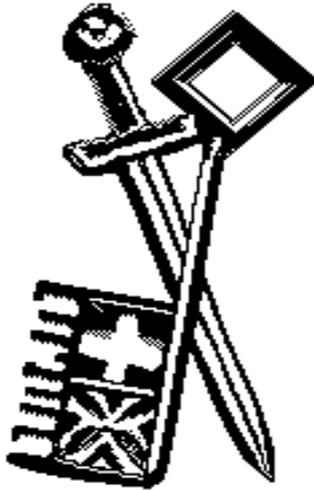


**CONFRATERNITY
OF
PILGRIMS TO ROME**



NEWSLETTER

April 2013 No. 18

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Editorial

This is the eighteenth issue of the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome's *Newsletter*.

There are seven articles, the Chairman's report of the CPR AGM on March 2nd this year, a book review, a list of additions to the CPR library and the section entitled "Secretary's Notebook," containing short items of information likely to be of interest to our members, plus news items received from the AIVF.

William Marques presents a very informative article on the many different cheeses made along the *Via Francigena* on its passage through Britain, France, Switzerland and Italy - their characteristics and how and where they are made. Alice Warrender describes how she prepared (or not) for her long journey on foot from Canterbury to Rome, a talk she gave at the CPR's Practical Pilgrim Day in March with the aim of helping future pilgrims, rather than providing an account of her own journey. Brian Mooney writes about the ferry service Danilo Parisi provides for pilgrims and his role as "Admiral of the Pô, after which Patrick Horgan describes his long walking pilgrimage from Canterbury to Rome, starting in May 2011. This is followed by a short postscript to Alison Raju's article on *Walking Companions* in *Newsletter* #17. Robert Muirhead's article reflects on the universal need for pilgrimage, after which Alison Raju provides a brief description of the life and iconography associated with Saint Grat.

Articles are always welcome for future issues though, in the interests of variety, we do not normally include more than one account of a pilgrim journey per issue. Note, however, that the views expressed are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect those of the CPR.

When submitting articles (most versions of WORD are acceptable – short items can be sent by email) please do **NOT** use automatic/preset formatting as this causes a lot of problems with the layout and, if you include photos, please send them as separate files, indicating where they should be placed in the article, not integrated into the text formatting.

We would like to thank Ann Milner once again for providing a PDF file for the electronic version of this issue.

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Cheeses on the *Via Francigena*

William Marques

Having written an article on the wines of the *Via Francigena* it seemed appropriate that my next task should be to write about the cheeses along the route. England, France, Switzerland and Italy are all famed for particular cheeses and although though these are not necessarily made on or near the *Via Francigena* there are still plenty of well-known cheeses that are made in the towns and villages you pass through. However, before I describe the cheeses I want to say a couple of things about AOC and PDO and how to taste cheese.

AOC and PDO

The A.O.C, or Controlled Designation of Origin, is the nomination of a region, or place used to designate a product for which its quality and characteristics are exclusively or essentially derived from the local geography (terroir). The AOC logo is attached to the crust of the cheese, the wrapper, or the label.

The PDO or Protected Designation of Origin is its equivalent at the European level. To achieve PDO status the entire product must be traditionally and entirely manufactured (prepared, processed AND produced) within the specific region and thus acquire unique properties.

Currently, there are 14 English PDO cheeses, none of which are in Kent.

Currently, there are 43 French AOC cheeses, of which seven are on the *Via Francigena*: Abondance, Banon, Beaufort, Bleu d'Auvergne, Bleu de Gex - Haut Jura, Bleu des Causses, Bleu du Vercors-Sassenage, Brie de Meaux, Brie de Melun, Brocciu, Camembert de Normandie, Chabichou du Poitou, Chaource, Chavignol, Chevrotin, Comté, Epoisses, Fourme d'Ambert, Fourme de Montbrison, Laguiole, Langres, Livarot, Mâconnais, Maroilles, Mont.d'Or, Morbier, Munster, Neufchâtel, Ossau-Iraty, Pélardon, Picodon, Pont-l'Évêque, Pouligny-Saint-Pierre, Reblochon, Rocamadour, Roquefort, Saint-Nectaire, Sainte-Maure de Touraine, Salers, Selles-sur-Cher, Tome des Bauges and Valençay.

Currently there are 49 DOC cheeses, the equivalent of AOC, in Italy, of which five are on the *Via Francigena*: Asiago, Bitto, Bra, Caciocavallo Silano, Canestrato Pugliese, Castella Trevigiana, Casciotta d'Urbino, Castelmango, Fiore Sardo, Fontina, Formaggella del Luinese, Formaggio di Fossa di Sogliano, Formai de Mut, Gorgonzola, Grana Padano, Montasio, Monte Veronese, Mozzarella di Bufala Campana, Murazzano, Parmigiano-Reggiano, Pecorino (Romano, Sardo, Siciliano, Toscano), Piacentinu Ennese, Piave, Provolone (del Monaco, Valpanada), Quartirolo Lombardo, Ragusano, Raschera, Ricotta Romana, Robiola di Roccaverano, Sprezza delle Giudicarie, Stelvio, Taleggio, Toma Piemontese, Valle d'Aosta Fromadzo, Valtellina Casera, Vastedda della valle del Belice

As a non-EU country Switzerland has a different system of regulation and there are fourteen major Swiss cheeses, of which five are on the Via Francigena: Appenzeller, Bündner, Bergkäse, Emmentaler AOC, L'Etivaz AOC, Le Gruyère AOC, Raclette Suisse, Raclette du Valais AOC, Sbrinz AOC, Tête de Moine AOC, Tilsiter, Tomme Vaudoise, Vacherin Fribourgeois AOC, Vacherin Mont d'Or AOC.

Tasting Cheese

You taste more with your nose than you do with your tongue. You can detect five senses on the tongue: Salty, Sweet, Sour, Bitter, and Umami. The nose carries anywhere from 5,000 to 10,000 different smell receptors.

If your cheese has been sitting out, perhaps coming up to room temperature before you serve it, try taking a fresh cut before you smell your cheese, or take the piece you have and break it in half. Cheese flesh that's been unexposed to the air will be more fresh and pungent.

The most basic mistake people make is not giving the cheese enough time on the palate. Don't swallow until the cheese has reached body temperature, and let it linger on your palate. You need to let the cheese go through all its phases of flavour. In essence, suck on the cheese as if it were a piece of toffee and concentrate on the texture and flavours as they develop, change and linger.

If you taste more than one cheese eat bread or bland crackers to cleanse your palate between tastings.

United Kingdom Ashmore Cheese

Kent



Cow



Semi-Hard

- Weight Approx 4000g
- Fat: 45.0%
- Colour: Yellow
- Rind: Natural

This naturally rinded hard cheese is made from unpasteurised British Friesian cows' milk from Mr. Castle's Debden Farm at Petham, near Canterbury. The cheeses are made in a cheddar style and, after milling, wrapped in muslin and pressed for 2 days in original 19th Century presses. After pressing the cheeses are unwrapped and placed "nude" on old pine shelves in the maturing room for at least 5 months for Ashmore Farmhouse. Each cheese is turned and stroked daily. Ashmore cheese is made in different sizes: 500g - 1kg truckles and 2kg and 4kg wheels, and is available at different stages of maturity.

France Maroilles

Pas de Calais



Cow



Semi-Soft

- Weight: Approx 500g
- Fat: 47.0%
- Colour: Orange
- Rind: Washed

Maroilles (pronounced mar-wahl) is made in the regions of Picardy and Nord-Pas-de-Calais in northern France. Maroilles is reported to have first been made in 962 by a monk in the Abbey of Maroilles. The cheese rapidly became famous throughout the region and a favourite of several French kings, including Philip II, Louis IX, Charles VI and Francis I.

The curd is shaped and salted before being removed from its mould and then placed in a ventilated drying area for around ten days, during which time a gentle light coating of bacteria develops. The cheese is then brushed and washed and cellared for at least five weeks, though periods of up to four months are not uncommon. During this time it is turned and brushed at regular intervals to remove the natural white mould to allow its red bacteria to change the rind from yellow to red. The cheese is sold in individual rectangular blocks with a moist orange-red washed rind.

The soft butter texture is supple and chewy and tastes mellow and nutty with an earthy farmyard style. The pungent aroma from the washed rind should not overpower the flavours although if the cheese is too aged it can become rather strong.

A number of less-common cheeses are made in northern France using very similar methods and are often listed in the "Maroilles family". These include Baguette Laonnaise (Laon) and Cœur d'Arras (Arras).

