



2017

MEDIA COVERAGE



Death on the streets: Shock extent of homeless fatalities in Scotland

EXCLUSIVE BY LIAM O'HARE

Statistics reveal that four homeless people are dying every month on the streets of Glasgow – that's one death each week. The revelations have now prompted the director of one of Scotland's leading homelessness charities to hit out at the "shameful" numbers of rough sleepers dying on the streets of Glasgow.

Figures obtained by the Sunday Herald from Glasgow City Council via a Freedom of Information request reveal that at least 39 homeless people have died in Glasgow in the space of just 10 months.

The deaths occurred between May 2016 and March 2017 with the council admitting that the numbers likely underestimate the full scale of the scandal. Details of the number of deaths in other major Scottish cities are currently unavailable.

"Each one of these cases represents a human life lost too soon," said Graeme Brown, director of Shelter Scotland. "We know that homeless people, in particular those who sleep rough, have worse health than the general population and are far more likely to die young."

"It is simply shameful that this is happening in 21st-century Scotland. Sadly, we know that homelessness is still far from fixed in Glasgow and across Scotland today."

The figures were collated through a critical incident group which was set up in October 2016 but backdated to May that same year.

However, the council admits that it may not include all homeless deaths in the city "such as deaths of rough sleepers who are not from Glasgow or not engaged with our services".

Shelter Scotland estimates that as many as 5,000 people sleep rough in

Scotland every year, while over 10,000 households were in temporary accommodation last year.

Following the recent local elections, Labour lost control of Glasgow City Council for the first time in nearly 40 years. Brown has called on the new SNP administration in the City Chambers to take urgent action to address the problem.

"We urgently need real leadership and action across local and national government to get to grips with this problem," he said.

"Safe, secure and affordable housing is fundamental to the health and well-being of all of us as individuals and Scotland as a country. We hope the new administration in the city will prioritise tackling this challenge head on as a matter of urgency."

Out of the 39 recent deaths in Glasgow, only five were over the age of 60, with the vast majority aged between 25 and 59.

One of those was Matthew Bloomer, 28, who was found dead outside the TJ Hughes department store on Argyle Street in Glasgow's Trongate in March after spending the night outside in freezing conditions.

At the time police said they were treating his death as "unexplained".

In 2015, 70 homelessness caseworkers from Glasgow conducted a 17-week strike to demand better pay and conditions.

In January of this year, the Sunday Herald reported how staff in Glasgow City Council's community teams complained of being overworked and understaffed. They said they were forced to turn people away without help because they have no accommodation to offer.

The rising problem of homelessness has led to heightened campaigning on the issue, with the graffiti "No More Homeless Deaths" seen daubed around the city. The sight of people, and sometimes couples, sleeping in doorways



throughout the city centre has become increasingly common over the last year, with beggars often on every street corner in the part of the city stretching from Central Station to Sauchiehall Street.

The campaign group Homelessness Shame Glasgow had engaged in lobbying and direct actions to raise the profile of the issue, as well as organising food and blanket distributions to people on the street.

It has also called on empty buildings to be opened up to rough sleepers in

Our hope is that with the change in leadership within the council, much more will be done

order to protect them from the elements and prevent any future deaths.

Sean Baillie, an activist with the campaign, warned that the figures obtained by FOI are "a scary indication of the scale of the crisis Glasgow is suffering".

He said: "Political pressure and action is desperately needed. The previous local government did all they could to cover up and dismiss the scale of the issue. Our hope is that with the change in leadership within the council, much more will be done."

"However, we will not be taking a

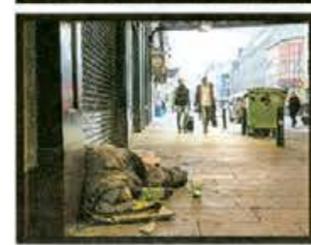
back seat and giving any new councillors coming breathing space to settle in. We intend to continue to ramp up our actions to ensure that everyone in the City Chambers knows that this must be a priority in order to prevent the devastating loss of lives in our city."

