

Sustenance from the sea

A self-guided walk around St Abbs in Berwickshire



Discover a picturesque village on the southeast coast of Scotland
Find out about both dangers and opportunities offered by its coastal position
Explore the old harbour and find out about the fishing industry
See how locals have developed a new economy based on tourism

www.discoveringbritain.org

**the stories of our landscapes
discovered through walks**





Contents

Introduction	3
Practical information	4
Route maps	6
Stopping points	7
Other places to visit	7
Area map	8
Directions	9
Further information	13
Credits	14

© The Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers, London, 2014

Discovering Britain is a project of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)
The digital and print maps used for Discovering Britain are licensed to the RGS-IBG from Ordnance Survey

Cover image: St Abbs harbour © Martin Haslett

Sustenance from the sea

Explore the seaside village of St Abbs

St Abbs is just off the main road between London and Edinburgh but the calm and tranquillity of the village itself make it seem like a world away.

This sheltered harbour was once one of the most significant ports between the Tyne and the Forth. The settlement was founded on fishing and people gained their livelihoods from the sea for generations.



Although the sea gives, it also takes. Shipwrecks around this rocky coast caused the loss of lives but also prompted the establishment of a lifeboat station and a lighthouse.



As fish stocks declined people needed to find new sources of income and they turned to tourism. See some of the stunning landscapes and seascapes that attract visitors.

Find out about initiatives driven by the local community to keep their village thriving. Reflect on both the advantages and disadvantages of relying on tourism.

This walk offers the opportunity to explore a picturesque village that has been shaped by the sea in so many ways.

St Abbs lifeboat station in the harbour (top); piles of lobster pots (bottom)
© Martin Haslett

Practical information

Location	St Abbs, near Eyemouth, Berwickshire, Scotland
Start and finish	St Abbs harbour
Getting there	<p>Car - St Abbs is easily accessible from the A1(T) between Berwick-upon-Tweed and Dunbar. There is parking at the Harbour (charges apply) and in the village above (free).</p> <p>Train - The nearest railway stations are Berwick-upon-Tweed (12 miles) and Dunbar (19 miles).</p> <p>Bus - St Abbs is served by a local bus from Berwick-upon-Tweed every hour; alight at the Old School (Stop 12 on the walk). A long-distance service between Berwick-upon-Tweed and Edinburgh stops at nearby Coldingham but does not go into St Abbs village.</p> <p>Bicycle - National Cycle Route 76 (Berwick-upon-Tweed to St Andrews) runs through Eyemouth just 4 miles away.</p>
Walk distance	1 ½ miles
Level	Moderate – there are some steep sections up from and down to the harbour including some steps.
Terrain	Pavements, harbour walls, lanes
Conditions	The outer harbour may be dangerous in stormy weather.
Suitable for	<p>Families – Plenty for children to enjoy (see below).</p> <p>Wheelchairs and pushchairs - Steps and steep parts of route can be avoided by taking alternative routes. Parking at higher and lower levels is available so that those with limited mobility can do the walk in two parts.</p>
Family-friendly activities	<p>St Abbs Visitor Centre includes activities for children and a high-powered telescope to view the cliffs and wildlife.</p> <p>St Abbs and Eyemouth Voluntary Marine Reserve has a Rockpool Explorer's Guide suitable for children: http://www.marine-reserve.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/StAbbs_Rookpoolguide_web.pdf</p> <p>The putting green (Stop 11) is open from June to August during the daytime and evenings; putters and balls are available from St Abbs Post Office and Shop (Stop 10).</p> <p>Old Smiddy Coffee Shop at Northfield Farm (Stop 14) has a children's play area outside.</p>

Refreshments

Old School Café at The Ebba Centre (Stop 12) offers fresh home baking and light lunches. It is open daily and has both indoor and outdoor seating.

Old Smiddy Coffee Shop at Northfield Farm (Stop 14) offers home-made baking and light lunches including freshly-made St Abbs crab sandwiches. It is open daily from January to October and on weekends only in November and December.

Ebb Carrs Café in The Harbour (start and end of walk, Stop 16) serves light refreshments and full meals with local seafood a speciality.

There is a **picnic table** overlooking the old harbour at the start and end of the walk.

