

Aberdeen Granite Trail

A guide to Aberdeen's granite heritage

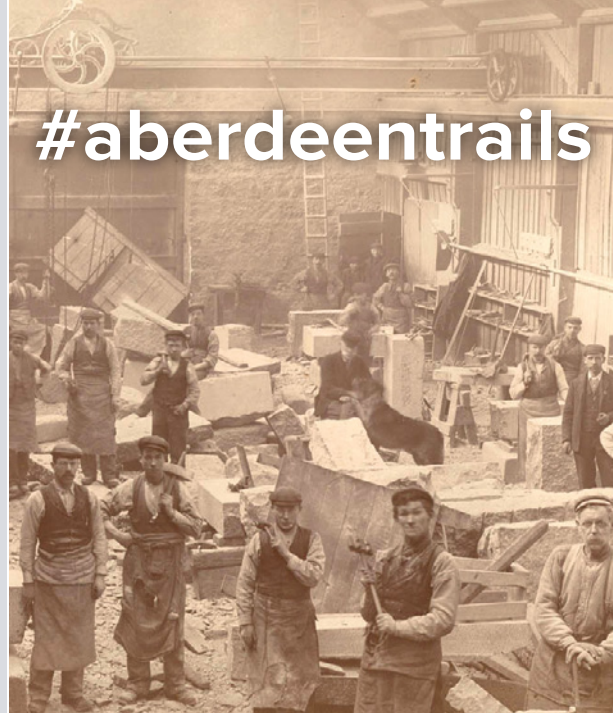


#aberdeentrails



Above: Settmaker in his scathie, circa 1930s

Front cover: Rubislaw Quarry in its heyday, watercolour by Watson Charleton



Erran Granite Works, Aberdeen, circa 1890

All content © Aberdeen City Council unless otherwise stated. Most images are from Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums Collections

Those at **2, 4, 5, 7, 11, 13, 23, 27 & 29** are courtesy of Aberdeen City Libraries/Silver City Vault www.silvercityvault.org.uk

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:

Queen's Road: First Bus 11, Stagecoach X17 Westhill

Rosemount: First Bus 3 **King Street:** First Bus 1 & 2

This trail is suitable for cycling though the city centre can be busy.

Suggested routes and places to lock bicycles are shown here:

www.aberdeencity.gov/cyclemaps www.sustrans.org.uk



**Show off your photos on
Instagram @aberdeen_cc**

#beautifulABDN

Aberdeen is the Granite City – few places can be more blessed with a local material of such endurance and quality that it gave its very name and has become emblematic of its historic core – the clear image of the city itself. Look around. Granite buildings are everywhere, ranging from the grandest of monuments to the humblest of tenements.

The North East of Scotland's geological base is granite and colours range from light white-grey to blue, pinks and reds. Granite has long been incorporated into local buildings and structures. Its hardness means it is difficult to quarry and work so, in the past, stone was often gathered as suitable boulders or very simply dressed. The Tower of Drum (c1300) and the more elaborate Crathes Castle (1500s), illustrate the early use of granite in fortifications.

The expansion of commerce and industry in the 1700s increased demand, as greater traffic with iron-shod cartwheels meant the need for more durable road surfaces. Granite was ideal for this and Aberdeen began to export the stone, particularly to London. Civil engineering projects, such as harbour works and bridges further increased demand, while merchants and manufacturers sought more imposing granite buildings and decorative features. Crucial to the industry's expansion was Aberdeen's access to the sea with thousands of tons of stone transported through its harbour.

The single most significant breakthrough in the 19th century to granite working came with the adoption of steam power. In the early 1830s, Alexander MacDonald designed a steam driven polishing machine which revolutionised the production of polished granite slabs and made it economically feasible for



'Aberdeen Bond' – an economical use of smaller stacked blocks of granite, within the masonry courses.

By the end of the 19th century, Aberdeen was the world centre for the granite trade. Quarries in the North East supplied the growing market for stone used in building, roads, sculptures and granite memorials. Thousands of gravestones were manufactured from the simplest of markers to elaborate tombs. Granite yards were dotted throughout the city.

Then just at the moment Aberdeen's granite industry was enjoying its greatest success, there came the threat of rivals. The USA began to restrict imports of stone. New road-making materials such as concrete and steel for building, and the growing popularity of cremations, had a devastating impact on granite production. Despite introducing new machinery and amalgamating during the 20th century, it was not sufficient to save the industry. By the 1970s, only a few working quarries remained and most yards closed.

