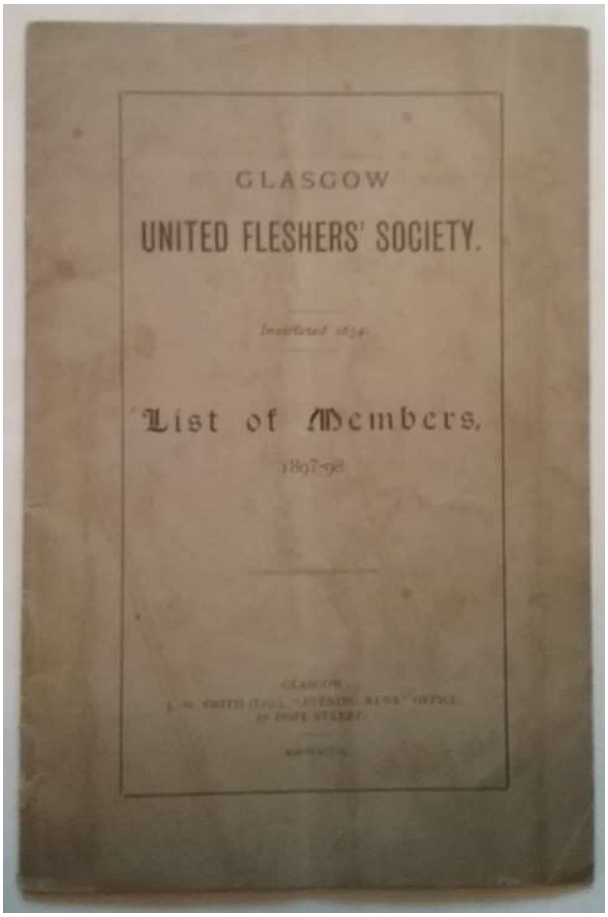
James Dunlop Watt, Master Flesher

By Laura Hogg, March 2019

As a Trustee of Triquetra Services (Scotland), I was aware of the acquisition of the *Seal of Cause and Bye-Laws and Regulations of the Incorporation of Fleshers of Glasgow*. Glasgow: C. L. Wright, 1887 It reminded me that a relative had been a flesher.

Although I cannot provide a great deal of information about his business life, I hope the information below will provide a more personal picture of one of the Guild members.

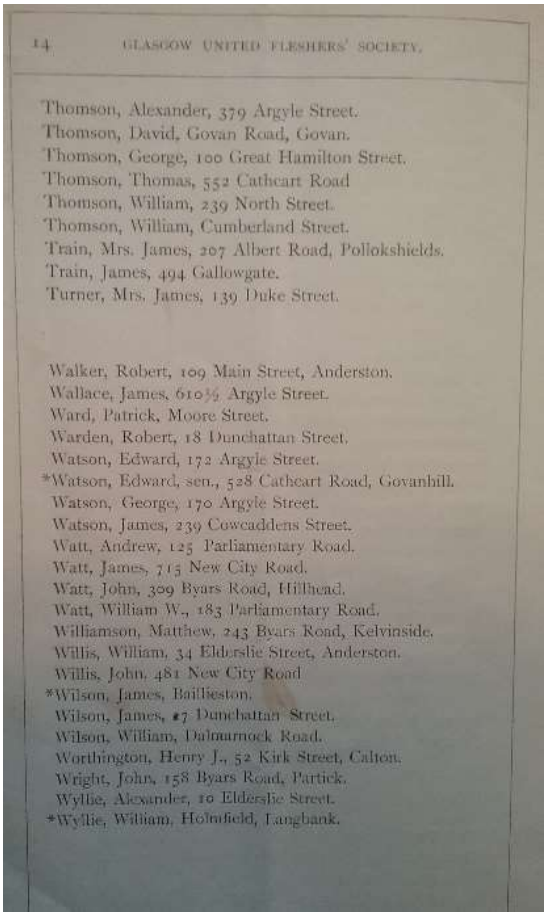
The document I immediately called to mind was this rather drab looking *Glasgow United Flesher's Society list of members for 1897-98.*


GLASGOW

UNITED FLESHERS' SOCIETY.

List of Members.

