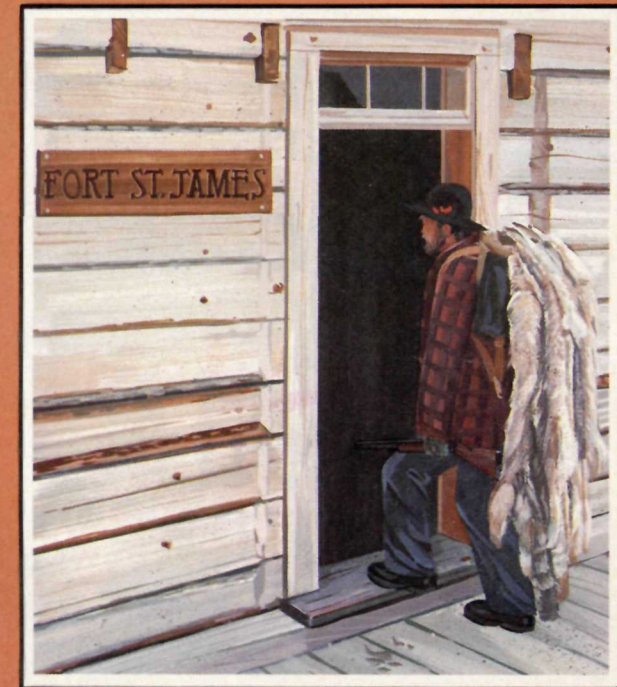


Fort St. James National Historic Park

British Columbia



FORT ST. JAMES NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK

Visitor Reception Centre. Services available here are parking, a picnic area, washrooms, first aid and information on the park and the local area. Exhibits and presentations in the theatre interpret the park's history and the surrounding area. Guided tours of the park depart from here on a regular basis. This centre also houses the administrative offices.

Fences. The reconstructed fences and platforms (or boardwalks) were originally constructed between 1887-89. Large rail fences separated the post from the surrounding area. Picket fences and platforms connected the buildings and separated the gardens.

Wharf and Tramway (1894-1914). During the 1890s sailing sloops carried goods on Stuart Lake to Fort St. James and took furs away. Cargo unloaded at the wharf was put on a small miner's car and hauled up the tramway to the General Warehouse.

General Warehouse and Fur Store (1888-89). The warehouse housed the trade goods for Fort St. James and the surrounding outposts. Furs were stored in this building where they were baled for their journey to Victoria. The warehouse is one of the finest surviving examples of Red River frame fur trade building in Canada.

Fish Cache (1889). Dried salmon and bacon were stored here for the use of company employees and the Carrier people. An adaptation of the traditional Carrier fish cache, the building is raised by the four corner posts to deter predators.

Men's House (1884). The men's house served as a residence for company employees, pack train hands, boat crews and visitors. The building also served as an early schoolhouse in the area and as a private residence in the 1930s and the 1940s.

Trade Store and Office (1884). This was the commercial centre of the post where furs were traded for the many goods displayed inside. The building also served as the first post office in the area until fire destroyed it in 1919. The building that stands today is an authentic reconstruction to the 1896 period.

Gardens and Fields. Today's landscape recreates the appearance of the post in the 1890s. Inhabitants of the post depended on the produce of the garden and fields to supplement their monotonous diet.

Grahame Warehouse (1868-69). The original warehouse served as storage space for harness and sleds. This reconstructed building is the park maintenance shop and is not open to the public.

Officer's Dwelling House (1883-84). This house was the residence for the manager in charge of the post. Although it underwent many changes over the years, it has been restored to the period of A.C. Murray's occupancy in 1896.

Dairy (1884). The dairy served as a storage building for milk and cheese and as a general service building for the main house.

Chicken Yard. Chickens were kept as a source of eggs and meat for the residents of the house. Other livestock at the post included dairy and beef cattle, and horses and mules for transport.

Officer's dwelling house



FORT ST. JAMES NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK

Since 1806 Fort St. James has played a significant role in the development of Canada's west. The expansion of the North West Company's fur trade activities west of the Rocky Mountains and the search for a navigable route to the Pacific Ocean brought Simon Fraser to the once isolated spot on Stuart Lake where he founded the fur trade post. Fraser's small outpost has endured as the longest continuously-inhabited white settlement west of the Rockies.

Once established, the post became an important trading place for Carrier and other Indian trappers and fur traders. As the headquarters for the New Caledonia District, Fort St. James was an important commercial centre in the interior of British Columbia. Hudson's Bay Company activity, British interests on the northern Pacific slope of Canada and later burgeoning economic interests in the developing province of British Columbia kept the post alive and active into the 20th Century.

Fort St. James National Historic Park commemorates an adventurous era of Canada's past. Restored to the 1896 period, the park offers visitors an authentic look at the last of a series of four posts built at Fort St. James.

