



Graffiti at Ravelrig House prior to restoration

# Preface

Professor Andy MacMillan and Professor Isi Metzstein

**TRUE ARCHITECT/DEVELOPERS ARE** rare indeed. A strange hybrid of architectural passion allied to money, presumably borrowed at high rates of interest, they are concerned with how their buildings look, how they fit within their context, how well they function and that all this should help them sell. Yet they are fleeting creatures. All too often, like caterpillar to butterfly, only in reverse, they undergo the sad transformation through the chrysalis phase of developer/architect then, ultimately, to a lower, mercenary form, only concerned with the bottom line.

Andy Burrell, John Forbes and their cohorts are an extraordinary phenomenon. The combined genius of Mr. Burrell and the late, great, Andy Doolan created a unique development model. Their enthusiasm and insight anticipated the shift in emphasis of the 1980s from new-build on the periphery of Scotland's cities towards re-inhabiting what remained of the fragmented fabric of Edinburgh's and Glasgow's city centres. Then they started to fill the gaps in between.

In 25 years of continuous achievement The Burrell Company have commissioned many young designers now recognised as among the finest of Scotland's architects. They have altered expectations by providing ingeniously planned and beautiful dwellings with good standards of finish in refurbished buildings. They commission extraordinary buildings on sites overlooked or rejected by others of lesser

vision and often mix uses, retail, offices, creative space and residential, all in the one block.

The Burrell Company's work, both directly and by influencing and encouraging, has improved Scottish architecture immeasurably. Perhaps their most notable achievement has been to raise the expectation of buyers. By example they have greatly enhanced the overall quality of urban development.

Often The Burrell Company have struggled against the limited vision of planners and those who have tried to thwart their ambitions or steal their ideas. Yet their drive, vision and determination has delivered a rich range of projects of which they and their architects can be proud. And somehow they manage to retain their enthusiasm and an infectious sense of fun. Those who have had the privilege of joining Messrs Burrell, Forbes, Ross and the rest of the team to celebrate acquisitions, competitions, launches and completions will certainly testify to that.

The Burrell Company have spent a quarter of a century changing Scottish urban architecture for the better, educating planners, politicians and the public on the benefits of good design and creating opportunities for innovative architects. They have remained a rare creature indeed; the persisting, enlightened architect/developer. And long may they continue.





# Carrick Quay, Glasgow

THE BURRELL COMPANY ACQUIRED the Carrick Quay site, overlooking the River Clyde, as part of a company buyout. The name reflected the fact that the MV Carrick was, at that time, berthed alongside. There were schematic designs by the architect Dai Rees whom Burrell invited to participate in a limited competition with four other architectural practices invited to make submissions. Forbes and Burrell judged the Davis Duncan scheme to be the most appropriate. Quantity surveying advice was for a more 'strong if forward' design solution, but this was, thankfully, ignored. Having said that, the scheme was somewhat ahead of its time for Glasgow City planners, who did their utmost to change and dilute its impact.

The implementation of Carrick Quay was in tandem with Balfour Beatty. Appropriately, given the proximity of the river, the scheme incorporated nautical references including crows-nest like balconies and mast-like elements. The loss of a Scottish Development Agency grant seriously affected the financing of the project which was also hit by the recession of the early 1990s. However, the block has subsequently been completed with a new hotel which follows the design cues of the original. The development still makes a bold statement on Clyde Street.





# Coalhill, Leith

**EDINBURGH WAS BIDDING FOR** the City of Architecture Award for 1999. Ian Wall was working with the City Council's Estate Department and receptive to a proposal from The Burrell Company. John Forbes suggested that The Burrell Company should organise an architectural competition to ensure a higher quality of architecture, appropriate to Coalhill's prominence within Leith and contributing to Edinburgh's 1999 bid. The site was also reputed to be that of one of Scotland's first parliaments. Another house builder was negotiating with the City for the site but the competition idea won the day.

The competition, for an ambitious mixed-use development, was organised to challenge three Scottish practices based in Scotland against three international Scots. Among the international grouping were Ushida Findlay from Tokyo and David Mackay in Barcelona (the latter's Scottish credentials were admittedly questionable but the fact that he had lived in Scotland for a period was deemed sufficient qualification). The competition was judged by a distinguished group, including Piers Gough.

The competition process was anonymous but such was the apparent 'signature' style of the winning design that, without even opening the envelopes, John Forbes phoned Elder & Cannon and congratulated them on their win. Unfortunately when the envelopes were opened it was revealed that Allan Murray's design style was not a huge remove from what Elder & Cannon might have drawn and

Murray was in fact the winner. The ensuing phone call to Elder & Cannon, asking them to re-cork the champagne, must qualify as the most embarrassing of Forbes' life.

