



# Dumbarton Heritage Trail



# Dumbarton Heritage Trail

The Dumbarton Town Centre Trail highlights features of history, architecture and industry, which combine to shape our environment. The circular walk should take about 1½ hours, starting and finishing at Dumbarton Central Station, which has regular services\* to Glasgow, Helensburgh, Balloch and the West Highland Line. Numbered points on the route will be marked by descriptive plaques on buildings, and by signage. Points of interest near the route are described in this leaflet as 'nearby'. Where appropriate, Historic Scotland's 'listed building' categories are noted, as are telephone numbers, access and website details for facilities open to the public. Notable points of interest near the circular route are also described in this leaflet.

The Dark Age **Alcluth** (later, in Gaelic, **Dun Breatann**) grew from the prehistoric fortress of the Britons – the 240ft high volcanic plug upon which evolved Dumbarton Castle, which has a longer history as a fortress than any other site in Britain. This was the ancient capital of the independent Kingdom of Strathclyde from the 5th century until 1018. There are structures dating from the 14th century onwards, and the Castle offers gun batteries, exciting fortifications, a fine Georgian Governor's House and wonderful views. While the Castle is not part of the circular route, its national importance is undeniable; as redevelopment proceeds, a river walkway from the town centre to the Castle will be provided.

## DUMBARTON CASTLE OPENING ARRANGEMENTS

### Summer

1 Apr – 30 Sep, 9.30am to 5.30pm,  
Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun

### October

1 Oct – 31 Oct, 9.30am to 4.30pm,  
Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun

### Winter

1 Nov – 31 Mar, 9.30am to 4.30pm,  
Mon Tue Wed Sat Sun

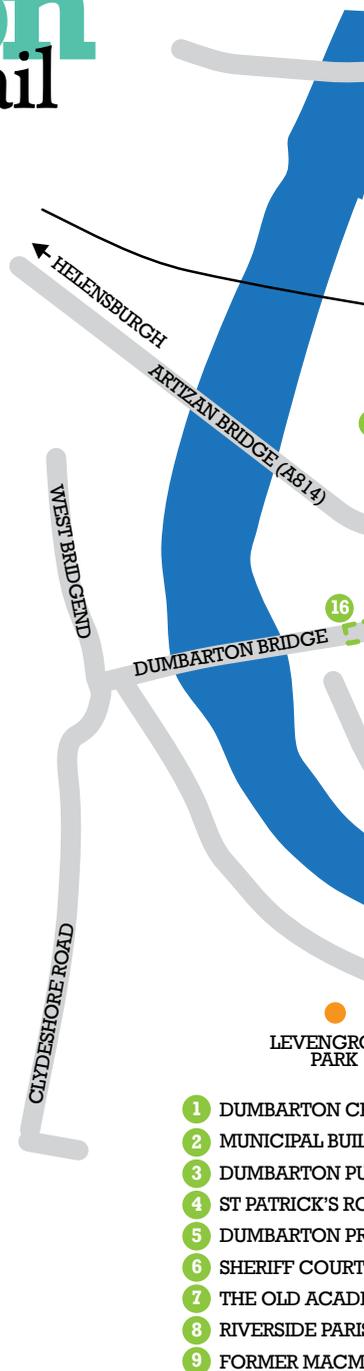
### Admission prices

All year: Adult £4.50, Child £2.70,  
Concession £3.60

### Contact

Tel: 01389 732167

[www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk)



- 1 DUMBARTON CASTLE
- 2 MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS
- 3 DUMBARTON PARK
- 4 ST PATRICK'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
- 5 DUMBARTON PRISON
- 6 SHERIFF COURT
- 7 THE OLD ACADEMY
- 8 RIVERSIDE PARK
- 9 FORMER MACMILLAN HOUSE

\* National Rail Enquiries: 0845 7484950  
First Scotrail: [www.firstgroup.com/scotrail](http://www.firstgroup.com/scotrail)



