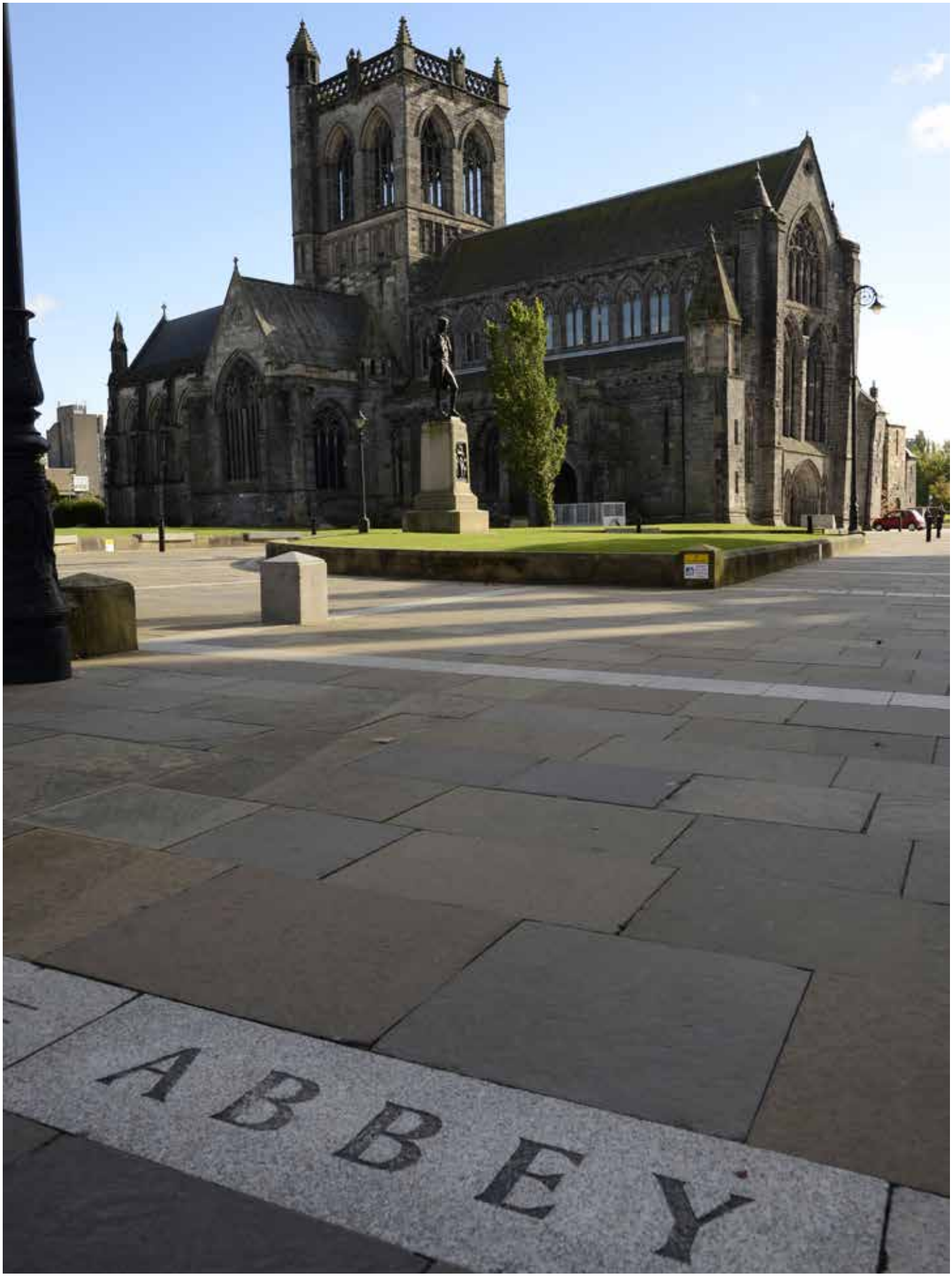
Paisley Town Centre **Conservation Area Appraisal**

March 2018

Renfrewshire Council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Prepared by The Heritage Place. Based on earlier drafts by Renfrewshire Council. Survey work undertaken Autumn 2015. Updated by Renfrewshire Council, Summer 2017.

Renfrewshire Council is committed to the regeneration of its town centres. Paisley's community has at its historic core outstanding architecture and a wealth of cultural assets and collections to help drive the regeneration of a vibrant town to promote and support a sustainable economy. This document provides an appraisal of the character of the Paisley Town Centre Conservation Area **(Figure 1)**, outlining its unique character and distinguishing the assets that set it apart. The Conservation Area extends from Wellmeadow Street to the west, down to Canal Station (Causeyside Street) to the south, out to Paisley Abbey and Gauze Street at the east and to Gilmour Street Station and the boundary of Oakshaw to the north.

Conservation Areas

Conservation areas were first introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 provides the current legislative framework for the designation of conservation areas. The Act defines each as an area 'of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. All planning authorities are required by this Act to determine which parts of their area merit Conservation status. Renfrewshire currently has 8 conservation areas varying in character from this town centre, to elegant suburbs, planned or industrial villages, an historic weaving centre and a commuter dormitory.

In a Conservation Area the architectural interest applies both to the buildings and to the spaces between them. Planning legislation and policy is aimed at maintaining the integrity of the area and promoting its special character. Conservation Area status does not mean that new development is unacceptable, but care must be taken to ensure that the new development will not harm the character or appearance of the area.

Conservation Area designation brings the following works under planning control:

- Demolition of buildings
- Removal of, or work to, trees
- Development involving small house extensions, roof alterations, stone cleaning or painting of the exterior, provision of hard surfaces, and
- Additional control over satellite dishes.

Where a development would, in the opinion of the planning authority, affect the character or appearance of a conservation area, the application for planning permission will be advertised in the local press providing an opportunity for public comment. Views expressed are taken into account by the local planning authority when making a decision on the application.

In order to protect the Conservation Areas, their designation requires the Council to formulate and publish proposals for their preservation and enhancement. Local residents and property owners also have a major role to play in protecting and enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area by ensuring that properties are regularly maintained and original features retained.

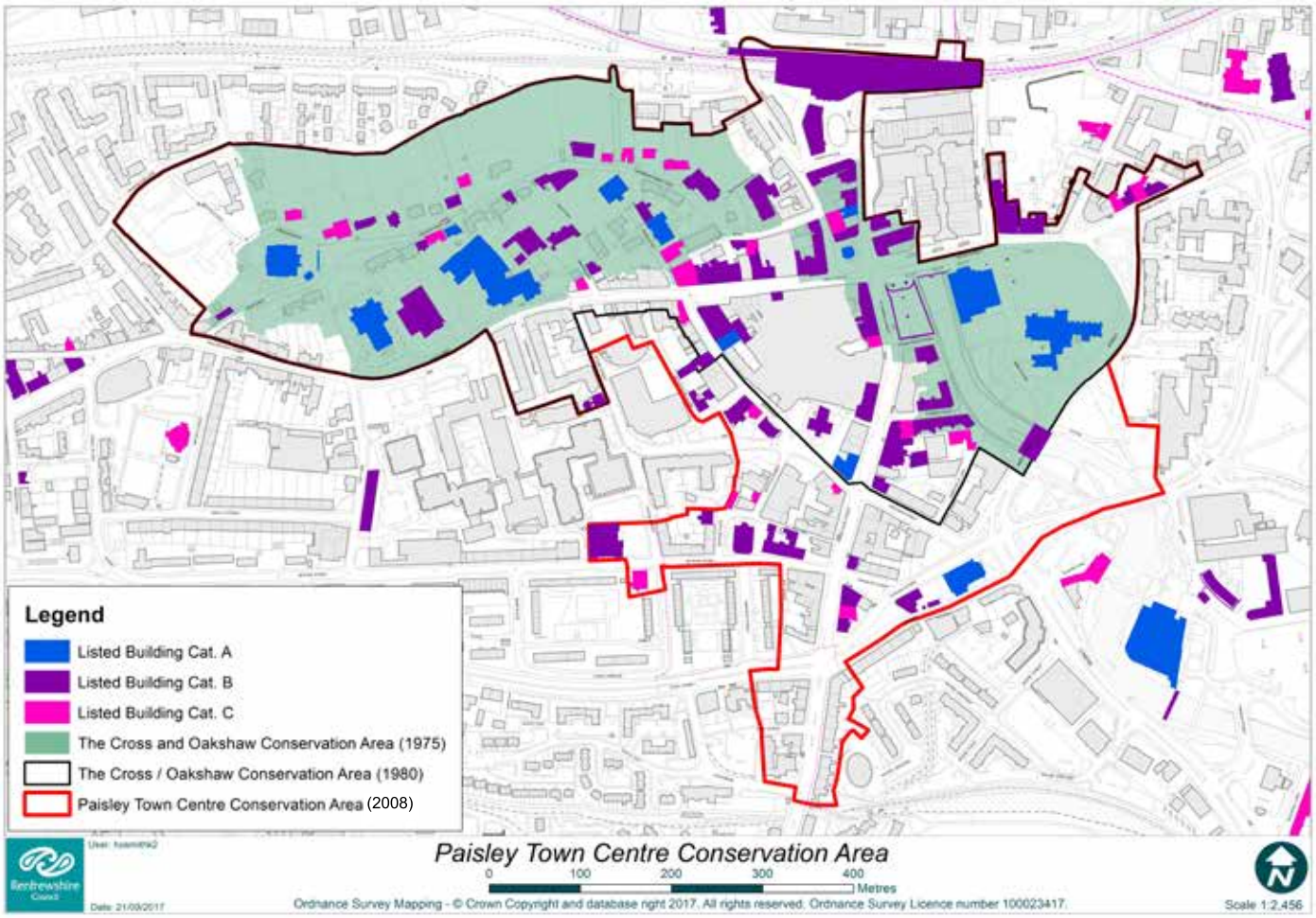
Purpose of a Conservation Area Appraisal

The purpose of an appraisal of the area is to define its important features, its salient and significant characteristics and to identify unique qualities.

