# FAMOUS SCOTTISH COLOUR PRINTERS

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REPRINTED FROM "THE BRITISH PRINTER"



A verificable revolution is taking place in means and methods of print. So drastic is the trend that even houses formerly considered as eminently well equipped are learning that they must change with the changing times or be literally out of date.

Happily the conduct of a successful printing business brings out the true doggedness of spirit which surmounts all obstacles; our best firms are steadfastly rising to the occasion.

One of these prominent concerns is the long-famous house of McLagan & Cumming, identified with the best of Scottish printing and more particularly in colour work.

Not content with the high reputation so well earned, the house has carefully observed the signs of the times, and it was the marked evidence of this that decided our suggestion to give some prominence and acknowledgment in these pages.

Their own advertising literature is modern and up-to-date in the best sense, thus reflecting of course the general policy and the arrangement of equipment.

The firm name of McLagan & Cumming has been retained from the formation of the business in 1872, when the partners bearing those names commenced in a small way as lithographic printers.

Mr. McLagan died in 1895, and after continuing the business for a number of years as sole proprietor, the late Mr. David Cumming (father of the present Mr. Cumming) took into partnership first his son and then Mr. Cousland, who had grown up with the concern and been specially identified with the design and studio work.

The present partners are Mr. Charles M. Cumming and his son David, Mr. Charles J. Cousland, and Mr. Charles Wm. Cousland, B.Com., his son.

The sons are understudies of the parents, the one as a practical printer with special interest in the works, the other as printer with special training in advertising and salesmanship in charge of the London office.

There is also a Glasgow office, for, besides the volume of orders from London district, the firm hath honour in its own country and a large proportion of its output is from Scottish sources. The firm has also a resident representative in Liverpool, besides travellers covering other parts of the country.

A removal was made in 1891 from Carrubber's Close, High Street, to the present address in the Warriston district, which is evidently popular with print, for at

## McLagan & Cumming.

### Famous Scottish Colour Printers.

least two of the largest Edinburgh printing firms are quite near.

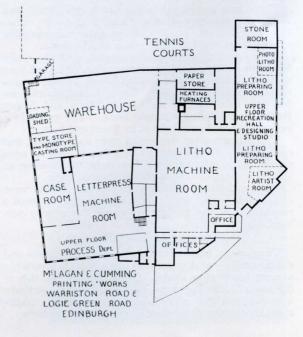
It is of interest to observe that the McLagan and Cumming frontage is curiously similar in style to that of these printing houses, possibly due to local regulations. The frontage is of stone, superior to and built in a style certainly not connected with accepted notions of a printing works elsewhere. The building indeed might be of a scholastic order and is certainly neat and dignified of aspect.

The premises are on the Warriston Road—a sort of by-way from the main road, faced by the river, and beyond that a railway bank, so that natural light and space are ideal and never likely to be lessened.

The ground held by the firm covers right to the corner and well on to Logie Green Road. At the rear the hard court tennis ground and gardens are eloquent of spaciousness and room for any extension desired.

The offices are complete in a compact frontage; corridor connections leading to the buildings occupied by the works proper, form a newer and an older group of single and double storeys. Machine rooms, litho and letterpress and the warehouse departments are suitably placed on the ground floor.

As befits a partnership of literary and educational tastes, bookcases predominate in the rooms used by the proprietors. The range of trade publications indeed offers a key to the applied theory and knowledge in technical matters appertaining to lithography and





FRONT VIEW OF WORKS, WARRISTON ROAD

photography for instance, which bespeaks the open mind and the urge for knowledge on progressive effort. Incidentally, the late David Cumming was author of a standard text-book, "The Handbook of Lithography" —now revised with sections on offset-litho and photo-litho.

It is unusual, too, to find such a remarkable collection of specimens of work in their place and available for ready reference. After all, why not profit by the experience of earlier work and the comparison of older and more recent productions.

#### Class of Work.

We may safely conclude that examination of typical specimens of work produced by the firm both of recent and earlier days, should offer a safe guide to the general equipment and even the arrangement of premises in due course.

