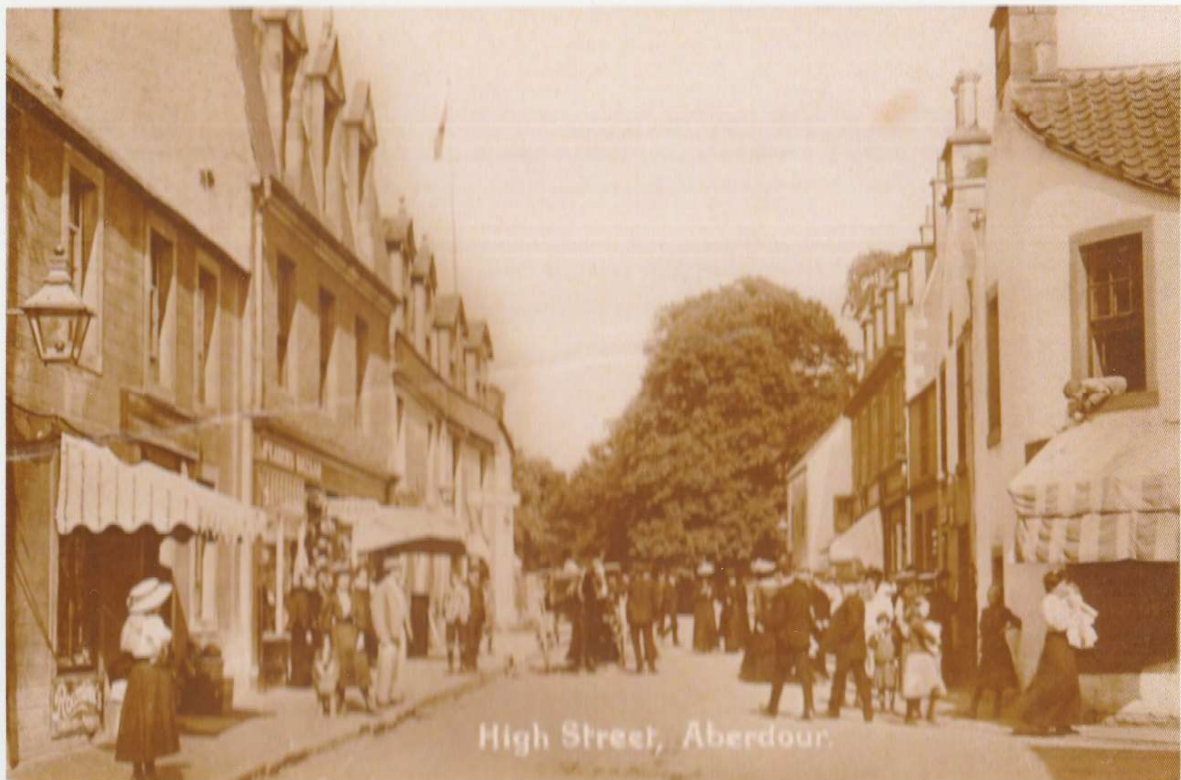


# Aberdour Aberdour Points of Interest

*Selected by Bill Cochrane*



***A guide giving the historical background  
to many features and places to be seen  
on a walk around the village.***



## Aberdour Walking Tour

*The sequence of the **points of interest** follow approximately an initial walk starting from the railway station, proceeding eastwards via the car park to St Fillan's Church to Easter Aberdour and returning by the main road to West Aberdour to Inverkeithing Road. A longer extension from the High Street around the shore to the Silver Sands is indicated in the text.*

### Introduction

Modern Aberdour, split into two distinct parts by the Dour burn is made up of two medieval village sites within the 1640 parish of the same name. Easter Aberdour was made a burgh of regality in 1383. and Wester Aberdour was a burgh of 'barons' from 1501. Easter Aberdour owed its title to the Douglas family, the earls of Morton, while Wester Aberdour was a barony under the Abbey of St Colme on Inchcolm and the Stewart earls of Moray.

Once known for its weaving, coal and freestone quarries, with a mention of corn mills in early medieval times, Aberdour developed in the nineteenth century as a seaside resort for the middle classes. During the twentieth century the railway station became the key link in the development of Aberdour to become known as the 'Fife Riviera'. Today the village retains some fine eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings and its popularity as a place to visit.

