



Renfrew and its Rivers



Further information

For further information about Renfrew, visit Renfrew Community Museum at 41 Canal Street (between points 1 and 2 on the walk, open Monday-Saturday 10.00-13.00 and 14.00-17.00, tel: 0141 886 3149) or Renfrew Community Library on Paisley Road (tel: 0141 886 3433).

If you're interested in shipbuilding and the Clyde, you should visit Clydebuilt, the Scottish Maritime Museum by the bus station at Braehead (admission fee). The museum is open Monday-Saturday 10.00-17.30 and Sunday 11.00-17.00. For more information, see www.scottishmaritimemuseum.org/renfrew.htm or telephone 0141 886 1013.

There's also a wealth of information about Renfrew on the internet. Useful starting points are www.happyhaggis.co.uk, www.renfrew.org.uk, www.myrenfrew.com and www.renfrewshire.gov.uk.

Getting to the start

Bus There are direct bus services to Renfrew town centre from Glasgow



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Welcome to Renfrew

Renfrew's history has always been closely tied to the River Clyde. Its importance as a trading post meant that it was made a burgh by King David I in the twelfth century, and then promoted to a royal burgh by Robert III two hundred years later. The Clyde provided food, fish and access up and downstream for trade, and the position of the town on the river's flood plain meant that local soil was fertile and good for agriculture. The town was the principal port on the Clyde by 1600, outshining even Glasgow.

In Victorian times, the town witnessed the rise of great shipbuilding and engineering enterprises. Industrial giants like Babcock, and Simons & Lobnitz, employed thousands of workers, sustaining a huge boom in the town's fortunes into the twentieth century. Heavy industry has declined since the Second World War, but now Renfrew is forging a new relationship with the Clyde: much of the former industrial land alongside the river is now being redeveloped as a modern extension to the town with new parks and leisure facilities and better access to the river.

Start and finish The war memorial, Renfrew Cross close to the junction of Hairst Street, Inchinnan Road and Paisley Road, at the very heart of Renfrew (grid reference NS506676).

Distance 6km (4 miles). Allow 2 to 3 hours.
Extension 4km (2.5 miles).

Terrain The walk is entirely on pavements or good footpaths, although some sections have rough surfaces. Walkers should wear comfortable shoes.



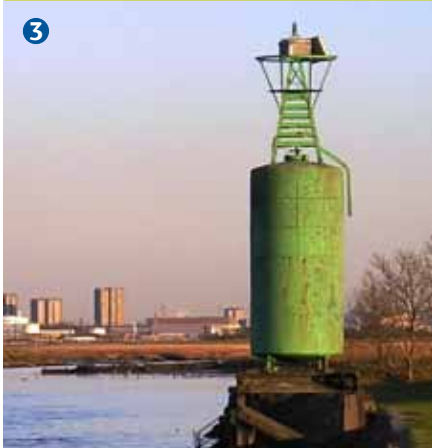
This walk gives you a flavour of what makes Renfrew. The town may not be a typical tourist destination, but there is still plenty to see: industrial heritage, a wealth of architectural interest, and fascinating wildlife on the riverbanks.

1 From the war memorial, walk along Hairst Street towards the spire and turrets of the Town Hall. Continue past the Town Hall, keeping on the left hand side of the street. The name of the road changes first to Canal Street and then to Ferry Road. You may want to call in to the Community Museum as you pass. After nearly 1.5km you will arrive at the ferry crossing over the River Clyde, by the Ferry Inn.

The ferry There has been a ferry across the Clyde at Renfrew for at least 400 years. During the heyday of the town's engineering industry, the ferry was thronged with workers crossing the river between their homes and the shipyard and factories on either side. Before the Erskine Bridge was built in the 1960s, the ferry was very congested with cars too. It was so vital that it ran continuously, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Today, the boat is much smaller and there are fewer passengers: but for the people who use the ferry, it is still a very important link.

2 Retrace your steps along Ferry Road for about 200m to the traffic lights at the crossroads, point A on the map. Turn right into Meadowside Street. Cross the road carefully. After 500m turn left into an unnamed road where there is a large sign for "Amec". At the end of the brick wall turn right along the tarmac footpath. This path joins the River Clyde after about 500m. It then continues alongside the Clyde for another 500m to a big green navigation light for shipping, just before the confluence of the Clyde and the River Cart. The navigation light is locally known as Wee Blinky. You can see Clydebank and Yoker on the other side of the river, with the Kilpatrick Hills beyond.

Links with the Clyde Between points 2 and 3 on the walk, you will pass a scrapyards. Although it's not particularly attractive, it is notable as one of the last links between Renfrew's industrial heritage and the River Clyde: scrap is sorted here and then shipped abroad from the wharf on the river. The town is now turning to face the Clyde once more. Big changes are happening to the derelict industrial sites along the Clyde between the ferry and Braehead shopping centre, a mile or so upstream. A new park, flats, houses and the giant Xscape have been built, and the Clyde riverfront is being opened up to the town's residents as never before in its history. See the walk extension overleaf.



