

*Esther  
Draycott*

*ALL  
SHADOWS*

*Sean  
Patrick  
Campbell*

*ARE  
ALIVE*



ALL SHADOWS ARE ALIVE





*I remember going with my granny to the steamy in Glasgow Green,  
then sitting there waiting on the washing to dry. I think only the  
washing rope poles remain*

Picture this. A woman in a bright white coat stands in the middle of Partick steamie holding a hose. Her hair is coiffed into a sharp bob, bootcut jeans visible from the knee down, a pair of dirty plimsolls on her feet. The backdrop is a tiled wall, with different strips of colour, first a dusty orange, then brown, cream, brown again, then white. She is underneath a black sign. It says, in gold type, that

*ANY PERSON WHO INTERFERES WITH the COMFORT of  
OTHERS in the WASH-HOUSE OR USES PROFANE, INDECENT  
or OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE Will be TURNED OUT of the  
PREMISES and not PERMITTED to RETURN.*

Her feet are placed square beneath her shoulders, sure. Her expression is one of delight. The photograph is by Douglas Corrance, taken from a book, published in 1981, entitled *Glasgow*.<sup>1</sup> Her portrait is placed next to an image of the Fairfield shipyards along the Clyde, cranes rising out of the mist like burnt trees. To the stranger, these shipyards may be familiar. Most recently, they were broadcast on the news during the 1971 Upper Clyde Shipbuilders work-in, when 80,000 shipbuilders successfully attempted to halt the liquidation of their employers by completing, without pay, the cancelled orders they had scheduled for the next year. Latterly, after the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, the shipyard's decline became a symbol of the city's post-industrial plight, of everything that had been lost when the work continued to dwindle.

Some decades before, a song devoted to life in post-war Glasgow was broadcast on the radio as part of the BBC series Landmarks. 'I was born in the shadow of the Fairfield crane', it began, over a series of minor chords, 'Where the blast of the freighter's horn/Was the very first sound that reached my ears/On the morning I was born'.





*This shot reminds me of the back greens where our tenements stood*

Look again. Shoulders broad, face open, she belongs to what theorist Jeremy Seabrook described as a 'sentimental iconography of motherhood' pervading everyday photographs of Britain's industrial heartlands: 'arms folded, clutching their elbows on the back doorstep'.<sup>2</sup> These are the photographs we return to, he wrote, to find something of ourselves, any attempt to revive the place one was born and raised as impossible without confronting this figure stood, resolutely, at the point of entry. In Glasgow, the public nature of early social housing, lived out through closes, back courts and kitchen windows, scattered these gateways across the city. When the most intimate aspects of life spilled into stairwells and parks, when grand municipal architecture was devoted to the duties of the housewife, the streets became her dominion: cleaved by her daily journeys through them, passersby reassured by her busy presence in the background of their own public lives. She stands there, stands again elsewhere, and again, as if aware of her duty to be seen as much as it is her own to see.

She smiles, holds your gaze: the scene glows against the calcified blackness of the empty shipyards in the image to her left. Corrance puts these photographs side-by-side as if to mirror the way memories are organised, painful experiences softened by those that soothe, amounting to a life which was in some ways lovingly tended to. In this woman's presence the wounded landscape of a disused shipyard is given intimacy, vitality, a sense that the core of it will live on as long as she does. In 1981, steamies are a familiar sight, but becoming less so, looked on with nostalgia as a living figment of an old city in a state of transformation. Looming large over an unnamed, undated Glasgow childhood, the women seen travelling to and fro with prams full of washing are relics of the order and certainty of a day lived by the rhythm of the freighter's horn. Carrying the weekly wash, visible to all, they serve as prompts to summon places and times that held more promise than they seem to now.



*Those were hard day's, women were fantastic. Family magnets.*

Across the thousands of photographs of Glasgow taken in the twentieth century, certain common features appear to knit separate locations, people and moments in time into one roving scene. The sky above each street hangs flat and unchanging like the backdrop of a theatre, every layer of cobble or concrete beneath them a palimpsest of new solutions to old mistakes. Through image upon image in books, newspapers and on the internet, there is a darkness that pervades every corner, a harbinger not of mystery so much as a feeling that beyond them there is nothing more to see.

Pulling together these images, it seems possible to know exactly the kind of journey the woman in the steamie will make to and from her home, no matter where, no matter when. Watch as she treads past bare-footed boys as they play in the backlands, makeshift forts out of coal sheds, under freshly-painted tower blocks, looming over the hills in fat jagged lines. Observe her, eyes down, pushing a pram past a crowd gathered at the foot of a wrecking ball, old homes strewn like loose feathers to a half-hearted round of applause. See her as a dot on the edge of a not-yet motorway artery, feet almost touching the vast crater where an old hotel once stood, air reddened by crushed brick. Past a row of square cottages, grass lawns organised in neat patchwork, weak young trees clasped to their stakes, roughcast cladding absorbing what remains of the daylight into mottled grey skins.

Nothing more to see, but for one thing: a washing line, flanked with wet clothes, pulled taut and immaculate against the pall. Here is proof of a moment spent beating and rising sheets until they turned a glistening blue-white. Catch the last of the light, they accumulate like footnotes: small signs of a life we do not see.



*loaded up with washing..soap..long stick for getting hot washing out  
of the boiler ..her fags and a flask*

*Glasgow Green*, a poem by the late Edwin Morgan, centres on an account of a gay man cruising for sex through Glasgow's oldest park. In it women are seen pinning wet laundry taken from various local washhouses to a set of communal clothes lines on the Green's north-eastern edge. Happening side-by-side, these acts – cruising and laundering – become somehow intertwined, dirty laundry as a lapsed soul and vice versa.

*the real Clyde/with a dishrag dawn/it rinses the horrors of the night/  
but cannot make them clean*

The tradition of drying laundry on the Green had existed since the city's first ever wash house was established there in 1732 as a gift to the local poor.<sup>3</sup> Through good hygiene, it was thought the most derided women of the notorious east-end of Glasgow might find a way to scrub away their wrongdoing, turning their bodies to the service of a fallen neighbourhood.<sup>4</sup> In 1885 Thomas Fairbairn wrote a brief history of the area to accompany a lithograph he had drawn of the wash house nestled between trees on the Green, remarking on 'the constant resort of scores of professional old washerwomen and buxom servant girls'<sup>5</sup> that could be seen working there, sometimes from sunrise to sunset, 6 days a week. The site was among what he called the 'relics of ancient architecture'<sup>6</sup> mostly otherwise sacrificed to a century of redevelopment to the city centre, sitting at the heart of a view now framed by factories, train lines, and the slums that laced between them like ivy.