Aberdour was noted in medieval times for its Hospital of St Martha. founded in 1474 by James, Earl of Morton, assisted by his Countess Anne. It was intended for the maintenance of the poor and to provide hospitality for pilgrims and wayfarers under the care of the Sisters of Penitence of the Third Order of St Francis.

**The Railway Station** was built over three years from 1887 to 1890 and opened for 'passenger' business on 2nd June 1890. It has since gained distinction for its gardens and upkeep, winning the UK Best Station award in 1990.

*For further information, and from which the above was extracted, see "Aberdour Railway Station" by W.T. Cochrane.*



The half-ruined **Aberdour Castle** has had a history from around the thirteenth century when a castle here formed the main dwelling house and grounds of the baron of Aberdour, granted by Robert 1, The Bruce, to his nephew Thomas Randolph, Earl of Moray, in 1325. In 1342 Sir William Douglas of Liddesdale acquired a charter of the barony from the Moray's and the property has remained in the Douglas family ever since. The oldest part of the castle is the fourteenth-century tower, now a part of the west range with other buildings added during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The construction of the garden terraces to the south in the seventeenth century and the sculpting of the nineteenth century railway embankment to the north altered the early medieval character of the site. In history Aberdour Castle is remembered as a principal home of James Douglas, 4th Earl of Morton, Regent of Scotland from 1572 until the coup d'etat of 1578. Before his execution in 1581 Morton is said to have 'denuded the royal treasury' and hidden his booty at Aberdour. The Mortons moved their residence to Aberdour House (or Cuttlehill as it was then called) for ten years following a fire which apparently 'destroyed' the castle in 1715 when occupied by Dragoons. The rebuilt east range of the castle continued in use as a barrack, school room, masonic hall, and dwelling until 1924 when the castle was placed under the guardianship of the HM Office of Works (now Dept. of Environment). *For further information, and from which the above was extracted, see the Official guide 'Aberdour Castle'.*

The old church of St Fillan's, standing by the road leading to the Silver Sands beach, is a Scottish ecclesiastical gem and one of the finest examples of Norman architecture in Scotland today. It has been referred to as the "Miniature Cathedral". Once the church was part of the endowments of the Abbey of Inchcolm (c. 1128), and its nave and chancel are of around 1140. It sports additions in 1500 and 1608, but was unroofed at the completion of a new parish church in the High Street in 1790. St Fillan's was restored in 1925-6. Local legend has it that Robert the Bruce, thought to be a leper, worshipped at the now sealed lepers' squint at St Fillans after the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314.

*For further information, and from which the above was extracted, see "St Fillan's Church" by Rev. David Rutherford.*



**The plaque over the newsagent's shop** in the Main Street bears the date 1722 and the maltsters' tools of trade. Before renovation in 1933 malt barns stood on the site and, in fact, were used as such until the turn of the century. The maltsters in the village came from the Lochtie family and they can be said to be true Aberdourians going back at least two and a half centuries. Checking the first census returns (1841) the name Lochtie is the only present day village name shown. Another well known Aberdour family is the Lyon family who, until the 1970s had a joiners' business in Park Lane (formerly called Coal Wynd) that went back to 1865.

**Hospital of St Martha.** About 30 yards to the south east of St Fillan's Church there was a well – the water from which was reputed to have medicinal properties (especially eye complaints). As previously noted a hospital was founded in 1474 by James Earl of Morton for the poor. Wayfarers and pilgrims came to be treated for eye complaints with the water from the well. The 'Hospital' was situated in the centre of Easter Aberdour on the north side of the Main Street, near the corner where Murrell Terrace meets the main road where now stands the house called 'Wellside'. An 'old manse' was converted into the 'hospital' and was operated by four nuns of the Order of St Francis (The Grey Nuns). Within the church there is a stained glass window on the north of the chancel to their memory. Four acres of land which now the houses of the Glebe are situated was gifted to the nuns and bore the name of 'Sisterlands'.

