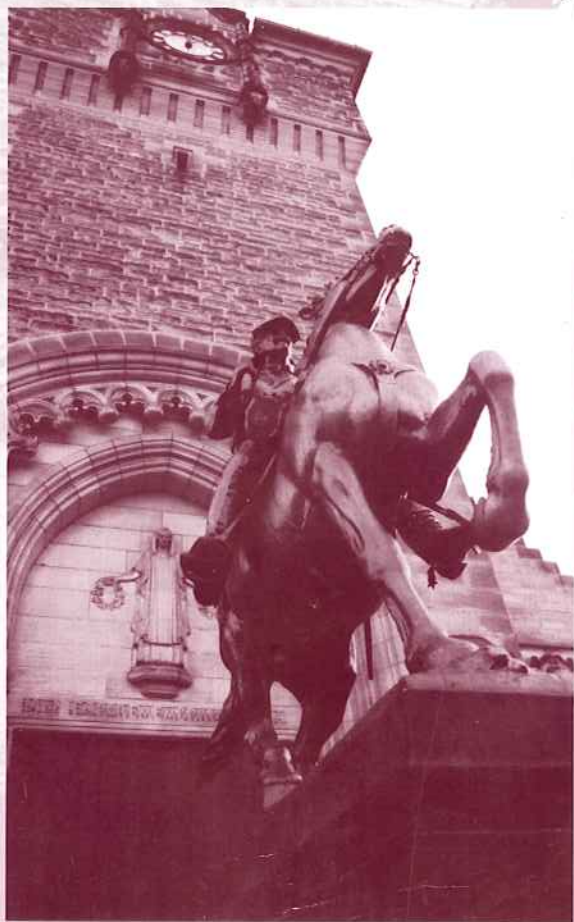




# Galashiels

*Town Trail Guide*





## INTRODUCTION

The Galashiels Town Trail has been set up by Scottish Borders Council in conjunction with the Old Gala Club and Scottish Borders Tourist Board. The aim is to provide you with an added dimension to local history and a flavour of the town's development.

The name Galashiels is a mix of two words. *Gwala*, which forms the first part probably, comes from Old English language and means "full stream". *Shiel*, meaning "shelter", derives from a Scandinavian language. This was the "shelters by the full stream" where hunters and foresters found shelter by the river. Galashiels is known to locals simply as Gala.

The Trail is split into two parts. The main walk is 4.5km (2¾ miles) long and should take 2 hours to complete. The extended walk, being approximately 3km (1½ miles) long, should take about 1 hour to complete. Those with less time to spare may wish to reduce this by referring to the map in the centre pages.

In order to guide you, numbered plaques are situated along the route at specific points of interest. Information relating to them can be found within this leaflet. As some of the sites along the Trail are houses, we would ask you to respect the owners' privacy.

We hope you will enjoy walking the Town Trail and trust that you will have a pleasant stay in Galashiels.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Built around the Gala Water (a tributary of the Tweed) the town of Galashiels lies in a shallow valley. Until the late 18th century Galashiels was little more than a village. Unlike other Border towns, Galashiels was not subject to the ravages of warfare on a regular basis, did not have an abbey and was not a frequent haunt of royalty. This is not to say that the town is devoid of history.

The nearby Abbey and village of Melrose were granted charters by King David I (1124-53) and King William I (1165-1214) in which land near the Gala Water is mentioned, possibly where the Old Town was built. In 1622, a new church was constructed at Galashiels and the parish name was changed to Galashiels.

Chronicled in the historical document Scalacronica is an event which is important to the history of the town. The valley of the Gala Water was a route used by English armies heading north and in 1337 an English force made their way towards Edinburgh to relieve the besieged garrison in the castle. According to local tradition they encamped near Galashiels. A party of English soldiers had become separated from the main force and was gathering wild plums. They were discovered by the locals who surprised and slew them.

During 1544 the villages of Buckholm and Gala were burned by the English, as were many other Border towns. The following year the Scots rallied around the Earl of Arran (acting as Regent) prior to their victory over the English at Ancrum Moor near Jedburgh. This led to further violent reprisals.

The Industrial Revolution and the coming of the railway transformed Galashiels from a village into a thriving town. From 1771, land within the town was feued and factories built. Gradually houses were built on each bank of the Gala Water. In 1844 the North British Railway (NBR) company began work on a railway from Edinburgh and this was completed in 1849. The line was initially called the "Border Union" but was renamed the "Waverley Route" in honour of Sir Walter Scott. More than 100 years later, Galashiels was a victim of the Beeching Review of the rail network and the Waverley Route was eventually closed in 1969.

Today Galashiels is the second largest town in the Borders with a population of approximately 14,000. It may not, at first glance, be as historic as other neighbouring towns but this is a living and developing community which has more to offer and surprise the visitor than may be expected.

