

Aberdeen Maritime Trail

Aberdeen's maritime connections



[#aberdeentrails](#)

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)

Accessibility

 The entries in this trail are mostly accessible

 No public access – this is a working harbour with some areas closed for operational and safety reasons.

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, which has several stops in Victoria Road.

Picture Credits

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Front Cover: Marine Operations Centre

No 22: Sonar Image of Duke of Sutherland

Photograph courtesy of Aberdeen Harbour Board

No 24: Queen on Forties

Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of the BP Archive

No 27: Rusting capstan by Alan Jamieson, CC-BY 2.0, Wikimedia Commons

Below: Rainbow Warrior, Auckland Harbour

by Ot CC BY-SA 4.0 from Wikimedia Commons

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



#aberdeentrails

Welcome to Aberdeen, our beautiful and historic city by the sea! We have a long maritime connection and if it was not for the harbour, Aberdeen would not exist as we know it today.

The earliest evidence of a natural harbour being in use is in the form of tiny flint tools left by prehistoric people about 8,000 to 10,000 years ago. The first written reference to shipping in Aberdeen dates from 1136 and the harbour and the quay (or key heid as it was sometimes called) were repaired many times and expanded in the medieval period.

In the 17th century, efforts were made to deepen the channel as previously, large ships had to berth at the villages of Torry or possibly Fittie to avoid large sandbanks known as 'inches'. Several shipyards opened around the harbour in the 17th and early 18th century and while the shipbuilding industry has faded, there is a dry dock for ship repairs in use today. The 19th century saw the biggest changes, including diverting the River Dee and the development of one of the docks and four of the quays.

Fishing, transportation of goods, and ferries to the Northern Isles have been the three main industries from the harbour, with each expanding or contracting as times change over the years. In recent years, there has been a prolific number of offshore supply vessels for the oil and gas industry – it is one of the few city centres where you can view a working harbour. The latest development being built is South Harbour, which will accommodate large passenger cruise ships and will increase tourist numbers to Aberdeen and the surrounding countryside.

Have fun roaming around our beautiful city, discovering the maritime connections, and finding out a bit about its history and geography through the Maritime Trail!



Show off your photos on
Instagram @aberdeen_cc

#beautifulABDN



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. A sculpture outside commemorates the men and women who lived, worked and died in the fishing industry.

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 is 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 about 120 people, 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



Virginia Street, showing Bannerman's Bridge

This street was formed and named in the 18th century and 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 panelled 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 1779 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 1989. 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 more than 100 ships between 1839 to 1881 including *Thermopylae*, *Centurion* and *Wooloomooloo*. 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.

In the early 1990s, 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.

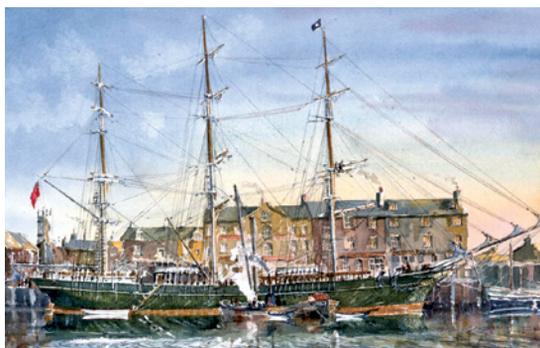


This building is the former home of Hall Russell

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 Sir William Hardy/ Rainbow Warrior

Launched on 29 November 1954 at Hall Russell, the ship was specially designed for carrying out research work on fish as food. She was the first diesel-electric trawler to be built in the UK.



In 1978, sold to Greenpeace and renamed *Rainbow Warrior*, she was sunk by French secret agents in Waitemata harbour, Auckland, New Zealand just before midnight on 10 July 1985. The crew escaped, apart from photographer Fernando Pereira, who drowned. *Rainbow Warrior* was refloated but could not be repaired. She was towed from Auckland and scuttled near the Cavalli Islands, off the Northland coast, to become an artificial reef for marine life.

10 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 at the time fought hard to have removed. A third row of houses, known as Pilot Square, was added some years later and 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.

Advertisement regarding damage to roofs caused by poultry

By Authority of the Hon. the
Magistrates of Aberdeen,
1810.

Whereas the Roofs of the
Houses at Footdee and Torrie
Squares, have of late been
much injured by HENS and
other POULTRY perching
thereon, and destroying the
Thatch :- These are certifying
the Inhabitants of said
Squares, that all Hens, or
other Fowls, found upon the
Roofs of said Houses in time
coming, will be instantly
killed :- And strict Orders
have been given to different
Persons to see this Certification
put into Execution.

