The Whithorn Pilgrimage: A Report
The Whithorn Pilgrimage: A Report

By Catriona McMillan

The Whithorn Trust
45-47 George Street
Whithorn
Dumfries and Galloway
Scotland
DG8 8NS

In association with 3rd Sector Internships Scotland and The Solway Centre

October 29th 2013
Acknowledgements

Thank you to all those who supported and contributed to this project. Your kindness, enthusiasm and knowledge made this research exciting and enjoyable.

Janet Butterworth (The Whithorn Trust)
Valentina Bold (The Solway Centre, University of Glasgow, Dumfries)
Third Sector Internships Scotland
James Brown and Susi Cormac Brown
Nick Cooke (Scottish Pilgrimage Routes Forum)
Peter Yeoman (Historic Scotland)
Richard Oram (Stirling University)
Andrew Patterson
John MacQueen
Sylvia Jenks
Barry Donovan
Chris Cheales
Angus Denham
Michael Given (University of Glasgow)
Ted Cowan (University of Glasgow)
Staff at the Crichton Campus and Henry Duncan Building, Dumfries

Special thanks to Margerie Clark for sharing her extensive knowledge and for allowing me to see her wonderful scrapbook on the Whithorn pilgrimage.

And sincere thanks to my father, John McMillan, for not only lifts to and from Whithorn but also helping me on an adventure around the Rhins and Machars, searching for pilgrim sites.
## Contents

List of Images p.1

Executive Summary p.2

I. Introduction p.4

II. The Medieval Story p.7

   II.I St Ninian: the Medieval Period p.7

   II.II Relics p.8

   II.III The Journey p.8

   II.IV Hospitality p.10

   II.V Belief p.10

   II.VI Healing p.11

   II.VII Royal Pilgrims p.12

   II.VIII Overview p.14

III Pilgrimage Sites and Landmarks p.16

   III.I Abbeys p.16

   III.II Holy Wells p.19

   III.III Chapels and Churches p.25

   III.IV Overview p.32

IV The Journey to Whithorn p.33

   IV.I Meeting points p.33

   IV.II The Ninian Way p.34

   IV.III Routes p.36

   IV.IV Paisley Abbey p.38

   IV.V Revival p.39

   IV.VI Challenges p.41

   IV.VII Overview p.44

V. Conclusion: A Moment of Peace p.45

Appendix: Pilgrimage Sites and Landmarks p.48

Bibliography p.55

I. Books and Articles p.55

II. Maps p.57

III. Recordings p.58

IV. Websites p.58
List of Images

Executive Summary

Aims

- To give a comprehensive account of the tradition of pilgrimage to Whithorn and to provide a summary of available information on the historical pilgrimage to Whithorn
- To provide an historical overview, establishing the experience of the medieval pilgrim
- To locate Whithorn’s relevance and meaning in the context of modern, international pilgrimage and faith tourism
- To identify what makes the current routes to Whithorn attractive, and suggest ways in which its potential appeal to pilgrims and visitors can be maximised.

Methods

- A desk and library-based survey of research on Whithorn and its archaeology
- Recorded interviews with people within Whithorn, participants in its pilgrimage traditions and those with a knowledge of active pilgrimage traditions
- Collating results from both into a coherent narrative of pilgrimage and pilgrimage traditions relating to Whithorn.

Key findings

- The literature about St Ninian and the legends surrounding him contributed to the height of his popularity during the middle ages. Royal pilgrims Robert the Bruce and James IV visited the shrine during this time, adding to fervour surrounding Whithorn
- It is possible to trace pilgrim routes and related sites from the middle ages onwards, by noting which abbeys and chapels offered hospitality and opportunities for worship, and by identifying the holy wells and sites pilgrims visited en route to Whithorn
- Pilgrimage to Whithorn, as elsewhere, fulfilled key functions in the past. These include providing opportunities for worship, cures and to exercise faith; the modern pilgrim seeks parallel, but different, qualities of experience
- Potential modern routes offer key challenges to pilgrims, but there is potential, as seen through the Paisley Abbey 850 pilgrimage, to create new routes incorporating the old.

- Shifts in experience can be identified, from the routes’ peak in the middle ages, through a nadir post Reformation, to revival in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

- Modern revived interest in Whithorn, its archaeological and historical significance, offers opportunities to expand the appeal of the town, and its environs, as a pilgrimage destination: a location for worship, reflection and experiencing peace.
I. Introduction

Situated at the southernmost part of Scotland, Whithorn has a long and rich history as a pilgrimage centre. This peaceful town in the Machars is home to the legend and shrine of St Ninian, once one of Scotland’s most eminent saints. While his legacy made Whithorn thrive during the middle ages, his life is shrouded in mystery. He dates back to the fifth century (Dictionary of Saints, 325-326), and our first literary source of his life comes from Bede’s account that Ninian converted the ‘southern Picts’, making him the first person to bring Christianity to Scotland. After studying in Rome, Ninian established a church known as Candida Casa in Whithorn. It was dedicated to his friend St Martin of Tours, another celebrated French saint of the Middle Ages.

After his death, Ninian was buried at Whithorn and his shrine became a pilgrimage centre. Its popularity increased in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as it received royal attention from Robert the Bruce and Margaret of Denmark (the wife of James III and mother of James IV). During his reign, James IV made pilgrimage to Whithorn frequently. The town thrived on the industry of pilgrimage until the Reformation in Scotland in 1560; soon after that, pilgrimage became a punishable offence.

In recent times there has been a renewed enthusiasm for pilgrimage. Lourdes is a relatively late addition to pilgrimage centres. Its pilgrim following came after sightings of the Virgin Mary by a girl in the mid-nineteenth century, and is strongly linked to the reputation of its waters for healing. It receives nearly six million pilgrims each year\(^1\), with around 400,000 pilgrims, mainly women, bathing in the grotto waters (Bradley, 179). The shrine to St James at Santiago de Compostella, while it began as a medieval European pilgrimage site, has seen a recent and sizeable revival. Since 1993, when it became a UNESCO world heritage site, it has seen staggering numbers of visitors. A steady rise sees figures in recent years entering hundreds of thousands, with 2010 (a holy year--when St James’s Day fell on a Sunday) receiving over 270,000 pilgrims\(^2\).

\(^1\) [http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-22982169](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-22982169)
\(^2\) [http://www.csj.org.uk/present.htm](http://www.csj.org.uk/present.htm)
Revival of pilgrimage in Scotland is still in the early stages, but is attracting attention after the success of sites like Santiago de Compostella. Pilgrimage shrines in Scotland include Iona, where St Columba brought Christianity to the north, and St Andrew’s, where the apostle’s relics were housed. St Cuthbert’s Way to Lindisfarne has been attracting attention in recent years. Luss in Loch Lomond, associated with St Kessog, is a member of the Green Pilgrimage Network, a multi-faith organisation promoting environmentally-friendly pilgrimage. The newly-established Scottish Pilgrimage Routes Forum is also dedicated to the development of pilgrimage routes throughout Scotland.

The identity of the modern pilgrim is broader than that of the medieval pilgrim moving piously towards the shrine of a saint. The term ‘modern’ has been applied to any pilgrimage which is post-medieval (Turner, 18-19)\(^3\), and this is broad enough to account for the kind of pilgrim seen today. I would argue that the modern Whithorn pilgrim originates, more precisely, from a late nineteenth, early twentieth century revival. Between the Reformation and this revival there is a significant gap in pilgrimage to Whithorn. The medieval pilgrim made the journey out of religious devotion, and while this motivation can certainly still be applied to pilgrims today, the identity of the pilgrim is evolving. An organisation like the Green Pilgrimage Network exemplifies that pilgrimage is encouraged for those of all faiths and none. Today’s pilgrim may also simply seek a challenge, or a refuge from the modern world and the hum of technology that dominates everyday life. He may wish to reflect, but not with a spiritual emphasis. He also may seek a new social situation, as pilgrimage offers the opportunity to meet individuals from all different backgrounds, united under the identity of ‘pilgrim’. Pilgrimage today can offer all of this, and the experience is deeply personal, despite being shared by millions of individuals around the world.

It is difficult to assert exactly why pilgrimage is still important today, to multi-faith, multi-cultural societies, representative of a wide range of beliefs and practices. This is very different from medieval Scottish and English society when thousands of Christian pilgrims flocked to shrines around Europe and to the Holy Land. Penitence and

---

\(^3\) However, the type of pilgrimage Turner describes differs from the St Ninian pilgrimage. He ascribes modern pilgrimage to sites with high devotional fervour dating from the nineteenth century onwards, such as Lourdes, associated with apparitions. I would say Whithorn falls into another category of his, being a pilgrimage originating from a literary source (Bede, Aelred).
devotion were the motivations then, now the reasons behind pilgrimage are diverse and multi-layered. A website advertising the Camino de Santiago suggests that ‘Modern Pilgrimages seems to be a lot less about religion and more about peace, finding something in life, a time to think, and for some a challenge’\(^4\). This is a thought-provoking advertisement, as it does not exclude any group from making the pilgrimage. Any individual can be a pilgrim. Examining the transformations that occur for an individual during pilgrimage produces the same result with or without a spiritual motivation being present. Pilgrimage is a liminal and transitional act, a betwixt-and-between stage of life. Both the religious and non-religious pilgrim is separating her or himself from the structure of everyday life by embarking on a journey, and then returns to everyday life renewed through having gone through the state of ‘pilgrim’ (Turner, 2-3). It differs from a holiday in that there is a process occurring during the pilgrimage: a holiday is separation from the everyday before return into it, whereas pilgrimage is separation, transition and then return. The journey is at the centre of pilgrimage, rather than the destination, which is usually the focal point of the holiday. The significance of the moment the pilgrim reaches their destination holds so much power because of the build-up; the test and experience has led them to the pilgrimage centre.

\(^4\) http://www.caminoadventures.com/camino-frances/
II. The Medieval Story

In the medieval period, Whithorn was in its element, and a combination of factors contributed to the pilgrim story at this time. Two of the most famous royal pilgrims, Robert the Bruce and James IV, visited the shrine through spiritual devotion, and sought absolution of their sins. In the case of Bruce, he was also seeking a miraculous cure for his malady. The records we have of James IV’s journey offer a fascinating insight into his obsession with the Whithorn pilgrimage. The ‘cult’ of St Ninian developed through literature, legend and royal patronage. The excitement this generated had a major impact on the experience of the pilgrim, perceptions around the journey itself and the commercialisation of Whithorn’s popularity.

