

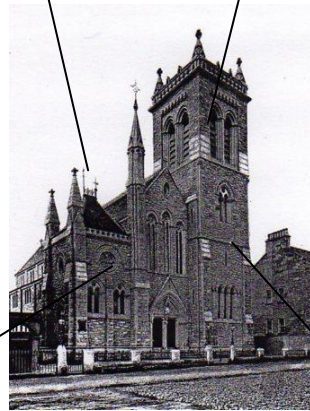
*A Condensed History of  
Ardgowan Parish Church  
1793 - 2010*



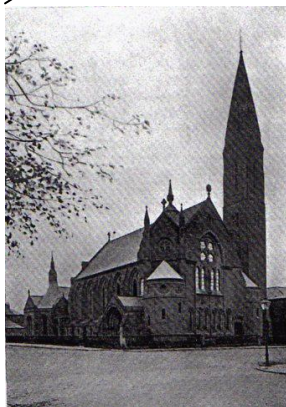
Nicholson Street Church  
( Later Became Trinity Church )  
( in Union Street )



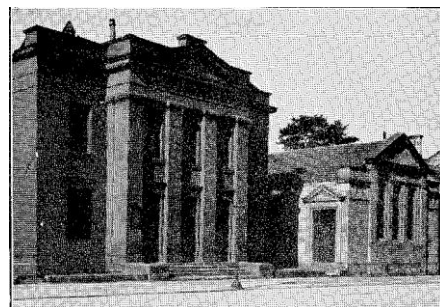
Argyle Street Church  
( Became Saint Andrew's Church )  
( in Ardgowan Street )



***Ardgowan Parish Church***  
( Originally Trinity Church Union Street )



Saint Andrews  
( Later United with Trinity )  
( Church in Union Street )



Union Street Church  
( Later United with Saint Andrews )  
( Church in Union Street )

## **Church History**

It should be fully understood that this document is in no way a comprehensive history of the Churches which have united over many years to form the present church which we to-day call :-

### ***Ardgowan Parish***

In setting out the following information, the writer has started at the oldest constituted congregation and worked forward to the youngest with all the information being researched from historical records. Ardgowan Parish is the by-product of three in number successful Unions which have taken place over a period of sixty years. The churches involved are Trinity Church, Sir Michael Street Church, Saint Andrews Church and The Union Church.

We should remember that the Inverkip Church's colloquial name was "Auld Kirk" and on a Sunday, it was necessary for the good people of Greenock to walk to the Kirk at Inverkip in order to worship. This was no mean feat as unless the worshippers were well to do they had to walk the 7 miles to and 7 miles back after enduring possibly a 2 to 3 hour sermon.

The original Parish of Inverkip once included the freeland from Gourrock in the West to Port Glasgow in the East and from the river Clyde to the Moorland Plateau above Greenock. In 1595 due mainly to the growth of the population in Greenock this area was disjoined from Inverkip and was known as the West Parish which was subsequently sub divided into the Mid, East, South and North Parishes. The South Parish being known as the Gaelic Parish.

As stated above this résumé starts with the oldest Constituted Congregation .

### **Trinity Church Constituted 1793**

In 1791 due to a difference of opinion with the Cartdyke Burgher Church, several members disjoined and moved westwards to form a new church.

Originally an Associate or Burgher church the congregation of the day built a new church on a plot of land at the South West corner of Nicholson Street and West Blackhall Street for the cost of £1300. The first service in this church was conducted by the Rev. Robert Jack in 1794. To day, the building is occupied by a cut-price furniture shop / gambling business and while the lower section of the external walls have been modified over the years the upper parts and roof have been retained.

In 1819, the Burgher and the Anti-Burghers resolved their difference and reunited at which time the church became known as the Nicholson Street Secession Church, which subsequently became the Nicholson Street United Presbyterian .

By the late 1860's the congregation had grown to the extent that a new church was required and in 1871 a new church was built at a cost of £7792 just East of the corner of Campbell Street and Union Street, the present site of Ardgowan Parish.

The first service in this new building was conducted by Dr Andrew Mc Farlane in 1871

The church retained the name Trinity until a union with Saint Andrews took place in 1967 . Since the original Saint Andrews was to be demolished and the Trinity Church building retained, the new charge would be known as Saint Andrews.

