

How a webcam has transformed a Rutherglen Street into an online phenomenon

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IT IS apparently one of the most fascinating webcams in the world. A vista to rival the Brooklyn Bridge, the skyline of Tokyo and Nasa's astronauts spinning in space. What location can keep such illustrious company? Why, of course, none other than Rutherglen Main Street.

The view of a bus shelter, road sign, four lanes of traffic and a Lad-brokes bookies has been listed in the top 25 views on the planet by the webcam portal site, [EarthCam](#).

Since the camera began broadcasting a 24-hour live feed of the street two years ago, it has attracted more than 430,000 viewers from as far afield as Australia, South America and Canada who are happy to watch their computer screens as the citizens of Rutherglen move contentedly past, like exotic specimens in an electronic goldfish bowl. On the Rutherglen camera's website, the owner, who has not yet been identified, writes in a welcome message that the camera promises live video and sound of "locals going about their daily business" and adds: "If you listen, you will hear the odd reveller go home after a wee drink or two after the local pubs and bars close. Also, if you're lucky, you might catch the local parades, marches and fun fairs that happen quite frequently."



[Click here to view the webcam of Rutherglen Main Street](#)

[EarthCam](#), the internet webcam portal that is conducting the poll, said the list of nominees had been compiled by a group of EarthCam editors. Criteria included image quality, uniqueness of the content and technical achievements in webcam technology.

Other webcams in the running include views of the Brooklyn Bridge, Tokyo, Nasa astronauts and the studio webcam of the American talk-show host Jay Leno. A second Scottish webcam, showing five views of the Shetland Islands, is also on the shortlist. Justin Camerlengo, of [EarthCam](#), said: "The Main Street cam in Glasgow is a pleasant escape to a main street outside of the United States. It is different in appearance, but maintains a universal feeling."

So why has a webcam of Rutherglen proved so popular? In one way it would appear to be a modern version of the final scene in *Local Hero*, where Mac, the American enchanted by Scotland but now back in Dallas, calls the red telephone box knowing no-one will answer but is content at the fragile connection.

As the site's guest-book shows many visitors have a connection to the town, which is the oldest Royal burgh in Scotland, pre-dating its neighbour Glasgow. Irene Black writes from America, "my family left Rutherglen in 1975 for Florida USA", and by visiting the site, she explains: "I come home." Janet from Romeoville, Illinois says: "Helloo from across the Pond ... glad to see Rutherglen," while Barry McCade, from Adelaide, writes: "The birthplace of my father many, many years ago." For James Quinn, now ensconced in Simi Valley in California, the site is particularly pertinent: "I almost can see my old house."

Finding the exact spot on which the camera is aimed proves relatively simple, as it's just past the "welcome to Rutherglen" Christmas lights and a few hundred yards from the panto, *Robinson Crusoe*.

But what do the local residents, think of the fact that they are featured on the computer screens of viewers around the globe?

"It's weird," said Amanda Butler, 17, who is studying hairdressing. "Why watch this place? Nothing happens."

Yet Hugh Templeton, 36, a support worker, sees his town's new celebrity as an extension of reality TV. "People are bored with reality TV and they want something true and unvarnished – everyone's looking for the next big thing."

Could Rutherglen Main Street be it? He smiles: "The internet can bring us great things and it can bring us bubble gum – this is bubblegum."

For Delia McShane, 63, the cause is simple curiosity. "People are just naturally curious about how other people live and where and what they do, we never seem to accept everyone is just the same, we always think it's better over the next hill."

So who, exactly, has blown Rutherglen up into a big web bubble? Who is the voyeur behind the camera? Judging by the angle of the image, it's pretty clear that it's coming from an upstairs window and there is a set of tenement flats above the local shops. The photographer's zoom lens soon picks up what looks like a little round camera, invisible to the naked eye, stuck to the top of a computer in the window. However, attempts to contact the owner have proved unsuccessful.

Then, curiously, yesterday afternoon the webcam became inoperable, but this may possibly have been due to the sheer volume of people attempting to view it. For it is not only ex-pats and the children of those who emigrated from the town who log-on to what is happening on the Main Street. One guest called Willie wrote: "Staggered in this street many times, full of the golden nectar," while the last word should go to Gareth in Melbourne who wrote: "Good cam, interesting, don't know why but I keep looking at it." Clearly, he is not alone.

TEN THINGS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT RUTHERGLEN

1 Rutherglen comes from the Gaelic An Ruadh Ghleann, meaning "the red valley".

2 Rutherglen remains the oldest royal burgh in Scotland, having received the status in 1126 by Royal Charter from King David I of Scotland, who ruled from 1124 to 1153.

3 William Wallace is said to have signed a treaty with the English in 1297 in Rutherglen, and it was here that Sir John Menteith plotted Wallace's capture (at Robroyston) in 1305.

4 During the Middle Ages, Rutherglen was the commercial and political centre while Glasgow was the ecclesiastical focus of life in the west of Scotland.

5 During its long history, Rutherglen has had a thriving handloom and coal industry, and even managed shipbuilding in the mid-19th century, launching cluthas and steamers despite the fact that the Clyde's low-tide depth here was only 60cm.

6 Stan Laurel lived in Rutherglen and attended Rutherglen Academy.

7 Rutherglen was the birthplace of the actor Robbie Coltrane and Archie Jackson, the Australian cricketer.

8 Rutherglen retained its independence until it officially became part of Glasgow in 1975.

9 Scotland's oldest man until his passing on 13 August, 109-year-old Bob Taggart, was a lifelong Rutherglen resident. For the final 20 days of his life, Mr Taggart was actually the oldest man in all of Britain, following the death of Harry Patch, a former First World War veteran from Somerset, who was 111 when he died.

10 Midge Ure, frontman of the band Ultravox, went to Stonelaw Academy – formerly Rutherglen Academy – until he was 15.