

QR Trails Stonehaven

The Market Square & Town Hall

The Market Square was “feud in perpetually” to the residents of Stonehaven as the centre piece of the “New Town” established by the 4th Robert Barclay Laird of Ury in 1795. The Square is two acres in size and the building within it and those surrounding it on all sides conform to a Georgian style.

It was Robert Barclay’s son Captain Barclay-Allardice in 1826 who established the market buildings on the square with open arcades or piazzas for the accommodation of market day stalls, known as “pends” or covered ways. On the upper floors were the County Offices.

In 1827 Public subscriptions of £250 were raised to fund the construction of a steeple, clock and bell tower. In 1856 the steeple was extended to its present form and height of 130ft.

On the south west side (the “Plain Stones”) there once stood a stone trough where piped water on market days refreshed cattle, horses & goats!

The Square was also the site of the twice yearly “feeing” where the wages or fee for farm labourers was fixed for the next 6Mths. This tradition is remembered today albeit as a holiday market on the first Saturday in June where residents dress-up and local organisations/charities create stalls of every description that cover the Square.

On the North East corner of the Square is a water fountain constructed of four varieties of granite: Aberdeen, Peterhead, Kemnay & Norwegian. It was presented to the Town in 1897 by Mr George Barrie ...lawyer, and resident of Stonehaven.

It was also the site of a Bronze Age cist dug up by workman in 1934 containing remnants of a skeleton. It is thought that the Square cover an ancient burial ground over 3000 years ago.

On the South side is the house of Robert Thomson (the inventor of the pneumatic tyre). Each June R. W. Thomson is remembered by a Vintage Car Rally.

On the North side stands the Royal Hotel built in 1827 and the Italianate Town Hall which was built, in 1878, with voluntary contributions at a cost of £4000. The Town hall (a listed B building) houses a collection of etchings and portrait of Field Marshal Keith. This famous soldier was the brother of the 10th Earl Marischal (the last Earl Marischal) whose allegiance to the Stuarts and the defeat at Flodden in 1715 lead to the forfeiture of the Keith family estates. The Town Hall was taken over by the Stonehaven Town Council in 1902 by Act of Parliament of that year.

Currently a Town Hall Trust has been set-up to run the activities within the Town Hall and the transfer of the ownership to the Trust is under discussion with Aberdeenshire Council and the Church of Scotland.