

THE FIRST NORWEGIAN
SEAMEN'S CHURCH IN LEITH,
EDINBURGH



THE SCANDINAVIAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Scandinavian Lutheran Church was erected in 1868 on 25 North Junction Street in Leith, Edinburgh.

Photo credit: Bergen Maritime Museum.

Cabinet
M. SELMER



Portrait
BERGEN.



It was the very first church to be built by the Norwegian Seamen's Mission established in 1864 by Johan Cordt Harmens Storjohann (1832–1914).
Photo credit: Unknown.



LOCAL SUPPORT

The Norwegian Seamen's Mission enjoyed strong support from the Scandinavian community in Leith. Shipowner and entrepreneur Christian Salvesen (1827–1911) from Norway, became one of the Mission's main supporters. Amongst other things he contributed to raising funds for the building of the Scandinavian Lutheran Church.

Photo credit: Mandal Museum.

THE SEAFARING COMMUNITY

The church was to serve the Scandinavian seafaring community around the docks in Leith - the port of Edinburgh. The Mission wanted to provide a safe and spiritual haven for the seamen, a place where they could feel closer to home.

In the 1860s around 3500 Scandinavian seamen came to Leith annually. Seamen of this time lived and worked under harsh conditions. Their wellbeing was not yet a matter of the state, but of their superiors, employers and non-profit organisations such as the Norwegian Seamen's Mission.

Photo credit: Bergen Maritime Museum.

