

Literary and Commercial Society of Glasgow

Overview

The Glasgow Literary Society was founded in 1752 and changed its name at the beginning of the nineteenth century to the Literary and Commercial Society of Glasgow. They changed premises as well, moving from the University of Glasgow (at its address on the east side on High Street), to an unnamed apartment in the city centre.

Atkinson's 'Sketch' offers a good summary of the society. According to him, prior to the start of the nineteenth century, the group was engaged in 'mutual instruction and improvement', and was made up primarily of university professors and students. The newly-renamed society not only changed premises, but also changed the nature of its proceedings, and extended its membership to many of the commercial men of the city.

The changing nature of the Literary and Commercial Society membership and the emphasis on business was directly reflected in the scope and content of the essays and discussions, but literature was also included. The subject areas of the essays read between 1806 and 1830 feature social history, politics, economics, and medicine, with literature among the minority of other subjects discussed.

Date of Existence

circa 1800 (1806?)-1856?

Source of Information

1. *Laws and regulations of the Glasgow Literary and Commercial Society* ([Glasgow]: [s.n.], [s.d.]) (UGSC, Sp Coll Mu22-a);
2. Bannatyne, Dugald, *Observations on the principles which enter into the commerce in grain, and into the measures for supplying food to the people: being the substance of an essay read to the Literary and Commercial Society of Glasgow* (Glasgow: Printed by James Hedderwick, 1816) (UGSC, Sp Coll Mu54-e.35);
3. Wardlaw, Ralph, *An essay on benevolent associations for the relief of the poor: of*

which the substance was read to the Literary and Commercial Society of Glasgow, April 1817 (Glasgow: Printed by Young, Gallie and Co, 1818) (UGSC, Sp Coll Mu18-d.25);

4. 'Glasgow Literary & Scientific Institutions', *The Western Luminary*, Vol. I, No. 3, 17 January 1824, p. 19 (UGSC, Sp Coll Mu60-f.31, Sp Coll Bh12-e.12)

5. *List of essays read by the members of the Literary and Commercial Society of Glasgow, from session 1806 to session 1830* (UGSC, Sp Coll Mu22-a.8);

6. Atkinson, Thomas, *Sketch of the origin and progress of the Literary and Commercial Society of Glasgow, with ... plans for the publication of a portion of its transactions; being the substance of an essay read before it in January, 1831* (Glasgow: [?], 1831) (UGSC, Sp Coll Mu22-b.25);

7. Watson, James, *Remarks on the opening of the British trade with China, and the means of its extension: being the substance of a paper read to the Literary and Commercial Society of Glasgow* (Glasgow: John Smith & Son; Edinburgh; London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1843) (UGSC, Sp Coll Robertson Bf66-d.18);

8. Watson, James, *A paper on the present railway crisis: read at the Literary and Commercial Society of Glasgow held on the 26th March 1846* (Glasgow: W. Lang, 1846) (UGSC, Sp Coll Mu22-c.6);

9. 'Glasgow Literary and Commercial Society', 'Educational and Literary Institutions', *Post-Office Glasgow Directory for 1856, 1857...* (Glasgow: William Mackenzie, 1856), p. 85; (ML, NLS)

10. Kilpatrick, James A., *Literary Landmarks of Glasgow* (Glasgow: Saint Mungo Press, 1893), p. 28 (UGSC, Sp Coll Mu24-a.34);

Repository

Mitchell Library (ML)

National Library of Scotland (NLS)

University of Glasgow Special Collections (UGSC)

Reference Number

(See Source of Information)

Additional Notes

The full title of *The Western Luminary* is as follows: *The western luminary, or, Glasgow literary and scientific gazette, embracing, Reviews of all new and interesting publications — Discussions of all important matters connected with the West of Scotland — Biographical memoirs of such living and dead individuals as possess peculiar claims on our sympathy or regard — Original essays upon men and manners, institutions and principles — Poetry, written and selected for the work — Anecdotes and extracts — Arts and science — Truth and fiction, conducted by the Writers of the Free Press, and other literary gentlemen of Glasgow and the West of Scotland.*

From the [Mitchell Library online catalogue](#):

'Notes: Additional information: 1 v (208p.); 28cm[,] Bound with: Select views of Glasgow and its environs / engraved by Joseph Swan ... Glasgow : Joseph Swan, 1828, in a volume with spine title The western luminary, Andrew Bain Memorial, Lacks nos. 14-16, no.18' [accessed 31 January 2018].

The Glasgow Post Office directories are available at the Mitchell Library and the National Library of Scotland. Digitised copies are available through the NLS website: <https://www.nls.uk/family-history/directories/post-office/index.cfm?place=Glasgow>