II.I. St Ninian: the Late Medieval Period

After Ninian’s death in 431, his grave at Whithorn became a pilgrim shrine. Early visitors included Kenneth III, and Alcuin, who made an offering on behalf of Charlemagne at Ninian’s Shrine (PSG 69-70). The attention on these high-profile historical figures indicates that prior to David I there was a substantial amount of pilgrim traffic to the shrine. Peter Yeoman attributes the fixture of the saint’s grave to the development of Whithorn as the spectacular pilgrim magnet. His argument, in brief, is that relics are easily moved, they can go on show wherever necessary, but a grave is a resting place, to attempt to reposition it would ‘devalue its sanctity’ (Yeoman, 35). This sanctity is imperative to Whithorn’s growth. Ninian’s final resting place became a particular draw to the frail and desperate, hoping for a repetition of the miracles reproduced by Aelred of Rievaulx in Vita S. Niniani published around 1154-60. The Vita cemented Ninian’s status as both a popular, national saint and a healing saint, particularly to those with diseases of the skin such as leprosy. Pilgrimage made with the aim of healing meant coming into direct contact with the saint via his shrine. In effect, it was believed that the closer the pilgrim’s physical contact to the inherent power of a relic, the better result would be obtained. In the process the Ninian cult grew, and its growth was sustained by his association with royalty. Authorative literature recounting miracles was a major contributory factor to the growth of fascination for Ninian. This increased faith in the efficacy of associated sites, shrines and relics.
II.II Relics
The relics in the early days of the cult would have contained a full set of bones, along with some of Ninian’s clothing, staff and bell, and his psalm book. This book was described in an episode in the *Vita* (MacQueen, *St Nynia* 115-117) where Ninian’s concentration on the words of the psalms prevented rain falling on him. When this concentration was broken, the rain soaked him and his book. These are all fragile items. By the time Ninian’s popularity reached his height at the time of James IV, these relics had dwindled. However, some bones survived, including an arm bone. Its importance was enhanced by its casing within an ornate reliquary commissioned by the King, specifically for this relic (*TA* Vol 3).

This relic survived the Reformation by being kept safe in France, but did not withstand the French Revolution. Preservation of the relics was poor, particularly of the bones. The draw of the cult was to those requiring healing, and this end was achieved by touching the bones of the saint which hindered preservation. One can only imagine the significance of that moment for the sick pilgrim. In that moment his faith and penance could bring about the end of his suffering. We know that miracles were considered possible at the shrine, as in 1506 James IV offered 18s to an English pilgrim on whom Ninian had performed a miracle (*TA* vol 3). Details of this miracle are not divulged, but the King’s reward reflects the devotion of some of the pilgrims to the powers of the site, and also to their faith.

II.III The journey
To embark on a pilgrimage carried heavy significance, both for the individual and those around them. Many groups of pilgrims undertook the journey to Whithorn, and this operation required extensive planning and organisation. Groups of pilgrims from outside Scotland were granted safe conduct by James I in 1427, so long as they were clearly marked by their dress. They were protected from hostility by badges, or *signes*, which adorned their wide-brim hats. Yeoman describes a badge which would have been presented by the prior of Whithorn between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, with a print of Ninian in his bishop’s vestments, with a suspected pair of shackles (38). During this time, pilgrimage was very nearly an industry, as traffic was high and the cult of Ninian was at its peak. In Whithorn itself, there were a number of stalls and booths selling basic necessities to the pilgrims, along with inns and hospices to provide accommodation, and ‘Luckenbooths’ which sold pilgrim
tokens. *Signes* were a significant commodity for those who offered hospitality to the pilgrims, such as the monks at Dundrennan Abbey.

Travel during the middle ages was a dangerous activity, and pilgrims were not exempt from potential harm. During the journey, *signes* played an important role in signifying that the wearer was a pilgrim, and thus granted special protection during their journey. After their pilgrimage had been made, the badges became a symbol of their faith and devotion, a relic of their transformation. Pilgrims also assured their own security by joining up with other travellers: just as hostility towards pilgrims was equivalent to hostility towards God, aiding a pilgrim would aid the soul. Travelling in a group would offer logistical protective benefits, but could also give regular travellers the opportunity to share the pilgrim’s experience. Once at the shrine, the pilgrim could pray for those who helped him along the way.

Pilgrimage was not an easy endeavour. The aim of the expedition was often penitential. Going without shoes, even completely barefoot, was customary as the journey was not intended to be comfortable or relaxed. At a time of meditation and reflection, during the walk the pilgrim was separated from normal life in order to seek forgiveness for sins, redemption from suffering or thanksgiving for health and prosperity. The journey was the opportunity to show dedication to faith. For those suffering from maladies, the pilgrimage must have been especially testing. They sought healing at St Ninian’s shrine when they were at their weakest, but their faith had to be at its strongest.
II.IV Hospitality
Respite along the way was provided by abbeys, churches and particular inns adorned with pilgrim symbols. An example of such an inn was described in 1684 in the parish of Girthon: a worn pilgrim symbol—an angel—indicated this was a stopping point for Whithorn pilgrims (PSG 126). Accommodation and care for pilgrims was also provided by the renowned Military Order, the Knights of St John or Jerusalem, known as the Knights Hospitaller. The Knights of St John were introduced into Scotland by David I in 1153, and succeeded to a great deal of land which had belonged to the Templar Knights. They provided care and protection for pilgrims in the Holy Land during the Crusades, through institutions known as ‘spittals’; their usage was extended to other countries too (PSG, 35). Spittals were run by the men and women of the Order of St Augustine. Care for sick pilgrims was provided by hospices. Excavations have revealed medical equipment used during the earliest times of the pilgrimage. Those seeking cures would touch the relics and bones of the saint, wash in water or soil made ‘holy’ by its presence at the shrine, and pray for help at the tomb and shrine.

II.V Belief
The fervour and belief surrounding the power of the shrine created tales and legends which would have been excitedly passed between the pilgrims on their journey but now, unfortunately, are reduced to only those that were recorded in writing from a time where literacy levels were low. The fantastical tale of David II visiting the shrine after suffering for years with an arrow wound in his head leftover from battle, and it then miraculously being cured is worthy of legend. It gives us a taste of the eager murmurings that would be intertwined with the pilgrim’s journey. Another tale tells us of when the son of Edward I planned to visit St Ninian’s shrine in advance of a raid of Scotland. Out of fear for a sacred painting of their national saint, devoted worshipers removed the image to Sweetheart Abbey, but the next morning it had returned to its home in Whithorn. Without today’s convenience of a car, the journey from New Abbey to Whithorn would not be easily undertaken, so while the trip may not have been impossible, it still makes for an impressive story incorporating the power associated with the shrine.

Devotional power relating to the shrine at Whithorn could be found in other parts of Galloway, as E.M.H McKerlie relates in a story of Ronald MacCairill from Cruggleton, in the parish of Sorbie. He dreamt three times that he was praying at St Ninian’s shrine where a ‘venerable man, of benign appearance, with a flowing beard, a pilgrim’s mantle over his
shoulders, a white cross on his breast, sandals on his feet, in his right hand a naked sword, and in his left a pennon furled on its staff” (PSG 92-94) appeared to him. This figure ordered him to fight in the Crusades in the Holy Land. The exact date of this dream, McKerlie could not identify, but the young man is said to have taken the cross and fought, returning a valiant knight with a wife from French nobility.

Another, less mystical, tale of devotion to St Ninian and the shrine comes from historical accounts of a turbulent journey from France to Scotland in the winter of 1434. An embassy from the court of the French King Charles VII embarked on a voyage to Scotland to collect Margaret Stewart, daughter of James I, before her marriage to Charles’s son, Louis. It was a dangerous journey, due to both the time of year and the fact that France was at war. A massive storm hit, meaning the ship was unable to dock and had to stay in open water for five days. During this terrifying ordeal, vows of a pilgrimage to St Ninian’s shrine were made, if they survived. True to their word, upon docking in the Port of Logan, the party visited Whithorn and presented a silver model of a ship with the King’s arms engraved upon it (Barbe, 50-54). A tale like this offers us an insight into the spread of Ninian’s popularity, while also creating a sense of the atmosphere that surrounded the pilgrimage: this was a place where miracles could happen and the devoted were saved.

II.VI Healing

The most famous account of a desperate pilgrim seeking the healing powers of Ninian is of King Robert the Bruce, crippled by illness in the final months of his life. In March and April 1329, Robert I is recorded to have travelled around Galloway in a rather convoluted manner before reaching Whithorn in early April. However, when his movements are examined we can see the motivation for his journey, as a few of the stops he made around Galloway were at sites associated with healing. Exactly what illness defeated Robert I has been widely debated: some sources suggest that it was leprosy. At this time many different ailments were diagnosed as this disease. If he was suffering from leprosy, this strengthens his connection to Ninian, who was known for aiding lepers:

‘…gyf that he
Socht sanct Niniane devotedly
Gat heile, tho it war myslyr (even though it was leprosy)
Thru the giffar of al grace
To quhame sanct Niniane servand vas’ (Barbour *Legends of the Saints*; Neilson 54).

Bruce not only ‘socht sanct Niniane devotedly’ in his agonising journey to Whithorn, he also sought a cure from the healing wells in Galloway. He is recorded at being at Kirkmaiden, on the western side of Luce Bay, which diverts from a direct route from the north to Whithorn. He is said to have visited Muntloch Well on Kilbuie Moss, where an abundance of water would heal the sick, but dryness would indicate no hope. St Medan’s well, which is probably one of three wells marked near St Medana’s cave, was also said to have healing powers attached to it and would have been within visiting distance of Bruce on his journey. A dedication to Ninian at the now-lost Chipperdingan Well was also in Bruce’s vicinity, and Geo Neilson writing in an 1898 article postulates that these wells could have had a part to play in the King’s detour round the Rhins of Galloway. Whether or not he visited all of these sites, the pilgrimage to Whithorn itself paints the image of a desperate man looking not only to ease his suffering, but also to cleanse his soul. For the devoted in his illness, the pilgrimage would not be for a miraculous cure, but to ensure the spirit was healed when the body was failing.

**II.VII Royal Pilgrims**

Between Bruce’s death and the middle of the Stewart reign, royal association with Whithorn and Ninian dwindles, despite the popularity of the shrine remaining strong, as indicated by the story of the French pilgrims. James IV, the most renowned Whithorn pilgrim, began his association with the shrine early as in 1473 his mother, Queen Margaret and his father, James III, made a thanksgiving pilgrimage to the shrine for the safe delivery of their son. James IV’s first pilgrimage recorded in the Treasurer’s Accounts occurred in 1491, and annual pilgrimages became a frequent part of the life of the royal court. These were split between Whithorn, usually in the summer, and the shrine of St Duthac at Tain in the north, which took place in the autumn. The *Treasurer Accounts* indicate much hunting and hawking occurred along the way. Payments along the way on these pilgrimages were made in the form of alms, or to those who entertained and provided help or accommodation for the royal pilgrims. In September 1497 he made a pilgrimage of thanksgiving following hostilities, coming down by
Biggar, by Durisdeer, Dalry and Wigtown before arriving at Whithorn, and returning via Ayr, giving alms to the sick and poor all along the way (TA Vol 1).

Despite there being a record of James IV’s pilgrimages, there can be some questionable dating in the Treasurer’s Accounts. Nonetheless, the frequency of the pilgrimages is clear, as Whithorn became a favourite site for the King. He did not take the same route each time, probably because he had business to attend to along the way. In 1501 he came via Dumfries and Kirkcudbright, whereas the next year in an autumnal pilgrimage we see him going down the west coast, from Glasgow to Paisley and Ayrshire before reaching Whithorn. In March 1503, while in Whithorn, the King received the news of his brother John Earl of Mar’s death and a mass was held in the Priory. Around two months later, he was in Whithorn again, staying on the journey at Glenluce Abbey where he paid a clarsach player and a piper.

