameras and microphones and are expected to give a sensible commentary on what has just happened. Sometimes they are still so breathless they are incapable of coherent speech. One cyclist at the games promptly threw up, which served as an eloquent commentary on the fatuousness of some of the questions, many of which are designed to elicit an emotional, 'newsworthy' response.

It now appears that successful competitors are (contractually?) obliged to take part in these exchanges, as well as the extended photo opportunities arranged for the press. Presumably anyone who wished to slip away and celebrate quietly with friends and family would be portrayed as anti-social and stand-offish. Our culture of celebrity expects high achievers to be flamboyant and attention-seeking rather than modest and understated.

Despite my reservations, I shall continue to enjoy the games and will be happy to toast the achievements of those who win medals and the efforts of those who simply take part. The event has reflected well on Glasgow and Glaswegians. The sheer amount of detailed planning that must have gone into the arrangements is hugely impressive. Visitors from all participating countries have received a warm welcome and the wild enthusiasm of Scottish spectators for home competitors has not prevented generous applause when representatives of other nations have come first.

After it is all over, we can expect reflection on the 'legacy' of the games – the social and economic benefits that they have brought. Evidence from other international sporting occasions has been fairly mixed, with debt being the principal legacy in some cases. Those involved in the promotion and organisation of such events always have a vested interest in emphasising the positive.

But the real test will be how far Glasgow's hosting of the Commonwealth Games brings longer-term improvements to the east end of the city, the regeneration of which was a major part of the strategy. In assessing this, the voices of local people should count for much more than the boasts of national politicians, civic leaders or commercial sponsors.

# Glasgow 2014

Kenneth Roy

2014

## 1.

Cheered on by the Scottish media's fans with laptops, the organisers of the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow have been indulging in an orgy of self-congratulation over their financial stewardship.

Many newspapers dutifully reported the claim that the games had finished 'under-budget', quoting the organisers' PR bump that 'effective cross-organisational governance' and 'tight budget controls' had helped deliver the event at a cost 'significantly' below the forecast figure.

After this gratifying announcement, the First Minister went smartly to the starting block. 'I am delighted to announce,' he told the Scottish Parliament, 'that in addition to being the greatest Commonwealth Games in history, it has come in almost £25m under budget, making it one of the few major sporting events in history which have managed to achieve that accolade'.

Lord Smith of Kelvin – he of Smith Commission fame – joined the chorus in his capacity as chairman of the organising committee. It gave him 'considerable pride to be able to say that Glasgow and Scotland have made Games history and have done so *well within budget*' (our italics). Prince Imran, president of the Commonwealth Games Federation, added his own tribute to Glasgow for its 'prudent and responsible approach' to budgeting. All in all, then, an astonishing outcome – and one which fitted conveniently into the triumphalist narrative of this pre-referendum jolly.

There is amicable disagreement about how the £25m 'windfall' should be disposed of. Mr Salmond favours giving it to the NHS, while billboards of the *Glasgow Evening Times* proclaim that it should 'go to the east end' – the profoundly disadvantaged area of the city which hosted the games. Either way, the alleged surplus has given the hard-pressed taxpayer a nice, warm feeling about Scottish diligence.

But the true story of the Glasgow games could not be more different. There is no 'windfall', and the idea that the event finished under-budget is a ludicrous re-writing of recent history. In reality, this is a classic case of smoke and mirrors: proof that, in a country without effective political opposition, you can fool most of the people most of the time. This is the story of how we have just been fooled.

## 2.

It was in 2007 that Glasgow made its successful application to host the games – with a bid price of £373m. If we accept that as the budget, then the games did not finish £25m under-

budget; it finished £202m over-budget. How could the organisers have got it so wrong? How can they now claim, with breathtaking audacity, that they got it so right?

Two years later, there were rumblings about the amount being lavished on 'consultancy fees' – £1.2m even at that early stage. The budget was promptly raised by £81m, which officials blamed on the economic downturn. In fact, the economic downturn had very little to do with it.

In January 2010, the public audit committee of the Scottish Parliament heard that the cost of the games was 'out of control' because the organising committee had somehow omitted to include an estimate for inflation in its original budget. No satisfactory explanation has ever been given for this elementary oversight by a committee with high-level accountancy advice at its disposal. The public auditors also received disturbing news about another omission: the failure to factor in pension payments of several million pounds for the employees.

The only good news was the assurance by a senior civil servant that the cost of the games was 'unlikely' to exceed the money set aside for it. In her expert opinion, the new budget of £454m would be enough. It wasn't. Not by a long way. The organising committee managed to incur expenditure £121m in excess of the revised figure which MSPs were assured was achievable. No-one chooses to remember how disastrously off-target the 2010 re-budget turned out to be.

The following year, the CEO of Glasgow 2014, John Scott, was forced to resign over an 'error of judgement' in accepting and not declaring an offer of a gift from one of the event's potential suppliers. Lord Smith refused to name the supplier in question – it is believed to be a major firm of chartered accountants – or the nature of the gift on the grounds that these matters were 'private and commercially sensitive'. So private and commercially sensitive that they outweighed the public's interest in ensuring the accountability of a committee responsible for a spend of more than half a billion pounds.

One of the incidental consequences of the Scott affair was that it brought to light a previously unknown fact – that, before the debacle over the gift, the CEO had been stripped of some of his executive responsibilities but that despite this effective demotion he retained his full salary of £179,000 a year – £39,000 more than Scotland's First Minister. What does any of this say about Glasgow 2014's 'prudent and responsible approach' to financial control?

In one respect, however, the organising committee was ridiculously prudent. Despite warnings in this magazine about the unrealistic budget for security, the committee persisted in thinking that it could do the job for £27m. The folly of this belief was finally exposed in December 2012 when it was announced that the cost of security had been re-estimated at £90m. The abrupt 70% hike, which should have been foreseen, would have had heads rolling in any private sector organisation. But the two partners in Glasgow 2014 – the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council – sailed on without a mark and now boast shamelessly of 'effective cross-organisational governance'.

In October 2013, nine months before the off, the public spending watchdog Audit Scotland published a progress report on Glasgow 2014. The budget was no longer the original £373m – the 2007 figure was ancient history, embarrassing but forgotten. Nor was it the revised 2010 figure of £454m. Audit Scotland reported that the partners were 'committed to delivering the games' on a budget of £524m. The word 'committed' should have been a meaningful one at so advanced a stage. It wasn't. Far from it.

### 3.

The financial history of the Glasgow games, and the current spin being put on it, leaves Lord Smith of Kelvin with questions to answer.