The **village shop** (Stop 10) sells chilled drinks, snacks and ice creams.

Toilets

There are public toilets in the harbour car park at the start and end of the walk.

Useful information

St Abbs Lifeboat Station in the old harbour (Stop 4) is occasionally open to the public.

rnli.org/findmynearest/station/Pages/St-Abbs-Lifeboat-Station.aspx

St Abbs Market takes place at the Ebba Centre (Stop 12) every Friday. Stalls include local fresh produce, crafts and great gift ideas.

Fridays from April to October 10am to 4pm; Fridays from November and December 10am to 3pm.

www.st-abbs-market.com

St Abbs Visitor Centre on Coldingham Road (Stop 14) has permanent and changing exhibitions about the local area including history of the village, geology and wildlife; family-friendly.

Open April to October 7 days a week (10am to 5pm) and November Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays (11am to 4pm); at all other times by appointment only.

Admission is free but donations are gratefully received.

www.stabbsvisitorcentre.co.uk

Tourist information

St Abbs Visitor Centre (see above for opening times)

Email: hello@stabbsvisitorcentre.co.uk

Telephone: 01890 771 672

Eyemouth Tourist Information Centre

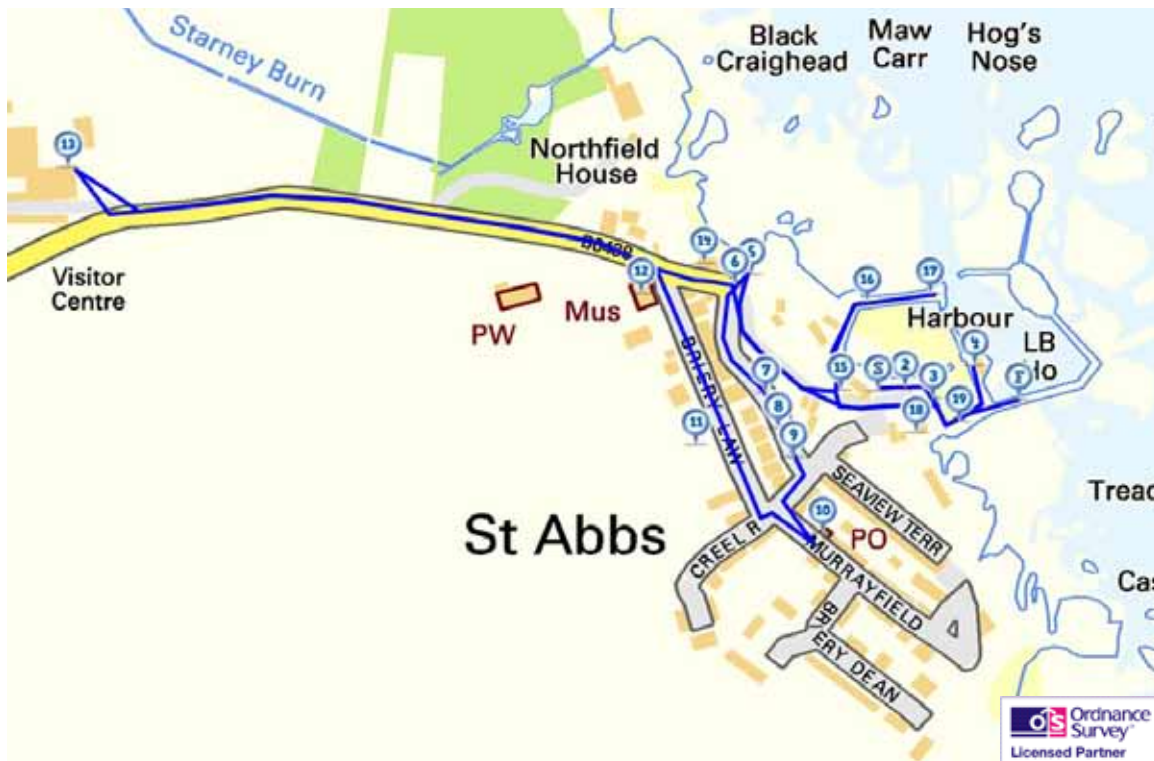
Auld Kirk, Manse Road, Eyemouth TD14 5JE

