

The North Wales Pilgrim's Way. Spiritual revival in a marginal landscape.

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Abstract

The 21st century has seen a marked resurgence in the popularity of pilgrimage routes across Europe. The 'Camino' to Santiago de Compostela in Spain and routes in England to Walsingham in Norfolk and Canterbury in Kent are just three well-known examples where numbers of pilgrims have increased dramatically over the last decade. The appeal to those seeking religious as well as non-spiritual self-discovery has perhaps grown as the modern world has become ever more complicated for some. The North Wales Pilgrim's Way is another ancient route that has once again seen a marked increase in participants during recent years. Various bodies have attempted to appropriate this spiritual landscape in order to attract modern pilgrims. Those undertaking the journey continue to leave their own imprints on this marginal place. Year by year they add further layers of meaning to those that have already been laid down over many centuries of pilgrimage.

This short paper is the second in a series of research notes looking specifically at overlapping spiritual and tourist connections in what might be termed 'peripheral landscapes' in remote coastal areas of Britain. In particular I will focus on how sites connected with early Celtic Christianity in Britain have been used over time by varying groups with different agendas. In the first paper in this series, I explored how the cult of St. Cuthbert continues to draw visitors to Lindisfarne or Holy Island in the North East of England.

Pilgrimages, made both in the traditional religious sense as well as those under-

taken in a lighter spiritual context, have become more popular than ever of late and hint at a deeper concern for many ordinary people to once again find personal connections with landscapes that are often 'liminal' or on the edge. In Celtic cultures, among which Wales stands proud and strong in the 21st century these places have often been referred to as 'thin'.

In this second paper concerning these issues I will focus on the pilgrimage route in North Wales that links Holywell in Flintshire with the island of Bardsey within the historic area of Gwynedd. Bardsey Island is known to Welsh speakers as Ynys Enlli. Alexander talks of Celtic Cornwall, but could equally be referring to North Wales when she says 'the route connects a web of shrines, standing stones, chapels, churches and holy wells that all beg for inspection and reflection' (2009). I will explore how in recent years the Pilgrim's Way with its strong connections to the early Celtic Christian church has been re-invented as a landscape of religious/spiritual significance in order to further promote tourism in North Wales. The hope of various organizations is to provide more jobs and as a result create a more vibrant economy in this predominantly rural environment. By promoting the long distance pilgrimage route tourism related groups are taking advantage of the increased interest in pilgrimage as a 21st century leisure activity. An estimated 30,000 pilgrims visit the well at Holywell every year and many walk on towards Ynys Enlli. They include many who are non-religious seekers (Stanford 2010).

This paper will begin by outlining brief reasons for the renewed appeal in such an activity for modern day pilgrims, before explaining in greater detail the route itself and how it is being marketed today. Finally a section of the route walked by the author in the summer of 2013 will be investigated in detail. I will highlight how boundaries between spiritual and environmental tourism concerns overlap as present day landscape use intertwines with the weighty historical past of this

'thin' landscape.

As noted in an article in the British newspaper 'The Guardian' by acclaimed writer Robert Macfarlane 'a revival is under way worldwide with pilgrim numbers rising even as church going figures fall.' The writer quotes, Dr. Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury who has spoken often in recent times of the phenomenon of 'new pilgrims', people searching for 'self-discovery' by setting out on all sorts of pilgrimages. Macfarlane sees pilgrimage as an 'arduous passage through the outer landscape prompting subtle exploration of the inner' (2012). This seems to be the motivation for many who undertake the 'North Wales Pilgrim's Way' or 'Taith Pererin Gogledd Cymru' as it is known in the Welsh language. The route covers about 150 miles and should take about 10 or 11 days to complete if walked at a pace that allows for reflection at the various sites of religious interest along the way. Tourism Partnership North Wales, which is one of a number of local organizations backing the route, is keen to push walking holidays as a key part of their strategy to entice more visitors to this part of Wales. They aim, according to Dewi Davies, their Regional Strategy Director to promote the walk as a core part of the North Wales experience, an experience they hope will be 'enriching or inspirational' (North Wales Pilgrim's Way).

