

Fifty fantastic fascinating fun facts about West Dunbartonshire

1. The name **Dumbarton** comes from "Dun Breatainn" meaning the fortress of the Britons. Known as "Dunbretane" in the past, it was once the capital of the ancient kingdom of Strathclyde and played an important part in Scottish mediaeval history.
2. St Patrick, the Patron Saint of Ireland, is believed to have been born beside **Old Kilpatrick** on the shores of the River Clyde around the year 410CE and the Kilpatrick hills are named after him too.
3. The geological feature of the Highland Boundary Fault runs diagonally across Scotland from **Helensburgh** in the west to Stonehaven in the east. The Fault separates the Highlands of Scotland from the Lowlands.
4. Opened in 1790, the 22 mile Forth and Clyde Canal, connects east and west Scotland and meets the River Clyde at the village of **Bowling**.
5. Claiming its date of founding as 1772, Littlemill distillery at **Bowling** is a contender as the oldest distillery in Scotland. Glenturret Distillery, at Crieff, founded in 1775 also claims to be the oldest in Scotland.
6. Formula One racing champion Jackie Stewart was born at **Milton** in 1939.
7. John Logie Baird, the inventor of television in 1924 was born in **Helensburgh**. In the early part of his career he invented a type of pneumatic shoes which, unlike Nike, never caught on.
8. The family of Madeleine Smith, the infamous Glasgow poisoner, had a summer house at **Rhu**. She used to meet her lover in the woods near the house. Her parents would not have approved.
9. The last surviving tea clipper, The Cutty Sark, on display in Greenwich, was launched from Scott and Linton's shipyard at **Dumbarton** in 1869.
10. When it was built in 1910, the Argyll Motor Works, in **Alexandria** was the largest car factory in the world.
11. In its heyday, Alexandria was the centre of the Turkey Red industry. Long before the Industrial Revolution, **Leven** was an important textiles producing area. Turkey Red was the name given to a red dye made from the roots of the "madder" plant
12. The Denny Ship Model Test Tank in **Dumbarton** has a water tank as long as a football pitch. Built in 1882, the Denny Tank was the first commercial ship model testing tank built in the world and it remains in use today.
13. Levenford House, currently the headquarters for **West Dunbartonshire's** Library Service, was originally built for James Denny the shipbuilder. It was used for filming the 1978 STV adaptation of Muriel Spark's 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie'.
14. William Wallace was held at **Dumbarton Castle** before being taken to London for execution in 1305.
15. **Dumbarton** was first mentioned around 450CE as the stronghold of the kings of Strathclyde. The ancient kingdom stretched from the northern tip of Loch Lomond to Morecambe Bay in the north of England.

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16. The rock on which **Dumbarton Castle** sits is an extinct volcanic vent rising to 240 feet (75 metres) above the River Clyde.
17. The castle on **Dumbarton Rock** is strategically positioned to monitor traffic on the River Clyde and to guard the mouth of the River Leven, the gateway to Loch Lomond.
18. The town of **Dumbarton** was made a Royal Burgh by King Alexander II in 1222.
19. In 1603 the use of the name MacGregor was outlawed by King James VI. The MacGregor clan had massacred many of the Colquhouns at the Battle of **Glenfruin**, the "Glen of Sorrow" not far north of Dumbarton.
20. Geese have been used at **Dumbuck** distillery as security guards since 1959. The alarm set up by this 'Scotch Watch' acts as a deterrent to would be intruders.
21. The town of **Alexandria** is named after the local Member of Parliament, Alexander Smollet, a relative of the town's developer around 1760. He was killed at the battle of Alkmaer in Holland in 1799.
22. Norse warriors laid siege to the formidable rock fortress of **Dumbarton** in 869CE. The starving Briton occupants held out for four months until the Fortress' well dried up. 200 ships took the occupants as slaves.
23. The village of **Balloch** on Loch Lomond's southern shore takes its name for the Gaelic word Bealach meaning "mountain pass" or "river gap" which reflects its position between the loch and the River Clyde.
24. Built across the width of Scotland in 142 CE, the Roman Antonine Wall meets the River Clyde at **Old Kilpatrick**.
25. The 720 square miles of **The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park** was opened in 2002 is Scotland's first National Park.
26. The **Kilpatrick Hills** were once the haunt of illegal whisky distillers and smugglers in early 19th C.
27. **Dumbarton** castle saw its last action in May 1941 when a German aircraft dropped four bombs on Dumbarton Rock during a raid on the Clyde.
28. **Dumbarton** was Scotland's largest producer of glass in 19th century.
29. Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland, died at his manorial country house in the parish of **Cardross** in 1329 but not where the present village lies. Instead his house was beside the river Leven close to Renton.
30. A. J. Cronin, the novelist, who inspired "Dr Finlay's Casebook", was born at **Cardross** on 19th July 1896
31. The town of **Dumbarton** differentiates itself from the county of Dunbartonshire by one letter which probably arises from an early mis-spelling, the pre-fix dun being old Gaelic for hill fort.
32. The piece of music composed by Stravinsky "**Dumbarton Oaks**" has nothing to do with Scotland. It is named after an estate in Washington DC (USA) whose owner commissioned it for his thirtieth wedding anniversary. It lasts a total of 12 minutes.
33. Mary Queen of Scots stayed in **Dumbarton Castle** for five months in 1547 before sailing to France to marry the Dauphin. Later, Mary and her supporters were defeated at the Battle of Langside in 1568 whilst making her way to Dumbarton Castle.
34. **Loch Lomond** is Scotland's largest loch by surface area. (7,123ha /190,000a)

