



## Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum

### Scottish Pilgrimage Gathering 2018 - Summary Report

A total of 34 delegates representing Full and Associate members of the Forum, invited speakers and guests met at North Berwick, East Lothian on 5<sup>th</sup> October for a busy and informative Gathering blessed by a perfect day of autumn sunshine. See full list of attendees and apologies below.

Most of us took part in the 4 mile morning walk along the most northerly section of the Forth to Farne Way pilgrim route starting at the historic St Mary's Church, Whitekirk. We enjoyed fine views across open farmland via the 'Becky's Strip' footpath and into North Berwick along the beach, stopping to see the surviving mediaeval porch from the original mediaeval St Andrew Blackadder church by the old harbour. We are greatly indebted to **Jimmy McGuinness**, chair of the Forth to Farne Way Steering Group for leading the walk and sharing much of the local history connected with the area.

An excellent soup and sandwich lunch was provided by the local Beacon Café team at St Andrew Blackadder Church, where we then held our main meeting. The SPRF Chairman, **Dr Sheilagh Kesting** warmly welcomed everyone to the afternoon session and introduced the speakers.

**Kathy Fairweather**, a volunteer with the **North Berwick Museum Trust** set the scene admirably with her talk on 'Why North Berwick?' and explained how the town first evolved as a strategic crossing point for mediaeval pilgrims destined for St Andrews via the free ferry established by the Earl of Fife in 1175. North Berwick never had its own patron saint, but all of its churches were dedicated to St Andrew and a well is dedicated to him in the town. The nearby shrine of St Baldred at Whitekirk also attracted a strong pilgrimage following and the Cistercian nunnery at North Berwick provided food and shelter to pilgrims until the Reformation. Not until the coming of the railway and golf in the mid C19th did the town find a new role. **To access the notes for this presentation, go to the Events page on [www.sprf.org.uk](http://www.sprf.org.uk)**

**Graham Johnstone**, chair of the **Elie & Earlsferry History Society** continued the story of the pilgrim journey across the Firth of Forth with a presentation on 'The Sea Route to St Andrews – 21<sup>st</sup> Century Style'. For centuries the quickest route to St Andrews from the south was via Earlsferry, with a nunnery similarly endowed by the Earls of Fife for pilgrims crossing the East Neuk. Much more recently, the coming of seaside tourism to Earlsferry has mirrored that of North Berwick. Over the past 2 years, the EEHS has developed a modern interpretation of this story by creating a new smartphone app and local story boards at Chapel Green on the western edge of the town, helped by an HLF grant and technical support from the Smart History team at St Andrews. **To access this presentation, go to the Dropbox link at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/rfqfdk2pkrr0lgm/AAD4Zabn0xWwubLisAsnaX33a?dl=0>**

**Rev Ray Simpson**, founder Guardian of the **International Community of Aidan and Hilda**, then shifted our focus onto wider issues of contemporary pilgrimage and Christian spirituality with a wide-ranging talk on 'Forth to Farne – Spiritual Resources for the Way' from the perspective of the Community which he established on Lindisfarne 24 years ago. Warning us of the threat of nationalism taking over its contemporary meaning, true pilgrimage is about 'letting go' of everyday concerns in one's life when setting out on the journey, unloading one's personal baggage and travelling light in a spirit of

'provisionality'. By appreciating the natural outdoor elements all around us, being alive to the wonders of Creation, and giving and sharing of hospitality with all one meets, we are reminded of the meaning of 'God' as the 'Lord of the Elements' in Hebridean Gaelic to reconnect us with our natural origins. We should celebrate this by using the outdoors to celebrate our faith - walking in the steps of the saints – and each pilgrim route should have its own version of the Benedicite psalm, and the CofE church in Berwick on Tweed provides an information hub and prayer stations to provide spiritual sustenance to visiting pilgrims. Ray ended his talk by asking us to respect the legacy of the Lindisfarne Gospels as a remarkable fusion of Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, Byzantine and Roman cultural influences. **To access the slides for this presentation, go to the Events page on [www.sprf.org.uk](http://www.sprf.org.uk)**

