

**Fenwick Cemetery**

Many notable people are buried in Fenwick Cemetery, just outside the village. These include:

**Matthew Fowlds**, the last surviving weaver, died at the age of 100 years and 47 days. Matthew was born in 1807 and joined the Society on his 20th birthday. He worked as a weaver all his life, and when the Society closed, he inherited all the records of the Society, which remained in the family until 1965. He is buried alongside his wife.

**Sir George Fowlds**, the youngest of Matthew's children, who became a draper in Glasgow but emigrated to South Africa, where he married his childhood sweetheart, Mary Ann Fulton, the niece of John Fulton. He then moved to Auckland, New Zealand where, after building a very successful drapery business, he went into and became very successful in politics. He joined the Government as Minister for Education and Public Health, and served in 1911 to pursue other interests. George was knighted in 1928 and, after his death in 1934, his ashes were brought back to Fenwick to be interred with his parents.

**Thomas Godfrey Polson Corbett, Lord Rowallan**, who was born in 1895 and served in the Ayrshire Yeomanry and the Grenadier Guards in World War 1 where he was awarded the Military Cross for gallantry. After the war he turned to farming in Ayrshire and became involved in the Scout Movement. He also served during the Second World War and in 1945 he accepted the appointment of Chief Scout of the British Commonwealth and Empire until 1959.

In 1959 he became Governor of Tasmania and served until 1963, when he retired to his family estate at Rowallan near Fenwick. On his death in 1977, he was interred in Fenwick Cemetery.

**Rev James Barr MP**

James Barr was a United Free Church Minister, who was elected as Member of Parliament for Motherwell from 1924 – 31 and for Coatbridge from 1935 – 1945. He campaigned tirelessly for home rule, a minimum wage and temperance.

On retiring in 1945, he remained active in the Church, opposing any reunion with the Church of Scotland. He died in 1949.



Weavers' Cottages

The Parliament Wall

John Fulton's House

William Guthrie's House

The Secession Church

Fenwick Church

John Gemmill's House (Last Meeting House)

The Fulton Memorial Hall

Fenwick Weavers' Library

## About Fenwick Weavers' Trail

Taking in nine key locations in Fenwick and covering major historical issues, such as the religious and political covenants to the formation of the first ever co-operative society, the Fenwick Weavers' trail will walk you through some of Scotland's most fascinating history.

## About the Fenwick Weavers' Co-operative

The Fenwick Weavers' Co-operative was re-established in 2007 with the aim of promoting awareness and recognition of the achievements of the original Fenwick Weavers' Society in the field of co-operative enterprise and more widely.



The European Agricultural Fund  
for Rural Development  
Europe investing in rural areas



This project is being part-financed by the Scottish Government  
and the European Community Leader 2007-2013 Programme

## About Covenanters

Covenanting was an important religious and political movement in Scotland in the 17th century. The Presbyterian Church drew up the National Covenant in 1638, refusing to accept the imposition of bishops by King Charles I. They believed that all officers of the church should be chosen by the people. This led to war when the King outlawed the Covenanters. The Church signed the Solemn League and Covenant and allied with the English opponents of the King. When the Church called for parish militias to oppose the pro-royal Duke of Montrose in 1645, Rev Guthrie appointed Captain John Paton to lead the Fenwick Militia.

On the return of the Royalists after the death of Cromwell, Paton became a fugitive, but was eventually captured in Mearns. He was taken to Edinburgh where, after being found guilty as a rebel, he was hanged in the Grassmarket in 1684. Before he died, he handed his Bible to his wife. The Bible can be seen today in Fenwick Church. There are many other Covenanting Memorials in and around the church including the "Call" to the Rev Guthrie and the banners of the Cameronian Regiment.



## Location

Just off junction 8 of the M77, Fenwick is only a few minutes by bus or car from Kilmarnock and about 25 minutes from Glasgow.

