

Over the top, and down to the Clyde: Kilmacolm to Langbank

This route follows an old right of way from Kilmacolm in neighbouring Inverclyde down to the Clyde. The first half is through green fields, where stone walls, woodlands and fields all combine to give that particular quality possessed by Renfrewshire's unspoilt countryside. Then tremendous views open out across the Firth of Clyde, with vistas to the Highlands, to Dunoon, and Glasgow. One of the best things is that there is more downhill than uphill !

Start and finish The walk starts at the main road junction in the centre of Kilmacolm, where Port Glasgow Road, Lochwinnoch Road, Bridge of Weir Road and Market Place meet (grid reference NS 358698). The walk finishes at Langbank railway station. If you come by car or bike, you will need to get back to Kilmacolm (see travel information below). Why not come by public transport and just hop on a train home?



Across the Clyde to the old Kilpatrick Hills

Distance 5.5 km (3.5 miles). Allow 2¹/₂ hours - more if you're taking a picnic or have to get back to Kilmacolm.

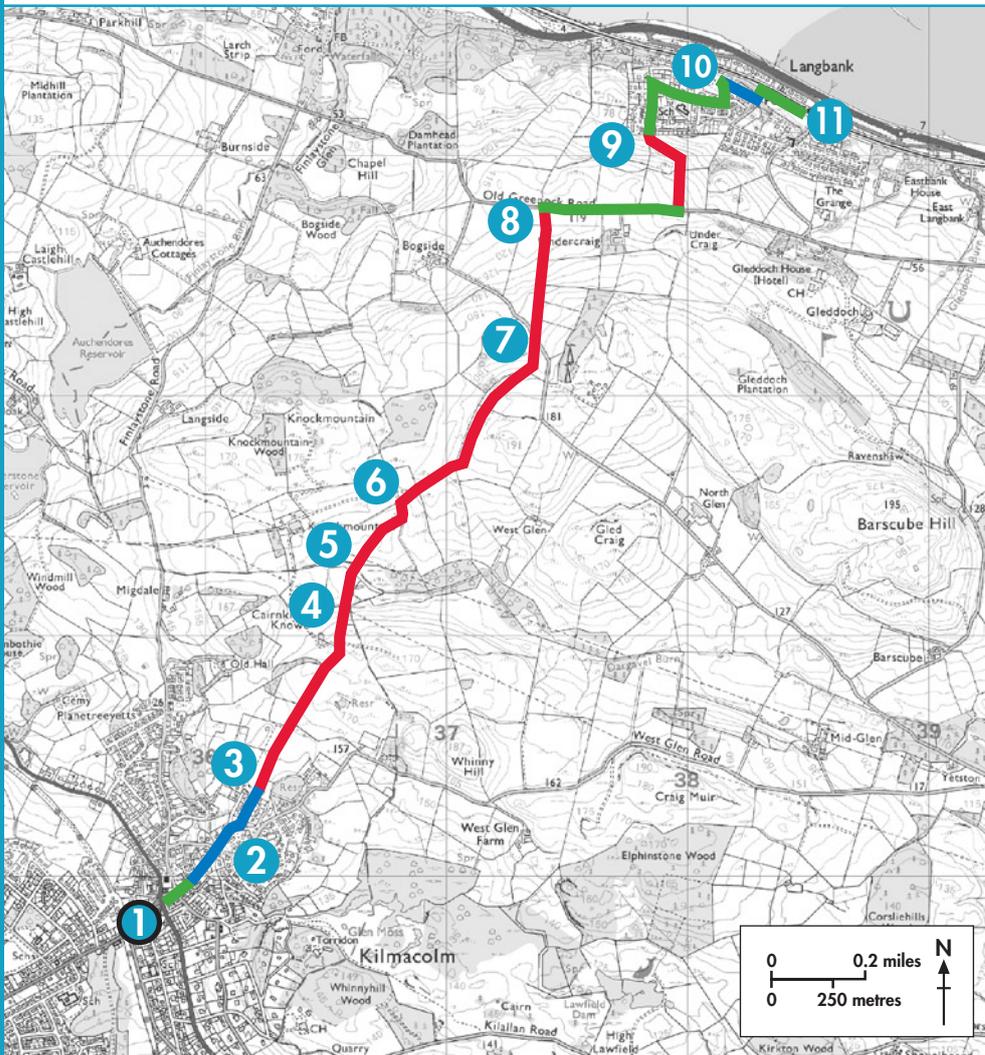
Terrain Mostly across grassy fields with no clear path, some stiles, with metal tubed treads with can turn when stood on. There are wet muddy sections, and occasional steep slopes. Boots required. Dogs must be kept on leads as many fields contain sheep or cattle.



