

A Walk from Canterbury to Rome in 2004

By Andrew & Carole Welch



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By Andrew & Carole Welch

On Andrew leaving the Royal Navy, after 35+ years, we decided to do something 'different' and, in a weak moment, told all our family & friends that we were going to walk from Canterbury to Rome. They didn't believe us & so we had to prove them wrong!

We did a bit of training beforehand – some time in the gym (sponsored by Cannons), the circuit of Gower, some SW Coastal Path & a few days on Dartmoor, but not much.

The following pages contain the Daily Dispatches (DDs) sent from Andrew's BlackBerry throughout our walk. For those unaware of Naval signalese, the heading to each section is a Date Time Group (DTG) – it starts with the date & then the time in the 24 hour system.



Sigeric at Glastonbury

181512 May 04

As many of you already know, we are starting off from Canterbury Cathedral on Sunday 30th May to walk the 1200 miles to Rome. There are several reasons for this lunacy - it's A's 'Retirement Cruise' - something to make a clean break between 35 years in the Royal Navy & Civvy Street, we need to get fitter & we are hoping to raise lots of money for 'Give a Child a Chance' - a charity helping to improve facilities for children who have physical or mental disabilities at Derriford, the main hospital for Plymouth & the surrounding area.

On the website below, you will find much more about what we're doing & you'll be able to follow our progress along the Via Francigena. For those of you who haven't already been caught, there is also a downloadable sponsorship form. Please give generously.

Thanks you & wish us luck

Andrew & Carole

www.walktorome2004.co.uk



Departing from home

Publicity in our local paper

301932 May 04

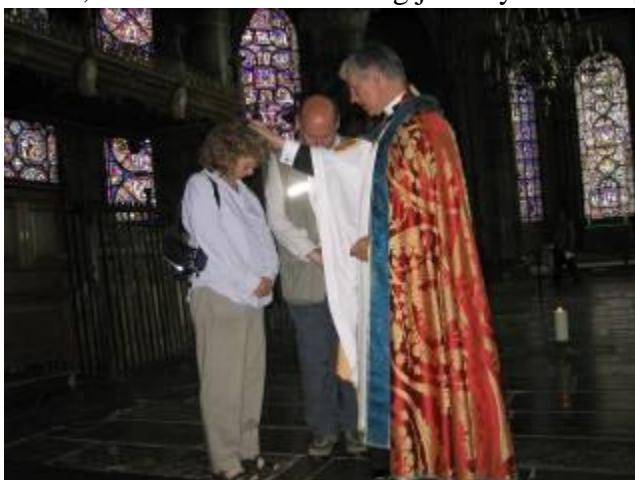
Day 1 – Sun 30th May

Canterbury - Kingston

We drove up from Plymouth yesterday - only minor problem was a major diversion through Salisbury because an accident had closed the whole A303.

A's mother, younger brother and sister-in-law were in Canterbury to see us off.

Today, we all went to Pentecost Eucharist in the cathedral, after which the Dean, the V Rev Robert Willis, blessed our forthcoming journey to Rome, in the chapel of St Thomas a Becket.



Blessing by the Dean



Pilgrim's Badge on Canterbury Cathedral Gate

Then, after a light lunch, we picked up our packs - to the comment from A's brother,

Bryan, "well, I never thought I'd actually see this moment", we set off down the North Downs Way. And there isn't really much to report about the first day - 6.29 miles and 2.5 hours to Kingston. We had a bit of rain - just enough to convince ourselves that we ought to take our packs off and put our WP jackets on. Needless to say, by the time we'd done so, the rain had stopped!



Departure



The South Down's Way

Tomorrow, onto Dover.

312011 May 04

Day 2 – Mon 31st May

Kingston – The Channel - Calais

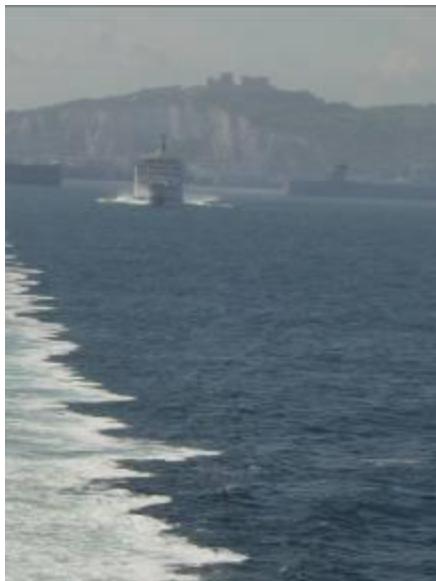
Sitting in the Hotel Folkestone (*) in Calais having moules & chips (9€ incl. 0.25l of wine).

Well, today we walked from Kingston to Dover & then onto our hotel in Calais - 14.29 miles. Feet etc in surprisingly good condition.

After last night's dispatch, we had an email at 2345, so the BlackBerry (named a Beetroot by Harvey (Carole's father) & now called that by C - as the replacement for A's mistress at home (the PC)) will have to be switched off over night in future.

Kent is surprisingly old fashioned & rural in places. Dover (we entered on the old Roman road, Watling Street), is quite like Plymouth - a real mix of isolated bits of history with an, overall, downmarket feel. Canterbury, in contrast, has preserved its old medieval centre (like Plymouth before the Luftwaffe's redevelopment?) & seems to be bustling & prosperous.

We made good time to Dover & so were on the 1515 ferry rather than the 1645. P&O had kindly sponsored us for the crossing - complete with Club class lounge tickets - worth thinking about - a free glass of champagne etc.



Dover astern



The White Cliffs

We had booked into the Hotel Bristol in Calais, but it was closed (at 1820 - “back at 1800”) & so we ended up in the Folkestone instead.

First impressions of France after many years - the docks are litter-free & they now stop for pedestrians on crossings.

We did note that the English are specifically blamed for bombing the cathedral tower in 1944, but it was just “bombing” that destroyed the museum in 1940. Also, the cathedral used to be in the diocese of Canterbury & we came upon (as Michael Palin does...) the memorial to Nelson’s mistress, Emma Hamilton, who died penniless in Calais.



The Memorial to Emma Hamilton

Tomorrow - along the coast to Wissant.

011824 Jun 04
Day 3 – Tue 1st June
Calais to Wissant



Raining almost all day (for JP&H - almost as wet as the first Gower day).

Between 0840 & 1530, we walked 12.8 miles. Excellent fish soup at Cap Blanc Nez for lunch. After arriving at hotel in Wissant (where Sigeric & Julius Caesar sailed for England from) we had to lie around semi-naked in our no star hotel room until our clothes were dry enough to go out to supper in. Only 1 restaurant open in Wissant - plat du jour is blanc de seiche façon calamar à l'armoricaine - not quite sure what it was! (Anyone know?) 18 Brits & 1 poor Frenchman in the restaurant.

It is most unlikely that our boots will be dry by the morning.
Tomorrow, we head south.

021737 Jun 04
Day 4 – Wed 2nd June
Wissant to Ecottes

0805 to 1600. 14.29 miles.

We left Wissant before the hotel had started breakfast & as the market was setting up, but no café was open. Wissant church claims to be where Thomas a Becket prayed before returning to England & “martyrdom” (did he really know?).



The Field of the Cloth of Gold

We had 3 miles under our belts by the time we found a campsite café for breakfast - we must have been a bit dozy, as we failed to notice the site of the camp from where Caesar launched his 55BC invasion of Britain. Onward, nearly due east, across the Pas de Calais towards Guînes. The countryside could have been England quite close to the coast, but became noticeably French quite quickly. There are lots of 'ruins' ready to be restored by some mad Brit - the Dordognification of this region is clearly some way off. Interestingly, the hotel we stayed in in Wissant had been a working watermill up to the 60s. And French ‘executive estates’ are also much more architecturally varied than in the UK. We also found a couple of drains to remind us of the ongoing sewage works on the West Hoe.

In Guînes, the v helpful tourist office found us a gîte that would take us for just one night & so, after lunch, we headed off past the site of The Field of the Cloth of Gold - probably the first Summit Meeting (7 June 1520) - held just outside Guînes because this was the edge of 'the pale' separating France from English Calais - the French didn't recapture Calais for another 38 years.

We made surprisingly good time after lunch & came upon a little settlement called Ecottes - about 3 miles N of Licques. Clearly St Christopher was keeping an eye on us (A's mother, Bryan & Annie had given us each a St Christopher in Canterbury) - the girl in Guînes tourist office had mentioned that our gîtes was in a part of Licques called something like Ecottes - so we asked & found out that this was, indeed, the place.

We're now happily ensconced in a 3 bedroom gîtes, complete with all mod cons & the landlady has provided more than enough food for supper, breakfast & a picnic. .

Tomorrow is, however, going to be a long day - we think that we are booked (via BlackBerry) into the Abbey in Wisques & that is about 17 miles SE of here. We slept for over 10 hours last night, so best we do the same tonight.

040709 Jun 04

Subject: OK

V tired last night.

Did write day 5 message, but couldn't get it to send. Will try again at stand-easy.

041136 Jun 04

Day 5 – Thu 3rd June

This is the one I tried to send at 2020 last night, but got stuck in a BlackBerry bush, so to speak.

Ecottes to Wisques

0800 to 1630. 18.74 miles



Wisques Abbey

A some poetry. With limited success, but she has plenty of time yet to get him trained.

Today was probably too far & too long - we'll see how we are tomorrow. C has the first proper blister & we both ache in most muscles.

Well, we're not quite clear who these two unfit people are who walked 7.4 miles before having a cup of coffee & then struggled into the Benedictine Abbey of St Paul in Wisques 8.5 hours after they set out either...

So, unless we've been taken over by aliens, I suppose it must be us. Certainly, C has never walked so far in one day in her life before & A not since Dartmouth, if then.

The first part of the day was grey & cool - ideal walking weather – we will look back on these temperatures with longing in a month or so – the flip side is that our nightly dhooby doesn't always dry overnight - especially socks. We've had to put on damp socks & knicks once already...

The scenery has been glorious & remarkably unspoilt - very rural - we've not seen a single town all day. However, the dogs kept in unsheltered cages in so many gardens are a bit upsetting, but otherwise, everything has been rosy & C has even been trying to teach

The Abbey wasn't expecting us because the email address in the VF Vademecum is out of date, but the Père Hotelier took charge & found us a room + issued bedding. We washed before Vespers & then were brought supper in the guests dining room (we are the only guests) - supper was watercress soup, turkey in white sauce + pasta, yoghurt, an apple & a bottle of beer.

Once we'd washed up, it was into bed. C is already asleep (2015) & A will be as soon as he's finished this email. Tomorrow will be a shorter leg

041727 Jun 04

Day 6 – Fri 4th June

Wisques to Flechin

An easier day - just under 12 miles, 'though it took us 8 hours - mind you the lunch break was a bit extended! We went to Laudes (0730) in the chapel - as 'regulars' we were given Psalters this time, which made following the service much easier & then sorted out our bedding, packed etc & headed off into the mist at about 0840.

The road was undulating, but not too bad. Probably just as well, as we weren't making that good a pace. Our first café served instant - not really what one expects in France, so we had to have pastry from the excellent boulangerie to take the taste away & a second (real) coffee before lunch (vg - jambon frites & crème brûlé) in Therouanne.

After lunch, we spent 45 minutes attempting to get the local tourist office to book us a room for the night & next night. The (decorative but not that helpful) assistant kept suggesting that we spent the night in Therouanne, which would obviously have been less work for her. Eventually, another woman arrived & found us somewhere to stay - with an English-speaking landlady too. A is still speaking in a kind of euro-babel that is 70% Italian & 30% French - no doubt it will be the other way around by the time we get to Italy!

Tomorrow - on to Marest - just S of Pernes - a bit W of the track, but the only place we could find to stay in.

090722 Jun 04

Day 7 – Sat 5th June

Flechin - Marest

After we'd rested a bit last night, we trudged the 0.5 mile back into Flechin to find somewhere for supper - C hobbling a bit with her second blister.

The first bar looked at us in amazement when we asked about food - probably just as well as it didn't look that clean, but the second really came up trumps. For €22 we had a bottle of v reasonable Bordeaux, two big wedges of pate (both home made), 3 slices of excellent local ham, some emmenthal & a lovely golden brie (why is Brit brie such a pallid colour?).



We were obviously a bit of a rarity as foreigners & were made to feel like welcome guests. This morning, we were comparatively slow off the mark – in fact, we've been pretty slow all day! We've moved SE, but a bit to the W of Sigerac's historic route & are now in Marest, a little settlement just S of Pernes. The countryside is beautiful - very rural, 'though we can see what must be slag heaps over to the E. We've only seen 2 foreign cars all day (the same as yesterday) - all Brits. We had lunch in Pernes - in a lovely square with a wine shop (€2 for a litre in a plastic bottle), 2 butchers, greengrocer, bar,

restaurant & a bakery/cake shop. Clearly, supermarkets haven't killed off the little shops here. Another observation on French life is that there seem to be lots of female coach drivers. Ah the joys of walking - one gets time to observe & comment to each other. C has a third blister on top of her second.

Interestingly all are on her L foot - probably caused by walking along the LHS of the road - but because the roads have such a camber on them, the left foot is often at an angle. Fortunately A's feet are OK so far.

We are spending the night in a gîtes, Madame has supplied sheets, A has done the washing & C is about to serve up the picnic we bought in those lovely little shops in Pernes. Today's distance 10.5 miles we think (partial pedometer failure) over 5.5 hours. Tomorrow we head E to rejoin the Chaussee Brunehaut - an old Roman road running SE to Arras & tomorrow night we are booked into the College of St John the Baptiste in Camblain l'Abbé.

090722 Jun 04

Day 8 – Sun 6th June

Marest to Camblain l'Abbé

15.49 miles 0825 to 1600

I forgot to say that Madame yesterday was v keen for us to know that the 'man' was her retired brother & that she was the local postman. We played battleships after supper - A won both rounds. This morning we were on our way by 0830 & back to Pernes to regain the route. In fact, after about 3 hours, we were due E of where we'd started from. It's been quite hot today & we've both been pretty tired + C is still suffering from her blisters. At lunchtime, the only place we could find was a bikers' bar, so we had beer, P&O biscuits & raisins left over from breakfast in Ecottes.

Eventually we stumbled wearily down the hill into Camblain l'Abbé & found the school with the help of a local French-American who was in a horse-drawn cart! The College of St John the Baptist de la Salle is a boys' school run by the catholic sect who reject Vatican II. There are about 130 boys; of whom 10 are Brits & 6 of these are brothers. We had a long chat with the English boys whilst waiting for one of the priests to arrive - this included an interrogation by a Chilean about the Cecil & Cochrane families.

Then, we were shown our beds in the infirmary (fortunately no sick boys - paper was put up over the glass in the door for C's modesty's sake).

We joined the boys for supper (a long grace in Latin) & afterwards had a tour of the grounds with one of the priests whilst helping him to collect rose petals for the Corpus Christi procession.

Then to bed - a late night at 2130. We seem to be in a mobile phone black hole, so I don't know when you'll get this. Total mileage on the VF so far 104.23. Only 3 hours into Arras tomorrow, we hope, where we are booked into a monastery for 2 nights.



Chaussee Brunehaut

090722 Jun 04

Day 9 – Mon 7th June

Camblain l'Abbé to Arras



12.9 miles 7 hours

We forgot to describe the school in Camblain - it used to be a school for disabled children before the Soc of St Pius X took it over, so all the corridors are v wide & there are no stairs. There are religious statues everywhere & lots of paintings of Tintin characters, as all the boys were, at one stage, taught to paint using the Tintin books as models. The infirmary had two statues, 2 sets of antlers, 2 hat racks made from the tips of antlers & a set of prints of hunting calls, with the music along the bottom & an illustration of the activity – e.g. boar warning - above.

The Camblain School Infirmary

Anyway, breakfast is not until 0900 on Monday - probably to allow the weekly boarders to return - & so we didn't get away until 0945. We were shown a lovely path that paralleled the main road & so were able to walk under an arch of trees for nearly an hour - this was our hottest day yet & the late start was unfortunate. We are well into the land of Commonwealth War Cemeteries now & we stopped to look through one today - nearly 50% Canadians. As always, beautifully looked after & wonderfully serene - "a corner of a foreign field that is forever England".

We arrived in our hoped for lunch village at about 1215 to find another bar that thought we were odd to want food, but fortunately the boulangerie was still open & the butcher re-opened his shop, so we had ham & bread & BOGOF strawberry tarts sat on a bench outside the school.

The Lonely Planet guide to Walking in France makes much of the Grand Randonnees - well, in our experience so far, they are rarely marked & so v difficult to find or follow. However, we were directed to the one going into Arras (C is v good at asking for directions - A still inclines to the philosophy that Real Men know where they are, even when they're lost).

Anyway, we found Arras & identified where we were from a street plan, then set off down the Ave Winston Churchill towards the centre - about 45 minutes later - after over 1.3 miles along a dual-carriageway through a land of industrial-sized shops, we saw the leaving Arras sign - we'd turned the wrong way & had walked out of town to the NW rather than inwards. C seemed to think that A was going to blame her, but A wasn't at all sure that he hadn't initiated the wrong turn & anyway, he has the compass, even if C has the map. So we agreed that we'd both been stupid & (it was v hot by now - mad



dogs & Englishmen stuff) so we trudged weary back & into the centre, where we easily found the diocesan lodgings & were even expected.

We were both fairly weary & C's blisters are still a problem.

Still, we have finished our first 100 miles & our first two maps.

To celebrate the first 100 miles, we allowed ourselves dinner on the Grand Place - which gave both of us mild stomach problems (though nothing by Pakistani standards).

A made a couple of attempt to find out why the Blackberry wasn't sending or receiving e-mail, but no ideas from the local mobile phone shops & we couldn't find a cyber café .

090722 Jun 04

Day 10 – Tue 8th June

Our first rest day - in Arras

Still walked over 4 miles.



We breakfasted with a large school party in the basement of the diocesan guesthouse & then headed into the centre of Arras. Not much was open at 0845, so we had a coffee. A was still concerned to sort out the BB, so at 0930 he went to the local cyber-café. It was no longer in service. So we tried the post office, where there is an Internet 'ordinateur' (known as a computer in nearly every other country in the world!). A bought a cyber-card & tried to log himself in. The French do not use a QWERTY keyboard & none of the on-screen instructions were 'obvious' so after 20 minutes, he gave up & joined C who was in another bar reading the DT (full of reports on D-day & Reagan). If anyone still has it, please keep the DT crossword answers for 8th June. We then did a few touristy things, had a baguette for lunch & visited the tunnels - started in the X Century & greatly expanded during WW1. They are humid & at a constant 11deg C – we saw the annual subterranean flower show - the sort of thing that qualifies for an EC grant...

Arras is twinned....

once again it's further than we'd have wished & to the W of the planned track.

After a rest (sewing by C, admin by A!), we managed to contact Carphone Warehouse, so we hope the BB will soon be back in form, had supper & went to bed.

Early start tomorrow for the 16+ miles to Sars.

091823 Jun 04

Day 11 – Wed 9th June

Arras to Le Sars (nr Bapaume)

18.17 miles from 0630 to 1630

Yes, another long day - caused by the difficulty of finding somewhere to stay.

We slipped out of the Diocesan guesthouse after a machine coffee & a couple of madelaines. We headed off SE & had a real coffee just before we cleared the suburbs. We had been advised to sew Union Flags somewhere on our clothes in case we were taken for Germans. As we came into the café for coffee, the whole place went quiet – once C had said something to me in English, all was OK – one of the occupants said something like 'It's OK, they're English'. Quite clearly, the politicians can say

that we're all friends in Europe, but those who have been invaded twice in their lives, unsurprisingly, think differently. For the rest of the day we were walking down 'white' roads & through little villages - most of which have lost their bar & shops.

In consequence, there seem to be quite a few travelling shops - we used 2 today. We are well into the area of WW1 battlefields & the consequent cemeteries.

One we paused in today - quite in the middle of nowhere - was called Sunken Road Cemetery - another we saw signposted was called Railway Cutting Cemetery. The Commonwealth War Cemeteries are all beautifully looked after & so tranquil- there don't seem to be any ghosts

about, despite the terrible fighting that took place all around - they've all been laid to rest. This is a notable contrast to the roadside chapels, quite a few of which seem to have been abandoned, vandalised or covered in spray-painted graffiti.

We were in a place called Achiet le Grand at lunchtime - in the Hotel de la Gare, where we had an excellent buffet & A replied to the 18 emails that had arrived when he decided to take the SIM card out of the BB & give it a rub - this worked & he was happier - C had to cope with her rival's revival! She did this with her usual good grace & just a bit of teasing. Whilst we were there, we watched the TV news showing the Frenchmen who'd just come 1st & 2nd in the Transat race. They left Plymouth on Sunday & are now in Boston - we left on the same day & have covered just 135 miles. Must try harder! One of the men who was in the bar at lunchtime & overheard our plans, flagged us down on our way out of the village & gave us a keyring from his garage to remember the village by & asked us to pray for him in Rome.

We are now sitting in the courtyard of our chambre d'hôtes - having had cheese, strawberries, biscuits & a small bottle of cider each (so restrained because we had to carry it 4 miles from the second mobile shop). The day's washing is hanging on the line & we'll probably be in bed by 2030.

Tomorrow, we continue SE to Peronne, which is on the Somme river.

The Landlady was right!

101827 Jun 04

Day 12 – Thu 10th June

Le Sars to Peronne

(Back on the VF!). 12.84 miles. 0700 to 1430

As we set off, our landlady asked if we didn't think it was going to rain.

No we said, we'd seen the forecast... 15 minutes later, the thunder started & we were wet through.

The day continued in similar vein - a couple of times we changed out of waterproofs, for the rain to return. In the end, A just decided to get wet & C decided to stay bundled up. We've been walking through verges replete



with poppies all day & eventually sighted the Somme at about 1330. Lunch was a picnic in a sunny spell - but the rain returned with a vengeance as we climbed the last hill into Peronne. The tourist office here has been v helpful & after about 10 emails, had booked us into a bar with rooms (often by the hour we suspect) called Chez Baby! We called into the tourist office to say TYVM & then went to the 'hotel' to dry out a bit. Peronne has 'the' Great War museum, so once we were changed; we headed there, to be stopped in the street by the head of the tourist office who wanted to know if we'd do a press interview. Of course, said A (C was a bit less enthusiastic) & so we agreed to go to the tourist office to meet the journo after we'd been to the museum.

The museum was OK - perhaps we're a bit tired - but like so many foreign museums, why don't they get a native speaker to do the translations?

Anyway, then off to our press interview + photo. We've been promised a copy idc.

Then to supper in a brasserie that had Pakistani Omelette on the menu. No we didn't, we had pizzas.

The next few stages - to Laon - are looking to be the most difficult for places to stay - tomorrow is fixed - an equestrian gîte in Trefcon, but then....

111729 Jun 04

Day 13 - Fri 11th June

Peronne to Trefcon

Only 10.32 miles from 0815 to 1230

Last night's pizzas were interesting - made with crème fraiche rather than mozzarella - C had Blanc Neige (Snow White) which included onions, bacon, cheese & egg. A's Capriciosa with steak haché & mixed seafood was not such a success in terms of flavour.

