

**THE INCORPORATION OF  
SKINNERS OF  
STIRLING**

By  
**DAVID B. MORRIS**

*(A Paper read to the Stirling  
Natural History and Archaeological Society,  
17th February, 1925).*

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### INTRODUCTORY.

The Incorporation of Skinners was one of the Seven Incorporated Trades of the Royal Burgh of Stirling, ranking sixth in order of priority. There is no record of the actual origin of the Crafts Incorporations in Stirling. When the earliest Town Council minutes, that have been preserved, begin in 1519, we find the Trades already in existence, with their principles of administration well established. Among these was the Incorporation of Skinners.

It is unfortunate that the minute books of the Craft have been lost. The only volume preserved is a copy of the minute book from 1854 to 1897. Happily, information is available from other sources. The Incorporation appears to have been a particularly close one, the members related by blood and marriage. Their numbers were probably always small. In 1820 there were seven, in 1835 eleven, and in 1893 eleven members. During the period from 1595 to the present day, the Deacon Convener of the Trades only on two occasions was a Skinner, namely, John Cuthbert in 1604 and Peter Reid in 1850.

In the year 1854 there was no member resident in Stirling, and a member whose home was in Glasgow petitioned the Convener Court to take charge of the affairs of the Skinners and their funds. The Court agreed, and steps were taken to recover the books and papers from the Deacon, Peter Reid, who had gone to reside at Silver Mills, Edinburgh. There is no record of what success attended this effort. A new deacon, Alexander Cherry, was shortly afterwards appointed.

In the Report on Municipal Corporations in Scotland it is stated that the dues of entry to the Incorporation of Skinners in 1835 were as follows :—

Sons and sons-in-law	...	£1 10 0
Apprentices	... ..	1 10 0
Strangers	... ..	15 0 0
Dues of entry with burgh—		
Sons and sons-in-law	...	1 0 0
Strangers and apprentices	...	2 0 0

These sums were considerably less than in all

the other Trades, so it was not excessive charges for entry that kept the numbers down.

#### THE SKINNERS' OCCUPATION.

An interesting question is, what was the precise occupation of the Skinners. No doubt the practice varied in different burghs, but it seems clear that in early times the skinners were glove-makers. Ordinance 40 of the Laws of the Guild deals with glovers and skinners, and while both names are given, the context reads as if the two terms signified the occupation of the same set of men. In the Stirling records the skinners are frequently referred to as the glovers. The points upon which the Chamberlain was to challenge the skinners dealt with two things, the making of gloves and the tanning of leather. This brings out the fact that at an early date a skinner was a tanner, and we know that in Stirling down to living memory, and long after the making of gloves here had ceased, the members of the Skinners' Incorporation were those engaged in tanning. This would be all quite clear were it not for the fact that there is evidence that shoemakers also tanned leather. Thus the Chamberlain's challenge to the soutars was concerned not only with the making of shoes, but also with the barking or tanning of leather. It may be that the shoemakers tanned the leather for shoes, while the skinners, by a somewhat different process, prepared the skins for the making of gloves. In course of time the shoemakers gave up tanning, which then became the exclusive trade of the skinners.

There was a considerable trade in furs, and fur was no doubt much used for official robes and ladies' garments when the Royal Court was at the Castle. It is not clear that the skinners were furriers, but on 2nd May, 1524, a tailor was forbidden to add furs to a gown, this prohibition being obtained at the instance of the "Furrier Craft," which I am inclined to think was the Skinners' Incorporation.

In 1546, two bonnet makers were received into the Incorporation.

#### EARLY HISTORY.

The earliest evidence which we possess of the presence in Stirling of men who worked with skins is a Charter by King David I., dated in 1129, in which he gave a number of grants to the Church of the Holy Trinity in Dunfermline.

Among these was included "half of the hides, fat, and tallow of all beasts killed at the feasts held in Strivelin and between the Forth and Tay."

In the accounts of the Burgh of Stirling, given up on 25th January, 1327-8, as audited in Exchequer, the customers charge themselves with the dues received on nine acres of hides—that is nine dozen—during the period of the accounts, which was eleven months.

King James II. granted a Charter to the Burgh of Stirling on 12th January, 1451-2, conferring on the burgesses freedom from the payment of custom on salt and skins, the skins being those of animals enumerated in the Charter, mostly wild creatures, but including sheep.

