

The heritage of five places of worship in Glasgow

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Garnethill Synagogue

129 Hill Street, G3 6UB

The impressive Garnethill Synagogue was dedicated on 9th September 1879.¹ It was designed by Glasgow's John McLeod with advice from Nathan Solomon Joseph who was the consultant architect of the United Synagogue in London. He worked with local architects around the country on showpiece synagogues, such as Garnethill.² It is a beautiful, well-maintained building, dubbed the 'cathedral synagogue' of Scotland by Jewish Heritage UK.³



It was opened by the Glasgow Hebrew Congregation and was the first purpose-built synagogue in Scotland. Today, it is still one of the finest 19th century synagogues in Europe, and the “mother synagogue” of Glasgow.⁴

There had been a Jewish community in Scotland for many years before the synagogue was built. The first record of Jews in Scotland dates back to the late 1600s. Many of the small number of Jews that came to Scotland in the late 1600s and early 1700s were academics, motivated by the fact that Scottish Universities did not require them to swear a Christian oath— unlike those in England and the continent. Before the synagogue was built, local Jews met in rented rooms in the High Street, Howard Street, George Street and elsewhere.

The synagogue was built on a hill and is large and visible. These decisions reflect a community that had considerable means collectively, and were confident enough in their position in society to build a place of worship that was also a status symbol. Scotland is one of sadly very few European countries where there has been no persecution of the Jewish community, although of course very many have come here fleeing persecution.⁵

When the synagogue was first built its congregation were not refugees, but businessmen and merchants of mostly Dutch and German descent. Soon after the synagogue's completion, the demographics of the community began to change. In the 1880s, many poor Jews began to arrive from Eastern Europe, fleeing poverty and pogroms. This group formed a community in the Gorbals, just south of the River Clyde, where there was cheaper

¹ *West End News*, 10th August 1979, P11

² Williamson, E, Riches, A and Higgs, M *The Buildings of Scotland: Glasgow*, Penguin, 1990

³ jewish-heritage-uk.org/listings/scotland

⁴ www.sjac.org.uk/archives/garnethill.html

⁵ Harvey Kaplan, Archivist at Scottish Jewish Archives Centre

accommodation. The earlier, wealthier community lived mostly in the Garnethill area and in the west end of the city.⁶

Writing in 1892, a glimpse into the early days of the Jewish community in Glasgow was described by J. S. Rubenstein in the *Evening Citizen*:

'When the man Levi died... arrangements were made for his burial by two men and a boy. I was the boy. No-one else attended because there were so few Jews in Glasgow and some had to attend to their business while the rest were afraid of the Cholera. Mr Crown, with myself, had to watch the grave one night out of seven to prevent thieves getting up the bodies and selling them to the doctor.'⁷

Between 1881 and 1930 it is believed around four million Jews fled Eastern Europe. Many had to pass through Britain on their way to America and reached no further. Glasgow being a port city, was often the place they settled. Several thousand settled in Glasgow during this time, some apparently believing that they had actually reached America.⁸

The Gorbals, where many of the poor new arrivals settled, had already accommodated a previous influx of immigrants: the Irish. Now Jews from Russia and Poland settled there. Traditionally a Jewish community looks after the welfare of its poorer members. However during this period the persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe was so severe that their welfare became a concern for members of the wider community. A public meeting was held in January 1892 to discuss raising a relief fund for their support. The sum raised would be equivalent to £201,130 today.⁹

Relationships between the Jewish community and local people were challenged during both world wars when Jews from what were now enemy countries, risked being perceived as enemies themselves.

The synagogue was very much the centre of Jewish life in the city during this period. A number of communal organisations were founded in the complex, including welfare organisations, cultural societies, and youth groups. A hostel for Jewish refugees was opened in Garnethill in the late 1930s. The *Glasgow Herald* describes the arrival into central station in 1938 of 12 Jewish boys and girls escaping growing anti-Semitism in Germany and Poland, who were greeted by several



⁶ Edward, M., *Who belongs to Glasgow*, Luath Press Ltd, 2008

⁷ *Evening Citizen*, 1 March 1894

⁸ Edward, M., *Who belongs to Glasgow*, Luath Press Ltd, 2008

⁹ *Glasgow Herald* 23 January 1892

hundred members of the Jewish community.¹⁰

There were incidents of anti-Semitism during this time but Glasgow also agreed to boycott German goods in 1933 because of the growing persecution of Jews there. Jewish leader Rev Cosgrove said 'Glasgow was a much better place for Jews to live than most others in Europe.'¹¹

