Trades House of Glasgow

Heritage Newsletter No 15

September 2026

Heritage Volunteers

Every Tuesday, our heritage volunteers arrive at Trades Hall to help preserve and make available the wonderful history of the Trades House and the 14 Incorporations and the City of Glasgow. This summer we have been delighted to have the help of school-leaver Andrey Georgiev who has been gaining archive experience in listing Trades House plans. Here Andrey describes his experience of working with us:

Andrey Georgiev, Archive Volunteer

“I first came into contact with the Archive team at the Trades House after emailing to enquire about work experience over the summer. I soon received a reply from the Honorary Archivist, Carol Parry, inviting me for an "interview". On my first Tuesday, I got straight to work numbering old maps and building plans. As I worked through them, I discovered the collection also included engravings, letters patent, and architectural sketches of mouldings, skirtings, and window designs. Not every item was equally fascinating however - some were plans of toilets and emergency exits. All

in all, I have worked through 491 items, and the project still isn't finished!

Although I had no previous connection with the Trades House, everyone made me feel very welcome. There was a relaxed and often humorous atmosphere, especially at lunchtime, when conversations ranged from recent trips, the World Cup, and national politics.

As for me, this September I will begin studying History at the University of Edinburgh. I hope to pursue a career in the heritage sector, and volunteering at the Trades House Archive has given me valuable experience and a greater appreciation of the work involved in preserving Glasgow's history."

We all wish Andrey well in his studies at Edinburgh University and hope that he keeps in touch.

Display Case in the Reception Room

Anyone venturing into the reception room (to the right of the entrance hall) in recent weeks will have spotted a subtle change to the décor. The two partially glazed units on the right (as you enter the room) have been transformed into much needed space to display some of the important heritage pieces linked to the Trades House and its history. Until recently the larger of the two cabinets served as an 'overspill' coat rack; the smaller one, used for no more than temporary ad-hoc storage following external room hire.

The change of use, first mooted by former archivist Craig Bryce and subsequently supported by DC's Richard Paterson and Tom Pollock has seen the cabinets' original shelving reinstated (and strengthened) and new lighting introduced.

The cabinets now display around a dozen of the unique Craft chests that were previously stored away in the basement and not seen by the public. In addition, a small selection of silver pieces brought out of safe storage in

time for the Summer Ball were so well received that the decision has been taken to keep them on display.

Understandably, the Crafts are perfectly entitled to access and remove whatever's required for any official purposes but it is hoped that these items can be returned straight afterwards. Importantly, as locked displays it's imperative that the cabinets are kept secure at all times. Keys are held with the Hall Keeper although a second set are deposited with the Archives team.

A New Exhibition at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow

The Incorporation of Gardeners has provided information and an exhibit for a new exhibition at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow entitled "Dear Green Spaces: Nature and Our Health". The exhibition focuses on how plants have been used for our health over the

millennia. Books from the library are on display including the writings from Greek and Roman medicine and an 18th century handwritten book of herbal remedies. Parks, acting as the city's 'green lungs', are emphasised and it is hoped that the exhibition will encourage people to get outside to explore the green spaces around them.

Above: Incorporation of Gardeners' Deacon's dancing medal.
Left: Deacon Nick Parry at the opening of the exhibition "Dear Green Spaces" at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow.

Examples of where the Incorporation of Gardeners has supported community groups in horticulture within the city are on display as is the Deacon's dancing medal.

The exhibition is open to the public to view every Monday between 14.00 and 17.00. It is helpful to email library@rcpsg.ac.uk in advance should you wish to visit.

Books on Botanical Matters in the Trades House Library

Following on the theme of "Dear Green Spaces", if you are interested in things botanical, the Trades House Library holds several books on Glasgow Botanic Gardens and plants in the Glasgow area:

Alston, E.R., et al.., *Notes on the fauna and flora of the West of Scotland*, Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1876.

Curtis, E.W., *A guide to the Glasgow Botanic Gardens*, Glasgow: Corporation of Glasgow, n.d. 1960.

Curtis, Eric W., *Kibble's Palace*, Glasgow: Argyll Publishing, 1999.

Curtis, Eric W., *The story of Glasgow's Botanic Gardens*, Glendaruel: Argyll Publishing, 2006.

