

## Kinneil Estate - 2000 years of history

Kinneil Estate is one of Falkirk District's most remarkable areas of parkland. Almost 2000 years ago, it was the location for a Roman fortlet, attached to the southern side of the Antonine Wall, the Roman empire's northernmost frontier.

Many years later, after the Romans had given up their struggle against the northern Britons, Kinneil was to be the site of a medieval village, its church belfry clearly visible to the captains of ships making for Bo'ness harbour.

In 1323, the Duke of Hamilton acquired Kinneil Estate, and although Hamilton House was the family's main seat, their house at Kinneil became an important residence, conveniently located for Edinburgh and the Royal Court.

Centuries later, James Watt was to test the prototypes of his revolutionary steam engine, at his workshop in the shadow of the impressive Kinneil House.

After the First World War, the former Bo'ness Town Council purchased the woodland area and surrounds of Kinneil House under the Public Parks Act, for the general public to have access for walks and passive recreation.

The Estate is now owned by Falkirk Council, and is open to the public all year round. It now contains a pitch and putt course, putting green, woodland walks and a walled garden, as well as the historical features mentioned in this page.

Tours of the Estate are available, booking through Callendar House.

### Kinneil Museum

The museum building dates from the late 17th century, and was previously the stable block for Kinneil House. Aspects of Bo'ness history are presented by displays of exhibits on the lower floor, in particular Bo'ness pottery. On the upper floor the exhibition '2,000 years of history' tells the story of Kinneil Estate from the Roman period.

### Kinneil House

Set in the magnificent Kinneil Estate, the house can be viewed from the outside, but is closed indefinitely to the public. The Hamilton family constructed the existing building during the 16th and 17th centuries, but they probably had a residence on the site as far back as the 14th century. The house was later leased to various tenants, including John Roebuck, who was a partner in the Carron Company, and the philosopher Dugald Stewart.

### Kinneil Roman Fortlet

The fortlet was attached to the rear of the Antonine Wall, built AD 142, and would have housed about 20 soldiers. A gravel road ran from the south to north through the fortlet with gateways at either end, the positions of which are now marked by timber posts. Within the fortlet, timber posts also mark the positions of original Roman posts which were found during the 1981 excavation. Some finds are on display in Kinneil Museum.

### James Watt's Cottage

This small building was erected in 1769 as a workshop for the famous Scottish inventor, James Watt. At the time, he and Dr. John Roebuck were joint patent-holders in a project to develop an improved type of steam engine. Watt chose to test the prototype of his engine here in order to avoid the risk of his improvements being copied. The large cylinder standing adjacent to the cottage is reputedly from an engine erected by Watt at one of Roebuck's Bo'ness coal pits. The Gil Burn, which runs behind the cottage, provided a plentiful supply of water.

### Kinneil Church

Only the western gable of the church, with its double belfry, now remains standing. This once acted as a landmark for ships entering Bo'ness harbour. The church formerly served a large parish, including the medieval village of Kinneil, the site of which lies in the meadow to the south. The building dates back to the 12th century, and one of its surviving bells, on display in Kinneil Museum, is dedicated to St Catherine.

### West Pond

During summer the pond and its margins put on a colourful display of yellow flag, water crowfoot, marsh grasses and wood grasses. Water fowl which may be seen on the pond include mute swan, mallard, coot, moorhen, and little grebe.

### Kinneil Wood

The wood was in existence in the eighteenth century and at present includes plantations of Sitka Spruce and Scots Pine. In a clearing in the centre of the wood were once the estate kennels and aviary. At the edge of the wood anemone, bugle, foxglove and lesser celandine can be seen in Spring and Summer.