

# The East Neuk sundial trail

## The East Neuk Sundial Trail to St. Andrews by Dennis Cowan



This sundial trail starts from the Forth Road Bridge (the main A90 road from Edinburgh) which spans the River Forth between South Queensferry and North Queensferry and is only a few miles from Scotland's capital city. It ends in St. Andrews, the home of golf where another sundial trail is available (the St. Andrews Sundial Trail).

St. Andrews now of course is almost as famous in some quarters for being the place where Prince William and Kate Middleton first met at the University in the town.

Another sundial trail is available for the return journey which takes a different route back to your starting point at the Forth Road Bridge (the North Fife Sundial Trail).

The East Neuk Sundial Trail takes the scenic (and longer and much slower) coastal route to the East Neuk of Fife (neuk is an old Scots word for corner) via Inverkeithing, Aberdour, Burntisland, and the fishing villages of Elie and Crail and then on to St. Andrews. A car will be needed and a full day is required. The journey to St. Andrews is approximately 53 miles and around 2½ hours driving time from the Forth Road Bridge plus stopping and viewing times.

There are eight sundials at six locations on this route plus four options to see another five sundials. These options are identified in the text.

If you are doing all three trails mentioned above and using this trail as the return leg from St. Andrews, you will obviously have to reverse the directions.

There are numerous options for meals or snacks in St. Andrews and the Anstruther Fish Bar on this trail is highly recommended for either a sit-in or take-away meal.

The map on the following page is from Google Maps.



<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=110052020879419928295.00049290cddedd60d7fb6&ll=56.344136,-2.803059&spn=0.017362,0.055661&z=15>

With reference to the map on the previous page, head north up the A90 from the Forth Road Bridge and leave at the first junction after the bridge on to the B981 to Inverkeithing. Head into **Inverkeithing** and park in the car park on the left hand side just before the town centre. Walk towards the town centre.

**No 1 - The sundial is on the market cross on your right at the junction of Bank Street and the High Street. The market cross (known as mercat cross in Scotland) was erected in around 1400, although the unicorn finial incorporating the sundial was not added until 1688.**



Drive through Inverkeithing and turn right at the roundabout on to the A921 towards Aberdour. Drive through Aberdour and park in the Railway Station car park. You may wish to take a look at the Railway Station – it is one of the most beautiful in the country and has won several awards. There is a footway at the far end of this car park direct to **Aberdour Castle** where the next three sundials can be seen.

**No 2 - The first sundial is a square stone dial situated in a niche in a projecting corner in the south face of the castle. It is dated 1635, although the date is no longer visible after its recent refurbishment. The initials WM and ACM are for William, Earl of Morton and Ann, Countess of Morton.**



The second sundial is located in the lawn in front of the castle and immediately in front of the previous sundial. It is a square stone carved dial face on top of a square ornamented pedestal, resting on four large balls, all sitting upon a raised circular pavement. It has an eight point compass inside a numbered scale and was originally at Aberdour House nearby. Unfortunately, the gnomon is broken.



The third sundial at Aberdour Castle is in the walled garden to the east of the castle. This is a cube dial with a truncated pyramid top resulting in eight dials surmounted by a ball finial with a rod gnomon passing through it. It includes an equation of time on one face. The dial is early 17<sup>th</sup> century resting on a 19<sup>th</sup> century column and was originally at Castle Wigg in Kirkcudbrightshire before being moved to Aberdour in 1972.



Return to the A921 heading east again, this time to **Burntisland**. Head for the town centre and park in the large car park that is in front of you as you continue down Cromwell Road at the bottom of the hill, from where the photos below were taken. The three faced sundial will be seen in front of you on the red sandstone building on the corner of the High Street and Rose Street.

**No 3 - These three huge rectangular sandstone attached dials, complete with gnomons, above the windows at 1st floor level form an original and essential part of the corner of this rather fine red sandstone Victorian building built in 1899. The mottos on the dials are East Face - "I count only the sunny hours", South East Face - "I mark time, dost thou" and South Face - "Time flies".**



Continue on the A921 once again, heading towards Kirkcaldy and passing the wonderful sands of Pettycur Bay on your way, where sand yachts can often be seen when the tide is out.



