

## M211 The Mary Acre, Brechin

### Introduction

This four-bedroom detached pink sandstone house in Brechin, Angus, shares features with slightly earlier Renfrewshire houses, Redlands and Ferndean.

**Authorship:** The semicircular stair tower and style of some interior woodwork suggest the involvement or influence of Mackintosh. John Keppie corresponded with the client.

**Alternative addresses:** Argyle Street    Argyll Street

**Cost from job book:** £2046 9s 6d <sup>1</sup>

**Status:** Standing building

**Current use:** Residential (2014)

**Listing category:** B: Listed as 'The Mary Acre, 11 Argyle Street'

**Historic Scotland/HB Number:** 22412

**RCAHMS Site Number:** NO56SE 95

**Grid reference:** NO 59433 60441

### Chronology

#### 1902

15 April: submission of first plans to client. <sup>1</sup>

4 June: John Keppie writes to Alexander Philip regarding alterations to sketch plans of house made by Keppie at Philip's suggestion. <sup>2</sup>

June: Amended first-floor plan of the house. <sup>3</sup>

14 July: Plans approved by Brechin Dean of Guild Court. <sup>4</sup>

July: Amended plan of kitchen entrance. <sup>5</sup>

28 August: Contractor tenders accepted. <sup>6</sup>

24 September: Altered plans submitted to Brechin Dean of Guild Court. <sup>7</sup>

29 September: Alterations approved by Brechin Dean of Guild Court. <sup>8</sup>

#### 1903

March: Drawings prepared showing further alterations to service wing of house. <sup>9</sup>

15 October: Master of Works deems house completed and certifies it fit for occupation. <sup>10</sup>

#### 1904

October: Final payments to contractors. <sup>11</sup>

26 October: Discharged account sent by John Keppie. <sup>12</sup>

#### 1906

6 October: New first-floor nursery built over the service wing is deemed complete by the Burgh Surveyor. <sup>13</sup>

**1979**

Service wing converted into a separate house. <sup>14</sup>

**1980**

Semicircular stone sun-porch with slate roof designed by architects Robbie & Wellwood is added to the N. elevation of the main house. <sup>15</sup>

**1990s**

Conversion of attic to two bedrooms and en-suite bathroom, and upgrading of attic stairs. Minor alterations also carried out to ground-floor cloakroom, kitchen and first-floor bathroom, and en-suite bathroom added to master bedroom on first floor. <sup>16</sup>

## Description

### Commission

The commission for The Mary Acre, Argyll Street, Brechin, probably originated with the restoration work carried out by the practice at Brechin Cathedral in 1900–2. The client, Alexander Philip, was honorary secretary of the cathedral's executive committee for the restoration and corresponded with John Honeyman about the work. <sup>1</sup> The name of the house commemorates a medieval hospital dedicated to the Virgin Mary which stood on Philip's acre site. <sup>2</sup>



By late 1900 Philip already owned the Argyll Street plot. In his professional capacity as a solicitor he also represented another plot-owner when they and others wrote to the Brechin Commissioners of Police in November 1900 calling for the 'levelling and Macadamizing' of the street. <sup>3</sup> In October 1901, the Commissioners issued the residents and plot-owners of Argyll Street with payment notices for the improvement works. Alexander Philip was charged £48 16s 3d, considerably less than others. <sup>4</sup>

By early summer 1902, planning of the house was well under way with John Keppie in charge of the design. <sup>5</sup> In a reply of 4 June, Keppie wrote to Philip that he had 'embodied' Philip's suggested alterations, and enclosed a sketch showing the latest plan, to which he had also made further slight changes. Keppie closed the letter: 'If you approve of the plans I would go into the Elevations and then we could have a chat about the matter with plans.' <sup>6</sup> The design progressed rapidly: one surviving drawing showing an amended first-floor plan is dated June 1902; a set of 12 drawings for the house was approved by Brechin Dean of Guild Court on 14 July. Contractor tenders for the building work were accepted on 28 August 1902. <sup>7</sup> Three additional drawings were discovered at the time of the launch of this website in 2014, in Brechin Cathedral archive. <sup>8</sup> Keppie's correspondence with Philip also refers to a possible commission from one of Philip's clients for a double villa in Edzell, but this is not referred to in his subsequent correspondence with Philip and no further information has to date been located. <sup>9</sup>

