

Taking the cycle path

Directions

Start from the main entrance of the **Royal Alexandra Hospital**, turn right onto the main road (Corsebar Road). You will pass a cricket ground on your left. As Corsebar Road rises up towards the traffic lights turn right into **Craw Road**. After a few yards turn left onto the cycle path. Take the path labelled to Lochwinnoch and Kilmaccolm. You will walk under the road then continue along the cycle path to the next bridge. Here take the spur off to the left and follow this up to the main road joining **Lounsdale Road** close to the junction with **Stranka Avenue**. Turn left and continue to the traffic lights. Turn right along Corsebar Road to the start.



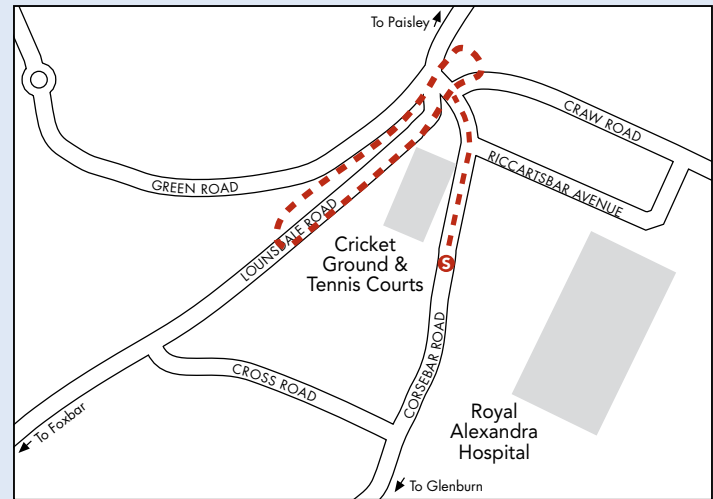
Taking the cycle path



walking to health

Distance: 1.3kms

Approximate time: 15 mins



A little local knowledge

If you had been here back at the beginning of the 19th Century you would have required water wings - the cycle path follows the line of the former Paisley Canal. The original intention was to build a canal from Ardrossan to Glasgow a distance of 32 miles, the first section from Glasgow to Johnstone was opened in 1810. At first it took an hour and fifty minutes to reach Glasgow but eventually lighter boats were used which could be pulled by two horses at the racy speed of ten miles per hour.

The coming of the railways eventually spelled the demise of the canals. At first the canals could compete but as train design improved and picked up speed the end for the canals was in sight. The last passenger excursion on the canal was in May 1882. The Canal was bought by Glasgow and South Western Railway Company. The water was drained away and track laid in the base of the canal. In 1885 the first train ran along the canal line.

Not only does the old railway line offer us a great place to walk and cycle it also allows animals to move from place to place undetected. It is often difficult to survive in the concrete jungle of the town or city especially if you are a mouse or a small bird. Food can be difficult to find and there is danger from machinery, cars and humans. The native plants along the cycle way are important throughout the year for many insects, animals and birds.

The Ferguslie Cotton Thread Mills grew up between the canal basin and the Candren Burn. The thread mill was owned by the Coats family and had been started by James Coats. When he retired his sons James and Peter took over the mill. However they didn't get a business handed to them on a plate, rather they had to pay their father rent of £500 each year.

They built the company up into a vast empire which spread around the world. They provided many benefits for their workers including a dining hall and a school. Thomas Coats contributed £10,000 to the building of the original Royal Alexandra Infirmary. Long before the days of national insurance they established a friendly benefit society to cover the workers in sickness and death. They also provided for their workers leisure time. In 1883 a meadow was acquired close to the mills. Here tennis courts, football and cricket pitches were laid out. These pitches lie between Lounsdale Road and the Royal Alexandra Hospital.