In the reign of David I. (1124-1153) a table of the petty customs leviable in Scottish burghs was drawn up. It was, no doubt, altered from time to time, but in the form in which it is preserved it is of great antiquity. It is very interesting as a record of early Scottish trade. The number of kinds of fur in use is very remarkable. The following are the duties on furs, or peloure as they were called:—

"Of peloure.

Of a tymmyr of skynnys of toddis, quhytredys, mertrikis, cattis, beueris, sable, firrettis or swylk vthyr of ilk tymmyr, at the outpassing iiij d. Of the tymmyr of skurel ij d. Of ane hundredth gray gryse and skurel dycht and letheryt viij d. Of ilk otyr skyn a halfpeny."

A "tymmer" of skins consisted of forty skins packed between two boards. The furs mentioned in the foregoing list are fox, weasel, marten, cat, beaver, sable, ferret, and squirrel. For these fourpence or twopence of duty per forty skins was paid. Each otter skin was charged a half-penny. When prepared and curried, one hundred grey furs or squirrel were charged eightpence.

The duties on hides and skins were as follows:—

"Of custome of hydys and skynnys.

Of a last of hydys viij d., of half a last iii jd., of ilk dakir of hydys sauld in dakir i d., of half a dakyr or four or three twa hydys i halfpeny, of a hid at the oute passing a fardyng, of a last of hert hydys aucht peniis, of a dakyr of hynd calwis thre half peniis . . . of a hundredth wol skynnys four peniis, of thre score twa peniis, of a bynde of skynnys of schorlyng that

is to say twenty four a penny, of ane hundredth hog skynnys thre half peniis, of ane hundredth lam skynnys thre half peniis, of ane hundredth gayte syknnyis or har skynnys thre half peniis."

A last of hides was twelve dozen, a daker was a dozen (nominally ten), a bind was two dozen. The skins mentioned are hart, hind calf, sheep, schorling (shorn sheep), hog (a young sheep), lamb, goat, and hare.

In the Laws of the Guild, promulgated at Berwick about 1249, and applicable to the burghs in Scotland, skinnners and glovers are classed together in Law 40, which is in the following terms :—

"Ordinance made concerning glovers and skinnners.

Also, we ordain that no skinner, nor glover, nor any other burgess make wool of any skins from the feast of Whitsunday till the feast of St. Michael, but he shall sell the skins as they are and as he best may. And if any skinner or glover be convicted of breaking this ordinance, he shall be deprived of his craft for a year and a day. And if any burgess break the ordinance and thereof be convicted, for each offence he shall give a cask of wine to the Gild."

The High Chamberlain of the Kingdom had cognisance in all burghal matters, and periodically visited the different towns throughout the country to inquire whether the administration was properly conducted. In the reign of King Robert the Bruce the points upon which inquiry was to be conducted were set down, and later these were extended. The reference to skinnners is as follows :—

"Off the chalance of skynnaris.

In the first, that thai mak gluvis and vther graith or ther lethir be kindly wrocht and maid. Item that thai hunger ther lethir in default of graith, that is to say alum eggis and othir thingis. Item that thai deir the kingis mercate and the cuntre of eggis bying. Item that thai fle the kingis watter. Item that thai sow and wirkis with fals graith. Item that thai mak thame maisteris and can nocht the craft."

This may be translated thus :—First, that they make gloves and other goods before the leather be well wrought and made. Item, that they starve the leather by default of tanning ingredients, that is to say alum, eggs and other things. Item, that they raise the prices in the

king's market and the country by their purchases of eggs. Item, that they foul the public streams. Item, that they sew and work with defective material. Item, that they make those master craftsmen who do not know their trade.

There was considerable regulation by Parliament and by the Town Councils of the trade in hides, not only in early times but also down to the union with England. Packing and peeling with unfreemen in such trade were forbidden, as was also the purchase of hides privately instead of in the open market. Hides were an important article of export, chiefly to Holland, and consequently appeared frequently in the fiscal legislation of Scotland. There was also a certain amount of regulation of the tanning of leather.

There is evidence of the export of wool and skins from a very early date. In the "Ledger of Andrew Halyburton, Conservator of the Privileges of the Scottish Nation in the Netherlands, 1492-1503," which has been published, details of this trade are given, the great variety of furs and the regular supply bespeaking the wild, unoccupied condition of the country.

Bishop Leslie, writing in 1578, mentions the export of wool and skins and other commodities from Glasgow to "the East Countries."

