

Woodside Local Area Trail

The village within a city



#aberdeentrails





Above: Woodside Community Centre mural **Below:** The inaugural procession, 23 December 1899, for the electrification of Woodside tram route, led by Lord Provost John Fleming at the helm

Credits

All content © Aberdeen City Council unless otherwise stated

We are grateful to Aberdeen Women's Alliance for the use of material from their information panels in Stewart Park.


Historical maps: Ordnance Survey. Reproduction courtesy of the National Library of Scotland

Images at **Intro, 1, 2, 8, 11, 14, 16, 20, 24, 26, 27 & 31** are used courtesy of Aberdeen City Libraries/Silver City Vault www.silvercityvault.org.uk

34 Aerial photo courtesy of Canmore – part of Historic Environment Scotland <https://canmore.org.uk>

36 Photo courtesy of Police Scotland NE Division Aberdeen.

Accessibility

 Mostly accessible but does cover uneven ground with some steep slopes

Transport

This trail is intended to be walked or cycled but the following buses run between locations on the trail and central Aberdeen:

Great Northern Road: First Bus 17, 18 & 172, Stagecoach 727 Airport

Hilton Drive: First Bus 8 & X27 Airport, Stagecoach 420 Kemnay & Alford

Clifton Road & Hilton Drive: First Bus 23



#aberdeentrails

Aberdeen city was formed in 1891 from four separate parts – Old Aberdeen, New Aberdeen, Torry and Woodside, which was originally a village. This trail highlights the features of Woodside and Stewart Park, plus the neighbouring area of Hilton that was built around it. Despite many changes, traces of the old Woodside can still be seen amongst the new and it retains its own unique identity and community spirit even as part of a large modern city. Enjoy exploring this historic part of our beautiful city!

Below: Woodside Fountain **Above:** Ordnance Survey map of Woodside, 1868



Show off your photos on
Instagram @aberdeen_cc

#beautifulABDN





1 Woodside Fountain

This fountain had four lions heads spouting water from the central lamppost into the trough for animals to refresh themselves. It was moved to the small pocket park in 1991, opposite its original location, seen above at the junction of Don Street and Hadden Street (now Great Northern Road). Until the late 1800s, this was three separate roads, Barron Street from the western end at Smithfield Lane up to Station Road, Hadden Street to the fountain and Wellington Street to the eastern end, at Piries Lane.



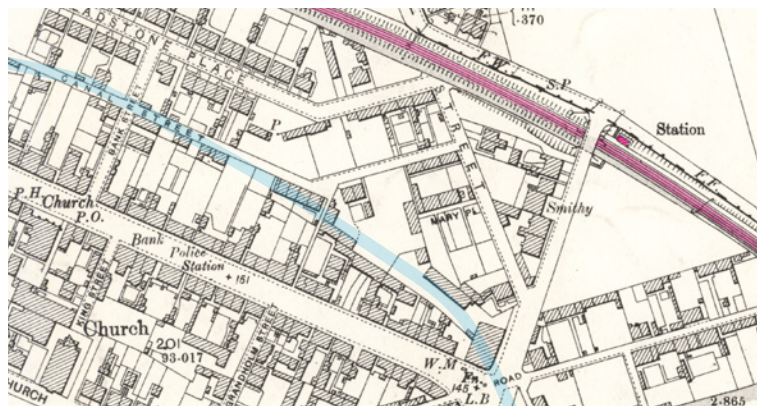
2 Woodside Tramway (site of)

Aberdeen's tram service, originally horse drawn, began in the 1870s, and had a St Nicholas Street to Woodside route, the first to be electrified in 1899. 'To and from the Stewart Pleasure Park Woodside', says the sign on the one above at Anderson Road in 1900. That was the original tramway terminus though the route later extended to Bankhead. In those days, trams were open topped like the 'horseless carriage' cars of the time but later looking more like today's double decker buses. The tram storage depot was where Woodside Fountain Heath Centre now stands. The last Woodside tram ran in 1955, and Aberdeen's tram service ended on May 1958.