Today was another wet day - though not as wet as some. We started off down the route of an old railway - clearly removed under their Monsieur Beeching, but still shown on the map - the first major error we've found in a French map. However, experience has already taught us that footpaths are inclined to be both wet & rough underfoot. This one was OK, but we abandoned it for the road as soon as it started to look overgrown.

As Joe Patterson, who did the VF two years ago, had warned us, much of rural France now has neither shops nor bars & today we saw only one possible 'watering hole' all day - a farm shop specialising in endives (!), though they did sell us a bottle of pear + apple juice, a couple of apples & some milk + honey sweets.

We also ended up walking along a major road at one stage - we had no real choice. The wash from lorries - even though almost all pull out as they pass us - is pretty horrendous & leaves one splattered all over.

For the same Hobson's Choice, we finished our day at 1230 at Trefcon where our landlady was kind enough to fix us lunch. She had no water at the time (so neither did we), but it came back on at about 1700.

We occupied our afternoon in sleep (amazing how much one now needs), finishing the DT of 7th June & in writing our first dispatch for the Plymouth Evening Herald.

Tomorrow, we swing E off the VF towards St Quentin (actually a place called Vendeuil tomorrow night) before rejoining the track on Sunday at St Gobain (the hotel Roses of Picardy).

C's feet are now OK & A's are still amazingly well. Thank you Michael, the Stonehouse podiatrist.

The Poppy Fields of the Somme



121656 Jun 04

Day 14 – Sat 12th Jun

Trefcon to Vendueil

17.34 miles. 0800 to 1645

As of this evening, we have walked 175 miles towards Rome & 186 miles in total.

The equestrian gîte in Trefcon is well recommended by all those we've spoken to who've done the VF & our experiences would back that up. The Wynands family looked after us really well & were a great help in sorting out our next stage.

Today was another difficult one through an area with few bars & fewer shops - we only saw two of the latter all day. The mini-supermarket where we bought our lunchtime picnic took one look at us & asked if we were en route to Rome! There is a Swiss man on the VF about a day ahead of us – as well as the 4 Canadians (1 man + 3 women) 3 or 4 days ahead & the Norwegian about a month ahead. Last year, we are told, there was only one pilgrim, this year there seem to be lots.

Anyway, off we set at 0800, through very flat countryside, with vast fields on both sides & we saw 2 cars in the first hour. There are usually cuckoos to be heard & almost always skylarks above us.

We had coffee & bought lunch (including a plastic litre bottle of red plonk for €1.5) in Etreillers & then continued through similar countryside, crossing the Somme again at Seraucourt-le-Grand.

Most of these little French villages have pavements made of chippings, if they have pavements at all - these are not kind to sore, tired feet & must be hell in stilettos (or so C says). There are also lots of garden gnomes - in the widest sense of the word - from 1/4 sized cows to powered, rotating windmills. Anyway, before we go down any more rabbit holes, there isn't much to say about today except that the rain mostly held off so it was delightfully cool (10 degrees below what it should be Mme said last night) & our feet are still OK, even if pretty tired & sore - A also has his first hole in a sock.

Tomorrow is still unresolved - we were going on to St Gobain,

Laon on its hill ahead

but it seems that the only hotel there may be closed & we don't fancy 20+ miles of twisty, hilly tracks between here & Laon - so we'll probably miss St G & go straight to Laon & our second rest day.



131556 Jun 04

Day 15 - Sun 13 Jun

We're in Laon

19 miles

Exhausted

Daily dispatch when recovered

131557 Jun 04

Day 15 - Sun 13 Jun

Carole sitting with feet in bidet! But then, isn't that what they're for...

141420 Jun 04

Proper day 15 dispatch & day 16 – Mon 14th June

Our second rest day – in Laon.

Well, we really will have to get better at estimating distances on maps.

Yesterday we walked for 9 1/4 hours & covered exactly 19 miles.

We've now been on the road for two weeks & are reminded of one of the books we read in which the author (who was following Hilaire Belloc to Rome) talked about his body looking 20 years younger after the first two weeks & his pack seeming to weigh nothing. Not sure how different we were 20 years ago, but we can't see much difference & our packs are not yet inconsequential.

Yesterday's route should have taken us S to St Gobain, but there was nowhere to stay, so we headed in an approximation of a straight line from Vendeuil to Laon. There is a nature reserve, a railway line & several military areas on this line, so of necessity, it was something of a zigzag - hence the distance. We also found our first French stand & deliver loo yesterday - the first public loo (a Clochmerle) was seen today.



This lack of facilities has accentuated the superiority of the male 'picnic equipment' - poor C is noticeably disadvantaged, especially in open country.

In general, the landscape has become more rolling & wooded - with much more to come yet. Fortunately yesterday was cool & overcast - ideal walking weather, nevertheless, we were both pretty exhausted by the time we found a hotel & were in bed by 2030. We did hear a couple of cheers for the football (the World Cup) & some tooting, but didn't know the result until we got Harvey's match report this morning.

After a good night's sleep, we were out of our hotel by 0800 (yes – we do include C!) & caught the POMA (tram) to old Laon - which is a remarkably well-preserved medieval city on top of a walled hill. We breakfasted in the cathedral square, and then visited the cathedral (** in Michelin with a deservedly *** nave - wonderful with the early morning light flooding in - less impressive when the sun was in the south). After the cathedral, we visited the Tourist Office - as helpful as Peronne (hope they

would be as so in UK), where they spent 30 minutes ringing round trying to find somewhere for us to stay tomorrow - in the end, by dint of us being on the VF, the girl found us a woman who will put us up in her home for an optional charge. With tomorrow sorted, we tried the Youth Hostel in Reims (150 beds) - it's full. We are booked into a cheap hotel, but accommodation is rapidly turning into our biggest problem & the one that defines our route & how far we have to walk each day.

We are going to resist seeing the new H Potter film in French tonight & expect to be on the road for another 15+ miles tomorrow.

201424 Jun 04

In a cybercafé in Chalons en Champagne

We're still OK. The Blackberry isn't & Carphone Warehouse, O2, Blueyonder & Blackberry all seem to be involved in trying to find out why. At least, I don't think that it's actually my handset. I have several (6 I think) days' dispatches in the machine, which I hope you'll get soon.

Weather here a bit mixed - quite chilly today.

Tomorrow morning, we set off to walk along the Marne canal for six days - perhaps a bit boring, but FLAT!

Normal comms soon I hope - no cybercafé s until Langres, so let's hope they fix it.

211548 Jun 04

Day 17 – Tue 15th June

Laon - Chaudardes

Another long day, 'though this one didn't seem quite so bad. Last night, we did fall for the lure of H

Potter (cheap seats on Mon nights), but were certainly not 100% sure about the story when we left the cinema (& C has read the book). We then had one of those 'unfortunate' restaurant experiences. There wasn't much still open at 2030 & so we ended up in a place near the station. We ordered 2 salads & different ones arrived, our 1/2 litre of wine turned out to be half of an already opened bottle, for which we were overcharged & by the time we left, there was a 'working girl' sat by the door. I suppose it's what we should have expected in the part of town in which we can afford hotels - lots of educational experiences to be had on this trip.



Laon continues to dominate the view as we continue South

We left our hotel at 0730 & headed round the E end of the old city.

Within an hour, we were completely out of the city & heading SE towards the wooded hills. In the first village, Bruyeres-et-Montberault, there was a large Romanesque church, which we visited. It was worth the minor detour - including a v graphic fresco of the Circumcision of Christ...

We continued SE up & down (not too bad) - passing the Ferme d'Hurtebise - where Napoleon fought Blucher in 1813 & there were several major engagements in both WWS.

Further along the ridge was the Basque Memorial - to all those from the regiments raised in SW France. Clearly, we were now out of the British sector from WW1 & into the French one.

The final section of the day really seemed to drag - we were on a partly overgrown cart track & C was suffering from (completely unjustified) doubts about the map/her navigation. If you're wondering why C is doing the navigation, it's because she can read the map without her glasses & A can't - so C has the mapcase around her neck.

Anyway, at 1745 after 18.35 miles we arrived in Chaudardes.

We were in Chaudardes because the Tourist Office in Laon had rung the Mayor & asked if anyone in her village (pop 84) did B&B. As we arrived in the outskirts, a woman in a car stopped & gave us directions - clearly we were either expected or could only be going to one house!

On arrival at No 9, we were greeted warmly & offered a drink before being shown to a lovely double room. The couple who'd volunteered to take us in looked after us really well - even showing



us around all (including the roof spaces) of their 'cathedral' - the vast CXII Romanesque parish church - now looked after by the French heritage body the Beaux Artes. The stained glass - original to the building & by the same master craftsman as Reims Cathedral was particularly impressive.

During a long evening of conversation in our terrible French (A's is now about 60/40 French/Italian), A was actually told that he spoke French with an Italian accent! Perhaps it will be Italian with a French accent...



before we started off the valley floor. It was obvious during all this time why Chaudardes had had such a big church built all those years ago (the population was about 2000 in the CXII as against the 88 of today) - Chaudardes is actually on a headland & the church was visible from far away.

Anyway, as we climbed out of the river valley, we came across our first vines - for champagne of course. We had, in fact, cut the corner & were soon back in the Aisne valley, by this time running SE down to Reims. We had our picnic lunch (bought as the previous evening's supper) at the village washing place in Villers-Franqueux. This consisted of some Norwegian smoked salmon, a Camembert, yesterday's bread & 2 25cl plastic bottles of Spanish 'table' wine.

Shortly afterwards, we tasted our first glass of champagne at Thil - leading to a slight disagreement as A drank his & wanted to get on (we still had over 4 miles to go) & C wanted to savour the moment...

The final leg into the outskirts of Reims was down the N44 under the circuit of a French Air Force training base - so not that quiet. Fortunately the traffic wasn't too heavy & the hard shoulder was fairly wide. The strip then onwards took us about 90 minutes of crossing minor, & not so minor, roads into the centre. At least there were now things to look at & people to comment on & even bars at which to have a beer.

Our * hotel only had us booked in for one night, but we managed to change that & then the credit card machine wouldn't accept our card - wouldn't we rather pay cash? We negotiated a discount (3 years of practice in Pakistan) of free coffees before agreeing.

French Cemetery just outside Chaudardes.

211539 Jun 04

Day 18 – Wed 16th June

Chaudardes to Reims

Over 18 miles again - 0810 to 1730 - Total mileage on the VF now 231.2 miles - total walked since Canterbury 250.71 miles.

This part of France is dominated by the Aisne valley, which has both the river & the Aisne Lateral Canal running through it with large flat floodplain areas on each side. We had to walk nearly 2 miles NW (gloom) initially to get to the first bridge (at Pontavert) & then over 4 more



After removing our boots, donning sandals & a quick wash, went into the central area, had a brief look in the cathedral (mainly to catch the sun through the W rose window) & then had a pizza Savoyarde & went to bed.

211549 Jun 04

Day 19 – Thu 17th June

In Rheims being tourists.

Cathedral first thing (having checked if the cybercafé was open). As all the books have it, the stained glass is just amazing - lots of it is CXII, but there are also the 3 altar windows by Chagall & 3 in the S transept given by the Champagne producers in 1954 & showing their craft from the wedding at Canaa onwards.

After the Cathedral, C went into the tourist office to try & sort out our next couple of night's accommodation, whilst A went to see if the cybercafé was yet open (as you may have noticed the

BlackBerry has indigestion again - & it's far from clear to A which bit of the system is constipated this time). As the big Union Flag in the cathedral square (right next to the equestrian statue of Joan of Arc) was upside down, A explained this to the staff in the Justice Dept, in whose grounds all the EU flagstaffs were. They were most receptive, but the flag was still upside down 8 hours later. The cybercafé wasn't open & so A rejoined C to find her

being offered nothing but a country house hotel (compulsory DB&B), but with a bit of persistence, we were found a gîte (still €62 for the night without any meals).

By this time the cybercafé was open & A set to to clear the 186 emails out of the Blueyonder inbox and to switch off all the junk-mailers like Amazon & Friends Reunited, whilst C went to have a coffee & to Gallerie Lafayette to buy a couple of plastic tumblers.

They met as A came out of the cybercafé, which was fortunate as A had forgotten the published R/V. This could have led to discussions!

We then visited a photoshop, where the proprietor was v helpful & both made us a CD to send to Pete Stadnyk (for the website & the Evening Herald) & said that he'd keep them on his PC until we let him know that they were safely in UK.

It was now time for lunch & to make up for C being rushed yesterday afternoon, we bought a bottle of chilled champagne from Monoprix (€12.40 - 1/3 the cheapest price in a bar) + a couple of ham baguettes & headed off to the park, where we christened our plastic tumblers.

We have decided to follow the Marne canal from Chalons to Langres (several days), but sadly this just takes us to the E of the maps we have with us. These maps have been trimmed to keep their weight down & one of A's trimmings is now to be walked. C'est la vie. Unfortunately, we had to make 3 trips to the map shop before we were convinced of this.

We also had to make another visit to the tourist office & two, it may have been three, to the cybercafé before we'd done what we could about Sat & Sun nights in Chalons & BB's indigestion.

We had supper in the Place de la Forum (more Roman remains) where we'd found a brasserie serving Illy coffee, our favourite.

By the time you get this, the BB problems, at least, will have been resolved. Let's hope we find a bed on Sat night.



Union Flag upside down yet again

211549 Jun 04

Day 20 – Fri 18th June

Reims - Bouzy

We left at 0700 this morning, hoping to see the Abbaye S Remi on the way out, but it didn't open until 0800, so we had breakfast looking at the facade & went on our way to join the Marne Canal towpath.

We walked along the towpath - easy walking - for a couple of hours. The weather has been good for walking all day - overcast, with a bit of a breeze. We had a coffee stop, a glass of champagne stop & were about to have our picnic overlooking the vineyards, when A saw this couple & wondered if they could be part of the Canadian foursome preceding us down the VF.



C + The Canadians

They were & so we joined them all for lunch & exchanged views on our various problems. Their worst is as ours - finding places to stay at the right distances apart. They are much braver than we are (but they are all francophone Quebecois) & just start looking at the end of their walking day. They are taking 6 months & hope to be in Rome by mid-Oct.

After lunch, we continued on towards Chalons & stopped in Bouzy at about 1630, where we had a gîte booked. We bought a bottle of champagne from our hostess, got some quiche etc from the local Shopi & were in bed by 2100.

Today's distance only 17.7 miles - we must be getting fitter.

Tomorrow - on to Chalons, where we have faxed the YH, but have no reply as yet.

211549 Jun 04

Day 21 – Sat 19th June

Bouzy – Chalons en Chapmagne

Still without BB cover & with the weekend here, this may continue for a bit yet. We were only just out of our gîte at 0725 this morning, when A realised that he'd left his poles in the kitchen, but fortunately we had been told to just shut the door & pull the shutter down, so little problem to retrieve them.



We headed on to the next village, Anbonney, & then turned S towards the canal. It was a lovely morning for walking &, after a coffee in Conde-sur-Marne, we joined the canal path & strode out. It was about an hour later, just after we'd seen a red squirrel walking across the end wall of one of the lock-keepers' houses, that we realised that we were going ENE - there were 2 canals joining at Conde & we'd joined the wrong one...

We'd probably gone over 2.5 miles in the wrong direction & so we headed cross-country (inevitably over a ridge) to rejoin the correct canal. As we breasted the ridge, it started to rain - it was to rain intermittently for the rest of

The canals make lovely walking, even in the rain

the day. Our morale was not high at this point & our feet reflected this! Surprisingly, we did not have words.

Having been told by a workman that there were no cafés in France, we found one in the next village & had another coffee. As it started to pour whilst we were in there & it was after 1200, we had a beer & ate the first of our sandwiches. At about 1245, still drizzling, we rejoined the canal & headed off towards Chalons. Canal walking is much easier than walking the countryside & we intend to spend most of the next week following the Marne canal down to Langres, where we will rejoin the VF proper. We got to Chalons at about 1545 & hoped to find the Internet point in the PO. French POs close at 1200 on Sat, so we went to the Tourist Office - manned (so to speak) by 3 smart looking girls (BCBG A thinks they're called, but can't remember what the acronym stands for). They were all obviously in completely the wrong jobs! Our every Q was met with a shrug & an irritated glance at each other. Was the youth hostel open - of course - why had we been unable to get an answer from them over two days? Could they ring (it wasn't in the centre) - €1.50 to make a booking - one rang - no response - we'd heard that it might only be open during the school holidays – oh maybe it's closed - were there any cheap hotels? No all full because there was an exam on & it's Father's Day - anyway, enough, you get the gist & this is written 24 hours later, not in the first flush of irritation!

Fortunately, on the final stretch into town, we'd met a couple who'd asked if we were pilgrims & had then told us that the church of ND en Vaux had a list of those willing to put pilgrims up. So we went off there & found 2 v helpful ladies (of the troisième age) who rang all of their list without finding us anywhere & then started ringing cheaper city centre hotels.

Having found us one, one of the ladies actually escorted us there. Très gentille.

Whilst C washed (at A's suggestion, we've invested in some travel wash stuff- much better than soap) herself & the dirtier clothes, A went to look for the cybercafé (on a bus, but he didn't realise that the required stop was on request) & continued his attempts to resolve the BB problems – it seems that the problem lies in BB's server, but not yet sorted. He then walked back to the hotel, as the centre of Chalons, which used to contain a 60s shopping centre is being redeveloped & feet were probably quicker. We had pizzas again for supper.

For those who are worried about our diet - you may be, justified! Today, up to supper, we'd had a litre of O juice, **Our hotel - Joan of Arc was omnipresent** 6 eggs (A ate 4 of them), ½ baguette, 2 vacuum packed sandwiches bought in Reims (tuna + egg, chicken & bacon + egg), 2 oranges, 2 coffees each & a beer each. We don't seem to be getting that much thinner, but the diet is well balanced between eggs & oranges. A has taken his belt in a couple of notches, but C, having seen herself in a full mirror for the first time in a couple of weeks, fears that she looks as chubby as ever. A, of course, does not agree.

Distance for the day 17.34 miles, but A covered exactly 20 by the time he'd been to the cybercafé.



211549 Jun 04

Day 22 – Sun 20th June

A rest day in Chalons en Champagne.

Not really much to report. The weather almost too chilly for our rest day clothes - C in her dress & A in a shirt + both in sandals. In fact, we resorted to waterproof jackets in the evening. It would have been a good walking day....

We bought a picnic, visited a couple of churches (ND de Vaux has marvellous stone work, old stained glass & an interior that is harmonious - not surprisingly, it is a UNESCO world heritage site), wandered around, had our picnic in the park, visited the Cathedral (in restoration & not a UNESCO site, but some impressive glass) - then C back to the hotel & A back to the cybercafé. Hopefully you received his short report.

In the evening, we wandered a bit (Chalons has lots of pretty half-timbered buildings & several stretches of water in the city centre), supped & went to bed early, as usual.

211614 Jun 04

A Think Piece after a couple of weeks on the VF - well actually started after 2 weeks & continued intermittently thereafter.

Kit - working downwards

Hats - Brimmer hats by The North Face - a great success. C doesn't normally wear a hat, whereas A usually does. These have a wide brim, which shields the face & eyes from the sun & so reduces the need to wear dark glasses. They also have mesh panels in the top, which allow any breeze to waft across A's head. Good colour for not showing the dirt too.

Shirts - Rohan - amazing how they wick the sweat away & how quickly they dry (washed every other day). They remain amazingly unsmelly (as far as we can tell).

Trousers - Rohan - A's old Rohan bags are getting a bit threadbare, but are better in terms of pockets than his newer ones - which zip into 3 different leg lengths. C has already vetoed the surfer length! The bags dry much more quickly too - but this may be age/thinness of material, as C's bags don't dry quite so quickly.

Bra - those who worried will be relieved to know that C has managed on the one so far. She's only had to put it on damp once & the coldness quickly passes.

Knicks - A's Rohan ones, although heavier, dry more quickly than C's M&S ones - washed daily, of course.

Socks - we couldn't have managed on only 2 pairs each if we are to continue to wash them daily. They take longer to dry than anything else. A has a hole in one, so far. Darned by C, who has already used the tiny sewing kit several times.

Shoes - we are both using walking boots that we bought in Lynmouth 4 years ago whilst waiting for our Pakistani visas & walking the SW Coastal Path. They are holding up well, though one of A's has worn through the inner lining at the heel & we've replaced the inner soles with Sorbothane liners in both.

These liners are already showing signs of wear, especially on the top surface.

Waterproof jackets by Rohan. We were persuaded by the manager of the Rohan shop in Chester that their lightweight Cloudcover jackets were as good as Gortex. Maybe. A, in particular, finds that his gets moister from the inside out than from the outside in in anything other than heavy rain & has taken to wearing his as a poncho.

Lightweight waterproof trousers from the Outdoor Shop - fortunately not used that much, but certainly fit for purpose.

Domke PhoTOGS waistcoat worn by A. Really well made & carries lots of bits & pieces in its, almost too many, pockets. C has sewn fluorescent strips onto it back & front for when road walking.

Rucksacks - A Lowe Alpine - C Berghaus. Both have a 'cool back' system. No probs so far. C's has a built in waterproof cover, which is a good idea. A's doesn't & takes in water in heavy rain. Both now have fluorescent strips on them - why don't all rucksacks come with them as standard?

Map holder - we bought a cheap one initially - it survived one day on Dartmoor, so we bought one by Ortleib - excellent. C has been wearing it around her neck since we started with all the maps (1:100,000

scale) as far as Italy ready marked up with the route of the VF. A had trimmed off the excess before we started to save weight.

Walking poles - A has two of the Outdoor Shop's own brand. He wouldn't be without them, although the life of the rubber feet is disappointing- the first one gave up after about 70 miles & the second has just come through at 260 miles. Leki feet do fit A's poles, but they cost €2.90 each. We'll just have to put up with the click-clack along the road.

Pedometer by Silva. Worn by A. The instructions are awful - not even proof-read properly as a line of some other language appears in the middle of the English section. There is no guidance as to where to wear it when wearing a pack, as it doesn't seem to work on the belt then - possibly the pack stops it moving back & forth. A wears it on the top edge of his sock.

Other bits of kit - we haven't brought anything, except the SOLAS whistles, that we haven't used already.

Things we should have brought

A wishes he'd bought some Marmite as he feels the need of something not sweet at breakfast (don't worry, we now have some!)

A also wishes he had a poncho rather than a WP jacket, but we must be out of the rain soon & we have bought some travel wash - soap just doesn't get things clean.

Modus Vivendi

Hours

We are both agreed that starting early is a good thing. We don't always achieve this.

We are usually in bed by 2130 at the latest & get up when we wake up - after our rest day in Chalons; we were in bed by 2030 & didn't wake until 0710.