## GALASHIELS TOWN TRAIL

Start the Galashiels Town Trail at the Tourist Information Centre in St John Street, named after the kirk which used to occupy the site now containing sheltered housing on the other side of the road. Head up St John Street towards Scott Park, passing on your right the former masonic hall with the stone rope over the door and then the Hayward Scout Centre. Originally built for the "Good Templars" in the 1870s, money from the Hayward Trust<sup>1</sup> was used to purchase the hall in the 1980s for the Scouts. This area of the town was constructed in the 1870s to provide housing due to an increase in the town's population. In order to build the houses, a culvert was formed to take the Baker's Burn which emerges at the fountain in Cornmill Square. Continue up St John Street.

**SCOTT PARK (1).** Enter the Park and note the ornate cast iron gates and railings. On the left is the lodge house which was built in 1881 as the entrance lodge for New Gala House. This is quite grand with its crowstep gables, tall chimneys and entrance porch. Bear right along the drive which is also part of the Southern Upland Way. The park is named after the Scott family who gifted the land to the town in 1939. New Gala House was built in 1872 for the Scott family as a replacement for Old Gala House. It is ironic that Old Gala House has outlasted its newer namesake which was demolished in 1985. The ground around the site is well wooded and within minutes you feel as if you are in the countryside, even although the town is just a short distance away. Today, the Gala Policies have become a popular walk with locals for this very reason and there is a rich variety of wildlife in the Policies.

<sup>1</sup>The Hayward Trust was established with money which Provost Hayward gifted to Gala in his will.

Every weekday during the school year pupils of Galashiels Academy walk through the park to go to school. The Academy was founded as a private school in 1861 in Bridge Place, although this was not the first school (a parish school was opened in Galashiels in 1696). During 1870 it moved to Croft Street and even though this was later extended, it still proved to be inadequate. In 1910 the Academy moved to Oaklea, a house on Melrose Road which was converted into a school building. The number of pupils continued to grow and, in 1964 the Academy relocated to its present site. The Melrose Road site was then taken over by Borders College.

Exit the park through the gates into Livingstone Place, noticing the local swimming pool on the left which opened in 1984 and should you have time, you can enjoy a relaxing swim there. The laminated timber structure of the building and the pool having two shallow ends, with a deeper centre, make the design worthy of note. At the end of Livingstone Place, turn right again into Scott Street and continue past the park gates to Scott Crescent. Notice, behind the high wall on your left, Gala Bowling Club with the pavilion overlooking the green.

**OLD GALA HOUSE (2).** Adjacent to the Bowling Club is Old Gala House. In 1455 the Douglas family had grown too powerful for the liking of King James II (1437-1460). They were stripped of their power and the Earl was charged with treason but their followers were allowed to retain their land. The Pringle family (originally called Hoppringle) had been supporters of the Douglases and they had their lands confirmed by the King. They built a tower in 1457, sections of which were later incorporated into the building you see here, which dates from 1583. The family owned the house until

1632, when Sir James Pringle found himself in financial difficulties and left Gala for the family home of Smailholm Tower near Kelso where he died three years later.

The house passed from the Pringles into the ownership of the Scott family through the marriage of Jean, Sir James's daughter, to Hugh Scott. In 1745, a division of Bonnie Prince Charlie's army visited Galashiels. Although the Prince was not present, the officer commanding the division was entertained at Old Gala House by Lady Scott. During his life Sir Walter Scott was a frequent visitor to Old Gala House as he was friendly with Captain Scott of Gala. The Scotts of Galashiels stayed here until 1876, when they moved to New Gala House.



The house was extended in the 18th and 19th century to its present form, although at one time there was an entrance porch. Today, Old Gala House is a museum with information and displays about the house and its occupants as well as the town and local artists and can be visited free of charge. You can see artefacts from some of the historic buildings of the Old Town, such as the weather vane from the old Tolbooth and the original shaft from the Mercat Cross. One of the rooms has a painted ceiling dating from 1635 which was covered over for many years and rediscovered in the middle of the 20th century. This commemorates the remodelling of the house by Jean Pringle and

Hugh Scott, whose initials can be seen on the ceiling. You should also note the plaster ceiling dating from the 18th century in the Christopher Boyd Gallery.

The Galashiels Arts Club was fortunate enough to be able to purchase the house in 1949 for their use, later passing ownership to Scottish Borders Council. It is now used on a regular basis for art exhibitions. In the summer, students from the Borders Campus of Heriot-Watt University attend a reception here after their graduation ceremony in Old Parish & St Paul's Church. The house and gardens are also popular venues for weddings and wedding photographs.

Cross Scott Crescent and walk uphill towards Old Parish & St Paul's Church.

**OLD PARISH & ST PAUL'S CHURCH (3).** This impressive church building, on top of a small knoll held its first service in November 1881 to the accompaniment of organ music and was built to provide additional accommodation for the expanding congregation of the Parish Church by the Mercat Cross. The Parish Church closed in 1931 and the congregation combined with St Paul's.



