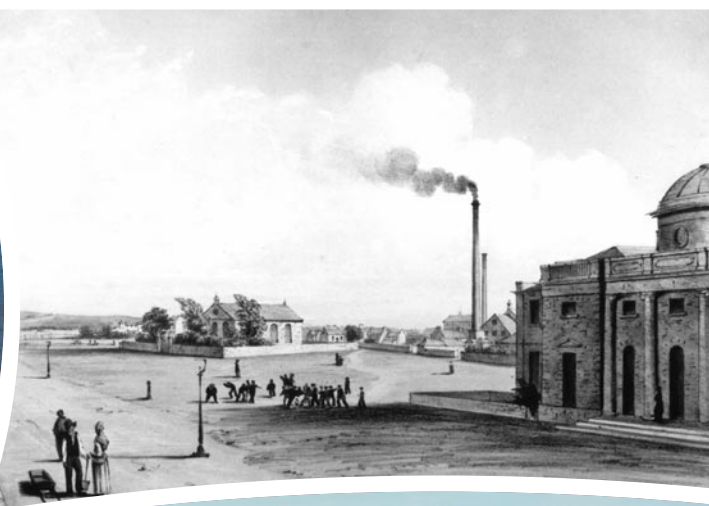


# *Visit* **ANGUS**

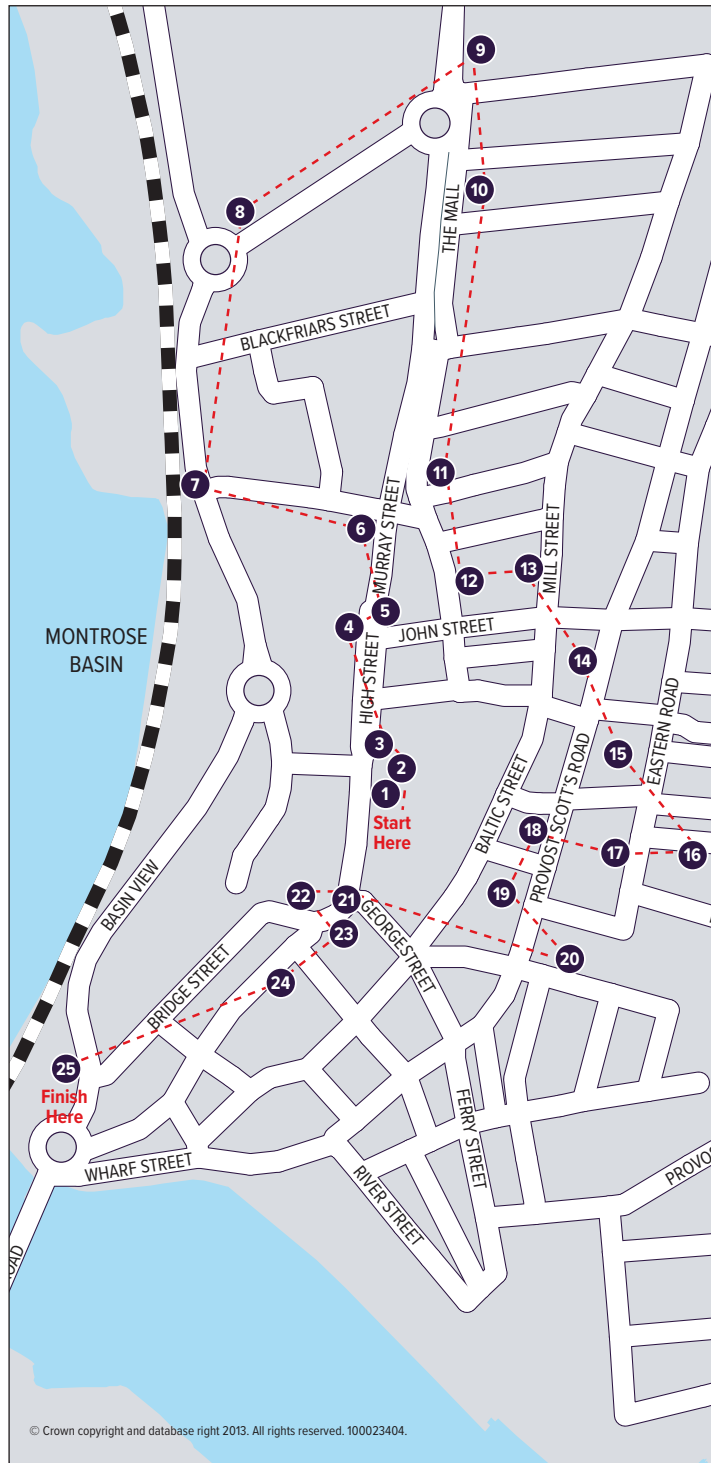
## **MONTROSE** Heritage Trail



# The Royal Burgh of Montrose

Starting at the steeple, this 1½ hour heritage trail will take you on a historical journey through the Royal Burgh of Montrose.

