

# Trades House of Glasgow Incorporation of Skinners Tassie Mortification



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MMXXI



# Tassie Mortification

## Background to the Tassie family

William Tassie was born in September 1749 and was christened in Govan on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1749. William was the youngest son; his father's name was William Tassie and his mother was called Janet Russell. William's parents were married on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1742 in the parish of Govan. William had the following siblings, all of whom were listed as being born in Govan:

Agnes Tassie	born 29/05/1743
Janet Tassie	born 29/05/1743
George Tassie	born 17/01/1745
John Tassie	born 26/04/1747

William's father received his Burgess ticket on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1762 as the eldest son of George Tassie, skinner, Burgess and Guild Brother. William, senior's father George Tassie received his Burgess ticket on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1754 as the fourth legitimate son of James Tassie, skinner, Burgess and Guild Brother.

William Tassie married Janet Smith on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1788 when he was aged 33 years. At the time of his marriage, William was listed as a Breeches Maker in Glasgow. It is worth noting that the marriage was listed as being irregular and this may imply that they had been together as man and wife for some time before this date. They had the following children all who were listed as having been born in Glasgow:

William Tassie	born 10/12/1788	
Janet Tassie	born 28/05/1790	
William Tassie	born 18/01/1792	
John Tassie	born 14/10/1793	
Robert Tassie	born 16/09/1795	
Archibald Tassie	born 21/06/1797	Burgess and Guild Brother 2 <sup>nd</sup> October 1777

On 30<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1777, William Tassie, skinner, became a Burgess and Guild Brethren as a younger son to William Tassie skinner, Burgess and Guild Brethren.

William Tassie became Collector of the Incorporation of Skinners in 1795 and 1796 and Deacon in 1798 and 1810. William passed away on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1811, he was listed as a Glover aged 60 on the certificate of his death.

To follow the Tassie family either forward or back in time, please use the following link to the Trades House Digital Library. <https://www.tradeshouselibrary.org/trades-house.html>, the ideal book to look at is the book *Burgesses and Guild Brethren from 1751 to 1846*. For information on the Incorporation of Skinners history, please use the following link:

[https://www.tradeshouselibrary.org/uploads/4/7/7/2/47723681/skinners\\_book\\_web\\_image.pdf](https://www.tradeshouselibrary.org/uploads/4/7/7/2/47723681/skinners_book_web_image.pdf) .

## Notes by Bracklin, Newlands ~ 19<sup>th</sup> April 1916

The following notes were compiled in 1916 and comments in square brackets are additions or comments derived from more recent research.

## **NOTES on THE TASSIE MORTIFICATION.**

William Tassie, Skinner in Glasgow, in commemoration of the year in which he was Deacon of the Incorporation of Skinners in Glasgow, signalized his year of Office by granting a Deed of Settlement and Mortification dated 15th August 1811. By that deed he conveyed his whole possessions at his decease to the Deacon Collector and Late-Deacon of the Incorporation and their successors in office, in trust for specified purposes. He instructed his Trustees to give his books to the Trades School and should his spouse or his son survive him he life rented them in the whole income. Thereafter the revenue was to be divided into three, one part as a pension to a decayed Deacon of the Incorporation, one part to a son and another to a daughter of a member of the Incorporation to assist in their education. The two latter payments were restricted to those between 6 and 14 years of age and could only be held for four years by the same child. The appointment and selection of the recipients were left with the Trustees.

The estate was not left to the Incorporation, but to three Trustees who were members of its Master Court; and beyond these three, the Incorporation has no voice in the Management of the Trust. By the rules of the Incorporation the Collector is appointed for one year and then goes out of office for a year; the Deacon is also appointed for one year but is late Deacon during the following year. The Trustees are therefore a fluctuating body, only serving for two consecutive years at the most, but as they may remain members of the Master Court for a longer period, and as the benefits of the Trust are for those connected with the Incorporation that want of continuity should not be any real loss to the Trust.

