

STEPHEN MILLAR AND GILLIAN LONEY



SECRET GLASGOW

AN UNUSUAL GUIDE



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

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GLASGOW BOTANIC GARDENS

LOST STATIONS

14

Ghostly remains

730 Great Western Road, G12 0UE

Hillhead Subway station



If you head off the main paths, Glasgow's famous Botanic Gardens contain the forgotten and fascinating ghostly relics of two old suburban train stations.

The first is visible if you walk through the main entrance off Great Western Road and bear left. Here – just behind some trees – lie the remains of the Botanic Gardens Railway Station originally operated by the Glasgow Central Railway.

It opened in 1896 and the platforms that are still visible were below ground level. The station continued to be used until 1939 when it was closed, a victim of competition from tramlines and the over-expansion of suburban railway lines. Sadly, the landmark station building above the platforms was ravaged by a fire in 1970 and later demolished.

The Glasgow Central Railway was built by the Caledonian Railway and ran mostly through tunnels right through central Glasgow. At this time, there was competition between the railway companies to reach the city's expanding suburbs, but construction was hugely expensive and difficult with miles of underground tunnels having to be dug out. Many passengers disliked the experience, as standing on underground platforms with a steam train passing through was not always very pleasant! The Glasgow Central Line finally closed in the mid-1960s.

While in the Botanic Gardens, take the opportunity to see the much harder-to-find remains of Kirklee railway station, which used to be just one stop along on the Glasgow Central Line. It also opened in 1896 and closed in 1939. It was designed by Sir John James Burnet, an eminent Scottish architect responsible for Charing Cross Mansions and the Glasgow Savings Bank on Ingram Street. After closure, the station building was used as a private residence before being demolished in 1971.

Most of the site has been built over but, if you enter the Botanic Gardens from Ford Road and walk along the path before bearing left through the trees, you will see the platform remains. If you look back along Ford Road, you can see the remains of a railway bridge adjoining the gardens. The platform is behind these remains.

OUROBOROS

AT THE KELVIN BUILDING

A symbol with ancient origins

*Kelvin Building
University Avenue, G12 8QQ*

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The University of Glasgow's Kelvin Building houses the Department of Physics and Astronomy, which features one of the city's most intriguing symbolic mysteries that has long puzzled observers. Located right next to the main entrance of the newer wing, a relief carving displays an enigmatic design featuring a serpent coiled in a circle and eating itself, a radiant six-pointed star and a three-sided pyramid.

The symbol serves as the logo of the Astronomy and Astrophysics Group, whose origins probably date back to the university's first observatory established in 1757.

The symbolism visible in the relief carries historical, religious and mystical significance. The most intriguing feature is the serpent eating itself – something you will see nowhere else in the city. This is an example of an ouroboros, an ancient symbol believed to represent the cyclical nature of life, eternity and the universe ... rather appropriate for an astronomy department studying cosmic phenomena.

In later centuries, several secretive groups adopted this symbol for their own purposes, including alchemists, Gnostics and Scottish Freemasons. For alchemists, the Ouroboros represented the interconnected unity of all things. The inclusion of a pyramid in the relief may refer to the triangle of measurement and also suggests Masonic connections as within that tradition, pyramids symbolise hidden knowledge and the pursuit of enlightenment.

Crowning the relief is a six-pointed star, or hexagram. It represents opposites – male and female – and harmony and balance in the heavens and among celestial bodies. An appropriate symbol for the department's primary focus ...

Today, no one knows who commissioned this symbol, the name of the sculptor or what was really intended in the design. One guess is that it was inspired by an astronomer with Masonic connections who was senior enough to influence the commissioned work.

It is known that the relief was located long ago on the frontage of the University's Horselethill Observatory and that the building was completed in 1841 due to the fund-raising efforts of the Astronomical Institution of Glasgow. When the institution ran into financial difficulties, the university took over the observatory in the mid-1840s. Perhaps this relief was inspired by members of the Astronomical Institution.

WOODLANDS COMMUNITY GARDEN

33

An urban garden in the heart of the city

117 West Princes Street, G4 9BY
woodlandscommunity.org.uk
 St George's Cross Subway station



It's easy to walk down West Princes Street in Woodlands and imagine it's just another Glasgow road, but look out for the entrance to one of the city's most innovative and impressive new gardens.

In 2009 a local organisation called Garden Revolutions of the West End – set up by artist Nina Wesolowski and architect Hanna Buss – persuaded the Woodlands Development Trust to let them transform a derelict site opposite Queen's Crescent into a community garden.