King David I founded the burgh and port between 1130 and 1140 to serve Angus and the Mearns. The High Street, the oldest planned settlement, was uniquely laid out on a shingle ridge forming the highest part of a peninsula between the tidal basin and the North Sea. To the east is windblown sand, to the west, clay and the highest point near the parish church is about 40 feet above sea level. The natural harbour and rich agricultural hinterland enabled Montrose to flourish as a port. Early exports were skins, hides and cured salmon.



- 1 The steeple of the Parish Kirk forms a prominent landmark at 220 feet high. It was built in 1834 to the design of Gillespie Graham, replacing an earlier oyster shell clad tower. The grave of a 13th century priest was discovered when excavating the foundations of the new spire. An urn discovered at the same time is now in the Montrose Museum Collections.

Montrose Parish Kirk was built in 1791 and designed by David Logan senior. One of the most pleasant walks in Montrose is the path through the old kirkyard, which harbours many interesting 18th and 19th century gravestones of merchants and sea captains. The kirkyard once extended westwards and by 1819 the Town House was extended over part of it. Tombs of former town clerks are still visible in the vault beneath, with the blocked up windows of their office behind. This part of the kirkyard had long been well-used; a guardhouse, smithy and meal market once stood between the kirk and the street.

- 2 The very fine Town House, or 'Ba Hoose' as it is locally known, was first built in 1763-4, the top floor added in 1819 giving local society a fine place to hold balls. The pend gives access from the kirkyard area to the High Street under the attractive open Italianate piazza, originally intended as a meeting place for merchants. The old market cross once stood in front of the piazza. It was dismantled in 1763 and the site is marked in the street by a cross of black stones. The neighbouring tenement house was built shortly after the Town House and was later home to Edward Baird (1904-1949), one of the town's many talented artists.
- 3 North of the Town House are two statues; one of Bill the Smith by William Lamb and the other of Joseph Hume, a native of Montrose, elected Radical MP for Angus Burghs in 1819. The wide street is very attractive and was even wider before the town council allowed homeowners to build forward on two occasions in the 18th century. The old houses lining the High Street were the gable-ended houses typical of North West Europe, thus giving Montrosians the nickname of 'gable-endies'. Only a few originals now remain. Near the Town House they were replaced by late Victorian commercial chambers, banks and former hotels. As you walk up the High Street, look down the many closes and courtyards set back from the street. A nice example is 107 High Street, Boswell House, incorporating the former Ship Inn and set around a courtyard. The famous 18th century writer Dr Samuel Johnson and his friend James Boswell stayed here in 1773.





Montrose Museum

Review Close was the site of the Montrose Review office, where renowned Scots language poet and town councillor Hugh MacDiarmid worked as a journalist for 10 years. He wrote his famous poem 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle' whilst living in the town.

- 4 You may like to look at the old town walls which survive on Western Road. Cross to the west side of the High Street and go down Hume Street. At the bottom turn left and walk along Western Road. On the left are the ancient burgh walls, built up over time to keep marauders at bay. The walls once marked the edge of the Basin before land was reclaimed to build the railway. Gates allowed easy access to the back sands. Return to the High Street and turn left at the junction. On the west side of the High Street there are a number of Georgian houses and shops built around 1780-1820. One example at 80 High Street offers a glimpse of the family home of the Coutts, merchants who later became bankers to the Royal family. A little further on is the attractive feature of Masonic mysteries above the Royal Arch Bar dating from the later 19th century.

- 5 Before reaching the North Port, you pass a tall granite fountain gifted to the town by William Black of London in 1859. The old medieval gate once stood where the street narrows before becoming Murray Street. The Port allowed the town to control entry of people and goods into the burgh. It was removed in the 1780s as it had become an encumbrance to traffic. On the east side is a much-altered Trades Hall of the 1770s.

