

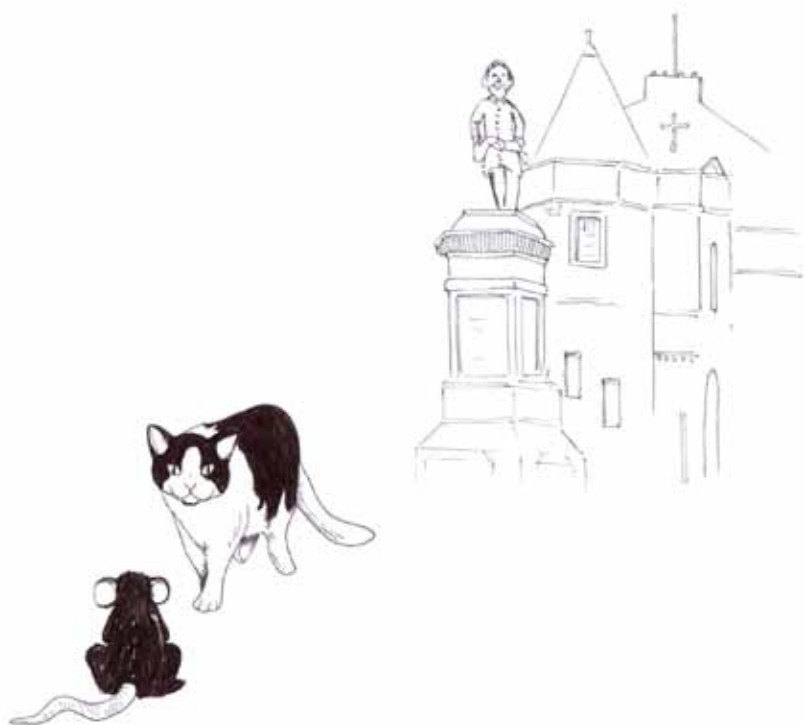


ONLY IN GOVAN
A COLLECTION OF GOVAN MEMORIES

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PREFACE

This book aims to capture a sense of Govan, its spirit, people, character and humour. The quotes selected are of memory and of personal reflection. They are not based on historical fact or interrogation. They are everyday recollections of life in Govan taken from living memory: stories that roll off the tongue and raise a smile, poignant reflections of Govan life that inspire pride. They speak of community, strength and of resilience even in hard times, and they reflect the precious individual detail of lifetimes past and present. Unique and often beautiful, these reminiscences are certain to be found – “Only in Govan”. Enjoy.

Govan's a special place and I'm proud to be from here

Play & Mischief
Pies, Peas & Hot Rolls
Swing Parks, School and Duck Ponds
The Wee Ferry & The Great Clyde
Docks, Yards & Men
Tenements, Baths & Windows
The Women & Good Neighbours
From The Lyceum to The Steamie
The P.I, Water Row & Govan Stones
Wartime & The Southern General
The Fair, The Sheep's Heid & Queens

PLAY AND MISCHIEF


Everyone would say that Elder Park farmhouse was haunted. We'd give each other a fright saying that we'd heard something.



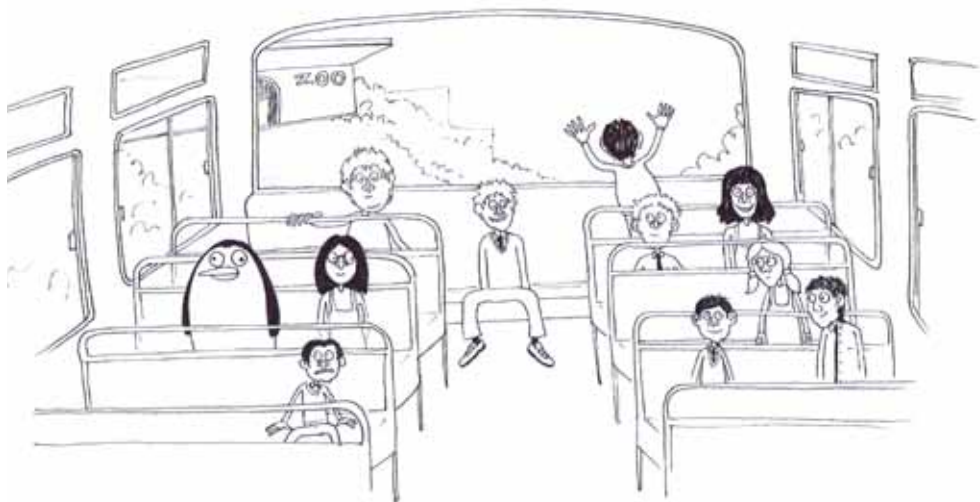
We had our own sort of gang.
There were 6 of us and we made
ourselves a gang hut out of the
bits you could find from the lucky
middens. We had a bit of lino for
a roof and got ourselves furniture,
even a broken chair and table.

We fished for wood in the Clyde
and went round the houses selling
it for firewood for thruppence a
basket. We saved up and bought
a tent. Then we went camping at
Milngavie. One of the boys who
came along with us made us laugh.
He had a rubber tube sticking out
of his back pack - he'd brought a
whole gas ring!

"We
fished
for wood
in the
Clyde"



We would hang a sheet up at
Granny's railings to make a tent
and we'd play 'Shop' with any of her
broken dishes.



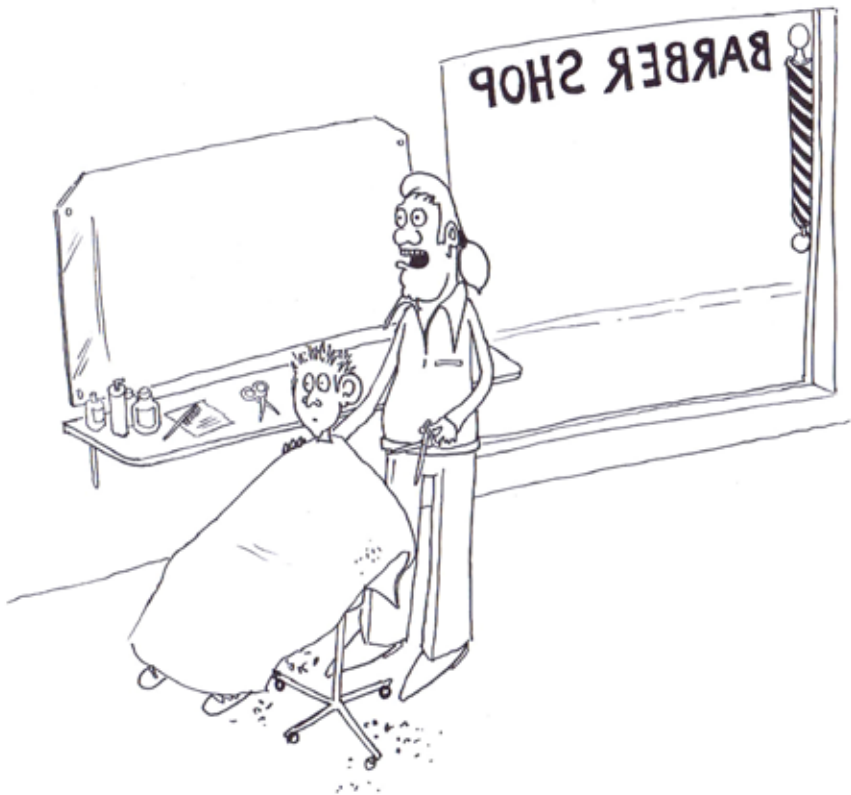
From Wine Alley there used to be bus runs for the weans, a sort of play-scheme trip. On one they went to a zoo, and halfway back to Govan it was discovered that the kids had managed to smuggle a penguin on to the bus. Alas, he had to be returned!

