

MUSIC HATH CHARMS – ART SEEN IN A NEW SETTING

Four young musicians from the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama gave a recital in the Gallery on Sunday, October 17. Scottish-born mezzo soprano Laura Margaret Smith, currently working for her masters degree, has gained several scholarships and appears on the concert platform and in the opera house. Violinist Rachel Spencer (at back) has led both the RSAMD's chamber and string orchestras and last year took part in a tour of Scotland. Laura Gabriella Gemesi, viola, has performed chamber music in her native Hungary, Britain, Austria, Italy, Norway and Indonesia. Japanese pianist Ayako Kanazawa, an accomplished accompanist, has been engaged as a repetiteur for Scottish Opera in 2011.



The artist John Mackechnie with his wife Sue at the opening exhibition.



A scene from the opening show

Welcome to the Drawing Room

The new first-floor Drawing Room (which used to be the billiard room) was formally inaugurated in September with an exhibition of photo and digital-prints by John Mackechnie, director of the Glasgow Print Studio – images seen to advantage in the bright ambience of the room, complementing and contrasting with the members' Autumn Exhibition in the Gallery a floor below. Pictured above: Sheriff Iain Macmillan declaiming in best senatorial style at the dinner held to mark the opening of the new space. Right: scenes from the private view.

Pittendrigh

(continued from page 7)

An ardent Scot, Pittendrigh spoke lowland Scots vernacular, writing poetry, essays and plays in this tongue. He wrote songs and played them on a violin made by his own hands. Hugh MacDiarmid admired his writing and the two were linked in the Scottish Renaissance movement.

Elected to the Royal Scottish Academy in 1901, LL.D in 1909, Pittendrigh became King's Sculptor in Ordinary for Scotland in 1921. He died in 1938 and was buried in Edinburgh, his home for many years. In an obituary, James Pittendrigh Macgillivray was acclaimed as being 'in the front rank of British sculpture of all time'.



CONGRATULATIONS...

...to Robert Kelsey on being awarded the honorary degree, Master of the University of the West of Scotland, earlier this year at a ceremony in Paisley. This recognises not only his

standing in the community and his achievement in art, but also his contribution to charity through the gift of paintings, by which he has raised many thousands for various charitable organisations. Robert has been a member of Glasgow Art Club for more than twenty years, serving on its council and for two years recently as honorary secretary.

He graduated at Glasgow School of Art in 1970, and after a spell in education he became a full-time artist in 1995. He exhibits regularly with, amongst others, the RGI and Paisley Art Institute. Last year he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

News from 185 BATH STREET



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GLASGOW ART CLUB

WINTER 2010

No. 34

President's column

Wanted – the next hundred members

The most significant development since the last edition has been the successful completion of the Drawing Room project on budget and on time. My thanks to Paul Dowds and Connie Simmers and everyone else including our professional advisers and the contractors who made it happen – not least our Trustees who enabled it to be financed.

If you have not yet had a look at this new facility please do. It is a handsome addition to our accommodation and makes superb use of a redundant space. It will replace the Gallery for the duration of its refurbishment but in the meantime is a space from which we must generate income. Council proposes if at all possible to reserve the revenue earned to compensate for the loss from not being able to host the larger functions during the refurbishment period.

An ongoing issue is that our recruitment of new members is just sufficient to compensate for deaths and resignations. I would like to increase the membership by 100 net. Council will be embarking on a significant marketing strategy for new members and to sell our facilities. If we had that extra subscription income and the revenue new members would bring we could transform what we could offer.

Our sister club in Edinburgh, the Scottish Arts Club, which was heading for closure, has just done precisely that. With a much more handsome property in Bath Street I cannot believe that what Edinburgh has done Glasgow cannot match or better.

All members have their part to play. Please sell the Club and its facilities to your friends and encourage them to join.

Donna Murray

Bon appetit!

Glasgow firm En Croute has taken over catering services for the Club. There will be new faces in the kitchen but our own management staff will continue to provide cheerful service.



