

Paisley Abbey



Abbey Herald

November 2025

Memories, memories. The poet, John Donne reminds us how they bring such mixed emotions: delighting, shaming, inspiring, challenging.

*A memory of yesterday's pleasures, a fear of tomorrow's dangers,
a noise in mine ear, a light in mine eye,
an anything, a nothing, a fancy, a Chimera in the brain
troubles me in my prayer.
So certainly is there nothing, nothing in spiritual things,
perfect in this world.*

This edition of the Abbey 'Herald' marks its fiftieth year of publication. Elsewhere in this edition, articles relate how the magazine has faithfully chronicled the changing patterns of the Abbey's life, worship and outreach. Looking back, I can remember the *Herald's* predecessor known as the 'Supplement': a monthly broadsheet, of the type popular in churches at that time, a handsomely printed, folded A3 sheet. It performed its task well, as I trust the expanded, more contemporary, *Herald* does today.

Each month, we try to use its outreach to inform, educate, entertain and encourage readers to ponder matters of faith and life, possibilities of involvement and opportunities for service. Its articles look forward to what the future may hold, offer informed background as to the rich legacy of the Abbey's history not just in the fabric of its magnificent buildings but in worship, changing liturgical forms, the diversity and splendour of its music and its ever evolving avenues of outreach to those beyond its walls.

Nothing is perfect, of course, as the poem says. We do our best. Remembering what has gone before, building on it in order to enhance our present and prepare for whatever the future may bring. Is there anything more urgent and important for us to do at this time? November brings very different opportunities for us to do this.

The month begins with All Saints' and All Souls Sunday. We allow memories to flood over us with recollections of those who, in their life, influenced us by their faith, principals and values. Perhaps they never thought of themselves as being particularly distinguished. But for us, their memory is cherished and their life and faith an example.

In spite of changing values and practices within Society, Remembrance Sunday remains a time of sacred memory. Recollections of war's horror, whether from the time of the First and Second World Wars and the various conflicts fought since, or of the current brutal conflict in Ukraine and elsewhere, memories of such atrocities shape our self-image and impact our national psyche.

Remembrance Sunday ensures our nation's history can never be forgotten, nor re-written. Not long ago, children were bored with their parents' war stories: today, grandchildren are fascinated. Paralympians are hailed as heroes and stories of limbless former military personnel inspire. Their resilience is a reminder of the debt we owe to all whose lives were sacrificed, scarred, changed. They deserve to be remembered and honoured. If only we would heed their sacrifice, hardships and experiences and learn that war is a sign of Society's failure and human evil.

Recently, I came across a poem by Kenny Martin.

It's called, *'I Went To See The Soldiers'*.

I went to see the soldiers, row on row on row,
And wondered about each so still, their badges
all on show.
What brought them here, what life before
Was like for each of them?
What made them angry, laugh or cry,
These soldiers, boys and men.

Some so young, some older still, a bond more
close than brothers
These men have earned and shared a love, that's
not like any others.
They trained as one, they fought as one.
They shared their last together.
That bond endures, that love is true.
And will be, now and ever.

I could not know, how could I guess, what
Choices each had made,
Of how they came to soldiering, what part
each one had played?
But here they are, and here they'll stay.
Each one silent and in place.
Their headstones line up row on row
They guard this hallowed place.

Jim Gibson
Interim Minister at the Abbey.

REPORT FROM THE OUTREACH COMMITTEE HARVEST FESTIVAL 2025

WaterAid

The wonderful work carried out by WaterAid is, sadly, in as much need of our support today as it was when first we selected it as our "Charity of Choice at Harvest Time in 2007. Still in third world countries there is a desperate need for pipelines and pumps to provide clean, safe water to millions of people who, even in 2025, are living without this essential commodity. This is the type of work being carried out in Africa, Asia and South America by WaterAid and I am pleased to report that, following the Harvest collection, the Abbey congregation has contributed **£520.00** (down slightly from last years £579.43 but still more than in 2023) to help with that work. That amount was enhanced by the gift aided donations which amounted to £380.00. – almost £80.00 UP from last year

We on the Outreach Committee and on behalf of WaterAid thank everyone who gave so generously to support the work of this still so necessary organisation. Thank you all.

Delivery of House Plants

Harvest is also the time for the Outreach Committee to carry out the very pleasant task of taking a little plant to those in the congregation who are unable to attend Church in person or who have experienced some unpleasantness during the year. We know that the plants give much pleasure but also acknowledge that very often the little chats with the recipients bring as much joy as the plants themselves. The Outreach Committee is extremely grateful to everyone who helped with these deliveries and we thank you all most sincerely.