Now that the event itself is receding into history, why does the chairman not tell us why the CEO had to resign so suddenly? Who was the mysterious potential supplier and what was the nature of the gift that the CEO received from the potential supplier? The individual in question was being paid handsomely out of public funds. The public has a right to know – if only to discourage future such 'errors of judgement'.

Next, which of the many budgets does Lord Smith of Kelvin consider his committee actually met?

Was it the 2007 budget presented to the Commonwealth Games Federation? Surely not: the committee overshot it by £202m.

Could it have been the 2010 budget submitted to the Scottish Parliament? Surely not: the committee overshot it by £121m.

Was it, then, the 2013 budget accepted by Audit Scotland as a 'commitment'? Surely not: the committee overshot it by £51m in nine months.

So that leaves the July 2014 budget of £563m, which the press reported as the athletes of the Commonwealth were preparing to set off for Scotland. But the committee overshot that one, too. The final spend on the great adventure was £575m – more than £2m an hour, 24 hours a day, for the duration of the games.

How come an event over-budget at every turn, and plagued by housekeeping blunders, is now being passed off by the organisers as a triumph of Scottish financial management? Only Lord Smith of Kelvin can say, and we invite him to do so. But we are not holding our breath. Having brought the games to a successful conclusion 'well within budget', his lordship is now otherwise engaged – shaping Scotland's destiny.

# A legacy of unanswered questions

Kenneth Roy

2014

1.

As we reported last week, the organisers of the Commonwealth Games were mistaken in their brazen public assertion that the event finished 'well within budget', the truth being that it finished £51m over the 2013 budget presented to Audit Scotland, £121m over the 2010 budget presented to the Scottish Parliament and £202m over the 2007 budget presented to the Commonwealth Games Federation. Still, the colossal spend of £575m could conceivably be justified by reference to the much-hyped 'legacy'.

Whether a tourist bounce will be part of the legacy remains to be seen. Otherwise, apart from a few dozen small local projects, we have not heard a great deal about legacy since early August, when the Scottish Government published a post-games newsletter online.

Under the heading 'Legacy 2014', the document included the blog of 'Games Minister' Shona Robison and a poem by Liz Lochhead. When we checked yesterday, Ms Robison's blog had disappeared – not much of a legacy – though the poem was still there.

Three months on, 'Legacy 2014' continues to be dominated by exciting news of the Scotland's Best initiative, which aims to get 1,000 unemployed young people (under the age of 24) into work by next March. In the immediate aftermath of the closing ceremony, Alex Salmond announced that Scotland's Best 'will be geared up to youngsters who have volunteered at the games'.

The First Minister told the media: 'We are offering these young people a terrific opportunity to gain vital skills, experience and qualifications that will better equip them in the workplace. This is a true games legacy'.

Intrigued by the suggestion of a true games legacy, we contacted Skills Development Scotland, the public agency which is responsible for Scotland's Best. We asked the agency how many volunteers – 'Clyde-siders', as they were known – had been given places on the scheme.

This is the reply we received:

*The volunteers at the Commonwealth Games were a diverse group. Many were over the age of 24 and were in employment – a large number were professionals who had taken time out from their full-time jobs to volunteer at the games, so they were not seeking employment when the games ended.*

There was nothing surprising about this statement. It confirmed anecdotal impressions of the admirable volunteer squad. But where did it leave Mr Salmond's 'true games legacy' if, in fact, comparatively few of the volunteers were even eligible for Scotland's Best?

We wrote back to Skills Development Scotland and suggested politely that they had not

answered our question. We asked them to tell us exactly how many – if any – Clyde-siders had been offered places. The second response was more defensive. It informed us that 'those [volunteers] who met the Scotland's Best eligibility criteria could choose to apply to the employability programme' and that 'they could then choose to offer information about having volunteered at the Commonwealth Games'.

Still no figure – though with a tacit acknowledgement that the relevant stats could be produced from the files. And the reason for no figure?

*Due to data protection legislation we are unable to access the volunteer information held by Glasgow 2014.*

Ah, that old chestnut, data protection! Words wearily familiar to the inquiring journalist: words that effectively close down even the most reasonable request.

Glasgow 2014 Ltd is a company chaired by Lord Smith of Kelvin, the man who claims that the Commonwealth Games finished 'well within budget', a claim supported in the Scottish Parliament by the departing First Minister. This is the company which organised the games and disposed of several hundred million pounds of public money.

It has yet to produce its final accounts. But it seems that its offices in Albion Street, Glasgow, have already been vacated – or that the telephone is no longer being answered. We have repeatedly dialled the number. Repeatedly it rings out.

## 2.

If anyone had picked up the phone, we would have asked the same question: where is the evidence that the 'true games legacy' produced a single place on the employability programme?

We have no confidence that the answer would have been forthcoming. Glasgow 2014 Ltd has never been noted for its transparency; indeed at one stage it declared that 'as a private company it is not subject to the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002'. If data protection does not completely dispose of an awkward media inquiry, exemption from freedom of information – so often the second line of defence – will finish it off.

But there are more important residual issues hanging over Glasgow 2014 than the relatively minor irritation of Scotland's Best being held up by Alex Salmond as a legacy project when it is nothing of the kind.

If we are looking for 'a true games legacy', we should look elsewhere: for example, to the association, never scrutinised, between Glasgow 2014 Ltd and Selex ES, which won the contract to provide perimeter fencing, CCTV and 'security management systems' at 20 venues and in the athletes' village. Shona Robison extended a warm personal welcome to Selex ES as a member of the 'games family', but there was no mention, then or subsequently, of the value of this contract to an outfit which is no stranger to controversy.

Selex ES, which is owned by one of the world's largest arms companies, supplies radar technology for drones employed by the state of Israel and its other clients include several states with an abysmal human rights record, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Pakistan.

Selex ES, then, is a company with reputational problems. But these problems can only have been eased by the abject fashion in which the organisers of Glasgow 2014 fell over themselves to include them in the 'games family' – at a cost (within a security budget of £90m) that should be public knowledge, like so much else about Glasgow 2014.

Will the terms of the deal with Selex ES ever be known? Doubtful. Always assuming there was someone answering the telephone, any request could be brushed off by pleading exemption from freedom of information. The public's only hope of obtaining such knowledge would be through a robust inquiry by the public spending watchdog Audit Scotland.

Meanwhile, Lord Smith of Kelvin – the man who is tasked with shaping Scotland's destiny – has still not explained why he insists that the games finished well within budget. It seems that unanswered questions about money are destined to be 'a true games legacy'.

# The power of the small

Gerry Hassan

2014

Football is everywhere in modern life and no more so than in Scotland. It is a partial story, concentrating on the theatre, drama and tropes of a very select few: the changing fortunes of Celtic and Rangers, the predictability of the Premier League, and an over-focus on a few clubs in the Central Belt (along with Aberdeen and the two Dundee clubs).

