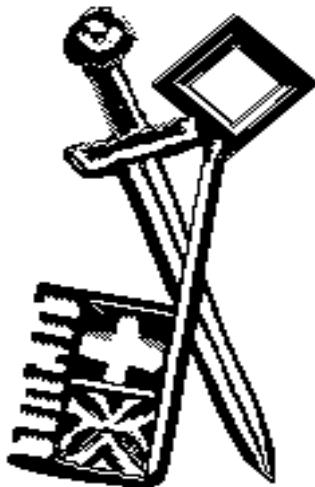


**CONFRATERNITY  
OF  
PILGRIMS TO ROME**



**NEWSLETTER**

**December 2009 No. 8**

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## **Editorial**

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

There are two long articles, one 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

Mark Hassall provides a written version of the talk he gave at the CPR Rome day in November, for the benefit of all those who were unable to be present, and in which he discusses his walking pilgrimage to Rome in the footsteps of one of his forebears who made the same journey six hundred years earlier. Howard Nelson continues his series of articles exploring the extraordinary richness that Rome presents to the modern pilgrims, with the fifth one dealing with the continuing Christianisation of Rome and the churches built between the fall of Rome in 410AD and the time of St. Benedict (ca 500).

Articles on all aspects of the pilgrimage to Rome are invited for subsequent issues. As a rough guide they should be somewhere between 1000 and 1500 words, according to the subject matter. Book reviews (300-500 words maximum) are also invited, as is also information suitable for inclusion in the "Secretary's Notebook" section. In the interests of variety the editors have decided to limit accounts of pilgrim journeys to one per issue.

Short items can be sent in an email but longer articles should be included as attachments and most WORD and RTF documents are acceptable. If you send pictures, though, please do not integrate them in the text but send them as separate files.

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

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# The Road to Rome: in the Footsteps of a Medieval Pilgrim

**Mark Hassall**

My family comes from Cheshire and we used to have at home a book by J. P. Earwaker called *The History of the Ancient Parish of Sandbach*. Sandbach is in Cheshire - and in it lies the hamlet of Hassall, from which our family derive its name, as lords of the manor. In October 1401 a certain Thomas Hassall was presented to the living of St Mary's Sandbach by the Abbot and Convent of Dieulacres in Staffordshire ("Delecray" means "God increases"). I imagine he was a member of the same family, presumably the younger son of the lord of the manor. Thomas must have been a very young man in 1401 because he was still parish priest in 1455, over half a century later, when he died and had to be replaced.<sup>1</sup> Now another odd thing about the career of young Thomas is that, less than a year after his initial appointment, on 12th August 1402, he received permission from John Burghill, the Bishop of Lichfield (Cheshire was then part of the Diocese of Lichfield) to go on a pilgrimage *ad visitandum limina Sanctorum Petri et Pauli* - to visit the shrines (literally "thresholds") of the Apostles Peter and Paul. He was given eighteen months to do this from the day permission was given. It was this presumed family connection with Thomas that first inspired my own interest in pilgrimage and was the reason why, in spring 2002, some 600 years after Thomas set out on his pilgrimage, that I myself set out with a friend, Valeria Coke, to walk to Rome. However without an extended sabbatical from London University to perform the pilgrimage, so far from doing it in eighteen months, it took us three years, as I had to divide the distance from Bordeaux, where we started, to Rome into seven stages, returning to England and my work after we had completed each stage. As a result we did not finally arrive in the Eternal City until Easter 2005. In this article I shall briefly mention some of the highlights of our walk. However, I want first to examine two topics of more general interest. First the question of pilgrim licenses and, secondly, routes to Rome. I shall finally conclude by saying a little bit about where pilgrims could stay on the journey and, more especially, where they could stay once they arrived at their destination.

Burghill granted Thomas his licence at the Castle of Eccleshall in Staffordshire, one of the residences of the Bishops of Lichfield. The licence that Thomas received was not only a record in writing of the permission given him by the Bishop to vacate his parish but also served, so I believe, as a sort of passport – *credencial* is the term that we use on the *Camino* in Spain when heading for Santiago - which Thomas could show to prove that he was a *bona fide* pilgrim who, as such, merited aid from those he met on his journey. As far as I know no pilgrim licences from the fourteenth or fifteenth century survive, though their possible appearance is suggested by a secular pass of the period. This was issued in Bordeaux by the Black Prince in 1355 - the year before the Battle of

Poitiers - to an archer, William Jodrell, who was returning from Gascony to England. It was written on a small strip of parchment in three lines of Norman French. In translation it reads "Know all that we, the Prince of Wales, have given leave on the day of the date of this instrument, to William Jauderel, one of our archers, to go to England. In witness of this we have caused our seal to be placed on this bill. Given at Bordeaux, 16th December in the year of grace, 1355." The seal bears the royal arms "differenced with a label", to use the technical language of heraldry, indicating that the Black Prince was King Edward III's eldest son.<sup>2</sup>

Turning to the pilgrim licence issued to Thomas, it is possible to get some idea of what the text may have been like by looking at the record of the grant in Bishop Burghill's Register now in the Lichfield Record Office (B/A/1/7/ f. 148 v). At the relevant place in the margin is a three-line note stating *Licenc' concess' vicario de Sondebach ad visitand' limina Apostol' Petri et Pauli* ("A licence is granted to the Vicar of Sandbach to visit the Shrines of Peter and Paul"). The actual record of the grant reads as follows:

*Item apud Eclesh' duodecimo die Augusti anno Domini superius nominato concessa fuit per dominum Licencia domino Thome Hassale vicario ecclesie parochialis de Sondebache ad perficiendam peregrinationem et visitand' limina apostolorum Petri et Pauli per unum annum et dimidium a die presentium exempta vicar' sua ex onere pre'missa dumtaxat se absentand' cum clausa promiso etc. ut supra*

"And again at Eccleshall on the twelfth day of August in the year of our Lord named above [i.e. 1402] a licence was granted to master Thomas Hassale, Vicar of the parochial church of Sandbach to perform a pilgrimage and to visit the thresholds of the apostles Peter and Paul over a period of one and a half years from the day of these presents, the vicarage being exempt and passed over (*pr(aeter)missa*) from the cost (*onere* = literally "burden") for the duration of his absence, with an oath (promise) having been made by him to the above effect".<sup>3</sup>

The following, then, is an attempt to reconstruct the wording of the actual licence from the entry given in Bishop Burghill's Register:

*Universis praesentes litteras inspecturis, salutem. Noveritis quod nos, Iohannes Burghill, deo gratia Lichfeld et Com Cestrie episcopus, concessimus et licenciam dedimus domino Thome Hassale, vicario ecclesie parochialis de Sondbach ad perficiendam peregrinationem et visitandum limina Apostolorum Petri et Pauli per unum annum et dimidium a die presentium*

*Teste me ipso, Iohanne Burghill, apud Eccleshalle, duodecimo  
die Augusti, anno domini MCDII.*

“To all those who shall examine these presents, know that we, John Burghill, by the grace of God, bishop of Lichfield and the County of Chester, have conceded and given a licence to Master Thomas Hassall, vicar of the parochial church of Sandbach to perform a pilgrimage and visit the threshholds of the Apostles Peter and Paul over a period of a year and a half from the day of these presents.

As witness, I myself, John Burghill, at Eccleshall, on the twelfth day of August in the year of our Lord 1402.”

There remains the question of the seal. This will presumably have been Burghill's *sigillum ad causas* used to endorse licences etc., rather than his Seal

of Dignity. The latter is of interest however, because it shows Burghill enthroned under a canopy and wearing his Bishop's robes and mitre. To his right and left are shields bearing versions of the royal arms as used by Richard II, while below is a shield with Burghill's own arms. The arms show that the seal dates before the deposition and murder of Richard II in 1399/1400, so before the date of 1402 when Thomas was given his licence. A cast of the Seal of Dignity is kept at the premises of the Society of Antiquaries in Burlington House.<sup>4</sup>

Turning now to Eccleshall - or rather, Eccleshall Castle where the licence was an episcopal residence. It was built in the very late thirteenth or early fourteenth century but was slighted in the seventeenth century after the Civil War. Nevertheless it is possible to gain some idea of what it looked like since one of the medieval towers survive along with the medieval bridge that crossed the moat and an architect friend of mine, Peter Rumley, has produced an axonometric reconstruction.<sup>5</sup>

From wherever a pilgrim from England sets out, he or she will first have had to make a sea crossing. Our knowledge of trading ships of the period depends for the most part on representations on seals - like those of the Hansa towns or the Cinque Ports - but a recent discovery, the remains of a fifteenth ship in the River Usk at Newport in South Wales, has added a huge amount of technical information. From these sources of information it is possible to have a pretty good idea of what the ships of the period would have looked like but it is hard to imagine what it must have been like for the medieval pilgrim, sailing in a cog, at the mercy of storms and the unnamed perils of the deep. A painting by a contemporary of Thomas, Bicci di Lorenzo (1373-1452), now in the Ashmolean Museum, conveys something of the horror of a sea voyage where one's best and surest hope lay in the goodwill of the Saints (in this case St Nicholas of Bari.).

