

CIRCULAR St. Bees 2 WALK

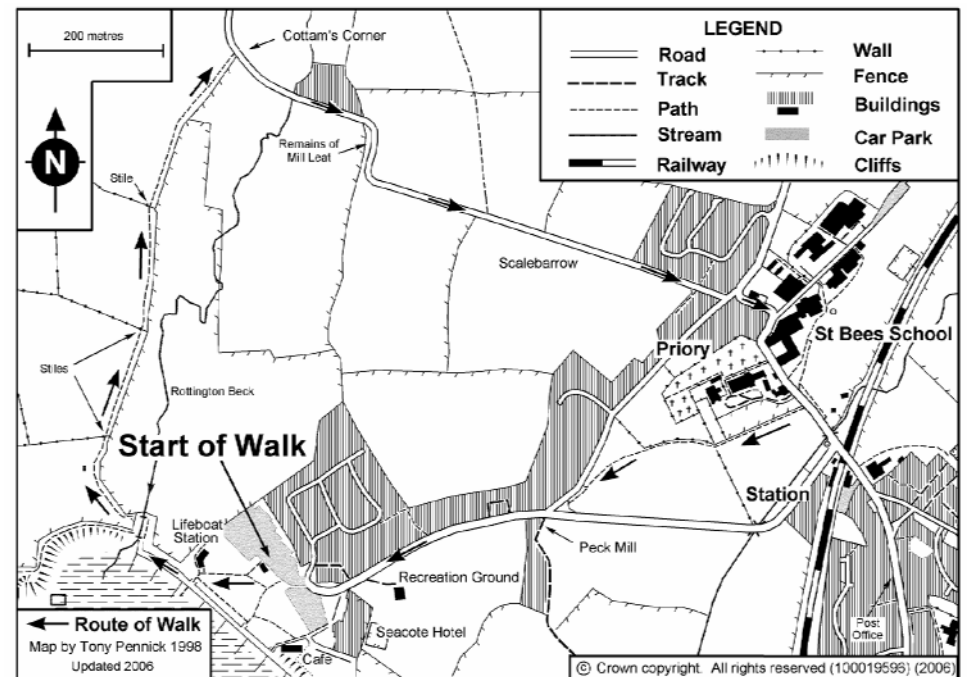
A short walk
2 miles : 3 km
about 60 minutes

Via Gutterfoot,
Scalebarrow and
the Dandy Walk



St. Bees School

Funded by the Parish Paths
Initiative



St. Bees Circular Walk 2 : Scalebarrow

(Time : approx. 1 hour Distance : 3 km ; 2 miles)

This is an easy circular walk through pleasant countryside. It does however include field paths which are often muddy after wet weather, and a section of narrow country lane, where children in particular should be aware of the possible dangers of blind bends and brows.

(If you are starting from the Station, or the main part of the village, begin at Section 3.)

(1) St. Bees Car Park to "Cottam's Corner"

Starting from the Beach car park, go down past the Lifeboat Station and turn right along the Promenade towards St. Bees Head. Follow the path along to the right at the far end of the Prom. and then cross Rottington Beck by the wooden footbridge.

This area, where the slopes of Tomlin come down to Rottington Beck is known as Gutterfoot - and anyone attempting this walk after a spell of wet weather will see why it acquired its name ! This is also the site of the earliest known visits made to St. Bees as a number of tiny flint tools dating from the end of the last Ice Age were found in this area some years ago.

After passing through a kissing gate, take the path which follows the wall on the right to a ladder stile. Over the stile the path continues in a straight line following the bottom of the next three fields, crossing two further ladder stiles and reaching the Rottington - St. Bees road via a kissing gate from the last field.

(2) “Cottam’s Corner” to St. Bees Priory

On reaching the road, turn right and go down the hill, crossing the little bridge and following the road up to the conspicuous “dog-leg” below the hill on the other side of the valley. The road at this point follows the contour at the bottom of the slope for a short distance before making another right angle turn to climb the hill.

