

CITY SCENE

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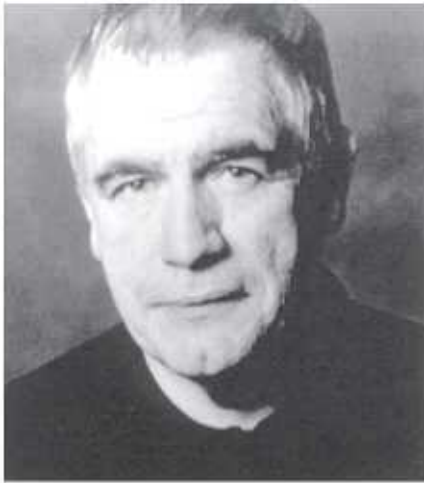


JOURNAL of the DUNDEE CIVIC TRUST

SUMMER 2011

TRUST IN DUNDEE





Brian Cox CBE

Patron of Dundee Civic Trust
Born Dundee 1 June 1946.
Renowned actor who started at the old Dundee Rep at age 14 and since ranged from the Royal Shakespeare Company to Hollywood with many varied stage, film, radio and TV roles. His local roots and love of the city and Scotland are evident with patronage of various local and national acting groups as well as support of medical research in Dundee.

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Contributions should be sent to the Editor, Craig Muir, either by post to his home address at 52, Victoria Road, Broughty Ferry, Dundee DD5 1BN or e-mail: craig.muir@virgin.net

The Editor will accept articles on floppy discs, CD or as e-mail attachments.

The Editor reserves the right to accept, reject and edit contributions.

The Dundee Civic Trust does not accept any responsibility for the views expressed by contributors in any article which has been accepted for publication.

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News & Events

Future Events 2011/12

All meetings at Dundee Art Society gallery, 17 Roseangle, Dundee starting at 7pm unless otherwise stated.

Thursday 22nd September

Walking tour of Broughty Ferry led by members of Broughty Ferry Development Trust. 6pm. Further details on website or by phoning Jean Braithwaite.

Thursday 20th October

Architects in practice: Tom Bostock of Reich and Hall.

Next Issue

Aystree House, West Ferry: A listed 1902 Arts & Crafts mansion and gatehouse by Charles Ower and Charles Soutar currently being developed as six flats and a separate house comprising the original gatehouse with a modern extension by architects, James Stephen, Glamis.

Talks

If you have an idea for a talk or interested in giving a talk, then please contact Jean Braithwaite

(01382 775171 or email: jeani@jibraithwaite.plus.com)



This Edition of the Journal has an excellent article by Neale Reader on multi storey housing in the city. It provides much food for thought on the topic of change and heritage. Change, they say, never stops and certainly this article makes the case for this being true in Dundee.

This thought would have been reinforced among those who have witnessed the slow but remorseless demolition of the multi storey flats at Menzieshill and those watching the preparation, for the same fate, of Maxwelltown multis. Many Dundonians can remember the construction of these buildings in the early 1960s.

Down in the Trades Lane and the Seagate area, the excavations for the new swimming pool have revealed walls and foundations from an earlier Dundee which was swept away as the City renewed itself. What is more, these excavations presage the demolition of the Olympia Centre, which has been thought of by natives of Dundee as the 'new' swimming pool because it replaced the old swimming pool which was located in the middle of the harbour up to the early 60s. It was demolished to make way for the roads associated with the Tay Road Bridge Landfall.

All of this is a good reminder that all of the historic buildings which comprise our architectural heritage

were themselves once new, and many of them rose upon sites which had been cleared of earlier buildings to enable their construction.

Perhaps, like humans memorialised in a cemetery, a plaque should be affixed to all new buildings giving some indication of the preceding buildings occupying the site. If this were the case some of our current buildings would have quite a lengthy list of their antecedents.

Of course the idea of the new arising from the ashes of the old is nothing new. In this respect it is perhaps apt to quote from the introduction to Lamb's 1895 volume entitled 'Dundee - Its Quaint and Historic Buildings'.

"The very great changes which have taken place...in Dundee during the last quarter century by the removal of old buildings and the formation of new streets have practically transformed the ancient burgh into a modern city'

However one significant new building which would have nothing to say in respect of its predecessors is the new V & A, as this will be built on a previously undeveloped site in the River Tay. Hopefully this can be seen as the signifier of a new start for the City and one which will augur well for development of the Waterfront.

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The unloved multitis



From bold embodiment of the future to failed social experiment, the fall from favour of high-rise public housing remains a much-analysed feature of recent British history. This personal review has been prompted as the removal of such buildings from the Dundee cityscape over several years reaches its climax.

