

Kingswells & the Four Hills Trail

Brimmond, Elrick, Tyrebagger & Kirkhill



#aberdeentrails





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Above: Bonfire for the Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary on Brimmond Hill in 1935. This, **4** and **24** are reproduced courtesy of Aberdeen City Libraries/Silver City Vault www.silvercityvault.org.uk

Opposite: Original drawing for Brimmond Hill War Memorial

Freedom Lands illustrated map courtesy of Yvonne Holton

1 & Diary of Alexander Jaffray courtesy of Aberdeen City & Shire Archives

3 Reproduction courtesy of the National Library of Scotland

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Accessibility



This trail by its nature covers some uneven ground and steep slopes. Like all hills parts may not be fully accessible to all visitors

Public Transport

The following buses link between the locations and central Aberdeen.

A day ticket allows unlimited travel by the same bus operator:

Kingswells and Brimmond Hill: **Stagecoach 14** or for Kingswells

Stagecoach X17 Westhill via Kingswells

Chapel of Stoneywood and Elrick, Tyrebagger & Kirkhill Forest:

Stagecoach 220 Kemnay & Monymusk or **Stagecoach 37** Inverurie

Cycling

Aberdeen to Kingswells: There is a good network of shared paths and off road routes. These are shown at www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/cyclemaps and for the Kingswells area on the maps at the back of this booklet.

The Four Hills: The A90 has motorway style restrictions and prohibits cycles, although it can be easily bypassed. The roads around the Four Hills are generally quiet except for the A96 dual carriageway at Tyrebagger (**21**) and Kirkhill (**22**) which can be busy. Responsible cycling on hill paths is welcome, please respect other users.

Countryside Ranger Service

Regular guided walks and activities are available. Please see the following link for further details: www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/rangerservice



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Kingswells and the nearby areas have a long, varied and fascinating past. The area itself is integral to King Robert the Bruce's Freedom Lands. There is also a significant amount of evidence from prehistory and amongst the oldest archaeological monuments in Aberdeen, the 6,000 year old long cairn.

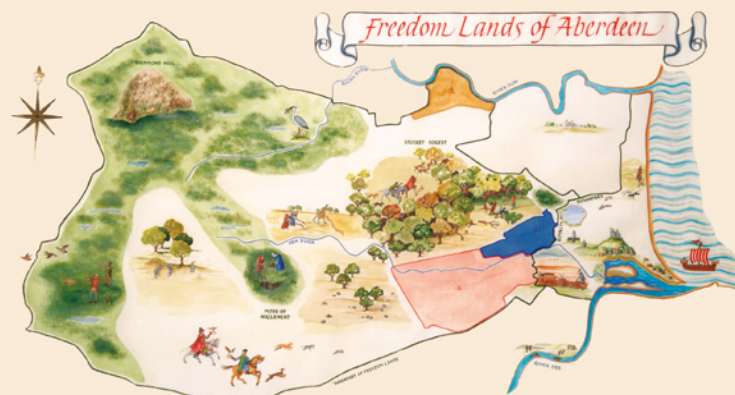
The lands themselves were very stony and these were cleared to improve the ground for farming. Some stones were used to build field dykes or sold as paving slabs. However, a huge excess of stones was left and large consumption dykes were created to 'consume' the stones cleared. It is true to say that Kingswells was at the forefront in the creation of these dykes, which are unique to North-east Scotland.

The surrounding landscape includes Brimmond Hill, Aberdeen's highest hill and part of the popular Four Hills Walks. This booklet explores some of the rich and diverse history, archaeology and natural history of the area.



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The history of Kingswells

There is a story that the name Kingswells derives from a visit of Charles II to the area in the middle decades of the 1600s. However the first historical appearance is Kingswellis in 1509 and Kyngiswallis in 1553, considerably predating Charles II (1630-1685). Therefore it remains a bit of a mystery.

King is a relatively common Scottish place name and other examples locally include Kingshill and Kingsford. These may derive from Gaelic – ceann meaning ‘head’ or ‘end’. So perhaps it means ‘end of the walls’. A record of 1578 noted: ‘the saidis commissionaris...past to the towne and landis of Kingiswallis...at the stane besyd the Wellheid whereout the Den Burne runis...’.