Cour de Arras

Arras



Cow



Semi-Soft

- Weight: Approx 180g
- Fat: 45.0%
- Colour: Orange
- Rind: Washed

Coeur d'Arras is shaped in the form of a heart. It has a strong flavour and medium density. The pâte is soft, uncooked and unpressed.

Baguette Laonnaise

Laon



Cow



Semi-Soft

- Weight: Approx 500g
- Fat: 4.0%
- Colour: Orange
- Rind: Washed

In the form of a brick, 15 cm long, 6 cm wide. Baguette Laonnaise comes from the shape of the cheese and place where it is made. The Baguette Laonnaise is fairly recent creation, having been invented in the 1940s in the city of Laon.

Maturing the Baguette Laonnaise occurs in damp cellar, with washing with salt water over three to four months. Its appearance is red-brown crust. It is a soft, washed-rind cheese with a sticky, pungent, orange-brown rind.

Chaurce

Champagne



Cow



Soft

- Weight: Approx 300g
- Fat: 45.0%
- Colour: White
- Rind: Bloom

Asking for Chaurce in an English deli is tricky. It rhymes with “horse” but with a bit of a French accent. Not all cheeses need long periods of maturing and Chaurce is a good example. Originally it was sold only fresh or demi-sec (slightly dry). Today people prefer it more matured, which gives it a round appearance. It belongs to the white pâte family. Its strong acidity prevents the heart of the cheese from maturing.

Its slightly sour taste is tempered by a salty savour. It starts with a white rind and when it has matured to a more advanced stage, one observes reddish stripes on the rind, but the interior remains white. The odour of Chaurce is not unlike creamy mushrooms

It is semi-soft with a dense crumbly texture and a natural white bloomy crust. Chaource has a drum shape, the edges slightly melting with a little ripening in a humid cellar. It tastes light when young, becoming tastier and flakier with maturity and is a useful accompaniment to Champagne.

Langres

Champagne



- Weight: Approx 200g
- Fat: 50.0%
- Colour: Orange
- Rind: Washed

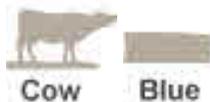
The Langres is a close relative of the Epoisses de Bourgogne. The cheese dates back to the 18th century. It was only quite recently (1991) admitted to the AOC family; prior to this date it was very much a regional cheese. During the maturing period the cheeses are placed in humid cellars, the ripening usually takes five to six weeks. The cheeses are regularly rubbed with brine, either by hand or using a damp cloth. A red dye extracted from the rocou (seeds of the American annatto tree) is applied which gives the cheese a natural orange colour. The cheese is never turned during the maturing process.

Langres has a soft brightly coloured orange natural crust, which must not be chilled as this will harden the outer coating and ruin the flavour. Inside is a rich, moist, spicy cheese, which should be almost melting with a flaky centre. The taste of salt is present, making the flavour of the cheese distinct without being aggressive.

Coming from the same family as Epoisses and Munster, Langres has a strong smell. Although a bit salty, Langres is milder than Epoisses. The form of the cheese is like a cylinder and has a 5-mm deep well on the top called in French the "fontaine" or "cuvette," which is intentional. Some people fill the well with a touch of Marc de Champagne.

Bleu de Gex

Haut-Jura



- Weight: Approx 5400g
- Fat: 45.0%
- Colour: Blue
- Rind: Natural

Bleu de Gex (also Bleu du Haut-Jura) is a creamy, semi-soft blue cheese made from unpasteurized milk. The areas of production for the cheese are the departments of l'Ain and Jura.

When the Dauphiné region was claimed by France in 1349 certain peasants of this region left and found a new living in the valley of the Haut-Jura. There they developed from cows' milk a blue moulded cheese - previously the region had been dominated by sheep and goat cheese.

The Bleu de Gex is still produced in the small mountain dairies that employ the traditional methods that have been handed down from the 14th century. During production, *Penicillium glaucum* mould is introduced and the unwashed curds are loosely packed. It is then aged for at least three weeks. To meet AOC guidelines, it must contain only the milk of Montbéliard or Pie Rouge de l'Est cows which graze on these mountains. It is flavourful for a French blue cheese. Each wheel is stamped with the word "Gex".

Although the smell is faint, this cheese is characterised by its nutty taste. The rind is very fine and yellowish. Sharp natural threads of blue veins work their way through the creamy slightly crumbly pâte. The crust is rather dry and rough textured when young, becoming a little moist as the cheese matures. It partners the lovely alpine style Gruyere cheeses well and can be added to fondue with great success. The best time for this cheese to be enjoyed is between March-July.

Morbier

Haut-Doubs



Cow



Semi-Soft

- Weight: Approx 7500g
- Fat: 45.0%
- Colour: Yellow
- Rind: Rubbed

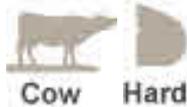
Morbier is a semi-soft cows' milk cheese of France, named after the small village of Morbier in Franche-Comté. The Jura and Doubs versions both benefit from an AOC.

Traditionally, the cheese consists of a layer of morning milk and a layer of evening milk. When making Comté (cheese), cheesemakers would end the day with left-over curd that was not enough for an entire cheese. Thus, they would press the remaining evening curd into a mould, and spread ash over it to protect it overnight. The following morning, the cheese would be topped up with morning milk. Nowadays, the cheese is usually made from a single milking with the ash added for tradition.

Mild with a fresh milky nutty flavour when young, becoming richer and more pronounced with age. A semi-hard smooth textured cheese with pale gold/beige washed brushed crust. It is ivory-coloured, soft and slightly elastic, and is immediately recognizable by the black layer of tasteless ash separating it horizontally in the middle. It has a rind that is yellowish, moist, and leathery. The aroma of Morbier is strong, but the flavour is rich and creamy, with a slightly bitter aftertaste.

Comté

Franche-Comte



- Weight: Approx 40000g
 - Fat: 45.0%
 - Colour: Yellow
 - Rind: Natural
- Comté is an ancient cheese. It has been produced since the time of Charlemagne.

Comté was originally made as a way of storing milk during the long, harsh winter, and was made large enough to be sufficient for a whole family's use for this time. A lot of milk is needed to make each 30-48kg cheese, on average about 500 litres - the daily production of 30 cows - and so the farmers united to form co-operatives. Comté is still traditionally made in more than 190 cheese dairies, known as the "fruitières" in the Jura plateau.

Comté is made in the Jura mountains on the French side of the Swiss/French border, and all milk comes from cows grazing at least 400 metres altitude. Morning and evening milks from Montbeliarde and Tachete de l'Est cows are mixed. The cows are fed exclusively on grass and hay, with fermented fodder being banned.

The flora of the Jura region plays a crucial part in the character of this cheese, with the abundance of beautiful flowers and grasses giving a rich complexity to the flavour. This can be particularly noticeable in the Alpage cheeses, which are made only in the summer months in dairies which are above the winter snow line. In winter, the cows descend into the valley and if cheese is made at all, it is in the "laiteries" - village dairies.

The cheese is regularly cleaned and rubbed with salted water. The eyes - holes - of the Comté are the result of a correct maturing and should be the size of a pea to a small cherry. During this time it develops a firm texture and a brown hard rind. The pâte is supple and melts in the mouth. The flavour is bold and long-characterised by sweet nutty notes.

Comté comes in different varieties, sometimes called "fruité" or "salé" (fruity or salty). Fruité Comté is often more elastic; Salé is usually a little more brittle; the most expensive Comté is "Comté Vieux".

Vacherin du Mont d'Or

Haut-Doubs



- Weight: Approx 550g
- Fat: 50.0%
- Colour: Pinkish
- Rind: Washed

The Massif du Mont d'Or rises to a height of 1,450 metres and lies near the French/Swiss border. Over the years there has been a heated argument over who made the Crèmeux/Vacherin first, the French or the Swiss. This very distinctive cheese is manufactured at altitudes of at least 800 metres. Like Comté, it is a cheese whose manufacturing process has changed little over the centuries. This rind-washed cheese matures in a round frame made of a thin strip of local spruce wood. In the course of maturing, this wood imparts an aroma into the cheese which is later packaged and sold in round boxes made from the same wood. These should never be removed, even when serving, as they enable the cheese to be contained.

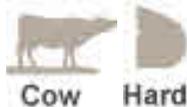
Unfortunately, Mont d'Or is a seasonal cheese and is not manufactured in the summer months because the milk quality in the region is different when the cows have rich summer pastures to graze on. The season for the traditionally handmade cheeses (as opposed to the year-round factory-made ones) is short; they start to trickle in at the beginning of October until the end of March.

However the product is superb, with a meltingly rich verging on clotted cream taste. The billowy crust is washed pinkish peach, with an earthy sappy aroma. The pâte is a soft yellow and creamy. The bark around the cheese helps to achieve its texture and perfume. A cheese to be eaten with a small spoon.

