

Transcript of Podcast 073: The Cathcart Circle

{Intro:

SCOTRAIL: The next train at Platform 6 is the 08:52 Scotrail Service to Glasgow Central, calling at: Pollokshields East, Queen's Park, Crosshill, Mount Florida, Cathcart, Langside, Pollokshaws East, Shawlands, Maxwell Park, and Pollokshields West. This train is formed of three coaches.

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{intro music - jaunty, bouncy}

{Intro standard announcement:

Hello. Thank you for tuning in. You're listening to Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure, a podcast looking at unfamiliar places across the world, and aspects of travelling you may never have thought of. I'm your host, The Barefoot Backpacker, a middle-aged Enby with a passion for offbeat travel, history, culture, and the 'why's behind travel itself. So join me as we venture ... beyond the brochure.}

{Music fades. Podcast begins}

Hello :)

We have now passed the summer solstice and the daylight is getting shorter. I mean, not that you'd know at the moment as it's still daylight at both 5am and 9.45pm, but it will shrink, slowly, surely, inexorably. I often think I'd prefer to live somewhere where it was pretty much always sunrise about 7am and sunset about 7pm, but that would involve living in places with 40°C heat and rains so intense they wash the roads away, so, you know, life is full of compromises.

I'm re-reading my housekeeping introduction from my previous pod in order to get a baseline. One of the things I mentioned then was Google Analytics. Well, as of now, the old version of GA has indeed stopped reporting and collecting data, and I'm having to work entirely with the new versions in my paid job. And, you know, very late last month I came to a conclusion that the best way for me to handle the change between the versions was ... not to handle it at all, stop trying to recreate things in the new version, and just pretend the old version had pretty much never existed. This was incredibly liberating as it meant I was no longer trying to force new GA to do what it wasn't designed to do, and instead I was just starting afresh. It meant having difficult conversations with my stakeholders but they all seemed to be very favourable to the change, perhaps surprisingly, possibly because I kept highlighting the flexibility and the 'and now *you* can do this, so interactive, see how easy it is to see things', which they were all in favour of. Conclusion, change can be very useful if managed correctly.

/me glares at Twitter.

And speaking of Twitter, Tweetdeck, the much-maligned Twitter client operated by Twitter themselves and which has looked like something out of 2012 for at least the last 6 years, got an overhaul and now looks ugly and works slightly less well in practice, even if more functionality has been added to it. I hear this is in preparation for making it a paid product which, a) is something they should have done at the very start of the Twitter Blue fiasco as it's the one product that actually people would be keen to use if it worked, and b) gives me a very difficult choice to make.

Many of my Travel Twitter buddies have moved to Threads which, I mean that's cool for them but I have two Twitter accounts and only one Instagram account, and also, Threads is currently not available on desktop/the web, but rather only via App, and the vast majority of my Twitter-time is spent while I'm on my computer. I'm not planning to venture into Threads just yet. Maybe when they add that functionality. I am using Discord slightly more, by which I mean, I'm actively typing in more than one server now. Part of me wonders if setting up a Discord server for this podcast would work as a community venture; I know the pod has a Facebook Group but I always forget it exists because I dislike Facebook's User Interface so never get the urge to do much there.

I could always join Reddit. {screams}

What else. Oh, I took a day trip to Manchester last week for, reasons, and in one fell swoop ensured the boundary between Manchester and Salford boroughs reached the top ten on the list of 'borders I have crossed on land'. Well, in this case mainly on bridges, but you know what I mean. But I will talk more about the significance of that trip next time, though I'm sure some of you can guess.

Aside from that I have no other tales to tell. I've still not done any running yet, though I have at least volunteered at Parkrun once since my last pod. I've actually been otherwise engaged, as Laura was up for two weeks, and on one of the Saturdays we went hiking over in Inverclyde with one of her friends. It was mainly along a route I'd done in April last year, although we also took a peek into the delightful Clydeside town of Greenock, remember 'Everywhere Is Interesting', and Greenock is interesting enough to be a cruise ship port. Which, not gonna lie, confuses us greatly.

Anyway, speaking of everywhere being interesting, and with inspiration from the Roundel Round We Go podcast, let's talk about part of Glasgow's Southside.

{section separation

SCOTRAIL: Please listen for announcements on board the train

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Glasgow has a remarkable number of railway stations for a city of its size; something I noticed when I first moved here. Indeed I worked out that within a mile of the flat I moved into, there were 10 railway stations on (nominally) three different routes, and I figured that using the railway stations as 'wayposts', I could define whether I'd been to and explored a different part of the city region by whether I'd walked past the railway station there.

The majority of those 10 nearby railway stations though are on a line known as the Cathcart Circle. It's a loop line starting at Glasgow Central railway station and goes around part of Glasgow Southside, that part of Glasgow immediately south of the River Clyde. Southside itself is much larger than the Cathcart Loop, and includes areas like Gorbals and Tradeston, though the latter is these days largely post-industrial wasteland and, coincidentally, trading estates. The Cathcart in the railway route name is a suburb of Glasgow around 4.5km (2.8 miles) south of Glasgow Central, and the most southerly point of the line.

The loop is 5.2 miles (8.4km) in length, starting and finishing at slightly different points in the suburb of Strathbungo. Trains on the Pollokshields West side of the loop go past Pollokshields East station, like, you can see it right there from the train window, and split from the main line to Kilmarnock just to the south. Indeed the two Pollokshields stations are only about 500m from each other in a straight line, about four road junctions away along Darnley Street. There used to be a station on the Kilmarnock Line here too (disappointingly called Strathbungo and not, say, Pollokshields South), but that closed in 1962.

Although planned as one loop, the line was built in two stages; the Eastern side - from Strathbungo to Cathcart via Mount Florida - was constructed first and opened in 1886. The western side, through Shawlands, followed in 1894. There were technical, legal, and logistical reasons for this, but importantly at the time the eastern side had a larger population - a map from around 1900 shows villages like Cathcart and Pollokshaws being pretty much one road and a handful of buildings on the edge of the countryside.

Although designed as a loop line, these days not many trains use it as such. Rather, extensions in the Cathcart area mean that trains on the western loop tend to travel on east to Newton, in South Lanarkshire, from where you can pick up connections to Hamilton and Motherwell, whilst trains on the eastern loop go Southwest to the southern suburbs of Glasgow and end at the East Renfrewshire village of Neilston. An odd place to stop, if you look at it on a map, but back in the day this line extended all the way to the coast at Ardrossan. Stations beyond Neilston closed in 1962, as it was effectively a duplicate of the Kilmarnock line that runs through Strathbungo. Note that because half the circle ends in Nelson and half the circle ends in Neilston, and the two names vibe quite similar to a Glaswegian, on the display boards at Glasgow Central, Neilston station is always displayed enclosed in angled brackets (chevrons). Just to make sure you can tell the difference.

Note also that, despite Cathcart being the nominal centre of the loop, Cathcart station itself isn't accessible by all trains. Only those on the actual loop, or, more commonly, on the line from Glasgow to Neilston via the eastern side of the loop, stop there. This is a design feature - the line to Nelson in the east was never designed

for passengers to use Cathcart station which means these days, outside of peak times, getting from Cathcart to Langside requires either a complicated movement potentially involving two changes (Mount Florida, King's Park), or walking. It's only about 1100 metres. It's flat. It's fine.

