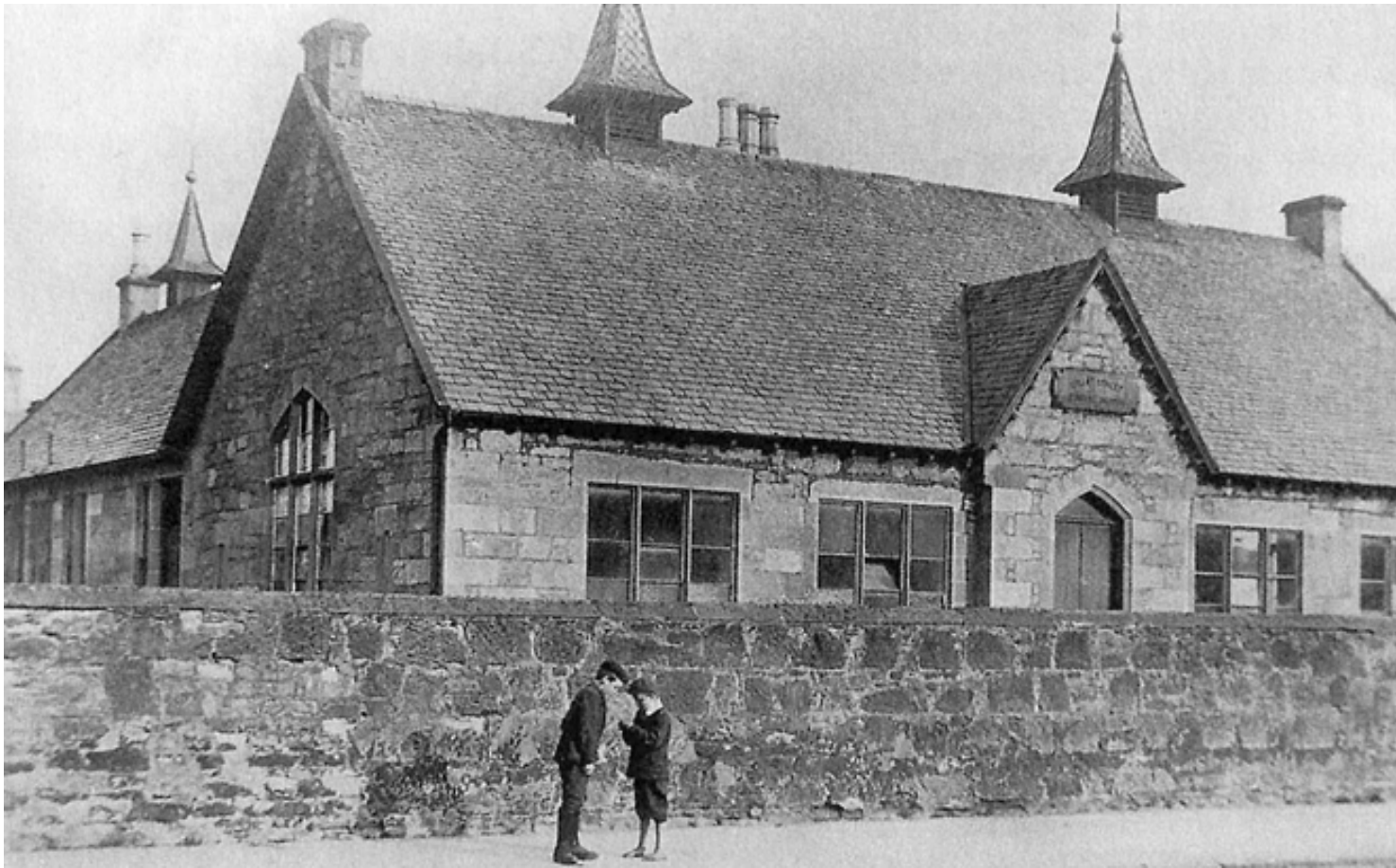


Bookshop find led to research

Written by Donald Fullarton - Last Updated Monday, 23 January 2017 14:17



AN 1899 copy of John Bunyan's 'The Pilgrim's Progress' found in a Glasgow bookshop was donated to Helensburgh Heritage Trust . . . and led to a flurry of research by two of the directors.

The book was presented by the finder, Glasgow man Michael Bar-Lev, who was interested in the Helensburgh background.

On the inside cover is a label stating that the book was a school prize awarded in 1899 to Miss Mary Gibson of Class 111, Grant Street and James Street School, for coming first in English and Writing.

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The label also bore the name of the headmaster, James A. Crabbe, B.A., and Mr Bar-Lev wondered if there were any descendants of Mary Gibson and James Crabbe still in the area.

The Trust directors were intrigued as to the designation of the school. How had the linkage of Grant Street and James Street come about, and what is known about the school, or schools?

Alistair McIntyre and Stewart Noble set out to answer these questions, and began by looking at the background to Grant Street School (*above*) — which was the senior partner.

By the middle of the 19th century, there was increasing anxiety in Helensburgh over a perceived section of society in the town, seemingly beyond the reach of the relatively good educational provision that already existed.

The parents concerned were thought to be “too poor or too indifferent to pay the usual fees”.

As a result, plans were made to set up a school, which, though not a charity school, would reduce fees to such a small sum as could cause no difficulty to the parent.

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The building shown in the photograph is the former site of the Glasgow Free Public Library, which was built in 1884. It was designed by the architect James Watson and was one of the first free public libraries in Scotland.