Peter Graham's A Morning Room Study

Planning for the future

LAURA BRINGS A NEW LOOK



A new face will be seen in the Club most Thursdays and Fridays. Laura Donnelly has been recruited on a part-time basis to help boost the Club's marketing. Her primary aim will be to increase membership, and beyond that to devise fund-raising schemes and to raise public awareness of the Club and what it stands for. She says that an important aspect of her work will be programming events for both Club members and outside organisations, including corporate events. More prominent use of the Club logo is also likely – for example it will be displayed on the windows facing Bath Street. Marketing will be active but not 'in-your-face', in keeping with the character of the Club – 'No neon lights,' she says.

Laura, who is 24, has been working part-time with the Prince and Princess of Wales hospice in Glasgow, where she has a similar remit. Born and bred in Glasgow, she is a graduate of Strathclyde University and has a degree in French and Spanish. She also runs her own online business for hand-made wedding and greetings stationery.

Peter Graham writes:

Over the last year I was fortunate to have been granted permission to produce a series of paintings at the Garrick Club in Covent Garden. Since it is one of our reciprocal clubs, members of the Glasgow Art Club can frequent this illustrious establishment when in London. The Garrick has a wonderful theatrical tradition with many members coming from the world of the stage.

From my paintings the Garrick Club expressed an interest in A Morning Room Study (above) which I was delighted to donate for their collection.

This watercolour shows the entrance to the Morning Room flanked by a bust of Sir Squire Bancroft, who ran the Haymarket Theatre in London from 1880. The white marble bust was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1881.

The bench seen on the right-hand side, with carved ornamentation in the Greek style, belonged to the poet Byron and was among his possessions at Missolonghi.

The Chippendale-style chair in the centre of the painting, one of a pair, belonged to the actor Sir Henry Irving, the first actor to be awarded a knighthood. He was one of the first actor managers of the British stage, supervising sets, lighting, direction and casting as well as playing the leading roles. He is thought to have been the inspiration for the Bram Stoker character Dracula!

CLUB NEWS

Coming events

The winter exhibition of members' work (opening on Saturday, December 4 at 12.30) runs until January 15.

A recital by the Song Studio of the RSAMD is scheduled for the afternoon of Sunday, December 12, preceded by optional lunch from 12.30.

It's party time on Friday, December 17 – '7.30 till late'. Victorian fancy dress is welcome but not essential. Actor John Cairney is billed to appear, but in what guise? Something Dickensian, perhaps. A feast from the buffet is promised, plus parlour games and carols by candlelight. What frolics!

Looking ahead to the new year, George Devlin will give a fund-raising demonstration of his art on Saturday, January 8. Brunch will be served at 11, painting demo for afters at 1.30.

On Friday, January 21, an exhibition of the RGI's drawing competition opens.

'A blast o' Janwar win' /Blew hansel in on Robin' – but our Burns supper will be held on Friday, February 4. Look for details later.

New members

We welcome the following new members (category in brackets):

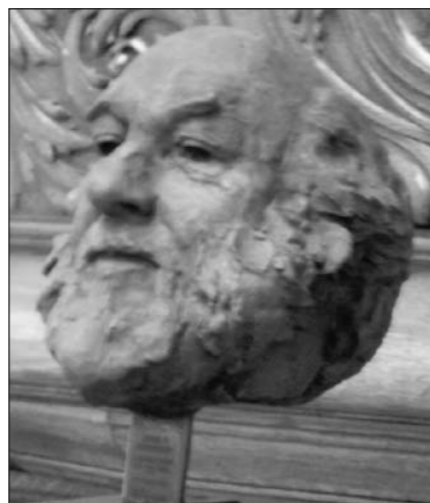
Anthony Hamilton (artist)
Alice McMurrough (artist)
Dr Alastair Ross (artist)
Eve Leonard (young artist)
Frank To (young artist)
Paul Kennedy (young artist)
Hamish Clark (architect)
John Cunningham (architect)
Brian McArthur (architect)
Kae Tinto (lay, town)
John Cairney (lay, town)
Paul A Reid (lay, town)
Alex Norton (lay, country)
Hugo Brown (lay, country)
Sheriff Colin Miller (lay, country)
Dorothy Hoskins (lay, country)
Donald Campbell (lay, corporate)
Alasdair Morrison (lay, corporate)
Suzan Malcolm (renewal)

Keep in touch

The Newsletter would like to hear from you. If you have an idea for an article, short item, anecdote or picture which you think would interest readers, please contact us at secretary@glasgowartclub.co.uk or phone 0141 248 5210 and ask for the Club secretary. Or write to the Newsletter at the Club.

