In Conversation with…Dr James Macauley
Interviewed at his home, by Professor Robin Webster on 5th July 2017

Robin Webster: Thank you very much indeed for inviting us here and allowing us to film you here in your house. The first question is what do you consider the most significant events related to the built environment and conservation in Glasgow over the last fifty years?

Dr James Macaulay: I think actually the most significant event in terms of conservation in Glasgow was probably in the early '60s when there was huge demolition in progress and we did not have the legislation in place that we have today for listed building consent. And very often demolitions happened over the Fair weekend when nobody was around. And there was a lot of concern expressed by people like myself and other young men about what was happening, and we formed the New Glasgow Society. Now, the New Glasgow Society today is to all intents and purposes as far as I can see more or less defunct. But in the early '60s it was a considerable force for change trying to promote an attitude that what we had of Victorian Glasgow was worth saving. And there were a lot of people, say like Robert Clow, who was the managing director of John Smith, the book sellers, Geoffrey Jarvis, who was a very well known architect, and people of that ilk. And we got together, and one Sunday we had a walk and we started in the Park area of Glasgow, and the reason for that was that there was huge controversy about the demolition of the Park Church, which of course stands at the very centre of the Park development. As I say, we were very young, we'd never organised a march before, and 2000 people turned up on a lovely summer afternoon. And we ended up in the St Vincent Street Church. And Jack Holmes, who was a lot older than us, he was the next generation up, a tough cookie, he'd been very prominent during the war and then became an architect, he delivered a very powerful tirade from the pulpit of the St Vincent Street Church against the policies of Glasgow Corporation. Glasgow Corporation got its revenge on him, because he was actually working for them at the time building warehouses, and they did not pay his fees for a very, very long time, and almost went to litigation. But I think actually that was a turning point because, as I say, 2000 people turned up. And they were all educated, well-informed people, and it showed that they were concerned about what was happening in Glasgow. Because at that time Glasgow Corporation was intent on acquiring all the property in Glasgow. What they wanted to do, in the words of a Lord Provost, was to create a 21st century in the image of Chicago. And they had already designated areas called CDAs, Comprehensive Development Areas, and they had marked out the whole of the city with these zones, and had actually started demolishing one or two areas, Woodside was one, over in the southside was another, round Crown Street and so on, and they were just simply blitzed, so the good and the bad went. And there was a lot of feeling that the fabric of the city was under threat, and needless to say eventually the CDAs were abandoned because nobody could afford to demolish an entire city and compensate all the owners. And so only three CDAs were actually every constructed. Of course they have been comprehensively redeveloped since then, two of them in the southside are now part of what we call the New Gorbals.

RW: Yes, certainly those were pretty significant events. So is that one of the things you're most proud of, setting up, that New Glasgow Society?

JM: Well, we set it up and the first chairman was Freddie Fielden, who had just become the professor of architecture at Strathclyde University. What was quite interesting was that

the architectural profession were not really represented. Freddie Fieldman had come from the Newcastle School Of Architecture, which at that time was probably one of the two best schools in Great Britain. And he was a professor of architecture at Strathclyde, which was a new creation because up until then, as you will know, there was only the Glasgow School of Architecture, and it was divided between the design work, as it were, at the School of Art, the technological basis at the Royal College, and examinations at the University of Glasgow. Anyway, the decision was made by the new University of Strathclyde, which was the successor body to the Royal College, that they would have their own School Of Architecture, and they appointed Freddie Fielden. Well, we didn't know him. We were all very young, we didn't have any influence, so we reckoned that we needed somebody of influence, so we went to him and said "will you become the chairman?" So he said yes. So we got a powerful chairman, somebody who had access to powerful people. And the New Glasgow Society really was very vibrant for quite a long time. I left probably after about five years because I went to Newcastle University to study there and do postgraduate work, and other people moved on. But in its day it was a very powerful force. Of course it wasn't so very long afterwards, ten years afterwards, that listed building consent was forced through Parliament, and that changed everything.

RW: What specific buildings in Glasgow do you most regret losing?

