

Chairman's Report AGM 2012 presented at the Fotheringay Centre 25th April 2012

I'm pleased to report that it has been another very busy year for Pollokshields Heritage

160th Anniversary. The series of events we organised for the 160th Anniversary of the cutting of the first sod in the garden suburb Pollokshields Heritage met with an enthusiastic response:

- Maxwell Park Station was opened up for the Ready Steady Grow festival on 5th June with author Jack Kernahan signing copies of the new edition of his book 'The Cathcart Circle'.
- And for Doors Open Day the station was the venue for the much-praised exhibition Pollokshields Past and Present on the heritage of Pollokshields, devised and prepared by Roger Miller for the 160th anniversary of the suburb.
- The station was also the starting point for 5 guided bus tours of the garden suburb held on a monthly basis throughout the summer. The tours were well received though we did have a hiccup when thanks to an error in the Doors Open Day brochure more than double the numbers of people turned up for the 18th September tour than seats available! However thanks to both some quick thinking, and some fine weather, disappointment was averted when the tour promptly split into a bus tour of the whole of Pollokshields and a separate walking tour of the Avenues with people being offered a choice.

Pollokshields Heritage trails. Further what I reported last year we continued working with GCC on the production of three heritage trails for the garden suburb. In late August we received a grant of £10,000 from the National Lottery's 'Your Heritage' Fund. This was 80% of what we had asked for and it comes with strings attached.

We have also decided, further to discussion with Glasgow City Council, to work up the design of the trails ourselves rather than use the council's graphics department. This means that we have the freedom to ignore GCC design standards and can choose our own font, vary the style of the leaflets, and thereby put our own stamp on them. We are keen for these to be as good as, if not better than, the west end trails which have set the bench mark for quality.

The content for the first two leaflets is concluded and we are now finalising their design. The content for the third leaflet, about the architects, builders, craftsmen and artisans who contributed to the construction of Pollokshields, is still being written. Our timetable is to have the leaflets launched for this year's Doors Open Day weekend on 15th and 16th September.

As part of the conditions for our grant we also have to conduct outreach and education so we want to organise a competition for local Primary Schools with the aim of making children more aware of the riches in our built heritage and environment.

To celebrate the launch of the trails we have arranged a two part walking tour as well as a separate bus tour of Pollokshields for this year's Doors Open Day weekend. The walking tours will follow the informal route laid out in the leaflets with the first walk taking in both the grand villas of the Avenues and the second the elegant tenements of East Pollokshields.

We are also looking at how we can publish the wealth of research information the trails have generated on line so it is available to all.

Maxwell Park Station. The former booking office was the venue for our 160th anniversary exhibitions and continues to act as a meeting HQ for a number of local amenity groups – it is available on request!

The subgroup have continued to be in communication with the Railway Heritage Trust and the relevant officers at ScotRail and Network Rail, but have failed as yet to make any significant progress regarding restoration of the amenities necessary for its development. Lack of funds is the bottom line - not lack of interest on the part of the relevant authorities. (We'll get there yet!!)

Meantime the storm damage to the roof is being repaired.

The Glasgow South Model Train and Tram Group continue to be the occupants of the platform level premises - and have similarly failed to make any headway in regeneration. We can only say Watch This Space.....

The platform planters continue to be nurtured by our Head Gardener, Ann Laing, and we are now collaborating with the local Fotheringay Road residents' group to control the weeds on the pavement side of the embankment.

Lecture Series. Now into its 3rd season the Lecture Series has continued through the winter and spring months of 2011 -2012 with lectures from John Pelan Director of the Scottish Civic Trust on 'Scotland's Civic Movement: the Way Forward'; David Martin Architect, historian and a Trustee of Strathclyde Building Preservation Trust, and for 20 years Building Conservation Officer for Glasgow City Council on 'Glasgow's Doors and Windows'; Simon Metcalfe Development Manager for New Gorbals Housing Association on 'A Miracle in the Gorbals – A History of Gorbals Regeneration'; Ian Johnstone, who until he retired in 2009 was the Deputy Director of the Digital Design Studio at Glasgow School of Art, on Shipbuilding in Govan 1840 – 1912'. We also organised a joint debate with the Saltire Society on whether there is a Modern Scottish Architecture and whether this matters which included speakers such as architects David Page and Roan Rutherford.

The talks have been well received and speakers on excellent form. Audience numbers seem to have settled around the 40 mark though we do hope for more. The talks are currently running at a loss. Until now the committee has taken the view that we should persevere in order to raise the profile of the talks and hopefully increase the size of the audience but at some point we will need to review the economics of this.

