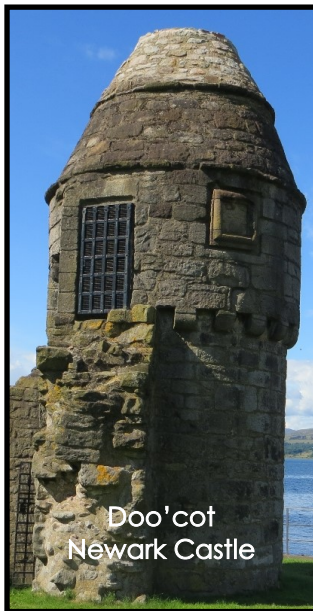


Port Glasgow

Heritage Walk

Situated on the south bank of the River Clyde on the west coast of Scotland, Port Glasgow has a fascinating history. Overseas trade and shipbuilding have left their mark on this historic town.



Follow this self-guided walk to find out more about the importance of Port Glasgow's industrial heritage and discover some interesting buildings along the way. There is a map on the back page.

*The walk will take approximately an hour and a half to complete.
If you are following this online then click on the links for more information.*

Suggested start - Newark Castle in Port Glasgow.

1 Newark Castle

In 1668 the Town Council and Magistrates of Glasgow bought 18 acres of land from the Maxwell family of [Newark Castle](#) to form a port for the city. Large ships could not navigate the Clyde all the way to Glasgow at that time, so cargoes had to be offloaded at Greenock a couple of miles west of Newark Castle. The Glasgow merchants wanted their own port and custom house. Harbours and quays were built and the settlement was called Newport Glasgow, later shortened to **Port Glasgow**.



Spurred on by the commercial interests of Glasgow's [Tobacco Lords](#), Port Glasgow became the biggest importer of Virginia tobacco in Britain. Ships also brought cargoes of West Indies sugar and cotton to the quays and warehouses of Port Glasgow. The American War of Independence (1775-1783) brought an end to the flourishing tobacco trade. Shipbuilding and the importing of timber from the Baltic and North America became important for Port Glasgow.

Follow path from Castle passing Ferguson Marine Shipyard.

2 Ferguson Marine

There has been a shipyard on this site for many years. The original Ferguson shipyard got into financial difficulties and in 2014 engineering investment firm Clyde Blowers Capital led by Jim McCall bought the yard. Since then [Ferguson Marine](#) has become known for producing hybrid ferries. The ships are built from pre-fabricated sections and welded together in the yard.



Continue past Shipyard round to the right.

Stop and look across the main road.



3 Ropeworks Building

This former ropeworks building was converted into loft apartments in 2007/8. There has been a ropeworks near this site since 1797 making ropes and sails for the great sailing ships. At one time it was the headquarters of the world famous rope and sail-making establishment called [Gourock Ropeworks](#). Behind the ropeworks was a ropewalk - a long, low building where the ropes could be twisted out. This can be seen in early [illustrations](#) and maps of Port Glasgow.

Continue on lower path past Shipyard

4 Port Glasgow Fire Station

Port Glasgow has had a fire station since 1787 at various locations in the town.

5 Glen & Ross Steam Hammer

This remnant of Port Glasgow industrial heritage is a steam hammer made by [Glen & Ross](#) of Glasgow.



old steam hammer

Follow the cycle path down to the river front.

6 Coronation Park and Riverside

Coronation Park was opened in 1937 to celebrate the Coronation of George VI. It was laid out on the site of the old West Harbour, which had been filled in. The park was extended in the 1960s. Much of this area is reclaimed land.



Slipway
Coronation Park

7 Slipway

Down at the riverside it is still possible to see some of the old walls of the harbours and quays. A dry dock was originally sited to the east of the Town Buildings. The dry or graving dock - the first to be built in Scotland - was completed in 1762. It had a horse-drawn pump designed by the Greenock engineer [James Watt](#). The dry dock now lies under the Health Centre carpark.

Walk along the riverside path through the park.

8 Memorial - Clyde Boating Tragedy

This [memorial](#) cairn commemorates the 20 people who died in an accident while on a pleasure cruise on the Clyde in 1947. Many were from Port Glasgow.



