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Scotland and Northern England (S26A-1)

Glasgow Sightseeing and Museums

Before this trip, I had traveled to Scotland three times. For those visits, I focused on Glasgow and Edinburgh sites, and family history – my paternal grandfather's ancestry is mostly Scottish. For this trip, I had a few family history-related things to do, and there were a number of museums in Glasgow and Edinburgh to see that I skipped on those past trips. But mostly, I wanted to see Scotland more like a tourist. Especially the Scottish Highlands, which I barely saw during a group day trip back in 2003.

Still, I spent most of my nights in Glasgow – six nights at the start of the trip and eleven more at the end of the trip. Scotland really isn't all that big, and Glasgow's two main train stations provide easy connections to many places, ideal for planning a number of train day trips. I planned on eight of these, and then added a ninth when I wrapped up all of my sightseeing plans with a day to spare. I also had six museum/sightseeing days in Glasgow, targeting different parts of town for each of those.

In addition to Glasgow, I spent four nights in Inverness to focus on that part of the Highlands. And I left Scotland to spend four nights in Newcastle upon Tyne, England because of my interests in Roman Britain – I wanted to explore Hadrian's Wall-related sites. But I report on the Highlands, the Lowlands and Roman sites separately. This note focuses on Glasgow sightseeing and museums.

On past visits, I had explored Glasgow's city center and neighborhoods like the Gorbals, Bridgeton and Calton in great detail. My grandpa's maternal grandmother Ellen McNeil was born in Bridgeton – the McNeils were my only ancestors who lived in Glasgow.

I was interested in museums where I could learn more about Scottish history and culture. I also targeted some art museum with hopes of seeing some works by Scottish landscape painter John Thomson due to a family connection to him.

West of the city center is the University of Glasgow, whose campus featured two of the museums I targeted. The Hunterian Museum focused on aspects of Scottish history, but it also had dinosaur and fossil exhibits. Its biggest exhibit, though, centered on the Antonine Wall. Hadrian's Wall, which crossed England from Newcastle to Carlisle, is much better known as how the Roman's fortified their northwestern frontier. The Romans made a few short-lived efforts to push the boundary further north, and built the Antonine Wall across Scotland, passing just north of today's Glasgow. But unlike the stonework Hadrian's Wall, the Antonine Wall was primarily piled dirt and timbers, so much of it didn't

survive the centuries. But several artifacts found along the wall's route across Scotland were on display at the Hunterian.



Roman altars dedicated to various gods found along the Antonine Wall



Roman military equipment and shoes found along the Antonine Wall



It was long after dinosaur fossils had been discovered globally before any were found in Scotland. To date, evidence of dinosaurs in Scotland has only been found on the Isle of Skye. This includes this rock that actually features two dinosaur tracks – the obvious one and a much smaller track found on the bigger track. The smaller track is currently the smallest dinosaur track found to date.