The pilgrimage route starts at Basingwerk Abbey near Holywell in Flintshire and finishes on Ynys Enlli located off the southern tip of the Llyn Peninsula. It takes in a number of key sites connected with the growth of Celtic Christianity in the region during the 6th century and also passes through some spectacular scenery on route. In 2013, the Pilgrim's Way as a concept is still being further re-developed. 2013, launched as 'The Year of Pilgrimage' is helping this development with various events scheduled in the Diocese of St. Asaph in particular, including a six-week study course with the theme of pilgrimage. There is a strong local group of people that wishes to enhance the experience for those who follow the

pilgrimage path. Hostel sites on route are being expanded, sites for pilgrim accommodation are being considered on farming land along the way and key paths are being upgraded. New technology is also being introduced to allow smart app's to a mobile, pilgrimage 21st century style, that will provide detailed maps of the route.

The route itself has been divided neatly into 25 sections, some measuring as little as 5 kilometres in length, others stretching for as much as 15 kilometres. While the distances are not huge, the terrain varies greatly and hillwalking sections over rough ground mean that on some days pilgrims may find that what initially looked simple on a map, is in fact quite a challenge, especially when the fickle Welsh weather is factored into the equation. On most of the sections there are stop off points marked that hark back to the earliest days of this pilgrimage route and have strong connections with the inception of Celtic Christianity in these parts. Good examples of this include the Holy Well of St. Winefride (at Holywell), the Cathedrals at Bangor and at St. Asaph as well as the church of St. Beuno at Clynnog Fawr. St. Beuno lived in the 6th or 7th century and founded a 'clas', a Welsh religious site somewhere between a monastery and a college at Clynnog Fawr, a site which lies close to the edge of the Snowdonia National Park today. His remains were buried in a tomb here and later moved to the present church, and as such Clynnog Fawr soon became a very important stopping off point for pilgrims on their way to Ynys Enlli. This seemed like a good starting point to undertake a part of the Pilgrim's Way in order to see and understand how the ancient route is being marketed today, and also to judge how far the modern pilgrim can make a connection with the spiritual landscape of past pilgrimages.

In the next section of the paper I will look in detail at sections 21-25 of the Taith Pererin, the final 5 sections along the route for those walking it, before they take a boat over the Sound to the island of Ynys Enlli where a true pilgrimage is com-

pleted. I hope to convey a sense of the route as a place where spiritual and tourist landscapes intertwine today, making sense of Macfarlane's view that 'we are almost all pilgrims' (2012). I also intend to show that to walk these paths is different from mere tourism as 'holy places by tradition carry with them the potential for stepping out of time and even out of character. They stand apart sometimes geographically, always in their slightly other-worldly feel' (Stanford 2010).

The North Wales Pilgrim's Way

Clynnog Fawr to Aberdaron (Sections 21-25)

Section 21 Clynnog Fawr to Trefor 6kms

Section 22 Trefor to Nefyn 9.6kms

Section 23 Nefyn to Towyn (Tudweiliog) 11kms

Section 24 Towyn (Tudweiliog) to Porth Oer 13kms

Section 25 Porth Oer to Aberdaron via Mynydd Mawr 8.4kms

The church at Clynnog Fawr with its notable ancient woodwork, particularly its medieval misericords makes a strong impression as starting point for section 21 of the Pilgrim's Way. Even those whose stated intent on walking the path is not particularly spiritual cannot fail to glean a sense of the religious atmosphere associated with this place. This awareness of the spirituality of the site would certainly have spurred on medieval pilgrims in their attempts to reach Ynys Enlli over numerous centuries. Beuno's 'clas' would have drawn religious scholars and monks from early in the 7th century and the place seems to have continued in its ability to draw people towards it even though the 'clas' is long gone and the numbers of its congregation dwindle in line with many of the rural Welsh churches in the 21st century. As one of the most important early Celtic Christian sites along the route, it helped the Pilgrim's Way gain such renown in the medieval period that it was

said three pilgrimages to Ynys Enlli were equal to one pilgrimage to Rome.

Pilgrims would have sought out connections with St. Beuno's life, such as Ffynnon Beuno or Beuno's Well. This well apparently had great healing powers, very much like the one in Holywell at the start of the pilgrimage route where miracles were said to have taken place. Today the well is quiet and the old road on from Clynnog Fawr is now a cycleway. This shows how part of the landscape has been used in recent times to implement a key strategic push to attract those interested in outdoor pursuits. In 2009 a by-pass of the village was completed and it is now easy for tourists on the main A499 route south to miss the village in an instant, but by promoting the Pilgrim's Way and nearby cycleway, it seems there is a conscious shift back to travel at a slower pace.



