

Paisley Abbey



Abbey Herald

March 2026

It feels like no sooner has this new year got underway than we are facing the imminent beginning of Lent which takes us down that challenging road to Holy Week and, eventually, the relief of Easter.

One of the great privileges and joys of participating in worship at the Abbey is the glorious manner in which we celebrate the traditional festivals of the Christian Church. Whether it be Pentecost, Christmas Easter the church comes alive with the most magnificent music supporting a liturgy which is meaningful and preaching which, hopefully, is thought-provoking. This year, our approach to Easter through Holy Week promises to be no different.

Let's be honest. Holy Week is always difficult for some. The last days of Jesus' life were full of events and sayings that shone a piercing light onto his personality, relationships and beliefs. If it is the event of Easter Morning that brought the early Christians a new sense of hope for their living and joy in their faith, it is Jesus' reaction to those events which gave their hope and joy credibility.

People may find it uncomfortable and inconvenient, but the reality is that we cannot expect to enter the full glory of Easter's wonder and mystery without first allowing ourselves an understanding of what lay behind the rejection, suffering and crucifixion.

Hence, as is our custom, on the Monday to Thursday evenings of Holy Week – March 30th to April 2nd – a series of special services will be held within the Abbey beginning at 7.30pm. Attendance at these services over recent years has been gratifying and everybody is most welcome. At the Tuesday service we look forward to being joined by folks from all the Paisley churches; on the Wednesday evening the choir will sing the beautiful evening prayers of Compline and, on the evening of Maundy Thursday, the Sacrament of Holy Communion will be offered to all.

This year's Holy Week reflections will focus on the very human traits we all possess and which were so clearly demonstrated by the leading figures that fateful week. Through understanding ourselves better, we may better come to understand the significance of all that happened.

Come Good Friday, April 3rd, beginning at 12 noon until 1.00pm, the Abbey Choir performs music that will truly inspire: 'Miserere' by Gregorio Allegri, 'Litanies pour la Vierge Noire' by Francis Pouenc and the oratorio, 'Jephte' by Giacomo Carissimi. Thereafter, from 1.00pm until 3.00pm.

Easter Sunday is the most holy and joyful of days in the life of the Christian church. Our worship this Easter will reflect all of that in music and in word. As usual, the Choir will be accompanied by a small orchestra. The Sacrament of Holy Communion will be celebrated with the Choir singing the 'Coronation Mass' by Mozart and the wonderful anthem by Ralph Vaughan Williams, 'Rise Heart, thy Lord is risen'.

The story of Holy Week, Good Friday and Easter Morning is an ancient and sacred tale which can yet surprise us, for it has new insights to offer, if only we are courageous enough to listen!

With every good wish.

Jim Gibson.

Minister at the Abbey.

ELDER DUTY TEAMS

March	Fiona Small's Team
April	John Kitson's Team
May	David Davidson's Team

PARISH REGISTER

Wedding 9 February	Lucy Allen & Nicholas Barclay
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RENFREWSHIRE FOODBANK

Over the last five years, the number of emergency food parcels provided to people in crisis by the Trussel Trust has increased by 73% and last year Renfrewshire Foodbank distributed 5595 food parcels to our local community.

Renfrewshire Foodbank is part of the Trussel Trust's UK-wide network of food banks, they provide food and practical support to help people in crisis, including offering advice and signposting people to other services, like debt advice that can help them break free from poverty.

The Abbey collects food for the Foodbank on the last Sunday of each month. The March collection will be on Sunday 29th You will see trolleys in the Cloisters. The congregation is very generous with their donations of non-perishable goods and money which can be gift-aided. (a form can be provided) If you do not currently contribute, perhaps you could note the date in your diary each month and bring along a few items from the shortages list which is printed in the Intimations in the Order of Service.

The staff at the Foodbank are always really grateful to receive our donations. Every little helps. Thank you.



ALLOVUS SYLLABUS

Meets every second Wednesday afternoon from 1.30pm to 3.00pm in the glorious Panel Room of the Place of Paisley. The all-age group is comprised of non-Church members as well as folks who have been members of the Abbey for decades. The groups purpose is to enable people to enjoy the company of friends while meeting new folks. In short, everybody is welcome.

11 March	Deryk Docherty 'In Conversation with Dr George McPhee'
25 March	Scottish Pilgrimage Nick Cook
8 April	Easter Surprise!
22 April	The Science of Bee-Keeping Jacqueline Ferguson
6 May	Outing to Sma' Shot Cottages/Afternoon Tea
20 May	End of Season Party!