Kingswells’ history is bound up with Aberdeen’s freedom lands (see **Boundary Stone Trail**) and march stones (21), in part dating to King Robert the Bruce in 1319. The Council initially ‘set’ the lands (a form of short term lease) but in 1551, feued them off to private owners for initial payment and yearly feu duty. Thus the estates of Kingswells, Hazlehead, Countesswells and Bogfairly came into existence.

The new owners encouraged settlement which would have helped the founding of a series of fermtouns (farm towns). Kingswells developed around the later turnpike road, becoming a small community which it remained throughout the centuries before expanding into today’s suburban village, largely during the oil boom of the 1980s.

Brimmond Hill coin hoard

These were coins of Queen Mary Tudor, Queen Elizabeth, Mary Queen of Scots, James VI, Charles I, two dutch doits and a brass Nuremburg counter and were found in 1942, ‘beneath a small boulder within 100 yards of the summit’. There were 77 coins, the majority Charles I, the most common copper Scottish coin of the time. The dates of coins suggest they might have been deposited in the first half of the 1640s.

It’s interesting to speculate about the circumstances and why they were never retrieved. It may be connected with the Battle of Justice Mills, 1644, a traumatic event in Aberdeen’s history (see **Bloody Aberdeen Trail**). This hoard was placed only 50 years before the Bank of Scotland was founded, a much safer way of looking after funds.

Kingswells and the Jaffreys

In 1551, Kingswells was feued to the Arthur family until purchased between 1603-1610 by the Jaffrey family. They had a significant impact on both Kingswells and Aberdeen, providing many of its Lord Provosts but were also prominent Quakers at a time when this was extremely problematic as Quakers challenged church authority.

The first Jaffrey of prominence was Alexander (died c.1569), a burghess of the Bakers’ Trade. His son Alexander (died c.1627), a magistrate is said to have purchased Kingswells estate. His son, also Alexander, became Provost three times (1630s-40s) and his sons, Alexander and John, were also Provosts of Aberdeen. However, the family were not considered ‘old blood’: Spalding noted he was ‘but an oy (grandson) of ane Baxter (baker)...’. When the first Provost Alexander attended service in Aberdeen’s St Nicholas Church he found a pie occupying his seat!

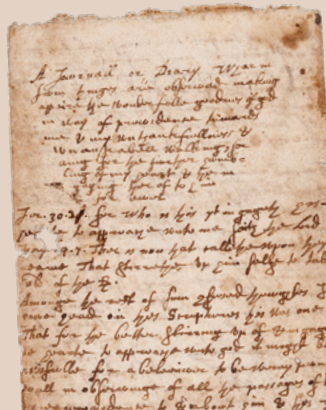
The second Provost Alexander (died 1673) was a Civil War covenantor who changed sides to fight with King Charles II at Dunbar. After, whilst under arrest he met Oliver Cromwell and under his influence became a 5th Monarchist (a believer in the imminent second coming of Christ). He was later imprisoned in Edinburgh’s Tolbooth for refusing to sign the bond for restoration of the monarchy. Upon release he became a Quaker for which he was persecuted, spending time in prison on five separate occasions.

Quakers and Aberdeen

Quakers emerged in the 1600s as a radical protestant group rejecting most traditional forms of church government and worship, whilst promoting equality for all and rejecting the swearing of oaths. As far as we know, Quakerism reached Aberdeen in 1658 and persecution began soon after. However they made conversions amongst the class of the magistrates and merchants; a cause of worry in itself to the magistrates.

Their problem was that Quakers challenged the whole social system and hierarchy, claiming that everyone was equal. Moreover, their meetings were illegal, they refused to pay church taxes, married without clergy, buried their dead in ‘unconsecrated’ ground and refused to take oaths. Although persecuted across the country, Aberdeen acquired a reputation for being worst – in the 1670s, just about every male adult Quaker was imprisoned at some point. It was said the Quakers were packed into the Tolbooth like ‘salmon in a barrel...’ Those imprisoned preached to crowds outside, resulting in the windows being blocked up.

