International Workers Memorial

Clydebank Asbestos Group


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International Workers Memorial

The 'International Workers Memorial' is a project initiated by the Clydebank Asbestos Group to acknowledge the sacrifices of workers throughout the world who have been affected by asbestos and other industrially related diseases.

The workers memorial will also be a monument to industrial achievement.

On the following pages are references to the form the memorial will take, the creative concept, where it will be sited, and information about the commissioned artist.

The Asbestos Tragedy

In Scotland the asbestos industry started in the nineteenth century. There was a particularly heavy use of the mineral from the First World War through to the 1970s... especially in the industrial heartland of Clydeside, centred on Glasgow, a port and a major shipbuilding and heavy engineering region.

By 1885 there were at least 19 asbestos manufacturers and distributors in Glasgow. This left an unwanted legacy of disability and death from asbestos-related disease.

An area particularly affected was the town of Clydebank, several miles west of Glasgow. Clydebank recently recorded the highest rate of mesothelioma mortality in the whole of Britain.

The great liners, including Queen Elizabeth II built at John Brown's in Clydebank between 1965 and 1967, provides a prime example of the extensive use of asbestos in ship construction at this time. At its peak more than 3,000 workers were employed in the construction of the QE2.

As we now know, many shipyard workers were exposed to asbestos dust. The extent of this exposure can be gauged from the fact that in 1960 there were 42 shipbuilding and ship-repairing establishments in Scotland, 32 of these yards were located on the River Clyde.

There are specific factors which can be identified in most towns and cities which experience an above average incidence of asbestos-related illness.

High on the list is usually a history of shipbuilding, heavy industry or asbestos manufacture.

In many cases there is a historical legacy, as the yards and factories which utilised large quantities of asbestos materials are no longer in operation. Subsequently the jobs which they provided are not now available. This is the unfortunate experience in Clydebank.

For almost a century the town of Clydebank was a hub of industry, famous for its shipyards and engineering works. In addition to this there was the Turners Asbestos Cement factory which operated for nearly 32 years, from 1938 until it closed in 1970.

There was also the giant Singer sewing machine factory which opened in 1884 and ceased production in June 1980.

The dangers of working in shipyards and heavy industry are well documented. However, asbestos is a real danger in everyday life. The growing number of victims of asbestos-related diseases from unlikely non-industrial backgrounds are unfortunate testimony to this.

While it is true that most asbestos victims are men, many women have been contaminated by exposure to their fathers, brothers and husbands work clothes.

Women were also employed in asbestos factories, shipyards and other dangerous occupations which exposed them to the dust.

Clydebank Asbestos Group has risen to the asbestos challenge in the most positive way by commissioning an artist to create a work that will symbolise the scale and dimension of this tragedy.

mixing asbestos insulation

The Memorial

The Clydebank Asbestos Group have links with support groups, trade unions and associated organisations throughout the world.

We also have close links between the Clydebank community and asbestos campaigners in Japan, South Africa, Australia, Brazil, USA, Canada, India.

All are part of the world family fighting for an asbestos-free environment which incorporates a drive for social justice and corporate responsibility.

The idea for a memorial was first raised at a heavily attended General Meeting of Clydebank Asbestos Group by a member whose father had recently died of mesothelioma. Responsibility was then passed to the Management Committee.

The committee unanimously decided that they would commission the Scottish artist Tom McKendrick to create a memorial dedicated to workers who have suffered as a result of their occupations.

The 'International Workers Memorial' is dedicated to all people, and particularly those whose lives have been affected by industrial illness.

The Group are working closely with regional and national agencies engaged in the task of repositioning Clydebank as a distinctive and successful regional centre within the Glasgow metropolitan area.

This monument will be sited at the head of the dock in the former John Brown & Co Shipyard.

Tom McKendrick has been commissioned to produce a piece of art which is uncompromisingly contemporary, yet pays homage to past achievement, sacrifice, skill and pride of working people.

That there should be a monument to working people who have perished in industrial accidents or through occupational disease is a unique product of the Clydebank community.

In addition to fund-raising initiatives undertaken the costs of the project will be raised through subscriptions from sponsoring organizations and individuals.

All donations will be fully acknowledged. Names of individuals and organisations will be integrated into the 'ring' at the base of the sculpture and in all correspondence and publicity material.