The Cathcart Circle itself goes through the following stations:

Pollokshields East
Queen's Park
Crosshill
Mount Florida
Cathcart
Langside
Pollokshaws East
Shawlands
Maxwell Park
Pollokshields West

Yes it's easy to get the two Pollokshields stations mixed up. To confuse matters even more, the line to Kilmarnock that goes between the two of them *also* has a station of its own at Pollokshaws West, making four very similarly-named stations that even the rail staff have to pause for a second when selling tickets on the train before making sure they're doing the right one.

[All the stations have ticket machines on-site, usually on the platforms, but none have ticket barriers. It's possible to buy tickets on the train. Or at Glasgow Central before the ticket barriers there, and many people do - often because the ticket machines at the stations only take card payments. And sometimes don't work].

There has been talk over the recent decades of converting the Cathcart Circle line into a light rail or a metro system. In one way it makes some sense, since the stations are incredibly close together for a main line system - the only reason it's not possible to see, say, Shawlands and Pollokshaws East at the same time is because the line bends slightly between them. It's not clear what would happen to the Nelson or Neilston trains if this happened, or even if they'd be included in the plan.

But this is not a railway history pod, it is a travel pod, so let's ride the line and talk about the places it travels through. Because everywhere is interesting and more people should explore their local area a bit more, as you never know what you might find.

{section separation - Pollokshields East

SCOTRAIL: This is Pollokshields East. If you are asked to produce a ticket and are unable to do so, you may wish to consider alternative transport modes to reach your destination

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Heading clockwise around the line, the first station reached is Pollokshields East. When I was plotting my visits to Glasgow-area railway stations, this was, for many months, the nearest station to the flat I'd never walked past, simply because I'd never really had need to (there's a lot of stations in the area and I'd been past all the other ones, so I'd already walked a lot around the locale).

On the displays at Glasgow Central, Pollokshaws East is usually followed with 'change for the Tramway'. This is not an indication that the Glasgow area has a tram system as well as a hundred-odd railway stations. Rather, this refers to the Tramway theatre, whose name derives from it occupying a former tram depot (one of the main depots in fact), in use as such from 1893 to the early 1960s.

Their website describes themselves as "a renowned international arts venue with an interdisciplinary spirit whose mission is to enrich and inspire our communities by providing ambitious, innovative and culturally relevant contemporary visual art and performance". While quite 'wordy', what it means is it provides a home for creative arts of all types, from painting to dance, sculpture to movie, and provide both a working space for artists and an exhibition area to display their works. Indeed at the start of this year I assisted a student at one of the arts colleges with their multi-media dissertation project on the positive parts of being non-binary or trans, which they then displayed at the Tramway.

Dance in particular is well-attested at the theatre, and it occupies the same building as the home of Scottish Ballet, meaning it's one of the best places in the city to watch a performance. Not that I ever have, mind you, because, being honest, dance itself never really caught my eye. I think it's because I'm not a visual person, and at least with film there's an audio track so I don't have to be *watching* it to get a gist of what's going on.

Next to the Ballet building are the Hidden Gardens. 'Hidden' because they're kind of behind the complex, accessed through a small service road and a metal gate you'd usually find blocking the route to an office building on a commercial park.

The idea behind the Hidden Gardens is to provide a quiet sanctuary from the inner city suburbs, as well as giving the opportunity for people to learn about nature that they may otherwise not get a chance to see. Their vision statement, as taken from their website, says their aim's to create "a society where people live, play, learn, participate and celebrate together in peace".

Though not that big, there's a lot to take in, from the design – which reflects the history of the site and includes an old industrial chimney and tramlines, but also is structured to bring to mind paths taken around religious sites – to the plants themselves, which include both native Scottish and imported varieties of pines and rowan trees. The meeting of cultures in the garden reflects the various cultures and demographics present in Pollokshields as a whole – the local council ward, for instance, is reputed to be one of the most ethnically diverse in the whole of Glasgow, being 69% White, 27% Asian, 2% Black, and 1½% Mixed/Other. I'll talk more about that later though.

An example of this here tho is, inside the garden, there is a Ginkgo Biloba tree, which though now incredibly rare, used to grow worldwide back in the day, and by 'the day' I mean the late Jurassic period, so its near-extinction isn't necessarily down to humans. It's been planted here to represent the peoples of the world, and to reinforce that, stones from Mount Sinai are at its base – that location being pretty important to the entirety of the Abrahamic Religions.

Not that that would matter to their neighbours. On the other side of the far wall, and between it and Pollokshields East railway station, is Gurdwara Guru Granth Sahib Sikh Sabha, more commonly known as Glasgow Gurdwara – a large Sikh temple and community centre. It opened 2013 to replace a smaller venue on nearby Nithsdale Road (which made it closer to Pollokshields West!). The sources are contradictory as to which it was, but one of the two is believed to have been the first purpose-built Gurdwara in Scotland. The new building can accommodate up to 1,500 worshippers, although the newer Gurdwara near Kelvingrove Park in Glasgow's West End, which opened in 2016, is bigger.

The gurdwara is built on the site of an old rail depot, and contains in addition to the worship area, a computer room, a library, a golden dome, advice & support services, educational and music classes, and, as you would expect from a Sikh community centre, a large kitchen serving free vegetarian meals for the community and passing visitors. Because, as I said in the London pods, this is a basic tenet of Sikh beliefs. You don't even get a wafer biscuit at an Anglican church.

The last thing of note in the area is on the other side of the main Pollokshaws Road, heading into Govanhill. It's a building at 31-33 Coplaw Street, dating from 1884 and expanded in 1903, designed by the architect John Bennie Wilson. It's known as Drill Hall, and is now an apartment block, but when built, served as the headquarters of the 3rd Lanarkshire Rifle Volunteer Corps. While the building itself is worth a look if you walk past (and there's still allegedly the battalion's crest on it in the wall), it's the battalion themselves who are more notable in terms of Glasgow Southside history, but not for the reason you might expect.

{section separation – Queen's Park

SCOTRAIL: This is Queen's Park. Please disregard a person running barefoot.

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Queen's Park station stands on Victoria Road, one of the many popular thoroughfares in Glasgow Southside that's lined with shops, cafes, independent boutiques, and pubs. At the time of podding, two unusual businesses in the area are a Jewish vegan queer anarchist pay-what-you-can cafe, and a queer intersectional bookshop that also does a fine line in retro badges and patches. Glasgow Southside is definitely an alternative place, very 'me'.

What I also find amusing is, a couple of buildings north of the station entrance on Victoria Road is a Victorian-era building, quite grand, looks like it should be a small bank. Well, it is a bank, it's a branch of the Bank Of Scotland. But above the long window on the upper floor is the phrase "Christ Died For Our Sins" in huge letters. I just like the juxtaposition of a religious tract above a bank – someone's been reading a bit too much into Matthew Chapter 21.