A whole array of football is missing from these accounts: the Scotland of the non-league game represents what is in effect a hidden Scotland. The biggest and most impressive part of this is junior football which covers 164 clubs in the country, and is nearly entirely absent from our media and public conversation, from the vast coverage of the game on TV, radio and papers, and which seems even beyond the reach and interest of Stuart Cosgrove and Tam Cowan's *Off the Ball*, along with most football reporters.

At the start of January 2012, myself and my friend Eddie completed our tour of Scotland's 42 senior football grounds and teams. We had deliberately undertaken the journey in a rambling, off the cuff way: to consciously not make it into a project or extension of work, and to do it with affection and love. It was also not just about football, but going to parts of our country with curiosity, as well as spending time travelling and blethering as friends. That experience concluded as I wrote about it in *SR* at the time, at a Peterhead v Celtic cup game, and Berwick Rangers v Stranraer.

There were many memorable experiences in that sojourn such as the rascal-like behaviour of Celtic fans on the coach to Peterhead illicitly drinking, taking drugs and even engaging in a bit of mass shoplifting. But the fans that stood out by a mile for us were those of East Stirling. They are groundless (sharing with Stenhousemuir), finished bottom of the lowest league five times out of six in recent years, and yet their fans are an example to all of us: showing commitment, humour and tenacity.

It was this latter example, the impressive fortitude in the face of adversity, which gave us the idea for what to do next after the 42. Initially, we struggled to think: what next? We even thought about doing all the teams again in a kind of time travel starting with the oldest (Queen's Park) and ending with the newest (which got into the pointless old/new club Rangers argument).

In another leftfield suggestion, Eddie (who fancies himself as a bit of a boyracer) came up with the idea that we attempt to drive to all the grounds in as short a period as possible, starting with Ross County in Dingwall. This would be a kind of cross-country football rally drive. For charity. We could even have Eddie and Gerry emblazoned on the front of the car. Eddie did suggest we could complete such a project in 24 hours, with gave me an image, up

and down Scotland, of creating absolute carnage and chaos on the roads behind us. So that one fortunately stayed on the drawing board.

### **Beginning our journey**

We actually stumbled into what we did next and the East Stirling experience gave us our inspiration: the world of junior and non-league football. Our first junior game actually came before we completed the 42 and on a Saturday, minus any 'senior' football due to a Scotland international game, we went out and discovered Kirkintilloch Rob Roy and their then slightly dilapidated ground, and for the reasonable entrance price of £5 witnessed an exciting and open game which finished 3-3.

Our first proper trip in February 2012 took us on a rain-soaked Saturday to the town of Blantyre and a Blantyre Victoria v Johnstone match. We had even taken sandwiches, not sure if football at this level would have that essential addition, the pie shop, which it did. In front of a crowd at most of 60 people, all of whom seemed to know each other, we witnessed a game with occasional flashes of skill, and a 1-1 draw. Given our expectations, we were hooked, and off.

This was for a number of reasons, not all to do with the football. There was the journey and sense of discovery. Scotland's junior football grounds are not, unlike nearly all the senior clubs, sign-posted, and none well-known. So there was a real element of exploration: of finding towns and places we had never heard of such as Camelon (by Falkirk) or Hurlford (by Kilmarnock), followed by the search for the ground (which could even be complex with GPS).

Often junior grounds are tucked away in the midst of council estates or in a rundown part of town, and sit there as symbols of dreams and glory days of past and some hopeful future. There is something innately impressive in the networks of love, commitment and energy which keeps this whole world going without much attention from outsiders.

Even the name is a misnomer. 'Junior' to some people implies young kids playing. To others it brings an association with journeymen and bruisers knocking the hell out of each other in an uber-physical game. It turns out to be anything but this, and in the dozens of games we have witnessed in the last couple of years we didn't witness one completely dire game, which is more than can be said about the 'top' league in recent times, and several epic classics with lots of goals, skills and drama.

The best thing about junior football is the scale. At Arthurlie, who play in Barrhead, Eddie found that he had won the half-time draw price, worth £10. When he went to collect his winnings from three elderly guys who were part of the local committee, they confessed that running the club was a complete labour of love, and made no financial sense, with the club several hundreds of pounds worse off each week, which was made up by the committee.

Neilson v Carlisle Rovers was billed as a top of the table clash, but it didn't feel like that with the home side winning easily 7-1. When the seventh goal went in, we cheered noisily

as we are inclined to do, having a policy of cheering all goals and generally supporting the home team. The Carluke manager turned to us and said to me: 'Hey big man pack it in.' I replied to him a summary of part of our outlook, saying, 'We are neutrals. We just want to see goals,' to which he responded, 'Fair enough'.

### **The joys of the Junior Cup**

The Junior Cup provided some of our most memorable experiences. At a Largs Thistle v Shotts Bon Accord semi-final, with the game in the balance, the Shotts centre forward was sent off in a completely baffling decision by the referee. By chance we were standing in the enclosure next to the player's parents. They were gutted and close to tears, recognising that if Shotts went on to the final, he would miss it. In consolation, Shotts did get to the final, and won the cup.

The Junior Cup is a tournament filled with romance, and is one of the oldest surviving cups in the world, originating in 1886-87, and predating the Scottish league. The actual cup itself is a thing of magnificence, and while the original Victorian trophy has been superseded, its replacement carries with it the air of history and splendour.

The cup used to attract, in the heyday of the game in the 1950s, huge gates for the final which was played at Hampden with crowds of 60,000 plus; and the record for a final is an impressive 77,650 in 1951. Those crowds began withering in the 1960s and 1970s, and in 1986 they took the wise decision to stop playing at Hampden. But the whole cup still has the air of something romantic and worth playing for, and in its later stages, attracts very decent crowds.

Our first experience of a Junior Cup Final was witnessing the underdogs Shotts, minus their centre forward, take on the giants of the junior game, Auchinleck Talbot, at Livingston's ground (apparently called the Energy Awards Arena). Shotts got themselves into a shock two-goal lead within the first 14 minutes, and despite Auchinleck piling on the pressure they could only pull back one goal with two minutes to go to produce a famous upset.

The final was on a Sunday and the following Tuesday Shotts had a league game and were desperately trying to win promotion, a battle they succeeded in. Before the game, the Junior Cup sat on a table at the side of the pitch, and you could have your picture taken with it and even lift and hold it to mark the moment. All at no charge, unlike the senior game where this would be a costly corporate package.

Elements of the game provide a window into a past Scotland. At the Largs v Shotts semi-final, standing in the enclosure, fans openly drank significant amounts of alcohol, smoked dope, and sang sectarian songs. They did all of this within earshot of two local policemen who stood smiling and observing all this, nodding affirmingly towards the fans.