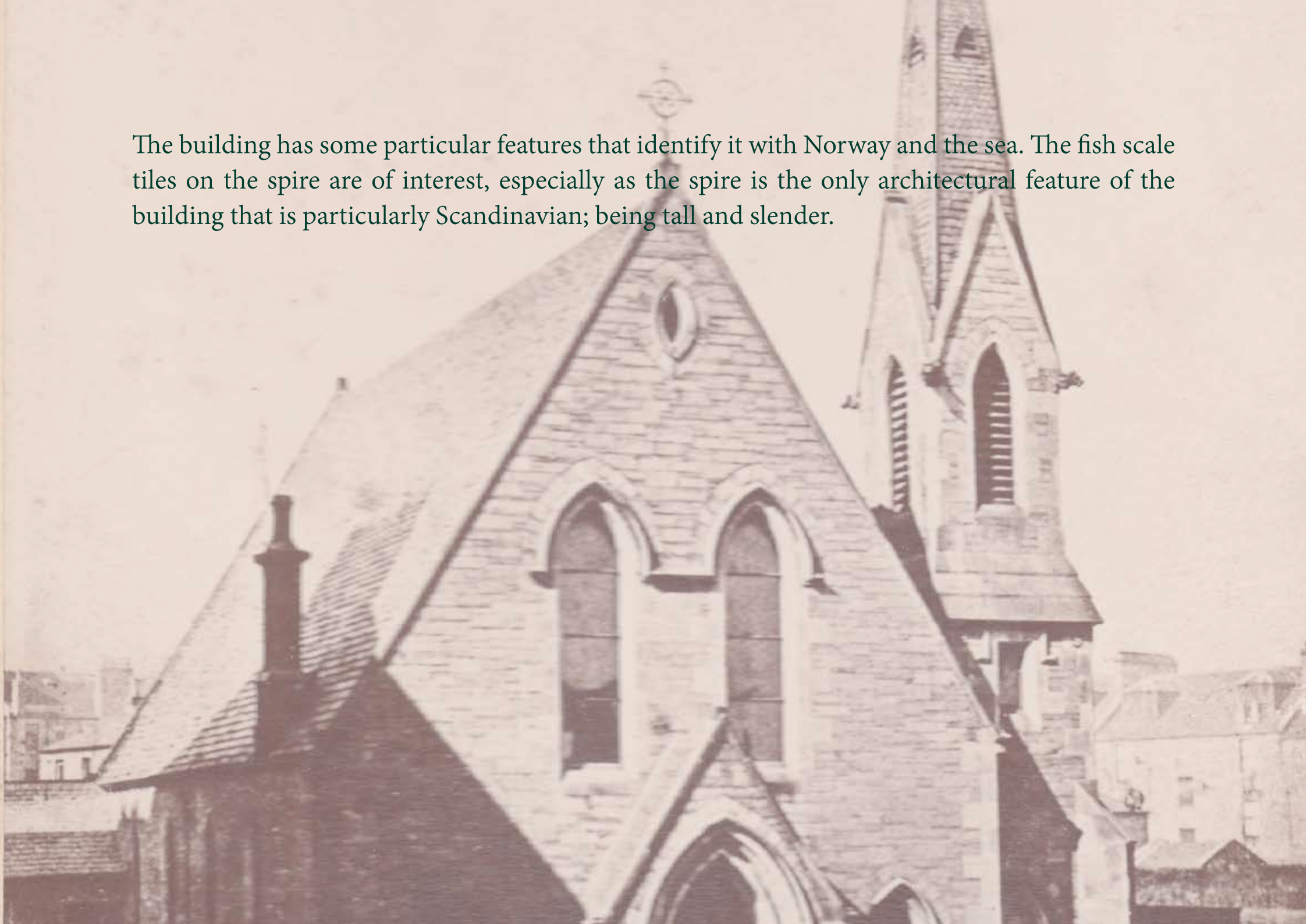




THE CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

It was Johan Schrøder (1836-1914) of Copenhagen who designed the church, but his drawings were later on adapted by the Scottish architect James Simpson (1832-1894).

The building has some particular features that identify it with Norway and the sea. The fish scale tiles on the spire are of interest, especially as the spire is the only architectural feature of the building that is particularly Scandinavian; being tall and slender.



TODAY THE CHURCH BUILDING IS
ON THE HISTORICAL SCOTLAND
PRESERVATION LIST (CATEGORY 3).

The church interior photographed sometime between 1925–1941.

Photo credit: Peter Stubbs.

157	15804
49	2555
25	805
108	
802	

THE SCANDINAVIAN CHURCH, NO. JUNCTION STREET, LEITH.

THE CHURCH INTERIOR

The original interior of the church was characterised by clean lines and basic decorative elements in its structure, open scissored-braced timber roof and leaf fielded panel doors. The interior was also decorated with gifts from various patrons and friends of the church.



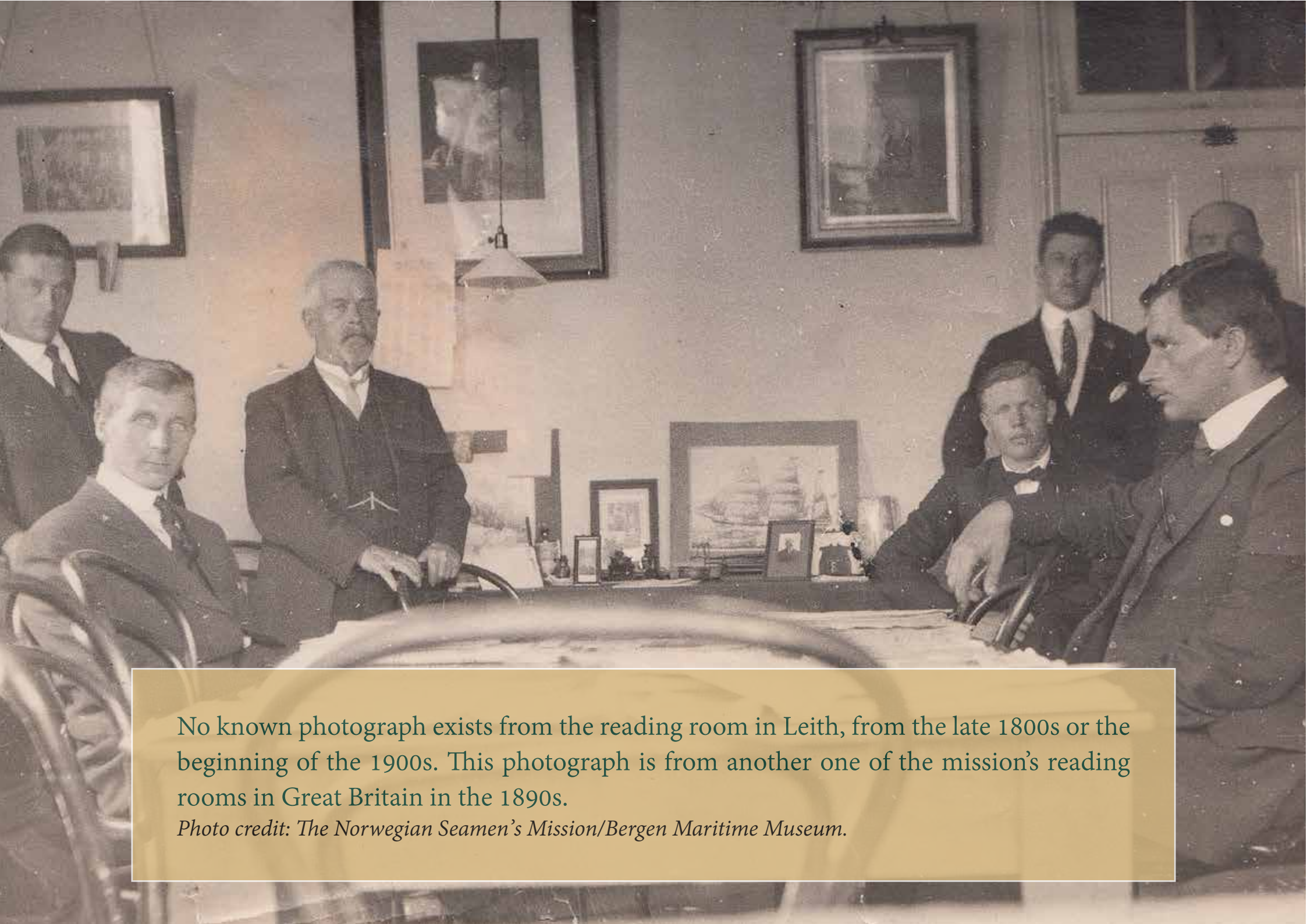
The alter piece was donated to the church in 1925. It is a copy of 'The Good Shepherd' from 1913 by the renown Danish painter Joachim Skovgaard.
Photo credit: Unknown.

