

HALLS



# 2010 MEDIA COVERAGE



# Commercial Property

## Beware, Greek's gift not bearing up

KEN HOUSTON

EXITING Glasgow Central Station on Gordon Street brings you face to face with the Grosvenor Building, a masterpiece by the Victorian architect, Alexander "Greek" Thomson. Coincidentally, one of the terminal's side exits opens out to Union Street and another Thomson design, the Egyptian Halls. But the two buildings tell a very different story.

Only the facade of the Gordon Street property is genuine; behind it are modern offices, new in 1992 and now undergoing a refurbishment scheme by its landlord, Ignis Real Estate. The Egyptian Halls – completed in 1872 and described as the finest surviving example of a Thomson commercial building – is still intact, but only just. Now the developer who for more than a decade has been trying to return the structure to its former glory claims the state of disrepair will soon reach a point whereby demolition – despite its grade-A listing – will be the only option.

Almost resigned to this, Derek Souter of Dundee-based Union Street Investments and Union Street Properties, has proposed a scheme for a new building on the site, with ground-floor retail and a hotel. He claims his passion for restoring the present structure has almost been spent – worn down by the obliquity of the public sector bodies with whom he has had to deal. Development of the site in whatever



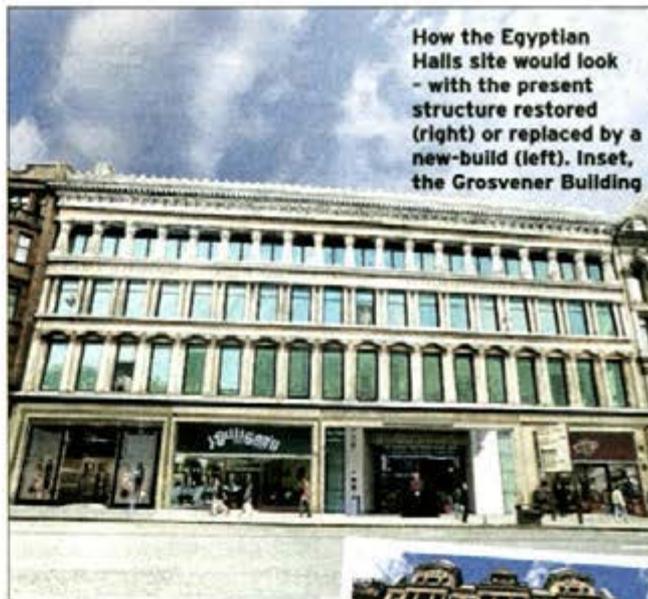
acceptable context is now his main aim.

The background to the saga is already well known in property circles. Souter's companies have spent £5 million on the project and, he says, are willing to invest a further £12m. Glasgow City Council has agreed a £1m grant and Historic Scotland a grant of around £1.65m, but that leaves about £4.35m still to be found. Souter says he is prepared to reduce the shortfall by a further £2m if Historic Scotland comes up with the remainder and is frustrated by the body's refusal to do so. Historic Scotland says

the proffered contribution towards the project is treble the usual maximum for a scheme such as this.

Souter insists that for many years his interest in the site was also driven by a genuine desire to see this unique piece of Victorian architecture retained and while this remains his preference, he is beginning to see new-build as the only option – a choice likely to become academic within a year given the state of disrepair.

He continues "The rebuild option is now subject to development appraisals. Early indications are this option shows



How the Egyptian Halls site would look - with the present structure restored (right) or replaced by a new-build (left). Inset, the Grosvenor Building

a decent surplus, which paradoxically vindicates the Scottish Government's advice that the Egyptian Halls should be treated as a commercial project."

Meanwhile, in contrast to all this angst, refurbishment of the Grosvenor Building will be completed in early 2011, the entire interior (currently unoccupied) being "remodelled" to provide office suites of circa 8,500 each from the first to the sixth floor. The joint letting agents, GVA Grimley and King Sturge, declined to put a value on the cost of the refurbishment, saying only that it was a "six-figure sum".



So what of a solution for the Egyptian Halls based on the Gordon Street building – i.e. a new-build behind the retained original facade? "It's a possibility," says Souter. "But the truly remarkable thing about this building is the iron floor interior which on completion was cutting edge structural engineering and reinforced Scotland's international architectural credentials."

## All go in Glasgow

THE first letting at City Site Estates's 79,000 sq ft office scheme at 2 West Regent St, Glasgow has gone to i2 Office, "a new concept in serviced offices providing flexible accommodation that maximises technology". The tenant has taken 15,900 sq ft over the first and second floors on a 15-year lease at an average annual rental of £24.30 a sq ft. GVA Grimley and DTZ advised the landlord while Jones Lang LaSalle acted for i2 Office.

Still in Glasgow, semiconductor distribution specialist EBV Elektronik has taken 1,900 sq ft at 180 St Vincent Street on a ten-year lease at an initial rental of £21.50 a sq ft. Ryden acted for the landlord, MWM Property.

EP Barrus has sold the 1.83 acre site which houses a 45,000 sq ft complex at Lumley Street, Grangemouth, to Bellair for £450,000. DM Hall acted for the vendor.

Drambuie is the latest tenant to sign up at ScotMid's Rosewell House at Connect Business Park in Newbridge, Edinburgh, where it has taken 1,309 sq ft of space on a five year lease at a rental of £17 a sq ft. Cushman & Wakefield and Ryden acted for ScotMid, Savills for Drambuie.

■ Please send deals information (text only, please) to: kh@kenhoustonmedia.com

# Fears for world famous 'Greek' Thomson



■ This picture of the Egyptian Halls, left, nine years ago gives an idea of their former splendour, but they are now hidden by hoardings, inset right. As our main picture shows, the halls are covered in scaffolding and Derek Souter fears for the future. Pictures: Colin Mearns



# £2.3m plea for historic city 'icon'

**EXCLUSIVE**  
By VIVIANNE NICOLI

**A** HISTORIC building in Glasgow city centre may have to be demolished ... unless £2.3million can be found to save it.

The 138-year-old A-listed Egyptian Halls in Union Street, opposite the side entrance to Central Station, were designed by Alexander "Greek" Thomson and are regarded as one of the finest buildings in Glasgow.

The building has lain empty and partly derelict for 30 years and is now hidden behind scaffolding and a giant hoarding.

Owner Derek Souter, director of Union Street Properties, invited the Evening Times to tour the impressive structure. What we found was a building crying out for attention, with plaster falling off the walls and ceilings, and decades of neglect evident round every corner.

Mr Souter said: "I believe the building is very close to being unable to be repaired, which would mean it

would eventually become dangerous." If that happened, it is almost certain the Egyptian Halls would have to be demolished and the site cleared.

Neil Baxter, secretary of the Royal Incorporation Of Architects in Scotland, said: "There is no question that the Egyptian Halls is the finest surviving example of an Alexander Thomson commercial building."

"This is a building of the first international importance and it would be a great pity if lack of a relatively small amount of money in terms of public expenditure, condemned this building."

Mr Souter admits he is frustrated that the Scottish Government, through Historic Scotland, has given large grants to other projects but - he claims - is refusing to give enough to save an architectural gem.

He said: "This is a 200-job project, in a street that needs regenerating, in a city that needs every job it can get. "It is a fantastic location, but it is a street that has never had any regeneration, which is such a pity."

"Central Station has 27million passengers a year, but Union Street has

nothing on it to make people stop before they go on to the station."

Work on the halls started in March 1870 and the building was completed in 1872. It was apparently built in emulation of the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly.

Mr Souter first got involved with the former market in 1988 when he bought the first of the four shops at street level and has been fighting to save the building ever since.

Because of ownership issues, he did not purchase the upper four floors until 2008.

He wants to upgrade the shops and transform the rest of the building into a 136-bed hotel in a project costing around £24million.

The Accor group, which operates 850 hotels in nearly 100 countries, is keen to get involved and take up the hotel franchise.

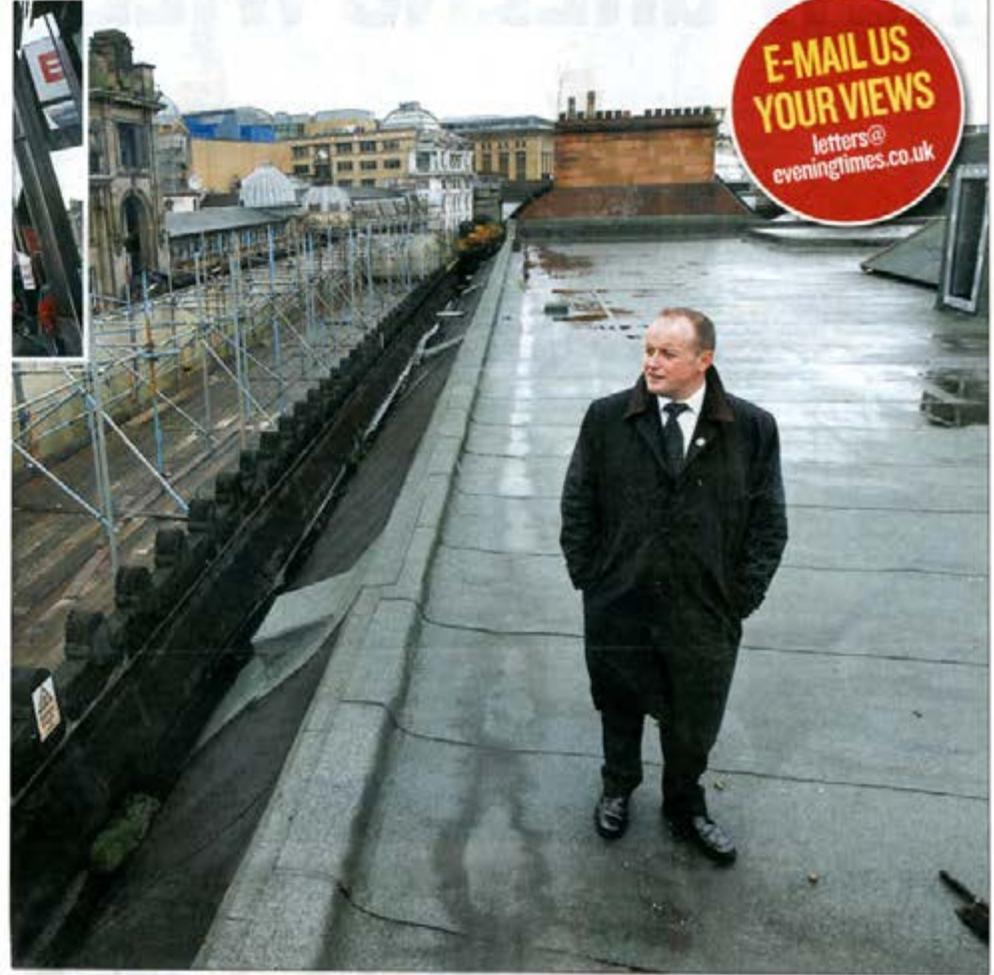


If the hotel became a reality, it would create 200 jobs, help regenerate Union Street and result in around £300,000 a year in business rates being paid to the council.