Sally Cook

THANK YOU

A big thank you to everyone who supported the Harvest Soup & Sandwich Lunch. The total raised for Abbey funds was £600 including the raffle.

Marion McDougall

ELDER DUTY TEAMS

November Marion Sommerville's Team
December Fiona Small's Team
January David Davidson's Team

PARISH REGISTER

Baptism
5 October Ruby Elizabeth Russell

Funeral
23 October Anne Maclean

ALLOVUS SYLLABUS

November & December

Wednesdays - 1.30 pm - 3.30 pm

In The Place of Paisley, All Welcome

26 November Yoga for All!

10 December Remember Chick?

17 December Christmas Celebration!



RENFREWSHIRE TOY BANK APPEAL

The Abbey will be supporting the Renfrewshire Toy Bank Christmas Appeal and will welcome any donations of toys (age range baby to teenager). They can be left unwrapped this year.

The Salvation Army will be collecting all the gifts at the end of November so please hand in any toys by the end of this month.

There will be a box available in the church each Sunday.
Thank you for your support.

“SOUNDS THE SAME-SPELLING DIFFERS” COMPETITION (ANSWERS)

More correct answers than ever before were received for this competition so particular congratulations go to the two who were drawn first and second on 19th October - *Alistair Park of Glasgow and Charles Giles of Cambuslang.*

The answers are:

SEAS/SEIZE
PACT/PACKED
HEROINE/HEROIN;
TEA/TEE;
CHEAP/CHEEP;
CHOIR/QUIRE;
AILS/ALES;
VEIN/VAIN;
PAIL/PALE

LAX/LACKS
AIR/HEIR
GUEST/GUESSED
VEIL/VALE
RIGHT/WRITE
BIER/BEER
DONE/DUN
LESSON/LESSEN
FOOL/FULL

As ever, thanks are given to all those who donated to the Abbey funds whilst, at the same time, we hope, enjoying the little quiz.

Sally Cook

ABBEY GIFT SHOP

As we come into a new season, and looking towards Christmas, new stock has been arriving for the festive season. Traditional decorations, some with a distinctly Scottish flavour and handmade glass from Clackmannan based Dragonfly Dichroics. More to come and Christmas cards on their way!!



We are always looking for new volunteers for the church, shop & café. If interested, contact the church manager Linda Barrett at the Abbey office who will forward your details onto the volunteer co-ordinator Margaret Craig.
info@paisleyabbey.org.uk or 0141 889 7654

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST OF SCOTLAND GRADUATIONS

Monday 17 - Friday 21 November

The Abbey will be closed to visitors, the Shop & Café will remain open

ALLOVUS

Wednesday 26 November from 1.30 pm until 3.30 pm

In the Place of Paisley

'Yoga for All'

LUNCHTIME CONCERT - *Gordon & Cheryl Cree*

Saturday 29 November at 12.30 pm

Admission is £5 payable at the door

THE CHRISTMAS ORCHESTRA

Tuesday 9 December at 6 pm & 8.30 pm

Tickets available from www.tickettailor.com/events

ACCORD CAROL SERVICE

Thursday 11 December at 11 am

Tickets available from Accord Hospice

CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Sunday 14 December at 1 pm at Ralston Golf Club

Tickets will be available soon from the Abbey shop

LONDON CONCERTANTE

Moonlight Sonata by Candlelight

Sunday 14 December at 2.30 pm

Tickets available from www.candlelightconcerts.co.uk

LONDON CONCERTANTE

Viennese Christmas

Sunday 14 December at 5 pm

Tickets available from www.candlelightconcerts.co.uk

ROYAL FOUNDATION CAROL SERVICE

Wednesday 17 December at 7 pm

'Love in the Community' in aid of The Royal Foundation
(Prince and Princess of Wales Trust)

Tickets will be available soon

ABBEY SCOUTS CELEBRATE A YEAR OF ADVENTURE, COMMUNITY & CREATIVITY

Young people from the 2nd Paisley & District (Abbey) Scout Group have had a busy and inspiring few months — from outdoor adventures and community service to cooking challenges and creative projects.

This year has seen every section of the Group — Squirrels, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts — thriving with energy and enthusiasm. The youngest members, the Squirrel Scouts (aged 4–6), have been exploring the outdoors and getting hands-on with nature. They've earned their *Creative Activity Badge* by crafting birds, bugs and stick men from natural materials, and even created thoughtful “Pocket Hugs” to share kindness within the community. Four of the Squirrels achieved the Chief Scout's Acorn Award, the highest award in their section — a huge milestone in their Scouting journey.

