

Dumfries – 'Queen of the South'

Although Dumfries [Gaelic: Dùn Phris] is 35 miles (56 km) northwest of Carlisle in England, it is definitely an ancient Scottish town. It's a market town and the commercial and administrative centre of Dumfries and Galloway. Dumfries became a Royal Burgh in 1186: a frontier town at that time. Invading English armies occupied and attacked the town; mind you, Scottish armies often did the same to Carlisle, over the Border.

On February 10, 1306, Robert the Bruce stabbed 'Red' Sir John Comyn, his rival for the Scottish throne, alongside the High Altar of Greyfriars church in Dumfries. Because this meant he would certainly be excommunicated by the Pope – and probably executed horribly if captured – he had three weeks (the time taken for news to reach Rome and his excommunication to arrive in Scotland) to begin an uprising which led to his being crowned King Robert I of Scotland at Scone Abbey on Palm Sunday, March 25, 1306. Scotland was soon invaded by Edward II of England and – to cut the story short – the two armies met at Bannockburn, exactly 700 years ago on June 23, 1314, where the Scots decisively defeated the much larger English army. This led to the 1320 Declaration of Arbroath and Scotland's recognition as an independent country. The Pope cancelled his excommunication too. The actual spot of the decisive killing just about survives in Dumfries and we'll track it down during our town walk.

Dumfries's other important claim to fame is that it was the home of Scotland's world famous poet Robert Burns (1759-1796). His home is open to the public (free of charge) and we'll visit the Burns House. You can see the window where he scratched his name with a diamond ring. His favourite local pub, or *howff*, is still in business. We'll also see his Mausoleum in the grounds of St Michael's church. Burns's 'day job' was an exciseman, trying to enforce the different customs tariffs for goods passing between England and Scotland. This meant much profitable smuggling!

There are pleasant walks and parks alongside the River Nith, which flows through Dumfries.

Join our walk around the centre of Dumfries and find out:

- What was special about Miss Roberta Ewart Robertson?
- Who was the Stane Man? What did he do?
- Where are the two unicorns?
- Who was Luath? Where can you see him?
- What happened at Comyn's Court? Why does it matter in 2014?
- What does ALOREBURNE mean?
- Who was 'doomed'? Where did he live?
- What happened to John Hulme and Thomas Mullin in 1912?
- Where was Norges Hus? What was it?
- What is a Doonhamer?

► Trains to Dumfries depart from Carlisle at **13:12** (arrive at 13:50). Return trains leave at **15:01** (Carlisle 15:42) and **17:00** arriving in Carlisle at 17:37. We catch the five o'clock train back to Carlisle so there's time for a break in Dumfries. *ATB 2014*