Glasgow City Council says it receives around 6,000 formal homelessness applications each year, with 2,000 people housed in temporary accommodation at any one time.

Commenting in response to the high number of deaths, a spokesman

Scenes of suffering and deprivation are growing increasingly prevalent in Glasgow city centre – with 39 homeless people dying on the streets within the past 10 months

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT PERRY



for Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership said: "These figures sadly reflect the harmful lifestyles and risk taking behaviours of some people who are affected by homelessness. "In Glasgow there is a wide range of support available for vulnerable people and we are looking to implement new services that are relevant to those affected by homelessness, particularly in the city centre. "We do whatever we can to engage with vulnerable people but offers of support can be declined."

'I've been kicked in the head, urinated on, my hands turned blue with the cold ... no wonder people like me are dying'

IF THEY AREN'T BEING BEATEN BY DRUNKS, THEY ARE SO COLD THEY TRY TO GET ARRESTED TO SPEND A NIGHT IN A CELL. PETER SWINDON SPEAKS TO ROUGH SLEEPERS IN SCOTLAND'S BIGGEST CITY. WARNING: REPORT CONTAINS DISTURBING DETAILS

Violence, drugs and the cold are killing a record number of homeless people in Scotland's biggest city, according to those who sleep rough. Figures obtained by the Sunday Herald following a Freedom of Information request show at least 39 have died on the streets of Glasgow in the last 10 months alone – that's one person every single week.

Jessica Jennings, 23, has been sleeping rough in the city for nearly a year, finding refuge under cardboard behind a bin in a filthy lane.

She said: "It's very dangerous at night on these streets. I was asleep and someone ran up and kicked me on the head, for no reason. They were just drunk at the weekend. People urinate on you. Some people carry knives and all sorts around with them. If you don't give them what they want it can get very dangerous."

Jennings says she fears she'll die on the streets because it's so cold at night. She said: "It's horrible. Literally, your hands turn blue it's so cold. A few nights ago I was going to go to hospital because I was so cold it hurt. I couldn't breathe properly. My chest was tight. The next day I was so stiff from the cold I couldn't walk."

"I worry every day that I'm going to die on the street. I walk past people and some of them do look dead. I'm surprised that the number is so low. I think there's probably more. It's very easy to die on the streets."

"It might sound weird but it could also be depression. If you're not looking after yourself you go in to deep depression. You get no help. You just give up. Your body just fails."

"People need more help. I would say there's hundreds on the streets of Glasgow. I see a new homeless face every day. They're everywhere. Every door. Every street. Not even just in the city centre. There are so many homeless people now."

One homeless man who gave his name as "Paddy" said he has been on the streets for three years.

The 42-year-old from Glasgow's east end said: "I've known people who've died from hypothermia. There's a lack of sleeping bags. I might get handed one from the street team and then leave it lying and it'll be stolen. Then I'll go back to the street team but there will be none left. You just have to sleep in a doorway under cardboard."

Paddy also said violence is a problem, particularly at weekends when drunk



Jessica Jennings, above, and 'Paddy', left, spoke of abuse and assaults on Glasgow's streets

revellers roam the streets. Some even film the assaults on mobile phones and post the footage online.

Men described by Paddy as "the young team" also exploit Glasgow's sectarian tensions as they abuse homeless people. "They'll offer you a few pounds for a bottle or a couple of cans to sing The Sash if they're Rangers fans or The Fields of Athenry if they're Celtic fans," Paddy said.

"People walk by of a different persuasion and hear us singing it and they come back and kick f**k out of us. You know what Glasgow's like. Sometimes we're better off in prison so we get ourselves arrested to get to jail. When it's really cold and the sleeping bags aren't helping we just shout and bawl at the police and get arrested. At least in Barlinnie you've got a room with a bed and heating. It's a revolving door. You just have to carry on regardless."

One woman from Ayrshire, who asked not to be named, has been sleeping rough for several years.

