

Deacon Convener Sir William Robertson Copland

Deacon of the Incorporation of Tailors 1883

Early Life of Sir William Robertson Copland

He was born in Stirling in central Scotland in 1838, the son of John Copland a merchant tailor who was later Chairman of Glasgow Technical College.

He was educated at Stirling High School then studied Engineering at Glasgow University. He was then apprenticed to David Smith from 1850 to 1856. He then joined the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway Company before becoming Burgh engineer to Paisley.

Copland was involved in the renovation of Dunoon Pier in the second half of the 19th century.

In later life he was heavily involved in the Glasgow Technical College and its expansion. Copland was appointed Chairman of the Board of Governors of Glasgow and West of Scotland Technical College. The College's reputation and student numbers had grown since its formation in 1887, but there was criticism of its inadequate premises and facilities. A decision was taken to build a large new building, later to become the Royal College Building, at the corner of George Street and Montrose Street.

As Chairman, Copland played a leading role in intensive fundraising activities to meet the cost. Philanthropists, public bodies, corporate donors and former students were successfully pursued, and by 1906, £230,000 had been raised. Copland presided over the ceremony when King Edward VII laid the memorial stone in 1903.

He had premises with his firm Copland & Foulis at 146 West Regent Street. He was knighted by King Edward VII in 1906 and received an honorary doctorate (LLD) from Glasgow University in 1907.

Their eldest son, John Pearson Copland, was also a civil engineer. For some time, they practiced jointly as W R Copland & Sons.

1861 Census

The 1861 census shows that William R Copland (22 years) was a Civil Engineer living at 67 Oswald St, Clyde, Glasgow along with his parents John Copland and Euphemia Pearson. His father John Copland (53 years) was a Clothier Employing 3 Men and was born in Holin, Orkney about 1808. Sir William's mother was born about 1805 in Haddington.

His siblings who were living with him and his parents were:

John P Copland aged 27 years and was employed as a Commercial Traveller.

George Copland aged 26 years and was as a Student of Theo B A

James Copland aged 24 years and was a Student of Philosophy

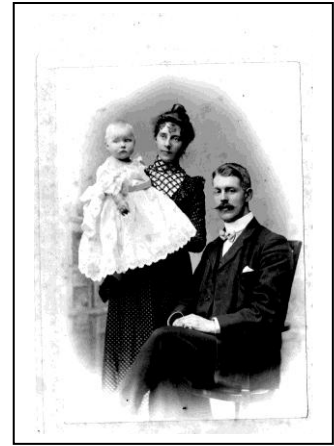
Living in the household was a Margaret Webster, a servant.

Marriage

William Robertson Copland and Elizabeth Jane Donaldson were married in Milton, Glasgow on 17th June 1867, both parties were 28 years of age.

1871 Census

The next census was 4 years after the marriage and lists William Robertson Copland as being a 32-year-old Civil Engineer, living at 21 Sandyford Place, Glasgow with his 32 year old wife Elizabeth Jane Donaldson and their 3 children and 2 servants.



The children were:

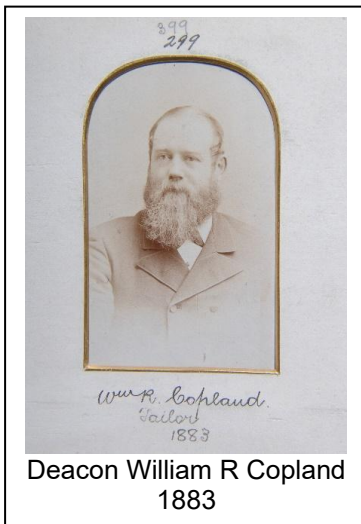
John Copland, aged 3 years.

William Copland aged 2 years.

Elizabeth Copland aged under 1 month.

1881 Census

The family were still living at 21 Sandyford Place, Glasgow at the time of the 1881 census. William Robertson Copland was still listed as a Civil Engineer.



The family had expanded to 6 children, namely:

William R Copeland Jr., 11-year-old Son

Elisabeth B Copeland, 10-year-old Daughter

James Mc K Copeland, 8-year-old Son

George D Copeland, 6-year-old Son

Edward R Copeland, 1-year-old Son

The family also had 2 female servants:

Helen A Duncan, 24-year-old Servant

Ann G Sharp, 24-year-old Servant.

In 1883 William Robertson Copland became Deacon of the Incorporation of Tailors.

1891 Census



By the 1891 census Sir William Copland (57 years) was married and living in 20 Sandyford Place with his wife Elizabeth Jane Donaldson (52 years) and his six children and two servants.

The children living with them were:

John Pearson Copland aged 22 years and was employed as an Assistant Civil Engineer.

William Robertson Copland aged 21 year and was employed as an Assistant Civil Apprentice.

Elizabeth Blair Copland aged 20 years with no employment given.

