

Guardian Of The Port

By Jim Gilchrist

Home to an ancient seafarers' guild and a compelling collection of maritime artifacts gathered over generations, Trinity House soldiers on in a changing world.

At the foot of Leith Walk, the bustling thoroughfare that connects Edinburgh with its old port of Leith, you walk through the tacky Anywheresville of the Kirkgate shopping centre, between the garish frontages of ubiquitous chain stores, to emerge suddenly where lush trees overhang the ancient walls of South Leith Parish Church. Opposite the church, just past a frozen food store, Trinity House, an imposing Georgian building, hints at the once handsome nature of the street and also conceals an astonishing treasure trove reflecting Leith's bygone glory days as Scotland's premier port.



Captain Magnus Polson, Master of the Incorporation, wears his chain of office.

The Kirkgate was once the vigorously beating heart of old Leith, with its shops and taverns and Gaiety Theatre, all of it mercilessly "redeveloped" during the 1960s, leaving only Trinity House and the parish church. As the kirk bell chimes the hour, Adam Gorysz answers the door of Trinity House and admits me to the headquarters of the Incorporation of Masters and Mariners, a once powerful maritime trade guild whose origins go back as far as the 14th century.

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Jaeame I. Koyil, President

September 2015

President's Letter

This summer, despite our regular meetings being ostensibly dark, has been very, very active.

In mid-August Susan Goodier our Exec Admin and David McCrossan did heroes work in upgrading the firehouse meeting room including 1) installing professional track lighting, upgrading both bathrooms, getting a new podium, getting ride of the unusable piano and setting up better meeting chairs. All of this was done within the budget set by our Trustees! I'm sure you will like the results.

On August 25th we hosted our first joint event with the University of Edinburgh helping them welcome incoming students from the Bay area. We are very grateful to our Chairman David McCrossan for his great efforts in cultivating this relationship.

The Pleasanton Games tent was supported by a group of volunteers put together by Francesca and we should give a special thanks to Francesca, Jean and Jek, Christian and others.

At the Cale cocktail event for Erskine, in accordance with the

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Trustees' wishes, I pledged \$500 to support of the Erskine home.

One year ago our Past President and Chairman Gene McCracken passed away suddenly in August. In the months before his passing he was very concerned about the electrical wiring in the Firehouse and at our next meeting in September we arrived to find all the power out for the whole block! We bough candles and had a lovely evening with many toasts to Gene's honor. This coming Sept meeting WE WILL CARRY ON THE TRADITION !!! With a candlelight dinner. Come prepared with stories and well conceived toasts!

Your aye

Jaeame I. Koyil

President

PS: David Campbell could not attend the games due to the passing of his mother. Send condolences appropriately.



Jaeame Koyil, Geoffry Craighead (Chief of the Caledonians), **Ian Skone-Rees** (President of the St. Andrew's Society of Los Angeles)

United Kingdom Flag Cufflinks Available

Julian Bevan-Jones, Managing Director of Trafalgar Bay Associates Ltd. is offering for sale a variety of flag cufflinks.



The St. Andrew's Cross cufflinks are available for \$6.60 (USD) per pair with a minimum order of 10 pairs, plus postage at cost.

Other cufflinks available are flags of Wales, England and Union. All priced at \$6.60 (USD) per pair with a minimum order of 10 pairs, plus postage at cost.



All cufflinks include a presentation box and free packaging.

Also available are cufflinks with your logo or crest or design. The cost will depend on the design and number required but most 2D designs, and based upon a minimum order, will be \$8.20 (USD) per pair.

For any additional information contact Julian Bevan-Jones at:

Email: julian@trafalgarbay.co.uk,

Website: www.trafalgarbay.co.uk

Tel: 07549 161282



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We pass through the heavy, classically pillared porch into an entrance hall hung with nautical canvases as well as an old, polished wood chart cabinet, while a glass case displays a large model of the SS Royal Fusilier, a vessel of the Leith-based London & Edinburgh Shipping Company, which used to take passengers between Leith and London until it was sunk in the Firth of Forth by German bombers in 1941. The arms of the Incorporation, with its anchor and saltire and nautical globes, are set into the blue and white hall floor, its motto, also carved on the stonework outside, declaring: “Pervia virtuti Sydera, Terra, Mare” (“The Earth, the sea and the stars are conquerable by men of courage”).

Gorysz, an anthropologist hailing originally from Poland, is the building’s manager for Historic Scotland, the government agency that took the property into its care in 2001. The building is open to the public, but only through prearranged tours (see “Further Information” for details). Gorysz introduces me to the history of what is by far the oldest—and at one time the wealthiest and most powerful—of Leith’s trade guilds. Trinity House, he explains, was built in 1816, but stands on the site of a 16th-century hospital and almshouse, established by the Incorporation for the relief of “poor, old, infirm and weak mariners.”