9 Mirren Shore - Steamboat Quay

At one time this was a very busy area. It was possibly named after St Mirren (Mirin) of Paisley. Port Glasgow's Custom House (the second to be built in the town) was formerly sited here to the south of the present stone buildings. As its name implies, steamboats berthed here. There are interesting [murals](#) on the walls of the garage.



The Perch
Lighthouse

10 Perch Lighthouse

The Perch rock, being so near the shore, was treacherous to passing river traffic. The [Lighthouse](#) was constructed in 1862 to aid navigation. It was lit by gas, which came via an underground pipe from the shore.

11 West Quay Lighthouse

This was constructed in the [1870s](#) as a guide for the large number of ships and boats using the quayside and docks.

Walk along the path on the shore side of the dual carriage way.

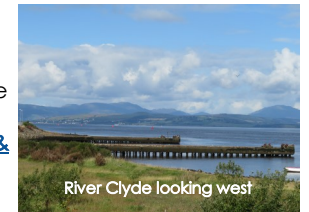
12 SUDS Pond

There is a well hidden [SUDS](#) (sustainable urban drainage system) Pond which is designed to retain run-off water from the road and filter it through vegetation before it drains off into the River Clyde, thus reducing pollution. This has become a haven for wildlife.

13 Remains of Shipyards

Port Glasgow was once a major shipbuilding town. A look along the riverside shows the stone and timber remains of many of the shipyards which used to line the River Clyde. One of the first was [John Wood & Co](#), whose yard was at the north end of Princes Street.

Other famous names are [John Reid & Co](#), [William Hamilton & Co](#), [Russell & Co](#) and later [Lithgows Ltd](#). Many famous ships were built and fitted out here. Workers flocked to the area seeking work in the Clyde shipyards. This area was once a hive of activity and the river could scarcely be seen from the town. As well as shipyards, there were stores, cranes, engineering works, timber works and some housing.



River Clyde looking west

Cross at pedestrian crossing into Tesco Car Park. Continue straight ahead.

14 Shipyard Names

Set into the pathway are slabs with the names of many of the local shipyards inscribed on them -



[Kingston Yard](#)
[Brown Street Yard](#)
[Inch Yard](#)
[Bay Yard](#)
[Castle Yard](#)
[East Yard](#)

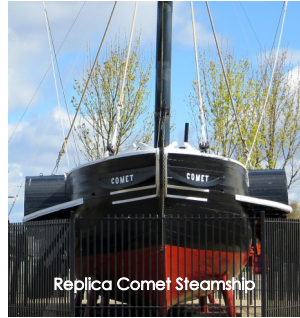
At east corner of Tesco take pedestrian crossing towards McDonalds.

Stop beside Comet steamship.

15 Comet

This ship is a replica of the famous [Comet](#) of 1812, which was the first commercial steam-powered vessel in European waters. The replica was built by local shipyard apprentices in 1962 on the 150 anniversary of the launch of the original. The Comet was built by Port Glasgow shipbuilder, [John Wood](#) and owned by [Henry Bell](#) of Helensburgh.

During the American Civil War (1861-65) many steamships were purchased from local shipyards by agents from the American southern states to become [blockade runners](#).



Replica Comet Steamship

16 Argylls' Parade

This pathway was named in commemoration of the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders [regiment](#), which used to recruit locally.

Look across the main road.



17 Church of St John the Baptist

St John the Baptist [Church](#) was built in 1854 to provide a place of worship for the growing number of Roman Catholics, many from Ireland who came to find work in the area.

Cross at pedestrian crossing onto Princes Street.

18 Princes Street

The town of Port Glasgow was originally laid out in a grid system with Princes Street and King Street being intersected by Church Street. The town was bordered by Fore Street, Shore Street and Bay Street. Redevelopment in the 60s, when the A8 was under construction, removed many of the older buildings that made up the once thriving town centre.

Continue up Princes Street. Turn right into grounds of New Parish Church.