3 Fountain Hall Church

Fountain Hall is an original mission hall which has been in use for more than 100 years. The church is an Open Brethren assembly which meets for the breaking of Bread on Sunday mornings with a Gospel meeting on Sunday evenings, intended for people who wouldn't normally attend church, plus other services throughout the week.



4 Don Street Railway Station (site of)

This station was one of two in Woodside (see also 23), which opened in 1887 and closed when the suburban service ended in 1937. The Donside Line ran from the Great North of Scotland Railway Company's Kittybrewster Station, which opened in 1854, to Huntly and later Inverness. In 1855, the line extended to Waterloo Station, now freight only, at Aberdeen Harbour. In 1867, the Denburn Line finally directly connected Kittybrewster with Guild Street and tracks south. The railway from Aberdeen Harbour to Port Elphinstone is mostly built on the former Aberdeenshire Canal (24) but took a different course as shown above, former canal in light blue, railway in pink.



5 Woodside Street Art

A collection of vibrant murals at Woodside Community Centre's pocket park by artists and locals, including schoolchildren, along with Fersands & Fountain Community Project. Above, Inverness-based French artist Marc Delaye runs graffiti workshops as Freshpaint (freshpaint.org) and other projects can be seen around Aberdeen and beyond, including the nearby Printfield Community Centre. Likewise, local artist Fitlike worked with the same communities on this positive response to lockdown, left, and its effect on Woodside, as part of the Start a Change Project.



6 Electricity Substation Street Art

This giant boombox mural is by pupils at Kittybrewster School who teamed up with older members of the local community and Argentinian artist, Patricio Forrester. The colourful and iconic artwork is a result of a grant from Aberdeen City Council's U Decide participatory budgeting event for Tillydrone, Woodside and Seaton. Patricio, of the international art group Art Mongers, said: "We work with children and older people... together on ideas and designs. It's all about public art and public engagement, looking to create an icon in the community that people can be proud of having created".



7 St Joseph's Church

St Joseph's was built in 1842, by the much loved Rev. Charles 'Priest' Gordon, in response to the many, mainly Irish immigrants working at Donside textile mills. He was also responsible for St Peter's Church, Castlegate and St Peter's School. Until 1880, St Joseph's was a chapel and school served by St Peter's priests. In 1899, it was extended to include a new chancel with cupola, and three years later stained-glass windows installed in the chancel. More recently, the small porch was replaced by a spacious foyer.



8 James Giles, Printfield

This artist was born at Printfield on 4 January 1801, but the address is unknown. Printfield was then an area of Woodside where cotton fabric was printed, which the street is named after. His textile designer father Peter died young and James maintained himself, mother and sister from age 13 by painting and at 19 taught drawing classes in Aberdeen. He became a successful painter of portraits, castles and Highland scenery with commissions from Queen Victoria and Scottish aristocracy. Above is an etching of his picture of the River Don with Grandholm Bridge in the background. He also designed landscape gardens and the painted sculpture of the Greek Goddess *Demeter* (known as *Ceres* to the Romans) at the Castlegate, above what is now The Archibald Simpson pub (see the **Sculpture & Curios Trail**). In 1829, he became an academician of the Royal Scottish Academy. He died on 6 October 1870, at his home 62 Bon-Accord Street, now marked by a plaque, and is buried at St Machar's Cathedral, Old Aberdeen, in the graveyard east of the church.



9 Masonic Lodge

On 6 February 1826, St Machar Woodside, Lodge 319, received its Charter from the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Originally, as was common at the time, they met in the local tavern, The Haudagain Inn, at the western end of Woodside. Later meetings were held in the Burgh Hall (14) and the then Temperance Hall, Bridge Street. In 1902, ground was purchased for a purpose-built building, funds were raised and plans approved in 1904. The hall was consecrated 28 September, 1904, with the first meeting in the new temple held on 11 October, 1904. Lodge 319 eventually moved to Crown Street and the property was sold and developed as flats in 2018.



