



40 fascinating facts about Galloway and district

1. **Galloway** is a Gaelic-derived name: 'Tir nan Gall' means land of the stranger since the early inhabitants of the area were a mix of Irish & Norse.
2. This whole south west corner of Scotland was **Gaelic speaking** into the early middle ages. In fact the Gaelic language was spoken as far south as parts of Cumbria at one time.
3. The name Stranraer is from the Gaelic for '**fat nose**' and refers to the shape of the Galloway peninsula.
4. 'There's **gold** in them there hills!' is true of the Southern upland area around Wanlockhead and Leadhills. The area is comprised of mineral rich deep-sea shale but lead ore has been a more common find!
5. You can try panning for gold at the **Museum of Lead Mining** at Wanlockhead.
6. **Wanlockhead** is the highest village in Scotland, at 410m above sea level.
7. '**Hunter**' **welly boots**, beloved of the 'green welly brigade' and Glastonbury festival-goers are made in Dumfries.
8. Formula 1 racing driver **David Coulthard** is from Twynholm.
9. Hip young pop artist **Calvin Harris**, whose tunes have been recorded by Kylie Minogue recently, is from Dumfries.
10. The **Southern Uplands** have been heavily sculpted and rounded by the effects of glaciation to leave a series of gently rolling hills with occasional rocky outcrops. There are no summits above 3000ft (914m), but over 80 rise above 2000ft (610m), offering some fine hill walking.
11. **Kirkcudbright's Tolbooth** was the model for the prison in Sir Walter Scott's novel 'Guy Mannering' (1815).
12. In the 5th century, **Christianity** came to Scotland via St Ninian when he set up a community known as Candida Casa in Whithorn to spread the Good News.
13. **Portpatrick** was for almost 200 years in the period 1661-1849 the main harbour for the crossing to Northern Ireland but was superseded by steamships using Stranraer. It was officially chartered as a burgh under the name 'Montgomerie' but that name failed to stick.
14. It was from **Portpatrick** that most of the original 'Plantation' or Ulster Scots set off for their new lands. They were Scottish Protestant farmers offered land in what is now Northern Ireland by the king to help establish farming and quash local Catholic populations who opposed him and the reformed Church.
15. **Portwilliam** was a planned settlement laid out and set up by Sir William Maxwell of Monreith in the 1770s.
16. **Kirkcudbright** became the base in the 20th century for several notable artists, including Sir James Guthrie, E.A. Hornel, Jessie King, W.Y. McGregor, S.J. Peploe and E.A. Taylor. The town is still well known as an artist's haven.
17. The long coastline of the **Solway Firth** welcomes over 40,000 wildfowl and 83,000 waders each winter making Dumfries & Galloway an ornithologist's paradise. Places such as WWT Caerlaverock and Mersehead Nature Reserve make it easy to get close to flocks of thousands of barnacle geese, which travel every year from Norway to winter on the wetlands of the Solway.
18. **Robert Burns** is said to have composed the song 'Scots Wha Hae' while riding from St Mary's Isle to Gatehouse of Fleet on 1st August 1793 and is thought to have written it down when he arrived at the Murray Arms Hotel in the town.
19. **Dalbeattie** was the birthplace of Lieutenant William Murdoch (1873 - 1912), First Officer of the Titanic.
20. **Wigtown** is 'Scotland's National Book Town' with numerous bookstores and book-related businesses. There is a spring book festival in May with the main festival in September.
21. Author **Gavin Maxwell** was born in Elrig, near Monreith in Dumfries and Galloway in 1914. In 1960 he published *Ring of Bright Water*, the story of his life in the West Highlands of Scotland with two pet otters, and for which he is best known.
22. Another famous Maxwell, **James Clerk Maxwell** a pioneering Mathematician and Physicist is buried in the churchyard at the village of Parton. Maxwell contributed significantly to the study of electro-magnetism and prepared the way for quantum physics. He ranks alongside Newton

