

1

Ahoy there, adventurers and welcome to one of the most spectacular seaside spots in all of Cumbria...

St Bees Head, the most westerly point in our fabulous county. My ancestors have been nesting here for hundreds of years. It is the only place the guillemots and us kittiwakes use to raise chicks in the North West of England! Thousands of other special seabird and sea creature mateys call it home too.

St Bees Head is wild and wonderful, and just exploring here will make your imagination run free. In springtime me and the other kittiwakes soar over the huge sea cliffs that are more than

300 feet high. When you walk the cliff-top trail to Fleswick Bay you will be as high as we are!

Fleswick Bay is one of my very favourite places to explore. It's a secret cove where the sandstone cliffs tower high above you, gemstones sparkle among the shiny pebbles and smugglers once hid their loot here in the mysterious sea caves. If you are feeling adventurous and the westerly wind is kind, you might just make it there.

My beautiful home is a place where mythical creatures of land and sea meet and there are many salty sea tales to tell... shall we cast off and discover just a few?



4

Smugglers

When the waters are calm and the sea mists roll in, smugglers secretly push their rowing boats out into the Irish Sea and head over to Cumbria from the Isle of Man. Well, a few hundred years ago they did!

For hundreds of years kittiwakes shared the coast with notorious smugglers who, under the cover of darkness, would land their bountiful boats on the beaches. In the 18th century many things were taxed such as tobacco, salt and alcohol, like brandy, whisky and rum. Even things like tea and wool were seen as luxuries and had a duty added onto them as they arrived into port. This meant that many people couldn't afford them, but they were

still in demand, so smugglers would sneak them into Cumbria and sell them without the customs officers and coastguards finding out!

Smugglers used hidden bays like Fleswick to land their boats and store the smuggled goods in the caves. Sometimes locals would use lanterns to signal when the landing areas were safe. My great great grandfather said his favourite smuggler treat was rum butter!

One of the most famous Cumbrian smugglers was called Lanty Snee and his speciality was moonshine whisky! Which cave do you think the smugglers used at Fleswick?



2

Saint Bega

Saint Bega was an Irish princess who lived here more than 1,000 years ago; it's where the name St Bees comes from. She fled from Ireland to avoid marrying a Viking prince, so the story goes! Cleverly, while all the lords and ladies were wedding planning, she used her silver arm ring to pick a door lock and escape from the castle. She somehow managed to cross the Irish Sea in a coracle and was thrown ashore near Fleswick Bay.

It was midsummer when she arrived in the village, cold and wet. She asked a local lord if she could have some land to live on, to grow food and keep some animals. The man laughed at her and said, "Any land that is covered with snow in the morning may be yours to keep." Thinking he was being very clever (because it was the middle of summer), he must have had quite a shock when he woke up to see a strip of land along the coastline

covered with a dusting of snow... but he had to keep his promise! Saint Bega settled here and lived a hermit's life in a little hut by the sea.

Many other miracles were said to have occurred in St Bees, from horses moving onto her lands and refusing to graze elsewhere to pilgrims being cured of their illnesses and people's eyesight and hearing returning. Fact or folklore we will never know, but where do you think the silver arm ring has gone? Maybe it's buried near Fleswick Bay?

If you arrived by train you might have spotted the statue of Saint Bega in her coracle with her sacred arm ring. Nowadays we don't get many maidens crossing the sea but we do see lots of seals, and sometimes sunfish and sharks too! Don't worry, though – basking sharks are vegetarian!



5

The Secrets of Fleswick Bay

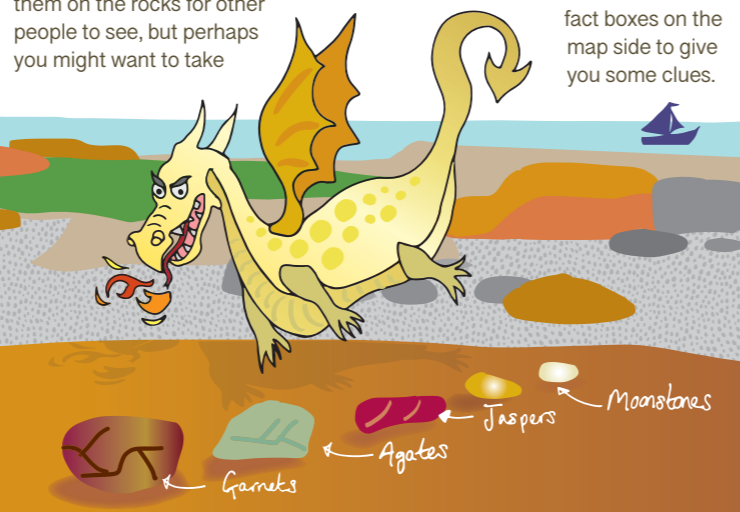
There are many hidden secrets at Fleswick Bay and if you have made it here you might be lucky enough to spot them.