(Medieval misericords at St. Beuno's Church, Clynnog Fawr. Photograph by author)

The landscape here seems made for those who are willing to pass through it at a gentle pace. There are no great distances, but in a car little can be appreciated. There is a fundamental need in this landscape, it seems to me, to go on foot. Macfarlane (2012) astutely refers to this essential point behind the worth of pilgrim-

age when quoting from Belloc's 1904 essay 'The Idea of Pilgrimage'. In it Belloc wrote

'The volume and depth and intensity of the world is something that only those on foot will ever experience'

and at Clynnog Fawr this makes perfect sense. If the pilgrim walks on within the space of a few kilometers there are wading birds to watch, seals basking in the bay to appreciate and Neolithic burial chambers like Dolmen Bachwen to marvel at. The landscape is layered with natural, historical, spiritual and cultural meaning.

The Pilgrim's Way passes on through the tiny village of Trefor and from there the walker climbs a steep path onto the grey granite hillsides of Yr Eifl ('The Forks' in English). This part of the route is a quintessentially Welsh landscape. On the path up to the summit of the small mountain sheep are dotted around. Higher up is Tre'r Ceiri, an Iron Age hillfort on the scree-strewn summit. It dates from the Romano-British period and would have housed up to 400 souls at a time not long before the first pilgrims were making their arduous way over these hills.



(Looking back to the village of Trefor from the Pilgrim's Way up Yr Eifl. Photograph by author)

The path crosses the edge of a disused quarry and descends to Nant Gwrtheyrn (Vortigern's Valley). This is the site of a former quarry village. Quarrying began at Nant Gwrtheyrn in earnest in 1861 to supply paving slabs for the rapidly expanding cities of Liverpool and Manchester. This was Victorian economic boom time and its effects trickled down even as far as these remote Welsh coastal areas. Within two decades two rows of cottages had been erected for the workers and their families. By 1886 the population of the village stood at 200, and yet it was not to last. Barely half a century later the last of the quarrying was finished and by 1959 the village was deserted. The landscape on the old Pilgrim's Way was as silent again as it had been pre-nineteenth century. However, although the cottages remained derelict until the late 1970s, they were eventually renovated as the site of a new National Language Centre. Today, after a 5 million pound upgrade between 2007 and 2011, the language centre is going from strength to strength. More and more interest in the Welsh language means courses at the centre are often over-subscribed and so granite cottages which once contained the Welsh voices of the quarrymen and their families now echo to the sound of Welsh again, used as classrooms and accommodation for further generations of Welsh speakers. The landscape of Nant Gwrtheyrn is inscribed over again and again acting as a palimpsest. 'The past embedded in the very rocks and soil of this place' (Schiller 2010:65) is what makes this landscape so fascinating for the modern pilgrim perhaps.

Schiller notes (2010:105) how the tradition of pilgrims and peregrinati ('those who wander') placed a great 'emphasis on marginality'. The tradition of the hermit in the early Christian church, (which I will explore in more detail in a later paper) tracing its roots back to the Egyptian and Syrian deserts, was to live simply on the margins. Pilgrims coming to find spirituality in these places whether deserts in the traditional sense, or as in Wales, places of rock and wind, would have followed set routes passing by key sites of religious significance. This was

and is still today the 'thin' landscape of Celtic Wales, its own kind of desert where the devout would feel closer to God. One such key site in this landscape on the pilgrim's journey to Ynys Enlli would have been at the tiny hamlet of Pistyll.

Here the site has long been connected with St. Beuno, who it seems had found a place of solitude, ideal for prayer below Yr Eifl's granite summit in a narrow valley close to the ocean. A church was subsequently built and used by generations of pilgrims as a stopping off point on the way to Ynys Enlli. The present building dates in part to the 12th century, but there is no doubt an earlier structure also stood on this site. As Schiller (2010:105) makes clear, 'the footsteps of these early saints and hermits have left an imprint on the land'. This is the case with Beuno. The church built in his honour was used as a rest stop during much of the medieval period. There was an adjacent hospice where they could find food and shelter. It is important to remember that while many modern pilgrims may be in rude health and enjoying an invigorating vacation while walking the Pilgrim's Way, in medieval times many were old, infirm or even dying, so a hospice was vital for them to enable them to recoup energy for the trials that still lay ahead of them. The landscape today still retains much of this medieval feel about it. The small simple church is often strewn with rushes on the floor and bedecked with sweet smelling herbs gathered from local hedgerows. In medieval times these herbs were used to ward off disease and the church retains a small 'Leper's window' from a time when those pilgrims unfortunate enough to have contracted the disease were allowed to listen from outside to the sermons without coming into contact with other worshippers inside. This continued use of rushes and herbs in the church leaves an imprint on the landscape that re-affirms to the modern pilgrim visiting in the 21st century how 'time and the passing of time have such a hold on us' (Schiller 2010:81).