www.visiteyemouth.com

Visit Scotland - Scottish Borders

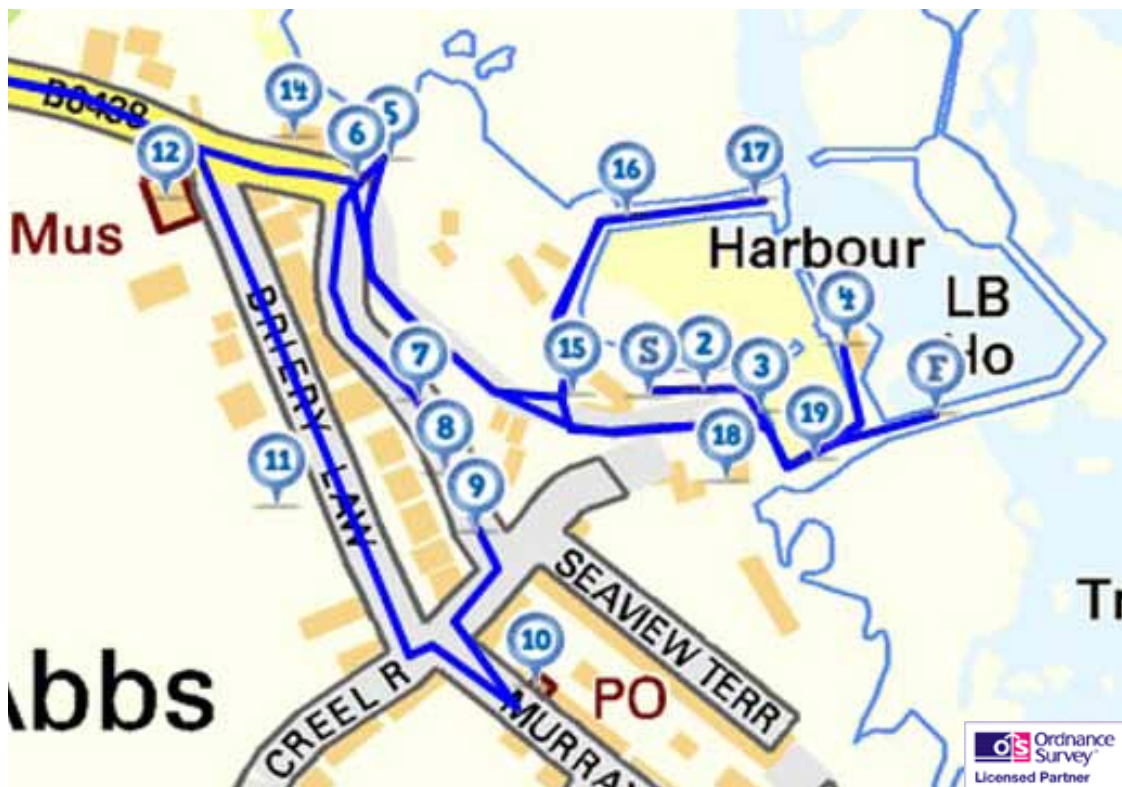
www.visitscotland.com/destinations-maps/scottish-borders

Route overview



Note: The Visitor Centre has moved; it is no longer at Northfield Farm as shown on the map but rather at Stop 14

Detail of harbour area and village



Stopping points

- Start** Picnic area overlooking harbour (behind Ebb Carrs Café)
- 2.** Picnic area overlooking harbour (behind Ebb Carrs Café)
 - 3.** Old harbour
 - 4.** Lifeboat station
 - 5.** East Coast Fishing Disaster Memorial
 - 6.** East Coast Fishing Disaster Memorial
 - 7.** Parking area overlooking harbour
 - 8.** Parking area overlooking harbour
 - 9.** Near telephone box
 - 10.** St Abbs Post Office and shop, 1 Murrayfield
 - 11.** Putting green, Briery Law
 - 12.** Ebba Centre and Old School Café, corner of Briery Law and Coldingham Road
 - 13.** Northfield Farm
 - 14.** St Abbs Visitor Centre, Coldingham Road
 - 15.** Ebb Carrs Café, The Harbour
 - 16.** Harbour wall looking towards St Abbs Head
 - 17.** Harbour wall looking out to sea
 - 18.** St Abbs Marine Station, The Harbour
 - 19.** Old harbour
- Finish** Old harbour