On the right hand side of the road where it follows the contour is a ditch with a thick growth of reeds and willow bushes which marks the line of a medieval mill leat. This was built by the monks at St. Bees and carried water from Rottington Beck along the side of the valley towards the sea, around the end of the hill and back away from the sea to feed the water mill in the valley close to the Priory. (You will pass the site of this mill later in the walk.)

Carry on up the hill, known as Scalebarrow, and over the top back towards St. Bees. (Please beware of traffic when approaching the blind brow here.)

At the bottom of the steep descent from Scalebarrow you get good views of the buildings of the former Abbey Farm, a typical local farmstead built of St. Bees sandstone and roofed with Cumberland greenslate. Each section of the roof clearly shows the graded sizes of the slates, those at the bottom being up to 2’ x 4’, whilst those at the top are only 6” x 9”. The buildings here have evolved over many years, the lintel of a disused doorway round the corner bearing the date 1679.

On reaching the T-junction at the bottom of Scalebarrow turn left and then immediately right past the farmhouse. Cross to the far side of the road and follow it down and around the zigzag bends between St. Bees School on the left and the Priory on the right. The bends are blind and care is necessary, but the view of the School and the Priory has altered little for a hundred years or more - if there is no traffic about! Once safely around the bends, the Quadrangle of St. Bees School appears on the left.

Edmund Grindal, an Archbishop of Canterbury in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, had been born in the village at a house on Crosshill (which can be seen on Circular Walk 1). When he died in 1583 he left provision for the founding of a school here. The block on the left of the Quad is the original Elizabethan school and includes a lintel dated 1587. The remainder of the buildings you can see here date from around 1840, and for many years the arched alcove in the roadside wall held a public drinking fountain.



The Quadrangle - St. Bees School

Cross the road and go through the Lych Gate to walk around the outside of the Priory, built on the site of an earlier church by Benedictine monks from about 1150 onwards.

The impressive Norman West Door is amongst their earliest work here.

If time permits, the interior of the Church is well worth a visit. There are descriptive pamphlets and postcards available inside. Today this is the Parish Church of St. Bees. Visitors are welcome to join in the services .



The Norman Arch which forms the west doorway of the Priory

Continue around the Priory and go down the drive, passing the buildings of the 19th century Theological College on the left. Rejoin the road and turn right towards the Station.

(3) St. Bees Priory to the Beach Car Park

A signpost indicates a footpath to the right, along the side of the playing field leading back towards the beach.

This footpath is known as the “Dandy Walk”, possibly after the students from the Theological College. The playing field was established as a memorial to those Old Boys of the School who lost their lives during the First World War.

At the end of the playing field, Priory Paddock, the village’s own small Nature Reserve, can be visited on the right. Follow the path through the wicket gate and cross the next field to the gate at the far end. (Ignore the one up the steps to the right.) Cross the road on your left and turn right along the pavement, skirting the garden wall before emerging on the broad pavement leading back to the beach.

The building behind the garden wall is called Peck Mill and was the mill to which the monks brought the water from Rottington. Opposite the first seat you can see a path on the right by a bungalow called “Millfield”. This is where the mill leat came round the hill and ran back along the line of the pavement to Peck Mill.

Continue down the pavement towards the beach.

In the sports field on your left and below you, the rippling “ridge and furrow” pattern left by generations of ploughmen and their horses can still be seen in the outfield of the cricket pitch. The seats here were presented to the people of St. Bees by Old Boys of Mill Hill School in London, who were evacuated to the village in September 1939, some of whom were billeted during the War in the Seacote Hotel, down towards the sea.

A very short walk takes you back to the Beach Car Park.

I hope you have enjoyed the circuit.

(If you would like to find out more about St Bees and its history, why not visit the Web Site on www.stbees.org.uk It has an extensive history section with numerous interesting articles including Douglas Sim’s book ‘100 years of St Bees’ now out of print, but reproduced in its entirety on the web. Inside the Priory Church, there is also a pamphlet ‘St Bees - a thousand years of village history’, written by John Todd.)

Neil Bettinson

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-Illustrations courtesy of “The Cumbrian Coastal Way - A Guide to the Whitehaven to St. Bees Section” and St. Bees : a thousand years of village history.

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