

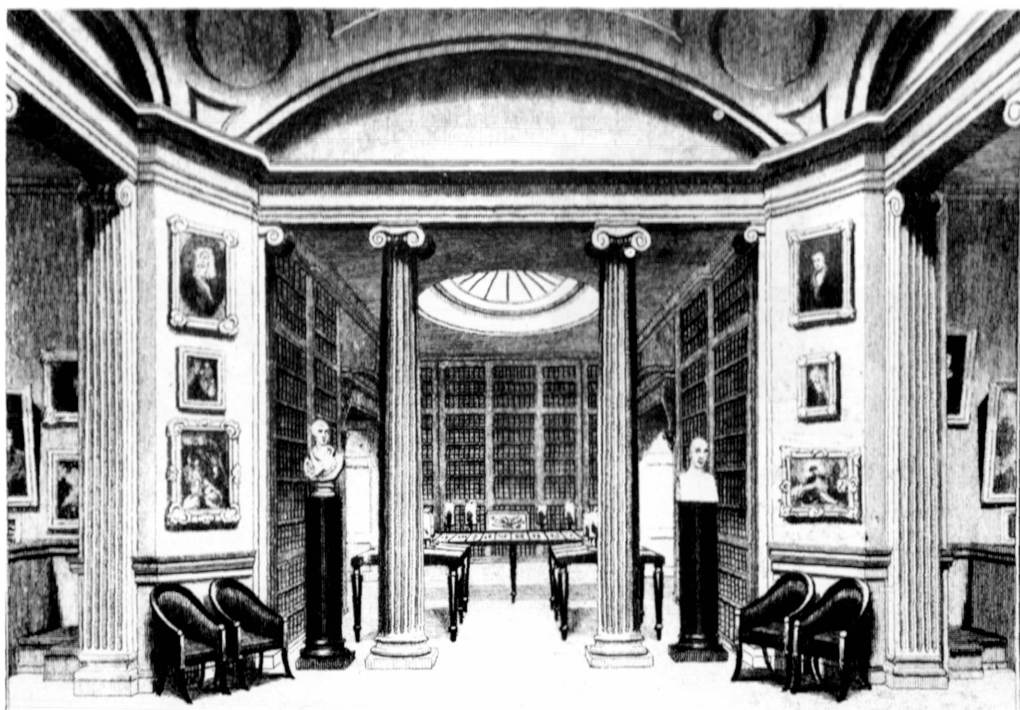
# FURNISHING THE HUNTERIAN MUSEUM, GLASGOW STYLE, 1809

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Much of the fashionable furniture manufactured in early nineteenth-century Glasgow has remained tantalisingly anonymous. The city's cabinet makers do not seem to have identified their pieces with name stamps as consistently as in Edinburgh, where enough stamped furniture by prominent firms such as Bruce & Burns and Morison & Co. exists to enable a relatively detailed analysis of their work. Similarly, no rich vein of documentation has revealed the existence of a dominant city manufacturer comparable with Trotter of Edinburgh, whose furniture and business activities can be traced back into the eighteenth century through study of surviving bills.

This makes the recent discovery of invoices which identify furniture at the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow, a particularly exciting event, and it introduces Messrs Cleland, Jack, Paterson & Co. as the city's leading cabinet-making firm before 1830. The Hunterian was Scotland's first public museum. It was based on the varied collection of the celebrated anatomist Dr William Hunter and reflected his interest in fine art and the natural sciences. The collection was placed in its own special building,<sup>1</sup> designed by Glasgow architect William Stark, in 1807. The exterior of the museum, executed in the austere but handsome Roman doric order, was of temple form, raised on a plinth with a wide flight of steps leading to the entrance portico. It was one of a group of newly erected public buildings, including hospitals, churches, and banks, which gave early nineteenth-century Glasgow the stamp of a well-planned classical city.