The red sandstone for the building came from the Belses Quarry near Ancrum to the south east. The quarry was close to the railway line and the stone would have been easily transported the 16km (10 miles) to Galashiels. The transport of the large polished granite columns, which support the high roof inside the church, would have caused more of a problem as they came from Peterhead in Aberdeenshire. The towering 57m (190 feet) high spire was damaged in a gale in 1888 but repaired shortly afterwards. If you look up you can see a gargoyle at each corner of the spire. The porch on the front (designed by the architect Peter Macgregor Chalmers) was added as a memorial to the two sons of a local manufacturer, William Schulze, who both died near Amiens in the First World War. The figure of Christ above the door is an exact copy of the one at Amiens Cathedral. The hall to the side was added in 1927. The minister of the time - Dr Langlands - was an avid badminton player and decided on the dimensions of the hall by pacing out the size of two badminton courts. The church has some fine stained glass windows dating from the late 19th and early 20th century. Continue along Scott Crescent until you reach the Mercat Cross.

**THE TOLBOOTH, HALL & MERCAT CROSS (4).** On Scott Crescent near the Mercat Cross stood the Tolbooth and the 'Pant Well'. In Scottish market towns, the tolbooth was the building in which monies were paid by traders attending the markets. The Tolbooth in Galashiels was probably built in 1599 when Galashiels became a Burgh of Barony. Prior to 1617, the Tolbooth was used as a place of worship and as a dancing school. Those who fell foul of the law also saw the Tolbooth at close quarters, as it was used as a prison for the Manorial Court of Galashiels. Originally there was a clock and a bell contained within a tower but

the clock was removed to the parish church. Unfortunately, the bell has since been lost. The building was demolished in 1880 as it was in danger of falling down. The weather vane from the top of the Tolbooth can now be seen in Old Gala House.

The 'Pant Well' was once located to the left of the shop and was one of the public wells supplying drinking water to the locals. Such wells were common in Galashiels until the latter stages of the 19th century. Even though the water from these wells was frequently unfit for drinking and outbreaks of disease occurred as a result, the townspeople were against installing a piped supply. Matters were not helped by town councillors who were opposed to the introduction of pipes. The government eventually compelled the Burgh Council to provide a secure water supply in 1879 but it was not until 1907 that the Secretary of State for Scotland forced the Town Council to install a piped sewage system.

The manufacture of cloth has been important to Galashiels for many years and in 1666 the weavers of the town formed a corporation to promote their trade. The Corporation dissolved in 1875, by which time the mills (where most of the weavers worked) had made the cottage weaving industry uneconomic. The Galashiels Manufacturers' Corporation was established in 1777, followed a year later by the Dyers' Corporation. In 1791 the first mill in Scotland with mechanical carding machines was constructed in Galashiels. There was a massive increase in the quantity and quality of cloth being produced as a result of such mechanisation.

The Cloth Hall (on the right hand side of the road) was constructed in response to this. Here was a centre for the trade of cloth produced by the early mechanised textile

industry. Without this building, trade from Gala would not have been as strong as it became. The Hall opened for business on 30 July 1792 and was an instant success. The cost of the building was met by subscription and the local minister, Dr Robert Douglas<sup>2</sup> gave a loan of £1000. Each member of the Manufacturers' Association was allocated a shelf and charged an annual rent for this space.



In 1813, the Hall became a public house and later a bank. Today the Hall has been subdivided to form private flats. After the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, there was a depression in the woollen industry. The depression hit Galashiels badly and in 1827 the town was described as being "in a most disastrous condition". Sir Walter Scott and some of his friends visited London wearing trousers made from Shepherd's Tartan, the material became an instant fashion success and trade in the material increased.

In the 1830s, Gala became a distribution point throughout the Borders for coal carted from the Lothian coal fields (for many years, the tenants of Gala paid their rent by carting coal). This coal enabled steam power to be introduced to the mills in 1836 and cloth production increased. The arrival of the railway in 1849 helped to boost trade again as producers could transport their goods to customers with great ease.

<sup>2</sup>Dr Douglas sold his estate called Cartley Hole to Sir Walter Scott who then remodelled and renamed it Abbotsford.

The Mercat Cross was the traditional symbol of a Scottish village or town's trading status and was the focus of much social interaction. A Cross has occupied this site, almost uninterrupted since 1599 when the town was granted Burgh of Barony status. The Cross originally stood on a circular base with a flight of steps and a projecting balcony. It was removed in 1820 and put back in its present form in 1867 with the aid of funds from a public subscription. The Cross was restored in 1887 and a section of the original shaft can be seen in Old Gala House.

It was near here that an Act of Sasine relating to the marriage of James IV and Margaret Tudor took place, an act which is commemorated annually in the Braw Lads' Gathering in late June. On the Saturday of the Gathering, a stone and turf from Torwoodlee Tower (the seat of the Pringles of Torwoodlee) are handed over, symbolising the gift of the lands of Ettrick Forest by King James IV to Margaret Tudor in 1503. Their marriage eventually led to the Union of the Crowns of Scotland and England one hundred years later. The Act of Sasine, or the granting of legal possession of feudal property, is still enshrined in Scots Law for property transactions. The plaques which depict James IV and Margaret Tudor were designed in the 1930s by George Hope Tait and commemorate their marriage.