Though it is quite a strong cheese, Mont d'Or is not usually a sharp cheese and tends to appeal to almost all tastes.

Switzerland Gruyere

Western Switzerland



- Weight: Approx 32000g
- Fat: 48.0%
- Colour: Yellow
- Rind: Natural

Gruyère was first made in the canton of Fribourg during the 12th century and took its name from the town of Gruyère. Old records exist which show that Gruyère was used by farmers to pay tithes to the monks of Rougement Abbey. It is produced in the cantons of Fribourg, Vaud, Neuchâtel, Jura and Berne.

Each cheese measures approximately 1 metre in diameter and is 10cm thick, about 2 cheeses are made from the milk of 50 cows.

Gruyère is made using “unpasteurised”milk from the black and white Fribourg breed of cow. Although it is often referred to as “unpasteurized” milk, it is in fact heat-treated. This process is not as severe as pasteurisation and consequently much of the natural flora in the milk is preserved and this yields delicious flavours in the resulting cheese.

The excellent melting and cooking properties of Gruyère are a result of the process used to make the cheese - Gruyère is a “hard-pressed cooked cheese.”

Gruyère cheeses are matured in cellars and are regularly turned. Their rinds are always kept moist to prevent cracking. The cellars to mature a Swiss Gruyère must have a climate close to that of a natural cave. This means the humidity is between 94% and 98%. If the humidity is lower, the cheese dries out. If the humidity is too high, the cheese does not mature and becomes smeary and gluey. The temperature of the caves should be between 13°C and 14°C. This relatively high temperature is only possible if the quality of the cheese is excellent. Otherwise, the temperatures are lower, between 10°C and 12°C. The lower the temperature is, the less the cheese matures, resulting in a texture that is harder and more crumbly.

The rind becomes reddish-brown and tough and the pâte is yellow with the occasional pea-sized hole. Gruyère is sweet but slightly salty, with a flavour that varies widely with age. The cheese is sometimes sold at five months when it cuts easily, but the flavour is still mild. It is often described as creamy and nutty when young, becoming with age more assertive, earthy, and complex. When fully aged (five months to a year) it tends to have small cracks which impart a slightly grainy mouth feel.

The Alpage high mountain cheeses are made between June and September, by small independent cheesemakers using very traditional methods and equipment in their mountain chalets. The flavours are savoury and almost toasty, from the unpasteurised milk being heated in large copper vats over open wood fires which are located literally next door to the barn where the animals are housed.

Gruyère cheese is generally known as one of the finest cheeses for cooking, having a distinctive but not overpowering taste. In quiche, Gruyère adds savouriness without overshadowing the other ingredients. It is a good melting cheese well suited for fondues. It is traditionally used in French onion soup, as well as in croque monsieur. It is also used in chicken and veal cordon bleu.

Raclette Suisse

Switzerland



Cow



Semi-Hard

- Weight Approx 5300g
- Fat: 45.0%
- Colour: Yellow
- Rind: Natural

The first references to Raclette cheese date back to 400 years B.C. In Roman times, it was even used as a means of payment. Archives kept in monasteries in Obwalden and Nidwalden, record that William Tell tasted Raclette in 1291. In French, I am told, the word for the cheese is masculine, le raclette, whereas the word for the dish is feminine, la raclette.

Raclette is also a dish indigenous to parts of Switzerland. The Raclette cheese round is heated, either in front of a fire or by a special machine, then scraped onto diners' plates. Traditionally, it is accompanied by small firm potatoes, gherkins, pickled onions, and dried meat, such as jambon cru/cuit d viande des Grisons.

A semi-hard washed rind cheese with a stronger, spicier flavour than the French version and a little more dense in texture. Used in the same way as the French version.

Raclette Valais

Valais

The geographical area in which Walliser Raclette AOC is produced covers the whole of the Valais canton. The milk used is produced exclusively in the Valais canton, where the cheese is also processed and ripened. Walliser Raclette AOC is a semi-hard, full-fat raw milk cheese, creamy, pleasant smelling and sumptuous.

AOC specifications guarantee that the dairy cows have been raised appropriately to the species and fed with fresh grass in the summer and meadow hay in the winter. Silage feeding is forbidden, as is the use of artificial or genetically modified substances.

Italy

Valle d'Aosta Fromazado

Aosta



Cow



Semi-Hard

- Weight: Approx 10000g
- Fat: 30.0%
- Colour: Biscuit
- Rind: Natural Smooth

Valle d'Aosta Fromadzo (DOP) is produced in the entire area of the Autonomous Region of Val d'Aosta. It has a cylindrical shape, with flat or almost flat faces and a straight or slightly rounded outer rind. It is straw-coloured outside, becoming greyish after long aging, sometimes with a reddish tint. The product is aged for a minimum of 60 days up to a maximum of 8-10 months.

The local people use the word "fromadzo" when referring to a typical partly skimmed milk cheese made in the Val d'Aosta area and consumed as an alternative to the whole milk product historically designated as "Fontina".

This Italian DOP cheese is produced from cows' milk, sometimes with the addition of a very small amount of goats' milk, coming from at least two milkings and which can be divided, according to different processing methods, into partly skimmed milk and low fat milk types. The milk comes from herds located in the Val d'Aosta that must be predominantly of local fresh grass or hay. It can also be flavoured with juniper berries, caraway seeds or fennel.

The "Valle d'Aosta Fromadzo" has a very distinctive flavour. When it is fresh, it has fragrant and medium sweet taste, whereas if mature it is a bit stronger, slightly tasty, with a spicy hint. It has an aroma of herbaceous plants and mountain flowers, especially if produced in the summertime.

The logo represents a stylized cow, which colour changes depending on the type of product: green for low-fat, natural for the medium fat, blue if it is added goat milk, pink if the milk is pasteurized, yellow if the milk is flavoured with herbs or spices.

Fontina Alpina

Aosta



Cow



Semi-Hard

- Weight: Approx 10000g
- Fat: 45.0%
- Colour: Biscuit
- Rind: Natural Smooth

Fontina cheese has been made in the Aosta Valley, in the Alps since the 12th century. Italian Fontina can be identified by a Consorzio (Consortium) stamp of the Matterhorn, including the script "FONTINA". Fontina cheese is fairly pungent and has quite an intense flavour. Fontina has a natural rind due to aging, which is usually tan to orange-brown.

Fontina Val d'Aosta must be made from unpasteurised milk from a single milking, with two batches being made per day. It is noted for its earthy, mushroomy, and woody taste, and pairs exceedingly well with roast meats and truffles. A classic farmhouse-made cheese, full-flavoured from unpasteurised milk, its texture semi-hard in the mountain Gruyere style.

Young Fontina has a softer texture (and can be suitable for fondue). Fonduta is a traditional dish of Fontina whipped with eggs and cream. Mature Fontina is a hard cheese. Fontina has a mild, somewhat nutty flavour, while rich, herbaceous and fruity. It melts well.

Gorgonzola

Lombardy



Cow



Blue

- Weight: Approx 12000g
- Fat: 48.0%
- Colour: Well Veined
- Rind: Natural
- Pasteurised

Gorgonzola has reportedly been produced in the town of the same name since AD 879, acquiring its greenish-blue marbling in the eleventh century. Today, it is mainly produced in the northern Italian regions of Piedmont and Lombardy. Under DOC law Gorgonzola can only be produced in the provinces of Novara, Bergamo, Brescia, Como, Cremona, Cuneo, Lecco, Lodi, Milan, Pavia, Varese, Verbano-Cusio-Ossola and Vercelli.

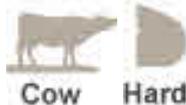
There are two varieties of Gorgonzola, which differ mainly in their age: Gorgonzola Dolce largely made around Novara (also called Sweet Gorgonzola) and Gorgonzola Piccante (also called Gorgonzola Naturale, Gorgonzola Montagna, or Mountain Gorgonzola).

This cheese uses both the morning and evening milk, which is ladled in layers into the mould. The cheeses are brined in a salt and water solution and left for a week or two before being pierced at the top, sides and bottom of the cheese to allow the blue bacteria mould to evenly distribute into well spread blue/green veins. Gorgonzola is typically aged for three to four months. The length of the aging process determines the consistency of the cheese, which gets firmer as it ripens.

Gorgonzola may be eaten in many ways. It may be melted into a risotto in the final stage of cooking, or served alongside polenta. Pasta with gorgonzola is a dish appreciated almost everywhere in Italy by gorgonzola lovers; usually gorgonzola accompanies short pasta, such as penne, rigatoni, mezze maniche, or sedani, not spaghetti or linguine.