Queen's Park doesn't just refer to the district, but more to the large public park just to the south of the station. As an aside, given that Victoria Road ends with a large gateway into the park, and then continues along a tree-lined avenue within up to a flight of very wide stairs, you might be forgiven for thinking the park is named after Queen Victoria. And you'd be ... wrong. It is in fact named after Mary Queen Of Scots, for reasons that will become apparent over the course of several of these stations.

It's 60 hectares in area, whatever that is, just slightly smaller than Disneyland apparently, or, for Indian listeners, the size of Eden Gardens Cricket Ground. Bigger than the Vatican by a third, too. It was laid out by Sir Joseph Paxton in the mid-1800s; he was the chap who designed The Crystal Palace in London, making him presumably one of the few people to have lived to have indirectly named two football teams.

As parks go, it's quite unusual, given it's quite varied. Most city parks in the UK tend to be quite mundane, with paths of cement or gravel separating out large areas of lawn. On the edges might be trees or bushes. And they're often quite flat. Maybe there's a boating lake. It all tends to feel quite open and slightly dull. Queen's Park is ... not. For one thing there's a huge hill in it with a flagpole on top. Or at least it feels like a huge hill when you're on lap three of Parkrun (it's about 60m high and the elevation gain from the start of the lap is 35m). The views from the flagpole (which does not have a flag on it) are pretty good across the east of Glasgow, from hills near Loch Lomond all the way round to points beyond Cathkin Braes in the SE. There's not great views to the west because there's a load of trees in the way.

By trees, it feels a bit like a veritable ancient woodland on the side of the hill, with quiet barely-perceptible muddy trails in lieu of paths, and the feeling that at some point you'll be whisked away by elves. It's remarkably quiet, given where it is. In amongst the trees are the remains of an iron-age fort, though this requires a bit of imagination. At the bottom of the hill are more solid paths, but even so it feels more like a woodland walk than a park stroll. Meanwhile, on the other side of the park are sports facilities, an overgrown pitch-and-putt site that's now used mainly by dogs, and a wide council access road that feels bigger than the roads outside.

Also in the park are a rose garden (from the World Rose Convention of 2003, who knew that was A Thing), which is in part dedicated to Scottish poets of the last 500 years (some of whom are commemorated on, of all things, litter bins; I don't know if that's quite how I'd like to be remembered!), a tree dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the founding of the UN and, next to it, one commemorating the Halajba massacre in 1988 in Iraq, a plant nursery and glasshouse (currently closed awaiting renovations), and not one but two small lakes, mostly occupied by ducks, although there's a couple of modern art sculptures in and around one of them. In winter the ponds freeze over, and the Parkrun gets cancelled because of ice on the slopes.

As mentioned earlier, Queen's Park is also the name of the local football club – the oldest in Scotland and the tenth oldest in the world. They don't actually play *in* Queen's Park, but a little way to the east, but I'll come onto that in the next station. They were founded in 1867 and remained resolutely amateur until 2019, despite playing often in the upper echelons of a professional league system. This may say more about Scottish football than about the club's principles. They play in a black-white striped kit, and are therefore not to be confused with Queen's Park Rangers FC, who have a blue-white striped kit. And play in London. As an aside, given Queen's Park FC's forays into the English FA Cup (reaching the final twice, losing to Blackburn Rovers both times) I did try to search if the two sides had ever played each other. Given that there's *also* a club in Scotland called, simply, 'Rangers', you can imagine how fraught that websearch was.

They were founded at a flat called "No. 3 Eglinton Terrace" which ... the address no longer exists due to renumbering but the site exists, it's now a flat above the Victoria pub on Victoria Road not far from the station – a small doorway into a grade B listed building (though not listed for that reason) with no indication this is where Scottish football kinda started.

I've never been to that pub. Maybe I ought.

{section separation – Crosshill

SCOTRAIL: This is Crosshill. Due to operational problems, please disregard any public address announcements and please take extra care when getting on and off trains.

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Crosshill station is the one on the line I've walked past the least. This is because it's located at a point just to the NE of Queen's Park that I never really need to go past - from the flat I'd either hit Cathcart Road further south, or I'd be wandering through Govanhill much further north. To go past the station itself would mean I'd be taking a somewhat awkward route that doesn't make much practical sense.

The area around the station though I've been to quite a bit, as two junctions south of the station is Queen's Park Recreation Ground - a flat open grassy area often used by sports teams for training, and which feels like an extension of Queen's Park itself.

These days, the area around Crosshill station is largely residential - another shopping area in Southside (Cathcart Road) heads North towards Gorbals and Laurieston, not yet as gentrified as points to the west. However, at the time the Cathcart Circle was built, it was not housing that brought people to the area, but a whole different ball game.

Although now it is housing, the area around Holybrook Street, just NE of the station, was the site of Cathkin Park, the original home stadium for one of the leading clubs in the early days of Scottish football - Third Lanark. The team were formed from a local army rifle regiment, hence the name - yes, the very same regiment who occupied the Drill Hall near Pollokshields East railway station. Told you it wasn't what you might have expected. Early football clubs tended to evolve from other organisations - the list of clubs formed from the armed services, church congregations, industrial works teams, or even from other sports (often cricket, as we'll see later) is huge, and probably deserves its own podcast.

At the same time, Queen's Park FC were playing their home games at Hampden Park, which was located a couple of blocks south of what became Crosshill Station. This was not just believed to be the first football stadium in the UK (and by inference, the world) which was enclosed and accessed via turnstiles rather than being open-sided to all-comers, but also used for early (1870s and 1880s) international matches between Scotland and both England and Wales. However the Cathcart Circle line itself had to be built pretty much through the site of the stadium, forcing them to move. They simply crossed to the other side of Cathcart Road to a new stadium they again called 'Hampden Park' (or 'Second Hampden'). The old original stadium is now partly occupied by a bowling green, and there are murals and information boards around it explaining its part in early football history.

In 1903 they built a new stadium a little further south, and, keeping with their naming convention, they called it, yep, you guessed it, (Third) Hampden Park. This left their second stadium empty, and Third Lanark FC decided to move in (better facilities and location etc). They renamed it 'New Cathkin Park', because it's not just Queen's Park who had standard naming conventions. They stayed there until 1967 when, as is sadly not unique amongst lower-league clubs at times, they went bust through financial irregularity and a dodgy chairman who seemed to profit from selling the ground for housing (he may have wanted to move the club to one of the New Towns outwith Glasgow; cf Clyde FC and Wimbledon FC). He died of a convenient heart attack before he could be sentenced, but other directors were charged and fined with corruption).

Except. Planning permission was refused. So while the original Hampden and Cathkin Parks no longer exist, this Second Hampden (then New Cathkin Park, eventually the 'New' being dropped) still does, and is used mainly these days by Amateur footballers, and, er, dog-walkers. The terracing around the pitch still exists, at least on three sides, despite having trees growing through it, and it feels eerie to stand on it and watch people kick a ball around, almost like you're in somewhere that should be fenced off for dereliction. It looks overgrown and unloved, but really it's used more-or-less like a standard park, just one with an unusual setting. It also feels weird to be walking on a pitch that within living memory hosted a decent standard of Scottish league football - they were in the top flight as recently as 1965.