William Lithgow, in his descriptions of Scotland of 1628, after a reference to "meandering Forth, from tiptoed Snadoun, the prosopious mirror for matchless majesty," goes on to mention the commodities transported beyond sea, these including hides and skins.

The process of tanning was no doubt primitive in early times. It has been described thus :—After the hair is removed from the hide with lime, it is soaked in a "woose," or wash of bark and willow twigs. Next day the tops of young heather are placed between folds of the hide in the tub, and the woose poured over the whole. The hide was left some time in the tub weighted with stones, and was then considered to be tanned (Colville, 169). In 1617 the shoemakers of Edinburgh were dissatisfied with the quality of the leather, and made personal complaint to the king. The matter was taken up by the Privy Council, and twelve Englishmen from Durham, Hexham, Morpeth, and Chester-le-Street were brought in to advise. In spite of opposition, a patent was granted to Lord John Erskine, and with the authority of a Royal Proclamation the

strangers were distributed among the burghs. They were nowhere welcome, but appear to have succeeded in introducing improved methods of tanning. They were allowed to return home in 1622.

In 1681 a farther development of the leather trade occurred. Leather, stamped and gilded, believed to be originally a Spanish fashion, was a favourite cover for the walls of rooms in the better class of houses in Scotland. Hitherto such ornamental leather was introduced from abroad, but now Alexander Brand, merchant in Edinburgh, by a considerable outlay, had brought workmen and materials into the country, and for the first time was about to set up such a work, in which he expected to produce the article "at as easy rates as it could be imported." On a favourable report from the Committee of Trade, the Privy Council gave Brand a privilege of exclusive manufacture for nineteen years.

#### THE SKINNERS AND THE GUILDRY.

There was a long standing dispute between the skimmers and the Guildry in Stirling, which lasted for centuries. The origin of the quarrel was the practical difficulty of defining the respective rights of and restrictions on the merchant and the craftsman with relation to the preparation and sale of skins and their products. The merchant bought and sold, but dare not work with his hands, while the craftsman could work, but must not buy nor sell, other than to buy the materials of his craft and dispose of the manufactured article. The merchant could deal in hides, but the craftsman only could make leather or leather goods. A sheep skin was covered with wool, but the skinner had nothing to do with trading in wool. It will be seen that there was plenty of scope for controversy. So far back as the date of the Laws of the Guild (1249), we have seen that the wool question between the merchants and the glovers or skimmers required regulation.

Among the earliest extant records of the Town Council of Stirling is a pronouncement on 1st October, 1526, that no merchant should buy any calf skins, and on 6th October, 1527, the relations of the merchants, the skimmers, and the shoemakers with reference to the buying of skins are set forth.

On 12th April, 1549, the Provost and Bailies

inhibited William Norwell and all others to 'visie and occupy the fredome of skinner craft in tymes coming bot gif thai entir to the samin and scot and lot with thame.' William Norwell was a Guild brother, and a few years later was Dean of Guild. There was an amusing sequel to the Magistrates' decision, for we find that on the same day Norwell was fined for troubling William M'Clellane, a skinner, saying "gif he gat him without the port he suld peirs his skin." So much for skins. Human nature does not change throughout the centuries.

On 2nd December, 1549, merchants were forbidden to buy the skins of calves, goats, kids, or wild animals, while the skimmers were precluded from purchasing various kinds of sheep skins. On 12th October, 1602, the Town Council regulated the purchase of skins by Guild brethren from burgh or landward fleshers or creilmen, forbade them to sell the skins except to burgesses, and prohibited forestalling the market.

There is evidence that in 1622 a joint arrangement was in force by which a visitor on behalf of both the Guild brethren and the skimmers attended the market.

In 1628, Malcolm Sword was admitted to the Guildry, but he had previously to give his solemn oath never to exercise his calling of skinnercraft. Trouble arose in 1692, when the Guildry forcibly seized two packs of skins belonging to the Skimmers' Incorporation. The skimmers, thinking this somewhat too high-handed, raised an action against the Guildry. The Guildry resolved not only to defend the action, but to raise a counter action of reduction and declarator against the skimmers. A meeting took place on 25th June, 1692, when an agreement was come to, under which the two packs were given back to the skimmers, who undertook to sell no goat or other skins without changing the nature of the skins by their own handiwork. In 1696 an important litigation took place between the Guildry and the whole body of the Seven Incorporated Trades as to their respective rights, a test case being made with reference to Alexander Cudbert, glover, which the Court of Session decided in favour of the merchants. This is a well-known case, but although the defender was a member of the Incorporation of Skimmers, the merits of the question were not

specially concerned with the privileges of his craft.

