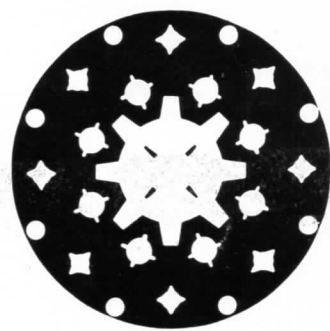


HP McCafferty

# Planning History



Bulletin of the  
Planning History Group

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Jim,  
Good write up  
-have you copied it  
to marketing?

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ment, had now been singled out as a scapegoat, as those same architects now moved seamlessly to new patterns of architecture in keeping with evolving 'British norms'.

Indeed, in 1967 Red Road was pushed into the front line of these changes in British architectural fashion, which by now had progressed from the New Brutalist attempts to build dense, high Modern groups as complex conglomerates, towards an increasing rejection of large blocks altogether, in favour of lower, more English-village patterns. This rejection was heralded in 1967, by the avant-garde London critic Nicholas Taylor's special issue of the *Architectural Review*, entitled 'The Failure of Housing'. Taylor led off his polemic with a blistering denunciation of Red Road: its 'nightmare sublimity' and 'total lack of individuality'<sup>28</sup>. But this rhetoric of Picturesque anti-monumentality, however much recited over the following years to the point where it began to affect public opinion even here in Scotland, need not unduly concern us today. After all, ALL 'British Modern' architecture - Taylor's picturesque Low Rise High Density courtyards as much as anything - has been in official 'disgrace', as a whole, for the past 20 years. So 1960s 'British' architectural rhetoric need not constrain the relationships we choose to establish with our architecture of that period. It is, incidentally, something of an irony that, in the current rediscovery of Modern architecture in England, the most prominent architects so far to be 'revived' by historians have been Erno Goldfinger and Berthold Lubetkin - Continental 'outsiders' who never accommodated their rationalistic 'Hard Modern' principles to the Picturesque<sup>29</sup>.

## Conclusion

So - to conclude - what was the significance of Bunton's work? Well, I think the Red Road saga shows that his great contribution to this country's Modern architecture - whatever his own rhetoric of ruthless business efficiency and machine like repetition - was above all in the field of ideas and images. He was a romantic ideas man, whose Americanising skyscraper imagery powerfully energised the period's now unfashionable causes: housing production, prefabrication, high-density urban redevelopment, high blocks. He gave architectural expression to the inchoate indignation of many Glaswegians at the idea of the massed exporting of their city's population. He synthesised a widespread feeling that this city's crusade to rehouse its own people - the climax of public housing in Western Europe - should not be bashfully hidden away in an atomised sprawl of low, brick rabbit-hutches, but should be proudly broadcast through the building of vastly expensive,

uncompromisingly monumental blocks which would theatrically proclaim the collective idea of urban life<sup>30</sup>.

So much for Bunton's national significance. But what about international? The highway engineer James McCafferty has recalled, (in his talk to the Scottish DOCOMOMO conference), that the designers of the Glasgow Inner Ring Road drew ideas direct from the most advanced US practice, transformed them here into a new form reflecting the dense urbanity of the European city, and then re-broadcast them overseas, notably to Hong Kong. I think research may reveal a similar process in the case of Bunton's work. Outside 'the West', during the 70s and 80s, there began to be organised increasingly powerful public housing drives, employing large, regularly disposed blocks. The well-known campaigns in Eastern Europe were clearly inspired by France, by the long but relatively low blocks of the 'grands ensembles'. But in Hong Kong the public housing drive took a very different course. Crushingly massive slabs and towers juxtaposed with outcrops of slender point blocks far higher than any mass housing in the USSR or the USA - erupting from hillsides, from any available site, in a paroxysm of urbanistic energy unparalleled in the world. Now the links between Hong Kong and the UK, but with this country in particular, hardly need to be stressed - in commerce, and in all professional spheres: including the structure of the Hong Kong Housing Authority. But within the UK it was only in Scotland, in Glasgow in particular, that very high blocks were built in this massed yet at the same time abrupt pattern. Could there be a missing link to be traced in here somewhere?