FROM CURLING AT THE ABBEY TO OLYMPIC SPORT

The Little Ice Age which affected the Northern Hemisphere circa 1300-1850 was responsible for providing the environmental conditions for the sport we know as curling today. Due to rivers and lochs freezing over for prolonged periods, people in Scotland were able to slide stones across the ice. The game developed over time from a winter pastime into an organised strategic team sport using carefully shaped stones and applying rules.

The oldest curling stone, dated 1511, was found when an old pond was drained at Dunblane in Stirlingshire. Early games used stones from riverbeds called channel stones.

The first written reference to the game of Curling dates from 1540 in Paisley Abbey. An entry in the protocol (working notebook) of a Paisley Notary called John McQuhin dated 6 February 1540 records the event. He describes how, together with John Bangle, Allan Livis and John Lofs, he witnessed the settlement of a wager between John Sclater, a monk of the Abbey, and Gavin Hamilton, who was administrator of the Abbey and a relative of Abbot John Hamilton. The 2 men threw stones or quoits on to the ice and while the nature of the wager is not disclosed the entry does formally record the existence of the sport of curling by putting ice and stones or quoits together. The word *curling* first appears in print in 1620 in Perth, Scotland in the preface and verses of a poem by Henry Adamson.

Kilsyth Curling Club was constituted in 1716 and lays claim to being the first club in the world as well as the oldest purpose-built curling pond in the world. The club is still in existence today.

The first Rules were drawn up in Scotland. These were formally adopted as the Rules in Curling by the Grand Caledonian Curling Club which formed in Edinburgh in 1838. They went on to become the sport's governing body. Following on from a demonstration of curling on the ballroom floor of Scone Palace by Lord Mansfield during a visit by Queen Victoria, the Club's name was changed to the Royal Caledonian Curling Club in 1843. Nowadays the sport is governed by World Curling.

Although international curling events were held in 19th century Europe and North America, the first official international competition took place in Chamonix, France at the 1924 Olympic Winter Games.

Not until 2006 was this competition retroactively accepted as curling's Olympic debut and medals were awarded accordingly. Canada has dominated the sport since its official addition in the 1998 Olympics. Curling's roots in Canada can be traced back to Scottish immigrants in the early 18th century who introduced the game to maintain their cultural traditions. The sport today has an international following. It is known as "the roaring game" due to the sound of the stones sliding on ice.

In November 2016 curling returned to its historical roots in Renfrewshire when the European Curling Championships were held at Braehead Arena with the opening reception included a visit to the Abbey by the participating teams. Curlers from all over the world continue to visit the Abbey to this day.

*Elizabeth Hughes
Volunteer Abbey Guide*



ABBEY GIFT SHOP

Spring is here, almost, and the mice are back – the decorative variety only!!

New in the shop a bright and inspiring selection of gifts and books for the new season!



REREDOS UNDER GREAT EAST WINDOW

The Abbey sanctuary has so many objects to remind us of our Christian faith. Sitting in the nave looking towards the East Window, a delicately carved oak screen may be seen. It is called a **reredos**. Have you ever noticed the symbols on the wood? After being asked their significance by a visitor at a recent Doors Open Day, I resolved to investigate.



The reredos is not directly attached to the communion table but is affixed to the wall directly under the Great East Window by Douglas Strachan, depicting Christ ascended and enthroned. It contains 15 cartouches – symbols of the Passion of Christ. A cartouche is an oval or rectangular shaped design that frames a symbol or coat of arms.

From Left to Right

1

2

3



- 1 **Alpha** - first letter of Greek alphabet “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord.”
- 2 **Hammer and Pincers** - instruments used to nail and remove nails from the Cross.
- 3 **Rooster/Cock** - crowing. Peter denied Christ 3 times.

4

5

6



- 4 **Lantern** - Judas came with a band of men with lanterns, torches and weapons to betray Christ.
- 5 **Ladder, Sponge and Spear** - Christ was given a sponge of sour wine. One of soldiers pierced Christ’s side with a spear.
- 6 **Crown of Thorns** - Christ was clothed in purple and a crown of thorns placed on his head.

