

The Thomas Muir Heritage Trail

Walking in the Footsteps of the Father of Scottish Democracy

Thomas Muir of Huntershill (1765–1799) was a leading light in 'The Friends of the People', a political reform movement of the 1790s, when only a significant minority of Scotland's citizens had the right to vote. He was tried and found guilty of sedition and received the harsh sentence of being banished for 14 years to Botany Bay, Australia. In silencing the man they created a martyr, and a hero to many.

The Heritage Trail is 18km in length and offers visitors a great walking or cycling experience. The route itself stretches through some of East Dunbartonshire's most attractive landscapes, and towns and villages that have a direct link to the Thomas Muir story as interpreted by built heritage along the way. Regular waymarkers allow the trail to be navigated in full or in part and from either direction. The historic town of Kirkintilloch offers a natural halfway point along the route or an alternative start/finish location for those wishing a shorter experience. Most of the route is on established foot rural and urban paths, the terrain is level and suitable for all ages whether on foot or bicycle. Regular local village and town hotels and other service points are highlighted to enhance your heritage experience. At these locations you can pick up copies of 'The Life and Times of Thomas Muir' companion booklet.

Monument hunt in the graveyard

A woodland walk in the footsteps of a friend

A calico print works, a church with a story and a pioneering society

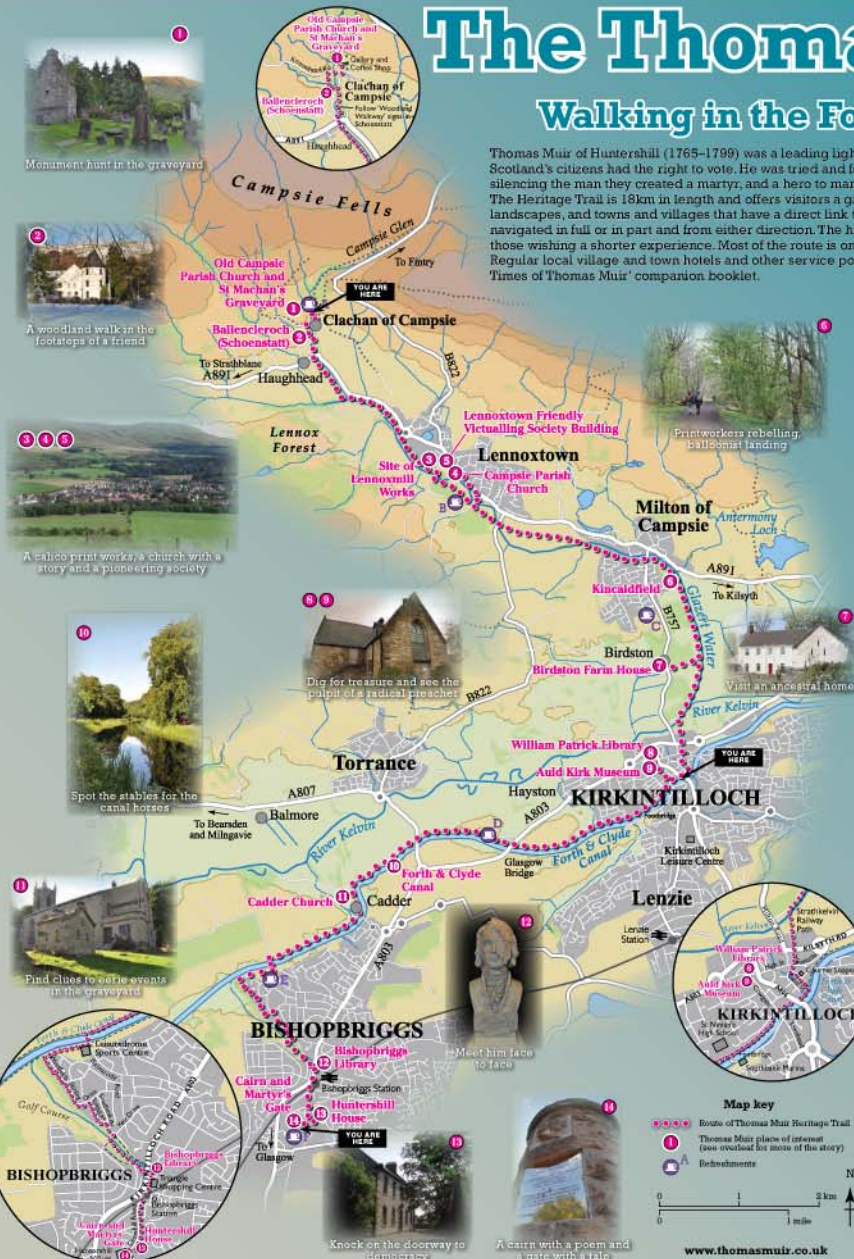
Spot the stables for the canal horses

Find clues to solve events in the graveyard

Knock on the doorway to Democracy

A cairn with a poem and a gate with a tale

www.thomasmuir.co.uk



1 Old Campsie Parish Church and St Machan's Graveyard

Watch out for the ruins of old Campsie Parish Church where 'The Rev James Lapointe was minister. Lapointe was a determined opponent of political reform. When the Government placed Muir on trial, Lapointe turned against him and went to great lengths to furnish incriminating evidence. Part of Lapointe's Manus was set on fire by angry locals in 1797.

- Look for the prominent monument to William Muir 'The Campsie Post' (Thomas Muir's relation) and John MacLellan of Balenceroch (Thomas Muir's close friend).
- **10** Campsie Glen Gallery and Coffee Shop In a building formerly used as an inn, tearoom, house and post office, a good place for lunch, tea, coffee and homebaking. Tel: 01360 313 049

2 Balenceroch (School site and pilgrimage centre)

Balenceroch was the home of John MacFarlan, a friend of Thomas Muir. Known as the 'Liberal Laird', he opened up his land at Campsie Glen to the public in 1798, an act of kindness that attracted much admiration and support. The house passed on to the MacFarlan family to become a hotel in the twentieth century. It was destroyed by fire in 1993 and rebuilt as a museum and pilgrimage centre in 1999.

