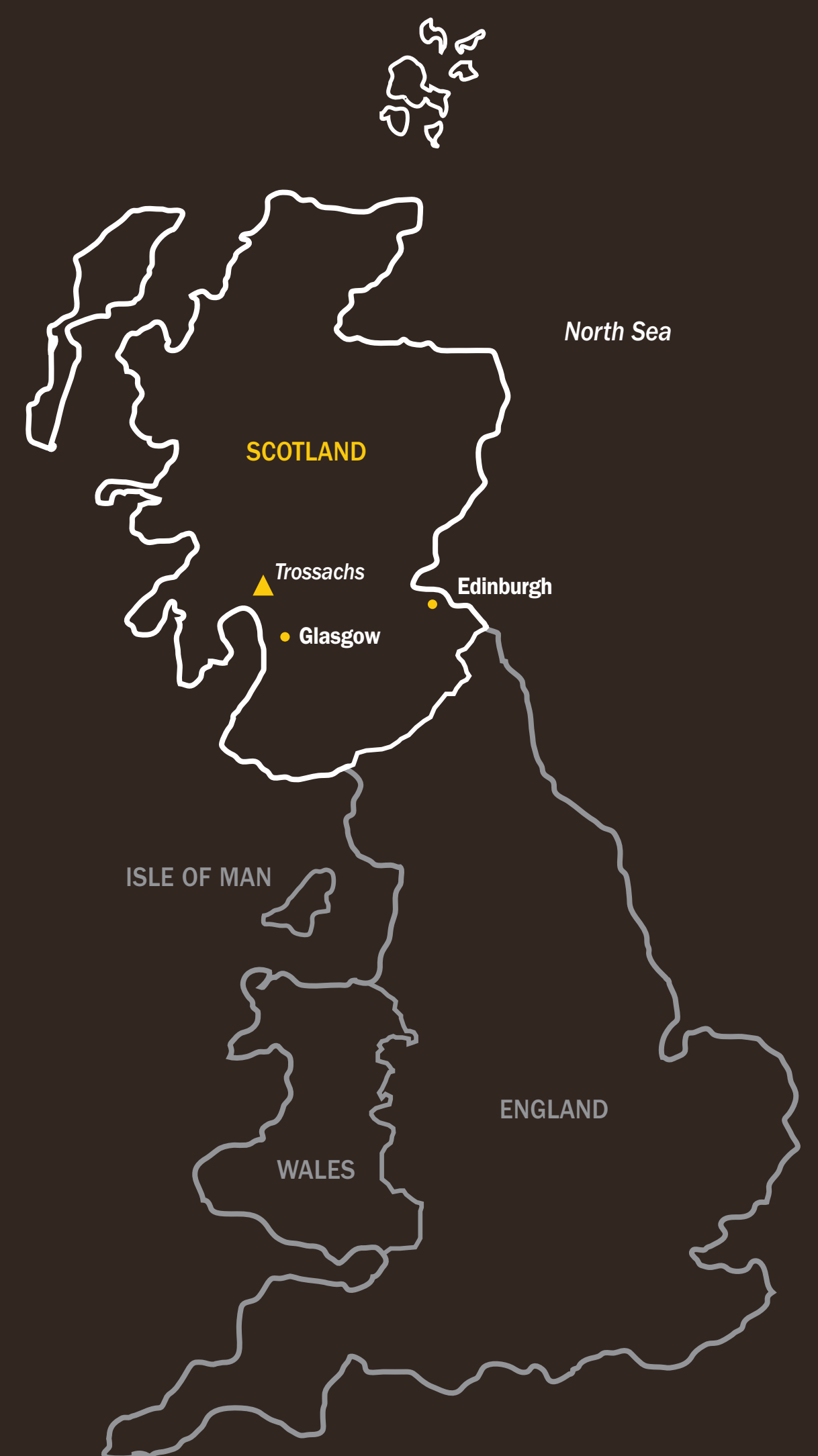


THOMAS ANNAN PHOTOGRAPHER OF GLASGOW



Thomas Annan (Scottish, 1829–1887) ranked as the preeminent photographer of Glasgow in the mid-nineteenth century, when the population of the “second city” of the British Empire increased dramatically and industrial production neared its peak. Annan opened his eponymous photographic firm in Glasgow in 1857 and maintained a studio there until his death, when his brother Robert, and sons John and James Craig, took over the business.

Amid diverse artistic interests that ranged from portraiture to landscapes to photographic reproductions of paintings, Annan is principally remembered for his documentation of numerous municipal initiatives that concerned Glasgow’s built environment. Such work traced the evolution of that densely populated, rapidly changing city and its surroundings for approximately thirty years. Best known for recording tenement buildings and passageways, or closes, prior to demolition—a project regarded as a harbinger of social documentary photography—Annan worked on related civic projects that included construction of the Loch Katrine aqueduct, the relocation of Glasgow College, and the expansion of the harbor. His extensive engagement with Glasgow as a subject forms the basis of this exhibition, the first to survey the breadth of Annan’s prolific career and consider how his work was printed, reproduced, and disseminated in the form of photographically illustrated publications.



