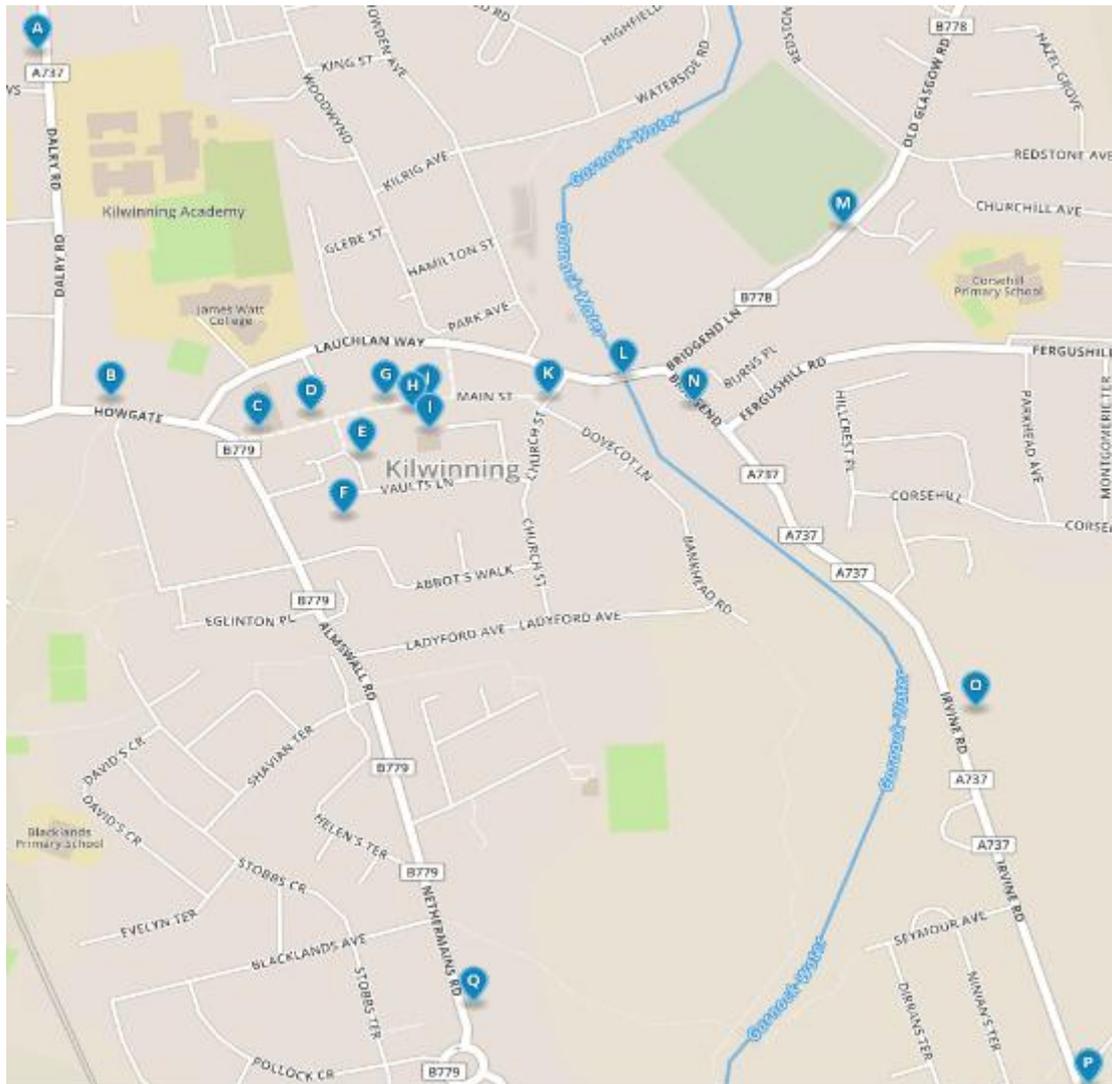


## Kilwinning Heritage Trail Route



Letters for each plaque can be found on the map above.

Start at McGavin Park.

### **(A) John McGavin, 1814-1881; benefactor to Kilwinning**

Dalry Road, KA13 7HE

OS Grid Reference - NS 29925 43778

Plaque on south entrance.

Born in Kilwinning in 1814, John McGavin trained for service in the Church, but, never having had good health, abandoned his studies. About 1832, he started work for George Gardner, grain merchant in Glasgow, which led to him forming a partnership with his brother-in-law in the new firm of Harvie and McGavin.

In 1846, he became active in speaking out in favour of the Temperance movement, becoming chairman of the Scottish Temperance League. He was a keen patron of the arts and provided

substantial funding when the Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts moved to new premises in 1880. He had developed a keen interest in the expansion of the railways, and became something of an authority. He served on several railway committees, and at the time of his death, was chairman of the Forth and Clyde Junction Company. At that time he was also a director of the Chamber of Commerce.



John McGavin died suddenly whilst walking along the banks of the Garnock on the evening of 12 July 1881. As well as his will leavening legacies for religious and charitable purposes, £7,000 was allocated for the formation of a public park in Kilwinning. This park was formally gifted to the town on 20th September, 1884.