At Pistyll the feeling of leaving a modern footprint to blend with many ancient

ones among the rushes is very strong. This concept, it seems to me, underlies the recent increased interest in pilgrimage in the 21st century. The renewed interest 'in the places in which we have our roots... in a way which lays claim to the past as part of the present, permeating the boundaries of time and space and our understanding of our history and ourselves' (Schiller 2010:105) is key to the modern pilgrim. At places like Pistyll this is clearly evident through the continued importance the site holds for visitors, attested to in this 'internet age' by the current number of blogs and websites dedicated to this tiny church.



(St. Beuno's Church, Pistyll, next to the site of a hospice in medieval times for pilgrims. Photograph by author)

In this section of the Pilgrim's Way the influence of St. Beuno both at Clynnog Fawr and at Pistyll in particular is evident. The regard with which the early Celtic Christian figure is still held in rural Wales is also echoed in the poetry of R.S. Thomas, a long time inhabitant of the Llyn peninsula through which these last sections of the Pilgrim's Way meander. He lived for many years in Aberdaron and Rhiw at the end of the peninsula, and his verse is heavy with the sense of place

and particularly the sense of the past which seeps through into the rural Welsh psyche even today. In his poem 'Border Blues' (1993:69) he hints at the image of pilgrimage as he writes

'I was going up the road and Beuno beside me
Talking in Latin and old Welsh'.

From Pistyll the next section of the Pilgrim's Way leads down to the small holiday resorts of Nefyn and Morpha Nefyn. It is these kinds of small towns with their transient summer tourist trade that many in organizations such as local tourist boards and the ancient monuments organization CADW are trying to help develop in terms of the amenities they can provide for those undertaking the pilgrimage route. Dewi Davies further explains the great benefits would be participants can expect when walking the Pilgrim's Way.

'Not all the walkers we get now are pilgrims, but people who are not religious will be enriched by our heritage and culture, and often go back with a concept of spiritual life. If the route to salvation does not appeal to today's walkers, the trail still offers excellent walking and breathtaking views. The North Wales Pilgrim's Way will certainly be inspirational and is another great reason to visit the region' (North Wales Pilgrim's Way).

On a beautiful summer's day walking the path along the cliff top down towards Nefyn it is easy to see how more beach tourists might be persuaded with the right advertising to leave the seaside for a while and get up on the coastal path to walk parts of the Pilgrim's Way.



(Pilgrim's Way with new gates in place near Porth Oer. Photograph by author)

As more basic infrastructure in terms of signposts, benches for resting, and gates and stiles to cross rough farmland are put into place, the numbers of those attracted to take up this section of the coastal path which leads on to Ynys Enlli will surely increase.

In the last couple of years a great deal of work has been put into upgrading the path itself. Added to this, there are plans to set up 'pilgrim pods' for overnight stays for walkers and the possible conversion of old school buildings into a hostel for pilgrims to use. All these things show that much is being done to help those coming on pilgrimage get the best experience possible. How far this takes the pilgrimage away from its early roots remains to be seen. Yet in many ways the whole idea of pilgrimage remains intensely personal and as such should remain open to as many interpretations as possible.

The final 20kms or thereabouts of the route as far as the small port of Aberdaron at the end of the peninsula includes some of the most appealing scenery for those who walk the route on a fine day. The path hugs the cliff tops for much of the way and helps the modern day walker comprehend the level of spiritual awe

that must have underpinned the experience for a medieval pilgrim. This part of the Llyn is sparsely populated. Hamlets are few and far between, and in medieval times would have been more so. The sense of isolation and of wandering into a marginal landscape must have been great, particularly in inclement weather with the waves pounding the rocks only yards below. But this thought which comes to me as I walk this part of the path on a glorious day of sunshine in August, is also perhaps misleading. As Schiller points out (2010:71), although today the Llyn seems 'off the beaten track' and remote, in earlier times this was an area where landowners were in fact 'on the direct route between the coastal districts of mid Wales and the shipping channels of the Irish sea'. Again, landscape changes over time. What once was desert is now civilization, and equally what once was an important area within the early Celtic Christian world has now become set more firmly in the margins, a point R.S. Thomas hints at in his poem 'Abersoch' (1993:106) when he writes

'There was that headland, asleep on the sea.'