THE FORT ST. JAMES STORY

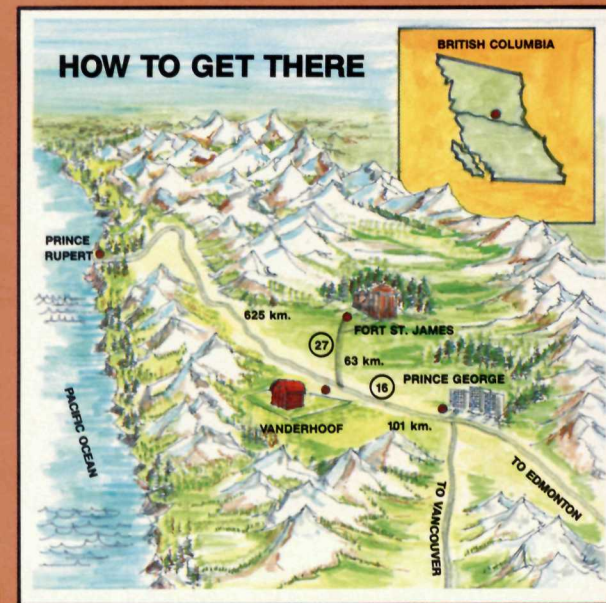
Carrier People. Long before the Europeans discovered North America and pushed across the continent, the central interior of British Columbia was home to a branch of the western Dene people whom the fur trad-

ers called Carriers. The name Carrier comes from the custom of widows who carried the cremated remains of their deceased husbands on their backs until a traditional potlatch could be held. Early French-speaking fur traders who observed this custom named the Indians *Porteurs* from the verb *porter*, which, in English, means to carry. English-speaking traders later translated the name to Carrier.

The Carrier people depended on salmon, mainly, for survival. Every year, salmon make the long run from the Pacific Ocean up the Fraser River into their spawning grounds in the lakes and rivers around Fort St. James, and every year the Carriers set traps and caught thousands of fish. These were gutted, smoked and dried for use through the long winter. Salmon was a staple in the Carrier diet. When fur traders came to the area they too depended on salmon for survival. This monotonous food was, however, a constant source of complaint in the letters and journals of the time.

The Carriers also relied on hunting and the gathering of other wild foods. Many local plants provided other sources of food, medicine and clothing. Large game, such as moose, was scarce in the central interior of British Columbia at that time. Small animals, such as beaver, marten, otter and muskrat, were trapped by the Carriers. These were the same animals whose pelts were sought by the fur traders to supply the markets of Europe.

Prior to 1806, when James MacDougall made a brief stop at the Carrier village near the present town of Fort St. James, the Carriers had not experienced direct contact with Europeans or their culture and traditions. Some European trade goods had filtered into the area through the traditional trade between the Carriers and coastal tribes. These coastal tribes had been



in contact with Russian and English traders for many years. After 1806 and the establishment of the fur trade in the area, the introduction of European trade goods in large quantities gradually made a profound and permanent change in the traditional way of life of the Carrier people.

Fur Traders. By 1800 the fur trade in Canada was controlled by two rival companies, the Hudson Bay Company and the North West Company. Competition for fur was strong and sometimes resulted in violent clashes between company traders. Searching for new supplies of fur, these companies sent out groups of explorers to find new transportation routes into Canada's wilderness, make contact with native people and establish trading posts.

Simon Fraser, of the North West Company, was such an explorer. In 1805 he led an expedition over the Rocky Mountains to investigate the fur trade potential of the Pacific slope and to find a navigable route to the Pacific Ocean. Fraser and his party of 20 men spent the winter of 1805 at McLeod Lake. Early in the spring of 1806 he sent James MacDougall to explore the surrounding country. It was on this journey that MacDougall visited the Carrier village on Sturgeon Lake, later called Stuart Lake after company clerk John Stuart.

Encouraged by MacDougall's report, Fraser and his men arrived at Stuart Lake on the 26th of July, 1806, and established Stuart Lake Post (later called Fort St. James). Within a few years Fort St. James had become the administrative centre for a large trading area between the Coastal and Rocky Mountains and from 51°30' to 57° north latitude, known as New Caledonia.

The dwindling supplies of fur in eastern Canada forced the two rival companies to conduct their business in remote regions of Canada. As a result, transportation and operational costs increased and placed financial burdens on the companies which led to reduced profits. Strong competition only served to drive the price of fur upwards. In 1821, to ensure that the fur trade would remain a profitable venture, the two rivals merged to form a new Hudson's Bay Company. All of the old North West Company posts in New Caledonia, including Fort St. James, came under the jurisdiction of the new company which afterwards enjoyed a monopoly over the fur trade in this part of Canada.

