

West End Women's Heritage Walk



Meet the ancestors...

West End Women's Heritage Walk

Determined, committed and inspiring women have shaped Glasgow's history from its beginnings, but their story is often not told. Join us on a journey to celebrate some of their achievements.

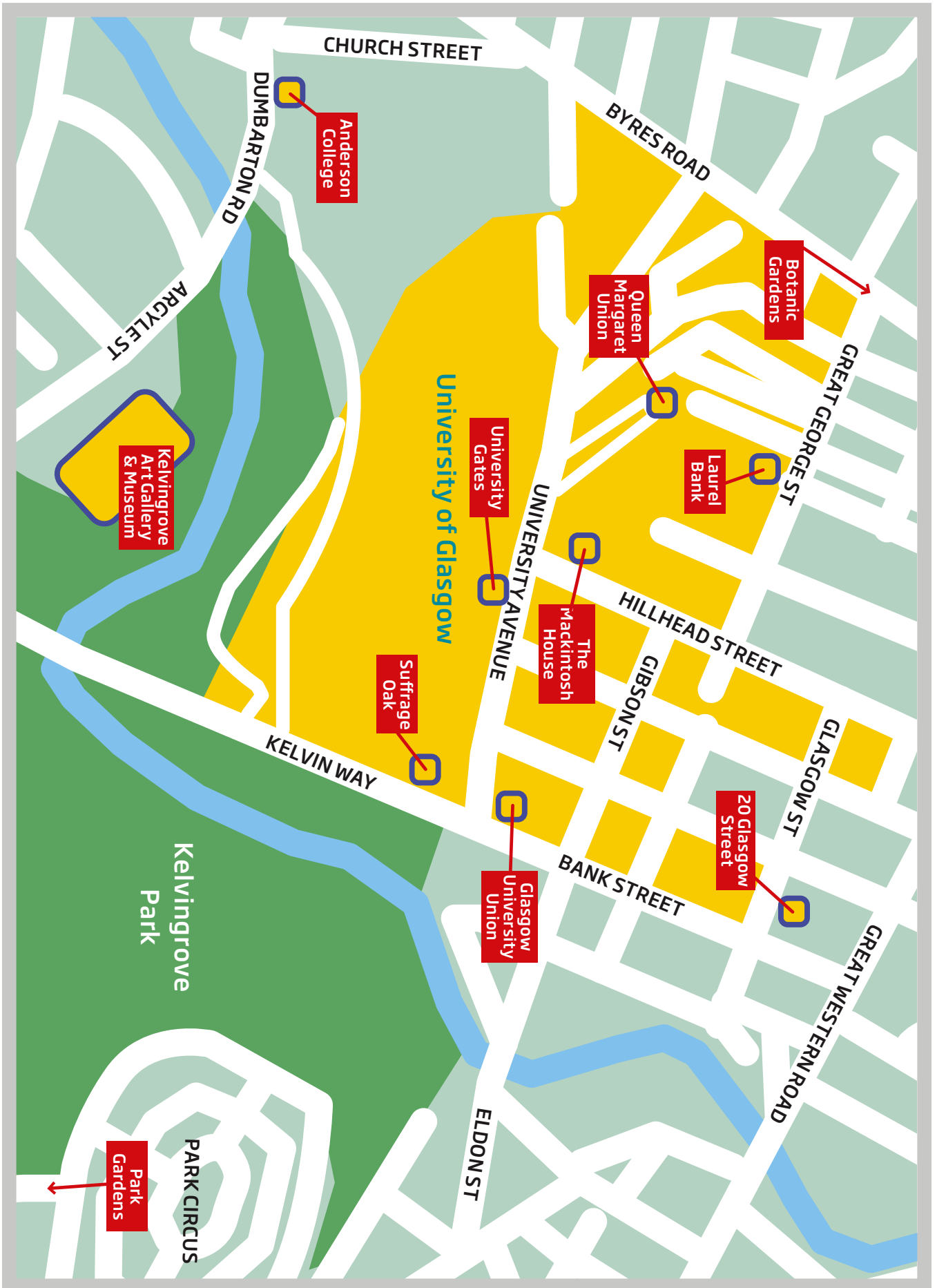
This trail guide will take us around the West End, following in the footsteps of women who have a connection to the area through work, protest and education. Glasgow Women's Library made history itself by creating this guided walking tour in 2007; the first one to focus on the pioneering women of the city. Our trail will follow that route.

There are additional stops outwith the marked walk to explore if you wish. Depending on your pace and whether you get distracted by the museums, cafés or other watering holes on the route, the walk should take about an hour and a half; it is quite a gentle wander.

So get your walking shoes on and come and meet the anisters!



