



M106 Competition designs for Paisley Technical School

Introduction

John Honeyman & Keppie entered two designs in the Paisley Technical School competition. They were placed second and third. The design placed second was a symmetrical Scots-Renaissance-style building with striking central apsidal feature, embellished with a figurative relief frieze; elaborate 16th–17th-century style Scottish doorways on the wings; and a corbelled string-course. A perspective of it, drawn by Thomas Raffles Davison, was published in the *British Architect* in May 1896 and exhibited at the Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts in 1897 and the Royal Scottish Academy in 1898. No images of the design which came third are known.

This was not the only competition in which John Honeyman & Keppie submitted more than one design. For the Glasgow Art Galleries competition the firm submitted three designs: one in the Ionic order; another with towers; and a third with a dome. Two designs were submitted in both the National Bank of Scotland and Liverpool Cathedral competitions.

Authorship: The authorship of the design, known only from Raffles Davison's perspective, is unclear. The combination of conventional historical and abstract details suggest that John Keppie and Mackintosh may have collaborated on it.

Status: Unbuilt

Chronology

1895

January: A board of directors comprising leading town figures is established for the newly instituted Paisley Technical School. The new building is to house three departments – art; chemistry and physics; and science (naval architecture, engineering and trades) – and a hall for 300 students. It is expected to cost £17,000. Specifications for the building are drawn up in consultation with the Department of Science and Art in South Kensington, London. ¹

March: John Honeyman & Keppie are among nine architects invited to participate in the competition. Edinburgh architect Robert Rowand Anderson is appointed assessor. ²

1896

17 February: Competition closing date. ³

27 March: The results of the competition are reported in the *British Architect*. Paisley architect Thomas Graham Abercrombie's design is placed first and he secures the job. John Honeyman & Keppie's two designs are placed second and third. The practice is awarded the first premium of 25 guineas given their two high placings; the second premium is awarded to the fourth-placed design. ⁴

15 April: *Building Industries* publishes a full-page article on the competition result and an illustration of the winning design. ⁵

29 May: Thomas Raffles Davison's perspective of Honeyman & Keppie's second-placed design is published in the *British Architect*. ⁶

1897

March: The perspective drawing is exhibited at the Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts (322). ⁷

1898

March: Raffles Davison's perspective is exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy (592). ⁸

Description

In 1895 John Honeyman & Keppie were invited to participate in the competition for Paisley Technical School by its newly established board of directors. The new building was to house three departments – art; chemistry and physics; and science (naval architecture, engineering and trades) – and a hall for 300 students. It was expected to cost £17,000. A site and £3,000 towards the construction of the building were donated by Paisley thread manufacturers and philanthropists, J. & P. Coats. A further £14,000 had already been accumulated by two existing educational organisations involved in founding the School. Specifications for the building were drawn up in consultation with the Department of Science and Art in South Kensington, London, which oversaw the construction of new buildings such as this. ¹

The practice entered two designs in the competition. These were awarded second and third prize. Paisley architect Thomas Graham Abercrombie won the

competition and secured the job.² His building stands (2012) on George Street, Paisley, just W. of the junction with Storie Street. Honeyman & Keppie's second-placed design was a symmetrical Scots-Renaissance-style building with striking central apsidal feature embellished with a processional figurative relief frieze, elaborate 16th–17th-century style Scottish doorways on the wings and corbelled string-course on the principal elevation. No drawings by the practice of their two designs survive. However, a perspective of the design placed second was prepared by the editor of the *British Architect*, Thomas Raffles Davison.

The authorship of the design as evidenced from Raffles Davison's drawing is unclear. The form of the design and the use of conventional historical details, such as the heavy, baroque-inspired open pediment, pinnacles, and columns surrounding the doors on the wings, may suggest Keppie's work, as for example at Anderson's College Medical School. More abstract, apparently functional details may suggest the work of Mackintosh. A similar corbelled shelf-like string-course can be found later in his perspective of the Daily Record Building.³ A similar treatment of window sills as a deep shelf— here as a continuation on the side elevation of the shelf-like string-course – can be found at the Glasgow Herald building and at Martyrs School, and in his unsuccessful competition design for the the Royal Insurance Company building. A processional frieze can be found on buildings by architects Mackintosh is known to have admired, such as John Belcher and Leonard Stokes, and he appears to have planned a similar frieze for the museum in the Glasgow School of Art.⁴ Attenuated columns with broad, flattened cyma-recta profile capitals between the first-floor windows suggest his sensibilities; comparable capital-like projections without columns situated above the frieze can be found above the stair-tower windows at Ruchill Free Church Halls.