The estate came into the hands of the Trustees at the death of Mr Tassie on 11th November 1817, when it consisted of two Bonds and a small sum in cash amounting in all to £590. The free income was paid to the liferenters, the last of whom died on 4th September 1825, when the total value after paying £7:10: 7d to the heirs of the last liferenter is stated to be £552: 9: 5d. The greater part of the depreciation in the amount of the funds is explained in a minute of the Master Court which records that a Collector (and therefore one of the Trustees) had fled to America after appropriating £30 of the Trust Funds.

Were the remaining Trustees in 1825, or are the present Trustees liable to make good that defalcation; and was the Incorporation at any time responsible for the fault of its Collector when acting in a capacity outside of his duties to the Incorporation?

The Mortification instructs the Trustees to lend out the funds "upon heritable security" but after the payment of bonds in existence at the Testator's death the greater part of the capital seems to have been transferred to the Incorporation without separate investment, and the remainder lodged in the Savings Bank. The Incorporation paid over to the Trustees the interest on what they had.

A Master Court Minute states that up till 1828 the Trust income had been divided in terms of the Will and a similar statement is made in a Minute of 15th May 1840. In a Minute of 1830 the Trust Capital is stated at £590 (the, original amount received by the Trustees) less a balance of £7:10: 7d paid to the heirs of Archibald Tassie the last liferenter, leaving £582: 9: 5. It would thus appear that the Incorporation was making good out of its own funds the Trustees loss of £30 already referred to.

In the Master Court Minute of 6th April 1869 there is an acknowledgment that payments under the trust had not been regularly made, and that a calculation of what the funds should amount to brought out the sum of £750; to which the Master Court agreed on 9th February 1869 and consented to pay four per cent to the Trustees. It will be noticed that this consent seems to have been given before the revised capital amount was ascertained. It is understood by a few of the present members of the Court that the sum of £750 was arrived at by allowing five per cent compound interest on £590 less all payments under the Trust. In any case, compound interest should not have been allowed.

In 1868/69 the Incorporation paid the Trustees £16: 1: 9 being the interest under that agreement till the date of balance and for the next eight years the Trustees got £30 per annum being 4% on £750 making £256: 1: 9 during that time.

On 8th May 1877 the Master Court Minutes acknowledge borrowing £60 from the Tassie Fund at 4 per cent and on 17th August following the Master Court added this £60 with £2:10: - of interest to the agreed on capital of £750 thus raising it to £812:10: -, at which sum' it has stood ever since. To say the least of it, this seems peculiar accounting. The whole funds of the trust were admitted to be £750 and that year the Incorporation paid the Trustees £30 of interest being 4% on £750 besides the £2:10: - already mentioned.

From a note on the fifth page of the Trustees notebook signed by the Trustees it appears that on 1st August 1877 the Trustees had £62:12: 8 in the Savings Bank of which they lent to the Incorporation £62:10: - at 4% and divided the remaining 2/8 among the recipients of the Trust. The whole funds originally received by the Trustees only amounted to £590 and under the Will should not have increased. As a matter of fact from the foregoing statement they could only very slightly have increased as statements are made that the income was divided in terms of the Will. Notwithstanding that, the Incorporation were paying interest on £750 (the supposed total capital) while yet the Trustees had part lying in the Bank in their own name.

The monies in the Savings Bank may have been an accumulation of sums not paid by the Trustees to pensioners and which may have extended over the period from 1840 till 1869 already referred to. In that case, however, it follows that the Trustees were then in receipt of the whole interest due them from the Incorporation even although they could not spend it. If that view is accepted the Incorporation should not be liable to the Trustees for more than the original £582: 9: 5 plus the £60 received in 1877 and of course the interest paid by the Incorporation has been more than was due.

Under the provisions of the deed which allow the Trustees no latitude is it legal for them to add any sum to capital, especially money provided to be spent otherwise?

For the next twenty years till 1898 the Incorporation paid the Trustees £32:10: - per annum being 4% on £812:10: - making for these years a total of £650 in interest alone.

Can the Master Court not rescind its resolutions regarding the capital of the trust as readily as it made them, and can it not revise the accounting on a more equitable basis? The Trustees are not likely to oppose any fair adjustment.