At an earlier period the route across France would ideally have been the shortest. Matthew Paris, a monk of St Albans (1200-1259), prefixed his *Historia Anglorum* with an "itinerary" which gives routes from the Channel across France to Italy and Rome although he is not known to have made such a journey himself. It takes the form of a strip map, showing the route (and variations) with occasional vignettes, including a pelican on the roof of a building at Sutri and the Veronica in Rome.<sup>6</sup> The distance from the Channel to Rome would be about

horseback. If each stage took a day then the total journey would be about 6 weeks. However a direct route across France in the early fifteenth century, then intensely hostile to the English because of the Hundred Year's War, was perhaps unthinkable. One possible route that Thomas could have taken was to travel by way of Gascony, then an English possession, and proceed through the semi-independent County of Toulouse. And so by way of the Riviera and the Maritime Alps into Italy. This would have had the added attraction for Thomas in that he could have taken passage in a vessel leaving the port at Chester with a cargo of hides, timber and the like for Bordeaux, where it would have loaded up with good Gascon wine. Chester was a thriving port in the Middle Ages and by going by sea Thomas will have saved himself the journey across England from Cheshire to Kent, let alone that through great swathes of hostile northern France. This at all events is the route that we decided to follow in 2002. Ideally we would have embarked at Liverpool, the successor of Chester as the major port in the North West, but in the end we had to compromise and get the ferry from Portsmouth to Bilbao and go from there to Bordeaux by train.

However, I am not certain that Thomas really did go this way, attractive though it would have been for someone setting out for Rome from Chester, and there was another alternative, that taken by Thomas Adam of Usk, cleric and lawyer, and an exact contemporary of Thomas.<sup>7</sup> Adam avoided the dangers of France altogether by going by the so called "German Route" but even so he was accompanied by a guard of archers. Adam started from Billingsgate in London (on 19th February, 1402) and sailed to Bergen-op-Zoom. He then went by land through Diest, Maastricht, Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) to Cologne. From there he went by up the Rhine through Bonn, Koblenz, Worms, Speyer, Strasbourg, Breisach and Basel. At Basel he left the river and headed off through Lucerne and Bern in Switzerland. He crossed the Alps by the St Gothard Pass, carried blindfolded in an ox cart because he was so frightened! From the pass he went down to Belinzona (18th March, Palm Sunday) and crossed northern Italy via Lake Como, Milan, Piacenza, Borgo San Donnino, Carrara, Pietra Santa, Pisa, Siena, Viterbo and Rome (5th April). I had followed an almost identical route from London to Basel on my journey to Jerusalem in 2000. In 2004/5 from Carrara to Rome, Valeria Coke and I had again followed the final stages of Adam's journey along the *Via Francigena*. It would be interesting to walk "the missing bit" from Basel to Carrara. One final point. Adam of Usk took 35 days. It took Valeria and me about twice that number, about 70 days walking. Not

only that but Adam - of course - did the trip all in one go, but we had to spread it over three years. But seventy days walking wasn't that bad because we covered something over 900 miles.

Finally there is William Wey<sup>8</sup> (1407-1476). Wey was a fellow of both Exeter College, Oxford and Eton.<sup>8</sup> He made a pilgrimage to Compostela in 1456, to Rome and Jerusalem in 1458 and again to Jerusalem in 1462. In 1458 Wey made the crossing to Calais then up the coast to Bruges and Ghent, though Maastricht and Aachen. He joined the Rhine in the region of Sinsig, south of Bonn and just north of Andernach, passed through Worms and left the river at Speyer. He went through Waiblingen on the Neckar to Ulm on the Danube, up the Iller Valley, through Memmingen, across the Reschen Scheideck Pass, and on through Merano and Trent; to Verona, Bologna, Florence, Siena, Bolsena and, finally Rome.

### **The Road to Rome, 2002-2005**

We commenced our pilgrimage, following - hopefully! - in the steps of Thomas Hassall and six hundred years after he made his journey, and completed it at Easter 2005, having been compelled to divide it into seven stages. The first four stages took us from Bordeaux across France and into Italy south eastwards and into Italy. For the purposes of this article I shall just mention the pilgrim hostel, the Commenda di San Giovanni di Prè at Genoa, which we saw at the end of the fourth stage and then inspected more briefly from the outside at the beginning of our fifth (spring and summer 2004). The Commenda was situated just outside the lower gate through the medieval walls of the city and in the Middle Ages the upper floor had served as an alms house, while the lower had acted as a hostel for pilgrims going to the Holy Land by sea or to ports like Marseilles for those who wished to Santiago by land but avoiding the Ligurian

***The Sixth Stage, August/September, 2004,*** took us through Tuscany to Viterbo in Lazio and so within striking distance of Rome. On this stage we saw three of the most fabulous places on the whole trip: Lucca, San Gimignano and Siena. Thomas will certainly have passed through these cities, whatever doubts remain about the route of the earlier parts of his pilgrimage, for between Massa and Pietra Santa we encountered *Via Francigena* signs.

Through Tuscany and down to Rome we were following the route of the Roman *Via Cassia*, to all intents and purposes identical to the *Via Francigena*, or else trying to work our way parallel to it along minor roads. In some cases we were fortunate enough to follow *strade bianche* (the straight dirt roads that are such a feature of the area) and just occasionally the modern *Cassia*, diverted from the old line so that we could follow the ancient *Cassia* in comfort. The first of the three superb Tuscan cities that we came to was **Lucca**. At the time of Thomas it was ruled by the Podesta Paolo Guinigi. On the 3rd February 1403, the Podesta married Ilaria del Caretto, daughter of the Marquis of Savona, through which we had also passed just before Genoa. A few years later, on 8th

December 1405, she died following the birth of her second child. Her monument in the Cathedral of San Martino is by Iacopo della Quercia. She wears typical high-status costume of the time. She has full sleeves tight at the wrists, her gown has a high collar and its folds are held by a belt under the breasts. She has a calm and lovely face, with two ringlets falling free from her bound hair and the headband intertwined with flowers. Could Thomas - just possibly - have passed through at the time of the wedding? Perhaps not, but visitors to the Victoria and Albert Museum, where there is a cast of her monument, can see Ilaria as she looked while Thomas was tramping the roads that lead to the Eternal City!

Ilaria's tomb is in the Cathedral of San Martino. In the portico is a carved marble panel showing a labyrinth. Such mazes exist in Christian contexts - at Chartres, for example - where they seem to have been a metaphor for the Journey to the Centre - to Jerusalem (compare the Hereford *Mappa Mundi*, where the Holy City is literally at the centre) or else for the inward spiritual journey taken by the ascetic. Inside the Cathedral was an object of great devotion to the pilgrim - the miraculous *Volto Santo* or image of the crucified Christ. It is supposed nowadays to be a work of the twelfth century and pilgrims could purchase miniature leaden replicas as badges to wear on their hats.<sup>9</sup> Finally, the

Thomas if he had seen it - a Limoges enamel *chasse* like the one in the Victoria and Albert or the Ashmolean, or that owned by the Antiquaries, containing relics of Thomas Becket.<sup>10</sup>

An easy day's walk from Lucca was **Altopascio** - the High Pass - though in traveller would have to traverse on the way between Lucca and San Gimignano. I have a theory that it may actually refer to an *hautpas* or *halpace*, "a room or floor raised on pillars underneath, extending into, or in this case across the gates to the courtyard of the convent. This was the Convent of the Knights of the Tau - the Greek letter "T" - one version of the form of the cross on which our Lord was crucified. The *raison d'être* of these Knights was to help pilgrims on their way to the shrine of St James at Compostela, and their church was accordingly dedicated to St James, but they were also there to help all pilgrims or travellers in need and the Smarrita bell tolled on dark or foggy nights, to guide those who were lost to the sanctuary. It seems to me that Thomas may well have stopped there - Valeria and I certainly did (2nd September 2004) - and we were not the first because we saw the signatures of CSJ members John and Shirley Snell in the *Liber Pelegrinorum* (1st June 1999).

Next came the justly famous **San Gimignano** with its bristling towers - the Manhattan of Chiantishire - and not so different now from the representation of it in the arms of the Ssaint as depicted by Taddeo di Bartolo a year or so before Thomas came through. We stayed here in the "Leone Bianca" in the Piazza

della Cisterna - thoroughly recommended!

But it wasn't just the famous places that were a delight. There were lesser hill towns like Monteriggione where we had dinner one evening, or miniature isolated castles like La Chioccia - "the Snail," so called from the spiral staircase that one climbed to get to the top of the tower... insignificant and unnoticed by the car-borne tourist who rushes by ...

And so to **Siena**. When Thomas visited, the Sanctuary of Saint Catherine of Siena had not been built as she had not yet been canonized, but the Cathedral, of course, was there and across from it a great pilgrim hostel. The cathedral is one of the few buildings that can definitely be recognised in the wonderful fresco by Lorenzetti on the *Art of Good Government* in the Palazzo Publico - and not only buildings. If one looks at the group riding out of the Porta Romana, as Thomas will have done, you will notice a boar - but not just *any* old pig: black bristled with a band of white round the middle this is a *Cinta Sinese* - a Siena Girdle - or Saddleback as we might say, and such as still live in the hills around Siena - I have seen them.