A few manufacturers can still be found turning out high quality work using a mix of the old craft skills and the latest technologies. Fyfe Glenrock of Old Meldrum cut the new steps for Aberdeen Art Gallery (see back pages). Even with modern diamond saws, it can take many hours to cut a block of granite, which is a testament to the manual work of old and the sheer strength of the material.

Despite most of the industry having gone, its heritage is there for all to see. Our list of buildings and sites will introduce you to some of the significant phases in the trade's history. The two-part trail is easily followed. Start and stop as you wish. Granite gems are all around, so remember to look up, as many fine details are found above head height.

Cowdray Hall/War Memorial under construction, circa 1924



relatively large-scale production to take place. MacDonald also devised a steam-powered saw and lathe and gradually the granite trade moved away from the old hand-crafted industry into what we now recognise as the modern trade.

However, until power tools were introduced at the end of the 19th century, all carving was still carried out by hand and this continued right into the middle of the 20th century. Granite setts or cobblestones, (cassies as they are known locally), continued to be cut manually.



PART ONE Rubislaw to Castle Street

From source to the grandeur of the Granite City's finest constructions and the showcase of Union Street and Castlegate.

1 Rubislaw Quarry

When this quarry closed in 1971, it was some 450 feet (140m) deep and had been worked for more than 200 years when hundreds of thousands of tons of grey granite were blasted and cut from the ground. In 1788, Aberdeen's Town Council had not been optimistic about the potential of the quarry and decided to give up its right to work the land. It has been estimated that at least 50% of Aberdeen's buildings are built of Rubislaw stone. Rubislaw also provided stone for the Portsmouth and Southampton docks. However, the depth of hole, the need to continually pump the quarry floor clear of water, poor stone and competition, led to the quarry's closure. It remains spectacular despite filling with water since closure and now resembles a small loch. For information see www.rubislawquarry.co.uk and Adventure Aberdeen runs canoeing sessions for groups, visit www.sportaberdeen.co.uk for details and booking.

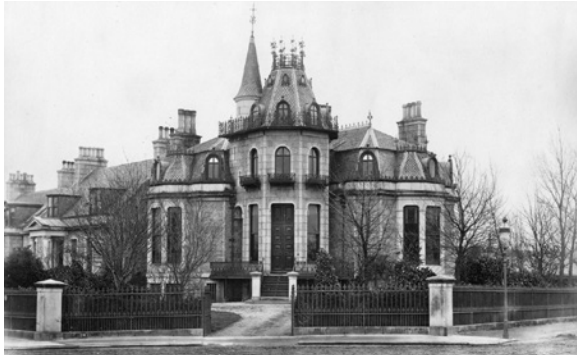
2 Queen's Road No 50

This large house designed by J. B. Pirie in 1886 is perhaps the most imaginative piece of 19th century domestic architecture in Aberdeen. The house was commissioned by John Morgan, a trained mason who was one of the city's biggest building contractors. As a skilled granite craftsman, he was associated with many of the most prestigious projects, including houses in Aberdeen's west end and Marischal College.



3 Queen's Cross

On the south east corner sits a bank, formerly home of photographer George Washington Wilson. Designed by J. Russell Mackenzie and completed in 1865, the house is a remarkable combination of granite and ironwork. To the north and opposite is the sandstone Rubislaw Church also by Mackenzie (1874). G.W. Wilson was so infuriated at the use of sandstone that he placed a feu on the ground opposite to ensure that only granite houses were built.



Queen's Cross, circa 1880

4 Queen's Cross Church

John Bridgeford Pirie, of Pirie & Clyne, won the architectural competition in 1877 for this French Gothic design. Built in 1881, the steeple is 150 feet high (nearly 46m) and the grand entrance doorway is flanked by massive pillars leading into a spacious nave for 800 worshippers. It was opened on 17th April 1881, by its first Minister, Rev Dr George Adam Smith, later Principal of Aberdeen University. A new hall and vestry were added in 1939 and the building was extensively restored in 1980. The



architectural conservationist, and later much loved Poet Laureate, Sir John Betjeman (1906-1984), visited Aberdeen in 1947 for BBC radio. His talk 'Aberdeen Granite', which concluded with this church, is covered in an article at www.aberdeenvoice.com/2010/11/betjeman-in-aberdeen/



5 Rubislaw and Queen's Terrace

The granite splendour of these terraces, 1852 (above), were planned by architects Thomas Mackenzie and James Matthews, who was to live there, working with artist James Giles (see 26). The houses have crowstepped gables and plain windows alternating with bow windows. Granite balustrades and a garden area separate them from Albyn Terrace.

