

# Renfrew Developmet Trust

## ***History of Renfrew***

The name Renfrew comes from the Old British rhyn frwd meaning "point at the current"; the River Cart enters the Clyde by the town.[1] Renfrew's recorded history began with the granting of land in the area to Walter fitz Alan, the High Steward of Scotland by King David I in the 12th century. The strategic location of this castle was to prevent the eastern expansion of the lordship belonging to Somerled, the Lord of the Isles, and to protect western Scotland from Norse invaders.[2] Eventually the hereditary title of High Steward came to form the surname Stewart.

Renfrew Castle was situated in what is now part of the well-known Braehead shopping complex. It was located on the King's inch or King's Island. This location both added to the castle's defenses but also added to its strategic positioning on the Clyde. Many street names close to this area demonstrate the survival of knowledge of this citadel. For example, 'Orchard Street' is a reference to the royal orchards that were at and around Renfrew Castle.

Later in the 12th century, King Malcolm IV, grandson of David, finally demanded Somerled's fealty. In 1164, Somerled sailed to Renfrew and attacked an assembling Scottish army in a conflict known as the Battle of Renfrew. The outcome was a defeat of the Lordship of the Isles and the death of Somerled.[3] The Lords of the Isles were eventually stripped of their lands and titles in 1493, as a consequence of conspiring with an earlier King of England (Edward IV) to overthrow the Scottish monarchy. Since that time, "Lord of the Isles" - as with "Baron of Renfrew" - has been a courtesy title of the heir to the throne and both are currently held by The Prince Charles, heir to Queen Elizabeth II.

The role of the Stewarts continued to grow and in 1315 Walter Stewart, 6th High Steward married Marjorie, daughter of King Robert the Bruce. Their son succeeded to the throne as Robert II of Scotland.

During the Monmouth Rebellion of 1685, Archibald Campbell, 9th Earl of Argyll was injured and captured at Renfrew before being transported to Edinburgh and executed for his role in attempting to overthrow the Crown. The Argyle Stones in the town mark the site where his capture took place.

During the night of 13 March 1941, three Polish airmen saved Renfrew's Roman Catholic church of Saint James. Lance Corporal Pawel Radke, Aircraftman Antoni Ptaszkowski, and Aircraftman Zygmunt Sokolowski were at the church and at great risk were extinguishing incendiaries. These had caused a number of fires in the church. Two of the airmen were killed by a bomb and the third died in Alexandria Hospital the following day. They were in their twenties. When 309 Squadron transferred to Dunino in Fife in May 1941, it presented to the church a portrait of Our Lady as a token of their appreciation to the people of Renfrew. Parishioners never forgot the sacrifice and in October 1982 at a special Mass, a silver plaque in memory of the airmen and the portrait of the Black Madonna was blessed and dedicated by Bishop McGill. The plaque was crafted by a local Polish jeweler, Eugeniusz Waclawski.



### WALK 1 - KING'S INCH

(DISTANCE 1 KM, LEVEL EASY WALKING.)

Start – **Corner of Queen Street & High Street**

Walk up High Street (away from town centre) to traffic crossing, cross & continue to Andrew Avenue

Feeling thirsty? – Why not pop in to the Nineteenth for some refreshments.

Turn into Andrew Avenue, go to Kings Inch Road.

Renfrew Castle was near junction of the River Clyde and White Cart on a river islet, known as King's Inch, at Renfrew. Once considered a royal castle nothing now remains of the castle above ground.

Cross at lights over Kings Inch Road to entrance of Clyde View Park. The park, opened in June 2005, is part of Braehead development. The park features fountains, paths, cycleways, play areas, picnic areas, artwork, green space and a riverside walkway. It's designed to encourage natural wildlife and flora. Its name was chosen following a competition for local residents.)

In the park you can see some of Renfrew's history illustrated in statues.

Proceed through the park to the Clyde. You may see the Waverley (World's Last Seagoing Paddle Steamer) going "doon the watter".

Clydebank is on other side of the river. BAE Systems shipyard continues building of naval vessels (destroyers, frigates and corvettes) and from the Clyde walkway you can view any work in progress.

The Clyde walkway takes you past Xscape and Braehead shopping centre.

Xscape houses Snow Factor – Scotland's only indoor real snow slope. The shopping centre hosts a range of shops, food outlets and central display area. The centre has an arena which hosts sporting events and shows.

To the east was once the estate of Elderslie House and became the site of Braehead Power Station in 1926. The power station was demolished in the 1980s.

### WALK 2 - FERRY DOCKS

(DISTANCE 1.2 KM, LEVEL EASY WALKING.)

Start – **Corner of Queen Street & High Street**

Walk along High Street toward town hall.

Left are traditional tenement buildings with a variety of shops. Right is a decorative floral display dividing the road – a recent addition to High Street. The High Street is the focal point for Christmas light decorations.

Approaching the end of the buildings looking left, Renfrew Old Parish church comes in view. No longer in use, it dominates surroundings with its impressive spire.

Past the church another row of shops takes you to High Street and Canal Street with the town hall directly in front of you. The Town Hall was built in 1872-3 using the site of the original Renfrew Town Hall built in 1670. The town hall is topped off with a decorated turreted tower and spire.