- Try to imagine the grand private buildings on the right hand side of Strath Road, Lennoxtown, near the river (8).
- Look out for the rebuilt Balenceroch House, now used for guest accommodation as part of the Balenceroch retreat.

3, 4, 5 Lennoxtown

In 1796 a calico printing works was opened at Lennoxmill (9). Near by Lennoxtown, or Kirkton of Campsie as it was sometimes called, was established to house the mill workers. A Reform Society was set up there during 1796. St. Campsie Parish Church on Main Street (4) occupies the site of a Relief Church established by parishioners who were ejected by the appointment of James Lapointe as minister of the Clachan church in 1784.

- Try to imagine the grand private buildings on the right hand side of Strath Road, Lennoxtown, near the river (8).
- Look for the surviving building of the Lennoxtown Friendly Victualling Society (5) - established in 1818 as a pioneer co-operative society - just across the road from the modern Co-op building.

- **12** Glazert Country House Hotel, Lennoxtown Family-run hotel set in two acres of mature gardens bordering the River Glazert. It offers a variety of options for snacks and meals. Tel: 01 540 31079 www.glazert.co.uk

6 Kincaidfield, Milton of Campsie

In 1790 a ninety-nine year lease was agreed between two Glasgow merchants and John Kincaid of Kincaidfield, for a portion of his lands, and a calico printing works was then established at Kincaidfield nearby. In November 1790 Thomas Muir addressed a large crowd that included many Kincaidfield workers. This led to a local reform society 'The Associated Friends of the Constitution and of the People' was formed in Milton of Campsie. At Muir's trial, the list of defence witnesses included six Kincaidfield men.

- Try to envisage the private buildings at Kincaidfield, near the railway walk to Kircintilloch.
- Make a diversion into the village to see a plaque commemorating the landing here in 1785 of Helen Davidson (Helen's Landing) one of the first Scottish female fugitives.

- **13** Kincaid House Hotel, Milton of Campsie A grade A hotel building which was largely reconstructed around 1812, this family-run hotel offers a variety of options for snacks and meals. Tel: 0141 776 2226 www.kincaidhouse.com

7 Birdston Farm House

Thomas Muir's ancestors, who were farmers from Ayrshire, purchased land at Birdston around 1690 and built dwellings there. A later Birdston Farm House still stands today. Its design very similar to that of Huntershill House in Bishopbriggs. Thomas Muir's father owned land at both Birdston and Hayston nearby. Birdston was also the birthplace and residence of 'The Campsie Post', William Muir.

