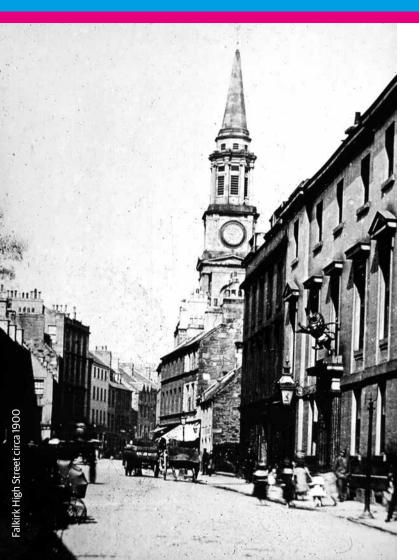
# Falkirk Town Heritage Trail

Discover Falkirk's Story





Follow one of our heritage trails and immerse yourself in stories from the past.

Whether you are a local or a visitor, explore the history of Falkirk town centre. Discover the stories behind over 30 historical sites in the town. Choose from two trails and walk around the west or east end of the town centre.

This is only a snapshot of Falkirk's history. While walking, look out for other interesting buildings and architectural features.

## **Trail One**

#### 1 Hour and 30 Minutes

Starting at the Old Market Place, this trail explores the west end of the town including many of Falkirk's former public buildings.



#### **45 Minutes**

Starting at the Old Parish Church, this trail explores the east end of the town including the iconic town Steeple and the unusual Tattie Kirk.



High St, Falkirk.

Group of road causewayers, High St, Falkirk. Unknown Circa 1903 Kirk Wynd and Manor St, Falkirk. A C Brown, 1902-1913 **Kirk Wynd, Falkirk.**Unknown, Circa 1910

# A Short History of Falkirk

Falkirk stands in an important position at the heart of central Scotland. This position has ensured its central role in Scottish history from the Roman period till today. The town has a fascinating history and has undergone many changes. From becoming a burgh in 1600, to the beating heart of Scotland's industrial revolution.

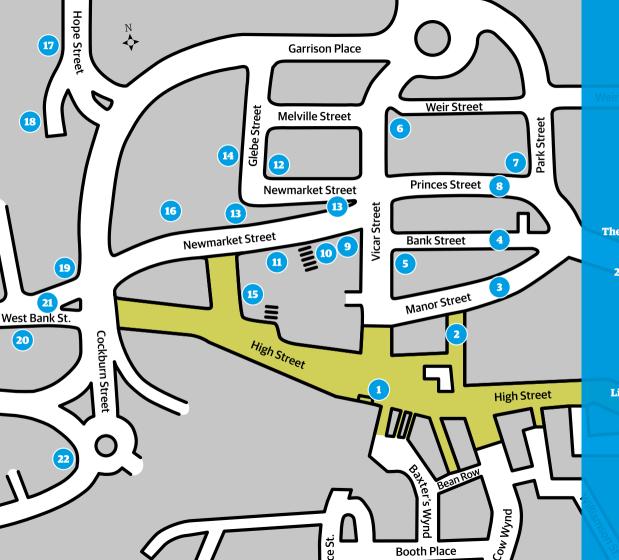
The name 'Falkirk' originates from the Gaelic EGGLESBRECH, meaning 'the speckled church'. Over the years this has translated into Scots as FAWKIRK and then into the modern FALKIRK.

The town has given its name to two local battles, the First Battle of Falkirk on 22nd July 1298 between the armies of William Wallace and Edward I of England; and the Battle of Falkirk Muir on 17th January 1746 between the Jacobite army, led by Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Government Redcoats.

During the 18th century, Falkirk's economy shifted away from agriculture to industry. The town became a busy industrial manufacturing centre, and many iron foundries opened, including the famous Carron Iron Works. During the 20th century, there was less demand for iron goods and Falkirk as an industrial centre began to decline.

The town's history is echoed in its surviving historic buildings, architecture and local folklore. The town is like a history book in stone - all you need is the key to read it.

To explore more of Falkirk's history visit falkirktownheritagetrail.co.uk or download the Falkirk Town Heritage Trail app via the app store.