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Full house celebrates the life of Jimmy Robertson



A presence at the festivities – Jimmy Robertson, modelled by Robin Hume

The popping of champagne corks gave a fine introduction to the Art Club's evening of commemoration of Jimmy Robertson on October 15. The Gallery was full and the mood relaxed but sharp enough to respond with acclamation to president Raymond Williamson's invitation to applaud Jimmy's work, and his stature in and contribution to the Glasgow Art Club. As the Club bent to its supper so did the decibels rise, and as the food was enjoyed so did they rise and rise again until lip-reading became the easier way to converse.

Distinguished guests, members of Jimmy's family and members of the Club sat in a Gallery full of Robertson major works which emphasised the artist's philosophy of painting and his love of colour and colour contrasts.

After dinner Katie, Jimmy's step-daughter, recalled her early memories of family holidays and of her father's 'impracticability' (in everything bar painting!) and of the fun and humour that abounded in the Robertson home.

Then Leon Morrocco, who had come to Glasgow to join the Art School staff in 1968, applied his 'retrospectroscope' to life at the school, the Glasgow atelier, mentioning well-remembered names – Donaldson, Goudie, Squire, Thomson and Duncan Shanks, etc. He recalled how Jimmy hated 'tight painting and lines' and pursued his own free style that we admire today. He remembered too the parallel life of the art school band with Jimmy on the drum kit, and produced a snippet of a recording, possibly the one with the visiting Johnny Dankworth band. Even more decibels at this point.

Roger Billcliffe spoke seriously about Jimmy's contribution to painting in Glasgow and the west of Scotland, commenting on his prodigious output of 'painting from the heart rather than the head', of painting of emotion of mood, and revealing what was a little difficult to believe, namely that painting for Jimmy was a constant struggle, and that he had to persevere in meeting the constant challenge of the canvas.

The serious moment was registered, and passed, and the company turned to the happier business of celebration – of the life of a supreme artist and

teacher, for a good companion and past president, and of course, a family man – the decibels were still rising when the evening closed.

Ian Melville

Author, author! (times three)

Three members of Glasgow Art Club have published books recently. Two appeared in October, Edna Robertson's fine biography of a remarkable medical man who made a name for himself in Africa before returning to Glasgow, Christie of Zanzibar: Medical Pathfinder (Argyll, £14.99), and Lesley Duncan's wry and witty Images Not Icons: Poems for Our Times (Kennedy & Boyd, £9.99) – some of which will already be familiar to members.

Edna's book, her third ('my swan song' as she called it bravely at the book launch shortly before her death), follows the career of James Christie, a graduate of Glasgow University who trained for the ministry before becoming a doctor. He spent nine years in Zanzibar, where he pioneered methods of treating cholera – work for which he gained worldwide recognition – acted as the sultan's medical officer and became acquainted with Livingstone and Stanley.

James Macaulay's lavishly illustrated study Charles Rennie Mackintosh (Norton, £42) was published in June. Also published this summer: a monograph on George Devlin's life and art, A Brush with Life, by Thierry Gardie (Scottish Gallery/Portland Gallery, £25).

Stagestruck and working for Bridie

In the last issue of the Newsletter I recalled how I became secretary to Dr Mavor – otherwise 'James Bridie' – and my rather unusual interview for the post, when we sang the 30th Paraphrase together – 'Come, let us to the Lord our God...' The job turned out, as I said at the end, to be 'a remarkable experience'.

I was nineteen at the time, not long arrived in the big city from Oban, and unsure of myself. He was the same age as my father; an established author with plays running in the West End. He had served in the First World War, for heaven's sake. Yet this distinguished man chose to take an interest in a callow youth like me.