The Clyde, with Dumbarton Rock and Ben Lomond

Kilmacolm to Langbank

1 From the junction, go up the Market Place between the Post Office and the optician. The road starts to curve round to the left after 50m. At this point, turn right up Barrs Brae (a steep cul-de-sac). At the top of Barrs Brae, carry straight on up the steep tarmac path. Cross the road carefully. Go up a short flight of steps, and continue on up Barrs Brae.



Kilmacolm's long history The name of the village (Kil-ma-colm) is Gaelic for Colm's church. Colm was St Columba – the Irish missionary from the sixth century AD who sailed across to Argyll, travelled the Isles, and founded the famous religious community on Iona. The first church was built in his memory in 570AD. Although that original church has long gone, a St Columba's Church does still stand on the site – if you look along Lochwinnoch Road from the start of the walk, you can see it on the left. The current church dates from 1903. This was a time when the character of the village was changing rapidly from a rural hamlet to a commuter town, following the opening of the railway between Glasgow St Enoch and Greenock Princess Pier in 1869.

2 100m further on you come to a junction. A black and white signpost points left to “Langbank and West Ferry Footpath Only”, along Langbank Drive. Follow this for 50m to the end of the road, ignoring Langbank Rise to the left. Next to the last house on the left is a pedestrian gate and stile. Go through the gate and along the path. Within a few metres you are in open countryside.



Dargavel Bog



Kilmacolm Church

Footsteps through the past. The old cast iron black and white signposts along the route give a clue as to how old this path is. Their quality also reveals how important the path was in the 19th century, before we could use cars, trains and buses to get around. In those days, rural people had to walk to get to another village or town. The path you're following predates the railways in both Kilmacolm and Langbank. It was an important link between the village of Kilmacolm and the ferry across the Clyde at West Ferry, a mile or so east of Langbank.

3 There is no clear path from this point, but the navigation is quite simple. Straight in front of you on the skyline is an electricity pylon to the right of a line of trees. Walk across the fields towards the pylon, crossing three low stone dykes. When you reach the right hand end of the line of trees (about 750m), go over a stile in the wall and fence in front of you. There is another wall and fence running alongside you – keep these on your right as you go downhill. The wall and fence soon bend to the left. Keep to the left of the wall and fence, ignoring the pylon which is now on your right. At the bottom of the slope, you will come to a stile, footbridge and stile in quick succession.

4 After crossing the stiles and footbridge, continue in the same direction up a little rise for a few metres. From the top of the rise, you will see another black and white signpost – like the one in Kilmacolm - about 150m in front of you. Go straight across the field to the signpost and stile.

The Dargavel Burn The swampy area crossed by the boardwalk is no ordinary bog. To the untutored eye, it looks green and lush all year round. But to the naturalist, it's full of interesting flora and fauna. It has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Thanks to the constant supply of springwater, the bog is home to a great range of butterflies and a number of orchids – including the Northern Fen Orchid and the Lesser Butterfly Orchid. There are also a number of uncommon sedges (including Mud Sedge, Lesser Tussock Sedge and Greater Tussock Sedge).

5 Before you cross the stile, look up to the skyline along the direction of the boardwalk. Just to the right of the line of the boardwalk, you will see two radar masts on top of a hill. Keep these in mind as you go along the boardwalk. Take care as it can be slippery. Once you get to the end of the boardwalk, you cross a short wet section, and go over another stile. You then head across the field for 200m (no path) towards the two radar masts. On the other side of the field, you will approach a fence and stone dyke. Bear

