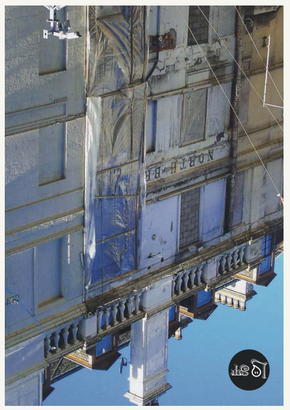

Lost & Found

The mysterious, transient nature of Ghost Signs means they often disappear and reappear. A Ghost Sign might be lost forever if the sign has been painted over or physically removed, but on occasion they disappear to magically reappear years later, for example when a building is under renovation.

The North British Station Hotel sign spotted at Queen Street railway station during the renovation in 2019 is an example of this, as it appeared just for a few months before quickly being hidden again from view.

Can't find a Ghost Sign?

Use the black sticker to mark on your map where a Ghost Sign is no longer visible.

Found a Ghost Sign?

Use the golden sticker to mark a new Ghost Sign not yet marked on your map.

The City Centre

The centre of Glasgow is the city's central nervous system, found most vibrant and alive on a Friday or Saturday night. The bars and clubs of the centre keep it moving throughout the week and at the weekend. Some cultural attractions in the city centre include the Glasgow Museum of Modern Art or GOMA, the Lighthouse and the CCA which host an ever-changing line-up of art and cultural events. One prominent feature of the centre is George Square which is bordered by the City Chambers and, in December, a festive market. The centre is a travel hub including two different large train stations, Central Station and Queen Street, which keeps Glasgow connected to the rest of the UK. The city centre has the busiest shopping streets in Scotland—Sauchiehall Street and Buchanan Street.

@ghoststisngsgla

#ghoststisngsgla

@ghoststisngsgla

Tag us in your picture be a good Ghost Sign buster!

Follow our online archive on Flickr

Ghost Signs of Glasgow

Want to become a volunteer?

Drop us an e-mail at ghoststisngs@glasgowheritage.org.uk

Keep an eye on our social media for tours and talks!

Glasgow City Heritage Trust

Ghost Signs of Glasgow

Ghost Signs of Glasgow is a volunteer-based project which tracks down, researches and archives fast-disappearing signs around the city. The project naturally found its home in Glasgow City Heritage Trust, as Ghost Signs are vital to the fabric of Glasgow's urban landscape.

A Ghost Sign is a fading sign that represents a business or establishment that no longer exists. We have been building an archive that will help us better understand Glasgow's economic and cultural history. One fundamental goal of the project is to be able to learn about the architectural, social, economic and cultural atmosphere of 'the Glasgow' to which these signs belong and share it with you!
We have developed tours to showcase the fascinating stories we have unearthed and currently have tours spanning the city, with walks covering the West End, the East End and the City Centre. These walks have been a learning experience for both the Ghost Signs team and the walkers.
The project works in collaboration with Glasgow's local communities who often contribute memories of their much-loved locales. We have a wide social media presence using our Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to further connect with the Glaswegian community. All the material on this map, including research text, drawings, photographs and graphic design, has been a collaborative effort by our wonderful team of volunteers.

Who we are

Map

City Centre West

Jacobean Corsetry
Virginia Street

The Jacobean corsetry sign on Virginia Street is a local landmark in the Merchant City. It was first erected in 1946 to advertise the lady's undergarment which operated from the A listed building. The company who owned 'Jacobean Corsetry' were in fact Dowell&Son Limited.

They distributed more than 30,000 corsets annually to 500 shops nationwide. The successful corset trade continued here right up until the late 1980s. By then, demand for the restrictive and cumbersome underwear had fallen away and the business closed in 2000.

Boys found playing
Royal Exchange Court

In this courtyard, a faded sign threatens: 'Boys found playing at balls or marbles will be handed to the Police'. Looking closely at the nearby wall, dates and initials are carved into the stone, possibly written by the street urchins the police were addressing.

