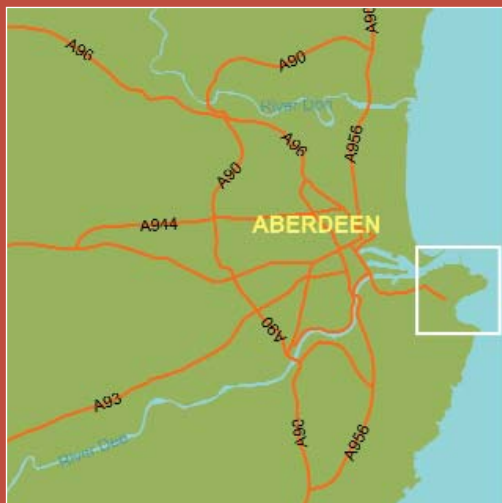


Torry Coastal Trail
is one of a series of themed trails
being developed around the City.

Aberdeen City Council
'Regenerating the South of the City'

Further details about these trails can be found at:
www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/trails



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Aberdeen Visitor Information Centre

01224 288828

www.aberdeen-grampian.com

For public transport information contact Travel Line

on **0870 608 2608**

or visit www.travelinescotland.com

For a large text version contact

01224 522070



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Torry Coastal Trail

A guide to Torry's coastline



3 Torry Point Battery

This venerable and much loved fortification was built in 1860, along with another battery a little to the north on Aberdeen beach, to defend the city, harbour and trade of Aberdeen. It was staffed at first by volunteers and was decommissioned in the 1890s. Torry Battery was re-fortified in the early years of the 20th century and was permanently staffed during the First World War.

During the inter war years the Battery became home, for the first time, to a



Gun practice at Torry Point Battery.

number of homeless families, during a housing crisis. During the Second World War the Battery was again permanently staffed and owing to the advances in warfare technology, especially the development of bombers, it underwent a number of changes. During the war years the Battery's gunners engaged a number of German bombers and took direct hits. It was during the Second World War that the Battery's big guns opened fire for the only time in their history, against a friendly vessel. After the war the Battery and its associated camp again housed a number of homeless families, including the families of many recently demobilised soldiers. Families remained here until the 1950s, during which decade the Battery was finally decommissioned. In the following decades it became a temporary home to many different species of migratory birds whilst today it is a favoured spot for many Aberdonians, offering unparalleled views of the city and harbour.



Torry Point Battery: in the foreground are structures on which to dry fishing nets.



Titan crane at the Breakwater.

4 Breakwater and Goliath

Despite the existence of the earlier Inner South Breakwater there was an ongoing need for more quay space and better facilities in Aberdeen's harbour. The 1868 Act of Parliament, which allowed the Dee to be diverted and a third extension to the North Pier to be built, also legislated for this breakwater. The works were carried out between 1869 and 1874. This structure was much larger than the Inner South Breakwater and is built of concrete.

A gale in 1937 tore a 100 foot gap in the Breakwater. Repair work began in 1938, was stopped during the Second World War and resumed in 1954. At that time the Breakwater was widened. The works involved constructing 30 ton concrete blocks in a yard close to the Breakwater. These were loaded onto a Sentinel

steam waggon by crane and transferred to a Titan crane, named 'Goliath'. The completed Breakwater is 1050 feet in length and 35 feet in width.



The Breakwater showing damage after the 1937 gale.



Breakwater today.

5 Anti-Tank Cubes-World War Two remains

Not far from the Breakwater lie the remains of what may be part of a Second World War road block, in the form of rectangular concrete bases with iron uprights embedded in them. World War Two coastal defences included a variety of structures to deter landing of wheeled and tracked vehicles and their movement inland. Some of the broken concrete blocks visible on the foreshore around Girdleness may be remnants of anti-tank 'cubes', designed to slow tanks down and expose their vulnerable undersides to fire.



Lighthouse today.

6 Lighthouse

In 1813 the whaling ship 'Oscar' went down off the coast of Aberdeen with only 2 survivors of the crew of 44 men. After this the shipmasters of Aberdeen lobbied extensively for a lighthouse. It was not until 1833 that this one was built. It was designed by Robert Stevenson, grandfather of the author Robert Louis Stevenson, and constructed by the Aberdeen contractor John Gibb. It was built to a new design of two lights, the lower of which was set at the third floor, where a corbelled gallery can still be seen. The Lighthouse was lit for the first time at sunset on 15 October 1833. The Lighthouse is 37 metres high and contains 189 steps.

In 1847 the original cast iron lantern was removed and sent to Inchkeith. In 1996 it was acquired by the National Museums of Scotland. During restoration of this 5 ton lantern, it was found to be decorated with a wonderful casting of dolphins, ships and lighthouses.



Foghorn today.