This is the starting point for deciding what should be protected and enhanced by planning authorities, residents and property owners, and what problems need to be addressed. It informs effective management of the historic fabric of the town.

The appraisal explains the area's historic development, its special townscape and architectural interest, and includes consideration of significant buildings and open spaces which establish the character of the area.

The appraisal provides a context for the assessment of development proposals within the area, identifies opportunities and priorities for enhancement, and sets out the policy framework for the determination of development proposals. This appraisal is supplementary to the policies for Paisley Town Centre and its built heritage set out in the Renfrewshire Local Development Plan (see Part 3, General Planning Guidance).



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It is recognised that the successful management of conservation areas can only be achieved with the support and input from stakeholders and in particular local residents and property owners.

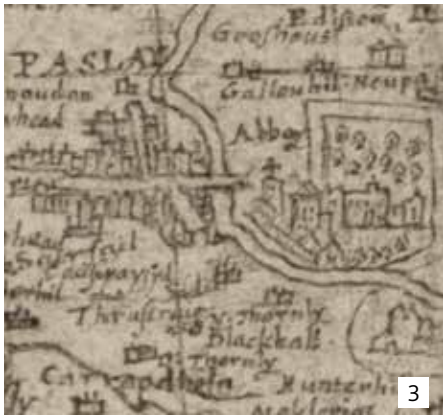

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Figure 1: (above) Paisley Town Centre Conservation Area

Figure 2: View of Paisley Abbey

Figure 3: Timothy Pont's plan of Paisley

Using this document

The appraisal follows the recommendations set out in the Scottish Government's *PAN71: Conservation Area Management* (2004). This sets out a series of issues which should be assessed in order to determine and thereafter manage the special character of a conservation area.

- A description of the general location, geography, and geology of the area.
- A brief historical overview setting out the development of the town.
- An appraisal of key townscape features.
- An assessment of the overarching character of the conservation area
- Identification of key issues in the future management of the site.

Historical Development, Character and Boundary

Historical Development

As a result of its topography and a long and fragmented history, Paisley town centre has great complexity and variety concentrated in a relatively small area. Even individual streets rarely have one consistent character and most have exceptional fabric and an interesting story to tell.

This brief history of the town is provided to assist the understanding of why and how the town came to have its present form and character, and to help to make an assessment of the elements which make it today.

Paisley's history can be outlined as having five distinct periods of development separated by four periods of stagnation. The breaks in this history have created a town centre which is irregular in layout, has areas of contrasting character, and buildings which often differ from their neighbours in scale and character.

From St Mirin's church to the great Abbey and its village

Paisley is sited on the White Cart River at its highest navigable point from the Clyde and the lowest point where it could be forded, on the important route between the south-west and central belt of Scotland. St Mirin is said to have built a chapel at Seedhill on the east bank in the 6th century, and Benedictine monks who were granted lands here in 1163 built the abbey nearby (**Figure 2**). Their monastic precinct occupied most of the level east bank, so the dependent village grew up subsequently at Causeyside, between two burns on the more undulating west bank and next to a ford close to the Abbey. **(Figure 3)** This established the distinct character of the east and west sides of the town. Without the legal rights and privileges of burgh status, it did not (indeed could not) expand greatly, nor have a distinct economic presence. In the later medieval period Paisley was a major pilgrimage destination.

From dependent village to market burgh

The village was made a burgh with trading privileges in 1488: the original ecclesiastical village was enlarged and a planned burgh was established with the right to hold a market, held at the Cross. The construction of the first bridge over the Cart (St James) about 1490 helped make it the principal market centre of Renfrewshire. But the closure of the monastery in the Reformation (1560) ended this stage of Paisley's development. When the monastic way of life was swept away, with it one of the main drivers for the town's economic growth disappeared.

Figure 4: William Roy's military map, 1754, showing New St and Orchard St added.

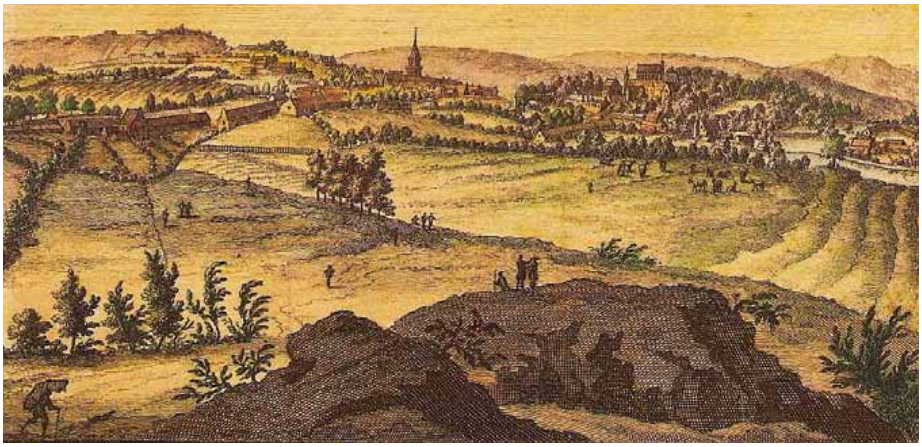

Figure 5: View from Saucel Hill by John Slezer, 1693

Rapid expansion to major textile town

The opening up of trade with the Empire following the Act of Union in 1707 saw a rapid expansion of manufacturing, especially of textiles. Trades incorporations sprang to life in the town. Paisley's population grew faster than anywhere else in Scotland until, by 1820 it was the third largest settlement in the nation. Muslin and silk production started around 1710, assisted by the free trade joining that of linen in the town's output. The population in 1695 was 2200 but grew by 1755 to 6800. By 1801, it had risen to 24,324 and by 1821 to 47,000.

Development extended out along the old routes into the village - the High Street, Moss Street and Causeyside Street. The irregularity of the street pattern followed from the fossilisation of major routes into the burgh in the 15th century. Starting with New Street in 1724, new streets were laid out in a systematic response to the needs of the growing town **(Figures 4 and 5**).

The long medieval burgage plots, headed with either thatched cottages or two-storey houses with shop or booth at ground and family accommodation above, were redeveloped and the back courts built up. Most of the new Georgian buildings were modest, built with local buff sandstone and roofed with slates. The Town Council in 1733 decried thatch and timber fronts but some remained as late as 1900. New Street was laid out in 1724 to cope with the rapid expansion of the town. Orchard Street followed in 1746.

The most prominent public building of this period is the High Church (1756, now Oakshaw Trinity) on the east end of the long Oakshaw hill above the town centre whose towering steeple was added in 1770. The Laigh Kirk (now the Arts Centre) on lower ground in New Street is however older, opening in 1738 and the second oldest church in Paisley after the Abbey. The church presence in the town became considerable with the Middle Parish Church on Church Hill designed by Samuel Henning from 1789 and the Gaelic Church, Oakshaw built from 1793. The town boundaries remained those of the Parish but divided into three by 1781. Development around the Abbey in the 18th century included the knocking down of abbey walls in 1760 and works to the nave in 1788-9.

Like many towns in the later 18th century, Paisley began resurfacing roads and providing better drainage.

The ancient gardens to the north-east of the monastery were laid out on a regular plan (known as the New Town) thanks to the Earl of Abercorn from 1781. New public open spaces were created. A Police Act of 1806 set out to modernise the centre. This included the demolition of old buildings in Moss Row and their uniform replacement with elegant houses, shops and a warehouse. Orr Square was laid out from 1808 on the site of the former almshouse. County Square was created in front of the County Buildings (1820, demolished circa 1971).

The construction of the Glasgow to Johnstone canal in 1810 and the arrival of the railway in 1840 divided the centre from its southern and northern satellites but considerably improved communications **(Figures 6 and 7**).

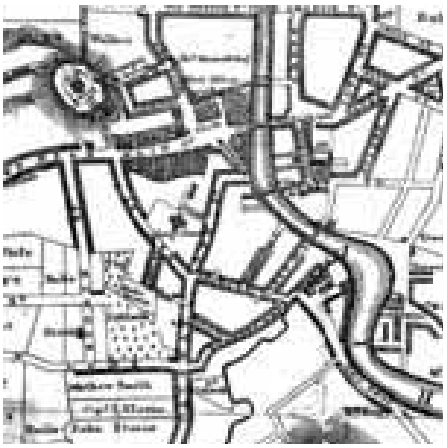

Figure 6: William Semple's map, 1787, showing many additional streets laid out since Roy's map and development extending along them.

Figure 7: View from Saucel Hill by Clark, 1825, with canal to right and High Church to left.

Late Victorian and early twentieth century rebuilding

Slow recovery following the Napoleonic Wars and the blow of a further trade recession in the town in 1842, brought years of severe depression and growth only resumed in the 1860s. Steam-power had arrived at the mills from the 1820s. The economy came to be dominated by larger scale manufacturing, notably in the thread works of the Coats and Clark families to the west and east of the centre. The one exception was the formation of County Square to give an appropriately grand setting for County Buildings in 1818.

By the second half of the 19th century, Paisley's wealthy industrialists were determined to improve the appearance of the streets and buildings of their town, and instituted a Town Improvement Scheme. To cope with increasing traffic most of the streets in the centre were widened from 1862. The urban renewal included the demolition of the north side of the High Street in the 1880s and their replacement with commercial chambers which rivalled their best contemporaries in Glasgow and provided a high quality streetscape (**Figure 8**). The Masonic Hall (dated 1879, No. 20), evidenced by a statue

Figure 8: High Street in 1906 showing awnings and regularity

Figure 9: Causeyside Street showing Paisley's characterful mix of building periods, Georgian and Victorian.

