

Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Irwin, Mary (2015) Away and raffle Yourself! Still Game, Craighang, Glasgow and identity. In: Regional Aesthetics: Mapping UK Media Cultures. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp. 90-104. ISBN 9781137532824

Published by: Palgrave Macmillan

URL:

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:
<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/27988/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)

“Away and Raffle Yourself!” - *Still Game*: Craiglang, Glasgow and Identity

Over six decades Jack and Victor have watched their Glasgow neighbourhood of Craiglang turn from a site of optimistic regeneration into a ‘total [total] shitehole’ which they now cast their cantankerous gaze over from either side of a landing high in the Osprey Heights tower block.¹

Introduction – Background to *Still Game*

BBC Scotland’s comedy series *Still Game*, 2002-2007 [TV]. BBC Scotland. chronicled with ebullient scathing humour the day to day exploits of a group of working-class pensioners living in the fictitious rundown Craiglang housing estate on the outskirts of Glasgow. Written in authentic vernacular Glaswegian, the series was linguistically rich and inventive, underpinned by a nuanced understanding of, and affection for, Glasgow and a specifically Glaswegian sense of identity. *Still Game* drew knowingly on a host of local cultural references and allusions making strategic use of cameos from a range of well known Glaswegians such as *Pop Idol* winner 2003 Michelle McManus (*Pop Idol*, 2001-2003 [TV]. ITV 1.) and daytime television presenter Lorraine Kelly to internationally established figures such as former world champion lightweight boxer Jim Watt and actor David Hayman.

The series featured an ensemble cast, but lifelong friends and sparring partners seventysomething Jack Jarvis and Victor McDade (played by Scottish comedians, and series writers Ford Kiernan and Greg Hemphill) were at the centre of the weekly half-hour-long storylines, and it is from their perspective that events were most frequently presented. Their relationship, whilst usually conducted in terms of comedy banter, petty squabbles and frequent mutual irritation, was at the same time firmly grounded in their shared experiences of growing up in and around postwar Glasgow and an adult life spent in Craiglang. Principal characters were scheming Winston Ingram (Paul Riley), miserly Tam Mullen (Mark Cox) and fount of all community gossip Isa Drennan (Jane

McCarry). Shop keeper Navid Harrid (Sanjeev Kohli) - had eloped in the mid 1970s from India to Glasgow with his wife Meena (Shamshad Akhtar) to escape an arranged marriage. Navid's corner shop was a focal point for the Craighlang community. Navid brought to the series the perspective of first-generation immigrants to the city. All these long term friends and or antagonists of Jack and Victor were, like them, hard up pensioners struggling to make the best of their circumstances, always on the hunt for any opportunities which might save them some money and make their lives a bit easier. Navid is the exception here as the owner of his own small business his circumstances are more comfortable than the others. Navid is however as much part of the community as the rest of the characters. His own livelihood depends on locals using the shop. The characters were played by actors in their thirties and forties, which allowed for a robust comic physicality in performance, playing against stereotypes and expectations around screen representations of ageing. That the characters are played by younger actors is significant as *Still Game* does not deal simply with straightforward nostalgia of those recalling their past, rather a conscious reanimation and exploration of the pasts of previous generations of Glaswegians. It is the cast and writers' own specific historical and cultural heritage as postwar working class Glaswegians which is being reanimated. Such lives are rarely depicted on national television. As Medhurst points out of the northern-English-set television comedy *The Royle Family, 1998-2006* [TV].BBC1. These are "not the type of people customarily assumed to require in depth treatment in cultural representations. Other texts have no qualms about stereotyping such people because such people have little or no power to contest such representations". (Medhurst, 2005:147). Likewise the particular Glasgow and its people which *Still Game* depicts is not one generally afforded much UK media attention.

