

# Duthie Park Trail & Guide

The park's history, curios & attractions



[#aberdeentrails](#)



## Opening times

Duthie Park is open 24 hours and the David Welch Winter Gardens (free entry) open at the following times: **March–October** 9.30am-5.30pm **November–February** 9.30am-4.30pm

## Facilities

There is a café and toilets within the Winter Gardens. In addition, there is a chargeable automated public convenience in the main park.

## Transport


Duthie Park can be accessed by First Bus 17 & 18 and Stagecoach X6, 7 & X7. These stop at the park gates on Great Southern Road. The 17 also stops on Polmuir Road, a short walk from the park (bus stops marked on map).

Parking is available off Polmuir Road and Riverside Drive. There is a three hours maximum stay on Mondays-Fridays between 8am-4pm. Bike lock up stands are located outside the Winter Gardens and at Riverside Drive car park.

## Activities

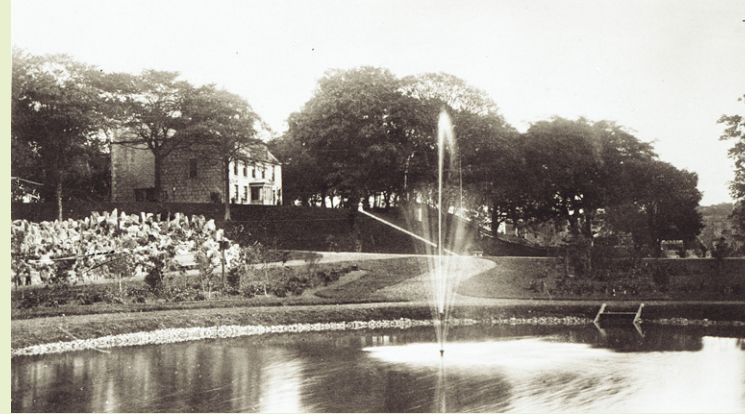
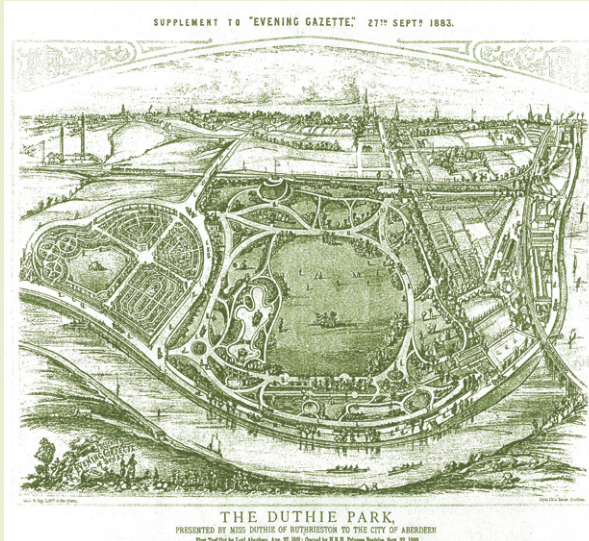
If you like treasure hunts, nature, the outdoors or running, then you'll love exploring Duthie Park. The park has a rubbing plaques trail and two orienteering courses, short (1km) and medium (1.9km) with maps available here: [www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/duthie-park](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/duthie-park)

## Accessibility

 The park and winter gardens are mostly accessible but with some steep slopes or uneven ground. Some parts of entry 7 are not fully accessible.

**Right:** Arthurseat House, whose original grounds form part of Duthie Park.

**Below:** Illustration from the Evening Gazette's supplement to commemorate the opening of the park.



# #aberdeentrails

Welcome to Aberdeen, our beautiful and historic city by the sea! The Duthie Park Trail explores one of the jewels in the crown of the city with popular year-round attractions for people of all ages.