Cross at lights to Canal Street, which heads towards the Clyde. Tenements on the east with shops on the ground floor. On the westerly side past the Post Office is the Brown Institute which was the local museum before the exhibits moved to the town hall.

Nearby is the site of 12th century Renfrew Castle. Just beyond the Brown Institute is the former Regal Bingo & Social Club Renfrew that started life in 1913 as the Regal Picture House. The building largely rebuilt in 1929 now serves as a martial arts centre.

Continue towards the river, pass Meadowside Street which gives access to Fishers Road, a footpath round Renfrew Golf Club and the Clyde and White Cart.

Near the ferry ramp are tug engines, a monument to busier times on the Clyde. In the past the ferry carried vehicles but now operates as a pedestrian ferry linking Renfrew and Yoker.

In 1960s other crossings operated serving the Clyde shipyards. The Erskine, Whiteinch, Partick, Govan and Finnieston ferries have stopped, replaced by bridges and tunnels, but the Renfrew Ferry, at a point where tunnelling and bridging are difficult, has survived. The last crossing this far upstream, and closest to Glasgow.

# Heritage Walks



### WALK 3 - ARGYLE STONES

(DISTANCE 1.5 KM, LEVEL EASY WALKING.)

Start – **Town Hall front**

Walk up Hairst Street to the war memorial and turn right into Inchinnan Road. The war memorial area is a focal point for Remembrance Day services.

Along Inchinnan Road on the right is the Victory Baths. An Edwardian 25 yard pool with a sense of history and tradition. Built 1921 by Paisley architect Thomas Graham Abercrombie, funded by Danish immigrant, Henry Christian Lobnitz. Although modernised the baths retain their 1920's style & layout.

Next to the baths is the disused Renfrew Police Station. Both are built from local sandstone.

Further up left is an iron gate to Robertson Park. Opened in 1912 as an open space for Renfrew children. It was gifted to the Burgh by William Robertson, a local businessman. Near the park entrance the fencing curves round a water fountain of polished red granite.

Continuing along Inchinnan Road you pass the former site of Renfrew Football Club (New Western Park) as the road rises to bridge over Craiglea Road. This was part of the route for a Renfrew Paisley railway line. Continuing to a roundabout giving access to Blythswood Industrial Estate. The estate contains popular shops and areas cleared for developments. Trees by the road are a haunt of grey squirrels.

Along the road you reach the Normandy hotel and Renfrew golf course. The clump of trees between the hotel and Inchinnan Road contains the Argyll Stones. Facts about the stones are scarce but earliest tales link them with St Conval and later the Earl of Argyll. More recently (from the 17th century) the stones were the starting point for the Silver Bell horse races.

Close to the Argyll Stones the road crosses the White Cart Water by a bascule bridge opened in 1923 (refurbished 2004). The bridge opened to allow large power station parts to be transported from the Babcock and Wilcox (now Doosan Babcock) factory.

Extend this walk with 3A or 3B, listed on a map.

### WALK 4 - AIR AMBULANCE

(DISTANCE 3.2 KM, LEVEL EASY WALKING.)

Start – **Town Hall front**

As Walk 3, go up Hairst Street, turn onto Inchinnan Road, and enter Robertson Park on the left.

Strolling through the park, left at each "roundabout", you pass the ornamental pond and reach the exit at Paisley and Craiglea Roads. Continue along Paisley Road past two tenement blocks. At the corner of Paisley Road and Broadloan cross to the Firestation corner with its tribute garden area.

Continue up Broadloan towards Tesco crossing Sandy Road. Left are the King George V playing fields used for sporting and local events, on the right is a community allotment. The Renfrew Airport memorial is on the grassy area across from Tesco, itself on the site of the dramatically styled Airport Terminal building.

The airport started as a military facility during the First World War; it first handled scheduled flights in 1933 with Campbelltown the first regular destination.

A new terminal building was built in 1954 (with a parabola arch), but the airport was unable to cope with increasing demands for domestic air travel, and the final flight took off 2 May 1966 - its destination the new Glasgow Airport a few km away.

After the airport closed, the area adjacent to the runway became part of the M8 motorway. Opened in March 1968, it connected the new Glasgow Airport to Bishopston and Glasgow city centre in the east. The old airport was demolished in 1978. A Tesco supermarket, and Arkleston Primary School was built on the terminal site, along with housing.

From the airport memorial go towards the "Flying Scotsman" pub and turn left on to Newmains Road. Continue until the corner of Newmains Road and Sandy Road to the Air Ambulance memorial.

Along Newmains Road before Paisley Road you pass Renfrew Leisure Centre, a recent development on the site of the Babcock & Wilcox social club. On reaching Paisley Road turn right to go back to town centre.





### WALK 3A - AIRPORT

(0.3 KM)

Continuing over the bascule bridge and Black Cart Water along Inchinnan Road you reach a layby near the end of the Glasgow Airport runway. It is popular with aircraft spotters watching landings & take-offs.

### WALK 3B - CART & CLYDE

(2 KM)

From the Argyll Stones a footpath takes you past the Normandy hotel along the White and Black Cart Waters and Renfrew golf course to meet the Clyde. You may spot a seal in the river as well as a selection of bird life.

Following the Clyde upstream takes you round by the Meadows Industrial Estate on to Meadowside Street and Ferry Road, a short walk back to the town centre.