Another time on a bus run to Blackpool, the kids decided to help themselves to a few strings of teddy bears hanging outside the shops. On the way home everyone was scrambling over teddy bears to try and find a seat.

“When the
gas man
came to
light the
close, that
was it”



We'd be playing Cowboys and Indians in the close, but when the gas man came to light the close, that was it - you knew it was time to come in.



I knew one character who came from Riverside - he was a prankster. A new guy set up a hairdressers in Govan and he set about all fluttery waiting for his first customer. So this prankster guy came in with a wee boy in tow and asked for the full treatment. He got his shave, trim, etc, and they had a bit of patter. Then he said he was going to pop next

door for cigarettes and asked the hairdresser if he could give the wee boy a trim too. Off he went. When the boy was finished, the hairdresser said to him, 'Your dad's taking his time. The boy said, 'He's not ma da. He asked if I wanted my hair cut and said I'd get a lollipop too. Where's my lollipop?' 'Oh aye, I'll give you a lollipop!!!'

My Dad used to play with his pals on the dykes - the walls that seperated the backcourts of the tenements.

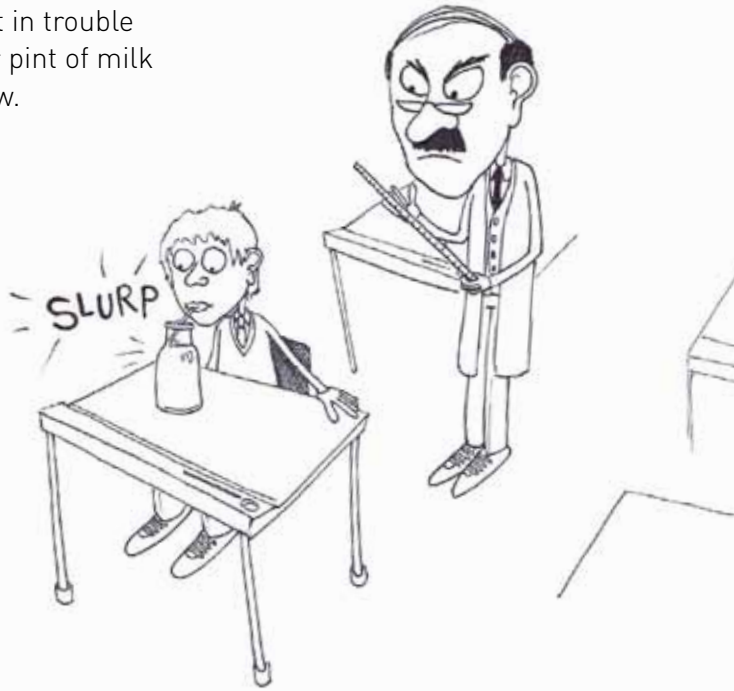
One day he overheard a policeman knock on the back window of the local fish and chip shop and ask for 'fish suppers for the officers'.

So next night he and his pals knocked on the window around the same time and shouted 'fish suppers for the officers!' The suppers were duly handed out and they ate them up on the dykes. The police came by later on only to be told they'd already had their fish suppers!

"fish
suppers
for the
officers"

Last time I remember a really big snow was when I was three, but there was one year we got trapped in the school because so much came down at once. We made a snowman, only I was the snowman. My pals put all this snow on my head and it went down my trousers. I was trying to cover myself with as much as possible.

I remember school being really strict; you used to get in trouble even for sucking your pint of milk too loudly with a straw.



I was one of the first pupils at the new Hill's Trust Primary School, at the age of 10 in 1974. It was the first open plan school in Glasgow. If you were told off then the whole school could hear. There was one space at the bottom with corrugated doors which was called 'the noisy quiet room' where you could do music and things.

"If you
were
told off
then the
whole
school
could
hear"



We used to play in Elder Park when we were wee and carry on with each other. Now our kids are doing the same.

"All of the schools in Govan are really good, we got a good education here."



I started playing football with the Pirie Park Club. The coach had us running up and down the hill in Bellahouston Park. He takes his dog - you have to keep up with it!

“It’s important that the young people of Govan are listened to because we are the next generation.”



PIES, PEAS & HOT ROLLS...

Years ago we had nothing but we used to share. You would
give a cup of milk and someone would give you sugar.

Folk used to queue at 4am for hot rolls. In those days there was always a queue everywhere. If you were with your sister you'd say 'You jump in that one, I'll wait in this.' Jack's Rolls used to be in a building on the now vacant land on Water Row. You would go in through the back door and the guy would give you a roll with a big slab of butter on it. Once you had your roll it was off to the chip shop in Shaw Street to buy a few pennies' worth of chips. The best part was going up the road and eating your roll.

"Folk
used to
queue
at 4am
for hot
rolls"



You couldn't beat a pie and peas,
peas with loads o' vinegar.






If you've never had a Watson's pie
you've never experienced life!

Walking towards the Govan Road shops, we came to the Co-op provision shop. It smelled of cereals and spices, but best of all you could buy my favourite biscuit. 'My mother wants a quarter of a pound of jam sandwiches please – 12278.' I would say. The assistant, having weighed out the biscuits and been paid, then wrote the number and cost on a tab in a long book, which she tore out and handed to me. The number was my mother's membership number and the tabs were collected carefully by her until they could be presented on dividend day and exchanged for cash.

"The Co-op was the big thing in those days. It was at the corner of the Golly"



I worked 33 years on the Govan Market. There used to be a waiting list to get a market stall for Saturday. There was a maximum of 120 spaces and sometimes there was not enough room for everyone.

During the summer we had a daily visit from an ice-cream seller, an Italian gentleman by the name of Notoriani. He had an ice-cream parlour in Govan. Notoriani pushed a handcart, which was fully laden with ice-cream, around the streets all day until the ice-cream was sold.

His menu started with a ha'penny cornet, then a penny 'slider' which had only one biscuit, next a proper wafer of ice-cream between two wafer biscuits costing two old pennies. The really posh one had a gorgeous toffee/chocolate biscuit. After years of pushing his cart, using his right hand to hold the handle and his left forearm to do the actual shoving, he appeared one day in an exotic horsedrawn van surrounded by cut-glass windows. The excitement was great, like welcoming royalty.