The 44 acre park is loved by locals and visitors due to its wonderfully restored Victorian features such as the iconic bandstand, fountains, the linked lakes, boating ponds, the Japanese Garden, and the stunning botanical gardens in the middle of the park, with paths all around. There are also two playparks – one for younger children and another for the more adventurous – and an all-weather area for ball games. The Park Café is also very popular with visitors.

The David Welch Winter Gardens is the jewel in the crown of the city's parks, and houses one of the most-visited public botanical gardens in Scotland.

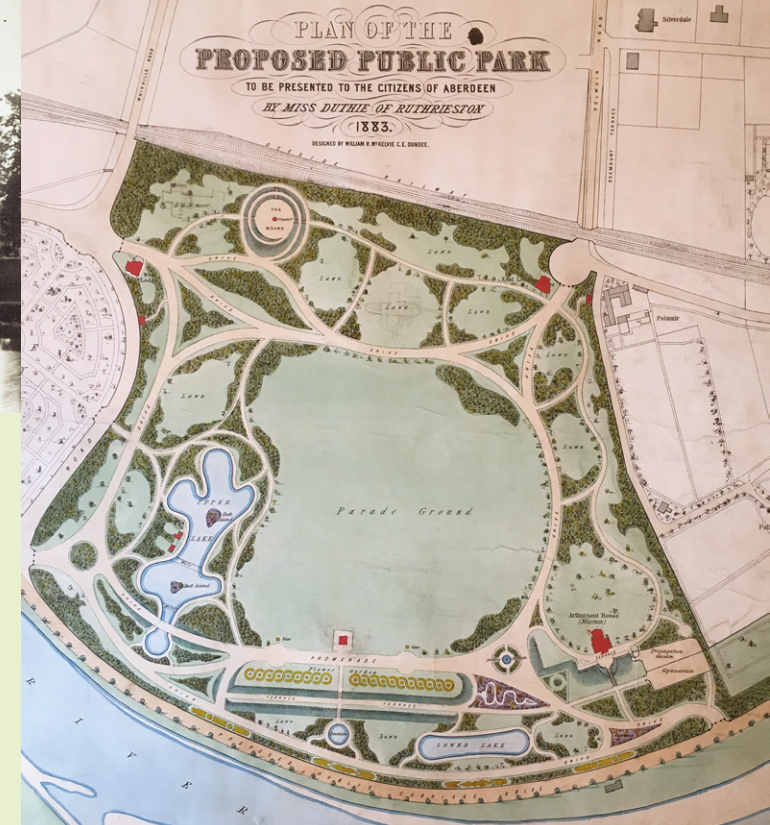
The park also links directly onto the Deeside Way, a former railway line which is now a popular walking, cycling and horse riding route from the heart of Aberdeen to the countryside of Aberdeenshire. It also runs alongside the River Dee stretching from a picturesque section near the fishermen's bothy which is also great for walks.

Have fun roaming around Duthie Park and its attractions and finding out a bit about the city's history and culture as you go. Remember and tag us into social media too!

 **Show off your photos on Instagram @aberdeen\_cc**

**#beautifulABDN**

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## Elizabeth Crombie Duthie

Elizabeth Crombie Duthie of Ruthrieston gifted the park land as a memorial for her uncle, Walter Duthie, a well known Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh, and her brother Alexander Duthie a respected member of the Society of Advocates of Aberdeen.

She is buried in the St Nicholas churchyard in Aberdeen city centre with her brother, uncle and other family. The grand granite monument is near the kirk's Union Street doors but as the inscription says, 'The best and most enduring memorial is the park she gave to her fellow citizens'.



## Landscape Design

Duthie Park's original layout was by William R McKelvie of Dundee. Influenced by Sir Joseph Paxton and his followers, McKelvie's design and layout for the park represents a model of late 19th century philanthropic acts, providing high quality public open space for the people of Aberdeen.

It is a good example of a public park that retains its original layout and notable for the involvement of a named designer. Duthie Park is recorded in the Historic Scotland List of Gardens and Designed Landscapes – the only example of such a site in Aberdeen. The plan above shows the original proposed design which, despite some modification, is recognisable today.