Routes

Canal sides are our favourite - often tarmac, flat, tree lined & a bit cooler. Sadly there are no cafés or bars on the canals. Next, we prefer white roads, which are level & have comparatively little traffic on them. Yellow roads are OK, but have more traffic. Interestingly, the more minor the road, the more severe the camber seems to be at the edge - so forcing walkers further away from the edge of the road. The bit of Route Nationale we've walked was flat right to the edge. The Grand Randonnées are badly marked & sometimes just peter out. They are not where shown on our maps. Footpaths & tracks, in general, seem to disappear - we've noted several that are on the map, but now under a neat field of wheat.

Sending this now as I think I'm back on line!

211615 Jun 04

Day 23 – Mon 21st June

Chalons - Chausée

A short day & a bit of a late start, as we didn't wake up until 0710. We popped out to buy a picnic & have a breakfast that was cheaper than the hotel's. Whilst doing so, we met another walker, who turned out to be doing the Camino from Utrecht - 2800km in total.

The hotel, Le Pot d'Etain was v helpful & even rang the priest in Vitry, where we had been told that there was a pilgrim house. There is & we are booked in there.

We finally set off along the canal at about 0855. The canal path was mostly tarmac'd & we made quite good time to St Germain-la-Ville, where we diverted into town for a beer. Shortly afterwards, we were eating our picnic on the bridge at Pogny, when our fellow Dutch pilgrim (Chris) came along, so we chatted & then he walked with us as far as Pogny, where we diverted inland to follow the road into Chausée-sur-Marne, where we had a hotel booked.

To our irritation, we discovered from Chris that the YH in Chalons had been open after all. One look at the climb out of Pogny & we returned to the canal path. We passed Chris having his lunch about 10 minutes later & ploughed on towards Chausée. We had been told not to arrive before 1700, but had made it at 1510, so we sat on the grass outside until the owners came back from town (about 1530) & let us in.

221813 Jun 04

Day 24 – Tue 22nd June

Chausée - Vitry

To start with a PS on last night.

When we got into the Clos de Mutigny, we were not offered anything to drink (they knew that we were on foot & this was not a cheap hotel) & our room wasn't quite ready - no problem about that, we had been told that we couldn't arrive before 1700. So we quickly dumped our bags, changed into sandals & left the staff to finish the room. At about 1810, showered & changed, we returned to reception & asked if we could have a drink. No, the restaurant wasn't open until 1930! Seeing our amazed looks, Madame gave us a glass of wine each & we sat outside (the only place to sit - it was spitting a bit & getting chilly - after a while there was another couple + their son in the same position). At 1928 we were all trying the restaurant door & so were, a bit reluctantly, let in. Imagine our surprise on seeing a pleasant waiting area - plush sofas etc. - just inside the door. We sat down & were offered the menu. Qs such as what is St Pierre? Produced - "a fish" - what kind of fish - "a fish" - shrug - the Patron wasn't so much rude, as, couldn't care less! This from a place that produced a very upmarket meal - A's scallop soufflé was excellent. It was v difficult to believe that he was incapable of describing St Pierre to us, he just couldn't be bothered.

Perhaps the whole place was being run to generate a tax loss!



Anyway, this morning we didn't have the £6 breakfast & found a local bar.

Today was a half-day - we only walked 9.1 miles & were in Vitry by 1230.

Nothing much to report really - walking the canal bank is easy - lots of herons & terns (A thinks - black heads?).

One thing that we forgot to report in the Think Piece is that A has been carrying a pair of binos since we started - at Veronica O'Connor's suggestion. We only get them out today, to look at the Terns & suddenly realised that A should have been wearing them all the time - they are so useful for everything from checking canal signs (how far to the next bar)

to looking ahead down the track. Thank you Veronica, we wish we'd realised the wisdom of your advice earlier.

We had been told that the parish had accommodation for pilgrims & so applied at the parish office, to be sent to La Maison de Doyenne, run by the Polish Sisters of Jesus Misericordieux - one of whom (there are only 3) is Canadian. Tomorrow is a long day - planned to be 16 miles along the canal, but fortunately the forecast is still overcast.

231651 Jun 04

Day 25 – Wed 23rd June

Vitry – St Dizier

We started off from Vitry at 0730 this morning & at 1600, after 18.2 miles, we strode (well almost!) into St Dizier.

We were on the canal bank for 95% of the time - really apart from a detour into Orconte for a beer, where the landlady, foolishly, tried to serve C short measure!

We are now on the Marne to Saône Canal, which is much quieter than the Marne one - in fact we've only seen one working barge all day &, because of the speed restrictions, we were walking faster than he was going. We also met a Brit (an early retiree we guess) who was travelling the canals, in his de-masted yacht, en route the Med at a v leisurely pace & saw an Aussie in his gin-palace heading N. Otherwise, the canal was empty.

The weather has been v Autumnal - just teetering on the edge of rain, lots of wind, but overall ideal for walking.

St Dizier is not a major tourist resort, perhaps just as well, as we will probably eat at German time & then go straight to bed.

More of the same tomorrow - 'though after a day going E, we now turn S towards Joinville & in 5 days' time, we hope to have our next rest day in Langres - about 70 miles S of us now. We will need a rest day by then'

241806 Jun 04

Day 26 – Thu 24th June

St Dizier - Joinville

0810 to 1715

19.34 miles

Total distance walked towards Rome 325.17 miles

Today was comparatively easy walking along a flat & level canal side track in cool weather - we doubt we could have achieved the same distance over either hilly terrain or in real summer temperatures, as we only just made it in ideal conditions & are both 'tired' & a bit tetchy.

The canal can be a bit monotonous, but today, as we move into the hills, with the river, the

canal, the railway & at least two roads in the same valley, it has not been. We've seen lots more herons, dragonflies, the first 2 geckos, those insects that walk on water & several FAF Jaguars, a couple of Alpha Jets & even a pair of Super Etendards - in aircraft terms, this region seems to be a bit like E Anglia. The only boat we saw moving on the canal all day was another Brit yacht (friend of yesterdays) moving S.

One PS from yesterday - a postman stopped & offered us a completely spurious letter just to find out who we were - if we'd been quicker off the mark, we'd have opened it!

Joinville has a wonderful formal renaissance garden (prob **), but we were too tired to pay €4 each just to walk further. The town is based around a tributary of the Marne & is v pretty on the riversides.

Several properties for doing up...



For the second night running, we find ourselves eating Italian style (really a French interpretation) - this isn't through choice, but there is almost nothing else (except the US style in larger towns) at the cheaper end of the market - a real change since we were last in France.

Tomorrow should be only about 14 miles on S to Vignory - let's hope so!

251848 Jun 04

Day 27 – Fri 25th June

Joinville – Vignory

We are, of course, still speaking - even kissing under the many globes of mistletoe on the canal banks! We left Joinville - probably the prettiest town we've visited so far – at 0815 in ideal walking conditions. The French reporting of last night's England defeat seemed to be pretty balanced. Certainly, no-one asked us how we felt this morning.

The Marne-Saône Canal is advertised as one of the most beautiful in France - this seems to be a very fair claim. We've walked along lovely often-shaded canal banks with an abundance of wildlife - from frogs pretending to imitate humans pretending to be frogs, to lots of dragonflies (most flying locked 'nose to tail') & butterflies.

At one stage, when we wanted to confirm which side of the canal the path ran on, we asked a teenage boy - he was perfectly polite, but all those parents out there will be relieved to know that teenagers do not need foreign languages, the grunt is universal!

We have a guide to the canal, which mentions a restaurant 400m from a lock about where we expected to be at lunchtime, so we charged on (well A did, with C valiantly scurrying behind) in case we were too late – recent observations have reminded us that the rural French seem to have lunch at 1200. We saw an ad for a restaurant about 500m before the lock, but could see nothing at the lock, so asked the Madame in the lock cottage if there was a restaurant nearby (gone 1300 by this stage & we'd already walked +11 miles) – “behind” she said - we worked our way round the back - could see a building, but couldn't get in. After a good few hundred metres back along the canal, we discovered the road into the restaurant & found a proper French Country Restaurant. On entering (with packs on backs & A with poles in hand) - “had we reserved?” No, but fortunately this was not a problem. The meal was superb & very good value - & afterwards Madame let us out of the gate directly behind the lock cottage.

The Logis we were booked into was shown as being 400m from Vignory on the RN towards Voecourt - in fact it's 400m past the Vignory turning on the RN & then 400m down a side road on the edge of Voecourt - these things matter when you're not in a car!

After walking the canal all day, we left it just N of Vignory & headed W (the canal does a loop to the E here). We got to the RN to find no sign of Vignory or the Logis, so headed off S down the RN (not fun walking) until we saw the sign off to Vignory & then the sign to the Logis - off down towards the canal... We probably walked over a mile, mostly uphill to boot, because it wasn't clear where the Logis was - or I suppose really because none of us normally considers directions from the point of view of anyone but a car driver.

Anyway, we're here.

Today we walked 18.12 miles between 0815 & 1715.

Tomorrow will be shorter - we are only about 11 miles N of Chaumont.

Our washing drying



261816 Jun 04

Day 28 – Sat 26th June

Vignory - Chaumont

Fortunately today was a short day - only 12.9 miles from 0845 to 1500.

We were quickly back on the canal bank (less than a km from our hotel...) & just kept going S, apart from a minor diversion into Biébil for coffee & to buy our picnic lunch.

Surprisingly, there has been quite a bit of activity on the canal – a couple of barges (one of which we could hear scraping along the bottom) & several pleasure boats - mostly Dutch, but one Belgian & a few French. The gulls have all disappeared, there are still lots of herons & we saw two pairs of blue/green dragonflies connected nose to tail, making a charming heart shape.

The main excitement on the canal was walking through the 300m long tunnel at Condes, just N of Chaumont. This is wide enough for two barges to pass inside & shows how economically important the canal must have been in the late C19.

The weather has, again, been perfect for walking - a bit overcast, some breeze & only a bit hot towards the end of the day. Oh, and A has his first blister - between the little & the second toes on his R foot - as he found it at the daily foot examination, rather than felt the pain, it's not a major problem.

We got to our hotel (within 100' of the canal & another Logis), at 1500 &, as we'd been told, it didn't open until 1600, so we changed into our sandals & sat outside & waited. We'd also been told that the bed was 10cm narrower than normal - it certainly looks it...



In this (non-touristy) part of France, most of the smaller/cheaper hotels are family run & so close after Sunday lunch to Monday 1700. This exacerbates our accommodation problem. We explained this to our Patronne & she rang up the only practicable option between here & Langres & persuaded the Patron there (normally closed Sunday) to provide us with a bed (only) tomorrow night. After that it's Langres & a day off before we rejoin the VF proper. Some of our readers have noted that we've diverged from the real VF. Our aim (which the military educated pedants amongst you will know you can only have one of, albeit supported by objectives) is to walk from Canterbury to Rome. The supporting objectives include following the VF, raising money for Give a Child a Chance, getting fitter, marking A's change to being a civilian etc. etc. - but the aim is the walk, not to follow the VF. So we are not being too purist about the route, which the paucity of accommodation has already forced us off twice &, no doubt, will again. We have found accommodation more easily along the canals, the walking is much easier & the sad truth is that many of the sights worth seeing are either locked, especially the churches, or too far off the track for tired middle-aged walkers. We will be back on the VF at Langres.

Anyway, after that rabbit hole, once we'd dumped our bags & sorted out tomorrow's accommodation, we set off to walk up to the top of the hill on which old Chaumont sits. To our surprise, this wasn't too hard & we had a beer, bought the Economist, booked Sunday lunch, bought Sunday's supper & Monday's breakfast & had another beer. Chaumont is resolutely not for tourists. The Tourist Office is off the top of the hill, so we didn't go there & the church has a wonderful C15 painted statuary group standing around Christ's open coffin + a medieval carved tree of life - both really are worth a diversion in Michelin-speak - sadly there are no PPCs of either nor any foreign-language leaflets describing the church, as we've seen elsewhere.

Anyway, enough for today - we've nearly finished our second beer & must head back down the hill to supper.

PS In the end we decided to get a taxi down the hill - not that easy - "after the football" C was told in one bar.

261834 Jun 04

Re: Day 28 – 26th June

A second PS

We've had several Qs from those worried that late night emails might wake us up - fear not. The BB gets switched off when we go to bed (about 2100 normally) & they are all delivered once A switches it on in the morning – C says that he's a bit a bit downhearted if there is no overnight mail.

BB protocol on the march is that A normally resists checking it until the next break, unless we are waiting for a reply from a hotel, tourist office etc.

Mind you, of the French hotels that we have contacted, only 1 has ever replied... It may be our French...

271840 Jun 04

Day 29 – Sun 27th June

Chaumont – Marnay-sur-Marne

Fortunately, the predicted short day - we started off at 0855, lunched from 1230 to 1345 & were in our hotel by 1600 having walked 12.76 miles. In our first 28½ days, we have walked 369 miles towards Rome - an average, excluding rest days, of 15 miles per day.

The weather has, again, been ideal for walking & we covered 2.9 miles in the first hour; this mean soon decreased after our first break & the hourly means thereafter to about 2.2 mph. We had booked lunch in Foulain, as we were going to be picnicking for dinner, & had a good old-fashioned French meal - but

there was only 1 other table occupied & one has to wonder how long restaurants in little villages will survive.

The canal is still quite idyllic, with trees lining both sides & heavily wooded hillsides just beyond. Today's wildlife highlight was seeing a deer; about 200' ahead of us, jump into the canal, swim across & then disappear into the woods. There has been no pleasure traffic on the water & only one barge this afternoon - union rules, we assume. Our hotel is 'closed', but they couldn't have been more helpful in making sure that we had everything we needed for our picnic on their terrace - including inviting us to

put our food into their outdoor chiller cabinet.

This chiller cabinet, which is unlocked, contains wine & soft drinks - difficult to believe that any hotel owner could safely leave alcohol in an unlocked cupboard facing the road in the UK. This same degree of public honesty applies to things like the floral plant troughs on bridges – how long would they last in Britain before someone thought that it was 'fun' to throw them into the river?

Tomorrow, we finish our canal walking in Langres & rejoin the VF proper. We will be only 122 miles/195 km from Switzerland & we will have covered over 100 miles in the last week.



290530 Jun 04

Day 30 – Mon 28th June

Marnay-sur-Marne - Langres

We were out of our room by 0700 this morning & recovered our OJ, apples & vacuum-packed bacon & egg sandwich from the terrace cooler cabinet. By 0715, we were on our way back to the canal for our last day of walking on the flat in the shade & without traffic. We had coffee at Rolampont, where the bar owner, on being asked if he had anything to eat, went out to the boulangerie & got us some fresh bread, which he served with home-made redcurrant jam & (C said - like a typical man) - steak knives & no plates or paper tablemats!

As usual, the canal was not busy - 'though we did see one Brit heading N flying the French flag as a jack... We also saw a hawk swoop down & catch a fish.

We left the canal NE of Langres & climbed straight up the hill (probably the old Roman road) towards one of the city gates. The temp was in the high 20s centigrade & we were both v surprised that we made it to the top without whingeing/palpitations on either part.

Langres is another of those untouristy, remarkably unspoilt small French cities - stuck on the top of a hill, still within its Roman bounds & still with its walls & gates.

We walked as far as the square before having lunch & then went on to the youth hostel, where we booked in for two cheap nights. Yes, we are too old to be described as 'youth', but they seemed to be prepared to accept us. The YH is actually fine - we have a corner room, two beds, basin etc. There is a laundry room with washing machines & a big sink - with no plug & not designed to have one, but our multi-purpose plug filled the hole - & showers where the light doesn't come on until you've locked the door & the shower head sprays water everywhere - with the added joy that it's on a time-push, so you can't stop the water until the button releases. But none of this is a major problem & the views from our window over the sunrise on the plain below are wonderful. Not sure exactly what this plain is called but we're at the watershed - from now on the rivers in France run S to the Med, rather than N to the Channel/N Sea.

After a quick change, we looked into the Tourist Office to try & sort out the next few days, but retired without any answer. It's not going to be easy. We also visited the new museum - free & v impressive. The most remarkable exhibit is a 50m square Roman mosaic floor of Bacchus – actually uncovered whilst building the museum, plus lots of other vg Roman stuff & a C12 church, which the museum was built over & around.

Finally, we found ourselves having to choose between the Hotel Jeanne d'Arc or the Irish Corner for supper - the J d'A (aka The Witch of Orleans) stuff is interesting - most of it seems to be late C19 - the period of the Entente Cordiale.... Anyway, we chose Irish.

A had to throw away his first sock (the one that C mended a couple of weeks ago) today - completely gone through on the heel & when he took his belt off prior to washing his Rohan bags, they fell down - so he must be getting a bit thinner.

Today (A is finishing this at 0600, having started at the Irish Corner) is a rest day, with two priorities - to find C's diary (we hope left in the Tourist Office) & to book ourselves the next week's accommodation. Schools break up on the 1st (& Rod the Builder should be starting on our house – but that's another problem - we hope not too much of one for Louise, our house sitter) so we are told that accommodation next weekend will be a problem - we may even have to throw ourselves on the mercy of local mayors.

A final point - distances - we don't suppose that anyone other than A is really interested in this subject, but as we have been quoting them, we ought to be accurate. Pedometers are notoriously 'variable' & A did three separate checks against the kilometre posts on the canal bank - ours has been under-reading by

about 11% - so we've actually walked 419 miles along the route so far, 476 miles including sightseeing, days off etc. & our longest day has been 21.27 miles or 34 km for those who prefer Napoleon's system. No, we're not really sure that we believe this either!

More this evening.

291655 Jun 04

Day 31 – Tue 29th June

A rest day in Langres

Firstly, the good news - we found C's diary in the tourist office & secondly, we have managed (much effort by C on the phone) to sort out accommodation up to & including next Saturday night. When we went into the tourist office, the 4 Canadians were there - they'd caught a train to get to Langres for the birthday celebrations (tomorrow) of the co-founder of Montreal, who was born here.

Our sightseeing started with a circuit of the ramparts. These are complete & the gates, which are still the only way into the city, range from Roman (20BC) to C19th. The weather has been lovely today (for tourists – a bit too sunny for walkers!) & the views out over the countryside have been picture postcard stuff. If anyone is thinking of camping or caravanning in this region, the campsite on the ramparts must have one of the best views anywhere - complete with upside down Union Flag - about which the receptionist started to apologise almost before A had opened his mouth. As with so many flagposts these days, it requires a high-reach platform to put right.

Having 'done' the walls, we picnicked in a lovely wooded avenue & then did the architectural trail. This city has an amazing number of old building still in daily use - we reckon that there only about 20 post-WWII building within the walls. There are several half-timbered ones, but most are of the local cream stone. We haven't seen the terrible thing we spotted in Joinville of a half-timbered medieval building with PVC door & windows.... Clearly the mayor has a firmer grip here. The cathedral roof is being retiled - from slate to a geometric pattern in greens & oranges - nothing if not striking &, apparently, historically accurate.

Whilst buying our picnic for tomorrow, we bought a bargain pack of 4 toothbrushes (we'd have preferred to buy just one, but everything comes in bulk these days - mind you, A has got through 2 since we started, 'though these were free travellers ones & C may be allowed one of these new ones - provided she carries it).

Tomorrow, after calling into an out-of-town sports shop, we have only about 10 miles to do to our first stop in Les Archots. This little stroll is forced upon us by the paucity of accommodation outside the main towns.

And now, off to supper - a Menu du Terroir! But not the one we spotted offering rabbit pate or snails as the only starters!



011109 Jul 04

Day 32 – Wed 30th June

Langres – Les Archots

A very short day today - perhaps just as well, as we are out of the habits of walking on roads - the adverse camber on the edge & the traffic, most of which is pretty good at pulling out to give us a wide berth, but you never know & so have to remain alert.

Today was 9.11 miles & we were on the road from 0835 to 1400. Langres is the crossroads for 12 Roman roads & so, not surprisingly we left town on a Roman road - now a lovely wooded avenue in a park. The old walled town is, in fact, on the N end of a ridge & to the south is a large C19 fort built to deter the 'Prussians'. Some of it is still in French army use, but most is now derelict. There seems to be no reuse of old buildings such as warehouses/barracks for housing here - but they do have much more land & it's probably cheaper to build new tower blocks.

Having cut through the old barracks area; we headed off down another Roman road to the out-of-town shopping centre to get A some more socks & a rubber foot for his walking pole. Success on the first, but not the second. We also bought some braces to hold his Rohan bags up with. Another bit of equipment that's failing is the pedometer - the clip on the back has given up on one side & it won't be long before the spring forces the other side off too. One could be quite Victor Meldrewish about things being made to last...

Then, it was just on over the gently rolling countryside to Le Pailley, where we found a bar & had a couple of beers whilst we ate our sandwiches.

At Le Pailley, there is a wonderful little château under restoration – a complete mix from a medieval tower on a section of moat to a front with a classical facade, via the standard early C19 château bit. Our Gîte/chamber d'hôtes at Les Archots is the only place to stay for quite a big area – which explains today's short leg & tomorrow's longer one. It is run in a slightly eccentric but effective way by a man & his daughter. He was making jam when we arrived - early, as he commented, but the Anglais were always early.



About half a dozen of his friends came in before supper to have a drink & chop vegetables. We asked for some wine at about 1800 & were given a litre jug of red, which we started to drink whilst playing scrabble using a French set - the different letter mix is certainly noticeable.

There were a dozen of us for dinner on one long table - including a Belgian family on their third visit & the 4 Canadians.

Having drunk most of our litre of red, we were then offered homemade aperitifs, followed by lots more red wine & homemade digestifs to finish.

Dinner at Les Archots

The food was good too - from the hors d'oeuvre, through the pork to the excellent cheese board & the rhubarb pie - all for €14. For obvious reasons, we got to bed after dark for the first time since we left Canterbury & this dispatch is being finished at lunchtime next day.

One correction to yesterday - Blackberries have been around for at least a couple of years & a couple of observations - we heard a group of French schoolchildren telling jokes about an Englishman, a Frenchman & a German - sadly our French wasn't good enough to follow it. There are so many things that you notice on foot that you miss in a car - how quickly the temperature drops in the shade, local

architectural details (fancy raised panelling on the doors in Langres & round or oval windows with square shutters hereabouts that have an extra inner layer that fits into the window hole) & the fact that the Belgian family instinctively supported Portugal rather than the Netherlands in the football.

011757 Jul 04

Day 33 – Thu 1st July

Les Archots to Champlitte

14. 24 miles from 0850 to 1530.



Departing from Les Archots

Champlitte is, strictly speaking, off the VF, but there is nowhere else to stay. The town has a surfeit of listed buildings crying out for a new use or a new owner - it also has a little supermarket, so we've restocked our emergency supplies & have tomorrow's picnic. The girl in the tourist office was both helpful & prepared to think through our Sunday night accommodation problem. So we now have a couple of phone numbers, even though we haven't yet managed to establish contact.

Tomorrow should be a lovely walk - overcast - and we are following the River Salon to Dampierre.

Breakfast was again served at the long table - with 5 of the patron's excellent homemade jams.

