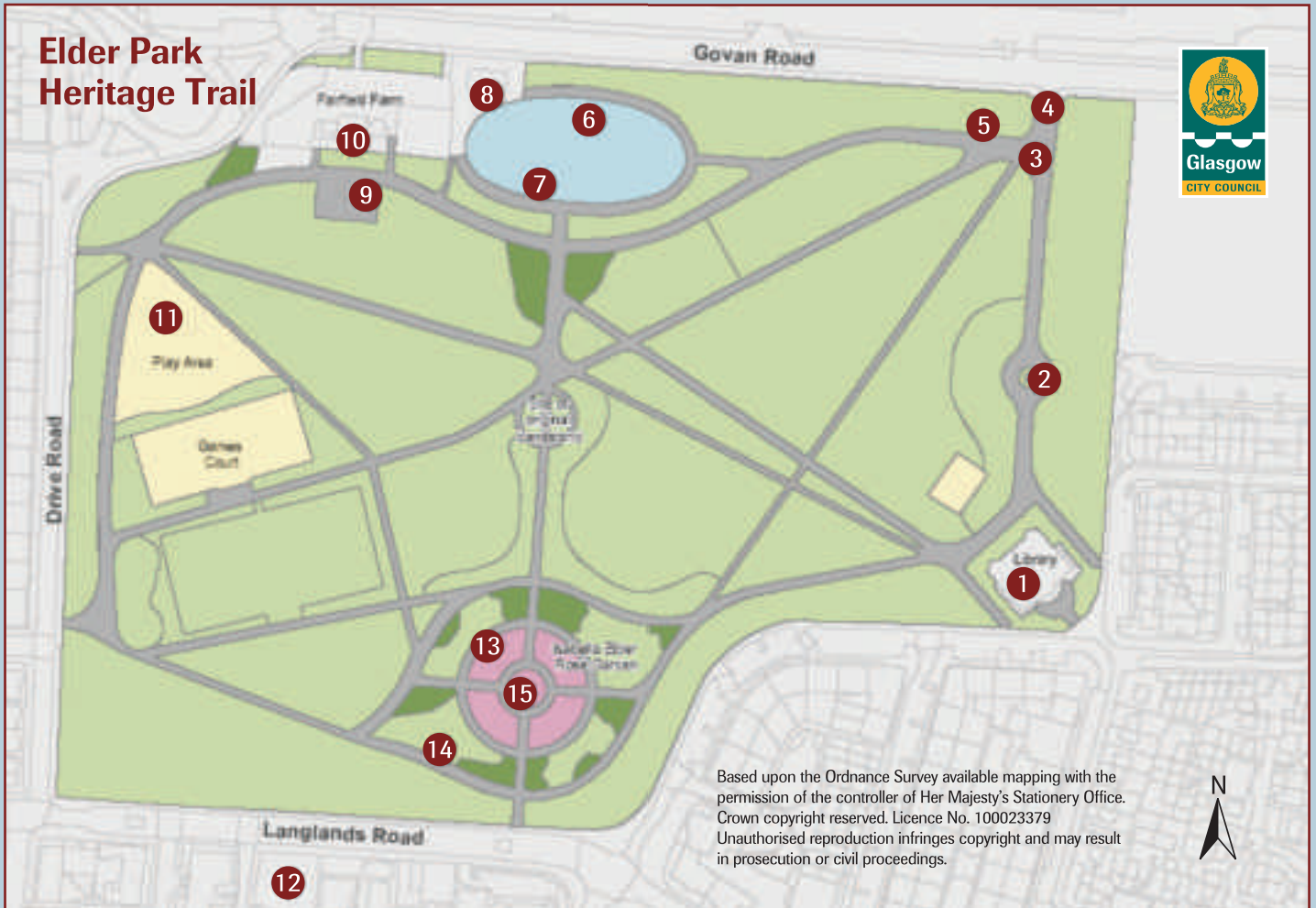




Elder Park Heritage Trail





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Introduction

Elder Park has an area of 37 acres and was laid out by John Honeyman, of architectural practice Honeyman & Keppie. The Park is located within the historic Burgh of Govan and was presented to the Burgh by Mrs Isabella Elder, in affectionate remembrance of her husband, John and of his father, David Elder. This act of generosity on the part of Mrs Elder is the first example of a private individual presenting a public park to the City of Glasgow or any of its suburbs, - an example which has since been followed by more of Glasgow's citizens.

In donating the park Mrs Elder provided some respite from their grim and unhealthy living conditions that workers were forced to endure.

The bye-laws at that time included no washing or drying of clothes, no discharging of firearms and no furious riding or driving. Another stipulated that 'no person shall wade, bathe or fish in the lake'. Anyone breaching these bye-laws would be liable to pay a penalty not exceeding 40 shillings for each offence.

It should be recognised that Elder Park once served a population of 60,000 when shipbuilding on the Clyde was at its height; however, recent population statistics for Govan suggested around 16,000 inhabitants.



Looking south to John Elder



Elder Park Heritage Trail

On behalf of Glasgow City Council, welcome to Elder Park. Please enjoy your visit. The park is located just west of the historic burgh of Govan and is only a 10 minute walk from Govan Cross Subway. The park can be easily accessed from the surrounding streets; Govan Road, Drive Road and Langlands Road.

The trail has a number of points of interest and offers a welcome retreat from the surrounding busy streets. Toilet facilities are available within Elder Park library.

Elder Park Trail Route

Beginning at Elder Park Library follow the suggested route which should take around one hour to complete, allowing for a brief stop at each point of interest around the park and back to the library.

1 Elder Park Library



Elder Park Library

The library is a Category 'A' listed building. It was constructed during 1902-03 and is the design of architect Sir John James Burnet (1857-1938) who studied in Paris. Other buildings designed by him were; the Barony Church on High Street and the Cenotaph in George Square a focal point in the George Square Heritage Trail.

It is an Edwardian single storey building in the design of a park pavilion constructed in blonde sandstone. The building is influenced by French and Austrian Baroque styles with a curved colonnade dominating the entrance, above which is the Govan coat of arms.



Elder Park Library

There are numerous columns along the curved façade creating an unusual visual effect. The building is topped with a well proportioned dome. The original gates and railings are exquisite cast iron features of the park.

Elder Park Library is the oldest general public library in Glasgow and it contained 'a News Room, general Reading Room, Ladies Reading Room, and Committee Room, private room for Librarian and a Children's Library'. The library was another gift donated to the people of Govan from Mrs Isabella Elder, which is significant as it was the first library provided this way in Glasgow. Mrs Elder provided £10,000 to meet the cost of building the library and the purchase of books; she gave a further £17,000 to fund the maintenance of the library. Among the conditions attached to the gift is, that it must be opened on Sundays at suitable hours and this stipulation is one of the main conditions of the gift.

