

# Turning an idea into a lived reality

In the summer of 1988, Glasgow staged the third of the UK garden festivals on Princes Dock on the River Clyde. Over five months the Festival attracted over 4.35 million visits, making it the most popular of the five festivals and exceeding that year's annual visits to Scotland's two top visitor attractions combined.

The Festival was a coming together of four forces: the ramping up of post-industrial regeneration in British cities, Glasgow's history of major events, the international garden festival movement, and best practice in staging international open-air events across the world.

Design, delivery and operation of the Festival came about through a remarkable coalition of government agencies, host local authorities, private businesses and sponsors, Glasgow's design community, the many participants – from across Scotland, the UK and internationally – and of course the people of Glasgow. A strategic partnership was established, inter-agency rivalries set aside, and innovations made in the practice of regeneration. Glasgow tasted success unknown since its heyday in late 19th/early 20th centuries, and rather liked it. For Glasgow, the Garden Festival created a sweet spot, a tipping point in the city's fortunes and can-do attitude.



**The festival brought together four movements:**

- 1 post-industrial regeneration in British cities,
- 2 Glasgow's history of major events,
- 3 the international garden festival movement,
- 4 international best practice in open-air events.



This exhibition tells the story of how the 1988 Glasgow Garden Festival came about – how Glasgow won the bid for the 1989 Festival, convincing government to bring the event forward by a year to coincide with the anniversary of the 1888 and 1938 international exhibitions, and created an event that lives on in the city's collective memory.

Looking back across the decades, there seems an inevitability about the Festival's place in Glasgow's story. However, for those involved in its feasibility, design, delivery, outreach and operation, it was a high-wire act with no safety net.



# The case for Glasgow

When the UK Government announced the search for cities to host further garden festivals to follow Liverpool in 1984 in support of inner-city regeneration, the prospect of winning a national profile event to further stimulate Glasgow's recovery made strategic sense.

## Making the pitch

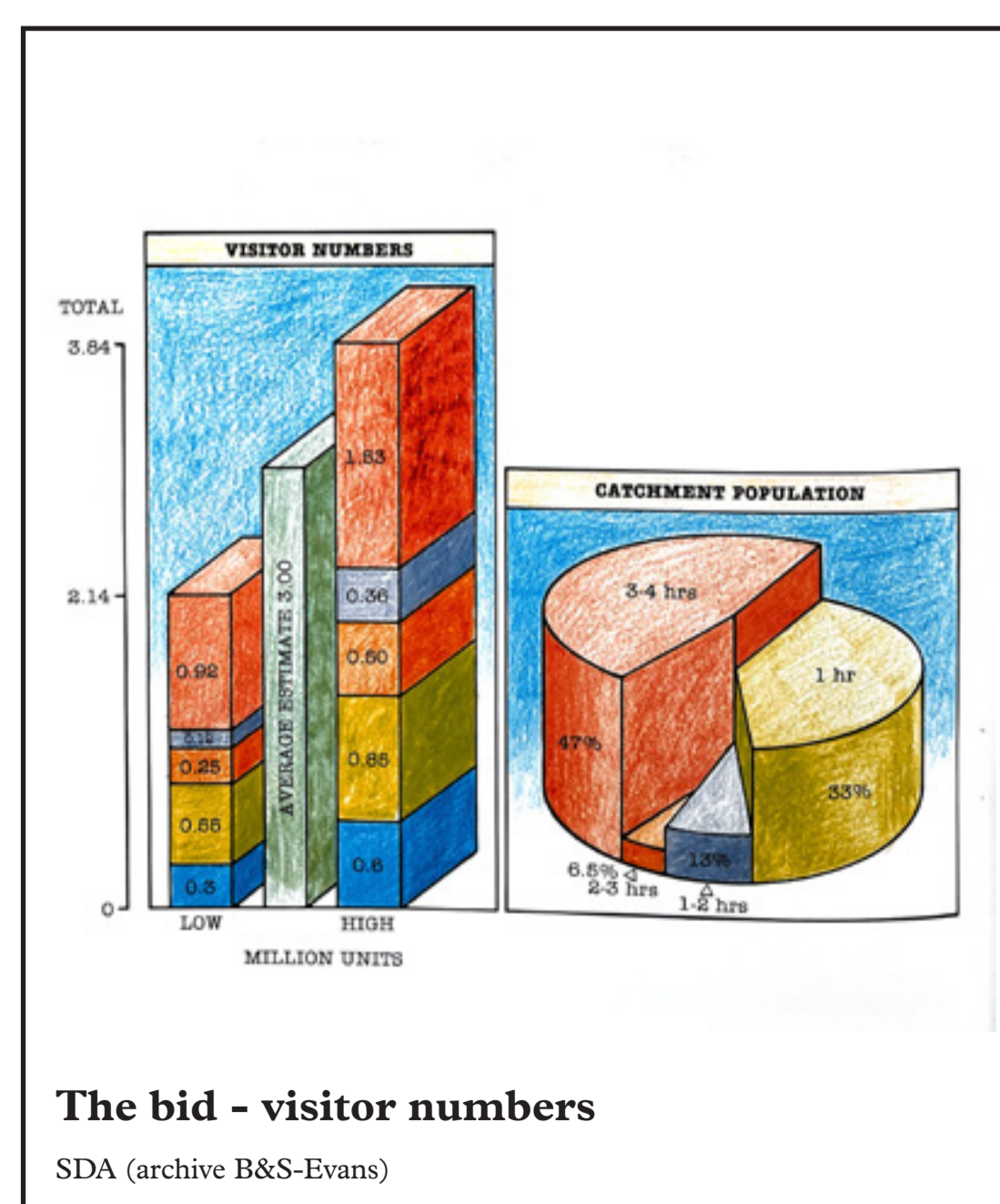
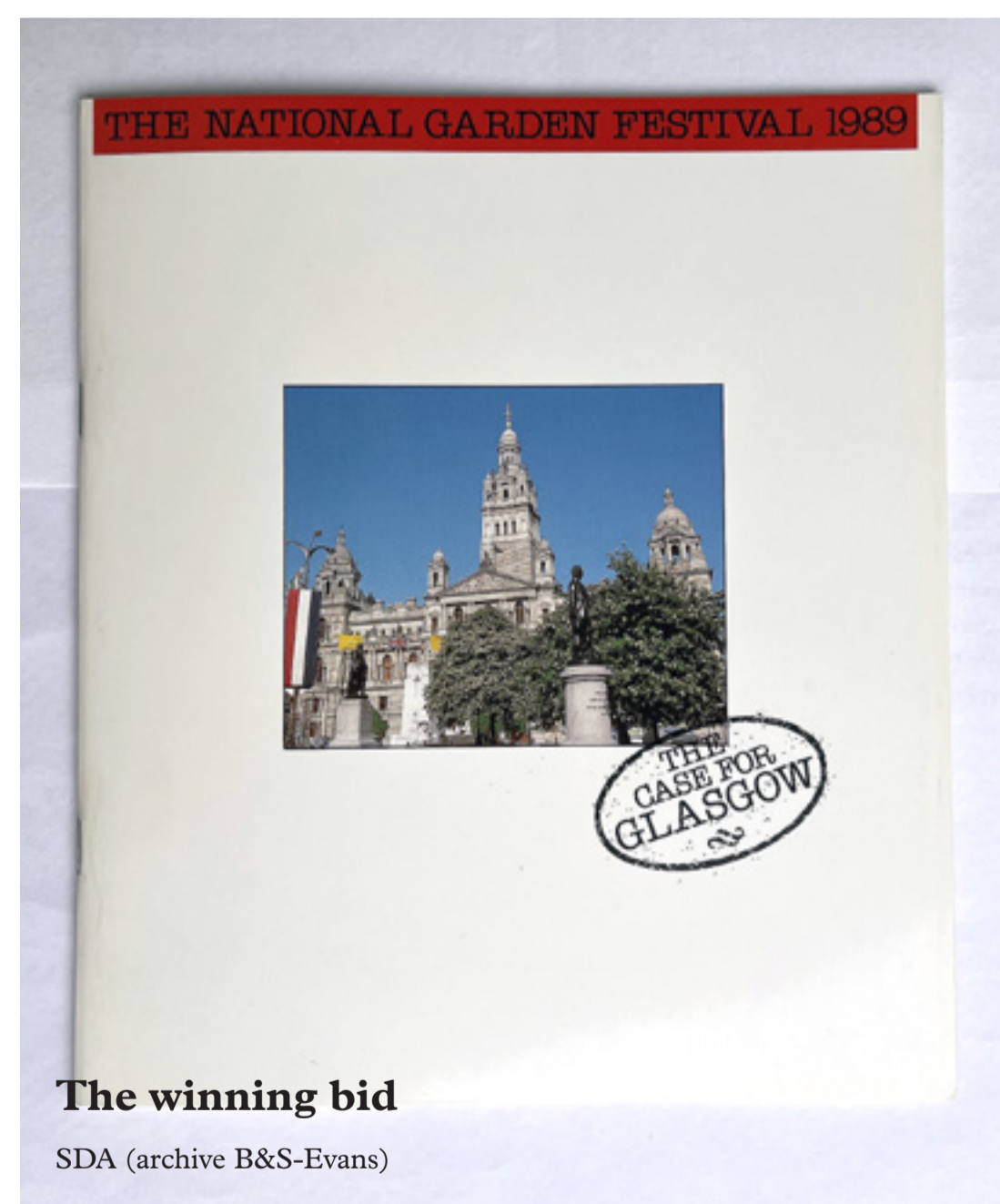
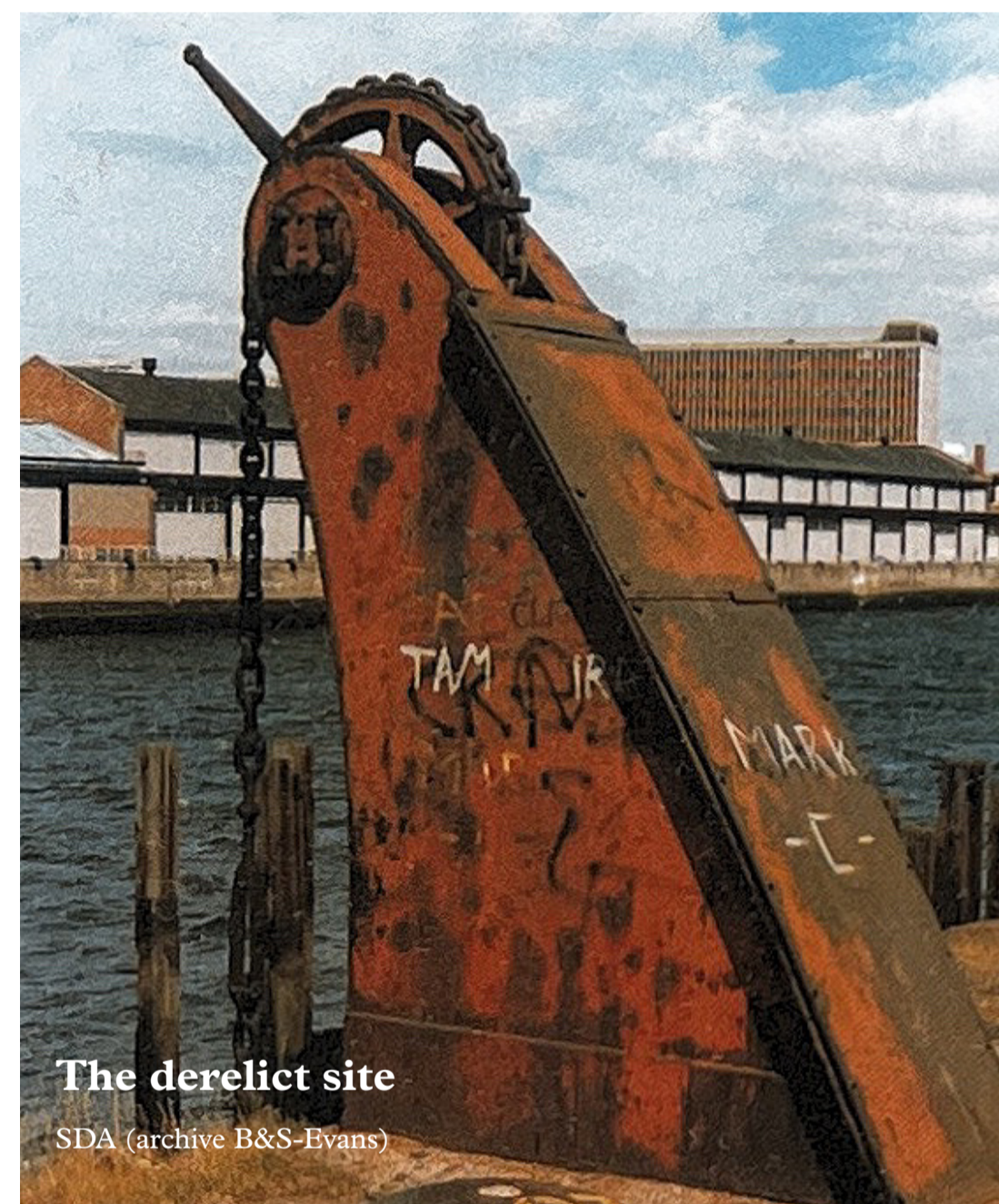
A bid proposal was developed and submitted jointly by Glasgow District Council and the Scottish Development Agency (SDA) which had been active in urban renewal since its establishment in 1975, setting up the Glasgow Eastern Area Renewal Project (GEAR) in 1976.

The challenge for the SDA lay in reconciling government funded land renewal programmes with the regeneration aims of a festival programme set by different government departments. The requirements for success were explicit: a derelict inner-city site, readily accessible to millions of visitors over a few months, delivered in three years, and with post-festival economic end uses in place. To win the bid and secure the funding, the festival had to be temporary and recognise that after use as a public park was deemed to be a public cost liability, not an economic asset.

A further challenge for Glasgow was visitor numbers – how long would people be prepared to travel to pay for a fun day out? Glasgow had a catchment population of 2.5 million living within one hour, only a quarter of Liverpool or Stoke. This meant that the location had to be excellent, pricing had to be right and transport access to the site had to be quick, high capacity and frequent.



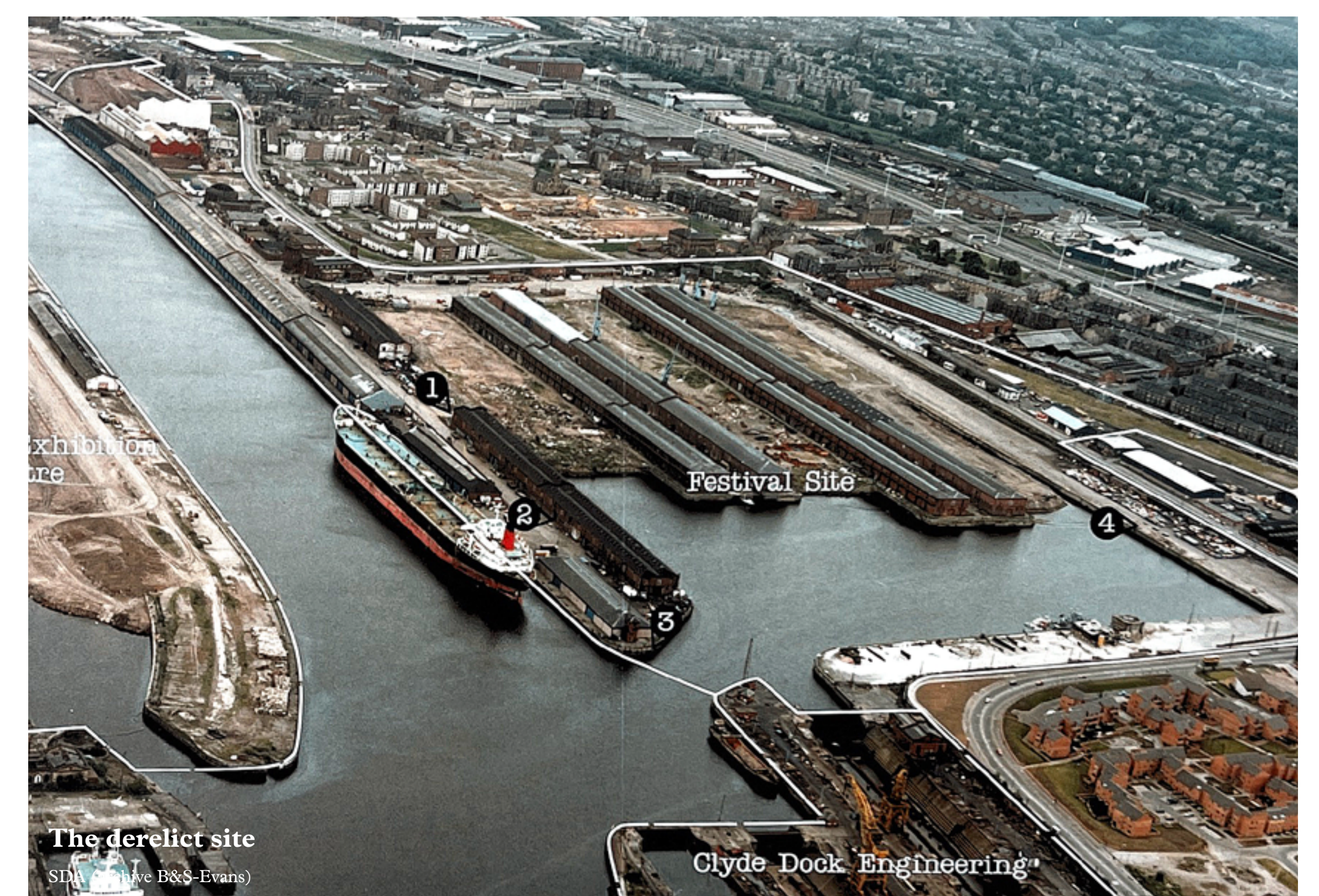
Four sites were considered, initially: Kelvingrove Park (site of the 1888 exhibition), Bellahouston Park (site of the 1938 exhibition), Glasgow Green (the city's oldest park, reworked by Joseph Paxton) and Princes Dock – a quayside opposite the soon-to-be-opened Scottish Exhibition Centre. Princes Dock was a derelict site with the advantage of easy access by rail, subway, and road as well as ample parking at the SEC. The willingness of the site owner to develop alternative sites for housing to enable the Festival to take place and their commitment to post-festival redevelopment were also attractive factors. Princes Dock presented the best case for the event and was selected unanimously by the coalition assembled by the SDA to develop the Bid.