Other places to visit

St Abb's Head National Nature Reserve

200 acres of wild coastline including sheer cliffs which are world-renowned for birdwatching; seabird cruises departing from Eyemouth in summer months; see website for walking trail and rockpooler's guide

Open all year round; access to the north of the village; car park by Northfield Farm

Car park free for National Trust for Scotland Members; £2 non-members

www.nts.org.uk/Property/St-Abbs-Head-National-Nature-Reserve

Eyemouth Museum

Documents the fishing and social heritage of Eyemouth, brought to life in its exhibits including the famous Eyemouth Tapestry that commemorates the Great East Coast Fishing Disaster

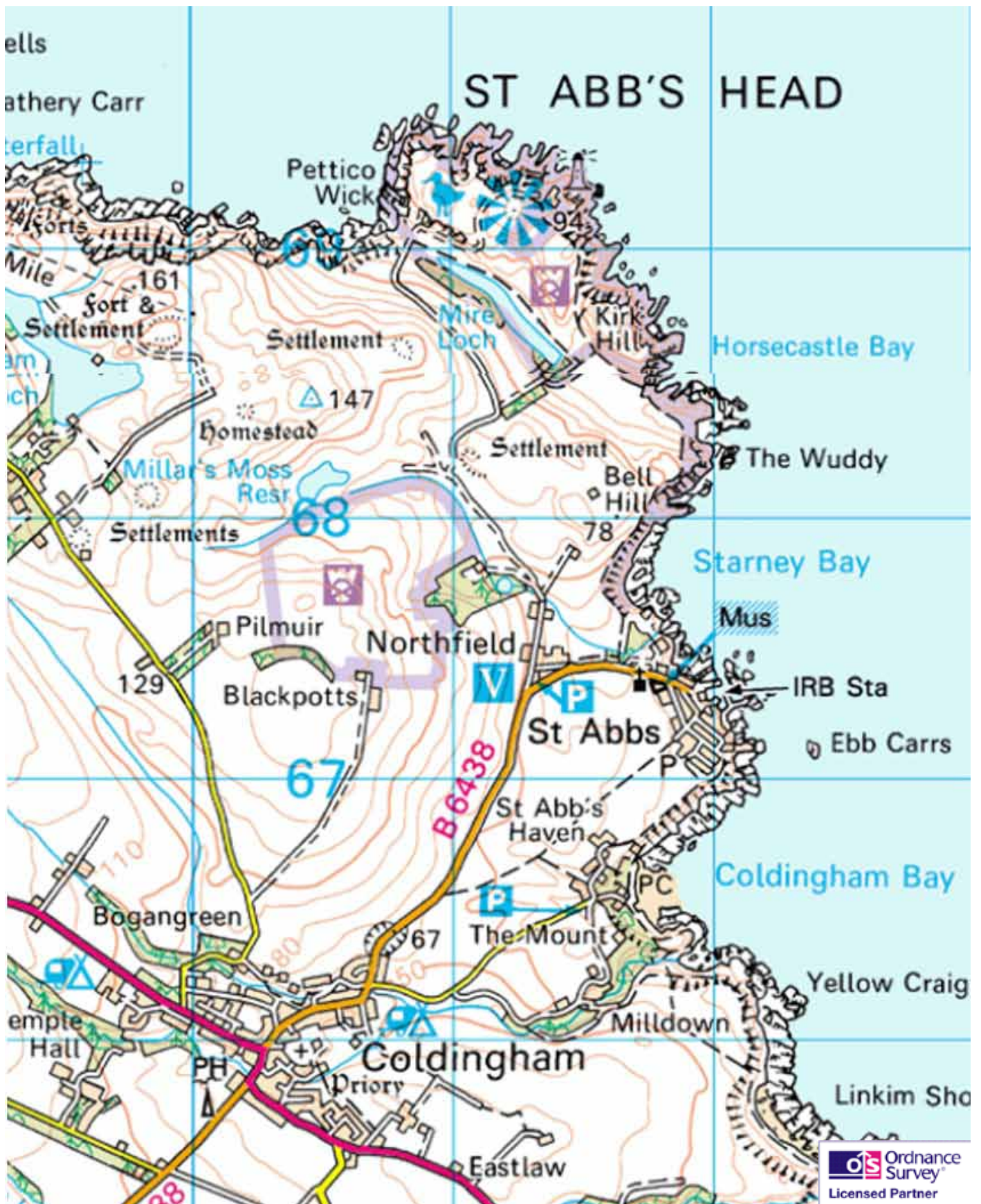
Located in the Auld Kirk, Manse Road, Eyemouth TD14 5JE

