

Fife – Fifty Interesting ‘Facts’

1. Fife, often called the ‘Kingdom of Fife’ is thought to have formed one of the seven pictish kingdoms well over a thousand years ago when it bore the name of ‘Fib’.
2. If all goes according to ‘plan’ the next UK Prime Minister may well be a Fifer as Gordon Brown was born and raised in Kirkcaldy and is the MP for Dunfermline East.
3. Dunfermline is home to the Makars Trust, which has since 1997 been creating and gathering folk songs predominantly from projects in Fife communities. They have successfully teamed song-writing talent with over 50 schools, 30 day centres and old peoples homes.
4. Sir James Dewar (1842 -1923) not only invented cordite but also the Thermos Flask. He was born in what is now the Unicorn Inn in Kincardine on Forth.
5. Culross, the beautifully restored 16th/17th century village was ‘saved’ for that restoration by a lack of money to clear away what had become insanitary housing. A rich trading port for salt and coal and in the 16th and 17th centuries it was commercially more important than Glasgow.
6. Sir Samuel Greig (1735 -1788) was born in Inverkeithing. He joined the navy and rose through the ranks to become a full admiral in 1782. He was responsible for transforming the Russian Navy during the reign of Catherine the Great and indeed is called, ‘The father of the Russian Navy’.
7. John Buchan author of ‘The Thirty-Nine Steps’, although born in Perth moved soon afterwards to Pathhead near Dysart, where he lived for twelve years. It is claimed that the title came from the 39 steps down to a beach near Kirkcaldy where he had played as a child. Some refute this.
8. Had not Alexander III, King of Scotland, been in such a hurry to rejoin his new wife on a stormy night in March, 1286, his horse might not have stumbled in the dark at Kinghorn and he might not have died. His death ultimately led to the Wars of Independence and the Battle of Bannockburn. In other words, it was a horse’s stumble that gave us, ‘Flower of Scotland’!
9. Ian Rankin, creator of Detective Inspector Rebus hails from Cardenden in Fife where he was born in 1960.
10. Jocky ‘at the ocky’ Wilson was born in Kirkcaldy in 1951 and still lives there. He was the first Scot to win the prestigious Embassy World Professional Championship Trophy.
11. Margaret Thatcher’s hero and the ‘patron saint’ of the free market Adam Smith (1723 – 1790) was born in Kirkcaldy and returned there to write his celebrated treatise, ‘The Wealth of Nations’.
12. The monks of Dunfermline were the first to exploit the ample coal reserves of Fife. A papal envoy, Aeneas Silvius Piccolimini, visited Scotland in the 15th century and was astonished to see people – as he thought – burning stones!
13. St Margaret, Queen of Scotland and patron saint lived in Dunfermline and gave her title to South and North Queensferry when she established a ferry there both for herself and the many pilgrims wishing to travel to St Andrews.
14. If you visit Dunfermline Abbey, you can pay your respects to Robert the Bruce who lies buried there (except for his heart which is said to have been buried in Melrose Abbey).
15. The Abbot House in Dunfermline, survived the town’s great fire of 1624 and is today a museum centre for Fife heritage.
16. Barbara Dickson, famous singer and actress, was born and educated in Dunfermline. Barbara sang on the original Evita soundtrack.