The site had been left empty after a tenement building collapsed in the 1970s, and the garden (opened in 2010) quickly became a peaceful oasis beloved by locals, despite its proximity to the M8 motorway.

In just a few years, the garden has brought together the local community in such a positive way that common sense suggests every part of the city should copy its example. Around 45 families, individuals and couples are involved in growing plants and vegetables in raised beds, and a much wider community of around 500 people are involved in the various on-site activities.

Neighbours who had previously never even met now have a place to socialise and make new friends, as well as grow their own food. Recent arrivals to Scotland, including asylum seekers, mix with born-and-bred Glaswegians, help each other discover cultural connections and reduce isolation and tensions. Using the garden has also proved to be particularly important for those under the care of local institutions, including a mental health charity and a day care centre for the elderly. Highlights of the year include harvest festivals, solstice events, concerts and an anniversary party.

Beside the garden is a community building used for workshops, social events and art projects. Volunteers work in the vegetarian cafe, organise homework nights for local schoolkids and tackle street littering by organising regular clean-ups. The influence of the Woodlands project is growing, and those working at the garden are now involved in mentoring other community gardens seeking to provide similar benefits for their own local residents.

THE HIDDEN LANE

40

Glasgow's ultimate secret gem

1103 Argyle Street, G3 8ND
 thehiddenlaneglasgow.com
 Exhibition Centre train station
 Buses: X19 or 23/26 from city centre



In trendy Finnieston, the Hidden Lane is one of Glasgow's ultimate secret gems. Blink and you'll miss the entrance: a covered, cobbled alleyway off busy Argyle Street, covered in posters and signs which could be anything between five or fifty years old. Head off the beaten track down this treasure trove of independent shops and businesses and you'll find some of the most creative things going on in Glasgow just now.

The highlight is the Hidden Lane Tearoom: a nostalgic, vintage-style place with mismatched crockery and chairs, as well as one of the best afternoon teas in Glasgow. It's a firm favourite with those who love a bit of retro styling, and there's a private function room used for many a hen or birthday party.

There are far too many other businesses to name, from yoga studios to craft supply shops, jewellers to photography studios – all of them housed in ramshackle, brightly coloured shacks and outhouses. You could be forgiven for thinking you've left hard-nosed Glasgow behind until you hear the accent drifting from one door or another.

It's all topped off by the Hidden Lane Gallery, an exhibition space that since 2009 has been showing work by rising stars on the Glasgow art scene and local legends like Alasdair Gray.

Whether you're in the market for a tarot card reading or a new sideboard from an independent designer, this is the place – and it's a slice of the up-and-coming, ever-creative Glasgow that all visitors should experience.



Some locals will argue that the area now known as Finnieston was always Sandyford and that 'Finnieston' (historically the area near the dock, on the north bank of the river Clyde where the Finnieston crane still stands) is just a construct designed to bump up trendy restaurants and house prices.

GLASWEGIAN BLACK MADONNA ②

A reminder of Spain's greatest religious relic

St Aloysius' Church
Rose Street, Garnethill, G3 6RE
8am–6.30pm
Cowcaddens Subway station

The exterior of St Aloysius' Church in Garnethill is not the most inspiring in the city, but step inside and you seem to have been transported to a Baroque-era church in Rome. Dating from 1910, the church was built for the Jesuits by a Belgian architect named Charles Jean Ménart, who based his design on St Aubin's Cathedral in his homeland. But it is not the church's Belgian connection that is its most intriguing aspect.

On the right of the altar, inside the Lady Chapel, is a dramatic small statue of the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus, both wearing gold-coloured clothes, their faces unusually dark. This colouring is a feature of Black Madonnas, a term used to describe similar statues found in other places throughout Europe, most dating from medieval times (see facing page).

This statue is a rare copy of the famous Black Madonna found at the Santa Maria de Montserrat monastery in Catalonia (see *Secret Barcelona* from the same publisher). The Spanish original has been at the monastery for centuries and is one of the country's most venerated religious images, associated with many miracles and myths.

But why does Glasgow have a copy of one of Spain's Black Madonnas?



In 1522 a troubled young Spanish soldier held an all-night vigil in front of the Montserrat Black Madonna, and in the morning he donned the clothes of a beggar. He would later found the Jesuit movement and become venerated as St Ignatius of Loyola. In 2008 representatives of Barcelona football club brought a copy of the Black Madonna to Glasgow when they came to play Celtic. It was appropriately donated to St Aloysius' Church, which is connected to the Jesuits to this day.

