



**Annual Review By The Lord Dean of Guild To The Members of**  
**The Merchants House of Glasgow**  
**10 May 2016**

**Introduction**

It was a very great honour to be elected as the 225th Lord Dean of Guild on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015. It has been a role that together with my wife Mariella, I have enjoyed wonderfully. The very great privilege that the role has of being the second citizen of Glasgow enables you to see so much of Glasgow that most people do not get to experience. I set myself a theme for my term in office using three words – Relevance, Growth and Legacy. To make our organisation more (1) Relevant – we need to better connect with the modern “mercantile community” of our city and encourage them to become members and directors. We also need to become more visible and to better communicate what we do. (2) Growth – by becoming more relevant we will attract new members and also other trust funds to manage and (3) Legacy – I am mindful that we do little to add to the endowment funds we are entrusted with and that as the current generation we should perhaps consider what we can leave behind for future generations – this is something I hope to continue to develop in the coming months.

**Immediate Past Dean**

Raymond Williamson stepped down at our 2015 AGM following two years of outstanding service as our Lord Dean. He, along with his wife Brenda, gave outstanding service not only to The Merchants House, but also to our great city. During his two years they enjoyed representing The House and the city at numerous events, not least the Commonwealth Games but also the tragic events of the Clutha disaster and a year later the George Square tragedy.

One of his last duties as Dean was to host a successful Valedictory Dinner on 20<sup>th</sup> March where he was able to thank the many people and organisations that had hosted him and Brenda. The speakers were Dr Anthony Lewis of Glasgow Life, Professor Anton Muscatelli, of Glasgow University and The Deputy Lord Provost Bailie Gerry Leonard. Many of the directors and Ex Deans were also present at what was a most enjoyable evening.

During 2015 we reached the wonderful culmination of the Dean’s Organ Appeal that was the initiative of Raymond. The appeal raised over £175,000 and has been used to buy a state of the art digital organ by Copeman Hart organ builders for the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its opening. The organ was dedicated on 23<sup>rd</sup> September with a special recital given by the renowned organist Dr Ian Tracey. The first RSNO concert where the organ was pride of place in the programme was on 21 November with the playing of Saint-Saens Symphony No 3. This is a wonderful instrument that generations will be able to benefit from and is a true example of leaving a legacy.

## **Our Building**

In the summer of 2015 the Directors Room, Ante Room and the Vestibule were redecorated and additional lighting was installed. At the same time we said a sad farewell to the table in the Directors Room as it was constraining the use of the room due to its size. The ship was also relocated to the vestibule where with some extra lighting it is now seen and admired. The redecoration work was painstakingly undertaken by craftsmen from City Building who did a first class job and received much deserved publicity. The rooms are now truly stunning. Plans are well advanced to have the main Hall refurbished this summer. The objective of these works is both to maintain and look after our rooms, but also to make them more lettable for functions and weddings. Once all the works have been done a major marketing effort will begin so that others can use and enjoy the wonderful surroundings and we can enhance our income for charitable purposes.

Director Rob Cunningham produced some stunning photographs of the rooms which were used in the House's Christmas Card. I am most grateful to Rob for the care and devotion he gives in the photographs that he takes for us.

## **Charitable Work**

At the core of what we do here is the support of our beneficiaries and the grants and awards we are able to make. Details are set out in the Annual Accounts. The total amount we spend on our charitable activities is £700k. We will shortly publish detailed lists of all the organisations that we support on our website as we seek to be as open and transparent as possible, and also help to shine a little light on the many wonderful organisations that exist in our city.

## **Events and Activities**

During the year we have held a number of events for members. We held a reception to welcome new members in March 2015. The golf outing took place at Strathaven Golf Club on 9<sup>th</sup> June where good weather prevailed and Ronald Inglis took the spoils. Our annual outing to Pitlochry Festival Theatre was held slightly later than normal in September when we went to see the David Greig play "Pyrenees". The play was excellent, and our later date happily coincided with the Pitlochry Highland Games with our arrival perfectly timed to enjoy the march through the town of the massed bands. We introduced a new event in October which was a sell out – a Dinner with Wine which was held at Hotel du Vin – a fine meal was enjoyed with matching wines being introduced by the sommelier. We held an auction conducted by Campbell Armour of Lyon & Turnbull which raised over £2,220 for Erskine Hospital.

On 31<sup>st</sup> May the Kirking of the House took place at Glasgow Cathedral with the service being taken by the Minister of the Cathedral, Revd Dr Laurence A B Whitley. The Lord Provost was represented by Bailie Anne Simpson along with other dignitaries and directors and members of the House.

On 12<sup>th</sup> June we had a repeat visit to the Glasgow Necropolis and enjoyed a guided tour from The Friends of Glasgow Necropolis. The site continues to be enhanced with a substantial programme of refurbishment works of certain of the major mausoleums. This year we were blessed with a fine dry evening. Those attending then dined at the Cathedral House Hotel.

The Annual "Beneficiaries" Lunch took place on 1<sup>st</sup> September and was held in conjunction with Hutchesons' Hospital. As always it was a most enjoyable occasion and event that our beneficiaries greatly enjoy.

We took part in Doors Open Day on 18 September, which was a great occasion to show off our redecorated rooms.

