



Curious Edinburgh Granton Walking Tour

From medieval times through the industrial age and into the future, this tour highlights Granton's heritage. Spanning quarrying to castles and early steel to electric cars, Granton has been at the forefront of bringing innovation and wealth to Edinburgh. While most of its industries have now vanished, we hope to keep its heritage alive in describing what was once a hive of activity. The scenic walk along the Forth foreshore takes around 1.5 hours at a leisurely stroll, is wheelchair/pram friendly and can also be done on a bike.

Download the tour free of charge, check <http://curiousedinburgh.org/granton-tour/>

get the app on the
Apple Store or
Google Play



The Madelvic History Group is pleased to announce the launch of the escorted Curious Edinburgh walk, with participants leaving from Madelvic House and accompanied by local historians, sharing their fascinating local insights.

The forthcoming dates are Sunday 14th of April and Sunday 12th of May. Participation is free of charge. Meet at Madelvic House, for 12.00, start at 12.30 with the tour lasting approximately 2 hours, depending on weather and total number of participants. Highlights of the tour will be Granton Harbour and Granton Castle Walled Garden. Alternative plans will be in place in case of adverse weather conditions.

If you are interested in taking part then please e-mail w.black@blueyonder.co.uk

Address: Madelvic House, Granton Park Avenue, Edinburgh EH5 1HS

1. Madelvic House and Vehicle Production



This Victorian red stone building was the original office of The Madelvic Motor Carriage Company.

The company was founded in 1898, by William Peck (1862 – 1925), later knighted, for the manufacturing of electric vehicles. Madelvic was one of the first Scottish motor brands built in the first British purpose-built car factory, reputedly with a test track (23 years ahead of Fiat). It was also the first to go into liquidation, in 1900. All assets were bought by Kingsburgh Motor Company, which manufactured cars powered by internal combustion engine, but by 1902 it, too, had financial troubles. Over a short period of time other companies moved in manufacturing lorries and buses using bought-in components (Stirling's Motor Carriages Ltd of Hamilton) and taxi-cabs (Scottish Motor Works). This was followed by a consortium of Peck, Kingsburgh & Stirling

which began trading as the Scottish Motor Engineering Company to produce taxi-cabs but it folded in 1912. This ended vehicle production on the site and during WWI the factory was used for storing torpedoes.

In 1925, United Wire moved into Madelvic House. It manufactures wirecloth on broadlooms, originally used for paper production. This successful company has had a presence in Granton for more than 175 years. It is the largest wirecloth supplier in the UK with a global customer base. You can see United Wire's modern factory and offices across from Madelvic House.

2. Granton Square



The first tramline in the Granton area dates from 1909. Edinburgh's modernisation, starting in the 1880s, was from horse-drawn tramcars to cable cars. This system used a moving steel cable just below the street, powered by stationary steam engines. The tramcars had no motors of their own – they moved when the driver – or 'gripperman' – clamped the car to the moving cable. The cars had steel fittings below them extending through a narrow metal-edged slot between the rails, with vice-like jaws that could be opened or closed on the cable by winding a control wheel on the tramcar platform. A system quite like this still operates in San Francisco. The Edinburgh system was

converted to electric operation between 1922 and 1924. The tram routes were re-organised to give longer through routes. Many remained largely unchanged until the end of tramway operation, in 1956. Some Lothian buses still follow the same route.

Granton Square was once a very busy tram terminus with various routes ending there. Trams left Granton to travel to various destinations in Edinburgh such as Colinton (9) Church Hill (14), the Braids (16) and Newington Station (17). The building still stands in the middle of Granton Square and can be seen on many photographs of that era.

3. The Railways



The Edinburgh Leith & Newhaven Railway opened on 31 August 1842 between the New Town and nearby Trinity Crescent. After the opening of Granton Harbour in 1838, a new station was opened on the Middle Pier, with a revised track layout to suit the train ferries and a passenger station to the nearby ferries which crossed the Firth of Forth to Burntisland in Fife.

