

Welcome to the Royal Burgh of Auchtermuchty



The Coat of Arms of the Royal Burgh of Auchtermuchty

A Walking Tour

The tour starts on the next page and you will find a map to guide you through too.
At a leisurely pace it should take just over an hour. For now, let's start with some background information.

The name 'Auchtermuchty' is believed to originate from the Gaelic meaning "uplands of the wild boar". The town's coat of arms incorporates a wild boar along with a sower. The motto, 'Dum sero spero', meaning 'while I sow I hope', indicates the importance of agriculture locally.



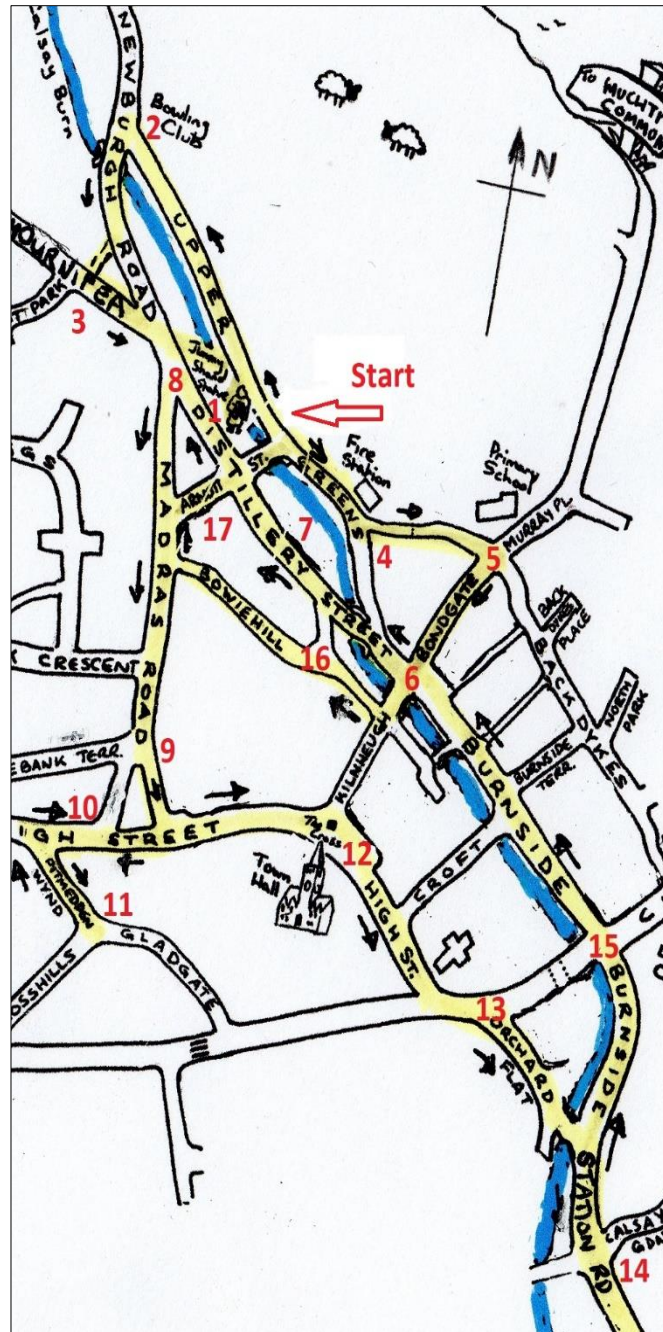
Original Burgh Seal
Granted in 1517

You will notice that the name is often shortened to 'Muchty' and most local people use this name.

The earliest documented evidence of a settlement at Auchtermuchty is dated 1293 and 'Utermokerdy' is referred to as a small agricultural settlement with a mill, brew houses and a blacksmith.

In the 1960s aerial reconnaissance revealed the outline of a Roman marching camp (a temporary camp) and in 1988 engineering excavations confirmed this. Covering 63 acres, the camp is thought to date from the 3rd century AD and could accommodate a legion of 6,000 men including cavalry.

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To begin your walk – Make your way to the statue of Sir Jimmy Shand which is marked on the map. After greeting Sir Jimmy, turn and walk over the small bridge across the burn. You will find yourself in **Upper Greens (1)**. Head north, with the burn on your left and take a moment to look around at the cottages. Can you hear the clickety clack of the old weavers' looms and spot the roofs that would have had thatch on them?

