

ANGUS *Heritage*

Maritime Trail
Walk in the steps of your ancestors





The Angus coastline is about 35 miles long, from north of Montrose to the outskirts of Dundee.



When roads were poor, goods and people were carried along the coast by ship, and over a dozen distinct communities in Angus made their living from the vibrant and bustling coast. But the sea could be dangerous and unpredictable and many lives were lost through shipwrecks and storms.

All Angus coastal settlements began as small villages, with residents earning part of their income from fishing. This fluctuated over time. Fishing villages grew if the conditions were right. Boats needed to be safe when not at sea, perhaps sailed into natural inlets on the rocky coast or hauled onto shingle beaches. Families needed ground where they could build houses with easy access to the shore, with somewhere to land catches, prepare fish for sale and maintain boats, nets and lines.

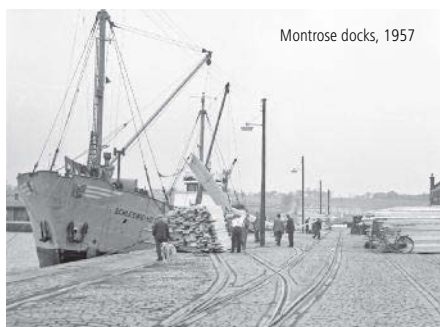


Houses could be built on narrow plots between the sea and coastal cliffs, or above those cliffs, with steep paths leading to the landing area. Some communities built harbours, providing shelter for moored boats and sites for fish markets and other maritime businesses.



Montrose is a town that thrived as a seaport on the edge of rich farmland. The town's motto; Mare Ditat, Rosa Decorat (the sea enriches, the rose adorns) reflects its nature as a trading town.

Historical evidence suggests Montrose had an offshore, commercial fishing industry as early as 1420, when dried cod was exported from the town, but it may have begun earlier. In the medieval period, Montrose had a legal monopoly on exporting fish, with catches along the entire coast from Dundee to Aberdeen, exported through Montrose.



During the 1700s, Montrose had a thriving tobacco trade. Montrose ships sailed to America with cargoes of local textiles, returning with holds full of tobacco leaves.

From the late 1700s, Montrose had a whaling industry, with several whale fishing businesses operating from the town.

Montrose became one of Scotland's main timber ports. Pine was imported, from Scandinavia and Canada, for the British market and for re-export to America, as dressed timber. Trading ships often carried an extra cargo, of emigrants bound for life in the New World.

Across the South Esk from Montrose, a fishing community developed in **Ferryden**, throughout the 1800s. The busiest period, in the 1890s, saw 160 fishing boats operating from the village.

Montrose Basin - once known as the Land of Sands - was a source of bait for fishing communities along the Angus coastline. The shallow water, and regular exposure of sands, ensured that the Basin had extensive mussel beds and supplies of lugworm and ragworm. Montrose fishermen, and their families, had free access to this bait but their habit of digging in the mud caused other townspeople to call them sandsuckers.

Other fishermen were charged for bait they collected from the Basin. Families from Usan and Ferryden avoided this expense by forming a Mussel Society and leasing mussel beds in the Basin. Jamie West, of Ferryden, came to be known as Mussel Jamie, from his time managing these beds for the Society.

The villages of **Usan** and **Ethie Haven** engaged in sea fishing, from the early 1700s. Usan had a sheltered haven for boats, and housing on high ground above the sea.

From medieval times salmon fishing was carried out at Usan and Ethie Haven, as well as other sites along the Angus coastline, continuing to the present day, at Usan. Nets were mounted on stakes, secured into the seabed, close to the shore, with structures to direct salmon into the nets at high tide.

The Cadger's Road was a narrow band of land running between Usan and Forfar, across Montreathmont, set aside as a right of road for the King's Cadger, so he could supply the royal court at Forfar with supplies of fish.