Government assessors were impressed by Glasgow's case, and the capacity to bring the Festival forward a year to celebrate the centennial and semi-centennial of the 1888 and 1938 exhibitions proved compelling to a government anxious to demonstrate tangible progress with inner city renewal.

In October 1985, Glasgow actor and comedian Billy Connolly, TV journalist Selina Scott and the then Secretary of State George Younger, helped the SDA launch the Glasgow Garden Festival 1988 campaign in London and Glasgow – a campaign designed to reach high worth companies and organisations in the UK who could back the Festival with hard cash.

The project now had the green light and masterplanning could get underway.



# Concept and masterplan

The brief for the masterplan was to deliver ‘a Festival for five months’ which was fun for all the family, within a setting of horticultural excellence – one that would act as a focus for the promotion of the cultural and commercial image of Glasgow for the 1990s and beyond.

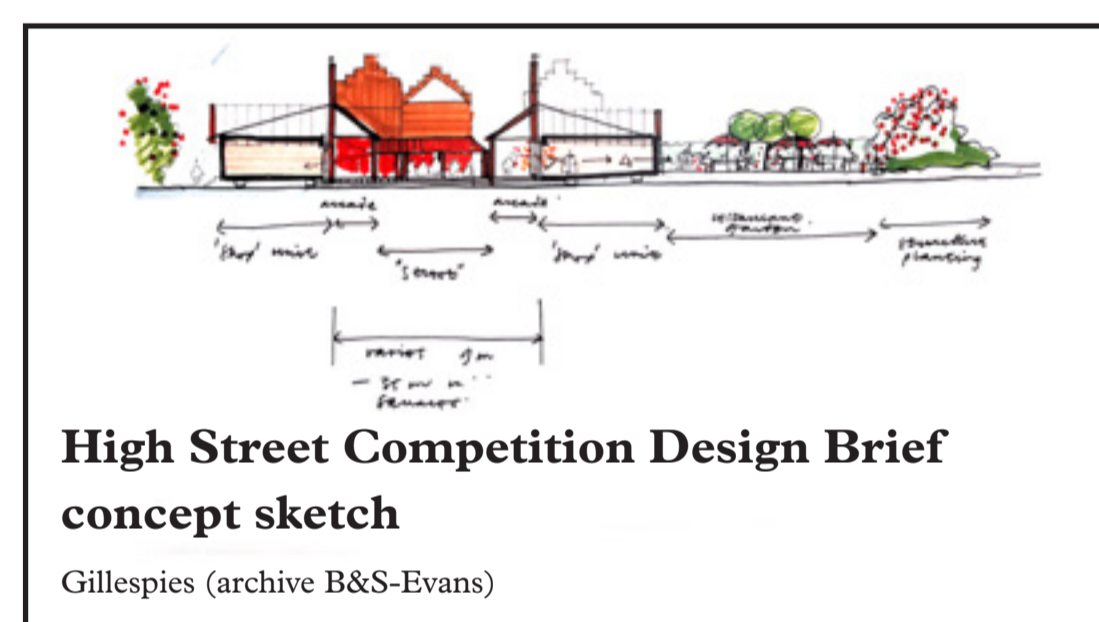
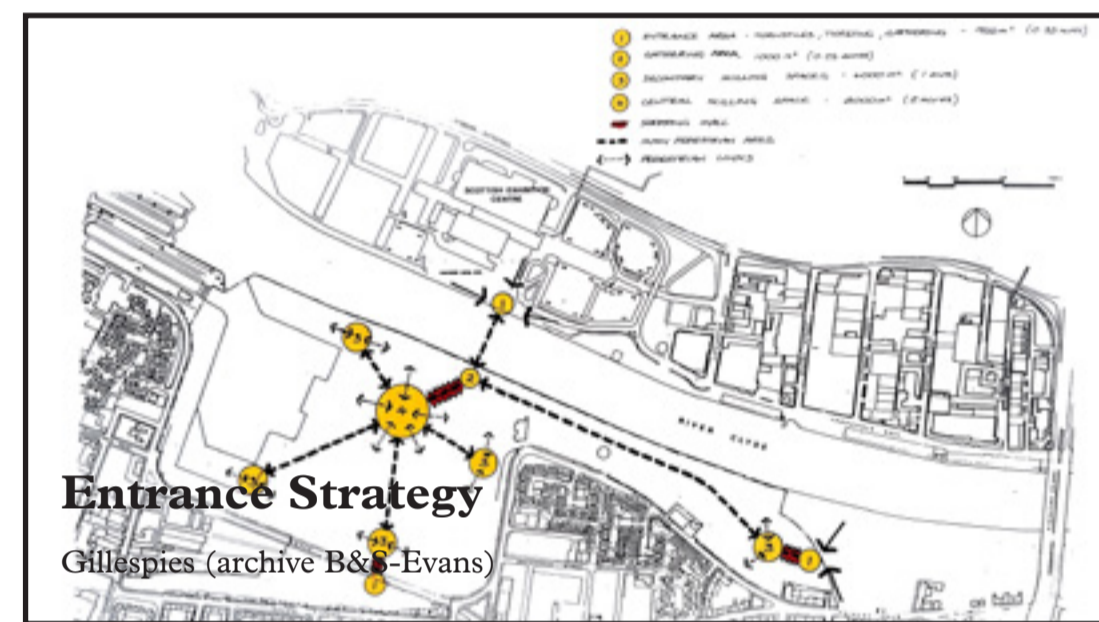
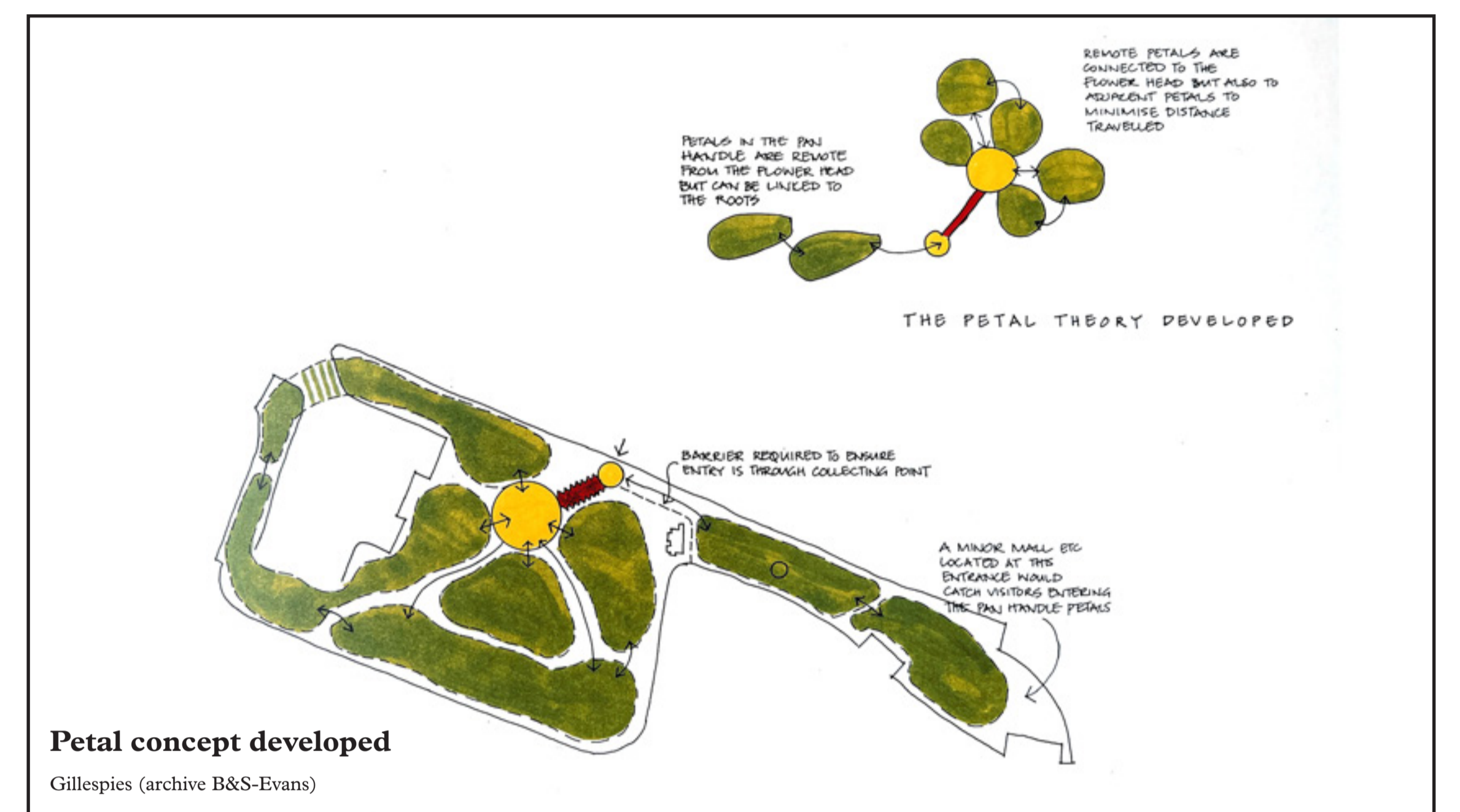
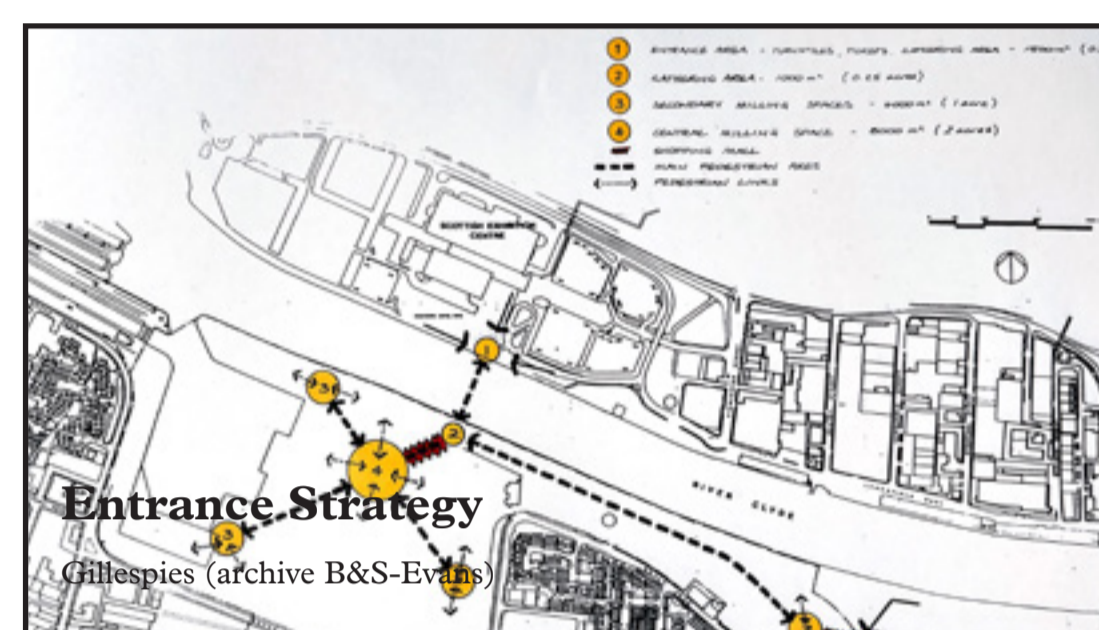
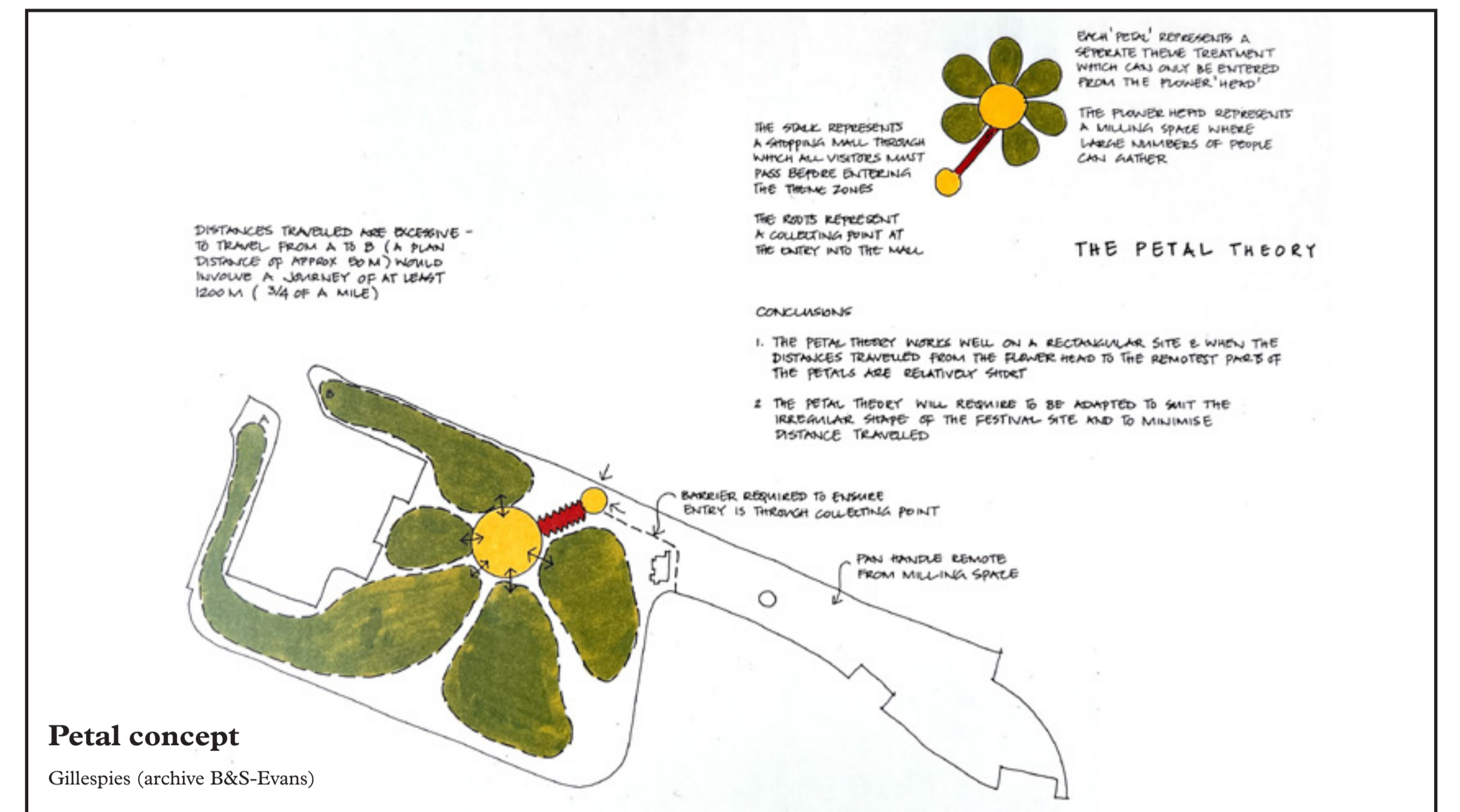
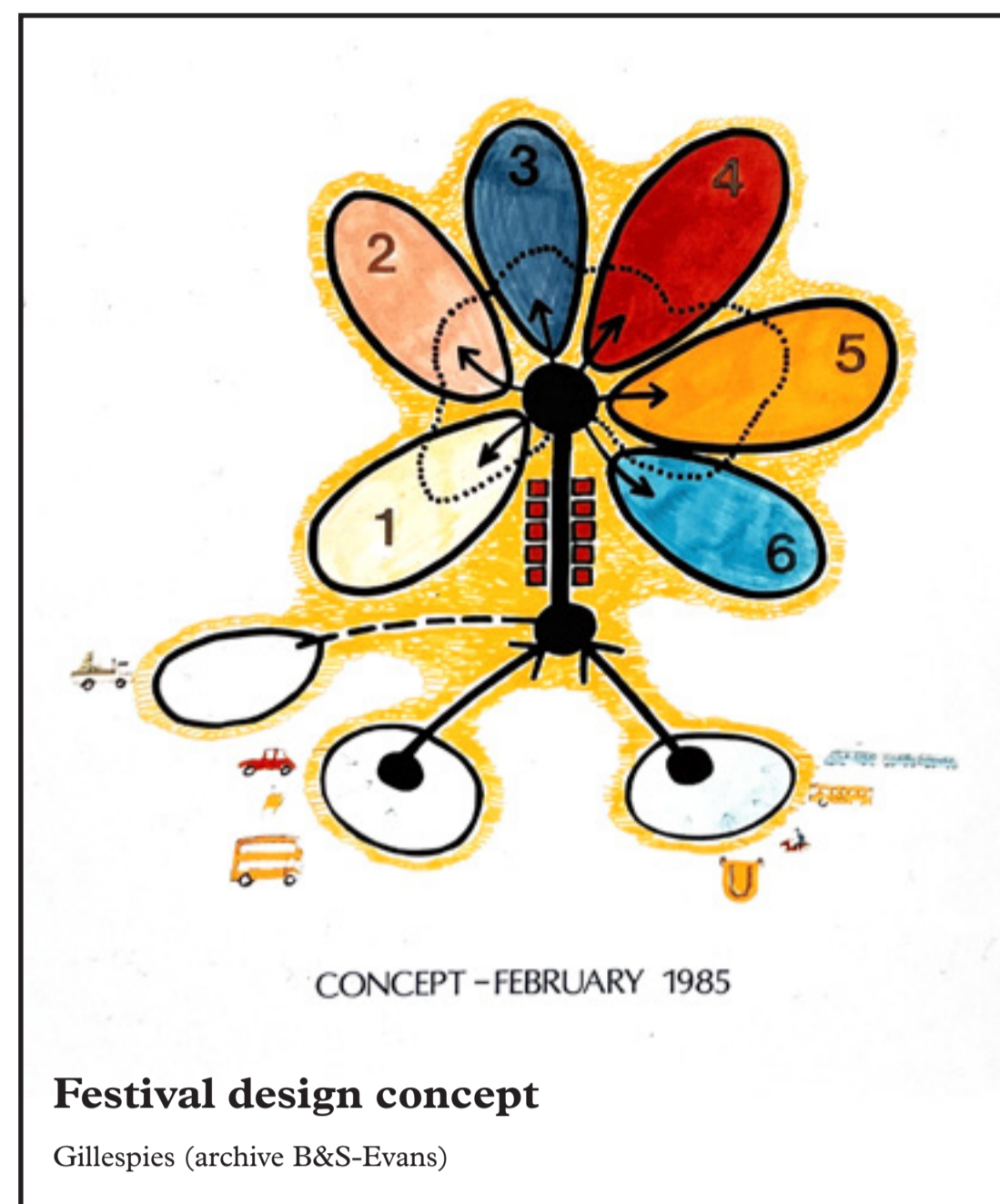
## The petal concept

The concept and masterplan plan for Glasgow drew on learning from large and successful consumer events and leisure parks in the USA (Epcot, Disneyland and Cypress Gardens in Florida,) and in Europe (Germany’s federal garden shows and the Dutch Floriade).

