

Introduction

The following script has been designed to be used alongside 2.17) Politics, Religion and Sectarianism in Leith – Map. The script provides more detailed information for each of the key sites of interest that you can find on the map.

As well as information on each key site of interest, you will also find accompanying quotes from the summary transcribes which are included in this toolkit.

The script can be used to deliver your own version of the Leith anti-sectarianism Project's Walking Tour; or preferably, you can use the script as inspiration for developing your own walking tour.

Politics, Religion and Sectarianism in Leith - Walking Tour Script

Intro: Hello and thanks for coming on today's *Politics, Religion and Sectarianism in Leith* - Walking Tour. Today we will be taking you to various sites in and around Leith, which are linked to politics, religion and sectarianism in Leith.

Much of this tour has derived from the personal experiences of community members which were shared when they took part in an oral history project (OHP). We will be stopping at 11 points of interest and although this is a guided tour I would like to encourage anyone one who has any relevant information to feel free to add their contribution when and where appropriate.

Stop 1 Ferrylee – Our first stop today gentleman is at Ferrylee Care Home. Now some of you may be aware this is the old site of David Kilpatrick's Catholic secondary school.

Other points to note: the bombs was the area opposite the school where other activities (including fights) took place. Fighting was also not only restricted to the school, with pupils at David Kilpatrick often getting in brawls with pupils from rival non-denominational schools.

In 1974 the school merged with Trinity Academy to become a full comprehensive serving north and West Leith, Newhaven and Trinity.

This school came up frequently during our discussions as part of the OHP. I also interviewed a member of the local community who had their own story to tell about the school. This person recalled an interview he attended following leaving school:

'When I left school at 15, I went for an interview working on a building site. The guys who were doing the interview came from the West of Scotland and asked me what school I went to. I told them David Kilpatrick and then this guy asked what foot I kicked with and I'd never heard the expression before, so I said left not knowing I was telling them I was a Catholic. The crazy thing was, I'm not a Catholic'.

It will come as no surprise gentleman that he failed to secure the job.

This person I interviewed also shared the following story of when he was 18 and worked on the construction of St James Centre, where much of the work force were Irish. Describing getting ready to attend a Hibs match, this

EXPLORING SECTARIANISM WITH GROUPS

Walking Tour Script

2.12

person recalled he was asked if he could hand a piece of paper to someone in a nearby hut:

'The hut he actually sent me to was full of guys who came from Ulster. So I walked in to this hut, to give him this paper, with a green and white scarf on. I walks in and on the right hand side of the wall they had a photograph of William of Orange, King Billy on the wall. I've turned round and heard get that fenian bastard out of here'.

Does anyone have any stories of David Kilpatrick they would like to share?

Stop 2 - Coburg Street – This small bistro was formally the Coburg Bar that was a known Protestant/ Orange pub with a strong loyalist tradition.

'It was an Orange pub, everybody knew it was an Orange pub, they had a bus that followed Rangers that left from it.'

'I remember, going back to the 60s there used to be a bar in Coburg Street, which is now a French restaurant, it was called the Coburg Bar and it was an Orange pub'.

'My aunty used to tell me lots of stories about the Coburg Bar which was a Protestant bar and had ties with Rangers. My aunty would be keen to tell you more about it'.

It was even noted that this bar may have had connections to loyalist paramilitaries such as the Ulster Defence Association (UDA).

Coburg Street was also the location where they filmed the Orange March in Peter McDougal's film – Just another Saturday, due to the problematic nature of filming Orange Walks in Glasgow.

Does anyone have a story about Coburg Street they would like to share?

Stop 3 – Cooper/construction of new flats –

Many of the old industries of Leith have now disappeared along with many of the buildings which housed such industries. One such industry was whiskey bonding and of course whiskey needed barrels. If you look up to the parapet of the building opposite you will see an example of this, this building was formally a coopers or barrel makers which supplied the whiskey bonds and still has the solid stone barrel which is testimony to its` past. Further along the street are examples of new dwellings which were built in place of older industrial buildings this reuse of land has been given the dubious title the Gentrification of Leith. Much of this type of housing is high priced and began to spring up in conjunction with the building of the new Scottish Office which is nearby. This type of approach to housing and land use, has spawned much debate among the older more traditional members of the Leith community, and there is a feeling that this had led to two different communities and an, us and them mentality. This is a sad situation as Leith has had a long standing tradition of community support and cohesion and it would be a shame if this was eroded by such circumstances.