OLD CLOSES & STREETS

Thomas Annan is best known today for the haunting series *Photographs of Old Closes and Streets*, considered an early example of social documentary photography. Between 1868 and 1871 he produced at least thirty-one images that depict streets, tenements, and passageways (referred to by such various terms as *closes*, *vennels*, and *wynd*s) that were earmarked for modification or demolition as a result of the Glasgow City Improvements Act of 1866. A selection of these photographs is on display in this gallery.

Dark, narrow, and hidden behind the main thoroughfares of Saltmarket, Gallowgate, Trongate, and High Street, the closes were difficult to explore and photograph. Moreover, these passageways—and the tenement houses surrounding them—were malodorous hotbeds of crime and disease. Annan somehow surmounted such unfavorable conditions to generate a photographic project that continues to fascinate, in part because its origins and motivations remain unclear. Presumably

charged by the Improvement Trust to record these sites before they were demolished, Annan also included the laborers and families who inhabited the tenements, injecting a sense of humanity into his work. Urinals, drains, laundry, and other signifiers of modernized sanitation further suggest that Annan was attempting to portray progress already underway.



Glasgow city center

LOCH KATRINE

As migrants from the Scottish Highlands and Ireland flocked to Glasgow in search of work in the 1700s and 1800s, the dramatic rise in population strained resources, including the supply of clean water available within the city. By the mid-1840s, this shortage escalated to a crisis. Increasingly polluted by sewage and chemical waste, the local River Clyde could no longer service the people of Glasgow. Forced to identify an alternative water source, city officials ultimately proposed an initiative to channel fifty million gallons of water daily from Loch Katrine, approximately thirty-five miles away in a wooded area called the Trossachs.

Commonly known as the Loch Katrine aqueduct scheme, this massive engineering effort required excavating wild, scenic terrain to lay pipeline. Between 1855 and 1859, laborers constructed seventy tunnels to direct clean water from the lake into the city. Presumably commissioned by the Glasgow Waterworks Corporation to document these feats of engineering, Annan first

photographed the aqueduct around 1859. On display in this gallery are some of his earliest photographs of the subject, at one time compiled in a book called *Views on the Line of the Loch Katrine Waterworks* that has since been disbound. They underscore the relationship between man and the environment, and invite contemplation about the nature of progress through industry.



Map of the Trossachs, featuring Loch Katrine

DOCUMENTATION OF LOCH KATRINE

After generating the images of the Loch Katrine aqueduct scheme in 1859, Annan continued to document the loch and the evolution of the waterworks. For more than two decades, he made photographs of landscapes, engineering works, and people in relation to this project. These later images typically feature more refined, complex compositions, as well as aspects of the engineering efforts that could not have been photographed prior to 1860. Two examples are shown here, while others appear in the book titled *Photographic Views of Loch Katrine*, four copies of which are on view in the center of the gallery. The sequence of images in the book loosely mimics the southbound course that the water traveled from Loch Katrine to Glasgow.



OTHER REPRESENTATIONS OF LOCH KATRINE

The release of Sir Walter Scott's epic poem *The Lady of the Lake* catapulted Loch Katrine and the Trossachs—a lush, wooded area northeast of Glasgow renowned for its scenic views and lakes, including Loch Katrine—into fashionable tourist destinations. The poem also inspired many artists to represent the lake, including Horatio McCulloch and J.M.W. Turner.



Horatio McCulloch, *Loch Katrine*, 1866

Image courtesy of Perth Museum & Art Gallery,
Perth & Kinross Council

Among the first photographers to depict the location was William Henry Fox Talbot, who included scenes of Loch Katrine in *Sun Pictures in Scotland* (1845). George Washington Wilson and

James Valentine, contemporaries of Annan, also capitalized on the loch's popularity by producing numerous views of the area and offering them for sale as prints or stereoscopic cards.

GLASGOW COLLEGE

Founded in 1451, the University of Glasgow (or Glasgow College) occupied buildings on High Street between 1457 and 1870. Numerous problems—including inadequate facilities, overcrowding, “nightly pandemonium of screams and policemen’s rattles,”* and threats posed by the neighboring tenement slums and factories—prompted relocation of the campus from the city center to Gilmorehill in the West End. The move from High Street occurred, however, “not without a lingering, regretful look behind.”** The university evidently recognized the need for a record of these buildings and apparently commissioned Annan to generate it. He made his initial photographs of the college around 1866, documenting distinctive parts of the university buildings on High Street prior to their transformation into a railway goods yard. He produced at least twenty-one images, most of which highlight architectural details such as archways, stonework, stairways, and statues.

*John R. Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities* (Routledge, 1969).

