



Old Gourock and Ashton Parish
Church - a walk around guide

In 1972 the Secretary of State for Scotland announced that this building had been included in the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

The church, built in 1831, was officially opened in 1832 as Gourock Kirk, becoming officially the church for residents of the parish of Gourock. In 1929 with the Union of the United Free Church and the Church of Scotland, it was renamed Old Gourock, reflecting the fact that it was the original Church of Scotland charge.

Ashton Church represented the tradition of the United Presbyterian Church in Scotland, arising from the union of the United Secession and Relief Churches in 1847. It was opened on 8th May 1848 as Gourock U. P. Church and remained so until 1900 when there was a union between the Free Church of Scotland and the U. P. Church to become the United Free Church. This resulted in the church being renamed the United Free Church of Scotland - Ashton, Gourock (Ashton being the name of the district of Gourock) or Ashton U. F.

In 1929, there was a policy of giving each church associated with the Church of Scotland parish responsibilities so that the name became Ashton Parish Church. In 1989, because of structural faults in the building and the high costs associated with their correction, a decision was made to unite with Old Gourock and to be named OLD GOUROCK AND ASHTON PARISH CHURCH.

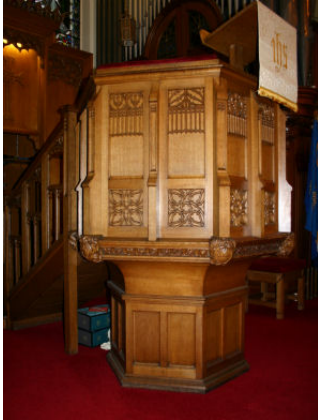
As you go round you will see artefacts associated with both churches

The Chancel

When you enter the sanctuary from either of the west doors the main focus is on the chancel area. The chancel area is exceptionally well furnished. Of particular note are the pulpit and choir stall panels both designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh.



Let us look at some of the chancel furnishings in a little more detail.



The Pulpit

The pulpit was designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh for Keppie Henderson, Glasgow and installed in 1899. The panels of the pulpit are not identical. It is from the pulpit that the Minister preaches the Word of God.

The Lectern

Gifted by Miss J Simpson in memory of her parents. It is beautifully carved. The four niches contain scriptural figures: Moses associated with the Law of God; Peter holding the keys of the Kingdom, disciple and associated with the foundation of the church; John, writer of the fourth Gospel; Paul, writer of letters to the early church and



The Baptismal Font

Gifted by the widow of Neil MacKay and his sister Mrs Whitehead. From the octagonal base arise foliated capitals which support panels four of which depict Biblical stories with allusions to water e.g. Christ's Baptism



Stained Glass Windows

The two windows at the rear of the chancel were installed in 1876 and were gifted by R Binnie and R.W. Robertson. That to the east side in memory of William Robertson in recognition of his efforts to endow the 1832 church into a church and parish Quoad Sacra and the theme is – St Matthew 22:21 “Render unto Caesar.... Render unto God...” That to the west side is in memory of William Robertson’s mother Christian Liddell and the theme is – St Luke 10:42 Jesus with Martha and Mary.



The Communion Table

Dedicated in 1920 as the congregation's memorial to those who gave their lives in the 1914-18 War. The front is triple panelled showing the Cross and sacred monograms I.H.S., Alpha and Omega. The extremities of the Cross have curved figures representing the four gospels i.e. lion, calf, man and eagle (Rev 4:7). The side panels bear the names of the fallen.

The Communion Chairs

Behind the table sit three Communion Chairs. Dedicated as the congregation's memorial to those who died in the 1939-45 War. The Kirk Session decided to include those killed as civilians (the Barbour family who lived at the corner of Tarbet St and Cardwell Rd and died as a result of enemy bombing in 1940 – a sensitive innovation. The celebrant's chair is surmounted by the Burning Bush, symbol of the Church of Scotland. On the elders' chairs are the names of the fallen.

Also of note in the chancel area are: –

The Chancel Light – gifted by the late Ian Fletcher, Provost in memory of his first wife Janey, a life long member of the church and a former president of the Woman's Guild.

Two Oak Alms-Trays – these lie on the Communion table and were the gift of a member of the Congregational Board. The

two Alms-Plates used for receiving the offering at the front doors of the church and brought forward for dedication are the gift of the Kirk Session.

The Pulpit Fall – different pulpit falls are used in accord with the church calendar. On occasions a fall presented to the church by the Gourrock Town Council at the time of its demise with the reorganisation of local government in 1975 is used. Two oak plaques sited on the face of the Darroch gallery were part of the same gift.