But, you may be thinking, I've heard of Hampden Park and it's not full of trees and none of this sounds familiar. Well, for that we have to go one stop south.

{section separation - Mount Florida

SCOTRAIL: This is Mount Florida. This service has been reported to be full and standing due to overcrowding because of a football match.

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Mount Florida station, briefly the terminus of the line while they built it to Cathcart, is another area of Southside with a central shopping road lined with cafes, restaurants, and some independent businesses, including a Queer-friendly hair salon. It's also the nearest station to Victoria Hospital, just east of Queen's Park, which continues the theme in this area of '... but not *that* Queen'. It's where I've been for most of my leg-related check-ups.

However, it's more notable these days for being the nearest station to Hampden Park, Scotland's National Football Stadium. Or, more precisely, the Third Hampden Park, built in what was then open land and inconveniently on top of a small stream (Mall's Mire) that runs into the nearby White Cart Water - the main river of the area. This came to light in a recent football match when after a short torrential shower just before kick-off, the pitch pretty much flooded. The match was delayed for an hour while they tried to dry the pitch, mind you they stopped it just after Scotland scored, which their opposition, Georgia, were unimpressed with.

As stated, this Hampden was constructed in 1903, and is still used, albeit it's been renovated and rebuilt. As you'd've hoped. One plan to completely rebuild it in time for a potential Men's Football World Cup bid in 2030 has been but on hold, so sadly it won't look flash and won't have a retractable roof in the near future after all.

As it currently stands, the capacity for sport is just over 51,000 (lower when they use it for athletics, but higher when there are concerts - Coldplay played here about a year ago and seemed to have had 100,000 or so spectators. I walked past it about six hours before they went on stage and the pedestrianised street alongside it was already full of concert-goers and stalls selling tat). The ground does hold some sporting attendance records though that are unlikely to be beaten: 136,000 people watched Glasgow club Celtic play in the semi-finals of the European Cup in 1970 (against English club Leeds United, which may have helped), the highest ever for any UEFA competition; just over 149,000 people watched Scotland beat England 3-1, the highest ever European international attendance; and only venues in South America have had larger attendances for club football matches than the 1937 Scottish Cup Final (about 147,000 people).

Note that when Queen's Park FC were in the fourth tier of Scottish Football, they had attendances just about pushing the one thousand barrier - indeed in 2013 they hosted Montrose in a match seen by 325 people. I don't know how it would feel to watch a match in such a large stadium surrounded by such a small crowd. I imagine it'd be quite eerie. Anyway, despite being home of Scottish Football, Queen's Park still owned the stadium until as recently as the Pandemic, when they finally decided to sell up to the Scottish FA and revamp their training ground to make that their stadium. Which lies right next door and is called Hampden Park. Obviously. Well it's called *Little* Hampden, rather than Hampden Park The Fourth, but still ...

The streets in the immediate vicinity are lined with standard Glaswegian tenement blocks and to this day I don't know if that's a brilliant place to live or an awful one. Maybe it helps if you like Coldplay and lower-league football. I don't know.

Hampden Park also hosts the Scottish Football Museum, which does exactly what it says on the tin, and despite Scotland not being exactly a world power in the game, is definitely worth the trip. Touted as 'Europe's First Football Museum', it includes exhibitions on the history of the game up here, including a part on Women's Football, and a tour of the stadium itself.

Despite being at the foundations of football in Scotland, this part of what is now Glasgow is much older than that, as we're now about to hear.

{section separation - Cathcart

SCOTRAIL: This is Cathcart. This service is delayed by approximately fifty minutes due to earlier engineering works not being finished on time.

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As far as I can make out, the name Cathcart comes from the leading landowner family in the area in times gone by; indeed there is still an Earl Cathcart in existence although they appear to have decamped to Norfolk. Their ancestral home was Cathcart Castle, now a series of nondescript ruins, barely identifiable, in the general surrounds of Linn Park, having been demolished in 1980 because it had lain derelict for many decades and the cost of renovation was too high. It was only a mansion anyway, not a proper castle. /me glares at Nottingham.

As an aside, the family also presumably gives its name to White Cart Water, a small river that I mentioned in passing in Mount Florida but which will follow the course of the railway for the next few stations. This is a river, despite its less-than-salubrious name, which rises several miles to the Southeast, somewhere in the hills near East Kilbride, and runs roughly north-west eventually to Paisley and Glasgow Airport, before joining the less-interesting Black Cart Water to form the River Cart which, less than a mile later, flows into the Clyde at Renfrew.

This river flows through Linn Park and there are two notable places en route there. Halfway down the Park is Linn Park Bridge, also known as 'Ha'penny Bridge', one of many across the world with that epithet. It is, by all accounts, the oldest cast iron bridge in Glasgow (it was built in the early 1800s), and its name comes from its design, and not, as you might otherwise expect, a reference to an early toll. Rather, the sides of the bridge have holes in that resemble pre-Victorian half pennies.

Slightly further north, downstream, is Snuff Mill Bridge. This lies on the edge of Linn Park, a short walk south of Cathcart station, and is two centuries older than Linn Park Bridge, although it was rebuilt in the 1800s. It's one of those cute stone bridges and nearby are some of the oldest tenement-style blocks in Glasgow (we're talking about 18th Century). It's also the site of an old mill, so it was quite an important spot in the early modern history of the region.

Between the two is Linn Park Waterfalls, not to be confused with Linn Falls in Moray, in the NE of Scotland. When I walked past it for the first time I ended up chatting to a couple of shirtless teenage boys who were salmon-fishing here, which is not a sentence that ends how you'd expect. They're more like rapids than a full-on waterfall but they are quite cool to stand and watch for a short while - especially if you've been walking along a couple of the paths through the woodlands of Linn Park. It's these waterfalls that give the park its name though; 'Linn' being derived from Gallic 'linne', meaning a waterfall, pool or ravine.

On the opposite side of the White Cart Water is Holmwood House, which featured on a recent £20 note issued by Clydesdale Bank (Scottish money is beyond the scope of this podcast). It's a mid-Victorian middle-class merchant house and as such is a fine example of period architecture. It was designed by Alexander Thomson, a 19th Century Scottish architect who was nicknamed 'the Greek' due to his preference for recreating the style of ancient Greece in his plans, and who's responsible for quite a few of the buildings in central Glasgow.. The house, arguably the best example of his work, is pretty much still preserved inside as well as out. It's now owned by National Trust of Scotland who have vowed to preserve it as much as possible to its original decor and design. I've never been in it but I have wandered around the outside of it - the cafe had just closed by the time I turned up (not that I have a habit of visiting cafes of old buildings).

Linn Park itself is about 80 hectares, and is the second largest park entirely (or at least mostly) within the Glasgow city area - the largest is Pollok Country Park a little to the west. Glasgow is perhaps a surprisingly green city - indeed an article in The Guardian newspaper suggested that at 32%, Glasgow had the second most green space of any city in the UK, after Edinburgh, but this was specifically city rather than urban area and the UK has an overly-specific definition of city

On the edge of Linn Park is an area called Court Knowe. This is a grassy hill, surrounded by trees, that would otherwise be un-notable (if a nice place for a walk) where it not for a historical legend. It is said that this is the spot that Mary Queen of Scots, she of Queen's Park fame lest it not be forgotten, stood and looked out from when she was observing the battle of Langside in 1568. A propos of anything else, I've stood at that spot and, despite the height, could barely even see Cathcart. I assume there were fewer trees back in the 16th Century.