Hand loom weavers



A significant source of employment in Auchtermuchty from the mid-18th century to the mid-19th century was cottage hand loom weaving of linen.

For many years there was a huge demand for the finer linen cloth that could now be produced and as a result Auchtermuchty and its hand loom weavers enjoyed

many years of prosperity. Between the 1760s and 1820s the town's population doubled from 1,300 to 2,700. At the height of the industry over 1,000 looms were in operation in the parish of Auchtermuchty. This prosperity was not to last as mechanised weaving frames were being developed and were in operation in larger towns such as Dundee and Dunfermline.

Turning left, walk down **Newburgh Road (2)** a short distance and on the south side of a large bungalow, no.10a, you'll see a small pathway. Take this path to **Mournipea (3)**. It is a strange name with many spellings including Mournipae. In the Ordnance Survey name books of 1853-1855 this extract was found with various spellings – Murniepea/Mourneypea/Mornipae so take your pick! It also notes "A row of ten small dwelling houses of one story high each in good repair and all occupied by tradesmen. They are the property of Messrs. Simson of Auchtermuchty".

So, turn left down Mournipea to the junction with Newburgh Road and cross over to a pathway by a lamp-post which takes you to the weir. Turning to your right you will notice a high stone wall. This was the wall of the laide which used to run under Newburgh Road and along

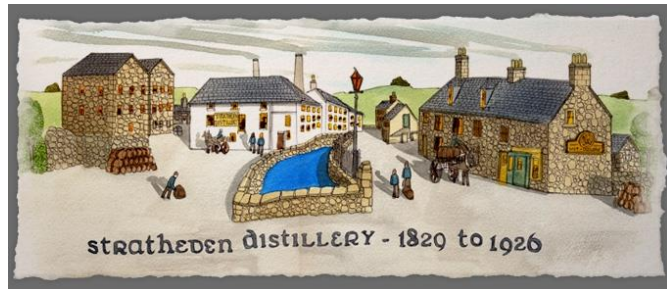
to the west of the current burn, powering many mills and factories. More of this later. Follow this high wall back to Sir Jimmy again.

Cross the small bridge into Upper Greens again, this time turn right. On your right, what is now houses was once a linen mill and then a potato warehouse. You will see a Historic Scotland plaque erected to mark local farmer Archibald Findlay's contribution as a pioneering potato breeder. He bred many popular varieties which helped feed the nation through two world wars and Majestic, in particular, has left a lasting legacy for today's breeders.

Turn up the hill at the Fire Station. This is **Back Dykes (4)** and you will arrive at the school. You will notice that the school now incorporates what was once one of 'Muchty's many churches. It is now the school's lunch hall and sports hall.

At this point if you feel energetic you can turn up to the left and stroll up the hill, through Broombrae Farm, until you come to Auchtermuchty Common. (About 1 mile) This is part of the land granted to the Burgh in the Royal Charter of 1517 – more later.

At the school turn right down **Bondgate (5)** to Burnside. For your safety, due to narrow pavements, it is best to cross the road and go over the bridge here.



This illustration shows what you would have seen looking from this bridge northwards.

Walk up to the next bridge and into **Distillery Street (7)**. Reaching the Community Centre, which was opened in 1990 by local lads, "The Proclaimers", look across at the old buildings opposite. You can just make out some writing... *Duty Free Warehouse No D1 and Duty Free Warehouse No2 D2*

Auchtermuchty once boasted its own widely acclaimed whisky distillery, which was founded in 1829 by Alexander Bonthrone of the Bonthrone family of Falkland, brewers in the area since the 1600s.

Bonthrone carried out extensive work, blasting out tons of solid rock from the burnside to create a lade (as spoken of previously) and an aqueduct to bring water into his distillery site. This water, to which Bonthrone attributed the quality of his whisky, was said to be "as pure and as sparkling as crystal".



The distillery ceased production in 1924. The maltings were in use until the 1970s and the bonded warehouses were used until 1989.

Continue to walk up **Distillery Street** - past Jimmy Shand again. This time cross the road and you will find yourself in **Madras Road (8)**. At the front of the row of houses here you will notice a hand pump and well. There would have been many wells, but few remain.