10 Woodside Parish Church

This was formerly Woodside South Church (both Church of Scotland). Like the nearby Free Church (12), it was designed by the famous Aberdeen architect Archibald Simpson. It was built around the year 1849, in Classic-Italianate style, rubble, with a circular clock tower (clock added 1867). The distinctive tower is one of the most recognisable features of the Woodside skyline. As well as services they broadcast "Take a Moment with Woodside Parish Church" at 8am every Sunday morning on shmuFM radio 99.8 FM.



11 Woodside Congregational Church (site of)

The Woodside Congregational Church (above) was built in 1867. It replaced the previous building on the same site, known as the Cotton Chapel. The construction of the later church is usually credited to the liberality of Provost William Leslie. The congregation temporarily closed down in about 1994. It started meeting again after about three years but unfortunately could no longer use the church building. Woodside Congregational Church currently meets in the nearby Printfield Portakabin.



12 Woodside Free Church

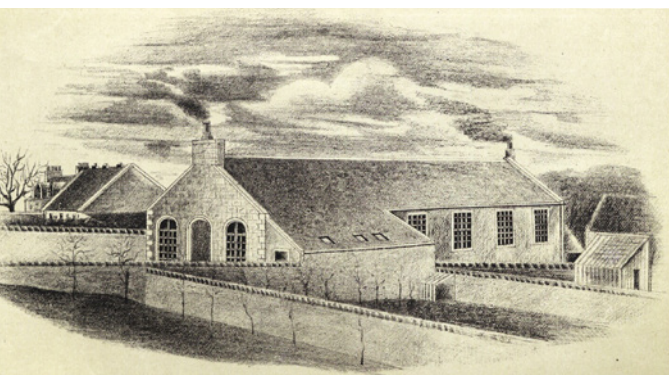
A former Free Church built in 1836, now in residential use, and like Woodside Parish Church (10), it was designed by Archibald Simpson with later additions and furnishing. Later known as Woodside North Church (Church of Scotland), it was converted to flats in 1985. The building is in a simple neo-classic style constructed in rubble, partly pinned and is rectangular with a simple pedimented frontage that has antae framing the door in an enclosing arch.



13 Woodside / Anderson Library

Sir John Anderson (1814-1886) is one of the most famous to have been born and brought up in Woodside. He served a seven year engineering apprenticeship at Woodside Works (21) before moving to Manchester then London where he specialised in modernising armament manufacturing. His achievements in the field of ordnance engineering at Woolwich Arsenal, and in public service are recognised

around the world. He gave credit for his success to his upbringing in Woodside and, to pay tribute, gifted this library to the people of the area. The beautiful ecclesiastic style building was designed by architect Arthur Clyde under Sir John's strict instructions, and it opened in 1883. He died at St Leonards-On-Sea in England but is buried at Aberdeen's St Nicholas Church in the front graveyard. One obituary reads: "John Anderson, as the phrase goes, was a self-made man; no one owed less than he to outside influence. Woodside may well be proud that one of its sons has achieved such distinction." *The Aberdeen Journal*, 29 July 1886.



14 Woodside School/Burgh Hall

In 1837, this was a parish school for the children of Woodside. It also doubled as a venue for many social gatherings over the years. In 1876, a new school was built on the site of the current Woodside Primary and it was then that this building became known as the Burgh Hall. Latterly a community hall, it is currently closed.

15 All Saint's Episcopal Church / Christ Embassy Aberdeen

This interwar church of 1935-36, was designed by A.G.R. Mackenzie as All Saints' Episcopal Church in modernist style with unadorned walls of roughly squared and random courses of stugged granite (a textured finish), the main elevation blank except for a raised dressed granite cross. The congregation from Bucksburn first gathered in 1931, it closed in April 1971 when numbers declined, reopening in 1975 as a community centre. It is now part of the Believers' LoveWorld bible ministry.



16 Woodside Primary School

The first Woodside schools were provided by Gordon, Barron & Co as Woodside village's population increased. They were cotton spinners and manufacturers with a works at Woodside dating from around 1779. The first large school was funded by public subscription, opening in 1837 in the building now known as the Burgh Hall (14). The original school, known as the Board School, opened here in February 1875, and was at the time the second largest in Scotland with nearly 1400 pupils. This building was altered in subsequent years and plans for a major reconstruction, undertaken by architect J. A.O. Allan, of the Aberdeen School Board, were begun in 1901. This enlarged building continues to function today as Woodside Primary School. The dates of 1890 and 1902 can be seen written in the building's stonework. When Sir John Anderson first gifted 9,000 books to the people of Woodside they were kept here until the library (13) was opened on 15 October 1883.