The almshouse was demolished in 1816 and a new building, designed by Edinburgh architect Thomas Brown, erected on its remaining vaults. Two weathered carved stone panels from the almshouse are set into the outside

wall of the present building, one of them bearing an inscription: “In the name of the Lord ye masteris and mariners bylis this hous to ye pour. Anno Domini 1555.”

Gorysz shows me the venerable, whitewashed vaults, but

We pass through the heavy, classically pillared porch into an entrance hall hung with nautical canvases as well as an old, polished wood chart cabinet.



if they are old, the Incorporation is even older, established in 1380 as a charitable fraternity by Leith’s ship owners and master mariners to succor sailors and their families

left destitute by life and the elements. The fraternity was granted the right to levy a tax, known as “prime gilt,” of 12 pennies on every ton of merchandise loaded on or from Scots ships in Leith, which in those days was an immensely busy port, trading across the North Sea with Scandinavia and the Baltic countries as well as France and the Low Countries.

As ever, there were those who tried to avoid payment, several such disputes prompting Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1566, to ratify the right of the fraternity to collect the prime gilt as well as to seize the sails and anchor of vessels whose owners declined to pay.

Meanwhile, the prime gilt, as well as additional voluntary contributions known as crown money, was used for poor relief, maintaining the almshouse and paying a quarter of the maintenance costs of the neighbouring South Leith church, with which the Incorporation had a close relationship. Some beneficiaries were accommodated in the almshouse, which is recorded as having six women lodgers when it was being renovated in the late 18th century.

In a corner of the hall, a relic of these activities is the charter chest, a heavy oaken box that once held deeds and other records. When Oliver Cromwell’s forces occupied Leith in 1650, they carried the chest off to Stirling Castle, where it remained for some years before being returned, although the documents it contained were never recovered.

The hall also contains six beautifully wrought mahogany chairs commissioned from the

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Edinburgh furniture maker William Trotter when the present building was constructed in 1816. The chair backs feature the Incorporation's arms, surrounded by carved coiled rope. Gorysz conducts me past them and into the Master's Room, where the Incorporation—currently with a membership of 15, compared to 104 in 1716—holds its quarterly meetings.



The building houses an astonishing collection of nautical artifacts.

be a product of the Flemish naive school, the painting, Gorysz tells me, was found in an Amsterdam antique shop by one of the Incorporation's past masters, who recognised the scene as Leith and bought it.

visit Scotland since 1650.

Black and white photographs record other royal arrivals—the late Queen Mother with King George VI in 1948, and the last Russian Czar, Nicolas II, arriving in 1896, having been escorted across the North Sea from Copenhagen by the Incorporation's pilots.

Everything in the room is much as it has been—apart from improved heating—for generations. When the Incorporation handed over Trinity House to Historic Scotland,

Colina Grant, daughter of a ship owner and the only female honorary member of the Incorporation. Rededicated in 1945 following the Second World War, its vividly detailed panels depict everything from radio operators and ships' cooks to prowling German U-boats and the age-old scenario of anxious families waiting on the shore.

Ascending the stairs, we enter Trinity House's greatest glory, the vast Convening Room, which runs the entire length of the building. Gorysz opens



The stately Georgian building incorporates two carved stone panels from the original almshouse.

He points to the Camperdown fireplace, as it is known, a heavy black stone and cast iron edifice commissioned to mark the Dundee-born Admiral Adam Duncan's momentous naval victory over the Dutch fleet in 1797. Among the paintings hanging in the room is one depicting Leith's shore area on a fine, blustery day in 1710 and a vessel entering the harbour, sails and pennant billowing. Thought to

He opens a door to reveal the strongroom, with its heavy safe and metal document boxes. Because of damp, he explains, the records once kept in them have been removed to more secure archives. Another door reveals fitted wooden filing cabinets, one of which is labelled "Key to His Majesty's landing at Leith 1822," referring to when King George IV arrived at the port, the first reigning British monarch to

says Gorysz, it was agreed that the agency would conserve, rather than restore. "Everything you see here, it's like a time capsule."

One relatively recent addition was the stained glass Memorial Window, designed by local artist Walter J. R. Cook to commemorate the many merchant seamen who perished during the First World War and donated in 1933 by

Ascending the stairs, we enter Trinity House's greatest glory, the vast Convening Room, which runs the entire length of the building.

the window blinds, allowing the sunlight to illuminate this extraordinary cabinet of curiosities, the many portraits and other large canvases on its walls, its ornate ceiling and, particularly, the astonishing assembly of 18th- and 19th-century and other artifacts, reflecting Leith's importance as a port, laid out on the great table which occupies most of the length of the room, lined by Chippendale chairs and betokening the days when 100 or more members might gather round it.

