

THE THREE UNITED TRADES OF DUNDEE

Masons, Wrights & Slaters



ANNETTE M SMITH

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Cover illustration:

plaque in St. Andrew's Church, showing the symbols of the Three United Trades of Dundee.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Masons, Wrights and Slaters of Dundee formed their separate incorporations during the seventeenth century, and their joint society, United Trades, in the middle of the eighteenth. Men, and sometimes women were building, roofing and practising the various trades subsumed under general name of 'wright' long before 1600, but this is the story of incorporations of these trades, not a history of their crafts and craftsmen within the town. The period covered, therefore, begins as they sought power to appoint deacons and form societies which would be legally authorised and recognised by the Town Council, though only as appendices of the Guildry, which meant that in some matters of discipline the incorporation would be subservient to the latter body. The main story ends in 1846, when Parliament abolished the trading monopoly of the Royal Burghs and, in same act, the privileges held by merchant guilds and craft incorporate those privileges which the societies had been formed primarily to defend.¹ Dundee merchant and craft incorporations did not disappear immediately they lost their special place in the town, and others beside the subject of history still exist, though all have a different sort of membership and a different objective from those of the original founders, but it is within these dates, from their founding until the mid-nineteenth century, that incorporations were of special significance for their members and for Dundee.

It is perhaps worth noting that about half the population cannot automatically be omitted from any active part in this history. Women were members of Trades. They might be involved in crafts or merchandise particularly when a widow or daughter was allowed to carry on an established business. Katrine Mann, for instance, relict of Patrick Hunter, a glazier, given the monopoly of the glazing work in all public buildings in Dundee, her name does not appear in the Lockit Book of the Dundee Wright Trade, which lists all master wrights recognised in the town.² Women do figure throughout the records, but usually only passively, as recipients of poor relief in right of their husbands or fathers. Two marked exceptions, however, were women whom the Masons and Wrights employed as their officers. Both were daughters of former members, so an element of charity may be seen in their appearance as officials.³ Women were also employed as cleaners of the seats owned by Trades in the Town Churches.

Another aspect of the Trades that must be remembered is that the interest of the incorporations was interpreted as being that of the masters; journeymen and apprentices had little or no influence though masons, in Dundee at least, followed their own procedures, which were slightly different from those of other crafts. In some ways,

these were more democratic, but the Masons' pleas for permission to form an association in 1659 protested that less qualified men were taking their work.⁴ The Slaters forbade master slaters to take journeymen into partnership in 1703 and in 1754 ruled that masters could not even employ journeymen if masters who were without work would accept the position of hired workmen, as had the Masons in 1659. Dundee journeymen seem to have been in a weaker position than the Glasgow or the Aberdeen journeymen wrights, the latter having their own organisation by 1732.⁵ There is, however, some evidence in the records of the three United Trades of early combinations of journeymen and apprentices. One or two entries in the Wrights' Lockit Book and sederunt or minute books give an inkling of joint action by servants and even of individual resistance to the fiats of the masters. In November, 1695, the journeymen were showing a spirit of independence which did not please their employers. They 'seduced ilk ane other not to fie with any maister langer than ane week or ane twentie days at maist so that non is the journeymen will fie with any maister for ane year, half or quarter years' but, the Lockit Book went on, they 'only does as they please and obey no order....whereby they breid great confusion in the trade'. To remedy this, masters were ordered to 'fee and feed' in future for no less than three months on pain of penalty of £4 Scots, the Trade hoping by this ruling to prevent servants playing off one master against the other.⁶

Almost sixty years later, in 1752, we must assume concerted action among apprentices and journeymen in the Wright Trade, for masters were informed that they would no longer work in the dark, but only to 6 p.m. at house work (in customers' homes or places of work) and to 7 p.m. in their own workshop. In some alarm, the Trade consulted the Dean of Guild, so that he could exercise his jurisdiction over the Trade, which resulted from its position as a pendicle of the Guildry. The Dean's considered judgement was that the hours of work had always been from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. and that anything less would be prejudicial to the inhabitants of the burgh as well as to the Trade, i.e. the masters. The Wrights promptly imposed a fine of £10 Scots on any master found infringing those conditions, while apprentices or journeymen who tried to insist on shorter hours were to be dismissed and refused any work in Dundee thereafter. May 1784, saw the Master Wrights meeting specifically to discuss the formation of a combination of their journeymen which was threatening strike action if wages were not increased. The masters naturally claimed that the current prices they were charging and the regulations in force about prices and wages made a rise impossible, adding honestly, 'without hurting ourselves or our families'. To prevent their servants from playing off one master against another, the Trade agreed not to employ another man's servant without written proof that master and man had 'fairly parted'. And no more is heard of this, in the minutes at least.⁷ More drastically for the journeymen, they were simply informed in 1808 that their wages were to be reduced by 2s. to 15s. a week and there were no immediate reported repercussions, which must surely give an

indication of hard times. However, journeymen did serve in equal numbers with masters on a committee set up to decide fair prices.⁸

In 1818 and 1821, there were petitions from the journeymen asking for a rise of 3d. in the ls. They argued that they could not keep their wives and families on the same footing as other trades, as prices had risen so much. The masters on this occasion may have felt that their men had some grounds for complaint, for they asked their clerk to write to fellow tradesmen in other Scottish cities. According to the report in the minutes, the replies to these letters showed that the Dundee men were better paid than elsewhere; and in any case the masters pointed out that only the Town Council could authorise a rise in wages. Unfortunately, though meticulous in copying letters to non-members of the Incorporation who were suspected of working in the town without having the right to do so - letters which were almost all identical except for the addressees — the clerk did not record either his letter to the other cities nor the answers he received.⁹

One interesting facet of the attitudes of the three Trades, at least as incorporations and as illustrated in their records, is that they were not outward-looking. This is, of course, partly because the main aim of the incorporations was in effect the defence of the masters. Lockit Books, minute or sederunt books, accounts, all are totally silent about such weighty matters as the deposition of James VII, the Union of the Scottish and English Parliaments, the Napoleonic wars; even the Jacobite rebellions do not merit a mention, though there was a rebel presence in the town in both 1715 and 1745. On this last it is only fair to say they were not alone in their silence. Only the Kirk Session and Presbytery among Dundee's official bodies ventured opinions on the 1745 rebellion and, though one master wright, Thomas Haliburton, was one of the earlier recruits to Charles Edward's army, we do not hear of this from the wrights.¹⁰ Indeed, in 1745, the most dramatic event they recorded was the expulsion of Andrew Beg Junior from the Trade, his name being ceremoniously crossed out of the Lockit Book, because he had stolen wood from the town timber yard. It has to be accepted that the repercussions of wider and national and international events, and even of local happenings which do not directly impinge on the activities of the Trades, can rarely be traced in these records, except by inference. For instance, during the Cromwellian period, the Wrights' language became slightly more biblical, in keeping with the ethos of the time. The Masons in 1659 also talk of the 'blissing of God' but the opening of their Lockit Book is a direct quotation from the centuries-old Masonic 'Old Charges', which we shall consider in Chapter 4.

We do find from the records in 1757 that the country was embroiled in war. In that year, John Thomson was entered in the Lockit Book of the Wrights as master, without paying any of the usual fees. He was also presented with £4 sterling by the

Trade in gratitude for his enlisting in the army on its behalf. They had been instructed by the magistrates and the Justices of the Peace that they must provide a man to represent their Trade, so a volunteer was most welcome. Then, economic recessions can be guessed at, for hard times and poverty brought extra requests for help from the poor fund of each trade, with less money being collected to provide for that relief. One major political question does appear in the records in the 1780s and the 1830s when the reform of burgh and parliamentary government was a live issue. The United Trades, united and separately, were prepared to contribute to the reform movement. But there is more than a suspicion that once again it was self-interest that moved them, not any abstract interest in democracy for its own sake; they wanted to share in the management of their own town, instead of seeing it ruled by a 'self-perpetuating oligarchy', whose aims and purposes they did not necessarily agree with.

John Thomson's present of £4 sterling reminds us of one aspect of economic history which is illustrated in the Trades' records. From 1603 the Scottish pound had been recognised as worth one twelfth of the English, so to obtain the equivalent sterling value of all sums given as Scots, one must divide by twelve. At the Union of the Scottish and English Parliaments in 1707 one of the agreements made between the two countries was that the coinage of the two should be uniform. This standardisation did not take place immediately and the length of time it took to establish the change is indicated in the records of the three Dundee Trades. The Masons' accounts were given in Scots money until 1754, the Wrights until 1758. Throughout this publication sums of money are reported as they appear in the records and we therefore find mention of such obsolete terms as the Scots mark or merk, worth 13s.4d., and the guinea, £1-1-0.

All craft incorporations had similar aims and policies and these will be examined first. Similarly, once the United Trades was formed as an incorporated society, much business in which all the three Trades were interested or involved was channelled through that body. The general history of the Mason, Wright and Slater Trades will therefore be examined in Chapter 2, that of the association, the United Trades in Chapter 3, and only matters peculiar to each Trade will be dealt with in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, but the index will indicate where references to each Trade is made in the first three chapters.

CHAPTER 2

Craft Incorporations: Their History and Aims

Craft incorporations have a long history in Europe. Merchants living in towns in Italy, the Low Countries and on the banks of the Rhine were the first to form associations or guilds for mutual help and protection, about the beginning of the twelfth century. Towns everywhere tend to have their origins in the market-place and it is therefore not surprising that merchants first became influential in town society and developed institutions to protect their particular interests. Equally unsurprising is the fact that producers of the goods which the merchants bought and sold began to feel the need to defend themselves and their livelihood. In the next hundred years, craftsmen too saw the possible benefits of cooperation and entered into associations which tried to regulate all aspects of the practice of their crafts. A certain amount of friction between the producers and sellers of goods was probably inevitable but, as the well-being of the town as a whole was important to both groups, this can be exaggerated.¹

In Scotland, the story of the merchant guilds and craft incorporations follows a similar pattern to that in the rest of Europe but significantly later. William the Lion (1165-1214) decreed that the merchants should form guilds but, even at the end of the thirteenth century, traces of these can be found only in the most important burghs. Among these, Dundee should probably be included but the earliest manuscript proof of the existence of guilds in the town dates only from the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries. The Dundee Seal of Cause, the document granted under the seal of a burgh court, which gave merchants the power to elect a deacon, was dated 1515. However, as Robert the Bruce is credited with 'resuscitating' the Dundee merchant guild, it would seem that the merchants in the town had been operating some form of association before then.²

In Scotland, the privileges of guilds and incorporations were intimately connected with the monopoly over foreign and domestic trade and industry exerted by the Royal Burghs. From the twelfth century, Scottish monarchs had endowed various towns with charters which gave them the sole rights of export/import trading and considerable power over the making and marketing of goods within the country. The price of such privileges was that these chartered Royal Burghs had to bear a regular share of any taxation imposed by the king. As they bore such heavy fiscal and economic responsibilities the burghs expected to be consulted on economic affairs: they thereby achieved some political power as the Third Estate of the Three Estates, the Scottish Parliament, and developed their own institution, the Convention of the Royal Burghs. Within the towns, some residents paid a fee to the Town Councils to

become full members of the community as freemen or burgesses, and they thereafter shared the responsibility of paying taxes among other burghal duties, but could hope to share in any economic benefits or political power accruing to the burgh. Other residents were simply indwellers who had their homes within the town walls and did not share in the 'freedom' of the town. Not unnaturally, the burgesses looked for some recompense for their extra responsibilities. If burgesses alone paid taxes, alone were eligible to become Town Councillors, and alone might be involved in the expense of attending Parliament and Convention, they alone meant to benefit from the commercial and industrial activity generated within their burgh's boundaries and liberties by its Royal Burgh status; in the growth of merchant and craft associations, we can see their institutional attempts to defend their position. When a Town Council granted a Seal of Cause allowing a group of merchants or artisans to act as an incorporated body within a town, such legal recognition gave greater strength to the group.

Legal recognition also brought the need for formal organisation and one of the first administrative steps taken by these societies seems to have been the acquisition of a book in which would be kept trade secrets, including their financial affairs and any regulations concerning the behaviour of members. In this book the names of qualified, fully paid-up masters would be ceremoniously entered. As these volumes were considered highly confidential, they were sturdily bound, often in leather-covered wood, and kept closed by means of metal locks - hence they became known as Lockit (locked) Books. Many Lockit Books have survived, even though the incorporations whose records they hold have vanished. Elected officials of the respective incorporations had the care of the key or keys and of these officials, the most important were the deacon and boxmaster. The Deacon, or Visitor, as he was sometimes called in a hangover from legislation of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which tried to limit the powers of craft associations,³ was the chairman of meetings, but his duties also included the oversight of not only the workmanship but of the general behaviour of his fellow masters. The Boxmaster, in many societies the only other elected official, was the treasurer, whose title arose from the fact that, before banks and safes kept money and documents reasonably secure and private, funds and papers were deposited in a strong locked box for which he was responsible. Several members might have custody of different keys if there were several locks on the box, but the Boxmaster had the overall charge of a society's funds and collected fees, fines, any rents due from property or interest on loans, as well as the 'quarterly accounts', the sums supposedly collected each three months from every member.

There were also paid officials. One was the clerk, who had to be literate, as he wrote the entries in the Lockit Book; he was often a writer (anglice *lawyer*), a public notary, and apart from a general fee, he would be paid for each entry made in the records. The other was the officer of each trade whose duties were myriad. He acted as messenger,

calling members to meetings and to funerals of their fellow craftsmen; he would be responsible for the care of a trade's mortcloth, the capacious heavily-fringed cloth of silk or velvet thrown over coffins while they rested in the home of the deceased and sometimes on the way to the grave; he might have to help delivering meal bought in bulk by his trade. These are only a few examples of what might be required of him. The officer was often a member of the trade he served and, in the seventeenth century, the Wrights expected their newest Master to act, though in the nineteenth century, it is quite plain they used the post to help the older or poverty-stricken among them. In March 1816, they even appointed a second officer, because the existing holder of the post was too old and infirm to look after the heavy mortcloths properly; these had to be aired regularly. However, the position of the master who was also the paid servant of the incorporation could be awkward. At one point the Wright Trade decided that he could not vote on matters being discussed at meetings, and this must have been a source of annoyance on occasion. Masons took turns in being their Trade's officer and this practice continued until late in the history of the Incorporation. In December 1801, the Trade realised that not all members had taken their share in this duty and they resolved that all who had not served in the past should do so, beginning with the oldest and, in 1834, demanded £1 from those who had not done so.

The officer's job must sometimes have been more lucrative than the clerk's. For instance, in 1795, the Dundee Wrights increased their officer's salary by 10s. per annum to £1-15-0; two years before, the clerk had received only 10s.⁴ In addition, the officer was often provided with clothes — a coat, shoes, stockings, which cost the Wrights 5s.3d. in 1764-5. He was also allowed fees for each separate duty, and if a Trade thought he had had rather more work than usual, this was often recognised in a material fashion. On the other hand, when funds were low, he could find that his salary was cut, as happened to the Wrights' officer in 1805. All the three United Trades became more formal in the nineteenth century and one example of this is the Wrights' decision in March 1805, that their officer must be clothed in black, not only when he attended a funeral in his official capacity when the Trade's mortcloth was used, but when he distributed funeral letters giving members information about the time and place of burials.

Scottish craftsmen found it more difficult than the merchants to win official approval for their becoming incorporated bodies. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Scottish government seemed to assume that any meeting of craftsmen must have nefarious purposes — 'to savour of conspiracies'. The election of a deacon was forbidden on occasion, as his powers of exercising discipline over his fellow craftsmen's private behaviour as well as over their workmanship were described in 1493 as 'rycht dangerous'. The so-called Visitor who replaced the deacon could examine only craftsmanship.⁵ In times of economic recession or other difficulties,

such as plague, craftsmen, not the circumstances, were often blamed for rising prices and the craftsmen's constant attempts to improve or defend their existing living standards were not always viewed favourably by either town councils or by the central government. In 1493, for instance, associations which ruled that no-one could take on work left unfinished by a fellow-workman were described as 'oppressors of the lieges', and masons and wrights were castigated for asking for paid holidays.⁶ The hands of the merchants have often been identified as the main force behind much of this repressive legislation but, as Dr. T.M. Devine has pointed out, the merchant class was neither economically nor socially homogeneous, so this view may need some reconsideration.⁷ Certainly, some merchants' sons joined craft incorporations, as we find in the records of the Wright Trade.

In connection with this aspect of incorporation history, it is unfortunate that there is little information about the social background of the members of the United Trades in their existing records. The Wrights alone seem to have made a practice of giving the occupation of a new apprentice's father, and of all those listed up to 1830 in the Lockit Book and elsewhere, deficient records as we shall see, the occupations and places of residence of only 250 appear. Of these, only three were freemasters of the Dundee Wright Trade; common sense as well as the Lockit Book would tell us that many more than three sons of Free Masters were likely to have joined their father's trade. However, it may be worth noting the origins of apprentices where we can. 113 were the sons of craftsmen of one sort or another. Thirty came from what we may call service and consumer industries, their fathers including bakers, cowfeeders, porters, vintners, one bellhanger and one gardener and twenty-eight were the sons of sailors and shipmasters. Eighteen can be identified as the sons of farmers and tenants compared to thirty-four who are described only as from other burghs or from townships outside Dundee, their fathers being described as 'in' or 'of' a location, the 'of' not always clearly indicating proprietorship. There were five schoolmasters' sons, five merchants', three ministers', one lawyer's and one surgeon's. And one graduate schoolmaster became a free master in 1752. This was Mr. Robert Beg, teaching at Lundie, son of a deceased master, Andrew Beg, and brother of Andrew who was drummed out of the Wrights in 1745 for theft. Mr. Beg paid the small sum of ten merks as son of a master and presumably did not mean to practise the trade, though he may have hoped to benefit from the poor fund, if necessary, as schoolmasters at the time did not qualify for any pension. Most of these with presumably rural backgrounds appeared in the eighteenth century, and there was a distinct decrease in the number of entrants from a rural environment in the nineteenth century, when labourers and manufacturers appear, an indication of the change taking place in Dundee society, and indeed in Scotland generally. Only ten apprentices came from areas other than Dundee and the shires of Perth and Forfar, and four of these ten were from the quasi-suburbs of Dundee — Newport-on-Tay, Ferryport-of-Craig, now Tayport.

However, of the five whose fathers were merchants, one was from North America and one from Jamaica. As well as the rather surprising trans-Atlantic entrants, two fathers gave their home as London. It would be rash to draw far-reaching conclusions from such scanty material but within the Wright Trade at least we can say that the divisions between the various ranks of society were not completely rigid.

Despite Dr. Devine's evidence, however, and that of the Dundee Wright Trade, there is no doubt that wealth had accrued to prosperous merchants during the early years of the fifteenth century and in many towns they had been slowly but surely ousting craftsmen from any position of influence in burgh government. Pre-eminent in town councils, the merchants thereby achieved parliamentary standing as burgh representatives. A legislature with no members specifically interested in the well-being of the producer may well have had an instinctive distrust of associations which behaved as craft incorporations did. It was perhaps too easy to persuade it to act against them, but on two occasions, in 1469 and in 1592, The Three Estates did pass acts which assisted craftsmen. The first of these in effect turned councils into the self-perpetuating oligarchies which they remained until 1833 but it did grant recognition to some craft associations, for their representatives were to share in the election of the burgh officers, the Provost, the Bailies, the Dean of Guild. This may have assisted the growth in the number of trade incorporations which can be seen thereafter, the first being that of the masons and wrights of Edinburgh, who obtained their Seal of Cause six years later; the two trades were incorporated in one body as their work was considered complementary. The second act showed the legislature for once definitely on the side of burgh craftsmen, though no doubt town councils saw the benefit to themselves of protecting the interests of their burgesses. The Act of 1592 forbade the practising of trades in the suburbs of burghs, as freedom from taxation and burghal duties outside the towns allowed for cheaper prices, which could undercut those of artisans within the burgh boundaries, who were liable for such impositions.⁸

Despite the apparent ill-will of the Scottish Parliament, the underlying vitality of the trades can be seen in that they refused to be cowed. From the late fifteenth century onwards, the number of trade incorporations grew steadily. And while Acts of Parliament seem to have been considered necessary to **abolish** rights and privileges of craftsmen, the power to grant recognition had accrued to the town councils. The Seal of Cause was the important document within the burgh. In Dundee, the Weavers are the first of the crafts to have one recorded, dated April 1512, but the records of the group known as the Nine Trades are so depleted that other Seals may have been granted before that date. These nine produced what we now talk of as consumer goods: Baxters (bakers), Cordiners (shoemakers), Glovers or Skinners, Tailors, Bonnetmakers, Fleshers, Hammermen (all kind of metalworkers), Weavers and Litsters (Dyers, but including also fullers or waulkers) had all been recognised by

Dundee Town Council by the end of the sixteenth century.⁹ Presumably a town that was so economically important as Dundee must have experienced institutional developments as sophisticated and as early as anywhere else in Scotland, but the definitive evidence for corporate activity before 1500 seems to be lacking. Each of the Three United Trades, the subject of this study, has records dating from the seventeenth century, but there are problems in dating their exact beginnings too, as we shall see in the chapters on the individual trades. The Masons alone can claim some proof of the Town Council's authorising their forming an incorporation. The lack of such evidence arises from the unfortunate history of Dundee archival material, including for instance the sacking of the town by General Monck in 1651 and the removal of records then.

The first purpose of craftsmen who formed an association was that of self-protection during their working lives, combined with some assurance of help in sickness and old age for themselves and, in some cases, for their dependants. However, while it is fair to say that self-interest was the main motivation, the results were at least marginally beneficial for the community at large, particularly those regulations which attempted to ensure that workmen were properly trained and which provided for regular contributions to each trade's poor fund. A long apprenticeship under the eye of a trained journeyman and a master made for the maintenance of high standards of work, while craft poor funds must have relieved many parishes from the burden of giving assistance to sick and aged tradesmen and their families.

