



THE
MERCHANTS
HOUSE
OF GLASGOW

ANNUAL
REVIEW 2024 



INTRODUCTION FROM THE LORD DEAN

Welcome to the 2024 Annual Review of The Merchants House of Glasgow.

It has been another remarkable year- one of service, generosity, and deepening civic engagement. As Lord Dean of Guild, I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the incredible impact of The Merchants House in Glasgow and beyond.

At the core of our work is a commitment to philanthropy. This year, we awarded over £226,000 in grants, supporting more than 50 charities working to address some of the most pressing issues in our communities. In addition, £68,000 in direct benefits was provided to individuals in need, ensuring tangible support for those facing hardship. However, the growing demand for assistance highlights the ongoing challenges many face, and the vital role The Merchants House continues to play.

Beyond our charitable giving, The Merchants House remains an active part of Glasgow’s civic life. I have had the honour of representing the House at a

wide range of events, from visiting the Citizens Theatre ahead of its reopening to celebrating the Year of the Snake at a Chinese Burns Supper. As Second Citizen of Glasgow, I have also supported the Lord Provost at key civic occasions, including the Senior Citizens Christmas Lunch and the Lord Provost’s Children’s Christmas Party, spreading joy to our city’s residents, young and old.

A particularly exciting moment was attending the launch of Glasgow850, the city’s year-long celebration of its 850th birthday in 2025. The Merchants House is proud to be involved in the Port Stones Project, which will mark the locations of Glasgow’s four historic gateways, leaving a lasting legacy of our city’s rich past.

We also continue to honour our long-standing connection to the Armed Forces. It was a privilege to represent The Merchants House at the Remembrance Sunday service at George Square, standing



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alongside veterans, dignitaries, and members of the public in a solemn tribute to those who have served.

Our members remain at the heart of our work, and I am delighted to see our 830-strong community come together at special events throughout the year. From the annual Christmas Concert, featuring the wonderful students of St Denis’ Primary School, to an exclusive performance of Enlightenment: An Immersive Light Show, our events continue to inspire and bring people together.

For over four centuries, The Merchants House has remained steadfast in its mission of charity, civic duty and fellowship. This year has been no exception, and I extend my sincere gratitude to our directors, staff, and members for their dedication and support.



Andrew McFarlane,
Lord Dean of Guild

OUR IMPACT **THIS YEAR**

For over 400 years, The Merchants House of Glasgow has been at the heart of the city’s charitable and civic life. Guided by three enduring pillars—Philanthropy, Civic Duty, and Member Engagement—we remain committed to improving lives and strengthening communities across Glasgow and the West of Scotland.

2024 in numbers

£226,000+
in grants awarded



Supporting local charities tackling health, education, poverty, and social welfare.

50+
charities supported



From food banks to mental health services—organisations creating real change.

£68,000
in direct benefits to individuals



Helping people when they need it most.

830
members



A thriving community bound by purpose, tradition, and generosity.

250+
visitors on Doors Open Day



Opening our doors and sharing our heritage with the city.

Our Pillars of Purpose

Philanthropy

Charitable giving is at the core of everything we do. Through grants and individual support, we provide a vital safety net for those facing hardship and enable organisations to deliver life-changing work.

Civic Duty

The Lord Dean of Guild, Glasgow’s Second Citizen, represents the House at key civic events and helps uphold the traditions, responsibilities, and values that have shaped our city.

Member Engagement

With over 830 members, The Merchants House is a vibrant community. We bring people together through shared values, meaningful events, and a collective commitment to doing good.



GRANTS COMMITTEE

This year’s grants committee has been busier than ever, with nearly £300,000 awarded through grants and beneficiaries.

This money supports vulnerable individuals and the vital work of charities and community groups across Glasgow and the West of Scotland. This significant contribution underscores the House’s historic legacy of a positive impact for those who need our help the most. I know for Merchants House members the charitable work is essential, and each and every House member can be extremely proud of the impact we are having.

There is no satisfaction in saying our work is more needed than ever. Our focus has continued to be on supporting groups who tackle food and fuel poverty, those who encourage social inclusion, and those who promote healthy living, reflecting our dedication to addressing the diverse needs of the community. I am grateful to everyone who has contributed to House funds to help meet this need.