## Trail 1

The Old Market Place 1 **Woo er Street 2** 

**Manor Street 3** 

**Bank Street 4** 

Co op Department Store 5 **Old Post Office 6** 

The Grammar School, Park Street 7

**Princes Street 8** 

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St Andrews Church 10

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Statues on Newmarket Street 13

The Burgh Buildings 14

**Lint Riggs and Masonic Temple 15** 

Aitkens Brewery 16

Falkirk Public Library 17

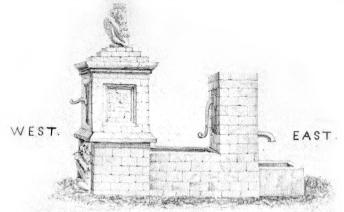
St Francis Xavier's Church 18

The Old Sheriff Court 19

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#### THE OLD CROSS WELL OF FALKIRK

Drawing of original Cross Well. 19th Century

#### The Old Market Place

The Old Market Place used to be called 'The Cross' because the town's Mercat Cross stood here from 1600 until 1715. This was a symbol of the town's status and was the site of markets, public proclamations, punishments and executions. The last public hanging took place here in 1828.

The Cross Well used to stand in front of the Steeple but now sits in the flower bed. The cylindrical stone structure topped by a lion with a shield dates from 1817. Locals celebrated the opening of the original well by the Livingstons in 1681. The Earl of Callendar toasted "the wives and bairns o' Fa'kirk", the first record of the locals nickname 'Bairns'.



#### **Woo'er Street**

The narrow Woo'er or Weaver Street links Manor Street with the High Street. This street once contained many small workshops. They produced items using the by-products of Fleshmarket Close including glue, bone meal, and leather. The smell was said to have been almost unbearable and it would have been very noisy.

Tolbooth Street is just off Woo'er Street and behind the Steeple. Some say it is Britain's shortest street, but not according to the Guinness Book of Records. It is 58 feet long (17.7m).



#### **Manor Street**

Until the late 1800s, Manor Street was known as Back Row. In early Scottish towns this signified the secondary street, parallel to the main thoroughfare. Some evidence suggests that it may predate the High Street as Falkirk's principal road, linking the route from Kerse to the Parish Church.

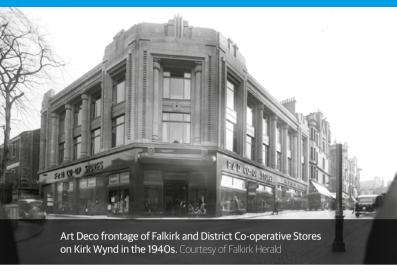
During Victorian times
Back Row was grim and
narrow. Its buildings were
overcrowded and insanitary
and the area was notorious
for regular outbreaks of the
dreaded cholera and typhus.
To help the inhabitants the
Free Church appointed a
missionary to work among
them!



#### **Bank Street**

One of the oldest road alignments in Falkirk, Bank Street marked the northern town boundary in the 18th century. It was named after Falkirk Union Bank, which stood here from 1803 till 1816. In 1852 Falkirk's court house stood on this street. Rumour is that a tunnel ran from the court house to the steeple.

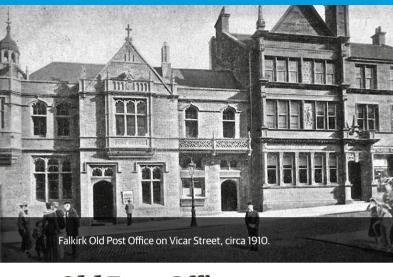
Wetherspoon's 'Carron Works' was originally a church, built in 1843. In 1915 it was converted into the Picture House Cinema, which screened Falkirk's first 'talkie' film in 1927. Some buildings have been demolished including the Salvation Army Hall, built in 1910 and Violet Grove Cottage.



## **Co-op Department Store**

When it was first built in 1934, the then Co-op Department Store dominated the street. The previous buildings on this site were two-storeys high, so the new three-storey 'super store' would have been a novelty. Originally run by Falkirk Co-operative Society, it would have been a new shopping experience, with Falkirk's first customer lift.

The building is one of many designed by local architect James G. Callendar in the 1930s. Its Art Deco style, influenced by clean simple lines and ancient Egypt stands out in a predominantly Victorian streetscape.



