



*The Trades Hall*  
of GLASGOW

WELCOME TO THE TRADES HALL  
HOME OF THE TRADES HOUSE OF GLASGOW  
AND THE FOURTEEN INCORPORATED CRAFTS

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*Since the Trades Hall first opened its doors in 1794 it has operated as a public hall. It can be hired in whole or in part for a wide range of functions including conferences, meetings, dinners, dances, exhibitions and concerts. It is particularly popular for weddings.*

*Information packs are available by contacting the office on the contact details above.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Trades Hall of Glasgow and the Ancestral home of the Trades House and the Fourteen Incorporated Trades which are:

Hammermen, Tailors, Cordiners, Maltmen, Weavers, Bakers, Skinners, Wrights, Coopers, Fleshers, Masons, Gardeners, Barbers, Bonnetmakers and Dyers.

The roots of the Crafts go back to medieval times. In 1604 Craftsmen and Merchants agreed to a local Government reform and in 1605 a formal Letter of Guildry was agreed and then confirmed by Royal Charter in 1690.

While initially the Trades House Crafts controlled all trade work in the city, giving them immense power in the development of industrial Glasgow, the power to control who worked and what they were paid was removed in the Burgh Reform Act in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Trades House of Glasgow and the Incorporated Trades now function as charitable organisations.

Each Craft or **Incorporation** consists of members, referred to as Craftsmen or by their specific title e.g. Maltmen or Cordiners or Wrights. The members of its governing committee, the **Master Court**, are referred to as **Masters** and include the three main office bearers: the chairman, known as the **Deacon** or in the case of the Maltmen, the **Visitor**, the treasurer or **Collector** and the secretary or **Clerk**. The fourteen Incorporations all send representatives to the Trades House which has three equivalent office bearers, the **Deacon Convener** of the Trades of Glasgow, the **Collector** of the House and the **Clerk**.

The House and Crafts today still actively support benevolence and good causes within the city. They work in close liaison with colleges and schools. Further details of these projects can be found on the last page.

The Annual Dinner of the Trades House following the installation of the Deacon Convener is one of the foremost dinners in the Scottish Calendar.

## **TRADES HALL**

In 1605 the Trades House took over the running of an Alms House which stood at the corner of High Street and Cathedral Street. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was decided to close the Alms House and build the Trades Hall.

Accordingly, **in 1791** Scotland's best known architect **Robert Adam was instructed** to build the present Hall. When Robert Adam died in 1792, his two younger brothers, James and William who were also his business partners, took responsibility for overseeing the building of the Hall which was completed in 1794. It is the only major Robert Adam work surviving in Glasgow and the oldest building (with the exception of the medieval cathedral) still used for its original purpose, that being as a public hall.

The Hall was originally built with small pavilions with pyramidal roofs at each end. **In 1837-1838 David Hamilton**, extended the South pavilion upwards (when building the Saloon) and **in 1888 James Sellars** did the same as a fire escape from the new kitchen.

The building was **refaced** by John Keppie RSA, a former Deacon of the Skinners in 1927, and David Miller, also a Skinner, restored the large Venetian windows of the Grand Hall, so that despite a variety of alterations down the years the overall appearance of the façade retains Adam's lines and movement with a neo-classical silhouette.

## **ENTRANCE HALL**

Although Robert Adam's original drawings of 1791 show the Entrance Hall with a crossed-vaulted ceiling, his brothers James and William may have made alterations when completing the building after his death. The current ceiling probably dates from the 1930s, when this long, narrow passageway was reconstructed.

**The floor is an intricate ceramic mosaic** inset with the Arms of the Trades House crowned by the sheaf of fourteen arrows, **representing the Incorporated Trades, with the motto 'Union is Strength'**. The walls are panelled in oak, with painted decoration designed by Keppie in 1929.

**The most noticeable items here are the carved oak benches** which run the full length of the passageway, stretching over ten metres. They are believed to have been made by Belgian woodcarvers who were refugees in Glasgow during the First World War. Alexander Walker, a former Deacon of the Cordiners, gifted the benches to the Trades House in 1937.

## **THE STAIRCASE**

The main public staircase follows a typical Adam double staircase plan. Although the stair was rebuilt by James Sellars this is one of the few areas of the Trades Hall which retains original details with some particularly fine plasterwork and an interesting **tablet** above the entrance to the Grand Hall which commemorates the opening of the building. Set in a circular panel is the Trades House' grant of arms, very similar to Glasgow's but with a red field as the lower part of its background.

The internal arched window with its two fluted columns supporting carved urns was designed by **James Sellars**. In 1888 Sellars was responsible for extending the building this side of the double doors and creating a rear entrance from Virginia Street. At the same time he rebuilt much of the original Adam staircase.

A French influence can be seen in the ornate moulded cornice, the urns and fluted columns of the stair window, and inspired the glazed barrel-vaulted ceiling. The double height of the space, combined with the natural light from above and the delicate plaster-work, create a light and airy feeling. The plaster-work panels just below the vault features sheaves of fourteen arrows which represent the fourteen Incorporated Trades and occur more frequently than the Arms of the Trades House throughout the building.

