

"in the mid-1920s the park became an ideal recreation centre"

Zetland Park

Geoff B Bailey

Zetland Park was for many decades simply known as the Public Park. It now covers 18.5ha (45.8 acres) of land on the east side of the Grange Burn to the east of Grangemouth town centre. The ground here is quite flat and the raised flood bank of the burn is a prominent feature. The southern half of the park is open with large areas of sports fields served by a pavilion. This contrasts with the formality of the northernmost tip which contains the massive cenotaph and its associated gate piers, paved piazza and monumental fountain. Between the two are clearly defined activity areas with tennis courts, a bowling green, pavilion, paddling pool (remnant) and children's play area. Tree-lined paths follow the perimeter of the park and provide axial routes through it.

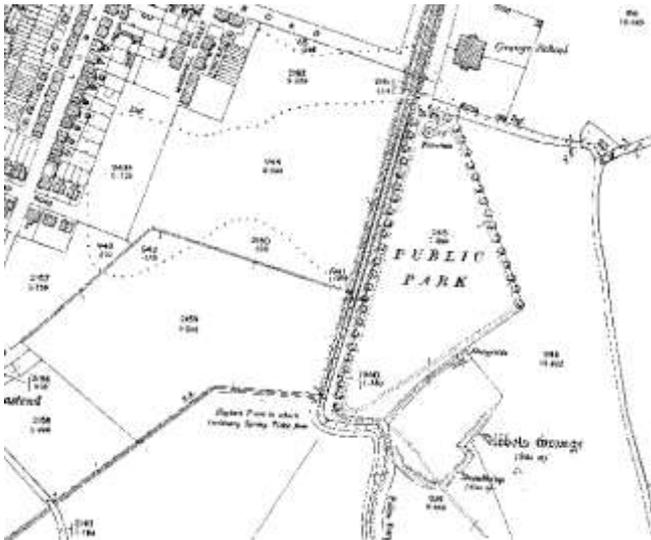
3.4ha (8.5 acres) of land was offered to the burgh in 1880 by the Earl of Zetland for use as a public park. Although well to the east of the town at the time, it was realised that the urban area was rapidly expanding and would soon engulf the area. The burgh then spent £350, raised by public



Illus: Medallion struck to commemorate the official opening of the park and new dock at Grangemouth.

subscription, on laying it out. Seats and a flagpole surmounted by a model ship were donated by local firms and on 3rd June 1882 the Public Park was officially opened in typically Grangemouth style - on the same day as the Carron Dock. Medallions were produced to commemorate the event. The main entrance to the park was at its northern tip, which lay nearest to the town. A footbridge crossed the Grange Burn from Kerse Road to Dalratho Road. Here an ornamental cast iron drinking fountain was placed, having been donated by the chief magistrate, Hugh Macpherson, the owner of a local woodyard (see [SMR 1732](#)). Despite its avowed purpose of being functional as well as

decorative, the fountain was soon railed off from the public.



Illus: 2nd edition OS map.

Along the west side of the park the Grange Burn had already been straightened and large flood banks erected. These banks were used as footpaths via Bowhouse Planks to Beancross and provided the only other entrance to the park at this time. Until the 1970s this was the core path taking Portonians into the countryside. A new formal path was placed alongside the

bank within the park and trees planted between them. It was

continued around the perimeter of the park with another avenue of trees on the east side. The fields to the east and south were part of Abbotsgrange Farm. The former used for arable and grazing cows, and the latter, with its earthworks, for sheep.



Illus: The original entrance of the park with the Fountain opposite Grange School, c1900.

The park was a place where the public could promenade around the playing field where the children took part in sports.

Two football pitches were laid out for the use, during the winter months, of the Grange Rovers and the Forth Rangers. In the summer the Zetland Brass Band performed promenade concerts. It was also used to host flower shows by the Grangemouth Horticultural Society. On these occasions the park was closed to the general public and an admission fee charged. At this time it lacked the formal garden layout of larger towns until after the First World War when moves were made to have a

memorial worthy of the town and the men who had died. Peace Celebrations were held in the park on 4th August 1919 with a programme including sports, music and fireworks. This emphasised the muddy nature of the park and entrance. A councillor noted that it "was not a thing of beauty" and had been neglected. It was the architect chosen to design the war memorial, Sir John Burnet, who chose its site – many preferred a central location at Charing Cross ([SMR 591](#)). The opportunity was taken to erect flanking walls, railings and huge gates and piers as part of the monument and as a grand entrance to the park. The cenotaph cost £2,478 and the entrance with its piers another £1,625. The memorial was unveiled on 22 September 1923 by General Sir Ian Hamilton.