JM: Well, Glasgow has had a long history of demolition, and you can look at it this way, that in the 18th century the citizens of Glasgow moved out of the mediaeval city and left it to rot and it became slumland. And so the 18th century city slightly moved to the west, and the remnants of that are in places like Blythswood Square. And then in the 19th century the Victorians came along and they reckoned they could do much better and build bigger and better. And they did. And then the Edwardians came along and they could build even bigger and better because they had escalators, electricity, and they could light buildings and they knew new methods of construction. And then in the 20th century we had a great change in the post-war era. So there's been a long history of demolition in Glasgow. The greatest loss actually occurred long before our time, and that was the destruction of the old college in the High Street. It was the greatest secular Jacobean building in the whole of Scotland, and was very remarkable. And there was no need for it actually have been demolished, but the university sold it literally for a mess of potage and it became a railway goods yard. I think in my time one of the great losses was the Elgin Place Church just off Bath Street which went on fire one Christmas probably about twenty years ago now. The external fabric was left standing, the interior was gutted, it had become a nightclub. The fabric was there but it was suddenly demolished very, very quickly. And the wonderful portico simply vanished into rubble. And there was quite a lot of concern about that, but Glasgow was not apt to conserve its buildings. And one of the big problems has always been the lack of leadership from the city council. The city council has never really been aware of the economic benefits of what they've got. So they have allowed change to take place, certainly in earlier generations, up until the '70s, but after the '70s of course they were more constrained.

RW: Elgin Place Church was my mother's church, I remember…

JM: I see. It was a wonderful building. One of the great examples of neo-Grecian architecture in Scotland. It was very dignified, very solemn. And it had a wonderful presence. And it was obviously a precursor for somebody like Alexander Greek Thomson because it was the generation before. And he obviously looked at it and the scale of it and the solidity of it, and really the drama of it, I think, for a young architect like him, it was very important. I suppose actually another great loss has been the loss

of Caledonia Road Church by Greek Thomson. Henry Russell Hitchcock, the great cataloguer of 19th century architecture in Britain, and indeed in Europe although he was an American, actually rated the churches by Alexander Thomson as of true architectural significance. And the loss of Caledonia Road Church, that was needless. It just wasn't looked after, and vandals set it on fire. But vandals in Glasgow do have a habit of setting many buildings on fire.

RW: It used to be a pastime on Sunday afternoons for the youth of the city, I think.

JM: I would think so too.

RW: Who do you think have been the most important people who have had an impact on Glasgow in your lifetime? It could be positive or negative.

JM: Well, I think in terms of negative would be the city's planning officers and the city's architects, because they have not been men of outstanding ability, and that has been very unfortunate. There were town councils who attracted men of great ability. The outstanding example would be the old LCC, the London County Council, after the war when there were a group of men there who really were outstanding in every way. And they proselytised post-war architecture in a very big way, and the produced some marvellous buildings, both public buildings and domestic buildings. The Festival Hall would be an example of that era. And the great thing about the LCC was that these young men later on received senior appointments in other local authorities around the country and so they spread the word. Edinburgh for instance had a very good leader in terms of architecture and control of buildings for many years, and he was very sensitive to the city's heritage. And Glasgow never, ever had anyone like that at all. And the result is there was always antipathy from the city planners. After I came back to Glasgow from Aberdeen in 1981 I was instrumental in setting up what became the Glasgow West Conservation Society along with David Leslie, a past president of the RIAS, and Lady Williams, the wife of the Principal of Glasgow University. And I remember having a meeting with Lord Provost Gray, now the planners had dragged their heels, and at that meeting the planners were coming across George Square to have coffee with the Lord Provost, and they'd been told by their director to strangle this new initiative and it was to go no further. We knew that because we had a mole. Anyway, we assembled in the Lord Provost's parlour and he gave us all coffee, and we'd taken the precaution of having Lord Maclay, who was head of the Scottish Civic Trust, to come along and speak. Now he'd been a former secretary of state for Scotland, so he was quite an impressive character, very gentle, but firm. And he outlined what we had hoped to achieve. Then the Lord Provost turned to the planners who were assembled there and said "this is a very good idea, don't you think so?" And they all said "oh, yes, Lord Provost, what a good idea," and then he said to us "now you can go ahead," and we did go ahead. The conservation trust did a lot of good work on a very limited budget in the west end. That, I think, in some ways was also a turning point because it was made up of local citizens. It was not made up of professionals, and it had a constant struggle with the city planning department all the way through. They did not like it one little bit. And it did a lot of good work in a very minor kind of way like installing railings, persuading the middle classes that they ought to invest in their property. The middle classes, for instance at Ruskin and in Crown Terrace, they were not prepared to put their hands in their pocket to restore the buildings, and we had to bribe them. At Crown Terrace and Ruskin Terrace we had to offer £5 towards the regeneration of the buildings for every £1 the owners put in, then they agreed. And it was an uphill struggle, but the results are there to this day. And it's been very unfortunate that the Conservation Trust, which was

meant to be the first of several in the city, was destroyed, and I use that word deliberately, by what was then Historic Scotland and the city planners, and it re-emerged as the Glasgow City Heritage Trust. But the City Heritage Trust is an arm's-length branch of city government, whereas the Conservation Trust was not anything like that at all. It was totally independent, and that was not liked.

