

Time Chart for St Nicholas

DATE	EVENTS IN ST NICHOLAS & ABERDEEN	EVENTS IN SCOTLAND	EVENTS BEYOND SCOTLAND
AD c.30			Pentecost – beginnings of the Christian Church.
4 th Cent.			Nicholas was Bishop of Myra
397		Traditional Date for first Christian Mission in Scotland at Whithorn under Ninian. (See South East Window in Apse)	
c.563		Columba arrives in Iona from Ireland.	
Before 600?	Arrival of Columban mission at Old Aberdeen (Machar)		
1066			Norman conquest of England
1070		Margaret (a refugee from England) arrives in Scotland, marries King Malcolm and begins a ‘reformation’ of the Scottish Church to bring it more into line with the rest of Western Europe. (See North East window in Apse)	
1087			Italian merchants ‘acquire’ relics of Nicholas and bring them to Bari. Cult of Nicholas spreads rapidly, especially to seaport towns.
c.1100	<u>Earliest evidence of a building on this site.</u> Aberdeen is growing as a fishing and trading community		

1124	Aberdeen accommodated David and his court on occasion, and he may have issued Aberdeen's first charter as a burgh. Bishopric transferred from Mortlach to Old Aberdeen, and, possibly, a small parish delimited for the new burgh.	David I succeeds his brother Alexander as King of Scots. A policy of 'Normanisation' is vigorously pursued – feudal system of land-holding, creation of royal burghs with trading privileges, introduction of new monastic orders, establishing of a system of diocesan bishops, and development of parish system.	
1153	Town of 'Aparidion' sacked in a Norse raid.	David dies and is succeeded by his grandson, Malcolm IV	
c.1154			Carmelite Order founded in Palestine
1157	First written evidence of the Church of St Nicholas (in a bull of Pope Adrian IV)		
1170			Archbishop Thomas Becket murdered by four knights in Canterbury Cathedral – a significant event in the development of Church/State relationships, not least in Scotland
c.1179	Oldest surviving royal charter granted to Aberdeen by King William the Lion (1265-1214)		
1198			Trinitarian Friars founded in France with the approval of Pope Innocent III
c.1200	The earliest parts of St Nicholas surviving above ground (north transept and doors to West Kirk) probably date to around this time, and foundations exposed by recent archaeology indicate that about the same time the church was extended eastwards		

1209	Francis of Assisi founded the Order of Friars Minor (Grey Friars)
1211	Traditional date for the establishment of the Trinity (Red) Friars in Aberdeen in a property on the Green (hence, the later Trinity Hall and Trinity Parish Church).
1216	Dominic obtained formal sanction in Rome for the foundation of an Order of Friars Preachers (Black Friars)
1222	Alexander II founds a monastery for Black Friars in St Nicholas parish
1250	Queen Margaret formally recognised as a saint (canonised) by the bishop of Rome.
c.1273	Earliest mention of Carmelites in Aberdeen.
1277	Altar of St John the Evangelist founded by Richard the Mason, earliest recorded Alderman (Provost) of the Burgh.
1286	Accidental death of Alexander III initiates a long period of instability in Scotland, compounded by English aggression under the first three Edwards
1306-1329	The reign of Robert I ('the Bruce') as King of Scots
1309	Papal court moved from Rome to Avignon as a more convenient and accessible administrative centre.
1314	Battle of Bannockburn

From 1329		Edward III of England took advantage of a period of instability in the early years of the boy, David II.
1336	During a campaign by Edward III in the north of Scotland, much of Aberdeen was levelled to the ground. Possibly to repair damage inflicted at this time there followed a period of building and adornment.	
1349-50		The Black Death (bubonic and pneumonic plague) which had swept across Europe, reached Scotland and is believed to have carried off at least 20% of the population. Heightened unease about the uncertainty of earthly life, coupled with political instability led to an increase in benefactions to the Church for prayer to secure well-being after death Plague returned to Scotland at fairly frequent intervals for the next 300 years.
1351	William De Leith provided two great bells, Laurence and Mary	
1355	The same man, as Provost, with the aid of the community, provided a south aisle for the nave and in his will made provision for a similar aisle on the north side.	
1356	He provided for the extension of the south transept by 16 feet and there founded the altar of SS Laurence and Ninian.	
1377-8		Pope returned to Rome but died. A successor was elected in Rome but dissatisfied French cardinals elected a rival Pope at Avignon. Scotland adhered to the Avignon Pope.
c.1382		John Wyclif and a small group of scholars

make the first translation of the Bible into a still recognisable form of English