7 Foghorn

The current foghorn, known affectionately as the 'Torry Coo' (owing to its low sonorous tones) was completed in 1902 and replaced an earlier foghorn which was located to the east of the current structure. The foghorn, like the lighthouse, was once an invaluable aid to navigation. The siren itself is a cylindrical type. The Aberdeen Daily Journal published the following account on 25 March 1902 of how the horn worked.

'Compressed air escapes from tanks into the perforated syren while it rotates and there are thus produced every two minutes four blasts-two high and two low notes. For the purpose of producing the compressed air... three oil engines, each of 25 horse power, are used, and these are housed in a commodious stone erection within the grounds of the Lighthouse Commissioners surrounding the lighthouse. Each of the engines produces air up to a pressure of about 30lb per square inch, and it is conveyed to the tanks through pipes and there stored. Three of these tanks are situated within the engine-house, and are capable of containing 135 cubic feet. From the tanks to the feeders at the horn house the air is conveyed in pipes, and by an automatic arrangement is discharged in the syren with ear splitting effect...'

The horn was worked by a man who was posted on outlook duty and its plant was supplied by James Dove and Co., contracting engineers from Edinburgh. Although it has not been used for many years it retains a special place in the hearts of people from Torry and is a striking addition to the rugged coastal landscape of this area.



8 Girdleness Battery

This coastal artillery battery was built at the start of the Second World War and was issued with two six-inch naval guns on 28 May 1940. The guns were subsequently removed after the war finished in 1945 and the Battery itself was demolished. Concrete bases of the gun emplacements can still be seen at the site, both at the top of the cliff and on the shore. Girdleness Battery was one of 14 batteries that defended Aberdeen during the war and was probably manned by the gunners at nearby Torry Point Battery.



Part of the remains of Girdleness Battery.

9 Sewage Valve House

This once elegant, but now rather downtrodden building was constructed as part of the massively engineered sewage outfall system created for Aberdeen as the result of a scheme drawn up in the years 1896-98. Previously, a sewer built in the 1860s had been expanded bit by bit, but by the close of the 19th century, the growth of the city as well as changing standards of sanitation required more radical action. The new sewer was over three miles long, piping effluent from both north and south of the River Dee. It was designed to discharge up to



Sewage Valve House.

81 million gallons per day, a quantity representing a significant degree of future planning. This Penstock and Valve House provided an automatic flap that prevented the sea from backing up the sewer, but opened when required by pressure of sewage. The building itself was constructed by John Morgan. The line of the sewer tunnel, which was dug through substantial rock cuttings in places, can be clearly observed on the shore between the Valve House and Nigg Bay.



*Leisure in the Bay of Nigg in 1934.
Image © Aberdeen Central Library.*

10 Torry Park/Girdleness Park/Walker Park

This plot of land adjacent to the lighthouse was purchased in May 1901, following public pressure for a formal park. Once the park was developed it was described in 1902 as 'well laid out, with abundance of splendid spring water. It has also got its well arranged shelters...It will be one of the finest picturesque parks in Scotland...'. The area today no longer has these features described in 1902 and has also changed name to Walker Park.

However the tradition of people from Aberdeen visiting the Torry area, in general, for leisure has a long history. It may stretch back to the 17th century but was still very much in evidence in the early 20th century. Many families would make day trips to the Bay of Nigg and a number of shops existed there to serve their needs. By the middle of the 20th century this age-old practice was in decline.



Walker Park as shown on the 1925 Ordnance Survey Map.

11 Fishing Station

This small granite-built dwelling, with a later harled brick extension, is visible on Ordnance Survey maps from the first edition of 1867 onwards. On the 1901 version, a well is marked nearby and even today the remains of a slipway can be seen. Local people recall it being used seasonally by lobster and crab fisherman up until the 1960s.



Remains of the Fishing Station.