The city into which I was born in 1964 retained a skyline pierced by mill chimneys, which fascinated me as a child. Their place was, however, being gradually taken by high-rise blocks, except that Dundonians never call them high-rise blocks, or tower blocks, or high flats. All of us, from whatever background, call them multitis. This abbreviation of 'multi-storey' is rarely heard outside eastern Scotland, but in Dundee it is universal and has been from the beginning. Perhaps this is because 'multi' lends itself so well to the Dundee dialect, with the flat vowel and glottal stop duly accommodated in one five-letter word!

That word is uttered less frequently now, for multitis in Dundee have become an endangered species. Most have already been demolished, although this process is close to finishing and about a quarter are due to be retained. However, as the last of the iconic landmark blocks are now disappearing from the skyline it seems fitting to acknowledge the place the multitis have held, for better or worse, in our urban setting.

"The ultimate in brutalism was to be expressed between 1965 and 1971....."

When I was born, ten multitis had been completed. Eight years later the city had its final complement: 45 actual structures, some containing blocks conjoined in twos and threes, giving a grand total of 59. Containing over five thousand

dwelling, they were scattered over the city from inner Comprehensive Development Areas to the last great sweep of peripheral housing schemes. Like the mill chimneys, they came to fascinate me.

The story had begun modestly in 1958, when the corporation approved construction of four ten-storey blocks (for the SSHA) at Dryburgh Gardens and another four at Foggyley Gardens. These schemes, completed at the start of the sixties, were closely followed by Crudens' two 15-storey blocks at Whorterbank briefly the tallest inhabited buildings in Dundee and then another clutch of very similar multitis at Lansdowne, Foggyley and Menzieshill, all by the same builder.

Crudens was, in fact, the main player in the construction of the multitis through a 'design-build' package. As time passed, the visual impact became more audacious. Ardler featured six massive slabs each of three individual blocks, named alphabetically after golf courses in unsubtle recognition of the fact they had been built on one. At some 600 feet above sea level, the uppermost of their seventeen inhabited floors contained the highest dwellings in the city. Eye-catching though these buildings were, their effect was softened by the parkland setting. The ultimate in brutalism was to be expressed between 1965 and 1971 when the Hilltown skyline was crowned by the tallest multitis of all: four 23-storey slab blocks at Maxwelltown and another two at Derby Street.

These multitis were the only ones in the city built to designs prepared by local firms of consulting architects. Ian Burke, Hugh Martin and Partners (also responsible for the first Overgate development)



The unloved multis

designed the Maxwelltown blocks which, striding eastwards almost the length of Alexander Street, demanded attention from the start. In 'The Architecture of Dundee', a chapter of the 1968 British Association handbook Dundee and District, David Walker remarks queasily that the buildings 'in bulk if not quite in height challenge the Law Hill itself'. James Parr and Partners' Derby Street blocks went further, rising at a barely respectful distance from the summit and coming in altitude within 40 feet of it.

Visually there was little to love about the upper Hilltown multis, but much to inspire awe. Like Ardler, they represented a feat of engineering that was hard to ignore. No doubt the designers and builders wanted it this way, and imagined their work being carved indelibly into the urban geography of Dundee for all time.

Yet the Ardler scheme has vanished, replaced by a much-commended village development of low-rise housing, while the uncompromising blocks of the upper Hilltown are in the process of joining the 38 multis already demolished by the end of March 2011. In a short while many will struggle to imagine they ever existed.

Of course, high-rise public housing went out of favour in Britain long ago. The Ronan Point accident of 1968, in London's Canning Town, is often quoted as the event that caused professional opinion to turn. Initially, however, this disquiet focused not on the social implications of the housing type, but on the technical failings of industrialised 'system building'. Multis continued to be built in Dundee for another four years;

and it may be added in passing that only the three Trottick blocks, built using 'Bison' panels and completed just about the time the Ronan Point collapse occurred, could be considered similar to that unfortunate building.

The growing awareness of social difficulties in high-rise living came later. Market forces are expressed in public housing through the awkward concept of 'difficult to let'. As in other urban areas social problems, whether perceived or real, helped to move parts of the multi-storey housing stock in Dundee into the 'difficult to let' category.

It was under these circumstances that the process of demolition started in the 1990s at Ardler. Recent times have generated a more urgent impetus, for in 2004 the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) was introduced. Providers of social housing are committed to full implementation of its provisions by 2015. The physical characteristics of the

multis mean that, in most cases, demolition is a more attractive financial proposition than the capital expenditure required to meet the SHQS.