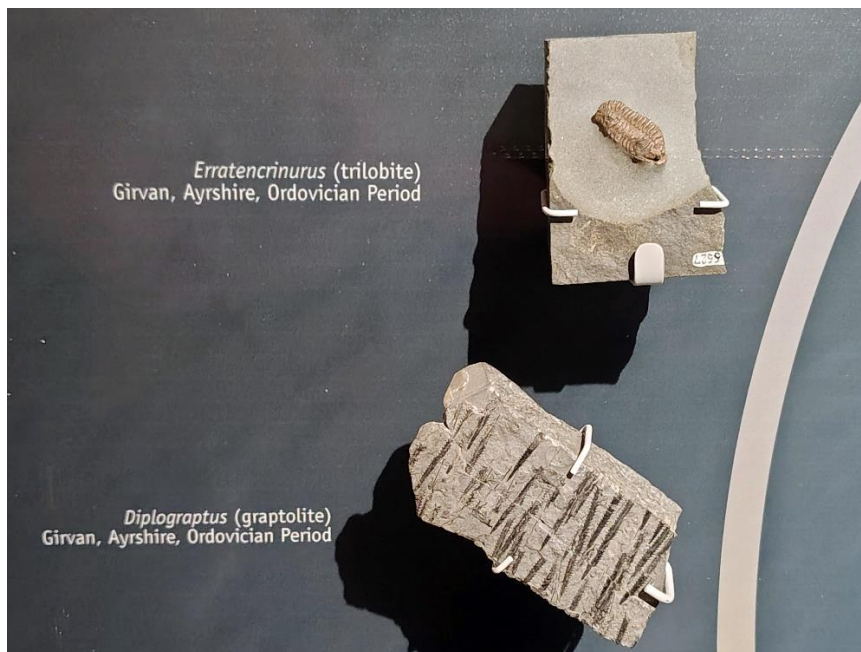
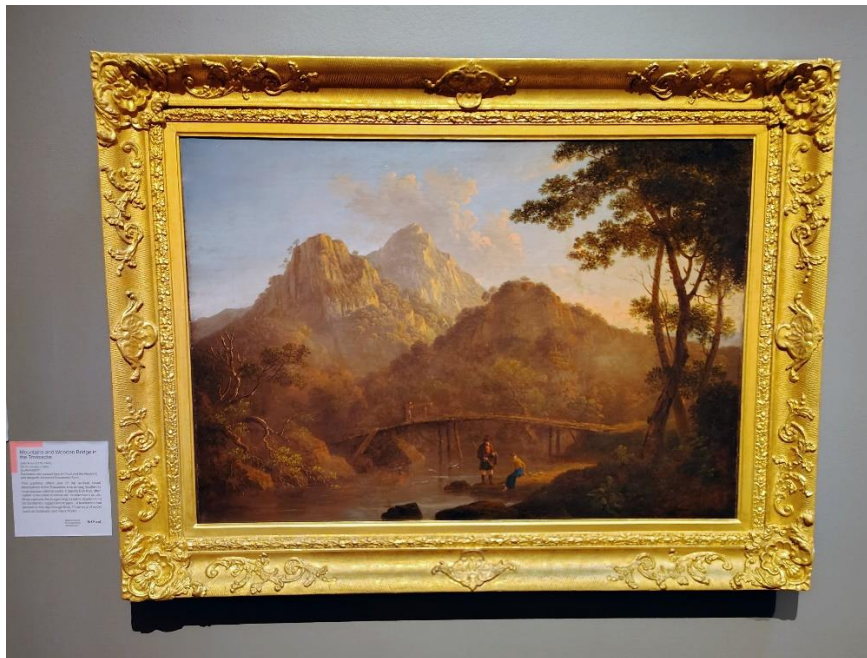


Plate tectonics and continental drift are generally accepted ideas today, but that wasn't always the case. Craighead Quarry between Dailly and Girvan in south Ayrshire, Scotland revealed types of rock and how they were layered and folded that were similar to those found in the Appalachians. Fossils found in the quarry also closely matched those found in the Appalachians. More evidence of both were then found in what is referred to as the Girvan Arc, which includes Dailly, Girvan and Ballantrae. The geological and

fossil evidence collected at the quarry and more broadly across the Arc helped confirm the relationship between the Appalachians and much of Scotland. Under current models of plate tectonics, it is believed that much of today's Scotland was part of Laurentia with most of North America, and got pushed up against Avalonia where the rest of Scotland and today's England were located. Then, when the Atlantic Ocean started opening up, it separated Scotland from the rest of what had been Laurentia. Some evidence from the Girvan Arc and other sites in Scotland was on display at the Hunterian.

As *New Scientist*, August 13, 1981, described it, "The quarry was one of the first and most crucial pieces in the jigsaw of evidence that led to the theory of plate tectonics – better known as continental drift. Fossils found in the quarry were the first to suggest that 400 million years ago, in the Ordovician period, Scotland was joined to parts of Ireland and North America." Craighead Quarry has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. So why my extra coverage of this? Craighead Quarry was located at Craighead, the farm where my great great grandfather John Watson was born. So, what happened at Craighead eventually led to two important developments – the theory of plate tectonics and me.



