

# St Mary's Circular

An interesting 3.2km (2m) circular walk from St Mary's village



Scapa Flow



St Mary's was developed in the latter half of the 19th Century to support the booming herring fishing industry. It became an important fishing station, especially after the pier was completed in 1877. The village grew steadily and at one time had four shops which sold supplies to the crews of the herring vessels. However, at the outbreak of WWI ships were deliberately sunk to block the four channels on the eastern side of Scapa Flow. This meant that boats could no longer take an easy route to the North Sea from St Mary's and the herring industry collapsed.

On the night of the 13 October 1939 the German U-boat U47 entered Scapa Flow by squeezing past the sunken block ships in the Holm Sound and sneaked unnoticed round the Point of Skeldaquoy and Howequoy Head. It then manoeuvred itself into position and torpedoed the battleship HMS Royal Oak. This resulted in the loss of 833 lives.

Mute swan and mallard breed on the Loch of Ayre by the village and it also attracts migrants and overwintering wildfowl.



Nesting Swan

Near the loch of Ayre is a large Nissan hut which housed a cinema during WW2 to entertain troops from the local batteries.

Close to the northern end of the loch is a low mound which is the site of the Broch of Ayre.



Grass of Parnassus

Enjoy nature as well as history along the walk - look out for plants such as bog asphodel and grass of Parnassus.

Bog Asphodel



St Mary's Village



EAST MAINLAND