

# THE MOSAICS OF KINGS PARK

## INTRODUCTION

These mosaics form a heritage trail that illustrates part of the history of the park. The panels were the idea of the Friends of Kings Park and came from the Kings Park history leaflet. The panels were created in 2011 from artwork by the students of St Modan's High school and the project was supervised by the artist Meredith Crone.

### 1. Roman Road

At the front gate facing the Kings Park fountain is the site of an ancient Roman road which, excavations have revealed, followed a route through the park from the main entrance. This road is probably a continuation of the road which runs through Beechwood Park. This road is believed to continue towards the Kings Knot, Raploch and on to several river crossings points. The exact route of this road though the park is not known.

### 2. The Wolf

The wolf is the symbol of Stirling. The legend states that around 900AD the wolf saved Stirling from attack by howling during a night time Viking raid on the town, so alerting the towns folk and saving it from pillage.

### 3. James IV

There are few records of the old park until about 1493 to 1507 when James IV commissioned the redesign of the park. Prior to that, much of the park appears to be used for pasture. Around 1493 to 1507 the park became known as the Kings Park. The Kings Park was not just the park that we think of today but also included the Kings Knot, the Haining, an orchard on the tiered hillside and cattle which would have fed the royal table.

### 4. Stirling Races

Horse racing took place in the Kings Park prior to and during the 19<sup>th</sup> C. Around 1800 the park loch was drained and a raised embankment formed to create a flat horse racing circuit. This new race course took a circular route around the park. A grandstand was added in 1841, situated near the site of the old park quarries, with stables nearby for the horses. The grandstand was burned down in 1872.

During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> C, the Stirling Races became a popular event with the Stirling Gold cup featuring as the main prize. People travelled from all over Central Scotland to attend these events. It's popularity was due in part to William Ramsay of Barnton a well known sportsman and politician. However, leaders of the temperance movement, notably Peter Drummond, raised concerns that the race meetings contributed to drunkenness and gambling among the locals. These concerns gained local support and in 1854 the last race meeting was held.

### 5. The Knight

Jousting in early medieval times tended to be fierce bloody affairs where combatants often fought to the death, so these tournaments are likely to have been held some distance away from the Castle and possibly in the area near where Victoria Square is now located. In 1506 jousting tournaments moved to the area directly beneath Stirling Castle known as the butt park. By this time, the court enjoyed participating in royal pageants and jousting tended to be more ceremonial and chivalrous affairs.

## **6. Park Loch**

As one of the many improvements, James IV made to his park in the 15<sup>th</sup> C one was the creation of the loch as a royal water feature. Reference is made in Treasurer accounts of 1434 to a net for fishing being provided and payment made to the loch keeper. This evidently contained a "sheet of water" measuring 6 acres and was well stocked with fish and also a residence for herons and swans.

## **7. Golfer**

Golf has been a popular sport in Scotland since the 14<sup>th</sup> C and was played by Scottish monarchs. James IV is said to have purchased golf balls for his game in the royal park Stirling in 1505. The origins of Stirling Golf club dates back to 1869 when a club was first set up playing on a seven holes course in Kings Park. This course was extended to 9 holes and in 1892 a proper club house was built. In 1912 the golf course was redesigned and extended to 18 holes. Stirling golf club has occupied its current site in Kings Park since the 1960s. A ladies golf club was formed around 1900 and soon had 72 members. However prior to July 1912, lady members were only allowed limited access to the full golf course unless playing mixed foursome. Cattle were still grazing on the golf land and many golfers complained about having to compete with cows, so ruining their game.

## **8. World War 1, 1914 – 1918**

In October 1914, amid much excitement locally, 4,000 troops including army reservists and territorials arrived in Stirling to prepare for active service in the Great War. A temporary training camp was set up in Kings Park with 500 men from the City of Glasgow Argyll Brigades billeted. A wooden building was erected as a canteen and local people were asked to provide musical entertainment. A large number of horses used by the artillery were stabled in the park. However, in December, the troops left because of flooding in the park and the horses were also removed to various stables in the town. The troops were evacuated to Tillicoultry to an old mill.

## **9. Circuit of Britain Air Race**

In May 1911, the *Daily Mail* sponsored a Circuit of Britain Air Race with a prize of £10,000. The race started at Broadlands in Surrey on 22<sup>nd</sup> July. There were 11 compulsory stops on route. The race went as far as Edinburgh and returned via Stirling. The event triggered great excitement; 8,000 people had gathered in Kings Park by the time the first plane landed at 3.45am on 25<sup>th</sup> July. Flaming torches were placed in rows to make a runway. 17 competitors entered the race which was won by Lieutenant de Vaisseau Conneau, flying a Bleriot monoplane.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES**

### **The Romans in Central Scotland**

Romans invaded Britain 43AD and over the next 45 years conquered present day England, Wales and some of Scotland. The Romans tried to establish forts in this area but because of rebellion among the local inhabitants but also because Scotland lacked good soil, mineral wealth and a developed, central economy that could be easily taxed, there wasn't seen to be enough to steal. The Romans retreated and built a wall named after emperor Hadrian. In 117AD, Antonius Pius marched north and pacified the Lowlands from the River Clyde to the Forth and built the Antonine wall in 162AD. Forts were constructed from Doune to the River Tay, known nowadays as the Gask Ridge. Roman rule ended 410AD and a letter from Emperor Honorius said Britain must "look after its own defences."

### **James IV 1473 – 1513 (only 40 years old)**

James IV was the most successful of the Stewart monarchs and had a great interest in Arts and Education. He came to power in a royal coup at the Battle of Sauchieburn where he led an army against his father, James III, in which James III was killed. James IV seemed horrified at what he had done and re-endowed Cambuskenneth Abbey as a suitable mausoleum for his father. Separately, he did much to restore other churches, Stirling Castle and the Royal Park. James IV was married to Henry VIII's sister, Margaret Tudor and a period of peace followed. However, when Henry III invaded France, James sided with the French – the Auld Alliance in action. He led an army into England and was defeated by Catherine of Aragon's forces (Regent while Henry was away). James IV was killed at the Battle of Flodden.

End

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