The indenturing of apprentices did not, of course, begin only with the forming of incorporations, but the existence of these did make it easier to standardise and supervise the necessary training, at least within the burghs. The apprenticeship system had two aims. First, by subjecting all entrants to a trade to a long training of anything up to seven years, followed by a mandatory few years as a servant or journeyman — the two terms were seemingly interchangeable — standards of workmanship within the trade were preserved. Secondly, a trade could exert some control over its size, trying thereby to avoid unemployment or poor pay arising from over manning. The same policies achieved both these objectives, for restrictions in the number of apprentices a master might have under various stages of indentures not only kept the numbers down, but also ensured adequate supervision, when only one beginner, for example, was allowed to one master at one time. The Dundee Wrights laid down in 1670, 'No master with apprentice may accept another until three years of his firsts apprenticeship is fully expired'.¹⁰ In 1677, the Dundee Mason Trade decided on a seven year gap between apprentices signing on with the one master, and masons generally were allowed at one time to train only three apprentices in their whole life.¹¹ Masters were expected to have enough work to be able to provide each apprentice with a

comprehensive training, as well as being able to look after their physical welfare. Master Slaters in Dundee were informed in 1654 that they must be able to 'sustain' their apprentices in both meat and work.¹² Though the point has been made that the incorporations were the masters' associations, on this matter, masters and journeymen were united. Both groups saw the disadvantage of training too many men. Neither master nor man wanted to see the labour market flooded, nor boys being used as cheap labour in the later stages of their apprenticeship.

Once a boy had served his time, he could apply to his trade to become a master. He had to give evidence of competence by producing a set piece of work, usually within a set time. The Dundee trades called this his 'say', an abbreviation of essay. In theory, everyone who wished to join an incorporation, or to be recognised as a master, should have completed this test, but both the Wrights' and Masons' records show that this did not invariably happen. Just after the booking of nineteen Freemasons, one attempt was made to tighten entrance regulations in the Mason Trade. The relevant entry for 4 January 1734/35 begins 'Taking into consideration the many abuses and inconveniences that have happened and doe daily happen through entering members not duly qualified for Exercising their employment and the many discouragements the Lieges meet with by Employing men incapable of their business' and goes on to prescribe an essay of hewn stone to be judged by a committee of the deacon and others. Later records in the minutes show what these essays might be, the committee appointed both to supervise the work to ensure that the would-be master carried out his task alone, and the result. It is only fair to say that it is always implied that imposing this test on a new entrant was merely a continuation of old practices; the Trade may have become temporarily lax. The essays vary; Alex Jack was asked in 1768 to make a concave chimney suitable for a room fourteen foot square and in 1769, Thomas Donaldson had to hew a pavement eighteen inches square. In 1762, the Wrights insisted that a man who married a master's daughter 'with a design to exercise the Wright Trade' should not be admitted without performing a satisfactory essay, 'according to the Custom of the said Trade'.¹³ The implication must be that in the past sons-in-law had been excused their say, even if they did mean to practise as wrights. Marrying a master's daughter was, of course, a cheap route into an incorporation, as sons and sons-in-law were treated equally in being allowed much smaller entry fees, but allowing untrained men entry by such a means defeated the usual argument of the trades that their exclusive policies protected the lieges. The Wrights still impose an essay as a proof of competence, though in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries the essay was a 'straight edge', difficult for the totally unskilled but not the test of ability of earlier says like clock cases, chests of drawers and panelled doors.

Competence was not the only quality needed to enter the ranks of the

masters; one's father had to be well-heeled or the apprentice hoped to earn enough once he was trained to be able to afford the entry fees, serving as a journeyman and perhaps even working outside a burgh where he could set up his own shop without let or hindrance from an incorporation. Becoming a master was always an expensive business and not all could afford the process. Indeed, at every step from entering an apprenticeship, through service as a journeyman to being entered in his trade's Lockit Book as a fully qualified and fully paid-up master, able to train apprentices in his own right, the candidate had to pay fees to the incorporation of his choice, which were added to the poor fund, and fees to the clerk for every entry respecting the would-be entrant, which went into the clerk's pocket. In addition to the apprentice's own fees, his master was expected to register him with the Trade and pay a fee to the 'boxkeipar' for each apprentice he indentured and for each journeyman he employed.¹⁴ This regulation was more honoured in the breach than in its observance in the Three United Trades at least.

The Wrights' Lockit Book gives some indication of the scale of failure. The name of every apprentice wright in indentures in Dundee and the name of every journeyman employed on a permanent basis by a Dundee master wright should have appeared in the Book. Only fifty of the 400 master wrights are recorded as having served an apprenticeship in Dundee, ten apprentices appear as journeymen, and thirty journeymen in the book take the step of becoming freemasters. These numbers are obviously incomplete, for there were certainly more than fifty masters who paid the fees due from time-served apprentices who were residents or sons of masters. From the late eighteenth century onwards, Scotland's increasing and migratory population could have made for an influx of 'stranger' members, that is those not native to the town, but the non-appearance of masters as having previously served as apprentices or journeymen is consistent from the time the records began. The Masons complained too in January 1762, of journeymen who brought young boys into Dundee 'without any induntur over thier head which has been a great loss to our poors stock', and ordered master masons not to employ such journeymen.¹⁵ The loss to the poor fund was the crux of the matter, as can be seen when one considers that the registration for an apprentice in 1670 was 4d. Scots for a Wright, in 1776, 2s.3d. for an apprentice mason.¹⁶

The omissions from the records must be regretted by the historian but are hardly to be wondered at. While masters wishing to practise in a town and to employ servants without legal harrassment by an incorporation were taking a considerable risk if they did not join their local Trade, particularly when towns were smaller and all could be easily identified, non-registration did not invalidate an apprentice's indentures nor result in a journeyman's dismissal. The master who informed the Trade of every change in his employees, in every apprentice he took on, had to pay a fee which he could otherwise forget about. However, in 1728, the Masons commended and spent £3-15-0

Scots 'complementing' seven or eight journeymen, 'stranger masons, whom we caused pay and they frankly gave it when they needed not to a don it except the had pleased being that the leges behoved to be served'.¹⁷

Entry fees for apprentices and masters, as well as registration fees, varied and grew throughout the years, the variation depending on the status of the entrant within the burgh and also on inflation. In the nineteenth century it was quite common for arrangements to be made in all the Three United Trades for a new master to pay by instalments as he would earlier have given a bond to the Trade for what he owed. At all stages of the progress from apprenticeship to entry in the Lockit Book as master, sons and sons-in-law of existing or previous masters paid less than 'strangers' who were either men who had served their apprenticeship outside the town and now wished to work there, or residents in the town with no earlier family connections with the trade of their choice. The Dundee Wrights also recognised two classes of apprentices, the more privileged being so-called 'free' apprentices, who paid more to join. In the nineteenth century at least, this group was also compelled to serve a full five years, while others might work as journeymen after four. But only those serving the longer period could join the Trade as masters and become entitled to all the Trade's privileges. On 22 and 27 October, 1829, the Wrights advertised in the local papers, *The Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser* and *The Dundee Courier* that the change from ordinary to free apprentice must be made within twelve months of a boy's entering the trade. And not only the fees altered; the length of the apprenticeship was not always the same — six years for the Dundee Wrights in 1670, less as we have seen in the nineteenth century. Members had to face other fees too - a marriage merk, and fees paid by officials and councillors when they were elected, such as 18s., by the Wrights' Deacon in 1735.

The marked insistence within each trade on the levying of various fees and fines and the collection of quarterly accounts - accompanied by regular expressions of alarm from trade and deacons when it was realised how few members in fact paid these with any degree of regularity — illustrate the importance of the other main duty of the incorporations, after their regulations of working practices: they acted as quasi-insurance or friendly societies for members. With only personal savings, which can rarely have been substantial, and the parish poor fund to fall back on in bad times, sickness or old age, many must have been comforted by the knowledge that they could place some reliance on the charity of their own, their husband's or their father's trade incorporation. It was of interest to all, therefore, in times of personal prosperity, to husband the poor fund and most comments on the state of a society's funds are accompanied by remarks on how the poor of the trade would be affected. Poverty was never far away and even prominent members could be found to be in need. In June 1771, the Wrights' Deacon, Alexander Haliburton, was loaned

£2, as he was in 'indigent circumstances', which were presumed to be temporary as he had to give a promissory note. Dundee Town Council's injunction to the Masons, when authorising the founding of their society in 1659, that the funds should be used for the relief of any poor people with a claim on them, was probably unnecessary.

Of course, there were hitches in the system. Not only did not all the money that might have been expected from members arrive in a trade's box; there could be suggestions of abuse, as among the Masons in 1707. The Trade decided in that year that, in future, except on St. John's Day, when the annual general meeting was held, members would have to spend out of their own pockets at meetings. The implication is that 'refreshments', the inevitable alcohol the indispensable part of many Scottish transactions, had been provided out of the Masons' funds, to the detriment of the poor. There are later similar decisions, so the battle was not won in 1707. Indeed, on 23 September, 1830, a Masons' committee set up to examine the Society's books waxed wroth on what they termed 'immense sums', which their report claimed had been 'drained and embezzled in the shape of entertainment, merely for the gratification of a few favourites in office'. As they calculated that in the preceding forty-five years, £490-11-6 had been spent on poor relief and £ 105 on entertainment, and that on one night in 1811 'the appalling sum of Seven Pounds four shilling and four pence sterling was spent at an entertainment!!!!' (their exclamation marks), perhaps their indignation and disapproval was justified.

This same report marks a great change in trades' attitude to charity. In the earlier records, there was no narrow parochialism in giving relief. Wrights and Masons succoured Dundonians and 'strangers' almost indiscriminately; in 1714, a 'strange' woman, i.e. not a resident or native of Dundee, was given help 'being a wright's wife', and in 1708, a Dutchman, 'being a wright', got a small sum. Masons all over Britain made special rules for 'travelling brothers' and in 1749 in Dundee, at least one received financial aid. But in 1830, the Masons made adverse comments on the 'liberality of various Deacons in bestowing money gratuitously on Strangers'. Such an attitude would have been incomprehensible in preceding centuries when masons travelling to look for work expected shelter and sometimes work as a right.

On the other hand, leaving Dundee did not invalidate a man's claim, or that of his widow, to help from his Trade's poor fund. The mobility of the Dundee tradesmen is reflected in the destination of many small pensions. In 1749, we find £1-16-0 Scots being forwarded to a mason in Glamis, but the nineteenth century saw sums of money going to Glasgow, London, Birkenhead, Ireland. One mason, David Beattie, severely hurt in a fall in 1828, was allowed £5 for his journey to his son-in-law in Ireland. Mrs. James Thomson, on the other hand, was refused a travel allowance to join her husband there, on the grounds that in 1808, a decision had been taken that only 'decayed' members,

widows and orphans, were eligible for relief. The Wrights allowed £5 to a widow, Mrs. Rankin, who was emigrating to Australia, on condition that she would make no further claims on the Trade.¹⁸ In 1844, John Stephen, a wright, wrote very unhappily from Newry in Ireland, where he must have gone to join his family, after suffering a stroke in March 1836, when his pension of 10s had been doubled. 'It hurts my feelings very much' to be obliged to ask for help, which he went on 'is what I never at one time expected to be obliged to do, but I must submit to the all wise dispensations of Providence'.

In the nineteenth century, stringent inquiries were made as to whether claims were justified, even as far away as Glasgow in August, 1838, about the circumstances of one wright, Charles Key. One widow had to answer questions about her age, her income from any other source, such as other incorporations, and her late husband's property. Pensions were increasingly in later times paid in cash, but fuel, rent, clothes and funeral expenses might all be provided for, as had been done in previous centuries. In 1720, the Wrights bought a blanket for a man going into the local hospital, perhaps as a permanent resident. In 1786, 2s.6d. was allowed for a pair of shoes for James Steven's youngest daughter with 8d. for a handkerchief, 8s.9d. for seven yards of shirting and 12s.7½d. for cloth for a gown and coat.¹⁹ In 1821, the Masons paid 3s.6d., for a nurse for David Smith. Tradesmen in debt to their trades for any reason, perhaps because they had not fully paid up their masters' fees or were in arrears with quarterly accounts, were in theory less favourably treated, but the Slaters in April 1813, collected 'out of the private pockets of members' who were at the meeting for James Coupar, who was 'not clear of the books'. Pensioners in the Mason Trade at least were not counted as second class citizens; in December 1810, a majority decided that a man's being in receipt of charity from the Trade should not disable him from voting at meetings.

One episode in the Slaters' history illuminates the general attitude of the trades in dealing with their poor fund. For instance, none wanted to enroll older men who themselves, or whose family, might claim assistance from a comparatively small investment of entry money and quarterly accounts, compared to the amount paid in by someone who joined in his early twenties. This would have been to the detriment of those who entered when young and paid fees for many years. In September 1825, William Nicoll had entered the Trade, paying only part of the entry fees. By the end of 1826 he was dead and in January 1827, the Trade held a special meeting with Nicoll's representatives at which arrangements were made to free the Slaters from future claims by his family. The Slaters agreed to give up any demand that his executors should pay up the money he owed the Trade for full membership; in return each child would renounce any claims on the Slater Trade on reaching his or her majority.²⁰ In January 1818, the Wrights who in 1803 imposed half a stranger's dues on sons of

new masters aged over fifty, decided once again to take age into consideration when admitting members 'to the benefit of the trade'; this was shortly after the entry of both a father and son on the same day and clearly the Trade had been struck by the fact that David Hean, the father, might well cost them money sooner than his son Alexander, while having paid less.²¹

One petitioner to the Masons so provoked them by her importunity that they eventually wrote to her very severely. They had 'noted her tone', wrote the clerk, and 'in case of repetition of such improper ebullitions, it is proper that you should be made aware that you are labouring under a very great mistake when you suppose that the Trade are under any legal obligation to pay you a single farthing'.²² This lady, Mrs. Georgina Rutherford, was an unusual case. In 1834, she wrote to the Mason Trade offering to give up her annuity for £20, as she was moving to Edinburgh. This was refused, but £2 was allowed towards the cost of her removal. With hindsight, they would have been well advised to commute her pension. Forty years later, and with much acrimonious correspondence between, she was still on the pension list. She seems to have been in receipt of a pension from the Wrights too, for there is a petition from her in their records dated 1838 and one later in 1841 asking for more.²³

But the Masons were quite right in their contention that their charity was wholly at their discretion. Pensions in all trades went up and down as the funds allowed, and were awarded as each trade thought fit, this applying to public as well as to private charity, the former always being considered a proper part of incorporations' expenditure. At different periods both Masons and Slaters cancelled their contributions to the local infirmary. The Masons decided in 1817 that they could not afford their annual subscription of £1-1-0 though five years before they had felt affluent enough to give five guineas towards the building of a new lunatic asylum. The Slaters felt the pinch in 1847 but renewed their donation in 1856 'because of the faculties thereby afforded for any of our members' men requiring medical advice'. The Wrights gave annually to the Dundee Dispensary, the forerunner of the infirmary, £2-2-0 in 1787, reduced to £1-1-0 thereafter and continued to Dundee Royal Infirmary once it was opened. In January 1792, Montrose poorhouse was also the recipient of £3-3-0 from the Wrights 'for the behoof of Helen Haliburton who is a Present in Montros madhous', but this could be categorised as private charity. Trades members also supported the infirmary personally by giving to the church collection at the annual charity sermon. This could hardly be called voluntary. In July 1814, when the chairman of the Infirmary wrote asking for support when Dr. Thomas Chalmers of Kilmany was to preach later in the year, on 12 September, the Wrights agreed to help and sent a list to absent members to subscribe to. Those who did not do so voluntarily were fined Is. for the collection. Similarly, when the annual subscription for the orphan school was opened on 25 September, 1817, the Deacon and Boxmaster

were 'desired to wait on those not present', to ensure that they contributed. The building, but not the maintenance, of the new lunatic asylum also attracted support from all three of the United Trades in 1812.

To modern eyes the sums dispensed are of course tiny, but they must be valued in the context of the wages and prices of the time. In December 1801, the Wrights themselves thought that 4s. per quarter for widows was 'very unequal to the present high price of provisions' and doubled this from Candlemas 1802, with the cautionary note 'as long as the funds would admit'. In September 1819, widows' pensions were raised from 30s. to 40s. per annum, and in April 1831, newly widowed women were allowed funeral expenses of 30s. An interesting light is thrown on the seasonal work of even joinery work in November 1826. At the general meeting, Thomas Kinnear and William Bruce were allowed 5s. a week for a month or two 'in the dead time of year'. And the Trades' attitude to members who were in debt to the incorporation is illustrated by the Wrights' treatment of William Abbot in November 1832. The Boxmaster, who had some discretion in these matters, had allowed Abbot 10s. when he became ill. Unfortunately, he was in arrears with his quarterly payments, so the committee dealing with the Wrights' business affairs recommended that he be allowed 4s. a week — but 1s. was to be deducted each week until his arrears were paid off. In 1833, the Slaters allowed one claimant 3s., another 1s. per week and the Wrights expected to pay about £80 in all towards pensions in 1843. But these sums were better than nothing and were usually appreciated; Mrs. Rutherford was an exception.

One natural result of monopoly was not likely to be appreciated outside the incorporations. This was the habit of fixing prices, both at burgh and county level, which masters undercut at their peril — they could face a stiff fine.

Wrights, Masons and Slaters, all regularly arranged price lists, and in 1807, the Masons not only fixed the prices but laid down what the master's profit should be — 6d. per day on a journeyman's labour, 4d. on a labourer's.²⁴ In 1812, they further resolved that no member of the Trade should value another member's work, unless appointed to do so by a Court of Law; measuring was allowed, however.²⁵ In January, 1802, the Deacon of the Wright Trade, John Skirving, described the difficulty the brethren of the Trade faced when called on by magistrates to settle disputes between members and employers and even unfreemen, as there was not set list of prices. The Trade agreed to set up a committee to calculate prices, that would be fair in the Dundee conditions, and when it reported on 25 January, decided that it would stand for a year, and that thereafter a yearly review of prices should be carried out. They emphasised that these should refer only to the best quality of work and materials. The Slaters too discussed prices in 1803, which they must have fixed, as in 1806 they castigated one of their members, John Stewart for undercharging, which they claimed

was 'not for the first time'. He promised not to offend again. In 1825, the Wrights were negotiating prices with the local sawyers, relating to the type of measurements used as well as to the quality of timber. Later, in August 1841, the Trade objected to the use of some merchants of the 'calliper' measure, which the wrights thought a method of overcharging, because the timber was thereby not fully squared. They wrote to the Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow incorporations but, though the answers were communicated to the meeting, they were not entered in the minutes. However, the Trade agreed that they would oppose the use of the calliper, instead of the string measure, to the best of their ability. All three trades had county connections with their fellows. The Slaters appointed a committee in March 1806, in response to a letter from a Brechin slater. The Wrights and Masons sent members to Forfar to consultations at various times.²⁶

Members of the various incorporations shared in another benefit besides having the monopoly of their craft in the burgh and the possibility of assistance in times of need. This "was access to a trade's seats in the burgh's kirk, and this was available to apprentices and sometimes journeymen as well as to masters. The Masons claimed in 1812 that these seats had been 'purchased by our Ancestors for the accommodation of the members of the Trade and their families'.²⁷ The only proof of such purchases in the surviving records of the Masons, Wrights and Slaters is that they all paid ground rent to the kirkmaster, except for the occasion when the Wrights rented extra seats in the South Church in 1803 to cope with their increasing numbers.²⁸ Possession may be a remnant of mediaeval times, but all three had recognised ownership of particular pews, which made them part-owners of the fittings, if not the fabric, of the town churches. The right to occupy a specific seat in a Scottish presbyterian church had to be paid for until this century, so individual craftsmen could make a small saving by using their trade's seat, either free or at a very favourable rent. To the incorporations, on the other hand, ownership

brought responsibilities; maintenance, repair, and sometimes capital expenditure, all fell on the funds. The costs incurred can be seen throughout the accounts of the trades. 1727-8 saw 3s. Scots paid to the Masons' officer for cleaning their seat and, as someone had to be present at each service to unlock the door of the pews for those eligible for a seat, payments had to be made for that too - 6s. Scots to the Kirk Officer from the Masons in 1727-8, £3 to Widow Duff from the Wrights in 1790-91. Lights had to be provided and kept in order with lustres and candlesticks. The Masons also decorated their pews in the Old Church with their arms, framed and gilded at a cost of 10s.²⁹ The Wrights were even more ambitious, recording in July 1803 that they meant to open a window in the roof, for which they needed the permission of the Town Council, the owners of the fabric of churches. This they obtained on condition that they minuted that the Wright Trade was responsible for keeping the window in good repair.

The three Trades viewed their church seats in different ways. The Slaters must have decided quite early in the seventeenth century to use theirs as a source of income and rented them to members of the congregation — merchants, maltmen, weavers, periwigmakers, all figure in their list of tenants.³⁰ In the eighteenth century, the Masons were renting not only their seats but chairs in front of these. These had been at one time let out to Masons and their heirs male in perpetuity for 40s. Scots, but in 1709, they decided that they must make more out of these. In future, if a member died without a male heir who was a mason, then the Deacon and Boxmaster could let his chair to anyone they thought fit, at 4s. Scots yearly, with masons being given first refusal.³¹ The Masons also let spaces cheaply to women, on the footgang, planks laid between the pews; these cannot have been very comfortable.³² In December 1810, they expressed the 'impropriety' of letting their seat in the Old Church to 'strangers' when members lacked seating, and decided to keep the pews for themselves, the rent being fixed in 1808 at 1s. 6d. per seat, despite efforts among some members to raise this. They also decided in December 1811 that servants of seat-renters were not to be allowed to share the privilege of using the seat, though a friend might be brought occasionally, plus wives and children.