Meanwhile, the newly re-opened Beaver Colony (ages 6–8) celebrated its first full term with a moving investiture ceremony, welcoming both new members and returning leader Jill McLeod into the Abbey Scouts family. The Beavers have already been embracing the Scouting spirit of friendship, fun and discovery.

The Cubs and Scouts have kept up the adventure, taking to the water at Pinkston Watersports for a kayaking session full of excitement and teamwork. They also rounded off the term with a friendly 10-pin bowling night that proved a hit with everyone. Back on land, the Scouts earned their *Chef Activity Badge* through a lively “Ready, Steady, Cook!” challenge — and even experimented with light writing and Morse code as part of their science badgework.

Beyond the weekly meetings, Abbey Scouts have played an active part in the wider community. During Paisley's Sma' Shot Day, the Scout team volunteered at Paisley Abbey, leading 14 guided tower tours and climbing a combined 2,800 vertical metres — the equivalent of scaling Ben Nevis twice! The Abbey team praised the Scouts' energy and enthusiasm, saying their “youth and fitness made it all possible.”

The year ended on a high with the Group's Annual BBQ and AGM, where more than 100 young people, families, and supporters came together for games, laughter, and celebration — complete with burgers, bouncy castles, and plenty of Scouting spirit.

Group Lead Volunteer Richard Murray said:

“It's been an incredible year of growth and achievement across all sections. Our volunteers have worked tirelessly to give local young people the chance to build skills for life, try new things, and make lasting memories.”

As the Group looks ahead to another exciting year, it's also welcoming new members to its Cub (8–10½) and Scout (10½–14) sections. Weekly meetings are filled with outdoor challenges, teamwork, and adventure — helping young people develop confidence and friendships that last a lifetime.

The 2nd Paisley Abbey Scout Group continues to grow and is also seeking additional volunteers to support its expanding Beaver Colony. No previous experience is required — just enthusiasm and a willingness to make a difference.

To find out more or get involved, visit www.abbeyscouts.org.uk/join



ORIGINS ~ PAISLEY ABBEY, 1066, AND ALL THAT

***Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time . . .***

(from *Macbeth*, spoken by Macbeth)

by William Shakespeare

You may have read the article about the foundation of Paisley Abbey in the previous edition of the Abbey Herald. It rightly emphasised the part played by countless numbers of individuals across ten centuries. It recognised how pointless it would be if that were merely a monument to times past. Were that so, we should feel like Shakespeare's Macbeth as he plays out the last fatal phase of his life in embittered despondency, filled with a twisted sense of personal failure and the pointlessness of his, if not every life.

The Bard of Avon's words were the imagined utterings of a tortured, defeated mind questioning the very meaning of life at a time of existential crisis. Their implicit pessimism was circumstantial. We all have such moments of doubt, albeit expressed less eloquently. Shakespeare himself experienced them yet is a striking example of the significance and consequence that a life can and does have.

Whatever our part, great or small, our lives matter. In Paisley Abbey, our host of dedicated volunteers and staff have duties to perform, great and small, but vital to realising our church's continuing role and place in the world around us, the world of today, and the world of tomorrow.

For all its unique heritage and singular place in the history of our country, Paisley Abbey exists today as an active regenerating church. Ordinary people sit in its pews, many of whom contribute their time, energy, and money to the working and maintenance of our church, reaching out to a wider community, and bringing Christian values of love and hope to all. We bring a message of comfort in a time of great uncertainty. Our belief in the love of God is not a magical prescribed panacea that will instantly cure the world's woes. It does however bring the reassurance to live with the uncertainties, and the knowledge to hope for a better world. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today. (Matthew 6:34)

Reading and writing about the Abbey's history is not living in the past. Knowing about the incidents and accidents of fate that have formed our present provide interest for some, and opportunities to learn from these experiences for others. There is a temptation in troubled and challenging times to believe that everything was better in the past. Nostalgia is often accompanied by misremembrance – a mythology expressed in phraseology – that would never have happened in so-and-so's day, and the like.

History, whether recent or ancient, does not discredit the so-and-sos of the past but tells a truer story, nuanced with the realities, trials, and tribulations that have faced successive generations. In lionising individuals of the past or the present we can too often be blind to these realities. Notwithstanding the worthy endeavour of such individuals to transcend, none is exempt from human failings.