This research identified a number of core elements to manage visitor movement: a single entrance and arrival space with immediate access to retail, cafés and toilets leading to a central hub from which the site could be explored. This arrangement became known as the ‘petal concept’ – with ‘roots’ the entrances and arrival space, the ‘stalk’ the link to the hub as the heart of the ‘flower head’, and the exhibition spaces around it the ‘petals’.

The configuration and orientation of Glasgow’s site, formed by the Canting Basin and the long river frontage, necessitated two entrances to maximise visitor experience without overcomplicating operational arrangements and costs: an entrance from the north, across the Clyde, and an entrance from the east.

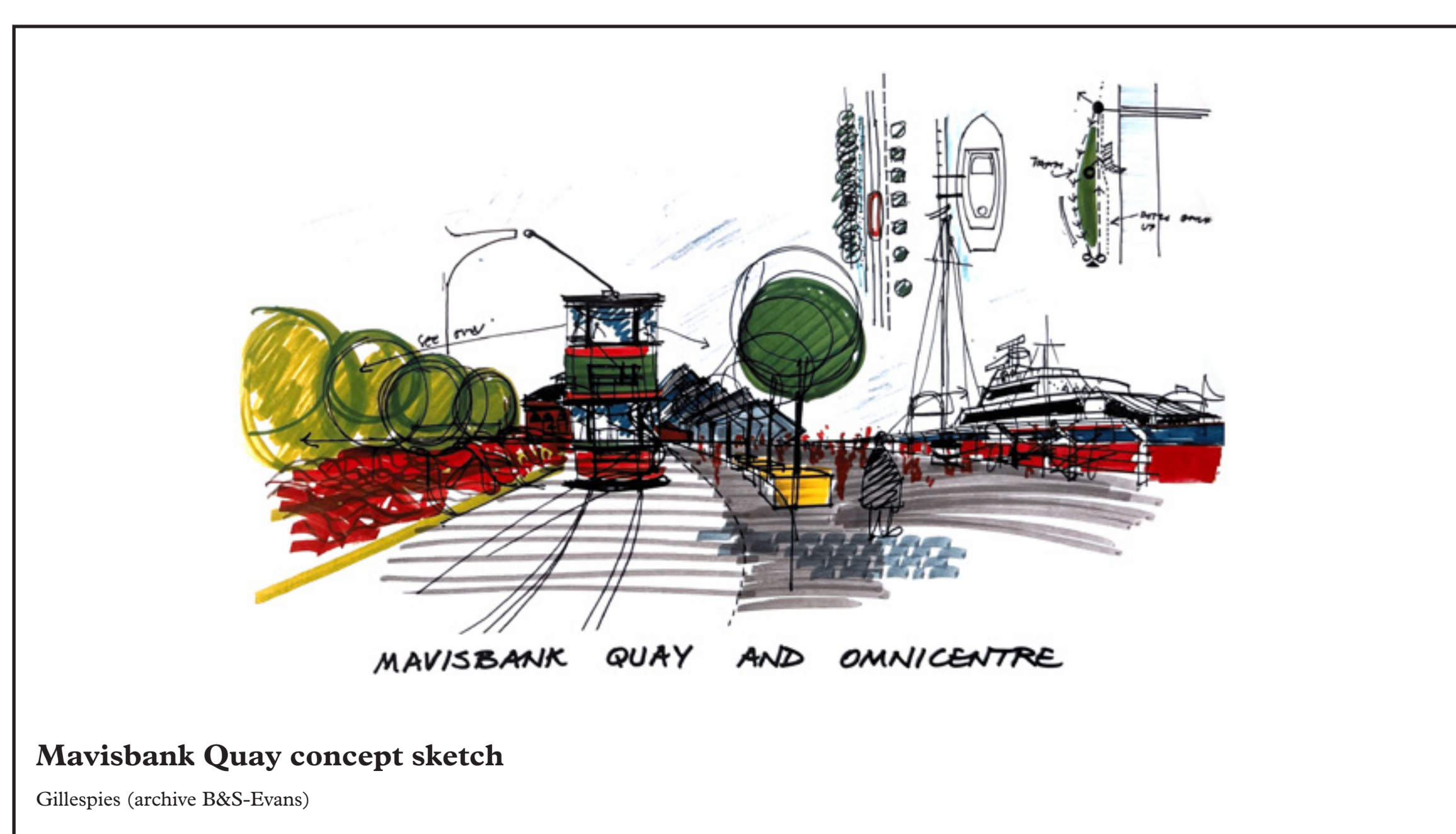
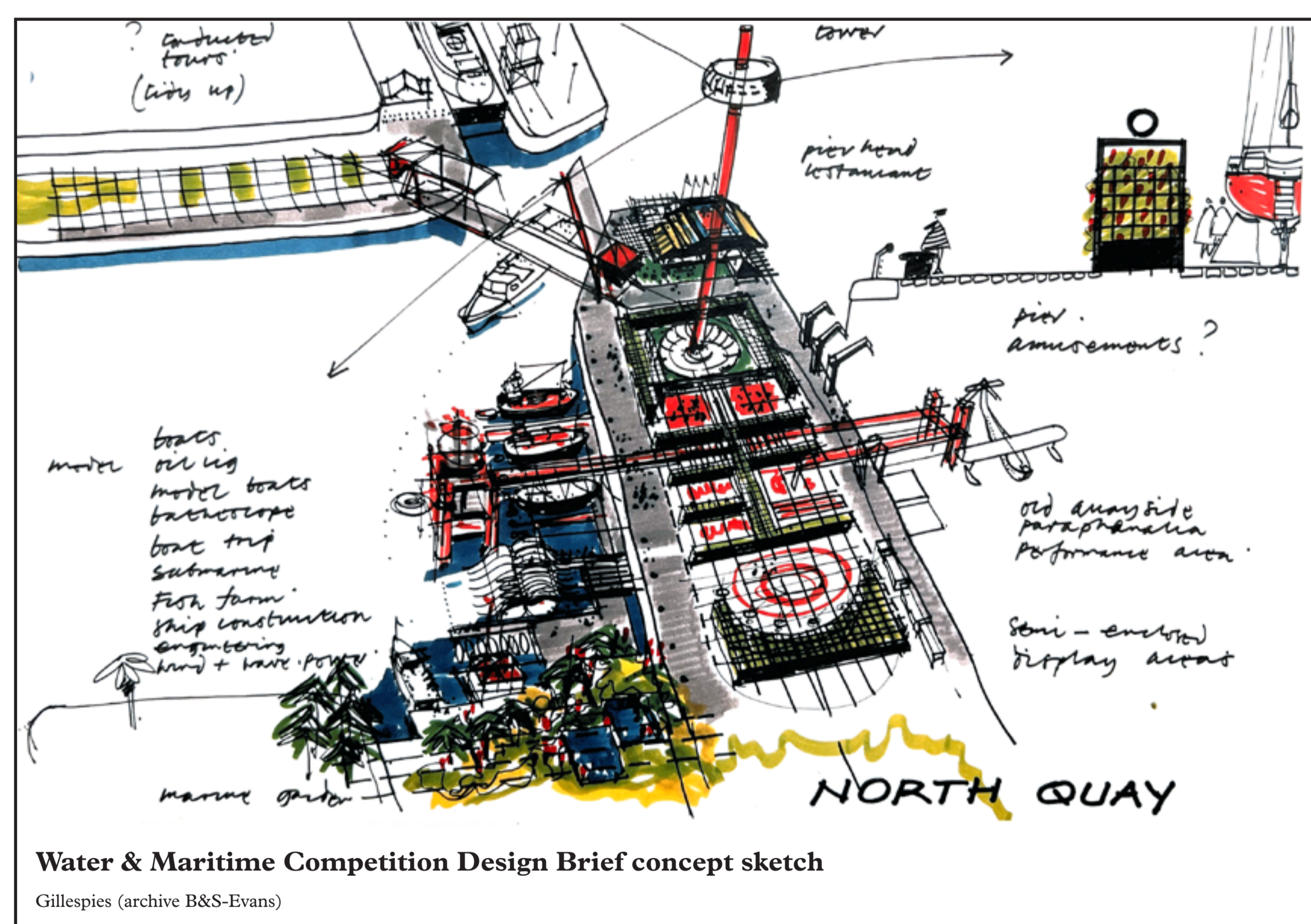
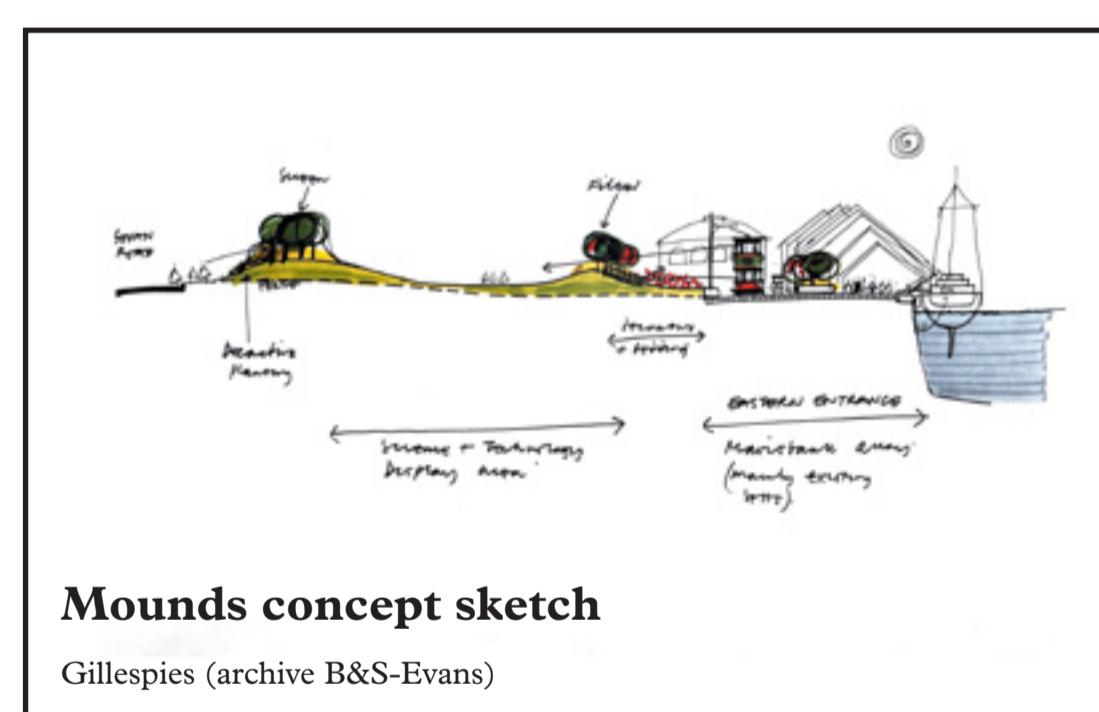
This meant the adoption of a different ‘petal concept’ – two routes (like roots) joining at the arrival space at the base of the stalk, and ‘fallen petals’ not directly accessible from the hub and linked by additional access routes.



## Disposition

The concept informed the development of a masterplan comprising:

- a principal entrance from the north, with a new pedestrian swing bridge across the river enabling the Scottish Exhibition Centre buildings and carparks to be used
- an eastern entrance on the south side of the river, to facilitate local access and bring visitors to the site by subway, using trams to move them quickly and efficiently along the Esplanade to the arrival space
- an arrival or gathering space where visitors from both entrances could come together to walk through a central retail location (the High Street) with shops, restaurants, services and merchandise
- a centrally located orientation space (the Milling Space) to act as a focal point that visitors could return to on several occasions during their visit as a resting space, and as a marshalling area for events and parades
- visual compartmentalisation of the site using earth mounds and planting to extend and contain the experience whilst maintaining critical views to the viewing tower, Govan Town Hall, and the city’s skyline to aid orientation
- development of display areas (the petals) within the spaces between the mounds each designed to have its own identity with exhibits and gardens relevant to the six themes selected for the Festival
- attractions such as the Thrill Ride (Coca-Cola Roller), the Clydesdale Bank Anniversary Tower and the indoor show pavilion and cafés, positioned to encourage dispersed use of the whole site and linked by the festival railway with access around the Canting Basin over a second temporary bridge
- design of major routes along four Avenues and the Clyde Esplanade to sustain large flows of visitors, encourage use of more remote areas and provide access back to the Milling Space
- three Themed Trails to establish visitor routes designed for specialist and longer stays.



# Concept and masterplan

*“The Festival is now recognised to have been one of the most successful events to have taken place in Scotland and to provide a milestone in the regeneration of Glasgow and beyond.”*

THE RT. HON. MALCOLM RIFKIND, QC, MP, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND

## Zoning the festival

The aim was to ensure that each petal area would have a strong identity with exhibits and gardens that matched the theme. A range of themes was considered, and options developed to show how they might be disposed across the site. This included a blended approach, allowing multiple themes within an area and an additional zoning of ‘past’, ‘present’ and ‘future’ across the themes, but these ideas were discounted as adding too much complexity. Six themes were then settled upon enabling design of these areas to get underway in readiness for the allocation of spaces to contributors. The Festival themes, exploring issues like health, fitness, wellbeing, energy and food growing, were prescient given the degree to which these are now mainstream in society.



### Water and Maritime

Bordering the River Clyde, this sector celebrated Scotland’s maritime history and the significance of the river in the development of the city. With a bold nautical design of masts and flags, visitors could learn about aspects of ships and shipbuilding and enjoy water-based sports and recreation.



### Recreation and Sport

Spread over two areas and incorporating homes and garden features, an arena, the craft centre and the Canting Basin, this sector illustrated how leisure time, recreation and sport are essential to modern healthy living.



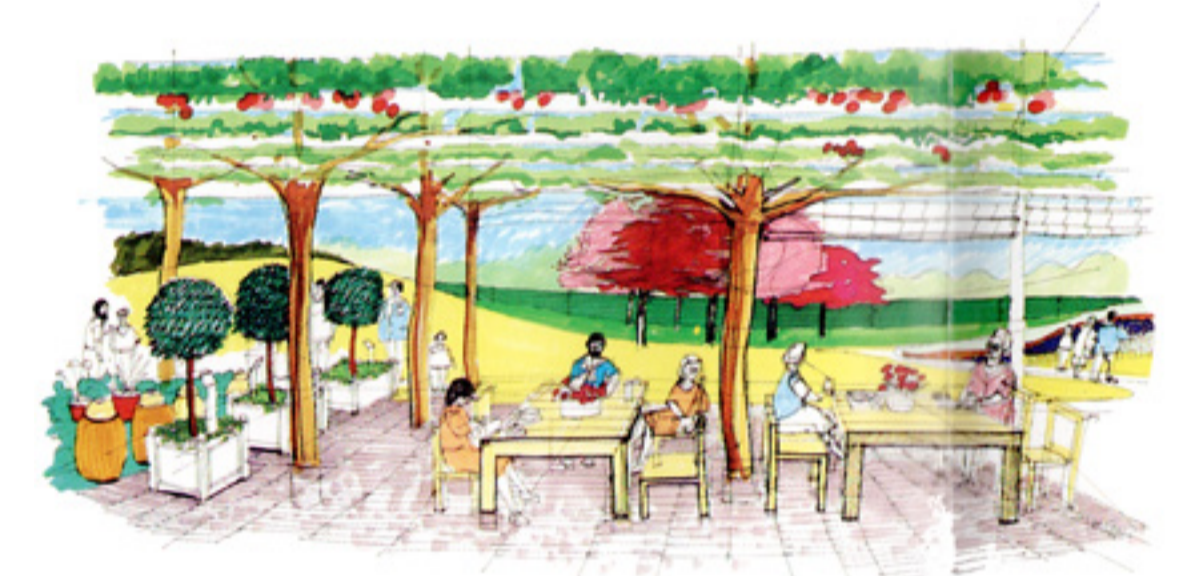
### Landscape and Scenery

Recreating a landscape in miniature with scenery from the Highlands and the Glens of Scotland to the Pennines, the sector included a model whisky distillery and exhibits by major environmental and wildlife organisations.