On his death, he was described as "modest and unassuming, gentle and generous during his life, munificent in the bequests which he made in anticipation of his death, the benign influence of such a man cannot be estimated, and it will never be known".

### **On to the next stop**

*Walk down Dalry Road past Kilwinning Academy to Howagte and turn left.*

### **(B) Caley House; site of Caledonian Railway Station**

Howgate, KA13 6EJ

OS Grid Reference - NS 29959 43355

Kilwinning was once served by two railway companies, the Glasgow & South Western and the Caledonian, both with their own stations and lines. The "Caley" line opened to Kilwinning in 1888. Passenger services were withdrawn in 1932, but the station buildings largely remained until 1956 when the long corridor along the street level and stairway down to the platforms were taken down and the area was flattened. The site was used mainly for parking and hosting 'The Shows' or travelling fairs. Part of the main station building was kept for a while and was converted into a fish and chip shop.

The site remained vacant until the joint YMCA/YWCA and the Cornerstone Church was built in 1985, designed by Irvine Development Corporation in a shape to reflect the old booking hall, at a cost of one million pounds. It is now flats known as Caley House.



The railway line passed under the road of course, but the "bridge" still exists, filled in and buried under the new development and landscaping.

A large stone viaduct bridge, still to be seen today, was constructed by Robert McAlpine for the Lanarkshire and Ayrshire Railway Company in 1886, north of the Woodwynd housing estate to carry rail traffic over the river Garnock, and forms part of a popular country walk.

### **On to the next stop**

*Continue along Howgate to the pedestrianised Main Street.*

### **(C) Robert W Service, 1874-1958; Bard of the Yukon**

176 Main Street, KA13 6EE

OS Grid Reference - NS 30139 43316

This is where Robert Service lived as a child.

Robert William Service was born in Preston, Lancashire in 1874. The Service family had lived in Kilwinning for many generations but his father had been sent south to work in Preston and his son was born there. When his father moved again to Glasgow, he sent Robert to live with his three aunts and grandfather John Service, postmaster in Kilwinning. The blue plaque is erected on the building where Robert lived as a youngster aged 5.

A few years later, Robert moved back with his parents, and joined the Commercial Bank at age 15. But he was soon bored, and the idea of being a ranch hand in Canada took him across the Atlantic in 1896. There, he worked in labouring and farm jobs in Canada, Mexico and California before going back to banking in Vancouver. Exploring the rugged countryside and rough towns inspired him to write what became his most famous poem, 'The Shooting of Dan McGrew'. This made his name and his fortune and many more popular poems followed.



Using his wealth to travel around Europe writing occasional newspaper articles, he met and married his wife Germaine in Paris in 1913. When the First World War broke out he became a war correspondent and ambulance driver on the front lines, inspiring him to write a different, though powerful poetry.

He returned to Kilwinning in 1930, and erected a memorial to his grandparents in the grounds of the Abbey. This memorial can still be seen today.

At the outbreak of WWII, he moved his family to America's West Coast and, being a celebrity, was invited to join Hollywood stars in morale-boosting visits to US Army camps to recite his poems. He was also asked to play himself in the movie *The Spoilers* with Marlene Dietrich and John Wayne. After the war, he returned to France, enjoying the friendship of the rich and famous in Monte Carlo.

In 1958 while staying at his villa in Brittany, France, he died from complications from a severe bout of flu at the age of 84, the only poet to become a millionaire in his own lifetime.

## **On to the next stop**

*Continue up Main Street.*

## **(D) Segdoune Queens from 1947. No Queens 1954-76**

151 Main Street, KA13 6EQ

OS Grid Reference - NS 30194 43308

Plaque on pillar on right side of street. This overlooks where the Segdoune Queen is crowned.

Segdoune is an ancient name for Kilwinning, possibly meaning "Saint's town". Margaret Simpson was crowned the first Segdoune Queen in McGavin Park in 1947 following a carnival and fancy dress parade, complete with decorated floats and a Pipe band. The event was organised by the British legion, the Town Council and Kilwinning Co-op, and was held to raise funds for the Welcome Home Committee, the money going to help members of the Armed Forces demobbed after WW2.

Nowadays, the Queen is crowned in a ceremony in this square in the Main Street.

1947 Margaret Simpson; 1948 Betty Walker; 1949 May Morrison; 1950 Sybil Barclay; 1951 Betty Finlayson; 1952 Agnes Simpson; 1953 Margaret Ramage; 1977 Sandra Lauchlan; 1978 Lynn Thomson; 1979 Julie Coombe; 1980 Amanda Urie; 1981 Angela Thomson; 1982 Jacqueline Porter; 1983 Yvette Ramsay; 1984 Kirsty Louise Campbell; 1985 Lynn Simpson; 1986 Louise McIntee; 1987

Clare Kelly; 1988 Allison Muir; 1989 Maria Gillan; 1990 Claire McAlpine; 1991 Sarah McDonald; 1992 Lynsay Rankin; 1993 Carla Bunce; 1994 Marlene Fitzsimmons; 1995 Cheryl Burns; 1996 Carrie Anne Cochrane; 1997 Linsey Cockburn; 1998 Fiona McCarlie; 1999 Toni Sweeney; 2000 Nicola Weir; 2001 Angela Hunter; 2002 Jessica McKee; 2003 Karly Grimes; 2004 Leonie Neill; 2005 Shannon McCulloch; 2006 Emma Craig; 2007 Carly Malcolmson; 2008 Gemma Steven; 2009 Holly Robinson; 2010 Charis Fenney; 2011 Karah Murphy; 2012 Rachel Dean; 2013 Emily Reid; 2014 Lauren Caldwell.