*This paper was originally delivered as a lecture at the inaugural conference of the DOCOMOMO Scottish National Group on 10 October 1992. It is derived from research for a forthcoming book, 'TOWER BLOCK', jointly written with Stefan Muthesius and due for publication by Yale U.P. in 1993. As the paper is essentially a report on work 'in progress', footnotes are relatively sparing. Full footnotes for this paper's subject-matter will be included in Chapters 20 and 25 of 'TOWER BLOCK'.*

## References

1. Williamson, etc.: *Buildings of Scotland: Glasgow*, 1990 (Sheriff Court of Glasgow). Taylor: *Architectural Review* 11-1967 (re. Red Road). Stamp: AA Files 1991. Powers: lecture to 20th Century Society Oct. 1992 (referring to London school by Spence)

This first conference seems to have got the Association off to a good start, and it intends to repeat the venture biennially, with Strasbourg lined up for September 8-11 1994, and Budapest for August 1996. This will provide a supportive academic structure for planning historians, and supplement the American networks of SACRPH and the Urban History Association. Suggestions for themes and papers for Strasbourg 1994 to Jean-Luc Pinol, Centre des Recherches Historiques sur la Ville, 22 Rue de l'Ail, Universite de Strasbourg II, 67000 Strasbourg, France.

## Visions Revisited: The first conference of DOCOMOMO-Scotland, Glasgow, 10 October 1992.

David Whitham

DOCOMOMO, an international working party for the documentation and conservation of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the modern movement, was founded at the University of Eindhoven in 1988. A United Kingdom branch is well established, but the conference was convened from the History of Art Department, Glasgow University under the fiery cross of DOCOMOMO-SCOTLAND.

Opening the conference, Professor Hubert-Jan Henket diplomatically explained that if nationality were recognised the Scottish group would be the 28th national working party. He went on to define the field of interest that DOCOMOMO had set for itself: its period the end of the 19th century to today; modernity as that which was historically innovative, technically, socially or aesthetically.

### The Great Themes of Glasgow's Planning and Architectural History

A century ago, Glasgow's civic power and enterprise made it a wonder of the world. 'Municipal socialism', pioneered in Joseph Chamberlain's Birmingham, was most highly developed in Glasgow, and visitors concerned with social services and city management came from the world over, but particularly from the USA. The municipal ideal became an ideology, even a faith -Glasgow had a branch of the American Civic Church. The tramways, municipalised in 1894 and electrified by 1901, could open up better housing, better recreation and health for all, increase mobility of labour, and promote urban development. Glasgow became the Mecca of the civic faith and the tramcar its icon.

Yet by mid-20th century, as two contributors showed, the direction of pilgrimage had been reversed. In 1939 the arch-municipalist Patrick Dollan took Glasgow councillors to see housing achievements of Mayor La Guardia's New York, and in 1961 Lord

Provost Jean Roberts led a delegation to eight American cities, returning convinced that a great urban motorway system was essential to Glasgow's redevelopment.

The second recurring theme, central to Scottish planning history and by no means yet fully disentangled, was the thirty-year struggle between Glasgow and the Scottish Office over dispersal of the city's population. Despite Glasgow's reluctant acceptance of overspill and new town policies, the strength of the 'second city' faction, with its historic image of a million population, affected planning and housing decisions in west-central Scotland from the second world war to the 1970s.

### The Introductory Papers

Following Chairperson Kirsty Wark's welcome and Professor Henket's greeting, the morning session began with introductory papers by Dr David Walker and Miles Glendinning.

David Walker, chief inspector of ancient and historic monuments in Scotland, later to be embarrassed by questions on listing of modern buildings, raised two points of difficulty, if not dissent from DOCOMOMO's principles. Buildings were being demolished in their architects' own lifetimes as never before, not only because of their construction but due to the specialised functions of many modern buildings, a clear obstacle to conservation. He also seemed to qualify, if not question, the innovative test; pioneering was not important in time. Dr Walker was after quality, to be valued on its own terms.

Miles Glendinning of Edinburgh University, a historian of modern housing with a holiday home in a 22-storey tower block, expanded on the difficulties of the post-1945 period. It was a period of unprecedented building activity, with a near-monopoly of public sector work, not only housing but including schools, hospitals, universities, roadworks and bridges, industrial buildings for the Coal Board and ports authorities; even commercial buildings in Scotland tended to be built for government clients. Buildings had decayed and were lost to redevelopment. Art-history valuations were no help; *The buildings of Scotland* (The Scottish 'Pevsner') while praising Scandinavian inspired empirical work of the 1950s, saw the new Glasgow Sheriff Court as 'dumb monumentality'. It was necessary to pursue the archaeology of building provision, separately from its experience in use.