7

8

9

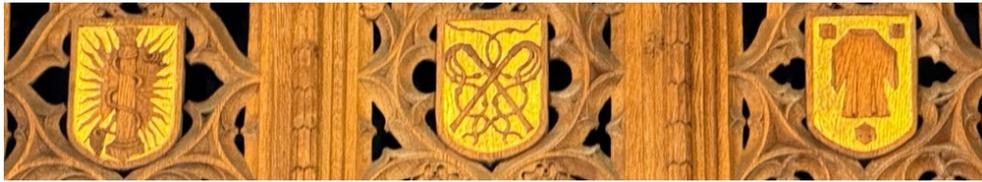


- 7 **Monogram I H S** - originally the first three letters of Greek name for Jesus. In Latin this became **IHS** interpreted as *Jesus Hominum Salvator* or Jesus, Saviour of Mankind.
- 8 **Empty Cross** - used as a symbol of Resurrection of Christ from the dead. This is in the centre of the 15 cartouches.
- 9 **Chi Rho** - consists the first two letters of Christ’s name in Greek superimposed - one of the symbols used by early Christians.

10

11

12



- 10 **Pillar and Rope** - Christ was captured and bound.
- 11 **Whips** - Pilate had Christ scourged.
- 12 **Cloak and 3 separate Dies** - Soldiers at foot of Cross cast lots for Christ's raiment to keep it whole.

13

14

15



- 13 **Nails and 30 Pieces of Silver** - Judas betrayed Christ for 30 pieces of silver - there are 30 coins shown.
- 14 **Bowl Jug Towel** - Pilate washed his hands and said "I am innocent of the blood of this just man".
- 15 **Omega** - the last letter of the Greek alphabet.
I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord."

I would encourage you to wander up to the reredos to see this depiction of the Easter Story.

*Jan Leeming
Volunteer Abbey Guide*

PAISLEY ABBEY AND SPORT

*He was the king of a' the core,
To guard, or draw, or wick a bore,
Or up the rink like Jehu roar
In time o' need.*

From "Tam Samson's Elegy"
By Robert Burns

I wonder if the Abbey Herald in its lifetime has ever included a sports column. This may be a first and, I would venture, is highly likely to be the last. What possible connection to sport could Paisley Abbey have?

Some might say that the answer is in black and white. Yet the town's football team, forever saddled with its misspelt version of our patron's name, has little else in common with our church.

Others might make a more cryptic suggestion, stooping to the lows of paronomasia in citing the family burial vault that was rehabilitated as our Cathcart Aisle at the time of the Abbey Choir's restoration. A stone set in the floor of the Cathcart Aisle is the only surviving element of a monument by William Mossman that was erected in 1848 to memorialise "William Schaw Cathcart, Earl, Viscount and Baron Cathcart, Baron Greenock, born 17th September 1755, died 16th June 1843," who was buried beneath.

Cathcart was the son of the ninth Lord Cathcart, on whose death in 1776 he succeeded to the title and inherited, in addition to other properties, the estate of Schawpark in Clackmannanshire. In 1784, in the grounds of that estate, he organised the first formal cricket match in Scotland.

Cathcart pursued a military career, rising to the rank of General and Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in Scotland and Ireland. After obtaining his first commission in 1777, he went to America to fight in the American Revolutionary War that had followed the Declaration of Independence whose 250th Anniversary will be celebrated this year. He participated in a number of engagements in the Philadelphia campaign, distinguishing himself in combat and in consequence gaining rapid promotion, culminating in his taking command of the British Legion with conspicuous success at the Battle of Monmouth in 1778.

John Witherspoon, one of the Founding Fathers and the only active clergyman to be signatory to the Declaration of Independence, is also memorialised in Paisley Abbey by the plaque in the North Aisle.

He had been minister of the Laigh Kirk in Paisley before leaving in 1768 to take up the post of Principal of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University). As events unfolded in America during the 1770s, Witherspoon quickly came to support the American revolutionary movement and strongly influenced the thinking behind the United States' Constitution. By a strange coincidence, his young son, James, fought on the American side under George Washington in the Philadelphia campaign. He was killed at the Battle of Germantown in 1777, while engaged against British forces that must very likely have included Lord Cathcart among their number.

Cathcart's interest in the game of cricket may, it seems, have been matched by Witherspoon's in the game of curling. Robert Brown in his History of Paisley states that "The Rev. John Witherspoon was a keen curler, and enjoyed the sport on the 'Heigh Linn,' which was the place resorted to at that time and long afterwards." Brown supports his claim by quoting from John Cairnie's Essay on Curling: "Dr. Witherspoon, minister of Beith, in 1745 was a keen and earnest curler. He often came to Lochwinnoch while the frost lasted. He frequented Strand's Inn with his curling compeers. One Saturday, after a tough match, he, with his party, dined there, and sat till eleven o'clock at night. Strand's wife, a douce and serious Christian, patted him and whispered a hint about his public duty, the next day being the Lord's Day. He replied loudly — 'A minister who could not shake a sermon out of his coat sleeve is a silly cuif.'"