Over the road is Church Square, modern housing designed by the well known architect Peter Womersley which is typical of the style of architecture of the early 1960s. The Old Parish Church was demolished in 1960 to make way for the flats, leaving only the name of the development to remind people that there was once a place of worship here. In 1963, the Saltire Society adjudged the scheme the best local authority housing completed in Scotland that year.

The flats directly across from Church Square were designed in the same style as Womersley's scheme but lack the strength of design which they would have obtained had they been by the same hand. They were built on the site of the Baron Baillie's house and garden. The Baron Baillie acted as the constable and legal agent for the Lairds of Gala right up to the early 19th century. On the side wall at Elm Row you can see a carved stone and a stone tablet. The stone was brought to Galashiels from Edinburgh by Sir Walter Scott; it had previously been built into the Tolbooth of the City (the castle is the traditional heraldic symbol for Edinburgh) and was saved when the Tolbooth was demolished. An inscription records that Scott carried out banking near here.

Walk up Elm Row and turn left along Tea Street which is opposite the entrance to Galashiels Academy.

**TEA STREET (5).** The houses on the right hand side of Tea Street were built in the late 17th century<sup>3</sup>. Looking at them, you will see that the line of the roofs and eaves are constant but the ground level, door and window heads vary in height, the most



<sup>3</sup> One of the houses was replaced by a modern house which matches the others in style in the 1970s.

exaggerated case being the house at the eastern end of the row. Until the 17th century, most Scottish domestic buildings were thatched. In 1681, an Act of Parliament was passed which stipulated that new roofs should be covered with 'lead, slate, scailzie<sup>4</sup> or tile and no otherwise'. This was in an attempt to stop a fire in one building spreading to those close by. The houses in Tea Street were originally thatched - notice how steeply pitched the roofs are - and this was still in evidence on the houses in 1930.

Near the junction of Tea Street and the lane called School Close there used to stand Hunter's Ha<sup>5</sup>, a strong tower with walls two metres (almost seven feet) thick which served as a Royal Hunting Lodge. It is said to have been erected in the 14th century by the Douglas family who held sway over much of the Borders. When they were stripped of their lands and power in 1455, the tower was claimed by the Crown. It then became a mini armoury for the storage and repair of cannon and other guns used in Border wars and was locally known as the 'King's Fortalice'. The building later became the residence of the Gala Estate Forester and remained so until 1813. Parts of the tower were then incorporated into the new parish school building, although most was demolished in 1816 for safety. The school itself was demolished shortly before the Second World War to allow new houses to be built. This also created a new road called Glebe Place.

Continue along Glebe<sup>5</sup> Place to the junction of Church Street. Immediately in front of you is a terrace of houses. Behind the houses is an area known as the Bow Butts. This is where the men of Galashiels used to practice archery and may date from the 15th century. A decree made by King James IV (1488-

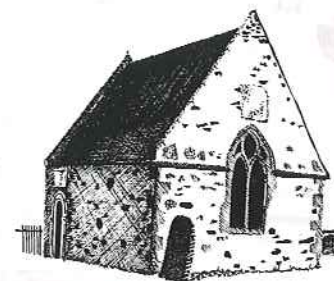
<sup>4</sup> scailzie, pronounced 'scailyie' - stone shingles.

<sup>5</sup> glebe - a portion of land assigned to the parish minister

1513) required that all men of military age were to practice archery in order that they could be called upon in times of conflict. Well before this law was passed, both William Wallace and King Robert I made use of archers from the area during the Wars of Independence. As you walk along Church Street the Old Burial Ground is on your left. Behind the high wall on the right is "The Grange" (the old name for an abbey farm) which was at one time the manse for the church.

**OLD BURIAL GROUND (6).** Once the site of a church which was built in 1617, the Old Burial Ground has many old memorials, the oldest of which dates back to 1679. Here you will find a simple tombstone which is detailed with a wheel and an angel with an axe. This is said to be the grave of the first wheelwright in Gala. Within the grounds is the family tomb of Mungo Park, the Borders-born explorer of Africa.

Here also is the Gala Aisle, built in 1636 by Captain Hugh Scott of Gala who served in the Scots army which was allied to the



English Parliamentarians in the English Civil War of the 1640s. He returned to Gala in 1644 where he died, possibly as a result of battle wounds. The Aisle was to the side of the main kirk building and there may have been one of similar size opposite. When the kirk was demolished in 1813, the side walls