If you or your organizations require further information or would like to contribute to the memorial fund. Please contact

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TEL: 0141 951 1008
FAX: 0141 562 0045

Email: clydebankasbestos@ntlbusiness.com
Website: www.clydebankasbestos.org.uk

Clydebank Asbestos Group

The Scottish Perspective

Unfortunately Scotland has had a long association with the asbestos industry. Scottish entrepreneurs were among the pioneers in developing the manufacture of asbestos products, with the first companies appearing in the 1870s.

One account suggests that it was two Scottish businessmen who first introduced the mineral to the United Kingdom, establishing the Patent Asbestos Manufacturing Company in Glasgow, to process asbestos, imported initially from Canada in 1871.

Thereafter growth was rapid as the potential of the manufactured mineral began to be realized. By 1885 there were at least 19 asbestos manufacturers and distributors in Glasgow and a further handful dotted around Lanarkshire.

By 1914, Scottish trade directories reveal that there were more than 60 asbestos manufacturers throughout the country, including seven in Aberdeen and three in Edinburgh.

Turner Brothers, the company that came to dominate the U.K. asbestos industry (as Turner & Newell), began manufacturing asbestos from its plant in Rochdale in the late 1870s. In 1938 Turners set up a factory at Dalmuir to manufacture asbestos-cement products.

Turner's Dalmuir asbestos factory expanded to employ at maximum capacity in the 1950s some 320 workers, of whom 45 were women. They continued production until closure in 1970.

Cape Asbestos and Johns Manville, for example, established Marinite Co. Ltd. in Glasgow in 1952.

Asbestos was widely used to insulate the Cunarder Queen Elizabeth II, built at John Brown's shipyard, Clydebank, in the 1960s.

One of the largest and most active companies was Newalls Insulation, a subsidiary of the major U.K. asbestos producer, Turner & Newall. The biggest shipbuilders, such as John Brown's, had their own asbestos preparation sheds in the yards

In the shipyards asbestos was used to insulate boilers and pipes and as a fire retardant.

Many of these, across a whole range of trades including laggers, joiners, plumbers, french polishers, plasterers, and electricians, were exposed to asbestos dust.

Clydebank Asbestos Group

The Clydebank Asbestos Group is a volunteer organisation set up in 1992 to help provide support, advice and information for victims of asbestos and their families.

We are part of the Clydeside Asbestos Partnership which also includes the Greater Glasgow Health Board, West Dunbartonshire Council and Clydebank Health Issues Group.

Asbestos could soon outstrip motor accidents as a cause of premature death in Britain. However, the most important aspect of this brochure is the fact that it has been empirically confirmed by respected academics that this area has the highest percentage of asbestos-related disease per head of population, certainly in the UK by a large measure and probably through Europe.

In Great Britain it is estimated that in each and every year 10,000 workers die a slow and painful death from the effects of an industrial disease.

If you are seeking further information on any of the subjects covered by this booklet you can contact us either by e-mail at clydebankasbestos@ntlbusiness.com or phone us on 0141 951 1008.

The Framebender

Frame-Bending

Frame-bending was one of the most skilful and dangerous jobs in the shipyard environment. Great girders of steel had to be heated white hot in furnaces, dragged from the inferno on to a 'frame bending floor' and shaped to follow the curvaceous lines of the ship.

Accuracy was an essential part of the job and frames had to be bent in sets to high specifications to ensure perfect symmetry and that the ships hull followed the lines of her design.

Physically demanding and performed in a hostile environment in front of a huge furnace…this was a spectacular display of physical power, usually drawing an admiring audience of other shipyard workers; for which the frame-benders willingly performed. A ritual of swinging hammers and men dancing in and around the debris of 'dogs' and 'spikes', essential in the forming process.

When the great beams had cooled it would have been difficult to imagine how those sweet and gentle curves had been formed by force...unless of course you had witnessed the spectacle that had shaped them.

