

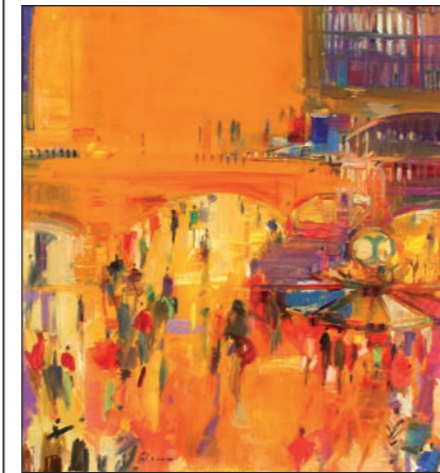


A feast of young talent to celebrate the opening of the show

An artist at gunpoint

As Peter Graham sat innocently sketching in New York's Grand Central Station recently he found himself looking into the barrel of a gun held by a cop from the NYPD. 'You've got two minutes to finish,' he was told. - 'I managed to stretch it to five,' says Peter. Then he sneaked away to an unobtrusive corner where he could complete his sketch.

Peter's large finished painting of Grand Central Station, with other recent works, is at the Roger Billcliffe gallery in Blythswood Street, Glasgow, until 22 December. There has been no police presence.



Scene of the crime

YOUNG TALENT ON SHOW

Young talent took a leading role in the Club's programme last month, when an exhibition of school pupils' work was mounted in the Billiard Room. This was the first exhibition of works by young people from secondary schools hosted by the Club. Entitled *Small Works*, it featured painting, photography, print making and mixed media. The show, part of the Club's education programme, is aimed at young adults aged between 14 and 18.

Jackie Marno, the Club's council member for education, said: 'This is an exciting exhibition because it encourages young Scottish artists and gives them a valuable insight into the arts, as well as an opportunity for them to showcase their work at a public exhibition.'

'It is important that institutions such as Glasgow Art Club should embrace young talent and show that the world of the arts is both enticing and accessible.'

Robert Kelsey, one of the judges, said: 'The most important thing about this exhibition is that the Glasgow Art Club is opening its doors and embracing a new generation of young Scottish artists.'

Kyle Fleming, head of education at Ballikinrain and Geilsland schools, said: 'This is a wonderful opportunity for school pupils like our own to experience what it's like to take part in a public exhibition and to gain invaluable insight into the world of the arts. Thank you to Glasgow Art Club.'

What's John Cairney up to in the attic?

I was first taken to the Glasgow Art Club many, many years ago by the late Emilio Coia, when he was drawing me as James Boswell for the *Scotsman*, and again by my old friend, Benno Schotz, when he was doing a bust of me as Burns. I was most impressed then by the Club's Victorian charms and the easy comfort of its rooms, not to mention the art display available at all times. I visited many times thereafter as a guest of various Glasgow friends, until I became a member myself last year. However, it wasn't until I was looking for an art studio in Glasgow, or at least a room to paint in, that a friend suggested the Art Club as somewhere that might have space as a temporary measure. It did. A room three floors up under the roof.

I found myself staring into a shambles, but fell in love with it at first glance and called my wife, Alannah, to join me in her oldest clothes and with our Hoover. A week later I was ensconced. For more than a year, I

lived on top of the world. By that, I mean I occupied the top floor of the Club in order to fulfil a private commission for paintings which involved nine scenes from the life of Robert Burns. I left the Art Club world that I so admire, three carpeted landings below me, and gave myself over to this new *La Bohème* situation shot through with something of Dickens' *Bleak House* with a suggestion of a Georgian Glasgow glimpsed through the grimy windows.

Little did the members below know that two ceilings above their hearty lunchtime laughter was a world of locked doors and fire doors, rusty fireplaces and temporary stairs, hanging lights from another time, a temperamental heating system and a leak in the room attended by miscellaneous buckets. To me it was a paradise. I was the happy hermit of the upper storey. Here was light, air and, above all, freedom. I could set up my easel on the bare floorboards and, despite my open view of the rafters

above, daub away at my Burnsian creations to the sound of Radio 3. An ancient Victorian room became a workplace of the imagination. Against those walls, I saw Burns' harvest field, his bachelors' debating club, his Edinburgh triumphs, his lonely dying. It was all there in my mind and, for a time at least, he lived with me on the top floor at 185 Bath Street.