"The excitement was great, like welcoming royalty"

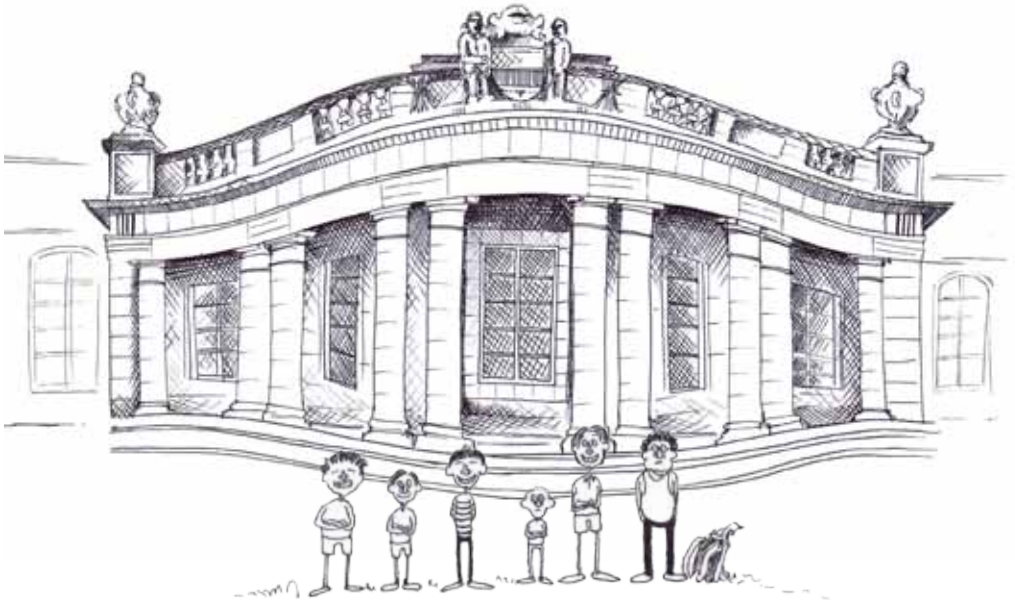


© Peter Saintmartin

We spotted that there was nowhere really to sit and have a coffee in Govan, so we decided to start up our own café.... Café 13.

SWING PARKS AND DUCK PONDS

You're not a Govanite until yer tossed in the pond.



"The Library
is the heart
of our
community in
Elder Park"

The park was gifted in 1885 by Lady Isabella Elder. It was originally farm land.



“We’d been playing in the park, and we were manky!”

The photographers used to come round the Govan streets and you’d get your photograph taken. We’d be all dressed up perfect for them. On one occasion we had our photograph taken in our nice dresses. But, we’d been playing in the park, and we were manky! The photographer had to come back when we were clean.





Orkney Street Swing Park is where I met my husband. I was 13, he was 14. He was sitting in a cardboard box. I just knew he was going to be the love of my life. We got married in St Mary's when he was 20.

“Orkney Street
Swing Park is
where I met
my husband”

"You're
not a
Govanite
until yer
tossed in
the pond!"



It's the funniest thing people getting flung in the duck pond. I got flung in by my Nanna. Now I've been in it more times than I can remember. If you live in Govan you have to get flung in the pond.

You're not a Govanite until yer tossed in the pond!

You can take a slice of bread down to Elder Park and if you're lucky you can feed the swans there. I used to live up the other end of Govan and we had a whole family of them, teenager swans and all.

“I used to get chased into Elder Park by my mother to play”

I used to get chased into Elder Park by my mother to play, instead of the back courts, which were all concrete.



THE WEE FERRY & THE CLYDE

The ferries were part of childhood growing up in Govan.

"The 'Wee Ferry', as it was affectionately known"

At Govan there were two ferries. The larger one carried vehicles and passengers. It was a bit slow as it never crossed until it had enough cars. Foot passengers hardly ever used it, preferring instead the 'Wee Ferry', as it was affectionately known. This was a little steamboat with access at each end for getting on or off. The boiler and engines were in the middle of the boat. This was also the place where the captain stood in a kind of sentry box with his steering wheel. His mate was responsible for keeping the boiler stoked up and, when the boat docked by bumping up the ferry steps, he had to jump ashore

and tether the boat to one of the series of spikes set into the steps. From ground level down to the river there were some 40 or more timber steps, which were exposed according to the height of the tidal river. The descent to the ferry boat was hazardous at the best of times, but in the winter it could be positively suicidal.

Slatted seats ran down both sides of the boat, but no one seemed to sit on them except for in summer. At most times the wind off the river discouraged this. Instead there was always a rush to get into the shelter and warmth of the boiler house.



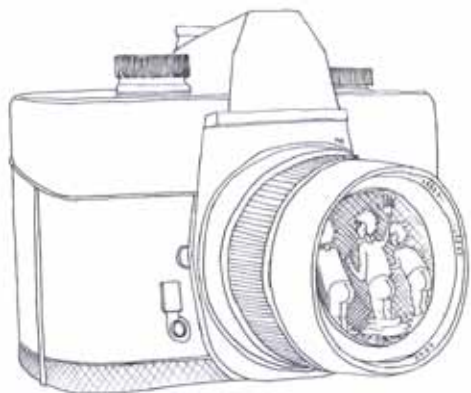
I remember my grandfather telling me a story. He was trying to catch the ferry and just as he arrived it was about to leave. Running to jump on, he slipped and landed in the river. And it was pay day too! They hauled him out and he went home, water pouring out of him and with a soaked pay packet.

Between Linthouse and Glasgow there were 5 or 6 ferries, but there was also the horse tunnel, which worked until the 60's. The horse tunnel was where the two rotunda buildings are now. One night there was this big fire across the river, and me and my pals decided to go for a look the next day. We went there via the horse tunnel. You went down this big spiral stair. There was also a lift and you had to hang on to the horse as they'd get awful frightened.

"Between
Linthouse and
Glasgow there
were 5 or 6
ferries"

We would get the ferry (free travel in those days) to cross the river, then walk down to the next ferry to take us back across. We continued crossing and re-crossing until we reached Govan. One of the things we did was "midgie raking". I recall some

very big ships tied up towards the city end of the Clyde. We would take envelopes from the bins and detach stamps from Singapore, USA and many other foreign places. This started my hobby of stamp collecting.



"My first
thoughts?
It could
only
happen in
Govan"

I used to travel quite often on the ferry between Braehead and Glasgow. On one occasion, I was passing Govan in the presence of a lot of camera-toting tourists, when I spotted what was happening on the shore close to the old ferry stances. It was three lads mooning, backs to the river, trousers at knees, exposing their backsides. My first thoughts? It could only happen in Govan!

"The
ferries
were
part of
childhood
growing up
in Govan"

The ferries were part of childhood growing up in Govan. In 2013 they ran a free trial during the summer and I loved the chance to travel on the ferry again. I would be happy to pay a fare. The experience was a brilliant idea.



DOCKS, YARDS & MEN

How do you get such a big ship on such a narrow river?

As kids we used to stand at the doors of the shipyards. 2000 men would all come out at once. My memory of this was all black and white, although of course it was in colour, but the men would be so dirty. We had a phobia of getting flattened.

“ The gate
would
be black
with men
– Govan
was alive ”

I remember all the men coming out of Fairfield. When that horn went, you ran – I had a pram and I had to get out of the way. The gate would be black with men – Govan was alive.





"Govan has
always been
blessed with
radicals"



There can be a lot of misplaced nostalgia about the docks. You have to remember that they were dirty, insanitary and a danger for those who used to work in them. It used to amaze me, they made sleek Atlantic jobs, like floating Hiltons, and then went home to the single ends of Govan.

“there was
always
a good
sense of
humour”

One time we were all sitting in the shed, hundreds of men, waiting to start the next bit of work when the lights went out . The foreman came in shining a torch and one joker shouts ‘One tub and two choc ices!’. That’s yard humour for you.