During the summer of 1947 the Kilwinning branch of the British Legion, the Town Council and the local Co-operative Society organised a gala to raise funds for an official 'Welcome Home' celebration for the local service men and women who had returned from the war. A Gala Queen, known as the Seagrouse Queen (Seagrouse is an old name for Kilwinning, possibly meaning 'town of the saints'), was crowned in McGavin Park and her first duty was to officially declare the Gala open. Prior to the crowning the queen was paraded through the town, accompanied by a band and decorated floats.

## On to the next stop

*Cross over the square and turn into to Abbey Gate on the right.*

## **(E) Abbey Green Medieval Town Square**

Abbey Gate, KA13 6AY

OS Grid Reference - NS 30264 43271

Plaque on railings of Abbey grounds.

The Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century was a Europe-wide revolt against the excesses and corruption of the established Roman church, and Kilwinning Abbey was ordered to be "cast down". The monks and abbots were ousted or left and the building fell into disuse and disrepair. Since there was no question of rebuilding or preservation, wind and weather took their toll, and the crumbling site became a source of free building material for use elsewhere in the town and district over many generations.

Gradually, buildings appeared, encompassing the original boundaries of the Abbey, even on top of the medieval foundations. Surrounding the open area were tenements and businesses, including a public house and a shop, and other domestic buildings, many of 19th century origin, but possibly at

least one dating back to the mid to late 16th century. Most would have been built from stones taken directly from the Abbey ruins.



As the name suggests, it may have been covered in grass at one time, but even the earliest photographs show it to have a bare stony surface, unpaved and not 'green'.

The area was used for shows, other temporary entertainments and public meetings. Old records indicate who owned properties on the Green, and what sort of entertainments took place there.

Over the course of the first half of the 20th century, due to a combination of lack of maintenance and an increasing awareness of the need for better, healthier living standards, many of the buildings on the Green were condemned as unfit for human habitation, all were finally cleared over the course of the 1950s and early 60s, and new houses built.

More information is available from the Kilwinning Heritage Series publication "The Abbey Green in the 19th and 20th Centuries" by Helen Matthews and Jeni Park, available from the Tower Heritage Centre or the Abacus shop in the Main Street.

### **On to the next stop**

*Go through the car park and turn right.*

## **(F) Greenfoot Church, 1759-1956; original Secession Church**

Greenfoot, KA13 6BH

OS Grid Reference - NS 30243 43225

This is the oldest Dissenting church in Kilwinning, built in 1759 and rebuilt in 1825. The graves of the first two ministers of this church, Robert Smith and William Jamieson, can still be seen in the grounds.

The symptoms of the Disruption go back to 1738, when a dispute arose in the Church of Scotland over what is called 'taking the Burgess Oaths'. This meant that those seeking public office had to swear allegiance to the prevailing Protestant religion, but which form of Protestantism was a problem. Those in favour of an allegiance were called 'burghers', those who refused were termed 'anti-burghers'.



Both sides split again in 1806 to become the 'Auld Lights' and the 'New Lights', but later the New Light Anti-Burghers and the New Light Burghers united as the United Secession Church.

The Anti-Burgher Auld Lights became part of the Original Secession Church in 1822, which split again in 1852. In 1956, it joined with the Free Church of Scotland. The congregation sang psalms and hymns with no musical accompaniment. Due to falling membership, the congregation merged with the Erskine Church in 2011.

Pewter communion ware dating from 1765, which belonged to the original Secession Church of Kilwinning, is on display in the Abbey Tower Heritage Centre.

### **On to the next stop**

*Retrace your route to Main Street and turn right.*

## **(G) John Parkinson, 1874-1918; poet and writer on Islam**

104 Main Street, KA13 6AA

OS Grid Reference - NS 30284 43347

Plaque on side of building at Castle Pen. This was where John Parkinson was born.

John Parkinson, Scottish Muslim poet, essayist and critic, was born in Kilwinning of Irish descent. Having lost both parents whilst still a baby, he lived his entire life in the home of his grandparents. When they died, he supported himself from the age of sixteen as a wool spinner in the nearby Busby Spinning Company, now the site of Bridgend Motors. A voracious reader, he taught himself astronomy, mathematics, science, geography and philosophy.



Converting to Islam around 1900 and discovering a talent for poetry, he adopted the name Yehya-en-Nasr. Although relatively isolated here in Scotland, Parkinson maintained contact with the Liverpool Muslim Institute between 1901 and 1908 which helped to establish his literary reputation by publishing his early work, after which he developed connections with literary and learned Muslim circles in British India and elsewhere in the UK.