Figure 10: 2-10 St Mirren Street

of King Solomon in a niche at first floor, and the Liberal Club (1886, No. 32) add to the mix, with shops at ground floor. The Beaux Arts YMCA (1908) set back on the south side, brought Edwardian vivacity and continued the characteristic diversity of Paisley's main retail street.

The High Street's Tolbooth was taken down in 1821 and its tower in 1870.

At times the rebuilding was more piecemeal and created diverse streetscapes, making the irregularity and mixed quality of the retained Georgian facades more apparent **(Figure 9**). The traffic bottleneck of the medieval St Mirren Street was opened in 1875 providing a more direct route to Causeyside Street. Peddie and Kinnear, masters in such re-planning, provided Paisley with a fine run of tenements at the western edge, as significant as their Edinburgh equivalent (**Figure 10**). The necessary clearances created the site for Dunn Square, laid out by James Donald in 1894.

Improvements to Causeyside Street created a handsome approach to the town centre from the Canal Street station (1885). Almost all of the four-storey tenements were developed separately giving an interesting variety to the street scene. The most prominent features of these tenements are their corners, which were often given special treatment such as round or facetted towers and finialled ogee-caps, marking the junctions and creating distinguished streetscape (**Figure 11**).

The character of the town was most dramatically changed by the erection of several large public buildings in contrasting architectural styles (**Figure 12**), notably the John Neilson Institution (Charles Wilson, 1852) and the classical Museum (John Honeyman, 1868-1871), both by Glaswegian architects. Honeyman was also responsible for Paisley's Coats Observatory, which graced Oakshaw's quiet streets in 1881. The

monumental George Clark Town Hall, designed by William Lynn of Belfast (1879-82) provided an appropriate civic centre for Scotland's sixth most populous town. Statues representing the seasons by James Young of Glasgow, adorn the campanile. The great public buildings and their concentration within a small area gave the centre the character of a city more on a par with Glasgow than any other Scottish town. Most of these later great buildings were slotted into the existing fabric with little change to their surroundings.

The Italianate Churches continued to proliferate, with Oakshaw Hill a favoured location, and the north transept, choir and massive tower were added to the Abbey nave in four stages (between 1862 and 1928). The Post Office Directory 1891-92 lists 20 churches within the boundaries of the current Conservation Area but more were to come.

In 1894, the Thomas Coats Memorial Baptist Church a soaring monument in outstanding French Gothic (**Figure 13**), (won in competition in 1885 by the eminent architect, Hippolyte J Blanc) was gifted to the town in honour of its namesake. 'The United Free Church employed W D McLennan in 1907 to design St Matthew's Church in Gordon Street (originally St George's): an influential Art Nouveau interpretation of perpendicular gothic on a difficult corner site. Had its belfry been built it would have added further distinction to the skyline of the town. In 1908, Watson and Salmond designed the vast Methodist Central Halls in Gauze Street, their scale showing the strength of the Methodist faith in Paisley.

Paisley Cross was formed by the demolition of a block of High Street tenements between Moss and Gilmour Street in 1906 as part of town improvements. The Square became known as Polson Square, in honour of its sponsor, Mrs John Polson of Westmount.

The Abbey was in the later nineteenth century the focus of a sustained campaign of restoration. This involved works to the nave and partial repair of the transepts by James Salmon, 1859-62, and then further restoration by Robert Rowand Anderson of the transepts and the central tower. Between 1912 and 1922, Peter McGregor Chalmers was responsible for rebuilding the choir area of the Abbey, and two sides of the cloister. Robert Lorimer then continued until 1928 altering Chalmers work, vaulting the choir and adding the upper stage to the tower.

Figure 11: Montage of Paisley's eye-catching corner towers.

Figure 12: Montage of Paisley's later Victorian landmarks (John Neilson Institution, Museum, Town Hall, Coats Observatory)

Figure 13: The Coats Memorial Church, 1894.

The clearance of the run down streets surrounding the Abbey (1873-1920s) (**Figures 14 and 15**) was part of the town improvements (secured by an Act of 1877) and exposed the newly restored building. Part of The Place of Paisley had been used as a tavern before its pre-Reformation west wing was demolished in 1874. The new open setting partly restored the contrasting characters of the town on the two banks of the river.

After the interruption of the First World War, some of the pre-war changes were continued, notably the completion of the Abbey, clearance of the buildings around it, and the widening of streets from The Cross down to the Town Hall and Forbes Place. The Housing (Scotland) Act 1935 brought necessary improvements in congestion, relieving Paisley's from a near record 32% overcrowding.

Tenement construction was not resumed and no further city scale buildings were commissioned. However, the architectural sophistication of several new additions showed a continuing pride and originality, most notably the Cenotaph (Robert Lorimer and Meredith Williams, 1922) (**Figure 16**) and the Russell Institute (James Steel Maitland, 1926).

As old industries closed down, the high chimneys were removed from the skyline. Town centre slum residents were rehoused on suburban council housing estates. Manufacturing decline set in seriously in the 1950s, and service industries became dominant.

The town centre was adapted to this by three major comprehensive redevelopment schemes which replaced large areas of the inherited urban fabric. Paisley College of Technology, 1963 (now the University of the West of Scotland) opened a wide gap in the west end High Street frontage and added a bulky six-storey tower into views of the Oakshaw skyline from the south.

The ambitious Civic Centre (1966-71) in Cotton Street replaced yet more of the New Town and the notable Tontine building. Softened by landscaping, it served as a neutral though over-scaled backdrop to the Abbey. Demolition of the castellated Old County Buildings and jail (1818 and 1850) flanking County Place in 1969-1971 made way for the Piazza (1968-70) shopping mall with three long office slab blocks and a towering multi-storey car park built over the river from St James Bridge to the railway viaduct.

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Conservation and adaptation, 1970s - present

The damage which the comprehensive redevelopment approach was doing to the historic towns and cities of Britain was recognised in the 1960s, as was the contrasting contribution made by historic buildings and areas to economic regeneration. Starting in 1971, buildings of architectural interest were protected from demolition and unsympathetic alteration.

The Cross and Oakshaw were designated as Conservation Areas in 1975 and amalgamated and extended in 1980, to an area which today has 101 listed buildings of which 14 are Category A. The three major 1960s redevelopment schemes were excluded from the Conservation Area.

Oakshaw, where the John Neilson Institution stood derelict from 1971 was picked out for major public investment in 1985, a process which resulted in a tripling of the number of dwellings on the hill, most of them in former redundant listed buildings.

A new approach to redevelopment was set by the Paisley Urban Design Framework adopted by the Council in 1990. The Paisley (shopping) Centre development (1992) followed this by being adeptly fitted into the High Street-Causeyside Street-New Street block behind retained historic facades and new 'contextual' ones. While giving additional modern shopping accommodation, the two indoor shopping centres made the old main street shops less viable, and increased the problem faced today of retail business loss.

Although known about from Victorian period, the Abbey Drain (under the old grounds of the Abbey, the Conservation Area's only Scheduled Monument) was not opened until the 1990s. It is finely built in stone with a vaulted roof and arguably the finest of its type in Scotland. The excavation of extremely informative artefacts from the drain has highlighted that other significant finds may potentially lie along the burns around the town and the White Cart River.

Following the extension of the Conservation Area in 2008, the Council, with additional funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Scotland has delivered a successful Townscape Heritage Initiative and Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme focused on the Causeyside area of the town centre aiming to support investment through heritage-led regeneration. Shopfront improvements have returned some of Paisley's rich streetscape interest. (Nos 35, 36, 38, 41, 44 and 62 Causeyside Street) (**Figure 17**). Extensive repair has brought T G Abercrombie's 1903 tenement at 43 Causeyside Street to a sustainable future (**Figure 18**). Works to the public realm and circulation routes have provided a more appropriate backdrop for the exceptional architecture, creating a pleasing environment. The Council has since secured funding to deliver a further Townscape Heritage and Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme with a particular focus on High Street, New Street, Shuttle Street and George Place. Public realm improvements are also planned within this area.

In 2014, the Council committed to a targeted plan for the regeneration of the town in the Paisley Town Centre Heritage Regeneration Strategy and Paisley Town Centre Action Plan to be realised over the next 10 to 15 years (*Paisley: The Untold Story.)* This aims to draw together the town's history, character and story to revitalise the town and release the potential of its unique selling point.

Opposite

Figure 14: 2nd edition OS, 1893

Figure 15: View from Saucel Hill c 1890, with the Town Hall in the centre and Abbey nave to its right

Figure 16: The Cenotaph. Robert Lorimer (architect), Meredith Williams (sculptor).

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Figure 17: 41 Causeyside Street shopfront (restored)

Figure 18: 43 Causeyside Street, T G Abercrombie (restored)

Archaeological Interest

In an historic town such as Paisley with its rich evolution and an early settlement in the core of the Conservation Area, it is important to remember the underground potential in taking forward any development. A defined Historic Settlement polygon in the Historic Environment Record (HER) recognises the concentration of this built environment asset, including the area of the Abbey drain which has provided an insight into pre-Reformation monastic life. In addition to this, the HER also includes other sites of potential archaeological significance where remains may survive in small pockets or at depth, such as the prehistoric hillfort site under and around the former John Neilson Institute.

Character Areas

The Conservation Area has three main contrasting areas: the Town Hall-Abbey-riverside area, Oakshaw hill, and the urban shopping streets. This last area can be divided into four parts, making six areas in which certain characteristics or features predominate. Each has several important and memorable buildings. The Areas of Intervention identified in the Heritage Regeneration Strategy are enveloped within these, being the West End Cultural Quarter, the High Street and the Abbey Quarter.

Following the successful delivery of the THI/CARS Project in Causeyside, the TH.CARS2 project is being delivered in the High Street area linking the cultural quarters and developing the economic potential of Paisley's exceptional character.