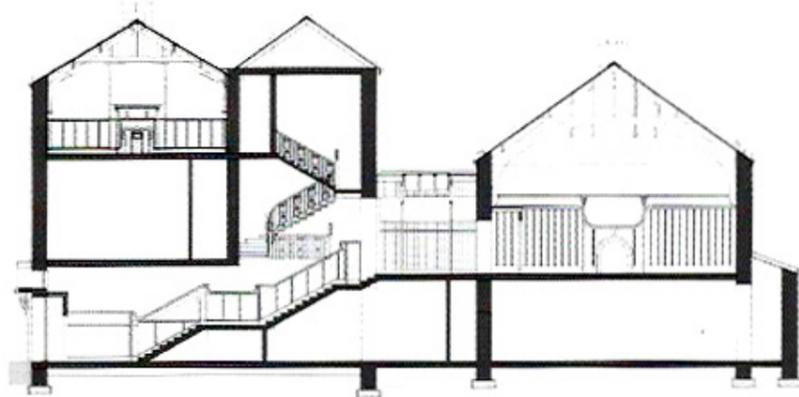
She has a tent and a sleeping bag but wouldn't reveal the location because she was afraid other homeless people would overhear her.

The 42-year-old said: "They're dying because they're taking drugs. It's white valium and kit (heroin). You get a bag of 25 white pills for a tenner. They're drinking, they're taking drugs, and they're sleeping in the cold. It's not a good combination. I have a drink problem but I don't take drugs."

She is a mother and a grandmother but hasn't seen her children for many years and hasn't met her grandchildren.

"I just want my family back," she added. "If I could get a house I'd get to see them. I've been in every hostel. I'm on waiting lists. They're knocking houses down. Why are they not letting us stay there instead of demolishing them?"

Mackintosh Club, Helensburgh



Many CRM Society members have already visited the former Conservative Club in Helensburgh in the 10 months since Puregreenspace Architects took possession of the top floor. Here, owners Nicola and Bruce Jamieson tell us about the steady progress being made to restore and protect the building for generations to come. Now rebranded as the 'Mackintosh Club,' the pigeon-infested mess of the last 60 years has become a distant memory.

Fundamental to the long-term restoration of the building has been a strategy to redesign a section of roof that has caused ingress and to add a stair to the roof to enable easy maintenance, which has just received planning permission. All the historic and recognisable features of the building will be completely untouched by these alterations, albeit safeguarded by better protection from the elements. The design of the new section of roof takes its inspiration from Mackintosh's love for the ziggurat and also makes reference to his own careful modifications at The Glasgow School of Art. There, the first phase was completed in 1899, and when the second phase got underway in 1907 he replaced the sloping roof of phase one with the now familiar square boxed studios, connected along the rear with the famous

'hen run' - one of the more imaginative parts of his design. At the Mackintosh Club the roof in question sits concealed in the centre of the building, neither visible from Sinclair Street to the front or Maitland Street to the rear.

Four enlarged landings on the new stair will provide a symbolic gallery space housing a permanent homage to the Glasgow Four, who were coming to public prominence at the time the building was being designed and erected. The stair will culminate in a roof-top terrace that literally 'connects to the sky' providing breath-taking views over Helensburgh and the surrounding hills and lochs. Being offset to the rear, the stair and gallery will serve neatly as an auxiliary space to the former billiard room which will remain frozen in time as an early Mackintosh masterpiece. By day it will be a place for visitors and club members to sit and reflect, read the library books, enjoy the piano and indulge in tea and cakes. In the evening, it will be available for private hire - a unique experience for dining, small performances and receptions.

The 'Mackintosh Club Rooms' - a new charity - is being set up to preserve and safeguard the entire building. Its strong board of professionals and Mackintosh experts will embark on a fundraising

Section through the former Conservative Club, Helensburgh. Image © Puregreenspace Architects



3D view of the Mackintosh Club. Image © Puregreenspace Architects

programme to implement the conservation plan and proposed alterations. To date the project has been funded entirely by Nicola and Bruce Jamieson. Visitors and donations to the Mackintosh Club are very welcome.