All of this felt like a glimpse into a Scotland of the 1970s, of fans enjoying themselves in ways which might now annoy the authorities, but was really in good humour and spirits, and not making much bother. It was the Shotts fans who were singing the songs, chanting,

'Hello Hello we are the Billy boys,' and eventually when they continued doing it a couple of games on, we decided that sadly they weren't the special junior team for us.

This year's Junior Cup Final between Hurlford Athletic and Glenafton Athletic at Rugby Park saw myself and Eddie nearly barred from entry as we met the face of officialdom. As we went to enter the ground, we were stopped by two G4S personnel who told us that 'legislation' meant we could not take a camera into the ground. After I told them politely there was no such legislation, they then referred to 'Premier League rules'; myself and Eddie then pointed out that this was a junior game hiring Kilmarnock's ground, not a Premier game, a distinction which seemed beyond them. The two G4S staff presented myself with a choice: give an undertaking not to use my camera, or face the prospect of being barred from the final. Reluctantly, I gave such an undertaking.

That wasn't the complete end of the matter. Once inside Rugby Park, just before the game started, a special announcement was made over the PA just to our stand, 'Would supporters in the Frank Beattie stand please refrain from taking any photographs as it is against the rules': this clearly directed at us. This made us have a good laugh, knowing that small-mindedness isn't restricted to the senior game, but everywhere. Hurlford ran out impressive 3-0 winners on the day.

Our trips have taken us to many wonderful, welcoming places across Scotland. These include the infamous Auchinleck Talbot v Cumnock Rovers Ayrshire derby where we were frisked by the police before entering, and the woman in the local pub told us with evident pride, 'the rivalry is much worse than the Old Firm'. At Ashfield (who play in Possilpark, Glasgow), one man told us how he had until recently lived in London and supported Chelsea, paying £1,800 for a season ticket, and now could do so at the Meadow for £50. A recent Beith Juniors v Largs Thistle finished 5-5 with the game swinging one way then another, as myself and Eddie reflected that we had never seen 10 goals in a single game.

### **Walking into Stewart Regan and the Titans of Fort William**

We have also extended our travels beyond junior football to other non-league teams. The opening day of the Lowland League saw us at Preston Athletic v Dalbeattie Star and the opposition won 4-3, with SFA head Stewart Regan in the tiny crowd. Eddie tweeted his presence, and invited fans to suggest questions they would like to put to him.

A couple of weeks before the Lowland League started, we went to Spartans v Threave Rovers in the first round of the Ramsden Cup, and Spartans won 4-2. Before the game, we did notice that despite Spartans playing next to the Pilton estate in Edinburgh, the crowd appeared completely middle class. When we asked someone associated with the club why this was so they answered, 'We tried inviting local kids last season but they made too much noise. We got complaints from neighbours, so we stopped it'.

Then there is Fort William FC, who play in the Highland League, and are the 'East Stirling' of the north, regularly finishing bottom, and often getting trashed by nine, 10 and even 11 goals, and still going on. We went there for the first round of the Scottish Cup not

expecting too much, and found a well-looked after ground and set up. The match against Newton Stewart finished nil-nil, but could have been about five each, so bad was both their finishing. In one instance, a Fort player managed to miss an open goal from six yards, hitting it so softly that the other team managed to get a player back and clear it off the line.

Then there is the rich history of junior and non-league football: the teams, towns and nature of small-scale Scotland which follows an archaeology set at the peak of industrial Scotland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It isn't an accident that the heartlands of the junior game map practically exactly the powerful forces of that earlier age, with Ayrshire, West Lothian and Fife being places where junior football carries with it an importance way beyond the game.

Many clubs carry with them a whole host of stories, identities and memories about what it is to live in the 21st century in places such as Auchinleck, Cumnock, Beith, Bonnyrigg and countless others. Maybe reflecting on it, their local football team, run mostly on countless acts of goodwill, carries just a bit too much of this sense of local pride and place – and that in a country which continually stresses how different it is, while centralising and standardising lots of public life. Perhaps government and public bodies could actively support and sustain such local feeling.

This is about history, connection, generational and collective stories, and a whole lot more. Important things which tend to get forgotten about, but which make us into who and what we are. None of us who live here are just simply Scottish, or even Scottish-Asian or Scottish-Italian, but a whole mix of complex and fluid identities.

Some of this can be seen in the clubhouses and social clubs of many of the junior clubs. There we find a conscious attempt to preserve and record the illustrious achievements of the past: the Junior Cups won, numerous other trophies and cups, memorials and testimonials, occasional big matches played against titans from the top leagues, pendants exchanged, and photographs of great league title winning teams. In some of the clubs, this is all beautifully presented and maintained, while in others, who shall remain nameless, there is a potent sense of decay and the passing of an era.

What is most evocative about the junior game is the intimacy of the whole thing. It is all on a very human and personal scale, which allows you to practically reach out and touch the players, and see and feel the emotions, hopes, elation and occasional heartbreak which people go through over the course of a game.

Our exploration of football captivated us, is ongoing, and in future will take us to many other towns and places. Here is another Scotland which exists underneath the attention of most of society and with a near-complete media blackout; the exception being the Junior Cup Final shown each year on BBC Alba.

For lifelong football fans, Eddie, a Celtic fan, and myself, a Dundee United fan, all of this has been an enormously uplifting and affirming experience, about our friendship, football and wider Scotland. Fans have an opportunity to get to know the players, and spend time with them in a pub on Saturday night, celebrating highs, commiserating lows, and berating

them for mistakes. There is something rather edifying in this, far removed from the grotesque corporatised world of the European Champions League, English Premiership, and even to a lesser extent, Scotland's top flight.

In the course of the last two and a half years, as we traversed up and down Scotland, the two subjects which obsessed public life were the implosion of Rangers FC and the independence referendum. People, not surprisingly, spoke in passing about the former, but with a mixture of bewilderment and amusement, and no real relish or malice.

Yet, for all the debate elsewhere and claims of 'a nation in conversation', not one person mentioned the referendum. In fact, politics was nearly completely missing from the hundreds of people we spoke and listened to. This might be good old-fashioned Scottish reticence, but it also points to a deeper truth: that politics and even the independence referendum are not all there is to life.

There is even, in the year of our historic choice, a Scotland beyond politics and the independence debate. That's as it should be in a mature society. What the world of junior football shows is that there is a fascinating, rich, diverse country beyond the gaze of the media, politics and government, a Scotland beyond the big cities and centralisation of practically everything in public life.