6 Nellfield Cemetery

Great Western Road

With the invention of steam powered polishing in the 1830s came the capability of producing hundreds of thousands of memorial graveyard slabs. Wide ranging examples can be found in this graveyard. There is a surprisingly modest memorial to Alexander MacDonal, father of the modern granite industry, (on the Great Western Road boundary wall, close to the lodge entrance) and an even more modest marker to paupers of the Aberdeen Female Orphans Asylum. On a grander scale is the large Celtic cross, erected in memory of photographer George Washington Wilson.



7 Union Street

Aberdeen is known as the Granite City and its grand centrepiece as the Granite Mile and though falling slightly short of a mile in length, it is no less impressive. When the sun catches the glittering mica crystals present in granite, the buildings seem to sparkle, giving the city its second name the Silver City. This part, at Holburn Junction, was originally called Union Place.



8 Bon Accord Baths Justice Mill Lane

Constructed to provide a centrally-located public baths in the city, the £37,000 structure's robust granite-clad frontage block gives way to a lighter, airy pool hall behind, which exudes the fashionable Art Deco style. They were designed by Alexander McRobbie, City Architect, with TF Anderson, City Engineer. The foundation stone was laid in 1936 and the opening day was August 30th 1940. Known to generations as the 'Uptown Baths', there is currently a fund raising campaign to restore them.

9 Archibald Simpson Memorial Bon Accord Square

This architect, 1790-1847, was native to the Granite City and greatly helped shape it, together with his friendly 'rival' and sometimes working partner John Smith. Simpson lived here at 1 East Craibstone Street (by Bon-Accord Street). In the centre of the square is a monument to his lifetime's work in the profession (see [Sculpture & Curios Trail](#)). He is also memorialised by The Archibald Simpson pub in Castle Street (28).

10 Bon Accord Crescent & Bon Accord Square (1820s)

These Georgian houses were built by Archibald Simpson to accommodate some of the city's wealthier citizens. Additionally, to the immediate east of the square, on Bon Accord Street, is an interesting example of modern use of granite. Originally a garage, this art deco style building of 1937, was designed by A. G. R. Mackenzie. However, unlike the houses on Bon Accord Square, the granite on the 1937 garage would have been cut using power saws and hand tools.



11 General Post Office Crown Street

Now flats, this building was opened in 1907 with considerable fanfare by Sidney Buxton, Postmaster General and cost more than £55,000. The architect was WT Oldrieve and designer JC Wyness. Crown Street itself curves around the impressive castle-like Scottish Baronial building. However this was intentional to avoid the cost and inconvenience of bridging Windmill Brae. There is an asymmetrical frontage to Dee Street.

12 Freemason's Hall Crown Street

Stonemasons practice one of the earliest crafts in the world and are responsible for many of its ancient wonders as well as those since. Freemasonry formed from their medieval Renaissance guilds although it is not now exclusive to the trade. The building itself, by Jenkins & Marr in 1910, is testament to the stonemason's skills with much fine detail in evidence including the ornate sundial on the gable. It is as impressive inside but only accessible on public open days. However 'Friends of Freemasons Hall Aberdeen' on Facebook have pictures of the interior.



13 Music Hall Union Street

The Hall is the combined work of Archibald Simpson and James Matthews. Simpson's Assembly Rooms of 1820 fronts Union Street with massive fine-axed pillars, their ionic capitals representing the refined elegance of craftsmanship in granite. The individual sections that make up the columns were cut by hand and not by steam driven lathes that were later in use. Behind Simpson's work is Matthews' Music Hall of 1858.

14 Statue of the Duke of Gordon Golden Square (1841)

Designed by Thomas Campbell, it was cut by hand from a 20 ton block of Dancing Cairns stone. The work was carried out at the yard of Macdonald & Leslie, the most important granite yard in the city at the time. The statue now stands in Golden Square, but originally, it stood at the Castlegate, close by the Mercat Cross. Dancing Cairns Quarries, now disused were north west of the city centre close to Bucksburn and Auchmill. In its last days, the stone from here was crushed and bonded to form Adamant granite paving slabs.