The sandy beach of **Lunan Bay** stretches for three miles, beneath the Red Castle. The castle was gifted by King William the Lion to Walter de Berkely, in the 1100s, and was a safe place for spotting raiders from the sea.

Auchmithie was the property of Arbroath Abbey, so the village was expected to supply the Abbey with fish.

Auchmithie had the advantage of a good shingle beach but not a harbour. On returning from the sea, fishermen hauled their boats up the beach, assisted by their wives. The women also helped launch the boats, wading barefoot into the sea, carrying the men on their backs! This ensured that the men had dry feet and clothes at the start of their long, cold hours at sea.

Later generations of Auchmithie residents had the Earl of Northesk as landlord, and he charged for use of the beach.

In the late 1800s, Auchmithie families witnessed several village improvements, often due to campaigning by local farmer's wife **Annie Gilruth**. Annie's badgering of public authorities, and local landowners, resulted in an improved village school, a new kirk and manse, a village hall, improved housing and a stone harbour.

Auchmithie was the original home of the **Arbroath Smokie**. This famous smoked fish delicacy was first developed in the village, before local fishers moved to Arbroath's Fit o' the Toon area, taking the traditional smoking technique with them.

The Smokie is protected under European Law (PGI Status) meaning that the Arbroath Smokie name is protected and can only be used to describe haddock smoked in the traditional manner, within an 8km radius of Arbroath, including the village of Auchmithie.

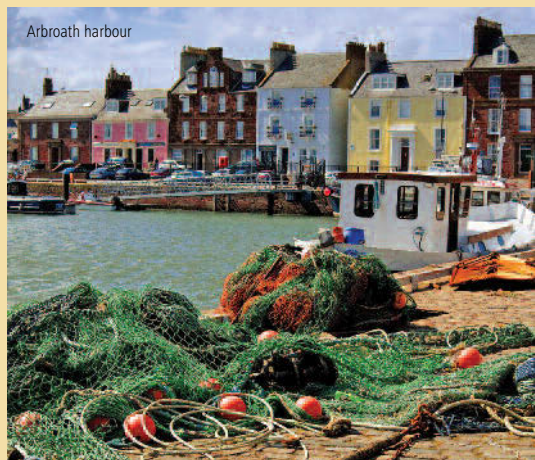
Arbroath had a basic harbour from the late 1300s, thanks to the Abbot of Arbroath Abbey, trying to boost maritime trade.

Arbroath Magistrates tried to tempt Auchmithie fisher families to operate from Arbroath. **Robert and James Cargill** decided to move to Arbroath in 1705. The Earl of Northesk was furious as he did not want his fisherfolk to leave Auchmithie, in case his estate's income from fishing was to reduce. The Earl took the Arbroath Magistrates, and the Cargills, to Court in Edinburgh. The Court decided that Auchmithie fishers were the Earl's serfs and were not free to move. The Cargills had to return to Auchmithie.

This was finally repealed in 1799 and Auchmithie fishermen began to move to Arbroath, with the offer of free land for housing, from the Arbroath authorities. From then, there was a gradual decline of the Auchmithie fishing industry and a growth of the Arbroath community, centred on the Fit o' the Toon area, near the harbour.

During the 1800s, **Arbroath's fishing fleet** was part of an expanding Scottish east coast fishing industry. By 1928, Arbroath had more boats operating, and men employed, than Auchmithie, Ferryden, Gourdon and Broughty Ferry - all villages that had been more active in the past.

All ports suffered in the aftermath of World War 1. The Angus industry was affected less



than others, although it did decline later in the 20th century, through fishing quota cuts and vessel decommissioning. At its peak, fishing provided hundreds of jobs, at sea and in shore-based servicing and processing work.

All ports suffered in the aftermath of World War I.

As in Montrose, **Arbroath Harbour** became a bustling commercial port, surrounded by grain lofts, rope works, ships chandlers and ale-houses.