Oaths were very important then and on 20 October 1675, Aberdeen changed its Burgess Oath so it could not be taken by Catholics or Quakers. This meant that they could not own land in the city or lawfully enter into trade. It was not until the 1690s that persecution stopped and early 1700s before they were allowed to make an affirmation rather than an oath.





1 Skene Turnpike Road

Turnpikes were new roads dating from an Act of 1795, part of the 1600-1800s agricultural revolution which next brought canals and finally railways to Scotland. New agricultural practices meant greater need to connect farms with markets. The first under the act in Aberdeenshire was Deeside Road, then Ellon Road, Inverurie Road and Skene Road. The Skene Road was dogged by financial problems and not started until 1801. It was completed by 1803 with the Council paying to connect to Union Street. The proposed turnpike is in the centre of the above survey detail with Kingswells upper left and Maidencraig far right. This doesn't precisely match what was built but the turnpike followed today's main route except for the Old Skene Road at Kingswells and a smaller loop near Maidencraig.



2 Kingswells United Free Church

Kingswells acquired its own church following the 1843 Disruption, where a large portion of the Church of Scotland walked out to form their own church. The Kingswells congregation formed in 1857, with the church built in 1858, aided by Dr Edmonds (who contributed wood and rafters for the ceiling), continuing the tradition of local landowners having strong influence in the area. It was designed by Liverpoolian architect John Hay and cost £681, the Manse completed in 1859. It was built, like the consumption dykes, from stones cleared from fields by the congregation. The war memorial, in Kemnay granite, was erected after WWI, originally on Skene Road, later amended to include the names of those who lost their lives in WWII.

3 Huxterstone Farms

The word huxter, or huckster is obscure in origin. It may be Dutch and relate to itinerant sellers, without a stall or permanent base.

Although it has come to mean trickery, it is not clear this was originally the case. The 'stone' part may mean a stone, but it may equally mean a town. Either way Taylor and Skinner's Survey of 1776 (right) shows the farm as Huxterstone. By the first Ordnance Survey map of 1867, there are two farms Huxterstone and West Huxterstone, though at times Huxterstone was known as East Huxterstone, both remain today as private houses.



4 Newpark

In *Historical Walks and Names* (1927) local historian GM Fraser wrote: "[Newpark] is a comparatively recent name for Cuttlehill, the property that once formed part of Sheddocksley... bought in 1777 by Robert Dyce of Aberdeen, father of the well-known physician, Dr. William Dyce, of Cuttlehill, whose town house for many years was No. 48 Marischal Street." Dr William Dyce lectured in medicine at Marischal College and was father to William Dyce RA (1806-1864), the Scottish artist most associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood school of painting. As well as a noted artist, Dyce (right) played a part in the formation of public art education in the UK and was head of what became the Royal College of Art. Aberdeen Art Gallery has the largest collection of his work including the gallery favourite *Titian Preparing to make his First Essay in Colouring*, 1856-1857. He is believed to have been born at the Marischal Street address.





5 The Bodysnatchers

An enclosure at Gillahill Farm is said to be where Resurrectionists, an earlier euphemism for bodysnatching, buried the remains of the bodies they had stolen from graves and sold to anatomy students and teachers for education and dissecting. However there is no evidence to back this up: indeed Aberdeen's main Anatomy School on St Andrew Street, associated with grave robbing, buried the remains in their yard. Some of which were dug up by a dog in December 1831, which precipitated a major riot, as told in the **Bloody Aberdeen Trail**. In *Historical Walks and Names* (1927) local historian GM Fraser refers to this farm as 'Gillahill (properly Gallowhill)'.



6 Rough's Cairn

This is the most impressive of Aberdeen's consumption dykes. A result of work organised by Alexander Rough (1799-1888), possibly in the 1850s. He owned Gillahill Farm (4) and undertook to clear the land of stones to create new fields. At 3.6 meters in height, it is the tallest of over 120 consumption dykes recorded in Aberdeen. In the late 1950s James Cruickshank, in *The Third Statistical Account of Scotland*, described it as '100 yards long, 20 feet wide and 20 feet high...' and 'a fitting example of the tasks of our forefathers...'. It is composed of 3-4 courses of coursed squared boulders, the remainder piled up boulders. In the days before mechanical farm machinery, this represented the results of monotonous back breaking labour. The historian Alexander Smith wrote of Newhills parish that 'the hands of man have done much to create fruitful fields...'. In the 1881 census Rough is described as a widower farming 140 acres. He was recorded as employing 6 men, 1 boy and 2 women but he likely drew on labour resources from the wider area.