Grana Padano

Northern Provinces



- Weight: Approx 30000g
- Fat: 32.0%
- Colour: Dark Yellow
- Rind: Oiled

A wheel of Grana Padano is cylindrical, with slightly convex or almost straight sides and flat faces. It measures 35 to 45 cm in diameter, and 15 to 18 cm in height. The rind, which is thin, is white or straw yellow.

Grana Padano is one of the world's first hard cheeses, created nearly 1,000 years ago by the Cistercian monks of the Chiaravalle Abbey, founded in 1135 near Milan, who used ripened cheese as a way of preserving surplus milk. By the year 1477, it was regarded as one of the most famous cheeses in Italy.

Grana Padano is one of Italy's most popular. The name comes from the noun grana ("grain"), which refers to the distinctively grainy texture of the cheese, and the adjective Padano, which refers to the valley Pianura Padana.

It is made in a similar way to the Parmigiano Reggiano but over a much wider area and with different regulations and controls. The cows are milked twice a day, the milk is left to stand, and then partially skimmed. Milk produced in the

evening is skimmed to remove the surface layer of cream and mixed with fresh milk produced in the morning. The partly skimmed milk is transferred into copper kettles and coagulated; the resulting curd is cut to produce granules with the size of rice grains, which gives the cheese its characteristic texture, and then cooked to 53-56°C. It is produced year-round and the quality can vary seasonally as well as by year.

It is in the Parmesan style but with a creamier, crumbly texture rather than the grainy sharp Parmesan. Not quite as fruity, but very good when used in risotto or mixed into pasta.

Grana Padano is sold in three different ripening stages:

- i) "Grana Padano" (9 to 16 months): texture still creamy, only slightly grainy;
- ii) "Grana Padano oltre 16 mesi" (over 16 months): crumblier texture, more pronounced taste;
- iii) "Grana Padano Riserva" (over 20 months): grainy, crumbly and full flavoured.

Pecorino Toscano - Pecorino Marzolino Rosso

Tuscany



Sheep Semi-Hard

- Weight: Approx 1200g
- Fat: 45.0%
- Colour: Cream
- Rind: Washed
- Pasteurised

Pecorino Toscano (Tuscan pecorino) is a firm-textured ewe's milk cheese produced in Tuscany. The cheese usually takes the form of a semi-flattened sphere, typically with a diameter between 15 and 22 cm and a height between 7 and 11 cm.

Pliny the Elder describes several stages in the production of pecorino Toscano, which he names as Lunense, apparently after the territory of Lunigiana (today Western Tuscany). Today, this style of pecorino is widely produced across Tuscany and also in several nearer districts of Umbria and Lazio.

The cheese is prepared with full cream, pasteurized ewe's milk, often by farm-based cheese producers. The cheese is ready to be eaten after a maturation period of just twenty days. However, it is generally regarded as a hard cheese, frequently used for grating, and to achieve this characteristic hard texture, the cheese should be left alone for at least four months.

The outer rind is naturally yellow coloured, but there is considerable variability according to how the outside of the cheese has been washed during maturation (generally with a combination involving crushed tomato, ash and/or olive oil).

There is a wide range of uses for the cheese. The delicate flavour of a young pecorino Toscano can provide an excellent complement to salad-based starters. As the cheese matures and the flavour strengthens, it can be eaten with honey or jam, as well as with fresh vegetables or fruits (especially pears and figs). Well matured pecorino Toscano is widely used across Italy as an alternative to parmesan for grating over a wide range of dishes, especially pastas or soups.

A delicious sweet earthy taste with the crust rubbed in olive oil and tomato paste. The cheese is matured for forty days giving it a light crumbly texture and a not too aggressive flavour.

I hope this article has given you a taste of the cheeses on the Via Francigena, most of which are available internationally, and that you are probably surprised to see how many famous cheeses are made on the route. The original intention was to run a cheese-tasting at one of the CPR Meetings before publishing this article but I am now doing it the other way round, so that people will have had time to do their homework before the tasting.

* * * * *

Walking from Canterbury to Rome

Alice Warrender

This article is based on the talk the author gave at the CPR's AGM and Practical Pilgrim day in St. James' Church Hall, Picadilly, on Saturday March 2nd 2013.

In May 2011 I went to Stanford's, the travel bookshop, to buy a map on pilgrim the first English guide book on a route, the *Via Francigena*, from Canterbury, was currently being published and should be on the shelf in September. This sparked a desire inside me to walk to Rome and on the 12th of July the same year I turned my back to Canterbury Cathedral and was on my way.

My aim in keeping with the CPR website is *to inform, encourage and assist those making a pilgrimage to Rome* and so I will stick to the helpful tips rather than tell you too much of the adventure which lies ahead. For anyone who asks if I would recommend it I would say "you need to make that decision in your mind," as you need this determination to stick at it. There will be good days and bad days but you need them both for the overall reward of a pretty long walk.

Unlike the *Camino de Santiago* the *Via Francigena* is a less popular, poorly way-marked route but this gives you a raw experience. I chose to walk alone so that my mind was free to think and, of course, it was desperately lonely at times,

but this taught me to pick myself up and not revert to relying on others. Being alone opened up opportunities where perhaps being with a group would not have but took away those shared moments of amusement, worry and questioning whether to turn left or right.

I did very little pre-planning, perhaps to my detriment, although I think it helped in letting fate lead me into stranger's houses and stopped me being apprehensive about the landscape. Being here today you are already doing more pre-planning than me, who only after my return have come across a few people who have walked a similar route. Hopefully my lax approach will confirm to you that walking to Rome is possible to accomplish with no training and few pre-booked places to rest.

Before leaving I wrote down all the stops from Sigeric's itinerary and had a spreadsheet with distances between them so I could pass through a place knowing how long it would be before I would reach civilization again and coordinate at what point I was going to stop for the night. Although carrying a credit card and a telephone that didn't accept calls but which I could call out on, I existed with very few aids. My pilgrim passport was essential for getting me nights at religious accommodation and Italy has some rules that, no matter what the circumstances, people abide by. Needing a conventional passport to stay anywhere is one of them.

I relied heavily on my compass, particularly at moments when I had walked myself into a bearing-less state deep in forests. I took the opportunity to walk cross-country as often as possible, avoiding roads and even more obvious footpaths at times. Not once was I stopped or questioned as I cut my own path through vast arable fields or occasionally across other people's gardens. Walking in the height of summer, from July to October, often I would cross dry riverbeds ignorant of the fact that this was the very stream I was supposed to be following. Never did I find myself with the right map and would strongly recommend taking or buying along the way topographic maps of the area you intend to cover. I carried all three of the *LightFoot* guides and the most useful part of them was the small map on the back tracing the journey from Canterbury to Rome which I would push in the face of people I tried to communicate with whilst in search of a bed. To get a guide that tells you every compass bearing, every turn from Canterbury to Rome is surely impossible so for that ambition I admire Paul Chinn but to rely solely on his *LightFoot* guides is a mistake not worth making, particularly if it were my feet talking.

I met few people in the three months I walked but when I did I enjoyed admiring the kit they had. So much so I began a list of luxuries I could have done with having. These include, a waterproof map cover, a breathable waterproof coat with a neck tie on the hood, a waterproof bag cover – yes as you're begin to realize the rain does fall and the wind sure blows! – Gel insoles and, I'd never admit it, but a Kindle and a GPS could make for easier times.

I have no doubt most pilgrims can find something in their bag to throw away and lighten the load in the early weeks but the things that remained firmly in mine were a Swiss army knife, a stop watch, a camel water pack, a rosary and an arched backpack so it didn't rest hot on my back. Other vital bits of kit needed at certain stages are sun cream in the mountains, mosquito repellent in the Pô valley, a swimming costume for the volcanic lakes and several good books for month three when anything to take your mind off the monotony of walking becomes essential.

Unless you are made of something most people aren't, your feet will hurt. The tips I would give are changing your socks every two hours even if you don't have blisters and always having a roll of Elastoplast to strap up sore ankles and put in place before blisters appear.

It took me 82 days to reach Rome, I would walk on average 7 hours a day covering between 25 and 35 kilometers. My longest day was 42 kilometers and shortest 15. The most frightening things I came up against along the way were the Alps; where some describe them as beautiful I would say they are enormously terrifying and being face to face with a wild boar was slightly disconcerting. Having a walking stick is essential, particularly when it comes to warding off stray Italian dogs, inner courage is needed to ignore the wandering eyes of Italian men, and an ability to calm ones imagination when staying in ancient buildings alone.