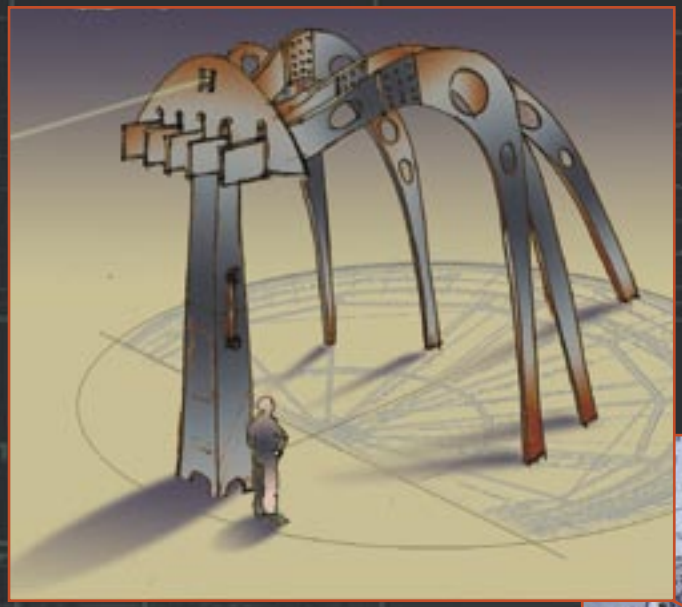
That is the essence of the 'Great Framebender'…it is a peculiar mixture of danger and beauty…

In the frame bender I have inverted the frames of the ship. Instead of reaching gracefully skyward they turn towards the earth. The curves that drew the beautiful form of the hull now draw a more sinister form… Beauty and danger… two words that describe the environment that was heavy industry.

Few of us knew that when the last ship left the dock and the yard gates closed for the last time the danger did not end. Deeply hidden in the lungs of the majority who toiled in those places tiny seeds were planted, indestructible splinters that can sow a brutal premature demise.

Perhaps it might be a fitting tribute to the unknown thousands who died through exposure to asbestos, undiagnosed, and many thousands more who are yet to be claimed…to have a monument that is made from the frame, the wedge and the rivet…a monument that has an austere dignity... yet is uncomfortably stark…

Tom Mckendrick



The Great Framebender

The Framebender is a dynamic sculpture that will constantly change in colour and mood by incorporating time sequence environmental lighting.

The sculpture is also designed to interact with the elements.

Wind will play a part and the sculpture will be built to react to the air that surrounds it, reflecting lifes reliance on air for survival.

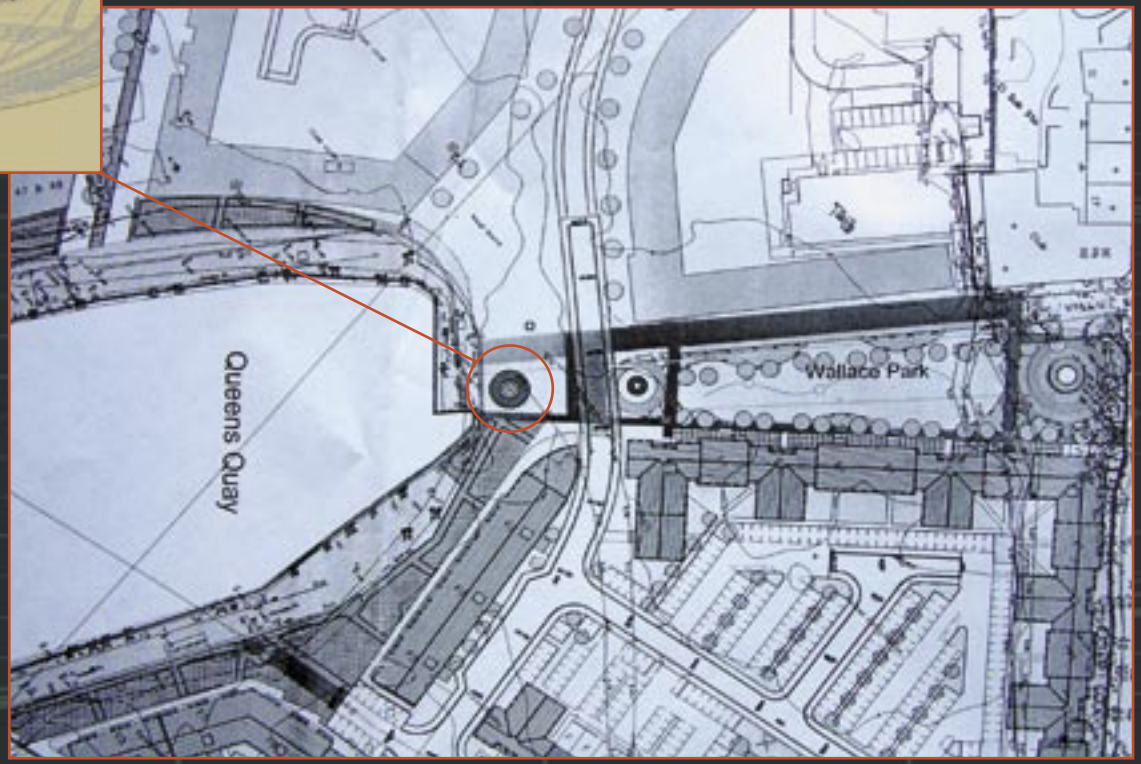
The sculpture will have a ceremonial role to play in the commemorative sense and also as a rallying point for May Day celebrations.

