

Graemeshall Circular

A circular walk of 2.2 km from Graemeshall Loch to the Holm Coastal Battery



Wartime relics

One night in October 1939 a German U boat slipped silently through Kirk Sound, past the abandoned Holm battery into Scapa Flow and torpedoed the battleship 'Royal Oak'.

As a result of this two 12 pounder, quick firing guns were emplaced on the site of the old WWI battery. Further guns and searchlights were added and a camp developed at the site. Holm battery survives almost complete – the gun and searchlight emplacements and the observation post can all still be seen. Along the walk you also have a good view of the first of the Churchill Barriers.

The barriers were built on the order of Winston Churchill after the sinking of the Royal Oak, in order to close the channels between the islands.

The Barriers were formally opened on 12 May 1945 - ironically just in time for the end of the war.

As a result their main role has not been for wartime defence, but to link the south isles to the Orkney mainland.

Graemeshall Loch, along with the wetlands and reedbeds surrounding it, is a popular site for a variety of birds.

Gulls and terns use it for bathing; ducks and waders nest there; migrants shelter in the reedbeds and wildfowl winter on the loch. Large numbers of swallows roost near the loch in summer.



Curlew



Meadowweet



Churchill Barriers



Graemeshall Loch

EAST MAINLAND