



A pilgrim nears the Brough

I am a pilgrim, making my way from Evie to the monastery on the Brough of Birsay, following the route taken by those who bore the body of St Magnus to his first resting place.

I love to walk the pilgrim way. You do have time to reflect on the life of the saint. You meet so many interesting people, learn something of their stories and can share your own. It helps so much that we begin on common ground, treading the same path. We have come out to enjoy the beauty of the world which masks the Maker yet allows us tantalising glimpses of his glory.

We had a drink to quench our thirst at Swannay loch, knowing we had some way to go before we topped the hill and saw at last the monastery astride the Brough, the sea glittering around its shoulders.

My story is that I have had a stroke and, as you see, my hand is withered. I can do little to support myself. Some time ago I went to see the monks to ask for healing. They know that Jesus healed so many people. They have the skills. They have a wealth of knowledge of the herbs. But this too they know. It is not they who heal but God who is responsive to their prayers. I was not healed but did begin to live again and do whate'r I can to serve the needs of others. Look! There in the fields the monks are toiling with the farmers. They share the yield and use their share to meet their needs and offer pilgrims hospitality. They have their sheep upon the Brough and fish the seas. They lead a simple life, their common task with their community to clothe the world with Christ.

Life is not always easy for the monks. Some pilgrims are perverse. But in their rule, there is some wise advice for monks: "If any pilgrim prove himself perverse, let two strong monks in the name of God explain the matter to him," (All options are left open!)

Enjoy your pilgrimage.

Benedict