

THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

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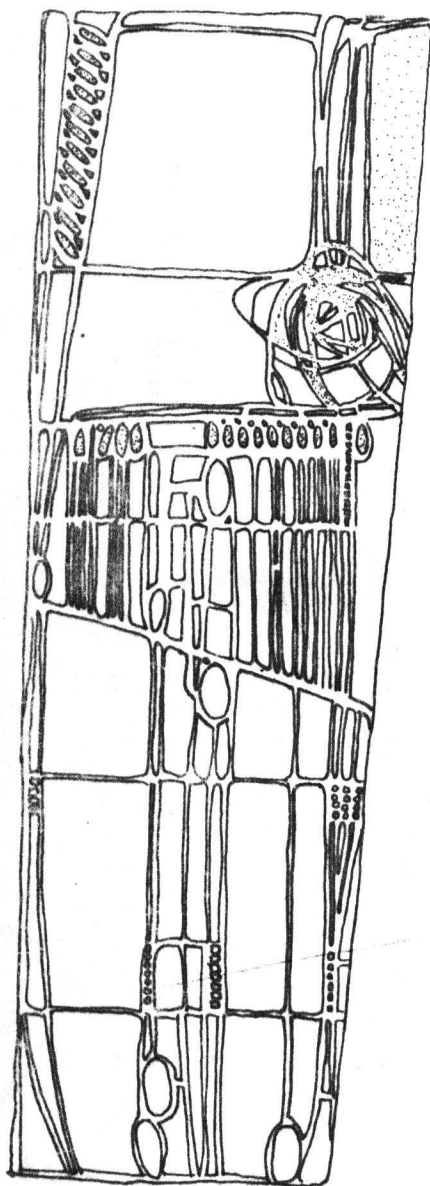
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THE CRANSTON TEA ROOMS



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T H E C R A N S T O N T E A - R O O M S

A Dissertation

Presented to the

Royal Institute of British Architects

as Subject F

for Part 2 of the Examination in Architecture

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29th September 1976

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PREFACE.

The tea-room was a familiar part of the social life in the city of Glasgow from the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. They were 'dry' establishments which had their roots in the temperance groups fighting for that social reform. They were, on a wider plane, a social reaction to certain phenomena and changes in the society of the early nineteenth century.

The first section of the study attempts to trace the main contributory factors which brought about their genesis; with particular attention being paid to the temperance groups, overcrowding and its related social problems.

At this point in the study it is worth mentioning that Stuart and Catherine Cranston were each responsible for, what would appear to be, two entirely separate chains of tea-rooms. The former having a larger number of establishments in his business. One would expect that this would be reason in itself to carry out the study on his contribution alone. However, the renown of Catherine's four tea-rooms is more recent in the memory, even though the last of these closed some twenty years before her brother's. The study attempts to trace the reason for this.

The basic format of the study is to lay out the history of Catherine Cranston's tea-rooms and to establish the reasons for their success, and the contribution of both the architect and patron to it. It would seem an injustice however, to ignore the contribution of her brother's tea-rooms; to do this would be to accept the success of both Miss Cranston and Charles Rennie Mackintosh without question. An additional reason for the inclusion of the section on Stuart Cranston's tea-rooms is that it

provides a perfect background with which to lead the reader into a position where he might come to his own subjective conclusion about the relative successes of both groups.

CHAPTER 1.

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CLIMATE OF VICTORIAN GLASGOW

The success and wealth of the industrial city, has, throughout history, been dependent upon its ability to manage and utilise its intrinsic natural resources and to direct them into its industry in order that full employment might be provided for its population, manufacturing what might be regarded as an exchangeable commodity for its economy. The success of this mechanism depends largely upon the principles of supply and demand; it is an integral part of the system that a market must be found, and maintained, on which these manufactured or natural goods might be exchanged. A successful industrial city is one who can easily divert her energies towards the manufacture of a new exchange commodity should the market for the previous one either terminate or become inviable. The City of Glasgow is no exception to this rule. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Glasgow's wealth grew from her trading with the world in such commodities as tobacco and cotton, but following the collapse in the supply of these, she directed her energies towards iron and heavy-engineering products. By the end of the nineteenth century Glasgow had become one of the principal world centres for this industry.

Initially Glasgow's trading was in tobacco and textiles, which she shipped to and from the Americas and through her own industries to the rest of the world. In exchange for the untreated tobacco she supplied America with those commodities most required by a growing nation. Vast fortunes were accumulated by the merchants who controlled this trading, and the 'Tobacco Lords', as they were commonly known, were to realise a standing in society which had previously been

reserved for the Aristocracy alone. The 'Tobacco Lords' were to bring with their exhibitionism in dress, manner and accommodation, a certain colour to the city's social life and renown on the cultural level.

Following the American War of Independence (1775-83), trading in tobacco all but ceased, with the exception of those of the 'Tobacco Lords' who had had the foresight to stockpile this commodity, and who now began to accumulate vast fortunes with the spoils from this monopolised market. The rest of the traders directed their energies elsewhere. The replacement exchange commodity was to be cotton and it was with this raw material, which was purchased from America, that the textile industry of Glasgow took on a new life and magnitude manufacturing cotton goods which, in return, were exchanged for more cotton and for other commodities from the rest of the world. Furthermore there was one commodity which the plantations of America craved for; the negro slave, and Glasgow was quickly to become one of the centres for this exportation. The trading in cotton flourished until 1876 when the American ^{Civil War} ~~Declaration of Independence~~ brought with it the demise of the slave trade and the cotton plantations. In the centre of Glasgow today however, many of the textile factories from this period remain operational, although relying on other means and sources for their supply of the raw materials.

Throughout this period the Industrial Revolution was rapidly changing economic values and production techniques. Iron was rapidly becoming the new key to economic success and by the middle of the nineteenth century Glasgow had established herself as one of the

major iron producing cities in the United Kingdom. By the end of the century she had become, through her ship-building, one of the leading heavy engineering centres of the world.

Population Growth, Influx and Related Social Problems

The influence on the society of the city during this period of industrial prosperity was great; the population began to increase at an alarming rate with immigrants converging on the city from the Highlands, the surrounding countryside and from Ireland. Wealth began to percolate through the community; new institutions were founded to handle this money and a greater demand was put on the service industries by the public, who with their newly acquired riches demanded more in the way of bars, restaurants and music-halls. At the same time the city was faced with new social problems and were made painfully more aware of the worsening state of most of the problems they already faced. The poor housing conditions worsened and became seriously overcrowded, while unemployment increased as more and more immigrants arrived in the city in the search for their 'pot of gold'. At the same time drunkenness became something of an everyday occurrence as the working classes celebrated their newly found wealth and the unemployed drowned their sorrows in an attempt to forget their deplorable living conditions. Illicit liquor shops (shebeens) opened their doors to cater for the ever increasing demand for twenty-four hour drinking; some sections of the city, usually those closest to the most overcrowded and deprived areas, became renowned for the numbers and variety of shebeens which they accommodated and for the vice which was generally associated with them.

During the first half of the nineteenth century the population

of Glasgow increased at an alarming rate; in the year 1801 it was 77,000, by 1850 it had increased to 329,000, and by the end of the century it was 762,000.¹ These figures may be best seen in comparison with the population increase which was being experienced in the rest of Scotland at the same time; between the years 1801 and 1871 the population for the whole of Scotland doubled, in the same period the population of Glasgow increased over six times.²

Much of this increase in population can be accounted for by the invasion of the Irish immigrants during the 1830s to 1860s. The Irish had always been emigrating to Glasgow but during the first part of the nineteenth century the numbers reaching Glasgow were increasing at a great rate; by the year 1840, 50,000 were arriving annually, in the period between December 1847 and March 1848 nearly 43,000 arrived in the city.³ The reason for this sudden increase was that in 1846 two successive years of potato crop failure had struck the farming community in Ireland and many had found themselves destitute. They emigrated to Glasgow, the colonies of America and to Liverpool in their thousands, some with no more than the clothes on their backs in the way of possessions, and all searching for a new life and affluence. Those who could afford the crossing to America did so while the others headed for the United Kingdom.

The presence of the Irish however, met with little favour in Glasgow, partly because they would take to any sort of employment available, and at a lower wage than would be expected by a Glaswegian for the same work. This was not the only reason for the apparent

1. Charles A. Oakley, The Second City, 1975, pp. 52-55

2. ibid. p. 113; Jack House, The Heart of Glasgow 1965, pp. 77-78

3. ibid. pp. 52-55

hostility shown towards the Irish immigrant population by the Glaswegian, but served to aggravate the hostility created by the Glaswegian's aversion to sympathise with the Irishman's different religion and lack of schooling. The West of Scotland had its own social problems to deal with, over and above those created by this influx of Irish. Unemployment was high, deplorable housing conditions were prevalent; many of the immigrants from the Highlands were still homeless or living in sub-standard, overcrowded conditions, and religious controversies between rival protestant sects were the rule of the day. To further aggravate this already explosive situation the Irish immigrants brought with them their own religious feuds and political differences, between Catholic and Protestant and between Loyalist and Republican. The Glaswegian preferred the Ulsterman, not only because of his Protestant leanings but because he was more likely to have been trained to a trade; he was however, an anti-reformist and as such was regarded with ill favour by the Scottish worker and by many of the Liberal middle class. The fervour with which this antagonism towards the Irishman was felt may best be illustrated by an incident in the late 1870's, when a meeting was organised on Glasgow Green by Protestants to protest against the Pope's restoration of the Scottish hierarchy in the Catholic Church, which was regarded by many Protestants as papal aggression. The military were put on alert to police any ensuing trouble between rival religious factions, but were not required.

It is difficult to assess the effect that this increase in Glasgow's population had on the level of drunkenness within the city, and even more difficult to judge whether or not the sudden

increase in the numbers of Irish arriving in the city had any direct relationship with this worsening social problem. The social level of drinking was not just that of the proletariat and escapism, but was to be found amongst both the middle classes (if one could term this class such during this period) and the upper classes. It was the type of alcoholic beverage and the form of premises on which it was consumed that differed greatly between the poor sectors of the community and the not so poor. The inns of the day generally catered for the more wealthy sections of the community, serving their clientele claret, punch and whisky, and often offering both entertainment and bar snacks to the thirsty passer-by. Those who could not afford the luxury of such drinks had to restrict themselves to the more conventional ales, wines and, on pay day whisky which they could purchase, at almost any time of the day, at one of the many less reputable drinking establishments in the city. These wine shops and shebeens sprang up in the more overcrowded areas of the city centre to cater for this lucrative market, and in the Saltmarket area of Glasgow, an area of less than one square mile, there was reported to be some 150 shebeens and 200 brothels in the year 1850.⁴

The sudden increase in the incidence of drunkenness around the beginning of the nineteenth century could neither be attributed directly to the sudden increase in the Irish population, nor to the Highland population that had already arrived in the city in their thousands. Their presence in the city added heavily to the existing social problems facing it; those of bad housing, social deprivation, overcrowding and unemployment. It was as a result of these worsening

4. Jack House, The Heart of Glasgow, 1965, pp. 51-2.

social conditions, particularly amongst the poor, that the problem of drunkenness was highlighted and it was this, together with the increasing popularity of the lunch-time refreshment with the white collar worker, that began to create a certain feeling of antagonism towards drinking, and the drinker, in some sections of the community. By the middle of the nineteenth century this feeling had grown to huge proportions and temperate Victoriana was about to be born. In Glasgow the first Temperance Associations were formed and much pressure was put on the 'City Fathers' to abolish drinking of alcohol within the city boundaries.

The Temperance Movements.

The first of the Temperance groups were founded concurrently in Belfast and New Ross in the summer of 1829; in the Maryhill area of Glasgow during the same year a Temperance group was formed out of which grew the Glasgow and West of Scotland Temperance Society. This group was to exert more pressure on society for drinking legislation reform when the Scottish Temperance League was formed some years later, but initially did little but drum up support throughout parts of the community for the Temperance Movement as a whole. Both these early Glasgow groups set out to advocate abstinence, but it was not until the formation of the Glasgow Abstainer's Society that this philosophy was exerted in any material way. In 1854 the Glasgow Abstainer's Society began to organise inexpensive concerts, particularly on Saturdays, in an attempt to draw custom from the inns and public houses on this, the most popular of the drinking days amongst the population.

Throughout the nineteenth century these groups grew in numbers

and in the influence which they were to have on both public and governmental opinion. In 1856 a society for the prohibition of the sale of intoxicating liquor was formed, and in 1860 the Scottish Permissive Bill Association became very active in organising public opinion against the sale and purchase of intoxicating liquors.

In 1869, an American group, the Order of the Good Templars, formed its Scottish lodge and thereafter opened over a thousand branches throughout Scotland. The Band of Hope and Union, another American offshoot, entered the crusade in Scotland in 1870 and set up 650 juvenile societies throughout the country.

All these groups had abstinence and prohibition firmly embodied in their philosophies and, unlike their contemporaries in England and Wales, did little to offer the drinking-man, in entertainment terms, a reasonable alternative to the average pub of the day. Additionally the Temperance Groups had to fight against the myth that had been implanted in the minds of the people which glorified the gusto of liquor consumption; the song entitled "Fou' the Noo" was particularly popular in Glasgow around this time. In both England and Wales coffee-bars had become the order of the day, but in Scotland this form of establishment was unheard of, on such a major scale, and was to remain so until the advent of the tea-room and coffee-house at the end of the nineteenth century.

The first temperance groups in England were founded in Bradford and Leeds in 1830 and were followed in 1831 by the London Temperance Society. There was at the same time, an attempt by the Free Traders to abolish the duty on beer and alter the licensing system in the belief that the supply of more beer at a lower price would draw the

custom from the 'Gin Palaces' of the period. It was generally believed that the consumption of gin and other such 'hard' liquors was the chief reason for drunkenness in the English cities, and although it was later to be found that beer had an equally as inebriating effect, this 'more beer' movement was to gain considerable momentum and support throughout England.

This pressure by the Free Traders Association on the Government, was responsible for the Wellington Beer Act of 1830 which abolished duty on beer, took licensing out of the jurisdiction of the Licensing Judges and made licenses available to any householder who could pay the two Guinea fee. Gin drinking however, continued to flourish.

In retrospect, the panic created by the effects of gin drinking seemed somewhat exaggerated. It was not so much the product of, and increase in drunkenness, but a combination of an increasing middle-class awareness and disapproval of drunkenness, misread statistics and a conservative dislike for change.⁵ The dramatic recorded increase in spirit consumption was due mainly to the move made by the buyer of illegal and smuggled alcohol to that available through normal channels. This move was recorded as a dramatic increase in sales and as a consequence the drinker of the mid-nineteenth century was to be labelled a drunkard. In a similar way the increase in crime was represented simply as an increase in the number of arrests made by the police force, and what would appear to have been a crime wave, in retrospect was simply due to a more efficient constabulary. These scares did not however, have much effect on stemming the sales

5. Mark Girouard, Victorian Pubs, 1975, p. 25.

of gin and the reasons for this are tied up in a changing attitude amongst the publicans and brewers, who felt that their livelihoods were suffering due to the adverse feelings of the time. The publicans began to decorate their establishments more tastefully, they diversified their stock to cater for even the soft-drinks drinker and introduced a semblance of the corner shop, dealing in other commodities besides liquor.

Following the 'gin scare' the attitudes of the temperance groups became more extreme, moving from condemnation of spirits and abstinence in the 1840s, to a philosophy of absolute prohibition in the 1850s.

The first aim of the temperance groups was to reduce the number of licensed premises and it was this aim that led to the Licensing Bill of 1871 which reduced the numbers of such establishments and introduced a system of Governmental Inspectors who were responsible for ensuring that the public houses maintained a recommended standard of service, and operated within the new, shorter opening hours. The bill however, met with much opposition from the public and from the licensing trade. It was withdrawn to be replaced by the milder Aberdare Act in 1872. This act reduced opening hours less dramatically than had the previous one and replaced that system of Governmental Inspectors by a system of policing which would be under the control of the local constabulary.

The main obstacle in the way of temperance reform was the public house itself, which as has already been seen, began to change its role in the community following the 'gin scare' and the onslaught of anti-pub propaganda from temperance societies. They had, with their newly decorated, diverse image, reinforced their social and

entertainment role in Victorian Britain and were now very popular places to meet; not only to drink in company, but to catch up on news, relax, and generally pass one's leisure hours in an atmosphere that was both casual and informal. Not all those who drank liquor could therefore be regarded as drunkards, and although the temperance groups were slow to realise this, they now tackled the problem in a completely new way; that of the pub-alternative. This was to be an attempt to re-create the atmosphere of the public house without the sale of intoxicating liquor.

The Pub Alternative.

The first such 'dry' public house was opened in Dundee in 1853 and its success led to a chain of similar establishments being opened throughout that city. They were however, merely working mens' cafes and did little to recreate the atmosphere of a public house. It was not until 1867 that a real pub alternative was opened in Leeds; the British Working Man's Public House was to set the pattern for all subsequent ventures in this form of establishment throughout England and Wales. These new public houses were financed by various interested companies, in a similar way to that method of financing the normal public house by a brewery. One such company was the Coffee Public House Association which was founded in 1877. By the year 1884 there were over 1500 such establishments in Britain and examples were also to be found in Ireland, America, Canada, Australia, Holland, Switzerland and Belgium. They sold other non alcoholic drinks besides coffee; tea, milk, lemonade, ginger beer and cocoa were often to be found, some served on draught along beside the temperance root beer, while others concentrated more on feeding their customers. The more

elaborate and larger concerns provided their clientele with reading rooms, and tried more enthusiastically to create an atmosphere of relaxation and involvement rather than simply mimic the austere Victorian public house trimmings.

The success of these coffee-houses was, however, short-lived. Almost as rapidly as the movement had grown its stature dwindled; by the end of the nineteenth century there were few of them left operating. The reasons for their demise were manifold and ironically some of the reasons were instruments of management that the publican had been used to dealing with in the licensing trade. They frequently employed inexperienced and often dishonest management and their financial backing, which had in many cases entered into financing the venture on a speculative basis, now withdrew their support because of small returns. For the few very successful establishments the financing remained but this too was to fall off as business slumped. Strangely the choice of beverage had much to do with the slump in trade; the sale of coffee by the end of the century was falling while that of tea and cocoa were becoming much more lucrative. One of the principal reasons for their decline was, however, their founding fathers' inability to resist the opportunity to preach about the evils of alcohol on the premises.

The 'pub alternative' movement was not a complete failure; although the alternative had had little effect on the social life of the masses, it did pave the way for the working man's cafe and helped society to realise that there was a need for an alternative entertainment besides drinking. It also created a new awareness in the licensing trade; publicans began to create more pleasant

establishments, not simply because he wanted to present the public with a more attractive place in which to pass the time of day, but because the public house had now become something of a speculative commodity; the more work and money he invested into it, the greater were its market value likely to be. But no matter what were the motives, the coffee house had at least created a rise in the standard of accommodation afforded by the public house. Above all this they created a suspicion of public houses among the middle classes and divided the working classes into two distinct groups; those who drank, gambled and attended music halls, and those who were known as the 'self improvers' who attended church, signed the pledge of abstinence and saved money.⁶

At the end of the nineteenth century workings mens' cafes were becoming a common feature in most cities, while groups, such as Lockart of London who ran a chain of cocoa-rooms, were to be found throughout the country. Other companies were also undergoing rapid expansion in this field; in Glasgow the Cranston Tea-Rooms had become a common sight in the centre of the city, while on a national level, the Lyons Tea-Room Group which had been founded in 1894, followed the Cranston example with tea-rooms in most of the English cities. Tea-rooms were to set new standards in the field of entertainment and service, and to offer a real alternative to the public house.

6. Mark Girouard, Victorian Pubs, 1975, pp. 21-22

CHAPTER 2.

THE CRANSTON TEA-ROOMS

By the end of the 19th century Glasgow had become famous for the variety and general high quality of its tearooms: "Nowhere else can one have so much for so little, and nowhere else are such places more popular or frequented"¹, said a contemporary observer. These tea-rooms were run by two members of the Cranston family, Catherine and Stuart, who in turn operated a chain of quite different tea-rooms within the City. Their father, George Cranston, was a well known figure in Glasgow and owned two well known hotels in George Square; The Crown and The Crow. With this background of service both children launched themselves into the tea-room business, Stuart Cranston became involved in the tea retailing business and made the first tentative moves towards a tea-room at his premises in Queen Street, while Catherine, at a later date, and much against her family's wishes, launched herself directly into the tea-room trade.

The Stuart Cranston Tea-Rooms.

Stuart Cranston's interest in tea came about through Mr. Arthur Dakin, a representative of Messrs. Twinning and Co., London, who was in the habit of taking rooms at The Crow, the hotel run by Stuart's father. During one of these visits Mr. Dakin advised the young Stuart Cranston to take up a position with Messrs. Wright, Napier and Co., tea merchants in Glasgow. It was during his employment with this company that Stuart Cranston took to the habit of

1. James Hamilton Muir, Glasgow in 1901, 1901, p. 166

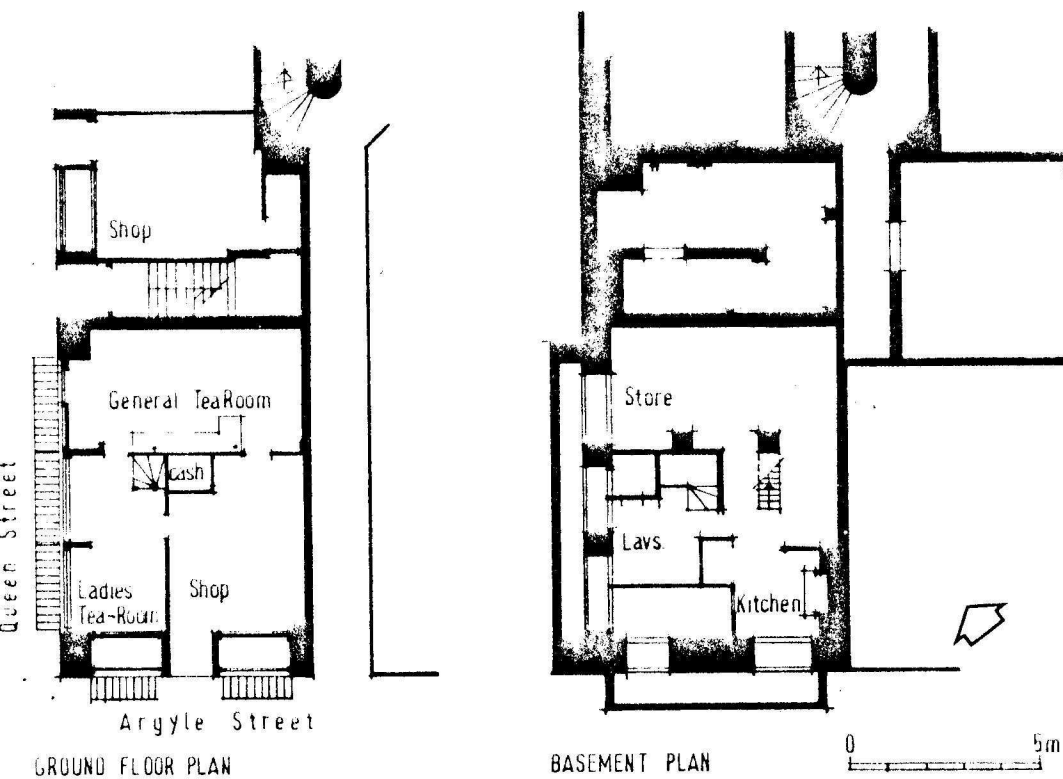


Figure 2. Plans of the Tea-Room at No. 76 Argyle Street.

From a Dean of Guild application for further improvements to the property at No. 76 Argyle Street in 1906,³ it can be seen from the existing plans (Fig.2, above) that the tea-shop was of a very limited size. Although no previous applications by Cranston for alterations to this shop were recorded, it would appear that some internal re-organisation had taken place since the description of Sample Room No. 2 in 1875, and that one of the two tea-rooms shown on the 1906 plans had previously been used as this famous sample room. Although the initial public response to this 'tea-room' facility was far from overwhelming, it soon became apparent to

3. W. Thomson & C. Menzies I.A. Dean of Guild Application, 1906. No. B4/12/2/1420.

Stuart Cranston that this small provision for the public would have to be enlarged upon. He acquired new premises at No. 46 Queen Street to cater for this growing public demand.

The Morrison's Court Lane Tea-Rooms

In 1889 Stuart Cranston met with Mr. James McMichael Jnr., and their conversation was to turn to the property at No. 26 Buchanan Street on the South side of the Argyll Arcade which had recently been gutted by fire. This property was at the fulcrum of what was, and remains to this day, one of the best commercial parts of the City of Glasgow and furthermore was centred in one of the principal entertainment nodes. It was just the situation that Stuart Cranston had been looking for so he seized upon the opportunity to lease it from the owners of the Arcade, together with No. 28 Buchanan Street. After refitting the property, the new suite of tea-rooms was opened on the first day of October 1889. The new premises consisted of a retail shop at No. 28 Buchanan Street of fairly limited size with a balcony at the upper level; an extensive first floor area which overlooked the Arcade to the North, together with the first floor of the remainder of the block bounded by the Argyll Arcade and Morrison Court Lane.⁴ This was one of the largest set of tea-rooms not only in Scotland, but in the British Isles, and was to become even larger; the initial development provided a ladies tea-room, a general tea-room and the

4. W. Thomson & C. Menzies, 1898, Dean of Guild Application No. 5. Bl/12/1/5316 & 5019 indicate the extent of the property developed by Mr. Cranston; it is corroborated by "Men You Know No. 885". The Bailley vol. 35. No. 885. October, 1889, p.4.

largest and best ventilated smoking room in Glasgow;⁵ all of which were air-conditioned.

Following two alterations to these tea-rooms the proprietors of the Argyll Arcade approached Mr. Cranston to offer him the opportunity to purchase the remainder of the block from No. 28 Buchanan Street to the entrance to Morrison Court from the Arcade. He purchased them in 1894 and became the owner of a substantial section of the Arcade. Before this property could be incorporated within the existing scheme he had to raise capital; to do this Messrs. Stuart Cranston & Company was floated and in 1896 two applications were lodged to extend and alter the tea-rooms. One of these modified the layout of the Morrison Court tea-room⁶ (Fig. 3, 4 & 5 pp.19,20,21), moving the kitchen to the ground floor and increasing the size of the ladies tea-room, while the other (Fig. 6. p. 22) improved the access and frontage at No. 26 Buchanan Street.⁶ This new layout was to establish Nos. 26-28 Buchanan Street as the largest set of tea-rooms in Glasgow and to earn for Stuart Cranston an elevated position in both society and business.