Anyone's world is what they make it and, for a calendar year or more, mine was an attic studio that wouldn't have disgraced Paris or Barcelona. For that I loved it dearly. I'm sure it's the nearest I'll ever get to heaven. Thank you, Glasgow Art Club.

John Cairney

John Cairney's exhibition 'The Nine Lives of Robert Burns' is at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, Ayr, until 25 January.

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News from 185 BATH STREET



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GLASGOW ART CLUB

WINTER 2011

No. 36



An important sculptural frieze by Charles Anderson has been saved from destruction and erected on a new site after a popular campaign on its behalf. Charles and Barbara attended the unveiling ceremony in September. Full story, 'Fanfare for Charles', on page 6.

NEW OPENING HOURS

Changes in the opening hours of the Club came into force last month. It means that facilities are greatly improved, with several late evening openings in the week and greater flexibility for lunching and dining. Here is a reminder of the details.

Monday: the Club will be open from 11am until 6pm. The kitchen will be closed but snacks will be available at lunch time.

Tuesday: Open from 11am to 6pm. Lunch served between 12 noon and 2pm.

Wednesday: Open from 11am to 11pm. Lunch between 12 noon and 2pm. Food also served between 5pm and 9pm in the Billiard Room.

Thursday: Open from 11am to midnight. Kitchen closed, but snacks available at lunch time. Food also served between 5pm and 9pm in the Billiard Room.

Friday: Open 11am to midnight. Lunch between 12 noon and 2pm. Food also served between 5pm and 9pm in the Billiard Room.

Saturday: Open 11am to midnight. Lunch between 12 noon and 2pm. Food also served between 5pm and 9pm in the Billiard Room.

Sunday: Sunday opening is being investigated. Members will be kept

informed in due course.

A very visible addition to our facilities is the installation of a big screen TV in the Billiard Room. This will be available for viewing films, sports events and documentaries, and will also be invaluable for presentations, seminars, and advertising space for Club members.

A new sound system is being installed in the Gallery, Dining Room and Billiard Room. This will be an asset for musical events, speeches, lectures and talks - besides providing a loop for the hard of hearing.

President's column

An invitation to members

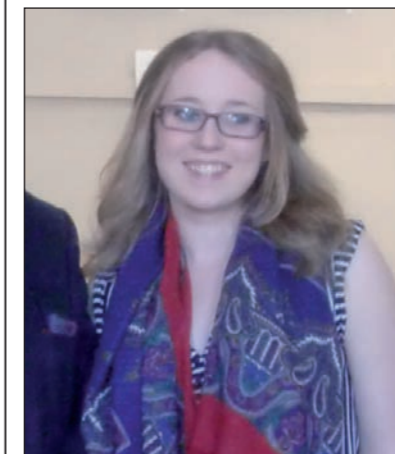
You will have received your subscription notices which consolidate the levy into the subscription (with a discount to those who paid the levy in a lump sum).

It was becoming increasingly difficult to sell new potential members membership of the Club with a levy on top of an already significant subscription and I hope the consolidated subscription has the approval of those members who were unable to attend the EGM where those present gave unanimous approval. The consolidated subscription is a significant reduction in the annual cost of membership.

I would like to see the subscription rates reduced even further but that will only be possible with increased membership. If fifty per cent of us introduced one new member the subscription rates could be transformed and the Club's trading made more buoyant.

Could I urge you to be one of the fifty per cent who do?

Young artists' work on show



Sophie Simpson (pictured) of the High School of Glasgow was one of two prize-winners at the exhibition *Small Works* held in the Billiard Room last month. The exhibition and competition, open to local school pupils aged between 14 and 18, was a new departure for the Club. It formed part of our education programme, led by Jackie Marno. The other winner was Charlene Key, of Larkhall Academy (see also page 8).