A82 LOCH LOMOND ←

A82 GLASGOW →

DUMBARTON CENTRAL STATION

DUMBARTON COMMON

STATION ROAD

TOWNEND RD

BONHILL ROAD

CHURCH STREET

STRATHLEVEN PLACE

GLASGOW ROAD

A81 GLASGOW →

HIGH STREET

CASTLE ST

MARITIME MUSEUM DENNY TANK

LEVEN STREET

RIVER LEVEN

DUMBARTON CASTLE

CASTLE ROAD

CENTRAL STATION  
BUILDINGS  
PUBLIC LIBRARY  
C CHURCH  
PRISON  
HOUSE  
EMY  
SH CHURCH  
MILLAN SHIPYARD OFFICES

- 10 FORMER BRITISH LINEN BANK
- 11 ST AUGUSTINE'S SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH
- 12 FORMER SAVINGS BANK OF GLASGOW
- 13 FORMER BURTON'S BUILDING
- 14 GLENCAIRN GREIT HOUSE
- 15 FORMER FREE HIGH CHURCH
- 16 DUMBARTON BRIDGE
- 17 SITE OF THE DUMBARTON GLASSWORKS

As the strategic town at the confluence of the rivers Clyde and Leven, at what was once the highest navigable point on the Clyde, Dumbarton gained supremacy and financial security as a Customs port. When Glasgow won control of shipping in the 18th century, Dumbarton adopted its first true industry – glassmaking. This prevailed until the mid-19th century, when commercial shipbuilding intensified.

**High Street** follows the line of the mediaeval street which ran parallel to the River Leven. Narrow ‘burgage strips’ ran to the river’s edge, with vennels or wynds (like Quay Pend) giving access to the High Street. Such strips of land typically ran at right angles to the main streets in mediaeval towns; they had narrow fronts, long thin courtyards and connecting alleyways at the back; houses or shops were usually at the front facing onto the street, with workshops and yards at the rear. The south side of the street still retains an eclectic mix of building types, although some are in poor condition, and others have had unsympathetic modern additions.

Recent years have seen considerable industrial decline, but with the completion of the Lomond Shores and Millennium Link Canal projects, and a £-multi-million regeneration of the town centre in prospect, Dumbarton is looking forward to an improved future.

**Acknowledgement is made of the detailed architectural information in ‘The Buildings of Scotland – Stirling and Central Scotland’ by John Gifford & Frank Arneil Walker (Yale University Press), which is recommended reading.**



Municipal Buildings

### 1 *Dumbarton Central Station*

1896, by Formans & McCall, (Listed ‘A’)

Dumbarton Central Station was built west of the original station of 1854 serving the Bowling to Balloch Railway of 1850. It was owned by the Dumbarton and Balloch Joint Line Committee, which also owned the track between Hartfield and Dalreoch junctions. It had uniforms for the staff – but owned no rolling stock, and the Company uniquely remained independent until nationalisation in 1948. With faux pink sandstone walls supporting the high-level tracks, crenellated parapets, mock cross gun loops and Tudor-arched windows, the structure promises more delight than it delivers. However, parts of the extensive buildings were renovated in 1992, and the welcome smell of coffee now greets passengers.

College Bow





Dumbarton Public Library

## 2 *Municipal Buildings*

**1899-03, by James Thomson Jnr. of Baird & Thomson, Glasgow, (Listed 'B')**

This is a good example of native Scots Baronial-Jacobean architecture. The building houses the District Court, a debating chamber and administrative offices, and has been recently renovated. In front of the main entrance stands the bronze statue of Dr Peter Denny (1898, by Hamo Thorneycroft RA, Listed 'B'); bas-relief panels on the pedestal depict aspects of shipbuilding and engineering. Close by stands the College Bow (Listed 'B'), the last remnant of the Collegiate Church of St. Mary, founded c. 1453-4 by Lady Isabella, Countess of Lennox and Duchess of Albany. In pre-Reformation days the church educated the sons of the gentry. The fragmentary ruins of the Church and its hospital were obliterated when Dumbarton Central Station was built. The three Burmese cannon on the lawns nearby – known as 'MacFarlan's Hurdles' – were presented to the town by Provost Robert MacFarlan to commemorate the opening of the Municipal Buildings.

## *Dumbarton Common*

13 acres of reclaimed lagoon designated by ancient charter as common land. Once, it was known as The Drowned Lands, and ferrymen were employed to navigate its tidal area. Part of The Common was recently threatened by development, but local people won a landmark case at the Court of Session in 1996, when it was declared that Dumbarton Common should remain a vital recreational amenity for all time.

