

OFF WALKING ON THIN ICE

(Camino to Cop26)

a film by Benjamin Wigley



an ARTDOCS production



'Can one footprint imprint on our collective consciousness and create change?'

'A walk; a pilgrimage, an odyssey...for the planet. Five hundred miles from London to Glasgow Cop26: Eight weeks, 56 days and more than 56 host organisations, over a thousand walkers and thirty rolls of 16mm celluloid film.'



COAT OF HOPES BRINGS CAMINO FILM TO EDINBURGH FESTIVAL

"Can one footprint imprint on our collective consciousness and create change? A walk, a pilgrimage, an odyssey ... for the planet. Five hundred miles from London to Glasgow for Cop26. Eight weeks, 56 days and more than 56 halls and churches. More than a thousand walkers and 30 rolls of 16mm celluloid film."

Join us at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival for daily screenings of Ben Wigley's film **OF WALKING ON THIN ICE (CAMINO TO COP26)** which follows the 500-mile journey by hundreds of climate pilgrims from London, and Bristol, to Glasgow for the COP26 Climate Conference in November 2021. The film will be shown at 2pm throughout the festival, (August 4-27), at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, where visitors can also see **THE COAT OF HOPES**, a patchwork pilgrim Coat, made, worn and walked by hundreds of people from the south coast of England to COP26. Visitors are invited to wear this Coat - ever calling those who encounter it to be present. Supported by its warmth (love) - to bear it's weight - the responsibility we share in this time of climate emergency.

The **CAMINO TO COP26** was a people's walk carrying a message of love, hope, grief, fear, and connection with the natural world to leaders deciding on the future of our climate. Filmmaker Ben Wigley walked with the group, who became known as **CAMINISTAS**, filming their experiences and capturing the sense of pilgrimage on this momentous and purposeful journey. More than a thousand walkers, aged from eight to 80 plus, joined the Camino for a few hours, a day or more, with a core group of about 30 walking the entire route to Glasgow. Completing the 500-mile journey involved intense physical and mental effort, emotional and spiritual upheaval, but it brought transformation and a sense of hope, despite the looming threat of climate breakdown. **OF WALKING ON THIN ICE** is 55 minutes long and is suitable for all ages with some flashing lights, and loud drumming in the soundtrack.

The film is being carried to Edinburgh in a pocket of **THE COAT OF HOPES**, launching the next chapter of its work (an ongoing walk - interrupting people in the places they live and work, inviting them to stop, be present with the unfolding climate crisis, and ask themselves what part they have to play). Accompanied by pilgrims, including some of the original Caministas (who now come together as **XR WALKERS**), the coat will set off on July 30 from Finnieston Street, Glasgow, where the gates of COP26 once stood. Travelling through Cumbernauld, Falkirk, Bo'ness and Queensferry, it will arrive at the cathedral on August 3 in time for Evening Prayer, followed by a **BOOKABLE** 7pm screening, then discussion with Ben and the pilgrims.

As he walked with the Caministas to Glasgow, Ben rigged himself with binaural microphones (putting microphones in his ears), capturing an immersive and poetic film memory of the Camino. Shooting on 16mm film with his hand-crank Bolex camera, he developed it by hand in his lab. The film is full of beautiful black and white footage of landscapes, slow and quick movements of flag-waving pilgrims, and the ethereal sound of singing, alongside walkers sharing reflections on the climate and nature emergency.

The impressionistic film moments are captured in an iterative and incisive way; inspired by the words of Werner Herzog in his book 'Of Walking In Ice'. Herzog describes the physical act of walking as '**DREAMING ON FOOT**' - and this sense is present in the walkers' hopes, imaginings, stories, and connection with nature, which merge to create a new world.

Locations and communities continuously change as film viewers travel with the pilgrims. From London where the walkers share stories of why they are starting on this journey, through Milton Keynes where we hear their feelings about the climate emergency, alongside the voices of local schoolchildren. Struggling together through the heavy rain in Manchester, the **CAMINISTAS** then reveal their deep connection as a community as they travel from Carlisle to Scotland, before uniting with pilgrims from across the world for a final jubilant walk into Glasgow.

Ben also recorded conversations with people who witnessed the walk - politicians, community leaders, and passers-by stunned by this unique pilgrimage. The closeness of the walkers, who rely on each other each day, reveals how people will need to create caring communities to succeed in saving our planet. Singing is heard throughout the film, spurring the walkers on and changing as they journey northwards to Glasgow. The film is shot in **BLACK AND WHITE CELLULOID** until the final walk into the city, when the brightness and hope of the destination is revealed, like a dream, in **KODAK COLOUR CELLULOID**, as we enter the COP26 'Zone' (a reference to Tarkovsky's film 'Stalker').