There is, however, a rarely expressed sub-text. Just as the R₁₀₁ Road flats came to embody a certain image of Glasgow, so a skyline interrupted by brutal structures reinforced a negative external view of Dundee. The later multis are also tainted by association with a highly disreputable period of civic history. The reasons for their fate being sealed surely go far beyond those formally stated.

The foregoing account perhaps implies that the multis have become a completely unloved entity. This is broadly true so far as professional wisdom is concerned; but then it was professional wisdom that had them erected in the first place. Dundonians form strange attachments, and I cast my mind back to the summer of 1985 when, preparing a university thesis, I undertook a door-to-door survey



Maxwelltown multis - 'Gigantic Easter Island statues'



The unloved multis

in the Hilltown multis. I found people, many resettled from slum clearance in the same area twenty years before, who were fiercely proud of their homes. Recently, this pride has had a last sad echo in the unsuccessful fight put up by the Derby Street residents to stop their multis being demolished.

My own feelings are mixed, and were aroused earlier this year when I visited Maxwelltown to take some last photographs. With the neighbouring low-rise housing gone, the four derelict multis stood exposed and isolated, defiantly glowering over to Fife like gigantic Easter Island statues. Viewing the weathered rendering and broken windows, I reflected on what the sight signified. The architects who put their names to Maxwelltown are long dead and, just as most of their Overgate has been bulldozed, so their multis have lasted only a few decades. These giant buildings spoke of the hubris of the era that gave birth to them, with perhaps a hint of midlife male egos! The

transience demonstrated here ought to sound a salutary warning for our current age.

By next year 44 of the original 59 blocks, accounting for nearly four fifths of their housing provision, will have been razed. What of the remaining multis?

The demolition programme was due to go further, but for a lack of suitable housing stock to which the remaining council tenants could transfer. In 2010 the city council stated that, out of necessity, its six remaining multis in the Lochee area would be retained, a declaration made with a distinct lack of enthusiasm. The four Dallfield blocks are being addressed more positively. The scheme promises to become a colourful, environmentally friendly showpiece, even featuring a district-heating system.

Also due to remain are the solitary Dudhope Court and the four pioneering ten-storey blocks at Dryburgh Gardens, formerly of

the SSHA and now largely under the ownership of Abertay Housing Association.

With fifteen of the buildings surviving, the word 'multi' spoken in the Dundee tongue may be heard for some time to come, and that is strangely comforting.

Meanwhile the distinctive upper Hilltown blocks are passing into history, and onlookers from Newburgh to Broughty Ferry shall see Dundee's skyline handed back to the Law, Balgay Hill and Cox's Stack. Perhaps this is the way it ought to be. The city's appearance will be transformed as much by these multis' removal as it was by their construction.

But here is an odd thing. Those huge buildings were so much part of Dundee during my early life that somewhere deep down, with typical Dundonian perversity, I shall miss them.

Neale Elder



Hillside Court during demolition



Dundee Central Waterfront - Where we are now?

In February a large audience were present at a joint meeting of the Dundee Civic Trust and the Friends of Dundee Heritage Trust. This was held at Discovery Point, the speaker being Mr Alan Watt, and the topic the current position with regard to the development of Dundee Central Waterfront.

Alan is a Dundonian who has worked with both the City Council and Tayside Region before going to Scottish Enterprise Tayside and more latterly setting up his own consultancy.

He opened by saying that he saw the Central Waterfront not in the context of the past but as a vital component in of the City's future. This could not be overstressed, as it was a once in a lifetime transformation of the city.

He drew particular attention to the involvement and interest of all Dundee's citizens in the future form of the Waterfront development. He noted that on a number of his visits to the excellent exhibition of the short listed designs for the new V & A Gallery he had heard vehement arguments as to the merits of the different designs. This level of involvement he felt augured well for the development.

Mr Watt then turned to the proposals for the Central waterfront. There are three very specific aims, the achievement of which will be fundamental to the success of the development.

The first of these was to provide a new and exciting location for new and existing businesses. The second was to establish a new and welcoming arrival point for those visiting the City, and the third to provide a new location for housing and commerce. The success of the development was of great importance, not just to Dundee but also to the region.

Ever since the ambitious plans set out by Thomson and the city fathers in 1910 the Waterfront has been seen to have a great potential to radically alter perceptions of the city. In a way the Harbour had been left behind as two major transformations of the city had taken place – the establishment of the two universities and the development of the new Overgate. In the 1980s the establishment of the Enterprise Zones on the Waterfront had brought about significant changes. To the west there was the building of Discovery Point and the landscaping of the Esplanade. This was followed in recent years by the development of the adjoining City Quay area where in recent decades almost £1 billion had been invested in housing and infrastructure.