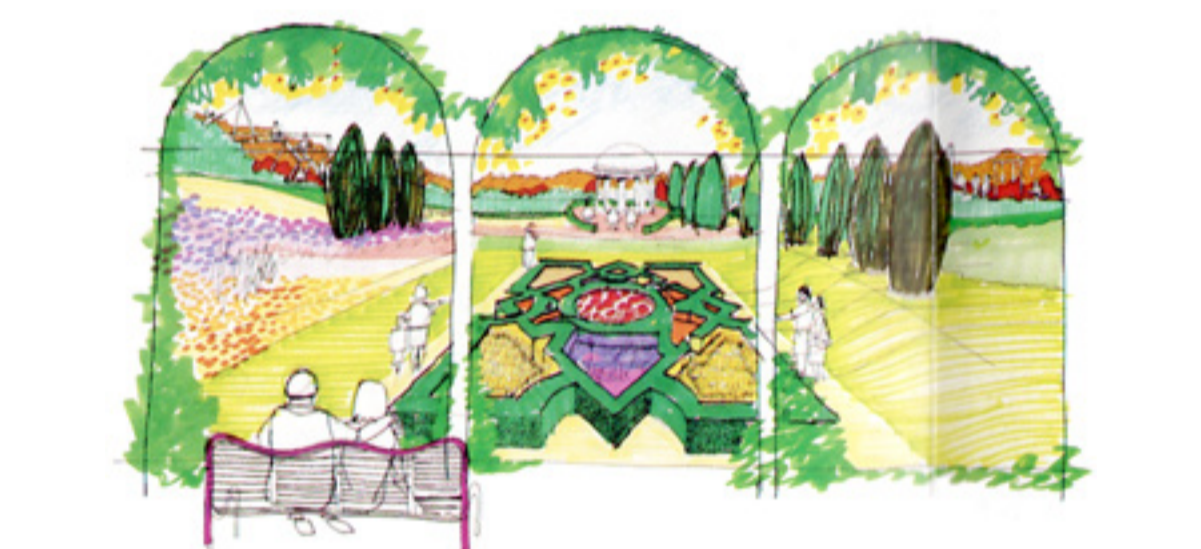
### Plants and Food

This was the main horticultural display area for gardening and food production exhibits and included a rose garden, a flower arranger’s garden, a cottage garden, a walled garden, an ornamental vegetable garden and a display of grasses and bamboos.



### Health and Wellbeing

A place to recharge your mind and body, this sector featured restful and tranquil gardens relating to peace and religion, and displays focused on physical and mental well-being. A wildlife garden added nature’s own special contribution.



### Science and Technology

Reflecting Scotland’s strong contribution to industry through the ages at home and abroad, displays featured the latest achievements in the sciences of horticulture and agriculture alongside the future of electronics and energy.



Theme logos: Westpoint (After the Garden Festival archive)  
Theme sketches: Gillespies (After the Garden Festival archive)

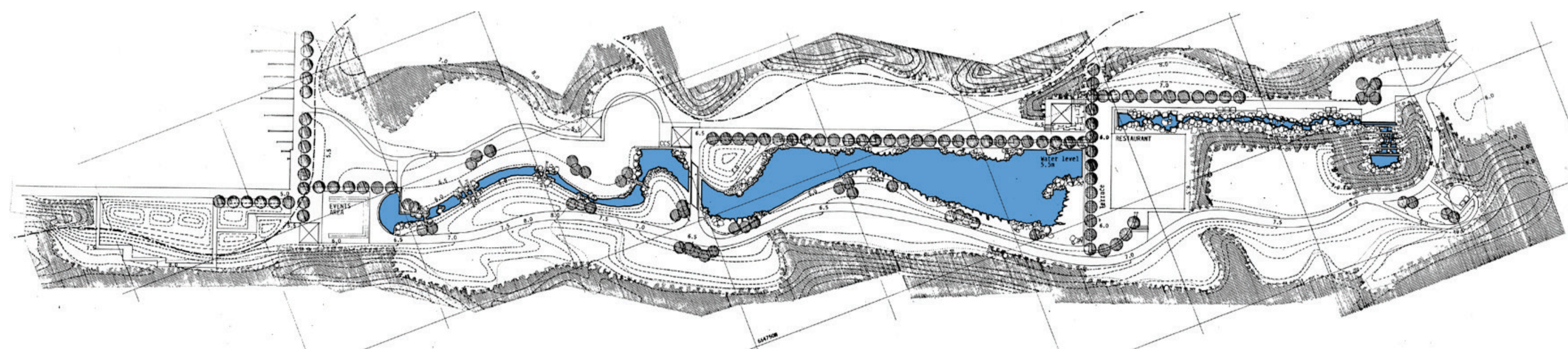


Contributors Masterplan 1986-7  
Gillespies (archive B&S-Evans)

With contaminated land treatment and reclamation work completed, and earth moving and planting already underway, the final masterplan was approved by the Festival Company in February 1986. The plan illustrated the location of all the main features for the site, the internal transport routes, locations for play areas, cafés (by Lyons Catering who had held the franchise for the 1888 Jubilee Exhibition), shelters, toilets, first aid, wheelchair hire and medical support. This approved masterplan used a honeycomb of 100 square metre units to illustrate where some 75,000 square metres of gardens and other displays could be distributed across the site. Not everything came to pass – the water gardens across the Canting Basin were a bridge too far!

# Making the Festival

With the masterplan in place, the Scottish Development Agency took the lead in planning, designing and constructing the Festival on behalf of the city.



Landscape and Scenery Theme Masterplan  
Ian White

## The team

The SDA retained the bid team for masterplanning and delivery, augmenting this with further specialist consultants: Principal Consultants and Design Coordinators, Management Contractor, Cost Consultants, Product Consultants, Transport Consultants, Civil Engineering Consultants, Services Consultants and Catering Consultants.

A further 29 design teams were commissioned to deliver the Festival infrastructure, reporting to a design coordination team chaired by the masterplan and design coordinators together with the cost coordinators and management contractors. Nine design competitions were held to ensure creativity and high standards of design, including the Water & Maritime Theme Area, the Entrances, the High Street, The All Seasons Garden, the River Clyde Bridge, the Canting Basin Bridge and children's play areas.

The SDA set up the Glasgow Garden Festival Company 1988 Ltd as a wholly owned subsidiary to market and operate the event, with a Festival Board of Directors and an executive team of Chief Executive and Directors of Marketing, Horticulture, Operations, Events and Finance. A Head of Product Development and Visual Arts Coordinator completed the key personnel. The delivery and success of the Festival would not have been possible without the efforts of the Festival Company team in obtaining funding, raising the profile of the event and the City, and in securing the many displays and exhibition.

As 1988 approached, the Festival Company team was expanded by 2,000 previously unemployed local people through a training programme to help with festival operations.



Landscaping and planting under way, 1986  
Gillanders and Mack/Michael Dale archive

## Groundworks and planting

Two major tender processes sourced over £1M worth of plants to ensure sufficient trees and shrubs of the right size and quality would be available when needed. Trees, shrubs and perennials were grown on by 90 nurseries across the UK and in Europe. 70,000 square metres of turf were also supplied.

200,000 cubic metres of subsoil (25,000 lorry loads) and 30,000 cubic metres of topsoil (3,750 lorry loads) were imported to create the mounded areas to divide up the site and frame the theme areas. Some experimental soil was manufactured using silt dredged from the River Clyde at Meadowside Quay and transported to the site via the Clyde Tunnel and Govan Road.

Structure planting on the newly formed mounds was phased over the winters and springs of 1985/86 and 1986/87 with the usual challenges of wet winters followed by dry springs. Matrix planting (using decorative mixes of planting to blend between the structure planting and the more ornamental garden planting) went ahead in 1986/87. In 1987 and early 1988 the horticultural focus moved to the construction and planting of the international gardens, sponsor gardens, outdoor bedding and indoor planting displays. Three 80 metre deep boreholes provided irrigation water around the site and a squad of 80, including 20 trainees, ensured the site was well maintained and the planting and turf thrived.



**Capital Works**

- 90 plant supply contracts
- 15 landscape packages (mounding, structure and matrix planting, theme areas, esplanade, central milling space and avenues)
- 9 architectural packages (entrances, shelters and cafés, High Street, restaurants and markets, Landscape and Scenery restaurant, 'Four Winds' and 'Rotunda' rehabilitation)
- 5 engineering packages (site infrastructure, tram and train systems installation, River Clyde bridge and Canting Basin bridge)

## Design & delivery

With the masterplan in place, the product development team began securing major sponsorship for key features such as the viewing tower, the trams, supplies and services and hundreds of show gardens and exhibits. At the same time, many more designers and contractors were working on the design and delivery of every aspect of the site including outdoor art, entrance designs, site and exhibition signage. Aerial photographs show how the cleared derelict and flat site was being transformed on the ground.

A final as-built masterplan was prepared in April 1988 which will be recognisable to those who visited Glasgow during that summer of fun.



Stone laying in the Landscape and Scenery theme area  
Ian White



Turving the Pyramid  
Turf Management in Scotland (May 1988)



Landscaping  
Gillespies (archive B&S-Evans)



Final Masterplan April 1988  
Gillespies (archive B&S-Evans)

# Making the Festival

*“If anyone needed reminding that ‘Glasgow’s Miles Better’, this event must represent yet another milestone in the Renaissance of this City, it equally represents a milestone for urban regeneration for our country. A remarkable change has been achieved in developing a derelict riverbank into a magnificent living park.”*

HRH PRINCE CHARLES THE PRINCE OF WALES, AT THE ROYAL OPENING

## Getting around

Infrastructure works included the design and installation of 16km of footpaths across the 58ha site. Major pedestrian routes were designed to move visitors quickly around the site and to act as service roads for operational purposes and emergencies. Paths over the planted mounds were laid out with gentle gradients with wheelchairs and prams in mind.

A trainline and a tramline were installed to help visitors move around the site. Following a call for trams, Blackpool Borough Council, Lothian Regional Council and the National Tramway Museum in Derbyshire all agreed to loan vehicles. Each tram was sponsored to fund their transport to and from Glasgow, servicing and any restoration. The five tram stops were sponsored by each of Scotland’s New Towns. The trams were housed overnight in the restored Four Winds Building.

## Visual arts

The work of 46 artists made a significant cultural contribution to the Festival. Around half of the 70 pieces on site were loaned from public and private collections or by the artists themselves. The other half were commissioned for the site providing opportunities for less well-known artists and new collaborations. Employees of British Shipbuilders Training Limited (part of Govan Shipbuilders) worked with several artists, including Richard Deacon, Jim Buckley and Richard Groom, using their traditional skills. The Forestry Commission supported an Artists in Residence programme for the duration of the Festival allowing visitors direct contact with nine artists. Performance art also featured regularly as part of the Events Programme.

## Sponsorship

The Festival Company had great success in winning sponsors for major structures, onsite transport, and attractions like the roller coaster and the viewing tower. Demand led to an increase of land for gardens and displays from 75,000 to 100,000 square metres, with some displays coming forward as late as March 1988. In the end more than 350 organisations and contributors provided 140 gardens and features at the Festival. The value of private sponsorship was estimated at £14.5M – well in excess of the bid target of £3M.



The festival train  
Tommy Quinn



Festival parade  
Donald McCrae



West of the Canting Basin  
Gillespies (archive of Sue and Brian Evans)

## Events programme

The Festival was brought alive with an extensive programme of changing weekly and daily events and parades. In all, there were over 15,000 different events, involving hundreds of participants who often brought along their friends and relatives. Visitors were entertained by orchestras, pipe bands, brass bands, jazz bands, choirs, folk groups, Morris dancers, school displays and buskers. There was a children’s circus each weekend and demonstrations included US marching bands, Canadian lumberjacks, kite flying, chess, Jeux San Frontières, science fiction and sports. Most memorably, there was street theatre – which made a star of Big Rory and Wee Malkie.

The Indoor Show Pavilion hosted 26 horticultural events over the Summer. The flagship Grand International Show (and the first ever AIPH event to be based in the UK), was held in the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre in July.



Waves Food Court  
Gillespies (archive of Sue and Brian Evans)



## Marketing and ticketing

A two-year campaign to win over the travel trade saw the Festival Marketing team promote the Garden Festival across Europe, North America and Australasia, obtaining commitments from travel organisations to bring international tourists.

With one year to opening, the Festival Company launched its ‘365 awareness campaign’ including the sale of an early bird season ticket at £15. It seemed that this really was ‘a bargain out of this world’, with 77,000 tickets sold in eight weeks. Even after the price rose to £20, the tickets kept selling. There was a third and final prelaunch sale of reduced tickets for local residents. A media awareness campaign continued through the ‘365’ period, with articles running across the trade press, national and local publications.

In parallel, an outreach action engaged with local residents, over 7,000 horticultural groups, taxi drivers and transport providers to promote the Festival. This activity was delivered mainly by eight individuals on the employment training programme who gave over 1,000 talks by the time the Festival opened, and all later became employed. Local residents were also given free tickets to the two preview days ahead of the Royal Opening. By the time of the Royal Opening in April 1988, 95,000 season tickets had been sold, finally rising to 122,000 overall. Tactical PR and advertising continued throughout the duration of the Festival.

The bid submission forecast that the event, supported with an effective marketing campaign, would result in an overall attendance level in excess of 3 million. This compared well with equivalent European events and Liverpool’s International Garden Festival. This forecast was exceeded by a final attendance figure in excess of 4.35 million.

**Visiting the Garden Festival**

<b>Day tickets</b>	
Adult	£5.00
Family ticket (two adults plus three children)	£14.50
Child from 5 to 16	£2.50
<b>Two visit ticket</b>	
Adult	£9.00
Child	£4.00
<b>Senior citizens, unemployed and full-time students</b>	
Day ticket	£4.00
Two-visit ticket	£7.00
Group advanced bookings 10% discount	
<b>Season ticket</b>	
Adult	£45.00
Child	£22.50
Children under 5 were admitted free	
The only secondary charge on site was for the Coca Cola Roller	
The Festival was open daily from 10am until an hour before dusk	



Signage  
Gillespies (archive of Sue and Brian Evans)



Lochan restaurant  
Gillespies (archive of Sue and Brian Evans)



Stirling Maze  
Gillespies (archive of Sue and Brian Evans)