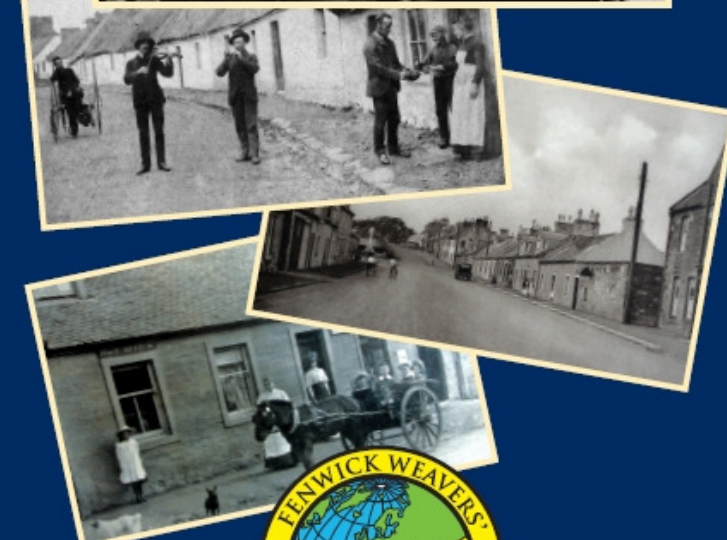
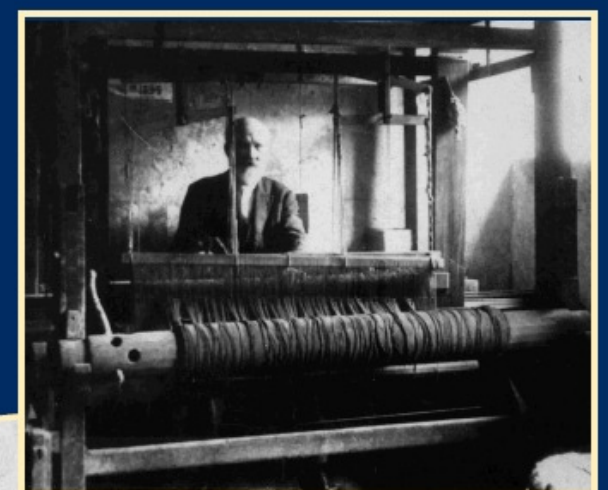
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# Fenwick Weavers







## The Parliament Wall

As early as 1758, the handloom weavers of the village would meet at the village pump to discuss all manner of current affairs. In those days, meeting in groups and especially to discuss radical ideas, was outlawed and dangerous. However, the Parliament Wall provided a perfect location for meeting to discuss radical ideas where the men could talk in the shadow of the wall, while their wives and children could stand watch on the three converging roads and notify them of any dangers.

At the Wall nine master weavers and seven apprentices formed a plan to work together to regulate both the prices they paid for yarn and the prices they would charge for completed cloth. A charter, which made this legal, was signed by the Fenwick Weavers on 14 March 1761 in Fenwick Church, thereby creating the first Co-operative Society in the world. The Charter and Record Book of the Society are in the safekeeping of the National Library of Scotland.



## Weavers' Cottages

Externally, this row of Grade B Listed weavers' cottages is much like it was in the Eighteenth Century. The original thatched roofs have been replaced with slate tiles and one has had a second story added. Having two windows close together was a typical feature of such cottages, though some in this row have had the second removed, with a further one on the opposite side of the door. The room with two windows was generally where the weaver had his loom, providing the best possible day-light source for working. Living quarters tended to be in the room with the single window as well as rooms at the back of the house. Many of these cottages also had 'kailyards', a kitchen garden, to provide home-grown food for the family.