The Wrights, more numerous and, as a result, slightly wealthier than either the Masons or Slaters, managed to allow their members free use of seats in both the Old and South Churches until 1775. Only eight years before this, presumably under pressure of growing numbers, they had decreed that only masters, journeymen and apprentices should use their pews. Any family or domestic servants who tried to infringe this rule, presumably by pushing their way past the Trade's Officer who was supposed to bar the door to them, made their husband, parent or employer liable to a 2s. sterling fine.³³ In May 1775, however, the Trade was in some financial difficulties because of general economic troubles. They talked of the 'Increase of their Poor, the Smalness of the Trades Funds for supplying their Necessitys and the Trade being willing to take every method for enlarging their funds for supporting the poor' and their remedy was to let seats in both the Old and New Churches at 1 s. 6d. sterling for each freemaster and his family and 2s. for servants and strangers.³⁴ The back pew in the New Church was to be let to apprentices and others for 1s. per seat. During the rebuilding of the Cross Church in the 1820s, the Wrights were very careful to see that entry to the South Church was not impeded, because of their interest there. All the Trades paid 5s. ground-rent to the Town Council and all three were involved, as part-proprietors of the internal fittings, in the rebuilding of the town churches after the disastrous fire of 1841, but this will be looked at in the chapter following.

The churches played another part in the activities of the United Trades. The Nine Trades met in hardy fashion in the Howff, the local burial ground. Not so the

builders of the town. They met comfortably in inns, vestries of the churches, session house, and in the churches themselves, even in the ruinous Cross Church. After the Nine Trades built their hall, rooms in it were occasionally used as a meeting place, coals and candles being paid for, and in the 1820s, after the Wrights provided themselves with a small hall in Key's Close, off the Nethergate, they sometimes let that to their brothers in the United Trades for a small rental.

Not only the material aspects of life are illustrated in the records of the three trades, the pride of these artisans in themselves and in their incorporations shines through. Misdemeanours by one they obviously thought reflected on all and they endeavoured to ensure good, honest behaviour among members, both as craftsmen and as private individuals, thought the greatest weight in their regulations was laid on professional ethics and on maintaining good relations within the trade. The Wrights' oath demanded defence of the Trade's privileges, obedience to the Magistrates, the dean of Guild and the Deacon, but the Trade's rules were to be obeyed only as long as they did not conflict with those of God and the realm. The new master also promised not to acknowledge as his any work not done by him, himself, or by his servants or apprentices.³⁵ An Act of the Parliament of Scotland may have forbidden a master to refuse a job deserted by another; internal trade regulations could directly contravene this.³⁶ Masters were instructed not to entice apprentices or journeymen from other masters, nor even to employ a man unless there was proof that he and his previous master had agreed to part.³⁷ Fines were imposed for the breach of such rules, or for undercutting wages or prices where these had been generally agreed within a trade. Suspicion among outsiders, expressed in acts of the Three Estates, becomes more understandable when we find trade regulations that went far beyond the professional lives of members. Ordinances of the Dundee Wrights talked of 'keeping decent order among ourselves', of encouraging the 'virtuous and civil' and of 'correcting and suppressing the vitious, stubborn and stravaigin'.³⁸ The Slaters went further in 1685. They objected to their members taking complaints to the magistrates about disagreements within the Trade without the consent of the Deacon; they imposed a 40s. Scots fine on any who offended them in this way in the future.³⁹ In January 1811, the Masons decided to evict from their meetings any

Despite the legal basis for their monopolistic privileges, the incorporated trades were rarely left to enjoy these in peace. To outsiders they were felt to be a 'grievous hardship' and the trades were often on the defensive.⁴⁰ The Masons formed their society in 1659 specifically to protect themselves from unfreemen working within the liberties of Dundee. Wrights and Masons both rewarded anyone who informed them of nonfreemen pursuing their craft within the burgh and hindered the offenders. In 1728, the Masons laid out 8s. Scots and thought the money well spent. In 1660, they authorised members to take away the tools of an unfree mason found at work.⁴¹ The

Wrights too paid reporters of infringements and took court action against 'encroachers', as the Trades universally called such offenders. However, they were probably always fighting a losing battle. In 1728, the Provost of Dundee, a magistrate on whom the Trades should have been able to rely to defend the legal situation and all privileges of the burgesses, was employing glaziers at his new lodging in the Overgate who were not even burgesses, never mind members of the Wright Trade.⁴² The Masons, sixty-one years later, found that their own members were 'packing and peeling', that is to say, were having dealings with unfreemen, in this case, employing journeymen who had paid no dues to the local Trade.⁴³ As towns in Scotland grew in size throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries at unprecedented rates, the supervision of craftsmen of all kinds must have been wellnigh impossible, but the Trades persevered, even in the face of such direct attacks as those which faced the Dundee Masons and Wrights. In 1770, Ninian Alexander queried the Masons' right to act as an incorporation styling themselves the 'Mason Trade of Dundee'. He argued that they had neither royal nor any legal authority for this, part of his submission being that this was proved by the fact that their deacons had no seat on the Town Council. Actually, Lord Pitfour had shown in 1762 that the Town Councils could grant Seals of Cause⁴⁴ and the Masons argued that if a seat on the Council was essential to being a legal incorporation, then none could have been founded since the fifteenth century when the sets, that is the constitutions, of the Royal Burghs were fixed. In the end this turned out to be a storm in a teacup, for Alexander had applied to join the Mason Trade earlier and decided on legal action only because he was piqued by some disagreement about fees. He gave in and paid up in October 1771, and became Deacon in 1773, though he was clearly not a convinced monopolist, being accused of trafficking with the unfree in the early nineteenth century.⁴⁵

The Wrights were involved in an expensive, long-running and eventually more important case from 1796-1803. The Dundee magistrates had decided against the Wright Trade in a case they brought to the burgh court against Thomas Smyllie or Smellie who was practising their craft within the burgh bounds without being a member of the Trade. The magistrates can have made their decision only on the grounds that Smyllie had become a burgess in 1796 and the decision shows where their sympathies lay. The Wright Trade was in some confusion and alarm over this decision, which threatened the whole basis of the corporate existence of all crafts. In May 1799, they decided that 'the Rights of Traid should be advocated',⁴⁶ and under the guidance of a subcommittee they appointed, the case went to the Court of Session. There, both parties had recourse to history, custom and expediency and the arguments went back and forth until January 1803. The Wrights, for instance, showed that they had been acting as an incorporated body for almost two centuries (incidentally quoting two different dates for the start of their Lockit Book), that they had helped the 'improvement of arts and manufactures' and had educated the young,

thereby 'making artisans expert and protecting the public'. This is the classic defence of trade incorporations, that they were basically acting altruistically.

Despite the existence of earlier judgements such as Pitfour's, Smyllie's counsel argued that they must produce a royal charter, which he no doubt thought — erroneously — they did not possess. (See Chapter 4.) He also produced the argument of expediency; he claimed practically that it was quite obvious that far more than merely the twenty existing members of the Wright Trade must have been employed over the years to construct the great number of buildings in Dundee. In fact almost forty members were attending meetings in 1803, but there was still some sense in his argument. Eventually, in January 1803, Lord Meadowbank gave judgement in favour of the Wrights, and thereby, implicitly, in favour of all other incorporated trades in Scotland as well as in Dundee.⁴⁷

Needless to say, this case was a heavy burden on the Wrights' funds. From 1796 onwards their accounts show costs gradually mounting and they had to borrow £100 temporarily in 1803 to help defray these. Included in their expenditure was fifteen guineas for a silver teapot and stand inscribed 'From the Wright Trade of Dundee to Mr. John Skirving for his assistance in conducting to a favourable issue a Process by which all their rights as an Incorporation are fully established'. Skirving had been exceptionally generous with his time over the four years from the time the Trade decided to take their case to the Court of Session, seeing the Trade's lawyers in Edinburgh and attending to the case generally. The Wrights did try to recoup some of their expenses from the Masons and Slaters, as the favourable decision affected them too, but the other two had their own problems at the time. The Masons' minutes make no mention of the case and their only reply to the Wrights was a complaint that the latter were sometimes poaching on Mason preserves, and accused the Wrights' Deacon of employing journeymen masons on his own house in Tay Street after 6 p.m., the official end of the working day. As the Wrights said, firmly denying all charges, that was 'no answer at all',⁴⁸ so the appeal fell on deaf ears, though after 1803, both Masons and Slaters availed themselves of the certainty of their rights provided by the legal decision.

The Wrights were particularly vigorous in pursuing offenders throughout the next forty-three years. How necessary their action had been, from their point of view, can be illustrated by the fact that one new member had had his workshop in Dundee for eight years before they won legal confirmation of their position. As more and more workmen flocked into the growing urban areas to provide the houses, shops and factories needed for the increasing population, the incorporations were only too aware of the difficulty of maintaining their unique privileges. Dundee's population was 26,000 in 1801, 60,000 in 1841. Many of the incoming craftsmen totally ignored the

incorporations unless they were threatened with legal proceedings and sometimes even then. In various towns all over Scotland the custom grew of licensing non-members and unfreemen by the year, though the Dundee Mason Trade did not adopt this practice until 1835. It was suggested that licensing was an attempt to 'render the privileges less obnoxious'.⁴⁹ Sometimes the licensees applied to a trade because they claimed they were working in a town on only a temporary basis, sometimes because they did not wish or could not afford to pay entrance fees, despite the possibility of paying these by instalments. Fees, never small by contemporary standards, increased in all the trades after 1800, until all three imposed fees of over £30 for strangers.⁵⁰ Some men who meant to work at only one job in the town approached the trades themselves, without waiting for what some called 'harrassment' and the Edinburgh Incorporation of Wrights tactfully approached their brother institution in February 1840, to ask how much the Dundee Trade would accept, to allow them to put up a shop in Dundee costing about £200. They may have hoped for a free licence but they were asked for £5 from their brother craftsmen.

Some men who were at first recalcitrant, like George Ower, a glazier, gave in gracefully and became stalwart members, but Thomas Smyllie, who had to accept the Court of Session's decision and became a freemaster Wright in March 1803, had clearly not been overawed or perhaps even convinced by the process of law. In August 1803, he refused to pay an apprentice's dues on the grounds that only three months of the indenture remained to be served. In 1820, though Boxmaster, he was accused of employing unfree workers at a house being built in the Seagate for a mason, James Stewart. Despite his official position he had to be summoned to the Wrights' meeting and there gave 'such silly and evasive answers', that the wrights present were convinced of his guilt. At first, he refused to comply with the demand that he abandoned this job. Even when threatened with dismissal from the post of Boxmaster and with being permanently incapacitated from holding office, he treated the meeting 'with the greatest contempt'. Four days later, however, on 22 August, he had had second thoughts — had he been pot-valiant, one wonders? — and apologised for his behaviour at the meeting, but he 'still seemed extremely loth to acknowledge that he had behaved wrongly or illegally' and that cannot have pleased his more enthusiastic fellow members.

The development of the new industrial crafts which were flourishing without the benefit of any legal monopoly plus the sheer pressure of population growth and demand were combining to undermine the whole rationale of the privileges of the incorporated trades, but government action had also had its effect. For over a century before the actual abolition of all the privileges of burghs and incorporations, an act of Parliament had been passed at the end of every war to enable ex-servicemen and their offspring to practise their crafts anywhere in the country. This

practice had been continued at the end of the Napoleonic Wars.⁵¹ As a result, workmen apparently unfree who were threatened by the trades could often produce their own or their father's certificate of service and demobilisation. As a result, they were immune from prosecution, but the clerk of the Wrights, for example, wasted much time writing letters or beginning court proceedings against such men, only to find he had no legal grounds for his case. And the climate of opinion was becoming more and more strong against restrictions on trade and commerce. In May 1837, one wright, Robert Grant, with a workshop in Castle Street, wrote quite insolently asking just what the exclusive privileges were 'of which I have not yet heard'. The clerk informed him in no uncertain terms, but growing disquiet about restrictions which such privileges inevitably imposed on those not sharing them can be seen in the remarks of the Commission on Municipal Government, reporting in 1835. According to them, 'some of the most intelligent' men in Dundee disapproved of the current position.⁵²

Just before William IV died, a bill was proceeding through Parliament to remove all Royal Burgh trading monopolies, and craft privileges were to be included. The King's death meant the abandonment of the bill, but it was not forgotten. Even within the trades, there was growing uneasiness about the situation and one wright moved in September 1843, that the Dundee Wright Trade should simply renounce their exclusive privileges. Needless to say, with all the financial implications of such a unilateral movement he got little support and the Wrights continued attacking 'encroachers'. However, the unfree were on the march, sensing that public opinion was on their side. In September 1845, the Wrights appointed a subcommittee to consider a letter from a Mr. C. Gulland, who designed himself Chairman of an Association of Nonfreemen of Edinburgh; this was on the subject of the abolition of the privileges of the incorporations; the Masons, who also received a copy of the letter, put off consideration until their next meeting. In February 1846, the Wrights unanimously approved the spirit of the bill for abolishing Royal Burgh privileges, even though their own were to disappear in the act; the Slaters agreed to petition both Houses of Parliament in its favour. When Parliament finally passed the act later in the year, an ancient restriction on the freedom of trade and craftsmen had finally disappeared within Scotland. How the United Trades of Dundee were affected will be examined in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 3

The United Trades

The formation of the association known as the Three United Trades of Dundee arose from one of the very utilitarian activities of the three Trades involved, the Masons, Wrights and Slaters; this was the bulk-buying of meal for the benefit of members. From an early date in the history of each incorporation, there had been negotiations with farmers, merchants and landowners to purchase large quantities of cereal, so that members and widows of members could obtain a year's supply at an advantageous price. The earliest mention of meal-buying in the Wrights' records occurs in 1709.¹ In that year, payment was made for meal bought from the Earl of Panmure's estate; and 10s. Scots was spent in Allan Fleming's, 'at the settling', on the obligatory alcohol. The three building Trades realised that in combination, with larger numbers to cater for, they could perhaps obtain even cheaper prices. As pendicles of the Guildry, they needed Guildry consent for many of their plans and an Act of Guildry was passed on 4 November 1741, allowing them to unite.² The first sederunt took place on 11 November in the West Kirk of Dundee. There the three Trades heard the Act being read out; it was written in the first four pages of a new sederunt book and they agreed unanimously to the 'hail articles' of the Act. Unfortunately, these four pages have been torn out but copies exist in the records of the Guildry.³

In their approach to the Guildry, the Trades had argued that the joint security they could offer sellers of meal would help them make better bargains. They proposed that the Wrights, as the largest trade, should have half of any meal bought, the Masons and Slaters a quarter each. Perhaps in the hope that imitation of the older organisation of the Nine Trades of Dundee would strengthen their case, they also suggested that the new body should set up a fund for poor relief, even though each craft made provision for its own poor. The new fund was to be financed by entry money from masters, apprentices and journeymen, additional to what they paid their own incorporation. The amount was to be decided on by the Guildry, but £1-10-0 Scots for each new visitor or deacon, and 6s. Scots for each member's marriage was suggested plus 1s. Scots (Id. sterling) on each boll of meal bought by all those partaking in the scheme. A Collector of these various sums would be responsible to the Trades and to the Dean of Guild or to a committee of the Guildry and should have access to the accounts of each Trade to ensure that they had the resources to pay their proportion of each lot of meal. The Guildry agreed to all of these proposals except that they decreed that deacons as well as free masters should pay only 18s. Scots on their entry to office, and journeymen and apprentices were to be liable for 6s. Scots. An additional condition was made that if any Trade failed to meet its obligations on one purchase, it could not enter into any further bargain until the debt was paid.

Having agreed to these conditions, the three Trades set up their administrative machinery. The first Collector was David Ramsay, a slater, who was to act for a year. Future Collectors were to be appointed by a committee of fifteen men, three from each Trade, who would also be responsible for auditing his accounts. In the meantime, the present and later Deacons of each Trade were to act as a committee assisting the Collector, in 'managing the business recommended to him by the said Act'. On 24 November, the Collector and his committee appointed a clerk, another Ramsay, John, a Dundee writer. No time seems to have been lost in realising the main aims of the new union, for the 1741-2 accounts record 218 bolls of meal as having been bought. From then on, each year until near the end of the century, varying quantities were purchased, the largest being 664 bolls for the year 1766-67, the smallest 145 for 1742-43. This last must have resulted partly from the poor harvests of 1739-41 but may also indicate that the United Trades was having teething troubles as an organisation, an idea that is borne out by the report of a meeting of 22 November 1743. With the Dean of Guild, George Yeaman, in attendance, the Trades met to arrange for 'effectual Division and recovering payment' of any bargains of meal bought or about to be bought. The Collector, it was agreed, should be an annual appointment and when he summoned members to a meeting, all must attend under penalty of 6s.8d. Scots. There is further indication of difficulties experienced in the first couple of years of the life of the organisation in the condition laid down that each member who did not pay his share 'peaceably' and, as a result, caused the Trades to go to law to obtain payment, would have no share thereafter in any bargains made, unless he provided a cautioner, the Scottish legal term for surety. Furthermore, no money was to be lent out of the United Trades' funds without sufficient security.

When individuals did not keep their promise to pay for meal they had contracted for, their incorporation sometimes had to borrow to cover the debt and in addition might become due for interest payments too. The Wrights had to find £100 in 1770 when members had failed to keep their side of the bargain.⁴ The joint body was not immune from financial troubles. In 1775, the Collector, Patrick How, asked the Masons and Wrights for permission to use United Trade funds to pay the Slaters' proportion of the meal bought out of the 1773 crop, as so many of the Slaters had experienced business failure. £70 was advanced, but the Slaters recovered sufficiently by February 1779 to repay this debt.⁵

In November 1766, there was an ambitious attempt by a Dundee merchant, William Yeaman, to become the long-term supplier to the three Trades. He offered a contract for nineteen years, offering 600 bolls per year at 12s.2d. per boll, with one boll per 100 free for the poor — the gift to the poor by the seller was a common feature of all the bargains made. Though all three Trades agreed initially, within a week, the Masons had second thoughts and withdrew. The Wrights, however, continued with

the bargain, agreeing to taking 400 bolls and they must have regretted so doing in the next few years. Yeaman rarely fulfilled his part of the contract. By the following August, only 150 bolls had been delivered and the Deacon reported many complaints. In 1773, the Wrights' Deacon, John Peter, pointed out that not only had the supply been irregular, the Trade was having to pay higher prices than they needed. The contract was duly broken off by mutual agreement with suitable financial arrangements, but it was 1776 before Yeaman's penalty money reached the Trade, £62 going to members and £16-7-0 to the poor.

The difficulty in collecting the debts from individual members can have come as no surprise to the Wright Trade, at least. Regularly, before 1741, they had had to record 'deficiencies' in meal money and expense in collecting back payments for food that may well have been consumed long before. There was also the problem of parcelling out the small portions out of bulk delivery, some of the buyers taking perhaps only one or two bolls. The Trade's officer often had to undertake the delivery of the separate lots. However, the practice continued, despite the difficulties, prices varying from just over 9s. a boll to 12s.4d. and varying between lots bought even in the same year. Sometimes meal was bought directly from ships in Dundee harbour.

Later in the century the practice of bulk-buying meal ground to a halt and this left the United Trades as a body in a slightly ambiguous position. Its *raison d'être* had disappeared, and the organisation faltered. Signs of uncertainty appear in the records or, sometimes, lack of records. In some years in the early 1820s the only business at meetings was the appointment of office-holders. Apparently there were no official general meetings from 1790 to 1802, as there are no minutes, but the accounts tell another story.⁶ The society was not totally dormant; J. Waddell was paid 4s. for lighting a fire in the Session House during 1795-6, where presumably the Collector and his committee of the three Deacons kept warm while they carried out their accounting duties, but we have no means of knowing who attended these Session House meetings or what was decided. The clerk's salary too was continued through these years, but varied from 3s. in 1797-8, when presumably he had little to do, to 10s. in the following year, and the Wrights' accounts from 1799-1801 show that they were receiving regular dividends from their share of the United Trades' funds.

At this point, it may be appropriate to consider the development of the administrative and financial machinery of the Incorporation of the United Trades. We have seen how the members elected a management committee. As well as a clerk, an officer was appointed, who, like the officers of the individual Trades, acted as messenger and postman, delivering announcements of meetings and carrying business letters. He was paid £2 Scots in the first year though he was sometimes given additional sums for 'extraordinary trouble', as in 1774-5,⁷ but his salary varied with changing circumstances

within and without the Trades. He was provided annually with shoes and stockings or with the cash to buy these — 4s. for 1754-5, 5s.3d. in 1765-6 — and fairly regularly he received breeches and coats. In February 1811, however, it was decided that in future, officers of the current Convener's Trade should be employed to call meetings. The Collector, it should be noted, had suddenly become the Convener in 1810, but there does not seem to have been any formal decision about this. The other paid official of the United Trades, the clerk, was also paid varying sums, as we have seen. In February 1852, Mr. John Anderson demanded and received an increase, his remuneration being doubled from one and a half to three guineas. He served a very long time, from 1829 until his death in 1864. He was also clerk to the Wrights over the same period, and office-bearers of the United Trades often met in his office in Reform Street.

In the first seventy years of the existence of the society there were few administrative or constitutional changes, but the revival of the early years of the nineteenth century brought more formality. In January and February 1811, new rules appeared in the minutes. For instance, the clerk was not to vote on the committee managing the finances; the Trades were to meet separately to decide issues and then report; the Boxmaster should be elected from each Trade in turn as was the Convener, and he could serve two years. At this time too, the Masons and Slaters paid £27-15-0 into the United Trades' funds, the 'conjunct fund', so that they would be entitled to the same interest in it as the Wrights. In September 1829, the Convener was elevated still further, being given the title of Deacon, though this did not last, the older title being reverted to in the next decade. His powers were restricted by the term of office being one year only, but the dignity of the office was enhanced by the purchase of a suitably inscribed gold chain and medallion, bought from an Edinburgh goldsmith, Mr. Marshall. (See Plate 1.) The reverse side of the medallion bears the legend 'Tria juncta in Uno. Masons, Wrights and Slaters. The gift of the Three United Trades of Dundee 1830 to be worn by their Convener'.

On 5 March 1830, at a meeting in the Session House of the Old Church, the Deacon of the time, Robert Scott, was ceremoniously invested with the chain of office by the old Deacon, James Butchart. Fulsome speeches were made in which it was stated that the chain was to be seen as a mark of ninety years of amity among the Three Trades and it was hoped it would 'emulate members to aspire to office'. Members present declared their intention to maintain the rights of the Trades with 'principles as pure as the chain'. Forty members and guests attended the following dinner.

