

The first people came here hunting reindeer after the main ice sheet retreated across Scotland about 12,000BC! The hills around Biggar are rich in sites where ancient people lived and were buried.



The Caddger's Brig

Biggar Kirk stained glass

Discover some of the highlights and important events in the life of the town and the characters connected with Biggar. Explore the shops, cafes and pubs, and enjoy this beautiful little conservation town. You can delve deeper into our historic past at the Biggar and Upper Clydesdale Museum.

From ancient beginnings to a bustling market town

Biggar

A warm welcome to

Heritage Trail

Explore this bustling town and discover historical highlights



Spot the horse hooks

Look for the literary legend

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Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this leaflet

Map and information

We hope you enjoy your visit to Biggar.

Let the deed shaw!

Colourful characters and pioneering entrepreneurs . . .

- a** **Gilbert Rae 1875-1955**, was an ironmonger and also a notable poet, writer, historian and editor of *The Scottish Field*. His legacy to Biggar includes the recognition of George Meikle Kemp and Dr John Brown. He saved the remains of Boghall Castle from final demolition in 1912.
- b** **Blackwood Murray** of Heavyside Farm was one of the founders of Albion Motors in 1899. A veteran and vintage vehicle rally is held every August to commemorate this great industry and its founder.
- c** **Hugh McDiarmid 1892-1978**, was a significant Scottish poet and generally recognised as the founder of a Scottish literary renaissance. He lived for a while in Brownsbank Cottage, Candymill. Look at the wall for words of wisdom from him.
- d** The ancestors of **William Ewart Gladstone 1809-1898**, (Prime Minister during the period 1868-1894) are buried in the churchyard at Biggar Kirk. William contributed to the rebuilding costs of the Gillespie church, but he upset the elders by describing the architectural style as 'debased Gothic'. One elder responded, "Well, well, dirt or no dirt, Mr Gladstone should have written about the ould kirk in a ceevil manner".
- e** **George Meikle Kemp 1795-1844**, find the plaque behind the hedge overlooking Burn Braes Park and discover what iconic building in Edinburgh he designed.
- f** **William Wallace 1272-1305**. Why was he in Biggar? Find out by looking at the plaque on the wall of the Cross Keys.

g Legend tells us that, during the Wars of Scottish Independence, Robert the Bruce rushed from Greyfriars Church in Dumfries after stabbing his rival John Comyn and cried, "I doubt I have slain the Comyn". Bruce's followers entered the church and **Robert Fleming** emerged holding Comyn's severed head and exclaimed "**Let the deed shaw**". This became Biggar's motto.

h **Mary Fleming** was picked to be one of Mary Queen of Scots' playmates and to be trained with her in her learning. Around 1561 she took part in a fun game at the Scottish Royal Court and was crowned Queen of the Bean - she was saluted as Queen for the day. A local schoolgirl is crowned as Fleming Queen on the annual Biggar Gala Day.

i **Ian Hamilton Finlay CBE 1925-2006**. Find the sundial. What did this famous poet want to tell us?

j **James Cuthbertson 1907-1993**. We rely on one of his many engineering inventions in heavy winters.

k **Doctor John Brown 1810-1882**. Find the plaque that commemorates this famous author who was born in Biggar.

l **General Sikorski**. Look at the plaque on the wall of the Elphinstone Hotel to find out what the Polish Prime Minister was doing here in August 1940.

m **Elizabeth B. Mitchell 1880-1980**. The Little Mitchellwood owes its name to Miss Elizabeth Mitchell who planted the woodland on her Langlees Estate. She believed strongly in providing open spaces in the proximity of housing estates. She was the first lady town planner in Scotland and was instrumental in the development of Scotland's first new town, East Kilbride.



Mercat Cross 1

This area was the main focal point of the town for many centuries. Weekly markets were held in the wide High Street and a Mercat Cross erected on a small hill called the Cross Knowe. Nearby was a Tron Knowe - a public weighing place. These old relics of trade and commerce are now mostly gone, but the remains of the old Mercat Cross are built into the rear gable wall of the Corn Exchange (you can see them from John Street). The design of the War Memorial beside the Cadger's Brig is based on the Mercat Cross.