The hidden Scotland of junior football is a fragile, precious ecology, a place held together not by the millions of the globalised game, but hundreds of thousands of Scots giving voluntarily their free time. There are concerns about its viability in some places: the ageing volunteers and supporters, and the generation of working-class older men who have given back so much to their local teams. What comes after them?

Junior football shows a glimpse of a very different land: one about localism, small-sizedness, and the potential of self-management. This Scotland has managed to exist and be nurtured without much interest and action from the Scottish Government or comment from Stuart and Tam and the like.

Maybe there are bigger lessons for the powers that be in this state of affairs in this historical year: namely, that there is more to life than politics and recognising the limits of the remorseless logic of centralisation. There is a rich tapestry of a complex, varied society out there – below the radar and beyond the attention span of official Scotland – which doesn't have voice or recognition in the corridors of power.

Perhaps we could all learn from the endurance of junior teams the length and breadth of our country, and celebrate the beauty of the small, the local and the reach of the voluntary. That would begin to look like a very different and better Scotland than that of today.

# Football crazies

Jonathan Tevendale

2016

There are few stereotypes so universally negative as that of the football fan: fat, gaudy and hyper-aggressive. The only thing which overpowers the borderline offensive scent of hair gel and cheap lager is that of Greggs' corned beef pasties, dripping grease onto their hands. I embody none of these characteristics: I'm gay, somewhat lanky, and the last time I ate Greggs I ensured an inch of napkin separated me from the oil, before finding a knife and fork. It is surprising, therefore, that I should find myself on the tranquil, cultured streets of Lyon, not just distantly observing those who adhere to this boisterous 'cult of football', but actively participating in it myself.

When my mother and I chose Lyon as the location of our mini-break we expected many things, many of which turned out to be true. The cuisine was just as garlic-studded, wine-filled and utterly delicious as the title 'French capital of food' would suggest, though their devout use of tripe (which I accidentally ordered twice – it wasn't a word I had needed to pass any exams) was a tad disturbing. We swanned from Louis XIV pomp to rustic Renaissance elegance, stopping only for coffee and death by over-consumption. The Saône snaked through le centre-ville, its perfect shimmer ruined only by the oil slick or shopping trolley; but hey, that's modern Europe for you. The beret-donning youth, stinking of 'l'artistique', meandered through the Lyonnais streets without a care in the world; the fervently Catholic old-guard sang glorious Latin verse in the decadent cathedral. Lyon was a beautiful, idyllic microcosm of a perfect France, one without any of the worries of contemporary living.

And yet, by night, this perfect image melted into a hot, soupy puddle of testosterone and patriotism. My mother and I, in our naivety, had booked this trip in the middle of the Euros. Of course, we'd been warned. A concerned member of my Highland community advised me to spend game nights 'away from public areas'; others had laughed, having heard of the brawls between England and Russia and recognising my impending fate: to be crushed to death by a rabid fan who 'didn't like the look on my face'. And yet, not wanting the suffering endured during our Easyjet flight to have been in vain, we set off into the Lyonnais streets, not knowing what to expect. Whilst the game itself was in Marseille, we knew the French would be out supporting *leur Patrie*.

We were right. The beret-wearing artistiques had shed their hats and clothes, dressing themselves in nothing but well-wrapped Tricolores, with the occasional plastic chicken perched upon a head. The elderly had dumped their prayer books and walking sticks, opting for an aggressive, guttural French tongue over the insular Latin of that afternoon. Who needs knitting needles when you're armed with a vuvuzela and diverse array of

profanities? And so we sat, and drank, and ate in a street-side *bouchon* (as we'd been doing all day), yet it was no longer the patter of feet which echoed off the walls of the narrow 15th-century alley, but the glory and screaming of a French crowd, making up for centuries of military defeat by slaughtering the hopes and dreams of little Iceland.

It was brutal; it was brilliant. Each goal scored created a sense of ecstasy, seeming to embody the spirit of national unity. My mother and I were both surprised at the quantity of enjoyment we were deriving from football, a game neither of us could, would, or will ever play. And so when the game ended in French victory, when people started waving flags out of windows, chanting in shared elation and tooting their car horns ceremoniously, we were both hungry for more.

Stereotypes are funny things. Being in Lyon, verified almost all of the preconceptions I had about 'the French'. They take their food seriously, smoke a lot, and have an endearing tendency to ignore the American dictum that the 'customer is always right'. Customers can be, and very often are, opportunistic, entitled fools, and the French know it. Yet, in spite of this, almost all my ideas about football were shattered, a trend which was both continued and amplified. The fans were loud and gaudy, sure, but they didn't quite fulfil the hooligan role so often attributed to them by hysterical snobs.

When both the Welsh and the Portuguese descended upon the town a few days later, it was no surprise to find the Welsh guzzling Carling from plastic cups in whichever pub had a vaguely Anglo-Saxon ring to it: the Elephant and Castle, Shamrock's Irish Pub, Winston's bar and restaurant. A particularly ballsy (or drunk) Welsh pensioner removed his top to reveal a red dragon tattoo stretched across his entire back, the only thing keeping him from stumbling into a gutter being his stubborn patriotism. The Portuguese, conversely, locked themselves in wine bars, perhaps because they like wine, probably because they were intimidated by the infinitely more energetic Welsh.

Yet again, my national stereotypes had been verified and my ones about football shattered. Here were two rival teams, one of which was British and thus considerably more prone to violent outbursts, and I witnessed nothing other than joviality and mild alcohol poisoning. I went to France expecting to enjoy the food, culture and history, but find myself most attached to the memories concerning football. I'm not sure I could ever bring myself to actually touch the ball with my own hands, but I'd certainly consider exchanging two hours in an amphitheatre for 90 minutes of high-excitement, testosterone-powered sporting action. What's worrying is that you can never really know, well, anything. Discovering that football fans aren't universally thuggish is surprising enough, never mind my spontaneous outburst of sporting fanaticism.

As my mother and I drove home through Highland glens, we were not thinking about the buildings and the art, but about how to tune the radio so we could listen to the final. I may have shattered preconceptions I had about myself and football fans, a group I came to consider myself part of, but one thing will always remain true: the signal's terrible in the Highlands.

# The bird that saved my team from oblivion

Ron Ferguson

2017

From Stromness to Cowdenbeath is a long journey. By public transport, it takes around 13 hours. You have to have good reasons for making the 26 hours return trip. So why have I done just that? I'll come to that in a minute.

My wife Cristine drove me from our Norwegian wooden house in rural Orkney to the terminal in Stromness. The first challenge was crossing the Pentland Firth. It can be a fearsome piece of water, with its turbulent clashing tides. I'm not a great sailor, but it has to be done. The alternative is to fly from Kirkwall to Edinburgh; but the return journey would not leave much change from £300. So I must go down to the sea in ships. (I'm reminded of theologian Juergen Moltmann's wry observation: 'Noah endured the stench on the ark by focusing on the size of the waves outside'.)

