

Ruination and reinvention

A self guided walk around the Kilmahew estate near Cardross



Discover the ruins of a medieval castle and a modernist building
Explore the overgrown pathways of an ornamental Victorian estate
See how water has shaped the natural and built landscape
Find out how an arts organisation is planning to revitalise the site

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**the stories of our landscapes
discovered through walks**





This booklet is to be used alongside the audio commentary for this walk

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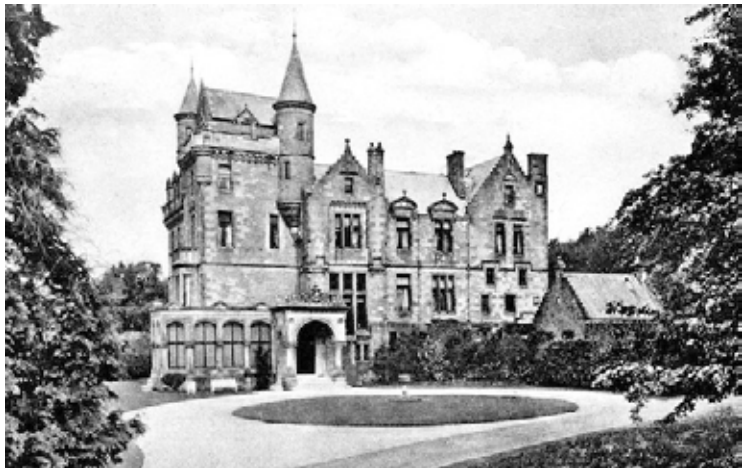
Ruination and reinvention

Discover the secrets of the Kilmahew estate

If you go up to these woods today you're sure of a big surprise!

Hidden in the woods of Kilmahew Glen is an abandoned country estate with the ruined remains of human habitation from the medieval to the modern period.

Kilmahew has had many incarnations. Each time a new vision and design has been followed by decline and ruin.



Kilmahew House
© Helensburgh Heritage Trust

Amidst a landscape of woods and rhododendrons are stone, brick, iron and concrete features that offer a tantalising glimpse of the buildings and structures that once stood here.



Discover remains of iron footbridges and scenic walkways
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Step through the undergrowth to discover waterfalls, gardens and ponds.

Let your imagination recreate the grandeur of driveways, parkland and ornamental gardens.

As you walk in the footsteps of early Christian missionaries, old Scots nobility, trainee priests and community volunteers the layers of history on this site reveal themselves.

Practical information

Location	Cardross, Argyll, Scotland
Start & finish	Cardross railway station, G82 5NL
Getting there	<p>Car - Cardross is on the A814 road between Dumbarton and Helensburgh on the north shore of the Firth of Clyde. There is a small car park at Cardross railway station</p> <p>Train - Cardross is served by trains running every half hour between Glasgow and Helensburgh</p> <p>Bus - Cardross is served by buses running between Glasgow and Helensburgh; alight at the stop near the Post Office and war memorial</p>
Walk distance	4 miles
Level	Moderate – An undulating route with some gentle slopes
Terrain	Outside the village the paths are a mixture of gravel tracks and woodland footpaths around a gorge; the ground can be rough underfoot in places and some paths can be overgrown
Conditions	The site is invariably muddy all year round so do wear walking boots or wellies and take waterproof clothing
Suitable for	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Families- Dogs
Refreshments	Cardross village has two pubs (The Coach House Inn and The Muirholm), a couple of small convenience stores and Laura's café (selling rolls, hot snacks and drinks)
Toilets	There are no toilets or other facilities on the Kilmahew estate; the nearest toilets are at the pubs in Cardross village

Important notes

There are several ruined buildings on the Kilmahew Estate. These are not safe for entry or exploration so please view them from the outside only.

The whole site is in a state of continual flux and there may be unforeseen disruptions to the walk route caused by demolition or restoration work, rhododendron clearance or other activities. Seek alternative footpaths if the route is barred.

Detail of first and last part of route



Stopping points

- S** Cardross railway station
- 2.** The Napiers plaque, Main Road
- 3.** Metal gates at West Lodge
-
- F** Cardross railway station

Detail of middle section of route



Stopping points

- 4. Ruins of Kilmahew Castle
- 5. Spottie's Linn waterfall
- 6. Path beside pond
- 7. Path through rhododendron tunnel
- 8. Shipping container in old stable courtyard
- 9. Double Bridge over burns
- 10. Metal gates at East Lodge
- 11. Walled garden
- 12. Fence by ruin of St Peter's Seminary
- 13. Fence by ruin of St Peter's Seminary
- 14. Bridge over Kilmahew Gorge
- 15. Footpath between golf course

Directions

Listen to each track then read the directions in the boxes below to get to the next stop.

1. Welcome to Cardross

Cardross railway station

Directions 1

From Cardross railway station turn right into Station Road and head towards the village. At the war memorial turn left onto Main Road. Keep to the pavement on the left side for about 200 metres.

Shortly before the red telephone box and second pedestrian crossing find a boulder with a plaque to the left of the pavement. Stop here and listen to Track 2.