But there is one major problem - lack of money.

Union Street Properties and sister company Union Street Investments have so far spent £5m on the project and Mr Souter says they are willing to invest a further £12m.

# building as owner fights to save it



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**“ This place is special on a world stage and worthy of support from every direction**

The city council has agreed a £1m grant and Historic Scotland a grant of around £1.65m, leaving about £4.35m still to be found before work can start.

Mr Souter says his firms are prepared to fund a further £2m but wants the Scottish Government to provide the remaining £2.35m. He pointed out it recently awarded Abbotsford House, the McIlrose home of Sir Walter Scott, a grant of £4m.

He added: "We have shouldered all the risks with this project for 12 years because we will not make any money from it for next five and 10 years."

**I**F THE money cannot be found, the halls would be mothballed, resulting in it deteriorating further and eventually having to be flattened.

But Mr Souter believes transforming the Egyptian Halls would breathe life into Union Street and start the regeneration of the area.

He said: "The Halls are a massive part of Glasgow's cultural heritage but have been allowed to atrophy and decline."

"What do you do with a culturally iconic building if it cannot be repaired because it has been allowed to deteriorate to such an extent?"

"The signs for the winter to come are for a severe one and this will do nothing but increase the physical challenges the Egyptian Halls are facing."

John Addison, who is consulting structural and conservation engineer to the Egyptian Halls, project also

believes the building should be saved. His other projects include the Britannia Panopticon Music Hall, Cottier Theatre, Gartnavel Hospital Royal Chapel and the Trades House Of Glasgow.

He said of the Egyptian Halls: "This place is special on a world stage and worthy of support from every direction."

"Its' Category A historic status means it is a cultural asset for all society for all time - and that is running out."

Historic Scotland insists it will not be able to provide any more than the £1.5m it has already pledged towards the renovation work.

Martin Fairley, Historic Scotland's head of investments and projects, said: "We have offered three times the usual award maximum to assist in the repair of Egyptian Halls."

"We are incredibly supportive of the efforts to save this important building, but have to be realistic about what Historic Scotland can provide in this commercial project."

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Talks on the Egyptian Halls' future are advanced

# Deal close for A-listed landmark

Egyptian Halls to get developer

By GRAEME MURRAY

THE owner of Alexander "Greek" Thomson's Egyptian Halls is in talks with four interested parties who could secure the future of the A-listed landmark in weeks.

The identities of those involved are being kept secret until a preferred developer is confirmed, but the firms involved are believed to be "serious and well-financed".

The property's owner Union Street Properties says a winning firm could be appointed in four to six weeks allowing the project to end 30 years of stalemate.

Once a developer is chosen, the historic halls will be transformed into a 136-150-room hotel with restaurant, bar and retail provision.

The firm also wants to create a Mackintosh-Thomson Mews linking Charles Rennie Mackintosh's Lighthouse building with Thomson's Egyptian Halls.

Derek Souter, director



Derek Souter is optimistic the halls' future will be secure

of Union Street Properties, said: "Everybody wants to see the Egyptian Halls saved and it's now getting close to that."

Dundee-based USP has been involved with the halls for 11 years and has invested £5.5million in the building.

But because of legal issues over ownership, the company only took full possession of the 136-year-old property last year and began marketing the halls to potential developers.

Mr Souter added: "All parties know the deadlines and we are benefiting from support from Glasgow City Council, Historic Scotland and our funders Dunfermline Building Society."

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## Last day at school

PICTURE SPECIAL

PART 2

**BREAKING NEWS**

### Cops hunt gunman as shots fired

A GUNMAN is on the run after a man was shot in a house in North Lanarkshire.

Police descended on Inverkip Drive, Shotts, after neighbours reported hearing gunfire around 7.30am today.

The victim, who was apparently shot at close range, was rushed to Wishaw Hospital. He is said to be in his early 30s.

It is understood four shots were heard and one nearby resident said a man was seen running from a house.

Police have cordoned off the area.

**HOSPICE**



### Campaign hits £15.5m

AN Evening Times backed campaign for a new Glasgow hospice has hit the £15.5million mark.

Staff and patients celebrated the Big Build milestone, just £600,000 short of the target.

The new Marie Curie Hospice was officially opened at Stobhill Hospital five months ago.

■ PAGES 6-7

**EXCLUSIVE**

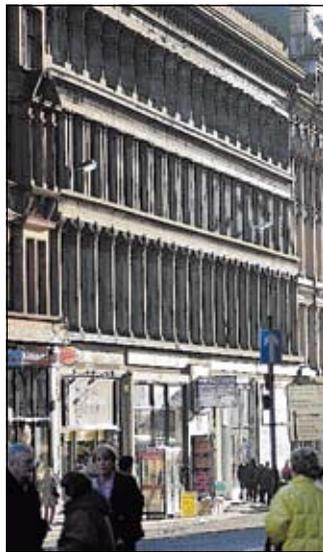


### LENNON LINES UP BELLAMY RETURN

SEE BACK PAGE

### Hotel plan for derelict site

# £18m TO SAVE CITY CENTRE GEM



By VIVIANNE NICOLL

**A** DERELICT Alexander Greek Thomson building in Glasgow city centre is to be transformed into a 136-bedroom hotel.

The owners of the A-listed Egyptian Halls have signed an £18million deal that will end decades of stalemate and secure the future of the 139-year-old halls.

FULL STORY - PAGES 4, 5

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# Pope visit to Glasgow is finalised

Cancellation fears allayed as plans for Mass in Bellahouston Park go ahead

GERRY BRAIDEN and DAVID ROSS

THE Pope's open-air Mass in Glasgow's Bellahouston Park has finally been officially confirmed, allaying fears the entire British visit was in jeopardy due to spiralling costs, most of which will be picked up by the UK's Catholic population.

The venue for the Catholic ceremony in Scotland was formally announced yesterday after a meeting between Glasgow City Council and the Bishops' Conference of Scotland.

However, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland said it was offensive that the UK Government was hosting the Pope as a head of state.

Prime Minister David Cameron has drafted in former Tory grandee Lord Patten to oversee Benedict's UK visit. Lord Patten, a cabinet member in the 1990s and former governor of Hong Kong, is to be the Prime Minister's personal representative for the visit in September and, as a Catholic and experienced diplomat, it will be his task to get the first ever papal state visit to Britain back on track after a series of difficulties.

The Pope will arrive in Edinburgh on September 16, the feast of St Ninian – the saint who brought Christianity to Scotland – and will meet the Queen at Holyrood House before making his way to Glasgow.

A statement from Scotland's Catholic bishops said: "The Catholic Church welcomes the confirmation by Glasgow City Council that Bellahouston Park will be available and suitable for the visit of Pope Benedict."

"The park provides a wonderful venue for what will be a tremendous event. It is a place

that has a great resonance for Scottish Catholics, many of whom remember the wonderful day in 1982 when Pope John Paul II said Mass there."

The bishops said they expected more than half of the 185,000 Catholics who attend Sunday services across Scotland to attend Bellahouston, with the 450 parishes north of the Border receiving a pro-rata allocation of places based on their Mass attendance figures.

Thousands more are expected to line the route of the Pope's motorcade through Edinburgh earlier in the day. A St Ninian's Day Pageant in Edinburgh is also planned.

Benedict is to beatify England's most famous convert to Catholicism, Cardinal Newman, who founded the first English Oratory in Birmingham in 1848. There has been speculation the planned beatification ceremony, an open-air Mass before 200,000 pilgrims at Coventry airport, could be replaced by a smaller event, although the Church has insisted the visit to Coventry will go ahead.

A prayer vigil was to take place in London's Hyde Park, but Royal Parks said no such event has been booked.

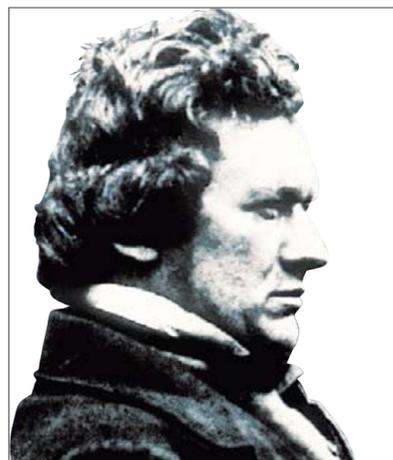
The Pope's UK visit has upset the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, who said: "We deny that he is the head of the Christian church or that he has any civil power which should receive recognition by any state, particularly one which has renounced his pretended jurisdiction."