## 3 *Dumbarton Public Library, Strathleven Place* **1908-10, by William Reid, architect, Dumbarton**

Andrew Carnegie funded this Renaissance-style rusticated building, built in white Dalreoch sandstone, with good internal joinery and plasterwork. The extension of 1968 does no architectural favours to the original. In sad isolation is a bell-shaped tablet dated 1732 and 1790; this stone was originally part of the Collegiate Church of St. Mary and was later used in the 18th century 'MacKenzie House' in the High Street before being placed above the emergency exit on the 1968 extension.

**Regular hours**

**Tel: 01389 608050**

**[www.west-dumbarton.gov.uk/education-and-learning](http://www.west-dumbarton.gov.uk/education-and-learning)**

**4** *St. Patrick's R.C. Church, Strathleven Place*

**1901-03, by Dunn & Hansom, of Newcastle, with tower and apse of 1926 by Pugin & Pugin, (Listed 'B')**

St. Patrick's is of rough-faced red Dumfries sandstone, with ashlar dressings. The interior furnishings are particularly good, and include a fine rainbow-winged sculpture of St. Michael the Archangel by Eric Gill. The church also has a noted carillon of 23 bells, the first of its kind in Scotland. St. Patrick's was the first building in Dumbarton to be lit by electricity.

**Tel: 01389 762503**

**[www.stpatricksdumbarton.org.uk](http://www.stpatricksdumbarton.org.uk)**

**5** *Dumbarton Prison, Maclean Place*

**1824-26, by James Gillespie Graham, (Listed 'B')**

The prison was opened in the rowdy aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. The last execution took place here in 1875, and after the prison closed in 1883 the building became a Council records store, before lying derelict until demolition in 1973. A portico, Coat of Arms and two cell windows remain in the existing wall.

**6** *Sheriff Court House, Church Street*

**1824-26, by James Gillespie Graham and Robert Scott, (Listed 'B')**

This pavilion-roofed Georgian mansion was originally a jail and court house, replacing the Old Tolbooth of 1640 on the High Street; it was later used as Dumbarton County Buildings. Balustraded wings in similar style were added in 1865 by William Spence; further extensions with a Venetian window were added in 1895, and a courtyard block and Council Chamber in 1905. Good internal detail remains. Substantial external and interior refurbishments were completed in 2009, along with a modern rear extension.

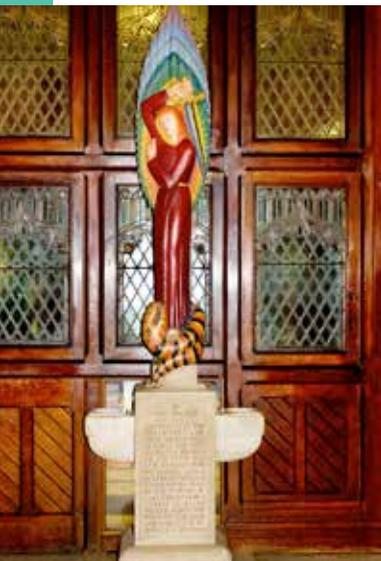
**7** *The Old Academy, Church Street*

**1864-66, by William Leiper; (originally Listed 'A')**

The walls and tower are all that remain of the original Burgh Hall. One of the best examples of Leiper's work, the building was badly damaged by fire in 1882, but restored by the architect. This French Gothic Revival building became Dumbarton Academy, and successively an Art School, primary school, police station, and commercial offices. Destroyed by fire in 1976, the original Burgh Hall to the rear housed stage productions,

St. Michael the Archangel

Dumbarton Prison





Sherrif Court House



Riverside Parish Church

concerts, dancing, boxing matches, public meetings and cinema. The remaining listed building was badly neglected, and when restoration as an arts centre proved prohibitively expensive, 'façade retention' was its fate.

