

## The National Museums' stained-glass window

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### ABSTRACT

*The window, the work of W Graham Boss, presented by J R Findlay to commemorate the opening in 1891 of the new home of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland is described. It is argued that in the choice of portraits of the Council of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and the plants surrounding them Findlay wished to affirm the Museum's right to its half of the building.*

The window in question (illus 1) is one of two at the top of the eastern staircase in the building on Queen Street, Edinburgh which the Royal Museum of Scotland presently shares with the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. This staircase provides the main access to the Museum's galleries. With the exception of the entrance hall and the ambulatory around it at first floor level, the window represents the most important internal decoration of the whole building. Indeed, when it was first installed in late 1894 there was no other decoration inside the building to compare with it.

In these circumstances, it is perhaps surprising that so little evidence about it now survives. No document of this Society so much as mentions the window – it was never discussed at any Council Meeting nor do any of the surviving letters of the period in the Society's archives make even so much as an allusion to it. Even more surprising is that the papers of the Board of Manufactures, which at the time had control of the building, do not record either the approval of the design or the granting of permission for its installation. Indeed, the only surviving reference to the window is in the Board's letter book where an entry dated 20 February 1895 records a letter from A M Inglis, the Secretary to the Board, to W Graham Boss, the glass stainer who executed the window (Board of Manufactures Letter Book: Scottish Record Office 1/3/42). In the letter Inglis begs 'to acknowledge receipt of your letter of yesterday's date offering in gift to the Scottish National Portrait Gallery the portrait drawings made for the stained glass window recently filled up in the staircase of the Museum of Antiquities, and which are at present in the possession of Mr Findlay'. The obvious secondary sources barely provide anything more than the merest mention of the window (see, for example, the entry in *The Builder*, 68 (1895), 33).

It is not easy to explain this lack of source material even if one may reasonably suppose that much of the business concerned with the realization of the window was done on an informal basis. After all, there was in the late Victorian period a considerable feeling, at least among organizations like the Board of Manufactures and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, that the proper formalities should be strictly adhered to. Anyone reading the letter books of the Board of Manufactures will be immediately struck by the concern shown by the Board's officers to ensure that the prerogatives of the Board were fully maintained even in what we would now regard as quite trivial matters.

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Nevertheless, the fact remains that in the case of this window the formalities do not seem to have been recorded. The consequences of this state of affairs is that this essay contains more supposition, and presumably half-truth, than one might expect in any discussion of something not yet quite a hundred years old.

The event which the window commemorates is, of course, the official opening on 13 August 1891 of the eastern half of the building as the new home of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland (since October 1985 it has formed part of the Royal Museum of Scotland within the wider National Museums of Scotland organization). No comparable memorial was erected to mark the opening in 1889 of the Portrait Gallery in the other half of the building. It is perhaps appropriate, therefore, to begin by considering the circumstances which led to the Museum being accommodated in a building originally conceived as housing only portraits (more fully considered in Stevenson 1981, 163–73).

In the 1850s the collections of this Society had been accepted as a gift by the Government of the day with the clear intention that they should form the basis of a national collection. Although in theory this relieved the Society of the burdens of providing accommodation and maintaining the objects, it left it with responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Museum under the aegis of the Board of Manufactures. Prior to the move to Queen Street the Museum was housed in part of the Royal Institution building at the foot of the mound (now the Royal Scottish Academy). Long before there was any realistic possibility of a building on Queen Street, the Council of the Society was complaining about the inadequacy of the rooms in the Royal Institution. It drew particular attention to the overcrowding caused by the large number of recent acquisitions (easily understood when looking at Bell 1981, illus 2–3). In part this was the result of the considerable enthusiasm shown by the Society for augmenting the collections once the financial responsibility for maintaining them had passed to the Treasury.

In 1883, for reasons unconnected with the perceived inadequacy of the accommodation in the Royal Institution, the Board of Manufactures proposed, at the Treasury's suggestion, that the Museum should be housed in part of the new west wing of the Museum of Science and Art (now the Chambers Street building of the Royal Museum of Scotland). This solution did not find favour with the Council of the Society. Yet the idea was not finally abandoned until J R Findlay, the proprietor of *The Scotsman*, offered to match his original proposal to provide £10000 to help establish a Portrait Gallery with a further £10000. The whole sum of £20000 was to be used 'for the purpose of building or acquiring premises for the accommodation both of the National Portrait Gallery and the Museum of Antiquities'. In the end delays pushed up the cost to Findlay to over £50000 and he subsequently contributed a further £10000 'for decoration'. His gifts finally totalled almost £70000.

At the opening of the Portrait Gallery section of the building in July 1889, Findlay's generosity, which had hitherto been anonymous, was publicly acknowledged for the first time. In his own speech Findlay made clear the importance which he attached to the attempts to move the Society of Antiquaries and the Museum to the Chambers Street building and the role this had played in involving him in the project. At the opening of the Museum section of the building in 1891, Findlay again returned to this matter, remarking that 'at one time there was a very serious risk of our collections being made a mere appendix to the Museum of Science and Art, but through the exertions mainly of Lord Lothian that was averted, and it is to his Lordship that we owe in no inconsiderable degree the fact that the Museum is now here'. Current conventions and Findlay's modesty no doubt caused this understated version of his own major contribution.

The singular importance which the Society attached to the acquisition of new premises is indicated by the celebrations which accompanied the formal opening. A *conversazione* was held in the Ground Floor of the Portrait Gallery on the evening of 13 August 1891 (*The Scotsman*, 14 August

1891). As well as representatives from numerous learned societies, the Society had invited the Royal Archaeological Institute to hold its summer meeting in Edinburgh that year to coincide with the opening. Upwards of 600 people attended. The number was regrettably reduced, as Lord Lothian remarked in his speech, by the occasion falling but one day after the start of the grouse-shooting season. In all honesty one could not expect everybody to view the opening of the Museum as more important than the slaughter of the odd bird. According to *The Scotsman*, 'the architectural attractions of the handsome building were enhanced by a judicious decoration of its picturesque hall and corridors and stairs with plants and flowers among which burned soft fairy lights'. It went on to note that these 'decorations and lighting were admirable – worthy in all respects of one of the most artistic buildings in Edinburgh'. After speeches by Lord Lothian and Lord Percy, President of the Royal Archaeological Institute, Findlay said that he had been 'informed on high authority that the proper mode of opening an archaeological museum in Scotland is by a blast upon the bagpipes'. Lord Lothian duly called for such a blast and 'although the lecture hall was too crowded to admit of the pipes entering, the skirl of the bagpipes was immediately heard in the outer corridor, and the pipers subsequently played in different parts of the building'.

I have spent some time on the opening because it is easy for those of us, whose thoughts about the building tend to be dominated by its inadequacies and whose working lives have been spent trying to leave it, to fail to appreciate just how important and welcome the move to Queen Street was for those involved. Not that everybody necessarily regarded the building with wholehearted enthusiasm – Joseph Anderson, for example, the Keeper of the Museum, thought its style incompatible with its function (Stevenson 1981, 173). But, nevertheless, there was a strong feeling that the collections, perhaps for the first time, had a home which adequately reflected their importance. However, although this sense of the importance of the occasion was felt by the Society, its friends and supporters, the matter was complicated from the start by sharing a building with the newly established Portrait Gallery. The Board of Manufactures always described the place as the Portrait Gallery building. And in 1891, perhaps even before the Museum was officially opened, the first Curator of the Portrait Gallery, J M Gray, produced a guide with the title *The Scottish National Portrait Gallery: the building and its contents* (Gray 1891) which reinforced the idea that this was indeed the Portrait Gallery building. Out of this has grown the totally fictitious idea that the Museum occupies its half of the building under sufferance, on a sort of long term but nevertheless temporary basis.

I am of the view that Findlay saw this trend in its infancy and believed there was a real danger to the Museum if this view grew to maturity. After all, he had been intimately involved on the project with the Board of Manufactures for more than ten years by the time he initiated the idea of a commemorative window to mark the opening of the Museum. By then he was well aware that the Board could not be relied upon to have the best interests of the Society or Museum at heart. In the circumstances, therefore, the window is most appropriately seen not just as a memorial but as a public statement by Findlay that the building represents a home for two separate institutions. Findlay was by nature not much attracted by public memorials. He had strenuously and successfully opposed earlier attempts to establish a permanent memorial to his own contribution to the building. Of course, personal modesty must have been a factor on this previous occasion but it remains surprising that, after all his gifts, he should have chosen to initiate and pay for this window if its sole purpose was the commemoration of the Museum's opening.

This idea, that he was making a much broader and more important statement than mere remembrance by installing this window, perhaps helps to explain the absence of written records which I noted earlier. As the provider of the building, Findlay's request to install the window could hardly be refused by the Board of Manufactures. If, however, the purpose that lay behind the request was clearly understood and consequently embarrassing in its implied criticism of the Board, it is not

perhaps so surprising that they chose to deal with it in an informal way that would not result in surviving records. The Society of Antiquaries, though not sharing the embarrassment, would not have wished to add to the discomfort of the Board, perhaps prejudicing their working relationship, and might similarly have chosen to deal with the matter in a manner which ensured no records for future generations. This, of course, is all supposition but the idea that the window is intended to convey a firmer statement than mere commemoration is supported by its design.

The window is divided into two lights although the overall design ignores the division created by the stone mullion (illus 1–2).