And onward ever onwards: *Ultreia!*, as the medieval pilgrims would have said. Past the Romanesque gem of the church of Abbadia San Antimo. Mount Amiata, glowering forbiddingly - we chickened out from taking a short cut across the summit and circumnavigated the base instead. The Abbadia San Salvatore, once the home of the *Codex Amiatinus*.<sup>12</sup> The Church of San Sepolcro at Aqua

Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. And onwards yet again, past the volcanic lake of Bolsena - the town of the same name has its own local saint - Santa Christina - whose shrine in the church we saw. To Montefiascone where, in the Lower Church of San Flaviano, we saw frescoes of the "Three Living" and the "Three Dead" and, in a side chapel, the tomb of Giovanni Defugger (d. 1114), the man who sent ahead his squire to write EST - "this is it" - on the door of an inn that sold the best wine in Montefiascone but the young man found a place where the wine was so amazingly good that he wrote EST!!! EST!!! EST!!! And so at last to **Viterbo** where we finished this, our penultimate stage, and where, a week before Easter 2005, we commenced our seventh and final one.

**The Seventh Stage, Easter 2005** Viterbo contained a papal palace to which the Pontiff would retire if things got too hot for him in Rome - literally or metaphorically. If there is one defining image of the place, it is the delicate Gothic tracery of the Loggia at the Papal Palace. Less aesthetic no doubt, but far more rewarding in a way, was the humble Ospedale Domus Dei, that we located outside the Porta Romana - again how many visitors to this great showplace have seen this lowly edifice? It was *in restauro* at the time of our visit and we talked to the workmen and read the notice on the wall from which we learnt that the original foundation had been made by Visconte Gatti and his

wife, Theodora Cappocci, in 1303. As we left the Porta Romana we knew that we had five more days ahead of us: nothing so special about them except perhaps at Sutri (it figures in Macauley's *Lays of Ancient Rome* - "before the Gates of Sutrium is met that great array, a proud man was Lars Porsenna upon that trysting day...") where there is a rock-cut amphitheatre and *mithreum* converted into the Church of Santa Maria del Parte, St Mary of Child Birth, where there were frescoes showing a group of thirteenth-century pilgrims.... And so on down the *Via Cassia* till we got to La Storta where, a few miles south of the little town, we saw the sign that we had been waiting for - not the one that showed us the *Via Cassia* itself heading straight for Rome and which it would enter via the famous Milvian Bridge, but the *Via Trionfale*, the traditional pilgrim route, branching off to the right. This is the route that we took - in the footsteps of Thomas Hassall who had preceded us by 600 years - or rather, by now it was ~~most~~ to abode to the ~~now~~ when the ~~Emperor~~ Capital And the ~~old~~ brothers road up Monte

### WE HAD ARRIVED!!!

Arrived - just in time to see a last glimpse of a frail figure at a window overlooking St Peter's Square looking down over the crowds on Easter Sunday. Two days later he was dead.

#### **Medieval Pilgrim Hostels and Inns.**

**Hostels** In the account of the pilgrimage to Rome given above, two major and two lesser pilgrim hostels have been mentioned. The first of these was the Commenda di San Giovanni di Prè, situated just outside the lower city gate at Genoa. Then there was the great pilgrim hostel across from the cathedral in Siena. Smaller in scale were the facilities provided by the Knights of the Tau at Altopascio south of Lucca and the hostel built by Visconte Gatti and his wife, Theodora Cappocci, in 1303 at Viterbo. The accommodation will have been supplemented by monasteries and inns along the various pilgrim routes. The same situation will have obtained in Rome itself.<sup>13</sup>

**Pilgrim Hostels in Rome** There were a number of hostels catering for pilgrims and the Schola of the Germanorum (see below). In what follows I shall look at the hostels which were endowed for pilgrims from England.

**Santo Spirito in Sassia**<sup>14</sup> There appears to have been a settlement of expatriate Saxons living in Rome across the Tiber near the Vatican - as witnessed by the finds of Anglo-Saxon coins.<sup>15</sup> William of Malmesbury (d. 1143) says that it was founded by King Offa of Mercia (757-796), while Matthew Paris (d.1259) in *The Chronica Minora* attributes its foundation to Ine of Wessex who went to live in Rome c. 726. By the beginning of the thirteenth century the settlement - or whatever it was - had run down and the Pope, Innocent III, built the Hospital of Santo Spirito on the site. It may have combined the role of both

hospital and pilgrims' hostel - so asks Francis Davey who wonders if William Wey stayed there.<sup>16</sup> The hospital attracted a number of charitable donations including one from King John of England (1199-1216). The building burnt to the ground in the fifteenth century and was rebuilt between 1473-1478 by Pope Sixtus.<sup>17</sup> It was sacked again (according to Francis Davey) in 1527 and was rebuilt in the sixteenth century. Francis cites as a parallel the hospice for German pilgrims which can be seen and visited next to the German Church of Santa Maria dell'Anima in the Piazza Navona. At Easter 2005 we visited the Church of Santo Spirito in Sassia and what had once been one of the "wards" or dormitories - this would originally have resembled the wards in the Hospital of the Knights of Rhodes.

Becket (1118-1170) as the Hospital of the Holy Trinity.<sup>18</sup> After Becket's death Thomas the Martyr. It was refounded "by subscription" in 1362. John Stow (*Annales*, p. 335) records a list of those who contributed. It included merchants but also the Cheshire Knights, Sir Robert Knolles, Sir Hugh Calverley and Sir significant fortunes in France and elsewhere in the Hundred Years War and also, as members of the Companies as mercenaries." They were also well-known philanthropists. Sir John Hawkwood was actually in Rome in 1382 and 1387.

The Hostel of St Thomas survived the Reformation to become the Venerable English College. It is located at Via di Monserrato 45 and the Chapel of St Thomas of Canterbury is adjacent.

**Hostel of St Edmund** In 1396 the canons of St Chrysogonus' Church on the Viale Trastevere across the Tiber let a house nearby at a peppercorn rent to an expatriate London merchant and banker, John White, to act as a hospice<sup>20</sup>. It was known at first as the Hospice of St Chrysogonus but later designated that of St Edmund. White took up residency and was actually living in the hospice at the time of his death in 1404. In 1464 it was amalgamated with the Hospice of St Thomas.

### **Inns**

Master Gregory in the *Graphia* - a version of the *Mirabilia Romae* - when describing the beauties of the Capitoline Venus, to which he had to make repeated return visits, says, *en passant*, "even though the hostel where I lodged was three stades distant."<sup>21</sup> This was in the early thirteenth century and is one of the very few references to a "private" inn. The inn in which Master Gregory stayed remains anonymous. There must have been many to choose from. When we entered Rome on the *Via Trionfale* on Good Friday 2005 we passed an ancient building on the left-hand side of the road. This turned out to be the "Antico Falcone," the *piu antico trattoria* in Rome. A notice told us that it was a

medieval post-house and had originated in the 1,400s - so technically just post-Thomas and yet... and had belonged to the Strozzi family ("Monumento Nazionale dal 1935"). It was closed, but the owner let us look inside.

But the biggest surprise of all came when I was preparing this piece for the CPR Rome day on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2009, for I discovered that the place where we were staying, the "Albergo del Sole," is listed along with seven other named inns in a document of 1468! Counting Master Gregory's establishment and the "Antico Falcone" we have a total of ten, but this must be only the tip of the iceberg.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> J. P. Earwaker, *The History of the Ancient Parish of Sandbach* (1890), p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> H. J. Hewitt, *A History of Cheshire Vol. 5: Cheshire Under the Three Edwards* (1967), pp. 104, 109 with text, translation and photo between pp. 86-7

<sup>3</sup> For the interpretation of the phrase I am indebted to Prof. C. Harper-Bill (personal communication, 2nd June 2005).

<sup>4</sup> The following is based on the note in the seal tray at the Antiquaries and H. A. Rye, "The Episcopal seals of Coventry and Lichfield," *Burton on Trent Archaeological Society Transactions* IV, pt 2 (1899), p. 90. Antiquaries shelf mark, C.G.4 in gallery.

John Burghill, Bishop of Llandaff 1397 and Confessor to King Richard II, translated to Lichfield 1399 - 1415, will have had four seals:

1) A vesica-shaped Seal of Dignity. There is a cast of this in the seal tray at the Society of Antiquaries in Burlington House. The Bishop is represented seated under a rich canopy with tabernacle work at the sides, fully vested; the right hand raised in benediction, the left hands holds a pastoral staff curved outwards; he is shown with three shields bearing coats of arms: on the left the arms of the Confessor (*azure a cross flory between four doves or*) empaling England; on the right England quartering France - at the end of his life Richard was briefly married to Isabel daughter of King Charles VI of France; in base the arms of Burghill, *paly of ten argent and sable, on a bend rouge three escallops charged with a mitre or.* Round the edge S(IGILLUM); JOHNS : DEI: GR: LICHFELD : ET: COM: [CEST]RIE\*: EPISCOPI. \* Or [CESTR]JENSI

2) A vesica-shaped counter seal c 1 5/8 x 1/6, full length seated figure of Our Lady and Holy Child ... (M)ARIA GRACI.... The Bishop was a Dominican.