Where once the Green belonged to women, industrialisation had elsewhere handed the outside world over to men. As the city grew, Glasgow's streets became the dominion of pipes and boots, smoking chimneys and swinging cranes, while the tenement interior was turned over to safety and softness, wipe-clean linoleum and polished brass. Where dirt belonged to an exterior, masculine world, cleanliness was not only associated with a feminine world of interiority but the very essence of its appeal: the housemaid's scullery an engine-



room allowing the rest of the home to maintain an impression of the 'tranquil haven' so coveted by the middle-classes.<sup>7</sup>

The sight of laundry washed and dried on the Green was a violation of these largely unspoken codes of conduct. In the eyes of a mannered Victorian society, it was a symptom of not only of women's poverty but of their bodily confusion, an inability to respect the boundaries between space and gender seen as the bedrock of civic order. In spite of all those things, a sunny day in Glasgow would see women and girls flock to the Green to dry their wet sheets in the open air: sustaining a tradition of belligerently public laundering that would continue to remain there for the next 100 years.





*I remember the noise of those pulleys being pulled out to hang up  
the clothes and the heat*

Edwin Morgan's poem begins with a violent sexual assault which happens not far from the old wash house on Glasgow Green. Here, the park is described as though seen through layers of mist, familiar scenes registered just beyond the reader's field of vision as if they were behind a shroud. As Morgan's protagonist stumbles out of the bushes and onto the flat open space of the Green's northern edge, he is met by women putting out laundry in the drying area, pegging wet clothes to the open lines, edges of the fabric white and indistinct. He notices the way that, as he stares, they seem to watch him back, both tenants of this moonlit space, compelled, despite the risks, to conduct their private business away from home. In a later interview he claimed the poem was about liberation. More specifically, he said, about 'power from things not declared'.<sup>8</sup>







*I used the Bank Street one when I lived in Belmont Street in 82 and Cecil Street later in 86, before that I did the washing for my mum on Dumbarton Rd, it was downstairs from us on the clog between Meadow Road and the Old railway where the now police station is*

In the mid 1970s, Jeremy Seabrook recalls taking a walk through an area full of houses condemned for demolition in the centre of Northampton, where he grew up. He describes his dismay at the number of things families had left in the houses about to be destroyed: not only furniture, but trinkets, heirlooms, objects he imagined they would have kept closest of all. Feeling his way through the mess, he remembers finding sets of family photographs, kept together in boxes or lying under shards of glass on the floor, edges curled, surfaces stained with light. Gathering them together, he remembers rescuing a select few, unable to bear the idea of their being lost forever, before recognising the futility of it, and throwing them away once again.

*all the mothers would sing and dance while doing the laundry or as we called it the washing lol*

In 2010, Cranhill Arts, an arts centre based in a post-war housing scheme in the north east of Glasgow, launched the Glasgow Family Album: an open online archive dedicated to family photographs of Glaswegians captured over the past 150 years.

*Mary and Helen Callahan, 1959, Acrehill Street Blackhill:* Two girls stand arm-in-arm in woollen overcoats in what looks like a tenement living room, small bouquets of flowers just-visible on wallpaper spooled with damp. *Big Sandy fae Johnstone, Punk rocker:* A young man in a studded leather jacket, pale blue eyes circled with uneven black kohl, poses awkwardly in front of a makeshift polyester backdrop in Shuffles nightclub, Sauchiehall Street, in 1978. *Napiershall Street School 3 1900s:* 33 young girls pose for a school photo, arranged by height in neat pyramid formation, hair gathered in ribbons, broad lace collars in different constellations on dark pinafores, fleeting half-letters drawn in chalk across the wall behind.

*I too remember this*



GlasgowFamilyAlbum.com is not the only repository of its kind. Dozens of similar websites are used by residents of the city, past and present, to capture and re-instate something they feel has been lost. On the homepages of these websites, lists of topics – schools, graveyards, housing schemes, shopping centres – are organised into grids and tables in order to correlate memories and images of places now invisible or irreparably changed. Threads are usually instigated by questions, often posed semi-anonymously (aliases include ‘taurus’/ ‘\*talisman\*/ ‘misspandalebear’). Their answers conjure hazy outlines of certain places, one over the other, until they do not so much come into focus as thicken and seize.

*The bolts for the mangle are still in place*

In recent years, the most popular platform for the sharing of photographs and memories relating to ‘old’ Glasgow has been the social networking website Facebook. Here groups and pages encourage users make to comments on a rolling discussion board, upload their own images, share those of others, and ‘like’ the various types of content held on the page or group in a single touch.

In a collection of essays on technology and memory, Ina Blom describes the way nostalgia groups on social media have changed society’s understanding of the relationship between photographs and processes of human recall.<sup>9</sup> Until the rise of the internet server, photographs were stored in the faith that the body retrieved memories from within its folds somewhat analogously to the way a hand retrieves a document from a folder. Placing photographs in physical vessels was seen to act, by extension, as a form of insurance for the psyche, allowing the outsourcing of a person’s most precious experiences from the mind’s eye into places that could contain them with greater integrity. Walter Benjamin once wrote how the earliest photographs were kept in cases, ‘like jewels’,<sup>10</sup> but leatherbound and inlaid with a pink silk cushion, they were more like replicas of a human torso: affixed to hinges, they could swing open to reveal a tender impression of a beating heart. As photographs became more common, these containers proliferated, bringing with them the album, the archive: vast repositories of images siphoned into a single body, memories kept alive within their skins.

*This is exactly like the view from our kitchen window in our first house in Kinning Park in 1966*

By contrast, websites and social media platforms now allow for the unmediated upload and sharing of hundreds of images at a time, siphoning photographs from their physical copies onto servers which remember their imprint as a code, to be conjured again as pixels on a monitor. Each of those images is provided with an option to comment, caption, share or download in decisions that will be permanently remembered by their webpage hosts, every move an irrevocable manipulation of the original. While users are led to believe what they encounter is somewhat fixed or secure, through every uploading and transfer the image and the memory it confers has in fact been thrust into ‘a world of networked mobilities – relays, updates, negotiations, associations and speculations’.<sup>11</sup> Given over to an online host, every time a comment appears, or the image is shared or ‘liked’, some part of it is rewritten, fast becoming so distant from its genuine context or owner that its source becomes somewhat irrelevant. In this world of relays, the image is given a second life among users who find in it something that resonates with and between them, some flash of recognition in the dark. As these testimonies are passed, imperfectly, from one host to another, the act of remembering turns from grasping into a kind of release, something not so much contained in the heart as spilling out of it.<sup>12</sup>



[Facebook.com/groups/1320993168076838](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1320993168076838)

A small, pixelated black-and-white photograph shows children playing in the empty yards of a short row of interwar tenements. Behind them, a housing scheme stretches out into the mist, ending with a barely-visible block of flats. A boy pulls a face in the foreground, behind him, several more run toward the pavement carrying broken chairs and bits of wood.