Thus considerable time was both pleasantly and instructively occupied in turning over books, catalogues, circulars, posters, showcards, photographic studies, box labels, fashion plates and booklets.

These commenced logically enough with the really fascinating chromo-litho printing afforded by editions de luxe and the almost equally luxurious and monumental publications such as standard works on Musical Instruments, the Garter Plates and Stuart Relics, and Kipling's Jungle Book. The collections veritably show direct litho at its finest and best.

The lithographers concerned were truly artists, and not only in their treatment of subjects, but in conception of colour values. The finish of printing as such is a sheer delight to the most jaded critic.

No wonder that McLagan & Cumming, who were responsible for all this truly exacting work, attained a reputation of the highest wherever lithography was used.

#### Planning of Work Rooms.

The lay-out both as units of a complete works and the dovetailing as departments of a whole, is invariably a most interesting study. Curiously enough this is the more interesting when instead of being an entirely new concern, the works have been erected by stages according to the class of production and its volume. Even the most up-to-date and new works are subject to this tendency; we have found lay-outs modified very considerably in course of even a few years after model establishments have settled down to steady business.

In brief, it is seen that the McLagan & Cumming premises show a predominance of lithographic equipment, but even here the rooms are rivalled in number of machines by the closely filled floors of the letterpress department.

#### The Canteen System.

What may be described in general as the canteen system is particularly interesting, both as a successful endeavour to cope with a problem bulking large in welfare recommendations and departure from the usual.

In many printing establishments a practice is made of sending round a travelling wagon, stopping at all groups of employees at, say, 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., furnishing tea or coffee and sometimes a bite of cake. This heralds a rest interval of a few minutes for the whole of the works and is greatly appreciated.

The Edinburgh firm has ordered things differently. Divided into at least three sections, the whole of the employees stop work, throw off overalls and quickly pass into the canteen which is a commodious open room set with tables and provided with kitchen, besides facilities for games when the room is used during evenings.

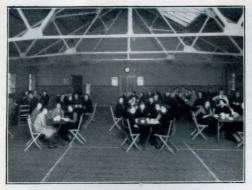
The mess room is readily reached from all departments by an outside staircase. The hall may thus be used in the evenings without entering the work rooms.

Each of the groups takes a ten minutes interval and it is obviously a delight to have this break in the routine work with opportunity for a cigarette and cup of tea. No wonder the innovation is vastly appreciated.

From the employers' point of view this is regarded as no loss of time, but a useful "break," work being undertaken afterwards with renewed keenness.

#### Designing Studio.

This department is an important section of the works, occupying a second floor position. Here is good natural lighting, ample space for posing subjects,



LITHO. ARTISTS' ROOM.

> PHOTO-LITHO. ROOM.



VIEW IN RECREATION HALL DURING AN INTERVAL



CORNER OF DESIGNING STUDIO





PHOTO-GRAPHIC STUDIO.





LITHO. PREPARING DEPT.

ONE OF THE LARGE CAMERAS IN PROCESS DEPT





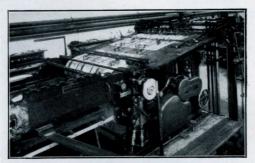
LITHO, PROVING PRESSES.



LITHO. MACHINE ROOM.



OFFSET PRINTING MACHINES.



A LARGE OFFSET MACHINE.

whilst divided round the walls are part partitioned studioettes for the individual artists.

There are seventeen of these skilled people, all specialists in one or other branch of design—figure, fashion, wash drawing, line, lettering and so on.

Window displays and models are also a feature of the production in this department.

#### Photographic Studio.

We confess that it was with pleasurable surprise that we were shown into a large and complete photographic studio, exactly of the class specialized by a very few large London photo-engraving establishments.

This is specially laid out with ample room for placing subjects, whether for illustrations of fashion catalogues, taking direct photos of models wearing special gowns, hats and other garments, or almost anything advertised for wearing, eating, drinking or household goods which may be set forth in front of the cameras.

