

# Kilcreggan Pier to Peaton

## West Coast



# ROSNEATH PENINSULA HERITAGE TRAIL



## Rosneath Peninsula West Heritage Trail

During the massive industrial expansion of Victorian Glasgow the Firth of Clyde became a highway for passenger steamers with dozens of steamer piers dotted around its coast. As railway mania took hold rail terminals at Craigendoran (Helensburgh) Gourrock and Greenock were built to bring passengers speedily away from the bustle of the city to the scenic beauty of the Firth. Coastal resorts such as Rothesay, Dunoon and Helensburgh thrived but there were also opportunities for smaller and more peaceful “watering holes” to flourish.

As part of this demographic change, in 1848 the 8th Duke of Argyll feued the south and west coasts of the Rosneath peninsula for housing developments and built steamer piers at Cove, Kilcreggan and Coulpport to encourage the project.

Passengers could arrive from the smoke and grime of Glasgow to the clear air of Kilcreggan Pier within an hour thereby creating a thriving summer trade with an emphasis on healthy, peaceful surroundings.

Feus were quickly taken-up and in the following decade many prestigious villas and castles were built as summer residences for Victorian Glasgow’s well-to-do business men. They could commute to work daily by ferry and train leaving their families to enjoy the fresh air and scenery away from the industrial city.

Feued plots were large so that only the wealthier echelons of society could afford the high feu duties and the cost of building and maintaining a residence in keeping with the surroundings. These residences include fine early examples of the prominent architect Alexander “Greek” Thomson.

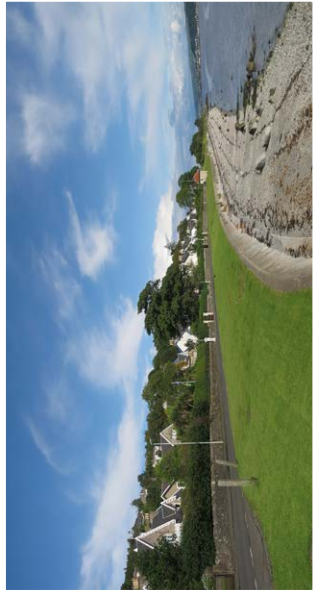
A host of service business, shops, and churches provided for the summer population bolstered

by holiday lets and day trippers known as “excursionists”. Many would arrive at Kilcreggan Pier and walk to Cove Pier via the Shore Road which had regular water fountains and seats for walkers. Others could walk Barbour Road for its elevated scenic views of the Firth of Clyde.

Cove & Kilcreggan became a Police Burgh in 1865 administered by its own elected provost and commissioners and as such it continued to prosper. The Duke’s chamberlains retained a tight control over the feued properties ensuring high standards were retained. The Duke also helped to enhance the Burgh giving very lenient feus so that waterworks and a Burgh Hall with recreational fields could be built by the Commissioners. Sobriety was an important element and to discourage social disorder brought on by the evils of strong drink the area was “dry” boasting its own Temperance Hotel.

The Rosneath Peninsula West Trail looks at some of the houses, churches and shops that remain from this period and continue to give Cove & Kilcreggan its enduring character.

Those who wish to explore Rosneath village and its environs can gain information from the Rosneath Peninsula East Trail which starts at Kilcreggan Pier and heads east.



### Directions to Kilcreggan for the start of the West Heritage Trail

#### By Car:

Scenic 16 mile drive from Helensburgh to Kilcreggan Pier via the A814 and B833 takes 30 minutes. Drive time from Glasgow is about 1 hour 15 minutes.

#### By Bus:

Hourly bus service from Helensburgh to links with trains from Glasgow. The B813 service from Helensburgh (Adjacent Helensburgh Central Station) to Coulpport stops at Kilcreggan Pier. Journey time 40 minutes. On Sundays the service is two hourly. There are regular bus stops along the Shore Road route of the Heritage Trail. The B813 service also stop at Rosneath for the East Heritage Trail.

