

Launch of Centenary Celebrations of the Prestoungrange Gothenburg 1908–2008

Jorgen Linder: The Lord Mayor of Gothenburg

Madam Provost, Lord Mayor, Guests from Armadale and Newtongrange, GothMembers here in Prestonpans

One hundred years ago the man after whom this suite is named, Thomas Nelson III, signed the Loan Note for £2000 that set this institution rolling. And like everyone connected with us here since that date life has been a roller coaster. Sadly Thomas Nelson died at Arras in World War I as did many more who frequented this place, and Armadale and Newtongrange's 'Dean Tavern'. Our house here joined the 'English Trust/Houses Group' in 1919 and they sold us out to Bass in 1956 who stayed with us until the 1990s when a couple of private landlords took this house to the most inhospitable depths. We were rescued by closure to become a private home for five years with John Murray's family which included their son, Scott, local supermarket shelf-stacker who became Scotland's most capped rugby footballer.

Pat O'Brien, your distinguished predecessor Madam as Provost in these parts and an obsessive Panner as we all well know had, by getting these premises listed as of historic significance, ensured they were not lost and could see their renaissance as a community institution that we trust they have now once again become.

And what an extraordinary renaissance it has been, driven by a Galaxy of artists but masterminded here in The Goth by an indefatigable CEO in Anne Taylor who, as David Beckham says of his 'Galaxy' in LA, puts her family first and then does the job.

Not everyone who has played their part in this renaissance could possibly be here tonight but in this room is as representative a group of them as one could hope to achieve which includes their undisputed convenor and inspiration Andrew Crummy, their 'press baron' Kristine Cunningham and their 'literary chaser' Annemarie Allan. More than 50 of them have painted and exhibited from art classes and as Burriss Bursary Winners, lit up a power station's chimneys, reopened a harbour with paper boats and lights, linked three harbours in an amazing annual arts festival, created the county's tallest totem pole and 30 or more historic murals, written a 250,000 word history of the town, staged three Music and Ale Festivals and launched PansBands CD, pardoned 81 witches and presented a new trilogy of witch plays and more theatre besides, seen over 500 newspaper articles and 20+ tv/ radio news reports locally and nationally as well as our Poet Laureate capturing the moments, campaigned for the restoration of Cutmill Park where the annual mural fest is held and our Redburn Cow Herd gets lost and found, set in hand the nationally significant 'Battle of Prestonpans Campaign' for a £7m. Visitor Centre, annual re-enactments and much more. And as for work in progress, August sees The Goth staging the Scottish launch of Sweden's first ever distilled whisky [Stockholm alas not Goteborg] as well as creating the definitive six week Prestonpans Pottery Exhibition in town under Graeme Cruickshank's Curatorship and a new memorial to Charles Belfield all concluding, how else, with a Greek Night and Plate Throwing Party on the beach, Belfield-style – plates courtesy of Sam Burns' Family of course. And if that is too far off tomorrow we advance our campaign to Save The Fowler's Old HQ in town.

And all this is done [including Plate Throwing] in the name of Gothenburg Principles. What an alibi we have Lord Mayor. All we are doing is simply following the example set by your own

predecessors in your office in mid-19th century Sweden on how best to spend any extra surpluses arising as a result of the people in the town having a good time at the local community pub! And most surprisingly then, and indeed today, to do so whilst at the same time encouraging moderation in the consumption of alcohol and reading [although with all the art and 'pictures telling a thousand words' maybe we have somewhat overlooked the latter!]

And I know for a fact that the temperance point even surprised you when Lady Avril and I first visited you in Goteborg to 'educate you about Scottish Goths' and invited you to come and see what we were doing. The fact that you did come was, we all know, in part because you personally love Scotland but also because Goteborg owes so much in its historical development to the Scots exemplified in your Chalmers' University, Carnegie Porter and East India Company – even soccer. The fact you have come twice within four years, and brought your best friends with you this time, says more than that I believe. It says for us that you actually approve of our use and abuse of your City's name here in Scotland in the cause which we and our fellow travellers from Armadale and Newtongrange continue to espouse.