In 1850, imports through Arbroath Harbour included coal from Fife and Tyneside, salt from Portugal, flax from Russia and iron from Sweden. There were exports of textiles and leather products, oats, wheat and potatoes, as well as herring being sent to the Baltic ports, and barley to Islay, Campbeltown and Kirkwall for whisky distilling.

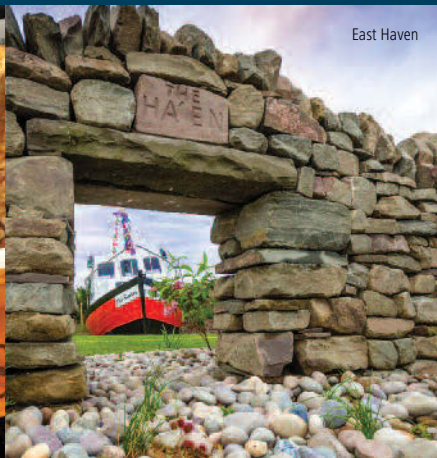
Paving stone from Carmylie Quarry was carried by railway to Elliot junction, for transport to the harbour and distribution across Europe.

Passenger steamships anchored off Arbroath, en route for Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Caithness, Orkney and Shetland. Fishing boats carried passengers out to the steamers.

Arbroath Smokies



East Haven

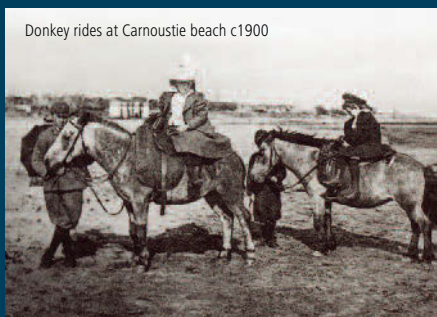


East Haven has the distinction of, possibly, being the earliest fishing community mentioned in Scotland, in a charter of 1214, under the settlement's unfortunate previous name of Stinking-haven! As with the nearby settlement of **West Haven**, and other villages along the Angus coast, the earliest fishermen of East Haven may have split their year between fishing and farming.

East Haven and West Haven developed side by side until the mid 1800s. East Haven had a population of approximately 150, and amenities including a bakers and an inn but, in 1848, an outbreak of scarlet fever is said to have resulted in the deaths of one-sixth of the population. West Haven was not affected to any significant extent. The following year, cholera also devastated East Haven. Growth of the village was permanently affected by these two catastrophic events.

Fishing from East Haven had more or less ceased by the end of World War II. Some of the last fishermen in the village were involved in a celebrated rescue at sea. In 1935, three brothers - William, Jamie and Sandy Herd - with local railway worker James (or Robert) Ramsay, rescued the crew of a motor boat in heavy seas. The following year, they were honoured by the RNLI.

Donkey rides at Carnoustie beach c1900



Neither **Carnoustie** nor **Monifieth** have a particular heritage of fishing or harbour trade. But both towns did have industries that exported goods worldwide and both have long been holiday destinations, with tourists enjoying a wide range of seaside attractions, similar to Arbroath and Montrose. Before World War 1, Carnoustie claimed to be the most popular East Coast resort in Scotland and was marketed as the Home of Health and Happiness.

Barry Buddon is a triangular shaped sandy headland, north of the mouth of the River Tay, between Monifieth and Carnoustie. As one of the UK's most significant sand dune areas, it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a European Habitats Special Area of Conservation.



The Angus coastline - of long sandy beaches, rocks, cliffs, caves and deep inlets - was perfect for **smuggling**. During the 1700's, crews of ships lingering offshore, near Lunan Bay, Usan and Arbroath, often came under suspicion. Angus fishermen were known to be involved, ferrying ashore illicit imports of tobacco, alcohol and other goods. Customs officials patrolled the cliffs but were unpopular in local communities. There was a ready market for anything that could be supplied cheaper by smugglers than by legitimate traders.

Angus coastal communities were affected by **press gangs**. Prior to 1815, men could be compulsorily recruited into the service of the Royal Navy. A press gang, of several men with an officer, could enter a settlement and forcibly take local seamen from their families.

