

St Columba's Argyll Square Church

Argyll Square Church was originally built as part of the Free Church of Scotland and opened in 1888. Oban already had a Free Church which was built in 1846 following the disruption of 1843 where the Free Church split from the Church of Scotland. Services in the original Free Church were predominantly conducted in Gaelic but as English gained in popularity and as the numbers of English speaking tourists grew the congregation became divided. On 17th June 1875 the English speakers broke away from the original Free Church and worshipped in the Argyllshire Gathering Hall in Breadalbane Street.

The congregation decided a new building was required. The old Tannery (Farmfoods) and Dalriach Park Terrace was considered as potential sites before the site at the bottom of the new street called Albany Street was chosen. The cost of building the church was £3,600. The land and £1,000 towards the building costs was provided by local landowner McFie of Airds and one quarter of the cost provided by the Free Church of Scotland Building Fund.

The church was designed in the gothic style by local architect John Fraser Sim. It was built partly on the site of the old Royal Hotel and designed to accommodate 500 worshippers. Work began in 1888 and at the opening ceremony a memorial stone was placed on the Albany Street side of the tower which is still there today although the inscription is worn.

The memorial stone was inscribed with the words

“Free church of Scotland – This memorial stone was placed 7th August 1888. To God only wise, be glory, through Jesus Christ forever. Amen”.

Behind the stone a stone jar was placed which included a copy of the Glasgow Herald, The Scotsman, The Oban Times, Oban Telegraph and Oban Express. Also included was a list of all the church members and elders and an envelope with all the current coins from a farthing to a half crown.. As Oban now had two Free Churches of Scotland the original one became known as the Free High Church due to its location

In 1900 the Argyll Square Church was united with the Church of Scotland and became known as the United Free Church. Oban already had a United Free Church known as Dunollie Road Church at the junction of Breadalbane Street and Dunollie Road but the two congregations remained separate.

In 1929 Argyll Square Church united with the Church of Scotland.

On 26th October 1949 the Argyll Square congregation merged with St Columba's United Presbyterian Church (Hydro Board Shop) as St Columba's dwindling congregation were unable to pay for the repairs required to their church. They were originally to join with the Dunollie Road Church but the Dunollie congregation were against such a merger! Argyll Square now became known as St Columba's-Argyll Square.

Area 4

The church originally had a much taller steeple of 128 feet high but it was found to be unsafe and removed in 1976.

In 1984 Argyll Square Church closed and the congregation worshipped in the Parish Church on Glencruitten Road. The church first became a nightclub, then the local Tourist Office but is now empty.

The building is category C listed.