



# Galston Heritage Trail

History of Galston

Complimentary copy



Galston

## Location 1: Parish Church

Leave the side gate of the church in Brewland Street and walk to the corner past the cafe and turn left. Continue past the front gate of the church to

## Location 2: The Cross

Cross over the pedestrian crossing outside the butcher's shop and enter

## Location 3: Church Lane

Continue along Church Lane and at the end, where it meets Polwarth Street turn left to the front of

## Location 4: Brown's Institute

Continue to the left and reach, at the top of the rise,

## Location 5: The Muckle Bridge

Retrace your steps and continue along Polwarth Street towards the Four Corners, cross to the left at the Pedestrian Crossing to Henrietta Street and then right to the crossing for Wallace Street. Walk along Wallace Street past the chemist and the Wee Train Public House and bear left into Station Road. At the first corner, turn left into Bentinck Street and walk along to

## Location 6: St Sophia's Church

Retrace your route to Station Road and at the corner turn left, walk on uphill to the corner with Duke Street and in front is

## Location 7: The War Memorial

From the War Memorial turn right along Duke Street to the corner with Belvedere View. This brings you to

## Location 8: Once the site of the Railway Station

Turn around and go back to the War Memorial. Cross the street, look both ways carefully, and go down the lane at the side of the vacant plot of land. [The infants school, Barr School once stood there.] At the bottom turn right and follow the path bearing to the right. This leads to

## Location 9: The Barr Castle

Cross carefully to the car park side and turn left along Barr Street. Halfway along on the grassy area on the right is

## Location 10: The Mining Memorial

Continue along Barr Street to the bridge and turn left into Cemetery Road. A short distance along on the right is

## Location 11: Grant's Factory

Turn round and walk back along the pavement in Cemetery Road to the bridge. Cross straight over and walk forward up the hill beside the Burn Annan and into Glebe Road. At the top of the slope and once round the corner is

## Location 12: Once the site of two schools, the Higher Grade on the left and the Primary on the right

Continue on down Glebe Road on the right hand pavement, bear to the right at the bottom and then turn right opposite Dunblane Gardens. This brings you to

## Location 13: The Old Co-operative building

You are now back where you started, opposite the side gate of the church



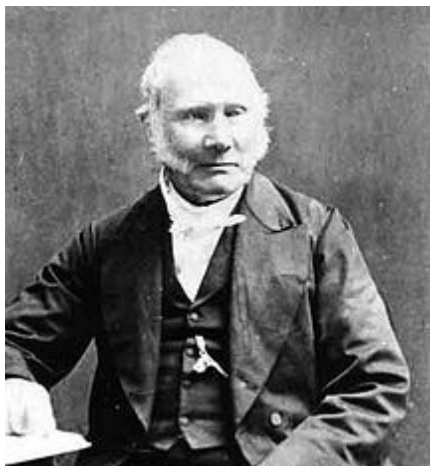
## 1 Galston Parish Church

The site of the present church has been a place of Christian worship since 1252 as one of five churches belonging to the Monastery of Fail. This would have been the beginnings of Galston as a settlement.



A full list of ministers since the Reformation in 1563 is achieved in the Session House. Amongst these notable ministers are:

- Alexander Blair (1643-1674), imprisoned for supporting the Covenanting Cause.
- Dr George Smith (1778-1823) who is immortalised by Robert Burns in the poem 'The Holy Fair' and was great grandfather of Robert Louis Stevenson.
- Dr Robert Stirling (1824-1878), who gained fame as inventor of the Stirling Engine.



The present church was built in 1809 at a cost of £3 200. The architect was John Brash from Glasgow. The spire is 38 metres in height making it the main landmark in Galston. Inside the church at the rear of the chancel stained glass windows form part of a memorial to church members who died in the First World War. These were gifted to the church by John Littlejohn, coal master and elder and were dedicated in 1920. The outbreak of World War 1 led to many members of the church marching off to war. Additionally the church became involved in the events of the war in a more unusual way; helping support over 100 refugees from Belgium who lived and worked in Galston from 1914 to 1919.