*this is where we all loved when very young it was awful for all of us  
but we did not know any better xx we lived at the top of the hill*

*John I can imagine you in this pic up to mischief. X*

*I lived there before I was adopted it was awful there was 5 kids  
and we were left on our own especially at night I was about 5  
or 6 and there were 4 kids under me !*

*it must have been a nightmare eileen i just remember going  
down that big Avenue to go to her house on a winter night  
it would be flooded i liked going to her house she had one  
brother it was always nice and quiet different from my  
house with seven sisters and a brother i hope they don't  
read this .*

*...yes eileen i would love to be back there and be  
neighbours we had good times i gues you cant really go  
back although you did eileen and your happy x*

90 likes/81 comments/10 shares

*Monday morning my mum took a pram full of laundry to the steamie  
in Medwyn Street*

Despite their popularity, nostalgia forums, whether as websites or on social media platforms, have not yet generally been considered of much historic or social significance. Regardless of the volume of testimony, or the level of detail some posts may contain, some excess of loss or sentimentality among users is seen to undermine the salience of their contributions to broader historical narratives. In recent years, the appearance of racist rhetoric and the spread of conspiracy theories on these platforms has helped further their reputation as unstable, socially disruptive sources of historical information, with sites such as Lost Glasgow identified in British periodical *The New Statesman* as breeding grounds for ‘problematic content’.<sup>13</sup> With members of the most popular pages or groups numbering in their tens of thousands, the sheer amount of possible viewers for each post lends threatening political potential to even the most seemingly innocuous declarations of yearning, love, or regret. Among outsiders it is often believed that embedded in these expressions of desire to return, whether to bygone landscapes or old ways-of-life, is a nascent form of jingoism, something that must be apprehended or at least contained.

*Was hot inside but a wonder for a wee girl listening to these women*

When an institution is presented with an old photograph, for example during an interview or through a donation to a museum archive, whoever handles that photograph may be advised to assess whether the subject to which it is connected holds the image close, sees in it something they want, need or miss. Any indication of an emotional attachment signals there is work to be done to re-institute boundaries between the story of the image and the truth of it. The photograph and its loving owner are, together, a knot to be unpicked, the researcher’s job to plot a line of navigation between subject and image in order to make the latter stand alone in its significance, perhaps for the first time. Naturally, when photographs are transferred into online forums, users are able to encounter and appropriate hundreds of photographs of unclear provenance at once, blurring their fictions together, making new ties, at which point a researcher’s concerns about truth and

falsehood may multiply just as many times. As users appropriate and redouble each other's narratives, projecting emotion onto and stating ownership over photographs in ways that do not accord to a particular logic, the possibility of their graduating into archival material becomes seemingly untenable. Yet, all the while, the reach of their words increase: certain scenes and captions becoming ever more popularly resonant of the thing they appear to depict.

*nothing better than seeing a nice washing blowing in the wind*

To take part in any internet forum is 'to be drawn into a collaborative project of explaining the world', writes Jon Askonas. 'It is to lose, even fleetingly, one's commitment to what is most true in the service of what is most compelling, to what most advances a narrative one deeply believes'.<sup>14</sup> In the case of forums such as Lost Glasgow, that world is one of a city wrested away from its former inhabitants by processes of slum clearance, economic decline and neoliberal privatisation, all of which resulted in one of the most ambitious, longstanding and wide-reaching programmes of demolition in the history of any city in the UK. Old Gorbals, Garngad (now Royston), Anderston, Blackhill, Possil, Springburn, Kinning Park, Townhead – these Victorian neighbourhoods and many more were variously bulldozed to dust in the space of the average lifetime, most never to be re-instated, in the name of the greater good, whole communities relabelled as municipal errors of judgement. In threads devoted to the restoration of certain well-trodden journeys to school, or to a street corner in an old estate, nostalgia-forum-users comb the modern landscape for clues of a world that has been meticulously concealed beneath brownfield sites, piles of rubble and new developments, to find that which has disappeared and call it a loss.







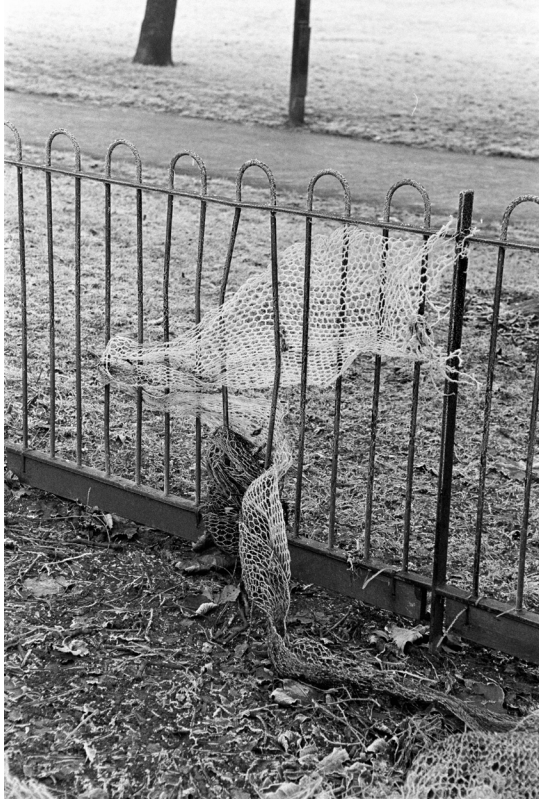
*One of the saddest memories was my grandmother was in the steamie when she was told he oldest son was drowned at sea during WW2 :(*