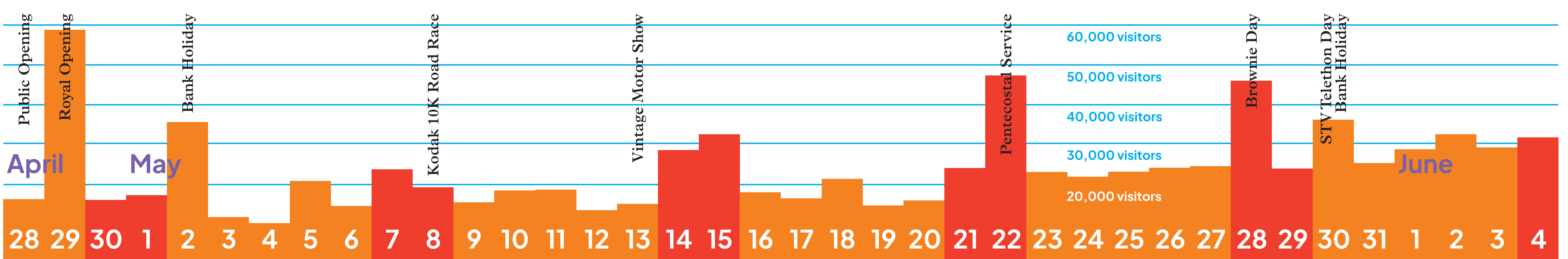
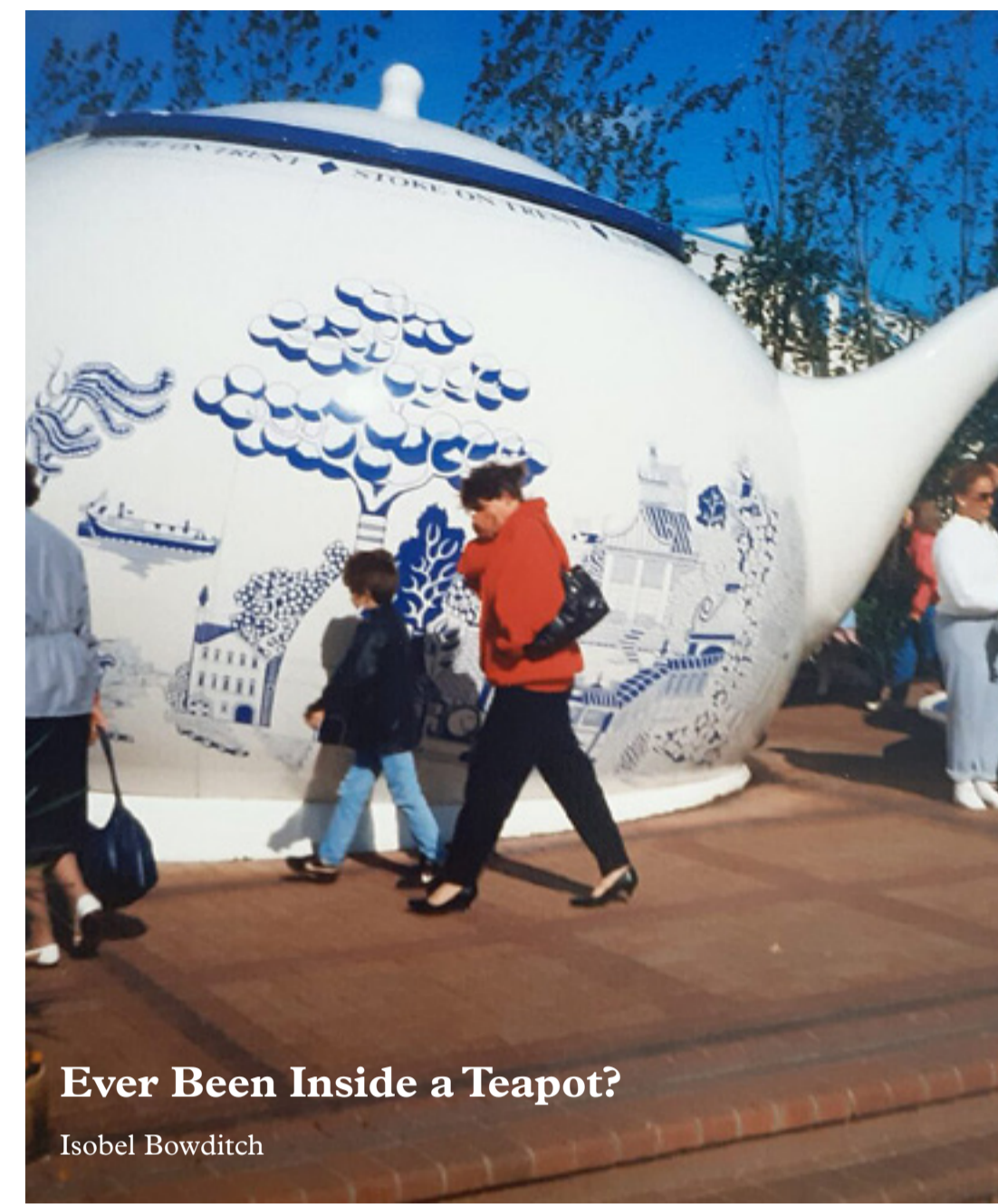
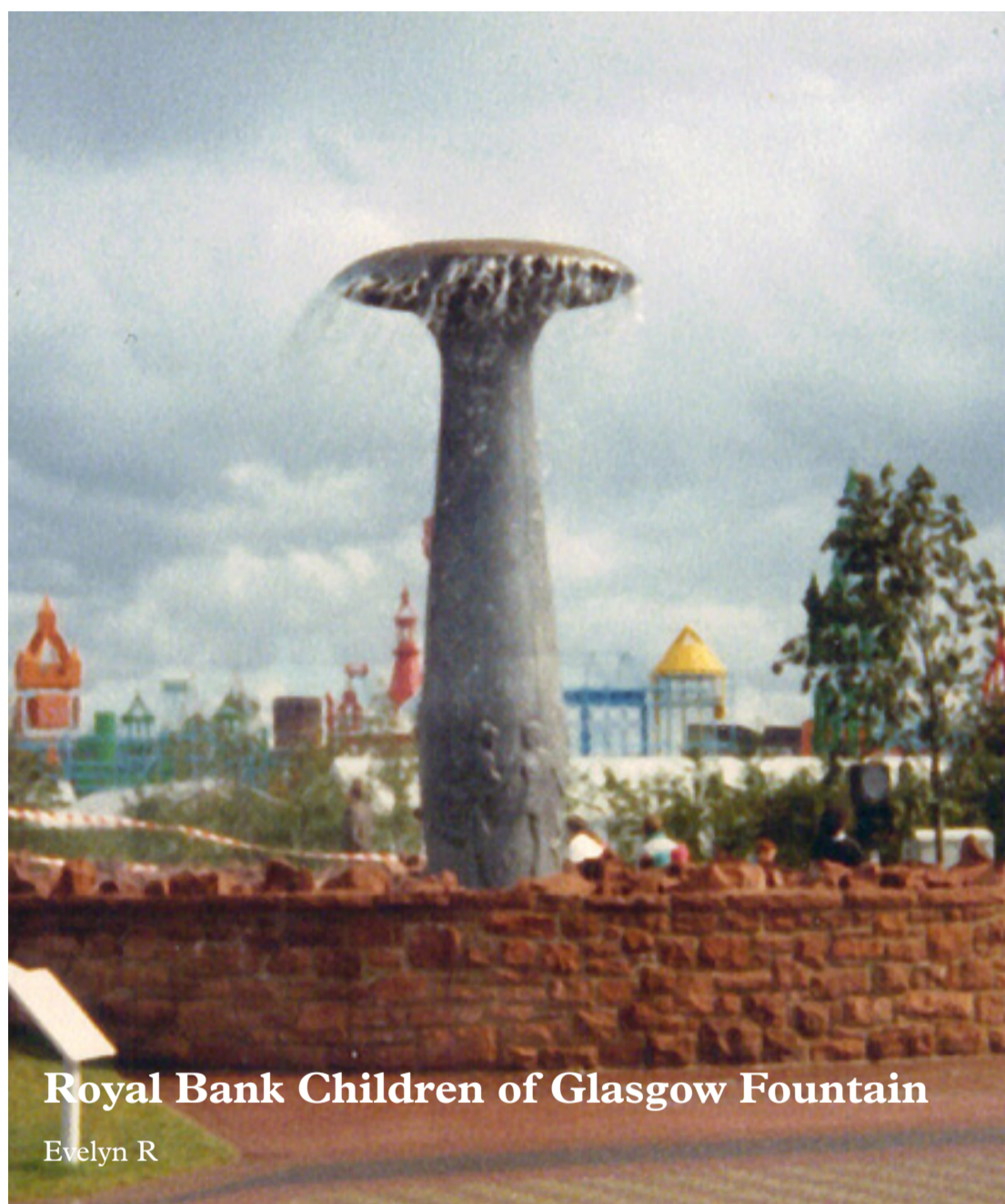
**School visits:**

Strathclyde Regional Council paid for every schoolchild in the region to attend in May resulting in **345,000** visits

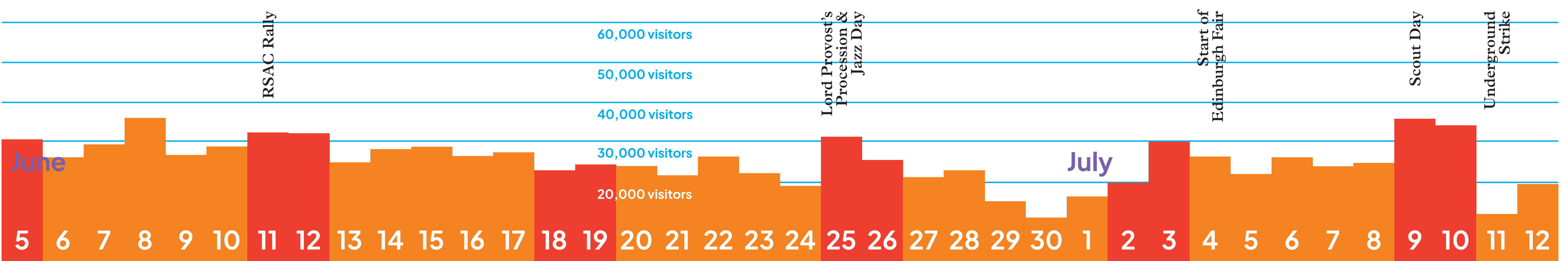
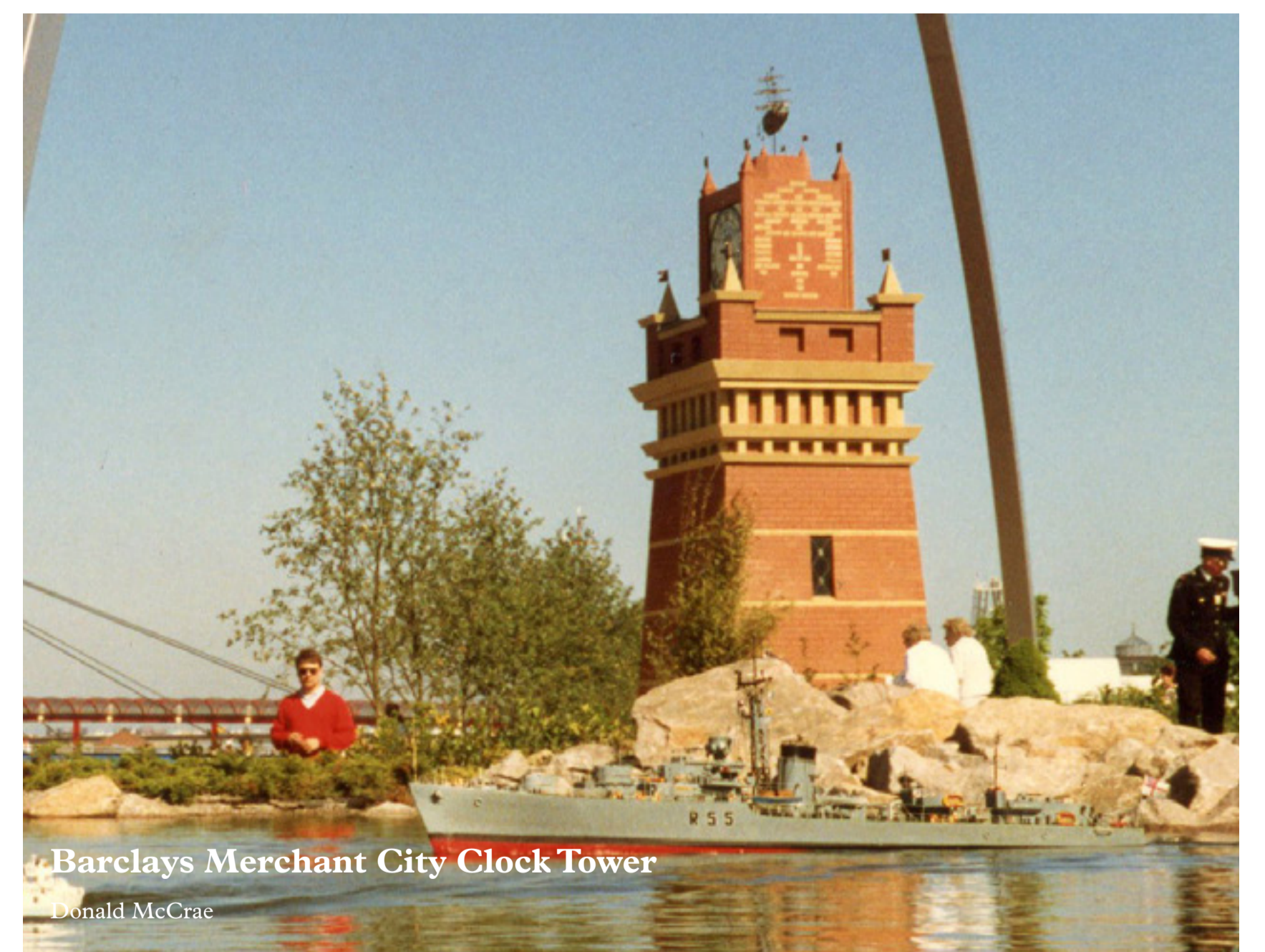
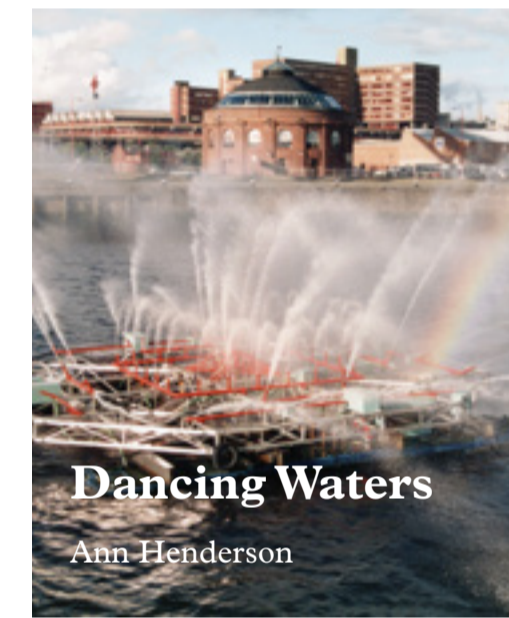
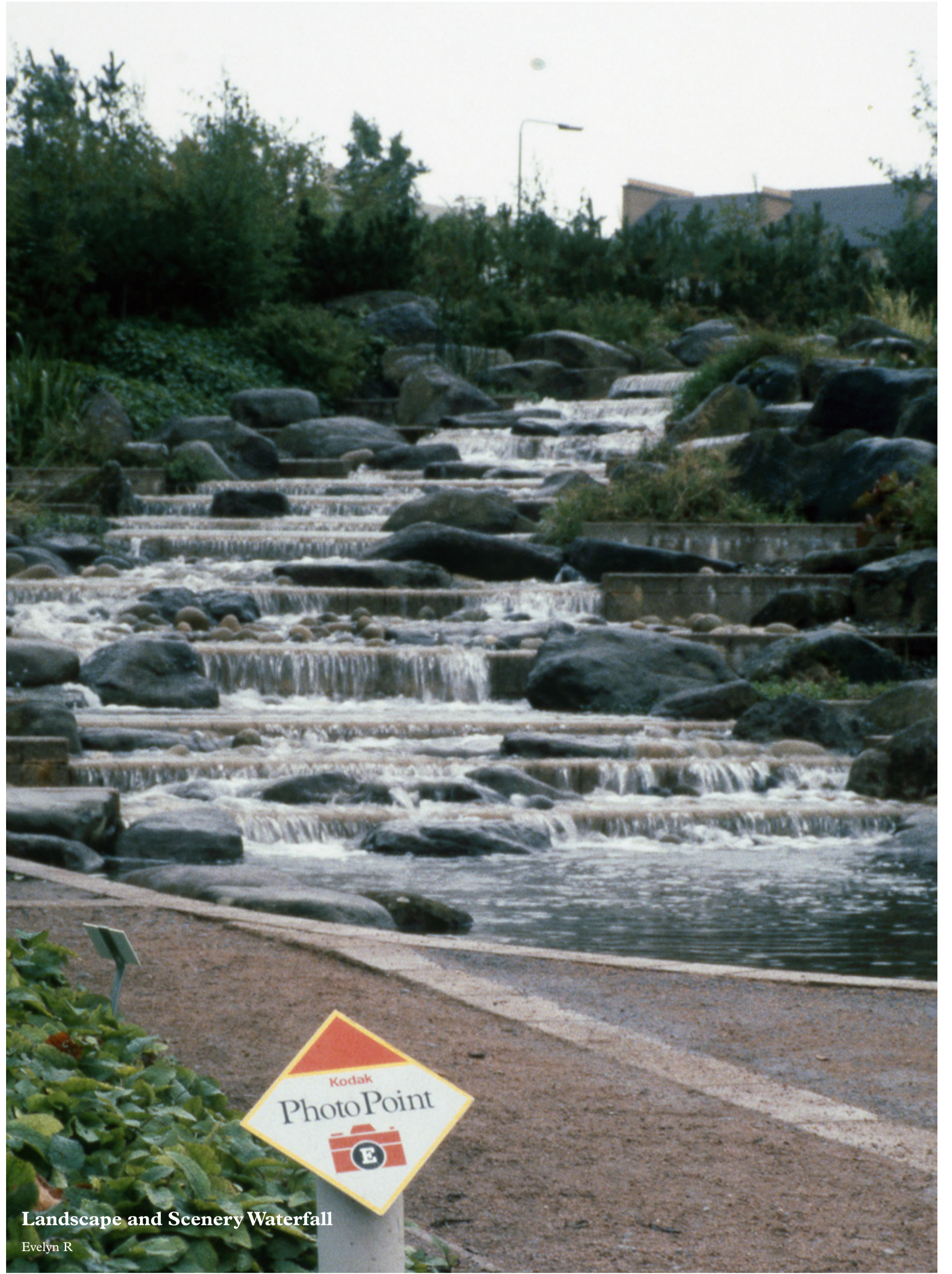
Other schools from across Scotland also visited and a whole school came from Aberdeen on a chartered train

<b>1981</b>	<b>1983</b>	<b>1984</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1986</b>
In response to inner city decline & social unrest (riots in Brixton and Toxteth) Margaret Thatcher’s environment secretary, Michael Heseltine, announces a Garden Festival programme across the UK	The Burrell Collection opens	Liverpool International Garden Festival opens after only three years’ preparation Glasgow’s final bid for a Garden Festival submitted	Scottish Development Agency launch the Glasgow Garden Festival 1988 campaign in London Site reclamation and clearance begin Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre opens Earthmoving and tree planting get under way	Stoke-on-Trent Garden Festival opens for the summer

