Save The Botanic Gardens Garage

Report from Public Meeting
on Thursday, 9th August 2007 at 7.30pm
in Hillhead Library, Byres Road.

1.0 Introduction

The meeting was chaired by Cllr Martha Wardrop, a Hillhead Councillor. The speakers were Sam Maddra and Gordon Barr. Copies of their presentations are included in this report. At the start of the meeting, there was a silent film screening showing footage from the Botanic Gardens and Hillhead area from 1912. This was provided courtesy of Scottish Screen Archive.

Apologies were received from Mr John Clark of Arnold Clark and his letter was read out as follows:

"Unfortunately I am unable to attend the meeting this evening due to a pre-arranged appointment which I could not reschedule. I am the only person from Arnold Clark able to fully answer questions on this project and did not think it would be suitable to send a colleague. As you are aware, the plans for Vinicombe Street are currently with Glasgow City Planning and we hope to hear their recommendations shortly. As with all building applications, we anticipate slight amendments being made to the proposal and will carry these out as per City Planning's instruction. We welcome any constructive suggestions put forward at the meeting and we will certainly consider them for the final plan. I have asked Councillor Martha to send me the minutes from this meeting, so that we can take suggestions on board."

A message from Ann McKechin, MP for Glasgow North, was conveyed as follows:

"I am very grateful for the invitation to speak at tonight's meeting but unfortunately I am not able to attend as I am on a fortnight's annual leave. I hope and trust that you will have a constructive and useful meeting. As you will be aware, planning is a matter for the local council's planning authority and as your local Member of Parliament, I do not have a direct remit in this matter. However, I, like many local people, at the very least want to see the facade of the property retained. It is important that we retain the rich mixture of architecture in our area.

I have raised this matter with City Councillor, Hanzala Malik and have conveyed the concerns expressed by local residents to him. My understanding from Councillor Malik is that Council has received a listed building application for the demolition of this category 'B' listed building and planning application for the complete redevelopment of the site for mixed use, including flats, retail and commercial development. I understand that a survey was undertaken in Summer 2004 and concentrated on an external visual inspection of all listed structures in the city and in the case of the Botanic Gardens Garage/Arnold Clark property it was found that the structure was in fair condition. National and local policy on listed buildings states that no worthwhile building should be lost unless it is demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that every effort has been exerted by all concerned to find practical ways of keeping it. I trust that these rules will be applied in this case."

1.1 Meeting Attendance

The meeting was attended by over 100 people, of whome 93 recorded their names and addresses on the provided attendance sheet. Most attendees appear to have been residents from the surrounding neighbourhood. Additionally, fourteen people agreed to become more active volunteers in the Save the Botanic Gardens Campaign.

1.2 Summary of Recommendations from the Meeting

i) Following proper research into the buildings history (see details below), which has proved its importance as the oldest custom-built multi-level motorcar garage in Scotland, the building's listed status should be reviewed by Historic Scotland.

ii) An *independent* Structural Engineer's report on the building should be commissioned. This could

be done as part of the planning process, as proposed in the current consultation paper on Listed Building Consent (SHEP 3, section 4.11: *Consent should not be granted for demolition unless the authority proposing to grant the consent has itself thoroughly investigated the scope for avoiding demolition.*).

iii) The building should either be preserved and restored by its owners, or offered for sale on the open market to a restoring purchaser at a price reflecting its condition, as per national policy.

iv) The current planning application should be withdrawn while these three things, which should have been done before it was even submitted, are carried out.

2.0 Botanic Gardens Garage: History and Historical Context.
Researched and presented at Public Meeting, Hillhead Library, August 9 2007, by Sam Maddra

2.1 History: Botanic Gardens Garage, Vinicombe Street, completed 1912.

Gordon Urquhart remarked in his book *Along Great Western Road*:

'It is not surprising that in Victorian Glasgow, the industrial powerhouse of the British Empire, engineers were experimenting with the development of motorised vehicles as early as the 1880s. By the turn of the Twentieth Century, Glasgow was the home of some of the greatest names in Scottish motorcar manufacturing, including Arrol- Johnston, Argyll, and the last survivor, Albion of Scotstoun… and the number of car-owners among wealthy Glaswegians grew steadily.