Re-launch of Newsletter. You may have notice that the PH newsletter was re-launched in December 2011. We have a new editor Helen McNamara, who has a wealth of new ideas for the style, and look, of what will now be a quarterly newsletter. It will be produced in house to save money. We think Helen has done a superb job with both the December 2011 and March 2012 issues

Helen is keen to get more information about the neighbourhood and her intention is that future issues will include subjects such as the Great War. Helen has also carried out house research for several members and these are now case studies on website.

We now have around 200 people subscribing to receive the e-version of the newsletter, and would encourage others to do so by emailing editor@pollokshieldsheritage.org (the details are on newsletter page of website). Also we have a Facebook page and more people are "Liking" us on a daily basis which is great. However, we are still producing hard copies and they can be found in local cafes, shops, library, schools, etc.

City Plan 3 Public consultations on City Plan 3 began in autumn last year. We reviewed the document but to be frank as far as we are concerned it has not fundamentally moved on since City Plan 2. Committee members spent a great deal of time scrutinising City Plan 2 and raising issues at the public inquiry. We did this in good faith only to see concessions secured with the reporter promptly over turned by the council. Having discussed this the committee do not see the point of wasting everyone's time going over old ground only to find our stance rejected once again. We have instead written to the council noting that in response to the consultation process that our objections to City Plan 2 remain extant and advising them of our dissatisfaction with the whole process.

East Pollokshields Conservation Area appraisal.

Having enthusiastically endorsed the draft East Pollokshields Conservation area appraisal back in May last year, we were caught off guard when Glasgow City Council changed their minds about a proposed extension to the conservation area boundary that would have taken in the north eastern edge of Pollokshields.

We were informed of this in a letter dated 3rd October which we only received on 16th November giving us no time to discuss prior to the Conservation area appraisal document going before the planning committee for approval on 29th November 2011.

GCC cited Historic Scotland's comment that the remainder of the area is of *'little architectural or historic interest and would not benefit from Conservation Area designation'* as the reason for the retraction

We were surprised by this comment as the 'A' listed Miller & Lang Building, one of Glasgow's hidden Art Nouveau gems, and of European importance, is right in the middle of it.

Consequently we have sought explanation for this from both Glasgow City Council and Historic Scotland.

Our support for the revised boundary wasn't motivated by wanting to pickle this area in aspic. We also appreciate that an 'A' listing protects the fabric of the Miller & Lang building. Nevertheless we are concerned about its setting and are worried that the future of the small Victorian and Edwardian industrial buildings adjacent to this gem is not secure.

Furthermore over recent years there have been a series of piecemeal planning applications for blocks of flats on the narrow strip of railway embankment directly opposite the Miller & Lang building. None are of a decent design standard but all received permission thanks to the embankment being accidentally zoned for residential use in City Plan 1.

Our hope was that incorporating this area into the East Pollokshields conservation area would assist us in being able to argue for higher design standards in the inevitable rush of applications when people start building again.

Pollokshields Heritage has been making the case for a masterplan for this area for quite some time so would be most unhappy to see a repeat of what happened at Port Eglinton with developments such as the Plaza Ballroom which won the Zit building award for worst new building in Scotland. Anything that helped strengthen our hand in encouraging better design standards would be welcome. Hence our surprise, and disappointment, that GCC changed their minds.

It is therefore even more disappointing to see the GCC's City Design Group supporting such a stance at a city wide level. Awarding conservation area status to help raise design standards has been successfully applied to both Govan Cross and Bridgeton Cross. More recently in the newly adopted City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal when Historic Scotland queried the need for a boundary

amendment at Collins Street to include the large car parking areas behind the 'A' listed Barony Church and Provand's Lordship GCC ignored them and progressed the amendment in full because they felt the new boundary would ensure future redevelopment in the area is of appropriate conservation area quality i.e. exactly what we were aiming for in East Pollokshields.

The final nail in the coffin for us was that the boundary was specifically amended to take in the Forth Street Cottages. Though they are not listed these simple vernacular cottages predate the establishment of Pollokshields. However while the consultation process was ongoing the owner of one of the cottages applied for its demolition so that they could build retail units instead. Despite objections their application was approved via the council's delegated powers in January 2012.

St Andrews Drive Phone mast. Despite these disappointments we have had some successes. In December 2011 the application for a proposed installation of a 17.5m high monopole accommodating 4 antennas within shroud and two equipment cabinets at Site at the St Andrews Drive / Springkell Avenue entrance to Maxwell Park was refused by the council. We had been involved in pre-application discussions with the applicant and Councillor Meikle so could appreciate issues with regards to poor mobile phone coverage within the heart of the conservation area. Nevertheless the only concession their proposed solution made to the conservation context was to paint it green to match the trees. The sitting of it meant it protruded right into one of the key view corridors in West Pollokshields. We welcome the council's decision.

