



Kirkintilloch's history can be traced back to the Roman invasion of Scotland. The area was first occupied around 80 AD and 60 years later, under Emperor Antoninus, the famous Antonine Wall was built across Scotland between the Forth and Clyde, partly along the ridge that the town now occupies. The Wall's construction was commemorated with carved stones, some of which can be seen in the Auld Kirk Museum. A fort was built on the summit of the hill now within Peel Park to control a crossing over the Luggie Water. The Romans abandoned their defences around 160 AD. The town's name originated as the Brythonic Gaelic caer (fort) - ceann (head) - tulaich (hillock), as spoken by the indigenous tribe the Romans called Damnonii.

In 1211 William the Lion made Kirkintilloch the second burgh of barony in Scotland. A castle had perhaps been built within the old fort by this time and during the Wars of Independence (1296-1328) it was strategically vital. The castle was the stronghold of Edward I's allies, the Comyns, and the King ordered a scouting mission to go by Kirkintilloch 'as near as you can by our enemies'. Scottish forces besieged the castle in 1306 and the Bishop of Glasgow supplied timber, originally intended for his cathedral's steeple, to make siege engines. It is not recorded how the castle fell but it was probably razed by the victorious Scots.



Canal Bridge at Townhead
By courtesy of East Dunbartonshire Information and Archives

Medieval Kirkintilloch was a rural town with most inhabitants employed processing wool. Archaeological digs have revealed the remains of timber buildings, cobbled yards and cess-pits, which suggest that the settlement grew along High Street and Eastside, with a market held at The Cross.

The town was on a route between Edinburgh and Glasgow and passing traffic might include armies which would press townspeople into providing food and shelter. This was clearly resented and in 1746 the town was nearly burned down by the Jacobites after an inhabitant shot one of the passing Highlanders.

Despite such troubles the town grew through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and buildings were constructed down Cowgate. One of the few that



Auld Kirk
By courtesy of East Dunbartonshire Information and Archives

survives is the Auld Kirk, which replaced an older parish church located at Oxbang. A tolbooth, or town-house, had been built by 1659, and stood at The Cross until replaced by the standing Barony Chambers. The Cross was also the location for the burgh's stocks. There were regular lint (flax and linseed) markets in Eastside and weaving was the pre-eminent occupation in the town.

From the end of the eighteenth century the burgh changed dramatically. Firstly, there was a rapid expansion in cotton handloom weaving and many parts of the town, notably the streets running off Cowgate, were created as a result. The town's transformation was accelerated when the first section of the Forth and Clyde Canal from Grangemouth was opened in 1773. The town acted as a port for freight traffic and the main commodities were grain, sugar, coal, timber, pig-iron, herring, coffee, cocoa and ironstone. The nineteenth century saw the establishment of iron founding in the town. The best-known foundry was the Lion, which gained an international reputation for ornamental work. Increasing wealth meant a middle class emerged and villas were constructed to the west of the old town. There was a poorhouse, but in the 1880s it had only two regular inmates.

This new wealth did have drawbacks and visitors were very disparaging about the town's appearance. One wrote in 1842 that 'it is an irregularly built, strangely arranged, confused looking little town, conveying... such entire devotion to trade and manufacture as precludes nearly all attention to the graces of exterior appearance'.

During the twentieth century the canal lost its importance and a decline in heavy industries affected Kirkintilloch like many other towns. However, the population grew rapidly because of the Glasgow Overspill Project. Continued expansion resulted in the removal of many older structures and the last thatched property was demolished in 1947. Fortunately, archaeological work has provided much to remind us of the town's long history, from Roman frontier to industrial boom-town. Today the Antonine Wall has been included in the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site.



Demolition of weaving shops, 1956
By courtesy of East Dunbartonshire Information and Archives

Historic Kirkintilloch

This archaeological map and sketch of Kirkintilloch accompanies the Burgh Survey. The Scottish Burgh Survey project was established in the 1970s and has since produced detailed surveys of nearly 80 of Scotland's historic towns and cities. The primary objective is to identify areas of archaeological potential within the towns under study, to help assess the implications of development. The surveys also provide background information on the history and archaeology of each burgh. The Centre for Scottish Urban History at the University of Edinburgh and Headland Archaeology produced the Kirkintilloch Burgh Survey for Historic Scotland.

