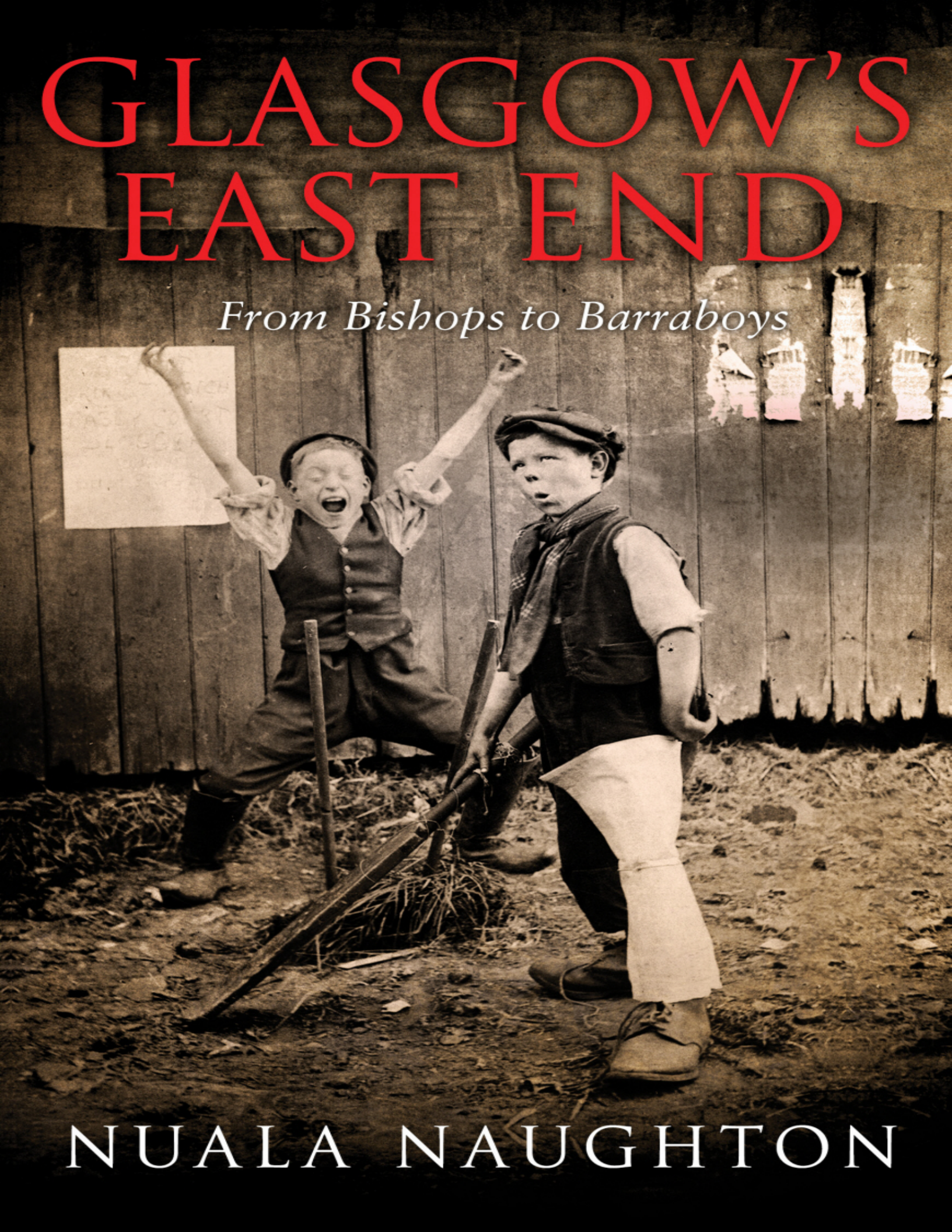
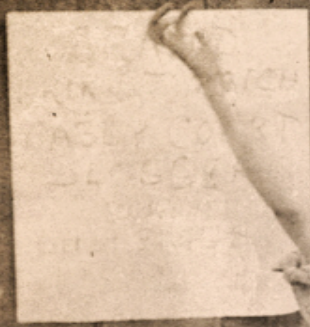


GLASGOW'S EAST END

From Bishops to Barraboys



NUALA NAUGHTON

About the Book

From bishops to battlefields, barrowboys to business tycoons, Nuala Naughton brings to life some of the characters and events that have shaped Glasgow's East End since the city's founder, St Mungo, first set eyes on the 'dear green place'.

This entertaining, lighthearted account looks at the legends behind the city's coat of arms and the foundation of the city as an ecclesiastical centre of excellence and respected seat of learning. It also offers a colourful insight into tenement life with anecdotes and interviews by born and bred Eastenders; the Battle of George Square in 1919 when prime minister Winston Churchill waged war on unionized workers; the make-do-and-mend community and the story behind 'silk stockings' made from used teabags and an eyebrow pencil during the Second World War; the 'City of the Dead' and how the Barrowland Ballroom came to the attention of the German high command and the war propagandist Lord Haw-Haw.