- 6 Beyond the Port is Murray Street. The Y.M.C.A. building of 1905 stands on the site of the Old Lithouse where dyers worked until the mid 19th century. Behind was St John's Croft, now built over by several streets. You will notice two establishments with similar names; The White Horse and the Black Horse Inn. The White Horse was originally an inn, first licensed in 1740, which harboured Jacobite rebels during the '45. The Black Horse Inn is the second of that name, the first having burned down in 1880.

Turn left down Lower Hall Street, once known as 'Dummie Ha's Wynd', a corruption of 'Dominican Hall Wynd' which commemorates the Dominican Priory which stood there from the 13th century.

Lower Hall Street leads to the old route to Brechin which skirted the Basin. On the south side, between 31 and 33 Lower Hall Street, is a set of commemorative plaques featuring the heads of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, believed to mark their coronation in 1902.

- 7 At the foot of the street is the site of the old slaughterhouse or shambles built in 1685, which is now a garage. As early as 1542, a turf dyke was built to protect the arable crofts in the Clayhalf from high tides. Before the railway was built around 1880 on reclaimed land, sand dunes and sea pinks graced the shore.

The inner relief road was opened in 1997 and follows the route of the railway. Blackfriars Street also occupies part of the site of the Dominican Friars' house, founded in 1261. They were known as the 'black friars' from the colour of their robes. South of their house was a 13th century leper hospital. Both were outside the old burgh boundaries, but no trace of either remains as the site was built over from 1800.

- 8 Continue along Western Road North, follow the cycle path, cross the road at the crossing and turn left. Follow the path through the children's play park, almost to the entrance to Lochside School.



The church spire situated in the High Street is one of the tallest in Scotland.



Bamse statue



Castlestead



Exhibit, Montrose Museum

Here part of the old sea wall has survived, enclosing the Medicine or St Mary's Well of the 1730s, once popular as a cure for scurvy amongst the seafaring community.

- 9 The tall octagonal tower in Tudor revival style on Northesk Road was originally built as a water tower in 1841 to give a head of water to the town's supply brought from Glenskenno. It is now a house.

The Mall is a lovely street with many impressive Victorian houses. The Mall and the High Street mark the high point of the pebble ridge dividing the town into two geological halves: the Clayhalf leading down to the Basin and the Sandhalf leading to the sea.

- 10 Most of the houses on the Mall date from the 19th century. There is an earlier survival in the shape of a row of 18th century brick-built weavers' cottages. On the low gable end is a decorated ceramic plaque from 1708, believed to have been placed there in the early 20th century by local historian and Baillie of Montrose, James G Low. He later moved into the adjoining semi-detached villa, Cranes Meadow, which features one of a pair of winged angels rescued from a sailing ship.

- 11 On the right at the corner of Upper Hall Street is the Holy Royal Lodge Kilwinning Freemasons Hall, built in 1910 of imported red sandstone in florid Renaissance style.

- 12 Opposite the Catholic Church is the entrance to the William Lamb Studio in Trades Close. Lamb was a sculptor and artist who died in 1951, leaving his studio and many works to his native town. The studio is open in July and August, and at other times by arrangement with Montrose Museum. Many of his works can be seen around the town. In the studio you can see three bronze heads of the Royal family: Princess Elizabeth and her sister Princess Margaret Rose as little girls and their mother Elizabeth, Duchess of York. Further down Trades Close are examples of small Georgian town houses built for wealthy tradesmen.

- 13 John Street was opened up in 1818 and St John's Church was built in 1829 with a magnificent Ionic façade and cupola. The former church housed the Montrose Review for many years.

- 14 Mill Street offers a glimpse of an early 18th century tobacco barn with its distinctive slatted windows and piend roof with local grey slates. This is a rare survivor of dozens which once lined this back street, known simply as Back Wynd, from about 1700 when grain and malt exporting was very important. Tobacco was also an important trade in the town, forming part of a triangular trade route which included trading in slaves.

- 15 Turn left into St Peter's Place, where you will discover a green sward of parks, sports grounds and avenues of trees in the Mid Links, providing a beautiful and environmentally friendly space. Provost George Scott masterminded the development of this green belt between 1887 and 1890. The Mid Links had previously formed part of the town's ancient golf grounds. The original first tee was located in the vicinity of the foot of New Wynd across from the Links Hotel. The first written evidence of golf being played in Montrose dates to 1562.

