

PILGRIMAGE TO LINDISFARNE

When I first heard of the opportunity to join in this MWiB pilgrimage I felt it was for me. To be part of a group of twelve women led by Jill Baker grabbed my imagination and made me think of Jesus and his disciples. At first I doubted whether I could walk 10 miles a day for 3 days with all I needed stowed in a backpack. I came to see that this was of God. It would be a wonderful introduction and preparation for my time as MWiB President for the Southampton District. This is my account of our journey.



Day 1 Monday 17th August

Travelled by train to Durham. Amazing view of the Cathedral as the train pulled in. Walked to the Cathedral and met the other pilgrims at St. Cuthbert's Shrine. Prayers before checking in at St. John's College.



Good room. Evensong at the Cathedral. Evening meal at Bella Pasta. Evening prayers and the sharing of thoughts, fears and hopes.

Durham cathedral; place of Cuthbert history; enduring stones, pillars of grandeur steeped in prayer; sun through stained glass; reflected light, reflected glory.

Day 2 Tuesday 18th August

Slept well. Raining today. Good breakfast. Looking forward to getting going. Train to Alnmouth. More rain. Waterproofs vital as we walk to Craster on the Coastal Path. Snails on the path carry their burdens—just like us. Wonderful coastline. Kittiwakes on the cliffs, a heron on the stony beach. We eat our sandwiches in a stone bus shelter: a welcome haven.



We are all soaked but in good spirits. A welcome coffee in Craster. The smell of Kippers pervades the village. Arrival at the Cottage Inn brings relief and a sense of achievement. Black sacks for all our wet clothes, it will be dried by morning. Very kind and caring hotel staff and excellent food. We have a comfortable room, a hot shower and change of clothes. Pilgrimage is not meant to be easy or comfortable. It wasn't today, but we did it!

On we go into this new day of unknowns. Rain, cloud, wet clothes; cheerful hearts, undampened spirits; sisters together; sights to see. Snails with burdens—just like us. Wild seas; wild flowers: Creation—pregnant with God.

The Journey	
Day 1	Pilgrims meet in Durham.
Day 2	Train to Alnmouth. 10 mile walk to Craster
Day 3	10 mile walk to Seahouses
Day 4	To Beale then 90 minute walk in water to Holy Island
Day 5	Day of reflection at Lindisfarne
Day 6	Return home via Berwick-upon-Tweed



When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem...(Luke 9:51)

Day 3 Wednesday 19th August



A fine, sunny day. We follow the Northumbrian Coast Path past the dramatic ruins of Dunstanburgh Castle. Collecting our previously ordered sandwiches from the Golf Clubhouse we continue our journey along this beautiful stretch of coastline before reaching a vast expanse of beach. The tide is out. We stop to eat. A couple of us cannot resist trekking across the beach for a quick paddle in the sea. Arriving at Beadnell we stop to buy ice creams. We can see Seahouses in the distance - our destination for the day. The last mile is a plod alongside the road. My toe is hurting. My hip is painful. What a relief to arrive at The Links Hotel!

Before our evening meal we share in a celebration of Communion at the local Methodist Church. I feel very pleased with myself to have covered another 10 miles. It is wonderful to again feel refreshed and restored.

Radiant light. Glistening sun. Shimmering seas. Icy water. A long way to go. We press on, heavy packs laughter, encouragement, sore toes, sore knees, sore backs. Distant Seahouses. We follow Leader Jill—follow Jesus to Jerusalem.



Day 4 Thursday 20th August

Renewed by sleep and good food we start out for Bamburgh. What an imposing castle this is! We find our Bus Stop. There is some anxiety. Will the bus turn up? Will we miss the one safe opportunity of crossing the water to Lindisfarne? Needless worries—all is well. I am anxious about the ninety minute trek through the waters to Holy Island. I want to be able to do it barefoot. Our bus journey to Fenwick Bridge will take us to St. Cuthbert's Way. I felt a real sense of peace. God will enable me to do the cross over. He had called me to do this pilgrimage.