**'Templeland'** which is situated on the north side of Main Street at the east end is one of Aberdour's oldest houses, and was so named because the land on which it stands was owned by the Knights Templar.

**Hillside House**, was part of the Whitehill estate, which in the seventeenth century was owned by David Phin. In 1699, due to family debts Hillside alone was inherited by Margaret Phin and ownership eventually passed to a rather colourful character named James Stewart / Stuart, who in 1822 fought Scotland's second last duel against Sir Alexander Boswell of Auchinleck who died as a result.



James Stewart / Stuart was tried for murder in Edinburgh but was found 'not guilty'. He and his family left Hillside in 1828.

**The School** (which was the main village school) stood on the site now converted into '**The Sensory Garden**' next to the bridge over the railway line and opposite the former Station House. The large school building, that had been developed in 1896 from a school 'room' originally built about 1650, was demolished in 1974 after the current primary school had been opened in 1967 in Hawkraig Road. Prior to the building of the original school room children were given their lessons in the castle.

**The clock** which stands at the east end of the High Street, between the entrances to the station and the castle, was erected by the people of Aberdour to the memory of Dr Robert Spence who practiced in the village for forty years. The clock was originally erected on the street boundary wall of the church (now the church hall) in 1910 and moved to its present position in 1920 to allow people to have a clear view of the War Memorial (placed against the wall of the church hall). Incidentally, the Institute in Shore Road was built as a memorial to the survivors of the 1914 - 1918 war as a community centre (which has now been modernized) and is used for village activities. (see below.)

**The plaque over the house** at the east end of the High Street (next to the baker's shop) is dated 1739 and shows a book and the initials IMF. The building is not 'listed' but this may be due to structural changes as a photograph of 1890 shows that there have been a number of alterations. Local legends about its original purpose have not been borne out by any documentary evidence. The building next door containing the bakery and the (recently closed) Royal Bank is shown on a photograph of last century as a barn type structure.

**Aberdour House**, at the north end of the High Street, was a townhouse of the Mortons. It was used a residence by the Earl from 1715 after a fire destroyed part of the castle. He moved to his Dalmahoy Estate in 1725. Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty lived here during the First World War.