From medieval Glasgow to modern times, this fascinating book offers a pick 'n' mix of fact and fiction, myths and miracles surrounding the rich and sometimes turbulent history of Glasgow's East End.

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Glasgow's East End

From Bishops to Barraboys

Nuala Naughton

To Cissie Smith, my wonderful mum, born and bred in the
East End

And to my good friend, mentor and researcher, Monty
Bryden

Foreword

*by James Doherty, Proud East Ender and Head of
Media at Glasgow Life*

EASTERHOUSE WAS A pleasure ground, a heady mix of wonder, a kaleidoscope of fields. My earliest memory is of living in what was at the time the halcyon promise of council housing, aged three. In 1977, it must still have been considered a 'new build'.

Green and safe to roam, we went through a lane to get to my older brother's primary school. I never noticed the poverty, the grey or the lack of social facilities. At three, you're not worried about a lack of shops, bingo or bookies.

But I remember the magic of going home. Home was Parkhead. Home was reached by going to my granny's house by way of the number 62 bus. A big, belting beauty of a beast - better than any Bugatti Veyron - was the Corporation bus. It transported us to a place where Sandra's Dairy had pies and peas that would make Nigella Lawson weep - but only when adorned with vinegar, loads of vinegar, salt (from a cellar, not milled) and gravy.

It was the way to travel: at the top of the bus, my ma puffing away on her Kensitas Club King Size, and me and my brother looking down the periscope at the driver's baldy napper - and 'oooing' and 'ahhning' every time we went under a bridge. It was the stuff of legend; a journey that set the standard for the East End day out, which we were still to encounter, when the delights of the Inner or Outer Circle on the 89 or 90 bus could see a family outing around the city, with a picnic of Barr's American Cream

Soda, made up with ice cream, and a couple of spam sandwiches (pan, not plain bread, if you were going posh). Such an outing would take in myriad exotic sights, such as Maryhill, the 'SooSide' (Southside) and treasures like that of Kelvingrove - and it was the only bus journey that took in Ibrox, Celtic Park and Hampden football stadia.

But we'd always return to Springfield Road. This Holy Grail of a poor man's Clockwork Orange would always wind its way home to Parkhead. Granny Alice and Auld Jimmy, my granda, lived in a six-in-a-block grey tenement, not the lovely blonde sandstone much desired today. Two bedrooms, top floor, but even then distinctly over-crowded, and all within the shadow of what, for my family at least, was Paradise - Celtic Park, just a stone's throw away.

There was a coal bunker on the ground floor and there was one on the landing. There was coal, which was harvested from old engines in the scrap yard across the road (a playground of immense proportions, both in size and opportunity, not least for jumping into a hollow steam chamber, with little chance of getting out, but the chance to create your own echo cavern, which could easily rival that of the Grand Canyon). There were screaming matches when someone was accused of stealing a few lumps of the black diamond from someone else's bunker.

There was a three-legged dog.

There was my great granny, who lost a leg to gangrene and her wits to dementia.

For my ma and da, Easterhouse was just too far from the action. The Mecca Bingo Hall at Parkhead Cross was the prize for my ma, and the fitba' and egregious action in Flynn's Bar and the London Road Tavern was the calling card for ma da.

We moved back to Parkhead and our first 'bought hoose', a wee tenement flat overlooking the Bowling Green. Ma da was a wholesale butcher in the Duke Street slaughterhouse - a pig boner, whose claim to fame was being featured in

Butcher Weekly or whatever the magazine for those involved in the meat trade was called. My ma was a cleaner and auxiliary at Belvedere Hospital. I used to marvel at the prosthetics department from London Road, where occasionally you might catch sight of an arm or a leg through the window.

School was Our Lady of Fatima in Dalmarnock. The 'belt' - a punishment that could sting like a hornet and, for many, was a badge of honour - had been declared a violation of human rights and no longer were teachers sanctioned to carry out the painful admonishment. We sang hymns and were looking forward to the visit of Pope John Paul II - but I was much more interested in reading and numbers.

In later years, I would go to St Michael's in Parkhead. There, the parish priest, Canon Lyne, used to terrorize the children every Monday, demanding to know what details of the gospel had been described in chapel the previous day. Nine year olds don't decide if they're going to mass on a Sunday and my family were not exactly enamoured by the Church. I had watched as my granny was forced to go into the bedroom when the priest came to call - he was apparently offended by the fact that she was a Protestant in a Catholic home. I was offended by his lack of grace and kindness. Sometimes it felt like being Catholic wasn't very Christian.

Of course, sectarianism was rife. On various weekends, you'd see the 'walks' (annual marches associated with religious affiliation), both Orange and Republican: women in bowler hats and wearing sashes on one side, folk dressed in balaclavas and pretending to be pseudo-paramilitaries on the other. There would be bunting and flags draped throughout Bridgeton, and running street battles in the Calton and the Barras after every Old Firm match. Indoctrination started young. When I was asked what team I supported, I always said I supported my ma, not the nonsense that helped create the Old Firm - sectarian

hatred that allowed the business of football to thrive, even during the Great Depression.

