



WALKING THE WAY

ST BEES PRAYER WALK

This walk starts at St Bees station but since it is circular you can also start from one of the churches, the beach or Sea Mill Lane car park or walk in the opposite direction.

You may use it as a prayer walk or simply to enjoy the exercise. Prayers are taken from Francis of Assisi's hymn based on giving thanks to God for the world we are given, but you may wish to use the walk to ponder other questions or pray for those you see.

For transport use the Cumbrian coast train to St Bees from Carlisle and Whitehaven to the north and Lancaster and Barrow to the south (not Sundays). Buses run daily from Whitehaven (6, X6, 20) and Egremont (835) to the station or beach (Sundays station only). Cars can park beside the station, at the beach or at the bottom of Sea Mill Lane.

The beach section has stiles on the cliff top and is not suitable for wheelchairs or buggies. Public toilets are at the beach car park. There are plenty of seats along the walk. Refreshments are available at pubs, restaurants and cafes on Main Street and the beach café. Accommodation is in hotels and bed and breakfasts – this is one end of the Coast to Coast walk. The village shop and post office is also on Main Street. There is a phone box at the station. There are maps at the station, outside the post office and at the beach. A good source of information is the St Bees website www.stbees.org.uk.

From the station the walk goes up the hill on Main Street. Towards the top of the hill turn right on Sea Mill Lane. At the end turn right either on the cliff path or beach to the promenade. Turn right again on Beach Road. At junction ahead follow footpath to Priory. Turn right again to station. Without stops the walk will take under an hour and is around 3km (2 miles).





From the station turn uphill along Main Street. You will often see horses here or in the paddock near the Priory. On the right is a small garden with links to Mill Hill School which was evacuated here from London in the Second World War.



*All creatures of our God and King, lift up your voice and with us sing, alleluia!
O burning sun with golden beam, and silver moon with softer gleam, O praise him, alleluia!*

Cross the road onto Finkle Street at the Albert Hotel (take care – there is no pavement on this section). On the left is the village hall (called Hodgett's, the former Liberal Club).

Turn right onto Cross Hill. On the left is the house which was the home of Edmund Grindal who became Archbishop of Canterbury in the 16th century and founded St Bees School.



On the right is the rimming stone from the smithy which was opposite.



Rejoin Main Street up the hill past the pubs, shop and Post Office. Behind Main Street on the left is the village primary school and library.

After the Outrigg junction is St Bees Methodist Church on the right, usually open every day – a plain, simple building renovated in 2000 with its shell cross. A place to be quiet, maybe think and pray. Look over the golf course to the Isle of Man.



Turn right and walk up Main Street. At the notice board turn right onto Sea Mill Lane (beware there is no pavement and it is narrow, though with little traffic). This is the southern edge of the village.

*O rushing wind that is so strong, and clouds that sail in heaven along. O praise him, alleluia!
O rising morn in praise rejoice, and lights of evening, find a voice, O praise him, alleluia!*

Half way down Sea Mill Lane on the left is a house called Snaefell, with views over to the highest mountain on the Isle of Man. Just after you may see the legend *I am the way the truth and the life* – Jesus laid out in white stones at the right hand side of the road.

Towards the bottom is a smiling Buddha at the roadside.



There is a right bend under the railway line by a public footpath sign labelled *The shore*. On the left are beach bungalows – from here down through Nethertown to Braystones, best seen from the train, are lines of these bungalows which started off in the 1920s as holiday homes for West Cumbrians. In front is the Seamill Foreshore sign which gives the history of the former mill, the railway dating back to 1849, beach and cliffs.



Turn right through the small car park.

Now there is a choice of walk, either along the beach except at high tide with the chance to examining the stones, pools and seaweed or over the cliffs which have better views.

*O flowing water, pure and clear, make music for your Lord to hear, sing 'Praise him, alleluia!'
O fire so masterful and bright, giving to all both warmth and light, O praise him, alleluia!*

To follow the cliff path cross the beck, ignoring the public footpath sign on the right and take the path between the beck and the golf course.



This is part of the Cumbria Coastal Way www.ldwa.org.uk/ldp/members/show_path.php?path_name=Cumbria+Coastal+Way which stretches around the coast from Lancashire to Scotland. You will see wild flowers and butterflies.