Dickson, J.H., Macpherson, P., and Watson, K., *The changing flora of Glasgow: urban and rural plants through the centuries*, Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 2000.

Ellis, David, *Guide to the common wild flowers in the neighbourhood of Glasgow*, Glasgow : John Smith, [1909].

Should you wish to look at any of the above, please email: carol.parry@tradeshouse.org.uk.

A list of all the books in the Trades House Library is available from the Trades House Library website at https://www.tradeshouselibrary.org (scroll down the page).

Recent additions to the Trades House Library website:

Laws and Regulations of the Incorporation of Masons
Published: 1926
Author: Incorporation of Masons
Available from:
https://www.tradeshouselibrary.org/uploads/4/7/7/2/47723681/masons_laws___regulations_1927_.pdf

This book provides a list of members, a list of the Deacons and also a list of the Clerks of the Incorporation of Masons from 1772 until 1925.

Trades House Connections with Football
Published: 2026
Author: Craig R Bryce
Available from:
https://www.tradeshouselibrary.org/uploads/4/7/7/2/47723681/trades_hall_~_football_~_rangers_club.pdf

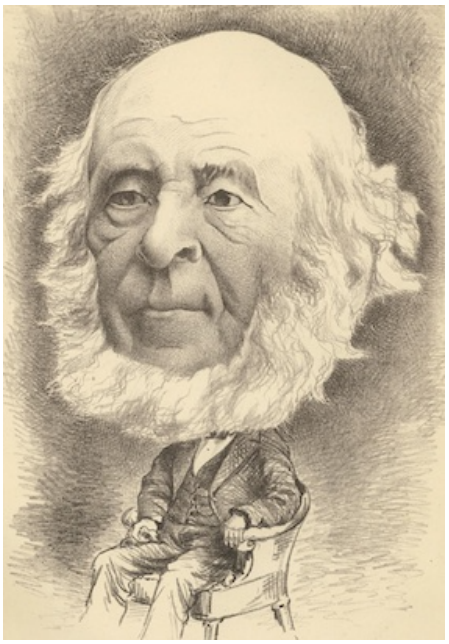
This article by former Honorary Archivist, Craig Bryce, shows that football has been played in the city for a long time. In the second half of the 16th century the city's accounts paid for footballs until 1589-90 when a Cordiner named John Neill, in return for remission of fees on his admission as burgess, undertook to supply the city every year with six footballs. Fleshers Haugh, part of Glasgow Green, was used by the Fleshers for pasturing their animals and in 1792 was purchased by Glasgow City Council. Football was played on Fleshers Haugh since at least Victorian times and it is there that Rangers Football Club played their first matches, their AGM being held at Trades Hall.

Deacon Conveners buried in Glasgow Necropolis

The Honorary Archivist is working with Friends of Glasgow Necropolis to find out more about former Deacon Conveners who are buried there. In this edition of the *Newsletter* we look at two former Deacons of the Incorporation of Cordiners, James Craig and Thomas Blyth.

James Craig, Deacon Convener 1853/4

James Craig was born at Dunkeld and moved to Glasgow where he and his brother established a business as shoemakers. He later became a leather merchant. His second wife, Agnes, was wealthy and she acquired the estate of Middleton near Ibrox. When living in South Portland Street he was elected a bailie of the barony of Gorbals and the adjacent burghs of Anderston and Bridgeton. In 1853 he became a justice of the peace for the Lower Ward of Lanarkshire. He was also a member of the Govan Parochial Board and a one-time chairman of the Glasgow Perthshire Society.



Caricature of James Craig from *The Bailie*

Memorial to James Craig of Middleton and his first wife Agnes Binnie at Glasgow Necropolis

He appears to have been a man of strong opinions, his obituary in the *Glasgow Evening Post* stating that: 'he was wont to argue vigorously in favour of opinions which are certainly not those advocated in this journal'. Politically, he was considered 'an extreme Liberal'. Originally a Baptist, he was for many years connected with Elgin Place Congregational Church.

He entered the Incorporation of Cordiners in 1840 and was Deacon of the craft in 1848/9, 1852/3 and 1865/6, becoming Deacon Convener in 1853/4. He was also Director of the Trades House School.

