

## Small Pilgrim Places Journal 18: Windsworth

A recent addition to the Small Pilgrim Places Network must be one of the most remote locations, since there is no access to it other than by foot on a meandering, steep footpath - and there is no building at the end of the journey.

I started at the end of a narrow lane at Bodigga Cliff, not far from Looe, on the southern coast of Cornwall. A short climb down a steep gradient brought me to the Old Cost Path, running mostly through National Trust Land and overlooking the town of Looe and Looe Island, owned by the Cornwall Wildlife Trust and home to grey seals and many sea birds. The path wound its way amongst blackthorn hedges and brambles, glades and fields, and shortly after climbing a gully I found I was approaching a grassy slope where, without the warning of signposts or notices, I spotted my destination. Set into the hillside is a labyrinth of small ridges and furrows carved into the exposed hillside.



Above: Views of Looe and Looe Island from the Old Cost Path



Above: Walking the labyrinth

The Small Pilgrim Places Network handbook describes this place as “open to the four winds”. I was lucky to arrive there on a calm late-August morning, with barely a breeze and no mist, so as I began to walk the labyrinth I could enjoy the quiet and stillness of the place, the stunning views and the sounds of sea below and birds above.

The labyrinth is a very ancient symbol, used by many cultures across the world for thousands of years. One of the most celebrated Christian examples is the medieval one on the floor of Chartres Cathedral in northern France. The Windsworth labyrinth follows the classical seven-fold form, which has been found on coins struck in the third century BC in Knossos, Crete.

The beauty of any labyrinth, whatever the form, is that you can't get stuck; unlike a maze, if you simply follow the path it will eventually bring you to the centre (in this case a standing stone) and then out again. It's a helpful guide to reflection and prayer, and is best done mindfully and without haste – and this case, with wonderful, natural surroundings and a far-reach backdrop of sea, sky and grassy hillside.

And as an extra reward, there were a few fresh field mushrooms dotted around the edge of the labyrinth, so a tasty foraged supper beckoned at the end of the day.

Ali Green

Right: The standing stone at the centre of the labyrinth