{section separation - Langside

SCOTRAIL: This is Langside. Due to passengers causing a disturbance earlier on this train's journey, this service will now depart in approximately fifteen minutes.

}

Glasgow has a suburb called 'Battlefield'. It lies north of Langside station (and, to be fair, is nearer Mount Florida, but regardless) and contains an ornate cafe that used to be a tram shelter, a Victorian library, several shops, a old building with ornate columns that's a pub called The Church On The Hill that was, well, you can guess, and a small cul-de-sac called Blairhall Avenue. This small dead-end street just to the south of Queen's Park, if it were anywhere else, it would be filled with Instagrammers, but because it's in a lesser-visited suburb a little walk from any of the cute cafes, is generally very quiet. It's a road with trees on one side and terraced housing on the other - but the housing is two-storey Victorian era with ornate bay windows and each is a different pastel colour. The entire road feels like some kind of child's box of coloured pencils. This may explain why houses here are going for nearly £540,000, when the surrounding roads are going for much less than that. It's not the most expensive street in Glasgow though - that's about 2km to the Northwest.

Close to Blairhill Avenue and outside the Church On The Hill, visible from the southern paths around Queen's Park, is a large column in the middle of a small roundabout. This column is the monument to the Battle of Langside, it's about 16m tall, with a lion on top, with one paw on a cannonball. The sides are carved with thistles, roses and fleur-de-lis, while the pedestal base is made up of cannon, swords, and several coats of arms. The latter represent those lords who fought in the battle, whilst the former is all a mix of Scottish and Royal iconography. It was constructed in 1887, designed by Alexander Skirving, friend of Alexander Thomson and who built the Church On The Hill (1896), and sculpted by James Young, who did a number of other works in Glasgow centre.

The Battle of Langside was a decisive battle in the latter years of a separate Scottish monarchy, and was part of a small civil war between supporters and critics of the previous monarch. That monarch was the oft-mentioned Mary Queen of Scots. She'd been on the throne of Scotland for nearly 25 years at this point, albeit being only 25 years old (her father, James V, had died when she was 6 days old, unusually in such circumstances of natural causes), and her early 'reign' had been enacted by nobles acting as regents, so there was a history of the nobles having a say in power. Anyway, Mary married her half-cousin, Lord Darnley, had a kid (naturally called James), and then ... Lord Darnley died in mysterious circumstances. The person generally believed to have caused these mysterious circumstances was a chap called Lord Bothwell, who was a recent divorcée (his marriage being terminated itself on some very shaky ground). In not at all suggesting anything untoward was going on, Mary then married Bothwell. Many of the nobles, being both genre-savvy and Catholic, weren't impressed with any of this and this, along with other discontent at her reign, caused them to imprison her and force her abdication in favour of her infant son.

She had other ideas, escaped from prison, and rested with her friend Lord Hamilton, in nearby Hamilton. She knew some nobles supported her, and managed to raise an army of around 6,000 men. Her plan was to base herself in Dumbarton, Northwest of Glasgow where the fortress is high on a rock on a peninsula - fairly defensive, and where she had strong support - and get there by avoiding Glasgow. However her opponent, the Earl of Moray, was on the ball, so to speak, and blocked her way at Langside.

The battle itself lasted less time than this podcast. It doesn't sound like it was a terribly interesting battle, resembling somewhat of an elongated rugby scrum, except with pikes. Despite having a much larger force though, Mary's army was thoroughly routed - 100 killed and three times that number taken prisoner, whilst Moray's troops are reported to have lost precisely one man. Mary fled to England, was imprisoned in Carlisle, and spent the rest of her life waiting for Queen Elizabeth I of England (her first cousin once removed, or something of that ilk) to do something with her.

The civil war that resulted lasted five years, and could easily have become yet another war between France (who supported Mary) and England (who supported Moray), but in the end enough sabres were rattled to prevent that. The regents of the infant James won out, though Moray himself had died in 1570, the first head of government to be assassinated with a firearm, Wikipedia tells me. James later became King James VI and, in 1603, ended up as King of England too. But that's another story.

As to the belief that Mary looked out at the battle from Court Knowe; it's felt by historians this was enemy territory as the Cathcart family seem to have been supporters of Moray, and if she had watched the battle from anywhere it's likely to have been Prospecthill, to the east of Mount Florida and between where the second and third Hampden Parks would later be.

And this is why Queen's Park is specifically not named after Queen Victoria.

{section separation - Pollokshaws East

SCOTRAIL: This is Pollokshaws East. We apologise for the inconvenience caused by a problem with a river bridge earlier today.

}

In researching this pod, I've finally discovered what 'shaws' means (as in Pollokshaws, nearby Shawlands, and the town of Wishaw near Motherwell); it's old Scots and means 'woods' or 'woodland'.

Anyway. Pollokshaws East is the closest of the Cathcart Line stations to where I've been living for the last two years, but I don't use it as often as you'd think because the main road with buses on is, you know, 'right there', and they're more frequent. Shush, Laura. It's yet another road lined with shops, restaurants, pubs (not all of which feel 'stabby'), and cute cafes; it's also here where the Curious Liquids wine and beer shop / wee bar is, where I spend much of my soft-earned money. The White Cart Water passes literally underneath the station, making it one of the few railway stations I know that are built on a river, although it doesn't rival London Blackfriars for views. Sheffield station is also built on a river but you can't see it unless it floods.

Aside from housing (and the railway here vibes like it forms a boundary between the tenements of Glasgow and the townhouses of the suburbs), there's a couple of interesting buildings in the area. In the far west, and virtually opposite Pollokshaws West station but that's by-the-by, it's 800m in a straight line between the two, is Pollokshaws Burgh Hall. This was opened in 1898 at the behest of local politician Sir John Stirling Maxwell, and was apparently based on the designs of the original buildings of the University of Glasgow, before the latter moved from the city to the West End. It served as the town hall for 14 years until the Glasgow Corporation annexed Pollokshaws, whenupon it was used by the local council until the late 1990s. It's now used as a community centre, offering dance and yoga classes. It also holds what their website says is "Scotland's only functioning Wurlitzer cinema pipe organ". This seems to have been installed in 2007, having been moved from Clydebank Town Hall, but started life many hours away in the Ritz Cinema in Stockport, near Manchester.

Sir John Stirling Maxwell, a name you'll be hearing a lot more of later, is commemorated in a nearby Primary School, a large and impressive sandstone building built around 1907. Just like the Burgh Hall, he gifted the land for the school, who repaid him by naming it after him – the current building is the on-site replacement for the earlier, smaller, building originally named for him. Sadly, the school closed in 2011 and is now derelict. A bit like the Wetherspoons pub named after him just up the main road from Pollokshaws East railway station in the Shawlands Shopping Centre, which closed in early 2023, possibly due to arguments over rent and the imminent demolition of the shopping centre anyway. My nearest Wetherspoons is now in Rutherglen, but it's just easier to wander into the city centre if I want cheap beer and a dodgy breakfast.

