

T H E V I S I T O R C E N T R E

Cathedral Square, Glasgow

Extracts from the Brochure

"Laying of the Foundation Stone
of

The Visitor Centre, Cathedral Square, Glasgow "

by

HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES

accompanied by

HRH THE PRINCESS OF WALES

29 April, 1988

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FOREWORD

For a long time The Society of Friends of Glasgow Cathedral has been trying to solve the puzzle of how to provide better facilities for the ever increasing number of visitors to the Cathedral.

The Cathedral is a place of worship and accordingly is not suitable for visitor facilities on a large scale. Dr Graham Hills (President of the Society of Friends of Glasgow Cathedral) wrote:

"It would be wrong to erect new buildings immediately adjacent to such an historic and lovely building. Various proposals were discussed, often at length, but when, after the competition for the re-design of Cathedral Square, the District Council suggested we build in the very centre of the square on the site of the Bishop's Castle we decided that this was a superb position. To decline the offer would have constituted a failure on our part to seize an opportunity, which would never again arise, to build something which would fulfil our needs and attract the admiration of visitors of today and of generations to come.

Also, Cathedral House was deteriorating so quickly and so extensively that very substantial sums would be necessary for repairs and modernisation. Its layout made it unsuitable for the elderly and infirm. So far as possible the congregation and Society should share accommodation and thus keep administrative costs to the minimum. Therefore, Cathedral House was too small and badly located for serious consideration for redevelopment. This made it essential that the new Visitor Centre be designed so as to be capable of serving the Cathedral's needs.

The design of a building on such an historic site, surrounded by the Barony Church, Provand's Lordship, the Royal Infirmary and the Cathedral was something requiring the highest standard of creative architecture. It was accepted that the new building would be expensive for these reasons but there was determination that money would not be wasted on unnecessary luxuries. Good design and craftsmanship are what will be our aim."

GRAHAM HILLS

THE BISHOP'S CASTLE

The castle which provided a defensive stronghold for the bishops of Glasgow was reputedly built on the site of an early 'rath' or Norman motte, which might be attributable to the time of David I(1224-53), but there is no evidence, documentary or archaeological, to confirm this. There is evidence of ditching in the area which might have been associated with an earlier earthwork castle. The bishop's castle was certainly in existence by the thirteenth century when a palisade surrounding an adjoining court or pleasure ground was to be removed to provide space for the erection of manses for the cathedral canons. The castle to which a tower was added by Bishop Cameron (1426-46) lay to the west of the cathedral and occupied an irregular hexagon about 180 feet wide and 300 feet long. Within this area in the centre there was a large keep which housed a kitchen with vaults, a banqueting hall and various other apartments, but although there are extant engravings of the exterior of the castle, there is nothing to show the precise lay-out of the interior although most authorities accept that it was approached by its northern side by a drawbridge. Between 1508 and 1522 the whole complex was surrounded by an ashlar wall of about 15 to 20 feet high with crenellated and reinforced bastions and between 1524 and 1547 a gatehouse was added in the south east corner. Attacked with artillery in 1516 by the Mures of Caldwell who removed beds, jewels, utensils, provisions and ammunition, restitution was eventually obtained by the archbishop after the castle had been retaken by government forces.

In 1544 the castle was garrisoned against the Earl of Arran by the pro-English Earl of Lennox but the governor quickly recaptured it and "causit saxtene gentill men guho hepit the same to be hangit at the Croce of Glasgow".

During the Reformation crisis and wars the castle was occupied by French troops and in 1570 unsuccessfully besieged by the Hamiltons who supported the exiled Mary, Queen of Scots. During this period the castle passed through a variety of hands including those of Sir John Stewart of Minto and James Boyd of Trochrague, who held the archbishopric from 1573 to 1581. By 1600 when the castle was conveyed to the Duke of Lennox and his heirs, its stonework was already being used for other purposes. Three years later the appointment of John Spottiswood as archbishop halted this process and the

episcopal palace, at it was frequently designated, was restored to something of its former magnificence. However, the abolition of episcopacy in 1690 again placed the future of the structure in jeopardy and by the eighteenth century it had once more become a quarry; stones taken from the ruinous building were used in the erection of the Saracen's Head Inn in the Gallowgate in 1755, and in 1789 anything left standing was removed to make way for the Royal Infirmary.