GRASSLANDS

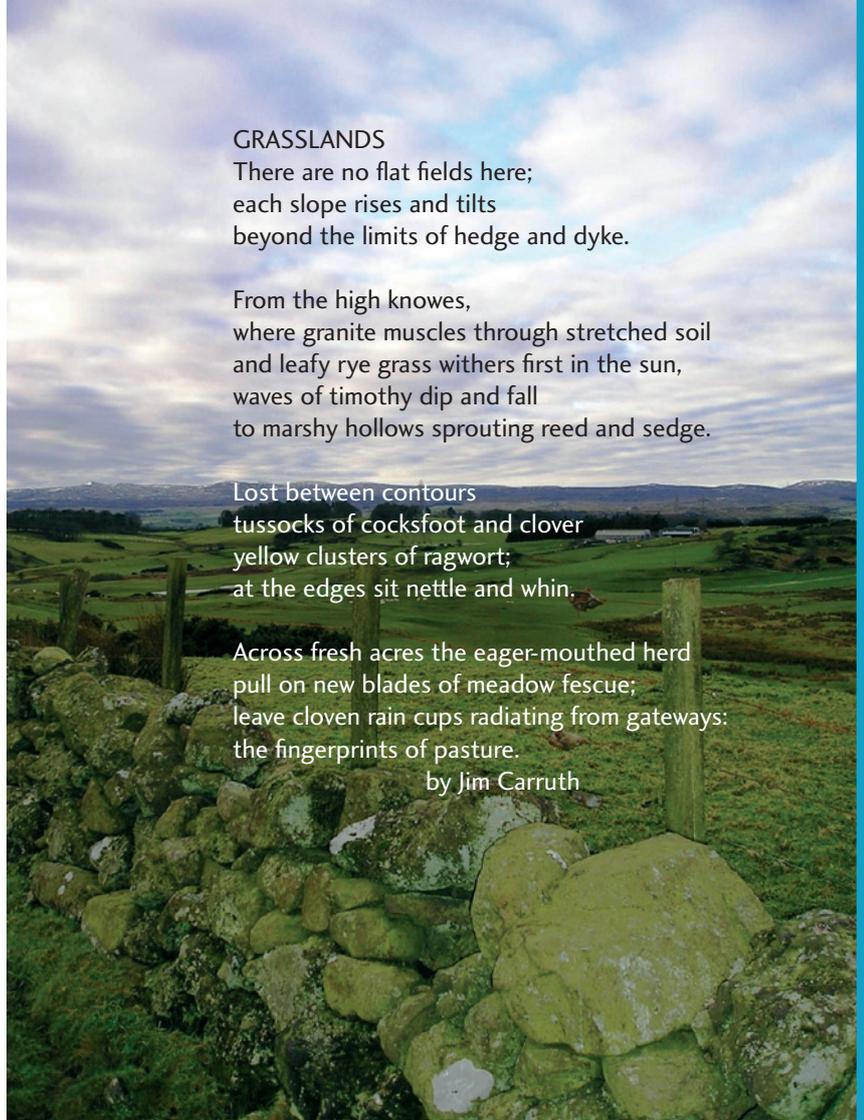
There are no flat fields here;
each slope rises and tilts
beyond the limits of hedge and dyke.

From the high knowes,
where granite muscles through stretched soil
and leafy rye grass withers first in the sun,
waves of timothy dip and fall
to marshy hollows sprouting reed and sedge.

Lost between contours
tussocks of cocksfoot and clover
yellow clusters of ragwort;
at the edges sit nettle and whin.

Across fresh acres the eager-mouthed herd
pull on new blades of meadow fescue;
leave cloven rain cups radiating from gateways:
the fingerprints of pasture.

by Jim Carruth



slightly to your left. If you've been going accurately towards the radar masts, you should reach a stile over the fence and wall after about 100m.

6 Go over the stile and cross the muddy farm track. Continue uphill towards the radar masts, keeping left of the gorse bushes 30m beyond the stile. Once past the gorse bushes, you will find yourself on an old grassy cart track. Follow this uphill, still going towards the radar mast. You will arrive at a gate and stile about 500m from the last stile. Go through the gate/stile, and turn left following the line of the wall and fence (ignore the radar masts now). Keep the wall and fence on your left.

The high point The views from this point are magnificent. As you approach point 7, a vista suddenly opens up across the Clyde. Across the river you can see to Cardross and Helensburgh with the smooth outlines of the Luss Hills above. Further left are the rough outlines of the Cowal Hills, above Holy Loch. Further right are Ben Lomond and the Trossachs, with Dumbarton and the Vale of Leven coming into view as you continue past some rocks on your left. A good place to stop for a picnic.

7 Just less than 1 km from the last gate/stile, the wall turns sharply left and goes downhill to black and white signposts and stiles at a minor road. Cross the road carefully and go over the stile on the other side. Continue in the same direction alongside another wall and fence – this time keeping



Looking across the Clyde towards Argyll, Helensburgh and Ben Lomond

them on your right. If it is clear, you will see Ben Lomond directly in front of you. At the bottom of the hill after a steep downhill section and a wet ditch, you will come to a black and white signpost at another minor road. The signpost says “Langbank West Ferry footpath only”.

