**Cathedral Reading (14/6/16)**

“PROGRESS”

**J.B Simpson, Stirling’s Library, May 18th 1855**

Do not be alarmed, most fastidious reader, the burn whose history we purpose writing is not the pestiferous ditch that now drags its tortuous course through our overgrown city. Natheless, the streams pursues the same course, and it’s waters among green fields and fresh breezes; but how different from the burn of other days, when our patron saint, Kentigern, held converse with the pious Columba on its green banks; when acts were made to forbid the pollution of it’s pure waters, that, perhaps, our ancestors might enjoy the pleasure of trout fishing along it’s healthy margin. When we look at the burn now, it certainly requires a stretch of the imagination to fancy the time when such things could be. But we will try to show the good offices that the old burn has conferred upon Glasgow when steam-engines were not- when the force of running water met the wants of our simple progenitors, who could be contented with what would be put in motion the machinery for grinding their daily food, and who would deem anything superior to the ancient quern a great effort of human ingenuity. The very name Molendinar has a soft euphonious sound, and is full of delightful associations connected with the most picturesque object, a rural mill,- everything that is peaceful and quiet lingers around the old mill, and such objects are usually very old. The changed state of society, the increase of population, and the advance of inventive science have all tended to leave the “mill and trysting thorn” very much out of the way of what has been denominated, *par excellence,* “progress.”

**George Eyre Todd - Book of Glasgow Cathedral, 1898.**

It was important to early Christian missionaries that they had running water at hand for purposes of baptism and ablution. There stations were most frequently chosen, therefore, by sides of springs or streams. This was no doubt the other circumstance which influenced pioneers of early Christianity in Strathclyde. On the bank of the Molendinar the settlement had at its command and abundance of the baptismal element, and it lay at the same time within the convenient distance of the great national place of worship. Humble enough the first little cell of wattles and clay by the Molendinar must have looked to the people compared with the great open air temple and its huge stone altar on the moor of the above; by the estimation of the two has been strangely reversed by time.

**Theodore Brotchie, Glasgow Rivers and Streams – Their Legend and Lore, 1914.**

‘A great city is not the haunt wherein we can hope to find the wimpling burns of which poets, and artists, and wayfarers fondly dream. The arctic eye of commerce looks askance at the humbler waterways of nature, and as the octopus of industry advances over the verdant countryside she absorbs and then hides them from human ken’.

‘Glasgow has changed vastly since the times when it was considered a privilege to have one’s house on the banks of the Molendinar. We have polluted and then buried the historic stream and its humbler confreres: and in doing so have we not perhaps buried something else – that subtle breath which the woodland path and wimpling burn give forth to all who care to woo them? However much it may represent industrial activity and commercial greatness, the evolution of a limpid stream into a foul sewer seems a questionable exchange. It is certainly far short of being either an elevating or inspiring spectacle’.

‘I wondered what Edinburgh would have done about a burn like the Molendinar? Dr C. Stewart Black says: ‘when Edinburgh was no more than a group of huts nestling beneath a fortress, Glasgow had already a past of a thousand years’… But Edinburgh seems to make more of its past’.

**Jack** **House, Evening Citizen, 1946.**

‘The rapid spread of the city has meant that most of these burns, which once flowed through fields or between thatched wooden houses, now run obscurely underground (often no more than sewers) so that in many cases neither their source nor their route is definitely known’.

**J. Fisher, The Glasgow Encyclopedia, 1994.**

Do you think children now would know what the Molendinar is?’ ‘No, they wouldn’t have a clue’

**Agnes Campbell, interviewed, 2002.**

No doubt in the 1970’s, when the M8 motorway was being built, engineers managing the project took this heritage into consideration. However, when Amey Highways were asked to comment in 2002, they responded as follows: ‘We don’t have any historical knowledge whatsoever – five to six years max’

**Graham Drummond,** **Amey Highways, interviewed, 2002**

‘as  investigations  into the flood event progressed, it became evident that there had  been  considerable  interaction  between  the  sewers  and  watercourses at certain flood locations’.  ‘Safe  flood routing becomes a greater problem in Glasgows  East  End  where  over  90%  of  watercourses  are  culverted

leading  to increased overland  flow risks and potential  flooding  of  low  lying  areas’.

**David Wilson (Scottish Water) & Martin Spiers (Montgomery Watson Harza) The Strategic Response to Glasgow East End Flooding. 2003.**

‘Landscape design and the presence of nature are critical to the quality of our urban environment. Landscape is a fundamental element of the design process, and may even be the starting point of design. Shouldn’t the city grow from its setting rather than be imposed on it?’

**Randall Thomas,  Sustainable Urban Design, 2003**

‘We  could  possibly  get  localised  fish  life  and  improved  bird  life.

When  a  body  of  water has been heavily modified there will be lesser

targets. We will  never  achieve  the  good  status  of  the  Water

Framework  Directive’.

**George Rattray,  Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) interviewed, 2002**

‘Urban regeneration should provide opportunities for improving the environment, and open watercourses should be considered as assets in this regard. A further project objective is therefore to explore the possible opportunities for “de­culverting” of watercourses. Along with other measures such as provision of attenuation ponds, this could provide valuable habitat enhancement in an area where it is much needed’.

**David  Wilson (Scottish Water) & Martin Spiers (Montgomery Watson Harza) The Strategic Response to Glasgow East End Flooding, 2003.**

The 2002 flooding had its greatest impact on some of the  city’s  most  disadvantaged  people.  ‘Many  lost  all  their  possessions  because  many  households  were  uninsured’.

**Garry** **Thomas, East End Independent. October  20th, 2004.**

‘I still refer to the Molendinar as her. I knew she had gone into the Clyde so I went down the Clyde in a boat on an imaginary trip that the Molendinar would take, wondering where it would lead to. And I discovered that it led to the Firth of Clyde and eventually into the Irish Sea and we joined the Gulf Stream which was coming from the North and working its way South. So I was quite content that this was where the Molendinar had ended; joining the Gulf Stream to wherever it was going around the World’.

**Tom Elliott, interviewed, 2002. Mearnskirk.**