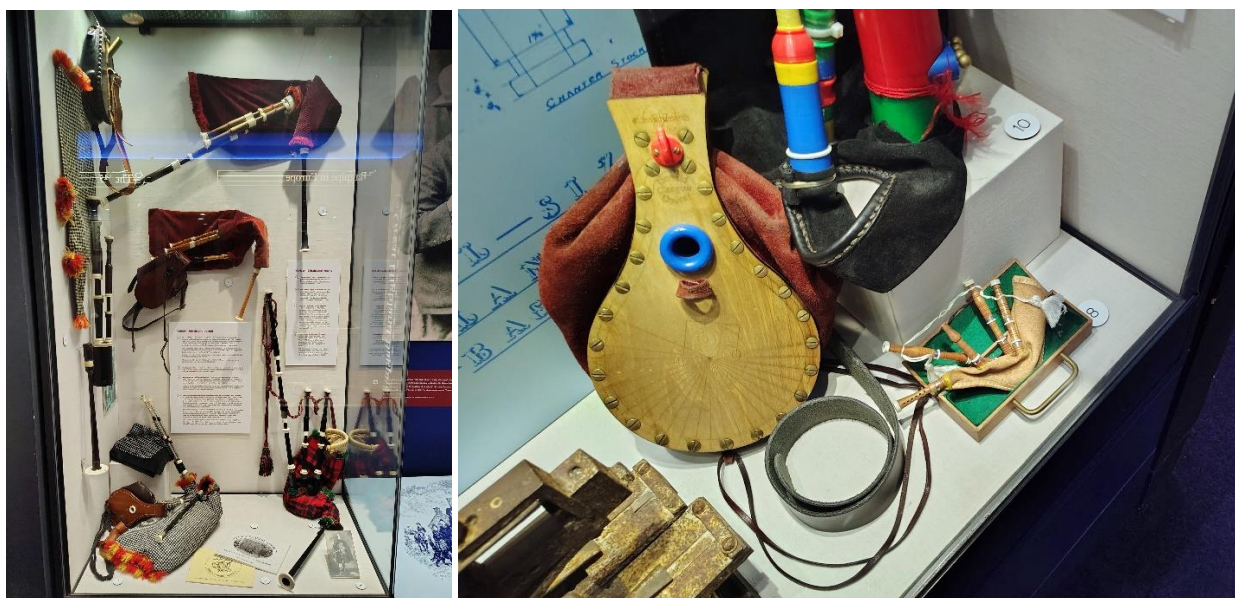
Painting of the Trossachs, mountains located in the southern Highlands, on display at the separate Hunterian Art Museum. The Hunterian Art Museum also had a dedicated space focused on Charles Rennie Mackintosh, a Glaswegian architect, designer and artist. I'm not a big fan of his particular style, but you'll see it featured around Glasgow.

I developed a bad head cold at the start of the trip, and because I felt a bit feverish, I decided to take it easy in the hotel room for a day. But the lowest priority museum on my list – the Gallery of Modern Art – was just a block from my hotel, so I checked it out that day.



At the Gallery of Modern Art. A chandelier hangs above a vat filled with molasses-like black treacle. Sometimes, I wish (modern) art museums, along with the name of the artist and artwork, would provide an explanation of what they saw in the “art” to justify adding it to their collection or putting it on display. This one was a real headscratcher, especially given how much space was devoted to it.

My next museum excursion took me to the neighborhood to the west northwest of the city center. I started with the Museum of Piping at the National Piping Centre, a small museum about the bagpipe. Bagpipes are closely associated with Scotland, and it’s not unusual to come across someone playing the bagpipes, especially in tourist areas, but I really didn’t know much about them and how they worked. The museum provided a nice introduction.



Variety of bagpipes (left); miscellaneous related items including the world’s smallest working bagpipes (right).

As my walk through the neighborhood continued, I passed the Charles Rennie Mackintosh-designed Glasgow School of Art building, only to find it surrounded by scaffolding. Two fires in recent years have gutted the building, and they're still trying to figure out how to salvage what's left of it.

