



The John Galt Way

Stage A southwards – Saltcoats to Irvine (13km, 8.1m)

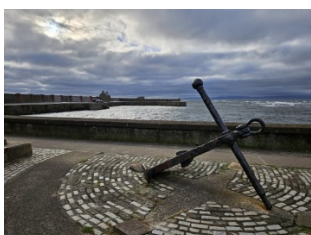
Waypoints: WP5 Saltcoats harbour, WP4 Bartonholm ('Garnock'), WP3 Burns statue, WP2 Galt's birthplace, WP1 Harbour Arts Centre

Distance: 13 km, 8.1 m; Time: ... hrs;

Terrain: surfaced, mostly cycle routes, no obstacles

Public transport: regular town to town services

Toilets: Harbour Arts Centre, Portal, ...



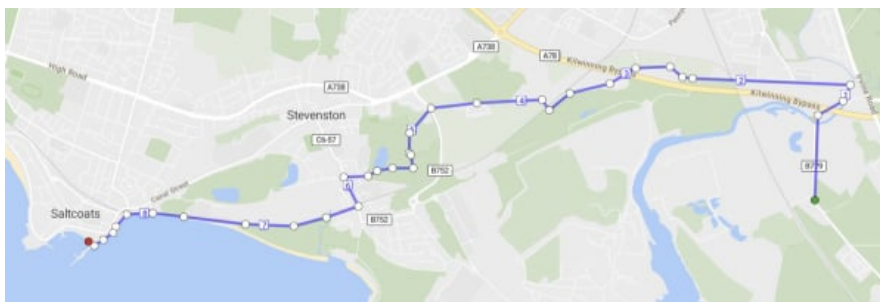
Waypoint 5 Saltcoats harbour

[What3Words: ///wharfs.quicksand.just](http://what3words.com/wharfs.quicksand.just)

(next to Aldi and Iceland stores)

Saltcoats, once a small fishing village, gets its name from the cottages of folk who evaporated salt from seawater for the curing of fish - "salt-cots". When coal was found, the harbour was built in 1684 for its export; in 1772 a two-mile canal was dug to bring coal to the harbour. In 1812, on land reclaimed from the sea, a horse-drawn railway was built. The harbour could handle up to 24 vessels (of 20 to 200 tons) exporting coal, salt and textiles, and importing fish and grain. The seaward extension was added in 1847. Just north of the harbour are three sea-water bathing pools, no longer popular!

+ Route details - Saltcoats harbour to Bartonholm (8.7km)



Proceed along the coast, either following NCN73 (on our map) or through Stevenston Beach Park before turning up Shore Road to the level crossing. Continue up Station Road and

map (c) OpenStreetMap contributors

turn right onto Moorpark Road East. At its end, follow a path into Ardeer Park, past an ornamental loch, an old earthwork dam and the miniature golf course. Cross the B732 to pass Ardeer Steading and the caravan park. Follow the cycle way under the Ardrossan-Kilwinning railway, past Todhill Farm, under the A78, under the Glasgow-Ayr railway, on to Byrehill Road through the industrial estate. Keep following the path to the River Garnock, where you turn right to follow the river back under the A78 to cross the river on a one-way road bridge.

On the left is the Scottish Wildlife Trust's Garnock Floods Nature Reserve, an important wetland sanctuary for duck, geese and waders. (There are no internal paths on the reserve to minimise disturbance to bird life. You can view the reserve from the hide, cycle-path or the grass path beside the river. For the hide, enter the field over the stile by the gate and approach the hide from the back to avoid spooking the birds you hope to observe. Dog walking is discouraged.) From the

bridge there are good views of the Ardeer dunes, described on Armstrong's map as the Ardeer Hills. There, in 1870, Nobel established his explosives, and later chemical, works; in WWII the works employed 13,000 people; in the 1980s and '90s, the redundancies were disastrous for the local economy. Looking over that area now, you need to imagine a huge industrial complex with tall chimneys and a massive cooling tower - which collapsed overnight in a 1972 storm. The cycle path takes you south to your next Waypoint, the entrance to the recycling centre.

+ Road links

Bartonholm is on a side road, the A779, which leads from Kilwinning Road to the River Garnock - no through road north to the bypass, though access is possible southwards from the bypass to Bartonholm. Therefore, it is easily reached by car either from Irvine or from the bypass, and there is enough opportunity for parking on the roadside.