This broadsheet was designed for Historic Scotland by Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd: www.headlandarchaeology.com

This broadsheet accompanies the book *Historic Kirkintilloch* by M Rorke, E P Dennison, S Stronach and R. Coleman, published for Historic Scotland by the Council for British Archaeology. The book may be bought from Central Books (0845 458 9911) or <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/pubs/index.html> or from any good bookshop.

Further information, particularly regarding legally protected sites, can be gleaned from the PASTMAP website (<http://www.PASTMAP.org.uk>). Where development is being considered, in all cases advice should be sought from East Dunbartonshire Council, The Triangle, Bishopbriggs, G64 2TR. (Tel: 0141 578 8000).



Places to visit near Kirkintilloch

Bar Hill Fort – the highest fort on the line of the Antonine Wall and the best site to appreciate its strategic significance. Off B8023 ½ mile east of Twechar.

Rough Castle – the best-preserved length of rampart and ditch together with the earthworks of a fort, the most complete on the Antonine Wall, giving a good impression of how the frontier and its integral forts worked. Signposted off the B816 at Bonnybridge.

Bothwell Castle – Scotland's largest and finest thirteenth-century castle. Off the B7071 at Uddington. Tel: 01899 221050.

Auld Kirk Museum – displays on the archaeology and history of the town. Cowgate, Kirkintilloch, G66 1AB. Tel: 0141 587 0144.

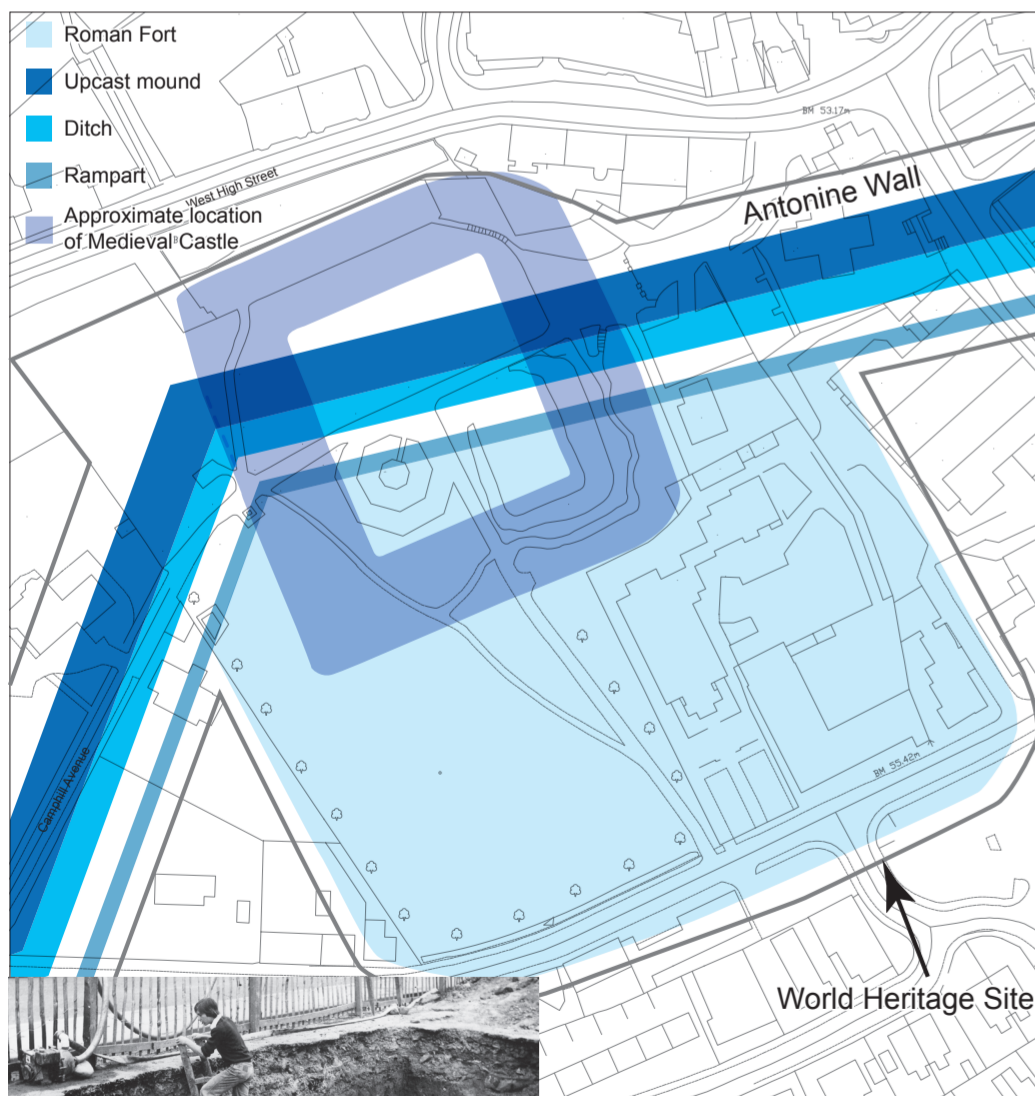
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HISTORIC SCOTLAND
The Scottish Burgh Survey
broadsheet