The foundation stone was laid on the 4th October 1902 by ex Bailie Andrew Williamson convenor of the parks



committee after which a banquet was held in the general reading room.



Andrew Carnegie and Isabella Elder at Library opening ceremony

The library was opened on September 5th 1903 by Scots/American industrialist Andrew Carnegie, who never visited any of the libraries that he later funded in the city; these were opened by local dignitaries. Elder Park Library is the only surviving Glasgow branch library which pre-dates Carnegie's gifted libraries.

2. John Elder Statue

The statue of John Elder (1824-1869) erected in 1888, by public subscription, is a Category 'B' listed structure sculpted by Sir Joseph Edgar Boehm (1834-1890) and cast by James Moore of Thames Ditton in Surrey. It portrays John Elder standing with his hand resting on a small scale model of his compound steam engine pioneered by Randolph Elder & Co in the early 1850s. The true size of the Compound Steam Engine is 15 to 20 times the size of the model. John Elder's Compound Engine reduced ships' fuel consumption by 30 to 40%. The first vessel built with this engine was the S.S. Brandon, launched in 1854. Prior to this engine, ships on long voyages had actually resorted to burning part of their cargo as fuel, so as to reach their destinations.

John Elder is looking towards the shipyard which he helped create.

The statue was the result of a popular movement amongst the working men of Govan, brought about by the respect in which Elder was held by his former employees. The plinth has plaques on all four sides but the inscription on the south side sums up the respect in which Elder was held by his former employees “His unwavering efforts to promote the welfare of the working classes, his integrity of character, firmness of purpose and kindness of heart, CLAIM equally with his genius, enduring remembrance”.



John Elder Statue

The foundation stone for the statue was laid on the 21st April 1888 and it contained a sealed glass jar containing portraits of John, David and Isabella Elder; along with a medal, coins and a copy of the current Govan Press newspaper. The statue was unveiled on the 28th July 1888, by the Marquis of Lothian, Secretary of State for Scotland at that time, after the Prince of Wales, in Glasgow to make arrangements for the Queen's forthcoming visit to the International Exhibition, respectively declined the invitation.

board, the order was given to cast off and tugs towed the giant submarine out of the basin of Fairfield's yard to move slowly down the Clyde. K13 was 339 feet long and displaced on the surface 1,800 tons, figures greater than those of the largest destroyers at that time.

After making a third dive the boiler room flooded due to openings that failed to close properly and the submarine sank in 20 metres of water.

The first rescue vessel, Gossamer, arrived at around 22:00 and divers were sent down at daybreak. The divers were delayed since Gossamer had a diver but no suit, and the first diver to attempt to contact the submarine had a damaged suit which nearly flooded.

Despite the lack of proper escape apparatus, the captain Lieutenant-Commander Godfrey Herbert, and the captain of K14, Captain Goodhart attempted an escape to the surface by using the space between the inner and outer hatches of the conning tower as an airlock. Herbert reached the surface alive but Goodhart's body was later found trapped in the superstructure.

For an incredible fifty-seven hours the 47 survivors were trapped in the submarine. They were finally able to climb out through a hole cut in the plating on the forward deck. Sadly thirty-two other men, including six shipyard workers, lost their lives. K13 was raised to the surface six weeks after she sank and in mid March was towed into Fairfield's for refitting and then saw service as HMS K22. The number 13 was never again given to a Royal Navy submarine.

The inscription on the monument reads "Sacred to the memory of those named who lost their lives in HM Submarine K.13 in the Gareloch 29th January 1917.

A metal plaque with the inscription, 'In Memory of all Allied Submariners W.W.II still on 'patrol' by families and friends', has been added to the base of the monument.



There is a memorial to the disaster in Carlingford, New South Wales, Australia, paid for by the widow of Charles Freestone, a leading telegraph operator on K13 who survived the accident to later emigrate and prosper in Australia.



K13 Monument, Carlington, Australia

The Australian memorial was unveiled on 10 September 1961 and has the inscription “This memorial has been created in memory of those officers and men of the Commonwealth who gave their lives in submarines while serving the cause of freedom. It is called the “K13” memorial in particular memory of those lost in HM Submarine K13.”

Another K13 monument to this tragedy stands in Faslane Cemetery, a simple grey granite obelisk.

4 Main Entrance, Govan Road

The main gateway to Elder Park was an elaborate entrance which is listed Category 'B'. There are six octagonal sandstone pillars with ornate caps which date back to 1883-84. The two centre pillars feature fretwork panels and carved caps topped with ornamental lanterns. The gates were originally cast iron but have been replaced with mild steel retaining the original design. Curved stone walls support iron railings with fleur-de-lys finials.



Elder Park Gates 1910

The pillars were carved by James Young who studied under John Mossman. James Young is also known for John Honeyman's Coats Observatory in Paisley, 1881. The gates were restored in 1995 but are now missing. It is proposed to restore this historic main entrance to the Park in 2011.

5 Chessboard



Chessboard

Adjacent to the chessboard sat a single storey shelter built c1950 as a place where 'old retired gentlemen' could meet to talk and play games such as dominoes and billiards. The giant outdoor chessboard was also used by the shelter members for many hours of entertainment.



6 Pond



Boating Pond

The boating pond is 380 feet long, 165 feet broad and 2ft 6inches deep and was constructed by using a layer of bitumen sandwiched between 2 layers of concrete in 1883. In laying out the park Mrs Elder had not forgotten the wants of a shipbuilding community such as Govan with retired shipyard workers who built and sailed model yachts, passing their skills onto younger generations. This practice is still carried out by the members of Elder Park Model Boat Club, which was established in 2000.

7 George Wylie Statue

“The Launch” is a sculpture of the bow of a ship complete with champagne bottle, fabricated in brushed steel on top of a quarried stone plinth. Standing 4 metres high it was erected in the pond on June 5th 1998 commemorating shipbuilding in the area by renowned artist George Wylie. Beneath the champagne magnum are the names of Wilf and Simmy who assisted George Wylie as he sculpted in the pipe fitting rooms of Kvaerner Shipyard (formerly Fairfield's) where it was completed over two days.



George Wylie Statue

8 Boating Pavilion

The boating pavilion was built c 1930 as a single storey building in red brick with red sandstone cills, mullions. The building was divided into two sections, the eastern section would have been used to store the model yachts and the bay windowed western section would have been a meeting place. The pavilion was refurbished in 2009 and is shared by Park Villa Football Club and Elder Park Model Boat Club. The model boat club carry on the tradition of constructing model boats and sailing them in the pond and are just as passionate as their predecessors.