Most of the window is filled with portraits of the Society's office bearers for the session 1890–91 within which the opening date fell – the Society's year ran, then as now, from 1 December to 30 November. At the top of the window, between the points of the two arches which would normally be filled with tracery, is a portrait of Queen Victoria, surrounded as are all the other medallions by a circular floral wreath (illus 3). My colleague, Miss Helen Jackson, has attempted, with a good measure of success, to identify the plants involved and her conclusions are incorporated in the following description. Queen Victoria's wreath is one of only two where no firm identification can be offered. The *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch* (28 December 1894) thought it to be laurel but the flowers seem closer to privet and the leaf is not very convincing for either species. Below the arching of each light is a medallion – that on the left contains the Royal Arms (illus 4), while that on the right has the arms of the Society (illus 5). Both are surrounded by hard fern.

Below these come the portraits of the office-bearers which run in sequence from left to right across the two lights and from top to bottom. In order, they are:

The President – the Marquess of Lothian (illus 6). His floral wreath is the other that remains unidentified. It has been claimed to be myrtle (*Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, 28 December 1894) but the identification is unconvincing.

The three Vice-Presidents –

J R Findlay (illus 7), appropriately surrounded by thistles

The Marquess of Bute (illus 8), acorns and oak leaves

Sir Herbert Maxwell (illus 9), holly flowers.

The two representatives of the Board of Manufactures –

Sir Joseph Noel Paton (illus 10), flowers and berries of ivy

Sir William Fettes Douglas (illus 11), laburnum flowers.

The Council members –

Professor Sir William Turner (illus 12), ground ivy flowers

R W Cochran-Patrick (illus 13), borage flowers

R Rowand Anderson – the building's architect (illus 14), rowan berries

T Dawson Brodie (illus 15), wild rose flowers

Aeneas J G Mackay (illus 16), corn marigold flowers

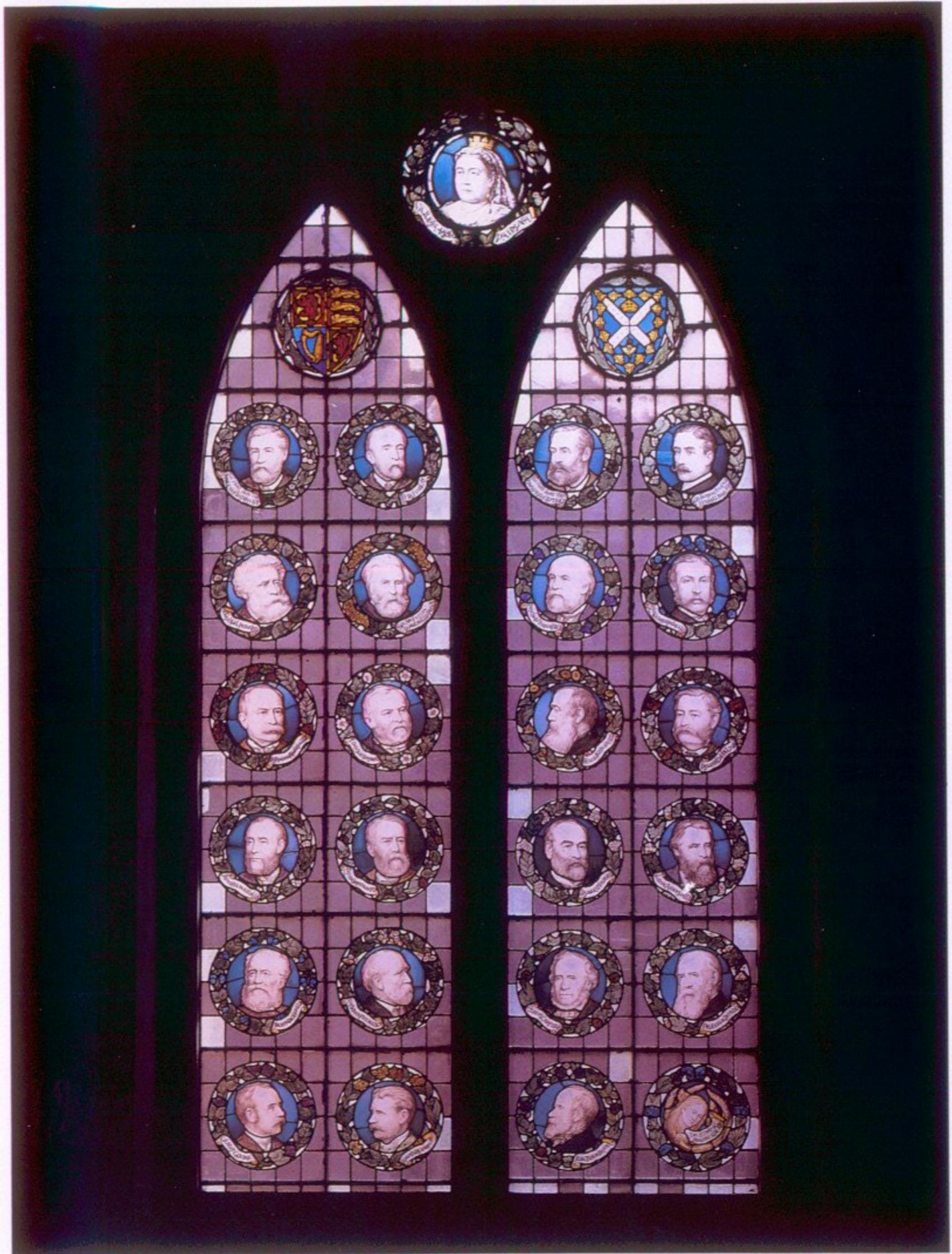
Reginald MacLeod (illus 17), rose hips

James MacDonald (illus 18), mistletoe berries.

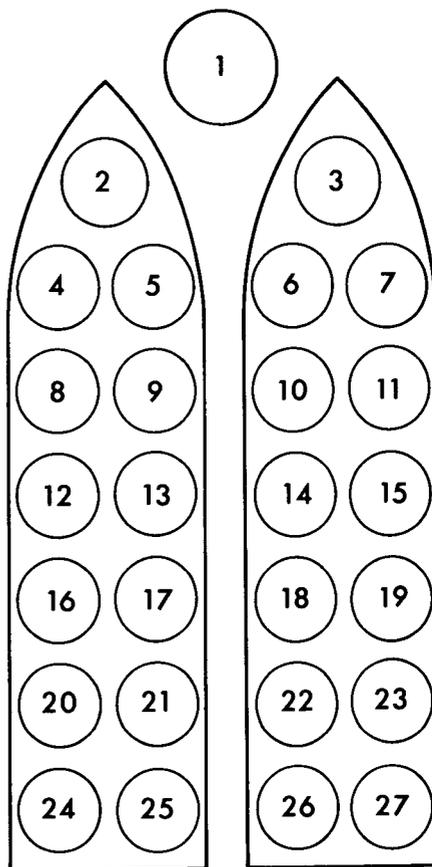
The two Secretaries –

David Christison (illus 19), holly berries

Robert Munro (illus 20), rowan flowers.



ILLUS 1 The window



ILLUS 2 Key to the individual elements in the window:

- |                         |                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 1: Queen Victoria       | 15: R MacLeod      |
| 2: Royal Arms           | 16: J MacDonald    |
| 3: The Society's arms   | 17: D Christison   |
| 4: Marquess of Lothian  | 18: R Munro        |
| 5: J R Findlay          | 19: J Anderson     |
| 6: Marquess of Bute     | 20: T Dickson      |
| 7: Sir H Maxwell        | 21: Sir A Mitchell |
| 8: Sir J Noel Paton     | 22: R Carfrae      |
| 9: Sir W Fettes Douglas | 23: Prof Duns      |
| 10: Prof Sir W Turner   | 24: G Goudie       |
| 11: R W Cochran-Patrick | 25: A B Richardson |
| 12: R Rowand Anderson   | 26: J T Brown      |
| 13: T Dawson Brodie     | 27: Date roundel   |
| 14: A J G Mackay        |                    |

The Assistant Secretary –

Joseph Anderson (illus 21), hawthorn flowers, Anderson appears in the window only because of this post and not because he was Keeper of the Museum.

The two Secretaries for foreign correspondence –

Thomas Dickson (illus 22), speedwell flowers  
 Sir Arthur Mitchell (illus 23), feverfew flowers.

The two Honorary Curators of the Museum –

Robert Carfrae (illus 24), black bryony berries  
 Professor Duns (illus 25), white bryony flowers.

The Treasurer –

Gilbert Goudie (illus 26), honesty flowers and seed-pods.

The Curator of coins –

Adam B Richardson (illus 27), yellow loosestrife flowers.

The Librarian –

John Taylor Brown (illus 28), red clover flowers.