1411 **Provost Davidson was killed at the Battle of Harlaw and buried in the north transept where his (supposed) effigy lies.**

1413 **Scotland's first university at St Andrews, where teaching had started two years earlier, obtained a Bull of Foundation from (anti-)Pope John XXIII at Avignon**

1414-18 **At the instigation of the Emperor a Council was called at Constance to end the Schism, reform the Church, and suppress heresy. It asserted the authority of General Councils over Popes but the later rejection of that, together with the failure to effect reform led eventually to the 16th century Reformation.**

1438 **The Lady Elisabeth Gordon (heiress of Huntly) died and was buried in front of the altar which she had founded - the Cocklarachie aisle situated on the south side of the kirk nave.**

1440s **Local import and export taxes were being levied for building work at the Kirk Work may have begun on St Mary's Chapel to which the first clear reference is in 1445 when an altar was endowed 'in the north yill of our lady of pyte' The Council's tax rules make plain the existence of important trade links with the Low Countries and it may have been from that source that the angled style of apse was derived, of which the chapel provides an early Scottish example.**

c.1450

A German jeweller, Johannes Gutenberg

- 1455** invented a mould for casting moveable type and set up the first printing press. His first printed work, the Gutenberg Bible appeared, an event significant in preparing the way for the Reformation.
- 1457** **Death of Sir Alexander Irvine of Drum whose effigy, with that of his wife, Elisabeth Keith lies in the south east corner of Drum's Aisle, with their names on the brass tablet on the wall above.**
- 1472** **Scotland was provided with an Archbishop for the first time with the elevation of the Bishop of St Andrews and the placing of the other Scottish bishops under his jurisdiction.**
- 1477** **Bishop Thomas Spens, as Parson (or Rector) of St Nicholas, devoted the second teind to further the rebuilding and enlargement of the choir (or eastern limb of the building)**
- 1498** **The rebuilding was sufficiently advanced to enable Bishop Elphinstone to carry out the Act of Dedication.
In this same year the magistrates of Aberdeen warned the citizens that to preserve the town from plague guards were to be posted at the four gates in day time and at night the gates were to be "lockit with lokis and keis".**
- 1507** **Walter Chepman, received a patent from James IV to set up the first Scottish printing press with Andrew Myllar.**
- 1508** **A set of 34 canopied choir stalls installed by John Fendour who also worked at King's College.**

1510		Chepman and Myllar produced the Aberdeen Breviary (Prayer Book) for Bishop Elphinstone.	
1513		James IV killed at the Battle of Flodden	
1517			Martin Luther, a German monk, set out the 95 theological propositions (theses) for debate which effectively set in motion the Reformation movement.
1519	St Michael's door on the north wall of the transept was blocked (arch still visible and the present larger window space with 'basket' tracery created).		
1528		Patrick Hamilton, priest, was burned at the stake in St Andrews for 'heresy' (the teaching of Luther on justification by faith)	
1539			Henry VIII suppresses <u>English</u> abbeys
1543	At the request of the Earl of Arran (Governor of the realm for the infant Queen Mary), who had espoused Lutheran teachings, two friars were unanimously appointed by the Town Council the preach and teach the true Word of God.		
1547		George Wishart was burned as a heretic in St Andrews and shortly afterwards Cardinal Beaton, who had ordered his arrest, was assassinated. John Knox, who had joined the friends of Wishart in their occupation of the Cardinal's Castle, was taken captive when the Castle fell to a French assault.	With the accession of Edward VI in England reformed views made further headway there. Knox began a period as a French galley slave.

1549

On his release Knox went to England and ministered in English parishes.

1554

With the death of Edward VI and the accession of ‘Bloody’ Mary, Knox moved to John Calvin’s Geneva where he found ‘the most perfect school of Christ since the days of the apostles.’

1559

On the news of the advance of a body of cleansers from the South, the silverwork and other movables from the Kirk were placed by the clergy in the hands of the Town Council. Altars were no doubt cast down but the survival of considerable portions of John Fendour’s choir stalls to the present day and other evidence indicates there was no wholesale destruction here.

Knox returned to Scotland where, in various places, notably Dundee, Reformed teaching and practice had been making headway. By a sermon in the Kirk of Perth ‘vehement against idolatry’ Knox triggered a campaign to cleanse churches of ‘monuments of idolatry’ (i.e. altars and their appurtenances) – a movement in which the destructive zeal of ‘the rascal multitude’ went further than Knox approved.