Entertainment was an important feature of these pilgrimages, with the royal party’s journey being a massive spectacle for those hoping to catch a glimpse of the King. In summer 1504 James IV was at Glenluce Abbey again on his way to Whithorn and gave money to some pilgrims coming from Tain to Whithorn. An act like this stresses how boundaries were broken down while the individual became a pilgrim. The devotion of these ordinary pilgrims was equal to that of the King, earning the donation from him while he was also in the state of ‘pilgrim’ (Vol 2).

In the summer of 1505 King James made for Whithorn via Glenluce again where he purchased a Ninian pilgrim token. He returned via Penningham, then by the Water of Cree to Dundrennan, on to Dumfries and Lincluden where he visited Lincluden Collegiate Church. The following year he came south by Paisley and Glenluce again, and it was during this trip he gave money to the pilgrim who received a miracle, and also offered a silver-gilt reliquary at the shrine. The King was generous while on these pilgrimages, exemplified on another 1506 summer pilgrimage where he made offerings of £4, 18s (vol 3).
1507 was an intense year of personal pilgrimage for the King, with concerns for the health of his Queen following childbirth. Believing his sins could be responsible for their illness, James IV set out on a low-key pilgrimage on foot to Whithorn. He was accompanied by a small group of people who could ride ahead to check the roads, but this was a journey of piousness and reflection, rather than spectacle. In Penpont, there is a record of a transaction to a cobbler for re-soling his shoes, signifying the exertion necessary to undertake a pilgrimage. At the final stage of his journey he acquired a guide to take him through the darkness from Wigtown to Whithorn in order to make the morning mass. Following this penitence, the Queen recovered, and was able to travel down to Whithorn later that year with her husband to give thanks, on a much grander scale than her husband’s solo venture (Vol 3/ Vol 4).

II.VIII Overview

The pilgrimages made by James IV are the best record of the journey of a medieval pilgrim. The royal following heightened Ninian’s popularity, and it remained unusually strong until the Reformation. Pilgrimage lasted a good twenty years into the Reformation, before legislation forbidding ‘pilgrimages to Chappelles, Welles, Croses and sik other monuments of Idolatrie’ (Anderson, Celtic Light) was passed in 1581. After this, there is a massive empty stretch in the pilgrim story, perhaps partly caused by the lingering fear of idol-worship left over from the Reformation. Andrew Symson,
writing in 1684, mentions sites associated with pilgrimage in his *Large Description of Galloway*, but does not go into the details that would add new dimensions to the research of the Whithorn pilgrimage. A hundred years after pilgrimage was banned, local stories and legends associated with the shrine may still have been potentially available, but not lightly passed on for record for us to analyse today. To say pilgrimage was destroyed by the Reformation is extreme, but it was certainly significantly altered: devotion was no longer an admirable quality, but a punishable offence.

The experience of the pilgrim travelling to Whithorn in the medieval period would be sombre, as the aim of the journey would be penitence and devotion, but also bustling, as such huge crowds of pilgrims flocked to St Ninian’s shrine during the height of this medieval popularity. Robert I’s journey in illness and James IV’s 1507 pilgrimage seeking absolution of his sins are two high-profile cases which portray the devotion pilgrims carried with them as they came to Whithorn, and thanks to the record of the latter, we have an insight into the routes traversed by pilgrims, as well as the prominence of pilgrimage in medieval culture.
III. Pilgrimage Sites and Landmarks

Creating pilgrim routes to Whithorn can be achieved by examining the sites and landmarks associated with the pilgrimage since medieval times. Records and traditions surrounding pilgrim spots survive although the routes and roads have changed and key sites are now ruins.

Pilgrim spots can be divided into three categories. The first group is of the abbeys which would have served pilgrims during medieval times. Secondly, there are holy wells and springs; their usage provides a fascinating insight into the pilgrim journey and belief in the miraculous. The third is a collection of chapel and churches, used by pilgrims for prayer, mass and worship along the way. I am using the same structure as McKerlie and McLean and describing these spots from Western Galloway to the East. I have organised them by parish, the same way as McKerlie, as this is the easiest way to look them up online and through the Statistical Accounts of Scotland, listed in the bibliography.

III.1 Abbeys

The abbeys and other monastic sites around Galloway are now in varying degrees of ruin. After the Reformation, monastic order was banned and so abbeys throughout Britain were either destroyed or abandoned. A radically different ecclesiastical structure was in place, and these features of Catholicism became archaic. Some of the sites described below are well-preserved, with ruins open to the public. Others have very little record other than vague dates and plans, or are merely rumoured, shrouding their existence with mystery.

On the coast near the Mull of Galloway, at Dunman, is the speculative site of St Buite’s Monastery. This is referred to by McKerlie as a possible ‘cell’ of St Buite (McKerlie, PSG, 9), with the original monastery founded by the saint being located in Angus (McLean, 33). It would make strategic sense for a monastery to be located here, due to its position on the coast and proximity to Ireland, but there is no evidence that

---

5 My primary resource here was the Canmore database on the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (see bibliography and Pilgrim Spots appendix)
this site existed, other than the place-name ‘Kilbuie’. The nearby holy Muntloch well could also indicate a place of worship in this vicinity.

At the top of the Rhinns, at Inch, is the site of Soulseat Abbey. There are virtually no remains today, safe for a few mounds by the loch. The Abbey was the Centre for the Premonstratensian Order in Scotland. Whithorn Priory was also Premonstratensian, and surpassed Soulseat in wealth and size due to its position as a pilgrimage centre. James IV requested Rome to promote Whithorn above Soulseat but this was rejected (PP, 78), and Soulseat prospered until the Reformation. It was founded by St Malachy, an Irish saint who was attached to miracles and reforming Christianity in the twelfth century. His life was recounted by St Bernard of Clairvaux. The medieval parish church at Inch was rumoured to be in the Castle Kennedy estate. There are two lochs, with the castle remains in the middle. The alleged 11th century church once stood on Inch Island on the White Loch.

Glenluce Abbey is well-preserved, with ruins open seasonally to the public. It was founded around 1190 (PP, 43) and a Cisterian monastery was established in 1192. The abbey saw frequent pilgrim traffic at the height of Whithorn’s popularity, and was visited by Robert the Bruce and James IV. The original parish church was said to be founded prior to the Abbey, between the 8th and 11th centuries. Situated in the centre of Glenluce, it has been rebuilt twice since the Reformation, most recently in 1814.

Another Premonstratensian Abbey was found at Tongland. There are no remains today, and nothing marks the site on the map. Founded in 1218, by October 1529 the abbey was described as ruinous with only a few monks still living there. In January 1530 it was united with the bishopric of Galloway. The tower of the Abbey was said to be about 200 feet high, making it one of the highest in Galloway and possibly the south of Scotland (McKerlie, PSG, 146-152). The old church was built upon the site of the Abbey, and its ruins were incorporated into the building for the sake of saving money (NSA, Vol 4, 88). At nearby Rerrick, there are the remains of Dundrennan Abbey, this one operating under Cistercian Order. It was founded by King David I, and the first monks were brought there from Rievaulx Abbey in North Yorkshire by Abbot Aelred. Rerrick Church, found nearby, belonged to this Abbey until the Dissolution (around the mid-1530s to early-1540s).
There are a few monastic sites of interest in Eastern Galloway, around Dumfries. **Sweetheart Abbey** was founded in 1273 by Lady Devorgilla, widow of John Balliol and one of Galloway’s most renowned figures. It was secularised in 1624. The name ‘Sweetheart’ comes from the tradition that Devorgilla embalmed her husband’s heart upon his death, enclosed it in a box, and built it into the walls of the Abbey (SA, Vol 2, 138). Its monks were of the Cisterian Order. The church was dedicated to St Mary, the remains of which are quite remarkable. The ruin itself is an impressive and prominent feature of the village of New Abbey.

**Lincluden Collegiate Church** was originally a Benedictine nunnery founded in late 1164 by Uchtred, son of Fergus of Galloway. During the reign of Robert III (c.1377-1406), the conventual establishment became a Collegiate Church: a non-monastic dwelling run by the clergy, akin to Westminster Abbey in London (Barbour, 18-21). Rather than the previous group of nuns operating under the Benedictine order, the community living in the college was self-governing, overseen by a provost. This was a stop on James IV’s 1505 pilgrimage (TA Vol 3, 153). Another payment on this pilgrimage was made to a messenger of the Abbot of the now-lost ‘Halirudhous’. ‘Halirudhous’ may correspond to the **Holywood Abbey**, given the royal party’s
transactions around this entry are in the surrounding area\textsuperscript{6}. The site of Holywood Abbey can be found at the spot marked Kirklands on the map. It was a Premonstratensian establishment, and there are very few records of its history (Crowe, 113). With a royal visitor to both abbeys in Terregles, there was most likely plenty of pilgrim traffic through this area, particularly pilgrims coming from the north.

Little is known about nunneries in Galloway, like the one at Lincluden. McKerlie attributes this to a fire destroying a record of their history. Augustine nuns would be devoted to the care of pilgrims at spittals and any convents that were around at the time (\textit{PSG}, 133). Up at Twynholm, adjacent to \textbf{Nunmill} there was said to be an ancient nunnery. Another rumoured woman’s monastery was attributed to \textbf{St Medana} at the Isle of Whithorn, and said to be a cell of \textit{Candida Casa}. The harbour at the Isle of Whithorn was a port for medieval pilgrims coming up from the south. The ruin of a 13\textsuperscript{th} century chapel dedicated to Ninian greets visitors today, and there is no trace or record of St Medana’s convent, although many other sites around Galloway bear her name.

\textbf{III.II Holy Wells}

Scattered all across Galloway there are wells and springs named after saints, or with miraculous properties, which would be a draw to the pilgrim coming to Whithorn. As in the case of Robert the Bruce, pilgrims sought a cure but also, lest they were unsuccessful, the possibility of salvation. Many of the beliefs around these holy healing wells state variations of a rule that if the waters are abundant, the user’s health will be restored, whereas if the well is dry, then no cure is possible. An example of this is St Mary’s Well at Kirkcolm. From the sheer abundance of these healing waters in Galloway, surely one would hold water for the infirm to drink!

Andrew Symson in his \textit{Large Description of Galloway} (1684) mentions some of these wells and springs, but often in a dismissive manner. He cannot condone the belief in their powers. According to him, Galloway does have some excellent waters, but he dismisses the belief of the ‘country folk’ that the waters carry medicinal qualities (80-81). Rationally thinking, if the water contains particular minerals and was especially

\textsuperscript{6}As there is so little on Holywood Abbey, it cannot be said for certain that this is what this entry refers to. As the payment was made to a \textit{representative} of the Abbot, it could also refer to Holywood Abbey in Edinburgh. Both possibilities are likely candidates.
clean, then it perhaps would have the power to help ailments—curing them, however, is more than Symson can believe. He was writing in 1684, and while the Reformation may not have been a fresh memory, it was still a drastically different time in Scotland from the medieval period where pilgrimage was commonplace. By the time we reach the *Statistical Accounts of Scotland* in 1791 to 1799 and 1834 to 1845, the attitude towards these folk beliefs has relaxed a little. However, there is still the impression that the magic of these healing waters belongs to the lower classes and a long-forgotten time. Despite this, the fact that these superstitions last into the nineteenth century and beyond is testimony to the power of these traditions, and the places and communities they are tied to.