Window mounts for pupils' work and cash awards totalling £250 were donated by A B Framing Ltd, Anniesland.

Refurbishing the building - the plan

Glasgow Art Club has applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Scotland and a number of other trusts and bodies for grant funding to carry out a comprehensive project of repairs to the Club's premises at 185 Bath Street.

This will include the repair and refurbishment of the external envelope and structure of the main building, and refurbishment and improvements to the Gallery.

The Club has employed a team of consultants who have carried out a series of detailed studies and investigations of the building, including an analysis of the importance of the building and its contents. These surveys also included an examination of the physical condition of the Club's premises.

A programme of repairs has been

developed for the main building, including stone repairs, roof repair and renewal, repairs to windows and replacement of defective timbers and previous repairs. In addition to this, the Gallery is to be comprehensively redeveloped, returning the roof structure to its original configuration, renewing the floor structure, repairing and reinstating historic wall linings and renewing all electrical, ventilation, heating and lighting systems.

It has been established that the Gallery played an important role in the early career of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, who was an assistant in John Keppie's office at the time of the 1893 alterations to form the Club's current premises.

Mackintosh was commissioned to produce a decorative frieze at high level in the Gallery. Analysis of paint

scrapings and detailed surveys have suggested that this frieze does exist.

The Club intend to protect the remaining frieze, and commission a replication of the original which will return the Gallery to its original appearance.

The total estimated cost of the project is £1.12 million and the current fund-raising shortfall is £280,000.

The project is due to commence on site in April 2013 and is scheduled to take eighteen months up until November 2014. It is the Club's aim that disruption to the members is kept to an absolute minimum, and that the Club's interior (with the exception of the Gallery) should remain in use throughout.

Paul Dowds, project director

CLUB NEWS

Everyone a winner

• An exhibition of work by winners of this year's Glasgow Art Club awards is in the Gallery until 8 January. They are Derek Robertson, Christopher Wood, Robert Dawson Murray, Alice McMurrrough, Ellen McDann, Ian Cook, Paul Murray, George Collier, Tom Allan. They receive a two-year membership of the Club.

• The Christmas party – Hollywood speakeasy theme – is on Friday, 16 December.

• The Burns Supper is on 10 February. Immortal memory by James Macaulay.

New members

The following have joined the Club recently (category in brackets):

Allan Elliot (artist), Paisley
James Pye (lay), Qatar
Christopher Dyson (architect), London
Oliver Dyson (young), Glasgow
Donald MacDougal (honorary), Johnstone
George Russell (honorary), Glasgow
Pat Alston (lay), Strathaven
Linda Chapman (lay), Stirling
John Kingsley (artist), Glasgow
Euan McGregor (artist) West Kilbride
Chick McGeehan (artist), Irvine
Gavin M Watson (lay), Glasgow



Picture: Lewis Segal

Award for president

The Club's president Raymond Williamson has received the Lord Provost's Award for Culture 2010. The award was made by Lord Provost Bob Winter at a civic dinner in the banqueting hall at Glasgow City Chambers on 12 May. At the ceremony Raymond's contribution to the cultural life of Glasgow, particularly music, was described as 'sustained and significant'.

Reference was made to his service on the boards of various organisations, starting with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (1970 to 1991, the last six years as chairman). He was governor of the RSAMD (now the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland); he is currently honorary president of the Scottish International Piano Competition; is the founding chairman of the National Youth Choir of Scotland; and he is also director of Glasgow Unesco City of Music, and vice-chairman of the board of governors of the High School of Glasgow, which he says is 'very close to my heart'.

OUR COLLECTION GOES DIGITAL

George Devlin writes: Glasgow Art Club's collection of art works is an understated treasure.

In all, it amounts to more than 200 paintings, prints, sculptures and ceramics. They range from delicate watercolours of a few inches to large formal portraits.

For some time Jim Davis, Peter Graham and I have been assembling a visual record of every picture in the collection. The object of the digital photography was to record, rather than to provide images for reproduction. These images are now on CD, which members can view.

