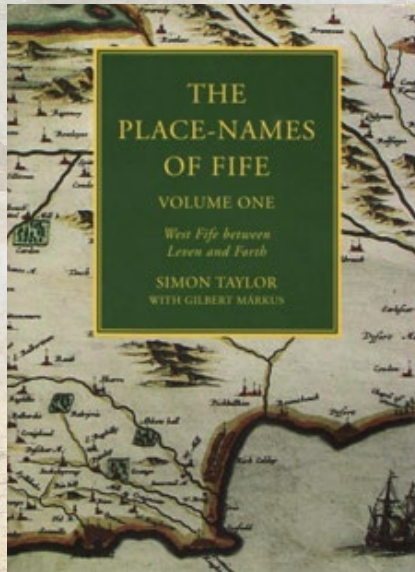


FUNDING SUPPORT



Full details of all these names, and many more in and around Aberdour, can be found in Simon Taylor with Gilbert Márkus, *The Place-Names of Fife, vol. 1: West Fife between Leven and Forth* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2006) [volume 1 of a 5 volume series]

The Data, with addenda and corrigenda, are also online on www.fife-placenames.glasgow.ac.uk

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Macdonald, N., 1981, *Aberdour: the past hundred years* (Aberdour).

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www.aberdourheritagecentre.uk

Leaflet compiled for the Aberdour Heritage Centre by Simon Taylor.

KNOWING YOUR PLACE ABERDOUR Place-Name Walk



An exploration on foot of some places and their names in Aberdour.
Duration: about 2 1/2 hours.

What is a place-name walk? It is a walk through past and present, through landscape and language. It is an attempt to see the modern environment through the eyes of the people who gave it the names which we still use today, taking the names themselves as our guides.

These names are guides also to the languages of the past: for Fife these are chiefly **Pictish**, **Gaelic** and **Scots**, together spanning around 1,500 years, with some names going back even further, perhaps into the first millennium BC, names such as **Fife** itself, or the river-names **Leven** and **Ore**.

This rich linguistic past contains so-called dating horizons, so a name coined in Scots, such as **Couston**, can scarcely be older than the thirteenth century; one coined in Gaelic, such as **Dalachy**, cannot have been coined much before c.950 AD, nor much after 1150, although it is first recorded in the

14th century; while Pictish **Aberdour** could go back to the eighth century or even earlier.

There are another two languages which have contributed important names in Aberdour: Norse has given us **Humbie**, containing the common Norse word *bý* 'farm'; while French (probably emanating from the Augustinian monastery of Inchcolm, who held this land) has given us **Bouprie** (*beau pré* 'fine meadow').

On this walk we will encounter names from many different times, each one telling us something unique about the place, for example an ancient church site, a place of medieval assembly, a place of public execution, a brewery, sailors and salt pans, as well as the names of a variety of landowners, such as the Knights Templars and the Sisters of St Francis.

AN HISTORIC COASTAL VILLAGE

The Route

(see map on page 4)

Starts at Aberdour Heritage Centre at the railway station [1890]; over the railway bridge and across the main road, heading 'over Easter' or 'over the burn', as the locals say; on the right is Aberdour Castle, on the left **Hillside** [*Hilsyd* 1636; a Scots name, formerly called **Brewlands of Newton** (*Neuton* 1420)]. Behind Hillside is **Inch Marton Hill** and **Inch Marton Plantation** [(*Eglismarten* c.1350), 'church of (St) Martin', containing a Pictish word *egtlēs* 'church']. The lands of Inch Marton originally stretched east almost to Murrell Terrace; a stone coffin was found in Inch Marton Plantation in 1820s, perhaps a clue to whereabouts of the original church.

Flowing below Hillside is the **Dour Burn** [Pictish **duvr* 'water', compare Welsh *dŵr* 'water'], with former mills upstream at **Mill Farm** (the mill for Wester Aberdour) and a sawmill [*Samiln* c.1750] below the north side of the present road bridge.

Once over the burn, on the left is **White Law** [*The White Law* 'a pretty mount' c.1750: perhaps site of barony court], now with a house on top, then past a house called **Templeland** [the temple of *Inchemartyne of Aberdor* 1540; lands formerly belonging to the Knights Templars, taken over by the Knights Hospitallers of St John in 1312].

Along the Main Street of Easter Aberdour to the site of the **Old Manse**, west corner of Murrell Terrace and Main Street, earlier the nunnery of St Martha, founded in 1474 to provide care for the pilgrims coming to the Pilgrims Well [le *pilgramyswell* 1479]

near St Fillan's Kirk. The lands attached to the nunnery were once known as **Sisterlands**, now **The Glebe**, as they later supported the minister in the manse which was built on the site.