"We find it offensive that this visit will start in Edinburgh where, 450 years ago, under the brave and Godly leadership of John Knox and our other reformers, the jurisdiction of the Pope was forever abolished."



PLANNING AHEAD: Derek Soutar of owners USP said the development was great news for Glasgow as it would mean 80 jobs when the hotel was up and running. Picture: Lenny Warren

# Greek is the word: £18m plan to transform Thomson's derelict masterpiece into hotel



VIVIENNE NICOLL and GRAEME MURRAY

ONE of Glasgow's architectural gems is to become a 136-bedroom hotel in an £18 million redevelopment.

For 30 years the Egyptian Halls in Union Street have lain mostly empty and partly derelict. But all that is about to change with plans to convert the A-listed Alexander "Greek" Thomson-designed former warehouse.

Union Street Properties (USP) owns the historic building, which is now regarded as being at risk. The firm has agreed that Derbyshire-based Longrose Buccleuch will manage the building with the hotel franchise being taken over by the Accor group.

Derek Soutar of USP said: "This is fantastic news for Glasgow and Union Street. As well as creating more than 60 construction and 80 full and part-time jobs when trading, it will preserve Scotland's architectural heritage."

The Egyptian Halls are considered by many to be architect Thomson's finest building. Over the past three decades, various plans to refurbish the halls have been frustrated by the fact it had a large number of individual owners.

The city council eventually stepped in on behalf of majority owner USP and began preparing compulsory purchase orders for the rest of the building. As a result, all the other owners agreed to sell up and the company now owns the entire building.

USP, Historic Scotland and the council looked at options that included keeping the facade and demolishing everything



SLEEPING GIANT: The Egyptian Halls in Glasgow's Union Street is considered by many to be the finest building of architect Alexander 'Greek' Thomson (left). Picture: Nick Ponty

behind it, adding a rooftop extension, or flattening the building and redeveloping the site.

A report to councillors, says: "Given the status of the building and its importance to the heritage of Glasgow, USP has been advised demolition/redevelopment would not be supported by Historic Scotland or the council."

But studies show no other options are financially viable. The option that shows the smallest financial loss involves

shops at basement and ground-floor levels and a hotel on the first to fourth floors with the addition of a rooftop extension.

The part of the hotel in the existing building would be three-star with the new extension four-star.

The report adds: "Historic Scotland appears to accept compromise is necessary and that without some radical design changes to the building no refurbishment will take place and the deterioration will continue."

"The initial appraisal suggests the development will cost approximately £18m but will show a loss of £5m based on the estimated returns. There is, therefore, no prospect of proceeding without external funding support."

USP is in the process of raising £17m and has asked the city council to provide the remaining £1m.

Steve Inch, the council's executive director of development and regeneration, said: "The council has been anxious to see this important A-listed building restored and returned to productive use for many years."

"We hope our proposed financial support will bolster the regeneration of Union Street."

Garin Davies of Longrose Buccleuch said: "We assess many project opportunities and this is one which is near the top of the list we want to become involved with."

Neil Baxter, secretary of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, said: "This is a building of the first importance, not simply in Glasgow or Scotland but in European terms."

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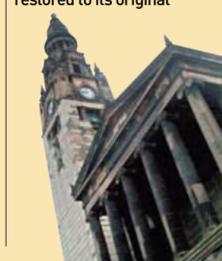
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### Architect's legacy

- The A-listed St Vincent Street Church (right) was designed by Greek Thomson in 1859 for the former United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. It is owned by Glasgow City Council and currently used by a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland.
- Holmwood House on the south side of Glasgow is considered Thomson's finest and most original residential property.

Now owned by the National Trust for Scotland, the Victorian villa has been restored to its original



condition and opened to the public.

- Caledonia Road Church in Gorbals was Thomson's first church in Glasgow and was built in 1857. It was severely damaged by fire in 1965.

- An elegant row of two-storey terraced townhouses in Millbrae Crescent, Langside, Glasgow, are among Thomson's other designs and also use Egyptian-style columns and ornamentation.

## Sarah Payne killer's jail term is reduced

THE killer of schoolgirl Sarah Payne had his 50-year minimum jail term cut by 10 years by the High Court in London yesterday.

Paedophile Roy Whiting, 51, was jailed for life in 2001 for the kidnap and murder of eight-year-old Sarah, from West Sussex.

In 2002 the then-home secretary David Blunkett ordered him to serve at least 50 years before becoming eligible for parole.

But yesterday high court judge Mr Justice Simon said the appropriate minimum term was 40 years and that from that must be deducted the time spent on remand, calculated to be 234 days.

He stressed that the sen-

tence on Whiting – who was not in court – remained one of imprisonment for life and he would be detained "unless and until the parole board is satisfied he no longer presents a risk to the public".

The judge added: "I invite everyone present in court to pause and remember Sarah Payne, who would now be 18 if she had not been murdered, and reflect the grave loss her death has caused to her family and others who loved her."

Sarah's mother, Sara Payne, who was in the packed courtroom, linked hands with a man sitting next to her but was otherwise impassive as the judge made his comments.

## MSPs back national children's panel body

BRIAN CURRIE  
POLITICAL EDITOR

A PLAN to replace local children's panels with a single national body has been backed by a Holyrood committee.

However, MSPs expressed several concerns including the problem of children carrying a criminal record into adult life.

In their report into the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Bill, members of the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee agreed the system had to be modernised.

The new legislation is aimed at strengthening the 40-year-old children's hear-

ing system. While the current system has individual local authority panels, the Bill proposes a national body called Children's Hearings Scotland, though hearings would still take place in communities.

Committee convener Karen Whitefield said: "We agreed to support the general principles of the Bill, although there were concerns that much would depend on the views of whoever is appointed as the national convener."

"Our main concern is to ensure the strengths of the children's hearing system are bolstered and decisions continue to be made in the best interests of the child."

## FACES IN THE NEWS

### New crown for mag Queen Cole



**CHERYL COLE'S** status as the nation's celebrity queen was cemented after being crowned Woman of the Year.

The TV and singing star, 26, scooped the Glamour magazine award at a glitzy ceremony in London last night.

It's been a busy year for Cole, but both her X Factor role and her solo album were overshadowed by her split from husband Ashley.

### Cowell tribute to Bethany, 5



**BRITAIN'S** Got Talent judge Simon Cowell has paid tribute to a "very special little girl" who died of a brain tumour days after fulfilling her "big ambition" to sing for him.

Bethany Fenton, 5, from Gloucestershire, performed Twinkle Twinkle Little Star for him on Saturday. She died yesterday with her family at her side.

### Birthday blues for Kym's beau



**CORRIE** star Kym Marsh has put her wedding to former Hollyoaks actor Jamie

Lomas on hold due to work commitments.

The former Hear'Say singer said: "The wedding was to take place during the same week as Coronation Street's 50th birthday, which would have meant I'd have been very busy."

### Fortuna waltzes off dance show



**US** star Brian Fortuna is to quit the BBC's Strictly Come Dancing show after changes to the format.

The BBC has recruited three new male dancers to the show this year, with Fortuna offered a role in a new professional group, which would have seen him removed from the mentoring role which saw him partnered with celebrities.

# £18M plan for derelict 'Greek' Thomson building



# A-LISTED HALLS TO BE HOTEL

## EXCLUSIVE

By **VIVIENNE NICOLL** and **GRAEME MURRAY**

**A** N **£18 MILLION** plan will see the transformation of one of Glasgow's architectural gems into a 136-bedroom hotel.

For 30 years the Egyptian Halls in Union Street have lain mostly empty and partly derelict.

But all that is about to change with plans to convert the A-listed Alexander 'Greek' Thomson designed former warehouse into a swish hotel.

Cash will come from the Better Glasgow Fund which was set up two years ago to fund regeneration and the protection of historic buildings. It is hoped the hotel will act as a springboard for the wider regeneration of Union Street.

On Friday, Glasgow councillors will be asked to contribute £1m towards the cost of the scheme from the Better Glasgow Fund.

Union Street Investments own the historic building which is now regarded as

being at risk. The firm has agreed that Derbyshire-based Longrose Buccleuch will manage the building with the hotel franchise being taken over by the Accor group. It already operates 850 hotels in nearly 100 countries.

Derek Souter of Union Street Investments said: "This is fantastic news for Glasgow and Union Street and would also be a significant boost for Glasgow's construction industry."

"As well as creating more than 60 construction and 80 full and part-time jobs when trading, it will preserve Scotland's architectural heritage."

The Egyptian Halls are considered by many to be architect Alexander 'Greek' Thomson's finest building.

Over the past 30 years, various plans to refurbish the Halls have been frustrated by the fact it had a large number of individual owners.

The city council eventually stepped in on behalf of majority owner Union Street Properties and began preparing compulsory purchase orders for the rest of the building. As a result

all the other owners agreed to sell up and Union Street Properties now owns the entire building.

The company, Historic Scotland and the council looked at options for the Halls including keeping the facade and demolishing everything behind it, adding a rooftop extension, or flattening the building and redeveloping the site.

**The council is anxious to see this Grade A building returned to productive use**

A report to councillors, says: "Given the status of the building and its importance to the heritage of Glasgow, USP has been advised demolition/redevelopment would not be supported by the council or Historic Scotland."

But studies show no other options are financially viable. The option which shows the smallest financial loss involves shops at basement and ground floor levels and a hotel on the first to fourth floors with the addition of a rooftop extension.



The part of the hotel in the existing building would be three star with the new extension four star.

The report adds: "Historic Scotland appears to accept compromise is necessary and that without some radical design changes to the building no refurbishment will take place and the deterioration will continue."

"The initial development appraisal suggests the development will cost approximately £18m but will show a loss of £5m based on the estimated returns."

"There is therefore no prospect of proceeding

without external funding support."