RW: Although it did get funds from Historic Scotland I think. On the good side?

JM: On the good side, I find it difficult to think of people who have been on the good side. The architectural profession has not really been very active in terms of conservation. And maybe I'm being very unfair, I don't know, because I was away from Glasgow for a very long time. But I find that nowadays young architects are not stepping forward to join the various conservation societies. Now, I quite understand that, they have a lot of pressures, they have financial pressures, a lot of demands on their times from contractors, from local government and central government, and they have to work very hard for whatever they earn. So in a sense I understand that. But that has always been the case. I find it interesting that the Mackintosh Society, which has been a remarkable success story since the early '70s, was a success story because of one woman. She was an independent minded lady, her husband was quite well-to-do, so she could afford to devote her time to preserving Mackintosh. And she was a firebrand and not to be meddled with. And I suspect if it hadn't been for her that the Mackintosh heritage would have been very considerably diminished. Because again the city has played around with the Mackintosh heritage and not really put their backs into it. The Martyrs' School is a very good example, there have been various attempts, various projects to use it, but not in any meaningful way. And nowadays once again it is empty, but a lot of money has been spent on it. It stands there unused. I have ideas about how it might be used, but that's a different story.

RW What was the lady's name?

JM: Pat Douglas. Eventually she was given a CBE, I think, for her work. And certainly deserved it. She made the Mackintosh Church a real hub. She was able to recruit people who were willing to serve under her diktats, and she would invite various people, she would organise lunches, she would have speakers at lunchtime, she would organise tours. She was a one-woman band. And you need people like that. And it's just the same today. In the west end, there's an organisation which is, if you like, the successor body, or grown out of the Glasgow West Conservation Trust, the Friends Of Glasgow West. And it's led by a lady called Anne Laird, and you do not mess with Mrs Laird, she is formidable. And it's people like that who really are leading the way. For instance, today there really isn't a conservation unit in Glasgow City Council, it doesn't exist. There's no planning officer. There's not really a planning department. And so if you have a problem to whom do you turn? To whom do you look for leadership? I'm afraid you have to go and look to the lay people. And they're the ones that are very active. And one of the great sources in terms of whom one would admire would be the Architectural Heritage Society. I have been involved with that ever since I was a young man. And when I was in Aberdeen I started the north east group, and later on I persuaded friends to set up the Strathclyde group. It is fascinating that they have a cases panel which meets every Wednesday night, and has been doing this for forty years now, and they assess the planning applications and they pass these on to the city council, and usually they're ignored, but they persevere and they're wholly committed to this. Without them there would be many, many losses in the city.

RW: Given all that, what do you consider is the most effective way of persuading people to save a building from demolition?

JM: To persuade people as to how they might save a building from demolition I think it's very difficult, because there have been a lot of campaigns and the powers that be have not listened. For instance, the Park Church was one. The body of the church was demolished, the tower was retained because it was effective on the skyline, but in a sense it's meaningless, but it is very effective on the skyline. One of the big problems today is the number of buildings which are being vacated by churches, by banks, and other institutions. And so the list of endangered buildings grows all the time. And you have to make hard decisions as to what you're going to save. And I was very fortunate when a young man in Glasgow in the early '60s, there was an architect called Alfred G Lochhead, and he was a kind of mentor, once I got to know him. And I would go and visit him and we would talk about buildings, and I remember there was a building called the Canal Boatmen's Institute up in Port Dundas. Now, the canal was being done away with and a motorway was going to be built, and the Canal Boatman's Institute was in the way and it was to be demolished, and it was by Keppie, although it had details by the young Mackintosh. And I remember Alfred said to me "save your ammunition for what is first rate and let the second rate go." And that building went. Now, today, given its Mackintosh connections it probably wouldn't have gone because we have listed building consent and we have this love of Mackintosh, but it went in those days. And you can't save every building and you shouldn't expect to, because there are too many of them to be saved. And I suppose it's fortunate that many banks have been turned into coffee houses across Glasgow, at least they're still there. I think to galvanise people into conserving a building they have to feel very strongly, and in an area like this or Pollokshields there's enough interested or educated people who do that. So for instance when in the '60s the city corporation decided that Great Western Road should become an expressway and all the gardens and the approaches to all the terraces should be done away with and there will be four lanes speeding out to the west and all the rest of it and there'll be flyovers, and the people in the west end were outraged and they all got together and formed a particular society, and eventually the scheme was dropped. Whether it was dropped because of the opposition or whether it was dropped because of the sheer expense of it one doesn't really know, but it was dropped. In a sense if you have a responsive city council, what the citizens demand can be effective. But it has to be said in Glasgow we've had a political party for something like fifty years which really did not listen to people very much. And I can remember in 1970, I think, the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, which was the leading body of its kind in the country, came to Glasgow, and I actually organised the conference. We were given a reception in the banqueting hall of the City Chambers, and our president was Sir John Summerson, who was like a figure from the '30s, a very eminent gentleman, keeper of the Soane museum, went every day for his lunch to the Athenium, always wore pale grey suits, white shirts, silk grey tie, and he smoked cigarettes from a 1930s holder, very elegant, he looked like a diplomat. He was the president. The Lord Provost entertaining us to tea in the banqueting hall of the City Chambers said "the city is intent on destroying all the Victorian tenements, and it has done this, that, and the next thing." And the whole gathering fell silent: even the rather inept, although not stupid, Lord Provost realised he'd dropped a clanger. Sir John gave a very diplomatic reply and said "well, it was just as well we were here before all the tenements disappeared." The Lord Provost later on that afternoon decided that he would come to the annual dinner, which was at Pollok House. Well, he was an hour and a half late, and there was a sherry reception and they kept on plying us with sherry until we were all leaning against the