Between the Burgh Hall and Pollokshaws East railway station is what at first glance appears to be a very out-of-place building – an old pre-Victorian clock tower not connected to anything, and located in an otherwise empty pedestrianised square. This is all that remains of the older Burgh House, built about 100 years earlier than the current Burgh Hall, and which served as a courthouse, police cell, and, oddly, a library and a pub. All at once, it seems. The majority of the building was demolished not long after its replacement was built, leaving just the clock tower. Which doesn't seem to be used for anything these days.

Behind the clock tower is a small cairn dedicated to John MacLean (not that one; it's spelt differently). He was born in Pollokshaws, and graduated from Glasgow University in 1904 with an MA in 'Political Economy'. Given his studies, and his environment, and the popular philosophies of the time, it may come as no surprise to anyone that he made a career in left-wing thought and activism. He taught Marxist economics (at the Sir John Stirling Maxwell School, indeed; evening classes for adults though), led strikes and marches, and ended up setting up a consulate for the new USSR in 1917 in Glasgow. Indeed Lenin himself is reported to have regarded him as "Lenin as Britain's greatest revolutionary leader". Obviously he was arrested a few times, especially during the first world war. He died from Pneumonia at the comparatively young age of 44; it's said he'd given his only jacket to a striking worker just a few days before, and Glasgow in November is not a place to not be wrapped up well. While not as noted as many of the socialist leaders and speakers of the time, he's nevertheless well regarded in left-wing circles and even at his funeral, thousands of local workers came out to express their memory of him – this became a yearly march for over twenty years afterwards on the first Sunday after his deathday.

The cairn was placed on the 50th anniversary of his death, and has a plaque which reads "In memory of John

Maclean, born in Pollokshaws on 24th August, 1879, died 30th November, 1923. Famous pioneer of working-class education. He forged the Scottish link in the golden chain of world socialism". I have no idea what chain means in this context.

The area around Shawlands and the two Pollokshaws stations has enough micro-history to warrant a 60-page leaflet issued by Glasgow City Council called the 'Pollokshaws Heritage Trail'; it is mostly old buildings to be sure. I've talked about the ones on this pod as they're the ones I'd been to prior to my discovering the leaflet's existence!

{section separation - Shawlands

SCOTRAIL: This is Shawlands. This train is delayed due to cattle on the railway.

}

There's a lot of Polloks spoken in this pod, but this seems like the best time to explain it all. The name itself, by the way, seems to come from a Gaelic word meaning 'pool' or 'pit'.

Shawlands is the nearest railway station on the Cathcart Circle to Pollok Country Park (Pollokshaws West is closer, but that's on the line to Kilmarnock). This is the largest park in Glasgow – at 146 hectares it's three-quarters of size of Monaco or half the size of the City Of London. It's also been regarded as one of the best urban parks in the world, and certainly the only one where you're likely to see Highland Cows. It was donated to the city in 1966 on condition it remained a park, and wouldn't be built on. Which, apart from a motorway that cuts off any access from the west aside from one footpath, they didn't.

The family that owned the land was the Maxwell family, of which the aforementioned Sir John Stirling Maxwell was a notable member at the turn of the 20th Century. He was the local MP, was chairman and trustee of a couple of notable Fine Arts organisations, and founder of the National Trust for Scotland. Despite being landed gentry, he seems to have been very keen on allowing access to green space rather than hoarding it for personal gain.

The family home was Pollok House, which still stands today and is visitable as part of the deal with the council. It was built in the mid 1750s and is surrounded by a large set of walled flower gardens with paths going every which way. I've got lost in them a couple of times because it's not quite as easy as you'd think to get from one side of them to the other if you're coming in from the footpath along the White Cart Water. It's possible to get almost to the water's edge, and there's a stone-arched bridge over it dating from the same period which looks cool in photos.

Inside the house is a restaurant, museum and art gallery, and is where the famous Burrell Collection is on display. This is a collection of almost 9,000 art pieces obtained over many years by local shipping magnate William Burrell, which were donated by him to the city of Glasgow in 1944 (at that point the collection was only 6,000 strong; he literally carried on afterwards until his death in 1958), purely because he seems to have felt that was the right thing to do with them. It took the city council the best part of 20 years to find a place for them; the donation of Pollok House and Park proved quite serendipitous. The art includes one of the largest collections of Spanish paintings in the world, much mediaeval art and weaponry, sculpture ancient and modern, and random things he just seems to have liked.

Some of it was obtained without as large a trail of receipts as you might hope, and two items in particular have led to restorative payments in the tens of thousands of pounds being made to German Jews who originally owned those pieces but which were looted from them by the Nazis.

The park itself feels very much like country parkland rather than an urban park. While there's some areas of open lawn, the majority of it is forested, with streams flowing through and a couple of lakes in the centre. On the western fringes of the park there aren't even many trail paths and it feels very remote. There's a Parkrun here, quite popular, though with a bit too much gravel and knobbly path in one part to comfortably run it barefoot, and the size of the park means it's one of those rare two-lap courses rather than the more common three-laps. On the edge there's also a running club, a rugby club, and a cricket club.

As for the highland cows, well there's around 50 of them in the park and this makes it the easiest place for most of Glasgow to see them. They've been a feature of the park since the early 1800s, when the Maxwell family

decided it would be a really cool idea to have them around. It seems this was also for commercial purposes; the soil and land in what is now Pollok Country Park suited them more than arable farming, and they could breed them for show purposes (and presumably stud).

{section separation - Maxwell Park

SCOTRAIL: This is Maxwell Park. The public address at this station is currently under test. [beep]

}

All the stations on the Cathcart Circle are built in the same way - island platforms where the two lines go either side of the platform itself - and with two exits (the majority of stations have an exit at either end of the platform). The original station buildings were also all built to the same style. However, that at Maxwell Park is one of the only station buildings in the whole of Glasgow to have survived - albeit very reconstructed in 2000 rather than being genuinely original brickwork.

This though sums up the Maxwell Park area - traditional and elegant. In 2022, the most expensive street for housing in the Glasgow City Area was Sherbrooke Avenue, just west of the station. with an average house price of just over £1 million. Now admittedly there were only three sales in the period, but given the number of houses on the street, that's a fair indication of value. Sherbrooke Avenue is also home to the Sherbrooke Castle Hotel, which ... yes. John Morrison, a building contractor, built a villa for himself out of red sandstone in 1896 and designed it to look like a castle, complete with turrets and domed towers. It's on a small hill and is an impressive building even for the area. It was taken over by the Royal Navy in world war II and used as a radar training centre, and became a hotel after the war.

Also, fun fact: one of the other expansive and expensive villas in the area, on Maxwell Drive, is currently in use as a Pakistani Consulate.

