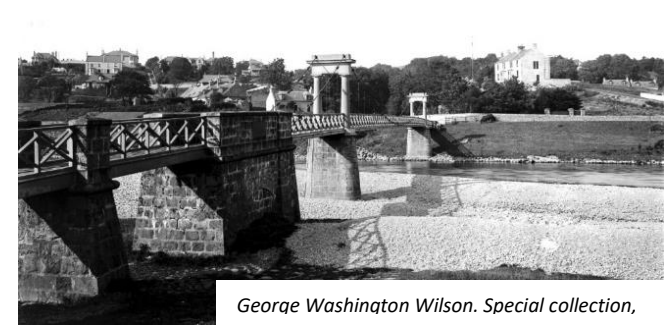


Courtesy Aberdeen City Council - Silver Vault

## St Devenick's Bridge

also known as  
**The Shakkin' Briggie**  
and  
**Morison's Bridge**



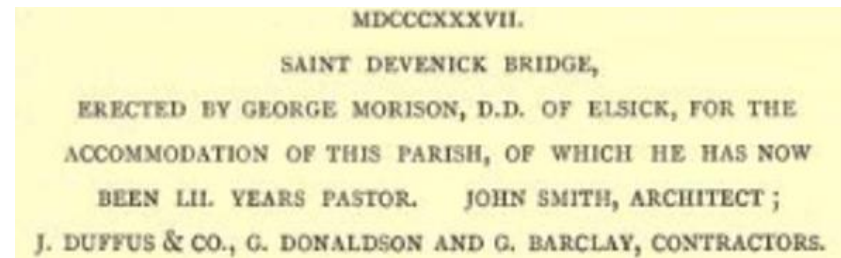
George Washington Wilson. Special collection,

A suspension footbridge started in 1836 and opened the following year designed by the renowned Aberdeen architect John Smith is amongst the earliest surviving examples of suspension bridges in Scotland, with mirrored tall, rounded and tapered ashlar pylons to the north and south each supporting two cast iron Greek Doric columns with lintels holding the suspension cables. There are masonry abutments to the north and south banks, but as the river has widened, the abutments to the south are situated on an island mid-river.

The classical design with the cast iron Doric columns on the pylons is unusual and characteristic of Smith's confident use of the neo-classical style in his work.

The columns are distinctive and the bridge is one of only a handful of suspension bridges in Scotland with classical styling. When it was built, the bridge was 305 feet long, with a central suspension span of 185 feet. The suspension chains comprise 3-inch-diameter (76 mm), 6-foot-long (1.8 m) cast-iron bars, anchored into 45 feet back into stone anchor blocks. At the join of each pair of 'chain' bars slender hanger descend to transverse iron deck beams. There was timber decking and a wooden balustrade painted white.

The contractors were John Duffus & Co, Aberdeen iron founders, cast the towers, chain, and hangers., and George Donaldson constructed the footings and piers, and George Barclay, a local Cults builder, made all the timber work.



*Inscription on a cast-iron plate which is built into the south-east parapet. See Reference 4.*



*Portrait of Rev. Dr. George Morison by Robert Moore Hodgetts showing bridge in background. Courtesy of University of Aberdeen. 1841*



*The bridge today. Image by Peter Ward*

The bridge replaced a ferry and was paid for by the minister of the church, the Reverend George Morison. In 1840 Dr. Morrison settled a capital sum on the Kirk Session 'to maintain and hold in time coming'. From 1845, when Dr. Morison died, to 1920 the bridge continued to be repaired and maintained by the Kirk Session. Early in the period extra spans were added to the bridge at the south end as the bank had shifted. It was extensively repaired in 1920-22, following flood damage. The church maintained the bridge but there were ongoing problems of erosion of the south bank. In 1952 when Aberdeen City Council took over the responsibility.

It became redundant after the southern approaches were swept away in the 1970s due to the changed course of the River Dee and the bridge no longer spans the whole river. The bridge has been derelict since 1984 when its timber decking was removed for safety reasons. The listed status of the bridge was changed from Category A to B in 2016.

There been a number of appraisals by the City Council and others as to the future of the bridge, the most recent major review was in the 1990s and when a project team was formed and a brochure printed. A number of options were considered, including restoration and relocation and it was proposed that a Trust be formed. No trust was formed and the team disbanded.

The south side now ends the river and the southern approach span has been swept away Even if a new extension to the south bank were made it would only lead to edge of the golf course and there is no proper river path. To be used as a footbridge would require the decking to be raised by one metre to meet current regulations. Relocation and restoration would a multi-million-pound project and Historic Environment Scotland has indicated it is not keen on either relocation or raising the bridge.

Ownership of the bridge is unclear. No title deeds have been discovered and it is possible that none were ever drawn up.



*Southern end of bridge after flooding. Courtesy Aberdeen City Council - Silver Vault*

The above is based on the following references:

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2. CANMORE. <https://canmore.org.uk/site/19407/aberdeen-cults-st-devenick-suspension-bridge>

2. 'Restoration of the Shakkin Briggie'. Brochure prepared by a Project Team. 1990s.

3. Building at Risk Register Scotland. <https://www.buildingsatrisk.org.uk/details/905164>

4. [History of the parish of Banchory-Devenick](#)". John A. Henderson with illustrations by William Taylor. Publisher: Aberdeen: D. Wyllie & Son. MDCCCXC. Taylor and Henderson, Lithographers and printers, to the Queen.,. Adelphi Press, Aberdeen.

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5. Wikipedia. Shakkin' Briggie

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6. Kathleen Robertson. Article in the Leopard magazine December 2005/January 2006.

7. Diane Morgan. 'A future for the Shakkin Briggie'. Article in Press and Journal 29 November 1991