19 New Parish Church and Churchyard

(Formerly St Andrew's Church) There has been a church on this site since 1719, when the magistrates and town council of Glasgow along with the merchants in Port Glasgow got together to provide funds for building a church. The [present building](#) dates from 1823. The churchyard has many very old gravestones, some dating to the 18th century. Here

are buried many of Port Glasgow's merchants, shipowners and skippers along with their families. One of the gravestones is that of [Robert Allison](#) or Allason (car park entrance wall), merchant in Port Glasgow who worked for many of Glasgow's tobacco traders. His brother, William Allason worked as a

storekeeper in Virginia, sourcing tobacco crops from local planters to send back to Port Glasgow.



St Andrew's Church



Lair marker of Robert Allison

Exit at front of Church onto Princes Street. Turn right.

20 Old Bank Building

This was constructed in the latter half of the 19th century for the Royal Bank of Scotland. There is another bank building of the same period (the Clydesdale Bank) further up Princes Street.

21 Port Glasgow Railway Station

The railway connecting Greenock with Glasgow came to Port Glasgow in 1841. Inside the station are [Murals](#) made by local people. There are fourteen panels, each celebrating an aspect of the history and people of the town.



Mural panel in Port Glasgow railway station

Exit station and cross onto John Wood Street.

22 John Wood Street - Star Hotel & Tenements

This street was built between 1909 and 1912 during the massive redevelopment of the Bay Area in the east of the town. The architects were [George Arthur & Son](#). The scheme was partially financed by the [Lithgow](#) family of shipbuilders.

Turn left onto King Street.

23 King Street

(Nos 9-11) Constructed in 1750, these are the oldest remaining buildings in the town centre and are currently being renovated. Originally built as a Town Hall and Masonic Lodge (Lodge [Cumberland Kilwinning 217](#)), they were later known as the George VI Buildings.



Old building, King Street

Part of the way down King Street turn right into Customhouse Lane.

24 Customhouse Lane (off King Street)

This lane once led to the original Customhouse for Port Glasgow on its corner with Fore Street.

There were many small lanes like this running off the main streets of the town leading to the harbours and quays. Many contained poor, cramped housing where large families lived. Many also contained drinking establishments - legal and not so legal - as well as cheap lodgings for the many mariners and workmen who came to the town.



At the bottom of the lane cross over to the former Town Buildings (Library).

25 Port Glasgow Town Buildings

Situated on Fore Street, the Town Buildings were designed by [David Hamilton](#) and built in 1816. This building was once right at the harbourside of the town. It served a multitude of purposes, with a court, council chamber, prison and police department. The steeple is 150' high and at the top is a weather vane in the form of a fully-rigged sailing ship. The building was refurbished in the 1990s and now houses the town's Library.



26 Provost's Lamp (to side of building)

Port Glasgow became a burgh in 1775. The town [coat of arms](#) includes the arms of Glasgow on the sails of a three-masted ship. The Latin inscription on the lamp reads - *Ter et Quarter anno Revisens Aequor Atlanticum Impune* which means - three and four times a year revisiting the Atlantic with impunity. This is a reference to Port Glasgow's timber trade with North America.

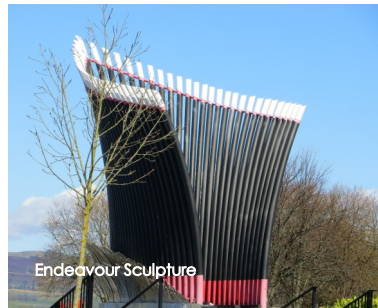


27 Port Glasgow War Memorial

A [memorial](#) to those from Port Glasgow who lost their lives in World War I and World War II. A full list of names on the memorial can be found [online](#).

28 Endeavour Sculpture

By [Malcolm Robertson](#), this sculpture celebrates the town's proud shipbuilding heritage. The colours are those of the [Cunard](#) shipping line, whose Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth and the QE2 (amongst many other ships) were built on Clydeside and had connections with Port Glasgow. The sculpture seems to take the shape of the bow of a proud ship as she slips through the waves.



This concludes our Port Glasgow Heritage Walk.



Transport links for Port Glasgow -
Train - [Scotrail](#)
Bus - [McGill's](#) & [Stagecoach](#)
Port Glasgow has ample [car parking](#) facilities.