**David Bethune**, programme co-ordinator with **Eco-Congregation Scotland**, concluded the invited talks with an overview of 'Eco-congregations as pilgrims for eco-justice', telling us about the work of ECS and its values. There are currently 432 registered ECs in churches across Scotland, five along the route of the Forth to Farne Way; all are encouraged to use worship and prayer to celebrate our care for Creation, to make a commitment to put that care into action, and to campaign on the urgent environmental issues facing our planet today. David's message is that we are all pilgrims walking to a better world, with different churches making different journeys. A recent joint statement from the churches in Norway that "Material wealth and increasing consumption are NOT the answer to human need" shows that we face a spiritual battle in modern society if we are to lower our carbon footprint. We want our Pilgrim Ways to still be here 100 years from now, so our churches need to think, act and pray how to do this and there are several practical ways to do so – organizing local pilgrimage walks, welcoming and providing hospitality for pilgrims, opening churches more often, and helping to maintain local pilgrim routes on the ground. **To access this presentation, go to the Events page of [www.sprf.org.uk](http://www.sprf.org.uk)**

After a short break, the afternoon closed with the **2018 SPRF Annual General Meeting**, which is recorded separately. Warm thanks were expressed by the Chair to all who had made the day such a success, and tea and cakes were enjoyed in the Church Hall prior to departure.

**Nick Cooke**  
**Secretary**

**October 2018**

**Attendance:**

**SPRF Patron:** Lord Wilson of Tillyorn KT GCMG

**Full Members:**

ACTS - Scottish Churches Rural Group (Rev Prof David Atkinson)

CLEAR Services (Nick Cooke; Anne Cooke)

Elie & Earlsferry History Society (Graham Johnston)

Glencruiten Cathedral of Trees (Rev Nicola Moll)

Holy Socks (Margaret Wylie)

Luss Parish Church (Rev Louis Bezuidenhout)

Sannox Christian Centre (John Jackson)

St Mirin's Pilgrims (Martin Bonnar; Frank Doherty)

Walking Support (John Henderson)

**Associate Members:**

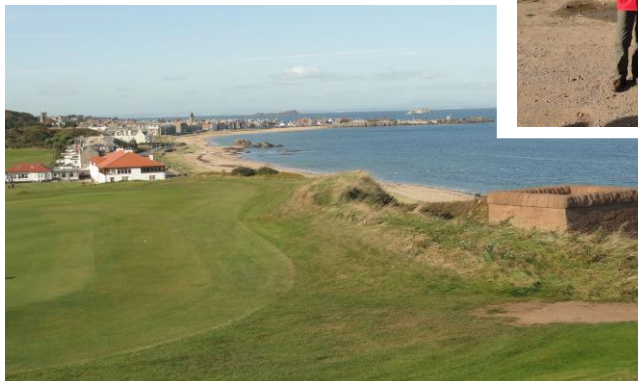
Prof Ian Bradley  
Neil Gaunt  
Margaret Hadley  
Dr Sheilagh Kesting  
David Macdonald  
Jimmy McGuinness  
Duncan MacIntyre  
Sr Margaret Ann Minards  
David Pott  
Rena & Eric Simpson  
Ken Spittal

**Visitors:**

British Pilgrimage Trust (Guy Hayward)  
Community of Aidan and Hilda (Rev Ray Simpson)  
Eco-Congregation Scotland (David Bethune; Rev David Coleman)  
North Berwick Museum (Kathy Fairweather; Cherry McIntyre)  
University of Glasgow (Dr Simon Taylor; Dr Eila Williamson)  
Lucy Bradley

**Apologies:**

Jill Baker; Dr Marion Bowman; Caithness Book Club (Jane Coll); CofS Church in Society Council (Marjorie Paton); Comrie Croft (Andrew Donaldson); Craig Lodge House of Prayer (Callum Macfarlane Barrow); Discover Dunfermline Tours (Jack Pryde); Dunfermline Heritage Community Projects (Clive and Yvonne Willcocks); Fife Coast & Countryside Trust (Ed Heather Hayes); Ruth Forsythe; Forth Pilgrim (Roger Pickering); Geoff Hardman Carter; Helen & Robbie Kerr; Sarah Kettles; Callum MacKellar; Ken McTaggart; Scotland's Churches Trust (John Graham); Way of St Andrews (Hugh Lockhart); YWAM (Arno Bremer).



**A brief glimpse of this year's Gathering – come and join us in 2019!**