### **Trinity Church continued :-**

The Memorial hall constructed at the rear of the main church was a gift to the church from the Mc Pherson family in memory of their son and brother who was killed in action at Richbrough during the First World War and was constructed in 1933

### **Sit Michael Street Church Constituted 1806**

About 1800 ten members of the Mid Kirk had occasion to disagree with how the seats were let and therefore decided to leave and set up a new church. The first meeting of this new church was held in a vacant circus located at the bottom of Sugar House Lane with their united contribution being 10½d approximately 4½p in to-days money. A new church was eventually built at the North West corner of East Shaw Street and Sir Michael Street. The Church was opened in 1808 as was constructed at a cost of £6,000.

In 1950, this congregation united with the Union Church with the new charge being called the Union Street Church . The Sir Michael Street Church was eventually demolished and the corporation houses located to-day in the vicinity of 8,10 and 12 East Shaw Street 8 to 10 Sir Michael Street were built on the site . Unfortunately, no photographic record could be found for this building at this time.

It is interesting to note that the Finnart Church , which was located in Maderia Street across from the Greenock Academy School and is now a private housing complex was a westward extension of the Sir Michael Street Church, which was constructed for £4,500. Finnart Church united with Saint Paul's in the 1960's.

### **Saint Andrews Church Constituted 1827**

In 1827, several of the members of the Mid Kirk had a disagreement over the appointment of the assistant Mr. J. Bonar resulting in the supporters of Mr. Bonar leaving and forming a new church. In the first instance, the new congregation met in the Old Methodist Church, which was located at the corner of Tobago Street and Sir Michael Street. The New Parish of Saint Andrew's was constituted on 18th February 1835 and a new building was constructed at the North West Corner of West Stewart Street and Argyle Street for the cost of £4000 in 1836. This church was known as the Argyle Street Church. The new Saint Andrew's Parish or Argyle Street Church boundaries being defined as follows :-

Northern edge of the Parish The Vennel , Kilblain Street and West Blackhall Street  
Southern edge of the Parish Tobago Street, Princess , George Square and Union Street.

Eastern edge of the Parish Cowgate and Nicholson Street

Western edge of the Parish Jamaica Street.

Within this new Parish were approximately 2000 parishioners with 1000 of these being members of the Church of Scotland.

In 1843, there was a disruption in the Church of Scotland resulting in Saint Andrew's leaving the established church .

The Argyle Street Church buildings were subject of a legal battle between the church and the Greenock Bank and the Western Bank on the death of Mr Watt Church treasurer who had acquired a loan on behalf of the Deacon's Court , trustees for the building of the Argyle Street Church. Eventually after 10 years the Deacon's Court purchased the building for the sum of £327.36 which was the outstanding debt on the building.

### **Saint Andrews Church continued :-**

During the Disruption of the “Church” Saint Andrew’s became a U.F church with them continuing to worship in the Argyle Street Church but with on going major repairs to this building they were forced to look for a new building.

It was established that there were possibly two sites one being at the corner of North West corner of Newark Street and Johnstone Street and the other at the North West Corner of Ardgowan Street and Margaret Street . Due to the site at the West corner of Newark Street and Johnstone Street not being for sale the plot of land on Ardgowan Street was purchased and the New Saint Andrew’s was subsequently built for a cost of £10,500.

The origin Argyle Street Church Site was sold off and to-day the original building is used for a cut-price furniture and carpet store.

In 1967, Saint Andrew is united with Trinity Church at which time Trinity Church was renamed Saint Andrew’s Church with the building in Ardgowan Street being demolished and private houses erected on the site.

### **Union Street Church Constituted 1843**

The Union Church was first constituted in 1843 by the members of the United Secissions Church in Nicholson Street .

In 1992, the Union Street Church and Saint Andrew’s Church Union Street were united in the Saint Andrew’s building and the name of the church was changed to Ardgowan Parish Church..

The Union Street Church was demolished and the site developed for private housing .

It is of interest to note that the origins of the Union Street Church came from the Nicholson Street United Secission Church . While no records have come to light , to date, with reference to its location it would appear that the building used was the building used by the former Nicholson Street Church . As already recorded the congregation of the Nicholson Street Church resolved their difference over the subject of Burgher’s and Anti-Burghers and reunited at which time the church became known as the Nicholson Street Secession Church, which subsequently became the Nicholson Street United Presbyterian .