The foregoing apologia is the writer's justification for bringing historical snippets about Paisley Abbey to the notice of readers of the Abbey Herald. The Abbey's history is the history of our country as much as of our church. Our extraordinary and unique record is to have existed as a parochial church for our surrounding community continuously from the time of our Twelfth-Century foundation within the same surviving building that was first begun as a conventual church – the Church of the Monastery of Paisley. Our church has survived many vicissitudes over the intervening centuries. Its recent challenges have been just the latest, and arguably far from the worst in that long series. We should take strength from that knowledge and the associated courage to take Paisley Abbey Church forward into the future. These articles tell of how our church is alive with history. More importantly, the commitment and support of their readers, our members, and our friends confirm that our church is alive (with history)!

This article is being written in the week before “Bonfire Night,” the day, at the beginning of a month of remembrances, which recalls the foiled Gunpowder Plot to assassinate King James VI and I in 1605. Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* in the year following the plot, and it is said that he had both personal and political reasons for doing so. The play explores themes of treason, overthrow of a king, and the fate of his assassins that clearly resonate with the aftermath of the attempt on King James's life. Its author appears not only to have written a piece of royalist propaganda but also to have written his personal declaration of loyalty at a time when fervid reaction to the conspiracy brought suspicion of treason on many. The Ardens, the family of Shakespeare's mother, had been implicated in the plot.

Readers who are baffled by the relevance of this to Paisley Abbey should recall that King James was a Stewart, and that during his lifetime – indeed, up until modern times – “the origin of this family” according to Cameron Lees' history of Paisley Abbey “has been and still is a great subject of controversy among genealogists and antiquaries. While some have with Shakespeare traced its descent to Fleance, the son of Banquo, others, with probably greater likelihood, have sought for the house a less romantic ancestry, and have made out the first Stewart to be ‘a Norman of the Normans.’” The story of *Macbeth*'s implication in the murder of Banquo, and the escape of the victim's son, Fleance, to exile in France where he became the progenitor of the line that was to become the Royal House of Stewart was a fanciful tale that predated the time of James and Shakespeare. It was only natural that the great playwright should adopt the already widely believed fiction and, by elaborating it, ensure its endurance in the lore of urban mythology.

George Crawford, in his 1710 “History of the Royal and Illustrious Family of Stewart” described in detail the successive generations from Bancho, Thane of Lochaber. According to this account, Bancho's son Fleance had fled to Wales rather than France following the murder of his father in 1050,/

and became the forefather of Walter who was advanced to be “Senescallus Scotiae” (Lord High Stewart of all Scotland) by King David I.

Mark Twain is credited with having said “never let the truth get in the way of a good story,” but in disobedience to that instruction the “true” ancestors of the Stewarts are here revealed to have been the Seneschals or Dapifers of Dol-de-Bretagne in modern-day France where they can be traced back to the early Middle Ages. At least, there is compelling genealogical evidence to support that descent, but other theories still abound.

Accepting this version of the Stewart pedigree, we discover that in the Eleventh Century Flaald became the first hereditary Seneschal or Dapifer to the Archbishop of Dol. “Seneschal” means old servant and “Dapifer” food-bearer, but the role evolved to encompass administrative and financial responsibilities, so becoming the Archbishop’s head of household. Flaald’s son, Alan fitz Flaald succeeded his father as Seneschal of Dol. Although not a participant in William the Conqueror’s invasion of England in 1066, Alan was a staunch supporter of the Conqueror’s youngest son, Henry, especially when he and his two older brothers fought over the right of succession to the throne of England. He also went with Robert Curthose, the eldest brother, on the First Crusade which culminated in the capture of Jerusalem in 1099. In later life, Alan came to England and settled in Shropshire, where he took the title of Lord of Oswestry and became Sheriff of Shropshire, having been granted property and lands by Henry who had by then succeeded as King Henry I of England. Alan’s status as a senior member of the Anglo-Norman nobility and father of a dynasty was thus assured.

Alan fitz Flaald had at least four sons from his second marriage, the eldest of whom succeeded as Seneschal of Dol. The other brothers remained in England where William fitz Alan’s descendants included the Earls of Arundel and the Dukes of Norfolk. Simon, whose memorial plaque is on the south wall of the Choir of Paisley Abbey, was a witness to the Abbey’s founding charter. He was, by tradition, the original ancestor of the Boyd family who became Earls of Kilmarnock.

Being the youngest of Alan fitz Flaald’s sons, Walter fitz Alan would have had the poorest prospects of the four. He became one of the knights who joined King David I of Scotland’s army after the death of David’s brother-in-law, King Henry I of England, in 1135. He fought alongside David at both the Battle of the Standard in 1138 and at the Siege of Winchester in 1141. Although on the losing side of both actions, he showed himself to be a capable warrior and as such came to the attention of King David. In consequence, Walter was appointed to David’s personal staff and by proving himself to be an invaluable servant was promoted to the head of the royal household in about the year 1150, becoming the first High Steward of Scotland. This was made a hereditary role, and confirmed as such in perpetuity by David’s successor, Malcolm IV.