Illus: Zetland park with the war memorial looking south from grange School, 1930s.

This grandiose monument acted as a spur to the development of the park, which included a large extension of 7.71ha (19 acres) to the south acquired from the Blair

Drummond Estate and 2.6ha (6.5 acres) from Kerse Estate. Within the latter was an area known as the Orchard, which was slightly higher than the surrounding land and contained the earthworks of the 14th century grange ([SMR 878](#)). The Orchard is presumably named from its use in the 17th century for the production of apples and pears. The fruit trees were removed at the end of the 19th century because people passing by helped themselves to the produce. The level inside the Orchard was some 4ft higher than that outside, but in order to improve the drainage of the remainder, which often flooded, rubbish was used to raise it to the same level. Early editions of the OS maps show that the Orchard was an irregular shaped enclosure with an earthen bank surrounded by a ditch; the latter interrupted by a causeway on the SE side. Given the proximity of the place name "Abbotsgrange," first noted simply as "Grange" in 1362, it is reasonable to assume this to be the site of the monastic farm belonging to Holyrood Abbey – after which Grangemouth gets its name. A grange was the centre of an estate run for a remote abbey and usually housed a granary or warehouse to hold the agricultural produce of the

area. There was often a substantial dwelling for the factor, who also ran the baron court. These were probably stone buildings. Produce would have been taken by sea to Leith for onward transport to the Abbey and it is no coincidence that the grange was located at the tidal limit of the Grange Burn. In later years the Grange was owned by the Bellenden family and the buildings were converted into a more substantial dwelling. Two stones were found in the Orchard in the 19th century - a date stone of 1618 and an armorial stone containing a chevron and three mullets for Ker. The former was later incorporated into a sundial for the park ([SMR 1377](#)).

Between the orchard and the original park was a large drain, necessitated by the low-lying land and the earlier diversion of the Grange Burn. At the point where it issued into the Grange Burn there was a sluice to stop water from the burn ponding back up the drain. This created a small pool where the youth of the town learned to swim. Once it was incorporated into the park the burgh officials prohibited this activity and before long the drain was piped and covered over. A small stream feeding the Grange Burn ran passed the farm of Abbotsgrange and was also diverted and culverted as part of the landscaping of the park. The Grange Burn was further canalised, smoothing out the curves in this area. The tree-lined perimeter path soon continued around the new extension and a small copse was planted in the south-east corner over the old stream. The NNW/SSE hedge of the earlier field boundary was retained for the time being. Further entrances were added.

The 1920s saw great additions to the facilities:

- 1923 War memorial unveiled [SMR 1732](#)
- 1924 Swimming pool completed [SMR 2109](#)
- 1925 Bandstand opened [SMR 2110](#)
- 1926 Bowling green and pavilion ready for use
- 1931 Paddling pool



Illus: The paddling pool looking NE towards Abbotsgrange Road.

The imposition of the war memorial and its associated structures were part of a reconfiguring of the main entrance. At the very northern tip was a triangular parking area that could be used for ceremonies on

Armistice Day. The war memorial was on the central axis of this triangle and its flanking wall where set at right angles across it. The earlier fountain was moved into the park and placed on this axis at the hub of paths that emanated from it like the spokes of a wheel with flower beds between. Continuing this central line was the new bowling green. Overlooking this again was a pavilion and an area of benches. The pavilion was flanked by tennis courts – all underlined by a road. This formal layout was then broken by the retention of the trees and earthworks of the Orchard. An ornate bandstand was placed in its centre ([SMR 2110](#)). A long paddling pool with tapering sides and curved ends now bordered the south-east side of the Orchard. In the summer it was used for sailing model boats and makeshift rafts, and in the winter as a skating pond. A football pitch lay to its east. For swimmers there was an open-air swimming pool adjacent to the Grange Burn. Initially the changing rooms utilised old railway vans, but these were soon replaced by a neat single storey brick complex.



Illus: The swimming pool looking south from the Orchard.