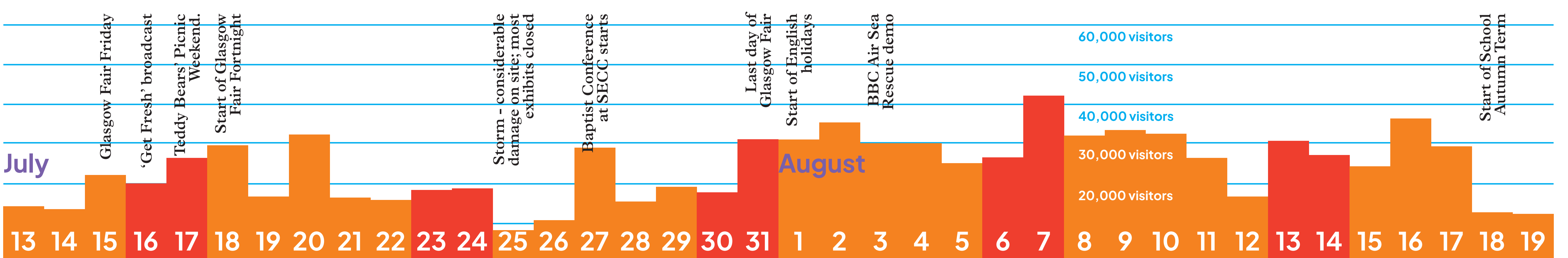
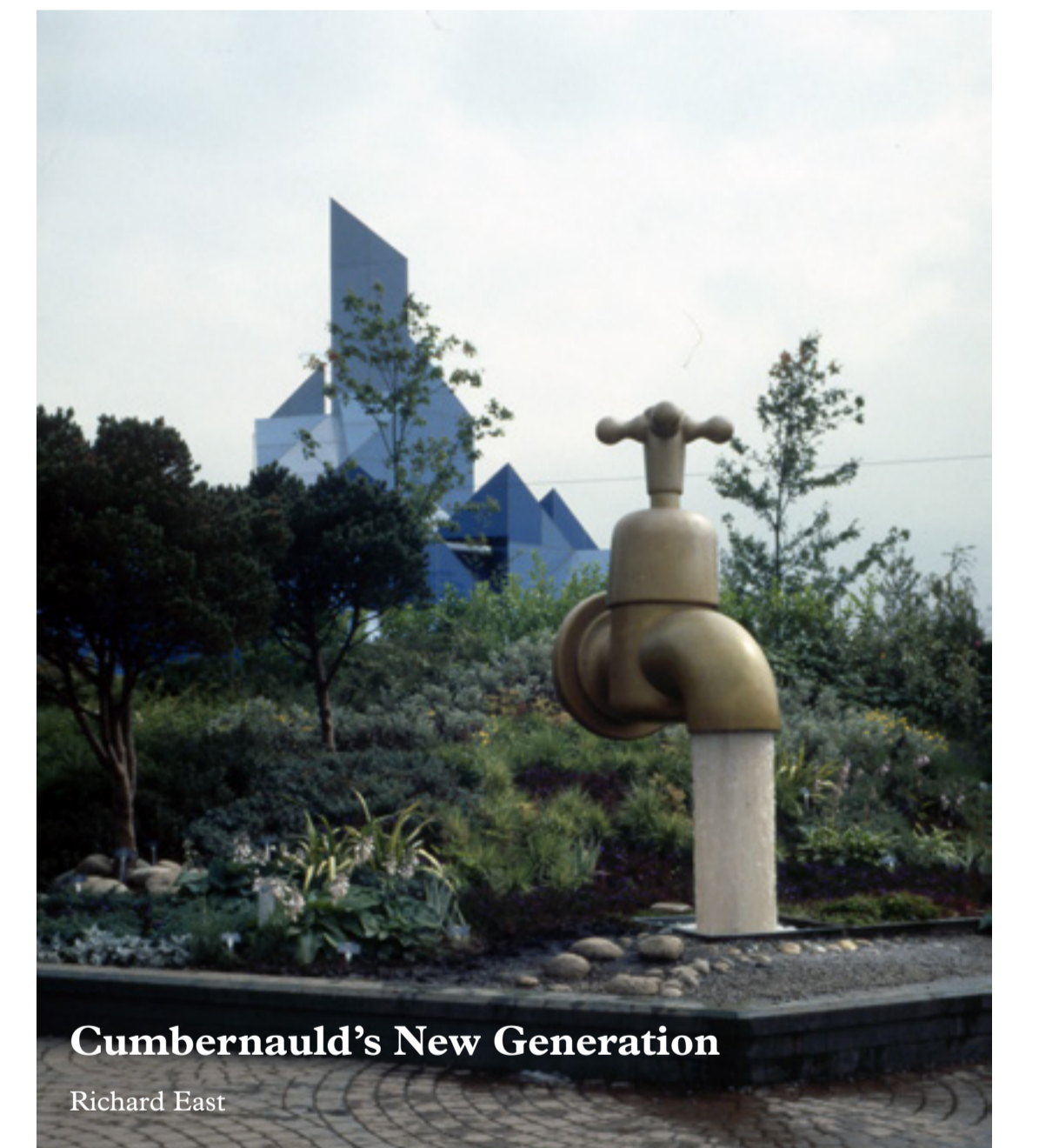
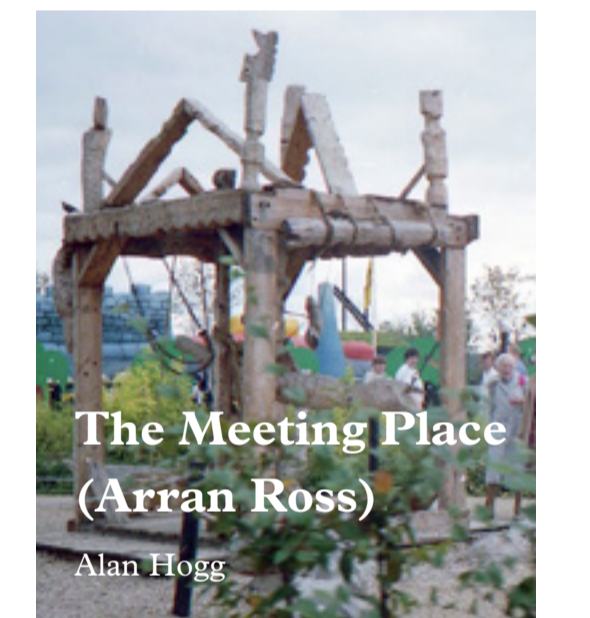
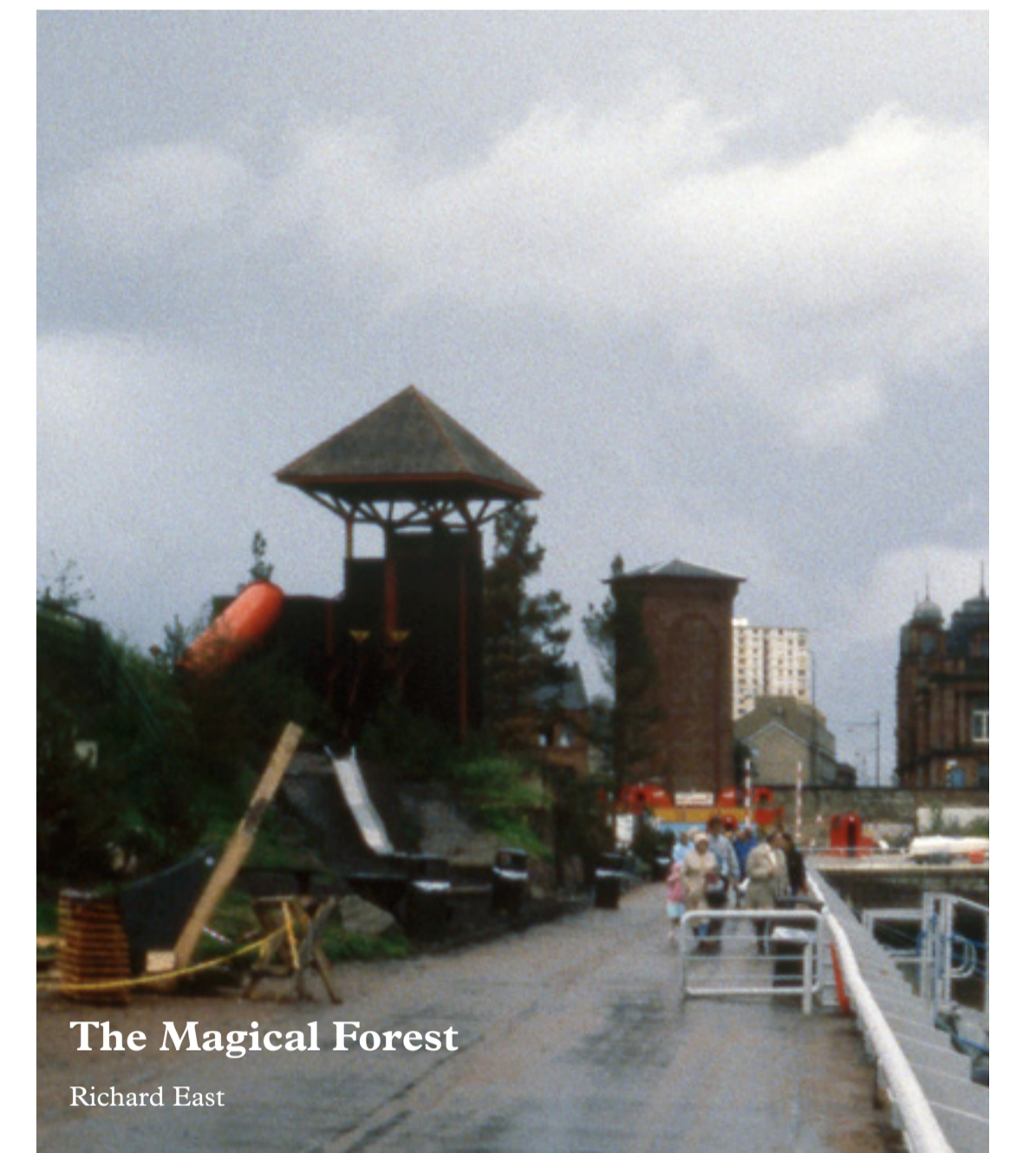
# The experience



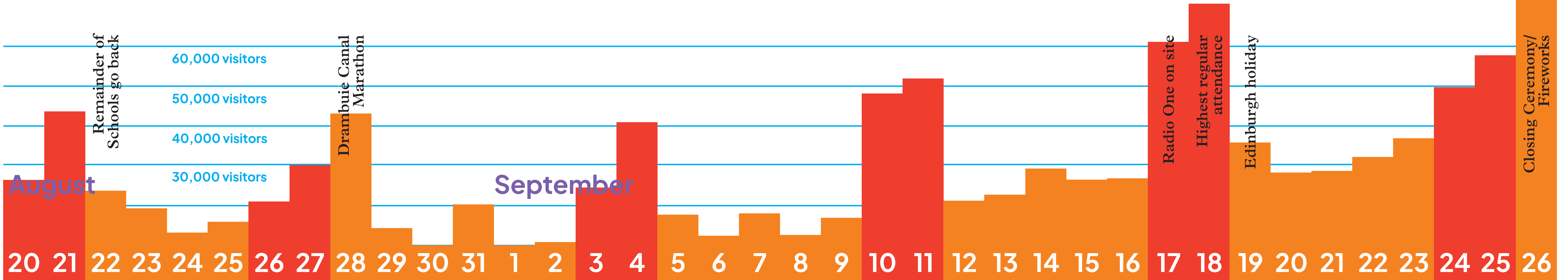
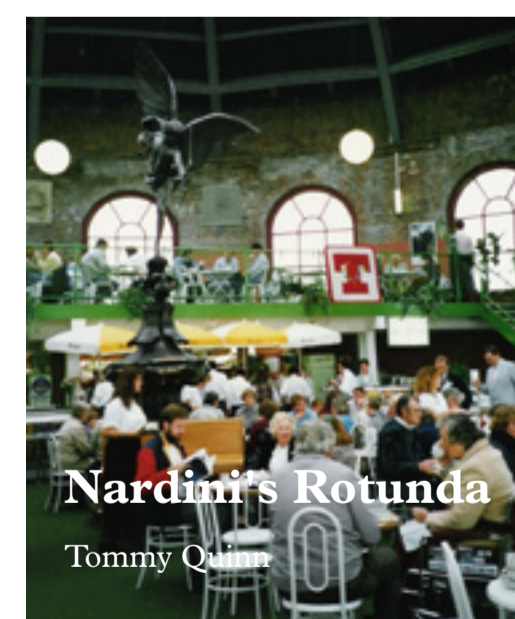
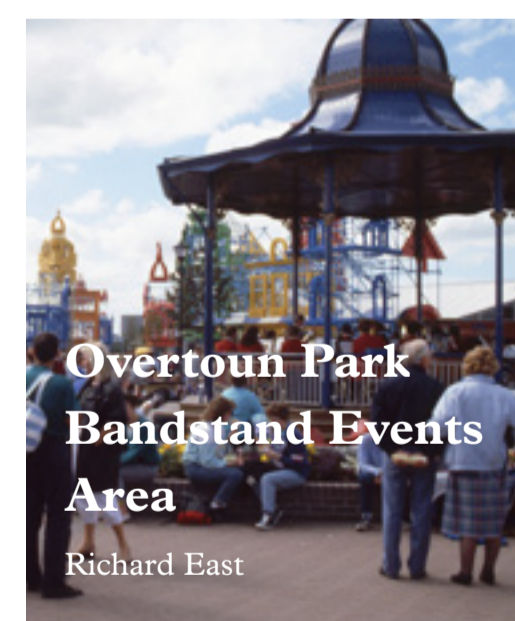
# The experience



# The experience



# The experience



# What happened to the Garden Festival?

When the Glasgow Garden Festival shut its gates for the last time on the 26th of September, a variety of fates awaited the gardens, pavilions and artworks that had brought pleasure to its 4.3 million visitors.

## Arranging futures

Long before the Garden Festival closed, efforts were under way to find permanent homes for the structures and exhibits. Press advertisements were placed early in the summer for the sale of some of the major pavilions, and some visitors made their own arrangements – Dhruva Mistry's 'Reclining Woman' was purchased sight unseen as a present for a fiancée, and a newspaper of 24 August reports the singer Shakin' Stevens' interest in purchasing the BBC Beechgrove Garden. By this stage, arrangements had already been made for the Festival Train to be relocated to Japan.

The future of two of the Festival's biggest draws had also been assured by the time the closing fireworks were lit. The Clydesdale Bank Anniversary Tower was removed to the seafront at Rhyl in Wales to become the 'Sky Tower'. It still stands there, though in a non-functioning state.

However, the Coca-Cola Roller is very much alive – following the Garden Festival, it was reconstructed at Derbyshire's American Adventure theme park until that park's 2006 closure, at which point it was moved once again to Pleasurewood Hills, Lowestoft where it can be enjoyed today.

## On-site survivors

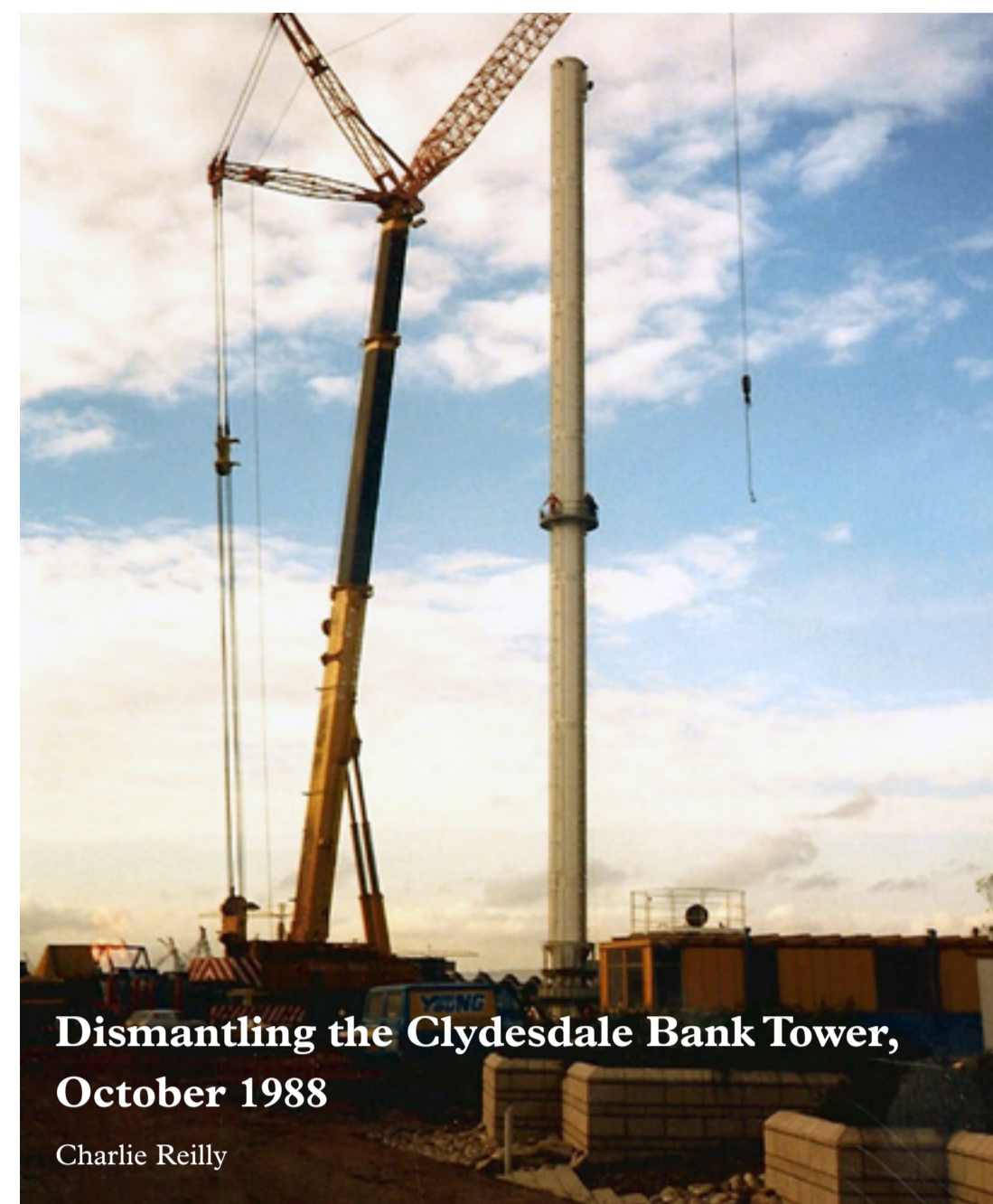
Some significant structures such as the Southern Rotunda were reused in situ, and their Garden Festival repurposing represents a short phase of a long and continuing life.

A tangible legacy of the Festival was the decision to retain a part of the 'Landscape and Scenery' Theme Area which featured some of the most ambitious and popular landscapes of the event. This became Festival Park and can still be enjoyed today. The maturity of the trees and shrubs first planted there in 1985 belie the fact that a couple of metres below the surface remain the infilled dock and Victorian cobbles of the former Prince's Dock.