The **stained glass window** giving on to the South Lightwell shows the old Arms of the Crafts as they appeared in 1888. The background of each panel is made up of little painted icons; thistles, roses and harps to symbolise Scotland, England and Ireland.

In the upper part of the window, the Trades House arms appear again with the inscription 'Instituted by Letter of Guildry 1605', flanked by two seated boys.

There are two **marble busts** on the staircase. The gifting of such sculptures was a popular way of ensuring one's relatives would be remembered in years to come. Here you can see the bust of **William Maclean**, who was Deacon Convener in 1827-28 and **James McLennan**, Deacon Convener in 1893-94.

The **painting** above the right hand bust is of **George Crawford** who was Clerk to the Trades House from 1831-75. The two **portraits** are of **James Buchanan** and his wife. James Buchanan rose from humble beginnings as a blacksmith in Glasgow's east end to amass a huge fortune trading with Jamaica in the early 1800s. On his death he left a legacy of £10,000, the equivalent of nearly half a million pounds in today's money, to pay for the education of Craftsmen's children.

## **THE GRAND HALL**

Much of the room (which originally formed the entire first floor) has changed since it was completed over two hundred years ago. One of the major projects in recent years has been the re-creation of the magnificent windows to Adam's original design.

The room is symmetrical in design. Its three large arched windows and two smaller rectangular windows flood the room with light. Above the central window is the Trades House Coat of Arms. Stand below here and you have a good view of the Quatercentenary Monument in Hutcheson Street commemorating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Letter of Guildry.

**The ceiling has twice been replaced;** the first time by Hamilton in 1840 and secondly by **Underwood in 1953** - this time because traffic movement had made the plasterwork unsafe. The current ceiling is made of waxed and fireproofed avodire wood from West Africa, and was **inspired by Hamilton's** ceiling. Adam's was probably quite flat, with light plaster tracery. It is dominated by a seven metre dome around the base of which are the fourteen Coats of Arms of the Incorporated Trades, each bearing its motto. Above the dome is a bell which rings to celebrate the appointment of the new Deacon Convener.

James Sellars added the mahogany panelling around the walls and relaid the floor. The fireplace at the far end of the room is one of the few Adam elements which remain in the Grand Hall. Its partner which originally stood at the opposite end of the Hall is now in the Saloon next door.

The painted and gilded **frieze** was installed around the end of the Boer War and runs the entire perimeter of the Hall stretching a distance of some sixty-four metres or 210 feet: showing in a styled and romantic way the work of the **fourteen Incorporated Trades**. It features one hundred and sixty one individual figures as well as a donkey, two pigs, two sheep and a cow. Little is known of the original Belgian artists who painted it but whoever designed it was clearly familiar with the Grand Hall, designing it to tie in with the window arches and the large paintings at the end of the room.

**Sellars'** mahogany panels contain the names of past and present Deacon Conveners of the Trades. **The large portrait above the fireplace is of Archibald McLellan who was Deacon Convener in 1831–32 and again in 1834.** A member of the Incorporation of Hammermen, he was elected Deacon before he became twenty- one and was a City Magistrate before the age of twenty-five. He left his collection of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century paintings to the City Council and they formed the basis of the city's collection which the McLellan Galleries in Sauchiehall Street were built to house in 1855.

At the other end of the Hall the portrait hanging between the windows is of **John Dallas**, Deacon Convener from 1924-26 who, in 1924, established the Commonweal Fund; used to advance educational and charitable and scientific schemes and research 'tending toward the commonweal' of Glasgow.

## **SALOON**

When the Trades Hall was opened in 1794 this room, known as the Saloon, did not exist. It was added in 1838 by the architect David Hamilton.

He was chosen by the Trades House to design two major extensions to the building. This room formed part of his later work which dates from 1837. At this time, although the Trades Hall had only stood for forty years, there was already a need to modernise the Hall's facilities to create cloakroom accommodation beneath this room, and schoolroom accommodation above. It was refurbished by John Keppie in 1916 during the Great War.

The Saloon was used for the first time on 1 October 1838. Since then this room has been the normal meeting place of the Trades House and is frequently let for meetings, dinners, receptions and seminars. Most of what you see today dates from 1916. John Keppie already had an understanding of the building, having worked for James Sellars in the 1888 additions.

Keppie's work in the Saloon included the new mahogany panelling with its record of significant donations to the Trades House and the Crafts, applied in gold paint. Reading these panels gives you a good idea of the type of people who were members or connected with the Trades House. Many of the benefactors stipulated how their money was to be used and their purposes ranged from scholarships and educational purposes to training apprentices and providing financial help to poor and unmarried daughters.

**When the Trade House meets** here the room is laid out like a **traditional Council Chamber** or Parliament Hall with a large table down the middle. The Deacon Convener, Collector and Clerk sit at its head with the previous Convener and Collector and down its sides sit the Deacons and Visitor in Craft order with the other trades' representatives behind them.