During the Second World War the parcel of land in the corner of the park bounded by Henry Street and Abbotsgrange Road was used for allotments. After the war this was reinstated as a rose garden. The bowling pavilion was earmarked as a first aid station and baffle walls were erected for the duration. Troops and airmen were temporarily billeted in the park living in bell tents. Servicemen were given free use of the swimming pool. In 1944 the burgh invested £600 in an open air dance floor that was installed adjacent to this pool and was opened by Joseph Westwood Under-Secretary of State for Scotland in May. It covered 400 square yards and was surfaced in thick asbestos tiles and was very popular, being considered a good dancing surface. Music was blasted out from speakers attached to the swimming pool. People were encouraged to use the park as part of the "Holidays at Home" campaign and bands played in the bandstand, whilst Punch and Judy shows were performed nearby. These were the heydays of the park. In 1945 three small boys stole three rifles and 1100 rounds of ammunition from a hut occupied by the Army Cadet Force in Ronaldshay Crescent. They fired these weapons in the Public Park, just missing two men walking on the golf course. The boys were aged 11, 13 and 6 years.



Illus: Aerial photograph of the park, c1950.

The end of the war brought about alterations to the war memorial. Plaques with further names were added and the flanking walls interrupted to either side of the main plinth in the area of the dais. This opened up through access and meant the removal of shrubs here. The park included land on the west side of the Grange Burn. This land, to the south of the parking place, was ploughed up during the war and later became the site of the indoor swimming pool. Further south still the rugby pitch was not cultivated, but in 1944 the Department of

Health decided to erect a nursery there.

To the south of the park the fields had been turned into a golf course, but the war interrupted its success. In 1953 this was part of a further extension to the park of 6.9ha (17 acres). In the following year the construction of a pumping station to the south of the swimming pool in this extension finally solved the more serious problems of flooding in this area. 1956 saw the start of a further building programme supervised by Wilson & Wilson, architects. A sports pavilion with changing rooms for the teams using the outside pitches was constructed near Bowhouse Road. It had a barrel vaulted roof of Glulam beams and a central hall used for gymnastics. Other buildings included a snack shop to the west of the tennis courts, a children's corner, a maintenance block to the west of the bowling green, and a toilet block near the tennis pavilion. The area in front of the cenotaph was also redesigned. By 1960 the park contained six tennis courts, a putting green, netball court and six football pitches, as well as those facilities already listed. Rowing boats were introduced on the paddling pond in 1960s and part of the south end was infilled to create a small separate quatrefoil shaped pond, allowing the construction of a boathouse, jetty and ramped access to the large one.

More change came in the 1970s. The open-air pool was demolished in 1972 shortly after the opening of an indoor pool on the other side of the burn. The following year the bandstand was sold off. A kiosk and toilets were built next to the tennis courts. A cycle proficiency track was laid out on the site of the old pool.

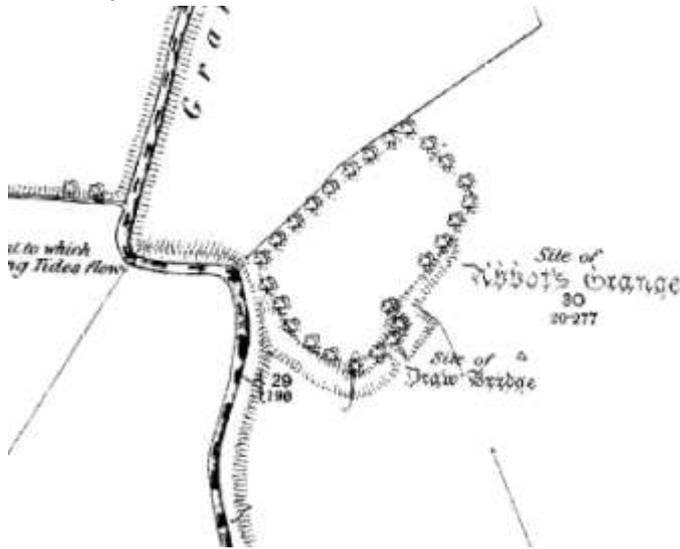
In the 1980s the cafe was converted into an aviary. The 1990s saw the neglect of many of the parks in the area and the aviary was now demolished. The paddling pool was drained in the name of health and safety. The new millennium saw some minor additions. In 2005 the Trent Memorial was placed on the central axis in front of the war memorial. It commemorates the volunteers from the Territorial Army Reserve who died on a training exercise in 1975. And in 2014 the two footbridges across the Grange Burn were replaced. The avenue between Moray Place and the Orchard was planted with Hornbeam. The three tennis courts to the east of the bowling pavilion were removed and grassed over, but those on the west were refurbished. At their opening a Guinness World Record was set with 679 locals bouncing tennis balls on their rackets simultaneously.