Scotland in Moving Image Scholarship

There is substantial recent scholarship on film and television representations of

Scottish and Glaswegian identity, from MacArthur's Brigadoon, Braveheart and the Scots: Distortions of Scotland in Hollywood Cinema (2003) and Petrie's Contemporary Scottish Fictions - Film, Television and the Novel (2004) to Blain and Hutchison's edited collection The Media in Scotland. (2008) and Hibberd's "*The Funny Thing about Scottish Independents*" (2010). There is some critical commentary on *Still Game*. Mowatt in Blain and Hutchison considers *Still Game*'s popularity and success as part of his wider overview of broadcast comedy. Hibberd also reflects on aspects of the significance of the series in terms of BBC Scotland's Comedy Unit's output. The Comedy Unit is one of the most successful independent production companies in Scotland. It was established in 1995 by former employees of BBC Scotland and based in Glasgow (Hibberd, 2010:74). Neither Mowatt nor Hibberd's work however has *Still Game*'s particular representation of Glasgow as its central focus. This chapter uses Mowatt's and Hibberd's analyses as a starting point, drawing on their observations to examine in detail the richly detailed comedic depiction of the strand of Glaswegian life which the series offers. *Still Game* represents a rare televisual insider perspective on the cityⁱⁱ. Such absences chime with Mills' reflections on television comedy as a genre and the contradictory notion of an all encompassing 'British' comedy tradition as offered by the BBC.

In order to be a national broadcaster the BBC must deny certain kinds of comedy content, and humorous voices as much as it promotes others. For the regions and communities of the United Kingdom this can be seen to be problematic.

(Mills, 2010:72)

Indigenous humorous perspectives on Glasgow circulating outwith Scotland are few in number with BBC Scotland's *Rab C Nesbitt*, discussed more fully later in the chapter, the only notable exception.

Still Game syncretises characters, geographical locations and issues around class and identity which have experienced limited, partial and frequently

problematic representations in mainstream media. Glasgow remains consistently poorly served and little understood by national broadcasters with a limited sense both of the specificity of contemporary Glaswegian life and Glasgow's own history. The city is frequently and lazily deployed as cultural shorthand for the most violent and deprived of UK communities, its native accent often cited as a byword in belligerent incomprehensibility. A recent radio documentary *Speak Britannia* (BBC Extra 12/7/14) on accents had teenagers cite the Glaswegian accent as one of the most aggressive in the UK. The comments were based less on any concentrated experience of the accent rather the limited media exposure to the accent that they had experienced

Medhurst's *A National Joke: Popular Comedy and English Cultural Identities* provides a useful framework for examining *Still Game*'s articulation of Glaswegian cultural identity. He writes of comedy "which explores the relationships between popular comedy, social context and shifting configurations of ideas of Englishness" (Medhurst, 2005:10) as well as highlighting the "neglect of comedy in academic debates over the meanings of cultural identity" (Medhurst: 15, 2005). He interrogates the nuancing of particular kinds of Englishness within the comedy genre, for example looking at the specificity of northern English identity in comedy series such as Victoria Wood's *dinnerladies*, 1998-2000 [TV]. BBC1. and Caroline Aherne and Craig Cash's *The Royle Family*. Medhurst suggests "comedy is a short cut to community" (Medhurst, 2005:121). This chapter approaches *Still Game* similarly, considering the way in which, within the context of a sitcom format, the series explores and documents a particular strand of Glaswegian identity situating it within the wider contexts of other extant mobilisations of notions of Glasgow and Glaswegianness. Raymond Williams' critical term *structures of feeling* is also significant here in articulating what it is that *Still Game* achieves in capturing, comparing and contrasting the specific cultural climate of

Glasgow's present and past. At the same time, *Still Game* taps into wider discourses around nostalgia, old age and community which give it a resonance with more universally recognisable experiences around these concepts and an application and reach beyond the specifics of life in Glasgow.