By a resolution per minute of 9th February 1896 the Incorporation intimated to the Trustees that the rate of interest would be reduced from 4 to 3½% or the indebtedness would be cleared off, and for the next 13 years £363: 6: 4 was paid in interest or an average of £27:19: -. At 3½% the interest on £812:10: - would be £28: 8: 9 per annum, but for 1904/05 only £21: 6: 9 was required to meet the Trustees engagements and only that sum was paid, which brings down the average. The resolution to reduce the interest was made because at that time money was cheap and most bonds were earning no more, and because 3½% gave the Trustees as much as they could reasonably spend. The School Board Act passed in 1872 made provision for the education of all children and when latterly that education became free the Trustees had difficulty in finding worthy recipients who could use the gift in the strict terms of the mortification.

If it is competent for the Incorporation to make an alteration in the rate of interest to suit the times, could it not also arrange with the Trustees to make an alteration in the capital sum to suit fact and justice?

For the last five years (1910-11 'till 1914-15) the payments to the Trustees have only amounted to £82: 4: 9 or an average of £16: 9: - per annum being all the sums that the Trustees spent.

The Trustees roll book begins at November 1869 and the past Deacon who then received the Tassie Pension was James Hodgers aged 75. The last payment to him was on 1st February 1871 and opposite that entry is marked "dead". On 1st November 1874 late Deacon James Wood was enrolled and he received the pension until his death, the last payment being at November 1910. Since then there has been no applicant.

For the year 1913-14 there was no applicant on behalf of a girl and no payments were made in that year nor since, though every member of the Incorporation has been circularized on the subject. The payments for the boy presently on the roll will expire in August next. It is really impossible to find needful applicants of twelve years of age who require to pay fees.

In the last forty six years (for which alone full information is available) the Incorporation has paid to the Trustee £1351:13: 8 which is 5% per annum on the sum capital left by Mr Tassie.

In 1806 the Trades House resolved to open a School for the teaching of freemen's sons. Each of the fourteen Incorporations were allowed to elect two boys for each of their representatives in the house. This made an opening for 108 boys. A School within the Trades House Buildings was opened in 1808 and the following year girls were also admitted. The Incorporations were required to pay fees for their pupils, any balance required being made good by the House. The Incorporation of Skinners was thus entitled to have six boys and six girls taught, for whom it paid £8 per annum or 2/5ths of the actual cost exclusive of any charge for School Accommodation.

No record is at present available of the amounts paid by Incorporation to the House on account of education until 1863, but from that date till, 1876 (when the payments cease) the Incorporation paid £395: 2: 5 for education, exclusive of interest to the Tassie Trust for a like purpose. At first these payments were small, some years being only £2: 2: - but gradually rose until they touched £25: 3: 3 when they gradually fell as the children were taught elsewhere. The total of £395: 2: 5 gives an average charge of £33: 3: 5 for each of these years.

If it be deemed advisable to provide any new arrangement for the management of the Trust, the whole Capital as it may be adjusted might be conveyed to the whole Master Court of the Incorporation, one third of the annual income to be voted as a Tassie gift to a decayed pensioner on the roll, and preferably to a decayed Deacon; one third to be voted as a Tassie Prize or Bursary to the son or grandson of a present or past member of the Incorporation, who is being educated at Hutcheson School. The Buchanan Institution or ether approved school and the remaining third as a Tassie Prize er Bursary to the daughter or granddaughter of a present or past member who is being educated at Hutcheson's School Girls' School, The Logan and Johnston School of Domestic Economy or ether approved school. The Master Court to have the control of all appointments and should it not find suitable applicants for the gifts, to add any unexpended income to Capital.

It is believed that the Tassies were descendants of Italian Protestant Refugees of good family who. settled on the banks of the river Cart in the Parish of Eastwood just south of Pollokshaws. In the sixteenth century Bernardo. Tasso was Architect for some important buildings in Florence, Bernardo Tasso and his son Torquato Tasso were poets of Padua, and Alexandro Tassoni was a poet of Modena.

The Tassies of Pollokshaws successfully carried on the businesses of Tanners, Skinners and Glovers there and married wives there, most of whom were of Irish extraction so that their number became considerable. In 1695 there are known to have been four families of, Tassies within the Parish all engaged as Glovers and Skinners besides others of different trades and others in neighbouring Parishes.