17 March Stone 52

These stones mark Aberdeen's historic Freedom Lands dating back to the times of King Robert the Bruce. The **Boundary Stones Trail** tells the full story but 'March' comes from the 1500s name for a boundary, the earliest probably natural features such as large stones or cairns. After 1790, they were replaced by this style with ABD for Aberdeen. March Stone 52 was described in 1780, as 'a large earthfast stone...marked with a saucer and also a key (mark)...'. The saucer may have been filled with lead and the town's seal impressed into it.



18 March Stone 51

The second on this trail, 51 ABD, described in 1698 and 1780 as a saucer stone. Woodside Primary School is the unofficial guardian of March Stones 50 and 51 and shmu (see entry 33) of 52.



19 March Stone 50

This third stone was described in 1698 as adjacent to 'the old Ford of the Dirra-dyke...'. Dirra, Deir, or Deer Dyke was a wall to keep out deer and the ford a shallow part of the river allowing safe crossing. Deer Road was the track that led there so the ford itself may have been near where Grandholm Bridge (20) crosses.



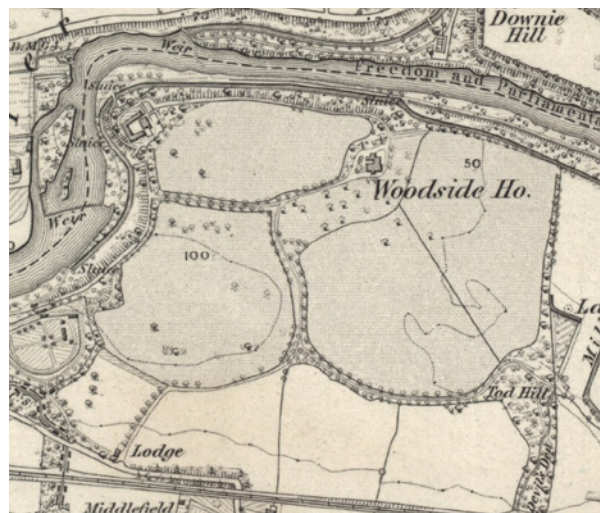
20 Grandholm Bridge & Jacob's Ladder

These bridges were originally built by the Grandholm Mills for its staff, many from Woodside, to reach their work across the River Don. The current stairs (now closed) were completed in 1921 but an earlier stairway can still be made out next to them. The first pedestrian 'White Bridge' of 1810 (above), was replaced by the present one in 1922 by Crombie Woollen Mill who took over in 1859. The full story of the industry and features of the river from sea to Persley Bridge, is covered in the **Donside Heritage Trail**.

21 Woodside Works (remains of)

These impressive sculpture-like structures are a fitting monument to the area's industrial heritage. Records indicate a waulk (cloth) mill here in the mid-1700s.

Gordon, Barron & Co leased the land in 1775 for a printfield and bleachfield, adding a cotton spinning mill in 1785. An early 1800s, House of Commons report states they employed 976 people and Woodside village's population as 2,000, largely due to the works. In 1851, it became part of Alexander Pirie & Sons of Stoneywood. Known as 'the rugger' it prepared rags for their papermill and employed about 400 people. See the **Donside Heritage Trail** for further information.



22 Woodside House

This was built in 1769, but the main part is c.1840-50. It gave its name to Woodside and this 1869 map shows the former estate. Later it was Woodside House Hotel (aka Cruive's Inn) in 1930-1973, then the Dee & Don River Purification Board, and now a care home. Persley Castle or Barracks was its stables and Persley Walled Garden its orchard. The ruined building behind those is a former summer house. The lower blocked up door has a possible WWII gun loophole for defending Persley Bridge. The Woodside Trail leads from the south side of Grandholm Bridge along former mill lades to Persley Walled Garden, now dedicated to those who lost their lives in industry.