After the war on their return to Belgium several people kept in touch. A flag stitched

by women who had been refugees in Galston was presented to the people of the town in 1919. In 1964 several of these women returned to Galston; it was then discovered the flag had disappeared. For 30 years its whereabouts remained a mystery until it was discovered in a cupboard in a council building in Kilmarnock. After some negotiation it was returned to Galston for restoration. Madame Irene Steenackers, a granddaughter of one of the original refugees handed over the flag at a service in the church on Armistice Sunday 1995. It now hangs proudly in its rightful place on a wall behind the pews.

## 2 The Cross/Bridge Street/ Four Corners

For centuries Galston was confined to the old 'Kirk Toun' by the parish church (The Cross, Church Lane then a drover's road and the area around Bridge Street and Brewland Street). Galston Cross was the site of the Mercat Cross and horse trough. This focal point of the town hosted agricultural fairs and celebratory events and was a place for people to meet. During the 19th century the hub of the town developed around the 'Four Corners' at the end of Bridge Street with hotels, public house, shops and workplaces throughout. This area thrived until the late 20th century. Traffic congestion along with the loss of industry and changing shopping habits contributed to the general decline of the area with many businesses closing leaving empty units and gap sites where unwanted and unsafe buildings have been demolished. Today there is a realisation that many of the buildings around this central area have historic value, conservation and restoration are now seen as the future for this area.



## 3 Church Lane

The Trinitarian Order of Friars from the monastery at Fail, established the parish church in Galston in the 13th century. An old drove road linked Fail and the seven mile journey to the church, continuing along what is now Church Lane, fording the river near the Muckle Brig then winding its way over the Eaglesham Moor to Glasgow. From Galston another track branched off to Edinburgh. Galston was a convenient stopping point en route; therefore some habitation including a few houses, a tavern for overnight stopovers grew around the church and drove road. Later the drove road to the river was known as Kirk Toun (a toll road) and to the right was the entrance to the Black Bull Hotel, a coaching inn on the route to Glasgow and Lanarkshire. The Black Bull still exists today and is now known as The Sporan, the entrance now on Bridge Street. By the mid-19th century the road was renamed Pye Lane after Mr Pye the Toll Keeper. As the motor car developed Church Lane (as it's



now known) became too narrow to be the town's main thoroughfare, Bridge Street became the main route. By the 1980's the area around Bridge Street was very congested, the solution was for a bypass to be built.

## 4 Brown's Institute

Brown's Institute in Polwarth Street adjacent to the Muckle Brig was built in 1864 with a gift of money from Miss Martha Brown of Lanfine Estate. Around this time institutes for working men were springing up around the country providing facilities for education and recreation at little or no cost. In Galston it was especially popular with local miners.



There was a reading room facilitating classes in reading, writing and arithmetic and occasional lectures in politics. Leisure activities included pool, darts and cards. By providing these facilities it was hoped that it would keep the men away from the numerous public houses where many would often drink away the bulk of their wages. Today the building is part of Balmoral Knitwear which includes a café. It can be said that Martha Brown's wish to have a place for Galstonians to meet and socialise continues to this day.



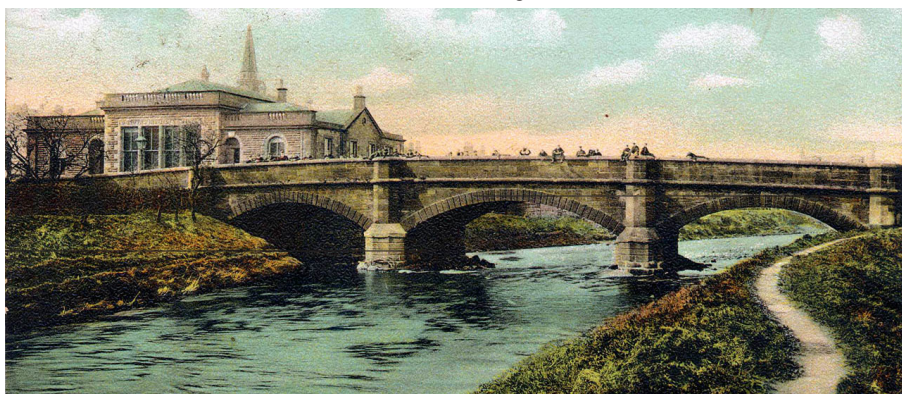
## 5 The Muckle Brig

Timothy Pont, a famous 16th century map maker mapped two roads over the Burn Anne (Burnawn) in Galston. This is the first evidence of any bridges in the then village. In 1640 a bridge was built over the Burn Anne to connect the east and west sides of the town to allow greater expansion of the settlement. There may have been some basic crossings of the River Irvine around this time but none were recorded.