James McKenzie Copeland aged 18 years and employed as a Clerk (Calico Printers)

George D Copland aged 16 years and employed as a Wright (Apprentice).

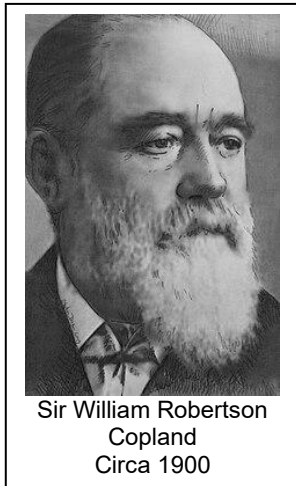
Edward R Copland aged 11 years and was listed as a scholar.

Also in the household was Barbara Wishart (24 years) and Barbara P McLaneblan (20 years) who were domestic servants.

In 1891 Sir William became Deacon Convener of the Trades House of Glasgow.

Not shown on the census was his election as Deacon Convener in October 1891.

1901 Census



William R Copland was 62 years of age at the time of the 1901 census, he was still living with his 62-year-old wife Elizabeth Jane. Most of the children had left home and only 3 remained in the family home:

James M Copland, aged 28 years and employed as a Warehouseman.

George D Copland, aged 26 years and employed as an Architect.

Edward R Copland, aged 21 years and employed as a Chartered Accountant.

They also employed 2 servants:

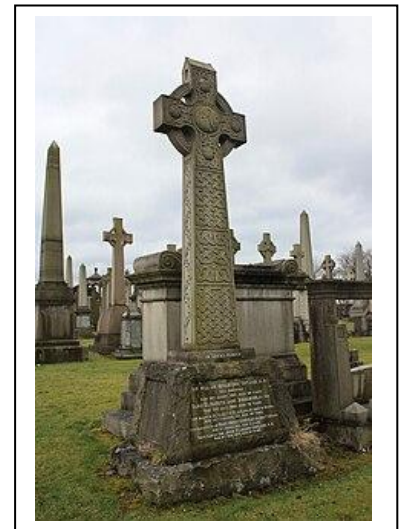
Mary M Mclean, 22-years-old.

Christina M Cumming, 22-years-old.

Death

Sir William passed away on the 19th of August 1907 at his home in 20 Sandyford Place, Glasgow at 8.30 a.m. The cause of death was Renal Abdominal Tumour and Enlargement of the Liver which he had been suffering for a period of 4½ months. His wife Elizabeth Jane Donaldson passed away on the 23rd July 1908 aged 70 years. The cause of death was listed as Bronchial Asthma, Emphysema and Cardiac Failure.

Sir William was buried at Glasgow Necropolis



Trades House Obituary

Trades House Minute of 27th September 1907

Death of Ex-Convener Sir William Robertson Copland.



Before proceeding to the business of the day the Convener said :-I desire to make a reference and submit a motion for your acceptance regarding the death of Ex Convener Sir William Robertson Copland.

It is unnecessary to say much of late Convener Copland's work in this House. It seems such a short time since he retired from it, although he first entered it as Deacon of the Incorporation of Tailors so far back as the year 1883 and served for the long period of 19 years. It was in the Deacons' Association that he first took an active interest, and he was soon elected Treasurer, and passed through the Chair as President in 1890; but his outstanding merits had already marked him out for advancement here, and having been elected Collector in

1889 he became Deacon-Convener in 1891. His ready eloquence, his unceasing energy, his dislike for all unworthy traditions, and his reverence for ancient customs worthy of continuation will always be remembered by his old colleagues of these days. The spirit he chiefly showed in this House was one which made for reform and progress. The House made great strides in these directions whilst he led it. Under his influence expenditure on social functions was reduced and ultimately abolished, and the expenditure on pensions very considerably increased. He strove long and, in the end, successfully, to make the House and the Crafts take a deeper interest in the cause of technical education, and when elected to represent them on the newly constituted Board of the Glasgow, and West of Scotland Technical College he entered into his duties with a zeal and enthusiasm which earned him the highest respect of his fellow-craftsmen, and ,soon placed him at the head of one of the most useful institutions in the city. For nearly 20 years he served us and the community on that Board with nothing short of genius. The honours he gained reflected upon ourselves, for he always considered himself in this special work a Trades House man, and with a modesty that was characteristic of him referred back any distinctions he achieved to the opportunities the House had given him. He gave us his best and made many sacrifices for the House he loved so well.

I ask you, therefore, to resolve that we record in our Minutes of to-day how much we miss his genial presence, his kindly tactful word, his good heart, overflowing with sympathy, and his example of constant labour in every good cause to which he set his hand. We have had many great hearts in the Trades' House, but we have never had a greater than Sir William Copland. I beg formally to move that we express deep regret at his death and convey our sincere condolence to Lady Copland and the members of her family in their bereavement, and that an excerpt from the Minute be forwarded to her.

The motion was unanimously agreed to.