Cuthbert was leader of a monastery on Lindisfarne, which is just off the north east coast of England. He had a great part in the conversion of northern England and southern Scotland to Christianity. In 1995 a walk was compiled to cross some of the country in which Cuthbert walked and preached. St Cuthbert’s Walk is 100km in length and, as seen on the map, crosses from Scotland to England.

My daughter, Lucy and I recently completed the walk in six days. The walk was planned so that each night after about 15 kilometres there was easy Bed and Breakfast accommodation. A van transported the luggage to each evening stop allowing us to carry a light day pack. The journey was well highlighted on a special map and distinct markers were obvious along the path.

The path wended its way across fields, beside crops, along hedgerows and stone fences, up gentle hills, across rivers and through sleepy villages. Each morning began with prayer and though the weather was foggy and cool there was the blessing of no rain. The highlight was meeting a couple from Canberra who, in the village of Moorebattle, were restoring a church building as a rest and encouragement stop for pilgrim walkers.

The walk ironically passes Kelso and Yetholm; these names were a reminder of the connections which Bathurst has with British tradition. The approach to Lindisfarne or Holy Island is across six kilometres of tidal sands. The walkers need to time their two hour crossing so that the four metre tides are well at their ebb. In an emergency walkers may find refuge in either of two tree houses which have been constructed on the sands. The St Mary’s Church on the Island is ‘working’ with daily prayers and for now, a secular Christian community. It was a most refreshing accomplishment.

Father Paul