The Synagogue's community has included many notable figures:

One early Jewish arrival was Isaac Cohen, who in 1812 was made a Freeman of the City of Glasgow¹², and is credited with bringing the silk hat to Scotland.¹³

In 1908 a member of the community called Oscar Slater was accused of murder and faced the death penalty. His case has become a famous example of a miscarriage of justice. Ultimately leading figures of the day including Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes, helped establish his innocence.¹⁴

In 1958 Myer Galpern (pictured) became the first Jewish Lord Provost of Glasgow. As an MP he was Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons. While sitting as speaker he had to suspend debate when Michael Heseltine infamously seized the mace. He was both knighted and given a life peerage as Baron Galpern of Shettleston in 1979.¹⁵



Sir Horace Phillips, from a Garnethill family, became a distinguished diplomat, knight and British ambassador to Turkey. His diplomatic career was badly affected while serving as ambassador to Jeddah. The Saudi Arabians discovered that Sir Phillips was Jewish and he was forced to resign his position. He was an extremely gifted linguist and is said to have learned Japanese, Arabic, Persian, French, German, Italian, Turkish, Indonesian and Swahili.¹⁶

Lord Emmanuel 'Manny' Shinwell, the 'Red Clydesider' who was jailed in 1919 for inciting striking dock workers to riot, but nevertheless went on to serve labour politics as an MP for over 40 years.¹⁷ The strikes and riots in Glasgow in 1919 so alarmed the government that

¹⁰ *Glasgow Herald*, 23 December 1938

¹¹ Edward, M., *Who belongs to Glasgow*, Luath Press Ltd, 2008

¹² Scottish Jewish Archives Centre timeline display

¹³ Edward, M., *Who belongs to Glasgow*, Luath Press Ltd, 2008

¹⁴ <http://www.nas.gov.uk/about/081214.asp> - National Archives of Scotland

¹⁵ <http://www.theglasgowstory.com/image.php?inum=TGSE00738>

¹⁶ www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1457733/Sir-Horace-Phillips.html

¹⁷ http://articles.latimes.com/1986-05-08/news/mn-4837_1_lord-shinwell

troops and tanks were ordered onto George Square.¹⁸ He was awarded a life peerage and died in 1986 aged 101.

Hilda Goldwag, who fled Austria in 1939 and settled in Glasgow. Despite losing the sight in one eye as a child she went on to become an accomplished painter and illustrator.

Modern Day

The population of Jews in Glasgow is now thought to be 5-6000, with many young people being attracted away from the city to larger communities in order to find a husband or wife from within the wider Jewish community.

The building is also home to the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre since 1986, but it is still a functioning congregation, with a small but active and loyal membership.¹⁹



Judaism

The practice of Judaism began in the Middle East over 3500 years ago. It is a monotheistic religion and the oldest of the three Abrahamic faiths. A key tenet of the faith is that Jews have a covenant, or promise with God that they will uphold God's laws. Family and community are of

great importance to Jewish people. Moses was the founder of Judaism and the Torah is the holy book. There are believed to be 13 million followers of Judaism, with most recent census figures recording over 270,000 in the UK.²⁰

A synagogue is the place of worship for Jews but will often serve other functions as well. Each synagogue contains an ark, housing the Torah Scrolls. The ark is named after the original Ark of the Covenant which holds the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were first written.²¹

¹⁸ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/glasgow_and_west/7859192.stm

¹⁹ www.sjac.org.uk/archives/garnethill.html

²⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/judaism/>

²¹ http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/worship/synagogue_1.shtml

Central Gurdwara

138 Berkeley Street, G3 7HY

The Glasgow Central Gurdwara at 138 Berkeley Street was established in 1981 to provide an appropriate place of worship for the Glasgow Sikh community. The building is also known among the community as the Singh Sabha Gurdwara.²² The name refers to the Singh Sabha movement: a reaction among Sikhs in India in the late 1800s to proselytizing efforts by Christians and others.²³



The building was purchased following a concerted effort by the local community, led by a committee of around 20 trustees who made significant individual donations. The building had previously been a military warehouse for storing vehicles.²⁴ A new purpose-built Gurdwara is planned nearby and work is already well progressed on the site. Once complete it will accommodate up to 1500 worshippers and will be the largest religious building in the city.²⁵



Prior to the property at Berkeley Street being purchased the Sikh community worshipped at Scotland's first Gurdwara on Portland Street (pictured).²⁶

A key function of any Gurdwara is the provision of free food, called 'Langar'. The service is for anyone who needs it, regardless of their religion, and the food provided is vegetarian to ensure it is appropriate for all faiths.²⁷ The Golden Temple in Amritsar, centre of the Sikh faith, provides over 50,000 meals every day.²⁸ The Central Gurdwara has a large kitchen and dining area, which can accommodate up to 250 people.

