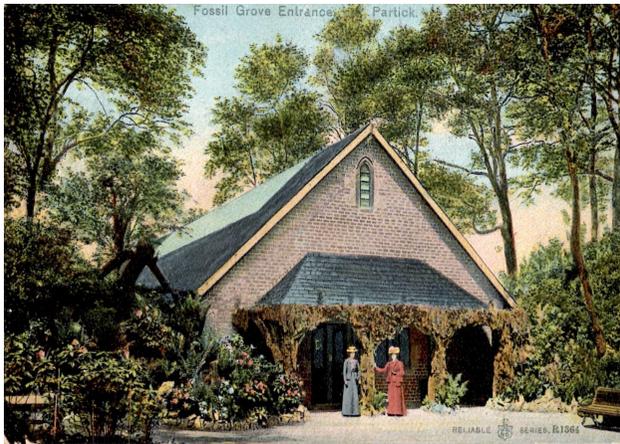


Creation of the Fossil House

During the construction of Victoria Park in the late 19th century, beautifully preserved fossil tree stumps and roots were discovered when a pilot channel for the road was cut through an old quarry. The route for the road was diverted and the rock further excavated to reveal more of this rare snapshot of part of a forest that 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. Today the site is still run by Glasgow City Council.



Exterior of Fossil House circa 1910

The Fossil Trees

The Fossil Grove houses a spectacular group of erect stumps and their root systems, a large section of fallen trunk and several smaller pieces of branch and root. They all belong to lycopod trees whose modern cousins are the clubmosses, which grow to only a few centimetres tall. Most of the trees in Victoria Park were preserved in their life position by the sand that surrounded them and filled their decayed, hollow stumps and roots.



Three of the Fossil stumps: photo courtesy B Bergman

Ripple marks provide evidence of water currents moving between the trunks depositing sand when a nearby river repeatedly burst its banks. Through time the sand turned to sandstone and the outer, more rigid, parts of the stumps became thin coatings of coal.

The trees grew in a dense forest in a lowland swamp when what is now Scotland lay close to the equator as part of the large supercontinent. Thick deposits of peat from the accumulation of the remains of trees, including ones like those at Fossil Grove, and other plant material gave rise to the coal seams that powered the Industrial Revolution.

The slight distortion resulting in the oval shape of the trunks is likely to be due to the speed of the currents that deposited the sand around them.

The Quarry

During later volcanic activity, a thin sheet of molten rock was intruded into the sandstones and can be seen cutting through some of the trunks. This rock formerly known as whinstone is properly called dolerite. Quarry Knowe Rock Gardens surrounding Fossil Grove have been established in the former whinstone quarry. Earth movements have gently tilted the rocks (and the fossil trees)



Quarry Knowe Rock Garden

Geoconservation today

Today the Fossil Grove is classed as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), giving the site outstanding nature conservation value. It has also been designated as a 'Regionally Important Geological Site'. The building protecting the fossils is recognised as one of the earliest developments in geotourism and geoconservation and is testament to the foresight of Glasgow's Victorian forefathers.