The diligence undertaken to ensure each application meets a tangible need is a

source of strength for the Merchants House, and I am confident each and every donor to the House, now or in the future, can take great comfort from knowing funds are being disbursed wisely and with impact.

We are incredibly grateful to all members of the House whose donations and legacies help us make a difference. I hope you too will be inspired by some of the stories of support in this document and on our social media channels. If you would like to support our grant giving you can do so by making a donation through our website.



Tony McElroy,
Chair -
Grants Committee





GRANT STORIES

SUNSHINE WISHES CHILDREN’S CHARITY

Funding of £5,005 is helping the Sunshine Wishes Children’s Charity tackle food poverty through food banks they have established in 8 nurseries.

These food banks are playing a crucial role in assisting up to 280 families each month, helping them to access basic necessities.

The food banks supply a range of essential items, including rice, pasta, cereal, tinned foods, and baby products like nappies and baby food. In addition to providing meals for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks, the food banks also offer essential hygiene and cleaning products.

A representative said *“We tailor our support to meet families’ needs by talking discreetly with the families to remove any stigma attached to them requesting help. This also gives us the opportunity to discuss other ways we may be able to help. With food poverty being a huge and growing problem, these services are a vital lifeline for those who continue to face difficulties in the current economic climate.”*

Sunshine Wishes Children’s Charity was established in July 2016. The charity’s mission is to make dreams come true for sick and terminally ill children, children with learning disabilities, and underprivileged children.

GRANT STORIES

HEARTS & MINDS (CLOWNDOCTORS)

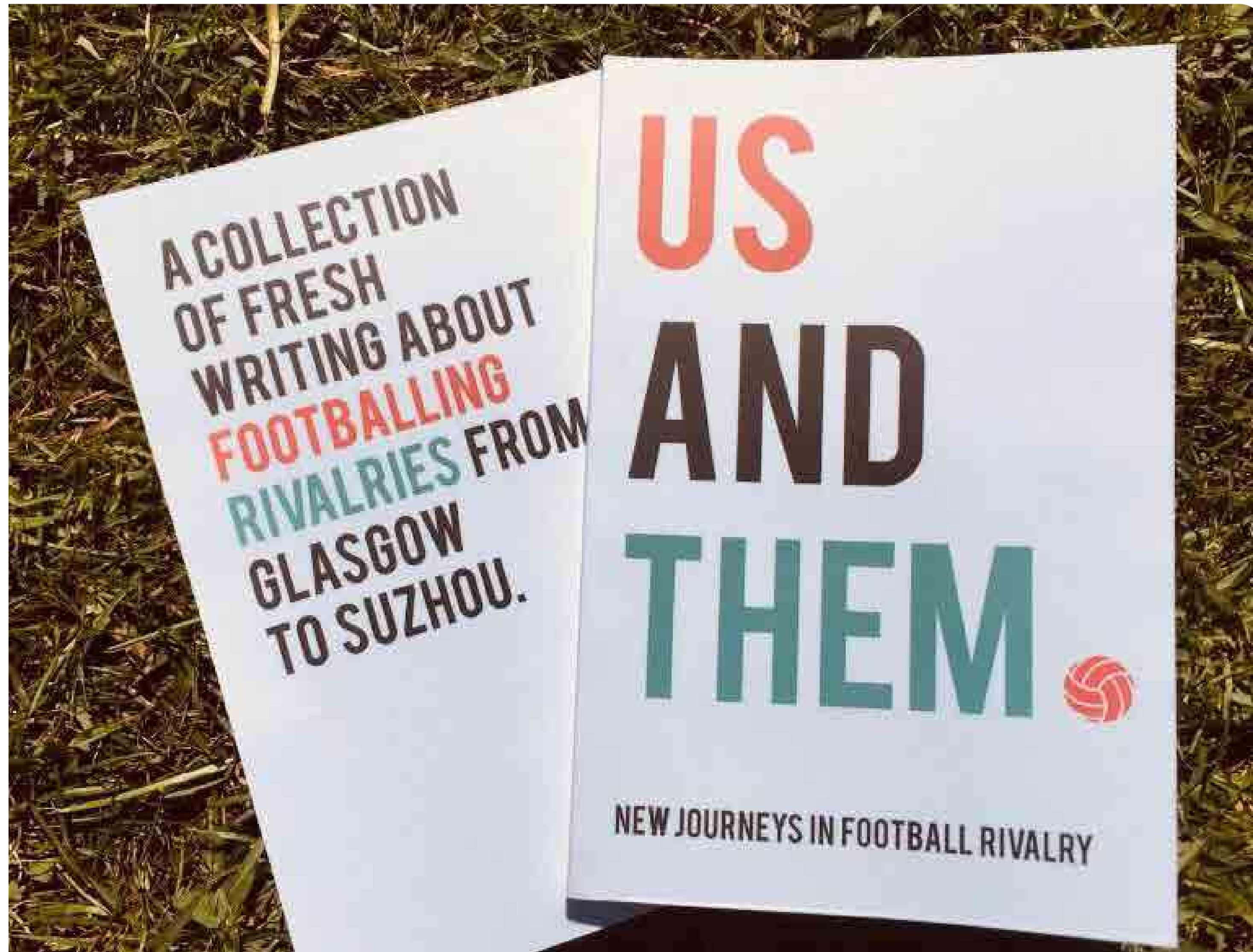
This £3,700 grant supports the Clowndoctor Programme at the Royal Hospital for Children, Glasgow.

