

Trades House of Glasgow
DEACON CONVENER
ARCHIBALD MCLELLAN



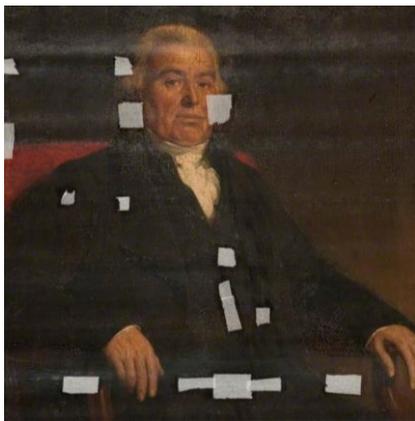
By

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Deacon Convener Archibald McLellan (1798-1854)

Archibald McLellan was born about 1798 in Glasgow, many references claim he was born in 1795, but no reference given to support the claim. The 1798 date comes from the 1851 census which shows his age as 53, thus making his birth year as 1798¹. His father was a coach builder, and his place of business was a large open space fronting Queen Street and Miller Street². Archibald's parents were Archibald McLellan (1747 to 1831) and Christian Shillinglaw (1753 to 1837) who were married in the Glasgow Gaelic Chapel on 4th August 1794³. They had at least two other children, James born on 13th May 1796 and a sister called Christian who was born on 10th May 1799⁴.



Archibald McLellan (1747-1831)
From
Glasgow Museums Resource
Centre

As part of the process of joining the Incorporation of Hammermen of Glasgow, he became a Burgess in the great City on the 14th of March 1782 after having served his apprenticeship with Archibald Bogie and John Edmiston, coach and harness makers in Glasgow. To become a member of the Incorporation in the 1700s, applicants had to carry out an essay, this was a practical piece of work to prove that they had sufficient skills to become a member of the Incorporation. Archibald the elder had to manufacture a screw bolt and nut to the required standard. He became a full member of the Incorporation of Hammermen on 30th of August 1782. Young Archibald must have been exceptional as he was accepted into the Incorporation of Hammermen on 27th August 1813

after completing his Essay to produce a screw bolt and nut. His entry was at near hand under the auspices of being the eldest legitimate son. The exceptional aspect of this membership is that he would have been only 15 years old at this date and it was normal that a member would be 21 years of age at the time of their membership⁵.

Archibald was educated at the Grammar School and the University of Glasgow (in the Old College) before joining his father in the coachbuilding business where he showed skill as a heraldic draughtsman. Surprisingly, there is no graduation information available for Archibald at Glasgow University, so possibly he dropped out for some reason or misdemeanour. He received a thorough classical education and was interested in literature etc., which made him a fine gentleman and scholar.

¹ www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk, 1851 Archibald McLellan (Census 622/114 21) Page 21 of 21.

² <https://www.glasgowcemetery.org/profiles/archibald-mclellan/>.

³ www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk, 04/08/1794 Archibald McLellan (O.P.R. Marriages 644/1 270 173 Glasgow) Page 173 of 376.

⁴ https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/record-results?search_type=people&event=%28B%20OR%20C%20OR%20S%29&record_type%5B0%5D=opr_births&church_type=Old%20Parish%20Registers&dl_cat=church&dl_rec=church-births-baptisms&surname=McLellan&surname_so=exact&forename_so=starts&from_year=1793&parent_names=Archibald&parent_names_so=exact&parent_name_two=Christian&parent_name_two_so=exact&record=Church%20of%20Scotland%20%28old%20parish%20registers%29%20Roman%20Catholic%20Church%20Other%20churches.

⁵ Lumsden Harry, History of the Hammermen of Glasgow, Pages 295 and 305.

On leaving university he took up the practical tools of the hammer and anvil and the paint brush, he distinguished himself as an accomplished heraldic draughtsman. He was made a partner in his father's coach building business. In 1819, Archibald junior became Collector of the Incorporation of Hammermen and two years later, in 1821, before reaching the age of 21 years, he was made the Deacon of the Incorporation of Hammermen, the highest rank in his Craft⁶, and he had the honour of becoming a Magistrate of the city when only twenty-five years of age. Ten years later Archibald was elected to the post of Deacon Convener of the Trades House of Glasgow and he served as such from 1831 to 1832 and then again in 1834⁷. It was during his tenure as Deacon Convener that the agreement that the Dean of Guild and the Deacon Convener would become ex officio councillors, an honour which was proposed to be taken from them under the Burgh Reform Act.