In 1163, at the Castle of Fotheringhay and during Malcolm’s short reign, Walter fitz Alan signed the charter for the foundation of a monastery . . . and so would down the first day of Paisley Abbey and all its tomorrows . . . to the last syllable of recorded time.

David C. Davidson

50 YEARS OF THE ABBEY HERALD

Fifty years ago this month the Kirk Session agreed to a proposal that a newly formed section of the Growth Committee should produce a monthly magazine to be known as the Abbey Herald which would replace the then current Abbey Church Supplement, a commercially produced publication.

This new in-house publication would reduce the annual costs from £600 to £400 -the main attraction of the proposal. There would be 9 or 10 editions each year. The outer covers were to have a “professional appearance” while the inner pages would be duplicated by a dedicated group of volunteers. And dedicated they were, with one or two of them continuing with this work for 40 years!

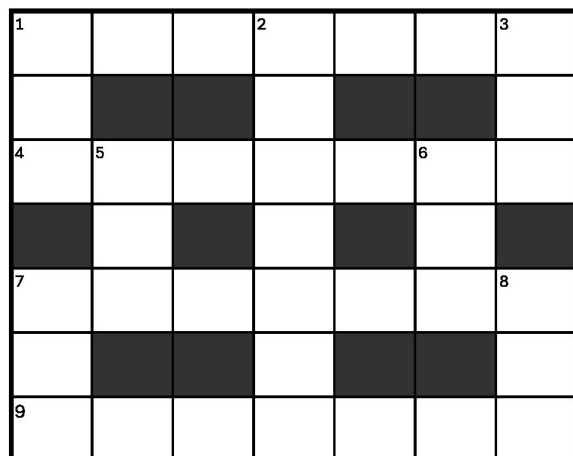
In a pre-internet time, the aim was to improve and maintain communication with the congregation and, to achieve this, each Abbey household received a copy of the magazine each month delivered by a band of volunteers. Ten years ago, or so, those members who “signed up for it”, started to access their magazine from the Abbey’s website after an email, thus cutting down the numbers required for delivery.

The initial agreement to have a similar pattern of contents in each edition is largely recognisable today – Message from the Minister; Parish Register; Abbey Contacts; Duty Team information; Services; News; Reports from Organisations; Events; Music; special articles etc.

From time to time, the cover of the magazine has changed with the most striking innovation being the use of colour. Those who access their copy online can enjoy full colour for all photographs.

The production of the Abbey Herald was only one of the many projects created and developed by the Growth Committee which have had a lasting impact on Abbey life. We owe so much to their enthusiasm and commitment to developing the Abbey’s potential as a place of welcome and worship.

In the first edition of the Abbey Herald in November 1975, Miss Sally Cook submitted the Children's crossword below. Sally has a talent for compiling quizzes and has been challenging our brains and knowledge for the past 50 years. Her latest quiz to mark this 50th Anniversary of the Abbey Herald can be found on the next page.



ACROSS

1. The first book of the bible
4. You can do this to your holiday or your muscles
7. A Saint associated with music
9. Samson brought down the Temple by taking hold of the two middleand pushing them with all of his strength

DOWN

1. He told Noah to make an Ark of Gopher Wood
2. One of the prophets of the Old Testament
3. The juice of plants
5. The mother of Cain and Abel
6. A Japanese woman's bright coloured sash.
7. "Thou anointest my head with oil, myrunneth over " (Psalm 23)
8. "Ox andbefore him bow" (Christmas Hymn)

THE ABBEY HERALD AT FIFTY

A just for fun quiz to celebrate

The Abbey Herald at Fifty

(The answers all pertain in some way to our Abbey)

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| T - - - - | The Scouts organize tours up here |
| - H - - - | The singers – or where they sing |
| - - E - - - - - | The highest walkway |
| A - - - - - - | Records of our past |
| - B - - - - | They were in charge - 1225-1571 |
| B - - - - | Holy Book |
| - - - E - - | Name of Marjory's father and son |
| - - - - Y | Made by bees; sold in our shop |
| H - - - - - | Religious song book |
| - E - - - - - | Ornamental Screen behind the Altar |
| - - R - - | ? Jones designed 3 of our windows |
| - - - A - | The Communion Table |
| - - - - L - | The font is made of this material |
| - - - - - D - | This Society donates to the Abbey |
| A - - - - | Our most famous gargoyles |
| - T - - - - - | The dynasty which originated here |
| F - - - - - - - - | Where our Charter was signed |
| - I - - - - - | She gifted the tomb of Robert III |
| - - F - | Have a cuppa and a chat here |
| - - - T - - - | From here the Readings are read |
| - - - - Y | Our order of monks originated here. |

Answers are to be found at the back of this edition.