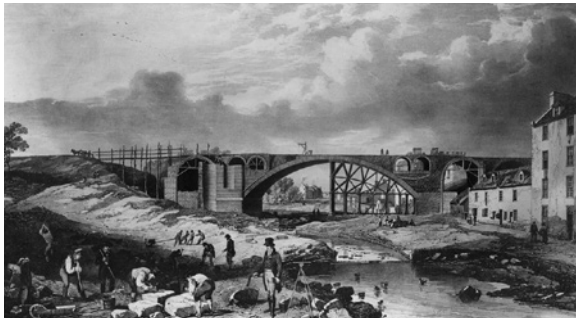
15 Northern Assurance Offices Union Street (1885)

This majestic commercial building, now the Chaophraya Restaurant, was designed by architect A. Marshall Mackenzie and built by master mason John Morgan. The cage-like entrance portico, screened by grey granite Doric columns, gave the building its nickname the 'Monkey House' for past generations who met up here. Inside are polished pink Corennie granite panels in the vestibule and grand Corinthian columns in the main hall. Corrennie Quarry, 23 miles west of Aberdeen, is one of the few local quarries still working today. Its pink stone is fine grained in contrast to the larger grained red granite taken from Stirlinghill Quarry at Peterhead.

16 Edward VII statue Union Street

The statue was designed by sculptor Alfred Drury and carved by mason James Philip with his assistant George Cooper. Pneumatic and hand chisels were used in the cutting of this Kemnay granite sculpture. The lead mason, James Philip, spent his working life in the granite yard of Arthur Taylor and he was perhaps the best carver ever employed in the city's stone trade.





17 Union Bridge (completed 1805)

Commissioned by the Town Council, with advice from Thomas Telford, the bridge was designed by David Hamilton and Thomas Fletcher. With a span of 130 feet, this great engineering feat had every stone dressed by hand using hammers and picks. The arch of the bridge is evidence of the way that Union Street itself was built. From what was the crown of St Katherine's Hill (the north end of Shiprow), a series of arches were built westward. However, most are now hidden beneath the street (see 21). The bridging of the Valley of the Denburn encouraged citizens, particularly the affluent, to escape the noises, smells and unsanitary conditions of the older burgh, though financing Union Street nearly bankrupted the council.

18 Kirk of St Nicholas and Screen Union Street

Within the Mither Kirk is the 15th Century St Mary's Chapel, a fine example of medieval granite work. The granite of the church's east portion, designed by Archibald Simpson in 1837, was rebuilt following a fire in 1874. The earlier west church portion of 1741 is built of sandstone. Following the fire in 1874, William Smith designed a granite spire to replace the lead covered one destroyed in the blaze. The screen with twelve columns, was designed by John Smith in 1829 and is cut from Dancing Cairns stone and is called the Smith Screen (See entry 14). It references the famous Hyde Park screen in London by Decimus Burton completed the year before.



St Nicholas Church and Screen, circa 1880

19 Correction Wynd

The Wynd is an example of granite setts or cobblestones (called locally cassies which derived from the word 'causeway'). Cassies usually came direct from quarries where cassie making was skilled work and paid according to output. The cassie maker sat in a 'scathie' (a small portable hut, see intro), reading the grain of the granite and cutting squared and cambered stone that was used for towns and cities across Britain. Sett exports peaked in the 1880s with more than 50,000 tons of setts exported from Aberdeen. The Wynd passes beneath a granite arch (circa 1802) which carries Union Street overhead. The arch is visible evidence of the great civil engineering that was necessary to build the city's main street.

20 RBS Union Street

The architecture of this square-plan Jenkins & Marr bank of 1929 is of robust neo-classicism following Art Deco and redolent of the architecture of the great American city buildings of the same period. Giant Corinthian columns frame decorative metal panels. Built for the Commercial Bank of Scotland which merged with the Royal Bank of Scotland in 1969.

21 Union Street Vaults **Carnegie's Brae, under Union Street, access from Netherkirkgate and East Green**

Aberdeen's Green is one of the oldest parts of the city (see **Aberdeen Green Trail**). Like all early settlements, this was organic following the natural lie of the land. Carnegie's Brae hints at this with brae meaning a steep slope. Later advances in civil engineering allowed the levelling and bridging of this landscape. Union Street itself is a viaduct built on a series of vaults and arches including Carnegie's Brae. This illustrates the importance of granite's strength as a material for engineering projects as well as buildings and for both purposes it was exported worldwide.