Dr John Cairnie, the author of the foregoing account, has been described as the "King of curlers." In 1812, Cairnie had retired from service as a surgeon with the East India Company and settled in Largs where he had a mansion built as his new home. Already a curling enthusiast, he made Scotland's first artificial curling pond at his new house which became known as "Curling Hall," (later becoming part of the Marine and Curlinghall Hotel). Cairnie was a founder member of the Largs Curling Club (the "Noddle Club") and formulated a set of rules that were later used as the basis for the game internationally when he became the first President of the newly instituted Royal Caledonian Curling Club in 1838.

Around 1880, Curling Hall became the property of John Clark of Gateside who had become senior partner of the firm of Clark & Co., the Paisley-based thread works. His sporting interests lay not in the game of curling but, first, in angling, and then in yachting which he was better able to pursue from his new residence at Largs. By commissioning a succession of magnificent prize-winning yachts from Clyde yards, he helped to establish their international reputation as designers and builders. John Clark's passion for sailing was shared by his younger brother Stewart who pursued a political career and became Member of Parliament for Paisley in 1884. In 1899, he purchased Dundas Castle after which his son, John, took the title of 1st Baronet of Dundas and styled himself John Stewart-Clark, having adopted the double-barrelled surname in honour of his father. Also, in honour of his father, John, along with four of his sisters, paid for the completion of the restoration of the Choir of Paisley Abbey, the centenary of which we will be celebrating in 2028.

In concluding this search for Paisley Abbey's connection to sport, and having considered along the way football, cricket, angling, and yachting, it is to the game of curling that we now return. The recent excitement that Britain's curling teams engendered at the Winter Olympics in Cortina may not have been met with the hoped-for gold medals, but it certainly helped to raise the profile of the game and bring interest in it to a much wider audience.

But who in that audience would have heard of the first ever recorded curling match?

Fifty years ago, some early Paisley protocol books were rediscovered. These are notebooks of Paisley notaries compiled during the last half century of the Abbey's pre-Reformation existence, between 1510 and 1560. They refer to the often-mundane events of life in the monastery at a time when it was facing a growing existential threat from the burgeoning Reformation movement which had so brutally ended English monastic life in the 1530s. The last Abbot of Paisley, John Hamilton, was preoccupied with his political wranglings and intrigues, especially latterly as the close confidant of Mary, Queen of Scots. He was an absentee-Abbot throughout much of this time, but there is a sense of the monastery functioning satisfactorily despite the lack of his leadership. Furthermore, when John Hamilton attempted to meddle with the monastery's administration by sending his agent, Gavin Hamilton, (probably his relative) to act on his behalf, it is clear that the monks resented the imposition.

In 1540, according to the account in the protocol book of John McQuhin, senior, one of the monks, Dene John Slater, elected to take a stand against Gavin Hamilton by challenging him to a duel. His choice of weapons predated pistols at dawn, and, in any event, violence could not be the resort of one of the brotherhood. His opportunity came in February of the following year when an area of the River Cart beside the monastery had frozen over. Down he went and threw three quoits on to the ice, asserting that he sought a contest on the ice against Gavin Hamilton. In response, the Abbot's unwelcome representative agreed to go to the designated place and compete with quoits as he had been challenged to do, so initiating the first known curling contest.

The result of the match is not recorded, but it matters not. Paisley Abbey will forever be the home of curling.