**OPTION A - A detour can be made to see the horizontal sundial in the War Memorial Gardens in Bennoch Road in Kirkcaldy. The modern octagonal dial plate replaced the original in 1991. Then head east on Victoria Road (B925) eventually meeting up with the A921 again.**

Follow the A921 yet again. Stay on the A921 as you pass through Kirkcaldy and look out for the roundabout where the A915 branches right towards Leven and take this road. If you reach the major roundabout with the A92 dual carriageway, you have missed the A915 and need to go right round the roundabout and retrace your steps back to the first roundabout, which is the A915. Take the A915, this time to the left. Follow the A915 until the A917 is reached

after Lundin Links. Follow the A917 to Elie. As you enter **Elie**, the main road turns sharply left. Ignore this turning and go straight on down School Wynd. At the "T" junction, turn right into South Street and this is the location of the next sundial.

**No 4 - The sundial will be seen above the doorway a short distance down the street on your right. The " Muckle Yett " was a fine old Scottish house in Elie, which, as it projected some ten or twelve feet into the street, had to be taken down in about 1860. On the projecting part there was an elaborate doorway which contained a curious sundial. The dial and doorway are still preserved in their new position on this house in South Street. On the doorway is the date 1682, and the initials of Alexander Gillespie, and his wife, Christian Small. There are two angled dials with three cup hollows above giving five faces in total. Only two gnomons of the original five remain in place.**



Return to the A917 again and head towards Crail. You will pass some lovely old fishing villages such as Saint Monance and Pittenweem on the way, which are well worth a detour to the harbour areas.

**OPTION B - From Pittenweem, a short detour can be taken to Kellie Castle where two sundials can be seen. There is an armillary sundial in the walled garden and an old cube dial on top of the doocot. Kellie Castle is three miles from Pittenweem and is signposted.**



Back on the A917, it is well worthwhile stopping in Anstruther where the Anstruther Fish Bar can be found opposite the harbour at 42 Shore Road. This restaurant won the UK Fish and Chip Shop of the Year in 2008/09 and has won the Scottish award several times. Many dignitaries have eaten there including Tom Hanks and Prince William. Due to its popularity a queue often extends into the street, but it is well worth the wait.

**OPTION C** - From Anstruther, a detour can be made to Dunino Churchyard by taking the B9131 road for about four miles to see the ancient sculptured stone which had been converted to a sundial in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but unfortunately it is hardly recognisable as such now. Only the remains of the gnomon give it away.



Continue on the A917 to Crail where a further two sundials can be seen. In **Crail**, just after the town centre, as the main road turn sharply left, go straight on into Marketgate and park there. The first sundial is in Marketgate on the left around 100 yards from the junction with the main road.

**No 5** - This is a square dial with cut away corners mounted on the corner of a house on the north side of Marketgate. The gnomon comes out of a sun's face at the top of the dial. The house has been recently renovated but thankfully the dial has been left intact. There is a motto in Latin, but the whole inscription is difficult to read.



For the next sundial walk down to the harbour and take the old footpath that climbs eastwards from the harbour. The sundial is located on the bend of the path.

**No 6 - This 17<sup>th</sup> century horizontal dial on a circular moulded shaft is in a serious state of disrepair and it is a wonder that it has survived at all in this extremely exposed position. It was originally sited at the harbour from where it was removed in 1833. It was relettered in 1890 but the gnomon surprisingly is about the only recognisable survivor now.**



**OPTION D** - Continue on the A917 towards St. Andrews passing Cambo Gardens on your right in about three miles. Entry to the gardens is normally via an honesty box (£4 in 2010) and there was a sundial here in the walled garden until 2007 when it was stolen, leaving only the pedestal in place. The Victorian walled garden is well worth seeing, as are the snowdrops with over 300 different varieties on display during February and early March. If you walk down through the woods you will emerge by the seashore at the wonderful Kingsbarns golf course.



Continue on the A917 to St Andrews. St. Andrews is a very busy town due to both its status as the home of golf and its world famous university, which is the oldest in Scotland and the third oldest in the English speaking world. Seven sundials can be seen in the St. Andrews trail.

If this trail has wetted your appetite and you would like to look at details and photographs of other sundials, then visit my website at [www.sundialsofscotland.co.uk](http://www.sundialsofscotland.co.uk).