David Welch Winter Gardens  
28 43 – see detailed map on back pages

Ferryhill Engine Shed

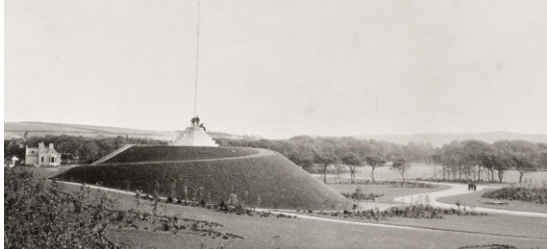
Railway turntable

Allenvale Cemetery

King George VI Bridge

River Dee





### 1 East Lodge

Nineteenth century baronial lodge in tooled coursed grey granite, built 1882/83. This is the base for the Outdoor Nursery Project in the park. It is left of the mound in this early photograph.



### 2 Playground Steam Roller

Colourful former working steam roller used for road surfacing and repair, now part of this children's play area. A companion piece to Seaton Park's former railway engine Mr Therm.

### 3 The Gordon Highlanders Memorial

One of two memorials to the regiment in the park (see also 25). Grey granite Celtic cross memorial, dated 1882, to Gordon Highlanders. Large roughly cut granite blocks form plinth, surmounted by cross, with inscription, Gordon Highlanders crest bearing their motto 'Bydand' (stand fast), and decorative Celtic motifs to South side; inscription to North side.



### 4 Gas Lamp Pedestal

Made of red Peterhead granite this stood in Aberdeen's New Market beside the indoor fountain (see [Hazlehead Park Trail & Guide](#)).

### 5 Hygeia

Designed by John Cassidy of Manchester and carved by Arthur Taylor in 1883. The Greek Goddess Hygeia (Health) in classical dress, is carved in pale granite. She stands on a decorative corinthian column. Four recumbent lions in pink granite lie at the base. She represents a virgin holding a cup from which the symbol of health, a snake, drinks. It is inscribed: 'This park was presented by Elizabeth Crombie Duthie to the City of Aberdeen', and opened by H.R.H. Princess Beatrice on 27th September 1883.



### 6 The Bowling Pavilion & Community Garden

The former Bowling Pavilion, built early 1900s, has been converted to provide park ranger facilities, whilst the green is used for events. The former tennis courts are now the park's Community Garden, used to help teach gardening skills. It has wildflowers, an orchard and farm plots, vegetables, herbs and fruit, a formal garden with flower beds and a Scottish landscapes feature. The Friends of Duthie Park along with Parkforce gardening volunteer group and staff maintain the Community Garden and 1920s Rockery (7).

### 7 1920s Rockery

Originally formed in 1922, the Rockery was restored in 2012-13 when Aberdeen Rock Garden Club selected plants and designed the new layout. It was planted by the group and the Friends of Duthie Park and completed in June 2016.

### 8 Granite Quarrying

Commercial quarrying of granite in the North-east really began in 1730 when James Emslie opened a quarry at Loanhead in the Rosemount area. By the end of the 18th Century, the city was ringed with quarries including two represented here – Rubislaw and Sclattie. In the second half of the 19th Century, granite became one of Aberdeen's main industries being exported all over the world. Further information is available in the [Aberdeen Granite Trail](#).



### 9 The Duthie Fountain

The Duthie Fountain was made by A Macdonald & Co. Aberdeen City Granite Works c.1883 of pink Peterhead granite. A two-tiered granite fountain set in large roll moulded basin. Water jets spout from carved swans with folded wings on a lower stage which supports upper basin and tazza – the middle bowl. Presented in 1883 by Elizabeth Crombie Duthie.



## 10 Boating Pond

The large pond has been used by the model yacht club since 1907. In 1926, the former hour-glass shape with two fountains was developed into the large rectangular pond we see today to conform to international model yacht standards allowing competitions to be held. The club still uses the pond today making it the oldest-continuous user of Duthie Park.