The Site

The sculpture will sit at the head of arguably the most famous Dock on Clydeside, that of the former Cyldeside shipyard John Brown & Co.

The 'laser eye' of the Framebender will look out into the dock from the best vantage point to view this historical place.

Inscribed at its feet and integrated into the 'ring' will be the names of the individuals and organisations who contributed to its construction.



Tom McKendrick

Tom McKendrick was born in Clydebank in 1948. Growing up in this small but vibrant industrial community and six years working in the shipyards, as an apprentice then tradesman, has had a marked influence in his work.

His trade as a Loftsman, now obsolete, acquainted him intimately with the drawing of ships in their development and form. His close working with steel and his observations of textures colours and the calligraphy of the shipbuilder permeate his work.

As an artist Tom is internationally known. He is a respected member of two Royal Societies and his work is exhibited in collections worldwide, yet he remains firmly rooted within his community.

Tom has a strong association with Clydebank Asbestos Group, as an organization and by the misfortune of having family and many friends lost through asbestos related diseases.

Tom's exhibitions contain a rich variety of media and techniques, dedicated sound, objects and effects that merge to create a highly charged aesthetic statement. These exhibitions have been the subject of many documentaries.

Influenced by religious and archaeological art, McKendrick blends with ease ancient concepts and modern technologies. Mckendrick strives to bring fundamental beliefs and ideas to his exhibitions, making them accessible and meaningful.

The drive to create a single holistic visual impact dominates his shows and the use of theatrical effects are employed to enhance and bind together the varied components and intensify the aesthetic atmosphere.

He is at ease working with sound, light , music, paint, steel, electronics...indeed anything that will contribute to the whole.

As a painter his work is identified by its rich surface texture...his sculpture by its direct reference to industrial forms.

Tom can be contacted, and his work can be viewed in greater detail at - www.tommckendrick.com

THE GREAT FRAMEBENDER

The "Framebender" could be described as classic McKendrick. The artist, as a product of the community, has created for its people a vision that they will understand.

It is intended that this monument will become a place of homage and contemplation for the people of the region and the "industrially damaged" of the greater community.

The Great Framebender will become a focus to those who have suffered loss through asbestos exposure, and in the greater expanse of time, a monument to achievement and sacrifice.

The Clydebank Asbestos Group are proud to be the driving force behind this art work and feel that its creation will be defining marker to the continuing struggle for justice. We also believe it will become a poignant symbol for the international asbestos Community.

The Great Rivet God

Rivet Panel No33

Tom Mckendrick

About Asbestos

Asbestos is a group of minerals with long, thin fibrous crystals. The word 'asbestos' is derived from a Greek adjective meaning inextinguishable. The Greeks termed asbestos the 'miracle mineral' because of its soft and pliant properties, as well as its ability to withstand heat.

Asbestos became increasingly popular among manufacturers and builders in the late 19th century due to its resistance to heat, electricity and chemical damage, its sound absorption and tensile strength. When asbestos is used for its resistance to fire or heat, the fibres are often mixed with cement or woven into fabric or mats.

Asbestos is used in brake shoes and gaskets for its heat resistance, and in the past was used on electric oven and hotplate wiring for its electrical insulation at elevated temperature, and in buildings for its flame retardant and insulating properties, tensile strength, flexibility, and resistance to chemicals.

This 'magic mineral' is now known to be highly toxic. The inhalation of asbestos fibres can cause serious illnesses, including mesothelioma and asbestosis. Since the mid 1980s, many uses of asbestos have been banned in many countries.

Six minerals are defined as 'asbestos' including : chrysotile, amosite, crocidolite, tremolite, anthrophyllite and actinolite.