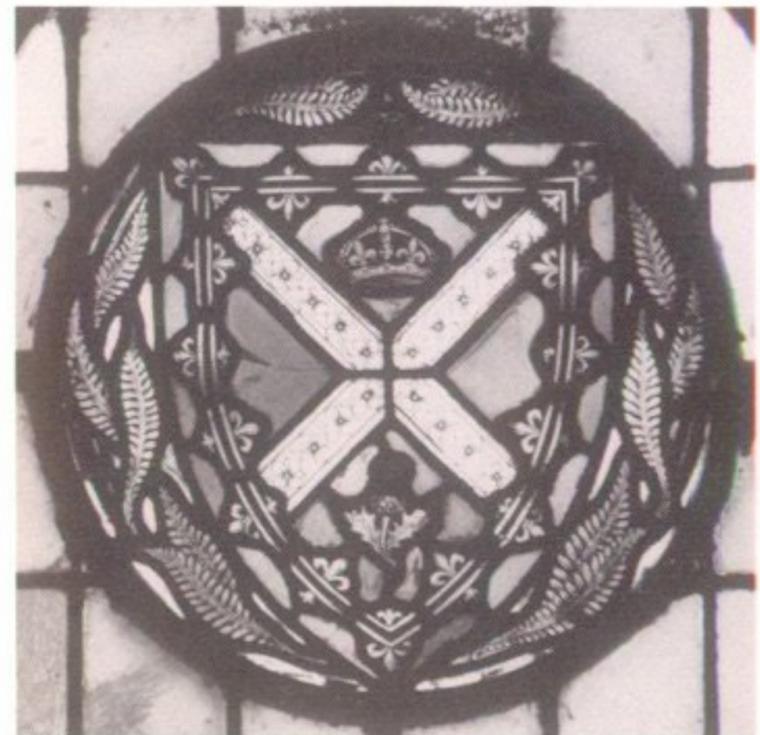
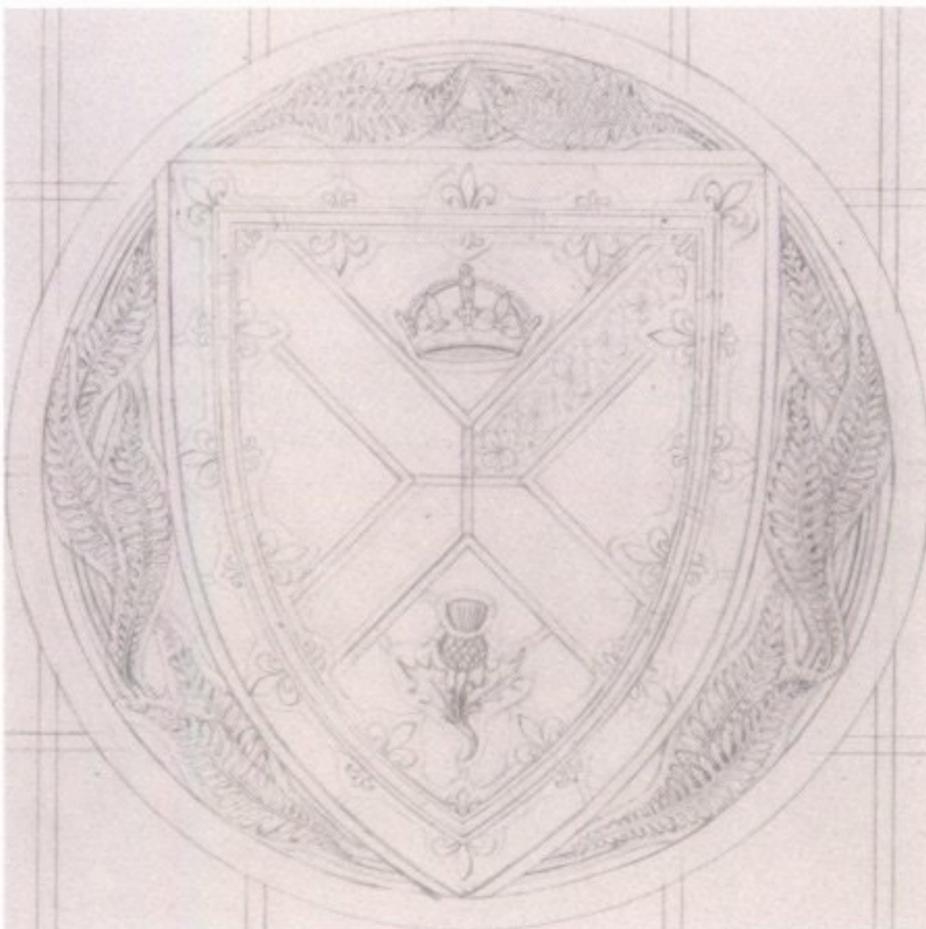
In the bottom right-hand corner is a roundel with a female figure, ears of corn and the appropriate date surrounded by forget-me-not flowers (illus 29). This figure has recently been described as the autumn sign of the zodiac (Smailes 1985, 74 presumably following the same claim in the *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, 28 December 1894) but this surely cannot be correct. August would not normally be viewed as part of Autumn nor does the season have a specific sign of the zodiac. It is much more likely that the image is an allegorical representation of the month with echoes, if echoes there need be, of the late medieval roundels depicting Labours of the Month, where August is commonly illustrated by images of reaping the harvest (Cowen 1985, 40–41).



ILLUS 3 Queen Victoria (in illus 3–29, a is the cartoon and b the finished version)



ILLUS 4 The Royal arms



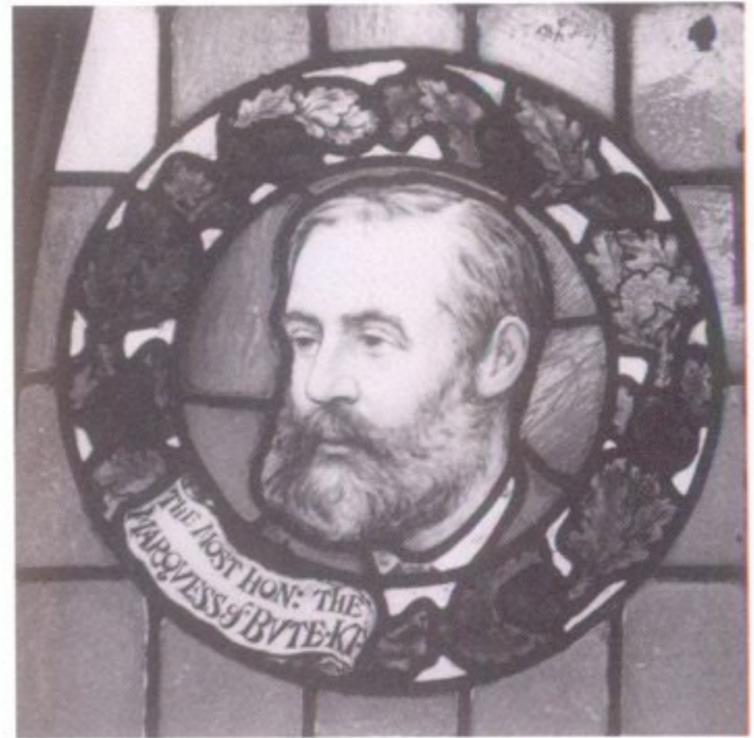
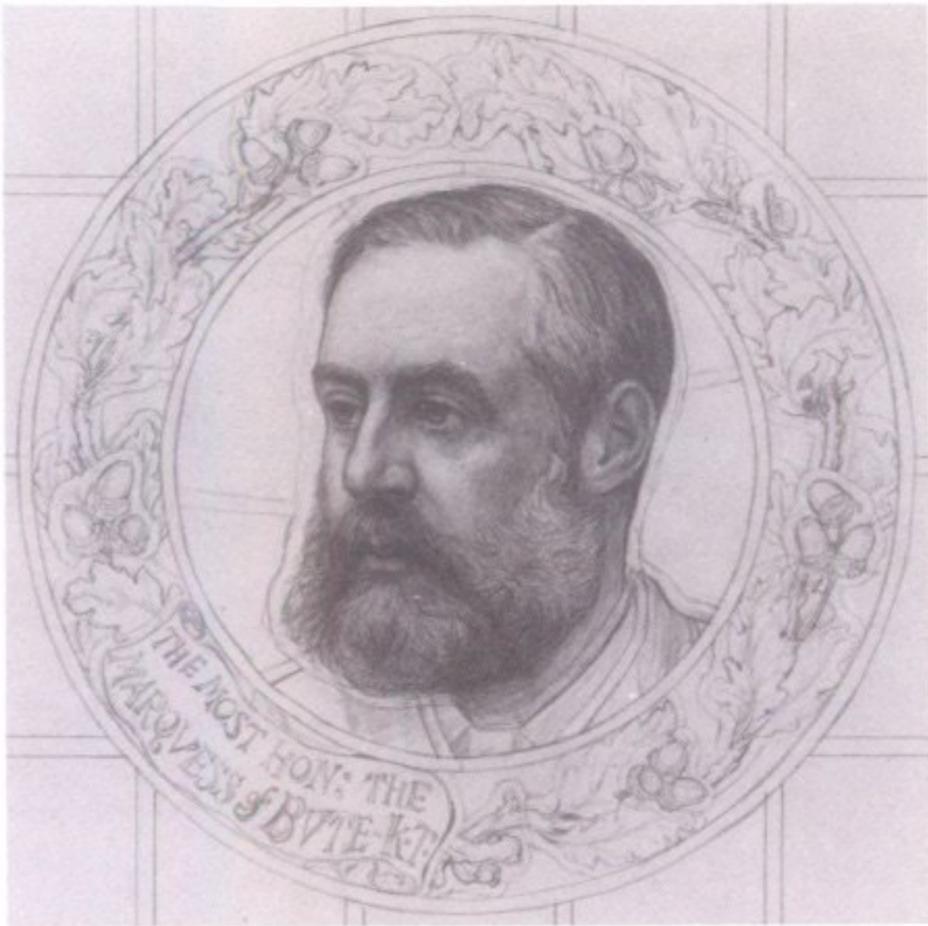
ILLUS 5 The Society's arms