Fitba', religion, turf wars. All provided at least for a sense of tribalism, community and cohesion in a society that was under attack by Thatcher and her policies. It would also provide the defence when the effects of her government were most keenly felt, as drug abuse and the scourge of heroin decimated countless families. However, the biggest attack was on an industrial base that had made Glasgow great. The wholesale closure of heavy industry did for Glasgow as the Great Fire did for London - but while they rebuilt from the ashes, there was no great desire from the Tories to do the same for the once proud Second City of the Empire. The East End was hit badly. People wanted to work, but there were no jobs - to keep the unemployment figures down, many were put 'on the sick' and many would end their days on benefits. Generations were affected by poverty: a new industry in and of itself. I remember asking one of my neighbour's kids what he wanted to do when he grew up. His response: 'Go on the buroo [the welfare system] and go to the bookies, like my da.' Poverty of expectation is the most insidious of threats to communities.

In the early '80s, my family became a victim of the Thatcher years. My brother and I woke up frightened and worried in a van, in the dark, somewhere in a motorway service station. We were doing a moonlight flit, but this time the destination was London. My da had already been there for six months, paving the way for our arrival. My ma quickly got a cleaning job. We stayed in a wee flat above shops, just across from King's Cross Station. I was a rent-boy at a very early age; sent, as we were, to pay the landlord the weekly dues, with a warning from my mother that we 'were not to speak to any of the women', the light in the district being decidedly red. It wasn't long before we were in another East End, moving to Mile End and what, for Glasgow boys, seemed like another world. We had a

maisonette, the neighbours had cars and there were street parties and barbecues – we'd never seen a barbecue, let alone enjoyed food from one.

London was bright, bold and brash. My brother and I became fluent in Cockney within weeks, changing back into broad Glaswegian whenever we approached our house. I'm sure my new pals were completely mystified whenever I rocked up shouting, 'Ma, gonnæ gie's a piece 'n' jam?'

We frequently went home, first on the misery of the night bus and later, when the cash situation improved, by rail on the sleeper. We would invariably be going back because there was a big match on – but no matter how much drink was consumed on the journey, someone would take out the bulbs from the roof, allowing me and my brother the opportunity to sleep on a hammock, styled from the webbing of the luggage racks, without fear of being burned. No sleeper beds for us.

For economic migrants like us, the draw back home was always there. Family, friends, the fitba', the bingo. I was at an age where I realized there was real potential for me growing up in London. I could see the opportunities and I was none too chuffed when after a few years in the Big Smoke we were wrenched back to our own East End, back to Parkhead, to Lilybank, a scheme that was once described as the worst in Europe (the BBC did a documentary on the place).

Glasgow had changed. So many people were on the buroo. Jobs were thin on the ground and the attack on communities was in full flow. 'Glasgow's Miles Better' was the city slogan, but it didn't feel that way. Thatcher's policies had created a post-industrial wasteland. We used to go scrapping for copper and lead, stripping out wires and melting them down for a bit of extra cash. I used to have a pitch outside my granny's, where I would watch the motors every time there was a game on at Celtic Park. 'Hey, mister, can I watch yer motor?' was what we cried out. The new

20p coin was the usual reward; sometimes as much as 50p a motor could be had. It was lucrative stuff and many a turf war erupted when someone strayed onto another's pitch. It wasn't unusual to see a grown woman fighting on her kid's behalf. Of course, we didn't watch the motors - something I regretted once when I went to a black hack to collect: 'Hey, mister, I watched yer motor.' The taxi driver was a little jaded: 'That right, son? Well, you didnae dae a bloody good job ae it.' I still had my palm upturned as he showed me the window that had been smashed.

I was lucky in that my ma and da always seemed to be able to find work. My eyes had been opened to opportunity and ambition, and education was a prize I valued. I loved school, St Michael's and later St Mungo's (by this time it was a comprehensive, not the grammar school of old). The Mungo was still great. I'd had the chance to go on a scholarship to private school St Aloysius, but, making my first socialist decision, was determined to go to our local school and get the same qualifications right there, with my friends. That first day in our first year I perhaps regretted the decision when it became obvious that one of the rituals was for the older kids to gang up and beat the new boys. Fear was the name of the game. Still, I got stuck in to school life. Many of the teachers had come from the old school and there remained real pride in what could be achieved. A lot of my peers had no interest in learning, so I received almost one-on-one tuition. Of course, it meant I was branded a 'snob' and a 'poof' - the latter being a most accurate description of me, albeit one they could never have foreseen.

On our days off, we did everything we could to have fun on not a lot of cash. Day trips to the Barras were brilliant. We would go to get knock-off tapes and games for our new computer consoles, the ZX Spectrum and the Commodore 64. It could take up to half an hour to load a basic game of ping-pong that today's youngsters would barely thole.