1560

Adam Heriot, formerly a Canon of St Andrews Cathedral Priory, and for the past year minister of the parish church of St Andrews, was appointed to Aberdeen by an embryonic General Assembly in Edinburgh. The Burgh Council welcomed Heriot on generous terms.

Legislation was passed by Parliament in Edinburgh abolishing the authority of the Pope in Scotland, prohibiting the saying of mass, and adopting a Reformed Confession of Faith, but much of the financial and legal structure of the old church order was left intact.

1562

A Kirk Session was elected and convened for the first time.

1564

First Scottish metrical psalter with 15 psalms translated by John Craig, (see below)

1567 Mary abdicated in favour of her son, James VI. In the following year she fled to England where she was later imprisoned.

1569 Euphemia Scheves, Adam Heriot's wife died and was buried in the choir. Her memorial stone is now on the wall near the north-west corner of St John's Chapel.

1572 The Massacre of St Bartholemew's Day – a major setback for the Reformed cause in France

1573 Adam Heriot retired on health grounds and died the following year. John Craig, a former Dominican friar, who had been a colleague of Knox in Edinburgh, was appointed to succeed him.

1574 The Regent Morton, reflecting the view in the capital that Aberdeen was not sufficiently supportive of government policy, visited the and, in relation to the Kirk, ordered removal and sale of the organs and the relocation of the choir stalls and screens at the back of altars to positions where they would protect and accommodate those hearing sermons.

1578 "A tempestuous great storm on 28th March occasioned much damage to the Church"

1587 Elizabeth signed Mary's death warrant and she was executed at Fotheringay.

1596 Carved timber-work remaining in position removed and a stone diving wall erected to create a 'preaching church' in the former choir – called the New Kirk until the mid 18th century. The nave was the Old Kirk

- 1601** The General Assembly, meeting at Burntisland, approved of the making of a new translation of the Bible.
- 1603** After the death of Queen Elizabeth of England, her successor, James VI of Scotland left Edinburgh to live in London and rule Scotland “by the pen”
- 1605** The General Assembly met in St Nicholas
- 1608** A seat was erected by the Baxtor (i.e. Baker) Incorporation, panels from which remain in Drum’s Aisle. During this period many individuals and incorporations erected ‘lofts’ or seats for themselves in the Kirk, often richly carved
- 1611** The ‘Authorised’ or ‘King James’ version of the Bible was published.
- 1625** The first Scottish post-Reformation Psalter with harmonised tunes was printed in Aberdeen by Edward Raban (see memorial beside organ)
- 1633** William Forbes, one of the ministers of St Nicholas, was among those chosen to preach before Charles I when he visited Edinburgh for his Scottish Coronation. Having pleased the King, he was chosen to be Bishop of the newly founded Diocese of Edinburgh, but died in April 1634
Willaim Guild, another of the ministers bought Trinity Monastery for the Incorporated Trades.

1638		<p>The office of bishop was abolished in the Scottish Church by a General Assembly meeting in Glasgow, leading to the Wars of the Covenant.</p>	
1640	<p>The ministers of Aberdeen, having declined to sign the Covenant, were deposed by the General Assembly.</p> <p>Three new ministers, including Andrew Cant, a vigorous Covenanter, were appointed.</p>		
1644	<p>Two brothers of the family of Burnet of Leys (see grave slab in St Mary's Chapel) were among the many citizens killed in the Battle of Justice Mills, a local episode in the Wars.</p>		
1649			<p>King Charles I was executed at Whitehall by the English Parliamentarians</p>
1651		<p>Charles II, having fled to Scotland was crowned at Scone as King of Scots in a ceremony arranged under Covenanting auspices and shortly afterwards departed to the Low Countries</p>	
1660	<p>Andrew Cant resigned (or was deposed)</p>		<p>Charles II returned from exile</p>
1661		<p>The 'Act Rescissory' had the effect of restoring the moderate episcopacy of James VI' middle years.</p>	
1686	<p>The Town Council acquired the hangings embroidered under the supervision of Mary Jameson for the adornment of their 'loft'</p>		

1688

The 'Glorious Revolution' in England. James II, having fled to France, was held to have abdicated.