We reach the Pilgrim Poles and remove our boots. There ahead is distant Lindisfarne. We will walk in silence apart but stop at the refuges to sing and pray. These wooden structures can be climbed by



pilgrims who have been caught out by the tide. We sing John Bunyan's famous hymn about being a pilgrim and then *Sister, brother let me serve you.*

Solid sand, black mud, sea weed and shells, at times clear water. Our heavy backpacks become as light as our joyful hearts. We are walking in the footsteps of the saints.

Anticipation. Fear. Excitement. Anxiety. The vast expanse of beach. Light – the light of God. This is Cuthbert's Way. Onward, ever onwards. We are pilgrims in reality in communion with the saints. Sand. Shells. Squelchy mud. Weed. Flooding water. Groaning wind. Poles as guides to new life. Burdens lifted. Freedom. Cleansing. Wholeness. Healing. Life in abundance.

Day 5 Friday 21st August



The 8am Communion at St. Mary's Church was wonderful. There is timelessness about liturgy which passes through the centuries connecting up the past and the present. There is space today, no pack to carry, a chance to amble freely accompanied by the many sparrows that inhabit this holy island. I have time for myself, to wander, to soak up the atmosphere of this 'thin place', chance meetings and conversations with my fellow pilgrims. Together again on St. Cuthbert's Isle we reflected on his life and faith while seals stuck up their heads in the water to watch us.

Discovering the Celtic Garden and the Gertrude Jekyll Garden was an unexpected delight; places of colour and exuberance. More opportunities to pray and share experiences.

A day of no demands, freedom to be; rhythm in silence; stillness; glistening waves, aloneness. Together again on Cuthbert's Isle; laughing, walking, sharing. Explosions of colour, light, communion. Time for God; time for me.

Day 6 Saturday 22nd August

Today we return home, but before we start out we have the morning free. 8am Communion once again where we are blessed for our onward journeys. Retracing my steps to the Pilgrim Posts I sit and watch the sea receding. Others will be waiting to cross at low tide as we did. There will always be pilgrims. I am flooded with a great sense of peace as I remember how I with my companions have walked this Pilgrim Way. Twelve separate people who in travelling together have become one.

We meet at St. Aidan's statue in the Abbey Ruins to pray and sing. We use the same sung blessing we have used every day in order to bless each other and those around us.

*May you know blessing every day.
May God shed light to brighten your way.
May God protect you and keep you from harm.
May he hold you in his hand,
May he hold you in his heart.
Now and evermore, Amen*



We travel from Lindisfarne to Berwick station by taxi. We say our final prayers together. There is sadness at our parting. I think of Tom. There is so much to share. He will be waiting.

Pilgrim posts, island of peace, vibrant history, a thin place, a communion of saints, earth and heaven joined, special forever. Journey home; changed; enriched by experience, relationships, achievement, a touch of God.



MORE REFLECTIONS BELOW

What has this pilgrimage meant for me?

I have discovered resources within me which I never knew I had. I am more physically able than I thought. I had been anxious about my right knee which has been giving me problems for ages. Could I maintain the distances involved?



I thought hard about what to take with me. I opted for the minimum concluding I had all I needed. I can travel light!! I found unexpected energy in being with other pilgrims. There was pleasure in their presence, the conversations, the sharing, the silences, the laughter and in our mutual encouragement. There was inspiration from our leader Jill Baker. I also valued those occasions when I could detach myself from the others and walk alone. I became aware of God travelling along with us each day as we marched along. His presence was there in the beauty of creation, the sun and the rain, the chill of the water, the squelchy sand. He was there in the faces of others. He was there when we sang and got the music wrong. He was there in our homely destinations when we found our rooms, dumped our haversacks and rested our tired feet.

The Pilgrim Posts were especially significant for me. In passing each one and drawing ever nearer to that distant holy shore I was journeying into God, the mysterious three in one. I am excited about the future. There is hope in my heart. There is peace in my soul.

You too can make life-changing discoveries if you become a pilgrim.

Christine



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I wish to thank Alison, Liz, Jenny, Carolyn, Jill and others for the above photos