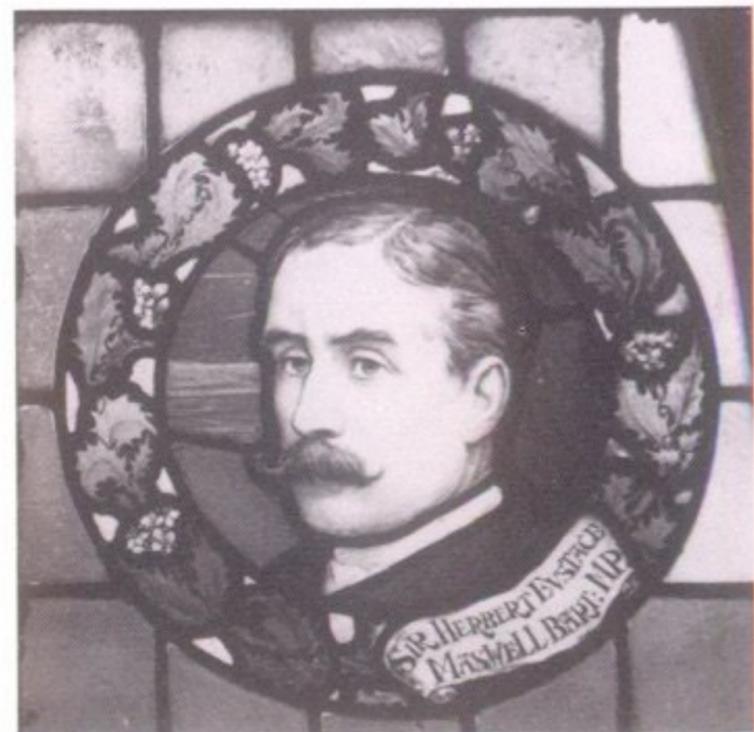
ILLUS 6 The Marquess of Lothian



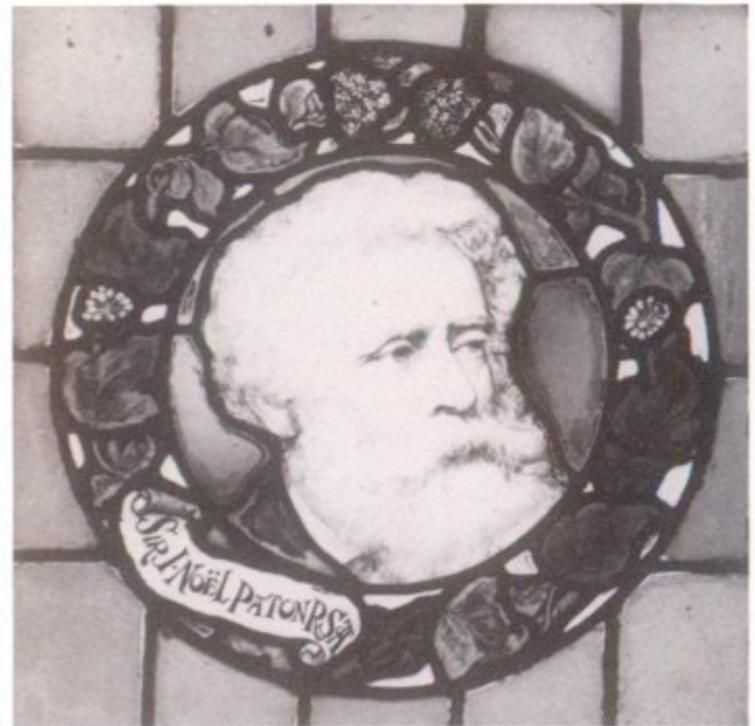
ILLUS 7 J R Findlay



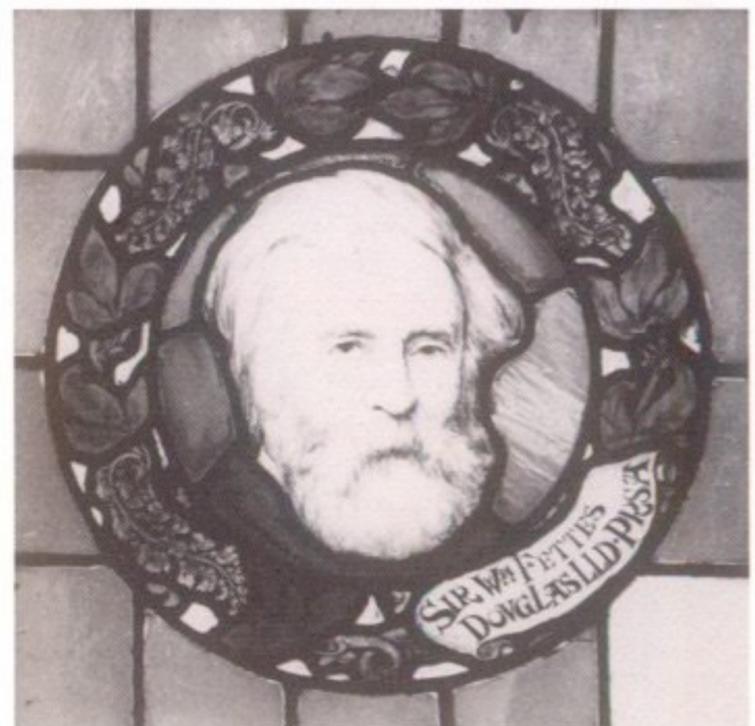
ILLUS 8 The Marquess of Bute



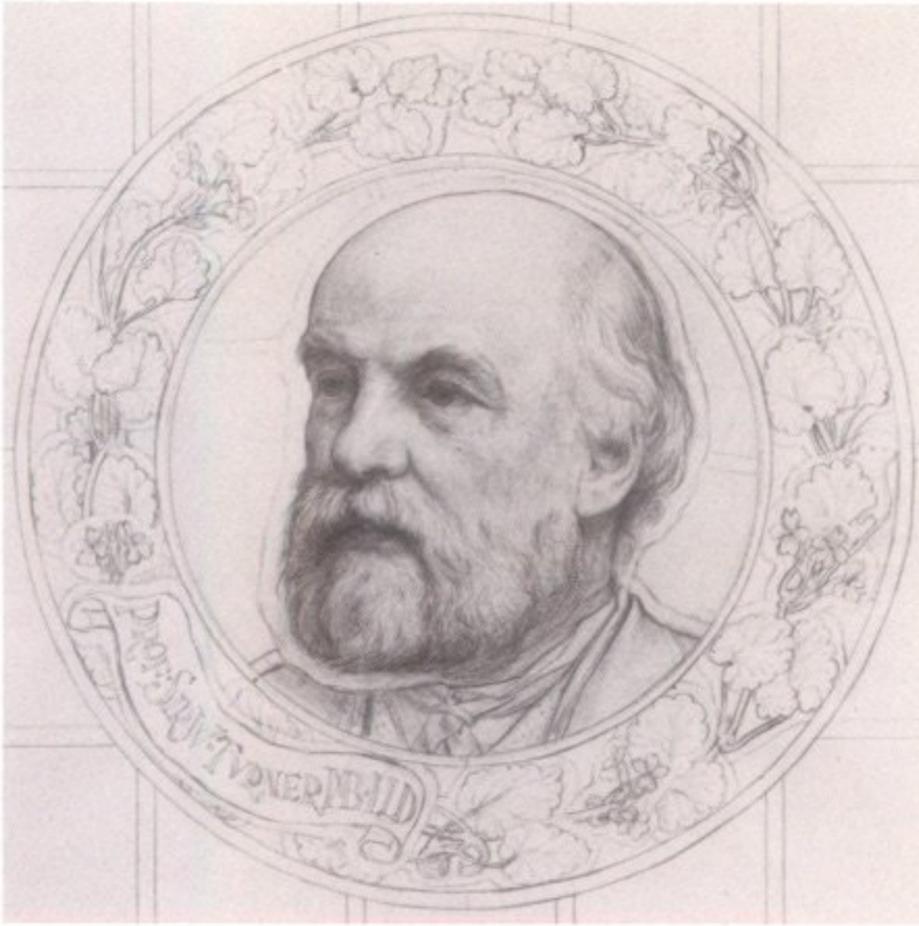
ILLUS 9 Sir Herbert Maxwell



ILLUS 10 Sir Joseph Noel Paton



ILLUS 11 Sir William Fettes Douglas