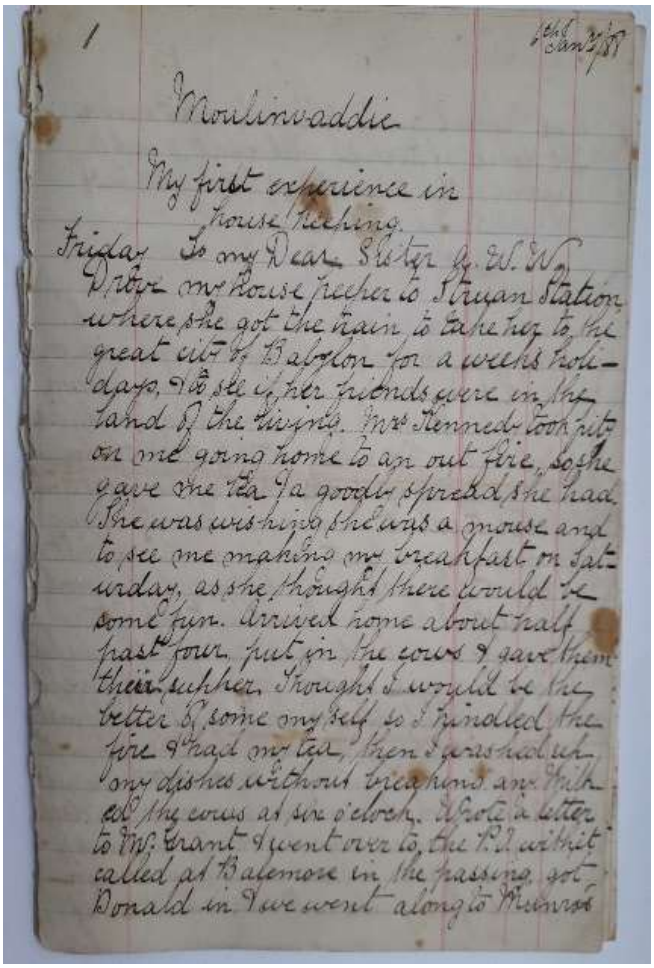
1897-98


14 GLASGOW UNITED FLESHERS' SOCIETY.

Thomson, Alexander, 379 Argyle Street.
Thomson, David, Govan Road, Govan.
Thomson, George, 100 Great Hamilton Street.
Thomson, Thomas, 552 Cathcart Road
Thomson, William, 239 North Street.
Thomson, William, Cumberland Street.
Train, Mrs. James, 207 Albert Road, Pollokshields.
Train, James, 494 Gallowgate.
Turner, Mrs. James, 139 Duke Street.

Walker, Robert, 109 Main Street, Anderston.
Wallace, James, 610½ Argyle Street.
Ward, Patrick, Moore Street.
Warden, Robert, 18 Dunchattan Street.
Watson, Edward, 172 Argyle Street.
*Watson, Edward, sen., 528 Cathcart Road, Govanhill.
Watson, George, 170 Argyle Street.
Watson, James, 239 Cowcaddens Street.
Watt, Andrew, 125 Parliamentary Road.
Watt, James, 715 New City Road.
Watt, John, 309 Byars Road, Hillhead.
Watt, William W., 183 Parliamentary Road.
Williamson, Matthew, 243 Byars Road, Kelvinside.
Willis, William, 34 Elderslie Street, Anderston.
Willis, John, 481 New City Road
*Wilson, James, Baillieston.
Wilson, James, 27 Dunchattan Street.
Wilson, William, Dalmarnock Road.
Worthington, Henry J., 52 Kirk Street, Calton.
Wright, John, 158 Byars Road, Partick.
Wyllie, Alexander, 10 Elderslie Street.
*Wyllie, William, Holmfield, Langbank.

To start at the beginning though, James Dunlop Watt was born on 12th November 1865 at Auchinairn House in Cadder/Bishopbriggs. He was the 8th of 10 children of Alexander and Janet Watt. Alexander was a mining overseer though seems to have rented or owned a farm on two occasions over the years. James had 5 older brothers, 2 older sisters and 2 younger sisters.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16th Jan 1887
Moulinwaddie
My first experience in
house keeping.
Friday To my Dear Sister G. W. W.
Dear me house keeper is Struan Station
where she got the train to take her to the
great city of Babylon for a weeks holi-
days. To see if her friends were in the
land of the living. Mrs Kennedy took pity
on me going home to an out fire, so she
gave me tea & a good spread she had.
She was wishing she was a mouse and
to see me making my breakfast on Sat-
urday, as she thought there would be
some fun. Arrived home about half
past four, put in the cows & gave them
their sukher. Thought I would be the
better of some my self so I kindled the
fire & had my tea, then I was had up
my dishes without breaking any with-
out the cows at six o'clock. Wrote a letter
to Mr Grant & went over to the P.O. with it
called at Balemore in the passing got
Donald in & we went along to Rannoch

By the 1881 census, James was still living at home but working as a flesher's boy. The wider family was linked to farming and a farm or smallholding near Kinloch Rannoch in Perthshire was his destination for a week in 1888 at the age of 22 to look after it while his older sister, Agnes, visited Glasgow. An informal diary addressed to Agnes, shows only some passing references to tending to hens and pigs and milking the cows which does not seem to have taken large proportions of his day. He spends more time describing his varying success with housekeeping tasks - cookery does not seem to be one of his strengths – and social activities. He clearly new local people well so must have visited reasonably frequently. The farmhouse is now a holiday home.