But however great the potential of the Central waterfront, the area did have underlying problems. The first of these was the disconnection of the area from the City Centre. The second was that the area presented a very confusing entry point to the city and without a doubt gave a negative perception of the city to those who passed through. Some would say that this was a consequence of not carrying through the

proposals made in the 1960s which would have seen the Repertory Theatre and a multi storey car park alongside the Olympia centre. Nevertheless the consequence was a very underutilised area dominated by roads.

The process of preparation of alternative schemes for the central waterfront and the process of public consultation had resulted in the current proposals being adopted by the development authorities.

The first phase of the new road system was now in place and the central waterfront development was now well in hand. SET alone had invested some £32,000,000. This had been paralleled by expenditure by the City Council and central government. At the present moment finishing touches were now being put in hand to the Balancing Tanks located alongside the present Hotel and designed to solve the drainage problems long associated with the lower parts of the city centre and the waterfront. Work was also being completed on the removal of one of the bridge ramps.

The new development would have to function within the overall road system which underlined the importance of traffic calming measures within the new layout.

The form of development proposed for the waterfront was city blocks some 5/6 storeys in height, which echoed the current heights in the city centre. These would be occupied by a variety of uses with businesses and commercial development on the lower stories with the upper parts of the blocks occupied by housing and commercial uses.

A key part of the development was the location of major visitor attraction within the development. The new V & A was therefore a lynchpin for the area. It had already proved its worth as even in the current period of financial retrenchment there was a high volume of developer interest in central waterfront. It was also influential in encouraging the takeover of the Tay Hotel by a major operator, in which regard he noted the welcome sight of a skip outside the hotel.

The construction of the V & A was also helpful in the negotiations which had now commenced with British Rail over the reconstruction of the railway station. To illustrate what might be achieved Mr Watt showed a possible design by Nicoll Russell which gave a good indication of what might be possible. However discussions were still ongoing with Network Rail.

Mr Watt then turned to the question of water in the Waterfront. The proposal for a marina at the heart of the Waterfront had turned out not to be feasible. However the idea of a marina had not gone away and the design of the lock gates in the Harbour was being looked at. If something could be done there not only might a marina still be part of the Dundee waterfront but the work on the lock would also facilitate the use of the dock for oil maintenance and renewable energy businesses.

Jack Searle



Annual General Meeting 2011

There was a very good attendance at Roseangle on 17th March for the 2011 Annual General Meeting of the Trust. The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming all members and guests and reported on a busy and eventful year

Events

Over the past year events were very well attended. In September the guided visit to the McManus Galleries was not only very interesting but also indicated the strong relationship between the Trust and the McManus. The meal which followed the tour was excellent.

In October Dave McDougall gave an extended and detailed talk on the regeneration of Lochee. November saw us hearing a talk in our series on Architects in practice. Brian Park, a partner in Page and Park, and a specialist in conservation projects, explained his work with particular reference to the McManus and Rosslyn Chapel.

In January of 2011 a three handed talk on the work of the Broughty Ferry Development Trust was given by Hugh Begg, Ruth Lonsdale and Andrew Nicoll. Of particular interest was the BFDT's proposals for Castle Green, to which the Council seem to have been receptive.

The Trust held a shared event with Dundee Heritage Trust in February when Alan Watt gave members an update on the current state of play in respect of the plans for the Central Waterfront.

Dundee Civic Trust Awards

The Awards ceremony was held in McManus Galleries in September and was extremely well attended. Three Commendations were awarded, the first to the mixed use West Port development, the second to the regeneration of Clement Park House and the third to the new Grove Academy.

However the clear winner of the 2011 Award was the McManus Galleries. The Chairman noted that the success of the refurbishment of the McManus has been phenomena not only locally but also at the Scottish level. This is something of which all Dundonians should be proud.

After thanking Alex Anderson, Andrew Nicoll, John Alexander and Andrea Subedi for their work as Jury members, the Chairman remarked that the current financial problems have meant that there have been few completions of buildings this year. This may mean that there will be insufficient projects to justify an Awards ceremony in the coming year. Nevertheless, members were asked to consider proposing any buildings of note and to volunteer for the Jury.

Planning Applications and Developments

There continued to be fewer planning applications to monitor. The Trust had, however, made comments this year on ASDA at West Kingsway; housing developments around Broughty Ferry; and the change of use of the Eastern Primary School. The Trust was pleased to see progress on the Tay Hotel and the Customs House as they are important parts of the city's heritage. The Trust also made a submission on the Biomass Plan proposal at Dundee Harbour.

The Trust gave its views on the short listed proposals for the new V & A and was glad to see that the selected project was one of the four schemes which it felt deserved further consideration.

Projects

The project "Photographing Dundee 1950-1995" will be finally completed in May and handed over to the City Council in September.