The tea-rooms were ideally situated with regards to both the central shopping and commercial areas of Glasgow; Argyle Street, Buchanan Street and the Argyll Arcade bounded the site on three sides and entry could be achieved from any one of these. Ironically, Morrison's Court Lane which led from Argyle Street to one of the entrances to the tea-rooms, was the site of one of Glasgow's most

5. "Men You Know No. 885". The Bailley vol. 35. No. 885. October 1889, p. 4 of the Advertiser's Supplement.

6. W. Thomson & C. Menzies, Dean of Guild Application, 1896. No. B4/12/1/5019 and /5316.

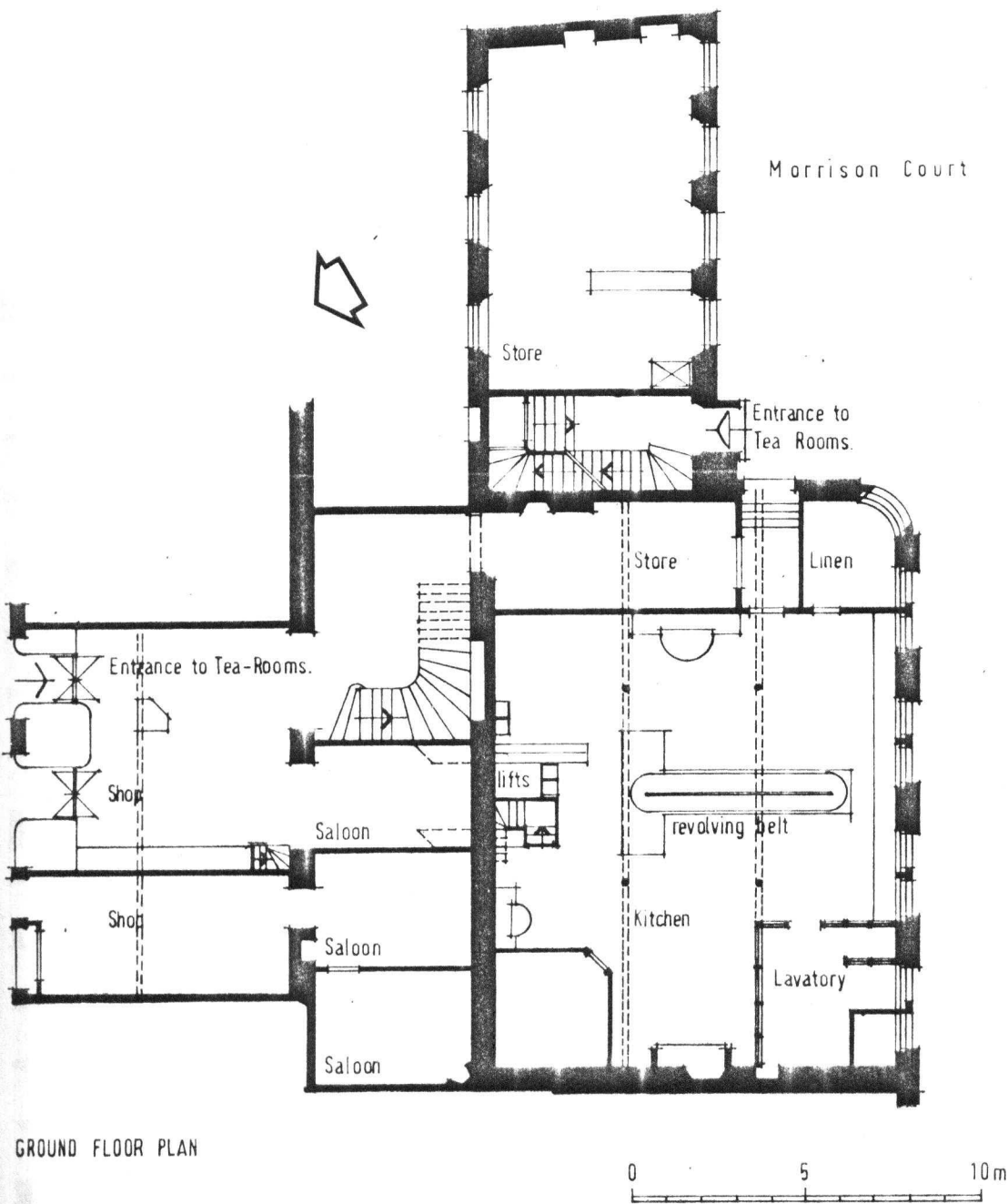


Figure 3. Ground Floor Plan of the Morrison's Court Tea-Rooms.

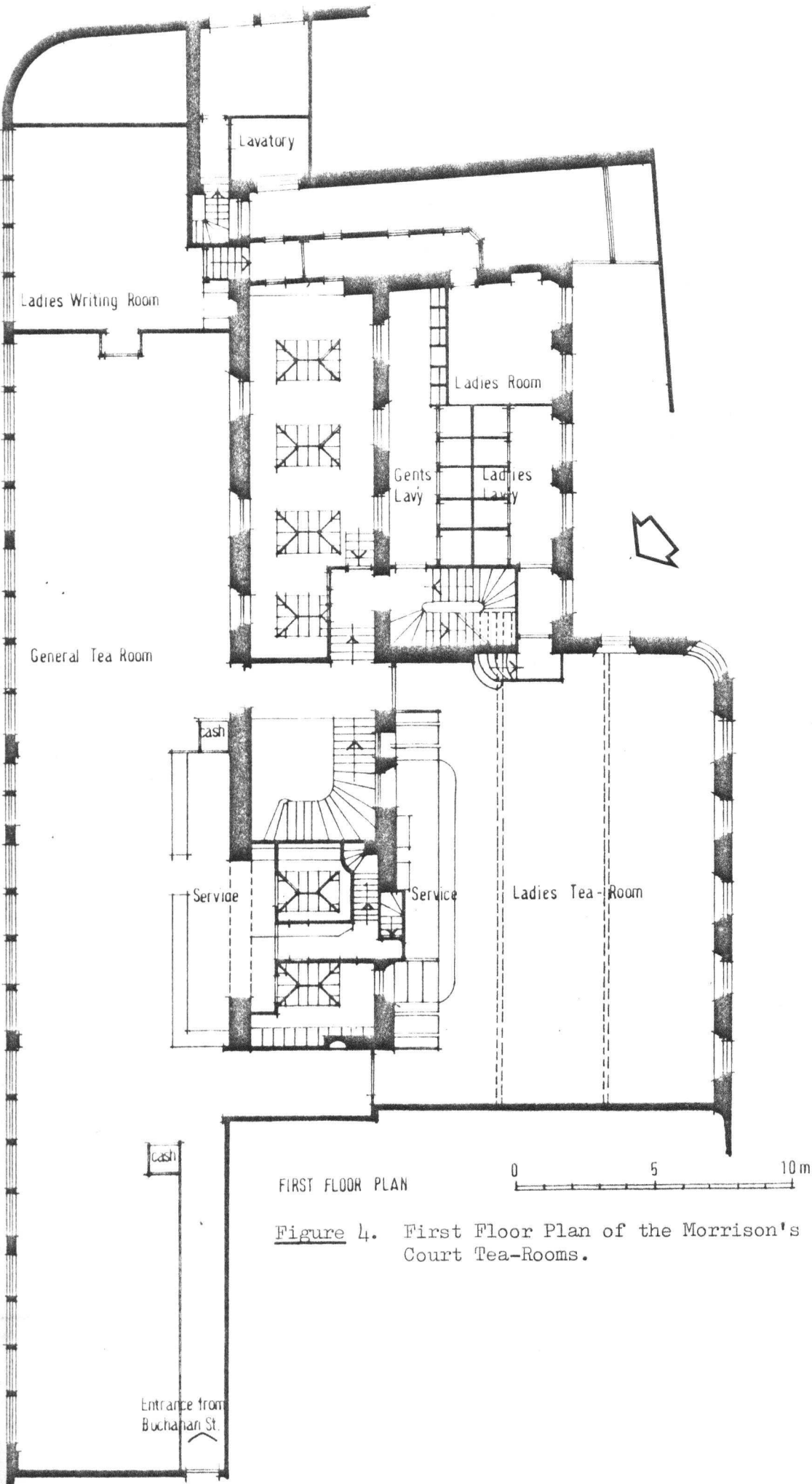
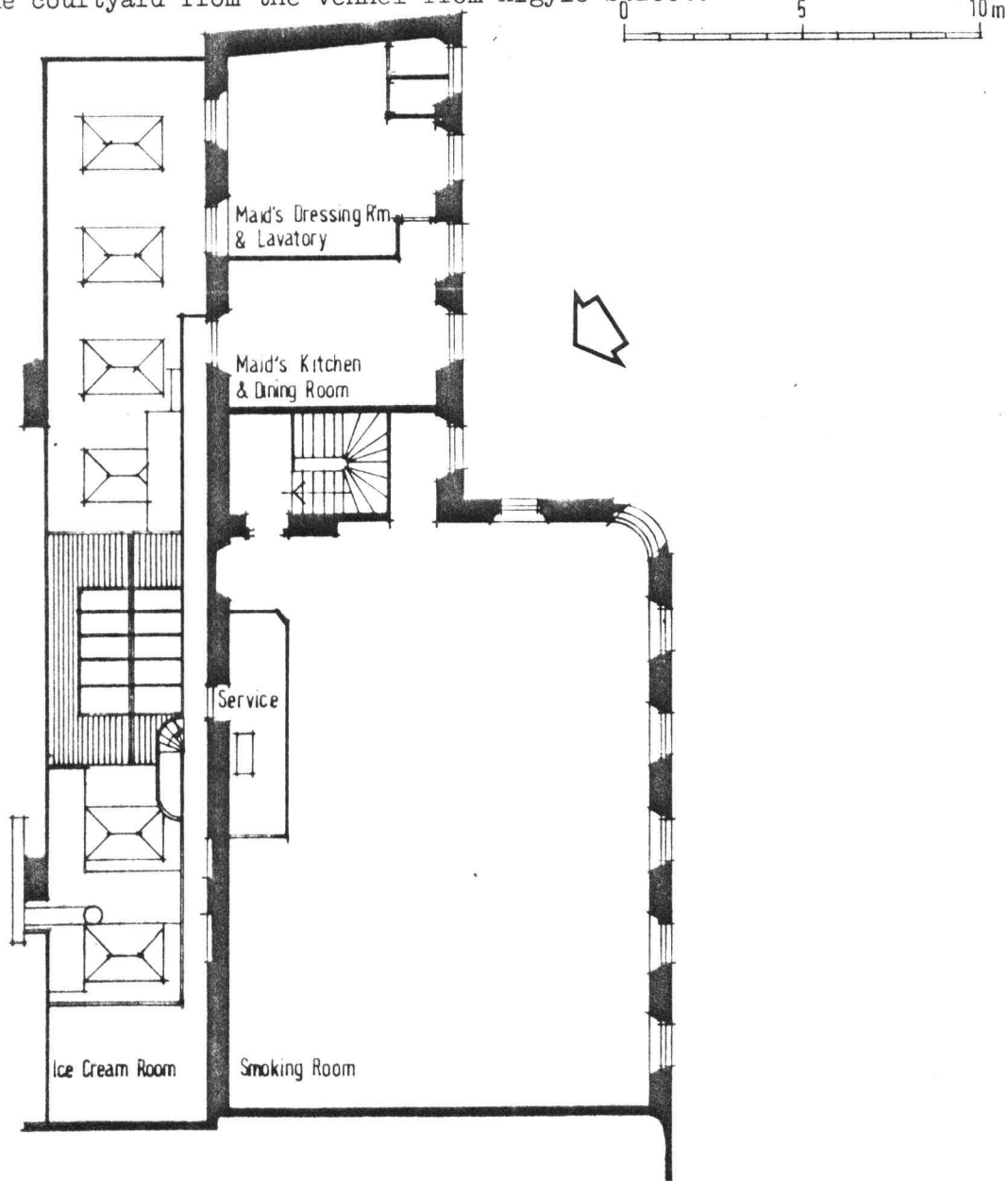


Figure 4. First Floor Plan of the Morrison's Court Tea-Rooms.

amous public houses - Sloan's, a fact which Stuart Cranston turned to
 s advantage, by advertising extensively on the frontage to the lane.
 is advertising occupied the principal focal point of the view into
 e courtyard from the vannel from Argyle Street.⁷



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

Figure 5. Second Floor Plan of the Morrison's Court Tea-Rooms.

Renfield Street Tea-Rooms.

In 1898 he opened another set of tea-rooms at No. 13 Renfield Street; these had been leased from the Trustees of William Govan in a four storey building, his part of which consisted of basement, ground, first and entresol floors. (Figs. No. 7,8,&9 pp.23,24,25). These accommodated a general tea-room at ground level, a ladies' tea-room and smoking room at first floor level, the latter

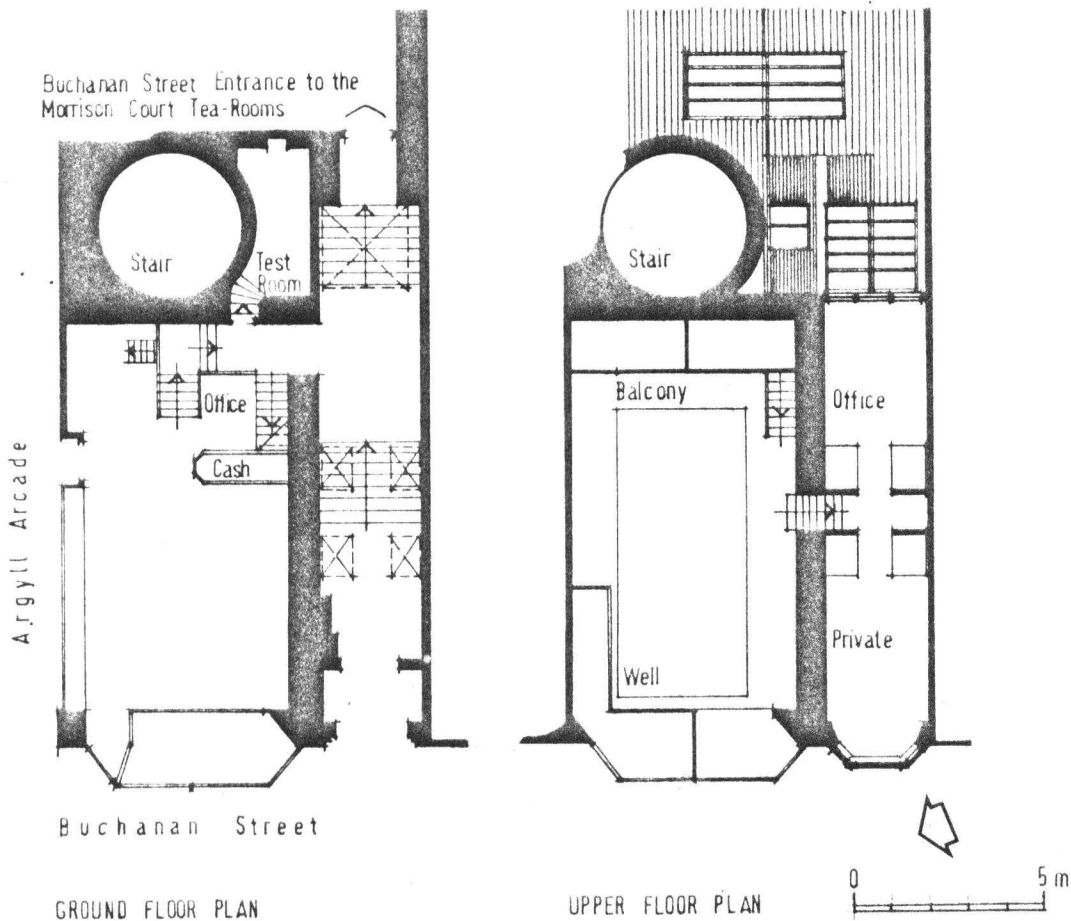
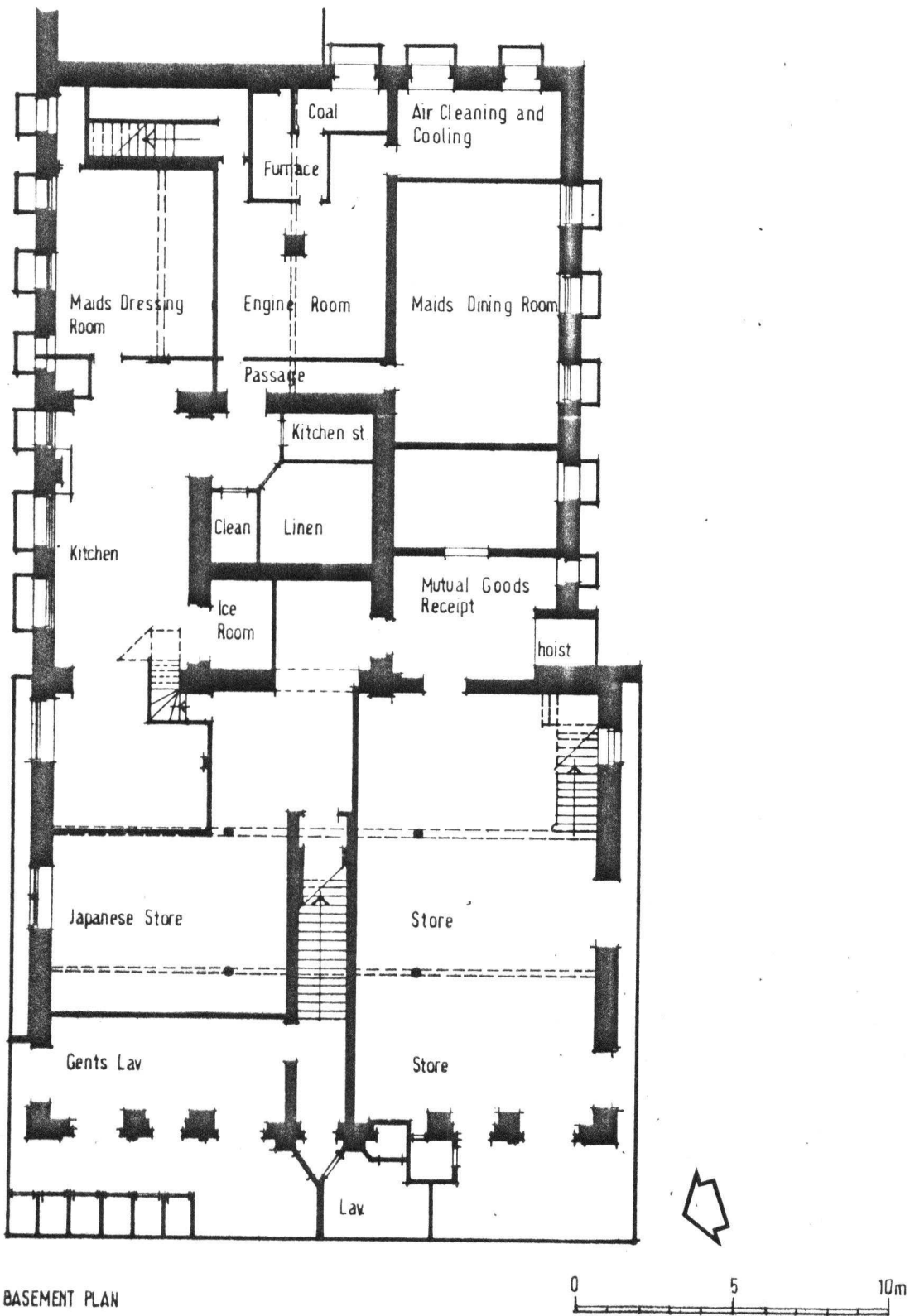


Figure 6. Plans of the tea-shop at Nos. 26-28 Buchanan Street.

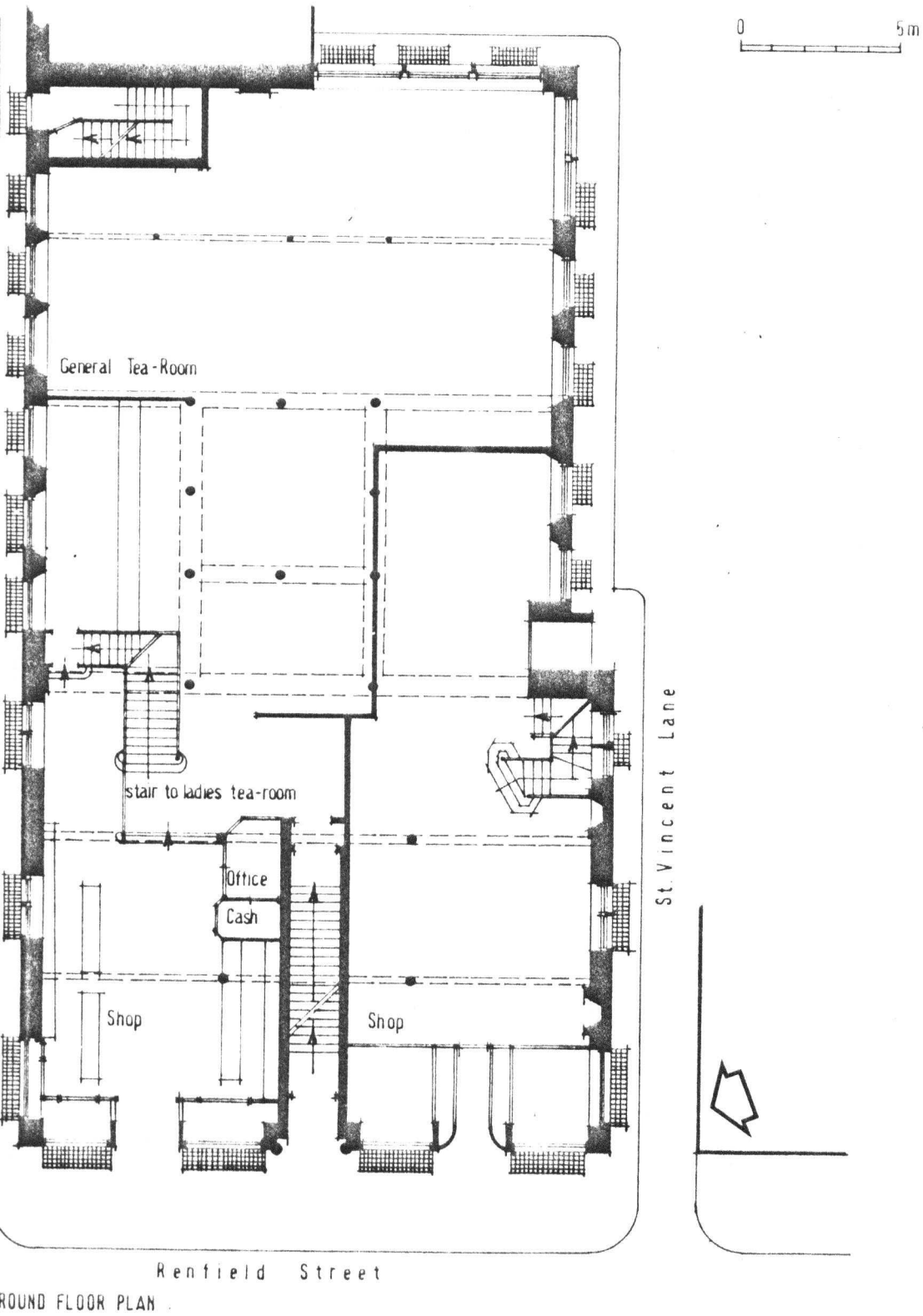
having access to the gentlemen's lavatory at entresol level, while, also at entresol level, there was a ladies' writing room. This scheme was also air-conditioned as can be seen on the basement plan.⁸

8. W. Thomson & C. Menzies, Dean of Guild Application, 1897. No. 84/12/1/5614.



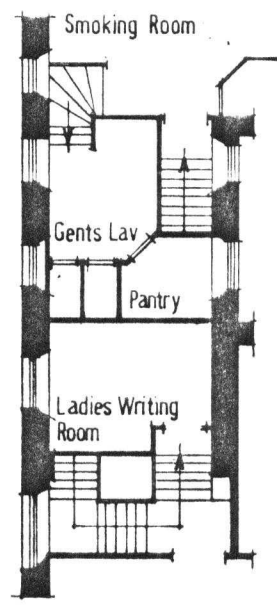
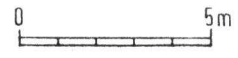
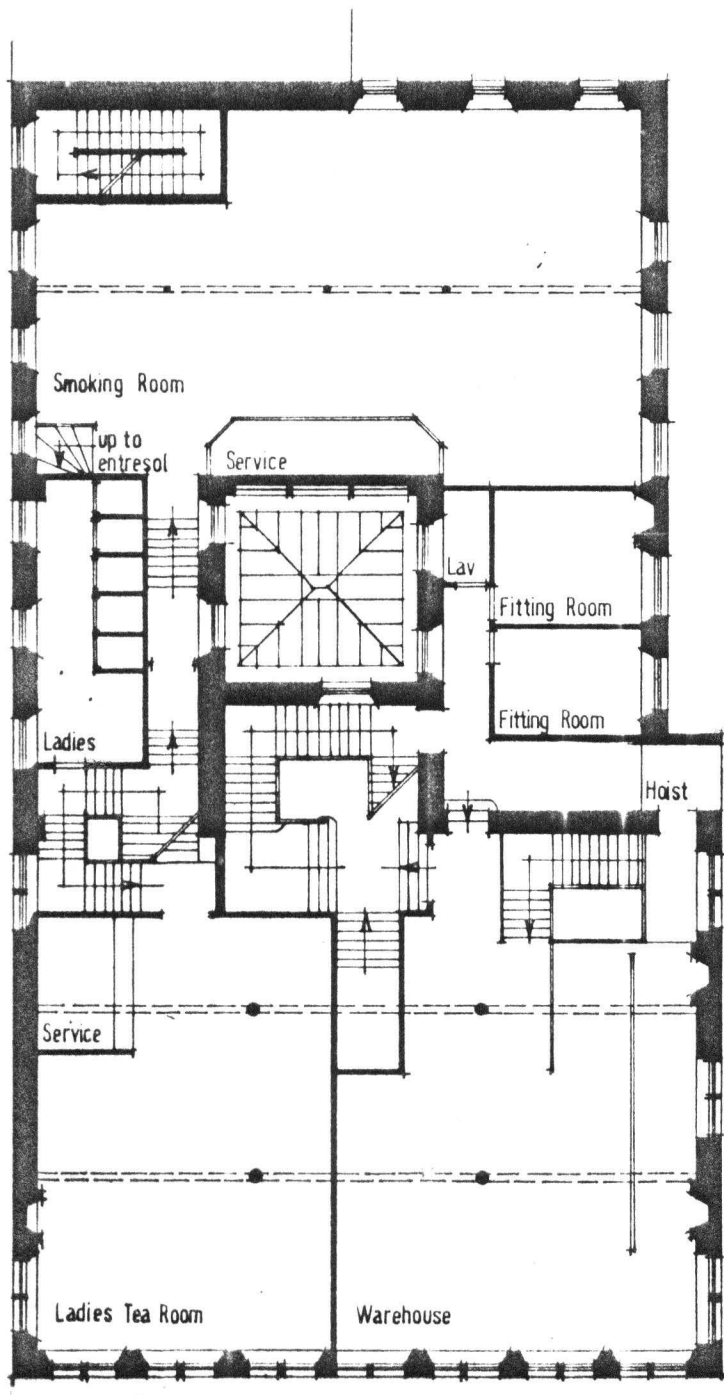
BASEMENT PLAN

Figure 7. Basement plan of Stuart Cranston's tea-room complex at No. 13 Renfield Street.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN .

Figure 8. Ground floor plan of No. 13 Renfield Street.



ENTRESOL PLAN



PLAN OF FIRST FLOOR

Figure 9. First floor plan of No. 13 Renfield Street.

Again Stuart Cranston purchased the property, as he had previously at the Argyll Arcade tea-rooms. He obtained a lease in perpetuity on them; this further consolidated his Company and released more capital for further expansion. This expansion was to be the most adventurous of the tea-room developments.

The Buchanan Street Tea-Rooms

Although the tea-rooms at No. 26 & 28 Buchanan Street were both spacious and very popular with the shoppers of Glasgow, as has already been pointed out, the shop and office section at No. 28 were far from adequate. Spacially they were particularly limited; the gallery at the upper level of the retailing floor was little more than passage width (fig. 6. p. 22) and the frontage of the building was out of character with the atmosphere of prosperity generally reflected by buildings in this, the finest of Glasgow's shopping areas.⁹ It was Stuart Cranston's intention to utilise this prime site to its maximum potential and he commissioned Messrs. W. Thomson and C. Menzies to design a new building for it: circa 1903.¹⁰ The building was in the French Renaissance style, consisting of six floors and attic fronting Buchanan Street, with a seven storey turreted tower in the North-East corner. The building bridged the Argyll Arcade; the entrance to which consisted of twin arches with a central column but this rather splendid feature has now been desecrated by a modern canopy arch.¹¹ The accommodation taken by

9. "No. 26-32 Buchanan Street", Regality Club, vol. 3, 1899, pp 114-123.

10. "The Story of the Glasgow Tea-Room", Glasgow Today - 1909, 1909, p. 66.

11. "W. Thomson & C. Menzies I.A. Dean of Guild Application, 1903, No. B4/12/1/9383

Messrs. Stuart Cranston & Co., was restricted to the basement, ground, mezzanine and first floor of the section to the South of the Arcade (fig. 10. below; fig. 11. p. 28), the remainder being let out for office accommodation. It would appear that Stuart Cranston felt,

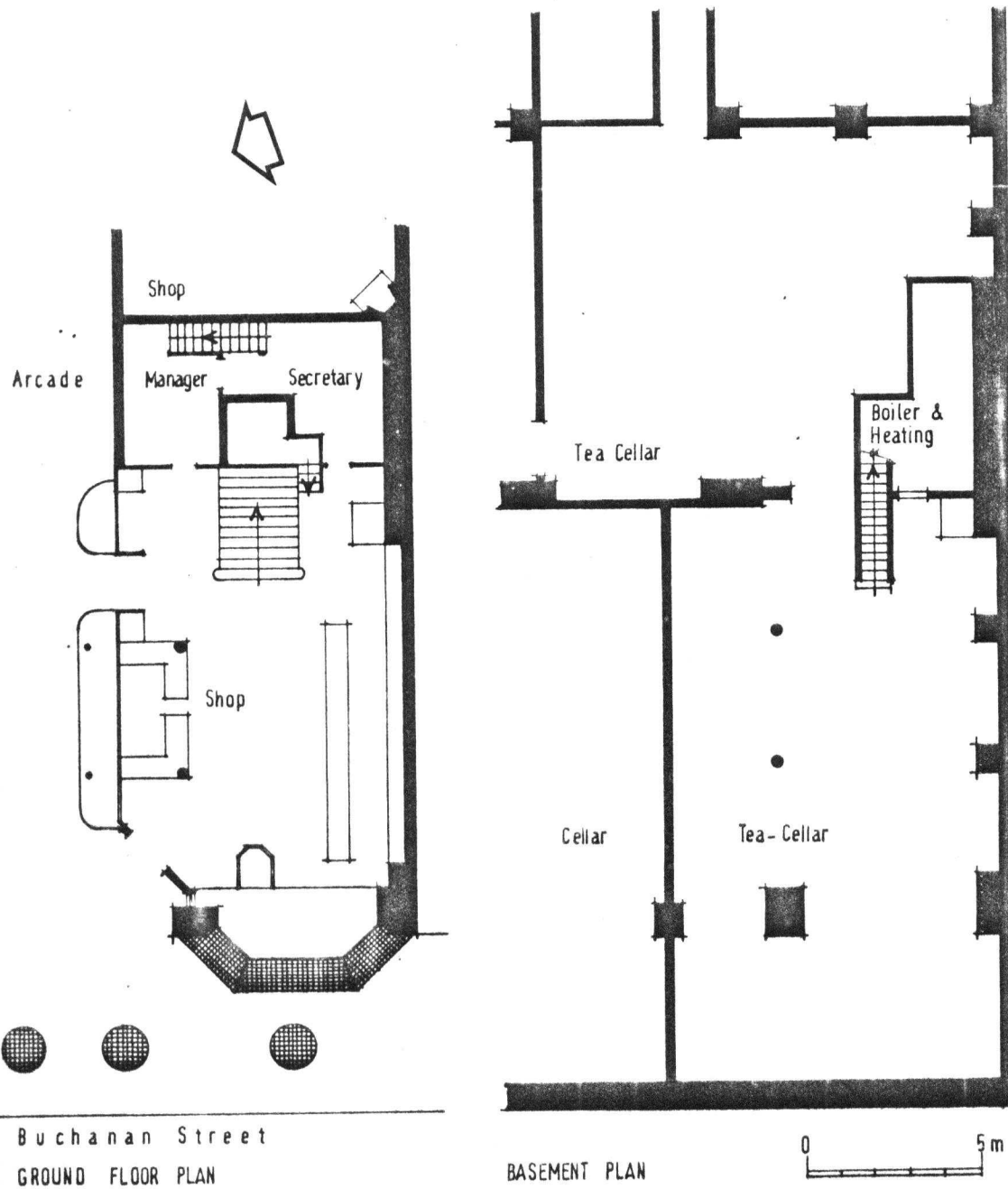


Figure 10. Plans of New Building at No. 26-32 Buchanan Street.

that the tea-rooms already provided here, were adequate for the demands placed on them by the public, and the only major changes he made to these, apart from the provision of additional tea-storage areas in the basement and company offices in the mezzanine and first floors, was to rationalise the retail floor layout and to provide, in place of

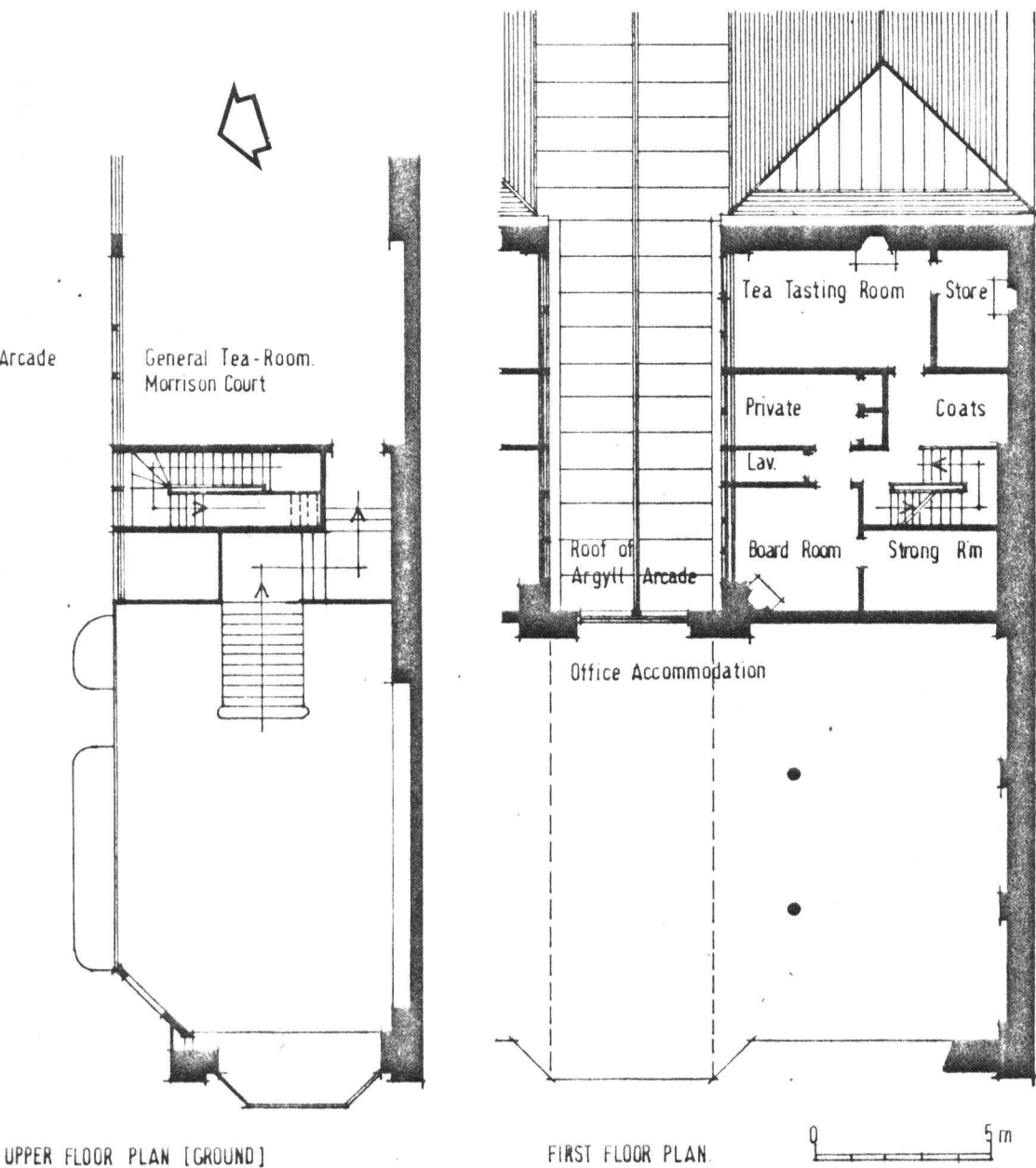


Figure 11. Plans of New Building at No. 26-32 Buchanan Street.

the existing passageway access to the Morrison Court general tea-room, a central open staircase leading to it from the retail shop area. This took the entrance to the tea-rooms away from the frontage on Buchanan Street, thereby encouraging those who wished to fraternise the tea-rooms to pass through the shop, and, perhaps purchase something on the way.

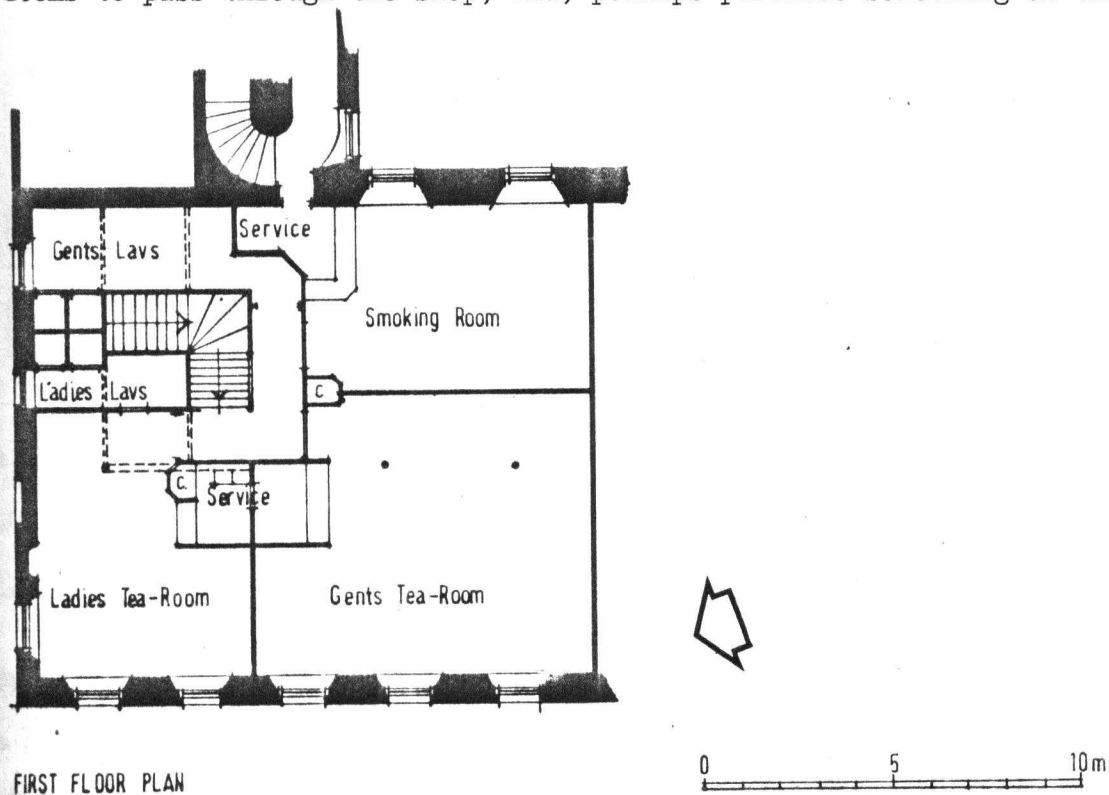


Figure 12. Upper Floor Plan of the Tea-Room at No. 76 Argyle Street.

In 1905 a limited company, Messrs. Cranston's Tea-Rooms Limited took over the business but retained Stuart Cranston as their Managing Director. It issued debenture stock and, at the same time, increased the share capital to £140,000. The new group carried on business in the properties which had been purchased by Stuart Cranston thus assuring fixity of tenure while, at the same time, drawing a large part of its revenue in rent from the one-hundred or so tenants of this very desirable city centre property. This capital and security

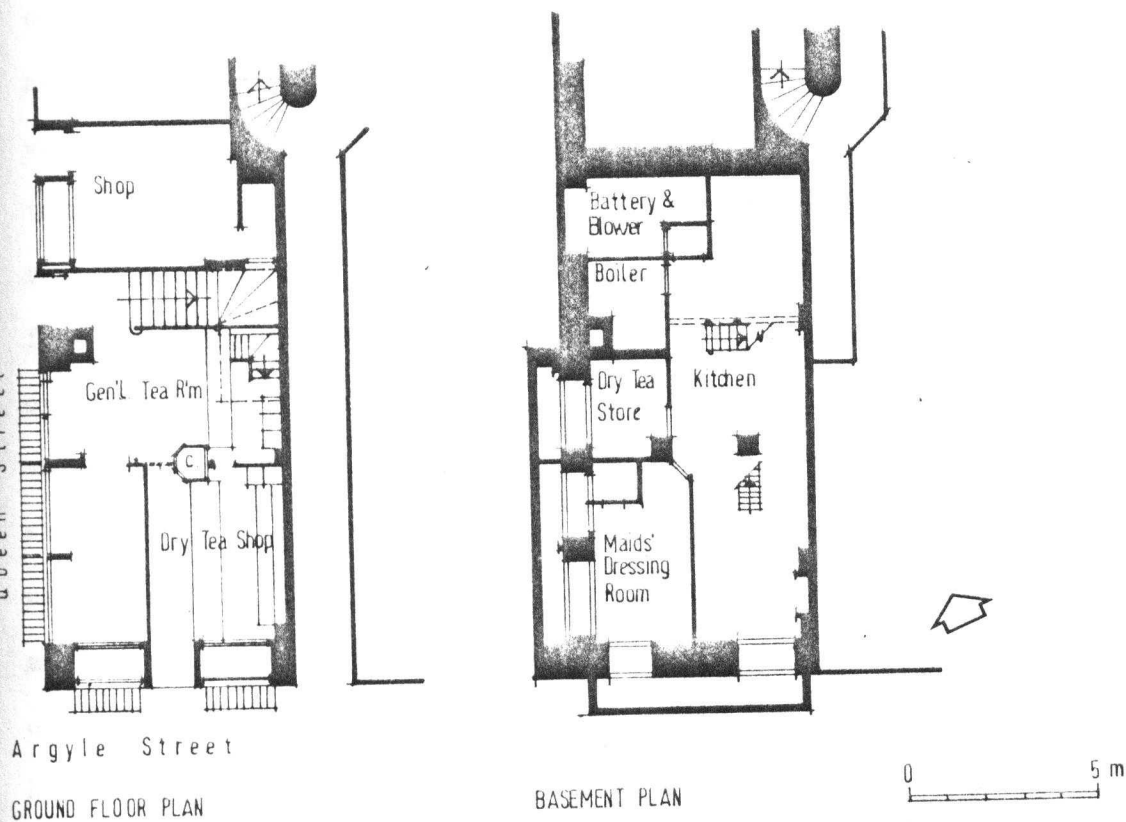


Figure 13. Plans of the Tea-Rooms at No. 76 Argyle Street.¹²

enabled further expansion of the business, and in 1906 they opened a new tea-room at No. 145 Sauchiehall Street.

The Argyle Street Tea-Rooms.

Also in the year 1906, Messrs. Stuart Cranston's Tea-Rooms Company Limited took over the remainder of the premises at No. 76 Argyle Street and extended the existing tea-rooms into this first floor area, which had recently been vacated. The additional floor area made available, about twice that of the ground floor, provided in the way of accommodation: a ladies' tea-room, a gentlemen's tea-room and a smoking-room. (fig. 12 p. 29). In addition to the new accommodation provided

12. W. Thomson & C. Menzies, Dean of Guild Application, 1906, No. B4/12/2/1420.

on the first floor, the ground and basement floors were entirely remodelled (fig. 13, p. 30) (cf. fig. 2, p. 16). This new layout was certainly characteristic of Stuart Cranston's changing attitudes towards the function of a tea-room. Since the earliest tea-room venture the catering element had been introduced and the facilities for providing this had been improved upon; a realisation that in order to maintain custom one had to provide an interesting and varied selection of snacks. He had always been searching for new ways by which to improve the selection of activities catered for, usually by providing additional private tea areas for either sex and separate rooms for such leisurely pastimes as writing, reading or smoking. He had always been conscious of the need to create a healthy comfortable atmosphere and to this end had installed air-conditioning in most of his tea-rooms; those which did not have this facility originally, had been altered as his business grew to provide it. This was the case in the Argyle Street tea-rooms. They were the first of his tea-rooms and had little to commend them in the way of comfort or variety, however, in their remodelling and extension it is apparent that Stuart Cranston, although now relegated to the position of Managing Director of the Company, had much to do with their refurbishment.

Following this extension to Argyle Street little in the way of either extension or expansion was carried out on the remaining tea-rooms, except a novel addition to the Buchanan Street premises in 1908 that of a Fruitarian-Room. The retailing part of the business began to take on a new format with tentative steps being taken into coffee and confectionary selling. About the same time, Stuart Cranston retired

from his position as Managing Director and left T.W. Macalpine to carry on in control of the Company. In the following years the business diversified considerably from its original course; a cinema was opened (circa. 1916),¹³ at no. 15 Renfield Street, the Waverly Hotel in Buchanan Street was taken over and more emphasis was placed on the catering side of the business. The Cranston Tea-Rooms continued to operate, under the control of the Limited Company, until 1955 when the last of these was taken over and put to a new use. They had been a feature of the city for eighty years, but by 1955, the cause of temperance and the pub-alternative, which they had so enthusiastically represented, had become a myth in the mind of the average Glaswegian, as too had the function for which they were originally intended.

It is unjust, perhaps, that when one talks of the Cranston Tea-Rooms today the likely response is to kindle some sort of memory of Miss Cranston's Tea-Rooms and not of Stuart Cranston's contribution. The same would appear to have been the case at the beginning of the century when "Who's Who in Glasgow 1909"¹⁴ failed to acknowledge Mr. Cranston, but did his sister;¹⁵ an insult perhaps, but certainly recognition of the dramatic impact Catherine Cranston had made on the city in such a short career.

13. Post Office Directory, 1917. 1st listing of cinema at No. 15 Renfield Street.

14. George Ayre-Todd, ed. Who's Who in Glasgow, 1909.

15. ibid. p. 50

CHAPTER 3.

THE EARLY DAYS OF MISS CRANSTON'S TEA-ROOMS.

Much against the wishes of her family, Miss Cranston rented a part of the shop below Aitken's Hotel at No. 114 Argyle Street, and opened a tea-room. The tiny venture flourished, much to the surprise of everybody concerned, mainly because she personally supervised every detail of the business. It was this feature of her business that was later to become the basis of her phenomenal success and great reputation.

While Catherine Cranston was running the tea-room below Aitken's, she realised that it was more than a tea-room that her customers wanted. She began to formulate plans to provide for them an establishment, more on the lines of a restaurant than a tea-room. She hoped that this would provide for the population of Glasgow, not only a place to eat, but somewhere where they might drop in for a few minutes of relaxation at any time of the day to enjoy perhaps, a game of billiards or simply a quiet smoke. This dream was realised in 1892, when she married Major John Cochrane, the head of the Cochrane engineering group of Barrhead, and ex-provost of that town. As a wedding gift he bought her the whole of No. 114 Argyle Street; the birth of the Miss Cranston Tea-Rooms had taken place.

No. 114 Argyle Street was quickly transformed into something of a miniature community centre with billiard-rooms and smoking-rooms furnished with easy chairs, small tables for chess, draughts and dominoes, a reading room, and a separate tea-room for ladies. It created something of a sensation in the city by being a businessman's club at midday, and in the afternoon becoming a popular rendezvous for both sexes.

In 1895 she acquired No. 205-9 Ingram Street and No. 91-3 Buchanan Street for further expansion of her tea-room business, at the same time commissioning Messrs. H. & D. Barclay, Architects, to carry out the reconstruction of the Argyle Street rooms, which were renamed The Crown Lunch and Tea Rooms. In 1896 she commissioned George Washington Brown, R.S.A., of Edinburgh, to rebuild the newly acquired Buchanan Street premises, with a view to providing something in the way of a larger scale of tea-room.

Within a few years Miss Cranston became one of the best known figures in the city of Glasgow, not only because of the reputation that she had established in the tea-room business, but because she was much of an extrovert in most things she did. She was always very well dressed, and this atmosphere of care and attention was even more evident in her capacity as manager of the tea-rooms. She personally supervised the smallest details of her business; the layouts of each room, napery, cutlery, china and glassware had to be impeccable. She interviewed the parents of prospective employees to ensure that the girls were suitable material for the position, and, following successful application, the new employee was taken into the service of Miss Cranston and Major Cochrane at their house, "House'hill", before being passed into service at one of the tea-rooms. It is even suggested that she examined the underwear of her waitresses every day before allowing them to commence their duties. By such methods of sheer force of character, great capacity for hard work, and painstaking care and attention to detail, Miss Cranston raised the tea-room business in Glasgow from the level of mundane commercialism to that of a profession, if not a fine art.

The phenomenal success of the tea-room venture was to revolution-

ise the social behaviour in Glasgow in the late 1890s, and to lead to a way of life in the city that is still felt today. Both Stuart and Catherine Cranston played major roles in bringing about this social change, but it was chiefly the personality of Miss Cranston that enabled these changes to build up the momentum and respect of the city.

'Due mainly to her gifts of organisation, management, taste, originality, hard work and perseverance, and her great shrewdness in judging what people want, she has created a demand in the supply of just the right thing at just the right time, in just the right way and at just the right price. In the domain of lunch and tea-rooms she has been a real power and pioneer, and still holds her place among many excellent rivals. All honour to the distinguished citizen who has produced a veritable revolution in catering for our people - a revolution in which temperance, comfort, elegance, and economy are allied to a fine progressive reform.'

'It is difficult to assess the influence which Stuart and Catherine Cranston must have had on each other. Stuart's tea-rooms, unimpressive as they might seem in comparison with his sister's, must have implanted the idea of the tea-room in Catherine's mind and given her an insight into both the potential, and failures, of such an enterprise. Similarly, at a later date, Stuart was to glean some of Catherine's ideas for his own business but never had the audacity to carry these out with such enthusiasm, nor the fortune to have, as his architect, Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

Although Miss Cranston's enthusiasm, imagination and managerial qualities were undoubtedly successful, they relied to a great extent for their ultimate fruition upon the social atmosphere of the time. The temperance movements and Permissive Bill agitators had created, not only in Glasgow but throughout the remainder of the United Kingdom, an atmosphere of mistrust in public houses, particularly among the

1. "Men You Know, No. 2023", The Bailley - vol. 77, July 1911.

middle classes. Most towns and cities had attempted to create an alternative to the public house; in England this had mainly been in the form of a coffee-house, a dry-pub which attempted to recreate some of the atmosphere of a public house, but without the alcohol usually to be found in their counterparts. In Scotland, the solution had been, initially, that of the working man's cafe. This form of establishment offered little more than a refreshment facility and had, by the end of the nineteenth century been replaced by the more sophisticated tea-room establishment.

Following the new licensing laws the public house had become something of a speculation commodity, and as a result the larger breweries had taken over many of these in order to market their own alcohol, so that their publicans might, with their assistance and money, be able to decorate their premises and compete with the speculative sector, where new buildings and lavish interiors were becoming the order of the day. The tea-rooms in Glasgow had to face this sort of opposition, with its well decorated public house, and a general public who were no longer willing to accept the drab, mundane interiors usually associated with them. Publicans were redecorating their premises, providing: snacks, entertainment and a more relaxing atmosphere, in an attempt to retain their custom. On the other hand there was a need to provide, for those who found the public house distasteful, an attractive and clean alternative.

Miss Cranston had, as has already been pointed out, been quick to recognise this potential market and to cater for its demand. She realised that with the expansion of the city limits, and with the associated spread of the population away from the commercial centre of the city, people

would be less likely to be willing to make the journey home for lunch. This was to be the foundation of her business: that there was a need to supply, for the office worker, a place where he might purchase good cheap food without running the risk of being exposed to alcohol. Before this time most such facilities were only to be had in the public house.

This catering for the right demand at the right time, was the reason for the phenomenal success of Miss Cranston's tea-room empire, and in particular for that of her first venture into tea and lunch rooms, at No. 114 Argyle Street; her realisation that there would be a period during the day when these rooms might almost be empty, relying only on the fickleties of the passer-by or casual shopper and business man. To create an attraction for these people and also to encourage casual visits by office staff during their afternoon leisure hours, she introduced leisure activities which might not be found elsewhere at that time of the day: billiards, reading, smoking, light snack facilities and refreshments.