### Exterior

The elevations of this two-storey pink-grey ashlar sandstone house with its semi-cylindrical tower display similarities to the elevations of commissions of this period for Redlands, Bridge of Weir; Ferndean, Barrhead; and Dunottar, Kilmacolm. In plan, however, it is distinct with individual rooms and the service wing essentially arranged around, and projecting from, a much smaller hall in the centre.

The stonework is snecked and stugged with smooth dressings. The gables at S., E. and W. are half-timbered with roughcast, and both S. and E. have canted bays on the ground floor. Decoration is minimal: there is a first-floor string-course on the E. gable and on the tower; the square-headed front door has a moulded architrave – from door-handle height – and cornice. Windows are largely multi-paned sashes except those of the tower, which are leaded. The pitched roofs are slated, with overhanging eaves and bargeboards on projecting gables.



### Interior

The front door leads through a vestibule with mosaic floor into the central hallway. The inner front door reputedly had Glasgow Style stained glass, but it has been removed. The wide dog-leg stair opens out on the N. side of the hall. To the W. a door leads via an internal vestibule to the large kitchen and service wing beyond. To the S. was the inner hall, which originally served as an ante-room to the drawing room; these two rooms have since been combined to make one large room. To the E. of the inner hall was the library (now–2014– the dining room), and to its W. was originally the dining room (now a sitting room). An architrave in the wall between inner hall and drawing room suggests a folding partition may have formed the division. By 1982, this partition had been removed to create a single, large drawing room. The inner hall with its separate entrance may have served as a waiting room for clients attending appointments with Philip, a solicitor, in his private library. <sup>10</sup>

On the first floor, four large bedrooms and a bathroom open off the hall. The bedroom in the E. gable had a dressing room adjacent.

Several styles are in evidence in the interior woodwork here. As at both Redlands and Ferndean, this suggests the involvement of more than one designer, including perhaps Mackintosh or another member of the practice influenced by him.<sup>11</sup> The Mackintosh-style woodwork certainly draws on details of his projects, or includes details appearing in later projects with which Mackintosh is definitely associated, but is less sophisticated.

In the drawing room, the simple, square sandstone fireplace is framed by tapering square wooden pilasters and a cornice at picture-rail height, echoing the hall fireplace at Windyhill of 1901–2. Between the cornice and outward-curving mantelshelf is a wooden overmantel panel with an oval bisected by vertical moulded rectangular forms and five oval-shaped 'beads' arranged along its top edge. These motifs are strongly reminiscent of the decoration around the piano in Mackintosh's 1901 music room for the House for an Art Lover competition.

The dining-room fireplace is framed by tapering square pilasters and has an ogee-shaped mantel. This chimneypiece displays stylistic similarities to earlier bedroom fireplaces at Redlands and Ferndean, and later fireplaces in the flat and offices at Comrie from 1904–5. The turquoise tiles and grate are not original.

Door architraves which are concave above door-handle height, with a thick curved outside edge, and convex below are also found later in the Comrie flat. Stair newel posts are carved with Mackintosh-style rectilinear and oval forms with simple square balusters between.



Historically inspired woodwork, perhaps reflecting the influence of Keppie, is found alongside the Mackintosh-inspired details. The drawing room and inner hall have Jacobean-style wall panelling to picture-rail height and strapwork moulding on the ceiling. Further strapwork ceiling moulding and a conventional stone 'Windsor' fireplace were installed in Philip's private library.

