

# MARITIME TRAIL ABERDEEN

A guide to Aberdeen's maritime connections



ABERDEEN INVESTLIVEVISIT

## Aberdeen's Heritage Trail Leaflets

Granite Trail  
March Stones  
North Sea Trail  
Old Aberdeen Trail  
People & Places  
Sculpture Trail

### Foreword

Aberdeen Harbour is a working port and busy industrial area. There is heavy traffic, cargo handling and other activities that you should be aware of when walking around.

Access is generally available, but some locations may be temporarily closed for safety, security or operational reasons.

Do not enter operational areas at any time.

The north section of the trail is 2.5 kms in length  
(around 1.5 miles)

The south section of the trail is 3kms in length  
(just under 2 miles)

#### Key to Symbols

Accessible

Steep Slope or Gradient

Wheelchair with assistance

No wheelchair access

No public access



### Transport

Fittie (or Footdee) can be accessed on the No 15 bus, which stops at the end of New Pier Road (bus stop marked on map)

Torry can be accessed on the No 12 bus, which has several stops in Victoria Road.

### Picture Credits

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#### Front Cover

**Aberdeen Maritime Museum**

**No 24**

**Queen on Forties**

Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of the BP Archive

**No 31**

**Bottlenose Dolphin**

Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of  
Kevin Hepworth, Sea Watch Foundation

**No 17**

**Sonar Image of Duke of Sutherland**

Photograph courtesy of Aberdeen Harbour Board

Thanks to Lizzie Finlayson, Aberdeen Harbour Board, Fiona-Jane Brown  
of Aberdeen & Region Oral History Association, Scottish Natural  
Heritage and Brian Robertson, Chairman, TS Scylla



## THE HARBOUR OF ABERDEEN

If it were not for the harbour Aberdeen would not exist as we know it today. The first use of the natural harbour, formed by the River Dee and its estuary, is very hard to pinpoint. The earliest evidence is in the form of tiny flint tools and waste flakes, left by prehistoric flintworkers around 8,000 to 10,000 years ago.

The first written reference to shipping in Aberdeen dates to 1136. That charter has been proven to be a facsimile, a later 15th century re writing of the older charter. The first mention of the 'key' dates to 1399. The harbour and the quay (or 'key heid', as it was sometimes called) were repaired many times and expanded during the medieval period. After 1597, the Burgh Council exercised the right to levy taxes on all ships entering the harbour for the upkeep of what were called 'shore works'.

In the medieval period, the harbour channel and shipping were dogged by large sand banks known as 'inches', only one of which was permanently visible above the water line. Large ships had to berth at Torry or possibly at Fittie. Their cargoes were then loaded and unloaded by means of small supply vessels. It was only really from the 17th century that efforts were made to deepen the channel.

The 19th century saw the greatest period of overall change in the harbour. Increased shipping demanded better facilities and the basis for the present harbour layout was developed.

Improvements in the 19th century included the development of Victoria Dock and parts of Waterloo Quay, Matthews Quay and Blaikies Quay. The River Dee was diverted to create a new expanse of water and Jamiesons Quay was constructed.

A number of shipyards opened around the harbour in the late 17th and early 18th century. The clipper ship *Thermopylae* was built in Aberdeen in 1868 and was one of the fastest ships of its day.

The advent of steam trawling in the 1880's led to another significant increase in activity. Further harbour developments were then necessary to accommodate the growing fishing industry and ensure continued success.

Today Aberdeen's harbour is best known for its association with the offshore oil and gas industry, but also continues to serve a wide range of sectors and is a busy passenger port – all making it one of the major trading ports in Europe.

## NORTH SECTION

### 1 Aberdeen Maritime Museum

**Cobbled surface, on steep slope**

Situated on the historic Shiprow and incorporating Provost Ross's House, which was built in 1593, Aberdeen Maritime Museum tells the story of the city's long relationship with the sea. This award-winning

museum houses a unique collection covering shipbuilding, fast sailing ships, fishing and port history, and is the only place in the UK where you can see displays on the North Sea oil industry. Aberdeen Maritime Museum also offers a spectacular viewpoint over the busy harbour.