### **Old Post Office**

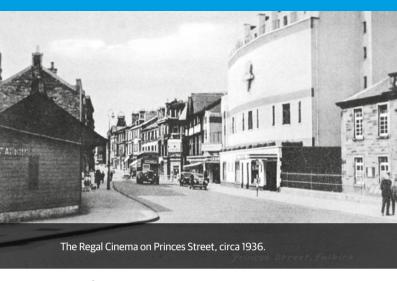
Falkirk's first purpose built Post Office was built in 1893. At the time Falkirk was a prosperous industrial town and the building was very important. Today's instant communication makes it easy to overlook the impact the early post office system had on speeding up Built in the Gothic Revival style, it has medieval inspired features. Some of these reflect symbols of the postal services. This includes a crown which is still used in the Royal Mail logo today. A modern extension was added in the 1970s. The building was the Job Centre before becoming the Business Hub in 2013.



# The Grammar School, Park Street

By the early 19th century, the parish school in the Pleasance was overcrowded. A new school was needed for students over 13 years old. The new Grammar School was built in Park Street, despite opposition. Some thought it was "an out-of-the-way, low and unwholesome place".

When it opened in May 1846, the pupils walked in procession from the old school. The building was a high school for over half a century, then housed the County Mining Institute (part of Falkirk Technical College). On the opposite side of Park Street is the former School of Arts and Sciences, which opened in 1878.



#### **Princes Street**

In the 1930s a new street was built, to prevent congestion from the new Bus Station. In 1933, the Prince of Wales, later Edward VIII, opened Princes Street. Built over the former playground of Park Street School, it linked Newmarket Street to the east end of the town

A new street meant new buildings. The mock 'Tudor House' looked back to the past. Other buildings in the new Art Deco style showed that the town was up to date! Pride of place was the 'super cinema' now Sportsters Bar. The cinema started life as the Grand Theatre and became Falkirk's leading cinema; the Regal, ABC and lastly the Canon.



## 25-29 Upper Newmarket Street

This unusually shaped building was built between 1862-3 for the National Bank of Scotland (now Royal Bank of Scotland). It was designed by David MacGibbon, the bank's principal architect, in the Scots Baronial style.

The Falkirk branch of the National Bank had previously been located on the High Street. After 30 years, business had increased so they needed new premises. The Bank demolished the buildings on the corner of Upper Newmarket Street and Vicar Street and built the current building as their new branch. St Andrew, the symbol (logo) of the bank, is carved above the original bank entrance.

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### St Andrews Church

The Free Church of Scotland opened this church in 1896. It replaced a building in Garrison Place which the congregation has used since 1860. The new red sandstone building cost over £8000. James Strang, a leading Falkirk architect, designed it in the Gothic style.

With seating for 900 and a 130 foot spire, it has several fine stained glass windows including work by William Wilson. In 1900 the congregation joined the United Free Church and in 1929 re-joined the Church of Scotland as St Andrews Parish Church. Union with the West Church in 1990 created the present congregation, St Andrews West.

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#### The Old Town Hall

A window fragment and a side wall are all that remains of Falkirk's Old Town Hall.
Built in 1879, it was the heart of Falkirk's community for over 90 years; hosting concerts, political meetings, dances and other events.

The new Town Hall opened in the 1960s. Plans were made to demolish the old building and build a church hall. When demolition work began in 1968, part of the

church north wall, including part of the organ, fell into Newmarket Street. The light coloured stone on the church shows the extent of the damage. It is now almost impossible to build on the site, as concrete was used to support the church building.



#### **Christian Institute**

The Christian Institute has had different uses over the years. It was built in 1880 at a cost of £1,300. This was fundraised by the Young Men's Christian Association who needed a place to worship and study. In 1888 Falkirk's first public library opened in the building. When the library on Hope Street opened in 1902 the books were moved to the new building.

A key feature of the building is the triangular pediment. In the pediment are a number of carvings including the YMCA date stone and the heads of three 'worthies'. 'Worthies' were people who influenced Christian organisations.



## Statues on Newmarket Street

There are two statues in Newmarket Street. Outside the Burgh Halls stands the South African War Memorial, commemorating those who died during the Second Boer War (1899-1902). The statue depicts a soldier of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders defending a wounded comrade, and was unveiled on 19th October 1906.