Historic Kirkintilloch

Front Cover image: Cowgate, c 1900
By courtesy of East Dunbartonshire Information and Archives

Historic Scotland, Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh, EH9 1SH
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Excavating the fort's ditch in 1978-79
By courtesy of East Dunbartonshire Information and Archives

Archaeological features around Peel Park
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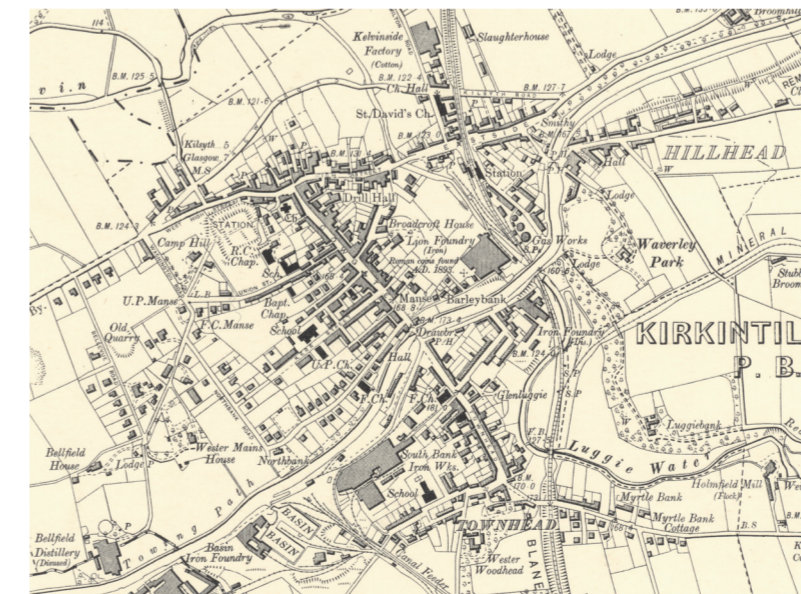
W Roy's Military Survey of Scotland, 1745-55
By permission of the British Library



Ordnance Survey, 1st edition, 1864-65
By permission of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland



C Ross's Map of the Shire of Dumbarton, 1777
By permission of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland



Ordnance Survey, 2nd edition, 1899
By permission of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland



East High Street
By courtesy of East Dunbartonshire Information and Archives



Peel Boat, c 1880
By courtesy of East Dunbartonshire Information and Archives



Townhead, c 1880
By courtesy of East Dunbartonshire Information and Archives



West High Street, 1975
© Crown copyright: RCAHMS



Close to 18 High Street
Photo by Headland Archaeology Ltd, 2004



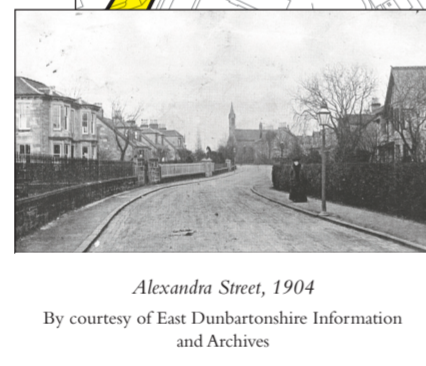
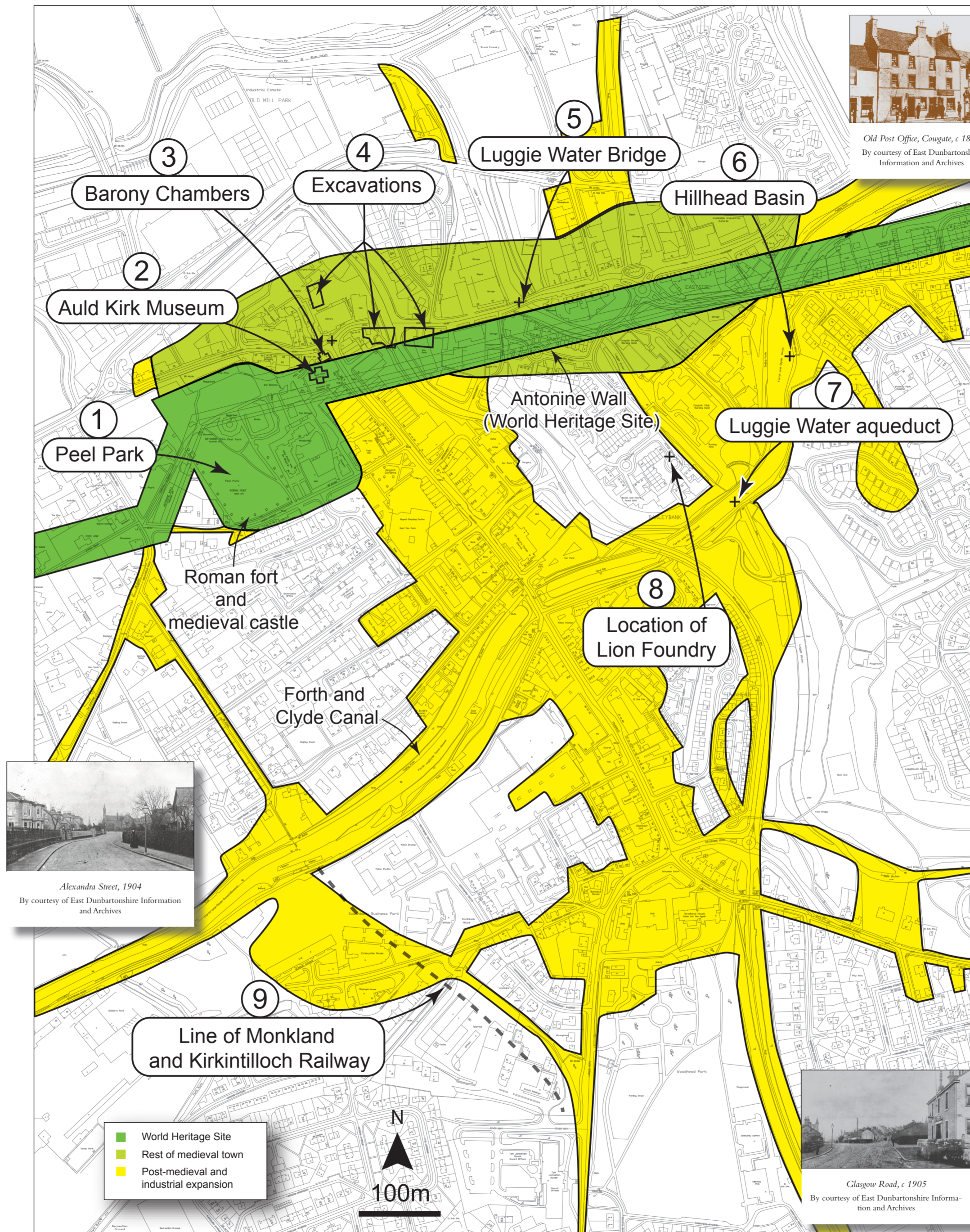
Peel Brae, c 1820
By courtesy of East Dunbartonshire Information and Archives

The map shows the areas of prime archaeological interest in Kirkintilloch and is a useful guide to protecting and recording its historic remains as the town develops in the future.

Peel Park contains nationally important remains relating to the Antonine Wall World Heritage Site. It is important to remember that the fort extends beyond the park. The medieval castle located here is probably of an early stone type and is also nationally important. The medieval town developed around High Street and Eastside and excavations have shown that this area contains important archaeological remains that can tell us much about the lives of the inhabitants. The pre-twentieth-century buildings surviving around The Cross have the potential to contain information relating to their development. The relief road that divides High Street lies in a deep cutting into the natural slope. It is inevitable that this will have removed any archaeological features that once existed within its corridor. To the east of the road, development has been less intensive and archaeological remains may be well preserved. Some buildings dating from the late eighteenth century survive in Eastside and have the potential to contain information about their earlier uses. Cowgate developed following the opening of the Forth and Clyde Canal and contains important visible industrial remains. Paramount among these is the canal and associated structures, which form a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Elsewhere, remains relating to industrial sites, for example the town's foundries, may survive as sub-surface remains. Few buildings earlier than the twentieth century survive on Cowgate and those that do are all the more valuable because of their rarity. Kirkintilloch contains a variety of historic remains that is very rare among Scotland's small towns and their protection or recording can only enhance its future.



