

BRIEFLY..
Arcade wins praise after £750k revamp

THE Argyll Arcade's recent facelift has received an official nod of approval.

A £750,000, two-year project that restored the mall to its full former glory earned it a commendation in the Building Conservation category of this year's Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors Scotland Awards.

The L-shaped shopping arcade, which dates back to 1827, is one of the world's oldest covered shopping malls. It is notable for its ornate cast-iron hammer beam roof trusses, which support a glazed roof.

The ambitious building conservation project rescued the mall's iconic architecture after decades of neglect. It revealed original light fittings, unique cast iron "fish scale" panels and stripped back 15 layers of paint to expose the original colour scheme.

The refurbishment received two grant awards from Glasgow City Heritage Trust.

Niall Robertson, associate director at Jones Lang LaSalle, the surveyors responsible for the work, said: "This recognition from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors is much deserved, and with the commitment of building owners this polished architectural gem will continue to shine for many years to come."

Chapter and verse

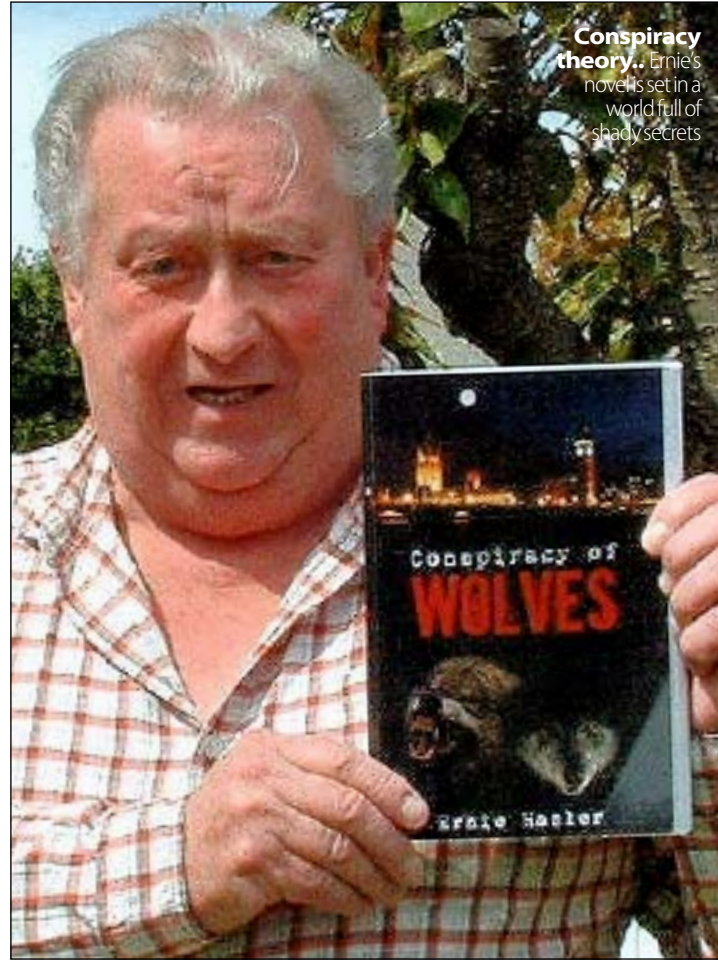
GLASWEGIANS are invited to represent the city in the annual National Poetry Anthology, which celebrates the best of poetry across the UK.

Entry is free and the "Glasgow champion" will receive a free copy of the book.

One overall winner will receive £1000.

To enter, send three unpublished poems to United Press, Admail 3735, London, EC1B 1JB, by June 30. Poems can be on any subject and should be up to 25 lines and 160 words each.

THE MAKINGS OF A THRILLING READ



Conspiracy theory.. Ernie's novel is set in a world full of shady secrets

EXCLUSIVE by Joe McGuire
 jmcguire@theglaswegian.com

THE second novel by a former health and safety officer may prove none too safe for the author if MI5 pick up a copy.

Ernie Hasler's *Conspiracy of Wolves* is a political thriller in which a shady cabal secretly rule the world.

And the Bishopton man joked that if the security service decided to have a read, the fictional disclaimer at the book's start may prove naught but a paper shield.

The 69-year-old's first "chase" novel tells the tale of Douglas Hamilton, who gets dragged deep into a world of crime, cover-ups and dodgy characters.

But Ernie said it wasn't an easy journey to get the excitement readers want.

He explained: "Readers who buy thrillers want excitement from the very beginning."

"I spent a year writing *Conspiracy of Wolves* but initial feedback from the early drafts suggested I 'find the chase and cut to it', so I completely re-constructed the first 19 chapters to pack in more action."

The book covers the morality and legality of weapons of mass destruction after visits to Faslane naval base and the peace camp there inspired Ernie to start writing.

He said: "I'd think about these evil, black submarines in the water carrying warheads that could obliterate not just my village but everyone else's as well."

"That's what made me start writing. 'We went to war with Iraq because they

Writer reveals his sources of inspiration for new novel

were apparently building WMD, yet we're stockpiling these terrible weapons ourselves - it's a massive hypocrisy.

"It's a case of the big boys in the playground wanting to be in charge."

Ernie also highlighted the MPs' expenses scandal as symbolic of the dual standards that exist between rich and poor in society today.

Sticking up for the oppressed and taking on the powerful are themes that occur throughout his work - and his role as a trustee with the Emmaus Glasgow community has influenced this.

In 1997, Ernie was a founder of the group, who help previously homeless people to run their own business and, in turn, help others.

He said: "My work with Emmaus has shown me how society misunderstands and judges certain groups of people."

"The poor and deprived are often assumed to be 'bad' but I've seen they're often victims, controlled and dominated by others."

"I want to stand up for them through my writing."

Conspiracy of Wolves is on sale now from Amazon, priced £8 in paperback and £5 as a Kindle download.

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