3) A *sigillum ad causas* used to endorse marriage licences etc. I do not have a description of this. This was presumably the seal used on the licence granted to Thomas.

4) The bishop's *signet* (the same as the *sigillum ad causas*?) was not necessarily an episcopal seal but used for sealing his private correspondence. It is sometimes used as a counter seal to the Seal of Dignity.

<sup>5</sup> J. Maddison, "Building at Lichfield during the Episcopate of Walter Langton, 1296-1321," in J. Maddison (ed.), *Medieval Archaeology and Architecture in Lichfield*, BAA (1993). Copy in the Institute of Historical Research (London), Local History BC 271.

<sup>6</sup> Debra Birch *Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages* (1998), pp. 43, 45 and p.42 (map with alternative routes across France to Beaune and thence to Piacenza). A second map (p. 44) gives two alternative routes from Piacenza to Montefiascone and thence as one to Rome. These were taken by Nikolas of Munkathera and Albert of Stade and correspond to the two Italian routes given by Matthew Paris. See also Lewis Art of Matthew Paris in *The Chronica Maiora*, pp. 321-376.

<sup>7</sup> C. Given-Wilson (ed. and trans), *The Chronicle of Adam of Usk, 1377-1421* (1977), pp. 152-55. See also G.B. Park, *English Travellers to Rome* (1954), p. 137.

<sup>8</sup> Francis Davey, "William Wey's Pilgrimage to Rome in 1458," Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome Newsletter, No. 6 (April 2009), pp. 2-15. Publication of Francis Davey's book by the

Bodleian Press is imminent. See also Williams, G., *The Itineraries of William Wey* (Roxburgh Club), 1857, pp xx-xxii. Wey's route is identical to an anonymous itinerary in the Bodleian, Tanner MS No 2 fol. 139, 140.

<sup>9</sup> Brian Spencer, "The Holy face of Lucca," *Medieval Finds from Excavations in London: 7, Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges* (1998), pp. 254-255.

<sup>10</sup> V. Notin, *Valérie et Thomas Becket* (1999), with a catalogue of those Becket Chasses known to her.

<sup>11</sup> *Journal of the Chester Archaeological and Historical Society*, NS 14 (1907), p. 206.

<sup>12</sup> Chris George, "The Codex Amiatinus," Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome Newsletter, No. 4 (August 2008), pp. 15-16.

<sup>13</sup> In general see Thomas Szabo "Gli Ospedali," in Mario D'Onofrio (ed.) *Romei e Giubile: il Pellegrinaggio Medievale a San Pietro, 350-1350* (1999), pp.127-136.

<sup>14</sup> W.J.Moore, *The Saxon Pilgrims to Rome and the Schola Saxonum*, Fribourg (1937). Debra Birch *Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages* (1998), see Index under "Santo Spirito, hospital of."

<sup>15</sup> C.E.Blunt et al, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England* (1989), pp. xxvii, for the Rome hoard and other finds and hoards of A/S coins in Rome with bibliographical refs. E.g. M.A.O'Donovan, "The Vatican Hoard," *British Numismatic Chronicle* No. 33 (1964?), pp. 7-10 for the circumstances under which AS coins came to Rome - pious gifts, "Peter's Pence," etc. The Vatican Hoard was found on the site of the Vatican Wireless station in c. 1928.]

<sup>16</sup> Francis Davey, Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome Newsletter, No 6 (April 2009), pp. 2-15 and, for Santo Spirito, see especially p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> For a Fresco in the Ospedale di Santo Spirito in Sassia showing the Hospital built by Sixtus IV in early 1480s see Gloria Fossi (ed.), *Rome, The Pilgrims' Dream* (1988), plate p.179. Ibid, plate p. 102, an illuminated letter, mid 14th century, showing dining in the Hospitale di Santo Spirito.

<sup>18</sup> See especially Margaret Harvey, *The English in Rome 1362-1420* (1999), Ch. 3, pp. 55-76 (St Thomas's Hospice).

<sup>19</sup> For articles on Sir Hugh Calvely and Robert Knolles see *Journal of the Chester Archaeological and Historical Society*, NS 14 (1907/8), p. 206, and for the monument of the former *The Colour of Heraldry* (1958, published by the Heraldry Society (1958), Plate 14. For Sir John Hawkwood see, e.g., Frances Stonor Saunders, *Hawkwood, Diabolical Englishman* (2004) and for his monument in Florence Plate 26.

<sup>20</sup> Harvey, see note18, Ch. 4, pp. 77-90.

<sup>21</sup> G. McN. Rushforth, "Master Gregory *De Mirabilis Urbis Romae*: a new description of Rome in the twelfth century," *Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol 9 (1919), pp. 14-58, and section 12 and Plate I for his admiration of the nude statue. Also, more recently, *Master Gregorius: Narracio de Mirabilibus Urbis Romae*, trans. J. Osborne, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Canada (1987) not seen by me. Three stades is in fact only about half

## Rome for the modern pilgrim, 5: the continuing Christianisation of Rome – churches built between the fall of Rome in 410 and the time of St Benedict (ca 500).

Howard Nelson

This series of articles is designed to give the pilgrim a chronological framework for Rome's extraordinary, and extraordinarily rich, jumble of churches and monuments. Previous articles<sup>1</sup> have looked at the earliest traces of Christianity, programme, and at the beginnings of the more systematic Christianisation of Rome which began after Constantine had departed for the east. I turn now to the churches built in the turbulent 5<sup>th</sup> century, beginning with the fall of Rome to under Guiseric in 455, the deposition of the last emperor of the west in 476, and ending with the time of St Benedict (480-547).

My first thought – since there are quite a lot of churches to cover – was to be selective, but in fact, the 5<sup>th</sup> century churches include many of the most interesting, and in some cases the most beautiful, of Rome's early churches: Santa Sabina, Santa Maria Maggiore, and San Stefano Rotondo among them – alongside which the 4<sup>th</sup> century churches covered last time begin to seem quite modest.

Most of the churches described here are illustrated much more fully in the Gallery, section entitled *Rome: 5<sup>th</sup> century churches*. To see them go to

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Very shortly after the foundation of the last church we looked at, S Giovanni e Paolo, Rome was conquered in 410 by Alaric and the Goths, causing a shock which reverberated around the known world<sup>2</sup>. Many of the churches we have already described were looted of the treasures they had been endowed with (and which are listed in detail in the Liber Pontificalis); but overall, the damage seems to have been relatively limited, and church-building resumed fairly quickly. In any case, the Goths were Christian (albeit Arians and therefore, since the Council of Nicea in 325, formally heretical); and one of the churches described below, Sant'Agata dei Goti, was built for Rome's Gothic community.

And in fact the shock that the city which had captured the world should itself have been captured seems to have acted as a spur to the early 5<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>1</sup> See CPR Newsletter #3, 4 , 5 & 6 (April, August & December 2008; April 2009).

<sup>2</sup> It inspired, for example, Augustine's *City of God*, which argued that the true city of God is

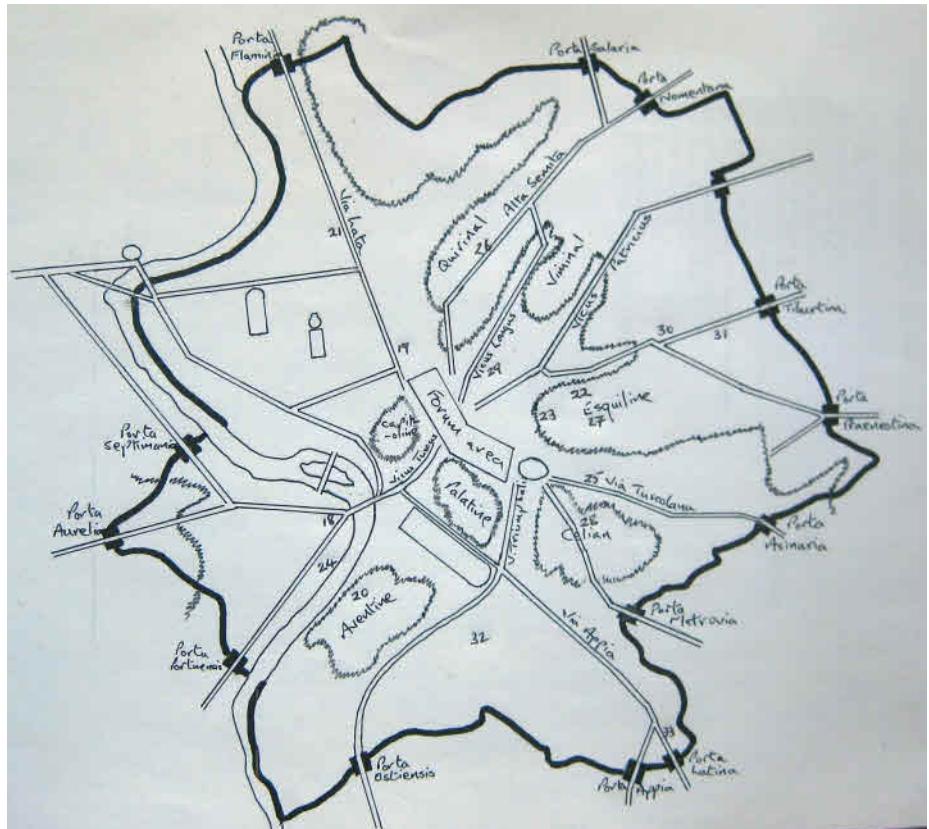
Popes Innocent I, Celestine, Sixtus III and Leo the Great to move decisively into the power vacuum created by the absence of the emperor, to turn Rome entirely away from its pagan past, and by combining classical and Christian motifs in their churches, to declare that Rome remained the capital city it had always been: only now the capital of a Christian world.