The Corn Exchange 2

This iconic building, where farmers and merchants came to trade in cereal grains, symbolises Biggar's trading history. Built in 1860 to replace the dilapidated Meal House, it cost £190 to construct, funded by local merchants, tradesmen and farmers. Trading cereals like wheat in Corn Exchanges was common at that time, in towns throughout Britain and Ireland. Biggar Corn Exchange is now a thriving entertainment venue for both local and visiting theatrical productions, concerts and a film club. At Hogmanay, the Biggar Bonfire, on the cobbles in front of the Corn Exchange, is lit to burn the old year out.



Medieval Closes 3



A number of old medieval closes (narrow passages) run from the High Street to both North and South Back Roads. Next to The Crown Inn is Brian's Yard, where a Biggar "notable" dwelt. Bailie Patrick Kello was struck off by the Kirk Session for keeping a riotous house. His initials can still be seen above a rear window. Smith's Close, at one time known as Canongate Close, may refer to the Canons of Biggar Kirk. Or it may refer to an incident when lumps of peat were charged with gunpowder to trap a thief. When put on a fire in the close a tremendous explosion occurred, and a rumour spread through the town that the house had been deliberately blown up.

Biggar and Upper Clydesdale Museum 4

Biggar Museum Trust collects, stores, preserves and records Biggar and Upper Clydesdale's rich archaeological, social and historic heritage spanning over 14,000 years of rural and small town life. People have lived and worked here from prehistoric times.



The Municipal Hall 5

Built in 1847 as the Parish school, which remained in operation until 1900. The Municipal Hall is used regularly by many local organisations.



The oldest house in Biggar 6

47 High Street is locally regarded as the oldest house in Biggar. Once an inn, officers from the retreating Jacobite rebel army were billeted here in 1746. Can you spot the spiral stonework up on the roof?

Greenhill Covenanters House 9

This 17th century farmhouse was rescued by moving it from Wiston (13km away) and rebuilding it here in 1975 as a museum (now closed) dedicated to the story of the Covenanters.



Burnbraes Park 10

Once an industrial hub, with grain mill, wauking and dyeing works (for cloth manufacture), a brewery and a nearby community of weavers at Westraw. The mill was powered by the Biggar burn which was straightened to enable the bleaching and dyeing of cloth on its banks.

West Row (Westraw) 11

In 1831 more than half of Biggar's workforce were part of this weaving community, but by the turn of the century there were none left. W B Pairman records the rhythmic working of the loom from the homes of the Westraw hand loom weavers:

'Treadle, Beam, Clip-clap, Hand, Shuttle, Reel, Clipperty-clapperty, Clipperty-clapperty, Clap'



The remains of Boghall Castle

Boghall Castle 12

Baldwin Flandrensis is the first recorded owner of Biggar. When he became Sheriff of Lanarkshire in 1162, the Fleming family succeeded Baldwin, and built Boghall Castle. Visit the museum to see a scale model of how the castle used to look.

Biggar Gasworks Museum 13

The last remaining Scottish example of a gasworks producing town gas from coal. In operation from 1839 to 1973, when North Sea Gas came to Biggar. At one time children with whooping cough were brought here to breathe the sulphur fumes! Open weekends from June-September, 2pm-5pm. An Historic Environment Scotland property.