walls, and when he arrived he wouldn't drink any wine, he said he only drank whisky. And the waitress had to run out to a pub and acquire a bottle of whisky to placate the Lord Provost, and he then gave a grovelling apology.

RW: Actually, it's not always been the case that Glasgow didn't have some good architects. At the beginning of the 20th century there's some very good architects who did some very good buildings, actually.

JM: Oh, yes. I'm talking about the post-war era in a sense. And even then there were good architects, as you well know as well as I know. The interesting thing about the architects of the late 19th century and the early 20th century, they were a very cohesive breed. Many of the finest buildings were put up by people like the Burnetts and Alexander Thomson and others, all local men. You really did not get men from outside being considered for commissions. When William Young was offered the commission to build the City Chambers, and when Sir George Gilbert Scott got the commission to build the Gilmorehill Building for the University of Glasgow there was absolute outrage in the local architecture profession because there were very good architects in Glasgow. The thing about these people was that they understood the background to the city, they had connections at all levels to the city, and so Glasgow in the 19th century and early 20th century has a cohesive scale. It also has a unity of material, it has a unity of format, so it reads well. You take the west end, the west end is all built of sandstone, it's all to a certain scale, it's a certain type of building, architects refined these buildings, they have their own way of dealing with facades and elevations and proportions. Even Mackintosh at the Glasgow School Of Art: the Glasgow School Of Art in many ways is a typical tenement block. It fills what is essentially the ground plan of a tenement block. It is the same height as a tenement block. It is the same material as a tenement block. But within that he put up this building which we all recognise is an international masterpiece. In the post-war era of course there was a great change in the sense that there was a determination to follow the 20th century masters, mainly European though many of them had gone to America but they were very influential. A lot of architects didn't understand the new architecture. They simplified it, they didn't really know what it was about but they were constrained in that they had to follow this new idiom. There were other constraints as well, in that they were dealing with new materials which they didn't always understand, there was a great change of scale, and of course there were huge political pressures because there was a housing crisis. So you had to rattle up houses at a great rate. There were economies of scale, economies in terms of finance. Most architects couldn't really respond to that satisfactorily. The one firm which was the shining light in all this was Gillespie, Kidd, and Coia. That firm really was a beacon in what was a very arid period in many respects. Their buildings, whether they were churches or schools, broke the mould in every case. Now, they were very lucky in that the best buildings were for the Roman Catholic Church, and the Roman Catholic Church was intent on making its mark particularly in new areas, although not always in new areas. But they were intent on making a mark. And there was a succession of archbishops who were quite prepared to spend money, and they were princes of the church. None of this pretending we're all Jock Tamson's bairns. If you were a Roman Catholic archbishop you drove around in a Mercedes, you lived in a grand house, and people went down on their bended knee and they listened to what you wanted. And people like Archbishop Scanlon wanted this new architecture. And people like Andy MacMillan and Isi Metzstein, although maybe I should have put the names in reverse order, they were reading the continental journals, they were going to the continent, and they produced these wonderful buildings. For instance, near here St Charles at Kelvinside, which is a remarkable building although I'm very sorry to say that nowadays it is semi-derelict. It's

underused because attitudes towards religion have changed. But they really produced wonderful buildings. And their office was run like an atelier, it wasn't a normal office and there were a lot of clever people in that office, because Jack Coia, who was the principal, and had put up wonderful buildings of great solidity and strength and design quality prior to the Second World War, he had a very good eye for talent and he brought in the young Andy MacMillan and the young Isi Metzstein.