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Townscape Detail

Paisley Town Centre is rich in architectural detail and skilled craftsmanship. In particular, attention should be paid to:

- Carved stonework **(Figure 19)**
- Wrought and cast ironwork **(Figure 20)**
- Corner towers **(Figure 11)**
- Sculpture **(Figure 49)**

Conservation Area Boundary

The Cross and Oakshaw Conservation Areas were designated in 1975 and amalgamated and extended in 1980. The three major 1960s redevelopment schemes were excluded from the Conservation Area **(Figure 1)**.

In 2008, the area was extended to the south-east ring road and re-named the Paisley Town Centre Conservation Area. This has a clear edge with the former fire station building and the St Matthews Church recognised in the extension as belonging to the heart of the town. Although interrupted by the ring road, the late Victorian character of Causeyside Street as far as the Canal Street railway line is strong where both sides of the street were redeveloped with tenements. The Conservation Area has some obvious boundary features to define its edges in the Cotton Street buildings to the east, the Piazza, railway viaduct and foot of Oakshaw hill to the north and west. The enlarged Conservation Area now extends over 41 hectares. It contains 122 Listed Buildings of which 14 are Category A, 79 are Category B and 29 are Category C. There is one Scheduled Monument.

Figure 19: Carved stone panels/datestones

Figure 20: Decorative iron work

The Town Hall - Abbey Area

This area's predominant features are its two contrasting monumental buildings and the green spaces and the river across which they are viewed. While the Town Hall relates to the Cross and High Street, this area is otherwise a quiet backwater, protected from the impact of ring road traffic to the east by the high walls of the Cotton Street buildings.

The Abbey and the Town Hall relate obliquely to each with their sides defining the spaces facing each other's fronts. The green area which the Town Hall overlooks is the town's oldest graveyard. However, its character has been changed by laying flat the gravestones and allowing them to become covered by turf, and by removal of surrounding walls and railings. The presence of the gravestones, lack of paths and the shade cast by the Abbey inhibits its use for relaxation, closer viewing of the Abbey, and taking short cuts along its north side.

To the north, the space in front of the Town Hall is well defined by the Central Methodist Halls **(Figure 21**) and the former Arnott's, but less so further east. The Cotton Street building is too distant to define this space well. The Town Hall's imposing entrance front commands the view down Gauze Street from as far off as the end of Glasgow Road.

The contrasting west front of the Town Hall rises sheer from the river's edge; its twin towers providing dramatic vertical features which dominate views downstream from the Abbey Bridge and Forbes Place.

The Town Hall (**Figure 22**) screens the Abbey from the bustle of the Cross, and it is only from the end of Causeyside Street that its west front can be seen as it was designed to impress approaching medieval pilgrims fording the river.

The Abbey with the Place of Paisley form the eye-catching landmarks from Forbes Place, River Cart Walk and Abbey Bridge, where not excessively screened by trees. The definition of the wider space to the south-west of the Abbey, and the special character of the riverside are weakened somewhat by the gap site in Forbes Place and the single storey former industrial building on Bridge Street.

The open space between the river and the Abbey and Place of Paisley has potential to enhance the historic importance of the buildings. The greenspace could be re-landscaped to provide a unified public space suited to the stature of the Abbey.

The presence of the river, shielded by the high embankment wall, could be accentuated in a fresh design to revive the town centre's former relationship with the river which is hidden except in the graveyard beside the Town Hall. Under this area lies one of Scotland's best preserved monastic drains, over which were sited major buildings of the monastery **(Figure 23).**

Only Gauze, Lawn, Silk, and Smithhills Streets remain of the pattern of the late 18th century New Town built on the Abbey grounds, with nine original buildings and the later Mission Hall by T G Abercrombie on the area's buffer zone.

Figure 21: Central Methodist Halls, Watson and Salmond.

Figure 22: Town Hall and Abbey from Dunn Square

Figure 23: Approximate lines of medieval drain and abbey precinct wall.

Oakshaw

Oakshaw provides the dominant skyline for Paisley Town Centre as seen from outside the area, especially from the north and east (**Figures 24 and 25**). From here it appears as a wooded hill, topped with a line of the varied silhouettes of towers, spires and domes.


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Set apart from the rest of the town by the steepness and narrowness of the seven lanes up to it, Oakshaw Street retains its ancient narrow width and winding alignment along the ridge of the hill, limiting views up and down the street. It is enclosed by informal lines of buildings and high garden walls overhung by trees on the north side, giving the street an intimate pedestrian character. Several trees have reached a maturity that causes the area's seclusion to be threatening and deprives the pedestrian of vistas of the architectural interest. Selective surgery would be welcome.

The north side has well-spaced 19th century detached villas, two small blocks of flats of a similar width and three former churches. The south side has mainly terraced two-storey villas and three to four-storey tenements, trees in whose large back garden add to views of the hill from the south.

Only in a few places surprisingly distant views open over the town below. Although in the past Oakshaw has been the site of three schools and nine churches, the conversion of seven of these to housing and the closing of the road to through traffic has reinforced the sleepy residential character of the area. Emphasising the access possible through Orr Street would encourage pedestrian through traffic from the High Street and extend the welcome of the area.


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Oakshaw has an exceptional concentration of category A-listed buildings, each of a very different character. Other buildings range between one to four storeys, and the architecture is varied. Sandstone predominates and almost all roofs are slated, giving coherence to views up to the hill and across from the Observatory balcony. The new infill development between Church Hill and Orr Street fits comfortably into this pattern.


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The public realm has been respectfully detailed with setted roads and flagstones. There is also (as throughout the town centre) some exceptionally fine ironwork distinguishing the quarter and requiring regular repair and attention (**Figure 26**).

The Cross and High Street

Though radically altered over the centuries, Paisley Cross retains its character as the centre or hub of the town. It is a busy junction of five routes, lying between the indoor shopping centres, the main railway station, bus stops and the university. Public realm improvements have significantly revived the area's stature and a concerted programme to regenerate the exceptional historic fabric of the area is underway.

The openness of the space to the south-east over Dunn Square affords views out to the Town Hall and even the Anchor Finishing Mill, but it is still defined by the way the land slopes away outside the space. The 1875 tenements at the head of St Mirren Street provide an outstanding backdrop. Diagonally opposite, the former Burton's building (1929-30) **(Figure 27**), is a fine Art Deco statement with faience cladding, a notable example by Henry Wilson of Leeds, the architect to the Montague Burton tailoring chain.

High Street runs along the side of Oakshaw Hill, rising gently as far as Townhead Terrace where it curves out of sight becoming Wellmeadow Street. It retains something of the enclosure of a medieval high street, with four of the five streets linked allowing only narrow views out to left and right. Though quite modest in length, the High Street is given a grander scale by the view in the distance of the crown spire of the Coats Memorial Church at one end and the presence of the Town Hall at the other (**Figure 28**). The Coats Church, rich in detail and material, forms a fitting close to the West End Cultural Quarter.

The east part of the High Street maintains a roughly even width, and, with three and four-storey buildings, it has good proportions and urban character. Improvements made to the public realm encourage footfall and it retains its identity as the town's prime shopping street but this is fragile. Vacancies and disproportionate shop fascias pose a threat to the exceptional chambers that line the north side.**(Figure 29)** Details such as the ironwork parapet to No 18 merit careful attention. The Liberal Club **(Figure 30)** turns the steep corner adeptly and acts as an eye-stopper from New Street. The reinstatement of the former galleried and finialed cupola which crowned the tower and decorative ventilators to the roof would return the elegance of this High Street group and echo the historic significance of the club.

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Opposite page:

Figure 24: Oakshaw skyline

Figure 25: Oakshaw buildings

Figure 26: Ironwork details

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Figure 27: Stone carved lintel (Burton's rear doorway)

Figure 28: Aerial view, Town Hall

Figure 29: Regeneration on High Street

Figure 30: The Liberal Club – then and now)

Figure 31: High Street

Figure 32: Townhead Terrace tenements

Figure 33: Former TA building

Figure 34: Moss Street from the Cross

From New Street / Church Hill to Storie Street the High Street suffers from the reduction of some four-storey tenements to two storeys. A significant gap site at 55 High Street, together with vacant upper floors, small shops, and some unsympathetic modern redevelopments require investment to reinforce the street lines.

The fine late 19th century four-storey tenements between Storie Street and the university have a remarkable coherence and urbanity (**Figure 31**), and complement the elegant museum opposite.

Townhead Terrace, built on the site of the home of Christopher North, is a fine street of mirrored, four-storey, red sandstone tenements. It is a single development of about 1900, distinguished by the ripples of canted bays that articulate their unity, and an important focus directly opposite the Museum. It provides an important enclave and distinctively suburban mix to the area (**Figure 32**).

A development similar to a west wing balancing the library extension of 1904 (as originally intended) would strengthen this key public building's presence in relation to the tenements opposite, close the long view up the High Street, and form a visual gateway to the last section of the High Street.

Beyond Townhead Terrace the High Street changes character to be an open setting for large detached buildings: on the north side the former Territorial Army (TA) Building **(Figure 33)** and Coats Memorial Church, set back with landscaped frontages. The widening of the roadway in front of the university draws attention to the blank severed gable of Townhead's last tenement but new landscaping has brought a positive change of contrast. The colourful Scottish Renaissance TA Building sits hauntingly, unoccupied and in need of investment. Beyond, Wellmeadow Street leads into the town's western suburbs.

Moss Street - County Square

Moss Street from the Cross to County Place retains the pedestrian scale of Georgian Paisley. This part may be the only late medieval street which was not widened. The facades are very mixed, with Georgian predominating. The former Empire Music Hall at Nos 8-10 with restoration could be appreciated as the last lay public building to survive from the Georgian period (**Figure 34**).

The rest of Moss Street is another unbalanced wide Victorian thoroughfare, with individually designed four-storey tenements on one side. At the north end, No 30 Moss Street is a fine French Renaissance design and with its contrasting polychrome brick neighbour No 22 to the south (cleverly answering the red sandstone of its other neighbour, the former

Figure 35: Surviving historic shopfronts (James Harvie, Moss St and Wm Houston, High St).