At the top of the stairs there is a curious amalgamation of stylistically unrelated details: the full-height, square newel post is decorated with an unusual moulded 'capital' corresponding to the height of the wide frieze rail around the hall; panelling above the rail is decorated with both conventional moulding and five low-relief squares. Beyond the door architraves, no further woodwork on the first-floor indicates the influence of Mackintosh.



## Alterations

In 1906 the house was extended to provide additional accommodation for Philip's growing family.<sup>12</sup> An unknown architect designed a nursery over the service wing with a hipped roof and dormer windows, completed by 6 October 1906.<sup>13</sup>

In 1979, the service wing was converted into a separate residence and the garden divided by a new wall. UPVC double-glazed windows have since been fitted and in 1980 a semi-circular sun porch was added to the N. elevation of the main house, in the angle of the new garden wall.<sup>14</sup>

Since 1982, when the current (2014) owners moved into the house, the attic has been converted to bedrooms and a bathroom. New attic stairs have been built from the first-floor hall, with a balustrade and newel post modelled on those of the main staircase. The layout of ground-floor cloakroom has been changed. The original bathroom is now connected to the adjacent bedroom by a new door. The W.C. and store across the first-floor hall were converted to a shower room, and central heating was installed. External secondary glazing has been added. During 2011, eroded stonework was repaired using lime mortar.

## People

### Clients:

- Alexander Philip

### Contractors:

- Robert Aitken
- John Bryden & Sons
- David A. Crabb
- John Davidson
- Douglas, Hunter & Whitson
- James Dures
- Ferguson & Carver
- Galbraith & Winton
- William McGeoch, Kemp & Co.

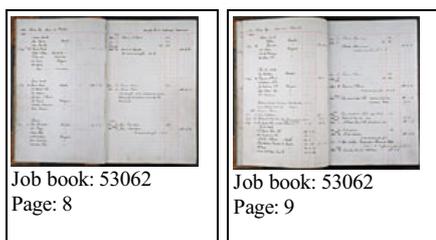
- Charles Middleton & Co.
- J. C. Middleton
- Charles Thomson

## 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 M211 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 M211 has been extracted from the job books:



**Client:** Alexander Philip

**Measurer:** Douglas, Hunter & Whitson

**Tenders:**

Contractor	Type	Address	Date	Value	Accepted
John Baxter	mason	Brechin	no data in job book	£997 18s 7d <sup>1</sup>	no
Alex Crocket	mason	Brechin	no data in job book	£940 0s 0d	no
David A. Crabb	mason	Brechin		£971 17s 2d <sup>2</sup>	yes (28 August 1902)
Liddle & Calder	mason	Careston by Brechin	no data in job book	no data in job book	no
T. P. Jamieson	mason	Bailieston	no data in job book	no data in job book	no
James Grant	mason	Glasgow	no data in job book	no data in job book	no
J. H. Whyte	mason	Glasgow	no data in job book	£1313 13s 1d	no
James Ford & Son	mason	Montrose	no data in job book	£1270 0s 0d	no
James Dures	joiner	Brechin	no data in job book	£703 0s 0d <sup>3</sup>	yes (28 August 1902)
William Black & Son	joiner	Brechin	no data in job book	no data in job book	no
George Ogilvie	joiner	Brechin	no data in job book	no data in job book	no
Jamieson & Caird	joiner	Brechin	no data in job book	£738 0s 0d	no
James Grant	joiner	Glasgow	no data in job book	£849 7s 8d	no
Matthew Henderson	joiner	Glasgow	no data in job book	'returned with thanks'	no