Opening: April to October, Monday to Saturday 10am to 4pm and Sunday 12 noon to 4pm

Admission: £3.50 adults, £3 concessions, under-16s free

www.eyemouthmuseum.org

Area map



Directions

These directions are for use with the audio commentary. Listen to each track then read the directions below to get to the next stop.

1. Welcome to St Abbs

Picnic area behind café overlooking the harbour

Directions 1

Remain in the same place to listen to Track 2.

2. Men of the sea

Picnic area behind café overlooking the harbour

Directions 2

Follow the path down to the harbour, passing a tall house on the right. Turn right and stop at the edge of the harbour to listen to Track 3.

3. Scaling up

Old harbour

Directions 3

Proceed round the harbour and stop by the lifeboat station. Listen to Track 4.

4. Loss of life

St Abbs Lifeboat Station

Directions 4

Retrace your steps around the harbour and pass the picnic area. At the junction with the road keep left past the public conveniences and go uphill. Where the lane bends to the left is a small seating area on the right with a memorial. Listen here to Track 5.

5. A light in the darkness

East Coast Fishing Disaster Memorial

Directions 5

Stay where you are but look down to the harbour below. Listen to Track 6.

6. A declining industry

View from East Coast Fishing Disaster Memorial

Directions 6

Leave the memorial area, cross the road and continue into the unnamed lane. Stop near the parking area looking down on the harbour. Listen to Track 7.

7. New opportunities

Parking area overlooking harbour

Directions 7

Remain in the same place and listen to Track 8.

8. Outsider invasion

Parking area overlooking harbour

Directions 8

Continue along the lane and stop at the end above the telephone box. Look along the row of houses ahead and listen to Track 9.

9. Pros and cons

View along Seaview Terrace near the telephone box

Directions 9

Follow the lane round to the right then turn immediately left into Murrayfield. Stop outside the village shop on the left. Listen here to Track 10.

10. The shop that sells everything

St Abbs Post Office and shop, 1 Murrayfield

Directions 10

Retrace your steps back along Murrayfield. At the end turn left and then immediately right into Briery Law. Stop when you reach the putting green on the left side. Listen to Track 11.

11. Hole in one

Putting green, Briery Law

Directions 11

Continue to the end of Briery Law. Stop outside the old school which is the last building on the left. Listen to Track 12.

12. No more school lessons

The Ebba Centre and Old School Café, corner of Briery Law and Coldingham Road

Directions 12

With the school behind you turn left along Coldingham Road. There is no pavement on the first section so do take care but after about 50 metres you can go through the wall on the left and use the footpath running parallel to the road. After about 100 metres this path changes to the other side of the road. Continue following the path until you reach a cluster of farm buildings. Listen to Track 13.

13. Old buildings, new uses

Northfield Farm

Directions 13

Retrace your steps along Coldingham Road. At the junction with Briery Law continue straight on. Stop outside the St Abbs Visitor Centre on the left. Listen to Track 14.

14. In local hands

St Abbs Visitor Centre, Coldingham Road

Directions 14

With the Visitor Centre behind you look down into the harbour. To the right of the harbour is a café in a small stone building. Take the steps from the Visitor Centre or follow the road to reach it. Stop when you are outside and listen to Track 15.

15. Entrepreneurial spirit

Ebb Carrs Café, The Harbour

Directions 15

From the café walk down to the harbour. Follow the edge of the harbour and then go up the concrete steps so that you have a view over the harbour wall. Listen to Track 16.

16. Seabird sanctuary

Harbour wall looking towards St Abbs Head

Directions 16

Return down the steps. Turn left and stop at the end of the harbour wall. Listen to Track 17.