3 Continue along the riverside path, which bends round to the left. Before the bend, you were walking downstream alongside the Clyde. Now you're walking upstream alongside the Cart, which usually has interesting wildlife to see. After about 1.5km, you'll pass the Normandy Hotel on your left. The path forks immediately before a set of heavy metal railings around the St Conval and Argyle Stones (see box). Fork right, up the short slope, and cross Inchinnan Road at the traffic lights. (Take care, no pedestrian crossing).

The White Cart Water You might not realise it, but the White Cart is still navigable by seagoing vessels all the way up to Paisley. The red bascule bridge at point 4 on the walk still lifts to allow tall boats through. But you're as likely to see herons, shags or even otters on the water as you are ships, now that Paisley's docks are a thing of the past. Wildlife makes the most of the river's undisturbed banks and the little tidal islands near the confluence with the Clyde. This is a very peaceful and tranquil part of the walk.





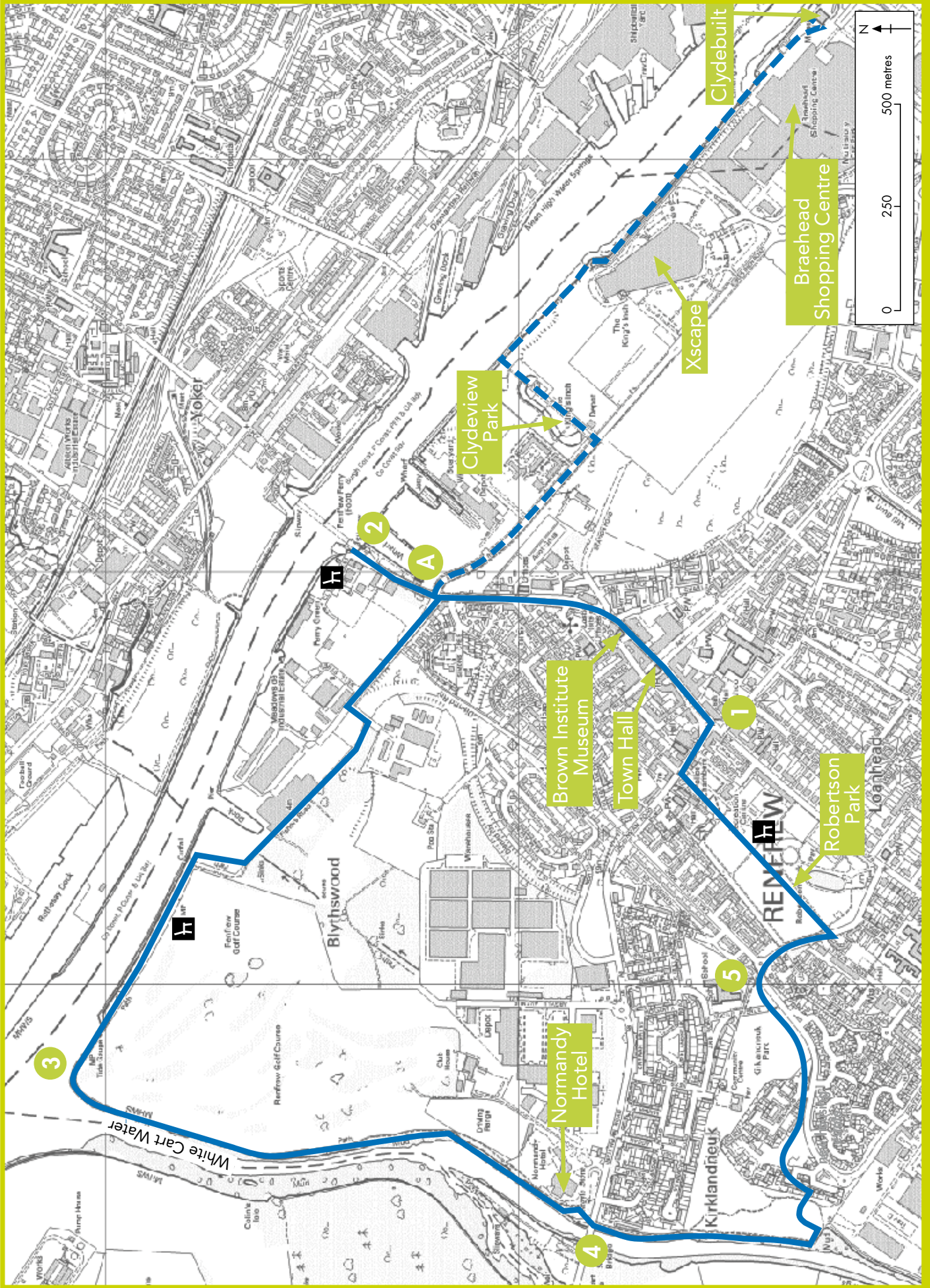
RENFREW AND ITS RIVERS

Legends of the St Conval and Argyll Stones According to tradition, one of these weighty stones floated out to sea from Ireland in the sixth century AD when St Conval was resting on it, having decided to found a new church. He and the stone floated up the Firth of Clyde and came to a stop at Renfrew. St Conval then went on to found his church just across the River Cart at Inchinnan. Such was the power of the legend that the stone became a shrine for pilgrims and sick people. Rainwater collected from the hollow on top of the stone was believed to have healing powers. More recently, but still over 300 years ago, somebody else took a rest at the stones - with even more fateful consequences. The 9th Earl of Argyll, part of the failed rebellion against the new King James VII and II in 1685, had fled and was making his way incognito to Renfrew from Inchinnan. Like St Conval a thousand years earlier, he stopped for a rest on the stone. The stone didn't float away this time. Even worse, Argyll was snatched by two militiamen, taken to Edinburgh and then beheaded at the Mercat Cross. Tradition says the stone was disfigured with the red stains of the Earl's blood for decades after... You have been warned. Don't rest here for too long !

4 From the traffic lights, continue along the path signposted to Porterfield Road via the White Cart Water. Continue alongside the river for 500m. Then follow the path as it turns left away from the river. At the back of some modern houses, turn right, and then left after 30m to a roundabout.

Renfrew's buildings For a small town, Renfrew has a wealth of architectural heritage. There are magnificent buildings in the Town Centre, such as the flamboyant Town Hall at the start of the walk, and the Police Station and Victory Baths on Inchinnan Road near the end of the walk. Renfrew also boasts a tradition of well designed housing. The solid red sandstone tenements on Paisley Road, at the start of the walk, are a monument to solid Victorian values. In Kirklandneuk at point 4 on the walk, and elsewhere in Renfrew at Moorpark and along Paisley Road, there are wonderfully inventive Scottish housing designs from either side of the Second World War, with turrets, towers, gatehouses and stone detailing. Not to be outdone, some modern housebuilders are continuing the tradition. At Kirklands, between points 4 and 5 on the walk, Mactaggart and Mickel's new houses and flats have an unmistakably Scottish character.