Union Street Properties is in the process of raising £17m and has asked the city council to provide the other £1m.

Steve Inch, the council's executive director of development and regeneration, said: "The council has been anxious to see this important Grade A listed building restored and returned to productive use for many years."

"We hope our proposed financial support will bolster the regeneration of Union Street."

# aims to put new heart into city centre site



■ The plan would create a hotel from the building which has lain derelict for almost 30 years



The council is likely to draw up a legal agreement allowing it to claw back cash if the building costs are not as high as expected or if it is sold on for above its estimated cost.

Garin Davies of Longrose Buccleuch said: "We assess many project opportunities and this is one which is near the top of the list we want to become involved with."

Neil Baxter, secretary of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, said: "This is a building of the first importance, not simply in Glasgow or Scotland but in European terms."



■ Derek Souter says the project will create more than 60 construction jobs and 80 jobs once completed

# Probe told of pressure on inspections

But care home had more than 20 visits

A BUILDING control expert told the inquiry into the deaths of 14 OAPs at a care home the process of inspecting buildings had become "devalued" by pressure to rush through applications.

But Thomas Sorbie said Rosepark Care Home in Uddingston - where the deaths occurred in 2004 - had received more than 20 site inspections, an unusually high number.

Mr Sorbie had told a Fatal Accident Inquiry in Motherwell that council league tables put pressure on inspectors.

He said site visits by inspectors had reduced dramatically over the years from the early 1990s and this was a major problem by the start of this century.

One chief executive he knew had quipped that "warrants (for new buildings) mean jobs", the inquiry was told, and that with limited resources inspectors were pushed into



processing applications. "There just isn't the same emphasis on inspection as there was before," he said.

Mr Sorbie said the inspections at Rosepark appeared mainly to have been early in the construction process, meaning most took place before ventilation and other fire-stopping measures would have been in place.

He had earlier told the inquiry that a site inspector appeared to have missed problems with the building's ventilation system, such as the absence of any fire dampers, the automatic closing systems that could have blocked the passage of heat and smoke through the premises.

The inquiry, in Motherwell, continues.

# Autism link to babies born a week early

BABIES born a week early are more prone to develop a series of learning difficulties such as autism, and deafness.

A study of more than 400,000 children by researchers at Glasgow University showed that those born at 39 weeks were more likely to need help at school compared with babies who spent 40 weeks in the womb.

The results "suggest deliveries should ideally wait until 40 weeks of gestation because even a baby born at 39 weeks... has an increased risk of special educational needs compared with a baby born a week later".

Around a third of UK births take place at 37 to 39 weeks as mothers choose earlier deliveries for non-medical reasons.

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**EveningTimes**NOBODY KNOWS  
GLASGOW BETTER

## IN OUR OPINION

City's 'Greek'  
gem must be  
rescued

UNION STREET - P4,5

FOR more than thirty years the derelict Egyptian Halls has been an eyesore that should be a treasure.

The £18m hotel plan is the closest anyone has come to securing the future of this 'Greek' Thomson masterpiece and put it back into good use.

There are still hurdles to overcome, especially financial, but this development looks to be a suitable solution to long standing problem.

The city council has done well to finally unite the building under one ownership, to allow development to progress

A refurbished Egyptian Halls and top hotel would breathe life into what has become a neglected corner of the city centre.



## IN THEIR OPINION

From Europe? Don't rule out the Ivory Coast... or Japan!

ONLY AND EXCUSE - P57

Chips are down  
for fryer Luigi

OPERA - P9

GLASGOW is sizzling with talent and if more proof is needed listen to singing chippy Luigi Corvi.

Now he has been discovered he could be catapulted from the Glasgow Cross chip shop to Milan's La Scala or London's Covent Garden.

Opera aficionados can get a little taste of his talent on BBC's One Show tonight.

Lets hope Luigi leaves them craving second helpings.

## IN YOUR OPINION

Never mind the Freedom of the city, Big Yin Billy Connolly deserves a Knighthood

READERS' LETTERS - P14

**EveningTimes**

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www.eveningtimes.co.uk

## Will you be cheering England ... or is it a case of anybody but?



**DAVID YATES, 33, road sweeper, Drumchapel:** "Argentina, they've got a great team of players I put a wee bet on them winning as well."



**SUZANNE MCLEAN, 21, student, Bishopbriggs:** "Spain, I love the country. I don't see the point in the bitterness people have for England."



**MAYO MICHIE, 31, secretary, West End:** "England. You have to back your own ... why shouldn't we? I'm sure deep down they'd support us."



**GARRY HENDERSON, 20, sales assistant, Southside:** "Anyone but England! Got to keep the old rivalry up."

Who will  
you back  
to lift the  
World Cup?

By ANDREW DOUGLAS

**T**HE Football World Cup is almost upon us and for Scottish fans that troublesome question has surfaced again:

'Which team am I going to support?'

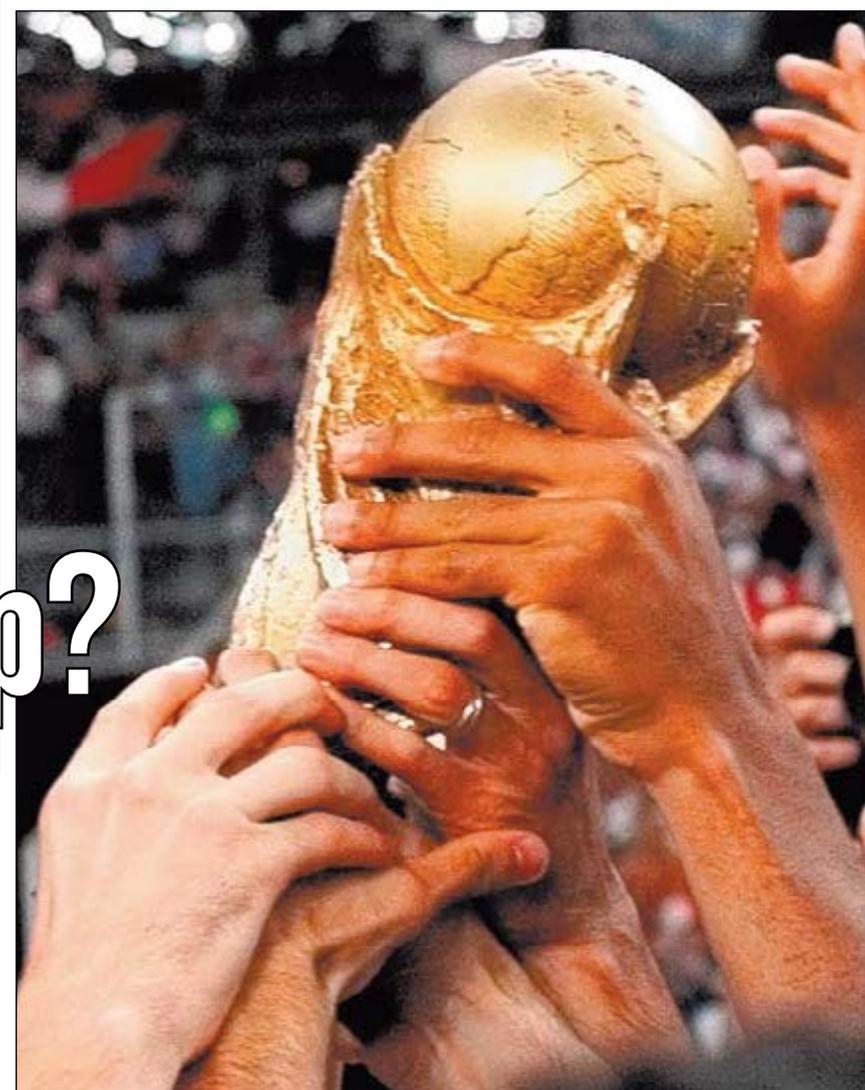
At the start of the year, Scottish clothing and kilt makers Slanj encouraged fans not to back our near neighbours, with the introduction of the Anyone But England (ABE) clothing range.

The T-shirts inspired outrage, debate and laughter among Britain's population and most people accepted there will

always be a rivalry between Scotland and The Auld Enemy.

Scotland v England is the oldest international football fixture in the world, having first being played in 1872 at the West of Scotland Cricket Club's ground in Hamilton Crescent, Glasgow. The teams have played 110 matches; England have won 45, Scotland 41, and there have been 24 draws.

Recently, England have developed rivalries with the German and Argentina national squads, after World Cup clashes. Many England fans now feel matches with these teams warrant more of a rivalry



than that with their Scottish neighbours.

So if the 'Auld' rivalry really is fading down south, is the same happening here?

Will the average Scotland fan cover up their lion rampant with the cross of St George and sit

sipping a pint of John Smith's, hoping Rooney's fifth metatarsal is alright?

When asked about sales of England shirts, staff at Greaves Sports, in Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow said: "They're flying out, we had to order another batch this week."

The majority of people we asked on the street wished the England team all the best.

However, Slanj claim that sales of their ABE range are at fever pitch.

So who will you be cheering to lift the famous trophy?



**LINSEY MORRISON, 29, toy shop employee, city centre:** "England. I like David Beckham ... even if he's not going to be playing."



**KATRIONA GULLESEL, 21, IBM rep, Bearsden:** "Italy, because they play great. My boyfriend's from Norway but they didn't qualify either!"



**FAISAL IABUL, 26, shop assistant, Garnethill:** "England. Scotland aren't playing so I'll support another British team."



**DAVID COCHRAN, 23, customer service rep, Easterhouse:** "Holland. I'm a Ranger's fan and have loved Dutch football since Van Bronckhorst played at Ibrox."

**WORD ON THE STREET** EVERY weekday, we'll be out on the streets of Glasgow to get your views on what's in the news, from serious topics to the light-hearted stories that will bring a smile to your face.



