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Jane Frank

Kippford and Rockcliffe Circular



Writers' Walks



Jane Frank

Jane Frank is an Australian poet, editor and academic that spent a number of years living in Dumfriesshire in the 1990s. Her latest poetry collection is *Gardening on Mars* (Shearsman Books, 2025).

When Jane was living in Dumfries and Galloway she started a PhD about world book towns that has a number of sections in it about the development of Wigtown. It was later published by Palgrave Macmillan as *Regenerating Regional Culture: A Study of the International Book Town Movement*.

Jane has been runner up and shortlisted in The Wigtown Poetry Prize ('Green Bathroom' 2020, 'Wandering Stars' 2024)



Kippford and Rockcliffe Circular
walkhighlands.co.uk



Gardening on Mars
by Jane Frank



Regenerating Regional Culture : A Study of The International Book Town Movement
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Writers' Walks



Kippford and Rockcliffe circular

2 hours, approximately 3.5 miles return. Varied terrain but easy to navigate.

I often took this walk in the 1990s when I lived in Dumfries. For reasons I can't quite articulate, it was the place that reminded me most of home. The quiet ruggedness of the coastline between these two contrasting villages appealed to me. There was always so much to see — yachts, sailing boats and the estuary view across to Rough Island, the woodlands with their wildflower meadows with cattle grazing and the Mote of Mark — a sixth century hilltop fort. The walk varied with the seasons and the tides. I would happily walk alone there or take Australian visitors on the walk with me, stopping for a pint or fish supper at the Anchor in Kippford afterwards.



Forever is a Pool with a False Floor

Take the shore road.
Try to ignore the light pivoting by degrees,
the slight tear in the lining of the sky
that makes reading it complicated,
clouds hard to fix

. You'll pass the stone cottages
with their expressive faces
and out in the river mouth there are redshank
and curlew but you won't want
the sympathy of birds,
the freedom of their eye,
all their layers of reality not visible to you.

The shell beach is almost too white
littered, as it is, with heartbreak.
When you feel the crunch beneath your feet
you can almost remember
the curve of yourself again
but you are taking this walk from memory.

You were a different person then.
You wore a faux fur hat with exotic markings,
you drank lime green concoctions
in a martini glass
at the hotel perched on the hill,
had a boyfriend who shared
a birthday with Hitler
. Back then, you were homesick
for places you'd never been.

You read that in Victorian times
this was an important port—
now there are yachts and fishermen.
Of course, the island is still an exclamation
between the estuary's blue lungs
so sit on the bench a while,
meditate in deep aqua infallibility,
feel grateful to be here:
there are a sea of souls waiting for vacancies.

Colours bloom, commingle on granite outcrops,
pearlescent streams of skin
and family grow—all your thoughts wash
together.

When you're ready, take the path
between two stone walls.

Walk along the edges of crop fields,
not venturing into the tidal zone just here.
Cross a bridge over a small stream
and enter woodland:
you'll find highland cattle grazing
among pale musk flowers.

There are an anaphora of kissing gates.
Leave them as you find them.
You don't know yet about cyberchondria:
that is all ahead like the short, steep climb
to reach the site of an Iron Age hill fort.
From there, you can see the mountains
of the Lake District across the firth.

Follow the road back down to the water
which might be splashing against the rock wall
or dramatic at low tide with rockpools.

You'll pass houses
with multicoloured gardens
belonging to people who live undisturbed lives
.Walk through a tunnel of ferns.

Pass a moss
-green tree that leans
into a startling blue view.
This is where the walk ends,
not back at the pub where you left your car.
Finish here where tides fiercely cross,
where memory wears down
in the ceaseless thrashing
of shingle and stone.