Campaigns

The Trust has supported Neil Grieve and Tayside Building Preservation Trust

with their application to preserve the High Mill at Verdant Works. We are pleased that our campaign to conserve Linlathen Iron Bridge has been successful and that this is now going ahead.

Communications

The Trust considered that the reporting of its views on the V&A project had been somewhat selective. It had been obliged to clarify its position publicly which is one of wholehearted support for the choice of the Kengo Kuma design.

Continued improvements are being made to our Website and the Journal continues to improve. It is a priority of the Trust to sustain its improvements to both the Journal and the Website.

Membership

In the course of the year a recruitment campaign had produced a number of new members and, assuming that outstanding subscriptions are paid, the increase in membership this year was running at 20%.

The Chairman concluded his report by thanking all the committee members who had worked so hard for the Trust over the past year.

Revised Constitution

The meeting then unanimously approved the revised Constitution which incorporated a number of minor changes to satisfy the requirements of the Official Scottish Charities Regulator and made provision for the election of officers by the Committee of the Trust.

Following the formal business of the meeting, the members enjoyed a talk from Jack Searle on "The Greening of Dundee" during which he offered a fascinating view of the transformation of Dundee from a grim, tree-less industrial landscape, to the present day, with tree lined streets, verdant central carriageways and numerous green spaces.



Dundee Remembered

Who would be a taxi-driver these days? The price of petrol rises remorselessly as do taxation and the costs of vehicle maintenance. In Dundee an additional source of tension seems to be the rules and regulations surrounding the taxi trade.

Was it any better, I wonder, when life was simpler, when the hackney carriages, the "growlers" and the hansom cabs plied their trade and when the horse was key to urban mobility?

George Martin in "Dundee Worthies" certainly remembers the cabbies as a happy lot and each of them well enough known in the town to have a nickname, often, he says, derived from some peculiarity of his horse. He reports;

A few of these nicknames are Provost Haggart, Keek in the Pot, Jess, Cabbage, Black Swan, The Racket, The Sodger, The Blue Leek, Torn Stockings, Auld Gaiters, Young Gaiters, Puir Joe, Auld Hill, Young Hill, The Waiter, The Joiner, The Kipper, The Lamp, The Monk, Bowser, Lord Young, Sugar Baolie, The Baker, Foondrum, The Tightener, Bob the Groom, Stupid Loon, Broken Rock, The Whale, The Doctor, Hip-pooches, Jimmy the Gum, The Snatcher, The Dreep, Corkey Boyle, Anxious Johnnie, The Gouk, Habbering Wull, Dizzy Ritchie.

So that was it then? No petrol worries, no MOTs and no directives from the Council? Well, not exactly.

In their old wooden shelter in Lindsay Street Dizzy and the boys must have had something to say about the regulations of the day (listed below) and, no doubt, a friendly word or two for the magistrates who framed them.

HACKNEY CARRIAGES

Abstract of the Regulations enacted by the magistrates.

STANDS

On the High Street, in front of the Town House – four cabs.

On Nethergate Street, opposite top of Union Street.

On Panmure Street, long south side thereof, west from Murraygate.

On West side South Union Street.

On East Dock Street, West end of Railway Station.

FARES

That the following and no higher fares shall be charged:-

For any distance betwixt places within the town, not lying beyond the Lilybank toll-bar and Taybank gate on the East; Blackness and Logie toll-bars on the West; or Somerville Place, head of Hilltown, and Stobswell (at crossing of Forfar and Murroes Road, Lunatic Asylum) on the North, One Shilling.

For any distance beyond the said bounds, but within the limits of the extended Royalty (besides payment of tolls), One Shilling and Sixpence.

If required to go from a place situated to the Westward of Small's Wynd, Hunter Street, or Blinshall Street, to a place lying to the North of the road in front of Somerville Place or Ann Street, Hillbank, or the Eastward of St Roque's Lane, Dens Brae, or Wellington Street, or betwixt places lying beyond the limits stated, Sixpence extra shall be charged.

For any distance beyond the extended Royalty, not exceeding one mile, a farther sum of One Shilling; for every mile or part of a mile thereafter, Ninepence additional, unless by agreement.

When engaged by the hour, the fare shall be per hour, Two shillings (besides tolls).

When required to ply after eleven o'clock p.m. to one o'clock a.m., a fare and a half, as aforesaid to be charged; after one o'clock a.m. to five o'clock a.m., double fares; after five o'clock a.m. till seven a.m., one and a half fares to be charged.

If a carriage be required to take up two or more parties, or to go out of the ordinary route betwixt two places, so that it be detained more than ten minutes by doing so, Sixpence extra may be charged.