Times Past



Easter Aberdour

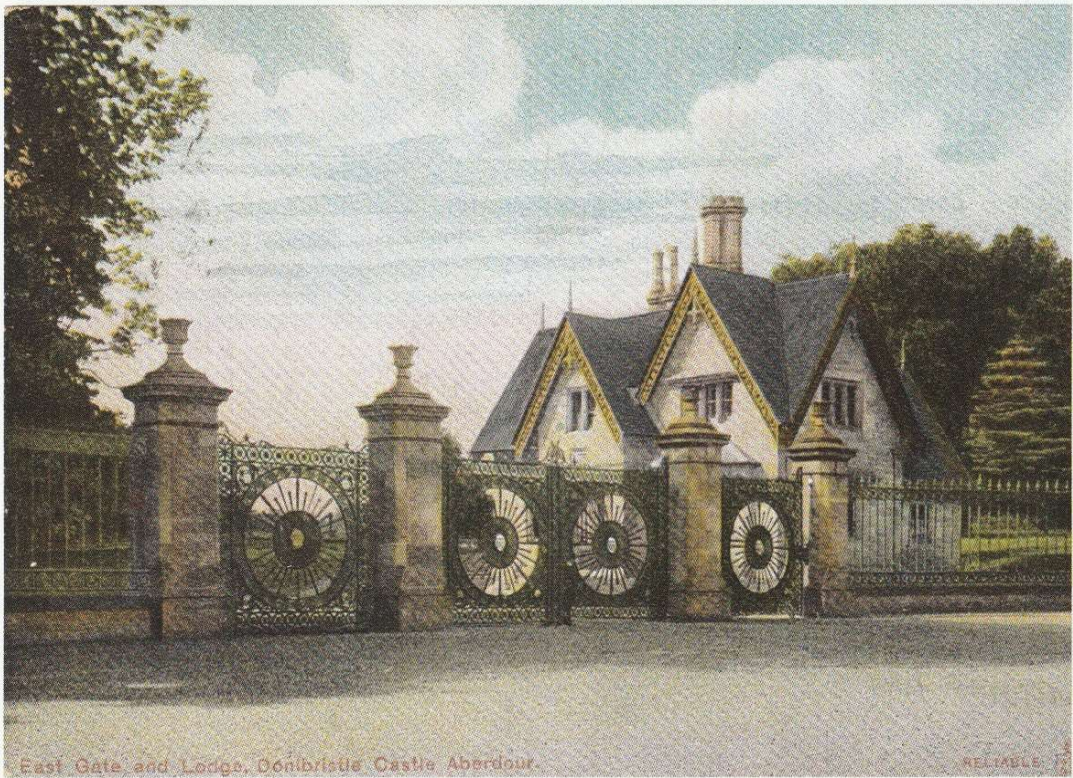


Wester Aberdour



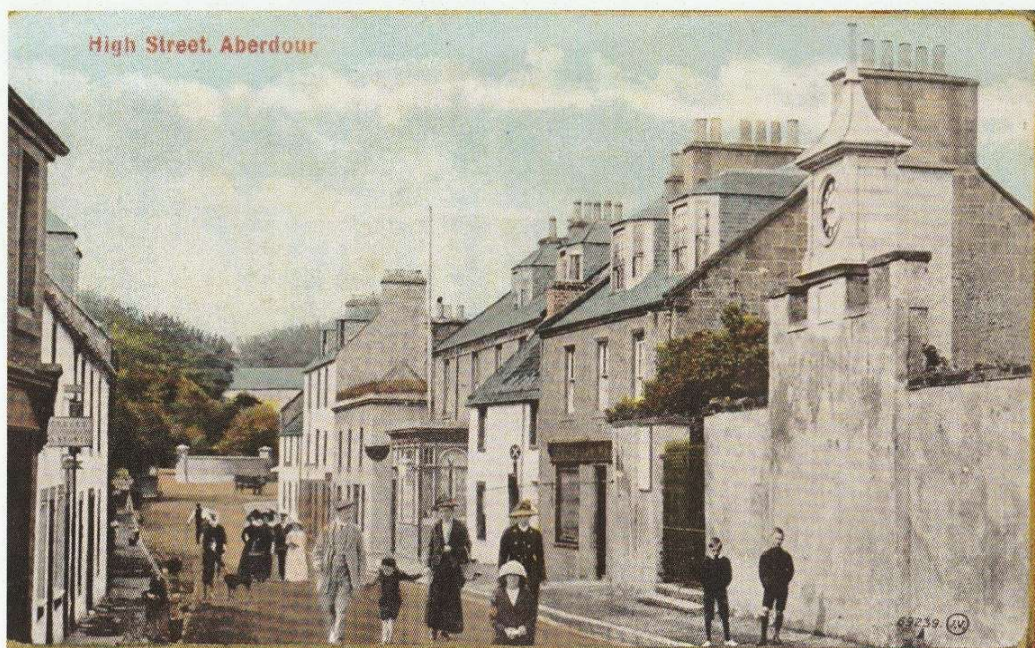


West End





Clock before

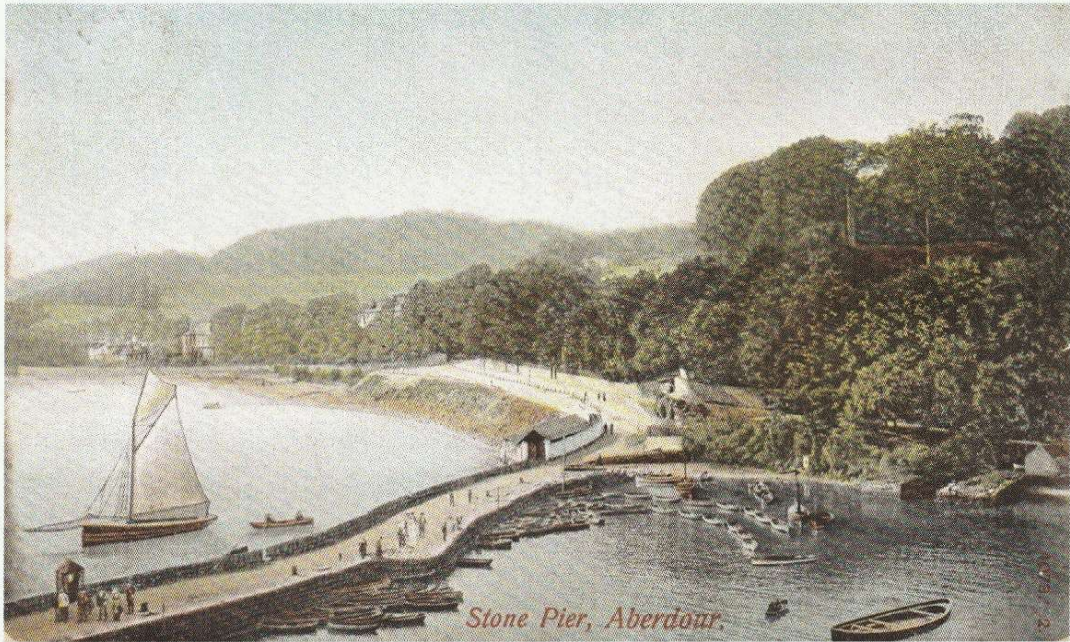


Clock now

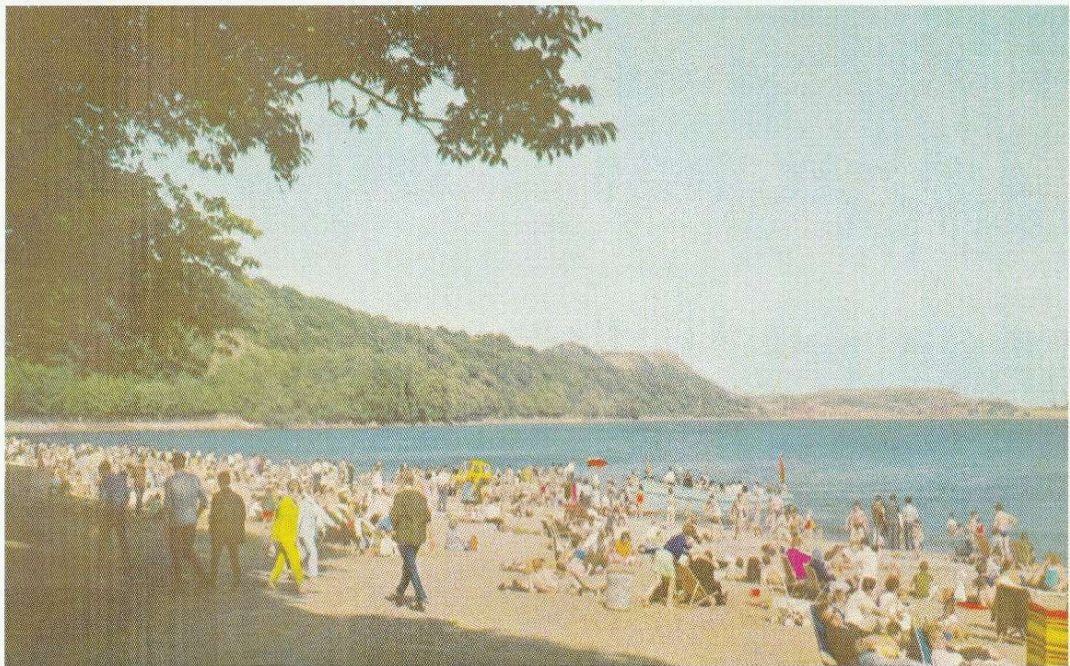




Shore and Harbour



Silver Sands





**Livingston Lane** (so named after the Livingston Dairy which stood where the car park is now) behind this car park stands an old building with a pan tiled roof from which protrudes an aperture which could be mistaken for a chimney – in fact an access for pigeons. The building was a pigeon loft.

**The house in Livingston Lane** known as the Stables, was indeed used as stables. The stables were last used by coal merchant David Simpson who took over the business from Joe Barclay. Joe stabled three horses of his own and a fourth pulled the railway station delivery lorry.

**Peel House** in Livingstone Lane was the police station until the 1980s when a new station was built at the corner of Main street and Murray Place in Easter Aberdour – now a private residence.