**The Deacon Convener's Chair** was designed by David Hamilton and dates from 1819. You can see its fourteen silver shields each engraved with the Coats of Arms of the Incorporated Trades. They surmount a beautifully carved panel of the Trades House crest. At the top of the Chair you can see the fourteen arrows again, with the motto "Union is Strength". Laurel wreaths, foliage and scrolls decorate the back and sides of the Chair and its feet end in two powerful-looking claws.

**LIBRARY** (if available)

The Library was refurbished by the 1994 Chain Gang in celebration of 200 years of the Trades Hall.

It has an extensive collection of books about the history of the Trades House and Hall and also of the city of Glasgow.

Many books have been donated to the Library including those from the Old Glasgow Club and the Colquhoun Library of the Junior Chamber of Commerce. This is an excellent collection which can be accessed for study but books may not be removed from the library.

There are also photographic records of the Deacons and Visitor over the years. There are many other interesting items.

On the wall there is a copy in oils of the “four Philosophers” by Peter Paul Reubens.

**DEACON CONVENER’S SUITE** (if available)

This is the private suite of the Deacon Convener of the year and his Lady. It is a tranquil area where preparation for meetings and events can be carried out and also can be used for personal hospitality.

The carpet bears the crests of the House and the Incorporations. There are two old Alms Plates from the days of the Alms House and two wooden chests. The first is the Conveners Chest dated 1761 and the other the Glasgow Browns Society. An album of Ex Deacon Conveners is also to be found here.

In this area there are also many other interesting items connected with the Trades House and Hall and guests.

## **CRAFTSMAN'S GALLERY**

This room was originally added to the Trades Hall in 1808 as a **purpose built schoolroom** after the Trades House decided to establish its own school known as the Trades Free School in 1806 and sixty boys would take their places here, sitting on the oak benches.

Initially the Trades Free School was only for boys, the sons of freemen, but in 1838 girls were admitted. By 1844, 216 pupils attended the school, half of them boys and half girls. During their four years they were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, church music and the principles of religion. A female teacher taught the girls needlework and knitting. The tapestry depicting the Finding of Moses was made by one of the pupils and won the Trades School prize.

Bible stories and religious instruction were an important part of the curriculum. As well as attending classes through the week they attended school for two hours on Saturday mornings when religious instruction, history and geography were taught. Perhaps surprisingly, no science was taught but particular attention was paid to spelling. Pupils sat four exams each year; those who failed to make the grade in spelling and reading were given extra tuition by the female teacher to bring them up to scratch. Literature was certainly considered important, and the school had its own library, housed in large bookcases in the schoolroom. The students were clearly avid readers borrowing over 1,600 books during one session alone.

**To help pay for staff costs,** each of the Trades contributed fifteen shillings a year towards each pupil it sent. However, the children had to provide their own books, paper, pens and ink. By 1839 the school had two male teachers who earned £100 per year, and one female teacher who, in the days before equal pay, earned only half that amount. On the wall you can see a portrait of Thomas Struthers, who was Principal Teacher of the Trades Free School for twenty one years, from 1845 to 1866.

Things changed with the introduction of the Education Act in 1872, which placed the responsibility for education in state control under the newly-created School Boards. While it was not compulsory for all children under the age of thirteen to attend school, enterprises like the Trades Free School provided many children with the opportunity to discover new worlds and perhaps even contributed to the next generation of Glasgow entrepreneurs.

Of the two Deacons' Chairs the one with the higher back and the insignia of the House and of the Cordiners bears the date 1558, not because it was made then (it is Victorian) but because this was the year when their Charter was renewed by the Town Council and Archbishop of Glasgow, just before the Reformation. The other heavy chair, also of modern construction in old oak, belongs to the Incorporation of Bakers. Both chairs are made from wood which was reclaimed during the renovation of the roofs of Glasgow Cathedral and Culross Abbey.

The mace which has been carved from a log of walnut dredged from below the site of the south pier of the King George V bridge, has been designed and carried out by Mr Walter Gilbert. The idea underlying the design is to emphasise the spirit which guides

the House in its work and the connection of the House with the City. On the head of the Mace on one side is a figure symbolising Brotherhood and on the other side the figure of St Mungo. Below these figures, on the shaft of the Mace are blazoned the Coats of Arms of the fourteen Crafts linked together by links of a chain marking their interconnection through the Trades House. The base of the shaft is adorned by the fish from the City of Glasgow Coat of Arms.

This room now contains a permanent exhibition on the history and work of the Trades House and the individual Incorporations who elect its members, as well as a brief section concerning the continuous development of the Trades Hall from 1605 –2005.

### **EXHIBITION AND COMPETITIONS**

The Craftex Exhibition is held over four days in June exhibiting the best of young and mature students' work whilst the School Craft and Citizenship Award Competitions, also held in June, show what school children can do. Awards are made within a number of categories reflecting each craft skill.

The Trades House of Glasgow Modern Apprentice of the Year Award was introduced in 2006. This award aims to encourage young and not so young people to become proficient in their chosen vocation. It is important to encourage people to take up and continue the traditional trades, many of whom are represented by our fourteen Craft Incorporations established so long ago.

Each of the 14 Crafts sponsor college competitions; the winners of which are presented with their certificates and prizes at the Annual Choosing Dinners of the Crafts.