It would appear that this new congregation split to become what would have been known as the Trinity Church and the Union Street Churches.

## Ardgowan Parish Church 1992

The building you are standing in was designed by John Starfoth Architect in 1871 .

It is

This building has been redesigned twice in its life . Once in 1951 when the interior was changed considerably by a gift from Mrs Gilgrist in memory of her husband who was an elder of Trinity church for many years and again in 2002. As you will observe the high walls have been cleared of their covering i.e lath and plaster after dry rot was found in the ceiling space resulting in the exposure of the rough stone work. The pews were removed and new seating installed . It was felt that to meet the 21st century the Church had to change and to make this possible clearing the Sanctuary of the pews was a step forward thus allowing the Sanctuary to become a multi functional area.

The church is home to many organization these being :-

- 1) Boys Brigade . It is interesting to note that the company , 1st Greenock, was founded in 1875 in the Vennel Hall which was the mission Hall of the old Saint Andrews Church . The Hall location is marked by a plaque on the wall of the red council houses at the corner of High Street and Tobago Street
- 2) Junior Section Boys Brigade
- 3) Company Section Boys Brigade
- 4) Brownies
- 5) Rainbows
- 6) Guides
- 7) Beaver Scouts
- 8) Cub Scouts
- 9) Scouts
- 10) Karate Club
- 11) Ladies Badminton Club
- 12) Guild
- 13) Sunday School
- 14) ACTS Group
- 15) Summer Holiday Camp
- 16) 49th Royal Air Force Air Cadets Church

As can be seen the Church is still very much ALIVE and supports the local and wider community in a verity of ways

Main points of interest :-

- a) Stained Glass window
- b) Carved tympanum above the main entrance doors.
- c) Can you spot the angel with the blower hat ? One theory for this is that the window cost was defrayed by members of the congregation who were managers in the shipyards of the day . Or it's the artists joke. What ever, the window in question is the west panel

Main points of interest continued :-

- d) Can you find the stone carving of the Devil being chased out of the Church by the good ? This can be seen on the north stone pillar of the east side entrance door. The carving is at the head of the column.



Carved Tympanum Above the Main Entrance doors.



Angel with Bowler Hat  
What Does it Mean



Evil Being Chased Out of The Church  
What Does it Mean

## Stained Glass Window

The writer is indebted to M<sup>o</sup>n senior XXXXXXXXXXX of Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church for his help with the interpretation of the window.

As there appears to be no actual history of the window the interpretation is purely that of the writer and XXXXXXXXXXX



The window is pre 1914 and has been designed with a strong Flemish influence. This can be seen especially from the panel depicting Alpha which shows the heavy floral pattern and is in keeping with the Flemish design of windows.

The description tabulated below is set out with the viewer standing looking at the window and reading the window from left to right.

- 1) This panel we feel is self explanatory . It shows Mosses with the tablets of stone reading the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel
- 2) This panel would appear to be someone being baptised . Our interpretation of this panel is John the Baptist baptising Jesus . The scriptures tells us that Jesus was baptised in the river Jordon so the thinking is that this is showing a symbolic baptism .
- 3) Centre Panel. We feel that this panel shows Jesus telling the people to allow the children to come to him .Suffer the little children to come unto me for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 4) The fourth panel is the most continental and shows what appears to be an Angel with a "Bowler" hat . It portrays three people around the feet showing fear . The scriptures tells us that on the Sabbath after the crucifixion Mary Magdalene along with another two were on their way to Jesus' tomb when they met someone on the road who told them not to worry.

Stained Glass Window continued :-

- 5) The bottom panel of this window shows the arch angel and the inscription reads “ Come Unto me All Yea Who Are Heavy Laden And I Will Give You Rest”
- 6) The last panel depicts Peter preaching to the people.
- 7) There are two in number small circular windows at the top of the window. The one located above panels one and two from the left hand side depicts Abraham being stopped from sacrificing his only son as instructed by God. The one located between panels four and five appears to depict a person on a sick bed . We feel that the interpretation here may be Peter raising Tabitha from her sick bed.

The writers interpretation may very well be wrong but pause a awhile and marvel at the beauty of the window and the craftsmanship . We would be delighted if during your time of meditation you could pen your thoughts and interpretation of the window.