**8** *Riverside Parish Church, High Street*  
1810-11, by John Brash, (Listed 'A')

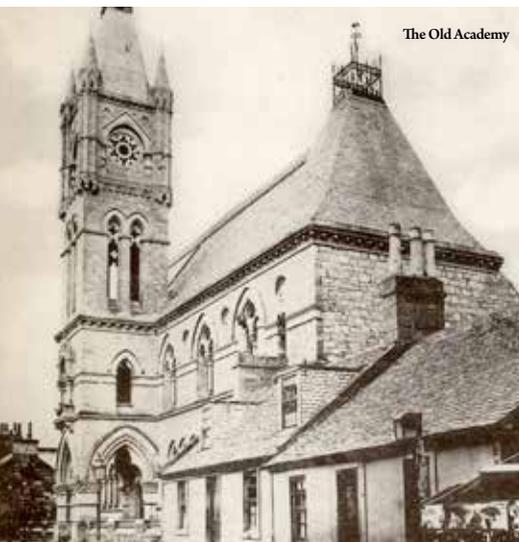
The present church, originally Dumbarton Parish Church, replaced a 16th century church, itself on the site of a 14th century building. The classically severe structure, with two-stage steeple and illuminated clock-faces, dominates the High Street. An original, more ornate, design had been considered too costly. The church contains some notable stained glass.

**Open 09.30-12.30 weekdays**  
**Tel: 01389 742551**

*The Denny Ship Model Experiment Tank*  
Castle Street, 1882, (Listed 'A')

The world's first commercial ship model experiment tank contains 1.75 million litres of water. It was built for the Denny Shipyard. The Castle St. wall bears a sculpted memorial to William Froude, 'the greatest of experimenters and investigators of hydrodynamics'. Now part of the Scottish Maritime Museum; visitors may try their hand at working a wax hull model, and other activities. Near the entrance stands the engine of 'P.S. Leven', designed by Robert Napier in 1824 and built by James Lang of Dumbarton.

**[www.scottishmaritimemuseum.org](http://www.scottishmaritimemuseum.org)**  
**Museum open Mon-Sat 10.00-16.00; entry charge;**  
**Tel: 01389 763444**



The Old Academy



### *The Denny Shipyard Site*

The shipyard was established in 1867 between Castle Street and the Castle itself (including the site of the present football ground) after vacating a site across the River Leven at Woodyard (where Dumbarton's shipbuilding probably began in the reign of James IV c.1488-1513). Many and various were Denny's 'firsts': steel-hulled ship; passenger turbine; and first all-welded ship. Perhaps best-known is the tea-clipper 'Cutty Sark', begun by Scott & Linton at Woodyard. The builder, Hercules Linton, failed financially, and the ship was completed by Denny in 1869: she is berthed at Greenwich, re-opened to the public following a disastrous fire. The Denny Shipyard closed in 1963, and the offices and the entire shipyard site have been razed. Some new housing has been built, and remaining areas await regeneration. It is to be hoped that interpretation of the Denny Shipyard can be incorporated in any redevelopment plan.

### **9** *Former Macmillan Shipyard Offices* **3 High Street; 1881-88**

The Italianate offices for the important Macmillan Shipyard later became the offices of Hiram Walker, the Canadian distiller taken over by Allied Distillers in 1988. It

subsequently became a rather unhappy, badly altered classical building (witness the concrete attic storey); after a vacant period, it became the offices of the Procurator Fiscal and more recently a public house.

### *Site of Former Dumbarton Distillery* **1937-38**

The Canadian company Hiram Walker & Son built the grain distillery, bottling & blending plant and warehousing. Their site (the former Macmillan Shipyard, dating from 1845) was adjacent to the former Parish Church. The seven storeys of naked red brick wholly dominated the town centre; however following closure in 2002, the distillery and offices were largely demolished in preparation for a much-delayed regeneration of the riverside.