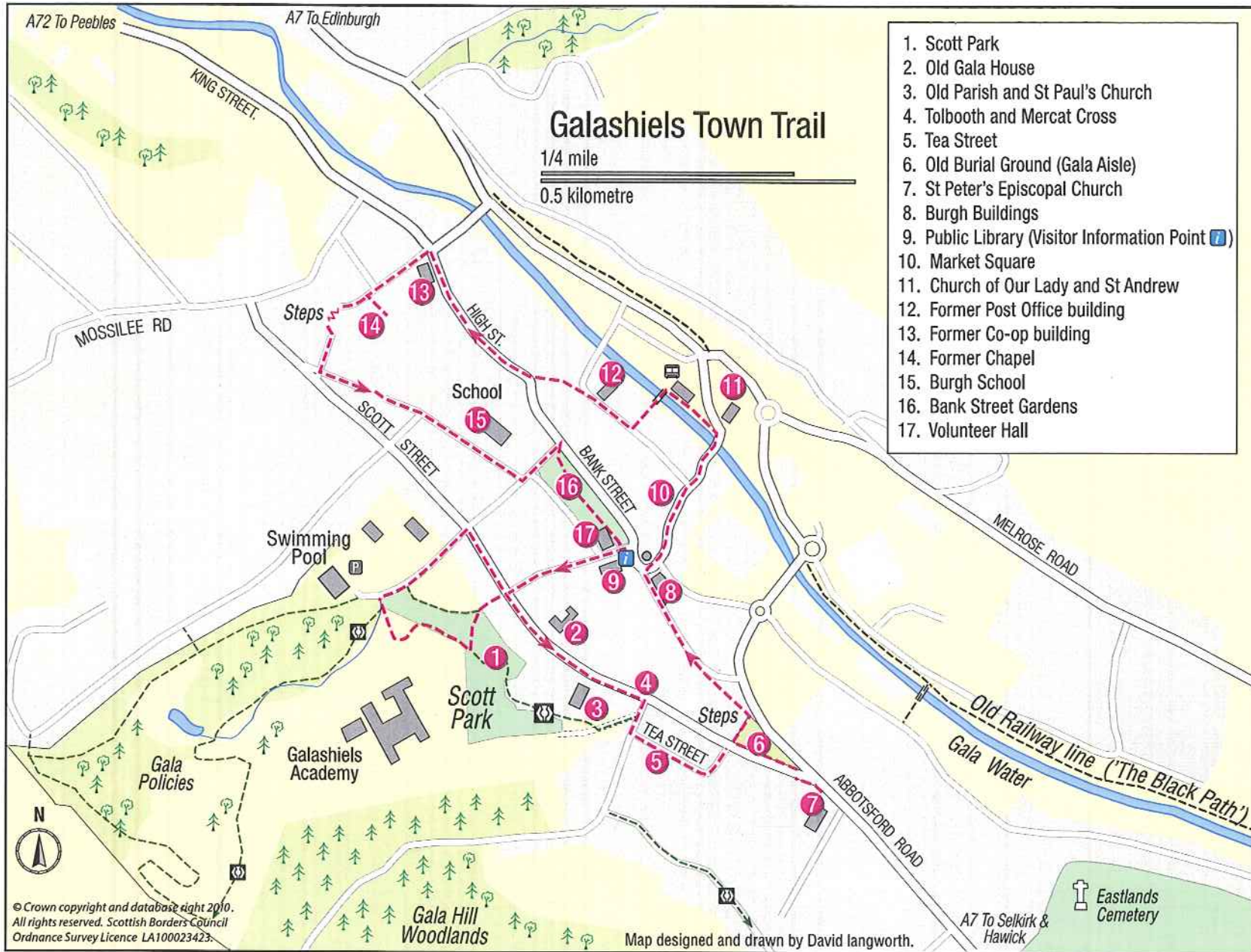
of the Aisle were increased by roughly two metres (almost seven feet) and the end closed off with a wall and gothic window. There is a memorial within the Aisle to the Parish Minister, Mark Duncan, who was killed at the Battle of Dunbar in 1651 while opposing Cromwell's advance into Scotland. The tablet above the window originally had the inscription

"GLORIE . TO . GOD . IN . HEVIN  
PEACE . IN . EARTH . &  
GVDVIL . AMONG . MEN"

In the late 1820s there was a gruesome trade in dead bodies (known as body snatching) which were supplied to the Medical School in Edinburgh. This was the period of Burke and Hare and the locals were determined that their graveyard would not be robbed. They organised themselves into armed patrols to keep watch over the graves. Although William Burke lived for a while in Peebles, there is no evidence that he and his partner visited Galashiels to carry out their grim work.

To the right of the Old Burial Ground is St Peter's Episcopal Church and School.

**ST PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH & SCHOOL (7).** Set a short distance back from Abbotsford Road, this whinstone church was constructed during 1853 in the Early English Style. The land on which it was built was gifted to the Scottish Episcopal Church by the Scotts of Gala. There is a memorial in the church to Major Henry Scott, the last direct descendant of the family. He died in 1940 during the defence of Calais whilst in command of the 60th Rifles. This desperate defence allowed a great many allied soldiers to be evacuated from Dunkirk. The east window of the church has fine stained glass depicting the crucifixion. The hall to the right was added in 1891.



The school, built in 1859, catered for over 200 children from the surrounding area. To provide better teaching conditions a new building was opened in 1938 on Parsonage Road a short distance to the east. The old school finally closed in the late 1960s when additional classrooms were added to the 1930s school. The old school building is now the Galashiels office of the Scottish Borders Council Social Work Department.