Did you notice that from above the beach looks grey? This is just a clever disguise because there are actually thousands of shiny gemstones hidden among the pebbles. If you look carefully you will find tiny moonstones, agates, jaspers and garnets. You can tell if they are semi-precious by holding them up to the sky; if sunlight shines through them you have found some treasure! If, like me, you love looking for gems you can call yourself a 'Lapidarian'. I like to make art with them and leave them on the rocks for other people to see, but perhaps you might want to take

a couple home to remind you of how special Fleswick Bay is.

Many moons ago, in Smugglers Cave, something else very precious once lived here too... a dragon with golden scales! He guarded his treasure with his fiery breath and a fearsome roar! Sometimes at sunset, after a rainy day, liquid gold pours off the cave roof to remind people of the dragon. You can also see him in the famous Dragon Stone opposite the west door of St Bees Priory.

There are many other special things to see here at Fleswick Bay. Have a look out for Victorian graffiti, old shipwrecks and mysterious rock pool creatures. Use the fact boxes on the map side to give you some clues.



3

As you are walking across the cliff-top trail make sure you stick to the path as there are some very mysterious and quite alarming creatures that may be lurking just beneath your feet... Batten down those hatchles!

The Pattering Holes

In the second field, near Lookout Ridge you will see some caves marked on the map. These ancient caverns are called the Pattering Holes. Some kittiwakes think they are called that because of the 'pitter patter' sound the falling rain makes but I think it's the long gnarly claws of a sea troll tapping on the cave walls. Luckily I have only seen him come out on a full moon; he is a strange-looking creature with seaweed-coloured fur and big hairy ears. He loves to use his little hammer to search the cliffs for fossils and gemstones. If you are lucky you might find some pieces of precious gems he has left behind on the beach at Fleswick Bay.

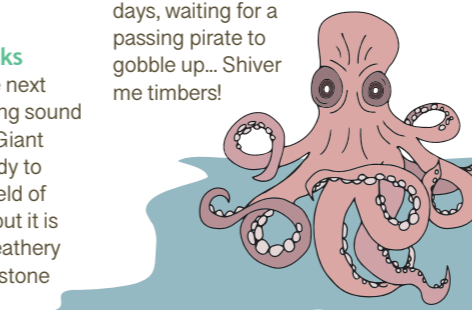
The Giant of Tomlin Rocks

If you make it through to the next field and you hear a grumbling sound take care as it could be the Giant of Tomlin Rocks getting ready to rumble. Just beneath the Field of Feathers lives a rock giant, but it is hard to spot him as his old leathery back looks just like the sandstone

rocks. He has lived here for so long and moves so slowly that moss and barnacles have grown on his skin. He likes to stay as hidden as possible but sometimes when lots of seagulls nest on him it gives him a tickly nose. He raises his giant rocky head and sneezes into the sky, sending feathers flying across the fields above. It is said to be extremely good luck if you find a pure white one!

The Kraken

Just out to sea lurks an even more mysterious and terrifying creature... the Kraken! This strange beast is a legendary sea monster of gigantic size. It's thought the Vikings introduced the locals to this tale hundreds of years ago but the legend lives on! The Kraken terrorises sailors around the coastline by lying in wait around rocky coastlines. It appears only when the sea mist rolls in and can swallow huge ships whole. It lurks under the water for days, waiting for a passing pirate to gobble up... Shiver me timbers!