### Key Actors Look Back

Dr J Dickson Mabon, ex-MP for Greenock and a minister at the Scottish Office 1964-70, recalled the political context of the great housing drive. Labour had promised 500,000 new houses a year in Great Britain, against the Tory bid of 300,000. On Labour's narrow victory in October 1964, Mabon was called on to produce the Scottish rate of 50,000 within 18 months. While the target for England and Wales would be partially met by the private sector, that market was virtually non-existent in Scotland. Apart from numerical shortage the quality of housing and the extent of overcrowding were much worse in Scotland; thousands of respectable 'lower middle-class' families in Glasgow lived in flats with no baths, and rural areas had their slums too. Three assets were the centrally managed Scottish Special Housing Association, the new towns, and industrialised building which had been promoted by the Tories. The SSHA and new towns were already geared for high production, and industrialised building enabled small towns to negotiate jointly with one large contractor. High-rise building was welcomed; every small burgh wanted its 'multi'.

Production came close to the 50,000 target for a few years - 'if only it had been for ten . . .' Glasgow, where the powerful housing convenor Bailie Gibson enthusiastically accepted high flats, also exceeded its planned overspill rate, despite Gibson's second city sentiments.

Ronnie Cramond, a senior Scottish Development Department administrator during the housing drive, and a historian of Scottish public sector housing, recalled the social context of the 1950s by describing a recent demonstration at a wedding party, with a similarly geriatric colleague, of 'joined-up dancing': 'It's like watching a documentary', onlookers said. More seriously he pointed to the origins of public sector housing, the realisation, prompted by the Scottish Royal Commission report of 1917, of the moral imperative to meet housing needs not met by the market and since 1919 always chasing a moving target of housing need. His most impressive recollections of the housing drive were of the enthusiasm and integrity of the people involved, civil servants, councillors and local officials, in the daily handling of huge contracts; -'there was a lot of idealism about'- to get their constituents reasonably housed. Working now in the voluntary housing sector he believed that idealism and integrity was still there, but in the face of continuous denigration of the public service, for how long? There could be no dogmatic solution to the 'housing problem', but to advocate caution or

delay was suicidal in the continuously changing context.

Patrick Rogan, ex-Edinburgh councillor and first Labour chairman of Housing Committee was elected in 1954 when Edinburgh had no housing department as such. Housing provision was slow, and letting was controlled by the Finance Committee. City officers were more deeply concerned than the ruling moderate councillors:

'Slums = darkness, dampness, dilapidation, despair' said a health department inspector. By unceasing action, unpaid and with pitiful compensation for attending daytime committee meetings, and by skilful use of the local press, Rogan made housing a political issue in Edinburgh, becoming housing chairman in 1962. Edinburgh became an active housing authority with a housing policy, a housing programme and a housing department; and of course, still with housing problems, post-war housing in need of rehabilitation or even demolition, estates with inadequate social facilities, and an increasing waiting list.

### Roads and Planning in 1960s Glasgow

James McCafferty, a partner in Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick who had worked on the Glasgow urban motorway schemes from the 1960s provided a pivotal view of Glasgow's post-war planning history.

He traced the evolution of the Glasgow road plan. City engineer Robert Bruce's plan of 1945, which confidently demonstrated that a million people

could be housed within the city boundaries had proposed two ring roads, the inner ring tightly enclosing the city centre. Abercrombie's Clyde Valley Plan of 1949, though recommending reduction of Glasgow's population by at least 250,000, endorsed Bruce's road plan, enhancing it by proposing that main radial roads should be motorways rather than improved existing roads as Bruce had envisaged. The inner ring box was thus accepted by both second city and dispersal camps. There was no dispute either about the need to clear the city's slums, the worst of which surrounded the city centre in the path of the ring road. The 1960 development plan review linked the problems:

'The future social and economic health of Glasgow will depend basically on a successful attack on the interlocked problems of housing, employment and communications. In this respect, the campaign in the 1960-80 period should be centred on the 29 comprehensive development areas and on the traffic proposals for the central area'.