This initial venture was immensely successful, but there was the need to consolidate her business and to retain her custom once the initial novelty had worn off. To do this she expanded her tea-rooms into new premises, while, at the same time, redecorating her existing rooms. It was a successful formula and both old and new tea-rooms continued to flourish. To carry out this refurbishment of the old property Miss Cranston used, at first, only well established Decorators, Designers and Architects. This was due in part, to the fact that her first venture was as yet only experimental and could hardly be subjected to the designs of those with little reputation, and partly because

Victorian conservatism held little favour for any degree of radical change. Later in her career, however, she was to make use of the talents of Charles Rennie Mackintosh and his nonconformist approach was to prove equally if not more successful in its interpretation and anticipation of the social mood of the time.

Charles Rennie Mackintosh was introduced to Miss Cranston in 1896 as work on her new tea-rooms in Buchanan Street was proceeding. She commissioned him to become one of the group of designers already employed on the work; specifically to join with George Walton and to share the responsibilities of decoration. This relationship between Mackintosh and Walton through subsequent expansion programmes carried out on the tea-rooms was to provide each of them with changing roles and what in normal circumstances could have been a fairly explosive conflict of ideas. However, in this first commission Walton was definitely in charge and Mackintosh's role was to be little more than his assistant, being given only small sections of his own work to carry out. In other, later, tea-rooms this role was to be reversed until eventually he was given a completely free hand to carry out the alterations to Miss Cranston's Ingram Street Tea-Rooms; Walton had, just prior to this date (circa. 1901),² left for London. Three years later the services of Mackintosh were retained for what was to be his most individual of the Cranston commissions: the Willow Tea-Rooms in Sauchiehall Street. On this project he was to be responsible for the furnishings, decoration, fittings, cutlery and menus; in actuality everything that went inside

2. "Studio Talk-Glasgow", The Studio, Vol. 36, May 1903, p. 288. gives indication of this work recently completed; Dean of Guild Application No. B4/12/1/7683, 1900.

the tea-rooms were either of his or his wife's design. It was a completely new structure and provided Charles Rennie Mackintosh with his only opportunity to display his talents on the exterior of a new tea-room.

The Willow Tea-Rooms were to mark both the pinnacle of Miss Cranston's Tea Rooms and of Mackintosh's contribution to them. They were, however, not the last commissions for Mackintosh; in 1906 he was commissioned to carry out work on the "Dutch Kitchen" in the basement of No. 114 Argyle Street. This was an acknowledgement of the maturity of his talents by his patron and one which must have meant all the more to her since these had been the site of her first venture into the business.

The Buchanan Street Tea-Rooms.

In 1896 Miss Cranston took over the premises at No. 91-3 Buchanan Street to further consolidate her business and provide in this street, one of the prime shopping streets of Glasgow, a series of tea-rooms. She commissioned George Washington Brown R.S.A., of Edinburgh to carry out the project for a new building on this site. He designed this four floor block in the French Renaissance style of the period but externally the building had little to commend it; a contemporary reviewer in "The Studio", referred to the building as having been designed by "An Eminent Edinburgh Architect", and suggested that his name be left unrecorded in his review.³ The building has since passed into the hands of the Clydesdale Bank Overseas Department and they have been responsible for improving the external appearance of this by having the entrance remodelled and

3. op. cit. 1897

fitted with heavy timber pannelled doors and glazed arched screen which had been awarded a Saltire Award.

George Washington Brown introduced, at ground floor level, a general luncheon-room and general tea-room, the latter of which, a lofty apartment, was entered directly from Buchanan Street. This room was two storeys high and penetrated through the first floor level. Behind this apartment, the general luncheon-room formed the base to a four storey well and was separated from the tea-room by the vertical circulation core consisting of: a passenger lift, goods lifts and service area, and a grand staircase which rose up through the four storey volume of the well to be capped by a top light (fig. 14, 15 & 16, pp. 41,42,43). This well was enclosed on four sides by a series of broad galleries at each of the three subsequent floor levels, and each gallery provided additional accommodation to the main adjoining apartments. The galleries usually provided additional accommodation to the adjoining major apartments on their respective floors, but, at first floor the gallery was a separate entity entirely, serving as a ladies tea and luncheon area over the main luncheon room below, and was separated from it by a heavy timber balustrade. At the second floor it was a gentleman's luncheon and tea-room; while, at the third floor it provided a smoking area adjacent to the billiards-room.

From illustrations of the tea-rooms which survive it is hard to find a clear definition of the extent of either Walton's or Mackintosh's contribution to the decoration of these. It is, however, evident that Mackintosh played only a minor role and that Walton would appear to have been in charge of the majority of the work. In addition Walton was also responsible for the hoardings erected in Buchanan Street to advertise

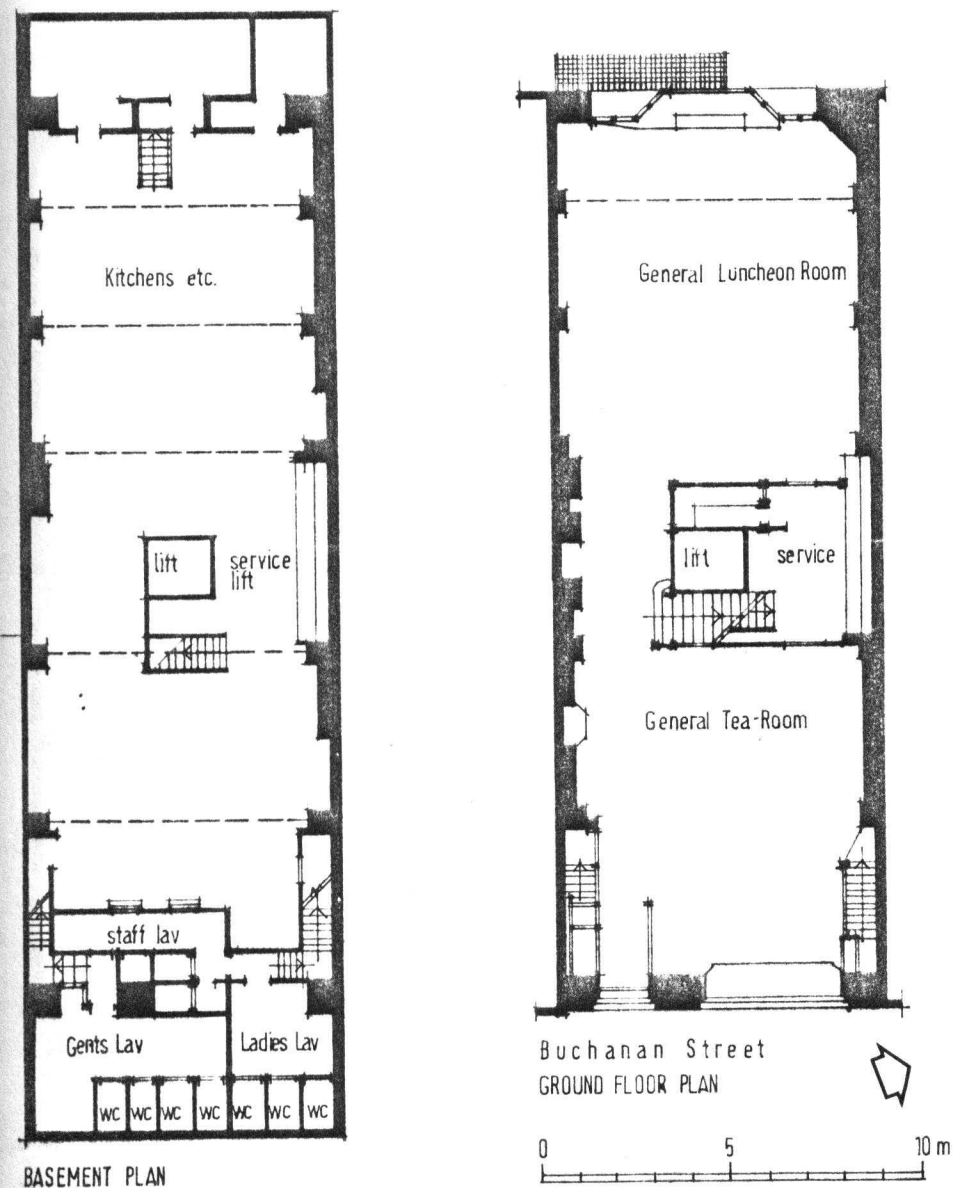


Figure 14.⁴ Basement and Ground Floor Plans of No. 91-3 Buchanan Street.

the site of the new tea-rooms; an unusual medium on which to find a designer working but one which, in this case, was executed to the highest aesthetic standards. The structure of the hoarding had its timbers painted black and the fascia, also painted black, had a brilliantly coloured exotic peacock motif stencilled on each corner. The whole thing was completed by a frieze of flowers, hearts and appropriate

4. Woolfall & Eccles FRIBA., Dean of Guild Application No. B4/12/1919/53,1919

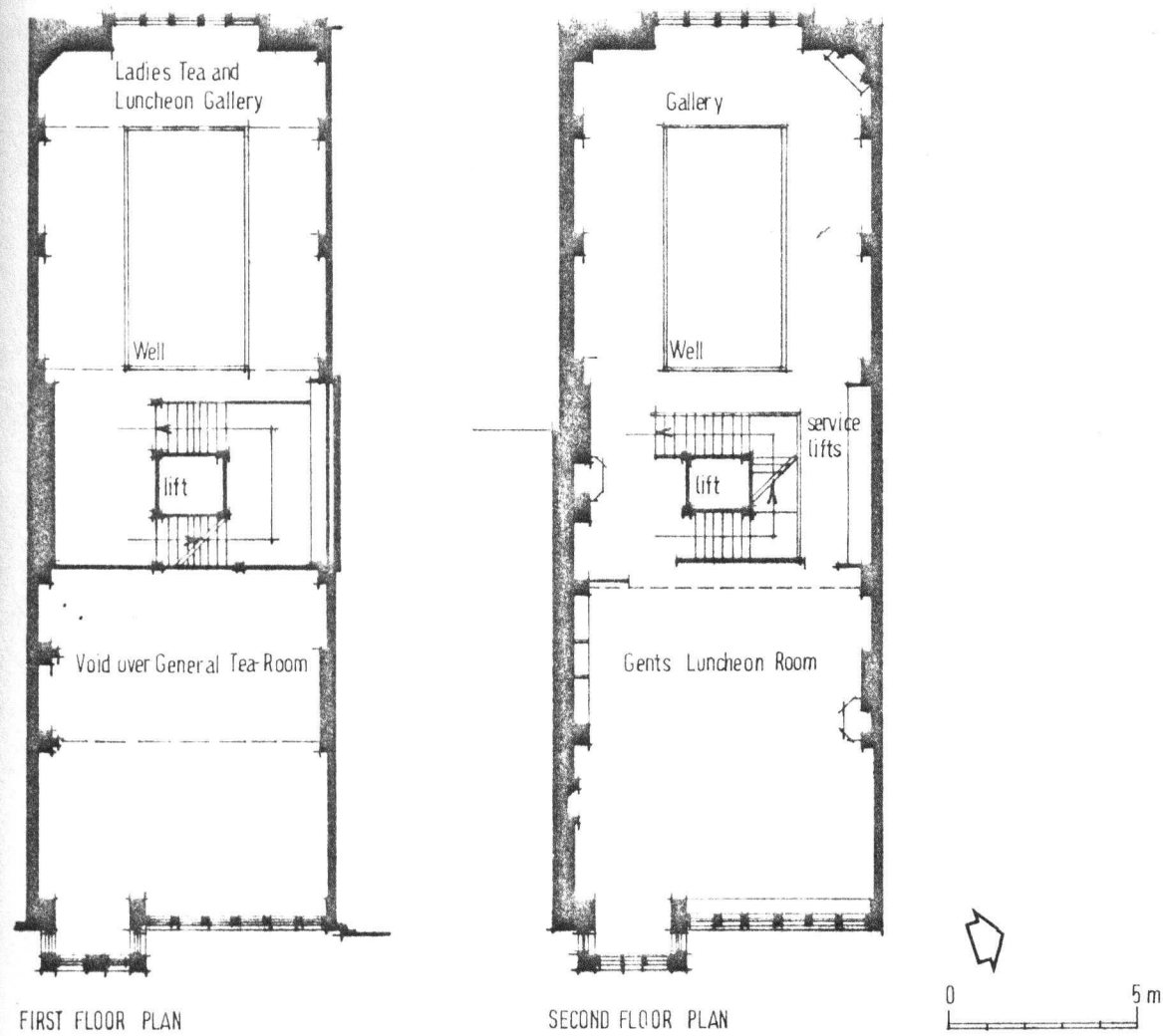


Figure 15. First and Second Floor Plans of No. 91-3 Buchanan Street.

lettering.⁵ This type of hoarding treatment was also employed by Mackintosh at a later date, when he was to provide a hoarding for the front of The Willow. This was, however, quite different from that of Walton; it was painted white and the facia was brought out on heavy timber beams to the line of the street where they intersected

5. Prof. Nikolous Pevsner. "George Walton, his Life and Work." *R.I.B.A. Journal*, vol. 36, No. 11, April 1930, p. 540.

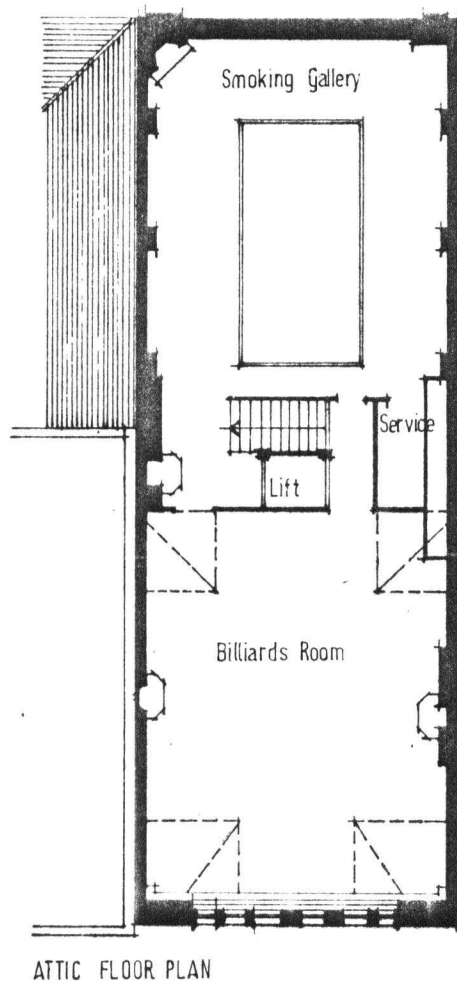


Figure 16. Attic Floor Plan of No. 91-3 Buchanan Street.

with dark timber uprights in a typically 'Mackintoshish' fashion. The frieze to the fascia was distinctly geometric, and enclosed lettering, in the Mackintosh style, announcing the opening of the tea-room. What would appear to be stencilled motifs, reminiscent of some of the designers wrought-iron work, were arranged on canvas and draped over the ends of the stand, and in all, the hoarding took on more of the appearance of an exhibition stand than that of a construction display.⁶

6. Illustrated in Dekorative Kunst, April 1905 vol. 8, No. 7, p. 257

It was in the realms of the mural work for the tea-room at Buchanan Street that Mackintosh's creativity and originality of design came into its own. In these exercises, he applied a technique which he had perfected in poster stencilling consisting of, firstly applying the colour in flat ungraded washes, using a series of highly personalised forms with bold stencilled patterns and applying to this, small areas of intense primary colours to catch the eye. In later work a similar technique was to be used in his faded glass; that of breaking up, what could have otherwise appeared repetitive, with the application of small areas of intensive interest and colour. He never used conventional techniques of trying to break up the surface by the use of areas of perspective but created, instead, an honest, stencilled flat wall, avoiding the repetitive by small changes in each of the stencilled patterns; displaying a close association with the arts and crafts principles.

The most famous of these wall murals was one which decorated the first floor gallery area (fig. 17, p. 45). In Professor Howarth's book these murals are said to be around the walls of the general tea-room on the first floor.⁷ On inspection of the photograph, however, the positioning of the butts and the hint of a central balustrade would suggest that this wall was in fact on one of the gallery floors, an area that would seem more likely to have been used for one of the lesser functions than that of the general tea-room. This mural consisted of a series of large white robed figures who were entwined by a growth

7. Professor T. Howarth, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement, 1952, p. 127.

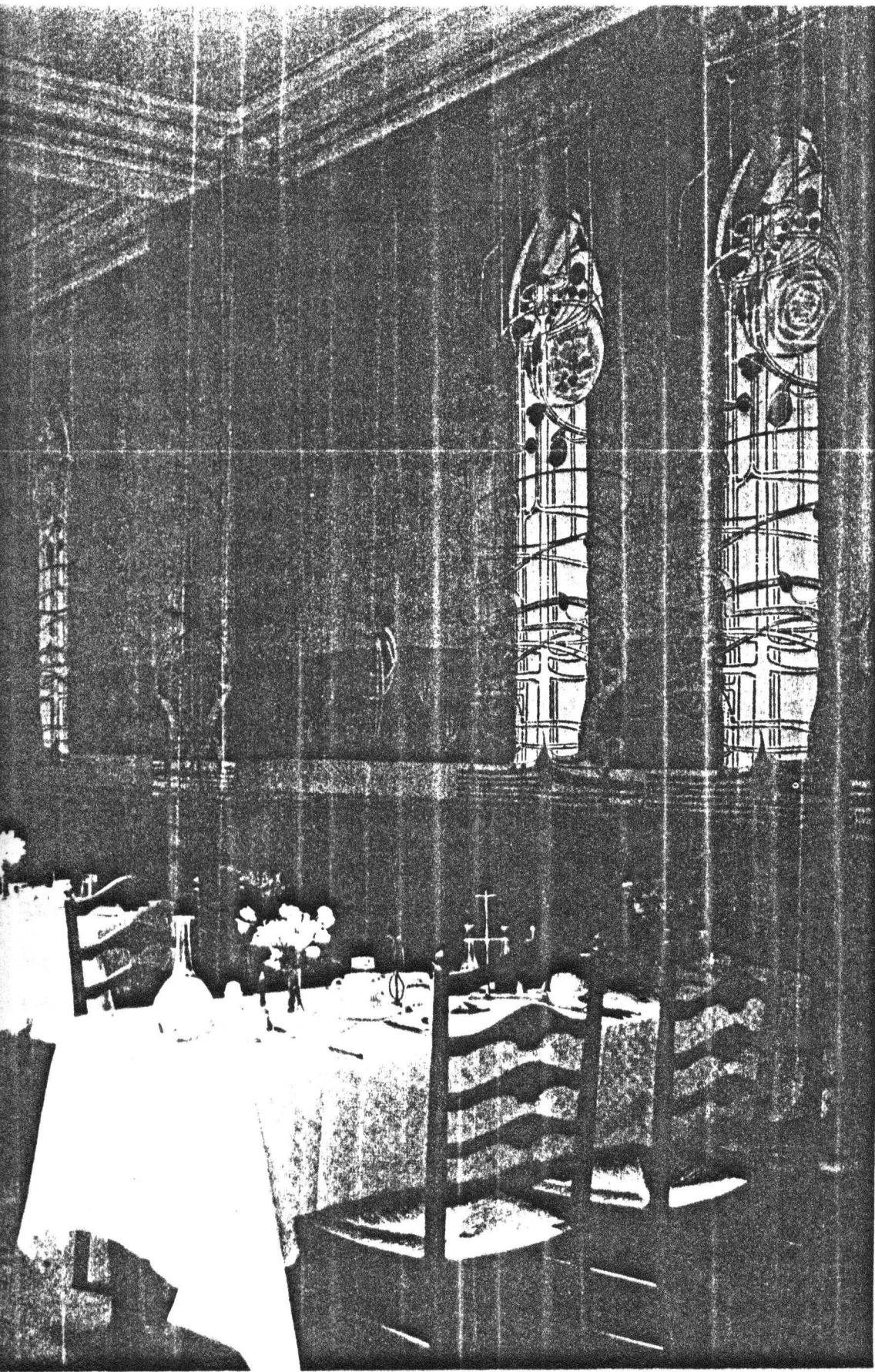


Figure 17. Buchanan Street Tea Rooms: Mural Decoration by Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

of sinuous branches, stalks and flowers and displayed more than a little similarity to Jan Toorop and the symbolists. Perhaps these figures have risen above the entanglements and mundanity of society to adorn the walls of an establishment whose ideals were just that. There is evidence in this mural that Mackintosh's work was not strictly confined to decoration: wrought iron coat hooks entwine in three dimensional protrusion from the butts.

Mackintosh was also responsible for the mural decoration in the luncheon room where the motifs employed were a series of entwining, sinuous trees, branches and flowers together with the peacock. Here again he exercised his feeling for movement and change by differentiating the form and arrangement of branches, leaves and flowers in an attempt to create growth and flow.

Throughout his work in decoration, Mackintosh rarely adopted the motifs of abstract pattern. In the smoke-rooms of Buchanan Street there was, however, a diversion from this course, short lived though it may have been. This mural consisted of a series of totem-like motifs linked together with a sinuous line. The motifs employed the same technique for creating change and movement, as had the others in the building, and this change in the design, although it was more exaggerated in this case, combined with the line of smoke linking them to create movement in what would otherwise have been a fairly 'flat' design. The same movement was exhibited in Mackintosh's treatment of the colour scheme for the galleried area. Gleeson White writing in "Studio Magazine" reported that these colours ranged from blue at the ground floor, through greys, yellows, and finally to blue at the top floor.⁸ This represented

8. Gleeson White. The Studio, vol. 11, No. 52, July 1897, p. 95

a transition from earth to sky which was to become a characteristic of much of Mackintosh's later work.

Walton was largely responsible for the rest of the decorative work in the tea-rooms which was principally the design of furniture. His work in this field was quite unlike that to be designed by Mackintosh being of a more permanent and robust nature. He used four types of chairs in this tea-room; one high backed with a central reeded back, the second had a stocky spindle-back with turned legs and uprights; the third with a shaped back and rectangular reeded panel, while the fourth had a square reeded seat and ladder back (fig. 17, p. 45). In addition Walton was responsible for some mural decoration in an orthodox Arts and Crafts idiom contrasting greatly with those by Mackintosh.⁹

The Argyle Street Tea-Rooms.

Miss Catherine Cranston commissioned the Glasgow Architects; Messrs. H. & D. Barclay, to completely remodel the property at No. 114 Argyle Street and to provide in this a new set of tea-rooms to take the place of those that were previously on the site.. Messrs. Barclay proceeded to remove all the external mouldings from the facade while placing fanciful gables and dormers in the steeply pitched, red-tiled roof. A turret was added and the walls were rendered with rough-cast from the eaves to the first floor level. This treatment was a departure from the normal facade on to Argyle Street and its Belgian-like appearance was to bring a certain amount of custom to the new tea-rooms. These consisted of; a tea-room at ground level, a luncheon-room at the second floor, and a billiards and smoking-room on the third floor (fig. 18, p. 49).

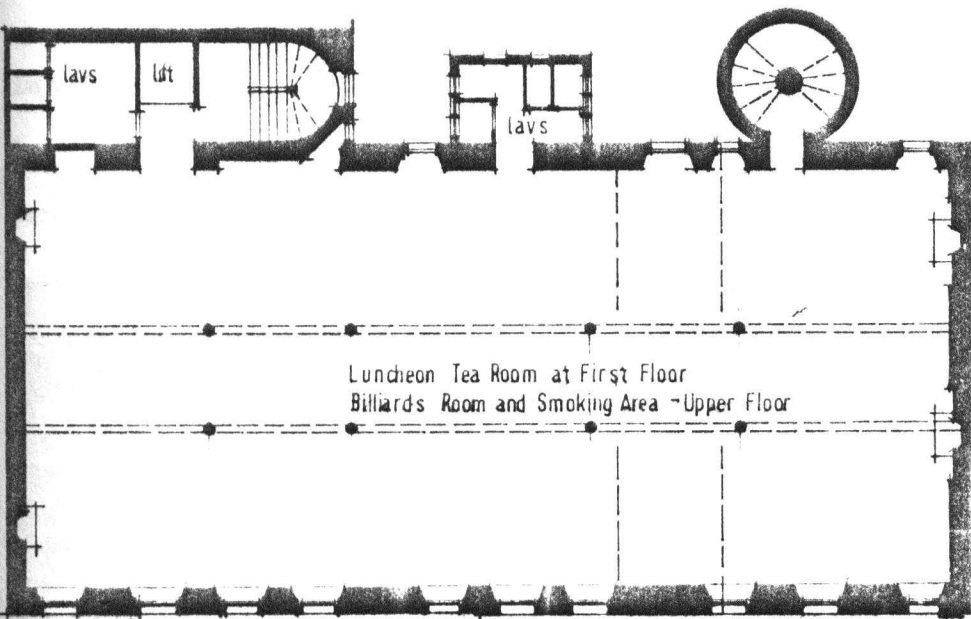
The roles of Walton and Mackintosh as designers of the interiors

9. "Modern British Domestic Architecture and Decoration". The Studio, a special number, 1901, pp. 197-8.