RW: You're right about the patronage of the Roman Catholic Church, it's very important, I think. Isi Metzstein actually said that Glasgow was dying the death of a thousand cuts. Do you that's right? Do you think that's still the case?

JM: Well, Isi Metzstein was Jewish, and he was a Central European, and put the two together and you get a very mordant sense of humour: he was never exactly noted for his joyful outlook on life. He'd had a very unfortunate childhood, as you know. He as a young boy had watched the Nazis torch his school, and he was very fortunate in that he was one of the children on the kinder transport that came out of Germany and arrived in Britain just before the war with his siblings and his mother. So maybe that rather shaped many of his views. But, as I say, he wasn't really noted as the most joyful spirit that one could encounter in this life, but he was always worth listening to. Certainly he was always worth debating with as well. He was an intellectual, he was a Central European intellectual in that sense, for instance, what Isi liked to do mid-morning was go to a coffee house with his newspaper and sit there as if he was in a café in Vienna, and they, and I really mean Andy and he latterly because Jack was slightly remote in the office in many ways, ran the office on a day to day basis. Jack was the one that brought in the work. It was a very interesting firm because Jack was a Roman Catholic Italian, Andy MacMillan was a Presbyterian Scot, and Isi was a Central European Jew. So the conflicts, the intellectual conflicts in the firm were constant. And that helped to give them this liveliness, and there was a great sense of being cosmopolitan and being part of a wider architectural community outside Scotland. And if Isi says that Glasgow was dying from a thousand small cuts, cities are always changing, and you could say the same about Glasgow today. But on the other hand I've got to recognise, and I think everyone has got to recognise, that Glasgow has changed remarkably in the last thirty years. I was brought up in Glasgow,and it was grimy and black and heavily industrialised. I remember all that, and the dreadful fogs. But much later in the '60s my uncle said "do people in Glasgow become sunburnt?" I said "of course they do." Because we had a clean air act. Also as you know the city got its act together and set about this massive program of cleaning the city, sometimes with unfortunate results but on the whole beneficial. There is now a much wider acceptance of the architecture that has been bequeathed to us particularly from the Victorian age. Although I find it depressing that not enough emphasis is given, for instance, to the west end. I'm a resident of the west end and always have been because my family have lived here for generations, but the west end I would maintain is unique in Britain. You have places like Bath, for instance, the squares in London, the squares in Edinburgh, but in terms of the Victorian age there is nothing in Britain quite like the west end of Glasgow. And by great chance it has survived more or less intact, and that is a remarkable happening. But the city for political reasons has never been prepared to really recognise its unique quality, because if it recognises its unique quality it's got to do something about it like put money into it in terms of paving, in terms of lighting, in terms of general maintenance. And so the west end in a sense has had to struggle along. But given the right initiative it could be yet another tourist bonanza for the city of Glasgow.

RW: That's very interesting. Historic Environment Scotland have instructed the Glasgow City Heritage Trust not to put money into the leafy suburbs of Glasgow, which they contend have had enough money from the government, and we have to give the resources we have to areas of economic deprivation. That is a political view, actually.

JM: It is a political view, and it's always been that way. I can go back many years in dealing with councillors, and their argument is the west end is perfectly wealthy, people can afford to look after themselves, and up to a point that's true. But you need to give direction and you need to light the fuse, as it were, and encourage people. In the Glasgow West Conservation Trust, we had a great difficulty in persuading the middle classes that this was something worth conserving for the future. They were much more interested in buying good wines and going to expensive restaurants, going abroad for holidays, having big cars. But the idea that you spend a great deal of money on the fabric overall has been difficult. And it's still an ongoing battle. And you're quite right, central government has not been supportive. And you're a recipient in your organisation of funds from central government, but central government has its own agenda and those who operate on behalf of central government, they have very particular agendas, we've all seen that in our time. I think Glasgow to a certain extent has suffered: there are areas where you could put in a great deal of money, and clearly nobody should live in deprived areas, but an awful lot of money has been poured into the post-war housing estates, millions of pounds, and they certainly have been upgraded and the environment is a lot better. But I would be very hard put to say that central government has put a great deal of money into the west end or into the likes of Pollokshields, which again has a very active preservation trust, and there is certainly a lot of money in that area. But you do need, as it were, to light the fuse to encourage people. And you've got to give, from the professionals, a sense of direction.

RW: I agree with that. Can I ask, James, would you have criteria for saving a building? How do you balance between one's passion and admiration for the work as well as the practicality to how to do it? Do you think there can be criteria?

