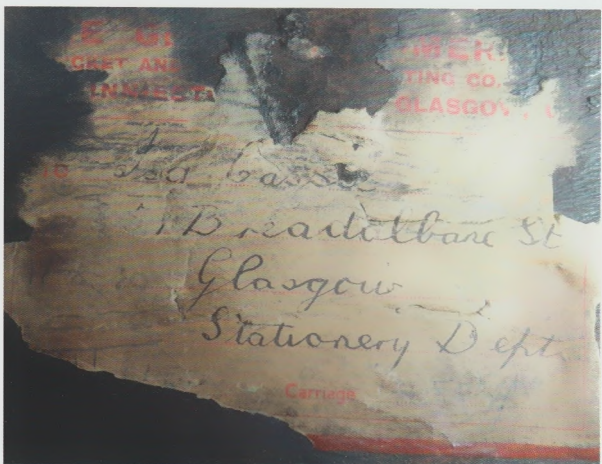


## Four stools in Provand's Lordship, Glasgow Museums

Glasgow's oldest domestic building is said to date from 1471. It currently houses an interesting collection of mainly 17th-century Scottish furniture and related items. The four stools (numbered TEMP.4655-58 and with no known history) seem initially to be a strange addition to the museum. Their catalogue entry describes them as Church stools, adding to the questions of why they were part of the current furnishings. Brief inspection suggested a thick rectangular birch seat (one is square) into which four octagonal deal legs had been inserted into round sockets and held in place with wedges. These legs were strengthened by deal rectangular lower stretcher rails inset into the outer face of each leg, these being nailed into place and meeting at the corners with a simple lapped joint. Two of these might be slightly reduced in height and some have missing rails. All showed signs of heavy wear, staining and patina consistent with heavy use.



Workshop stools, late 19th-century, American birch and deal. Glasgow Museums, Provand's Lordship, TEMP.4658. (Photo John Boram)



Label for The Glasgow Numerical Ticket and Check Book Printing Company. Glasgow Museums, Provand's Lordship, TEMP.4658

The use of American birch and the presence of machine-made saw marks under the seats (either from a frame saw or large circular saw) together with the manner of construction and design would tend to a possible 19th-century manufacture date. One seat has a flat brass-headed nail pattern on the top reading 'A. McE'; a torn printed paper label underneath associates it with The Glasgow Numerical Ticket and Check Book Printing Company, 31 Finnieston Street, Glasgow. It was a subsidiary of David Carlaw & Sons Ltd (1888–1976), envelope machinery manufacturers, motor and mechanical engineers. The firm made and operated envelope-making machines, and machines for serially numbering tickets and other printed goods in these engineering works. The label is inscribed by hand with a name and a nearby address: 'Isa Cassie, 51 Breadalbane St., Glasgow, Stationery Dept.' A second stool has a degraded label underneath, inscribed 'E. Sommerville' and on a third, surviving pins indicate a former label of association. The fourth shows repairs in the form of nails driven through the socket joints in the seat.

The evidence of the printed and inscribed label suggests use of one or possibly all in the Glasgow Numerical Printing Works, within the Stationery Department, while three of the stools show indications of personal ownership. Their identity as a generic type is substantiated by the image in Christopher Gilbert's *English Vernacular Furniture* (1991, p. 206) of a 'typical workshop stool' from the premises of Singleton and Flint, brush makers of Lincoln, c. 1900 (Museum of Lincolnshire Life). This 3-legged stool is made of painted pine, with a D-shaped slab seat. The birch stools in Provand's Lordship would seem to belong to this same functional type.

Thanks to Martin Bellamy for identifying the name of the company.

*Simon Feingold*