M030 Reordering of the choir, Glasgow Cathedral

Introduction

This scheme for reordering the E. end of Glasgow's medieval cathedral involved removing the old central pulpit, laying a new marble floor, installing an oak communion table and constructing a stone reredos.

Authorship: It appears from contemporary published sources that John Honeyman was personally responsible for the work.

Cost from job book: £535 1s 5d

Status: The reredos has been removed; other elements of the scheme survive

Current use: Cathedral (2014)

Listing category: A

Historic Scotland/HB Number: 32654

RCAHMS Site Number: NS66NW 17.00

Grid reference: NS 60248 65577

Chronology

1890
June: Approximate date of commencement of works. 1

1893
March: Reredos erected and reordering complete. 2

Description

Between 1890 and 1893 a general reordering of the choir of Glasgow Cathedral was carried out. The aim seems to have been to create a setting for Presbyterian worship that was more in keeping with the building's medieval character, as favoured by the ecclesiological movement. From contemporary press reports it seems clear that John Honeyman was personally responsible. 1 He was a scholarly architect with a keen interest in archaeology, and as early as 1854 he had published on the cathedral's architectural history. 2 While the work was in progress, he delivered a paper about the reordering to the Glasgow Archaeological Society. 3 Mackintosh may have been involved with the project as an assistant, but there is no documentary evidence for this.

Some of Honeyman's work has been removed, but photographs record its original appearance. The reordering involved relocating the old central pulpit, laying a new floor of coloured marbles, enclosing the sides of the choir with 'carved oak work' and installing on the site of the medieval high altar an oak communion table carved with a representation of the Last Supper. 4 The final and most prominent element of the scheme was the free-standing reredos of Caen stone and alabaster, which provided a backdrop for the communion table and gave it an altar-like dignity. Made by the sculptor James Young, it consisted of three traceried arches under crocketed gables, with statues at each end representing St Ninian and St Kentigern. 5 Its whiteness and delicacy contrasted starkly with the dark and massive 13th-century piers of the choir.

Some elements of the scheme were funded by private donors: the floor was paid for by William Gilfillan of Galbraith & Winton, the firm which laid the marble; the reredos was the gift of Lady Maxwell of Calderwood in memory of her husband Sir William Maxwell; and the communion table was given by James Garroway. 6 This may explain why not all the work is recorded in John Honeyman & Keppie's job book. However, their cash book records that they received £25 0s 0d on 23 April 1891 from Garroway, presumably in connection with the communion table, and £46 0s 0d for the reredos on 6 June 1893. 7 A payment of £40 0s 0d from the Cathedral Committee was received on 29 September 1890, and another on 14 March 1891. 8

People
Clients:
- Glasgow Cathedral Committee
- James Garroway
- William Gilfillan
- Lady Maxwell

Contractors:
- P. & W. Anderson
- Buchans & MacIntyre
- John Craig
- Galbraith & Winton
- Jones & Willis
- James Young

Job Book

The job books of Honeyman & Keppie (later Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh) are now held by The Hunterian, University of Glasgow and include four volumes related to the Mackintosh period. The books were used by the firm to keep a project-by-project, day-by-day record of contractors, suppliers and expenditure. The name of a project and/or client is usually at the top of the left-hand page, followed by information about tradesmen who tendered. The name of the measurer (quantity surveyor) is usually at the top of the right-hand page, followed by information about payments to contractors and suppliers. All of the data for M030 is entered in the tables below.

Page numbering is not consistent in the job books. Sometimes a single number refers to a double-page spread and sometimes each page is individually numbered. Here, each image of a double-page spread is identified by the number given at the top of the left-hand page. (Images of all of the pages from the four job books can be found at Browse Job Books, Visit Book and Cash Book.)

The following information about M030 has been extracted from the job books:

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Documents

Images
Bibliography

Published

- *British Architect*, 34, 26 December 1890, 34, p. 493
- *Glasgow Herald*, 25 March 1893, p. 6

Notes:

1: *British Architect*, 34, 26 December 1890, p. 493.


5: *British Architect*, 34, 26 December 1890, p. 493.


11: No tender recorded

12: No tender recorded

13: No tender recorded

14: No tender recorded

Mackintosh Architecture: Context, Making and Meaning

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