22 New Town House **Union Street (1868-1874)**

A proposal that sandstone be used was abandoned when John Fyfe offered to supply the Council with his Kemnay stone at a preferential rate. The result is a building, by architects Peddie and Kinnear, that expresses the confidence of a mature granite industry. With its towers and arcades, it showed what the industry and the town could do. This confidence went so far as to boldly incorporate, at the east end, a 17th century sandstone Tolbooth.



New Town House, circa 1952



23 Athenaeum Union Building, Castle Street (1819-22)

This prominent building at the east end of the Granite Mile at Union Street and Castle Street (left hand side) is by Archibald Simpson. It is an important example of the granite trade with fine, smooth ashlar work amongst the earliest illustrations of granite dressed by hammer and puncheon (chisel). Hammers and picks had been standard until 1818 when masons introduced tools associated with sandstone and the lighter hammer and puncheon became the tools of choice.

24 Aberdeen Sheriff Court Annex & High Court of Justiciary Castle Street, James Burns' Banking Company (1801)

This is an early example of fine quality working and a harbinger of the future. Burns' building demonstrates exactly how elegance and grace is possible with hard tone. An observer of 1794 described how masons achieved the smooth finish – 'picking the surface, exactly as a miller does... smoothing out by a tool in shape like a small hatchet'. Look to the top of the building and see the fine balustrade.

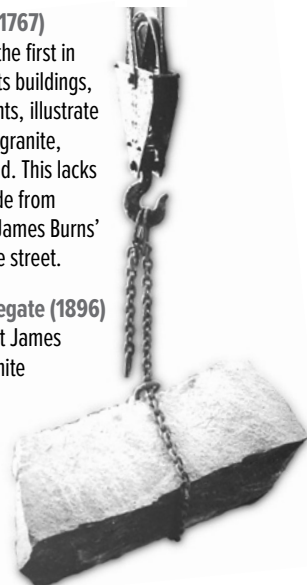
25 Marischal Street (laid out from 1767)

Aberdeen's earliest planned street was the first in the city to be paved with granite setts. Its buildings, originally the homes of wealthy merchants, illustrate the use of a more friable easier worked granite, quarried close to the surface at Loanhead. This lacks the whiter sparkle of later buildings made from deeper quarried stone. Contrast it with James Burns' Bank (24) at the north west corner of the street.

26 Salvation Army Citadel Castlegate (1896)

Modelled on Balmoral Castle by architect James Souttar, it was completed when the granite industry was at its peak. Some 300,000 tons of stone was being quarried locally and 40,000 tons of this was exported through Aberdeen harbour.

*Block of granite being lifted
from Rubislaw Quarry*



27 Mercat Cross Castlegate (1686)

Sandstone was the main building material prior to the introduction of granite in the 19th century. Standing at the head of Union Street, the sandstone Cross is emblematic of the pre-granite period. Within 100 years, the way of life symbolised by it, and its soft stone, was pushed aside to make way for urban and industrial growth and granite.

28 The Archibald Simpson Castle Street (1839)

This bar, previously North of Scotland Bank, takes its name from the prolific Aberdeen architect, 1790-1847, (see 8). His friend James Giles designed the painted terracotta sculpture above (see *Sculpture & Curios Trail*). Simpson designed many of the buildings in this booklet and also the former Medico-Chirurgical Block and St Andrew's Episcopal Cathedral opposite it, both slightly further up King Street, before entry 29.

29 Aberdeen Arts Centre West North Street

Architect John Smith's (1781-1852) striking classical North Church of 1828-1830 has a grand portico with Ionic columns and the clock tower commands the townscape for miles around. It is topped by a homage to Lysicrates' Monument in Athens. This monument's connection with the Theatre of Dionysus anticipates today's function as a charity-run arts centre and theatre.

30 The Lemon Tree

West North Street

Previously the St Katherine's Centre, Jenkins & Marr's 1937 building is a Modernist granite classic. It is inspired by the geometric European architecture of the time. It was gifted by the philanthropist Lord Strathcona.

Aberdeen Arts Centre



PART TWO Planning the Picturesque

A counterpoint to the 'formal' Union Street, the buildings were grouped in key locations along the route from Marischal up into the Rosemount area.