Iain Macmillan recalls the happiest days of his youth

I sat at a big desk and typed his latest play, or his latest article, or his latest letter to Bernard Shaw, or whoever, from his dictation straight on to an old fashioned Remington, while he lolled back in his big chair. Sometimes I couldn't resist coming out with what seemed the obvious next line, and he would say, 'That's good, Iain. Just put that in'. So I can claim that some of Bridie's lines were mine. Not many!

And he would talk to me about far away places like Baku and Samarkand, or about queer religions or ancient myths, and about Frazer's Golden Bough. And I read the theatre returns which came in weekly with the audience numbers, and I leafed through the casting books with pictures of Alastair Sim and Robert Donat. And of course I dreamed of becoming a famous playwright, like him.

My father was always telling me tales of life in the villages up north, where he had worked, and I told Dr Mavor some of them.

'You should write a play, Iain,' he said. 'You're good at dialogue'.

So of course I wrote a play. In one act. He said it was excellent, and he sent it to his friend Paul Vincent Carroll, who wrote Shadow and Substance. Mr Carroll sent it back, saying he had enjoyed the story, but he didn't think the young author was quite ready to be let loose on the public!

Then the next thing was that he rang up Colin Milne, the chief dramatic critic of the Glasgow Herald, and asked him to let me do some theatre notices. And Colin Milne did! During that winter I

went to see shows and plays in the Glasgow theatres, and then hurried back to Buchanan Street where I typed my notices on yellow copy paper and handed them to the sub-editors, who turned my prosy sentences into something short and snappy. But the smell of printers' ink was getting to me.

Dr Mavor's plans for the Citizens' Theatre were well advanced by the time I came to work for him. He was determined that Glasgow should have a theatre where the best modern plays would be performed – even in war-time. So he and George Singleton and Tom Honeyman and others put their heads together, and the theatre opened on October 11, 1943, in the old Athenaeum building with one of Bridie's own plays, Holy Isle, with Duncan Macrae in the cast.

My boss was busy with the organising of the theatre, so two or three days a week we would travel by bus from his house in Bearsden to the Glasgow Art Club where he had meetings with his colleagues. I had no part in these, of course, so instead I walked to the Athenaeum and lent a hand there. I helped to count the petty cash. I went behind the stage and helped to paint the scenery. I listened to the actors rehearse and marvelled at their talk of first nights and last nights and theatre intrigue. And I dreamed my own dreams.

The programme was a folded sheet of cardboard, all that could be managed in the stringent conditions of war-time. It gave the cast list and a brief description of the play. There was a lovely footnote that read – 'In the event of an air raid the performance will continue. If you wish to leave, please do so as quietly as possible'. Later on, when the theatre was established, I wrote the programme notes myself, no doubt encouraged by my boss.

I never became an author. I don't suppose Dr Mavor ever thought I would, but it was not for lack of encouragement by this wonderful, kind man.

In March 1944 I received another kind of notice. This one told me to report for service in the RAF. On a fine spring morning I made my way to Dr Mavor's house for the last time, and with a heavy heart. I remember lingering by the fence, admiring the dewdrops glistening on the cobwebs in the early sunshine, and I thought about the time I had spent with him, how kind he had been to me, and how much I had learned. I thought then that these eight months had been the happiest time of my life.



James Bridie – detail from a painting in the Club's collection, hanging in the reception room. Bridie just manages to keek into Robert Eadie's painting of a Glasgow street scene on a rainy day

PITTENDRIGH'S THE NAME

Norma Farquhar hails a man of many talents in her latest essay on the history of Glasgow Art Club

On visiting the recent exhibition The Glasgow Boys at Kelvingrove you may have noted two plaques by James Pittendrigh Macgillivray, the only sculptor associated with the Glasgow school of painters. Just as the 'Boys' rebelled against established Victorian painters, Pittendrigh (as he preferred to be known) sought to establish a forward movement in sculpture, free from tradition, showing energy, emotion, mood and character.