Other signs of growing formality can be seen in the writing and rewriting of bye-laws on several occasions throughout the century. Meetings which had been held haphazardly in alehouses, in the Old Church - sometimes 'with adjournments for refreshments' to nearby vintners — or in the Collector's house tended to take place in

the Wrights' Hall after 1825, or in the Common Hall of the Nine Trades. More importantly, changes were also made in the method of electing the Deacon, the ballot becoming more secret in 1865, by which time of course the Trades had lost their privileges.



1. Medallion on the chain worn by the Convener of the United Trades, commissioned 1830.
(Stanley Turner)

One administrative problem caused difficulties to each Trade individually and to the United Trades. This was the collection of all the dues agreed by members. Masons, Wrights and Slaters did not pay all they were due to their own incorporations and each Trade was usually behind with payments to the United Trades. It would probably be unfair to accuse either individuals or the Trades of deliberate procrastination or malefaction. Omitting the registration of all apprentices or journeymen employed may sometimes have been conscious saving by masters but often it must simply have been the ignoring of a bit of paperwork by busy practical men; admittedly the omission helped their pockets! But even today tradesmen do not always send in accounts to customers regularly; it is not surprising that not always literate craftsmen of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not always pay their dues to their own incorporations or to the more remote United Trades. There were periodic round-ups of overdue fees within each of the Trades when a particularly active deacon or boxmaster was in office, who realised how remiss his members had been — and how badly this affected the Trade's poor fund.

The earlier records of the United Trades give note of entry fees from each Trade, from masters, apprentices, journeymen and new office-holders. After 1811, there was special concern with apprentices' dues, of 5s. each. Masters' names appeared automatically in their Trade's Lockit Book so they were comparatively easily checked, but only masters knew how many apprentices were entering their workshops. In September 1811, the United Trades meeting decided unanimously that if any of the three Trades allowed these to fall into arrears, the dues would be retained from the amount divided annually among the three from the General Fund belonging to the society. A year later, this seems to have been ineffective, and it was then decided to prosecute individual masters as, it was minuted, 'nothing else would make them regular'. In 1841, there was a vain attempt to keep an up-to-date register of members, but it was difficult to cope with a mobile society which needed such entries as 'Lauchlan Lindsay transferred to non-resident as he had gone to Sydney upon the *Ann Mill* this day'. Neither the separate trades nor their united society had the administrative resources to keep up with this.

The United Trades' finances were not helped when the Trades neglected to send their returns. In 1824, the Masons were mentioned as particularly recalcitrant, 'having kept back their lists of new elected members and apprentices' since 1819, so that the books had not been properly balanced for four years. The sums were not massive, consisting of nine shares in the Forfarshire Insurance Company at £10 deposited on each, and £103-7-4 in cash, only £193-7-4 in all, but those handling them would not have had incomes reaching such heights. In May 1840 the gold chain was excepted from any valuation of the funds affecting division of income or assets among the three Trades.

Being an office-holder could be expensive. New Deacons and Boxmasters paid the United Trades 10s.6d. in 1811, and this was in addition to entry fees paid to the individual's own Trade. Suggestions that the entry fee could be forgotten were made at intervals, but as late as 1865 the United Trades decided to retain their Convener's. Perhaps the most onerous financial burden on the incoming Convener was the dinner he had to provide for the United Trades on his election. In 1838, Convener Gellatly flatly refused to pay for the dinner he had himself ordered, refusing even to sign the minute which referred to it, as he said he did not think himself liable for the expense. In 1865, the lunch ordered 'at Mrs. Reid's' was cancelled and the new Convener was then told he could please himself as to whether he provided entertainment or not. Relief from that expense must have been a greater incentive for standing for office than the possibility of wearing the gold chain!

To return to the objects of the association of the three Trades in one society, we can see that apart from paying for meal bought, the main use of any funds accruing to the United Trades seems to have been envisaged in 1741 as providing for the poor of the Trades. This duty was not accepted for long as a direct responsibility of the incorporation; very soon, any income surplus to administrative requirements was divided among the three member incorporations with specific amounts being marked for poor relief, such as £8-6-0 in February 1818 for instance. One usual way of securing funds, entering the property market, was not used much by the United Trades. They made one foray into this market, the 1753-4 accounts showing £528-17-0 Scots paid for a tenement and yard, but it was sold in 1760 for £1764 Scots, quite a handsome capital gain. The subject of buying houses or land did not arise again until 1822, when there was a tentative suggestion that property should be looked at with a view to purchase, but nothing seems to have come of this. This was probably wise, for the Wrights found management of their quite extensive property rather a heavy burden. In addition, there was undoubtedly the feeling within the United Trades as a body that there was no point in building up stock for which they could see no use, and this was forcibly expressed in February 1826. Then the meeting decided that once their funds reached £200, any surplus should be divided among the three Trades. The responsibility for providing charity for individuals had been explicitly rejected in November 1789, the opinion being given then, when a slater, Patrick MacDougal, asked for help, that each Trade should help its own poor. The slater representative at the meeting informed them that the Slater Trade was unable to do so at the time, and he was told that his Trade should present its books for auditing before next Candlemas. In the meantime, MacDougal was given 2s. per week from the funds of the United Trades. But the next meeting was delayed until 13 August 1790 and by that time the Slaters' finances seem to have been forgotten.

Trades individually were always prepared to consider giving a favourable response to public charities and worthy causes in the town but the organisers of appeals soon realised that application to the United Trades meant one letter instead of three. In 1813, £3-10-0 was contributed to improving the Magdalen Yard by making a walk there. When the building of swimming baths was first mooted in 1842, a donation of £10 was proposed but in 1848 this had been whittled down to three guineas. In 1813, apart from contributions by the individual incorporations, the United Trades gave £25 towards the new lunatic asylum and, as a result, had the privilege and responsibility of electing one of their members each year to sit on the Board of Directors. When the need to replace the old asylum was recognised in the 1870s, David Hean, a member of the Mason Trade and a bailie, was an enthusiastic supporter; he regularly sat on the Board and kept the United Trades fully informed, first of the reasons for the need for expansion and then of the progress of the building of the new hospital at Liff. This ran into financial difficulties, partly because of the difficulty of disposing of the old asylum, but the Trades gave only £5-5-0 in 1886, a rather less generous donation than that of 1813.

The Watt Institute, founded for the purpose of educating mechanics in Dundee, received fifteen guineas in 1824 and a further twenty in 1834 when the Trustees wanted to add a museum and lecture theatre to the existing structure. The reward to the United Trades, as to the individual incorporations, was complimentary tickets for lectures and for the use of the library. On one occasion, charity was not restricted to Dundee, for the 1785 accounts show six guineas sent to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. In Dundee itself, though the annual sermons at which funds were collected for the local Royal Infirmary were attended and supported, it was left to the individual three Trades to contribute. £2-10-0 was voted for the widows and children of those who died in the Crimea, but for the victims of the Taybridge disaster, each Trade was asked to hand over £3-3-0 to the Boxmaster of the United Trades, and the gift was to be noted in the newspapers. In fact, as the North British Railway Company paid all claims for compensation, the Trades got their money back. The return was accompanied by an appeal from the owners of steamship, the *Marathon* which had been given up for lost. Though the meeting voted £2-2-0 for this, the Boxmaster reacted to protests from some members and did not pay it. Later in the year, at the September meeting, he was criticised for this but the original sums were returned to the Trades just the same.

One reason for the survival of the United Trades, once its original objectives had disappeared and there was no apparent positive purpose in its existence, was convenience. It suited the three members to have a ready-made consultative body available when they needed it. In the third quarter of the eighteenth century, one very important occasion arose when such consultation was valuable. There were three parish churches in Dundee, including the Cross Church newly repaired in the

1750s, and all were in the charge of the Town Council. The population was growing rapidly, however, and even with extra places of worship provided by the two Episcopal congregations and various seceding churches there was not enough accommodation for all would-be worshippers. The Kirk Session was very conscious of the need for yet another building and another preacher,⁸ and in July 1770, approached the Nine Trades declaring that the Session would, on their personal security, raise one third of any money required to build a new kirk and provide a stipend. The Nine Trades cautiously enrolled the help of the United Trades, inviting the latter's Convener to a meeting in the Howff, the old burial ground, their traditional meeting place. The twelve Trades like the Kirk Session undertook to pay one third of the necessary amount, the United Trades being liable for one quarter of that third. The assumption was that the Town Council would pay the rest. In July 1771, however, the Kirk Session sourly noted that after three years of fruitless application to the Magistrates and Town Council trying to obtain 'their Countenance and Aid to the very pious Necessary design....and without having received any Decisive Answer', they had decided that any future approach would be wasted effort. They decided to go ahead, depending on the help of the Trades and on other voluntary subscriptions.

Plans were drawn up by Samuel Bell, a practising architect, who became a Master Wright in 1762, and was to become a Boxmaster of the Wrights in 1779.⁹ All the building work was carried out by local tradesmen, members of the United Trades. David Beath or Boath, entered as Master in the Masons' Lockit Book on 15 February 1771, had his estimate of £546 accepted. Wright work at £745 was to be the responsibility of Thomas Baillie, entered Master Wright in March 1754. His father, James, entered in 1728, had been Boxmaster and Deacon before him and his brother, Andrew, was also a member of the Wright Trade. Thomas had already served as Visitor and Boxmaster and was to be Deacon once again in 1779. The slater, William Law, whose bill was to be the smallest at £115, had been a master since May 1763, and his sons followed him in the trade. The contractors were warned that they must build 'without making the smallest deviation from the plan given in by Samuel Bell' but even so between £400 and £500 was necessary above the estimates. However, the result of Bell's plan and the labours of the Trades is the splendid church of St. Andrew's, the 'church in the Cowgate', finished and ready for services in 1775. (See Plate 2)

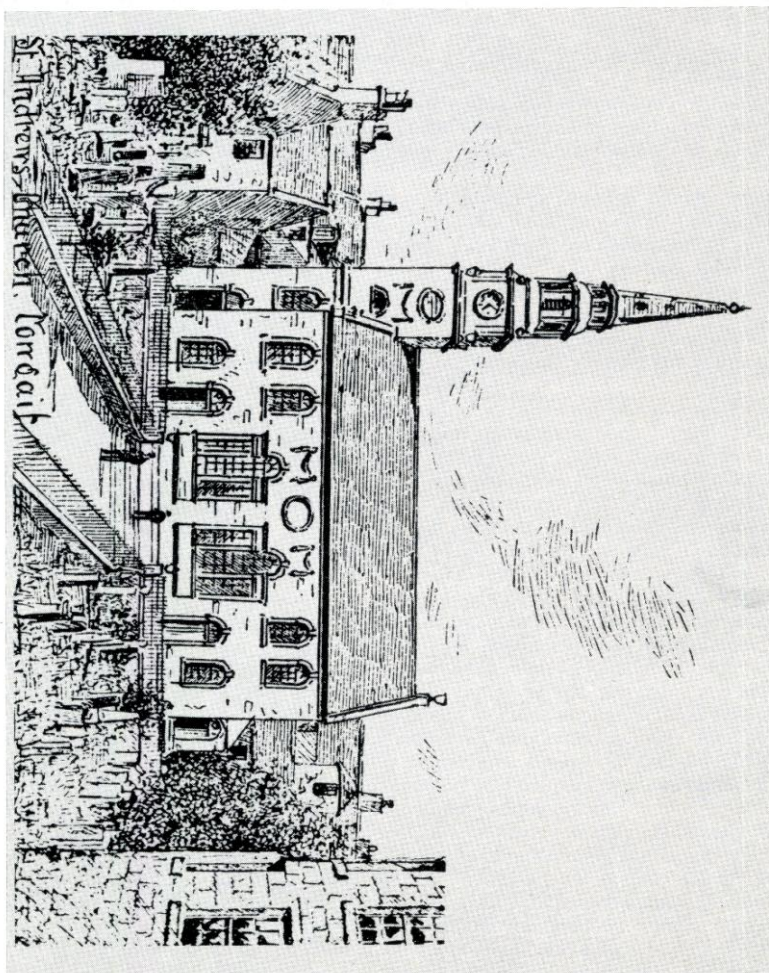
The Trades' expenditure on the new church had not been mere altruism; they received a regular return on the money they had invested in it until late in the nineteenth century, when the building was sold to the congregation. However, the Kirk Session and the twelve Trades were the joint proprietors of the fabric of the church and of the ground on which it had been built and were therefore responsible for these. The United Trades were never happy about further expenditure and relations between them and the congregation's management committee were not always

completely harmonious, despite the presence of a Trade representative on the committee. A further source of contention could be the selection of a minister. As proprietors, the Kirk Session and the Trades shared the powers of the patronage of choosing a new minister. The selection committee included twenty members of the Kirk Session, fifteen representatives of the Nine and five of the three United Trades. In 1806, when the first incumbent, Mr. Thomas Rait, left for another charge, some members of the Kirk Session, perhaps imbued with evangelical principles, wished to weaken the influence of the Trades. As well as making various suggestions regarding the methods of election, early in 1807 the Kirk Session bought the shares of the Bonnetmakers and the Waulkers to strengthen their position. The row ended in May of that year but not before there had been recourse to the Court of Session. On 27 May 1807, at what the Kirk Session minutes describe as a friendly meeting, a compromise was reached. Litigation was to be ended, the Bonnetmakers and Waulkers were to buy back their shares and, perhaps most important, the Kirk Session and Trades were to be responsible alternately for the appointment of the minister, the first being picked by lot. The Kirk Session won the first lottery, drawn by a waiter at the inn where the meeting was being held.¹⁰ This episode had also highlighted differences within the United Trades. The Masons were at odds with the Wrights over the work which each should do and protested against the Wrights' and Slaters' proposal to accept the Kirk Session's offer for their shares; this was generous enough to be tempting. The Masons also objected to the suggestion that any expenses in the disagreement with the Session should be paid from the United Trades' funds.

Though various changes took place in the next half century in the exercise of patronage of the charge of the church and in its status within the Presbytery of Dundee, the proprietors retained their rights to and responsibility for the building until 1872. At that time the church was in great need of repairs and a congregation with no vested interest in the fabric of the building felt no obligation to spend on it. As the Trades had no wish to do so, they accepted the offer of £22-4-6 for each Trade's share. The historical and sentimental connection was retained by the reservation of pews in the front of the gallery for the Trades' use.¹¹ This connection is still maintained. The minister of the church is the official chaplain of the Trades and in October each year, representatives of the Nine and the United Trades attend the 'kirking of the Trades', a special service in the church. Its internal appearance has been enhanced by the two stained-glass windows, installed in 1892, which display the tools and symbols of the twelve Trades, and for which the United Trades contributed £20, one tenth of the total cost. (See Plate 6.) Some of the flags or banners of the Trades are also displayed within the church and in 1962, two plaques were put up on the gallery of the church, bearing the arms of the two incorporations, the Nine and the United Trades.¹²

As the official joint organisation of the three building Trades, the United

Trades was also involved in matters to do with the original parish churches of Dundee. In 1826, they were consulted about alterations inside the Old Church and after the 1841 fire, each Trade had strong views on the rebuilding, but that will be looked at under individual Trade histories. The United Trades attended the laying of the foundation of the East Church, marching in the procession accompanied by a band. In 1872, they contributed £10 to help restore the Old Steeple and in 1884, gave a donation towards repairs and alterations to St. Andrew's.



2. St. Andrew's Church. (University of Dundee, Audio-Visual Services Unit, Photographic Section)

One important issue on which the United Trades Incorporation was more able to act with effect than each building Trade separately was that of political reform. In the eighteenth century, there was growing dissatisfaction both with the franchise within Royal Burghs and with their constitutions. In Edinburgh, outright attacks on these had been made by a 'wealthy Edinburgh burgess', Thomas McGrugar, in the *Letters of Zeno*, which were published in the Edinburgh newspaper, the *Caledonian Mercury*.¹³ At a meeting called in February 1783, to consider a resolution of the Merchants Company of Edinburgh on the subject of burgh reform, the Dundee craftsmen heartily endorsed the view that the franchise was too narrow. They also remarked on their having 'not the smallest shadow' of representation on their Town Council and were unanimous in agreeing to contribute towards a fund for applying to Parliament for change.¹⁴ The Treasurer, William Law, was authorised to send money to the Edinburgh committee and to publish the sum sent in the Edinburgh papers. A few months later, this support was endorsed, when Law was encouraged to get in touch with the Nine Trades and any other committees involved in the campaign, including the Commissioners of the burgh, who were to meet in 1784 at a convention on political reform. For the next ten years, the Incorporation's accounts show regular amounts 'towards the reform',¹⁵ giving all the interest on their capital in 1793, but the campaign was unsuccessful. The bill the campaigners put forward which aimed at dealing with political abuses within the burghs failed in the House of Commons and the growing power of Henry Dundas, compounded in the 1790s by the fears aroused by the excesses of the French Revolution, ensured that the subject would lie dormant for many years. Despite the undoubted interest and sympathy with political reform, the records of the Trades make no mention of the stirring events in Dundee during the 1790s, the planting of the Tree of Liberty or any of the riots of the time.

In 1817, would-be burgh reformers began to become more vocal once again. In Dundee, the *Dundee Advertiser* had been the local voice of reform since 1801. The United Trades petitioned the Convention of Royal Burghs, asking for a share in the elections. All they got for their pains at this time was a large bill of between £30 and £40 and disagreement over it with the Dundee and Edinburgh lawyers they had employed, Reid and McEwen in Dundee, Berry and Lawson in Edinburgh. A General Meeting recognised that this had to be paid and authorised lifting money for the purpose from the funds, much to the annoyance of one mason, Thomas Smart.¹⁶

The question of burgh government arose once again in 1830, when Dundee Town Council, bankrupt in 1819, was found to be so badly in debt that the town was disfranchised. The United Trades saw their opportunity and met on 17 March of that year, to discuss how they could find a place on the new council. The Municipal Act of 1831,¹⁷ obtained in the face of every sort of opposition the old corrupt Council could throw in its way, either openly or surreptitiously, did not in fact procure official

recognition for the Trades, but every burgess was enfranchised by the act. Every member of a Trade had to become a freeman of the burgh before he could be entered as Master, so they were reasonably happy with the outcome.¹⁸ This act was in any case superseded by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1833 which may well have disfranchised many craftsmen who obtained the vote in 1830, for not all of them would be inhabiting houses rented at £10 per annum, the condition which obtained a townsman the vote.¹⁹

At the same time that they were supporting burgh reform in the 1830s, the Trades were expressing active interest in the movement for the reform of the British Parliamentary system. They agreed in December 1830, that the existing system in Scotland was 'deplorably defective', even by comparison with the franchises obtaining in England and Ireland. On the rejection of the first Reform Bill by the House of Lords in 1831, the United Trades used the good offices of the Earl of Camperdown to send an address to William IV deploring this. Not surprisingly, when the First Reform Act was eventually passed in 1832, they celebrated in style. They joined the town procession all neatly dressed in black, with their standard at their head, and finished the day with a dinner in the Wrights' hall. Ten years later, in February 1842, they combined opposition to the Corn Laws with a demand for further extension of the franchise. Their reason for this was expressed in a motion by two wrights, Hugh Lowson and J. Nicoll, that without wider parliamentary representation they thought 'no measure for the benefit of the country' was likely to be passed by Parliament. Their views begin to sound even more radical when we find them including in the same petition the request for the abolition of all 'unjust monopolies'. Not all of them presumably thought their own monopoly of work in the town was 'unjust'.

The proposals in 1830 to extend the harbour had also seen the United Trades acting with those who opposed any suggestion that the Town Council, either the present or any future body, should have control of the new harbour. They were undoubtedly motivated by the desire to earn the reward of representation on any future board of management which it was hoped would be elected to replace what they had no compunction in describing as an 'irresponsible' Council. Their support did in fact gain them the desired place, one of their number being elected to sit among the new Harbour Commissioners and, as a result, all important proposals for change and development of the harbour were debated at their meetings throughout the nineteenth century.

While harbour extension was almost always approved of, at least in principle, railways were not initially so popular. In 1848, the United Trades sent a petition to the House of Commons, protesting against the suggestion that the Dundee and Perth and the Dundee and Arbroath Railway Companies should join up by means of

a viaduct through Dundee. By 1871, their tune had changed and they seemed to be in favour of proposing to the North British and the Caledonian Railway companies, that they should improve through communications and build a general station in the town.

All these activities in the life of Dundee illustrate how the United Trades acted as a medium through which its three members could act together, and how it was sometimes seen by outsiders as one channel of communication to the three. Once the original reason for the foundation of the incorporation had been forgotten or had become unimportant in changed circumstances, it is possible that the Masons, Wrights and Slaters saw their joint association as an extra line of defence of their privileges. Also, of course, it added to their dignity to have an association similar to that of the Nine Trades. The United Trades as such did not possess any monopolistic privileges, but had some interest in the subject on behalf of their constituent members. Certainly, on occasion, the Incorporation acted as if its duties included protection of its members' monopolies. In 1770, the Incorporation decided to pay the Masons' legal fees when they had to defend themselves against Ninian Alexander. It was argued that invasion of the rights of one craft would affect them all.

In July 1819, attacks on 'encroachment', the term used by the Trades to describe work done by non-members, received less material support. Local tradesmen had become increasingly worried by the pretensions of local militia-men to pursue their crafts with the same freedom as demobilised soldiers and sailors. The Tailor and Cordiner Trades were preparing for legal action, but the United Trades deferred action until the other two produced relevant documents. And there the matter seemed to rest. Despite the lack of joint action in 1819, the Wright and Mason Trades were particularly energetic defenders of their privileges, regularly threatening and often carrying out their threats of legal action against 'encroachers', both non-burgesses and burgesses who dared to practise their trade in Dundee without joining the local Incorporations. But the retention of craft privileges was being seen, even within the crafts, to be more and more anomalous. Apart from the increasing difficulty of maintaining them in an expanding society, it was obvious that practitioners of the new industrial skills were succeeding admirably without the benefit of protection, and without having to pay heavy fees for protection that was not always effective. The existence of each Trade's poor fund, the fees Masters had paid to enter the Trades, and the considerable property some had acquired must often have been the only stumbling block to complete and immediate acceptance of the suggestion that the legal privileges should be dispensed with. The United Trades took note of the 1837 bill for abolishing Royal Burgh privileges and in the 1840s appointed a committee of the Convener and the Deacons of each Trade to study the bill which became law in 1846.