A well-established element of the complex is the Mel Milaap centre. It is a day care facility for the elderly, disabled and other vulnerable people. It was run by the community for

²² <http://centralgurdwaraglasgow.org/proj/about-singh-sabha/>

²³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singh_Sabha_Movement

²⁴ Conversation with Dr Satwant Multani

²⁵ <http://centralgurdwaraglasgow.org/proj/about-singh-sabha/>

²⁶ <http://www.bhatra.co.uk/index.php?module=pages&pageid=5>

²⁷ <http://www.sikhs.org/gurdwara.htm>

²⁸ <http://www.goldentempleamritsar.org/guru%20ka%20langar.html>

many years, but has been recognised for its value and is now part of the city council's social work services. The Gurdwara is also used to conduct marriages, host a doctor's surgery, exercise classes for children and to host classes in Punjabi language.²⁹

The majority of Sikhs hail originally from the Punjab region in Northern India and Pakistan. The first Sikhs settled in Glasgow in the 1920s.³⁰ A significant migration of Sikhs to the UK began in the 1960s, mostly motivated by economic factors.³¹ In more recent years the community has also come to include Sikh refugees fleeing religious persecution in Afghanistan.

The experience of many migrant families is described by Mr Saghu of the Sikh community:
'As a human being I'm still Indian. I've lived here long. My roots are there, my friends are there, my mother is there and I still love to go back. My children are different. They feel this is their home. This is their place. They belong to Scotland. They belong to Glasgow.'³²

Notable members of the Scottish Sikh Community

Mr Sewa Singh Kohli MBE

In India he worked on the railways and became sufficiently active in the underground union movement that he was forced to spend some time on the run from police. Or as his grandchildren say, "Papaji was on India's Most Wanted list!"³³ He came to Scotland in 1962 and is well known in Asian communities here for having successfully campaigned for the right to have Sikh, Hindu or Muslim marriages recognised by law. Before his 12 year campaign only Christian or Jewish ceremonies were recognised. He founded the Asian Artistes Association in 1976, which in its current incarnation as the Scottish Academy of Asian Arts (SAAA,) organises the popular Glasgow Mela.³⁴ He also founded the Mel Milaap Centre. He died in April 2012 leaving his wife Harinder, his three children, 10 grandchildren and one great granddaughter.

Dr Satwant Multani

Dr Multani will be recognised by many Glaswegians as the Harley Davidson riding Sikh! He owns four of the classic motorbikes and is very distinctive when he rides through the city. As a doctor he is a specialist in drug addiction and sexually transmitted diseases. Now retired, he remains very busy, as a director of both Scottish Interfaith Council and BEMIS. He has represented Sikh society in many forums and has been awarded with, among many other accolades: a 'Lifetime Achievement' Award by the Indian Government; and an

²⁹ <http://centralgurdwaraglasgow.org/proj/about-singh-sabha/>

³⁰ <http://www.youngscot.org/info/100-sikhism>

³¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikh_diaspora

³² Quote on display in St Mungo's Museum of Religion, Glasgow Room

³³ <http://www.sikhsinscotland.org/obituaries.phtml>

³⁴ <http://www.sikhsinscotland.org/people/people-from-scotland/kohli,-mr-sewa-singh-mbe/192.phtml>

'Ambassador of Peace' Award by the Universal Peace Federation, for promoting the virtues of Sikhism.