Born in Inverurie in 1856, the son of a sculptor, Pittendrigh trained in sculpture and ornamental plasterwork from the age of thirteen. Later he assisted the Glasgow architect James Mossman before becoming an independent sculptor in 1879. He joined Glasgow Art Club as an artist member in 1882. He was twenty-six years old.

First of the Glasgow Boys to join was E A Walton in 1878. Between then and 1892 twenty-one more of the Boys joined Glasgow Art Club as artist members. Although Joseph Crawhall lived at a distance from Glasgow and Arthur Melville travelled constantly, they were both frequent guests at the Club.

Pittendrigh continued his career producing architectural sculptures for Glasgow buildings, including the City Chambers and monuments for Glasgow's Necropolis and other cemeteries. His first important public work was the statue of Robert Burns at Irvine in Ayrshire, 1895. There followed the statues of Lord Byron in Aberdeen, the third Marquis of Bute in Cardiff, the bronze of John Knox in St Giles, Edinburgh, and the large-scale monument to William Gladstone, Edinburgh, 1902, considered to be his masterpiece.

(continued on page 8)

OBITUARIES

In memory of a fine writer, and a much-loved keeper of this house

Edna Robertson

Edna Robertson, who died on November 9 at the age of 75, was a long-serving stalwart of the Club. She joined in 1988, just four years after women were admitted to membership. At that time she was a full-time journalist, but after she left the Herald she was able to play a more active part in GAC activities. In the early 2000s she served on the Club council and helped to edit the Newsletter.

A committed Glaswegian, Edna followed a history degree from Glasgow University with post-graduate study at Michigan State University. She joined the then Glasgow Herald, working up from the library to become chief leader writer and an assistant editor. She travelled for the paper, writing informed features on India, China and Zaire at a time when these lands were opening up to the West. She kept a special interest in the USA and covered several presidential elections.

She wrote three books, the first a history of Yorkhill hospital (1973) which led to an interest in key figures in Glasgow's medical history. Her Glasgow's Doctor (1998) traced the life of the city's first MOH. Twelve years later her Christie of Zanzibar appeared. By then she was gravely ill, but with characteristic determination she gathered the strength to speak at the book launch, a triumphantly happy occasion enjoyed by many of her good friends.

Edna's personal reserve and impatience with any woolly thinking were balanced by her warm generosity and concern for people and animals. She loved the open air, gardening and hill-walking, and enjoyed nothing more than a good heated discussion with congenial companions over a lengthy meal. She will be sadly missed.

Jean Reid

John Fowler writes: I got to know and admire Edna when I joined the Herald in what old-stagers now regard as a golden age. Though she was a star of the paper she was less known to the readership than some writers because leader columns carry no byline. Editorial conferences were enlivened by her tenacious left-of-centre views. Though leader writing was her metier she could move confidently in other



Edna Robertson – a happy moment at her book launch in October

fields – even, to her amusement (and pride) appearing on the sports front page with a football report from Africa. Once, reporting in America, she was subjected to a terrifying knife attack – but, being Edna, fought back. Off duty we shared a passion for the hills. Summer and winter (I have seen her glasses sprinkled with snow on some ben or other) she was a doughty walker – the adjective serves for her life.

Ann Parker

Ann Parker, who has died at the age of 75, was housekeeper at Glasgow Art Club for seventeen years from 1983 to January 2000.

She came to the Club from the Rogano restaurant, where she had been manager. Throughout her time with the Club she lived in what was the flat on the second floor – now converted to other uses – where her merry parties were memorable.

James Macaulay remembers her as a persuasive manager in occasionally difficult times, and her elegant presence at Club functions.

Dai Vaughan writes: We first got to know Ann through our daughter Lucy working at the Art Club. Jenny and I were immediately struck by how glamorous she was, and how good she was at dealing with people.

We soon became aware of how good she was at juggling the wishes of the members with the need to generate revenue for the Club, by holding

functions for outside organisations. She was brilliant at this. Of course a real plus was that she attracted around her a loyal staff, who both loved and respected her. Many of these stayed in contact when she left the Club, and visited her in her new home in Hyndland, where she held many most enjoyable social gatherings.

In her new home she was surrounded by paintings and drawings by artist members, bringing her many happy memories, especially of the fireside gang whom she used to recall fondly. She also enjoyed her garden.

