

CNOCNICOLL WOOD TO TRIG POINT ROUTE 2 / 2

Route: Continue to follow the West Island Way in a southerly direction, passing two houses on your right. You will come to a crossroad where you should turn right (west) and follow this road to its highest point – the trig point. **Please keep dogs under close control on the moor – there are sheep and cattle roaming free.**

Start point coordinates: 55.80264, -5.04515

Distance: 2.4 km

Terrain: The entire route is on a good stone path. It is mostly level with a slight rise towards the trig point.

As you travel

This part of the route is open moorland. Some days will be perfect with long views across the island, on others you will be surrounded by wind-blown rain which obscures your view.

Celtic monks travelling throughout the west coast of Scotland would have had to live with these conditions too. They sought wilderness in a similar way too and followed the example of the early Desert Fathers; considering that a monastic life of silence and poverty allowed them to better connect with God.

This landscape encourages us to embrace the wilderness. Stop on any section of this route and close your eyes. Listen. Try setting a timer on your phone for 5 mins and sit silently, with your eyes lightly closed, until it rings. Your thoughts will wander but if you allow the wilderness sounds to overcome them, you will begin to understand why these places were sought out by the monks. You may want to investigate Christian meditation on your return home.

Think as you go

Today we seek 'experience' – putting ourselves at the centre of things, we wish to make them subservient to this aim; too often, even God becomes a 'source' from which the highest experiences flow, instead of being Him Whom we adore, worship, and are prepared to serve, whatever the cost to us.

The above extract is from a paper on the collected sayings of the Desert Fathers: **The Alphabetical Collection Translated, with a foreword by Benedicta Ward.**

Father Agathon: Journey with prayer

The brothers asked Abba Agathon: "Among all good works, which is the virtue that requires the greatest effort?" He answered: "Forgive me, but I think that there is no greater labour than that of prayer to God. For every time a person wants to pray, one's enemies, the demons, want to prevent one from praying, for they know that it is only by turning away from prayer that they can hinder one's journey."