During the late 1700s, fluctuations in the population of coastal villages, such as Ferryden and Auchmithie, were caused by men being snatched by press gangs or by local people moving away to avoid being taken. Even Montrose is thought to have been affected and the town's fishing industry disrupted.

The **Bell Rock Lighthouse** is known worldwide as the oldest existing rock lighthouse in the British Isles.

The lighthouse protects ships from running aground on the Inchcape Reef - a rocky shelf 11 miles off-shore from Arbroath. The reef is fully submerged by the tide, twice a day. Even at low tide, the highest peaks only project above the water by around four feet. In poor lighting conditions or heavy seas, they are almost invisible to anyone on a ship.

It is said that the Inchcape Reef came to be known as the Bell Rock after Abbot John Gedy, of Arbroath Abbey, arranged for a bell to be mounted there, during the 1300s. The Abbot understood the danger to shipping posed by the reef and believed that it might threaten trade through Arbroath Harbour. His hope was that the wind and waves would ring the bell, warning ships' crews.

Increasing maritime trade along the Angus coastline meant more ships encountered the dangerous reef. Lighthouse engineer Robert Stevenson reported 70 vessels lost, off Fife and Angus, during dreadful storms in December 1799. Seamen avoided the shelter of the River Forth or the River Tay, for fear of running onto the Bell Rock.

In 1804, when HMS York disappeared in the North Sea, with the loss of 491 men and boys, it was stated that the dangerous Bell Rock was the cause, adding impetus to demands for a lighthouse.

The Northern Lighthouse Board was granted permission, by Government, to construct a lighthouse on the Bell Rock. Work began in August 1807, under engineers John Rennie and Robert Stevenson. Interlocking granite and sandstone blocks were cut to shape by masons in Arbroath, before being shipped out to the reef.

The Signal Tower building, in Arbroath, served as the Bell Rock Lighthouse shore station and keepers' family accommodation, until the 1950s.

During construction of the light, the workmen were issued with exemption certificates to prevent them being press ganged into the Navy. Their bravery and ingenuity, in carrying out heavy construction work on a rock shelf at sea, under atrocious weather and working conditions, with equipment designed on site, has been recognised ever since.

The first lighthouse keepers took over the completed Bell Rock Lighthouse tower during December 1810 and the lighthouse became operational on 1 February 1811. The **Signal Tower** building, in Arbroath, served as the Bell Rock Lighthouse shore station and keepers' family accommodation, until the 1950s. It was developed as a museum in 1974.



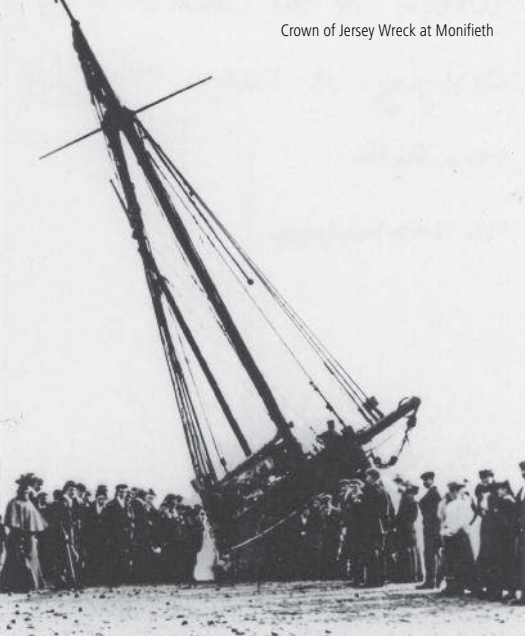
Signal Tower



Scurdie Ness, near Ferryden, is another Stevenson lighthouse, built by Robert Stevenson's sons, David and Thomas, to protect the rock-bound shore between the Bell Rock and Girdle Ness. It was lit for the first time on 1 March 1870.