This street was originally named Back Wynd but was renamed after Madras House was built. This was built as a school with the lower parts being the schoolrooms and the upper flat the teacher's residence. This may have been a "Bell school" founded on the Madras principle of monitors, or more able pupils, assisting the teacher.

Dr Andrew Bell was Chaplain to the regiments of the East India Company in Madras, hence the connection. He also endowed both Bell Baxter High School in Cupar and Madras College in St Andrews.

As you arrive at the south end of Madras Road, you are presented with a choice of routes. On the right is Madras Road and to the left is **Parliament Close (9)** (which has no street name but is shown on old maps) – you will end up in High Street either way!

But before you go, look up at the chimney of the house beside the hairdresser's shop. It seems a very odd thing and nobody is sure who the man is but it is thought to be John Crombie a linen mill owner, who built the house.

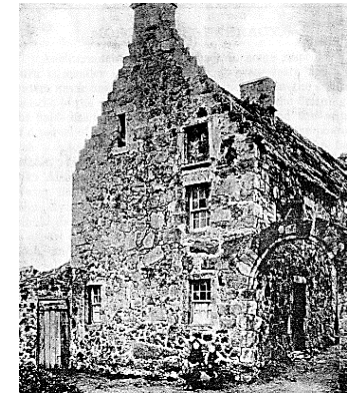
Now you are on the **High Street (10)**. Turn right and as you walk along try to imagine this with two-way traffic - including buses! This is how it was until the early 1990s.

Beyond the present-day Co-op, on your right you will see a cottage with a stone archway over the gate. This is Braehead House - note also a marriage lintel of 1772 and a wall mounted sundial. This archway (and probably the sundial) were originally from Pitmedden House See below.

From this point westwards, the High Street becomes the High Road which confuses many people looking for a particular address!

Turning left and walking a short distance into **Pitmedden Wynd (11)** you will see an old, high stone wall

(notice the huge boulders at the base of the wall). This wall marks the westmost boundary of Pitmedden House, the residence of the Factor to King James V and where the **Royal Charter of 1517** was said to have been signed.

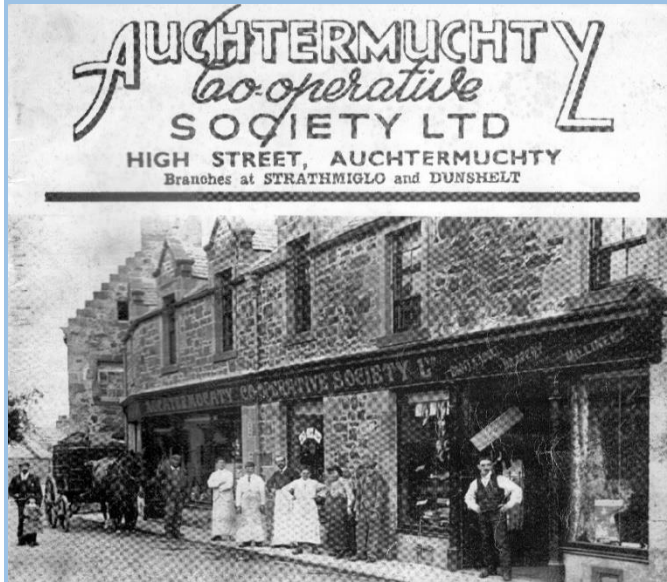


By this Charter, Auchtermuchty was created a **Royal Burgh** by the young King James V, in acknowledgement of the wishes of his late father James IV who had been killed at the Battle of Flodden in 1513. In return for taxes paid to the king, the Charter granted Auchtermuchty the right to have a Town House and Burgh Council to govern the town.

It stated that a market cross could be erected at which weekly markets could be held. An annual fair was permitted beginning on St. Serf's Day in July and lasting for 8 days. The people of Auchtermuchty were also granted a sizeable common to the north of the town, "to be enjoyed forever and in all time coming".

Copies of the Charter and the Seal can be seen inside the Parish Church. (Further down the High Street.)

Return to the **High Street** and heading east you will recognise the old Co-operative buildings which were built in the 1920s at a cost of £5000.



