

The St. Andrews sundial trail

The St. Andrews Sundial Trail by Dennis Cowan



This sundial trail is within the historic town of St. Andrews in Scotland, known around the world as the home of golf. Now of course it 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.

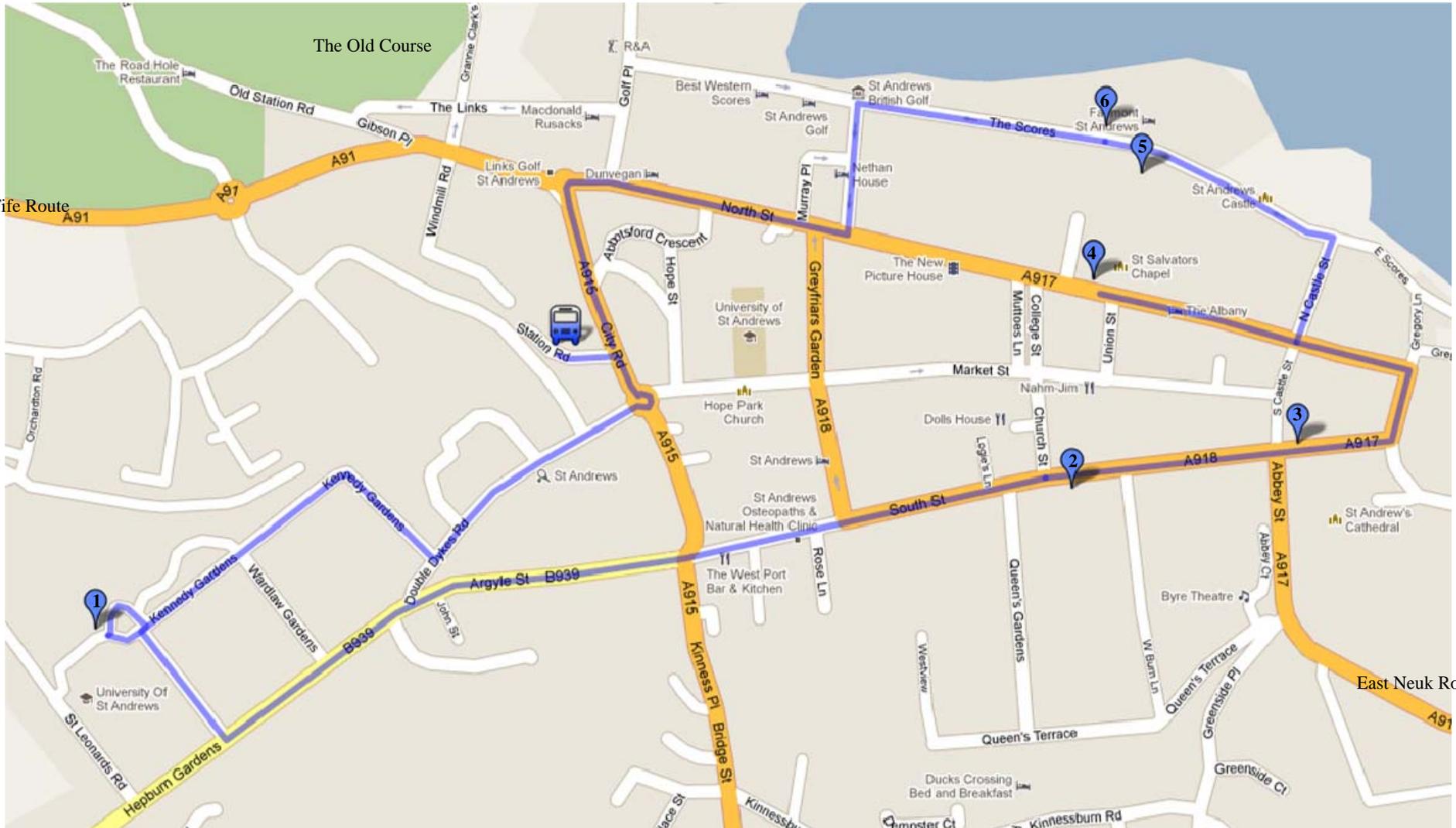
There are two other trails available (the North Fife and East Neuk Sundial Trails which can be followed to and from St. Andrews, but for these a car is required.

However if you are without a car, there is a regular bus service between Edinburgh and St. Andrews which takes around two and a half hours each way, so it is possible to go direct to St. Andrews by bus and view the sundials there. St. Andrews is a compact town and all the sundials are easily accessible on foot and would take around two hours walking and viewing time.

There are numerous options for meals or snacks in St. Andrews.

The map on the following page is from Google Maps.