We are on the corner of Main Street and **Murrell Terrace**, formerly providing access to the rigs (strips of land) in the Aberdour Acres. This is named after the house (formerly farm) of the Murrell [*Muriel* 1328: Gaelic *mòr ail* 'big rock or cliff', in this case 'rocky brae'] about a kilometre to the north. From the Main Street, looking east, we can see above the village the farm of **Humbie** [*Humbie* 1574: Norse 'dog farm'], and to the right of Humbie **Gallows Knowe** ['Plantation at *Gallows Know*' c.1770], where those condemned to death by the local barony court would be publicly hanged: its conspicuous position beside the old road to Kirkcaldy is typical of gallows sites.

We then cross the Main Street to **Murray Place** (originally New Street, until the block of flats there was acquired by the Murrays of the George Hotel, Burntisland) and **Morayvale** (built in 1950s, and named after the neighbouring land-holder the earl of Moray, but on land belonging to the earl of Morton). Down **Morayvale** and over the railway line into the recreational land, formerly **Kirk Shots** [Scots *shot* or *shott* 'a piece of ground, especially one cropped rotationally; a division of land']



Detail from RHP1022 c.1750 (north on the left). This clearly shows how the lands of **The Aberdour Acres** were divided up into individual strips or rigs; all this was swept away by about 1770, creating the big fields we are familiar with today. By permission of National Archives of Scotland.



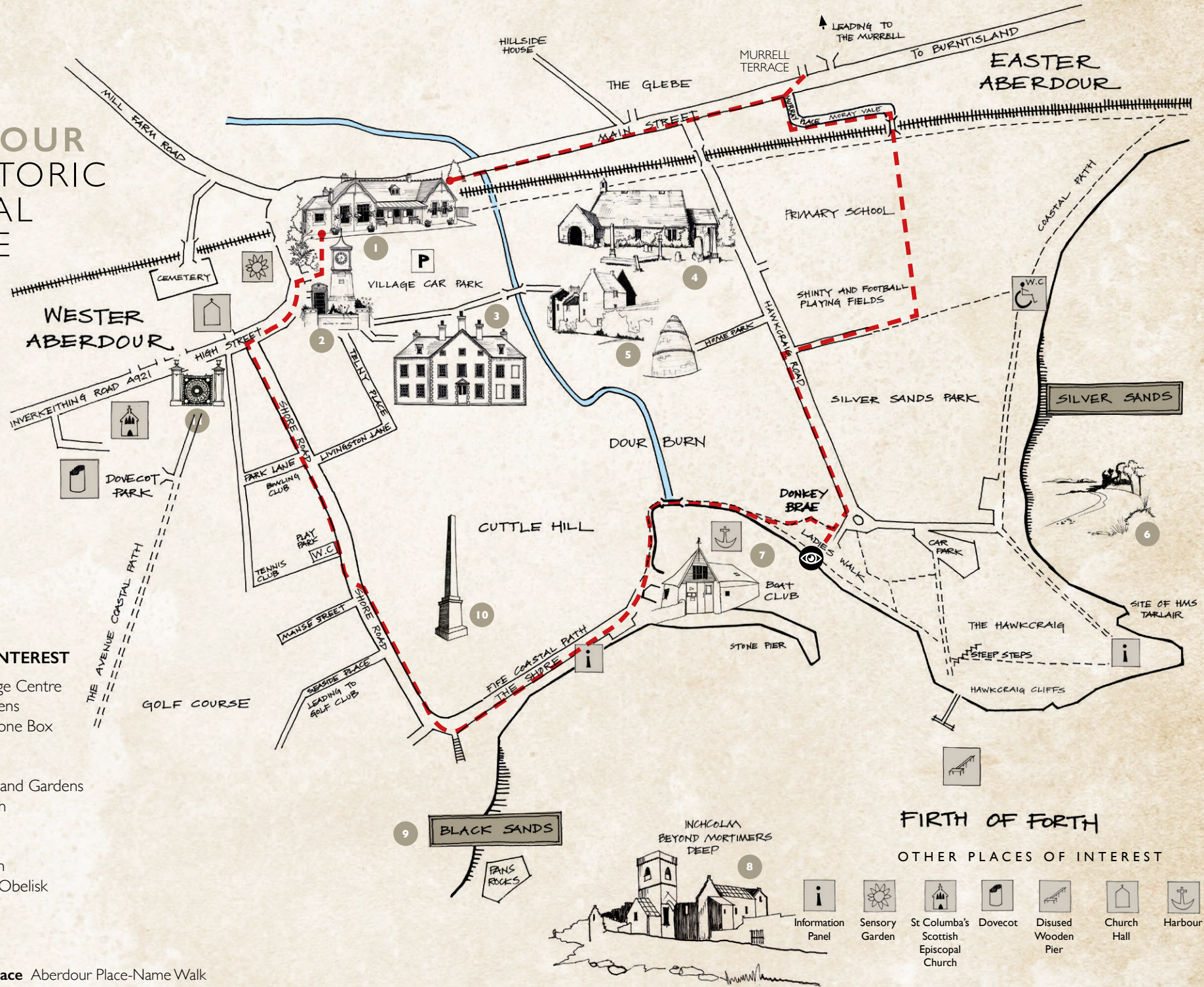
Detail from RHP1022 c.1750. **Kirk Shots** now contain Murray Place, Morayvale, the railway line and the primary school. By permission of National Archives of Scotland.