Now, you'll notice the preponderance of Maxwells here. And yes, you won't be surprised to learn it's the same one. Maxwell Park itself is a small parkland just north of the station, which was given to the city in 1888 by the very same Sir John Stirling Maxwell. In fairness it's built on quite boggy land which would have been unsuitable for building at the time, but still. The park itself contains a lake, a series of tree-lined avenues (unlike both Queen's Park and especially Pollok Country Park, most of the paths in Maxwell Park are either straight, or at least geometric), a children's play area, and ... a tree where a bandstand or fountain would have stood.

My research has also brought up (because though I've walked through the park many times, I've never noticed it), that Maxwell Park is home to one of the many Tiny Forests in the country. This is a project by Earthwatch Europe, an environmental charity whose website says they have "science at its heart". The idea behind the project is to plant very small pieces of woodland (about the size of a tennis court) in urban areas, to allow the local people to connect with nature, be more aware of their environment, and support urban wildlife. It's definitely focussed towards children, but ultimately it's supposed to benefit and educate everybody.

I saw an urban fox once in the streets between Shawlands and Pollock Country Park. It was about 4pm. I don't know who was more surprised, but it ran off before I could say hello, so I imagine it was him. I also saw one near Celtic Park in the east of the city but that area's a bit more open (post-industrial wasteland) so it's less strange. I also saw a deer in part of Craigton cemetery, just south of Govan, once. There's certainly more urban wildlife around than you might imagine in a large city area.

Just inside the park, on the east side, is Pollokshields Burgh Hall. Not to be confused with Pollokshaws Burgh Hall, exactly 1 mile SSW. It was commissioned by and given to the people of Pollokshields by, guess who, and opened on the same day (in 1890) as the park itself. It had a much shorter life as the Town Hall than the one in neighbouring Pollokshaws; Glasgow took over this borough in 1891. Again the city council used it for a while but it was given to a trust organisation in 1986, refurbished, and now serves as a community centre and wedding venue. It's built of dark red sandstone, is a Category A listed building and, to the best of my knowledge, does not contain a Wurlitzer.

South of the railway lies Titwood Cricket Ground. This is the home of Clydesdale Cricket Club, who, despite the name, had an important part to play in the history of Scottish football. They are, it seems, the oldest sporting club in Glasgow still playing, and as far as I'm aware, have always played cricket. They had been playing at a site in Kinning Park, a shade less than a mile due north of Maxwell Park station, but sold it in 1873

to a group of footballers from the West End with the vague name of 'Rangers'. {pause} I wonder whatever happened to them. Anyway, just before they moved, they founded a football club – Clydesdale FC. They didn't play for very long (they'd stopped by 1881), but in that time they were one of the founder members of the Scottish Football Association, the second oldest in the world, and indeed made the second largest donation to the cost of the Scottish Cup amongst those present. In addition, one of their members, Archibald Campbell, which, let's face it, is about a Scottish name as you can get before resorting to stereotypes, became the SFA's first chairman. They also lost in the first ever Scottish Cup Final. To Queen's Park, obviously. So quite an influential club, if short-lived.

As an aside, seven clubs founded the SFA on 13 March 1873, in a meeting at a place called Dewar's Hotel. This seems to have been at 11 Bridge Street, the address of which matches that of an Indian Restaurant up the A77 just south of the Clyde, most of the building of which doesn't look that old. Apart from Queen's Park, Clydesdale, and Third Lanarkshire Rifle Volunteers, the others were Vale of Leven, Dumbreck, Eastern, and Granville. Only Queen's Park still exist, and most of the others had dissolved by even the turn of the 20th Century. An eighth club, Kilmarnock FC, who do still exist, sent a letter of support, presumably because all the others were Glasgow-based and Kilmarnock was, at that time, a bit of a trek.

Anyway. Titwood Cricket Ground itself is notable, as not only do Clydesdale play there still, but it's also one of the designated grounds for Scotland's international cricket team. And before you say anything about cricket in the Scottish weather, let me tell you right now at least in the cricket season it's very unlikely you'll have a game stopped for bad light. Sunset in Glasgow is after 10pm in the height of summer, we can just wait. Granted the first international game scheduled there was one between India and Pakistan in July 2007, and it was entirely rained off, but still.

By the way, Scotland's men's international cricketing side have recently just failed to reach the Cricket World Cup; they were defeated in what was effectively a play-off by the Dutch, and outside of the countries who actually play cricket, Netherlands are one of the best teams, so that's not a bad effort.

{section separation – Pollokshields West

SCOTRAIL: This is Pollokshields West. The police are dealing with an incident near the railway.

}

In actual fact the naming convention of these stations is a little off-kilter, as the area known as Pollokshields traditionally started around the railways and headed West – Maxwell Park station should really be called Pollokshields West, and this one possibly Strathbungo, which as you won't recall was the now-closed station on the line to Kilmarnock, and literally on the other side of Darnley Road. But anyway.

This is the last station on the Cathcart Loop heading clockwise, and lies around 500 metres Southwest of Pollokshields East. North of here the railway joins with the Kilmarnock line, passes the East station, and then closes the loop. In the sense of joining the same track – there's no provision to actually loop. And even if there was, the layout of the track means it would only be possible if you built a line between Pollokshields West and Queen's Park stations.

Incidentally, the 'Shields' part of the name here is from the word 'shielinga', which is a type of hut. They're mostly found in remote hilly farmland or moorland, and are simple rectangular structures made of dry-stone or turf, and often no windows. Kind of like a small bothy, I guess. Anyway, it implies in pre-Glasgow times, the land around the western side of the Cathcart Circle was quite boggy and damp, with woodland in the south and a little farmland in the north, where the land rises before dropping back again to meet the Clyde.

Much of the area between the Pollokshields stations and Maxwell Park station is a conservation area. It was built under the auspices of the Maxwell family (one or two generations before our old buddy John), to create a suburb fit for habitation, basically, with quality housing of a stylish nature. While the Maxwell Park area in the west got the townhouses and villas, the area around Pollokshields West station got fashionable and upmarket tenement flats, built along leafy suburban avenues. Many of the buildings were designed by notable architects, among them the previously-mentioned Alexander Thomson and John Bennie Wilson. To all intents and purposes, Pollokshields would be described as a Garden Suburb.

One question asked is: 'why did the Maxwells give so much to the city'. One answer could be they saw Glasgow

expanding and wanted to control, or at least manage, that expansion so they didn't wake up one morning and find inner city terraced housing on the fences of Pollok House. It is of course possible they saw the conditions of urban housing in Glasgow at the time (cholera was rife and it's estimated by 1850, 50% of people died before they were five) and genuinely believed that, having the means to improve it, they felt they should.

I ought to talk a bit about tenements actually, since they're the dominant style of housing in Glasgow, especially around the Cathcart Circle area. They're actually found across Scotland, but the ones in Glasgow mostly date from between the mid-Victorian period to the first world war. The one I currently live in seems to have been built around 1906, according to cross-referencing of old local maps of the area. They're generally made from red or light orange sandstone, and are usually 3 or 4 storeys high. To take the street I live on as an example, both sides of it are lined with one continuous building with no gaps, but this is internally divided into several blocks. Each block contains maybe 3 flats on each floor, so while connected in principle to the rest of the street, in my block there are only 12 flats. Behind each tenement is a series of lawned areas, and there's usually some kind of service road behind that to allow access for rubbish collection and the like - though I'm 100% sure despite this in my block, the council simply come through the front door of the block and head directly to the back.