Still Game and the Comedy Unit

Still Game needs first to be considered in the context of a number of other broadly contemporaneous comedy series which have emerged from, or been developed by The Comedy Unit and its offshoot Effingee Productions. Effingee productions is a television production company founded in 2000 by Greg Hemphill and Ford Kiernan and based in Glasgow. These series depict Glasgow life from the perspective of the insider writing from within the context of the city. The best known is *Rab C. Nesbitt*, 1988-2014 [TV]. BBC Scotland. created by Glaswegian writer Ian Pattinson. *Nesbitt* offered a dark, nuanced reading of the bogeyman figure of the uncouth, workshy, untameable Glaswegian. The series charted alcoholic, unemployable Nesbitt's wrangles with authority and law and order set alongside the daily grind of life on the dole. Nesbitt, as street philosopher, revelled in his unconditional and unadulterated "two fingers up to the world" stance, displaying at the same time a fierce reflective intelligence shot through with acute, mordant humour. A little considered irony, is that the highly articulate Nesbitt is often dismissed as incomprehensible by those unfamiliar with Glasgow accents, language and pronunciation. Yet verbal virtuosity and linguistic ingenuity is a key part of the character and the vibrant working class Glaswegian oral culture from which he emerges is best represented by comedian Billy Connolly, recognised internationally as one of the world's most gifted funny men. Nesbitt's eloquence in describing his own plight and behaviour at the same time as castigating the folly of the society is shrewd and insightful, belaying Nesbitt's sardonic representation of himself as "scum".

The character of Rab C Nesbitt allows Glaswegian viewers to wrestle with aspects of their own identity, and their own attitude towards it. There is space for knowing self-reflexive laughter at the complexity of Glaswegian identity, a consciousness of a perverse pride in Glasgow's ability to produce such a grotesque, yet also recognition of the accuracy of the writing and performance which makes Rab so much more than the stereotypical 'hard man' that he might be in the hands of outsiders. Where the series differs from *Still Game* is that despite its genuine connection to Glasgow life and language it mobilises a highly stylised version. Nesbitt is an exaggerated and at times almost surrealistic portrayal of a particular kind of Glaswegian folk devil who is in line with the figure of the wise fool who challenges and disrupts the social order. This figure is part of the socially unruly and upended world that *pace* Medhurst a Bakhtinian reading finds in Rabelaisian accounts of periods of medieval carnival where the grotesque body, the opposite of the classical ideal is in charge. Medhurst cites characters like bawdy English comedians Frank Randle and Roy 'Chubby' Brown who exemplify such a notion and who here have their Glaswegian corollary in Nesbitt. (Medhurst, 2005)

Dear Green Place 2007-2008 [TV]. BBC Scotland. and produced by Effingee Productions is both in its writing and performance style closer to the more naturalistic style of *Still Game* than the dazzling stream of consciousness monologues and fantastical scenarios which make up Nesbitt's world. Set amidst the daily working world of local council park attendants, as in *Still Game*, the focus is on the details of everyday life in and around the city. Noticable here is the presentation of Glasgow as a city of parks, rivers and well preserved historical landmarks. This contrasts with a Glasgow more frequently seen as representing dark, threatening urbanity. Glasgow in fact is a city surprisingly full of green spaces and placesⁱⁱⁱ. *Dear Green Place* makes visual use of these little seen aspects of the city such as the historic Glasgow Green in

the east end of the city, and the Necropolis, an impressive Victorian cemetery set amidst rolling parkland. The term 'dear green place' itself is a translation of the Gaelic word *Glaschu* from which the name Glasgow derives. Another of this group of locally set and written comedies is *Happy Hollidays*, 2009 [TV], BBC Scotland and also Effingee Productions. Set in a caravan park on the Ayrshire coast, it is the kind of modest resort that would be frequented by Glaswegians for holidays in the postwar period prior to the advent of the affordable package deals to Europe and very much part of their shared family experiences and memories. As with both *Still Game* and *Dear Green Place*, *Happy Hollidays* is concerned with the textures of everyday life, depicting with relish the cultural specificity of in this case the Glasgow caravan holiday.