## 11 The Circular Pond

This part of the park, including the terraces and steps above, has been resored to match its original layout. The area had been redeveloped, and pond removed, sometime after 1961. The site was surveyed by a team of archaeologists and park staff in June 2010 and the footprint of the pond and relics of pipework were discovered. The pond was recreated in August 2012 using reclaimed granite from the park and the city's reclamation store at Sclattie Quarry.

## 12 McGrigor Obelisk

Alexander Ellis  
1830-1917,  
Aberdeen. This tall obelisk is of red Peterhead granite, from the Stirlinghill quarry and built of large polished square blocks. The shaft supported on a large base and plinth. Originally sited in what is now the quadrangle of Marischal



College (above, before Mitchell Tower and the Broad Street frontage were built). The obelisk was moved in 1906 when the college was redeveloped. The obelisk was built to honour the memory of Sir James McGrigor, who was Director-General of the Army medical department for 36 years and Lord Rector of Marischal College.

## 13 Fountainhall Well

James Mackie and John Burnet, 1706. Small granite rubble cistern house built into hillside. Flat-arched opening with a large lintel, and a metal plaque above which reads 'Old Well from Lands of Fountainhall, erected in connection with the first city water supply 1706, Re-erected 1903'. Rectangular pool in front, with four stone steps on each side leading down to water; brick and stone lined vaulted inner chamber. Moved from near Fountainhall House, now 130 Blenheim Place, as shown in the above photo.



## 14 World War II Loopholes

A defensive feature from World War II – an inexpensive alternative to building pillboxes was to adapt existing walls with loophole firing positions. This example within the park's boundary wall allowed defensive fire along King George VI bridge, a possible entry point into the city following an invasion.



## 15 King George VI Bridge

The foundation stone was laid on 15 September 1938 and the bridge was officially opened by the Queen Mother in the presence of her husband King George VI on 10 December 1941. Their daughter Queen Elizabeth's cortege crossed here on 11 September 2022 on her final journey south from Balmoral. It is made of granite-faced reinforced concrete with four arches and eight coat of arms. It was to feature four upright lions but the outbreak of war halted this. One of the granite blocks forms the Archibald Simpson memorial (see [Sculpture & Curios Trail](#)) and there are traces of lions in the roughly sculpted blocks of [Hazlehead Park Trail & Guide](#). There are flood arches on the south side where a footpath links football pitches to informal wooded parkland with riverside walks at Banks of Dee.







## 16 Former Denburn Footbridge

Circa 1883, three-span, flat-arched bridge. Rough-faced battered grey Aberdeen-bond piers rising through parapet, supporting cast-iron arches; decorative ironwork brackets and parapet railings with a lion rampant centre of both parapets; gently-splayed wing walls. Now known as the Iron Bridge, it once crossed the Denburn Valley near Triple Kirks before Rosemount Viaduct was built (see **Aberdeen Denburn Trail**). Seen behind Union Terrace Garden's bandstand in the photo above, it now spans the lower of the linked lakes (below).



## 17 The Linked Lakes

The three linked lakes were an important feature of the original design by William McKelvie. They were excavated between 1881 and 1883 and the excavated material was used to build the mound (see entry **26**). Water for the lakes was taken from Ruthrieston Burn three quarters of a mile away. In later years, the upper lake was converted to a boating pond with island, now with a large copper beech tree (below). The lakes were restored in 2012 reinstating much of McKelvie's original design. The original Victorian stone shelter was also restored and is of historical interest as shelters



of this period are increasingly rare in Scotland. The middle lake has been formed into a Scottish lochan to attract a diverse range of insects and pond life. The lower lake was completely rebuilt at this time.



## 18 Union Bridge Balustrade

When the south side of Union Bridge was developed in 1962, this was moved to the park, originally standing in front of the Winter Gardens. During the restoration of the lakes, the upper dam was widened to form a bridge and the balustrade or parapet was relocated here. Trade and Finance (**35**) was originally mounted on it with Kelly's Cats (**39**) ranged along the top rail.