JM: I'm not sure. There are criteria now in the sense there is listing that you have A, B, C, and even D which doesn't occur very often. But I think each case is an individual case. Patently nobody is going to say "abandon the Glasgow School of Art." I mean, that is sacrosanct. But something that I think is happening at Gilmorehill with the University of Glasgow is that the university is removing the Hunterian Museum and the collections out of the Gilbert Scott Campus to the Kelvin Hall. They can justify that in many ways, that the collection space in the old university isn't big enough, they don't have proper conservation facilities, and everything will be fine in the Kelvin Hall, which is going to be a cultural centre. Now, whether it's a true cultural centre or not I don't know. As I'm told the staff have been moved into the Kelvin Hall, you go along the corridor, and as you're going along the corridor you bump into all these weightlifters wearing white t-shirts and tattoos up their forearms and that is culture of a different kind, and that's inclusive. Okay, fair enough, if that's what we want that's what we get. But I think actually the University of Glasgow is losing sight of something very important, that the museum is at the very heart of the university, it tells you what a university is about, it is a place of learning, a place of history which goes back to the very beginning of the university's foundation: all these artefacts are going to be taken away and divorced from the spiritual home. That's a dilemma that you have, and, as I say, there are so many buildings now which are changing use. Banks are closing all the time because people don't use banks anymore. What do you do with them? People are abandoning churches, how many churches can be concert halls, or even bingo halls? It's very limited. So there is no set

criteria. You can grade it A, B, and C, but what do you actually use buildings for, because they've got to have a use: it is becoming a major problem. The city doesn't really have a view on all that they have a buildings at risk register but it's up to organisations, businesses, individuals to say "I want to use that building for such-and-such" and then you might find a use for it. Some buildings are a real problem, and probably the greatest of these is the St Vincent Street Church by Greek Thomson. It has been a problem for years. There is a congregation there which is there literally by the skin of its teeth, the Free Church, it's very tiny. They are there, they have a lease with the city. If they moved elsewhere because the building is far too big for them, what would happen to that building? The city which actually owns that building, and in fairness they bought it in the 1960s when the established church moved out, they have maintained it up to a point, but central government and the local authority have never really got to grips with that building and said "we're going to go hammer and tongs at this in terms of conservation." So parts have been conserved, other parts haven't been conserved: you do worry about that building because it is of international significance.

RW: So the challenge is making the buildings relevant today?

JM: They have to have a use, because you can't afford to keep buildings just lying there as empty monuments. The vandals move in. Apart from anything else, the weather takes its toll. Buildings are expensive to maintain. It doesn't matter whether it's a house or whether it's Glasgow Cathedral. And Glasgow Cathedral, I might add, is a big problem because central government's expenses of running that building are half a million a year. With all the cutbacks they're saying "well, now we will have to charge for admission during the week to the general public." And of course there was great uproar about this last year. And I actually fully agree with HES, if you're going to maintain that building and you don't have the funds, well, there are a thousand tourists a day in the summer go into that building. If you charge them all £4 or £5 over the year it's quite a big contribution to the building. And it has got to be maintained, there's no two ways about it. So how do you do it?

RW: James, what do you hope for in the city? What do you think is the most encouraging thing that has happened?

JM: I think in some ways the most encouraging aspect of Glasgow has been that if there is a determination and a will some things do change for the better. Buchanan Street is a shining example. Buchanan Street now could be anywhere in Europe. It is sophisticated, it has very high quality shops with owners who can afford to maintain the buildings. It has a variety of use. From St Enoch Square up to the Concert Hall it is a delight. And you can actually check that against what has happened in Union Street in Aberdeen. Union Street in Aberdeen, because of the policies of the town council, has become a slum: it is one of the great streets of Europe, on a par with Regent Street, Grey Street in Newcastle, and so on. It really is disgraceful that Union Street is filled with betting shops, Poundland, and shops of that quality: it is no longer an attractive place at all. Now, Sauchiehall Street suffers greatly, but I think Sauchiehall Street could and will be improved because the city have recognised that it has fallen in the last thirty years and parts of it are just a slum, so there is a policy that as of the 31st of July various improvements will take place. What I think is interesting is that has all come about in a sense because of one woman, Celia Sinclair. Mrs Sinclair bought the Willow Tea Room out of her own money, and she bought all the adjacent properties to the east. And she set up a trust, and it had nothing to do with the city council or HS or HLF. And she got together a group of independent trustees. That has been a catalyst for the beginning of