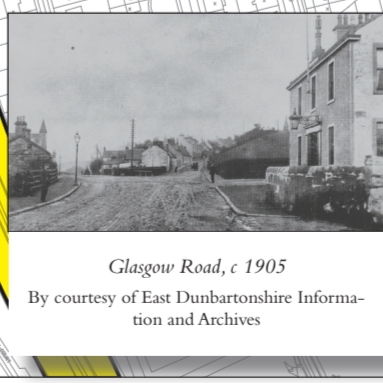
Aerial view of Kirkintilloch, looking east
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Alexandra Street, 1904
By courtesy of East Dunbartonshire Information and Archives



Old Post Office, Cowgate, c 1882
By courtesy of East Dunbartonshire Information and Archives



Glasgow Road, c 1905
By courtesy of East Dunbartonshire Information and Archives

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1. Peel Park

Several digs carried out here have uncovered the remains of a Roman fort built as part of the Antonine Wall. The fort would have contained a headquarters building, commander's house, granaries, barracks and a bath-house. Many finds have been recovered, notably decorated drinking vessels and sandals. The Castle of Kirkintilloch was built partially within the old fort as early as the twelfth or thirteenth century. It was probably razed following the Wars of Independence and the remnants were described in 1732 as a 'double rampart of hevn stone, strongly cemented with lime'. The land was being used as a dairy farm when it was bought and converted into a park to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. It was returned to its military roots during the Second World War when it was used as a location for air raid shelters.



Fountain by Lion Foundry in Peel Park
By courtesy of East Dunbartonshire Information and Archives



Gateway to the 'Auld Aisle'
Photo by Headland Archaeology, 2004

2. Auld Kirk Museum

A chapel was situated close to the castle and the Auld Kirk may occupy the same location. The Auld Kirk was built in 1644 to replace the medieval parish church of St Ninian's located outside the town at the Auld Aisle, Oxcang. The Auld Kirk was in turn superseded by St Mary's Church on Cowgate in 1914 and was converted into a museum in 1961.



The Steeple or Barony Chambers, 1990
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3. Barony Chambers

The town's tolbooth occupied this spot from before 1659. It was demolished in 1813 to make way for the Barony Chambers. The current Town Hall on Union Street replaced them in 1906 and today the Chambers contain a visitor information centre.

4. Excavations in the medieval town

Several sites in the medieval town have been archaeologically investigated. Two neighbouring sites on East High Street produced medieval pottery and one contained remains of a yard with drains, rubbish pits and a cess-pit. Some of the pottery had been imported from Germany. Nearer The Cross another excavation suggested that simple timber buildings once lined the street.



Eastside and Luggie Water Bridge, c 1880
By courtesy of East Dunbartonshire Information and Archives

5. Luggie Water Bridge or Kirkintilloch Bridge

It is not known when a bridge was first built over the Luggie Water but it was described as 'decayit' in 1672. Thereafter a new bridge was built, which still survives today, although it was widened in 1881.

6. & 7. Forth & Clyde Canal, Hillhead Basin and Luggie Water Aqueduct

The canal at Kirkintilloch was said to have cut through 'a green, undulating sward' of land. A port was built at Hillhead in 1773 because the aqueduct between there and the town was still incomplete. It was intended to be temporary but endured, although the only remains now are red-brick houses that were formerly stables. The amount of freight carried by the canal tailed off in the twentieth century, and it was closed in 1963. Happily, an increasing interest in the canal's leisure potential has led to a revival through the Millennium Link.

8. Former location of Lion Foundry

The first iron foundry in the town was established in the 1830s and others soon followed. The best known was the Lion Foundry, which opened in 1880 and made ornamental castings such as the bandstand in Peel Park. It also made the famous red British phone boxes. See www.scottishironwork.org/lion.htm

9. Monkland & Kirkintilloch Railway

The Monkland and Kirkintilloch Railway opened in 1826. From an early date steam locomotives were used rather than horses, and it is sometimes regarded as the first proper railway in Scotland. It terminated at the canal and its main cargo was coal.