THE ABBEY SHOP OVER THE YEARS

The Abbey shop has evolved over the past 50 years. Traditionally there was a bookstall selling books and bibles. This was originally located in the church and then moved to the current shop position.

In the mid-70s the bookstall became an agent for the Webb Ivory, fund raising catalogue, used by the scouts and guides at Christmas time. This was run by Mr Alex Mathie (scout leader) selling Christmas cards, wrapping paper, diaries and advent calendars. Mr Mathie then went on to manage the shop for approximately 25 years. In 1976, merchandise advertising the Abbey was produced. This included stationary items such as pens, pencils and rulers, along with postcards, bookmarkers and tea towels. This was followed by a commissioned print being introduced, as well as records by the Abbey choir and gentlemen's ties with the previous Abbey logo. The following year the Abbey was gifted a large draper's style cabinet to display the increasing variety of products for sale.

The shop was originally open on Sundays manned by Mr Mathie and a few volunteers. As the church started opening on other days, so did the shop. It continued to expand and by 1980 had become profitable. By the end of the 80's the shop was open throughout the week. It began selling refreshments of tea, coffee and snacks each day apart from Saturday when the Cloister Café was open.

A remodel of the shop was completed in 1991, when it was decided to give customers a more self-service experience. The counter was replaced with cupboards and shelves along the rear wall, allowing space for free standing greetings card carousels. This afforded customers to browse freely. A further remodel was completed by Mr Matt McIntosh, former Church Officer and was launched in 2008.

In 1998, Mrs Carol Birss became the shop manager and continued to develop the shop's ambience and warm welcome that continues to this day. She introduced a variety of goods from smaller artisan businesses. Today we stock quiches, a wide selection of jewellery, toiletries, scarves, wooden church mice ornaments, books, children's bibles, chocolates and shortbread, as well as original Abbey merchandise.

The shop is open Monday to Saturday 10 am to 4 pm, also before and after Sunday service. It is also open during evening events, concerts and graduations. The shop is now managed by the Abbey manager Linda Barrett and staffed by volunteers.

Over the past 50 years the shop has raised vital funds for the upkeep of the Abbey. Thank you to all our customers. We hope to continue to serve you for the next 50 years!



Mrs Carol Birss & Matt McIntosh, (former Church Officer) at the shop re launch

50 + YEARS OF MUSIC IN PAISLEY ABBEY

When I was appointed to the Abbey as Organist and Master of the Choristers in October 1963, I inherited a long tradition of excellence in church music although the make-up of the choir, carefully nurtured by my immediate predecessors, Pearce Hosken and J.D. MacRae, was quite different from that of today. For one thing, there were 32 boys and 40 adult singers and the repertoire naturally represented the fashion of the day with the service music often containing choruses from oratorios along with anthems which ranged largely from composers S.S.Wesley to Sir Edward Bairstow. Renaissance motets and Tudor anthems were in short supply along with items from the 20th century. I also felt that the choir needed more to do in the services. In some ways an answer came from an unsurprising source. During the late 60s the choir was asked by Decca to participate in a recording with the renowned Scottish tenor, Kenneth McKellar, and this led later to a number of commercial recordings of the choir, some of which are, I believe, still globally available. Probably on the back of this and about the same time, we received an invitation from the BBC to participate in the weekly choral evensong series on Wednesday afternoons. We were offered the St. Andrew's tide spot which we held for several years. This certainly shaped and influenced the tonal direction of the choir which became more slimmed down and disciplined. A completely new repertoire was also introduced. Thanks also to the encouragement and support of the succession of ministers, the choice of liturgical repertoire has been wide and, through time, we have assembled a large collection of sung Communion Services, Masses and canticles.

During this time the boys choir also had a life of its own. It had a prominent role in the first Scottish performance of Britten's War Requiem with Alexander Gibson and the SNO (as it was then). They also sang with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in a recording of Britten for EMI with Stuart Bedford and Neil Mackie, a former choir member, and played prominent part with the BBCSSO in Judith Weir's 'Storm'.

Through the years the full choir has performed frequently with the BBCSSO.