Figure 36: County Square – former Post Office

Post Office), forms a characterful stretch of streetscape on the east. This is weakened on the west by two gap sites, the car park against the railway viaduct, once occupied by a four-storey block and No. 23 Moss Street awaiting redevelopment with buildings of similar height to its neighbours. It boasts the historic tobacconist shop front at No 20 which sets an example in scale and detail. **(Figures 35 and 36)**

County Square is well defined by contrasting buildings on three sides - County Place, the former Post Office, and the railway station and viaduct. However, the Piazza is set too far back to contain the space, allowing it to bleed away into Central Road and Gilmour Street, where Gilmour House fails to relate to interesting mainly Georgian elevations on its west side. The square has been divided between vehicular traffic and pedestrians presenting some uncertain priorities for those arriving by train. Being level and sheltered, it is the most useful space in the town centre for outdoor events and activities.

Causeyside Street - Gordon Street

Causeyside Street with St Mirren Street is equal to the High Street in importance to the structure of the town centre. It has continuity of character over a greater length, a greater width, and a longer run of shop fronts, interrupted only by the ring road at Gordon Street. Imaginative re-working of the public realm has brought a new freshness to the street and eye-catching detail capturing the town's formative industries (**Figure 37**).

Looking down St Mirren Street the city scale and pride of the restored former Co-operative building at 25-29 Causeyside Street impresses, while the entrance to the Paisley Centre and bus stops makes this a busy area (**Figure 38**). Approaching from the south, Dunn Square can be seen from as far away as Gordon Street, but what attracts attention is the Russell Institute's richly embellished corner entrance façade (**Figure 39**). This is one of no less than ten eye-catching corners up the street's entire length, eight of them belonging to tenements.

The whole of the street has been widened, with the east side from Forbes Place to Gordon Street and both sides from there to the station

Figure 37: Causeyside Street pavement carvings


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redeveloped in the late 19th century with individually designed four-storey tenements. All but one of the nine side streets have themselves been widened giving views out to left and right, notably of the former Free Renaissance Fire Station down Johnston Street and Gordon Street.

The strong character of the street established by the four-storey tenements is contrasted by the more historic two and three-storey buildings on the west side from Laigh Kirk Lane to Canal Street for which shopfront improvements are returning character. Recent reduction in the oversized shop fascias has lessened competition for attention and enabled the simple Georgian character of some of the elevations to continue their distinctive presence in the street.

The runs of tenements up the east side of Causeyside Street return down Orchard, Johnston and Gordon Streets, but the area's quality and coherence was redefined by demolition of tenements to form the east bound traffic lanes of the ring road.

The eastern ends of Orchard Street and George Street could be repaired by landscaping to provide a better context for the former landmark Fire Station and extraordinary St Matthews Church (**Figure 40**). Bridge Street makes a poor link and approach to the Abbey area, and the wider setting here does not make a positive contribution to this sector or to the Abbey.

Development of a river frontage similar to Forbes Place could further define and protect the Abbey's precinct from the impact of ring road traffic without blocking any important views of the Abbey, the Oakshaw skyline or Finishing Mill. It could return an active engagement with the river in contrast with the high banks by the Town Hall and its submersion under the Piazza.

Figure 38: Former Co-operative, Causeyside Street

Figure 39: Russell Institute (Restored)

Figure 40: St Matthews Church

Figure 41: View along Shuttle Street to George Place


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New Street - George Street

Although New Street was also widened and partly lined with tenements, this area retains more than most the character of Georgian Paisley. Buildings range from one to four storeys. Excepting George Street and the end of Witherspoon Street, the streets and alleys of this area are pedestrian in scale.

The quiet presence of the small former Laigh Kirk and its small graveyard, now the Paisley Arts Centre, forms a green oasis able to withstand the effect of the high Paisley Centre on one side and the wide open road junction of Witherspoon Street with New Street and Shuttle Street (**Figure 41**) on the other. This would be reduced by development of the gap sites at the end of Shuttle Street. A diverse streetscape in this street enjoys a finely finished public realm and eye-catching end point in the former St George's Church. Removal of roller shutters and improvements to the elevations here would allow Shuttle Street to be a welcoming thoroughfare.

The area contains two distinct and pivotal classical mansions. 5 George Place, (**Figure 42**) once occupying generous ground was abutted by a towering tenement by 1900, but with its fine perron stair remains


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an important terminal landmark previewed from the narrow, cobbled, industrial interest in Browns Lane and a significant survival. 26 New Street with quadrant bays flanking sits opposite the Laigh Kirk (Paisley Arts Centre) (**Figure 43**) adds gravitas to the flanking junction with Witherspoon Street, screening the historic core from the modern developments behind and heralding the incline of New Street **(Figure 44).**

No 42 George Street, **(Figure 45)** part of the University of the West of Scotland, is a fine Renaissance institution by T G Abercrombie, 1898 (won in competition as the Technical College). The former Baptist Chapel, and the New Jerusalem Church diagonally opposite in George Street, seal the historic core effectively from the 20th century tenements to the south and east.


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Figure 42: 5 George Place

Figure 43: Paisley Arts Centre (Laigh Kirk)

Figure 44: View up New Street with Bull Inn

Figure 45: 42 George Street (T G Abercrombie, 1898)

Preservation and Enhancement

Key Challenges

The Paisley Town Centre Heritage Regeneration Strategy 2014 outlined the key challenges faced by the town centre and set out strategic objectives and an action plan to address them. Two key objectives are 'To tell the story and define the visitor product for Paisley and to subsequently display, curate and align the town's heritage assets' and 'To develop consistency in terms of the visitor experience in relation to town centre cohesion, function and management'. Essentially, the aim is to return to Paisley a vibrant economy in the centre, creating a better place to live and work with opportunities to learn and develop skills, based on Paisley's rich built heritage.

Building on the success of the previous town centre Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) and Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) , the current Townscape Heritage and Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (TH.CARS2) **(Figure 46)** operates in conjunction with the *Heritage Regeneration Strategy* to achieve these aims of heritage-led regeneration.

Considerable investment has been secured to address the empty shops and the vacant upper floors, and a continuing investment programme will build on the successes of the THI/CARS in providing for tenement refurbishment. Reducing the level of vacancy serves to improve investment confidence. Working with local businesses, cultural and community bodies and property owners is beginning to drive new activity into the centre.

The challenges are understood, tangible improvements have been achieved but the drive continues. For example while occupancy levels in Causeyside Street have been improved following investment, the problem remains in the High Street.

The accelerating integration into the Glasgow conurbation with increasing mobility in road and rail travel has brought with it a loss of retail custom to Paisley's centre and an increased demand for housing.

Figure 46: Paisley TH.CARS 2 logo

Figure 47: Arnott's Store – as was

Figure 48: Restored Arnott's building

Figure 49: Paisley sculpture (Dunn Square, Russell Institute, Town Hall)

Building Repair and Reuse

Since the designation of the Oakshaw and Cross Conservation Areas, there has been a number of successful conservation initiatives to preserve the buildings in the Conservation Area.

Of the seven major skyline landmark buildings, two of which were at risk have been rescued and converted to flats with major public subsidies - the John Neilson Institution in 1992, and Orr Square Church in 1997. The former Arnott's Store and the Russell Institute have been restored and removed from the Buildings at Risk Register **(Figures 47 and 48)**. Similarly, a scheme to extend and restore the Museum and Art Gallery is in the pipeline. Previous investments have been made in the High Church, the Abbey, St Matthews Church, Coats Memorial Church, and the Town Hall.

Fourteen other buildings in the Conservation Area have been rescued from a derelict state, most of them for residential use or re-use. Eight redundant church buildings have been found new uses, but those with the finest interiors are among the six remaining places of worship

The need to monitor continues as congregations fluctuate, buildings adapt to secure their relevance, as targets to reduce carbon emissions loom large and rainfall increases. Several vacant B-listed buildings in the Conservation Area are currently at risk- for example, the former Territorial Army Drill Hall in the High Street (vacated in 1996).

Efforts to promote regular maintenance in the centre have been ongoing but blocked gutters and damaging foliage require regular attention. Advice on maintenance programmes to safeguard historic assets is part of the TH.CARS2 Heritage Education, Training and Events Activity Plan.

The Paisley Town Centre Conservation Area Maintenance Guide provides property owners with the essentials on how to protect their historic asset. The implementation of the TH.CARS2 Heritage Education, Training and Events (HETE) Activity Plan will also encourage improved maintenance, management and understanding of historic properties. It proposes activities that will provide accessible advice to prevent out-of-character alterations and detrimental works to the fabric of listed buildings and conservation areas. Early discussion, guidance and resource provides a more successful outcome. Dissemination of this advice, education and regular reminders are required to ensure that regeneration is heritage-led.

Several key unlisted properties within the conservation area are in need of repair and investment. Successful investment in Causeyside Street has shown what can be done to improve the older and smaller Georgian property (**Figure 50**). The effort to stem the flow of vacant or underused upper floors must continue, notably in the High Street.

Most of the Victorian tenements appear structurally sound, but are in need of modernisation and the restoration of original details. However, the occasional introduction of out-of-character windows has undermined their quality and reduced their value as historic assets.

Figure 50: 36 Causeyside Street (restored)

Neglected shop fronts and empty units are evidence of declining retail activity, together with inappropriate fascia signs and solid roller shutters. Restoration of shop fronts should follow the positive examples of improvements shown in Causeyside Street. **(Figures 51 and 52)**

Some of the unlisted Georgian buildings have been badly maintained making their restoration difficult to achieve. These can be found in Moss Street and the High Street. Their regeneration is desirable to retain the Georgian aspect to the area's character.

Future investment should focus on the principal stretches of the High Street to create a critical mass, limit vacancy rates and contribute to the vibrancy of the area.