All day has been overcast, again great for us, less so for all the French children who are now on holiday. Today's route took us mostly through woodland - of which there is a lot in this corner of France. Most of it seems to be grown for firewood & there are vast stores of Teutonic neatness all around. We passed through only one village - no shop & no bar – so lunch consisted of the half baguette we'd saved from breakfast, two cans of beer from Langres, dried sausage (our emergency supplies), raisins (ditto) &, for A, some marmite on his bread. In consequence, we made quite good time.

021905 Jul 04

Day 34 - Fri 2nd July

Champlitte to Dampierre

Along the Salon valley - 11.24 miles between 0830 & 1430

As we said yesterday, this is a wooded area - we now know that it's 45% covered in woods. Two other observations from yesterday are that the distances on the road we were on were marked by kilometre stones at the half-kilometre & Champlitte used to have a railway - the line must have been closed many years ago, but the local council has kept renewing the level crossing warning signs. In fact, as we discovered on our way out this morning, they just closed the line & left it - some has been tarmac'd over, but most of the line is still there on its rotting sleepers & we saw a pair of raised crossing gates covered in creeper.

It was a v pretty route today with a choice between white roads & a Grande Randonnee. We followed a mix, with unfortunate consequences when the path disappeared into a field of sunflowers & we had to

walk down the lines of plants until we found the track again. It was in the same area that, whilst we were sitting on the verge having our lunch, a fox walked across the track about 50' away.

Dampierre is another pretty riverside village/small town with a 15-storey angular mirror glass block plonked into the centre. As it contains the only restaurant in town (in a *** Best Western hotel), as we've now completed a third of the route & as we're picnicking for the next two days, we treated ourselves to dinner with panoramic views - well at least you don't have to see the block from within it. Not for the first time, we've wondered how the French planning system works & how you get approval to build things....

The tourist office here was v helpful & we now have a bed for Sunday night. However, we are going to have to carry everything we eat between breakfast on Saturday & lunch on Monday from here - v good for us, I'm sure. We are actually staying in a gîte tonight, as are the 4 Canadians & one of the sisters celebrates her 73rd birthday today.

As I write this the sun is setting over the countryside & we have just been joined, an hour after we arrived, by three more customers. The restaurant seats well over 100 & so we have been well looked after. As C observed, it rather reminds one of some of those luxury hotels build in Pakistan in slightly odd locations that never had many customers.

Tomorrow, we head onto Frasne-le-château where we are the only occupants of an empty school/conference centre - we've just been given the key & told which room to use - v trusting. The director even, kindly, delivered the key to our gîte in Dampierre.

More tomorrow

031807 Jul 04

Day 35 – Sat 3rd July

Dampierre – Frasne-le-Château

Today should really have been a lovely day - the weather was again perfect for walking & the, mainly wooded, countryside is beautiful. Unfortunately, we were carrying our heaviest loads yet - all our food & drink for the next two days & A's shins have been playing up. We think that this may be due to walking on heavily cambered roads, as the left shin is definitely more painful. Brufen held it in check during the day & it seems to be a bit better this evening.

Anyway, we left our chambre d'hôtes after a vg breakfast at 0830 – during which our Patron quizzed us about how many had eaten in the Best Western the night before & then confided that it was always empty - & headed to the boulangerie to buy our bread, pizza slices & bacon tart - which we had recce'd the night before. Gloom - they only do sweet things at weekends, so we had to accept 2 different breads & pop to the supermarket for a couple of sandwiches. As we left the supermarket, the sirens sounded, but no one looked that interested, so we headed out of town. Shortly afterwards, we headed back into town, having realised that we were going in the wrong direction. We finally left Dampierre at about 0900.

As we came towards the local disco, in a shed about a mile out of town, we found the reason for the sirens - the local (retained?) Fire brigade were exercising & were using all their hoses to spray an empty field - with the water blowing back across the road. Cars coming towards us had their wipers on full.

We approached with trepidation & C even took her hat off so that they could see her curls.

Miraculously, as we finally arrived at the scene of the exercise, the hoses stopped, we passed through dryly (more than at least one motorcyclist had) & the hoses then recommenced watering the lucky farmer's field.



That was our main excitement of the day. At about 1600, after 16.52 miles, we arrived in Le Foyer of the Association St-Joseph in Frasne-le-Château (**photo left**). We left ourselves in with the key that had been delivered to us last night & found our allocated student-type twin en suite room. We made full use of the kitchen fridge to store our food in, washed most of our clothes, fixed the pedometer, decided that the thin area in C's Rohan trousers produced by her now more muscled, even if still a bit chubby thighs will wait to Besançon for repair or replacement, ate supper & went to bed. The swallows continued to fly to their nests above our window throughout all this.

If this sounds unfinished, we're tired!
Good night

041835 Jul 04

Day 36 – Sun 4th July

Frasne-le-Château – Voray-sur-l'Ognon

Today didn't start so well, as about 15 minutes after leaving the Foyer, we discovered that we had left the sandwiches in the fridge.

Fortunately, St Christopher was looking after us & we found a small shop so were able to buy some more bread, ham & cheese + a Twix ice cream.

Today has been quite a bit hotter than of late - probably much nearer the normal & A's shins are still playing up a bit, as is C's blister, in exactly the same place as her first, but not as bad. We were therefore feeling a bit low by lunchtime when we happened upon a restaurant & decided that our picnic would do for this evening & tomorrow.

We had a proper French Sunday Lunch, 'though perhaps C's 4 slices of sausage & 4 boiled potatoes was slightly unexpected & fortified by a bottle of rosé &, in A's case, a Brufen, we, quite cheerfully, completed our 15.04 miles by 1545.

Tonight's lodging at Voray-sur-l'Ognon is a Gîte d'Etape - a sort of communal gîte, with 4-bed rooms & one bigger one + a TV room & a proper kitchen. It is on the first floor over a canoeing centre & is designed partly to support it. We had our supper at a picnic table by the old mill on the river - very relaxing. Whilst sitting by the river, C removed one of the knee patches from her Rohans & patched the trousers.

Tomorrow, we have only about 10-12 miles to go, but most of it will be through the N industrial suburbs of Besançon. We have a rest day in Besançon & then have three or four days left in



France - mind you, those are going to be pretty hilly ones. As we came out of Frasne-le-Château this morning, we could see some fairly big hills ahead - these may well have been the Jura.

A couple of corrections & a few comments - the eyesore hotel in Dampierre was actually only 8 stories, it just loomed larger & yesterday's swallows may well have been swifts or house martins - whichever, they are the type that build knobbly nests in the corners of windows or under eaves. There are lots of them around here.



We commented on the new multi-coloured tiled roof of Langres Cathedral - since then we have seen lots of beautiful polychrome tiled roofs on church towers - though it looks as if we're now S of them. The other feature of this region is the communal village wash-houses - in use until well into the 30s - most are v simple & elegant structures - one we saw today (**at Etuz – photo left**) looked like a pair of Roman Temples with a canal running in between them. The final observation for today is net curtains (on which C used to be an expert when she did her Saturday job in Swansea Market) - they come in a

wonderful profusion of designs - from cats, via cows to Pierrot & harbour scenes & (coloured) Labradors + pups - no window is complete without them.

051820 Jul 04

Subject: Day 37 – Mon 5th July

Voray-sur-l'Ognon - Besançon

Quite an exciting start to the morning - we were making toast by the yottie method (directly on an electric ring), when the ensuing smoke set off the fire alarms. A rushed downstairs to meet the fire brigade, but fortunately the alarm only sounds locally (the other occupants of the gîte had left at about 0400) & after about 5 minutes, it reduced to only sounding quietly inside, so we finished our breakfast, cleared up & were leaving when a neighbour arrived - clearly the alarm goes off quite often, as he knew how to reset it.

By then it was raining heavily, so in full waterproofs, we headed S from Vorey.

Fortunately we found a café quite quickly as C was suffering from severe caffeine withdrawal syndrome after only a couple of real coffees in 3 days. By then the rain had stopped & so we divested ourselves of our waterproofs & continued on into the outer suburbs of Besançon. We were just into them & the

traffic next to us was static in roadworks, when someone asked us if we were on the VF. This turned out to be Pierre Blondeau & his wife Dany.

Pierre has drawn all the maps for the VF in the Doubs Department - which we had with us - & so we had a long discussion about routes etc. & he will meet us at our YH to guide us out of Besançon on Wed morning, because this bit of the route is difficult to find.

We walked on through the Zones Industrielle of N Besançon, had our picnic in a deserted children's' basketball pitch & arrived at our YH (a vast modern block) at about 1330 after only 8.82 miles. A's shins are still a bit painful, but our Physio sponsor Alison (see the website) has offered email advice & A isn't going to lose his legs, but ice packs will help.

Having shed our packs & boots, we headed into the old city, booked Wed & Thu nights & then took the tourist boat trip around the loop in the river & under the citadel in a tunnel. Besançon has been a crossroads since Roman times & has a wealth of historic buildings. We wandered tiredly, but contentedly, in frequent heavy rain showers until suppertime, then had some more pig (are we really still suffering from Pakistani pork withdrawal symptoms?) & went back to the YH to bed.

061820 Jul 04

Day 38 – Tue 6th July

A Rest Day in Besançon



Today the weather has favoured tourists, after some thunder, lightning & heavy rain overnight.

We caught the 0900 bus into town & took in another couple of sights, before catching the free bus up to the Citadel. The Citadel is vast – 11 Ha - & was started by the Romans (needless to say, the 'Gallo-Romans'), before the Spanish (Besançon was the centre of a Spanish Protectorate into the late 1600s) built the basis of the present fort & then Vaubon greatly expanded it under Louis XIV? once it became part of the French Kingdom – to put the military engineering into perspective, there are 30 supporting forts/batteries. Quite like Plymouth & Portsmouth & Palmerstone's follies in some ways.

The views from the ramparts over the surrounding hills (which we have to climb tomorrow) & the old city are superb. Within the Citadel, there is a zoo (just modernised & pretty good as zoos go), an aquarium, insectarium, museum of local life & culture (including an extensive collection of very well explained firebacks) & a museum of the Resistance & Deportation. The last has 20 closely packed rooms & is pretty harrowing/thought provoking at the very least. The second half is not recommended for children & many of the adults were walking on through with hardly a glance at the exhibits. We had cards in English explaining each room & so were encouraged to look at all of it. As always when dealing with history that is within the memory of the living, there is a degree of partiality. Mers-el-Kebir/Oran is ignored in the English version, capitalism comes in for criticism whenever the opportunity offers & no mention is made of Stalin's role in the massacre of the Warsaw Ghetto! In A's view, the curator of the exhibition was somewhat to the left of centre - oh & the only mention of deaths in Besançon were from an 'English' bomb dropped on the railway station - & as we've found everywhere in France, the Germans never did anything unpleasant - it's either the Prussians or the Nazis. This 'airbrushing' of Europe's recent history may be politic, but is it honest?

Anyway, we were in the Citadel for 6 hours & then came back down into the old city - the Cathedral was closed (it's Tuesday), we looked at some Roman remains & got the bus back to our YH. Our feet are considerably improved after a day & a half in sandals, we're up to date with the washing & tomorrow, we set off S towards Switzerland & our first serious climbs. Luckily, Pierre Blondeau, one of the VF Amis in this area, who did much of the route planning, is joining us for the first leg out of the city - he has done the Road to Santiago 4 times, so is probably much fitter than we are. Wish us luck.

101132 Jul 04

Day 39 - Wed 7th July

Besançon - Foucheron

We left the YH (run by local govt. we now know) at about 0820 & set off at a good brisk pace in Pierre's wake.

Pierre (**photo below with Carole**) needs a proper introduction - he is the VFA friend in the area & produced all the route maps for the VF between Besançon & the Swiss border, as well as the local



Santiago da Compostela VP, 7 years in the French Fleet Air Arm (visited Plymouth in FS Arromanches), has walked to Compostela 4 times by different routes, ex-Customs Officer, firearms instructor, mountain walking guide & he's 69... He's well out of our league & we had difficulty keeping up. So off we went - all the while being regaled with stories of wartime in Besançon - he saw a Lancaster being attacked by a Messerschmitt – the ME fatally damaged the Lanc, but was itself crippled & crashed into the big circular engine shed by the station. He watched as the Lanc's pilot fought to keep his aircraft airborne during 3 circuits ('remaining engines screaming') whilst the 8 crew bailed out, the pilot then put

the Lanc into a dive at the engine shed & bailed out himself. The engine shed was completely destroyed & all the crew survived. He also gave us a different version of yesterday's story from the museum about the 41 killed by an English bomb in the railway station - provided we understood properly – the Germans would take the non-German passengers off trains during a raid & lock them in the railway station waiting room, whilst the train was hidden in a nearby tunnel - it was during one of these raids that a bomb hit the station & 40+ were killed. Who knows? We may well have misunderstood some of his account - our French has improved, but by how much is debatable - A is still spouting 30% Italian!

Anyway, Pierre led us down by the river to the edge of the Citadel & then straight up the old shepherds' tracks - cutting across the hairpins of the modern road. We climbed about 300m in a km or so, with only 3 or 4 v short breather stops - in fact, we had no real A&C type breaks at all until lunchtime, by which time we'd covered over 9 miles, most of it in rain of varying intensity - described by Pierre at one stage as 'le soleil de Plymouth' - clearly a man who remembered his visit to Devonport! The track (of pre-Roman origin) was pretty slippery & A managed to slip, falling onto one of his sore shins - bigger Brufen after lunch! No coffee break either... & C

View over Besançon from the ridge



didn't have any coffee at breakfast as it wasn't up to her standards.

In La Veze, we had a good lunch, discussed possible routes for the next few days (a bit weather dependant) & Pierre admitted that Dany, his wife, had admired C's hair but said that it wasn't English - another comment to go alongside the one from Madeleine, the wife in the Canadian foursome, who asked C if she had curlers in her pack.

Once Dany arrived to return Pierre to his car at the YH, we thanked them profusely for all their help & guidance - Pierre even lent us the detailed map of the final French leg + an SAE in which to return it to him & wouldn't accept a thing in payment.

We continued on S over the Jura Massif, climbing gently in warm – becoming hot - sunshine to Foucheron at about 500m. The architecture has been starting to show signs of 'Swissness' - the chalets, with a balcony set into one corner & lots of window boxes full of geraniums & this afternoon, we passed four herds of cows with the leader wearing a cowbell. We must be nearly into Switzerland - the land of C's great-grandfather (& maybe her hair - just like Heidi!)

We arrived at about 1700 having covered 16.19 miles.

Our bed tonight is in another Gîte d'Etape, but this one belongs to a co-op & is being extended, so there are buckets of workmen's tools around, no door on the loo, no pillows on the beds, only 1 sheet (a French habit & one of C's pet hates) & the co-op donkey is trying to get out of its patch at the end of the garden (actually a v small field) - however, it's only €20 for both of us.

Tomorrow, we head several 100m down to Ornans for a half-day & a bit of sightseeing.

101133 Jul 04

Day 40 – Thu 8th July

Foucheron - Ornans

An easy day. We woke at 0700 to bright sunshine & by 0745 it was pouring.

There had been distant thunder & lightning overnight & some rain, so the auguries weren't too good. As it happened, by the time we left at 0840, it was dry & it remained so until we got into Ornans just before midday after 7.3 miles. The track down from Foucheron was initially a GR, and then became a cycle track on an old railway line, so it was easy walking.

We had been going to stay in a Gîte in Ornans, but when we realised that the Gîte was 2km out of town & we would have to do this extra 2km 4 times, 2 of them with our packs, we foreswore the economy & found a cheap hotel in town.

The rain started as we looked for somewhere to have lunch - which was a great pity, as Ornans must look wonderful in 'summer'. The town is in a fairly steep, narrow valley (we came down 200m today) & the wooded hills rise on all sides - so the background is impressive in every direction. Add to this the fact that the river has, mostly old, houses right down to the bank on both sides & you have a v picturesque place – a pity about the rain.

Our bit of culture was the Courbet Museum/Gallery - he was born here. As well as his paintings, the exhibition included works by Matisse, Gaugin & several other recognizable contemporaries.

Tomorrow, we follow the river Loue upstream to Mouthier Haute-Pierre.

Let's hope the rain holds off, at least until we're there...



101133 Jul 04

Day 41 – Fri 9th July

Ornans – Mouthier Haute-Pierre

Once again, it was pouring when we woke up, but we walked all day in the dry, with the sun coming out in the afternoon.

Our original intention on leaving Besançon had been to gain height & then hold onto it. Our inability to find any accommodation on the Jura plateau had forced us down into the Loue gorge at Ornans & so we decided that we might as well stick with the 'low road' whilst we could. The tourist office in Ornans had not helped much in the decision making process - in fact, they were clueless! "Were there any footpaths?" "Yes, but not that easy to follow". On a return visit, we asked about cycle tracks - oh yes - several! It was quite clear that no one in the office had ever been on any of them - after all, what are cars for (oh dear - Meldrew resurfacing...)

Anyway, this morning, after Madame in the hotel had told everyone that we were walking to Rome, we headed off on Les Doubs Chemins, which turned out to be the track of a disused railway & was graded/gravelled etc., except in one spot where a tunnel had been gated off & was being used for air-conditioned storage (prob cheese) where we had a nasty slippery scramble down to the river & back up again.

At coffee time, we found ourselves in Vuillafans, where they were getting ready for a weekend of motor racing on the local roads & A posted the next CD of photos back to Plymouth.

The Loue is, we both think, the cleanest river we've ever seen & the scenery around is perfect picture postcard stuff. We had risked not bringing a picnic today as we'd assumed that we were well into tourist country & so it proved.

Lunchtime in Lods provided some wonderful local smoked ham carved off the bone & lovely fresh trout meuniere + local rosé, with a view over the gorge.

The last couple of miles into Mouthier Haute-Pierre, now along the road, weren't too bad after that! The road here is about 70m above the river &, as we couldn't find any signs to our gîte, we walked further up the hill to the Mairie to ask for directions. Eventually we found it - right down on the river - oh well, the view out of the windows in our archetypal 'Swiss' chalet is wonderful - over the crystal clear river to the wooded opposite bank & up to the plateau 600m above us where we have to be tomorrow evening.

Today's statistics - off at 0825, into our gîtes by 1530 & we covered 11.92 miles.

We have now been out of GPRS coverage for over 48 hours & I've no idea when you'll get this.





101815 Jul 04

Day 42 – Sat 10th July

Mouthier Haute-Pierre - Pontarlier

A hard day - at least initially (**photo shows the way ahead**). We were probably too yo-ho last night & kept our bedroom windows fully open - with the consequence that we were cold & the washing didn't dry.

Madam had produced breakfast for us at 0730. (Monsieur is 96 & she is probably of a similar age - but 'quite a few people in the mountains live to over 100') - wonderful home-made apricot jam - & as we were leaving we heard voices mocking (quite gently) our French - it was the Canadian sisters - as they put it 'in steerage' - they'd produced their own breakfast. Once we'd exchanged route notes, we headed off (about 0800) into the moist valley. The route to the Source de la Loue was well marked - probably the best-marked path we've seen so far. It soon started to rain - it was to rain all morning. After a time, we came to a signpost offering us two routes to La Source - one via the GR at 1hr40mins & the other via the

D road at 1hr10mins. Not surprisingly, we chose the latter, which climbed inexorably up the side of the gorge. When we came to the path down to the Source, we took one look & stuck with the road. By the time we're got to the RN (it was still raining), we'd climbed nearly 600m in two hours without a significant break - we assume that we are significantly fitter - certainly C can now keep walking up quite steep hills whilst amusing A with a medley from The Sound of Music!

Our intention had been to join the RN & then to take to the minor roads that parallel it - it was not to be - they've all been cut off or are in ruins & so we walked almost 10km along the main road getting covered in spray & giving all the cars (not too many lorries) another thing to worry about.

When we got to Pontarlier, the BB was still offline & so A resorted to a hard reset, which brought 14 emails in & allowed him to clear the last 3 days DDs.

Pontarlier is the second highest town in France & we've climbed over 600m today - our feet/legs know this. We were thinking of going to the YH, but having discovered from the Canadian sisters that it's dormitories, we're v glad that it was closed when we arrived & we went to a hotel instead.

Today's big decision was boots. Pierre had taken one look at the soles of our 4-year-old boots & had condemned them as unsafe (a decision that we vaguely knew was right - we've also worn through the inner side of the heel), so in Pontarlier, we bought some new ones. The difficult decision is whether to leave the old ones here, or to carry them with us for a few days in case we need to wear them whilst wearing the others in. Watch this space.

Otherwise, we have nearly 'done' France, which seems incredible & just as the landlady in Ornans congratulated A on his French...

Tomorrow, onto Jougne - 2km from Switzerland & then - fondues, cuckoo clocks & real mountains.

110949 Jul 04

A Lunchtime Dispatch

In Les Fourges &, finally, above 1000m (**photo by the 1000m marker**) & so, as we understand it, technically in the mountains.

No BB cover here, so don't know when you'll get this.
No snow either, but they obviously get lots of it.



111743 Jul 04

Day 43 – Sun 11th July

Pontarlier - Joune

We left Pontarlier at about 0820 in lovely crisp sunshine (i.e. about 12 deg C) & it stayed this way until about 1530, when - quite swiftly - the sky clouded over & it started to rain - heavily at first, then more steadily, so we sheltered in a bar with a glass of wine, hoping that it would pass through - which it, just about, did for our final mile or so. We arrived in Joune at about 1645 after 14.10 miles.

Our initial route out of Pontarlier was along the RN 57, the main road to Lausanne, which passes a very picturesque fort - the Château of Joux. Because heavy lorries are not allowed on the roads in France on Sundays, it wasn't too bad on the RN 57 & there is also a hard shoulder on lots of it.

We left the main road after about 5km & headed up into the hills to les Fourgs - a series of 3 little villages strung out along the road on a little plain just above 1000m. They are obviously dependent upon cows (for cheese) & tourists - either walkers or winter sports types.

We had lunch in the bar/brasseries in les Fourgs (vg cheese pie & the man at the next table, who was not English, was reading The Tablet in English). We then took to a little white road over the ridge, past resting ski lifts & down to Joune & our last night in France.

Tonight we are staying in a Village de Vacances Amitie (as are the married Canadian couple - we met the sisters in the street in Pontarlier last night & don't know where they are today).

We are not sure quite who runs this place, but think that it a (semi-government?) local charity that provides places for families & groups to come on holiday/field trips etc. There is an evening 'manifestation' & we now know that one can yodel in French & we've had a short concert on the alphorn. One of our big worries today was our new boots - & we are both carrying our old ones with us in case the 'running-in' process was extended, but in fact, all is well & I think that we will dump the shoes, that we bought in Lynton 4 years ago, tomorrow.



Tomorrow, we cross the border into Switzerland - only 3km away. We hope to be in Lausanne on Tuesday night.

Dumping the boots

120824 Jul 04

The Swiss Border

We crossed into Switzerland at 1000 this morning through an unmanned gap in the fence, guarded by a few cows on the Swiss side. Fortunately there was a man taking his dog for an international walk who took our photo.

Just having a coffee - ordered before we realised that we had no Swiss money - but Gladys, our hostess, is very amenable & is giving us Swiss francs in change, as well as a couple of biros as presents for our pilgrimage.