7 The Bucks Burn

The second of two notable waterways, giving its name to the neighbouring Aberdeen suburb. Bucksburn Gorge consists of an area of broad-leaved woodland and grassland with the Bucks Burn part of an important linear habitat through farmland and housing. A number of birds feed and nest along the stretch upstream and these habitats support a good diversity of plant species. There are a network of paths including return loops to Kingswells and through the now-closed Howes Road to Bucksburn itself. Alternative routes lead to neighbouring Sheddocksley and Northfield.

8 Derbeth Farm

Named mid 1700s, from a contraction of Alexander and Elizabeth Aberdeen. It superseded Dykeside, described as an improving farm by Francis Douglas in 1760, who also wrote of consumption dykes on the farm: 'Much of the ground was full of great stones, which obstructed the plough; to consume them, after they were blown and cut some of the fences were built five feet thick at the bottom.'

9 Fairley House (private)

This fine house retains one of the older names in the area, historically Bogfairley which first appears in historic documents in 1498, as Bogferloche and *Place Names of West Aberdeenshire* suggest it derives from the Gaelic Bog feur-lochain meaning bog of the grassy pool. It was feued in 1551, as part of Aberdeen's freedom lands, to Provost Menzies, the Laird of Pitfodels for the equivalent of £12,000 today. Later, George Davidson of Pettens mortified the lands to the town of Aberdeen in 1662 to help support a minister at Newhills Church. In late 1800s, early 1900s, it was home to the Brooke family, Sir Harry Brooke was greatly involved in setting up the Gordon Highlanders' Institute. Today, a private residence, it is one of the areas most impressive historic villas.





10 East Dyke

Although smaller in dimensions than the adjacent Broad Dyke, most famous of the consumption dykes, it is no less impressive.

Along with Broad

Dyke it was scheduled as an ancient monument in 1933. It may be not be old as Broad Dyke as it does not appear on the first Ordnance Survey map of c.1867, but does appear on the second c.1900. If constructed between 1867 and 1900 then it makes it much more likely it was the work of Dr Francis Edmond. These dykes at Kingswells have attracted attention from many different commentators and are mentioned in the above poem of 1876.

*‘On which, with an immensity of toil,
It built itself into a monster mound,
Matching in size our long broad granite pier,
Reminding us of Babylon’s great walls.
For all along the middle of its top
The broader flatter stones, designedly,
Are laid to form a way quite passable
For gentle lady or fine gentleman.’*



11 Broad Dyke

Whilst Rough’s Cairn (6) is the largest, this is perhaps the most iconic and well known. In 1840, the writer Catherine Sinclair wrote: ‘You might fancy, in some parts of this country, that it rained stones instead of water! And towards the west, where rocks abound most, the superfluous stones are swallowed up in what is called an ‘Aberdeenshire dyke’ built about six feet high, and twenty or thirty feet broad, fit for a waggon to be driven on, and looking as if materials had been collected for a village.’ Dr Francis Edmond (see 13) is thought to have added the pathways along the top of the dykes.



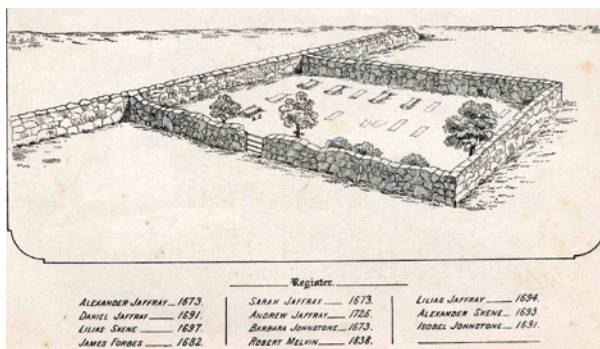
12 The Denburn

This rises nearby, with its first notable appearance at the Prime Four Business Park. This gentle stream has shaped Aberdeen itself. Very literally, in carving out the Denburn Valley – most noticeably at Union Terrace Gardens. The gardens themselves, Union Terrace, Rosemount Viaduct and Union Bridge are all due to its presence. It was also historically a major feature of the early and growing Aberdeen, providing power to mills and even becoming whisky via a distillery. Its story is told in the **Aberdeen Denburn Trail**.