In order to increase the collection, artists of distinction (not necessarily Club members) will be invited to mount a solo show with the option of a talk or lecture. A donated work will replace sales commission. In February we welcome Iain Clark's photographic exhibition and in October Tom McKendrick will present a show. The programme for 2013-14 is being planned.

• Now's the time to buy. Any member buying a picture at an exhibition in the Club gets a 10% discount. Anytime – not just for Christmas!

• Cheers to Gerald Belton of Giffnock, winner of the draw for a bottle of champagne, offered as an enticement to members to respond to a recent questionnaire on the Club's future.

Two club members have just published their memoirs - now read on

Getting to know Yvette

The following passage, lightly edited, is from Iain Macmillan's *I Had It from My Father*. The young Macmillan, who wanted to be a Spitfire pilot, was posted to France after D-day in a humbler role



Iain Macmillan

We completed our journey two days later and were billeted with the US 8th Air Force. Being with the Americans meant that we were on their ration strength, which meant that we got Lucky Strike and Camel cigarettes and Hershey bars (chocolate). Later on this was to prove very useful. Unfortunately it also meant that we got peanut butter and jam with our porridge.

My friend Tom Dogget took himself off to see the sights of Paris, which had been liberated a week or so before. On his return he told me he had been to a party.

'There I was, see, strolling up the Champs Elysées. This geezer comes up to me with a couple of females and he says – "Excusez moi. We have a fête – a party – to celebrate la libération. You will come?"

'I went. Beautiful big flat, just off the Arc de Triomphe. There was masses of people there, all jabbering away, having glasses of wine and that. There was this nice old lady there, Madame Carra...something. She had a bit of English and she said to come back next Saturday, and bring a friend'.

Tom asked me if I would come with him and help him out with the 'lingo', me being able to speak French like what I could.

On the following Saturday Tom and I stood facing a massive wooden door in the Avenue Victor Hugo. Tom gave it a push and it swung silently open. Inside the dark, tiled vestibule it was difficult to see after the sunshine outside, but we hurried up to the first floor and pressed the bell. The door was opened by a small lady wearing steel-rimmed spectacles.

'Ah, Tom!' she said, smiling. 'Quel plaisir de vous revoir!' We were led into a large dark room where two young girls stood waiting. 'Ma fille, Jackie,' Madame Carla said. A pretty girl grinned at me as I shook her hand. Then I took the slim hand of the other girl – 'On m'appelle Yvette.' She had large brown eyes.

We were invited to sit down. We had brought some things from the PX (Post Exchange, the American canteen/shop where we got our supplies) and Tom now opened his battle-dress blouse, and out tumbled packets of soap and

cigarettes, bars of chocolate, sweets, and some cans. They clapped their hands together again and cried – 'Ah non, non, non, non, non...!' and examined the things with evident delight, and said we were 'trop gentil' and 'merci mille fois'.

The room was dim, the curtains half-drawn, the ceiling lofty. The furniture looked heavy, old-fashioned. But there was a fresh, pleasant smell. Perfume?

After tea it was suggested that Tom and I should play a game of cards with the girls, which would help us understand one another. Soon we were immersed in 'piques' and 'coeurs', 'carreaux' and 'trèfles' and we three were trying to get Tom to count in French, which provoked great

A TALE TOLD WITH ZEST

Jake Davidson is a well-kent figure in Glasgow Art Club. Leaf through his engaging memoir *Jake's Corner* and you will find plenty of pictures of the author, most of them featuring the trademark grin that splits his craggy face. A happy man, you feel.

He tells the tale with zest and an appealing diffidence. Brought up in Edinburgh, he was schooled at George Watson's College during the war years (he has a vivid memory of watching a U-boat being depth-charged by a destroyer off the Fife coast) before graduating in medicine at Edinburgh University. The day he qualified was momentous on more than a personal level – it was 4 July 1948, when the National Health Service came into being.