121907 Jul 04

Day 44 – Mon 12th July

Joune - Orbe

Well, no report would be complete without details of last night's meal. Once the yodelling demonstration had finished, we waited for the restaurant to open & finished our Scrabble (C won). Eventually, we went into the dining hall & sat down next to the married Canadian couple (who had been there for 2-3 days already). Madame, who ran the dining hall, was not at all happy with people not filling up the next place at the table - some (NOT us) were even unwilling to sit next to other people's children. Quite a bit of ostentatious re-laying of places took place! The main course was sliced potato with little bits of fatty bacon & a green salad (A thought that this was his starter!) followed by 2 apple fritters each. We had a 50cc jug of wine between two & ours was soon empty. We were advised by those who'd been there for a night already, that that was it, but A asked Madame (he was accused by Madeleine, the Canadian wife, of using his beaux yeux) for more & another jug of red arrived in no time, followed by one of white when she realised we were not drinking red. This led A to start several complicated discussions that were well above his ability in French! We went straight off to bed after dinner.

This morning, we were the only ones into breakfast at 0730 & still the only ones when we left at 0805. Madame was kindness itself & told us how much she'd cried when Princess Diana had died & that the Queen was going to allow Charles to marry Camilla because Camilla is seriously ill (have we missed something?). As we left, she photographed us dumping our old boots & off we went into the rain. The path led steeply downhill through the woods - we could easily feel the difference made by having boots with grip on the soles - to the Chapelle St-Maurice (restored in C12 after a fire) & on mostly along the Roman road to the Swiss border.

This was just a sign but fortunately there was a man taking his dog for an international walk who took our photo next to the border. 10 minutes later, we found a bar - Chez Gladys - & went in for a coffee. . Onward - mostly in the rain - to lunch.



This was a slightly surreal picnic just outside an 'artisan' forge. There was a line of three metal seats, a skip & a 4' high galleon in full sail - probably floodlit at night. We sat on the seats & ate our bread & ham & cheese with a bottle of Swiss Pinot Noir. Soon the rain recommenced & we sat there as if we were on Brighton seafront, determined to enjoy ourselves in our foul weather jackets. Eventually, the rain ceased & we moved on towards Orbe, via some lovely C12 frescos in Montcherand. We got to Orbe at about 1600 after 11.92 miles.

Orbe was our first real introduction to Swiss prices & it was a bit of a shock. The v helpful man in the

tourist office was a bit embarrassed to be able to offer us nothing between sleeping on the floor in one place & an expensive hotel - there is only 1 hotel left in Orbe's centre. Eventually, he persuaded the hotel to allow 2 pilgrims to have a discount & so here we are.

Orbe is another of those v historic cities that we've been through - roman roads, roman mosaics & lots of history that we don't quite understand. Even though we both went to school when old-fashioned history was still taught, there is an awful lot of European history from this part of the continent that neither of us knows anything about. The Catholic-Protestant divide in Switzerland seemed to be almost 'Irish' in its vitality.... Mind you, there are clearly some Swiss youngsters with a slim grasp of history/politics - having seen 'USA go home' graffiti within Switzerland.



Orbe's 'quarried' castle

Anyway, tomorrow we head off S to Lausanne - possibly nearly 30km away. Then a rest day.

131831 Jul 04 Day 45 – Tue 13th July



Orbe - Lausanne

I'm sitting here on the windowsill of our room in the YH in Lausanne looking at the dusk creeping over Lake Leman (yes, we thought that it was called Lake Lausanne too) down towards Geneva.

We left Orbe at 0750 this morning & had a good day's walking - past Mr Nestlé's original factory & on towards the S.

Orbe is a place that, sadly, seems to have lost its way. It had a wonderful medieval castle - turned into a 'quarry' in the 1880s & the City Fathers just decided to save two of the four towers in time. The Priory is now a 'wanabee' brothel - our judgement is

based on the photos outside the 'night club' (the man in the tourist office was clearly embarrassed about the 'cabaret'), one of the two city centre hotels has just closed & last night there was only 1 real restaurant open - the rest have closed or are on holiday. The city has roman mosaics (unique in Switzerland), some wonderful old buildings & a real sense of history, but doesn't seem to know what it wants to be. Sad.

A surprising observation, already, on Switzerland compared with France is the number of flies. Perhaps the Swiss don't support the agro-chemicals business in the way that the French obviously do, but it is v noticeable.

Our path took us across the Orbe Plain, along the southern slopes & then up onto a plateau above Lausanne. We kept expecting to drop down off this plateau, but were well into Lausanne before we began our descent. We got down to the YH after 17.76 miles & 9 hours

Even C was impressed with the BB today as we managed to book & pay for the last room (other than dormitory beds) in the YH in Lausanne in a series of 8 emails between lunch & our arrival. The YH is a converted C19 building just below the railway station. Our room overlooks the lake & has two double bunk beds in it. The private bathroom is across the corridor & everything is v clean - partly, we think, because it has v recently been done up. All this for 100CHF (approx. £45) a day, which we think is fairly good for central Lausanne.

Having a rest day here will be good as it will give us a chance to catch up on things like the washing - A's waistcoat is getting a bit distinctive & to give our feet a bit of a rest. A's shins are nearly 100%, but his new boots are a little on the tight side still. C is in good shape.

Tourism tomorrow.

141741 Jul 04

Day 46 – Wed 14th July

A Rest Day in Lausanne

Today has been a wonderful day to be tourists - the sun has shone, the air has been clear & it hasn't been too hot.

Our first problem was to sort out the next few days' accommodation & we found a v helpful lady in the tourist office down by the lake.

A had emailed the YH in Vevey, which was when we discovered that the Montreaux Jazz Festival is on until next W/E & we have to walk through Montreaux on Friday. Anyway, after a few phone calls, we are sorted & will be getting the lake paddle-steamer to

Vevey first thing tomorrow, dropping our bags off & getting the steamer back to Lausanne before walking (without packs for the first time) back to Vevey. The night after we'll be away from Lake Leman & into the Rhone Valley & will stay in Aigle, then on to the Abbey in St-Maurice & on Sunday night, we are being put up by some kind friends of the VFA - Carol & Patrick Collins - then into the mountains & the St-Bernard Pass (Tuesday next we think).

Having sorted our travel arrangements, we had a coffee & wandered along the shoreline soaking up the views. We picnicked on supermarket sandwiches & Orangina (the supermarket wasn't licensed) & then went up the hill on the trolley-bus to the old city. The cathedral is high gothic, but having been built of



soft stone has been continuously 'restored' over the years (a bit like the Victory!) & is a bit too perfect - it doesn't have any feeling of age.

We bought A a pair of thin cotton socks (to see if these will solve his tight boots problem) & found someone to glue the side back on his glasses. After further wandering - the sales have been on everywhere for the last two or three weeks & we've browsed a bit, but bought nothing - C says that she finds the fact that we can only shop for essentials "almost liberating".

Lausanne is clearly a v rich city - full of tall, fair, elegant women - often dressed in a v expensive, but understated way - the shoes, jewellery & hair usually give them away. The dogs are as neatly coiffured as their owners. There are also more scooter riders & roller-skaters (both of all ages) than we can remember seeing anywhere. Along with the rich are lots of young backpackers (& 2 old ones!), quite a few obvious servants & the begging fraternity (complete with puppies & needle bins in the city centre). After our sightseeing, we returned to the lakeside & are now sitting with 50cl of Swiss Rosé about to have a Salade Paysanne looking across at the Alps in the soft evening sunshine - it was worth the walk here for the superb view.

Tomorrow - off to 'sea'!

151913 Jul 04

Day 47 – Thu 15th July

Lausanne - Vevey

One highlight of yesterday that we failed to report was the self-cleaning loo seats! These have a head that comes out from beneath the cistern & the whole seat rotates by 360 degrees under this head. C was on one today that started rotating as soon as she stood up! C's other excitement has been realising that Lac Leman is also Lake Geneva & C always wanted to be Alexandra Bastedo in the TV series The Champions, which was set in Geneva. We're now working on straitening her hair & stretching her legs, as well as replacing the backpack with an elegant dress & the boots with court shoes.

We were up good & early this morning & took the Metro (we walked this bit yesterday) down to the lakeside. We were 90 minutes early for our ferry & so had a coffee + dealt with the overnight emails. The ferry to Vevey was The Rhone - a steam reciprocating engined paddle steamer built in 1927 (even then to a retro design) & fully refitted in 2002. Training the engine room staff must be an interesting problem.

The weather was lovely & we had a beautiful trip alone the lake to Vevey, where we arrived at about 1030. Vevey seems to be Nestlé's HQ & is also where Charlie Chaplin lived for many years.

We walked up to our hotel, dropped our bags off (24 hours later than we'd been expected, but,



fortunately, Madame accepted that it was her staff's fault). We then walked back down, bought & ate our lunchtime picnic & got the 1306 boat back to Lausanne, where we arrived just after 1400.

After a real 'Italian' ice cream, we set off along the shore side path. The temperature was in the mid/high 20s & so this was our first real experience of walking in proper summer temperatures - fortunately without packs. The first section follows the water's edge - clearly unwillingly in places, as the owners of what must be multi-million \$ houses have sometimes tried hard to reduce the path to the minimum. Still, it does follow the

water & the views are wonderful. After a time, the path moves inland a bit & we found ourselves sometimes in the vineyards, sometimes by the water & sometimes on the pavement of the lakeside road. Nevertheless, a wonderful walk with quite breathtaking views. We can see down the valley towards the San Bernard Pass & there is clearly snow around at below the height of the pass. We shall see.

Our walk back took us 5 hours & we walked over 17 miles again today.

Tomorrow - on around the lakeside through Montreaux, past the Château de Chillon (Byron etc.) & onto Aigle.

161912 Jul 04

Day 48 – Fri 16th July

Vevey - Aigle

Another day on which we walked further than we'd realised we were going to & for longer. We were on the road at 0800 (almost exactly) & arrived in Aigle at about 1715 after 16.27 miles. We were not as exhausted as we have been on similarly long days, although we had both run out of water & the electronic temperature display on a garage as we entered Aigle was showing 35 - we think this was an over estimate.



We were staying halfway up the hill in Vevey &, as we had to go down to the shore past the cemetery, we walked through to see if we could find Charlie Chaplin's grave - we did & he is buried alongside Oona with 2 plain, matching gravestones & a simple bed of flowers. Later on, we found a life-sized statue on the shoreline of him in characteristic pose with bamboo walking stick.

The path, with stunning views, runs along the shore until the Nestle Conference Centre, where it is forced inland. Our walk along the road wasn't too bad at all & we were back on the shoreline well before Montreaux. The Jazz Festival is just about to finish & there is the

usual string of tents selling a wide variety of things along the shore. We arrived at the Festival area at about 1000 & almost nothing was open. By the time we got to the far end (after our coffee), most were open. Many seemed to be being run by superannuated 60s hippies - what do they do for the rest of the year?

As we headed on towards the S, we passed the gate into the Paul Kruger Museum, which had a plaque (in French) commemorating his death there in 1904. The house next door has a plaque (in English) saying 'nothing happened in this house in 1897' - perhaps the year in which Kruger took up residence? It is interesting that the Ladies who walk along the lakeside path are - to our eyes - v formally dressed & often with a small 'English' dog in tow.

It is also amusing to note the looks that we get - especially Carole - from all these beautifully turned out people - we are obviously too old to be back-packers - but we don't look like down & outs - we must be providing a topic for several conversations - one elderly jogger actually stopped & asked us, as he came back, who we were etc. - he had spotted the White Ensign on the back of A's rucksack & used that as his opening gambit.

The Château du Chillon (**photo right** - much painted - & rightly) is at the S end of Montreaux & it is as wonderful to see as the ads say. Sadly, we didn't have time/weren't motivated enough to go inside.

We picnicked at Villeneuve, which is the SE corner of Lake Leman/Geneva & then turned off onto the pedestrian tourist track. The change was immediate & absolute. We were in thick forest, less than 500m from the lake. About 30 minutes later, we were out into the rich farmland of the Rhone valley (did you know that (according to The Economist of 3rd July) Switzerland has the most heavily subsidised farming in the World - 55% of the value of gross farm output is 'producer support' - the EU is 'only' 38% & the US 25% - what are we doing - no wonder the third world is grumpy). We continued S along a drainage canal & into Aigle.



Aigle has a very old sector & was definitely on Sigeric's route 1050 years ago. One of the very old streets - narrow, with first wooden bridges from side to side - is still called Rue de Jerusalem.

As A writes this, we are sitting (at 2100) on the terrace outside our hotel as very heavy rain falls, lightning flashes & thunder reverberates around the valley.

Just had a BB shut down - the storm? Fortunately nothing lost.

Tomorrow, we intend to follow the Rhone up to St-Maurice, where we are staying in the Franciscan Abbey

171759 Jul 04

Day 49 – Sat 17th July

Aigle – St-Maurice

Today was a shortish day. We bought our picnic & then headed W out of Aigle towards the Rhone. After the rains (or maybe anyway), the Rhone was flowing strongly & was that grey colour that rivers seem to be when full of mountainous silt.

The riverside path was actually a cycle track &, whilst we could be said to be walking in the Alps, our main danger was of being run down by a group of be-logo'd, lycra-clad speeding cyclists of indeterminate ages.

At 'coffee time', we saw a sign leading through the trees to a 'cantina', where we found a shooting club (100 & 50m ranges) with a café attached. Clearly there is a radically different attitude to firearms here - on the way to the loo, you had to go through the weapon cleaning areas & A was immediately assailed by all the familiar smells & sights of a small arms range.

Eventually, the mountains closed in, the railway & the motorway disappeared into tunnels & we found ourselves on the old road going through a gorge with the river. The Château of St-Maurice guards the N end of the town & it was here that we saw our first VF sign - fortunately pointing us southwards.



We thought that we'd booked into the Abbey, but they redirected us to the Foyer Franciscain, where we were expected. As we said, a short day - just over 10 miles in 5 1/2 hours.
St-Maurice is a sleepy place & most of it was closed. The Abbey Church is wonderful - over 1000 years old in places with a history back to 300AD.
Provided tonight's thunderstorm abates, we will be back at the church for a concert at 2030.
Tomorrow, on to Martigny, where Carol & Patrick Collins have kindly offered to put us up - & then we start up the St-Bernard Pass...

190532 Jul 04

Day 50 – Sun 18th July

St-Maurice – Martigny (Branson)

We try to get the DD written over supper each evening, but last night we were discussing the VF & the rest of the World with Carol & Patrick Collins, so A is actually drafting this at 0630 whilst C slumbers peacefully beside him.

The concert in the Abbey Church on Saturday night was, as we understand it, the culmination of a week's choir school for experienced singers. The conductor was the ex-choir master from ND in Paris & the organist was from Montreal Cathedral. The music was all French & had all been performed in ND - from the C12 onwards. So it was quite a varied collection - including one choral piece using two organs.

The pews were rather hard, but it was good to get some sustenance for the mind & we didn't get too wet getting to the church.

Yesterday morning we were out of the Foyer Franciscain at 0805 & started walking S into 35 knots of headwind. This wind persisted, on & off, for most of the forenoon (0800-1200 watch for the non-sailors).

Our initial path was along the old road & then the riverside track. After a time, we found ourselves on a beautiful grassy track, with the Rhone to our right that suddenly ended with no notice. We have found the signposting of pedestrian tracks here less 'Swiss' than we had hoped. Quite often the signs die out - sometimes to reappear, sometimes to not.

Anyway, we couldn't go on & so had to retrace our steps to the road, where we found 3 Brit climbers about to tackle a waterfall. Their guidebook was of no help to us, so we decided to continue the way we were going, as, on our map, there seemed to be a footpath going back to the river after the third hairpin bend. We climbed on up the road & found a plethora of footpath signs, so headed off down across a field to the woods by the riverside.

Almost as soon as we were in the trees it became obvious that the path was not for those of a nervous disposition! Having cleared the scree & bits of wood brought down by the previous two days' storms, A went on gingerly as far as the next corner & then persuaded C to follow him - balancing, with a pack on your back, on paths that are slippery & slope sideways towards a drop may be some people's idea of pleasure, but it isn't ours.

To have gone back would have meant an extra 90 minutes, so fortunately A was right & the worst was at the beginning - 'though we did have one section where someone had thought it necessary to fix a chain along the rock face.





We survived this big of genuine Alpine trekking & found ourselves a coffee in the next village. The path was pretty straight forward from there & after nearly 11 miles, we climbed up into Branson, where Carol & Patrick Collins (**in photo**) , Friends of the VF Association, had kindly offered to put these two strangers up.

Distances are impossible to be exact about on the VF because everyone follows a different route to a greater or lesser degree - these days caused by accommodation problems, motorways & getting lost - in Sigeric's day by bandits, pestilence & hospitality offered (or maybe refused). Anyway, we have now walked just over 650

miles towards Rome & reckon that we are about halfway. A also rashly weighed himself last night & seems to have lost 9 kg so far. C couldn't work out how to turn the scales on...

Carol & Patrick are a Canadian/Brit couple who have lived in Switzerland for 30+ years, having originally come here because Patrick had a job teaching English Literature at a Swiss private school (it was his suggestion to call the DD Pilgrims' Progress).

It was good to be in a home for the night & to be able to discuss Switzerland & France (they are both bilingual & have a translation business) with people who know the areas we've walked through so well.

In a couple of hours, we leave the Rhone Valley & start up the St-Bernard Pass. We've decided to spend two night on the way up before we get to see the dogs & on into Italy

200522 Jul 04

Day 51 – Mon 19th July

Branson – La Doue

Probably our most exhausting day yet & we both doubt if we'd have been able to finish it 7 weeks ago. We left the Collins's at 0935 & crossed the Rhone for the last time before heading S through Martigny, where we met a v helpful lady in the supermarket café , who used her mobile to ring the Monastery at Col St-Bernard & to book us beds in the dormitories. Then out past the Roman amphitheatre (still complete enough to be used for performances) & we started up the Dranse Valley. Initially we were on one leg of a nice circular 'Sunday afternoon' walk, but soon we were being taken on up the hillside & the path became noticeably more Alpine. It was quite warm & v humid - we were both sweating freely.

Eventually, after several ups & downs & a couple of hours, we crossed the river & ate our sandwiches on a granite picnic table. We then crossed the railway - the H&S nannies would have a fit here - warning notices in 4 languages, but no fences - after all - you don't need them if you have warnings, do you? Certainly the Swiss don't seem to.

There was a bar just across the road (the only road to the St-Bernard Tunnel, so lots of traffic), so we allowed ourselves a beer & then walked on through Bovernier.





The 'Route Napoleon' out of Bovernier started with a gentle climb up a v old road (Roman?), but this soon degenerated sharply. At the first narrow gorge, we found ourselves being forced upwards & the path, as such, disappeared in a jumble of rocks. For the next 90 minutes, we had to scramble across everything from scree, to real rocks to the debris of a minor landslide.

After yesterday's unkind words on the Swiss signage, we have nothing but praise today. Several sections of today's path had clearly been subject to the depredations of nature, but the paths had all been rebuilt & very good, reassuring signs had been provided. The path wasn't that much used, though we did pass a teenage girl who was semi-jogging southwards just after we'd negotiated the landslip - oh for the agility, fitness, balance, self-confidence etc. of youth! One side effect of the limited traffic on this 'track' was that there were lots of wild strawberries & even a few wild raspberries.

Pause here as A was falling asleep over his homemade rhubarb tart (in season & the third we've had in Switzerland - vg indeed). The fondue was also vg.

By the time we got to Sembrancher, we'd been on the track for 7 hours & we needed another beer. This was where we got the email from Dave Hatfield, who used to be my PA in Islamabad, saying that he's persuaded his ship, HMS Sutherland, presently on deployment in the N Atlantic, to support the GACAC Appeal.

After Sembrancher, we had to turn R up into another valley & continue our climb up a better, 'though v steep in parts, track to a little village called La Doue, which fortunately has an inn with rooms, where we were booked in. We showered, ate & almost fell asleep at the table.

As A writes this (0700), we both seem to have a few aches in unfamiliar places, but are getting ready for the climb to Bourg St Pierre.

We were on the track for nearly 9 hours yesterday & the pedometer recorded 18.99 miles. This can't be the true figure because it has recorded every step up & down every rock as a pace, but it's a pretty true reflection of the effort & energy expended - these two unfit fatties from Plymouth do wonder, at times, what they're doing here...

201806 Jul 04

Day 52 – Tue 20th July

La Doue - Bourg St Pierre

Firstly an apology to our more avid readers for having worried them by not getting the daily PP out by your bedtime. We will send a safe arrival signal in future if we're too tired to do the full PPDD.

Another day of climbing - we are now in Bourg St Pierre at 1632m, having climbed steadily all day.

The paths/tracks have been much better than yesterday in terms of their surface, but much worse in

terms of steepness - and sustained steepness (almost 1 in 2 at times - but lots of Alpine strawberries).

The Swiss have spent a lot of money/put a lot of effort into their network of paths & today - in 7 hours - we passed only one other walker - a local with his dog.

The weather started well for us - a bit overcast, little wind etc. - but at lunchtime, it started to rain heavily. We had made slower progress than we'd expected & so were not in the village in which we'd hoped to get some food. We sheltered under the eaves of a chalet & ate our emergency supplies - cheese

left over from breakfast, a dried spicy pork sausage that A had been reluctantly lugging round for weeks (& when we tasted it, he was right), the last of our raisins & an Ovomaltine bar (dried Ovaltine...) As the rain seemed to be set in, we got into full foul weather gear & started off up the mountain again (inevitably the track takes you up above the road/railway/river between villages & then back down again). Two chalets later we found the bar/restaurant that we'd assumed this village didn't have. But by then it was 1400 & lunch was over + a power cut was scheduled. We did manage a coffee before the power went off.

Off again - still overcast, but not actually raining. It did start to drizzle as the afternoon progressed & was raining properly again as we got close to Bourg St Pierre.

The pedometer shows 12.61 miles, which may be a little bit high, as one does take shorter steps both going up & down the steeper bits.

Bourg St Pierre, the last town in Switzerland, is a little place with lots of history. Apart from assorted Romans, Archbishop Sigeric, Charlemagne & Napoleon with an army of 40,000, there must have been many others. There is a 308AD milestone carved on a Roman pillar ([see photo](#)), a C10 church tower & lots of old wooden buildings.

Tomorrow, we have, apparently 4 hours to go to the top - but we also have another 800m to climb, so we are planning on 6 hours.