The parish of Kirkmaiden in the Rhins of Galloway has a large concentration of pilgrim spots. Holy wells with saintly dedications are particularly prominent. The name of the parish is split between deriving from the Virgin Mary, who was apparently seen praying and left her knee-print upon a stone (*NSA*, 199) and the more widely recognised St Medana. St Medana was a pious Irish princess who travelled to Scotland, landing in the Rhins. Her lover followed her there, and Medana fled across to the Machars. Her lover followed again, declaring that he could not live without her eyes. Medana then removed her eyes and cast them at his feet, sending him away. She then washed her face in a well at Monreith and her sight was miraculously restored (‘The Story of St Medan’s Well’). Her story is almost identical to another Celtic saint, Triduana (*Dictionary of Saints*, 426), associated with the healing of eyes. As they have different
Saint Days, they are considered to be separate saints (*PSG* 4). St Medana’s Cave and Chapel mark the spot where the saint landed and began her life in Scotland.

The holy wells in Kirkmaiden are as follows:

- **Three holy wells** near to St Medana’s Cave and Chapel. These are known for curing disease particularly those afflicting children. Traditional bathing in these wells was associated with the first Sunday in May, known as Co or Cove Sunday. At that time people would come to be healed at the wells, and also to have a gossip (*NSA*, 208). It was traditional to leave gifts at the cave upon departure.

- **The Muntloch Well** on Kilbuie Moss, visited by Robert the Bruce but now lost. Muntloch Well is associated with the rule that if the waters ‘buller and mount up’ (*Symson*, 67), the person will be cured, but otherwise there is no hope.

- **Tibberliekite**, coming from the Gaelic *Tiobar tighe Caite*, is said to have waters for stomach troubles. It translates as the ‘Well of Kate’s House’, due its proximity to Kirkmaiden parish church, dedicated to St. Catherine. Which Catherine this refers to is debatable; it could either mean St Catherine of Siena, or Alexandria. In August 1506, James IV made an offering at ‘Sanct Katrinis of the Oly Well’ (*TA* Vol 3), which could indicate this well in Kirkmaiden or one in the next parish over, Stoneykirk. The latter was used for baptisms.

- **Peter’s Paps**, dropping water said to be good for ‘chine-cough’. This is most probably the landmark *Symson* refers to as the water ‘which drop hath this [continually dropping] quality, as my informer saith, that if any person be troubled by the chine-cough he may be infallibly cured by holding up his mouth, and letting this drop fall therein’ (67).

Moving through the Rhins of Galloway, at Portpatrick and Kircolm there is also an impressive collection of wells.

- **Port Mora:** There are two caves here. One is the *Uchtrie Machean* or ‘cave of the hermit’, with particular power on the first Sunday of May (*Dalyell*, 80). The other is partly veiled by a stream, visited at the change of the moon by the sick, particularly children with rickets. The tradition was for them to bathe in the stream, and then dry in the cave.

- **St Columba’s Well** is so-called after the Kirkcolm’s namesake, St Columba.
- **St Mary’s Well**, described by Symson as being superstitiously resorted to by the sick. Again we rely on the prophetic power of the amount of water available in the well to heal the infirm.

- **St Bride’s Well**, south-west of St Bride’s Chapel: “a well of remarkably pure water, that never fails in the driest seasons” *(PSG 33)*.

East of the Rhins, there are plenty of pilgrim spots surrounding the routes from Glenluce to Whithorn.

- **Two Lady Wells** are located near Glenluce Abbey. One near Sinniness and another further inland running into the Lady Burn. There is some confusion between these Lady Wells and the ones found in the next parish at New Luce. One of the **New Luce Lady Wells** is marked, the other have evaded those who have sought it, leading to the conclusion that it may have been confused with one of the others over by Glenluce Abbey *(RCAHMS)*.

- **Kilhern Well**, also found in New Luce, is found near the caves of Kilhern. It is traditional to throw small objects into the well, for a now forgotten purpose.

- **The Wells of the Rees** near to the Laggangairn Standing Stones.

- **St John’s Holy Well** at Chippermore, at St Finian’s Chapel and another Lady Well on Monreith Mains, in the parish at Mochrum.

- **St Medana’s Well**, also known as Chaincough well can be found in the parish of Glasserton. Chaincough or chin-cough describes the symptoms of whooping cough, perhaps indicating that this water could cure these ailments. This was the well at which water miraculously sprung up and healed the bleeding eyes of the saint.
In Eastern Galloway, there are fewer wells. However, they have curious traditions attached to them.

- **The Rumbling Well** at Barshcoch Hill in Kelton was frequented by sick persons on the first Sunday of May. Suffering from all sorts of ailments, they would lie by the well on the Saturday night. Early the next morning they would drink from the well. It was traditional to leave an offering of thanksgiving on departure, usually money or clothing.

- **The Slot Well** nearby was also used for healing, but rather than people, it was known for healing cattle suffering from ‘connoch’. According to the *Dictionary of the Scots Language*, ‘connoch’ describes a disease affecting the nose and throat carried on a *larvae* eaten by the cattle while grazing. It is the only example I can find of waters healing only animals, which is surprising given the rich agricultural tradition in Galloway. The beasts were led to the well, or the water was carried in vessels to the cattle. They were either bathed in the water or drank from it. The bands and shackles of the beasts were left as an offering (Symson, 16).
St Queran’s Well in Troqueer, near Islesteps, is the best preserved holy well in Galloway. Variations of the name include St Querdon and St Jergan, but the saint is most commonly known as Irish St Ciaran. The well was attributed with healing, particularly of women and children. Offerings are still left in the form of ribbons and pieces of cloth tied in the bushes, or money and pins dropped in the well. Writing in 1892, Patrick Dudgeon comments on the numerous coins found at the well, with an impressive historical span:

They consisted mainly of irish (Elizabeth) pennies and halfpennies, James VI twopenny pieces and hardheads or bodles, and the same of Charles I, Charles II turners and half turners, William and Mary bodles, Louis XIII double tournois, some Fresian (Holland) copper coins, and George II and III pennies and halfpennies and farthings. (63)

Dudgeon suspects the later coins had been removed and spent on drink, but the findings of these old coins indicates the length of the superstition associated with holy wells. Even if pilgrimage was a distant memory, traditions surrounding a site like St Queran’s Well endured. Even in the late nineteenth century, Dudgeon suspects that ‘the curative powers of the water are, by a few, not yet altogether disbelieved in’. The location of the well is closer to a town than many of the other wells described here, which could
account for its longevity. Nonetheless, the tradition surrounding this well is not only part of the pilgrim story, but also the greater folklore of Galloway.

III.III Chapels and Churches

A crucial part of the pilgrim’s journey was the opportunities for worship. Throughout Galloway there are remains or evidence of churches and chapels used for pilgrim worship on their spiritual journey to Whithorn. Today, many of these sites consist of merely a few stones, or just a place-name indicating that there was potentially a church or chapel in the vicinity. After the decline of the Abbeys at the Reformation, many of these pilgrimage chapels were destroyed or fell into disrepair (McLean, PP, 12-13). Churches and chapels require a lot of maintenance, so often brand new churches were built on the site of old ones or a new church was built elsewhere. The land of the old church was bought over and records lost. An example of this is St John’s Chapel in Stranraer, which ceased to be a Catholic chapel in 1560, and the record of the chapel was lost. The land the chapel was on also changed hands, as it was said to be in the vicinity of the castle. The Presbyterian Church in Stranraer was built in 1766 (McLean, 100-101).

Several of the sites described here were used as a chapel-of-ease, a place of worship attached to the main parish church, but for the use of patrons who lived away from the parish church. Parish boundaries change, as do population patterns, and many of these churches were deemed no longer necessary.

Place-name evidence is an indicator of a place of worship, as many farms and lands contain variations of saint names, or evidence of a church. The Gaelic word ‘cill’ means church, and numerous sites throughout Galloway begin with the prefix ‘kil’, followed by a reference to a saint. John MacQueen examines these name-origins. He states that the origin of these names was probably colloquial or local rather than the official title (Place-Names, 46). While there is no physical evidence for Kildonan in Kirkmaiden, there are a few ‘Kildonans’ marked on the map: Kildonan Hill, Kildonan Glen and Kildonan Burn. Kildonan refers to a church dedicated to St Donan of Eigg, a Hebridean saint with a few dedications around Scotland. Although today’s pilgrim would find no physical stopping-point as they reach one of these sites, they can provide us with an insight into the structure of the journey.
Moving from the Mull of Galloway up through the Rhinns, there are a number of chapel sites and ruins:

- **Kirkmaiden Parish Church** was located by the Kirk Burn at the Mull of Galloway. The generally accepted origin of the name comes from ‘the church of Medana’. MacQueen applies caution as there is much contestation over this name (50). An alternative explanation is that the dedication is to St Catherine (McKerlie, *PSG*, 7). There are very few remains, just a few stone mounds, but it is marked on the map. It was once under the jurisdiction of Soulseat Abbey.

- **St Ninian’s Chapel**, at Chipperdingan is a speculative site. There is no indication of this chapel, or even the place-name marked on the map, and the name itself is debatable as ‘Chipperdingan’ is said to mean ‘Thy Finian’s Well’, but could also be Ninian rather than Finian (McLean, 61; see also Clancy).

- **St Finian’s Chapel** is said to be at Killingeane, but again there are no remains or markings on the map.

- **Chapel Rossan** is to be found on the Chapel Rossan Bay, dedicated to St Drosthan, a monk under St Columba. There are no remains of this Celtic chapel, but the eighteenth century Roy map indicates a building on this bay as ‘Chapel Rossan’ (McLean, 65).
- **Kirkmadrine**, found at Stoneykirk, is possibly dedicated to St Martin (McKerlie, *Lands Vol 1*, 328) and dating from about the fifth century to the eighth century. At this site we also have the Kirkmadrine Stones, second to the Latinus Stone at Whithorn as the oldest Christian Stones in Scotland. These stones are engraved in Latin with Chi-Ro markings and the names of priests: Viventius, Florentius and Mavorius, some of the first Christians in Scotland.

- The village of Stoneykirk is named after the medieval parish church dedicated to St Stephen. St Stephen was an early defender and preacher of Christianity, who angered the Jewish authorities and was stoned to death for blasphemy. The village name incorporates his martyrdom. A later church was built in 1827 and is now unused.

- **The chapel-of-ease at Eldrickhill** was dedicated to St Catherine. This was a later chapel, lying on the route between Portpatrick and Stoneykirk through to Eastern Galloway, and so would have been a key stopping point for Whithorn pilgrims. There are no remains today, or anything marked on the map, but it was in the vicinity of the aforementioned St Catherine’s Well.