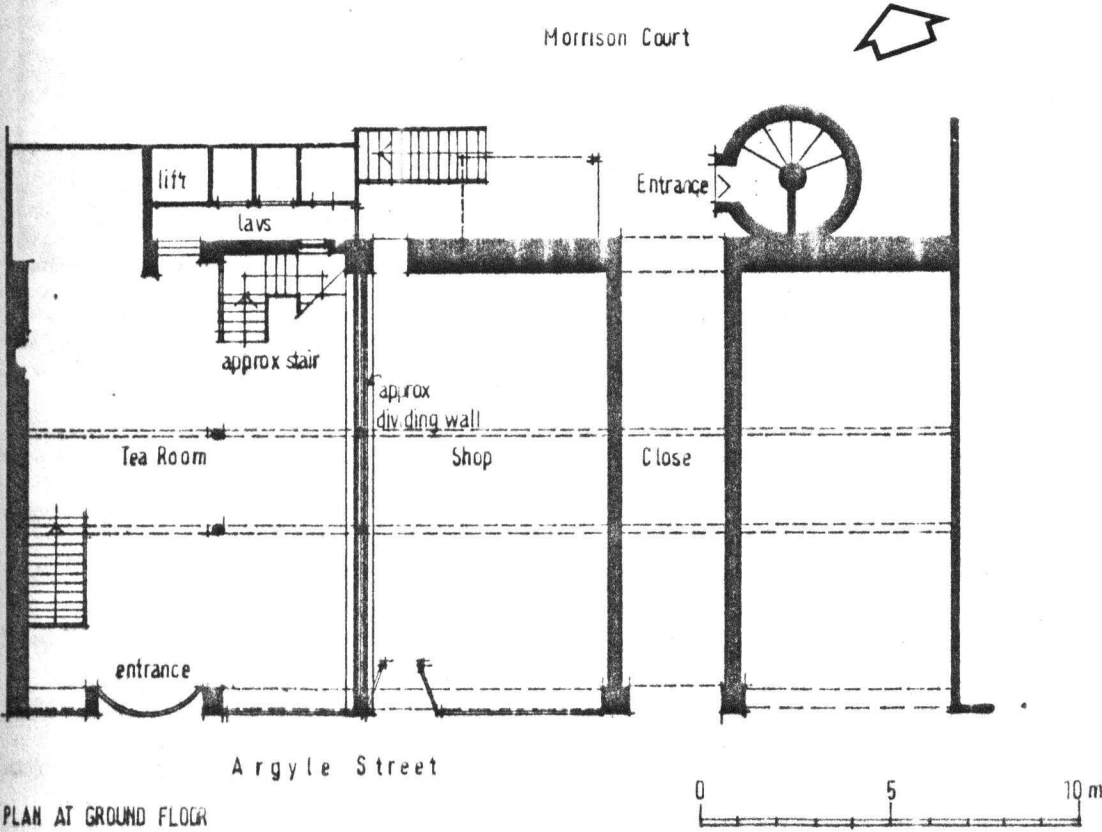
was, for this tea-room, a reversal of the positions which they had occupied at Buchanan Street. Walton was responsible for: the decoration, panelling, screens, billiard-tables, fireplaces and the electric light fittings. Mackintosh was in charge of the design of tables, chairs and coat stands. It is particularly difficult to say at which point in the delineation of responsibilities that either one of the designers stopped. They had worked together previously and there had been some cross-fertilisation of ideas with the result, that mannerisms of one may have been adopted by the other. The lack of definitive and reliable information on this further adds to the difficulty. There is little doubt that Walton carried out the murals and that Mackintosh carried out both the light fittings in the billiards-room and the furnishings throughout the rest of the tea-rooms, but there are points where certain items have been attributed to one, yet bear remarkable likeness to work by the other. The billiard tables (fig. 19, p. 50), were attributed to Walton in a report on the tea-rooms which appeared in "The Studio"¹⁰ yet bore a remarkable likeness to the tables which were designed by Mackintosh, for the Sauchiehall Street Tea-Rooms, some five years later¹¹. The same might be said for the screens in the billiards room (fig. 21, p. 51). These were of a style and finish remarkably like the work of Mackintosh to be found in the Ingram Street Tea-Rooms. This dispute about authorship of many of the items in the work on the tea-rooms where both artists were involved is likely to remain unresolved since most of their work has since been lost or destroyed.

10. J. Taylor, The Studio, vol. 39, No. 163, October 1906, p. 33.

11. "Dekorative Kunst". vol. 8, No. 7, April 1905, p. 274.



FIRST AND UPPER FLOOR PLAN

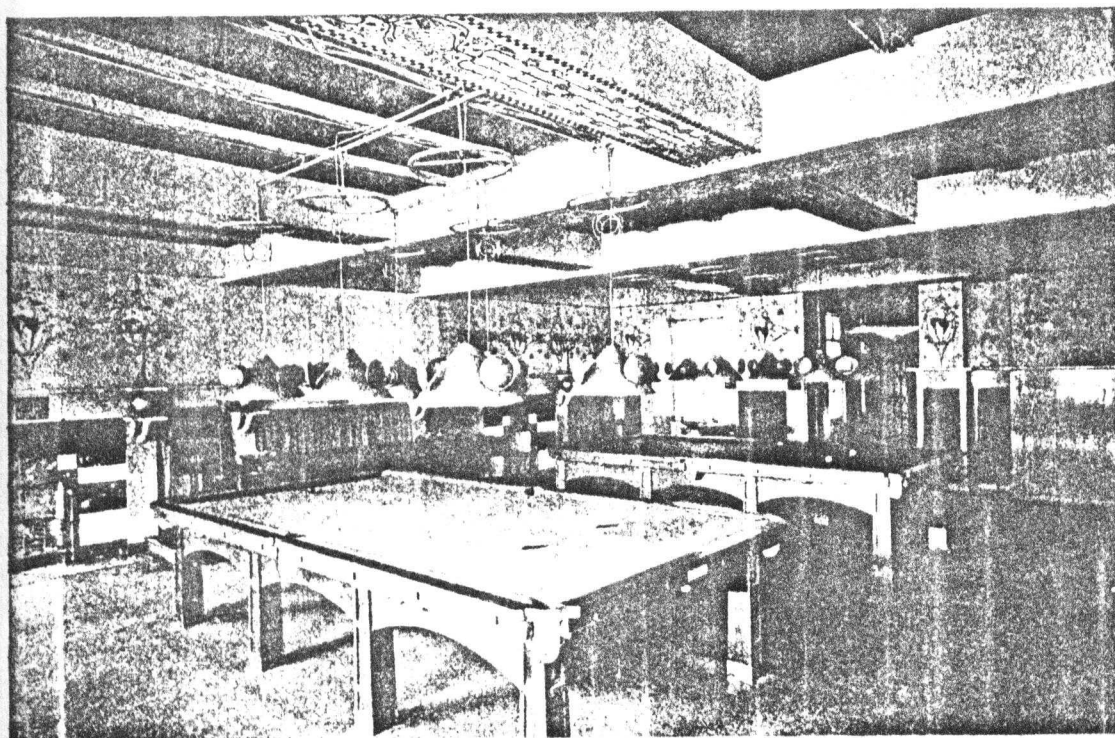


PLAN AT GROUND FLOOR

Figure 18. Plans of No. 114 Argyle Street.¹²

12. J. Hamilton & Son. Dean of Guild Application, No. B4/12/1920/611, September 1920.

The tea-rooms at No. 114 Argyle Street followed the same general layout as had those in Buchanan Street providing; a tea-room at street level; luncheon-rooms at first floor level, while at the top floor there were billiard-rooms and smoking-rooms. The ground floor tea-room was



BILLIARD ROOM AT MISS CRANSTON'S
TEA HOUSE, ARGYLE STREET, GLASGOW

DECORATIONS AND BILLIARD TABLES BY GEORGE WALTON
CHAIRS, ETC., BY CHARLES R. MACKINTOSH

Figure 19. The Billiards & Smoking Room at No. 114 Argyle Street.^{13.}

decorated by Walton in a rich walnut panelling, and had at its North end a bridged staircase which led to the first floor. Some doubt has been expressed about this stair; a report in Professor Howarth's book suggests that it may have been the work of Mackintosh, but this would seem unlikely, since he had not by this time attained the stature which

13. Illustrated in The Studio, vol. 39, No. 163, p. 33.

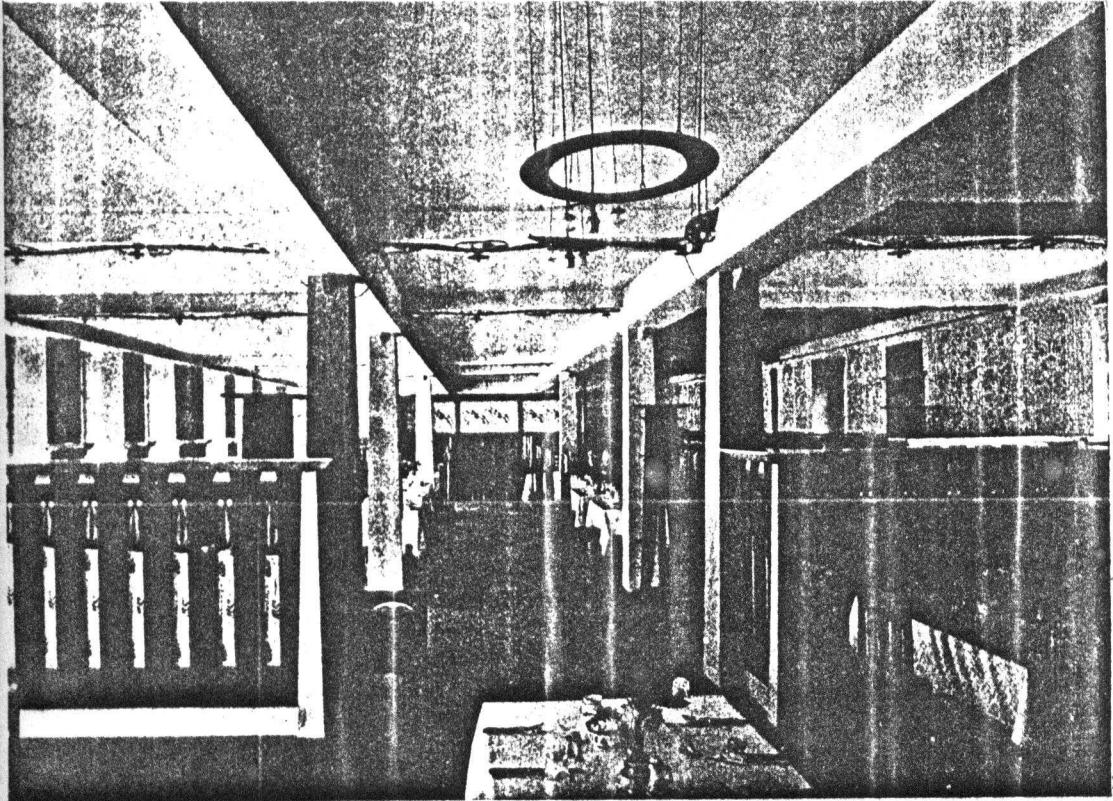
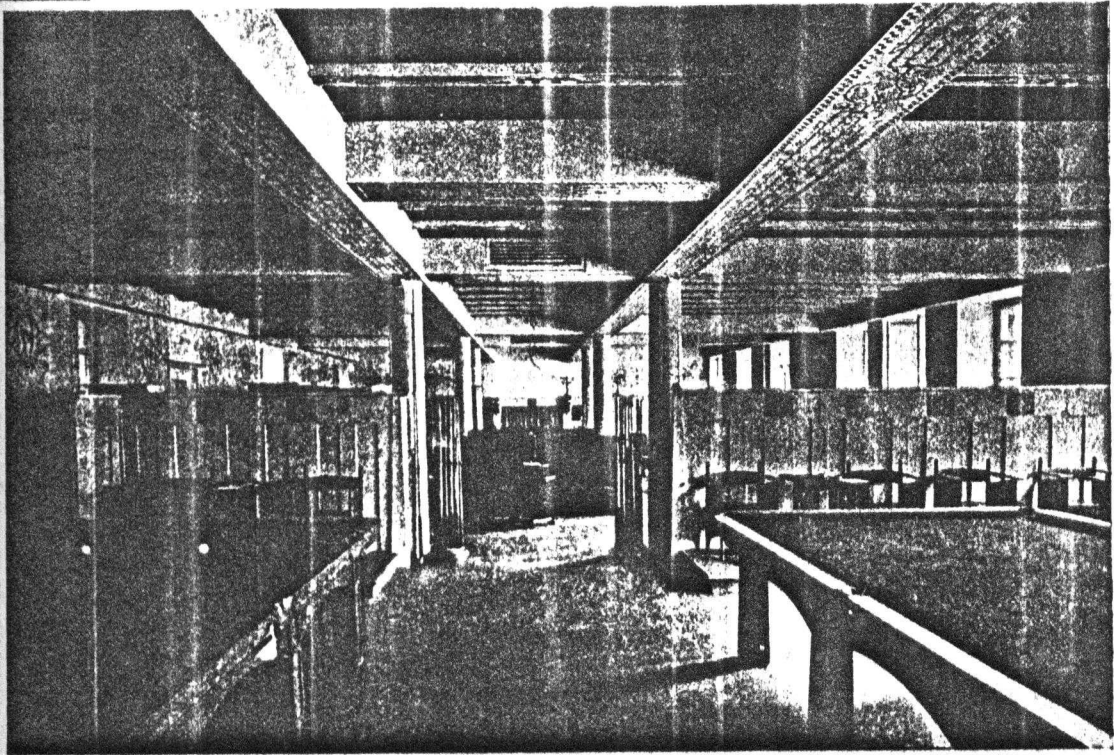


Figure 20. Luncheon Room, No. 114 Argyle Street.



LUNCHEON AND BILLIARD ROOMS
AT MISS CRANSTON'S TEA HOUSE,
ARGYLE STREET, GLASGOW

DECORATIONS, SCREENS, TABLES, AND
ELECTRIC FITTINGS BY GEORGE WALTON
CHAIRS AND STANDS BY C. R. MACKINTOSH

Figure 21. Billiard Room, No. 114 Argyle Street.

would permit such a large contribution.¹⁴ At the first floor level was the luncheon-room. This was a long, low apartment which was divided into two by a dark-stained oak screen by Walton, and the two areas thus provided were further subdivided by low timber screens; which were also by Walton. The main screen had its upper part stencilled with a floral pattern on a light background (fig. 20 p. 51), while the walls of the room were stencilled, in a style more in keeping with the Arts and Crafts movement, with a striking floral pattern. These stencils by Walton emphasised the low ceiling height of this room and contrast greatly with the murals executed by Mackintosh in the Buchanan Street rooms. The room did, however, house the famous decorative panel "Eros". It was designed by Walton for the Glasgow Exhibition in 1901 and was a striking mosaic employing materials in the strange combination of: slate and marble, coloured and opalescent glass, mother-of-pearl, crystal and occasional pieces of silver.

The billiards-room and smoking-room on the top floor were decorated almost entirely by Mackintosh (fig. 21, p. 51) with Walton's only contribution being that of a flowery-lined, stencilled frieze on the walls and decoration to the underside of the beams. The billiard tables were also by Walton, but, as has been discussed earlier, may have been the work of Mackintosh. Mackintosh painted the panelling to the room white

14. Professor T. Howarth, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement, 1952, p. 130

to reduce the feeling of lowness which had been created by Walton's stencilled patterns, and provided the light fittings over the billiard-tables. The most interesting feature of Mackintosh's work for these rooms was the furniture which he designed (fig. 22, p. 54); which was of a much lower profile than is to be seen in his later work. In these furnishings was to be seen the beginnings of a mature style, with the construction, although fairly inelegant, showing a more robust nature than had been seen in his earlier work. It shows the introduction of many of, what were to become, Mackintosh's standard designs for furniture: the ladder-back, the tub-chair, stool, and the circular coffee-table which was to be used again, some years later, in the Ingram Street commission. None of the chairs had the grace and elegance of Walton's furniture, but possessed a down-to-earth, homely nature which was quite suitable for their purpose.

In 1906 Miss Cranston opened up the basement to the tea-rooms and commissioned Mackintosh to carry out the design for these. She had, just previously, committed herself heavily on the financing of the Sauchiehall Street venture and it is likely that Mackintosh would be given a fairly tight budget on which to work. The basement, however, posed other problems for Mackintosh beside financial ones: it was a long, low-ceilinged, narrow apartment with little natural daylight and had a heavy load-bearing wall which divided the area into two. There were, in addition, five circular iron columns which further subdivided the larger of these areas; the one which had been chosen for the tea-room. This was not to deter Mackintosh, and he created, from this nightmare, one of his most pleasing designs for a Cranston tea-room.

There were four main elements introduced to the basement which

enabled Mackintosh to create the desired effect of the 'Dutch Kitchen'; firstly, he added cross-members to the exposed ceiling beams and in this way created a lattice of recessed rectangles, the timbers of which he stained black; secondly, he further emphasised the inglenook by boxing in the stair at the South-West corner of the room and by building a screen across it, consisting of an ogee curve at ceiling level which was terminated at the springing line on either side of it, by five



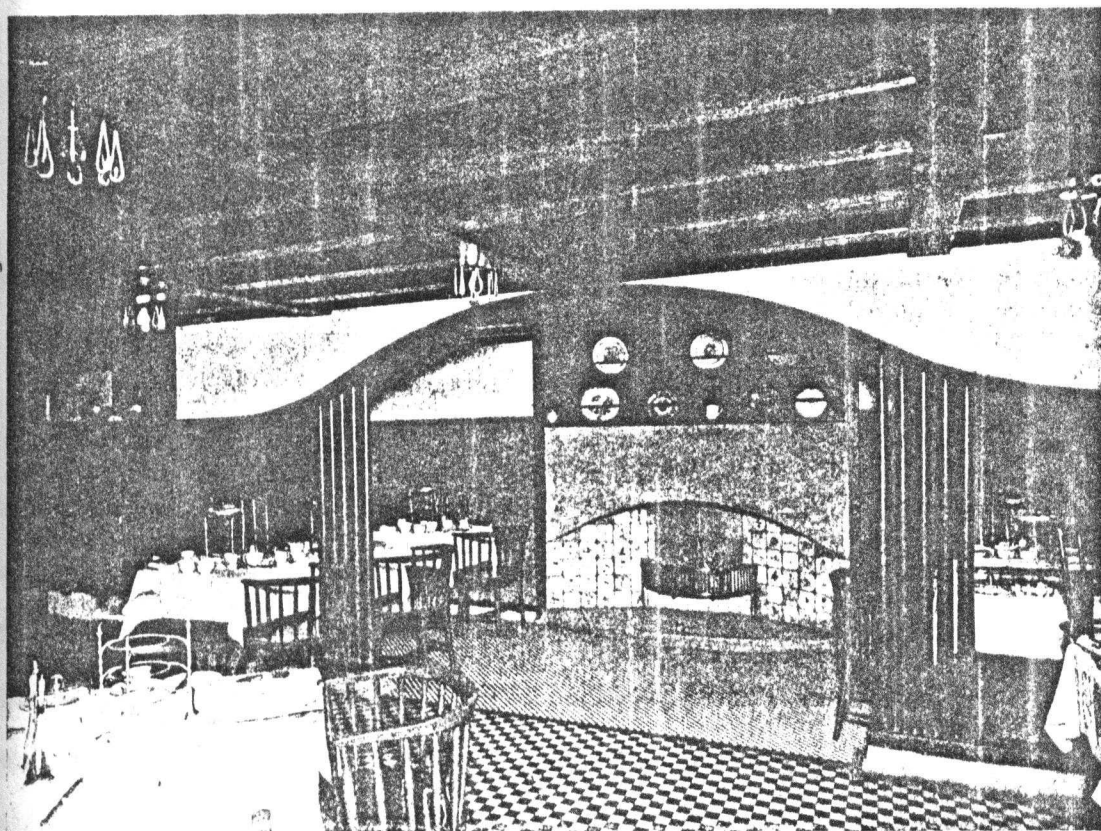
CORNER OF SMOKING ROOM AT
MISS CRANSTON'S TEA HOUSE,
ARGYLE STREET, GLASGOW

DECORATIONS BY GEORGE WALTON
FURNITURE BY C. R. MACKINTOSH

Figure 22. The North-East corner of the Billiards
Room at No. 114 Argyle Street.

tapered timber posts (fig. 23, p. 55); thirdly, he introduced into the wall to the pavement cellar, two bow fronted leaded-glass casement windows (fig. 24, p. 56); and lastly, he employed a particularly strong

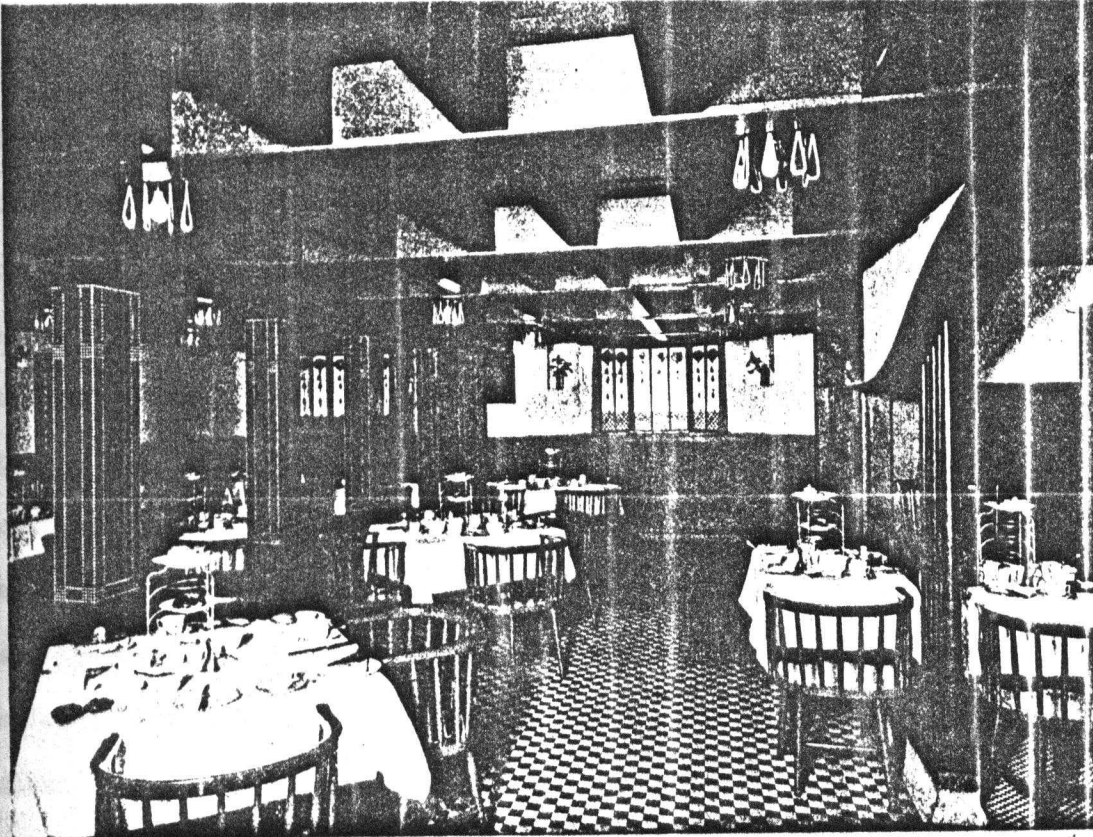
motif for decorating the room - the black and white squared pattern and black-stained timbers - which he contrasted by employing an emerald green stain for the furniture of the room. The use of the bow fronted windows, and the flower niches which were cut into the East wall (there were seven on these) served to detract from the rectangular shape of the room, and, the curved emphasis on the ogee and the fireplace lintol served to further detract from the geometric regularity which he had introduced with the lattice ceiling, checked linoleum and squared terrazzo.



THE OLD KITCHEN AT MISS CRANSTON'S
TEA HOUSE, ARGYLE STREET, GLASGOW

DESIGNED BY C. R. MACKINTOSH

Figure 23. Interior View of the 'Dutch Kitchen'



THE OLD KITCHEN AT MISS CRANSTON'S
TEA HOUSE, ARGYLE STREET, GLASGOW

DESIGNED BY C. R. MACKINTOSH

Figure 24. Interior View of the 'Dutch Kitchen'.

The main feature of the room was the fireplace, which had a simple steel grate and was tiled on either side with blue and white delft tiles. This was capped with a deep curved lintol, above which a lip was provided to form a dresser. A small black and white squared terrazzo was used to floor the inglenook and the whole was framed by the screen and ogee curve. This screen separated the inglenook from the remainder of the room, but it can be seen that by the use of a simple removable timber strap, which ran between the tapered poles and the adjoining walls, this area could either remain separate or be included in the main seating area.

There was a complete committment to the checked motif; the boxed-in columns had white squares of mother-of-pearl set into their faces in an attempt to reduce their visual mass; while a gingham material, with a minutely checkered pattern was stretched and pinned over the lower sections of the walls. On the East wall this lower section was framed in timber and splayed outwards towards the floor before the application of the gingham. This had the effect of transposing the floor surface on to, and up the wall; this again was characteristic of Mackintosh's unfailing desire to create movement and transposition from one surface to another. The remainder of the surfaces in the room were plastered white, but broken up by occasional splashes of pink in inserts in both the flower niches and the leaded-glass.

This was to be Mackintosh's last major commission for the Cranston Tea-Rooms in Argyle Street and (circa. 1919) they passed into the hands of Manfield's who turned the premises into a shoe-shop. Professor T. Howarth reported that all vestige of Miss Cranston's charming tea-rooms had vanished.¹⁵ This opinion has, however, recently been shown to be incorrect; the 'Dutch Kitchen' has been found, virtually intact behind the shelving which the above company installed. This recent discovery will be discussed in more detail in the Appendix.

The Ingram Street Tea-Rooms.

In 1895, according to the Post Office Guide, Miss Cranston took possession of Nos. 205-9 Ingram Street, and in 1901 added a further

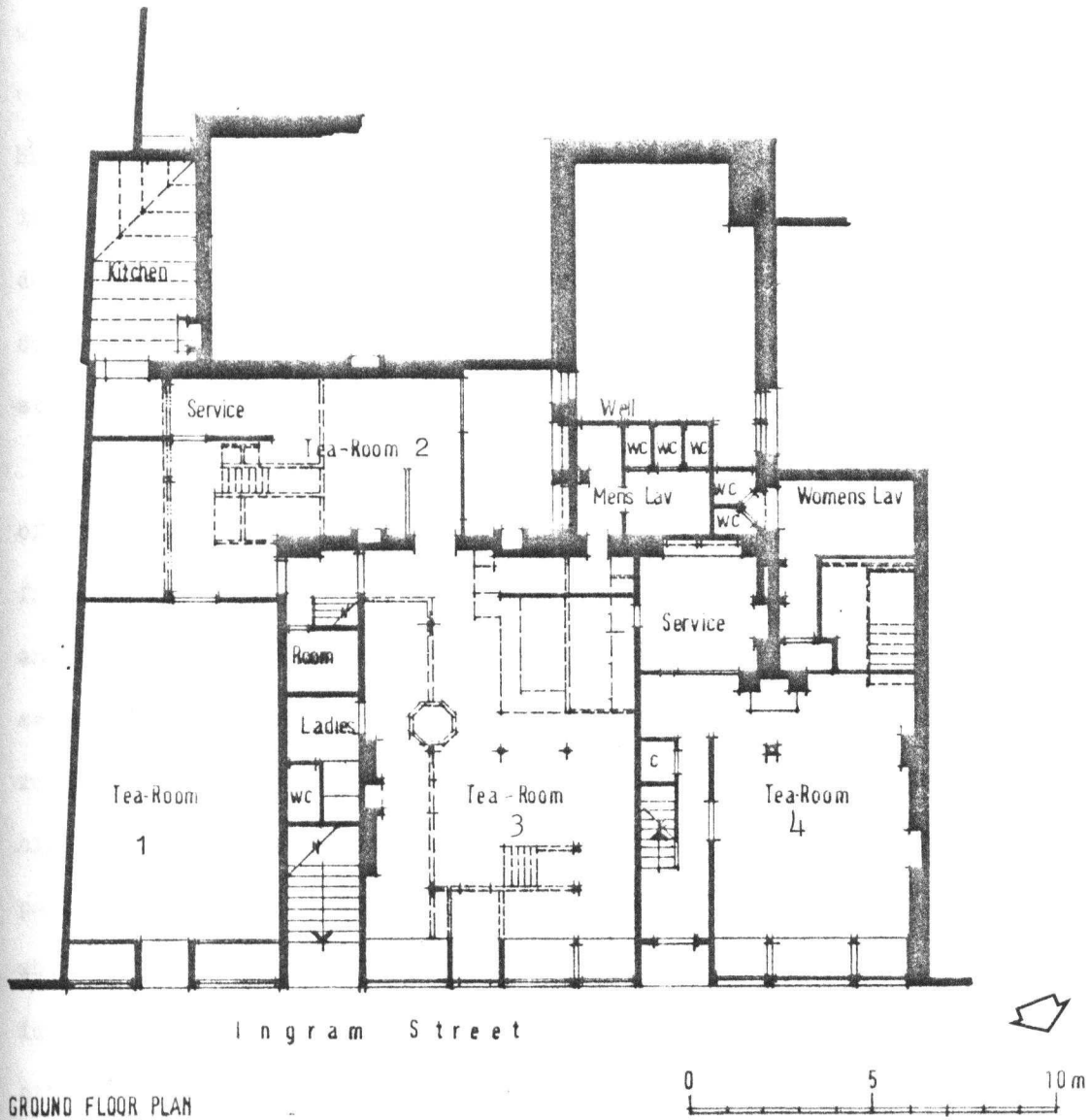
15. Professor T. Howarth, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement. 1952, p. 131.

section at Nos. 213-15. It would appear that the section, which was later to contain the Oak Room, was added after Nos. 213-15 which appear on a Dean of Guild Application in 1900.¹⁶

The first set of tea-rooms, at Nos. 205-9 Ingram Street, were designed by the architect Kesson Whyte and decorated by Messrs. Alexander & Howell. They consisted of a gentlemens' tea-room, later to become the Chinese Room; a ladies' tea-room, later to become the Cloister Room; and on the basement floor, a smoking-room (fig. 25, 26 & 27, pp. 59, 61, 62). The apartments were dark, narrow and rather depressing with furniture consisting of, in the main, low spindle-back chairs, and in the smoking-room upholstered armchairs of the clubroom type. An atmosphere of Victorian respectability was created by these fixtures and decorations, and was further reinforced by the use of ornate light fixtures, heavy panelling, and a richly patterned wallpaper.