### 2 Site of 15th century Harbour Wall

**Cobbled surface, on slope**

At Shore Brae, a small rescue excavation in 1974 uncovered portions of an ashlar-fronted stone harbour wall dating from the late 14th or early 15th century. This indicates the position of the 'key-head' or highest navigable point at that period. It is exciting that much of that site remains untouched and will undoubtedly reveal more in future about early harbour development. Other evidence of Aberdeen's medieval waterfront was found during excavations on the line of Virginia Street. More information about the medieval harbour and rare excavated objects associated with trading and other sea-borne contacts are on display in Aberdeen Maritime Museum's Harbour Gallery.



Site of 1974 excavation, now a car park



### 3 Aberdeen Harbour Board

**Busy traffic**

Aberdeen Harbour Board are responsible for the administration, maintenance and improvement of the busy port which covers 378 acres of land and water, including six kilometres of quays and 20 deep-water berths over which pass around 5 million tonnes of cargo annually.

An Act of Parliament established the Board as an independent statutory authority in 1960, beginning an era of modernisation for which the arrival of the North Sea oil and gas industry in the 1960s was another catalyst.

As a Trust Port – one of the busiest in Britain – all profits are reinvested in maintenance and development, with more than £150 million spent in recent decades. An ongoing multi million pound investment programme by the Board will ensure that facilities and services continue to meet the requirements of the many port users.

Employing around 120 directly, the Harbour Board gives high priority to health, safety and the environment in all aspects of port operations.



### 4 Virginia Street & Surrounding Lanes

**Wheelchair access difficult in places**

This street was formed and named in the 18th century and



Virginia Street, showing Bannerman's Bridge

is a reflection of the overseas trading routes of the day. From the 1770s Aberdeen, along with many other major ports in Scotland, began to trade with the southern states of America. The international

connections are also reflected in other street names in Aberdeen, such as Baltic Lane.

#### **Sugarhouse Lane**

As with Virginia Street this street was named for a trade ongoing from the 1770s. On 8 May 1776 a number of merchants in Aberdeen formed a public company and took ownership of the Shorelands, which had previously belonged to the City Council. Here they erected the first Sugarhouse; their business only operated for about 25 years.

#### **Weigh House Square**

Named after Aberdeen's Weigh House, which was first erected in 1634. This building was also sometimes known as the Packhouse, and was the principal place for weighing goods. It was demolished in 1883 to make way for the Harbour Offices at 16 Regent Quay.



## 5 Marischal Street

### On steep slope

Marischal Street, built in the 18th century, was the first planned street in Aberdeen. It runs in a straight line downhill to the harbour (it was intended to provide direct access from the centre of Aberdeen to the port) and incorporates Bannerman's Bridge, a flyover crossing Virginia Street halfway down. The original Georgian houses remain on this street, and some paneled interiors survive. Some are now commercial premises, but the character of the street is largely unaffected by this.



## 6 St Clement's Church



Historical records show that there has been a church here since 1467. However it is very likely that a church dedicated to St Clement may have been here for much longer. In fact it has probably been here as long as the fishing village of Fittie (or Footdee) has, which dates from at least the late 14th century. Often a dedication to St Clement is associated with Vikings although there is no evidence to prove that connection here.

The church went out of use at the time of the reformation in 1560 and was not reinstated until 1631 when several people subscribed to its re-opening. It was around this time, in 1650, that George Davidstone built a new wall around the church at his own expense. The stone plaque in the wall, which commemorates this, dates from 1679 when the original 1650 plaque had to be replaced. The wall itself also dates from slightly later in the 18th century. St Clement's has been rebuilt a number of times but the present church dates from 1828, when it was raised to the status of a parish church.

David Grant (1833-1893) is also commemorated by a plaque in St Clement's churchyard. Grant, a member of the congregation of St Clement's, is often attributed with having composed the harmony for the hymn tune Crimond (The Lord is my Shepherd). This claim has been disputed and the matter is not resolved.

### Opening hours:

Apr - Sept 9:00am - 7:30pm

Oct - Mar 9:00am - 3:30pm

Access to churchyard only



## 7 Shipbuilding



During the last two centuries some 3,000 ships were built in Aberdeen. Well known shipbuilding companies including Alexander Hall, Walter Hood, Hall Russell and Duthie all built ships there.

### Alexander Hall

The Hall yard was the city's longest serving shipbuilders, producing vessels from 1790 to 1957. Halls built Britain's first clipper ship, the *Scottish Maid*, in 1839 and later was responsible for some of Aberdeen's fastest sailing ships. From the 1890s they built hundreds of steel steam trawlers that became the backbone of Scotland's premier fishing port.

