

Trades House of Glasgow
THOMAS STRUTHERS
PRINCIPAL TEACHER OF THE TRADES HOUSE SCHOOL
FROM 1844 TO 1846



By

Craig R Bryce
Trades House Honorary Archivist

MMXX

Thomas Struthers Details



Thomas Struthers was the principal teacher of the Trades House School for 22 years and left a legacy which had a long lasting effect on the education of the children of the parents who were members of the 14 Incorporations. He was born on 22nd August 1819 in Currie, Midlothian, Scotland and his father was called Alexander and his mother's name was Christian Robertson¹.

The photograph to the left shows Thomas Struthers who was appointed Principal Teacher to the School on 1st November 1844. Prior to being appointed, he was a Teacher of English at the Grange Academy, near Sunderland. His starting salary was one hundred and thirty pounds²

A small part of Principal Teacher Thomas Struthers' personal life is recorded in the Trades House Minutes when he intimated his intention to go to America for about 6 months to wind up the affairs of his dead uncle who had made him the executor of his estate. Mr Struthers indicated that he intended to return by the end of May 1846, when he would resume his duties as teacher. In the same letter he indicated that he had found a person willing to undertake his duties during his absence. On the motion of Mr Dick, the meeting agreed to give Mr Struthers leave of absence until 1st June 1846 on condition if he did not return by then, he would forfeit his appointment.³

In November 1865, Thomas wrote a letter to the Trades House which had then been printed and circulated to the members of the House. Mr Struthers claimed that the minutes of the House and other documents for some years previously had referred to him as Teacher when in fact he claimed to have been appointed by the House as Head Master of the School. Mr George Crawford, Clerk to the House read letters from Mr Struthers in which he charged Mr Crawford with "*having loosely and arbitrarily dealt with the titles of Teacher*", and "*with having taken it upon him without the sanction of the House to change the designation of Head Master*" which Mr Struthers claimed to have been appointed. He also claimed that Mr Crawford "*persisted doggedly in adhering to that arbitrary and insulting cause*".

Needless to say this led to a rather acrimonious dispute that was eventually settled by the House on the evidence provided by both parties in which Mr George Crawford proved that the title that Thomas Struthers was hired under was that of Principal Teacher and NOT Head Master⁴.

Close monitoring of the cost of running the School was often being examined by the House. Concern at the number of children and the incorporations contributing to the cost came up in a meeting of the House in May 1866 when Mr Struthers return to the

¹ www.ancestry.co.uk, Thomas Struthers in the Scotland, Select Births and Baptisms, 1564-1950.

² Minutes of the Trades House, 10th October 1843.

³ Minutes of the Trades House, 15th December 1845.

⁴ Minutes of the Trades House, 14th November 1865.

Directors of the School was examined. Instead of 216 Scholars there are only 171 attending the School, a deficit of 35 fee paying places. Thomas Struthers had also supplemented the number of children with children from Incorporations who had supported children at the school and also with some children whose Incorporations did not contribute to the cost of the school i.e.:

Children presented by Incorporations	121
Children introduced without presentation	36
Children taken into the School by the Principal Teacher who are known not to be connected to any of the contributing Incorporations.	<u>14</u>
In all	171 ⁵

It looks as if the last two disagreements with Thomas Struthers was enough to encourage him to look for alternative employment because in July 1866 the House considered a letter sent by him intimating his resignation as Principal Teacher of the Trades School and his intention to leave Glasgow at the end of the end of June.

A copy of Mr Struthers letter is attached below:

*To The Convener and members of the Trades House of Glasgow
42 Carnarvon Street
Glasgow
6 July 1866*

Gentlemen,

I beg leave to respectfully resign the situation of Principal Teacher of the Trades School and hope you will have the goodness to relieve me of the office at the expiration of the current quarterly term as I shall then be under the necessity of leaving Glasgow.

In closing a twenty two years connection with the Trades School, I may be allowed gratefully to acknowledge the large measure of confidence and encouragement that has been bestowed on me during that time and to say that the long recollection of the long intercourse I have had with the Trades House and Incorporations will always be associated in my mind with more of pleasure than of regret.

*I have the honour to be gentlemen,
Your obedient humble servant
(Signed, Thomas Struthers)*

And so, this was to be the end of Thomas Struthers connection with the Trades House and the School which he had led so effectively for a long time.

The following trail of Thomas Struthers from 1841 to 1901 is given to enable the reader to know some more of Thomas's background before and after working in the Trades House School:

In 1841 Thomas was a 20-year-old, Assistant Teacher and residing at Abbey Close Wren's Nest (house) in the parish of Jedburgh, Scotland. At this time, he was a lodger with the Headmaster and his wife⁶. In 1851, Thomas was back staying with his parents at 196 Hope Street, Barony, Glasgow and at this time he is recorded as

⁵ Minutes of the Trades House, 13th May 1866.

⁶ www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk, 1841 Census for Thomas Struthers.

being an English and Commercial Teacher. In 1851 Thomas's father was a superannuated butler and his wife and daughter, 25-year-old Christian was also staying with them⁷. Ten years later and 41-year-old Thomas was still in Glasgow and he was residing at 42 Carnarvon Street, Barony, Glasgow with his mother Christian⁸. By 1871, Thomas was staying at 21 Union Street, Dalserf, Lanarkshire and was listed as the Headmaster of Headmaster of Lochled, Desway. His 74-year-old mother Christian who was an Aunminster and his 42-year-old sister Christian were also staying with him⁹. There is no record of Thomas in 1881, but in 1891, Thomas was staying in the home that he would eventually die in, 2 Upper Gilmore Terrace, Edinburgh. Christian Struthers was also staying with him at this time and Thomas is listed as living on private means¹⁰. By 1901, Thomas was 81 years of age and still residing at , 2 Upper Gilmore Terrace, Edinburgh

It was in 1901 that Thomas wrote his last will and testament and in this he left most of his wealth to his housekeeper, Euphemia Baxter as long as she was his housekeeper at the time of his death¹¹.

Thomas passed away on 12th April 1901 at 4.30am at the age of 81 years and the cause of death was General Athroma and senile exhaustion¹².

⁷ www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk, 1851 Census for Thomas Struthers.

⁸ www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk, 1861 Census for Thomas Struthers.

⁹ www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk, 1871 Census for Thomas Struthers.

¹⁰ www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk, 1891 Census for Thomas Struthers.

¹¹ www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk, 1901 Thomas Struthers (Last Will and Testament reference SC70/4/329 Edinburgh Sheriff Court Wills Image 329 Last Image 408).

¹² www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk, 1901 Thomas Struthers (Statutory Register Death 685/5 461).