I paid for very little accommodation along the way. France was full of concerned women who beckoned me into their houses, feeding me and giving me a bed for the night. It was often possible to stay on the floor of village halls, having first sought out the town's mayor but beware: there is not an edge of comfort, so a bedroll could be worth taking. Switzerland was expensive and lacked the goodwill of others I found in France. Throughout Italy I relied heavily on the church. However small the town, village or hamlet, a knock on the priest's door would ensure a hot meal and a roof over your head - just don't expect it to be clean.

It is hard to justify why the simple act of walking day after day is so enriching until you go and do it. Time alone, in thought, is personal, and will be interpreted by others in different ways but all I can say is that the simple act of a pilgrimage, walking through foreign lands and relying on the good will of others and belief that it is worth continuing to your goal, will give you a reward beyond description but firmly instilled inside you forever more.

I wrote my book *An Accidental Jubilee**** in the hopes that what I had experienced along the way would inspire others either to take the small time out in the large scale of things and walk in thought for three months or, at the very least, pass on to others the grit and determination to stick at one path for the unknown reward at the end.

***Published by Stone Trough Books, 51 Walmgate, York YO1 9TY.

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Articles needed for the August Newsletter!

As you can see, we have had a good response to our request for articles for this issue. However, we don't – as yet – have anything at all for August: so please start writing!

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Danilo Parisi – Admiral of the Pô

Brian Mooney

One of the highlights of walking from Canterbury to Rome is the trip over the River Pô with Danilo Parisi. Danilo has been ferrying pilgrims across the river for all of the 15 years since the *Via Francigena* was formally resurrected in 1998 with a grant from the European Union. He provides a unique service, and the register he keeps is an extraordinary up-to-date record of the *Via Francigena*, but there is a danger that this modern St Christopher is being taken for granted, both by us – the contemporary pilgrims – and by the local Italian authorities.

Danilo runs his ferry back and forth from the quay at Corte Sant' Andrea to his home at Soprarivo down the same four kilometre sweep of the river that pilgrims in previous generations crossing from Lombardy to Emilia-Romagna would have taken in a boat propelled by sails and oars. He names his service after Sigeric – *Guado di Sigerico* – but that is the only direct link with the medieval past; pilgrims today have the advantage of being able to book his ferry by mobile phone (+390523771607). He charges only a modest fee, and chiefly plies the river for the love of it. The *Via Francigena* is his passion. Danilo is not just a ferryman; he is one of the gatekeepers of the modern pilgrim journey to Rome.

Most of the people he ferries across the river he never sees again, as they head off through the maize fields to Calendasco and on to Piacenza. Their passage, however, is not forgotten. Each one inscribes his or her name in the great leather-bound pilgrim book kept at Soprarivo.



An ex-Rugby player with wispy grey hair, Danilo is sometimes now helped by his young son Pierfrancesco. One fellow pilgrim, Harry Bucknall, has dubbed him the Admiral of the Pò but, like every honest person in debt-burdened Italy, he is struggling. Recently, his outboard motor was stolen at night – an expensive piece of kit, because it needs to be powerful enough to punch against the current; after replacing it, and with the small amount he charges each pilgrim, he is barely covering his costs. It is not as if the local authorities give him any help either; they recently installed a new landing stage on the north bank at Corte San Andrea, at a cost of €90,000, without even acknowledging his ferry service, let alone contributing towards it.

I spent a few pleasant hours in Danilo's company last summer on my return journey from Rome, and it was at once apparent that it wasn't just money that was troubling Danilo. The river had silted up and, in high summer, there was so little water by the shore at Soprarivo that he had to moor his boat further up river and, once on board, it was touch and go as the bottom grated over the sand banks until we got into clear water.

"If it carries on like this, people will end up walking across the Pò," I said.
"You may not be joking," Danilo replied.

Danilo welcomes pilgrims at his stone farmhouse by the river embankment, serving cold drinks and providing whatever food is available. The house is enshrined as an epicentre of contemporary pilgrimage with a cast bronze plaque on the wall on which moulded letters and numerals announce the distances to Rome, Jerusalem, Santiago de Compostela and Canterbury. The big moment is when Danilo brings out his *Liber Peregrinorum* – a sort of Domesday record of the Via Francigena – and when he endorses the pilgrim's passport with his *Transitus Padi - Caupona Sigerico* stamp.

The number of pilgrims walking from the Alps or north of the Alps to Rome has grown steadily each year; according to Danilo's statistics, the annual total exceeded 500 for the first time in 2012. This does not take into account the many who walk far shorter distances to Rome, starting for example in Siena, and others, also unaccounted for in his book, who cross into Piacenza by the bridge at Pieve Porto Morone.

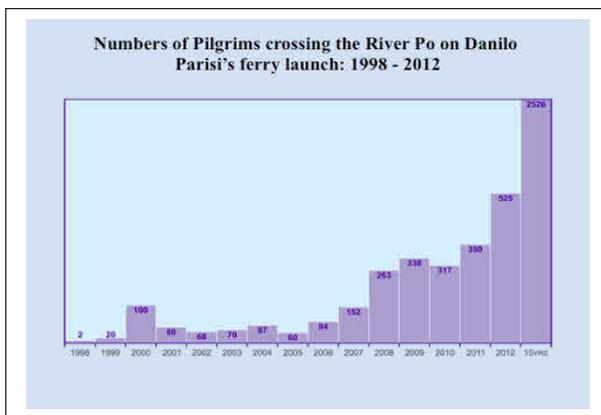
When I re-crossed the River Pô on 5th August 2012, I was the 307th pilgrim of the compared to 350 in 2011 and 317 in 2010. Of the nationalities crossing on Danilo's launch from the time he began his service to the end of 2012, the overwhelming majority were Italians: 1,300. Next came Swiss, 292, Germans, 246, French, 228, Dutch, 139, British, 66, Belgians, 42, Austrians, 34, Americans, 34, Australians, 30, Spanish, 27, Canadians, 17, Norwegians, 14, Swedes, 13, Danes, 5, Irish, 5, and Polish, 5. Nations with three or less pilgrims include Portugal, Vietnam, Estonia, Croatia, Hungary, Russia, Finland, South Africa, Chile and Argentina. Almost all were heading for Rome, but each year there are several driven souls making their way to Jerusalem, Santiago de Compostela and Canterbury. Danilo has logged 22 pilgrims walking to Canterbury since 1998, against 20 to Jerusalem, and 16 to Santiago de Compostela.

The message is simple: use him, or lose him!

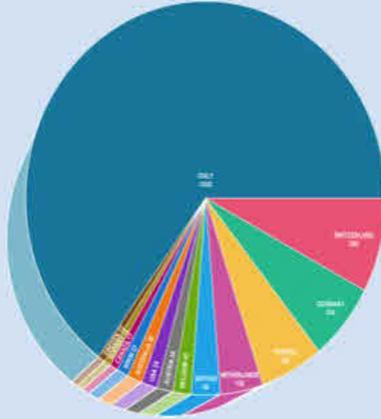
www.couponasigerico-viafrancigena.it
info@couponasigerico-viafrancigena.it

Editor's note: The author has walked both from his home in Essex to Rome (an account of this journey – *A Long Way for a Pizza* – was published in 2012) and from Rome back home again, an account of which walk – *The Wrong Way for a Pizza* – will be available this autumn. Both titles are published by Thorogood Publishing.

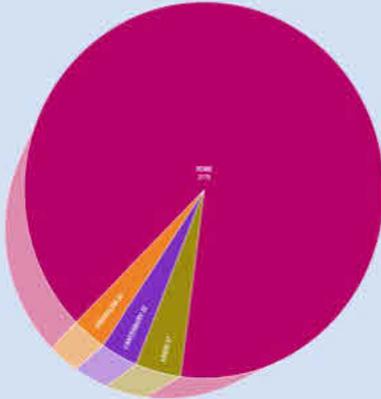
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**Nationalities of Pilgrims crossing the River Po on Danilo
Parisi's ferry launch: 1998 - 2012**



**Destinations of Pilgrims crossing the River Po on Danilo
Parisi's ferry launch: 1998 - 2012**



My Path to Rome

Patrick Horgan

Christian pilgrims have travelled across Europe for centuries to the three main sites of devotion: Santiago de Compostela in Spain, Rome and Jerusalem.

Having walked from Le Puy-en-Velay in France to Santiago in 2002 my wife, Dorothy, reminded me that since reading Hilaire Belloc's *The Path to Rome* as a young man I had expressed a wish to walk to Rome, and that *tempus fugit*. I took this to mean "do it while you are still able."