The breakfast on board the *Hamnavoe* was excellent. The Firth behaved itself. The 90-minute sail wasn't too bad; I've been on a lot worse.

You can lose the will to live on the journey south by bus. I was glad to have a break for lunch in Inverness. It was a stunning day. I decided to have a meal in the open-air at Pizza Express in Falcon Square. I rewarded myself with a large, cold glass of Pinot Grigio. It was lovely. It did wonders for my anxiety about the purpose of my journey.

It was while I was in benevolent spirits that the bird struck. A pigeon. What happened? Well, how can I put this delicately? One of God's creatures shat on me, a Presbyterian servant of the Lord.

My mood darkened. I was saved from a bout of Kierkegaardian angst by Mary, a senior waitress at the Pizza Express. She had witnessed the scene. Suppressing her desire to laugh, she came over to me and said: 'That is a sign of good luck!'

Aye, right. So what might bad luck look like?

She helped me get myself sorted. Then she took away my plate. I had eaten about half of the large pizza. She came back soon with a new pizza. Then she appeared again with a new large glass of Pinot Grigio, with the compliments of the management. When I'd finished the excellent meal, Mary came over to tell me that there was nothing to pay.

What had begun as a bit of a disaster had turned into good news for a Scotsman. Now that is good customer service.

Restored to my normal beneficence, I settled down for a sleep on the bus... So now I am in Cowdenbeath accompanied by my daughter Fiona, my elder son Neil, and my younger grandson, Dan. I am feeling very anxious. The team I support, Cowdenbeath, are due to play East Kilbride in the second leg of a play-off which may result in the Blue Brazil's third relegation in a row.

East Kilbride have already knocked Cowdenbeath out of the Scottish Cup at Central Park this season. If we lose this game, we will drop out of the senior Scottish game altogether. Cowden chairman Donald Findlay QC warns that this will probably result in the demise of the club after 136 years. The Fife club was founded eight years before the advent of Celtic Football Club.

On the way down in the bus I prayed one fervent prayer: 'Please let it not go to extra time and a penalty shoot-out'. Why? Because Cowden have failed to convert six penalties in a row, the last failure happening seven days before in the first leg at East Kilbride. I tell my family that if the game goes to a penalty shoot-out, Cowden will lose. We will be lucky to even score one goal.

The grandstand is filling up. Instead of the usual 300 attendance, the crowd is declared to number more than 1,600. Some are ghouls, hoping to witness the death throes of a Scottish football club with a colourful history.

Before the game, I received a text from Sir Alex Ferguson (no relation) telling me he was rooting for Cowden. This information cheered the players in the home dressing room. Alex was a supporter of my book *Black Diamonds and the Blue Brazil* when it first came out, and he wrote the foreword to the recently-published updated edition.

The referee blows his whistle and the game starts. I can hardly bear to watch. The rain is torrential. Cowden start aggressively and attack the East Kilbride goal. Within three minutes, the ball is in the EK net! What a roar goes up. That relaxes the Cowden fans a bit.

The play swings from end to end, with both teams giving as good as they get. Then, in 64 minutes, EK attack the Cowden goal and score an equaliser. A familiar Scottish dread sweeps over me. I have been here before, many times. Not another relegation, please.

The 1-1 score remains the same until the final whistle. There is no more scoring in extra time. Penalties it is. We're dead in the water. This is unbearable torture. I feel sorry for the players, taking spot kicks with so much at stake. Their nerves must be shredded. Mine certainly are.

Cowden defender Fraser Mullen, who scored the opening goal, strides forward to take the first penalty. He hits it firmly. Goal! Both teams keep up the scoring rate.

Then Jamie Sneddon, Cowden's 18-year-old goalkeeper, dives to his right to make a fine save. The EK player who missed is devastated. Then Cowden forward Liam Henderson goes up to take the kick that could keep his side in the Scottish senior league. He sends the EK keeper the wrong way, and the ball hits the back of the net.

After their terrible run of penalty failures, Cowdenbeath have avoided relegation in dramatic circumstances. I feel exhausted, though I haven't kicked a ball. Rather than running about celebrating, the Cowden players turn immediately to shake hands with their defeated opponents. There but for the grace of God. Pure class.

My phone pings, indicating a message. Sir Alex Ferguson. 'Hallelujah! Well done the Blue Brazils. It's another book, play and film!!'

Gary Locke, the Cowden manager, invites me into the dressing room. The place is jumping. Then up to the boardroom for a substantial dram. I need it.

In the evening, my mind turns to that incident in the Pizza Express, Inverness. Mary had said that the birdshit from the sky represented good luck. From that moment on, East Kilbride were doomed. It was fated. The bird had spoken. God moves in mysterious ways.

Now I face the endless hours in the bus, followed by whatever the Pentland Firth chooses to throw at me. But I'm happy. My team has been saved.

# Scotland's unheralded curling giants

Jack Davidson

2018

Although the British men's curling rink at the recent Winter Olympics at Pyeongchang hoped to return with gold medals and improve on fellow Scot David Murdoch's rink's silver medals in 2014, it was not to be. But had the Scottish four representing Britain and skipped by Kyle Smith done so, they would not have been the first Scots to have achieved this feat.

That honour belongs to the team at the inaugural event in 1924 in Chamonix, consisting of Willie and Laurence Jackson, Tom Murray and Robin Welsh. And in any event, one record created then by Welsh would have been beyond their reach. Aged 54 and 101 days when he struck gold, he remains the oldest gold medallist in Winter Olympic history. Nor is it likely that in future any curler will emulate the Watsonian's sporting pedigree of being an internationalist at rugby and tennis, as well as curling.

What makes the tale of the 1924 success fascinating is that for years it was thought that curling was merely a demonstration sport. As a consequence, the four medallists died without realising they were official Olympic champions. After 1924, curling was a demonstration sport at the Winter Games till it was accorded full competitive status for the Nagano Games in 1998, leading to the assumption that in Chamonix it was also demonstration only. But in 2006, scrutiny of the records prompted largely by *The Herald's* former sports writer Doug Gillon convinced the Olympic authorities that in 1924 it had indeed been a full competitive event for which medals and an accompanying diploma had been awarded, and the Scots' true status was officially recognised retrospectively. Robin Welsh's gold medal remains in the possession of a grandson.

