

Wylie & Lochhead Funeral Order Books

Introduction

Wylie & Lochhead was founded in 1829 by brothers-in-law Robert Wylie (a feather and hair merchant) and William Lochhead (a cabinet maker and funeral director). The main focus of the company was retailing, particularly through its department store on Argyll Street and later Buchanan Street. Undertaking remained, however, an important part of the business, the Victorian funeral combining elements of drapery, cabinet making, upholstery and even paper-making. Wylie & Lochhead became part of the House of Fraser in 1957; the Wylie & Lochhead collection is part of the House of Fraser archive.

Format

The records of the Wylie & Lochhead funeral directors comprise funeral order books and funeral journals. The funeral order book was where the details required were first entered; further requirements could be added later. The order books are listed and described here: <http://www.housefraserarchive.ac.uk/series/?id=fras-42>.

The early order books are large volumes bound in yearly sequence, usually three years to a volume, with two concurrent volumes for each sequence of years covered (ledgers A and B). They are 'day books' with each entry in chronological order (January to December in any given year). Pages have folio numbers. The entries are on double pages. The pages are pro-forma with printed column headings; entries are hand written. Later volumes (from 1942 onwards) are quarterly. Indices are in separate volumes for 1879-1930 then incorporated into the ledgers thereafter.

Content

- **Information provided:**
Name of those who paid for the funeral; name of deceased (and sometimes age); address; coffin size; shroud; wine and biscuits; stationery; number of hearses / coaches / 'noddies' whether a driver / ushers / bearers / attendants were provided; location of grave; date / time of burial.
- **Dates:** 1837-1965.
- **Indices:** 1879-1965.
- **Closure Period:** 75 years.
- **Points of Interpretation:**
 - The deceased is named in inverted commas (often only first name), except when the funeral is being paid for by the deceased, which is rendered 'John Smith Dec.'
 - The cost is recorded in code, as the order book was open to scrutiny by other customers.

The code is easy to decipher with the key - like most systems of this period it involves the use of letters substituted for numbers:

Code	'D'	'M'	'P'	'O'	'R'	'T'	'A'	'N'	'C'
No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

The figure zero is always represented as a zero and double numbers are used for sums over ten. If you look at the order books it is noticeable that most funerals in the 19th century cost in the region of one or two pounds. However, there are some exceptional sums that run into the tens of pounds.

- 'Noddies' are carriages.
- The service provided was all inclusive, thus the refreshments for the 'wake' (wine, biscuits), stationery for mourning.