A pair of invoices in Glasgow University Archives collection reveal that the interior of the museum was furnished by the firm Cleland & Jack of Virginia Street between May 1808 and September 1809. The first invoice from Cleland & Jack, addressed to 'The Managers of the Hunterian Museum' itemises a quantity of furniture including twenty-four 'Bamboo' chairs, writing tables, pembroke tables, 'bason stands' and a carpet, supplied between May 1808 and February 1809. None of the items from this bill, which could represent a 'trial' commission, appear to have survived. Items surviving from the second, more extensive invoice include eight 'Roman' chairs (Fig. 2), one large circular library table (Fig. 3) and two writing tables with rising tops (Fig. 5). The 'eight Roman chairs covered with fine Crimson Moreen brass ornaments and strong brass castors' were supplied in September 1809 at a cost of £5 each. Their design, continuous bow back and sabre forelegs, the uprights capped with brass ball finials, is exactly comparable to that of 'curricule' chairs supplied by Gillow of Lancaster to T. W. Egerton of Tatton Park, Cheshire in 1811<sup>2</sup> and for similar chairs, also by Gillows, supplied to R. O. Gascoigne of Parlington Hall, Yorkshire.<sup>3</sup> Small details, such as the appearance of finger grips on the back of the cresting rails and the invoice price of £5 each, make the correspondence between the Cleland & Jack and Gillow chairs very close. The Hunterian chairs are only different in their use of upholstered moreen, rather than cane, back, seat and sides, and in their black-painted finish and brass ornaments. The brass mounts or 'chair ornaments' of anthemion design applied to the centre of each seat rail



1. Interior of the Hunterian Museum, showing Cleland & Jack's 'Roman' chairs *in situ*.  
Print from Dr William Hunter's bookplate, n.d.

correspond exactly to designs in an anonymous Birmingham brassfounder's pattern book from the Victoria and Albert Museum's collection.<sup>4</sup> The 'large circular Library Table on triangular block and Lion's paws bronzed, fine locks to pass, Drawers figured wt. Ivory and top covered with fine green cloth — £30' is of the type recommended by George Smith in *A Collection of Designs for Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1808), but the giant lion's paw feet with ionic capitals make the table particularly distinctive. The description 'figured wt. ivory' refers to the identifying numbers let in to the drawer fronts. Like the chairs and large circular table, the 'two mahogany Writing Tables, with a flap to rise on top, shape Pillar & Claws, handsomely strung, tops banded and two Drawers in each, figured with Ivory, fine patent locks wt. key to pass and brass paw Castors ea. £12.12/-' were supplied in September 1809 as part of the second invoice totalling £246 3s. 2d. Interesting sundries appearing in this bill are the quantity of oil cloth, the 'four Door Rope Matts' which were probably of the imported German type illustrated by J. C. Loudon on p. 347 of his *Encyclopaedia*, carpet brooms and different sorts of green furniture coverings. This comprehensive repertoire indicates that Cleland & Jack offered a complete upholstery and floor-covering service, including the necessary implements to keep these items clean. The bill also gives some idea of the prevailing colour scheme of the museum's 'saloon' which appears to have been green, mahogany and black, offset by the dazzling crimson moreen of the Roman chairs.



2. Pair of 'Roman' chairs supplied by Cleland & Jack, September 1809

Prior to the identification of the Hunterian pieces the only illustration of the type of furniture produced by Cleland & Jack had been an engraving in R. Chapman's *The Stranger's Guide or A Picture of Glasgow*, 1812, showing one floor of the firm's retail warehouse in the Trongate. This print (Fig. 6) shows an assortment of items, including sideboard tables, dining room, breakfast and sofa tables, firescreens, dressing glasses and a globe, neatly displayed in a fashionable classical revival setting, which clearly represents just one department of an extensive shop. The sideboard tables, although shorn of some decorative detail in the engraver's realisation, are recognisable as the characteristic 'stage top' type specified in the *Glasgow Cabinet Maker's Book of Prices* (1809). The view also indicates the firm's method of displaying upholstery goods, floorcoverings and lighting. The selection of curtain draperies decorating the windows, the swags of fringed fabric draped on pins across the central arch, the lengths of 'ingrain' or 'Scotch' carpet and the different hanging and statuary lamps, are all presumably examples of goods for sale. In the text accompanying this unique illustration, Chapman includes a brief reference to Glasgow's cabinet trade.

Woodwork is extensively done in all its branches within the city, particularly that of cabinet making which is in general executed in a style of exquisite elegance and taste. Admirable specimens are at all times exhibited in the handsome ware house, no. 81 Trongate occupied by Messrs. Cleland Jack Paterson and Co.



