

# Growth



The second stage, from Birsay to Dounby, follows the journey of Magnus's bones. Some twenty years after his death, his bones were moved to St Olaf's Kirk in Kirkwall, awaiting the completion of the cathedral that bears his name. Our theme for this stage of the journey is Growth – reflecting on the growth of the cult of Magnus in the years following his death and in the shifting base of power from West to East in Orkney, as well as in our own stories of growth.

Stories of healings associated with the grave of Magnus began to spread and people made their way from near and far to visit Birsay and the martyred Earl. Unlike some medieval pilgrimage sites, this did not concern a famous link to the first disciples nor was it encouraged by the church hierarchy. Indeed the Bishop, William of Old, is recorded in the Orkneyinga Saga as only having a change of heart about the growing calls for sainthood when he himself was struck blind and then healed when he prayed at the grave of Magnus. At this time, Bishops could sanctify an eligible individual without recourse to Rome and the shrine of St Magnus grew in popularity, even as Birsay's time as capital of Orkney was drawing to a close. Gunni, a Westray man, had a dream that Magnus asked to be moved to Kirkwall. It was therefore with some pomp and ceremony that his bones were removed from Christ Kirk and taken to Kirkwall, where the Bishop's seat was to be based.

The example of Magnus, his psalm singing in battle and his submission to death for the sake of peace, grew in reputation. With this growth there was an inevitable mix of sincere faith and exploitation, genuine healing and exaggerated hearsay. Little has changed!

As you walk, consider your own growth as a person, the people and events that have shaped you. Some aspects may have come easily, others may have taken a lot of hard graft. The fields you are passing beside have been farmed for thousands of years yet even with all the advances in technology there are still limits to the crop yield.

Not all growth is good or even possible. We live at a time where the fallacy of unending economic growth is sold to us as not just possible but desirable. But barley does not reach the sky. Continuous unending growth is unusual – most growth happens in seasons and has limits and perhaps we are no different.

## Questions for the journey

- Who has inspired you to grow as a person? Why have they been so influential?
- What circumstances in your life have helped you to grow? Was it because, or in spite, of what happened that you grew?
- In what areas of life do you feel you have most room still to grow? Are there any areas in which you feel stunted or thwarted in your growth?
- Are you aware of growth beyond what is healthy, overreaching, or over achieving?

This may lead to questions about what needs to change, the following stage theme.