A somewhat dramatic climax was reached in 1699, when the skimmers approached the Guildry stating that the past litigations had been to the great prejudice and almost total ruin of their trade, and craving that an agreement be come to for the settlement of all such questions for the future. After two years' negotiations, terms were reached, these being embodied in a document entitled a Communication and Disposition, which was dated 28th February, and recorded in the Town Court Books on 29th July, 1701. The Guildry paid to the skimmers a sum which is left blank in the deed, but which we know from the Guildry records amounted to fourteen hundred merks, equal to £933 6s 8d Scots. The skimmers sold to the Guildry their whole general privileges (except their rights of administration and their own Common Good), the special privileges conferred on them by the Town Council as to the buying of certain skins on 2nd December, 1649, and 28th April, 1676, and a half right to the Skimmers' Mailing. The Guildry procured a small book, in which was kept the record of newly entered skimmers swearing to observe the terms of the agreement. It would at first sight seem as if the Incorporation had parted with their birthright, but the transaction was not so black as it appears. The Guildry had, in point of fact, for a long time bought and sold the skins which were the exclusive right of the craft, and indeed this is explicitly set forth in the preamble of the deed, so that the skimmers were giving up a privilege which was really no longer of value. The skimmers still continued to tan the leather and make the goods, and this the Guild brethren could not do, because by their own constitution they were forbidden to work with their hands. What was accomplished was that the Guildry secured the removal of a troublesome source of litigation, while the skimmers were put in funds to pay their debts.

There does not appear to have been any serious friction between the skimmers and the Guildry after that date, although in 1718 the Guildry considered a representation from the glovers that the cordiners (shoemakers) were buying calf skins, to which a counter complaint was made by Bailie Gillespie that some of the glovers bought and sold calf and other skins without changing

their nature. The matter was referred to the Town Council, who went into the matter with great care, examining the documents produced, including an Act of the Convener Court in favour of the shoemakers. The Council delivered an elaborate judgment on 22nd April, 1718, in favour of the Guildry and the glovers, and against the cordiners. We find the Guildry in 1739 instructing their visitors to the market to detect "skimmers buying hides in order to sale, without changing the nature of them."

#### BONNET MAKERS.

The admission of two bonnet makers into the 'Skinners' Incorporation in 1546 raises an interesting question. Were Scotch bonnets of that date made of leather or fur? We know the Scots blue bonnet of woven cloth, but that was of a later date. While the record deals with the entry of two bonnet makers, the decision of the Town Council was that all bonnet makers in the town should in all time coming enter the craft. The minute is as follows:—

"21 March, 1546-7.—In presens of Archbald Spittale and William Smart, baillies, it is appointit betuix Alexander Gourlay, dekin of the skynnaris, and the hale remanent of his craft, on that ane part, and Johne Maklellan and Waltir Stewart, bonnatmakaris, on that other part, in this manir, the saidis dekin and craftismen of skynnaris hes ressavit the saidis bonat-makeris to the brodirheid of thair craft and privilege tharof to be haldin in all tymes cuming of thair brodirheid, obeyand thair dekin and craft as thair subdeanis, and payand upsettis, olkie pennys and otheris dewiteis respective, ilkane for thair awin part, as the craftismen of the said skynnar craft pais, with all other chargis, taxationes and dewiteis, lik as the laiff of the said craft dois; providing always that the saidis personis and all thair efter cumaris of the said craft entir to the fredome of the burgh and do tharfor as efferis. The quhillk appointment and conventioun above written the provest and baillies hes ratiffjt and apprevit and for all tyme cuming confermit that all bonnetmakaris of this toun being enterit to the fredome of the toun sall pay upset, scot and lot, walk and warde, pay olkie pennys, and exerce and tak thair part effering to thair substance of all chaires to be put in tyme cuming to the said craft."