Still Game

Still Game is the most critically and popularly successful of all of these most recent Glasgow television comedies, synthesising its eye for the local with award winning bittersweet scripts and high quality performances. *Still Game* won six Scottish BAFTAs and was nominated for three others over its television life time. *Flittin'* (moving), BBC Scotland, 6th September, 2002 the establishing episode both introduces the main characters and establishes key themes which are at the heart of the series as well as mapping out something of the topography of the physical and emotional landscape within which the series operates. Noticeably, all the episodes have one word titles written in phonetic Glaswegian bringing an added linguistic richness. *Flittin'* in Glaswegian dialect and Scots more generally has the added sense of a move which may not be quite legitimate undertaken often to evade debts or financial difficulties. Jack Jarvis, tired of living next door to rude and unpleasant neighbours, wants to find a council flat in the nearby high-rise block where his friend Victor McDade lives. A death means a flat has become available and Jack wants to move in.

The opening shot of the episode exemplifies complex structures of feeling around the ‘insider’ Glasgow which the series presents. It opens on an overview of the Craighlang housing estate: the perspective is as from the window of one of the flats in which Victor and, by the end of the episode Jack, live. The weather is grey and overcast. The image is polysemic, resonating with negative images of working class Glaswegian life. Numerous identikit grey coloured high rise flats are interspersed with tenements and low rise ‘four-in-a-block’ developments typical of Glasgow’s local authority postwar housing stock. A four-in-a-block is a building, with two apartments on the ground floor and two on the first. These are surrounded by uncultivated grassland with, in the foreground, a dank-looking canal. Indeed, if the opening titles and the writers’ names are removed this image is congruent with one that might introduce television documentary or current affairs strands focusing on any of the social problems such as drug abuse, violence, extreme poverty and deprivation with which Glasgow has long been customarily associated in the media. Such an image could figure in social research on Glasgow’s historical housing problems such as Paice’s “*Overspill Policy and the Glasgow Slum Clearance Project in the Twentieth Century: From One Nightmare to Another?*”

The episode plays out around the desirability of moving into one of those very flats pictured, flats that for the pensioners in the series represent decent and respectable homes. This points to the contrasting perspectives of locals and outsiders looking in which is the source of *Still Game*’s take on working class Glasgow life and the structures of feeling which it encapsulates. The seemingly drafty isolated spaces of Craighlang, the sprawling uncultivated patches of wasteland, neglected canal, tower blocks and the identikit council housing are not straightforward sites of urban decay. Rather they are places where the characters meet, socialise, find out about local events and news and have as in any normal existence good and bad times. Rundown and unglamorous as this

landscape may appear at first sight, it is at the heart of an active and self-involved community with its own complex history which is frequently drawn upon in the characters' everyday conversations and shared reminiscences. Of *Still Game* Hibberd writes that "its popularity lies in its urban setting, a glimpse of 'normal life' in Glasgow in which the comedy derives from everyday life" (Hibberd: 81, 2010). In addition, it is worth pointing out that reading the image as a Glaswegian viewer would do, noticeable in the background of this opening image are the local Campsie Hills which surround the north-west of the city. These are much loved local beauty spots which point to Glasgow's closeness to unspoiled countryside within easy travelling distance.

The socio-economic and cultural identity of Craighang itself is part of the wider redevelopment of post war Glasgow, and its history is one which ties in with the experience and memories of subsequent generations of working class Glaswegians. Situating the series precisely in this location means that the characters are able to speak to and reflect on the hopes and aspirations which the development of housing schemes such as Craighang represented to early post war planners and Glaswegians themselves^{iv}. In this first episode Jack and Victor ruminate on the ways in which the new housing scheme they moved into offered living conditions and opportunities significantly better than those within the overcrowded city with its dilapidating tenement housing where they and the people of Craighang came from. Like many Glaswegians, Jack and Victor were enthused by the space and modern accommodation such overspill housing estates offered. What drives their discussion is the way in which the houses and to some extent the wider Craighang community have deteriorated since those times. They quote from the kind of publicity material they remember being written about Craighang when it was first built: "Craighang: developing for the future; Craighang: modernity beckons; Craighang: tomorrow's already here". This facet of the cultural climate of postwar Glasgow in which developments