## 19 Duthie Park Bandstand

A handsome, late Victorian, octagonal bandstand erected in c.1893 to a design by McDowall, Steven & Co. Glasgow and costing £400. It has a railed granite base with cast-iron columns



supporting an ogee canopy roof, with finials and cresting a weather vane apex. It is a fine and complete example of its type, with an unusual central column and wrought-iron roof ribs, of great cultural value and a rare survival in Scotland by this particular manufacturer.

## 20 The Taylor Well

Sculpted by Alexander Taylor in grey granite, the Taylor Well dates from the late 1800s and was originally located at the junction of Great Northern Road and Clifton Road, near the Northern Hotel. It incorporates a drinking fountain, dog basin and a horse trough. A scrolled pediment divides the drinking fountain and trough. The inscription to the east reads 'Erected to the memory of Alexander Taylor, Merchant in Aberdeen by his daughter, Jane Forbes Taylor, Morkeu, Cults' and to the west 'He prayeth best who loveth best all things both great and small'. The well is surmounted by an urn with carved masks.





## 21 JJR Macleod Memorial Statue

This is an initiative of the JJR Macleod Memorial Statue Society whose mission is to give proper credit to this medical pioneer. The University of Aberdeen graduate, working in Toronto, Canada, co-discovered insulin, vital in the treatment of diabetes. He was jointly awarded a 1923 Nobel Prize and this memorial marks the 100th anniversary. It is Scotland's first interactive statue via a mobile phone app which tells his story. He is buried in Allenvale Cemetery

(24) and his former home in Cults has a plaque (see [Lower Deeside Trail](#)). The bronze statue was created by Manchester born John McKenna, who lives in Scotland. His work includes bas-reliefs for the *Queen Mary 2* and her sister ship *Queen Victoria*, a giant *Shipbuilders of Port Glasgow* sculpture, statues of AC/DC frontman Bon Scott in Kirriemuir and of several Celtic FC legends in Glasgow.

## 22 The Temperance Fountain

Polished granite temperance drinking fountain by James Hunter, 1883. Circular plinth set on flagstones, inscribed 'In commemoration of the advance of temperance under the auspices of the Aberdeen Temperance Society in the year 1882' and 'Thou givest them water for their thirst, NEH.9.20', polished pink granite basin, with three columns supporting grey granite canopy, spherical finial. Three square pink granite plinths supporting pink granite urns to sides of fountain. Presented in 1883 by Elizabeth Crombie Duthie.



## 23 The West Lodge

The original West Lodge was removed due to the widening of Great Southern Road in 1938. It can be seen in its old location in the picture above. It was rebuilt at 72 Rubislaw Den South where it remains and replaced by the present Arts and Crafts type building which has a big swept roof with windows stuck under the eaves and a prominent gabled porch. Please note the current and former lodges are private residences.

## 24 Allenvale Cemetery

This beautiful cemetery dating from c.1880 is in two halves and contains fine granite monuments and mature trees. It has 164 Commonwealth war graves of WWI, and 110 from WWII. Allenvale War Memorial commemorates 47 soldiers who passed away in No.1 Scottish General Hospital (Aberdeen) during or following WWI. There are notable civilian graves including JJR Macleod (see 21), with a fine example of an Art Deco gravestone (above) including stylised Rod of Asclepius, ancient Greek symbol of healing and medical arts, and his father Rev Robert Mcleod; Scott Skinner, Deeside violinist and composer; Willie 'Moosie' Sutherland, a lifeguard who saved upwards of 120; There are pedestrian crossings near the bridge and just north of the park. For a longer walk it can also be reached via the Deeside Line (44).



## 25



## The Gordon Highlanders Memorial

One of two memorials to the regiment in the park (see also 3). Grey granite triangular obelisk memorial, dated 1898, in memory of the officers and men of the 1A Battalion Gordon Highlanders who fell in India during 1892-1898. Gordon Highlanders crest to each elevation, including their motto 'Bydand' (stand fast), surmounted by grotesque masks.



