

Dunaverty lifeboat house on the Kintyre Peninsula

# Sheer poetry

Andrew Ditton travels to the south-west of Scotland, home of The Bard as well as spectacular beaches, bays and bookshops



## THIS MONTH'S SITES



**1. NEW ENGLAND BAY**  
For the most up-to-date details, see The Club website – alternatively, see p231 of the *2015/16 Sites Directory & Handbook*. **Facilities include a games room and play area.**



**2. GARLIESTON**  
For the most up-to-date details, see The Club website – alternatively, see p222 of the *Sites Directory & Handbook*.



**3. AYR CRAIGIE GARDENS**  
For the most up-to-date details, see The Club website – alternatively, see p210 of the *Sites Directory & Handbook*. **Facilities include a play area.**



**4. CARRADALE BAY AS**  
For the most up-to-date details, see The Club website – alternatively, see p216 of the *Sites Directory & Handbook*.

You can book your pitch online at [caravanclub.co.uk/searchandbook](http://caravanclub.co.uk/searchandbook) or by calling our Advance Booking Service on **01342 327490**. Please call Affiliated Sites directly.



## FOOD + DRINK



### Potting Shed Bistro

Make sure you factor enough time into your visit to Logan Botanic Garden to take in the wonderful on-site bistro. It's also open to non-garden visitors in March, September and October. Homemade lunches and scrummy cakes are the order of the day.

**Contact:** 01776 860231, [rbge.org.uk/logan](http://rbge.org.uk/logan)  
**Nearest featured site:** New England Bay



### Reading Lasses

This Wigtown institution is famed as much for its fantastic food as its dazzling array of used books. Evening meals are also available during high season.

**Contact:** 01988 403266, [wigtown-booktown.co.uk](http://wigtown-booktown.co.uk)  
**Nearest featured site:** Garieston

### Clashwhannon pub

Clashwhannon Caravan Park has its own public house serving good grub at an attractive price. Your (well-mannered) dog is welcome if you eat in the bar area. Lovely staff.



**Contact:** 01776 840632, [clashwhannoncaravanpark.co.uk](http://clashwhannoncaravanpark.co.uk)  
**Nearest featured site:** New England Bay

### Network Tearoom

This cosy, dog-friendly café is only 10 minutes' walk from the caravan, and gives access to forest trails. Go for the soup and savoury scone – delicious! Warm and friendly service.

**Contact:** 01583 431296, [carradalebikesandbuggies.co.uk/network-tearoom](http://carradalebikesandbuggies.co.uk/network-tearoom)  
**Nearest featured site:** Carradale Bay

Whiting Bay on the Isle of Arran



Surprise and inspiration lie around every corner of Scotland's oft-overlooked south-west corner. But before exploring further afield, I fancied a few days kicking back and chilling out at New England Bay, arguably one of The Club's most delightful sites north of the border.

Only a couple of hours from the hustle and bustle of the Central Belt, New England Bay's almost tropical air of peace and tranquillity make it feel a million miles away. The site is right on the beach; you really cannot get any closer. Some members bring their boats, and there is a wash so you can rinse them off after a day messing about on the water.

Families love to head here for beach holidays. There are two amenity blocks as well as a family room housing snooker and

table tennis tables for days when the weather is unkind. There's also a super outdoor play area for the wee bairns. Intimate pitching areas surrounded by wild shrubs help retain a natural feel. Hardstandings are available but many grass pitches are motorhome-friendly, too.

Just down the road is the Mull of Galloway, a haven for birdlife, but it isn't just the ornithology that brings members flocking. A proliferation of semi-tropical gardens flourishes in the area, delighting botanists and casual gardeners alike.

If you cannot choose between Logan Botanic Garden, Castle Kennedy Gardens, Glenwhan Gardens and Dunskey Garden, why not stay a little longer and visit them all?

While visiting Port Logan do head for Logan Fish Pond Marine Life Centre. The pond itself is set in a 400 million-year-old blowhole. Afterwards you can go to the >>

"An absolute 'must do' is a day trip to the beautiful island of Arran. Brodick Castle and its gardens are an absolute joy to visit"

Caledonian MacBrayne sails to the Isle of Arran



## FOR THE FAMILY



### Mull of Galloway Lighthouse

At Scotland's southern tip is a lighthouse dating from 1803. Here you can climb the 115 steps and enjoy the fantastic view before visiting the Engine Room Exhibition, which will delight every budding engineer and historian.

