



St Bees Village History and Heritage Trail



St Bega is our local saint, said to be an Irish princess who fled across the Irish Sea to St Bees to avoid an enforced marriage to a Viking prince, sometime after 850 AD. The name of the village is derived from her.

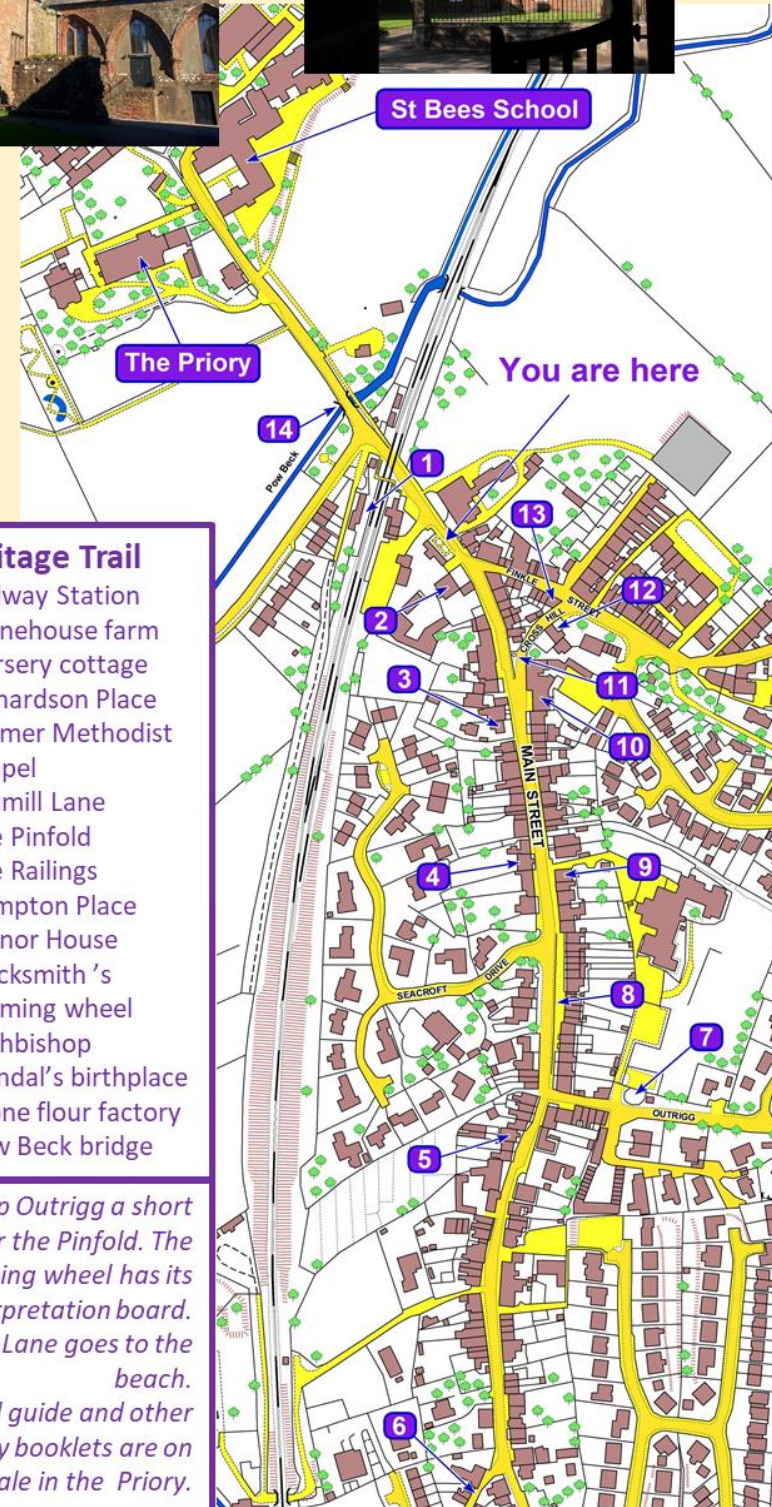
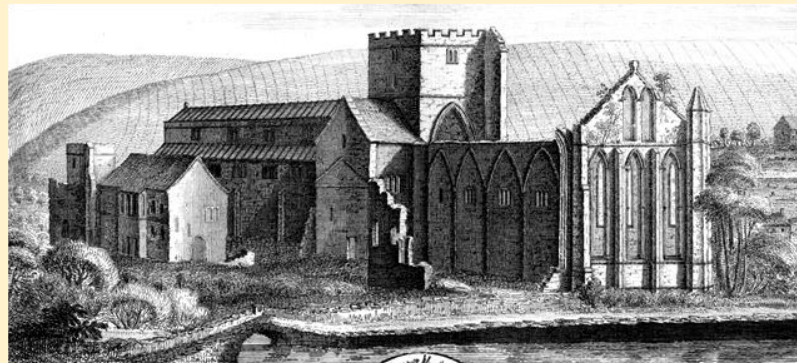
The invading Normans used the existing religious site to found a Benedictine priory in 1120. The Priory was closed in 1539 by Henry VIII at the Dissolution of the Monasteries, but the church has remained in use.