*Oh how awful, and to think how she lived with that ,*

In his essay ‘My life is in that box’, Jeremy Seabrook recounts standing at countless kitchen tables while housewives combed through old photo albums for his perusal. Conducting research for a project on the British family photograph, the thing that struck him most about these visits, he writes, was the tone and cadence of these women’s words as they provided each image with a spoken caption – the gentle ‘mingling of laughter and sadness’ in each of their stories betraying a strange gift for articulating, with true feeling, the long and muddled route their family had taken to their arrival in the here and now. Similarly, so often on nostalgia forums it is women who take on the role of custodians of the emotion and happenstance within the images they publish: capturing not so much an exact date or location as a sense of the joy, melancholy, bleakness or hope of the era they mark, managing to set forth some bigger, unseen dimension of the scene so it is not lost on their watch, as so much else has been. With the right handling, a Lost Glasgow image turns from belonging to a particular time, place and person into something more commodious, a register of human connection, or as Seabrook writes, ‘an outcrop of lived and felt experience; an evocation of the throng of people whose lives have touched and been touched by theirs’.<sup>15</sup>

*#bygonedays #laurieston #muses #placesofworship #decline #damp #lowestebb #redevelopment #indecision #sublime #iron #coal #Protestants #bells #Notoriety #catholics #turningthetide #ridiculous*

Discussion topics for [www.facebook.com/TheonlywayisGorbals](http://www.facebook.com/TheonlywayisGorbals). Private Facebook group. 11.6K members.



*The poles are still there but no washing*

The GlescaPals forum homepage begins with a triptych of logos.<sup>16</sup> On the left is a silhouette of a mountain at sunfall, the night sky a royal blue. Three figures, all shadows, plant a saltire at the mountain's peak, a clip-art flag undulating against the stark, halogen white of the moon behind. At the centre, a score of music, wobbly staff and notes giving the impression of a tune played drunk under a small black banner that says AULD LANG SYNE. Across the page, boxes hover on a black background with stars that twinkle on and off like a show curtain, overlaid with a headline that reads 'a website for families and pals all over the world to share memories and photographs of **Glasgow** – and especially its east-end and Bridgeton – Take a walk down memory lane with Old Glasgow Memories, childhood memories, Street & School photographs, **games**, food and **songs** of bygone days of yor. **GlescaPals motto**: "*Learn from the past, use well the future*".

*I clearly remember my mother sweating like mad when she was knocking her pan in doing the washing for five people*

The information presented on GlescaPals may be construed as a form of 'local lore':<sup>17</sup> a category conceived by Raphael Samuel to name those sites where unofficial narratives around past events, narratives often widely held by those directly affected, are produced and reiterated over time. Just as the nineteenth century date book layered newspaper headlines with 'local hearsay and gossip',<sup>18</sup> internet forums on Glasgow's past put history and memory on a level plane, using the framework of rumour, anecdote and daydream to break into a history bolstered by sources to which there is no popular access. In doing so, they draw critical attention to the process by which truth and falsehood, real and unreal, are otherwise distinguished in official discourse: the calculated space that has been cleaved between the writing of history and an expression of grief, the writing of history and an expression of longing, delight, rage.

*Used to hang my washing out when I stayed I Maryhill was proud of my white nappies that I boiled in an enamel pail on top of cooker didn't have much but always kept my wee house clean ♥*

Contained in the [GlesgaPals Main Index](#) is a section entitled ‘Glesca Green’, which leads to a grid-formation of Glasgow Green’s famous landmarks. Among the options is an entry on the park’s drying green, the set of 36 poles used by women to dry washing taken wet from the steamie, which leads users to a scrapbook-like page with three photographs of the site against a mottled cream background. The first two images, taken from the same angle, show the poles strung with washing lines draped busily in laundered sheets, pored over by women while children play between their feet. In image one, four young girls are visible in the background of the shot. Climbing over a structure made invisible by the laundry to the foreground, the middle child appears to float, angelically, above the washing, looking out for her mother below. ‘The Green’s proximity to Glasgow’s congested East End made this facility especially dear to the working class population,’ the caption beneath it reads, as the scene unfolds in a million possible ways overhead. The final image, a much-loved photograph seen frequently across other similar pages, is a close-up of two women sitting on the grass, waiting for their washing to dry. One of them is knitting, the other facing toward her, both of them talking next to a pram which looks away from the lens. The sun is low on the horizon, hitting their chests and the corners of the shirtsleeves above.

*Nice wee pram and look at the clothes on the line*

‘Glesca green’ is the only landmark to have its own section on the toolbar which runs across the top of the GlescaPals website. The rest are headings which denote their own subcategories, such as ‘Memory Lane’, ‘Schools’ ‘Streets’, ‘Churches’, ‘Forces’, ‘Tales’. The special attention it is offered is a reflection of the park’s place in public affection, the drying green as the beating heart of the city, the aproned, bustling washerwoman to Glasgow as the corseted, marauding parisienne is to Paris. In an echo of Gaston Bachelard’s treatment of the nook, the drying green finds its place on the forum as a fleeting shelter for the imagination, ‘simple, confined, shut’, a place from which to imagine and to write the complex world outside of it.<sup>19</sup> Laundry forms here what poet Lisa Robertson describes as ‘soft architecture’, remembering its inhabitants and having them remember back, making an enveloping vessel of the open ground,

the life of the street sequestered between the wind and its creases, 'the strange, frail, leaky cloths and sketchings and gestures which we are'.<sup>20</sup> The webpage tells users how some tenement closes had a sink at the top of the stairs rather than a back-court wash house, known in Glasgow and Northern Ireland as a 'Jaw', and how jaw also became a byword for the conversations women had over the sink. A nook, a jaw, the drying green was a starting place, a point from which to begin to speak.



*I can remember my mum washing the woolly jumpers in the sink put them through the wringer then on to the pulley*

In the Glasgow City Archives at the Mitchell Library, tied together with a small strip of linen, is a set of documents relating to the history of local public baths and wash-houses. Among them is a pamphlet from the North Parish Washing Green Society (NPWGS), which was established in 1792 to cultivate a washing green along the Molendinar Burn for residents living within the bounds of the north-eastern parish of the city. When the Necropolis, a large cemetery, was erected in the 1830s, the bank on which the washhouse operated was built over, and the NPWGS entered a new phase as a philanthropic remembrance group for the old ways of the parish. From then on, rather than fund washing facilities, the society took local washerwomen out on excursions, providing them with an opportunity to reminisce together about times spent on the banks of the Burn.<sup>21</sup> With the vanished washing-green a byproduct of the rapid industrialisation of the north parish area, the NPWGS became a permanent memento of a time before the ugliness and disappointments of the present day: of clean, flowing streams and the women dotted through them, beating the dirt away. Published in 1938, the digested history found in this archive, illustrated with tender portraits of past beneficiaries, is testimony to that sense of loss as one of the chief motivations behind its continued support. ‘We may picture,’ it reads, ‘how these douce housewives for three-quarters of a century exchanged over the washtub gossip which their spouses gathered in the coffee houses around the tollbooth’.<sup>22</sup>