It would seem from Miss Cranston's choice of yet another set of designers that she was still experimenting with her image. The novelty and social need for the tea-room were rightly anticipated by Miss Cranston but it was becoming increasingly more difficult to draw custom from the newly decorated and fitted public houses and inns. An attraction would have to be found and Miss Cranston turned towards Mackintosh for the solution to this. His efforts at the Buchanan Street tea-rooms had provided a talking point among the population, particularly the mural decorations, and it was to this end that she commissioned him to work on the second phase of the Ingram Street tea-room. It is interesting to note that, besides employing Mackintosh

16. Dean of Guild Application No. B4/12/1/7683, 1900.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Figure 25. The Ingram Street Tea-Rooms. Ground Floor Plan 1900.

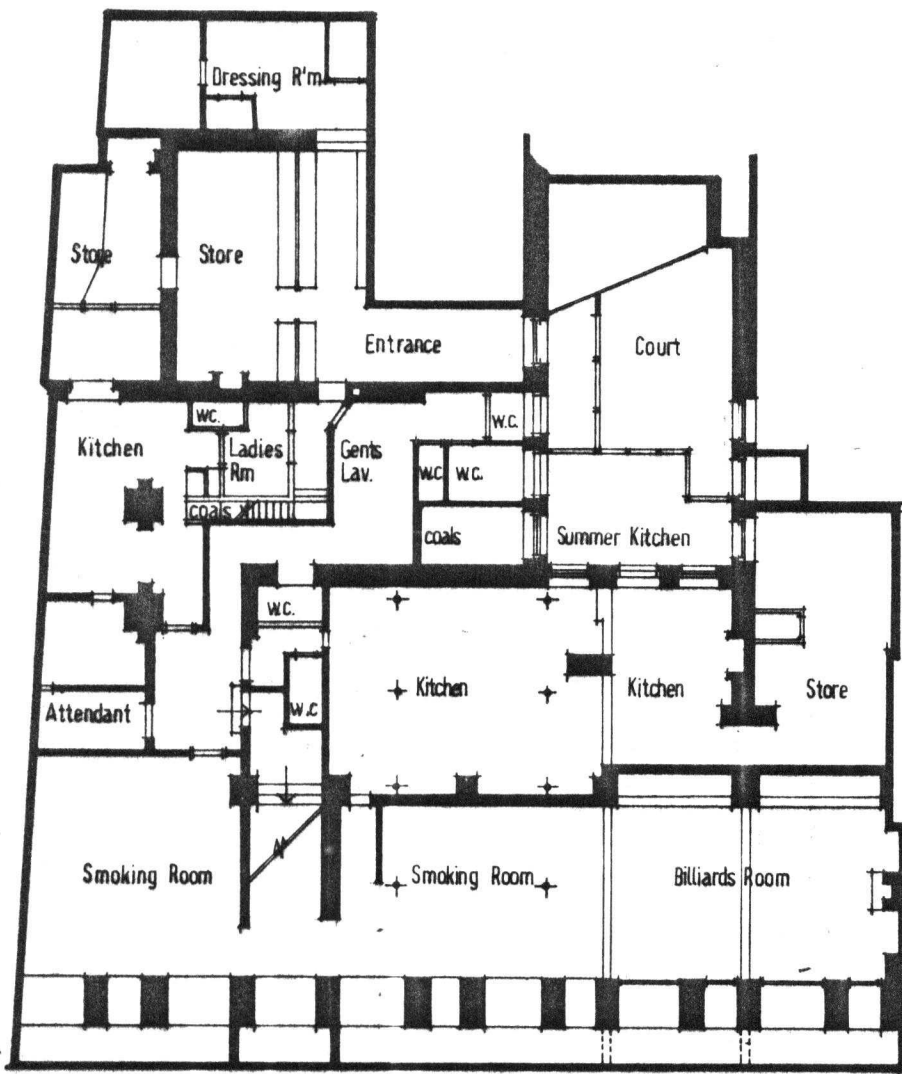
- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Gentlemen's Tea-Room: | first scheme. |
| Chinese Room | : second scheme. |
| 2. Ladies' Tea-Room | : first scheme. |
| Cloister Room | : second scheme. |
| 3. Scott Morton Room | |
| 4. White Dining Room | |

whom she thought to be a pioneer in the field of design, she was to contribute much in the way of publicity for the tea-rooms herself. She had always been a little extravagant in her ways but now she was to become even more so; she became a leader of fashion; employed a donkey drawn carriage, driven by a boy dressed in green velvet, to deliver flowers to her tea-rooms daily, and became a familiar figure at social functions and art shows.

Messrs. Scott Morton were retained to remodel the second section of the premises at No. 207 Ingram Street. They achieved a greater freedom in their design for the Scott Morton Room (fig. 25.3, p.59) and perhaps, created more of the atmosphere that Miss Cranston was searching for. This room was twice the width of the gentlemen's tea-room next door, and they introduced a balcony to take advantage of the high ceiling. The balcony was built in timber with Victorian carved panels, turning and carving used extensively. Below this a feature, which was to remain until long after Mackintosh's involvement, was introduced - the frieze of mirrors. These were, by all accounts, an attractive feature of the room.

The third and fourth sections of the premises were added (circa 1901), although as has already been pointed out, the third section appeared on a Dean of Guild application in 1900.¹⁶ It was in this tea-room that Mackintosh, for the first time, was to be given a completely free hand. He opened up the party walls between the various rooms to provide a series of inter-connecting apartments and the basement was extended to accommodate additional billiards-rooms and smoking-rooms (fig. 26. p. 61).

16. Op. Cit. no. B4/12/1/7683. This anonymous application with its Mackintosh style lettering shows the principal alterations carried out by Mackintosh.



BASEMENT PLAN

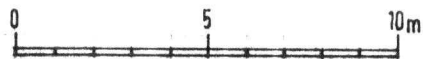


Figure 26. The Ingram Street Tea-Rooms, Basement Plan.

On the ground floor he introduced a new entrance in the centre of the block which led in turn to a new staircase, separated from the main dining-room by a timber screen. At the head of this stair he introduced a small gallery over the servery and struck an opening from this to the balcony of the Scott Morton Room. This made the existing stair to the balcony obsolete and it was subsequently removed. The new staircase was a fine

example of Mackintosh's treatment of such features; the sturdy ballusters were square in section and rose to a height of about three metres at the foot of the stair to meet with a wide cornice which was carried horizontally at balcony level. The timber screen which separated the dining-room from the entrance hall was two metres high and had square leaded-glass panels at eye level. The room itself was panelled to a height of about three metres with broad panelled strips which were echoed on the front of the balcony. (fig. 28, p. 63).

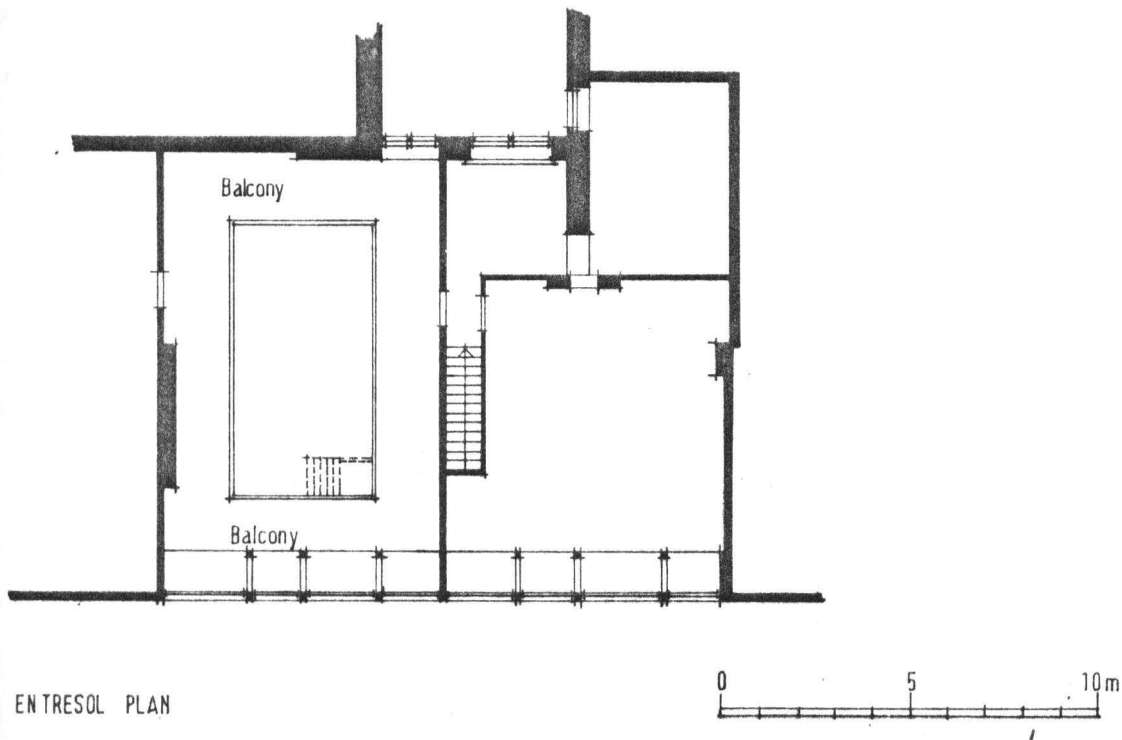


Figure 27. The Ingram Street Tea-Rooms. Entresol Plan.

All the timber in the room, including the staircase, was painted white. On the West wall of the room he placed a heavy rectangular fireplace in beaten lead, adorned with a characteristic motif, quite similar to those of the wrought iron railings of the Glasgow School of Art. The furniture of the room was characteristic of the mature Mackintosh style;

consisting of in the main, square back chairs of good proportion but some which had excessively high backs.¹⁷ These were pierced in the characteristic Mackintosh way with a series of small squares. After completing the white dining-room Mackintosh and his patron embarked on a new project in Sauchiehall Street - The Willow Tea-Rooms - and it was not until 1907 that any further work was carried out on the Ingram Street Tea-Rooms when Mackintosh completed the Oak Room.

During the first twenty years of the Cranston Tea-Rooms much experimenting had taken place in both the layout and interiors of the respective shops. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however,

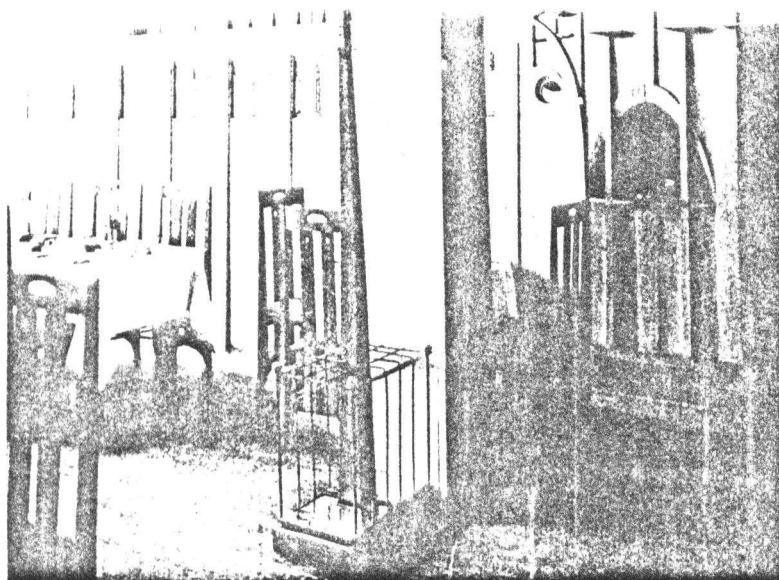


Figure 28. The Ingram Street Tea-Rooms. The White Dining-Room, view towards the screen.

the tea-rooms and their principal architect were reaching a maturity which was to be consummated in the Willow Tea-Rooms, the remaining

17. Robert MacLeod, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, 1960, p. 104, plate 77.

rooms at Ingram Street, and the Dutch Kitchen. The beginning of the twentieth century brought with it a new era in society and art. It was in these years that the transition from the old to the new was taking place and this was reflected in the sudden casting aside of old ideals and ways, replacing them with ephemeral displays of what might today appear to be eccentricities; the Art Nouveau movements in art and architecture together with radical changes in society in an attempt to find an outlet for the newly liberated energies of the people. It was, perhaps, as a reaction to this feeling that Miss Cranston gambled on the use of Mackintosh for her future commissions; a gamble which paid off for the few short years in which her business continued. The businesses flourished, of that it is certain, but whether they too might have been swallowed up in the onslaught of Modernism, Functionalism and the waves of technology is something we will never know.

CHAPTER 4.

THE WILLOW TEA-ROOMS.

Miss Cranston acquired the site for this set of tea-rooms at No. 215-17 Sauchiehall Street in 1901 and commissioned Charles Rennie Mackintosh as architect and designer for these, the largest set of Cranston tea-rooms. They were to be the most complete contribution by Mackintosh to the chain, and for the first time since his meeting with Catherine Cranston, he was to be given a free hand to carry out a set of tea-rooms from inception to completion. With the help of his wife, Margaret Macdonald, he was to design everything down to the smallest artifacts, which included such things as: cutlery, napkins, menus, curtains and even the hoarding for the frontage on to Sauchiehall Street. It was the first time that Mackintosh had been given the opportunity to display his originality on the exterior of one of these establishments, and the first time that he was to display this in such a prominent position; his other commissions had generally been a little 'off the beaten-track' but this one could hardly have occupied a more prominent site - on Sauchiehall Street, one of the city's principal shopping streets. The external works for this building consisted of primarily providing an infill to a well established street frontage together with the structure and fabric for the gap site between a department store on one side, and an office block on the other. He could have hardly done this in a less obvious manner, paying little attention to the styles of the existing street scape and completely ignoring window lines, which were, in any case rather ragged. The austerity of this street was to be interrupted by this example of typical Mackintosh interpenetrating geometric forms and plans (fig. 29. p. 66).

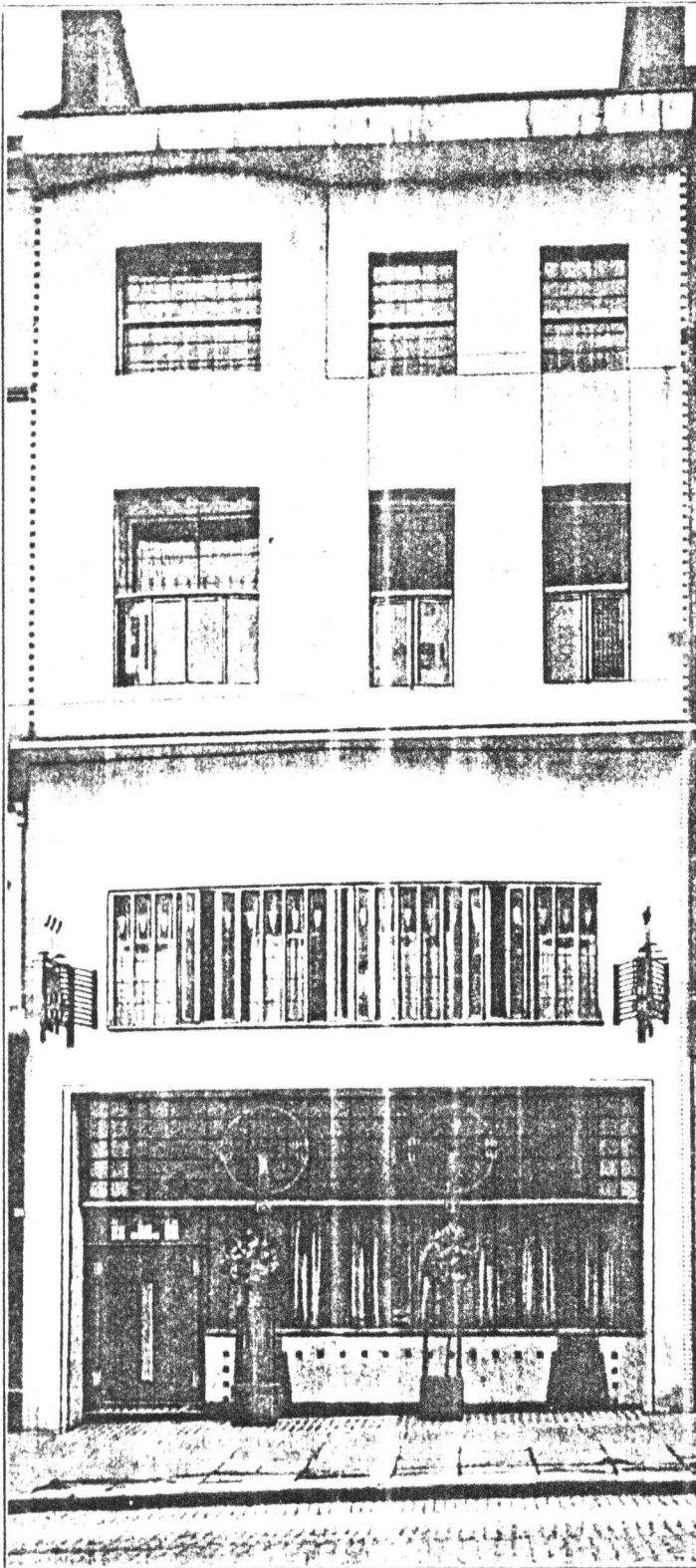


Figure 29. The Willow Tea-Rooms. Frontage on to Sauchiehall Street.

The vertical emphasis of this four storey frontage was divided into two parts by an unmoulded hood across the facade at second floor level; both sections having their own identity and character created by the fenestration and massing of the surfaces. The upper section displays a hint of the Scottish Baronial with the merest suggestion of a stair turret on the East side reflecting the position of the vertical circulation deep within the building while, the other has definite geometrical leanings which are softened subtly by a curving surface of the smallest order. At first floor level a band of glazing stretches almost completely across the width of the building; a feature which would at first seem to break the vertical emphasis, but which is subdivided by narrow, vertical panes of leaded-glass and thereby softened. Each of these narrow panes has a tiny mirrored-glass inset in the shape of a leaf. The shop front, below the first floor level was almost entirely glazed but divided, at just above door height, by a heavy transom above which the glazing was divided into small leaded-glass squares. Below this level the same square proportions are maintained but with horizontal pieces of a very light section, which served to accentuate the verticality. The frontage displayed Mackintosh's desire to create interpenetration of surfaces and planes; the desire to have transition from ground to sky; and a flowing nature which, even in this very geometric form, seemed to articulate without being offensive. Even the chequered borders vary in size and soften the impact of the frontage on the adjoining buildings.

This exterior must surely have caught the eye of the shopper; the recessed frontage beckoning him to enter; the vernal like appearance suggesting that there might possibly be something of interest behind; and the dominating lower half of the building suggesting that he would

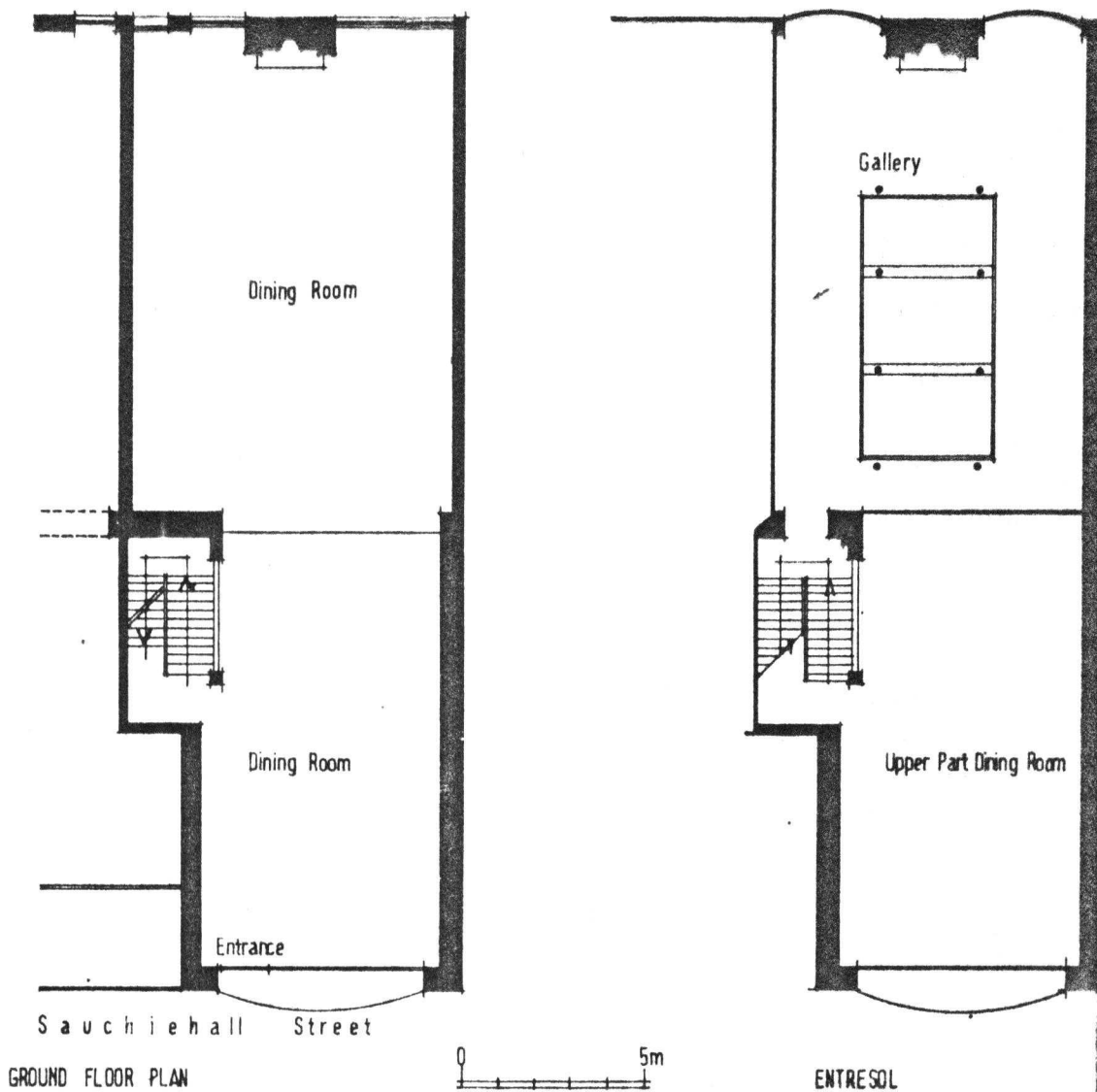


Figure 30. The Willow Tea-Rooms. Ground Floor & Entresol Plans.

once inside, not have far to climb. "Thon new tea-rooms wi' the comic windows" ¹ had been firmly established on the street-scape of the city.

The Willow was four storeys high at the frontage, and to the rear, had a single, high, top-lit room with a balcony. The ground floor was taken up by dining-rooms with the main dining-room to the front. This was

1. "The Looker-On", Erchie in an Art Tea Room from an undated news cutting. Extracted from Erchie, by Hugh Foulis (Neil Munro) chapter 22.

decorated with board and batten panelling to a height of about two metres, above which was a high relief plaster frieze in a repeating design of highly conventionalised tree forms. This design was so far abstracted from the nature of a tree that it appeared to be more of an exercise in linear arrangement rather than an illustration of something organic. This motif was to be the constant theme of the Willow Tea-Rooms and was, like the name of the rooms, derived from the name of the street: Sauchiehall - the hall of the willows. The panelling was painted white and the general atmosphere of the room was light and airy, contrasted by the dark stained furniture. Here, as in most of the other rooms in the restaurant, Mackintosh used the low ladder-back seat and the tub-chair; the latter being used only in small areas to create a different spacial quality. The most notable of these was a peculiar arrangement at the foot of the main staircase. Four heavy timber posts were formed to make a pagoda-like frame round about four of the low tub-chairs and tables. This frame rose to a height of about three metres to be capped by a metal frame, from which was suspended a heavy glass dome containing flowers (fig. 31, p. 70). The curtains for this room were in white silk with a repeat of the willow motif. These were designed by Margaret Macdonald and their effect must have been quite uncanny when billowing in the breeze: sinuous lines and translucent shrouds waving across the squared, geometric backcloth of Mackintosh's leaded-glass panes (fig. 32, p. 71).