Black Virgins: vestiges of pre-Christian religions?

The Black Virgins are effigies of the Virgin Mary (sculptures, icons, paintings) which, for the most part, were created between the 11th and 14th centuries. Their name refers quite simply to their dark colour. Around 500 of them have been counted, mainly around the Mediterranean basin. Usually found in churches, some of them have been the object of major pilgrimages. According to the Roman Catholic Church, there is no theological basis for the colour of these Virgins, although some experts have pointed to the passage in the Song of Songs (1:5): "*Nigra sum sed formosa*" which can be translated as "I am black but beautiful".

Some other very simple reasons have been proposed to explain this black colouring: the colour of the material used (ebony, mahogany, or a dark local wood) or deposits of soot from votive candles. But the importance that this colour has taken over time (some images have even been repainted black during restorations) leads to the belief that a deeper force is at work.

Thus, for some, the colour of the Black Virgin is a reminder that the Virgin, like the Catholic religion in general, did not become established *ex nihilo*, but replaced other ancient faiths in Western Europe: the Mithraic cult (for more details on this fascinating cult which was fundamental in creating a European identity, see *Secret Rome* in this series of guides), Mother-goddess cults, the cult of the Egyptian goddess Isis bearing Horus in her arms, etc. In these archaic contexts, tribute was often rendered to the Mother goddess, symbol of fertility, gestation, procreation, regeneration, and renewal of life in general, on which the peasantry relied to ensure a bountiful harvest. As the Christian religion began to affirm itself, the Virgin, mother of Jesus, son of God the Creator, thus became associated with this Mother goddess.

In symbolic terms, the black colour of the Virgin naturally evokes that of the virgin earth as well as the maternal/regenerative side of life in the sense that feminine procreation takes place in the (dark/black) depths of the woman's uterus. And her dark colour may also have brought her closer to the peasants whose own skin darkened from working out in the fields in the sun. So it is therefore no accident if similar inscriptions are found on certain statues of Isis as on many of the Black Virgins: "*Virgini paritura*" (to the Virgin who will give birth). Finally, although many of the Black Virgins are associated with miracles, it is interesting to note that these events are usually linked to the beginning of a new cycle or a new era, thus respecting the image of the Virgin as the giver of life, above all else.

GREEK INSCRIPTIONS ON THE FORMER ARROL'S BRIDGE

14

Relics of a drowned civilisation

Broomielaw, G1 4NR
St Enoch subway



If you go down to the bank of the Clyde by Broomielaw, you'll see some orphaned bridge supports (or 'piers') sticking out of the water, some inscribed with Greek letters. This is all that remains of the original four-track, 213-metre-long Caledonian Railway Bridge that crossed the river here and was completed in 1878. It was joined by a second bridge with nine railway tracks in 1905.

The first bridge was built by the legendary Sir William Arrol & Co., a firm that played a key role in Glasgow's industrial heyday and whose work (bridges, cranes and other products) can still be found all over the world.

Arrol's bridge was demolished in 1967 after early changes to the railway signalling system made it redundant. However, it was decided to leave some of the original piers and iron arches in situ, described by architectural writer Robin Ward as looking like 'relics of a drowned civilisation'.

Commissioned to work on the piers in 1990, the artist Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925–2006) added inscriptions in English and Greek taken from Plato's *Republic*, dating from around 375 BC. The Greek reads: ΤΑ ΓΑΡ ΔΗ ΜΕΓΑΛΑ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΕΠΙΣΦΑΛΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΛΕΓΟΜΕΝΟΝ ΤΑ ΚΑΛΑ ΤΩΙ ΟΝΤΙ ΧΑΛΕΠΑ [All greatness stands firm in the storm].

Finlay was a prominent Scottish poet and artist who was interested in philosophy – in particular, the work of Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). Although Heidegger was a controversial character due to his links to Nazism, Finlay was intrigued by the German philosopher's habit of living in seclusion in a hut in the Black Forest. The English translation quoted above is Heidegger's version of Plato's words, although a more accurate translation is the following: 'All great things are perilous, and it is true, as the proverb says, that beautiful things are hard [to attain].'

Finlay attracted controversy during his career for his own alleged fascination with Nazi symbols, although he successfully sued a Paris-based magazine over its comments on the topic.

Finlay has also left another artistic legacy reflecting a Greek theme: the acclaimed Little Sparta garden located in the Pentland Hills (open to the public). It has been described as his greatest work of art.

