

# Welcome to Johnstone

These three walks will take you on a journey through Johnstone's history. Explore and enjoy!



## Exploring the Town Centre 1.7 km/1.1 miles

From Houston Square walk uphill towards the traffic lights and turn right into Collier Street. You will pass the former Burgh Court on your left. Look out for the carvings on the building a different version of the burgh's coat of arms, and a very odd pair around a doorway. Cross the supermarket car park to the glass bridge. From the bridge you can look down into the Black Cart Water. This was the power source for the mills which once stood on this site. At the bottom of the stairs down to the supermarket, pop into the Johnstone History Museum (open Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 10.30 – 16.00).

Leave the supermarket by the main lower level entrance (note the many historical images used to decorate the building). Cross over the car park to the cycle track on the grassy bank to the north and turn left onto it. At the main road turn left and then right across the road at the traffic lights. Turn left up the slight hill. On the right is the site of the former Patons Mill.

The mill dated from 1782 however a major fire in May 2010 resulted in the loss of the main buildings. The lower end of Patons Mill, that stood closest to the river was considered the oldest water powered cotton spinning mill in the country. It was powered by a great water wheel in the basement. It was six storeys high. Power was transferred to each floor by drive shafts. The lower floors held the "water frames" (Richard Arkwright's invention which mechanised the production of cotton yarn), and the upper floors held the powered preparation stages, taking raw cotton and carding, drawing, roving and reeling it in advance of spinning). (From "The Early Development of the Cotton Industry in Paisley", Dr. Stuart Nisbet, Volume 15, Renfrewshire Local History Forum Journal). The remaining structures are Category 'A' listed and provide a reminder of Johnstone's successful industrial past.

Continue up the hill and then take the second on the right, at the traffic lights, into MacDowall Street, named for one of the major landowners in the area. William MacDowall held Castle Semple at Lochwinnoch and was heavily involved in the development of mills in and around Johnstone. Turn left into Quarry Street, which joins MacDowall Street about 250 metres from its junction with the High Street. Take time to have a look at the High Church and churchyard on the right as you approach Ludovic Square. The church was built in 1792, with its tower and spire added in 1823. The graveyard is usually open. You will see that many of the gravestones name the owners of the lair, not necessarily the people buried there. After leaving the church yard cross over to enjoy a quiet moment in Ludovic Square. The seats in the square and in Houston Square are replicas made in the 1990s, of a style known as the Johnstone design. Continue down Church Street back to the start in Houston Square.