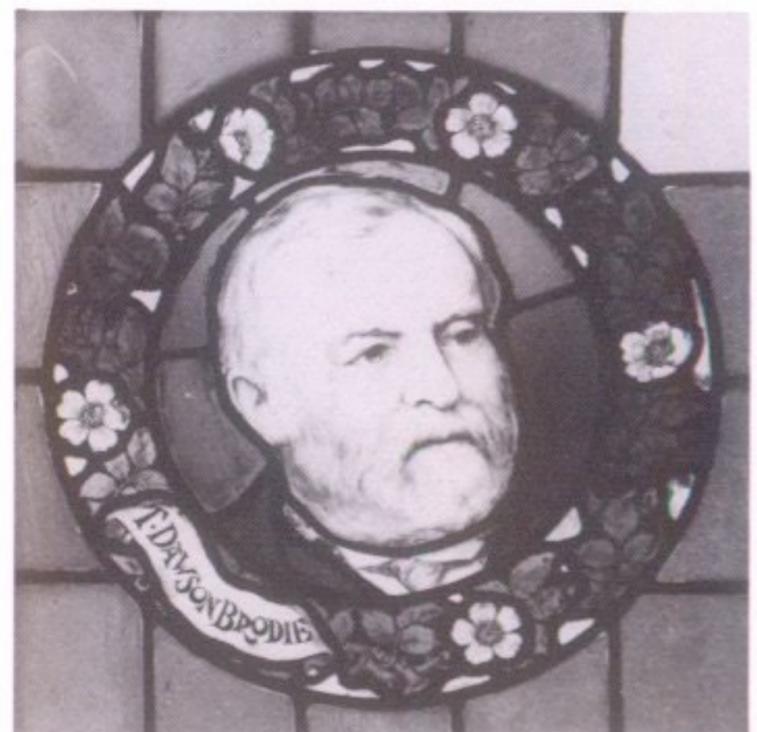
ILLUS 12 Professor Sir William Turner



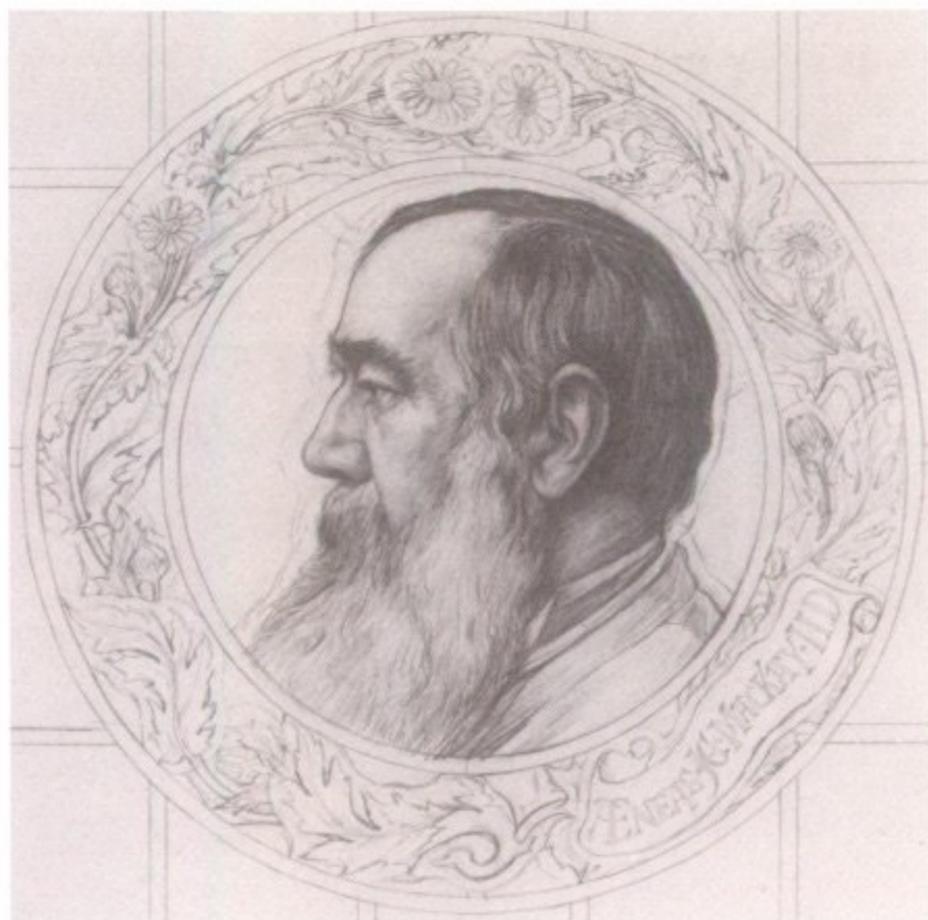
ILLUS 13 R W Cochran-Patrick



ILLUS 14 R Rowand Anderson



ILLUS 15 T Dawson Brodie



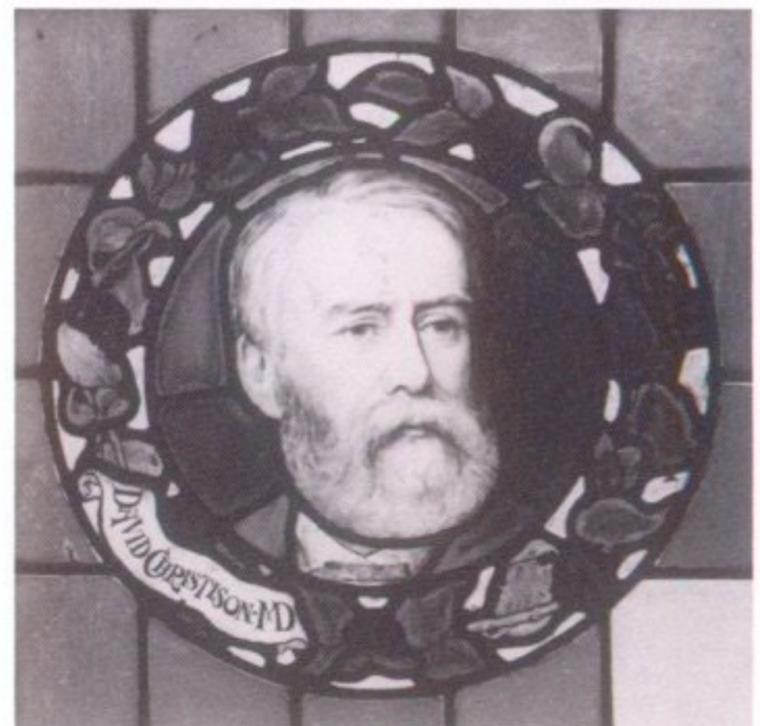
ILLUS 16 Aeneas J G Mackay



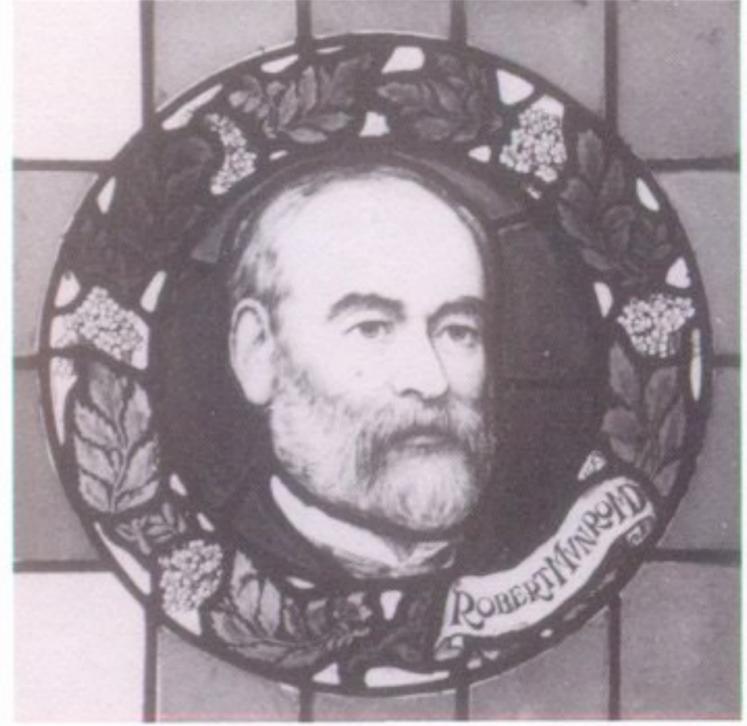
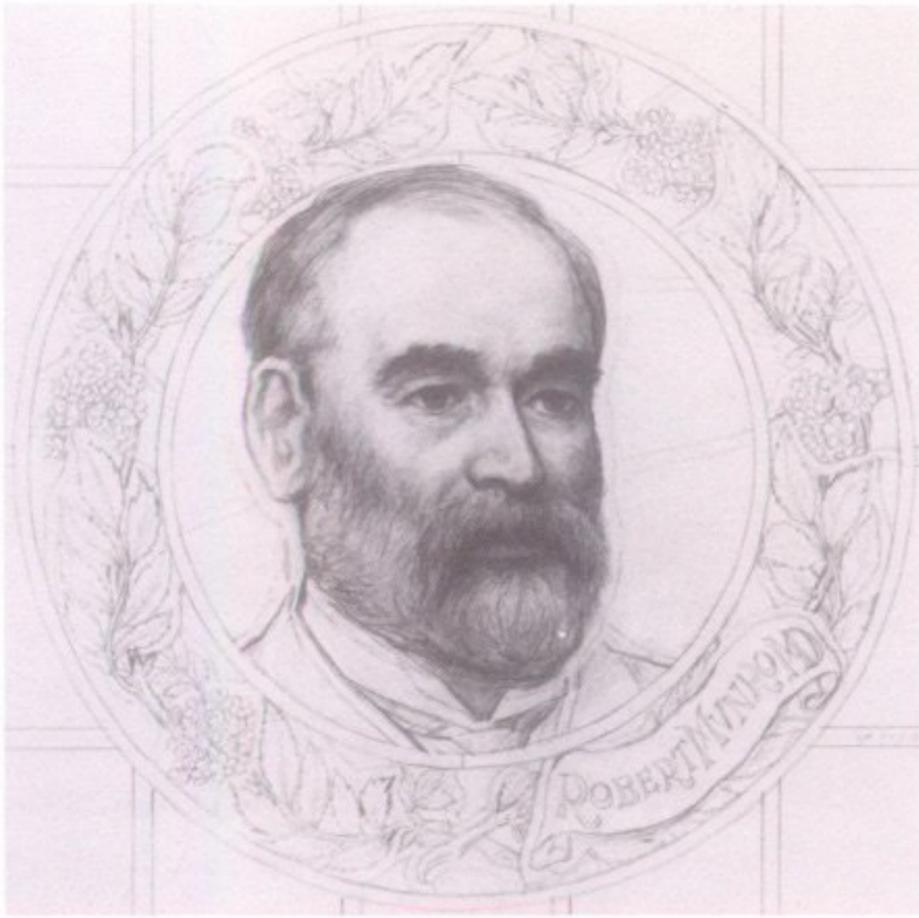
ILLUS 17 Reginald MacLeod