From 1850 to 1890 this was part of the main East Coast railway line to Perth, Dundee and Aberdeen. Most of the passengers who died in the famous Tay Bridge disaster in December 1879 had traveled by this route a few hours previously. The Tay Bridge had been built by Sir

Thomas Bouch, who also built Granton Harbour where he had introduced the first roll-on/roll-off train ferry to the world. The opening of the Forth Bridge in 1890 resulted in the main line trains to the north ceasing to use the route. The Granton branch was then used only for local passenger trains and goods traffic. The passenger trains stopped in 1925, a few years after the tramway systems were introduced. The goods trains ran until 1986. The line was lifted and the embankment beside Lower Granton Road removed in 1991-1992. Part of the route, from Trinity to Canonmills, is now a walkway.

4. The Building of Granton Harbour



The idea of building a harbour at Granton is said to have been suggested in 1834 by R.W. Hamilton, the manager of the General Steam Navigation Company. The company ran a fleet of passenger steamers and felt that it would be useful to have a harbour that, unlike Leith harbour, was not tidal. The 5th Duke of Buccleuch, who owned land in the area (and elsewhere), saw the opportunity to build this new harbour on part of the estate he owned, which included Caroline Park House. Developing a new deep water port would allow Edinburgh to import and export goods. The Duke was advised about the design of the harbour by Robert Stevenson, the lighthouse engineer and grandfather of

Robert Louis Stevenson. For the building of the harbour, stone used came from the Duke's own Granton Sea Quarry. The building was completed in 1863 although part of the harbour, the Central Pier, was opened much earlier on 28 June 1838, the day of Queen Victoria's Coronation.

The harbour was equipped with steam cranes, starting in 1860. Fishing vessels started using the harbour in the mid 1880s, with up to eighty trawlers berthed. Two World Wars brought in the naval ships and scrapage afterwards.

5. Granton Ferries



passengers.

In 1849, the Edinburgh, Perth and Dundee Railway Company commissioned the famous Victorian engineer Sir Thomas Bouch (1822 – 1880) to design and build a ferry service at Granton. Whatever the tide level, this service would be able to load and unload railway carriages and freight wagons between Granton and Burntisland across in Fife. This resulted in a specifically designed vessel, the *Leviathan*, the first of its kind in the world. The ship, built on the Clyde, had two engines, mounted port and starboard over the paddles, so the main deck had maximum stowage for the railway carriage cargo. The *Leviathan* carried mainly trains while another ship, the *Express*, carried

By October 1879, a new steam powdered passengers ship, the *William Muir*, was brought into operation. The *Leviathan* service ended in 1890 when the Forth Railway Bridge opened, but the “*Willie Muir*” went on for another 47 years and it is estimated she carried over three-quarters of a million passengers. After WWII, four more ferries were brought into operation, including the *Bonnie Prince Charlie* which could carry 30 cars and passengers and even had a coffee lounge and cocktail bar! The ferries were a huge success in the summer but the winter season was less popular and financial losses brought the service to an end on 12 December 1952.

6. Granton Harbour, Gunpowder, and Other Industries



In 1937, the harbour consisted of a Middle Pier (this road) protected on the east and west sides by two breakwaters, forming two harbours covering a total of 122 acres. The West Breakwater was lined with timber wharves and equipped with Electric Travelling Cranes to augment the quick-acting steam cranes.

Imports were esparto grass, wood pulp and other paper manufacturing materials, motor spirit, asphalt, strawboards, and bog ore.

Exports were coal, coke, and coke breeze. The coal came from the nearby Lothian coalfields, although a considerable load came from the Lanarkshire pits. Practically all the coke exported from the nearby Edinburgh Corporation Gas Works was shipped via Granton to Denmark, Sweden, and Germany. These exports were handled at wharves at the Western Breakwater and the Middle Pier.

This building you can see ahead is the recently refurbished Gunpowder Store. This B-listed building is the sole surviving historic structure on the middle pier at Granton Harbour. The two-storey building, which was built with extra-thick walls to ensure it was safe to store gunpowder there, had a cast-iron hoist to allow it to unload ships docked in the harbour. Inside the warehouse, which was one of four match buildings created for the opening of the pier in 1842, there are the remains of railway tracks used by goods wagons.