- **A chapel dedicated to St Patrick** was once near the harbour in Portpatrick. The town, named after the Irish patron saint, was, as the name suggests, a crucial port between Ireland and Scotland. Other places associated with the saint included a well, which was altered by pipes, and a footprint on a rock which was left by the saint when he was in Scotland. All three of these features are lost (*PSG* 20-21). Post-Reformation a later church dedicated to St Andrew was built (around 1622-1629) on what was thought to have been the site of St Patrick’s Chapel and is said to incorporate some of the old chapel’s features. The ruins of **St Andrew’s Kirk** are now to be found in the centre of Portpatrick (McLean, *PP*, 102-103).

- **Killantringan**, a chapel dedicated to St Ninian has also become tradition, as there are no dates or records of the chapel.

- **Kirkcolm parish church**, had an ancient dedication to St Columba.

- **St Mary’s Chapel** has its suspected site near St Mary’s croft and well. Kilmorie, or *cill Moire* in Gaelic refers to the ‘Church of Mary’, and while there are references to the chapel, including Symson in 1684, there are no remains. The **Kilmorie stone cross**, dating from the 8th to 10th century is located in the **Ervie-Kirkcolm parish church**.
- **St Bride’s Chapel and burial ground** at East Kirkbride was still traceable into the mid-nineteenth century in 1841.

Travelling eastwards, Glenluce is the next possible pilgrimage halt. Between the parishes of Old Luce and New Luce there is a collection of potential chapels. Throughout the land belonging to Glenluce Abbey there was a chain of chapels and chapel sites marking the route to Whithorn:

- **St John’s Chapel** was east of Glenluce, at the Knock of Luce, and then coming west we have **Chapel Fey** at Balcarry, also known as Our Lady’s Chapel. At Milton there was **Kirk Christ Chapel**, and nearby was **St Fillan’s Chapel**. There are no traces of these chapels, and subsequently there are no indications on the map of their precise whereabouts.

- At **Chapel Hill** in Kirkcowan, the remains of a chapel are marked. This chapel was dedicated to St Comgan, an Irish saint.

- **Killgallioch** chapel and burial ground was supposed to be found between Kirkcowan and New Luce. A wayside chapel for Whithorn pilgrims, it was said to take its name from the nearby Laggangairn Standing Stones (McLean, 164), or from the Gaelic *cill na Cailleach* meanings ‘Chapel of the Nuns’ (McKerlie, *PSG*, 52).

- **Kilfeddar** and **Kilmacfadzean** are two farmlands at New Luce with names suggesting chapel sites. Kilfeddar indicates a chapel dedicated to St Peter, in Gaelic being *Cill Pheadir*. Kilmacfadzean, according to MacQueen (46) comes from the Gaelic *Cill mo Phaidein* meaning ‘Church of my little Patrick’. The proximity of these lands to Glenluce Abbey, along with their names, makes them strong candidates for chapel sites.

Many pilgrim chapel sites are found in the parishes around Whithorn and Newton Stewart:

- **St Finian’s Chapel** ruins are at Mochrum. It is named after the Irish saint educated at Whithorn, who was the teacher of Columba. Its position on the coast makes it the ideal place of worship for pilgrims coming up the Luce Bay by boat.

- **Kirkmaiden-in-Fernes** is found on the hills above the Luce Bay. James IV made an offering at ‘Sanct Medanis Kirk’ in the summer of 1506 (*TA Vol 3*, 280). McKerlie thinks this refers to Kirkmadrine in Sorbie, but I am inclined to agree
with the *Treasurer Accounts* editor, Sir James Balfour Paul, that the entry refers to Kirkmaiden-in-Fernes. (*PSG*, 86; *TA Vol 3* xxvii) The previous entry is for Whithorn, and Kirkmaiden-in-Fernes is much closer to the Priory, being just along the coast from St Ninian’s Cave.

Passing through Wigtown and Whithorn, we reach Sorbie, another parish with a few places of worship for pilgrims just before they reach Whithorn. Sorbie joins the old parishes of Sorbie, Kirkmadrine and Cruggleton, and so each area had its own parish church.

- **Sorbie Church** is not marked on the Ordnance Survey map, but it is located in the village and was built around 1750.
- The remains of **Kirkmadrine** are marked on the map, although there are scarce remains. The 1834-45 *Statistical Account* states that ruins of the church could still be seen from a nearby farm (28).
- **Cruggleton Chapel** was associated with Cruggleton Castle, the seat of the Lords of Galloway\(^7\). It belonged at one point to Whithorn Priory. It was larger and built better than Kirkmadrine. Cruggleton Castle was said to be home of to John ‘The Red’ Comyn, famously murdered by Robert the Bruce, and after his murder his property was seized by Bruce. By 1684 the castle was ruinous (*NSA*, 28).

---

\(^7\) [http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/whithorn/cruggletonchurch/index.html](http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/whithorn/cruggletonchurch/index.html)
At Penningham, there are a few associations with St Ninian. Beside the river Cree is St Ninian’s Chapel of the Cruives, a late chapel built in 1508. A bend in the River Cree south of Newton Stewart is known in tradition as St Ninian’s Creek (McKerlie, *PSG*, 112) and across from the Upper Barr farm is another holy well, also bearing Ninian’s name. The parish’s name also contains reference to the saint, so it is unsurprising, given its proximity to the Whithorn route, that there are so many dedications to Ninian. There is an old church ruin by a hill known as Bell Knowe, which is said to be where St Ninian’s Bell was rung.

Moving east of the Machars, to the parish of Borgue, there are three churches of significance to the Whithorn story:

- **Borgue Parish Church**, according to McKerlie, has an old pre-Reformation church in its churchyard. There is rumour of this church being founded around 1100, but no mention of it is made until 1150 in connection to Dryburgh Abbey (McKerlie, *PSG*, 127).

- **Senwick Kirk**’s remains can be found on the east coast. This church was given to Tongland Abbey by David II and remained in its possession until the Reformation.

- **Kirkandrews** has its remains also marked on the map, west of the village of Borgue. Symson mentions this church (25) in reference to St Lawrence’s fair, held on the ninth of August. Plenty of merriment and rowdiness accompanied this event! How long this particular tradition had existed, he does not specify, but fairs of this nature would have been contemporary with the height of Whithorn’s pilgrimage; the pilgrims’ solemnity contrasting the excitement of the festivities.

In Twynholm the remains of the **Church of Kirkchrist** are in an attractive setting next to the River Dee. This was said to be the chapel attached to an ancient castle. In Kirkcudbright and Kelton there is a collection of ancient church sites:

- **St Cuthbert** is Kirkcudbright’s namesake and there was once a church dedicated to him. McKerlie says only fragments of the church were in a graveyard north of the town (*PSG*, 136), but there is nothing marked on the map to indicate this site.

---

8 The *New Statistical Account* describes Senwick Kirk and Kirkandrews as picturesque, but neither had been used for their designed purpose for 150 years (Vol 4, 55).
- **Galtway, St Brigid** and **St Michael** are three ancient church sites mentioned by McKerlie. Galtway parish church was dedicated to St Michael, before the parish united with Kirkcudbright in about 1663. The remains of Galtway St Michael’s are found south of the town. There are no indications of the presence of the other churches.

- **Kirkland of Gelston**, at Kelton, was under the patronage of Whithorn Priory. There are three more churches to note in the parish: **St Cormac’s, Kirkmirren** and St Colmonel’s Church at Buittle, marked as **Old Buittle Kirk** on the map.

In the east of Galloway are the parishes of Urr, and Colvend and Southwick.

- **An old church dedicated to St Constantine** was in Urr. Its site is at the land labelled Meikle Kirkland. This is the only known dedication to the saint in Galloway. In an archaeological survey of the area in the nineteenth century, some human bones and quantities of molten lead were unearthed, suggesting that the building was destroyed by a fire (see RCAHMS).

- **St Lawrence’s chapel** and well at Fairgirth are in the parish of Colvend and Southwick, south of Dalbeattie. McKerlie mentions the tradition of the site, which would once have been a small religious house (*PSG* 178-179). The 1st *Statistical Account* mentions St Lawrence’s Well as ‘a copious spring of excellent water, arched over, surrounded by burial ground’ (Vol 17, 110-11), but as McKerlie found in 1916, this is lost.

- **Southwick church** has few remaining ruins found just inland of the Southwick coast. McKerlie’s driver described it as ‘an eerie place, that auld kirkyard, sitting between twa hills’ (179). McKerlie comments that this small kirk would have seen pilgrimage traffic, as demonstrated in historical record: Edward I, on invasion of Scotland, gave alms to Our Lady at Southwick (McKerlie, p.180).
III.IV Overview
These pilgrim spots would have seen varying levels of pilgrim traffic around the height of Whithorn’s medieval popularity, and even beyond. Sites associated with saints, such as St Medana’s cave, may have been pilgrimage destinations in themselves, while many chapels pilgrims encountered would be purpose-built for the pilgrimage. Post-Reformation, these sites ceased to have pilgrim traffic, as chapels were torn down and rebuilt as Protestant churches, reflecting the new age. Natural features, like holy wells, were more adaptable, as folk tradition could alter their saintly associations while maintaining their healing superstitions. Symson’s *Large Description of Galloway* provides evidence that, in 1684, some of these wells still held on to their followers and believers. Today, these sites are in all sorts of different conditions. Some have no remains, only traditions attached to their sites, while others are surprisingly well preserved. When examining the Whithorn pilgrimage, it would be possible to argue the existence of these traditions and sites in themselves is all we need. The healing power of holy wells provides us with an insight into the pilgrim’s motivation; the chains of wayside chapels roughly mark their routes. The experience of pilgrimage was moulded by incorporating these sites, making for a remarkable and unforgettable journey.
IV. The Journey to Whithorn

The modern pilgrim must devise his own path. There are no records of the precise routes taken by medieval pilgrims, although the *Treasurer Accounts* provide a clear indication of how James IV travelled to Whithorn. Place-name evidence show where pilgrims landed in Galloway and pilgrim spots confirm where they stopped along the way. By connecting this evidence, an image of the medieval journey to Whithorn begins to form and routes can be roughly traced.

However, while the modern pilgrim making his way to Whithorn has these sources available to aid his planning, the pilgrimage today is a different experience. The pilgrim today ranges from the pious to the curious, with a range of motivations. To be part of a pilgrimage party means travelling with a group with various different backgrounds, but a shared goal. A new terrain and momentous changes in daily life and culture means that the modern day experience of pilgrimage has expanded and adapted.

IV.1 Meeting Points

There were numerous landing-points for medieval pilgrims coming by boat from the south or from Ireland. MacQueen suggests that Killantringan Bay was a landing-point for Irish pilgrims. The name indicates the site of the aforementioned St Ninian’s Chapel. After a long journey, a chapel on the landing-bay would provide spiritual solace to pilgrims (*Place-names*, 48). Portencalzie at Kirkcolm is also called Port of the Nuns or Lady Bay, and would be another port for Irish pilgrims. The Port of Spittal at Portpatrick similarly indicates accommodation for pilgrims coming from Ireland.

