

Extract from Book of Council Acts & Charters

Town Council, 27th June, 1730. – The said day the Provost, Bailies, Dean of Guild, Treasurer, & remanent members of the Councill of Dundee being mett & convened within the Councill-house yrof, consulting about the common affairs of the Burgh, & anent a petition given in to them by JOHN PALMER, shoemaker, humbly shewing that he having made application to the shoemaker trade of Dundee to be entered a free master of that trade, and made offer to them of the ordinary dues payable by unfreemen for their entrie, - The Deacon and remanent members having been pleased to ordain and appoint the Petitioner to make three different pairs of boots and several pairs of shoes as an essay of his sufficiency as a cordiner, conform to a particular note yrof given in to him by the said trade, & produced with the Petition, - which the Petitioner reckoned a manifest hardship imposed on him in order to bring him to trouble & charges; - therefore the Petitioner begged leave to mean himself to the councill, & to crave that it might please the Council to make enquiry anent the essays formerly required from the unfreemen entering to the said Cordiner trade, & to ordain the said trade to admit & receive the petitioner as a free master therein upon his making an essay, as the Council shall think reasonable, & paying the ordinary dues of Entrie, as the petition nears; and the councill having considered the Petition & heard the Deacon of the Cordiner trade to enter & receive the Petitioner a free master of their trade in the same terms as they entered & received DAVID TURNBULL, being the last mean that was entered a master of the said Trade, - Against which the Deacon of the Cordiners protested & thereon tool Instrument in the clerk's hands.

Note: There is no record in the Trade Lockit Book of a John Palmer ever having been accepted into the Trade.

Severe Punishment of Offender by Burgh Council

26 August 1720. – The Provest produced the Extract of the Lords of Justiciary's Sentence agns Thomas Gilkie, Cordiner in Dundie, att Edr 9th of August Instant, which was read in Councill; and as by the sd Sentence the sd Thomas is deprived of his ryt of Burgessship & freedome of ye sd burgh, so the Councill likeways, in obedience to the said Sentence, do hereby deprive the said Thomas Gilkie of his ryt of Burgessship & freedome of this Burgh, and declare him incapable of enjoying the same in all time coming; and considering yt by the sd sentence of the lords of Justiciary the said Thomas is to be scourged through the Town this day betwixt the hours of ten & twelve forenoon, at the five most publick places., receiving ffive strips at each place, The Councill condescended on the five places following as the most publick places qre he shall be scurged by the Scurger conform to the sd sentence, viz. to be taken, according to ye sd sentence, from the prison of this Burgh, qre he prsly lyes, to ye head of the thortor raw in the Overgate, yre to be first scurged, & next at ye cross, & next at the north door of ye scambles in the Murraygate, & next at the head of the Seagate for agt Tendall's Wynd, and from thence to the tron, & to receive five strips at each of the saids five places, conform to the sd Sentence, & ynsett at liberty: & the Provest delivered the Extract of the sds Lords of Justiciary's sentence to the Bailies present to see the same putt to execution.

Extract from the Convention of Royal Burghs.

25 March 1731

2. Upon application from the cordiners of Edinburgh and Glasgow shewing that there is a design to have a bill presented in parliament to disable all cordiners from being tanners which if it should pass would be a great detriment to the whole incorporations of cordiners in royal burrows and is directly contrair to their seals of cause ratified in parliament, and therefore craving the committee would give such directions therein as they should think proper; which being considered by the committee they appoint a letter to be written to the representatives of the royal burrows in parliament to oppose the same; as also that the bill depending in parliament for making the proceedings of the Courts of justice in English may extend to Scotland and recommend to the lord provost of Edinburgh, their preses, to sign the same, the tenor whereof follows: - Sir, - The committee of the royal burrows being informed that a project is sett on foot to have a bill brought in to extend to Scotland ane act made in the

parliament of England 1 James whereby all cordiners are disabled from being tanners, have ordered me to desire yow in concert with their other representatives in parliament to oppose the same as being a manifest incroachment on the seals of causes granted to the cordiners of royal burrows which are ratyfyed in parliament and secured to them by the twenty first article of the treaty of union. Nor could this be of any benefit to the revenue nor would it tend to the meliorating of that manufacture. Furder it must necessary highten the price of that commodity to ane extravagant rate for several years; at least till there were so many tannerys set up as could answer the demands of the country or the country must be served by importation. Mr William Hamilton is directed to waitt upon yow and if necessary to petition to be heard by the councill. The committee doe observe that a bill is depending for making all the proceedings of the courts of justice in English, &c. They wish heartily that it may reach Scotland and comprehend the court of exchequer, chancery and all other offices, and all deeds, instruments and writeings; and if its yet practicable they desire it may be done. They directed me to make yow their complements and they doe depend on your exerting yourself in their particulars. I am, [etc.]