Luggage, not exceeding in weight 56 lbs, shall be taken free of charge; above that weight it shall be liable to a charge of Sixpence extra.



Dundee Remembered



Hansom Cabs outside City Churches circa 1890 - © Dundee City Council Library

Half fares to be charged for returning the same carriage (when not engaged by time), but the carriage not to be detained beyond fifteen minutes, unless by agreement.

It shall be the option of the party requiring the carriage to take any one he may prefer, no priority of turn being allowed.

(From The Dundee Directory 1867.)

For city dwellers the alternative to all of this was of course to walk, and the majority did. The same Directory, however, reminds us of another set of options, although not of their price. A "town omnibus", we are told, left Blackness Gate for the High Street at 9.30 am and every half hour thereafter until 9 pm. It left High Street for Blackness at 9.15 am and every half hour until 9.15 pm.

Or, at similar time intervals but from another direction, you could board "Mr Peebles' City Bus" which operated between Manor Place and the Post Office and vice versa. Whether Mr Peebles might be more engaging company than The Dreep or Anxious Johnnie is not recorded.

Tom Devaney



On the 9th of May last the plaque commemorating the Dundee Civic Trust Award for 2010 was unveiled. Present were (from the left). Bob Duncan, Convenor of Leisure and Communities and Fiona Sinclair of McManus Galleries representing Dundee City Council, and Jack Searle and Tom Devaney on behalf of Dundee Civic Trust.

Kengo Kuma Talk - Dundee University

The over 1500 people who attended the two recent talks given at the Dalhousie building in Dundee University by Kengo Kuma, the architect for the Dundee V & A would have been much impressed by both his presentation and his modest manner.

He started by saying that this was the best site that he had ever had and regarded it as both an obligation and a pleasure to design a building which would exploit the site in the best possible way.

In his subsequent talk he referred to some of the traditional elements of Japanese design which had informed his design for the Dundee V & A. In particular he referred to the concept of a portal which framed an important element of the building or its surroundings. It was this that had led him to the concept of a building arising from two points in the River which joined together above to form an arch framing a view across the river. He felt that museums were extraordinarily important to cities and if designed properly should have a space where many things could happen, in his words 'the living room of the city' For this reason the new museum had at its centre a major space at the centre of the exhibition spaces and the restaurant.

Mr Kuma then showed a number of buildings which he had designed in locations as far apart as Tokyo and Yokohama in Japan, Besancon and Marseille in France, Naples in Italy and Granada in Spain. His early buildings all had a strong verticality about them whilst his later buildings became much more horizontal in character.

All of them however showed a preoccupation with the use of local and often recycled materials. An example was his museum in Naples which showed a creative use of Tufa, a soft stone often used in the past but rarely utilised today. All he felt were inspired by nature in some way or another. Most remarkable in this respect was his design for a Performing Arts Centre in Granada the honeycomb structure of which was inspired by the cellular form of a pomegranate.

His modesty and charm clearly won over his audience and if the skills shown in his previous buildings are anything to go by the City has chosen well.

Jack Searle



What's behind the hoardings?

Amid the general worry and uncertainty of today I am happy to note there is still sufficient evidence of building activity in Dundee to include some further topics in this section. This is despite the reported 6% fall in the number of applications for planning approvals compared to 2019-2010.

I was surprised to learn from a recent Channel 4 News item that Dundee is a "trolley town" and a major example of the inexorable expansion of supermarkets in the UK with reference made to the still unresolved Asda/Tesco court action which was covered in the previous City Scene. Apparently another strange statistic, this time according to the Courier, is that Dundee has in Fat Sam's the largest night club in Scotland with a maximum capacity of 3,500 on a "good" night. This of course could be an exaggeration or a misprint - I really hope so! In total contrast, while it is rewarding to note the very satisfactory and expeditious completion of the work to the lightning damaged spire of the landmark St Stephens and West Church, it would be remiss not to record that a £400,000 restoration of the spire of the 1852 B-listed Meadowside St Paul's Church in the Nethergate has also been completed following a three year programme of work. Our congratulations to all involved in these two projects.

However since new material is essential for the development of this section I will note my disappointment that nobody has identified possible buildings for investigation so please contact me on suitable subjects either by telephone: 01382 774150 or e-mail to jabuist@blueyonder.co.uk

Waterfront Development :

Work on the new west bound "off ramp" has commenced and is expected to be completed by the late summer. In view of the progress in this area it was somewhat dispiriting that the announcement of a £2 million transport hub outside the railway station proved to be somewhat limited in scope although the proposal aims to "give commuters an easier way in and out of the city by ensuring all forms of public transport are available to people arriving by train" Neither the refurbishing of the station nor the provision of a full scale travel interchange with the transfer of the existing bus station is included. It is understood that the new hub consists only of a new central bus stance, a new taxi rank and cycle hire service located on land currently used for car parking.