The Clowndoctors, dressed in yellow coats and red noses, bring comfort, laughter, and friendship to children twice a week, helping relieve feelings of anxiety and boredom during their hospital stays.

A representative explained more about their impact: *“A visit from the Clowndoctors is about connection and using performing arts in healthcare to help children face adversity with resilience, creativity, and humour. Each visit is unique to the child and can help improve emotional well-being and may help reduce the time children spend in hospital.”*

Always visiting in pairs, the Clowndoctors are all professional performers selected for their empathy, compassion, respect and playfulness as well as their clown abilities. They are trained in clowning techniques including improvisation, surprises, music, slapstick, celebrating mistakes, and rhythm. They are also trained how to clown in healthcare and school environments with children and young people who might be feeling ill, vulnerable or anxious, or have disabilities or life-limiting conditions.





GRANT STORIES

NIL BY MOUTH

Nil by Mouth will expand its impactful ‘Us and Them’ programme thanks to a £2,000 funding boost.

This initiative aims to help teenage football fans explore their identity and behaviour in relation to football culture in Scotland, particularly addressing issues of sectarianism and prejudice.

Working with a selection of authors, Nil by Mouth produced a book entitled ‘Us and Them’, which can be used with small, focused groups of young people to stimulate discussion and to help them consider their attitudes. The book acts as a catalyst in channelling their interest in sport more positively.

This funding provides the opportunity to bring the ‘Us and Them’ programme to Renfrewshire, to work with teenagers who have been identified as at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour around Scottish football.

Nil by Mouth said *“This support assists us in effectively challenging sectarian and prejudicial attitudes and means those participating will gain a much better understanding of cultures and beliefs different to their own. Because of your generosity and partnership we can make a real difference at what is a pivotal time in these young people lives while continuing to strive for meaningful change”*.



GRANT STORIES

CLYDE SHOPMOBILITY

Clyde Shopmobility provides an essential service for people with mobility challenges, offering access to mobility scooters and wheelchairs around the Clyde Shopping Centre.

A grant of £5,000 will help them purchase new, lightweight, more comfortable wheelchairs, enhancing the overall user experience. The service plays a key role in reducing social isolation by enabling individuals to shop, meet friends, or attend appointments.

Testimonies from service users highlight how important the service is for daily activities, helping them access the shopping centre and other locations they might otherwise struggle to reach.

One service user said *“The service is a massive help, as I wouldn’t be able to get around the shopping centre without it, to shop or just to meet up with my friends for a coffee”*.

Operating since 2011, Clyde Shopmobility is a locally run charity that serves residents of West Dunbartonshire and surrounding areas. They offer a variety of services to make it easier for people with mobility challenges to stay connected to their community.





GRANT STORIES

THE OCCASIONAL CABARET (THE SOUTHSIDE GROUP)

A grant of £2,200 will support The Southside Group’s (TSG) workshop and performance programme.

Formed in February 2020, TSG was initiated by The Occasion, a company dedicated to creating live theatre that entertains, challenges, surprises, and, above all, excites audiences. TSG was created to provide new and exciting opportunities for adults with learning disabilities to engage in theatre.