The second statue depicts the Duke of Wellington. It is unclear what connection Falkirk has with Wellington. The statue was bought by Provost Adam for £130 in 1854. Made by the sculptor Robert Forrest, it originally stood in front of the Steeple, it was moved in June 1905 to its current location.



## **The Burgh Buildings**

Falkirk's Town Council was established in 1833. Initially they met in rooms connected to the Steeple in the High Street. By 1880 the Council needed a purposebuilt municipal building to house the council and their staff. As a result the Burgh Building was built in 1880.

On the Glebe Street frontage look for the town's coat-of-arms with the motto "Touch Ane, Touch A' - Better Meddle Wi' the Deil then the Bairns o' Falkirk". Meaning "Better Meddle with the Devil then the Bairns of Falkirk". In the 1960s the Town Council moved to new premises on West Bridge Street.

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# **Lint Riggs and Masonic Temple**

Lint Riggs, means 'fields of flax', a reminder of Falkirk's agricultural past. Until the mid 18th century linen was a major clothing material, but there is no record of mass production in Falkirk. Before 1903 the street was only wide enough for a horse and cart. A great improvement scheme that year produced the present layout with several fine sandstone buildings.

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Most striking is the Masonic Temple on the southeast side. It is the only Temple in the district. It was completed in 1906 for Lodge Callendar No 588. The temple's handpainted windows and Art Nouveau brass fixtures are noteworthy.



### **Aitken's Brewery**

The Aitken family began brewing ale in Falkirk from c.1740 and remained in business for over two centuries. The ales and porters from the Newmarket Street brewery were famous across the world.

The early brewery occupied the south side of the street. In 1757 it moved across the road to where ASDA is today. The new brewery covered the land between Hope Street and Glebe Street down to the railway. In 1900 it was reconstructed, with its distinctive red brick building and 180 foot chimney that dominated the Falkirk skyline. Brewing ended on the site in 1968. The iconic chimney was demolished in 1970.

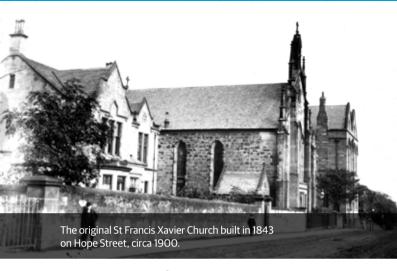
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## **Falkirk Public Library**

Falkirk's first purpose-built public library opened in 1902. Andrew Carnegie initially donated £2500 towards the building but ended up paying nearly £6000. The result was the distinctive red sandstone building we see today.

Unlike the early libraries, customers had to search through catalogues for books rather than browse the shelves. In 1922 things changed and books were displayed on open shelves. In April 1993 a new £1.5 million extension opened to the public.



## St Francis Xavier's Church

St Francis Xavier RC Church is a good example of postwar church architecture. Designed by Edinburghbased architect Alexander Ritchie Conlon, in 1961, it replaced the 1843 church which had been damaged by fire in 1955.

The distinctive entrance tower dominates the streetscape. The modern design includes a 12-foot statue of St Francis by
Maxwell Allen, made
from a single block of
Blaxter stone. The building
showcases the work of
various renowned Scottish
artists. This includes the
Four Evangelists sculptures
by Elizabeth Dempster and
the Stations of the Cross, on
laminated glass panels by
Felix McCullough.

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### **The Old Sheriff Court**

The former Sheriff Court
House was opened in
October 1868, replacing
a number of temporary
premises. The building,
designed in the Scots
Baronial style by Brown and
Wardrope of Edinburgh,
contained not only the

court room but also the prison and, later, a police office, since demolished. A second court was added in the late 1970s and the building remained in use as the Sheriff Court until it was replaced in 1990.



#### **The West Church**

The West Church, built in 1799, was designed by Thomas Stirling of Dunblane, who was seriously injured during construction. The ornate frontage was added in 1884.

The church was built for Falkirk's 'relief' church, formed in 1767. This new Presbyterian group left the Church of Scotland. In 1847 they joined the United

Presbyterian Church and in 1900 became the West United Free Church. In 1929 they re-joined the Church of Scotland until 1991 when the congregation joined with St Andrews Church. It is now 'The People's Church'. The graveyard was cleared in the 1960s. Several interesting memorials remain.