like Craighlang represented the city's belief in better lives and opportunities for working people, plays no significant part in any wider extant representations of the city. Whilst the present day Craighlang is changed from those idealistic early days, and its modernist concrete aesthetic has not worn well, neither has it deteriorated into the an urban nightmare of boarded up uninhabited flats with drug dealers peopling the landings. It remains a place in which people live ordinary, manageable and happily uneventful lives. There are sites within the estate such as the Clansman pub, the corner shop, the local butcher, bookmakers, laundry and the flats and houses of friends and neighbours which offer community and companionship. The landings on which the characters' flats are located are inhabited domestic spaces rather than empty places to be avoided. Isa, one of Jack and Victor's landing neighbours, can be seen on occasions cleaning or rearranging one of the displays of plastic flowers which sit outside. Jack places a 'welcome' mat outside the front door when he moves into a new flat at the end of the episode.

Craighlang is also the site of many significant memories for Jack, Victor and the other characters. Frequently recalled throughout the series are scenes of an earlier Craighlang, when the main characters themselves were younger, bringing up families and looking toward the future with optimism. Craighlang has its own distinctive personal and social historical structures of feeling for this group. In the scenes where we see Jack finally leaving the home in which he lived with his now dead wife this sense of the life he has had in Craighlang becomes poignantly apparent.

More broadly running through *Still Game* are the structures of feeling of a particular type of working class Glaswegian lived experience, one that goes unremarked in outside representations of Glasgow life. It is in this respect that younger actors playing older people is significant not merely for the laughs to

be had watching older people behaving badly. The cast and writers in recalling the Glasgow of their parents' and grandparents' earlier lives are reinserting their own little documented cultural inheritance into extant media discourses. Ford Kiernan was interviewed on Radio Scotland's *Stark Talk*, 2008 [Radio]. Radio Scotland. a series of in-depth thirty minute interviews with influential contemporary figures, the focus being on prominent and successful Scots. He talked about the cultural significance of a happy working class upbringing in the city, his memories of this, of family and friends and the sense of connectedness that he felt to it all. He made clear that although a move to London might be beneficial career-wise, he could not live anywhere but Glasgow. It seems reasonable to suggest that *Still Game* material draws for material upon fifty-two-year-old Kiernan's perspective of Glasgow life from his own fondly remembered experiences of growing up in the sixties and seventies and beyond, whilst building on the memories of family which stretch back to the thirties, forties and fifties. Co-writer forty-five-year-old Hemphill, as explored a little later in the chapter, makes similar use of the stuff of his own life.

The historical social and cultural context of post war Glasgow is most frequently considered in relation to the decline of heavy industry and the subsequent struggles the city had to readjust to a post-industrial climate. Yet, as *Still Game* demonstrates time and again characters' memories of living and working in and around the city their story is not one of relentless grinding poverty and unhappiness, but of jobs, holidays, family celebrations and normal ups and downs like any other ordinary British citizens of the period. In *Still Game* then, the textures and cultures of a contemporary Glaswegian world are connected to the reanimated socio-historical lived experience of the post war Glasgow which the fictitious Craighlang pensioners are part. While *Still Game* is a comedy with no claims toward social realism nor explicit sociological or historical commentary, in its well-crafted and observed recreation of its