1689

Jacobite pro-episcopal opinion was strong in Aberdeen and the North-East and a period of disputed claims relating to the ministry in St Nicholas followed. Eventually, the most notable of the ministers, George Garden, and his supporters left to form the congregation which is now St John's Episcopal Church in Crown Terrace.

A Convention of Estates resolved that James had forfeited the Crown and by the Claim of Right declared that Prelacy (Episcopacy) was 'a great and insupportable grievance and trouble to this nation.'

1695

New ministers of Presbyterian sympathies were appointed.

1707

Drum's Aisle was refitted for the greater convenience of the meetings of the Synod and Presbytery

The Scots Parliament agreed to a Treaty of Union with England of which an essential adjunct was an 'Act for Securing the Protestant Religion and Presbyterian Church Government.'

The English Parliament likewise agreed to the Treaty of Union and to an 'Act for Securing the Church of England as by Law Established.'

1715

At a rather late stage, when the Jacobite Rising was already doomed, the Old Pretender landed at Peterhead.

1732

The Council judged the Old Church to be unsafe and closed it after a report from the architect, William Adams, then in Aberdeen superintending the erection of the building which he had designed for Robert Gordon's Hospital. Services were transferred to Trinity Chapel and then to Greyfriars. The carved timber-work was added to that which was in the New Church and in Greyfriars

- 1741** **The Council, despairing of receiving plans from William Adam, invited James Gibbs, a native of Footdee, who had achieved eminence as an architect in the South, to provide plans. Sufficient funds for building were not available.**
- 1745** **Both Jacobites and Hanoverians occupied Aberdeen for a time and it is thought that the former appropriated the Church silver to pay their troops.** **‘Bonnie Prince Charles’ landed in Scotland**
- 1746** **Work began on the building.** **Culloden**
- 1751**
- 1754** **James Gibbs died**
- 1755** **(Jan.) A demonstration of a new type of psalm tune was given in the New Church by a choir from Fintray, The Session, aware of objections, decreed that, in all time coming’ only the few traditional tunes were to be used.
(Nov.) The rebuilt nave was opened. The designations ‘Old’ and ‘New’ were reversed, but that proved confusing and the designations ‘West’ and ‘East’ were adopted.**
- 1769** **Thomas Pennant, a Welshman on tour in Scotland, was surprised to see a model ship (now in the Maritime Museum) hanging in from of the Sailors’ Loft in the East Church.**
- 1785** **A Gaelic-speaking minster began to hold services in the East Church and some years in St Mary’s Chapel until a new chapel was built in Gaelic Lane in 1795**

1823 A book of 87 tunes was published for use in the East Church

1828 The single parish of St Nicholas, with its several churches and ministers was divided into six parishes, each with a single minister. A General Session was continued to administer funds for the poor such as those recorded on the Mortifications Board in St John's Chapel.

1829 Pillared church-yard Screen built at Union St

1831 A new church for the new North Parish was opened in King Street (now the Arts Centre) and one of the two ministers previously operating in the East Church moved to it.

1837 After a period of argument, the old East Church was, contrary to the advice of John Smith, City Architect, demolished, and a new church erected on the old foundations according to the plans of Archibald Simpson.

1843 The ministers of all six city parishes aligned themselves with the Disruption and demitted their charges. A majority of members followed them.

The Disruption of the Church of Scotland - the Disrupters, led by Thomas Chalmers designating themselves the Free Church of Scotland.

1845 Growth of urban population, industrialisation and the Disruption having combined to make old arrangements for the support of the poor no longer effective

The reign of Queen Victoria began

Parliament passed the Poor Law (Amendment) Act which created parochial boards to administer the law.

- 1853** A failure by the General Session and the parochial board for Aberdeen to agree on the allocation of mortified funds (see the board in St John's Chapel) led them to submit the matter to arbitration, a process which lasted ten years.
- c.1857** In an 'eloquent sermon', John Marshall Lang, the young minister of the East Church persuaded the congregation to stand (rather than sit) to sing, and kneel. (rather than stand) to pray. Dr Forsyth of the West Church reported the matter to the Presbytery who told him to conform to customary practices, but Mr Lang's move marks the beginning of a wide-spread move to improve worship practices in the Church of Scotland.
- 1869** Henry Cowan, (for whom the Cowan Chapel is a memorial) became minister of the West Church.
- 1872** The first stained glass window in St Nicholas since the Reformation, designed by Daniel Cottier was inserted in the East window
- 1874** A large new gas chandelier in the East Church overheated and the roof caught fire during a choir practice. The fire spread and destroyed the early 16th century steeple as well as the new stained glass window. The East Church was restored according to Simpson's plan – with the additional, but unprovided, doors which he had planned. A new and higher granite steeple was built, designed by William Smith
- 1876** East Church re-opened.
- 1880** Pipe organ installed in West Church