Life in the tool room had its moments. Our foreman was a strict man who kept us at it, especially the younger ones. Once a day he had to report to the managers, an absence usually lasting over half an hour. One of our bunch ran a dance band in his spare time and the departure of the foreman signalled a raucous imitation of the latest dance hit as everyone joined in with spanners clanking on metal and voices trumpeting. When the storeman, who kept a lookout through his window, saw the foreman returning, the tool room was like a Sunday school.

I always looked forward to lunchtimes, not necessarily because I was hungry, but when the 12.15pm horn sounded it was a welcome break from the routine. We would pour out of the yard gate, along the street to the restaurant on the corner of the main road.

As soon as dinner was over it was back to the yard for me – down to the slipway where the boats were being built. It's an awesome sight to be in the middle of the skeleton of girders towering up on each side as you stand up on the keel, 40 or 50 ft high in some cases. Sometimes I would give a hand to heave the decking plates into

position. This meant walking along the rib, often less than 2 inches wide, into the middle and squatting down, with your feet against the next rib, about two feet away. You had to get hold of a rope attached to the plate and pull like mad. These plates were often three quarters of an inch thick, three feet wide by six feet long, and they were heavy. It usually took up to six men to handle them.

“ It's an awesome sight to be in the middle of the skeleton of girders ”

To get to the boatyard you had to go through the boiler shop, so named because that was where the ships' boilers were made. What fascinated me was the gigantic steel punch, all of twenty feet high and weighing hundreds of tons, thundering down and punching out the rivet holes through the steel plates. And there were equally big guillotines which sliced through the three quarter inch steel as though it was cheese. The incredible thing was that

all of the men operating these machines had been doing this sort of work their whole lives and were so skilled that they only marked out the plates with chunks of chalk where to cut or punch holes. When these plates were put in position on the steel ribs with the edges overlapping, everything fitted exactly. The din was ear splitting in the boiler room and the only way you could communicate was by miming or hand signals. Come the day of the launch, all who could get the time off gathered on both banks of the Clyde seeking the best view. The river had been dredged for extra depth and was at high tide. The ship was by then supported by massive timber cradles resting and balanced on two enormous well-greased slipways, which extended into the river. The speeches having been made and the regulation bottle of champagne smashed across the bow of the ship, now called the 'Viceroy of India', the most important task now had to be tackled.

The block wedges which were preventing the ship from moving had to be knocked away. The shipwrights had to get underneath and, pair by pair, the wedges were hammered out. Then out went the

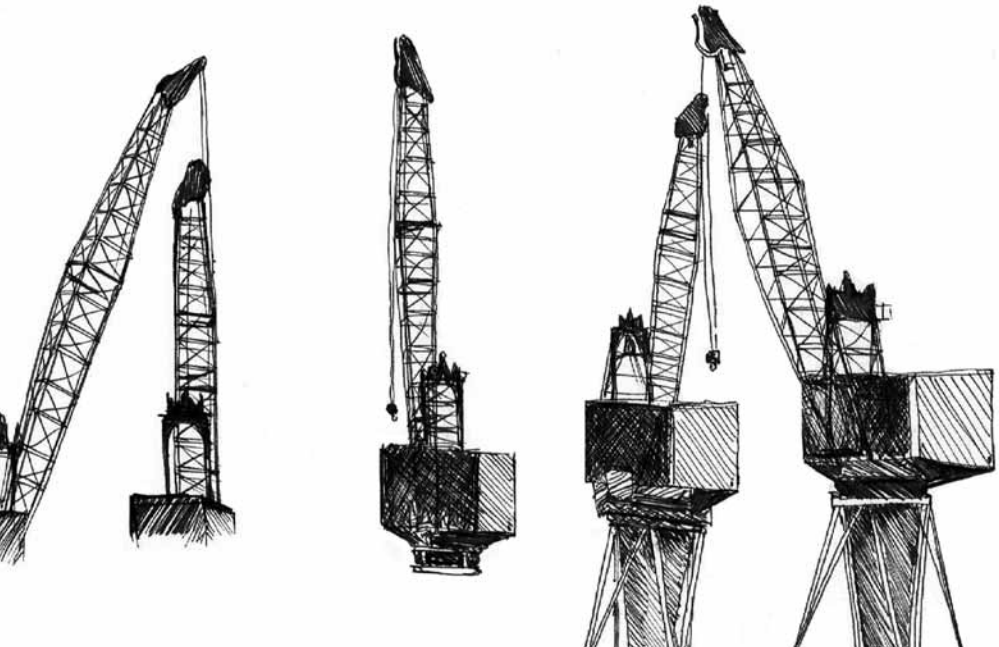
last pair. Now it was the moment of truth. We all knew what should happen but could remember another time when a ship refused to move and had been stuck on the stocks for months. Nothing seemed to happen – then almost imperceptibly, the ship gave a shudder. Then slowly, painfully slowly, the ship came alive and started to move. That was the moment when the ship became 'she'. 'She's going', someone shouted and caps went up in the air.

Everybody joined in, the yard horn hooted and it was taken up by horns in other yards up and down the river. 'She' gathered speed and, on board, the crew of specially trained men cheered. The noise was ear splitting as piles of rusty chains were dragged along each side of the slipway, covering us in dust. She hit the water and floated out into midstream where the chains took over, stopping her. The ship's horns added to the tumult, the people roared with relief and excitement, and three years of work sat in the middle of the river, majestically waiting for the tugs to take her into the fitting-out basin to receive her engines and other large equipment.

- William Paton

There would be parts of the day
when work was slack. I stayed in a
house where you could watch the
men climb over the wall at Fairfield
for a skive. It was called 'The
Salmon Leap.'

"you could
watch the
men climb
over the wall
at Fairfield
for a skive"





“ filling
up an
enamelled
mug with
water and
plunging
in a red
hot iron ”

At dinner time the workers washed down their food with tea, made by filling up an enamelled mug with water and plunging in a red hot iron until the water boiled, almost instantly. Then they would drop in some tea, sugar and condensed milk. After stirring the mixture violently, the excess tea leaves were scooped off the surface and tossed into the fire.

We gave people steel toecaps, overalls, goggles and at the end of the first day we weren't sure whether to let folk take them home, if we'd see the stuff again. But come the next day, not only did they bring the things back, but they wore them all the way here. They said they felt different walking down the street. People were looking at them and thinking 'Workie'.

People are not always motivated by money; it is more about the idea of being able to contribute to society. We are driven to contribute something that is valued, visible and makes a difference.

“People
are not
always
motivated
by money”





TENEMENTS & SINGLE ENDS

Newspapers were clipped to the wall for use in the toilet which was at the bottom of the close, and we shared a big steel bath.

On Neptune Street there were gambling rings in the back courts. The bookies would gather folk together. The police were always trying to catch them out, so each time the bookies came they would have a guy on look-out at the front, called the 'slop catcher'.

"they would
have a guy
on look-out
at the front
called the
slop catcher"

The back courts of the tenements were square - it was a perfect amphitheatre. Great singers would come round, like those from the Salvation Army on a Sunday evening.

Our tenement was on Shaw Street and everyone would hang out of the windows. The favorite song was 'O Sole Mio'.



