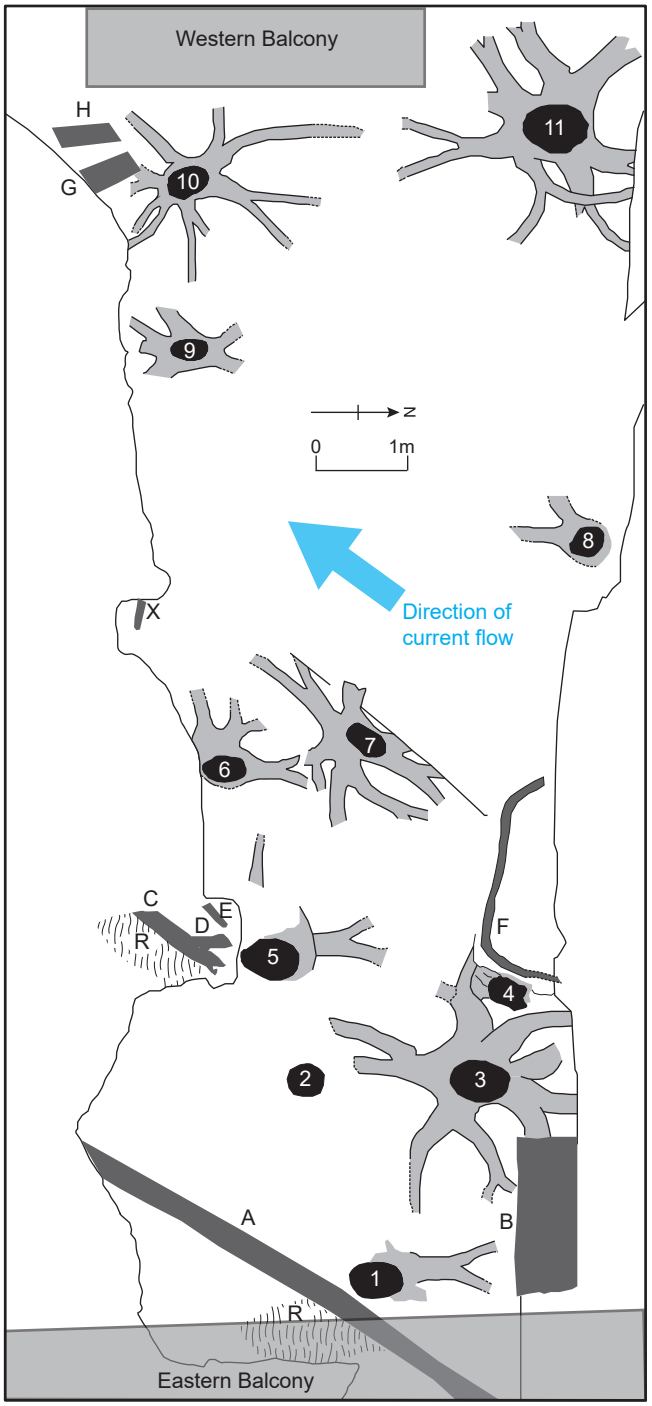
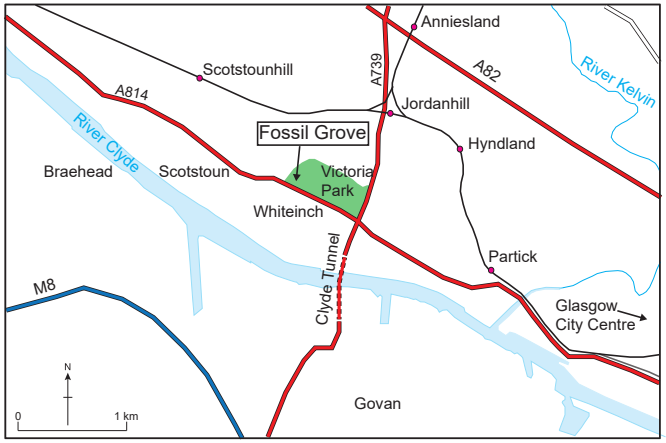


Map of the fossil trees (1-9), branches and roots (A-H, X) and rippled surfaces (R)



Visitor Information

Terrain: Tarmac paths and paving stones, some stone steps. Access to and within the Fossil House is wheel-chair friendly.