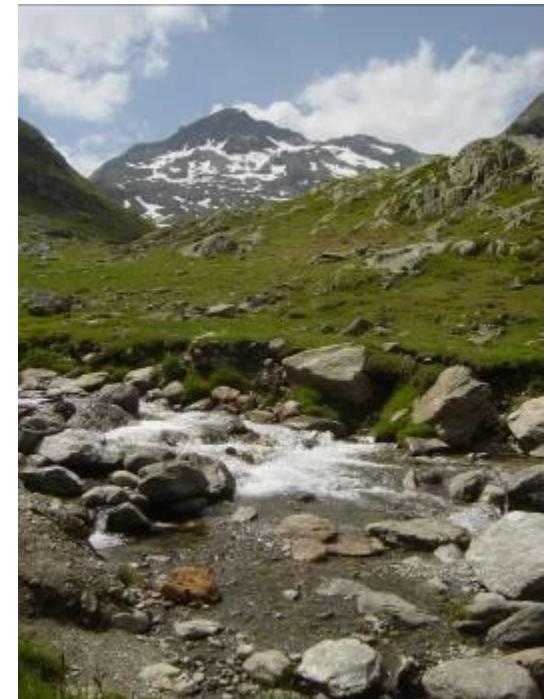


211013 Jul 04

We are sat on the grass ([photo below right](#)) at 2100m with an alpine stream 10' in front of us, foaming over the rocks & drowning the noise of the, albeit limited, traffic on the old road to the St-Bernard Pass.

The nearest patch of unmelted snow is 50' away & A's feet are enjoying the sunshine after 4 reasonably hard hours to get this far.

As Browning said: "God's in his Heaven - All's right with the World!"



211248 Jul 04

San Bernard Pass

We're there

211538 Jul 04

Day 53 – Wed 21st July

Bourg St Pierre to Grande St-Bernard

A quote from C's diary for today - "World's Strongest Dog, an 80kg St-Bernard, pulls 2909kg load 27m 1978"

A is typing this sat in the sun with a beer at his side on the top of the St-Bernard Pass.



The Monastery ahead

higher up, but more varieties. There are also lots of tiny wild flowers - again our knowledge of wildlife is quite inadequate!

On arrival, we were greeted warmly by the staff who deal with the tourists & taken into the refectory in the Privé area. One of the monks gave us tea & then showed us up to the mixed dormitory that we'll be staying in tonight. We're not quite sure how many people we'll be sharing with - more tomorrow.

We've been to see the dogs (less hairy than expected - they have smooth-haired St Bs up here - the snow doesn't stick so much) & the museum, which is good & includes everything from the treasures of the Hospice to Roman remains found at the Pass & a history of the Monastery + lots more. We hope to be photographed with the dogs before we start our descent into Italy tomorrow.

This evening, we have a service in the chapel at 1800, followed by supper in the refectory at 1900 & then, we suspect, bed.

221831 Jul 04

Day 54 – Thu 22nd July

Grande St-Bernard to St-Oyen

A fabulous day - but first to last night.

The Mass at 1800 was in the simple crypt of the very elaborate (Piedmontese Baroque) chapel. The congregation was about 40 - a figure that most CofE clergy can probably

At the top – Italy beckons

We left Bourg St Pierre at 0810 this morning & climbed almost all day (800m) until we got here at about 1400.

The first part of the walk was along the historic road (probably pre-Roman) as far as Toules Dam, which now covers the original route. From this point, we had to climb up & follow a track alongside the lake until we came to the place where the St-Bernard Tunnel starts. Here we decided to follow a mix of the old (C20) road & the marked footpaths - depending on which looked easier (a bit of a relative term!). We picnicked at the side of the road by a mountain stream &, despite snow about 50' away; it was warm enough for A to take his socks & shoes off.

The final stage was a bit worrying as it was over snow & we could see that there was a lot of water running under the snow - however, we survived.

The flora & fauna are wonderful up here. Yesterday, just after passing through a 'Marie Celeste' like Buddhist Peace Camp, we saw a stag with a full head of horns not far up the hill. He seemed quite unconcerned by our presence. Ever since we started climbing, we've seen lots of different butterflies - fewer in number



only dream of on a Wed evening.

Then we all trooped along to the Refectory for supper, where we found ourselves talking to a retired English French-teacher who now lives in Paris & leads walking groups - he walks 2-3 days every week & he's in his mid-70s. His best day in the last ten years was 100km in 20 hours... We are rank amateurs.

We decided to go to bed shortly after supper - the 4th floor dormitory had 20 bunks in pairs. Each came with 2 hairy blankets & a pillow. There were no sheets or pillowcases. A is used to a certain degree of hardship, C less so. Our mixed-sex dorm was full, including about half a dozen children. Fortunately we were in bed & pretending to be asleep by the time most of the occupants turned in. Actually, everyone was v quiet & v discreet. The only excitement was in the middle of the night when a young girl fell out of a top bunk. The thump & subsequent tears woke both us up, but things quietened down amazingly quickly & we both awoke at about 0655. We decided to try to get ahead of the rush & so were both dressed by the time the loudspeakers started playing Handel - orchestral at first & then choral pieces.



the border (no checks at all) & into Italy. There is a hotel just on the Italian side of the border that sells Illy, our favourite, coffee, so we had to have a cappuccino before starting down.

The Italian side is much steeper than the Swiss. We set off down yet another Roman road that slices across the modern road's hairpin bends & 2 hours after we'd started, we had descended 1000m. The weather was lovely, the views long into the distance & the path well found. What more could we ask for?

Well, after our emergency-rations lunch of a couple of days ago, our luck was in & at about lunchtime we walked into San-Rhemy, which has a real Italian restaurant. To celebrate our first day back in Italy, we allowed ourselves a proper lunch





with home-made egg pasta, fresh pesto etc. Wonderful. Suitably refreshed, we strode on to St-Oyen, where there is another of St-Bernard's Hospices (built in 1137 & still in use). However, just S of San-Rhemy (which has the VF pilgrim logo on its lampposts), we were directed to join the main road, fresh out of the St-Bernard Tunnel. This was a bit alarming, but as we could see a VF sign pointing N off the main road, we had to assume that we were in the right place. About 1km further on, we thought that the map showed a minor road down to the Aosta Valley floor & so we took it - fortunately there were roadworks/traffic light at the junction, so getting across wasn't too difficult. To cut a long story a bit shorter (& A's finger is beginning to ache), we arrived at the Hospice at about 1600, found our promised mini-dormitory (just for us), caught up on our washing & generally had a quiet evening. Compiene (Compline) shortly & then off to bed.
Tomorrow - on to Aosta & a rest day.

Note Pilgrim symbol in the lamppost

231652 Jul 04

Safely in Aosta

Tired

More tomorrow

240545 Jul 04

Day 55 – Fri 23rd July

St-Oyen - Aosta

Now 0630 on Saturday morning & it's been raining heavily overnight.

But to go back a bit to Thursday night. We went to Compieta (spelling correct this time). Again the chapel was full, but this may have been partly because the quality of the singing is renowned - we were strongly recommended not to miss it by someone at Grande St-Bernard. Anyway, next to the Hospice in St-Oyen, which is run by Augustinian monks, there is a closed Benedictine Convent - though interestingly they use the word for monastery, not the word for convent. The chapel is on the first floor of the convent & both monks & the congregation are behind a chained wrought iron screen. The nuns filed into the choir from a door to the left of the altar. There were 10 of them, dressed in an old-fashioned wimple like black habit. Unusually from our growing experience of religious orders, they were all comparatively young & all white.

One nun played a string instrument that had a sloping stringboard that she plucked with a quill - no idea what it is called, but the sound was a bit like a harpsichord. The nuns & the congregation alternated verses of a psalm, there were a couple of other, obviously well known, chanted pieces (all in French), a reading & then the Mother Superior (we assume) scattered the congregation with Holy Water & it was over. As the Hospice has been in use for its present purpose since 1137, it's quite likely that the order of Compieta is similarly old.

Next morning, we were on our way by 0800 & straight into the delights of Italian signposting. We had seen both VF & TAM (Tour Aosta Martigny) signs around & had asked about the footpath on to Aosta, so had a fair idea of where it should be. Within 100 yards, we were presented with a sign that split the



difference between the main road & a minor one going up the hill. As we were expecting to be walking parallel to the main road, but up the hill a bit, we chose to go up. Wrong! Fortunately, we hadn't gone too far up when we could see the path running right next to & just above the road.

I've forgotten to mention our legs - both were (& still are) suffering from the descent - A's calves & C's thighs in particular. The first section of path was easy & at the first little town, Etrobbio, we changed to the W side of the valley & started to climb. We were kept quite high, following a little irrigation canal, for much of the morning. The views were spectacular & the path mostly OK. We only had our Swiss 1:100000 map, so would have got lost a couple of times if we hadn't been able to ask for directions.

After about 3 hours (we were well above the main road), the path left the canal & headed steeply down, at times along a very old sunken road, towards Guignod. We decided to have lunch (a pizza) here as we'd had no break since starting.

Just after lunch it rained fitfully & briefly (though no so briefly that we didn't get waterproofs out) as we followed the old, & obviously Roman, road into Aosta.

The city centre is still ringed by its walls & you get the most amazing views of mountains down the streets.

We found the tourist office (not likely to feature in our top ten), dumped our stuff in a * city centre hotel & went out for a wander (mid-afternoon by then).

We were probably more tired than we'd realised, as we didn't really achieve anything apart from finding maps for the next two stages.

We did however, enjoy the spectacle of a real Italian passeggiata with our glass of prosecco.

Eventually, we had a plate of spaghetti just as the restaurants were opening & went to bed early.

Today - some serious sightseeing, download the camera & send off the photo CD & a bit of shopping for essentials

Tomorrow - east down the Aosta Valley to Chatillon

241804 Jul 04

Day 56 – Sat 24th July

Aosta

A good day of rest. We restocked on athlete's foot powder (used daily as a preventative & working well so far), emptied the camera & posted the CD + used maps etc. back to UK & bought A a Swatch - his Plymouth Pannier Market 50m waterproof one (bought just before we left) having succumbed to being put under a tap!

Otherwise, we did the sights & Aosta has plenty of them - especially Roman (gates in city walls, triumphal arch, bridge, theatre etc.) & Romanesque (a couple of churches, one with a wonderful cloister & several bell towers). The historic centre is compact (within the Roman walls), much of it is pedestrianised & we've seen it all at a leisurely pace, with all the necessary stops for coffee, lunch, prosecco etc. - still a bit carried away by the non-Swiss prices.

We are probably more tired than we'd realised - we slept for 10 hours last night & still had a siesta this afternoon - still we have walked for 9 days from Lausanne & over the Alps since we last had a days off, so perhaps we should expect to be tired.

There is a music festival on here at the moment & we've been entertained by the assorted marching folklore groups - including one in clogs with pointy turned up toes about a foot long - like a jester.

Tomorrow, we leave here to the east & follow the river Dore Baltea down the Aosta Valley for the next 3 days.

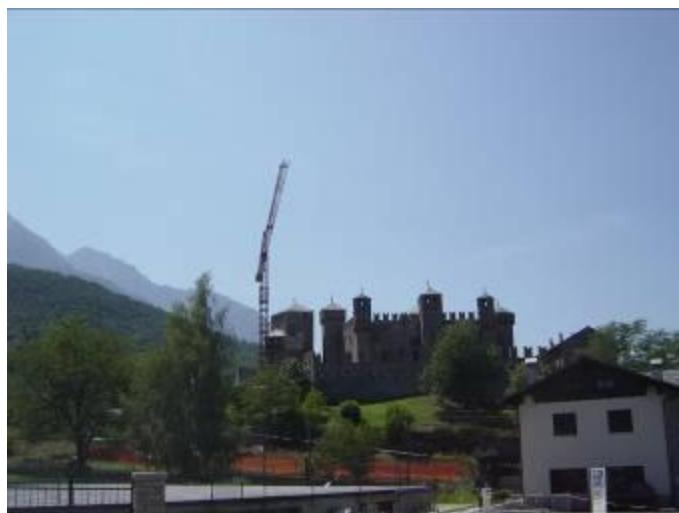
251854 Jul 04

Day 57 – Sun 25th July

Aosta - Chatillon

Somehow, we walked from 0750 to 1800 today - 16.76 miles. This certainly was neither our intention nor what we thought we'd committed ourselves to (those joining us in the next month or so pse take note - sometimes the route isn't that clear!).

Having had the worst breakfast since we started in our hotel yesterday (stale bread & awful coffee), we left without this morning & had cappuccino + cornetto in the Square.



We then headed S under the motorway & across the river Dora. The historic VF would have been on the N bank, but it is no longer possible to follow much of it because of the motorway, so we opted for the south. This took us through a series of little villages at varying elevations up the mountainside. We had invested in two Italian govt. survey walking maps at 1:50,000 scale. They were useless - in some ways worse than useless as we soon found that we could not rely on their accuracy. The only really good path that we found (after asking some locals) was not on the map - nor were some roads & other useful things like power lines & canals! Mind you, the signposting was also imaginative in places -

settlements would appear & disappear at random - often to reappear later.

Despite all this, the views both across & up and down the valley are wonderful & the vagaries of the maps/signposts probably added almost nothing to the distance we walked - it was just rather further than we'd anticipated.

We lunched in Fenis - which has a fairy-tale castle - in a little trattoria where we were certainly the only foreigners & probably the only tourists. We are delighted to report that a good 3-course lunch with wine & coffee can be had for £22 - this included 2litres of water.

We are now in a 'motorway exit' hotel - but it's quite adequate & we have a balcony with a lovely view over the valley towards Castello di Ussel (C12 stuck on a rock).

Tomorrow, we continue on down the Aosta Valley towards Pont St-Martin - we will probably stop short of there as it's further than today's stroll



The view ahead from our hotel balcony in Chatillon yellow (i.e. local) road on our map) for about a mile until we returned to the main road (the SS26). We then had a coffee whilst deciding whether to follow the historic route up a mountain or the SS. The traffic was light, so we followed the SS for about 2 miles until we turned left & onto the S bank of the river.

We then found our way through an assortment of little villages to Issogne, which was closed for lunch when we arrived. After lots of Qs, we found the only bar open in town (no sign, quite stylishly decorated, but an odd atmosphere - as if there were some unresolved local disagreements). Anyway, after a couple of panini & some wine, we walked on - along an excellent road that was shown as ending in a field (it didn't), past a medieval bridge that was in the middle of a building site (we had to clamber over a couple of waist-high barriers) & then along a mile of brand -new, but not opened, road to Bard.

Now Bard is an amazing place & it's difficult to see why it isn't better known. It's the bung in the Val d'Aosta.

The valley narrows & there is a v big fort (held Napoleon for 12 days, razed to the ground, rebuilt 1830 by the Savoys & now being turned into a Euro Cultural Centre (on guess whose money...)). The original road, up which we walked, between the fort & the cliff face was built by the Romans in 25-31BC & was the only road through the valley until about 100 years ago. The village of Bard still retains most of its medieval buildings either side of the Roman road.

We followed the road S to Donnas - with the final section being on the same Roman road, here cut into the cliff, with cart tracks still

261746 Jul 04

Day 58 – Mon 26th July

Chatillon - Donnas

Not quite such a long day as yesterday - on the road at 0740 & in our hotel by 1615 after just under 14 miles.

Our hotel was at one end of Chatillon, which appears to be the working end of the posh town of St Vincent - which has 2 4* holiday hotels & lots of expensive shops to go with them.

We walked up the hill (probably along the Roman road) over the main road & into St V's cobbled main street, which curved gently right along the contours & led us out again over the 'new' road (now superseded by the autostrada).

We then followed an unmade road (shown as a



Boards explaining the Via Francigena



clearly worn into the rock. Our hotel has the date of 1730 cut into the stone, but that must be one of the later reconstructions.

Our hotel bar & restaurant are also shut today, so we've been sat in Murphy's Wallace Pub since opening time. We were offered a vg selection of local salami & cheese to keep us going & could then only manage a plate of pasta for supper.

Tomorrow, we head onto Ivrea & out of the Val d'Aosta & the Alps into the N Italian Plain - could be hot.

C hopes to find a barber in Ivrea & A probably ought to as well as he's looking more & more like the Old Man of the Sea - 'though C says he's walking like Jethro Clampit from the Beverley Hill Billies....

271744 Jul 04

Day 59 – Tue 27th July

Donnas - Ivrea

Last night we had the air-conditioning on all night, we've seen our first umbrella pines & oleanders & the roofs made of thick stone 'slates' were all gone by lunchtime today. We are now out of the Val d'Aosta & into the plain surrounding the River Po. For any pretence at coolness now, we will need to depend on cloud cover or thick trees.

We didn't get away until 0840 this morning because breakfast wasn't available until 0800. We have been on the old Roman road towards Ivrea for about 75% of the day.

Initially up towards the bridge at Pont St-Martin - presumably 25-31BC to go with the road - said to be one of the biggest surviving single span Roman bridge - certainly v impressive &, because there was an Illy café overlooking the bridge, our excuse for a coffee as early as 0930.

Then onwards towards Ivrea, sometimes paralleling the SS (state road) 26 through the villages now bypassed &, where we had no choice, along the road itself.

We had lunch in the café of a sports centre (much nicer than it sounds - sat under the trees in the garden) - €8 each for pasta & grilled pork + beans.

Ivrea is not geared up to tourists - in any way. We eventually found the Tourist Office (quite a way out of the centre - but fortunately in the direction we have to go tomorrow) & discovered that the only hotel at our end of town was ***. Faced with the choice of walking about a mile back & repeating this diversion in the morning, we opted for the Hotel Eden.

Our most pressing problem is maps of the route to come. Being regional, the tourist office had nothing of any use (we are about to enter the next province). We tried 3 v helpful bookshops, all of whom had heard of the VF, but the truth seems to be that there are no maps showing footpaths outside the tourist trekking areas. After all - who would want to walk across the plains of N Italy (Mad dogs & Englishmen come to mind)?

So tomorrow, we will walk off the edge of our final Val d'Aosta map & ask the way...



281712 Jul 04

Day 60 – Wed 28th July

Ivrea - Cavaglià

We got away at exactly 0800 this morning - clocks were striking - & headed off on the old road, which is to the N of the present SS (Strada Statale). The SS is built on the flat valley floor & the old road is raised a bit (well +100m in one place) to keep it out of the flood plain. Therefore for the first 7+ miles, we were spared the traffic & had the delight of one medieval village after another - lots of v old churches & village streets almost unchanged for a couple of hundred years.



In one place, as we were powering uphill to our coffee break, one old lady said to a neighbour - just look at them - most people go on holiday in an aeroplane!

We lunched on the shore of Lake Viverone in a little bar. When A entered & asked if we could eat there, this grizzled old man said that we could have fried fish, so A said yes please. After a time, when nothing had happened, A returned inside (we were sat under the trees by the lakeside) & was told to get the fish from the basement of a building that looked like an old chapel (**see photo**). On investigating, he found steps going down the side of the portico & down below was the same man in his fish & chip shop. Having ordered

fresh corregone (gutted as he watched) & chips, A returned to our café table - having been reassured that this was OK. F&C duly appeared in a foil dish & the fisherman (as he obviously was) borrowed forks from the café for the 2 mad English Pilgrims - we tell almost everyone who we are/what we're doing - as much as anything, to see their expressions of disbelief. We did get water, ice-cream & coffees from the bar, so they got something out of our use of their table.

We've noticed for the last couple of days that there is a significant rise in temperature between 1230 & 1400 - it feels like 5 degrees or so. After lunch, feeling refreshed, we walked a further 4 miles on to Cavaglià - a "Comune of the Via Francigena". Although it was only 1530, we'd had enough & had covered 12 miles, so we decided to stop for the night. There were no hotel signs visible, so we announced ourselves in the bar.

In no time, once the disbelief had passed, we were being sorted out - but this wasn't so easy. The only rooms in town, over a restaurant, were taken. So A was taken off in a car by one of the residents, who had already bought us a beer, & the deputy mayor (the mayor being in Ireland) to see if a local agriturismo (not answering the phone) had rooms - they were closed for the holidays - so onto the motorway junction. There was a room in the truckers' halt there, without own shower & A said that it would do - another 90 minutes to walk on, but not too bad. However, his hosts were not impressed, so they returned to Cavaglià & entered discussions with the librarian (who may also have been the Comune Secretary) & the police. This produced a room in an agriturismo about a mile to the W of town - would we mind going backwards along our route. No, of



Our friends in Cavaglià

course not, so here we are - in an old farmhouse overlooking the lake run by a lady who lived in Islamabad for 5 years 20 years ago. Once we'd taken our packs off, we sat down outside to take stock & A was surrounded by wasps. There was a wasps' nest on the bottom of his chair. Fortunately, he was only stung once.

The deputy mayor will be here at 1930 to take us back into town for dinner.

More tomorrow

291807 Jul 04

Day 61 – Thu 29 Jul 04

Cavaglià - Vercelli

Short DD

We were on the road by 0800 & got to Vercelli at about 1630 after 16 miles - having only had a short break at lunchtime for a picnic & having walked 8 of those miles after lunch - we saw a thermometer, in the shade, showing 30 degrees when we got to Vercelli.

Interestingly, we were not that shattered earlier this evening, but now (2000) are feeling it. We also both have heat rashes on our legs & Vercelli has lots to see, so we've decided to take a rest day here.

This means that A will compose the normal DD whilst C sleeps in tomorrow morning, including bringing you up to date on how well we were looked after in Cavaglià

301129 Jul 04

Day 61 – Thu 29 July

Cavaglià – Vercelli

Full DD

The Vice-Sindaco collected us at about 1940 & we went to his house, where we met his wife & some of his family (his mother lives on one side & one married son on the other). After a glass of wine & the gift of a bottle, we went into town, where we met up with Noel, who runs the Comune cemetery & who we had met at the bar earlier in the day.

We had an extremely good dinner, with a wide assortment of local anti-pasti to start with. During dinner we discussed everything from the gothic architecture of Oxford & Cambridge to the new bendy buses in London & redesigned London taxis. We also covered George Bernard Shaw & Charles/Camilla + many aspects of our walk so far. All this was v good for our Italian. The evening finished with a look at our website in the Sindaco's son's office & photos outside the Comune. We were very well looked after by Cavaglià - a true Comune of the Via Francigena.

Next morning, our landlady brought us back into town & we were on the road by 0800. We got to Vercelli at about 1630 after 16 miles - having only had a short break, sat on the church steps at San Germano, at lunchtime for a picnic (& to drink the v-Sindaco's wine). All day we had to walk along the edge of a v straight (i.e. Roman originally, but also conducive to speeding) SS - at least the section after St G had a service trunk, between road & irrigation canal, covered in concrete slabs of varying quality - one broke when A trod on it - making a kind of pavement along most of it.

We walked 8 of today's miles after lunch & saw a thermometer, in the shade, showing 30 degrees when we got to Vercelli. The landscape is now completely flat &, after S Germano, we had rice fields on both sides. The flatness, combined with the straightness of the road, means that you can see things from a long way away & they take a long time to get closer - rather depressing.

Vercelli is, surprisingly, not on the main tourist route & the tourist information office is not marked on the town plans. Fortunately the AVF Vademedcum told us where it was & the v helpful girl (as we've said before, tourist office staff vary immensely - there can be little point in funding a tourist office if you

staff it with grumpy, uninterested, ignorant adolescents. Anyway that grump over for the moment). Samantha rang round the religious institutions in Vercelli that offered pilgrims accommodation according to the Vademedum & got a fairly blank response from three, but turned up trumps with the Convento S Cristoforo, where we are staying.

