

Fort Augustus - the name.

The old name for Fort Augustus- “the most central point of the habitable part of the Highlands” - was Cill Chuimein, named after Cumein, an Abbot of Iona who established a church here in the 6th Century.

After the 1715 rebellion General Wade built the first Barrack here where his “Military roads” were to intersect between Inverness and Inverlochy (Fort William), and Ruthven (at Speyside) and Glenelg. Work on a much more formidable Fort, beside Loch Ness, began in 1729. In this year Wade named it in honour of the young prince William Augustus, son of George II, later to become infamous as ‘Butcher Cumberland’.

This walk around Fort Augustus will give you some taste of our history, as well as impressive views of both the village and the surrounding scenery.

You may then like to enjoy the many fine walks or cycle tracks in the neighbouring countryside, details of which are readily available from the Tourist Office.



Loch Ness from the Pier.
(Point 4 on the Heritage Trail)

Fort Augustus Preservation Trust.

Our Trust was set up in 2008 to preserve, enhance and safeguard the heritage and natural environment of Fort Augustus and its surrounding area. It is a Company Limited by Guarantee and a registered Charity No. SC 039435.

Our first project is to restore the Old River Oich Bridge, to become the best and oldest such timber bridge in Scotland. Aside from being a listed historic monument, it will resume use for pedestrian, cycle and equestrian access and so create a traffic-free crossing of the river, as in 1850.

So far, Historic Scotland has pledged to us a sum of £185,000 for restoration. However the total cost of the project is estimated at over £500,000.

Kindly donate to the Trust in the Tourist Office, at the Council Service Point, or wherever you find our donation boxes - and so help us preserve the heritage and environment that you are here to see and enjoy.

Thank you and enjoy the walk.

www.fapt.co.uk

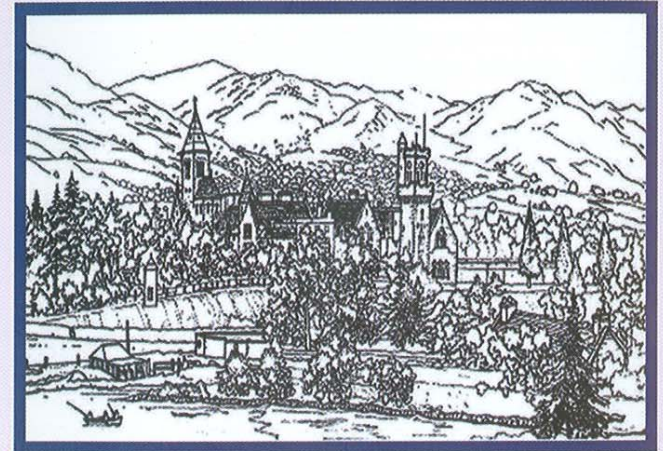
© Cill Chuimein Heritage

This leaflet has been produced with help from the following organisations.



Fort Augustus

Heritage Trail



Explore this beautiful and historic village on the shores of Loch Ness

Some Interesting Dates

© Cill Chuimein Heritage

500–599 AD

Chuimein, Abbot of Iona established church here, the “Cill” or church of Chuimein.

1645 Having called the nobility to sign a “band” at Cill Chuimein, the Earl of Montrose marches through heavy snow to defeat the Campbell “Covenanters” at the battle of Inverlochy.

1715 A redcoat Barrack was built at “Kilwhimman”

1729 Along with much road building, General Wade starts to build a new Fort, as the older Barrack had no water supply and was sited too far from Loch Ness. He names this “Fort Augustus” after the King George’s second son – who is later to become infamous in the area as “Butcher Cumberland” or “Stinking Billy”

1745 Capture of Capt Scott and two companies of Royal Scots Regiment (marching from Fort Augustus to Fort William) by Macdonald of Tiendrish “kicks off” the “-45 rebellion”. General Cope’s redcoats flee from the Corrieyairack Pass as Prince Charlie’s new army crosses from Glenfinnan.