Throughout this period the Flowers Shows and the annual Gala continued. In 2010 the field drainage was improved to ensure that they may carry on.

APPENDIX

SMR 878: Abbot's Grange

Description: The earlier versions of the OS map show a ditched enclosure with a 'drawbridge' in the area of what is now Zetland Park. The interior is said to have been higher than the surrounding area until the level of the park was raised using rubbish. It is presumably the site of the medieval grange of Holyrood Abbey.



History: The main buildings would have been of stone. Given the richness of the estate it is possible that the

principal building took the form of a small tower house.

A sundial which used to stand in this vicinity was stored in Falkirk Museum until 1998, when it was erected at the north end of Lumley Street in a metal cage. The earliest surviving reference to the Grange here comes from 1314 when the Abbot of Holyrood pleaded for a reduction in the land-duties from their holding on the carse due to its reduced state following the wars between England and Scotland (*Liber Sancto Crucis*, App. I.12, Bannatyne Club, 1840). In 1363 Holyrood is said to have "possessed the lordship lands of the said lands of the Carss with manor, grange and pertinents within the grange and with a meadow which is called Dubet" (*Regesta Regum Scottorum*, vi, 298).

The grange is next encountered in 1543 when Thomas Levingstoun appears as a kindly tenant (RMS, iii, no.2935). For further details see Reid, J. 1997, 63-5.

SMR 1377: Sundial



Description: Sundial in the form of a rectangular block with an ansate panel bearing the inscription "BK/ VB" and date 1618. This is surmounted by a respond capital carrying a bronze dial-plate. The chisel marks on the three parts are different and the Corinthian capital has a flat side as though designed to be placed against a wall. They are clearly of different dates. The capital imitates the bulky volutes of the 14/15th century, but its square cap suggests that it was made for the sundial in the 19th century.



History: Porteous provides us with the information that EK were the initials of Elizabeth Ker, daughter of Sir James Ker of Cesford and the sister of the first Earl of Roxburgh, who married Sir James Ballenden of Broughton (the owner of Abbotsgrange). WB are the initials of William Ballenden.

The sundial appears to have been erected in the 'Orchard' in c1920-30s and was removed the Museum store in the 1980s due to vandalism. It then stood for a few years in a cage at the north end of Lumley Street, before being returned to the store.

SMR 1732: Grangemouth War Memorial

Description: The cenotaph is 27ft tall and is raised on a paved and stepped platform 60ft wide. At the rear the cenotaph was connected to a circled wall terminating with the entrance gates into the park on either side. These gates are elaborately cast in iron and lead into the park proper. Crowning the cenotaph is a group of sculpture representing the British lion rending the German eagle. The original scheme had not included the eagle, and its appearance caused some consternation amongst the council who felt that Britain ought to be behaving with greater dignity in Victory than to portray the defeated Nation thus. The names of the fallen are to be found in lead at the base. On the front, under a carved cross is the inscription: "In proud and grateful memory of the Men/ from Grangemouth/ Who went forth during these years of War,/ to fight for God and the Right,/ The names of those who returned not

again/ are here inscribed." Underneath, carved on the stone are the words: "To you with failing hands we throw/ The torch: be yours to hold it high."

The designer was Sir John Burnett of John Burnett, Son and Dick, Glasgow. The surrounding layout was the work of the Burgh engineer, Mr D A Donald. The 1956 alterations were supervised by the Falkirk architects, Wilson and Wilson.



The sculptor was Alexander Proudfoot of Glasgow.

The structural work was by J J & P M'Lauchlan, Larbert, and the gates by the Windsor Engineering Co Ltd, Glasgow. Further work in 1956 was by Norman Robertson, sculptor, Falkirk.

The cost of the monument was £2478, the ornamental park gates and piers £1625 (mostly paid for by 5 anonymous gentlemen), which with the stationary and other incidental expenditure came to a

total of £4163. The flower beds were paid for separately by the burgh council. The work carried out after the Second World War cost £1225 which included £655 for the cleaning of the monument and re-chiselling of the eagle, £250 for adding the names.

