The Watt Club of Greenock.
HISTORY

AND

REGULATIONS

OF THE

Watt Club of Greenock:

WITH

THE NAMES OF THE PRESENT OFFICE-BEARERS,

AND OF THE HONORARY AND ORDINARY MEMBERS.

GREENOCK:

PRINTED IN THE ADVERTISER OFFICE.

1827.
OFFICE BEARERS FOR 1827,

ELECTED MARCH 28.

-President,

GEORGE WILLIAMSON.

-Vice-Presidents,

JAMES B. KIRK, M.D.,

REV. JOHN DUNN.

Secretary and Treasurer,

JAMES JAMIESON.
The Members of this Club first met in the Winter of the year 1813, and although they had, at first, no specific purpose in view, beyond the desire of cultivating the friendship of each other, by spending, once in the fortnight, an hour or two in social conversation, this arose rather from the difficulty of devising an object more extensively useful in itself, and accordant with the moderation of their pretensions, than from the absence of a wish to embark in any scheme, within their reach, which might, in any way, advance the interests of that Community of which they formed a portion.

From the institution of the Club, till the year 1820, their Meetings took place with considerable regularity. They assumed no particular designation. The place of Meeting, except during the Winter of 1813, was in the House formerly called The Greenock Tavern, and which, for the reason which shall hereafter be given, was changed into that of The James Watt Tavern.
Their Meetings were conducted upon the model of private life; no other regulation being deemed necessary to ensure the uninterrupted harmony which characterized the Society, than that the individual in the Chair should be addressed with the same good breeding which a Gentleman sitting at his own table might expect from the friends invited to partake of his hospitality.

In the year 1820, the attention of the Club was called to a consideration of the splendid talents of Mr. James Watt, of Soho, whom they felt proud in being able to claim as a Townsman, and who had, in the course of the preceding year, paid the debt of nature. Stimulated by the merits of a man, not less exemplary in morals than eminent in science—whose patriotism too was as conspicuous in practice as in sentiment; and wishing, rather than expecting, to make themselves useful, by connecting the Club with a name so auspicious, a resolution was unanimously come to, that so fair an opportunity as now offered itself to take to themselves a designation should be laid hold of, and they accordingly assumed the appellation of the "Watt Club."

Identifying themselves, as they had thus done, with the name of so distinguished a Philosopher, the Club next directed their attention to discover, if possible, the House in which Mr. Watt was born. They deemed this the more necessary, as, about that time, it had been asserted, in some of the public prints, that he was a native of Glasgow, and not a few even of the people of Greenock supposed he was born in Crawfordsdyke. At the period referred to, also, the interesting Biographical Memoir by his Son, in the Supplement to the Encyclopædia
Britannica, had not then appeared. The place of his birth was soon discovered. It was ascertained from proofs, both documentary and oral, the most unquestionable, that Mr. Watt first drew the breath of life in a house which once occupied the site on which the Greenock Tavern was reared—where the Club held their meetings, and instituted the inquiry which terminated in ascertaining so important a fact. A coincidence so extraordinary in itself, and at the same time so gratifying to the Club, determined them to change the name of the House into that before-mentioned—the better to identify a spot which, for a long succession of years, will be pointed out to the admirers of genius as the birth place of WATT.

Successful in this undertaking, and desirous to do honour to a name which the Town of Greenock can boast as its own, and which will be transmitted to posterity, as that of one of the most illustrious benefactors of mankind, the Club determined to express, by some public act, their admiration of Mr. Watt's character. It was thought that this might be best done in the way of a Public Dinner. Accordingly, upon the 19th of January 1821, the anniversary of Mr. Watt’s birth, and the next anniversary but one which occurred after his death, a Dinner did take place, at which the Chief Magistrate of Greenock presided, and which was attended by the most respectable of the inhabitants of Greenock, some of whom had been his personal and intimate friends. Thus, the Town of Greenock had the honour of being the first publicly to recognise, by a tribute of gratitude to his memory, the extraordinary merits of James Watt.

By the same agency, too, the public demonstrations of
respect to the memory of Mr. Watt which subsequently took place, in 1824 and 1827, were brought about.

At the institution of the Club, a regulation was made that its members should not exceed a certain number; but this limitation, being found inconvenient, was soon abandoned, and, from time to time, accessions were made by ballot to its members, of such Gentlemen resident in the Town of Greenock, as made application to be admitted, and were proposed and recommended by a member.

Honorary members have also been admitted; and although these are few in number, there will be found among them men distinguished in science and in art, whose names shed a lustre on the age in which they live. The honorary members admitted were, Mr. Chantrey, the celebrated sculptor; Dr. Cleland, the author of the Annals of Glasgow; Mr. Watt of Soho, the son of the Philosopher; Sir H. Davy, President of the Royal Society; Sir Michael Shaw Stewart, Bart., and Mr. Thom of Rothesay.

The names of the ordinary members, according to the periods of their admission, are as follow:—

George Williamson; James Balderston Kirk, M. D.; George Blair; Duncan Smith; Colin Buchanan; Rev. John Dunn; John Mennons; Allan Swan; William Kerr; James Mollison, M. D.; William Scott; James Caird; John Fleming, artist; Andw. Lindsay; James L. Brown; James Watt; Rev. Dr. Gilchrist; David Crawford; James Jamieson; John Fairrie; Henry Bell, engineer; John Paton; Andrew Muir; and William Currie.
REGULATIONS.

In the Winter of 1826, the Club directed their attention to the formation of some definite Regulations for their future government, and after mature consideration and considerable discussion, the following were unanimously agreed to:

1st, That the Club shall be managed by a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer and Secretary, who shall be annually elected by the members, at the meeting held upon the last Wednesday of March.

2d, That the meetings shall commence upon the last Wednesday of August, and end upon the last Wednesday of March.

3d, That the immediate object of the Club shall be to encourage native genius and merit, by bestowing Honorary Testimonials.

4th, That the Testimonials shall consist of Silver Medals, inscribed upon the obverse as follows:—"Presented by the President and Members of the Watt Club, Greenock." The reverse to bear the name of the person receiving the Medal, and the reason of its being bestowed.

5th, That as heretofore the Club shall meet once a fortnight for conversation, excluding, however, all discussion upon national and burgh politics.

6th, That the Club shall receive such accessions as may be made to its members by ballot, and a single dissentient vote shall exclude the individual proposed.
7th, That the Club shall receive as Honorary Members such strangers as interest themselves in the good of the Town and Community of Greenock, or distinguish themselves in arts, in science, or in literature.

8th, That no person resident in the Town of Greenock shall be admitted an Honorary Member.

9th, That each member shall, on admission, pay one guinea, and each member already admitted, with all members to be hereafter admitted, shall pay an annual contribution of half a guinea.

10th, That any member shall be at liberty to propose a Medal for a meritorious individual; but the Club shall not be called upon to decide upon the matter, till their next ordinary meeting, that the Members may have time to consider the merits of the person named. The Medal shall be bestowed by a vote of the Club, in which two-thirds of the members present must concur.

11th, That any member absenting himself from the ordinary meetings of the Club for a whole year, shall be held to have withdrawn himself from the Club, unless he offer a reasonable excuse for his absence, in which case he shall be re-admitted, subject to the future operation of this Regulation.

(Signed) JAMES B. KIRK,

11th March, 1827.

PRESIDENT.