32. Remitted to a committee to prepare the draught of an act on the subject of a petition from the tanners of Edinburgh.

33. Remitted to the annual committee petition from the cordiners of Edinburgh “praying that propper methods may be used to oppose the extending to Scotland the act of parliament made in England in the fiorest year of King James the first for disabling cordiners from beign tanners, or at least to have their right by their seall of causesaved to them.”

41. The convention having taken to their consideration a petition of the freemen tanners of Edinburgh and act of the town councill thereof dated the thirteenth of September jm vjc and ninety three therein referred to, and being perswaded that all forestalling and regrating is destructive to trade and commerce, and all sales and forehand bargains of slaughtered ruch hides are a species of regrateing, and that as the laws in that behalf doe now stand all slaughtered ruch hydes brought to mercat ought to be sold in mercat and in mercat hours and ought not to be sold by any beforehand bargain, doe therefor hereby ratify and approve of the forsaid act of the town councill of Edinburgh and interpone their authority thereto.

15 February 1732

The subcommittee reported that they had considered the memorial concerning salt and other matters reported to them, and having had a conference with a deputation from the commissioner and trustees for the manufactures touching the same they had prepared the draught of a letter thereanent to be sent to the representatives in parliament.....of which letter the tenor followes: -.....That as ane attempt is to be made this session to obtain a law for extending the act Jacobi 1mi over Scotland for disableing cordiners to be tanners notwithstanding that the cordiners in royal burrows have this verry privileged given them in their sealls of causes which are ratyfyed by the crown and parliament and reserved by the articles of union, the committee doe humbly beg that yow with their other representations will oppose such a bill unless in contain a saveing clause in favours of the cordiners of the royal burrows, for any innovation of this kind might be a verry dangerous precedent.

Wooden Land

The “Wooden Land”, was a property at he west end of Argylis-gate, adjacent to the West Port, next to the home of the Moncur family.

This is the gate through which William Wallace would have gone to the Carse of Gowrie after having slain the son of the Governor.

The earliest recorded proprietor was Andrew Witchand, a burgess prior to 1513. His son, also Andrew was entered burgess on 22nd October 1541, as a ‘slippermaker’ [sword slipper]

In 1559 it was sold to John Brown, also described as a ‘slippermaker’

Following that it came into the hands of John Brown and John Ingrahame, two leading members of the Cordiner Craft.

The property then passed to Thomas Fleming, a maltman. He leased the 'Playfield' in 1626 for five years. It was situated a little to the west, outside the port and was used for the "wapinschaws", that had been instituted by an ancient act of Parliament. These were the practice areas where the burgesses would practice archery and the bearing of arms. The wapinschaws were normally held twice a year, but the ground was also used for the staging of plays in the open air. The actual site lay between Brown Street, Blinshall Street. And the Scourin Burn.

Later still about 1616, it fell into the hands of William Stevenson, a tanner. In 1634 a considerable sum was granted by Alexander Boyter for the use of the poor of the Skinner Craft, William Skinner was one of those entrusted with the gift. The Stevenson grave is still in existence in the Howff.

Ultimately in 1682 the property came into the hands of Robert Christie, shoemaker, Convener of the Nine Trades. He was the first person to use the title 'Deacon Convener of the Nine Trades.'

In 1815 it was acquired by Mitchell & Gowans, thread manufacturers, both masters of the Weaver Craft, who opened a factory there. The manufacture of coloured sewing-thread was a very important branch of local trade, and gave employment to a great many people. In 1792, the computed annual value of thread manufacturing was £33,696. After the death of William Mitchell, Robert Gowans continued the business until his death in September 1837.