For more information email nicola@mackintosh.club

Glasgow City Heritage Trust has invested substantially in the built heritage of Alexander 'Greek' Thomson over the past 10 years.

GCHT has awarded numerous grants through several funding programmes including building repairs, shop front and heritage grant schemes. Most notably, it supported the major works at 1-10 Moray Place, one of the finest 19th century terraces in Scotland and where Thomson lived until his death in 1875. The Trust contributed to the full restoration works of the terrace at Strathbungo on the south side of Glasgow, including roof, stone and

window repairs plus the reinstatement of railings and lamps to restore the building to its original splendour.

Torsten Haak, Director of Glasgow City Heritage Trust said: "We are happy to be part of the Thomson bicentenary celebrations of the city. We are currently funding major works in Thomson's Walmer Crescent, which is one of four conservation areas in Glasgow targeted for special support."



Torsten Haak, Director of Glasgow City Heritage Trust

For more information on Glasgow City Heritage Trust visit www.glasgowheritage.org.uk

Alexander Thomson 1817-1875

Mark Baines BArch DipArch of the Mackintosh School of Architecture gives an account of one of Glasgow's most important architects as the city marks Thomson's bicentenary

This year is the bicentenary of the birth of Alexander Thomson, one of Glasgow's greatest 19th-century architects.

Few architects, before or after, were as skilled in the art of abstraction which would lead to the unprecedented levels of architectural thinking, innovation and originality of Thomson's buildings. Much of his work is as startling in its appearance today as it was when built.

Sadly, many of his buildings were destroyed in the post-war restructuring of the city, especially his tenements in Laurieston and Hutchesontown. Of his four churches only St Vincent Street Church survives. Forty out of some 120 buildings now remain. Holmwood is under the protection of the National Trust for Scotland while St Vincent Street Church is only open by arrangement, the remainder being in private ownership. Unfortunately, even today, the Egyptian Halls in Union Street, Glasgow remains under severe threat of destruction.

Born in Balfour, Alexander Thomson moved to Glasgow aged 12, became a lawyer's apprentice then joined the architectural firm of Robert Foote who introduced him to the world of classical architecture. Thereafter he worked with John Baird 1, an occasionally innovative architect and was then joined by his brother-in-law, also John Baird. In 1850 he established the practice of A & G Thomson with his brother George. Following the latter's departure for Africa, Thomson engaged John Turnbull who was responsible for the completion of works following Thomson's death in 1875. Throughout this period Thomson was undoubtedly the leading design protagonist.

Thomson's early works are sometimes hesitant, though distinctive forays into a variety of architectural styles are evident



Facade of the Egyptian Halls, Union Street, Glasgow. Image © GSA

in an early series of villas and terraces in Glasgow and its environs. However Tor House, Rothesay, the Double Villa, Langside, and Caledonia Road Church, Hutchesontown, all designed between 1855 and 1856 marked the emergence of his totally assured, if not radically orientated, design approach. The four churches aside a major public commission such as the University eluded him. Instead he designed numerous villas and terraces in Glasgow's inner suburbs and many tenements and commercial buildings in the city centre. It is an architecture which defines, belongs and is committed to the street, and, in a similar fashion to the diagonal approaches to the villas, the buildings are consciously intended to be viewed obliquely. Like the marble Grecian monuments which he so admired, Thomson only ever built in stone resulting in a wide range of buildings which combine a sense of mass associated with the monolithic qualities of masonry to instil varying degrees of monumentality. There is also delight and ingenuity in the highly controlled compositional artistry of light and shadow by means of repetition and detailed invention. In this sense it was

a quintessentially urban architecture which lived and breathed the gridded expanses of the burgeoning industrial city