So the verdict of history is that Armadale and Newtongrange made their century unscathed whilst we fell short for a while. It happens. Here in the Pans we were on probation in 2003 as we sought to rejoin the decimated ranks of Goths across Scotland. Five years ago The Scotsman newspaper ran a feature article on us all headed **The Twilight of The Goths**. They were wrong then and they are wrong now. The temperance challenges the Goths were established to address in the late 19th / early 20th centuries are just as rampant today as they were then. And the demand for 'community involvement' and concern as the antithesis of 'government knows best' is as vitally needed by us all.

All three of us who are proud to be called Goths today, with your so visible support Lord Mayor, have another century to travel. Armadale and Newtongrange are already well on the road; they've had their centenary celebrations, but we haven't yet. Your presence today and tonight has given us the opportunity to launch our Centenary Year although it wont of course start until New Year's Day 2008. But when it does, watch out. We are going for the "Wow" factor all the way. We shall be using and abusing your City's good name non-stop all year with a 100-song and poetry Burns-athon, themed McGonagall Poetry on our 100th, 200th and 300th Nights [Topaz, Oysters and The Goth], 1908 prices for 100 cheese rolls and porter every Tuesday night, 100 hours of non-stop music Gig, 100 carvers of a Gothenburg totem pole, a 100 foot mural, 1908/ 1918/ 1928/1938 ...1998 nights monthly, and **Midsummer Night's Dream** in Cutmill Park on Midsummer Night.

You aint seen nothing yet, Lord Mayor. We're gonna have lots of fun. You know if you want to come to Prestonpans again and join in you will always be welcome here - and as you already know at Armadale and Newtongrange as well.

Many, many thanks for your support and for coming here this weekend. **May I now formally invite you to Launch our Centenary Year?**

Gordon Prestoungrange
Baron of Prestoungrange



CHARLES BELFIELD IV

For every sun that sets
Behind this stane
Joined by the Forth
To the land of Prestoungrange
We think of the Belfield Potters

In their day
For they like we watched
Sunsets here the same

And could they speak
Their ghosts would surely say:
"Consider this!
We too were made of clay!"

In memory of their lives
We name this stane
"CHALES BELFIELD IV"
To celebrate their fame!

John Lindsay
Poet Laureate



HOKKAI THE NOO!

Haiku from Prestoungrange

The Gothenburg flowers
Well chosen by Jim Forster:
Gloriously tuned!

Storms lash the sea wall;
The totem pole crumbles but
What sprouts from its seed?

A fine thing to see,
The mighty Forth calm as glass!
Good for the children!

A cow out the back
Grazes on the witch gestallt:
Sure keeps the weeds down!

Pandores oyster beds?
Take 'em with a pinch of salt-
Tabasco's better!

Charles Belfield the Fourth
With a heron on his head
That the tide swept off

Gulls over the Goth
But pigeons nest in the eaves;
We can't have that!

Murals are magnets:
They warm the town walls
But frieze in winter!

Muralist at dawn,
His head like a periscope:
He prays for blank walls!

Sam Burns' fine junkyard-
It aye looks the same to me,
Winter or summer.

I think we should plant
Big sunflowers at the Haven
On old Topaz grave

A field of stubble;
Hundreds of dead redcoats there
And they call war art

Battles in the Kirk,
Doves nesting in the belfry:
What more can you ask?

He ran from the Manse:
Some Hielan' teuchter shouted:
Gie me your watch, son.

Bankton House looks grand
And he almost made it home-
Poor Colonel Gardiner

Red flag on the Bing!
Flying high in late July
The workers have won

PS
Auldhammer House folk
Can still hear the tramcars run
At the hush of dawn!

John Lindsay
Poet Laureate

July 23rd 2007