change, because the building is going to become a tea room from top to bottom once again. All the tat that was in it has been swept away, the building is being comprehensively restored, all the furniture is being remade, and it really is going to be the beacon in Sauchiehall Street: already you can see change beginning to happen. For instance, Café Nero have taken the property two doors away, and the reason for that is places like Costa and Café Nero, like antique shops and clothes shops, like to be beside each other, it generates trade. And I think actually that is a change. I think other parts of Glasgow have not been as successful. I take the view that the treatment of the river on both sides has not been successful. There have been various attempts to look at the Clyde and the north and south banks, and there have been piecemeal developments, and that is the problem, they've been piecemeal developments. The Riverside Museum was obviously meant to be a focus, but the Riverside Museum is not really the best example of the work of Zaha Hadid by a long, long way. It's a poor building, I think. It's not really fit for what it's meant to do. I think in future it will cost a lot in maintenance. And that whole area needs a proper masterplan, and you need to adhere to it. And some years ago I tried to encourage the leader of the city council to go and look at Bristol. Bristol has had a very dynamic civic leadership, and they have improved the river frontages dramatically in a very interesting way, and Glasgow could have learned so much. But needless to say the leader of the city council did not go to Bristol, and neither did the leading officials in the various departments, and they could have learned a lot. So Glasgow has its ups and downs. I find it interesting that St Andrews Cathedral, which fronts onto the River Clyde has become a major tourist attraction, and that is because of one man, Archbishop Conti. I mean, he simply decided they had to do something with that cathedral, it required a great deal of money, and he would set about getting the money and he would set about getting architects and artists and sculptors and masons and he has transformed that building and really put it on the tourist map. And that had nothing to do with the city council. So there are plusses and minuses. I'm involved at the moment with the cathedral precinct. And when the precinct was actually laid out quite a while ago in the late '80s, early '90s, there was a move then to set up a joint body which would look at the Royal Infirmary, Glasgow Cathedral, the Necropolis, the University of Strathclyde, Provand's Lordship, and there would be an integrated body which would coordinate what was happening there, and probably taking in the Martyrs School and making it a real tourist hub. But the precinct is owned by the city and nothing happened. Now, of course, there is a great deal of pressure to increase tourism because Glasgow is dependent on new economic activity, tourism is a major factor, financial services are a major factor. So the idea of reviving the area around the cathedral as a tourist honeypot is very much the fore and is being led at the moment by Glasgow Life and HAS. But there have been earlier reports. Whether action will be taken I do not know, and then you have the whole question of the High Street and the Saltmarket down to the river. That is just a kind of slum, it's awful. There have been attempts to do something with it. The University of Strathclyde now is beginning to produce better buildings, but on the deficit side it has to be said that the two great patrons of architecture in the last forty or fifty years have been the University of Strathclyde and University of Glasgow and neither of them has put up a decent building in terms of world architecture that people would want to go and see. There have been all these missed opportunities. But certainly Strathclyde just off the High Street is beginning to create more interesting buildings. And not only that, but to think in terms of a campus in a way that they haven't done before.

RW: Did you know, David Walker told me, that in the '60s there were still some college buildings of the old university in the High Street? There were still some there, and the

University of Strathclyde asked Glasgow University to join them to keep them, use them, and the University of Glasgow declined.

JM: These were buildings which were designed by James Adam and I remember them very well. They were on the corner of the High Street and College Street. They were built in the very end of the 18th century, and the University of Glasgow did have the wit at that time to engage the Adam family, and James Adam was the architect. Robert died in 1792, and James had been living in the country with what they would call in Aberdeen a bidey-in, and he had to move up to London much to his annoyance and take over the reins of the firm. And he designed these buildings as accommodation for university staff, and they were still there, David Walker is quite right, into the ‘60s. Strathclyde University was going to be a modern technological university, so why did they need 18th century buildings which weren’t in a very good state anyway? So they just went. The University of Glasgow in the late ‘50s and ’60s had a scheme to take over all the properties from the north side of the Gilbert Scott buildings all the way across Hillhead down to the Kelvin and demolish them all and put up modern buildings, post-war buildings. A colossal scheme. They had this masterplan. And it was dreadful, and it was fought by the local people, and eventually the expense was so great that they didn’t do it. Now they’ve got the Western Infirmary site, and that is one of the biggest developments anywhere in the UK. It’s a brownfield site; there’s nothing on it really that one wants to conserve, very little that one wants to conserve. And they’re going to develop that to expand the university. From what I have seen I am very alarmed that they are not going to employ, if you like, the best designers and architects. I am very concerned that they’re not going to produce architecture of real national quality in the way that the Scott buildings are. The Scott buildings are really quite remarkable, and the university had the foresight to go to somebody outside the Glasgow situation, and despite the attitude of the Glasgow architects they actually got a building which is of national importance. I mean, it ranks in a way with St Pancras Hotel in London, it’s that quality.