1746 The Jacobites blow up the gunpowder store at the Fort and largely destroy it sending its Garrison back as prisoners to Inverness – in their own “galley”. But after the disaster at Culloden, the Fort is re-occupied by the Hanoverian redcoats. Having initiated his cruel “pacification of the Highlands” (nothing less than “racial cleansing”), the Duke of Cumberland leaves for London - with the severed head of Roderick Mackenzie, in the mistaken belief that his is the head of “Bonnie Prince Charlie”.

1773 Boswell and Dr Johnson stay with the Governor of the Fort, whilst on their “Highland Journey” to the west coast. Ann MacVicar later known as Mrs Grant of Laggan, the barrack-master’s daughter, starts her “Letters from the Mountains”.

1782 “Clearance” of families in Invergarry to provide grazing for sheep.

1803 Thomas Telford starts building of the Caledonian Canal to link the East and West coasts of Scotland.

1818 The last of the “veteran” soldiers and its cannon are removed from the Fort.

1822 Opening of the completed Caledonian Canal - with 5 Lock Gates at Fort Augustus to raise shipping 40 feet above the level of Loch Ness.

1843 “Disruption” of the church in Scotland – Fort Augustus is soon to have four separate church buildings, one for each denomination.

1849 “The Great Floods” demolish stone bridges at each end of river Oich.

1858 Roualeyn Gordon-Cumming sets up his Museum beside the canal to display to Canal tourists the stuffed trophies from his African hunting expeditions.

1876 Having purchased the Fort from the Government, the 14th Lord Lovat leases the buildings to the Benedictine monks as a Monastery.

1889 The Abbey monks have installed the first Hydro electric scheme in Scotland: using its spare capacity to provide street lights in Fort Augustus until 1951.



1898 Invergarry and Fort Augustus Railway Bill passed by the House of Commons. Aluminium smelting plant has been established on loch-side at Foyers.

1903 Opening of Railway line with swing bridge over Canal & viaduct over river, leading to a second station at the pier on Loch Ness. The latter closes in 1907.

1911 Railway line closes, but is later reopened for passengers from 1913 until 1933 and continues to carry freight throughout Second World War, until 1946.

1914 Abbey provides a hospital for soldiers wounded in the Great War.

1919 Forestry Commission planting at Auchterawe. Abbey School opens.

1934 Main road re-routed over a new bridge crossing the River Oich.

1941 In the third year of Second World War, a Heinkel aircraft bombs the Foyers factory but misses a tanker traveling down the Canal.

1964 Canal bridge and lock gates become operated by electric motors.

1993 Abbey boy’s school closes.

1998 The last monks leave the Abbey, thereafter only a visitor attraction.

2004 Abbey buildings are re-sold and converted to luxury apartments.

2008 Establishment of the Fort Augustus Preservation Trust.

Fort Augustus Heritage Trail

Proceed into the village from the Car park, passing the Tourist office. After crossing the river bridge, turn left beside a corrugated iron building which was built as the (1) **United Free Church** - at a time when there were churches of *four* different denominations in the village - besides a Monastery and a Convent for nuns. The Clansman Centre, opposite, was formerly a Catholic school, for village pupils. Continue past the War Memorial until you reach -



(2) **The Old Oich Bridge** existed from before 1772 as "a stone bridge of three arches". Two of these arches were washed away in the

Great Floods of 1849, after which "temporary" repairs were made with the massive timbers still seen today!