Over the years TSG has grown into a ground-breaking company of 17 individuals. Ranging in age from late teens to sixties, all have some degree of learning disability. Some are experienced performers; others are relative beginners. All contribute enormously, in their own ways, to the work of the company. The group is open to anyone aged 18 and over, with no previous drama experience necessary - just a desire to have fun, create, play, explore and meet new people.

A representative shared, *“Funding from the Merchants House will provide valuable assistance for TSG’s workshop and performance programme, ensuring the continuing development of the group.”*



GRANT STORIES

ST MIRREN FOUNDATION (FIT & FED)

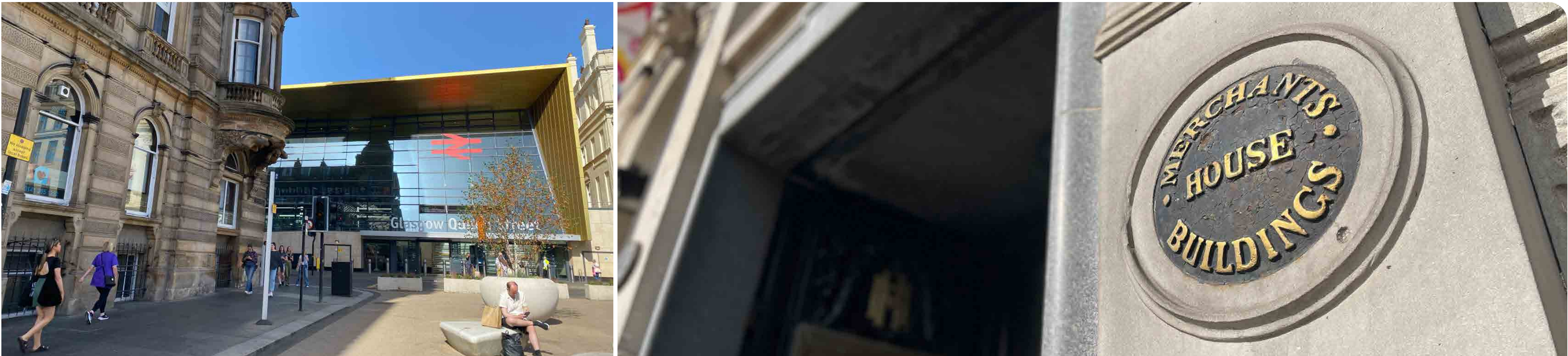
A £20,000 grant from the Merchants House is helping keep young people in Paisley Fit & Fed.

This programme of holiday camps for children and young people, delivered by the St Mirren Foundation, has already provided food and fitness fun for 5,000 youngsters this year.

Each day participants have access to 6 hours of high quality sports coaching and the opportunity to try out a range of other positive activities which aim to help improve physical and mental health and well-being, as well as to encourage the children and young people to develop their confidence and communication skills.

St Mirren FC Charitable Foundation is the official charity of St Mirren Football Club, based within The SMiSA Stadium, Paisley. The Foundation is committed to implementing positive change in the community they serve, providing a brighter and more hopeful future. Their work supports people of all ages, capabilities and backgrounds.





PROPERTY AND CAPITAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE

When our predecessors built the present Merchants House, they not only established a meeting place and administrative centre but also a lasting heritage.

Spread across six expansive floors, the property offers more space than the House requires, allowing us to lease portions to third parties. Among these tenants is the Chamber of Commerce, which has been in the building for over a century and remains a vibrant presence today!

The revenue generated from our tenants not only helps cover operational costs but also bolsters our charitable giving. Over the years, we’ve carefully maintained and refurbished the building, ensuring it remains a symbol of

our heritage as well as fit for purpose office and events space. However, as time progresses, major upgrades become necessary. The committee is actively engaged in exploring the feasibility, logistics, and financing of these essential improvements.

As we embark on these improvements, we’re committed to preserving the spirit and heritage of the Merchants House while ensuring it remains a dynamic and welcoming space for all.



Steven Morris,
Chair -
Property and Capital
Projects Committee



LEGACY AND PHILANTHROPY COMMITTEE

The relatively new Legacy and Philanthropy committee has enjoyed a number of successes this past year.

Not least the wonderfully generous and substantial gift from Lord Dean May Storrie CBE. Her name appears on our donors' board in the hope of encouraging similar philanthropy. We are very grateful.