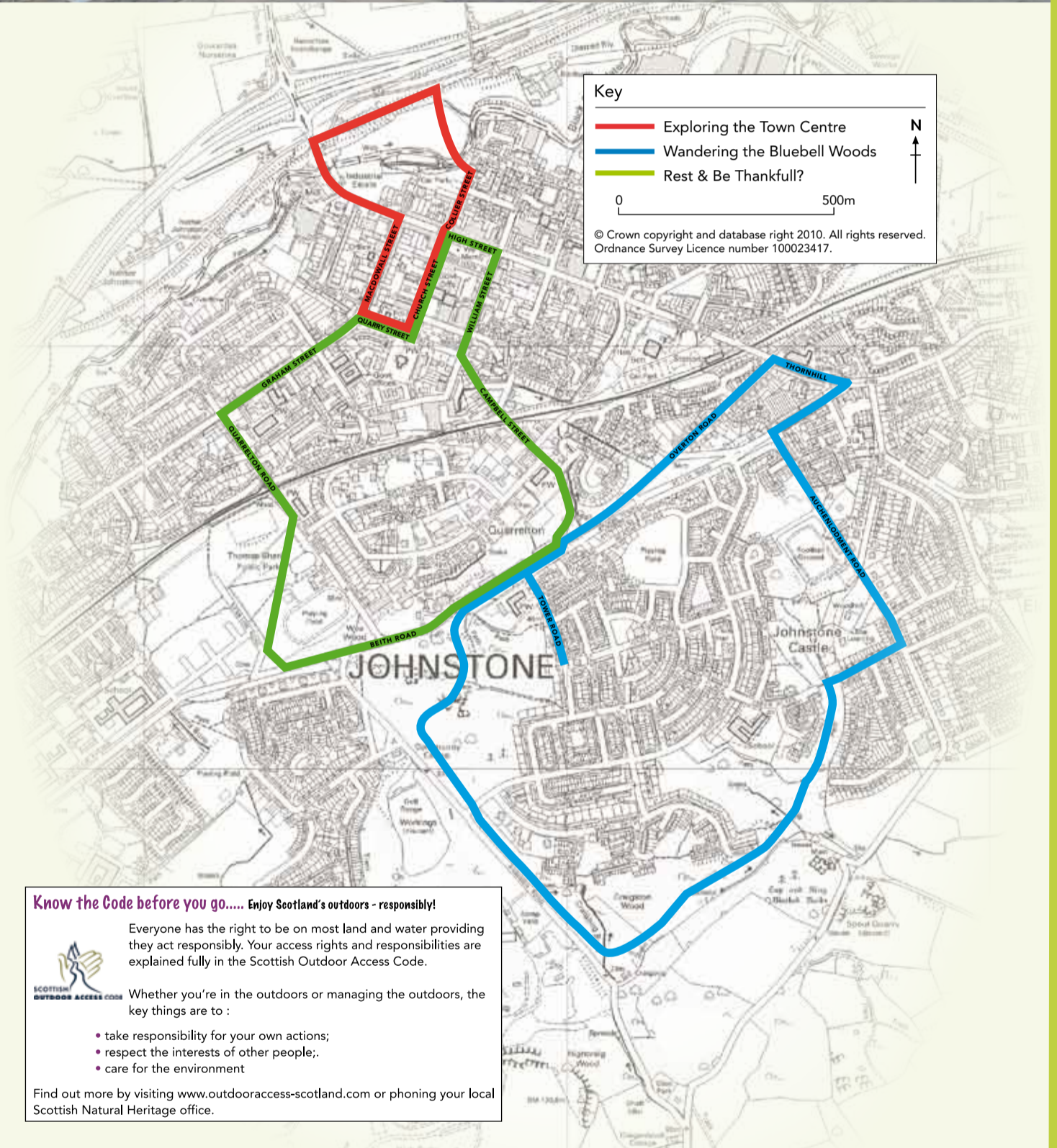
## Rest & be Thankful! 4.4 km/2.8 miles

From the middle of Houston Square walk down the slope towards the fountain and turn right into William Street. Follow William Street till Ludovic Square is on your right, and then bear left into Campbell Street. Continue up Campbell St past a children's play park on your left. The red sandstone building on the left just before the railway bridge was the Drill Hall, now converted to flats. Go underneath the railway bridge. \*Note\* there is only pavement on one side of the road. Just beyond the bridge on the left is Canal Road, a reminder of the canal which was planned to go from Glasgow to Ardrossan in the pre- railway era.

**The Canal**  
The Glasgow, Paisley and Ardrossan Canal was first proposed by the Earl of Eglinton in 1791. Industry was booming, but moving goods was still very difficult. The canal was planned to link Glasgow, Paisley and Johnstone with their new industries to a new port being built by the Earl at Ardrossan, on the Ayrshire coast. Houston of Johnstone was a shareholder as the canal would link his coal and iron mines to customers in Glasgow and Paisley. The first section to be built was a canal which followed the contour of the land from Port Eglinton in Glasgow to Thorn Brae in Johnstone. It needed no locks and was completed in 1811, but the remainder of the canal to Ardrossan was never built. The first section had used up all the available funds. The canal was popular with passengers who had the luxury of a journey to Glasgow which averaged 8 miles per hour. The custom-built boats were 70 feet long and 6 feet wide and could hold go passengers. Towed by teams of two horses, they could make the journey between Glasgow and Paisley in 50 minutes. The development of the railways and improvements to navigation on the River Clyde meant that the canal never made a profit in spite of handling large numbers of passengers and 76,000 tons of goods in a year. It closed in 1881 and much of the route was used for the Paisley Canal railway line, parts of which now carry Sustrans National Cycle Route 7.

Walk straight on passing the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints on your right.