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Figure 51: 41 Causeyside Street shopfront (restored)

Figure 52: 62 Causeyside Street shopfront detail (restored)

Gap Sites

At the core of the Heritage Regeneration Strategy and the TH.CARS2 project is the intention to preserve and enhance the special interest of the Conservation Area. Projects, whether public realm, repair grants, or shopfront improvements, are selected on the basis of heritage merit, and are part of a wider view on how economic sustainability and regeneration can be best encouraged.

Gap sites can have a significant impact on the character and amenity of the Conservation Area. Paisley Town Centre Conservation Area contains a number of such sites and in most cases redevelopment would be preferred, helping reinforce street lines, boost confidence and strengthen the coherence of the urban fabric. Priority is given to those sites which are critical to the approved purposes of grant. The TH.CARS2 and Heritage Regeneration Strategy are focusing attention on the High Street, the link between the Museum Quarter and the Abbey and Town Hall Quarters.

The development of gap sites in the historic core needs to consider the possibly significant archaeological survival on or below the terrain before (or during) development. As such, greater priority is accorded to problems more immediately amenable to improvement, such as vacant floorspace or envelope repairs.

Public areas

Most of the public areas within the conservation area have been upgraded to a good standard and are being well maintained. The programme of public realm improvements in the 1990s at The Cross and as part of the THI/ CARS project in 2014 in Causeyside Street, evidence the positive return of such investment.

The traditional street surfaces of significant sections of the conservation area have been reinstated as a result. Caithness slabs and granite setts were used for the pedestrianised High Street, The Cross, Gilmour Street, and County Square. Forbes Place, Smithhills Street, Moss Street and Shuttle Street have also been repaved. Around the Abbey, Abbey Close has been resurfaced and the river bank railings replaced.

Minor green spaces such as at the Arts Centre (graveyard of former Laigh Kirk), have been re-landscaped. The graveyard at Meeting House Lane has been tidied up and the perimeter of the Wynd Centre (former St John's Church) is open as a public space. The green spaces at the Abbey Close offer scope for future archaeological excavation of monastic remains and for fresh presentation of their relationship with the Abbey and the river (**Figure 53**).

Summary of issues

- Reduction in commercial activity, and an increasing number of empty shops and premises above them.
- Lack of investment in repair and modernisation /retrofitting of tenements.
- Installation of inappropriate shop fronts, roller shutters and signage.
- High levels of vacancy undermine investment confidence. Need to diversify the High Street economy.
- Bringing vacant historic floorspace back into active use.
- Finding compatable uses for churches whose interiors are too fine for conversion to be allowed.
- Redevelopment of gap sites and of buildings which do not contribute to the character of the Conservation Area with new development which is appropriate in design and enhances it.
- Making the road layout more legible to motorists without reducing pedestrian amenity and by reducing unnecessary proliferation of signage.
- Reducing the impact of traffic on Gordon Street and repairing the damage done to the urban fabric by road widening.
- Improving the public realm in the Conservation Area.
- Enhancing the character and use of public green spaces including grave yards.
- Ensuring redevelopment makes provision for the appropriate treatment of surviving archaeological remains within the Conservation Area.
- Conservation Area Management Plan to be utilised to address issues of management and maintenance.

Conclusion

Paisley town centre's diverse and complex character is the result of centuries of radical change - in its economy, society and culture, and its relationship with the county, the central belt of Scotland and the world. This has left a rich and unique built heritage which should be preserved as a valuable asset with which to face ongoing challenges. Harnessing and reviving the character of Paisley is key to heritage-led regeneration. This overview sets out the town's unique and distinguishing qualities and the calibre of the resource.

This appraisal informs the management of continuing changes in a way that safeguards and enhances the special character of the town centre, directing those who are leading its regeneration.

Figure 53: Abbey Close

General Planning Guidance

Relevant policies covering Paisley Town Centre and its built heritage are detailed in Renfrewshire Local Development Plan (adopted in August 2014) and the New Development Supplementary Guidance (adopted November 2014). The key points of relevance are set out below.

Local Development Plan

POLICY P1:Renfrewshire's Places.

POLICY ENV3: Built Heritage.

POLICY E1: Renfrewshire Economic Investment Locations

POLICY E4: Tourism

POLICY C1: Renfrewshire Network of Centres

POLICY P8: Open Spaces

Economy

The Renfrewshire Local Development Plan aims to promote sustainable economic growth by indicating opportunities for change and supporting investment. This helps to regenerate, create and finance communities and place, helping to provide high quality development in the right locations.

Paisley Town Centre is identified as a Strategic Economic Investment Location and is also identified as a Strategic Centre within Renfrewshire Network of Centres.

Paisley West End is a Mixed Use Area. Acceptable uses include residential, retail, restaurants and cafes, offices, educational facilities, nurseries and residential institutions.

New Development Supplementary Guidance

The New Development Supplementary Guidance accompanies the Local Development Plan and sets out detailed development criteria aiming to ensure that the character and integrity of listed buildings and sites within Conservation Areas are not significantly compromised and the enhancement of the characteristics, historic value and setting are considered.

Built Heritage Conservation Areas:

Development within Conservation Areas

Development within conservation areas will require to protect, preserve, or enhance the visual amenity and historic / architectural character, including the setting, buildings and open space.

The New Development Supplementary Guidance sets out the criteria which requires to be considered for development within Conservation Areas.

Development adjacent to Conservation Areas

Proposals for development adjacent to a conservation area should not have a significant adverse effect on its architectural and historic character and wider setting.

Listed Buildings

Listed buildings and their settings require to be protected and enhanced. Sensitive restoration, re-use and maintenance of listed buildings is encouraged.

Development proposals relating to listed buildings and their settings will require to consider 'Historic Environment Scotland's Managing Change' in the Historic Environment Guidance Notes.

Enabling Development

The Council may consider enabling development as a potential generator of funding to assist in the consolidation and/or rehabilitation of buildings.

The Council must be satisfied that the enabling development does not materially harm the heritage values of the place or its setting and also meets certain criteria.

Demolition of Listed Buildings

There is presumption against demolition or other works that adversely affect the special interest of a listed building or its setting. Criteria must be satisfied before demolition can be considered.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas

Scheduled Ancient Monuments and their settings require to be safeguarded, proposals for development which would adversely affect the site or setting of a Scheduled Ancient Monument will not be permitted.

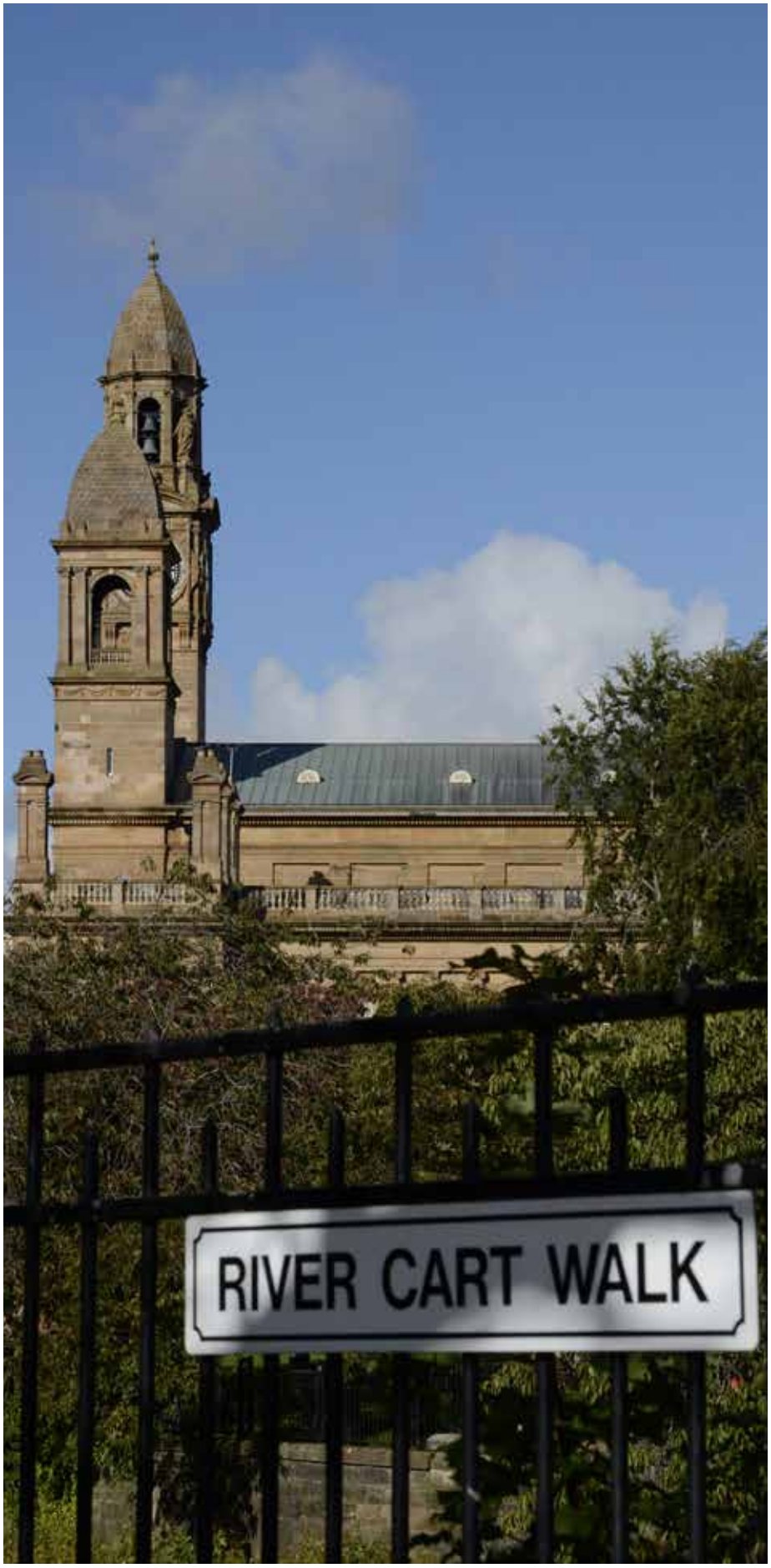
Unscheduled Sites of Archaeological Significance

The Council will seek to protect and enhance unscheduled sites of archaeological significance and their setting.