The Siberia of the Fur Trade. The remote location and isolation of the New Caledonia District created difficulties for the Hudson's Bay Company. Geographic obstacles and high costs associated with transportation were of particular concern. To overcome these difficulties many different transportation routes were used to reach Fort St. James in different periods of the 19th Century. Usually, more than one type of transport had to be used on each trip. At various times these included canoe, riverboat, sternwheeler, horses, mules, wagon trains and the strong backs of men and women.

Because it was the headquarters of the district, trade goods were shipped to Fort St. James for distribution to smaller outposts. In a similar way, furs were collected at Fort St. James for shipment out of the district. In the early years at Fort St. James, great distances meant that only one trip was made each year to bring supplies in and take furs out.

For the men stationed at Fort St. James this was a lonely existence; news from friends and family might

be received only once a year. Harsh winters and a monotonous diet of dried salmon added to the hardship. It is little wonder that New Caledonia came to be known as the Siberia of the fur trade.

Better Transportation Eases Post Life. Conditions improved at Fort St. James as the century advanced. Better transportation routes increased contact with the outside world and reduced the post's isolation. By the 1890s the Skeena River route had come into full use. Steamers brought goods up the Skeena as far as Hazelton and then pack trains and lake boats completed the journey to Fort St. James.

Trading. At Fort St. James, the Hudson's Bay Company traded for furs with the district trappers, mostly Carrier Indians. The value of the fur was set by the company whose prices were really dictated by market demands in Europe. The value varied also with the quality of the fur which was influenced by the coldness of the winter, the size and health of the animal and the skill with which the trapper had prepared the fur.

In the early days of the fur trade in British Columbia, trade was conducted on a barter system; little money changed hands. The trapper brought his furs to the trade store where they were graded by the company clerk and given a value in terms of beaver pelts. The trade items in the store were also valued in beaver pelts and the trapper was free to acquire as much merchandise as he desired up to the value of his furs.

Late in the 19th Century the nature of this trading practice began changing. Since the 1870s, New Caledonia had welcomed increasing numbers of prospectors, miners and settlers. These newcomers were prepared to pay cash for goods in the Hudson's Bay



Company stores. In response to this, the company began to move away from the old beaver standard of trade. A system of tokens was introduced, but, by the turn of the century, the store operated mainly on a cash basis.

Decline in the Fur Trade. The decline in demand for fur in Europe and the decreasing profits of the New Caledonia District in the 1880s and 1890s convinced company officials to invest only the bare minimum in the upkeep of the Fort St. James post. Yet, the officers in charge of the post managed to maintain the buildings and even construct new ones. In the 20th Century, the importance of the fur trade diminished further and in the 1930s the old log buildings were gradually abandoned by the company as it changed to become a modern retail business.

Fort St. James National Historic Park. In the 1950s the Hudson's Bay Company permitted the Fort St. James Historical Society to use the old General Warehouse and Fur Store for a local museum. Local initiative and determination interested the Governments of British Columbia and Canada in a cooperative agreement to restore the old buildings of the once important post.

In 1971 a multi-million dollar project was launched to create a national historic park. Historians, archaeologists, architects, engineers, carpenters, curators, interpreters and other technical experts made important contributions to the authentic restoration project. Restored to the year 1896, Fort St. James National Historic Park now commemorates an important chapter in British Columbian and Canadian history.



FORT ST. JAMES
NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK
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Canada



