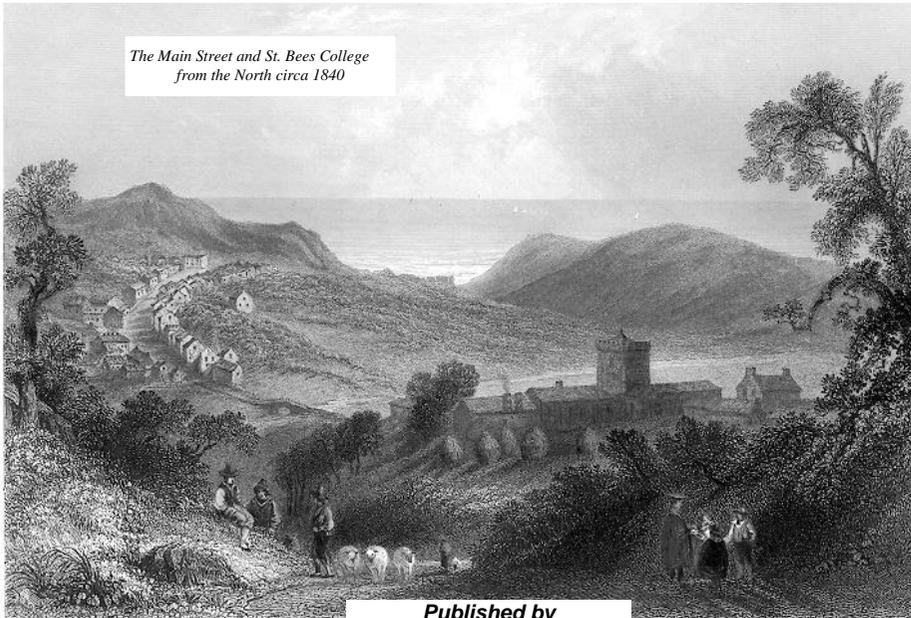


CIRCULAR St. Bees 6 WALK

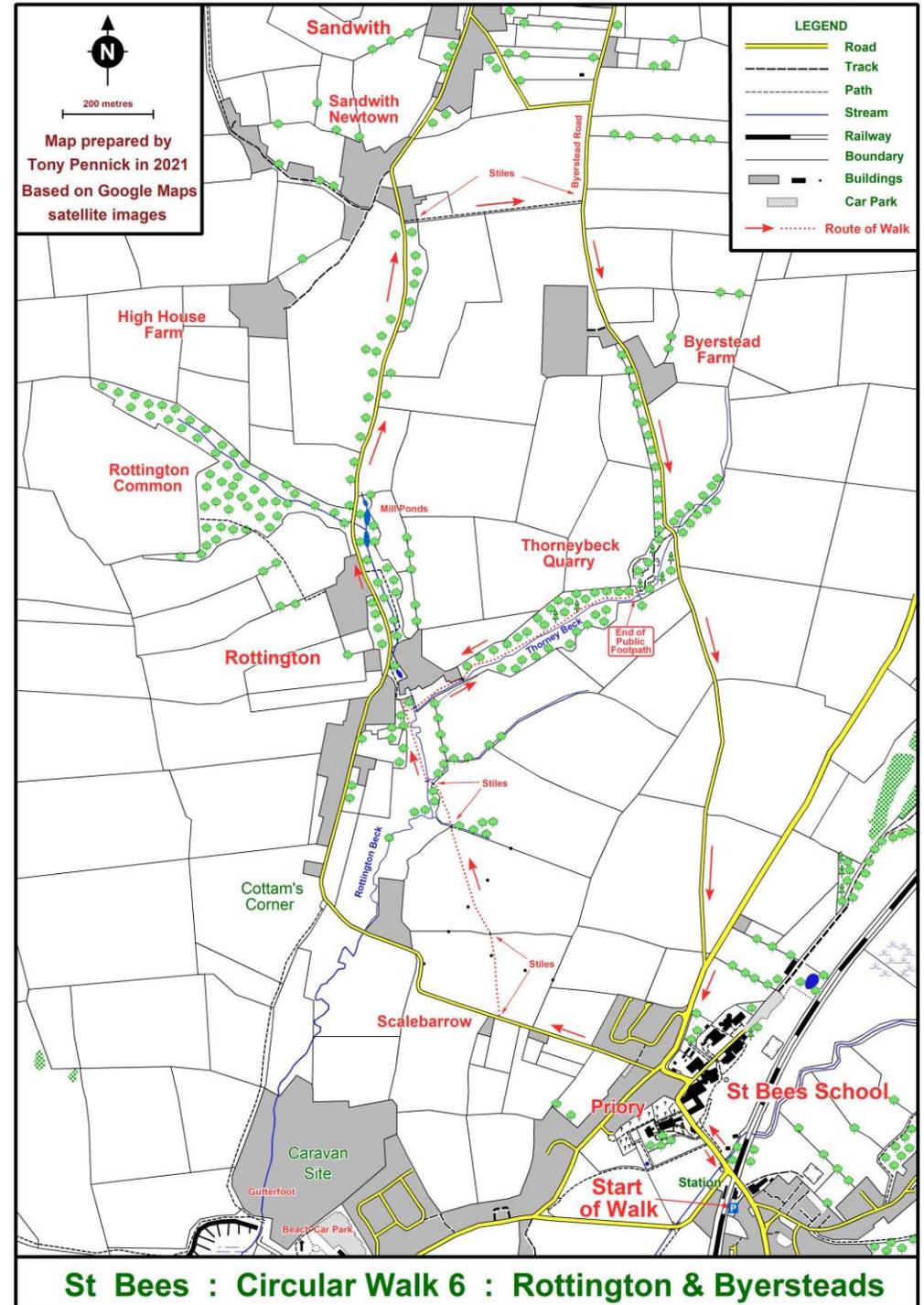
A medium walk
3 miles : 5 km
about 2 hours

To Rottington Hall
and back via the
Byerstead Road



The Main Street and St. Bees College
from the North circa 1840

Published by



St. Bees Circular Walk 6

Rottington Hall and the Byerstead Road

(Time : approx. 2 hours Distance : 5 km ; 3 miles)

This walk visits the hamlet of Rottington, which used to be a separate parish prior to its amalgamation with St. Bees in 1973. It continues north towards Sandwith and back via the Byerstead Road. Some of the paths can be quite muddy after wet weather and suitable footwear is advisable.