The place-name ‘Spittal’ is prevalent in Galloway, particularly in the Stoneykirk parish where we find the North or Little Spittal, and the South or Meikle Spittal. These spots are in an excellent location for receiving Irish or English pilgrims coming in to Portpatrick, Killantringan Bay and the Port of Spittal. Spittals around the River Bladnoch at Kirkcowan indicate accommodation for pilgrims from the east, and similarly spittals in the Creetown area would see English pilgrims (*Place-names*, 49).
Signposts for pilgrims included crosses, used as road markers. There are not many examples of these, but place-name evidence suggests at a ford named Corsemalzie, there was a wayside cross (McKerlie, PSG, 55). The water of Malzie is on the route to Whithorn near the river Bladnoch. Another fascinating pilgrim marker was the Laggangairn Standing Stones. At the end of the eighteenth century there were thirteen stones at the site in New Luce, possibly forming a circle. In the mid-1870s there were seven (P. H. McKerlie, Lands and Their Owners, 607). Today, there are two stones remaining, and these can be accessed by following the Southern Upland Way at Balmurrie Farm. The two stones have crosses carved into them, said to be by Whithorn pilgrims (PP 167). Their proximity to the holy Wells of the Rees and Kilgallioch, added to their position on the pilgrim route from the north, indicates that these were an important marker on the pilgrim journey. P.H. McKerlie also describes a number of stone cairns around this area, some of which are ancient but others were created by pilgrims, as it was customary for them to place stones on the piles as they went by (605). A modern example of the stone piles created by pilgrims can be found on the beach at St Ninian’s Cave.

IV.II The Ninian Way
There are various St Ninian sites across Galloway which mark the route taken by pilgrims travelling to his Whithorn shrine. His cave at Glasserton is a remarkable pilgrim site, and is still very popular with visitors today. The combination of its
position of natural beauty and its spiritual significance makes it one of the most important pilgrim spots on the approach to Whithorn. Bell Knowe at Penningham was said to be the spot where St Ninian’s Bell was rung. From the evidence available, this bell was probably a hand-bell. A man would stand at Bell Knowe and ring this bell at various times (NSA, Vol 4, 176). In March 1506-7, James IV gave nine shillings to the man ‘that bure Sanct Ninanes bell’ (TA, Vol 3, 374), and this bell-bearer was possibly the man who rang the bell - a very important job. Symson describes an engraving in Saxon letter on the bell: ‘Campana Sancti Niniani de Penygham, M.’. This engraving suggests the bell was dedicated to Ninian in 1000 A.D. the 1000th year after the birth of Jesus Christ. The whereabouts of the bell now are unknown. According to RCAHMS, it is in Kirkcudbright Museum, but there is no other source to back this up. The sound of a bell like this would beckon pilgrims to the nearby chapel. When reconstructing the idea of the medieval pilgrimage, the sounds are just as important as the sights, as church bells could help guide the pilgrims when visibility was poor.

One of the miracles said to be performed by Ninian is commemorated in the landscape of East Galloway (PSG 217). This site is found at Cowcloot Hill, in the parish of Parton. Ninian visited a farm to bless the livestock, and when all the animals were congregated he surrounded them with divine protection. That night, while Ninian and his host slept, thieves arrived at the farm. Seeing that there was no enclosure surrounding the cattle, they made to steal them. The divine protection sprang into action, and a bull gored the leader of the thieves, killing him. The bull then stamped down on a rock, leaving the imprint of his hooves. The next morning, Ninian came upon the scene, and prayed for the thief, asking forgiveness. By the same divine power that destroyed him, the thief was restored to life and full health thanks to Ninian’s kindness and forgiveness (MacQueen, St Nynia, 114-115).

A stone at Cowcloot Hill has impressions which look like a cow’s hooves, and also the imprint of a man kneeling. However, the Parton Statistical Account has an entirely different legend attached to it, completely void of any association with Ninian. This tradition describes a landlord who was owed rent, and took the cattle promised to him when rent could not be made. The cattle passed over this stone, followed by an officer on horseback, causing the hoof imprints. The knee-prints are said to be from a man who
was praying for relief against his enemies, just before the cattle were driven past (NSA, Vol 4, 283-284).

These two opposing legends show the significance of the site to local people, and also how traditions are extremely malleable. If a legend has been altered to exclude the association with the saint or the church, then the site becomes almost insignificant to a pilgrimage, other than being a site upon which pilgrims have trodden before. Following in the footsteps of both saints and other pilgrims is a crucial factor of pilgrimage, as it creates a sense of shared spirituality. When following sites associated with a saint such as Ninian, the pilgrim becomes closer to the divine and the holy, as they meditate upon their faith and repentance. However, there is also bonding with fellow pilgrims, even if he makes the journey alone. He is following a route and making a journey in the state of ‘pilgrim’, just as others have before him. Although pilgrimage sites, routes, and traditions such as the ‘Cowcloot’ tale are entwined with the land, the pilgrim simultaneously experiences a physical connection with the landscape and a metaphysical bond with God and every individual who has shared their motivation.

IV.III Routes
There are no official pilgrim ways to Whithorn. However, planning the journey is a rewarding part of the modern pilgrimage, as it involves looking at how pilgrims travelled in the past, when the roads themselves were so very different. The areas
described above are contributing factors to the formation of a pilgrim route: historical evidence in the form of James IV’s records, and pilgrim spots and place-names, showing where the pilgrim would have visited, rested and worshiped.

Medieval pilgrims coming from Ireland or England would have come by boat, as this was the easiest and quickest way to travel north. Getting from Northern Ireland to Galloway by boat is still the most direct way, as ferries come across from Belfast and Larne to Cairnryan. Until recently the port was at Stranraer. The landing-points at the Rhinns of Galloway are no longer used as ports. Depending on how much walking they plan to do, pilgrims from England can come by train changing at Carlisle for Dumfries and making their way west either by foot or by bus. There are also coaches to Newton Stewart from places as far afield as Manchester.

Whether coming from the north or the south, travelling by car or coach is simplest in terms of directness. This method also allows pilgrims more freedom when planning their trip and a choice of where they would like to visit along the way. Such a luxury was not available to the medieval pilgrim. Those travelling from the north followed a traditional route known as ‘The Pilgrim’s Way’, which involved trekking across moorlands north of Glenluce, then coming down the Eastern side of Luce Bay, moving across to Whithorn, passing by the chapel of Kirkmaiden-in-Fernes as they headed down the coast. Pilgrims from the North East came via the Glenkens and St John’s Town of Dalry. They would cross the river Cree at a possible ford or bridge and then travel in the direction of the Wigtown Bay. The land between these two routes was wild moorland, very boggy in some places. In the later years of the medieval cult, a middle route developed through Kirkcowan and Corsemalzie. Today, there are many options available to the pilgrim coming to Whithorn that can incorporate these routes. It is a matter of picking and choosing, of personal preference, and can depend very much on who is amongst the group of travellers.

---

9 Journey planning via Google Maps and Traveline Scotland, Transportdirect.info.
IV.IV Paisley Abbey

In 2012 and 2013 a pilgrimage to Whithorn was organised as part of celebrations for the 850th anniversary of Paisley Abbey. This involved walking the route to Whithorn from the Abbey, but was divided into eleven stages:

- Paisley Abbey to Lochwinnoch
- Lochwinnoch to Kilwinning
- Kilwinning to Troon
- Troon to Ayr
- Ayr to Maybole
- Maybole to Dailly
- Dailly to Barr
- Barr to Barrhill
- Barrhill to New Luce
- Glenluce to Mochrum
- Mochrum to Whithorn

There were varying numbers at each stage of the pilgrimage, with the later stages gaining more pilgrims. There were options available to the pilgrims who could not or who did not wish to walk the full journey. The walking group itself was made up of

10 http://www.paisleyabbey.org.uk/events/850-celebrations/
walkers at all different levels, accompanied by cars to ensure their safety. The roads they walked varied from cross country to cycling routes and main roads.

The organiser of this pilgrimage was Sylvia Jenks. She comments that finding the routes around Ayr was not too difficult, as the pilgrims could look at the lands owned by Paisley Abbey and follow the paths the Cluniac monks would have taken. Beyond there, it was a case of ‘looking at it in a twenty first century style’, as they had to consider the modern ways available to them. Looking for a direct route between Dailly and Glenluce involved trying to find as straight a line between the two points as possible. Examining this line on a map, there were signs of the areas along the route being densely populated in the past. Indicators such as monuments and burial sites around Barrhill and New Luce made it a viable route for the walkers to take, as there could have been a route there in the past (SC2013.3: 06.23-07.57). Creating the successful journey involved piecing together the evidence available of past routes, and the modern roads and ways available to the walkers.

IV.V Revival

In 1924, a pilgrimage hailed as ‘the first post-Reformation pilgrimage to Whithorn’ (Galloway Gazette, 23/8/1924) was held. It was arranged by the Catholic Young Men’s Society based in Dumfries, with the support of Rev James W McCarthy, the Bishop of Galloway. The journey was made by a special train and carried about 700 pilgrims, in addition to those who made the journey by motorcar and charabanc. There is no longer a train station at Whithorn, but the journey to Whithorn from Newton Stewart by rail was described as ‘one of those pleasant, unhurried, single rail lines… the contrast to the hurry and bustle of the mainline express… was very enjoyable’ (Harper, 384). This was a momentous occasion, and was attended not only by local figures but also dignitaries, including the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk and their family, and the Marquis and Dowager Marchioness of Bute. A procession gathered at the Town Hall, High Mass was held at the church grounds and a service was conducted at St Ninian’s Cave in the afternoon. The pilgrims wore a badge with a reproduction of Saint Ninian and the seal of Whithorn priory, in order to reflect the significance of this pilgrimage as the first since the Reformation.
After the success of this endeavour, subsequent pilgrimages were arranged by the Diocese and are now an annual event on the last Sunday of August. Mass is now held in St Ninian’s cave, a tradition begun by Bishop Joseph McGee in 1953. Because this open-air venue is on uneven terrain, the event can be thwarted by bad weather. This may have been the reason for the 1962 mass being held at the back of the church (SC2013.4: 14.14-15.03). In the early nineties a few years of poor weather meant that mass was held at the edge of the beach, as the tractor carrying the pilgrims’ table and equipment could not make its way along the beach to the cave (28.00-28.35). The pilgrims are led by a piper (13.20). The clergy go amongst the congregation to distribute communion, as the ascent to the cave can be difficult due to the uneven surface of the pebbly shore. The numbers of attendants have ranged from up to 3000 pilgrims, to around 700. The numbers began to drop in the early 1990s, coinciding with a decrease in church attendance (28.48).