# Greek Revival?

above An unapologetic intervention could soon be bedfellow to Thomson's masterpiece

**GLASGOW'S** decaying architectural legacy has long been waiting for appropriate benefactors to pull up. Now after a wait of near half a century, those prayers look to have been answered for the former Caledonia Road Church. Hot on the heels of the Egyptian Halls and St Vincent Street Church, this forelorn relic of bygone glory is to be pulled belatedly into the 21st century.

Riding the crest of Glasgow's commercial prosperity Thomson was able to channel the city's trade wealth into totems of architectural grandeur by drawing upon diverse influences from synonomous Greek homages to Egyptian, Romanesque, Persian and Indian influences. The Church, at the time keen to assert its influence and identity, provided a rich architectural seam for Thomson to sow, landing him a string of commissions that included St Vincent Street Church and Queen's Park Church (sadly since destroyed).

As religion receded from the city however a litany of architectural marvels were left in its wake, purposeless, vandalised and in decline. Now Gholami Baines Architects in association with the Alexander Thomson Society have intriguing plans to re-instate the full splendour of the Caledonia Road edifice in a contemporary fusion of old and new. Of the many hurdles facing a scheme of this magnitude it was the fact that Caledonia Road Church does not actually reside upon Caledonia Road that presented one of the earliest head scratchers for the sites custodians. After some deliberation however it was decided to rename the church One Alexander Thomson Place (ATP), to best articulate their new ethos.

ATP has long sat sentinel over an important transport corridor between the south side and city centre, a

**Alexander "Greek" Thomson has long been overshadowed by the cult of Mackintosh, however with a recent hat trick of proposals, that may change.**

haunting burned out skeleton. Despite the international significance of Thomson and being structurally sound, this shell has been closed off to visitors since 1965 and hints only obliquely at past grandeur. Reduced to a romantic ruin the church carries all sorts of memories as one of the few surviving 19th century buildings in the Gorbals and makes a highly memorable impact, particularly from the north.

This situation has not gone unnoted by the Alexander Thomson Society who wish to put this historic wrong to rights by transforming the crumbling structure of the existing A listed ruin into a custodian of Thomson's work, an archive to better communicate what was special about his contribution to the city, which numbered some 140-160 projects since he first hooked up with John Baird in 1849. This is envisaged to take shape in similar fashion to Le Corbusier's Villa La Roche and Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio, Vicenza.

Nevertheless selection of ATP by the Alexander Thomson Society for such a home proved a thorny issue for backers of St Vincent Street Church, which benefits

from a central location and intact interiors. Mark Baines explains the decision: "The depths of connection Thomson had with the Gorbals are clear, he was an elder of the church, worshipped there, built a lot of tenements between Eglinton St and Caledonia Rd and is buried in the nearby Southern Necropolis. Saint Vincent Street on the other hand is compromised in the eyes of the society by already having a number of other church related activities going on in the meeting hall and disabled access is problematic. Egyptian Halls was not necessarily a permanent location either as we would be renting space in the building as a commercial development which didn't seem appropriate. It then dawned as obvious that Thomson's first public building, not so at risk but still essentially isolated, was best placed to house the collection."

Sally White, secretary of the Alexander Thomson Society added: "In one sense we're lucky at Caledonia Rd that we don't have the responsibility of working with interior schemes. An ongoing debate with many buildings is do you recreate what was existing previously? Do you peel away more of what remains? Do we touch up

decoration or leave it the way it is? The destruction of the Caledonia Road interior makes that no longer an issue."

By reaching out to a still somewhat moribund swathe of city, despite the intervention of New Gorbals which itself is walled off from neighbours, it is hoped the development can be a catalyst not only for Thomson but Glasgow as a whole, establishing a meaningful partnership with the Mackintosh Society for cross collaboration, perhaps even realising a long held ambition of bringing tourist buses south of the Clyde.

Early on it was recognised that a gallery alone wouldn't be sufficient to attract large numbers of people, different uses were needed to enrich the space with meeting, rooms, studios, apartments and museum.

Entrance to the building begins at a public space, defined by granite setts and a statue of Thomson strategically sited to greet visitors. A tall narrow slot on axis with the tower leads visitors under the new building and into a central courtyard lined with planting derived from classical decoration. The courtyard acts as a haven from nearby noise and pollution and is the main source of natural ventilation. Within the courtyard a stone doorway rescued by the Thomson Society from a warehouse on Watson Street leads into the Thomson Gallery and Study Centre.

Most dramatically the site will witness the construction of five storey new build accommodation on land adjoining the partial church gable, this satisfies the dual aim of recalling the scale of original tenements whilst reinstating a northern frontage with ten serviced flats.

A minimalist facade of polished silver grey granite to the north uses glazing sparingly to create a smooth geometric sheen that will reflect the light and weather. South facing conservatories to the apartments view the tower. Baines describes: "Thomson's buildings are all monolithic, even timber detail is made to look like masonry, so we didn't want a mix of materials but something that was sharp, precise and machine cut." Sedum roofs with solar panels will be incorporated with built in roof level lanterns and floor to ceiling glazing drawing in light.

As the City Council is providing financial support for the planning application we can probably assume that permission will pass without a hitch. The same cannot be said for funding however, which is still not in place. The city council have agreed to partner the Trust in any

fundraising appeals, there is still a lot of work to be done before the this building can provide a roof over the head of the Thomson Society.

One Alexander Thomson Place will be built by a team comprising Gholami Baines Architects, David Narro Associates, Buro Happold, Ross & Morton and WHITE Design.

## WALK LIKE AN EGYPTIAN

The Morrison Partnership have unveiled long awaited plans to restore Alexander "Greek" Thomson's Egyptian Halls for Union Street Properties. The £6.5m development represents culmination of 11 years investment directed towards securing 100% ownership of the crumbling Halls, despite challenging and sometimes perplexing obstacles.

Restoration of the famous A listed cast iron framed warehouse will reinvigorate a down at heel Union St by returning to prominence its most famous architectural landmark, potentially initiating many spin off benefits as Soutar exclaims: "this project could be the linchpin of a Townscape Heritage initiative for Union Street, similar to the Merchant City project".

George Morrison of the Morrison Partnership said: "The current outward appearance is so dirty and forlorn that I guess the building does not register with most of the passing public." Behind a thirty years in the making coat of soot, grime and guano however resides one of the most striking facades in Glasgow, with potential to make a real and lasting contribution to Union Street.

Thomson's heritage is subject to a belated revival in fortunes of late and Morrison is happy that the famed structures now may be subject to strong and viable solutions but professes unease at any wider hook ups in the short term: "I would be concerned that early joint promotion of these buildings as a form of holy trinity might appear to complicate matters and frighten off the very people (and their money) who might save the buildings. As the future of these buildings becomes identified and on their way to being established then it may be appropriate on the back of the increasing confidence and their individual success to establish some sort of cross promotion and reference.

Indicative proposals call for reinstatement of original motifs at ground level alongside standardised signage across the presently cluttered streetscape. Most dramatically a contemporary roofscape intervention, in a

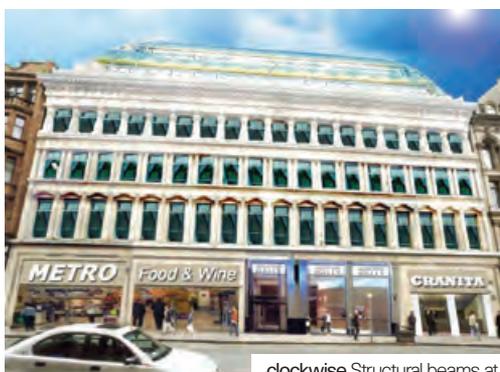
similar vein to Cooper Cromar's g1, is also planned, though Morrison is wary of heritage body reaction: "an inordinate amount of time and energy goes into trying to promote such ideas and I feel that as a principle there should be less of a presumption against it. That said, such challenges are not new. Even Greek Thomson spoke out against such resistance to new ideas. Given Greek Thomson's progressive thinking I wonder if he would be more inclined to encourage the evolution/change of his buildings to meet today's demands or would resist all such thoughts."

Interminable delays and protracted negotiations have witnessed considerable deterioration in the fabric of the Egyptian Halls, notably the collapse of one of the main cupolas and the loss of much of the internal plasterwork on the upper floors due to water ingress, which has badly rotted the timber floors. Now the question is how much of the building can be reasonably retained and can those solutions be practical, economic and sustainable.

Morrison states: "The intention is to reinstate internally those features where it is appropriate and practical in the context of the proposals, as well as financially viable bearing in mind the need for Planning and Listed Building Consents. Externally we will be endeavouring to retain principal features such as the front elevation and where detail has been overlaid with more recent finishes we will endeavour to reverse that work. Elsewhere inside the building we may discover other features hidden by more recent works. These will be recorded and where possible and practical we will endeavour to retain in some form."

Amongst the key steps still to be crossed are confirming a technical and practical solution, conveying the merit of such a solution; having those proposals accepted, getting adequate funding for those proposals; getting the right type of contractors and getting funders to understand the project and providing the necessary funding on reasonable terms

The tortuous timetable thus far traversed indicates that the road ahead will be by no means clear, a problem further compounded by the present economic climate. Any new applications for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent will only happen once discussions with the Authorities are complete but it is hoped that works could be underway on site in 2010, though this is predicated on parties executing their roles timeously to establish and maintain momentum.



clockwise Structural beams at St Vincent St have been clad in steel, a lead roof offers protection; One Alexander Thomson Place from the air; Egyptian Halls restored

## ST VINCENT STREET

St Vincent Street Church, a recurrent entrant in the World Monuments Fund's top 100 most endangered buildings, stands a forlorn relic of past architectural glories, the only surviving substantially complete church by Alexander "Greek" Thomson remaining in Glasgow. Until recently it was imperilled by leaking roofs but these have finally been addressed in a second phase of an ongoing programme of restorative works by Page \ Park on behalf of owners, Glasgow City Council.