**Contact:** 01776 840554, [mull-of-galloway.co.uk](http://mull-of-galloway.co.uk)  
**Nearest featured site:** New England Bay

### Cream o' Galloway Farm

Here you'll find an adventure playground for kids of all ages, a zip wire, pedal go karts and more. Highlights are the Farm Tour and Ice Cream Tasting event during which you have the chance to test a sample from a selection of 30 flavours!



**Contact:** 01557 814040, [creamogalloway.co.uk](http://creamogalloway.co.uk)  
**Nearest featured site:** Garieston

### Heads of Ayr Farm Park



Everything from cockroaches to camels lives at this farm – look out for Meerkat Mountain. There are adventure activities indoors and outdoors, with a soft play area for nippers and water dodgems for teenagers.

**Contact:** 01292 441210, [headsofayrfarmpark.co.uk](http://headsofayrfarmpark.co.uk)  
**Nearest featured site:** Ayr Craigie Gardens

### Vikingar!

At this attraction in Largs, you'll find out about the culture of these fascinating marauders, and how their influence has helped shape the Scotland of today.

**Contact:** 01475 689777, [kaleisure.com/activities/otheractivities/viking-ar-experience](http://kaleisure.com/activities/otheractivities/viking-ar-experience)  
**Nearest featured site:** Ayr Craigie Gardens





Wigtown

“In Wigtown you can while away an entire day browsing the second-hand bookshops and enjoying the many charming eateries”

delightful seaside town of Portpatrick for a hearty portion of fish and chips.

About an hour away from New England Bay is Garlieston – a different kind of Club site. The sea wall is very close to some of the pitches and the lack of play facilities means this site is perhaps less appealing to families than its neighbour across the bay.

There are two pitching areas – the Harbourside offers views over the water and comprises mainly non-awning pitches, while the Walled Garden is a peaceful, secluded sun trap boasting awning-friendly pitches. Each side offers hardstanding and grass pitches as well as a facility block. It's the perfect place to unwind.

**NATIONAL BOOK TOWN**

Great walks abound here, one of the most popular being the three-mile circular ramble from the site. For the more energetic, a seven-mile tramp to the Isle of Withorn can be rewarded with a lovely lunch at the dog-friendly Steam Packet Inn. Food is also available without the hike from the Harbour Inn, opposite the site.

Nearby is Wigtown, bestowed with the title 'Scotland's National Book Town'. It's a handsome place with free on-street parking. You can while away an entire day browsing the second-hand book shops and enjoying the many charming eateries. Reading Lasses (see panel) is a popular choice.

On my tour, I headed from Garlieston to Ayr Craigie Gardens through the beautiful Galloway Forest Park and along the dramatic coastline, which is well worth exploring even if you're not touring.

An oasis of calm amid the bustling seaside resort of Ayr, Craigie Gardens is a different kind of site yet again. With mature trees surrounding it, it has the feel of a secluded private garden. Next door is the brand new campus of the University of the West of Scotland, where Club members are most welcome to use the bright Atrium Canteen during term time. You can get a cooked breakfast for just over £2. Fantastic!

There are lovely riverside gardens around the campus too, where you can walk off the bacon and eggs. On site, all pitches are hardstanding, there is a heated facility block and a play area. The landscaping between pitches is particularly attractive – a credit to the volunteer wardens who help tend the site with such loving care.

Family-friendly Ayr is bursting with places to take the kids, from Pirate Pete's with its adventure play area, mini golf and American-style diner, to the Heads of Ayr Farm Park where you can see up to 50 species of animal.

Ayr is a magnet for anyone on the trail of Robert Burns, otherwise known as The Bard. Neighbouring Alloway is home to the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum and the Burns >>

CULTURE

Robert Burns Birthplace Museum

Enjoy a visit to the restored cottage where Burns spent his formative years. Ten minutes' walk away is the modern Burns Museum providing further insight into the life of Scotland's favourite poet.



Contact: 0844 493 2601, burnsmuseum.org.uk  
Nearest featured site: Ayr Craigie Gardens



Brodick Castle

If you have time for a day trip to the Isle of Arran, make sure you visit lovely Brodick Castle and its gardens. The interior has been maintained exactly as it was left by the Duchess of Montrose in 1957.

Contact: 01770 302202, nts.org.uk  
Nearest featured site: Carradale Bay



Culzean Castle

Former home of the Marquess of Ailsa, chief of the Kennedy Clan, both the opulent castle itself and wonderful gardens justifiably attract many visitors.

Contact: 01655 884455, nts.org.uk  
Nearest featured site: Ayr Craigie Gardens

Glencue Abbey

The remains of this Cistercian building offer a fascinating glimpse of life before and shortly after the Reformation. There is a small museum of monastic life on site displaying artefacts recovered during conservation work.