#### By Passenger Ferry:

The SPT passenger ferry from Gourrock to Kilcreggan Pier links with train services from Glasgow. Passage time is 10 minutes. It runs at regular intervals on weekdays and Saturdays. There is no ferry service on Sundays. Post code of Kilcreggan pier for Sat Nav users is G84 0JH

#### Overview of The Rosneath Peninsula West Heritage Trail:

The trail starts at Kilcreggan pier and proceeds North West for about 4.5 miles to Peaton.

For walkers, the burgh pavement on Shore Road runs for about 3 miles. It is not always wheelchair friendly.

Main car parking areas are at Kilcreggan Pier and Cove Bay.

Barbour Road is single track metalled road with light traffic. There are no official passing places or lay-bys.

The Forestry Track runs from the top of Peaton Hill near the Nature Reserve. There is a limited car parking area at the reserve. The track has views to the east and terminates at the east end of Barbour Road where there is limited parking.

Compiled by A. Bray & R. Reeve  
For more information visit:  
[www.rosneathpeninsulawest.com](http://www.rosneathpeninsulawest.com)



**Alexander Thomson** (1817–1875)

The Architectural partnership of Baird & Thomson was established in 1848 and met with immediate early success throughout Glasgow and its environs. Cove & Kilcreggan residences designed or attributed to the practice include:  
(D = Documented, A = Attributed)  
*The Anchorage*. (A) – Church Road. Built as Craigmunie Church manse • *Carradale*. (A) Kilcreggan • *Ellerly*. (A) Kilcreggan • *Ivy Cave Cottage*. (D) (1850) – Cove. Re-named *Cragowllet* • *Seaton Lodge*. (A) – Kilcreggan. Re-named *Glenrae* • *Cove Cottage*. Semi-detached Villas. (D) Shore Road Cove. Re-named *Ashlea & Ellerslie* • *Seymore Lodge*. (D) Cove (1850) • *Ardsoy*. (A) Kilcreggan (1851) • *Craig Alley, Italian Villa* (D) (1851) • *Craigrownie, House* and boundary wall – Cove (c1854) • *Knockderry Castle & Lodge* (D) (1855?) • *Glen Eden*. (A) (c1856) • *Barons Point Villa*. (A) (1860s) (destroyed by fire) • *Barons Hall*. (A) (1860s) • *Ferndean Villa*. (A) (1860s) • *Grafton Lodge*. (A) (after 1862) • *Dhault (Dowall) Bridge*. (c1873).

**Campbell Douglas** (1828–1910)  
*Harfield*. (1859) South Ailey Road, Cove. Built for Richardsons sugar merchants of Greenock and later purchased by the 1st Lord Inverclyde. In 1924 it was donated to the YMCA for use as a hostel and re-named *Inverclyde House*. (Demolished 1967)

**James Chalmers** (1852–1927)  
*Cove Burgh Hall* was one of Chalmers early works and his first public building. He went on to design many Glasgow buildings, particularly churches. He had a liking for red sandstone. His work is typified by classical. Arts and Crafts and Glasgow Style. Probably his most famous work, commissioned in 1847, was the offices of distillers Wright and Greig, later the Distillers Company Office in Glasgows’s Waterroo Street.

**James Sellars** (1843–1888)  
Sellars was strongly influenced by A. Thomson. He was articleed to Hugh Barclay and later worked in partnership with Campbell Douglas and John Keppie. He designed Cove Castle in 1867. In 1888 following his death, the firm of Honeyman & Keppie was founded.

#### John Honeyman

(1831–1914)  
Honeyman was an established architect before going into partnership with J Keppie in 1888. His designs on the peninsula include *Rockingham* and *Villa Marina* and extensions to *Knockderry Castle*.

#### William Leiper

(1839–1916)  
He designed numerous houses in Helensburgh and his later work shows Arts & Crafts influences. In Cove he completed additions to *Knockderry Castle* and *Knockderry Hotel*.

# DSA Architect Biography Report 2015

#### William Motherwell

Was a Dunbartonshire architect. His designs here were The Linn (1858) and possibly Auchendarroch.