Thomson was not a neo-classicist but in recognising the futility of archaeological reconstruction of past structures he expressively reinvigorated the essential elements of classical architecture consisting of the wall, column and beam, forging an ever varied contemporary language that was singularly compelling and one which was uniquely his own. His was a language genuinely striving for a modern architecture within the culture of his day and one with the capacity to encompass the full range of building types. Amongst his greatest architectural achievements not previously mentioned are Ellisland, Moray Place, Great Western Terrace and the lost Queens Park Church and Eglinton Street tenement, known as Queens Park Terrace. As a consequence of Thomson's rigorous approach, his architecture, when considered as a holistic body of work, appears to contain a sensibility, generosity and integrity that confers equal dignity on all aspects and peoples of an urban society

For more information about Alexander Thomson, the Alexander Thomson Society and the Bicentenary events please contact www.alexanderthomsonsociety.org.uk

BREAK THE MOULD

WITH THE BICENTENARY OF ALEXANDER ‘GREEK’ THOMSON FAST APPROACHING URBAN REALM TAKES A TIMELY LOOK AT THE MASTER’S WORK TO SEE HOW UNKIND THE PAST 200 YEARS HAVE BEEN. FROM THE DECAY OF THE EGYPTIAN HALLS TO THE RUIN OF CALEDONIA ROAD CHURCH IT WOULD SEEM THERE IS NOT MUCH TO CELEBRATE. AGAINST ADVERSITY A SMALL BAND OF TRUE BELIEVERS ARE BATTLING TO KEEP THE ARCHITECTS LEGACY ALIVE PROMPTING URBAN REALM TO REVISIT SOME OLD HAUNTS TO ASSESS THE SCALE OF THE CHALLENGE. PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK SEAGER.

With the bicentenary of Alexander ‘Greek’ Thomson’s birth upon us eyes are turning to the progress (or lack of) in securing the architect’s legacy for future generations. Custodians are a mix of private owners, public authorities and volunteers who are battling to claim limited resources for their cause but, 200 years on is Thomson’s legacy still in doubt?

With a back catalogue encompassing individual homes, tenements, warehouses and churches Thomson was a prolific architect but has since suffered the loss of many fine works ranging from Queens Park Church to the Waverley Hotel on Sauchiehall Street. Perhaps worse the architect suffers the ignominy of two of his greatest works, Caledonia Road Church and the Egyptian Halls, lying in a state of parlous ruin. A scandalous waste for someone who led the foundation of Glasgow Architectural Society and Glasgow Institute of Architects.

Dundee developer Derek Souter, present custodian of the Egyptian Hall, has cause to reflect on the passage of time as he prowls the crumbling corridors of his stalled hotel vision.

At 36 years and counting Souter can reflect that time is neither on his side nor on the side of the building he professes to love and which is stuck in a logjam epitomising the official indifference, differing developer priorities and sheer bad luck that has dogged much of Thomson’s work.

At the heart of the problem is a rumbling dispute between Union Street Properties (USP) and Union Street Investments (USI) the two companies which own the ground/basement and upper floors respectively of the A-listed landmark building. The dispute centres on a compulsory purchase order served in 1996, which has now dragged on for an incredible two decades but now USP and USI have brought forward proposals for a façade retention scheme at the A-listed landmark having decided that restoration is now ‘all but structurally undeliverable’.

Previous attempts to restore the Halls stumbled when the Heritage Lottery Fund ruled out grant funding which would have seen the historic building refurbished for a hotel operator, casting doubt on the delivery of this latest scheme





Time stands still in the Egyptian Halls, to the dismay of all those who care about the building

which still requires 'some' public funding to progress in addition to agreement with NCP. Should the stalemate continue USP have left a 'new build' option on the table although the full preservation scheme could still be delivered, including a rebuilt rear wall and roof, were funding to be confirmed.

The latest plans would establish a mews through route connecting Union Street to Mitchell Street, helping to reinforce the legacy of two of the city's greatest architects; Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Alexander 'Greek' Thomson, by creating a direct pedestrian link from The Lighthouse through to Central Station.

