

## Welcome to Härön!

Härön is dominated by barren rocky ground. In amongst the rocks, there are a few green valleys which have supplied two or three farms for a long time. If you want to experience the finest that Härön has to offer, you should visit the farm Ängen on the southern part of the island. It takes a while to walk there from Kyrkesund, but it is well worth it. Right up until the 1980s the farm Ängen was managed in a traditional old-fashioned way. The way the farm was managed has conserved the beautiful archipelago landscape of Härön with grazed coastal meadows and pastures, small fields and hay meadows right up to modern day.

Today the buildings are concentrated on the eastern side of the island in the village of Kyrkesund. A few summer houses are scattered across the island, but the open grazed landscape still dominates. Most of the island west of the village is a nature reserve. The aim of the reserve is to continue to manage the land. But let's start from the beginning.

## Härön was uninhabited until the Iron Age

### Stone Age

During the Stone Age the shoreline lay 25-30 meters higher up than it does today and Härön consisted only of a few islets. On the islands nearby, there are lots of remains from Stone Age settlements. We know that the sea played a big part in the lives of these people for fishing and hunting seals and birds. Perhaps that which was once Härön served as orientation points for Stone Age peoples' fishing trips.



**Swallowtail butterfly** (*Papilio machaon*) and caterpillar on **milk parsley** (*Peucedanum palustre*).

### Bronze Age

During the Bronze Age in Scandinavia, the shoreline was about 15 meters higher than the current sea level. Härön consisted of a number of small islands at that time. During this time three stone circles and a cairn were created. These were graves and they were often placed by the shore or on islands and islets. This suggests that the sea was still an important food source for the island people. Following the land rise, you can now see the graves on the top of the rocks.

At this time knowledge regarding seed cultivation and livestock farming came to the municipality's main island of Tjörn, located only a stone's throw from Härön. Studies of pollen that scientists have found on Härön show that the island was grazed by livestock earlier than this, but there is no evidence of cultivation on Härön from this time. The island was covered with birch and oak forest in the drier areas. In the valleys elm, lime, ash and hazel developed. Alder grew in the wet hollows and by the shore.

### Iron Age

During the Iron Age heathland began to develop across the island. This was partly due to the climate which became colder with less sunshine and partly because the island population had more grazing animals. During the early Middle Ages, around the years 1000-1100 the landscape changed dramatically on Härön. Pollen analysis shows that all tree species declined. We therefore believe that the first permanent settlement with farming came to the island at this time. Woodland was probably felled to create arable and grazing land and firewood for heating and cooking in the increasingly chilly climate. The island has probably been managed using the in-field and out-field system for almost a thousand years. The farmers had their arable fields (in-fields) close to the



Heathlands extend out across a large part of Härön

house whilst the animals were grazed in the more outlying areas (out-fields). Only after the harvest were the animals allowed to graze on the areas close to the house.

## Simple dwellings for visiting fishermen

Around Härön the remains of simple dwellings can be found, including those at Råbbevik and Rockenabben. These look like low stone walls in rings or rectangles and are often close to the water, preferably with a steep rock wall as one side. Sometimes there is only one and in other areas there are several in a large group.

These dwellings are associated with when herring fishing was at its peak during the 1500s and 1700s. They were probably used by fishermen until the early 1900's as simple dwellings during the fishing season, perhaps with a sail as a roof held up by oars. These types of houses can be found in several places

along the Swedish coast and the North Sea coast. In Bohuslän excavations have shown that these houses were used in the 1500s and there are similar remains in Norway dating back to prehistoric times.

## Härön residents were both fishermen and farmers

Just like other people along the coast, the people of Härön have taken advantage of both the sea and land to make a living. The herring fishing periods have had peaks and troughs over the last five hundred years and have thus affected the island dramatically. The number of residents has changed in line with these peaks and troughs in the herring population.

The map from 1699 shows that there were two farms on the island at this time. Both were on the north side of the island where a total of 17 people lived. At the end of the 1700s the fishing village of Kyrkesund had developed. At that time, just on Stavsundsholmen there were between 70 and 80 people living there. Numbers then reduced and by 1825 there were only five tax-paying people with their families, farmhands and maids in the whole of Kyrkesund. In 1830, the wind of change came again, and some 90 people lived on the island.

During the latter half of the 1800s, things stabilised when the fishermen began fishing in the high seas and the trade ban called “Bondeseqlationen” was lifted. Bondeseqlationen was a ban established in 1658 which forbade fishermen and farmers from trading with foreign countries. Guano factories, salting and processing industries grew up along the strait. Guano is the droppings from birds and other animals. Phosphate and nitrate were extracted from the droppings and used as raw material for fertilisers and explosives. New professions established themselves on the island such as bookkeeper, waiter, sailor and shoemaker. At the same time bathing visitors began to visit Kyrkesund. The fishing village also became an important place for the export of grain, mainly to England. Fishing and agriculture were still the main industries on the island.



**Marsh helleborine,** (*Epipactis palustris*) is a rare orchid which thrives on chalky wet meadows.

*Show consideration for the residents of Härön – respect the property boundaries when walking across the island.*



## The island is divided up between owners

When the National Land Survey undertook land reform in 1843, the land was divided up between the owners. Previously the land was divided into many small plots and the houses were gathered in a village. The land reform meant that each landowner got a coherent piece of land. At that time there were three farms on Härön: Ängen, Gården and Hisingsviken and the two crofts Odalen and Sandbacken. Most of the stone walls we see today on the island were built at this time to protect the cultivated land from grazing animals and to mark the boundaries between the farms' pastures. At the turn of the 20th century was the period when the land on Härön was most exploited. But only a few decades later the great migration to the towns began and the population on the island reduced more and more.