By 1906, car ownership in Glasgow was such that the Royal Scottish Automobile Club decided to relocate its headquarters from Edinburgh to Glasgow….

Good use was made of vacant ground in the early decades of the twentieth century to meet the growing demand for garages and lock-ups. Only a small minority of West End buildings had existing mews buildings to convert to garages, so enterprising companies established storage garages either in former livery stables or, more rarely, in new-build premises.'
(*Urquhart, Stenlake, 2000, p.104-05*)

In his book *The Industrial Archaeology of Glasgow*, John Hume stated:

'The earliest large examples seem to have been those in Hotspur Street (B28), Vinicombe Street (B44), and Berkeley Street (H8).' (*Hume, Blackie, 1974, p144*) All these buildings were first established c.1906 and further expanded c. 1911-1912.

While the real expansion in services for motorists came after the war in 1918, 1912 was clearly a significant time in Glasgow's motoring history as the Great Scottish Motor Show was held in the Industrial Hall, Kelvingrove from January 12 - 20th. (*Hume, 114; The Herald, Jan. 1912*)

As on-street parking was prohibited the garages 'primarily provided storage space for cars belonging to local residents.' After the Second World War, 'however, regulations governing on-street parking were relaxed' and other large storage garages 'fell into decline,' including the Wylie and Lochhead garage which formerly occupied the Somerfield site on Byres Road. [Urquhart, 185]

In *The Buildings of Scotland: Glasgow,* Williamson *et al.* noted that '... most of these garages [either] went or were adapted for other purposes…. [But one remarkable survivor is] the early and fine Botanic Gardens Garage of c. 1906 - 11 in Vinicombe Street, Hillhead, with its faience frontage and refined iron framed interior.' (*Williamson, Riches, Higgs, Yale, 1990 p. 95*) 'The Botanic Gardens Garage by D V Wylie, 1912, with a boldly arched green and white tiled front and an unusual steel-trussed roof and extensively glazed rear wall, crowned with shaped gables.'

(*Williamson et al. p353*)

The building is comprised of three different sections, all designed by David Valentine Wyllie for Mrs Annie K Kennedy (nee Wilson) between 1896 and 1911. David Valentine Wyllie was a prolific architect who designed both industrial and domestic buildings all over Glasgow, including a number of others in the West End, including terraced villas on Lilybank Gardens in 1892/93, and a tenement on Wilton Street in 1895 (*Glasgow City Archives [GCA]*).

The first part of what was to become the Botanic Garage building complex, built c.1896, was a 2-storey construction, described as a warehouse/stores at the end of Vinicombe Lane, behind what was then Hillhead Academy (*GCA 1/5154*).

Hillhead Academy was built c. 1876, and was very similar in design to the Western Baths – 3-stories including a basement, providing 4 classrooms, a gymnasium, playroom, office, cloakrooms, *etc*., with a walled playground to the rear. By 1902 the school was owned by the Heritable Investment Bank who had applied to raise the boundary wall (*GCA H/56; 1/9107*)

A year later (1903) Wyllie designed and built a 5-storey tenement on Vinicombe Street for Annie Kennedy (*GCA 1/9732*).

In 1905 Annie Kennedy had clearly purchased the old school and grounds, and had applied to build a corner tenement, with shops on the ground floor, and a 'Saloon' over two levels to the rear where the playground had been (*GCA 2/635*). It is currently unclear why this plan wasn't taken further. However, Kennedy and Wyllie did build another 5-storey tenement on Vinicombe Street, with retail units on the ground floor (*GCA 2/635*).

In 1906 Kennedy applied for an 'Extension to Motor Garage/warehouse…' - this is the second phase of the building, which backs onto their recently completed tenement. It is a two-storey building – basement and ground floor. The pedestrian entrance was down an alley to the right hand side of the old school building. Additional toilets and a cloakroom were added to the earlier building at this time. This is the first reference to the fact that the building is a Motor Garage – 'The Botanic Motor Garage' – as early as 1906. (*GCA 2/1526*).