Jake's speciality was radiology and in due course he became head of radiology at the Western Infirmary and Gartnavel General in Glasgow, seeing the discipline expand far beyond its early bounds. He writes: 'Like all young graduates we were full

'I Had It from My Father' by Iain Macmillan (price £15 hardback) is published by Standfirst, 217 Liberator House, Glasgow Prestwick Airport, Prestwick KA9 2PT (tel. 01292 473777). Also available from Amazon. 'Jake's Corner' by Dr J D Davidson (£25 hardback, £10 paperback) is available from the author at 15 Beechlands Avenue, Glasgow G44 3YT.

hilarity. We were young. We were interested in one another. Jackie was vivacious, and Yvette was charming. The language barrier was quickly overcome.

The afternoon passed quickly. Soon it was time for us to leave, to catch the Metro back to St Germain. We said our 'au revoirs', and were invited to come back next weekend, and we said we would.

We said little on the way back. I was quite tired with the effort of trying to concentrate on what was being said. And my mind was in a whirl with these new sensations of actually meeting and speaking to real French people. And such nice people. And Yvette. Such a nice girl. And such a nice name.

It occurred to me that my very sketchy French might improve if, as seemed likely, I was given further opportunities to practise like this.

As it turned out, I visited Madame Carrini's flat every weekend after that. It became a second home. And I had plenty of opportunity to improve my French. Thanks to Yvette.



of ideals, very much NHS doctors and keen to make it work'. And throughout his life he has remained a staunch supporter of the NHS, even though his (low-key) political beliefs tend to the right.

While charting a highly successful career, which was recognised by the award of an OBE in 1990, he leaves space for his love of golf, played on many a course worldwide. Travel is also an abiding interest. Appreciation of music and art came later, leading to his taking up painting as a hobby, and among the illustrations in the book are several of his pleasing landscapes.

Finally, his marriage to Edith – first met as 'a bright vivacious radiographer with blond hair and a stunning blue dress' – has clearly been a sheet-anchor of his life.

Cover portrait by Ian McIlhenny.



Agnes Walker

Agnes Walker, who has died at the age of 81, had a remarkable range of talents. After joining the Club in 2002 she took part in many of its activities. A gifted musician, she came to concerts and openings and joined Club holidays in France and Italy.

At Hutchesons' Girls Grammar School, she was dux – the first science pupil to gain the distinction.

After graduating at Glasgow University she worked at the National Engineering Laboratory at East Kilbride before marrying and raising a family. She returned to university as a mature student, specialising in botany but expanding her range through post-graduate projects which gained her a Ph.D

As assistant keeper of natural history at Kelvingrove Museum, she was able to combine her interests in art and Scottish history with her knowledge of various sciences. She took special pride in mounting an exhibition on the Scottish thistle, and she helped to create the wild flower garden at the Glasgow Garden Festival.

On retiring, Agnes joined the music department at Glasgow University, working on medieval manuscripts and computerising early Scottish music.

Meanwhile her interest in botany led to the publication of *A Garden of Herbs* (Argyll, 2003), her authoritative and readable account of all aspects of the subject from botanical description to the folklore of plants and their medicinal uses. Her transcription on CD of a handwritten notebook of 18th century Scottish herbal remedies was produced four years ago, shortly after she suffered the severe stroke which forced her withdrawal from active life and deprived the Club of one of its most colourful presences.

As her obituarist in *The Herald* remarked, 'despite the passage of time well over a hundred turned up for the open celebration [held in Glasgow Art Club] following her funeral, where through music, pictures and stories they were able to remember the Agnes they had known.'

Fanfare for Charles and his sculpture

The bulldozer has been stopped in its tracks and a notable sculpture by Charles Anderson has been saved.

Back in the 1970s Charles was commissioned to create a large-scale relief panel for a sports centre in Burnley, Lancashire. The concrete panel, 150 feet long by eight feet high, was thought to be the longest mural of its kind made for a public building in Britain. It represented sporting figures in action.



Abstract décor for Jack Coia.