City Council HQ, North Lindsay Street :

The building work continues to progress with completion expected by late Spring 2011 and opened to the public in August Work to demolish the old HQ, Tayside House

is expected to start in September 2011 making way for the next phase of the Waterfront Development.

Allan Street Swimming Pool and Car Park:

Work on this £31.5 million project started on site at the end of January is due for completion in late 2012. Demolition of the existing Leisure Centre will commence soon after to make way for the V&A development

Eastern Primary and former Grove Academy:

Alterations to former Grove Academy has started and is due to be completed by late summer.

Original Eastern Primary:

Being marketed as a "residential development opportunity" closing date 22 July 2011. The listed former Parkview School in Blackness with its 3 acre site is also being sold for development.

Ninewells Hospital :

News of developments here with the £3.8 million Assisted Conception Unit due for completion in September 2011 while the new £10.4 million Nuclear Medicine

Unit will be ready next summer. It has also been announced that the associated Dundee Medical School has launched a fund raising drive to complete an £11.2 million transformation of the near 50 year old building with a target completion date of 2014.

Replacement Park Place and St Joseph's Primary Schools :

Started April 2011 with an expected completion in August 2012.

Replacement Whitfield Primary School :

Work has started on site with completion in Spring 2012.

Whitfield Life Services Centre:

The go ahead for this £6 million project has been given the overwhelming backing of the Council.

St Aiden's Church Hall, Broughty Ferry:

Planning approval has been given for the conversion of this building as a funeral directors and the development of the site for private housing. Taylor Shepherd Homes purchased the property for £405,000.



What's behind the hoardings?

Linlathen East Iron Bridge :

David Hewick, Planning Secretary of the Broughty Ferry Community Council, advise that the site has been cleared and scaffolding has been placed with a start date of 16 May 2011 for a 20 week programme for this £400,000 project. He also advises that the Planning authority has been persuaded by BFCC to impose a number of legal agreements on the developer of a proposed "over 50s" housing complex to the north. The relevant

agreement is to improve the approach path to the bridge from the north.

St Aiden's Church Hall, Broughty Ferry: Planning approval has been given for the conversion of this building as a funeral directors and the development of the site for private housing. Taylor Shepherd Homes purchased the property for £405,000.

Housing on the site of the former Night Club, the Esplanade, Broughty Ferry:

Most of the luxury flats have been sold although no date is available for starting the west block. Unfortunately this means that the public access to the nature area is still somewhat restricted.

Housing on site of the former Filling Station, Queen Street, Broughty Ferry: Almost complete.

New Visitor Centre at Camperdown Wildlife Centre: Opened on 12 February 2011.

Dundee's Director of Housing has stated that the Hilltown multis should be replaced by "successful, meaningful and memorable buildings" in order to bring positive change to the area. Elaine Zwirlein has drawn up proposals for the marketing of the Derby Street and Maxwelltown sites – it is understood that demolition of the empty Maxwelltown multis will be undertaken in July.

Michelin have announced proposals for multi million extensions at the Baldovie factory comprising a 2,000 sq metre extension and a small unit to serve some 140 new personnel in the manufacture of the latest generation of premium car tyres..

The planning submission for a 23 bedroom hotel on the site between the library and the Indian restaurant at Queen Street, Broughty Ferry was refused.

Plans for the innovative 102 bed Airport Hotel at Riverside Avenue have been rejected by the Scottish Government Planning Reporter. It appears that despite the many good qualities of the submission it was in breach of development plan policies and would have had a detrimental effect on the "vitality and viability" of the Waterfront and city centre.

The Armitstead site has been sold by NHS Tayside to H&H Properties for £642,000. They have not divulged their proposals although the planning brief called for a high standard of development of this attractive site in a conservation area with a number of listed buildings set in a mature landscape. It is understood that this developer has also bought the troubled former Homebase site.

The fate of one of the last (unloved) 1970s Scarne blocks at Whitfield is the subject of a consultation exercise between affected Council tenants and the Angus Housing Association. This is part of the ongoing regeneration programme for of this housing area and may involve its demolition and replacement with low density housing.

Ambitious plans have been announced for City Quay with a public consultation planned for the £15 million mixed use development on land to the west of Thorter Loan and south of South Victoria Road. It is understood that proposals include a 90 bed residential care home, 46 flats, a children's nursery and associated car parking.