And 'Muchty folk didn't go short as the local Co-op offered a wide range of goods such as - *Groceries, Bakery, Butchery, Dairy, Off-licence, Tobacco, Clothing, Shoes, Evening Dress, Perfume, Hats, Household linen, Carpets, Furniture, Clocks & Watches, Kitchen goods, Electrical appliances, Radios, Bicycles, Upholstery, Wallpaper, Paint & Pigeon food.*

For the half year to March 1918, sales totalled nearly £20,000 - an increase of more than £1000 on the same period a year earlier. Quite an achievement! Imagine being able to buy all these goods right here on your doorstep!

The next building on your right is **Macduff House**. If you stand on the step of the Guide Hall on the left (which was once a bank) and look at Macduff House stonework you can make out a ring for tying up your horse and an old archway as well as other old openings. If you look way high up just under the guttering, you'll see the date stone. Being built in 1597 makes this the oldest remaining house in Auchtermuchty. Captain Moodie, the first Captain of The Cutty Sark lived here from 1911 – 1923.

Arriving at **The Cross (12)** you will see the site of the original market cross marked out on the ground with the date 1827 clearly visible in the centre. The **War Memorial**

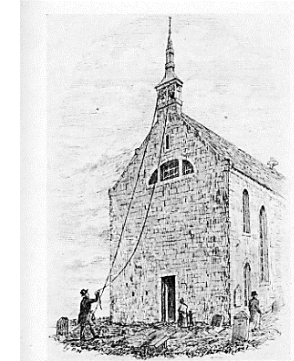
was erected in 1920. There is also the **Town House** and the **Jail**. The Town House with its Norman style tower was built in 1728, with the doorway and the windows added in the 1830s. The date on the clock is 1897. The Town Bell bears the inscription "Learn to number thy days" and still rings the curfew 100 times at 8pm every night. The word "curfew" is derived from the Old French "cuvrefeu" to "cover fire" and dates back to the Middle Ages when so many houses were thatched. The bell rang to remind householders to damp down their fires.

As a result of the decline in the linen hand loom weaving industry, Auchtermuchty fell on hard times and the Burgh Council was declared bankrupt in 1818. After a court case which ran for almost 10 years in the Court of Session, many of Auchtermuchty's assets had to be sold to pay off its debts. This included a large part of the common which had been granted by the **Charter of 1517** to the townspeople "*to be enjoyed forever and in all time coming*". Two of the town's mills and even church pews were sold. Some of the town councillors were actually put into their own jail!

This area known as **The Cross** was once the site of markets, meetings, council and commerce. If these walls could talk, what tales they could tell – even tales of camera crews and actors who spent time here in the 1990s filming scenes for 'Dr Finlay' when 'Muchty became Tannochbrae.



Continue down **High Street** to the Parish Church.



Auchtermuchty Church 1836

Auchtermuchty Church was first consecrated on 31 March 1245. It is mentioned in the Pontifical of Bishop de Barnham of St Andrews which is held in the Louvre in Paris. The present church was built in 1780 and it is assumed but not proven that it stands on the site of the earlier building. In 1838 the north aisle was added and in 1913, the pipe organ and the passion flower and grape vine stained glass windows were installed. In the graveyard you will find the headstone of Joseph Anderson who drowned in the Tay Rail Bridge disaster of 1879, Henry Brown who lived in three centuries and a headstone with a Green Man carved on it. (If you would like to see inside the church, and see the charter, the Session Clerk's details are on the notice board and access can usually be gained quite quickly.) At one time there were seven churches in Auchtermuchty.

At the bottom of the **High Street**, cross the main road to **Orchardflat (13)**. In the 1800s all the land to the west of this was given over to vast orchards, hence the name. The large building on your left was once a busy coaching house with stables, latterly known as the Royal Hotel. Crossing the bridge over the burn here you will find yourself in **Station Road (14)**. The old railway station was about 500m south from here and is now the site of Sterling Warehouse. (If you walk down the road and go beyond Sterling, then turn and look back at the warehouse, you can make out the old station building complete with its clock, below the upper floor of offices.)

Opposite the bridge at **Orchardflat**, you will see a building called White's Weigh (note the spelling). This was part of the factory buildings on this site previously occupied by **John White & Son**. At the beginning of the 18th century a young blacksmith called John White learned how to make weighing beams, essential for fair trading transactions. In 1715 he made a particularly fine example using the latest designs from Germany.