Does anyone have a story they would like to share on this subject?

Stop 4 – Rose Leaf Pub – Next gentleman we have the Rose Leaf Pub. We have chosen to include this on the tour as it very much fits in with many of the discussions we had during the OHP on the gentrification of Leith. This

EXPLORING SECTARIANISM WITH GROUPS

Walking Tour Script

2.12

pub and the surrounding area, very much show the regeneration that has taken place in Leith in recent years. It also links well with the concept of ghettos of wealth that was discussed.

Some of you may or may not be aware, that this old pub used to be a haunt for prostitutes. You certainly would not see that kind of clientele frequenting this establishment now. If you needed any more evidence of gentrification then I can tell you that when you buy cocktails in this place they are served in china tea pots and drank from china cups, you can almost hear the Dockers crying with laughter.

Does anyone have a story about the Rose Leaf that they would like to share?

Stop 5- Trinity House – Here we have Trinity House that was a guildhall, customs house and centre for poor relief. It is now a maritime museum.

It is a category A listed building this means it is of special historical interest as only (8% of buildings are A).

For centuries, Trinity House has been a focus for the seafaring community in the busy and important port of Leith. It is the headquarters of the Incorporation of Masters and Mariners, who looked after the welfare of those who took to the seas. The building is full of stories of the captains and memories of their voyages, and contains many treasures of Leith's seafaring past.

During the OHP we had lots of discussions on employment and also the navy. This included discussing Trinity House.

Do any of you have any stories about Trinity House you would like to share?

Stop 6 – South Leith Parish Church – Leith was previously an area of quite intense religious activity that is now marked by a number of redundant churches. Many old churches have also been changed into religious buildings of other faiths.

South Leith Parish Church, originally the Kirk of Our Lady, is a congregation of the Church of Scotland. It is the principal church and congregation in Leith, in Edinburgh and has a capacity of 1,400.

The Church at War

Within South Leith Church can be seen memorials of past campaigns from around the world in which members of the congregation have taken part, from the battle of Preston pans up to the Second World War.

Going further back in history, however, the church has seen the coming of the armies of Edward I and later his son Edward II, after and before the battle of Bannockburn, at which he was defeated by Robert the Bruce.

During the Cromwellian Period the church was used as a meeting place between the covenanters and the royalists in an attempt to reach a compromise rather than war with one another. Unfortunately these diplomatic attempts failed and the Covenanters and Royalists warred for approximately six years. During the war the church was used as a munitions dump for Oliver Cromwell's army whilst the citadel was being built in North Leith under General Monk.

One of the greatest tragedies to beset Leith was the Gretna Rail disaster of 1915 in which two companies of Royal Scots (raised in Leith) in an express

troop train collided with a local train standing on the track, after which another express train crashed into the wreckage. 215 men were killed and 191 men were seriously injured. This is believed to have been the worst railway disaster in British railway history. Many of the dead were buried at Rosebank Cemetery and the Company colours now fly within the church as a memorial to those who lost their lives.

Reverend John White (1876-1951) a leading figure in the Protestant Church of Scotland in the early twentieth century was also head of South Leith Parish Church in 1904.

Reverend White was responsible for Producing the 1923 report – The Menace of the Irish Race to our Scottish Nationality. The report accused the Roman Catholic Church population in Scotland of subverting Presbyterian values. It also called for the ending of immigration of Irish Catholics to Scotland.