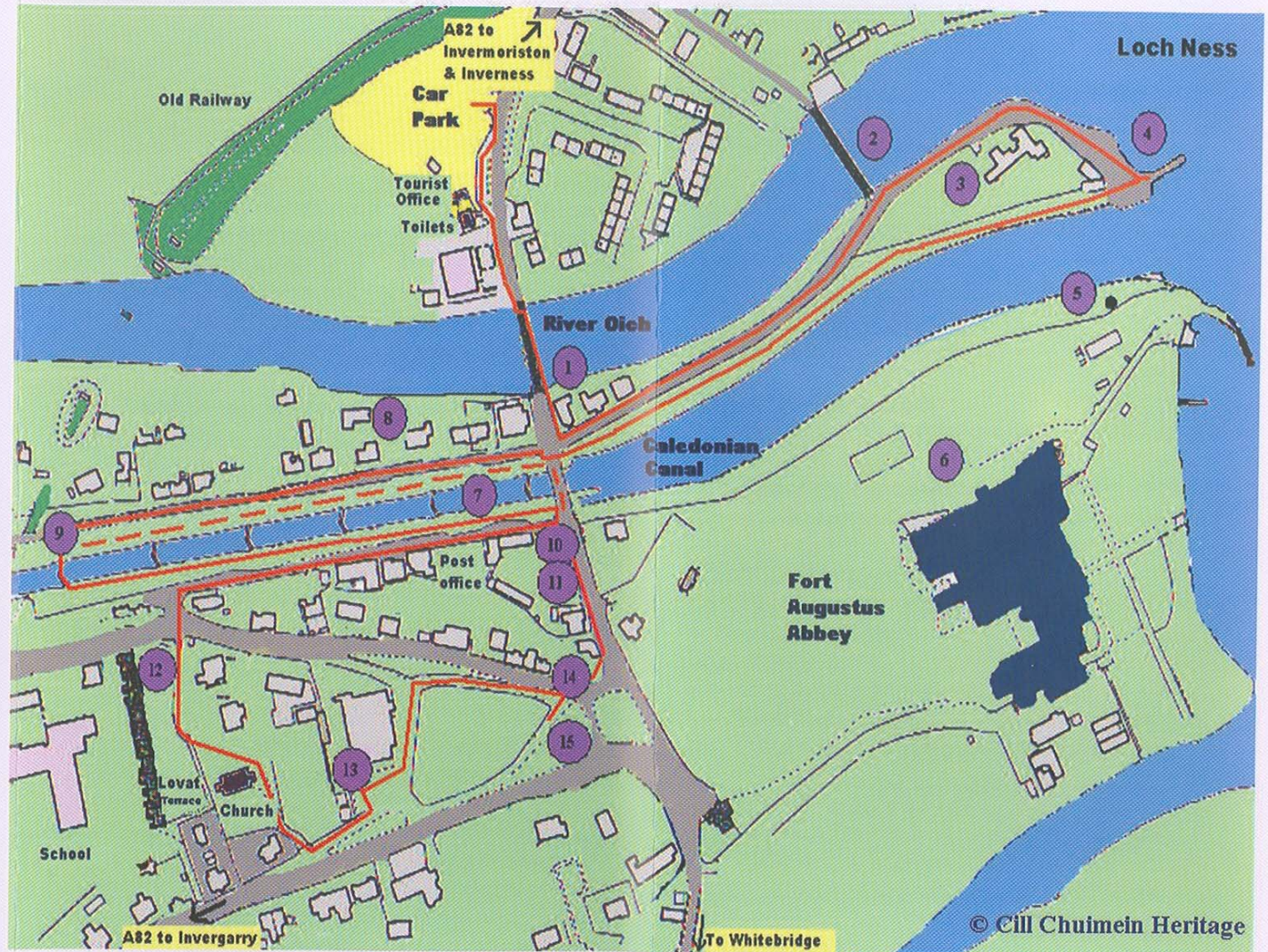
(3) **The Barrack-master's House** (now re-named "Inveroich house") has stood here for more than three centuries. On its land once stood the Fort's **bakery and brewery**, unkindly separated from the Fort itself by the cutting of the Canal between them.



Continue past this house to the **Loch Ness viewpoint** or

(4) **"Pier"** Relax here and admire the beautiful view.

On the far bank of the Canal, near to Loch Ness, is a (5) **"pepper-pot" lighthouse** - reputedly the smallest light-house in the United Kingdom and useful in bad weather to guide shipping into the mouth of the Caledonian Canal. Early one morning, in the 1930's, its carbide electric battery blew up - and frightened half the village.



————— Recommended route

- - - - - Alternative route

© Cill Chuimein Heritage



Behind the lighthouse and a screen of trees, stand the two towers and buildings of the former Abbey and School, on the grounds of the **Military Fort**.

Building of the Fort started in 1729, along with the local network of Military Roads.

