

# Change



The third stage continues to follow the Mans Stanes traditions, leaving Dounby via North Bigging to Harray Loch, past St Michael's Kirk on to Winksetter and the Loch of Wasdale, leading finally through Binscarth Wood to Finstown. The theme for this stage is Change – reflecting on the changing landscape and ways of life over the centuries as well as our own often conflicting attitudes to change as something both welcomed and feared.

Were Magnus to be walking with us – and who can say for sure he isn't? – there would be some features in the landscape that are unchanged since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. But much has also changed – improvements to drainage gave a new road through the marshland in Harray and farm land has extended in every direction, with wire fencing a relatively recent phenomenon. Farming is both more efficient and more lonely than it used to be – highlighting that change is rarely wholly good or wholly bad.

One of the secrets of music is its ability to combine repetition and change. Our brains delight in the sequences and patterns that both conform to, and subvert, our expectations. Sometimes musical preferences come down to how much familiarity we like in a musical piece – what sounds boring and predictable to some is rich and welcoming to others.

In many ways our lives are no different. Each of us needs some baseline of predictability, some patterns that repeat in our days and weeks. Yet we also need change to bring life to these patterns.

Pilgrimage lifts us out of the normal routine of our lives and imposes a new familiarity upon us. Our feet and legs may complain at first but then settle into the repetition of steps that lead us on. By the end of the day they may be complaining loudly and yet, rested and nourished, they are ready again in the morning.

As we approach the half way point in our pilgrimage notice what your body is telling you. Which bits feel alive and invigorated? Which are complaining or grumbling?

Also notice what the landscape is saying. How familiar is it to you? What is new and recently discovered? What is well known that you are seeing as if for the first time?

Allow the patterns of repetition and change to speak to you. Sometimes a small change can breath new life into old routines. Try it! It may not be as hard or as terrible as you fear. It may, in fact, lead to new songs that are rooted in tradition but also reach forward into the unknown, the future none of us has yet seen.

## Questions for the journey

- What changes have been forced upon you? How did you feel and how did you respond?
- In a previous change you chose to make, what helped it to happen and why did it work?
- What are you finding helpful in pilgrimage that can be folded back into everyday life?
- What changes would you like to see and what might help bring them about?

Our next theme is a very special force for change – forgiveness.