*For those who wish to extend their walk, see the map and points of interest at the rear of the Town Trail Guide, starting at point 18.*

Return towards the town centre down Albert Place. On the left at the bottom of the road is Lawyers' Brae (at one time called The Loan) where you see the Public Library and on the right are the Burgh Buildings.

**BURGH BUILDINGS (8).** This was the site of the house of the Gala Estate's miller. Dated 1867 and built at a cost of £2200, the original Burgh Building is the two storey block beside the clock tower. The tower (which looks like a Borders tower house) and War Memorial were added in 1924-27 to a design by Sir Robert Lorimer. The statue is by Thomas Clapperton - a local sculptor and



artist about whom a small exhibition is to be found in Old Gala House - and depicts a 17th century mounted Border soldier. Behind the statue, on bronze tablets are the names of those who died in the two World Wars. The sculpture of Peace was carved by local sculptor David Sutherland. Every evening at eight o'clock the clock chimes out the first bar of the town song, 'Braw, Braw Lads'. These bells were gifted to the town by the Cochrane family whose two sons were killed in the First World War and whose names you can find on the tablets.

On your left, at the bottom of Lawyers' Brae, is a bust of Robert Burns which dates from 1912 and is by F.W. Doyle-Jones. Burns wrote a new version of 'Braw, Braw Lads'. The song itself is a rewrite of an earlier piece and the chorus is as follows:

*"Braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,  
Ye wander through the blooming heather  
But Yarrow braes nor Ettrick shaws  
Can match the lads of Gala Water"*

**PUBLIC LIBRARY (9).** The Public Library replaced an earlier subscription library which had been founded in 1797. Everyone wishing to use the library had to pay an annual subscription and each time they went into the building an entrance fee was charged. Subscribers reduced in numbers over time and the library closed in 1859. A free public library was first suggested in 1871 and it was opened on Lawyers' Brae in 1873. Due to demand for books the building was extended in 1890. Both the original reading rooms and the extension were built by public subscription. Notice the carving of the words 'Free Library' over the central window.

The open area in front of the Library and Burgh Buildings is called Cornmill Square

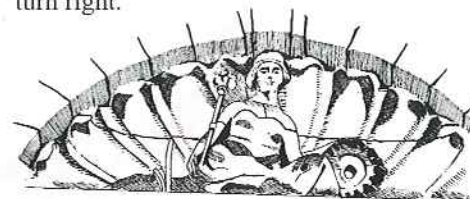
and was built on the site of the town's corn mill. In the centre is a fountain built in 1913, to a design by Sir Robert Lorimer, over the lade system which powered the mill and those of the woollen mills towards Netherdale. The water system is partially concealed by the balustrade but is well worth looking into.

Cross over Cornmill Square and with the War Memorial on your right, head along Market Street. The landscaped open area on the left is called Market Square.

**MARKET SQUARE (10).** At the east end of one of Gala's main shopping streets, Channel Street, stands Market Square. This part of the town has been put to various uses over the years including a spell as a bus station from the 1920s to the 1960s. In 1821, ground in the centre of Market Square was gifted by the Scott family for the building of a subscription school where pupils paid for classes which they attended. The venture was not a success and the building was demolished in 1862. Proposals to build on the Square were opposed and the feu passed to the Burgh Council on condition that the Square was landscaped and not built upon. The Square was accordingly laid out in granite setts in the early 1920s. It was landscaped properly for the first time in 1968 and again in 1994. The statue entitled "Man with Sheep" at the edge of the Square was sculpted by local artist Ann Henderson in 1971 and originally stood in the centre of the Square. When the area was landscaped in 1994, it was decided to move the sculpture to look directly down Channel Street. From here continue along Market Street.

On your right is the Pavilion Cinema, now extensively renovated, where there are four screens on which can be seen many of the latest films. Next to the cinema is the

Railway Inn. Prior to the closure of the Waverley Route in 1969, this hotel catered for railway travellers who wished to break their journey in Galashiels. Through the gates on the right are government buildings. These occupy the site of the Victoria Mill which burned down in 1905. The building which replaced the mill was the original Scottish College of Textiles. Notice the portico<sup>7</sup> with the figure of 'Industria' above the pediment. Return through the gates and turn right.



**CHURCH OF OUR LADY & ST. ANDREW (11).** Across the Gala Water you can see the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady and St Andrew. This church was completed in 1858 and extended in 1870. Inside the church there is a side altar which is a memorial to the numerous Polish soldiers stationed in Galashiels during the Second World War. After the end of that conflict many chose to stay in the town and become part of the community.

Taking care, cross the road and walk behind the bus station, along the side of the Gala Water. Cross the Douglas Bridge over the water and walk through the shopping precinct to Channel Street, then turn right.

At the junction of Douglas Bridge and Channel Street on your right is a large red sandstone building - formerly the Douglas Hotel. This has recently been converted into private flats. Channel Street was resurfaced and paved by Scottish Borders Council in 1998 with grant aid from the European

<sup>7</sup> Portico - a roofed space forming the entrance and centre piece of a building's façade.