But a day at the Barras was brilliant and was always topped off with some freshly fried doughnuts, dipped in sugar, from the wee shop on the corner of the amusements on London Road.

Other fun was made up of fishing trips to the Clyde, just further than Belvedere Hospital and close to what was Celtic's training ground. We'd head down with our bikes (BMXs were all the rage) and get out some tawdry fishing lines and bait. The most you would ever catch would be an eel or two, with which you could have endless hours of fun throwing at passers-by.

On sunny days we would run, what seemed like miles, to the zoo. It wasn't much of a zoo, not compared to Edinburgh, but watching the polar bears sliding in and out of the water, catching food and doing tricks was something foreign and distinctly different. It was a world of wonder on our doorstep at a time when wonder was a rarity.

The best fun to be had, however, was when it was really hot, the kind of heat that had the tar at the side of the road bubbling up. On those days, we would track down the one person in the scheme who had the best key in the world. He was the man (his name and location changed frequently, so as to avoid detection) who had the water hydrant key. He was the man who knew the best location (Methven Street, Lilybank, just across from the community centre) to unleash a geyser that was our Niagara Falls. The torrent would easily reach the third floor, with superb strength and enough flow to ensure that water pressure elsewhere was nothing but a trickle. But we didn't much care for the risks. It was an East End water park that could rival anything you could find on the Costas. All I needed for my *pièce de théâtre* was the metal binlid. With that, I could fly at the torrent, shield in place around my bum, then be launched skyward as I hit the water. A waif of a child, I would reach a dizzying height, delighting everyone in attendance. Of course, what goes up, must come down and there was more

than dented pride when I injured myself, as I invariably did. We also made a few bob by washing passing cars, using the same principle.

Of course, our memories are often rose-tinted. There was pain, real pain. In my family, there were stabbings, serious crime, premature death due to heroin abuse, and children left orphaned because of the same. The women in our family were incredibly strong – they had to be. The East End was built by men but run by women. I’ve no doubt that continues to be the same to this day. From my granny working in Beardmore Forge making munitions during the war to my ma holding our family together through thick and thin – this aspect of Glasgow remains the same.

I wanted to get out of the East End. I was a young gay guy in an area that, on the face of it, would never tolerate such a thing. It was still a place for hard men and tough reputations. In my mind, I had to get educated and get out. Of course, when I was outed on Hogmanay at the age of 18, everyone was fantastic about it. My ma simply said: ‘Ye are what ye are, son, and if naebody else likes it, then fuckum.’

It was a good, solid piece of East End advice and part of a response that showed that community and compassion were still very much alive in our part of the city. I have many gay friends from much wealthier parts of Scotland whose friends and families shunned them when they came out. Perhaps in middle-class areas there is much more of a desire to keep up appearances; in the East End, people liked you for being yourself.

I would later go on to write for the hit series *Brookside*, then at Channel 5 and for our very own *River City* on BBC1 Scotland. But it was in Glasgow that my career would evolve, as a writer on a small newspaper, the *East End Independent*, based in Bridgeton Cross. There, I was able to go into communities, understand the hardship people faced and provide a voice for them in their battles with power, both local and national. There, I truly understood

what it means to be part of the East End diaspora: those who have left the area, but have an opportunity to help improve it through the work they do.

I soon moved to the *Big Issue* in Scotland, where again I was able to investigate wrongs and hold the powers that be to account. I have interviewed various politicians in my career, from those in the City Chambers to those holding the reins of power at the national level, whom I interviewed later while at *The Scotsman* newspaper. I finished each and every interview with a question that, more often than not, had nothing at all to do with the earlier subject matter: 'What are you doing for the East End?' Many didn't have an answer, and those who did talked about the establishment of the GHA and improvements to housing.

It's almost ten years since I moved to the dark side, managing the PR for City Services. I was able to see for myself the plans that were put in place for rebirth and regeneration, whether we won the Commonwealth Games or not. In Easterhouse, the old, damp-ridden homes were pulled down, with new, low-rise homes put in their place. Who would have thought the National Theatre of Scotland would choose Easterhouse as their home? There is a huge amount of work to be done, but right across the East End real, positive, lasting change is arriving.

I still can't quite believe that there are new-build homes in Dalmarnock and Parkhead that are being sold for more than £200,000. But, more than that, I'm proud that the city is investing in quality social housing that rivals in quality much of what is being provided by the private sector.

My brother was destined for the scrapheap when he was in his late 30s, as he had been out of work for a long, long time. He was able to benefit from the Commonwealth Games, through a scheme that ensured work would be offered first to the people of the East End in positions like his. Contractors had to commit to employing local apprentices and offer support to those who had been out of

work. Public agencies are delivering training schemes to give people the skills and confidence they need to change their lives - and it's working; I've seen many a life transformed as a result of the work that's ongoing. There is still a huge amount to be done and massive problems to be faced, but at last there is hope.