## **West Bridge Street**

West Bridge Street is named after the bridge that used to run over the western burn (stream). The original bridge was removed when the West Burn was piped underground in 1871. The waters of the burn were used for many centuries to supply the tanneries which gave rise to the street's other name, Tanner's Brae. Close by was Burnfoot, or Barr's Lane which was

named for the aerated water works, on the south end of the street near the Howgate.

The Government army of General Henry Hawley camped along the north of West Bridge Street before their fateful encounter with the Highlanders of Bonnie Prince Charlie in January 1746.





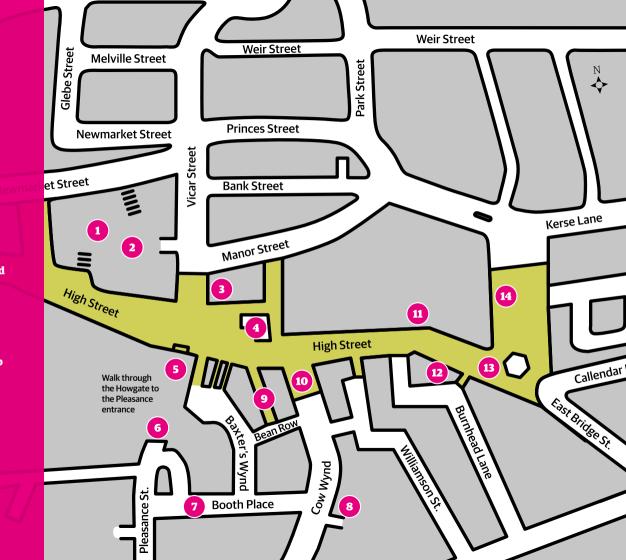
#### Site of Barr's Works

Robert Barr started as a cork cutter. In 1873 his son began manufacturing aerated water at Burnfoot Works (near Cockburn Street roundabout). His products included the famous 'Iron Brew', called 'Irn Bru' since 1946. Falkirk had several aerated water businesses. Many became part of the Barr's Company. They were taken over by A.G. Barr in 1959, merging both sides of the family business.

Barr's most famous delivery horse Carnera was named after the 1930s heavyweight boxer. Over 19 hands (6ft 6ins) tall, he was then the largest working horse in the world. One frosty day in January 1937, Carnera slipped on Cow Wynd and died.

## Trail 2

- 1 Falkirk Old Parish Church
- 2 The Parish Church Graveyard
- 3 The Commercial Bank
- 4 The Steeple
- 5 Roberts Wynd and the Howgate
- 6 John Logie Baird s Workshop
- 7 The Site of the Falkirk Roman Fort
- 8 The Tattie Kirk
- **9 Kings Court**
- 9 Kings Cour
- 10 The Cow Wynd
- 11 The Silver Row
- 12 The Cross Keys Inn
- 13 East Bridge Street
- 14 The Falkirk Tartan





### **Falkirk Parish Church**

Falkirk's Old Parish Church has undergone various name changes, currently called Falkirk Trinity Church. The first church on the site was established in the 7th century. The name 'Falkirk' originates from the Gaelic 'Egglesbrech' meaning the 'speckled church'. It is possible that this name derives from the speckled stone of the pre-11th century building.

The church as we see it today was built in phases. The oldest part is the central square tower (c.1450). The octagonal bell tower, added in 1738, was designed by William Adam father of famous architect Robert Adam. Further changes occurred in 1811, 1892 and 1995.



## The Parish Church Graveyard

The gravevard is unusual as it is mostly grass. In the 1960s the gravestones were cleared to create a 'civic space'. Of the handful remaining, two survive from the First Battle of Falkirk (July 1298). William Wallace's ally Sir John de Graeme's stone is surrounded by a decorative iron structure. Sir John Stewart has a flat stone memorial. The Celtic Cross near the High Street is dedicated to the men of Bute who fought and died alongside Sir John Stewart.

Further to the east stand the Munro and Edmonstone tombs, from the Second Battle of Falkirk (January 1746) between the Jacobite and Government forces.



### **The Commercial Bank**

Tenements with shops below, like 1-9 Kirk Wynd, a common feature of towns across Scotland, started to be built in the early 1900s. This red sandstone building was designed by Alexander Gauld in 1904-5, as part of a wider improvement scheme (1904-1910).

