

The Ways to Whithorn: In The Footsteps of Pilgrims Past and Present

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The Whithorn Pilgrimage

- April 2014
- The Whithorn Trust
- University of Glasgow Solway Centre
- Third Sector Internships Scotland

- 3 months research
- Previous research, OS maps, interviews

Overview

- History of Whithorn Pilgrimage
- Searching for Pilgrim Spots
- The Pilgrimage Today
- Potential of the Routes



HISTORY OF WHITHORN PILGRIMAGE

St Ninian

- 5th century
- Buried in the crypt at Whithorn: site became a pilgrimage centre
- Healing saint- leprosy
- Lots of legends about his miracles

The Medieval Pilgrimage Experience

- Not an easy endeavour: great distance, could be barefoot
- James I in 1427 granted safe conduct to pilgrims outside Scotland so long as they were clearly marked
- *Signes*- badges
- Dangerous roads: safer to travel in groups
- Industry: Booths lined the streets of Whithorn selling goods; inns, abbeys and chapels dotted along the routes for hospitality

Famous Pilgrims

- Alcuin: made an offering on behalf on Charlemagne
- David II- Arrow wound legend
- Robert the Bruce- ill and desperate
- James IV- frequent pilgrim, track routes through his Treasurer Accounts



SEARCHING FOR PILGRIM SPOTS

Pilgrim Spots

- Chapels
- Abbeys
- Holy Wells
- Other Markers- e.g. Laggangairn Stones
- Many marked on OS maps- but can be hard to find!

Chapels



Holy Wells





THE PILGRIMAGE TODAY

The Modern Pilgrim

- Walking groups organised through churches e.g. Paisley Abbey, Diocese of Galloway
- Mapping their own route- trying to stay true to ancient paths as much as possible
- Travelling with a group, 'merging': very much a communal activity
- Many different motivations: spiritual aspect still very important, but walking enthusiasts and history fans also come along

Pilgrim Traffic



- Difficult to assess exact numbers of pilgrims
- Pilgrim spots could be a pilgrimage in themselves- e.g. St Medan's cave, St Queran's well.



POTENTIAL OF THE ROUTES

Aspects of the Pilgrimage

- Map reading: an excellent way of getting to grips with Ordnance Survey and route planning
- All-Ability Walking
- Oral Tradition & Legends
- “Walking in the Footsteps of History” - James IV

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Thank you!