Oh aye, the pawn shop... She'd put her husband's trousers in on a Monday, kept the vest and the jacket on the hangers (he didn't go out during the week). So the Friday night would come and I'd go round to get the trousers back before he'd finished his dinner. I used all the back roads and backcourts in case anyone saw me. He never ever found out that his trousers were in the pawn shop. She'd put them back in on the Monday morning.

The rag and bone man would come round the houses and give you a balloon for some old clothes.



“No doors
were ever
locked”

No doors were ever locked in any of the tenement flats in Govan. People could just walk into other people's homes and knew who everyone was in the scheme. The same key was used for six locks in a tenement block. When you went on holiday you would hand yer keys in at the police station.





Betty Grable was a big star, we'd see her at the Lyceum. She was famous for her legs and we'd all come home and re-enact the musicals. We had stairs in the tenements, so we'd come down them singing and all that. We'd have concert parties down the back and one of the mummies would make jelly.

"She was famous for her legs"


“my uncle
had just
been in to
paint the
bath and I
came out
completely
white!”



We moved into a new house when I was wee in a place near the Sheep's Head pub. It was the first time we'd had a bath in the house. I mind coming in one day excited to try it out. What I didn't know was that my uncle had just been in to paint the bath and I came out completely white!

“Let’s ask
folk what
they want”

One of the ministers from Govan Old that we remember was David Orr because he was the chairman of the New Govan Society. They were responsible for getting the first housing association off the ground - what became Govan Housing Association. It was profoundly important. It allowed residents to have a say in what happens and was designed to keep the community together and to maintain the housing. He said ‘Let’s ask folk what they want’. It was a huge step to cut across the council and private housing schemes that existed at the time in Glasgow.



The heart of Govan doesn't change.
Even though the place has changed
the Govan spirit lives on. The new
building is a new start – the housing
is far superior now compared to
when we were children.

THE WOMEN & GOOD NEIGHBOURS

The women of Govan are strong.

You didnae need to go out of Govan to buy anything, you could furnish your house in Govan. You know we had seven shoe shops! There were shops all along from Govan Cross to Kinning Park. We had everything we needed. Back then there were just that many people. It was a town in itself Govan.

“It’s nice to share these memories”

Some of us remember going dancing in a wooden hut on Govan Road. I stay at Riverside. Now there’s only one couple in the close, the rest of us are widows.

All the widows in the close go out dancing on a Tuesday afternoon together. It’s nice to share these memories. There is still a good community spirit in Govan.



"Every woman
in your close
was 'yer
Auntie'.
When I was
wee, I asked
my mother
if all these
women were
actually her
sisters"



In the really old days, the corner of Rosneath Street and Shaw Street was called 'The Kittle Corner', It's where all the local women used to meet for a good gossip.

"There is still a good community spirit in Govan"

Mary Barbour. A Govan name to some degree lost in time, sadly. Her courage and determination as a woman was formidable, as was her passion and talent in standing against injustice for all in the community of Govan and the Clydeside. What a 'wummin', but when your back's against the wall someone must answer the call. And she did.

In 2008, I was walking from the subway at Govan Cross and happened upon a street protest by women and some young team, as we call them in Glasgow – the family, friends and kindred spirits of the cause. I stood for a good while, got my phone out and snapped away. The mega pixels might have let me down, but the images captured were of the same spirit and radicalism as Mary Barbour's Army.

The fight, the cause? Justice for two young lassies who were severely disabled and whom the Government had declared 'fit for work'. Well, the Government had another thing coming that day.

The people of Govan gathered and the reinforcements grew as the minutes passed. The women blocked off Govan road with their placards and songs, and the police were at a loss for what to do.

“ The protest showed the spirit of Mary Barbour still lives on ”

I was proud to witness it. The protest showed the spirit of Mary Barbour still lives on. It only takes so much injustice for the women to rally together and give them hell for leather.

My Granny used to pop out her tongue and profess – 'See that . . . that's a weapon. Learn how to use it son! Not all battles need fought wae yer hawns'.

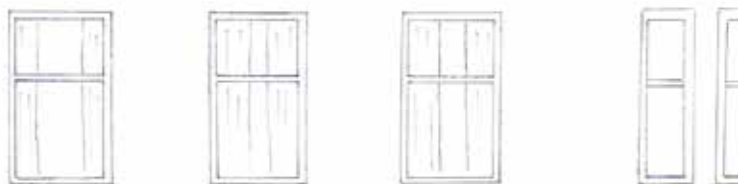
How right you were Granny.

Remember the great ones.

Remember Mary Barbour's Army.

- T.G Connell





Mainly women came out, with pots and pans, and they smashed in the rent man. Imagine being that rent man and having to go home to your wife. How embarrassing!



© Laura Frood

At one of our first flats, I was hanging out the washing when a women came out and insisted on showing me how to do it 'properly'. She didn't want to disgrace the other women in the block!

FROM THE LYCEUM TO THE STEAMIE

These buildings were part of my growing up.

"Inside was painted with Disney characters, the seats were immaculate"

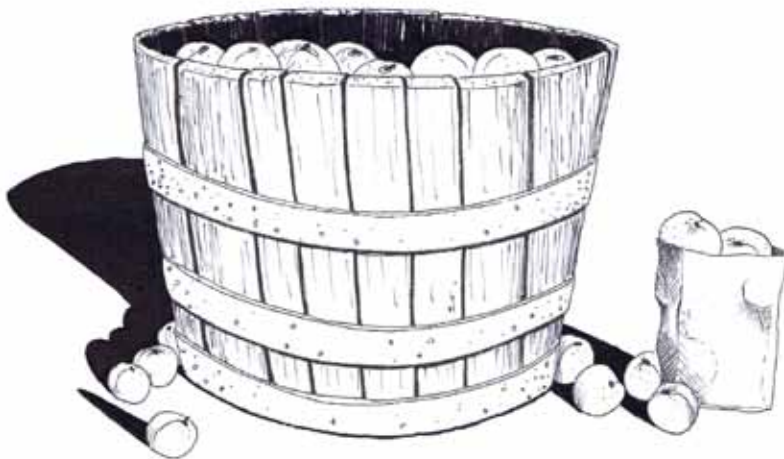


Mr Morris was the doorman, dressed in a smart dinner suit and bow tie; he was about fifty-odd, grey hair and that bow tie, lovely man (right handsome). Mr Bryson was the manager at that time. Inside was painted with Disney characters, the seats were immaculate. There was also the Plaza, a beautiful theatre built near the bus terminal. You would go in at 2, come out at 10 and walk home singing all the songs.



My first date was to The Elder picturehall on Rathlin Street. It was known as the 'flea pit' (you took the fleas in with you and gave them to someone else!) I was about 11 years old at the time. I borrowed some money to go. On the way, we passed a fruit barrel and my date asked 'Do you like plums?'. We got a big bag of plums and sat in The Elder. Life was simple then.

" My first
date was
to The
Elder "



“Up to two
hundred
people
would
queue with
their wee
bags of
sweeties.”

Street singers were a big thing in Govan. For example, there would be huge queues outside the Lyceum snaking right round the building and all the way up to Rathlin Street. Up to two hundred people would queue with their wee bags of sweeties. The street singers would come along and sing a few tunes. They could fair sing. They'd walk up and down the line shaking a cap for you to put something in it. Dougie Smith was one of the most well known. He was almost blind and played the accordion whilst singing Italian songs.