While this act abolished the privileges of craft and merchant incorporations, the

incorporations themselves were left almost intact. To outsiders, it may have seemed that there was no longer any validity in their existence, but paid-up members had a different point of view. They had made an investment and saw no reason for abandoning it immediately. Certainly numbers dropped all over the country and many trades simply became non-viable as corporate bodies and disappeared. In Dundee, however, the United Trades had developed a strong sense of their own value, particularly in the nineteenth century and, moreover, had practical evidence of their usefulness in the community. Service on the Harbour Trust, on the Board of Directors of the Lunatic Asylum, part-ownership of St. Andrew's Church, the fact that they were usually consulted on important issues in the town — all seemed to indicate the worth of an institution that might well have been seen as obsolete after 1846. On the contrary, later in the century, the Incorporation was prepared to press for recognition of its place in the town. In August 1858, when they realised that the Nine Trades and the Town Council were already established in the group discussing John Morgan's legacy, their clerk was sent along to solicit a place on the Board of Governors of what was eventually to become Morgan Academy, and he was successful. In September 1863, an apology was elicited from Sir David Baxter for omitting the United Trades Convener from the first list of Trustees for the Baxter Park, which had just been presented to the town.

The opening of the park saw an innovation on the part of the Three Trades. They decided to invite practitioners of the building trades who were not members of the Incorporations to join them in the opening procession. Eleven joiners, two cabinet-makers, four masons and one plasterer accepted, but whether such courtesy induced them to enter the Incorporations thereafter is unknown, as their names were not given. The Wrights, however, had a small increase in numbers that year.²⁰ Another change in attitude was to be seen in the same year. Incorporations, the Masons excepted, were wholly master-orientated, but in March 1863, the journeymen were invited to a dinner in the Wrights' hall, everyone paying Is. towards this.

Though some signs of vitality were obviously preserved after 1846, the legislation of that year tolled the death knell of craft incorporations as anything but social clubs and quasi-friendly societies. The social element in the craft incorporations was always important, of course; little excuse was needed by any of the Three Trades at least to adjourn for 'refreshments' or to hold a dinner. However, it was thirty or forty years before the socialising became the predominant activity in all the Dundee building trade Incorporations, when 'social picnics', as the Wrights termed their outings, and other such parties tended to become annual events. The first mention in the United Trades' records of a summer excursion, which was being planned for the following year, appears in November 1885. These outings seemed to become quite elaborate. Among some undated papers are plans for a trip to Southport, a motor tour to Liverpool and even a 'proposed exploration' of Holland, which was to cost the

massive sum of £14-15-0 per person — including lunches!

In some ways, it must have been easier for the United Trades than for incorporations whose main purpose had been the defence of craft monopolies to make the transition from the pre- to the post-1846 position. Its funds were minimal; it had no particular privileges to defend. This makes it seem slightly impersonal. It is perhaps true to say that the United Trades incorporation was less rather than more than the sum of its parts. Neither very ancient, still only 240 odd years old, nor conceived in anything but a material spirit, it may never have attracted the same instinctive loyalty from the members of each of its member Trades as the individual Trades did. Had these been less lively and active, small incorporations of the building trades still surviving in Dundee, this might not have been so. But as the description of its various activities show, the United Trades must be recognised as having played an important part in the history of Dundee, particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century when the town took much of the shape and character we know today.

CHAPTER 4

The Mason Trade

Although the society of Masons in Dundee is accorded seniority within the United Trades, taking precedence in processions for instance before the Wrights and Slaters, it was the last of the three to be formally recognised. In 1592, for reasons so far unknown, James VI granted permission to the Dundee masons, wrights and slaters to elect a deacon, and his charter to this effect can be seen in the vestry of St. Andrew's Church, Dundee;¹ but it was a dead letter. Perhaps because of the convention that only town councils could allow craftsmen the privilege of incorporation, the very existence of the charter may have been forgotten. Certainly, when the two crafts petitioned Charles I in the late 1620s for the privilege apparently granted thirty odd years before, James VI's charter was not mentioned. At this later date, the masons and wrights wanted power to choose a deacon 'for the better reforming abuses amongis them', abuses which they did not specify. The king, though declaring that he 'perceaved no inconveniences' in allowing them this, sent their petition to the Scottish Privy Council and this body in turn decided that the Convention of Royal Burghs was the proper authority to deal with it. The wrights, the masons and the Town Council of Dundee were therefore instructed to send representatives to argue their case, when the Convention met at Culross in July 1629.²

The two crafts enrolled John Mylne, of the famous Scottish family of masons, and the advocate, Master Hendrie Kinross, to present their supplication to the Convention. Mylne must have been personally acquainted with many of the Dundee men, as he had been responsible for so much building in the town.³ Master Kinross was to be responsible for answering any objections to the petition which the council representatives might put forward at the meeting. The Convention studied the usual form observed among other Royal Burghs in allowing the election of deacons and also considered more particularly whether the formation of incorporations of masons and wrights within the burgh of Dundee was desirable. They found that the liberty of choosing a deacon was not universal among their member burghs and further, that where this had been granted, it was on the authority of the magistrates and the council of the relevant burgh alone. The Convention went on, somewhat inconsistently, to express their view on the Dundee situation. It was declared that if the Dundee craftsmen were granted a Seal of Cause, this might 'not onlie induce sum alteration in thair quyet state of government bot also micht prove preiudiciall to the policie [law and order] of the said toun'. Worse, these crafts, no matter what laws were made against them, might make 'combinatiounes and quiett pactiones [secret agreements] for thair awin proffeit'. Here we hear a reflection of the medieval fears of the merchants repeated. The Convention therefore decided it was 'nowayes convenient nor expedient for the weill public' that the masons and wrights should elect deacons or convene together.⁴

This opinion was sent to the Privy Council, who accepted the Convention's advice, except that the wrights were not mentioned in the Privy Council's record of this matter.⁵ In light of all these legal proceedings, it is strange to find that the wrights were already acting as a corporate body, as we shall see in the chapter following.

The masons, fewer in number, were more docile, perhaps because of their numerical weakness. It was to be thirty years before the Town Council could be persuaded to countenance a society of masons. In 1659, six master masons living in Dundee, John Wast (West), Andrew Wast, Thomas Norie, John Mustart, John Young and William Randall, sent in a supplication to the Council. They claimed they were *master and able* (my italics) masons, long resident in the burgh and always ready to carry out their assigned duties with the rest of the population. Yet, because they had no society to defend them, strangers and, worse, 'insufficient' masons, that is tradesmen who were neither burgesses nor competent, were being employed in Dundee, thus 'eating the meat out of our mouths'. This, they said, was to their 'utter ruin' and they were destitute of work. This time, they got a sympathetic hearing. The Council allowed them to combine to protect their position, but at the same time drew up firm regulations regarding their wages and hours of work. For a twelve hour day from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. with three rest periods, half an hour in the morning and afternoon and one hour at noon, the pay was to be 16s.8d. Scots from March to September if no drinks were supplied in the short breaks; with drinks, it was to be 13s.4d. Scots. While the Council was prepared to protect local masons, they were also ready to ensure that other burgesses did not suffer because of any monopoly, and they reserved the right to be able to force the society to accept more members, if there was more work than the existing members could cope with. However, they forbade the employment of cowans, except for their own speciality, dry-diking. Masons were to behave soberly and faithfully and to do all that would be to the good of their society. All surplus funds were to be applied to the relief of their 'decayed members', that is the sick, the old and the unemployed.⁶

This last injunction of the Town Council, that the Incorporation's funds should be used for the relief of any poor people with a claim on the Masons, was probably unnecessary. As we have seen, the poor fund was the insurance of current members and one of the main concerns of all craft incorporations, and we have also seen some aspects of the Masons' use of their fund. One method they used to augment it was that in 1700, as their poor stock was 'but very low in support of decayed brethren, poor widows and distressed stranger brethren', any 'strangers' when booked, that is entered in the Lockit Book, were to pay £10 Scots to the fund in place of a 'treat' of meat and wine to members. At one point in their history, in January 1726, the Masons were very worried about the fact that so many debtors had died without repaying the Trade the money borrowed. The current members decided to list in their Accounts Book all the

unpaid bills that lay in their Box. It was not only the welfare of the poor that concerned them here, however, but their own reputations; they wanted to show 'succeeding generations' that they had not 'embeazled the said sums'. As the said sums amounted to over £180 Scots, it is not surprising that they were worried.⁷ The later books of the Trade are still in the hands of their clerk, so it is not possible to state how long their charity continued into modern times, but we saw that Mrs. Rutherford, at least, was being subsidised as late as 1873.

The organisation of the craft of masonry and its associated incorporations differed from that of other craftsmen in several ways, but before investigating this aspect of its history, we must note a difficulty in dating the foundation of the Dundee incorporation. The Act of Council was registered at Dundee in the *Register of Probative Writs* on 17 May 1762, and gives the date of the original act as 26 April 1659. It is unfortunate that the Town Council minutes for that period are missing, for the Masons' Lockit Book begins with the date 11 March, more than a month before the date on the eighteenth century record, and it declares that the Masons already have the town's concurrence in forming their society. The so-called Journeyman's book, which has few entries actually referring to journeymen, also begins on 11 March. As the second entry in the Lockit Book is dated for December 1659, this cannot be an example of confusion arising from the adoption of the English method of beginning the year on 25 March. Without the Town Council minutes, we are unfortunately left with this enigma.

Of course, there had been masons in Dundee long before 1659. In 1536, a mason, George Boiss, made an agreement with the provost, baillies, council and community of Dundee and with the kirkmaster, who was responsible for the upkeep of the fabric of the parish church of St. Mary's in the Fields. The mason was to be ready to repair the kirk or any other of the town's buildings as ordered by the master of works. His hours are carefully laid down — rather longer than those ordained by the Town Council 133 years later, but with generous sick benefit of pay for forty days. The conditions of work were described as 'the auld uss and consuetud of our lady luge of Dundee had and usit befor'.⁸ This implies the existence of some sort of organisation of masons at some time previously, recognised by both parties to the contract, but we can only surmise as to the dates. And the lodge at Dundee was one of those summoned to a meeting in St. Andrews in 1601.⁹ However, the mention of a lodge reminds us of the many distinctive characteristics of the craft, so perhaps this is the time to consider these.

The 1659 Act of Council itself made one stipulation about the qualification for membership of the incorporation which is distinctly unusual. Masons were to become burgesses — but only when the Town Thesaurer, the treasurer, thought they could

afford to pay the dues. In most incorporations, being a burgess was a primary condition of becoming a master craftsman and this may reflect the realities of being a practising mason. The first practical difference between masons and other artisans in earlier times was that the mason had nothing to sell but his labour. Modern products of masons, such as tombstones, standard fireplaces, etc., were not on offer. The cooper could offer his barrels, the wrights could produce furniture as well as sharing in the building of houses, the flesher could sell pieces of meat prepared for cooking, but the mason had only his skill to offer and that was not easily put on show. Secondly, when stone buildings were few and far between, the stone mason was of necessity peripatetic and only a few would be able to find work regularly in the same place. Normally the work force retained at a site, or by a town, as George Boiss was, to maintain and repair existing stone structures would be small compared with the greater number who were initially employed to do the building. The majority had to move on and look for work. As a result, the mason did not automatically take up residence in a town, set up his shop and make wares for sale and settle down to becoming a burgess; he set off for the next abbey, church, castle or large civic building that he heard was being built or he simply set off looking for work where he could find it, becoming a 'travelling brother', often dependent on the temporary charity of his fellow masons in the towns he might pass through.

The next obvious difference between the masons and other craftsmen was that the lack of a permanent workshop resulted in the building of a lodge at a building site. The lodge gave shelter from the elements and a place for relaxation during rest periods. Also in the lodge, stone could be dressed and hewed and carved — perhaps out of the sight of prying eyes which would have liked to try to discover the secrets of the trade. When the Tron Kirk in Edinburgh was being built, the first structures to go up were four great lodges for the masons, one of them containing a study for the master mason.¹⁰ 'Lodge' can now refer to either the association or its building, and we find the Dundee Mason Trade talking of their lodge meaning their incorporation, at least in earlier times. The Dundee Incorporation does not appear to have owned a meeting place of its own, but there are records of a masons' lodge in the Nethergate in earlier times.¹¹ Freemasons, of course, also use the term, inherited from their original connection with operative masons.

Other crafts would be unaccustomed to having only one master but there was usually apparently only one master at each large building, who may have been what we would today call the Master of Works, or even the architect; historians of masonry are uncertain about this. But this draws our attention to the structure of ranks within the craft of masons. Qualified men were less likely to become masters than those of similar competence in other trades, and within the lodge, there was usually a warden responsible for discipline there. The same features of the craft which led to the

establishment of lodges and to the travelling habits of the masons meant that these qualified artisans became 'fellow crafts', a grade unknown in other trades. There was also a peculiarly Scottish practice of giving newly qualified apprentices the title of 'entered apprentice' instead of the more usual journeyman. These men took part in all the administration of the craft, most of the time on an equal footing with any masters. In the Dundee Trade's records, masters and journeymen met together to enter apprentices in 1659 and in December, 1660 masters and 'jourmen' met and entered Walter Robertson as 'master and ffrleman'.¹² This was something the Wrights, for instance, would never have countenanced at any time in their history. The use of 'jourman' used in the Mason records gives us an inkling of its earlier meaning of men employed by the day, but the term 'entered apprentice' is yet another link with modern Freemasonry.

The Dundee records frequently show masons accepted as masters and attending meetings but they are not recorded in the Lockit Book until much later. This cannot always have been because of such hazards as the Trade faced in 1789, when the keeper of the key to the Lockit Book had gone to Edinburgh and new entrants could not be booked until he came back or 'as soon as the key can be found'.¹³ These more democratic practices also complicate any attempt to make an accurate count of the numbers in the Trade. The Lockit Book contains 256 names, 41 almost certainly Freemasons, two not easily classified, 210 operative master masons, two entered as master on condition they did not practise masonry and Thomas Smart, a writer who had been clerk of the Incorporation for many years and was made an honorary member in 1781. In the seventeenth and during most of the eighteenth century, the names of members who attended meetings were listed, however, and these number over 350, including Freemasons, journeymen, entered apprentices and at least one ordinary apprentice, as well as masters. The amounts paid in quarterly accounts might have been used to calculate numbers, except for the fact that they were usually in arrears and never exactly paid-up. Only the general statement can be made that the Masons were never a really large society in Dundee. The numbers paying quarterly accounts in the 1730s and 1740s varied between fifteen and twenty-four. Only twelve signed the 1825-26 accounts and in January 1820, the Masons reported to the Provost of Dundee that they had twenty-eight members, eleven of whom were office-bearers, including a deacon, two boxmasters, a keeper of the Lockit Book and one of its key, four councillors, a clerk and an officer.¹⁴

Though all crafts had their trade secrets, the masons were reputed to have two that were unique; one is the mason's word, the other a particular handshake. The 'word' is believed to have originated in Scotland and, indeed, one historian states that there is no evidence that English masons had secret methods of recognising each other.¹⁵ The reason given for the need of such a secret sign as the 'word' was the

existence of the craft of the cowans. These were builders of dry-stone dikes, skilled stone workers in their own right and able to pass muster as stonemasons for much building work. They were not trained to carve or undercut stone but in Scotland, where freestone was less commonly used, they might not easily have been discovered as impostors for much of the time in a trade that was not locally based. Hence, the 'word' was given to the true mason, once he had been accepted by his fellow craftsmen, so that he could obtain employment in preference to the cowan. Like other trades too, there were secret ceremonies when new members joined and one manuscript in the Scottish Record Office has been found which describes the initiation ceremonies of the masons.¹⁶ This is a catechism of questions and answers that 'masons use to put to those who have the word before they will acknowledge them'. It describes the sort of horseplay that can occur in any initiation into a secret society, attempting to alarm the new member into loyalty and it also talks of the master gripping the initiate's hand 'after the masons way'.

Masons also seem to have tried to counteract the innate weakness of their position, arising from relatively small numbers and lack of local territorial strength, by using their nation-wide or even international contacts. There is some evidence of at least regional meetings, the St. Andrews lodge having some jurisdiction over its neighbours, including Dundee, and the Old Charges, the mythical history of masonry, mentions assemblies. In 1598, William Schaw, James VI's Master of Works, laid down regulations for the trade, possibly for his own lodge initially, but they seem to have been widely accepted.¹⁷ Much of this early, somewhat speculative, history might have fallen into oblivion but for the development of Freemasonry and the avid desire of Freemasons to discover an apologia for their organisation in the early eighteenth century, when the Grand Lodge of England was established in 1716-17, and that of Scotland in 1735. Many of the somewhat esoteric practices of the earlier stonemasons seem now to be the prerogative of Freemasons, but we must now look at the connection between Freemasons, earlier known as speculative masons, and operative, that is working stonemasons, as this appears in the Dundee Mason Trade's records.

One of the most mysterious features in the history of the craft of masonry is surely the adoption by the secret society of Freemasons, who were initially largely upper-class, of practices and titles which originated in a society of working craftsmen. Writers on Freemasonry have made their discoveries and explanations from the fifteenth century onwards of what was first called 'speculative' masonry and only in the eighteenth regularly known as Freemasonry. One of the most influential histories was written by a Scottish minister, Dr. James Anderson; and it was a wholly uncritical acceptance of every possible myth that had been produced on the subject before his time, with a few of his own added. What we are primarily concerned with, however, is

what can be found on the connection in the Dundee records of the Mason Trade. Most seventeenth century lodges of speculative masons were separate from incorporations of operative masons.¹⁸ An unusual feature of the Dundee incorporation's records is the inclusion, during the first century of its existence, of entries which clearly refer to Dundee Freemasons or speculative masons. There is no description of any esoteric ceremonies, however, merely references to the 'usual solemnities'.

An element of mysticism appeared in the craft of stonemasons at an early date, and one example of this is the document known as the 'Old Charges' or as the 'MS Constitution of the Masons'. There are several versions of this extraordinary manuscript, the earliest dating from 1400 and there are similarities in all of them. After opening with an invocation to the Trinity, identical to the opening words of the Dundee Masons' Lockit Book, the document proceeds to relate a history of the craft of masonry. It is a weird and wonderful concoction, which ranges geographically from the Middle East to England. Chronologically, it opens before the Flood, and relates how the children of Lamech and his two wives, Ada and Sellah, founded all the arts of which geometry/masonry was one. The document is too long to reproduce here but some indication of its character can be given. (See Plate 3.) We are told that some time after the arts were founded, Nemorth, king of Babylon, was the first person to give instructions - charges - to masons, to sixty of his men whom he lent to his cousin, the King of Nineveh. These charges were that they should love one another and keep together. Later still, we hear that Abraham and Sarah went to Egypt and taught Euclid geometry; Charles Martel is credited with introducing the art of masonry to France. St. Alban and King Athelstane were reputed to have loved masons very well and built abbeys all over England while Athelstane's historically non-existent son, Edwin, loving masons even more than his father, persuaded the king to allow him to call an assembly of masons. After the long historical section, the document ends with 'charges' to the masons as to how they should behave. Hence the name of the whole document — the Old Charges.

Though the history and the ethos of this quite extraordinary document are described by one historian of Freemasonry as vital to the Brotherhood, in Dundee, it is the Incorporation of Masons, the operative masons, who possess a valuable seventeenth century version.¹⁹ This may confirm one view that reading or reciting it was part of the ritual for admitting operative craftsmen as fully qualified master masons, but locally, we must not omit the possibility that it was simply overlooked when the Freemasons and the operatives' incorporation became wholly separated. It is certainly almost impossible to be dogmatic about the reasons for the development of 'speculative' masonry within the craft. One argument is that the sixteenth century respect for mathematical skill was transferred to its connection with architecture and hence to masonry.²⁰ Yet another suggestion is that the administration necessary for efficient building of

large structures may have involved clergymen or educated laymen, who then became interested in what we might now term the history of architecture as well as masonry. The result was the production of this mythical history of masonry and masons.²¹ The Old Charges certainly bears the marks of wide reading. It is also surely not improbable that the atmosphere of these large religious buildings could have lent an appreciation of spirituality among their makers, whose work showed they could express the heights and depths of emotions. Within the confines of this study, however, we must restrict ourselves to the interplay between 'speculative' and operative, (that is working), stonemasons shown in the Dundee records. At the second meeting recorded in the Lockit Book, December 1659, we find Patrick Kyd of Craigie attending and some years later, 1677, he was elected Deacon. As laird of Craigie, it is highly unlikely that he was a working mason. Evidence of the speculative element in the incorporation before 1700 is thin. There are only three or four names in the Lockit Book that can be certainly asserted not to be working masons, compared to thirty-one operative masters. One was Mr. John Paterson, the title Mr. showing he was a graduate.

From 1700 to 1734, fifteen speculative and twenty-four operative masons, were entered in the Lockit Book and one of the former, Andrew Ouchterlonie, son of a member of the Incorporation, was definitely stated as 'to be a freemason'. In 1734, there was a great influx of Freemasons, nineteen at one time, and the Masons' accounts for 1734-35 show £35-18-0 Scots spent on 'Jewels for the Lodge'. We cannot be sure that there were only four speculative masons before 1700; in the eighteenth century over forty gentlemen, including the minister of Edzell and the Duke of Perth, among other local notables, local merchants and craftsmen and the *valet de chambre* of the Master of Gray, are recorded in the minute books and in the accounts as having paid their dues as Freemasons, without their names ever appearing in the Lockit Book. They may be ranked as 'entered apprentices' or 'fellow crafts', paying different dues. The same situation may have existed before 1700. The records of some of the Lodges of Freemasons in Dundee might solve the question, but the answer is not to be easily found in those of the Incorporation.