The Morrison Partnership envisage this as a street level 'concourse' threading through a central atrium with a hotel, restaurants and retail populating newly built accommodation behind a retained façade to a 'modernised' NCP car park, although a question mark hangs over whether NCP would be prepared to sacrifice their cash cow. Should they do so (and discussions have not yet begun) then there is potential to open up a strategic chunk of city centre real estate, breathing new life into the dank Union Place in the process.

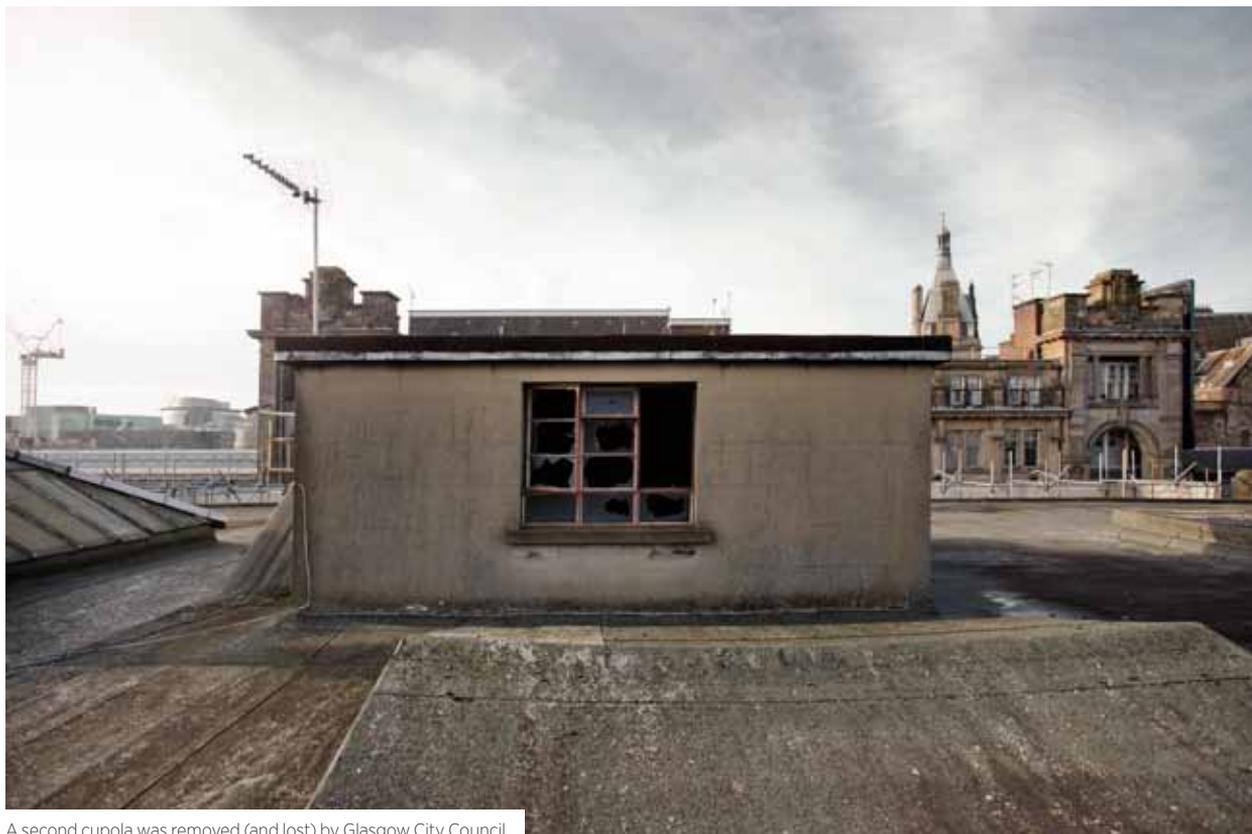
Derek Souter said: "The Halls are joined onto the NCP, it's back to back. The rear wall needs replaced and the roof needs replaced but we can save the building. The challenge is to save the floors, can we do a form of façade retention because the rear wall needs replaced anyway? If you retained the façade the

floors and the stairs and put in a new roof and rear wall you're saving 60% of it. There's a cupola on the roof, there used to be two, but the council took one away and lost it."