The CDA, originally intended for reconstruction of war-damaged areas was the chosen instrument for renewal in the 1960 review: Glasgow's 29 CDAs covered 2700 acres and contained 300,000 people.

In this context Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick were to make an initial study of the inner ring road, and Lord Provost Jean Roberts led her delegation to the USA. SWK were appointed to make a more comprehensive study, with American consultants, and eventually to design the inner ring. In 1963 the city highway plan was completed and work commenced on the north flank in 1965.

The study, with Holford Associates, published by the city in 1965, in many ways anticipated the Buchanan report on traffic in towns, but by 1974, with construction of the west flank well advanced, urban motorways were out of fashion. The GLC had abandoned its inner ring plan and even in Glasgow confidence waned. In 1975 roads became a regional responsibility, and after completion of the north and west flanks in 1981 there would be no more urban motorways.

Mr McCafferty clearly regretted that the plan was not completed, demonstrating present congestion and forecasting worse, but was justifiably proud of what had been achieved. His illustrations ranged from the heroic, the Renfrew Motorway threading through south-west Glasgow to the Kingston Bridge, to the intimate, the carefully graded and landscaped pedestrian crossings that never resort to the terrifying and squalid tunnels of other cities.

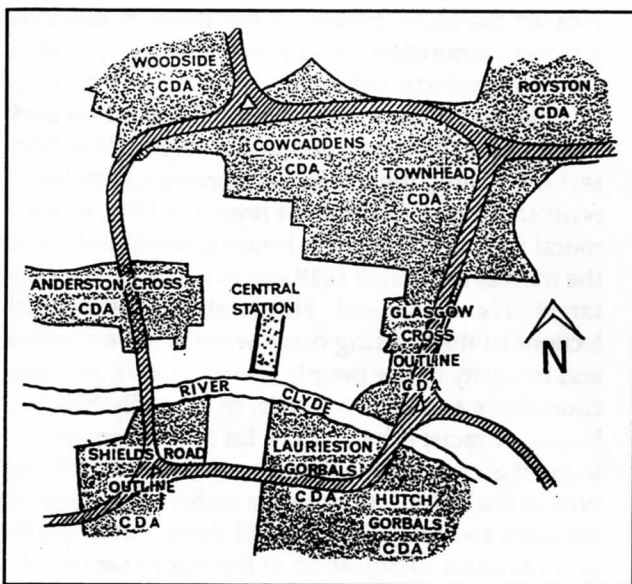


Figure 1: Glasgow Centre Area CDAs in Relation to the Proposed Inner Ring Motorway; 1960.





Figure 2: The Glasgow Inner Ring Motorway. Aerial view 1969 showing Kingston Bridge under construction and north flank cleared.

### The Architects

That completed the morning session, setting the post-war Scottish scene. At lunch a display of drawings and photographs had been arranged, an effort upstaged by views of Glasgow from the 9th-floor windows of the Boyd Orr building on a brilliantly clear day.

In the afternoon we got to the buildings. **Mark Baines**, of the Mackintosh School of Architecture, delivered a 'slide by slide' talk on 'post-Coia Coia', being the work of Isy Metzstein and Andy MacMillan, both present, which he believed to be 'the first public lecture other than by themselves', which was a thought. It included a haunting image of the present state of St Peter's College, Cardross, a



Figure 3: Glasgow: The Vision. Townhead interchange, the north-east corner of the proposed inner ring motorway. Collins press is front left with school and college buildings behind; Glasgow Cathedral middle right with a new Royal Infirmary to its north. Drawing by Alexander Duncan Bell, 1965.

building triumphant in recent memory; now derelict, illustrating as Professor Metzstein said in discussion, the difficulty of the highly specialised building.

**Professor Charles Robertson** of Strathclyde University, returned to Glasgow, recalling his time in the Basil Spence office 1956-62 as job architect on 'Hutchesontown C', the 'hanging gardens of the Gorbals', with anecdotes of Spence's panache in selling his ideas to officialdom, and cavalier attitude to costs. Again the reality is of abandoned and enormous buildings. What can we do with them now?