ABERDOUR AN HISTORIC COASTAL VILLAGE



LOCATIONS OF INTEREST

1. Aberdour Heritage Centre and Station Gardens
2. Clock and Telephone Box
3. Aberdour House
4. St Fillan's Church
5. Aberdour Castle and Gardens
6. Silver Sands Beach
7. The Harbour
8. Inchcolm
9. Black Sands Beach
10. Earl of Morton's Obelisk
11. Dovecot Gates



FIRTH OF FORTH

OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST

INCHCOLM BEYOND MORTIMERS DEEP

Information Panel	Sensory Garden	St Columba's Scottish Episcopal Church	Dovecot	Disused Wooden Pier	Church Hall	Harbour	Viewpoint

Crossing the Shinty Pitch we look down to Aberdour's best-known beach, the **Silver Sands**, known until well into the 20th century as the **White Sands**, in contrast to the **Black Sands**, which we will see later. Beyond the Silver Sands are the beautiful wooded slopes of the **Heughs** (Scots *heugh* 'a steep slope, a precipice'), known locally as the Usie Woods, a version of *heugh*, showing how radically place-names can change!

We join **Hawkcraig Road**, formerly the *Fishergates* c.1750; now named after the cliffs (The **Hawkcraig** [*Hallcraig* 1703 'the crag near the *hall* or castle' (Aberdour Castle)]. Past the ruins of the Teinds Barn, the barn where Inchcolm Abbey stored its teind or tenth (English *tithe*) from Aberdour parish [*Teind barns Park* c.1770, now the **Long Haugh** (*the Long Haugh* c.1750), Scots *haugh* 'low-lying land by water']. It is also known as the Silver Sands Park.

To the viewpoint overlooking the harbour and the original **Aberdour** [*Abirdoure* 1179; *Aberdour* c.1195, Pictish *aber Duvr* 'the mouth of the Dour Burn']; also out over **Mortimers Deep** [*Mortimers Deep* 1710], the name preserving the local legend of the coffin of de Mortimer, lord of Aberdour, being unceremoniously dumped in the Forth on its way to burial in the Augustinian monastery of **Inchcolm** [*ecclesia Sancti Columbe de Insula* c.1165, *Sancti Columbici Inche* 1531; *Inchcolme* 1583; Gaelic 'island of Columba']; down **Donkey Brae**, a reminder of Aberdour's Seaside Resort past, to the Sailor's Well, a reminder of its maritime past, this name now given to the whole of the rocky beach as far as the Dour Burn, but originally applied to the small well, now

dry, its rusted metal pipe still visible to the left of the steps; round by the harbour to the **Ballast Bank**, another reminder of Aberdour's maritime past as a port for coal export; past **Boathouse Rocks** [*Boat house* marked here c.1750].

Looking along the **Black Sands** [so named from the large amounts of sea coal washed up here, and in contrast to the **White Sands** (*the White Sands* c.1750), now called the Silver Sands], to **Pans Rocks**, site of saltpans [*Salt pans* c.1750]. Up **Shore Road** past **Seaside Place** [*Seysyde* 1559] and **Manse Street** [the manse re-sited here in 1802], through what was once known as the **New Town** (developed from c.1800), past the steep **Cuttlehill** on the right [*Cuthill* 1559; Scots *couthal* 'hill of the local, open-air court'; Scots *couthal* is borrowed from Gaelic *comhdhail* 'assembly, meeting'], crowned by an obelisk erected by the earl of Morton when he acquired this land from the Wemyss family in the early 18th century.

Past **Caulfield Cottage** by the Bowling Green on the left [probably 'coal field', referring to what is now the Bowling Green and Play Park, where coal was kept before being taken for export at the harbour]. The cottage, reputedly a weighing place for the coal, is at the corner of Park Lane, formerly **Coal Wynd**. Coal Wynd was also the name of the road on the right, now called **Livingston Lane** [named after Livingston's Dairy which once stood where there is now a car park].

We are now in the centre of Wester Aberdour, where places of refreshment are available. On the High Street turn right for the station, where our walk began.

Aberdour Harbour as seen from the Viewpoint. This is the *aber* (the Pictish word for 'mouth of a river or burn') which gave rise to the name Aberdour. At low tide the Dour Burn can be seen flowing through it from right to left.

