

Columba Way (Slí Cholmcille/Moluag) - Tarbert to Lismore (An Tairheart – Liosmor) Total 100 miles Saturday Sept 9 – Saturday Sept16

Well, we did it! On Saturday 16 September we ended our 100 mile long Pilgrimage Walk on Lismore. a group of walkers known as Ron's Ramblers from Port Ban completed a 100 mile long sponsored walk in aid of Mary's Meals linking Tarbert, Loch Fyne, with Oban and Lismore. Lismore was chosen as the end destination in preference to Iona for time reasons and as it was the base for the Bishops of Argyll, and St Moluag, the patron saint of Argyll who had arguably a larger role than Columba in the conversion of the Picts to Christianity.

The pilgrimage route included several churches, 3 islands and ferry/boat crossings, 3 heritage centres (Kilmartin, Luing & Lismore), 4 castles (Tarbert, Castle Sween, Carnasserie & Dunstaffnage), small detours to the Beaver Trail, the Heart of Argyll Wildlife Centre and Dunadd, and the Cathedral of Trees at Glencruitten House! Highlights were holy communion at St Columba's Cave and St Mouluag's Cathedral with Rev. David Carruthers and Rev. Ian Barclay respectively and being guided around Lismore by Dr Robert Hay (author of "Lismore, the Great Garden").

The walk was made almost completely through areas of breathtaking beauty and historical significance (the so called "thin places" where heaven and earth meet) on existing tracks and quiet B roads. And the route has a choice of alternative routes depending on personal sightseeing preferences, restrictions of time, weather and other circumstances. Accommodation is no problem as there is excellent bunkhouse as well as B&B & hotel accommodation along the way.

The walk demonstrates that a long distance pilgrimage route linking the Kintyre Way with Oban is feasible. The next step is to set up an organisation capable of being a partner of the Slí Cholmcille/Slighe Chaluim Chille/St Columba Trail Project, supported by the Heart of Argyll Tourism Alliance (HoATA) and the Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum (SPRF), and of course to seek funding to further develop the route. Argyll Countryside Trust (ACT) have already contacted us with a view to submitting a joint application. A website <https://columbapilgrimswalk.com> and route maps are being prepared.

Anyone wishing to help or sponsor the route should contact Jonathan Sheldrick at 01 880 770 224 email: chairman@heartofargyll.com or jonathan@portban.com

It is still possible to donate to Mary's Meals – including cash donations we have raised about £2,000 so far.

<https://www.marysmeals.org.uk/fundraising/project/david-austin/rons-ramblers-on-the-columba-route>

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