North Fife Route



East Neuk Route

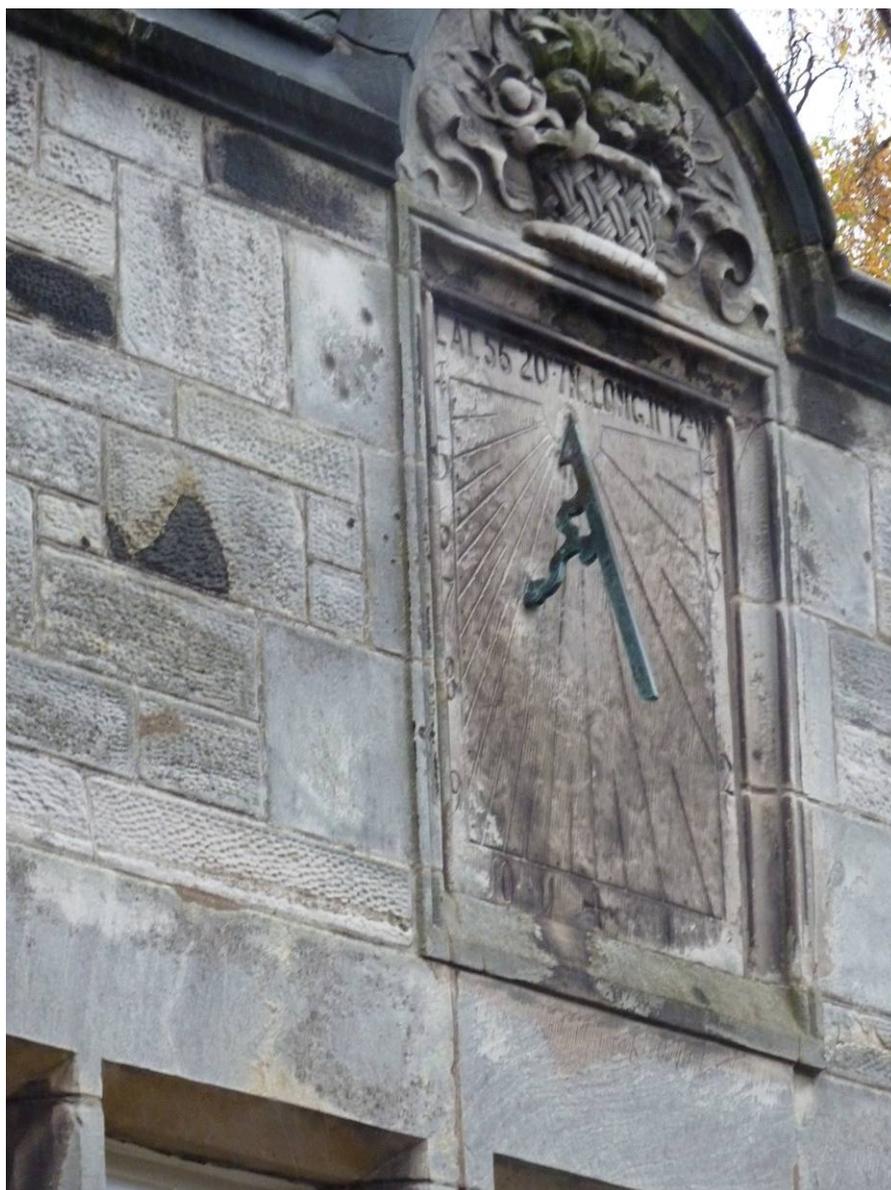
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There are seven sundials in this St. Andrews trail. If travelling to St Andrews by bus, then use the following directions with reference to the map on the previous page. If travelling by car, it may be best to park in Kennedy Gardens near sundial number 1, then drive to North Street and park there for the other sundials. However St. Andrews can be very busy at times and parking may be difficult. You may prefer to find a parking space wherever you can, and with reference to the map, pick up the trail at the most convenient point.

Leave the bus station and turn right along City Road to the first roundabout. Turn right along Double Dykes Road. Take the fourth right into Kennedy Gardens. Go along to the end of the road and proceed through the gates to the old wing of University Hall.

No 1 – This fine single face dial is probably from 1911, there is a wind vane above bearing that date. The dial is inscribed with “LAT 56’20.7”N and LONG 11’12”W”. Both the hour lines and half hour lines are marked.

University Hall was the first residence for female students in Scotland and has undergone many changes since it was opened in 1896 and extended in 1911. The residence has three buildings. Old Wing is the original. Lumsden is more recent and is connected to Old Wing and Wardlaw is a separate building of imposing Scots baronial style



Head towards the next sundial by turning right out of the gates where you entered previously, and go down Donaldson Gardens. At the “T” junction, turn left along Hepburn Gardens and continue along Argyle Street. Go straight over the main junction at City Road and continue along South Street. The third street on the left is Church Street. Just 20 yards further along South Street on the opposite side of the road is the entrance to St.