Pavilion

9 Portico

The Category 'B' listed Italianate Portico is the original entrance to the former mansion house of the Linthouse Estate which was built in the style of David Hamilton (1768-1843).



Linthouse Mansion 1870

Probably the best-known part of Hamilton's practice consisted of private housing – from the small suburban villa to the huge country mansions of the wealthy landowner. They are in many and varied styles, and in some, the influence of Robert Adam is apparent. Many of these houses have been mistakenly attributed to Adam, owing to the similarity between both architects' external treatment.

The segmental-arched tripartite opening has numerous parallels in Hamilton's work (eg Moore Park) and the steps compare with the Italian style St Fillan's Villa (now the Manor Park Hotel, near Skelmorlie).

Towards the close of the 17th century Linthouse estate was the property of City Chamberlain, James Spreull, who sold the property to the banker Robert Watson (of Robert & James Watson). Robert Watson had the old villa pulled down and erected on its site the mansion house where he resided for many years. After 1832 the estate changed hands again, being sold to Michael Rowand, cashier of the Ship Bank (founded in the Bridegate in 1794). He died in 1858, and after ten years the estate and 32 acres of land was purchased in 1868 by the shipbuilders Alexander Stephen & Sons. The house remained in use as offices connected to the shipyard but as the shipyard grew the mansion house was demolished in 1920. The Portico was rescued by the Old Govan Club. Reputedly retrieved from the rubble and carried away in wheel barrows by locals. It was erected in the park in 1921.

10 Farm House

The former farmhouse of the Fairfield Farm reflects the site's agricultural use prior to its incorporation in the original park design of John Honeyman in 1883. Category 'B' listed the farmhouse c.1800 which predates the park is a simple one and a half storey building, constructed in random rubble blond sandstone with a slate roof.

Symmetrical single storey pavilion wings with open verandas supported on finely detailed cast iron columns were added shortly after the park was established. Their original purpose was to provide Ladies and Gentlemen's 'waiting rooms'.

Today the site is used by local people and community groups developing the Fairfield Community Market



Garden. The aim of this project is to provide food locally and expand into community environmental work. The project was launched on Saturday 28th August 2010.

11 Play Area



Play Area

This modern play facility was completed in the early summer of 2009 after a period of close co-operation with various groups resulted in an agreed strategy of improvements to active play facilities. The Friends of Elder Park and Govan Youth Information Project carried out surveys which allowed Land and Environmental Services to develop a play design that would suit local wishes.

The facility caters for toddlers with swings, multi play unit with slide and a roundabout, and for older children there is a death slide and wizzer roundabout.



Games Court

In addition to the play area a new all purpose games court was developed on the site of the former tennis courts.

12 Elder Cottage Hospital



Elder Cottage Hospital

Between 1902 and 1904, Elder Cottage Hospital was constructed on the corner of Langlands Road and Drumoyne Drive just to the south of the park to provide free medical care for the people of Govan. Isabella Elder had originally intended it to be a Maternity Hospital with an all female staff, but once built and equipped, it was decided that it would be more useful as a General Hospital. It consisted of 30 beds in two wards named Florence Nightingale and Sophia Jex Blake after two contemporaries of Mrs Elder. It possessed one of the earliest X-Ray Departments in the country and had both medical and surgical wards that could cater for injured shipyard workers who would otherwise have had to travel via Glasgow a distance of some 10 miles to the Western Infirmary as there was no direct crossing point across the River Clyde. The Hospital was built mainly due to the generous donation of £50,000 by Isabella Elder to establish a hospital in the area and build training houses for the nurses of the David Elder Hospital on Langlands Road.



In 1948 it became a surgical unit under the Board of Management for Glasgow South Western Hospitals. The hospital was transferred to the South Western District of the Greater Glasgow Health Board in 1974. It closed in 1987 and was converted to residential use.

13 Isabella Elder Rose Garden



Isabella Elder Rose Garden

The Isabella Elder Garden is the main ornamental garden component of the original design by Honeyman, which has a singular character and charm, much appreciated by the local community. Restoration work to the Rose Garden was completed in 2010.

There are four themed benches located within the rose garden which depict scenes of a paddle steamer, the Rotundas and Titan crane.



Paddle Steamer Bench

During the early part of the 20th century the Clyde was full of pleasure craft sailing from Glasgow's Broomielaw "doon the watter" to the Clyde coast and islands of Bute and Arran. The paddle steamer *Waverly*, built in 1947, is the last survivor of these fleets, it is also the last sea-going paddle steamer left in the world and still sailing on the Clyde.

The Rotundas were the first tunnel under the Clyde. Parliamentary approval had been given in 1889 for a pedestrian and vehicle tunnel under the Clyde between Finnieston and Mavisbank Quay. On July 15th, 1895 the tunnel opened for business. The vehicle tunnel closed in 1943 but the pedestrian tunnel stayed in use until April 1980.

There are three Titan Cranes remaining from a bygone era of shipbuilding on the upper Clyde. The first is located at the former John Brown Shipyard in Clydebank which was famous for building the *Queen Mary* and both *Queen Elizabeth* liners, as well as a number of other vessels such as *HMS Hood*. The second is in the former Barclay Curle and Co yard opposite Fairfields (now BAE Systems). The third is the "Finnieston Crane" at Stobcross Quay built for the Clyde Navigation Trust. The crane had a lifting capacity of 175 tons and was used to lift boilers and engines into new ships, and load heavy goods such as tanks and locomotives.

14 SS Daphne Memorial

This memorial was erected in Mrs Elder's Rose Garden in 1996 to commemorate the lives lost in the world's worst shipping disaster (at that time). The bronze plaque was sculpted by John McArthur (a former plater with Fairfields) to a design by the Govan Practical and Historical Art Group and depicts the partially submerged hull of the cargo vessel *SS Daphne* in the River Clyde. In the background can be seen the various dockland buildings of the north bank of the river,



opposite the Govan shipyards. Mounted upon a granite stone cube, the plaque commemorates the SS Daphne, a 500 ton Cargo passenger ship built for the Laird Line's Irish Trade which capsized during her launch at Alexander Stephen & Sons at Linthouse on the 3rd July 1883.



SS Daphne Memorial

She keeled over and sank as she entered the water with the loss of 124 workers of various professions. Included, were a number of apprentices ages ranging from 14 to 20 years. Most workers were trapped below decks in holds, engine-room and cabins in which they were working.



SS Daphne

Five small rowing boats from the shipyard of Barclay, Curle and Co. of Partick, whose yard was opposite that of Stephens, were crewed and launched into the river. Between them, the boats managed to rescue ten men from drowning.