35. In a 2005 poll of Radio Times readers, **Loch Lomond** was named as the 6th greatest natural wonder in Britain.
36. The town of **Renton** was named in 1782 by founder, Jean Telfer Smollet (sister of the novelist Tobias Smollett) after her daughter-in-law, Cecelia Renton. The novelist is commemorated by a monument in **Renton's** Main St near his birthplace at Dalquhurn House.
37. **Renton** Football Club won the World Championship trophy in 1888, but unlike world championships of today, they didn't travel the world playing the best teams. As winners of the Scottish Cup they arranged a match with the English Cup champions, Bromwich Albion. The winner was declared World Champion!
38. Henry Bell, the inventor of the steamboat in 1812 hailed from **Helensburgh**.
39. The West Highland Railway on it's way from Glasgow to Oban and Mallaig is one of the most outstanding railway journeys in the world.
40. Sir James Colquhoun of Luss designed **Helensburgh** as a carefully planned residential town and named it after his wife, Lady Helen Sutherland. He bought the land in 1752 and started work in 1776. Originally the place was a small clachan and was called Milligs.
41. The Hill House in **Helensburgh** was designed by renowned Scottish architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh and is now in the care of the National Trust for Scotland.
42. During the Second World War 240 Sunderland flying boats were built at the Blackburn works in **Dumbarton**.
43. It was once possible to take a tramcar ride all the way from central Glasgow to **Dumbarton**.
44. And in the 1960s you could go from **Dumbarton** to Oban by hovercraft.
45. In the Tintin series of cartoon books, Captain Haddock and Snowy's favourite drink is "**Loch Lomond**" Scotch whisky.
46. The song The Bonnie Banks o' **Loch Lomond** was first published around 1876. The song tells of two Scottish prisoners in Carlisle after the 1745 Jacobite uprising. One was to be set free, and the other to be executed for his part in the uprising against the Hanovarian king. The two prisoners' release and execution were timed for the same hour. The freed man would travel home to Scotland the conventional way, tramping wearily for many miles by The High Road. The condemned man, travelling with the speed of a spirit by The Low Road, would be transported instantly at the moment of death, arriving home first.
47. Duncryne Hill (462', 141m) at **Gartocharn** is known locally as 'the Dumpling'.
48. Sir Walter Scott stayed for a time at **Ross Priory** on the shores of Loch Lomond and is said to have composed the Lady of Lake there.
49. WH Auden, the English poet afforded recent notoriety being quoted in the eulogy in the film 'Four Weddings and a Funeral' spent a two year period as a schoolmaster at the Larchfield Academy in **Helensburgh**.
50. It was at **Dumbarton** that Scotland's earliest poetry, 'The Gododdin', by the Welsh bard Aneirin, was first written down. It tells the tale of a disastrous raid by the warring Britons of Edinburgh on the Angles, revelling in their deeds and mourning the loss of so many fine warriors.