Other groups of walkers have made their way to Whithorn on pilgrimage, with the support of the Diocese. A group of walkers from Carfin first made the journey to Whithorn in 1985 and continued coming for fifteen years. Hospitality was provided for this group by the residents of Whithorn, who would also join them in their mass. This group was a lot smaller than the annual Diocese group, and their mass was held in the crypt at the priory, until their numbers got too great (SC2013.4: 16.40-18.29, 22.33, 23.10-24.08). In 1988 a group known as the Pilgrims of St Francis made a pilgrimage from Glenluce to Whithorn, where they joined up with the Diocese pilgrims for the annual pilgrimage (24.40; Galloway Gazette, 3/9/1988). A group of Russian Orthodox pilgrims came to Whithorn in 1990. Led by Father Ian Prior, who ran the Russian Orthodox Mission in Aberdeen, the group was made up of pilgrims from around Britain (Galloway Gazette, 4/8/1990). They were greeted by the priest at Whithorn at the time, Father Martin Poland, who had to get special permission for the Orthodox mass to take place in his church (34.45). A solo pilgrimage was made by Father Pat Keegan, also in 1990. He walked from Lockerbie to Whithorn, raising money to repair St Luke’s Church in Moffat. His departure was delayed due to the fervour of his parishioners on his send off, and his walk was challenged by a variety of weather conditions, including a hail storm (Galloway Gazette, 28/4/1990).
There are no official records of the number of pilgrims that make their way to Whithorn. St Ninian’s Cave is secluded and secretive, which makes it an attraction to pilgrims, but also means there is currently no way of measuring the number of visitors it receives. The groups mentioned above had support from the Diocese of Galloway and Whithorn itself, and a lot of planning is required to create the best atmosphere for worship. The pilgrim who visits St Ninian’s Cave alone, to reflect and pray, may leave a stone on one of the piles or mark a cross on the stone, but there is no way of recording his visit. It seems now that the cave is considered the pilgrimage ‘centre’ of Whithorn whenever possible, and this may well be because of its seclusion. As described above, a major attraction of Whithorn to the medieval cult was the static position of the saint’s relics. I think this attraction has now expanded: the crypt is still an important enticement, but so is the wild, mythical quality of the cave. It is connected to the saint, but simultaneously represents something separate from the modern world, and in the experience of pilgrimage today, this has great appeal.

IV.VI Challenges
Just as in medieval times, walking the routes to Whithorn today is not an easy task. Getting to the area and Whithorn itself is simpler thanks to the convenience of cars and main roads. However, for those who want to walk a traditional path, visiting some pilgrim spots along the way, there are many issues to consider. The first problem is
actually finding the pilgrim spots. Maps, research, and local knowledge are all imperative, but even these can only take you so far. Looking for a site such as St Medana’s Cave depends on timing, as at high tide there is no way along the beach. Many sites will evade those who search for them, particularly the wells and springs. Following directions carefully and studying the map can lead the pilgrim to the location of the pilgrim site, but once there things can be hidden or overgrown. However, walking off the beaten track and finding one of these sites is a tremendous feeling, whether the searcher is a pilgrim or just curious.

Planning is a significant factor in the organisation of a pilgrimage, particularly if travelling with a large group of mixed ability walkers. The Paisley Abbey route had to be methodically thought out and practised before the final walk. A route was advertised between Barr and Barrhill as eleven miles but, during a run-through of the walk, it proved to be fourteen miles. They lost the route they were trying to take, but fortunately they had a GPS. When they went back a second time to try it, they found the route difficult to negotiate, and so had to find an alternative (SC2013.3: 13.00-14.17). Traffic also had to be taken into consideration, as if there were corners on roads where the walkers would not be seen, it was too much of a risk to take. On the way to Maybole, they had to walk for two miles along the A77- a very different experience from some of the country footpaths they had encountered at other stages. Coming along the country roads on the final stage to Whithorn, there was nothing to advise drivers that walkers were coming along the roads (SC2013.1: 01.50-02.00). Issues of health and safety, then, are a massive consideration in the pilgrimage planning. Signposting, as with any other footpath or walking route, would be helpful (SC2013.3: 14.28-15.10). Factors to consider in planning include the size of the group, the types of roads available on the route, the ability of the walkers, and the possible weather conditions the walkers could encounter.

The challenges encountered along the route are very much part of the pilgrimage tradition. Tradition implies that the unpredictability and difficulty along the way is a test of faith and penitence. Turner recalls a tale of a pilgrimage made by the knights who martyred St Thomas Beckett to the Holy Land. They could not get ashore due to strong gales, and so did not complete their penitential pilgrimage, remaining unforgiven for their sins (7). In the twenty-first century, the idea of being tested by pilgrimage is
complex. The physical challenges, without considering any spiritual connotations behind them, differ from those of the medieval pilgrimage. The main difference is the types of roads available, and the restrictions in place. A medieval pilgrim could walk more freely (SC2013.3: 15.41-15.48), whereas a modern walker has restrictions in place on which lands they can pass through. While badges are frequently given out, they are more symbolic than the signes worn by the medieval pilgrim. If a route goes through private land, being labelled as a pilgrim gives no special privilege.

There is not necessarily a drive to recreate a medieval pilgrimage, but there is excitement over being ‘in the footsteps of history’ (SC2013.2: 00.44). This is why despite having modern roads, the pilgrim tries to walk off tarmac as much as possible (SC2013.1: 00.28-00.48), mainly for ease and safety but also for a sense of authenticity. If this is a walk outside the daily routine, walking away from the roads normally travelled adds to its significance. However, the modern pilgrimage also embraces the roads of the modern world: standing on top of a hill, there are clear views of the main roads, but also mounds and stones in the ground indicating the ways people travelled before this convenience (SC2013.3: 08.43). The lost, ancient routes may pose a challenge for finding a clear, direct walking route, but this can be adapted, creating what Sylvia Jenks termed “a living route” (SC2013.3: 11.29). One way may suit one group of pilgrims, another way may appeal to walkers looking for a greater challenge. By looking at the possible roads, as well as the historical evidence, options are available, meaning that challenges can be overcome and the walk is adaptable.
IV.VII Overview
Undertaking a pilgrimage to Whithorn has both its challenges and rewards. The journey varies greatly from the historical pilgrimages made at the height of the cult of Ninian, but nonetheless the pilgrim can incorporate the historical into their journey as he searches for routes close by those traversed by pilgrims and generations before. Despite the challenges, pilgrimage still holds significance in our evolving culture, even if it moves away from being faith-orientated to include a greater range of pilgrims. The revival of pilgrimage to Whithorn since the 1920s, and the recent walk from Paisley to Whithorn, show an interest in a distinctly Scottish pilgrimage. Ninian’s Cave offers the pilgrim a retreat from the modern world, while tracing the tranquillity of the past, and walking in the footsteps of the Celtic saint.
V. Conclusion: A Moment of Peace

Whithorn’s pilgrimage heritage creates a unique story for a town already rich in history. The area is significantly attractive as a pilgrimage centre: from the beginnings of the Ninian legends, to a renewed enthusiasm for pilgrimage in recent times. The experience of the pilgrimage now differs greatly from that of medieval times, but the history of the area at the height of its popularity adds new dimensions to the pilgrim experience. The spittals, monks and relics are lost, but the traditions attached to Whithorn survive. Its popularity with James IV allows the pilgrim to follow in the footsteps of history, not by recreating a medieval pilgrimage but incorporating the history of the area into a modern journey. The medieval pilgrim made the journey to Whithorn in piety and penitence, perhaps seeking a miraculous cure or absolution of sins before death. He was not necessarily restricted in his motivations, but his society and culture differed greatly from today, meaning the modern pilgrim has the potential to mould his pilgrimage into the journey he desires.

The roads leading to Whithorn are not currently equipped to deal with an influx of pilgrims, as they would be at the height of the Ninian cult. The meditative walker is an uncommon sight, and winding country roads create danger for today’s pilgrim which would have been unimaginable in the Middle Ages. This is not a hindrance to the modern pilgrim however, as planning the journey involves incorporating the modern routes available with the lost routes that belong to history. Authenticity in a pilgrim route is in the planner’s mind, but making the way to Whithorn involves creativity: the walkers may take a road less travelled in today’s terms, but it leads them through an area once populated or traversed as archaeological evidence dictates. Old routes may be lost, but they can be reimagined around modern roads and paths. This creates a route that is unique to the pilgrimage, including both history and convenience, meaning a variety of pilgrims of different motivations and abilities may walk it.

The landscape throughout Galloway on the approach to Whithorn is as encrusted in history as the town itself. The abbeys, chapels and wells that would have directed the medieval pilgrim to Whithorn no longer provide the hospitality and opportunities for worship they once did, but hunting them out is rewarding, embellishing the pilgrim experience. Pilgrim spots are off the beaten track: veiled along the coast, encased in
woodland, or hidden in farmland. Travelling to these sites alone is exciting, but also very peaceful. On a pleasant day, walking along secluded pathways searching for caves, chapel ruins and wells is almost surreal, compared to the hustle and bustle of everyday life. This is an attraction of pilgrimage today: the chance to find a moment of peace.

The peace found on a pilgrimage is unique, as it can be found alone or as part of a group. Groups of pilgrims converge at various points on their walk, and so it offers a unique experience to go through a process with not only new people, but people from all different backgrounds. Some may be spiritual or religious, others just keen ramblers looking for a challenge, but they all have a shared goal. The solo pilgrim may begin as an individual, but she can gel with the others walking the route (SC2013.3:03.25). Her previous identity does not matter, as while being a pilgrim she is united with others on the same journey, undergoing the same process. Sylvia Jenks described to me a wonderful moment on the penultimate leg of the Paisley Abbey pilgrimage (18.20-18.55). Normally comfortable chatter filled the air as they rested to eat lunch, but at this moment, after walking together for so long, there was peace and silence over a lunch break. This peace was broken by an announcement that it was raining back in Paisley—everyone cheered! The group had gelled, moving and meditating as one.
Whithorn offers moments of stillness and tranquillity in contrast to a modern world which finds real difficulty in switching off. The ruins of the priory offer the visitor an informative insight into the history of the pilgrimage centre, while their situation in a scenic spot in the Machars allows a moment of peace and escape. St Ninian’s cave, with its tradition of being a retreat for the saint to pray and worship in peace, is attractive to both the religious pilgrimage group and the individual. For a group like those who make the annual pilgrimage to take mass on the beach, it allows them to come together in their worship and to connect to the saint, after making the significant journey to the site. In this respect, it echoes the medieval pilgrimage in both motivation and atmosphere. For the pilgrim, whether she has made the journey alone or as part of a group, the site provides isolation for reflection, as it did for St Ninian whose legend is a timeless draw for the Whithorn pilgrim.
Appendix: Pilgrimage Sites and Landmarks

Kirkmaiden

PSG 1-11

Kirkmaiden Parish Church
- PP 27-33
- OS NX 138 324
- RCAHMS NX13NW 57

Tibberliekite - St Catherine’s Croft
- PP 27-33
- OS NX 131 316
- RCAHMS NX13SW 23

St Buite’s Monastery, Dunman
(Speculative)
- PP 33-34
- OS cNX097 334 (nothing marked)
- No RCAHMS entry

Muntloch Well, Kilbuie Moss
- PP 33-34; LDG 67
- OS cNX111 338 (nothing marked)
- RCAHMS NX13SW 2

St Medana’s Cave and Chapel, Holy Wells
- PP 35-38; NSA Vol 4 208
- OS NX 143 317 (Chapel and Cave); NX 143 315 (Wells)
- RCAHMS NX13SW 10 (Chapel and Cave); NX13 SW 11 (Wells)

Peter’s Paps

Peter’s Paps
- NSA Vol 4 202; LDG 67
- OS NX 074 422
- RCAHMS NX04SE 5

St Bride’s Chapel, Kirkbride

Tibberliekite - St Catherine’s Croft
- PP 56-60
- OS NX 119 404
- RCAHMS NX14SW 2

Killumpha

St Buite’s Monastery, Dunman
(Speculative)
- PP 56-60
- OS NX 112 407
- RCAHMS NX14SW 6