The High Street corner shop was originally the Commercial Bank of

Scotland. On the Kirk Wynd frontage is a carved panel depicting 'Commerce', robed and crowned with a wreath. This shows the Bank motto, Faith Preserved Enriches (Ditat Servata Fides). The scene also depicts a shield carrying the Scottish lion, a ship, a plough, barrels and a thistle.



## The Steeple

For over 400 years Falkirk has had a town steeple. It has had many different uses; town jail, shop, information point. The current Steeple is Falkirk's third, the second to stand on the High Street. All the Steeples have been symbols of Falkirk's pride in the importance of the town.

The current Steeple, completed in 1814, cost £1,460. It was designed

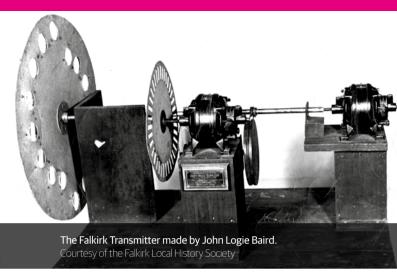
by David Hamilton, built with sandstone from the local quarry at Brightons. It stands over 140 feet high.

In June 1927 disaster struck. It was hit by lightning, damaging the top 40 feet of the building. Falling masonry littered the streets and damaged nearby buildings, injuring several people. A Barr's lorry horse was crushed by the rubble.

The High Street entrance to the Howgate Shopping Centre follows the line of Roberts Wynd. Also known as Bantaskine Port, it was one of the medieval town entrances. It led from the High Street to the Pleasance.

In January 1746, following the Jacobite victory at the Second Battle of Falkirk, Bonnie Prince Charlie's army entered Falkirk through the Port. The Prince spent the night in lodgings on the site now occupied by Waterstones book shop.

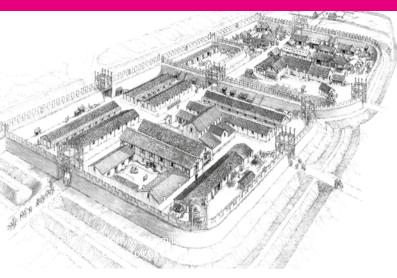
Stained glass windows displayed in the Howgate commemorate the Battle. "The Soldiers of Fortune", depicting the Prince, Lord George Murray and Sir John Drummond came from South Bantaskine House.



## John Logie Baird's Workshop

Among the buildings demolished to make way for the Howgate Centre was the former Falkirk public baths, which had replaced shops and houses in the Pleasance. One of these shops was owned by a radio engineer, John Hart. He worked with John Logie Baird. Early work to develop the television was done here.

Baird visited regularly and held demonstrations of his invention in the area. In 1926 Baird presented Hart with one of his early transmitters in gratitude for the help he had received. Baird told Hart to give it to a Scottish Museum and he chose Falkirk. The Falkirk Transmitter is the earliest surviving authenticated piece of Baird's equipment.



# The Site of the Falkirk Roman Fort

Falkirk's Roman fort stood near here in the Pleasance. There are no visible traces as it has been built over. The fort was part of the Antonine Wall defensives. Constructed c.142 AD, the 38 mile long wall ran across Scotland from Dunbarton to Bo'ness.

In Falkirk the remains of the wall and its V-shaped ditch crossed the town from Callendar Park to Watling Lodge. Excavations in 1992 confirmed its location.
There was evidence of a pre-Roman settlement and extensive ditching from the Antonine period. Remains were found of kilns, charcoal and iron slag, suggesting there was an annexe attached to the fort, used for semi-industrial activities.



#### The Tattie Kirk

The unusual octagonal shape of Tattie Kirk, built in 1806, is unique to Falkirk but not to Scotland. Local myth suggests that this shape meant "there was no corner for the Devil to hide in". It once stood on the edge of town, near open fields. Why it is known as the 'Tattie Kirk' is unclear. The name may have come from it being built in a potato field; the Minister

was paid in potatoes or it was a potato store.

The church was built and used by the Anti-Burgher congregation until 1879. Afterwards the building has had several uses, including a joinery workshop. Today it is a fashion and beauty boutique. The adjoining graveyard containing many interesting stones ceased to be used in 1869.