- and Einstein as one of the World's greatest physicists. Also a photographic pioneer, he succeeded in taking the world's first colour photograph, of a tartan ribbon
23. Dumfries and Galloway is a superb **outdoor activities** environment. A number of walking festivals run from May to October. Lower Annandale, Newton Stewart, Upper Nithsdale, Langholm and Moffat all boast organised festivals.
 24. **Galloway Forest Park** is the largest forest park in Britain covering over 300 square miles of spectacular forest, moorland and lochs rise towards the rugged grandeur of the granite mountains. The forest provides good opportunities to view wildlife with red squirrel and red kites firm favourites with visitors.
 25. **Mountain biking trails** have been extensively developed, graded and way-marked at Kirroughtrees, within the park **north of Newton Stewart**. The centre there is part of the 7 Stanes network of downhill mountain biking centres that stretch across Dumfries & Galloway and the Borders.
 26. The Twelve Apostles **stone circle**, in Nithsdale near Dumfries, is the largest by diameter in Scotland.
 27. As early as 1831 regular steamers served **Stranraer**, eventually becoming a major ferry port with links to Larne and Belfast in Northern Ireland.
 28. John Paul Jones, effectively the **founder of the US Navy**, was born in Arbigland. It is possible to visit the house where he grew up. An intrepid sailor he is often quoted, 'I wish to have no connection with any ship that does not sail fast, for I intend to go in harm's way'.
 29. The cult film **The Wicker Man** had many scenes shot in the Dumfries & Galloway area. The film centres on an investigation into a missing girl from a community called Summerisle. Logan Botanic Gardens and Castle Kennedy gardens together formed the gardens for Summerisle Castle.
 30. Nowadays there's a 'Wickerman' **rock music festival** each summer at East Kincarswell near Dundrennan. The dates for 2008 are 25 and 26 July.
 31. **Thomas Telford** the acclaimed Scots civil engineer was born at Glendinning (northwest of Langholm, Dumfries and Galloway). Telford is notable as a builder of many bridges, docks and canals. These include the Bridge over the Atlantic Ocean (the Menai Straits) linking Anglesey and Wales, Dean Bridge in Edinburgh and the Caledonian Canal. 2007 sees the 250 anniversary of his birth.
 32. The **Southern Upland Way** is Britain's first official coast-to-coast long distance footpath. It runs 212 miles (340 kms) from Portpatrick on the southwest coast of Scotland to Cockburnspath on the eastern seaboard. It one of four national long distance routes.
 33. Kirkpatrick Macmillan was born in Keir (Dumfries and Galloway), 1813, the son of a blacksmith. Macmillan developed the first rear-wheel driven **safety bicycle** in 1842. He gained inspiration for his invention from the hobbyhorse.
 34. **'Bruce's Stone'** is a huge boulder located about 3 miles west of New Galloway at Moss Raploch. Robert the Bruce is reputed to have rested against the stone after using guerrilla tactics to defeat an English army here in 1307.
 35. The **Murray Isles** are two small uninhabited islands in the Islands of Fleet, off Carrick Point, Wigtown Bay. They belong to the National Trust for Scotland and are home to breeding colonies of cormorants and gulls. Visitors are permitted from August to end April.
 36. **Venniehill** is a good viewpoint at the west end of Gatehouse of Fleet's main street. There is a large wildflower-rich grassland area below the viewpoint at the top of the hill. The hilltop is partially surrounded by a large earthwork, indicating the presence of an early fortification or settlement.
 37. Scotland's most southerly malt **whisky distillery** is at Bladnoch, near ???????? It has a visitor centre and whisky academy where you can learn about different types of malts.
 38. **Palnackie** near Dalbeattie annually hosts the world 'Flounder-tramplng' championships where competitors wade into the muddy shallows in bare feet and try to detect founders (a type of flat fish) in the sand with their toes. The trick then is either to spear the fish with a pitchfork (avoiding your own foot!) or to trap it in the sand with your foot till you can pick it up....
 39. Glenluce was home to an airship base for a time during world war I.
 40. In World War II **Cairnryan** was home to a huge military port and the west side of Loch Ryan hosted a sea-plane base.