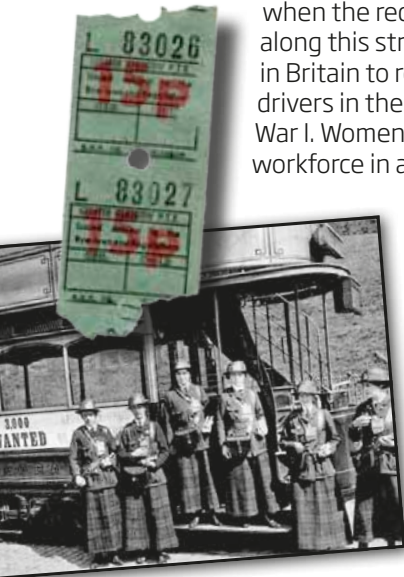
Route map



OUR WALK BEGINS in the shadow of **Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery.**

The museum houses works by the Glasgow Girls, women working in art and design between 1880 and 1920. If you complete the loop, you can return to the museum and look inside. For now though, let's walk from here along Argyle Street with the tower of Glasgow University on your right.

Use your imagination to go back in time when the red trams rumbled their way along this street. Glasgow was the first city in Britain to recruit female conductors and drivers in the place of men during World War I. Women provided a flexible and cheap workforce in a time of austerity. These women were the forerunners of the inimitable force that was the Glasgow 'Clippie'.



Let's wander on and look at some significant buildings on our route. After the Maggie's Centre and the Western Infirmary on your right you'll come across a set of gates, if they are open use the opportunity to get away from the bustling road. Look above the modern glass entrance

and you'll see faded lettering. You

can almost make out the name - **Anderson College.** The Anderson was initially founded to rival Glasgow University with the aims of making education more accessible. In the first 3 years of the college almost half of the 1000 students were women.

Women were not allowed to matriculate at any Scottish university until 1892, some 400 years after Glasgow University was founded. Trailblazing Marion Gilchrist was the first woman to graduate from Glasgow, doing so in 1894 with a high commendation in medicine.



Come back out to Dumbarton Road. Even the noise of today's buses bumping along the road wouldn't have drowned out the sounds coming from the shipyards. In peacetime the yards were generally a male domain, with one unforgettable exception.

Pipe smoking Rachel Johnston (above) was a well kent face in Partick. She broke boundaries by working as a labourer in the shipyards and as a special constable during riots in 1875.

Partick saw more dissent during the Great War. Not only against the war itself, but also against unscrupulous landlords trying to squeeze more money out their tenants. Helen Crawford (right) played a major role in both protest movements. As Secretary of the Glasgow Women's Housing Association she was instrumental in rallying and co-ordinating support for those who were at risk from eviction because of rent increases.



She made a rousing speech on the issue, and described how "the fight was essentially a women's fight". When evictions were attempted, members of the community clanged and banged all manner of kitchen equipment to rally the troops. Food and choice words were thrown at the sheriff's officers to ward them off.

On the 17th of November 1915 a massive demonstration weaved its way along the city streets and on to the Glasgow Sheriff's Court. We think the march came along this route.



Now, turn right up **Church Street**, the red sandstone building on your left is one of the many monuments to education in the West End. Church Street Primary opened in 1903. In the same year, Miss Hannah Watson and Miss Janet Spens, both Glasgow University graduates, established a private school for girls, **Laurel Bank**, on Great George Street.

Let's continue onwards and up Byres Road. Whilst researching the project we looked at businesses owned by women on this West End thoroughfare around 1900. Mrs McHoul ran a laundry at number 83; Miss Robson was a stationer and tobacconist at 101; and Mrs and Miss Simpson had a dressmakers at 115. The history of these working women is as fascinating and valuable as that of the graduates and suffragettes of the area.



Cross the road and bear right along University Avenue. In 2000 the Student's Representative Council Women's Group were up early to change the names on university buildings to honour past women graduates. A number of buildings were renamed, including the concrete monolith on your left, the Boyd Orr building, which recognised the astute politician Mary Hamilton. Bold suffragettes Frances McPhun and Dorothea Chalmers Smith also were amongst the honoured. Both these woman had earned hunger strike medals from the Women's Social and Political Union for their role in the battle for the vote.

Make your way around the Boyd Orr building, up the steps, and around the cabins. Hang right and go up these steps. This should take you out at the **Queen Margaret Union**, the former "ladies union" of the University. Since settling into this building in the 1960s, the Union has leaned towards activism and radicalism. Both it and its counterpart further





down
University Avenue
– the Glasgow
University Union,
were among the last
single sex student
unions in Britain. The QMU led the mixing campaign in the
politicised late 1970s. Debates raged and passions ran
high over the issue. The QMU subverted the old structure
of the unions in 1979 by admitting its first male member.

With the Union behind you, walk along University
Gardens. The path left will take you up and round to
the shell of Laurel Bank
if you choose to follow
it. Otherwise follow the
route round till you reach
University Avenue and the
gilded gates. See if you
can spot the sole female
commemorated here.

The achievements
of three women, Jessie
Campbell, Janet Galloway
and Isabella Elder, (the
woman on the gate), are
celebrated on the memorial
window in Bute Hall.
Without the phenomenal
efforts of this trio, educational opportunities for women
in Glasgow in the late 19th and early 20th century would
have been radically different.

