

Trades House of Glasgow

REV. JOHN HOWISON



By

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Rev. John Howison.

The Rev. John Howison is the first recorded person to have left money to the Trades House for the benefit of the members of the Trades House and the 14 Incorporations. His story highlights the generosity that many have bestowed on the Trades House over the centuries.

John Howison was minister of Cambuslang, and by deed of mortification (his will) dated 25th November 1613, he left money to the Trades House to be used to support a student at Glasgow University. "*... for the affection he had for the college and students of the same, and for the help and supply of the entertainment of a bursar, to be presented to the said college, in all time coming, by the Deacons and Visitor of the crafts of Glasgow, the said bursar always being one of the sons of a craftsman of the said burgh,*" (the term Bursar refers to a student receiving a Bursary), he granted and mortified the profit of one thousand merks, to be laid out upon sufficient lands within the said burgh; and so oft as the said annual rent is redeemed, by payment of the principal sum, the same to be of new employed and laid out upon lands again, by the principal of the said college, and the Deacon Convener for the time, perpetually thereafter. And he ordained that the Deacons and Visitor of the said crafts, and their successors, be presenters of the said bursar to the university of the said college; that the said bursar be a qualified scholar, of honest name and good repute, and apt and able to discharge his duty in learning, being of the crafts rank; and failing thereof, any other that pleases the said Deacons to place in the said revenue, to the time he passes his course within the said college - the said bursar to have his entertainment within the said college upon the good deed and profit of the sum above written.

It is understood that Trades' House received the proceeds of the one thousand merks bequeathed, although there is no hard evidence of this, and until 1817 Trades House paid £5 of interest each year to the bursar, who was appointed regularly. In 1817, the House authorised the Collector to pay a further £3 each year, in addition to the £5. On 6th January 1820, the then Deacon Convener received an anonymous letter, stating that the writer had enjoyed this bursary, and received £20 from it, which his improved circumstances enabled him to repay, and the sum was enclosed. John Young, Professor of Greek in the University of Glasgow, was the writer. He was the son of a freeman cooper in Glasgow and receiving the bursary for four years, had allowed him to attend college and become an eminent classical scholar. The House added this £20 to the principal sum and from 1820 paid £9 a-year to the bursar, often for four sessions (years). The intention was that the bursar should have been given board and bed in the College accommodation. From 1889 the Bursary was united with the Gilchrist Bursary as its value had fallen so much. The student was no longer maintained with bed and board, instead the money was handed over to the bursar.

The Reverend John Howison who founded this bursary was a zealous supporter of the principles of the Scottish Reformation and resisted the introduction of Episcopacy into Scotland. He was moderator of the Presbytery of Glasgow in 1582, when it was assembled to issue a *decree* against Mr. R. Montgomerie, who, contrary to his agreement with the General Assembly, was seeking

appointment as Archbishop of Glasgow. The Provost of Glasgow, accompanied by the bailies and some of the citizens, entered the meeting, and stopped John Howison the moderator from proceeding; "*they put violent hands on him, smote him on the face, rent his beard, struck out one of his teeth, and cast him into prison*".

In 1584, Mr. Howison preached at Edinburgh, denounced Prelacy and the headship of the King, and called on his hearers to acknowledge "*no prince and no magistrate in teaching the Word,*" and he again went to prison.

In 1585 while the parliament met at Linlithgow, he preached there, "*made a good exhortation, telling the truth, and meet for the purpose; but there was no help for it.*" And he went to prison again.

In 1596 he was appointed commissioner for the church in the west of Scotland, to reside in Edinburgh with the three commissioners from the other quarters of the kingdom, "*to consult what is most expedient in every case*". The next year, for being a party to the declinature of the jurisdiction of the King and council in matters spiritual, Mr. Howison was for a fourth time cast into prison.

It is rather singular, however, that his deed of mortification in 1613, is addressed to "*all and sundrie quhome it effeiris, and in special to the Richt Reverend Fader Johnne Archbishop of Glasgow, and the principal and regents of the college thair of, and universitie of ye samin.*"¹ The translation of the above text reads as: "*all and sundrie whom it is proper, and in special to the Right Reverend Father John Archbishop of Glasgow and the principal and regents of the college, and University*".

¹ George Crawford, Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Trades House of Glasgow, Page 255