6

A Bird's-Eye View

The RSPB have created some amazing viewing areas that cling to the top of the cliffs between Fleswick Bay and the Lighthouse. They really give you a perfect bird's-eye view of our nesting site. In spring you can see thousands of sea birds like kittiwakes breeding and nesting here. The bird sounds create a magnificent avian orchestra. You might also see guillemots, razorbills, cormorants, puffins, peregrine falcons, ravens, hawks and swallows.

Maybe you will spot me? Listen for my "kittee-wa-aaake!" call. I am a silvery grey, pretty little gull.



My black wing tips and legs look like they have been dipped in ink. We spend most of our lives at sea, eating fish and squid! Both mums and dads help to raise our chicks by taking it in turn to go fishing. You might also spot lots of white bird poo on the cliffs; it's called guano and can make the nesting sites a bit smelly during the springtime. To us it's a good sign, as it shows just how popular and important St Bees Head is for sea birds.

Well, young adventurers, I hope you have enjoyed exploring St Bees and Fleswick Bay; it really is a very special place. Let's hope we meet again, and fair winds to you on your next adventure.

The bit for grown ups....



This trail is two of six developed with Copeland Borough Council and The Outdoor Partnership as part of the Connecting Cumbria's Hidden Coast programme. Published by Tale Trails www.taletrails.co.uk Illustrations and design by Custard Graphic Design www.custard-graphic-design.co.uk Copyright © 2022 Copeland Borough Council

Find out more www.copeland.gov.uk

Wanted to learn more about Whitehaven's coastal craters and how sustainable fishing can help protect them? Visit www.livingseasaw.org.uk/my-local-catch for events, volunteering, and information about the seaford from our spectacular seabed!

Want to learn more about Whitehaven's Dragon Stone by the west entrance. In the village is an 11th-century priory dedicated to Saint Bega. You can find the Fleswick Bay is a remote, tidal bay with cliffs on the route and slippery surfaces. Coastal Way. There are steep, unstable Head. It is part of the famous Cumbria at times exposed footpath across St Bees This cliff-top trail follows a well-marked but the car park. They serve hot food, snacks, Hartley's Tea Rooms is located next to the car park. They serve hot food, snacks, drinks and ice cream. There are also shops and amenities in St Bees village.

St Bees Priory
In the village is an 11th-century priory dedicated to Saint Bega. You can find the Fleswick Bay is a remote, tidal bay with cliffs on the route and slippery surfaces.

Directions and Parking
St Bees village is situated on the west coast of Cumbria between the towns of Whitehaven and Egremont. It is signposted off the main A595 road. Once in the village follow the signs for the beach front and at the end of Beach Road you will find St Bees beach front parking at postcode CA27 0ES. This is a pay and display car park. This Tale Trail walk starts on the promenade.

Trail Safety Information
This cliff-top trail follows a well-marked but the car park. They serve hot food, snacks, drinks and ice cream. There are also shops and amenities in St Bees village.

Refreshments
Hartley's Tea Rooms is located next to the car park. They serve hot food, snacks, drinks and ice cream. There are also shops and amenities in St Bees village.

Two-Minute Beach Clean
In the car park you will find a children's play area and public toilets. Located here and back (Optional extra 2.5km walk to RSPB viewing areas and lighthouse). For where you can collect the equipment you need to help keep this beach beautiful. It feels good to give something back.

Route Length
5.5km (2-3 hours) from St Bees return) CA28 9UX areas, park at Tarn Flatt Hall Farm (4.5km via the lighthouse and RSPB viewing areas, park at Tarn Flatt Hall Farm (4.5km return) CA28 9UX

Wants to learn more
Want to learn more about Whitehaven's coastal craters and how sustainable fishing can help protect them? Visit www.livingseasaw.org.uk/my-local-catch for events, volunteering, and information about the seaford from our spectacular seabed!

Directions and Parking
St Bees village is situated on the west coast of Cumbria between the towns of Whitehaven and Egremont. It is signposted off the main A595 road. Once in the village follow the signs for the beach front and at the end of Beach Road you will find St Bees beach front parking at postcode CA27 0ES. This is a pay and display car park. This Tale Trail walk starts on the promenade.

fun local story walks
for children and the young at heart

Walks around
The Lake District Coast

The Kittiwake's Tale

A story walk from St Bees to Fleswick Bay

By Anja Phoenix

Easy to follow Map & Story
Explore, spot things & search for clues on the way

Tale trails