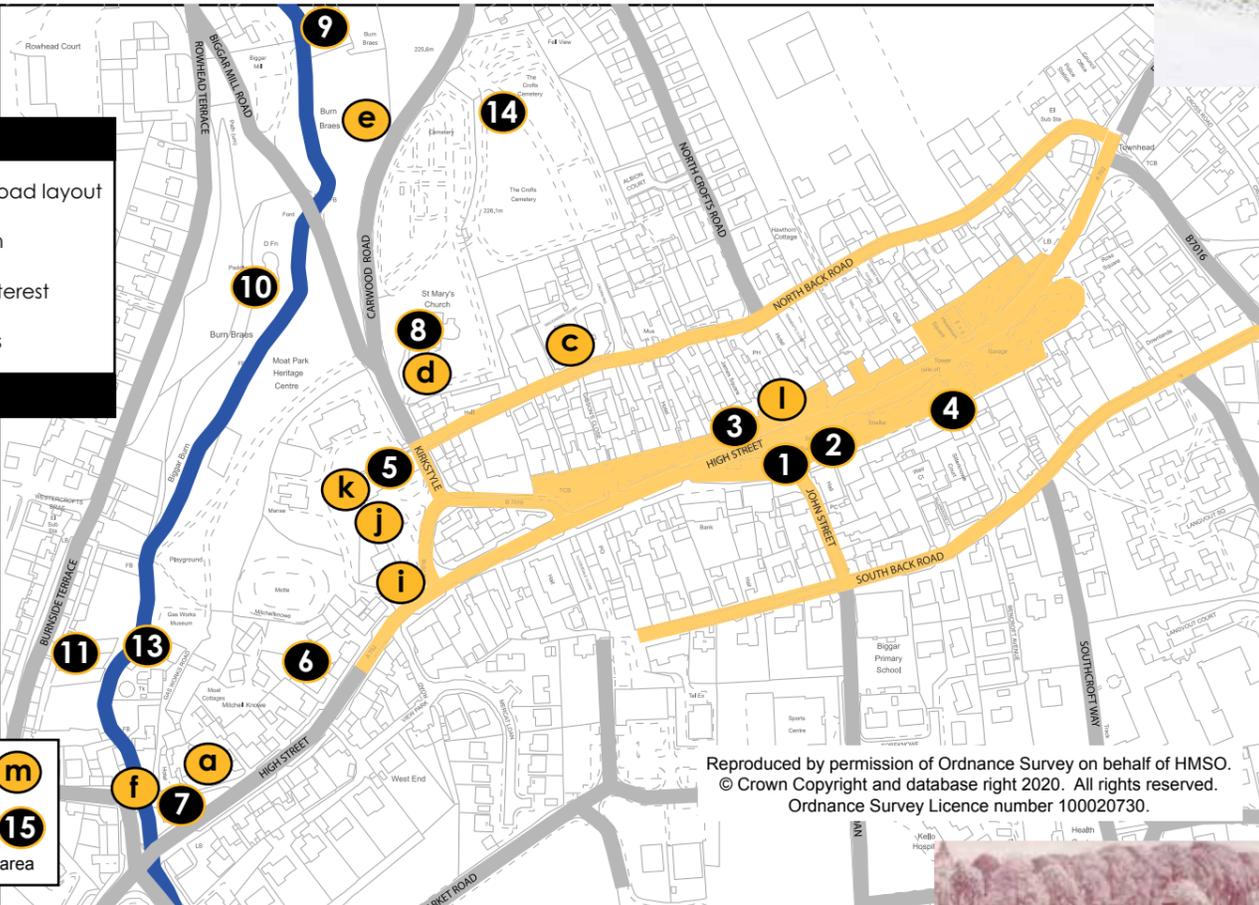


Biggar Arts, Loaningdale 14

Biggar Arts Centre works with other Biggar community organisations, to promote and encourage local, national and international artistic talent.

Little Mitchellwood 15

In 2004, Lord Clydesmuir granted a 50 year lease, at a peppercorn rent, to BDCH to restore Elizabeth Mitchell's woodland as a community resource.



Cadgers Brig 7

Local legend tells that, one night, William Wallace dressed up as a peddler or 'cadger' and crossed Cadger's Brig to spy on the enemy English camp.

Biggar Kirk 8

Standing on the site of the 1164 Church of St Nicholas, Biggar Kirk was built in 1546 by Lord Fleming, uncle of Mary Queen of Scots. It was the last church built for the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland before the Reformation. A stone basin (set into the south wall of the chancel) and a stone lamp survive from the 12th century building. There are wonderful stained glass windows throughout the building. In the churchyard stands the 'Peace Pole' in memory of Councillor Thomas McAlpine (1931-2006). Can you find the skeleton with long arms and legs on one of the gravestones?

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b 12 15
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