### Duthie

For much of the 19th century the Duthie family were prominent shipbuilders. Established in 1816 by William, a former Alexander Hall apprentice, Duthie designed and launched many fast sailing ships for the tea and wool trade to China and Australia. The yard closed in 1907 with the premises taken over by Hall Russell.

### Hall Russell

Hall Russell started in 1864 building mostly cargo steamships. They went on to launch a fleet of fishing vessels, warships and passenger ships. Aberdeen's last ship the *St. Helena* was launched here on 31st October 1899. When Hall Russell closed its gates for the final time in 1992 it brought to an end two centuries of shipbuilding tradition in Aberdeen.

### Walter Hood

The Hood yard built some of the world's fastest sailing ships producing vessels for the Aberdeen White Star Line of clipper ships. Hood launched over 100 ships between 1839 to 1881 including *Thermopylae*, *Centurion* and *Woolloomooloo*. By the 1880s the age of the clipper had been eclipsed by steam power and a faster route through the Suez Canal.

### John Lewis

The John Lewis shipyard, based at Torry, produced its first vessel in 1917. The yard was best known for trawlers and cargo vessels although it also built the sail-training schooner *Malcolm Miller* in 1967, the last sailing vessel to be launched in Aberdeen.



This building is the former home of Hall Russell



In the early 1990's the Hall Russell yard was demolished to make way for a significant expansion at the port. The development, named Telford Dock, commemorates the pivotal role the engineer had in the successful history of the harbour. The quays in this area are named after Aberdeen's shipbuilding firms except one, named Clipper Quay, which refers to their most famous products.

## 8 The Age of Sail

Many of the world's fastest sailing ships were built in the Footdee yards of Walter Hood, Alexander Hall and William Duthie. In 1839, Hall devised a sleek hull-form with an extreme bow that would soon be called the 'Aberdeen Bow'. Aberdeen clipper ships were at the forefront of the tea races of the 1860s and 70s, and challenged each other to bring the first tea home from China. In their time, these tall ships were the most advanced sailing vessels, manned by experienced crews from the North East who could rig every aspect of the ship for maximum speed.

The pride of the Aberdeen White Star Line was the tea clipper ship *Thermopylae* built by Hoods in 1868. The vessel aroused great interest during its design, launch and fit-out and a record breaking maiden voyage to Australia was anticipated. Aberdonians were not disappointed: the *Thermopylae* arrived in Sydney after a record 63 days. *Thermopylae* participated in the great tea races of the 1870s and beat the Cutty Sark in the famous race of 1872. The ship was later reduced to a barque rig, or ship with reduced number of sails, and was a timber carrier for Canadian interests in the 1890s. She ended her days as a Portuguese training ship and was ceremonially sunk off Lisbon in 1907.



Painting of *Thermopylae* by Eric Berryman

## 9 Fittie (or Footdee)

### Bus Stop on corner of New Pier Road and Esplanade



These two squares of cottages comprise the main part of the fishing village of Footdee or Fittie.

The older name for the village is Futty or Fittie, although over the years it has been changed to Footdee, which is now its official name.

The original village of Fittie dates from the medieval period. Although the first recorded reference dates from 1398, it is probably much older than that. The original village was located a little further north than the current one, near St Clement's Church. It was transplanted to its current location as the city grew and there was a greater need for areas to be devoted to the harbour. The two principal squares, North and South Square, were designed by the city architect John Smith, who also designed Balmoral Castle. The

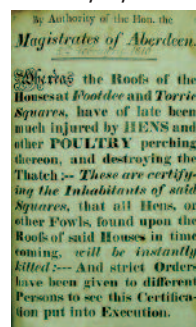


squares were hastily erected and when the first families moved in, the houses sometimes lacked roofs or toilets. The squares are built with the front of the houses facing inwards to afford some measure of protection against the cold winds off the North Sea. The open areas in the centre of the squares were quickly colonised by a series of shanty style dwellings which the council fought hard to have removed. A third row of houses, known as Pilot Square was added some years later. These were slightly better houses for the harbour pilots. Initially all of the houses in the squares were of one storey, but many families have added new storeys as needs dictated. Today this picturesque village has had a number of different buildings added to it but, as none are in a modern style, it has lost none of its charm.