Mrs Sawarnjit Kaur Burmy

Sawarnjit distinguished herself in the 1970s by becoming the first South Asian Woman Police Constable in Scotland. She served for 5 years with Strathclyde Police B Division in Glasgow. She now works for the NHS.³⁵

Sikhism

Sikhism developed from Hinduism but does not include the multiple gods worshipped by Hindus. It is a central tenet of Sikhism to reject all discrimination and inequality on the basis of caste, class or gender. Sikhs will traditionally follow the Panj Kakaar or 'five Ks': rules relating to their clothing and hair. The list includes the carrying of the Kirpan, a curved blade which is traditionally worn under the clothing by both men and women and symbolises the ability of truth to cut through untruth. The carrying of a true Kirpan has caused difficulties with police in Glasgow in the past, however under the Criminal Law (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 1995 it is permitted because of the religious importance of the item.³⁶ Many modern Sikhs now carry a tiny symbolic blade instead. Traditionally all Sikh men take the name 'Singh' meaning lion, and all women take the name 'Kaur' meaning princess.³⁷



The Sikh place of worship is the Gurdwara (or Gurudwara) meaning 'House of God'.

There are understood to be around 10,000 Sikhs in the Scottish population.³⁸ They work in a variety of professions but are particularly well represented in medicine.³⁹

³⁵ <http://www.sikhsinScotland.org/people/people-from-scotland/burmy,-mrs-sawarnjit-kaur/194.phtml>

³⁶ www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/Scotland/Projects_and_Campaigns/guidance_on_sikh_articles_of_faith_for_scotland.pdf

³⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2122.html>

³⁸ <http://centralgurdwaraglasgow.org/proj/future-glasgow/>

³⁹ Conversation with Dr Satwant Multani

Hindu Mandir

1 La Belle Place, G3 7LH



The beautiful building at 1 La Bella Place dates back to 1857 and is a grade A listed building. It has previously been used as 'Queen's Rooms' and later as a Church of Christ, Scientist.⁴⁰ The building was converted to a Hindu Mandir on 16th October 1994.⁴¹



The current premises provides a large and airy space for the community to worship in. However Glasgow's Hindus were not always so well provided for. Before the premises were purchased, the local Hindu community had initially used the homes of various members of the community for their acts of worship. Two women are given particular recognition for having organised these community rituals: the late Mrs Pushpawati Chaddha and Mrs Sudesh Mehan who started doing so in around 1967.⁴² In the following years members of the community came together to raise funds to buy a property for the specific use as a Hindu Mandir. In 1971 premises at 10 Great George Street were purchased after a successful appeal against refusal by Glasgow Corporation to allow the site to be used as a religious and community centre. The use as a mandir was objected to on the grounds of traffic congestion and shortage of housing stock. During the appeal Mr Amrit Lal Kochar, secretary of the committee of trustees, argued that,

'it would be both a religious and cultural place where we would hope the local people and the Hindus could exchange views and better understand each other.'

⁴⁰ <http://data.historic-scotland.gov.uk/pls/htmldb/f?p=2200:15:0:::::BUILDING,HL:33082,HB3308>

⁴¹ http://www.hindumandirglasgow.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4&Itemid=113

⁴² http://www.hindumandirglasgow.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4&Itemid=113

At the time the Mandir at Great George Street was intended to serve some of the city's roughly 1000 Hindus. The £4000 it cost to purchase the property was raised with support from many sources, including the Muslim Pakistani community.⁴³

In these early years the community had only photos of the various Hindu Gods and did not have a priest to lead their devotions. In the late 1980s a number of 'Murties' (sacred images of the Gods⁴⁴) were donated by members of the community. In January 1992 the senior Hindu Priest, Acharya Medini Pati Mishra Ji came to Glasgow and has been leading their rituals ever since.

The site at La Bella Place has allowed the community to develop a much larger and more appealing space for worship and rituals. In July 2006 they converted the upper floor of the premises and Margaret Curran, Minister for Parliamentary Business (pictured), attended the official inauguration. In the memorial pamphlet of the inauguration, the temple's Vice President, Mrs Shobha Nagpal described the community's feelings,



'At last the long awaited "Murti Pratishtha Celebrations" times is here. We are embarking upon writing a new chapter in history. A chapter in the history of the Glasgow Hindu Mandir which we Hindus will be proud of for many generations to come. A chapter also in the long and varied history of Glasgow, a city we all love so much where we have found welcome'⁴⁵

The building is also used for Hindu weddings, Hindi language classes and Yoga.