Typically the entranceway to the tenement is tiled and very often the internal passageways are ornately decorated, with big mosaic-type windows and wide staircases. In the recent heatwave we had, I noticed the entrance hall was the coolest place to be, possibly due to the marble tiling and the staircase being open so all the heat rose up. One notable feature of tenements here is the height of the ceilings - I have to stand on a ladder to change a lightbulb. The rooms tend to be a decent size; the one I'm in has two good-sized bedrooms and a large living room. We won't talk about the kitchen.

Now, that's not to say that all tenements are the same; indeed many in parts of Glasgow were knocked down due to falling into disrepair or being simply too small for the size of the families living there. The ones near Pollokshields West station though seem to be regarded as amongst the best in Scotland.

It would be remiss of me to mention Pollokshields and not talk about the community culture here. If you remember, when I talked about Pollokshields East I said about the ethnic diversity of the area. The streets between the two Pollokshields stations very much have a strong Pakistani and Indian vibe, and indeed the local library on Leslie Street, a category B listed building built in 1907 and opened by yadda yadda yadda, has a large selection of books and magazines in Urdu.

A couple of months before I moved to Glasgow, an incident occurred in Pollokshields that highlighted the community culture here, and probably sums up much of the vibe of Southside as a whole. As you may know, the UK's Home Office has an 'interesting' policy on immigration, which while not exactly 'no', isn't that much longer a sentence. Part of their policy is making it as difficult as possible to immigrate, to stay once having immigrated, and as easy as possible to remove people who fail to meet their exacting standards. One morning, the police, having got wind that there were two people whose immigration status was dubious, burst into houses in Pollokshields (Kenmure Street) and arrested two Indian men for immigration violations, with the presumed intention of deporting them forthwith. One important point to note - these men had been living in Pollokshields for ten years. Ten Years. Another important note, although the men were Sikhs, the area has a largely Muslim population and this event took place around Eid al-Fitr, the celebration at the end of Ramadan.

However, the local community (of all faiths and backgrounds) got wind of this and responded quickly, surrounding the police van, lying underneath the van, sitting in the road, and generally just doing everything possible to prevent the police from leaving until they'd released the two men. Despite extra police being called, enough residents and local activists were present to prevent them being able to do anything, and by 5pm the police gave up, transported the men to a local mosque, and released them.

A bit like Cable Street.

{section separation - Crossmyloof

SCOTRAIL: This is Crossmyloof. We apologise for the inconvenience caused.

}

Now, see, I've mentioned a few times of the existence of another railway line in the area, off which the Cathcart

Circle splits from both directions. This is the line from Glasgow Central to Kilmarnock and East Kilbride, and within the loop formed by the Cathcart Circle there's one railway station. It lies between Pollokshaws West and Shawlands, and the 470 or so metres (straight line distance) between it and Maxwell Park makes it one of the smallest distances between railway stations in the whole of the Glasgow region, which given how close many stations are to each other – the original premise of my explorations, don't forget – is quite an achievement.

I'm also including it because I like the name. Crossmyloof. It's a cool word to say. Cross. Ma. Loof. There are two origins to this name, one is considerably more boring than the other. The railway station, as per all stations in Scotland, has the name in both English and Gaelic, and the Gaelic name for Crossmyloof is Crois Mo Liubha, three words, which translates as 'St Malieu's Cross'. I don't know who St Malieu was (and nothing comes up in Wikipedia), but a websearch indicates they're most noted for having a church named after them in Inverary in Argyll that's been converted into a large self-catering cottage.

However, there's an urban myth that the name is a Scots rendition of 'cross my palm', as in, with silver, and refers to one of the themes of this pod – Mary Queen of Scots is alleged to have met a fortune teller here who promised to divine her the result of the upcoming battle, or that by giving her a silver coin she'd ensure the battle went Mary's way. Clearly, if that were true, she was fleeced. To that extent, outside the Corona bar at the main road junction in Crossmyloof, where the road to Pollokshaws East meets the road to Mount Florida, there's both a small hand carved out of plaster, with a cross shape in the palm itself, above the entrance, and the same symbol in the tiles on the floor in front of the door.

Opposite the Corona bar, which will never cease to amuse me given it was pretty much one of the first buildings I saw when I moved to Glasgow that wasn't a house, and given I moved here while there were still pandemic restrictions, is a wide paved triangular area used by skateboarders and the occasional small Saturday food market. A similarly small craft market operates from a side-alley across the main Kilmarnock Road a few buildings further north. Behind the paved area though, and in front of the SW edge of Queen's Park, is a building known as the Langside Halls.

This was built in 1847, and originally served as the National Bank Of Scotland building. As befitted such an institution, it was ornately decorated inside and out, with large windows across the whole frontage of two storeys built into large stone bricks and surrounded by columns, a stained glass dome in the building's interior, and decorative touches by the unfortunately named John Thomas, who also worked on the Houses of Parliament.

Now, you might wonder why the National Bank Of Scotland decided to build such a prestigious building in what was then the centre of a small village in rural Lanarkshire. And the answer is, they didn't. See, it was built in the centre of Glasgow, on Queen Street, and for 50 years this was fine. However in the late 1890s the Bank felt they had to move out to somewhere bigger. Normally, what would happen would be someone else would then move in and everything would continue as normal.

However, two things prevented this from being quite as smooth as that. Firstly, it seems the new owners wanted to build something new in the location rather than keep the old bank building as it was. Secondly, the Glasgow City council felt the new residential areas in the Southside needed a public building. So rather than the new owners of the bank knocking the old building down, and the council building something new two miles away as two completely separate actions, which is what normally would have happened, an arrangement was made for the council to move the old bank building, brick by 70,000 brick, and rebuild it in Crossmyloof. It wasn't completely perfect, and things like the dome and some of the internal décor couldn't be rebuilt (partly because it was deemed 'too ostentatious' for a public building), but to all intents and purposes, the building was reconstructed pretty much exactly as it was. For the record, the building that replaced it on Queen Street was the Guildhall, which if you look at it, fits in exactly well with its surroundings and you'd never know it wasn't supposed to be there, and meanwhile the National Bank Of Scotland got premises on Buchanan Street that looked equally as befitting, so everybody won. And in the move, the old bank building was renamed Langside Halls to reflect its new location near the Battle of Langside and on the edge of Queen's Park.

Sadly, time has not been kind to Langside Halls, and the interior of the building is in need to renovation and repair – it's been closed to the public since 2017 with no sign of any significant repair being done in the meantime. Local community groups keep pushing for something to be done about it but so far, nothing seems in the pipeline.

{end pod jingle: SCOTRAIL - Attention please! Please leave the station immediately.}

Well, that's about all for this pod. Join me next time for another adventure beyond the brochure. Until then, take good care of your highland cows, and if you're feeling off colour, keep on getting better.

{Outro voiceover:

Thank you for listening to this episode of Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure. I hope you enjoyed it; if you did, don't forget to leave a review on your podcast site of choice.

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Until next time, have safe journeys. Bye for now.}