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Advertisement regarding damage to roofs caused by poultry

## 10 Mud Tanks



These imposing tall tanks that line several of the quays hold drilling brine and cements. The 'mud', used by the oil industry, is actually an expensive mixture, which is pumped down drill holes to lubricate and cool the drill bit. Oil supply vessels pump the mud onboard from these tanks ready for transfer to rigs and platforms offshore.



## 11 Blockhouse



The first record of the blockhouse dates to 1497 when an English invasion was feared, by way of retaliation for Scottish support for Perkin Warbeck's attempted coup against Henry VII. The date of the construction of the blockhouse is uncertain: several entries appear in Aberdeen City Council's historical records. However what was built in 1532 was described as sixteen foot in length, eight foot in breadth and six foot of thickness in the walls.

The blockhouse stored the town's cannons and ammunitions. It was used as the primary means of harbour defence until the 18th century. Over the course of its history it had a number of other uses. In the 17th century it doubled

as a temporary storeroom for the council, whilst it was also used as a place of quarantine for several ships' crews who were believed to have the plague. In 1597 a gallows was erected next to it and several pirates were hanged.



Parson Gordon's map of "Futty", printed in 1661, showing the location of the blockhouse

Dr Alexander Walker erected the stone plaque in the late 19th century to commemorate the site of the blockhouse.



## 12 T.S. Scylla, Pocra Quay



The headquarters of the Aberdeen Sea Cadets since 1954, this group of Nissen huts dates from 1936 when it was built and used by the Army. During World War II it was used to house a barrage balloon unit for the defence of the harbour.

The Aberdeen Sea Cadet Corps originally had its roots in Torry as part of the British Sailors Society in the 1930s and soon moved to Cattofield, then to Charlotte Street in the late 1930s. It moved to its current location after a brief spell in the Hardgate.

In 1942 the people of Aberdeen raised over £2m to pay for the building of *HMS Scylla* as part of the war effort. That's the equivalent of £57m today.

After the city paid for this the unit adopted the name T.S.

(Training Ship) Scylla. It moved to the old barrage balloon unit building on Pocra Quay where it stayed.



## 13 War Memorial



This fine granite obelisk commemorates those killed in the Second World War. The memorial is prominently sited and is the work of a local man named John Caie of Pittodrie Granite Works. It lists not only the soldiers lost but also mariners. This is entirely fitting for Fittie which was traditionally a fishing village. Amongst the names of those it commemorates are included some from earlier wars.



## 14 Roundhouse



Properly called the Navigation Control Centre, although affectionately known as the Roundhouse, the structure is actually an octagon. There is some question over quite when the tower was originally constructed, although there is very good evidence that it was built as early as 1797-8. The Shoremaster's accounts for that year reveal that over £225 was spent building a 'new house' on the North Pier.

Ten guineas were also spent in those accounts for a telescope for the 'Lookout House' on the North Pier. It appears in a Plan of Footdee of 1803 and is the village's oldest building.

The Roundhouse controlled the entry of traffic into and out of Aberdeen's thriving harbour. Until 1966 harbour traffic was controlled by signals using three black balls that ran up and down a mast.



*Entrance to Aberdeen Harbour, 1874 by James Cassie RSA*

## 15 Sculpture by Janusz Tkaczuk



Situated next to the Roundhouse, this was presented by Mobil North Sea Ltd. in 1986. This abstract sculpture echoes the rolling movements of water and ships and the reflective nature of the sea. It uses both natural and man made forms and it is affectionately known as the "egg on a plate"!



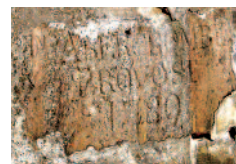
## 16 Abercrombie's Jetty



This jetty, or catch pier, was constructed in 1789. It was part of a series of harbour improvements being carried out around that time (see No 19, North Pier). When the first stage of the North Pier had been finished an unexpected problem was noticed; in heavy easterly swells it deflected the waves and caused them to race up the navigation channel.

A catch pier was erected, which was named after the then Provost, John Abercrombie (1729-1820). Unfortunately the jetty itself proved to be a danger to shipping and was consequently removed. Only a small part of it remains at the foot of the North Pier, next to the Roundhouse.

A carved stone commemorating John Abercrombie can be seen at the base of the jetty. It is just visible from the edge of Pocra Quay (please take extra care if looking over the harbour edge).



## 17 Scarty's Monument

Uneven surface



'Scarty's Monument' is a brick obelisk situated at Pocra Quay, named after a pilot who kept watch in bad weather from the North Pier in the mid 19th century. It is not actually a monument, but a ventilator shaft for a disused sewer outfall that emptied into the navigation channel.