My next stop was the Tenement House. Tenement housing was widespread in Glasgow, and my McNeil ancestors likely lived in a Bridgeton tenement. In some tenements, several family members crowded into just one or two rooms with no running water or indoor plumbing. But there were "middle class" tenements, too, including the one preserved here, once the home of Agnes Toward, a never-married dressmaker who kept meticulous records covering her 54 years in the same four-room tenement unit.



Everything you could want in a modern kitchen. Coal-fired stove and oven on the left, counter and cupboard on the right, an island in the middle, and the sink under the window. Note the washboard and wringer at the sink used for washing clothes. The ropes on the wall to the left of the sink area were connected to pulleys and rods. Lower the rods and drape washed items over them, and then raise them back up, taking advantage of heat from the stove and oven to help dry them. Toward's unit also had its own bathroom. Small units routinely shared bathrooms with other units.



On my walk back to the hotel, I stopped for afternoon tea at what had been the Charles Rennie Mackintosh-designed Willow Tea Room on Sauchiehall Street. It is now operated by the National Trust for Scotland and is called the Mackintosh Tearooms. You can get a nice look at his design style while enjoying afternoon tea – sticky toffee pudding and a Diet Coke in my case.



Inside Macintosh Tearooms

My next museum excursion took me over to the west side to Kelvingrove Park and the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum – more general museum than art gallery, it turned out. It had several exhibit spaces focused on various aspects of Scotland's history, culture and natural history – and a few unrelated topics, like ancient Egypt and French painters.



The “Glasgow Boys” were a group of artists from Glasgow who promoted a particular style of painting with an emphasis on local subjects, such as these row cottages. I suspect that these resembled the row cottages at Heather Row in Dailly Parish where a number of our Wason cousins once lived.



Weapons from the time of Robert the Bruce.

Robert I a.k.a. Robert the Bruce led Scotland in the First War of Scottish Independence, as did William Wallace, who was captured and executed in 1305 (the movie *Braveheart* is about Wallace).

Robert the Bruce’s efforts restored Scotland as an independent kingdom. He served as king from 1306 to 1329, having had some claim to the throne as a direct descendent of King David I of Scotland.

Both men are among Scotland’s top heroes, and I came across tributes to both at a number of sites in my travels.

The Riverside had a nice collection of old cars, city buses, train cars, bicycles, street trolleys, subway cars and other modes of transportation, but it didn't have much to say about any of it, feeling more like a collection of things to look at than a museum. But it was worth taking a look.



The Flying Scot bicycles. The first mechanically propelled two-wheeled vehicle may have been built in 1839 by Scottish blacksmith Kirkpatrick MacMillan, although there is some dispute about that.



An early Lipton's Tea delivery truck. Sir Thomas Lipton, who founded Lipton Tea, was born in Glasgow's Gorbals area, and he was buried in the Southern Necropolis there.

The history of Partick is closely tied to that of Govan, across the River Clyde. The Brittonic (Celtic Britons – not Anglo-Saxons or Gaels) Kingdom of Strathclyde included lands from just north of the River Clyde through southwest Scotland to as far south as northwest England. Originally called Alt Clud, it was governed from its capital at Dumbarton Rock, but the Vikings sacked Dumbarton in 870AD. The kingdom was reestablished with its capital at Govan and renamed Strathclyde. It pushed back against Viking occupation, and soon reached its own territorial peak. But it was conquered by the Scots in the 11th century, becoming part of the Kingdom of Alba/Scotland.

The kings of Strathclyde had a residence in Partick, with the heart of the kingdom at Govan. The churchyard at what was the Govan Old Parish Church is believed to be the oldest surviving Christian burial ground in Scotland, with some burials there dating back to the 5th or 6th century. More elaborately carved grave markers and Viking era hogback markers found there date back to when the capital of Strathclyde moved here. The Govan Stones, as they're referred to, are what you would expect to find marking the graves of royalty and other high-level officials. Although the church has closed, it has been repurposed into a museum featuring the Govan stones. The next day, I returned to Govan to continue my museum visits.



Five Viking age hogback grave markers have been found in the churchyard.