*I know now that Life can never be so hard again so builds resilience*

Other paraphernalia in the archive’s collection of documents: a few leaflets and posters from the Corporation Baths Department advertising public wash houses at Kennedy Street, Stobcross Street and Gibson Street; two letters of complaint, including one sent to the proprietor of Parkhead Baths in 1915 concerning ‘women engaged, not only in a verbal combat, but physical violence to each other, because of disagreements regarding a turn at the wringer’; and several newspaper clippings, one of which recalls a visit to Glasgow in 1803 by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, his wife Mary and



daughter Dorothy, during which they visited the famous drying green on Glasgow Green. 'It was amusing to see so many women, arms, head, and face all in motion,' wrote Dorothy in a diary entry remembering the visit. 'All busy in an ordinary household employment, in which we are accustomed to see, at the most, only three or four women employed in one place'.<sup>23</sup>

*I remember the wash house in the back yard my mum used it way back 1950/3 it was a brick built tub fired by a coal and wood shavings fire underneath, it was hard*

History fetishizes the archive, writes Raphael Samuel.<sup>24</sup> Its gaps and absences are as much obsessions as what is already there, the need for a contribution decided by whether it bolsters the system currently in place. In this case, what appears to be absent in the Baths and Washhouses Archive, its supposed historical lack, still falls strictly within the category of Glasgow Corporation posters and leaflets from other dates or locations, or newspaper clippings regarding stately visits to the famous Green. Scant observations by officious figures, the placeless outline drawn by government bureaucracy and advertising, the subtle message of this collection is that the history of baths and washhouses in Glasgow is not to be found in personal memories, that, in fact, memory's absence here is a form of historical order, to be managed and maintained. The archive deals purely in the certainty and relation of its current contents: the rest is treated as conjecture, a shapeless hinterland.

However, it is in the latter, Samuel writes, that frameless no-place, you will so often find the 'great army of under-labourers, handmaidens and scribes who, in any given period, are the ghostly presence of historical work'.<sup>25</sup>





*always went to Kath's house after their Monday morning at the Whiteinch steamie. If the weather was bad all hung their clothes on the pulley from the ceiling, and Kath always, always made them rolls in sausage, plus cups of tea, no coffee back then IN THE 50's, then Kath read their tea cups, yes she did ha ha*

In the late 1970s filmmaker Roberta Cantow remembers travelling all over New York City while working for an organisation named Theater for the Forgotten. A charity, Theater for the Forgotten assisted in the organisation and performance of plays by inmates at the city's various prisons and correctional facilities, including a number of women's centres. In order to move between these places, Cantow would often take the elevated train, which wound, suspended, between Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx. Day after day, she was bought eye-to-eye with endless rows of tenement windows and blurred snapshots of what lay beyond the glass. In an interview with filmmaker Tom Davenport, the artist recalls noticing the clothes lines which came out of each apartment onto the street. There it occurred to her, suddenly, that these lines were evidence of the 'unseen work of women',<sup>26</sup> the only visible sign of the labour that shaped the lives of half the city's population.

Cantow decided, at that point, to produce a film which depicted the act of hanging out laundry around the world. Her first step was experimenting with footage of washing hung out around New York City, rippling sheets and blouses set to ambient music. The effect was mesmerising, she said, but lacking in substance. Her next step was to go back to the beginning, and list all of the associations the sight of clothes lines had seemed to provoke in her: 'pain,' for instance, 'loneliness, drudgery, isolation, folklore, art, thwarted creativity, wisdom, generational links, changing attitudes'.<sup>27</sup>

*My wee mammy used the steamie on Scotland Street around the corner from Stanley Street, Kinning Park*

Back then a lot of her filmmaker peers, Cantow tells Davenport, could not believe she was concerning herself with a subject so mundane, so politically inconsequential as laundry. More than that, who thought her a voyeur for engaging with what was, to many of her background, such an obvious symbol of inner-city poverty. Cantow remembers

ignoring this chorus of disapproval and focusing only on the image with which she had begun, how it made her feel. In the opening shots of *Clotheslines*, packed washing lines can be seen streaming from one apartment window to another. Blouses and trousers, arranged meticulously by size and shade, are captured tussling in the breeze like tall grass. The sky looks heavy, like a sodden gold rag, as a woman drags her laundry basket up the stairs to the roof of her apartment, lying flat on her back for a moment, drinking down the sky. A woman in a chequered blue nightgown unfolds a set of tablecloths on her porch, pegging each corner to the line overhead and moving a pulley so they are stretched into smooth, flat squares. Dozens of pairs of white socks, from small, to large, move back and forth in the breeze, in footage that shifts between city street, suburb and open field, the repeating sight of a heavy line and a setting sun weaving the scenes together with an odd sense of intimacy, as if they were all a continuous backdrop to someone's walk home.

*when we moved to drumchapple in 1955 we had a boiler and a wringer it had cream and green daidolin not sure if that was how you spell it but it was shiny tile effect on the walls the bathroom had pink and black we thought it was lovely*

Cantow overlays these scenes with the voices of women being interviewed about their relationship to laundry. The lilts of Italian-American accents nod to their membership of the National Congress of Neighbourhood Women – a Brooklyn-based organisation helping housewives of mostly Italian and Irish descent to re-enter the workforce after periods of addiction. Present only as voice recordings, the women chatter busily over the footage, describing on their own terms a ritual that has shaped their lives for as long as they can remember. Their words are breathless but certain, evidence of the topic's freshness in their mouths, an eagerness to transmit something, make it bigger, more permanent. Different voices fade in and out, separating and overlapping in what feels like a familiar rhythm – that of the street corner, the school gates, the laundrette, the front room. Often, that testimony descends into babble, an eddying rhythm punctuated by hoots and howls from instruments, toys and the flow of streams. A cello plays a low, elegiac tune in the din. Minor notes move down, turn in, as the sun finally disappears.