Historic Perspective

Asbestos was recognized by the ancient Greeks to have certain hazards. The Greek geographer Strabo and the Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder noted that the material damaged lungs of slaves who wove it into cloth.

Wealthy Persians who bought asbestos imported over the Hindu Kush, amazed guests by cleaning the cloth by simply exposing it to fire.

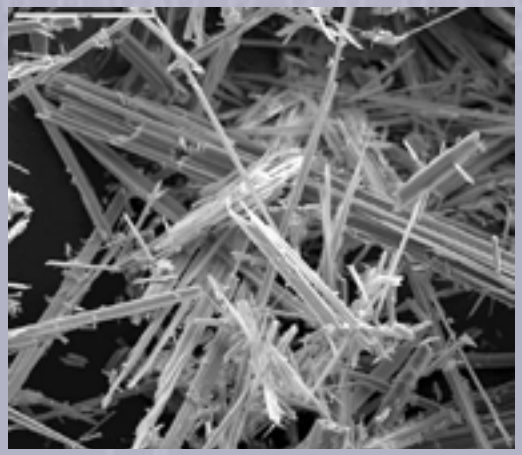
Some archeologists believe that ancients made shrouds of asbestos, wherein they burned the bodies of their kings, in order to preserve only their ashes, and prevent their being mixed with those of wood or other combustible materials commonly used in funeral pyres.

Asbestos became more widespread during the industrial revolution; in the 1860s when it was used as insulation. By the mid 20th century uses included fire retardant coatings, concrete, bricks, pipes and fireplace cement, heat, fire, and acid resistant gaskets, pipe insulation, ceiling insulation, fireproof drywall, flooring, roofing, lawn furniture, and drywall joint compound.

Shipyard workers in WWII were subjected to a high exposure of asbestos; for every thousand workers about fourteen died of mesothelioma and an unknown number died from asbestosis.

The first documented death related to asbestos was in 1906. In the early 1900s researchers began to notice a large number of early deaths and lung problems in asbestos mining towns. The first diagnosis of asbestosis was made in Britain in 1924.

asbestos fibres



microscopic asbestos needles

Amosite

Crocidolite

Chrysotile

Health Issues

Chrysotile asbestos, like all other forms of industrial asbestos, has produced tumours in animals. Mesotheliomas have been observed in people who were occupationally exposed to chrysotile, family members of the occupationally exposed, and residents who lived close to asbestos factories and mines.

Brown asbestos, like all asbestos, is hazardous. Blue asbestos is commonly thought of as the most dangerous type of asbestos. Tremolite often contaminates chrysotile asbestos, thus creating an additional hazard.

Mesothelioma is a malignant lung disease which results mainly from exposure to asbestos. Someone dies every five hours from mesothelioma in the UK.

Other asbestos-related diseases

Asbestos warts – caused when the sharp fibres lodge in the skin and are overgrown causing benign callus-like growths.

Pleural plaques – discrete fibrous or partially calcified thickened area which can be seen on X-rays of individuals exposed to asbestos.

Diffuse pleural thickening – similar to above and can sometimes be associated with asbestosis. Usually no symptoms shown but if extensive can cause lung impairment.

In 2005, 2.2 million tons of asbestos were mined worldwide. Russia was the largest producer with about 40% world share followed by China and Kazakhstan.

Information source, Wikapedia

Mesothelioma UK

The Clydebank Asbestos Group are grateful to the McMillan Cancer Support organisation for their dedication in improving the lives of people affected by mesothelioma and for the help provided by the organisation with the many problems that diagnosis brings.

Their support and advice on, practical, medical, emotional and financial problems and their campaign for better cancer care is greatly appreciated.

'Framebenders' Courtesy of Glasgow University Archives

Clydebank Asbestos Group are extremely grateful for the support and generosity of organisations and individuals who have supported our cause for many years.

Your kindness has ensured that many have been provided with the justice that they deserve and that many individuals and families futures have been assured.

We will continue to fight for the rights of the many who have through no fault of their own been affected by exposure to asbestos.

The group would also like to thank the artist Tom Mckendrick who is giving his work freely.

The Asbestos Group would to thank Mr Tommy Gorman of West Dunbartonshire Council for his help in compiling this brochure and for ten years dedicated service as advisor to the group and campaigner on asbestos issues.

THOMPSONS SOLICITORS

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UCATT

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WE ARE MACMILLAN. CANCER SUPPORT

T&G

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