**Thomas Annan, *Memorials of the Old College of Glasgow* (James MacLehose, 1871).

URBAN FABRIC OF GLASGOW

During the years Annan actively photographed in Glasgow, the built environment of the city changed dramatically to accommodate a burgeoning middle class and increased industrial production and trade. The city center grew more dense, and urban boundaries were reconfigured to absorb peripheral suburbs. Some residents viewed the city's transformation as progressive, while others perceived the changes less favorably. John Oswald Mitchell, who wrote the introduction to *The Old Country Houses of the Old Glasgow Gentry*, remarked that Glasgow, in 1870, "looks almost as new as Chicago. But the luxuriant growth hides the ancient stem."^{*}

This gallery features photographs made by Annan in the 1860s and 1870s that reveal, in both subtle and overt ways, how the urban fabric in Glasgow evolved. Concurrent advancements in photographic printing processes, coupled with greater opportunities to publish and disseminate his work in books, proved important professional developments for Annan and his business.

^{*}John Buchanan et al., *The Old Country Houses of the Old Glasgow Gentry* (James MacLehose, 1870).

THE OLD COUNTRY HOUSES OF THE OLD GLASGOW GENTRY

Changes to the municipal and parliamentary boundaries of Glasgow in the 1840s resulted in the absorption of neighborhoods on the periphery of the city. This outward sprawl into suburbs such as Calton and the Gorbals, coupled with the rising middle-class economy and the overcrowded, heavily polluted urban center, forever altered the landscape of Glasgow.

Expansion sometimes forced the demolition or repossession of estates, farms, and other properties. Concern for preserving and memorializing these storied places inspired the publication of *The Old Country Houses of the Old Glasgow Gentry*. For this ambitious project, several authors researched “one hundred stately homes” and then composed narrative texts tracing the history of each house—which sometimes spanned centuries and frequently involved multiple transfers of ownership. Each narrative is illustrated by one of Annan’s photographs: a small albumen silver print of the estate house and grounds, made in the late 1860s or 1870.

Released in 1870, the book was reissued in 1878. By then, ten houses featured in the first edition had disappeared, while “others, with every shrub and tree cut away, stand like victims bared for the axe: and we know not how many more are doomed.”*

* John Buchanan et al., *The Old Country Houses of the Old Glasgow Gentry* (James MacLehose, 1878).

GLASGOW CATHEDRAL

In the 1850s, as restoration of Glasgow Cathedral neared completion, a group of benefactors pledged to fund another beautification project: the production of more than eighty stained glass windows for the nave, transept, choir, and lady chapel of the church. A committee of donors, shepherded by Glasgow School of Art headmaster Charles Heath Wilson, awarded the commission to the Royal Establishment of Glass Painting in Munich in 1857. This was a controversial decision because it outsourced work that British craftsmen could have performed. Ten Bavarian artisans were charged with depicting a range of religious figures and subjects, with “a sequence of striking events in Old Testament history” to be installed in the nave, while parables that revealed “the more tender and peaceful teachings of Christ” were to be placed in the choir.*

Annan recorded this effort in more than forty photographs of the windows and cathedral, compiled in *The Painted Windows of Glasgow Cathedral*. Despite numerous technical obstacles—from the height of the windows to the difficulty of producing a single exposure that registered multiple colors of glass—Annan achieved great consistency and tonal balance in his black-and-white photographs. The technique he used to produce these prints remains unknown.

*Stephen Adam, in *The Book of Glasgow Cathedral: A History and Description*, ed. George Eyre-Todd (Morison Brothers, 1898).

CLYDE NAVIGATION

By the mid-nineteenth century, to keep pace with industrial production and trade operations, Glasgow needed to expand its harbor. This required significant redevelopment of the narrow River Clyde, a waterway unable to accommodate substantial traffic or convenient, expedient shipping from the riverbank.

Acts of Parliament issued between 1858 and 1870 empowered the Clyde Navigation Trust to deepen the river to twenty feet and widen its channel, build a graving dock where ships could be repaired, and construct a tidal dock on the north side of Glasgow Harbor to accommodate ships as they berthed or loaded cargo. James Deas, engineer-in-chief of the Clyde Trust from 1869 until 1899, oversaw the latter project, known as Queen's Dock; he likely commissioned Annan in the late 1870s to document some of the related engineering works. These photographs constitute another body of work that,

like the Loch Katrine aqueduct, concerned a civic initiative designed to improve the built environment. Although Annan's images of this initiative were shown in Paris at the Exhibition Universelle in 1877, they were all but forgotten in the context of his career, housed for decades in the Clyde Navigation archives as anonymous works.



Aerial view of Queen's Dock and Prince's Dock at Glasgow Harbor

LEGACY OF THOMAS ANNAN

Annan likely encouraged the artistic inclinations of his eldest sons John (1862–1947) and James Craig (1864–1946), both of whom became professional photographers. John developed a steady career recording architecture and industrial machinery in Glasgow, while James Craig pursued fine art photography and emerged as a leading figure in the Pictorialist movement. Their discrete areas of expertise may have constituted a division of labor connected to the firm established by their father, known for photographing portraits, landscapes, paintings, buildings, and engineering works. Together, the brothers maintained the spirit and diversity of their father's interests in the disparate subject matter they portrayed.

On view are several works attributed to John Annan that not only represent a continuation of his father's documentation of the built environment in Glasgow but also depict locations that Thomas had photographed decades earlier.



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