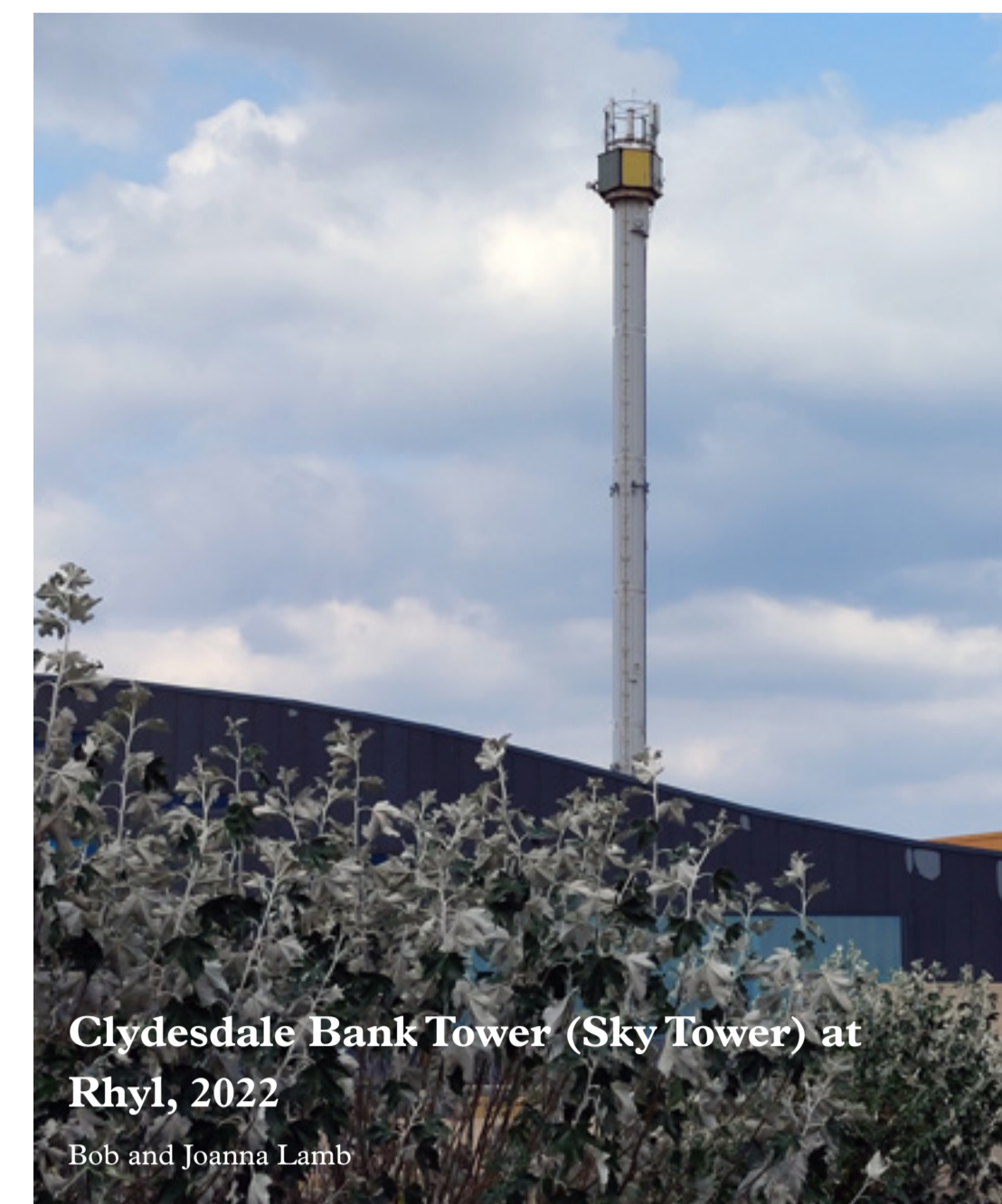
One of the Festival's most photographed features, the Cascade (or Festival Waterfall) can still be found, though dry and badly neglected, in Festival Park. The former Lochan water feature has now been allowed to silt up but remains perfectly identifiable.

## Borrowed exhibits

Only a proportion of the Festival's attractions began the summer without plans for their future. Many features, particularly artworks, were loaned for the Festival's duration and arrangements were already in place for their return. The boats and trams were transported back to their original locations, as were the gates and transoms from Strathclyde University exhibited at Bell's Bridge, and the various Charles Rennie Mackintosh relics that had been gathered at the RIAS/RTPI/LIS Environment Show pavilion. Rutherglen's Overtoun Park Bandstand, which had appeared at the 1986 Stoke-on-Trent Garden Festival as a centrepiece for a Glasgow Garden Festival event area, was returned to its original and permanent location.



Dismantling the Clydesdale Bank Tower, October 1988  
Charlie Reilly



Clydesdale Bank Tower (Sky Tower) at Rhyl, 2022  
Bob and Joanna Lamb



Dismantling the Coca-Cola Roller, October 1988  
Charlie Reilly



The Waterfall, Festival Park, 2021  
Bob Lamb



A bollard from Decoration of Bollards (Daniel Buren) in situ overlooking the Canting Basin, 2022  
Lex Lamb



Reclining Woman (Dhruva Mistry) being removed, October 1988  
Charlie Reilly

## Ready for the next garden festival?

The 1990 Gateshead Garden Festival was promoted at Glasgow with a variety of features intended to make a second appearance in Gateshead, including the Glass Pyramid (which became a centrepiece of the 1990 Festival), and Stuart Rose's 'Rolling Moon' which today sits in an urban woodland by the Tyne.



Rolling Moon (Stuart Rose) at Riverside Park, Gateshead, 2023  
Lex Lamb

### Post-Garden Festival distribution of some Garden Festival features



- Clydesdale Bank Anniversary Tower
- Coca-Cola Roller
- Giant Irises (Malcolm Robertson)
- Mediterranean Pavilion
- Human Sundial ('Sunclack')
- Man Feeding Seagulls (David A Annand)
- Kingston Entrance
- Edinburgh Tram No. 35
- Blackpool Boat Tram No 606
- Glasgow Standard Tram No 22, Paisley Tram No. 68, Glasgow Camander Tram No 1297
- Robinson Crusoe statue
- Giant garden fork and trowel
- The Motherwell Tree (George Wylie)
- The Sheep (Ronald Rae)
- Ceres (Hew Lorimer)
- Swing (Kevin Atherton)
- National Trust for Scotland/Dobbie's Garden
- Sonic Play Trail
- Church Pavilion
- Our Floral Heritage fountain
- Discover Scotland's Countryside pavilion
- Ardnamurchan pavilion
- 'Heart of Scotland' Station
- Festival Trains
- Sweetheart Arches
- Celtic cross
- Belted Galloway cow sculptures
- Scotland's Central Region stained glass panel (Emma Shipton)
- Rolling Moon (Stuart Rose)
- Festival Pavilion
- Reclining Figure (Dhruva Mistry)
- West Parade, Rhyl
- American Adventure theme park (1989-2006), Pleasurewood Hills, Lowestoft (2006-present)
- Leslie Roundabout, Glenrothes
- Mount Stuart, Isle of Bute
- Carnfunnock Country Park, Northern Ireland
- Peterhead Port Authority Building, Peterhead
- Klondyke Garden Centre, Polmont
- Blackpool Tramway
- National Capital Trolley Museum, Maryland, USA
- National Tramway Museum, Crich
- Main Street, Lower Largo
- Caulders Garden Centre, Cumbernauld
- Merry Street Pedestrian Precinct, Motherwell
- Almond Valley Heritage Centre, Livingston
- Kellie Castle, Fife
- Perry Barr storage depot, Birmingham
- Fawsley Little Hall, Northamptonshire
- Isle of Jura
- Carfin Grotto
- Roundhay Park, Leeds
- Duthie Park Winter Gardens, Aberdeen
- Ardnamurchan Natural History Visitor Centre
- Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway
- Rusutsu Resort, Hokkaido, Japan
- Dumfries & Galloway storage
- Ewart Drive, Newton Stewart
- Threave Castle Estate
- Smith Art Gallery and Museum, Stirling
- Pipewellgate, Gateshead
- Brookside Garden Centre, Larkhall
- London Borough of Sutton

1990	1992	1999	2000	2001	2002
Glasgow is UK City of Culture 1990 The Words and the Stones 1990 Crown Street initiative begins 1990 Glasgow Royal Concert Hall opens 1990 Gateshead Garden Festival opens for the summer – it features several features seen at the Glasgow Festival	Glasgow represents UK at the XVIII International Triennale, Milan Inverclyde's 'Yellow Kettle' Garden Festival exhibit becomes a Tourist Information facility at Gourock Pier. It is scrapped five years later Ebbw Vale Garden Festival opens for the summer	Glasgow is UK City of Architecture and Design	Glasgow & Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership established	Completion of Buchanan Street, Glasgow's Great Street. The project goes on to win the Academy of Urbanism Great Street Award in 2007	Salmon return to the River Clyde

# What happened to the Garden Festival?



Pavilion from Shanghai, People's Republic of China Friendship Garden at Polmont, 2022  
Cold Copland

## Municipal survivors

Scotland's five New Towns, each of which had designed and contributed a Tram Stop, found themselves in receipt of the components of those features and it is possible to rediscover surviving fragments of the Garden Festival in East Kilbride, Glenrothes and Cumbernauld, where the 'floating tap' attracted much post-Festival recognition from its prominent siting by the M90 motorway. Like most of the Garden Festival, it was never intended for a permanent life outdoors and succumbed to decay some years ago, though its accompanying giant garden trowel and fork have recently been refurbished and moved to a nearby garden centre entrance.

Dumfries and Galloway Council threw themselves into the Garden Festival with gusto, and several of the many features they commissioned were later distributed to various sites around the council area, where they can be sought out today.



Detail of mosaic at Strathcona Drive, East Kilbride, 2023  
Lex Lamb



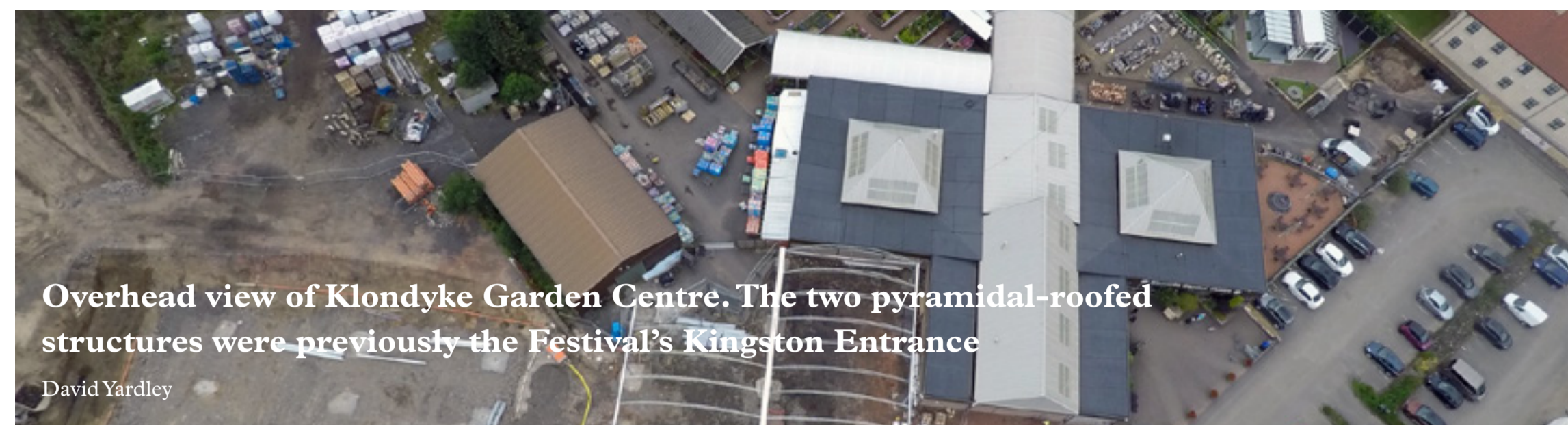
Cows from Dumfries & Galloway's 'Dumfries in Miniature' exhibit at Threave, 2022  
Evelyn Muir



'Giant Irises' (Malcolm Robertson) at Glenrothes, 2006  
James Allan (via Creative Commons)



Motherwell Tree (George Wyllie) at Merry Street, Motherwell, 2021  
Lex Lamb



Overhead view of Klondyke Garden Centre. The two pyramidal-roofed structures were previously the Festival's Kingston Entrance  
David Yardley

## Garden Festival for sale

There was a legal requirement to clear the main part of the site for development as soon as the Festival closed. A series of auctions were arranged early in the dismantling process. One auction was for street furniture – shelters, seating, litter bins and the like – and many of these items went to private gardens as well as to Glasgow City and other councils, and can be seen in various public and private spaces around the city region today.

Christie's conducted an auction in October for much of the public sculpture that had been created for the Festival with the aim of attracting the interest of 'local authorities, corporate institutions and private collectors throughout Europe and the USA'. Several pieces from that auction's catalogue were acquired by Glasgow District Council, and others by private individuals.

Understandably, given the nature of the Festival, garden centres were amongst the greatest participants in the sales. Various features from the Festival are still visible around the garden centres of Scotland. The most striking example might be Klondyke Garden Centre in Polmont – the building (since enlarged) from which the garden centre traded in its first years was originally the Festival's Eastern Entrance, and the pagoda from the Shanghai People's Republic of China Friendship Garden can still be seen within their grounds. Despite the owner's best efforts, after 35 years it is now in a terminal stage of decay.

Plants were auctioned too. Some specimens still thrive in West of Scotland gardens, a few within sight of where the Garden Festival took place. Not all sales were direct, however – enterprising garden centres purchased plants in bulk for resale, and this represented a boost for the horticultural trade and consumers since the trees and shrubs being sold were the quality product of a rigorous purchasing process and good maintenance by the Festival's horticultural staff.



RBS Children of Glasgow Fountain at the Garden Festival  
Evelyn R



RBS Children of Glasgow Fountain at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum  
Evelyn R (via Creative Commons)



RBS Children of Glasgow Fountain at its present location, 2022  
Lex Lamb

## Features lost and almost lost

However, much of what was constructed, grown or sculpted for the Garden Festival has been lost or abandoned. Michael Snowden's splendid 'Royal Bank Children of Glasgow Fountain' falls into the second of those categories. Despite having enjoyed a popular post-Festival existence at the rear of Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, it now lies neglected and facing a bleak future.

## Living legacies

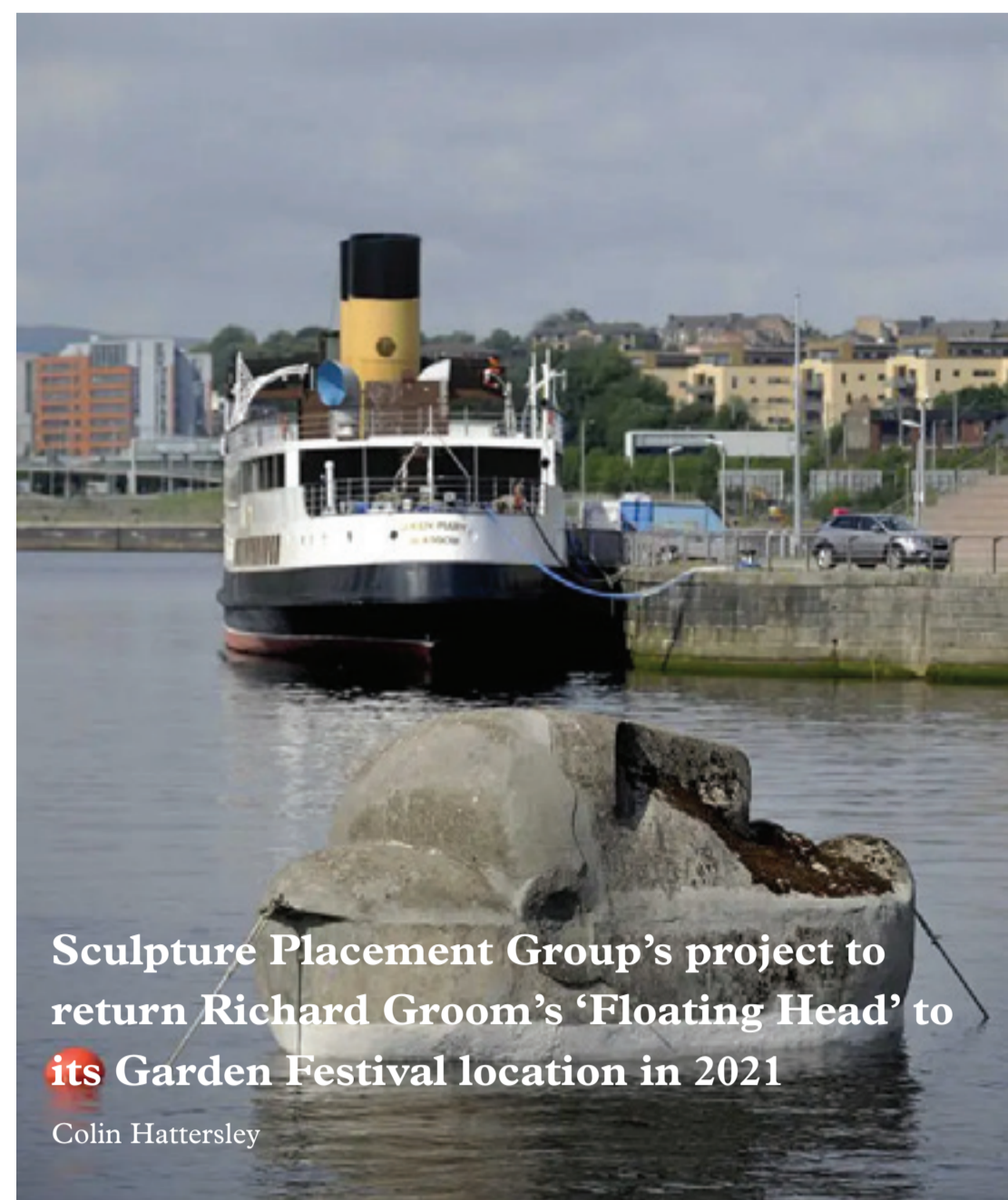
Glasgow Botanic Gardens had cooperated with Glasgow Zoopark in the creation of the Festival's Hugh Fraser Tropicarium, a glasshouse containing exotic lizards and butterflies alongside appropriate plant life. Several Botanic Garden staff had made an expedition to Papua New Guinea with the purpose of collecting plants for the display, and at the Festival's conclusion these were brought to the Gardens, where their descendants can still be seen.

Other gardens were resold as a complete entity. One of the Festival's most elegant areas, the National Trust for Scotland/Dobbie's Garden, was purchased in its entirety by the owner of a grand house in Northamptonshire and transported there in a fleet of 30 lorries. Its centrepiece, Charles d'Orville Pilkington Jackson's sculpture, 'Foam' was returned to the Trust's Greenbank Gardens. The Wildlife Consortium's Oor Wullie's Wildlife Garden and its plants were distributed between various locations including Mugdock Park, Clevedon Secondary School and Lilybank Gardens.