The misunderstanding arose partly from the fact that the 1924 games took place as the 'International Winter Sports Week'. This reflected the ongoing debate among the Olympic authorities whether to establish a Winter Olympics, given the opposition from Nordic Games countries – the principal winter sports proponents. In 1925, at the International Olympic Congress in Prague, the decision to create Winter Games was ratified with the 1924 Chamonix event being retrospectively designated the first Winter Olympics.

The successful 1924 team all had agricultural backgrounds. Tom Murray, and father and son Willie and Laurie Jackson, farmed in Lanarkshire while Welsh did so at Liberton Mains on the outskirts of Edinburgh. All had excellent CVs with skip Willie Jackson considered the pre-eminent Scottish curler of the first half of the 20th century. In 1922, playing together, they had won the prestigious 'Manchester Ice Palace Shield' while Welsh had skipped a Scottish team to three wins against the Canadians for the Strathcona Cup. At that time, selection lay in the hands of the Royal Caledonian Curling Club, and it was no

surprise when they were chosen to represent Britain in Chamonix, with each player having to make a contribution to his own expenses.

Three days before the opening ceremony on 25 January, a 'Curling Congress' was held in Chamonix's Hotel Majestic to discuss details of the forthcoming competition, where it was decided that games would be of 18 ends in round-robin format. Three other teams were due to take part – Switzerland, France and Sweden – but Switzerland withdrew before the opening ceremony, at which the Scots marched behind the municipal band, brooms held against their shoulders as if they were rifles, and curling stone handles hung round their necks on tartan ribbons. In contrast to today's apparel, the players then took to the ice wearing 'plus fours', collar and tie, and 'bunnets', while their jackets sported a Union Jack flag patch on one arm.

On 29 and 30 January, they comfortably defeated Sweden and France respectively to claim the inaugural title, despite reservations about the quality of the ice. Later at the Royal Caledonian Club's AGM, it was recorded that 'the ice was not good, far short of the ideal ice at Haymarket Ice Rink'. After Chamonix, the winning team members continued at the forefront of the sport with Welsh, at the age of 63 in 1932, captaining Scotland against England.

As mentioned, he was a remarkable sportsman from a remarkable sporting family. His first love was rugby. Playing on the wing for Watsonians from 1890 to 1898, he was a member of their multiple championship winning teams in that period, captaining one successful side. He won four caps for Scotland, three in the Triple Crown winning side of 1895 and was described in contemporary reports as 'lithe and speedy as a greyhound'. Later, he ran the touchline when Scotland clinched its first Grand Slam in 1925 and became president of the Scottish Rugby Union.

Once retired from playing rugby, he turned his attention to tennis at which he also excelled. Twice winner of the East of Scotland Championship, and several times finalist, he represented Scotland in 1914 (aged 45) against Ireland. Somehow he also found time to make a significant contribution to Edinburgh's civic life as town councillor, magistrate and bailie.

His wife Mollie was an outstanding tennis player, six times Scottish champion, and an accomplished curler. Brother and fellow Watsonian, Hugh, had a short but brilliant athletics career, twice British mile champion as well as winning numerous Scottish titles. Their cousin W H Welsh (Willie) was a dual Scottish rugby and athletics internationalist, once memorably winning the Scottish 100, 220 and 440 yards titles in one afternoon. He later became an eminent physician. Robin's son, also Robin, was a noted rugby and tennis player and curler, later secretary of the Royal Caledonian Curling Club and the International Curling Federation.

The inclusion of curling in the 1924 Winter Olympics was a landmark event for the sport. Given all that has since transpired in terms of doping and other scandals at the Olympics, it is thought-provoking to consider Baron de Coubertin's words at the Chamonix closing ceremony: 'Winter sports have a certain purity about them... that is why I'm inclined to support and nurture them in the Olympic environment'.

# The story of Rose Reilly: a Scottish footballing pioneer

Gerry Hassan

2019

Scottish football is on the way up at the international level – in quality, achievements and in its recognition by others. Our national team has just beaten the mighty Brazil for the first time ever, and if that were not enough, has qualified after a long fallow period for the World Cup finals taking place this summer in France. This is not some parallel universe or fantasy Scotland – it is actually happening now in women's football. The women's game is currently undergoing a renaissance and belatedly beginning to get the recognition it has long deserved.

It has been a long and difficult journey to get to this position. Previously, the Scottish women's game was marginalised, patronised, dismissed, and even the subject of banning for much of the 20th century, which denied at least two generations of talented women the opportunity to play football at a senior level in this country.

All this forms a backdrop to the timely, moving new film about the life and achievements of Rose Reilly, made by Purple TV and Margot McCuaig, and which will be first broadcast on BBC Alba this coming weekend. It tells how Reilly overcame entrenched resistance from football authorities in Scotland and found fame and fortune in Italy playing for AC Milan. She also won the Women's World Cup with Italy in 1984. Her personal story provides the opportunity to bring to public attention the long forgotten Neanderthal attitudes of those who ran football in this country and saw it as the preserve of men, with the women's game as something to be discouraged and actively suppressed.

Women's football was formally banned in Scotland in 1921 in the aftermath of the First World War (it was also banned in England that year). This was a conscious attempt after war and intensive female employment in industry to re-emphasise traditional female roles in the home, which football was seen to undermine.

For those who think such prehistoric attitudes lie deep in Scotland's distant past, prepare for a shock. In 1971, UEFA decided that the time had come to promote and integrate women's football and passed a near-unanimous vote to this effect – 31 votes to one – the single dissenting voice being the dinosaurs of the SFA. And it was to take until 1974 for the football authorities to finally relent and unban the women's game here, the SFA's official minutes recording that 'they reluctantly gave official recognition to the women's game', waiting until 1998 before they brought the game under the auspices of the SFA.

This is the context of Rose Reilly's life story, achievements and many successes – gained in the face of entrenched and unenlightened attitudes on the part of men in positions of power running the game in Scotland.

Born in Stewarton, Ayrshire, in 1955, into a working-class and Catholic family where she was one of eight, Reilly knew from an early age that she was gifted and loved football. At the tender age of four, she had a crisis of identity when she was given a doll as a Christmas present, which appalled her. 'I went straight out among the local kids,' she remembers, 'and eventually managed to swap that doll for a football'.

This was not the end of things but only the beginning. 'My mother didn't know what to do with me,' Rose says, who showed her identification and love for the game by sleeping each night with her football for a whole year. 'I fell in love with it. I was scared my mother or one of my brothers would take it off me.'

In her pre-pubescent years, Rose managed to play football in boy's teams by cutting her hair very short to look like a boy and calling herself Ross. Playing in the boy's game brought her success and attention, aided by her pace and growing ability, but this was to bring her first major disappointment.