After the Canal was cut through its glacis, the Fort was sold to Lord Lovat, who leased it to be rebuilt as a **(6) Benedictine Monastery**. The belfry facing you on the left, was designed by the architect Peter Paul Pugin - whose father had built "Big Ben" and the Houses of Parliament.

Walk on down the canal towpath, cross the main road beside its swing bridge to look at the **(7) five Lock Gates on the Canal**, which raise the water level by 40 feet. Their building was "the most arduous & uncertain" work undertaken by **Thomas Telford** in creating the "Caledonian Canal". So much water seeped into the lower, canal excavation that ultimately 3 dredging engines were required, with the combined effect of 62 horse power, before the "lock-pit" could be sealed. These lower locks were formed where the river originally took a wide bend (beside today's Post office) and Telford blasted a new river bed to align with the river mouth.

You can now visit the **(8) British Waterways Heritage Centre**. Beside this building were stabled the horses that pulled ships along the Canal, from its towpath. If you continue beyond the heritage centre you arrive at an **(9) absurd bridge** on the right- doing nothing! It originally carried a **railway line** over the towpath to the **viaduct**, crossing the river. You can now only see its battlemented, stone piers.



From here the line continued, on an embankment, through today's village car park and on to a **second Station and Pier**, on Loch Ness - where passengers could board a steamship.



You now have a choice! Either take great care and cross one of the narrow walkways over a Lock gate OR go down the towpath and cross the Canal on the main road, swing-bridge to arrive at a seated enclosure beside **(10) Jubilee fountain**. This is dedicated to Queen Victoria - who never even got out of her royal steamship when it was passing through the village's lock gates. She considered the villagers "very rude" for staring at her while she ate her luncheon in the ship's cabin.

If you now walk into the small car park beside the Bothy Restaurant, you can see the arched doorway of the **(11) old Gunpowder Store**, with its compass and Caledonian Canal weathervane atop its peaked roof. This and the site of today's restaurant was originally *an island*, in the middle of the river Oich. When an alternative river course had been blasted through rock, this reclaimed land was used to build the Canal Company's houses, offices, a **smithy and workshops**. Telford also needed a safe "lock-up" to prevent his novelty wheel-barrows from disappearing overnight!



Walk up this road (passing the Post Office and the Lock Inn) and where the road climbs sharply to the left, carry straight on up a narrow path to the right of the Bank, to view **(12) Lovat Terrace**. It dates from the late 19th century and was probably built by Lord Lovat as almshouses or for workers on his land. Later it also housed Railway workers.

The narrow path leads to a red gate, on the left, which will take you into the garden of the **Church Manse** and on to the **Church** itself, so that you can emerge onto the main Fort William road.

Keep left, passing the medical centre into the car park of the Lovat Arms Hotel. Keep left again, passing the modern chalets, to find an almost hidden view of the village's oldest listed monument - the tall, stone wall of the **(13) first Military Barracks**. Its "gunloops" can be clearly recognised. Being unable to pronounce "Cill Chuimein" the redcoat builders called this barracks: "Kilwhimman".

You are now overlooking Station road, and beyond, the trees surrounding the Abbey. It was probably from here that the Jacobites bombarded and blew up the "powder magazine" of the new Fort. Keeping to the left, cross in front of the hotel and then follow a diagonal track to the right, with metal railings, leading steeply down onto the road below. This brings you directly opposite the village's oldest landmark now disguised as three, adjoining cottages. **(14) The old King's Inn** was the scene of many historic incidents. The Glengarry Chieftain was heavily fined for having assaulted the village doctor here. The trial judges being horrified that he was, at the time, the County Sheriff!



Turning right to re-join the Fort William Road, and on the grass island to your right, stands **(15) an old lamp-post**, dedicated to the **1911 Coronation**. This is the last remnant of the original, electric street lights - first lit at a time when all British cities were still illuminated by gas! Only this south side of the village was provided for

by the monks, since the Canal Company would not then allow the dangerous electricity to pass over (or under) the canal!

You can now return to the main road bridge, crossing the Canal - and so on to the village centre and the car park.