11 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.



12 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.

13 T.S. Scylla, Pocrá 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 more than £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 Pocrá Quay where it stayed.



14 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.

15 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

16 Sea Moon

This abstract sculpture depicts the moon, its orbit, the sea and tides. It echoes the rolling movements of water and ships and reflective nature of the sea.

Janusz Tkaczuk won first prize in the Young Sculptors competition sponsored by Mobil at Aberdeen International Youth Festival in 1986. He is now an assistant visual arts professor at Gdańsk University of Technology in Poland.



17 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 20 North Pier).

When the first stage of the North Pier had been finished, an unexpected problem was noticed that 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 (15).

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).



18 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

19 Marine Operations Centre

Aberdeen Harbour's 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 more than 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

20 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 'Gawpull', which now forms the harbour's Turning Basin at the inner end of the navigation channel.



North Pier Lighthouse

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.



Advertisement regarding the alteration of the position of North Pier Lighthouse

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.

21 Lights & Port Control



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

22 Duke of Sutherland

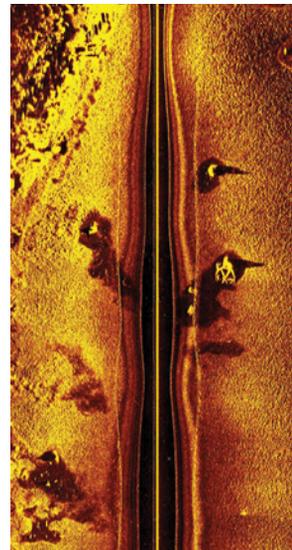
The steamship *Duke of Sutherland* arrived in Aberdeen Bay on the evening of Friday April 1st 1853 with 52 people on board.

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 10 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)

23 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

24 The Offshore Industry

Significant North Sea oil and natural gas reserves were first discovered in the 1960s and 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.

25 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 wis a heavy thunderstorm it wis, and a lot of people thought it wis 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 roon 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 wis so close to it, and as it came doon, it gradually decreased in size, landed right doon 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!"



26 Leading Lights

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,



showing red when it is safe to enter and green when it is dangerous. 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.



27



Skate's Nose Jetty & Capstan

This roughly hewn granite rubble jetty dates from circa 1796. The rusty capstan is the only surviving of 10 said to have been in use.

Before tugboats, sailing vessels had difficulty entering the harbour. The capstan is a form of winch with holes for long poles. Manned by teams of about a dozen labourers, who wound the capstan anti-clockwise using ropes to pull ships into port. Once inside the harbour, which was then a much wider tidal basin, they could safely anchor or moor at quaysides.



28 Inner South Breakwater

In the early 19th century, there was a huge expansion of trade which Aberdeen's harbour was ill equipped to deal with. The harbour was tidal and prone to silting up. Thomas Telford, the great engineer, was contracted to specify a programme of

works to improve the situation. Telford's improvements included the construction of the first part of the North Pier, to deal with the problem of silting. Despite problems of finance, progress was made and before 1840 a number of changes had been made, including the construction of the South Breakwater, in order to make Aberdeen's new quays (named Waterloo, Trinity and Regent Quays) less susceptible to the tidal influences of the North Sea.

29 Rocket House

Before the advent of helicopters, if a lifeboat was unable to reach a stricken vessel, the only alternative means of rescue was the rocket-propelled Life-saving



apparatus (LSA). One LSA unit was located at this Rocket House, and the other at Footdee, on the opposite side of the harbour. Unusually, Aberdeen Harbour's LSA teams were run by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution rather than HM Coastguard, with harbour staff and volunteers pushing the equipment to the scene on handcarts. The LSA teams were in existence from the 1920s until the 1960s and during that period, they took part in more than 50 rescues.

30 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.



31 South Breakwater Light

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



32 Girdleness Lighthouse

In 1813, the whaling ship *Oscar* went down with only two survivors from a crew of 44 men. The shipmasters of Aberdeen lobbied extensively for a lighthouse but it was 1833 before this one was built, designed by Robert Stevenson, grandfather of the author Robert Louis Stevenson, constructed by the Aberdeen contractor John Gibb. It was built to a new design of two lights, the lower set at the third floor at the corbelled gallery. The Lighthouse was lit for the first time at sunset on 15 October 1833. It is 37 metres high and contains 182 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 five ton lantern, it was found to be decorated with a wonderful casting of dolphins, ships and lighthouses.