At one time, in the 1730s, the Incorporation seemed to be in danger of being taken over by the Freemasons. In January 1735, a meeting under the chairmanship of the Honourable Master of Gray, Honourable Master of the Masons at the time, elected a committee of five operative masons to inspect all mason work within the burgh, the five to include the Present Visitor and the Boxmaster.²² This certainly seemed like an invasion of the privileges of the operatives. In 1737, the Lockit Book records that Alex Kinnimont was elected Visitor by 'a great plurality' which included many of the local gentry, but thereafter, obvious Freemasons disappear from lists of those attending meetings, at least in the existing sederunt books.

The connection clearly continued, however, for at a later meeting in 1743 a group of operative masons elected as Grand Master, William Chalmers, a merchant who had become an entered apprentice some years previously; and Chalmers was not present at that meeting.²³ In 1745, the local lodge of Freemasons applied to the Grand Lodge of Scotland for recognition and one might have assumed that the association with the Mason Trade would then end but, at intervals until 1760, the accounts show expenditure apparently on behalf of the Lodge, presumably the Freemason side of the organisation, £29-14-0 Scots for the charter from the Grand Lodge, £1 for four aprons, which could of course be part of the ceremonial garb of the Incorporation, and in 1760, the comment that the Lodge had not paid 11s. for books obtained for them by the Boxmaster from James Mores.²⁴

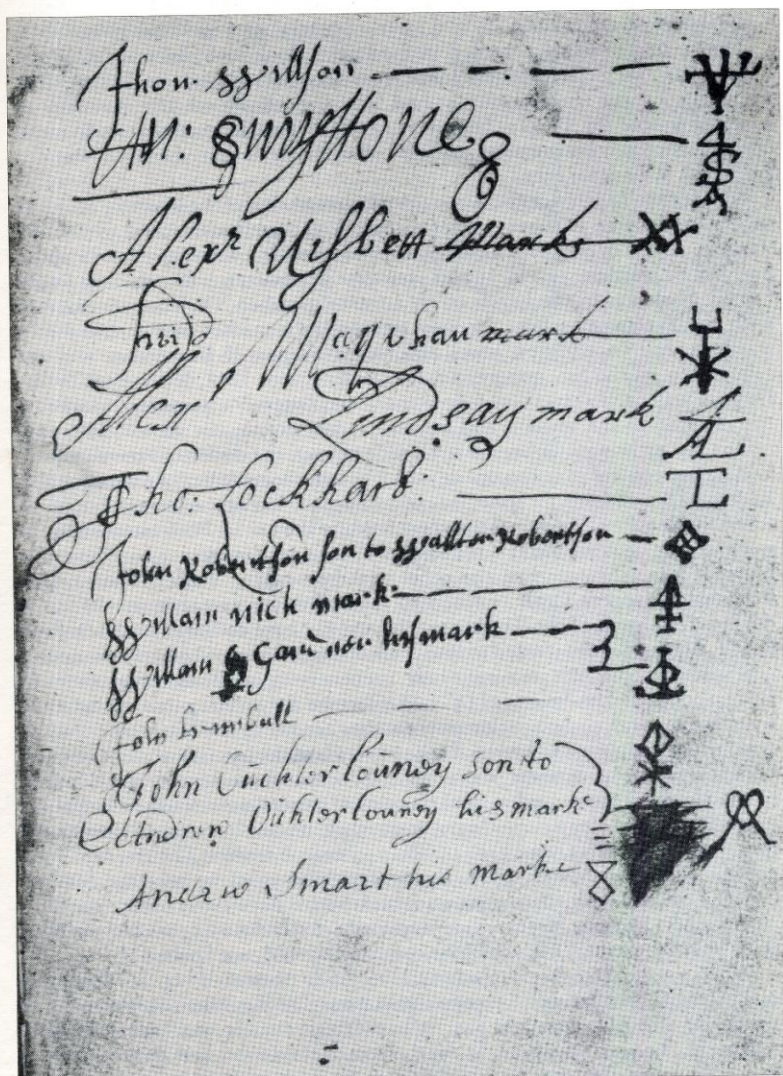
Apart from the somewhat mysterious connection with local Freemasonry, the Incorporation of Masons had a not untypical craft history. Their Lockit Book was like others, bound in leather-covered wood with a lock. It is not in good condition, with little of the leather and only part of the lock remaining, with no chain or key attached. The first entry, the *verbatim* copy of the invocation to the Trinity found in the Old Charges, reads 'The Might of the Father of Heaven with the Wisdome of the Glorious sone and the Grace and Goodnesse of the Holie Gost be with us at our beginning and give us grace so as to gowern us heir in owr lyffe, that we may come to his bliss that never shall have ending, amene'.

The six founding masters then went on to draw up regulations beyond those made by the Town Council for their Trade. First, entry fees, given of course in Scots money, were fixed: 40s. booking money and a pair of double gloves for every master and single gloves to every entered apprentice plus £8 in money from an apprentice, £10 from a fellow craft, £20 from a man becoming a freeman, plus wine, before he could enjoy the privileges of the craft, including the use of the Masons' pew in the kirk. In November 1677, when Patrick Kyd was Deacon, the Trade decided on a change in entry fees, considering the 'great prejudice' young men 'do sostaine' because of the exorbitant price of gloves. In future, only the deacon, master and warden would be given 'a pair less good sufficient gloves', by fellow crafts, who were, of course, paying their second lot of entry fees. Each Free Master was to receive two groats from apprentices and 16s. Scots from fellow crafts.²⁵ Entry was still an expensive business though the usual differentiation was made between local men and outsiders; strangers coming to the town and desiring to share the craft's privileges had to pay £40 Scots to the Trade Box plus wine to the members, while freemasters' sons bought wine for only the deacon and the masters.

The rules were not unusual for craftsmen's incorporations - no indenturing of apprentices without the consent of the Deacon and the Trade's council, and only at seven year intervals - 'not within seven yeirs at least'; journeymen's fees of £3 Scots to be paid to the Trade before they were employed, one exception being 'a needful brother upon his journey, who is to stay a wick or fortnight at most'. The habit of travelling to

look for work was clearly accepted in Dundee in the seventeenth century. Masons were not to take work from another member of the Incorporation, if the latter was able and willing to finish the job. In the so-called Jourman's Book, a similar course of action was prescribed, with the difference that the meeting was said to be one of 'masters and true men' as opposed to the 'friemen' mentioned in the Lockit Book. The masons' marks were inserted beside their names, not something that is seen in the Lockit Book. Masons' marks appear at other places in the Dundee records and while it is often pointed out that these have some mystic significance, including the square and compass, for instance, some of the Dundee marks also incorporate the initials of the individual mason, as can be seen in Plate 4. Each mason was to be charged 40s. Scots when he was given a mark. There was also a list of donations made to the Trade, each giving 'as it pplease him', which *was* unusual. John Wast, described as master of the Lodge, committed himself to 13s.4d. Scots quarterly, as did Andrew Wast, warden, while others signed up for 6s.8d. Scots. Entry fees increased throughout the next two hundred years, as inflation ultimately took its toll. In 1761, an increase to £100 Scots was decided, on the grounds that the Trade's entry fee was less than that of other crafts and this was harmful to their poor.²⁶ In the nineteenth century, before the abolition of the privileges of the crafts, the fees were fixed at £31-10-0 for strangers and £5-10-6 for freemasters' sons and sons-in-law.²⁷

The second meeting recorded in the Lockit Book took place at the end of 1659 when, on 27 December, John West was elected Deacon. Perhaps the founding of the Incorporation had not yet alleviated the problem of unemployment for it was at this meeting that it was decreed that no freeman should employ a journeyman until he offered work to any freeman who was prepared to work for him. Some of the differences between the administration of the Mason Trade and others can be seen in these earliest entries. A warden is mentioned as well as a deacon, visitor or a master. In 1757, we find a senior master, a visitor, a senior and junior warden, an eldest and youngest boxmaster, while the key to the Lockit Book was in the hands of yet another member. There are similarities with the Freemasons here for they too elected a master, senior and junior wardens, but in addition jewel and sword keepers.²⁵ Democracy was not allowed to go too far, apparently, for in December 1741, a proposal by the Deacon was carried to allow fellow crafts and entered apprentices to vote on the election of the warden and boxmaster but not for the visitor. This may reflect the growing numbers in the Trade or even the desire of Freemasons to keep some control over the operatives. Though the mobility of masons might have posed problems for the efficient administration of the Incorporation, as when the keeper of the key of the chest holding the Lockit Book moved away to work without leaving the key, the Mason Trade does not seem to have been any more or less efficient than the other members of the United Trades.



4. Dundee Masons' Marks from the Journeyman's Book.
 (University of Dundee, Audio-Visual Services Unit, Photographic Section)

One Boxmaster, George Craik, refused to take office for a year from 1737-1738 despite the threat of the Trade that they would have recourse to the Dean of Guild. All the Trades tended to lose track of documents and odd possessions if new officials did not remind their predecessors to hand them over. In December 1840, the deacon of 1834-35 informed the meeting that he had a box with books and papers belonging to the Trade, as well as their flag. A committee appointed to inventory the contents of the box discovered sederunt books, cash books, extracts of the original document concerning the founding of the United Trades, and several bundles of papers, as well as the flag and a case with a brass compass and rule. Apparently no-one had missed them in the five years since Mr. David gave up the position of deacon. The flag had been commissioned in March 1811. By twenty-three votes to one, the Masons decided on one with their arms on it and twelve days later, on 26 March, a painter, Mr. Thomas Mathewson, produced a sketch for a flag about 8' by 6', of dark blue 'lutestring' silk, which he estimated would cost about £12.

When a candidate for admission to the Trade presented his say, there was one interesting difference between the Masons and the other two Trades. The comment was always made that it had faults, that it was 'not altogether sufficient'; he was duly fined 5s. for the poor and then entered. One wonders if this reflects an element of masonic mysticism acknowledging that only God could make anything perfect.

The Masons' finances were organised in very much the same way as any other craft's, income arising from entry fees, payment when a member married, fines for a variety of offences and quarterly accounts, which were 16s. Scots (1s.4d. sterling) per annum in 1737, 1s. sterling per quarter by 1808, and by this date, payment in advance was asked for. This was a wise precaution as these regular payments were not always paid in time or at all. The Masons sometimes decreed that enjoyment of the privileges of the Trade should be allowed only to those whose whole entry fee was paid, as opposed to those who had only given promissory notes or bills. In the 1830s various masons who had taken an unduly long time to redeem their bills were pursued in the law courts.²⁸ In September 1831, the Trade decided to abandon claims against members owing them money, if they would sign a 'renunciation' of all the rights and privileges of members before 20 December next. Over a year later, they had not achieved a settlement and even after the Trade had recourse to the law, some were recalcitrant. Daniel Peters, for instance, ignored letters sent him in 1835 and only in January 1836, did he agree to give up his membership. However, in 1840, he is still on record as owing money, so he may have retracted his resignation. On the other hand, being in receipt of a pension was declared in December 1810 not to 'disable' a recipient from voting at meetings, while in 1847, admittedly after the abolition of all craft privileges, William Robertson was elected second Boxmaster though not recognised as a full member.

A small society like the masons could not expect to be wealthy in the ordinary run of circumstances. In 1835, they valued their total assets at £1,100 for the Commissioners inquiring into Municipal Government. In 1840, their total income was £95-3-11, of which they paid £28-7-0 in pensions. £8 of this came in interest from the Wrights, who had borrowed capital from them, and rent from property amounted to £12. The Masons dabbled only a little in speculation in property, such as tenements of land in the town and houses. In the early part of the eighteenth century, they were growing lint in their yard and selling it, but as they paid £1-4-0 Scots in 1708 for the delving of the lint ground, they appear not to have worked the area themselves. The proceeds from the sale of some land in the Hilltown are seen in the 1711-13 accounts and their first foray into being landlords did not last long. A house in the Nethergate needing rebuilding and repair in 1738 cost over £720 Scots though the rent seems to have been only £8 Scots per annum; in 1750 the rents were in arrears, though the adjoining yard was being regularly paid for. An attempt to sell it in 1763 failed, but in 1781, a weaver, George Thomas, offered £66 for the yard. In 1811, they bought a house and cellar in the Wellgate for £320. In 1821-22 the shop rent was £8 and the cellar £3 but repairs and taxation had to be laid against this.

They still owned the property in 1891, when their tenant, a fruiterer, John Wardroper, was paying £22-10-0 rent. He complained in that year about a choked drain in the back cellar and hoped the society would see about repairing this at once, as a 'lot of grapes' were stored in it.²⁹ Another source of income to societies was their mortcloth. The Masons possessed one in the eighteenth century, the price recorded in the 1713-16 accounts as £186-9-4 Scots. Judging from the accounts, it was not a good investment. In 1731-2, for instance, they received £1-16-0 Scots but had to pay 4s. Scots to William Ouchterlony for airing it. However, it was still in use in 1768 and in 1796, it was given into the care of the deacon of the time, an arrangement which seemed to continue at least as late as 1829.³⁰ During the eighteenth century, they also owned a hearse, for the accounts show repairs as well as cleaning costs for this, but it simply disappears from the records.

Their interest in the town churches has already been mentioned. It was not all gain. Though they did receive regular income from their investment in the building of St. Andrew's, they had originally to borrow £15 for four months in January 1773 to pay their share. Their seats in the parish church involved them in expenditure which must have been a considerable burden on a small Trade. Repairs in the 1820s had cost them £58-7-8 in 1826-7 and after the fire of 1841, they agreed to assist in the rebuilding of the East Church in proportion to their shares in the fabric, as it was the only one in which they had seats. The plans made by the architect, William Burns, were carefully scrutinised, not only from aesthetic angles, but from the view as to how their interests

would be affected. They described his first plan as a 'miserable piece of hatched work',³¹ but by August 1841, they had agreed to his new plans, which included the removal of the Cross Church, for which they were prepared to pay £20 compensation to the Town Council for the loss of that amenity. But they insisted that their seats in the new church must be as nearly as possible in the same locality as in the old. Eventually over the years 1841 to 1844, they paid £128-2-6 in instalments towards the rebuilding. But their total assets in 1842 were valued at £936-4-5, which included £360 for their Wellgate property, £60 in St. Andrew's Church, £66 share in the United Trades funds, £200 lent to the Wrights and £100 in the new church, which included the value of their seats, £135-18-11 deposited in the Eastern Bank, and £16-4-5 in cash.³² In 1840, the accounts show them handling only £135-12-4V2, and the fire meant that they lost income from seat rents the following year so any caution they showed in their approach to giving contributions to the rebuilding and embellishing of the new church is understandable.³³

The Trade was always prepared to take action to benefit members and there was one interesting but abortive attempt to obtain the monopoly of stones from Kingoodie quarry. In March 1790, Thomas Mylne of Mylnefield, the owner, and the Mason Trade signed a contract by which Mylne undertook to sell stones only to the Trade in Dundee and its suburbs, while members would buy only for themselves, for their own work. This was a necessary clause, apparently, as some unfree masons were endeavouring to mislead members into 'packing and peeling' (dealing with them, which was of course illegal). However, by June, this contract was cancelled at Mylne's request, but both parties had found it inconvenient, for the quarry could not always supply what the Dundee Masons needed.³⁴ An earlier act granted by the Town Council had forbidden masons to use stones hewed in Kingoodie or Balgay or any other 'cheughes' that had been prepared by cowans instead of masons, but in 1695, this was not being adhered to.³⁵

After the Wrights won their case against Thomas Smyllie, the Masons were active in proceeding against encroachers, even taking cases to the Sheriff Court as late as 1840, three years after there had been a bill before Parliament to abolish trade privileges.³⁶ And at least one mason was prepared to join the Trade in 1846.³⁷ Thereafter, however, there was a gap in entrants until 1862. Accepting the realities of the situation, the Masons reduced their entry fees in 1868, as they were reduced to seven members and could see no means of enticing others to join, when the old privileges no longer existed. A meeting specially called on 10 January 1868 voted to reduce entry fees, returning the amounts above the new rates to older members. At Whit, stranger members were to be refunded £30, sons and sons-in-law of members £20.³⁸ Despite this, the Trade's membership faltered and Warden was moved to urge Masons to make moves to revive their Incorporation, in his book *The Burgh Laws of Dundee*. In the twentieth

century, until 1962, when the last entry was made, at least the last when the Lockit Book was seen on 12 August 1986, only twenty-eight members had been entered in the Lockit Book. The Incorporation therefore still exists, though numerically only a shadow of its former self. Today, it seems fair to say that only historical interest or family sentiment may persuade masons in Dundee to join the Trade. Freemasons' lodges abound in the town, but after the local group was accepted by the Grand Lodge of Scotland and accounted part of that other masonic society, the eventual total separation of records and personnel from that of the Incorporation's removed their history completely from that of the United Trades and hence from further consideration in this volume.

CHAPTER 5

The Wright Trade

As with the Masons, it is unfortunately impossible to date exactly when the formal incorporation of the Wright Trade occurred. The Wrights, as we have seen, were associated with the Masons in their appeal to King Charles I and the subsequent appearance before the Convention of Royal Burghs in 1629, which refused the Trades' application for permission to elect deacons. One of the reasons given for the refusal was that the masons and wrights were 'for the maist part people of mean substance' and the fact that few had sufficient capital to have their estates valued seems to bear this out.¹ Despite this, however, the wrights were omitted from the Privy Council's confirmation of the Convention's decision, and the Wright Trade of Dundee had by 1629 been meeting together for at least a year, as the first legible entry in their Lockit Book is dated April 1628, though it would appear not to be the first. Indeed, in their case against Thomas Smyllie in 1799, the Wrights declared that they had been operating as a society since 1626,² and as the first pages of their Lockit Book were quite possibly more legible in 1799 than parts of it are today, this contention may well be right. Unfortunately, neither Town Council nor Guildry records of the time throw any light on this question, and a further Act of the Town Council of 1662, which might have been illuminating, is missing, as are the Town Council minutes for this later period.

In fact, the first entry by page in the Lockit Book is dated 5 September 1690, recording the appointment of John Gourlaw as clerk, John Key being the Visitor. The chronological confusion of the first twenty or thirty pages of this, the Wrights' most precious historical document, is not due to neglect by the Trade, but to their having taken great care of it. Like the Masons', the Lockit Book is bound in leather-covered wood, in good condition, except for a few woodworm holes which come right through the leather. The title 'The Wrightes Booke of D' is embossed on the front, lock, chain, key and iron hasp are all present, repairs and replacements having kept them in good order, and the book is intact. The Wrights have had the book rebound at intervals and it is unfortunate that, while the bookbinders who repaired it through the last three and a half centuries may have been skilled at their craft, they were not trained in early Scottish palaeography — handwriting. As a result, the pages were not always rebound in the correct order. And the Wrights themselves have not always made their entries in a straightforward fashion. At one point, the clerk began in a middle page, with the book upside down, and continued backwards for some years. In the mid-seventeenth century, the entry of apprentices had been begun in the middle of the book and entries continued in orthodox fashion until 1734. In 1823, masters' entries caught up with them and then simply leap-frogged to the next clear page.

Physical damage has been done to the book, even before A.J. Warden studied it in the 1860s or 1870s. In the nineteenth century, chemicals were sometimes used to darken faded ink and these resulted in entire pages turning eventually into a dark brown illegible mess. August 1635 is the earliest date at which we can find a whole legible page, and we can safely say that by that time, the Wrights were running a society strong enough to pass a series of acts and ordinances affecting local workers; these were signed by seventeen masters, while a notary public vouched for seven more. By May 1670, when Robert Strachan was Deacon, the Incorporation was sufficiently well established and recognised to be paying its share of the minister's stipend. The amount they contributed was not large, 16s.8d. Scots, and never changed, though inflation eroded this drastically. In 1805, the Rev. David Davidson wrote suggesting that they might like to make a 'suitable augmentation', as they had made no increase in 140 years. They refused, on the grounds that the poor of the Trade were in need and that the cost of the lawsuit against Thomas Smyllie in defence of their privileges had involved them in heavy expenditure. Mr. Davidson reacted by writing a receipt for his 16s.8d. which they considered so insulting they demanded that it should be erased from the records. And* they continued in their refusal to raise their contribution.

The Wright Trade has always been the largest, and concomitantly the wealthiest of the United Trades, because of the revenue from a larger number of entrants. Twenty-five wrights met in 1635; only six masons founded their society in 1659 and this numerical difference has been maintained even to the present. The records list over 400 apprentices, the last in 1830, over 700 journeymen between 1689 and 1770, and almost 400 free masters; thirty-eight signed the minutes in 1803 and since 1875, fifty-eight masters have signed their names agreeing to the rules made then. Happily, the Trade is still enrolling new members, with at least a tenuous connection with the building trades. Journeymen's names appeared in the Lockit Book until 1691, when a special book was bought, ostensibly for recording their names, but it includes many other types of records, including finance. This volume too is leather bound and still has the remains of its lock. Altogether the Wrights' records list over 1500 names, but even so, many can never have appeared in the Trade's books. There are various reasons for this, one being that urban development, even in the earliest times, encouraged specialist skills and Dundee was a town of importance long before 1628. James VI's charter shows that the wrights were sufficiently numerous in the town in 1591 to want to form their own society, needing only the agreement of the town's authorities to set it up, but if they did have any records before the early seventeenth century, these have not apparently survived. Even after the setting up of the Wrights' Incorporation, incomplete registration has made for uncertainty over the true total of men in the Trade over the centuries, as we saw in Chapter 2.

