

NEWS

13th June

Call for Glasgow's Egyptian Halls to become museum of slavery

By Kirsteen Paterson [@kapaterson](#)
Journalist



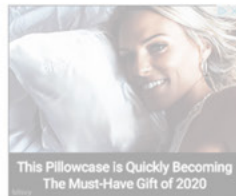
Much of the Egyptian Halls has been empty for 40 years

[f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [m](#) [c](#) 0 comment

GLASGOW'S at-risk Egyptian Halls should become Scotland's museum of slavery, according to a public vote.

The five-storey building, which dates from the 1870s, is one of the last remaining structures by celebrated architect Alexander "Greek" Thomson.

The privately owned Union Street site, which has spent years under advertising hoardings, has housed retail units, offices, studios and restaurants. But much of it has been empty for 40 years and the building has suffered serious damage and decay.



This Pillowcase is Quickly Becoming The Must-Have Gift of 2020

Now it has been earmarked as a site for a possible museum of slavery following an architecture competition and public vote.

The process predates current calls for a radical rethink of our public statues, museum collections and street names as the global Black Lives Matter movement forces a new focus on both contemporary and historical

wrongs, including the slave trade. But the announcement, which had been set for April, was delayed due to the pandemic. Now the organisers of the contest, the Alexander Thomson Society, say public interest in the matter means they cannot wait any longer.

The proposal was made by Gavin Fraser of Polmont, who said the halls "represent a culture and a period in history synonymous with slavery and its profits". He added: "When we walk around Glasgow, not so far from Union Street, we can see many remnants of Glasgow's grisly slave-related history: the Merchant City, Virginia Street and Jamaica Street to name but a few.

"But beyond this contextual reference to slavery, we see the remnants of its lucrative life within Glasgow's fine buildings from the 19th century ... with nothing to commemorate or recognise this history."

Councillor Graham Campbell previously suggested Glasgow's Museum of Modern Art (GOMA) – once the home of a tobacco and sugar merchant – as a site for such a centre.

However, the Alexander Thomson Society said: "While the building doesn't have the historic relevance that GOMA does to Glasgow's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, it is still located in the heart of the city, close to the river, and to Jamaica St – so named for the connection between Scotland and Jamaica, the place where the majority of Scottish slavers were based. And the building has been put to a similar use before.

We guarantee a tariff cheaper than the big 5 energy companies.



"The building started off life as the home of the Egyptian Halls Fancy Bazaar Company, which was an emporium styled on the Egyptian Halls in London, and included exhibition space, lecture and performance spaces, a restaurant and market.

"This A-listed building has now been vacant for 40 years and was recently listed as one of the 14

most endangered cultural sites in Europe."

Zandra Yeaman, of the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER), said: "It's particularly heartening to know that the hundreds of people who took part in the public vote also support this initiative.

"CRER has been campaigning for this for over a decade now, and even the Scottish Parliament have now shown their support. Community involvement and participation will be crucial to ensure the context and content of the museum credibly reflects the lives, origins and experiences of Black minority ethnic people in Scotland, and the task ahead is huge.

"We've asked the Scottish Government to fund a comprehensive scoping study to begin to make this a reality, and the use of the Egyptian Halls as a potential venue should definitely be explored further."

[f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [m](#) [c](#) 0 comment

MOST READ COMMENTED

- 1 BBC's Laura Kuenssberg accused of 'repeating mistakes of 2014'.....
- 2 These are the new coronavirus guidelines Nicola Sturgeon has announced
- 3 Jackson Carlaw 'squirms' on Sky News as he's asked about Scotland's virus 'success'
- 4 Miraculous poll results .. though growing support is no divine act
- 5 George Galloway plans return to Scottish politics after Border row



- 6 Gove and company are out to destroy the Scottish Parliament
- 7 Here's what's reopening in Scotland in phase three of lockdown
- 8 Caledonian Bar comes under fire for 'planning to ban SNP voters'
- 9 Tory voters could be warming to idea of independence, polls show
- 10 Rishi Sunak's union claims dismissed as 'insular rubbish'

READ MORE >



ggmgastro.com

Get involved with the news in your community
Send your stories and photos now