Facilities: There are toilets and refreshments in the centre of the park.

Access: The park is open 24/7 but the Fossil House has restricted opening times - currently (2024) on the third Sunday of the month (12-4) from April-October. Admission is free.

www.fossilgroveglasgow.org

Parking: Various on-road parking options around Victoria Park. Most visitors park near the main entrance gate on Victoria Park Drive North.

Public Transport: Bus stops (a 300 m walk) on Victoria Park Drive South (1 and X4) and Dumbarton Road (2 and 3) about 400 m away. Nearest railway station is Jordanhill (1.3 km)

Postcode: G14 9NW

Location: 55.877 -4.332 (Main Gates)

Strathclyde Geoconservation Group is part of the Geological Society of Glasgow. The group identify and explain sites of particular geological interest, be it a landscape, a land form or a rock feature. Further information on the Society and geoconservation can be found at:

www.geologyglasgow.org.uk

Registered Scottish Charity No. SC007013

GeoConservationUK

THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF GLASGOW

FOSSIL GROVE TRUST

FOSSIL GROVE
Victoria Park

STRATHCLYDE GEOCONSERVATION GROUP

Located in the Scotstoun and Whiteinch area of Glasgow

Victoria Park is home to some of the most spectacular and rare fossils in the British Isles.

Here a grove of 325 million-year old tree stumps are preserved in their life position.

The trees are the remnants of vast forests which eventually became the coal that powered Glasgow's industry.

The building protecting the fossils is the earliest extant example in the world of geo-conservation of this type and is testament to foresight of the City's Victorian forefathers.

Creation of the Fossil House

During the construction of Victoria Park in the late 19th century, when a pilot channel for the road was cut through an old quarry, the builders discovered beautifully preserved fossil tree trunks. The route for the road was diverted and the rock further excavated to reveal many more fossils. They were eventually identified as the fossilised stumps and roots of part of a forest which periodically covered much of what is now central Scotland over 300 million years ago during the Carboniferous Period.

The Partick Burgh Commissioners decided not to take the fossils to a museum but to leave them where they were and preserve them as a public attraction within a specially erected building which opened on January 1st 1890.

Interior of the Fossil House c.1910

The Fossil Trees

The Fossil House contains a spectacular group of erect stumps and root systems of the lycopod trees whose modern relatives are the clubmosses, plants generally only a few centimetres tall. There is also a large trunk lying across the floor of the quarry as well as several smaller pieces of branch and root. The tree stumps were buried by sand in their life position and ripple marks on some of the beds provide evidence of river currents moving to the south-west between the trunks. Through time the sand turned to sandstone and the outer parts of the stumps became thin coatings of coal.

One of the Fossil Trees

The trees grew in a dense forest in a lowland swamp some 325 million years ago when Scotland was close to the equator - it was only later that the continents drifted to their present positions. The development of thick deposits of peat from the accumulation of the remains of trees like these and other plant material gave rise to the coal seams which powered the Industrial Revolution.

Some later slight earth movements have caused the rocks (and the trunks) to tilt gently towards the NE, but the slight oval distortion of the trunks is likely to be due to the speed of the currents that deposited the sand around them.

The Quarry

About 30 million years later an episode of volcanic activity resulted in sheets (or sills) of molten rock (dolerite) being intruded into the rocks. The dolerite was quarried in the 19th century for roadstone. Friends of Victoria Park are creating a fernery in the old quarry.

The Fernery in the Quarry

Geoconservation Today

The Fossil Grove is classed as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), however it deteriorating condition continues to cause concern. The original wood and slate roof was damaged in World War II and replaced with metal and glass. The later addition of plastic roof panels and cement wall cladding have had the unfortunately increased the humidity, which is damaging the fossils

The site is owned by Glasgow City Council and volunteers from the Fossil Grove Trust are working with the Council to find new sources of funding to renovate the building, conserve the fossils and improve the visitor experience.