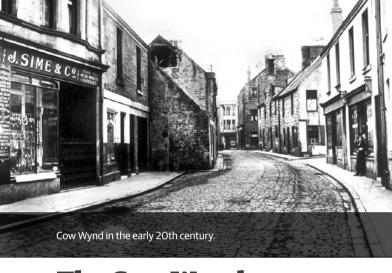


## **Kings Court**

This is the best preserved example of the many courts, wynds and closes which once ran off the High Street. It takes its name from the King's Arms Court, an inn that stood here in the 19th century. In the late 1700s James Aitken began his solicitor practice here. His successors continue the business today; the original Kings Court premises was used for over 200 years.

The Court was sensitively enhanced in the mid-1990s. On the south side of the High Street were Burns Court, Wilsons Close, Swords Wynd, Buchanan Court, Roberts Wynd, Dundee Court and Baxters Wynd, many of which disappeared or were greatly changed in the 1960s.





## The Cow Wynd

From the 17th century, this wynd was one of five entrances to the town through a town gate. The town's cattle were herded out of the gate to pasture.

The road's name has changed several times. From the mid-18th century it was known as Coalhill Road after the carts carrying coal from Sheildhill to Carron ironworks. When the High Station opened in 1842, it was renamed High Station Road, but reverted back to Cow Wynd in 1906 following public pressure.

The handsome Greek Revival style Bank of Scotland, opposite the wynd on the High Street, was built in 1832 for the Commercial Bank.

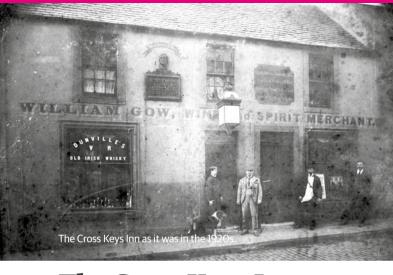


#### The Silver Row

Falkirk's lost street Silver Row, ran from Manor Street to the High Street through the area now occupied by Callendar Square Centre. Along the Row was the Masonic Arms public house, known to the locals as the 'Gluepot' and St Francis Primary School (1880 -1950s).

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Many remember the Roxy Theatre. Originally built as a church (1742), it became a theatre in 1905. After many changes in ownership it opened as the Roxy in 1938. It was part of the Scottish variety circuit. Many celebrities performed there. Part of Silver Row was demolished in the 1920s. Most of the buildings survived until the construction of Callendar Riggs Centre in 1961.



## The Cross Keys Inn

The Cross Keys was one of the High Street's well known public houses. Scottish wordsmith and bard Robert Burns spent the first night of his Highland tour here on 25th August 1787. He visited the grave of Sir John de Graeme in the Parish Churchyard and travelled to Carron ironworks where he was refused admission because it was a Sunday.

During his stay he etched a verse into a window. This is now displayed at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Alloway, but the building has a distinctive plaque commemorating the occasion. The Cross Keys remained in business until the 1960s.



## **East Bridge Street**

This was the main entrance to the town from the east before Callendar Road opened in 1829. The street was the site of the town's first gas works. At the bottom of the hill, the road crossed Falkirk East Burn and the area around this was known as the 'Cleddans', a common green that had many uses. At one time it was the site

**13** 

of the town gallows. Two executions took place here is the late 17th century, one for sheep stealing and one for child murder. In the 19th century the site was the parade ground for Falkirk Volunteers.



#### The Falkirk Tartan

In 1934 a hoard of almost 2000 silver Roman coins was discovered by workmen near this spot. The coins were in a clay vessel with a piece of cloth. The cloth was woven in a checked pattern using two colours of wool, dark brown and a pale cream. This is the earliest example of tartan yet identified.

The coins covered the reigns of several emperors, until 230 AD. They may have been part of a payment to local tribes to encourage them to keep the peace. These are now in the care of the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh.

