

Trades House of Glasgow

A Guide to the Roll of Burgesses and Guild Brethren



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Roll of Burgesses and Guild Brethren

The Records which hold the roll of the Trades House Guild Brethren are stored in the Archives of the Trades House of Glasgow and can be perused by appointment. Searching for a family member or to discover relations between Guild Brethren can be difficult using paper copies. It was due to the number of enquiries being made for hard copy searches that it became clear that a digital copy would be most useful for visitors to the Trades House Virtual Museum website.

As the records were copied from docketts written by the applicants, it is possible that the staff of the House may have made errors in transcribing these. Every effort has been made in transcribing the books but there have been a few occasions where it was very difficult to be certain what was written.

Types of Burgess Membership

For those not familiar with the various types of membership, the following guide may be of interest:

Catholic Emancipation

It was not until an Act of Parliament in 1793 was passed, authorising Magistrates of Royal Burghs to admit Roman Catholics to be Burgesses and Guild Brethren of their respective Burghs on condition that they swore an oath of loyalty. The first Roman Catholics applications were made in 1801.¹

Prior to this time, new Burgesses had to swear an oath of allegiance which included a declaration of the Protestant Faith.

Today people of all faiths are welcome to apply to join the Incorporation of their choosing.

Merchant Burgesses on the Trades House Records

There are quite a number of references to people being recorded as Merchants rather than to a particular Craft. This occurred due to an Act laid down by the Trades House on 21st April 1857 which caused the creation of a record of the Roll of Burgesses and Guild Brethren which stated in columns: The Trade entered, whether a son, son-in-law or apprentice Freeman Burges, or are at the Far Hand, and the entry money and bucket money paid by each.

The Clerk of the House also enrolled the names of Merchant Burgesses who had entered as Guild Brethren of the Craft Rank by paying two guineas to the

¹ James Cleland, Annals of Glasgow, Volume 2, 1816, Page 305.

House. These Merchants were then eligible to hold office in a Craft and the House.

Mention has been made above of the term “*bucket money*”, this was money paid to support the fight against fire in the City prior to the formation of a Fire Brigade.

Burgesses (Scotland) Act 1860

The Burgesses (Scotland) Act 1860 enabled those standing for public office to acquire a Burgess ticket without having to join an Incorporation or the Merchant’s House. This was sufficient to enable Town Councillors to take the oath and their seat according to the law then in operation, but it was not sufficient to enable the holder to join a Craft Guild. Such a Burgess was only a Simple Burgess. There are a number of examples of people doing this in these records.²

It is important to be aware that these records only hold the first membership of an Incorporation and if an individual joined a subsequent Incorporation, this would not be recorded in the Burgess Roll and may be found by searching the records of the Individual Incorporations. Many records are available on the website for free downloading for private or personal study.

South African War ~ Volunteer Burgesses

With the outbreak of war in South Africa, the British army required more fighting and support soldiers. On 1st February 1900 the Corporation of the City and Royal Burgh of Glasgow met, the Lord Provost, seconded by Bailie Robert Anderson, moved: “*That in order to mark the sense which this Corporation, as representing the citizens of Glasgow, entertain of loyalty and public spirit of the persons named and designed in the annexed list, who have volunteered to place their services at the disposal of their country in consideration with the present war in South Africa, the Corporation resolve to admit and receive, and do hereby admit and receive, them as Burgesses and Guild Brethren of the City and Royal Burgh of Glasgow, and confer on them all the civil rights and privileges by law belonging to a freeman citizen of Glasgow, and remit to the Magistrates to arrange with the Merchants’ House and the Trades House for their concurrence in these admissions to the same effect, in all respects as if they were made according to the ordinary practice.*” The motion was unanimously carried.³

So began the enrolment of the new Burgesses at no cost to the individual. One thousand and twenty men from Glasgow who volunteered to serve their country were enrolled as Burgesses by the Trades House. On 15th May 1902, the Trades House made a resolution whereby Glasgow Volunteers who gave their services to fight in South Africa only had to pay seven shillings and seven pence to be enrolled as a member of one of the Incorporations.⁴

² Harry Lumsden, Bibliography of the Guilds of Glasgow, 1928, Page 18.