13 Kingswells House (private)

The Jaffrey family built this house and a carved stone survives with three dates, 1666, 1713 and 1855, the earliest is likely when it was constructed. Alexander Jaffrey wrote in the 1700s of his grandfather, also Alexander, who built it: ‘Having a taste for, and some knowledge of architecture, he constructed the house after a plan of his own: it contains eight rooms (several of which were no larger than closets) on the two stories, with garrets in the roof’. Adjoining the courtyard was a horse stable and a room used as a Quaker meeting house. Mid 1800s, it was purchased by advocate Dr Francis Edmond LLD, 1805-1892, a major benefactor of Kingswells Free Church, who added a third storey and corner turret. The Kingswells Trust then ran it for benevolent purposes until purchased by Commander Calderwood who for a time had a mink farm. Until recently, it was a centre for the investigation, promotion and enhancement of spiritual healing.



14 Friends' Burial Ground

Friends is the name for followers of the Quaker faith. The burial ground was established by Alexander Jaffrey, Lord Provost and convert to Quakerism. He had the surrounding dry stone wall built and was buried in 1673. This dedicated site represents the Quaker concern for religious separation. According to Quaker tradition, there are no gravestones, but his family and friends are buried here. Including Lilias Jaffrey (née Skene), who wrote extensively in defence of the persecuted Quakers. An act commemorated by a plaque at the current Friends' Meeting House on Aberdeen's Crown Street. Dr Francis Edmond planted the surrounding trees which remain as a mark of respect for his Quaker predecessors.



15 Long Cairn

The Long Cairn (centre above) is the most visible indication of settlement during the neolithic period, from about 4000 BC. The earliest farmers in this area buried their dead below substantial stone cairns in prominent locations such as this one but there remain only a small handful in north-east Scotland. A stone cist or box-like burial chamber from this site is rumoured to have been used as a former roadside water trough at nearby West Hatton Farm. In the *Old Statistical Account of Scotland* of 1793, the cairn is described as being 108 feet (about 33m) long. Today it is 56m long so clearly much more stone has been added during agricultural clearance along with possible unregulated excavation, which may account for its current appearance of being in two parts. It has been a scheduled ancient monument since 1935.

16 Borrowstone

Brimmond Hill has several areas of small stone cairns possibly formed during agricultural clearance, along with stone cist burials, which may provide evidence of people farming and burying their dead at about 2000BC. There is also recorded evidence of a slightly earlier stone circle on the flank of Brimmond Hill. However the most spectacular discovery was at Borrowstone Farm. Found during quarrying of late 1970s, early 80s, six Bronze Age cist burials were subjected to archaeological excavation. All had contained a crouched human burial, although in some only a shadow of the figure remained. In cist 5, only one femur and the skull survived but it included one complete beaker and seven barbed and tanged arrowheads of superb workmanship (above). Cist 6 was built of massive granite and schist slabs and had a well preserved skeleton on a paved floor. Also present were a fine greenstone wristguard with four bronze rivets. Radio-carbon analysis dated the burials to around 2470 to 2200 BC. These remains are now in the care of the University of Aberdeen.



17 March Stones

Aberdeen's outer boundary stones ring Brimmond Hill marking the ancient Freedom Lands (see [intro](#)) and have their own **Boundary Stones Trail**. The earliest markers were probably natural burns, boulders or built cairns. The first description is a 'riding of the marches' in 1525. This ensured no adjacent landowners had encroached onto the town's lands and were accompanied by ceremony and feasting. Some stones have a saucer shape, possibly to allow the town's mark to be impressed into lead. In 1673, several cairns were ordered to be erected to mark the line of the marches on the Chapman road (this ran from Aberdeen, through Newhills to the Chapman ford, from stones No 44-34) but none of the 'march cairns' survive. After 1790 came the numbered ABD stones and the entire series was completed by 1810. Please note stones 38 and 39 are currently missing.