VAT on alterations to listed buildings. An unwelcome surprise in this year's budget was the proposal to remove VAT relief for approved alterations to listed buildings from October 2012. HMRC has opened a consultation on this which closes on 4th May. HMRC says the consultation is intended to 'address some of the loopholes and anomalies in our VAT system'. HMRC considers that 'the majority of the work covered by the relief consists of extension work which is not necessary for heritage purposes', and that this generates 'a perverse incentive for change as opposed to repair'. The committee is dismayed by this proposal and believes that withdrawal of VAT relief will act as a disincentive to sensitive alteration of historic buildings that are necessary to secure viable long-term use for many buildings and is a move that will jeopardize townscape heritage and other renovation schemes across the UK where financial viability is often marginal. We feel it is a regressive step that does not offer a sustainable way forward for our listed building stock as it removes the carrot while retaining the stick of requiring owners to maintain these buildings in the face of increasing costs and removal of subsidy. There should be a level playing field with new build construction which is currently zero rated for VAT. We have written to the Chancellor in this regard but also urge our members to respond to the consultation by looking at the information available on the Heritage Alliance's website. We have put a link to their website on ours.

<http://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/2012/04/17/vat-2012-campaign-toolkit/>

Future actions: We are also currently exploring the possibility of a Charrette concerning issues related to the design of streets in East Pollokshields involving Pollokshields Community Council, Scottish Civic Trust, Lesley Street Greenspaces Group and Strathclyde University Urban Design Studies Unit. The idea is to look at one street and work with these organisations, as well as residents and other key stakeholders, to see if we can come up with affordable and easily replicable design solutions that makes sure our streets are for people rather than solely for cars.

The Committee. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the other committee members for their support in particular Iain Dyer as deputy chair, Hilary Stanger our treasurer, Janet Brand our secretary, John Thomson as minute secretary, Helen McNamara our newsletter editor, both Karin Currie and John Thomson for their work at Maxwell Park Station, Ann Laing for being our head gardener at the station, both Hilary Stanger and Evelyn Lennie for organizing the December newsletter deliveries, David Hart for his work on the website, Roger Millar for helping orchestrate the lecture series as well as his work for the Doors Open Day exhibition, Karin Currie again for helping guide the 5 bus tours last summer, Alison Taylor for her work as events co-ordinator and Helen Barnard our planning convener for her diligence in reviewing planning submissions over the course of the last year.

Sheila Ogilvie. Many of you will know Sheila Ogilvie, one of the original founders of Pollokshields Heritage our local historian and one of the more well known residents of Pollokshields. Sadly Sheila has decided to retire from the committee this year. Sheila is the expert on Pollokshields and has published a series of books on the suburb: Pollokshields Pastiche, Pollokshields Panorama and Pollokshields in Perspective. When it comes to matters Pollokshields, such as the heritage trails, we make sure we run things past Sheila first! Others have not been so wise and have come a cropper as a result. One need only look at the 2010 publication Old Pollokshields which was promptly met with an errata from Sheila. All they had to do was ask! Please join me in thanking Sheila for all her contributions over two decades and we wish her the very best.

Finally please welcome our speaker for this evening's AGM: **Kevin Murray** who will be speaking on Grandhome and the National SSCI Charrette a masterplan project for a new suburb of Aberdeen, on which he has been working with the charismatic American 'new urbanist', Andres Duany

Kevin is a highly experienced town planner and urbanist, with over 30 years experience in the fields of planning, regeneration, urban design and economic development. He has worked in UK local government and has also been a director of two international multi-disciplinary consultancies, EDAW and Tibbalds Monro, is a founder Director, and current Chairman, of the Academy of Urbanism and Honorary Professor of Planning at Glasgow University, is also a Past President of the Royal Town Planning Institute and was a founding member of the Urban Design Alliance.

A strong believer in the philosophy of placemaking and enlightened place management, Kevin has co-authored the RTPI's New Vision for Planning, contributed to the Egan Task Group on Delivering Sustainable Communities, served on the board of the Academy for Sustainable Communities and helped create The Freiburg Charter on Sustainable Urbanism.

He has given evidence on urban planning and townscape matters to committees in both UK Houses of Parliament, and lectured on planning, design and community regeneration around the world, and contributed to debates in television and radio, as well as in conferences and in community workshops.

Kevin has a particular interest in helping towns, cities and their respective communities to address change and uncertainty. So I am sure we will be most interested to hear his thoughts as to whether the use of charrettes is the most effective way of engaging with communities and, as the Scottish Government hopes, makes the planning process less adversarial.

Niall Murphy 25th April 2012