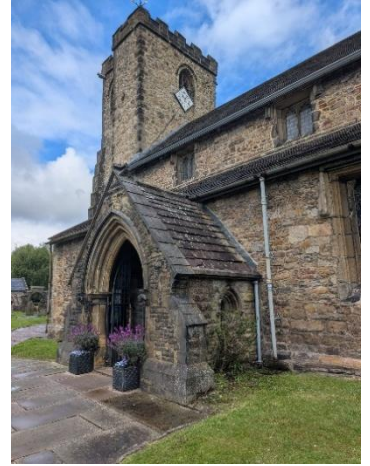


## Walking the Pilgrim's Way from Whalley to Manchester Cathedral 18<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> May 2026



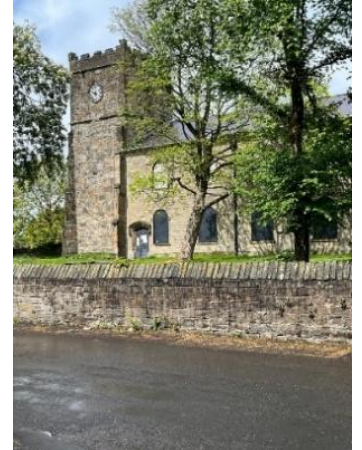
On a very damp morning in May, my sister and I set off from St. Mary and All Saints Church in Whalley to attempt the 36-mile route from the church to Manchester Cathedral.

We were treading a route that had been walked for centuries, following a guide, a compass and a map, (both digital and paper format to cover all eventualities).



The first day we completed 14 miles from Whalley to Haslingden, (St. James', which has a double socket stone) and visited another two parish churches on the way: Great Harwood, (St. Bartholomew's) and the one at Church Kirk, (St. James') which, unfortunately was permanently closed in 2025.

We saw a lot of wildlife including a pair of swans with eight cygnets, geese with five goslings and ducks with four ducklings but also got rather wet, walking along the canal. However, the highlight was walking past Holland's Pie Factory and smelling steak and kidney! Unfortunately, they did not have a shop to enable us to taste their wares.

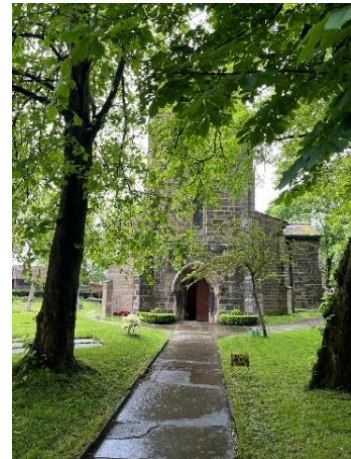
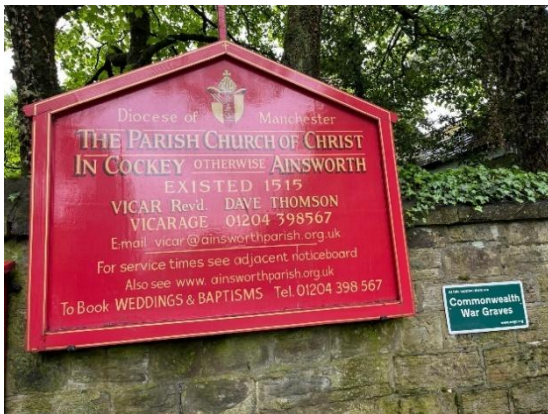


Tuesday dawned damp, misty and overcast. Restarting from Haslingden, we walked another 12½ miles before reaching Affetside in the pouring rain. To reach our destination we had passed Robin Hood's Well and the Pilgrim Cross, high on Bull Hill: the highest point on Holcombe Moor.

Descending for a well-earned lunch stop we then visited Roger Worthington's Grave before walking into Hawkshaw and then onto Affetside and taking a picture of the cross in the village.



Wednesday saw us walk from Affetside to Ainsworth where we stopped at Ainsworth Parish Church, (Christ Church), and managed a look inside, before walking onwards to Radcliffe and the parish church of St. Mary's, where our previous vicar, Rev. Carol Hayden, had served before coming to Christ Church.



As it was only lunchtime, we decided to continue our walk to Drinkwater Park and crossed over the border from Bury to Salford, completing another 11¼miles.

We followed the River Irwell for most of the way, walking through the Sculpture Park and over the M60 with its eight lanes of traffic, which were flowing well.



By Thursday we were now in sight of the skyscrapers of Manchester City Centre and had the last five miles to go. This was completed with relative ease in under two hours, before we left the City of Salford, just before the walk up to Manchester Cathedral. A visit, with time to pray and admire the magnificence of the stained-glass windows and the angels high in the roof before spending some quiet time in the Glade of Light Memorial Garden, in memory of the victims of the Arena Bombing, nine years ago on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2017.

We walked on roads, pavements, footpaths, (including a sunken one), bridleways, railway viaduct and aqueducts, fields, canal paths, an ancient highway, clay paths, gravel paths, and a lot of Cycle Route 6. A trip on the tram home and a well-earned rest and meal for a walk of gratitude, thankfulness and in memory of our Mum, who sadly died on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

### What have we learnt from our trip?

1. Have faith in instructions, maps and a compass. Even though the instructions were vague at times and our map reading erroneous resulting in us walking an extra 6¾ miles more than the official distance, overall, the resources served us very well.
2. Be resilient and determined. Sometimes we were faced with almost Biblical weather, steep climbs and misty empty moorland and both of us had physical ailments to contend with, yet we have proved that the over 65's cannot be written off yet!
3. Companionship, encouragement and a good sense of humour is a powerful motivator, especially when we had to retrace our steps, having gone "off piste."
4. We have realised our bodies and minds are stronger than we imagine, by putting our trust in God.