Sadly, thousands of pounds of damage were caused in a severe fire at the premises in May 2010.⁴⁶

The majority of Scotland's Hindus came to the country in the second half of the 20th Century. Many came from India itself and from surrounding countries including Nepal and Sri Lanka. A significant number were forced to travel to flee Uganda after the dictator, Idi Amin, ordered the expulsion of all Ugandan Asians.⁴⁷ Those who fled Uganda arrived very

⁴³ *Glasgow Herald*, Friday April 23, 1971 and *Glasgow Herald*, Friday July 16, 1971 – 'Hindu temple 'could improve race relations'

⁴⁴ <http://londonmandir.baps.org/worship/murti-puja-image-worship-in-hinduism/>

⁴⁵ *Hindu Mandir Glasgow Murti Pratishtha Opening Ceremony Souvenir*, Wed 19th July – Sun 23rd July 2006

⁴⁶ <http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/home-news/scotland-s-largest-hindu-temple-devastated-by-shocking-blaze-1.1031544>

⁴⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism_in_Scotland#cite_note-1

poor, having had to abandon their savings and property when they left. The Hindu community has tended to thrive in the UK and their successful integration is evidenced by the large numbers working in professional fields such as law and medicine.⁴⁸

Notable members of the Scottish Hindu Community

Sanjay Mahju who bought the successful Harlequin, Spice of Life and Ashoka restaurants. Sanjay is the son of a Hindu father and Sikh mother, lived in Glasgow since aged 2. He described being the only Asian in his class in East Kilbride but after his family moved to the Southside of Glasgow and:

*The minute I walked into Cuthbertson Primary. I saw it was full of Chinese, African and Asian kids and I fitted in for the first time in years.*⁴⁹

Hinduism

Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world with roughly 900 million followers. Hinduism is a collective term that covers a great many different beliefs and practices. It has no single founder or authority and no single sacred text. Although famous for its many gods, Hinduism is nevertheless a monotheistic faith. The multiple different gods are all incarnations reflecting the many forms that the supreme god, Brahman can take. The faith emphasises the law of Karma which states that every action has an effect.⁵⁰



Scottish Government figures suggest that there are about 5,600 Hindus in Scotland, roughly 0.1% of the population.⁵¹



⁴⁸ <http://hinduism.iskcon.org/tradition/1212.htm>

⁴⁹ Edward, M., *Who belongs to Glasgow*, Luath Press Ltd, 2008

⁵⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/hinduism/>

⁵¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/02/20757/53570>

Al Furqan Mosque

19 Carrington Street, G4 9AJ

The Al Furqan Mosque has been serving the local Muslim community since 1979. It is multi-denominational and provides for Muslims of any sect or tradition. ⁵²



The mosque is closely linked with the organisation, UK Islamic Mission. A founder of the organisation in London, Mr Aziz Khan, came to Glasgow in 1969 and began a Quran study circle in the Woodlands area of the city. Soon the participants became too numerous to keep meeting in Mr Aziz Khan's home and it was decided to rent a property on Arlington Street in 1972. The adjacent flat was later used as an Islamic school. By 1979 this venue was also too small for the congregation and the property at Carrington Street was purchased after extensive fundraising by the community. The building required a great deal of renovation to make it suitable for worship, with much of the work being undertaken by members themselves.

The teaching of the Quran, Islamic studies and Urdu language has been part of the community's service for many years. Both boys and girls have been equally served by the classes. The mosque has had a long standing link with nearby Willowbank Primary school and many classes have been held there over the years.

The building has long been a hub of activity, for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It has been used to host events such as an episode of Question Time featuring Robin Cook MP and Mohammad Sarwar MP. Also, Alex Salmond MSP addressed a gathering there after the 7th July London bombings. The mosque and its community have been at the forefront of a number of charitable campaigns including fundraising for conflict victims in Iraq, Libya and Syria. Popular interfaith meetings have also been arranged in the building and groups from the community have visited nearby churches.

A number of campaigning organisations with aims in keeping with the ethos of the community, have used the mosque for rallies and seminars. These include the Anti-war Coalition and Scotland Against Criminalising Communities. The Al Furqan Youth club has arranged sporting events and careers events for local young people. The hope is that this will become an annual event. There is also a women's group who meet regularly.

One of the earliest known Muslim migrants to Glasgow was Noor Muhammad Tanda. He left Bombay in 1916 aged 19 and travelled to Britain, arriving at Liverpool. He then moved

⁵² <http://www.alfurqanmosque.com/index.php/about-us>

to Glasgow and found work in a Greenock Shipyard. He travelled for many years, including living in Australia for five. Eventually he returned to Glasgow where he became part of a business in the Gorbals which was to trade for many years: 'Tanda, Ashrif and Company'.⁵³

During the 1930s a small community of Asians developed in Glasgow. Coming from what was then India (before its split into modern India and Pakistan) they were mostly Muslim, although some were Hindu and Sikh. Many lived in the Gorbals area, a part of the city that has traditionally housed many new communities including Irish, Eastern European Jews and Italians.⁵⁴ Initially it was often only the man in a family who would emigrate. He would then work hard, living in shared flats with other migrant men to reduce costs, until he could save enough for his family to join him.