The shallow pitching roofs to the main sanctuary and lower side aisles were reslated in the early 1990s with slates insufficiently sized to protect the church in its exposed location on Blythswood Hill and wind driven rain led to many leaks over intervening years. Ian Hamilton, Associate Director at Page \ Park explained that "much time was spent soul searching and discussing with Historic Scotland and the Planning Department the issue of changing the original roof finish. In the end it was agreed that a change from slate to lead-finished roofs would offer the best long-term protection to the valuable building fabric and finishes."

Despite having stood for over 150 years without obvious distress structural engineers called into question whether the original slim, exposed timber structure of the main sanctuary roof had sufficient inherent strength and lateral restraint, even without the additional loads imposed by the new roof finish. The only strengthening option open to the design team was the unorthodox approach of fixing

thin steel plates which span full length and tie the three truss-beams into the wallheads at both ends.

Hamilton voiced Page \ Park's dilemma: "was it really right to leave the structure in that condition if there is an opportunity to consolidate with minimum intervention? The Sanctuary space had to be preserved at all costs and in themselves these interventions - the new lead roof finish and the structural strengthening have gone a substantial way towards securing the building's future."

Outlining the resultant attention to detail Hamilton continued: "Each plate is only 10mm thick and has been engineered to follow precisely the bow on the individual truss beams which they support. The sides of the original timber beams are decorated and extreme care was taken to recreate that decoration on the faces of the steel plates to the extent that it is impossible, even at close quarters, to tell the difference."

Wider discussions are ongoing about the church's long-term sustainable future. The World Monument Fund chaired a recent workshop at Page \ Park's Glasgow offices to discuss ideas for new possible uses of the building. Included were representatives from Glasgow City Council, the Alexander Thomson Society, the St. Vincent Street Milton Free Church and 'Chan'an' (both current tenants), Historic Scotland, Glasgow Building Preservation Trust, Visit Scotland and Page \ Park. Outline proposals for conversion of part of the church to provide an interpretation centre for Thomson's work were discussed even though a more advanced development

designed by Mark Baines to include a similar facility is currently being championed by the Thomson Society on the site of the former Caledonia Rd Church.

Hamilton recalls: "these are parallel ideas but the Caledonia Road proposals are obviously quite advanced. St Vincent Street Church's location is certainly more central and accessible but it's all about joined up thinking. The idea of a 'Thomson Trail' starting from his finest surviving building and leading around his other city centre works, perhaps out to Caledonia Road and deeper into the south side beyond to include Holmwood House (an earlier Page \ Park conservation project for The National Trust for Scotland) could be tempting to visitors.

"Caledonia Road Church is a shell but it's had the essential repairs carried out to secure its future, albeit as a shell. St Vincent Street Church is still a functioning church and whilst relatively unchanged since its completion it still needs significant amounts spent on it. The unique decorative scheme of ornate stencilled work and plaster detailing within the main sanctuary must be restored as it is of world-class significance. That will be an enormously important, and costly, future phase of work."

The current economic climate makes conservation work ever more difficult to effect with Glasgow City Council strung out in so many different directions with pleas for funding. The hope remains however that St Vincent Street Church could once more be a stunning monument to Glasgow's forgotten genius- Alexander 'Greek' Thomson."

# Glasgow – still spooked by Mackintosh

THERE'S NO doubt about it: Glasgow still doesn't really like Charles Rennie Mackintosh. No-one noticed when he and his wife, Margaret, left Glasgow for Walberswick in Suffolk in 1914 where, as the First World War began, he was arrested as a German spy because the locals couldn't understand his Glasgow accent.

And no-one in Glasgow took any notice when Mackintosh died in London in 1928, though they may have been surprised when an exhibition was staged in London in 1968 to mark the centenary of his birth.

Nor, when Glasgow City Council began its grandiose motorway expansion in the 1970s, was there much opposition to the city's plans to demolish Mackintosh's Scotland Street School (1904) and Martyrs Memorial School (1895) to make way for cars. The city even planned to surround his Queen's Cross Church (1899) by building a motorway interchange around it. Only lack of funds prevented those ideas from going ahead.

It was not until the euphoria of Glasgow being selected as European City of Design 1999 that there was a brief official acknowledgement of Mackintosh's importance to the city.

This led to the refurbishment of his Glasgow Herald building in Renfrew Street (1901), which became The Lighthouse, complete with a permanent Mackintosh exhibition. But now, all the excitement of The Lighthouse's exhibition and conference programme has evaporated and the building is marking time while the city decides what to do with it.

As for the two schools, Stuart Robertson,

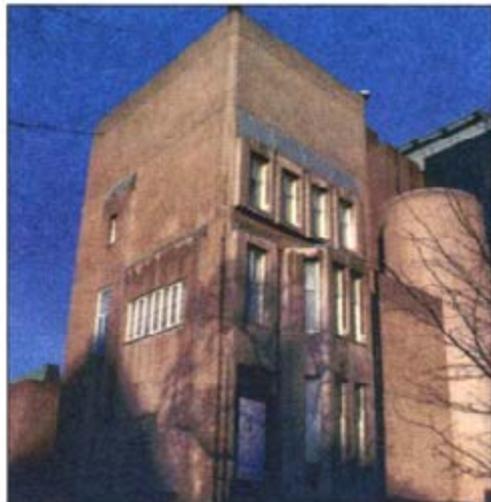
director of the Charles Rennie Mackintosh (CRM) Society, has warned that Scotland Street School (now an educational museum) and the Public Martyrs School (now mothballed) are being allowed to fall into disrepair.

And that's not the end of the story: the Willow Tea Rooms in Sauchiehall Street, which opened in 1901 and were saved from demolition in the 1970s by the CRM Society, is also in bad repair, while questions hang over the future of the remains of Mackintosh's Queen Margaret Medical College (1894-6), now buried within the former BBC television centre.

A tv adaptation of The Hunchback of Notre Dame showed Quasimodo swinging from its tower, which masqueraded as the roof of the Paris cathedral. There were plans to turn the BBC Centre into a boutique hotel but these have fallen through and the complex is up for sale.

Finally, Mackintosh isn't the only architect of major significance whose heritage in Glasgow is being ignored. Alexander 'Greek' Thomson's Egyptian Halls – built in 1873 and widely regarded as a masterpiece in commercial architecture – now face demolition as its owner and developer, Derek Souter, has given up waiting for approval of public grants towards his £ 20m plan to convert it into a hotel.

Instead, Souter plans to replace the Egyptian Halls with a modern building. Having lain empty for 30 years, it is a disgrace that the Egyptian Halls should suffer such an ignominious end. And, as Professor Isi Metzstein has said, "If such a superb and



Saved: the Mackintosh house formerly at Southpark Avenue, reborn at the Hunterian, Glasgow

adaptable building can be at risk, then no building in Glasgow is safe from uncaring philistinism."

Another Mackintosh building – The Hill House in Helensburgh (1901) – is proving to be very expensive for the National Trust of Scotland – its owner – to keep in good repair. Soon after the trust acquired the building in the 1980s, it discovered that the exterior walls had sandstone laid vertically below the roof with the result that rain got in and split the stone. Part of the walls had to be rebuilt. And now it's been found that the mortar used in buildings of that age in Helensburgh has always been faulty: more expensive repairs are now needed.

RICHARD CARR

# Egyptian dream nears reality

A Dundee developer is closing in on his dream of resurrecting Glasgow's Egyptian Halls some 30 years after they fell into commercial decline.

Derek Souter, of Union Street Investments, has ploughed £5.5 million into the project so far, but has now reached an important milestone by signing up a hotel management company that is expected to operate a 136-bedroom hotel in the historic building.

He says the chance of saving a "world class architectural masterpiece" through a £20m-plus redevelopment has never been closer.

Egyptian Halls, now approaching dereliction, is one of the signature buildings of Alexander Greek Thomson, Glasgow's chief architect during the second half of the 19th Century.

The 138-year-old Union Street edifice, opposite Glasgow's Central Station, is one of the most elaborate in the city but has gradually fallen into disrepair.

Derek, and co-investors Kelvin Kerr and Duncan Souter, have been pursuing a rescue plan for 12 years and now believe a deal is just around the corner. USI is just waiting for word on grant aid from funding sources with a decision expected within weeks.

Derek said, "Things are very close now and we see June as being a big month. We are on the way to achieving our goal."

USI recently signed an agreement with Longrose Buccleuch to manage the proposed hotel.



The Egyptian Halls in Glasgow's Union Street.

## BA may face "summer of disruption"

British Airways was today warned it could face a "needless summer of disruption" because of the "hard man" stance of its chief executive over the bitter cabin crew dispute.

Tony Woodley, joint leader of Unite, told the union's annual conference in Manchester a new ballot for continued strike action may be only a week away.

He issued the warning as cabin crew take the second day of a five-day walkout, with further industrial action planned for next week.

The cabin crew launched their 14th day of action today in a dispute which Unite said had now cost BA £91 million, with each day of action adding £7 million.

Mr Woodley said the need for the crew to seek a new mandate for industrial action lay firmly with BA chief executive Willie Walsh and his "persistent refusal" to permit a peaceful settlement.

"With a deal on cabin crew costs already agreed between both parties, the airline could be restored to full operation in time for the peak summer season — but only if BA drops its vicious determination to punish crew for striking by removing their travel assistance," Mr Woodley said.

BA said it had operated more services than planned yesterday, including the reintroduction of all of its services from Heathrow to New York's JFK airport, adding that it would continue to add to its schedule where possible.