## SEAL OF CAUSE.

We have no trace of the original Seal of Cause by the Town Council in favour of the Incorporation of Skinners, as it must have been of earlier date than the extant records of the Town Council. None of the original Seals of Cause of the Stirling crafts is preserved. There was, however, a supplementary Seal of Cause in favour of the skinners, granted on 16th September, 1729, which, on account of its importance, we give in full :—

'16 September, 1729.—Anent a petition or representation given in to the saids magistrats and council be James Baird, present deacon to the incorporation of skinners or glovers within the said burgh, for himself and in name of the remanent members of said incorporation, humbly shewing that where for these many years past the petitioners have had no stock or common good as the rest of the seven incorporat trades have, but to the contrair were and are still in debt, by reason of which the deacon of the said incorporation of skinners has been alwise obliged to pay out of his own pocket any charges or expenses he was necessarily putt to in that office by going the marches and otherwise, and in short any expenses or charges on account or for behoof of the trade the deacon has still paid out himself, which is a very great hardship, and whereby their poor of necessity are and must be burdensome on the common good of the burgh, and will still continue so and the forsaid debt remain unpaid unless remead be provided thereagainst; and whereas there are none of the said incorporat trades (except the said incorporation of skinners) but have some kind of gate penny and renew payable and allowed to be levied by them from unfreemen for defraying the above expenses and supporting their poor; and seeing there might be some small gate penny or renew uplifted and levied by the said incorporation of skinners or glovers each publick fair day out of the stands of chapmen who then cream in the mercat of this burgh, and are not gild bretheren or gild bretherens sons, but strangers and unfreemen, and there sell or expose to sale gloves or any other kind of skinner or Glover work, which if granted and allowed by the council would tend much to the defraying of the above expenses and supporting the poor of said incorporation and paying off the forsaid debt;

and therefore creaving that the council might take what before represented to their serious consideration, and authorise and allow the said incorporation of skinners or glovers in time coming to uplift and levy what small gate penny the council should think fitt, each publick fair day, out of every stand of chapmen who then cream in the mercat of this burgh, and are not gild bretheren or gild bretherens sons but strangers and unfreemen, and there sell or expose to sale gloves or any other kind of skinner or Glover work. And the said magistrats and council having now fully and maturely deliberat on the said petition or representation, they grant the desire thereof under the reservation and exception aftermentioned, viz., they authorise, empower, and allow the said incorporation of skinners or glovers in time coming to uplift and levy one shilling Scots money, each publick fair day, out of every stand of chapmen who then cream in the mercat of this burgh, and are not gildbretheren or gildbretherens sons but strangers and unfreemen, and there sell or expose to sale gloves or any other kind of skinner or Glover work; and if there be chapmen two or moe of the qualities abovementioned creaming in one stand, then and in that case the said incorporation are hereby allowed and empowered to uplift and levy one shilling Scots from each of them. Reserving always to the gildry of this burgh their priviledge of uplifting and levying any gate penny out of the said stands as formerly; and not allowing any gate penny to be uplifted or levied by the said incorporation of skinners from chapmen who do not cream by putting up stands in the mercat."

## APPRENTICESHIP.

One of the earliest records of the Incorporation of Skinners concerns an apprenticeship in 1521, and is in itself most interesting. James Lang and Males Lang, his "oye" (grandson) and heir, borrowed a sum of money from the brethren of the Holy Blood. There is reason to believe that these were the religious fraternity of the Merchant Guild whose funds were administered for the maintenance of the altar of the Holy Blood in the Parish Kirk. The Langs bound themselves to pay nine shilling and six shillings annually to the fraternity. Part of the borrowed money was given to Thomas Fowlar, a skinner, as apprentice fee for the boy Males, who was

indentured to Fowlar for four years. The record in the Town Council books is as follows:—

"14 February, 1521-2.—James Lang, burges within the said burgh, and Males Lang, hus oye and aire, hais grantit thame to have aneleit and said ane anuale rent of ix s. to be tane and upliftit be the brother and fraternite of the Haly-bloud or thar factouris yeirly and another annual of 6 s.; the quhilk mony that was gottin for the saidis sex shilling of anual ane pairt tharof was gifin to Thom Fowlar to lyeir the said Males the skennar craft as ane prentes aucht to be lyeir. Males Lang is bunden prentes to Thom Fowlar, skennar, for the spece of four yeiris; the said Thomas hais promittit to lieir the said Males and do hus delegens to lieir him the said craft effir hus pouar, and to do to him in meit, drynk and beddin, as a maister aucht to do hus prentes. And atour it is condicionit gif the said Males passis fra the said Thomas hus master within the saidis termes of iij yeiris in hus default, without ocasion of the said Thomas, and byidis and absentis him fra him fourti dais, the said Thomas sall nocht rasaife him agane to hus prenteschip nor lieir him the said craft in tyme thaireffir. And gife the said Males ramanis with hus said master to the wsscha of hus foirsaid termes he ablis him to mak service for ane yeir to the said Thomas, for meit and fee, befor ony uderis."