**The Obelisk** was constructed in the middle of the eighteenth century (1744?) on Cuttlehill by the Earl of Morton so that he might see his Aberdour Estate from his residence at Dalmahoy (near Edinburgh). The Earl of Morton purchased the field from The Earl of Moray to make his construction possible on this site.

**Park Lane** was formerly known as Coal Wynd as it led to where the coal was stockpiled – where the bowling green and former putting green are situated.

**Emerald Cottage** which stands back from Park Lane opposite the bowling green is the oldest house in Park Lane and had it's first change of ownership in 1723 (date of construction unknown) and probably was a farm house with steadings around it at one time. It was converted into the two storey building as it is now in 1972. At that time there was also an old building alongside (east) which was used as a joinery workshop that was demolished in 1980 to make way for the modern house standing there now.

The house at the corner of Park Lane and the High Street was the **Old Tolbooth** and one time Post Office.

**Anvil House** was the blacksmith's residence. The 'smiddy' was behind Anvil House being converted into a workshop store in the early 'fifties'.



**Livingston Lane** (so named after the Livingston Dairy which stood where the car park is now) behind this car park stands an old building with a pan tiled roof from which protrudes an aperture which could be mistaken for a chimney – in fact an access for pigeons. The building was a pigeon loft.

**The house in Livingston Lane** known as the Stables, was indeed used as stables. The stables were last used by coal merchant David Simpson who took over the business from Joe Barclay. Joe stabled three horses of his own and a fourth pulled the railway station delivery lorry.

**Peel House** in Livingstone Lane was the police station until the 1980s when a new station was built at the corner of Main street and Murray Place in Easter Aberdour – now a private residence.

**The Obelisk** was constructed in the middle of the eighteenth century (1744?) on Cuttlehill by the Earl of Morton so that he might see his Aberdour Estate from his residence at Dalmahoy (near Edinburgh). The Earl of Morton purchased the field from The Earl of Moray to make his construction possible on this site.

**Park Lane** was formerly known as Coal Wynd as it led to where the coal was stockpiled – where the bowling green and former putting green are situated.

**Emerald Cottage** which stands back from Park Lane opposite the bowling green is the oldest house in Park Lane and had it's first change of ownership in 1723 (date of construction unknown) and probably was a farm house with steadings around it at one time. It was converted into the two storey building as it is now in 1972. At that time there was also an old building alongside (east) which was used as a joinery workshop that was demolished in 1980 to make way for the modern house standing there now.

The house at the corner of Park Lane and the High Street was the **Old Tolbooth** and one time Post Office.

**Anvil House** was the blacksmith's residence. The 'smiddy' was behind Anvil House being converted into a workshop store in the early 'fifties'.



**The St. Colme dovecot** on McLaughlan Rise must have been built about the time of St. Colme House in 1835. The dovecot has 653 nesting holes and was completely renovated when McLaughlan Rise was built in 1977.

**“Woodside Garage”** was once the stables for the hotel, and owned by Watty Collyer, whose son served and died in the RAF during WW2. He lived in ‘Ashlea’ which has now since been acquired by the Woodside Hotel and partially converted into additional space for their dining room. At the beginning of the 20th century ‘Ashlea’ was the village Post Office.

(The current joinery yard and premises behind the garage was originally built to become the **Aberdour Palais** until its closure as such in the early ‘sixties’.)

**Elmwood House** is on the site of the fire station. A fire fighting pump, rusting and with perished hoses, stood behind chained gates well into the 1920s. In the past the villagers hauled the appliance to the fire then by manually working the handles pumped water on to the fire.

The **Aberdour Hotel** was the original staging post with its stabling and courtyard. Postal services were started in Aberdour in 1757. It happens that the current Post Office, nearly opposite, occupied its current site since the 1930s but the sorting office of which was transferred to Burntisland two hundred and ten years later in 1967. *For further information, and from which the above was extracted, see “The Postal Services of Aberdour Post Office” by W.T. Cochrane.*

**The Church Hall** was built to replace St Fillan’s Church between 1787 and 1790. From that time until 1926 when the restoration of St Fillan’s was completed (see above) it was the Presbyterian Church of the village.