Thomas Brown	joiner	Glasgow	no data in job book	£803 2s 0d	no
John Davidson	slater	Brechin	no data in job book	£131 0s 0d <sup>4</sup>	
William Frazer	slater	Brechin	no data in job book	£140 13s 2d	no
Messrs. Scott	slater	Brechin	no data in job book	no data in job book	no
A. & D. MacKay	slater	Glasgow	no data in job book	no data in job book	
John Anderson	slater	Glasgow	no data in job book	£149 15s 7d	no
A. M. Ross & Son	slater	Glasgow	no data in job book	£150 3s 1d	no
Gibson	plasterer	Brechin	no data in job book	£116 2s 11d <sup>5</sup>	no
Charles Thomson	plasterer	Brechin	no data in job book	£112 15s 2d <sup>6</sup>	yes (28 August 1902)
William Forbes	plasterer	Glasgow	no data in job book	£141 11s 0d	no
R. A. McGilvray	plasterer	Glasgow	no data in job book	£125 14s 4d	no
George Rome & Co.	plasterer	Glasgow	no data in job book	£116 9s 7d	no
George Cuthbert	plumber	Brechin	no data in job book	£176 4s 11d	no
Ferguson & Carver	plumber	Brechin	no data in job book	£169 4s 0d	yes (28 August 1902)
Middleton & Son	plumber	Brechin	no data in job book	£169 15s 1d	no
James Ingleton & Co.	plumber	Glasgow	no data in job book	£179 0s 0d	no
Fyfe & Allan Ltd	plumber	Glasgow	no data in job book	£180 0s 0d	no
William Anderson	plumber	Glasgow	no data in job book	£189 0s 0d	no
	electric wiring & lighting	Glasgow	no data in job book	£92 15s 0d	no
Angus Electric Light Company	electric wiring & lighting	Brechin	no data in job book	£63 5s 6d	no
Ferguson & Carver	electric wiring & lighting		no data in job book	£67 17s 6d	no
Charles Middleton & Co.	electric wiring & lighting	Brechin	no data in job book	£53 0s 0d	yes (4 March 1903)
Galbraith & Winton	tiler	no data in job book	no data in job book	£17 5s 0d <sup>7</sup>	yes (30 June 1903)
John Bryden & Sons	blinds	no data in job book	no data in job book	£11 10s 0d <sup>8</sup>	yes (10 August 1903)
C. J. Bowie, Fisher & Co.	painter	no data in job book	no data in job book	£162 16s 3d	no
H. L. Anderson & Co.	painter		no data in job book	£137 17s 6d	no
Stalker & Boyd	painter	Perth	no data in job book	£110 3s 0d	no
J. C. Middleton	painter	8 Market Street, Brechin	no data in job book	£70 12s 8d	yes (no data in job book)

[?] Bruce	painter	Brechin	no data in job book	£70 15s 1½d	no
David Hutcheon	painter	Swan Street, Brechin	no data in job book	£110 2s 8½d	no

### Payments (trades):

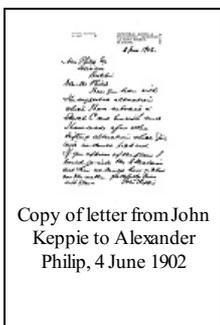
Name	Type	Payment out sum	Measurer fee payments
David A. Crabb	mason	<b>First installment:</b> 3 December 1902 <b>Final installment:</b> 10 October 1904 £841 6s 5d	£12 15s 0d
James Dures	joiner	<b>First installment:</b> 21 June [1903] <b>Final installment:</b> 10 October [1904] £383 15s 11d	£17 17s 0d <sup>9</sup>
John Davidson	slater	<b>First installment:</b> 30 March 1903 <b>Final installment:</b> 10 October 1904 £93 17s 2d	£1 7s 6d
Charles Thomson	plasterer	<b>First installment:</b> 27 May [1903] <b>Final installment:</b> 8 July [1903?] £110 8s 8d	£1 11s 6d
Ferguson & Carver	plumber	<b>First installment:</b> 27 May [1903] <b>Final installment:</b> 26 April 1904 £196 4s 4d	£2 17s 9d
Charles Middleton & Co.	electric wiring, lighting & bells	<b>Payment date:</b> 1 September 1904 £53 15s 7d	
Charles Middleton & Co.	electric wiring, lighting & bells	<b>Payment date:</b> March 1904 £45 0s 0d	
Galbraith & Winton	tiler	<b>Payment date:</b> 31 October 1903 £16 10s 0d	
J. C. Middleton	painter	<b>First installment:</b> 20 October [1903] <b>Final installment:</b> 14 October 1904 £114 11s 5d	£1 1s 0d