St Ninian’s Chapel, Chipperdingan
- PP 61
- OS cNX 119 419 (nothing marked)

Chapel Rossan

Muntloch Well, Kilbuie Moss
- PP 33-34; LDG 67
- OS cNX111 338 (nothing marked)
- RCAHMS NX13SW 2

St Medana’s Cave and Chapel, Holy Wells
- PP 35-38; NSA Vol 4 208
- OS NX 143 317 (Chapel and Cave); NX 143 315 (Wells)
- RCAHMS NX13SW 10 (Chapel and Cave); NX13 SW 11 (Wells)

Stoneykirk

Stoneykirk
- PSG 12-17
- Kirkmadrine
- PP 18-26
- OS NX 080 483
- RCAHMS NX04NE 1

Stoneykirk Parish Church
- PP 97-99
- OS NX 089 532
- RCAHMS NX05SE 32

St Catherine’s Well and Chapel,
Eldrickhill
- PP 105-107
- OS Well NX 061 544
  (marked - Chapel and Burial Ground not marked)
- RCAHMS NX05SE 1

Chapel of St John, Stranraer
- PP 100-101
- OS (vicinity of the castle)
  NX 060 608
- RCAHMS NX06SE 25

Portpatrick
PSG 18-22
Chapel Patrick
- PP 102-103
- OS NW 999 542
- RCAHMS NW95SE 1

Kirkcolm
PSG 28-34
Kirkcolm Parish Church
- PP 112-116
- OS NX 030 688
- RCAHMS NX06NW 2

Killantringan (and speculative St Ninian’s Chapel)
- PP 104
- OS cNW 981 564
- RCAHMS NW95NE 9

St Columba’s Well
- OS NW 989 725
- RCAHMS NW97SE 2

Portencalzie: Port of the Nuns aka Lady Bay
- OS NX 028 717

Stranraer and Inch
PSG 35-43
Soulseat Abbey
- PP 76-86
- OS NX 100 586
- RCAHMS NX15NW 1

Kilmorie Stones: Ervie-Kirkcolm Parish Church
- PP 123-129; NSA Vol 4 111; LDG 62
- OS NX 0339 658
- RCAHMS NX06NW 7

Stranraer and Inch
PSG 35-43
Inch Parish Church
- PP 92-96
- OS NX 104 608
- RCAHMS NX16SW 39

St Bride’s Well and suspected Chapel, East Kirkbride
- PP 136-138; NSA Vol 4 111
- OS NX 004 707
- RCAHMS NX07SW 6
Old Luce
PSG 44-48

Glenluce Abbey
- PP 142-151
- OS NX 184 586
- RCAHMS NX15NE 7

Lady Well near Sinniness
- OS NX 214 549
- RCAHMS NX25SW 1

Lady Well at Lady Burn
- OS NX 209 579 (near Gallow Hill)
- RCAHMS NX25NW 23

Glenluce Parish Church
- PP 152-153
- OS NX 196 574
- RCAHMS NX15NE 41

St John’s Chapel, Knock of Luce
- PP 154-156
- OS NX 262 557 (nothing marked)
- RCAHMS NX25NE 11

Our Lady’s Chapel, Balcarry
- PP 159-160
- OS NX 199 560 (nothing marked)
- RCAHMS NX15NE 10

St Fillan’s Chapel, Kilfillan
- PP 161
- OS NX 211 545 (nothing marked)
- RCAHMS NX25SW 2

New Luce
PSG 49-51

Kilfedar
- PP 162
- OS NX 153 683
- RCAHMS NX16NE 18

Kilmacadzean
- PP 163
- OS NX 203 675
- RCAHMS NX26NW 86

Caves of Kilhern
- OS NX 198 644
- RCAHMS NX16SE 12

Kilhern Well
- OS NX 200 641
- RCAHMS NX26SW 21

Lady Well
- OS NX 174 643
- RCAHMS NX16SE 1 (see also NX16SE 40)

Kilgallioch Chapel and Burial Ground
- PP 164-169; PSG 52-53
- OS NX 229 723 (nothing marked)
- No RCAHMS record

Wells of the Rees
- PP 164-169
- OS NX 229 723
- RCAHMS NX27SW 2

Laggangairn Standing Stones
- PP 164-169; SA Vol 13 586
- OS NX 222 716
- RCAHMS NX27SW 4
Kirkcowan

PSG 52-53

Chapel, Chapel Hill
- OS NX 303 590
- RCAHMS NX35NW 2

Kirkcowan Parish Church
- OS NX 329 605
- RCAHMS NX35SW 5

Mochrum

PSG 54-56

St Finian’s Chapel and Well
- SA Vol 17 570
- OS NX 278 489
- RCAHMS Well NX24NE 1
  Chapel NX24NE 2

St John’s Well at Chippermore
- OS NX 290 485
- RCAHMS NX24NE 20

Lady Well at Monreith Mains
- OS NX 363 431
- RCAHMS NX34SE 6

Corsemalzie
- OS cNX 347 524
- RCAHMS NX35SW 16

Glasserton

PSG 57-59

Kirkmaiden-in-Fernes
- OS NX 365 399
- RCAHMS NX33NE 1

St Medana’s Well aka Chaincough Well
- OS NX 364 400
- RCAHMS NX34SE 21

St Ninian’s Cave
- SA Vol 17 594; NSA Vol 4 38
- OS NX 422 359
- RCAHMS NX43NW 9

Isle of Whithorn

PSG 85-101

St Ninian’s Chapel
- OS NX 479 362
- RCAHMS NX43NE 6

Sorbie

PSG 85-101

Old Church of Sorbie
- OS NX 438 467 (nothing marked)
- RCAHMS NX44NW 9

Kirkmadrine

- NSA Vol 4 28
- OS NX 475 482
- RCAHMS NX44NE 4

Cruggleton Chapel
- NSA Vol 4 28
- OS NX 477 428
- RCAHMS NX 44SE 9

Penninghame

St Ninian’s Chapel of the Cruives
- NSA Vol 4 176
- OS NX 377 706
- RCAHMS NX37SE 2

Holy Well at St Ninian’s Creek
- OS NX 425 628
- RCAHMS NX46SW 1
Bell Knowe
- OS NX 411 612
- RCAHMS NX46SW 5

Borgue
PSG 127-129
Pre-Reformation Church
- OS NX 628 483
- RCAHMS NX64NW 24

Senwick Kirk
- NSA Vol 4 55
- OS NX 659 488
- RCAHMS NX64NE 16

Kirkandrews
- NSA Vol 4 55
- OS NX 602 481
- RCAHMS NX64NW 4

Twynholm
PSG 130-134

Kirkchrist
- OS NX 675 513
- RCAHMS NX65SE 33

Nunmill
- OS NX 660 488
- RCAHMS NX64NE 39

Kirkcudbright
PSG 135-145
St Cuthbert’s Church
- OS NX 609 511 (nothing marked)
- RCAHMS NX65SE 30

Galtway
- NSA Vol 4 13, 22
- OS NX 703 485
- RCAHMAS NX74NW 8

St Margaret’s Well, Howell
- OS NX 699 437 (Spr)
- RCAHMS NX64SE 14

Tongland
PSG 146-152
Tongland Abbey
- SA Vol 9 331; NSA Vol 4 88
- OS NX 697 539
- RCAHMS NX65SE 12

Kelton
PSG 160-172
Kirkland of Gelston
- OS NX 778 573
- RCAHMS NX75NE 6

St Cormac’s Church
- OS NX 716 574
- RCAHMS NX75NW 11

Kirkmirren and St Mirren’s Well
- SA Vol 8 297
- OS NX 800 550
- RCAHMS NX85NW 4

Old Buittle Kirk
- OS NX807 598
- RCAHMS NX85NW 1

Rumbling Well
- LDG 16
- OS NX 805 615
- RCAHMS NX86SW 3
Slot Well
- LDG 16
- OS NX 813 616
- RCAHMS NX 865SW 2

Rerrick
PSG 173-177
Dundrennan Abbey
- SA Vol 11 59-60; NSA Vol 4 362
- OS NX 749 475
- RCAHMS NX74NW 12

Rerrick Church
- OS NX 760 467
- RCAHMS NX74NE 16

St Glassen’s Well
- OS NX 759 469
- RCAHMS NX74NE 15

Colvend and Southwick
PSG 178-180
St Lawrence Chapel and Well, Fairgirth
- SA Vol 17 110-111
- OS NX 879 565
- RCAHMS NX85NE 2

Southwick Kirk
- OS NX 906 569
- RCAHMS NX95NW 3

Urr
PSG 181-183
St Constantine Church
- OS NX 825 697 (Meikle Kirkland)
- RCAHMS NX86NW 1

New Abbey
PSG 189-193
Sweetheart Abbey
- SA Vol 2 138; NSA Vol4 249
- OS NX 965 662
- RCAHMS NX96NE 9

Abbot’s Tower
- NSA Vol 4 250
- OS NX 972 666
- RCAHMS NX96NE 8

Troqueer
PSG 197-200
St Queran’s Well
- OS NX 955 722
- RCAHMS NX97SE 12

Terregles
PSG 201-208
Lincluden Collegiate Church
- OS NX 966 779
- RCAHMS NX97NE 4
- NSA Vol 4 232

Holywood Abbey
- OS (no confirmed record of site) ‘Kirklands’ NX 954 796
- RCAHMS NX97NE 1

Parton
PSG 214-217
St Inan’s Church
- OS NX 697 698
- RCAHMS NX66NE 2
Cowcloot Hill

- *NSA Vol 4 283-284*
- *OS NX 669 734*
- *RCAHMS NX67SE 5*

OS references can be referenced online and in the Ordnance Survey Explorer Series (see bibliography)

RCAHMS references refer to the Canmore database (http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/advanced/). On ‘Advanced Search’ enter the code in the OS Map Sheet/ Site Number box: e.g. OS 1:10,000 Mapsheet: **NX13SW** Site number **10** (St Medana’s Cave)
Bibliography

I. Books and Articles


_____. *Place-Names in the Rhins of Galloway and Luce Valley*. Stranraer: Stranraer and District Local History Trust, 2002.


“St Ninian Apostle of Galloway: Big Pilgrimage to Whithorn.” *Galloway Gazette*. 23rd
August 1924.
Symson, Andrew. A Large Description of Galloway. Edinburgh, 1684.

II. Maps
_____. 318 Galloway Forest Park North: Glen Trool, Loch Doon & St John’s Town of Dalry. 1:25 000 Southampton: Ordnance Survey.
_____. 319 Galloway Forest Park South: Glen Trool, Clatteringshaws Loch & Newton Stewart. 1:25 000 Southampton: Ordnance Survey.
III. Recordings

IV. Websites
Camino Adventures: http://www.caminoadventures.com/
Confraternity of Saint James: http://www.csj.org.uk/
Paisley Abbey 850th Celebrations: http://www.paisleyabbey.org.uk/events/850-celebrations/
Scotland’s Pilgrim Journeys: http://www.scotlandspilgrimjourneys.com
Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum: http://www.sprf.org.uk
Transport Direct: http://www.transportdirect.info
Traveline Scotland: http://www.travelinescotland.com
Whithorn Trust: http://www.whithorn.com