*The ‘extended’ Walk now continues from the High street down the Shore Road to the Black Sands and around to the Silver Sands and its cafe.....*



**The Institute (Community Centre)** was built in 1918 as part of the War Memorial. Originally called the Seamen's institute it used to incorporate several bedrooms which could be let to visitors, however, this part of the building has been demolished to accommodate a car park. At one point there was added a billiard room at the back (now modernised) made from the old potato hut transferred from the steadings at Hawkraig Road. The village Library and meeting rooms are currently used frequently, and it is here that people come to vote in General Elections etc.....

**The Bowling Club** was formed in 1891, located adjoining the Shore Road and developed from what originally was the coal dump. (Park Lane was formerly called Coal Wynd - referred to above.)

*Further details of the club may be obtained in the Club's Centenary Booklet.*

The **'Old' Manse** is situated at the far end of Manse street. It was built in 1810. On the retirement of the Reverend John Scott in 1996 the building and the outbuildings were converted into private living accommodation. A new manse was purchased in Bellhouse Road (Dovecot Estate).

**The wall type pillar box** on the corner of Shore Road and Seaside Place appears at first glance to be fairly modern with the letters ER inscribed on it. On closer inspection the numerals VII can be seen below the crown showing that it was sited here at the beginning of the 20th century - the letters ER stand for Edward Rex.

The **Golf Club** and course is situated at the west end of Seaside Place. The Club, originally established in 1896, moved to this site from Couston on the western reaches of the village in 1905. Further details may be obtained from "The First Hundred Years" edited by Jack Bald.

**The Black Sands** were so named because coal was shipped away from here so making them a contrast to the White (now known as Silver) sands of the other beach in Easter Aberdour.

**The Boat House** was originally a mortuary for drowned seaman.



**The Harbour and the stone pier** were built in the late eighteenth century by the then Earl of Morton for the shipment of limestone from his quarries. Later used to ship coal carted down from Donibristle mine before the construction of the railway in 1890.

**The wooden pier**, at the Ha'craig, was made at about 1866 to accommodate paddle steamers that arrived from Edinburgh with 'day trippers' (amongst others) during times of high tide. The first house built at Hawkraig Point was Hawkraig House in 1860.

**The Quarry**, which now has been transformed into a car park and quiet walk, started in 1910 and ended its quarrying of whinstone in 1933. The stone was taken away both by ship from the old pier at the Hawkraig point and by train (after 1915). During WW2 the quarry was used as a practice rifle range by the army.

**The Concrete Pier** at the south side of Hawkraig Point marks the place where HMS Tarlair was situated during the First World War. This land base was the Royal Naval hydrophone research station. 'Hydrophones' were the forerunners of today's sonar systems. The base was officially named 'The Admiralty Experimental Establishment Station'.