## 26 The Mound

The mound is one of the original and most striking features in the park and unique within public parks in Scotland. It was constructed between 1881 and 1883 using material excavated from the linked lakes (17). The mound has taken different forms throughout the years but the restoration project returned it to its original state in July 2012. Visitors to the top are rewarded with panoramic views. After the opening ceremony on 27th August 1883 Princess Beatrice boarded the royal train for Balmoral from a specially constructed Deeside Railway platform behind the mound.





## 27 The David Welch Winter Gardens

These are one of Europe's largest indoor botanical gardens containing many rare and exotic plants on show from all around the world. Free admission, see first page for opening times.

On entering, the visitor is greeted by a host of tropical wonders, colourful display beds and important economic crop plants including banana, coffee, cocoa and tea. The hibiscus with its large colourful trumpet shaped flowers has a truly stunning appearance.

The **Tropical House** contains plants mainly from the moist forests of tropical South America, giving the feeling of being in a tropical jungle. It contains plants such as bromeliads and orchids plus gingers and aroids from Asia. The character of the vegetation is dominated by the versatile Bromeliaceae pineapple family.

Plants from dry lands throughout the world – from Central America to Southern Africa, from Arabia to Madagascar can be found in the **Arid House**. This has one of the largest collections of cacti and succulents in Britain. The oldest specimen is the Echinocactus grussonii or barrel cactus at more than 100 years old.

The sight of more than 30 hanging baskets in their full glory in the **Victorian Corridor** is a must for any visitor over summer months.

The magnificent **Temperate House** with its cascading water feature contains plants from warm temperate regions of the world, especially Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the Mediterranean.

Ferns were among the first land plants 400 million years ago and the **Fern House** display is captivating with the natural setting beside water and the exhibitions of foliage and leaf texture.



The Winter Gardens feature three open courtyards. The **Japanese Garden** is a place of peace and tranquility (see entry 31).

The **Memorial Courtyard** to David Welch remains a quiet place for Aberdonians and visitors alike. He was a celebrated Director of Aberdeen Parks who died in 2000.

The **Floral Courtyard** features the Burma Star Association Memorial Rose Garden with 'Burma Star' the commemorative rose. It is dedicated to those who served in the 1941-45 WWII campaign. The Caithness stone slabs here were previously trodden on by prisoners at the old police HQ at Lodge Walk, off Castle Street.



## 28 Aberdeen City Coat of Arms

The right to bear a set of arms is a privilege granted by the sovereign through the Lord Lion King of Arms. Few burghs in Scotland have been permitted to adopt supporters, and Aberdeen's leopards are a mark of royal favour. The city's motto 'Bon-Accord' (good fellowship), has remained unchanged since at least 1430. In local legend it dates back to the Wars of Independence. 'Bon-Accord' being the townsfolk's watchword in 1308 during the successful assault on Aberdeen's castle, then in English hands.

## 29 Mount Cottage Fountain

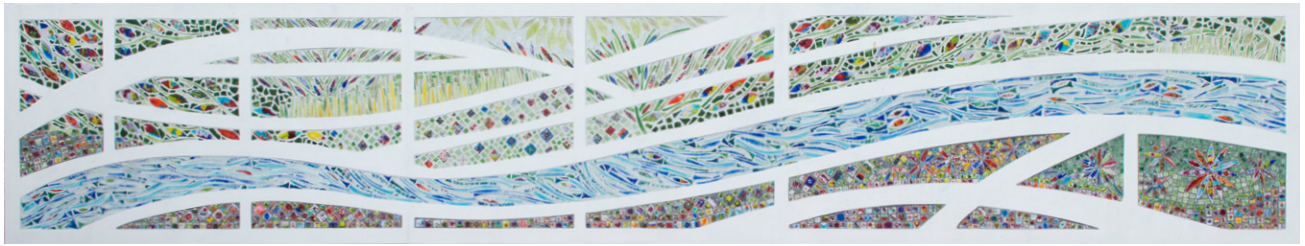
This fountain came from Mount Cottage which still stands at 45 Mount Street next to Westburn Road in Rosemount.

