

# M070 Student design for a Railway Terminus

## Introduction

This was Mackintosh's unsuccessful entry in the 1892–3 competition for the Soane Medallion, a student prize awarded annually by the Royal Institute of British Architects. Mackintosh's was the only Gothic design submitted.

**Authorship:** The design was published under Mackintosh's name in February–March 1893.

**Status:** Unbuilt

## Chronology

### 1892

March: Pamphlet published with details of prizes and studentships offered by the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1892–3. This is presumably where the subject for the Soane Medallion competition was announced. <sup>1</sup>

23 December: Deadline for Soane Medallion submissions. <sup>2</sup>

### 1893

January: Soane Medallion awarded to Arthur T. Bolton. <sup>3</sup>

February–March: Mackintosh's railway terminus design published in the *British Architect*. <sup>4</sup>

### 1894

Mackintosh's railway terminus design exhibited at Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts (881).

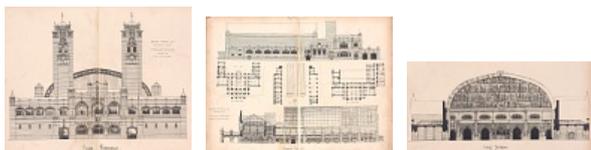
### 1895

Longitudinal section of Mackintosh's railway terminus design exhibited at Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts (209).

## Description

This was Mackintosh's competition entry for the 1893 Soane Medallion, a student prize offered annually by the Royal Institute of British Architects, the winner of which received £100 for six months of foreign travel. <sup>1</sup> It was his second attempt at the prize. He had entered the previous year's contest, when the subject was a Chapter House, but had failed to win. His 1893 entry was also unsuccessful.

Mackintosh's design must have been made after the conditions of the competition were published in March 1892 and before the deadline of 23 December. <sup>2</sup> Only one of his original drawings – a longitudinal section – survives, but reproductions of others were published in the *British Architect*. <sup>3</sup>



## The design

The design is symmetrical, with a central double-height booking hall fronted by a *porte cochère* and flanked by two-storey wings containing waiting rooms and offices. Long two-storey ranges extend behind, parallel with the tracks, enclosing the platforms under a single-span roof of glass and iron in the form of a slightly pointed arch. Externally, the most striking feature is a pair of tall clock towers ending in shallow octagonal ogee domes with lower corner pinnacles. Behind them, the glazed end of the arched train-shed roof can be seen in the elevational drawing, though it would only have been visible in distant views if the design had been built.

Mackintosh followed the example of most Victorian stations in treating the booking hall, waiting rooms and other offices as an elaborate architectural screen, concealing the utilitarian train shed from view rather than expressing it externally. However, most British stations, even large ones, were fitted onto awkward, irregular sites, where the symmetry and implied axial approach of Mackintosh's design would not have been possible. There was, apparently, little information

readily available on the subject of station design at this date: the eventual winner of the 1893 Soane Medallion, A. T. Bolton, noted that there was 'no book on the subject of railway stations', and that 'the student meets with considerable difficulty in obtaining the necessary data'.<sup>4</sup> Bolton evidently searched the pages of the *Builder* for relevant examples, but found only a small number of illustrations of stations, one in Paris, the rest in London, and none later than 1876.

Of the 15 designs submitted for the 1893 Soane Medallion, Mackintosh's was the only Gothic one.<sup>5</sup> Many mid 19th-century railway stations had been built in versions of the Tudor style, but major Victorian Gothic stations were few, George Gilbert Scott's St Pancras in London being by far the most important. Though still the usual style for churches, Gothic had fallen out of favour for secular public buildings by the 1890s. The version of the style adopted by Mackintosh derives from contemporary church architects such as J. D. Sedding (1838–1891), his pupil and successor Henry Wilson (1864–1934) and Leonard Stokes (1858–1925), designers who used medieval architecture as a starting point for highly personal and overtly modern buildings. The towers and the numerous domed turrets in Mackintosh's design recall, for instance, St Peter's church, Ealing, and Holy Trinity, Sloane Street, London, both by Sedding. Another probable influence on Mackintosh's design was Aston Webb's Queen Victoria Law Courts, Birmingham, completed in 1891, where the entrance hall has the same hammerbeam roof, canopied niches and elaborately sculpted royal coat of arms as the Railway Terminus. The panels of sculpture round Mackintosh's booking hall, with friezes of figures holding scrolls, seem to be based on those recently carved by William Hamo Thornycroft for John Belcher's Institute of Chartered Accountants building in Moorgate Place, London.

An inscription in Mackintosh's hand on the only surviving longitudinal section identifies a series of panels high up under the platform roof as 'Spaces for Posters'. Large, artistic posters were just beginning to appear in Britain at this date, following their earlier development in France, and in the mid 1890s Mackintosh himself produced notable examples of this new art form.

## Critical reception

William Emerson, Honorary Secretary of the Royal Institute of British Architects, reviewed all the entries for the Institute's student prizes on 16 January 1893, apparently in front of the students themselves.<sup>6</sup> It is not known if Mackintosh was there to hear Emerson 'condemn in a friendly way' his design:

Though there is some very pretty and attractive drawing in parts of this design, the plan is in the first place hampered by the introduction of two large towers, the supports of which cause difficulties about the Booking-Office and block up too much of the available space. Moreover, the arrangement is not sufficiently considered; as an instance, the Board Room is on one side of the building while the Secretary's office is on the other. In it a good deal of time and drawing have been expended on decorative details, to say nothing of the two towers before mentioned, which are absolutely unnecessary and unsuitable for a railway station; and in reference to these drawings, I would remark that peculiar or eccentric detail (say, for instance, the arches over the entrance) does not necessarily mean beauty of design.