Mary's Quadrangle. (It may only be open during term time, but if so, you can still see the sundial in the distance through the locked gate to the quadrangle.)

No 2 - Go through the grey archway in South Street to St Mary's Quadrangle. A cube dial dated 1664 with four vertical dials on a tall cylindrical shaft with a moulded finial is situated in front of you. It is inscribed DWC 1664. (DWC = Dr Walter Comrie, one time Principal of St Mary's College).



Head back to South Street and continue to the right. The next sundial is located a few hundred yards further on, on the opposite side of the road just past South Castle Street at number 19 South Street.

No. 3 - A stone cube dial with three faces surmounted with a head, above a doorway with the name "John Gillespie" inscribed on the facing dial. This house once belonged to Prof. Adam Ferguson, one of the Enlightenment's great figures. He taught at the University of Edinburgh, and it was at his house in Edinburgh that Scottish poet and writer Robert Burns and Walter Scott respectively met for the first and only time, when Scott was an adolescent. The Professor eventually retired back to St. Andrews to this house.



Although with reference to the map, a shorter route to the next sundial can be taken, it is recommended to carry on along South Street to the "T" junction where you should turn left along the A917 trunk road (North Street). Continue down North St for 200 metres and you will see St. Salvator's Chapel on your right.

No. 4 – Look at the second buttress from the right and you will see a sundial scratched into the stonework. You may have to look very closely to see it. Although common in England, this type of dial is very uncommon in Scotland.



The gnomon is normally missing as in this example, but would have pointed straight out. It would not have recorded the same time throughout the year, but would have been used as a marker for services rather than as a timepiece.



Retrace your steps to North Castle Street (the first street on your left) and turn left. Go to the end of the street and turn left along The Scores. The next sundial is through the entrance to St. Salvators College at number 8. Go into the grassed square and the sundial will be seen on your left adjacent to the building.

No 5 – This is an 18th century square horizontal dial plate mounted on a later stone shaft. It came originally from Cults Manse in Fife.

Unfortunately the gnomon is broken.

St Salvator's College was founded in 1450 by Bishop James Kennedy. Several of the original medieval buildings survive, including the college chapel, tower, tenement building (adjoining to the west of tower, actually older than the adjoining tower, but much restored) and the Hebdomadar's building.

In 1528, the protestant martyr, Patrick Hamilton, was burned alive outside the college.

Return to The Scores and turn left. The location of the last two sundials is twenty yards further on, on the other side of the road at number 7. This is the Museum of the University of St. Andrews (MUSA).



The museum (free) is open from noon onwards.



No 6 – Go into the museum and go up the stairs and exit on to the roof terrace. The modern combination of a horizontal and an equatorial dial on a large cube will be seen in front of you. Made by Tim Chalk of Edinburgh, it has scales for British Summer Time as well as Greenwich Mean Time.

It has the motto "Neither can the wave that has passed be recalled - nor the hour that has passed return again."

There is also a telescope on the roof of this excellent vantage point and this can be used to look at the surrounding seashore and the town of St. Andrews itself.

Return down the stairs and turn to the right. An octagonal double horizontal dial of the William Oughtred type by Hilkieah Bedford of London and made between 1660 to 1680 will be seen on display. It was William Oughtred, an English mathematician, who first made use of the x as a multiplication sign. This sundial was originally at St. Mary's College and was blown off its pedestal by a German bomb in 1940 during the 2nd World War. It was known to have been re-erected on a window ledge in the Library in 1948, but luckily it has eventually made its way to this museum – a much safer location!



Having visited St. Andrews it would be a shame not to visit the home of golf itself. Continue down The Scores and this will lead directly to both the 18th green and the 1st tee of the Old Course. The Old Course is a public course and you can play a round of golf if:

- a) you are successful in the ballot for a tee;
- b) you can afford and are willing to pay the green fees of up to £140 (in 2011).

If you are unsuccessful with a) and b) above, you can still stand at the roadside right beside the final fairway and green and watch the lucky ones, or have a go at the putting green. You can always say that you have played St. Andrews! You can also walk over the famous Swilcan Bridge, or take a walk along the West Sands where scenes from the multi Oscar winning film "Chariots of Fire" were filmed in the 1980s. The Botanic Gardens and Castle are also well worth a visit.

To return to the bus station from the museum, continue down The Scores from the museum to the first street on your left (Murray Park). Continue down Murray Park and turn right at the "T" junction to North Street. Continue down North Street to the roundabout with City Road where you should turn left. The bus station is one hundred yards or so further on, on your right.

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.