So on 23 May 2011 I left for Canterbury Cathedral with friends Keith and Paul. We received a blessing from Canon Chris Irvine and set off on the North Downs Way to Dover. The route is called the *Via Francigena* and was travelled by Sigeric, Archbishop of Canterbury in the year 990. It was a hard walk with a heavy (12 kilos, I thought at the time) backpack. After spending the night in a B&B near the ferry terminal we crossed the Channel in the morning to Calais and walked along the coast to Wissant. Disaster had struck already and my feet were blistered.

For the next two weeks I struggled through Liques, Wisques, Amettes, Arras, Bapaume, Peronne, Laon and Corbeny to Reims, taking rest days when my feet were too sore. In Wisques we stayed at the Benedictine Abbaye Saint-Paul and were able to attend Mass and the monastic services. Keith and Paul then went ahead while I remained to allow my blisters some respite.

On Ascension Day in Peronne I had spent the night in what was described as the parish room though it looked and felt more like a greenhouse. At Mass I met a doctor who kindly invited me for a meal with his friend. I also enjoyed hospitality from his family. This helped to revive my drooping spirits.

In Corbeny I booked into the Hôtel du Chemin des Dames, which sounds very grand, but I was in a room over a bar. When I went down for an evening meal I was directed to the hotel restaurant around the corner on the main road, which was very grand. In my walking clothes I was perusing the menu to see if there was anything that I could afford, when I was presented with a glass of champagne. I stuttered that I had not ordered yet, but was encouraged to drink it. I gratefully obliged. Elegant diners were arriving and I ordered a meal that was almost reasonably priced.

After enjoying an excellent meal I diffidently asked for the bill. I was told to pay back at the hotel. In the morning my bill had not charged for the champagne and a pilgrim discount reduced the price of the meal considerably.

I spent two nights in Reims and attended Mass at the wonderful cathedral. The modern stained-glass windows by Marc Chagall were beautiful and

complemented the more ancient ones. After Reims came Trepail, Chalons-en-Champagne, Coole, le Meix-Tiercelin, Brienne-le-Chateau, Bar-sur-Aube, Clairvaux, Mormont, Langres and Besançon.

In Coole I stayed at the farmhouse of Monique and Jean Songy who had volunteered to provide accommodation for pilgrims. Accommodation on the *Via Francigena* in France is more difficult to find and more expensive than on the *Camino to Santiago*. I enjoyed dinner with them. After breakfast in the morning it was raining heavily when they were leaving for work, and they suggested that I should stay until it eased up. As my feet were a little sore I agreed. They also refused to take any payment. Apart from their generosity, what trust to leave a stranger alone in their home.

On the long hot and exposed route through cornfields to Brienne-le-Chateau I felt very weak and thought that I would pass out. I sat down and rested and thought about ringing an emergency telephone number, but realized that it would be difficult to say where I was. Perhaps the signal from my mobile phone could be picked up? Fortunately I recovered somewhat and was able to continue. I think I must have been dehydrated.

In Bar-sur-Aube I met Jan, who had walked from his home north of Amsterdam. We agreed to meet up in Besançon. For a few days I had felt a pain in my right shin but had to wait to reach Besançon to see a doctor. The surgery operated a no-appointments system and it was late evening when I saw the doctor. His careful examination even included taking my blood pressure. I had thought the problem was just my shin! He diagnosed tendonitis and prescribed anti-inflammatory medication for six days. When I produced my European Health Insurance Card he waved it aside and also refused to take any payment. When Jan caught up with me in Besançon he had an infected toe and I recommended the same doctor.

The city of Besançon where we rested for a few days has a beautiful historic centre. On arrival I had asked at the tourist office for directions to the two religious hostels on my list of accommodation, and was informed that they had both closed. So I had no alternative but to book into a hotel. The day before leaving I met a German lady who was walking part of the route in her holidays. I was stunned to learn that she had been staying at one of the hostels that I had been informed was closed. Jan and I had needlessly incurred extra expense at the hotel.

We continued to walk through the department of the Franche-Comte and the Jura mountains, a mountain range that crosses France, Switzerland and Germany. At Ouhans there was a scary walk along the valley of the river Doubs on narrow paths over slippery rocks. It was very dangerous. The next few days the altitude made walking quite strenuous through Pontlarlier and into Switzerland near l'Auberson and onto Sainte-Croix.

I was now almost half way to Rome. Whilst walking each day prayers were said for family, friends and parishioners. My pilgrim passport had been stamped along the route in monasteries, hostels, hotels, bars, tourist offices and town halls. On presentation at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome I hoped to receive my *Testimonium*, a certificate of authentication of pilgrimage.

But first Switzerland, the Great Saint- Bernard Pass and through Italy to Rome.

* * * * *

Forty-one days after leaving Canterbury I was in Switzerland and walking with Jan, the Dutchman, towards Orbe. It was a lovely walk towards the Alps.

The first hotel experiences in Switzerland were bad. In Sainte-Croix my bedroom was noisy and the window was broken, and now, in Orbe the customer relations left much to be desired. Both places were of course quite expensive.

Near Rances we saw a lady waving from the other side of a field. When we realized that she was waving to us we came to a halt. She crossed the field towards us and invited us to join her and her husband for coffee and chocolates. She had noticed our backpacks, which reminded her of the marvellous experience she had had, walking to Santiago de Compostella a few years ago. Jan and I were able to relate our stories of that pilgrimage.

The route skirts Lausanne, then onto Villeneuve and Saint-Maurice, where we stayed in the Abbey and met a Swiss journalist called Phillipe. He was stunned to hear about our bad experiences and was apologetic. I think he thought we were two grumpy old men. Over the next few days we met up with Phillipe and he promised us a mention in the article for his newspaper "24 heures."

On through Martigny and Orsières to Bourg-Saint-Pierre. The route was a challenging steady climb with narrow pathways and steep cliffs ,compensated by dramatic scenery. It was a very difficult climb in very hot weather to the summit of the Great St. Bernard Pass (8114 feet), where there was still some snow.

We stayed in the Hospice founded by Saint Bernard of Aosta in 1050. It has never closed and today still offers hospitality to travellers. It is now run by priests active in the surrounding community, plus lay volunteers. We were able to attend Mass and the monastic offices on Saturday and Sunday and rest our stiff legs. Tomorrow the descent into Italy.



Admiring the view – looking down from the Great Saint-Bernard Pass into Italy
(Photo: Michael Krier)

It was hot in the morning walking down on stony paths through the Italian Alps, then nice and cool in a wood to Gignod. We were given a very warm and friendly pilgrim welcome by Pierre, the proprietor of the Hôtel Belle Vue.

The hot weather continued as we descended to Aosta, the regional capital. Next day I decided to leave at 6am to avoid the heat. Jan would catch up later. Ten minutes after leaving it rained heavily and I got drowned walking to Nus.

Next Pont Saint-Martin and onto Ivrea. The cathedral here has the tomb of Blessed Thaddeus McCarthy who left Ireland for Rome in the 14th century. Did he make it?

I was now very worried about the stitching tearing in the straps of my backpack. Through Alice Castello, Santhià and Vercelli to Robbio, I had been asking shoe repairers, to no avail, if they would mend it for me.

In Mortara the cobbler was not interested in doing a repair. I passed an upholstery shop which was closed. There was a long notice on the door, which I could not translate. I was becoming desperate. If my backpack gave way I was sunk. I had not seen an outdoor equipment shop anywhere on the route.

I went into a church and lit a candle and said a prayer near a statue of a smiling Padre Pio. Later I went back to the upholstery shop, which was open again by then. Two men were talking amidst chairs, materials and tools in a very untidy shop. I explained the problem and the men discussed in Italian, then one left. Marco, the upholsterer, examined the backpack and tried to manoeuvre it into a suitable position for stitching. The size of the bag made this very difficult. He sat me down and gave me a bottle of iced water to drink.

While Marco was working I noticed pictures of the smiling Padre Pio on most of the walls in the shop. Marco worked for an hour, experimenting how he could carry out a repair. He eventually succeeded in repairing the bag. What a relief! We spoke through a translation on his computer. He would take no money for his work, and spoke of altruism and my journey. A miracle?

After Mortara came Garlasco, Pavia and Santa Cristina, where we received a wonderful reception. The parish offers hospitality to pilgrims and has an active youth club. We attended Mass, had dinner then sat talking to the priest and parishioners.

Next day to Orio Litta and prepare to cross the River Pô by boat. Danilo, the ferryman is based on the other side of the river and must be telephoned to bring his little boat over.

On the morning of the 25th July (my wife Dorothy's birthday) Danilo was late and arrived in a very dilapidated boat that just about took Jan, a young Italian couple and myself. He told us that the motor had been stolen from his usual boat.