The founder of the Scottish Protestant League (SPL) – Alexander Ratcliff was born in Leith and attended bible classes in South Leith Parish Church. The main policy of the SPL was the repeal of the Education (Scotland) Act 1918. This act provided Catholic schools with funding which allowed for separate education of Catholic and Protestant children. Following a visit to Nazi Germany in 1939 Ratcliffe became a fully-fledged convert to fascism and was outspoken in the defence of Hitler's Germany. It should be noted that the 1918 act was also the main driver behind the formation of the Protestant Action Society which was controlled by the populist politician John Cormack. This latter society greatly eclipsed the popularity of the SPL. And this was in no small part due to the speaking ability of Cormack, who was able to inspire passion and hatred among the protestant population of not only Leith but also Edinburgh. Ratcliffe died in relative obscurity aged 58 in January 1947.

- . Does anyone have any stories to share about South Leith Parish Church?

Stop 7 – St Mary's Star of the Sea – Today we have spoken a lot about the Protestant faith and impact it has had on Leith. Accordingly, we thought it was important to have the Roman Catholic Church of St Mary's Star of the Sea on the tour. I would now like to share with you Arthur's experience.

Arthur shared his experiences of both the Masonic club and the St Mary's Star of the Sea social club. Arthur frequented both of these venues from around 1972 when he arrived in Leith from Broxburn in West Lothian. Speaking about both these venues Arthur was keen to highlight how women were expected to behave and what rules they were to follow - **'Women were not allowed in the bar'**. There was also no swearing in front of the women.

Arthur also interestingly spoke equally about the Masonic club that is traditionally viewed as Protestant; and St Mary's Star of the Sea social that is viewed as Catholic.

The church still holds social events to this day, which includes race nights and a regular over 60s club.

Stop 8 – St Mary's Leith RC Primary School/Leith Links

Today's tour has focussed a lot on the Protestant side of the debate, so I would like to turn your attention for a moment to our next stop St Mary's Leith RC Primary School. One person I interviewed who highlighted himself as Protestant, described his attitude towards Catholics in the Leith community in his younger days.

Overall this person's view of Catholics was very much positive, with him stating the '**strong socialist values of Catholics**' as playing a part in this.

He also spoke positively of the local priests and how they were much more approachable than the Protestant ministers. He also spoke of a Father Ryan who was based at St Mary's school and ran the school football team. This person explained Father Ryan did much to help the local community and always treated everyone the same regardless of whether they were Protestant or Catholic, '**I was a Protestant but played for St Mary's**'. Another interesting fact about this school was unearthed when speaking to members of the Hibernian Disabled Supporters Association. Who informed me that "**At the beginning of the 20th Century Hibs asked Celtic to play a friendly match I order to raise funds to help build St Mary's. However Celtic had other commitments and so Rangers played instead, this was not seen as a problem as Rangers only began to be supported by people with links to Protestantism after the influx of protestant ship builders from Ulster came and settled in the Govan area of Glasgow.**"

As you can see gentleman we are also now at Leith Links. This is a key point of interest, as late as the early 1990s Orange Walks still culminated here. In describing the Orange Walks which took place in the 1970s one local person I interviewed highlighted how people of Leith overall accepted it as part of life: '**People tended to accept it. People never went...shit need to go watch it!**'

This person I interviewed also mentioned the following interesting story, when a group who opposed the Orange Walks ambushed a walk as it went past Jane Street. At this time Jane Street had a railway bridge and it was from here that those opposing the walk launched balloons filled with urine, mud and faeces on the Orangemen below. This was a rare occasion of negativity being shown towards the Orangemen. Any of you who have

seen the film Just another Saturday which we discussed earlier will know that this type of protest also featured in the film.

'At one time there used to be Orange Walks every year through Leith and it's something that never happens now, so you saw it on a regular basis.'

Stop 9 – Hindu cultural centre and former Church of Scotland Kirk –

We have decided to include the Hindu Cultural Centre as it highlights not only a beautiful building but also the diversity of religions and ethnicities which now exist in the Leith area.

The building, is a former Church, is a spacious building which can easily hold 500 people and more when the need calls for it. It has a fairly large congregation which meets once a fortnight. The temple is run by a small Executive Committee who take care of the week to week running of the Temple. Although the temple does not yet have its` own designated priest it is hoped that once the current renovations are complete this situation will be remedied. The Edinburgh Hindu Mandir & Cultural Centre is established for the advancement of religion, culture and arts and specifically:

- To promote Hinduism through regular meetings at the Mandir
- To promote a better understanding of the Hindu culture by celebrating popular festivals and by inviting other communities to participate at all such festivals
- To provide facilities for cultural and arts and recreational activities for the Hindu community and encourage members of other communities to participate in such activities
- To provide and maintain a library on Hindu religion, culture and arts

'...a substantial number of the community adhere to minor religions...Sikhism, Hinduism, both which are well represented in the Leith community'.