characters' lives and environment it brings back many significant memories of working class Glaswegian lives which are not figured in any widely circulated national accounts of Glasgow. This is done on a micro level through the mobilisation of the wide net of close personal and social relationships which bind Craighlang residents together and emphasise the deep tightly knit roots of this working class community. This is best exemplified by gossip Isa's convoluted monologues which invariably encircle a new piece of Craighlang news with where she heard it, who told her, and a potted synopsis of memorable anecdotes related to them. While the bystanders are often irritated by these lengthy outpourings everyone always knows the characters she mentions. Just as the internal connections which underpin local Craighlang life are woven across the series so too are the familiar links for Glaswegians to their city's past and present. One such example is frequent mentions of Yarrow Shipbuilders, located on the Clyde and a major employer in the city. One of the main characters Winston makes a number of proud references throughout the series. In episode six series two *Scran* [food] May 2nd 2003 the plot revolves around Winston's bad blood with another former Yarrow's employee Vince Gallacher, played by David Hayman. This comment is, of course, understood by all the characters and a local audience and also acts to colour outside understanding of the shipyards which are usually represented from the perspective of strikes and closures rather than the source of local employment pride and belonging which they represented for many years.

Shooglies (a reference to the trams which were a major part of Glasgow's transport system) 9th May 2003, brings together another set of iconic Glasgow institutions, memories and images. Jack and Victor take a trip into the city centre to celebrate their sixty-year friendship. What the trip memorialises in particular is the Glasgow which was the backdrop to this relationship pointing

to it as a place of fond and happy memories. Jack and Victor, and by extension the writers Hemphill and Kiernan are rehabilitating an earlier Glasgow bringing back to life the times and experiences of older Glaswegians, parents and grandparents. This set of memories is complex. The pair walk around the city centre - George Square to be precise – noting missing landmarks. Jack points to where there used to be a tobacconist, a fur coat shop, a haberdasher's and Birrell's confectionery shop. All of these are businesses connected to an earlier era and also recreate a little of the landscape of Glasgow of the nineteen fifties and sixties when Jack and Victor would have been in their twenties and thirties and most likely to have been frequenting the city centre. At the same time the episode is not only nostalgic for the past, as we also see that Glasgow city centre is currently a bright and prosperous place in its own right. There is a comedy montage of Jack and Victor in the John Lewis department store surrounded by an array of consumer goods and later we see them in a state-of-the-art restaurant converted from a Victorian bank. This is itself a symbol of a postmodern Glasgow refashioning a post-industrial future from the industrial past. A young waiter takes pity on them when they say that they cannot afford the prices although his promise to wipe their bill doesn't work out and they have to pay for what they eat. That said they both agree that it was worth it for the experience, the memories and chance to be in the city full of memories both of what it was and what it is now.

The trip also has the two visit the city's transport museum, a much loved local resource which holds a collection of historic vehicles and recreations of the contexts in which the vehicles operated. The museum has been situated in various key locations around the city in its fifty year history and is now housed in the new Riverside Museum (2011), designed by award winning architect Zaha Hadid. Jack and Victor are particularly attracted by a recreated Glasgow shopping street which serves as the location for a tram. As Jack says of the

memories of Glasgow life that this brings back, and again of their own lives especially that it was “some flashback the old caur” [tram car] and that “they should have never done away with thae [those] things, smashing things”.

In *Hoaliday* (holiday) 7th May 2003 *Jack* and Victor have been invited by Jack’s daughter Fiona to Canada where she and her family have relocated. Once again the episode shifts between different Glaswegian memories and experiences, in this case the experience of emigration to Canada as represented by Jack’s own family. The episode crystallises the relationship between Jack, his daughter, his now-dead wife, Craighlang, Scotland and Canada. He and Victor are very much impressed by the affluent lifestyle that Fiona and her family now lead.