Most of the dead came from the Govan and Partick areas of the city. Their names are listed in Elder Park Library. This included William Telfer, a young Govan dentist who stowed away to experience the launch.

News of the tragedy swiftly spread through Govan and Partick and both towns were plunged into mourning. Relatives of the victims besieged the yard seeking news of their loved ones.

At 1.15pm the same day 41 bodies were recovered and a further 34 came to the surface on Sunday the 7th July.

By the 14th the Daphne was partly raised, and on the 21st the operation was completed and the other bodies recovered. For many days during this period, funerals were a familiar sight in Govan and Partick.

The day after the disaster, the Lord Provost of Glasgow received a telegram from Sir Henry Ponsonby on behalf of Queen Victoria, which read: 'The Queen hopes that the account of the loss of life at the launch on the Clyde is exaggerated. Her Majesty, who is deeply grieved at the disaster, asks if you can give her any further information.' A reply was immediately dispatched to Buckingham Palace informing her of all that had happened and what was now being done in the aftermath.

A Disaster Fund was set up immediately and even Queen Victoria made a donation, sending a personal cheque for £100. In the first week alone, over £17,000 was raised, which in those days was a phenomenal sum.

Alexander Stephen was cleared of any blame at the official enquiry held by Sir Edward Reed. New



legislation was introduced after the enquiry limiting the number of men allowed on board any future launches. The enquiry also recommended that all loose fittings and equipment should be firmly secured.

The “Daphne” was later completely refitted and handed over to her owners, who wisely renamed her SS Rose. For many years she plied the Irish Channel between Ireland and Scotland, and many times, on journeys to Glasgow, passed the site of her sinking that became the temporary grave of 124 men and boys.

Such was the scale and tragedy of the disaster that there are two SS Daphne Memorials in Glasgow - one in Victoria Park, Whiteinch and the other here in Elder Park - both sides of the Clyde representing the loss to those communities involved.

There is also a magnificent obelisk monument located in Craigton cemetery to commemorate the dead.

15 Isabella Elder Statue



Isabella Elder Statue

A bronze statue of Mrs Isabella Elder (1828-1905) seated upon a large granite plinth was sculpted by a local architect turned sculptor and Glasgow University graduate, Archibald McFarlane Shannan in 1906, and erected as a memorial to Isabella Elder in the same year. The £2,000 cost was raised by public subscription, much of it from ordinary working people of Govan, who

held her in high regard. Sadly, Mrs Elder died before the sculpture could be unveiled. It is listed Category 'A' status and is significant as it was the first statue of a woman erected in Glasgow other than Queen Victoria and remains to this day the only female Glaswegian commemorated in this way. It sits elegantly within a large circular bed surrounded by wrought iron railings within its own formal garden, facing her beloved husband's shipyard.

The statue was the result of a movement within her lifetime to ensure public recognition of the life and benevolent works of Isabella Elder in Glasgow. The statue which captures Isabella 'in meditative mood' and wearing her doctor's robes was unveiled by the Duchess of Montrose, who had been closely associated with Isabella in philanthropic works during the latter years of Isabella's life.



Isabella Elder's restoration

Restoration work to the Isabella Elder Statue was completed in 2010.



Some of the Achievements of Mrs Isabella Elder

- 1883 *Donated North Park House to establish Queen Margaret College Medical School - former BBC building on Queen Margaret Drive*
- *Funded the first courses at the College's School of Medicine*
- 1885 *Gifted Elder Park*
- 1885 *Donated Bandstand to Elder Park*
- 1885 *Established a School for Domestic Economy within Govan*
- 1901 *Provided a villa for Cottage Nurses Training Home*
- 1903 *Gifted Elder Park Library*
- 1903 *Gifted Elder Cottage Hospital*
- 1904 *Provided funds to establish the David Elder Lecture which is still running in 2011*
- *Financing Glasgow University's Chair of Naval Architecture*
- *Endowed the Chair of Civil Engineering and Applied Mechanics in the University of Glasgow*
- *Provided a District Nurse for Govan*
- *Provided training of District Nurses and Midwives*
- *Presented the Organ and Font for Elder Park Parish Church*



History

The detail present on Roy's map, compiled between 1747 and 1755 enables the identification of a number of small estates on the western edge of the still very rural village of Govan. These include the adjacent Linthouse, Holmfauldhead, Greenfield and Fairfield; it is the latter on which John Elder's shipbuilding yard and the Elder Park were built.

The Fairfield Farm lay between the line of the road to Renfrew (now Govan Road) and Langlands Road. The farm consisted of a single field, with the farm and steading lying against the north-western boundary of the tree lined field and conforming precisely to the bounds of Elder Park.



Elder Park 1860s

Fairfield House described as 'a fine dwelling house and offices on the north side of the road leading to Renfrew' was the property of Mr Whyte, of Glasgow a member of the Turnpike Trust for Renfrew. Fairfield Farm was also the property of Mr Whyte whose tenant was Mr Alexander Thomson. Due to his skill and the fertile nature of the soil Fairfield Farm was considered to be a model farm. Alexander Thomson became one of the first Police Commissioners of the Burgh of Govan in 1864.



West of the park was the estate and mansion-house of Linthouse occupied in turn by well-known Glasgow families of Watsons and Rowans. The latter had connections with the Bellahouston Estate until 1824. The estate was acquired by Alexander Stephens & Sons and the house became the company's offices and general store.

Elder Park was presented to the burgh of Govan by Mrs John Elder, in affectionate remembrance of her husband, who was long connected with the famous firm of Randolph, Elder & Co, now known as Fairfield Shipbuilding Company, and of his father, David Elder (1785-1866).



Elder Park

The ground was acquired by Mrs Elder in 1883, and with a £50,000 gift of donation the actual work of laying it out was commenced in the spring of 1884 by John Honeyman. All details in connection with it received Mrs. Elder's personal supervision, and no expense was spared to make it complete in every respect.

The Park was completed towards the middle of 1885, and the formal ceremony of handing it over to the authorities of the burgh of Govan was performed by the Earl of Roseberry on the 27th June in the same year, the day was a public holiday in Govan. There was a trade's procession of 8000 people, including a lorry displaying

the wares of each, and a procession by various Sunday Schools comprising 6,000 children.



Elder Park Opening 1885

The formal handing over of the park took place on a specially built grandstand, draped in scarlet and seventy feet in length, which could sit up to 500 people; in front of this was reserved seating for another 600 people. After a short religious service led by the Rev. John Macleod, the minister of Govan and a speech by the provost, Mr Campbell, the latter then introduced Mrs Elder who said.....