'Leith was an area of quite intense religious activity that is now marked by a number of redundant churches'.

The erosion of this religious base in Leith has impacted on the number of both Protestants and Catholics in Leith.

Stop 10 – Lansbury apartments

Next on our stop is a piece of history some of you may not be aware of. At 1 and 3 Academy Street we have Lansbury apartments, named after former Labour Leader George Lansbury.

The Lansbury apartments in Academy Street were a set of rooms that for many years served the labour Party and the local trade unions. Leith was a working town and various forms of socialism had begun to emerge at the end of the 19th century.

By the 1930s it was a well-established movement. An important part of many political or campaigning groups throughout this period were public demonstrations. The Lansbury apartments were dominated by a large hall and here members met and planned, amongst other things, the running order of their marches and parades. Up to 30 people could be positioned in the room, banners and plaques held high. Just along the road, at the top of

the Kirk gate, many a soup box debater would gather a crowd to promote their cause. Modern politics is said to suffer from a lack of public engagement; back then taking to the streets was often the best way of putting your point over to the masses. Face to face social media. It should be noted that at this time there was no television and many people attended such events as a form of entertainment as well as a place to gain information.

Interesting facts! – George Lansbury is grandfather to Angela Lansbury, star of murder she wrote. He is also the grandfather to Oliver Postgate, creator of The Clangers and Noggin the Nogg. Allegedly there are a lot of left leaning messages in the storylines of the Clangers. So if you ever have the opportunity to see this show lookout for this and decide if it is fact or fiction.

George Lansbury was born in Suffolk in 1859 and was a British politician and social reformer who led the labour party from 1932 – 1935. He spent his political life campaigning against established authority and vested interests; his main causes being the promotion of social justice, women's rights, (he was an avid supporter of the Suffragettes) and world disarmament.

He was also a lifelong pacifist and his desire for peace even took him to seek out talks with Hitler. Lansbury died in 1940, supposedly a broken man his dreams shattered by war.

Stop 11 – Queen Victoria Statue – You may recall earlier that I introduced you to the character John Cormack well this along with the mound in Edinburgh city centre was one of his main sites wee he would speak to crowds. His ambition was to stir up enough anti-Catholic feelings so that

he could lead large number of people in demonstrations against the cities Catholics.

The Protestant Action Society was a political party founded by John Cormack that was active in the 1930s. At their peak they had a membership of 8,000. Key successes for the party included having 9 members elected to the Edinburgh Council in 1936 with 31% of the vote.

The party emerged at a time when other similar movements were arising in other parts of Scotland. This included the Glasgow based Scottish Protestant League and the Scottish Democratic Fascist Party.

John Cormack tried to encourage the Orange Order in Scotland to join his movement, but his views were considered too extreme.

In addition to the Queen Victoria statue Cormack also spoke at Leith Links.

Cormack would also meet every Sunday morning and speak at the Mound for a hour/hour and half. This would be followed by an indoor meeting in Leith in the Corner Rooms, which was known as the headquarters of the PAS.

Although poor at writing one of our interviewees highlighted how good a speaker he was: '***He was undoubtedly a gifted orator***'.

In Cormack's opinion his greatest success, was a demonstration at Canaan Lane in 1935 against a Roman Catholic congress. According to Cormack there were '***40,000 people out on the streets, although to the authority's***

EXPLORING SECTARIANISM WITH GROUPS

Walking Tour Script

2.12

quotes only 10,000 people'. The protest to demonstrate against the Roman Catholic Eucharist congress in Edinburgh, interestingly this congress had been moved from Glasgow amid fears that it may cause public unrest, and it was felt that Edinburgh was a safer option. Clearly they had not considered the influence of Cormack and the PAS.