

NEWSLETTER

Dear Pilgrims

We did it! Several people said we couldn't organise another Lindisfarne Pilgrimage in just one year, but we succeeded. In fact, our biggest challenge probably came from the popularity of Lindisfarne as a destination: our numbers were higher than they have been for many years, so bed spaces were at a premium, and there were many mouths for our support team to feed. We had several nights with split accommodation, necessitated by the numbers, which are always a challenge.

This was broadly a pilgrimage in three parts: the wild North Yorkshire Moors, the industrial heritage of Teesside, Wearside and Tyneside, and the stunning Northumberland coastline. Patrick got us started out of Lastingham with hills, mud and stunning views. Bruce continued the theme with wonderful scenery – purple heather around Captain Cook's monument and Roseberry Topping (a hill, not a dessert), taking us down to the modern Catholic Middlesbrough Cathedral. John and Louise found a remarkably green route through Teesside, and Francis took us through farmland and alongside the River Wear to Durham and its ancient Cathedral. Maurice's day to Washington saw us entering the old Durham coalfield, which continued on Mark's day where we also visited Jarrow (where St Bede spent much of his life) and the Bedesworld museum before walking under the River Tyne and along walkways along the route of the old coal wagons. Ann gave us our first contact with the sea, then an inland loop to avoid the port of Blyth. Sue and Fred had to avoid an aluminium smelter and its personal power station, but then gave us our first long stretch of coastline. Peter managed to find our only really wet day (and to get lost!) leading us past Warkworth to Alnwick (both with stunning castles). Susan and Michael led the longest, but pretty flat, day back out to the coast then lots of beach walking on firm sand, Dunstanburgh Castle, and great views. Jonny and Mike followed this with the shortest day, Bamburgh castle, and our first views of Holy Island. Finally we looped around, with great views over to Lindisfarne, before crossing the A1 (safely), the East Coast Main Line railway (safely), and the causeway (dry shod, except for those who tried their own route) and onto the island. Here we had a little time to explore before convening for evensong, our final Eucharist, our celebration meal and a muted sing-song, then a night sleeping in BEDS before our long journey home.

Spiritually it was an uplifting pilgrimage, with many powerful reflections in the prayer stops, the usual rousing liturgy, and great welcomes along the way. And I think this continued in the relationships between individual pilgrims as we walked, and grew, together. Great cathedrals and humble "tin tabernacles", wind-swept moorland and sea-kissed beaches, closed-down pit villages and regenerated urban areas: the Lord is to be found in all these, but particularly in the people we take time to walk with and to listen to.

We were blessed again this year with more pilgrims joining us for the first time, and a number returning to the fold after a few (or many!) years away. We need this new input to develop and grow. We had some new younger pilgrims this year – and they want to come back!

And so – we did it! But, as several of the new pilgrims commented, this is because of the hard work of the planning team through the other 11½ months of the year, and the support team before and during the pilgrimage:

- Keith, the "reluctant accommodation officer" who wanted to stand down but was persuaded to do another year, and without whom we'd have had nowhere to sleep (thanks too to Danny, Patrick, Sue, Fred, Clare, Mark and others who assisted in various ways). Keith also gave up a week's walking to assist new caterer Alexe – a great sacrifice, thanks Keith.
- Mary and Bill for all their work liaising with the churches we would visit on the way, which no doubt contributed to the welcomes we received. Unfortunately Bill was only with us in spirit on the pilgrimage as his mother was dying (and passed away halfway through the pilgrimage, may she rest in peace): Bill, our thoughts and prayers were and are with you. This left Mary with responsibility for all of the church liaison during the pilgrimage, a burden she carried without complaint: Mary, thanks for all your work over the past few years and especially this year.
- John for coordinating (a.k.a. chasing, chivvying or nagging) the route planners into action and drawing the individual days into a coherent whole. Frequent unexpected teas-after-prayers challenged the timings, but John continued the theme of getting there more-or-less on time.
- All of the day planners (detailed above) for an excellent series of routes, finding green routes through grey areas and beautiful countryside.
- Monica for taking people's names (and money) and making sure we knew who was expected where.

- Patrick for keeping tabs in that money and keeping us in the black (not to mention all the other contributions).
- Father David for leading our liturgy and for uplifting homilies, not to mention sorting out details with clergy at churches we visit, and of course the largely unseen job of unloading the luggage.
- Peter for planning our liturgies, the musicians for adding life, and all those who contributed.
- John for driving the van and so much more, especially the extra burden assisting not one but two new catering teams.
- Alexe, Mary and Imelda for keeping us fed: between clearing up, shopping, preparing and serving it's a full-time job (and one we've underestimated for the last 30 years).
- Rosemary (with Monica) for keeping us plied with drinks and other sustenance, come rain or shine.
- Clare for all-round support, and for getting the instruments to the church on time.
- All the pilgrims who do the many jobs necessary to keep the show on the road (sweeping, washing up, loading, lunches, medical, the list goes on).

THANK YOU ALL

Aidan

Reunion 30th October - 1st November in Hove

The annual reunion will take place in Hove, at St Peter's Church hosted by Patrick Reeve. An application form should be enclosed with this mailing, or download one from <http://www.thepilgrims.org.uk>. This year we are extending a special invitation to any pilgrims who walked with us to Lindisfarne in 1984.

Pilgrimage to St David's, 14th to 29th August 2010

No sooner is one pilgrimage over than planning starts for the following year. So, having "chewed the fat" on Lindisfarne, our AGM on 13 September voted unanimously for the 2010 pilgrimage to take us back to St David's, last visited in 1992. The proposed route starts at Cardigan, where we will visit the National Shrine of Wales; four days' walk via the Ceredigion Coast Path to Aberystwyth (Rest Day); four days' walk via Strata Florida abbey ruins, Llanddewi Brefi and Lampeter to Carmarthen (Rest Day); 4 days' walk via Haverfordwest and the Pembrokeshire Coast Path to St David's.

Volunteers from amongst our pilgrim family are sought to plan (or assist with planning) days once the accommodation starts to firm up. Please let John Chenery know if you'd like to contribute. This is open to all, even if you've only done one pilgrimage: the best way to learn is to assist an old hand.

A message from: Bernard Coleman

I can't believe it is 27 years since I last joined on the Evesham pilgrimage and even more amazing that it is still going. I'm not sure if there is anyone who will remember me from all those years ago. Walsingham 1, Glastonbury 1, Canterbury, Evesham and Buckfast 1 & 2 are the walks I took part in and also contributed to the music with my clarinet.

The website has brought back some very happy memories of good times and good friends. Unfortunately, a muscle problem in my leg prevents me from walking any distance, but my thoughts are with those who will be undertaking this year's pilgrimage.

After 18 years in Derby, followed by 4 on Guernsey, I now find myself in Devon, where for the last 3 years I have been working as a catering manager at Buckfast Abbey ! I live in Bovey Tracey which was one of our stops on the way. If anyone does remember me it would be nice to hear from you, or if you're in the area why not pop in.

Bernard Coleman

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