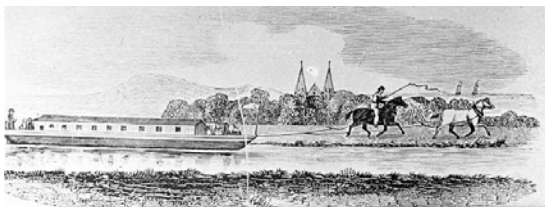
23 Woodside Station (site of)

This railway station is the second in the area (see also 4) and was opened in 1858 by the Great North of Scotland Railway. This became the London and North Eastern Railway Company (no relation to today's LNER) which closed it in 1937. The above map shows the original station in 1869 but there was later a footbridge, then larger station and concourse in what is now the car park area behind Station House, home to charity Station House Media Unit (shmu). The names Station Road and House survive long after the station itself.



24 Aberdeenshire Canal (remains of)

Station Road has a surviving canal bridge and embankments with a Canal Street here and at Mounthooly near Old Aberdeen. The route went from Aberdeen Harbour to Inverurie, from 1805 to 1845, linking the Dee to the Don but is now mostly under railway tracks. The period drawing below shows a towed canal boat passing St Machar's Cathedral and there was most likely a passenger and freight wharf at Woodside. The canal's terminus was at Inverurie, the inland Port Elphinstone, which has a bridge and a mile of remaining canal with water. An information panel at Port Elphinstone tells its history and further material is on display in Inverurie's Garioch Heritage Centre.

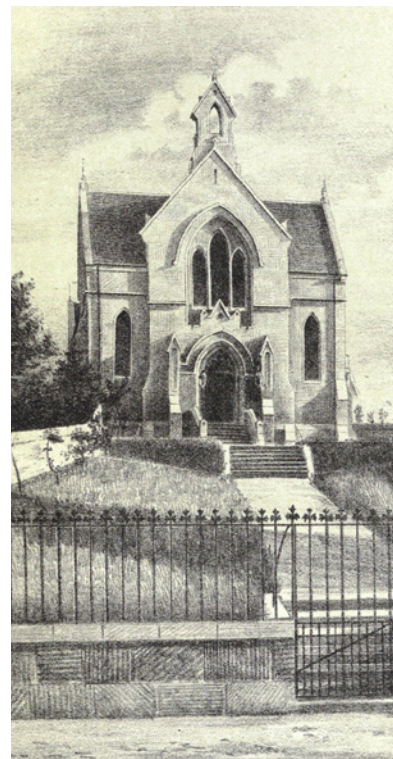


25 Woodside Picture Palace 'The Rinkie'

This colourful building started life in 1909 as The Woodside Roller Skating Rink. It opened as a cinema on the first of January 1912, still nicknamed the 'Rinkie'. It was later renamed Woodside Electric but by all accounts was a ramshackle cinematic experience. The projectionist being alleged to have frequented a nearby bar even during film screenings. The building was also difficult to heat and it closed as a cinema in 1923. It became a garage then a Hay's Lemonade warehouse, latterly a home for the Instant Neighbour Charity and is now for sale.

26 United Presbyterian Church

The churches in Woodside have always provided a strong community base where various clubs and social groups could gather. From Bible classes to indoor bowling and a wide range of youth clubs, these locally designed buildings remain an important part of the area. The United Presbyterian Church was built in about 1881 and renamed in 1900 to St Johns United Free Church so that it would not conflict with Woodside Free Church nearby. It is now offices and surrounded by houses but this drawing shows its original appearance. Picture from *Annals of Woodside and Newhills*, by Patrick Morgan, 1886.





27 Stewart Park

The City Extension Act of 1891 formed Aberdeen incorporating Woodside and made provisions for this public park. Formerly farmland, the grounds were acquired from the Hilton House Estate (33) and intended to be used by all ages. It was opened on Saturday 8 June 1894 by Lord Provost Sir David Stewart (1835-1919) who declared, "The Stewart Park will be a thing of beauty and a joy forever for the people of Woodside". The opening ceremony was a grand affair attended by hundreds of people, complete with a large marquee. However more than 200 people, unhappy with the park's name, attended a protest meeting at the Burgh Hall (14) wanting it instead to be called Woodside Park.