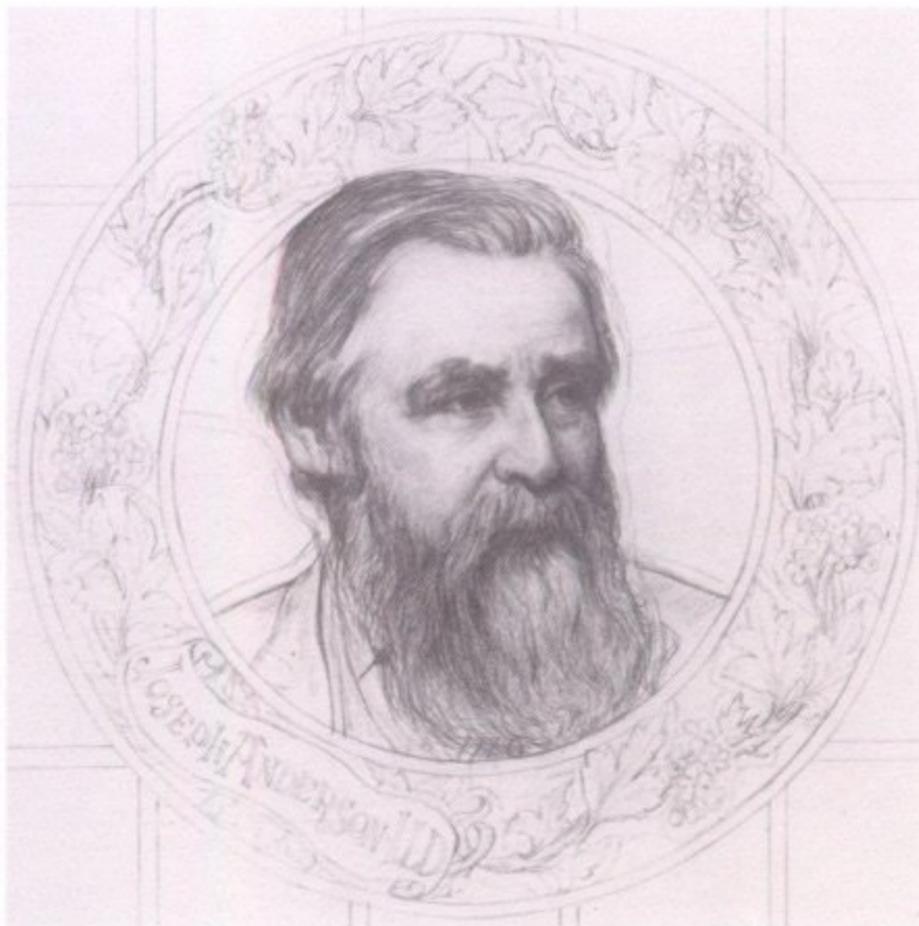
ILLUS 18 James MacDonald



ILLUS 19 David Christison



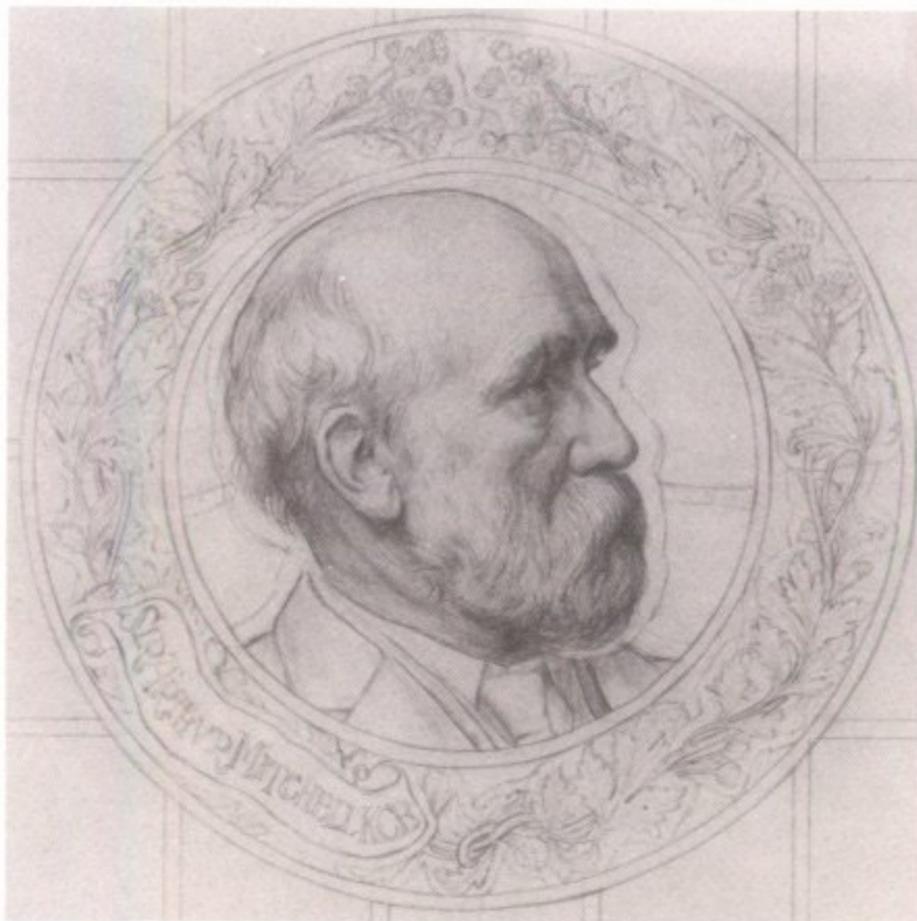
ILLUS 20 Robert Munro



ILLUS 21 Joseph Anderson



ILLUS 22 Thomas Dickson

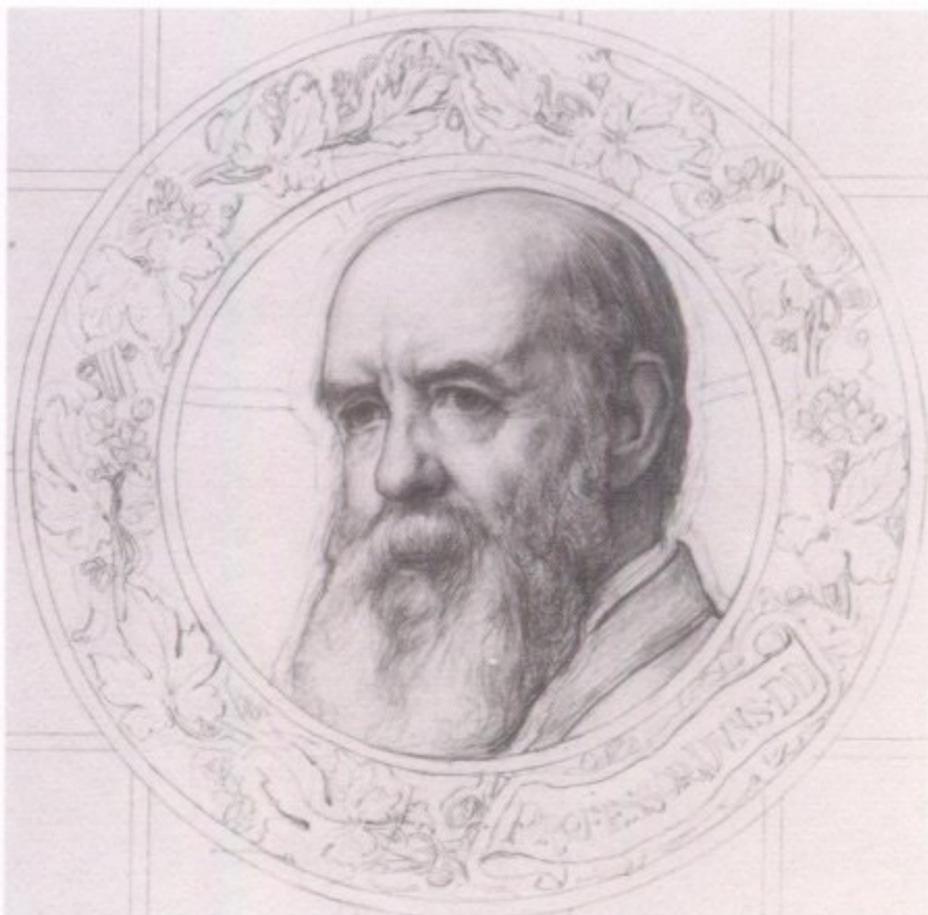


ILLUS 23 Sir Arthur Mitchell

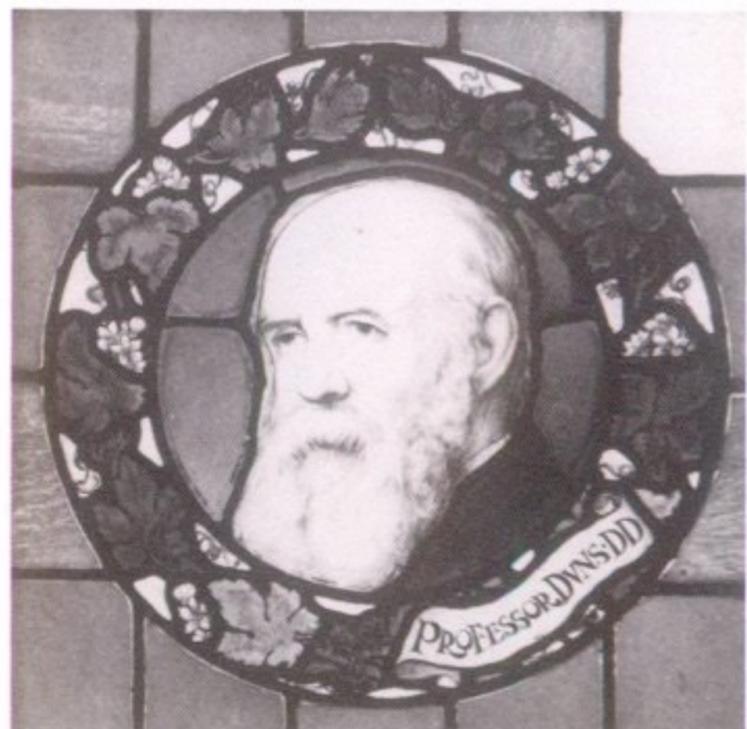




ILLUS 24 Robert Carfrae



ILLUS 25 Professor Duns

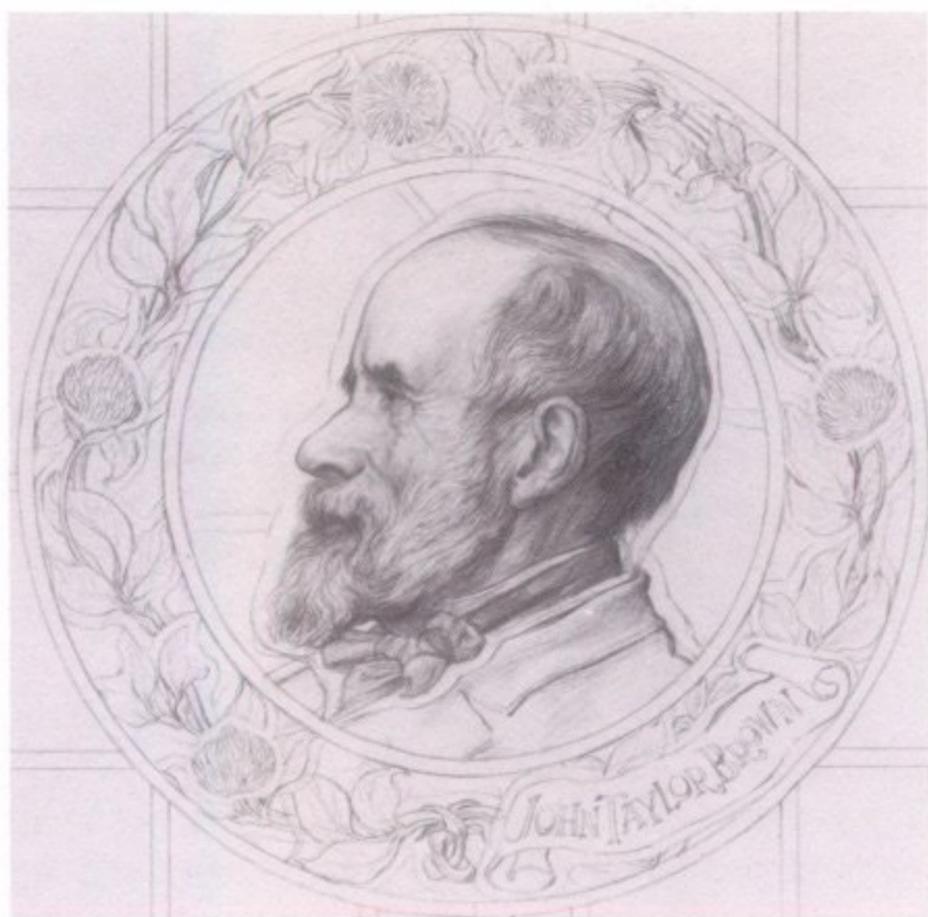




ILLUS 26 Gilbert Goudie



ILLUS 27 Adam B Richardson



ILLUS 28 John Taylor Brown



ILLUS 29 The date roundel

Now if I am correct in supposing that Findlay wanted this window to make a statement about the status of the institution, the opening of which it was commemorating, this choice of subject is wholly understandable. The use of contemporary people is not perhaps the most obvious choice for a building entirely devoted to Scotland's past. But these were the men who were party to the decision to move to Queen Street and who knew the circumstances associated with it. Moreover, they represent the one group, that is the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, who could be relied on in any situation to promote the Museum's best interests. In effect, they stand as witnesses to the agreement entered into by Findlay and the Board of Manufactures with regard to the provision of accommodation for the Museum.

Although the choice of individuals is relatively easy to understand, the other element in the design, namely the floral wreaths surrounding each portrait, is altogether more difficult to interpret. One can, of course, take the view that all that is involved is the choice of plants which would fit well into the frames of the portraits. Even at this level the choice is rather eclectic. Speedwell, feverfew, yellow loosestrife and red clover, for example, are not, I suggest, plants that nowadays would readily spring to mind for use in these circumstances. But more important, is it likely that, in a window with such a carefully chosen and unusual subject, that the choice of species should be left to the whim of the designer or artist?

There are a number of hints which suggest this is not the case. At its simplest, the encirclement of the date roundel with forget-me-nots is obvious enough and may imply very little about the other plants. But equally, it may be intended as a clear indication to the viewer that the plants are also messages. These messages need not all be complex or abstruse. Surrounding the Treasurer with honesty flowers and seed-pods, known colloquially as 'pennies', is surely just wry humour. But what are we to make of the plants surrounding the two representatives of the Board of Manufactures – laburnum, a poisonous tree not native to Scotland, and ivy, known, then as now, for its capacity to mask the identity of buildings.

This ambiguity is present in several of the wreaths, as if the choice were dictated by some language of flowers formula. The idea that messages could be conveyed in bouquets of flowers enjoyed considerable popularity in the earlier Victorian period (Scourse 1983, 37–38). But it had rather passed out of fashion by the time Kate Greenaway published perhaps the best known book on the subject in the early 1880s (Greenaway 1884; Marsh 1978, 17). Many of the messages, of course, were concerned with the subtleties of romantic feelings but underlying the whole idea was a number of plants with associated and widely understood meanings which derived from a much older folklore tradition. It is in terms of these older associations, not generally involved with romantic matters, that we must view the choice of plants for the window. Here was ample opportunity for deliberate ambiguity. Findlay himself is surrounded by thistles (illus 7), an obvious enough tribute to his patriotism, but thistles according to Greenaway and other language of flowers' writers also symbolized retaliation. The association derives from the motto of the Order of the Thistle, *Nemo me impune lacessit* – 'No one injures me with impunity' (Powell 1977, 121).

