

Long-gone Granite Quarries in and around Aberdeen



In this short document, we look at eight granite quarries, which were operating in and around Aberdeen. All 8 of these quarries are abandoned now but the stone has contributed to many famous buildings, monuments and bridges. Granites in the North East are attributed to plutons, plugs, dykes and sills from the late Silurian / Devonian period

Cairngall quarry was west of Peterhead. Clinterty was located in Tyrebagger west of Clinterty Woods. Corrennie is on Black Hill by Tillyfourie. The Dancing Cairns quarry can be found on Auchmill Golf Course. Paradise was adjacent to Kemnay while Rubislaw is very much part of Aberdeen city. Sclattie was in the Bankhead area of the city and Stirling hill was just south of Peterhead.

Six out of these eight examples, are displayed as polished granite blocks as a special feature in Duthie Park, Aberdeen. The display includes some Norwegian blue granite blocks.

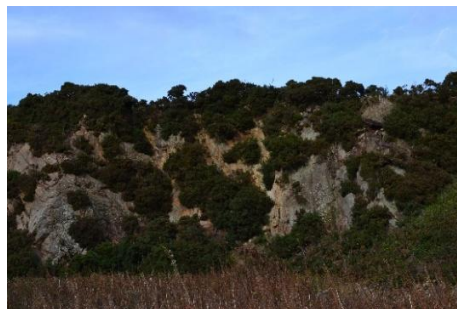


Further information about these and other local quarries and their stones' uses is captured in a piece called "[Doric Columns – The History & Heritage of the City of Aberdeen / The Granite Industry](#)" which may be accessed online.

Cairngall (NK 049 471)

The site is located at Flushing, just off the A950, 8 km west of Peterhead. It has long since been abandoned as a quarry but now serves as a site for a rifle range.

The reddish stone was used in the foundation for the Bell Rock lighthouse, as well as the Sarcophagus for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert



Clinterty (NJ 845 109)

Public access is denied to the large hole which was once the quarry because it is now the site of an offshore crane operator training centre. It is located in Clinterty Woods just off the A96 at Tyrebagger.

The pinkish granite was used in widening the bridge over the River Don at Seaton in the 1950s..



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Corrennie (NJ 567 789)

Corrennie is another abandoned quarry that is quite overgrown. Its excavation is up a fairly steep incline on Black Hill at Tillyfourie.

The stone is pink granite and one of its most famous uses was to construct the piers of the Tay Rail Bridge in the mid-1880s.



Dancing Cairns (NJ 896 092)

It's very difficult to recognise this site as a quarry now. It is close to hole 9 of Auchmill golf Course at Bucksburn and has been completely covered by overgrown vegetation.

Significant uses of Dancing Cairns granite were Aberdeen's harbour North Pier and the Union Street screen at St Nicholas church.



Paradise (NJ 737 169)

A view of the now flooded Paradise quarry site may be obtained by following the footpath up Paradise hill from the Origin car park in Kemnay.