Union. From here to the western end of Channel Street was once called Tannage Street. The tannery which was located at the end of Channel Street needed a constant supply of water. After passing through the works, the water (known locally as the Tanny Burn) was allowed to run into a channel, hence the name of the street.

**POST OFFICE (12).** At the end of Channel Street you will find the Post Office with the Bank of Scotland, dating from 1862 next door. Five years beforehand, the Bank operated from premises to the west of the present Post Office.



Gala's first Post Office was located in Elm Row, near the Mercat Cross. Prior to the opening of that office all letters were delivered to Melrose, Selkirk or Staghall by stage coaches or via coal and lime transports. The hapless recipient in Gala would have to journey to one of these places to collect any letters. After the Elm Row office, the 'Post' moved to Market Place. It was later located in Bank Street for a short time. A further move came in 1863 when it relocated to High Street before an increase in the volume of business led to the building of the present Post Office in 1894.

Opposite you can see the Victoria Buildings. The original 19th century building was five stories high and was once described as the finest commercial premises outside Edinburgh. A four storey building replaced it in the 1920s. Notice how the corner turret matches those of the Post Office.

Continue on to High Street. As you cross over Sime Place, look to the right and see the former St Andrew's Kirk. Further along High Street on the right and set back from the building line, is St Ninian's Church of Scotland, dating from 1844. This church, built in a Romanesque style, was enlarged in 1868. The paved area in front was originally enclosed by railings but these were removed during the Second World War. At the end of High Street, beside the traffic lights, is the former Co-op building.

**FORMER CO-OP BUILDING (13).** The Co-operative Society in Galashiels was founded in 1839. Their first 'store' was located in Overhaugh Street (between Bank Street & Channel Street) and opened in 1842. An increase in trade meant that a new building was required. In 1886, property on the corner of High Street and Roxburgh Street was purchased and new premises built. This red sandstone building was completed in 1888 at a cost of £13,000. The Co-op left for its new site at Paton Street in 1984 and the building was converted into flats and offices. The roof-line is interesting and the corner with its turret provides a dramatic end to High Street. The square turret nearest the town centre originally had a domed cupola but this was later removed.

Diagonally opposite the former Co-op building is the Bridge Inn. This was one of Gala's coaching inns before the arrival of the railway in 1849 and a ballroom was one of its facilities.

From the former Co-op, turn left up Roxburgh Street. On the building which faces you on the right you will find a memorial to George Meikle Kemp who was the architect of the Scott Monument in Edinburgh and he served his apprenticeship here. Further up the street, on the left (opposite the ambulance station) is Botany Lane, at the end of which you will find the Glasite Chapel. Please note that care should be taken when entering the lane as it is used constantly by vehicles.

**GLASITE CHAPEL (14).** The Glasite church for the area was at first located in the village of Darnick, to the west of Melrose. This transferred to Gala in 1775, initially to the Old Town but then to Botany Lane in 1842. The Glasite Movement followed the teachings of Pastor John Glas who practised abstinence from alcoholic drink. The congregation ceased to worship here many years ago.



The chapel is a rather unassuming building and is also called the 'Kail Kirk'. The Sunday services sometimes lasted most of the day and food was provided for the worshippers. This often consisted of kail soup, a dish made with curly leafed cabbage.

Return to Roxburgh Street and walk into Union Street which is almost opposite Botany Lane. The house which faces

Roxburgh Street and forms one side of a courtyard, was built in the mid 19th century. Once in Union Street, on the right you will see the former engineering works of Robert Herbert. The workshops were built in the early 20th century, this is a pleasing industrial building which was renovated in 1994. Notice the large arched openings at ground floor and the central loading door and window at first floor level. The Congregational Church, with its fish scale slated tower, forms another side of the courtyard.

Return to Roxburgh Street, turn right and go straight on up the 'Hundred Steps' (in actual fact there are 78) into Roxburgh Place. At the end of the street, turn left and walk down Gala Park until you reach the Burgh School on your left.

*For those not wishing to use the stairs, continue along Union Street and turn left to go up Kirk Brae, turning left into Gala Park and joining the route again.*

**BURGH SCHOOL (15).** The Parliament in Edinburgh passed Acts in 1633 and 1696 which obliged every Burgh Council to provide funding for free education within their area and this led to the establishment of Burgh Schools. Views were expressed in Gala that education for those who worked in the mills was a waste of time. The Reverend Paterson even said "there can be no training of the volatile minds of youth equal to that which is maintained at the factories". The Burgh School was built in 1874 and extended in 1895, at which time the school roll was in the order of 920 pupils. Most of the children were from the newly erected housing in the area from Gala Park to Scott Street.

Turn left down Bank Street Brae, known locally as Round Tree Brae. Near here there



was once a tree, which local legend claims was the haunt of fairies or "little people" and also of a "ghostly white lady". This street slopes down to Bank Street and is essentially a bridge over part of the lade system which powered many of the mills in Gala. At the junction with Bank Street is a pair of red sandstone lamp pillars with the Burgh Crest carved on them.