IAN B COWAN

E P D TORRIE

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE BISHOP'S CASTLE

The first archaeological investigation of the site of the Bishop's Castle took place in the 1850s during work on the Royal Infirmary. These excavations claimed to have found remains of several parts of the castle, but as proper records of what was found do not survive they are of little value to modern studies of the buildings.

The next archaeological work on the site was a small trial excavation carried out in 1983. This showed that remains of the castle did still survive. As a result, the Scottish Urban Archaeological Trust was invited to excavate a large area in advance of the Cathedral Square development. This excavation has exceeded all expectations and has shown that many earlier views of the castle were wrong in important details.

In the first phase of the excavation the foundations were uncovered of the corner tower and surrounding curtain wall built by Archbishop Beaton. The excavations proved the tower to have been outside the curtain wall and not, as previously thought, inside. The tower and wall were shown to have been built together in the early 1550s.

The second phase of excavation was even more successful and the results were very surprising. Although substantial remains were not expected, an impressive section of dressed-stone foundation wall was in fact uncovered. The quality of construction showed that some of the castle buildings must have been of fine appearance. This wall was probably built in the 1440s and may be associated with the central tower known as Cameron's Tower. The location of the wall, however, does not match that of the tower as shown on early prints and plans. This is a problem that current excavations may solve.

The foundation-wall was constructed in a ditch which had been subsequently infilled. From this ditch were recovered large pieces of structural timber, two leather shoes, animal bones and pottery. It is perhaps 500 years since anyone last saw this part of the Bishop's Castle. It is to be preserved as part of the Cathedral Square Visitor Centre.

Another important find during the second phase was a narrow, stone-lined shaft, almost two metres deep. Its purpose is unknown. It was floored with re-used

roof-slates and contained many 18th-century wine-bottles, oyster shells and two fine tin-glazed earthenware bowls, one of which has been identified as rare Glasgow delft-ware.

There is still one more phase of the excavation to be completed on the site of the Bishop's Castle. It is hoped that this will reveal more details of the main buildings, including perhaps the gatehouse, as well as the castle walls and gardens.

PHILIP HOLDSWORTH

THE VISITOR CENTRE

Glasgow has changed, and changed again, in the period since Daniel Defoe in 1727 wrote that

"Glasgow is indeed a very fine city".

In 1723 John Mackay wrote

of

"the beautifulest little city I have seen in Britain"

and before that in

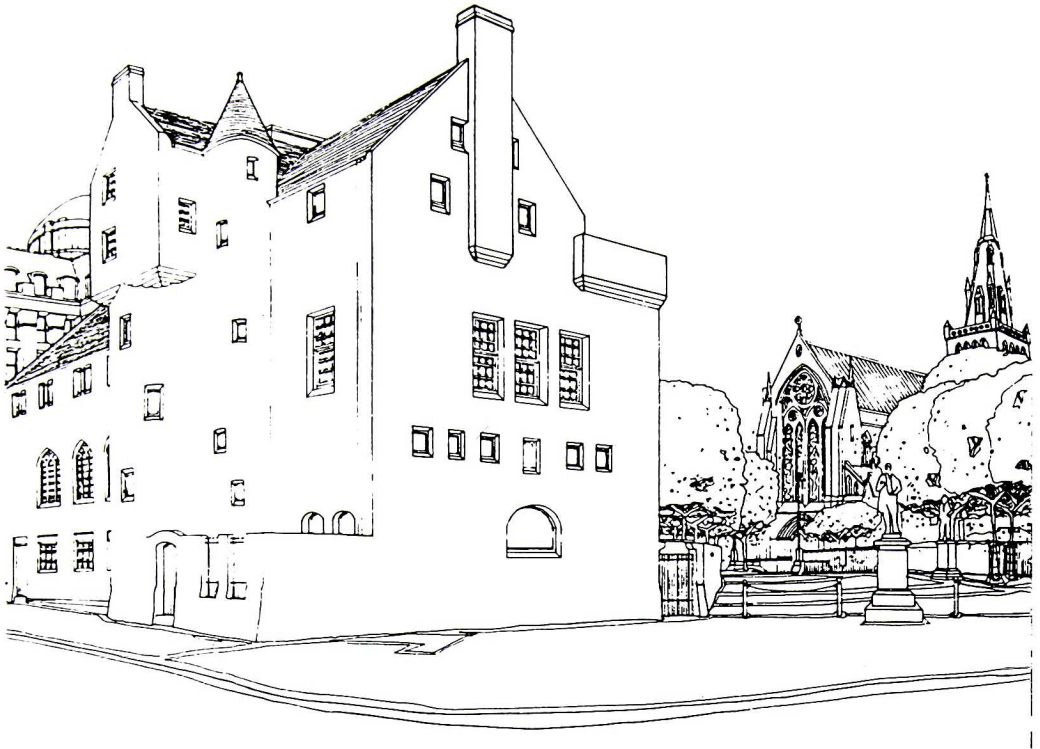
1669 James Brome wrote

"The renowned city of Glasgow.....for pleasantness of sight, sweetness of air and delightfulness of its gardens and orchards...surpasseth all other places of this tract".