The two lighthouses on **Buddon Ness** were also built by David and Thomas Stevenson. In 1884, the outer lighthouse was moved 160 feet to the northeast of its original position. This was made necessary because the movement of sandbanks had altered the entrance channel of the River Tay.

Scurdie Ness was lit
for the first time on
1 March 1870.



Crown of Jersey Wreck at Monifieth

However, **shipwrecks** continued, despite lighthouses. The wrecking of HMS Argyll occurred on the Bell Rock, in October 1915, during World War I. An official blackout was in place on the lighthouse, to make it less visible to the enemy. A failure of the procedure to notify lighthouse keepers of an approaching friendly vessel meant Argyll did not receive a warning and ran onto the reef. All 655 sailors were rescued but the ship was lost.

In January 1922, severe gales drove the German ship Haio, onto rocks in Carnoustie Bay, during a voyage to deliver pit props to Newcastle. William Swankie, a young Arbroath fisherman, swam 50 feet in heavy seas, to secure a line to the ship and rescue the crew.

Later the same year, the Belgian vessel Rosa was blown northwards onto the sands at Elliot during a storm. The crew members were reluctant to abandon ship but eventually they fired a line ashore. The Captain and sixteen exhausted crewmen reached land and were taken to the White Hart Hotel, in Arbroath, to recover.



Johnston's boat on lorry, Montrose June 1966



Her Majesty's Coastguard was founded with the twin aims of deterring smuggling and of giving assistance in the event of shipwreck. When a ship was wrecked, lives were at risk immediately but the ship's cargo might then be removed and sold illegally. Coastguard stations were established locally, at Usan, Auchmithie and West Haven, in the 1830s. Each had a look-out tower and rescue facilities.

The Angus coastline is covered by three Royal National Lifeboat Institution (**RNLI**) lifeboat stations. Original lifeboat services in the area were volunteer-run. The RNLI was founded in 1824 and later took responsibility for operation of the Angus stations.

A volunteer station was established in Montrose in 1800, making it one of the earliest in the UK. The station was taken over by the RNLI in 1869.

Arbroath's lifeboat service was established in 1803, before being transferred to the RNLI in 1865. Arbroath Town Council agreed to build

a boatshed, on East Grimsby. The lifeboat was funded by an appeal to the readers of the People's Journal newspaper.

