

M034 140–142 Balgrayhill Road

Introduction

This pair of red sandstone semi-detached houses was built for Mackintosh's cousin, a carting contractor. He lived in one and let the other.

Authorship: The houses were published as early works of Mackintosh by Thomas Howarth in 1952. The attribution seems to have been a family tradition. No documentation has been discovered to confirm it.

Alternative names: Redclyffe; Redcliffe; Torrisdale; Torriesdale.

Alternative addresses: 120–122 Balgrayhill Road Balgray Brae Road 7 and 8 Mosesfield Terrace

Status: Standing building

Current use: Residential (2014)

Listing category: A

Historic Scotland/HB Number: 33288

RCAHMS Site Number: NS66NW 248; NS66NW 451

Grid reference: NS 60607 68369; NS 60607 68373

Chronology

1890

December: Mr and Mrs James Hamilton move into Redclyffe. ¹

1975

Listing category upgraded by the Scottish Development Department from C to B. ²

1977

Listing category upgraded by Historic Scotland from B to A. ³

Description

The history of these semi-detached houses is difficult to trace. This part of Springburn was not absorbed into Glasgow until 1891, and planning records for the part of Lanarkshire to which it previously belonged have not survived. ¹ Moreover, the name of the street and the numbering of the houses have also changed.

Location

Late 19th-century Springburn was an industrial suburb with extensive railway engineering works. Tenement flats dominated the centre, while the higher slopes of Balgray Hill were developed with villas for the more affluent, skirting the 1838 mansion of Mosesfield House. ² Just two semi-detached pairs of villas are shown on the O.S. map surveyed in 1858, but the survey of 1893 shows 15 pairs, interspersed with large detached houses, strung out along both sides of what would later become Balgrayhill Road. ³ Development seems to have been active around 1890: in February 1891 the *Glasgow Herald* carried an advertisement for an unspecified number of new 5- and 6-room semi-detached houses for sale at 'Mosesfield, Balgray Hill, with 'Bath, Hot and Cold Water, &c.' ⁴

Architect and client

Originally known as Redclyffe and Torrisdale, the pair of houses now numbered 140–142 Balgrayhill Road were published as early works of Mackintosh by Thomas Howarth in 1952. ⁵ The client was probably Mackintosh's cousin, James Hamilton, of the carting contractors J. & G. Hamilton. He is listed as the first occupier of Redclyffe in the *Glasgow Post Office Directory* for 1891–2. This tallies with what Howarth was told by Hamilton's daughter in 1946: that as a newly-married couple her parents moved into the house in December 1890. ⁶ The attribution to Mackintosh was presumably a family tradition. No

documentation has been discovered to confirm it.

Howarth gave the client's name incorrectly as William Hamilton, identifying him as 'the architect's uncle ... a haulage contractor'.⁷ Mackintosh's uncle – James Hamilton's father – was in fact Gavin Hamilton, who married Marjory, youngest sister of Mackintosh's father.⁸ It is just possible that Gavin Hamilton commissioned the houses, but it is unlikely, since he appears to have died around 1887, being listed for the last time in the *Glasgow Post Office Directory* for 1887–8. It is more likely that Gavin Hamilton's death paved the way for his son to build.

This stretch of Balgrayhill Road was known in the early 1890s as Mosesfield Terrace. In the 1891–2 *Glasgow Post Office Directory*, Redclyffe is listed as 7 Mosesfield Terrace, while number 8, the other half of the pair, appears for the first time in the 1892–3 edition as 'Torrisdale', occupied by George Clark, a wine and spirit merchant.⁹ James Hamilton probably built both houses with the intention of living in one and letting the other. In 1895 he advertised a six-room semi-detached villa at Springburn for rent, with 'servants' room, bath room, scullery, h. and c. water; [and] garden'.¹⁰ The house is not named in the advertisement, but the fact that Clark departed around this time, to be replaced by a new tenant, Donald Robertson, strongly suggests it was Torrisdale.

Design

Presumably because of their association with Mackintosh, the two houses escaped demolition in the 1960s when all the surrounding 19th-century villas were cleared to make way for public housing.¹¹ Deprived of their original context, it is difficult to know what – if anything – distinguished them from their former neighbours. They are set back behind front gardens, and separated from the pavement by a low wall with railings (the railings are not original). They are built of red sandstone, and each has a two-storey canted bay with hipped roof. These big bays dominate the front, the main entrances being in the side elevations. The only slightly unusual feature is the treatment of the first-floor windows between the bays: small and squarish, they share a continuous sill band and are pushed up under the eaves.



People

Clients:

- James Hamilton

Documents

Images



View from N.W.



View from N.W.

Bibliography

Published

- Thomas Howarth, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd edn, 1977, pp. 21–3
- Elizabeth Williamson, Anne Riches and Malcolm Higgs, *Buildings of Scotland: Glasgow*, London: Penguin, 1990, p. 432

Notes:

1: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: letter from Marjory M. Hamilton to Thomas Howarth, 13 March [1946] (unaccessioned item).

2: *Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society Newsletter*, 9, Autumn 1975, p. 1.

3: <http://data.historic-scotland.gov.uk>. Consulted 1 June 2014.

- 4: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: John McKechnie, Clerk of Glasgow Dean of Guild Court, to Thomas Howarth, 26 August 1946 (unaccessioned item).
- 5: Elizabeth Williamson, Anne Riches and Malcolm Higgs, *Buildings of Scotland: Glasgow*, London: Penguin, 1990, pp. 425–6.
- 6: O.S., Lanarkshire, 1:10560, sheet VI, 1865; O.S., Lanarkshire, 1:2500, sheet VI.03, 1895.
- 7: *Glasgow Herald*, 21 February 1891, p. 3.
- 8: Thomas Howarth, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd edn, 1977, pp. 21–3.
- 9: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: letter from Marjory M. Hamilton to Thomas Howarth, 13 March [1946] (unaccessioned item). James Hamilton had previously lived with his parents at 1 Mosesfield Terrace, and his widowed mother continued to live there after he moved.
- 10: Thomas Howarth, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd edn, 1977, p. 21.
- 11: Information from Iain Paterson, 13 July 2012, based on census returns.
- 12: In the names section of the directory, Clark is confusingly listed at Redclyffe.
- 13: *Glasgow Herald*, 27 February 1895, p. 4.
- 14: It is not clear when 140–142 Balgrayhill Road were first listed. In 1975 they were upgraded by the Scottish Development Department from category C to category B, and since 1983 they have been further upgraded to category A: *Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society Newsletter*, 9, Autumn 1975, p. 1; *Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society Newsletter*, 35, Autumn 1983.

Mackintosh Architecture: Context, Making and Meaning

Led by The Hunterian, University of Glasgow, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council; with additional support from The Monument Trust, The Pilgrim Trust, and the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art; and collaborative input from Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.



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