William Tassie joined the Incorporation of Skinners in 1771 and is the first of that name on the roll, while the last is James Tassie who joined in 1810. [*Modern records show that there were members called William Tassie in 1760 and 1762*] William Tassie was elected Deacon in 1780, 1785, 1791 and 1797. It is net quite evident whether these four are elections of one or of two individuals but at least the latter was the father of William Tassie who granted the mortification and who was elected Deacon in 1798 and 1810.

A Chamois Factory was established near Mains Street, Pollokshaws, in 1782 which is claimed to. have been the first of its kind in Scotland, which was long known as the Shammy Mill or Skin Mill Yard though latterly used for the manufacture of glue. This factory is said to have been started by a Tassie but was occupied by three generations of Muirheads whose descendants are members of the, Incorporation and some are still tanners at Bridge-of-Weir. In 1802 John Tassie, Glover, acquired the estate of Auldhousefield on the Banks of the Cart at Pollokshaws where he and his sons carried on business as Skinners and Tanners.

James Tassie the famous Modeller and Cameo Engraver was born at Pollokshaws in 1735 and while quite young was apprenticed to a mason. He carved a monument dated 1759 which is erected in Eastwood Cemetery to the memory if his father, William Tassie, and family.

Taits Directory for 1787 contains the name of "William Tassie, Glover and Breeches Maker, Bridgegate" who was the first Deacon of that name. In 1779 George Tassie & Co. advertised in the Newspapers "Shammy Buck and Doeskin Breeches at the Golden Glove, head of King Street".

Somewhere about 1880, two old ladies the Misses Tassie, relatives of Deacon Tassie were in reduced circumstances and applied to the Incorporation but as their father was not a member the Master Court could make no grant though some of its number did assist out of their own funds.

BRACKLINN, NEWLANDS )  
19th April, 1916. )

### Conclusions

The generous donation of William Tassie in 1811 was well constructed and met the needs of the time where the revenue was to be divided into three, one part as a pension to a decayed Deacon of the Incorporation of Skinners, Furriers and Glovers, one part to a son and another to a daughter of a member of the Incorporation to assist in their education. The two latter payments were restricted to those between 6 and 14 years of age and could only be held for four years by the same child. The 1876 Education Act made it difficult for the Incorporation to find children in need of their educational fees to be paid and by September 2018 it was nigh impossible to find child beneficiaries in line with William Tassie's mortification.

A meeting of the Trustees met in the Trades Hall in Glassford Street and proposed a minor modification to William's wishes where one third would continue to be used to give a pension to a member of the Incorporation of Skinners and Glovers who had held the position of Deacon and who was in financial need. In the event of there being no Past Deacon in need, the current Deacon would be able to nominate a charity and the fund would be made payable to the charity nominated. One third would be payable to assist a son of a member of the Incorporation under the age of 25 years towards the cost of his education. Likewise, one third would be payable to assist a daughter of a member of the Incorporation under the age of 25 years towards the cost of her education. The resolution was signed off by Deacon Elspeth Talbot, Collector Sofia Thalmessinger and Late Deacon David Bird, the Trustees of the Trust and was dated 14<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

In 2018, Clerk to the Incorporation of Skinners, Neil Headrick put a notice in the Glasgow Evening Times to have the William Tassie Mortification Trust altered so that "*the trust deed be modified by replacing the trust purposes by other purposes specified in that resolution*". Anyone wishing to object to the alteration had until 12<sup>th</sup> October 2018 to place objections with the Clerk.<sup>1</sup>

In January 2019, an exchange of correspondence with the Scottish Government, Student Awards Agency and the Trust, the Trust was accepted on the Student Award Agency in the Register of Educational Endowments for the educational aspects for children under 25 years of age. William Tassie would surely be pleased that his mortification was still active and giving support to decayed Past Deacons and supporting young people's education.

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[https://www.glasgowtimes.co.uk/announcements/public\\_notices/notice/84115.WILLIAM\\_TASSIE\\_MORTIFICATION\\_TRUST/](https://www.glasgowtimes.co.uk/announcements/public_notices/notice/84115.WILLIAM_TASSIE_MORTIFICATION_TRUST/)