By the 1891 census, James is 25 and recorded as a butcher. He is living as a lodger at 88 North Hanover Street in the household of Mr James S. Wardrop (an asphalter) and his wife. Other residents at that home were Grace Walls, age 15 and a domestic servant from Dunblane, and John Watt, age 28 and the lodger and bolt and rivet handler (this was James' brother).

James became a member of the Incorporation of Fleshers on 16th February 1893, by which time he seems to have been both working and residing at 715 New City Road.

At Glasgow
The sixteenth day of February
One thousand eight hundred and ninety-three years
These Certify that James Dunlop Watt, Flesher, 715 New City Road, Glasgow
Having paid his freedom fine at far hand to entitle him to be a
Burgess and Guild Brother of Glasgow
has been admitted a Burgess and Guild Brother of the said Burgh,
qua Flesher and is entitled to all the civil rights and privileges by law belonging
to. As by his acceptance of this Ticket now delivered to him, he becomes bound to
perform all the civil duties and obligations by law incumbent on
A freeman Citizen of Glasgow

(The stamp in the top left corner of this certificate is for 5 shillings.)

Incorporation of Fleshers
Glasgow
Incorporated by letter of deaconry granted by the Lord Provost, Magistrates and Council. Dated 6th October 1580.
This is to certify
That Mr James Dunlop Watt
Residing at 715 New City Road
Was on the eighth day of May 1893 admitted a Member of the Incorporation of Fleshers, and having lodged Burgess Ticket, Certificates, and paid freedom fines, is entitled to all the rights and privileges pertaining to, and subject to all the obligations incumbent upon a Member of the said Incorporation as set forth in the printed rules and regulations of the Incorporation.

William S. Brown Deacon,
William W. Watt Collector
James Colquhoun Clerk

James married Lilly Steven on 4th September 1893 at her parent's home at 13 Ronald Street, Glasgow. He was living at 7 Clarendon Street at that time. Their first home was very close to Clarendon Street at 14 Seamore Street – both locations being just off Maryhill Road between St George's Cross and Queen's Cross.

These photographs of James and Lilly were taken at the time of their marriage. (Lilly Steven was the sister of my great-great grandfather, Alexander Steven.)

James' working life appears to have continued with little change, but his personal life contained significant loss.

James and Lilly became parents in 1894 but their first child, Alexander, died after one month as a result of diphtheria.

A move to 717 New City Road, Cowcaddens, took place and another son (un-named) was born in January 1896 but died the following day. A third boy, John, was born in 1897 and died aged 9 months of whooping cough and acute meningitis.

The family at West Kilbride, Ayrshire, in 1912.

After these losses, 1899 saw the birth of their daughter, Lily, and then two more sons: James Henry and Philip in 1903 and 1906. By 1906 the family had moved to 5 Wilton Street which was in the same area as their previous home in Seamore Street.

Another blow to the family came in 1913 when Philip died due to appendicitis.

James' business moved to 399 Maryhill Road in 1921 or 1922 where it remained until he retired in 1930. This was also the year that he and Lilly moved to 11 Great George Street, Hillhead. Lilly died at the end of June that year following 2 years of ill health.

James was looked after in is old age by his daughter and died on 20th December 1953 in his home.

James' surviving children were Lily and James Henry (known as Henry)

James in July 1939 at Newquay. (This "walking photograph" was taken by a street photographer.)

Lily was of similar age to my grandmothers and a regular visitor to our house when I was growing up. I remember being told that Lily had been keen to go to university in her youth, but her father was against this on the grounds that she would later marry. He thought this would be a waste of a university education. However, she did not get married. She worked as a secretary/cashier. Despite her inability to further her education formally, Lily was well read and intelligent. She always seemed quite formidable to me and didn't suffer fools gladly though was not unkind. She retained a very sharp mind even when she became frail in old age. Lily died in 1984.

Henry was a mine electrician and worked in India for many. Henry and his wife, Jean, did not have children. They returned to Scotland in 1960. Henry died in Glasgow on 21st January 1973. I do not remember ever meeting Henry or his wife.