The walk starts from the Station car park in the centre of the village (although from the Beach car park, the second part of the walk can be joined by taking the path from Gutter Foot to Cottam's Corner and then north along the road to Rottington).

From the car park, cross the Railway and walk towards St. Bees Priory. At the Lychgate, cross the road by the entrance to St. Bees School and walk around the double bend until the road can be re-crossed with safety by Abbey Farm.

This used to be one of the working farms in the village. The main farm house on the corner dates from 1679. The farm buildings have now been converted to residential accommodation.

Continue around the corner to the left and up the hill signposted towards Rottington.

This is Scalebarrow, but the sunken road very much restricts the visibility, although it does give glimpses of the underlying rock structure, the red St. Bees sandstone. At the top of the hill there are fine views of St. Bees Head, the beach and the golf course - and a seat for those in need!

Once over the brow of the hill, a stile & a footpath sign are reached on the right, giving access to a large arable field. Go straight across the field, heading for an electricity pole.

This is a public right-of-way, so don't be put off by the growing crops as the landowner has an obligation to maintain a path across the fields.

Cross the stile at the opening in the adjacent field boundary and head across another large field, again making for the nearest overhead powerline pole. On the same walking line, make for a step stile in the field boundary. Once over the stile, follow the edge of the field to the left until another stile and a footbridge is reached. Cross these and the second footbridge over Rottington Beck, turn right and follow the beck upstream to a stile in a stone wall. Before the wall there is a small wooden bridge over the beck to the right.

This is the start of a footpath which follows the Parish boundary up a delightful wooded valley towards the Byerstead road.

If there is time, the walk up to the end of the footpath and back is well worth while. The path crosses the meadow, goes over a ladder stile and follows the north side of the beck.

At the right time of the year, the north side of the valley is a sea of gorse and wild flowers and the place is alive with butterflies and small birds. Take care though - one of the local history books reports a story of the Black Dog of Thorney Beck which is said to have eyes as big as saucers! Unfortunately this path, which would provide an ideal return route to St. Bees, stops at Thorneybeck Quarry before the road, has fallen into disuse and is only for the intrepid. The quarry itself is long disused and is a fine wooded area, but there is no public right of way through or around it to the road.

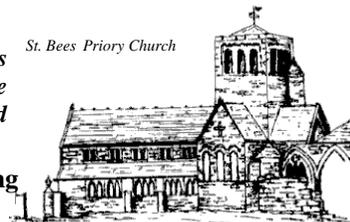


To continue the walk, pass through the former walled orchard by Rottington Hall farm until a short length of track is reached.

Rottington is said to have got its name from the barnacles, rot geese and wildfowl that were found in the area before it was inhabited. The Hall was the home of the Sands family who acquired the Manor of Rottington in 1421 and remained there for over 200 years. Very little local history is recorded before the 19th century, but in 1601, the remains of "The St. Bees Gyant" were found in a nearby field. The said Gyant was 4½ yards long, had a forehead more than 2½ spans broad, teeth 6" long and 2" wide and was in complete armour, his sword and battle axe lying beside him. Later historians considered the measurements to be grossly exaggerated, but were actually the remains of a man of above average stature, probably a Norse Chieftain who had come to West Cumberland from settlements on the Isle of Man. Norse names are found in the area, and there are Norse tombs in some of the churches.

Follow the track to the road.

The building on the right is a former water mill which was fed by the water leat running under the road. The village green at Rottington has been planted with oak, willow and hazel by the Groundwork Trust.



At this point, the walk can be shortened by returning via the road to Scalebarrow and St. Bees.

However, the recommended route follows the road north.

At the northern end of the Green, there is the weir of the old mill pond. This has become silted and is colonised by willow. On the left is a small lay-by and the mature woodland of Rottington Common. According to a report that appeared in the local paper in 1922, the ghyll here is said to be haunted by the ghost of a former inhabitant of the Common.

Follow the tree-lined road through the collection of houses at Sandwith Newtown until a footpath sign is reached at the entrance to Croft Foot. Walk up the track and cross into the field over a stile by a gate on the right. (Cross a fence and follow the boundary eastwards. At the end of the fence, go over a stile onto a narrow road which leads to the Byerstead road.) Turn right (south) and follow the road past Byerstead farm and in and out of the dip by the side of Thorneybeck Quarry. Continue along this road until it meets the main St. Bees to Whitehaven road.

There are fine views of the meandering Pow Beck in the valley, the School, the Priory and the southern part of St. Bees from the rise before the descent into the village.

Keep on the grass verge and follow the main road towards the village. From Abbey Farm, retrace steps around the zigzag bends keeping to the left (school) side of the road. Cross the road by the Lychgate and proceed back to the Station.

If time permits, walk round the outside of the Priory. The impressive Norman west door and the interior of the church are well worth a visit.

We hope you have enjoyed the circuit.

To find out more about St Bees, you may like to visit the Village Web Site on www.stbees.org.uk

Bob Mayow & Tony Pennick

July 1998 (Updated April 2021)