In the 1970s the Gorbals began to be cleared for reconstruction and many Muslim people moved to areas such as Pollokshields, Garnethill and Woodside. Few would have qualified for local authority housing and most preferred the security of owning property so many bought old tenement flats.⁵⁵

The demographics of the Al Furqan congregation reflect this history but are now very international. The most long standing members tend to be of Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi descent. In addition, given the mosque's proximity to the universities it has attracted many Muslim students. In the 1980s and 1990s many students were from Malaysia. In more recent years Arab and Kurdish people have joined as well as many from African countries. Many of this group have been refugees fleeing persecution in their country of origin.

Notable members of the Scottish Muslim Community

Mohammad Sarwar

When he won the Glasgow Govan constituency in 1997 Mohammad Sarwar became the UK's first ever Muslim MP. His son Anas continues his work as MP for Glasgow Central. Recently Mohammad Sarwar was forced to give up his British citizenship in order to become Governor of Punjab, where he was born. He is worth an estimated £16 million from a range of business interests.⁵⁶

Bashir Ahmad

A strong supporter of Scottish independence, Indian-born Bashir Ahmad was the first MSP to be elected from Asian-Scots, Muslim and non-White backgrounds. He founded the

⁵³ Edward, M., *Who belongs to Glasgow*, Luath Press Ltd, 2008

⁵⁴ <http://www.centralmosque.co.uk/about#.UhPClz9yKqk>

⁵⁵ Edward, M., *Who belongs to Glasgow*, Luath Press Ltd, 2008

⁵⁶ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/uks-first-muslim-mp-mohammad-sarwar-becomes-governor-of-pakistans-punjab-province-8746743.html>

campaigning organisation, Asian Scots for Independence, and is often quoted by SNP colleagues as saying, "it isn't important where you come from, what matters is where we are going together as a nation".

The bill to criminalise forced marriage in Scotland was led by Ahmad. He died in February 2009.⁵⁷

Atta Yacub

The actor Atta Yacub is probably best known for his lead role in the film 'ae fond kiss'. He has been actively involved in the Show Racism The Red Card and One Scotland, Many Cultures campaigns.⁵⁸ He went to school in Shawlands Academy and describes himself as 'Glasgow through and through'.⁵⁹

Islam

The second largest religion in the world, Islam has over 1 billion followers. It is a monotheistic religion and the youngest of the three Abrahamic faiths. Muslims recognise Jesus and Moses as prophets of God, but believe that Muhammad is God's final prophet. In Muslim texts or speech Muhammad's name is always followed by 'Peace be upon him' (often written pbuh for short). The word 'Islam' translates as 'Submission to the will of God' and followers are required to adhere to five core principles known as pillars:

- 1.To declare that there is no god but God and Muhammad is his prophet
- 2.To pray five times a day
- 3.To give money to charity
- 4.To fast during the month of Ramadan
- 5.To make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime.⁶⁰

There are around 42,000 Muslims in Scotland, comprising 0.84% of the population.⁶¹

⁵⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bashir_Ahmad_%28politician%29

⁵⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atta_Yacub

⁵⁹ Edward, M., *Who belongs to Glasgow*, Luath Press Ltd, 2008

⁶⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/ataglance/glance.shtml>

⁶¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/02/20757/53570>

Glasgow Buddhist Centre

329 Sauchiehall Street, G2 3HW

The Glasgow Buddhist Centre is part of the Triratna Buddhist Community, a group that seeks to make Buddhism accessible to people in the Western world.⁶²



The Glasgow group has been meeting together and providing classes since 1973. The current centre has been their base since February 1983. The premises became available to the group after it was badly damaged by a fire that began in the property below. One of the group's members was a firefighter who attended the blaze and realised how suitable it would be for the community's needs. The repair and renovation of the building took over 3 years to complete, as all the work was performed by members of the community. Buddhists from other centres also came to contribute their time and skills to the project. The only remaining sign of any fire damage in the bright and airy centre are slightly uneven floorboards in the largest room.