Merbei Ardesir Vakil (above) was the first Indian woman
to graduate from the university in 1897, and female firsts
are still being achieved here: 2004 saw Andrea Nolan
appointed to the position of Vice Principal.



Come back out from the
University main building
and onto University
Avenue. You can see the
round reading room across
from you. Interestingly,
parts of it were still gender
segregated until the
1950s.

The street to the right of
the reading room is South-
park Avenue. Number 78
(**the Mackintosh House**)

reared in the Hunterian Art
Gallery back on Hillhead Street. It was the home of Marga-
ret Macdonald Mackintosh. An incredible artistic force in
her own right, her talents have often been overshadowed
by those of her husband Charles.

Beyond Southpark Avenue is Glasgow Street. Number
20 has a special significance. As a member of the
British Red Cross Stella Reekie was one of
the first nurses to arrive in Belsen,
and witnessed the atrocities that
prejudice can cause. She eventually
returned to Glasgow, where her
home became an international



hub. Dedicated to supporting those in need and
promoting understanding, she pioneered the interfaith
movement in the city.

If you took this detour return to University Avenue and
make your way to the bottom of the hill. Across the road
you'll see the fortress like **Glasgow University Union**.
Now open to all students, the Union's former incarnation
as the "men's union" seems long since past. The all-male
Beer Bar of the GUU was stormed by a group of male and
female 'pro-mixers' in early 1979 Somewhat grudgingly
the Union eventually voted to admit women into
membership the following year.

Now, onto our final stop. Turn right onto the leafy
Kelvinway, and continue for 50 yards or so. On your right
you will see an unassuming brass plaque, and a mighty
oak behind it. This is the **Suffrage
Oak**, planted in 1918 to
celebrate women's first
opportunity to vote in a
general election.

We've mentioned
some of Glasgow
suffragettes during our
walk. Militant campaign
tactics, including window
smashing, hunger
striking, attacking post
boxes and fire raising
were not the
practice of all who wanted the vote, but the approach
certainly drew attention to the cause.



The West End was rocked on the morning of 24th
January 1914. Twenty seven panes of glass from the
Kibble Palace in the **Botanic Gardens** (at the top of
Byres Road) were broken by a bomb, allegedly planted
by suffragette militants. Evidence of this being the
impression of high-heeled ladies shoes in the soft ground
and a lady's black silk scarf found nearby!

Just through the park Dorothea Chalmers Smith was
caught red handed trying to set fire to an empty house at
6 Park Gardens. The suffrage movement wasn't only
the preserve of university graduates – Jessie Stephen, a
domestic servant, perpetrated acid attacks on post boxes,
but was never caught.

Perhaps Helen Crawford, Dorothea Chalmers Smith,
Jessie Stephen and Frances McPhun stood here and
watched as the acorn was planted. Let's stop to reflect on
those incredible women we've talked about on the way
round, to think about how their achievements affect us
today and to bring our walk to a close.

We hope you've enjoyed your journey of discovery
around the West End. We've only just scratched the
surface of women's heritage in the area. We'd love to
think we've inspired you to find out more ...

Image Credits:
Badges & anti-Suffragette postcards:
GWL Archives
Ticket: Glasgow Museums
Helen Crawford: Gallacher Memorial Library, Glasgow Caledonian University Archives
Hunger strike medal, Tram drivers, Big Rachel: Glasgow Museums photo library
Cartoon: Awful Mag (student magazine) Glasgow University Archives
University women, newspaper clipping: Glasgow University Archives



Produced by *Glasgow Women's Library's*
'Women Make History' project

About Glasgow Women's Library

Glasgow Women's Library (GWL), established in 1991, is a unique organisation in Scotland and is a key information hub on women and gender. It has an exciting lifelong learning programme and dedicated projects including Adult Literacy & Numeracy and Black & Minority Ethnic women's programmes. It hosts a range of cultural events that aim to broaden public knowledge on women and women's history.

Women Make History

This is the GWL's women's history project. Volunteers have been involved in the research, design and delivery of pioneering Women's Heritage Walking tours in Glasgow. Other aspects of the groups' work includes talks, recording the histories of living heroines, tour guiding, training and ongoing women's history detective work.

How to get involved

Glasgow's women's history is still largely hidden. There are many ways to get involved in helping GWL and Women Make History. Why not become a women's history detective? Or maybe help us research and deliver our tours? You could even sponsor a shelf in our future home at Glasgow's Mitchell Library and dedicate it to one of Glasgow's lost heroines. You may have information you think could be added to this tour or some suggestions on how it could be improved.

How to contact us

To find out more about Women Make History or our guided tour dates, visit our website: www.womenslibrary.org.uk, email us at info@womenslibrary.org.uk or telephone **0141 552 8345**.

With the assistance of:



This trail was developed by the Glasgow Women's Library 'Women Make History' group. Researched and compiled by Kirsty Hood. Designed by Ian Corcoran. © GWL 2009