John White's son later joined his father in the business which then became John White and Son. This is now the oldest family firm in Scotland thanks to the dedication of eight generations of the White family. The original 1715 beam scale is still in the firm's possession.



For 3 centuries John White and Son played an important role in the life of Auchtermuchty, by providing employment and by helping to sustain a variety of local businesses. From its earliest days of blacksmiths with anvils, the firm continues to develop and innovate, employing state-of-the-art electronics and computerised control systems. They are now based in other premises in the town.

From **Orchardflat** bridge, walk down the path by the burn and on the right behind the wall, was once the site of a very large and noisy foundry. This was **Robert**



Ferlie and Sons, another significant employer in the town in days gone by. Founded in 1877 by Robert Ferlie, a local business man, the foundry later passed to his son, who continued to develop the foundry until his death in 1937 and John Carswell became proprietor. Family member Sandy Carswell was the last Provost of Auchtermuchty until 1975 when local government regionalisation took place. Ferlie's began by producing small, lightweight cast iron

components for the coal mining industry, but the business developed considerably during World War Two with increased demand from shipyards and dockyards. Every lunchtime, workers from both factories would meet to play football in Station Road Park. Together Ferlie's and White's have provided a livelihood for many 'Muchty families. Standing anywhere in this area you would have been able to see, hear and smell heavy industry at work!

Cross to the east side of the road and head back up Station Road which, after White's Weigh, becomes **Burnside** and **Burnside** then continues across the main road. Auchtermuchty folk are fortunate to have the choice of catching a bus to Stirling to the west, St Andrews to the east, Perth to the north and Kirkcaldy to the south.

Cross over to the **Victoria Hall (15)** which was built in 1865 and has been a focal point for both social and political activities ever since. In 1909 the Auchtermuchty Dramatic Society was formed and plays were regularly seen. The hall had its own projector room and "the pictures" were shown in the Hall until the late 60s. During the Second World War Ignacy Jan Paderewski, statesman, composer and concert pianist, played for Muchty's Polish officers who were housed locally. For many years Auchtermuchty Theatre Group have, and still do, put on plays here and every Christmas their Panto plays to packed houses for a week.

Further up Burnside on the left-hand side, you will see some old stone commercial premises. On the gable wall of the building by the new(ish) houses you might try to imagine a water wheel turning to power the mill.

The datestone is 1766 and the inscription reads "*By order of the Baillies and Town Counsel of the Burgh of Auchtermuchty was this mill erected*".

At the Cycle Tavern, cross over the bridge again, turn right and walk up **Bowiehill (16)** through the heart of Bonthrone's enterprise where mills, bonded warehouses and production lines were once busy workplaces.

At the top of Bowiehill, turn right onto Madras Road then right down **Arnott Street (17)**. You are back to the start.

So, what did you think of our town?

To the passer-by it may appear that 'Muchty has "gone to sleep" – but things are not quite as they may seem. There is a surprising amount going on in this very friendly place.

Admittedly most of the old manufacturers and shops have gone but there are still around 30 businesses operating in Auchtermuchty.

As well as these businesses, there is a welcoming and vibrant community here. There are Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. There are Rainbows, Brownies and Guides. There are Baton Twirlers, Skateboarders and Footballers. There are Bowlers, Keep fitters and Quilters. There's the Babies & Toddlers, the 'Muchty Monkeys, the Rural and the Guild.

The Community Centre is an important hub where many of these groups meet and the Community Council, the Community Association and the Community Trust fulfil important roles. Let's not forget the Lunch Clubs, Muchty in Bloom, Garden Club, Church visitors and the Heritage Group (who produced this leaflet). There is also a Library, Retained Fire Service, a GP Practice, a Pharmacy, a Dentist and a Care Home. Apologies to any group that may have been missed out.

And there is something about Auchtermuchty that seems to draw in creative people. When it is time for the annual North Fife Open Studios, it becomes clear just how much artistic talent there is around. You will find several Jewellers, Potters, Painters, Sculptors and Blacksmiths all opening their studios to delight and surprise visitors.

Who knew?

It just goes to show, you can never judge a book by its cover – or a town at first glance!

We hope you have enjoyed this short wander around our town and if you would like to learn more there is much to be found on the internet where you will also find contacts for various organisations.