31 Marischal College Broad Street

The College is said to be the second biggest granite building in the world (the largest being the Escorial in Spain). It is a blend of two styles – A. Marshall Mackenzie's 'perpendicular gothic' (1890s) and Archibald Simpson's earlier Elizabethan architecture (1837) which harks to gothic seats of learning and the typical quadrangle architecture of learned colleges. The overall style is a combination of different aesthetics and the opportunities given by various granite working technologies. Simpson's older building is built of Rubislaw stone with contrasting window mullions and details in pink sandstone. McKenzie's modern gothic is in Kemnay granite.



Archibald Simpson's Marischal College, circa 1880



A. Marshall Mackenzie's Marischal College, circa 1900

32 Provost Skene's House, Broad Street

Level access from Broad Street, also Flourmill Lane with steps

The earliest portion of this house, on the west side, dates from 1545. It is one of the City's few examples of the pre-industrial use of granite. Here, the stone is incorporated in rubble walling with little working, compared to the fine ashlar stone produced in the 19th century. Where decorative features are called for, such as window margins, softer sandstone is used. The surrounding Marischal Square takes its granite colour reference from the earthy colours of Provosts Skene's and the majority pale grey from the actual pinkish grey of Marischal College.



Provost Skene's House, circa 1950

33 Bon Accord and St Nicholas Centre

St Nicholas Street

The then St Nicholas Centre shopping centre opened in 1985 and incorporates thin slabs of granite facing which seeks to achieve some continuity with the area's architectural heritage. The mass production of such uniformly thin slabs became possible with the introduction of new sawing techniques.

34 Robert Gordon's College Schoolhill (1730s)

The two-storey Auld Hoose building designed by William Adam is an early example of building in granite. The stone came from Loanhead Quarry in the Rosemount area of the city. Opened in 1730 by James Emslie, this quarry also supplied stone for the original infirmary and Gilcomston Chapel of Ease. The corners of the building are yellow sandstone, likely for colour contrast, as they are not as hard wearing as granite cornerstones.

#aberdeentrails



35 Aberdeen Art Gallery and War Memorial, Schoolhill

The complex, designed by architect A. Marshall Mackenzie (1886/1905 and 1925), is a fine combination of Kemnay and Corrennie granites (pink). Within the Gallery are 28 turned and polished granite columns representing the varieties of stone being worked in and around Aberdeen in 1905. As can be seen, even at this relatively early date, the local industry was importing granite from abroad. The new steps and ramp entranceway are of local granite – pink steps from the Corrennie quarry and the pink/grey of the ramp from Newhills Quarry in Aberdeenshire. The design for the War Memorial Lion was the work of William McMillan and was cut in granite by James Philip and George Cooper (see the *Sculpture & Curios Trail*).

36 His Majesty's Theatre, St Mark's Church and Central Library Rosemount Viaduct (1891-1908)

A picturesque grouping known locally as 'education, salvation and damnation!'. These buildings demonstrate the diversity of granite use – the theatre's lightness of touch contrasting with the church's confident classicism. All three are prominent in the view from Union Bridge (17).



37 Archibald Simpson's Infirmary Woolmanhill (1832-40)

A neo-classical building with a dome, the infirmary set the pattern for the nearby War Memorial, St Mark's Church and His Majesty's Theatre. The erection of the hospital coincided with the introduction of steam powered granite polishing and sawing, marking a new phase for the trade.

38 Gilcomston Church Skene Street (1771), later Denburn Parish Church and now Hebron Evangelical Church

The significance of the Church, or Chapel of Ease as it was originally known, is that its stone came from Loanhead Quarry, a short distance north west of the church. The chapel ministered to the needs of the many handloom weavers and other tradesmen and their families of Gilcomston.

39 Tenements, Rosemount Viaduct

The tenements were built as part of an improvement scheme in the 1880s. These substantial granite buildings include the tallest traditional tenements in the city at seven stories high from the ground behind and display a variety of architectural features such as towers and parapets. The ornate decoration employed here contrasts with simpler motifs seen elsewhere in City tenement blocks.



Rosemount tenements, above circa 1970, below circa 1950



40 Rosemount Square (completed 1946)

This circular council housing block is a remarkable example of granite being used in a modern art deco style. Modelled along the lines of Vienna's Karl Marx Hof, the building is decorated with sculpture by T.B. Huxley Jones (see *Sculpture & Curios Trail*). It is an outstanding example of council house building, mixing modernity and traditional materials.

41 Richmond Street

This is an example of a street laid with granite setts. It is recorded that sometime in the 1760s, Aberdeen began to export stone for paving London streets. Much of the early stone was simply gathered from local land, helping landowners, in some cases, to subsidise agricultural improvement. This 'ad hoc' method of production grew into a major industry with quarries such as Rubislaw helping supply the then expanding market.

