

CIRCULAR St. Bees 4 WALK

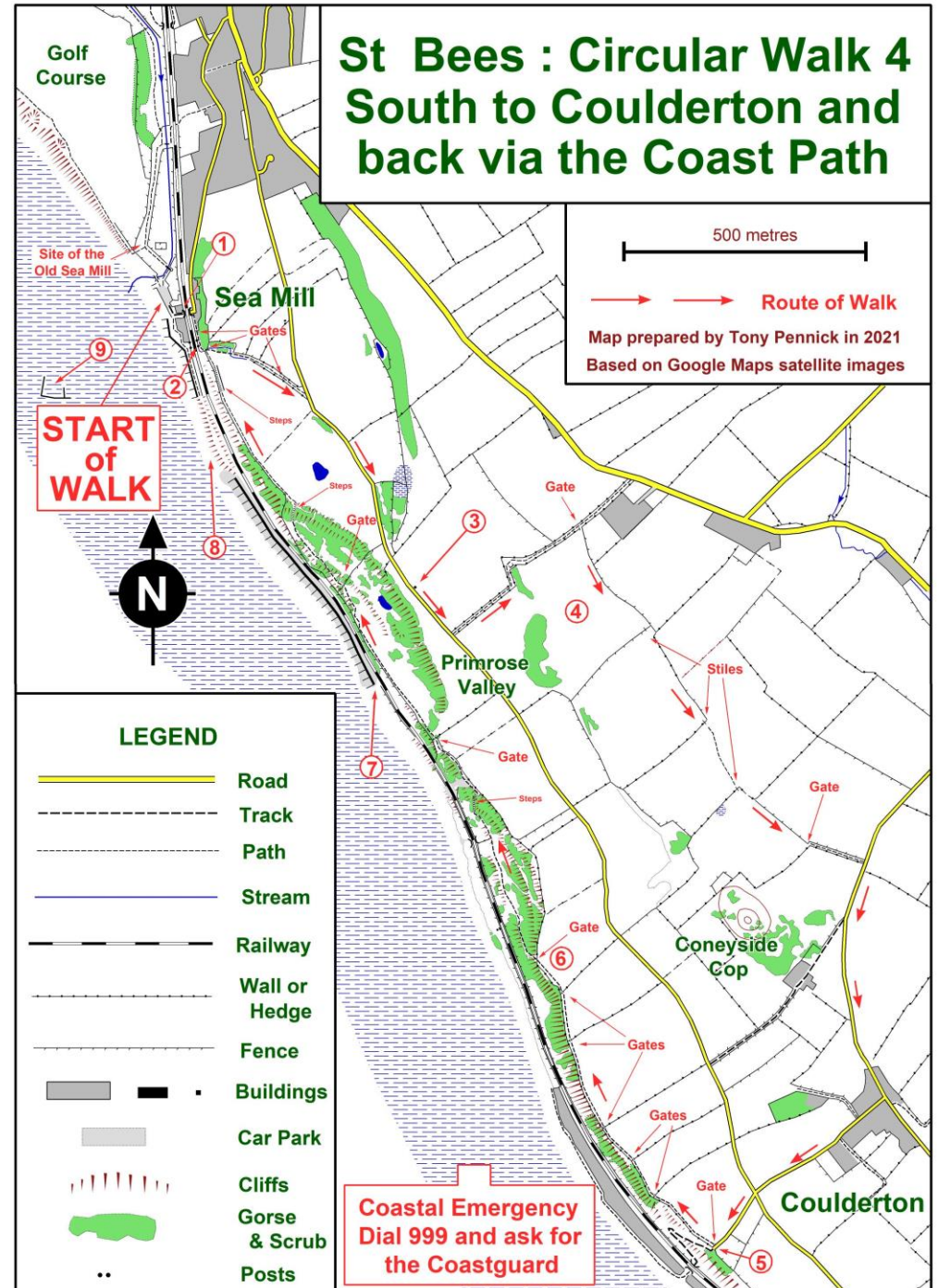
A medium walk
4 miles : 6 km
about 2 hours

From Sea Mill to
Coulderton and
the Coast Path



The Old Sea Mill

Published by



St. Bees Circular Walk 4 : Couderton & the Coast Path

(Time : approx. 2 hours Distance : 6 km ; 4 miles)

This is a circular walk to the south of the Village, taking in both pastoral and coastal scenery. It includes tracks and field paths which can be quite muddy after wet weather, as can the areas around some of the gates and stiles. Suitable footwear is advisable. The walk returns on the recently created England Coast Path (ECP) via Primrose Valley.

Please Respect the Countryside Code and keep Dogs on leads at all times when crossing stock fields.