Setting out on the last few miles of the Pilgrim's Way at the end of the Llyn Peninsula, the sense of treading ancient paths in this marginal landscape becomes ever stronger. Dotted here and there close to the Pilgrim's Way are numerous Neolithic burial chambers like the one found earlier along the route at Clynnog Fawr. There are also hut circles, stone ruins which speak of settlers who arrived long before even the earliest of pilgrims following the Christian tradition had ever left an imprint on the landscape. Perhaps even for these groups of people the Llyn was a spiritual place on the edge of things. Perhaps it attracted people on journeys of self-discovery long before Cadfan, Beuno, and Hywyn brought their version of religious belief to these parts. The deep sense of the past that scars the landscape both physically and metaphorically is something that many who have

passed this way have recognised. The poet R. S. Thomas was very aware of it and this is summed up magnificently in his poem 'Welsh Landscape' (1993:37) when he writes that

'To live in Wales is to be conscious,
At dusk of the spilled blood
That went into the making of the wild sky.'

In words that echo the spiritual call of these ancient ruins that cover the landscape today he also tells of how

'There is no present in Wales
And no future. There is only the past
Brittle with relics.'

And yet ironically perhaps it is this sense of the past and its relics which is the key to promoting the Pilgrim's Way for both a securer economical and spiritual future. This need in modern day pilgrims is part of a 'broader desire to reconnect with landscape and nature, provoked by the increasing dematerialisation and disembodiment of virtualised existence' (Macfarlane 2012).

By journeying further along the path, the modern pilgrim passes close to the hamlet of Anelog where in former times there was a small monastery. We know for certain that as far back as the early post Romano-British era there were Christian connections to this area thanks to the discovery in the eighteenth century of two stones inscribed with Latin inscriptions. They stand now, silent witnesses, in a corner of the church at Aberdaron, powerful reminders of the deep spiritual past of this area. These stones in memory of Veracius and Senacus, probably

monks in the community at Anelog leave a rare mark recording the early Christian links to this landscape. Their imprint, physically on granite and spiritually through the imaginations of those who visit the church to see them, is self-evident.

From Anelog the modern walker on the Pilgrim's Way can take a shorter direct route into Aberdaron itself, or wind up over Mynydd Mawr, the last climb on the peninsula, and take a longer path along the coast. This gives the modern pilgrim an idea of the awe early medieval travellers on the path would have felt with their first glimpse of the fabled Ynys Enlli just off the coast. Some pilgrims would have first rested at Aberdaron. Many having taken the North Wales pilgrimage as far as possible by land would have gone to the church of St. Hywyn in order to pray for safe passage across the treacherous sound to Ynys Enlli. The setting of the church on the beach at Aberdaron only yards from the sea would surely have made these prayers even more heartfelt.



(First sight of Ynys Enlli from Mynydd Mawr. Photograph by author)

Aberdaron itself has a long history of associations with the pilgrimage route. By the 12th century there was a 'clas' or monastery cum college well established

here and the nearby hamlet of Cwrt (or 'court' in English) was in fact a cluster of buildings that would have acted as an administrative centre for Enlli and Aberdaron. As Schiller points out, the area around Aberdaron at the margins lent itself perfectly to the ideal for early monks as a location where they could be closer to God. 'It was rugged and inhospitable, difficult to cultivate, exposed to the extremes of elemental storms: a veritable desert in the monastic tradition on which their lives were formed.' (2010:186) It was, in short, the 'thin' place they had long sought.

Perhaps it was this extreme wild quality of the landscape that drew R. S. Thomas to Aberdaron. He was vicar of St. Hywyn's from 1967-1978 and lived close by in Rhiw overlooking the splendidly named beach of 'Hell's Mouth' after his retirement. There has been a church on the present site for the best part of 1400 years. Hywyn was a contemporary of Prince Cadfan who having arrived from Brittany, set up the first monastery on Ynys Enlli. The present style of the church at Aberdaron, modelled simply on a long barn of the local farming community was first built in stone around 1100 and would have pleased Thomas who forged close links with local Welsh speaking farmers in his time in the area. The style of the building fits the landscape. Ruggedness, simplicity and dependability are what come across.