The film is being screened as part of St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral's **OF VOICES/PATHWAYS** exhibition from **AUGUST 4-27** which also includes talks, immersive film walks, screenings and discussions exploring the role of artists and craft makers as they respond to the climate and ecological emergency. It takes place in the **A+E** project space in the Chapter House of the cathedral from 10am to 5pm on Mondays to Saturdays, and 12noon to 5pm on Sundays, closing between 1pm-1.45pm for lunch and all day August 16th. **A+E** stands for Accident and Emergency, Art and Ecology, Art and Education. The project, curated by artist Jonathan Baxter, aims to support Edinburgh City Council's commitment to operate at net zero carbon by 2030, exploring how the Cathedral might become an ecological commons, shaping a social and environmental art practice.

After the Edinburgh Festival, **OF WALKING ON THIN ICE** will be carried on its journey to diverse and unique screenings around the country. It is being shown at local cinemas, ecological festivals, community screenings, and is now available through **TAKE ONE ACTION**, a film club bringing social and environmental films to a wider audience. Post-film discussions share the message of **CAMINO TO COP26**, raising awareness of the climate and nature emergency. **THE COAT OF HOPES** will also continue its journey, heading down the east side of the country. More information on the walking route and how to join a local section is **HERE**.

OF WALKING ON THIN ICE has become an expanded cinema project, where walking to the film screening is part of these immersive events - led, in song, by the film staff (a carved wooden staff with the film on a USB stick inside), helping to build a sense of community. The audience arrives at the screening and often eats together before the film. Those who walked sit back with the sinuous memory of the walk still live in their legs and watch the film unfold. The routes are also accessible for wheelchair users. More information about future screenings and events will be available on the film website **OFWALKINGONTINICE.COM**.

The vision of the Camino to COP states: *"We are united by our faith; a faith that we can advocate and influence and be the change that we want for our world. We choose to walk as a practice of that faith, an act of connection with the earth on which we walk and the people with whom we walk and the communities through which we pass; and we make our way in kinship with the peoples and creatures of the earth who are suffering and displaced by climate and ecological breakdown. We do so peacefully and lawfully, ready to engage and learn, because we care and we have hope."*

"My work is often about humanity's relationship with the Earth, which is how I came upon this project," said Ben. "As an artist I work in collaboration with subjects, and the XR walking community is no exception."

"I discussed ideas with the pilgrims individually or in small groups, and we would explore those ideas through recorded conversation, through soundscape, and through image making. We were all active participants in our collaboration, working together to make this film."

"Ben Wigley has produced a dreamy, black and white impressionistic vision of England and Scotland, full of flag-waving activists pounding the pavements, lanes and towpaths, with a haunting soundtrack of song and conversation, sometimes sad, sometimes optimistic."
Steven Morris in The Guardian.

NOTES:

* The trailer for the film can be viewed here **OFWALKINGONTINICE.COM** and it is also [downloadable here](#).

Downloadable images for media and publicity use are available on: OF WALKING ON THIN ICE IMAGES

* More information about the **OF VOICE/PATHWAYS** programme and screenings is available [here](#). Details of how to book for the evening screening at 7pm on August 3 are [here](#). You can also book to join the route from Queensferry to Edinburgh on the same link.

* Ben Wigley founded Artdocs in 2010 and its first independent film, **P.S. Your Mystery Sender**, played internationally (SXSW, HotDocs, Palm Springs). In 2012 Anna Griffin joined the company to produce their first feature length documentary, **Paa Joe & The Lion** (Sheffield Doc/Fest and SXSW, 2017). Ben has a track record of ground-breaking creative collaborations with Arts Council England and The National Trust and with these partners completed an epic project that exhibited at Somerset House, entitled **One and All** - merging physical exhibition, online interactive journey and celluloid film.

* Most recently, Ben has created a bold new multidisciplinary, multimodal art and film project, called **Hart of the Wood**, that celebrates humanity's ingrained relationship with the woods. The project envelops an ambitious range of art forms that include: a long-form avant-garde documentary film, outdoor expanded cinema live event, kinetoscope hand-crank celluloid film projection sculptures, and an exhibition of handmade celluloid film prints, paintings, and projections.

* Ben is interested in how many different ways, or forms, a person can experience an idea or a story: using performance, documentary and experimental film, sculpture, photography, exhibition spaces, digital immersive experiences, through artist walks and interpretation, that all work together to build an augmented viewer experience. "These works are an extension of my exploration of the cinematic form. Bringing film into the landscape and building an expanded cinema experience that has the opportunity for the art explorer to get a sense of both a physical, and an experiential journey; interacting, immersing and participating," he explains.

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