- 16 St Mary's and St. Peter's Episcopal Church was built to replace the original St Peter's Chapel of 1722 which burned down in the mid 19th century. Dr Johnson visited the original church and gave a penny to the clerk. Reputedly, George Frideric Handel, famous for his Messiah, once played the original organ in the old church. The gates belong to the earlier church and enclose the kirkyard.

- 17 As you approach the Museum, you can see the surviving frontage of the Chapel Works, once an important flax spinning mill, on the other side the Dean's Park. The date of 1795 above the gate commemorates the date of the business partnership of John & George Paton, twin brothers, who began a spinning business here about 1816. The building you see dates from about 1840-50.

- 18 Dean's Park also houses a statue of Robert Burns, largely financed by Dunfermline born millionaire Andrew Carnegie who attended





The town of Montrose 1678

the unveiling ceremony on 7 August 1912. Burns had family connections in Montrose and he was known to have visited them at least once. Opposite the statue is the modern interpretation of the original bandstand.

- 19 Montrose Museum opened in 1842 and is one of the first purpose-built museums in Scotland. It was designed by John Henderson. The art gallery extension was added in 1889. The museum is open throughout the year (Tues-Sat) and explores the story of this vibrant town and its people. The museum houses a collection of Pictish stones, maritime and local history and changing exhibitions.
- 20 Montrose Academy, with its distinctive dome, was designed in 1815 by David Logan junior. It has been the main place of education for generations since. The gilding of the copper dome was a gift from former pupil Blanche Mearns after World War II.
- 21 George Street was once a narrow street known as School Wynd. At the top of the street, on the site of the old tolbooth, stands the monument to Robert Peel, Corn Law reformer, which was erected on his death in 1852. The last public execution at this site was that of Margaret Shuttleworth, executed for murdering her husband in 1822.

- 22 Across the street is the Public Library built in 1905, funded by Andrew Carnegie, on the site of the old cruciform house where botanist Dr Robert Brown was born. He discovered the scientific principle of Brownian Motion. A bust of him is displayed in the foyer.
- 23 Looking across from the library door is Castlestead, an old castellated house with an 1820s frontage. This was the site of the old stone castle of Montrose where King Edward I of England stayed in July 1296 and which was razed to the ground by William Wallace. A tower house was built on the site about 1500 and, according to tradition, it was the birthplace of James Graham, Marquis of Montrose in October 1612. A statue of the Marquis now stands in front of Castlestead.

Continue on to Bridge Street, which was opened up about 1800 to give access to the first bridge over the River South Esk, constructed in 1795. Previously, Castle Street and Seagate to the east were the main routes into the town.

- 24 There are some very fine Georgian and Victorian houses in Bridge Street, the town's first relief road. Further down, on the west side, is a large Georgian building topped by a pair of urns. This was once the town's theatre. Opposite is an old coaching inn, now converted to housing, which has still retained the old gate for the coach and horses.
- 25 Near the foot of the street is the classically-designed Montrose Infirmary, built in 1835 and still in use today. Reaching the river you see the fourth bridge to be constructed over the South Esk. A ferry served the crossing from the 12th century.

Before you reach the left turn into Wharf Street, look up the narrow street known as Seagate. This was the entrance into the town before the construction of Bridge Street. There was once a small Viking trading settlement in the vicinity known as Stromnay, also reflected in the Norse word 'gate' meaning 'street'.

Wharf Street offers a pleasant area from which to view the busy, working harbour. On the south side of the river is Rossie Island, a true island before the Inch Burn was drained and in-filled in 1973. There are statues of Seafarer by William Lamb and of Bamse, a brave dog who came to Montrose as crewmember of the Norwegian minesweeper Thorodd during World War II. He became a mascot for the Free Norwegian Forces and a symbol of freedom. He was buried on the banks of the River South Esk and his grave is marked by a cross and by tokens left by visitors.

The RNLI lifeboat station was relocated here in 2013. Wharf Street provides the perfect place to finish the walk. Take a seat and enjoy the view of the busy harbour.



The Minesweeper,  
William Lamb

# Angus Heritage Trails

Angus has a unique heritage and its towns are well preserved, unspoilt and full of character. Each of the main towns has a heritage trail as well as a variety of museums, galleries, historic sites and buildings to be enjoyed.

It is easy to travel to Angus thanks to good transport links.



Contact ACCESSLine on 03452 777 778 if you require this leaflet in an alternative format.  
For more information about Angus, go to [visitangus.com](http://visitangus.com)