(St. Hywyn's Church, Aberdaron. Photograph by author)

By 1500 it had been expanded to its present size in order to cope with the growing number of pilgrims hoping to rest and pray there before taking the small boats out across the unpredictable currents of the Sound. Close by the sea, the churchyard has already lost one third of its area to encroachment by the waves. In 2012 large-scale work was carried out to further protect the walls and the removal of old whitewash revealed the splendour of the ancient stones beneath. The church remains in constant threat from the elements, but this itself perhaps adds to sense of spirituality in a marginal place which still clearly permeates the site today.



(St. Hywyn's Church and its proximity to the sea. Photograph by author)

Its position close to the sea also underlines its relationship with the isle of Enlli. Schiller suggests that the sea both 'welcomes' and 'warns' the pilgrim. This warning of the dangers still lying ahead for those wishing to embark on the final leg of their journey are perhaps best summed up in Thomas's lines from his poem 'Pilgrimage' (1993:364).

There is an island there is no going to,
But in a small boat the way the saints went,

Travelling the gallery of frightened faces

Of the long drowned, munching the gravel of its beaches.'

The fickleness of the tides and the unpredictable nature of the Sound that separates Ynys Enlli from the mainland have not changed to this day. The modern pilgrim may have walked the 150 miles from Holywell in Flintshire, but he or she may find the last leg the most troublesome. Even today with modern boats and the latest technology to predict the weather, one in three scheduled trips have to be cancelled due to poor weather or tidal difficulties. On the day I intended to cross, the sun shone and the island seemed to beckon from Mynydd Mawr, but winds gathered and the local boatman whose knowledge of the waters is traced back through his lineage decided there was little chance of returning the same day, and so the trip was cancelled. As a pilgrim, the virtue of patience is still necessary it seems.

So it is perhaps fitting that this short paper on aspects of the Pilgrim's Way in North Wales ends without mentioning in detail the landscape on the isle of Enlli itself. A study of the island and the overlapping imprints made upon it will have to wait. Schiller saw the island as 'the fulcrum of this place and space' (2010:135), and as a modern day hermit who lived 25 years in sight of the island from a small cabin under Mynydd Mawr, she more than most can surely appreciate the intense spirituality of the place in the Celtic 'desert' that over the centuries so many have tried to reach.

In a future paper I will address the way the island continues to embody this spiritual aspect of the landscape while making concessions to the modern world and the tourists that it attracts. The Pilgrim's Way too, I would suggest, has found a way to overcome the possible pitfalls of becoming just another 'tourist attraction' in the 21st century. Care seems to be being taken to find a balance between

marketing the Pilgrim's Way so that numbers using it increase, while protecting its religious sites so that a continuation of the spiritual aspect of the pilgrimage remains clear. Today the modern pilgrim is still afforded an immersion into a spiritual landscape, parts of which the early Celtic Christian monks and pilgrims would still recognise. In his poem 'Welsh History' (1993:36) Thomas acknowledges the ability of this most Welsh of landscapes and the people who inhabit it to overcome when he states

'We will arise and greet each other in a new dawn.'

It certainly seems that the new dawn of the North Wales Pilgrim's Way will be a bright one if those controlling it continue to understand how to juggle the demands of visitors seeking healthy 21st century walking holidays along with others undertaking a more traditional journey of self-discovery along the thin country to Ynys Enlli.

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論文要旨

北ウェールズの巡礼者の道 ある辺境風景の中の霊的復活

ダニエルズ・アンドリュー

Abstract

ヨーロッパ中に渡る巡礼の旅は、21世紀に著しく人気が復活している。有名な例をほんの三例挙げるならば、スペインの聖地サンティアゴへの巡礼路、イングランドのノーフォーク州ウォルジンガムやケント州カンタベリーへの巡礼路が、過去10年で巡礼者の数が劇的に増加している。現代の世界がより複雑になっているために、宗教的な自己発見と宗教的でない自己発見を求める者の両方にとって、巡礼の旅が魅力を増しているのだろう。ウェールズ北部の巡礼路も、近年、巡礼者が著しく増加している古代の巡礼路のもう一つの例である。さまざまな団体が、現代の巡礼者を魅了しようと、この神聖な景色を自分のものにしようとしてきた。巡礼の旅に出る者は、この辺境の地に、自分自身の足跡を残し続ける。年々、何百年にも渡って巡礼の旅に積み重ねられた意味に加えて、更なる意味が付け加えられている。