It was designed by Robert Walker, Aberdeen's first public park keeper at Rosemount's Victoria Park, who later also laid out Westburn Park, Union Terrace Gardens, Aberdeen Beach Links and developed street tree planting throughout the city. Otherwise surrounded by fields, the main entrance was Anderson Road on the north side, where the former park keepers's lodge was built in 1896, near the granite fountain, left, which is an original feature. This is a fine example of a purpose-planned Victorian public park and is today a quiet place for recreation. However, this peaceful scene saw

tragedy during a wartime attack by the Luftwaffe on 21 April 1943, the night of the 'Aberdeen Blitz' (36). Three 500 kilo high explosive bombs detonated in Stewart Park, one directly on Hilton Bowling Club. Another killed a young man and seriously injured his girlfriend as they took a shortcut through the park. There are five information panels within the grounds, produced by Aberdeen Women's Alliance, each telling the different stories behind this compact yet historically feature-rich park.



28 Sports Facilities

Sport has always played a big part in this park, as the *Aberdeen Journal*, 6 June 1894, put it, 'The park was intended to be not so much a flower garden as a recreation ground in which the greater portion of the space would be appropriated for games for both juveniles and adults, with perhaps a snug grassy plot where ladies, if they choose, might indulge in a game of lawn tennis'. Ever since, they've been a popular activity with hockey and cricket historically the main ones played until 1926, when relief work for the unemployed created six tennis courts and a bowling green on grounds next door. Hilton Sports Centre which featured bowling, tennis, and putting, is currently closed, but football and other activities are still played in the main park. The wooden shelter on the west side of the playing fields is thought to be the 1896 original.

29 The Taylor Memorial Well

This was commissioned in 1906, as a memorial to Mrs Jean Taylor who, in 1888, bequeathed £500 for a playground for the children of Woodside. This was originally in front of the well but has since been relocated. It is a replica of an Italian Lavabo, a religious well, sculpted by Arthur Taylor of Jute Street. The back of the well is rough hewn Rubislaw granite and front finely carved Kemnay granite. Arthur Taylor's sculptors produced works of notable skill and artistic merit: including work for the Titanic memorial in Liverpool, Inverurie war memorial and the Edward VII statue in Aberdeen.





30 Whale Jaw Bones

These lower whale jaw bones were presented to Stewart Park in 1903 by the captain of the whaling ship, *Benbow*. Whale jaw bones were hung from the masts of these ships to collect the oil that dripped from them during the journey home. These jaw bones were once a common sight and often erected with pride in whaling captains' gardens as trophies of Arctic adventures. These are the only known public example left in Aberdeen and are more than 100 years old.

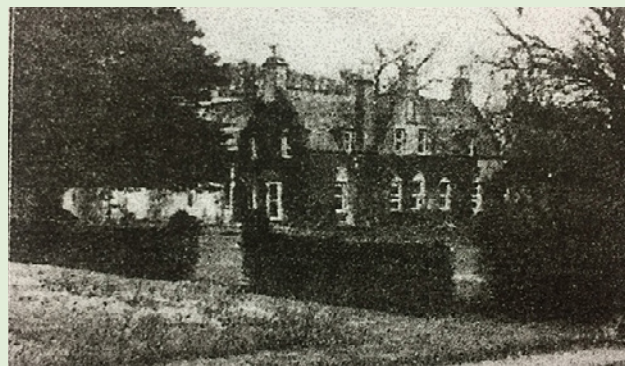


31 The Hilton Quarries

These quarries were first shown on the 1869 map opposite, already abandoned and water-filled. Those within Stewart Park were originally converted to shallow duck ponds, stocked with fish in 1894, above, but have since been filled in. The rest of them were on the other side of Hilton Road in what is now Hilton Woods, opposite top, but were filled up in the early 20th century when the Hilton housing estate was built. However, remains including dramatic quarried rock faces, are still there in Hilton Woods. Dr William Knight was Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University of Marischal College, Aberdeen. His *Account of the Granite Quarries of Aberdeenshire in Prize Essays and Transactions of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland*, 1835, described them. "At Hilton, various quarries excavate on a small scale. The stone has a slight reddish hue, and is considered very inferior to the bluish varieties."