Continue up the hill until you reach the main road (Beith Road). Carefully cross over the top of Linn Brae and continue right along the main road. Almost immediately you will pass the peaceful little enclave of Gordon Sq, with its handy benches if you feel you deserve a rest after making it up the hill!!!



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Whether you're in the outdoors or managing the outdoors, the key things are to :

- take responsibility for your own actions;
- respect the interests of other people;..
- care for the environment

Find out more by visiting [www.outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com) or phoning your local Scottish Natural Heritage office.

### General Gordon of Khartoum

The little square is a memorial to Major-General Charles George Gordon (1833 – 1885). He was famous in Victorian times as a renowned soldier in the Royal Engineers, who played a major role in campaigns in the Crimea, China and finally in the Sudan, where he was killed during the siege of Khartoum.

A short distance beyond there is another opportunity for a sit-down – a shelter built as a commemoration of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee – her "Happy Reign". Just beyond the shops and you will come upon the 'Rest and Be Thankful' monument. Quite why this stretch of road merits three places to sit and rest within such a short distance is unclear!

### The Rest and Be Thankful

This is thought to have been built in the late 19th century by George Ludovic Houston, the last Laird of Johnstone. He lived in nearby Johnstone Castle, and was responsible for the construction of many town landmarks, such as the Houston Square bandstand, Gordon Square and Cochrane Tower. The shelter has been used by Johnstone Wheelers cycle club as a starting point for their training runs since the club was founded in 1928.

Continue along Beith Road passing Thomas Shanks Park on the right. The park was opened in 1908 in memory of Thomas Shanks who was the first provost of Johnstone after it became a burgh in 1857. His daughter gave the park as a gift to the town. Just after crossing Quarrelton Road you will see a stone cairn under the trees in the park. This commemorates the mining disaster at the nearby Benston coal mine, in 1860. The mine flooded and five miners were drowned.

Go down Benston Road and then cross the park diagonally to Quarrelton Street continue down to Graham Street and turn right you will soon pass St Margaret's Catholic Church.

### St Margaret's Church

St Margaret's Church was opened on Boxing Day 1852. The number of Catholics in the area had increased dramatically as the town developed, with people coming from Ireland to work in the mills and factories. Before the church opened, services had been held in a hayloft.



At the junction turn right into Quarry St, then first left into Church Street, passing Ludovic Square again and return to the start at Houston Square.

### Ludovic Square

Johnstone High Parish Church takes pride of place on Ludovic Square. It is octagonal with a slender spire and was built in 1792-94, only ten years after the founding of the town! Also on Ludovic Square were other important civic buildings – the Town Hall and the High School. The little fountain was the gift of an anonymous donor.



### Wandering the Bluebell Woods (5.1km/3.2 miles)

The walk starts at Johnstone Railway Station. Turn right, from the main road entrance and walk up Thorn Brae. Just before you leave the station entrance look across the road to the red sandstone gate pillars which are carved with the word Boys. A little further up the hill there are more gate pillars with the words Girls and Infants. Presumably girls were more trusted not to frighten the little ones! This was the original site of Thorn Primary School. The school was rebuilt across the road, next to the railway station. Turn right into Overton Road and continue to its end, and then in the same direction along the dual carriageway (Beith Road). After crossing over the top of Linn Brae you will see a small square to your right. This is Gordon Square, see box for walk 2



As you approach the bus stop cross over Beith Road and turn left up Tower Road. In the distance you will see the square tower of Johnstone Castle

### Johnstone Castle

Known originally as Easter Cochrane, this 16<sup>th</sup> century tower house was bought in 1733 by George Houston and renamed Johnstone Castle. The building was extended in 1812 and became a very fine mansion house. In 1848 the composer Frederick Chopin visited the Castle during a tour of Britain. Over the years the estate lands were sold off and the last laird died in 1931. During the Second World War the estate was used by the army and German prisoners of war were housed in the grounds. In 1956 Johnstone Burgh bought what was left of the estate for housing. The nineteenth century parts of the house were demolished. Now only the 16<sup>th</sup> century tower house remains. It is being restored for use as a private house.

