

## Report to the WF Southall Trustees – The GalGael-Iona Work Week – 7-13 March 2026

by Alastair McIntosh, GalGael Trustee (and Glasgow Quaker Meeting)

The Southall Trust provided £1,500 for 4 of our GalGael well-proven volunteers to experience Work Week at Iona Abbey. They are Janet Eastwood, Joan Phillipsz and Jim Rae, and they went up in early March. We had a fourth person unable to go at the last minute. He has now been substituted by Paul Hamilton. Paul went up this week, and will be staying to volunteer for a number of weeks as he's been there on a previous GalGael visit. Apart from that change, the project went according to plan.

Jim said, "It was one off the best weeks I have had in a long time, thanks." Janet maybe spoke for all:

It was such a great experience. I loved being part of a working group again. I felt that we actually helped the Abbey staff. They were such lovely people who looked after us so well. The Abbey and the island had a lovely sense of peace to it - except when we were battling the weather, but again the weather was just part of the experience. The other people who were volunteering like the three of us was what made the experience so great. Those people came from all over, bringing with them their customs and experiences. Working at tasks, our work, or some of the social events gave us chances to meet most of the volunteers and many of the staff. It was such a valuable experience and one that I'll never forget and will always be grateful for the chance to go there.

Joan wrote several poems. In one of these, *Rocksteady at Iona*, she describes painting the Abbey chairs for woodworm while sharing an earpiece with Jim, as they listened to *Rocksteady*:

Listening tae rocksteady, sharing a headphone wi' Jim. We work away wi' our woodworm, quiet hands, steady and dim.	Serving the Lord above us, in an abbey warm wi' love— basslines drifting through the rafters, and peace like a cooing dove.	Jim laughs, "Ye're dancin' again." "Aye," say I— work goes better that way.
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She added: "It struck me how music, work and companionship can turn strangers into kin very quickly". Although she found the experience of being in an Abbey a little "overwhelming" at times, she said: "It felt very GalGael somehow — work, humour, kindness, and the quiet spirit of the place."

On his arrival this past week, Paul has texted to say:

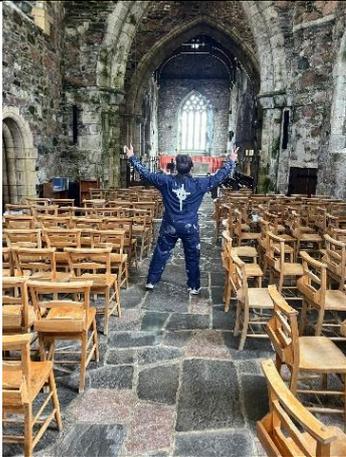
It has been strange seeing all these amazing people with their big smiles glad to see me back, I just think *why* at times. But it has been good seeing all these faces I meet last year because it has made it so much easier to settle in, and today Andy has been showing me around all the different places where the tools are kept and showing me some of the jobs we will be doing over the next few days. So yes, I am definitely glad to be back and I am sure it will fly in once I get settled and get stuck in [Adding later ...] I am just saying bye to some of the guests ... I have a busy couple of days ahead as I am doing all the driving, dropping off and picking up from the dock as Andy is away for the weekend now.

In this last week before the financial year ends, we intend to pay the Abbey for the booked 4 places, total £876 at the concession rate, and to roll over the "unused" space for the November Work Week. We have incurred £431 for their travel and out-of-pocket allowances. If OK with the Southall Trust, I am retaining £200 for further allowances for Paul and hopefully Lynn McCambridge, due to go up for 10 weeks from 20 April. Total spend: **£1507**, which matches £1,500 for [2024-25 Work Weeks](#) funded by another Quaker trust, the John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust. See photos and reports 2016-26, [here](#).

Joan sent lots more poetry, but as this report is to be 2 pages long, I'll let the pictures do the rest of the talking. Such experience enriches the [GalGael](#) when folks return. The [Iona Community](#) also say it's meaningful for them. It has re-established the original Govan-Iona connection, and gives life.



Jim, Janet and Joan



Behold, work might be happening



Lo and behold, work is happening!



Paul Hamilton (photo 2025)



Ceilidh in the refectory, relaxation, and the Iona Community Work Week Group, March 2026



**A huge thank you from the GalGael Trust to the Trustees of the Quaker-based Southall Trust and also, the John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust, whose previous funding Southall matched**