Underpinning much of this episode is Fiona’s desire for her father to come to Canada and live what she sees as a better life than the one that he has in Craighlang. Their discussion mobilises a picture of the Craighlang that she remembers and the Craighlang for which Jack and Victor and the rest of the cast are often nostalgic. Jack talks about “It’s not the place you remember .Your ma used to take you up to Mrs McCain’s shop on Napier Road and put you on the counter”. He continues “I’d take you to the park”. He is quick to point out that the shop has gone and the park now neglected. At the same time, he also recalls that he and his wife were themselves on the point of emigrating to Canada as were “thousands of young people but wur [our] bottle went”^v. At the same time Jack makes it clear to his daughter that his life is in Craighlang and that for him, the ties of friendship and the rootedness of his life there are more significant than moving to Canada for all the attractions that it can boast. Greg Hemphill was part of this exodus in real life, his family moving to Montreal when he was six. Hemphill returned to Scotland as a teenager to study at the University of Glasgow. In the depiction of Scots settlers’ lives in Canada presented, Hemphill draws upon his experiences of life there.

Party, 31st December 2006, the series six finale special does more than have characters merely reminisce about the Craighlang and Glasgow of the past actually setting a large part of the action in 1975. The main ensemble cast, trapped in a lift, reminisce about the last time the lift got stuck: Hogmanay [New Year's Eve] 1975. In Scotland, and Glasgow in particular, the celebration of New Year's Eve has special significance. New Year's Day, rather than Christmas, was the main seasonal holiday and Christmas Day was not a public holiday in Scotland until 1958. Traditionally the day was spent ensuring that the whole house was spotlessly clean for the coming year and after midnight neighbours would go to each other's houses to celebrate. Flashback to 1975 and Victor and his wife Betty's Hogmanay housewarming party. Victor's newly decorated flat is kitted out in the height of 1970s chic with dramatically patterned voguish wallpaper, lava lamps, a hostess trolley and Victor's pride and joy: that 1970s *must-have*: an avocado bathroom suite. Jack says "you've landed on your feet here boy, this is like Hugh Hefner". The main characters and the party guests are confident, lively, fashionably-dressed thirtysomethings and both they and Craighlang represent a modern, go-ahead Glasgow looking to the future. This segment demonstrates a quite different 1970s Glasgow from the more familiar images of a dark, depressed and hopeless city. Flash forward to the present, and Jack points out that "we had it all in front of us back then, not a care in the world". The episode ends with counting down to "the Bells" (the first stroke of the chimes of the New Year) and the sound of ships' foghorns on the river Clyde, another Glasgow Hogmanay tradition. This mid 1970s scene is connected with yet older Glasgows by the continuation of these long seated traditions. In turn, the 1970s scene is connected with a contemporary Glasgow, as the cast break the fourth wall to wish the viewers Happy New Year, a celebration still very much part of Glaswegian and Scottish tradition and the source of many family memories. The location of the party in the 1970s allows the cast to in effect become their parents' generation, playing out and honouring

the traditions that they are likely to have experienced as children bringing this period back to vivid life.

Conclusion

Still Game is of course predominantly a light hearted comedy series which derives much of its popular appeal from the antics of younger actors playing mischievous unruly Glasgow pensioners, saying and doing things which would not be expected from the over-seventies. As this chapter demonstrates the series works well beyond such generic expectations. Drawing its subject matter from the rich complex cultural source of 20th century Glasgow, a source little explored by national media beyond the well-worn and oft repeated tropes of poverty and violence which this chapter has identified, it offers a space in which Glasgow and Glaswegians have the chance to make the jokes about themselves and their culture rather than stand as the subject of others' laughter. Concurrently *Still Game* amidst the laughter acknowledges and values the little celebrated or understood world of working class Glasgow and its citizens.