But when plans to demolish the now redundant sports centre were announced, the Anderson frieze was threatened with destruction. A campaign to save it was launched, led by Dr Lynn Pearson, an architectural historian whose recent book *Public Art Since the 1950s* features the Burnley mural. In spite of an offer of support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, all seemed to be lost until a local businessman stepped in, bought the mural and had it stored until it could be erected on a new leisure centre.

Finally it was unveiled this September by the mayor of Burnley, to the accompaniment of triumphal music by the local brass band. Charles is now probably best known to Club members as an easel painter, but for many years his metier was as a sculptor, particularly of public works – a career first inspired by a commission from the architect Jack Coia for an abstract mural in Coia's house in Park Circus, Glasgow.

Charles says: 'This, for me, was like opening a door of opportunity on the architectural world and enabled me to start on a professional career spanning more than 35 years as an architectural sculptor and mural designer.'

A birthday celebration for Gaelic poet

The ninetieth birthday of one of the Art Club's most distinguished former members, the poet and scholar Professor Derick Thomson (Ruaraidh MacThomas), was celebrated at Glasgow University at the end of October. Born in Stornoway, he studied at Aberdeen and Cambridge universities, and held the chair of Celtic studies at Gilmorehill from 1963 to 1991. His indefatigable support for Gaelic language and literature is complemented by his own creative talent as a bilingual poet, with publications spanning sixty years. A limited edition of his poems, chosen by fellow writers, was launched at his birthday celebration.

Here is a sample from it, dealing, through the image of the always receding loch and island, with the unattainability of dreams and aspirations. This is Derick Thomson's own English version of the poem, *The Second Island*.

LD

*When we reached the island
it was evening
and we were at peace,
the sun lying down
under the sea's quilt
and the dream beginning anew.*

*But in the morning
we tossed the cover aside
and in that white light
saw a loch in the island
and an island in the loch,
and we recognised
that the dream had moved
away from us again.*

*The stepping stones are chancy
to the second island,
the stone totters
that guards the berries,
the rowan withers,
we have lost now the scent
of the honeysuckle.*

• On Doors Open day this year Club member Jim Bankier noticed a visitor studying the war memorial in the lobby. The visitor, from France, said: 'There's my name – Eugene Bourdon.' Bourdon, killed on the Somme in 1916, had been professor of architecture at Glasgow School of Art. No relation, though – a coincidence.

Open house for guests at 185

No need to fumble for one's Art Club key on Tuesdays. One will be politely ushered inside by the Rotarian sentinels waiting to welcome colleagues to their weekly lunchtime meetings in the gallery.

Glasgow Rotary Club is only one of 34 organisations that use the Art Club regularly for gatherings – including the intriguingly named Sherlock Holmes Society. Not only do the outsiders help to raise the Club's profile, there are spin-offs in terms of revenue and potential membership.

They are an amazingly eclectic lot.* A little more detail about two may help paint the more general picture. The Nomads, who meet on alternate Monday evenings over winter, have been gathering at 185 Bath Street for well over a decade. (There is some overlapping membership.) The club was founded in 1895 with the object of 'the intellectual and social improvement' of members'. There are no more than 50 'wanderers' at one time – all male so far. (Tut, tut!)

St Mungo's Mirrorball is a relative newcomer both to the city and the Art Club. It was set up in 2005 as a network to support poets and poetry lovers from Glasgow, and currently has 170 members. Chairman Jim Carruth explains the title: "A mirrorball with its many faces echoes the many voices we want to be heard."

St Mungo's Mirrorball moved its events into the Art Club this autumn.

As for the Sherlock Holmes Society – meetings discuss the great sleuth and his creator Conan Doyle. Elementary, dear Watson...