Plaque to the Napier family in Cardross village
© Michael Gallagher

2. Wandering monks and noble families

The Napiers plaque, Main Road

Directions 2

Continue along Main Road and cross over at the pedestrian crossing. Turn right into Barrs Road beside The Muirholm pub. Follow the road gradually uphill past residential housing.

After about 400 metres the road becomes a rougher grade of track and there are fields on either side. After about 200 metres the track bends to the right past a house. Immediately after the house the track forks: take the right fork and stop at the modern metal gate and listen to Track 3.

3. An impressive approach

Metal gates at West Lodge

Directions 3

Return to the fork in the track and turn right. The ruined Lodge is clearly visible on the right. Follow the track as it ascends steadily with fields either side. Pass a large house and round the next bend pass a cottage and barn of Kilmahew Farm.

Where the track splits turn right across the front of Kilmahew Cottage. After about 20 metres (just before the track starts to descend steeply) there is a cattle grid on the left side at the entrance to Kilmahew Cottage. Immediately opposite on the right side are two stone pillars that mark the northern entrance into Kilmahew estate.

Go between the stone pillars and follow the footpath with fields on the right and a ravine and stream on the left. At certain times of year this path may be quite overgrown. Stop when you reach the ruins of a stone tower and listen to Track 4.

4. An antiquarian enigma

Ruins of Kilmahew Castle

Directions 4

Follow the main footpath that leads downhill from the castle. After a short distance look for a drainage ditch that passes under the footpath and a very large beech tree to the right of the footpath. Immediately after passing over the drainage ditch take the small path to the left. The path may be overgrown, but you should be able to make your way along it to a painted wooden post with the number 6 which overlooks a ravine and waterfall. Stop here and listen to Track 5.

5. Sprites and steeds

Spottie's Linn waterfall

Directions 5

Retrace your steps back to the main path and turn left. Follow the path for a short distance until you reach an embankment on the right side over which is a pond. Stop here and listen to Track 6.

6. Pleasure gardens

Path beside pond

Directions 6

Continue following the path. For a short section the golf course is visible to the right of the path. Immediately after this is a rhododendron tunnel. Stop here and listen to Track 7.

7. An exotic tunnel

Path through rhododendron tunnel

Directions 7

Continue following the path downhill until it meets a wider track. To the left is a bridge over the Kilmahew Gorge to which we will return later. Turn right and follow the track until you reach a grassy island. Follow the surfaced track that bears left and goes gradually downhill. After about 100 metres bear left on an unsurfaced track that leads to an area of level ground where there is an old shipping container. Stop here and listen to Track 8.

8. Upstairs, downstairs

Shipping container in old stable courtyard

Directions 8

Retrace your steps away from the shipping container back to the main track. Turn left and follow the track for about 300 metres until you reach a stone bridge over a stream. Stop here and listen to Track 9.

9. A liquid landscape

Double Bridge over burns

Directions 9

Continue across the bridge and follow the track for about 250 metres (passing part of the golf course on the right) until you reach a modern metal fence by a road. Stop here and listen to Track 10.

10. The gardener's cottage

Metal gates at East Lodge

Directions 10

Retrace your steps back along the track. Immediately before the stone bridge turn right onto a footpath which is likely to be muddy. Follow it up through the woods and over a stone bridge. Take care to avoid the exposed hole on the right side of the bridge. Go through the arch in the red-brick wall and follow the path. Go through another archway into the next walled enclosure. Stop here and listen to Track 11.

11. Green fingers

Walled garden

Directions 11

Continue following the path through the walled garden with the ruins of the glasshouses on the right and the cultivated area to the left. Go through the archway at the top corner and turn right under another archway. Follow the footpath steadily uphill through the woodland. When you reach a surfaced track turn right and follow it as it curves uphill to the left. Stop when you reach a modern metal fence and listen to Track 12.

12. A radical and daring design

Fence by ruin of St Peter's Seminary

Directions 12

Remain by the fence overlooking the ruined building and listen to Track 13..

13. Ruins and raves

Fence by ruin of St Peter's Seminary

Directions 13

Retrace your steps back down the surfaced track to the bridge over the Kilmahew Gorge. Stop in the centre of the bridge looking back up towards the ruined structure of St Peter's and listen to Track 14.

14. The Invisible College

Bridge over Kilmahew Gorge

Directions 14

Cross the bridge and follow the track to the grassy island. Take the track to the right which bisects the golf course. After a short distance, stop and turn around to take a last look back at the woods and listen to Track 15.

15. Ongoing cycles

Footpath between golf course

Directions 15

Continue along the track between the two parts of the golf course until you reach the ruins of West Lodge. Go round the modern metal gate where we stopped earlier. Follow the track past the house and between the fields as you retrace your steps back towards the village. Go straight down Barrs Road then turn left onto Main Road. At the war memorial turn right into Station Road and the railway station is at the end.



Kilmahew: a site with layers of history
© Lairich Rig / Michael Gallagher

Credits

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