It was unveiled by General Sir George Ian Hamilton on Saturday 22nd September, 1923. On the same day he unveiled a brass plaque to the 7th Battalion Scottish Rifles (Cameron's) in the town hall, and a memorial tablet was also dedicated at the parish church.

History: In 1948 it was decided to remove the crowning sculptural group and replace it with something simpler. However, lack of funds meant that the project had to be carried out by the town council who restricted the scheme and cleaned the existing monument, removed the railings attached to the cenotaph and extended the dais to make it free standing. On the side facing the park they added three Roman stones with lead lettering, each bearing about 44 names.



**SMR 1733:
Drinking fountain**

Description: It takes the form of a large circular cast iron and concrete trough set on a stone base with a central pedestal. The base has four courses of ashlar masonry above a chamfered plinth course. Two steps at opposite ends provide access to small cast iron side bowls raised in fretted arched

frames with scrolled feet mounted on the rim of the trough. Four cast iron winged angels kneel at the base of the central pedestal with their arms clasped over their bosoms. Each has two mermaid-like tails. The pedestal has two trumpet flower offsets and then a large open bowl with a beaded rim and intermittent leaves. Originally a further tier above this supported another large bowl and a figurine, but these are now missing. The ironwork was painted in black with gold highlights in the 1990s, before which it was pale blue with the figures painted flesh and green.

History: The fountain was erected near to the entrance of the Public Park in Grangemouth (now Zetland Park) in 1882 and moved in the early 1920s when the park was extended and the war memorial built. At that time it was surrounded by a cast iron fence.

A medallion struck for the initial installation reads, obverse: "TO COMMEMORATE THE PRESENTATION OF PUBLIC PARK BY THE RIGHT HONORABLE THE EARL OF ZETLAND AND OPENING OF NEW DOCKS BY J.C. BOLTON ESQ. M.P. GRANGEMOUTH 3RD JUNE 1882 3RD" and reverse: "FOUNTAIN IN PUBLIC PARK A GIFT FROM HUGH MACPHERSON CHIEF MAGISTRATE 1882"



**SMR 2110:
Grangemouth
Bandstand**

Description: The cast iron bandstand stood in the centre of the Orchard in Zetland Park, with the perimeter trees providing shelter for the audience when needed. The octagonal plinth was built on brick retaining walls c1.4m

high, with steps projecting from these on the WSW side. Access to the underfloor area was provided by a wooden door. An iron railing ran around the wallhead. Within this eight plain iron columns supported the roof. The gently pitched canopy was covered with segmented sheets of metal upon which sat an inverse funnel-shaped wrought iron cupola. This extended up to an ogival lead dome topped by a fretted vase finial. A fretwork railing at the base of the cupola and brackets at the top of the columns provided further ornamentation. The ceiling was of panelled wood. History: It was officially opened on 11 July 1925 - the 7th Queen's Own Hussars playing military music. Bands featured largely in its use. According to one historian the bandstand was sold in 1973 and removed for export abroad, however, a minute of the Town Council records tenders for its demolition in December 1970.

SMR 2109: Grangemouth Swimming Pool

When opened in July 1924 the pool was 150ft by 45ft with a depth of 6ft at one end and 3ft at the other. It was edged by a raised kerb and surrounded by a fence, within which were steps and handrails to assist the swimmers. Dressing rooms were provided in the form of disused railway vans.



The complex was upgraded in the 1930s and the pool was surrounded by single storey rooms along three sides and an enclosing wall on the south. Facing the pool these rooms were for changing, with offices in the corners. The flat roof above them served as a balcony, having a brick parapet wall to the outer side and concrete post and tubular rails inwards. The finish was in good engineering brick with harled panels. On the north side of the pool two steel girder flights of steps met at a central diving platform on a level with the balcony, to which they also provided access. The parapet rose to a shallow gablet behind the diving platform and supported a flagstaff. Further steps in its height occurred at the corners to produce turret-like features. The balcony floor extended over open brick-pillared shelters inset into the outside of the building between the offices. The main entrance was in the centre of the north facade and had a lofty brick arch. Narrow horizontal slit windows served the changing rooms, with larger windows for the offices.

In October 1971 a new indoor swimming pool was completed on the other side of the Grange Burn and a year later the old pool was demolished.