### Payments (suppliers):

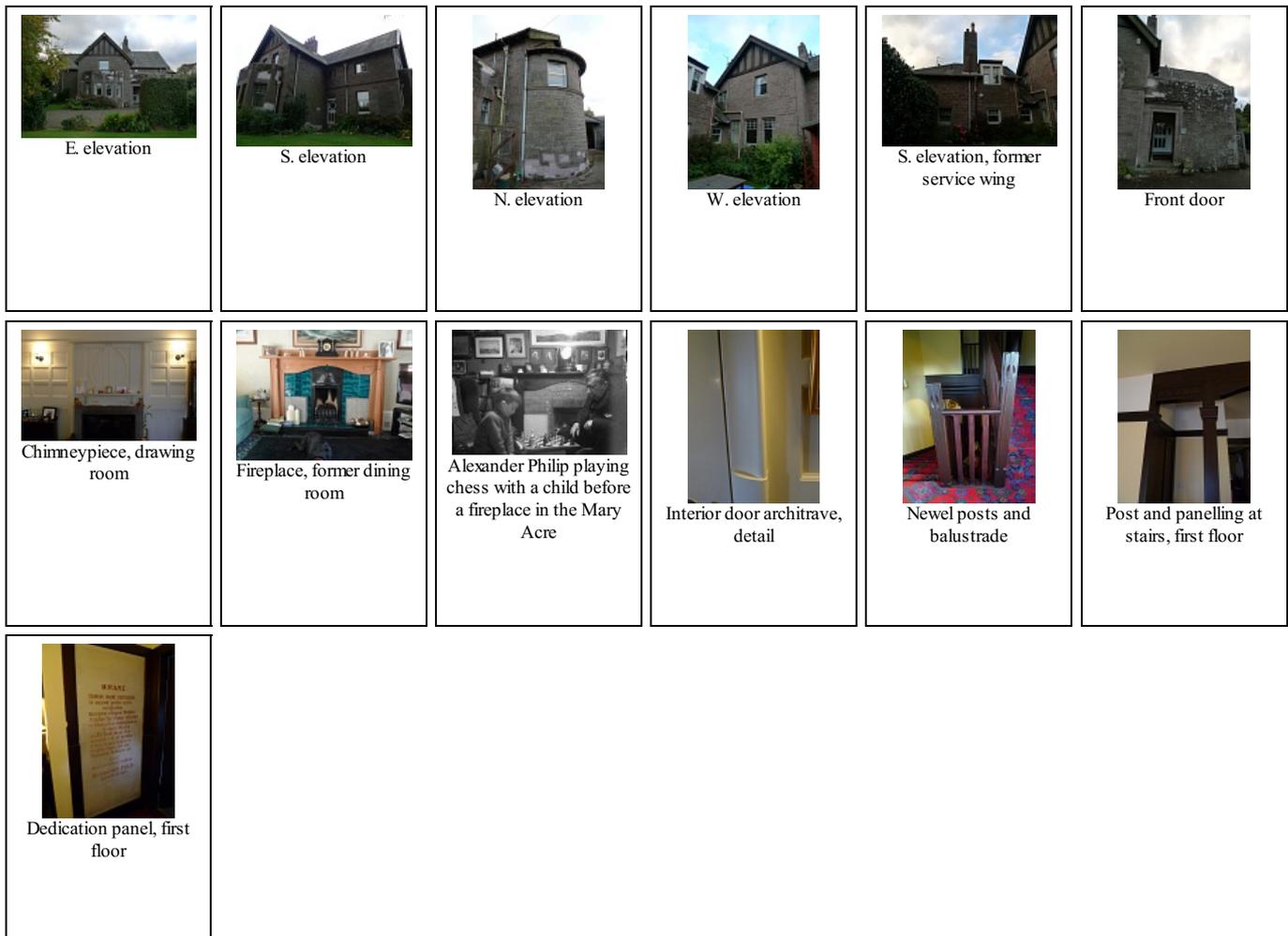
Name	Service	Payment date	Payment sum
William McGeoch, Kemp & Co.	'fireplaces etc'	1 September 1904	£86 1s 6d
Robert Aitken	inspector	23 December [1903]	£47 15s 0d <sup>10</sup>

