

The Royal Burgh of Annan

The town of Annan sits on the estuary of the River Annan at the eastern end of the Solway Firth. It has a population of some 10000 and is the principal town in the Annandale and Eskdale area of the Dumfries & Galloway region.

There is evidence that Annandale was the home of native tribes about 5000BC. Much later during the period 80 AD to the 3rd century the area was under Roman control. In the eleventh to fifteenth centuries which included the War of Independence, Norman families, notably the Bruces, governed the district.

The Solway Firth was a natural barrier against invaders during war and a hindrance to commerce in peaceful times. Annan's location on the first fordable part of the Solway Firth was of great importance both as a route for invading armies and for traders. Because of its position the town suffered from attack and counter attack during the War of Independence, and later when "border reiving" was a way of life.

In recognition of the townspeople's resistance and loyalty, a charter was granted to Annan by King James V in 1538, perhaps renewing an earlier award. The town's Royal Burgh status was reaffirmed in 1612 by King James VI. Each year the Royal Burgh of Annan celebrates the granting of the charter by Riding the Marches to check that the boundaries are secure. This tradition now stretches back about 700 years.

After hundreds of years of cross border conflict peace was finally achieved. As agriculture developed Annan became a prosperous market town with coastal shipping links with Liverpool and other industrial cities. This trade was further developed with railway links in the 1840s.

Before the beginning of the 18th century the district's children were provided with several schools teaching a range of both classical and practical subjects. In 1802 the syllabus at Annan Academy, which was promoted by the town council, included mathematics, physics and natural science, Greek and Latin. Former pupil Thomas Carlyle returned to teach there. Lieutenant-General Alexander Dirom (1757-1830), who lived on the Mount Annan estate, was an enlightened landowner. He was responsible for developing agriculture and industry, and was also involved with improving roads and having river bridges built. In 1811, with others, he promoted the opening of the Annan branch of the newly formed Commercial Bank of Scotland.

Annan's 19th century industries of fishing, shipbuilding and sandstone quarrying were later augmented by watermills and

windmills which powered cotton manufacturing and cereal milling. Bacon curing and tanning were also major industries. As a by-product, and to support agricultural development, factories made bone meal and fertilisers. The town's fine sandstone buildings and bridge are a testimony to the industry and skills of the 18th and 19th century quarrymen and masons.

In 1899 engineering was established with Cochran & Co., who built small ships and a wide range of boilers. The Great War 1914-18, and the 1930s industrial depression years, followed by the Second World War, brought about many changes in both social attitudes and local industries. The building of the nuclear power station at Chapelcross in 1957 resulted in a further influx of people bringing new skills and outlooks.

Today the town still has many people employed in the engineering industry in both manufacturing and maintenance, and the two large food processing companies employ more than 1000 people. In common with many small towns improved communications are a mixed blessing. Local businesses have to compete with large shopping centres and a significant number of people commute to work.

Access and Transport

Two busy main roads cross the region, the A75 Gretna to Stranraer, and the A74 (M) Gretna to Glasgow which is an extension of the M6.

Scotrail Cross Country Sprinter trains These link Carlisle and Glasgow and stop at Gretna, Annan and Dumfries. For information contact National Rail Enquiry Line. Telephone 08457 484950

Intercity trains These service Carlisle and link with the Scotrail Sprinter service to Annan. For information contact National Rail Enquiry Line. Telephone 08457 484950

Buses A frequent service links both Carlisle and Dumfries and there are many other local services. For information contact Traveline. Telephone 0870 608 2608

SUSTRANS, the National Cycle Route This crosses the region linking Carlisle, Gretna, Easttriggs, Annan, and Dumfries. For information about all routes visit the web site www.sustrans.org.uk

Activities and Interests

Cycling Annandale and Eskdale provide many miles of quiet country roads for the cyclist. Within a radius of roughly 35 miles the area offers easy cycling on the flat coastal plain, moderate upland cycling and tougher cycling in the more northerly hills and forests.

A free guide, "Cycling signposted routes in Dumfries & Galloway" describes some on-road cycle routes. This is available from the Town Hall, Library and local Tourist Board Centres.

Walking There are many short walks along peaceful riverbanks, through woods and along the shores of the Solway Firth. A free guide, "Walking in and around Annan" describes a number of walks that can be enjoyed throughout the year. This is available from the Town Hall, Library and local Tourist Board Centres. This information can also be downloaded from www.annan.org.uk. Annan, together with the Annandale burghs of Lockerbie and Lochmaben, holds an annual Walking Festival over the first full weekend in May.

Angling There is excellent salmon fishing on the River Annan. Coarse fishing is also available at several nearby locations. For information about all beats visit the web site www.riverannan.co.uk

Golfing Visitors are welcome at the two local golf courses.

Powfoot Golf Club 18 hole course.
Telephone 01461 700227

Hoddum Castle 9 hole course.
Telephone 01576 300251

Annan Swimming Pool Annan Academy, St John's Road. This is a 25m indoor pool within the grounds of Annan Academy which is open to the public after school hours. Telephone: 01461 204773

Sports & Leisure Newington Sports & Leisure Centre provides a wide range of health and fitness facilities with outdoor track and field provision at Newington and the Everholm. Tennis and Putting facilities are available in Seaforth Park. Telephone: 01461 201079