Front and back of the Sun Stone



The church is dedicated to St. Constantine. The Govan Sarcophagus, discovered in the churchyard in 1855, may have held his relics at some point. Which Constantine? There are two candidates. Archaeological digs continue in the churchyard, turning up both significant finds and more recent general headstones.

The River Clyde connects Glasgow to the sea. After the river was deepened in the 18th and 19th centuries, the area became a major shipbuilding center, with more than 200 shipyards producing a fifth of the world's total shipping tonnage. The Cutty Sark, Queen Mary and Lusitania were among the ships built there (one of my maternal great grandmothers emigrated to the United States on a Clydebuilt ship, the S.S. Parisian).

Among the biggest shipyards was the Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Company, headquartered in Govan. By the 1970s, shipbuilding along the Clyde fell on hard times, and more recently what was left of Fairfield was sold to BAE Systems. But the Fairfield headquarters building was preserved. Much of it has been converted to office space, the revenue from which supports the Fairfield Heritage Museum of Shipbuilding, which provides a nice overview of this part of Glasgow's history.



The Fairfield shipyard in 1920



The River Clyde from its Partick bank. The building on the left was the Govan Old Parish Church. A century ago, almost everything else along the Clyde here would have been shipyards.

My last Glasgow museum day was really more about visiting various sites east of the city center than the one minor museum I visited, although all but the museum were repeats from past visits to Glasgow.



Tron Square is one of the oldest streets in Glasgow. The Tron Steeple was built in 1628 for a church that was destroyed by fire in 1793.



Trongate leads to the Glasgow Cross, the hub of old Glasgow. It was the site of the Glasgow Tolbooth – a tolbooth was the main municipal building of a Scottish city or town, housing city offices, the court and jail. The tolbooth was built in the 1630s. All but its seven-story steeple was demolished in 1921.



Just down the street on Gallowgate is The Barras, a major indoor/outdoor flea market held every weekend in Glasgow's Calton district.

To the south of Calton is Glasgow's Bridgeton district. My great great great grandparents, blacksmith Duncan McNeil and his wife Jane, started their family in Glasgow's Gorbals area, but they were living in Bridgeton in the late 1830s when their last three children were born, including my great great

grandmother Ellen. But Duncan died of fever in December 1840. The 1841 U.K. Census showed Jane working as a cotton weaver and living with five kids on John Street. The census page had Bridgeton on it, but it was crossed out and replaced by Barony.

The only John Street I found on Glasgow maps was near the city center in Barony Parish, just a few block from my hotel in a neighborhood better known at the time for its wealthy residents. But at one of the museums, I found out that there had been a John Street in Bridgeton. It didn't take long for me to find online that in 1926 Bridgeton's John Street had been renamed Tullis Street after a prominent local businessman. Given my family's history in Bridgeton, Jane's occupation and Bridgeton being dominated by businesses in the weaving and textile industries, and it made a lot more sense that the McNeils had remained in Bridgeton. And Bridgeton was also part of Barony Parish.

John Street, Bridgeton would generally be unrecognizable to the McNeils today, as most of it has been redeveloped. The John Street Burial Ground, where I now suspect Duncan McNeil was buried, is still there, although all the surviving grave markers have been moved along the walls, creating a neighborhood greenspace now called Tullis Street Memorial Gardens.