*Facebook.com/page/250132471654783*

*I was in Mount Florida today. There was a girl, a young mum in her mid 20s hanging out the washing in the garden. She had her hair tied up in a 60s style bun. The garden was small and run down with an old delapidated red brick wall typical of the old back closes*



Late August, 2016: artist Penny Anderson hangs 28 white sheets on clothes lines re-strung on the poles in the drying area on Glasgow Green, left empty since the late 1970s. The words of real and imagined women who once pegged out their washing in that spot are embroidered on the centre of each sheet. Passersby are invited to walk between them, experiencing the space as it would have been for over a century, flanked by broad stretches of cloth. Anderson's sheets are made of muslin, to reflect the presence of three mills near the Green where it was manufactured by women in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, nodding toward a life spent wrapped in fabric, long days hewn by making and cleaning, making and cleaning. Muslin being a loose-weave cotton, Anderson's sheets pull apart where the thread has been applied, making words not with markings but shadows, a filigree of small holes which wink and fade as the weather moves. The artist says in an article for the Glasgow Herald that she thought of the drying green as a vantage point from which women would have witnessed the major events of Glasgow's working-class history:<sup>28</sup> looking out over the Calton Weaver's Massacre, the Chartist uprising, suffragette demonstrations, anarchist rallies, rent strikes and marches for nuclear disarmament through the gaps in her collapsing white fort. Sitting with that picture – the washerwoman as witness – she came to imagine all the women who had ever used the drying green as a single figure, forever looking out from the same patch of ground, watching the world turn and having it watch her back while she scrubbed, dried, again, again.

*This is not a delicate nightmare/you carry to the point of fear/and  
wake from*





*Lived 3 floors up, room and kitchen, no hot water, shared outside loo wit 2 other houses on the landing...20 people using the one freezing, scary, vermin infested, dark loo. We had one of those wee washing poles outside the kitchen window too*

By the late 1970s, steamies had entered a state of terminal decline. Slum clearance had dispersed former working-class strongholds out onto the periphery of the city, meaning older urban facilities were no longer convenient, while relatively cheap, mass-produced washing machines had flooded the market, hire-purchase schemes making private ownership of one feasible even for some of the poorest families for the very first time.<sup>29</sup> Even when prohibitively expensive, the home washing machine had been an object of desire among women in Scottish households since their invention in the early 1900s. Their convenience and efficiency made them deeply covetable among those for whom the weekly wash, as Lynn Abrams writes, consumed ‘body and soul’:<sup>30</sup> not only a household chore, but a public duty, watchful eyes taking stock of your success or failure, your dirtiness, your guilt. A survey taken across Scotland in the 1940s showed only 1% of respondents would have chosen a communal washhouse over in-house facilities<sup>31</sup> – demonstrating a longing for privacy among women denied the kind of self-contained homes afforded to so many in other, more affluent parts of Britain. In the decades following the Second World War, the four major ‘peripheral’ estates developed to rehouse residents of inner-city slums, Drumchapel, Easterhouse, Pollok and Castlemilk, often provided either in-house washing facilities or options for their installation, a feature used to tempt potentially reluctant council tenants to secure homes which were completely removed from their daily lives and historic communities. To have a washing machine was to become invisible, intangible, in places where household chores were under the constant scrutiny of the passer-by. It was to escape the prison that had been made of the city when domestic life bled like an open wound into parks, roads and public buildings, to separate from the street, at whatever cost.



*I'll remember to my last breath..the wooden baths, steaming hot water..the steamie would give the mum's Lysol to put into the baths.. then the carbolic soap*

In front of the drying area on Glasgow Green lies a tomb-like plaque which claims the last recorded use of the washing lines was in the 1970s. A tradition that shaped women's lives for over a century, this was a closure with no ceremony, no parade, no recorded date or hour. Left behind, and remaining still, is the set of 36 poles on which the washing lines used to hang, grey and thin like pencil marks under the city's near-constant layer of thick, dark cloud.

The statuesque arrangement recalls David Hammons' vacated sculpture *Day's End* (2021), a tribute to an artwork of the same name by Gordon Matta-Clark in 1975. The latter was an intervention on an abandoned nineteenth-century salt shed on pier 52 along Manhattan's waterfront. Here, Matta-Clark made incisions through the roof and walls of the building, channelling sunlight into its interior in the shape of floating sails and crescent moons, sunrise and nightfall refracted across the room and out onto the Hudson River. Up to the point of this intervention, the shed had been a favoured spot for cruising homosexuals, pushed to Manhattan's margins by police campaigns to rid the city of its perceived problem with deviant public activity of all kinds. On arrival, Matta-Clark padlocked the doors of the shed, disrupting the cruisers' occupation of the building to indulge his own fantasy of its abandonment. Because of the attention *Day's End* had drawn to the space, pier 52 was then shut down entirely by police before the artist could 'open' it once again to the public. The cuts Matta-Clark had made, flooding the building with light, rendered the structure largely useless as the makeshift meeting place it had been for years thereafter. Matta-Clark died in 1978. The shed was destroyed entirely less than a year later.

*she capped my door to tell me she had been round everyone else to tell them she had given me a line in the backdoor to hang my nappies out every day*

Hammons' recent tribute to *Day's End* is an in-situ recreation of the same pier in scaffolding composed of steel alloy.<sup>32</sup> Here, a set of six frames jut into the river just as the building would have done, capturing its scale but not its heft, so that it becomes, in some lights and from some angles, barely perceptible. The steel has been buffed so it both reflects and absorbs its surroundings, flickering as the Hudson ripples and hardening again under the clouds overhead. Rather than attempting to re-instate what had been there before, Hammons' structure traces the empty space that remains like the chalk outline of a murder scene, recalling not so much the crumbling majesty of ruins as shell or bone, the fuselage of bodies which have been consumed and spat out. While intended as a tribute to the man, it ends up more of a reckoning with what came to a halt when those first shafts of light reached the shed's back wall. Wide and empty, its hollows remember all those who have made a home of the city's vacated corners only to then, without warning, move on, never turning back.

*though washing blows/where the women watch/by day*

1968: the back court of a tenement block as seen over the sink through the kitchen window of a flat on the first floor, a tatty pigeon roosting on the sill. Middens, toilets and washhouses are huddled in the centre of the open ground, overlooked by the backside of tenements that wind around its border. Just beyond them is a washing line strung with white vests. They catch the evening sun as it hits the rooftops, giving half of the view a sharp, flat glow. The window in front of the camera lens dimly reflects the room behind, making the shadows of drying clothes on a pulley maid just-visible in faded strips of black.