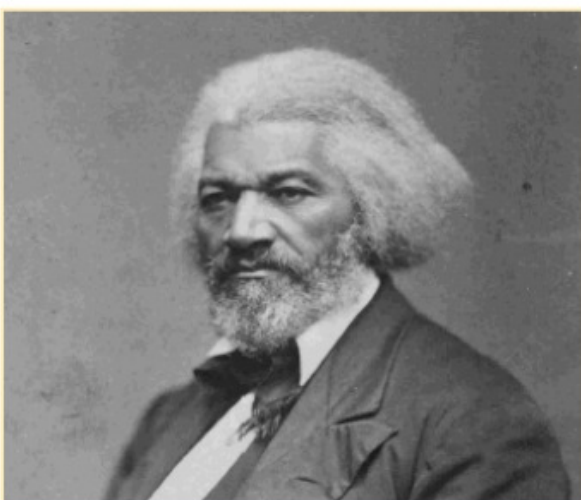


## The Fulton Memorial Hall

In 1918, a committee was formed to build a public hall and library to celebrate the memory of John Fulton, the builder of the famous Orrery. Led by William Brown of the Schoolhouse in Fenwick they sought to raise £1,200 to buy and equip what had been the Guthrie Memorial Church. The Guthrie Memorial Church (1843) had been set up as a splinter from the Orr Memorial United Secession Church, the scene of the famous visit by Frederick Douglass. The original church bell of the Church remains in the safekeeping of East Ayrshire Council.

Over the next two years, they received subscriptions from all over the world, one of the first being from the Hon (later Sir) George Fowlds in New Zealand, who had married Fulton's niece. Indeed, judging from the large number of subscriptions from New Zealand, it would seem that George played a very active part in the fundraising.

By the end of 1919, they had achieved their aim, and took possession of the Hall, which was opened in 1920. The Hall remains the public meeting hall for the village, and is now managed by East Ayrshire Council.



Picture: Frederick Douglass



## William Guthrie's House

Born in 1620, educated at St Andrew's University and ultimately a highly regarded preacher it is reported that people came from far and wide to hear William Guthrie preach, with reports of up to 3000 people coming to the village on weekends.

Licensed to preach in 1642 and ordained in 1644 he was called to be the first Minister of the new parish of Fenwick. During his first two years in the village, he lived in a house on this spot, whilst the Church, and the Ministers House opposite it, were being built.

Fenwick Parish Church has the highest number of Covenanting memorials in Scotland. Guthrie had made public his support for the Covenanters and many villagers followed his lead, indeed dying for the cause. Guthrie was imprisoned on several occasions for his support of the Covenanters but always remained true to his beliefs.

Despite being tempted to richer and larger parishes Guthrie served Fenwick until he died on 10 October 1665, aged 45. He was buried in Brechin but has a memorial in the parish churchyard.



Fulton's Orrery  
Picture: © Culture and Sport Glasgow (Museums)

## Fenwick Weavers' Library

A Co-operative is not just a way of making money for its members. Modern co-operatives ascribe to a set of values and principles. Principle 5 is "education, training and information" and Principle 7 is "concern for the community". Fenwick Weavers exhibited both of these and none more so than in their founding of the Fenwick Library in 1808.

In prior years, members of the Weavers banded together to buy individual books, and in 1808, they decided to set up a subscription library.

In the preamble of The Regulations and Catalogue of the Library, published in 1827 it states: "Everything which has a tendency to improve the condition of man, claims his cordial regard. For this end, nothing can be better calculated than a Library adapted to the habits and various pursuits of the community where it is established."

One of the earliest subscribers to the library was John Fulton, who used his knowledge and love of astronomy, mathematics and engineering, which he gained at the Library, to build his great Orrery in the 1830s.

## The Secession Church

In the 18th and early 19th Centuries, the Presbyterian Church in Scotland was riven by splits and factionalism, and a number of new churches were set up. One of those was the United Secession Church, formed in 1820, and a parish of this new church was set up on this site in Fenwick, with many of the Weavers as members.