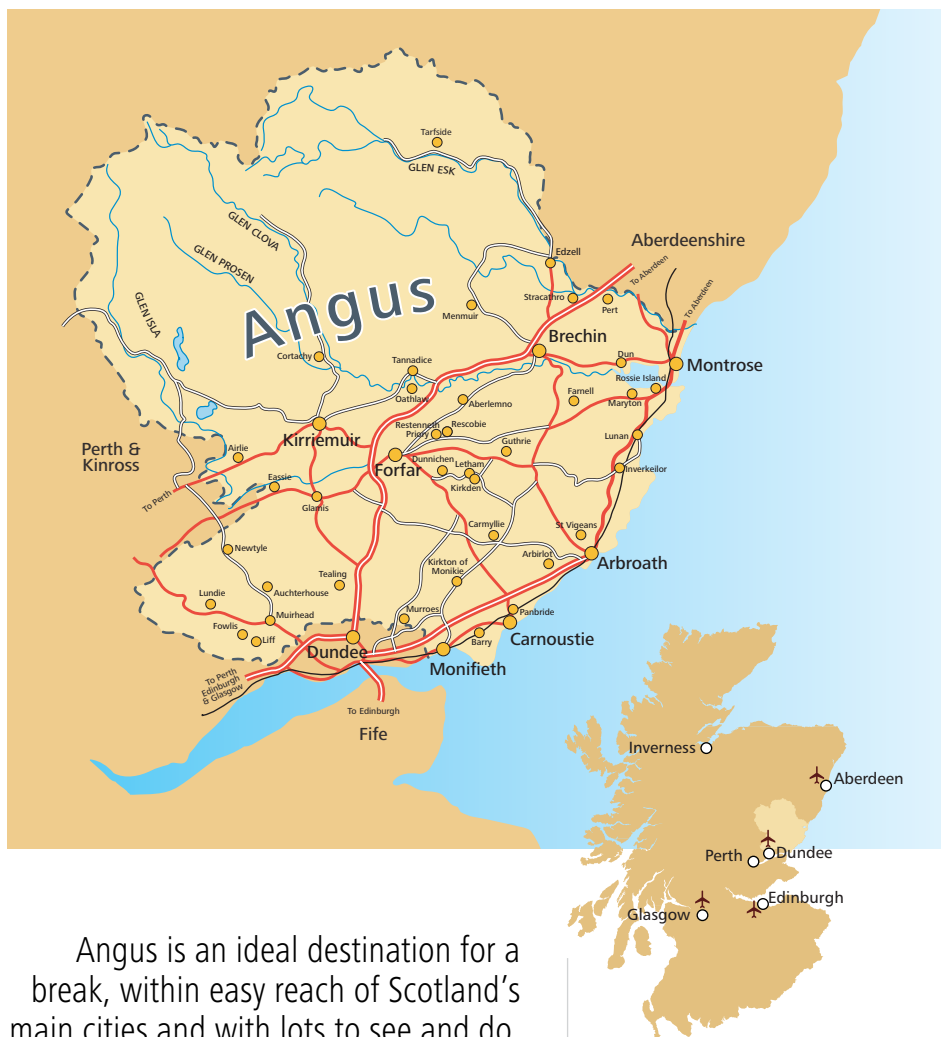
From 1830, the River Tay Lifeboat and Humane Society operated a lifeboat from Buddon Ness, with volunteers from West Haven and Broughty Ferry. Volunteers had to travel several miles to Buddon Ness, often on foot, before launching a rescue, causing confusion and delays. In December 1861, the RNLI adopted the Buddon Ness service and moved the lifeboat nearer to the crew, with a new boathouse in Broughty Ferry.

Crews of both the Arbroath and Broughty Ferry stations saved many lives over the years but both crews also suffered tragedy at sea. In October 1953, the Arbroath lifeboat **Robert Lindsay** lost six crewmen, after turning over on rocks west of the breakwater, during an attempted rescue. Similarly, in December 1959, the **Mona** of Broughty Ferry was washed up on the beach near Carnoustie, with all eight crew lost, following an attempt to assist the North Carr Lightship, in St Andrews Bay.



Did you know?

- In the medieval period, Montrose had a legal monopoly on exporting fish.
- The Angus coastline is one of the few remaining areas in Scotland where traditional salmon netting still takes place.
- The village of Auchmithie had no harbour, so the women helped launch the boats, wading barefoot into the sea, carrying the men on their backs.
- The Arbroath Smokie name is protected under European Law (PGI Status) and can only be used to describe haddock smoked in the traditional manner, within an 8km radius of Arbroath.
- East Haven, by Carnoustie is one of the earliest recorded fishing communities in Scotland dating back to 1214.
- Before WW1 Carnoustie claimed to be the most popular East Coast resort in Scotland and was marketed as the Home of Health and Happiness.
- During the late 1700s Angus coastal communities were affected by press gangs as men could be compulsorily recruited into the service of the Royal Navy.
- The Bell Rock Lighthouse is the oldest surviving sea washed lighthouse, built 11 miles off the coast of Arbroath by Robert Stevenson between 1807 and 1811.



Angus is an ideal destination for a break, within easy reach of Scotland's main cities and with lots to see and do. An area of outstanding beauty there's something to suit everyone.

Discover more about the area's rich maritime heritage – visit the picturesque seaside towns and enjoy the spectacular Angus coastline, fantastic local food and drink and historic sites and landmarks.

For more information about what to see and do in Angus, as well as a full list of accommodation providers and places to eat and drink, go to

www.visitangus.com



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