Thomas Raffles Davison's perspective of Honeyman & Keppie's design was published in the *British Architect*. The journal, a keen supporter of the practice, described the design as 'clever and original', and continued, 'one cannot help feeling a little curious to know why the selecting committee did not honour themselves by giving it first place.'⁵

The following year the perspective drawing was exhibited at the Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts (322). The *Glasgow Herald* critic praised Raffles Davison's 'beautiful drawing' of Honeyman & Keppie's design, commenting that it 'shows their work at its best'. Like the *British Architect*, the critic was dissatisfied with the result of the competition: 'The design is admirable, and would have formed an important addition to the architecture of the town, though, doubtless such considerations are among the last which appeal to the powers responsible for civic art.'⁶

In 1898 Raffles Davison's perspective was exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy (592). The *Glasgow Herald* critic's only comment on this occasion was that the drawing has been 'noticed elsewhere'.⁷ The project was also exhibition by the practice at the Glasgow International Exhibition 1901 (290).



People

Clients:

- Board of directors of Paisley Technical School

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 M106 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 M106 has been extracted from the job books:

Documents

Bibliography

Published

- Evelyn Hood, *Forward by Degrees. The University of Paisley 1897–1997*, Paisley: University of Paisley, 1997, pp. 21–9
- David Stark, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Co.*, Catrine, Ayrshire: Stenlake Publishing, 2004, pp. 194–5
- *British Architect*, 45, 27 March 1896, p. 215; 45, 29 May 1896, p. 380; p. 384; 47, 19 March 1897, p. 201
- *Builder*, 4 April 1896, p. 301

- *Building Industries*, 7, 15 April 1896, p. 5; 16 March 1897, pp. 183–5
- *Glasgow Herald*, 13 March 1897, p. 8; 12 March 1898, p. 4
- *Magazine of Art*, January 1895, p. 199

Notes:

- 1: Evelyn Hood, *Forward by Degrees. The University of Paisley 1897–1997*, Paisley: University of Paisley, 1997, p. 24–6; *Magazine of Art*, January 1895, p. 199; *Building Industries*, 7, 15 April 1896, p. 5.
- 2: *British Architect*, 45, 27 March 1896, p. 215; *Builder*, 70, 4 April 1896, p. 301.
- 3: *Building Industries*, 7, 15 April 1896, p. 5.
- 4: *British Architect*, 45, 27 March 1896, p. 215.
- 5: *Building Industries*, 7, 15 April 1896, p. 5.
- 6: *British Architect*, 45, 29 May 1896, pp. 380, 384.
- 7: *Glasgow Herald*, 13 March 1897.
- 8: *Glasgow Herald*, 12 March 1898.
- 9: Evelyn Hood, *Forward by Degrees. The University of Paisley 1897–1997*, Paisley: University of Paisley, 1997, p. 24–6; *Magazine of Art*, January 1895, p. 199; *Building Industries*, 15 April 1896, p. 5.
- 10: *British Architect*, 45, 27 March 1896, p. 215.
- 11: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 52400 (M182-015).
- 12: The proposed frieze can be seen on the September 1897 section drawing. Glasgow City Archives Collection: Glasgow Dean of Guild plans, TD1309/A/123.
- 13: *British Architect*, 45, 29 May 1896, pp. 380, 384.
- 14: *Glasgow Herald*, 13 March 1897, p. 8. The *British Architect* deemed the *Glasgow Herald* critic 'evidently competent to speak with authority' and reprinted the review of the Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts exhibition rather than providing their own: *British Architect*, 47, 19 March 1897, p. 201.
- 15: *Glasgow Herald*, 12 March 1898, p. 4.

Mackintosh Architecture: Context, Making and Meaning

Led by The Hunterian, University of Glasgow, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council; with additional support from The Monument Trust, The Pilgrim Trust, and the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art; and collaborative input from Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.



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