After a particularly successful game in the boy's team, where she scored a barrel load of goals, word got around of the young player's prowess. This led to the interest of a Celtic FC scout who said to the club, 'I'd like to sign right away yer wee number seven,' to which the youth coach replied, 'Sorry, you can't, that's actually a wee lassie'. Rose remembers this defining moment well: 'I got talking to that scout and I was raging about it. I just couldn't understand why I couldn't play for Celtic'.

Reilly continued to play boy's football until puberty and biology made it obvious to all that she was a girl. This brought with it the weight of disapproval from school and church authorities in nearby Kilmarnock. 'They finally got exasperated with me,' comments Rose, 'and I got the belt, right across the hands. The headmaster said to me, "You are never going to learn, are you?" I said, "Naw, it's youse that are never going to learn. I just want to play football, I'm doing nothing wrong".' Reilly adds poignantly: 'Back then sometimes I felt like I would be burnt at the stake for playing football'.

Reilly as a young woman not only showed great aptitude as a footballer, but also in athletics, where she could have represented Scotland. But it was football to which her heart, commitment and skill belonged. Yet, in 1970's Scotland the football authorities were doing all they could to discourage the women's game, forcing talented players like Reilly to seek opportunity elsewhere.

She moved to France as a teenager in 1972, signing for Stade de Reims, before the following year taking the big step of moving to Italy, signing for AC Milan and playing at the legendary San Siro. This was to be the making of Reilly as she played 17 years in Italian football, including for Lecce and Trani, winning eight league titles, four cups, and twice the 'Golden Boot' for the most goals in a single season – scoring an outstanding 43 and 45 goals respectively.

Reilly's years in Italy were among the happiest in her life. 'I totally embraced Italy,' she recalls, talking of how she loved everything about the culture, from the cafes to nightlife, fashion and style. 'I started drinking espresso coffee. My motto was, when in Rome, do as

the Romans do. I was being wined and dined in restaurants all over Italy. Previously, the only place I'd been to was the chippy in Stewarton.'

Not only did Reilly perform at club level in one of the most passionate football countries in the world, but she also established herself at international level. Not for Scotland, but for Italy, with Reilly as the captain of the Italian team lifting the World Cup in 1984, scoring one of her team's three goals in their 3-1 defeat of West Germany.

This is an uplifting story about the triumph of talent, passion and belief rising above the small-minded bureaucrats who ran men's football and wanted to keep it as a closed shop, keeping women permanently outside of it.

Reilly is a wonderful character and witness to her own story and achievements. She tells her account with wit, humour and a sense of authenticity which goes to her core. This is a woman who encountered, what would have been to most people, insurmountable barriers and prejudice, and defeated them. When asked if she still feels anger towards those who banned her from football in her own country, she displays a Zen-like attitude with a soft degree of incredulity that people running the game could have been so stupid, along with a charm and great line in self-depreciation that belies deep courage and resilience.

Eventually, the football authorities caught up. In 2007, Reilly was at long last inducted into the Football Hall of Fame, despite the disapproval and opposition of some of football's dinosaurs. And this week Reilly and some of her fellow pioneers have been awarded in retrospect national caps for international games, before the SFA unbanned the game.

Reilly's role as a trailblazer and ambassador is now widely recognised across the game, although unreconstructed male chauvinists still linger in parts of the football world. The Scottish coach of the women's team heading off to France, Shelley Kerr, openly talks of the inspiration and pioneering role of Reilly (and her team-mates Edna Neillis and Elsie Cook) all those years ago in what seem now like dark ages.

Rose Reilly's accomplishments – as a player, as a role model and as someone aiding social change – is unquestionable, and more than that, is humbling and empowering given the obstacles she faced from her earliest years. It is accurate, and right, to call her one of Scotland's true football giants and legends – someone who should be seen and spoken of in the same breath as household names like Billy McNeill, John Greig, Archie Gemmill and Jimmy Johnstone, to name a few.

The film of her life, *Rose Reilly*, covers her story from her earliest years in Stewarton to the present, where at the age of 64 she reflects on a life that included retiring from football at the age of 40; marriage to an Argentinian doctor and psychotherapist, Norberto Peralta, and at 45, the birth of her only daughter, Valentina, who is now 19.

This is a story that needed to be told – it is about more than just football and the success of one extraordinary woman. It is also about the oppressive society Scotland was not that long ago, and how we all owe a debt of gratitude to the likes of Rose Reilly for refusing to defer to the men who said 'no, you cannae dae that'.

But it also one where we should not imagine that the sexists and misogynists have been

completely defeated – think in recent years of Tam Cowan's dismissive remarks on women's football; or that the accomplishments of Reilly and others have now been universally recognised – with no entry for Reilly or anyone else associated with women's football in the just published *New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*. It is wonderful that the women's game is now being celebrated but we still have a lot of progress to catch up on, and across society we are far removed from gender equality in any walk of life.

A special word has to go to Margot McCuaig who championed this as a project and saw it into production. 'Making this film has been an emotional journey, but also an empowering one,' says Margot. Rose's 'legacy of self-belief, determination and hard-fought for success against the backdrop of deep-rooted misogyny in sport and society will undoubtedly inspire generations to come'.

It was appropriate that, as the successful Scottish national women's team played their last match at Hampden against Jamaica before going to the World Cup in France, the SFA finally acknowledged the success of Rose and a generation of other women pioneers. At long last they have decided to recognise Rose and the team who played the international against England in 1972 – before the game was unbanned. Better late than never, even if it is 47 years later. But as we cheer on Shelley Kerr and her talented squad over the summer, let's remember the giants they are standing on the shoulders of.

# Contributors

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**Dominic Brown** works in post-school education

**Seán Damer** was a senior research fellow in sociology at the University of Glasgow

**Jack Davidson** is a journalist

**David Donnison** was an academic and social scientist. He died in 2018

**Ron Ferguson** is a journalist and author. He is a former Leader of the Iona Community

**Tess Ferguson** was a contributor to the *Scottish Review* 'cafe'

**Gerry Hassan** is a writer and commentator

**Walter Humes** is an Honorary Professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Stirling University

**Kevin McCarra** was a sportswriter. He died in 2020

**Jack McLean** is a writer and former *Glasgow Herald* columnist

**Anne-Marie McManus** was an occasional writer for the *Scottish Review*

**Barbara Millar** is a funeral celebrant

**Bill Paterson** is a distinguished Scottish actor and commentator. He has appeared in many films and television programmes and lives in London

**Eileen Reid** is a writer

**Kenneth Roy** was a distinguished Scottish journalist and founding editor of the *Scottish Review*. He died in 2018

**Gillean Somerville-Arjat** is a writer and critic

**Jonathan Tevendale** was Scottish Schools' Young Writer of the Year 2015/16

**David Torrance** is an author and contemporary historian