Lith. O. Hart, 1866

THE READING ROOM

In 1885 a reading room was built, adjoined to the church. The purpose of the reading room was to create a social arena for the Scandinavian seamen in a homely atmosphere, offering healthy leisure activities such as bible readings and informative lectures.

[Faint, illegible handwritten text in the background, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]



No known photograph exists from the reading room in Leith, from the late 1800s or the beginning of the 1900s. This photograph is from another one of the mission's reading rooms in Great Britain in the 1890s.

Photo credit: The Norwegian Seamen's Mission/Bergen Maritime Museum.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The church became an important meeting place during the Second World War for exiled Scandinavian families, war sailors, soldiers and marines.

In 1940 alone, the church had 14 000 visitors.

NORWEGIAN WAR SAILORS IN THE ATLANTIC OCEAN IN 1943.

Photo credit: The Norwegian Seamen's Mission.



FEWER SCANDINAVIAN SEAMEN IN LEITH

After the Second World War, the number of Scandinavian ships coming in to Leith was frequently low.

At the beginning of the 1950s it could go weeks between every time a sailor walked the 10 minutes from the docks to the Scandinavian Lutheran Church on North Junction street.



Five sailors from the Norwegian ship `Lotus celebrating the 100 years anniversary of the Norwegian Seamen's Mission and the Norwegian Constitution day on the 17th of May 1964.

Photo credit: The Norwegian Seamen's Mission.

A CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CENTRE

Because of the few Scandinavian seamen coming to Leith after the Second World War the church ceased to a large degree it's original function as a meeting place for seafarers.

Rather, in this period the church consolidated its role as an important cultural and social centre for Scandinavian residents in the area.

A joyful group of Norwegian sailors and Norwegian residents on a sightseeing trip from North Shields to Edinburgh in 1954, organised by the Norwegian Seamen's Mission.

Photo credit: The Norwegian Seamen's Mission/Bergen Maritime Museum.





A Norwegian third officer and his bride outside the church on the 12th of July 1953 after the wedding ceremony.

Photo credit: The Norwegian Seamen's Mission



Tutta Koren and Finn Koren, Norwegian consul in Glasgow in the period of 1959–1964, together with their eldest daughter Elisabeth outside the Scandinavian Lutheran Church after her confirmation in 1962. To the right in the photograph are Elisabeths younger siblings Merete and Anita Koren.

Photo credit: Anita Koren.



Norwegian King Olav V visited the church
in 1962.

Photo credit: The Norwegian Seamen's Mission.





The congregation outside the Scandinavian Lutheran Church, after the celebration of the Norwegian Constitution Day 17th of May 1964 and the 100 years anniversary of the Norwegian Seamen's Mission.

Photo credit: The Norwegian Seamen's Mission.

Norwegian ladies in their national costumes outside the church after the celebration service for the Norwegian Seamen's Missions 100 years anniversary and the Norwegian Constitution day, 17th May 1964.

Photo credit: The Norwegian Seamen's Mission.





The church bazar in 1972.
Photo credit: The Norwegian Seamen's Mission.



THE END OF AN ERA

In 1973 the Norwegian Seamen's Mission ceased its work in Leith, and in 1985 the Scandinavian Lutheran Church was sold.



Today the Scandinavian Lutheran Church harbours the Leith School of Art.
Photo credit: Leith School of Art.

IN 1985 THE HELPING HAND TRUST WAS FOUNDED

The trust works towards maintaining the Scandinavian Lutheran Church as a cultural monument on Scottish ground and to promote Norwegian-Scottish relations.

PLEASE MAKE A DONATION TO THE HELPING HAND TRUST

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