Lesley Duncan

*Here they are, listed in no particular order: Highland Club; Nomads; Rotary; Sherlock Holmes Society; RGI (for the varnishing dinner); Celtic Connections Festival; Glasgow International Jazz Festival; Glasgow Cabaret Festival; Faber & Faber Publishers; Saint Mungo's Mirrorball; Bridge Jazz (weekly jazz night); Rhymes with Purple production company; Fingask Follies; Glasgow Young Professionals; Inverarity Wine School of Excellence; Scottish Opera; Doors Open Day (the club participates); Showcase Scotland; Incorporation of Coopers of Glasgow; Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society (the club is included in their tours); Maggie's Centres; Glasgow Society of Women Artists; Glasgow Southern Arts Club; Raeburn Supper Club; Serpent Yacht Club; Ye Cronies Choir; Design & Artists Copyright Society; The Attingham Trust; Lyon & Turnbull; Yorkhill Children's Hospital; Neil Munro Society; Ours Club; NHS; Scottish Women in Business.



Lord Macfarlane - proud of his link with Kelvingrove. (Picture: Colin Mearns, The Herald)

A key figure in the arts

Lord Macfarlane of Bearsden was the subject of a recent article in *The Herald* headlined 'Cultural champion retires from public roles in arts'. The article by Phil Miller reported that Lord Macfarlane – 'for more than 30 years a bastion of the arts as board member, president and trustee of many of Scotland's leading cultural institutions ... is to reduce his public roles at the age of 85'.

Miller described Lord Macfarlane as 'one of the key figures in the revitalisation of Glasgow's Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum', and noted that he was said to be particularly proud of his part in fund-raising for the Kelvingrove project.

Lord Macfarlane is retiring from the board of Glasgow Life, which runs the city's galleries and museums, and will step down from his positions as honorary president of Scottish Ballet and honorary president of Glasgow School of Art.

Lord Macfarlane chaired the Glasgow Boys committee which resulted in the exhibition *Pioneering Painters: the Glasgow Boys 1880-1900*.

He continues as a trustee of Glasgow Art Club. Club president Raymond Williamson writes: 'Of all Lord Macfarlane's many connections in the world of the arts over many years I know that he holds the Club as one of his closest and longest loves. He is never more content than in the company of our artist members. The Club owes him a great debt.'

IT'S EASY AS RINGING THE DOORBELL

The critic Jan Patience wrote the following notice in *The Herald* last month, highlighting the Club and its aims and referring to the two exhibitions then on show:

'In the Glasgow Art Club, a bastion of the old-school art establishment, the powers that be are working hard to make the club relevant and accessible to the public. If you haven't been in this historic building, getting in is as easy as ringing the doorbell and asking to see the exhibition – or exhibitions.'

At the moment two shows are running simultaneously. In the main gallery on the ground floor, Glasgow Southern Art Club has its annual selling exhibition on display.

Upstairs in the Billiard Room (minus billiard table) there is an exhibition of work by young people from Scottish secondary schools including Larkhall Academy, Clydebank High School, Geilsland School, Ballikrain School and the High School of Glasgow. The exhibition is being hosted as part of the club's education programme, which aims to provide those aged 14 to 18 with an insight into the cultural diversity of the arts. 2

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.

Ten days in Sicily - Club members revel in the sun



Pictures from this year's Club trip: Party jollity; a dip in volcanic mud; puzzle painting; a seat in the stalls; and a climb to the temple of Segesta



Picture: Jake Davidson

Siracusa – anglicised as Syracuse – is a handsome small town rebuilt in baroque style after an earthquake shattered the original site three centuries ago. One building which survived the cataclysm in reasonable shape is the Duomo, the cathedral, a remarkable edifice whose origins as a Greek temple are still visible in its massive doric columns half engulfed by later masonry walls. Here you might spend a quiet half hour peacefully contemplating the unadorned and dignified interior.

Just across the square from the Duomo we admired a striking Caravaggio, *The Burial of Santa Lucia*, a dingy reproduction of which hung in the lobby of our hotel. In the adjacent dining room – where the happy chatter at table reached an almost Italian din – was a more enigmatic modern painting. An impromptu competition to interpret this puzzle picture was won by Richard Day.

On our first outing we visited a Greek amphitheatre hollowed out of the hillside and a spectacular quarry excavated centuries ago where the

SIRACUSA

caverns once served as dungeons. We arrived at a huge grotto in the rocks where Paul Dowds tested the acoustic by giving tourists of several nations a fine rendition of *Song of the Clyde*. Paul declares that as he hit the top note a stalactite shattered and fell to the ground but sadly no one else noticed.