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17. Iain Banks, the writer, was born in Dunfermline in 1954 and still lives in Fife. He writes very quickly (about three months for a book) and this leaves him free to enjoy life for the rest of the year.
18. Andrew Carnegie (1835 – 1919), Dunfermline's most famous son who became one of the richest man in the world once said, 'The man who dies rich, dies disgraced.'
19. Raith Rovers, Kirkcaldy's football team, celebrating a famous victory in the 1960's led to the famous quote (commonly attributed to English commentator David Coleman), being repeated, that the fans would be "dancing in the streets of Raith tonight." Whoops.
20. Kirkcaldy itself became world famous for the production of Lineoleum. It takes its name from the latin, 'linum' – flax and 'oleum' – oil in that the production of the flooring involves the oxidising of linseed oil.
21. Kirkcaldy has been nicknamed. 'the lang toon', because its main street is some four miles in length.
22. The father of Mary Queen of Scots, James V, died in Falkland Palace shortly after her birth. The palace and its surrounding forest were much favoured by the royal family of Scotland.
23. Nearby Auchtermuchty was the birth place of that much loved and respected musician, Jimmy Shand (1908 – 2000). Did he inspire The Proclaimers also associated with the town?
24. St Andrews is the head quarters of the Association for International Cancer Research, which assists in funding cancer research projects worldwide.
25. Auchtermuchty was used as a film set for the remake of AJP Cronin's, 'Dr Finlay' in the 1990s. The Tannochbrae Tearoom stands testimony to the series.
26. Mary Queen of Scots spent her last months in Scotland as a prisoner in Loch Leven Castle.
27. KT Tunstall, Best British Female vocalist at the 2006 Brit Awards, is from St Andrews. KT finally gained musical recognition with her 'Eye of the Telescope' recording which has sold over one million copies across Europe.
28. Near Cupar the Hill of Tarvit Mansion (rebuilt in 1906 by Sir Robert Lorimer) contains a fine collection of furniture and works of art. It is owned by the National Trust. After a visit, it is well worth the effort of climbing to the top of Tarvit Hill for the fine views over Cupar and over towards St Andrews and Dundee.
29. Leuchars, famous for its airshows, has one of Scotland's finest examples of Norman architecture in its delightful little church, which partly dates from the 12th century.
30. Glenrothes was 'created' as a new town in 1948 to provide homes for those in the mining industry. After the closure of Rothes pit in 1961 many families came to live in Glenrothes from Glasgow. The population of the town is now around 50 000.
31. On Elie Golf Course the starter at the first hole uses a World War II periscope to check if the next group may tee off safely.
32. Thomas Chalmers, leader of 'The Disruption' in 1843 which split the established church in Scotland was born in Anstruther. He was the first Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland.
33. Les Routier awarded the much loved Anstruther Fish and Chip Shop their 'Best Café in Scotland' award in 2005.
34. The Isle of May is a bird watcher's paradise and home to some 200 000 nesting birds. If you want to see the puffins, take a trip to the island from Anstruther between April and July.

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35. Pittenweem is a delightful village and is still an active fishing port. The fish market takes place each morning at 8.00 am.
36. Crail is also a delight and probably can boast the most photographed and painted harbour in Scotland. It is a good place to sample a little of the Fife Coastal Path which runs from Culross to the Tay Bridge and was opened in 2002.
37. St Andrews derives its name from the fact that in the 4th century St Regulus was prompted in a dream to bring some relics of the Apostle to Scotland from Greece. It was a very important place of pilgrimage until the Christian Reformation.
38. Robert the Bruce was present at the consecration of St Andrews Cathedral in 1318. The cathedral was the largest in Scotland.
39. The foundation of the University of St Andrews was confirmed by the Pope in 1413. It is Scotland's oldest university and the third oldest university in the UK (after Cambridge and Oxford)
40. Prince William must rank as one of St Andrews University's most famous graduates and certainly helped to boost the number of female applicants.
41. St Andrews University has some 9000 students, which in winter time is more than half of the town's population.
42. John Napier (1550 -1617), the inventor of Logarithms studied at St Andrews University. (cf Napier University in Edinburgh)
43. Golf and the Old Course have made St Andrews what it is today and courses all over the world might have 20 holes rather than 18 had the decision not been taken to coalesce the first two holes and the last two holes.
44. Old Tom Morris of St Andrews, who won The Open four times, still holds the record as its oldest winner. He won in 1867 at the age of 46.
45. Sir David Brewster, Principal of United College in the University from 1838 – 1859 not only invented the kaleidoscope, but also played a part in the early development of photography.
46. Józef Stanislaw Kosacki (1909 – 1990) was a Polish engineer, inventor and soldier. Whilst in Scotland he developed the world's first useable mine detector and tested it out on the West Sands at St Andrews. His invention has helped to save lives around the globe.
47. The opening scene of the film 'Chariots of Fire' (1981) was shot on the West Sands of St Andrews.
48. In the summer months some 6500 years ago Morton, Tentsmuir Sands saw the arrival of some of our earliest 'tourists'. We know that they made shelters and their middens tell us they ate red and roe deer, aurochs, pig, guillemot, gannet, cormorant, razorbill, cod, haddock, turbot, sturgeon, salmon, twenty different kinds of marine molluscs and crab.
49. Fife is the ideal place for cycling – it has one of the country's most comprehensive cycling networks with 300 miles of signposted cycle paths. Seize the moment – get fit now! Find out more by visiting www.fifecycleways.co.uk
50. If walking is preferred, drive up from Falkland on the small road to Leslie, park in the car park and discover East and West Lomond. The views are spectacular. Make sure you are properly equipped.