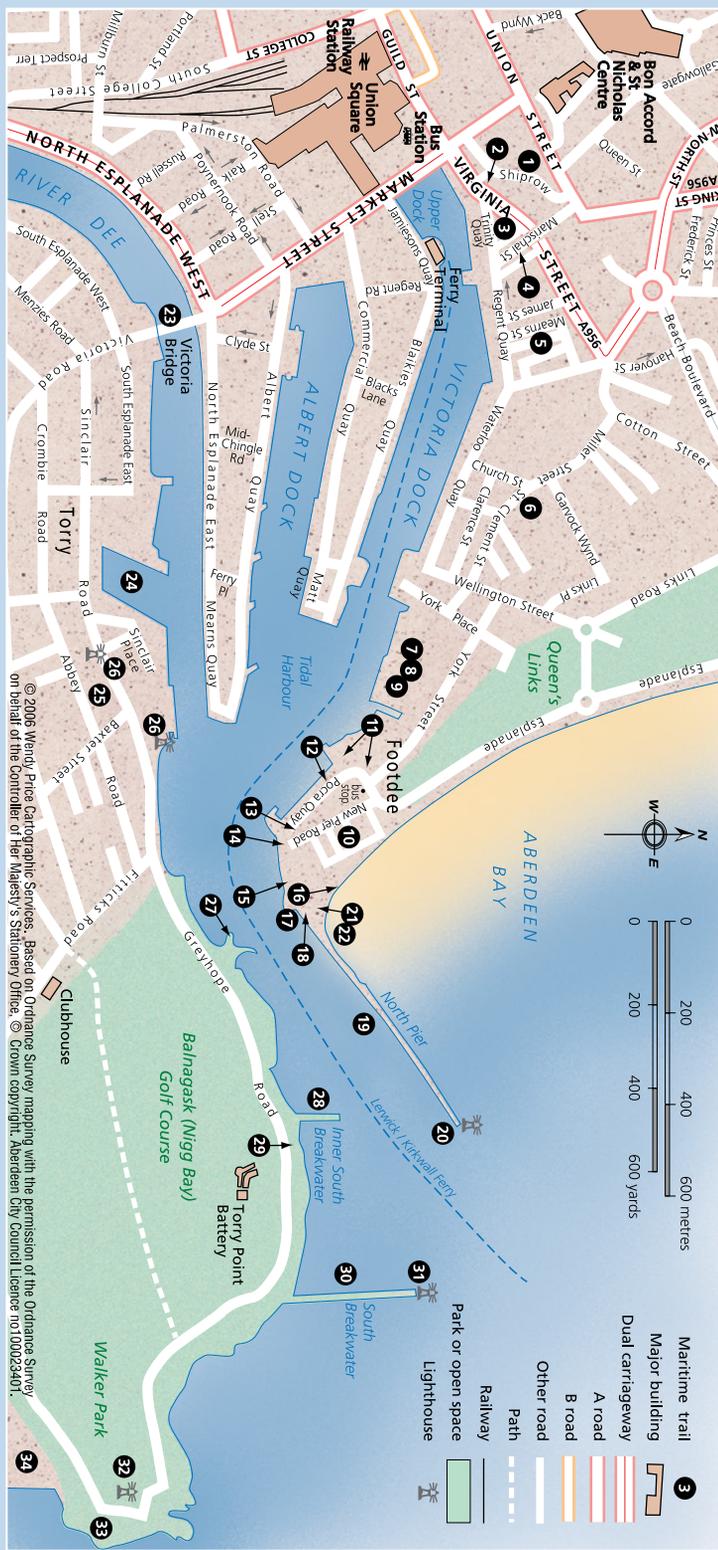
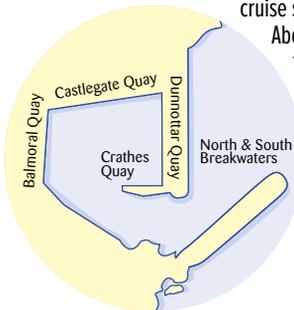
33 Foghorn

This foghorn, known affectionately as the 'Torry Coo' (owing to its low sonorous tones) was completed in 1902 and replaced an earlier one to the east of the current structure. Like the lighthouse, it 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... Each of the engines produces air up to a pressure of about 30lb per square inch... 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 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.



34 Aberdeen South Harbour

The latest development in the long history of Aberdeen Harbour is South Harbour to allow the port to accommodate large passenger cruise ships increasing tourist numbers to Aberdeen and surrounding countryside. The four quays are named after some of the most iconic castles in Scotland including Balmoral (owned by the Queen), Dunnottar, Crathes, and Castlegate (the site of Aberdeen's former castle). They were named in honour of the history and heritage of the north-east of Scotland.



Maritime Heritage Trail

Aberdeen's maritime connections



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