*Scarty's Monument viewed from Greyhope Road*

## 18 Marine Operations Centre



Aberdeen Harbour's state-of-the-art Marine Operations Centre provides an iconic landmark enhancing the image of both the port and the city.

The design, chosen following a competition for architects, reflects a traditional Scottish lighthouse, supporting a modern glass structure.

Standing at the inward end of the North Pier, which protects the main channel to-and-from the North Sea, the Centre also gives Vessel Traffic Services staff essential visibility over the port entrance and the entrances to the harbour's three arms.

On round-the-clock duty, these officers are responsible for managing over 17,000 vessel arrivals and departures annually. Including in-port activity, the figure increases to over 25,000 movements a year.

The facility incorporates the latest traffic management equipment; emergency response, a training room and an advanced ship's bridge simulator used in training.

Brought into operation in 2006 at a cost of £4.5 million, the Centre succeeded the nearby Navigation Control Centre, built in the early 1800s and known from its shape as the 'Roundhouse'.

In a port with almost nine centuries of recorded history, there is another reminder of the past in the approaches to the Centre – a bell long used to warn shipping during fog is featured in a seating area.



Marine Operations Centre viewed from south end of the beach

## 19 North Pier Area closed to public



North Pier with Skate's Nose Jetty in foreground

The North Pier was constructed in three distinct stages as part of the great series of harbour improvements during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Port was prone to siltation, so only very small or shallow drafted vessels could access the inner quay area. Larger ships were obliged to lie in the deeper water of the river channel or 'Gawpuill', which now forms the harbour's Turning Basin at the inner end of the navigation channel.

The first major alterations, designed by John Smeaton, started in 1770, and were completed by 1781. The extended pier was 300 yards (1,200 feet) long and cost £180.

It reduced the entry of sand into the harbour area and changed the angle of incoming waves at the harbour entrance.

The North Pier was extended again between 1810 and 1816 on the advice of Thomas Telford. This extension measures some 900 feet and ended amongst a number of large rocks responsible for at least five shipwrecks.

The final phase of construction, undertaken between 1869 and 1874, extended the North Pier beyond the dangerous rocks into deeper water. This third section added 500 feet, bringing the pier to some 2,600 feet in length. Due to safety concerns, the pier is no longer accessible to the public.



North Pier Lighthouse



Advertisement regarding the alteration of the position of North Pier Lighthouse





All shipping movements in Aberdeen Harbour are controlled and monitored from the Marine Operations Centre situated at the inner end of the North Pier.

Light signals to ships can be seen at the top of the buildings white 'spine'.

The light signals have the following meanings:

- **Green light** – No entry into the Navigation Channel for vessels proceeding towards the Harbour.
- **Red light** – No entry into the Navigation Channel for vessels proceeding to sea.
- **Green and red light** – No entry into the Navigation Channel for any vessel.

As the Navigation Channel is narrow, a visual aid called leading lights help Masters stay in the deep water. These lights mounted in white cast iron towers are visible on the river's south bank, when looking across to the oil tanks. The towers are approximately 240 metres apart with the rear light mounted slightly higher than the front tower creating an imaginary extension of the channel's centerline. When both lights are aligned the ship's Master can be confident that his vessel is on the centerline and the deepest part of the Navigation Channel.



*Painting depicting the shipwreck of the Duke of Sutherland*

## 21 Duke of Sutherland

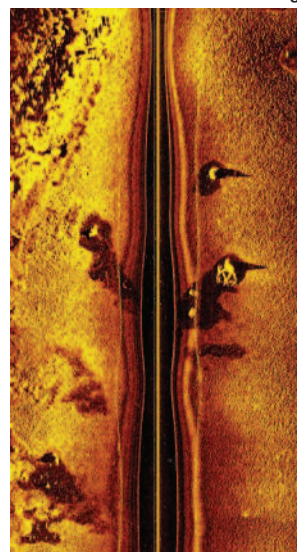
The steamship *Duke of Sutherland* arrived in Aberdeen Bay on the evening of Friday April 1st 1853 with 52 persons on board.

There was a heavy sea running on the bar and the current of the River Dee was very strong. The south-east wind made it difficult to sail round the granite pier that protected the harbour entrance from heavy weather.