I have the impression that there was a shift in the meaning of the word *titulus*<sup>3</sup> during the 5<sup>th</sup> century, arising – possibly – from the fact that most of the buildings previously owned by Christian families had already been converted into parish/missionary churches. The earlier *tituli* bore the name of the individual or family who had given the land to the Christian community. Now we find a number of foundations bearing not the donor's name but the dedicatee's: San Pietro in Vincoli is a case in point, while San Crisogono is nicely ambiguous.

It might be helpful before going any further to refer back to the “mental map” of churches in the overall geography of Rome. The map which follows locates all the churches described here, their numbering continuing the sequence used in the similar map included in the previous article.

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<sup>3</sup> See the beginning of my article in the CPR Newsletter #6, April 2009 for the original nature of the *tituli*.



- 18. San Crisogono
- 19. San Marcello al Corso
- 20. Santa Sabina
- 21. San Lorenzo in Lucina
- 22. Santa Maria Maggiore
- 23. San Pietro in Vincoli
- 24. Santa Cecilia in Trastevere
- 25. SS Quattro Coronati
- 26. Santa Susanna
- 27. Santa
- 28. San Stefano Rotondo
- 29. Sant'Agata dei Goti
- 30. San Eusebio
- 31. Santa Bibiana
- 32. Santa Balbina
- 33. San Giovanni a Porta Latina

## **Titulus Chrysogoni = San Crisogono**



San Crisogono: vestiges of the original church  
below the present one



San Crisogono: fresco of St  
Benedict healing a leper

The *Titulus Chrysogoni* was situated in Trastevere, beside the main road coming in from the Porta Aurelia and leading directly to the Pons Aemilius (now

Via Lungarella and the Ponte Palatino); it was installed early in the 5<sup>th</sup> century in a late second-century *domus*, possibly belonging to a Christian named Chrysogonus (though it is a little unusual for the name of a *titulus* to be maintained in the later church's dedication: the martyr Chrysogonus does not seem to have had a particular connection to Rome). Although no traces of Christian use of the *domus* remain, much of the early church is still visible (and open to visitors) below the present one. The central section has been filled in to support the later building above, but you can walk freely around it. The two lateral walls are those of the original Roman house, which were lengthened to create an apsidal hall some 60m long. Parts of the original floor survive, the remains of a baptistery can be seen in the left-hand side-chapel, and there are remains of early frescoes in the sanctuary and on the walls of the apse: one of them may show St Benedict healing a leper. This is a silent and haunting spot, little visited by tourists, and deeply evocative – because so much remains visible and intelligible to the untrained eye - of the earliest period of church-building in Rome. It is worth a prolonged and lingering visit.

the apse is a mosaic attributed to the 13<sup>th</sup> century aster Pietro Cavallini showing

Curiously, this church was not noticed by the Einsiedln pilgrim in 800<sup>4</sup>, although Pope Gregory III (s 731-741) had made major improvements to it not very long before his visit (and the church is included in the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* of 1143<sup>5</sup>).



San Marcello al Corso

This church is first mentioned in 418 when Boniface I (s 418-422) was consecrated here as bishop of Rome: it must have been of some importance to have been thus selected. It is dedicated to the very short-lived Pope Marcellus I (s 308-309), and may have been built shortly before 410; it was evidently completed soon after. It stands slightly to the east of the Via Lata, near its southern end. Archaeology has revealed a few traces of the original church, which was aligned to the west (unlike the present church which is aligned to the east, so that its main front now faces the Corso), and which was built on the site of the *Catabulum*, the stables for the Imperial post-horses – where, according to

<sup>4</sup> Gerold Walser, *Die Einsiedler Inschriftenammlung und der Pilgerführer durch Rom (Codex Einsidlensis 326)*, Stuttgart 1987. Hereafter GW for the text and EI for the Itineraries.

<sup>5</sup> Which reports, moreover, that the church held among its relics the arm of St James the Great

legend, Pope Marcellus was condemned to work by Constantine's predecessor Maxentius, and where he died. The *Liber Pontificalis*<sup>6</sup>, which records this story, also credits Marcellus with the organization of the 25 Roman *tituli* into dioceses [presumably parishes] "for the baptism and repentance of many converts from paganism". As was increasingly the case in the Christianisation of Rome, San Marcello was endowed with a baptistery from the beginning: according to the information panel outside the church it was discovered in 1912, and now lies below the present Banco di Roma building on the opposite side of the Corso. It was not evidently to be seen at the time of my visit.

San Marcello was thus, with San Marco and the now lost (but possibly on the site of today's SS Apostoli) *Basilica Iulii iuxta Forum Traiani*, one of a group of churches established at the foot of the Capitol, clearly intended to declare the presence of Christianity at the heart of Imperial Rome.

The church was restored in the 8<sup>th</sup> century under Hadrian I (s 772-795) and 1519, and the present church dates from the subsequent 16<sup>th</sup> century rebuilding.



Santa Sabina, the exterior



and the nave

Santa Sabina, on the summit of the Aventine Hill, is one of the loveliest, and best-preserved of the ancient churches in Rome. It was built under Pope Celestine I (s 422-432) or his successor Sixtus III (s 432-440) with funds given by a presbyter from Dalmatia called Peter. Excavation below the church has revealed traces of a Roman *domus* said to have belonged to a Roman matron called Sabina, who was later canonized: one of the few instances where the *titulus* name and the eventual dedication coincide. Fragments of the previous

<sup>6</sup> *Liber Pontificalis* = *The Book of Pontiffs ... the ancient biographies of the first ninety Roman bishops to AD 715*, trans Raymond Davis, Liverpool University Press, 2000 (hereafter LP), para 31

building survive: a single column is preserved in the right-hand aisle.

The building is lofty, and the inside gracious and uncluttered: perhaps most remarkable is the use of a matched set of columns and capitals – a feature hardly ever encountered once imperial support for church-building had ceased, and builders had to rely on the spoils that happened to be available in the local yards. Overall, the building gives evidence of the growing classical influence in church building which asserted itself in the wake of Alaric's invasion. It recalls in many ways the basilicas of Ravenna.

The church's dedication is recorded in a large blue and gold mosaic at the western end, which includes female figures representing Jewish and Gentile converts to Christianity. But the most extraordinary survivals of all are the wooden doors, the carved panels of which (though they have probably been remounted in the wrong order in restored frames) date from the church's foundation. Among them – in the top left-hand corner, and very hard to see – is the earliest known representation of the crucifixion.

Astonishingly, Santa Sabina is not included in the Einsiedeln Itineraries<sup>7</sup>. The compiler also omits the nearby Santa Prisca, which – given its association with

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<sup>7</sup> Nor – perhaps even odder – the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* of 1143.

<sup>8</sup> There is some debate about the sources, or mixture of sources, used by the Einsiedler (see GW pp 159-160): a map or maps, other visitors' accounts, and personal observation. His omission of two major churches on the Aventine, which would surely have been included if he had relied on the first two, suggests to me that he did indeed visit Rome, but simply failed to climb the Aventine.

## **Titulus Lucinae = San Lorenzo in Lucina**



San Lorenzo in Lucina, the façade

Evidence that the supporters of Damasus gathered *in Lucinis* in 366 to elect him Pope (against his rival Ursinus, whose supporters were meeting in the Basilica Liberii, and where 137 of them were killed in the violent fracas which ensued) indicates that there was some sort of Christian establishment on this spot, in a house or property donated by a woman named Lucina, before Sixtus III (s 432-440) founded this church in 435. Archaeological investigation below the church<sup>9</sup> has revealed a fragment of fresco and two small pieces of mosaic flooring belonging to a 2<sup>nd</sup>-century *domus*, over which an *insula*<sup>10</sup> was built in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The masonry appears to show that the 5<sup>th</sup> century church was built on the foundations of the *insula*, but it includes no evidence for a specifically

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<sup>9</sup> A very interesting guided tour is given at 1630 hrs on the first Saturday of the month –

<sup>10</sup> The Blue Guide to Rome (9<sup>th</sup> ed, by Alta Macadam, 2006) has a useful paragraph on Roman domestic architecture at p 506.



Remains of the 5<sup>th</sup> century baptistery below the present church

In terms of location, the church was built close by the Via Lata, the continuation down to the Forum of the Via Flaminia, a little north of the column of Marcus Aurelius, adjacent to the Ara Pacis of Augustus, and covering part of the same emperor's massive Horologium. The gnomon of this great sun-dial, originally an Egyptian obelisk, was still standing in 800 when the Einsiedler included it in his Itineraries, and though it was lost thereafter, it was rediscovered late in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and re-erected in the Piazza di Montecitorio, some 100m south of its original position, where it still stands – with moreover a line of brass strips set into the paving to record the length of its shadow at different times of the year, so that it still retains part of its original function. One could hardly have found a more significant spot at which to declare Christianity's supersession of Imperial Rome.