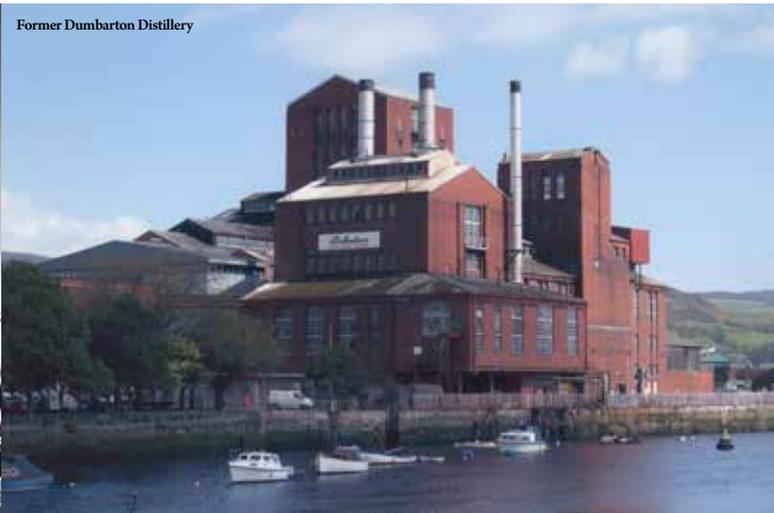
### **10** *Former British Linen Bank*

**17 High Street; 1897-98, by J. Dick Peddie & George Washington Browne; (Listed 'B')**

This charming pink sandstone building in Late Gothic style was built originally for the British Linen Bank. Intricate detailed stonework survives, including Elephant & Castle motifs above the arched doorway. Since being vacated by the Bank of Scotland, the building has been redeveloped as a public house.



The Cutty Sark



Former Dumbarton Distillery

**11** *St. Augustine's Scottish Episcopal Church*  
1871-73, **Sir Robert Rowand Anderson**, (Listed 'A')

The church seems hemmed-in, presenting only its decorated Gothic gable to High Street. If the exterior is rather disappointing, the interior is said to be among Anderson's finest, and recent Lottery and Historic Scotland funding has enabled substantial refurbishment. A parsonage and hall by A. C. Denny are now demolished. Scotland's great Art Nouveau architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh married Margaret Macdonald here in 1900.

Tel: 01389 734514  
[www.staugustinesdumbarton.co.uk](http://www.staugustinesdumbarton.co.uk)

**12** *Former Savings Bank Of Glasgow*  
12 High Street; 1938, by **Eric Sutherland**

This modern building of quality was built for The Savings Bank of Glasgow, whose name is sculpted on the stone façade. This is an elegant but narrow, three-bay Classical Art Deco building with fine, simple, recessed windows. An obtrusive plastic corporate box fascia spoils its superb main elevation.

**13** *Former Burton's Building*  
85 High Street

The High Street is rich in provincial Art Deco buildings; at No. 61, the former City Bakeries of 1926 had an upper storey of cream tiles with coloured chevron ornaments. At the corner of Quay Street, the original

Burton's shop of 1937 reinforces the effect: these traditional menswear shops often had billiard saloons on the upper floors. This particular shop stands on the site of one of Dumbarton's most illustrious buildings: The Elephant Hotel, built in 1762 by John Brown, was sometimes known as The Town's Hotel, and stood until the 1930's. This was where important visitors would be accommodated, and where much official carousing and politicking occurred. At No. 97, the former Woolworths building of 1939 completed the Art Deco group.

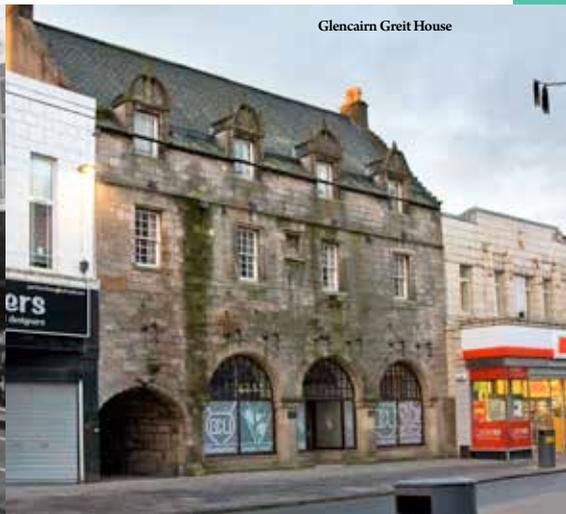
**14** *Glencairn Greit House*  
1623, (Listed 'B')

Next to the Burton's building stands the oldest house in Dumbarton. Glencairn Greit House was built as the town house of the Earls of Glencairn and later the Dukes of Argyll. Although in poor physical condition, this is a good example of 17th century Scottish domestic architecture, and Dumbarton would have had several similar houses. It stood beside the Mercat Cross, and faced up Cross Vennel, or College Street. The ground floor is characterised by three round arches, and a fourth that opens to a vaulted passage, Quay Pend, leading to the River Leven. The upper floors have been much altered and underused; after use in recent years as a gas showroom and social work offices, Dumbarton Credit Union now occupies the ground floor.