AURELIUS STATUE

②

A striking modern sentinel on an ancient frontier

Lambhill Stables

11 Canal Bank North, G22 6RD



Tucked behind Lambhill Stables, where Glasgow's city edge meets the Forth & Clyde Canal, the monumental head installed in 2015 and seeming to gaze across the centuries is *Aurelius* – this striking public sculpture by Malcolm Robertson is one of Glasgow's most evocative 'secret' landmarks.

Most people stumble upon it by accident, to be confronted by a silent sentinel, a reminder of the city's ancient role as the northernmost frontier of the Roman Empire.

Aurelius is no ordinary sculpture. Towering and monolithic, it is positioned precisely on the line of the Antonine Wall, the turf and stone barrier constructed by the Romans in the mid-2nd century to mark the empire's northernmost reach. The wall once stretched nearly 64 km from the Firth of Forth to the Firth of Clyde, slicing through what are now the northern outskirts of Glasgow. Behind Lambhill Stables, the faint undulations of the ancient earthworks can still be traced and it is here that Robertson's giant head keeps watch.

Aurelius looks northward, across what the Romans called 'barbarian' territory. In antiquity, this was the land of the unconquered Caledonian tribes and the Romans built forts, milecastles and watchtowers right along the route of the Antonine Wall.

The Antonine Wall is named for Emperor Antoninus Pius (86–161). It was during Pius's reign that the wall was constructed over a 12-year period from 142. Aurelius is associated with another Roman emperor: Marcus Aurelius, who was the adopted son of Pius and succeeded him (co-ruling with Lucius Verus) when Pius died. Marcus Aurelius is remembered as a philosopher-king, the author of the *Meditations* and a ruler beset by border wars.

During his rule, the Antonine Wall was abandoned and Roman forces moved over 112 km south to Hadrian's Wall. This marked a new phase in Roman history – after this point, rulers focused on defending the empire, not expanding it. The Romans did come back here during the reign of Septimius Severus in around 208–211, but for only a short time.

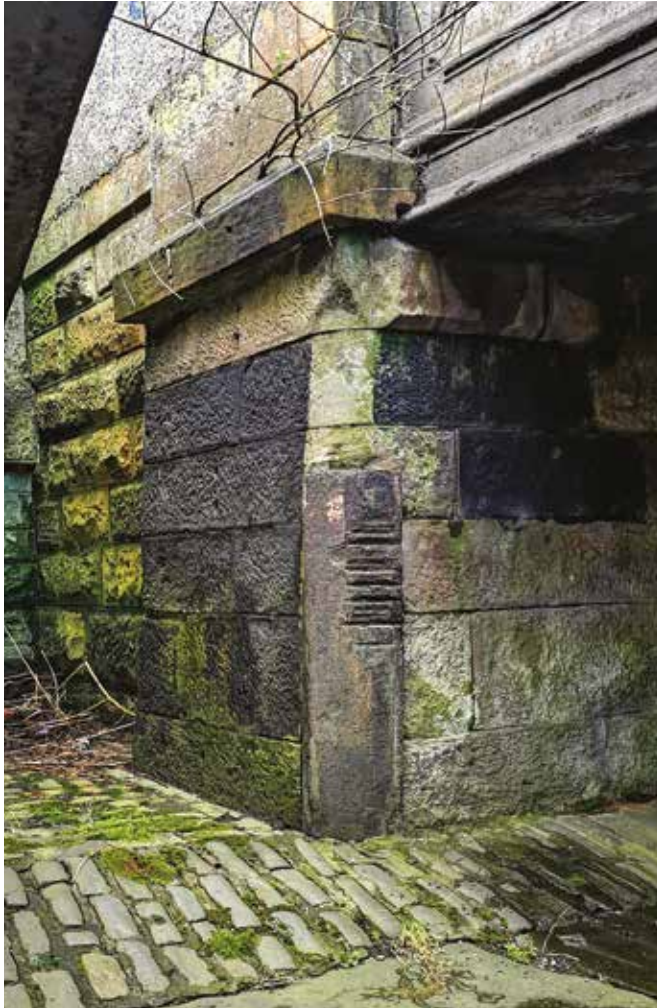
Other sites in or just outside Glasgow where you can see relics of the Antonine Wall and the Roman presence include, from east to west: Castlehill (the site of a Roman 'fortlet'), the bathhouse in Bearsden and a section of the Antonine Wall in Old Kilpatrick Cemetery. Distance slabs built by Roman soldiers, including one dug up at Castlehill, are also on show in the Hunterian Museum.