“My Lord Roseberry, Permit me to express my deep sense of the kindness shown by your lordship in consenting so readily to honour me with your presence on this occasion. It is my privilege now to ask you to declare this Park open. It gives me great happiness to find my anxieties in connection with this matter thus ended. I have wished to bestow on this town some gift of general utility to commemorate among all classes the names of my husband and of his father. (Cheers.) It is gratifying to me that this has been possible so near the active industries that recall their labours, and specially gratifying that, as has recently transpired, this is in part the ground on which my husband had intended to acquire for the purpose of erecting model workmen's houses. Apart from personal associations, I am indeed grateful to God that, as means of benefiting many, it has been given me to obtain this Park. My heartfelt wish is that, to all who enter it, it may prove a blessing. My Lord, I beg your acceptance of this key as a token of my personal appreciation of your kindness. I have now to ask your Lordship formally



to declare this Park open and to put into the hands of the Provost, on behalf of the people of Govan, the title deed and the Park key.”(Cheers.) This was presented in a gold decorative box which had relief panels depicting the Park gates, Elder Park Library and the busts of David, John and Isabella Elder.



Decorative Gold Box

The Earl of Rosebery responded to this, by drawing attention to Isabella's other philanthropic acts and then to the achievements of her father-in-law and husband ending with

“She determined that the name of Elder should not be less famous for generosity than for genius, and I think you will agree with me that she has accomplished her object. I beg to hand over to you {the burgh of Govan} the Deed of Gift and the key to this noble Park”. (Loud cheers.)



Elder Park Opening 1885

The unveiling ceremony in the park was followed by a public banquet in the Burgh Hall, distinguished by numerous speeches. On the succeeding Tuesday, all the Sunday school children were entertained to tea by Mrs Elder in their various classrooms.



Sunday School Children at Tea

Glasgow Herald 29 June 1885

Reports on the opening of Elder Park

'Lord Rosebery arrived in Glasgow on Saturday forenoon for the purpose of opening the Elder park at Govan. Previously to the ceremony his Lordship visited Queen Margaret College, and afterwards lunched at the house of Mrs Elder, in Claremont Terrace. The Govan people made great preparations in recognition of the importance of the occasion. In the principal streets there was a plentiful display of bunting and banners hung out at all points bearing inscriptions of gratitude to Mrs Elder and welcome to the "Peoples Peer." At two o'clock about 8,000 of the representatives of the various industries, crafts and ledges in the burgh were marshalled in Haughhead Park, and thereafter marched in procession through thronged streets to the place where the ceremony took place. Mrs Elder and her guests drove from Claremont Terrace in twelve carriages, and as they moved through the Govan streets were met with a most enthusiastic welcome. Received there by Provost Campbell and the Magistrates, they shortly afterwards, drove to the Park, the ranks of the processionalists opening to let them pass. At the Park,



Mrs Elder, having been formally introduced as the donor to Lord Rosebery, made the next speech thanking his Lordship for his presence, and asking him to declare the Park open. His Lordship then delivered an address, in which he passed a high eulogium on the benefactions of the Elder family and firm, and ended by formally handing over the park to the burgh. A illuminated address from the Commissioners was then presented to Mrs Elder. Lord Rosebery replied on behalf of Mrs Elder to the toast of her health, dwelling at length on the importance of such a gift as a public park in elevating and beautifying the lives of the people, on whom we have every day more and more to depend for sound sense and high instincts.'

The opening ceremony is documented in the book "The Elder Park".

This was the first donation of a park to the public by a private citizen in Glasgow and no expense was spared by Isabella Elder.

A bandstand was also erected by Mrs Elder, and was situated in the centre of the park. It was octagonal in shape, with an overhead ornamental metal canopy, which was well suited as a sounding board for the musical performances. The canopy was supported by eight carved pillars. It had an artistic dado round the base of the stand which consisted of panels illustrative of shipbuilding, music, and art, and in the south panel a plate was inserted giving the name of the donor of the park and the object for which it was given.

‘THIS PARK,
given to the inhabitants of Govan by
ISABELLA ELDER,
in memory of her husband,
JOHN ELDER,
and his father,
DAVID ELDER,
and in token of her interest in the place
where both gained their fame.
was opened 27th June 1885.’

The bandstand sat on a mound, raised four feet above ground level and protected by a high cast-iron fence. It was surmounted by a weather vane and surrounded by rustic cast iron standards displaying upcoming musical events. The Salvation Army and Govan Brass Bands all gave concerts from the bandstand.



Elder Park Bandstand

The 'Deed of Gift,' stated that the park was to provide the inhabitants of the burgh with 'healthful recreation by music an amusement'. An annual event in Govan was Mrs Elder's firework display in the park.

At the beginning of the Second World War the bandstand was dismantled and sent as a contribution to the war effort as were most of the ornate iron railings in the park.

West of the bandstand an oval raised platform was erected by Mrs Elder, for the purpose of accommodating the pipe band of the Govan Police,



organized by Captain Hamilton, the superintendent of the Govan Police force.

Elder Park in Adelaide, Australia, has a replica bandstand (rotunda) which was manufactured by Walter Macfarlane & Co at the Saracen Foundry, Glasgow and erected in 1881. It is in excellent condition and is a well known Adelaide landmark. It is believed that the Adelaide Park was named after a younger brother of John Elder.



Elder Park Bandstand in Adelaide, Australia

By 1864 the population of Govan was only 9,000; in 1893 it was over 63,000. This increase was almost entirely due to the shipbuilding enterprise and it is therefore most appropriate that the park which has been presented to the burgh should be commemorative of one who did so much towards founding its prosperity.



Elder Park 1906

In 1887 the working men of Govan resolved that some recognition should be made of Mr John Elder's ability, and of his close connections with the prosperity of the burgh, and it was agreed that a statue in the park was the most appropriate form which the testimonial could take place. There was no lack of subscriptions, and the commission was placed in the hands of Sir J. E. Boehm. The statue was erected in the eastern section of the park and was unveiled by the Marquis of Lothian, the Secretary of State for Scotland, on the 28th July, 1888, and is not only a faithful likeness, but is also a work of art and an ornament to the park.



John Elder Statue 1908

Ex-Provost Campbell's Opening Address at the Unveiling of the John Elder Statue.

(Extract)

"It has long been felt, especially by the working classes of the community, that some permanent memorial of so remarkable a man ought to be reared, which would not only tell of the regard in which his contemporaries held him, but which might preserve to those who come after us some representation of the lineaments of one whom we valued so greatly and to whom the world owes so much."