The walk starts from the Seamill car park, reached via Seamill Lane (originally known as the "Went"), which turns off the Main Street at the southern end of the Village. From the car park, go under the railway bridge and turn immediately right.

The area south of Pow Beck was landscaped by Rail Track in 1997. Information points here give details of the area and the Sea Mill, which was demolished in the early 1960's.

The footpath passes through Stonecroft yard, via a gate onto an old track.

The angled section of metal pipe on the left of the road (1) just under the bridge was placed there to help kick the wheels of the carts around the sharp corner on their return to the village loaded with sand and shingle from the beach. On either side of the railway by the bridge there are two pairs of sandstone gate posts (2) which allowed access for these horses and carts. Owners had to pay 3d a load to remove gravel from the shore by Sea Mill.

Pass through a new gate (don't go through the ECP kissing gate), turn left and follow the track which leads up hill, towards the road, through another gate on the way.

The route follows the original cart track access to the Sea Mill from the south.

Turn right onto the Nethertown road and walk approximately 800m to a path on the left. Locally, these enclosed lanes, where the path passes between two old stone dykes is known as a "lonnin". This particular lane is "Lovers Lonnin", or "Golf Links Lonnin".

On the way are the remains of a stone plinth built into the left bank (3). This was a coffin rest used by bearers bringing bodies to St. Bees for burial and has been restored. In the field to the right of the lonnin (4) was the clubhouse of the first St. Bees golf course - nine holes and 2810 yards long. The club was formed in February 1906 and built the club house the following year. The course was closed during the 1914-18 War and the present links opened in 1928.

At the right time of the year, the bluebells on either side of the lonnin are a sight to behold.

Follow the lonnin past the zigzag section until a gate on the right is reached just before a line of trees. Pass through this gate and follow a footpath that joins the road at Couderton. The path is indistinct underfoot but it follows the field boundaries in a direct line south across four fields and three step-over stiles. Make for the gate in the top corner of the last field which gives access to a short section of lane before the road.

The single strands of barbed wire running on either side of the field boundaries are called "breast wires" and are used in modern farming to ensure that animals cannot get into adjacent fields and to protect the field boundaries from damage. In earlier times, the farmers just left the gorse to grow.



The Clubhouse on the Old St. Bees Golf Course : 1907

In the final field, the hillock to the right is called "Coneyside Cop", a glacial feature, fortunately not flattened by sand and gravel extraction for the construction of the Sellafield Nuclear plant in the 1950s. Its name may originate from "Coney", the old word for rabbits which would find burrowing into the sand easier than the surrounding ground.

Turn right towards the coast and follow the road to the hamlet of Couderton. At the road junction turn right, signposted "Shore" and walk down to the Nethertown Road.

At this point, those wishing to have a slightly shorter, easier walk can turn right (north) and walk back along the Nethertown Road, past Lovers Lonnin to the Seamill car park.



Coal Train on the line south of St. Bees

For the more interesting route, cross the road and follow the lane down the hill. Just before the bend, join the England Coast Path (5).

Turn right (north) through the kissing gate and follow the line of the field boundary through 5 further kissing gates (courtesy on Natural England) until the path crosses the boundary at another kissing gate (6). Then follow the new path down hill through the gorse, along by the railway and up some steps to the field boundary again. Follow this to a kissing gate at the southern entrance to Primrose Valley.

About 250m north, the railway embankment has been strengthened against the ravages of the sea by thousands of tons of rock armour and a revetment, after sections of it were washed away by storms and high tides during the winter of 1996/97. At the southern end of this embankment was once a small halt (7) where the golfers could get off the train and walk up the hill to the old golf course.

The route through Primrose Valley follows beside the railway, through a kissing gate, before climbing another set of step to the top of the hill. From here, follow the field boundary down to Stonecroft Yard via a set of steps complete with a handrail (thanks to Natural England).

The section of cliff (8) to the south of Seamill has been declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The exposed rock is the Triassic St. Bees Sandstone, dominantly red in colour with occasional layers of mudstone, deposited about 240 million years ago by a complex series of shallow rivers and flood plains when the climate was dry and arid. In much more recent geological time, when the climate of northern England was similar to the present day Arctic, the advancing and retreating ice sheets removed vast quantities of the underlying rock and sediments. This became ground up between the sheets and was left behind as a series of hummocky deposits in a succession of interbedded tilts, sands and gravels, the debris of a retreating glacier about 15,000 years ago.

Walk back to the car park via Stonecroft yard and under the railway bridge.

At low tides in the sea opposite the Car Park, ancient peat beds with the remains of petrified trees can be seen. There are also the remains of old fish garths (9) which were used to catch fish by trapping them in a vee-shaped pond when the tide receded.

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 and Tony Pennick

August 1998 (Updated April 2021)

Photograph of the Sea Mill courtesy of Mrs E Haile

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