**Breast cancer breakthrough hopes raised**  
— turn to P11

# Hopes summer is here to stay

By Graeme Bletcher

Dundonians swapped sweaters for sunscreen today as a sunny Bank Holiday Monday sparked high hopes that summer is here to stay.

Aside from an unwelcome blip of rain tomorrow morning, temperatures look set to stay steady throughout the week, with the Met Office predicting highs approaching 20 degrees Celsius from Wednesday.

Sunseekers will be praying for no return of the freak conditions of last week, which saw heavy hailstone showers followed by the thunder and lightning that ripped through a church spire in Broughty Ferry.

And after two weekends of glorious sunshine and soaring temperatures earlier in the month, most local residents will be keeping their

fingers crossed that British summertime has finally arrived.

Thursday and Friday may be the best time to break out the deck chairs this week, as a good amount of sunshine is predicted with little cloud and, most importantly, just a gentle southerly breeze.

A Met Office spokeswoman warned that while Scotland has enjoyed the best weather in the UK today, it may not quite be time to ditch the cardigan altogether.

She said, "It will certainly be a nice day across much of country today, with most places getting a

lot of sunshine and temperatures reaching 19C in Scotland.

"The end of the week is also looking good, but into the week after we may see the weather become more unsettled and a bit more cloudy.

"We are expecting next week to be fairly mild, but a bit more unstable."

An early morning update from a Dundee weather observation station showed just a five kilometres-per-hour wind, humidity at 63% and a temperature of 13C.

The 10-day forecast indicates a chance of light rain at the start of next week before the sunshine breaks back through.

This time last year Dundee was enjoying temperatures of around 18C, with the city's average spring temperature coming in at 14C and the average low at five degrees.

## Crash pilot was 'very competent'

A pilot who died with his son in a light aircraft crash on the Spanish island of Menorca was a "very competent" flyer, a family friend said.

Former RAF man Bruce Hook (63) and his 26-year-old son Ian were killed on Saturday as they prepared for an air race at the island's San Luis aerodrome.

It is thought the plane had just taken off when it nosedived, crashed and exploded, killing the pair instantly.

Mr Hook senior, from Worcester, was flying his own plane — a Beech Baron 55 in RAF colours — when the accident happened.

Mr Hook has owned a village garage in Lapworth in the West Midlands for the past 32 years, where his son also worked.

Business colleague Stephen Esslemont (44), from Solihull, who rents the garage forecourt, described Mr Hook as a "kind, considerable and helpful person" and said he was shocked by his death.

He added, "After all the years he's done it you don't expect him to crash. He was a very competent pilot."

The two men are believed to have been preparing for an air race organised by two branches of the Royal Aero Club.

They left the UK on Friday to attend the event in Spain, which Mr Hook went to every year.

## Activists die as commandos storm Gaza Strip aid flotilla

Up to 10 pro-Palestinian activists were reported killed today and dozens more injured when Israeli naval commandos stormed an aid flotilla heading towards the blockaded Gaza Strip.

The Israeli army said the soldiers were attacked with knives and clubs as they boarded the six vessels in the Mediterranean early today.

The Israeli military said the violence turned deadly after one of the activists

grabbed a weapon from one of the commandos. The weapon discharged, though it wasn't clear whether the activist fired it or it went off accidentally.

Dozens of people — both soldiers and activists — were wounded in the fierce clashes. They are being airlifted to hospital by helicopter.

Israel has condemned the flotilla as a provocation and vowed to block it from reaching Gaza.



Activists were interviewed by reporters shortly before the attack.

# Demolishing Egyptian Halls is last straw in 30-year development plan

Published on 10 May 2011

**Union Street Properties (USP) has been forced to apply to demolish the Egyptian Halls in Union Street, Glasgow, because we cannot fund the Listed Building Repairs Notice (LBRN), which is a legally binding obligation.**

An LBRN cannot be varied once it has been served (“Threat to demolish historic Greek Thomson building”, The Herald, May 5 and Letters, May 6). The near-£10 million deficit cannot be funded in the present commercial market, due to the absence of speculative funding and the 80% crash in property values on Union Street. An alternative solution is required.

USP cannot survive with the threat of the LBRN hanging over it. If it was removed there would not be a statutory duty to discharge it. The application to demolish focuses on the financial non-viability of the scheme, which would see the LBRN discharged and a 200-room hotel created. The latter does not relate to or concern USP.

The application to demolish follows to the letter Scottish Historic Environment policy and, according to the criteria laid down USP, qualifies on at least three of the four grounds.

I also have to state this is a 30-plus years problem which has come to a head. It’s bad timing for all stakeholders: Glasgow City Council, Historic Scotland, the Scottish Government, USP and Union Street Investments (USI). A decade ago the deficit would have been £3m. If I was in favour of demolition I’d not be taking to the streets of Glasgow to get signatures for a petition.

To preserve the Egyptian Halls and return it to commercial sustainability the new Scottish Government needs to engage with both USP and USI. No developer in these challenging times can expect any form of a blank cheque. A collaborative private/public sector project can still be implemented; one which is self-financing, accountable and transparent and would see the Scottish Government offered a share of any windfall profits, if they should accrue.

**Derek J Souter, Director, Union Street Investments and Union Street Properties,**

**26 Foundry Lane, Dundee.**

# Owner calls for TIF to rescue crumbling jewel

By Colin Donald

THE co-owner of one of Scotland's most endangered architectural jewels has called on the Scottish Government to consider a tax increment finance (TIF) scheme to save it from ruin.

Derek Souter is director of Union Street Investments and Union Street Properties, which respectively own the top and ground floor storeys of Glasgow's Egyptian Halls.

He believes a TIF scheme could stave off further dereliction and possible compulsory preservation costs of £12 million for the taxpayer.

The Scottish Government has resisted making a grant on the grounds that the project to restore the internationally renowned Victorian building by Alexander Greek Thompson in the city's Union Street is primarily commercial.

Souter said a TIF scheme, borrowing against future earnings from a proposed hotel and retail development, could raise the extra cash needed for the regeneration of the once prosperous central thoroughfare for the opening of the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

"We need £2m to £2.5m from the Scottish Government in addition to the £1m pledged by Glasgow City Council and £1.65 from Historic Scotland. We have said that the building would generate an annual extra £300,000 of business rates. The route forward is to use around £2m to save the Egyptian Halls and create 200 jobs via this £20m project."

The upper floors of the building have been empty for nearly 30 years, and are derelict. Souter and co-investors Kelvin Kerr and Duncan Souter have been pursuing a rescue plan involving a hotel and shops for 12 years.

Derek Souter contrasted the Scottish Government's unwillingness to pump-prime the project with its grant of £4.5m for the refurbishment of Sir Walter Scott's estate Abbotsford in Melrose.



Photograph: N

Prize guru's promise for Salmend's green technology award

## Alexander 'Greek' Thomson 1817–75

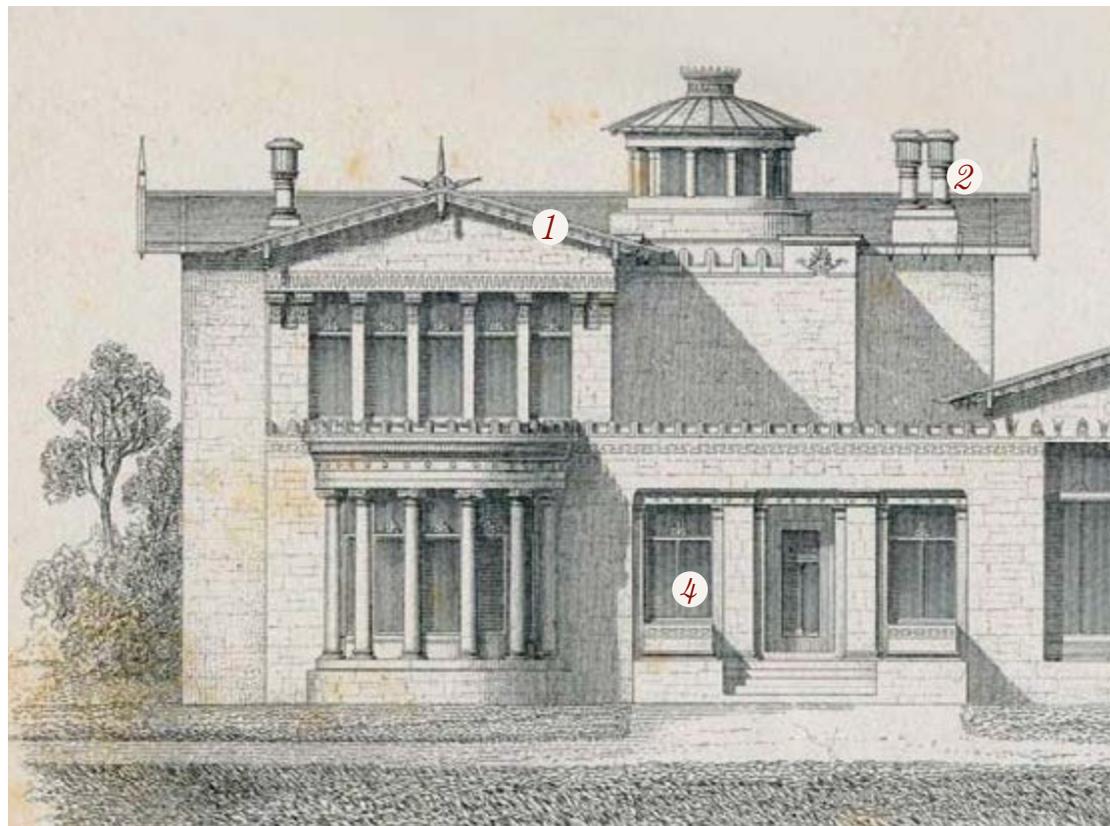


**'Thomson's predilection for abstract form was the outcome of an original mind'**

Sir Albert Richardson, 1914

Alexander Thomson was known as 'Greek' Thomson because of his tenacious commitment to an idiosyncratic interpretation of Ancient Greek architecture at a time when it was completely out of fashion and Victorian Gothic was dominant. An eloquent thinker as well as a practitioner, he came to believe that Greek architecture was an expression of God-given 'eternal laws', and Gothic was an irrational, unstable (Anglo-Saxon) style. However, he was no copyist, and believed that the Greek should be the starting point for a rational modern architecture. His work was never pure Greek, and Egyptian and other exotic influences may be detected, as well as that of the Prussian architect K. F. Schinkel. Practical and inventive, Thomson was happy to use cast iron and large sheets of glass with traditional stone masonry in his buildings.