### The First Feus of Cove & Kilcreggan

The first essential requirement in the plan to feu the area was to provide good transport links. Kilcreggan pier was opened in 1850 and was described as “a substantial pier with commodious waiting-rooms and other conveniences”. Cove Pier was opened in 1852. “An area of ground was depowned to John McElroy,



George Campbell  
8th Duke of Argyll

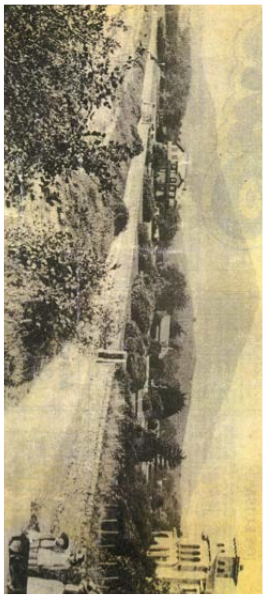
founder and proprietor of houses, living, with his wife, at Craigmunie Cottage. Together with Thomas Forgan he took feus to the south of Cove Pier and built speculatively. Hamlet Hill and Turhill were built to house the necessary builders and craftsmen and they engaged Alexander Thomson as architect of some of the early large houses. These epitomised contemporary taste for setting grandiose residences in a rugged and picturesque landscape much beloved by Victorians. Here the rich Glasgow merchants could create a haven of retreat away from the dirt and grime of the industrial city. Within a decade a string of villas and castles had appeared along the shore with conformity to the ducal feu Charter tightly controlled to ensure stylish development.

### Coulpport Feus

Coulpport (one mile north along the coast of Peaton Road) was the site of an old ferry on the drovers route from Ardenintny on the west side of Loch Long.

The Duke of Argyll later opened his Coulpport Estate to feuing building a pier in 1880. Only three feus were taken up, one by architect **James Boucher** (1826 - 1906) of Boucher & Cousland, who designed *Drayneig* also known as *Swiss Chalet*. He also designed *Coulpport House* for his friend and neighbour John Kibble, builder of *Kibble Palace* at Glasgow’s Botanical Gardens). These residences were demolished in the 1970s to make way for the Coulpport Armament Depot. The only surviving structure is the stone foot of the steamer pier.

Some say that Harry Lauder’s song “Keep tight on to the End of the Road” refers to his journey along Barbour Road to catch the Coulpport Ferry to Ardenintny en route to his estate at Glenbranter.



Coulpport Feus including *Swiss Cottage* and *Coulpport House*



# ROSNEATH PENINSULA WEST HERITAGE TRAIL

1

**Kilcreggan Pier.** Built in 1848 to encourage feuing. It has the original signal discs dating from 1888 which regulated the order of steamers racing for the pier. In its heyday up to 39 ferries a day would call here and on one June Sunday in 1880 1,500 "excursionists" alighted at the pier to enjoy fresh air and peaceful surroundings.



2

**Kilcreggan village comprises 5 blocks of houses with shops at ground level.** The first tenement was built in 1876. The gables on some of the buildings show later dates. Between two of them, next to the bus stop, is Temperance Brae, the building beside it being once the Temperance Hotel. The Burgh prided itself on being a temperance area. Glendhu (LP 20) is one of the earliest feus.



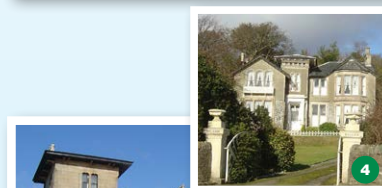
3

**Donaldson Brae (LP 24) leads up to Kilcreggan Hotel originally called Woodbine, summer residence of Peter Donaldson who was an iron and steel merchant from Glasgow.** His uncle built Heathfield further east on Argyll Road.



4

**Going west along Shore Road is the Italianate Auchendarroch and next to it (LP 32) the small Alexander 'Greek' Thomson villa, Ardsloy.** Continuing west, the Victorian rock art on the shore was re-painted in 1922 to celebrate Tutankhamen and named Tut-tut. At the east end of Silver Bay (LP 46) are four identical villas originally named after the royal houses of Windsor, Holyrood, Carleton and Claremont although Windsor and Carleton were renamed Rockcliffe and Lovedale. Shortly before School Road and set back against the cliff is the Italianate Balgair (LP 52).