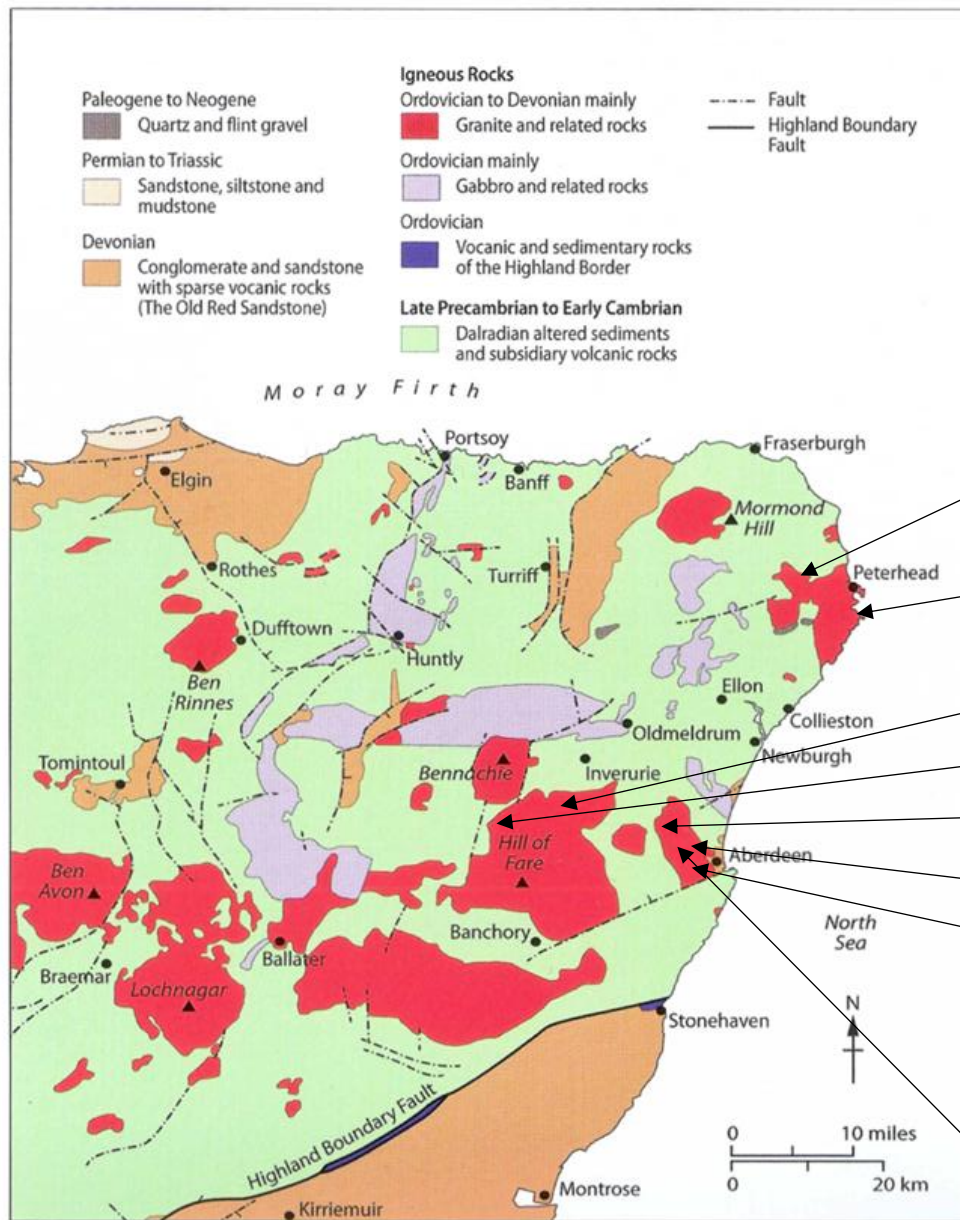
Paradise grey granite was used for Marischal college and the piers which support the cantilevers of the Forth Rail Bridge. They are 2 fine examples of its famous uses.



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Rubislaw (NJ 912 054) Once thought to be the biggest hole in Europe and some 140m deep, the quarry is completely flooded. The greyish stone was used in many homes and significant Aberdeen buildings. Union Street, often commonly called the “Granite Mile” features Rubislaw granite.			
Sclattie (NJ 890 009) Sclattie, like Clinterty, has found an alternative use as an industrial site; now it's a waste recycling operation. Sclattie granite tended to be used for setts (More commonly termed cobblestones) for road surfacing in yesteryears. The nearby remaining wall of the GNSR Bankhead station appears to have used Sclattie stone.			
Stirling Hill (NK 124 414) Peterhead male-prison was built to provide convict labour to work the quarries at nearby Stirling Hill. The town's harbour breakwaters were built with the bluish granite blocks. There were 11 Stirling quarries in total but only one is now operational. Nearby Buchan Ness lighthouse was created from Stirling Hill stone.			