© Peter Saintmartin

Perhaps the spirit of the street singers still endures as Brechin's Bar in Govan is one of the few places you can still go into on a Tuesday afternoon for Karaoke!

“you can still go to the pub on a Tuesday afternoon for Karaoke”

"ye'd only
just got
your
soap on."



In the public baths you never had long enough, you got 15 minutes before someone would come banging on the door. Ye'd only just got your soap on.

**GOVAN
HOT BATHS**

GENTS MON. WED. FRI. SAT.
 LADIES TUE. THU. SAT. SUN.
 MON-FRI. 10am-12pm SAT. 10am-12pm
 MON-FRI. 2-4pm SAT. 4-6pm
 LAST ADMISSIONS
 MON-FRI. 10-12pm SAT. 4-6pm

SCALE OF CHARGES

ADULTS 2s
 JUVENILES 1s
 FIVE OF UNDER 10s 5s
 WASH OF TOWELS 6d

HEAD OFFICE: JAMES RUSSELL
 CITY CHAMBERS: WARRICK
 WARRICK & CO. MANAGERS

**GOVAN
WASH-HOUSE**

MON-FRI. 10am-12pm SAT. 10am-12pm
 SAT. 10am-12pm
 LAST ADMISSIONS
 MON-FRI. 10-12pm SAT. 4-6pm

SCALE OF CHARGES

WASHING MACHINE per hour 17d
 FILLING 10d
 DRYING MACHINES 2s
 TOWELS 1s
 and American lines before closing

HEAD OFFICE: JAMES RUSSELL
 CITY CHAMBERS: WARRICK
 WARRICK & CO. MANAGERS



“You used
to take
prams to
get your
washing
home
in big
bundles”



The wash house, the Steamie, was great - big sinks, very deep, boards, big dryers. You used to take prams to get your washing home in big bundles, so much that you could hardly see where you were going.



I used to walk down to the subway
as a young girl just to smell the old
subway station;
I loved the smell of the old subway.

“Swimming
was a big
thing in Govan”

Swimming was a big thing in Govan. The swimming pool was next door to the steamie. Some of the schools had swimming baths. Govan High had swimming baths, so did the village school up the road, the Broamloan School. It had the swimming baths under the floorboards, a hidden swimming pool. Way ahead of the times!



© Peter Saintmartin

The Lyceum went through several different hands and at one time it became the place for bingo. Even today bingo remains a big thing in Govan.

We played bingo before anyone knew what it was, only we called it box ball. It had a raffia bag and balls you had to throw into a small cup with a skull and crossbones on it. If you got the ball in the cup you won any prize on the stall, bingo! All the balls had numbers - legs eleven, two fat ladies...

"Bingo
remains
a big
thing in
Govan"

THE P.I. WATER ROW & THE GOVAN STONES

There is a very spiritual heart of Govan, this is where
the Kings and Queens of Scotland stood.

I feel very connected to the P.I, it's where my parents met. My father was Assistant Minister and lived in the top flat, my mother was Girls Club Leader. My memory is of a buzzing lively place. I remember using the Girls entrance and thinking, my mum used this entrance when she was a girl, over 50 years ago, and it is completely unchanged.

“I feel very
connected
to the P.I.”

William Pearce had passed away and the P.I. was built as a thank you by the widowed Dinah Pearce. At that time the people of Govan were extremely poor. It was built so that half was for the women. They had the likes of a shower, bath, wash house and they could do sewing classes and everything you can imagine. The other door was the gents and they used to come and play billiards and cards, etc. The building opened in 1906.



"The place is
important
to people
and their
memories."

Doors Open Day is always really good at the Pearce Institute. Loads of folk come, and they tell you that this is where they met their wife at the dancing, or she was in the Brownies and he the Scouts. The place is important to people and their memories.



© Govan Cross THI

The lights in the Billiard Room were hand forged by the workers of the shipyards. A set hung over each table. There are still the marks of the billiard table legs on the wooden floor.

“Hand
forged by
the workers
of the
shipyards”



We used to stand on the graves and pretend the rumble of the subway was a ghost.



© Paul [illegible]

People believe there is a ghost on the balcony of the P.I. It's a figure of a lassie. I say lassie but she's more a woman, say fifty, in black Victorian dress with a kind of veil over her head. They say it's Dinah who built this place.

"People
believe there
is a ghost on
the balcony of
the P.I."

"he took the
skills and
talent of the
Govanites
with him"

One of the only pacifists to receive a military medal was the former minister of Govan Old, George Macleod. He gave up ministry here in 1938 and went up north to rebuild the Iona Abbey. To do so he took the skills and talent of the Govanites with him, employing a lot of the local craftsmen. He left a strong connection between an urbanised Govan and this Inner Hebridean island.





© Paul McDonald

Govan Old Churchyard is heart shaped, with no corners. Its boundary marks date back to 800/900AD.

“The Govan Stones are of great interest to people; visitors come from all over the world to see them”



In the early 90's we wanted to understand more about Govan Old Graveyard. So we dug lots of tiny little trenches. Students, the Govan Reminiscence Group and other local volunteers spent some time in the holes. The basic idea was to try to understand if this was the real existing graveyard boundary. It was quite funny really, getting hundreds of people to peer down holes. To our surprise the Time Team from the TV heard about it and wanted to get involved!

"To our
surprise
the Time
Team
from the
TV heard
about it"



© Mitchell Library Archives

It is vital for places such as Water Row to link to their ancient past. It is one of the most historically important places in Glasgow.

“It is one of the most historically important places in Glasgow.”

WARTIME & THE SOUTHERN GENERAL

The shops would give everyone coffee, tea and bread.

I remember having to walk to school wearing a gas mask and ear-plugs.

I had a siren suit - the original onesie! I was sent round the doors in it, to tell people there was air raid. We all congregated in the downstairs hall, someone would bring down sandwiches. There was a battle wall at the front of the tenements to stop shrapnel going in, and sticky tape at the windows to stop them smashing after a bomb blast. You couldn't afford to have a chink of light in case it could be seen by the German planes.



"I had a
siren
suit - the
original
onesie"

During the war we used to make bracelets out of thrupenny bits.



“During the war, when the siren went off”

During the war when the siren went off, my mother would roll me up in a blanket and put me in a deckchair. There was a wee café downstairs and they'd give everyone coffee, tea and bread.



During the war my sister and I used to go with a bath - a bath with four wheels and a big piece of string - to Govan Cross train station. Then the coal would come in and we always got half a tonne, put it in the bath and pulled it home. Then I mind one

time we went there and there was no coal left. So my sister and I started to pick up bits. About $\frac{1}{4}$ of a tonne was just lying on the ground. We would heat our tea with it, that's what you did when you were 13.



Govan used to be a burgh. There were several burghs in Glasgow. Ambulances would come out around Govan but couldn't cross the border into the next burgh. I asked them once what would happen if they needed to transfer a patient to a neighbouring hospital and they told me that the two ambulances would meet on the border and swap the patient over!

“ambulances
would meet
on the
border and
swap the
patient over!”