All entries for the Soane Medallion were submitted and judged anonymously, identified only by mottoes or aliases. Mackintosh's was marked with a 'green device', which according to the *Builder* resembled 'a conventional representation of three tadpoles'.<sup>7</sup> The same reviewer noted that this, the only Gothic design in the competition, was 'in some of its parts ... not without merit, though the plan of the booking-hall is quite spoilt by the vaulted corridor which forms its surrounding parts. The iron shed-roof of the station seems to indicate that the author despaired of giving an architectural expression thereto in Gothic language'.

The *British Architect* gave a mixed verdict: 'If the design marked with a green device is not practical or exhilarating, it is at all events very clever. Generally speaking one cannot say that the proportions of the main front are pleasing, but we have quite fallen in love with the towers. The author, however, has not at all made out a case for Gothic as applied to railway stations.'<sup>8</sup> The same journal went on to publish Mackintosh's drawings over the next two months, with a more generous assessment: 'This design, whether traditionally satisfying for a railway station or not, has at all events much more conspicuous architectural merit than that which was selected for the first place in the competition. The great roof is frankly and agreeably expressed, and there is a homogeneity [sic] and quality of proportion about the whole design which certainly did not distinguish the premiated design. Mr. MacIntosh [sic] has shown equal ability in his former essays and classic designs.'<sup>9</sup>

Another favourable review appeared in the *Building News*:

A clever and spirited set of drawings is that with the motto "Green Device," in which the author adopts a freely-treated Late Gothic style, the main station roof slightly pointed, being flanked by towers with a boldly-projecting *porte-cochere*, and booking-offices, dining and waiting rooms in front. The two latter form double-storied wings. The projecting carriage-drive in front of booking-hall is well arranged, and gives a broken outline to the front buildings. Side entrances to restaurant and platform are provided. The ticket-office and station-master's enclosure forms a projecting structure in the centre of booking-office and platform. The large station roof has lattice-pivoted ribs.*Building News*, 64, 13 January 1893, pp. 55–6.

The design was shown at the Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts in 1894 (881), and the longitudinal section in 1895 (209), where the *Glasgow Herald* noted it, but without comment.<sup>11</sup> Its academic draughtsmanship would have made a striking contrast with Mackintosh's highly individual perspective drawing of the Queen Margaret College Anatomical Department, also shown in the Institute's 1895 exhibition.

## People

### Clients:

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### Contractors:

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### Other:

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# Documents

## Bibliography

### Published

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- Thomas Howarth, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd edn, 1977, pp. 15–16
- Robert Macleod, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: Architect and Artist*, London: Collins, 1983, pp. 31–33
- J. M. Richards and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Anti-Rationalists*, London: Architectural Press, 1973, p. 119
- *British Architect*, 39, 13 January 1893, p. 19; 17 February 1893, p. 112; 24 February 1893, p. 132; 3 March 1893, p. 150
- *Builder*, 64, 14 January 1893, p. 25
- *Building News*, 64, 13 January 1893, pp. 55–6
- *Journal of Proceedings of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 7, 19 January 1893, pp. 140–7

### Unpublished

- Hiroaki Kimura, 'Charles Rennie Mackintosh: Architectural Drawings', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 1982, p. 22

#### Notes:

- 1: *British Architect*, 37, 18 March 1892, p. 205.
- 2: *British Architect*, 38, 16 December 1892, p. 435.
- 3: *British Architect*, 39, 13 January 1893, p. 19.
- 4: *British Architect*, 39, 17 February 1893, p. 112; 24 February 1893, p. 132; 3 March 1893, p. 150.
- 5: For a history of the Soane Medallion, see *Journal of Proceedings of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 7, 5 February 1891, pp. 150–2.
- 6: *British Architect*, 37, 18 March 1892, p. 205; *British Architect*, 38, 16 December 1892, p. 435.
- 7: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 52588 (M071-004); *British Architect*, 39, 17 February 1893, following p. 112; 24 February 1893, following p. 132; 3 March 1893, following p. 150.
- 8: *Builder*, 64, 11 February 1893, p. 112.
- 9: Renaissance-style schemes placed first and second were illustrated in the *Builder*, 64, 11 February 1893, p. 112, and 11 March 1893, p. 194.
- 10: *Journal of Proceedings of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 11, 19 January 1893, pp. 140–7.
- 11: *Builder*, 64, 14 January 1893, p. 25. For the 1896 competition drawings for the Glasgow School of Art, Mackintosh used a device composed of three wishbones: Glasgow School of Art Archives: GSAA GOV 5/4/10. For the 1901 Glasgow International Exhibition Buildings, he used a device based on plant forms: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41522.
- 12: *British Architect*, 39, 13 January 1893, p. 19.
- 13: *British Architect*, 39, 17 February 1893, p. 112; 24 February 1893, p. 132; 3 March 1893, p. 150.
- 14: *Building News*, 64, 13 January 1893, pp. 55–6.
- 15: *Glasgow Herald*, 11 April 1895, p. 4.

## Mackintosh Architecture: Context, Making and Meaning

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