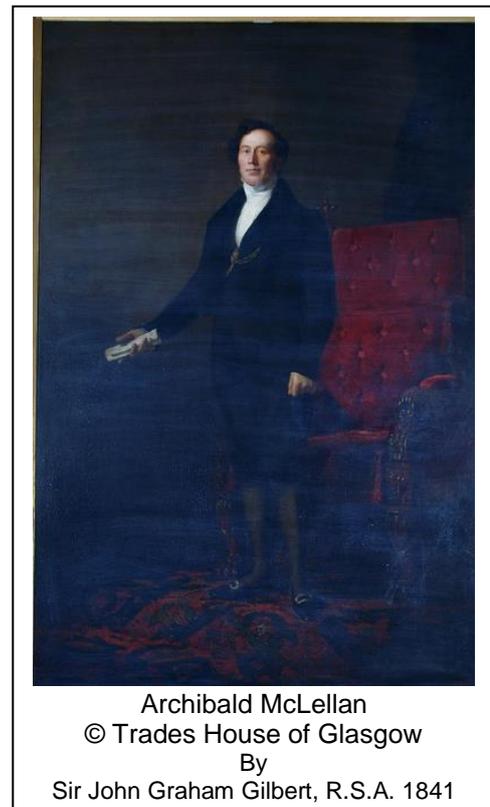
On 9th October 1833, on the motion of Mr. Mollison, seconded by Deacon Muckart, the House unanimously resolved that Mr. McLellan be requested to sit for his portrait at the expense of the House; to be hung in the Hall as a lasting mark of the House's approbation of his conduct as convener and of gratitude for his arduous exertions for the interest of the House and the Incorporations, during the two years that he filled the chair.

And upon the motion of Convener Graham, carried by acclamation, the meeting unanimously resolved that the thanks of the House are due to Mr. McLellan for the very able and efficient manner he discharged the duties of Deacon Convener.

Convener MacLellan in returning thanks for the honour done to him by those votes respectively declined to sit for his Portrait, assuring the House that he did so from no want of respect and that he accepted with much pleasure the vote of thanks by the House to him.⁸

In 1841, the House received a gift from the subscribers of the painting of Archibald MacLellan and agreed to hang it in some part of the hall as a mark of appreciation for his services to the House. The artist, Sir John Graham Gilbert, was a lifelong friend of Archibald McLellan.

In 1906 the Sub-Committee of the Corporation and Art Galleries wrote to the Trades House indicating that they were very desirous to have a portrait for their Galleries of the late Ex-Deacon-Convener Archibald MacLellan, who was the donor of the MacLellan collection, and enquiring if the House will grant the necessary permission for having a copy of his portrait by Graham-Gilbert now in the Trades' Hall made for the Corporation.



Archibald McLellan
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By
Sir John Graham Gilbert, R.S.A. 1841

⁶ Lumsden Harry, History of the Hammermen of Glasgow, Page 389.

⁷ Trades House of Glasgow, Archives.

⁸ Minutes of the Trades House of Glasgow, 9th October 1833.

The House unanimously agreed to the request.⁹



Glasgow Cathedral at the time of the Reformation
Showing the Western Tower and Consistory House

Archibald McLellan was not solely interested in advancing the objects of the Trades House and the Town Council, where he sat as a Tory Councillor, he was also interested in developing the City's art, architecture, painting and music. One of his passions was the development of Glasgow Cathedral which had been disfigured at the time of the reformation and then with its numerous unsightly conversions as places of worship for several different Presbyterian congregations in the City

with unsightly pews and galleries in both the nave and choir. McLellan's views on the improvements that he proposed did not received uniform appreciation, especially the removal of the Western Tower and Consistory House which were removed by Her Majesty's Commissioners during the restoration of the Cathedral. It was McLellan who was the first to propose the new western approach to the Cathedral and to achieve this he purchased the ground between Weaver Street and Stirling's Road. This ground was eventually transferred to Council and the Merchants' House to enable them to carry out improvements in the area.