One can see, from the old engravings of Glasgow, something of the form and appearance of the old city.

Today Glasgow is changing again with a remarkable reawakening of spirit and the awareness of being a real living city. Yet it is still a surprise to many that the merchant city of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is so intact and recognisable but the Old City from which the place grew up, the place that was so beautiful, is a sad remanant. The City Fathers took their chambers away to George Square, the University moved the Old College to Gilmour Hill and the people moved or were dragged to improved conditions in the newer parts of the city. But the noble Cathedral, dating from the early thirteenth century, survives. One of the finest and oldest of Scottish town mansions still stands as a museum and further down the Clyde three characteristic seventeenth century steeples stand. There are some people still in the area but certainly not enough to be a population to this old city. That must come.

In proposing this new building for the Society of Friends of Glasgow Cathedral we were all attempting to satisfy some community needs based on the Cathedral, but possibly more strongly, to establish a building that would re-kindle some sense of identity with our past, some sense of belonging. After all, life did not start with our birthday as some seem to think.



The Visitor Centre, Cathedral Square, Glasgow.
(artist's impression)

The building design looks backwards simply to pick up threads of quality from our historic past so that they can be brought into the pattern of modern life. It is Scottish, human in scale and placed to contribute to the architectural setting of the new Cathedral Square, to re-establish traditional views and approaches to the great Cathedral and even to play down a little the vast scale of the huge Royal Infirmary which looms over the area when seen from the approach up the High Street. The design is for a modern building using some traditional materials like stone and slate. It will be decorated internally with colour and materials like wood and good plasterwork to be a pleasant place for Glasgow people and visitors alike. There will be an open arcaded walk or piazza and a quiet walled garden to add a sense of peace, right on the corner of the High Street, in this heart of Glasgow.

This building is the fore-runner in the re-creation of the old city which must grow again round the Cathedral and down the High Street to the Cross.

ACCOMMODATION: Within the basement there are the kitchens and servery, main

lavatories and cloak-room and the lower part of the historical display room which will give some understanding of the growth of the medieval city and its relationship to the Cathedral and its associated manses.

On the ground floor an arched main entrance leads in from Castle Street, which is at the top of the High Street. There is the upper part of the historic display and a retail shop; there is an information centre, possibly further shops and a top quality restaurant. An arcade forms two sides of the knot garden with a high wall completing the enclosure.

The first floor has the main, general purpose hall with high ceiling which will be able to seat two hundred at a banquet. It also has a small platform stage; and direct access to a tea-room above the restaurant will give flexibility to allow multi-purpose use. There is a small servery to supply coffee to the main foyer at this level, plus lavatories. On the second floor (the upper level of the hall) is the Cathedral music room with a library on a raised floor level which can form a general committee room.

The third floor has the upper part of the music room plus main offices and smaller meeting and interview rooms for the various functions of the Cathedral.

Finally, at the south or tower end, there is a flat on the two upper floors. Although high up with its private stair, it has direct access to all levels of the building by means of the main lift.

This building is intended and designed to lead and inspire, as many buildings in the past were designed to do. Both by its setting and by its place in the community it will be a landmark in the regeneration of the Old City of Glasgow.

IAN BEGG

THE CEREMONY

The activities of the archaeologists in the square and the possibility of inclement weather as well as the wish of the Society of Friends of Glasgow Cathedral to include on the guest list the large number of those who had contributed, led to the decision to hold as much of the ceremony in the nave of the Cathedral. This particularly related to the inspection of the model of the whole Cathedral precinct. Closed circuit coverage of the external activities was relayed to monitors in the nave.

FOUNDATION STONE: gifted by Stewart McGlashen Ltd

CARVING: by Vincent Butler (Edinburgh) funded by the Incorporation of Masons of the Trades of Glasgow

SILVER TROWEL: gifted and engraved by Balfour Beatty Ltd.

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