5 At the roundabout, turn left along Nethergreen Road (no sign), following the pavement over the entrance into Kirkfield after 50m. Cross Nethergreen Road where it is safe. Almost 1 km from point 5, you will come to another roundabout. Turn right into Craigielea Road (no sign), and cross over. Turn left into Robertson Park, immediately beyond a 20mph sign for St James Primary School. Walk straight down the tree lined path, passing the boating lake on your right and a play area on your left. At the far end of the Park (just over 500m from the entrance), turn right onto Inchinnan Road. This leads back to the start of the walk at the war memorial after 100 metres.





Extension to Braehead

Start at point A, at the junction of Kings Inch Road, Meadowside Street and Ferry Road. Walk along Kings Inch Road, a new boulevard planted with young trees. After about 500 metres turn left into Clyde View Park. Read stories about Renfrew's history on the herms (sculptures on pillars) along the path.

Clyde View Park The park is part of the major development at Braehead. Once there was a power station and other heavy industry here. Now, two thousand new homes are planned, along with a business park to link the old town of Renfrew with Braehead. Local Renfrew primary school pupils worked with artist Kenny Munro on the herms. Artist David Annand produced the view point sculpture which honours the skilled engineers who gave Renfrew its prominence in the 19th and 20th centuries. The park and its artworks were sponsored by Capital Shopping, owners of Braehead.

At the river turn right. Across the water is the former Yarrows shipyard where BVT Surface Fleet is building the Navy's new type 45 destroyers. You will soon see Xscape, the "ultimate leisure destination" which offers a combination of extreme sports and leisure activities.

Xscape Inside this great gleaming structure you can ski or snow-board any day of the year on real snow, try the climbing walls or the aerial assault course, go to the cinema, go 10 pin bowling, play football or golf. There are shops specialising in outdoor equipment and clothing, and a whole range of eating places.

Carry on beyond Xscape and you will soon be walking along the promenade of the Braehead shopping mall. The mall has over 100 stores, plus a 4,000 seat arena, a curling rink and large food court. There is a themed outdoor play area for children, complete with a sailing ship to climb on. Just at the end of the promenade you will see another building, with a very distinctive sculpture of shipyard workers hauling a ship out of the shed. This building is Clydebuilt, a 5 star visitor attraction which tells the story of the river and its industries, and the trade carried on it. It has lots of hands-on activities for young and old, and a good gift shop selling appropriate nautical souvenirs. The walk extension ends here. To rejoin the walk around the town, just retrace your steps back alongside the river and through the park to point A on the map.

Photography

FRONT COVER: Renfrew Town Hall, Clydeview Park viewpoint sculpture

- 1 Renfrew War memorial
- 2 Renfrew Riverside
- 3 Clydebank and Wee Blinky
- 4 Renfrew Ferry and BVT shipyard
- 5 St Conval and Argyle Stones
- 6 Xscape
- 7 Clydeview Park