I'm incredibly proud when I visit the £113 million Emirates Arena. This massive sports complex, which has an indoor sports arena, and gym and spa facilities, as well as the stunning Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome, sits just across from Celtic Park. I go into various rooms, looking out of the windows and remembering the six-in-a-block grey tenements that were such a part of my youth. I visualize where we used to watch the motors, or see the three-legged dog try to avoid the contents of my great-granny's piss pot being thrown from her bedroom window. But what I always remember is that no matter how grave the adversity, nor the attacks, either social or political, the incredible and indelible sense of community fighting back is at the heart of our part of the East End.

That community remains: it is stronger, more proud and contributing to the next chapter of the East End's story, one that I've no doubt will provide hope, equality and prosperity for many more, as our great city continues to evolve.

Introduction

THIS BOOK BEGAN as a social and oral history of Glasgow's East End inspired by the many stories – some hilarious, some tragic – that I'd heard from my mother, my aunts and uncles, and their friends, who all grew up in Tollcross and went on to marry and raise their kids in the nearby districts of Shettleston, Parkhead and Carmyle.

When I went on to interview other East Enders myself, I found most of their stories almost mirrored those told to me about my family's upbringing: going to the Barras market on a Saturday; doing the 'wahshin' at the Steamie, all bundled up in a bedsheet and packed in the wean's pram; the weekly or twice weekly trek to the public baths for a hot bath in a private cubicle or, for the younger kids, a tin bath in front of a roaring fire at home in the living room of the 'single end' or butt-'n'-ben.

I spoke to men and women about their war years of 1939-45 and wanted to learn more about the First World War of 1914-18.

The further back I went, the more fascinated I became with the origins of the East End. I was being transported through time to the Victorian era, to its tobacco lords and ancient architecture, then further back to the bishopric, whence evolved the diocese and archdiocese of Glasgow, with its churches, dominant buildings, agriculture, great battles and great legends.

I was somewhat stymied when my research time machine seemed to falter a bit around the period going back from the tenth and eleventh centuries. I could find little available to the non-academic or non-ecclesiastic reader.

Eventually, I arrived at the sixth century and the story of St Mungo and his mother, and the founding of what became known as the Necropolis, City of the Dead, and birthplace of Glasgow.

Of course, Glasgow's history goes back to more ancient times, with relics from the Bronze Age being unearthed in excavation projects.

Small boats, possibly canoes, were discovered on the banks of the River Clyde, indicating that a Stone Age fishing community had settled along the riverside, which was much shallower than it is today and was easily forded.

The small mound that St Mungo chose as the first burial site and upon which he founded his church is believed to have been an earlier place of worship and ceremonial rites for Celtic druids. St Ninian, at least a century before Mungo, is also said to have consecrated this same site.

Glasgow, or Cathures, as it was known in early times, was also settled by the Romans around the late first century Anno Domini.

I had to stop somewhere in my research and begin the writing of the book itself. So, it turned out I had researched the book back to front.

There is so much out there, from ancient and academic texts to tales and legends, all of which put a different spin on certain events and even offer conflicting dates. And, of course, there are some outright fairy tales. I've tried to sift through many of the anomalies and myths, miracles and misinformation. Far be it for me to make any judgements, but, if you take much of the early stuff with a pinch of salt, you'll probably enjoy the book more.

I don't claim in any way to be an expert or a historian, and this book is not a hefty academic tome. It is intended as a light-hearted read that will appeal to those who wouldn't normally pick up a history book but are happy to learn some interesting and entertaining things about the city's past. It is my version of Glasgow's history, told

through a wealth of anecdotes and oral legend. I'm sure I'll feel the wrath of many an academic who will have his own, no doubt far more fastidious, version of historic events and legends.

There are so many stories about the evolution of the East End and its communities that I just couldn't fit everything into this book. So I've mainly picked ones that I find interesting and, hopefully, you will too. If you enjoy my rambling, maybe they'll let me write a second volume.

As for the subtitle, 'From Bishops to Barraboys', I know it's non-PC to only mention the *Barraboys* - indeed, I found that many of the hawkers, stallholders and social traders were female - but I plead artistic licence on this since 'Glasgow's East End: From Bishops to Barraboys, Girls, Men and Women' or '*Barrapersons*' is a bit of a mouthful.

I also appreciate that much of the legendary past is probably bollocks - but it's our bollocks and, if we choose to perpetuate a completely ridiculous myth or legend, then we jolly well will.

I appreciate that I've taken a somewhat loose approach to the ancient history, but I have included some excellent books, papers, texts and translations in the 'Recommended further reading' section for those who may want to delve deeper and explore events in more detail. Indeed, we are indebted to the scholars and historians who have uncovered and translated ancient texts and for their painstaking attention to detail, where detail could be found.