THE GROOVE MARKS OF MONKLAND CANAL

⑤

A relic of Glasgow's lost canal

*Pedestrian subway under Castle Street at Royston Road, G21 2QU
Visible at Summerlee Heritage Park (Coatbridge, ML5 1QD: daily, 10am–4pm)
or Drumpellier Park (Coatbridge, ML5 2EH: daily, 10.30am–7.30pm)*



Groove marks on a wall in a dark subway under Castle Street are a ghostly reminder of the Monkland Canal that used to stretch from Calderbank, near Airdrie, right into the heart of Glasgow at Townhead Basin. The marks were made by the ropes used by horses pulling barges along the canal.

The construction of the Monkland Canal was one of many Scottish engineering triumphs during the Industrial Revolution, though sadly much of the route has long been filled in, most now lying directly under the M8 motorway. However, remaining sections can still be seen in odd places like this subway, and in the Coatbridge area at Summerlee Heritage Park and Drumpellier Park.

Construction began in 1771 and the canal eventually ran for some 19 km. The purpose was to reduce the cost of transporting coal into Glasgow by bringing it in from the coalfields of Monkland. It was later connected by the 'cut of the junction' to the much larger Forth and Clyde Canal, which ran across the middle of Scotland.

Engineer James Watt, whose improvements to the steam engine were arguably the single most important contribution to the Industrial Revolution, supervised the initial construction of the canal although his involvement was short-lived. For years, construction was blighted by lack of funds and it took a quarter of a century to complete.

Those who backed the original plan could not have foreseen the railway revolution that occurred during the 19th century and which impacted many canal routes.

Despite competition from the new railways, the Monkland was still the most profitable canal in Scotland by 1837 – much of this was due to the development of ironworks in Coatbridge that created a huge demand not only for coal but also for a means to transport iron ore and pig iron cheaply.

The golden era for the Monkland Canal was in the mid-19th century, when over 1 million tonnes of coal a year were moved along the water. It was later taken over by the Forth & Clyde Canal Company before being sold on to the Caledonian Railway Company. The latter was primarily concerned with investing in its railway and the Monkland Canal grew increasingly irrelevant as other forms of transport became cheaper and quicker.

The canal finally closed in the mid-20th century and during the 1960s most of it was filled in. This provided a convenient route for the M8 motorway to be built on. As a result, there are only a few remaining sections of Glasgow's 'lost' canal, the most substantial remains being visible in Summerlee and Drumpellier parks.

DENNISTOUN MILESTONE SCULPTURE

A forgotten time capsule

Duke Street (opp. junction with Annbank Street), G31 1QZ
Bellgrove train station

⑥



Every day, locals stand at the bus stop by the *Dennistoun Milestone* and fail to notice this strange sculpture that has been likened to Darth Vader. Commissioned by Dennistoun Community Council to celebrate the city's status as 1990 European City of Culture, the monument was created by Jim Buckley (b. 1957), a prominent sculptor from Cork who spent many years working and living in Scotland, including lecturing at the Glasgow School of Art and founding the Glasgow Sculpture Studios.

In Buckley's own words, 'The *Milestone* is intended to be a marker. The scale is small and intimate so as to function as an indicator of a "sense of place" – and to be a shrine or time capsule of the past and a monument to the future.' Its unusual abstract features were inspired by the design of a typical Glasgow tenement with its stair turrets and windows. Inside, Buckley placed a time capsule with local objects of interest and a written account of tenement life.

Buckley's sculpture was one of seven intended 'Glasgow Milestones' planned for the city as European City of Culture. The Dennistoun version was unveiled by the Lord Provost of Glasgow in September 1991. It remains one of the city's most unusual yet little-known pieces of public art.

STEPHEN MILLAR AND GILLIAN LONEY



SECRET GLASGOW

AN UNUSUAL GUIDE

A beautiful garden inside a hospital, a staircase once celebrated by Einstein, the remains of a workhouse and a Roman wall, a lost burn and a reminder of the Spanish Civil War, a stranded column in the Clyde and a Celtic gravestone, a derelict railway platform, a stone that flew over the Irish Sea, the burial place of a Scot who became an American hero and mysterious etchings on a cathedral wall ...

Glasgow is full of hidden treasures that many residents go past without realising their significance. This is an indispensable guide for anyone who thought they knew the city well but would like to discover its hidden face.

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