All photos apart from *Bell Rock Lighthouse*, *Tay Rail Bridge*, *Forth Rail Bridge* and *Rubislaw Quarry* are by K. London. *Tay Rail Bridge* and *Forth Rail Bridge* are by W. Lindsay.



The Past Quarries of Aberdeen and the surrounding area.

This image is reproduced from the book "North East Scotland - *Landscapes in Stone*" by Alan McKirdy.

It was published by Birlinn in 2025 and Aberdeen Geological Society provided some financial support for its production and publication.

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The approximate positions of the 8 quarries listed above are marked by arrows

Cairngall

Stirling Hill

Paradise, nr Kemnay

Corrennie. nr Tilliefourie

Clinterty

Sclattie

Rubislaw

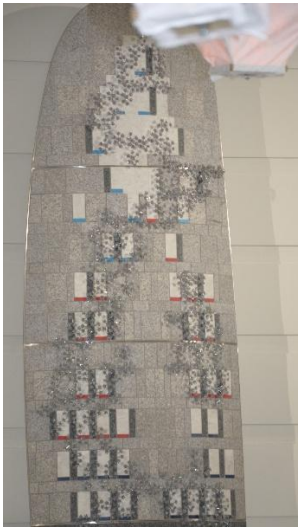
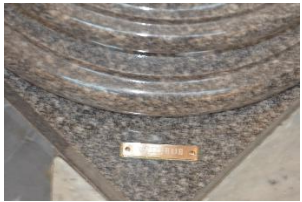
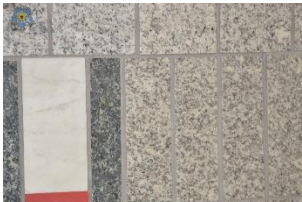
Dancing Cairns

Aberdeen Art Gallery

Five of these quarries are represented by beautifully polished granite columns which feature in the entrance hall and the immediate ground floor exhibition space at Aberdeen Art Gallery. Cairngall, Clinterty and Dancing Cairns quarries are not represented but instead, as a bonus, there are also samples from Tom's Forest, between Kintore and Kemnay, Hill of Fare near Banchory, Tillifourie as well as Syllavethy near Bridge of Alford. There are also columns representing 2 types of granite from Norway, Cornish granite and from the Ross of Mull.

				
				
Aberdeen Art Gallery in Schoolhill, was designed by architect, A Marshall MacKenzie and is constructed from Kemnay and Corrennie granites. The ramp and steps at the entrance are Newhill's granite.	Corrennie A beautifully consistent and homogeneous salmon pink stone. Compare this with the nearby Tillifourie granite.	Tillifourie A dark grey or blueish grey stone. The quarry is less than 1 km north from Corrennie quarry	Kemnay A light grey warm pinkish stone from Paradise which ceased operations in 1980s.	Tom's Forest Also, a light grey pink stone from a working quarry about 1km due east from Kemnay.

All photos are by K. London. We sought permission to photograph all these columns prior to taking them.

					
					
Rubislaw A silvery dark grey granite from one of the deepest holes in Europe. Many of the prominent buildings in Aberdeen used Rubislaw stone.	Sclattie Also, a silvery grey blue granite, quite similar to Rubislaw. Scattie quarry, at Bankhead, was only 5 km from Rubislaw.	Peterhead A reddish granite with a very coarse crystalline texture from Stirlinghill just south of Peterhead. There were many quarrying operations here.	Hill of Fare The stone is a light pink stone with a fine crystalline texture. Compare this with Corrennie which was some 10km north from this quarry, close to Banchory.	Syllavethy A dark grey granite from a small quarry close to Bridge of Alford. There appears to be little evidence of the quarry on current maps. Note the change of crystal size on the column (Fault?)	Hall of Remembrance A statue is displayed in this hall as a tribute to "Lest we Forget". It forms a Spitfire wing and is made from individual granite blocks

All photos are by K. London. We would like to thank the staff of Aberdeen City Art Gallery who gave permission to photograph all the columns and the Spitfire wing.