Queensberry Properties have announced plans to demolish the rundown Longhaugh Neighbourhood Centre to make way for a supermarket plus individual shop units for local traders and residential units undertaken in 3 phases with a possible start later this year.

A new "urban village" comprising some 275 homes is proposed by Strategic Land (Scotland) Ltd for vacant farmland located between Clatto Country Park and Templeton Woods. This would bring Dundee within 500 meters of Birkhill and Angus Council territory. A public exhibition of the proposals will be displayed in the Dundee Ice Rink on 15 June.

Proposals for an unsightly Hilltown gap site, comprising plans for a shop and flats above , have been rejected.

Jim Buist



Buildings at Risk in Dundee

A few more Dundee buildings for your interest and remember the Scottish Civic Trust website at www.buildingsatrisk.org.uk can be checked for all 73 properties which are currently under threat. Should, for any reason, you consider that a building in Dundee has been overlooked in this listing you can contact the SCT directly or alternatively me and I will investigate the matter. It should be noted too that the SCT has no statutory powers to order necessary work to be undertaken in any property in the city as responsibility for this is vested solely with Dundee City Council.

Customs House and Harbour Chambers is a low risk category A listing in fair condition and located in a key position between the old docks and the new Waterfront area. In recent months there have been many reports of apparent interest of developers of this fine building as a 4 star hotel and clearly the proposed V&A development should influence such an investment.

Chalmers Hall, High Street/Castle Street, Dundee is a low risk category B listing in fair condition. The occupied ground floor retail units contrast with the long neglected disused upper levels which make a negative contribution to the life of the city centre.

Maryfield Transport Depot, Forfar Road is a low risk category B listing in fair condition. Welcome recent reports indicate that a Transport Museum proposal is being investigated although it is understood that ownership of the building is vested with Scottish Water which may require resolution.

Stobsmuir Service Reservoir, Clepington Road is also the responsibility of Scottish Water and is a B listed building in fair condition at moderate risk. This vacant secured specialised structure has no apparent long term use.

McCheyne Memorial Church, Perth Road is a moderate risk and condition category A listed church and has been available for sale for some years. It seems clear that the form and structure of such redundant buildings make it difficult to secure appropriate development.

St Roques Public Library, Blackscroft is a category B building from 1910 currently used as a nightclub whose condition has been reclassified as of concern.



St Roques Public Library, Blackscroft Circa 1950 - © DC Thomson



Thoughts on "The V & A at Dundee" as seen from the V & A, London

Dear Editor,

Recently on a short break in London, while staying across from the V & A, my wife and I were delighted to find that an exhibition of the submissions to the competition has been mounted in the parent building - from 1st April until 15th May 2011. Quite by chance we found all the entries - models and drawings - had been sensitively displayed in ground floor rooms 17 and 18 and were pleased to find an evident public interest in the exhibition. It was rewarding to see again the submissions and especially to have the opportunity to admire once more Kengo Kuma's magnificent winning model which looked very fine and very much at home in this most distinguished venue. The appreciation and interest of the many visitors from various backgrounds was much in evidence and gave a good guide to the potential benefits to Dundee of this iconic structure.

Although in the past I have sometimes felt that some parochial discussion on the project seems close to hyperbole I would now admit that it does seem that the new building will indeed provide a potent and lasting symbol of the new Dundee and should provide a further stimulus for the continuing development of the city as an educational and cultural centre. Its projected cost of £45 million - which I dearly hope is not a significant under estimation- would seem like a veritable bargain at London prices. Indeed it now seems that such a sum would not be a unique transfer fee for a top level footballer whose unproven services could last only a few years. In these days of global financial insecurity coupled with reckless banking practices and a deluge of spurious information I note Oscar Wilde's much quoted words "a cynic is a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing" as a possible reference to many modern people of influence. This next tale may illustrate this well.

During our stay much publicity was given to the marketing of some 86 newly constructed luxury apartments at no.1 Hyde Park designed by the famous architect Lord Rogers. Recently it seems a 6 bedroom penthouse flat in this development was sold to an East European billionaire for £140 million and he intends to spend a further £60 million on finishing it. Apparently it is an incomplete shell. Luxury, of course, is a much abused word and widely applied by DIY stores to market their cheap built-in kitchens and bathrooms and estate agents for relatively modest houses. In contrast a billionaire's idea of luxury, although closer to the dictionary meaning of the word, may well result in lavish expenditure applied in bad taste.

So a final personal thought - even if the ballpark figure for "V & A at Dundee" turns out to be just a wee bit out it will still be a bargain which will be enjoyed by generations to come and more worthwhile than any over-rated footballer or an over-priced penthouse pad.

Jim Buist





Construction of the new West bound off ramp - Dundee Waterfront May 2011

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