## 30 Spike the Talking Cactus

Spike first appeared at the Glasgow Garden Festival in 1988 and was refurbished in 2010 by the Friends of Duthie Park.







### 31 The Japanese Garden

The Japanese Garden at Duthie Park was designed by the Japanese-born landscape architect Takashi Sawano. It was officially opened by His Excellency Toshio Yamazaki the Japanese Ambassador to Britain in June 1987.



Mr Sawano has created a peace garden to commemorate the many thousands of people who died in 1945 from the effects of the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II. The design of the garden has as a focal point a stream, crossed by stone bridges, which meanders slowly over rock formations until it flows into the pond. The outline of the water feature represents the Chinese character 'kokoro', which means 'heart'. There is a snow-viewing lantern 'yukimi', whose wide roof catches the snow as it falls. All of the materials are used in the traditional Japanese way including the bamboo fences and wisteria trellis.

Apart from the stone lantern, everything, including the stone, rocks and plants were obtained in Scotland. The plants are of Japanese origin and include pine, which represents longevity, and bamboo for endurance; there is also maple, azalea, camellia and flowering cherry, all of which are found in traditional Japanese gardens.

Mr Sawano returned in 2000 and 2014 for further work to the Japanese Garden.

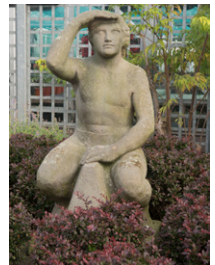


### 32 Glass Mosaic

Fused glass mosaic (above) by 2017 Artist in Residence Shelagh Swanson in collaboration with the local community.

### 33 Regensburg Männchen

Richard Ross Robertson, Aberdeen, 1914-2007. Student and tutor at Gray's School of Art. Replica of the Regensburger *Brückenmännchen* – Bridge Man of Regensburg – which stands on the bridge over the Danube at Regensburg. Presented by the Scottish/German Association in 1973 in recognition of Aberdeen's twinned city link.



### 34



### Gargoyle

Artist unknown. This water spouting gargoyle was formerly sited in Victoria Park, Rosemount in a section known locally as Tom's Castle. A miniature castle once stood on the summit of a small knoll and children believed that it was inhabited by little Tom Thumb himself! The gargoyle was originally part of the existing well in the park.

### 35 Trade and Finance

Sydney Boyes 1878-1931, Southampton, England. This bronze panel in high relief, was designed by Boyes and cast in Burton on Trent between 1905-1908. Originally set into the cast iron parapet or balustrade, formerly on the south side of Union Bridge. This side was removed when shops were built in 1962. The figures represent: trade, finance, fishing, shipbuilding, engineering and agriculture. The original balustrade is in the park at the Linked Lakes (see entry 17), as are the Kelly's Cats (39) which were arranged along the top.





### 36 McPuddock

The mechanical diving frog in the Fern House pond is a constant source of delight for all ages. He was presented to the Winter Gardens by the North East of Scotland Federation of Towns Woman's Guild.



### 37 Peace

Presented by the family of James Dougall Rust, granite merchant it was bequeathed to the city by Muriel Rust on behalf of her late husband in 1991. The seven foot high sculpture of a liberty figure dressed in classical robes and holding a torch is thought to have been sculpted around 1930 by James Philip, who was responsible for parts of the work on the King Edward VII statue at Union Street and the war memorial lion next to Aberdeen Art Gallery. It is of particular interest because of the skill and time involved in fashioning granite. Originally sited in the Sensory Garden at Victoria Park, Rosemount it was relocated here in May 2005.