As well as his column in the local newspaper, writing under the name of 'Ingomar', Parkinson published several books, including *Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, and his collection of poems, *Lays of Love and War*, which deal with romance and Jihad. He had a two-year sojourn in Burma as a deputy editor of a Rangoon newspaper in 1908-10, but ill-health forced him to return to Scotland, where he died in December 1918 after a short bout of pneumonia. Those who took care of his burial and effects chose not to mention his association with the British Islamic Movement and he was buried in Kilwinning Cemetery in a grave with no memorial stone.

While he achieved some fame within UK and international Muslim literary circles, Parkinson has been largely forgotten due to having no family to remember him. Recently, there's been a small revival of interest in his work among some historians. Brent D Singleton in California recently republished a number of Parkinson's poems in an anthology by Muslim converts of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, *The Convert's Passion* (2009), and a number of them have also been set to music in *Muslim Songs of the British Isles* (2005).

### **On to the next stop**

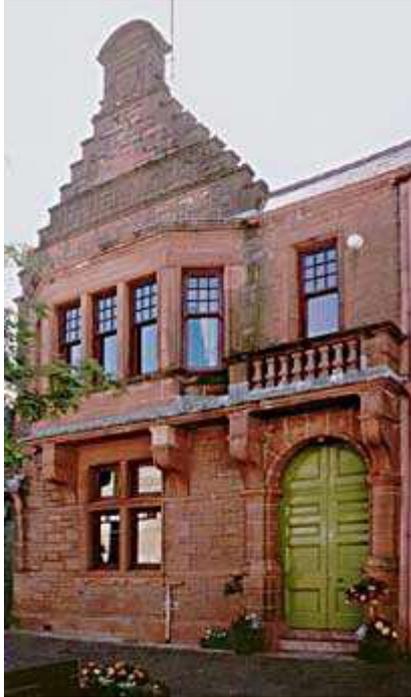
*Cross over to right side of Main Street.*

## **(H) Masonic Lodge Mother Kilwinning; founded circa 1140**

99 Main Street, KA13 6AG

OS Grid Reference - NS 30271 43339

This old and ancient Lodge of Freemasons dates back to the building of Kilwinning Abbey around 1140, and has a unique history second to none in the Masonic world.



The Lodge was founded in the chapter house of the Abbey and remained there until the Reformation in 1560 when the Earl of Glencairn, a blood enemy of the Earls of Eglinton who held a long tradition with the Lodge, sacked the Abbey.

Little is known of the masons at this point but they still met at various locations including the Abbey in 1598, the house in the Crossbrae in the town centre in 1643 known as the "masons howf" and the court house of the Earl of Eglinton. In 1779, the masons decided to build a new Lodge, at the entrance gates of the Abbey. Unfortunately, 100 years later due to decay and fear of the building collapsing, it was demolished and a new Lodge was built 30 yards from the former site and remains there today. The present Lodge you see here was consecrated in 1893.

Before the forming of Grand Lodge in 1736, Mother Kilwinning was a Grand Lodge in her own right, issuing warrants and charters to Lodges wishing to enjoy the privileges of Freemasonry, and many Lodges still carry Kilwinning's name today. But it was felt undesirable to have two Grand Lodges in Scotland, so Mother Kilwinning gave up this right.

Mother Kilwinning was placed second on the roll of the Grand Lodges, a position she strongly disagreed with, so withdrew from the Grand Lodge of Scotland in 1743, but continued to issue charters as before.

This dispute lasted until 1807 when the Grand Lodge of Scotland and the Grand Lodge of Kilwinning met in Glasgow and settled their differences when a new and binding agreement was reached. Mother Kilwinning was placed at the Head of the Roll of the Grand Lodge of Scotland and now has the famous and distinctive Number '0'.

### **On to the next stop**

*Continue up Main Street and enter Abbey grounds.*

## **(I) Ancient Society of Kilwinning Archers Papingo Shoot**

Kilwinning Abbey Tower, KA13 6AY

OS Grid Reference - NS 30285 43309

Plaque on Kilwinning Abbey Tower

The ASKA is believed to be the oldest archery club in the UK, if not the world. Whilst records are only available from 1688, there is a written reference to a papingo shoot in Kilwinning in 1483. The annual shoot, the only one of its type in the world, is held in the grounds of the Abbey on the first Saturday in June, when the papingo, a decorated wooden bird, is mounted on the end of a horizontal pole at the top of the clock tower to allow the archers to attempt to dislodge first the wings, then the bird itself. The magnificent Silver Arrow Trophy of 1724 associated with the shoot is on view in Kilwinning Library.



Originally, shooting at a papingo was not confined to Kilwinning. In other parts of the Britain and Europe, it was customary for villagers and townspeople in the Middle Ages to hold a papingo shoot. As they could be called to military service at any time, it was seen as a form of target practice. By the second half of the 19th century, interest in archery for pleasure was out of fashion, and in 1870, the archers held their last Papingo shoot. There were no volunteers to shoot for the Captaincy, and the Society folded. The Silver Arrow was kept in a local bank, then was loaned for a time to Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow, before being given for safe-keeping to the Royal Company of Archers in Edinburgh.