Although very organised, she was always fun to work with. I experienced this first-hand when, with an important function only an hour away and a member of staff unwell, she rang me out of the blue. I dashed from my



Ann Parker – fun to be with

bath to the phone, to be asked if I had a white shirt and pair of black trousers handy. I had, and so found myself at the Club polishing glasses and silverware in a panic of preparations. After that I handed around glasses of champagne – rather wanting a tipple myself, but of course I never did.

That came later, when all the guests had departed. Indeed, at the end of a function, when all the furniture had been put back in place, and everything tidied, Ann enjoyed having a bit of a drink and a singsong, particularly Irish folk songs.

She was a wonderful, warm hearted lady who our whole family loved very much. We are happy to have known her and be counted amongst her friends.

INTERNATIONAL MUSICIANS DINE AT THE CLUB

On September 8 the Club president Raymond Williamson, who is also honorary president of the Scottish International Piano Competition, a triennial event held in Glasgow which attracts young talent from around the world, hosted a supper party for members of the board and the jury.

The Club was accordingly visited by a number of distinguished pianists and composers including Sally Beamish, Thea Musgrave, Norika Ogawa (Japan), Alfredo Perl (Chile), Arnaldo Cohen (Brazil), and Susan Tombes (Scotland). The chairman of the board of the competition, Baillie Liz Cameron, was also present.

All were mightily impressed by the Gallery and appreciated the opportunity to escape from listening to yet more piano music and relax in wonderful surroundings and enjoy conversation over food and wine.



Guests from the Scottish International Piano Competition, left to right: Robert Love, Thea Musgrave, Alfredo Perl and Norika Agawa

COMMENT IN THE PRESS

A review of the recent Group of Six exhibition in the Art Club appeared in the arts section of the Herald on Saturday, November 6. The critic Jan Patience was taken with Shona Barr's 'luscious colour applied with gusto' and sensed 'an almost sepulchral feel' in Hazel Nagl's work which, she wrote, displayed 'confidence and softness'. She was attracted by Jennifer Irvine's 'subtle depiction of light and shade' – and, indeed, had praise for the work of all six (Liz Knox, Delny Goalen and Connie Simmers were the others). She noted that Connie had been the first woman to break the all-male barrier of Club membership back in 1983, and she rounded off her column by inviting the public to 'ring the bell and ask to see' the exhibition – a helpful piece of advice to the public in view of the Club's current low-key presence in Bath Street.

The Glasgow Boys exhibition which has opened in London (see this page) received a lengthy review in The Guardian on Saturday, October 30, prompting this response in the paper's letters page. It was signed John Carnegie, Glasgow:

'I was fascinated by the article about the Glasgow Boys exhibition opening in London. However, it would have been much more helpful to be able to read it when the same exhibition opened here in Glasgow, earlier this year.'

The Glasgow Boys go south

Kailyards have uneasy connotations in a Victorian literary context. Happily not so in a painterly one. There are, nonetheless, rather a lot of cabbages on view at London's Royal Academy where the Glasgow Boys exhibition has transferred from Kelvingrove.

Take the space-bullet glass lift to the top floor of the building and you find yourself in the Sackler Wing of the RA where the exhibition is mounted. It's most pleasurable to meet up with familiar canvases in this metropolitan setting. And, it must be said, the airy gallery spaces are probably kinder to the works than the subterranean reaches of Kelvingrove.

The background material is generous in acknowledging the Boys' impact on the wider European scene of their day ('Taking inspiration from such French Naturalistic painters as Bastien-Lepage and also from Whistler, the Glasgow Boys produced some of the most revolutionary painting in Britain, drawing praise in London, Munich, Vienna and further afield.')