Facebook.com/posts/groups/2677570705873027

*This was the view from our kitchen window at St Andrews Rd,  
Pollokshields. Taken by my sister with her Olympus camera ♥*

362 likes

*What a horribly sad and depressing view.  
I remember them well :(*

*Sally was never sad and never depressing we loved it it was  
our playground*







### *Hard back breaking work*

In a 1992 article for Metro magazine entitled 'Reworking the Family Album', the artist Jo Spence detailed an exercise for her readers to reframe the photographs they have at home.<sup>33</sup>

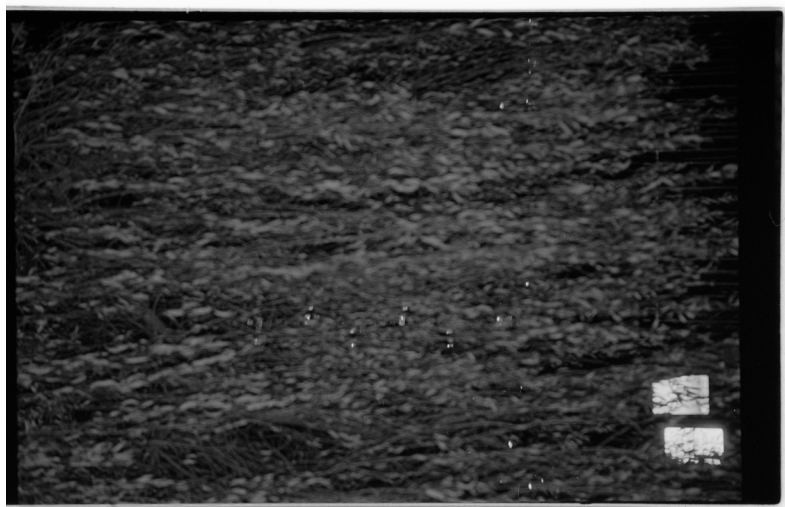
#### *Step 3:*

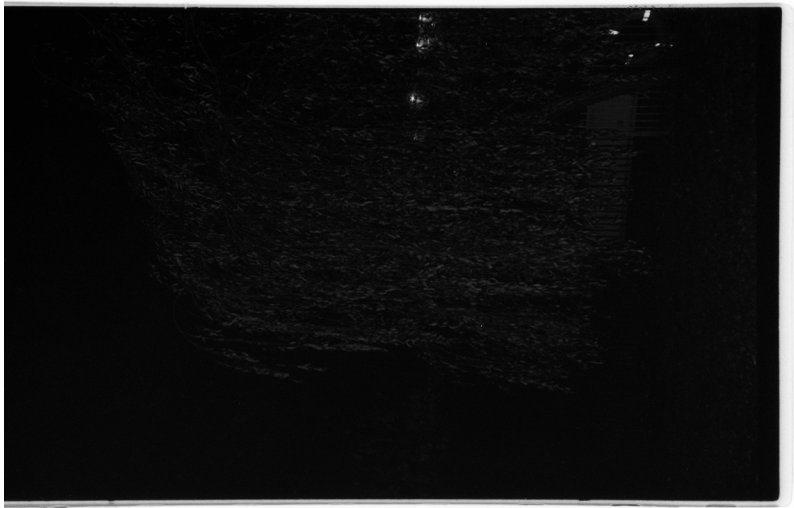
*Start to think about how you might photograph a day in your own life. Notice what your patterns are, what gets repeated day after day, what seems trivial, what seems important. If you live with someone, ask them to comment upon (or get involved in) such a task. They might be able to notice things that you take for granted and therefore discount altogether. Then, when you are in the mood, put a special film into your camera and record the day as you go along. Forget about aesthetic conventions: this is a form of self-documentation which can be the basis for further journal work or storytelling into a tape recorder. Decide if you want to photograph what you see, as opposed to having yourself included. Send the film/s off to be processed at a bulk processor, making notes of what you have done plus any relevant difficulties about what you would have liked to photograph and couldn't think how to, or didn't dare. Don't restrict yourself to taking pictures of people but also think of how you could just use parts of rooms, or objects symbolically arranged, to say something about yourself.*

Spence later described the way memories of her own upbringing had been covered over or manipulated by the family photographs that remained from that time. Taken through the depression of the 1930s, the Second World War, and the years of rationing and reconstruction that followed, these images may not have always depicted the events through which she lived, but nonetheless seemed at first glance to portray the limited possibilities of what they could have been, the visible hardships and indignities of a working-class life represented at the expense of any further dimension as subjects. Snapshots of her family in their Sunday bests, shoulders thin and sharp, or modest plates of food at a street party, politely ignored. Empty parlours flanked with lace and small, tidy gardens, coal sheds and outdoor loos: it was as

though all of these images taken in such particular circumstances worked in concert with a basic narrative of the sacrifice of people like her, the diminishment of their surroundings as in service of some greater beauty elsewhere. Spence played with these scenes in her photography, using her body to disrupt the captive landscapes of her childhood, directing her partner as he pressed the shutter again and again. One series, taken in the early 1970s, shows a half-demolished block of tenement flats, the lens roving across the churned remains of an old back court and onto the ruins of a 1940s-looking interior.<sup>34</sup> Visible are two sets of floral wallpaper cleaved by old room dividers, steel trusses which once held each floor bent in all directions like broken legs, rubble strewn across the ground beneath, and then, finally, Spence's face, visible through a smashed window, intruding. She gazes over the back court through large round glasses, looking out from where the kitchen sink would have been. Stance firm, her eyes are fixed on a view seen reflected over her lenses, all reduced to blurs and daubs in the evening light.

*nothing but silence/except the whisper of the grass*





*I loved night staring out those big windows to the roof tops across the street with the small street light on the corner*

Picture this: it is 1981 and Douglas Corrance is photographing the interior of Partick steamie. The room hums with voices while he takes a portrait of a woman standing proudly under a sign containing its Victorian bylaws, which are written on a large black sign which hangs above her head. As he shoots, Corrance feels dimly aware he capturing an image that will soon be nothing more than a pang of memory to a city permanently and unceremoniously altered by the home washing machine. That with this single image, he is making a record of something before it disappears without a trace.

*What were these? They look like a wee furnace*

As this woman stares, beaming, into the lens, he does not realise that she is also looking, out onto a landscape he does not see. She looks out across the steamie towards the lines of ceramic tiles across the back wall, through the women moving across the floor with trolleys full of wet shirts, vapour rising from the boilers in thick, dank plumes. She looks out, through the doors and across the street, off Dumbarton Road, windows twinkling as tenement lights go on. Under the railway and then the motorway, grey and angular, toward the river, out east toward the city centre. Past long stretches of empty land, wire fences drawing griddled lines over tall, shuffling weeds. Past the shipyard cranes hanging like giant carcasses in the dirt-flecked air, across the river Kelvin as it trails into the Clyde like smoke. Down Broomielaw, toward the Briggait, through the wrought iron gates of Glasgow Green, up the gravel pathway, over the grass to the mist as it settles on the blades. Out over the empty poles, memories of sheets dried stiff in the wind, toward the setting sun, out, into the dark.