The Church was a home to radicals and the Fenwick parish was no different. In 1846, they invited a travelling speaker against the slave trade, Frederick Douglass, to speak in the church. Douglass was born into slavery in 1818 and escaped in 1838. He became one of the foremost anti-slavery campaigners and, during his visit to Britain, his supporters were so impressed by his oratory, they banded together to purchase his freedom. He is regarded today as one of the father figures in the black anti-slavery movement and President Barack Obama has said that Douglass is one of his greatest heroes.

The Frederick Douglass Society in America, who maintain and record all information about Douglass, was aware of his visit to Scotland, but not that he visited Fenwick. After an approach from the modern Society, Fenwick has been added to the role of honour in the Frederick Douglass Society.



## John Fulton's House

Born in 1800, John Fulton was a young shoemaker, who lived on this site in Fenwick. He developed a love for maths, engineering and astronomy from using the Weavers' Library, which had been founded in 1808 and, so the story goes, melted his grandmother's candlesticks to make the first of three "Orreries".

An Orrery is a working model of the Sun and the Planets, and, in all, Fulton built three. The last, and largest, can still be seen today in Glasgow's Kelvingrove Museum, and it is still in working order nearly 200 years after it was built. The operation is based on "wind-up" machinery similar to a pocket watch, the operation of which he taught himself. His skills were such that he was appointed Principal Instrument Maker to King William IV and he eventually moved to London. On retiring, he returned to Fenwick and died in 1850. He is buried in Fenwick Churchyard.

Fulton is highly regarded by the astronomical community in Scotland, including the Astronomer Royal for Scotland and his Orrery is still considered to be highly accurate even today.



## Fenwick Church

Fenwick Parish Church has seen many notable occasions, including the signing of a charter on 14 March 1761, by nine weavers and seven apprentices to regulate both the prices they paid for yarn and the prices they would charge for completed cloth. This charter set up the Fenwick Weavers' Society, the first co-operative in the world. In it they also agreed a method of collective saving, an early form of credit union. In 1769 the Fenwick Weavers signed another Charter setting up the world's first consumer co-operative, selling "victuals" out of a small shop in the town.

William Guthrie was the first minister of Fenwick Church, in 1644. When the Church called for parish militias to oppose the pro-royal Duke of Montrose in 1645, Reverend Guthrie appointed the local, experienced soldier, Captain John Paton to lead the Fenwick Militia. He led the militia at the battle of Kilsyth. Numerous Fenwick men also fought in the battle of Drumclog. Many of these Covenanters' gravestones can be seen in the churchyard and The Bible, handed by Paton to his wife before being hung in the Grassmarket, Edinburgh in 1684, can also be seen in the Church.

Other local worthies, including John Fulton are buried in the graveyard.



## John Gemmill's House (Last Meeting House)

The industrial revolution of the 19th century saw new mechanised spinning and weaving mills make it harder for the handloom weavers to compete in a mass market. Fenwick Weavers' Society membership dwindled with few people wanting to become apprentices.

In 1839 they set up an Emigration Society to help young people from the village emigrate to the Colonies. Among those who emigrated was George Fowlds, youngest son of the last of the Fenwick Weavers, who eventually became Minister of Education in New Zealand, and was knighted for his public works.

Unable to continue their work, the last three remaining weavers, John Gemmill, William Kent and Matthew Fowlds dissolved the Society in John Gemmill's house on 9 June 1873. John Gemmill, Secretary, received the money on hand to settle his expenses, whilst Matthew Fowlds received the "stock of implements" including the Records of the Society.

Matthew's last loom was eventually shipped to New Zealand, where his son was a major personality. It can be seen at the University of Auckland Museum.

The family looked after the Society's records until 1965 when Matthew's descendent, Labour politician Sir Andrew Fowlds MP, donated the Records and the Charters to the National Library of Scotland, where they can be seen today. On 14 March 2011 they were returned to Fenwick Parish Church, where it all started, for the 250th anniversary of the founding of the Society. Over 200 co-operators, politicians and members attended the event.