It's not an identical exhibition to Kelvingrove's, but there are many favourites to be relished. For me these include James Paterson's tranquil canvases of Moniaive and Autumn in Glencairn, the central white river in the latter pulling the eye into the distant hills. Arthur Melville's wondrous use of watercolour seems, as always, to be pushing forward the possibilities of the medium, whether in Mediterranean crowd scenes or just in the intensity of the colour he achieves, as in The Sapphire Sea. John Lavery with his Tennis Party offers a glimpse

of high-bourgeois suburban life. In a sense, though, these are the exceptions in theme. And after relishing the Glasgow Boys' ability to celebrate the predominantly rural with unsentimental skill and freshness and painterly flair, is one disloyal to harbour a certain disappointment?

These accomplished artists were living in a Glasgow at the peak of its industrial power and influence, when its shipyards and locomotive works were turning out heroic products of heavy engineering that briefly gave the city global pre-eminence. One would never guess it from these largely bucolic scenes.

The Glasgow Boys obviously felt no compulsion to be recorders of their times - perhaps because they had no first-hand experience of industrial work, though many of their patrons must have built their fortunes on such. Maybe they were quite deliberately escapist.

Better, however, to cherish the treasures the Boys left behind than lament theoretical ones. They brought prestige to Glasgow in international cultural circles in their day. Perhaps this London showing may have the same effect again.

Lesley Duncan

Prizewinner

Artist member Patricia Cain has received this year's Threadneedle Visual Arts prize, worth £25,000, for her Building the Riverside Museum – a pastel work showing Glasgow's new transport museum under construction.

If it's Friday it must be Ravenna

This autumn a group from the Club spent a hectic week of cultural discovery in the north of Italy. JOHN HAMILTON and JAMES BANKIER kept diaries of the trip

TUESDAY

JH: Our Hotel, the Porta San Mamolo turned out to be comfortable, although some rooms were treated to impromptu serenades as the restaurant opposite skaled at one in the morning. Dinner – arranged in advance – a very good meal lubricated by the local Sangiovese wine which set the tone for the week.

JB: *Thanks to our table of twenty, the restaurant sounded exactly like a Glasgow Art Cub function. After that first meal we did our own thing and small groups searched out restaurants and compared notes afterwards.*

WEDNESDAY

9am – Met by Daniella Bigatti, small, slim, young and formidably well informed, who led us briskly down a gentle slope into the centre of Bologna (not so gentle when toiling back to the hotel at the end of the day). First stop, the Basilica San Domenico, last resting place of St Dominic, the magnificence of the building internally and of his tomb, graced by three small statues by Michelangelo, in interesting contrast to the austerity of his life and the unimpressive exterior.

Then to the Palazzo dell' Archinnasio, one of the oldest parts of Bologna university – the feature to note being the 17th century Sala Anatomica, carefully reconstructed from materials retrieved after destruction by Allied bombing in the war.

The energetic Signorina Bigatti somewhat reluctantly allowed a coffee and comfort break of ten minutes, stretched by the company to thirty, then briskly off to the Basilica di San Petronio, said to be the fifth largest church in the world, with a sundial at 66.8 metres said to be the longest in



'The mosaics of the Emperor Justinian with his court and the Empress Theodora with her ladies...are surely some of the most compelling ever made.'
– James Bankier's observation in the Basilica di San Vitale, Ravenna.
The above detail shows Theodora. Photo: Adrian Fletcher, paradoxplace.com.

the world. Paintings by Giorgio Morandi at the Palazzo Comunale, followed by a welcome release at the exuberant Fontano Nettuno, with four



Singer Marjory Gray charms her impromptu audience in the Basilica di San Vitale

statuesque mermaids expressing copious jets of water from their breasts below a nude Neptune, brawny and well-endowed. Lunch followed by scrutiny of shops, cafés and bars before return to hotel.

It should be admitted that after several hours walking cobbled streets, climbing staircases, craning necks and listening to information, it became ever more difficult not to stop for a coffee.

THURSDAY

Free morning to enjoy sunshine and gracious Italian outdoor urban living. 2pm: Cross-city trek with Daniella at light-infantry pace. Long galleries filled with permutations of Madonna and Child. Some fell out into café or bar, to rendezvous in the main square at 6.15. A number of us dined at an excellent fish restaurant and discovered Brolettino, a delicious white wine.