**Measurer fee payment:** £57 2s 6d (23 September 1904)

## Documents



## Images



## Bibliography

### Published

- James Macaulay, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh*, New York: W. W. Norton, 2010, p. 144
- David Stark, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Co.*, Catrine, Ayrshire: Stenlake Publishing, 2004, pp. 151, 165

### Unpublished

- Forfar, Angus Archives: Brechin Cathedral Archive, letters from Alexander Philip to John Honeyman, 12 January 1899 and 17 July 1900
- Forfar, Angus Archives: Brechin Commissioners of Police minutes, B1/2/3

### Notes:

- 1: Including measurer's fee.
- 2: Brechin Cathedral Archive: John Keppie to Alexander Philip.
- 3: Brechin Cathedral Archive: John Keppie to Alexander Philip.
- 4: Notes on this drawing suggest that it was supplementary to the set of 12 passed by Brechin Dean of Guild Court on 14 July 1902. The drawing was dated 24 and 29 September 1902 by Brechin Dean of Guild Court. Forfar, Angus Archives: Brechin Dean of Guild Court plans, BDG 132c.
- 5: Handwritten note signed by Brechin Dean of Guild, John S. Baxter, on sheet of elevations dated 24 and 29 September 1902 gives date of approval of original set of plans. Forfar, Angus Archives: Brechin Dean of Guild Court plans, BDG 132a.
- 6: Notes on this drawing suggest that it was supplementary to the set of 12 passed by Brechin Dean of Guild Court on 14 July 1902. The drawing was dated 24 and 29 September 1902 by Brechin Dean of Guild Court. Forfar, Angus Archives: Brechin Dean of Guild Court plans, BDG 132e.
- 7: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Honeyman Keppie & Mackintosh job book, GLAHA 53062, pp. 8–9.
- 8: Drawings stamped and signed 24 September 1902. Forfar, Angus Archives: Brechin Dean of Guild Court plans, BDG 132a.