Certainly, I think, there is in most cases a straightforward association, even though it is now difficult to interpret, between the individual and the plant. This association may well have been intended to disguise any alternative meaning. The Marquess of Bute, for instance, has acorns and oak leaves (illus 8) and the oak is, of course, the clan plant badge for the Stewart clan. This relationship between the individual and plant offers the best explanation of what is in many respects a remarkable list of plants. All are species native to Scotland except laburnum and black bryony and, Miss Jackson informs me, the representations are of high quality and were probably drawn from life. This raises the final difficulty associated with the plants – the lack of identification for those surrounding Queen Victoria and the Marquess of Lothian (illus 3 and 6), the latter being Secretary of State for Scotland as

well as President of the Society of Antiquaries. If, as I have argued, the choice of plants was intended to reinforce, albeit with some ambiguity, the overall message of the window and if that message was to some extent a snub to a Government body, it was perhaps considered more appropriate to ensure that no ambiguity attached to these two individuals by making their wreaths indeterminate plants. That they were not, in effect, to be regarded as parties to the message.

The design of the window is attributed to the building's architect, Rowand Anderson, but the evidence from other aspects of the work on the building suggests that Findlay would have been heavily involved. The fact that he had possession of the original drawings for the window at the time they were offered to the Scottish National Portrait Gallery early in 1895 points to the same conclusion.

The window itself was made by William Graham Boss. Boss first appears in the *Edinburgh and Leith Post Office Directory* (cited hereafter as ELPOD) for 1883–84 described as a glass stainer and art tile painter. He does not, however, appear in the Professions and Trade section of the *Directory* until the volume for 1885–86. In the volume for 1893–94, the phrase 'art tile painter' is abandoned and he is henceforth styled solely as a glass stainer until the volume for 1919–20 when he becomes the proprietor of a 'stained glass studio'. His last appearance in this role is in the volume for 1923–24 although he continues to be recorded as an individual until the volume for 1927–28. His first studio was at 16 Union Street but he moved to 18 Forth Street in 1915 or 1916 (ELPOD, 1915–16, 37) and again to 30 Northumberland Street in 1919 or 1920 (ELPOD, 1919–20, 35). Otherwise very little information about him appears to have survived. Our best guide is provided by the only advert he placed in the *Directory* (ELPOD Advertiser, 1889–90, 52):

WILLIAM GRAHAM BOSS, Glass Stainer,  
16 UNION STREET, EDINBURGH

Stained and Leaded Glass – Figures, Heraldry, Ornamental, Geometrical,  
Memorial and Church Windows, Hall and Staircase Windows, Lobby Doors,  
Fanlights, Window Screens and Top Sashes, Panels, Bookcases, etc.