"It may, perhaps, at first sight appear as if the erection of a statue at this date is a somewhat tardy recognition of Mr Elders greatness and worth... I venture to remark that the matter also bears another aspect, for surely no greater proof could be given of the solid, far-reaching and fruitful results of John Elder's life and labours...."



“In due time a commission was entrusted to the eminent sculptor, Mr Boehm, and by the favour of Lord Lothian, you will shortly be able to judge the result.”

“I shall now request Lord Lothian in the name of the Memorial Committee to unveil this statue and hand it over to the Magistrates and Commissioners of the Burgh of Govan; and I think that in future when we come to this beautiful Park and look at this statue the words of our national bard will recur to our minds with apt force..

“An honest man’s the noblest work of God.” (Loud cheers.)



John Elder Statue 1908

By 1885, a range of glasshouses were constructed in the park between the farm house and the pond with a further additional house added by 1913.



Elder Park 1890

These would have been used to house local floral displays as well as producing bedding plants for the park. The 1971 version of the OS map shows that the glasshouses had been removed.

Govan celebrated Queen Victoria's golden Jubilee on Saturday 25th June 1887 the second anniversary of the opening of Elder Park. The proceedings of the day commenced at ten o'clock in the Robert Street Hall, where 500 poor people sat down to breakfast on the invitation of the Lord Provost of Govan, George Ferguson, who presided.

At noon, cake and wine was served in the Burgh Chambers, Albert Street, to the Commissionaires of the Burgh and a few leading citizens. Provost Ferguson, who presided, submitted the toast of "The Health of the Queen," which was drank with all honours.

In the afternoon, between the hours of five and seven o'clock, the band and pipes of the Royal Scots, played music in the Elder Park. This was followed in the evening by a pyrotechnic display conducted by Messers C.T. Brock & Co, Crystal Palace, London, and included a special jubilee device, giving a portrait of Her Majesty, encircled by a motto, "Accept Govan's loyal congratulations". While these fireworks were being displayed, the band of pipers in connection with the Govan Police Force, gave a performance of music concluding appropriately with the march "Happy we've been a' thegither."

A meeting took place in Govan Town Hall on the 29 January 1902, chaired by Provost John Marr, the outcome of which was the establishment of a General Committee similar to the one formed to erect John Elder's statue. The initial proposal was to commission an 'Artist of eminence' to paint a full-length portrait which would be placed in the Elder Library, which she had gifted to the Burgh. This was rejected on the



ground that few people would see such a work, and that to do '...justice to that noble lady and to the Burgh of Govan... they ought to have a statue of Mrs Elder placed where all might see her as they could see that of her husband in the Elder Park'. The cost of the statue was paid wholly by public subscription mainly from the people of Govan.

By the end of 1905, the statue appeared to have been approaching completion and the committee had started making plans for an unveiling the following spring. On the 21 November, however, the chairman reported that Mrs Elder had died and the unveiling would have to be postponed.



Isabella Elder Statue

Invitations to perform the unveiling were sent to Lord Rosebery (who had inaugurated the Park in June 1885) and Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, both of whom declined. In the event, the ceremony was performed by The Duchess of Montrose, a personal friend of Mrs Elder.

On the 13th October 1906, the Duchess was received in the Town Hall, before proceeding to the park, where large crowds had gathered in a railed off enclosure around the statue, with the unveiling party seated on a raised platform.

Duchess of Montrose's Address at the Unveiling of Isabella Elder's Statue

(Extract)

"Provost Anthony, Ladies and Gentlemen, I consider it a great honour to be permitted to take part in this interesting ceremony today. I wish Mrs Elder had lived to see this beautiful statue unveiled, so that this practical token of the appreciation in which she always had been held by the inhabitants of Govan, and many others, might this day have been demonstrated to her".

"One can truly say that Mrs Elder spent her life in good works, as the aim of her life was to do all she could for the social and moral welfare of the people here. She resided in Glasgow, but her heart was always in Govan".

"...But to return to Mrs Elder, I think the gift that will make her memory linger longest in the hearts of the foiling masses in Govan is the gift of this beautiful Elder Park".

After a number of speeches, the platform party made their way to the Town Hall for a 'cake and wine banquet', with Shannan himself among the 400 guests.



Govan Town Hall circa 1910

The Govan Press described the statue as follows: The sculptor...has succeeded in evolving a capital likeness of the late Mrs Elder. The pose is natural, and the statue depicts Mrs Elder's eager earnestness of

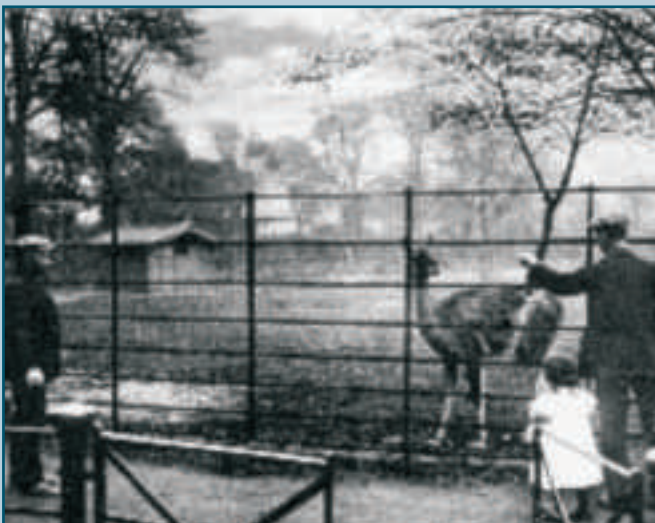


countenance and pleasant benign smile. She is shown dressed in her academic robes and is seated in an architectural chair.



Deer in Elder Park 1901

In 1890 animals were introduced to the park. These included a single deer from Japan and two fallow deer from the Isle of Arran contained in an enclosure on the west side of the park. There was also a single guanaco from Patagonia (a type of llama), acquired in 1886 and presented by T.C. Guthrie, then convener of the Parks Committee.



Elder Park Zoo

A flagstaff, 105 feet high was erected in 1909 in a prominent position near the centre of the park but this was removed in the 1960's.

The Burgh of Govan became part of the City of Glasgow in 1912 making Elder Park one of the City's public parks on the 5th of November the same year. Following the acquisition of Elder Park, a parliamentary motion was enacted making Elder Park subject to the Parks Acts. This meant that the condition of the Public Parks (Scotland) Act of 1878 and, most importantly, those contained in Mrs Elder's Deed of Gift, could be disregarded where they diverged from the provisions of the Parks Act.

On the 18th June 1952, Memorial Gates were presented to Glasgow University by the General Council to honour the twenty-nine outstanding figures of the University's first 500 years. Isabella Elder is named as one of the twenty nine outstanding figures.