When we reached the other side Danilo offered us drinks, and showed us the records he kept of who had crossed, their countries of origin, etc. He was an expert on the history of *Via Francigena*. That night we stayed in the Basilica Santuario Convento Santa Maria di Campagna in Piacenza.

In Medesano at the excellent Oratoria Don Bosco I was able to use a washing machine for the first time since leaving home. (I hasten to say that I had been washing my clothes by hand each night!)

We were now walking through the territory of Parma, through the beautiful Apennine mountains. Near Berceto we were sitting outside a hostel after a days walk, when we saw a man approaching slowly. When he reached us I asked if he had blisters. He showed us his feet, and I was reminded of mine two months earlier. I went to my room to get some of the treatments that I had used. It could be days before we reached a pharmacy. Meanwhile, Jan proceeded to adjust his backpack so that the weight was more evenly distributed. We later found that the man was called Albano and from Northern Italy. We nicknamed him "Mister Blister," which he liked. A couple of days later we would meet two young Italians, Emiliano and Stefano, with whom we would also walk to Rome.

Resting outside the Cathedral in the lovely town of Lucca where Puccini was born, I was pleasantly surprised to hear a cellist playing "Danny Boy."

We were now staying in the same accommodation as the Italians we had met. Albano would produce wine each night after dinner as a thank you to Jan and I. Jan did not drink wine!

It was now early August and the further south we walked the higher the temperature. Through beautiful Tuscany to San Gimignano with its towers, Monteriggioni, and getting lost in woods before Siena. That lovely city was crowded with tourists and very hot.

The next stages took us through San Quirico d'Orcia, Acquapendente and to Montefiascone on the celebration of the Assumption of Our Lady. The town was open until 2am, and fireworks could be heard from the surrounding villages.

Viterbo is the capital of its province and a medieval town. Then Sutri, La Storta and, finally - ROME!

All along the *Via Francigena* I had been having my "pilgrim passport" stamped in order to qualify for the *Testimonium* on its production in Saint Peters. Near the museum I was directed to the sacristy and taken to the office of Don Bruno Vercese, the priest in charge of pilgrims who issues this *Testimonium*.

About twenty walking pilgrims (excluding the thousands queuing outside) arrived on 18 August 2011 and Don Bruno took us on a private tour down the steps to the Clementine Chapel where, behind the altar, there is a slab of red stone concealing the bones of St. Peter. We then prayed. and read a short passage from the Bible. It was a great privilege.

It is said that a pilgrimage is a metaphor for life. All the events, good and bad, the trials and the joys, condensed on this occasion into three months. Physically it took a while to recover. Mentally a little longer to process everything that had happened. On the walk I prayed for family, friends and parishioners.

I would like to thank Dorothy for her forbearance and encouragement.

* * * * *

Walking Companions - postscript

Alison Raju

In response to the article on *Walking Companions* in the December issue of our *Newsletter* (#17) several readers wrote in to say that I had only dealt with one aspect of this subject: those on two legs... I had not, they pointed out (and correctly so), considered the question of those four-footed friends who often accompany us on walks near home: dogs!

The advice, however, is very simple: leave Fido, Bonzo, Spot, Rover and company all firmly at home!

- You will meet other, local dogs along the way who are on their own territory and do not take kindly to strange ones;
- You may have difficulties with accommodation (though Italy is less problematic in this respect than many other European countries);
- You may well have transport problems returning home;
- Most dogs, although used to going out all day long, are not accustomed to continuous long-distance walking and, like their two-legged companions, are prone to problems with their feet.

As the Italian adage reminds us:

Meglio soli che male accompagnati!
(Better alone than in unsuitable company!)

* * * * *

Memories of another time, another place

Robert Muirhead

Some years ago I trekked to Gokyo Ri in Nepal, not far from Everest Base Camp. It took eight arduous days to reach the high camp by a glacial lake at the base of the final peak.

I met a lady who had already made the long trek, but who had failed in her first attempt to reach the summit of the mountain. But on this day she succeeded, breathing with difficulty in the thin air almost 5500 metres above sea level.

In the distance Mount Everest, Chomolungma, the holy mountain, shone dazzling white. Wisps of snow streamed fiercely from the summit. All around us were vast, craggy mountains, cloaked in gleaming white snow and bluish ice, jostled together in the greatest mountain range on earth. Prayer flags fluttered in the wind, carrying their messages into the great unknown.

Far below I saw the milky blue lake from which we began our ascent, with our tiny tents nestled on its shore. A jagged glacier wound down the valley, an icy dragon slowly edging its way to a distant river, there to melt into waters feeding Mother Ganges, and, at last, to disappear into the immense ocean that girdles our planet.

Next year the monsoons would come again to carry those waters deep into the mountains, feeding the snow and glaciers and completing another great, endless cycle of renewal - a cycle that lies at the heart of the Buddhist faith.

But what has all that got to do with the *Via Francigena*?

There is a universal human need for pilgrimage, not only for the joy of accomplishing a difficult task, but also because it can be a search for something that will give us comfort for the hurts and pains of our lives, and hope for the future. Some people undertake a pilgrimage as a way of giving thanks for the blessings they have received in their lives.

Whatever their reasons for setting out, there is nobility in overcoming the hardships of body and mind that all pilgrims must face on their journeys. The value of such a journey is not defined by distance or by the opinions of other people, it is defined by ourselves alone for the personal blessings it has inscribed in our hearts, in our minds and on our bodies.

May you and people of all faiths find fulfillment, comfort and hope on the *Via Francigena*, on the *Way of St James*, on a holy mountain - or on some other personal journey that can only be measured deep within our being.

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Saint Grat

Alison Raju

If you have not already done so, you will see many representations of Saint Grat in the Aosta valley, whether in paintings, frescoes, sculptures etc. starting with the frescoes on the façade of the *Chiesa di San Rocco* in Signayes, on your way down from the Great Saint-Bernard Pass to Aosta, and where he is depicted alongside Saints Innocent and Roch, holding, in his left hand, something that will probably surprise you: the head of St John the Baptist.



(Photo: Michael Krier)

Saint Grat (Gratus) was of Greek origin but fled to Rome to escape the persecutions of the East and was sent as an emissary to Charlemagne. A vision experienced in the Pantheon sent him to Aosta, where he converted many pagans. He was then sent – by divine command – to the Holy Land to find the head of Saint John the Baptist, executed by Herod at the wishes of the Salome (to whom he had sworn, after he had seen her dance, “Ask of me what thou wilt, and I will give it thee;” so - at her mother’s instigation - she asked for the Baptist’s head on a dish). Saint Grat found the head concealed in Herod’s palace, smuggled it out of Jerusalem and returned with it to Rome where, so the story goes, all the church bells there pealed of their own accord in celebration of this event.

Saint Grat presented the Baptist’s head to the Pope but in handing it over the jawbone is said to have remained in the saint’s hand. This was seen as a sign and he was allowed to take the relic back to Aosta with him. As a result Saint Grat is very frequently portrayed in art holding Saint John the Baptist’s head in his hand. There are many examples in the Aosta valley, including this modern sculpture in a wayside shrine near Verrès:



(Photo: Michael Krier)

Saint Grat is also the patron saint of the Aosta diocese so that his feast day, September 7th, is a public holiday in the whole region.

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Chairman's Report: 6th Annual General meeting of the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome, March 2nd 2013

Joe Patterson

Thank you for coming here today, to our 6th AGM. I hope you may find it interesting.

Seven years ago I was part of the original group that set up this Confraternity. membership has increased, as have all the decisions we have had to make. As

membership is 167 and already in 2013 we have issued 20 Credentials (pilgrim passports). In 2008 we went from being a small, informal group to a more formal one, complete with a constitution etc. It thus followed that a committee was required or, as we prefer to call it, a Steering Group. William Marques became our first chairman and it is largely due to William that we are in the position we are today. And I mean that in the nicest possible way.

In no particular order our Steering Group members currently are:

- William Marques, who has now taken over the role of Membership Secretary and also maintains our accommodation list;
- Bronwyn Marques is our Secretary and also our Minutes Secretary and has the often-difficult task of making sense of our rambling discussions;
- Alison Payne was, until recently, our Treasurer. She now continues as a member of the Steering Group but is currently without portfolio;
- During the year Robert White joined the Steering Group and then took over the position of Treasurer – much to Alison's relief...
- Ann Milner is our Webmaster. She is responsible for the setting up and the operation of the impressive website we now have today;
- Yvonne Loftus, who, with her energy, organisational skills and willingness to undertake any task, has contributed so much to the events of last year;
- Alison Raju, author of many pilgrim guides, is also one of the editors of our *Newsletter* and our "translator;"
- Last but not least Jim Brodie, currently without a specific role but who, at the moment, is researching Facebook to see if there can be any benefits for us.
- I must also mention Chris George, who works with Alison on the *Newsletter*, and Howard Nelson, who is responsible for our library and also works with Michael Krier on the Image Gallery.