*Designs and Estimates submitted on approval*

Certainly, at first sight a glass stainer whose work must have consisted almost entirely of commissions for private houses does not seem the obvious candidate for a work of this importance in a major public building. Although much of the stained glass installed in Edinburgh and the surrounding districts at this period was the work of firms located farther afield, particularly in London, there were about ten firms in Edinburgh and Leith who considered themselves glass stainers (see, for example, the list in ELPOD, 1892–93, 574). To judge from the names almost half seem to have been small operations based around a single individual, as was apparently the case with Boss, and with few recorded commissions (McWilliam 1978; Gifford *et al* 1984; Gifford 1988). Apart from three firms in Leith, the remainder are all located in the southern part of the New Town with the largest firms having their studios on George Street. Local manufacture seems to have been dominated by the firm of Ballantine and Gardiner (established 1892 but building on the earlier activities of the Ballantine family) with its studio at 42 George Street. As well as several windows in Edinburgh, including St Giles Cathedral, their contemporary work is to be found at Crichton, Gladsmuir, Haddington and Lasswade among other places in the Lothians. Moreover, they seem to have worked with Rowand Anderson when installing windows at St Anne's Episcopal Church at Dunbar which was built to his design in 1889–90; McWilliam (1978, 184) describes their window there as 'contemporary with the church'.

There are two reasons, I think, why Boss got the commission – first, his previous association with the Queen Street building and some of the leading figures connected with it, and second, the nature of the window's design. Let us deal first with his connections. In 1891 a major heraldic exhibition was held in the Portrait Gallery side of the building (Paul *et al* 1892) and indeed this formed an important reason for the visit of the Royal Archaeological Institute to Edinburgh that year. The two honorary secretaries for the art section of the exhibition were Rowand Anderson and J M Gray, Curator of the Portrait Gallery. Among Gray's particular interests was stained glass and indeed he contributed two articles on the subject to the *Proceedings* of this Society (1892; 1894). Among those who loaned material for the exhibition was W Graham Boss who provided drawings of an iron door knocker and its heraldic decoration from Fyvie Castle, two pieces of stained glass mounted in oak frames and, more important in this particular context, accurate water-colours of the heraldic stained glass at St Magdalen's Chapel in the Cowgate and at Stobhall (Paul *et al* 1892, 114, no 1193 & pl CV; 104, nos 1095–96; 30, no 201 & pl LXIII; 116, no 1212 & pl LXIV). He also apparently provided full size watercolour drawings of pieces of stained glass found at Fyvie Castle – the catalogue entry does not make clear whether he produced the original drawings or just the catalogue plate (Paul *et al* 1892, 30, no 198 & pl LXVI).

Following the exhibition, and presumably using surplus money, the Organizing Committee, of which Gray was Secretary, resolved to install three stained glass windows of an heraldic nature in the south windows of the ambulatory of the Queen Street building. They instructed Boss to prepare designs which were subsequently accepted by the Board of Manufactures on 5 April 1893. The Board requested that Mr Boss 'place himself in communication with Dr Rowand Anderson to whose satisfaction the work must be carried out' (Letter of 5 April 1893 to J M Gray: Board of Manufactures' Letter Book: Scottish Record Office 1/3/41). It was presumably Gray who secured this work for Boss since, when he resolved to install two further roundels in the remaining windows at his own expense, Boss again prepared the designs and produced the glass. A letter of 14 July 1894 from Alex Inglis, Secretary to the Board of Manufactures, to William Rae MacDonald, acting for the executors of Gray, states that 'Mr Gray, I believe, shortly before his death [ie in 1893], gave full instructions to Mr Boss, Glass Stainer, Edinburgh, for carrying out the work' (Board of Manufactures' Letter Book: Scottish Record Office 1/3/41). Gray was also instrumental in getting Boss to repair and conserve the stained glass in St Magdalen's Chapel in the Cowgate in 1893 (this, I think, is the clear implication of his remarks in Gray 1894, 12; for a detailed discussion of the glass including Boss's work and observations on technical aspects of see Ross & Brown 1915, 66–72; Boss's letter to Professor Baldwin Brown providing these technical details is preserved in Edinburgh University Library, Special Collections). Thus, when Findlay decided in 1894 on a stained glass window to commemorate the opening of the Museum, Boss had presumably established himself in the eyes of Rowand Anderson and others as the most appropriate glass stainer for the task. Indeed, it seems to have been quite common at this period for contracts to be awarded for stained glass work on the basis of social contacts (see, for example, the very important role they played in the growth of Charles Eamer Kempe's firm in London: Stavridi 1988, *passim*).

In addition to his contacts, Boss's interests and style of work seem to have been particularly appropriate to this commission. In the 1880s the tenets of the Arts and Crafts Movement had begun to influence seriously some producers of stained glass. The leading proponents of this Movement felt that the designer of a window should either perform or at least supervise every stage in its manufacture. They particularly objected to the factory approach of the larger studios where production-line procedures saw designs on paper handed over for copyists to interpret in glass. This was presumably the situation pertaining at Ballantine and Gardiner's studio, Stavridi argues that this and other criticisms of the large firms' practices have been uncritically accepted by modern commentators

(1988, 104–5) but her own study of Kempe's firm provides ample incidental evidence that they contain more than a grain of truth. From what evidence we have Boss seems to have been in sympathy with these ideas, which are, of course, particularly suited to such an unusual commission.

The stained glass of the Arts and Crafts Movement is typified by an adherence to the ideal of controlling the whole manufacturing process, by the use of Pre-Raphaelite inspired figure design and a fondness for plant-form backgrounds (for a discussion of this type of glass see Harrison 1980, 63–74). Clearly, the scope for Boss to show his allegiance to these beliefs in a window of this kind were necessarily limited but there are sufficient suggestions to support such a view. He was as far as can be judged in control of all the manufacturing processes. The pencil cartoons drawn by him of the individual roundels are preserved in the Portrait Gallery. The *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch* (28 December 1894) claimed they were 'executed partly from photographs and from sittings given to the artist by the office-bearers'. This seems reasonable enough since it is unlikely that Queen Victoria gave Boss a sitting. Findlay, however, in a letter to Rowand Anderson dated 1 January 1895 (Rowand Anderson's Press Cutting Book: National Monuments Record of Scotland), rather implies that most were from life: 'The likenesses, considering that Boss is not a professed portrait painter, are wonderfully good, though each man no doubt thinks his own one of the least agreeable!'. His ability to undertake this may have been a further factor in his obtaining the commission for there was a contemporary belief that the larger stained glass manufacturers were not much accustomed to drawing from life using actual models. The claim does now seem over-stated (Stavridi 1988, 105) but it may nevertheless have been influential at the time. The roundel with the date contains a figure symbolizing August in a style which might reasonably be interpreted as inspired by Pre-Raphaelite work. His concern with the accurate reproduction of plant forms we have already discussed at some length. Of course, underlying all the tenets of the Arts and Crafts Movement was a belief in a return to the craftsmanship of a pre-industrial age. As we have seen Boss was certainly interested in earlier material. He shows his interest and knowledge of medieval heraldry in the rendering of the Society's coat of arms. My colleague, Mr Charles Burnett, has kindly pointed out to me that this is reflected in the diapered decoration of the saltire and the use of 16 fleur-de-lys on the double tressure instead of the 8 which had been usual since the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign.

The choice of Boss to create this window was, therefore, in harmony with Findlay's desire to see the building as providing the Gothic equivalent of the Neo-Classical buildings housing other museums at the foot of the Mound. That Findlay was intent on creating a building of considerable importance is shown by his offer in 1896 to finance further work including providing the statues for most of the exterior niches, completing the carved stonework inside and out, the adornment of some walls and ceilings with decorative paintings, and the filling in of the windows of the hall and staircases with appropriate stained glass illustrative of Scottish history. Of course, this scheme was never completed, particularly with regard to the stained glass, but such work as was done indicates that Findlay saw the decoration of the building solely in terms of evoking Scotland's past. It is in the context of this vision of what was appropriate decoration for the building as a whole that the window has to be judged. Taken at the obvious level the choice of subject is at odds with Findlay's ideas for the rest of the building. It is this disparity which ultimately causes me to believe that Findlay was making a much bolder statement than the simple commemoration of an opening when he commissioned this window some three years after the event.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I should like to thank Mrs M Duvall (*née* Robertson), Miss E H Jackson, Mrs A O'Connor, Miss H Smailes and Charles Burnett, all of whom have contributed information and added to my

understanding without assuming responsibility for my conclusions. The photographs, to his customary standard of excellence, are the work of Ian Larner. Miss M O'Neill produced illustration 2. I am most grateful to the Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland for permission to reproduce W G Boss's cartoons. Copyright for all the photographs rests with the Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland.

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*This paper is published with the aid of a grant from the  
National Museums of Scotland*