RW: Do you think that the role of conservation is destined to always be a role of activism against the state and government? It seems to me from the people we’ve spoken to it’s always been that kind of conflict between ordinary people, educated people, and what the state can do. Do you think that needs to change? Do you think it will change?

JM: It needn’t be like that. I’ve been around long enough to have seen many changes. And one of the things that I’m becoming concerned about, not just me, other people have been in this field, conservation is becoming more difficult. In the ‘60s, and certainly in the ‘70s when the new legislation came into place there was very much a unity between the central government and local government. And for instance when bodies like the Scottish Georgian Society, which then became the Architecture Heritage Society, and the Scottish Civic Trust made recommendations or objections or observations on changes to a building these were usually welcomed, and in fact very often their advice was actually sought when an application was coming in. And there were quite a lot of very notable public enquiries. So there was a feeling in the Scottish Office, quite a powerful feeling, led by people like Robert Matthew and others that conservation had a very important place to play. And that has largely disappeared. There doesn’t seem to be, in the government, an awareness of the uniqueness of buildings, individual buildings great and small, and as I say, there isn’t that backup in the local authorities. The local authorities have had more and more responsibility put on them in terms of listing. The central government has withdrawn, shoved the responsibilities onto local authorities. The local authorities don’t have the qualified staff, they don’t have the money, they certainly don’t have the time. And so there are difficulties. And I think the conservation

societies are up against it. And maybe in a way the conservation societies have run their course in that they did achieve legislation which has been very important in preserving the fabric, the creation of conservation areas, the listing of buildings, the protection of buildings, listed building consent and so on. That has all helped hugely and has been a huge change of attitude. But the battle continues, and it is endless. You sometimes think we haven't progressed at all, and in some aspects there is a feeling that we've gone back. Certainly the government that we have today really I don't think is very interested in conservation. I don't think it's interested in the arts, quite frankly. And there was one marvellous episode when Jack McConnell was Minister of Scotland, when it was thought by the arts that he ought to be more interested in the arts, and he ought to attend a performance at the Theatre Royal. So it was decided that he should attend an opera, he'd never been to an opera in his life. And so he agreed to go to an opera in the Theatre Royal, and it was Tristan und Isolde. Now, if you've ever been to a performance of Tristan und Isolde, it lasts for hours. One aria can last for twenty minutes. So they never got anywhere, needless to say. So I cannot think of a government minister that is seriously interested in the arts, and they're certainly not interested in architecture. But on the other hand there's been quite a change in the RIAS because you do have Neil Baxter there and he is very competent and he's interested in conservation and he has pushed conservation, and he has very powerful connections with the government, and so I have high hopes that somebody like that will do something. But at the end of the day, as always, it comes down to individuals. If an individual is interested he or she will achieve results.

RW: What do you think conservation of the buildings does for the people who live in the city? What impact does it have in the way they see themselves, see the city?

JM: Sometimes it's subliminal in the sense that people accept what they see round about them. Round here people accept what they see because that's what they've always seen. Where they would really be disturbed would be when it goes away, it disappears, something happens. But I think the general public do have, and that applies to all classes, an awareness of the quality of architecture. I'm heavily involved with the Willow Tea Room Trust, and of course it's right in the middle of Sauchiehall Street and we're conserving that building and we've got to find by June 2018 £10 million. Now, I think we're going to get it, but what we find interesting is the numbers of passers-by who stop, look at the plans, take an interest, and they're genuinely interested in that building and how it responds to them. Similarly I'm the chairman of the society of Friends Of Glasgow Cathedral, and last year to celebrate our 60th anniversary we promoted a festival of music. We had a series of concerts in the cathedral, and for each concert hundreds of people would turn up. What was fascinating was that most of them had never been in the cathedral before, and they responded to the architecture. People would say "this is a wonderful building, I admire this, I admire the glass, I admire the space, I admire the carvings." And people do respond instinctively to the quality in architecture. I think in fairness to the city they have spent a lot of money in places like Garthamlock and so on improving the general amenities, and that has been respected. If you give people rubbish buildings they will behave in a rubbish kind of way, and it doesn't work. Everybody deserves quality in their lives. Anyone can rubbish the city council, they do have certain political views, but they have actually improved many areas. The New Gorbals is an example of giving a much better life to people. Around where the Commonwealth Games took place, they have got a very good environment. So I really don't despair but it is a battle and you just have to keep on fighting.

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