As she entered the harbour, the Dee's current caught her on the port bow and threw her head straight for the pier. Despite the captain reversing his engines, the collision was inevitable. Within ten minutes there was three feet of water in the engine room and, as the ship lay broadside on, the waves pounded her to pieces.

A small boat manned by five men reached the wreck but capsized on the return to shore and five of the occupants drowned.

In all, 16 persons lost their lives. There was much public outrage at the unprepared state of the rocket apparatus, which would launch life-saving ropes from the shore to



the boat, and at the conduct of a few of the crew who escaped in the first boat.

A recent sonar scan shows a structure thought to be one of the *Duke of Sutherland's* paddle wheels on the sea bed. The wheel is estimated to be 2.4 meters in diameter, about the same size as those fitted to the stricken ship.

*Sonar scan of the sea bed, taken by police on a training exercise, showing the iron paddle wheel of the Duke of Sutherland*

## SOUTH SECTION

(south of Market Street)

### 22 Victoria Bridge and the Dee Ferry Boat Disaster

Victoria Bridge was erected following the Dee Ferry Boat Disaster, which claimed the lives of 32 people in 1876. The Ferry Boats had for centuries plied their trade between Pocra Quay and Torry, but a packed boat sunk on April 5th, a Feastday, claiming the lives of 32 people. There had been plans for a new bridge across to Torry for some time, but the final impetus was provided by this disaster. Victoria Bridge was formally opened July 2nd 1881. It was funded by public contributions and the Corporation of Aberdeen. It provided a swift link for



carriages from Torry to get, via Market Street, to the heart of the city.

*New Victoria Bridge, painted 1884 by James George Watt*

### 23 The Offshore Industry

Significant North Sea oil and natural gas reserves were first discovered in the 1960s. Aberdeen Harbour suddenly found itself at the forefront of North Sea oil exploration. In 1973 Shell UK became the first to sign a deal with the Harbour Board for the development of a supply base on the site of the former Old Torry village at Maitlands Quay. Other oil companies followed.

The UK's North Sea oil began to flow in June 1975, from the Argyll Field. Later that year, HM Queen formally inaugurated the giant Forties Field at BP's control centre at Dyce, Aberdeen.

News item from the BBC in 1975 ran as follows:

#### **North Sea oil begins to flow**

*The Queen has formally begun the operation of the UK's first oil pipeline at a £500,000 ceremony in Scotland. The 130-mile (209-kilometre) pipeline from Cruden Bay to Grangemouth has been built by British Petroleum (BP). The pipeline serves the Forties oilfield 110 miles east of Aberdeen, which the company discovered six years ago. The Queen inaugurated the flow of oil by pushing a gold-plated button in BP's control centre at Dyce near Aberdeen. She was accompanied by Prince Philip and Prince Andrew. Prime Minister Harold Wilson also attended with the Scottish Secretary and other senior cabinet colleagues. The inauguration by Her Majesty and the presence of so many high-ranking politicians in Dyce – a town scarcely on the map a year ago – is seen as testament to the importance being placed on North Sea oil.*

Evidence of the continuing high level of offshore activity today can be seen by the ever-present supply vessels and specialist ships at the quaysides.



### 24 Old Torry Village

From the late 12th century the abbot of the Abbey of Arbroath was the feudal superior of the lands that included Torry. Initially Torry developed as two villages: Upper and Nether Torry. It was from Nether Torry that the village known as Old Torry developed in the late 18th and early 19th century. Much of this quaint old fishing town was lost in 1871 when the course of the river Dee was diverted. The remainder of the village was lost in the 1970s when the harbour and quay area expanded. Only one or two streets and a few houses are left from this village although none are dated earlier than the 19th century.



A resident of Torry, Lizzie Finlayson, recounts her experience of seeing a barrage balloon being struck by lightning in Torry harbour during a storm in World War II: *"It was in 1941. It was a heavy thunderstorm it was, and a lot of people thought it was an air raid. It must have been between nine and ten anyway, a Friday or Saturday, my husband came in, and we went to bed. The youngest one was in the cot. Wrapped the blankets round him, ran him out in the thunder and lightning, to an air raid bit [shelter], and up we went, and the rain was lashing. At the bottom of the street, there was this enormous bang, it was worse than a bomb I think and this barrage balloon – the size of it was enormous! It was just a ball of fire, and from far we was standing, we was so close to it, and as it came down, it gradually decreased in size, landed right down in the middle of the harbour, missed the boats and that, right in the middle, and the splash was enormous. Now that was a wartime experience!"*





## 25 Leading Lights



### Beware fast traffic from Greyhope Road

Built of cast iron in 1842 the Leading Lights still give vessels a clear and simple means of



navigating the narrow central channel into the harbour. As a ship approaches the entrance, the

Master has to keep the two lights on the towers in line, one above the other, in order to keep to the middle of the channel. The Leading Lights are thought to be amongst the oldest cast iron lighthouses in the world.



