40 fascinating ‘facts’ about Renfrew and surrounds

1. The origin of the name Renfrew is thought to have a Brythonic origin meaning *point of the current* referring to confluence of the Clyde, White Cart and Black Cart rivers.
2. The Baron of Renfrew is the Price of Wales. His other Scottish titles are Duke of Rothesay, Earl of Carrick, Lord of Renfrew, Lord of the Isles, Prince and Great Steward of Scotland.
3. Opened in 2004, the Glasgow Audi showroom at Braehead was the first Audi brand statement site in the world.
4. The medieval name of Renfrewshire was Strathgryfe
5. Paisley Presbyterian minister Rev. John Witherspoon was the only member of the clergy to sign the American Declaration of Independence. He emigrated to America to become Principal of Princeton College.
6. Paisley Abbey is the burial ground for many of the ancestors of the Stewart Royal family of Scotland.
7. St Mirren Football Club is known as the *Buddies.*
8. Coats Observatory in Paisley is open for public use.
9. Scottish patriotic hero Sir William Wallace is believed to have originated from Elderslie in Renfrewshire.
10. The John Byrne play 'Slab Boys' is based on his experiences as an apprentice in the design department of Stoddarts carpet factory in Elderslie.
11. The Weavers' Cottage, (NTS) in Kilbarchan is an 18th century house and weaving workshop furnished in period style and complete with looms and is one of the last remaining intact weavers cottages in the country.
12. Glasgow shoemaker William Quarrier established the Quarrier Village in the 1870s. He felt that he could do more to help the children sleeping rough on the streets of Glasgow. In 1871 he opened a night refuge in Renfrew Street in Glasgow and then with money donated from all over Britain he built cottage homes in a village setting in Bridge of Weir, Renfrewshire.
13. Bridge of Weir acquired a fine reputation for both the tanning and the working of leather and other animal skins. The seats in the House of Commons and the House of Lords were renewed in 1989 using leather produced in the village.
14. Sir William Arrol, famous builder of the Forth Rail Bridge, was born in Houston.
15. The material originally used for the upholstery in the House of Lords was woven in Houston.
16. There was a Roman fort located on Barochan Hill to the north of Houston
17. Bishopton, although a 19th century name, commemorates the lands owned by the Bishopric of Glasgow in the 14th Century
18. Now overbuilt by the M8 and housing, by 1948 Renfrew was Britain's third busiest airport, handling 107,052 passengers that year.
19. Somerleds Norsemen were routed at Inchinnan as a precursor to the battle of Largs where the Norse were finally pushed from Scotland.
20. Gregor Fisher of *Rab C Nesbitt* fame is from Barrhead.
21. Many of the famous ships built at John Browns Shipyard including the Aquitania (1913), Queen Mary (1936) and QEII were actually launched into the Black Cart Water in Renfrew. As the vessels took up the full with of the River Clyde, the Black Cart mouth directly opposite the yard had to be dredged to allow the vessels to be launched into the River Clyde and enter the Black Cart estuary.
22. The St Conval Stone stands beside the Walkway on the Renfrew side of the swing bridge over the White Cart. St. Conval is reputed to have crossed the sea on the stone from Ireland and it has been known for centuries as St. Conval's Chariot.
23. Since 1685 a stone at the mouth of the White Cart Water has been known as the Argyll Stone because it was on this stone that the 9th Earl of Argyll was captured following an unsuccessful invasion against James VII (and II). He was subsequently executed in Edinburgh.
24. During World War II the rival shipbuilding firm Lobnitz, apart from shipbuilding, designed and built Mulberry Harbours, which were used to offload cargo on a beach during the Allied invasion of Normandy.

25. The first aircraft to fly the Atlantic both ways did so in 1919. It was the R34 Airship, built in Inchinnan.
26. Paisley could be said to be the birthplace of the Stewart Dynasty since it is where Walter the High Steward married Marjorie, daughter of Robert the Bruce. Their child was the first of the Stewarts.
27. Houston microbrewers celebrate local history in the names of some of their ales. *Barochan*, *Kilellan*, *Peter's Well* and *Texas*, which is a nod to their US sister town.
28. The composer Frederic Chopin once visited Johnstone Castle, now a ruin.
29. Alexander Wilson, the recognised father of American ornithology through his classic nine-volume work *American Ornithology* was brought up in Paisley the son of an illiterate distiller.
30. Centred around Castle Semple Loch, the Castle Semple Water Country Park is located to the east of Lochwinnoch in Renfrewshire. A centre for rowing, sailing and canoeing, it is also incorporates the RSPB Lochwinnoch Nature Reserve.
31. Christopher Broookmyre the satirical novelist was born and brought up in Barrhead. His books include, *A Big Boy Done it and Ran Away* and *Quite Ugly One Morning*.
32. Clydebuilt at Braehead provides a marvellous insight into shipbuilding and development of the Clyde. An interactive game also allows you to pilot a large tanker out of the Clyde estuary. Watch out for the sand banks!
33. St Mirren is a 6th century Celtic saint from Ireland who founded the first Christian settlement in Paisley. The Abbey is dedicated to him since his relics were there making the site a place of Pilgrimage. He is also patron of the town.
34. The Celtic Barochan Cross, once sited near the village of Houston, Renfrewshire, is now to be found inside the abbey. The Cross is thought to be 8th century.
35. Marjorie Bruce is buried at Paisley Abbey. She was riding nearby when she fell from her horse. She was heavily pregnant at the time. The child was saved it is said by Caesarean section but Marjorie perished. The child was to become Robert II, the first Stewart king.
36. A museum dedicated to the life and works of the Paisley born poet, Robert Tannahill (1774 - 1810), the Tannahill Cottages are located in the centre of Paisley, Renfrewshire. Exhibits on the poems and songs he wrote are on display, as are examples of the weaving trade in which he worked.
37. Xcapes's *Snowzone* guarantees 365 days a year of snow regardless of climate change!
38. The family of the Chief of the Clan Macmillan manages Finlaystone Country estate. A great family day out awaits whether it be a tour of the 14th century house and gardens or a stroll through the 140-acre woodland with views of the Clyde.
39. From the 14th century a ferry linked Yoker with Renfrew on the south bank. A foot passenger ferry still operates this route today.
40. The former car ferry from Renfrew is a nightclub in Glasgow. At one time it was the venue for the Riverside club and is allegedly where the dance the Riverside Jig originated.