After delays resulting from poor cost advice the project was put into a fundable shape. While the corner oval block was originally designed as offices the decline in that market resulted in a change to residential. The road was closed to create a wharf-side environment beside the Water of Leith. The scale of the buildings was such that it was agreed that pedestrians should be able to move under them, which created the planning difficulty of ensuring that the area was permeable without creating dark spaces or concealment. Another regeneration initiative was the proposed conversion of the adjacent Leith House as accommodation for 'rough sleepers'. This project was undertaken jointly with Dunedin Housing Association in tandem with various environmental improvements and the second Coalhill development, the imaginatively entitled Coalhill II.

The first phase of Coalhill created a number of small, single aspect studios within the oval block. Despite some unease about how these might sell they went very quickly. It is also ironic that the necessity of converting space originally designed as offices for residential use led to very dynamic residential plans. The building featured in various magazines and won the accolade of Best Apartment Block in the UK for 2001 from National House Builder Magazine.





# Tron Square, Edinburgh

THE TRON REGENERATION PROJECT came together as a result of a complex series of acquisitions. Firstly Burrell approached the City to acquire the former car park site on Old Fishmarket Close. This had been owned by the City and used by councillors and officers. Adjacent to the car park was the semi-derelict, People's Palace, formerly a rough sleepers hostel, which had recently been acquired by Castle Rock Housing Association. Discussions were ongoing with Castle Rock on various projects, notably the re-location of the Cowgate Nursery from one of the most polluted streets in the city to a more appropriate location.

At the same time Burrell was looking at opportunities around Tron Square, including a series of derelict sheds behind the company's head office on the Royal Mile. EDI had been talking to the company about the potential reuse of a small car park on the Cowgate. After extensive and complex legal negotiations with the Council it was agreed that the nursery would be relocated to the site of the derelict sheds behind Burrell's offices, that the cleared nursery site would provide new offices and housing on the Cowgate to maintain the urban scale of this important route, that the Old Fishmarket Close car park would be demolished for new housing and that the People's Palace would be restored.

This was a very complex property deal. It was remarkable that it all came together to very positive effect. Of course the benefits to the city included highly visible urban improvements, new terraces and squares and the

improvement of the City of Edinburgh's own housing stock within the original Tron Square.

These ideas came together in a very loose design brief which was promoted as a limited competition. The judges were chaired by Professor Isi Metzstein and included Piers Gough and Janet Street-Porter as well as representatives from the Council. The judging process was protracted and difficult and despite Izi Metzstein's power of personality it took a great deal of discussion to reach a conclusion. At the end of the day Richard Murphy won the housing element and Allan Murray, whose scheme for the same site was not dissimilar, was awarded the nursery. The headmistress of the nursery, initially resistant to the bold plan of the building, came round and ultimately was completely thrilled with the new nursery.

Richard Murphy's new housing was simple in plan form with two narrow building blocks, one set forward of the other, on either side of the recreated close. The buildings are tall and narrow with two apartments per floor in each block, linked by a narrow glazed connection over the close. Interestingly Murphy's design was the only one with a pitched roof submission and, intriguingly, he told us after the event that he had only decided to enter at the last minute, giving his office only a day to draw up the ideas. The idea was sound and, fortuitously, they had a brilliant draughtsman who was happy to engage in that architectural classic – an all-nighter – to produce the competition winning scheme. Not only did the design win the architectural competition it was later to pick up many awards.







# Upper Strand, Edinburgh

**THIS MAJOR PROJECT, WITHIN** a planned 20,000 person settlement, addresses the first phase of Edinburgh's waterfront. The Council established Waterfront Edinburgh Limited (WEL) to promote this crucially important regeneration. A masterplan was produced by Lewellyn Davis Architects and Page & Park. This, in turn, led to an architect/developer competition. One of WEL's wisest early moves was to select the joint submission by Burrell and Places For People as the winning scheme. This will deliver 500 homes, alongside leisure, retail and offices, over the next five years.

A new square, Saltire Square, will sit alongside the boulevard being created by Elder & Cannon and Reiach and Hall. This responds to the parkland setting into which the development is being placed. Relatively informal in its architectural treatment and rising to a fairly modest

four storeys, it forms a new street, with the elevation which addresses Caroline Park House being designed as a contemporary classical terrace. Reiach & Hall is also creating an eleven storey tower which will incorporate a bar/restaurant at ground floor level. This will serve as one of a number of "exclamation marks" within the overall masterplan. The balance of the Reiach & Hall contribution is set within a more formal streetscape and is, therefore, designed to reflect this more urban location.

This development will establish a new standard for sustainable housing in Scotland. It incorporates a district heating scheme, recycling facilities, underground car parking provision and rubbish collection. Just as Glasgow's Ingram Square was a model for urban regeneration in the 1980s, this major Edinburgh development is the way forward for urban expansion.