The rear dining-room was decorated in a fashion quite contrary to the white dining-room, and it was this contrast which served as the only tangible division of the two, with the exception of the general spacial

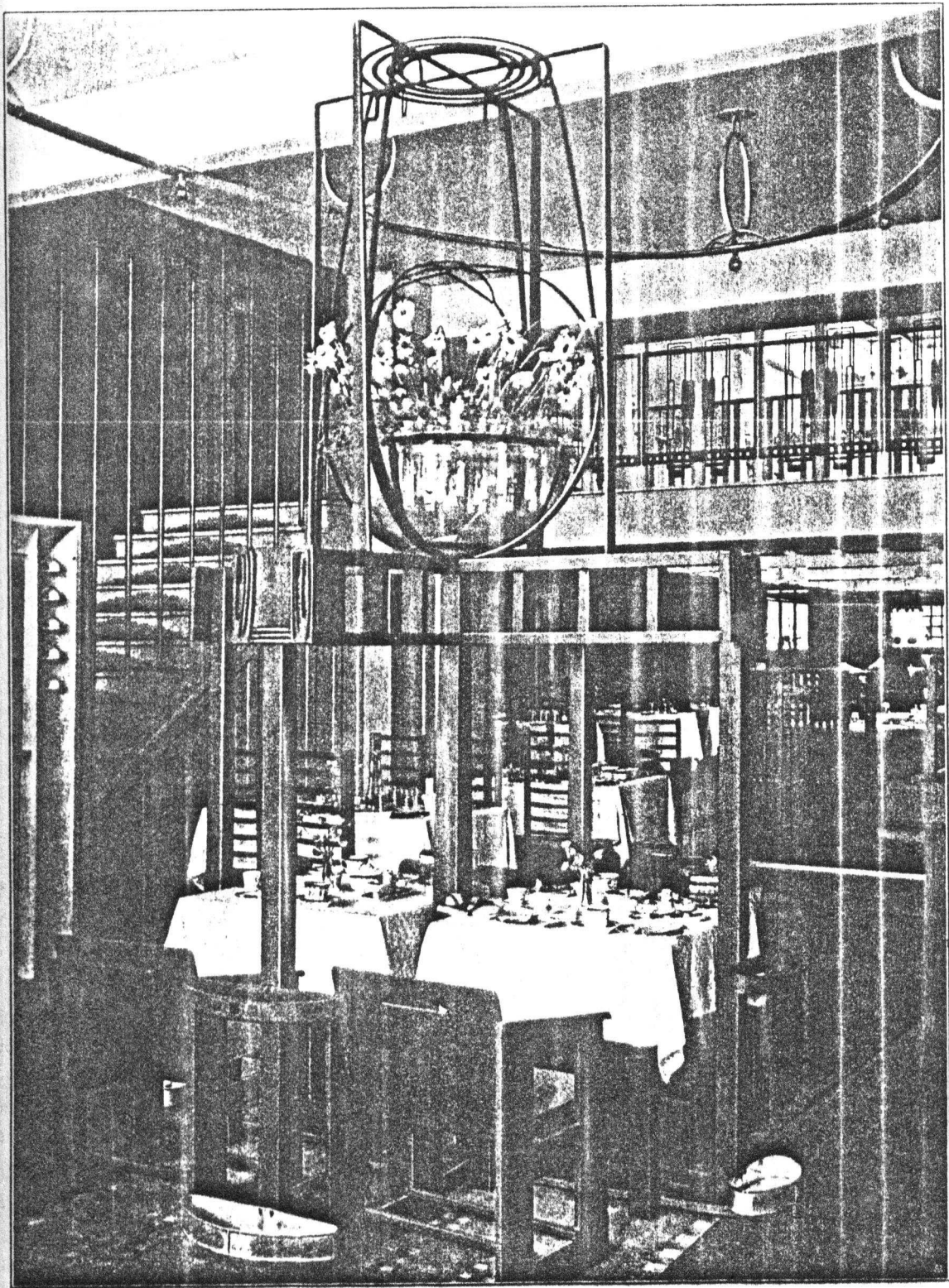


Figure 31. The Willow Tea-Room: White Dining-Room, Detail of Hanging Basket.

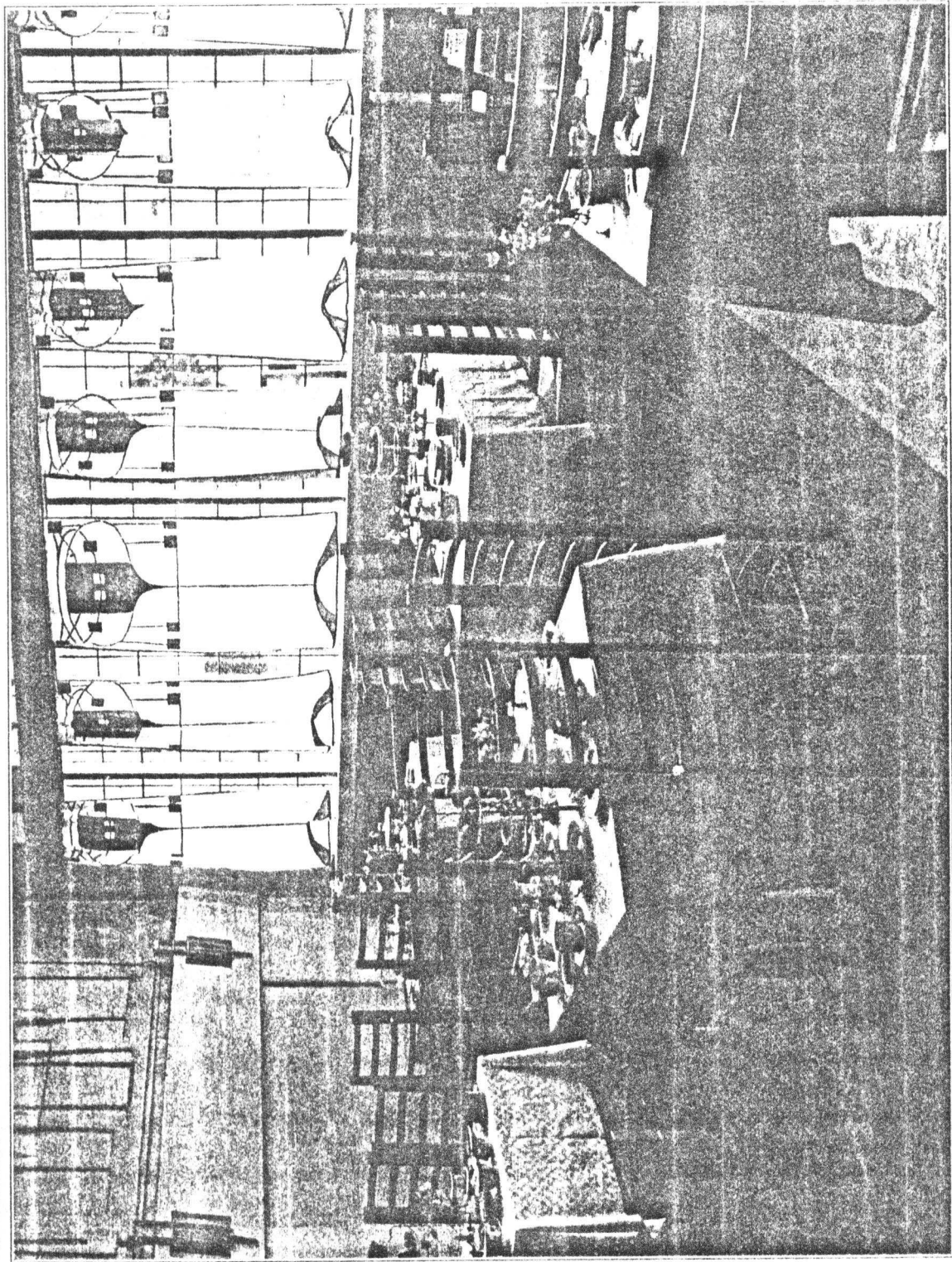


Figure 32. The Willow Tea-Room. Front Dining-Room. View towards front window.

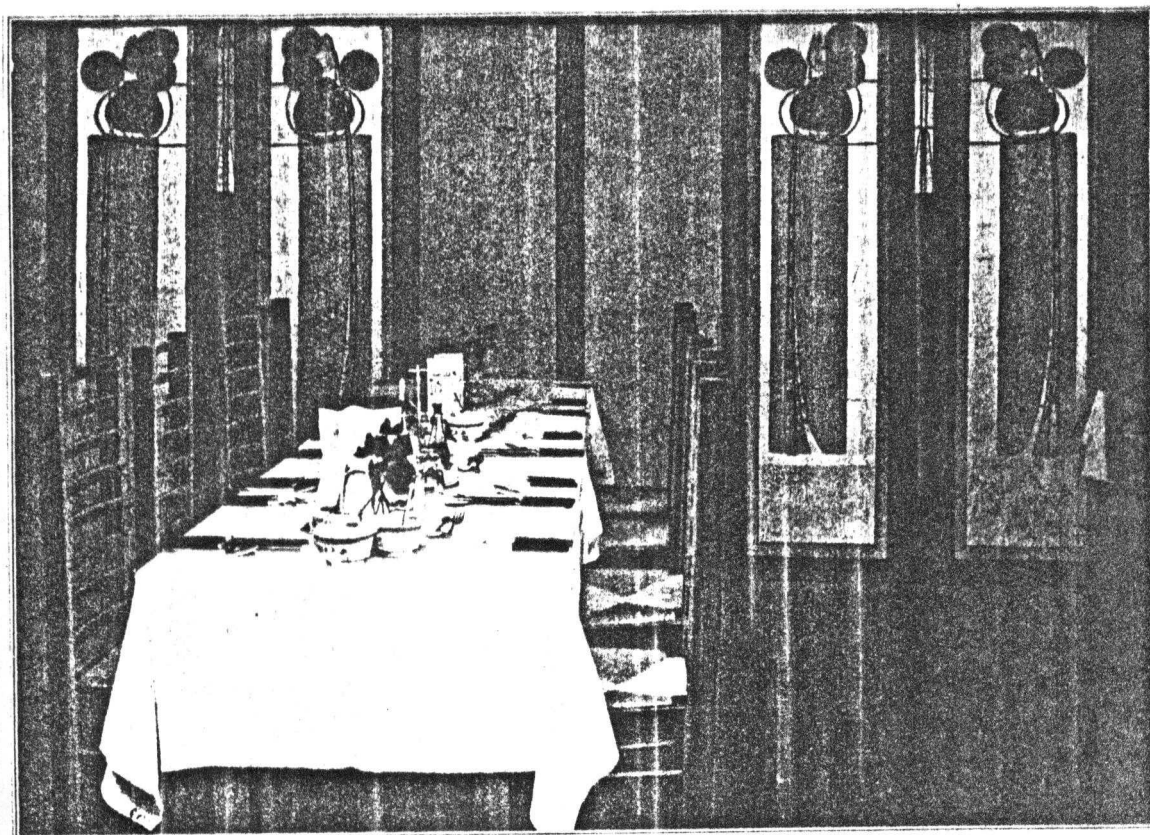


Figure 33. The Willow Tea-Room: Rear Dining-Room: Stencilled Detail.

arrangement of each. The walls were panelled in dark oak the dullness of which was broken up by coloured stencilling on small sections. (fig. 33, above). The furniture was of the same type as had been used in the white dining-room, only here, the tub-chair was employed more frequently. A notable feature of this room is the carpet design; here the Mackintosh square motif was used, in a similar arrangement to that on the walls of the West-Wing staircase at the Glasgow School of Art (fig. 35, p. 74).

Above this rear dining-room Mackintosh inserted a balcony, and on this was placed the upper tea-room. The Principal source of light for these two apartments was by way of glazing in the roof and through the

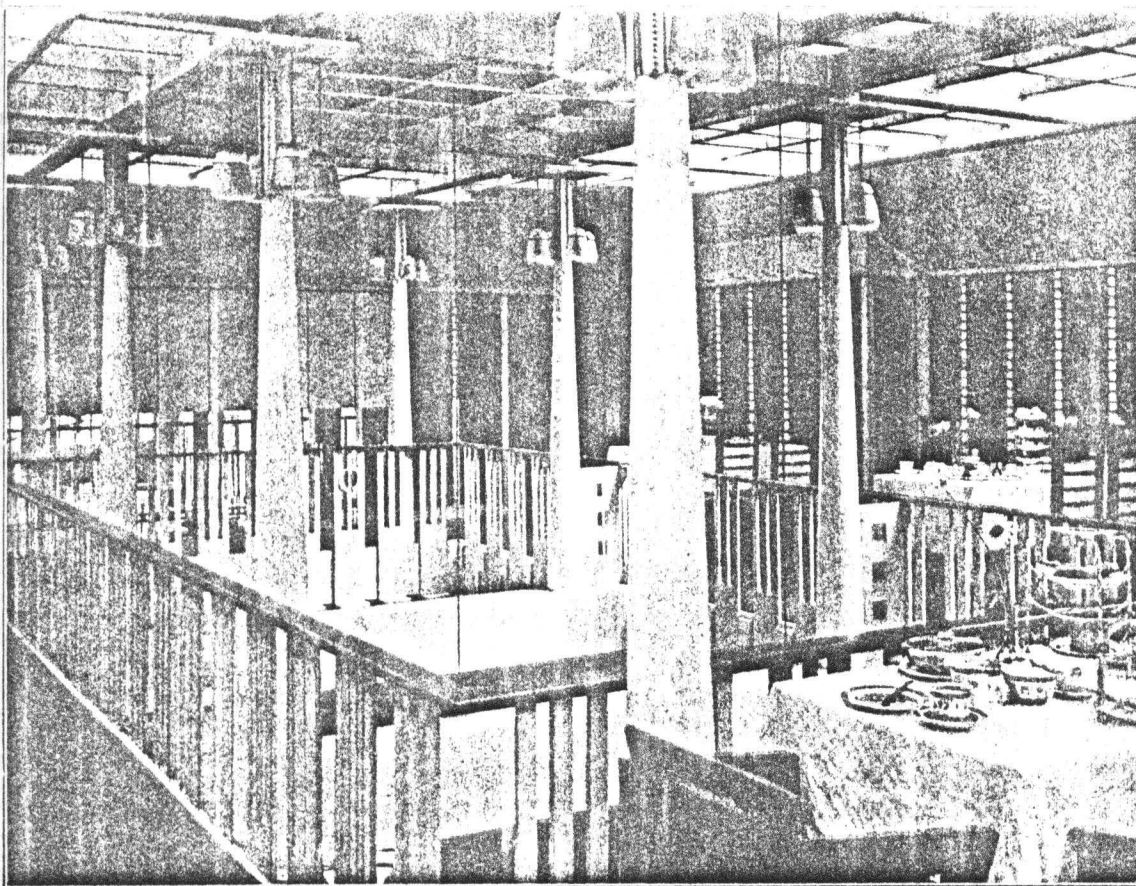


Figure 34. The Willow Tea-Rooms: Gallery Tea-Room. View and Detail.

well of the balconied area to the ground floor room. Mackintosh suspended a timber ceiling of a rectangular lattice grid arrangement from the roof of the balcony and this, in turn, was supported on eight tapered timber columns which rested on the cross beams supporting the balcony. This balcony construction was quite unlike that to be found in Ingram Street and the Art School Library; the balcony was not supported by the columns, which terminated at balcony level, but by heavy timber cross beams. The underside of the gallery was in an exposed beam and joist arrangement, the joists of which were brought into the open well by Mackintosh, quite unashamedly, and the beams carried through, past the edge of these to the supporting walls, as if completely independent from their supporting function.

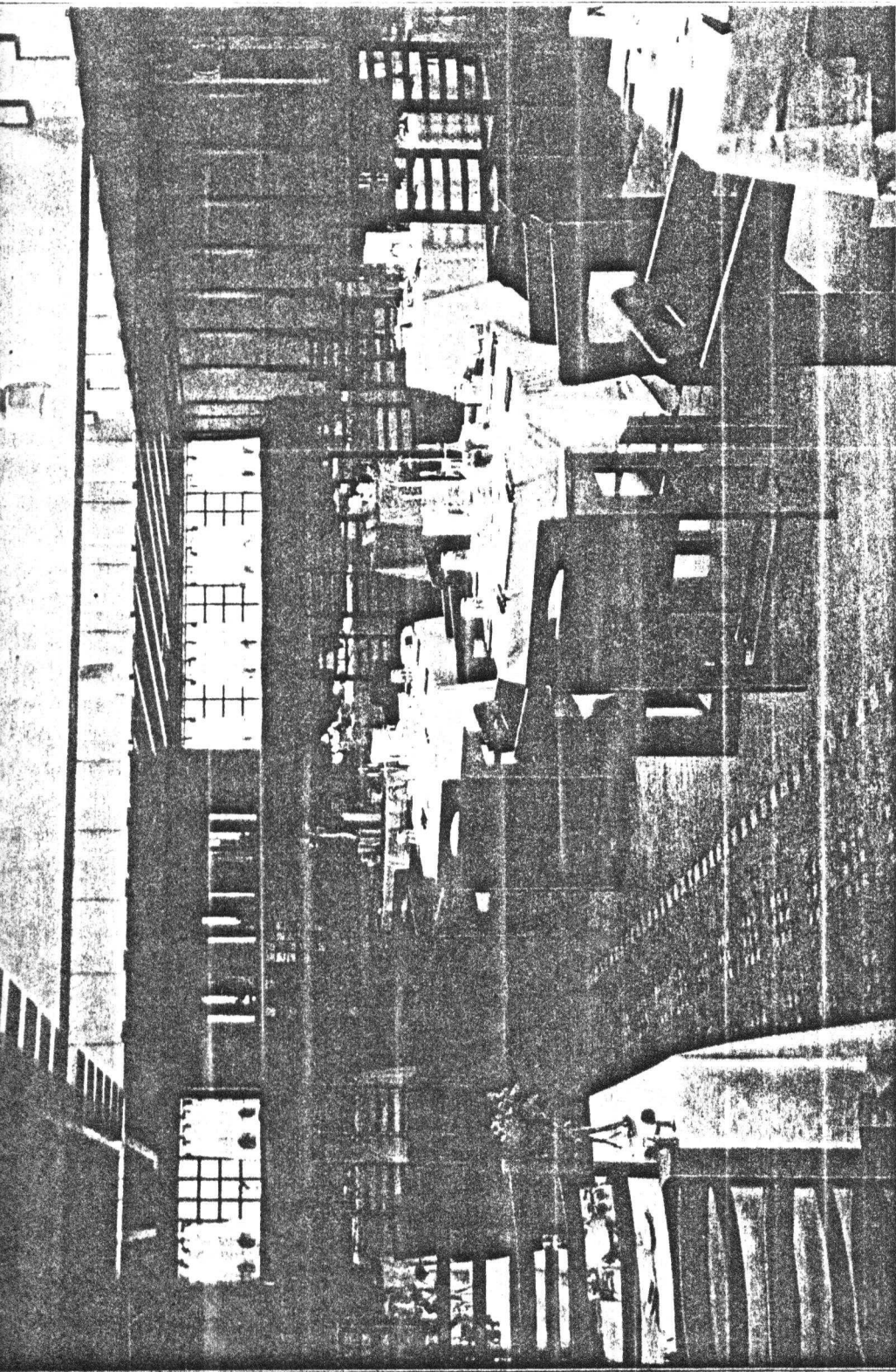


Figure 35. The Willow Tea-Room Rear Dining-Room.
General view and detail of balcony.

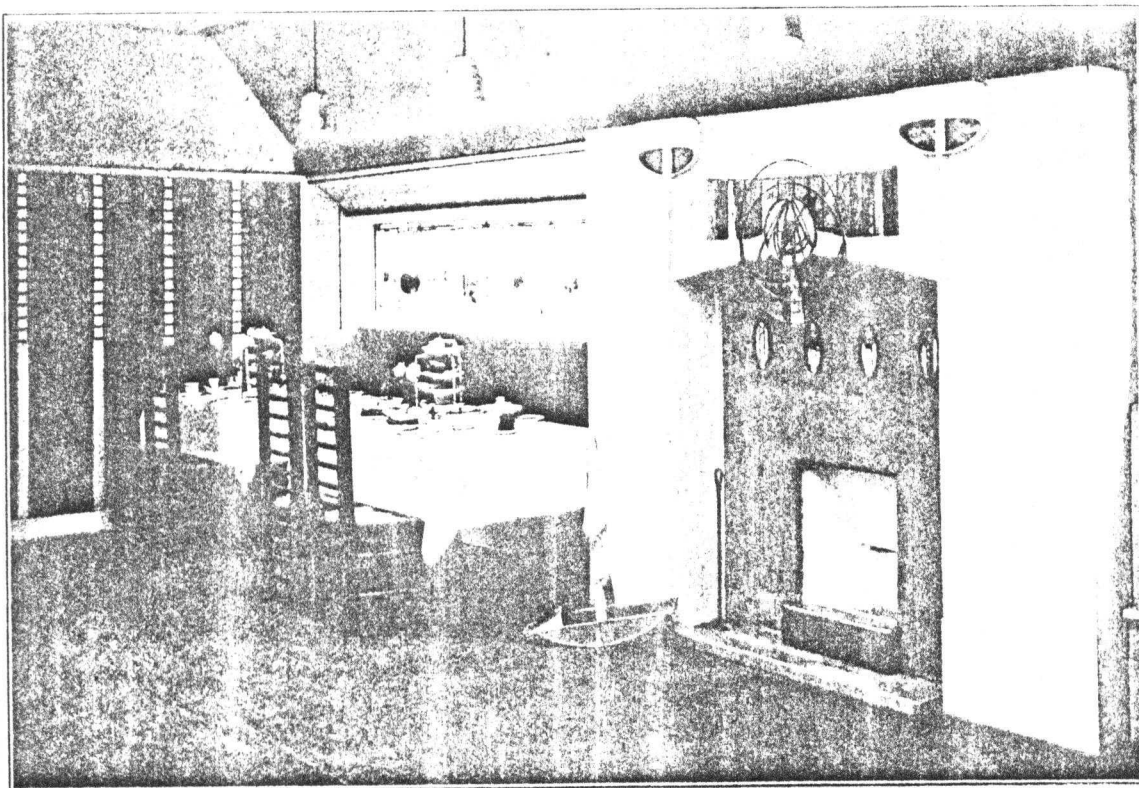


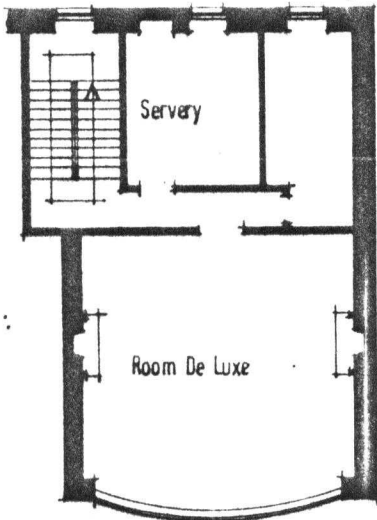
Figure 36. The Willow Tea-Rooms: Gallery, Detail at South Wall.

In this way Mackintosh managed to create an undefined, flexible boundary between the gallery and the area below, creating a visual and material transition between the respective spacial entities. (fig. 25, p. 59). The East and West walls were board and batten panelled with a dark stained timber on to which were applied simple coloured stencilled motifs; these panels extended to the eaves line. A plastered band to the underside of the roof framed the latticed ceiling and softened the junction of it with the enclosure of the room (fig. 36, above).

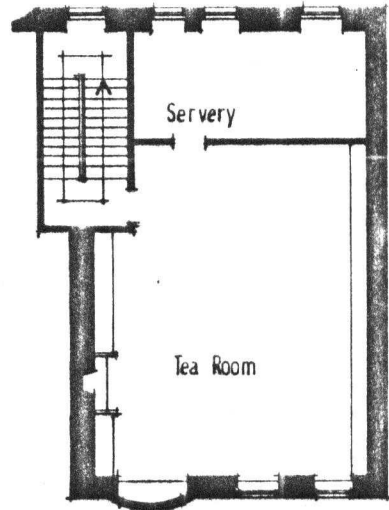
The white dining-room, rear dining-room and the upper tea-room, were spacially linked to each other in a veritable symposium of the transitional: the overlapping joists below the balcony; the wrought iron screen which enclosed the space between the gallery and the white dining-room ceiling, while the line of the underside of the gallery in

the white room displayed the only real break between the volumes of the front and back areas.

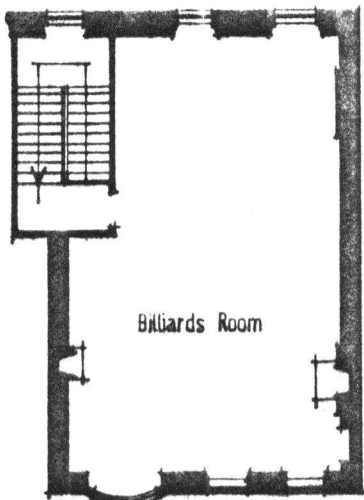
There was, however, another linking feature between this front volume and the gallery area. This was the main staircase and here the architect completely opened this feature by employing, in the place of a conventional balustrade, a tubular metal post screen. Each of these



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



THIRD FLOOR PLAN



Figure 37. The Willow Tea-Rooms: First, Second and Third Floors.

posts rose from a tread to the underside of the floor above where it was capped by a wrought iron frieze in a conventionalised willow form; between

each branch form was hung a series of green glass balls, representing the leaves.

The second floor (fig. 37. p. 76) contained a tea-room which was decorated in white painted timber, board and battened panelling in a similar form to that of the ground floor dining-room. This terminated at a dado height which corresponded with the level of the mid-rails of the windows to the Sauchiehall Street frontage. Above this was a plaster

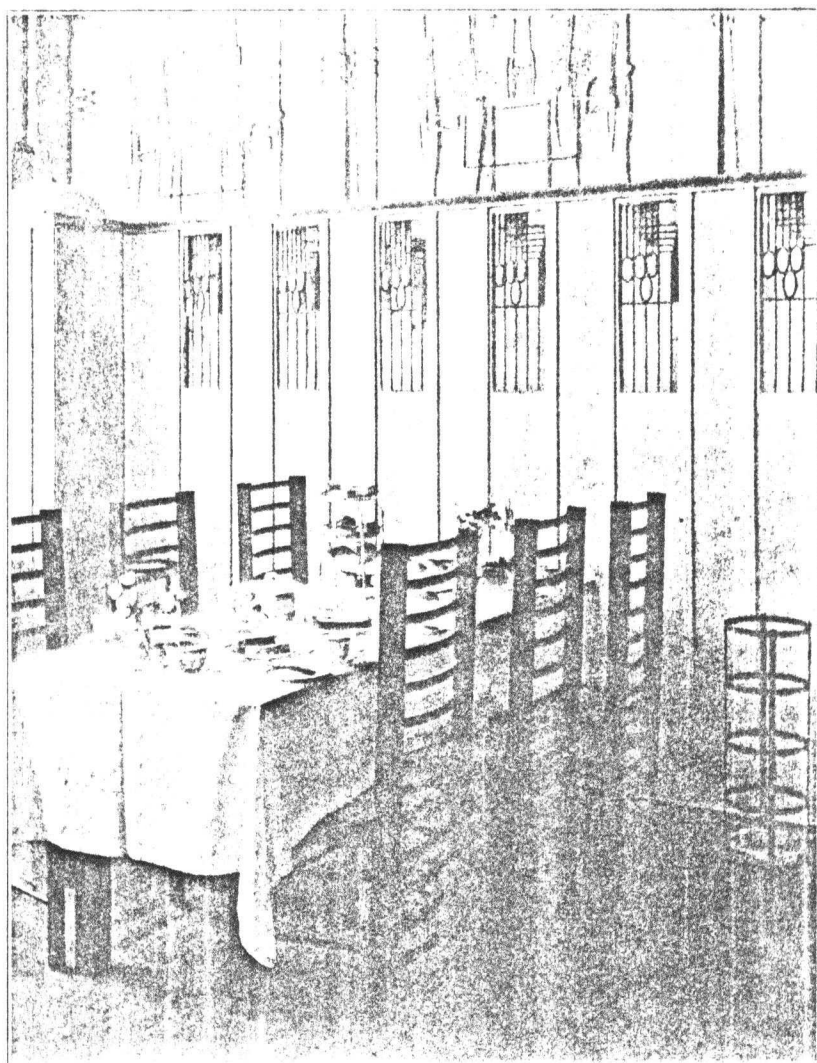


Figure 38. The Willow Tea-Room: Second Floor Tea-Room, Detail.

frieze like that of the white dining-room, but on a smaller scale. The upper sections of the panelling incorporated an intricate design in leaded, mirrored glass (fig. 38, above).