In 1907 Wyllie designed what is described as a 'Completed Lining', again for the site of the former school and playground. This was to have been a 3 storey building with 3 workrooms, 2 warerooms, an office, storeroom, private room and mess room. This clearly appears to be a working establishment that is being proposed, but was also not taken any further (*GCA 2/635*).

The third part of the existing garage; the section with the tiled frontage, was designed in 1911 (*GCA 19/11/273*).

Hume noted 'The present two storey, five bay front building, which has large windows, and is finished in green and white glazed tiles, was added in 1911, D.V.Wyllie, architect (£3,750)' (*Hume, 158*)

Gordon Urquhart stated 'The oldest custom-built motorcar garage in the West End is the Botanic Gardens garage in Vinicombe Street. It is also the most interesting architecturally. Built c.1912 by architect David V Wylie, the garage has a steel skeleton, a front facade of green and white faience (blocks of glazed terracotta), and a side elevation with large expanses of glazing. The upper level [...] was reached by a ramp in the pend of the adjacent tenement. This top floor storage area was spanned by barrel-vaulted steel trusses, with one section being glazed' (*Urquhart, 105*). Hume also stated 'The steel roof trusses are of unusual design' (*Hume, 158*).

'Unlike its later rival in Julian Avenue (with stable like stalls), the private lock-up spaces here were

simple concertina cages. Like most other buildings around Cranworth Street, the garage took advantage of the low lying land (a legacy of nineteenth century stone, brick-clay and coal extraction) to also form a valuable basement level.' (*Urquhart 105*)

'The Botanic Gardens Garage became part of the Arnold Clark empire in 1964, the painted sign on the tenement gable above was faded but still legible until it was finally painted over in the mid-1990s. ' (*Urquhart, 105*)

2.2 Historical context – The earliest surviving listed multi storey car park

Eva Branscome of the Twentieth Century Society has been conducting research into the historical context of the Botanic Gardens Garage, and we have her to thank for the following information.

'There is not much existing research published on the new architectural building forms that developed alongside the automobile industry and we have gone to great lengths to establish a context for the Botanic Garden Garage.

Built in 1912 by David V. Wyllie this appears to be the earliest listed multi-storey car park in either Scotland or England.

The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England put together a report in 1998 on Road Transport Buildings in support of English Heritage's listing programme. I have included the following paragraph in order to establish a context for the rarity of the Botanic Gardens Garage:

"Many multi-storey car parks were built on the Continent and in America before they were adopted in England. With the exception of Central London, they were simply not needed until the aftermath of the Second World War, when car ownership rocketed and traffic congestion became a real problem: …. Until the 1930s, multi-storey car parks had a traditional appearance, with pitched roofs, glazed windows and Classical facades: generally, one could not guess from their elevations whether they operated on lift or ramp systems. By the late 1930s they had become more functional in appearance, but it was only after the Second World War that the reinforced concrete, flat-roofed, open-deck car parks, which are now so familiar, first emerged."

We have only been able to find four listed multi-car parking garages that are not part of private estates…:

The Lex Garage, Brewer Street , Westminster, London, 1929, Grade II: parking garage.

The Bluebird Garage (formerly Carlyle Garages), Kings Road, Chelsea, London, 1924, Grade II: parking garage and residential accommodation for chauffeur.

The Rothbury Motor Garage, Northumberland, 1913, Grade II: single storey, multi-car parking garage.

In Scotland there is no other known comparable example still in existence. The RCHME report is unaware of the Botanic Gardens Garage when it states:

"The first public multi-storey car parks were built on the Continent and in the USA in the mid 1920s, and in 1928 RIBA gave publicity to this new building type in England by announcing a competition to design a parking garage for a theatre site in London. Two alternative means of transporting vehicles to the upper floors of buildings, car lifts and ramps, had already been tried in foreign garages… A number of multi-storeyed public garages had been built in London by 1939, but in other parts of the country they remained a rarity."

The Rothbury Motor Garage dating from 1913 is still a far less sophisticated building and is single storey. The Botanic Gardens Garage was built in 1912 and significantly predates this first wave of car parks, but already had a ramped access to the upper storey.