On 14 August 1849 he, along with other members of the Master Court presented a loyal address to Queen Victoria on her visit to Glasgow. Queen

Victoria was the first reigning monarch to visit Glasgow since the 1600s and an estimated 400,000 people lined the streets of the city to watch her and her procession pass through. Those on the pensioners roll of the Incorporation of Cordiners each received a gift of 5/- in honour of the occasion. Following her visit, the Incorporation held a 'loyal and joyous' dinner in the Globe Hotel, George Square after the Lammas Court meeting, at the expense of the Incorporation. Here, as reported in the *Glasgow Herald* on 27 August 1849, Craig as Deacon 'efficiently occupied' the chair. During the loyal toast special mention was made to the 'late auspicious visit of her Majesty, and drank with more than ordinary enthusiasm'.

James Craig was married three times and died on 19th August 1880 aged 85 at Millport where he had taken a house for a couple of months. He is buried in Compartment Omega in Glasgow Necropolis beside his first wife Agnes Binnie who died in 1851 aged 51 and other members of the family.

Thomas Blyth, Deacon Convener 1865/6

Thomas Blyth was born in Cupar, Fife, and was a boot and shoemaker in Glasgow. By 1861 he was employing 18 men, 53 women and a boy. His business address at that date was 98 Buchanan Street and his home address was 23 Carlton Place on the south bank of the Clyde. Carlton Place had been designed by Peter Nicholson in 1802 as a high-class residential area. He was amongst other boot and shoemakers who, on 1 January 1851, gave the young men in their employment a holiday for the whole day. He was, however, unsympathetic to his workers in May 1853 when they threatened to strike for higher pay. He was part of a consortium of boot and shoemakers in Glasgow who announced in the press that their workmen had 'attempted through their Union, to exercise a tyranny and control over us as employers, which were we to submit to, would completely invert the order of properly-regulated society' (*Glasgow Examiner*, 28 May 1853). Problems arose again when the Glasgow journeymen went on strike in 1857. This led to the composition of a song by one of the strikers entitled 'The Gallant Shoemakers of Glasgow', published in May 1857. The song was prefaced with the comment that: 'The foolishness of the employers in not giving in to the present demand of their workers, will be long felt by the Glasgow public, as many of the first-

class workers are away on tramp, to all parts of the three kingdoms; and when once away it may be a long time ere they return'.

Blyth had a long association with the Trades House having entered as a member of the Incorporation of Cordiners in 1833. He was Deacon of the Craft in 1841/2 and 1847/8. His time in office as Deacon was not without its problems. At the master court of 31 January 1848 a motion was proposed by one of the members, Mr Peter McGrigor, and 'in consequence of improper language towards certain members great confusion ensued and some of the members having left the Room the Deacon declared the meeting adjourned'. New bye-laws were being discussed around this period so perhaps the disagreement was about these – unfortunately the minutes do not say. The new bye-laws of the Incorporation were approved by the master court on the 1st September 1848. Thomas Blyth subsequently became Deacon Convener in 1865/6.

Thomas Blyth, Deacon of the Incorporation of Cordiners, 1841/2

Blyth family memorial at Glasgow Necropolis

Blyth took a strong interest in local affairs and acted as a manager to the City Parochial Board from 1850 till 1856 and again from 1871 until he died. He was a Director of the Fife, Kinross and Clackmannan Charitable Society, a Director of the North British Bank, and represented the Trades

House on Hutchesons Hospital charity and Glasgow Royal Asylum for Lunatics. He was also on the Committee of Management of Clyde Trust and on the sub-committee on ferries.

He died on the 15th May 1875 aged 69 years at 8 Newton Place, Glasgow, and is buried in Glasgow Necropolis in Compartment Sigma. He married Mary Smart in 1838. She died in 1890 aged 80 and is buried in the family lair beside him along with other members of the family.

Further information about The Friends of Glasgow Necropolis can be found at https://www.glasgownecropolis.org

Further information on historical matters relating to the Trades House can be obtained from:
Honorary Archivist, Carol Parry email: carol.parry@tradeshouse.org.uk
or
Honorary Curator, Peter Trowles email: peter.trowles@tradeshouse.org.uk