Red Road, one of the last and the largest of the Glasgow high-rise schemes, has survived and now serves another sector of the housing market. **Miles Glendinning** delivered the last paper on its designer, Sam Bunton, whose career illustrates both the transatlantic and second city themes, and a version of his talk appears elsewhere in this number.

**Paul Sturton** of the Glasgow art history department summed up. There was no truly historical interpre-

tation of modern architecture in Scotland; this conference was the first step and he hoped that serious analysis would flourish under **DOCOMOMO-SCOTTISH NATIONAL GROUP**.

The conference showed that Scotland *is* different (to evoke a wider historical debate), if only because, as Miles Glendinning said, of the overwhelming importance of public investment. That has resulted in a greater faith in planning, with some justification, as the achievements of the Highlands and Islands Development Board, for example, show; and more passion, as in the second city argument. Your reporter could not stay for Sunday's coach tour, but enjoyed a stimulating and thought-provoking day. What remained undiscussed should provide material for several more conferences and for much research in recent architectural and planning history in Scotland.



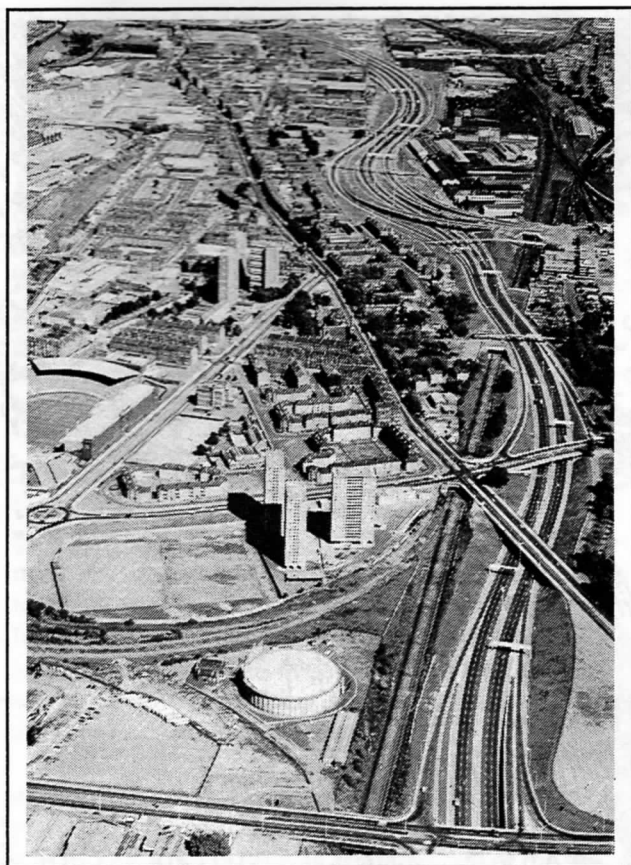


Figure 4: Glasgow; The Achievement. The Renfrew motorway threads between works and railways to the Kingston Bridge at top left. Paisley Road West crosses the picture diagonally; Ibrox Stadium is centre left.

Figures 2 to 4 from Scott Wilkinson Kirkpatrick archive.

Readers interested in the aims and activities of DOCOMOMO should write to:

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# Sources

## Cartoons 2

*This is the second in an occasional series. The first appeared in Vol 13 No 1, 1991.*

## Dacey's Dream: Up in the air and down to earth

Robert Freestone  
University of New South  
Wales  
Australia

Cartoons are an important source for planning history (Ward 1991). Providing amusing perspectives on what are invariably complex issues, they are a form of popular commentary that is a valuable corrective to the official record. In Australian planning history, their significance has been to highlight both the perceived absurdity and the inherent politics of planning in practice. Individual cartoons can have a story in themselves. They can open up a richer understanding of personalities and events, promises and realities.

### The Australian Planning Cartoon

Spearritt has effectively used black and white comic art to distil the essence of many complex political controversies in his work on the postwar development of Sydney (Spearritt 1978; Spearritt and De Marco 1988). The saga of the undoing of Sydney's 'green belt' in the late 1950s provides a classic case study of how cartoons mirrored if not contributed to declining public confidence in an ailing planning concept (Freestone 1992). It turns out there are remarkable parallels with the Melbourne experience during the same period (Dingle and Rasmussen 1991).