Present Day Location of  
The Argyle Street Church



Present Day Location of  
The Nicholson Street Church



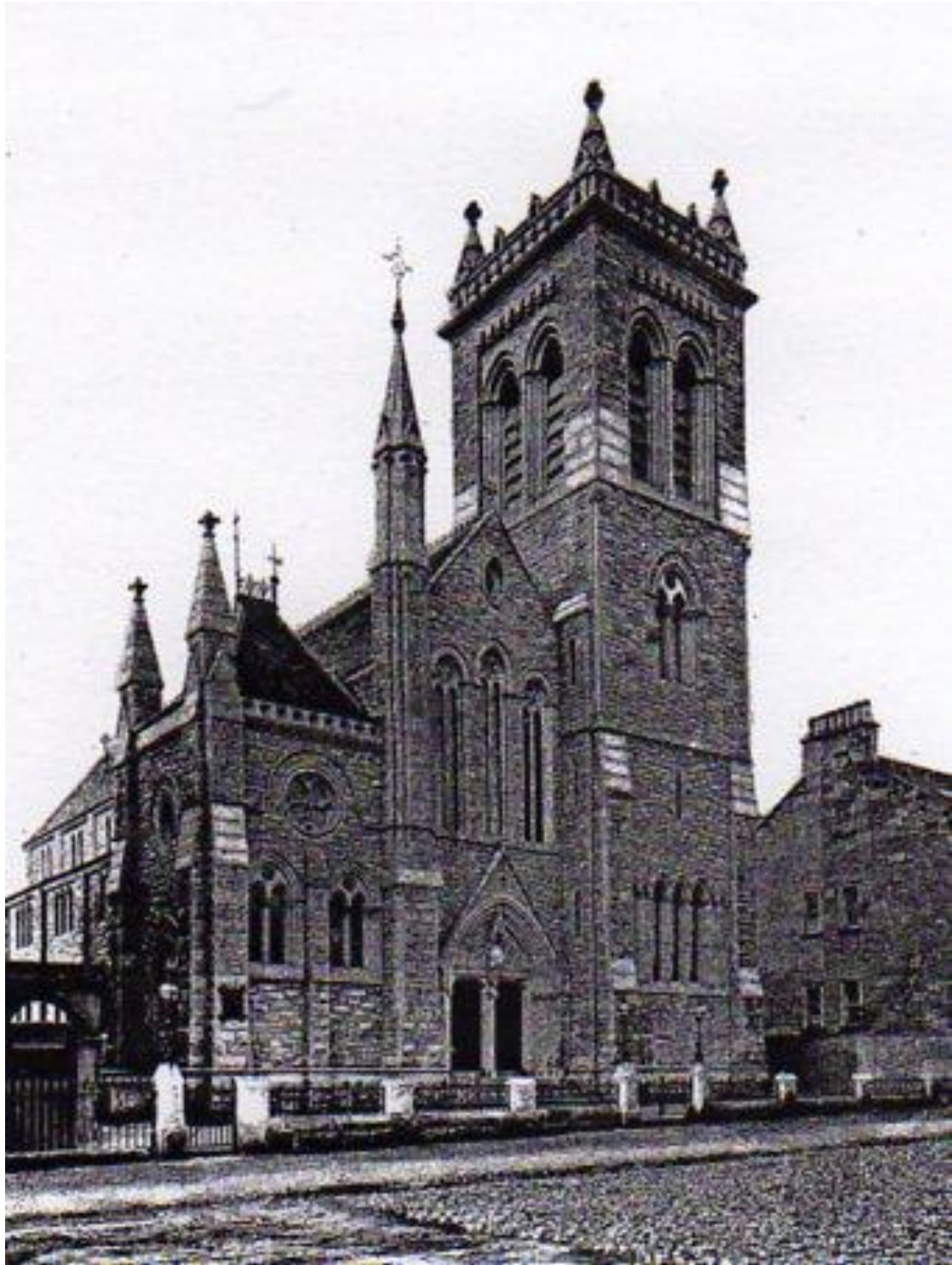
Present Day Location of  
The Sir Michael Street Church



Present Day Location of  
The Union Street Church



Present Day Location of  
Saint Andrew's Church Ardgowan Street



**Ardgowan Parish Church**