

Morrison & Gibb  
Article about the firm's centenary

This year (1937) the well-known firm of Morrison & Gibb Limited, Printers, celebrated their Centenary, and the Directors generously marked the occasion by giving their employees a concert in the Music Hall and a Dance in the Assembly Rooms on 21st May. This event will undoubtedly be recorded in the annals of the printing industry of Edinburgh and Scotland.

The business was founded in 1837 by Mr. William Oliphant, an Edinburgh bookseller, under the name of William Oliphant & Co., which was changed in the following year to William Oliphant, Junior & Co. In 1841 Mr. Gibb (Mr. Oliphant's partner) took over the business along with Dr. Thomas Murray, and the firm's designation was then altered to Murray & Gibb. The first premises were at 21 George Street, but owing to the increase of trade new quarters had to be found in Thistle Street Lane in 1845. Mr William Oliphant Morrison, a nephew of Mr. William Oliphant, joined the firm in 1864, and after Mr Gibb's death on 15th May in the following year he carried on the business until the death of Dr Murray, which occurred in 1872. Another change took place in 1879 when Mr William Oliphant Gibb, son of the late partner, entered the business, and the firm was renamed Morrison & Gibb.

After many extensions, the pressure of business upon all departments of the establishment compelled a further removal to more commodious premises and in 1887 the works at Tanfield were opened.

In 1896 an amalgamation with Messrs. Scott & Ferguson (formerly of Clyde Street) took place. In 1928 the works of W.& A.K. Johnston Ltd. were acquired, and in 1932 the business of Messrs. Mould & Tod Ltd. was also incorporated. The chief departments of the combined establishments are letterpress printing, bookbinding, lithography, map-making, stereotyping etc. which processes are carried through on a large scale.

The increase of production undertaken by the firm in recent years, through the splendid business abilities of the Managing Director (Mr. Frederick Haynes) and the management, has necessitated the construction of new premises upon vacant ground situated to the rear of the present buildings. The site occupies nearly 2 acres, and the new building, designed by Messrs. Buchanan & Linton, Architects, under the personal supervision of T. Edward Ockleford, F.I.A.A. is fully equipped with the most modern printing machinery.

This consistent progressive policy of the management has brought the firm into the position of one of the largest printing establishments in Scotland.

It may be of interest to mention that Messrs W.& A.K. Johnston's business was founded in 1825 by William Johnston, who set up a handpress at 6, Hill Square, Edinburgh and started business as a steel-plate and copper-plate printer. Soon afterwards he was joined by his brother, Alexander Keith, and then the business was moved to 160 High Street. In 1837 they established themselves at 4 St. Andrew Square. In 1848 William Johnston became Lord Provost of Edinburgh and in 1851 he was knighted by Queen Victoria. He retired in 1867. The business continued to expand and the Edina Works were built in 1879. The centenary of that firm was celebrated in 1925 and in 1928 the business was amalgamated with Morrison & Gibb.