Proposals for development which may have an adverse impact on sites of archaeological significance shall not be permitted. Where it is demonstrated that preservation cannot be achieved, excavation and recording of the site may be undertaken. Development will not be permitted to proceed until suitable excavation and recording has taken place.

Article 4 Directions

Article 4 Directions have been in place in the pre-2008 extent of the Paisley Town Centre Conservation Area since 1987. The effect is to control minor works which, over time could erode the character and appearance of the area. In February 2012 the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2011, removed Householder Permitted Development Rights within conservation areas. Properties within conservation areas now have no Permitted Development Rights and therefore all changes to the external appearance of a building in the area, particularly changes to windows, roof materials and painting external walls, require formal planning approval. There are a few minor exceptions, such as small sheds and decking.



Background Historical Information

The Thread of Paisley

This rich legacy is fundamentally that of thread and weaving which have woven their mark into Paisley, each aspect of their productive and variable journeys leaving a physical presence on the town, determining its scale, content, character and fascination.

'*The history of Paisley, may, properly speaking, be said to be the history of her trade*' John Parkhill, 1857.

'It was to all intents and purposes a weaving town. During the entire day, in the old-fashioned crooked side-streets, the monotonous click of the loom and the sharp whir of the shuttle were continually heard'.

Alexander Smith, describing Paisley in c1830, 'Alfred Hagart's Household'.

The vision for Paisley set out in the Heritage Regeneration Strategy (2014) seeks that '*The town will build a new vibrancy by developing sustainable uses within the historic core of the town centre, rebuild its high street economy using the audience power of its rich legacy and bring all its historic buildings into use for the ultimate benefit of the community of Paisley and Renfrewshire*'.

By the mid 18th century, Paisley was synonymous with textiles and weaving. Accordingly, the built form of the town tells their story and shares their inheritance. The cultural contributions to the town historically are part of the picture with outstanding collections of art, industry and scientific interest. Paisley's unique selling point is a

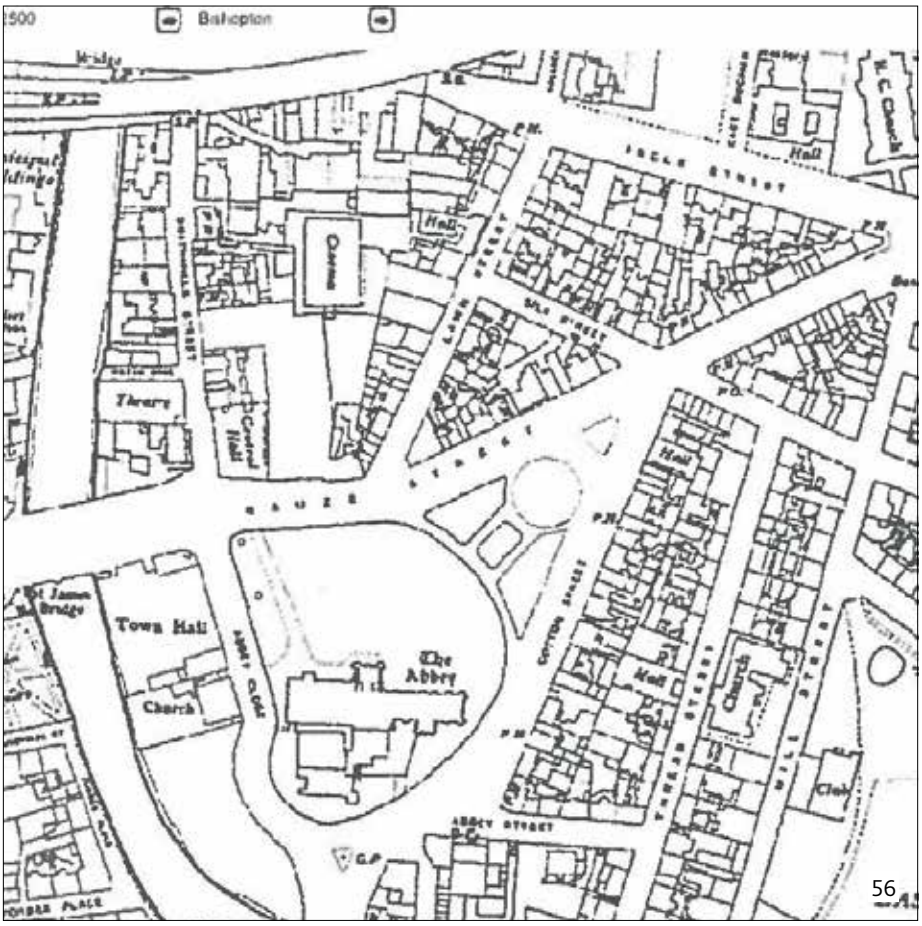
Figure 54: Emblems of Coats and Anchor Mills

Figure 55: Tear drop motif in pavement

Figure 56: Plan of Abercorn's New Town, showing 'textile' street names

Figure 57: Handloom weaving

Figure 58: Paisley Shawl pattern – from Paisley Museum's textiles collection

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fused medley, created by these strong resources and giving direction to heritage-led regeneration.

The Slaters Trades Directory of 1846, shows the extent and diversity of Paisley's industries early in the Victorian period, listing the addresses of bleachers, buckram manufacturers, calenderers, cloth-lappers, calico printers, cotton spinners, cotton and silk yarn merchants , drapers, dyers, muslin manufacturers, muslin factories, pattern drawers, rag and cotton waste dealers, silk manufacturers, shawl cutters, shawl and plaid manufacturers, shuttle makers, thread manufacturers, warpers, weavers, wool spinners and worsted yarn merchants. Together with these are listed the many supporting trades and industries: hatters and hosiers, milliners, starchers, weavers' wrights, mill wrights, dressmakers and tailors. It was a hive of industry, undeniably a world-leader in textile production and leaving a colourful trail.

The area of the Abbey was not to escape the impact of the yarn. The Earl of Abercorn chose to name the streets of the New Town laid out on the monastery's ancient garden Gauze, Lawn, Incle, Thread and Silk- the fabrics used in the manufacture of the town. **(Figure 56)**.

Fine linen manufacture caused the burgeoning of the town after its pre-burghal infancy supporting the monastery. There may have been as many as 900 weavers in the town in 1744. By 1812 the Paisley Directory told of 7 thread manufacturers (each with many machines) and more than a dozen independent thread makers.

Just as many of the town's streetscapes are irregular so were the fortunes of its home industries. The market fluctuated and income with it. For example, the production of silk gauze which joined the range from 1759, in imitation of that at Spitalfields, enjoyed only a short prominence, falling rapidly from 1784 when fashions changed. Similarly, silk reached prohibitive prices during the Napoleonic War. While global challenges damaged productivity and employment in the short-term, the industry was resourceful and responded with progressive alternatives. The arrival in the mills of the Jacquard loom and steam power in the early 19th century, provoked a Luddite reaction and shifted the balance of home weaving but maintained Paisley's position in terms of output. The manufacture of 'Paisley shawls', in silk, cotton, spun silk and mixtures of the three, became for many years the lead industry of the town. The patterns of the shawls made reference to the best in India and France but with individually characteristic details.

The 19th century was marked by the development of significant civic and cultural buildings – Coats Observatory, the Museum and Art Gallery, the Town Hall, each landmark the philanthropic product of the industries' magnates, the physical symbols of the town's material success. '*They almost literally overshadow Paisley*', Sheila Clark.

The thread works were highly successful between the World Wars despite a wage cut in 1922 following a price-fixing agreement. After the Second World War the Paisley thread mills had 10,000 employees on the pay roll. The complimentary firms of Coats and Clark amalgamated in 1952. The significant shift from thread production to that of garments and other fabrics came in 1961 when Coats merged with Patons and Baldwins. In 1986 a merger with Vantona Viyella created Coats Viyella. In 2003 the Guinness Peat Group plc took-over Coats Ltd.

Recent decades have seen Paisley ignore its identity. The heritage-led regeneration, in reviving the character of the town, will however give pride of place to the wealth of cultural assets that currently lie dormant.

Paisley's Protagonists and Principal Buildings

Paisley possesses some of Scotland's most significant contributions in the development of architecture, each outstanding and distinctly unique example showing the town's status, shaping its exceptional character and rich streetscape. The town embodies a series of distinct architectural styles including late 19th century French Free Renaissance and French Gothic, and early 20th century Art Nouveau and Art Deco.

'Fortunately for Paisley and unlike many other towns within Scotland of this size, the quality of the built heritage, and in particular that of buildings which date roughly between 1750 and 1930, is exceptional.' (Paisley: The Untold Story, p14).

Six figures and their landmark buildings dominate the narrative of the Conservation Area.

Thomas Coats
1809-1883

The hand of Thomas Coats in shaping Paisley in the 19th century was immense and the wealth that he brought to the town centre is evidenced in the outstanding quality of the commercial, educational and ecclesiastical buildings.