Although his imagination ranged far and wide, he never travelled abroad, and all his surviving work is in or near Glasgow. He designed villas, terraces, commercial buildings and Presbyterian churches, in which it is possible to explore a recondite symbolism inspired by the apocalyptic paintings of John Martin. Thomson secured a reputation beyond Glasgow, too, due to the conspicuous originality of his architecture.



### Early career

Alexander Thomson was born in Balfron, Stirlingshire, some 15 miles north of Glasgow. He was the 17th of the 20 children of a book-keeper at a cotton-spinning mill and part of an extended family that included several Presbyterian missionaries. Thomson moved to Glasgow with his widowed mother in 1825, and, because of his aptitude for drawing, was articled to the Glasgow architect Robert Foote. For about 10 years, he worked for John Baird, a leading architect in the rapidly expanding city, becoming his chief draughtsman. Thomson set up in independent practice in 1848 with another John Baird (no relation), both architects having married two daughters of London architect Michael Angelo Nicholson. The partnership was amicably terminated in 1857, when Thomson's younger brother George joined the practice, until he left to be a missionary in the Cameroons. Thomson's final professional partner was Robert Turnbull.

### Villas

Baird & Thomson began by designing villas in the new suburbs of Glasgow and along the River Clyde; these were in a variety of styles, including Gothic and Romanesque. However, by the mid 1850s, Thomson had developed the refined and abstracted Grecian manner for which he is known. He was never a conventional Revivalist and he argued that the earlier promoters of the Greek Revival had failed 'because they could not see through the material into the laws upon which that

architecture rested. They failed to master their style, and so became its slaves'.

He seems to have been the first to apply Picturesque principles of composition to the Greek style in his villas, as at his unique Double Villa at Langside (1856–57) where two identical semi-detached houses face in opposite directions. Thomson's finest villa was Holmwood at Cathcart (1857–58), of which his first biographer, Thomas Gildard, wrote that: 'If architecture be poetry in stone-and-lime—



**Egyptian Halls, Union Street (1870–72), a sort of bazaar or shopping centre with an exhibition gallery, was Thomson's largest and most elaborate commercial building. The sculptural treatment of the columns articulating each floor is different, rising to an 'eaves gallery' below the enormous cornice**

## Holmwood House, Glasgow

### *What to look for*

Thomson's finest and most elaborate villa was built in 1857–58 in a rural site in Cathcart, for James Couper, a paper manufacturer. It is a Picturesque asymmetrical composition in Thomson's Greek style, with the projecting circular bay of the parlour balancing the large windows

of the dining room either side of the entrance. Inside, the staircase rises under a circular cupola, and most rooms were embellished with a scheme of painted decoration. The house is now owned by the National Trust for Scotland.

1 The low-pitched slate roof (not wholly practical in the west of Scotland), with generous eaves supported on cast-iron brackets, typical of Thomson's villas

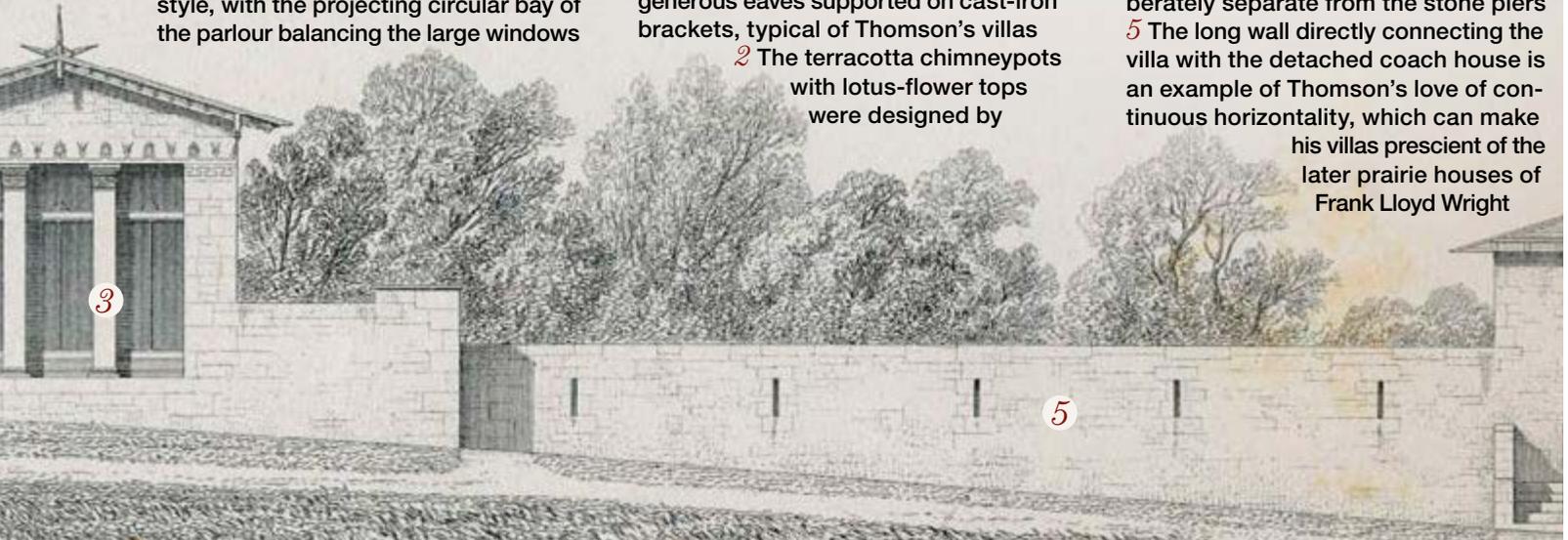
2 The terracotta chimneypots with lotus-flower tops were designed by

Thomson and specially made by the Garnkirk Fireclay Company

3 The square piers dividing the window openings are a simple abstracted form derived from Greek architecture, but much used by Schinkel in Berlin

4 The huge sash windows, which go up and down, are placed behind and deliberately separate from the stone piers

5 The long wall directly connecting the villa with the detached coach house is an example of Thomson's love of continuous horizontality, which can make his villas prescient of the later prairie houses of Frank Lloyd Wright



a great temple an epic—this exquisite little gem, at once Classic and Picturesque, is as complete, self-contained, and polished as a sonnet.' Thomson designed the furniture and fittings, too, plus the painted decoration.

### City architect

Thomson designed a number of impressive terraces in Glasgow, in which single houses were combined in various ways to make powerful unified compositions. The grandest was Great Western Terrace (1867–77), but, for the American historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Moray Place in Strathbungo (1859–61) was 'the finest of all nineteenth-century terraces... and one of the world's most superb pieces of design based on Greek precedent'. In this terrace—in which Thomson himself lived from 1861 until his death—the 'mysterious power of the horizontal element' is evident, achieved through Thomson's 'principle of repetition'. His façade treatment for Queen's Park Terrace (1856–60, dem.) influenced the design of Glasgow's blocks of tenements.

Thomson designed several commercial warehouses in Glasgow, in which cast-iron structures lay behind stone façades that incorporated large plate-glass windows. Their elevations are remarkable for the way in which he dissolved the wall plane into a sculptural, dynamic composition of columns, lintels and architraves. These were developments of the trabeated language of the Greeks and reflected his morbid suspicion of the arch, for, as he notoriously once said: 'Stonehenge is really

more scientifically constructed than York Minster.' His most elegant example is Grecian Buildings in Sauchiehall Street (1867–68).

### Churches

Thomson's largest buildings were churches. He designed great temples for United Presbyterian congregations, which Hitchcock considered to be 'three of the finest Romantic Classical churches in the world'. All had richly decorated interiors. The first was the Caledonia Road Church (1855–57, now a gutted ruin), where a raised-up temple portico was combined with an asymmetrically placed tower. The most inventive was the Queen's Park Church (1868–69), which was as much Egyptian as Greek in inspiration; its destruction by fire in 1943 was Scotland's worst architectural loss of the Second World War. The only intact survivor is the St Vincent Street Church (1857–59), with its unprecedented exotic steeple, like a modern interpretation of the Temple of Solomon, in which the galleries and clerestory are carried on shaped cast-iron columns, and plate-glass windows were applied directly to the masonry.

Thomson's contemporaries regretted that he was never awarded a commission for a public building commensurate with his talents. The decision of Glasgow University to give its new buildings to Gilbert Scott, without competition, provoked a searing, eloquent attack on the Gothic Revival from the architect, but Thomson's designs for the Albert Memorial and the South Kensington Museum

in London must have seemed unfashionable in England to the point of perversity. Only in Glasgow, perhaps, could his idiosyncratic approach and his exotic imagination flourish. Thomson was not well in his latter years, and, had he survived the severe winter of 1874–75, he planned to make his first trip abroad, to Italy, to try to recover his health. But this was not to be, and he was buried in the Southern Necropolis in Glasgow. 🐦



**The St Vincent Street Church of 1857–59 is Thomson's only surviving intact place of worship. The Ionic portico may be fairly conventional, but the steeple, rising to an exotic dome, is full of Old Testament allusions and the whole dramatic composition, on a sloping site, is without precedent**