5

**Beyond School Road Glentrae (LP57) is a mirror image of Ardsloy.** Some of the next houses were named after hymn tunes, Winton, Greenhill, Kenilworth, St Vincent Park and Rockingham (LP64). The old United Presbyterian church "Lindowan" is awaiting development. Note its boundary wall, gate piers and old wooden gate.



6

**Cove Burgh Hall, designed in 1893 by James Chalmers for the Burgh Commissioners.** Since 2001 it has been run by the community. Opposite is the War Memorial. Church Road leads up to Craigrownie Parish Church built in 1852 and enlarged by Honeyman and Keppie in 1889.



7

**Between Cove Burgh Hall and North Ailey Road are 4 villas which include Kirklea and Glen Eden (see architect Alexander Thomson).**

8

**South Ailey Road.** On the right are the gate piers for Hartfield Castle which became Inverclyde Holiday Home and was demolished in 1967. On the left is Craigrownie Castle in Scots Baronial Style attributed to Thomson. Further up on the left is Craig Ailey, one of the first Thomson villas being built in 1851. It provided the inspiration for many of the later villas. It was also known as the "Italian Villa".



9

**Shortly before reaching Cove Village is Cragowlet (LP93) - 4 apartments designed by Thomson.** Cove Village is a series of tenement type buildings built in 1876 with shops on the ground floor. To the back of the cottage at the east end of Urybank was the 'Reading Room' until 1893. North Ailey Road (LP98) leads up to Barbour Road for scenic walks. This was the original peninsula highway. 100m. up on the right is Hamlet Hill, a group of workmen's cottages.



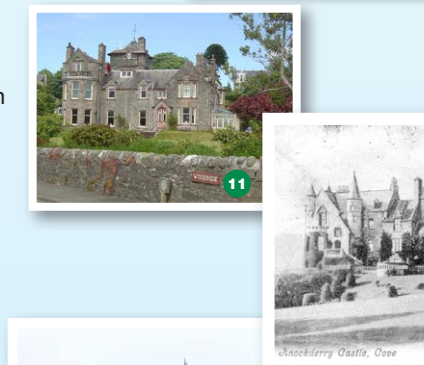
10

**Moving on to Cove Bay pass Clevedon (LP104) once the home of the Cayzer family, owners of the Clan Shipping Line.** The houses along Cove Bay are imposing Victorian villas. Cove Castle, designed by James Sellars in 1867, looks down over the bay. At LP105 are the remains of Cove Pier demolished in 1958. Seymour Lodge, (LP 106) built 1850 is an authentic very early Alexander Thomson. Next to it is Ferndene, probably Thomson, built for a member of the Blackie family with links to Hill House, Helensburgh. Note the garden wall and the gateway at the end of it which has an owl on one side and a fox on the other. Further on, opposite the car park, a lane leads to The Linn, built in 1859 by W. Motherwell for Mr Martin who had a boot and shoe factory in the Vale of Leven. It is now a botanical garden and nursery open to the public.



11

**The Dhualt (Dowall) Bridge at the end of the bay was designed c1873 by Thomson.** In the vicinity are more distinctive houses. For example, (LP 111) Woodside, Armadale and Cragdarroch (LP 113). Above to the North sits the Thomson designed Knockderry Castle built c1851, with extensions designed by Honeyman in 1869 and additions in 1896-7 by W. Leiper for J.S. Templeton, the carpet manufacturer. During WW2 it was used as a Free French Hospital.



12

**The Knockderry House Hotel was built mid 19th C with later additions by William Leiper showing American Arts & Crafts influence.**



13

**Barbour Cemetery (3.7m) following the Shore Road take care as there are no pavements.** A sign on Shore Road points uphill to the cemetery with limited parking. The Cemetery contains the graves and impressive monuments to many notable families of the Victorian era who lived here. Shortly after the cemetery turning, the centre one of three houses on the Shore Road was formerly Cove & Kilcreggan Gas Company built c1871.



Peaton Hill Community Nature Reserve

P

Peaton Road

Forestry Walk

Barbour Road, Single Track Road

Cove Bay Car Park

Kilcreggan Pier Car Park

Passenger Ferry from Gourock (Not Sundays)

Loch Long

Firth of Clyde

LP - Lamp post

Follow the 'Country Code' and respect the privacy of private residences

1 mile  
(approx scale)