Notably the series, which was last broadcast in 2007, was recently revived by its creators in September 2014 as a stage play at Glasgow's Hydro Arena. The *Daily Record* newspaper reported that it sold out all twenty-one performances, attracting audiences of 210,000^{vi}. 2014 was a year of especial significance for Glasgow and Scotland. August saw Glasgow successfully host the twentieth Commonwealth Games, relishing the opportunity to be in charge of how it presented itself on a world stage, whilst in September the Independence Referendum gave Scots the opportunity to decide whether they wished to remain part of the United Kingdom. All these events, in their own ways, spoke to vibrant contemporary Scottish national discourses around self-representations which moved beyond those offered by Britain and all inclusive British identities. The response to the referendum evidenced by the 84.5% voter

turnout demonstrated Scots' eagerness to take control of deciding what a future Scotland might look like. Despite an overall 'no' majority vote, post referendum, the specificity of Scotland and Scottishness are now an unignorable part of the wider UK national debate. Clearly this recognition is of vital interest to Scots. More than ever, in such post referendum times a Scottish text such as *Still Game* with its wryly authentic, comic presentation of urban working class life encapsulates Scots' desire to speak for themselves and in their own voices.

Bibliography

Blain, N and D. Hutchison (Eds) (2008), *The Media in Scotland*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

Hibberd, L. (2010) 'The Funny Thing about Scottish Independents', *Media International Australia*, 134, 74-83.

MacArthur, C. (2003), *Brigadoon, Braveheart and the Scots: Distortions of Scotland in Hollywood Cinema*, London, I.B Tauris.

Medhurst, A. (2005), *A National Joke: Popular Comedy and English Cultural Identities*. London Routledge.

Mills B, (2010) 'On Television Comedy as an Invented Tradition' *Media International Australia*, 134, 64-73.

Paice, L (2013) 'Overspill Policy and the Glasgow Slum Clearance Project: From One Nightmare to Another?' *Reinvention: A Journal of Undergraduate Research*, 1:1, 1-19.

ⁱ BBC Comedy, *Still Game* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/comedy/stillgame/> accessed 30/6/14)

ⁱⁱ At the time of writing (2014) Glasgow has been in the world media spotlight due to location of the Commonwealth Games in the city. This situated Glasgow as the subject of a global media event, and world media spaces were made available for the city's own representation of itself as 'the Games' city This was an atypical situation for Glasgow and it will be difficult to ascertain for some considerable time what kind of lasting measurable impact that this has had on Glasgow's national and international image.

ⁱⁱⁱ "With 91 parks – Glasgow has more per head of population than any other European city" From THE COUNCIL'S MAGAZINE FOR THE PEOPLE OF GLASGOW <http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=9064>

^{iv}The history of the redevelopment of post war Glasgow and how the city should be reshaped for the better in the aftermath of the destruction and the new climate of early post war Britain is complex. The driving force was the immediate shortage of housing and the wider aim to provide clean modern homes for people in contrast to the decaying housing stock of the inner city. One strategy was the development in the 1950s of council overspill schemes on the far edges of the city such as Drumchapel to the north and Castle milk to the south. Residents who moved there from the inner city were delighted with the green open spaces and newly built spacious houses with desirable amenities like inside toilets and running hot water.

Jack and Victor's Craighlang is clearly identifiable with such a scheme. Over the years a number of economic social and cultural factors meant that such schemes did not deliver what they initially promised. *Still Game* explores the tensions between such expectations and disappointments. See "Unveiling a futuristic vision of a Glasgow that might have been" *Sunday Herald* (11/8/2013) <http://www.heraldsotland.com/news/home-news/unveiling-futuristic-vision-of-a-glasgow-that-might-have-been.21839645> (last accessed 3/11/14) "Dreaming the Impossible Unbuilt Britain Season 1", Episode 3: "A Revolution in the City" (BBC 4 11/8//13)

^v Between 1946 and 1993 263,000 Scots emigrated to Canada <http://www.multiculturalcanada.ca/Encyclopedia/A-Z/s2/2>

^{vi} John Dingwall , *Still Game pulls in £6 million from 21 sell out shows at the hydro paving the way for a new tv series* , *Daily Record* 11,10,2014, <http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/entertainment/celebrity/still-game-pulls-6million-21-4417745> (last accessed 12/2/2015)