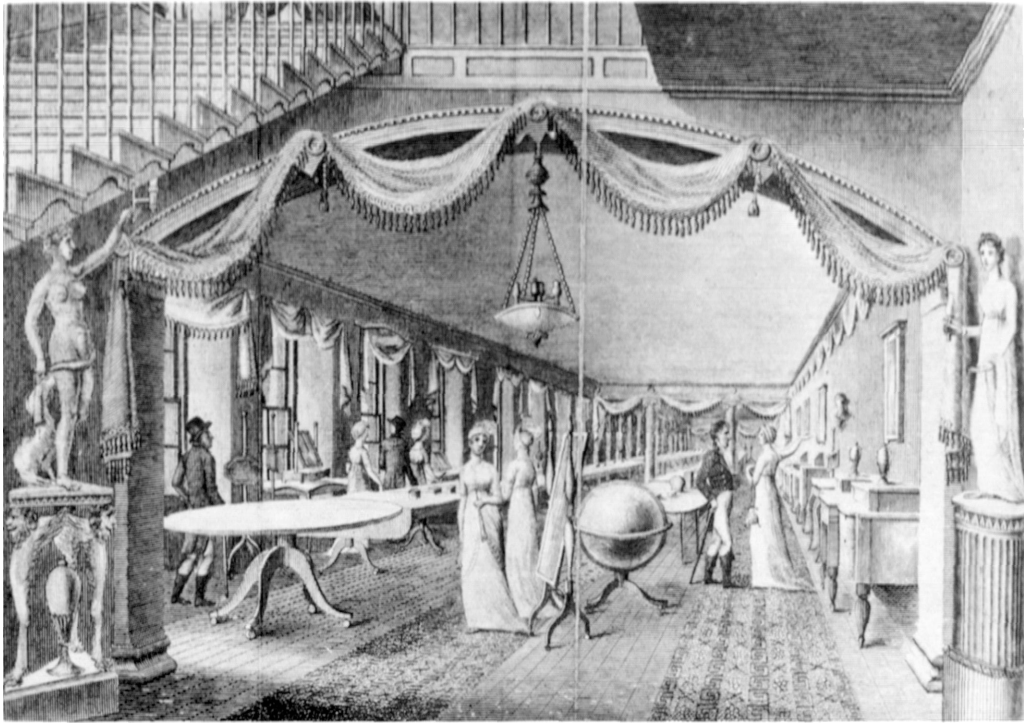
4. Detail of 'lion's paw foot' on circular library table

3. Large circular library table supplied by Cleland & Jack, September 1809



5. One of a pair of 'mahogany writing tables with flaps to rise on top' supplied by Cleland & Jack, September 1809. The ivory Figure 5 can be seen on the right-hand drawer front





6. Interior view of Messrs Cleland, Jack, Paterson & Co.'s warehouse, Trongate, Glasgow. From *The Stranger's Guide or a Picture of Glasgow*, 1812

The listing in the *Glasgow Directory* (1791) of John Cleland, Wright in Grahamston, is the first reference to this firm of Glasgow cabinet makers. It was from their base in Argyll Street, Grahamston, about a mile from the commercial centre of the city, that John Cleland and Son, Cabinet Makers and Joiners, advertised a range of household furniture and looking glasses in the *Glasgow Advertiser* of 20 August 1792. By 1799, the firm had moved to Virginia Street, a cabinet-maker's quarter which was nearer still to the heart of the city. In 1800 James Cleland assumed control from his father and took on William Jack as partner. Between 1803 and 1811 Cleland and Jack advertised extensively in the Glasgow press and continued to develop their commercial interests, which included building and property leasing. It was during this period that they won the prestigious commission to furnish the Hunterian, but their billhead of 1809, which advertised 'Trunks and Packing Cases, — ready made — Funerals Furnished' bore evidence of the less glamorous, staple manufactures upon which the business was founded. By 1815, when the firm was supplying a large quantity of furniture and upholstery for the Maxwells of Pollock, on the south side of the city, the description 'joiners' had disappeared from their billhead, as had the advertisement for packing cases and funerals. The partners were now simply 'Upholsterers & Cabinet Makers' who offered the specialist services of 'Carving and Gilding' and the manufacture of 'Camp Equipage' from their large Trongate warehouse. An advertisement of 10 May 1811 had announced the firm's imminent removal to 81 Trongate, premises which had been

previously occupied by the drapery firm Whitelaw & Boyd and which were described in their letting advertisement as 'without exception the largest and most commodious of any in the city'. The opening of the new warehouse on 24 February 1812 coincided with the appointment of a new partner, Robert Paterson, and the adoption of the name Messrs Cleland, Jack, Paterson & Co. James Cleland left the business in 1814 to join the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, later becoming Superintendent of Public Works, a post in which he exercised considerable influence over the development and expansion of the city. The cabinet-making firm which bore his name continued to trade until 1865.

