



A Love Letter to ERSKINE

After embarking on a life in the town and never looking back, writer *Cathie Devitt* takes us on a whistle-stop tour of this chosen home.

Back in 1992, my move to Erskine was regarded with contempt by my Glaswegian family. In fact, it was as if I was emigrating to New Zealand.

“There is nothing there, bar a hospital and a bridge,” they dismissively declared.

However, Erskine is an ideal gateway to discover Scotland. But rather than seeing it as a stopgap, be sure that you don’t miss out on exploring the local points of interest.

ERSKINE HOSPITAL

This area is well worth a visit to see the B listed buildings such as the piggery, the stable yard and the Reid McEwan Business Centre. Meanwhile, the original hospital building currently operates as ‘Mar Hall’, a luxury hotel with a spa, gym facilities and a private golf course.

Boasting celebrity guests such as Kylie Minogue, Bob Dylan and Mike Tyson, who knows who you might share a shortbread with should you treat yourself to afternoon tea? Otherwise, you could try alternative watering holes at the nearby Caulders Garden Centre and Vanishing Willows café.

BODEN BOO WOODS

As you leave ‘Veterans Village’, which offers family accommodation of over 50 cottages on the old hospital grounds, take a first left after Caulders Garden Centres to discover Boden Boo. Nestled close to the southern end of Erskine Bridge, this little slice of wilderness can be found between the woodland and Erskine Beach. Enjoy the views across to Kilpatrick Braes or explore the network of informal trails which span

around two miles. If you’re feeling energetic, Boden Boo is part of the 55km Clyde Coastal Path.

ERSKINE BRIDGE

From Boden Boo, you have a terrific view of Erskine Bridge. Straddling the River Clyde, these waters hold so much history in their depths including merchants trading under the British Empire, the survival of the Clydebank Blitz in 1941 and the heyday of the shipbuilding industry. In more recent years, locals have enjoyed seeing many flotillas, including tall ships and vessels from the nearby naval base. In addition, yachts, rowing boats and small cruisers all use the river on a regular basis. As it stands, the Waverley Steamer recently came out of retirement and is now berthed for winter to allow maintenance work to be carried out.

Photos by Brian Whittingham



Community Garden artwork by Bmore Sketchy

Constructed between 1967-1971, the bridge is suitable for all types of motor vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. If you fancy a bird’s eye view of Erskine and surrounding areas, the stairway to the bridge sits between Caulders and Boden Boo.

CONSERVATION AREA

Wildlife lovers will have no shortage of photo opportunities on a visit to Erskine. Stroll through many woodland pathways within the original housing estate or venture closer to the river to enjoy a leisurely walk. The Inner Clyde Estuary nature reserve sits downstream from Newshot Island, an area of intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh used as feeding grounds by wintering waterfowl.

You’ll find a multitude of plants, some suitable for foraging, as well as rocks, the natural habitats of many small animals and even the occasional deer. Horses graze in fields near the central Bridgewater Shopping Centre, with local farms that harbour sheep

and cattle that roam on surrounding slopes. Swans are often spotted as the Black Cart Water is a roosting site for wintering Icelandic whooper swans.

COMMUNITY GARDEN

In 2018, resident Erskine volunteers established an area of Bargarran Park and have lovingly created a fairy garden, mud kitchen, seating areas, produce areas and a focal meeting point. As a result, this garden plays hosts to events such as Holocaust Memorial Day, WWF Earth Hour, Wave of Light and annual bank holiday celebrations as well as outdoor yoga and reiki. Enjoy more fantastic views of the bridge and across the water from the garden’s hilltop boundaries.

FERRY ROAD TREASURES

Ferry Road brings you past the picturesque Bishopton Parish Church. The Abbey of Paisley founded a church on the site as part of the pilgrimage route to the isle of Iona in the twelfth century.

The current building was constructed in 1812 and remains in use.

Along from the church is Erskine Golf Club. Established in 1904, this is one of the finest courses in the West of Scotland, designed by Troon golf professionals. Guests are welcome and buggies are available to get you around the course.

Still on Ferry Road, The Blantyre Monument sits on the boundary between Erskine and Bishopton, a tribute to the bravery of Robert Walter Stuart, who lived at nearby Erskine House. Stuart was a Major-General and served with the Duke of Wellington in the Napoleonic war. The monument was built in 1825 and became a B listed structure in 1980.

“There is nothing there, bar a hospital and a bridge.”

Years on from their initial assessment, four generations of my family now live in Erskine. I wonder why?

Find out more about Cathie Devitt by visiting cathiedevitt.com.