David C. Davidson

J.S. BACH ST JOHN PASSION

PAISLEY ABBEY
SUNDAY 15 MARCH 2026, 7:30PM

PAISLEY ABBEY CHOIR
GEORGE MCPHEE CONDUCTOR

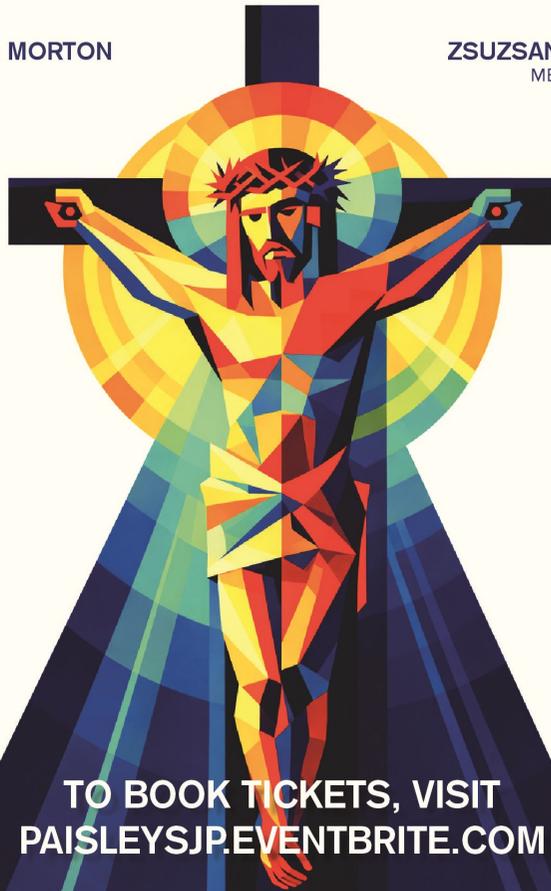
MATTHEW MCKINNEY
EVANGELIST

NICHOLAS MORTON
CHRISTUS

MHAIRI LAWSON
SOPRANO

ZSUZSANA CERVENI
MEZZO-SOPRANO

DAVID LEE
TENOR



TO BOOK TICKETS, VISIT
PAISLEYSJP.EVENTBRITE.COM



*Tickets are also available via the Abbey office on 0141 889 7654
and from Priscilla Routley on a Sunday after the Morning Service.*

SATURDAY LUNCH HOUR CONCERTS

Concerts at 12.30 pm
Admission is £5 payable at the door

14 March
Alistair Savage & Friends

21 March
Scottish Clarinet Choir

18 April
Abbey Strings

23 May
Choral Scholars of Paisley Abbey

20 June
*Aimee (Soprano), Diane Merson - Jones (Violin),
Callum Johnston (Piano)*



SUNDAY ORGAN RECITALS

Recitals at 3 pm
Admission is £10 payable at the door

3 May
George McPhee
Director of Music Paisley Abbey

17 May
David Hamilton
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

24 May
Marjorie Bruce
Holy Trinity Church, St Andrews

31 May
Mark Browne
Paisley Abbey

21 June
Damin Spritzer
USA

28 June
Richard Dunster-Sigtermans
Harrogate

MUSIC FOR MARCH

1 March
11 am
Benedictus
Anthem

8 March
11 am
Jubilate Deo
Anthem

4 pm
Responses
Psalm 40
Canticles
Anthem

15 March
11 am
Benedictus
Anthem

22 March
11 am
Te Deum
Anthem

29 March
11 am
Communion Setting
Introit
Anthem

The Second Sunday of Lent
Morning Service

God so loved the world
Byrd (Short Service)
Stainer

The Third Sunday of Lent
Morning Service

Like as the heart
Weelkes (Short Service)
Howells

Choral Evensong

Tompkins

Hear my prayer

Stanford in G
Batten

The Fourth Sunday of Lent/Mothering Sunday
Morning Service

Ave Maria

Stanford in C
Lindlay

The Fifth Sunday of Lent
Morning Service

Christus factus est

Weelkes (Short Service)
Bruckner

Palm/Passion Sunday
Holy Communion

Missa Iste Confessor
Open thy gates
Ave verum corpus

Palestrina
Julius Harrison
Byrd



HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES

29 March - Palm Sunday

11 am Morning Service

Monday 30 March

7.30 pm Service with Sermon, Choir & Organ

Tuesday 31 March

7.30 pm Service with Sermon, Choir & Organ

Wednesday 1 April

7.30 pm Service concluding with Compline

Thursday 2 April - Maundy Thursday

7.30 pm Service with Choral Communion and anthem sung by the Abbey choir.

Friday 3 April - Good Friday

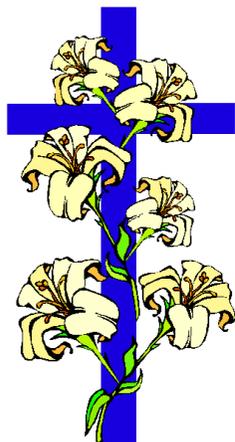
Three Hour Vigil

12 noon - 1 pm - Easter Music sung by the Abbey Choir

1 pm till 3 pm Music, Meditations and Prayers

Sunday 5 April - Easter Day

11 am Easter Celebration with Choral Communion
The Abbey Choir sing Mozart's 'Coronation Mass'
accompanied by a small orchestra.



ABBEY 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](https://www.facebook.com/paisleyabbey)

Instagram - [@paisleyabbeyofficial](https://www.instagram.com/paisleyabbeyofficial)

X (formerly Twitter) - [@paisley_abbey](https://twitter.com/paisley_abbey)