FRIDAY

Across the Po valley to Ravenna, last gesture of the western Roman empire, a city of sublime artistic achievement which has survived miraculously for 1500 years: San Vitale, Sant' Apollinare, with the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia as the climax. Our guide Verdiana Conti Baglione, a woman of mature years, charm, with a love and knowledge of buildings, mosaics and frescoes, set an easier pace – her first action was to guide us to a café before starting out. We admired her casual dismissal of the hapless young man who attempted to limit to ten minutes our visit to the Mausoleum.

The guide told us in advance that we would get a surprise in the Basilica of San Vitale. In every direction there are rich mosaics, naïve in execution but with an amazing impact. In the midst of all this splendour came our surprise.

Marjory Gray, one of our group, a member of the Hallé chorus who has sung at the Club's Burns suppers, sang the Eriskay Love Lilt. The church was full of tourists of a dozen nationalities but they all stood in rapt silence as the melody added to the magic of the building. Marjory, Charles Anderson's 'wee sister', with her rich contralto voice, made our visit the highlight of the week.

SATURDAY

Weather chilly, wet and windy, a foretaste of autumn, even in Italy. By bus to Ferrara, stopping first at the Palazzo dei Diamanti, the palace of the d'Este family, so called for the diamond-shaped stones of its walls, now the site of the Pinacoteca – mainly frescos salvaged from churches in the surrounding countryside, and works by early Renaissance painters. Next the Museo della Cattedrale, notable for a beautiful 15th century Madonna and a collection of illuminated choral books containing miniature depictions of birds and animals of photographic accuracy. After lunch, the cavernous cathedral itself, with an apse painting of the last judgment by Bastianino. Next, the Castello Estense with dungeons of the better sort for prisoners of good family only. Back to Bologna in our wee purple bus piloted through a rainstorm by our amiable driver who looked is if he had just stepped out of a Quattrocento fresco.

SUNDAY

Glorious sunshine all day. A rapid transit to Mantova (Mantua) to be met by the last of our guides, the delightful Giuliana Varini, always smiling, who introduced us to the town's new statue of Rigoletto before moving on to the Palazzo Ducale, home of the Gonzaga family for three hundred years, who eventually blew it financially. Labyrinthine ways culminated in the Camera degli Sposi, the superb ceiling painted by Mantegna. Giuliana directed us to a restaurant in the Piazza Broletto, from which we had a grandstand view of the Gran Premio Nuvolari, an international event for veteran and vintage cars from all over the world, which aroused youthful lusts and disinterested the not so latent adolescent in a surprising number of the company, mostly but not exclusively male. Finally the Palazzo del Te with frescoes by Giulio Romano alluding with little subtlety to its



A quiet corner – the leafy courtyard at the hotel in Bologna. Photo: Margaret Bankier

function as combined stable and passion pad for the Gonzagas. Home again, to be passed by squads of Ferraris and Porsches on the autostrada.

By happy coincidence Mantova had been shown on our TV screens only a few days before we left Glasgow. This wonderful production of Rigoletto

used both the Palazzo Ducale and the Palazzo del Te and other parts of the city as well. The engine noise of the rally cars did not help lunchtime conversation, but what a wonderful sight they were.

MONDAY

A day of rest, recollection and leisurely souvenir and present hunting. Ambling, window-shopping, stopping for coffee, postcard writing, meeting casually with others in the group, then back to base to pack for early start tomorrow.

TUESDAY

Bus to airport, usual trek to Ryanair check-in desk at outer limits of the building – surprise, the plane's almost in time. On landing, bus to the Art Club door and a welcome by Naoimh and crew with soup and sarnies.

We left Italy wishing to see more – the whole holiday was over too soon. Charles Anderson, who was in charge throughout, deserves congratulations. His ability to give a vote of thanks in both English and Italian is impressive. This year's trip will be hard to beat but the search has already started for next year's destination – ideas please.



The Thinker – Douglas Forbes, pondering below the statue of Savonarola in Ferrara. Or is he just grateful for the rest?



Alfresco refreshment in Bologna



Not the men of the Art Club party waiting patiently for lunch, but a line-up of Sicilians on holiday in Mantova. Photo: Charles Anderson