7. Granton Esparto Grass



A major industry in the Edinburgh area was printing and publishing, and this required paper. Paper can be made from a variety of raw materials, including wood and rags, but esparto grass was used to produce good quality paper. Granton was a major port for the import of esparto grass to the UK. In the 1950s, about a third of all the esparto grass that came into the UK arrived at Granton – 100,000 tons of it.

Between 1875 and 1925, esparto was imported from southern Spain, including Aguilas. In later years, the grass came from northern Africa and, apparently, was not cultivated – it was picked where it grew, bundled, and shipped. On arrival in Granton, the esparto was take

by rail or road to the paper mills.

Esparto grass was still being brought into Granton, and taken onwards by rail, until at least 1970. Local kids adored the off-loading of the shipments, as the occasional tortoise hidden in the grass would quickly become a favourite pet.

8. Northern Lighthouse Board



The Northern Lighthouse Board was created by an Act of Parliament in 1786. From 1802 until 1852, the Board's main store was in Leith but in 1852 it took a 5-year lease on this site in Granton from the Duke of Buccleuch for £110. The Board relocated its stores and from 1874, the ship *Pharos*, the lighthouse supply tender, was docked in Granton Harbour. Between 1868-1869, The Board built the red-brick store.

The experimental tower was added in 1874. Though the tower was built as a lighthouse, it never served as one. Instead, lighting and optical equipment was tested on this site before it

was taken out on the ship to the main lighthouses around Britain. Granton was an ideal site for the stores and in 1907 they were improved and extended, with a railway siding and a travelling crane added. The stores were extended further in 1969 and 1990. The engineering storage and test facility remained until November 2001, when it moved to a modern site at Oban and ended the Northern Lighthouse Board presence in Granton.

9. Original Entrance to Granton Castle



This stone structure is the remnant of the original entrance to Granton Castle. Although the building no longer stands, it was one of the oldest developments in the area, built on what used to be a rocky outcrop on a slope, with fine views across the Forth. The castle was already in existence in 1479 and sacked in 1544 when the Earl of Hertford landed nearby with an English Army on their way to burn Edinburgh and Leith. Rebuilt by 1619, the owner was Sir Thomas Hope of Craighall, an eminent lawyer and politician. A map from 1682 shows the Castle with its Walled Garden and Doocot (dovecote) which probably also dates from the 15th century.

In 1740 John Campbell, the 2nd Duke of Argyll, bought Granton Castle from the Hopes of Craighall, and renamed it Royston Castle. He had previously bought the neighbouring estate of Easter Granton, which included Royston Castle, in 1739, which he renamed Caroline Park, after his daughter.

With Argyll concentrating his efforts on Caroline Park, by 1749 Granton Castle was a ruin. Alas, it stayed that way throughout the 19th and early 20th century when lots of industrial activity developed in the area, contributing to the demise and ultimate destruction of this fine historic building.

10. The Three Bridges



From this viewpoint, you get the first glimpses of the three bridges, with the oldest one, the Forth Bridge, nearest. The Forth Bridge is an iconic railway bridge and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Construction of the bridge began in 1882 and when it was opened on 4 March, 1890, it was the longest single cantilever bridge span in the world. It held that record until 1919 when the Quebec Bridge in Canada was completed.

The second bridge is the Forth Road Bridge, a suspension bridge that opened in 1964 and, at the time, was the largest suspension bridge in the world outside of the United States. The

Scottish Parliament voted to scrap tolls on the bridge from February 2008. By that time, the bridge was carrying traffic in excess of its design capacity and a parallel replacement was built next to it. At its peak, the Forth Road Bridge carried 65,000 vehicles per day.

On 5 September 2017, all bridge traffic was transferred to the new bridge, the Queensferry Crossing. The new bridge is a cable-stayed structure, with three towers each 207 metres (679 ft) high. Including approaches, the overall length of the bridge is 2.7 kilometres (1.7 miles). At opening, it is the longest triple tower cable-stayed bridge in the world.

11. WWII Air Raid – 16 October 1939



Walking Granton's shoreline, visitors will often see aircraft overhead making their final approaches towards Edinburgh Airport, but on 16 October, 1939 these same skies were filled with enemy bombers.