Tullis Street Memorial Gardens, formerly the John Street Burial Ground

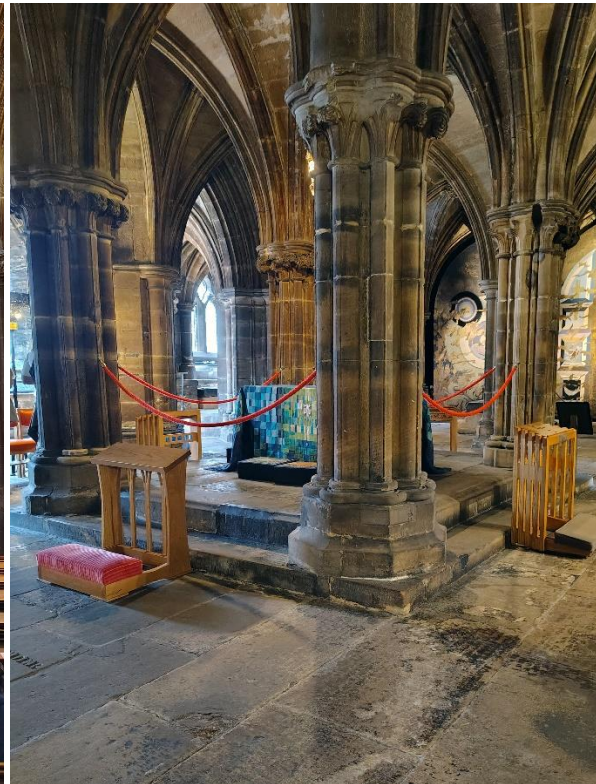
Within a few years, the McNeils emigrated to Québec, where Jane remarried and then was widowed a second time. The family then moved to the Fort Edward area in upstate New York, where Ellen would meet and marry Samuel Sawyer.

Samuel was a descendent of Thomas Sawyer and Mary Prescott – my eight greats grandparents – who came from England to colonial Massachusetts in the 1630s. It was there where they eventually met and married. It is through the Prescotts that we have our connection to the Bush family, with President George W. Bush being my 10th cousin.

I then headed north to the Glasgow Cathedral. It was the cathedral church of Glasgow from the 12th century to the Scottish Reformation, and now serves as a parish church. It is also the oldest building in Glasgow. The cathedral is dedicated to St. Mungo, whose tomb is in the building's Lower Church.



Glasgow Cathedral



The parish church (left); tomb of St. Mungo in the Lower Church (right)

Next door, I toured the St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Culture. I was expecting more about the history of St. Mungo or the cathedral, but instead it focused on religious diversity in modern day Scotland.



Reproduction of the painting *View of Glasgow and the Cathedral* (1840) on display in the museum. The red arrow points to the Barony Parish Church where the McNeil children were baptized. It was torn down in the 1880s.



View of Glasgow Cathedral and the Glasgow Necropolis from the top floor of the museum



I took a roundabout route back to my hotel, stopping for views along the River Clyde.



I also passed The Scotia. It was built in 1792, and is believed to be the oldest pub in Glasgow. Gerry Rafferty and Billy Connolly got their start at The Scotia with their band The Humblebums. Rafferty, who was born in nearby Paisley, would later as a solo artist become famous for [Baker Street](#) and a number of other songs. A plaque on the building also notes that Stan Laurel of Laurel & Hardy fame got his start at the Metropole Theatre that was next door until it was torn down.

This ended my sightseeing in Glasgow itself.



Greetings from Glasgow



Glasgow's Queen Street Station. I took more than two dozen train rides while in the U.K. Except for a Highlands small group bus tour, all of my Glasgow-based day trips began and ended with train rides. I also used trains to get to Newcastle and Inverness.



Glasgow's stately city chambers located at George Square. George Square was blocked off because it was undergoing a nearly complete overhaul.



The ornately decorated Princes Square on Buchanan Street, a pedestrian plaza shopping area



A local pub



Kelvingrove Park, with a University of Glasgow tower in the background



The main road through Govan



Redneck's Barber Shop. I wonder if they specialize in mullets.



The statue of Arthur Wellesley that stands in front of the Gallery of Modern Art has sported one or more traffic cones on its head every time I've been to Glasgow. The tradition dates back to the 1980s. Since 2005, the Glasgow City Council has considered a number of ways to deter this, including spending 1.2 million pounds on CCTV software that could automatically detect people putting cones on the statue.



There are a number of building-side murals around Glasgow's city center.



A1 Kilt Hire. In Scotland, it's not unusual to see men wearing kilts when dressed up. You can buy kilts off the shelf or have one custom-made, especially if you wanted to use a tartan associated with your family. But if it isn't something that you would use regularly, you can hire (rent) a kilt and the related paraphernalia as needed – much like renting a tux.

If you've ever wondered what people really wear under their kilts, you could just walk up behind someone who's wearing one and lift it up. Traditionalists may not wear anything, but underwear and shorts are pretty common. If you rent one, though, you're required to wear something.