Inside the warehouse



Fish cache and men's house



Interior of the men's house



Trade store and office



Gardens and fields



Officer's dwelling



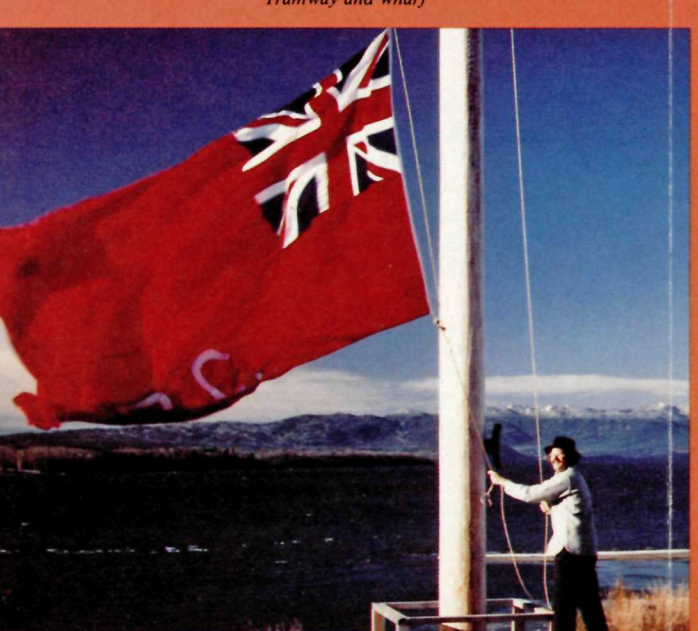
Dairy



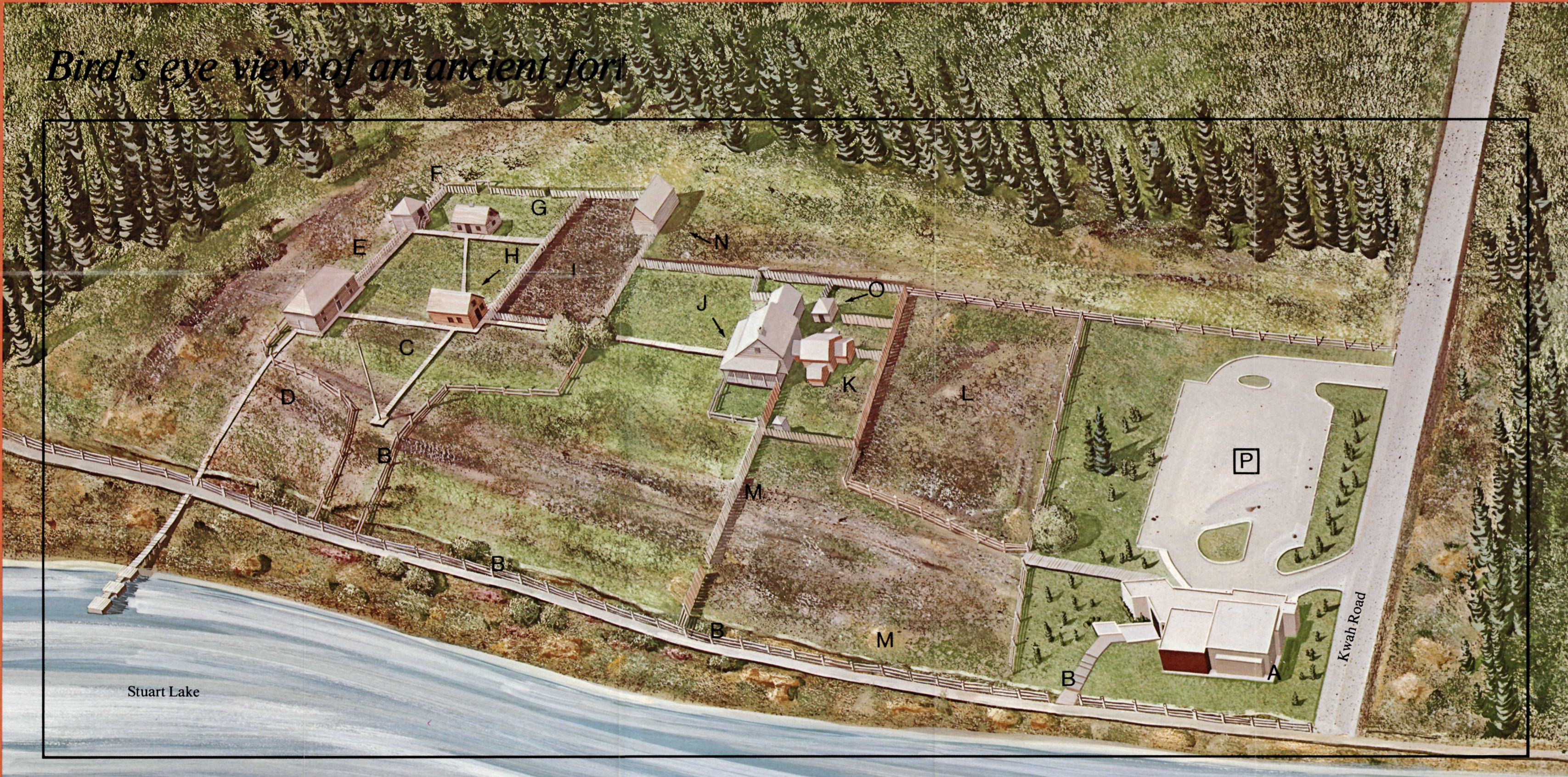
General warehouse and fur store



Tramway and wharf



Raising the company flag



Bird's eye view of an ancient fort

LEGEND TO MAP

- A Visitor reception centre
- B Pathway to historic zone
- C Flagpole
- D Tramway and wharf
- E General warehouse
- F Fish cache
- G Men's house
- H Trade store
- I Garden
- J Officer's dwelling
- K Chicken yard
- L Pasture
- M Fences
- N Grahame warehouse
- O Dairy
- P** Parking



Visitor Reception Centre