This has confirmed our initial assessment that the building is indeed exceptionally rare if not unique within a UK-wide context. In the light of the rarity of this building we are considering requesting that Historic Scotland assess this building for a possible upgrading to Category A.' (*Branscome, 2007*)

The earliest known multi-story car park in the US was built for the Hotel La Salle in Chicago, IL., in 1918 and was designed by Holabird and Roche. The Hotel La Salle was demolished in 1976, but the parking structure remained because it had been designated as preliminary landmark status. However, the Hotel LaSalle multi-story was later demolished after failing to receive [full] landmark status from the city of Chicago in 2005 (*Online Preservation, Car Culture, Mary Beth Klatt, Oct. 21, 2005, http://www.nationaltrust.org/magazine/archives/arch_story/102105.htm*)

Clearly further research needs to be done into the Botanic Gardens Garage's historical significance, not just in Glasgow, but also in a worldwide context.

2.3 Postscript

Two additional points of interest that need to be taken further arose out of the Public Meeting. Firstly that The Lighthouse, Glasgow is part of a European network of late 19th and early 20th century architecture, and that this network might be able to shed light on the European context of early multi storey car parks.
Secondly, Annie Kennedy's grandson, Nigel, was in attendance, and he confirmed the research to date that this was indeed a custom-built two storey garage, and that his family ran the company. He has agreed to give further evidence on the buildings history.

3.0 Botanic Gardens Garage: Obtaining Listed Building Consent

Researched and presented at Public Meeting, Hillhead Library, August 9 2007, by Gordon Barr.

Category B Listed Building Definition:

"Buildings of regional or more than local importance, or major examples of some particular period, style or building type which may have been altered."

Listed Buildings:

Listing a building does not prevent it changing or developing, but it does mean that consideration has to be given to preserving its character.

Any proposal to alter, extend or demolish a listed building must be granted listed building consent before it can proceed.

National Planning Policy Guideline 18 (NPPG18)

"With respect to the demolition (meaning total or substantial destruction) of listed buildings, it is Government policy that **no such building should be lost to our environment unless it is demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that every effort has been exerted by all concerned to find practical ways of keeping them**."

"The fact that a building is obsolete for a short period is not in itself justification for unsympathetic change."

"planning authorities should:

ensure that applications are accompanied by sufficient information on the historical, architectural, environmental and archaeological significance of the site"

The best viable use may not necessarily be the most profitable use.

Historic Scotland Memorandum of Guidance on Listed Buildings

"2.13: Scottish Ministers will wish to be satisfied that every possible attempt has been made to find a suitable alternative use.
For example, Scottish Ministers would normally expect to see **evidence that the building had been advertised for sale or long lease to a restoring purchaser on the open market for a reasonable period, and at a price reflecting its location and condition, without success** before granting demolition consent.

2.10: Applications for consent to demolish should be supported by **evidence of the building's structural state of repair and wherever possible by evidence of attempted sale on the open market** (see 2.13). Comparative costings for demolition and new build and repair to existing buildings should also be sought."

Glasgow City Plan - Policy HER2 Listed Buildings

"The Council will not favourably consider applications for consent to demolish a listed building unless it can be **demonstrated, beyond reasonable doubt, that every effort has been made to find practical ways of keeping it**. Arguments based on economic obsolescence and/or structural decay must be accompanied by written evidence which proves the case to the satisfaction of the Council and the relevant Scottish Ministers. This will usually entail the **submission of studies by property and/or engineering consultants**.

Arguments based on lack of suitable use and/or unsuitability for adaptation to alternative uses must likewise be accompanied by **written evidence proving that every effort has been made to find new users, that extensive marketing has proved unsuccessful and that the possibilities of adaptation have been explored** in depth."

How to DemolishA Listed Building:

Show the building is unimportant and not worth preserving
- Research its history and show evidence

Show the building is beyond repair
- Provide structural engineering reports

Show no-one else wants to take on the building to restore it
- Offer for sale on the open market

Researching the Importance of the building

Quotes from 'Supporting Planning Statement', Keppie Architects:

p.3 "the garages are Category B listed, therefore making them of special interest, however not exceptionally recognised in terms of historical or architectural significance"

p.9 (On the Importance of the building):
"The building is in a poor state of repair."