18 Brimmond Hill

The highest point within Aberdeen City Council's boundary at 266m (873ft), Brimmond Hill is a Marilyn, a classification of around 2,000 UK and Ireland peaks. All distinct hills with a prominence of 150m or more, including smaller but significant ones like Brimmond Hill but excluding some Munros which are simply part of higher mountain ranges. The Marilyns were created by Alan Dawson in 1992, the name a pun on the actress Marilyn Munroe and the well known 3,000ft Munros.

The hill's dominating position and visibility made it ideal for a warning beacon and one was thought to have been established in 1627 at the time of a feared Spanish invasion. Presumably at the highest point, where the relatively modern cairn stands. It has also hosted bonfires (see photo at [intro](#)), notably the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887 and George VI's coronation in 1937. The keeper of the beacon may have lived in a former cottage on the hill.

A much later form of hilltop communication are the microwave radio transmitter towers. These, for example, help link North Sea oil platforms with their Aberdeen headquarters. Making use of the height of the hill as it requires line-of-sight, not unlike the earlier bonfires or warning beacons. Another notable summit feature is the mountain view indicator (above). It is also a memorial to the fallen of the Great War, placed there by Stoneywood Literary Guild in 1917. The original design for this is shown in the introduction.

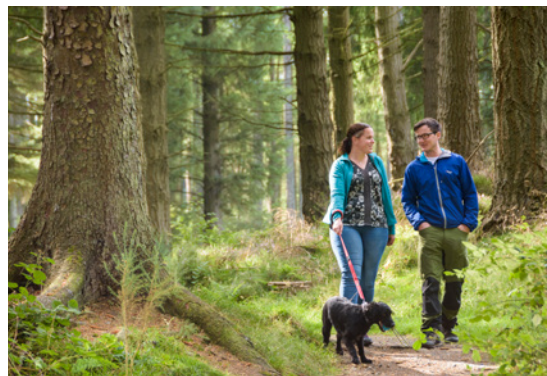
The small concrete pillar is an Ordnance Survey trigonometric, or triangulation, point and designed to fit a surveying device for map-making. However this is now mostly done by satellite-based global positioning technology. Speaking of maps, Brimmond Hill has three waymarked routes of various length, with colour coded waymarkers: Yellow ■ 1.8km, Black ■ 4.7km and Blue ■ 6km. QR codes on the posts link to a map, also available to download beforehand at www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/trails

There are visible remains of early cultivation of the lower northern slopes in the form of distinctive rig and furrow marks left by a medieval plough. This was dragged in one direction, year after year, leaving a distinctive pattern in the small irregular fields. The long narrow furlong strips were 'rigs' and the pattern 'rig & furrow' (ridge & furrow in England). There are also field clearance cairns where stones were gathered to clear the earth for agriculture. A substantial coin hoard was found near the hill's summit (see [intro](#)).



19 Elrick Hill

Like Brimmond, this is part of the Four Hills Walks which also include Tyrebagger ([20](#)) and Kirkhill ([21](#)). Along with its larger neighbour Brimmond, it regularly features in events by Aberdeen Countryside Ranger Service, sometimes covering both hills, which are also designated Country Parks. This includes guided walks and chances to learn bushcraft skills, including crafting natural materials, building shelters and fires. There are also opportunities to volunteer to help with hillside management. The other two hills are managed by Forestry and Land Scotland. They look after Scotland's national forests including those in Aberdeen and neighbouring Aberdeenshire.