You'd be hard put to eat or drink from it now, crammed as it is with nautical instruments

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such as quadrants, sextants and compasses, ship models, exotic memorabilia such as sawfish blades and a copy of War Instructions for Merchant Ships dating from 1917, the lead-lined covers of which ensured that, if thrown overboard, it certainly wouldn't fall into enemy hands. A model of the renowned Bell Rock Lighthouse rises from the centre of the table, a reminder of when the Incorporation's

days when Leith sent whaling ships all over the world, while nearby hangs a portrait of Peter Wood (1749-1826), a prosperous whale ship owner and member of Trinity House. In his hand he holds a walking stick fashioned from the tusk of a narwhal; a similar cane, as well as a much longer "sea unicorn" tusk, lie nearby.

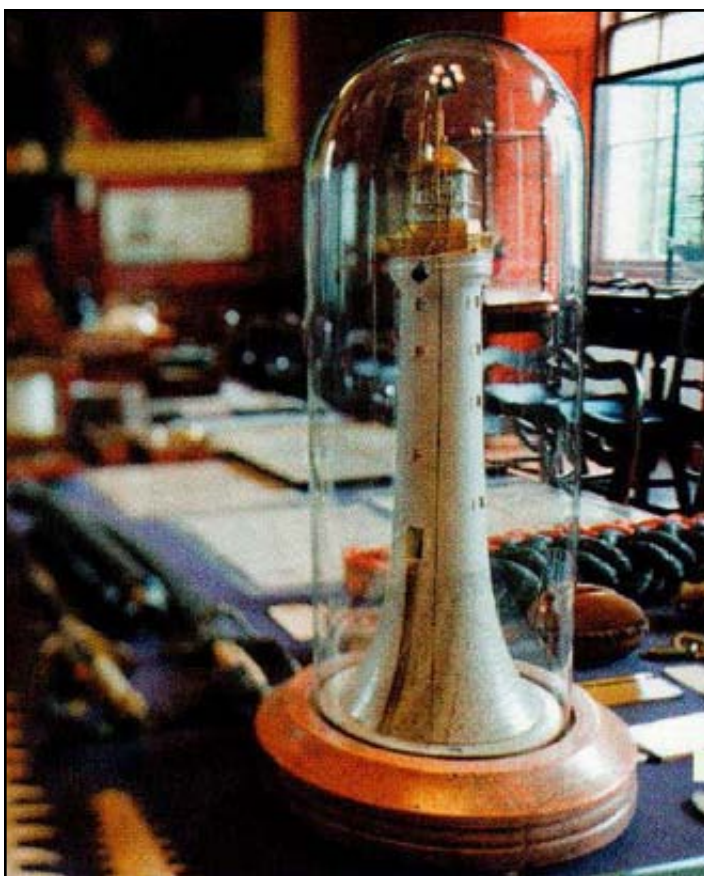
Wood's portrait is one of four in the room painted by the famous Scottish artist Sir Henry Raeburn. The other three depict George Smith, Master of the Incorporation from 1796

seashells, entwined ropes and figures—including at least one mariner whose telescope is trained not on distant ships, but on the comely nymph flouncing across the ceiling opposite him.

One of Gorysz's favourite items is the spectacularly vast canvas that almost fills one end of the room, portraying the Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama rounding the Cape of Good Hope, painted in 1842 by the Edinburgh artist David Scott. The mariners look utterly terrified, their

than Leith. It is a beautifully made little model of a three-masted warship dating from 1799, one of many such models made and sold by Napoleonic French prisoners of war in Edinburgh Castle, for whom Trinity House provided clothes (it also dispatched money to assist widows and orphans of the American Civil War).

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A model of Bell Rock Lighthouse has pride of place in the Convening Room.

duties included maintaining the lighthouses of the Firth of Forth and beyond, for which it received "light money" from ship owners. (Today all of Scotland's lights are the responsibility of the Northern Lighthouse Board.)

The wickedly gleaming steel of a harpoon head recalls the

to 1805; John Hay, the Master who oversaw the construction of Trinity House; as well as Raeburn's masterly, full-length portrait of the aforementioned Admiral Duncan, hero of the 1797 Battle of Camperdown.

The room's ceiling is a work of art in its own right, ornately plastered with dolphins,



sense of impending doom exacerbated by the patina of age that has darkened the canvas.

In contrast, another of his favourites couldn't be smaller, but is a reminder that the Incorporation's charitable activities extended further

Scottish Life magazine visit
www.scottishlife.org.