The building was remarkable for its association with the Cordiner Trade from its early days in 1513 until its demolition in 1876. Latterly a room was laid aside for the shoemakers benches which were let at a weekly rental.

Maxwell's Old Dundee Prior to the Reformation

1522. The Cordiners at an early time were protected in the exercise of their craft by a charter from the Town Council. In 1522 "James Abirnethy, deacon of the cordiners, and the craft compearit in judgement, and gave up [the names of three unfreemen] to the treasurer that have set up their buiths; and protestit that they tyne nocht the privilege of their letters that they have of this gude town, through them and others setting up buiths." Subsequently the Council fixed the prices of shoes according to the value of leather.

In 1600's Cordiners had an agreement with Brechin that allowed them to trade there without presenting their work for examination. This was reciprocated in that the Brechiners were allowed to trade in Dundee.

Convention of Royal Burghs

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comprehend the court of exchequer, chancery and all other offices, and all deeds, instruments and writings; and if its yet practicable they desire it may be done. They directed me to make yow their complements and they doe depend on your exerting yourself in their particulars. I am, [etc.]

8 July 1731

32. Remitted to a committee to prepare the draught of an act on the subject of a petition from the tanners of Edinburgh.

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The Wooden Land

Associated with the Cordiner Trade. The oldest building connected to a Trade was known as *The Wooden Lands* because it was timber fronted. It was certainly in existence before 1513, because in that year it belonged to Andrew Wichtand, a Burgess of Dundee, described as a Cordiner. From that time until it was demolished in 1876 it was associated with the Cordiner craft. It stood on the north side of the Overgate just west of Seres Wynd later Long Wynd and for many years before it's destruction a room was set up and furnished with shoemakers benches which were let to workers at a weekly rent.

The Wooden Land therefore was tenanted by Shoemakers for over four hundred years. In the Dundee Register of 1782 a list of a list of 63 Shoemakers appears and for many years afterwards, the prominent name of Crawford appears. In 1790 William Crawford had a shop, and works on the north side of the Overgate, nears Friar's Vennel, afterwards Burial Wynd and now Barrack Street and the name of Crawford's Close remained until the demolition of the Overgate. Crawford's son Alexander succeeded to the business and his daughter became the wife of Thomas Lamb of Lamb's Hotel, the mother of the well-known Alexander Crawford Lamb the well-known Dundee antiquary. The Crawfords carried on this business continuously from father to son until the late 1870's. This gives a very close link from remote times to the present day.

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Council Records

Guilde, Thomas (Shoemaker)

- Convicted of insulting Gabriel Symmer the deacon of the Shoemaker trade (29 May 1604).

Watson, James (Flesher)

- Convicted of striking a Flesher named Black in Edinburgh and to pay a fine (31 December 1603).

Fortifications

The house of **William Long**, cordiner, to be demolished and stones used as material for the wall, receives £100 in compensation.

Peter Dron

Mr Peter Dron was the son of Mr Robert Dron a native of Crail who came to Dundee in 1700 and carried on a business as Master Shoemaker. Peter was one of the oldest members of the Shoemaker Trade and a member of The Nine Incorporated Trades. He was repeatedly elected to the office of Deacon of the Shoemaker's and was subsequently elected Convener of the Nine Trades at a time when that office was much coveted. At that time reporters were not admitted to meetings of the Council and Mr Rintoul, who was then editor of the Advertiser, knowing that Peter Dron was an out and out reformer, applied to him to furnish short reports of the Council's proceedings for publication in his newspaper. A service to the press and the Liberal Party which he cheerfully and successfully rendered. He was appointed Hospitalmaster and held that office during the first outbreak of Cholera in Dundee.

The Cordiner Trade Banner and Chain were stolen in 1995.

As a result of a Police 'Sting' operation these were recovered from premises in Seagate, Dundee and restored to the Trade.

After being recovered the Banner, which was in a most delicate state was examined by the McManus Galleries and a report received.

In 2005, the Banner was photographed by late Deacon Convener Alex. Coupar and the trade is looking onto the possibility of restoring it before laying it up possibly in St Andrews Church.

Another name for a cordiner was gressich. See *Register of Deeds 1679 Page 19 John Baine of Sallaquhar*.

In 1764 the Maltmen Fraternity paid 4/- for a pair of shoes for their Officer.