"The building although of some interest is not by a known architect or contractor, and cannot therefore be considered a fine example of a significant person's work."

Detailed history of building under AC ownership has been submitted as part of the application, but no proper research into earlier phases in the buildings history has been done. In particular, there is no discussion of the phased development of the site, or the early dates for Motor Garage use.

A proper detailed building history would normally be a large part of a proper conservation statement of significance for a listed building.

"A literature review concluded that there are no details regarding the importance or significance of the building, apart from a brief mention in the Buildings of Scotland: Glasgow."
p.9, 'Supporting Planning Statement', Keppie Architects

Quick Literature Review Proving Otherwise:

".....most of these garages went or were adapted for other purposes. Two remarkable survivors are the early and fine Botanic Gardens Garage of c. 1906 - 11 in Vinicombe Street, Hillhead, with its faience frontage and refined iron framed interior ..."
"... the Botanic Gardens Garage by D V Wyllie, 1912, a boldly arched green and white tiled front and an unusual steel-trussed roof and extensively glazed rear wall, crowned with shaped gables."
- The Buildings of Scotland: Glasgow
(Williamson, Riches, Higgs, Yale, 1990), p. 95, 353

The Botanic Gardens Garage, 1911, by D V Wyllie, one of the earliest in the city, is handsomely clad in green and cream tiles."
Central Glasgow: An Illustrated Architectural Guide
(C McKean, D Walker, F Walker, RIAS / Rutland Press, 1990), p.190-1

"Since motor vehicles were relatively rare before 1914, so were garages. The earliest large examples seem to have been those in Hotspur Street, Vinicombe Street, and Berkeley Street."
- Industrial Archaeology of Glasgow
(Hume, Blackie, 1974), p.114; Plate 74.

The oldest custom-built motorcar garage in the West End is the Botanic Gardens garage in Vinicombe Street. It is also the most interesting architecturally. Built c.1912 by architect David V Wyllie, the garage has a steel skeleton, a front facade of green and white faience (blocks of glazed terracotta), and a side elevation with large expanses of glazing. The upper level [...] was reached by a ramp in the pend of the adjacent tenement. This top floor storage area was spanned by barrel-vaulted steel trusses, with one section being glazed. [...] the private lock-up spaces here were simple concertina cages."- Along Great Western Road (G R Urquhart, Stenlake, 2000), p. 105

"Given the age [...] the reinforced concrete walls may be a very early example of this type of construction in Scotland, and therefore of historic interest."
- Letter from Montgomery Smith Associates, Consulting Structural Engineers, Oct 2006, submitted as part of the planning application

Structural Condition

'A spokesman said: "Arnold Clark Automobiles has continually monitored and maintained this building since it was listed in 1989, but the irreparable damage and corrosion, which began prior to the building's B-listing and our ownership, has been giving real cause for concern." '
- Evening Times, Tuesday August 7th

An "up to date visual structural appraisal" was performed in October 2006 with Andrew Briggs of WA Fairhurst & Partners, Civil and Structural Engineers in attendance. Andrew Briggs prepared an earlier 1994 condition report as well.

The 1994 structural report says:
"recommendations for repairs and further investigations are included in the report. These recommendations are the minimum necessary to maintain the integrity of the property"

The 2006 structural report states:
"we found that little significant remedial work had been done in the intervening period of twelve years. The building had deteriorated further, particularly where water has continued to run down through floors"

The Supporting Planning Statement by Keppie Architects states:
"The building condition has deteriorated over time, particularly where water from ACA Ltd operations has run through the floors. " (p.10)

The 2006 structural report states:
"significant invasive investigation works will be required on the facade to elicit the extent of the corrosion present in the steel frame. This will have to be discussed with the Planning Department/Historic Scotland as we understand the facade is listed."

"Our recommendation would be that the Planning Department/Historic Scotland should be consulted on the complete dismantling of the front facade followed by rebuilding it with a new steel frame. The facade could then be restored if required by using the undamaged glazed blocks and replicas made to infill the cracked and damaged areas."