Waypoint 4 – (Bartonholm Recycling Centre):

What3Words: ///verve.famed.vast (on the B779).

Imagine away the modern sign! You are near the fictional “**rural village of Garnock . . . pleasantly situated between Irvine and Kilwinning**”, the home of the Pringle family in ‘The Ayrshire Legatees’, where Dr Pringle, the incumbent minister, is “much loved by his parishioners”. Galt’s ‘Garnock’ was probably **Bartonholm**, the coal-mining hamlet which lay on the other side of the 1839 railway. In later years, the 350-person hamlet produced three Scottish amateur golf champions (Hamilton ‘Hammy’ McNally, Jimmy Walker and Jack Cannon). Half a mile further to the west was another long-gone mining hamlet, **Snodgrass** – is this why Galt named the other local minister as Dr Snodgrass?

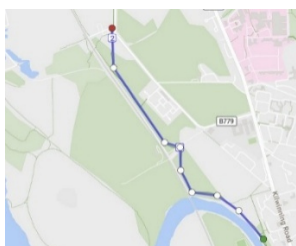
The Pringle family in the novel proceeded “by the coach from Irvine to Greenock”, so went from here to Irvine to “take the coach to Greenock”.

*“On New Year's Day Doctor Pringle received a letter from India informing him that his cousin had died at Hyderabad and left him his residuary legatee. The same post brought other letters from the agent of the deceased in London. . . . It was determined that, as soon as arrangements could be made, the doctor and Mrs Pringle should set out for the metropolis; and, as Rachel had now a "prospect before her", that she should accompany them. . . . The doctor had been for many years the incumbent of **Garnock, which is pleasantly situated between Irvine and Kilwinning** . . . and was much loved by his parishioners.”* ('The Ayrshire Legatees', Chapter 1)

. . . and, on their return:

“a shout announced that a carriage was in sight. It was answered by a murmuring response of satisfaction from the whole village. In the course of a few minutes the carriage reached the turnpike: it was of the darkest green and the gravest fashion; a large trunk, covered with Russian matting . . . occupied the front . . . the blithe faces of the doctor and Mrs Pringle were [seen]. The boys huzzaed, the doctor flung them penny-pieces, and the mistress bawbees . . . the old men reverently took off their hats and bonnets . . . all the village dogs came baying and barking forth . . .” ('The Ayrshire Legatees', Chapter 10)

+ Route details – Bartonholm to Burns statue (2.0km)



Follow the cycle route going in the direction of the railway, in due course crossing the Bogside Golf Club access road (deviate a few steps to the railway bridge for a view over the Golf Course, beyond which was Bogside Racecourse, the venue for the Scottish Grand National until 1965, the oval shape on the map). Stay on the east side of the railway – keep on the NCW7 cycle path. Follow the bend of the R. Irvine away

map (c)
OpenStreetMap
contributors

from the railway. On your left you pass the Cadgers' Racecourse, named from the races held by the itinerant carriers or carters; it hosts the Irvine Carters Society races at the Marymass Fair each August. The tall pole is the Greasy Pole, which teams of young men attempt to scale each year as they try to carry off the ham at the top.

+Buses

The no.11 bus (Kilmarnock - Ardrossan) has a stop near the Police Station.



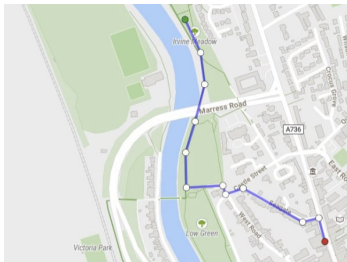
Waypoint 3 – Robert Burns statue

[What3Words ///rungs.offers.behind](#)

(A path through the houses connects with the main road at the Police Station.)

This 1896 statue is highly regarded as a fine one of the poet, shown facing south towards his birthplace of Alloway - [Read about it!](#). After admiring the statue, continue on a short distance. Near where a left-hand branch leads to a footbridge, there is an interesting stone - [Read more](#) . . .