DÀIMH

Performing at the
Freight and Salvage Coffeehouse in Berkeley, California
Tuesday, September 29th at 8:00PM



Dàimh hails from the Scottish Highlands, known in Gaelic as A' Ghàidhealtachd, the Land of the Gaels, and their music is rich in Gaelic tradition. The band features Angus MacKenzie on pipes and whistle, Gabe McVarish on fiddle, Griogair Labhruidh on vocals, pipes, and other instruments, Murdo Cameron on mandola, mandolin, and accordion, and Ross Martin on guitar. Twice nominated for Folk Band of the Year at the Scots Traditional Music Awards, the band plays glorious instrumentals and songs in Gaelic with lyrics about love, drink, war, murder, emigration, dancing, and death. "Daimh are steeped in Gaelic heritage," says *BrightYoungFolk.com* in a review of their most recent album, *Diversions*. "Their beautiful songs and tune sets create an album of shades, mixing the upbeat with the poignant. *Diversions* is a truly Scottish album musically and in the stories it tells." The band is known for rich textures, intricate arrangements, complex harmonies, and the seeming effortlessness of their playing. *Irish Music Magazine* calls them "one of the most exhilarating acoustic bands on the Celtic map."

TICKETS

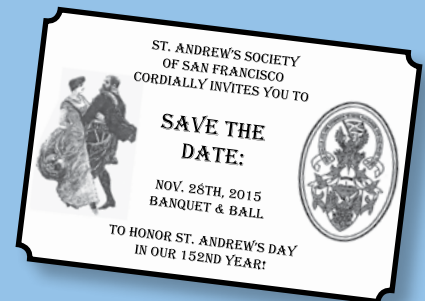
advanced: \$22.00, at the door: \$24.00
(doors open at 7:00PM)

For more information visit
www.freightandsalvage.org/daimh
or www.daimh.net

Save the Dates



RSCDS 2015 Asilomar Weekend
November 13–15, 2015



St. Andrew's Society
of San Francisco
Banquet & Ball
November 28th, 2015



Meeting & Events Schedule

| Date | Event / Topic | Location / Notes |
|----------------------|---|---------------------------|
| 2015 | | |
| Mon. Sept. 21 | Member's Dinner | 1088 Green St., SF |
| Mon. Oct. 19 | Member Meeting..... | 1088 Green St., SF |
| Sun. Nov. 8 | Remembrance Day Service..... | Grace Cathedral, SF |
| Mon. Nov. 16 | Member Meeting..... | 1088 Green St., SF |
| Sat. Nov. 28 | 153rd Annual Banquet & Ball | Marine's Memorial |
| Mon. Dec. 21 | No Meeting due to Hogmanay Potluck on 12/31 | |
| Thur. Dec. 31 | Hogmanay Potluck..... | 1088 Green St., SF |
| 2016 | | |
| Mon. Jan. 18 | Member Meeting..... <i>Inauguration of 2016 Office Bearers</i> | 1088 Green St., SF |
| Sat. Jan. 23 | Burns Supper (The Family) | 545 Powell St., SF |
| Mon. Feb. 15 | Member Meeting..... | 1088 Green St., SF |
| Mon. Mar. 21 | Member Meeting..... | 1088 Green St., SF |
| Sat. April 16 | 19th Annual Tartan Day Scottish Faire | Ardenwood, Fremont |
| Sat. April 16 | John Muir Association / Earth Day celebration | Martinez |
| Mon. April 18 | Member Meeting..... | 1088 Green St., SF |
| Mon. May 16 | Member Meeting..... | 1088 Green St., SF |
| Mon. June 20 | Member Meeting..... | 1088 Green St., SF |
| Sat. July 9 | Summer Ceilidh | Encinal Yacht Club |
| Mon. July 18 | Summer Break – no meeting | |
| Mon. Aug. 15 | Summer Break – no meeting | |
| Sept. 3–4 | 151th Highland Games & Gathering | Pleasanton, CA |

About Us

The Saint Andrew's Society of San Francisco

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Membership Meetings

Meetings are held the 3rd Monday of the month, at 7:30 P.M. Light supper served before the meeting. (Free valet parking is provided for members' meetings. MUNI: one block east of Hyde St. cable car).

Officers of the Society

Jaeame I. Koyil, President
David Campbell, First VP
Francesca McCrossan, Second VP
Ian Baird, Treasurer
Jean Allen, Secretary
Roger Weed, Librarian
Marilyn Van Story, Chaplain
Marjory Matic, Bard
Jack Cunningham, Piper
Thomas E. Kasinger, Historian
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**The Saint Andrew's Society
of San Francisco**
1088 Green Street
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Recipient