- Make a diversion to see the distinctive Birdston Farm House, on the west side of the main road between Milton of Campsie and Kircintilloch.

8, 9 Kircintilloch

With encouragement from Thomas Muir a Reform Society was set up in Kircintilloch in November 1790. The Rev William Dunn, minister of Kircintilloch Parish at the time, spent three months imprisoned in the Edinburgh Tolbooth for touring his people from a minute book of the Reform Society. On his release, the people of Kircintilloch celebrated with a procession through the streets.

- Make a street diversion to the William Patrick Library (8) to inspect books and documents relating to Muir and to the Kirk Kirt Museum (9) to see William Dunn's page.

10 Forth & Clyde Canal

The Forth and Clyde Canal was built from east to west between 1769 and 1790. It was complete as far as Kircintilloch by 1778. In 1793 people used it as a mode of transport to attend Thomas Muir's trial in Edinburgh. William Muir's poetry contains many references to the canal.

- Watch out for the distinctive white stone building at Glasgow Bridge, built by a standard pattern. This was used for collecting tolls on the express service of Great Britain between Glasgow and Edinburgh.
- Did part of the trial on board a canal boat.
- Visit www.thomasmuir.co.uk or phone 0141 772 1400 for details.

11 The Stables

Well known country pub and restaurant housed in a stable block built in 1812 for horses which pulled barges on the Forth and Clyde Canal. A good place for family-friendly dining.

- Tel: 0141 777 6988 www.vintagepub.co.uk/hostelkirkintilloch/

11 Cadder Church

Thomas Muir was an elder of Cadder Parish Church. He represented the Cadder congregation when they were fighting landlords who wanted to impose their choice of minister on the local church. After a long and bitter fight, the Church of Scotland General Assembly ruled in Muir's favour. The present church building dates from the 1820s.

- See the little statue 'Auld Auld' and the 'cotton-shaped' 'mural' in Cadder Church grounds. These both date from the days when bottles were being recycled by Muir's friends for medical research. Pictures provided show that nearly 5000 bottles were used in the north-west, while the iron waste was recycled to make the front of bottles reuse (11).

- **12** The Leisuredrome Open water play facilities include swimming pools with theme, sports hall, health suite, soft play and cafe. Tel: 0141 777 3660 www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/leisuredrome

12 Bishopbriggs Library

A permanent Thomas Muir Exhibition at Bishopbriggs Library includes nine display panels telling Muir's story.

- Make sure you don't miss the bust of Thomas Muir by Alexander Colclough. Three statues by the famous sculptor are displayed in prominent positions in central Edinburgh.
- Look out for books about Thomas Muir in the local history section.

13 Huntershill House

An important example of a Georgian house built in the 1790s, this became Muir's family home when his father bought Huntershill House and estate in 1782. The house was purchased by Muir in 1808 and for a time it housed the small collection of Thomas Muir manuscripts now displayed in Bishopbriggs Library.

- Although this is the Muir family home with views across fields and Thomas Muir and his family in the garden.
- Note the proximity of the house to Crosshill Road, at one time an old foot road from Glasgow to Edinburgh.

- **14** Huntershill Village and Thomas Muir Coffee Shop Huntershill Village is made up of over 80 businesses, mainly owned by local residents, who employ locally and offer a wide range of services to the local community. Thomas Muir Coffee Shop is a great place for a snack or lunch with a chance to reflect on Muir's life as portrayed in the paintings, photographs and information on display. Tel: (Thomas Muir Coffee Shop) 0141 742 3323 www.huntershillvillage.com

14 Cairn and Martyrs' Gate

The Cairn and Martyrs' Gate at Huntershill were erected by John S.L. Robertson in 1890 (reworked 1897) with some financial support from East Dunbartonshire Council. 'The Martyrs' Gate commemorates Thomas Muir and the other four men known as 'The Scottish Political Martyrs'. During 1793-4 these men received sentences of transport to Botany Bay for sedition, an alleged crime which included the circulation of pamphlets on parliamentary reform. Other menorial to their heroism were erected in Edinburgh and London during the nineteenth century.

- Visit the cairn from across Muir where it is recorded on the cairn, erected by Muir's friend John MacFarlan of Balenceroch.