Following the Second World War, interest in archery was rekindled by local enthusiasts. The Society was revived in 1948, and negotiations began for the return of the Silver Arrow. On 7th June 1951, a Tournament, held in McGavin Park, was arranged between the Society and the Royal Company. The Royal archers, the Royal Bodyguard in Scotland, paraded through the town in full uniform in the

presence of Provost Hamilton Fleming, Kilwinning magistrates, and the Earl of Eglinton. The historic trophy was formally handed back to the Society and the town of Kilwinning.

The Arrow was put on display in the Town Council Chambers, but following the reorganisation of local government in 1975, it was lodged with a local solicitor. It was then stored in the Royal Bank of Scotland in Saltcoats, intending to be transferred to the new Royal Bank in Kilwinning. However, better sense prevailed, and it is now on permanent display in Kilwinning Library.

19th century wooden papingoes, bows, arrows and target are on display in the Abbey Tower Heritage Centre. It is believed that these birds and the bows are likely the only examples of their kind in the world.

### **On to the next stop**

*Retrace your steps to the Main Street.*

## **(J) Kilwinning Abbey and Old Parish Church**

87 Main Street, KA13 6AW

OS Grid Reference - NS 30316 43341

Plaque on Abbey grounds gate post

Historians and writers disagree about who was the man we call St Winning. Some say he came from Ireland, some say Wales, some even say he was Scottish, and his name has many variations in spelling. What is agreed though is that a Holy man set up his church or cell here, perhaps on the very site of the Abbey, hence the 'kil' prefix in the town's name, but there is no set date for this either.

The medieval Abbey was commissioned by the Anglo-Norman family of de Morville; some say specifically by Hugh de Morville, High Constable of Scotland, some say his son Richard. Yet others say it was his other son, also called Hugh. Some place the date as early as 1140; while 17th Century historian Timothy Pont states that he had studied the Abbey's charter which gave the date as 1191. Unfortunately the charter, or cartulary, of the Abbey has been lost, so we have no accurate records to consult.

The Abbey was relatively short, but very wide. The public parts, the nave and transept, were 100 ft (30m) across, wider than Paisley, Glasgow or St Andrews abbeys. It was unique in Scotland, as the two bell towers at the western end were open on the inside, perhaps to more or less their full height. One of these towers fell at a relatively early date, but the other remained standing until 1814 when most of it collapsed. The tower you see now is a replacement with the addition of a clock, completed in 1816.

Kilwinning Abbey was very wealthy. Its income came from a wide variety of sources, including many Parishes, farms and churches in Ayrshire and Dumbarton, as well as on the island of Arran in the Firth of Clyde. In the 1860s, historians calculated that its yearly income could well have been in the region of £20,000, or in today's money, around £3 million.

During the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, the abbey was cleared and fell into disuse, the stones being robbed to build other structures in the town and district. But the town still needed a church. The first post-Reformation church was built about 1565 over the foundations of the old medieval monastery, and the present church in 1774. Also known as the Abbey Church, it was built over the altar and chancel of the medieval Abbey. It was designed by John Swan and cost £546, partly donated by the Earl of Eglinton. Many stones from the old Abbey were re-used, and these are easily seen by the uneven surface of some of the outer walls.



A bazaar was held in 1896 to raise funds to install a new organ in the church. £1630 was raised, and the organ was built and installed by Foster and Anderson of Hull, at a cost of £750.

The pews at the front of the balcony within the pillars facing the pulpit are known

as the Eglinton Loft. Being the Parish church, the Eglintons paid for and were granted their own private pews for family and servants, and a private room and stairway entrance at the rear.

## **On to the next stop**

*Continue along Main Street.*

## **(K) Mercat Cross, 17th & 18th century buildings**

Main Street, KA13 6AQ

OS Grid Reference - NS 30450 43353

An ancient structure, it once stood on a site at the junction of Moncur Road and Corsehillhead and was presumed to be one of the original wooden crosses which adorned the towers of the ancient monastery. It was repaired in 1850 when Princess Mary of Cambridge visited Eglinton Castle. A replica of the original was made by Messrs. Palmer Bros. and erected shortly before Queen Elizabeth

Il visited Kilwinning on 3rd July, 1956. This cross and section of rare octagonal shaft are on display in the Abbey Tower Heritage Centre. The modern one seen now is by sculptor Ian Cooper.

The house on the corner, numbered 14, is an 18th century domestic building, partly demolished in the 1940s, and rebuilt by the former Irvine Development Corporation in 1985. It won a Civic Trust Award in 1986.



24 Main Street, dated 1744, is a Listed building. The date appears on the roof corner stone, though other details suggest a much earlier date. This is possibly the "house at the Croce" (Cross) mentioned in Masons' minute books of 1642, and used as their Lodge, or "Mason's howff", until 1790. Now a private dwelling, it too was restored by IDC and won a Civic Trust Award in 1986.

The Buffs Tavern dated 1714. The date is in the roundel above the door, but is now covered. It has an attractive pediment and scroll skew at the roof line. The 'Buffs' refers to the local football team, Kilwinning Rangers.