#### THE SKINNERS' MAILING.

An interesting possession of the Incorporation was a piece of land known as the Skinners' Mailing. It is situated on the north side of Upper Craigs, opposite the junction with Burghmuir, and in shape is a long triangle, the two longer boundaries being the street on the south and Goosecroft on the north-east, while the short boundary to the west is the entrance to Goosecroft. Originally the mailing included what is now the roadway of the entrance and a small piece of ground stretching farther west as far as the town's burn, which was its western limit. It measures about one-third of an acre, and is presently partly unoccupied and partly used for railway purposes. Previously it was a candle-work of Messrs M'Diamid, until the premises were destroyed by fire. Before that again, as I can remember, it was part of the tanwork of Mr Paterson, an industry which also came to an end as the result of a fire. Although Mr Paterson

owned the adjoining tanwork, he was never the owner of the Skinners' Mailing, for which he paid a rent to the Incorporation.

There is good reason to believe that for at least 350 years this piece of ground was occupied by tanpits, and was veritably the corporate home of the skinners throughout that long period. It was granted to the Incorporation by the Town Council by a Charter, dated 4th May, 1539, in which it is described as a piece of waste ground. It is described in the document of 1701 as "that piece of land belonging to our said Incorporation lying in the East Craigs of the said burgh upon the north side of the highway or loning leading to the borough mure." The document referred to was the deed by which the skinners conveyed to the Guildry a half right to the Mailing under the arrangement then come to as to their respective trading rights.

The position of the Guildry with reference to the Mailing is somewhat obscure. In 1728 we find the Guildry agreeing that the skinners' house at the East Craigs be repaired, the Guildry bearing half the expense. In 1765 the skinners petitioned the Guildry for the rebuilding of their house, which had fallen, and in the following year the Guildry paid £3 1s 9d, being half the expense of repairing the skinners' house. The skinners appear to have retained the actual possession of the whole of the Mailing, while the Guildry alleged that the skinners were under obligation to pay them an annual rent of 6s 8d in respect of the Guildry's interest in the ground. In 1792 it was reported to the Guildry that the skinners had not paid this annual rent for twenty-six years. It rather appears as if the conveyance of the ground was of the nature of a security to the Guildry that the skinners would fulfil their obligations under the agreement of 1701 as to questions of trading privileges, and that on the abolition of all such privileges by the statute of 1846 the whole transactions came to an end. At any rate, I have been unable to trace the matter farther.

In 1855 the position of matters was, that while the whole mailing was occupied by Mr Paterson, tanner, the western portion was let to Mr Robert Gillies on a lease which was due to expire in 1861, Mr Paterson having apparently made an arrangement with Mr Gillies, and the eastern portion had not been formally leased to Mr

Paterson. The division of the mailing was described as a water burn. It still exists, although now enclosed in a culvert, and was originally a natural stream draining the land in the neighbourhood of what is now Linden Avenue. Into this stream is carried the overflow of the town's burn, first at a point where the street of Burghmuir crosses the town's burn near Messrs Graham & Morton's premises, and again where Upper Craigs crosses the burn, which by this time has received the overflow of Saint Ninian's Well. The weir may be seen by looking over the parapet in Upper Craigs near the gate leading to Rockvale Mills. This combination of waters, crossing the middle of the Mailing, is of very ancient date, as is also the Town's Burn bounding it on the west, and the presence of these abundant water supplies was no doubt the reason which caused the ground to be selected as suitable for tanpits.

The Incorporation of Skinners made an agreement with Mr. Robert Paterson in 1855. They leased to him the eastern portion of the mailing for seven years from Martinmas, 1854, at an annual rent of £2. They farther leased the whole mailing for two nineteen years (thirty-eight years) from Martinmas, 1861, at a rent of £4. The lease included all buildings erected on the ground and wooden or other pits sunk therein.