The northwest corner of the park, with its play area and toilets, was lost to road widening in 1967 to ease access from the construction of the Clyde tunnel. This resulted in the play area being relocated to its current site north of the tennis courts, separated from them by two small paddling ponds.



Elder Park 1936



Today the park is at the centre of a vibrant community, hosting many local events.

The “Friends of Elder Park” group established in 2008 aim is to encourage the involvement of local residents in the future development and preservation of the Park. It organises and supports events and applies for project funding whilst working closely with Glasgow City Council and local groups such as Housing Associations, community groups, colleges, schools and local businesses. The group aims to raise the profile of the Park by promoting a greater awareness towards the protection and conservation of the Park's natural history and heritage.



Dray Rides in Elder Park

Isabella Ure Elder (1828 - 1905)

Isabella Elder (nee Ure) was the daughter of a Glasgow lawyer. She was born on the 15th March 1828 and along with her elder brother John Francis (born 1820) were the only two children of Alexander and Mary Ross, to survive to adulthood. When she was 29 she married John Elder a partner in Randolph, Elder & Co, marine engineers in Tradeston. The wedding service was conducted by the Rev. Norman Macleod of the Barony Church.

The business acquired a shipbuilding yard at Govan in 1860 and in 1868, renamed John Elder & Co, moved to

the Fairfield Shipyard. The following year John Elder died and Isabella managed the business for nine months until it was acquired by a new partnership composed of her brother John Francis Ure, the shipbuilder William Pearce and the engineer J L K Jamieson. In 1886 Pearce formed the Fairfield Engineering and Shipbuilding Co. Ltd.



Isabella Ure Elder

Mrs Elder devoted herself to charitable works after managing the transfer of the business. In Govan, for example, she funded the purchase and laying-out of Elder Park and the establishment of the Elder Cottage Hospital and provided funds for a school of domestic economy for the training of young girls. She was known to locals affectionately as “Lady Elder”, although she had no official title.



For the 36 years of her widowhood she lived at number 6 Claremont Terrace which bordered onto Kelvingrove Park but her heart always lay in Govan.

Isabella inherited a considerable fortune and from the early 1880's between extended stays on the continent she became the major philanthropist of nineteenth century Glasgow. Her primary interest was higher education and she endowed the Elder Chair of Naval Architecture at Glasgow University.



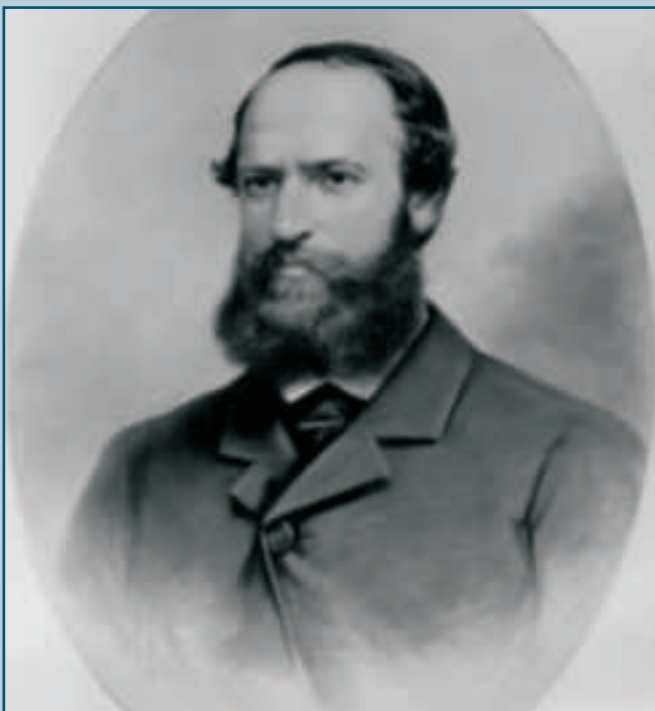
Jessie Campbell

Mrs Elder's resolute dedication to the provision of education for women was such that she acquired the extensive property of North Park House, in Queen Margaret Drive, (a focal point on the Botanic Gardens Heritage Trail) and offered it free of charge to the fledgling Queen Margaret College on the condition that it raised an endowment fund mounting to £20,000. Mrs Elder supported the college for many years and in the early 1890's provided the necessary funds to ensure that the new medical college would be an appropriately substantial and prestigious building.

In August 1888, Queen Victoria visited Glasgow for the final time to formally open the new City Chambers and view the International Exhibition in Kelvingrove Park. Her Majesty also paid a fleeting visit to Queen Margaret College, at the behest of her daughter Louise, the Marchioness of Lorne (who was the college's president). Queen Victoria was received at North Park House by Mrs Isabella Elder.

On the 18th November 1905, Isabella Elder died after a long illness and is buried in the family plot in Glasgow Necropolis. During her funeral all bells in the city churches were tolled and Flags were flown at half-mast over Govan Municipal Buildings, Elder Library, Fairfield Shipyard and Glasgow City Chambers. The residue of her estate was used to establish the Ure Elder Fund for Indigent Widows Ladies of Govan and Glasgow, in memory of her brother's great regard for her husband.

John Elder (1824 - 1869)



John Elder



John Elder, the third son of the famous marine engineer David Elder, was born in Glasgow, on the 8th March 1824. After serving an apprenticeship, Elder worked for a time in England as a draftsman before returning to Glasgow in 1848 where he ran his father's drawing office before joining Randolph Elliot & Co in 1852 as a partner. This firm of millwrights later renamed John Elder & Co moved into shipbuilding and in 1863 the firm moved to the new Fairfield Shipyard, employing 4,000 men. Elder's greatest achievement was the development of the marine compound steam engine (1854), which gave an increase in fuel efficiency of up to 40% by consuming far lower quantities of coal than other engines of the day. One hundred and eleven sets of steam engines were built during Elder's time.

In April, 1869, John Elder was unanimously elected President of the Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders in Scotland, and its members looked forward to an opening address from him at the commencement of the following session. But their hopes were never to be fulfilled. His death left a painful void in the social and scientific world which he adorned.



Elder Family Tomb at Glasgow Necropolis

Mr Elder was known for good worker relations, by providing education and an accident fund. He had also contemplated the formation of five schools in Govan,

principally for educating young men working in the shipyards and had encouraged them (through the payment of fees) to attend. After being ill for several months, he died on the 17th September 1869, aged 45. During his funeral, many of the shipyards shut down and every ship flew its flag half-mast. Crowds lined the streets to watch the procession pass to the Glasgow Necropolis.

