

# Leith's history - in seven phases

## 1. Early years:

**C12<sup>th</sup> Medieval wharf edges** (in the Shore area)

**1434 The King's Wark** (or fortification, begun by James I)

## 2. Medieval:

**1486 First bridge** (Abbot's Bridge across the Water of Leith, at Coal Hill)

**1493 St Ninian's Church** (Leith's oldest surviving building)

**1610 Lamb's house** (For many years Leith's finest merchant's house)

**1682 The Vaults** (The vaulted cellars are thought to date back to before 1200)

## 3. Military:

**1548 Leith fortifications** (Begun by Mary of Guise)

**1560 Siege of Leith** (Mary of Guise and her French troops besieged by an English army)

**1655 Citadel** (Built for Cromwell, as part of his plan to subdue Scotland)

## 4. Port expansion - advent of Leith's modern industrial period, centre-of-mass moves seaward:

**1770 First dry dock** (Sandport St.)

**1778 Second bridge** (Fishquay Bridge, at W. end of Tolbooth Wynd - a drawbridge)

**1799 Rennie's wet docks** (First in Scotland - created a modern, always accessible dockyard)

**1800 Great Junction Street** (Formed as fast route from Leith Walk to new docks)

**1812 New Custom House** (Built in Commercial St.)

**1838 Gladstone's philanthropic benefactions** (Sir John had owned 2,508 slaves)

## 5. Industrial revolution:

**1832 First railway** (A horse-drawn operation, comes to Tower St.)

**1846 Leith Citadel railway** (Opened. Soon Leith boasted seven railway termini)

**1871 Victoria Swing Bridge** (Hydraulically powered. UK's longest clear span swing bridge)

**1881 Edinburgh Dock** (Opened)

**1885 Henderson Street** (Improvement Scheme)

**1904 Imperial Dock** (Opened)

**1905 Electric tram** (Arrives)

**1911 Christian Salvesen & Co** (are operating the largest whaling fleet in the world)

## 6. Post-industrial decline:

**1945 A rapid drop set in** (to the fortunes of Leith as a port, and as a centre of ship building)

**1949 Abercrombie's map** (of distribution of the multitude of small industries across Leith)

**1949 Abercrombie's plan** (for a 'motorway' with 4 giant roundabouts in central Leith)

**1950 Banana flats** (Iconic brutalist megastructure, became notorious for '80s drug abuse)

**1968 Leith's last railway closed**

**1983 Mortgage blacklist.** Huge 1-km-radius Health and Safety exclusion zone around docks

## 7. Yuppification and gentrification:

**1984 The Cooperage** (Built early C19<sup>th</sup>) Conversion to flats marks the start of yuppification

**2012 Leith postcode** named as most desirable in the Scotland among young professionals

**2023 Michelin guide** crowns Leith as new foodie capital of Britain with most stars per sq. m