Glasgow's development was inevitable, given its predisposition. It had, after all - or before all - the three main constituents of settlement, according to architect and professor Frank Arneil Walker: 'a safe or sacred hill, an easy river crossing, a good harbour'.

While I was fascinated and sometimes totally gobsmacked at what I learned of the ancient history - that poor woman who gave the world St Mungo was put through merry hell before giving birth to her illegitimate son - it

really was the oral history that I held dear and didn't want to lose.

How I wish I'd recorded all my mother's and aunties' hilarious stories, and I'm grateful to social historians and fiction writers for keeping many precious memories alive.

Glasgow's East End

Saints and sinners

I'm embarrassed to admit that I have grown up happily ignorant of the story behind St Enoch. To me, it was the name of a municipal square and a metro station in Glasgow's city centre. Only while researching this book did I learn not only that St Enoch was a woman but that she was also the mother of St Mungo, sometimes known as Saint Kentigern, the patron saint and founder of Glasgow. Neither was I aware of the harrowing fate that befell her at the hands of her peers when her pregnancy could no longer be concealed.

My own ignorance of things pagan or biblical and saintly left me somewhat adrift in understanding the logic of a young girl's fervent desire to conceive a child out of wedlock, given the dire consequences of her condition.

Even her own status as a pagan princess could not protect her from the laws surrounding 'fornication' out of wedlock.

Not only was the girl to be thrown from the top of the highest nearby mountain or cliff top; the law decreed that the father of the child be beheaded.

Similar laws pronounced that an unmarried woman who willingly conceived a child under her father's roof should be buried alive and her seducer be hanged above her grave or tomb.

But the devout young girl believed she had a greater calling. She was by some accounts so fanatically devoted to Mary, the mother of Jesus, that she desired to emulate her in every way possible, not least to conceive a child who would grow up to perform great deeds - miracles - and be remembered for his saintliness throughout the lands.

The fervour with which she believed in her preordained destiny, and that of the child she would gift to the world, strengthened her resolve to not only bear the child but keep secret, on pain of death, the name of her lover. In this regard, she bore the wrath of her father, who tried to force her to name the unborn child's father.

She proclaimed time and again that she didn't know who the father was, believing herself to have been impregnated by immaculate conception in the manner of her heroine, Mary.

Nevertheless, it has been suggested that the father of St Kentigern was in fact Owain Mab Urien, a legendary warrior whose exploits were celebrated in numerous poems. Some accounts suggest that he raped her.

Being the daughter of a Brythonic king and a member of a pagan community, she said her prayers to her Christian God in secret. She prayed to the Lord that she should be impregnated as a virgin mother.

So, how she came to be with child remains a matter of debate. Was she overheard in prayer by a lustful young man happy to oblige her wishes? If she genuinely was unaware of how her prayers had been answered, might she have been the victim of an ancient type of date-rape drug?

Drunk and capable?

This notion is not as difficult to get one's head around as one might think. Bear with me on this.

Early writings bear witness to incidences of strong potions that had the effect of inducing paralytic drunkenness. Stories abound of people being given doses of a fortified wine or stout, sometimes called Letargion, under the influence of which grown men were so knocked out to be unaware of acts of violence, stabbings and burning carried out upon them. Even the removal of private parts was visited upon them without their being in the least

awakened from their oblivion, according to one medieval scribe.

Some analysts claim Letargion could possibly have been an early form of anaesthetic.

And far from being the victims of incestuous abuse, the daughters of Lot in the book of Genesis are said to have been so keen to carry on their father's name that they used such a strong elixir so that they might take advantage of his stupor to impregnate themselves.

Lot lived for a time with his daughters in a cave far from civilization and the book of Genesis claims the two girls got their father drunk and lay with him on consecutive nights without his knowledge. Now, we've all heard of 'brewer's droop', which makes this conjecture somewhat difficult to swallow.

Of course, I wouldn't be so bold as to suggest the author or authors of such an important religious text may have succumbed to personal bias to steer believers away from the idea of incestuous relationships between Lot and his daughters.

And incestuous marriages were not uncommon in ancient times. There are many instances of inter-familial marriages: brother to sister; mother to son; uncle and niece; and cousins.

Born with the given name 'Denw', Kentigern's mother was originally named in sainthood as St Taneu. Her name has been corrupted through the ages, from Saint Tenew, Saint Thenaw, Thenew, Thaney, Teneuch and finally Saint Enoch.

So the young Denw was dragged to the top of a mountain to be thrown with such ferocity from the highest precipice to her almost certain death that she would be torn to bits as she tumbled over rocks before taking her final breath.

On the mountain, she offered up a heartfelt plea to the Virgin Mary, asking her to intervene, to ask her son Jesus to spare her from this fate so that she might live to propagate

the Christian faith – an act of defiance that would have infuriated her accusers, not least her pagan father.

But Denw did not die that day.

A bird in the hand?

The story goes that she ‘flew like a bird’, as if carried in the hand of the Lord himself, and was set down unhurt at the foot of the mountain. For many, this was seen as a sign of divine intervention. It was initially decreed that she should be free from further punishment and the dark stain of dishonour be lifted from her name.