Whatever their numbers, unlike their fellow craftsmen in the United Trades, wrights, or 'wrights', as Scots pronounce the word without necessarily spelling it that way, have to be identified. Today, the word 'wright' is obsolete in standard English except in compounds, and in *The Concise Scots Dictionary* (1985) the wright is defined as a craftsman, a woodwright, a carpenter, while wright work is simply carpentry or joinery. Initially the Dundee Incorporation at £27-0-0 Scots, they had to enclose it with a thorn hedge, put up a door with stone lintels and then maintain the hedge.⁸ In 1738, at a time when the Town Council was encouraging building houses which fronted streets in the town by exempting these from cess for nineteen years after they became inhabitable, the Wrights built on a tenement on the north side of the Nethergate, 'a little without the Barrasport', in 1738.⁹ They borrowed £686-13-4 Scots during 1752-53 to build yet another house but later in the decade they sold a house and yard at the West Port for £130.¹⁰

Their greatest foray into the property market, however, came in the nineteenth century, when they both bought and built. In July, 1815, it was pointed out that there was much property on the market and that the funds might benefit from laying out money on good housing. They bought in 1816, having made up the required sum by borrowing - the proposal of Deacon David Shepherd — from a shipmaster, John Boyack, and from the conjunct stock of the United Trades. £200 was also realised by selling property on which they had a bond. As a result of these purchases they became the landlords of a schoolmaster, Crichton, and printers, Messrs. Colvill & Co. In 1819, they evicted the schoolmaster when the printer asked for the schoolroom, promising the Trade extra rent for alterations. Mr. Crichton was not impressed by the argument that the move was to the benefit of the Trade's funds!¹¹ The Trade also began to talk at this time of 'our committee room' which seems to have been set up in this property. Their accounts for 1818-19 show that their 'stock' — their assets — now included £615-12-4, the valuation of the heritable property they had bought and repaired. They did not stop there. In April 1821, it was once again suggested, this time at a general meeting of the Trade, that more property should be bought, as the market was obviously a buyer's, with bargains available. By August a house in Fish Street had been purchased for £360 and in the next few years they bought fairly extensively in the areas known as Key's and Scott's Closes, situated on the south side of the Nethergate, between that and Fish Street to the south. Their tenants included an innkeeper and the printers of the *Courier*, until 1857. They also built in this area, estimates for the new tenement being between £318 and £456, and though they were prepared to house horses, vintners and journalists they initially refused a lease to a tinsmith, Abram Middleton, on the grounds that his work might disturb other tenants. However, their insurance policy with the Town and County Fire Insurance company in 1862-3, included a tinsmith's shop valued at £10, so they must have relented.¹²

The building which most pleased the Trade however, was their own hall in Key's Close, built in 1825. It was neither a large nor elaborate construction, as is shown by the initial estimates which varied from £87-10-0 to £109 and the insurance-value in 1862 of £50, but it was their own. Masons, Slaters and the United Trades together sometimes met there, in preference to hiring rooms in the Nine Trades hall. Despite their palpable pride in the hall, they must have rued accepting the lowest estimates, for within a few years, by 1829, repairs were badly needed. It was properly furnished, with a marble chimney costing £7, and a stuffed and gilded chair for the Deacon, and in 1831, a platform was built which no doubt helped the chairing of meetings. The tavern-keeper looked after the hall, as it conveniently adjoined his premises, and he provided refreshments at meetings.

The acquisition of so much property was a mixed blessing, particularly when it was funded very largely by borrowing. Certainly the total assets of the Trade eventually increased substantially, for in 1832, they could claim assets to the value of over £4,000, the greater part in heritable property, though this was later declared to be an overvaluation, with debts of only £1,700, but the weight of their debts and the servicing of these debts had always to be placed against the capital increase and the profits from rents. In August 1826, a general meeting was told that £1,000 to £1,200 was needed to discharge some of these debts. On this occasion, a shipowner at Panbridge, Mr. David Williamson, was prepared to lend them this on the security of all their heritable property, excluding that in the Overgate which was in such a ruinous condition that it had to be rebuilt in 1829.¹³ This allowed them to repay their other creditors. It was difficult to avoid the impression that in the early 1820s the Trade was carried away by the excitement of becoming property-owners and sometimes forgot the primary object of their having any funds at all — providing a fund for the poor of their Trade. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the report of the meeting in April 1827, just a few months after the arrangement with Mr. Williamson had been made. The pensions of seven men and ten widows were cut 'because of the Trade's great burden of debt'. It is this state of affairs that makes the 'satisfaction' of members with their finance somewhat spurious in 1828.

There were charges on the rents from their property, too, of course, including commission to the factors whom the Trade had to employ when their tenants became so numerous that an honorary Boxmaster could hardly have been expected to cope with rent collection and property management. The factor's commission could be 5% to 7%. While the employment of a factor relieved the Wrights from some work, factors were not infallible, as they discovered in 1842 and again in the 1850s when they had to call on factors' cautioners to make up the deficits in his accounts. Arrears were a perennial problem, and were as much as £75-12-0 for the

period 1830-33 for example. In July 1847, the Trade's exasperation with non-paying tenants can be seen in their response to the request for some repairs. They answered that they had no objection to the tenants getting the work done if they paid up their arrears to pay the expenses.¹⁴ The costs of serving eviction notices on recalcitrant tenants and calling in the sheriffs officer could be far greater than anything obtained from the sale of the defaulter's goods; after making Ss.10d. on one such sequestration they decided in June 1840 not to continue the practice. Possession of property also meant that they had to contribute to local improvement schemes such as paving the closes. In 1827 they laid gas pipes to the doors of their tenants' houses, leaving them to deal with the installation inside, and in February 1828 agreed to putting up gas fittings in their hall; but it was the 1850s before there was any mention of piped water. Another burden fell on the members of the Trade. They felt they themselves must keep an eye on the state of their property and on any repairs that were needed, so from the 1820s onwards, they were continually forming committees and subcommittees to oversee work, that one might argue, should perhaps have been the factor's responsibility.

Despite these disadvantages, in the 1820s and 1830s the Trade was generally well-pleased with the results of their investment in the property market, though there was an abortive attempt to sell the new building in Key's Close in 1835. However, in December of that year, they could report that their property was in good repair and well let. The following decade, the so-called 'Hungry Forties', saw a change. In April 1845, the Deacon, Boxmaster and factor found not only property in bad condition but 'a general determination among tenants not to pay rents'. In the economic conditions of the time, the 'determination' was likely to be total inability. In August 1846, the clerk's statement of the Trade's income and expenditure over the years from 1841-45 showed the full extent of their financial difficulties. Gross revenue had amounted to £688-8-1 ¥2, but their expenditure had been £1,016-1-8, which included £129-9-6 on repairs, £162-16-2 interest on loans - they did not try to repay their debts fully but kept on finding new creditors, borrowing from Peter to pay Paul — £179-6-8 miscellaneous expenses and £544-9-3 on charity to members and widows, the last amount decreasing each year. Fortunately, there had been sufficient new members in the period to bring in entry fees of £246-16-5, thus reducing the total deficit to just over £80. Such a situation could not have continued indefinitely, and there was little point in selling during such bad times for the likely result would have been considerable capital loss. As well as reducing pensions, they also tried to persuade creditors to accept 4½% interest instead of 5%. Only their brother craftsmen, the Masons, obliged.

The improving economy gradually removed their financial problems connected with property, despite the virtual disappearance of entry dues, after 1846. In 1874, the Commissioners of Police of Dundee served them with what we would now describe as a compulsory purchase order on all their property between the Nethergate

and Fish Street. The Commissioners were about to begin the transformation of that area of central Dundee, from a warren of closes and tenements to the shape it maintained until well on in the twentieth century. In August 1875, Trade and Commissioners agreed on a price of £5,000, the latter paying all expenses. This major transaction altered the Trade's whole conception of themselves as a property-owning corporation. By April 1876, they had disposed of all their property, including their house in the Overgate and their seats in the town churches, the Kirk Session seizing the opportunity of obtaining possession of some of these. The pews had been valued at £200 but realised in all only £90 because of the expenses arising from the sale. A last nostalgic note — in 1876 the Deacon was instructed to sell the furniture in their hall, bought with such pride fifty years before.

The next financial problem was a more pleasant one. What was to be done with this windfall? It did not take them long to decide. On 9 September 1875, the committee appointed to deal with the Commissioners of Police was discharged with a hearty vote of thanks and it was decided that £3,000 should be invested to provide enough to meet what they had previously been in the habit of allowing to 'decayed members' and widows. There were still recipients of the Trade's charity in 1920. The remaining £2,000 was divided among the remaining living members who had never received 'aid or aliment' from the Trades; there were only seventeen in that category. It is an interesting if perhaps pointless subject for speculation that if the wrights of the early nineteenth century had chosen to buy property in other parts of the town, they might still be large property owners like some of the trade corporations and merchant guilds in other parts of Britain. As it was, any profits considered in excess of their Incorporation's needs were divided among the members at regular intervals through the rest of the nineteenth century, which is not perhaps a practice earlier wrights would have approved of.¹⁵

The Wrights seem to have believed in sharing responsibility in making their rules and regulations and a council is mentioned in the seventeenth century. They also talk of a meeting in the 'counselhouse of the craft' in 1670, which leaves us with another mystery, about which one can only make guesses, as there is no definite identification of this place in the surviving records.¹⁶ Meetings of the whole Trade took place in various places, including the 'transvestrie' of the Old Church, and even in the ruinous Cross Church in 1728. The meeting there on 15 June also demonstrates another aspect of the Trade's administration, their position as pendicles of the Guildry, which involved supervision particularly by the Dean of Guild. Alexander Maxwell, holder of that office, was present to hear a complaint of the Wright Trade against one of their number, Andrew Scott, who had attacked the Visitor, Thomas Douglas, 'maltreating him that day and shakeing him by the breast and cursing him'. This was not the first of Scott's transgressions, the Wrights claimed, for 'because of the

great Disturbances the sd Andrew Scott frequently occasions at the meetings of the Trade', the Visitor craved that he should not only be fined but 'discharged', that is forbidden, from attending any meetings in the future. Scott's response to questions was 'insolent and uncivill', so he was fined £5 Scots and in effect expelled, or at least prevented from causing further disruption at meetings. But the Trade needed the authority of the Guild before they could carry out such disciplinary measures and this was further demonstrated in 1745. The Dean was present when the Trade took extreme measures and crossed the name of Andrew Beg Junior out of the Lockit Book because of his having stolen wood from the Town's timber yard.

Attempts to maintain strict discipline over members continued into the nineteenth century, as the printed regulations of 1803 show. Rule 14 repeated the condition of the Wrights' oath, that no-one should claim credit for work unless he, his servants or his apprentices had 'wrought' it. Rule 16 arranged that any member convicted of riotous or disorderly conduct by any court of justice 'whereby the peaceful safety of the realm at large' might be endangered would have his name erased from the list of members. One master had great difficulty in being accepted at all; it took him years as his reputation for wildness during his apprentice followed him into adult life. In October 1829, evidence was being given about him by one of his contemporaries. He had on one occasion sawed through the veneer of a chest of drawers, thereby infuriating his master, who had only taken him on out of kindness of heart to finish his time, his first having died. The master 'cursed and swore' and told him if he had known he was to behave in that way, he would never have taken him on. He went to a dance and stayed off work for some days thereafter and the master must have been even crosser when he had to go and extricate this terrible lad from enlistment. Committee members were fined for non-attendance at meetings without an adequate excuse, 6d. in 1806 being a steep penalty, as were the unpunctual, that is those more than quarter of an hour late, the proceeds going of course to the poor fund. Even John Skirving did not escape, having to pay 3s. in September 1807 on account of his absence from a committee meeting, and on 1 November 1836, the committee members present were very fierce against backsliders; the clerk was to write that if they did not pay the fines they had incurred by absence from the last meeting by '9th current', he would 'intimate', 'initiate' presumably being meant, a prosecution to recover these fines.

By the nineteenth century, however, no attempt is being made to control the employment of journeymen. They do appear in the records when wages were being discussed, either being lowered by the Trade or a rise being asked for by the journeyman. In one petition in 1818¹⁷ eighty-one made the point that they had expenses beyond what other craftsmen had, their tools. They also claimed, in 1821, that other towns paid better wages, 18s. to 20s. in Glasgow, 19s. to 21s. per week in Edinburgh and even Forfar wrights had 14s. to 15s. per week. The journeymen also appear in a happier mood when

they ask for the use of the Trade's flag for their country outing in 1856. This was allowed once one of the masters present undertook full responsibility for it, but one wonders if such solicitude was necessary, for seven years later, during which time the flag did not seem to be in use, it was decided to buy a new one costing £7 for the opening of Baxter Park on 9 September, 1863, when the Trade meant to join the procession.¹⁸ This is rather less than the Masons spent earlier in the century.

Of course, in 1803, the legal confirmation of their rights and privileges was a considerable boost to the confidence of the Trades. For one thing, it resulted in quite an influx of members, some of whom had no doubt been hanging back, hoping they might never have to pay entry fees, if the law decided against the Wrights. One new member had been working in the town for eight years, having his own workshop, and joined only at this time. One result of the greater numbers can be seen in the greater attention paid to their administration. For instance, secret ballots were arranged in elections for the offices of Deacon and Boxmaster; minutes became fuller, though not always any more illuminating, as is the way of minutes. The clerk began to keep a letter-book, or perhaps it is safer to say that one nineteenth century letter-book survives, dating from 1831-1846.

The lack of a permanent home for records always puts documentary material at risk. With new officials being appointed at regular intervals who had to be put in possession of all the relevant documents, there were regular entries in the accounts for 'the flitting of the box' or boxes, and the destination was not always given.¹⁹ Despite the Trades having their own hall and committee room with a safe, there was one occasion when only the vigilance of current members ensured that the Trade retained all its surviving archive. Many important documents had been removed to the clerk's office in 1834 as the room and safe were damp. The committee room was let to the *Courier* printers in 1849, with the proviso that the Trade would be allowed use of the room when they needed it. The clerk of the time was Mr. John Anderson, a writer, who had been appointed interim clerk, in March 1829, as the present holder of that office was 'leaving the country', one of the passing references to emigration which occur.²⁰

However, Anderson kept the office until his death in 1864, and when the new clerk went to the committee room to make an inventory of the papers he would have in his care, he found the safe locked and no key available. A smith had to be employed to break into it and the agent for Mr. Anderson's representatives, Mr. Peter Reid, indicated that he would deliver a box to the Trade marked 'Wright Trade No. 1'. To the horror of the committee, they realised that the Lockit Book was missing and the agent somewhat ungraciously undertook a further search of the deceased's papers.



5. Flag or Banner of the Wright Trade, commissioned for the opening of the Baxter Park in 1863.
(City of Dundee Museums and Art Galleries)

This resulted in the return of the Lockit Book and a large number of papers and books, but it took yet another approach to Mr. Reid to obtain their current minute books from 1837 and that covering 1800 to 1801. Then Reid had the gall to send an account for £3-12-6.²¹

Generally speaking, however, the Wrights did not seem to suffer too much from the sins of omission or commission of their officials, paid or honorary. The Boxmaster might be fined for his absence from a committee meeting in 1807; a candidate for the post of Deacon, Charles Henderson, was reported as being 'under censure of the Trade' for 'irregularities', which it was hastily added had been quite unintentional, and his apology was accepted; in 1837, the officer who was discovered to have been lax both in carrying out his duties and in his financial transactions with the sallies was dismissed. Perhaps there is a suggestion of suspicion in the committee's decision in October 1824 that in future the old Boxmaster should hand over cash and bills to his successor in front of the committee.

But there were no major scandals. One member who undertook the duties of looking after the Trade's rent-collecting in the mid-nineteenth century got into difficulties, but it was more inefficiency and a lack of realisation of how much was involved than deliberate cheating. The culprit turned up at the Trade's meeting to explain himself and call in his cautioners. The growing formality of the early nineteenth century saw secret balloting for officials, printed cards for calling to meetings, printed sets of the Trade's bye-laws - to be bought by all members on entry at Is. — growing bills from the 'stachener' as more and more paperwork apparently became necessary as the Trade grew. There were also arguments as to whether officers and members owing money, usually as part of their entry fee, should be allowed to vote and one in that position who had not realised he would not be a full member immediately left the meeting in high dudgeon in September 1826, demanding an apology for the affront he felt he had suffered. And he got it a couple of months later, plus permission to attend in future, the proviso being added that this was not to be taken as a precedent.

After the legal victory over Smyllie in 1803, the largest part of the Incorporation's business was quite simply the harrassing of as many wrights as they could find working in the town who did not join them. They were of course quite within their rights and licensing non-members was a fairly lucrative practice which was pure gain, as these licensees had no claim on the Trade's poor fund. It was also, of course, a battle that was to be lost in 1846, but it was some time before this later legislation had severe effects on the Trade. With so much property in their hands, members had a vested interest in keeping the society alive and it was really only after they disposed of it that social considerations outweighed the practical. In November

1877, it was agreed that Committee meetings, held once a month in 1803 and later every two months, were necessary only every three with a quorum of three. General meetings became annual events, in hotels as the hall was no more, though any jollity on such occasions was not a new development. There is no doubt that carousing was always a part of Trades' ambience, with celebratory dinners and recourse to vintners after ordinary meetings accepted as customary and perhaps as necessary in binding the members in friendship that was not wholly dependent on their work. In 1876, the Wrights began to enjoy annual outings, a 'social pic-nic', usually taking the train from Dundee to various salubrious destinations in Angus, Fife or Perthshire where they then hired coaches and horses and drove to a suitable hostelry.

Despite the loss of legal privileges, the Wright Trade was still actively concerned with the integrity of its members and of itself as an incorporation in the late nineteenth century. In 1875, Rules, Ordinances and Bye-laws were passed by the Trade whose standards are as strict as any of bygone ages, new members still having to undertake in their oath that they will not acknowledge as theirs any wright or glazier work wrought in Dundee unless it be truly wrought by the entrant, his servant, or his apprentice. He also promises to live as peaceably as he can with all his neighbours and to keep 'peace and concord' among all members of the Trade. Since 1875, over fifty men have subscribed to this, so it can be truly said that the Incorporation of Wrights of Dundee is trying to maintain the best traditions of all those who have followed the trade in the old burgh.

CHAPTER 6

The Slater Trade

Last in order of precedence in the United Trades, though certainly not last in importance in any building, the Slaters, or 'Sclaiters' as their name was sometimes spelt, have always been the least in number. It is unfortunate that this paucity in numbers has adversely affected the diligence with which the Trade has been supported and the records kept, even before the loss of legal privileges in 1846. The total number of names obtained from the records available amounts to under 200 masters, thirteen apprentices, twenty-two journeymen and twelve honorary members. As with the Mason and Wright Trades, only a few masters can be traced in the records as apprentices or journeymen. Another sign of the failure of the Slaters' administrative care is that many have signed minutes of meetings, where they must have been recognised as masters, yet their names do not appear in the Lockit Book. In these circumstances, it would be foolish to think that the list of masters is complete. In 1832, the Slaters could claim only twelve members at Michaelmas 1831. They gave this figure when returning answers to a questionnaire from William Barrie, the Town Clerk of Dundee, sent on behalf of a Crown Agent, when the problems of burgh and government representation were being considered.¹

Paradoxically, in light of their failure to maintain exact records, the Slaters, like the Wrights, had two books kept under lock and key. The more important, the true Lockit Book, is seven inches by four inches, bound like the others of the United Trades in heavy wood covered with leather. In 1985 it was not in a good state of repair. The wood was worn round the heavy lock and there was no key or chain. The first and earliest entry was made on 3 January 1654, and shows that the Trade was already established with a deacon, William Cock, accepted by his fellow craftsmen. The Slaters were included in James VI's charter of 1592, but we do not know when their society was first formed. The evidence for their acting as a group before 1654 can be found in an entry of 9 March 1685, which talks of an act 'wrettin in the Open book for 26 December, 1642'. The Open Book seems to have disappeared and there is no extant record of the founding of the Incorporation in the Dundee archive. At this earlier date, however, the Trade had decreed that 'no man enter to tak upon hand to meld or....with ane uther mans work' or to take work over his head without his good will and 'libertie either in land, march or brugh', the penalty for breaching this rule being 40s. Scots.

The first full record of decisions taken at a meeting is dated 3 January 1654. Those present made the point that the Trade was suffering through the 'stents' of many of their number. Judging from the following decisions, 'stent' here means the backsliding of members in making their due payments to the Trade and not, as is more usual,

taxation. Those present determined to correct the situation and laid down rules, with appropriate fines for breaking them, 'for the beter maintaining the poor peoples of the sd craft'. As well as yearly payments of 13s.4d. Scots by masters, plus 12d. Scots per rood of new work carried out by them, there were marriage fees of 20s. Scots, fines of a similar amount for employing another master's journeyman without the latter's consent, and 10s. Scots from the servant himself, £4 Scots for taking another master's work. This was rather more than they claimed was the amount in 1642 but this was reaffirmed in 1685. Masters were to assume responsibilities to apprentices and customers only if they were certain they could be carried out. In 1667, the entry fee from apprentices wishing to become masters was doubled and, in addition, a dinner had to be given to the whole Trade or £4 Scots paid to the Box, plus a pint of wine to each master. No fee was determined for masters' entry or booking money at this time, or apparently before or after until the omission was remedied on 9 May 1685; then it was fixed at £30 Scots, 'ane sufficient denner' or £4 Scots to the Box and a pint of wine to the Trade, when the Lockit Book was opened. One of the fines resulted from the fact that the Slaters did not like the idea that masters might take on journeymen as full partners. In 1701, at the end of December, a £10 Scots penalty was imposed on masters who accepted journeymen as partners in as much as one third of a job. And this regulation did not refer only to Dundee; it was to hold 'in the countrie' as well as in the burgh. Like the Masons, Wrights and other Trades, the Slaters owned seats in the Town church. Unlike others, however, these were not reserved for members of the Trade from an early date, as we have seen, but were treated as a source of income. The second Lockit Book records the names of all those to whom the seats were rented, sometimes for life. In 1930, although the Kirk Session had bought over the pews, they allowed the Slaters the rents of these for five years.