Burton's



Glencairn Greit House





Dumbarton Bridge

### 15 *Former Free High Church*

1863-64, by **John Honeyman, architect**, (Listed 'B')

The former church still makes a strong contribution to the riverfront skyline, with the spire 'rising in forgotten denominational rivalry' with the Parish Church steeple at the other end of High Street. This building – whose style, according to contemporary professional opinion, was Early English Gothic 'of similar character to older parts of Lincoln Cathedral' – is now a Leisure Centre and Indoor Market, with a number of unsympathetic commercial additions and other indifferent modern buildings in its vicinity.

### 16 *Dumbarton Bridge*

As early as 1682, the Convention of Burghs discussed the bridging of the River Leven. It was the mid 18th century before the Duke of Argyll, anxious to obtain access to Glasgow from his properties in Argyll and at Rosneath, provided funding. In 1765 John Brown of Dumbarton built this fine bridge (Listed 'B') at the site of a ferry crossing. Having five segmental arches with rounded cutwaters, the bridge resulted in the extension of

Dumbarton to West Bridgend and beyond. In 1884, footpaths and balustrades were added, supported on cantilevered iron brackets. Extensive if indifferent repairs have more recently been made.

### *Levensgrove Park*

Crossing Dumbarton Bridge from the town centre and turning second left brings the visitor to Clydeshire Road, a fine approach to the superb Levensgrove Park. Inside the main gate, there is a whimsical, Tudoresque Lodge of 1884 with decorative plasterwork, timbered gables and veranda framed by ogee-headed arches. The beautiful, well-tended 150-acre Park, lying between the rivers Leven and Clyde, was originally the estate of the Dixon family, owners of the town's glassworks. Later, the Denny and Macmillan shipbuilding families donated Levensgrove Estate to the town in 1885, allegedly to thwart the American Singer Sewing Machine Co from buying the site and poaching their workers. Robert Burns stayed in the opulent (but now long-demolished) Levensgrove House in June 1787 on the occasion of his being made a Burgess and Freeman of Dumbarton.



Old Dmbarton Glassworks

Kirktonhill was laid out in the late 1870's, away from the bustle and smoke of the shipyards. Here stood the mansions of the shipbuilders and marine engineers. Of note are Methlan Park (1880, John MacLeod), Garmoyle (1890, Burnet Son & Campbell) and Helenslee (1866, John Honeyman). Helenslee, built for Peter Denny on part of an earlier house by Rochead, was the home of Keil School since 1926, but after the school closed in July 2000 the building became the centre of a modern development.

In the park, beside the River Clyde, stands an ashlar obelisk designed in 1920 by John Burnet as the town's war memorial. Near the centre of the park, almost hidden by trees, are the ruins of St. Serf's, the old Parish Church of Cardross. Here there are commemorative tablets to members of the Dixon family; here also some of the internal organs of King Robert the Bruce were buried after his death in 1329.

### **17** *Site of the Dumbarton Glassworks*

The High Street is linked beyond Bridge Street to the A814, which crosses the Leven by the Artizan Bridge of 1973. 'The Artizan' was the name given to the low, flat area

between Station Road and the River Leven now occupied by Dumbarton Health Centre. Here, in 1776 James Dunlop of Garnkirk established Dumbarton's first 'industry' – the glassworks. In its heyday, from 1800-1830's, it was one of the most important glassworks in Britain, producing 92.5% of all approved glass made in Scotland and employing three hundred workers. The 6-acre works were owned by the wealthy and influential Dixon family from 1817 until 1831, and by James Christie from 1837-50. The three typical glass cones dominated the site, as the industry dominated the town's economy. The glassworks was highly self-sufficient, and owned five coal-works, four tramways, two wharves, two bottle works, a brewery, farm and seven sailing vessels. By 1850, foreign imports flooded the market and the glassworks were closed, the site being sold to the partnership of Tulloch and Denny, who built a massive engine-works to serve the Denny shipyard. Thus, the baton of economic dominance passed from glass working to shipbuilding.

Following Station Road from the Health Centre the short distance back to Dumbarton Central Station completes the walk.



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This leaflet is one of a series of six Heritage Trails designed to guide you around some of the most fascinating local areas, and to indicate significant social, historical and architectural features. Each leaflet includes an annotated map, detailed narrative, and a number of images relating to the trail. Each leaflet will be available on the West Dunbartonshire Council website, at:  
[www.westdunbarton.gov.uk](http://www.westdunbarton.gov.uk)



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