In 1963 the Queen came to open the Clyde Tunnel, she was the first one through it. You can imagine there was a big point on security! She also opened up the new surgical unit at the Southern General hospital with Prince Philip. We were all given white gloves and I asked, 'what for?' They told us, 'In case the Queen shakes your hand!'

At some point they all lost Prince Philip, he'd gone off on his own and there was a huge panic, walkie talkies going off all over the place.

At last they found him having tea with some of the porters. They made such a great fuss for the visit, the place looked great with flowers all the way along the path.

"they
found
him
having
tea
with
some
of the
porters"

THE FAIR, SHEEP'S HEID & QUEENS

The Govan Fair, the highlight of the year.

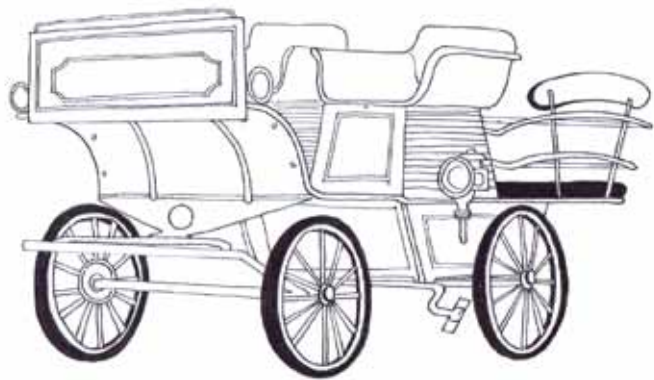
The Govan Fair, the highlight of the year!

Mammies, Daddies, children, all in their Sunday best, it was a chance to meet folk you knew and went to school with. The whole community gets together, right along Govan Road. You see different things - up to 17 groups or more, dancers, singers, football teams - go past and there is always a Govan Queen.

“ My first
memory of
Govan was
going to the
Govan Fair ”

My first memory of Govan was going to the Govan Fair. I was dancing in it when I was 3. In last year's parade, we dressed up as our favourite cartoon characters: some people Stuey, some Hannah Montana, Spiderman and all that. Then one time we dressed as pirates and mermaids, and we had moustaches on our faces!

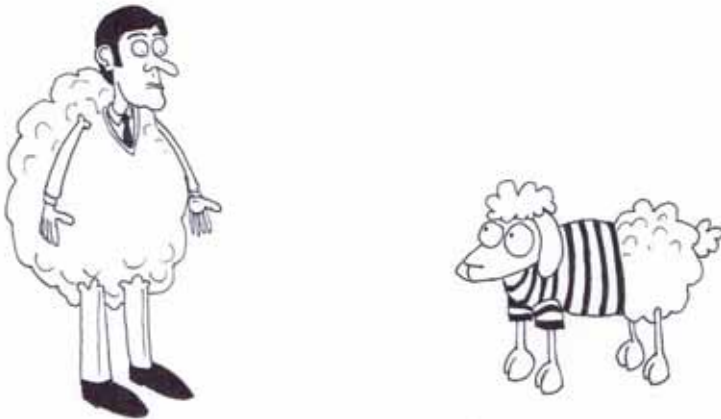




The Govan Fair was deeply connected to the social life of the men of the yards, that was a lot of people remember! It's important that we communicate and help to recapture that and restore the fair's place within the community.



"Festivals are
the glue within
communities"



This year we are having sheep at the Govan Fair, human sheep! The humans cloned the sheep and now the sheep clone the humans.

" Stop
the reel,
that's
ma Da!"

We were sitting there in Govan Old Church once and they were showing slides from the Govan Fair. They went through the 50's, 60's, 70's, the queens crowned, etc. My girlfriend was sitting next to me. Along came a float in one frame and she jumped up, 'Stop the reel, that's ma Da!'. There was this float with a pump man (who was her dad) and a diver with a glass helmet. He was a young man with this beautiful white jumper that they had borrowed from the Clyde Navigation Trust. She got three copies of that slide.

“It was
important
for the
kids to
interact
with the
parade”

They used to throw out lollipops and the kids would run out to catch them. It was important for the kids to interact with the parade. Nowadays this is difficult because the parade is motorised and this means it's dangerous for little hands getting too close to the wheels trying to grab fallen sweets. The fair went through a shift in the 70's from a pedestrian parade to a diesel procession, with the queen typically at the front. Now we are trying to slow things down and bring back the element of interaction.

The Govan Fair is an incredible institution. It was first recorded in the 1780's and established by the Weavers' Society, but could potentially link back to medieval times. The tradition of the Sheep's Heid links back to the time of a young weaver who wanted to ask the minister for his daughter's hand in marriage, only he was told that he wasn't good enough. In the dead of night, the weavers took their revenge and cut the heads off the minister's sheep. The ram's head was paraded on a pole, to return each year at the Govan Fair.



"Why is there a
formaldehyde
sheep's
head on a
stick?"

GOVAN CROSS TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE

Govan is a remarkable place. It is by far the oldest and most historically significant community of Glasgow. Its rich history, which stretches from being a seat of kings to leading the world's shipbuilding industry in the late 19th century has uniquely shaped both the physical and cultural character of this place and its people.

It has been the aim of Govan Cross Townscape Heritage Initiative (the THI) to ensure that the legacy of this illustrious past is well looked after. In particular, ensuring that the fine historic buildings and features of Govan Cross endure for future generations to enjoy, acting as a driver for regeneration in the present day.

Between 2009 and 2014, the THI invested £4.6million to make the very best of Govan's historic environment. The investment returned four of Govan's signature buildings, the Pearce Institute, Brechin's Bar/Cardell Halls and the tenements at Water Row to tiptop condition. Important local landmarks, the Pearce Statue and Aitken Memorial Fountain were lovingly

restored. The public space at Govan Cross was transformed and traditional shopfronts reinstated to spectacular effect, complete with stunning full length glazing and hand painted signage. Govan Cross has never looked so good and the investment is helping to attract new residents, businesses and visitors to the area.

By commissioning "Only in Govan", the THI hopes to preserve a small part of the cultural heritage of Govan by capturing the stories and reflections of the generations who have lived, worked and visited Govan in living memory. This collection of memories is offered as a legacy of the THI and as a testimony of the rather wonderful and contradictory place that is Govan, a place that has gone through huge change and recent hard times, and that is now re-emerging as a thriving, forward-thinking community. You can find out more about Govan Cross Townscape Heritage Initiative, Govan's on-going regeneration and also download this book "Only in Govan" at www.getintogovan.com.

OUR JOURNEY

From the autumn of 2013 to the spring of 2014, this project followed an engaging journey that led to the crafting of these pages. Both the process and the names of those who contributed to both the content and production of the book are listed in the following pages. To all of these individuals, and to the many others who wished to remain anonymous, we extend a huge and grateful thank you for sharing your time and thoughts and for making this book possible.

Saturday chats at the Cross

The project launched from our icecream architecture van, parked at Govan Cross one sunny Saturday morning during the market. With a large map and a lot of bright pens we began a discussion about the idea of 'Govan Memories.'

Camera Obscura conversations

For an afternoon we made a trip along Govan Road with a mobile Camera Obscura - a model of an old fashioned camera. We invited people to take a peek at the upside-down streets and share a story about them. Thanks to Michael Barr's invention and to Grant Connell for his time and continued support following this first meeting.