In the first major raid against Britain of WWII, the German Luftwaffe sent twelve Junkers Ju88A-1s to intercept Royal Navy Battleship HMS *Hood*, heading up-river towards the sanctuary of Rosyth Dockyard. The race was on!

Approaching from the west, the bomber crews saw they were too late – a battleship already safely docked. Seeking alternative targets, the Junkers dived to attack shipping in the river

below. With total surprise they dropped their bombs unopposed, narrowly missing HMS *Edinburgh* and HMS *Southampton*. Wave after wave of bombing harried the desperately zig-zagging ships.

Then a shock... Spitfires! The raiders had been briefed there were no Spitfires in Scotland. Now two squadrons of them swarmed in defence. The bombers broke and fled for their lives, chased back down the river or across Edinburgh at rooftop height. Citizens dived for cover as machine guns rattled and bullet casings cascaded onto the streets. Two bombers were shot down into the Forth, their surviving crew rescued by local fishing boats.

603 (City of Edinburgh) Squadron had claimed the first ever Spitfire victory. Edinburgh's skies were safe, but disaster had only narrowly been averted.

12. Charles Darwin in Granton



Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882) followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather and entered Edinburgh University to study medicine in 1825. Squeamish about surgery and uninspired by lectures, he did however enjoy Professor TC Hope's chemistry lectures and joined the Plinian Society, a University student club interested in natural history. Robert Edmond Grant who taught marine biology had a particular influence on the young Darwin. Charles became Grant's most attentive student, assisting him with collecting specimens along the shores of the Firth of Forth.

The book *The Berwick and Lothian Coasts*, by Ian Campbell Hannah (1913),

refers to Grant who wrote about Granton in 1883 and states it is "decidedly the noblest harbour in the Firth of Forth." Hannah further wrote: "About this point the coast again becomes rocky, and Charles Darwin found it a convenient spot for the study of seaweed and shells."

In 1859, a little over two decades after he started university, Darwin's book *On the Origin of Species* would be published and go on to become a worldwide bestseller.

13. Granton Sea Quarry



This stretch of grassy fields (Gypsy Brae) was the location of Granton Sea Quarry. The earliest recorded use of stone from this quarry is for Holyrood Palace (1532) and Leith Bulwark (1552-53). In 1835, the Duke of Buccleuch who owned the surrounding estate, supplied stone for the building of Granton Harbour's pier and breakwater and Granton Hotel (later HMS Claverhouse) in Granton Square. The Duke, former chairman of the Nelson Memorial Committee, supplied stone for the statue on top of Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, London.

The quarry, nearly 80 feet deep and over eight acres, collapsed and flooded after a storm in 1855. In 1884, it became the headquarters for the Scottish Marine Station for Scientific Research. This organisation carried out research on marine life in the quarry both from a floating platform and nearby buildings. After its closure the quarry was used as a lobster nursery and subsequently filled in.

The inconspicuous rock beds along the Forth shoreline are known as *the Muirhouse 'shrimp-bed'* in which geologists made a major discovery: a complete conodont, an eel-like creature whose teeth are the earliest found in the fossil record. The first trace fossils of the body of a conodont was unknowingly collected in the quarry in the 1920s. Starting in the 1980s, 11 more near-complete conodonts were found and identified, and then more again in 2013.

The quarry was also the site of a 75ft *Araucaria sp.* fossil tree, still buried, and similar to the ones discovered in Craigleith Quarry, now in the Royal Botanical Gardens.

14. Granton Gasworks



In the 1890s, gas was being produced in Edinburgh, Leith, and Portobello and the sites were operating at full capacity. It was decided to build a substantial new single-site gasworks capable of future expansion. Following negotiation with the 6th Duke of Buccleuch, a 106¼ acre site at Granton was purchased for £124,000. An impressive structure, the most elegant gas holder in Scotland in terms of its external framing was erected as part of a £450,000 state-of-the-art coal gasworks between 1898 and 1903 under the direction of Dutch engineer W. R. Herring.