32 Hilton Woods

Locally known as 'Hilton Woodies' this is a small patch of surprisingly wild landscape after the formal setting of Stewart Park and the built up area now surrounding them. The remains of Hilton Quarries (31) include jagged rock faces with steps up to their 6m high summit.



33 Hilton House (site of)

This house was built in 1729, at what is now the corner of Hilton Avenue and Walk. At about 1750, Sir William Johnston of Caskieben bought the house and estate using naval prize money won in a sea battle against the French off India, and ownership remained within the family over a number of generations. It was demolished in 1926, to make way for Hilton Academy (34). The newspaper cutting above is from the *Press & Journal* of 7 March 1923. The 1869 map below shows the house with most of the quarries behind in what is now Hilton Woods, top, and over the road in Stewart Park. Hilton Lang Stane (35) is just north of the long driveway on the right.





34 Hilton Academy (site of)

Hilton House was demolished in 1926 to make way for Hilton School. Later renamed Hilton Academy, it was closed in 1988 and merged with Powis Academy to become St Machar Academy. The building was demolished in 1991. Hilton Lang Stane, below, is the small black shape in the school's front courtyard above and can be seen on the 1869 map on the previous page. The former Hilton Estate was acquired for house building in 1925 and the above aerial photo shows Hilton School and the surrounding houses in 1933, Hilton Woods (32) are behind the school, middle right.



35 Lang Stane of Hilton

This Prehistoric Lang Stane (long stone) is a granite standing stone with measurements of approximately 2.95m in height, 1.5m in breadth and 0.9m in thickness at ground level. Its broad face is aligned WNW and ESE. It may originally have been part of a stone circle, of which there are many in the North East of Scotland. In the immediate area of Aberdeen, there are other standing stones with the same name, such as the Lang Stane at Langstane Place in Aberdeen city centre and the Lang Stane of Auquhollie just south of Aberdeen. The stone was originally in the grounds of both Hilton House (33) and Hilton School (top).



36 The Aberdeen Blitz

Hilton Terrace was the scene of the above devastation after Aberdeen's worst WWII air raid, known locally as the 'Aberdeen Blitz'. At 10.17pm on the night of 21 April 1943, 20 Luftwaffe planes appeared over nearby Middlefield. In just 44 minutes, 129 bombs rained down across the city killing 98 civilians and 27 soldiers, and left more than 9,668 homes damaged and 93 people injured. The deaths included a young man in Stewart Park (27) in what was the last of 34 separate air raids on Aberdeen and the last attack on a Scottish city.