12 Salt Pans

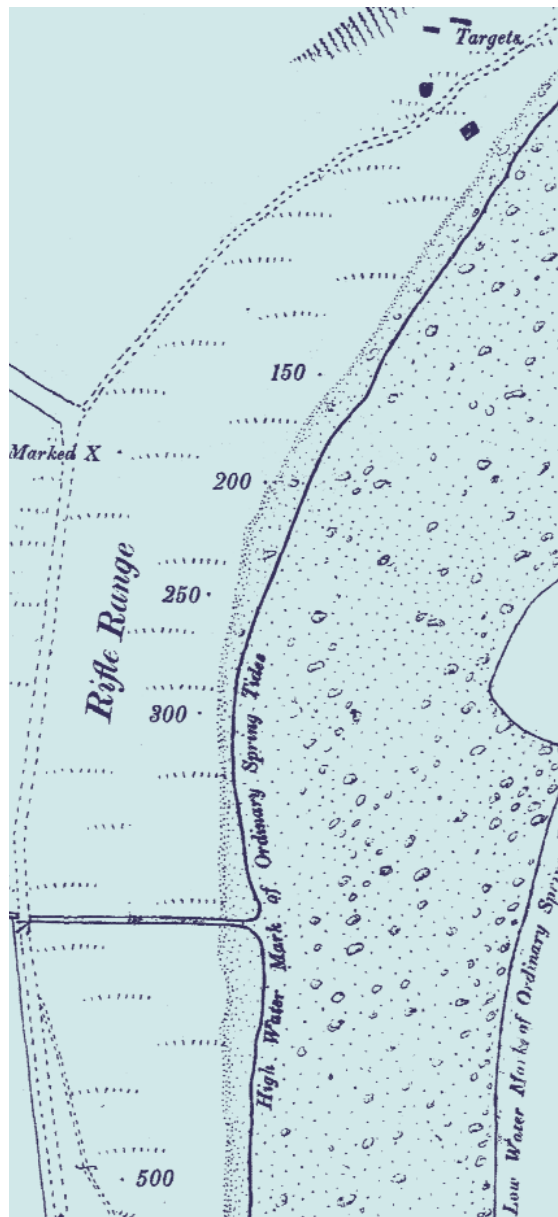
In the mid 18th century there was an attempt generally in Scotland to expand the manufacturing base of the country. This sea salt manufactory and refinery was established by Alexander Smith, a merchant from Old Aberdeen, in 1796. The process worked by evaporating sea water and collecting the salt which was left over. A number of houses and buildings were set up in 1797 in order to accommodate the process. However the venture was not successful, the minister of Nigg noting in the 1830s that it had failed some time ago. However Ogilvie, writing in the first years of the 20th century, noted that the bases of the buildings could still be seen.



18th century map showing salt pans, © Aberdeen City Archives.

13 Rifle Range

This practice range for soldiers and volunteers stretched along the Bay of Nigg. It was in existence by 1867 and was gone by 1901. There were other ranges like this in the city, often on the shore line, including one immediately to the north of Broad Hill.



Rifle range as shown on the 1901 Ordnance Survey Map.

14 Kelp Works

Like the salt pans, the kelp works was part of an attempt to diversifying the manufacturing base of Scotland. Kelp could be used for a number of different purposes. In the case of Aberdeen (Bay of Nigg) it was to be used in part of the production of soap. As early as 1728 John Gordon, a merchant from Aberdeen, had been collecting 'sea ware' in the Bay of Nigg and burning it in his nearby kilns. The Town Council objected to this because it encroached on the rights of those who lived there and collected the seaweed for dung for their fields. On 8 March 1750, George Leslie, a merchant trading in Aberdeen, applied to Aberdeen Council for a warrant to cut and burn kelp. He wanted to undertake this work as part of what he described as his 'soapere'.

In the early 1790s Dr David Cruden described the kelp business. He wrote: 'The sea-ware, or bladder succus, grows up in three years on the rocks around the Ness and Bay chiefly, to a condition for being cut, dried, and burned into kelp. In 1791, 11 tons, of a fine quality, were made by 33 women, mostly young women, at 8d per day, with the direction of an overseer.'

In the 1830s it was noted that kelp gathering for soap production had ceased but that young women still collected (possibly harvested, as a food stuff) a number of different kinds of kelp, namely dulce (*Fucus palmatus*), bladderlock (*Fucus esculentus*), and pepper dulce (*Fucus pinnatifidus*).

15 St Fittick's Well

This well is associated with St Fittick, an almost certainly legendary saint of the 7th century. The story runs that St Fittick was being brought to Scotland in a boat and when a storm developed the superstitious sailors threw the monk overboard. He was washed up on the shore of the Bay of Nigg, where a spring miraculously appeared to satisfy his thirst. The well emerges in the historical record after the reformation when the Protestant authorities attempted to ban people from having resort to the well for its curative powers. The well itself survived until the early 20th century but was washed away and replaced by a new structure, which in turn was also washed away.



St. Fittick's Well, as drawn in the early 20th century.

Aberdeen's other Heritage Trails

Aberdeen's Torry Coastal Trail is one of a series of heritage trails under development within the City. In addition to some path improvements and information panels, each trail will have a companion leaflet, which can be found in the Aberdeen Visitor Information Centre and other outlets throughout the City

The trails include:

Aberdeen's People and Places

a guide to Aberdeen's Commemorative Plaques

Aberdeen's Granite Trail

a guide to Aberdeen's Granite Industry

Aberdeen's Maritime Heritage Trail

a guide to Aberdeen's Maritime History

Aberdeen's North Sea Trail

a guide to Aberdeen's Coastal Heritage

Aberdeen's March Stones

a guide to Aberdeen's March Stones & Freedom Lands

Aberdeen's Sculpture Trail

a guide to public sculpture in Aberdeen

Old Aberdeen Trail

a guide to Old Aberdeen

Torry Churches Trail

a guide to Torry's Churches