The Slater Trade made one very helpful contribution to Dundee life which is not heard of in their own surviving records. In 1762, Deacon Peter Howie signed a petition to the Town Council, asking that slaters should be relieved of the burden of quartering of soldiers, when the town had to provide this. His reason was that 'the Sclaiters were always very assisting with ladders for extinguishing fires when kindled in this Burgh', and though offered payment for this, they always refused to accept it. The Council agreed to this request.²

As a body, perhaps because of their smaller numbers, in the past the Slaters were less given to socialising than their fellow craftsmen. They certainly followed the usual habit of having dinners on special occasions, the 'sufficient denner' at the entry of new members or apprentices described in 1685, but in the late nineteenth century, they became less enthusiastic about communal outings. In 1846, the 'custom of sitting down to supper on St. Stephen's night, the expense of which being paid from the Trades funds', was ended 'at least till such time as the Trade's funds be in a state to admit such

expense'.³ At this particularly difficult time, this was perhaps a sensible decision, but they had certainly begun dining together again by 1874, in the Albion Hotel, Dundee, and in 1880, when what was described as 'the annual dinner' was to be taken at Blairgowrie. Two years later, they began to follow the fashion set by their more numerous fellow Trades of having an excursion in the summer months. In 1884, however, the Trade agreed to the suggestion of one member, a Mr. Butter, that in place of an excursion paid for out of the funds, each member should be paid £1-10-0 'allowing each individual to go where he pleases'. Three years later, after one or two more excursions, David Martin repeated this proposal and from then on, each year, sums of varying amounts from £1 in 1888 to be 'paid when the boxmaster had the necessary funds' to £5 in 1889 were given to each master slater in the Incorporation.

The decrease in interest in becoming a member of a Trade Incorporation after 1846 was bound to be more marked in its effects on a small group like the Slaters than on one with a larger pool of possible members like the Wrights. The Slaters had had financial problems before the loss of the monopolistic privileges of the incorporations. While at any time the Slater Trade's fees were in line with those of other incorporations, their smaller numbers meant that the sums they were dealing with were rather less than was perhaps comfortable for them. Of course, their poor must have also been rather less in number, but we saw in the records of the United Trades that their finances were not always in a very healthy state. They imposed annual or quarterly payments in 1654 but in their answers to the Town Clerk in 1832 they stated they paid no annual subscriptions; this is surprising as in 1830 the majority voted in favour of continuing with the quarterly accounts and there is no cancellation of this decision before 1832.⁴ There may have been a clerical error which did not put in a 'not' before the crucial decision, but the accounts are not available, so checking this is not possible.

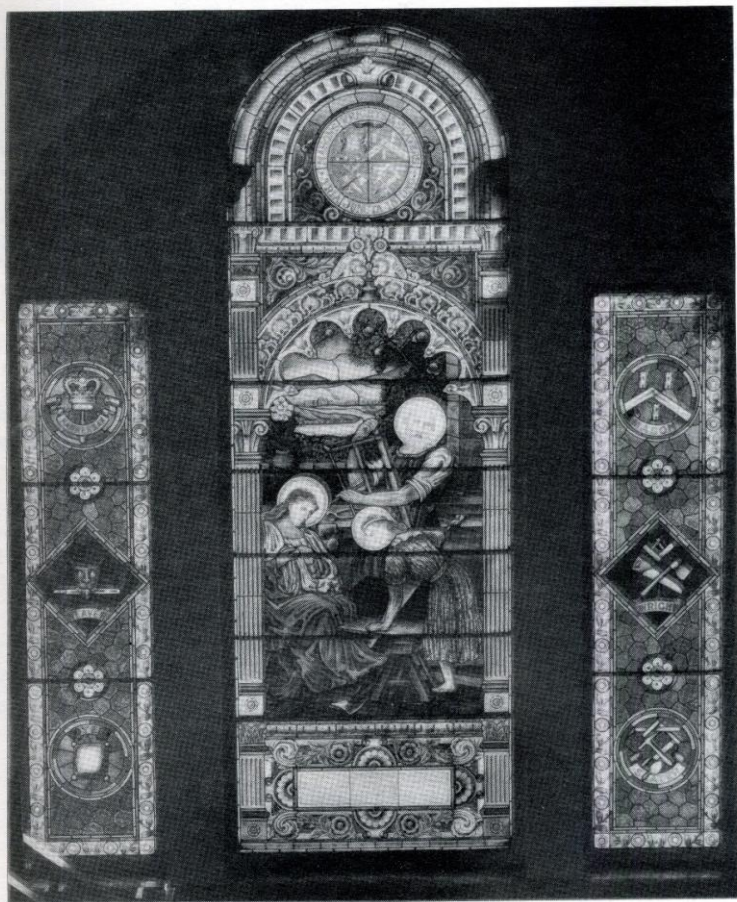
The Slaters then never had resources comparable to those of the Wrights. In the improving circumstances of the 1850s, however, they found themselves with some money to invest. This was a very different picture from that of 1844 when they had felt so hard up that they had stopped their annual contribution of one guinea to Dundee Royal Infirmary. They were able to lend the Wrights £90 and various sums were lent and repaid, as was usual, until eventually, in 1874, the clerk, George Haggart, a lpcal solicitor, who was also clerk to the Wrights, was told to invest £200 in the Scottish Provident Investment Co., either on deposit or debenture for four years at 4V2%. The Boxmaster did receive interest in June, 1876, but this was to prove a poor investment. By 1900 the company had been liquidated, its assets distributed and all its books and papers destroyed by order of the Court of Session. The Slaters' clerk went bankrupt in 1900 and the virtual disappearance of the Trade's capital became known at this time. It does seem somewhat remiss of the Trade and its officials that it had not been noticed previously that something was amiss, but we cannot tell what excuses the clerk may

have given. Haggart offered to repay 2s. in the £ which the Slaters accepted on condition that the Masons and Wrights would also lose their due interest. The Wrights' accounts for this period are not in the Dundee Archive Centre but their capital, even after the sale of their property, was always better able to withstand such a loss than the Slaters'.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, A.J. Warden recommended that the Slaters should recruit more members 'to give the Trade more weight and importance in the town than it presently possesses'.⁵ This advice fell on deaf ears and the Incorporation almost disappeared. There is a complete blank in the Lockit Book from 1869 to 1926, but the Trade was meeting, as the minute book shows. Numbers, or at least active interest in the Trade, slumped, and this became even more marked during the First World War. In 1917 the only person at the meeting apart from the clerk was Deacon James M. Fyffe, who duly signed the Boxmaster's accounts and re-elected himself Deacon. The following year, at the meeting in November, he is described as the only surviving member of the Trade and he once again re-elected himself Deacon, as well as appointing himself interim Boxmaster.

But Deacon Fyffe had apparently been remiss in carrying out some of his duties. In December 1925, the Court of Session heard the case brought by David Robert Abbot Law against the Incorporation of Slaters, the United Trades of Dundee and H.M. Advocate, William Watson, as *ultima haeres*. Mr. Law claimed membership of the Trade since 27 September 1917, on the grounds that on that date, Deacon Fyffe had agreed to meet him at the clerk's office and enter him as a member of the Trade, on payment of an entry fee of £5-5-0, as he was the grandson of John Law, a former member. The Deacon did not appear at the appointed time but, according to Law, admitted on several occasions that he was bound to admit this aspiring member and fully intended to. The ceremony was delayed on one pretext or another and in December 1920, Fyffe was killed in an accident, leaving the Slaters with no living entered masters. None of the defendants appeared before the Court and Lord Moncrieff gave judgement in favour of Mr. Law on 6 January 1926.⁶

Two days after this, the decision was entered in the Lockit Book and David Law signed the entry as the only certain remaining member. He also entered Charles Brand on the same day and the Slaters were once more in active existence, if only in a very small way. One of the first pieces of business of the reactivated Trade was to decide that the legal expenses incurred by the new Deacon in asserting his membership should be borne by the Trade. It seemed only fair.



6. Stained-glass window, St. Andrew's Church showing the symbols of the Three United Trades.
(Stanley Turner)

CONCLUSION

Once the legal basis for the Trades' existence had gone with the loss of the privilege of the monopoly of work within the Royal Burghs, little practical reason for their continuing existence remained. The stronger, wealthier and more numerous an incorporation, the more likely it was to survive in a viable state and the history of the Three United Trades seems to bear out this theory, the Wrights retaining greater numbers than the Masons or Slaters. Indeed, two slaters who had applied for entrance some time before the 1846 act was passed immediately renounced all claims on the Slater Trade, a compromise payment of £5 being agreed on. Today, the bonds tend to be those of historical pride or of social ties enjoyed by men with similar craft and professional interests. Another alternative is that of the Dundee Bonnetmakers, whose craft skills were obsolete before those of their fellows in the Nine Trades but who have become a purely social club with a degree of social selectiveness. The Mason, Wright and Slater Trades in Dundee, singly or together, did not at any time possess the sort of wealth that has encouraged similar incorporations in other cities to continue their existence as large property-owning or investing societies, but historical and emotional ties and a considerable amount of local pride in Dundee itself have not been without their effect, as the continuing existence of the Three United Trades proves.

APPENDIX

James Be the grace of god king of Scottis To all and sundrie oure liegis and subjectis quhome it effeiris qu[ha] have knowlege th[e]n o[u]r l[ett]res sal cum Greting:

Witjnes] Ye We to have gevin and gran tit and be thir o[u]r lettres gevin and grantis libertie fredome and full-power to all masouns wrychtis coll[?] sklaiteris and utheris craftismen that wirkis be square rewle; lyne; or compass under the airt of geomatrie dwelland and resident within the burgh of Dundie to elect and chuse yeirlie at Michaelmes thair awin deacon of Craft And to hald thair courtis and assemblies be thame selffis for guid ordour taking concern anent their craft Siclyke and als frielie in all respectis and condiciounis as ony uther craft exerteis the same within our said burcht or as the craftis hes brocht and usen within our brogh of Edinburt.

Gevin under our privie seile at halierudhous the sext day of Merche the yeire of god jai vc four scoiris ellevin yeiris and of oure reigne the twentie five yeir.

Per Sign'

Manibus subscriptis

Free Modern Translation of the Above

JAMES By the Grace of God King of Scots:

To All and sundry our lieges and subjects who it affects to have knowledge, to these our letters shall come:

GREETING:

Witness Ye that We have given and granted, and by these Our Letters have given and granted liberty, freedom and full power to all masons, wrights, [dykers?] slaters, and other craftsmen that work by square rule, line or compass under the art of geometry, who are dwelling and resident within the Burgh of Dundee;

To elect and choose yearly at Michaelmas†, their own Deacon of Craft, and to hold their courts and assemblies by themselves, for good order in anything concerning their craft, similarly and as freely in all respects and conditions as any other craft exerts within our Burgh of Edinburgh.

Given under Our Privy Seal at Holyroodhouse, 6 March 159172‡, in the twenty-fifth year of Our Reign.

† 29 September.

‡ Before 1600 the Scottish New Year started on Lady Day/Annunciation on 25 March. Although the document is dated 1591 it would be 1592 by present reckoning.

In recent years this document was discovered in an old deed box by the present clerk of the United Trades, Mr. N. Bowman. I came across no reference to it in any of the records of the United Trades which I consulted. Where it has been for almost four centuries, neither mentioned nor apparently remembered by the Trades, is indeed a mystery. It has now been framed and is kept in the Vestry of St. Andrew's Church. I have to thank Mr. Iain Flett, Dundee Archive and Record Centre, for the above transcription and translation.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>A.P.S.</i>	<i>Acts of the Parliament of Scotland</i>
DDARC	Dundee District Archive and Records Centre
D.T.C.	Dundee Town Council
<i>M.L.B.</i>	<i>Masons' Lockit Book</i>
<i>P.S.A. Scotland</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries, Scotland</i>
<i>R.P. C.</i>	<i>Register of the Privy Council</i>
<i>W.L.B.</i>	<i>Wrights' Lockit Book</i>
<i>S.L.B.</i>	<i>Slaters' Lockit Book</i>
S.R.O.	Scottish Record Office

SOURCES

Apart from the Lockit Books of the Three United Trades, which are still in the custody of the clerk of the four societies, most of the material for this study is to be found in their other records, deposited in the Dundee District Archive and Record Centre, with the general reference number GD/GRW/ followed by TU, M, W or S for the relevant incorporation. In the following footnotes, only the initial has been used to identify the separate incorporations' archives, to avoid cumbersome and, in the circumstances, unnecessary repetition. The documents include minute-books, accounts, some letters and some loose material in boxes, which have not yet been fully listed. These last are referred to as M, W, S or TU Misc. Those deposited include United Trades' records covering most fully the period 1741 to 1885; the Masons' minutes ending in 1852; the Wrights' in 1883; the Slaters' in 1976: some accounts for varying periods for each incorporation. Dates found in the text are not normally repeated in the footnotes and some of the later records still in use in the clerk's office have not been referred to. Miss Susan Payne of Perth Museum also helped me with the records of the Incorporation of Perth Wrights.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 1

- ¹ 9 Vic. c.17.
- ² *W.L.B.*: Alexander Maxwell, *Old Dundee After the Reformation* (Edinburgh – Dundee, 1884) 258.
- ³ M1/1, 1786: W1/2/1, 3 February, 1807.
- ⁴ See Chapter 4.
- ⁵ Kenneth J. Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland, 1715-1815* (John Donald, 1979) 162; Henry Lumsden, *History of the Skinners of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1937) 30.
- ⁶ *W.L.B.*
- ⁷ W1/1/1, 13 May, 1784.
- ⁸ W1/1/2, 3 May, 1808.
- ⁹ The minutes of the Perth Wright Incorporation do not mention any communication from Dundee and no copy of a letter seems to exist.
- ¹⁰ Annette M. Smith, 'Dundee and the Forty-Five' in L. Scott Moncrieff (ed.) *Still With Us* (forthcoming).

CHAPTER 2

- ¹ A. Black, *Guilds and Civil Societies in European Political Thought from the Twelfth Century to the Present* (London, 1984) 6,7; R. Nicholson, *Scotland in the Later Middle Ages* (Edinburgh, 1974) 307-8.
- ² Nicholson, *ibid.* 107; A.J. Warden, *Burgh Laws of Dundee* (London, 1872) 91-109.
- ³ *A.P.S.* ii. 234; I.F. Grant, *The Social and Economic Development of Scotland before 1603* (Edinburgh, 1930) 430.
- ⁴ W2/3/2.
- ⁵ *A.P.S.* ii. 234.
- ⁶ *A.P.S.* ii. 97.
- ⁷ T.M. Devine, 'The Merchant Class of Larger Scottish Towns' in G. Gordon and B. Dicks (eds.), *Scottish Urban History* (Aberdeen, 1983) 92-111.
- ⁸ *A.P.S.* ii. 95; *A.P.S.* iii. 579.
- ⁹ Warden, *op. cit.* Sections IV, V *passim*.
- ¹⁰ *W.L.B.* 3 May, 1670.
- ¹¹ David Murray Lyon, *The History of the Lodge of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh and London, 1873) 10.
- ¹² *S.L.B.*
- ¹³ *W.L.B.*
- ¹⁴ *W.L.B.* 1635.
- ¹⁵ M2/1; W1/1/3(i)
- ¹⁶ *W.L.B.*; M2/2.
- ¹⁷ M2/1.
- ¹⁸ W1/1/4, May, 1838.
- ¹⁹ W2/4/2: M2/2.
- ²⁰ S1/2, 28 September, 1825; 26 December, 1826; 20 January, 1827.
- ²¹ *W.L.B.* 5 January, 1818; W1/1/2, 5 January, 1818.
- ²² M4/1, 4 February, 1839.
- ²³ *M.Misc.*, 1873: *W. Misc.*
- ²⁴ M1/1. pp. 118-9.

- ²⁵ M1/2, 30 January, 1812.
²⁶ M1/2, 22 June, 1806; S1/1, 17 March, 1806.
²⁷ M1/2, 21 December, 1812.
²⁸ W1/1/1, 13 April, 1803.
²⁹ M2/2, 1808-9, 1814-15.
³⁰ *S.L.B.*, *passim*.
³¹ M3/1, 27 December, 1709.
³² M2/1, 1727-32.
³³ W1/1/1, 27 June, 1767.
³⁴ *W.L.B.*
³⁵ *ibid.* 5, 20 August, 1762.
³⁶ *S.L.B.* 1693.
³⁷ W1/1/1, 13 May, 1784.
³⁸ Warden, *op. cit.* 587; *W.L.B.*
³⁹ *S.L.B.* 9 March, 1685.
⁴⁰ M. Misc.
⁴¹ M. Misc. Decree of Masons, 27 December, 1660, masons signing by their marks.
⁴² Warden, *op. cit.* 177-8.
⁴³ M1/1, 26 January, 1789.
⁴⁴ UT. Misc.
⁴⁵ M1/1, April, 1807.
⁴⁶ W2/3/2.
⁴⁷ W. Misc., 19 January, 1803. Decreet extracted 6 April, 1803.
⁴⁸ W1/1/2, 28 August, 1803; M1/2, 10 February, 1803.
⁴⁹ *Reports from the Commissioners on Municipal Corporations in Scotland, 1835* 1835 [30] xxix 84 (Irish University Press, 8).
⁵⁰ M1/1/2; S1/1, 26 December, 1808; W1/1/2, 17 October, 1806.
⁵¹ 56 G. III c. 67.
⁵² *Report on Municipal Corporations in Scotland, 1835* 1835 [31] xxix 234.

CHAPTER 3

- ¹ W2/1/1.
² DDARC GD/GRW/G1/2. This entry talks of a society, not an incorporation.
³ TU2/4.
⁴ W2/1/1.
⁵ TU1/1.
⁶ TU2/4.
⁷ TU2/4.
⁸ All the material concerning the building of St. Andrew's Church will be found in TU1/1 under the respective dates unless otherwise indicated.
⁹ *W.L.B.*
¹⁰ DDARC CH2/8 - 1218, 9, 23 July, 13 August, 22 October, 10, 24 December, 1806, 7, 21 January, 11, 25 February, 8, 29 April, 20, 27 May, 8, 23 July, 1807, 13 January, 1808.
¹¹ W1/1/5, 20 June, 1872.
¹² S1/1, 16 February, 1892, 18 September, 1961, 24 September, 1962.

¹³ W. Ferguson, *Scotland: 1689 to the Present* (Edinburgh, 1968) 245.

¹⁴ TU1/1.

¹⁵ W2/3/2.

¹⁶ TU1/1, 13 October, 1817, 29 April, 19 May, 24 September, 1818, 14 July, 1819.

¹⁷ 1 & 2 W. IV c. 46.

¹⁸ TU1/1, 28 March, 1831.

¹⁹ 3 & 4 W. IV c. 76.

²⁰ TU1/3, *W.L.B.*

CHAPTER 4

¹ Appendix A.

² *R.P.C.* Second Series, III, 111, 118, 127, 128, 135-6, 227.

³ Robert Scott Mylne *The King's Master Masons* (Edinburgh, 1893) 109-110.

⁴ J.D. Marwick (ed.), *Records of the Convention of Royal Burghs, 1615-1676* (Edinburgh, 1878) 297-8.

⁵ *R.P.C.* 227.

⁶ DDARC Dundee Town Council *Register of Deeds* 26, p. 903.

⁷ M2/1.

⁸ Bannatyne Club, 102 (1856) pp. 318-9.

⁹ Lyon, *op. cit.* 38, 39; Douglas Knoop and G. Jones, *A Short History of Freemasonry to 1730* (M.U.P. 1940) 47.

¹⁰ Knoop, *ibid.* 89.

¹¹ A. Maxwell *Old Dundee Prior to the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1891) 173-4.

¹² M3/1, 1659, 29 December, 1660.

¹³ M1/1, p. 75, 29 January, 1789.

¹⁴ M1/2.

¹⁵ Knoop, *op. cit.* 39.

¹⁶ S.R.O. RH 9/17/14/2.

¹⁷ Knoop, *op. cit.* 16, 44-47.

¹⁸ I am indebted to Dr. David Stevenson, Director of the School for Scottish Studies, University of Aberdeen, for this information.

¹⁹ M. Misc.

²⁰ David Stevenson, 'Masonry, symbolism and ethics in the life of Sir Robert Moray, FRS' in *P.S.A. Scotland* (1984) 405-431.

²¹ Knoop, *op. cit.* 39.

²² *M.L.B.* 7 January, 1735.

²³ M1/1, 27 December, 1743.

²⁴ M3/1.

²⁵ M3/1.

²⁶ *M.L.B.* 25 November, 1761.

²⁷ M1/2, 23 September, 1830.

²⁸ M1/2, *passim*.

²⁹ M. Misc.

³⁰ M1/2, 21 December, 1829.

³¹ M1/2, 22 March, 1841.

³² M1/2, 1842.

³³ M4/1, 9 May, 9 October, 1843.

³⁴ M1/1; M. Misc.

³⁵ M. Misc. 8 February, 1695.

³⁶ M. Misc. Extract of case heard before the Sheriff Substitute of the County of Forfar v. Thomas Webster.

³⁷ *M.L.B.*

³⁸ M. Misc. Scroll minute.

CHAPTER 5

¹ Francis J. Grant (ed.) *Commissariat Record of Brechin: Register of Testaments, 1576-1800* (Scottish Record Society, Edinburgh, 1902).

² W. Misc.

³ I must thank the members of the Abertay Historical Society who pointed this out to me.

⁴ W4/1, 1877.

⁵ W1/4, *passim* 1845-47.

⁶ W2/5/1-6.

⁷ Warden, *op. cit.* 151.

⁸ W2/4/1; W2/1/1, 1741 ff.

⁹ W. Misc. Extracts from DTC minute.

¹⁰ W2/1/1; W2/2, 1753-5, 1757-9.

¹¹ W1/1/2, 2 February, 4 May, 1819; W2/1/3. 1817-18.

¹² W. Misc.

¹³ W2/1/3. 1825-26, 1827-29.

¹⁴ W1/1/4. 6 July, 1847.

¹⁵ W. Misc. Discharge by the Trade.

¹⁶ *W.L.B.* 1670, 1690.

¹⁷ W. Misc.

¹⁸ W1/1/5. 21 August, 1863.

¹⁹ W2/4/2.

²⁰ W1/1/3 (i) 3 March, 1829.

²¹ W1/1/5, 27 October, 28 November, 1864, 10 January, 1865.

CHAPTER 6

¹ S1/1, 29 September, 1832.

² Dundee Burgh Charters, 166.

³ S1/1, 24 September, 1846.

⁴ S1/1. 2 July, 1830.

⁵ Warden, *op. cit.* 595.

⁶ S.R.O. CS17/1/145 p. 100.

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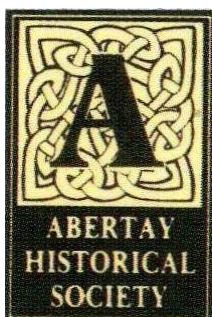
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