For now the Halls continue to rot behind their scaffolding screen with no sign of the impasse being broken so could the shifting tectonic plates of local politics and a timely anniversary provide sufficient impetus to turn this tanker around? Souter observed: "There's a council election in May and the SNP councilors are well aware of the situation. They're left with the legacy of sorting this out."

Asked whether the scaffolding advertisements were bringing in any resources Derek Souter said: 'Both companies (USP and USI) make a small trading loss' but the main concern is falling masonry bonking unwary pedestrians along Union Street, prompting the removal of parapet coping stones, hopefully to be reintroduced at some indeterminate future. As Souter attests: "The scaffolding has been up for seven years and it could be up for another seven without a solution. We can't take the scaffolding down because of structural issues, which the council now reluctantly accept."

"The council have no stake in the building. This building has an £18m deficit, no-one's going to spend £18m to get £6m back. It's been non-viable since 1996 and all that's happened is it's got worse. It needed £2m in 1998 and it needs around £16m now. I don't know, the figures haven't been updated for



A second cupola was removed (and lost) by Glasgow City Council

two years. If this was a new build you wouldn't need any help. The council have to admit they've caused a delay. In 1998 we believed we were doing a scheme in 2000 because the council changed a CPO and never told us. It took 11 years to reconcile that and the council refused to admit any liabilities for that. They withheld confidential information from us for 16 years."

Souter said: "I love this building. I've spent 19 years coming here once a week, twice a week sometimes, to see what would be an absolutely phenomenal restoration. It would be a beautiful hotel, especially if you can somehow integrate the NCP you can then create a courtyard through the building from central station onto the Lighthouse and open it all up."

At the vanguard of efforts to raise awareness of Thomson is the Alexander Thomson Society which has been valiantly championing their man, successfully overturning historic indifference and battling to preserve what remains of his built legacy. One handicap members face is being visible within the all-enveloping shadow cast by Mackintosh but with the bicentenary of the architect's birth this year a chink of opportunity now presents itself. Asked whether the Thomson Society was in effect competing for scant resources or if their aims were complementary chairman Mark Baines said: "We probably are competing but unknowingly. There are other projects, such as the Citizens Theatre, which are being funded by the city council from the City Fund."

Society secretary Sally White added: "We don't see it as a competition. We recognise that there are more Mackintosh buildings and they are more accessible because they are open to the public. A lot of Thomson's buildings are in private ownership so it's not as easy to access them. When I popped into St Vincent Street Church there were five visitors from abroad who had stumbled in completely by accident and were blown away so we have to do more to spread the word further." To remedy that the society is seeking to raise awareness by persuading owners to throw open their doors during the Doors Open Day Festival."

Past events have been massively oversubscribed with 450 people turning up at the Double Villa the first time it participated, illustrating the pent-up potential from a public clamoring for more than just St Vincent Street Church, which opens at lunch times, or Holmwood House which is open part of the year, part of the week. Baines said: "They have a very small exhibition space and its exhibition wasn't about Thomson last year, it was about Cottiers Furniture. That's why you really need something to show people what we have and encourage people to come."

Encouragement for many will come in the form of newly re-instated stencil work, something the society is particularly excited to see taking shape. White said: "There are specialist painters at Holmwood just now who are recreating the



Left - The Egyptian Halls as they could look **Middle** - Freshly reinstated stencilwork at Holmwood House
Right - The Thomson Society are in talks with the Council to repair lighting

decorative scheme in the dining room using the original stencils, they know what's under the layers of paint. Originally the decision was to reveal the image and decorative scheme but that was going to cost an awful lot of money. They have recently changed tack, possibly from concerns of damaging the paintwork and are doing the stencils onto paper."