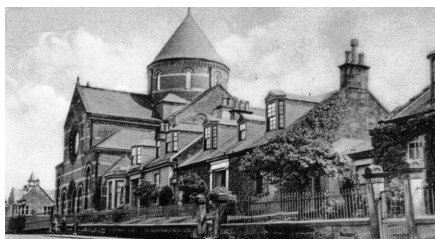


By the early 19th century there is recorded evidence of a narrow bridge over the River Irvine. In 1839 a three span suspension bridge known as Galston Bridge or The Muckle Bridge was constructed replacing a ford, built from sandstone with three arches which helps give it strength. At this time it was seen as a major structure and a feat of engineering. Stone from the Gauchalland Quarry was used. To commemorate its construction Hugh Brown, master at then Barr School performed the opening ceremony. It descended into commotion as Captain Patrick, factor at Loudoun interrupted Brown's fiery speech. The bridge has stood the test of time and many floods including the Big Flood of 1846. In 1921 it suffered damage during flooding to two arches but was soon repaired. This date is marked on the bridge as well as others during various floods.



## 6 St Sophia's Church

The 1851 census shows that immigration from Ireland to Ayrshire was increasing rapidly, 11% of the county's population had been born in Ireland. Work in weaving and coal mines in the Irvine Valley attracted Irish immigrants in their hundreds. Until this time there had been little need for a catholic church, initially those of Roman Catholic religion had to walk to Kilmarnock to attend Mass. The catholic congregation then purchased a former weavers shop near the parish church to celebrate mass, it was soon realised more spacious accommodation would be needed. John Patrick Crichton-Stuart, 3rd Marquis of Bute, a frequent visitor to Loudoun Castle, funded (£60 000) the construction of St Sophia's Church which opened on Christmas Eve 1886 for midnight mass. In 2003 a refurbishment programme took place costing up to £1,000,000.



## 7 War Memorial

The Great War (World War 1) was fought from 1914 – 1918. It was the first global conflict and centred in Europe, mainly France and Belgium. Refugees from Belgium took shelter in Galston during World War 1. The people of Galston also supported the War effort by raising large sums of money to pay for eight warplanes to which the town's name was attached.



The number of deaths of service personnel from the United Kingdom was around 900,000. As a result of the vast number of deaths it was decided that every city, town and village should have a War Memorial to commemorate the events and casualties of World War 1. The Irvine Valley News published a Roll of Honour in January 1919 listing those from Galston who sacrificed their lives during World War 1. By February three architects submitted their drawings and design for a war memorial to be sited at one of eight locations around the town.

inscribed on bronze plaques on three sides. On the fourth side would be a memorial plaque. The memorial cost around £2 000 and was funded from Galstonians near and far, local business and the Red Cross. A dedication service took place on 3rd December 1922. In 1946 the World War 2 names were added.

## 8 Station Road & The Belgian Refugees

Scotland's first railway ran from Kilmarnock to Troon, transporting coal to the coast and beyond. In 1848 this railway was extended to Galston opening up more coalfields around the town. As well as transporting coal the railway helped connect Galston with other places and indeed the wider world, none more so when it acted as a staging post for the arrival of the Belgian Refugees during World War 1.

At a well-attended service at Galston Parish Church in September 1914, Revd. Hogg gave an account of the suffering and losses inflicted upon the peoples of Belgium by the invading German Army. The shocked parishioners indicated they wished to ease their plight by offering homes, work and help. By November the first refugees, eighteen adults and four children arrived by train. Excited crowds thronged the streets from the station all the way to the town centre to greet them. They stayed at the railway station and housing on Polwarth Street amongst other places.



The railway was extended up the Irvine Valley from Galston as far as Strathaven. At its peak twelve trains a day travelled from Kilmarnock. Sadly with the advent of the Beeching Report this railway was axed in 1964 and no trace of the original station is left. The houses beyond the telephone exchange is where the railway station was sited.