Colours – The sets of colours displayed in the chancel belong to the youth organisations associated with the church.



The Centenary Screen

The screen behind the pulpit was erected to celebrate the centenary of the church building. On two of the oak panels are recorded the names and dates of office of the ministers of the church.

On the wall behind the Centenary Screen there is a Medallion Bust in memory of Rev. George McCorkindale, minister 1855-70, who died climbing Mont Blanc and is buried in Chamonix.



The Choir Stalls

The ends are also to a design by Charles Rennie Macintosh. As with the pulpit the carved tracery of the panels is not identical. The choice of designer was the forerunner of decorations used in Holy Trinity Church, Bridge of Allan in 1904.

The Memorial Aisle



The Memorial Aisle was created in 1997 (along with refurbishment of the chancel area) in memory of Maisie and John Warwick by their family.

The **Stained Glass Window** is in memory of Mary Anne Muir (died 1880) and the theme is Nativity, Glory to God. There is a partner window in the Music Corner in memory of Mary Liddell (died 1881), the theme of which is Crucifixion and Empty Tomb: "He is not here"

The **Communion Table** and **Lectern** are from the former Ashton Church. The table was gifted by John Steel in memory of Rev. George Rae who was minister there from 1880 to 1919. The Lectern was gifted in 1985 by the family of Roderick John Smith and elder (1934-76) and Session Clerk (1954-59). The **Good News Bible** on the Lectern was gifted in 1985 by George Offord.

The Celtic Cross on the Communion Table was gifted by the Parish Players in 1997 in memory of Mary Brown.

The bronze sculpture of **the Cross the Banner and the Lamb** is a work by George Wylie MBE and was given by him in 2003 to the church of which he is a member.



The Main Area

Solar Lamps

These are a distinctive feature of the church and were installed after the union in 1989.

The Public Address System

The public address system (with induction loop) was gifted in memory of Provost David Leith and his wife by their daughter and son-in-law (May and Stewart Gordon) who are elders in the church.

Stained Glass Windows



This window was situated in the east wall 1953 in memory of the Sunday School work of Mary Chalmers 1922-47, her sister and father. The theme is from St Matthew 19: 14 "Let the little children come unto me"



This window was installed in the west side in 1917 in memory of Provost Binnie a trustee for 48 years and an elder for 40 years. The gift of the congregation and friends of Provost Binnie, the Theme is: St. Matthew 19:21, Christian Stewardship –

- Christ pointing to Cross in his hand
- Wealthy man gifting his wealth
- Small kneeling figures – consecration
- Christian way merges into Christ who is the way to the city of light on Zion's hill

The Organ

The pipe organ installed in 1982 by Forster and Andrews of Hull was replaced in 1991 by an Allen MDS 75 Computer Organ. Like its predecessor this organ has three manuals and pedal board. There are 65 speaking stops, 15 on each of the swell and choir manuals and the pedals and 14 on the great manual. In addition, there is a "floating" department of 6 reed stops which can be coupled to any of the other departments of the organ, including the pedals. Full control of many of the voices is achieved by the provision, as both thumb buttons and toe studs, of combination pistons (which select pre-set combinations of stops), and the usual range of couplers. A useful feature, easily provided on an electronic instrument but rare in this country on pipe organs, is a general crescendo pedal.

The extensive specification permits the creation of a wide variety of tone colours and the performance of organ music of many styles and of almost any period from the Baroque to the modern French school. The organ is, of course, highly suitable for the accompaniment of congregational singing.



Stained Glass Windows in the Gallery

As with the windows above the pulpit the two windows on the south wall of the gallery were gifted by R. Binnie and R. W. Robertson. They were installed in 1876. That on the east side is in memory of Elizabeth Robertson and the theme is Faith and Hope. That on the west side is in memory of R. Binnie and R. W. Robertson and the theme is Charity and mercy. The windows on the north side are from Ashton Church and were installed in 1989. The theme is Peter and Paul.

The Darroch Gallery



The windows in the Darroch Gallery were formed from the main windows of the former Ashton Church. They were designed by Gordon Anderson. The windows facing the pulpit form a crucifix. The Merchant Navy insignia and the Gourock coat of arms represent honours given to the Rev George McNab, minister of Ashton Church during World War II – the former for his congregation's assistance to shipwrecked crews brought ashore to Gourock and the latter denoting his status as a Freeman of Gourock.