8 Turn right along the road in the direction of the signpost. Take care – the road can be busy at times and there is no pavement. The road soon starts going downhill. After 600m, there is another black and white signpost pointing left to Langbank West Ferry. Turn left over the stile. After 150m, go over another stile and gate with a waymarker. The path becomes an old cart track with an overgrown hedge on the right; follow it down and round to the left. 200m from the last stile and gate, you come to a pedestrian gate and

waymarker at the back of some houses. This is Langbank.

As you walk along the road from point 8, what can you pick out in the distance - Erskine Bridge? The Kilpatrick Hills? Clydebank? Glasgow? And beyond?

9 Go through the pedestrian gate and along a short path between the houses. Turn right along the road and then follow it round to the left downhill towards the Clyde. Go down this road for 150m, passing a play area on your right. Then turn sharp right into Dennistoun Road. Follow this for 500m, past the primary school, round a sharp left bend and then to a sharp right bend where the road is surfaced with red bricks.



10 At the sharp right bend, by the double garage turn right along a tarmac footpath. Follow this, down some steps, and alongside the railway line. After about 100m alongside the railway, a short flight of steps leads you onto the station platform.

11 If you are going back to Kilmacolm on the train and the bus, catch a train to Port Glasgow from this platform. If you are catching a train back towards Paisley or Glasgow, cross the footbridge and use the other platform. If you want to go to the village shop or Langbank Lodge, you should cross the footbridge and go down to Main Road just beyond. The shop is 100m to the left, and Langbank Lodge is 250m to the right.

“The Long Bank” There was very little at Langbank until the mid nineteenth century: a ferry across the Clyde at West Ferry, a mile or so upstream from the current village, and a couple of houses. Langbank only started life as a village after the opening of the Glasgow and Greenock Railway in 1841. It took a few years before the developers started to realise its potential as a commuter village. During the second half of the nineteenth century, houses were built along the line parallel to the Clyde. A few of these were built by wealthy shipbuilders who added servants cottages, stables and coach houses. For the architects amongst you, there is even a terrace of houses by the famous Glasgow architect Alexander “Greek” Thomson at the Port Glasgow end of the village.



Getting to the start

Remember that the walk ends 5.5km (3.5 miles) from the start. If you come by car or by bike, you will need to get back to Kilmacolm. You can either walk back the way you came, or catch a train to Port Glasgow and then a bus to Kilmacolm (see “Rail and bus” below). Alternatively, leave your car at home and come by public transport. Then you can just get the train straight home from Langbank. There are frequent trains to Glasgow Central, Paisley and Greenock.

Bus Riverside 301 from Renfrew, Paisley, Johnstone and Bridge of Weir (hourly Mondays to Saturdays only). First Glasgow X7 from Glasgow, Linwood, Houston and Bridge of Weir (hourly Mondays to Saturdays only). All buses stop at the Cross in Kilmacolm, where the walk starts.

Rail and bus The nearest convenient railway station is Port Glasgow about 7km (4.5 miles) away, with frequent rail services from Glasgow Central and Paisley. Buses run from Church Street near the station (Slaemuir Coaches 1, half-hourly Mondays to Saturdays, hourly on Sundays).

Bicycle Kilmacolm is on National Cycle Network cycletrack 75 between Paisley, Johnstone, Bridge of Weir and Port Glasgow. Bring a lock for your bike.

Car Kilmacolm is on the A761 between Paisley and Port Glasgow. From the M8, take the A737 exit signposted Irvine (junction 28a, immediately after Glasgow Airport). Then take the second exit (signposted Bridge of Weir), turn right at the top of the slip road, and follow signs to Bridge of Weir and then Kilmacolm. The walk

starts at the main road junction in the centre of the village. There is plenty of car parking nearby (both on-street and free car parks). Please park considerately.

Please check rail and bus times with Traveline Scotland before travelling. Tel: 0870 608 2 608 www.travelinescotland.com

Refreshments

At the start of the walk, there are various cafés, shops and pubs on Lochwinnoch Road in Kilmacolm.

In Langbank, The Langbank Lodge serves food and snacks from 12pm to 9pm (tel: 01475 540311) and there is also a small shop. Both are on Main Road near the station.

Please note that there is nowhere to get refreshments between Kilmacolm and Langbank. But there are wonderful picnic spots amongst the rocks on the hillside just before point 7, so why not take something to eat and drink with you!

Further information

Kilmacolm Library, on Lochwinnoch Road, is a useful place to start if you'd like to find out more about the area. Tel: 01505 873489. Open 6 days a week, but closed some mornings and afternoons.

For general information about Langbank, visit www.happyhaggis.co.uk



View from Gleniffer Braes