In 1876 and 1877 questions arose in the Incorporation as to legality of the lease entered into in 1855, and two legal firms in the town were consulted. The question cropped up again in 1888, and the opinion of a third firm was obtained. In 1893, Mr Paterson having died, his trustees entered into negotiations with the Incorporation for a renewal of the lease at an increased rent. No settlement was come to, and the trustees having sold the other portion of the tannery to Mr Samuel Forrester Millar, an agreement was arrived at between the skinners and Mr Millar, by which the latter became the owner of the Mailing, the Disposition in his favour being dated 25th November, 1893. Mr Millar sold the portion lying east of the entrance to Goosecroft in 1900 to the Caledonian Railway Company, now the London, Midland and Scottish Railway Company, and the small portion between the entrance and the Town's Burn now belongs to Mr Ebenezer Simpson.

### THE CHURCH.

There is very little evidence of the part played by the Skinners' Incorporation of Stirling in that strange development of the life of the craftsmen in Pre-Reformation times, which found its manifestation in religious fraternities. Each craft had a double existence. Its secular aspect was concerned with trade regulation, the preservation of privileges, the administration of the corporate body, and such like matters. On the religious side the brethren, known as a fraternity, named after the patron saint of the craft, dealt with the religious observances at the altar in the Parish Church, dedicated to the patron saint. The members gave regular subscriptions, known as the "weekly pennies," out of which payments were made to the priest who officiated at their altar. The Deacon, in early times designated also the "Kirkmaster" and the "God's Man," had religious duties to perform at the altar.

The brotherhood of the skinners is referred to in the Town Council minute of 21st March, 1546-7, concerning the entry of the bonnet makers, which we have quoted, and one of the obligations which the new members undertook was the payment of the weekly pennies.

We do not know definitely which was the altar of the skinners in the Parish Church of Stirling. In London the skinners had two altars, Corpus Christi and the Virgin, the craft being an amalgamation of two earlier fraternities with separate altars. The tawyers or leather dressers paid tribute to the altar of Our Lady. In Edinburgh the bonnet-makers had an altar dedicated to St. Mark. In Dundee the Skinners or Glovers maintained the altar of St. Duthac. The names of twenty-seven altars in the Parish Church of Stirling have been traced. Among these was an altar of Our Lady, and either another or the same known as the Virgin's Altar. It is possible that the skinners were the fraternity of Our Lady, and supported that altar. The Town Council minute of 14th February, 1521-2, concerning the apprenticeship of Males Lang as a skinner, mentions the Fraternity of the Holy Blood. But the fraternity were simply the creditors in the sum which the boy's grandfather borrowed to pay his apprentice fee, and there is a considerable body of evidence to show that the Fraternity of the Holy Blood were the

Stirling Merchant Guild, and that they maintained the altar of that name.

The skimmers doubtless took their part in those miracle plays, which were enacted in Stirling as in all other mediæval towns, under the direction of the priesthood. These performances were given in the open air, and were a means by which the church educated the people in the story of the Bible and the lives of the saints and martyrs. The scenes were divided among the different guilds and crafts, who each provided the players and furnished such properties or scenery as were required. The allocation of the parts among the different trades was done with a certain sense of fitness, which to us nowadays appears somewhat humorous, such as the choice of the plasterers to represent the creation of the earth, the shipwrights the building of the ark, and the goldsmiths the adoration of the gift-bringing Magi.

In Aberdeen there has survived a manuscript, dated 5th September, 1442, with the regulations for the Candlemas religious plays. In it we find that the skimmers were to furnish "Tua Bischopes, Four Angelis, and alsmony honest Squiares as tha may."

#### THE SKINNERS' FLAG.

In the Smith Institute is an old flag belonging to the Skimmers' Incorporation. It probably dates from the seventeenth century, and is thus a very notable municipal relic. It is made of silk of various colours, and is in a very tattered condition. Along the top is sewn a piece of sheepskin, by which it was attached to the pole.

The emblems of the Skinner Craft—a hand, a pair of skin-cutting shears, and a slaying knife—are cut in leather and attached to the flag on both sides. Near the top are painted the arms of King Charles II. with the letter "R" below, and a motto which has proved a puzzle to Latin scholars. I doubt, however, if it be meant for Latin.

"Finismo Perpet vanno."

I suggest that the words are Spanish, possibly dialect or archaic. "Finismo (y) perpetuo" (most fine (and) everlasting) is good Spanish, and would seem an appropriate motto for an incorporation of leather workers. It should be remembered that Spain, and especially Cordova, was a seat of the leather industry famed all over Europe.