<u>"Irreparable Damage" ??</u>

Visual surveys of the condition provided
These state proper investigation works are required to establish the true extent of any corrosion
There is a need to consult with experts in tile conservation

As it stands, the building is being condemned without any proper evidence.

<u>Formal comments on application:</u>

"Clearly, the building is in need of repair, but this does not justify demolition"
Historic Scotland, comment on application

The design for the building was very progressive for its time - as is indicated by the fact that the green and white glazed faience on the front pre-dates the emergence of Art Deco as an architectural form. This faience is generally in good condition and certainly any damage can be repaired or replaced as needed"
T*iles & Architectural Ceramics Society, comment on application*

"The two structural reports provided […] are visual surveys only, and do not in themselves prove the building is beyond repair. At the very least, a detailed structural investigation should be submitted. Faience can be repaired and replaced, as mentioned in the entry of the Bluebird Garage in the Prince's Regeneration Trust: Best Practice for Regeneration"
Twentieth Century Society, comment on application

Repairing Terracotta Tiles

From www.buildingconservation.com

"In the terracotta buildings of the late 19th and early 20th century, stress cracks are common"
"all terracotta buildings of the period which are constructed with a steel frame may be expected to display some sign of this form of deterioration."

"As with all buildings, the key to successful conservation lies in careful maintenance and minimum intervention. It is vital that all pointing, flashings, roof coverings and balcony drainage are regularly maintained, and rainwater goods should be cleared in order to reduce the risk of water penetration. "

"There are a number of specialist companies with increasing practical experience, and for even the most minor repairs, thorough research and consultation is highly advisable."
"Ultrasonic thickness readings of the steel beams can show if their remaining thickness is sufficient to support the roof"

Marketing

"As a first step, the building should be offered for sale to a restoring purchaser for conversion at a price reflecting its condition. The potential form and scope of conversion should be agreed with the local authority and drawn up as a planning brief for interested parties."
Historic Scotland, comment on application

Summary

Botanic Gardens Garage *is* important.
Evidence provided suggests building could be repaired.
Evidence provided *recommends* repair options be further investigated.
Building needs to be offered for sale on open market to give opportunity for a restoring purchaser (For Sale sign, adverts in Commercial Property newspapers etc.).

Current application should be withdrawn while this is done.

4.0 Feedback from the audience

Feedback sheets were circulated and amongst the general views received were the following statements;

"Arnold Clark must be interested in preserving Glasgow's heritage as I understand he was involved with both the Kelvingrove Art Gallery Restoration Appeal and also the MacLellan Galleries Restoration Appeal. To avoid the potential accusation that he was merely involved for PR reasons, could he consider restoring the Garage and leaving it for the people of Glasgow? Uses: Garage (for residents and shoppers, visitors etc); artists' space."

"I think the Garage has a beautiful huge windowed facade"

"I vehemently oppose the proposed plans and application either for change of purpose to residential flats or demolition"

"The historical and local importance of the building has been underplayed in the planning application. The present owners have not fulfilled the necessary conditions relevant to demolition"

"A horrendous idea! This is a historically important and extremely attractive building. It is

extremely suitable for re-use, especially given the revitalisation of leisure in the area (the Salon Cinema, Oran Mor, etc). Surely given its glazed roof, the building could make an attractive art gallery / artists studio space? It could be a wonderful focus for visual arts in the community – we already have a good music/drama venue, cafes and cinemas in the area; an arts centre would be a great asset".

5.0 Other Comments from the floor

"Can the building be upgraded in its listing? It has national and international importance. Contact the Lighthouse and the Art Nouveau Network."

"A repair order could be served by the council"

"Western Baths are interested in buying the building for parking."

"Request information on pre-submission discussion and details of how to object to planning application"

In addition, there were concerns raised about the decision to grant licences to large capacity bars in the West End as well as the need for more local councillors to be accountable for decisions on Licensing and Planning Applications Committees.

Hillhead Community Council also provided copies of the plans for attendees to refer to.