The cliffs are subject to erosion and the path here and on St Bees Head has been moved back inland several times.



After a few minutes you reach the highest point of the cliffs and may want to sit and look around.

To the left along the coast is the long dark shape of Black Combe and you may be able to see the wind farm off Walney near Barrow in Furness.



St Bees Head is the nearest point in England to both the Isle of Man, Whithorn in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Most days will give a view of the Isle of Man to the left and the Scottish coast ahead. To the right is St Bees Head, the start of the coast to coast walk to Robin Hood's Bay www.visitcumbria.com/coast-to-coast-walk.



Turn round to the land and there are glimpses of the Cumbrian fells, but the best views are from the edges of the village. However this is the best place to get the layout of the village, with the oldest parts clustered around the Priory and the newer estates on the outskirts. The exertion of climbing the cliffs is worth it.



*And all who are of tender heart forgiving others, take your part, sing 'Praise him, alleluia!'
All who long pain and sorrow bear, praise God and on him cast your care, O praise him, alleluia!*

Keep to the cliff top over stiles and leave the path between the Seacote Hotel and the beach shop where you can get snacks, drinks and excellent ice cream. In front are the beach, playground, toilet,

main car park, bus stop and lifeboat station. Beyond the promenade is the path leading onto the Head.

Turn right in front of the hotel to follow Beach Road. The golf club is on your right. Near its entrance is the junction of Abbey Road to the left and Station Road to the right. Opposite is a footpath, the dandy path, which leads to the Priory. (This is the only part of the walk which can get very wet – if it is too muddy use Station Road instead to reach the Priory.)

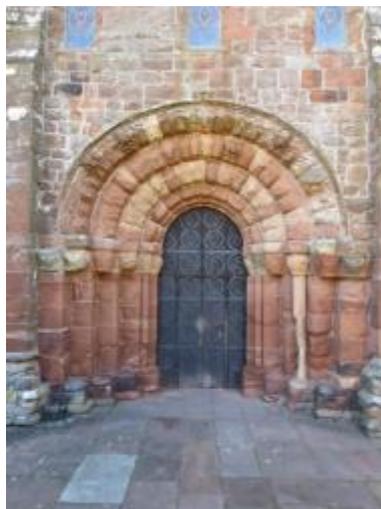
Follow the path beside the meadow and on the left you will come to the Priory Paddock Wildflower Garden www.stbees.org.uk/miscellaneous/paddock.html. Follow the boardwalk past a lily pond and pool. There is a plaque on the wall with a further reminder of Mill Hill School.



*Dear mother earth, who day by day unfolds rich blessings on our way, O praise him, alleluia!
The flowers and fruits that bloom and grow, let them his glory also show, O praise him, alleluia!*

At the end of the garden to your left is a gate into the churchyard. Have a look at some of the gravestones, especially the 18th century ones by the top wall and think about the stories behind them such as the families buried together, often with children who have died very young.

Now move round to the front of the Priory with its beautiful Norman west door. There is lots of information about the Priory inside and it is well worth a visit. You can also buy several booklets about the church and village here as well as at the village shop.



Leaving the door on your left and the vicarage on the right brings you to the Sleeping Child Garden dedicated to those who have died young. It includes sculptures by Josephina de Vasconcellos (there is another in the priory).



*And now, most kind and gentle death, waiting to hush our fading breath, O praise him, alleluia!
You homeward lead the child of God, and Christ the Lord the way has trod, O praise him, alleluia!*

At the far end of the garden you will be facing the Priory. To the right, in the area behind the altar, is Old College Hall and at right angles New College Hall, part of the theological college which flourished here in the 19th century.

Coming out of the priory grounds you are facing St Bees School, the public school which dates back to the 15th century.

Turn right back onto Main Street. At the corner of Station Road is the war memorial. Just on the right down Station Road is Beck Edge Garden which has a statue by Colin Telfer of St Bega, after whom the village is named and details of the legend. She is reputed to have come from Ireland around 850.



*Let all things their creator bless, and worship him with humbleness, O praise him, alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son, and praise the Spirit, Three in One, O praise him, alleluia!*

You are back at your starting point.