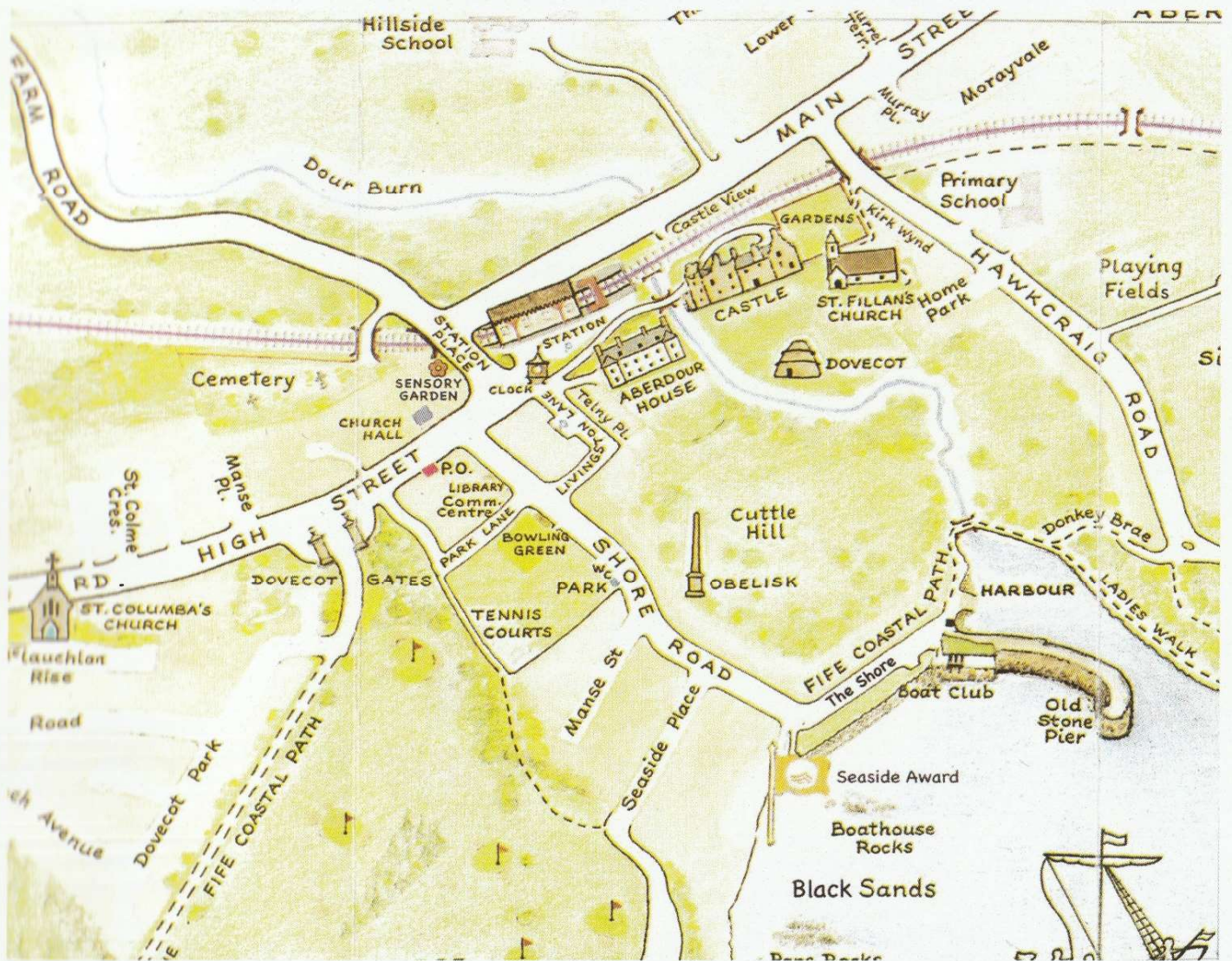
*Further details may be obtained from "Listen Up" by Diana Maxwell.*

**There are two farms close to the village.** One is **Humbie Farm** overlooking Easter Aberdour and farmed by William and David Rennie. The farm house is a C listed building but is of more interest as Thomas Carlyle wrote part of his masterpiece "Frederick the Great" here.

The other is **Mill Farm** along the Mill Farm Road. As the name implies it was originally a mill, the wheel being driven by piped water from Otterston Loch. The water, after passing over the mill wheel emptied into the Dour burn across the road. According to old maps it was still being used as a mill during the mid 19th century. This farm is now a small residential development.

***Authors note.** For those interested in genealogical research there are three graveyards. The oldest surrounding St Fillan's, Church, another behind the Parish Hall, and the current one with its main entrance from the Mill Farm road.*





Further reading and information from which some of the detail given may be found in the following:

- ‘Aberdour Castle’ by M.R.Apted Her Majesty’s Stationery Office 1961
- ‘St Fillan’s Church’ by Reverend David Rutherford
- ‘Aberdour Post Office’ by W.T.Cochrane
- ‘Aberdour Railway Station’ by W.T.Cochrane
- ‘Aberdour and Inchcolm’ by Reverend Dr Robert Johnstone
- Statistical Account of Scotland Vol.X, Fife 1791-99
- ‘Listen Up’ by Diana Maxwell
- ‘A Village Affair’ by Peter Drumm
- ‘The First Hundred Years’ (Golf Club) edited by Jack Bald
- Golf Club’s Centenary Booklet.

*The author would like to extend his thanks to Elaine of ‘Multiprint’ for her advice on the format of this little publication.*





The Dour Burn