

Whithorn Peninsula - Cradle of Scottish Christianity

Our first imaginative pilgrimage reflection takes us to the Whithorn Peninsula in southwest Scotland on the Solway Firth. The town is associated with St Ninian (360-432), he has been referred to as the Apostle to the Southern Picts.

Background notes

Southern Picts were descended from the Iron Age people (800 BC to AD400)

For a short history visit the Whithorn Priory and Museum web page below:

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/whithorn-priory-and-museum/history/>

The Orthodox Christianity have produced a web page and an illustrated post on St Ninian and his ministry.

<https://orthochristian.com/73449.html>

There is no vast cathedral towering over the landscape, yet this site was described as 'Scotland's 'cradle of Christianity', founded in AD 397, . . . it was the centre of Christian worship for more than 1,000 years until the Reformation. By the late 1500's the Priory was in ruins. All that is left is the simple roofless stone structure of Whithorn Priory and St. Ninian's Chapel on the Isle of Whithorn.

I have provided two web links where you can get more information on the Priory and St Ninian.



Whithorn Priory ruins

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St. Ninian's Chapel, Isle of Whithorn

Billy McCrorie - Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0

St Ninian's Priory Parish Church of Whithorn

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St Ninian's Priory Parish Church was built in 1822. It is known as Candida Casa, the White House. The name comes from the Latin, Casa, meaning house and Candida meaning shining white. traditionally thought to reflect its stone construction of the original Priory building.



On this pilgrimage we have, as is often the case, met the legends that surrounds these sites, and the people associated with its history. While we may not be able to verify the specifics of these traditions, something spiritual

happened, there was a Christian presence and leadership that was life changing. On the Whithorn Peninsula, a monastery was built, it was a centre of learning and mission that has lasted. Even the Reformation could not wipe its Christian heritage.

Pilgrimages must be more than visits to buildings and ruins, they are an important part of the sites story and of the people who have and continue to worship around the original Priory. At Whithorn there is more than buildings, past and present as we will see later.

When on a pilgrimage we can engage with our heritage, our Christian heritage with a rich and varied story. For a fleeting moment we become part of that story.

Pilgrims should not be tourists seeing how much can be crammed into a day, there needs to be time to take in what you have seen, heard or read. A time to absorb the story and ask what does it say to me today.

Isle of Whithorn Bay

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Let us take time and stroll, so to speak, to St Ninian's Cave at Physgill Glen, Whithorn

St Ninian's Cave

Left - WeeHolly - Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0

Below - **View from cave.** WeeHolly - Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0



I invite you to imagine you are sat in the entrance of St Ninian's cave, according to tradition St Ninian used this cave as a place of retreat, a time to reflect.



During the season of Lent, we remember Jesus' 40 days in the Judean Desert. A desert with its caves could it have been possible that Jesus sought refuge in one of the caves as Elijah had, see . *1Kings 19:9 – 13*. Elijah sat in the cave he did not hear God the great forces of nature, the wind, earthquakes or fire but rather it was a still small voice that Elijah heard God.

Caves have been a place of refuge across the millennia, they have become simple spiritual spaces for a closer relationship with God.

Sit and lookout across the beach and into the distance or at the glorious sunset reading the Psalmist song of praise to God

A Song of Praise to God

Oh, sing to the Lord a new song!
Sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord, bless His name;
Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.
Declare His glory among the nations,
His wonders among all peoples.
For the Lord *is* great and greatly to be praised;
He *is* to be feared above all gods.
For all the gods of the peoples *are* idols,
But the Lord made the heavens.
Honor and majesty *are* before Him;
Strength and beauty *are* in His sanctuary.
Give to the Lord, O families of the peoples,
Give to the Lord glory and strength.
(Psalm 96:1-7 - New King James Version)



Sunset View

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Acknowledgements.

My guide for this series is Britain's Pilgrim Places (2021 by Nick Mayhew-Smith & Guy Hayward) from the British Pilgrimage Trust. Described as a 'treasure trove for the armchair pilgrim' (Phillip Carr-Comm)

The book contains over 600 pilgrim places and 100 routes for pilgrims.

Daily Worship from the Iona Community is available through this link  **YouTube**

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwDTTUfoQ5YQRfA5bUi8ObQ>

While I seek to use only reliable sources when using websites, I cannot guarantee that the content on these websites is or will remain accurate or appropriate. I also have no control over the advertisements that accompany the YouTube links.

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