Granite

TECHNOLOGY

Historically, the great stumbling block in the development of the granite trade was the very hardness of the stone and the limitations this imposed on working it with hand tools. About 1834, Alexander MacDonald set about solving this problem. He designed a machine for polishing stone. Using an Aberdeen comb works' steam engine, he showed that a smooth surface could be achieved by running sand and water beneath an iron polishing head.

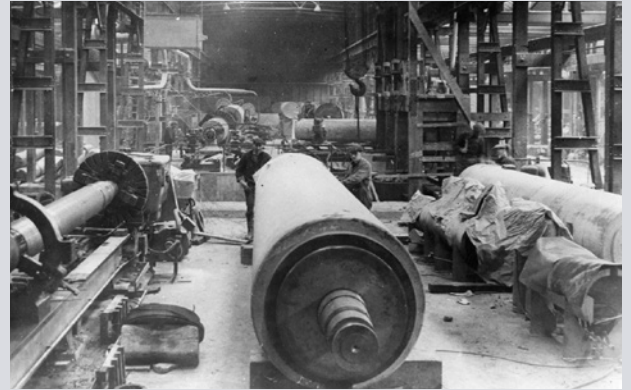


Masons' Shed at Excelsior Granite Works, Aberdeen, circa 1910



Masons James Philip and George Cooper carving the War Memorial, circa 1924
Alexander MacDonald went on to develop a steam saw and a steam lathe. However, even with steam sawing, the process of cutting a single large block, again with sand as the cutting agent, could take months. In the 1880s, chilled iron replaced sand and this increased the rate of cut significantly. A block, which previously took months of work, could now take as little as ten days. Further development of this technology enabled the granite trade to produce relatively thin slabs. When polished, these slabs were ideal as decorative fronts for buildings.

By the late 19th century, many of the new technologies were coming from the USA. About 1886, the idea of using pneumatic powered tools came to Aberdeen from Vermont. This was very quickly adopted as it increased the rate of production of carved stone. About the same time, the "Jenny Lind" polisher also came from America. It was called a Jenny Lind because the hum of the polishing head was said to resemble the voice of the great Swedish singer. This machine was ideal for producing polished gravestones. The 20th century saw further technical advances: circular saws, some multi-bladed, and with diamond tips, made an appearance. These cut through stone at an unprecedented rate.



Large granite rolls being turned at Pittodrie Granite Turning Company, circa 1960



Jenny Lind at Victoria Granite Works, Aberdeen, circa 1910

Wire saws, boring machines, portable hand polishers and sandblasting were amongst other innovations – they all tended to undermine, or replace hand craft skills. However, as with other industries, the granite trade must remain competitive to stay alive. New technologies can give that edge.



Workmen at Victoria Road Granite Works

Finding out more

Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums holds an unparalleled collection of more than 1,000 granite related artefacts in its significant archive.



The local relationship with granite goes back to early stone circles in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire and is represented by Neolithic stone axes and other prehistoric objects in our archaeological collections.

More recent star items include the complete minutes of the Aberdeen Granite Association from the industry's peak in 1887 through to the winding up of the Association in 1983, when only two firms remained.

There is also a substantial archive of engineering drawings illustrating developments in granite technology as manufactured by local firms such as McKinnons and George Cassie and Son Ltd.



Catalogues and business records also illustrate the changing styles in granite memorials during the 20th century, providing an insight into one of Aberdeen's most successful exports. A large collection of photographs capture the men and yards on whose work Aberdeen's international reputation was founded.

Above: Bush Hammer, 1888, Top: Granite Pick © Mike Davidson/ Positive Image

Highlights from these collections are on display in our venues periodically and the whole collection is available to users on request. Please contact the Curator to view particular items or to arrange a talk or workshop with artefact-handling. Visit our website www.aagm.co.uk to explore and search Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums collections.