Interestingly, we were not that tired earlier in the evening, but by 2000 (we were enjoying a risotto - rosemary & taleggio (a local cheese) in a basket also made of cheese) we were feeling it. We also both had heat rashes on our legs & as Vercelli has lots to see, we've decided to take a rest day here.

301649 Jul 04

Day 62 – Fri 30th July

Vercelli

We didn't sleep that well last night - a combination of heat, mozzies & a massive firework display (sad that we are missing the National Fireworks Competition in Plymouth - also v sad that we missed Music of the Night).

So we were late up this morning & wandered out of S Cristoforo at about 0900.

The first task was to get A's hair & beard cut - which cost €20 - even at the time this seemed rather a lot. Then we started on some serious sightseeing.



Having lived in Italy & travelled widely for all of our three years here, we are both amazed that we'd not heard of Vercelli before - it is rich in Romanesque churches, the cathedral has a 3.3 x 2.3m silver gilt crucifix that is 1000 years old & also the earliest surviving book in Anglo-Saxon (& so the earliest source book on English) - probably left behind by a pilgrim who died in the 'Scottish' hospice (**photo left**) here on his way to or from Rome along the VF in about 1100AD.

We also bought the maps (only 1:200000) for the rest of the VF & bought A some new sandals to replace his 18 year old ones. C also had a haircut - €14 - which did make A's look v expensive indeed.

After lunch in Piazza Cavour, we tried to get back into S

Cristoforo, only to find that we didn't have the key to the inner door & no-one was up to answer the bell, so we had to have a lemon-soda & wait until the church opened at 1530 (well, actually 1545 after we'd rung the bell several times) before we could get in for our siesta.

A couple of hours later, washing done, showered etc., we were back in Piazza Cavour to observe the passeggiata (the evening promenade where people come out to see & be seen).

We intend to eat as early as we can, pack & get to bed for our 0530 wake up call. We have little choice but to walk 33km tomorrow & the more we do before it gets hot, the better.

311844 Jul 04

Day 63 – Sat 31st July

Vercelli to Mortara

Well, today wasn't quite as far as we'd thought - only 17.79 miles - however...

We left S Cristoforo at 0615 & arrived at our hotel in Mortara at 1545. It was, as we had been told, closed & so we left a note on the door, rang both phone numbers & retired to a bar around the corner to wait until we eventually got in at 1700.

We found an open café soon after we started & so were able to have a cappuccino & cornetto. The first stretch was on the main road, but after about an hour we were walking along minor roads with mosquito breeding tanks (aka rice fields) on both sides. As well as the buzz of the mozzies, there was a constant plip-plop of the tiny frogs jumping into the water as our progress disturbed them.

We made good progress & had covered nearly 9 miles by 1030, when we had an hour's break for beer & panini at Robbio. Here we asked about a footpath that appeared in the Vademecum for our last leg into Mortara. The café's assembled 'Brains' Trust' (C would like to observe - all elderly male) said, with great charm, that it no longer existed, but there did seem to us to be a degree of we should know the answer to this, so we have to say something definite, not just - don't know.

We continued on to the next village, where the path was supposed to start from & asked again - there is lots of awareness of the VF in this area - yes, the barman said, there is a footpath (the importance to us was that this footpath was the diagonal of the square we were on one corner of) & his description fitted the Vademecum's one. So off we went & we could see Mortara in the distance...

Well, all went well for the first 45 minutes, until we came to the farm on the track - the Vademecum said turn R, but there was a big private property sign & another saying beware of the dogs. As we could see the track going on, we kept to it & didn't turn right. 15 minutes later, after the vehicle track had become a path, then had become the top of a dyke between rice fields, we decided to turn back.



The single-track railway line was running just S of us & we knew it went to Mortara, so we navigated a drainage ditch (rather more washing this evening than normal) & scrambled on hands & knees up to the railway line. Even from this, comparative, vantage point we couldn't see the path. Eventually, we decided to walk along the railway - like all railways, the sleepers are just too close together for proper paces & the ballast was nasty sharp rock bits.

After a time, we came to another track that seemed to take us in the right direction - it didn't &, this time, we cut our losses earlier & headed back to the railway line. Here we met a farmer, who had been watching us & had, correctly, assumed that we were lost VF walkers! He advised us to walk along the railway line all the way into Mortara - eventually we did so as far as the last village before Mortara & here we are.

The forecast was 33 deg this afternoon & it probably was. 35 is forecast for tomorrow, but twice we've been told that it was nearly 10 degrees hotter last year. Being a v flat area with most of the

crop rice, there is no shade, which means that we get all the heat & that C has to search that much harder for 'discrete' corners.

We've just had a v good dinner in our (v basic) hotel restaurant - starting with risotto with zucchini (courgette) flowers & finishing with fresh blueberries, served by an ex-Princess Cruises steward with a very direct manner!

Tomorrow, as the hotel is closed on Sundays, we have to let ourselves out without breakfast & we head off halfway towards Pavia - a much easier day.

011820 Aug 04

Day 64 – Sun 1st Aug

Mortara - Garlasco

A half-day today - straight along the main road from Mortara to Garlasco - only 9.04 miles, so we were in Garlasco for lunch.

Walking the main roads is not as bad as we'd feared. The lorry & coach drivers, in fact, are often the most considerate, with car drivers often much less so - apologies to our BMW owning friends & readers, but their fellow drivers are the ones who pass closest & fastest. The Italian love affair with Armco barriers doesn't help pedestrians as it diminishes the margin on the road for us to walk on, but the number of dents in it (& the number of little roadside shrines - usually to teenagers) demonstrates how needed it is.

Walking in the sort of heat we are experiencing produces some interesting effects - anything that is an 'inner' layer (e.g. shirts & trousers under rucksacks) is rapidly sodden with sweat - A's waistcoat is sometimes still damp next morning. Sweat runs down the inside of sunglasses & drips off eyebrows. And when we take our boots off, the insides are noticeably hotter than the rest of the body. At the moment, we are both suffering from heat rash, especially on our legs. Don't worry - we are drinking lots & lots of water. Despite this, neither of us has been tempted into shorts & shirtsleeves get rolled down by mid-morning.

Along the road today, we passed an ITAF radar site &, just afterwards, our first 'working girl' - black, tiny miniskirt, sat on a chair under a bright umbrella just up a track - just as we used to see them when we lived in Rome 10 years ago. What a terrible life.

Our *** hotel is 'closed' so all we get is a room (we were even evicted from the garden this afternoon, so that the owner could lock up & take his mother out). Despite this, there is no reduction in the room rate. Does seem a bit odd, but there isn't much choice as lots of places are closed for the holidays.

The TV news last night was full of stories of 15+ km queues on motorways, 10 hour delays in ferries to Sardinia etc. & stories about Milan being deserted - Italy still goes on holiday en bloc!

The one good thing about our hotel was that the owner advised us to eat in Fly - which we wouldn't have done otherwise. Fly is a large air-conditioned glass box at the junction at the start of town. It is liberally decorated with ITAF models/pictures etc. We had a pizza here for lunch & it was so good that we came back for supper - mind you there was no choice at lunchtime, but there are a couple of others open this evening. As A writes this, there are at least 150 local people eating around us.

At lunchtime, the big TV was on with a comedy programme about the Royals - initially, we thought, featuring HM, Charles, Anne & Camilla but, we think it was probably HM, Charles, the QM & Di - v difficult to follow as the voices were those high-pitched ones affected by cartoon figures, it was v fast & there was studio laughter.

Tomorrow, into Pavia & another rest day.

021739 Aug 04

Day 65 – Mon 2nd Aug

Garlasco – Pavia

Last night's hotel certainly wins the wooden spoon so far for unwelcoming behaviour & this morning's breakfast rivalled that awful one in Aosta for inadequacy, 'though the coffee was better.

You may wonder, sometimes, at the matters that we comment on in the DD's - the fact is that one's horizons contract. As some of you will know, A is a real newsaholic & usually reads the daily paper from cover to cover - now, apart from v intermittent CNN/BBC World coverage & the Economist every couple of weeks, we are quite unaware of what is going on outside our little world - which consists of

what we can see, hear & smell, what we eat & how the various parts of our bodies are coping with the walking & the heat.

Anyway, we were on the road by 0720 & we managed to spend the whole morning on minor roads. By lunchtime, we were on a Eurofootpath (probably supposed to imply adequate signposting & maintenance - actually neither) along the S bank of the Ticino. The Ticino clearly floods from time to time - our table had been 3' under water in 1993 & 6' under in 1994. A took advantage of the river to cool his feet for 10 minutes.

We had a good lunch & so it was about 1340 before we set off for the last 3 or 4 miles into Pavia & it was hot.

The path took us towards & away from the river in a random & frequently unmarked way but eventually, having led us through an area that can only have been Pavia's gay cruising zone, brought us over the river into the city.

After another cold drink, we found a hotel, showered & set off for the tourist office. Despite being well known, Pavia is not really geared up for tourists, but they were v helpful & knowledgeable as far as they could be.

A bit of gentle sightseeing, a couple of aperitifs (in different café s, then one gets two lots of small eats - quite enough for supper after a proper lunch) & off to bed.

Having mentioned the Italian propensity for adding Euro to things to give them the impression of reliability, it would be unfair not to mention the indiscriminate use of English words in titles for shops etc. - often with interesting results - the best we've managed so far was a Pub (pubs are v popular, presumably with the young, at the moment) but - The Nappy Pub... And it wasn't a one-off spelling mistake.

Tomorrow, The Certosa & more sightseeing in the city



**031855 Aug 04
Day 66 – Tue 3rd Aug
Pavia**

Off to the station first thing to check trains for Jane, Paul & Tim joining us at the end of this week & for Roger & Jo joining us in a couple of weeks' time. Then to the bus station for our first bus since leaving Canterbury - the long-distance coach to Milan, which dropped us off at The Certosa. The Certosa is rightly billed by Michelin as worth a special journey. It is difficult to sum The Certosa up - 250 artists & heaven knows how many labourers worked for over 200 years to produce a home for 24 monks. But of course, The Certosa is much more than that - it was/is a place of pilgrimage (not just religious, but cultural/artistic as well). The front is an amazing confection of marble -

drew Welch 2009

portraying Kings & Caesars, as well as all the expected Christian scenes.

Inside, the styles vary greatly, but every surface is decorated & decorated by masters in their art forms (these include a 5'x4' triptych carved out of hippopotamus teeth - actually v impressive)... You could clearly spend a whole lifetime studying the art of The Certosa - we spent two hours. All this is free &, when we arrived at 0915, there were only 3 or 4 other people there - even by the time we left, there were no more than 40.

Then back into Pavia, a walk through the old town, a sandwich by the covered bridge (originally medieval, bombed in the war (probably because of the (seemingly limited) tourist trade, we have been unable to find out who by) & rebuilt in the 50s.

In the afternoon, we did a couple of Pavia's generous stock of Romanesque churches, including St Augustine's tomb & then caught up with our domestic tasks.

This evening, we wandered back into the old city for pasta & a frittura mista of fish.

The alarm is set for 0600 & tomorrow we head off east down yet another Roman road. The weather forecast promises us a few degrees less - let's hope it's right. We are in the parish guesthouse in Santa Cristina tomorrow night.

041945 Aug 04

Day 67 – Wed 4th Aug

Pavia – Santa Cristina

We were on the road by 0640 this morning & then spent nearly 2 hours (& 2 coffee breaks) walking across Pavia. Once we were clear of the city, we headed S of the main E-W road & then paralleled it. This took us through a succession of little villages & through lots more rice fields.

Immense efforts have been expended on creating these rice fields - the countryside is not 100% flat & so lots of earth has to be moved to produce level fields of several acres in area - then there is the maze of irrigation canals to be created & maintained.



One of the little villages - San Giacomo contains a CXII-XV 'pilgrim' church. So we found the key (in the farm next door, which owns the church) & had a look inside. It is a v simple building, but for about half of the way round, the interior has frescoes on it - original to the building - & most are in vg condition.

Interestingly all start some way above the ground - probably because of the regular flooding of the Po - we saw more lines up a wall in a village further on indicating that the road was about 3' under water in 1994.

The Vademedum had indicated that the parish in Santa Cristina had rooms for pilgrims, so C rang & we were

told that there was space, but we really didn't know what to expect.

When we arrived, we were directed round the back of the building next to the church. Here we found the Oratorio of San Giuseppe. In fact, we found a club for both the young & the old presided over by Don Antonio, the parish priest, who offered us a beer on arrival (&, quite properly, asked to see C's wedding ring!), assisted by Manuela & Simone. Everyone was v hospitable & after we'd cooled down a bit, we were shown where the showers etc. were & then our bed set out in the middle of the primary school classroom upstairs.

We sorted ourselves out, showered, did our days washing (sadly, despite our best efforts, everything we have with us is developing the same greyish tinge) & did a bit of foot maintenance too.

We bought a pair of those tiny socks that just cover the top of the boot for each of us in Pavia & they seem to be OK, (lots of colour running on first wash), but C still has heat rash right up both legs (any suggested remedies?) & A's heels are both very tender. Fear not, we will survive.

Today was actually noticeably cooler than yesterday - probably because there was a thunderstorm last night. Tomorrow is forecast to remain cooler.

Anyway, once we'd finished our domestics, we returned downstairs & talked to Don Antonio & Manuela about the VF & life on the road before we went out for supper in the buildings of a Abbey originally founded in 543, then a school for Austro-Hungarian Cadets from 1776 & now a restaurant with a night club in the crypt.

We've had the €20 'Tastes of Puglia' (i.e. the heel) menu. Sadly we have the restaurant to ourselves, so no people watching! (Just about to leave at 2040 & an interesting big party is arriving - but we have to go to bed!).

Tomorrow, onto Orio Litta & then a boatman will take us across the Po.

On our departure from Pavia this morning, we could see mountains to the S of us - the other side of the Po Valley, which we have to get over to reach the coast by La Spezia, before we go back inland to the spine of Tuscany.

PS Brother Bryan has surfed the web & informs us that the Allies bombed Pavia's covered bridge - why do people feel that they have to disguise the reality of war? As Henry Ford didn't say, "Those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it".

No doubt someone will correct & attribute this quote correctly!

051702 Aug 04

Day 68 – Thu 5th Aug

Santa Cristina – Orio Litta

Just as we were finishing our meal last night, an Italian party arrived - the first 5 (3 men/2 women) were sophisticated (let's call them Milanese). A couple of minutes later, the rest of the party arrived - led by the elder child, a daughter. She said, "The family from the country are here". Her younger brother busied himself with his mobile phone & her father was wearing braces & no jacket. There was no mixing of the two parts of the family, but lots of fascinating body language! Sadly, we had already got our bill & so were denied some fascinating people watching.

This morning, A once again was defeated by the BB's technology & the alarm went off at 0500. C was very understanding...

We left the Oratory at 0635 & had breakfast in one of the 8 bars in Santa Cristina (pop 1860). By 0700 we were striding out along the SS towards Orio Litta.

Today was, in fact, our shortest day & we were there (approx. 8 miles - pedometer has gone slow on us & for 3 days now has significantly under-recorded - the Wards are bringing us a new one from Freiburg).

One of the more active Friends of the VF lives in Orio Litta - Pierluigi Cappelletti (**right in photo with A**). He greets all those walking the route & fixes their accommodation - we are in the 'away' changing room in the local sports hall on beds kindly provided by the Sindaco - most pilgrims have their own sheets & sleep on the gym mats - we decided to do without sheets in order to save weight & so, fortunately & v kindly, extra efforts



have been made for us.

Pierluigi also has a splendid pilgrim's book going back to 1999 with an entry from everyone who has passed through his hands - we added

our thanks.

Unfortunately, whilst showering, A found the keys to the showers of last night's Oratorio in his pocket, so we will have to ask Pierluigi for help to return them.

Tomorrow, he will walk down to the Po with us & we will cross into central Italy - the Po acting as a sort of Rubicon on our journey.

Thanks to brother Bryan again for info on the author of yesterday's quote - George Santayana

060546 Aug 04

Must get ourselves looking our best! Being interviewed by the press on crossing the Po this morning

060547 Aug 04

I have had a number of reports of multiple transmissions. I think that the problem is the signal strength inside the sports centre (made of reinforced concrete).

As Richard can show those of you who will meet him whilst he's in London, the BB works on 5 signal strengths:

1. No signal
2. gsm = weak old mobile signal
3. GSM = full old mobile signal
4. gprp = weak new mobile signal
5. GPRS = full new mobile signal

When you send a message, the BB asks for a receipt & if it doesn't get one, resends several times.

Eventually, I get a Red cross (message not sent) or a blue tick on the screen.

Yesterday's PPDD got a red cross, so I re-sent it - but it looks as if some of the attempts to send it succeeded, but the BB didn't know this.

Sorry to have clogged up your inboxes, but I don't think that there is anything I can do about this.

061911 Aug 04

We're in Piacenza after a most interesting, but long & hot day.

Proper PPDD first think tomorrow

071228 Aug 04

Day 69 – Fri 6th Aug

Orio Litta - Piacenza

But first, to go back to supper in Orio Litta. Having discovered that we still had the keys to the showers in the Oratorio in Santa Cristina, we asked Pierluigi for help in returning them. He very kindly offered to cycle over next morning & return them. It seemed that, although Don Antonio & Pierluigi both knew of each other as stalwart friends of pilgrims on the VF, they had never met.

Having phoned Don Antonio, we set off in Pierluigi's car for a restaurant in an old mill outside town. Here we met Giovanni Favari, who is the local Referente for the VF & who organises the boat trips across the Po.

Over an excellent meal of fish, shellfish & more fish, we discussed the problems of the VF - maps & signposting especially - we also discussed Sardinia, Giovanni having done his Army service there & A having visited the range areas several times. Giovanni also presented us with terracotta pendants of the pilgrim logo - given to those who have completed the whole of the VF &, therefore, which we are not really entitled to wear until we get to Rome.

After dinner, Giovanni invited us to his home, so off we went. This turned out to be the same village that Pierluigi's family came from, so we met his mother first & then Giovanni's wife, before seeing Giovanni's 'shed'. He has frescoed the outside wall with the route of the VF & the pilgrim logo. Inside he has all his records of the VF & many boxes of archaeological remains that he has discovered along the route.



After a digestivo in the bar (more Sardinian connections), we returned to the sports centre & slept through to 0700. Yesterday morning (A is writing this sat in the sun in a café outside the Theatre in Piacenza), Pierluigi gave us breakfast (the bar being shut for the holiday) & then walked with us most of the way down to the Po, before he had to return to cycle over to return the keys to Don Antonio.

We continued on & up onto the bund that forms the N bank flood protection barrier before turning right past Corte S Andrea (a little village with a massive ceremonial gateway reflecting its past importance on the road to Rome) & down towards the river. Here there is a brick pillar marking Sigeric's crossing point.

Giovanni soon arrived to join us & then Damilo Parisi arrived in the Pilgrim Water taxi along with Filippo & Matteo Zangrandi. Filippo is a journalist with *Liberta*, the Piacenza daily newspaper, & he had come to write an article on the VF, featuring us.

After some photos of us embarking & departing in the

boat, we returned alongside to pick up the two brothers (Matteo was taking the photos) & started the 4km trip downstream to the point where Sigeric had departed from. Remembering that Sigeric (Sigerico in Italian) had been returning to Canterbury when he recorded his journey up the VF.

There is another brick pillar marking Sigeric's departure point & then a climb up to the top of the S River Po bund. Just down on the other side is Damilo's house, where we had a couple of glasses of his own wine & some excellent local salami, before heading off along the top of the bund towards Piacenza.

As we all do, especially when we know the way well, Damilo had given us very straightforward directions into Piacenza. Well... We soon had doubts as to whether we were on the right route or not & started asking the way. Once in the local town, Calendasco, we decided to stop (it was about 1200) & have a beer & sandwich. The bar didn't do food, but directed us to the shop next door. C bought the sandwiches (made freshly to order) & A got the beers & water. As always, we explained who we were & were told of the Englishwoman who had married locally & now lived in the town (Damilio had already mentioned her).

We had decided on a short lunch (we'd hardly walked any distance so far) & so had some spare cold water to pour into our platypuses (platypi?).

Shortly afterwards, A noticed that he was sitting in a puddle! The mouthpiece of his platypus was under his rucksack... & therefore most of the content of the platypus was now on the bar floor. Madame was v good about it (A did help her mop up). So on we went - it was hot by now - past one house where we were questioned at length about what we were doing, where we were going, who we were - on the response to the last Q, that we were English, the questioning stopped - that seemed to be enough to explain the oddness of two middle-aged perspiring backpackers forcing themselves onwards in the midday sun.



On towards the river Trebbola - which Damilo had, we thought, told us we could cross on stepping-stones - certainly there was no bridge on the map.

As we approached the next village - in England, you find the edge-of-town shopping centre; in Italy, it's the cemetery - but, hooray, this often marks the start of the pavement - a car stopped & this woman strode towards us. Even before she'd spoken, we knew that she was the local 'Englishwoman'. As we'd heard of her, so she'd heard of us & she offered us a bed for the night. As this would have meant going backwards, we thanked her & declined. She will be opening a YH shortly, which should be useful for future pilgrims on the VF. Eventually (we'd asked for directions twice more by now & received consistent advice), we saw Piacenza clearly ahead & descended towards the river.

Well, river it was at times. About 500 yards wide & almost dry. Firstly, we had to get through 15' of waist-high



vegetation & then down a 4' gravel cliff. The riverbed varied from coarse sand to substantial pebbles. The river had clearly been carrying many seeds as it dried out after the spring, because some of the vegetation was dense & shoulder-high on C/chest-high on A. It took us about 30 minutes to get across from one bank to the other - with A forcing his way through & C following in his wake. We kept not thinking about the serpenti!

Once we were back on 'dry land', we found ourselves in the sort of wasteland that contains motorway tollbooths, out-of-town (maybe closed) discos & abandoned medieval churches - a mixture you could only find in Italy. We negotiated this & found a bar for a beer & a lemon granita. We were now in the outskirts of Piacenza & soon found ourselves inside the walls. Old Piacenza is down by the river - albeit now cut off from the Po by the autostrada which runs over the floodplain. The modern city spreads out to the S & E. The first church we came to had recently been restored, as Damilo had advised us, & the frescoes were wonderfully - well - fresh. This was the

A street market by one of Piacenza' churches church in which the First Crusade was declared in 1096 - there is just so much history around the VF that it is, at times, amazing but then obvious. This was the main road from the whole of the N part of Europe down to Rome.

We found the tourist office in the main piazza & found out that there was nothing on during our visit - not surprising, as this is the first half of August. Things recommence after Ferragosto (15th Aug).

Our hotel, the Astra, is on the second ring road out from the walls. It is cheap (€33 per night for a double room) & the towels are both of good size & clean, as are the sheets. It also has a bath - the first one we've seen (apart from our friends the Collins's in Switzerland) since leaving home. Otherwise, it is the dirtiest hotel we have stayed in outside Pakistan & they don't take credit cards - even though this is N Italy! We will survive - don't worry! Oh yes - the main stairs are locked off & the only access for residents is the service stair - of which the door opens inwards - not good in an emergency & probably illegal even in Italy.