- 9:** Handwritten note signed by the Dean of Guild, John S. Baxter, on sheet of elevations dated 24 and 29 September 1902. Forfar, Angus Archives: Brechin Dean of Guild Court plans, BDG 132a.
- 10:** Forfar, Angus Archives: Brechin Dean of Guild Court plans, BDG 132b; BDG 132d.
- 11:** Dated handwritten note on sheet of elevations dated 24 and 29 September 1902. Forfar, Angus Archives: Brechin Dean of Guild Court plans, BDG 132a.
- 12:** The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Honeyman Keppie & Mackintosh job book, GLAHA 53062, p. 9.
- 13:** Brechin Cathedral Archive: John Keppie to Alexander Philip.
- 14:** The unsigned, rudimentary drawing showing the proposed addition is not by Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh. Forfar, Angus Archives: Brechin Dean of Guild Court plans, BDG 245. By 1911 Philip and his wife Ethel had three daughters aged seven, five and three years.
- 15:** 'The Mary Acre', *Dictionary of Scottish Architects, 1840–1980*, [www.scottisharchitects.org.uk](http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk) [accessed 26 October 2011].
- 16:** Charles McKean, 'A new house porch with a pleasing aspect', *Times*, 24 October 1980, p. 15; information supplied by owners, 29 September 2011.
- 17:** Information supplied by owners, 29 September 2011.
- 18:** Brechin Cathedral Archive: almost 40 letters dated between 5 December 1898 and 13 September 1904, to Alexander Philip from John Honeyman and the firm.
- 19:** A dedication in Latin is inscribed on a panel now located on the first floor of the house: viewed 29 September 2011.
- 20:** Forfar, Angus Archives: Brechin Commissioners of Police minutes, B1/2/3, pp. 29–30.
- 21:** Forfar, Angus Archives: Brechin Commissioners of Police minutes, B1/2/3, p. 70.
- 22:** Brechin Cathedral Archive: over 50 letters survive from Keppie to Alexander, dating from 15 April 1902 to 26 October 1904. These constitute the largest surviving correspondence with one of the firm's private clients. The archive also holds invoices, receipts and measurements related to the construction and fitting out of the house. This material was located at the time of the launch of the website.
- 23:** Brechin Cathedral Archive.
- 24:** Forfar, Angus Archives: Brechin Dean of Guild plans, BDG 132a and BDG 132c. The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Honeyman Keppie & Mackintosh job book, GLAHA 53062, pp. 8–9.
- 25:** M207\_003, M207\_004 and M207\_008. Holding images and basic information are currently provided for these.
- 26:** Brechin Cathedral archive, Keppie to Philip, 26 September 1903: 'As arranged yesterday I herewith send two sketch plans of a double villa such as would be suitable for the site I saw at Edzell. The plans would require a little alteration but not much and of course they are merely sketches. I estimate that the two houses could be built for between £1700 + £1800, finished in a very substantial manner. If this is the kind of thing your client wants I would be glad to go into the matter more particularly and send him a special sketch for the site.'
- 27:** Information supplied by current owners during visit on 29 September 2011. The current owners have been acquainted with all four previous owners of The Mary Acre, who included one of Philip's daughters who continued to live in the house until the 1950s.
- 28:** 'The Mary Acre', *Dictionary of Scottish Architects, 1840–1980*, [www.scottisharchitects.org.uk](http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk) [accessed 26 October 2011]. David Stark, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Co.*, Catrine, Ayrshire: Stenlake Publishing, 2004, pp. 151, 165.
- 29:** The 1911 census return shows that Philip's second and third daughters were born c. 1906 and c. 1908.
- 30:** The drawing proposing the addition is signed by the Burgh Surveyor on 6 October 1906 to denote completion of the work. Forfar, Angus Archives: Brechin Dean of Guild Court plans, BDG 245.
- 31:** 'The Mary Acre', *Dictionary of Scottish Architects, 1840–1980*, [www.scottisharchitects.org.uk](http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk) [accessed 26 October 2011]; Charles McKean, 'A new house porch with a pleasing aspect', *Times*, 24 October 1980, p. 15; information supplied by owners, 29 September 2011.
- 32:** Alternative tender of £967 18s 7d also recorded.
- 33:** Tender of £937 11s 5d agreed on acceptance.
- 34:** Tender of £705 11s 9d agreed on acceptance.
- 35:** Tender of £95 16s 9d agreed on acceptance.
- 36:** 'PC' entered adjacent to tendered sum.

37: Tender of £112 18s 8d agreed on acceptance. 'PC' entered adjacent to tendered sum.

38: 'tiles less amount in fees'.

39: Includes 'extra mounting £1 17s 0d'. Tender of £13 7s 0d agreed on acceptance.

40: 'measurers fee 17.17. no deductions made because of conditions made by contractors'.

41: '29 visits 32/2 and 1.2.2. for measurer'.

## Mackintosh Architecture: Context, Making and Meaning

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