*Model 2 Wire Saw by George Cassie and Son Ltd
© Mike Davidson/Positive Image*



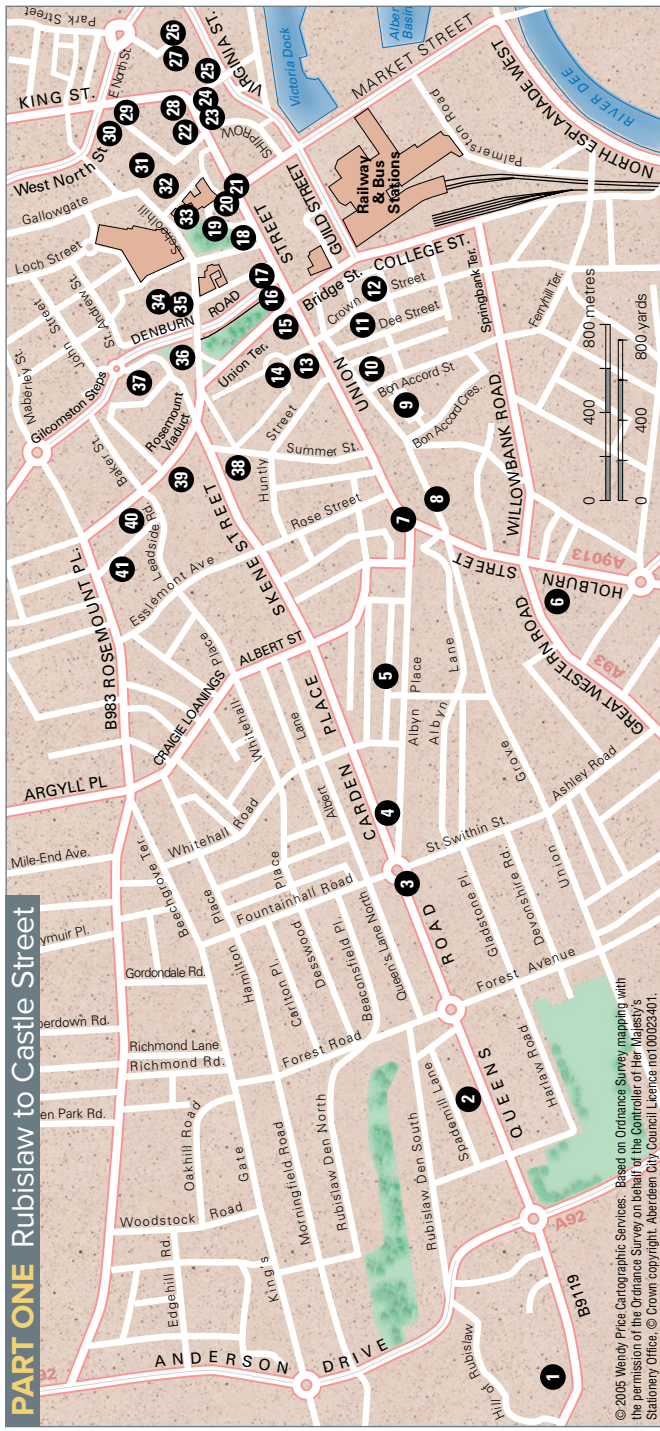
*Memorial Order Sketch Book; image
© Mike Davidson/Positive Image*



Granite craftsmanship continues to the present day and the new entranceway to the Art Gallery is of local granite – pink steps from Corrennie quarry and pink/grey ramp from Newhills Quarry in Aberdeenshire. The new War Memorial steps are reused blocks from demolished granite buildings made into Aberdeen Bond pattern – usually three small blocks packing out a larger block on either side (see [intro](#)) usually reserved for side elevations or lesser status buildings in the 1800s. A technical guide to the appreciation and use of external materials including granite in Aberdeen is available here: www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/materials

Corrennie pink granite blocks being cut at Fyffe Glenrock

PART ONE Rubislaw to Castle Street

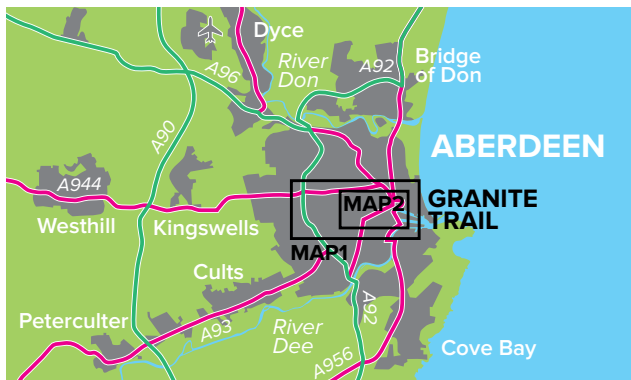


PART TWO King Street to Rosemount



Aberdeen Granite Trail

A guide to Aberdeen's granite heritage



© 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