The Annual Christmas Concert on 9<sup>th</sup> December entitled "A Merchants Christmas" was a sell-out. We greatly enjoyed listening to over 50 students from Hutchesons' Grammar School, who gave us a programme of Christmas

Music and Song under the direction of Ken Walton. On a musical theme, the hall continues to be the home of the successful Westbourne Music concert series, the first and last concerts of which are sponsored by The House.

### **Public Duties**

Since taking office I have attended approaching 200 civic/public events. In many cases my wife Mariella has been able to join me and we have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to meet and welcome to Glasgow many people from throughout the world. We have attended many events that maintain the historic links that The Merchants House has with the City of Glasgow, The Trades House of Glasgow, Glasgow Cathedral, Academia and the Armed Forces as well as other charitable and cultural bodies and organisations.

As Lord Dean I am the representative of The House on various charitable trusts, institutions and organisations. These include Hutchesons' Hospital, The Association for the Relief of Incurables in Glasgow and The West of Scotland, the Clark (Mile End) Bursary, Friends of Glasgow Cathedral, Citizens Theatre, the Glasgow Humane Society

As Lord Dean I Chair the Glasgow Dean of Guild Court Trust. In addition in May 2015 I was elected President of the Court of Deans of Guild of Scotland and as such hosted representatives of the Burgess organisations from throughout Scotland to the AGM in Glasgow on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

I was delighted to attend the Coopers Dinner at Mansion House in London. The Lord Mountbatten Festival of Music at The Royal Albert Hall and a lunch at The Central Criminal Court along with the judges and Alderman of The City of London.

The annual visit to Glasgow's twin city of Nuremberg in January as part of their Burns Supper weekend is a highlight of every year. My wife and I were delighted to accompany the Lord Provost and Mr Docherty as well and the Deacon Convener and her husband.

I must thank Lord Provost Sadie Docherty and her husband Willie, the Deputy Lord Provost, Bailies and Councillors for making Mariella and myself so welcome at the many events held in the City Chambers. They and their staff ensure that all who visit Glasgow receive a very special welcome and the slogan that "People Make Glasgow" is true.

During many events we have enjoyed the company of the third citizen of Glasgow in the form of the Deacon Convener of The Trades House. Our years overlap, so I thank Ruth Maltman and her husband Alan Lapsley and Late Deacon Convener Rt. Rev Dr Idris Jones and his wife Alison for their support and most importantly for all their friendship.

### **Office and Administration**

We were very sorry to say farewell to our Assistant Collector Roy Henderson who retired at the beginning of June 2015. Roy had decided to retire so that he could spend more time with his dear wife, Jill, who was very ill. That time was I know very precious to Roy, and it is with the deepest regret that I have to advise that Jill passed away on Sunday. We extend our deepest and most heartfelt best wishes to Roy and his family at this time

Upon Roy's retiral we have welcomed Avril Sloane as our new Assistant Collector. She along with our Visitor, Anne Gemmell, Ted Norman our House Officer and Bob King our Caretaker do a fabulous and dedicated job and have been an enormous assistance to me.

The website has been refreshed, and will continue to be developed. As Lord Dean I have introduced a Facebook page to show the events that I have attended and to create links with the people and organisations we come into contact with. Keeping these fully up to date all the time remains a challenge, but we are moving in the right direction. I am indebted to my wife for helping spearhead this work.

The work of the house would not happen without the time given by the Directors. I thank them all, but in particular I must single out the Committee Chairs, namely Robert Crawford, Robin Downie, Tom Gilchrist, Angus Kerr, Elizabeth Simpson, and Bob Winter.

In addition to the normal committee meetings, I can advise I called a meeting of the Executive Committee and we also have two sub-committees undertaking particular tasks at the moment – the Grants Sub-Committee is reviewing our processes to ensure we operate to the highest current standards, and the Property Sub-Committee is looking at the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act and what we can do to improve access to the building.

Today we say farewell to our Collector, David Ballantine. David has been Collector since 1985 and has been a much valued fixture of the life of the House. David retired as a Partner with Mitchells Robertson at the end of March, a firm that can trace its connection with the House through hundreds of years. David has seen many changes, not least the addition of many trusts and funds as well as the major Constitutional Amendments made in recent years. With his retiral a wealth of knowledge will be lost to us. David we thank you so very much. I along with many of the Past Deans and Assistant Collectors that you have worked with look forward to celebrating your achievements at lunch in the Directors Room along with your wife Marie on 27 May.

As a result of the retiral of our Collector, I have led a strategic review of our administration structure. The Directors approved changes that will lead to us moving towards having a beefed up full-time office team comprising of a General Manager who will also carry the title of Collector, along with an Office and Events Administrator. We shall continue to also benefit from the work of our Visitor who shall be moving, at her request, to a part time role. With the Hall being refurbished we will have a team ready to drive the organisation forward and able to meet the requirements of the modern era and to maximise the use of our magnificent building.

### **Conclusion**

I have greatly enjoyed the last year as Lord Dean, representing the work of this House and Glasgow. I believe we are in good heart as we go forward. A copy of this report will be published shortly on the website and next year as I come to the end of my term of office I intend to produce a fuller more glossy publication to document my term as Lord Dean.

John F MacLeod  
Lord Dean of Guild

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