Did you know that sign also bears witness to a dark history dating to January 1889, when a vicious attack took place in this courtyard? A newspaper reports a passerby hearing the cries of murder and whistling of police alarms at the attack on Mary McKenzie in the dark of the courtyard. The attacker, a young coachbuilder, was chased by the police, a bloody knife found in his pocket. Both the consequences and motive of the attack are unknown, but the newspaper draws parallels to the 1888 crimes of Jack the Ripper.

Wylie & Lochhead
Mitchell Street

Wylie&Lochhead was a household name in 19th-century Glasgow known for its design and craftsmanship. Robert Wylie and William Lochhead were skilled at their respective trades and related by marriage. In 1829 they formed a partnership, opening premises at 164 Trongate. They established their success during the 1830s, from undertaking during the cholera epidemic in 1832, to pioneering horse-drawn omnibus services in 1837. The business grew in the following decades as they manufactured wallpaper in the '50s, opened a paper staining factory in the '60s and specialised in ship and yacht interiors in the '70s. GSA's famous 'The Four' designed a room for the firm at the Glasgow International Exhibition of 1901. They introduced affordable lines after WWI and produced utility furniture during WWII. In 1957 House of Fraser acquired Wylie&Lochhead. By 1975, neighbouring stores including Wylie&Lochhead had merged into Frasers on Buchanan Street. The funeral side of the business continues as Wylie&Lochhead (Funerals) Ltd.

Argyll Arcade
4 Argyll Arcade

The Argyll Arcade, built in 1827 as Argyll Chambers, is the oldest covered shopping mall in Scotland, an architectural jewel and a magnet for jewellery shoppers. The L-shaped arcade was built in Parisian style in 1904, designed by John Baird to create a short-cut through old tenements.
One of the original occupants was tea dealer Stuart Cranston whose family pioneered tea rooms. In 1878 he opened the arcade's Cranston Luncheon Room with emphasis on the quality of food, design, decor and cleanliness. The mosaic coat of arms includes the crane and motto of the Cranston family.

Teacher Building
14 St. Enoch Square

The Teacher building hosts a distinctive Ghost Sign, thought to be original, which tells us more about the history of the building.
In 1832 Teacher opened his first 'dram shop' where customers could stop by for a tipple of his high-quality product.
By 1836 he had a second shop and a license to sell bottled whisky. Before long, a chain of twenty such shops were up and running, allowing thirsty Glaswegians to enjoy a dram and buy a bottle.
The headquarters at St. Enoch Square housed its own dram shop where strict rules were in place. Customers were banned from smoking, buying rounds, or having one too many.

Sponge Shop
52 Howard Street

At number 52 Howard Street, Glasgow, in the St. Enoch area of the City Centre, we see this fantastic layered Ghost Sign showing multiple typography designs, the most visible of which is M.L. Benjamin&Co, importer and merchant of natural sponges. Mark L. Benjamin occupied this shop, which formed part of a small arcade, from 1924.
In a time before synthetic sponges, Benjamin's natural products would have been imported from all over the world, harvested in such places as the Mexican Gulf, Florida and the Mediterranean.
As access to clean water became the norm, Benjamin's business grew rapidly. By 1927, now named the 'Howard Sponge House', it occupied the greatest part of the same building in this bustling part of town. The company ceased trading in 1972 after 50 successful years.

Typewriter
56 Oswald Street

The Typewriter Repair Co. was located at 47 Oswald Street from 1911–1914. From our research, this business was owned by the Dracup family.
There are a few people who could have been the shop owners. In 1871 a mechanic called John Dracup, aged 42, and his wife Gemma lived at 45 Oswald Street. The 1901 Census notes a John W.A. Dracup, aged 26, as a Typewriter Mechanic, however by 1911 he is listed as a Motor Car Engineer. An A. Dracup is located at 151 Garnethill Street in the 1912 Post Office Records, offering typewriter repairs from this address.
This sign remains something of a mystery but given the common threads it seems likely that this was a family business which kept the typists of Glasgow clacking their keys for several years.