Santa Maria Maggiore, the façade<sup>11</sup>



and the apse mosaic

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<sup>11</sup> Photo Michael Krier (all others are my own).

Further evidence, if it were needed after Santa Sabina, for Rome's relatively rapid recovery from the damage done by Alaric in 410 is provided by the *Ecclesia Sanctae Dei Genitricis*, today's Santa Maria Maggiore, which was also founded under Sixtus III, and very shortly after the Council of Ephesus (431) had declared Mary *Theotokos* or *Genetrix Dei*, Mother of God. It is thus the earliest western foundation with this dedication. It was not a *titulus*, in the sense either of being built on land previously belonging to a member of the Christian community, nor in the sense of serving a local parish: it was something like twice the size of any of the *tituli*. With no clergy of its own, it was designed for papal services outside the Lateran, for the benefit of the city as a whole, and still ranks, with San Giovanni, San Pietro and San Paolo fuori le Mura as a patriarchal basilica. Archaeological research has uncovered the remains of a large imperial building on the site, thus refuting the statement in the *Liber Pontificalis*<sup>12</sup> that it was built on the site of the earlier Basilica Liberii<sup>13</sup> (which must however have stood nearby).

The church was the largest of those founded by Popes, and it has retained much of its original layout and interior decoration, including the mosaics: so the present-day church, despite exterior re-modeling, gives a remarkably good sense of the size and spaciousness of the original building. Above each pair of columns there was originally a single large window (still visible in the exterior masonry of the clerestory level): alternate windows are now blocked, but the nave must at first have been extraordinarily well-lit. With Santa Sabina, Santa Maria Maggiore probably represents the summit of Late Antique church building, and together, they best represent the fusion of classical style and Christian motif.

The mosaic cycle of Biblical scenes around the walls above the columns was innovative and rare in its time, and is a unique survival<sup>14</sup>: it would be worth taking a pair of binoculars on your visit, as the scenes are high up and hard to see. Likewise, the mosaics of the triumphal arch are original: Mary's depiction in Roman imperial robes recalls both the apse of Santa Pudenziana, and the later imperial mosaics in Ravenna showing Justinian and Theodora. The apse itself was replaced under Nicholas IV (s 1288-1292). A contemporary church outside Rome which survived long enough to be recorded suggests that it may have shown the Madonna enthroned with the Child<sup>15</sup>, as opposed to the present scene of her coronatio

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<sup>12</sup> LP, 46,3. The legend is repeated in the Blue Guide, pp 245-6.

<sup>14</sup> Hugo Brandenburg *Ancient Churches of Rome from the fourth to the seventh century*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2004, pp. 185-189 has a good discussion of the content and significance of this mosaic cycle. (I have relied heavily on Brandenburg for this article, and refer to it hereafter as HB.)

## **Titulus S Petri in vinculis = San Pietro in Vincoli**



San Pietro in Vincoli: the nave



and the chains

This was another foundation on one of the main thoroughfares leading into the city; it stood on the northern slope of the Esquiline Hill, facing Subura, and close to some of the major buildings of the imperial city: the Templum Pacis and the Baths of Trajan. Relatively large among the *tituli*, it also dates from the time of Sixtus III, and appears to have been built with imperial support. There seems to have been an earlier church on this spot, but it was rapidly superseded by Sixtus's building, which incorporated substantial parts of its predecessor: remains of the original fenestration can be seen in the cloister of the adjacent monastery. The first church was dedicated to SS Peter and Paul, but it may be that the gift of St Peter's chains lay behind both the imperial patronage and the decision to replace the older building so quickly. In any case, once the church held the chains, the dedication to St Paul was dropped. The chains themselves, among Rome's most revered relics, are well displayed below the altar.

Archaeology has revealed a number of Roman villas below the present church, but there seems to be no hard evidence of a pre-existing Christian foundation; so this church exemplifies the gradual shift in the meaning of the word *titulus*, from a church built on land previously owned by a member of the congregation to newly-founded parish church.

The internal columns are an unusually well-matched set of classical *spolia*, a sign perhaps of the imperial family's interest in this foundation. Otherwise the church was restored in the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

The church contains Michelangelo's unfinished tomb for Pope Julius II (d. 1513), of which the massive figure of Moses is the only truly impressive element.

## **Titulus Caeciliae transtiberim = Santa Cecilia in Trastevere**



Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, the façade



and the figure of the saint

Approached through a garden courtyard, Santa Cecilia is a cool and lovely spot, one of those which take your breath away for a moment, when you enter, leaving you standing in quiet awe at the grace and beauty of the space before you.

A white marble statue of St Cecilia, carved by a young sculptor who was present when her body was rediscovered in 1599, lies in a black niche below the altar. She lies on her side, her face shrouded with a cloth, and her outstretched hands extending three fingers and one respectively: a representation of her faith in the Trinity even at the moment of death. Strictly speaking the gesture may be anachronistic, however moving, since the doctrine of the Trinity, though debated, was not formalised until the Council of Nicea in 325. What would be really interesting however is to know what drove the early martyrs: what they believed so passionately in these early years before the theologians found a way – still valid for us as we say the Nicene Creed – of expressing the extraordinary mysteries of the Incarnation and the Triune nature of the Christian God.

The church is thought to have been built on the site of Cecilia's house, where she was martyred in 230 (first by being shut into the over-heated bath – the method chosen by Constantine a century later to dispose of his wife Fausta – and then, when that failed, by beheading). You can visit the remains of Roman buildings below the church, though they are ambiguous and not clearly interpreted: there seem to be the remains of both a *domus* and an *insula*. The building is thought to have been adapted for Christian use in the 5<sup>th</sup> century – hence its inclusion in this section; the remains of a baptistery have been found, and the cult of St Cecilia is attested here from an early date, but it was not until 820, when Cecilia's remains were translated here from the catacomb of Calixtus, that a basilica was built. The apse mosaic, standing in rather sharp contrast to the much later decoration of the rest of the nave, is from the 820 construction. Christ is accompanied by SS Peter and Paul, Valerian, Agatha and

Cecilia, together with the church's founder, Pope Pascal I (s 817-824), holding the church, and given a square nimbus to indicate that he was alive (and therefore not yet sainted!) at the time the mosaic was made. He and Cecilia are shown just a little closer together than the other figures – perhaps an indication of the special devotion he felt for her. Both the women saints are dressed as royal ladies of the Late Imperial period (cf Theodora at Ravenna). It is extraordinary to think that this church was built, and the mosaic made, only twenty years after the visit of the Einsiedeln monk<sup>16</sup>, who mentions a church dedicated to St Cecilia (proving that the cult existed here before the translation of the relics).

Though strategically placed near the point where the Via Portuensis reached the from the road behind its gracious courtyard.

#### **Titulus Aemilianus = SS Quattro Coronati**



SS Quattro Coronati



and the “Donation of Constantine” in the chapel of St Sylvester

This church stands just south of the old Via Tuscolana, on the northern slope of the Celian Hill, and in the area that used to be known as Caput Africæ (indeed one of the streets leading down from here to the Colosseum is called Via Capo d'Africa to this day): once again, close to one of the principal thoroughfares leading in to the heart of the city. The earliest references call this church titulus Aemilianus, but it seems that the four crowned martyrs (who have not been clearly identified, but may have been stone-masons in Pannonia – now Hungary - who were killed for refusing to sculpt a statue of Aesculapius) were venerated here from an early date, and the present name has been in use since at least the 5<sup>th</sup> century. There is no archaeological evidence for an earlier Christian building on the site: the church as we have it was installed in the great hall, already

furnished with an apse (which is still a prominent feature of the present building), of a Roman *domus* of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. This first church was rebuilt on a huge

As a building, the Quattro Coronati could not be more different from most of the gracious and airy basilicas that we have looked at so far: it is a massive structure more reminiscent of a medieval castle than a church or monastery - especially when seen from below, on the Via San Giovanni in Laterano. You enter through a gateway below a ninth-century Romanesque bell-tower (in fact the oldest surviving *campanile* in the city); at the back of the first courtyard you reach the narthex of the twelfth-century church, which now gives on to a second courtyard, created when the church was reconstructed (in 1110) on a smaller scale after its sack and burning by Robert Guiscard in 1084. Pillars which used to be part of the nave have been uncovered in the wall of this courtyard.