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#### Trail 1

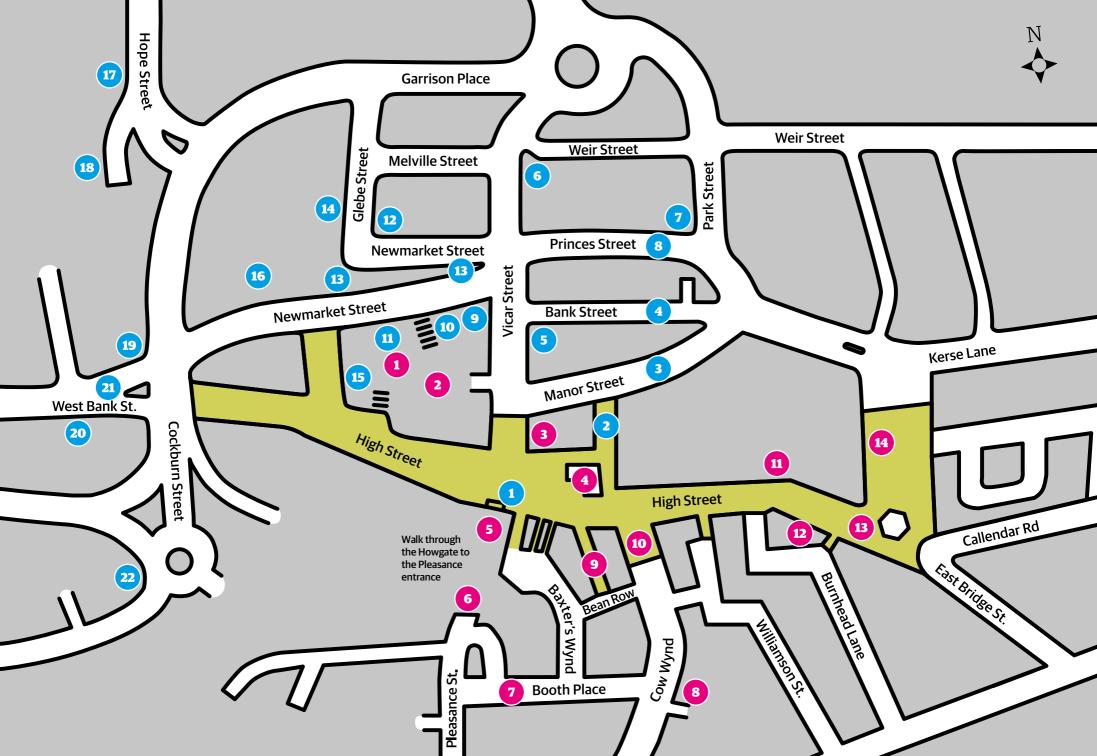
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- The Burgh
  Buildings
- Lint Riggs and Masonic Temple
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- Falkirk Public Library
- St Francis
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- 19 The Old Sheriff Court
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#### **Getting Here**

Midway between Edinburgh and Glasgow, Falkirk is right in the heart of Scotland with excellent road and rail links.

#### By car

From Edinburgh - take the M9 towards Stirling, exit at junction 5 for Falkirk

From Glasgow - take the M80 towards Stirling, exit at junction 5 on M876 and follow the signs for Falkirk

From Carlisle and the South - M74, M73, M80, M876 and follow the signs for Falkirk

From Perth and the North - A9, M9 towards Edinburgh, exit at junction 6 for Falkirk

#### By bus

There are regular buses between Falkirk and Edinburgh, Glasgow, Stirling and Fife.

Visit Traveline Scotland website for full details.

#### By train

From Edinburgh to Falkirk High (25 minutes) or Falkirk Grahamston - town centre station (35 minutes)

From Glasgow Queen Street to Falkirk High (20 minutes) or Falkirk Grahamston (45 minutes)

From Stirling to Falkirk Grahamston (15 minutes)

Visit Traveline Scotland or Scotrail websites for full details.

#### **Acknowledgements**

This heritage trail was created as part of the Falkirk Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI). Falkirk THI was a grant -giving programme that helped regenerate Falkirk's town centre Conservation Area. Between 2013 and 2018, £5.5million was invested in the town, to regenerate the area through repair work to buildings and community engagement.

Falkirk THI was jointly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, Falkirk Council and Falkirk Delivers. The production of this trail was also supported by Visit Falkirk and Falkirk Community Trust.

#### www.visitfalkirk.com















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## Falkirk Heritage Trail



To discover more of Falkirk's story download our heritage trail app. See what buildings and streets used to look like in the 360° augmented reality content. Families and children why not have a go at our fun kids challenges?

Free App Download Now





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