When the number of boys declined, it was the girls who sang, for example, the ripieno part in Bach's St. Matthew Passion with the Dunedin Ensemble. Universally, the Pandemic, along with a growing lack of singing in schools, saw a huge decline in the appearance and commitment of boys and girls in church choirs. The Abbey was fortunate in that most of the pre-Pandemic girl choristers became absorbed into the adult choir where several of them now provide the nucleus of our 'top line'.

Nowadays it cannot be assumed, unfortunately, that singers, who have just left school or even music colleges or universities, are able to easily read musical notation - both pitch and rhythm. With this in mind, the Abbey is seeking to address this problem with the introduction of dedicated classes.

Many of our past singers, whether boys or adults, have gone on to become firmly established as soloists in the opera and concert venues of the world and some have graced the choir stalls, and even the organ benches, of major Cathedrals.

In 2000, it was decided to introduce a choral scholarship scheme, not only to boost numbers in the choir, but also to provide a kind of training ground for young singers who might be about to enter the profession. This has been proved an astonishing success and the choir has been revitalised as a result. It is also a great delight to make new friends and to charter the burgeoning careers of many of the past recipients. Since the scholarships are self-funded, the Abbey is constantly on the look-out for sponsors.

The position of Assistant Organist has always been crucial to the success of the choir and we are currently so blessed with Mark Browne who currently, and so expertly, accompanies the services Sunday by Sunday. As with the Choral Scholars we are constantly in need of donations to ensure the continuance of this vital contribution to our choral services.

In addition to the most important weekly Opus Dei commitment, the choir has, in most years, put on a large-scale work with orchestra now financially possible through the efforts of PAMS (Paisley Abbey Music Society). PAMS, which was started in 1991 to raise funding for a choir trip to Nuremberg, has offered the opportunity to invite well known singers to sing with us as soloists. For instance, we have sung Bach's great Mass in B Minor with Dame Emma Kirkby and the same composer's St John Passion with the late Sir Peter Pears. We will be singing Bach's St. John Passion on 15th March of next year with former choral scholarship holders Matthew McKinney, Zsuzsana Cervení and the wonderfully helpful and ubiquitous David Lee in soloists roles.

Several composers, including Sir James MacMillan, Martin Dalby, Stuart MacRae and Edward McGuire have written specially works for us.

Especially in recent years, the Abbey has welcomed concerts by local choral societies along with orchestras. Not only has this, as well as the popular Saturday Midday Concert Series, brought members of the general public to the Abbey, but has strengthened its place in the community as a centre of music making and fund raising.

One of our glories is, of course, the organ. Paisley Abbey is indeed fortunate that in 1874, the Parisian firm, Cavaillé Coll was commissioned to fashion an organ for the nave of the Abbey, the only existing part of the building at the time. When eventually the crossing and choir was completed in 1926, the instrument was massively rebuilt and rehoused in its present stone box at the west end of the choir. Although the overall tone of the instrument was somewhat altered to suit the musical tastes of the time, it was still possible to discern something of the strong French personality of the 26 Cavaillé registers, particularly its reed stops.

When I arrived on the scene, much of the mechanism was failing badly and when inevitably, the time came for restoration, it was decided to call in as adviser, Ralph Downes, the great organ architect who had designed instruments such as at the Royal Festival Hall.

To my mind he completely transformed the instrument by returning the original Cavaillé pipe work to its original exciting timbres along with appropriately matching ranks of French colour. The organ enjoys world-wide acclaim and, through the years, has seen concerts by such eminent artists as Fernando Germani, Jean Langlais and Olivier Latry.

We have just discovered, through modern scholarship, that the musical life of the Abbey extends back over 12 centuries; this by recent musicological insight into the scratchings on the Abbey slate. The once-perceived discernable single line has now been identified, partly through the expertise of noted musicologists including choir member Joshua Stutter and AI, as belonging to a three-voice chanson, ‘Espérance’. It is thought that this was originally a ‘teaching piece’ which could put the Abbey in the forefront of early European musical education. We hope, in the making a CD in January, to include this along with some wonderful representative French choral classics, both ancient and modern.

George McPhee

Answers to the Children’s Crossword

Across	Down		
1. Genesis	1. God	6. Obi	
4. Develop	2. Ezekiel	7. Cup	
7. Cecilia	3. Sap	8. Ass	
9. Pillars	5. Eve		

Answers to the Abbey Herald at Fifty

Tower	Marble
Choir	Friends
Clerestory	Alien
Archives	Stewart
Abbots	Fotheringhay
Bible	Victoria
Robert	Cafe
Honey	Lectern
Hymnal	Cluny
Reredos	
Byrne	
Altar	

THE ABBEY CAFÉ OVER THE YEARS

In 1973, Joyce Ross, the then minister’s wife invited the ladies of the congregation to run a weekly café in the cloisters. The money raised would support the men of the congregation who were repairing and creating toys and other items for sale. This was Paisley Abbey Church Effort (PACE), which concluded with a sale of work in the Town Hall in the November. After the success of PACE, there were bits and pieces left over from the event and they were sold in the church, and thus began the Abbey shop. The cafe had been well supported, and therefore continued.