Retrace your steps back down Tower Road past St Aidan's Roman Catholic Church. Bear left and take the path along the inside of the wall. The wall is part of the original boundary of the castle's policies – gardens, woodland and parkland - and so it probably dates from when the Houston family took over and enlarged the castle. Follow the path into the woods. After a few metres take the path on the left signed Rannoch Woods. You will approach a brick wall. Here turn right onto a slightly wider path. Stay on this path ignoring any to right or left. You will go straight across at an obvious paths crossroads. In the distance you will eventually see houses ahead through the trees. Before you get to them take a narrow path which leads quite steeply uphill to your left, this is signposted to Elm Drive. Follow this path until



you reach a children's play area and sports pitch on your right. Continue beyond these to the road which is Elm Drive. Turn right and just before you reach Rannoch Road turn left into more woodland.

### The woodland

All this woodland is part of the old policies of Johnstone Castle. Some of the bigger oak and beech trees may date from the time when the castle was the home of George Houston, founder of Johnstone. In places some of the trees appear to have been planted out as if along an old carriageway but the layout of the old woodland has largely been lost. Many of the trees have regenerated naturally and you will see many small beech, ash, oak and sycamore. In the spring the woodland lives up to its local name of Bluebell Wood, but at any time of year you will see interesting plants, birds and even squirrels.



Continuing along the main path, you will cross a wooden boardwalk style bridge and then go up a slope. At a Y shaped junction take the higher path to the right. Follow this path as it swings through the woods until you reach a T junction; turn right and in a moment go down a series of wooden steps to another wooden bridge. Continue following the same path through the woods until you reach a cross roads, turn right onto a tarmac surfaced path with lamps. This leads onto Castle Avenue. At the bottom turn left into Auchenlodment Road. You will pass Johnstone Burgh football ground on your left.

### Johnstone Burgh FC

The club was formed allegedly in response to an article in the "Johnstone & Linwood Gazette" newspaper. The story goes that a journalist had been ordered out of the newspaper's office on the corner of Johnstone's Rankine Street by the office manager with instructions not to return until he had a story. The journalist proceeded to ask locals what they thought about forming a new football club to replace the former Scottish league side Johnstone which had become defunct in 1927. The story generated interest and in 1956 Johnstone Burgh was formed.

Carry on down Auchenlodment Road. Where it bends to the left continue on the path straight ahead through to Beith Road. Turn right and at the traffic lights turn left into Thorn Hill and return to the railway station.



# Johnstone

## RENFREWSHIRE WALKS

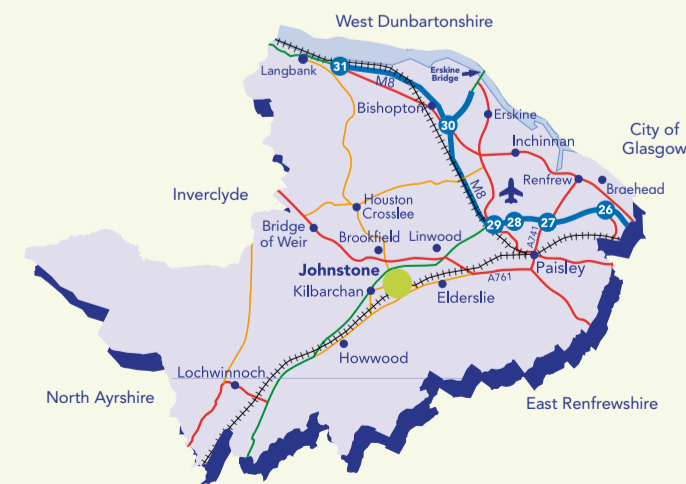
### Take Care Out of Doors

Dress to suit the weather, take an extra layer and something waterproof. While none of these walks are very far from the town, you may want to take snacks and something to drink, or plan a refreshment stop in the town. Stout footwear should be worn trainers will probably do in a prolonged dry period, or for routes on tarmac, but walking boots would be better on rough tracks.

### How to get to Johnstone

For bus and train information contact [www.travelscotland.com](http://www.travelscotland.com) or phone Traveline on 0871 200 22 33\*

\*calls cost 10p per minute from BT Landlines, charges from other providers or mobiles may vary.



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