- 1882** **The Guild of St Margaret founded in the East Church, the first parish church in Scotland to have such a Guild for women.**
- 1884** **First stained glass window installed in West Church**
- 1887** **Pipe organ installed in East Church.** **The Woman's Guild of the Church of Scotland authorised by the General Assembly** **Jubilee of Queen Victoria**
- After a prolonged period of dispute as to the nature of the set of bells to replace those broken in the fire a carillon (played from a keyboard) of 36 fixed bells and one which could be swung was installed. The bells were cast in Belgium and, as recorded in inscriptions on the bells, were the gift of Councillors, other named individuals, and members of five of the six Burgh Churches.
- 1888** **The Cartulary of St Nicholas (catalogue recording gifts to the Kirk) was edited by James Cooper and published by the New Spalding Club.**
- 1898** **St Mary's Chapel was restored and reopened in the course of the celebration of the 450th anniversary of the dedication of dedication of the Kirk.**
- 1910** **Great Missionary conference is held in Edinburgh – the seed-bed of the modern world-wide ecumenical movement**
- 1914** **Outbreak of the Great War**
- 1921** **Parliament passed an Act declaring the lawfulness of certain *Articles Declaratory***

of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland in Matters Spiritual which had been agreed in cooperation with the United Free Church as a preliminary to reunion .

1925

Parliament passed a Property and Endowments Act placing the ownership of the historic endowments of the Church for stipend together with the churches of old parishes firmly in the hands of the Church itself, through General Trustees

1929

Church re-union bringing together much the largest part of the Disruption Free Church, and of earlier secessions, with the Established Church, with a subsequent redrawing of parish boundaries.

1930

A local Scheme of the Scottish Ecclesiastical Commissioners appointed to give effect to the 1925 Act, by a series of elaborate calculations, determined the sums to be passed to the General Trustees and available to the six burgh churches for stipend and property maintenance with the responsibility for meeting the full requirements lying with the congregations.

1935

A chapel created in the West Church in memory of Professor Henry Cowan.

1936

Extensive alterations were made to the East Church, with new chancel furnishings in memory of Professor James Cooper, and a new organ.

1937	As a gift, a new vestry was built for the West Church.	
1939		Outbreak of the Second World War
1945		End of World War.
1948		First Assembly of the World Council of Churches was held in Amsterdam.
1952		Queen Elisabeth succeeded to the throne on the death of her father.
1954	North and Trinity Church returned to its roots and was re-united with the East Church, bringing its Communion Table with war memorial tablets, memorial chairs and marble font.	
1964		North Sea Oil exploration authorised by Act of Parliament and the first well opened.
1980	East and West congregations united.	
1987	Kitchen, toilet, and store rooms and social space created under extended gallery in East Church and named the Walker Room in honour of the Revd Dr George Walker, longest serving minister if the East Church (1899-1934)	
1988		The worst oil-related North Sea disaster claimed 167 lives at the Piper Alpha platform.
1990	The oil industry provided furnishings and a stained glass window to establish St John's chapel in Collison's Aisle (North transept)	

- 1995** St Nicholas Congregational Church, faced with the prospect of having to devote most of their accumulated resources to necessary fabric repairs, and believing that that would not be good stewardship of resources in an over-churched city centre took the courageous decision to leave their building in Belmont St. The ‘double’ church here provided ample space for both separate and, increasingly, joint activities
- 1998** The two congregations entered into a covenant committing them to seek union.
- 2000** The Scottish Congregational Church united with the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom (itself an earlier union of English Presbyterians and Congregationalists (and, later, the much smaller UK-wide Churches of Christ)
- 2002** The congregations of the Kirk of St Nicholas and of St Nicholas United Reformed Church joined to form ‘The Kirk of St Nicholas Uniting’ – a designation intended to indicate commitment to further ecumenical process rather than to accomplished fact. At the insistence of the Presbytery of Aberdeen, radical plans for the development of the East Church had to be made.
- 2006** Where major developments are to take place on historic sites, current national legislation imposes on the developer (in this case, the Church) the responsibility for undertaking thorough archaeological investigations. Accordingly there took place here a ‘dig’ of major national significance.