Lunch at the Riverside Hall

We took a pew at the pensioners' lunch and enjoyed a wee soup and a good chat with some really helpful Govanites. Thanks in particular to Davy Paterson.

Just before bingo

We set up in the little room at the entrance to the Riverside Hall and had conversations with folk as they arrived for evening bingo. We recorded stories and gathered visual materials. Thanks to Anne, Margaret, Pat and all the ladies.

Round the table at the Govan Reminiscence Group

We joined the weekly meeting of the Govan Reminiscence Group - whose members were unsurpassed in their stories and memories of Govan and who became our greatest inspiration. Massive thanks for the contributions and continued support received from Flora Pagan, Jean Melvin, Colin Quigley, Jim Kane and the whole group.

Elder Park Library book club

We called by to discuss the project with the book club in Elder Park Library and to read some of the great existing publications about Govan and its rich heritage.

Around the shops

On different days we called in to speak to shop owners. We had many individual meetings over haloumi sandwiches in Café 13 and, of course, sampled a Watson's pie or two. Thanks to Gayle Gawel, Cassandra Smith, Helen Campbell and other Govan retailers, and for constructive conversations with T S Beall, Mitch Miller, volunteers from 'Something is Missing' project and Julia.

Storytelling games and magazine making workshop at Riverside Primary

By playing word games and working in groups we helped pupils make their own Govan Zine, learn a little about self-publishing and share their own knowledge and stories of Govan. Thanks to Louise Brimelow, all the teachers and the very imaginative pupils.

Cosy Staff Room at the Rathlin Care home

At the end of Rathlin Street, a group of care workers welcomed us for a cup of tea and to share stories they'd heard through their local support work.

The Govan High Archivist

Ian McCracken is the voluntary archivist for Govan High and does an incredible job collating and researching the school's former pupils and achievements. He

shared an insight into this with us and continually supported and assisted us. He always welcomes new contact from former pupils

Surprise through the post

In response to an article in a local publication 'Govan Life', George Brown wrote to us with some beautiful and comic childhood memoirs of Govan.

Over breakfast in Govan

A lovely couple, Jack and Anne, born streets apart from one another in Govan, came back for a visit and breakfast roll to share memories of being mischievous and playful Govan kids.

GCIN Drop-in lunch

Invited by Isabel to join the weekly drop-in lunch for the Govan and Craigton Integration Network in the P.I, we spoke to people who have moved more recently to Govan about their perspectives and stories. Thanks to James, Andrew, Rita, Amit, Juris, Mr Sing and the many others who shared some time with us.

Exploring the P.I.

We had a tour of the building with Michael, punctuated by ghost stories and descriptions of the many past, present and future activities happening in the P.I.

A phone call across Glasgow

The phone rang and a gentleman, George Moore, shared his recollections of growing up in Govan and the backcourts of the tenements.

Visitors to Govan High

Invited to spend a morning at Govan High, we met Keith and Angela, who were tracing the life of Keith's father, William Paton, a former pupil and draftsman. They kindly shared William's beautifully constructed memoirs with us.

Daily morning service and tea at Govan Old Church

We joined the regulars of Govan Old who keep alive its tradition of a daily church service. We talked through their memories of Govan and the significance of the church over several cups of tea and fruit loaf. Thanks for the warm conversations: Anne, Robert, Jim, Betty and Fraser.

Create Club

A good laugh and lots of good material from some of the young people - Morgan Ross, Chelsy King and Megan Neilson - attending The Portal. Thanks!

Senior Film club

We used one of the office rooms in The Portal to audio record the memories of the group. Thanks to D.C. Barclay for helping us out and the contributions of Helen Reed Brown, James McGhee and Robert.

Tour of Starter Packs

An interesting exploration with Peter and Jennifer of Starter Packs, climbing through the back rooms and piles of lamps to learn about the project and its valuable work with people.

A chance encounter

Following one of the Govan Fair meetings, we bumped into Jimmy Stringfellow who shared tales about the Show People Community in Govan and the Govan Fair.

A loft in Fairley Street

On a Thursday evening, we dropped into the GalGael for a really great conversation with Gehan MacLeod. The place was alive with music, food and lots of creative activity and banter.

Archaeological Department visit

We met with Professor Stephen Driscoll at Glasgow University who has carried out extensive archaeological research in Govan. He kindly shared a fascinating insight into Govan's rich medieval history.

Review at Orkney Street

A group of local people gathered in the Orkney Street Enterprise Centre to review the quotes gathered so far and to add more of their own. Thanks to Deirdre Gaughan, Betty Neilson, Mari Homes, Shirley McKnight, Esme Clark and others already mentioned.

T in the Pot Ladies

A morning with the women of 'Tea in the Pot' at the Pearce Institute and photographer Charles Hamilton. Thanks to Mary Allison, Betty Harte, Robina McVeigh, Helen Keen, Kathleen Sweeney, Ruby Costley.

Looking down on Water Row

From its Water Row office, we looked down onto Govan Cross and the Govan ferry terminal, talking with Liz from Fablevision about the significance of this site and the Govan Fair.

Govan High word-games and news interviews

Students from different classes came to take part in word and memory games. They recorded each other telling stories. Many thanks to Philip Graham, Robert Saleh, Michael McCarron, the Student Council and all of the pupils involved.

Capturing Govan in action

Peter Saintmartin traced the places and activities that people had told stories about, capturing the activity in photos to enable us to bring them to life in the book. With thanks to Lyndsey Logue, GalGael, Friends of Elder Park, Whitefield Community Hall, Brechin's Bar, Benny, Sadie, Oliwia and the Fairfield Working Men's Club for these beautiful images.

Govan Fair Procession 6 June 2014

As a fitting ending to the project, we re-traced our steps back to Govan Cross with our icecream van to give away the first copies of "Only in Govan – A Collection of Govan Memories" to everyone enjoying the Govan Fair procession. We hope you enjoy it!

CREDITS

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icecream architecture

icecream architecture was founded in 2009 by Sarah and Desmond and has now grown into a small eclectic group of Designers & Artists. The practice has evolved from its grounding in design and an obsession with successful community consultation, into a highly interactive think-tank for the promotion of ideas and their subsequent realisation. They have a passion for working with people and a passion for icecream (often finding the two go together very well!).

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This book has been distributed free of cost to people in Govan. Archival copies will be available at selected local venues and libraries. An electronic version of the publication can be accessed at:

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I was born and brought up in Govan in the 70's and I played in the rubble of the tenements. It was bleak. Everything was pulled down. The same with jobs, all the yards shut down. It wasn't possible to go to work with your dad anymore. But there is a lot of growth and hope in Govan now, a lot of people are looking out for Govan.

This collection of Govan memories was kindly shared through a series of conversations, workshops and encounters. The reminiscences are heart-filled, playful and cast light on the humour and human spirit of this special place.

From autumn of 2013 to the spring of 2014, the project, led by icecream architecture for the Govan Cross Townscape Heritage Initiative, followed an engaging journey that led to the crafting of these pages. Every sentence originates from someone living in Govan or with a strong connection to the community.

We hope you find something inside this book that inspires, that brings on a chuckle or that reminds you of the warmth, wit and resilience of the people of Govan. Enjoy.