## 26 Inner South Breakwater



*Old South Breakwater with North Pier in the background*

The famous engineer, Thomas Telford, proposed the building of a South Breakwater in the early 19th century. It was completed by 1840, making the entrance channel less susceptible to the effects of siltation and heavy weather.

## 27 South Breakwater



This Breakwater was constructed between 1869 and 1874. It was much larger than the earlier Inner South Breakwater and was made out of concrete. The Breakwater was designed to provide better facilities by sheltering the Navigation Channel from easterly weather.



## 28 Aberdeen South Breakwater Light



This light is operational, and is currently an active aid to navigation. The site and tower are closed, although the lighthouse is easily visible from shore. Height of focal plane, or area from which light is seen, is 22 m (72 ft), with three red flashes every 8 seconds. The white tower on the breakwater is approximately 13 m (43 ft) in height with lantern and gallery, mounted on a conical concrete base at the end of the breakwater.



## 29 Wildlife and Natural Heritage

One of the most spectacular sights that can be seen at the harbour are bottlenose dolphins swimming in the entrance to the Navigation Channel. These creatures are very social and are often present in 'pods', or groups, of around ten individuals. Dolphins are best known for their playful, acrobatic behavior and are regularly spotted launching out of the water, performing somersaults and riding the bow-waves of passing ships.

Harbour porpoises can also be seen frequently from the shore. These tend to be smaller and less acrobatic than the dolphins, only ever showing their back and dorsal fin above the surface of the water. Harbour porpoises are nicknamed 'puffing pigs' because of the distinctive noise they make when coming to the surface to breathe.

All year round a wide range of birdlife can be seen, including cormorants, various gulls, eider duck and sometimes some of the winter visiting ducks such as goldeneye and red-breasted mergansers in the harbour itself.

Salmon pass through Aberdeen Harbour each spring to begin their journey up the River Dee, which is internationally renowned for its salmon fishing. Salmon migrate from the sea and return to their birthplaces to mate and spawn. Once in freshwater, the male salmon develop their distinctive orange and red mating colours. The salmon can be seen further up stream, leaping up the Falls of Feugh, near Banchory.



*Bottlenose dolphins in Aberdeen Harbour*

## 30 Girdleness Lighthouse

The lighthouse, designed by Robert Stevenson, grandfather of the writer Robert Louis Stevenson, was first lit in 1833, and is still an important navigation mark for ships entering the harbour. The lighthouse was built to alert ships to the danger of the wave-cut platform which extends right around the Girdleness peninsula. The lighthouse contains a famous foghorn known as the 'Torry Coo' foghorn. Out of service since the late Eighties, it was recently saved from demolition.





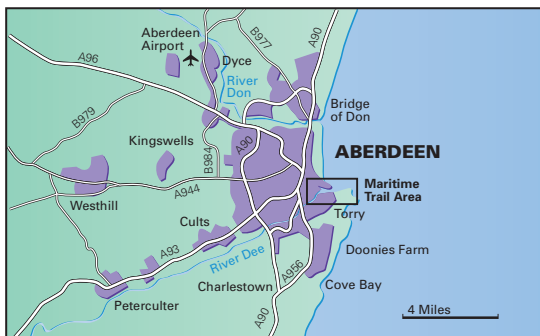


# MARITIME TRAIL

## ABERDEEN

one of a series of themed trails  
being developed around the City.

Further details about these trails can be found at:  
**[www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/heritagetrails](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/heritagetrails)**



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### For further information contact

Chris Croly  
Historian

**01224 337706**

or visit **[www.aberdeencity.gov.uk](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk)**

Aberdeen Visitor Information Centre

**01224 288828**

**[www.aberdeen-grampian.com](http://www.aberdeen-grampian.com)**

For public transport information contact Travel Line

on **0871 200 22 33**

or visit **[www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com)**

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**01224 337706**



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