David Elder (1785 - 1866)

David Elder, the father of John Elder was born in 1785, at Little Seggie, near Kinross. From his earliest years David Elder became a genius for mathematical studies. He studied the principles of mechanics and hydraulics by watching the working of old water-wheels in the mills where he lived. In 1817, he came to Glasgow to practice as a mechanical engineer and millwright. His energy and ingenuity speedily procured his advancement, and he became manager of Robert Napier's engineering works at Camlachie in 1821.



David Elder's Family Tomb

A paper read before the Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders in Glasgow in 1866 referred to David Elder in the following terms. "The history of so remarkable a man as David Elder must be interesting to many, on account of his connection with the works that have



made Glasgow and the Clyde notable, and given to his employer (Robert Napier) a fame which is known over the whole engineering world”.

David Elder was, and is, regarded as the father of marine engineering on the Clyde.

Alexander Elder (1833–1915) John Elder's younger brother founded the David Elder Infirmary, which sat in Langlands Road, Linthouse. After a number of delays the building was designed by architects Keppie & Henderson and built between 1924 and 1927, provided accident and emergency treatment for workers injured in the nearby shipyards. It was closed in the 1990s and is now a residential estate.

David Elder died on 31 January 1866 and is buried in the Family Tomb at Glasgow Necropolis.

Govan Fair

The celebration of the Govan Fair may have begun at the end of the 15th century. The Govan Weavers' Society revived the festival in 1757 and it continued until 1881. Members of the Old Govan Club revived the Fair once more in 1920, and it is still celebrated to this day.



The banner of the Govan Weavers' Society

The Fair reached its peak of success when the Govan Weavers' Society was founded in 1756.

The village band turned out at early dawn of the first Friday of June and serenaded the retiring Deacon outside his home. If that gentlemen resided in the east end of the village, the band started at the extreme east boundary of the village and marched along the main street to the west boundary, and of course should the Deacon reside in the west end the reverse course was followed. During the march the band stopped at each public house in the village, and the landlord regaled the bandsmen with a bottle of whisky. As the musicians reached the end of the village, there was confusion in their music.



Govan Fair Procession 1955

At the front of the procession, the Weavers emblem the Sheep's Head was hoisted aloft on a pole and gaily decorated. (According to legend, a Govan minister had refused to give his manservant permission to marry. The people of the village showed their disapproval of his behaviour by cutting off the heads of his flock of sheep. The rams head was kept and it was paraded



around the village each year in the weavers' procession at the Govan Fair). The villagers assembled at the Cross and the youth of the village would vie with each other to see who could successfully reach the top of a slippery pole. Other games were also played, along with the usual accompaniment of a country fair.

By the 1950s the celebration consisted of a parade of floats sponsored and decorated by local businesses and led through the streets by the Govan Burgh Band. Before the parade set off, the Govan Weavers' Society (who had dined the previous evening on their traditional meal of boiled eggs washed down with whisky) marched down the main street wearing sashes, aprons and chains of office and bearing aloft the famous sheep's head.

Today the procession starts in the early evening after the crowning ceremony of the Govan Fair Queen. The procession headed by the newly crowned queen and followed by bands, majorettes, and finely decorated floats starts from Copland Road at Fairley Street, going west via Summertown Road and Govan Cross to the saluting base at Langlands Road in front of the Victory Church.



Chronology of Important Dates

- 1747 Estate of Fairfield identified on Roy's map
- 1756 Govan Weavers' Society revive the Govan Fair
- 1785 Birth of David Elder
- 1824 Birth of John Elder
- 1828 Birth of Isabella Ure (later Elder)
- 1852 John Elder becomes partner with Randolph Elliot & Co.
- 1857 Marriage of John Elder and Isabella Ure
- 1858 Randolph and Elder moved to Old Govan Shipyard formerly belonging to Napier's. The first ship was completed in 1861, one of twelve completed at the yard
- 1860 The first edition OS map depicts the single field of Fairfield Farm divided into two
- 1868 Shipbuilding firm becomes known as John Elder & Co.
- 1869 John Elder elected as a councillor and Police Commissioner for the Burgh of Govan
- 1869 John Elder died on 17 September aged 45
- 1869 William Pearce became general manager and sole proprietor of John Elder & Co.
- 1883 A new park called Elder Park was laid out on part of Fairfield Farm
- 1885 Elder Park formally opened on 27 June by the Earl of Roseberry
- 1887 Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebrated in the Burgh of Govan ending with a firework display at Elder Park
- 1887 John Elder statue commissioned for placement in Elder Park
- 1888 John Elder statue erected in Elder Park
- 1893 Tenements start appearing on Drive Road
- 1901 The honorary degree of LL.D was conferred on Isabella Elder during the University of



- Glasgow's celebration for its ninth jubilee, in recognition of her support of Queen Margaret College
- 1901 Construction begins on Elder Park Library
 - 1902 Committee established to commission Isabella Elder statue
 - 1903 Elder Park Library opened on 5 September by Andrew Carnegie
 - 1905 Isabella Elder died on 18 November
 - 1906 Seated bronze statue of Isabella Elder erected in Elder Park
 - 1912 Burgh of Govan becomes part of the City of Glasgow
 - 1912 Elder Park is acquired by the City of Glasgow
 - 1920 Old Govan Club revive the Govan Fair once more
 - 1921 Linthouse Mansion Portico erected in Elder Park by Old Govan Club
 - 1939-45 Bandstand and railings taken for scrap during war effort
 - 1967 Northwest corner of the park lost to make way for the Clyde Tunnel
 - 1996 Memorial stone to SS Daphne erected in Elder Park
 - 1998 George Wylie sculpture installed in Boating Pond
 - 2008 Friends of Elder Park formed
 - 2009 Play area redeveloped and Boating pavilion renovated
 - 2010 John and Isabella statues and Rose Garden refurbished

Land and Environmental Services

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Reference

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The History of Govan by John Simpson

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Works of David Hamilton, Architect

Land and Environmental Services,
Parks Development Section

Land Use Consultants

Friends of Elder Park

Govan Fair Association

www.clydewaterfrontheritage.com

www.glasgowncropolis.org

Travel Information

Elder Park is on the Govan Road, Glasgow G51; adjacent to BAE Systems Shipyard

From Glasgow City Centre:
Underground - to Govan Station this is a 10 minute walk from Elder Park

Bus - the only bus service operating from the City Centre is Arriva bus number 23, from Renfield Street, Jamaica Street. This is a frequent service, and goes direct to Elder Park, passing Govan Underground. The nearest bus stops are located on Govan Road adjacent to the park entrances

Car - Elder Park is located on Govan Road and can also be accessed from the south bound Clyde Tunnel exit to Govan

Walking - Access points are available from Govan Road, Drive Road and Langlands Road