The present church is high and dark with bare chocolate-brown walls, Romanesque arches and a Romanesque clerestory – it is in fact one of the very few surviving Romanesque churches in Rome, having miraculously managed to escape the attentions of the Renaissance and Baroque re-builders. To the left a small doorway gives access to a delightful little cloister with a trickling fountain in its center. Possibly the most interesting feature of SS Quattro Coronati however is the chapel of St Sylvester, decorated in 1246 with a cycle of frescoes showing episodes in the lives of Pope Sylvester (s 314-335) and Constantine, most of which show the Emperor more or less subservient to the Pope: Constantine's fictitious baptism by Sylvester in the Lateran Baptistry features; in another scene, Constantine, on foot, leads Sylvester's horse; and most notorious of all – though evidently providing the context for all the other scenes – the well-known

"Donation of Constantine", which is based on a forged ms of about 752. The kneeling Emperor offers his tiara to the Pope, an invented episode long used to

## Santa Susanna



Santa Susanna

Santa Susanna stands in another prominent location, on the old Alta Semita, which ran along the ridge of the Quirinal, and only a short distance from the Baths of Diocletian. What little evidence there is suggests a 5<sup>th</sup> century parts of an early Christian hall below the present church: these can be seen through glass panels let into the floor of the sacristy.

Little of the original church survives; but the apse and the exterior wall of the Carolingian rebuilding (under Leo III, s 795-816) are still visible from the adjacent street. It is thought that the apse mosaic from this time included both

The church is now the home of the American expatriate community in Rome.

## **Titulus Praxedis = Santa Prassede**



Santa Prassede, the nave



and the ceiling of the San Zeno chapel

This is one of the most delightful of Rome's early churches, located in a side street a few minutes walk from Santa Maria Maggiore; though only a fraction of the size, it quite makes up in interest. It is dedicated to Prassede the daughter of Senator Pudens and sister of Pudenziana, whose own church lies just on the other side of Santa Maria Maggiore, and which we covered in the previous article.

The church is recorded in late 5<sup>th</sup> century sources, and the original building, although restored by Hadrian I (s 772-795), was apparently soon in danger of collapse, and was replaced by a new structure nearby, early in the 9<sup>th</sup> century<sup>17</sup>. The well-known and richly decorated chapel of St Zeno – which includes one of the relatively few images of St James the Great in Rome<sup>18</sup> – dates from this period. (There is, incidentally, a funerary slab in the floor of the nave which has all the appearance of belonging to a Santiago pilgrim.)

The arch mosaic, which also dates from the 9<sup>th</sup> century reconstruction, bears

<sup>17</sup> This may be enough to explain the otherwise odd omission of Santa Prassede from the Einsiedeln Itineraries: the compiler must have visited Rome in the short interval between the collapse of the old building and the construction of the new one.

<sup>18</sup> i.e. independent groups showing all 12 apostles.

comparison with that of San Paolo fuori le Mura; and in the apse, the two martyred sisters are presented to Christ by Peter and Paul. With Santa Susanna, therefore, we have another relatively unchanged example of church-building of the Carolingian period.

There is a small crypt with a rounded end and a very faded fresco of the Virgin with two saints above the Cosmati-fronted altar.

### San Stefano Rotondo



San Stefano Rotondo, the façade



and the interior

With San Stefano Rotondo, we come to one of the most dramatic and beautiful churches in Rome. Built only a few years after the sack of Rome by the Vandals under Gaiseric, it stands on the top of the Celian hill, and is described by Hugo Brandenburg as "one of the most peculiar and magnificent buildings of Late Antiquity"<sup>19</sup>. The original church on this site, dedicated to the first martyr Stephen, saint developed, by the present building, which was dedicated by Pope Simplicius (s468-483)<sup>20</sup>.

The church's circular form has led to speculation that it might previously have been a pagan temple, or a secular building of some kind, but there is no archaeological evidence to support this. It was built, like San Giovanni in Laterano, on the site of a barracks of imperial troops – in this case the *Peregrini*; the remains of their Mithreum have been found below the church, and can be seen by appointment<sup>21</sup>. San Stefano was in fact originally cross-shaped (a form

<sup>20</sup> HB, p. 204, reports that coins from 461-465 have been found in the foundations, while dendrochronological analysis of the roof timbers dates them to the mid 460s; an extraordinarily precise frame for the dating of the building.

<sup>21</sup> Phone 00 39 06 39967700 for information and to book a place on a visit.

which does have antecedents elsewhere, including Constantine's Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople), but the transepts have now disappeared, and the form is – ambiguously enough – more reminiscent of the earlier imperial mausolea; the nearest analogy in Rome

and must have been built with imperial support; what remains today is impressive enough. A relatively sombre outer aisle surrounds a rank of granite columns which in turn define the top-lit (and now whitewashed) central area, where two taller columns support the cupola. The light is constantly changing, enhancing the drama of the church's layout. One of the original transepts survives in part, and its original and extraordinarily rich floor of many different kinds of marble has been restored.

Like Santa Maria Maggiore, San Stefano had no clergy of its own: it was intended for imperial services outside the Lateran, and for the benefit of the city as

### Sant'Agata dei Goti



Sant'Agata dei Goti, the façade



and the main altar

Sant'Agatha was founded by the Gothic general Flavius Ricimer in about 470, in the Subura quarter, between the Vicus Longus and the Vicus Patricius. It was a private rather than a public foundation, intended to serve the mainly Germanic and Gothic Arian community in Rome. It was eventually transferred to the Catholic community and given its present dedication under Gregory I (c. 590).

See *CPR Newsletter*, December 2008.

604). Though restored in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, its preserves the size and layout of the original church; and the present building, set back from the road behind an unobtrusive façade and an enclosed courtyard filled with plants, is a quiet and private spot.



San  
Eusebio

This is another church originally sited at a prominent location: at the junction of the Via Tiburtina and the Via Praenestina, a little way inside the gates, Alexander Severus erected a monumental fountain or Nimpheum, the ruins of which still form an impressive pile in the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II. The church is barely 50 m away. It was founded as the *titulus Eusebii* not later than 474. Another example of the developed meaning of the word *titulus*, it was pastoral functions to a busy and densely populated area. Very little remains of the original church; and the present one, which dates from an 18<sup>th</sup> century

## Santa Bibiana



Santa Bibiana, the courtyard



and the nave

This tiny and unobtrusive church lies at the mouth of a tunnel under the lines leading to Termini station, squeezed at an angle between the railway and the tram tracks – though in the past, it must have been more or less at right angles to the Via Tiburtina, which has entirely disappeared at this point (the Porta Tiburtina, now closed and completely out of use, is on the opposite side of the railway). The church does not seem to be easily accessible today, and no service times are posted; but a lucky encounter with a passing priest allowed me two minutes inside, enough to appreciate its tiny 3-aisled basilica shape, and its heterogeneous columns, which clearly belong to the original construction.

The church was founded under Pope Simplicius (s 468-483) on the imperial estate which also included the Sessorian Palace, into which Constantine built Santa Croce in Gerusalemme; it seems to have formed a pair with San Eusebio, just described, being located on adjacent branches of the Via Tiburtina immediately after its entry to the city. It seems to have been an important pilgrim destination in the Middle Ages<sup>23</sup>.

Santa Bibiana was rebuilt by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680) for the 1625 Jubilee: his statue of the saint above the altar bears comparison with his more

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<sup>23</sup> HR n 215

## Santa Balbina



Santa Balbina, the façade



and the nave

From the outside at least, Santa Balbina is all that one could hope for in an early church. It has clean simple lines, is made of brick, and the windows have been restored with traditional *transennae*: a joy to the eye. It is perched on a little bluff of the Piccolo Aventino behind, and overlooking, the Baths of Caracalla, so quite an out-of-the-way location. Perhaps this is why it was not noticed by the Einsiedler in 800. A notice on the gate gives very limited opening hours, and even then nobody turned up on the two occasions I tried to visit. However, a chance encounter with two determined (and Italian-speaking) English women secured access via the Casa di Riposo next door ... to reveal a church not unlike San Giovanni a Porta Latina (the next to be covered), though broader, and without side aisles: but the same bare walls with traces of ancient frescoes, and the roof-timbers visible. The alcoves either side of the nave, in which the restoration in the 1930s (by Antonio Munoz) added a modern Schola Cantorum in marble, and decorated the floor with 1st century black and white mosaics taken from a nearby necropolis.

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<sup>24</sup> Though one of them clearly shows the Virgin and Child with John the Baptist and Paul to the left, and Peter and James to the right: The inclusion of James is – except as one of

The church was built into a large apsidal hall of a wealthy private villa some time in the fifth century, though the *titulus sanctae Balbina* is not mentioned in written sources until the 6th. Balbina appears to have been the foundress of the church, and came to be regarded as its patron saint. (If she wasn't a martyr, this may be another reason for the Einseidler's failure to notice her church.) There seem to have been relatively few changes in the overall structure of the building, so this may be one of the few in which we can get a real sense of what the earliest Roman churches were like.

### San Giovanni a Porta Latina



San Giovanni a Porta Latina



and the portico

This church, just within the walls at the southern edge of the city, is a gem and a joy. It is built of brick, and so modest that even its Romanesque campanile seems extravagant. It is set back from the road, and behind a small courtyard with an enormous pine tree and a little well. A simple narthex with four gloriously unmatched columns gives on to an interior of similarly ad-hoc columns. But the first thing you notice are the windows at the east end, made of brown-marbled alabaster or selenite, which give a soft golden light to the tall and relatively narrow nave, whose roof-beams are exposed. The sense of the look and feel of a very early church is strong. The clerestory level and the arch are

restored are faded and hard to see against the light. This is a place of extraordinary calm and simplicity after the ornate and over-crowded churches of the city centre.