The first necessity—that of extraordinary lighting facilities—is found to be scientifically complete and it was interesting to observe how a lady model posing for gowns was centred in powerful lights just as required for the picture. Then to note equal facilities for more prosaic picture reproductions in respect to tinned goods, eatables, rugs, carpets, furniture.

It is evident that Edinburgh takes no second place to London facilities for photo-studio work.

A full floor of the works is occupied by the process department, the studios and paper warehouses.

#### The Process Department

occupies considerable space and is found to be fully self-contained. It possesses three large cameras, one taking plate  $22 \times 32$ . Dark rooms on one side and the etching and kindred operations on the other. Besides the photographic and following operations the section is complete to every detail of mounting blocks, with mechanical tools.

So complete is the equipment that a full range of halftone and line, three-colour and also the preparation of plates for photo-litho work is seen in full operation.

The separate litho and letterpress machine rooms each occupy large floor spaces, roughly  $70 \times 100$  ft., with natural lighting on both sides and electric lighting throughout.

In the former the admirable equipment ranges from a series of hand presses for proofing generally, to flat-bed cylinders for direct work, and on to rotary offset litho presses—a Crabtree being the latest, and bronzing machines.

Thus the office is remarkably well equipped for the everyday commercial grades of lithography, as also the latest adaptions utilizing offset litho.

#### The Photo-Litho Department

is taking substantial shape and this, the latest form of lithography—photography combination, comes with suitability and appropriateness to a firm so long and favourably identified with the finest class of direct lithography.

The actual camera work is done in the process department overhead, but a separate section handles all the other details of the intricate photo-litho process with special plant of large mechanical whirler, printing down frames and other mechanical and hand devices.

But the Stone Age is still suitably with us, and litho stones are strongly in evidence both in the machine room and in a great store entirely devoted to that purpose. This large room is akin to a library in its arrangement of shelves whereon are set closely the great array of stones bearing work in use or stored for further demands.

In the litho rooms the stone and metal plate machines work side by side, so that the two processes may be witnessed in full operation.

The litho artists possess quite a department of their own, with separate sections for the variety of work involved. Eight skilled craftsmen are employed here.

The lithographic departments in series include a large preparing room, such as litho procedure requires, leading into the machine room. There is also the usual plant for stone grindery and plate graining, inkmixer and so on, all contributing to a very complete department.

#### The Composing Department

is well equipped for hand setting and also possesses a Monotype equipment. The range of faces available is quite up-to-date and indeed the class of advertising literature produced evidently draws upon modern display letter all the time. The adjacent store rooms show an excellent system for dealing with type supplies and particularly with the extraordinary number of blocks in use. These rooms are fireproof.

Alongside and reached from the same corridor as the litho department is the equally large and welllighted

#### Letterpress Machine Room.

Machines arranged in groups are chiefly from famous Otley engineers, but also including tworevolution, gravure and other presses, from platens to different sizes of cylinders in series.

We noticed, as elsewhere, the unusual degree of tidiness in these rooms and the obviously well-kept machines. From quad-demy downwards the presses present a complement of letterpress machines able to handle a great range of work and of high quality.

#### Paper Warehouses

offer accommodation for large stocks, and it is noticed that all paper, both for litho and letterpress use is matured by hanging in the proper temperature before use. A paper-seasoning machine is also in constant use.

The general warehouse which includes the manifold operations concerned with stationery make-up and binding, trimming and cutting, folding, covering, wire stitching and thread sewing, perforating, indexing, and so on, is housed in one large and well-arranged room. The familiar array of broad tables, the groups of appliances, row of guillotines and facilities for handling work, all bespeak system and insistently busy times.

All the rooms are well devised for access to kindred departments, are well lighted, clean and healthy places for daily work.

It is thus evident that the McLagan & Cumming works are decidedly well equipped for the class of work associated with the firm named.

It is indeed gratifying to thus find old traditions of skilled output continued through the gradual changes in methods which time brings about.

(All blocks and photographs used for such were produced by the depts. concerned.)



CASE ROOM.



LETTERPRESS MACHINE ROOM.



A ROW OF SUMMIT MACHINES IN LETTERPRESS DEPARTMENT.



GENERAL VIEW OF WAREHOUSE.