### 38



### Multi-Faceted Sundial

This 1707 sundial pre-dates both the park and Arthurseat House. As well as a sundial for telling the time, there are dials which could be used to make astronomical observations of the earth's orbit and movement in the solar system. They had to be specifically made to match the latitude of their location, and hence angle of sun, in Aberdeen's case, 57° North.

### 39



### Kelly's Cats

Sydney Boyes (1878-1931), Southampton, England, 1910, cast iron painted black, Known locally as 'Kelly's Cats', they are in fact leopards from the city coat of arms and were once ranged along the two parapets of Union Bridge (see entry 18). The name 'Kelly's Cats' is actually a misnomer, as only the bronze panels from the bridge were designed by Aberdeen architect William Kelly. The cast iron leopard finials were actually designed by Sidney Boyes, who taught at Grays School of Art, Aberdeen.

### 40 Wooden Figures

These wood carvings were originally situated in the park specifically for children to play on. They were carved by students of Aberdeen Gray's School of Art in Garthdee, who were employed by the Parks Department during the summers of 1971, 1972, and 1973.



### 41



### Oak Wheelbarrow

This is the original used by Miss Duthie and the Earl of Aberdeen during the cutting of the first turf on 27th August 1881. It is of finely polished oak with the Duthie arms and the family motto 'Data Fata Sectus'. It was made by Mr T Baird Cabinet maker of Aberdeen.

### 42 Provost's Lamps

These are placed on either side of the doorway of Aberdeen Provost's houses. The tradition comes from an old English custom of marking the Chief Magistrate's house. The first Scottish ones were in Edinburgh, then later other cities with the first pair set up in Aberdeen in 1838.



### 43 Stained Glass Windows

These are the original windows from the public toilets on the lower Promenade near the Beach Ballroom. To mark their Golden Jubilee in 1971, the Soroptimist International Society paid for their restoration. Two windows hang together and the third is by the café.

### 44 The Old Deeside Line

This former railway line, 1853-1966, is now a popular walking, cycling and horse riding route from the heart of Aberdeen to the countryside of Aberdeenshire. The railway ran from Aberdeen to Banchory, extending to Ballater in 1856, a total distance of 43¼ miles. It was planned to end at Braemar but Queen Victoria was afraid her privacy would be disturbed by 'hordes of tourists' at Balmoral. So she bought land along the route to prevent it. This photograph shows the final train at Culter Station in 1966.



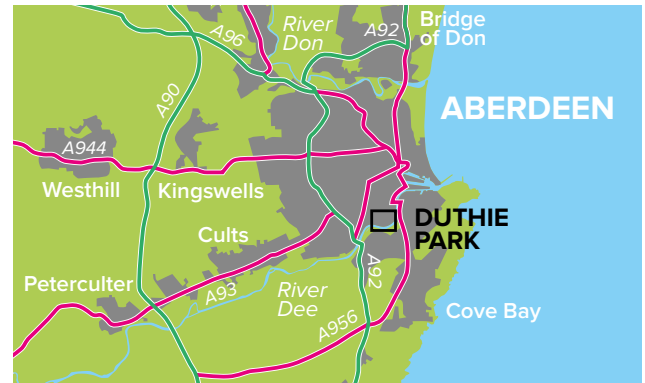
Ferryhill Junction, next to the park, was temporarily the city's first station when the railway came to Aberdeen. *The Illustrated London News* lithograph below shows the opening in 1850. The Deeside line originally began from here and the engine sheds are still visible at the edge of the park. The Ferryhill Railway Heritage Trust was established in 2007 to restore the remaining building and turntable, and transform the location into a working railway heritage site for the north east of Scotland. See FerryhillRHT on Facebook for details.





# Duthie Park Trail & Guide

The park's history, art and attractions



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## David Welch Winter Gardens



The Palm House, the original Winter Gardens, was designed by city architect, Mr Rust, and erected in 1899. It was constructed from St Petersburg redwood and cost £1,550 in total. The roof suffered extensive damage during a storm in May 1969 and had to be demolished and rebuilt.