No sooner was this judgement passed by worshippers of the Christian faith, however, than the pagans declared her some kind of witch – that the wondrous outcome owed more to black magic than divine virtue. They invoked her father, the King, to renew the judgement against his daughter and punish her further.

Both factions embarked on a furious war of words: the non-believers had their way by virtue of there being strength in numbers.

The frenzied and bloodthirsty mob led Denw to the harbour intent on setting the pregnant girl out to sea in a small boat – probably a coracle made of leather in the style of the times. To ensure that she met her newly decreed fate of ‘death at sea’, she was led onto a large ocean-going vessel, taken out to the deepest sea and lowered in her little coracle without oars.

When her persecutors returned to the waiting crowd, they announced that justice was done and the ‘evildoer’ had met her fate, joking that her God would not save her this time.

Again, in what many consider to be the second miracle of that day, Denw, with her unborn child, praying all the time to her saviour, survived the rigours of the stormy seas and was carried safely ashore near Culross.

Exhausted, she came across some glowing embers of an almost spent campfire and began to build it up, basking in the heat of the fire. There, she finally managed to fall into a fitful sleep.

Mother and child

By dawn, Denw's time had come. She gave birth alone in the woods to her baby boy. The story goes that she was discovered, with babe in arms, by shepherds who had been watching their sheep through the night, protecting them from the attentions of wild animals who would view their young lambs as a succulent and tasty meal.

These 'Good Samaritans' brought the two to the house of Servanus, also known as Saint Serf, who taught the Scriptures in those parts.

Nurturing the mother and child, he took the earliest opportunity to anoint with holy water the baby boy, whom Servanus named Kentigern, and at long last his mother, whom he renamed Taneu.

Servanus took the boy under his wing, teaching him the Holy Scriptures, among other disciplines. The two became very close and often Servanus would call Kentigern by the pet name Munghu, meaning 'dear one', which explains why today he is known equally as Saint Kentigern and Saint Mungo.

According to some accounts, this close relationship made him the subject of jealousy among his peers. Thus, his fellow students gave the young Kentigern his first miraculous deed.

Servanus had a small bird that would come to him and rest on his lap or shoulder. The old holy man would feed it tasty morsels while gently petting it. One particular day the little redbird, believed to be a robin, was caught by the students, who taunted it to death. Some accounts are less accusatory; in them, the story is told slightly differently,

with the boys playing with the bird and it meeting with an accidental death. Whichever way we read it, the solution was the same.

The dead bird was brought to Kentigern, the boys intending to blame him for its demise. Kentigern cupped the lifeless creature in his hands and prayed over it. After a short while, the bird was coaxed back to life.

The young scholar was later credited with bringing back to life the monastery's cook - after the man had been consecrated and buried. Far-fetched? Well, I did warn you.

Kentigern's envious enemies continued to try to thwart his good work and sully his good name until eventually the boy left the monastery and his beloved Servanus.

Moving on

It is believed that St Mungo first visited Glasgow to bury a holy man named Fregus, or Fergus, who clung on to life until Kentigern visited him. The holy man was to carry out Fergus's dying wish, to have his body carried by cart (or 'carted') westward by two great and unruly bulls. Kentigern was then to leave the bulls to their own path and bury Fergus wherever the beasts came to a halt.

The bulls traversed many miles towards the west before they stopped upon a mound within a grove encircled by fir trees. It is understood that the place had previously been used as a pagan altar, possibly by Celtic Druids.

Fergus was the first to be buried there. This was around 540 AD, when Kentigern would have been in his early teens. He is believed to have been born around 527 AD, although there are many contradictions within sources describing the significant chronology of Kentigern's life.

And in that tranquil place, with the nearby clear waters of the Molindinar (pronounced *moll-in-diner*) burn, Kentigern settled and made it his home, building a spartan

cell, which marked the beginning of the evolution of the bishopric of Glasgow.

Between a rock and a hard place

According to Bishop Jocelyn of Furness, who was instructed by his elder – also Bishop Jocelyn – to write Kentigern’s biography, there were already two brothers living near the burial site.

Jocelyn writes with almost obsequious evangelical zeal and much of his story is believed to be inaccurate, but hey, why let a lack of provenance spoil a good story?

Bishop Jocelyn writes that the brothers Telleyr and Anguen were as different as chalk from cheese. Anguen warmly welcomed the newcomer, while Telleyr wanted nothing to do with the interloper.

Anguen was pleased to serve and learn from Kentigern, while Telleyr thwarted him at every turn. And, it may be argued, they both got their just deserts.

Anguen and his family were blessed with greatness throughout consequent generations, as the small Christian community evolved. Not so for Telleyr. He embarked on a smear campaign to discredit Kentigern, reinterpreting his good deeds and putting a negative spin on his every move, slandering him and his faith at will. He argued every point and openly challenged him to his face.