*all shadows are alive*



## Notes

- 1 Douglas Corrance, *Glasgow*, (London: Collins, 1981), p. 16.
- 2 Jeremy Seabrook, 'My life is in that box', Holland, Patricia & Spence, Jo (eds), *Family Snaps: The Meaning of Domestic Photography*, (Virago Press, 1991), p. 172.
- 3 Editors at *Gazetteer for Scotland*, 'Glasgow Green' (2022), accs. 4.12.22, <<https://www.scottish-places.info/features/featurefirst1452.html>>.
- 4 Eileen Cleere, *The Sanitary Arts: Aesthetic Culture and the Victorian Cleanliness Campaigns*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press), p. 14.
- 5 Thomas Fairbairn, *The Washing-House, Glasgow Green*, photoengraving and blurb, (Glasgow: T. Annan & Sons, 1885).
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Moira Donald, 'Tranquil Havens? Critiquing the idea of home as the middle-class sanctuary', in Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd (eds), *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth Century Interior*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 118.
- 8 Edwin Morgan and Christopher Whyte, 'Power from Things not Declared', in *Nothing Not Giving Messages*, Edwin Morgan, (London: Polygon, 1990).
- 9 Ina Blom, *Memory in Motion: Archives, Technology and the Social*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), p. 15.
- 10 Walter Benjamin, 'A short history of photography', *Artforum*, (February, 1977).
- 11 Blom, *Memory in Motion*, p. 15.
- 12 Blom, *Memory in Motion*, p. 16.
- 13 Sarah Manavis, 'History-themed facebook groups have become a magnet for racist content', *The New Statesman*, 17 June 2019, accs. 05.05.2022, <https://www.newstatesman.com/science-tech/2019/06/history-themed-facebook-groups-have-become-a-magnet-for-racist-content>.
- 14 Jon Askonas, 'Essay 2: Life in an Alternate Reality Game', *The New Atlantis*, No. 68 (Spring 2022), p. 20.
- 15 Seabrook, 'My Life is in that Box', p. 173.
- 16 Accs. 03.07.22, <<http://www.glesga.ukpals.com/>>.
- 17 Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, (London: Verso Books, 1990), p. 8.
- 18 Ibid.



- 19 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, (London: Beacon Press, 1994), p. 7.
- 20 Lisa Robertson, *Occasional Work and Seven Walks to the Office for Soft Architecture*, (Astoria: Clear Cut Press, 2003), p. 17.
- 21 The North Parish Washing Green Society, 'Living History in Glasgow', (Glasgow: Trades House, 1939).
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Dorothy Wordsworth, *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1897), p. 210.
- 24 Samuel, *Memory*, p. 5.
- 25 Samuel, *Memory*, p. 20.
- 26 Roberta Cantow and Tom Davenport, 'Roberta Cantow on the Making of Clotheslines', *Folkstreams* (August, 2018), accs. 10.02.2022 <https://www.folkstreams.net/contexts/roberta-cantow-on-the-making-of-clotheslines>.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Jan Patience, 'Washing line art on Glasgow Green', *The Herald*, (27<sup>th</sup> August 2016), accs. 17. 03. 2022, [https://www.heraldsotland.com/life\\_style/arts\\_ents/14708422.washing-line-art-glasgow-green/](https://www.heraldsotland.com/life_style/arts_ents/14708422.washing-line-art-glasgow-green/).
- 29 Yvonne McFadden, 'Creating a modern home: Homeowners in post-war suburban Glasgow 1945-1975, PhD thesis (2016), University of Glasgow, p. 236.
- 30 Lynn Abrams & Callum G. Brown (eds), *The History of Everyday Life in Twentieth Century Scotland*, (Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 60.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Evan Moffit, 'The Invisible Histories of "Day's End"', *Art Review*, (4<sup>th</sup> June 2021), accs. 12. 05. 2022, <https://artreview.com/the-invisible-histories-of-days-end-david-hammons-gordon-matta-clark/>.
- 33 Jo Spence, *Reworking the Family Album*, *Metro Magazine*, (March, 1992), pp. 47-53.
- 34 Terry Dennett, (British, 1938–2018), [Untitled], 1973–1975, gelatin silver contact print. Jo Spence Memorial Archive, Ryerson Image Centre (AG03.2010.2000:0002), accs. 25.03.2022 <https://theimagecentre.ca/collection/jo-spence-memorial-archive>.

All of the quotes indented left are from posts are anonymised comments and captions from the following websites and social media groups. All names have been changed.

Dennistoun Through the Years Facebook group

*3200 members*

Garngad memories Facebook group

*5000 members*

Glasgow Memories Facebook group

*10 000 members*

[glesga.ukpals.com](http://glesga.ukpals.com)

Gorbals Old School History Facebook group

*1400 members*

[hiddenglasgow.com](http://hiddenglasgow.com)

Lost Glasgow Facebook page

*173 000 likes*

Lost Glasgow group Facebook group

*30 000 members*

[lostglasgow.com](http://lostglasgow.com)

Memories Of Old Glasgow Facebook group

*23 000 members*

Memories of Springburn, Balornock & Barmulloch Facebook group

*6600 members*

OLD Glasgow and OLD Springburn group Facebook group

*3500 members*

Old Glasgow Club Facebook page  
*1500 likes*

Old Glasgow in Colour Facebook page  
*4400 likes*

Old Glasgow Pubs Facebook page  
*14 000 members*

[pastglasgow.co.uk](http://pastglasgow.co.uk)

Springburn born n bred Facebook group  
*6700 members*

The Glasgow Chronicles Facebook page  
*66 000 likes*

The only way is Gorbals Facebook group  
*11 000 members*

The only way is Maryhill Facebook group  
*3200 members*

Whiteinch History Facebook group  
*2700 members*

PRIESTHILL MEMORIES Facebook group  
*5000 members*

Scotstoun memories Facebook group  
*2800 members*

All of the quotes indented right are extracts from the original manuscript of Edwin Morgan's 1961 poem *Glasgow Green*, held by the University of Glasgow's archives and special collections.



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