Gas Holder Number 1, still standing today, has an external framework constructed of riveted rolled steel. It has 24 vertical posts with finials divided into 4 tiers by horizontal tie beams with latticework bracing between. The gasholder had a maximum capacity of 7,000,000 cubic feet and is constructed on the telescopic principle with four lifts. The masonry tank, within which the holder moved up and down, is 252 ft 6 in. diameter by 37 ft deep.

Gas manufacturing stopped in 1987 and the building is now listed. Two more gasholders built in 1933 and 1966 respectively were demolished. The possibility of retaining this Gas Holder as an outstanding example of Scotland's industrial heritage is under consideration.

15. Granton House



Near this site once stood Granton House, a 24-room three-storey mansion with a balustraded roof, built by the Earl of Hopetoun in 1807 on the Duke of Buccleuch's land as part of a 99-year lease.

In 1883, the house became the property of Lord Gifford (1820 – 1887) the Scottish advocate and judge. When he died his bequests were used by the four principal universities in Scotland (Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh and St Andrews) and are now known as the 'Gifford Lectures' on natural theology.

Visitors to the house included Sir Walter Scott and Florence Nightingale who, following her visit, wrote to the family and said "I think Granton House the most poetic place I ever saw".

The house was purchased by the Edinburgh and Leith Corporations Gas Commissioners around the time that Granton Gas Works was built (opened in 1902), for use as the official residence of the Chief Engineer

and Manager. The first Chief Engineer and Manager to occupy the house was Mr W R Herring. When Edinburgh and Leith amalgamated in 1920, the house passed to Edinburgh Corporation.

From 1946 Edinburgh Corporation used the property to house homeless families following World War II. On 1 January 1954 it was destroyed in a disastrous fire and what was left demolished.

16. Granton Gas Works Train Station



The Gas Works had railway networks with two types of lines serving goods and workers.

An internal system of narrow gauge lines used steam locomotives and dealt with the ashes from the production process and with other waste and by-products. The locomotives were low in height and had no cabs, and were therefore able to pass under the gas retorts. This system reportedly closed in 1965. In addition, standard trains, part of the Caledonian Railway Granton Branch, operated from the Princes Street Station. This meant that coal deliveries could be taken into the Gas Works conveniently, and

coke and other products sent away.

The Granton Gas Works Station (awaiting repurposing) was opened on 27 February, 1903. This was a substantial station built to take the workers to and from the Gas Works. As there was no other form of transport to this area at this time, it was suspected that more than just the gas workers took advantage of the service. The station was closed in 1942 by the LMS Railway as transport links to the area improved. During the World War II, the Gas Works was a target for bombing, although it was not actually hit.

17. Caroline Park House



Caroline Park House, originally known as Royston House, was built around 1585 by Andrew Logan. In 1683 it was bought by Sir George Mackenzie of Tarbat who rebuilt the house to form a quadrangle and changed the entrance to be on the south side, towards Edinburgh. In 1739 it was sold to the 2nd Duke of Argyll who renamed it Caroline Park after his daughter who married the Earl of Dalkeith. Through this marriage the house and estate passed in 1793 to the Duke of Buccleuch, a pivotal event in Granton's history. The house was altered in 1740s by the architect William Adam, father of Robert and John Adam. It is Category A listed for its French influenced south elevation and fine

internal carvings.

Subsequent tenants of the house have included Archibald Cockburn (father of Lord Cockburn, the conservationist who lamented the development of Granton harbour) and Lady John Scott (1810-1900), who produced the standard version of the old Scottish song 'Annie Laurie'.

The house (and adjacent Granton Castle), increasingly disturbed by industrial activity became less attractive as a formal residency. The Duke initially leased the house as an office to AB Fleming & Co Ltd. which owned the printing ink and chemical works located further west of the house. In 1872 the company bought the house and it remained their HQ until 1966 when the company moved to Corstorphine. Since 1988 the house is in private hands.

18. Granton Castle Walled Garden



You will remember in stop 9 where we encountered the original entrance of Granton Castle, facing the Firth of Forth. This stop is the location where nearby the Castle once stood, and these grounds are now developed by Social Bite.