## 9 Barr Castle

Recent evidence indicates that Barr Castle dates back to 1305 seat of the Lockhart family (who held the Barony of Galston) until 1670. Reformers John Knox and George Wishart both preached here in the mid-16th century under protection from the Lockart family having been refused permission to hold a service in the parish church. Barr Castle is famed for the game of Handba' played by miners against the wall of the castle. This game appears to originate in Galston and can best be likened to squash. However there were three players in each team and the ball was made from wool wrapped round a round rubber core which had an outer layer of pigskin. Bare footed miners enjoyed the playing the game after being cooped underground all day. Today it's only the keep of the castle which remains. It has been modernised and has several uses, upper floor a museum containing artefacts, paintings and photos depicting the social history of Galston.



## 10 Galston Coal Mining Memorial

At the beginning of the 19th century Galston's character and appearance began to change from a textile and agricultural centre to a major coal mining area. The arrival of the railway from Kilmarnock in 1848 allowed new coal seams to open up. Towards the end of the 19th century Galston had fifteen pits around the town employing around one thousand miners. (a warren of disused mines lies far below the streets) This brought wealth to the town allowing significant expansion and bound generations of the town's people together. The 20th Century saw the decline of mining locally and the last pit (Maxwood Pit)



sadly closed in 1933. The Goatfoot Colliery was situated where the Barrwood Gate housing development on the main road to Kilmarnock is now sited. Deep coal mining was dangerous and treacherous, many lost their lives. In 2009 the Galston Memorial Cairn was dedicated to the memory of the men and boys who died in the local mining industry.



## 11 Grant's Food Factory

Galston became vibrant during the Victorian Era due to industrial growth. A gradual decline began between the two wars; farming was less lucrative, the textile industry was few and far between and the mining in the area fell into decline. This continued into the later part of the 20th century. Grant's was founded in 1885 by two brothers who set up a family butchers shop in Glasgow. As the business expanded the business moved to Galston with easy access to fresh local produce. Grant's is an example of local industry in Galston that has sprung up in place of more traditional industries that have been lost. One of Grant's most popular products is tinned haggis which many chefs around the world use for catering at Burns Suppers.



## 12 Galston Schools

Up to the mid 19th Century, education was not compulsory. Galston parish Church and Erskine Church provided schools but only those who could afford to pay the fees. In 1841 Charles Blair set up a free school for children from poorer families. He made his money by owning a local Lint Mill. The school had an Education Trust which provided each pupil with school clothing and £5 for the top boy and top girl leaving school each year. George Paterson was the first school master and held the post for over 30 years. He is buried in Loudoun Kirkyard. The Blair School can still be seen in Polwarth Street. The Education Act of 1872 meant free schooling for all. This resulted in all children going to these schools: Barr School - Primary 1-2.

- Burnside School – up to age 12 (1910 age increased).
- Higher Grade School – up to age 14 until 1972 when Loudoun Academy opened. It then became a Junior



Secondary finally becoming Galston Primary School. Galston Primary moved to a new site on Western Road in 2010.

- Roman Catholic Education began with St Sophia's Primary in 1884 next to St Sophia's Church, later moving to Nelville Drive and soon to Western Road.

## 13 The Co-operative

A Co-operative is where a group of businesses trade together for the mutual benefit for all. Commonly this includes distributing a share of profits according to purchases through a scheme which became to be known as 'the divi'. It is thought that one of the first Cooperative groups in the world was the Fenwick Weavers' Society formed in Fenwick in 1761 to sell discounted oatmeal to local workers. The first modern Co-op was founded in 1844 by the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers. Mostly weavers they set up their own store to sell food they otherwise could not afford.

In 1901 the Central Premises of the Co-operative Society opened in Brewland Street. Retail shops on the ground floor included a drapery, hosiery, shoe repairs, tailoring, grocers, fishmonger, house furnishing and a bank. Upper floors accommodated dressmakers and a cobblers workshops, also a bank, the Board Room and a hall with kitchen facilities. Many functions indeed weddings took place in the Co-operative Hall. The Co-op logo of a beehive can be identified on the front of the building.

There were four other branches of the Co-op in town, one shop issued the society's token in lieu of money which could be used to pay for coal. None of these Co-op shops remain, the branch in Brewland Street is now flats. However Galston does have a modern branch of the Co-op sited at its northern outskirts..



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