### **On to the next stop**

*Continue down Main Street and cross the bridge.*

## **(L) Abbott Adam's Bridge, 1439; widened 1857**

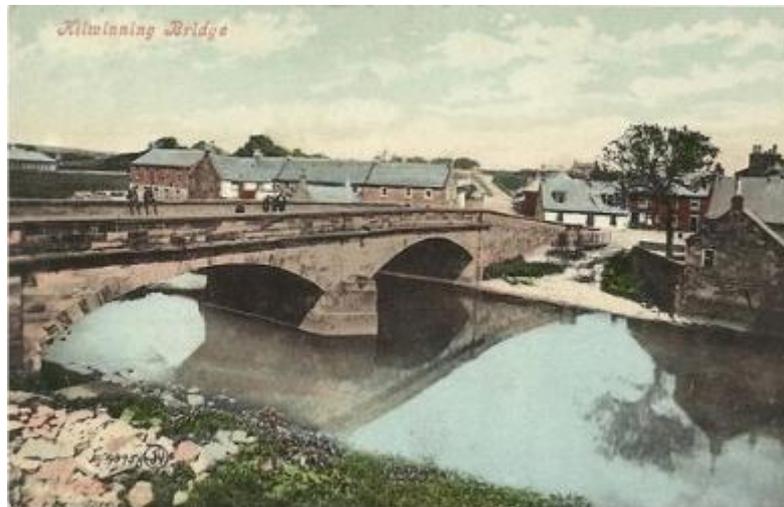
Bridgend, KA13 7LY

OS Grid Reference - NS 30574 43373

Plaque on north side of the road.

The present road bridge which crosses the River Garnock was built in 1857. However, it is a widening of a narrower earlier bridge, parts of which can still be seen when viewed from underneath, and there are also indications of the lade or watercourse of an adjacent mill, now demolished.

The first bridge was constructed in 1439 when Adam Spark, Abbot of Kilwinning Abbey, received permission from the Vatican to build it. This first bridge replaced the ford which was originally the only way to cross from the town, which at that time was mainly on the east side of the river in Corsehill area, to the Abbey on the west side.



Vintage photos of the bridge show a sign for a 12 ton weight limit, however, much heavier vehicles cross it often today.

### **On to the next stop**

*Go up Bridgend Lane past the garage.*

## **(M) Kilwinning Cemetery and War Memorial**

Bridgend Lane, KA13 7LY

OS Grid Reference - NS 30791 43527

Plaque on middle entrance gate post

The cemetery was constructed to replace the old Abbey churchyard and was opened in August, 1870. A one and a half acre extension to the main burial grounds was laid out in 1966.

At the north end of the main avenue sits the Eglinton Family vaults. These have been in use since 1886 and thirteen interments have taken place, the last being the Lady Dowager Countess in 1988. Before coming into use, the Eglinton family were interred within the Abbey grounds. Several vaults were discovered here in 1930, but these were demolished in the clearance of the cloisters in 1961. Then, another came to light but this too had to be demolished, being unsafe.



Also in the cemetery is the grave of Antonio Escazio who died in 1872, a servant of Mathew Brown of the nearby Monkcastle House for 43 years. The 'Black Man's path' ran from the house to Old Monkcastle, and Antonio is said to have walked this route regularly. It is not known when he was born or which country he came from, however San Antonio de Escazu is a town in Costa Rica. The grave indicates the high level of respect the family had for him.

The War Memorial, built of Creetown granite, stands close to the road within the cemetery, and has the names of 115 of the fallen from World War I and 67, including two women, from World War II. Originally, it stood at the entrance gate in McGavin Park but was removed to its present site in 1948.

McGavin Park but was removed to its present site in 1948.

A figure representing Wendy, one of the characters in Peter Pan in the form of a fountain, used to stand by a small pond here, but the area has been re-landscaped to a much simpler style, the pond has been removed, and the statue's whereabouts are unknown.

In 2005, the memorial won the Large Community Category in a Royal British Legion competition, and a marble plaque commemorates the award.

### **On to the next stop**

*Cross over Bridgend Lane, go down to Bridgend and turn left. Cross over Bridgend at the pedestrian crossing.*

## **(N) James Service, 1823-1899; Australian politician**

Ribbons & Lace Bridal Boutique

20 Bridgend, KA13 7LZ

OS Grid Reference - NS 30635 43329

This was where James Service was born.

Born in this building in Kilwinning in 1823, James attended school locally and was a schoolmaster for a while in Saltcoats. After leaving teaching to recover from TB, he entered business life and became an agent for the Glasgow-based tea and coffee importing business, Thomas Corbett & Co, becoming a partner.

He emigrated to Melbourne, Australia in 1853, and seeing a business opportunity for himself, formed James Service and Company, importers and wholesale merchants. Among his many business interests, he became a prominent banker, and was a founding member of the Commercial Bank of Australia in 1866.



Service was elected to the Legislative Assembly for Melbourne in 1857 and between then and 1886, represented four different districts in Victoria, holding several Cabinet positions in State governments. With the failure of the governing party in 1883, he formed a new government, becoming the 12th Premier of Victoria. His government lasted three years and passed significant legislation.

He supported calls for the annexation of New Guinea, and guided a bill constituting a federal council through the Victoria parliament in 1884. He was also supportive of trade unionism, early shop closing and the eight hour day.