Prior to the premises being purchased and converted, the community had used other venues but none as large or as central. The improved accessibility of the Sauchiehall Street venue has brought very many new people, both Buddhists and non-Buddhists, to the centre. Being in Glasgow is also important to the community as it is the largest city in Scotland and therefore accessible to the largest group.

The community provides a wide range of services, classes and facilities. The classes and venue hire is managed on a non-profit basis with costs being decided based on the cost to the centre itself. Those who cannot pay the standard price are often able to attend on a charitable basis. Courses offered include yoga, tai chi, mindfulness and meditation. In addition the centre is used for arts events, writers groups and exhibitions.⁶³

⁶² <http://www.glasgowbuddhistcentre.com/GBCorganisation.html>

⁶³ Conversation with Dassini, Chair of Glasgow Buddhist Centre

The Triratna Buddhist Community was founded by Sangharakshita. He was born Dennis Lingwood in 1925 and grew up in London. Interested in Eastern culture from an early age, he read widely on Buddhism as a teenager.⁶⁴ After being conscripted to the army at the age of 19 he was sent to India and was delighted to be travelling to the country where Buddhism originated. He lived in the Indian Subcontinent for 20 years and studied under a great many Buddhist teachers. In 1967 he returned to the UK and founded the organisations that became the Triratna Buddhist Community.⁶⁵ The name Triratna is a Sanskrit word meaning 'Three Jewels'. This refers to the Buddha, his teachings and the Buddhist community.⁶⁶ The name Sangharakshita was given to him when he was ordained as a Buddhist monk and means 'protected by the spiritual community'.⁶⁷



The approach of the community is to learn from each other as peers rather than a traditional hierarchy based on teachers and pupils. Similarly there is no attempt to convert people who attend the centre for classes, although many become interested in Buddhism through their participation in meditation or other aspects.

The community of the Glasgow Buddhist Centre are generally white British, and are usually people that have come to Buddhism during their adult lives, sometimes after becoming disillusioned with the religious tradition they were born into. Some lesbian or gay members have felt ostracised by other religious traditions because of their sexuality. Around 150 people have made a formal commitment to the centre and its community.

As white British people they are therefore not a visible minority in the same way as some other faith groups. However their beliefs can result in them feeling like a minority in terms of cultural, social or political issues. Non-violence is a core tenet of Buddhism and this can result in the community holding views different from the majority. Vegetarianism and protests against military action are some examples.⁶⁸



⁶⁴ <http://www.glasgowbuddhistcentre.com/GBCsangharakshita.html>

⁶⁵ <http://www.sangharakshita.org/>

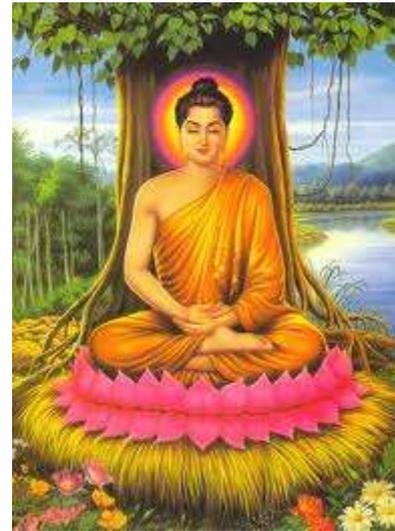
⁶⁶ <http://thebuddhistcentre.com/text/what-triratna-buddhist-community>

⁶⁷ <http://thebuddhistcentre.com/text/sangharakshita>

⁶⁸ Conversation with Dassini, Chair of Glasgow Buddhist Centre

Buddhism

For some practitioners Buddhism is a philosophy or way of life, rather than a religion. Equally for a great many it is a religion in the same sense as any other. There are estimated to be 300 million practitioners, spread widely across the globe. The word 'Budhi' comes from 'to awaken' and for many Buddhism is about seeking a spiritual awakening or enlightenment. The key figure is Siddhartha Gotama, the Buddha, who lived in what is now India and Nepal around 2500 years ago. Buddhism was born out of Hindu tradition but a belief in God or gods is not central to the faith. It is a difficult tradition to summarise but the central teachings could be described as:



1. to lead a moral life,
2. to be mindful and aware of your thoughts and actions,
3. to develop wisdom and understanding. ⁶⁹

The Scottish Government estimates there to be around 6,800 Buddhists in Scotland, or 0.13% of the population. ⁷⁰

⁶⁹ <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/5minbud.htm>

⁷⁰ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/02/20757/53570>