20 Tyrebagger

Well known to generations from annual visits for family Christmas trees! However, this peaceful woodland can be enjoyed in all seasons from the blossoms of spring to autumn's golden tones. The woods are managed by Forestry and Land Scotland and feature two waymarked trails. A blue ■ 1.3km Beech Tree Trail, leads through mature woods, home to birds, deer and red squirrels. The name Tyrebagger itself is Gaelic for 'land of the fox'. The red ■ 2.3km Robbers' Trail passes near the Robbers' Cave, a reputed outlaw hideaway of the 1600s. Festive tree sales start the last weekend of November and are open daily until the day before Christmas Eve. There's also on site catering, ideal for those cold winter walks. For further information see: forestryandland.gov.scot/visit/tyrebagger



21 Kirkhill Forest

This wooded hill is also managed by Forestry and Land Scotland and features a waymarked white □ 5.9km trail to its 250m summit, an 1800s folly, Tappie Tower (left). Although in Kirkhill Forest this is the peak of Tyrebagger Hill. The vantage point allows panoramic views over the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire countryside. There are a network of other paths through the woodlands and Kirkhill also features a mountain biking fun park and orienteering course. For further details see: forestryandland.gov.scot/visit/kirkhill

22 St Mary's Stoneywood

From about the 12th century, the settlement now known as Kingswells was part of the parish served by St Machar's Cathedral, Old Aberdeen – a long way to go for the weekly service. By the mid 1300s St Mary of Stoneywood addressed this as a chapel of convenience for the area at not too great a distance from the cathedral. It was erected, or completed at least, by the local landowner Donald Bannerman, formerly physician to David II, in 1367-8. The reformation of 1560 probably brought an end to it and once again residents had to travel to St Machar's. Distance could prove a useful excuse, however. In November 1649, it was recorded by the Kirk Session that 'An indweller at Long Cairn, Kingswells, accused of horrible cursing, sent word by an elder that, because of the shortness of the day, he could not stay the afternoon session, but when the day became longer he would give full satisfaction'. Some remnants of the foundations of St Mary's Stoneywood can still be seen, along with an ancient well within the old graveyard. Below is a modern recreation of the church and graveyard.