St Bees School was founded in 1583 by Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of Canterbury. He was born at Cross Hill House (right) in about 1517. He died shortly after founding the school.



The Priory church is shown here in 1739, with remains of the monastic buildings. Later in 1816, the roofless east end was restored to house the first Church of England Theological College outside a university.



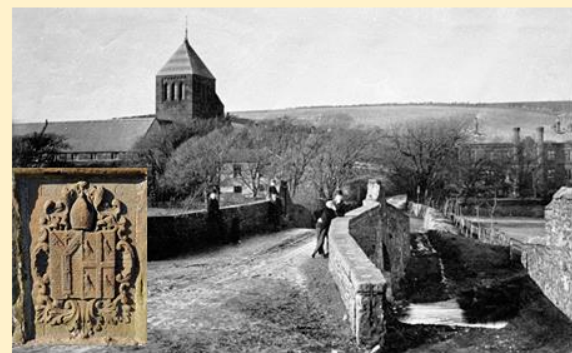
The 1600s saw expansion of the village south of Pow Beck, and two historic buildings from this period are Nursery House (left) and Stonehouse Farm (right – with original lintel inset).



The coming of the railway in 1849 brought large changes. A hotel was built at the station, and the tourist trade was born. Numbers were boosted at St Bees School and the Theological College. The Outrigg quarries could now export thousands of tons of sandstone by rail, requiring the Main Street to be widened at the "Railings" for stone traffic.



The college had up to 50 students, who lodged in the village. As a result private lodging houses were built, such as at Hampton Terrace (below, shown in 1920). The students had to wear cap and gown when out (left). The college closed in 1895 due to competition from new colleges associated with universities which had copied its pioneering model.



Pow Beck bridge was completed in 1585, paid for by Edmund Grindal. His coat of arms (inset) is on the bridge parapet. The old ford is at the right. (photo 1900).



Heritage Trail

1. Railway Station
2. Stonehouse farm
3. Nursery cottage
4. Richardson Place
5. Former Methodist chapel
6. Seamill Lane
7. The Pinfold
8. The Railings
9. Hampton Place
10. Manor House
11. Blacksmith's rimming wheel
12. Archbishop Grindal's birthplace
13. Scone flour factory
14. Pow Beck bridge

Go up Outrigg a short way for the Pinfold. The rimming wheel has its own interpretation board. Seamill Lane goes to the beach. A trail guide and other history booklets are on sale in the Priory.



The railway also attracted middle-class commuters to live here, and the Walker family opened an emporium (left), to cater for their tastes. They ran a pickle factory, and a scone flour works (right); all in Finkle Street.



By about 1900 the Main Street was much like it is today. Many farms had become inns or dwellings, such as the imposing Manor House, and Richardson Place with its portico. With the 19th century decline in agriculture, many villagers had found employment in service industries, the quarries and the Bigrigg iron ore mines. The circular Pinfold, for stray livestock, became unused.

Further information – There is a display of local history in the Priory, including the fascinating story of "St Bees Man". Open daily. Scan the QR code to access more history.

St Bees web site



stbees.org.uk