Thread manufacturer and benefactor, born at Ferguslie, Paisley. He was the 4th of ten sons of James Coats, one of the firm's founders. Thomas trained as a textile engineer at Johnstone before becoming a partner in the family firm. He worked first with his brothers James and Peter. Productivity was expanding – capacity doubled in the 1840s and again in the 1850s stimulated by demand from America. Thomas led Coats to be the most important company in the world market. By 1860, Coats employed 1100 workers: by the time of his death the firm had over 6000 staff, half of whom were in Paisley. Through his younger brother, Andrew, Coats sustained a strong market in America too. Thomas had 11 children. An active Baptist, he made many gifts to the church in the town. He was a Liberal and chaired the town's school board, giving regularly to the four local schools. In 1866, he employed the landscape architect, James Niven to re-design the former Love St gardens: these were then gifted to the community, re-named Fountain Gardens adorned with a decorative fountain (restored by Renfrewshire Council 2015), to be used as a 'place of healthful recreation and resort'. With his brother Peter, he gifted the Free Public Library and Museum to the town in the 1860s. Thomas's biggest single gift was in 1882, the Coats Observatory. It was Thomas's outstanding technical knowledge combined with management skills that brought the firm such tremendous growth.

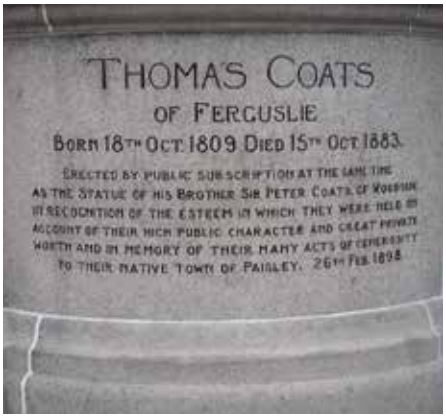

Figure 59: Thomas Coats, inscription

The town square was presented with a statue in his memory. His family however, ensured that his contribution to the town should be linked to his Baptist faith and gifted the Thomas Coats Memorial Church in 1894.

George Aitken Clark 1823-1873

Like Coats, George Clark was a thread manufacturer and philanthropist, born into an existing firm in Paisley. The Clarks had found by the early 19th century the market for 'sewing' thread and made this their main line of business. The spools for the thread brought another string to Paisley's economic bow, with wood imported for the purpose.

George was sent as a young boy to a business in Ontario before returning to join a firm of shawl makers, becoming Ronald and Clark. He joined his brother-in-law, Robert Kerr in 1851 to set up a thread factory and after further experience in the United States, the firm opened a successful branch in Newark in 1864. The firm merged with the original family firm as Clark & Co with the anchor trademark. The striking Atlantic and Pacific Mills graced Paisley's skyline until a few years ago. Anchor Mill stands as a symbol of an extensive former complex of buildings, its conversion pointing Paisley's regeneration in a positive direction. Clark bequeathed a considerable sum towards the building of the town hall in Paisley and his firm, Clark & Co contributed twice as much. The George A Clark Town Hall opened in 1882.

Figure 60: Statue of George Aitken Clark, (John Mossman, 1885), standing bronze on granite by the Town Hall

James Donald 1852 or 1854-1917

Born on a farm near Paisley, Donald began his career as an architect with Alexander 'Greek' Thomson before setting up his own practice in 1881, in Caledonia Street, during a boom period for the burgh. He used an eclectic range of style with a preference for Free Renaissance. His best-known and first major project was the Liberal Club, 32 High Street, in 1886, the design of which suggests he had some acquaintance with the work of James Sellars and John Burnet & Son. The Liberal Party ran the Town Council from 1895 and Donald was an active member. He was a Councillor himself from 1886-1912, and this activity was key to his commissions. It led to accusations, following a long-running court case over payment, that he had mis-used his role on the Town Council's Improvement Committee to secure work. The patron for his Dunn Square **(Figure 62)** designs was the Liberal MP, Sir William Dunn. Working with the new street-widening policies of the 1880s and 1890s he contributed many of the tenements and chambers along the burghs thoroughfares, often with distinctive corner towers,

Figure 61: James Donald

punctuating and defining cross roads across the town. He followed the Glasgow penchant for round-arched bays, stone transoms and mullions in decoratively articulated elevations. Further examples of this work in the conservation area are 19-21 Moss Street and Meeting House Lane, 1897-99, 51 Causeyside Street, circa 1900, Turf Tavern, 9 Orchard Street, and 67 Causeyside and 4 Gordon Street. Donald would also design for the suburbs where many villas and semi-detached houses are by him. Typical of Paisley's artistic progeny, he was also a multi-talented musician and a photographer.

Figure 62: Dunn Square – general view of layout

Thomas Graham Abercrombie 1862-1926

T G Abercrombie was a native of Paisley. He trained with John Hutchison in Glasgow, before spending a decade in North America. In 1886 he set up practice in Paisley's High Street and in 1888 won a competition for Greenlaw Church, Paisley. His church work was clearly inspired by the designs of Burnet Son and Campbell. Abercrombie developed close links with the Coats and Clarks, the leading patrons in the burgh. His practice began with successive partners, Robert Symington and William Kerr, while he worked with carefully chosen assistants 1902-23 from offices at 1 County Place. His work in Paisley was prolific and during these years he provided some of the town's most prestigious buildings, including the Royal Alexandra Infirmary 1894-1900, the Nethercommon Carpet Works, 1912, Wallneuk Church, 1913. He developed a free style blending elements from traditional Scottish architecture. Among the most significant buildings in the town centre by him are: the Scottish Renaissance buildings of the **Territorial Army Drill Hall**, 76 High Street, 1896; **Peter Brough Nurses Home**, 56 Oakshaw, 1897 and **25-31**

Figure 63: T G Abercrombie

Weighhouse Close, 1900, and the palazzo-like **University of the West of Scotland**, 42 George Street, 1898 (former Technical College) and the Beaux Arts **YMCA**, High Street, 1908. In 1923 he took James Steel Maitland (1887-1982) into partnership, a pupil of Leiper who had worked in Montreal. The partnership was brief as Abercrombie died suddenly at his home, Redholme, Castlehead, on 16 February 1926. Maitland continued the practice under the existing name of Abercrombie & Maitland.

William Daniel McLennan 1872-1940

William Daniel McLennan was the son of a Paisley shawl manufacturer, born in Glen Street, Paisley. He was educated first at Mr Watson's Public School in Stevenson Street, but in 1880 he was enrolled at the John Neilson Institute. By 1895 he was working in Belfast, and by 1896 in Cahir, Co Tipperary.

He called himself an engineer as well as an architect and it is possible he began as such. By 1895 he was known in Paisley and invited to compete for Paisley Technical School. While he did not win this commission, Rowand Anderson's report accounted for a distinguished submission. This encouraged him to set up practice in Paisley late in 1896 or early in 1897.

He emerged as one of Paisley's most original architects and was widely known for his adoption of bold and original Art Nouveau variations with perpendicular Gothic and Free Renaissance. With **St Matthew's Church**, Gordon Street, 1905-07, he graced the burgh with a watershed in architectural design and at **The Bull Inn,** New Street, 1900, with a lively tenement design and a characterful Glasgow pub interior (**Figure 66).**

Figure 64: Abercrombie buildings – YMCA, School for Girls, UWS

Figure 65: W D McLennan

Figure 66: The Bull Inn, New Street

As a person he is said to have been somewhat remote but 'clubbable' and wryly amusing with his own circle of friends. He lived in the family home at Carriagehill until the closing decade of his life, which was spent at Beltrees, Linwood, Paisley.

James Steel Maitland 1887-1982

James Steel Maitland was born into a well-connected family, his mother Kate Coats Steel being an adopted sister of the thread magnate George H Coats. He was educated in Greenock and Glasgow before studying with William Leiper and at Glasgow School of Art. He practised in partnership with William Hunter McNab from 1903. At the end of his apprenticeship in 1909 Maitland, advised by T G Abercrombie, left to work in Montreal, Canada. In 1914, he married the embroiderer, Ellison J F Young. During the First World War, Maitland learned to fly in New York before joining the British Royal Naval Air Service. By the end of the war, when a senior instructor, he was awarded the Air Force Cross for his services.

Early in 1920, Maitland joined the office of Thomas Graham Abercrombie at 1 County Place, Paisley as principal assistant, to become partner in 1923. After Abercrombie's death in 1926 he continued the practice. One of the town's artistic leaders, Maitland was also a painter, wood-carver, theatrical scene painter and costume designer and among his many interests he was President of the Paisley Burns, Rotary and Bohemian Clubs. In his later years he became committed to the conservation of Paisley, leading an unsuccessful campaign to save New Street. He died at the house he had designed for himself, Littlecroft, Stonefield Avenue, Paisley in 1982.

Figure 67: James Steel Maitland

He designed a large number of buildings in Paisley, which at this period were distinguished by their well-proportioned Art Deco facades and bands of horizontal glazing such as 35 and 50 High Street and 1 Orr Square, 1934. His most famous buildings are the **Russell Institute.** Causeyside Street/New Street, 1924-27; **Arnotts**, Gauze Street, 1925; **Kelvin House**, Marshall's Lane and Cart Walk, 1937 and 1949. Steel Maitland was the town architect of Paisley from 1930 and led further sensitive restoration of **The Place of Paisley** in 1957.

Figure 68: Russell Institute, Arnotts, 50 High Street, Burtons

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www.buildingsatrisk.org.uk

Dictionary of Scottish Architects
www.scottisharchitects.org.uk

Historic Environment Scotland
www.historicenvironment.scot

The Engine Shed
www.engineshed.org

National Library of Scotland
www.nls.uk

Pastmap
www.pastmap.org.uk

Canmore
www.canmore.org.uk

Scotland's Places
www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk

SCRAN
www.scran.ac.uk

West of Scotland Archaeology Service
www.wosas.net

Useful Contacts

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68 High Street
Paisley PA1 2BB
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Tel: 0300 300 1188

Abbreviations

CA	Conservation Area
CARS	Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
HER	Historic Environment Record
HES	Historic Environment Scotland
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
LDP	Local Development Plan
NLS	National Library of Scotland
RC	Renfrewshire Council
RCAHMS	Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland
SCRAN	Scottish Cultural Resources Network
TA	Territorial Army
TH	Townscape Heritage
THI	Townscape Heritage Initiative

Paisley Town Centre

Conservation Area Appraisal

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Renfrewshire Council