By the time of the 1886 election and in declining health, he retired from active politics. He died in his home, named 'Kilwinning' in honour of his birthplace, in 1899, leaving an ex-wife, a partner and several daughters. It was believed that twice he had refused the honour of a knighthood.

He is quoted as having "the respect of all parties, a successful business man, keen and farseeing, but also interested in matters such as philosophy, metaphysics, and political economy. In manner he was cautious and self-restrained, a man of large ideas and indomitable courage". The small, scattered community of Serviceton, named after him, lies just inside the Victoria/South Australia border. In 2006, its population was 377, most involved in the sheep, cattle and grain industries.

### **On to the next stop**

*Cross back over at the pedestrian crossing and turn right. Continue along Bridgend to Pathfoot and on to Irvine Road.*

### **(O) Buckreddan House; former maternity home**

Buckreddan Lodge Nursing Home

Irvine Road, KA13 7PF

OS Grid Reference - NS 30929 43031

Plaque next to front entrance on the original building.

Buckreddan had several owners including Robert Kerr who lived there in 1889. He owned shipping and a rope making company in Glasgow. Buckreddan then became the property of Ayrshire County Council in 1928/29 and from then was part of the public health service for which the Council became responsible in 1929.



In 1948, it became part of the newly formed National Health Service. Buckreddan Maternity Hospital officially closed on 1st January, 1984, having in the meantime been the birthplace of many local residents.

Several people born there went on to become famous in their own field. This includes Ron Geesin who worked with Pink Floyd on their album Atom Heart Mother.

## **On to the next stop**

*Continue along Irvine Road.*

### **(P) Eglinton Estate Castle and Country Park**

Irvine Road, KA13 7PW

OS Grid Reference - NS 31026 42491

Plaque at start of pathway into Eglinton Estate just after Bannoch Road.

The family name of the Earls of Eglinton is Montgomery. In 1388, Sir John de Montgomerie married Elizabeth, the daughter of Sir Hugh Eglinton. She was his sole heir, so the marriage joined two important families. It joined the Baronies and lands of Eglinton and Ardrossan, as well as other properties and estates in Ayrshire, Lanarkshire, and Midlothian, including Rothesay, Eastwood, Cathcart and Eaglesham. Hugh, the Third Lord Montgomery, was created Earl of Eglinton by James IV of Scotland in 1507.

The ruins of the 'castle' are all that remain of what was actually a large Georgian mansion, commissioned by the 12th Earl, and completed in 1802 by the Edinburgh architect John Paterson on the site of a much earlier castle. It's said there were 365 windows, one for every day of the year.

Sitting in about 1400 acres of land, with about 10 miles of roads, it was a magnificent building, second only to Culzean Castle in South Ayrshire. The central saloon was 36 feet wide (11m) and about 100 feet high (30m). The grounds also had a stable block, a deer park, an enormous bowling green said to be one of the finest in Britain, a cricket pitch, tennis courts, croquet lawn, squash court, a rackets hall (the oldest surviving court in the world and the oldest indoor sports building in Scotland), curling pond, fish pond, ice house, gardens, greenhouses, and a private gas works. At its peak, the estate employed more than 400 people. In 1901, it is recorded that Eglinton had the most important collection of species of mature trees in southern Scotland.

Archibald, the 13th Earl, staged an authentic Medieval Tournament, complete with Knights on horseback in full armour and all their servants, feasting, jousting, and a Queen of Beauty over three days in August 1839 in the grounds of the Castle. The earl's friends, the cream of the gentry of the day, played the parts of the Knights. They had been disappointed by the plainness and curtailed pageantry of Queen Victoria's Coronation the year before, so it was intended to be a colourful and no-expense-spared party.

The extravagant event attracted an estimated 100,000 spectators from all over the UK and beyond, and it benefitted from the recent completion of the first railway lines in Ayrshire. (It also caused the first fares increase!) Unfortunately, torrential rain ruined much of the first day of the event, creating huge cleaning bills for the Earl, and earning the Tournament an infamous place in history. Contrary to

popular opinion, the Tournament did not itself cause the downfall and bankruptcy of the Eglintons, but it didn't help.

The on-going costs of keeping the Eglinton empire afloat were enormous. Unsuccessful business projects, the poor condition of the Castle, and finally, death duties, all had a fatal impact on the family finances. The Castle was abandoned in 1925, was de-roofed and had the windows removed, thus avoiding tax. 1,960 items were auctioned off, raising £7,004 19s 6d. The Montgomerie family now lives in Perthshire.

During the early part of the last War, the Army and Navy used it for target practice, destroying two of the four towers, and vehicle maintenance and preparation depots for future European troop landings were established in the grounds. Not belying the fact that we were at war, the armed forces trashed the estate and what was left of the Castle.



Around 1973, the ruins were rationalised and made safe, resulting in what we see today. The establishment of Eglinton Country Park by the old Irvine Development Corporation (IDC) and North Ayrshire Council saved much of the estate for the benefit of all the people of Ayrshire and beyond. The Wilson family had purchased the old offices, castle ruins, and other land from Robert Howie and Sons in 1950. Clement Wilson, the food processing factory owner, established the Clement Wilson Foundation, and opened part of the grounds to the public, spending around £400,000 (around £5 million in today's terms) on consolidating the castle ruins, planting trees, landscaping, making paths, restoring the Tournament Bridge, etc.