2003	2007	2011	2013	2014	2021
Glasgow Housing Stock Transfer Richard Deacon's 'Nose to Nose, Beginning to End' finally scrapped after years of attempts to find it a permanent home	Clyde Gateway URC established GGF88's Coca Cola Roller reopens as 'Wipeout' at Pleasurewood Hills, Lowestoft	Riverside Museum opens David Kemp's 'Ancient Forester', which welcomed visitors to the Garden Festival's 'Magical Forest', finally succumbs to decay at its last site, on Carron Crag in the English Lake District	The Garden Festival's Bells Bridge (originally intended to be a temporary exhibit) is restored in readiness for the Commonwealth Games	Commonwealth Games welcome 4,950 athletes to the city	Glasgow hosts COP26

# The legacy: how did our garden grow?

The legacies of the Glasgow Garden Festival are many. The site and how it was developed, the boost given to a legion of designers and artists offered the opportunity to work on a once-in-a-lifetime project, and the contribution the Festival made to the psyche of Glasgow and its citizens in the 1990s and beyond are just a few.

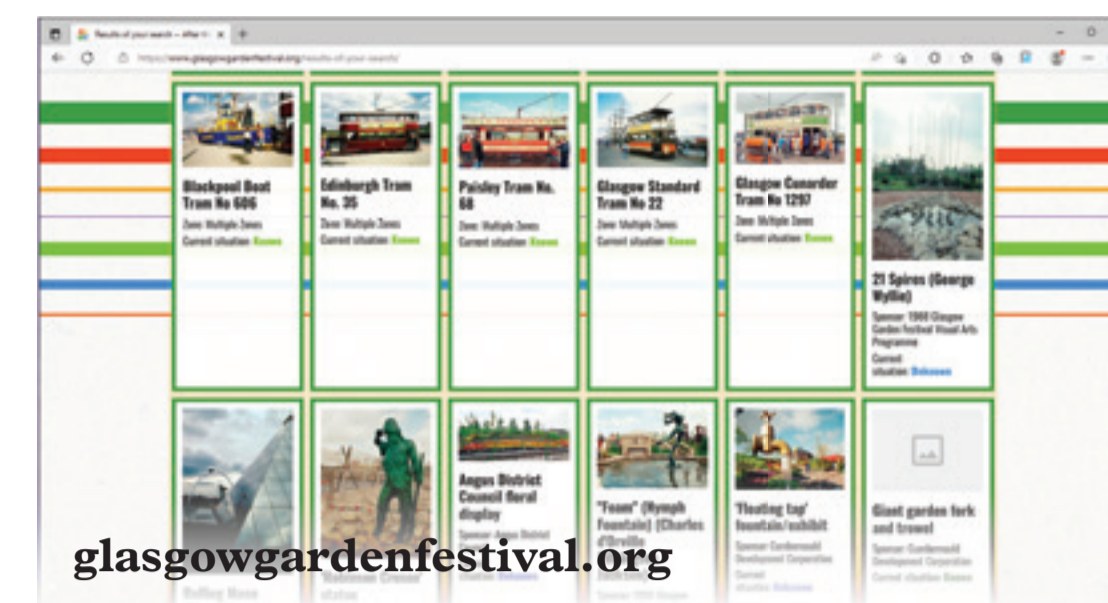


## Recording the Garden Festival

In late 2021, three individuals who realised that they shared a curiosity about the Garden Festival established the *After the Garden Festival* project. This entirely voluntary-run project's initial aim was simply to track down what survived of the Festival, and to collect information about the surprising number of Festival features dispersed around Scotland and beyond. As research began in earnest, it became clear that the historic record of the whole event was, like its physical remains, neglected. The importance of the Garden Festival to Glasgow's late 20th century reinvention, self-image and international perception seems historically obvious, yet the physical legacy of the event itself was almost forgotten and there existed no proper central record, let alone celebration, of the event.

*After the Garden Festival's* detective work tracking down confirmation of surviving relics from 1988 now forms part of a general effort to record – from first-hand, empirical, and physical evidence – as much about the Garden Festival as possible. The project has a crucial role to gather information from those old enough to be involved at the time, and to share and explain the importance of the event to those too young to have attended.

The initial output is a database website ([www.glasgowgardenfestival.org](http://www.glasgowgardenfestival.org)) which builds an ongoing catalogue of Garden Festival structures, gardens, artworks and other features in an attempt to establish a complete, illustrated inventory of the form and content of the Festival. The success of the website largely depends on the crowdsourcing of the photographic record as well as information volunteered by members of the public and those involved at the time – so if you have any new information for the project or Garden Festival images to contribute, visit the website and submit a comment.



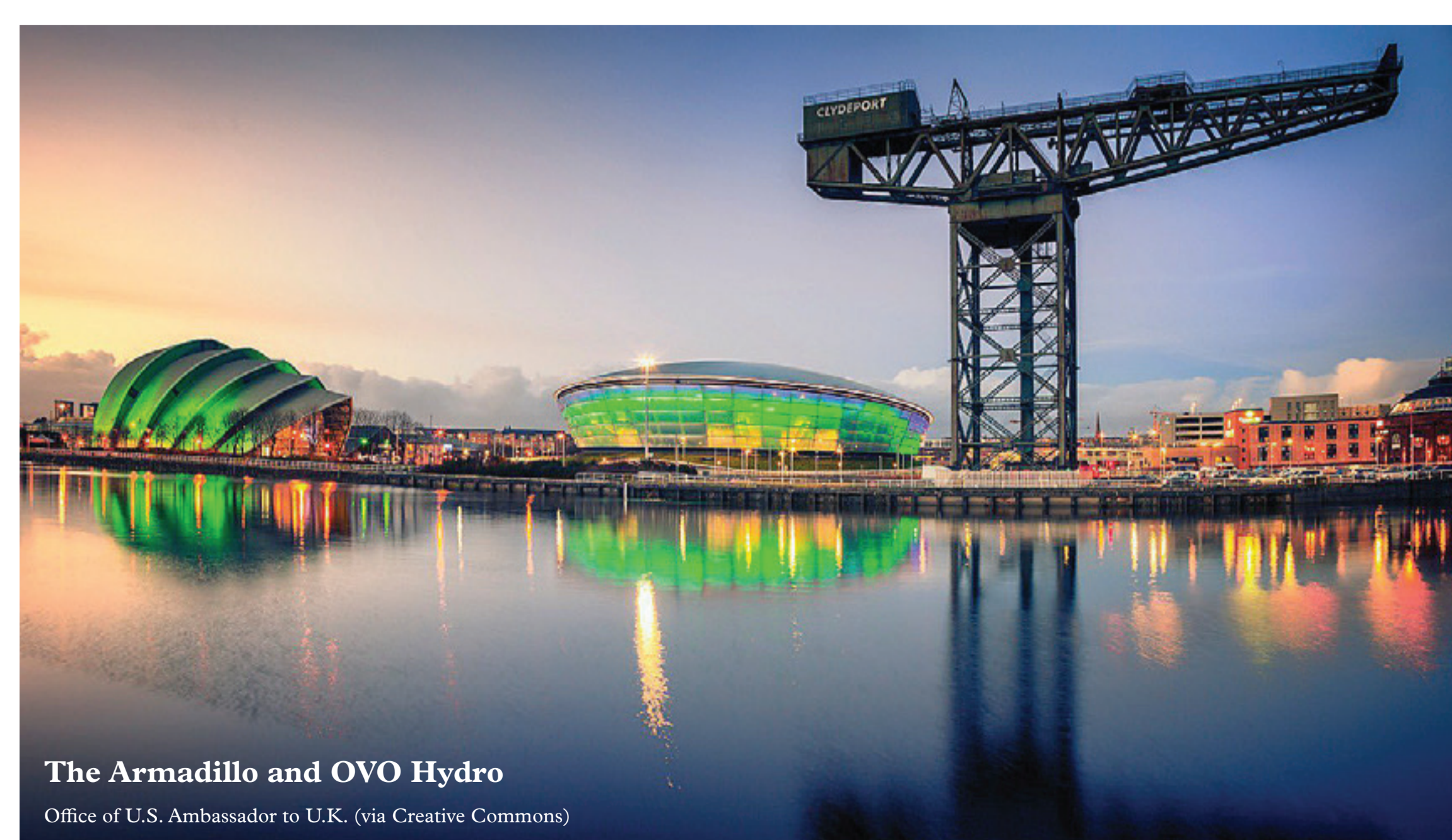
The professional interest in Contemporary Archaeology – and archaeology in urban contexts – of one of *After the Garden Festival's* founders led to 'Digging the Festival', a programme of fieldwork in Festival Park. This took the first steps – assisted by funding from Glasgow City Heritage Trust – in a proper survey of what remains, both visible and unseen, of the Garden Festival. Plans are under way for this work to continue over the whole Festival site.

*After the Garden Festival* also conduct walking tours and talks to share their findings with the public and encourage discussion and the emergence of further data. The project hopes to establish a comprehensive, permanent and objective record of this pivotal chapter in Glasgow's recent history.

## The Garden Festival site

The programme of substitute sites that released Princes Dock for use ran from 1985 until 1990, with 41.3 hectares (102 acres) of derelict land on nine sites around Glasgow prepared and developed with new housing.

The immediate dismantling of the Festival following its closure was dispiriting to the popular imagination. There is no doubt that the event had won the hearts of local people as well as the citizens of Glasgow and Scotland, and its loss has been felt for over three decades. Yet retention was never considered a possibility by a government intent on economic regeneration of inner cities, rather than the creation of public parks as in the German model. With this understanding, the event was designed and constructed to be readily dismantlable. Short-life exhibition technologies were employed in the construction of hard landscaping, buildings and pavilions and planting chosen for immediate impact, echoing the international events of 1888 and 1938 which, with minor exceptions, were also dismantled rapidly (in the jargon of the 1980s, the 'economic afteruse' of Kelvingrove Park was secured through funding the building of Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum from the profits of the 1888 exhibition).



Before the Festival closed, plans were in place for 'Waterfront 2000', an afteruse strategy brokered by the SDA that saw nearly 50% of the site retained for public and economic uses with 11 acres of Landscape and Scenery retained as the public Festival Park, 15 acres designated as business park, 11.5 acres retained for new civic uses along the Clyde and Bell's Bridge retained as a permanent cross-river pedestrian link.

In the surrounding area, and as a direct result of the Garden Festival, the Govan Initiative was established, attracting private sector investment of around £30M over the following 5 years. The next few years saw some public frustration about the pace of this transformation, but by the turn of the 21st century these commitments had been met – the Glasgow Science Centre has been delivered, a new media quarter houses the BBC and STV and other media related businesses, and new homes are being built adjacent to Festival Park.

# The legacy: how did our garden grow?

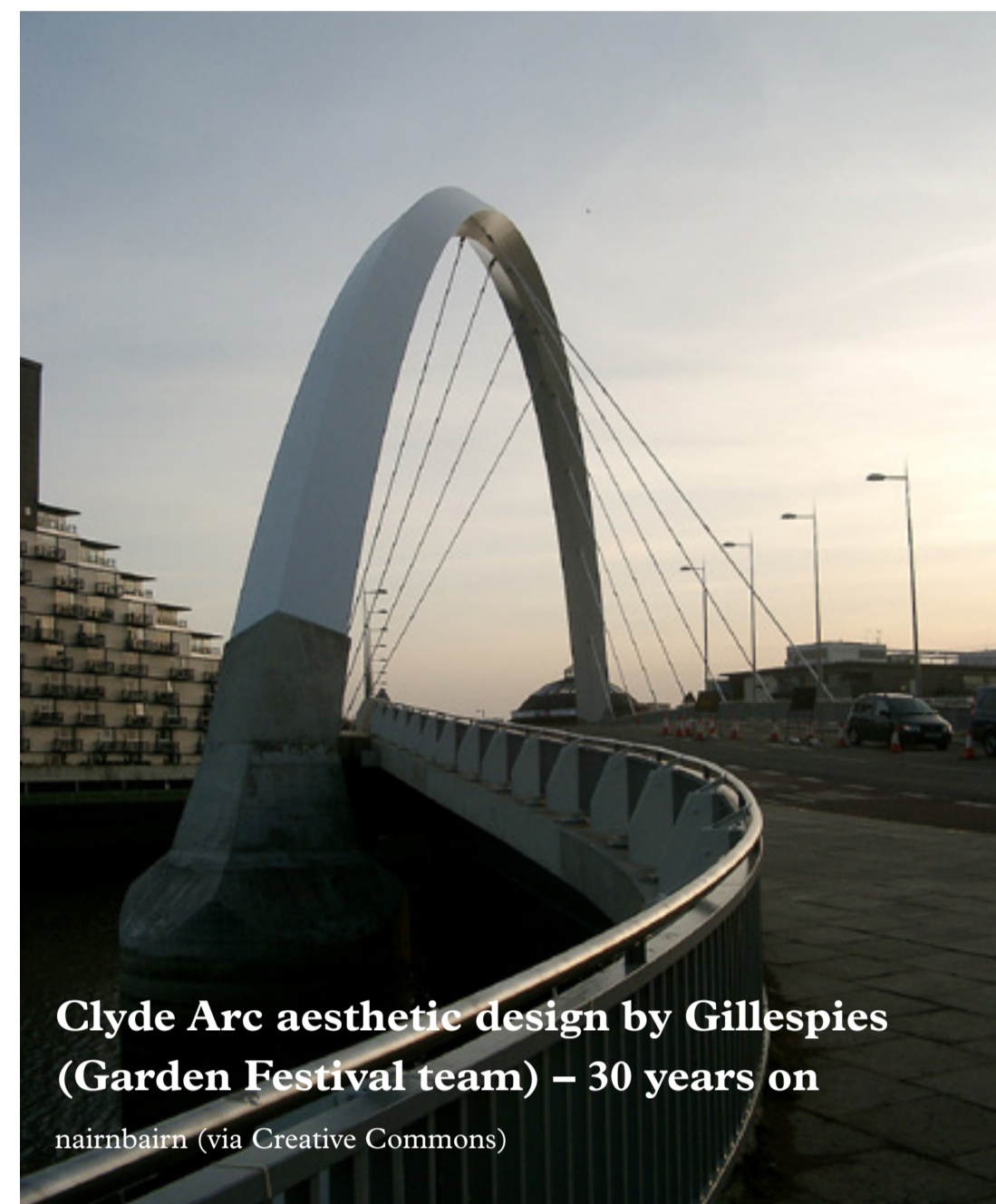
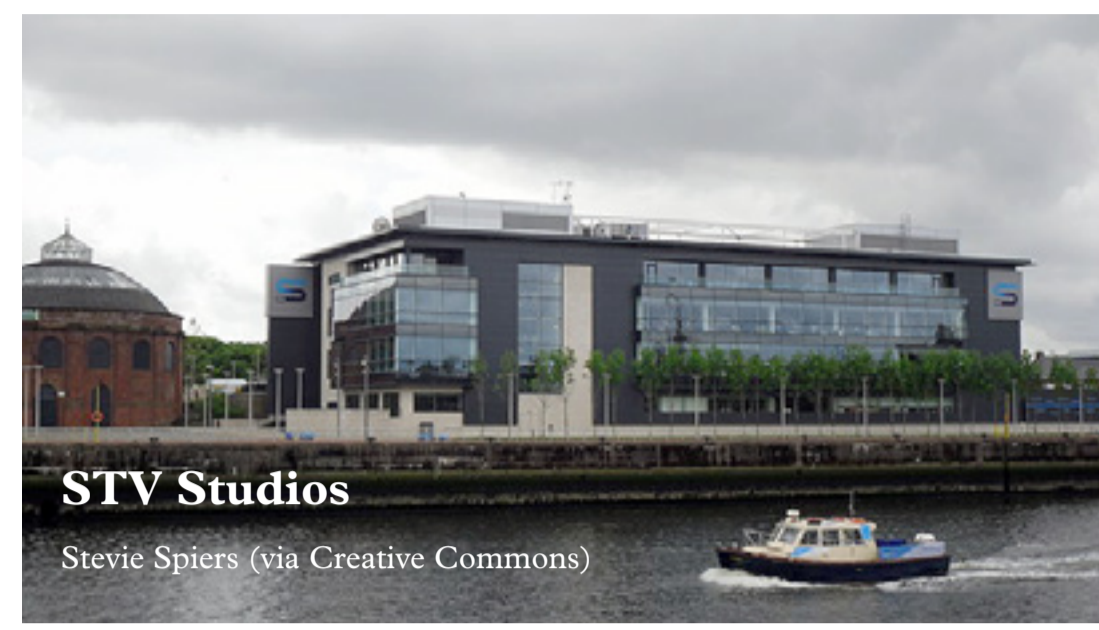
“... The after-use of the site itself will result in a high-quality living and working environment which will represent a major contribution to the redevelopment of Glasgow's riverside...”

JAMES H RAE, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL

## The lasting legacy

A ‘soft’ legacy has also become apparent. When work began on the bid, a team of under 20 was working on the project. By the time the Festival closed, this had grown to thousands. Local volunteers became invested in the city’s regeneration and many of those who came to work on the Festival stayed to participate in Glasgow’s renaissance, contributing to its economic ‘stickiness’ and the resilience of the city. Others are part of the City’s creative community, helping to accelerate, together with their public sector peers, Glasgow’s capacity for renewal, design and reinvention. This capacity and belief contributed to future successes: European City of Culture 1990, representing the UK at the Internationale Triennale di Milano 1992, and UK City of Architecture and Design in 1999. This continues today, with events including the Commonwealth Games (2014), hosting of COP26 (2021) and the UIE Cycling World Championships in 2023 all reinforced by the PEOPLE MAKE GLASGOW campaign.

Some of the afteruse may have taken longer to deliver and may not have taken place in the ways that some would have wished, but Glasgow is forming a new role as a knowledge city, moving beyond a post-industrial identity, with an aspiration to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, externalities permitting.



The 40th anniversary of the Glasgow Garden Festival will be in 2028 and that of City of Culture in 2030. Their themes of environmental sustainability and community regeneration were prescient for their time and are now highly pertinent to a just carbon transition. People make Places, the report of Glasgow’s Place Commission, calls for a new international community-led festival or exposition to demonstrate how the city and its hinterland can be configured for a net zero just transition in environment, culture and living.