A bus trip along Sicily's eastern coastline, much industrialised, brought us to the town of Ragusa, a world heritage site set on a hilltop.

Ragusa is built round a gorge and its steep streets took toll on our energies, some of the group rebelliously declining to leave cafes and restaurants promptly.

A second excursion took us to Taormina, another town built on dizzying slopes, with wonderful coastal views. Two cruise liners lay at anchor in the bay. Decanted into the hubbub of a narrow square packed with cosmopolitan sight-seers, we seemed to have arrived in a circle of hell. Many of us escaped to yet another Greco-Roman arena,

where a breach in the wall behind the stage allowed us to enjoy the vista.

This was followed, for some, by a gentle stroll through leafy gardens laid out by an English lady who had been dismissed from Balmoral by an outraged Victoria – it was rumoured because of hanky-panky with the Prince of Wales – and who had then married well in Italy.

There were many informal pleasures to be had in Siracusa. Two enterprising ladies found their way to the puppet theatre – a traditional Sicilian entertainment – and enjoyed the blood-and-thunder show. One member of the party was observed pedalling round the town on a hired bicycle. Some took a boat trip. Others were content to stroll through the daily market, gazing at the fish stalls or the benches laden with fruit and veg. The peaches were particularly appetising, and it's no wonder that at least one of us stocked up with fruit, bread and cheese, to be eaten at leisure on the rocky foreshore lapped by the Med.

John Fowler

Moving from Siracusa to Palermo took us across the beautiful interior of the island. However, 'beautiful' is not the adjective to describe Palermo when you're clawing your way through bumper-to-bumper rush-hour traffic, industrial estates and down-at-heel housing. In short, Palermo needs some TLC, but the city and its inhabitants really grow on the visitor.

One of their proud claims is that they don't pay much attention to rules of any kind. This cavalier attitude is very noticeable when they drive. I saw one driver threading his way through heavy traffic driving with his elbows to free his hands for his mobile! The child in the baby seat was snoozing contentedly. Another example was our taxi driver who also used his mobile while we hurtled down narrow streets. He slowed down, not at corners, but to call to and smile winningly at any girl who caught his eye.

We stayed in the Hotel Garibaldi. Its eccentric entrance – a basement door reached by a ramp – set the tone for the hotel. Most of us had normal en-

PALERMO

suite rooms, while others had suites with balconies or terraces. These lucky people generously seized the opportunity to share their good fortune and pre-dinner parties were thrown in their spacious accommodation. It meant we had a very lively social scene. The neighbours in surrounding building watched these nightly gatherings with interest. I think some joined in the applause after Marjory Gray sang for us at the final party. It took place on a terrace high above the street. Marjory's beautiful singing is becoming a tradition on GAC trips.

Excursions were all enjoyable and well attended – all except the Aeolian Islands. Only twelve intrepid members set off for the port of Milazzo at 5.30am to catch the 8am sailing for Lipari and Vulcano. We had had a scare the previous day when a guide said it might be called off because of stormy conditions, but several anxious phone calls later we were assured that the trip was on. Most of us were wondering if we

had made the right choice as we boarded the Eolian Queen for the two and a quarter hour trip. She can carry two hundred but took approximately 70 out of Milazzo. Almost from the dockside the crew were handing out sick bags. 'Pronto', usually used when answering the phone, can also mean 'Hurry up with that sick bag!' It was like a massacre, limp wan bodies everywhere. The sea was giving an impersonation of the Minch but it didn't get the better of the GAC travellers who arrived on Lipari, breakfasts still in place.

Most passengers were mourners going to join the locals at a funeral in Lipari town - it looked very like a highland funeral. Another short visit took us to Vulcano, which smells of sulphur, strongly to begin with until you are acclimatised. Here true grit was shown by five of our number who went into the mud bath. It has health-giving properties but you are advised to throw your costume away after bathing because of the smell!

James Bankier