On the left is the site of Waulkmillhead Mill, a small building compared to the giants of later years. The last owner, Dr Oliver, set up a trust for the benefit of students at the Scottish Woollen Technical College, the forerunner of the Scottish College of Textiles. The trust sold the building to the Council in 1947. The Town Council demolished the mill in 1949 and in accordance with the trust's conditions, that the area should not be built upon, the ground was incorporated into Bank Street Gardens in the early 1950s.

Turn right into Bank Street, Gala's second shopping street.

**BANK STREET GARDENS (16).** This street was initially called Scott's Place after the owner of the Fleece Inn. The National Bank of Scotland (now the Royal Bank of Scotland) took over the inn building in 1825 and the street name was changed. In 1946, a new bank building was constructed, based on a 1940 design. In the 1940s, the Burgh Council was gifted the garden ground on the south side of Bank Street by the owners of the properties. In 1813, George Craig created - along with Bridge Street - a street with houses on one side and gardens on the other. Sadly, the Bridge Street gardens have been built over but Bank Street shows what might have been had the modern development not taken place. Bank Street Gardens are much enjoyed by locals and visitors, as a place from which to watch life go by and to solve the problems of the world. In the summer time,

the Town Band sometimes entertains passers by with concerts in the gardens.

Head back towards Commill Square through the gardens, from where you gain an impressive view of the clock tower. You can see the Salmon Inn on your left. One of the oldest pubs in the town, this was a coaching inn many years before the arrival of the railway in 1849. The Salmon had a ballroom which was a popular venue with locals. The Salmon is still a traditional meeting point for locals and the atmosphere is always friendly. Notice how the windows on the Commill Square side of the building have sunk over the years, producing almost lozenge shaped windows.

At the end of St John Street is a bust of Sir Walter Scott and a bronze tablet, both designed by Thomas Clapperton in 1932. Turn right up St John Street.

**VOLUNTEER HALL (17).** Built in 1874 as a drill hall for the Gala Forest Rifles, a volunteer military unit established in 1859 in response to events in Europe, specifically in France. The Hall no longer serves a military function and can be hired out. It is used as a venue for concerts and plays and, during the Braw Lads' Gathering, dances are held here.



It is just a short distance back to the Tourist Information Centre and the end of the Galashiels Town Trail. We hope that you have enjoyed this short introduction to the town, its history and its architecture and trust that you will return soon.

#### ADDITIONAL POINTS OF INTEREST

*Starting from St Peter's Church (7) head east along Abbotsford Road.*

**ABBOTSFORD ROAD (18).** Most of the houses on this road were built using profits from the mills and date from the 1840s to 1870s. There are many examples of fine houses built during the 19th and early 20th century, houses which would cost a considerable sum to build at today's prices.

At the mini-roundabout by the public park (a gift to the town from the Scotts of Gala) bear left and head down Tweed Road. Take the first right into Tweed Crescent.

**LUCY SANDERSON COTTAGE HOMES (19).** On the right, opposite the ornate lamp standard which was once located in Market Square, you will find a pedestrian access to a group of buildings called Lucy Sanderson Cottage Homes. Named in memory of the wife of a mill owner, this model village is an early sheltered housing scheme built specifically for retired mill workers. Constructed between 1930 and 1933 and based around an imaginary village green, the buildings are built of random whinstone rubble with sandstone dressings but were supposed to be harled.

The exterior is dominated by the imposing clock tower which gives the building the look of a traditional tolbooth; notice also the sundial. Inside the main hall, there is a barrel vaulted roof and the walls are decorated with

murals depicting Border life and scenery. On leaving the grounds, walk down Tweed Grove and turn right to rejoin Tweed Road, walking downhill.

**RAID STANE (20).** On the left you will see a sign pointing to the Raid Stane. By continuing a short distance and going down the steps, you are able to walk to the Raid Stane. Local tradition maintains that this is the site of the episode in 1337 where English soldiers were surprised whilst they were picking wild plums. Their bodies were dumped in a ditch which is still called Englishman's Syke<sup>8</sup>. The villagers quickly adopted the title of 'Soor Plooms of Galashiels' in commemoration of this event. To this day, the town's motto is 'Soor Plooms' (Sour Plums) and the Burgh Arms feature a plum tree. This area of the town is called Netherdale.

**NETHERDALE (21).** To the north is the Scottish Borders Campus of Heriot-Watt University, which until October 1998 was The Scottish College of Textiles. The college was designed in the 1960s and is typical of an educational building of the time. Behind the College is Netherdale High Mill which was built in 1857. Although its days of production are long over, it is fitting that the mill is used by the College for tuition. With the College becoming a faculty of Heriot-Watt University, Galashiels became a 'university town'. Students from all over Scotland and the world come here to learn about all aspects of the textile industry. Perhaps of more architectural merit than the College buildings is the Hall of Residence and Student Union which sit on a grassy knoll to the south of the main building.

<sup>8</sup> syke - ditch





Scottish  
Borders  
COUNCIL



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