Relying on his great size and strength, he tried to bully the holy man, growing ever more furious when his acts of malice seemed to have no impact on the man of peace. Often he would show off with feats of burden, lifting and carrying impossibly heavy rocks and trees.

Just as Anguen was rewarded for his faith and obedience, Telleyr was soon to get his comeuppance.

One day Telleyr was felling trees when he misjudged his own capabilities, lifting a tree to his shoulders that was far too heavy, even for him. As he carried his load, he tripped

on a rock and fell, still with the huge tree on his back. No one was around to save him and he was crushed to death by his load.

As they say, pride comes before a fall.

Far from being relieved at the demise of his persecutor, Kentigern was distraught when he heard the news and lovingly cared for Telleyr's grave.

Grave circumstances

The burial site was eventually named the Necropolis, or 'City of the Dead'.

Since ancient times, the Necropolis has been both a tourist attraction and a pilgrimage site, not least for the magnificence of many of the gravestones, wells and monuments that populate the site where Kentigern carried out the first Christian burial and so laid the foundations of the city we know today.

The name Glasgow (Glasghu) has long been known to translate as 'dear green place'. However, it has also been argued by enlightened scholars and linguistic experts that the true meaning might be 'the place of the grey rock', based on the premise that the birthplace of the city was the mound of grey rock where Fergus's body was laid to rest in the mid-sixth century.

I would suggest that the 'dear' is represented by the last three letters of the early spellings of *Glasghu* and *Munghu*, but I'm no scholar of ancient tongues.

The site is also reputed to have been the very spot where Aymer de Valence and John de Menteith met to plot the downfall of Scottish hero William Wallace in the late 1200s.

And, in more modern times, it was by no means a graveyard for the hoi polloi. Rather, over time the mound on the hill became the burial site for the movers and shakers of the city: gentry, merchants, tobacco barons and civic leaders.

Even in death, it seems, the eminent citizens of Glasgow were determined to outdo one another, building grander and grander monuments. So much so that only the most expert stonemasons, designers, architects and sculptors were contracted to create stunning stonework. As such, Glasgow's leading architects would vie for coveted commissions. For example, visitors can see works of art at the Necropolis by Charles Rennie Mackintosh or Alexander 'Greek' Thomson, who would contract only the best stonemasons and sculptors to carry out their designs.

But I digress.

Kentigern adopted and consecrated the nearby holy waters of the Molindinar, which he began to use to baptize newcomers to the Christian faith. As his flock grew, his followers wanted to bestow upon him the unofficial accolade of Bishop of Glasgow.

Despite the modest holy man's objections - not least that, being only 25 years of age, he was too young to be elevated to such high echelon - the growing congregation persuaded Kentigern to succumb to the post and, as was the custom of the times, a bishop was invited to ordain him. Some texts suggest that this would have been a flawed ordination, as it was the custom of ordination for such an elevated position that three bishops were present, not just one.

Kentigern lived a life of austerity and abstinence. Texts claim that he shunned a comfortable bed in favour of a stone slab with only a large boulder for a pillow, and that he bathed in the cold Molindinar waters, reciting all the psalms in their entirety before retreating to the nearby hill for further contemplation.

The year 560 AD is often quoted as the one in which he ordained his first bishop.

The bird, the tree, the bell and the fish

Glasgow's coat of arms commemorates four of Kentigern's most famous miracles. There are many variations in the telling of these legends, but this is my version, based on the most convincing of the surviving texts.

The first miracle was saving Saint Serf's (Servanus) tamed bird, reviving it after Kentigern's fellow students had killed it. *'This is the bird that never flew.'*

While still residing at Saint Serf's monastery, Kentigern was given the task of watching over the holy flame, which was to be kept burning constantly. But the young boy fell asleep during his watch and the flame of the holy fire expired. Devastated, Kentigern grabbed a branch from a nearby hazel tree. The branch was frozen but, in the hands of the boy, as he prayed over it, the fire was rekindled. *'This is the tree that never grew.'*

While on his travels abroad, Kentigern visited the Pope in Rome, who is believed to have given him a hand bell. It is not known what eventually happened to this bell, which was to be rung during funeral services and other ceremonial rites, however it is believed to have still been in existence in the late fifteenth century. It is recorded that a replacement bell was commissioned by the Magistrates of Glasgow in 1641 and this bell is preserved, but not rung, in the People's Palace Museum in Glasgow's East End. *'This is the bell that never rang.'*

My own interpretation of the story of the ring and the fish goes like this: The King of Cadzow saw that one of his knights was wearing a precious ring that the king had given to his queen. He was livid and demanded that the knight return it. So furious was he that, on his way back to his castle, the king threw the ring into a nearby river, probably the Clyde, which was much cleaner in olden days - people could even fish for salmon from its banks.

Believing his wife to have strayed with the knight, the king demanded that the only proof he would accept that she had remained faithful was to show him the ring. This,