17. Underwater wonders

Harbour wall looking out to sea

Directions 17

Return to the café. With the cafe to your left follow the path back to the old harbour. Keep right, ignoring the steps to the right, and stop outside St Abbs Marine Station. Listen here to Track 18.

18. A new asset

St Abbs Marine Station, The Harbour

Directions 18

Return to the old harbour and listen to Track 19.

19. Old harbour, new role

Old harbour

Directions 19

Remain at the harbour and listen to Track 20.

20. Embracing change

Old harbour

Directions 20

If it is safe to do so, you may like to take the opportunity to walk along the wall of the 'new' harbour to enjoy views back across the village.

Further information

St Abbs Visitor Centre

www.stabbsvisitorcentre.co.uk

St Abbs Community website

www.stabbs.org

St Abbs Community Trust

st-abbs-community-trust.weebly.com

St Abbs Market

www.st-abbs-market.com

St Abbs Lifeboat Station

rnli.org/findmynearest/station/Pages/St-Abbs-Lifeboat-Station

St Abb's Head Lighthouse

www.nlb.org.uk/LighthouseLibrary/Lighthouse/St--Abbs-Head

St Abb's Head National Nature Reserve

www.nts.org.uk/Property/St-Abbs-Head-National-Nature-Reserve

Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast European Marine Site

www.xbordercurrents.co.uk

St Abbs and Eyemouth Voluntary Marine Reserve

www.marine-reserve.co.uk

St Abbs Marine Station

www.marinestation.co.uk

Dive St Abbs

www.divestabbs.info

History of the fishing industry in Scotland

www.scotfishmuseum.org/history-of-the-fishing-industry

Eyemouth Musuem

www.eyemouthmuseum.org

Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in producing this Discovering Britain walk

Martin Haslett for creating the walk, providing photographs and the audio narration

Malcolm Reid for providing the audio commentary

Jenny Lunn and **Rory Walsh** for editing the walk materials

Bob Thomson from Coldingham for kind permission to use images from **The John Wood Collection**

Liza Cole and **Jack Ibbotson** of the **St Abbs Rangers (National Trust for Scotland)** for kind permission to use their photographs

David McNeill for finding some wonderful old maps in the Collections of the **Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)**

St Abbs and Eyemouth Voluntary Marine Reserve for providing an underwater image

Bob Jones, Callum Black, David McAfee, Des Colhoun, Garry Knight, H4hwn, Janis Cornwall, Kentynet, Lisa Jarvis, Mark Hope, Mark Murphy, Mick Knapton, Nachosan and **Walter Baxter** for additional images reproduced under Creative Commons Licenses

Meg Reid for her generous hospitality providing the Discovering Britain team with breakfast, lunch and dinner!



St Abbs harbour
Janis Cornwall, Geograph (CCL)

**Try other walks in the Discovering Britain series
that explore the changing fortunes of seaside towns**

Magical Margate

Discover the reinvention of the Great British Seaside

<http://www.discoveringbritain.org/walks/region/south-east-england/margate.html>



The queen of Welsh resorts

Explore the elegant seaside town of Llandudno

<http://www.discoveringbritain.org/walks/region/wales/llandudno.html>



Not just another Devon seaside resort

Discover a different side to Teignmouth

<http://www.discoveringbritain.org/walks/region/south-west-england/teignmouth.html>



The way of the bay

Discover why Weymouth became a popular seaside resort

<http://www.discoveringbritain.org/walks/region/south-west-england/weymouth-international.html>



Deep water

Discover how the sea has been friend and foe to Harwich over the centuries

<http://www.discoveringbritain.org/walks/region/east-of-england/harwich.html>





Britain's landscapes are wonderful.

There is a tremendous variety within our shores – whether in the countryside, in towns and cities or at the seaside. And every landscape has a story to tell about our past and present.

Discovering Britain is an exciting series of geographically-themed walks that aim to bring these stories alive and inspire everyone to explore and learn more about Britain. Each walk looks at a particular landscape, finding out about how forces of nature, people, events and the economy have created what you see today.

The self-guided walks are fun, informative and inspiring. Prepare to discover something new, to be surprised and to find the unexpected.

Visit www.discoveringbritain.org to

Send your review of this walk

Search for other walks

Suggest a new walk