³ Roll of Guild Brethren of the Trades Rank 1855 to 1902, page 225b

⁴ Trades House Minutes, 15th May 1902.

The South African Volunteers are shown with their date of entry as a Burgess, their names and the Regiment that they served with in South Africa.

There are two forms of membership of Incorporation: **Far Hand** and **Near Hand**. Far Hand members were at one time called **Strangers** as they were not related to existing members of Incorporation. Anyone joining who does not have a father, mother, father-in-law or mother-in-law who are members, joins as a Far Hand. Near hands are members who join and have a close family relationship as above. Traditionally **Near Hands** paid slightly less to join an Incorporation.

In the past there was a third form of membership and that was Apprentice and this was available to someone who was serving their apprenticeship with a Burgess of one of the Incorporations.

Abbreviations

The text in the PDF documents follow the form in the Records of the Trades House and therefore where an abbreviations was used by the original authors, this has been copied into the new records.

The main abbreviations used are as follows:

E.S.F.L. ~ Eldest Son Father Living

E.S.F.D. ~ Eldest Son Father Dead

E.D.F.L. ~ Eldest Daughter Father Living

E.D.F.D. ~ Eldest Daughter Father Dead

E.S.M.L. ~ Eldest Son Mother Living

E.S.M.D. ~ Eldest Son Mother Dead

E.D.M.L. ~ Eldest Daughter Mother Living

E.D.M.D. ~ Eldest Daughter Mother Dead

Y.S. ~ Younger Son

Y.D. ~ Younger Daughter

F. in L. ~ Father in Law

D. in L. ~ Daughter in Law

F.H. ~ Far Hand

Female Members

As can be seen from the abbreviations above, female members were recorded in the Rolls of Burgesses. Sadly only two seem to have received their Burgess Ticket. The first female to register was on 7th May 1919 and her name was Ivy MacKenzie and she entered as a Far Hand in the Incorporation of Gardeners. The second female to register on the Rolls was Alison Leitch on 3rd June 1919 and she was registered as a Younger Son in the Incorporation of Bonnetmakers and Dyers. The next female member was enrolled on 3rd July 1920 and her name was Sophie Ziegler Gemmell (Douglas) and is listed as a Younger Daughter and a Merchant. All female members from 1920 until modern times did not pay for matriculation and hence did not become Burgesses and Guild Sisters. Today both male and female members are full members of the Incorporations and receive Burgess

Tickets. Race, colour, creed, etc., are no barrier to joining and Incorporation and all are invited to apply and will be made most welcome.

Burgess Fines

In the past, on joining an Incorporation, various fees were charged dependant on whether the applicant was a Near Hand or Far Hand and in the case of Near Hands, the closeness of relationship between the applicant and whether their father or father-in-law was the relationship used. Likewise, the Trades House charged a fee for joining and also for Bucket Money. Bucket Money dates from 1666 and was for the payment of assistance in case of fire in Glasgow. This was pre Fire Brigade times. There was also a payment for the Trades House Officer and the Town Officer which dates from 1666. The Town Clerk also received a payment for his work in recording the burgess records.

Nowadays, each Incorporation sets a charge and pays the relevant fees to the Trade House who then arranges the issue of the Burgess Ticket from the Town Council and pays them the appropriate fee.

Membership of an Incorporation

All fourteen Incorporations are still running and carrying out their traditional role of looking after the poor of their Incorporation, supporting the education of related trades and giving financial support to charitable organisations and individuals within the City of Glasgow. The Trades House and fourteen Incorporations between them give approximately £750000 to charity each year.

For details of membership of any of the fourteen Incorporations, please visit the website above and click on the **[Contact Us]** button, leaving details of the Incorporation/s of interest and your email address. Most Guid people are welcomed and most Incorporations accept membership from non-UK residents. Membership of an Incorporation includes becoming a Burgess and Guild Brother or Guild Sister of the City of Glasgow and new members receive certificates which clearly show that they are a member of a specific Incorporation and also the highly prized Burgess Ticket.