With the building of Granton Harbour in the mid 1800s, the Duke of Buccleuch saw great financial opportunity with land either being leased or sold off for commercial and industrial development in the area. As a result, the Castle became neglected and by the mid 18th century it was already described as being in a ruinous state. Following the First World War, the

Castle was bought in 1928 by a quarrying company Bain and Brown who demolished it to quarry the stone underneath it, but left sections of the wall in place. The Walled Garden survived and was bought by John Smith, market gardener and the business stayed in the family until 2005 when it was sold to the City of Edinburgh Council. Friends of Granton Castle Walled Garden are now working to ensure that this beautiful community asset is safeguarded for the future.

19. Granton Industries



AB Fleming introduced in rosin oil in 1852, a by-product of refining turpentine from dead pine wood. Due to expansion, Fleming leased a large area of land from the Duke of Buccleuch and built a new factory. 'Granton Oils' became popular all over the world with a production site of more than seven acres, stretching towards the Firth of Forth shoreline. Later on, the company manufactured inks for books, newspapers, fine half tone work, letterpress and lithography, and had the largest capacity anywhere in the world, operating globally. In 1972, the company was bought by an American firm of ink makers Croda who closed the operations in 1983.

Next to AB Fleming was Caroline Park Foundry (1880), started by Robert Mushet who was instrumental in perfecting a forerunner of today's steels, Robert Mushet's Special Steel. The foundry closed in the 1930s. The Granton Ice Company (1906) was also nearby and supplied the fishing industries of Granton and Newhaven, with premises originally located on the Middle Pier of Granton Harbour. A new factory was built near the site of Granton Castle. By 1952 it was the most modern factory of its kind in Britain. Water to make the ice came from Granton Burn's, stored in a pond behind Caroline Park, and piped down in lead pipes which still run beneath Granton Castle's walled garden.

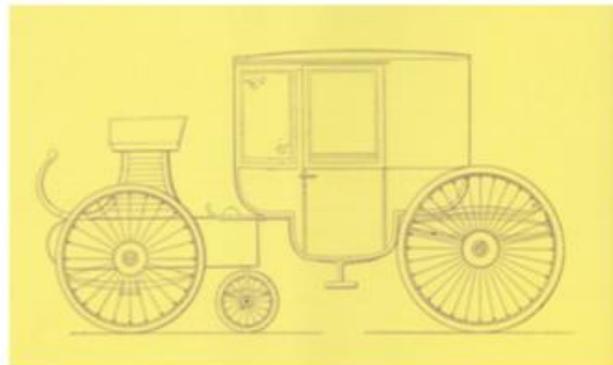
20. Madelvic Electric Car Factory



We have now returned to Madelvic, the legacy of Sir William Peck (1862 – 1925) who was a Scottish astronomer, scientific instrument maker and a prolific inventor. He was the director of the Edinburgh City Observatory from 1889 until his death in 1925. Peck was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and a man with vision: not only did he invent telescopes (one can still be seen in the Stirling Highland Hotel) but he also came up with the idea of an electric car, a most astonishing concept in 1899.

This electric car, which he named 'The Brougham', was produced in this factory building. It was driven by a three-wheeled tractor-style front axle unit, comprising a motor, batteries and a small central wheel, set behind the axle, which propelled the vehicle. This unit was mounted to the front of a chassis, creating a five-wheeled automobile and could be attached to any horse-drawn carriage. To gain publicity Peck used it to provide public transport between Granton and Leith. For a brief period, the Postmaster General of Edinburgh employed Madelvic to carry the mail between the General Post Office and Leith.

The fifth wheel is such an iconic design, Peck had it incorporated into the façade of the office building, Madelvic House, which is now the base of granton:hub.



The Madelvic History Group at Madelvic House organises events and activities for all ages. We have an extensive archive available to the community for viewing. Check our website and Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
www.facebook.com/madelviccommunity/
www.grantonhub.org
Twitter @granton_hub
Instagram grantonhub



Address: granton:hub, Madelvic House
Granton Park Avenue, Edinburgh EH5 1HS
e-mail: history@grantonhub.org