

History of Gardenstown

Gardenstown was founded in 1720 by Alexander Garden, specifically as a fishing village and often known as Gamrie after the bay and the parish. On the hillside to the west, and visible from most parts of the village, are the remains of the Church of St John the Evangelist. This predates the village, being built in 1513, and celebrates the defeat of the Danes here in 1004 at The Battle of the Bloody Pits. The Church was still in use until 1827 and the kirkyard was last used in 1952. Above the beach on Castle Hill are very limited remains of the Castle of Findon.

The original village includes part of Main Street and the Garden Arms Hotel, the harbour area and a number of the small properties in Seatown. The properties in Seatown are built on a series of terraces cut into the hillside, with nothing but a narrow roadway separating the house from the water. This roadway was constructed in the 1930s and prior to this the only access was by foot to the rear.

The picturesque harbour was once home to a busy salmon and herring fleet with a peak of 92 boats operating from the harbour in 1900. Main Street was the commercial heart of the village, and many small shops operated elsewhere from individual houses. The Church of Scotland dates from 1899 and replaced an earlier one built in 1856.

By the 1920s Gardenstown and Crovie together housed around 250 fishermen and 50 fishing boats, and this number declined further over the following years in the face of competition from larger vessels operating from other ports.

Gardenstown grew at Crovie's expense after the great storm of 31 January 1953 which washed away the path between the villages together with stretches of Crovie's sea defences and a number of houses and sheds. Residents moved to Gardenstown which started to expand further up the hillside. The total population today numbers just over 700.

Today the harbour offers a safe haven for small inshore fishing boats as well as pleasure craft, and provides the village focus for activities including the Harbour Gala. The Heritage Centre, open during the summer or by arrangement on 01261 851340 houses a display of historical photos, stories, poems and artefacts.

Other facilities in the village include a doctors surgery, a primary school, the Garden Arms public house and hotel, a Spar general store, a small restaurant at the harbour (booking essential) and several places of worship.