The **wall butterfly** (*Lasiommata megera*) is found in the drier grasslands and on sunny rocks.



**Kidney vetch** (*Anthyllis vulneraria*) thrives on the chalky unimproved grasslands. Pea plants live symbiotically with nitrogen fixing bacteria.

## Flora and fauna

### **The landscape offers variety**

A landscape which is farmed and grazed provides a beautiful landscape with a specific flora and fauna as well as food and fodder. Each soil type has its own plant and animal world. In the valleys where the soil is concentrated and where sand rich in seashells from ancient times remains, is where fields were cultivated and meadows were cut. On the other hand, the animals grazed on the rocky areas, where the soil was shallow and the surfaces uneven making it unsuitable for hay production. The result is a varied mosaic landscape.

### **Many rare plants and a rich bird life**

The roadsides and field boundaries that are still cut with scythes or similar equipment have a species-rich meadow vegetation with plants such as greater knapweed, cowslips, quaking grass, greater and lesser yellow rattle. In a damp area south of Ängens Gård, there are species-rich wet meadows. Here we find rarities such as marsh helleborine, early marsh orchid and the sedge *Carex hartmanii*. The old outlying pastures are covered in heathland with heather, crowberry and bearberry. In several places there are small beautiful coastal meadows. There are few trees on Härön and it is pine, spruce, sallow and rowan that are most common.

The bird life is rich and grey partridge and eagle owl can be seen here. Both species have returned after having been extinct from the island for a long time. The grey partridge is favoured by the fact that the fields are cultivated again.

### **The Farm Ängen (meadow)**

Ängen is the last remaining farm on Härön from the postwar period. The siblings Ragnar, Erik and Asta Andersson lived here. The Andersson siblings continued to farm in a traditional way with horse-powered tools. Cereals and potatoes were grown in rotation. One field was grown for fodder, but half of the hay fodder came from the salt marshes and the meadows. The arable fields were only fertilised with seaweed or natural fertiliser. The last of the siblings, Ragnar died in 1993. The estate was bequeathed



The Farm Ängen

to the Swedish Sea Rescue Society and was later bought by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.

The majority of Härön became a nature reserve in 1997. The aim is to as far as possible mimic traditional management with hay cutting, arable farming and extensive grazing. The narrow arable fields are still cultivated and the meadow is cut in July at Ängen Farm. The outlying areas are grazed, complemented by burning to regenerate the heather and create better grazing.

Seeds from these species have been collected from other places where they still exist and have been spread at the same time as spring or autumn planting of bristle oats or spring rye. Flax and traditional varieties of cereals have also been grown here. In the summer the fields shimmer with flowers in all colours.

**Quaking grass**, *Briza media*; **common milkwort**, *Polygala vulgaris*; and **bird's foot trefoil**, *Lotus corniculatus* are common species in the unimproved pastures.

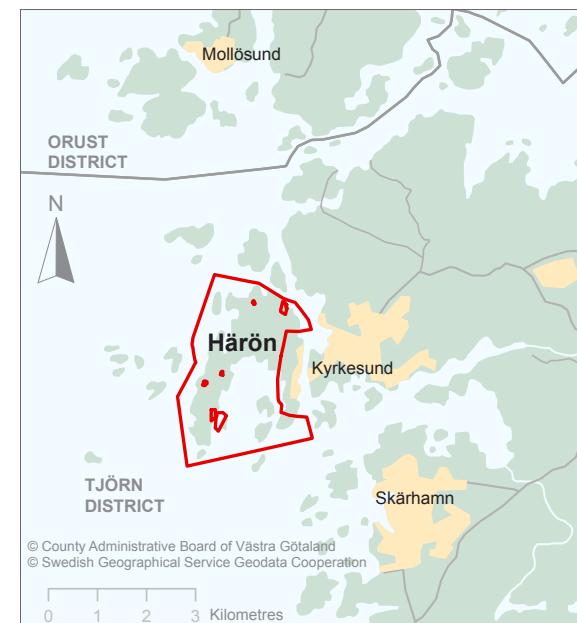


**Corncockle**,  
*Agrostemma githago*  
Up until the 1950s, corncockle was a common arable weed. It is now very rare.

## Cultivation of arable weeds

The cultivation of threatened arable weeds is being tried at the farm. It might seem strange that this is necessary, but for hundreds of years we have battled to get rid of these species. The effective control of arable weeds in farming has contributed to the fact that many arable weeds have almost become extinct today. On Härön chemical pesticides and fertilisers have never been used. The conditions for the threatened arable weeds to survive are thus good.

Species such as corncockle, stinking chamomile, rye broom, weasels snout, smooth cat's ear, Camelina alyssum and false cleavers have been planted in the small arable fields and along the field boundaries.



## Getting to Härön

The village of Kyrkesund lies by the strait between Härön and Tjörn. From the Tjörn side you can take the ferry across to Härön and discover the beautiful archipelago landscape which is still characterised by small scale farming. It is about a 3 km long walk from the ferry to Ängen Farm.



## Regulations for visitors

It is forbidden to:

- pick flowers or dig up plants
- camp other than in areas designated by the site manager
- bring a dog not on a lead
- make a fire anywhere other than in the places designated by the site manager
- rearrange or remove stones from the shingle area.



LÄNSSTYRELSEN  
VÄSTRA GÖTALANDS LÄN



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