

Argyll Mansions

Argyll Mansions were between 1905 and 1907 and designed by Glasgow architects Leiper and McNab, who were also the architects for Templeton's Carpet Factory in Glasgow. Argyll Mansions remain virtually unaltered and are considered to be one of Scotland's finest tenements. The building consists of four storeys of rock-faced pink Aberdeenshire granite dominated by dressings of Red Arran sandstone. At the corner of George Street and Argyll Street is a dormer-topped conical-roofed tower complete with Scots-Jacobean detailing.

At street level, bulging Roman Doric three-quarter columns, lugged under a full-width cornice crisp with fine detail and lugged again below, at mezzanine height, mark out a shopfront range altogether worthy of such promenade prominence. The wrought iron balconies have inset panels picked out in gold and even the rainwater hopper heads and pipe fixings are decorated with fleur-de-lys. The chimneys form an integral part of the building and one is constructed as seven linked diamond-set stacks. The dormer heads are decorative and some of the scrolls were copied from Aberdour Castle.

The roofing slates which are small and greenish in hue are thought to be from the Cumbrian quarry at Elterwater, as Leiper sourced slates from here for several of his buildings.

Argyll Mansions were built for William Chalmers who had a drapery shop on the site but who wished to expand his business to cater for the increasing number of visitors. His new shop was known as "Chalmers Highland Tweed Warehouse" and its patrons included Queen Mary and Queen Alexandra. In his application to the Dean of Guild Court he stated that his building would have shops on the ground floor and three floors containing large apartments, boarding houses and an attic storey. The building would be of fire proof construction, fitted with steel girders and fitted with electric light. One of Chalmers assistants James Turnbull was killed at the Somme on the 1st July 1916. He was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery. He is remembered on the Oban War Memorial and further information about him is available in the Oban War and Peace Museum. William Chalmers died in Naples in 1929, aged 70 during a Mediterranean cruise. He left an estate valued at £18,328. The business was carried on by his eldest son Robert.