He built a canning factory utilising the old stables block. The factory employed 300 people, but closed in 1997 on the sale of the business. The stable block, said to have been designed by Robert Adam and built of robbed stone from Kilwinning Abbey, has now been converted into private flats.

The Wilson family gave the park to the then Cunninghame District Council in 1978, making it possible to establish Eglinton Country Park, a resource which now attracts over 250,000 visitors a year.

Facilities include woodland walks, bird hides, picnic areas, Ranger Service, visitor centre and exhibition, play areas, camping and caravan site, and café.

Eglinton Country Park is served by the North Ayrshire Council Ranger Service which offers a programme of guided walks and events from Easter and July-October.

### **On to the next stop**

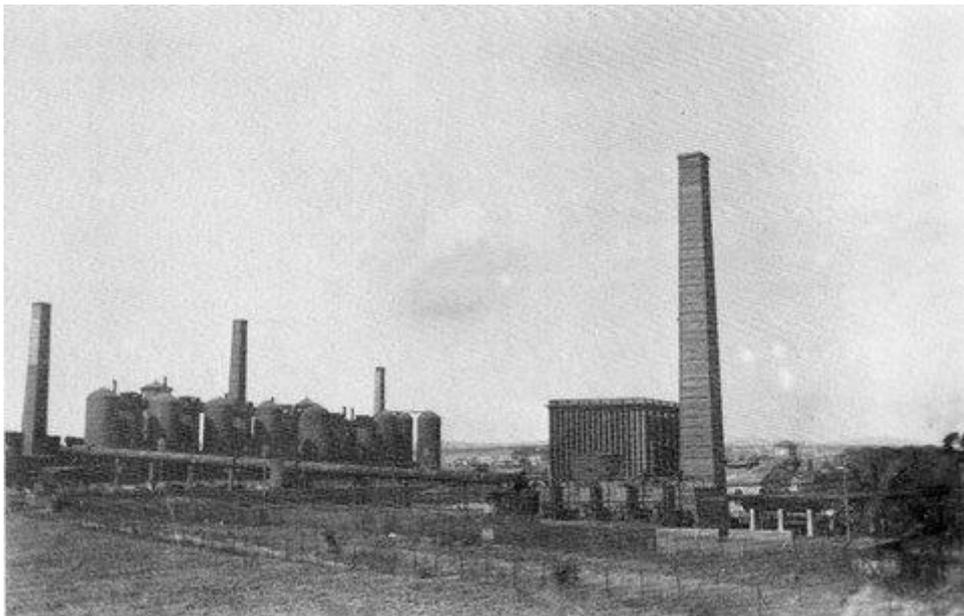
*Cross over Irvine Road and walk on the path going south - west across the River Garnock. When you reach Nethermains Road turn right.*

### **(Q) Eglinton Ironworks, 1846-1926**

Nethermains Community Centre  
Nethermains Road, KA13 6ES  
OS Grid Reference - NS 30350 42636

The ironworks, on the site of the present-day Nethermains industrial estate, employed well over a thousand workers at its peak. The Earl of Eglinton employed the firm of Baird & Sons of Gartsherrie in Lanarkshire to build eight furnaces which went into service on Christmas Eve 1846. Iron smelting was a continuous process, and the furnaces blasted away more or less permanently.

A contemporary report talks of "...a long range of flaring furnaces, belching fire and smoke even in the middle of the night where there used to be beautiful fields, and the ground for miles about is now full of deep holes which in the wet season form vast acid lagoons...".



The site covered 70 acres and produced up to 100,000 tons of iron per year. The processes caused a huge slag heap to build up, on the other side of the river, behind the Community Centre. A favourite

play area for many generations of local children, it was removed to build the deep water terminal at Hunterston, completed in 1979, and is now Almswall Park.

Lines of single-storey houses for the workers were built at the site. Double Row had 43 two-roomed houses, Brick Row had 34, and Cross Row had 15. Single Row had 60 one-roomed houses. The floors in all were made of brick tiles and tenants slept in built-in beds. Children would sleep in 'Hurly' beds, wooden boxes which when not in use were stored under the adults' beds.

There were no flushing toilets of course. Outside, there was one dry closet for every four households and one wash house for every eight. Apparently, the dry closets had two seats, meaning two persons sitting side by side could use them at the same time! As well as the Institute, the site had its own railway system to allow coal and iron to be brought in and out, a football park, a store and a school. Built in 1857, the school could take about 400 pupils, and was subsidised partly by pennies deducted from workers' wages.

The Ironworks Institute, now the Nethermain Community Centre, was opened in 1900 as a recreation centre for the employees of the foundry, comprising a meeting hall, library and baths. But some of its facilities were more popular than others. At the first AGM in 1901, the Committee reported, "We have met with less success with the baths than anything else. We would like you to take a bath at least once a fortnight, and induce your lady friends to do the same". When steelmaking began in the 1880s, Baird & Sons failed to change to the new processes, and the business gradually declined, closing in 1926. The houses were finally cleared around 1950.

**This is the end of the walking route.**