This wall treatment was interrupted on the East-side of the room by a fireplace.²

The third and top floor was occupied by the billiards-room and smoking-room. These were panelled to dado height in a dark stained timber, above which the wall was plastered. One side of the billiards-room was fitted with a fixed seating while the other contained a fireplace. There was no evidence of the familiar willow motif here, instead the Mackintosh square was used on almost every surface. The otherwise angular geometric form of the room was to be interrupted only, by the insertion of flat arches in the plaster over the connecting doors to the smoke-room. The light fixtures, over the billiard table,³ were of a more controlled and straightforward design than had been the ones at Argyle Street.

The Room De Luxe.

The most fantastic, and lavishly decorated room in the series was the Room de Luxe on the first floor. It was a complete breakaway from the restrained decoration which had been carried out on the other floors, and was the only room to be fitted with furniture which was outside the standard range of designs. There is every indication, in the choice of lavish trimmings and finishes, that this was the prestige apartment of the building; a fact which is reflected in the external accentuation of the first floor windows.

The room was decorated, to a height of about one metre, with a plain

2. Illustrated in Dekorative Kunst, April 1905, p. 263.

3. ib.id. p. 274, c.f. (fig. 19)

plaster panel, above which, a band of mirrored glass panels, extending to the door-head height, encircled the room on three sides. This band was completed, on the fourth side, by the window on to Sauchiehall Street. The door head height corresponded with the springing line of the arched ceiling, which had its flat gables on the East and West walls. The centres of these walls contain the two principal focal points of the room; the Margaret Macdonald gesso panel and, opposite it; a fireplace. Both these features were framed by an enormous architrave (fig. 39, p. 80). The entrance to the room is by way of an elaborate, leaded glass, double leaved door of intricate design, which is notable for its unmoulded architrave.

The furniture to the room, was, by way of a contrast to the stark, white painted walls, upholstered in a rich shade of purple. These chairs were quite uncharacteristic of the utilitarian designs which Mackintosh usually used in his tea-rooms; reflecting, more, the domestic designs of Hill House. The carpet was a soft grey colour with lines of squared insets (fig. 40, p. 81). This was a colour combination which is all too familiar in present times, but which must have been quite an innovation in 1904.

The Willow Tea-Rooms were opened in 1904 to meet a public reaction which had been anticipated; that of popularity and curiosity. It would seem, however, that the spectrum of society to whom they appealed, was limited to the middle and upper classes; the remainder being too terrified to enter such a refined looking establishment. This was certainly not the principle on which the tea-room philosophy was based, but may well have been Catherine Cranston's interpretation if it. This argument has more weight added to it by an account of a visit to the tea-rooms by one such

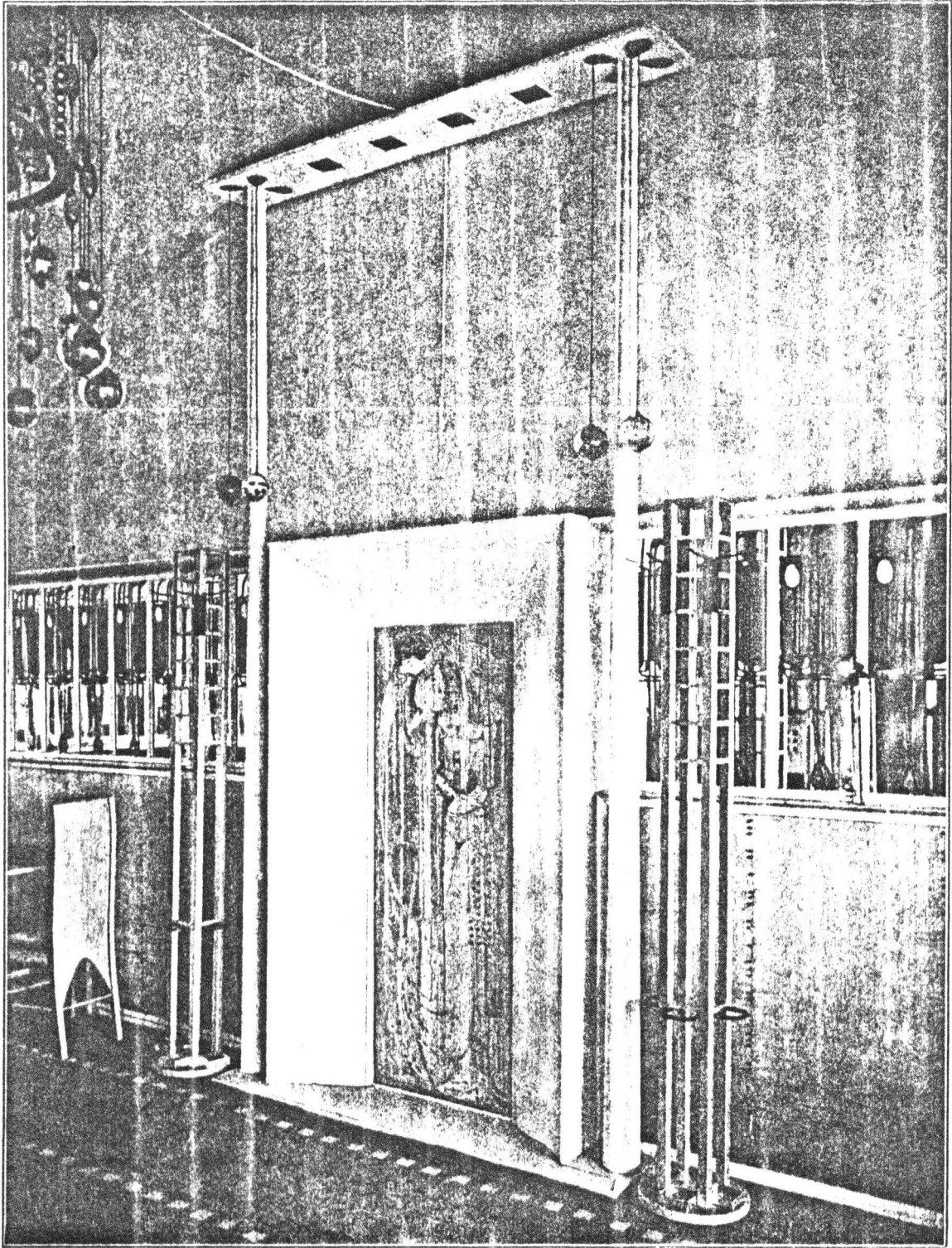


Figure 39. The Willow Tea-Rooms: The Room de Luxe, Gesso Panel by Margaret Macdonald.

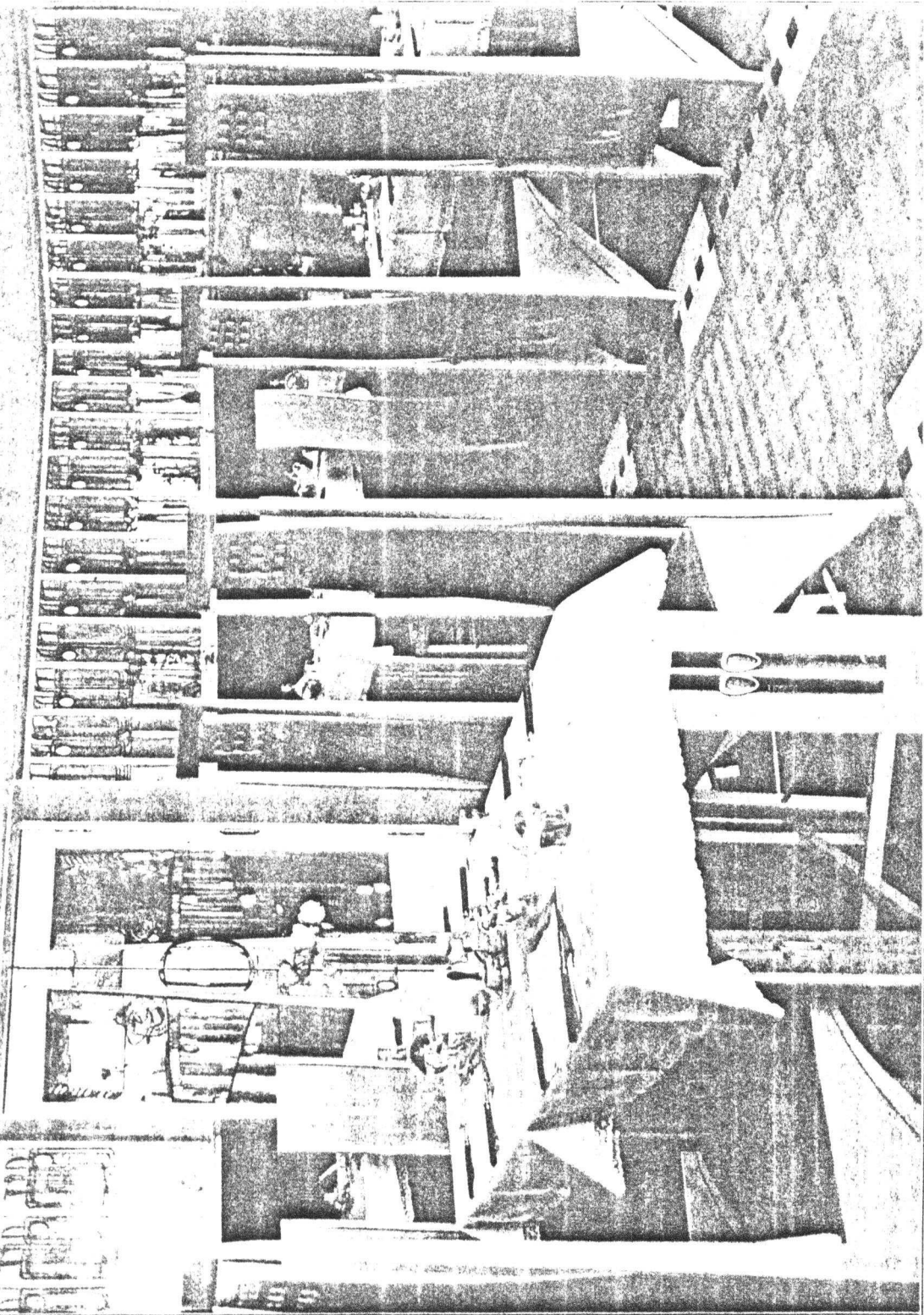


Figure 40. The Willow Tea-Rooms: Room de Luxe.

member of Glasgow's working class. This describes a system of placing orders to the kitchen, where instead of bellowing, the waitress simply dropped a coloured ball (coded to represent a specific item on the menu) into a chute and a meal was sent up to correspond with that colour.

'She puts yin o' the bools doon a pipe into the kitchen, and the stuff comes up wi' naethin' said That's Art. Ye can ha'e yer pie frae the kitchen withoot them yellin' doon a pipe for't and lettin' a' the ither customers ken whit ye want. When the pie cam' up it wis jist the shape o' an ordinary pie, wi' nae beads nor onything Art about it.' 4

4. "The Looker-On", Erchie in an Art Tea Room from an undated news cutting. Extracted from Erchie, by Hugh Foulis (Neil Munro)

CHAPTER 5.

AFTER THE WILLOW.

Between the years 1914-18, Miss Cranston opened up the basement of the Willow in Sauchiehall Street for conversion into a new tea-room. Little in the way of records remain for this, the Dugout, but it is apparent from those that do, that the Mackintoshes, who were now resident in London, made some contribution to this scheme. Of this, records and examples of the work remaining show two important contributions: firstly, a memorial fireplace (circa. 1919); and secondly, a pair of large canvases decorated with a two dimensional abstract pattern in a rationalised poster style. This commission was to mark the termination of a client-architect relationship which was more akin to the patron and artist bond of the Renaissance than to the twentieth century. It was in the last few years of this relationship, a time when Mackintosh certainly needed friendship, that both were to reap the full benefits of their efforts for each other. Mackintosh was to gain commissions which were to crystallise for him in an unexpected stylistic development; while Miss Cranston, on the other hand, was to achieve the real ends to her labours, by witnessing a cultural change in lunch-time habits in the city. Her tea-rooms had taken many of the city's workers out of the pubs at lunch-time and it was now quite customary for the Glaswegian worker to "tak his tea at denner - time, and his denner insteid o' his tea." ¹

Ingram Street: The Remainder.

In 1906, Mackintosh again turned his attentions to the Ingram Street

1. James Hamilton Muir, Glasgow in 1901, 1901, p. 170

tea-rooms. A change in social patterns had drawn much of the pedestrian traffic away from the site of the tea-rooms, which now occupied, what was, little more than a backwater to Argyle Street. Much of this traffic had moved towards the Sauchiehall Street area of the city following the example being set by the offices who had moved away from the traditional commercial centre in and around Buchanan Street, Queen Street and Argyle Street, and who had now begun to accumulate around the North central areas of Sauchiehall Street and Bath Street. The Willow tea-rooms were thriving on this extra trade but it became increasingly obvious to Miss Cranston, that a face lift would be needed at Ingram Street so that the trade might be retained and improved upon. It would seem that a novelty attraction would be required. Who better to provide this than Rennie Mackintosh?

His first new commission was to complete the Oak-Room, a design which he had begun work on some five years earlier and which had been interrupted by the Willow Commission, Hous'hill for Miss Cranston, and Hill House. Mackintosh introduced a balcony on three sides of this narrow room in a style quite reminiscent of the one in the Art School Library. Unlike the latter, the columns for this smaller project were not required to support anything other than the balcony, and as a result, terminated at the balustrade where they subsequently were divided into five narrow timber sections, of no structural function, which rose through the balcony wall to terminate at the ceiling. The remainder of the room was fitted with dark stained timber panelling.

Mackintosh was to carry out alterations to the two tea-rooms, which had been designed by Messrs. Alexander and Howell. These were to be the last tea-rooms of any significance which he designed for Miss Cranston,

and were completed (circa. 1911). The smaller of the two rooms had previously been the ladies' tea-room and had a low arched ceiling; walls panelled in pine which had been planed and wax polished. This was renamed the Cloister Room. There were deeply recessed niches, at one end of the room, lined with leaded mirrored glass and displaying a Chinese Gothic tracery. The walls of the room were painted with narrow vertical strips of red, green and blue, outlined in black. These formed a vertical diamond pattern which was echoed by plaster bands which ran transversely across the ceiling. The chairs for the room consisted of a high backed variation which had a broad wavy central slat, which were, at a later date, reduced in height.

The colour scheme and design were a complete departure from what had been Mackintosh's normal treatment of the interiors of the other tea-rooms, which were usually decorated in a more muted, sober and serene way, with the emphasis usually being placed on the curvilinear and sinuous; no matter how much he wandered into the rectilinear and geometrical he always returned to the curvilinear. Here for the first time was the sign that he was not about to return.

The last room to be decorated at Ingram Street, the China Tea Room again exercised this preoccupation with the rectilinear. The room was formerly used as the gentlemen's and, as the name suggests, had a certain oriental quality. This was created by the inclusion of a pseudo-chinese screen and a pagoda-like canopy over the door. This oriental theme was to be retained in Mackintosh's scheme. Firstly, though, he stripped the room of all its original decorations and covered the walls with a heavy hessian on which he fixed a square timber lattice to a height of about three metres. The lattice was painted blue and some of the squares

were filled with leaded glass, while others were grouped together and lined with plastic and alternatively mirrored glass to form recessed niches. There were three broad openwork canopies spanning from wall to wall below which three vertical screens which divided the room into compartments and further acted as umbrella stands. The furniture consisted of mainly: bucket-chairs with broad slatted backs; some tip-up settees upholstered in blue corduroy; and, coffee tables of a similar design to those which had been used in the Argyle Street tea-rooms.

These last two tea-rooms for Miss Cranston show how Mackintosh's work had changed during his work on the remainder of the group and in other commissions. What was previously a preoccupation with the curvilinear, was now one with the rectilinear; a feature which was to show itself in his last work on the Art School. It was a departure from the long complex curves to the harsh zig-zag and 'waggon-chamfer'; two motifs which were clearly abundant in the Cloister and China Tea Rooms.

Mackintosh's work had throughout his career shown a tendency to branch away from one geometric form to another, usually, however, because there was a call to emphasise a detail, change in texture or surface. This had been apparent in the Willow and the Dutch Kitchen where he firstly created; strong rectilinear surfaces with panelling, tiles, strapping and balustrades, and with paintwork; then, reduced their visual impact and purity by interposing the curvilinear and allowing the whole to melt together, leaving, at some point in the space between the unconnected planes of different nature, of limbo of transition. There had always been a threat of the rectilinear, but at no time, until the Ingram Street additions did this feature take over.

While these extensions were being carried out, Mackintosh was facing

deteriorating conditions in his personal life. His talents had reached their architectural maturity at a time when, his output was at its lowest ebb and, he was finding himself increasingly isolated from the mainstream of both public and bureaucratic favour, and its associated commissions. He had become disillusioned with his partnership with Keppie and had broken many relationships with both client and friend. It culminated in his resignation from his partnership and in the following year (1914) the Mackintoshes moved to Suffolk where his ties with Glasgow were all but severed. In 1915 they moved to Chelsea, where they were to occupy most of their time in fabric design and watercolour exercises since the war had stemmed most building work and subsequently either architectural or interior design commissions. In this period they were to receive their last commission from Miss Cranston - that of the work for the Dugout at Sauchiehall Street.

The Decline of Miss Cranston's Tea-Rooms. 1917-76

Following the death of her husband in 1917, Miss Cranston retired from her tea-room business which she had built up so enthusiastically over the past thirty-three years. Following this retiral three of her premises were sold; the fourth at Ingram Street was reported to have been gifted to one of her manageresses - Miss Drummond.⁵

The Argyle Street Tea-Rooms.

These were sold to a shoe company between 1917 and 1920 and subsequently opened as a branch of Manfields Shoe Shops. In 1920 permission was granted to carry out alterations to these⁶ and until recently, it was believed that during these alterations all vestige of both Walton's

5. Professor T. Howarth, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement 1952. p. 136. Glasgow Post Office Directory 1920-21, 93rd Publication, first lists Miss Drummond as Proprietor.

6. Dean of Guild Application No. B4/12/1920/611.

and Mackintosh's work had been destroyed, with the exception of a rusty firegrate. The Dutch Kitchen has, however, recently been discovered behind the shelving installed in the basement, together with other extant items from the ground and first floors of the original tea-rooms. (see Appendix).

Members of Glasgow's Planning and Museums Department are presently in discussion with the British Shoe Corporation, tenants of the property, who have made application to alter the premises. Their objective is to preserve and re-instate the interior before any further decay takes place.

The Buchanan Street Tea-Rooms.

These were sold to London Joint City and Midlands Bank and in 1919 permission was granted to carry out alterations to the interior of the building.⁷ All traces of the tea-rooms were removed but it is interesting to note that the drawings for these alterations show the addition of brick panels flush to the face of the butts around the gallery (fig. 15. p. 42) at all levels. It is possible that Mackintosh's murals are extant behind these panels.

The Willow Tea-Rooms.

These rooms were sold to Messrs. Smith (of Glasgow), Restaurateurs, in 1919. The premises were subsequently taken over by Daly's department store in 1927. The frontage was ruined by inserting a continuation of their standard adjacent shopfront, while internally many features were either removed or altered.⁸ The ceiling to the gallery at the rear of the building was removed to be replaced by steel angles; while the Room de Luxe was virtually untouched. The only other remaining features are

7. Dean of Guild Application No. B4/12/1919/53

8. Dean of Guild Application No. B4/12/1927

the staircase, some of the board and battened panelling, the plaster frieze, several fireplaces and a large wrought iron light fitting.

The Ingram Street Tea-Rooms.

The history of these tea-rooms after the retirement of Miss Cranston is of a more diverse nature than was that of any of the others. It was to continue as a tea-room, still called Cranstons, for another twenty years. For the first ten of these, it was looked after meticulously by Miss Drummond, and by 1930, when it was finally sold, nothing of the original character or decoration had been changed or disturbed.

In 1930 Messrs., Cooper of Glasgow took over the premises, and gave the reassurance that the charm of the thirty-year old building would be retained. It seems it was, and in 1950, when their lease on the property ran out, the Corporation of Glasgow (under great pressure from architects and public alike) bought the basement and ground floors of the tea-rooms for £21,000. This transaction included all fixtures and heritable fittings of the rooms and they also bought the furnishings, for a price of £1,200. The building lay empty until 1955. The reason was that a suitable use to which to put the tea-room could not be found. In 1955 they let the premises out to a Tartan Goods Manufacturer for a period of seven years, by the end of which, remarkable deterioration had taken place. Fortunately the Corporation had removed a selection of the fittings and furnishings which were given on a loan basis to the Art Galleries, Scotland Street School and to the Art School.

The remainder of the interiors (or what was left of them) were eventually removed in 1971 to be stored for future use in the School of Architecture. This building is now under way but unfortunately some

further damage has occurred to the stored remnants by a fire.

In Conclusion

The tea-rooms were a showcase for Mackintosh's work not only in Britain, but also throughout Europe, where they were quite often the subjects of exhibitions or illustrated articles. It is quite understandable, therefore, that these works were often considered to be representative of his 'normal' commission, whereas, their very nature was quite extraordinary. Miss Cranston was preoccupied with providing an impression of ingenuity and novelty; it was to these ends which Mackintosh devoted so much of his creative energy. He preoccupied himself with design for leaded-glass patterns, stencils, twisted wire, and pattern and its composite parts.

The tea-room design and decoration became an intermediary between proceeding and succeeding projects without which the two could not be linked in design development terms. The tea-rooms became an important link in his design advancement and should therefore be regarded as transitional and not representative in isolation.

It is for this reason that it is felt that wherever possible the remnant of these should be retained or restored.

Never, surely, in any world was such a copy of lily-forms. The balustrades, the mullions and the muntins, the splats of the chairs, the light fittings and wall decorations, the very spoons and forks all grow in the same thin, ardent, "Christ-like" way . . . it is phenomenal; it is exceedingly curious and rather beautiful; but as with some of the more wayward exploits of the Rococo, one's feeling is that having been done once it must on no account ever be done again. The impress of universality is not there. 9

9. John Summerson. "The Weekend Review". New Statesman and Nation December 1952. p. 784.

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A P P E N D I X

NOTES ON RECENTLY DISCOVERED REMNANTS OF THE TEA-ROOMS AT NO.114 ARGYLE STREET.

A news report, on the eighth of September 1976, told of the recent discovery of the Dutch Kitchen behind the shelving which had been erected in the basement of the property. Subsequent examinations have found the room to be almost completely preserved: of the movable fixtures, nothing remains; on the south face, at least one of the bow fronted windows has been destroyed; the other is firmly panelled over at present but an area of debris, visible in the pavement well, may possibly contain evidence of other fittings. It is impossible at this stage to assess the condition of the remainder of this wall. The ogee screen has been removed from the face of the inglenook, but behind the shelving to the West wall the fireplace still remains. The delft tiles have survived on either side of the fireplace, in part at least, and the steel grate is still in position. (figs. 23 & 24, pp. 55, 56).

The pillars have been boxed-in, and it would seem unlikely, judging by the way in which the shop-fitters have simply slapped over the existing walls, that the Mackintosh mother-of-pearl insets have been destroyed.

The small checkered mosaic remains in part; while, on the East wall, both the tapered timber panelling and the seven scooped niches remain intact, but have been heavily painted.

On the North wall, an area of the room which does not appear on either of the Annan photographs (figs. 23 & 24, pp. 55, 56), has an opening which leads to a narrow passage, by which the toilets can be reached. The North wall of these is board and batten panelled in the

typically Mackintosh fashion and have two recessed flower niches. The door to the lift shaft is in the passage leading to the toilets, but has no distinguishing features, unlike the toilet door which has two recesses rectangular panels with a heart shaped perforation in each.

The latticed timber ceiling would appear to be intact behind the plasterboard panels presently fixed to the underside of the beams.¹

Other Remaining Features on the Upper Floors.

There are two areas of interest which survive at ground floor: firstly, the lift shaft at the North-West corner of the apartment (fig.18, p. 49) which exhibits an interesting framed doorway in a style similar to that of Mackintosh; and secondly, the toilet area leading from the lift to the courtyard at the rear of the building. The three toilet doorways have leaded glass panels, not in the Mackintosh style, below which the faint outline of the sign writing can be defined. The doorway to the courtyard, a leaded glass design, has been removed by the City of Glasgow Museums Department for rot treatment.

On the first floor a large section of what appears to be walnut panelling attributed to Walton is extant on the North wall between the lift core and the main staircase. This is presently boxed-in by a shoe-display fitment. This panelling, if it is the original, was previously situated at ground floor level. The lift well here again, displays the Mackintosh-like framing and ogee curved moulding. Some of the Walton panelling from the original scheme for this room is to be found

1. Michael Donnelly. Charles Rennie Mackintosh's Dutch Kitchen Tea-Room 1905-6. August 1976.

adjacent to the lift well.

The toilets on the first floor which cantilever out over the rear courtyard have examples of leaded-glass.

The second floor is not accessible at present; the property is sub-let by Manfields.

The property occupied by Manfields: the basement, ground and first floors, are subjects of a planning application presently under consideration. From conversations with representatives of the Planning Department, B.S.C. Footwear and the Museums Department it would seem that little can be done to enforce re-instatement of the areas threatened by the proposals for alterations.

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