I am grateful to all the members of the Steering Group for all the work they have done for our Confraternity and also for the help and guidance they have given me. As you will hear later, all of the members of the Steering Group are seeking re-election this year.

The Steering Group met four times during the last twelve months and much has been achieved. Yvonne has designed and produced accommodation stickers; basically, if a pilgrim stays at accommodation that represents good value etc., then we ask him or her to obtain permission from the owners to display the sticker, in order that future pilgrims can identify approved lodgings. Stickers are also dispatched with pilgrim passports when the latter are requested. William, Yvonne and Alison Raju carried this idea forward when they wrote (in at least two languages) and sent stickers to all the accommodation along the *Via Francigena* that we already recommend.

A highlight of the year in 2012 was to walk from Dover to Canterbury with a group of pilgrims from the Abbey of Saint-Marice in Switzerland. This was the final section of their walk from Rome to Canterbury along the *Via Francigena*, spread out over several years. Their company was much enjoyed by those of us who accompanied them on those final days.

During the year Ann walked the London Loop Walk as a Walk for Peace. This was walked in stages and people were invited to join her for any of them. This was putting into action the Olympic ideal of 100 days of peace throughout the games. Myself, Yvonne and Jim joined Ann on different stages.

During the year Alison Raju probably spent more time on the paths of the *Via Francigena* than she did at home! The fruit of her labours will result in the publication of her latest guidebook, covering the route from the Alps to Rome. Hopefully this guide will be available later this year.

At the last meeting of the Steering Group, in February, we were informed that a French group of pilgrims will be walking to Canterbury, to arrive in September, and they have asked us to walk with them from Dover to Canterbury. We are considering holding our next Open Day Meeting in Canterbury, to coincide with their arrival. Further information will be in the *Newsletter* and on the website in due course.

Later this afternoon you will hear from two pilgrims talking about their pilgrimages to and from Rome.
Once again, I thank you all for coming.

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Book Review

Howard Nelson. *The Einsiedeln Itineraries: A Pilgrim's Guide to Rome in Charlemaane's Time* (Confraternitv of Pilarims to Rome Pilgrim Guides to Rome 2). Confraternitv of Pilarims to Rome, 2013, 98 pages, 11 maps, 1 photo, £7.00, ISBN:978-0-9568499-2-2

The book is based on the itineraries in the *Codex Einsidlensis 326* held at the monastery of Einsiedeln in Switzerland, which were written in about 800. The *Einsiedeln Itineraries* are a series of routes across the city of Rome from one gate to another. There are 11 itineraries described in the book, plus one which did not exist in the original, covering the area within the Forum which now costs money to enter.

Chapters 1 and 2 briefly cover the *Codex* and Rome from Constantine to Charlemagne. Howard questions whether the guide is the work of one man or many, whether it is one work or a number of different documents bound together and the possibility that the compiler never visited Rome? He then sets the scene of Rome in 800, a city which was resurrecting itself following Constantine moving the capital to Constantinople in 324 and the sack of Rome in 410, 455 and 536. The fall of Jerusalem in 640 meant that Rome became the principal destination for Christian pilgrims in Europe and by the time that Charlemagne was crowned emperor in St Peter's on Christmas Day 800 Rome's fortunes had turned.

The core of the book is a guide designed to be used when walking the streets of Rome and is a little confusing to read sitting at home. The order in which the itineraries are presented is not that of the *Codex* but one which reflects their quality, completeness and interest. Because the routes cross each other several times many places are listed more than once so routes which largely repeat sites earlier in the guide are included only in summary.

Each itinerary contains a map of the route with the sites mentioned marked, a Latin transcription of the itinerary and an English interpretation. The itineraries in the *Codex* are merely registers of sites which follow a standard layout, listing the monuments as they lie to the right and left. Itinerary 12 however presents the sites a single column and gives credence to the argument that the *Codex* is not the work of a single writer.

The greater part of each chapter is a guide through the modern streetscape of Rome and description of those sites still standing.

This is a book to carry in your pocket or bag and read while you are in Rome. Wandering around the city knowing that you are visiting its churches and monuments in the footsteps of pilgrims more than 1000 years ago is like walking the *Via Francigena*, a stroll through history.

There is a copy in the CPR Library and the Guide can be bought through the CPR, the CSJ online bookshop (www.csj.org.uk) and, if you are in Rome, it is also expected to be available in the Crypta Balbi Museum (Via delle Botteghe Oscure 31, on the corner with the Via M. Caetani).

William Marques

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Additions to the CPR Library, December 2012 to March 2013.

Howard Nelson

Brandenburg, Hugo: Ancient Churches of Rome from the fourth to the seventh century: the dawn of Christian architecture in the west. Photographs by Arnaldo Vescovo. Turnhout, Brepols, 2005. 336 pp.

Location: CPR. Acc. no: 5403.

Colonna, Pierluigi: Le antiche chiese di Roma. Rome, Polo Books, 1998. 240 pp.

Location: CPR. Acc. no: 5402.

Krautheimer, Richard: Rome, profile of a city, 312-1308. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000. 389 pp.

Location: CPR. Acc. no: 5404.

McCarthy, Phil: Rome alone: a twenty first century pilgrimage. N.p., [Lulu Publishing], [2013]. 232 pp.

Location: CPR. Acc. no: 5405.

Roma Sotterranea: La Scala Santa e il Sancta Sanctorum. [34] photocopied pages: a handout to accompany a visit in February 2012. 2012. Location: CPR PAM 45. Acc. no: 5406

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Secretary's Notebook

Bronwyn Marques

Membership

We currently have 201 full paid members from 19 countries: Australia 30, Belgium 2, Canada 17, Cyprus 1, Denmark 3, Finland 1, France 5, Iceland 1, Ireland 11, Italy 1, Netherlands 1, New Zealand 5, Norway 2, Poland 1, South Africa 1, Spain 1, Sweden 1, USA 36, UK 81.

This year we have already sent out 67 credentials to our members, between 1st January and April 11th 2013; this is more than we sent during the whole of 2010 and 2011.

Accommodatin feedback

Once again we would ask all members who have made the pilgrimage but have not yet provided any feedback on where they stayed to contact William Marques at pilgrimstoromeseecretary@yahoo.com. So few people still walk the *Via Francigena* compared to the *Caminos* in Spain and any feedback is valued highly.

Open day in Canterbury

We are planning an Open Day in Canterbury on Saturday, September 14th, to coincide with the visit of the French pilgrims:

French Pilgrims Walk from Dover to Canterbury During the weekend of Via Frangigena France, based in Reims (this town is twinned with Canterbury) will be walking along the *Via Francigena* (which coincides here with the route of the North Downs Way) from Dover to Canterbury. They have invited us to join the on this two-day walk and any or all our members are very welcome to participate. More details will follow in the August *Newsletter* and also on our website.

When did you arrive in Rome?

In the previous issue of our *Newsletter* we explained that we know how many *pilgrim passports* we issue each year and so have a more or less accurate idea of how many pilgrims set off for Rome but very few of you indeed tell us that you actually made it all the way there and received your *Testimonium!*

We would like to know, though, so that we can include a section in the *Secretary's Notebook* section in future issues of the *Newsletter*.

So far only one person has told us that he completed his pilgrimage in 2012!

CPR Library

This is situated at the CSJ (Confraternity of St. James) offices at 27 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8NY (020-7928-9988) and details of the items held can be found via our website. The office is open every Thursday from 11am to 3pm and at other times by arrangement

CPR Photo Gallery

The CPR Photo Gallery is available via our website. It has been significantly enlarged and now covers the entire *Via Francigena* and Rome. All those with photos of good enough quality are encouraged to make them available to other members via the website. (more information in its Gallery section).

Ospitale dei SS Cirino e San Giacomo in Badia a Isola

The Italian Confraternità di San Jacopo has asked us to inform our members that they have now opened a third pilgrim *spedale* ("hospital") here in 2012, as it does not yet figure in accommodation lists.

21km after San Gimignano, 2km before Monteriggione and 18km before Siena, it has 16 beds and is open at 14.30 each day from the Thursday before Easter to the beginning of October. It operates on a donation basis, offers a communal evening meal, is attended by volunteer *ospitalieri* from this Confraternità and is *only* for pilgrims with a *credenziale* (pilgrim passport). Telephone: (+39) 329.6593778.

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Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome

Founded November 2006

www.pilgrimstorome.org.uk

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