The Thomson Society's own Mackintosh moment came in 1965 when Caledonia Roach Church was consumed in an conflagration. The response (or rather lack thereof) is indicative of a wider imbalance in appreciation which has condemned the landmark to a 50-year spell in purgatory as a gutted ruin. Is it the case that Thomson simply lacks the local and global appeal necessary to untie funding purse strings? Baines said: "He is known internationally but by small groups or individuals who have either been here or stumbled upon him. He is known but could be better known for sure. We hope with a couple of publications and these events that will get us out there and gather more members."

This long, grinding, slog is taking a small band of true believers toward their stated goal of transforming Caledonia Road Church into One Alexander Thomson Place, an audacious intervention set amidst the ruin. Baines remarked: "We'll promote it culturally and artistically without going down a commercial route and making earrings and bracelets. It

would be the centre for information about Thomson. You can come to Glasgow and have a whole array of information and experiences about Mackintosh but there's nothing about Thomson. You can't see any of his drawings.

"Mackintosh has a whole archive of drawings in the Hunterian and elsewhere but there are only about 28 drawings of Thomson's. There is a whole archive that was destroyed around 1880 so there is scant original information to go on just a certain amount of measured studies compiled by others. Gillespie Kidd and Coia for one."

What would Thomson make of his legacy if he could look down on us today? Is he turning in his grave? Baines answered: "I think he would be dismayed that so much of it was lost in post-war renewal," while White added: "In 1964 it was a Glasgow councilor who said the city could not afford two Thomson churches. We can't have St Vincent Street and Caledonia Road churches so one of them will have to go and it was Henry-Russell Hitchcock, the American architectural historian who wrote the letter to stop that. How ridiculous that people have to intervene from other continents to save your amazing buildings."

Is it still the view of officialdom that we can't afford these buildings and that we need to consolidate within one or two? Not in the eyes of White who has seen a marked change of



tone (if not resources) over the intervening decades: “We’ve had a lot of support from the city council to get our ideas off the ground and the support is ongoing. The reality is there is more competition for the funding available and who knows what will happen when we come out of Europe. The pot seems to get smaller and there are a lot of projects looking for the same money and all of them justify getting something done.”

Change is happening however as a swift walk around Laurieston will quickly attest, as perceptions of what was once urban wasteland morph into well-ordered urbanity, cemented by the looming Citizens Theatre refurbishment (pg 88). White noted: “In the time we’ve been involved in the project we’ve seen a lot of these ideas realized and we hope we’ll realise some of our own too. Part of that would be getting the clocks on the towers as an indication that something is happening.” Baines continued: “It’s a stepping stone between Crown Street and the new Laurieston. It’s highly visible from the centre. We’ve designed it so it has a multiplicity of functions; the usual café/bar, gallery and museum. Any of these spaces could be used in a variety of ways both by local people and national events.”

A programme of stone indentation is planned to protect the tower and previous surface render repairs now threatening to spall off, potentially taking some of the stonework with it. The tower remains structurally stable however thanks to a £200k

stabilization project undertaken by the council which saw concrete slabs tied in at different levels. Sally continued: “We had a meeting with the council last week to ask if the lighting could be repaired. It’s just lightbulbs concentrated on the portico. What’s nice is you can see right inside when its lit up.

Another potential ace up the society’s sleeve is a long overdue extension of the city sightseeing buses south of the river, something Thomson enthusiasts have long advocated: White explained: “We’re representing a group called South Side Routes, a collaboration with cultural attractions such as the Burrell and Tramway, to entice tour buses south of the river. They’ve got posters around the Cathcart Circle but you do need the bus because Pollok House is in the middle of the park and if you’re a tourist you’re reliant on public transport. We would be the first stop going south with Govan Old Parish Church at the other end.”

Further momentum will spring from an exhibition of Thomson drawings, ‘Lines of Thought’, at The Lighthouse. White observed: “The Unknown Genius was the inaugural exhibition at the Lighthouse but that was in 1999 and there hasn’t been another one since.” This just goes to show that while Thomson’s light still shines 200 years on, it is dimming, necessitating a redoubling of effort if there is to be something to celebrate in future.