A consistent feature of the known activities of Cleland, Jack, Paterson & Co. was their ability to keep abreast of current fashion. Almost as soon as James Cleland joined his father in business, as he noted in a *Memoir* of 1825,<sup>5</sup> between 1788 and 90 he was away on an adventure to London. On his return, no doubt armed with the latest designs and ideas, he claimed that the cabinet-making firm soon began to flourish and became one of the most successful businesses in Glasgow.

James Cleland's successors continued to cultivate a modern image, as their press advertisements testify:

CABINET & UPHOLSTERY WAREHOUSE  
81 TRONGATE

CLELAND, JACK, PATERSON & CO. respectfully announce to their numerous Friends and the Public that one of their Partners is at present in London, selecting the Newest and most Fasionable Patterns of every Article in their line. Among the different Goods, they are in daily expectation of receiving a Superb Collection of French Paper Hangings and Decorations

(*Glasgow Herald*, 27 January 1815)

It was not, however, necessary to leave Glasgow to obtain the latest cabinet-making ideas. Current pattern books were available from the city's booksellers and it is likely that works such as George Smith's *A Collection of Designs for Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*, which was advertised in *The Glasgow Herald*, 7 December 1807, were consulted by Cleland & Jack.

Press notices provide a fairly reliable guide for the firm's business activities. As John Cleland & Son, in 1792, they had a wareroom with looking glasses and household furniture 'always in hand' and a department which supplied cabinet-maker's sundries including 'articles for the use of Inlayers, Wrights &c. particularly Dyed Vineers of various colours, Tulip & King Woods, Stringing, Banding and Shells, Glass Paper &c.' Other specialist departments within the company included a carving shop, from which details such as the hairy paw feet of the Hunterian's circular library table would have been produced. An announcement in the *Glasgow Herald*, 7 August 1807, reveals a William Stewart setting up as an independent carver and gilder. It was clearly an advantage for him to state that he was 'late foreman to Messrs Cleland and Jack'. Diversification appears to have been a company strength, and it is likely that all the various aspects of the Hunterian commissions were executed in the company's own workshops. These would have included upholstery, carving, gilding and bronzing, turning, japanning and inlay. Production of fancy items such as the twenty-four bamboo chairs supplied between 31 May and 1 September 1808, for instance, would have involved several of these processes. Bamboo furniture seems to have

been quite common in Glasgow at this time. The *Glasgow Book of Prices* (1809) listed two items, one of which was an interesting 'Bamboo Tent Bed'.

For the bedstead.....	0.7.4.½
Bamboosing the sweeps for ditto .....	0.2.1.½

The *Glasgow Book of Prices* was itself an indication that the city's cabinet-making trade was well developed after 1800. Other significant local firms, who were no doubt major competitors of Cleland & Jack, included John Reid & Co. who moved from 600 Argyll Street to newly-built premises on Virginia Street in 1801. Their wareroom stock in this year amounted to 1,200 individually-specified items of domestic furniture.

A combination of recently identified furniture, bills, press notices and other documentary sources has revealed a good picture of the activities of the Glasgow firm Cleland, Jack, Paterson & Co. The appearance of the items supplied to the Hunterian Museum indicates an awareness of current fashionable design and suggests further evidence of a possible link between Scotland and northern English and London makers such as Gillow.<sup>6</sup> It is certain that many more examples of Cleland, Jack, Paterson's work await discovery.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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#### REFERENCES

1. This was demolished in 1870.
2. See N. Goodison and J. Hardy, 'Gillows at Tatton Park', *Furniture History*, vi (1970), p. 32 and Fig. 16.
3. See C. Gilbert, *Furniture at Temple Newsam House and Lotherton Hall*, 2 (1979), pp. 383–84.
4. See N. Goodison 'The Victoria and Albert Museum's Collection of Metal-Work Pattern Books' *Furniture History*, xi (1975), p. 17, illustrated pl. 47. Pattern book ref. M61c. Interestingly, Goodison notes that this firm also supplied ornaments with national motifs, such as the Irish harp, Scottish thistle and American eagle and stars.
5. This *Memoir* comprises the preface to James Cleland LL.D., *Historical Account of the Grammar School of Glasgow* (K. Lull, Blackie & Co., Glasgow, 1825).
6. This is suggested also by a correspondence between furniture types appearing in both Gillow's repertoire and *Scottish Cabinet Makers' Price Books 1805–1825*. See David Jones, 'Scottish Cabinet-Makers' Price Books 1805–1825', *Regional Furniture*, III (1989), pp. 27–39.