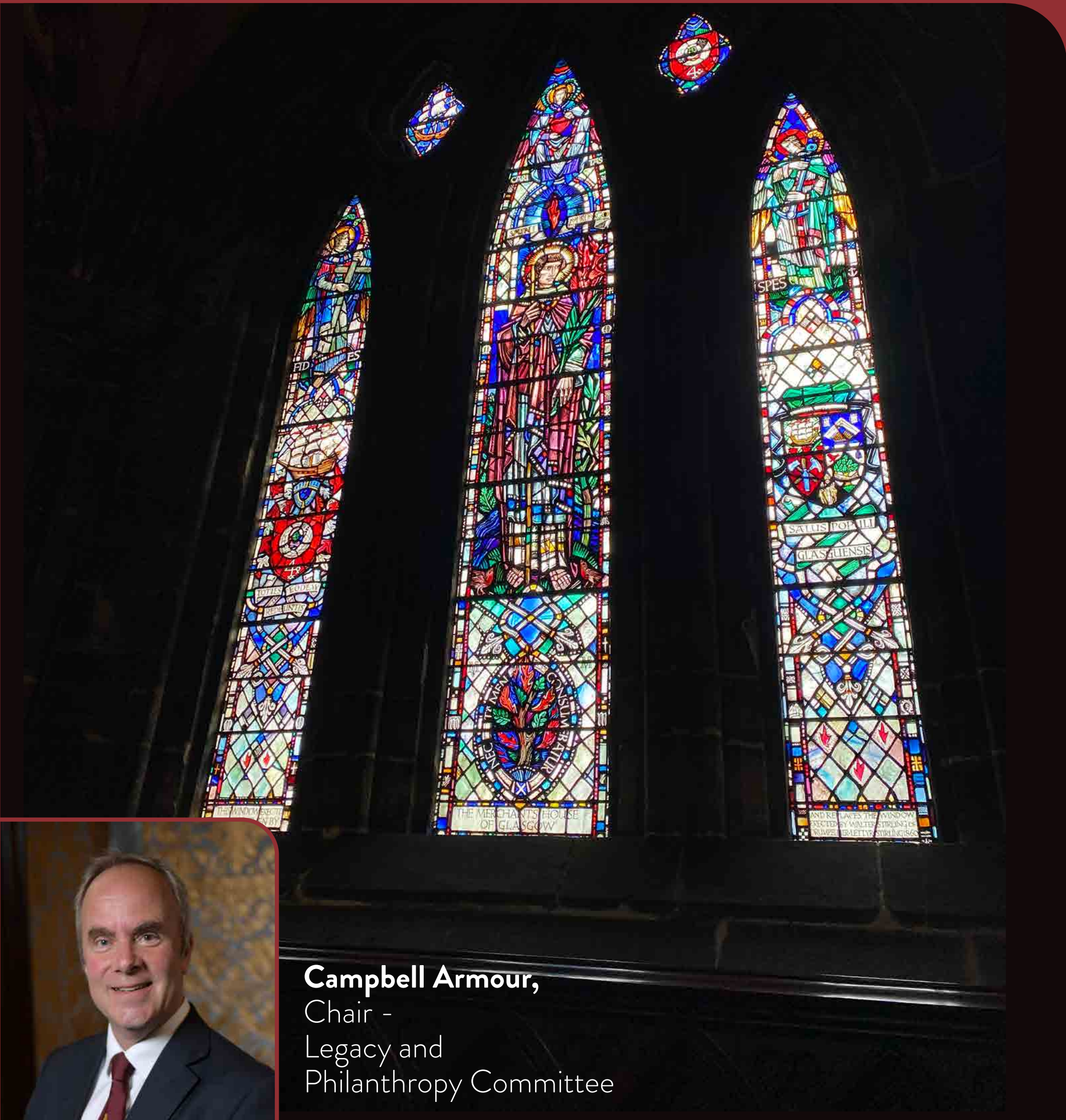
During the year we held a breakfast seminar for private client solicitors in the city. We hope to raise awareness amongst this influential professional group that our charity might be of much interest to their clients. We also played an active role in the autumn 'Glasgow Doors Open Day Festival' again this year, which offers such a good opportunity to meet new prospective members and indeed donors. Several useful conversations have been held since these events took place which are likely to have a positive impact on future donations.