There were monthly co-ordinators, supported by volunteers who would be asked to bake and serve in the café twice a year. The co-ordinating team comprised various ladies over the years, but the core team, previously Sunday School teachers together, moved into the Saturday morning slot. Anna Mathie, Jenny Norris, Edna Muncie, Cath McCord and Phyllis Small. Other key personnel over the years included Betty McInnes, Helen Pollock, Evelyn Donaldson, Jean Stewart and Maureen Wilson.

Over forty years, the proceeds of the weekly Cloister Café paid for numerous items for the church and Place of Paisley. For example, it provided a piano, carpeting, blinds, dishwashers, cooker, vacuum cleaners and flasks, urns, water heaters, dishes, tables and chairs and lighting and the rope handle for the tower. The ladies hung up their aprons in 2013.

From 2013, the café format was reduced to one Saturday per month. coinciding with the Lunchtime Recital programme. On occasions funds raised were small, and a change was required. During 2021, the Abbey Manager Linda Barrett and one of our elders participated in a webinar programme focussing on sustainability in heritage organisations. This resulted in grant funding of £11,200 to re-establish the café to serve the congregation and the local community, throughout the week – not just on Saturdays.

The grant funding was received in 2022, and we were delighted to also receive a donation from the family of Anna Mathie to purchase new crockery. A small team of volunteers was recruited, and the café was relaunched in July 2024.

We are open 6 days a week, serving Matthew Algie’s coffee, tea, hot chocolate and delicious cakes at very reasonable prices. The team would welcome additional volunteers, and more customers. The café and the shop are vital to the sustainability of the Abbey, and I would encourage every member of the congregation to support them in whatever manner they can.

Whereas in 1973 the volunteers were asked to help twice a year, the current team are stepping up once a week. For this we are deeply grateful. The original café ladies created a recipe book full of lovely baking ideas, which was sold in the Abbey Shop. This is in the process of being republished. It won’t be ready for Christmas, but we will have a launch event next year – keep checking in the Abbey Herald for the date, and come along.

MUSIC FOR NOVEMBER

9 November Remembrance Sunday
11 am Morning Service
 Introit Thou knowest Lord *Purcell*
 Benedictus *Elgar*
 Anthem Greater love hath no man *Ireland*

4 pm Choral Evensong
 Responses *Byrd*
 Psalm 40
 Canticles *Leighton (Magdalen Service)*
 Anthem O Pray for the peace of Jerusalem *Howells*

16 November Second Sunday before Advent
11 am Morning Service (UWS)
 Jubilate Deo in Bb *Purcell*
 Anthem And I saw a new heaven *Bainton*

23 November Christ the King
11 am Holy Communion
 Communion Setting *Palestrina (Missa Papae Marcelli)*
 Anthem Lord, for thy tender mercy's sake *Farrant/ Hilton*

5 pm Choral Evensong (with the choirs of St Giles' and St Mary's (Scottish Episcopal) Cathedrals, Edinburgh)
 Introit O Rex Glorae *Marenzio*
 Responses *Leighton*
 Psalm 72
 Canticles *Leighton (Second Service)*
 Anthem Blest pair of sirens *CHH Parry*

30 November Advent Sunday
11 am Morning Service
 Te Deum *Gibbons (Short Service)*
 Anthem Never weather beaten sail *Parry*

4 pm Service of Lessons and Music for Advent

ABBAY CONTACTS

Minister: Revd. Jim Gibson
Director of Music: Dr. George McPhee
Church Manager: Linda Barrett
Church Secretary: Karen Kerr
Session Clerk: Marion Sommerville
Depute Session Clerk: Dr David Davidson
Treasurer: Stewart McDougall
Abbey Herald: Karen Kerr

The Abbey office can be contacted on 0141 889 7654 or by email at -
info@paisleyabbey.org.uk

***The Abbey, shop & café are normally open
 Monday to Saturday from 10 am - 4 pm with last entry at 3.30 pm
 Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday tours are normally at 2 pm.
 Please check the website for up to date information.***

*Abbey website - www.paisleyabbey.org.uk
 Facebook - @paisleyabbey
 Instagram - @paisleyabbeyofficial
 X (formerly Twitter) - @paisley_abbey*