He was a member of the Glasgow Dilettanti Society in 1825 (president in 1834), trustee of Anderson's University from 1840, Glasgow Art Union's management committee, and president of the City of Glasgow Fine Art Association at its foundation in 1853.

he is noted for the construction of a gallery on Sauchiehall Street to house his large collection of Old Master paintings. The gallery later became the home of the Glasgow School of Art prior to the construction of Charles Rennie Mackintosh's famed building in 1899¹⁰.



Archibald McLellan

Most of McLellan's surplus income was spent on purchasing fine paintings, sculptures, books, gold, and silver plate, most of which he bequeathed to the city and formed the start of Glasgow's great collections that they own today. Many of his items were made by local artists and he was able to count many of the greats in this sphere among his friends, such as Sir David Wilkie, Sir Francis Chantrey, Sir Daniel Macnee, R. A. Smith, William Motherwell.

McLellan was a leader in the Council for more than thirty years and during that time he took a leading role in the management of several public trusts. He also took a keen interest in numerous issues concerning the government of the City of Glasgow.

The register of deaths for Archibald McLellan shows that he died on 22nd October 1854 at his home at 3 Dalhousie Street and that he was buried on the 27th of October 1854 in the same lair as his father (Lair No. 142, Wall C) in the new

⁹ Minutes of the Trades House of Glasgow, 18th May 1906.

¹⁰ <https://www.rct.uk/collection/1070860/plans-elevations-of-the-proposed-restorations-and-additions-to-the-cathedral-of>.

Cathedral cemetery. He died of heart disease at the age of 59 years. He was conveyed to the cemetery in a hearse drawn by 4 horses and he had six ushers at the service and seven carriages in attendance. The funeral cost £1 and 4/- to move the gravestone. This was an expensive funeral for its day¹¹. McLellan had requested that his funeral was to be a quiet and private affair. At a later date, McLellan's grave was relocated, and his grave was marked with a number. In 2004, a Memorial Stone was erected in the Necropolis Graveyard.

Unfortunately, Archibald McLellan had made several unwise investments in property and the erection of the galleries etc., in Sauchiehall Street had left him in debt to several banks who had first call on his heritable and personal estate. This made it impossible for his wish to bequeath his property to the city. At this time, Glasgow did not have a developed art collection and many of the far-sighted council rulers felt that this was an opportunity to purchase the nucleus of an Art Gallery and such an opportunity might not arise again. After long and angry discussions, the Town Council agreed to purchase the from the trustees the Sauchiehall Street buildings, his pictures, sculptures, and other works of art for the sum of £44,500. A price comparison of the purchase value in 1850 compared to today would give purchase price as approximately £3,608,375. Clearly there would be a lot of debate if such a decision were to be made even today and that is exactly what happened with McLellan's estate. One side expressed the view that the price was far below the value of the goods and of great benefit to the public. On the other side considered the cost higher than the value that they were being asked to pay. Fortunately, those in favour of purchasing the property and art won the day and Glasgow now has a wonderful collection of art¹².

Unfortunately, the war in Crimea was in full swing and the newspapers were full of reports from the front and details of troop losses and the passing of Archibald McLellan was more of a footnote than would otherwise have been the case. The Caledonian Mercury of 8th February 1855 reported that a meeting of creditors was to take place in Carrick's Royal Hotel, George Square, Glasgow on the 19th of February at one o'clock¹³. On the day that McLellan's obituary was printed in the newspapers, the papers were full of the accounts of the Battle of the Alma¹⁴.

¹¹ www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk, 22/10/1854 Archibald McLellan (Old Parish Registers Deaths 6441/580 127 Glasgow) Page 127 of 130.

¹² http://www.glasgowwestaddress.co.uk/100_Glasgow_Men/McLellan_Archibald.htm.

¹³ Caledonian Mercury 08 February 1855

¹⁴ <https://www.glasgowncropolis.org/profiles/archibald-mclellan/>.