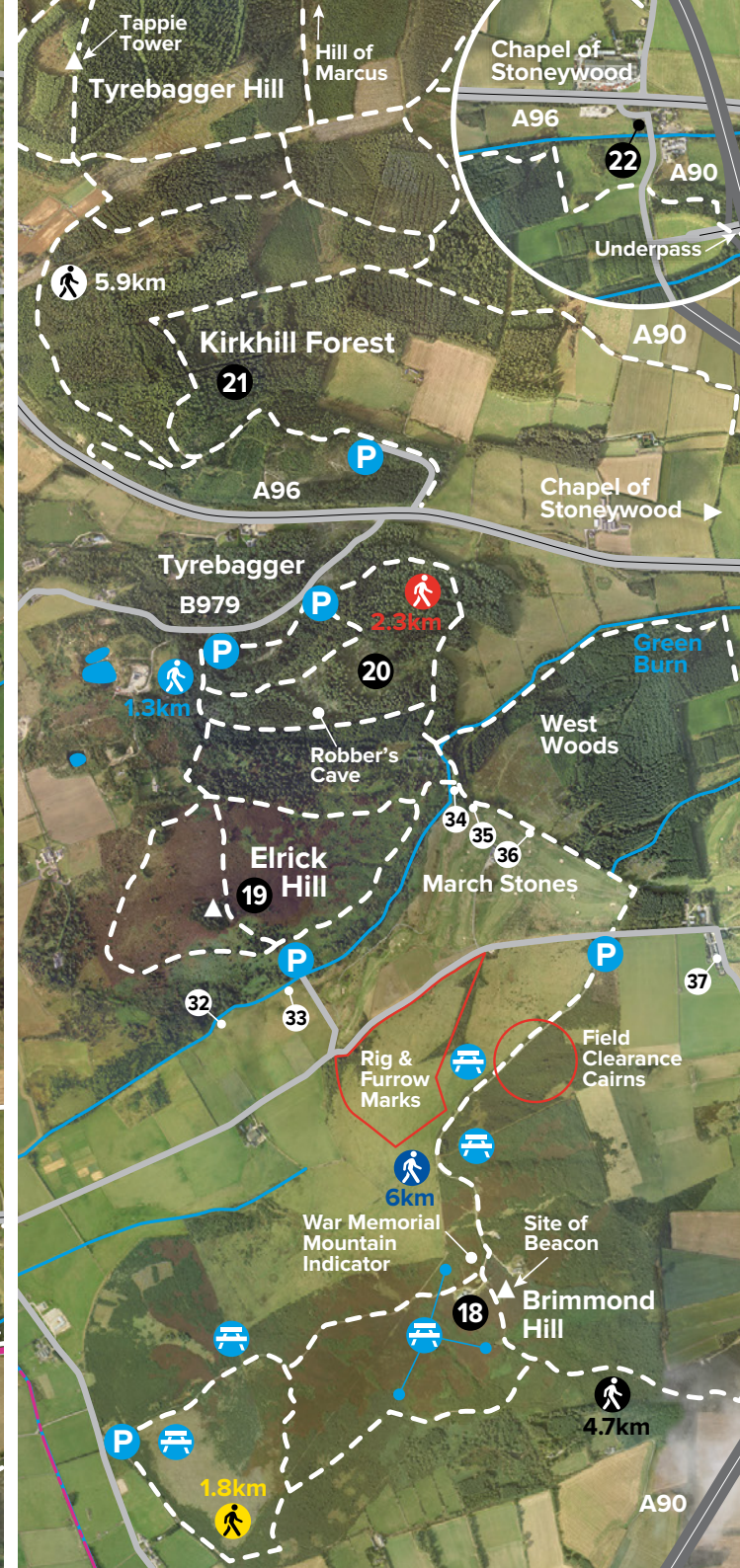
23 Newhills Old Parish Church

By the mid 1600s, it was clear a new parish was required to meet the needs of a growing community. This was solved by the generosity of George Davidson of Pettens, who paid for construction of this church in 1662-3. He began as a chapman, or packman, an itinerant drapery salesman and ended up a very successful grain merchant and substantial landowner. He granted his lands of Bogfairley and Newhills to support a new church and minister in Newhills. He died before completion and is buried in Aberdeen's St Nicholas churchyard, with a significant memorial on the west wall. He also had a bow bridge built over the Bucks Burn where it was said he witnessed a man drown and vowed to avert future tragedy. The heritors' minute book suggests that attempts were made to completely demolish the old building but that 'stout obstinate walls proved too much for the destroyers'.

24 Newhills Parish Church

The original church continued in use until 1830, when this new one, designed by notable Aberdeen architect Archibald Simpson, was opened on 16 June 1830. The bell, George Davidson's pew and his commemoration tablet were moved here, while other fixtures and fittings, such as slates, doors and windows were reused in local steadings. There is now a striking modern church hall extension to the north side. The historical etching below shows the church in its early days. The picture looks west and the rural lane in the foreground is now the Bucksburn to Kingswells road.





Wildlife and habitats of Kingswells and the Four Hills

Kingswells is surrounded by countryside and the Denburn acts as a great wildlife corridor. For birdwatching, dippers are often seen sitting on rocks or flying fast just above water. Look out for the black and white pied wagtail, which constantly wags its long tail as it searches for food. In marshy areas, northern marsh orchids grow alongside marsh marigolds, cotton grass and bog bean. Gardens attract a wide variety of birds including blue tits, great tits, goldfinches and if you are lucky yellowhammers and siskins. Sightings are especially likely in the winter if you put out some bird seed when their natural food is more scarce.



Spring to early summer

Parts of the hills turn yellow as the gorse flowers. On a warm still day, the air fills with their scent of coconut. Chiffchaffs call their own name as they declare territories. Blackcaps and whitethroats will also join in the chorus.

Summertime

At the top of Brimmond Hill, there are small areas of heathland which turn purple as the heather starts to flower. Overhead listen out for the musical call of the skylark as it sings from on high. Buzzards are a common sight and increasingly red kites, easy to tell from buzzards as they have a forked tail. The area is also home to large wild mammals including roe deer, foxes and badgers. Pipistrelle bats are common, mainly flying in the evenings. Each one catches thousands of midges and other insects each night. Look out for damselflies and dragonflies too.

When you are out watching the wildlife remember it is their home too so try not to cause too much disturbance. Take nothing but photos and leave nothing but footprints.

Top: Foxgloves and grasses.

Left: A buzzard searches for prey.

Kingswells & the Four Hills

Including Brimmond, Elrick, Tyrebagger & Kirkhill



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#aberdeentrails



This is one in a series of themed Aberdeen City trails. All are available via the free **GoABZ** mobile app and at www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/trails



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