The Regular Giving scheme has provided funding in this past year for React, Royston Youth Action, Glasgow Street Aid, Nil by Mouth, Family Mediation West of Scotland,

Clyde Shopmobility and Scottish Youth Dance. These kind members who choose to give our charity an annual donation really are making a difference to the lives of many and helping often quite small charities, where our support makes such a big impact.

We will shortly be holding the launch of The 1602 Circle, the name of our newly formed group of philanthropic individuals who support the Merchants House by larger than average annual or one off gifts, or who include us in their wills. The name celebrates the first such gift to the House in 1602 by John Mure.

On the legacy side, a number of directors and members have made known their intention to include the Merchants House in their wills, and we continue to welcome others to this growing group. Through these initiatives we continue to foster the spirit of philanthropy which has always been a hallmark of our venerable charity, serving the city and its surrounding area.



Campbell Armour,
Chair -
Legacy and
Philanthropy Committee

MEMBERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The public profile of the Merchants House continues to grow in a most positive way. In 2024 we again saw an increase in the House’s social media engagement and the website views now stand at approximately 13,000 per month.

It is perhaps no small coincidence that part of the rise followed another spellbinding performance in April by Donald Findlay K.C. who kept the 160 full capacity audience of both members and visitors enthralled with his retelling, in his own inimitable way, of the scandalous miscarriage of justice which saw Oscar Slater being convicted of murder in 1909 but only having his conviction overturned in 1927 by the then newly created Appeal Court.

We were delighted to welcome many more visitors when we participated again in Glasgow Doors Open Day. This time, the House was open on both the 20th and 21st September and 250 people came to explore our historic venue, including the Grand Hall, Director’s Room, the Lord Dean’s Room and to be welcomed by a short talk both in person and on video by the Lord Dean, all helping them to discover not just our history but the nature and extent of our charitable giving. A display of

a number of items and old newspaper reports from our archives proved very popular and the event has helped boost membership numbers.

For a second year, The Christmas Concert was a great success, thanks to all the entertainment provided by the very talented children of St Denis’ Primary School. It was the perfect ending to another year that demonstrated that the House is going from strength to strength and continuing to prove its worth and relevance to the people and visitors to Glasgow.



Frances McMenamin,
Chair -
Membership and
Development
Committee



FINANCIAL REVIEW

The Finance Committee plays a crucial role in managing the House’s finances and ensuring that grant funding and other charitable support continue throughout the year.

Income from the three main sources increased in 2024 and it is particularly positive to note the growth in Hall Lettings. The office rental market continues to be difficult, however, and further investment is planned to help find new tenants and grow this important revenue stream.

The Committee continues to collaborate closely with the Property and Capital Projects Committee to ensure that the programme of repairs and improvements to the

House is managed effectively. It is crucial we secure long-term income growth from the premises and also maintain the fabric of our historic building.

The Investment Sub Committee continues to work closely with our Investment Managers to ensure the House Portfolios are carefully managed. Each portfolio saw growth aligning with the long-term objectives whilst generating appropriate levels of income for grants.



John Mason,
Chair -
Finance Committee



FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT...

The Merchants House, at its present site on the corner of Glasgow’s famous George Square, represents a beacon of hope in troubled times.

One of our core objectives has always been to help those local charities who do so much good in Glasgow and its surrounding area. The city, in common with many others, contains many such charities, which in these stringent times rely on financial support to continue and expand their essential work within the community.

These grants are only possible thanks to the generous legacies of our forebears. The many inscribed boards around the Grand Hall are visible testaments to this past generosity. These legacies have, in turn, allowed us to occupy the Merchants House, from which we derive further rental income to distribute as grants. We are lucky to have received very kind and thoughtful legacies

given over the last few years. This vital continuing philanthropy allows us to continue to help the most deserving local charities.

We invite you to join this philanthropic group of predominantly former directors, members, and other supporters of the Merchants House. If you have already made provision in your will to leave a legacy, then we are most grateful to you.

However, if you would like to discuss how you can help by considering a legacy in your will, then please get in touch with us to discuss further or arrange a meeting. We would love to hear from you.



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Please contact our Chief Executive, Craig Vickery, at Craig.Vickery@merchantshouse.org.uk or phone on **0141 221 8272** if you have any questions or require further information.