Archaeological evidence proves that San Giovanni was established in the 5th century, although it is not mentioned in literary sources until its restoration by

Pope Hadrian I (s 772-795). It must have been at its best when the Einsiedler saw it about 800. Located on one of the main routes out of the city to the south, it does not seem to have been intended for the benefit of a local community. It may have been a memorial of martyr church, used also by travelers entering or leaving the city.

The church is an unusual shape, recalling elements seen in churches in Constantinople and Ravenna<sup>25</sup>, and it has been suggested that these may derive from Justinian's reconquest of Rome in the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusion

We have reached the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, a turbulent period which nevertheless saw the foundation of some of Rome's most interesting, beautiful and characteristic churches. As a final glance at the time and the circumstances during which these churches were built, it is worth remembering that Benedict of Nursia was born into a noble Umbrian family in 480, and came to Rome as a young man to pursue the literary education which would have fitted him for an aristocratic career. Disenchanted with the dissolute and licentious lives of his companions, he abandoned his studies to live as a hermit in a cave situated on the precipitous rock face of a narrow valley above Subiaco, some 40 miles southeast of Rome. After founding a dozen monasteries in the area of Subiaco, he went on to found Monte Casino, and to write the Rule which remains the foundation-stone of all western monasticism.

Subiaco, though not served by a direct public-transport link from Rome, is contrast to Monte Casino, which though faithfully reconstructed after its total must have been, Subiaco is a haunting an evocative spot, well worth a visit, and offering a strong sense of what one extraordinary young man, at least, chose as an alternative to life in Rome as the 5<sup>th</sup> century In the next and final article of this ending with the Pantheon, the first previously pagan building to be converted to Christian use; a moment which may be said to set the seal on the Christianisation of Rome.

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<sup>25</sup> HR n 221

## **Book Review**

### **The Red Velvet Turnshoe**

Cassandra Clark, *The Red Velvet Turnshoe*, John Murray, 2009, 272 pages.  
ISBN: 978-1-84854-029-3. Website: [www.cassandraclark.co.uk/index.htm](http://www.cassandraclark.co.uk/index.htm)

This novel by Cassandra Clark, a member of the CPR, is not the first book that she has written. It is an historical thriller and part of an Abbess of Meaux series based on Hildegard, an intrepid Cistercian nun who is a female Richard Hannay for the Middle Ages.

There are two stories intertwined, set in 1383. The first is the murder of a scribe and the hunt for the minstrel falsely accused. The second is about Hildegard's mission to Rome to bring back the legendary Cross of Constantine as a relic for her Abbey in Yorkshire. However, powerful enemies are determined she will not succeed and her own life is in jeopardy. In telling this story Cassandra Clark illuminates the world of fourteenth-century Europe.

Although the topic of pilgrimage is part of the story, readers who have completed the *Via Francigena* journey will notice that the journey does not follow Sigeric's route. There are also gaps in which hundreds of miles are covered with the turn of a page. One correction for any reprint is that although Sembrancher appears in the story in its correct location on the map it has moved 200 miles.

The book is full of suspense and is a real page-turner, engrossing reading, skilfully structured and well-written. It is an effortless read and those interested in historical crime will be very happy to read this compelling novel. One for the beach bag on your next holiday.

**Bronwyn Marques**

## Additions to the CPR Library, April to November 2009 Howard Nelson

*Note: this list does not include items published in the Newsletter.*

**Barberini, Maria Giulia,** *The Basilica of the Santi Quattro Coronati in Rome.*  
Rome, Fratelli Palombi Editori, 1993. 72pp.

Location: CPR. Acc No: #4784.

**Boyle, Leonard**, *A short guide to St Clement's, Rome*. Rome, Collegio S. Clemente, 1989. 80 pp.

Location: CPR. Acc No: #4786

**Crump, Vincent, Step up for Europe's top treks** [Includes an account of the Via Francigena between San Gimignano and Siena, as organised by a travel company in Oxford], 2008

Location: CPR PAM 30. Acc No: #4752.

**Della Portela, Ivana**, *Roma sotterranea*. San Giovanni Lupatoto, Arsenale Editrice, 2002. 191 pp.

Location: CPR. Acc No: #4843.

**Hartley, Elizabeth et al.**, *Constantine the Great: York's Roman Emperor* [Catalogue of an exhibition held in York in 2006]. York, York Museums Trust, 2006. 280 pp.

Location: CPR. Acc No: #4816.

**Niesen, Juanita et al (eds), Auf ewige Zeiten: die Geschichte der Konstantin-Basilika [Trier].** Trier, Evangelische Kirchengemeinde, 2008. 109pp.

Location: CPR. Acc No: #4842.

**Palladio, Andrea**, *Palladio's Rome: a translation of Andrea Palladio's two guidebooks to Rome* by Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006. 285 pp.

Location: CPR, Acc No: #4783.

Pettit, William, *New web portal for the Via Francigena in Kent*, 2008.

Location: CPR PAM 31, Acc No: #4753.

**Ronig, Franz**, *Trier Cathedral*. Trier, Paulinus Verlag, 2008. 47 pp.

Location: CPR PAM 34. Acc No: #4841.

**Schwinden, Lothar**, *Rheinishes Landesmuseum Trier: introduction to the collections*. Trier, [The Museum], 1994. 39 pp.

Location: CPR PAM 33. Acc No: #4840.

**Touring Club Italiano**, *La Via Francigena del Sud da Fossanova a Roma* [Map], 2009.

Location: CPR PAM 32. Acc No: #4839.

[Highest no: #4843]

## **Secretary's Notebook**

**Bronwyn Marques**

**Membership** We have 194 members but the total will go down at the next count as we still have a number of members who have not paid their subscription and the final reminder will be sent shortly.

**Membership by country** 103 UK, 28 USA, 19 Australian, 13 Canadian, 5 Ireland and France , 3 from Denmark, Norway and Sweden, 2 from NZ and South Africa and 1 from Ghana, Gibraltar, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico and Spain. We issued 32 pilgrim records in 2009.

**Subscriptions** Our on-line bank account is now up and running. Many of you will have received an email pointing you in the direction of the CPR website where access to Pay Pal account can be found. Thank you to those who have paid. Those who have not paid by the 31<sup>st</sup> December will no longer receive the *Newsletter* or be able to access the members' only section of the website or be eligible for the pilgrim record.

**Website** Our website has been redesigned for easier use and as well as the changes. The most important of these is that there is now a members' only section which has back issues of all our *Newsletters*, the accommodation list and more nuggets will follow. Members who have paid their subscriptions will by now have received the passwords which will be changed each year.

**CPR Library** The CPR library is situated at the CSJ offices on Blackfriars Road, London SE1 and details of the items held can be found thorough the page on our website.

Pilgrims' journals are always a welcome addition to the CPR Library. A series of journals written over the years provides an overview of the development of the route itself and you could be part of that history. If you would like to donate a journal (word-processed, in a binder or folder) of your pilgrimage to the CPR Library please send it to Howard Nelson c/o the CSJ office, 27 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8NY.

**Accommodation List** If you would like a copy of the CPR accommodation list please email [culverwood3@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:culverwood3@yahoo.co.uk) and request a copy, the list is also available in the member's only section of our website.

Due to the small number of people who walk the route compared to the *Camino Francés* your feedback is even more valuable in updating and refining the list. We hope over the course of the next year or two to use the list as a basis for a CPR guide to the *Via Francigena*, similar to those published by the CSJ.

**CPR Photo Gallery** The CPR Photo Gallery is available via our website. I would encourage those with photos of good enough quality to make them available to other members via the website.

**Rome Day** Our Rome Day on Saturday November 7th was a great success and was very well attended.

*Howard Nelson* spoke about, Constantine and his Churches. Howard had some interesting ideas about their design and their situation and some very fine slides. An outline of Constantine's career before and after the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, and an examination of his church-building programme in Rome was also given.

*Anthony Brunning* spoke on Sigeric's Churches. He also gave an account of his itinerary as a modern day pilgrim who follows Archbishop Sigeric's route around Rome. Anthony pointed out how it would not have been possible to visit all the churches in the time traditionally allowed. This was accompanied by some wonderful photos.

*Mark Hassall* gave an account of one of his ancestors, Thomas de Hassalls, who was a medieval pilgrim, and his journey to Rome in 1402 and Mark's walk with Valeria Coke, from Bordeaux to Rome six hundred years later. Mark's route from Bordeaux across Provence was different to that taken by most pilgrims and it was good to get an impression of another route.

*Jim Brodie* and *Yvonne Loftus* gave a moving account of their walk from France into Andorra following a route taken by escaping prisoners in World War 2. They also showed that one needs to take proper precautions when walking in icy conditions to avoid calling out the air ambulance - as they had to for Yvonne.

**Media** There has again been more talk about filming a documentary on the *Via Francigena*. We will keep you posted as to any developments if and when they occur.

**Coming Events** This Spring there will be another Practical Pilgrim Day and the date will be circulated early in the New Year.

*We wish you all a very  
Happy New Year.*

**Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome**

**Founded November 2006**

**[www.pilgrimstorome.org](http://www.pilgrimstorome.org)**

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