Introduction

The University of Glasgow Archive Services hold an extensive collection of architectural plans for the University of Glasgow by Sir George Gilbert Scott. Work on the collection included analysing and interpreting the plans for conservation.

Paper

The Plans were designed on different paper according to their function and importance. Several plans were drawn on Whatman paper recognisable by the countermark. The Whatman mills specialised in wove paper suitable for large sized watercolour painting. During the 19th century it was widely used by artists including J. W. Turner. Scott utilised the large size sheets for large-scale elevation plans and for plans approved and signed by University officials.

Drawing

The plans were drawn carefully using black ink and revisions were made in lead. The draughtsmanship is evident in the numerous compass point holes and precise ruling. Watercolour washes were used to highlight architectural features and building function in a similar way to those at the Royal Institute of British Architects.

The Planning Process

Scott’s planning process included making multiple versions of each plan. Each version had a purpose or indicated a major revision. For example, two South Elevation plans exist. The first plan on wove paper indicates revisions and is signed, whilst the second plan is a to scale tracing of the first plan with corrections. Other plans were for signatory purposes or for the use of builders. Most sections of the University have at least 2 plans.

Signatures

Analysing the plans revealed various signatures which ranged in content (name and address) and style. The variety would suggest other members of Scott’s firm signed on his behalf. Plans signed by Scott’s son John Oldrid are more distinctive being consistent in content and style.

Conclusions

Understanding the materials used by Scott and his firm has assisted in determining appropriate conservation methods and storage of the plans. Further research of these plans and comparison with his other design materials in other institutions, will provide a comprehensive understanding of the making, meaning and context of Scott’s architectural practice.