37 March Stone 53

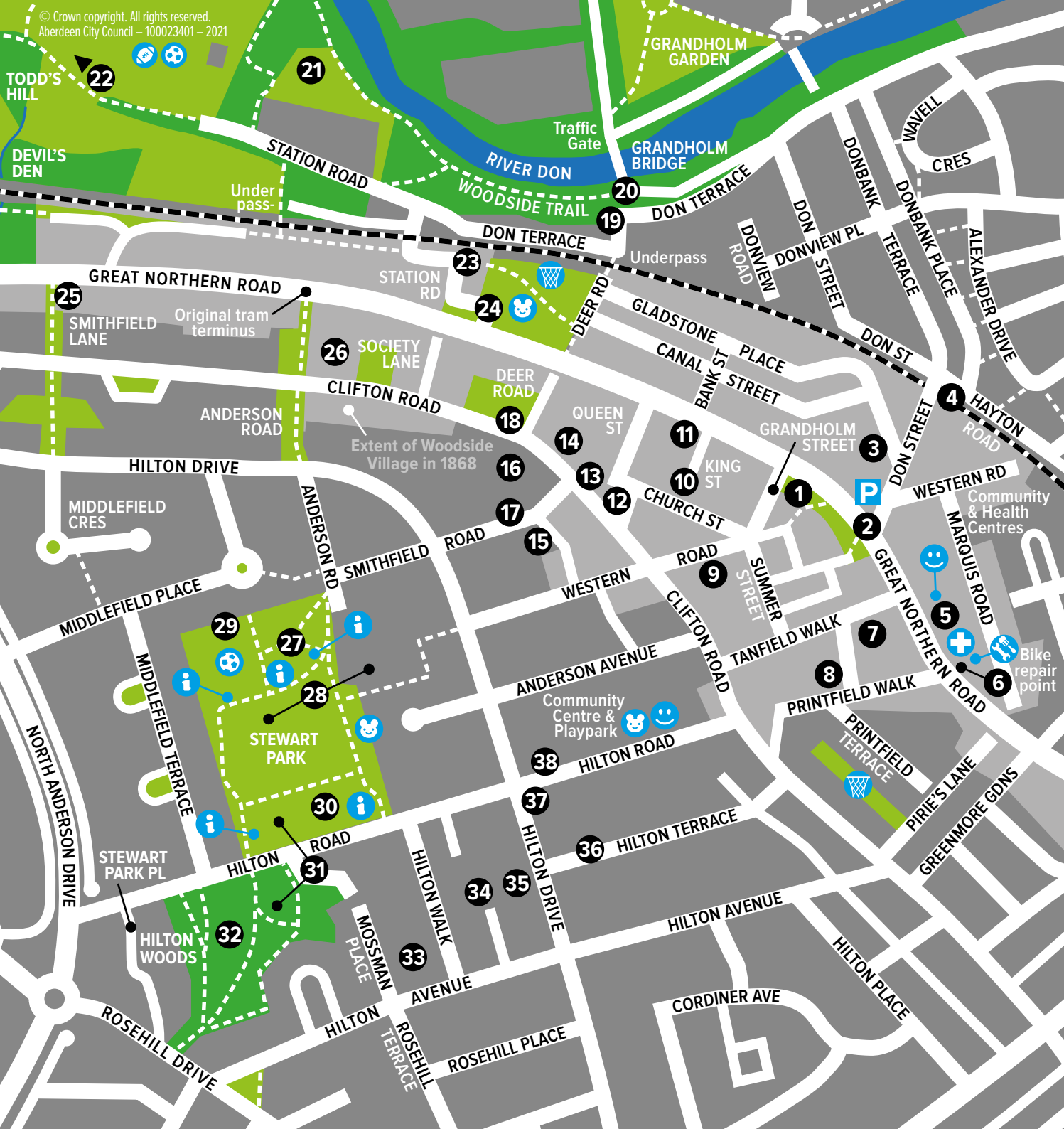
This stone, 53 ABD, is set flush in the pavement beside the post box and was described in 1780 as noted as having a saucer and key mark. A further March Stone 54 ABD, is just outside this trail, set in the pavement on the west side of Smithfield Drive, at the junction with Provost Rust Drive, across Anderson Drive from Hilton Road and was described in 1780 as marked with a saucer and a key. In 1698 ridings, it was noted to stand next to the supposed site of Caperstown kiln.



38 Jeannie Robertson

The Scottish folk singer Jeannie Robertson (1908-1975) lived here. In 1960, she recorded the most famous version of 'I'm a Man You Don't Meet Every Day' also known as 'Jock Stewart', a traditional Scots/Irish song. Which possibly influenced the one later recorded by the Pogues in 1985, with bass player Cait O'Riordan on vocals. In both versions, the first-person narrator is a woman, despite the song's masculine narrative. Written from the point of view of a rich landowner telling the story of his day while buying drinks at a public house. Fellow Scottish folksinger Archie Fisher described it as "an Irish narrative ballad... shortened to an Aberdeenshire drinking song".





Woodside Local Area Trail

The village within a city



© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Aberdeen City Council – 100023401 – 2021

#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



For further information contact

Visit Scotland Aberdeen iCentre
01224 269180 www.visitscotland.com

Visit Aberdeenshire www.visitabdn.com
follow on Instagram @visitabdn

For public transport information contact Travel Line
www.travelinescotland.com

For a large text version contact
03000 200 293