Contact: 01557 331856, historic-scotland.gov.uk  
Nearest featured sites: New England Bay and Garlieston

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## OUTDOOR FUN



### RSPB Mull of Galloway

Pick a clear day and enjoy stunning views as far as the Isle of Man. The cliffs below play host to a city of sea birds – as well as kittiwakes and guillemots, you may be lucky enough to spot a peregrine or even a puffin.

**Contact:** 01988 402130, [rspb.org.uk](http://rspb.org.uk)  
**Nearest featured site:** New England Bay



### Cycling

Try the National Cycle Network Route 78 from Oban to Campbeltown which offers adventurous cyclists the chance to explore the spectacular peninsula of Kintyre, Knapdale and Lorn. There are traffic-free sections along the Crinan Canal and in Kilmartin Glen.

**Contact:** [sustrans.org.uk](http://sustrans.org.uk)

### Logan Botanic Garden

The Gulf Stream and walled surrounds combine to provide perfect conditions for some beautiful plants. A new conservatory widens the spectrum even further.

**Contact:** 01776 860231  
[rbge.org.uk](http://rbge.org.uk)  
**Nearest featured site:**  
 New England Bay



### Trump Turnberry Resort

While the price of a game of golf on the iconic Ailsa course (closed for renovation until June 2016) may be outside some people's budgets, you can play the nine-hole Arran layout for as little as £15 depending on the season.

**Contact:** 01655 331000, [turnberry.co.uk](http://turnberry.co.uk)  
**Nearest featured site:** Ayr Craigie Gardens

Monument as well as the Auld Kirk and Brig o' Doon, both of which feature in *Tam 'o Shanter*. Further afield you can discover other Burns-related attractions such as Souter Jonnie's Cottage in Kirkoswald and the Bachelors' Club in Tarbolton.

An absolute 'must do' is a day trip to the beautiful island of Arran. Brodick Castle and its gardens are an absolute joy to visit, and situated only a couple of miles from the ferry port. It doesn't cost extra to take pushbikes on the ferry and there's a good bus service around the island.

### BAY OF PLENTY

Another option is to incorporate a visit to Arran into your journey from Ayr to the final site on our tour – Carradale Bay Affiliated Site on the Kintyre Peninsula. In the summer, though, you can take a direct ferry service from Ardrossan on the mainland to Campbeltown on Kintyre ([calmac.co.uk](http://calmac.co.uk)), navigating past Arran.

However, you make your way to Carradale Bay, be sure to carefully follow the directions given in the *Sites Directory*. The journey here is rewarded 10 times over

with a fantastic site in a jaw-droppingly beautiful location. Carradale Bay itself is a south-facing sandy bay, which backs directly on to the pitching area. Many pitches have uninterrupted sea views, and an air of informal calm pervades the site. All pitches are grass but well-drained, while the refurbished amenity block is kept scrupulously clean.

Motorhomers especially love this site as there is a shop and a great selection of quality places to eat within 20 minutes' walk of the pitches. Do call in at the Network Centre café for Carol's amazing soup served with a warm savoury scone.

At the Network Centre, less able visitors can also rent all-terrain buggies, opening up a dazzling network of beautiful forest trails.

Nearby Campbeltown offers a couple of distilleries to tour and, hopefully by 2016, Scotland's oldest original picture house will once again be open for business.

But you don't need to stray far from the sandy beach, forest walks, fantastic food and cycle trails of Carradale to enjoy an unforgettable holiday that will stay with you for many, many years.

## MEMBERS' VIEWS



**Colin and Eleanor from Kintyre** have been regular visitors to Ayr Craigie Gardens for years. They love the site for its peace and quiet and, as Colin says, "It's so easy to walk along the river into Ayr." He and Eleanor once saw a dozen kingfishers on the river. As for food, they heartily recommend the 'Wee Hurry' fish and chip shop in Troon.

**Chris and Lynn Gill** from Lancashire have been coming to Dumfries and Galloway for more than 30 years, and love the Club site at Garlieston for its quiet, intimate feel. Lynn loves hunting out old maps in Wigtown while Chris enjoys a round on the undulating golf course nearby. The lack of light pollution delights Lynn: "We can just lie in bed and gaze at the stars through the roof light," she tells us.



## Club Together

The online community that just keeps growing

To read even more member views, see our fantastic online forum at [caravanclub.co.uk/together](http://caravanclub.co.uk/together)