+ Route details - Burns Statue to High Street (0.8km)



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contributors

Shortly after the statue, a path leads off to the right to a footbridge - near here is an interesting stone - [Read about it!](#) . . Then follow the right-hand path under the road bridge, returning to roads at the former fire station, currently the 'West Road Centre', facing a statue of Lord David Boyle (1777-1853), the Lord Justice General, on Castle Street. Cross the road with care and take the cobbled street to the left of the statue - Seagate, so called because it led into the town from the river, where ships would moor in medieval times. You pass Seagate Castle, a mid-16th c. town house of the Earl of Eglinton. Although a wall plaque claims that Mary, Queen of Scots, visited the castle on 1 August 1563, records are clear that she stayed at Eglinton Castle. At the top of the street, turn right onto High Street and walk a short distance to the Bank of Scotland.

+ Buses and parking

The High Street is served by many bus routes, the main one being the Ardrossan-Kilmarnock no. 11 (mostly double-deckers) at 15 minute intervals or oftener. Car parking is behind the High Street, on East Road, with closes (alleys) giving easy access.



Waypoint 2: Galt's birthplace (Bank of Scotland, 167 High St)

[What3Words ///dips.pill.comical](#)

Here, a bronze plaque on the wall marks the site of the house where John Galt was born on 2nd May 1779. His family moved to Greenock in 1789. [See a photo of his house!](#)

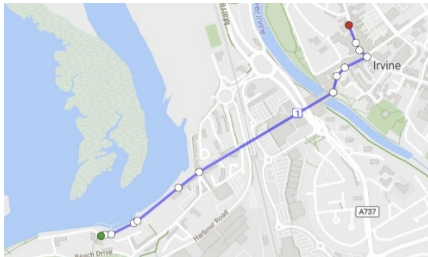
The plaque was made by Ayrshire artist Robert Bryden, R.A., in 1903. Here, each year on May 2nd, the anniversary of the author's birth, a wreath is laid by Irvine Burns Club.

The **Wellwood Burns Centre and Museum** is only two minutes' walk

to the north, on the opposite side, at 28 Eglinton Street, the red sandstone building with two Provost's lamps. Book your free museum visits via the website www.irvineburnsclub.org

"I was a soft, ailing, and growing boy. I have no remembrance of the enjoyment of perfect health for many years, and yet I was not ill. . . When not engaged with my flowers [in the garden], I lounged on my bed, which gave me a kind of literary predilection: all sorts of ballads and story-books were accumulated by me, and some of them have left impressions that still remain fresh and unfaded." ("Autobiography", 1833, p.9)

+ Route details - Harbour Arts Centre to High Street (1.5km)



map (c) OpenStreetMap contributors

From here, continue to Irvine Cross, turn right onto Bridgegate and use the shopping mall to cross the river. Follow Montgomery St – [Read about James Montgomery](#) - under the railway bridge. Now or another time, visit the [Scottish Maritime Museum](#) - the Linthouse Building has many fascinating exhibits; you pass the 1920's shipyard worker's flat. Then enjoy the vessels of the Museum, the sea air and the open views of the Ardeer flats, as the River Garnock joins the River Irvine. The Walk ends at the Harbour Arts Centre.

+ Eateries

The many eateries along the harbour include Gro cafe, the Ship Inn, Duncan's restaurant in the Arts Centre, Smalltalk coffee shop, the Harbour Lights public house, Puffers cafe at the Scottish Maritime Museum, the Niche restaurant and the award-winning Vanilla Joe's ice-cream shop. In Rivergate Mall are Wetherspoon's The Auld Brig public house, Gregg's cafe and Freckleton's cafe.



Waypoint 1: the Harbour Arts Centre

([current events and exhibitions](#))

[What3Words ///even.sober.flips](http://What3Words:///even.sober.flips)

(cafe, art gallery and toilets - built as a Mission Hall in 1888 - see the [Arts Centre history](#).)

We end at the harbour - busy in Galt's time - exporting over 25,000 tons of coal and importing over 6,000 tons of grain in 1819, when Irvine itself had 87 vessels and 517 seamen. John Galt's father was the captain of a West Indiaman (a profession appealing to the youth of Irvine!) sailing between Greenock and Jamaica. Read more about Irvine harbour at www.irvineharbourside.org

Extra info panels in this stage are:

More on the Burns Statue

The Gallows Stone

Galt's birthplace before demolition c. 1860

James Montgomery (of Montgomery Street)