Well, that's enough for yesterday (now lunchtime outside the Palazzo Farnese/Civic Museum awaiting its opening).

Tomorrow, we set off early (forecast to be hot) & walk to Fiorenzuola d'Arda, where we are looking forward to meeting the Wards, our first visitors.

071529 Aug 04

Day 70 – Sat 7th Aug

Piacenza

Well - another rest day & another beautiful Italian City. Piacenza is our 4th day off since we came over the Alps &, the third city that we thought we'd been to before, but now think that we haven't. Clearly too much travelling can confuse one!

The city has a wonderful collection of churches from the CX onwards & a Farnese Palace, whose art gallery contains the Boticelli Rotunda - an art gallery that was opened up just for us - there were no other visitors. We also saw a copy (the monks sold the original to the King of Poland several hundred

years ago; it's now in Dresden) of that Raphael that has 2 cherubs looking up at the Madonna - you'd recognise them from countless T-shirts, tin trays, mugs etc.

Otherwise, we've eaten (not that much), drunk (a bit - it's 29 degrees) & rested before we head south towards the Cisa Pass & the Mediterranean.

Early start tomorrow, so time (1730 here) to wander back to our grubby hotel, do the washing, pack, have another of their vg thin-based pizzas & go to bed.

081837 Aug 04

Day 71 – Sun 8th Aug

Piacenza - Fiorenzuola

The hotel did redeem their lack of cleanliness both by finding us a fan, so that we slept much better than we had the night before & by the fact that the pizzas were so good, that we had supper there both nights. It is probable that the hotel was very much a sideshow, compared with the restaurant, which was v busy. This morning, we were away by 0630 &, fortunately, soon found a café open for breakfast.

The historic VF would have taken us directly along the Roman road (the Via Emilia) to Fiorenzuola, but as that road is now a Strada Statale, we followed a number of minor roads (about 15% further), but they kept us away from most of the traffic.

It started to rain at about 0800 & rained gently, but steadily, for the next 2½ hours. We didn't get that wet, because our clothes were drying at about the same rate as they were getting wet.

We arrived in a little place called Chero at about 1145 & decided to stay for lunch - for our Italian readers, we would strongly recommend La Taverna - we only had time for pasta & a salad, but both were very good.

We had to get on to Fiorenzuola because our friends, the Wards, were due to arrive there on the train from Milan at 1506. We got to the hotel at 1500 & their train was on time, so we met up shortly afterwards, dumped our things & headed for a bar to catch up on over two month's gossip.

As you've probably had enough of our views over the last few weeks, we are going to invite them to

write a 'Guest PS'.

For those that don't know them, the Wards are Paul, a paediatrician (Paul is the head of the division in Derriford that we are raising money for), Jane, a marine solicitor, & their son Tim. (14). Henceforth, P, J & T.

Guest PS.

We have been dying to find out the truth behind the daily dispatches. Sadly however there is no juicy story to tell. A and C really are as fit (although watch this space, we are told they have a written list of ailments to discuss with P) and content as they appear to be from their reports. We are very pleased to have missed last night's hotel. I suspect that tonight's is

above the usual standard. More tomorrow when we have actually done some walking.



091813 Aug 04

Day 72 – Mon 9th Aug

Fiorenzuola – Fidenza

We started out at 0700 this morning, & by the time we'd breakfasted & agreed on the route, it was 0730. C&P had decided our way out of Fiorenzuola & led us into an industrial estate. Unfortunately, they are building a new bypass & the road we were trying to find didn't seem to exist anymore.

Eventually, we managed to get out of town & found somewhere for our first coffee.

We continued across country parallel to & S of the Via Emilia. After a while, we had to return to the SS & walked the last few kilometres into Fidenza along the main road. As we got into Fidenza, now at about 1300, we found a restaurant where we had a vg lunch (homemade pasta, salad, wine, homemade puds etc. - all for £10 per head).

On arrival in the centre of Fidenza, we found the tourist office, where the man was extremely aware of the VF & gave us lots of useful leaflets. We found our hotel & were told that Tim was in a hotel about 200 yards away. We objected to this &, eventually, were sorted out with us all in the same hotel.

When we asked about places to eat (the hotel restaurant is closed for the holiday), the hotel offered to take us to another of their restaurants out of town “as there was nothing open in town within walking distance”.

We are now in their restaurant (about 5 miles away), having seen a couple of open restaurants on our way out of town (presumably they didn't belong to the family). We think that one of those who drove us here is another hotel guest - asked to transport us. Our other driver is a family friend.

More tomorrow - which is a day off.

Now over to T&J for the ‘Guest PS’.

I think that we were lucky with the weather today. Overcast but dry with a breeze from time to time. We seemed to cover the ground quite quickly in between the long breaks and hardly noticed the busy traffic on the SS after we had drunk a large amount at lunch. All of the people in the group adding to their wine with some sort of stronger alcohol - even Tim enjoyed his limoncello.

101910 Aug 04

Day 73 – Tue 10th Aug

Fidenza

We've not done a great deal today apart from wander round Fidenza (Romanesque cathedral with pilgrim frieze), eat very well & drink a bit. We had a siesta & downloaded the camera to a CD - otherwise, we just pottered.

We also negotiated the Italian postal system & collected our parcel of maps from Alberto Alberti - oh that we had had them earlier.

We are presently in a restaurant run by an Anglo-Italian couple. She is front of house & knows that we are on foot - so told her husband to do us generous portions - the pasta/risotto arrived in frying pans - we were all (yes all)

defeated by the quantity & are now awaiting, with a degree of trepidation, the main course. Tomorrow we have about 12 miles to walk - let's hope that this is enough to get rid of some of today's food.



Guest PS by Jane (as imagined by Tim)

Today was extremely pleasant but we may have overindulged on the food and drink side. Hopefully tomorrow we will be able to walk off most of this food. The hotel is simple and rather hot but we are still able to get a good night's sleep. As there was not a great deal of activity during the day we have exhausted what needs to be said. More tomorrow. – Jane

111818 Aug 04

Day 74 – Wed 11th Aug

Fidenza - Medesano

We had a leisurely breakfast in the Piazza & then headed S to a little place that isn't directly on the route, but the CX church

is dedicated to St Thomas a Becket, so we thought that we ought to have a look.



It was open (as advertised) & was reasonably plain & simple. Then off to Costamezzana for lunch. The countryside is starting to get more undulating - quite Tuscan-like, but without the cypressi so far.

The Trattoria-Bar in Costamezzana was a real find. No menu & no prices, but it didn't look expensive & so we

A's surfer length Rohan's – banned by C

ordered away. The homemade pasta was superb, the grilled meats excellent & the salad equally so. We had a litre of the local frizzante white & when the waiter said would we like a bottle instead of another jug full, we said yes & then another 1.5 litres appeared. Fortunately Tim was helping us out. We had convinced ourselves that the local fizzy white was only 5-6% - the arrival of the bottle disabused us - it was 11%! After double espressos, we headed off towards Medesano - with the countryside becoming hillier as we went on.

The 'hotel' in Medesano was an annex to a bar. When we arrived at about 1630, our rooms were not made up.... We sat around for 15 minutes whilst the barmaid changed the sheets. Then there were no towels... When we asked for towels, we were given tablecloths. There is quite a bit of damp, the loo has a broken seat, no lock & no paper. Still, half-board is €30.

Today's Guest PS is from Tim as interpreted by Jane.

Up far too early and brain not switched on until after breakfast. Visited yet another church and then on to a cool lunch. I was miles ahead of the oldies after lunch. Hotel not great but at least I have my own room. So don't have to put up with the parents snoring and nakedness. Not a pretty sight

121903 Aug 04

Day 75 – Thu 12th Aug

Medesano – Fornovo

As so often in life, you get what you pay for. The demi-pension rate was €30/£20 & we now have a new 'dirtiest' hotel - lots of mould, broken seats in both loos, no paper etc. Supper was pretty iffy too - none of us touched the brown lettuce. When we asked about breakfast, we were referred to the owner (grossly overweight), who told us that today the place was closed, so we could have fruit juice & cornetti now & let ourselves out in the morning. He also asked us to pay then & there. We'd seen the

credit card machine on the counter, but had all agreed that it would have a problem. When he was offered my credit card & he said that the machine needed a new battery, we all burst into laughter. He seemed to be neither surprised nor offended!

So we let ourselves out this morning & ate our cornetti & fruit juice in the outside section of the locanda & then went into Medesano to look for coffee.

Our plan today was to head up into the hills to the N of the SS & then come back down to Fornovo. We left our breakfast coffee at about 0900 & headed up into the hills. The countryside was beautiful & it was hot (24 in the shade as we left Medesano). By 1145 we were in S Andrea Bagni, where we found a vg pizzeria. Two hours (& 2.25 litres of light fizzy wine) later, we started our return run into Fornovo. This did involve a few km along the main road & then a bridge nearly 1km long over the nearly dry gravel of the riverbed.

We are now in a *** hotel to compensate for last night's squalor & as it's the Ward's last night.

Tomorrow, we are starting the climb up to the Cisa Pass in the Apennines - we have to do either 14 or 25km & climb about 600m because of the spacing of hotels. We are aiming for the 25km to Berceto.

Over to Jane for the Guest PS

I think I can honestly say that I have never been so relieved to have arrived at an air-conditioned hotel with the prospect of a sweat and mosquito free night. In true A and C tradition, I will provide a consumer report on Mosiguard Natural. If you want to guarantee that you will wake up covered in bites make sure that you plaster yourself in the stuff before you go to bed. Ignore any claims to the contrary on the tube. A and C very generously bowed to the wish of one of our number not to walk on main roads any more than necessary which meant walking twice as far today... It was worth it, as the scenery was stunning and sadly the nearest to Tuscany we are going to get. If only we could continue for another couple of weeks...unfortunately work calls and we must leave A and C to continue alone. Good luck to you and see you in Plymouth in September.

Leaving Fornovo



131941 Aug 04

Day 76 – Fri 13th Aug 04

Fornovo - Berceto

Well - for those of you who thought that we'd been idling for the past few days with the Wards, we made up for it today. We started out at 0740 & by 1115 we had climbed to over 800m (from a start at 150m). No reliable distances any more, we regret to say, as the replacement pedometer that Jane bought us in Germany turned out to be defective. We think that we covered about 30km today.

The first coffee stop had no bar; in the second, the bar was permanently closed & the locanda was closed for the holidays, so it wasn't until 1115, in Casola, that we got our first sustenance (beer, water, panini & coffee) since breakfast.

Although the temperature down at Fornovo had been 24 deg at 0730, we found the going reasonably easy - helped by the constant breeze.

Our climb into the Apennines took us through the edge of the Monte Prinzera nature reserve. We followed the SS almost all the way & were surprised to only see 1 articulated lorry all day & for motor

bikes to almost outnumber cars. The road was commemorated in one place as the route of Enzo Ferrari's first road race (Parma to Berceto in 1919).

The historic VF is in the next valley E of the main road, but it is both longer & involves more climbing, so it wasn't a difficult decision to follow the SS. Most of the climb was early on & thereafter, we were on the ridge between two big valleys. The scenery was spectacular.

After Casola, we continued on to Cassia for a glass of wine, another (shared) panino, ice cream & coffee. This was the point at which we had to commit ourselves to going onto Berceto &, as we were making good time & only had 11km to go, we decided to do so.

The SS in this region is well marked with VF signs - little concrete posts with an inset terracotta pilgrim tile. Sadly about 30% of the terracotta tiles have been levered out by souvenir hunters (they are quite collectable). These posts appear, in places, every 30m (no exaggeration - both A&C paced it out - C thought that 20m was nearer the mark) - talk about from famine to feast! In most places there are no signs at all & suddenly we have a glut. However... just before Castellonchio, we were lulled into a false sense of security by the excess of signs & decided to follow the historic route. This was the old mule track & started with a nice clear sign. There were no more signs of any kind, but as the track continued on, we followed it. A mistake - at some stage, there was another track on the map that forked off the VF. We saw no sign (physical or in charge of the path) that we were no longer on the VF, but after a time, it became obvious that we were not where we should have been. The VF climbed, according to the map - we were on the level. Eventually, we managed to get a sight across the valley & realised that we were probably 150m directly below & E of Castellonchio. There seemed to be a track connecting the one we were probably on to Castellonchio, so we took it.

Initially, the climb was about 30 degrees, but it soon levelled out to a mere 15. Then our real problems started - the track disappeared. From the remains of walls, the area had clearly once been terraced - now it was planted with a mix of oak & pine. For over an hour we worked our way upwards, clambering over the remains of walls, finding bits of track that gave us false hope, battling with brambles, packs getting caught, etc. etc. We both really doubt if we could have got through it all 3 months ago. But eventually, a bit scratched & fairly fraught, we saw a bit of flat ground up above & followed an animal's tracks up to - the VF! Complete with a sign showing the way N.

We had arrived in Castellonchio at almost exactly the same point as the VF.

As we walked down the medieval street, we heard the chimes of an ice-cream van ahead & so stopped for a Granita.

We followed the road thereafter until 1km before Berceto, when we thought it safe to try the signposted VF again. This was down another very old track straight into Berceto's historic centre.

The Duomo (C8, rebuilt in 930 & renovated in C15) is a wonderful Lombard-Romanesque building & the lovely streets through the middle have had their original VF stone surfaces restored.



The descent into Berceto



Capuchin Monastery in Pontremoli.

Oh we forgot to say that, inspired by the Wards, C went into shorts after Fidenza & A took off the bottom strip of his Rohans (surfer length). C made her displeasure at the sight of A in 3/4-length trousers v clear & he is, now, in shorts too.

140824 Aug 04

We are presently sat at the Passo Cisa - 1041m - on the watershed between the Po Valley & the Med - on the ridge of the Apennines.

This is the last time we will be over 1000m until our aircraft lifts off from Rome

We found the Tourist Office, who were v helpful - but this is the weekend of Ferragosto & there were no rooms anywhere. So we threw ourselves on the mercy of the Parish & Don Giuseppe took us round to a room in the building by the sports field. This has 4 bunk beds, but no sheets - by this stage C was biting her tongue in gratitude at having anywhere to sleep.

We dropped off our bags, put on our sandals & headed into town for a good look at the Duomo & then supper before bed.

Tomorrow, we cross the Cisa Pass (from which we may be able to see the Med) & hope to finish in the



The Med is somewhere down there.....

141826 Aug 04

Day 77 - Sat 14th Aug

Berceto – Pontremoli

Another long hot day - it was 32 degrees in the square in Pontremoli at 1930...

We were out of the Parish dormitory by 0700 & filled our Platypi from the fountain in the square, as many of the locals seemed to be doing.

Then we had breakfast (2 Illy cappuccinos each) & set off along the old medieval road that still runs right through Berceto.

As the SS bypasses the town, we had no choice but to follow the historic VF - fortunately this time the signposting continued all the way & we were able to rejoin the SS where we expected to. We could have continued up tracks (the historic VF) to the Pass, but decided not to, both because we couldn't be certain that the signposting would continue & because the VF climbed further than the SS.

The climb from Berceto to the Cisa Pass is only about 200m over 8km & we were there by 1000. We spent an hour at the pass, which was probably too much & then set off down & into Tuscany at about 1100.

As you would expect, there are many more tourists the closer you get to, & into, Tuscany - not just Brits, but French & Dutch too. We had decided to follow the historic route (there is also an SS & an autostrada). The historic VF descends very steeply into a river valley (& a BB black spot). Shortly after we'd left the SS & started our descent, we came across a memorial to 2 SAS officers where they had been shot by a firing squad in 1944. The memorial had only been erected in June of this year, to commemorate the 50th anniversary. Wonderfully, the wreath & poppies from the inauguration were still in good condition. The VF waymarks stopped abruptly & completely at the Emilio-Romagna/Tuscany border, so we were solely reliant on the maps that Alberto Alberti had sent us. Eventually (at about 1400) we

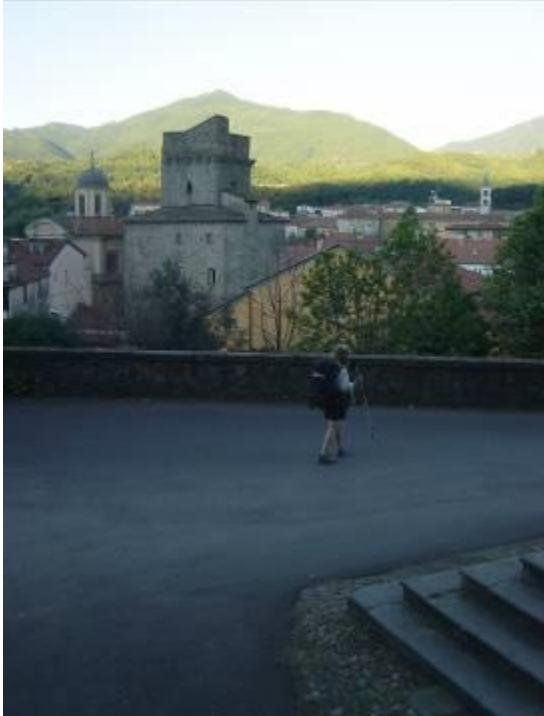
found a signpost for Pontremoli & that confirmed after 3 hours that we were on the right road. We arrived in Pontremoli (640m down from the Pass & at least 25km) at about 1630 & it was obvious that we were not going to find a hotel, so we went off to look for the Capuchin Monastery.

We arrived just as Mass was starting & it was 90 minutes before anyone came to help us. This may have been partly our fault, as we sat down in a shaded corner & didn't see the monks on the other side of the cloister when they came out of the chapel.

Anyway, having assured the Father that we were married ("over 20 years"), we were given a double room overlooking the cloister. We dumped our stuff & headed into town for supper before an early bedtime.

Tomorrow we intend to go 24km further on to Aulla. No Guest PS until Roger & Jo, A's brother & sister-in-law, join us on Tuesday night.

View of Pontremoli from the Monastery's steps



151846 Aug 04

Day 78 – Sun 15th Aug

Pontremoli – Aulla

We couldn't find anyone around when we left the monastery this morning, so we left our donation in an envelope on the kitchen table. Then off to the Piazza for breakfast - only to find that the coffee machine wasn't on yet - a commercial coffee machine seems to need at least 10 minutes to get up to working temperature.

Anyway, by 0740 we'd had our cappuccino & cornetto & were on our way.

Old Pontremoli (from its 'trembling' wooden bridges in medieval times) is on an island in the river Magra & we crossed over to the far S bank before turning SE & following the river towards the sea. We are unfortunately back on 1:200000 maps - not for lack of trying to find better. We bought a 1:25000 Club Alpino Italiano/local authority one last night that, from the overall map on the cover, went all the



way from Pontremoli to just N of Pisa. When we opened it back in the monastery, the actual area covered was about the central 20% only! No Trades Description Act here!



So all we knew was that we had to get over the autostrada & then run S parallel to the river. We managed this & had a pleasant walk along the old road that followed the RHS of the valley. Once past Villafranca, the 'old' road swapped onto the other bank & we had a small white one to follow. In the absence of any useful contour lines, we didn't realise that this road was going to take us most of the way up the valley side to a little fortified village (now full of second homes) called Lusuolo. No doubt Sigeric walked the same route - certainly the village has changed little in hundreds of years - the main street is too narrow for a car. Today is Ferragosto (like the August BH) & is the last day of the traditional Italian holiday fortnight - many shops/restaurants etc. close for the two weeks up to Ferragosto. However, we were surprised to find a trattoria that hasn't closed for the fortnight, but has for today - a bit like closing for the BH Monday. We saw a piece in one of the papers today questioning how long Italy can go on taking a

Lusuolo High Street

block holiday in early Aug, but no doubt this custom will die very slowly.

By 1300, we were getting v hot & tired, when we found a restaurant open - Rolando in Barbarasco. We had the €20 (£15) menu - lots of anti pasti (including fungi porcini & Parma ham), handmade ravioli in fungi porcini sauce, a big plate of assorted grilled meats + veg, pud, bottle of wine, 2 litres of water & coffee - amazing value. Sadly marred at the end, when the waiter who was given our money (not the excellent one who'd served most of our meal) decided to pocket the €10 change. A recovered it & tipped the one who had served us.

By 1515, we staggered out of the restaurant for the final couple of miles into Aulla - only about 15 miles covered today.

Aulla was almost completely destroyed (90% of housing) by the Allies in 1944 & they made the 'brave' decision to bulldoze & completely rebuild. Sadly Aulla now has no character & no city centre + some of the post-war buildings are already badly decayed. Sounds all too familiar....

The one major exception is the castle which overlooks the city. This had been bought by a British family - the Waterhouses - about 100 years ago (it was then in ruins) & had been completely restored. The city bought it in 1960 &, amongst other things, it now contains the, sadly full tonight, youth hostel. There is also a Pet cemetery in the grounds - widely advertised in the local tourist brochures as being 'unusual in Italy' - those funny Brits again!

The contrast between Aulla & Pontremoli could not be more absolute - 'though both were formed by conflict in different ways & in different centuries. We should be thankful that so little of Italy's architectural & cultural heritage was destroyed in the last war - modern weaponry being so much more destructive.

Enough philosophising/sermonising - tomorrow, we are having a 'half' day - just down the valley to Sarzana, where we will have a rest day on Tuesday & look forward to the arrival of Roger & Josephine - A's elder brother & his wife + more Guest PSs.

161820 Aug 04

Day 79 – Mon 16th Aug

Aulla – San Sarzana

Not quite sure how far we walked today, but approx. 18km from 0750 to 1300.

We decided to walk along the main road from Aulla to San Stefano & then, because we had the 1:25000 map, to follow the 'signposted' footpaths on to Sarzana.

All went according to plan until we got to the point where the first footpath left the SS. There was no sign, but we were clearly in the right place, so we turned right onto the floodplain on the side of the River Magra. All was OK for about 10 minutes until we came to the motorway. There was a dirt-racing track where we'd expected there to be a footpath. As the path was shown as going on under the motorway & towards the river, we gave it a go. There were, of course, no signs - why on earth, after our other experiences, did we think that there would be? About 45 minutes later, after we'd done several loops in the extended dusty dirt-racing track, we saw a proper track leading back towards higher ground & so followed it.



A 'fertility' shrine just outside Sarzana

We established our probable position & walked on along an irrigation canal footpath (not on our map). Eventually, we asked where we were & were told that we needed to go up to the main road because our path was about to disappear. This was good advice as the canal disappeared under a railway line.

We decided that we'd now stick with the main road - actually the Roman Via Aurelia. We walked on & into Sarzana at about 1300.

The tourist office was closed until 1700 & the only hotel that we knew of from the Vademeum was full, so we had lunch. A vg, if slightly dear, lunch it was too, but we needed to sit down (we saw 37 deg on one thermometer - in the full sun, so maybe a bit high, or maybe we're getting acclimatised). As the patron also found us a hotel not too far away, his prices were worth it & the spaghetti with mussels was excellent.

We walked down, over the railway, to our hotel (the San Andrea) on the Via Aurelia, booked in & did lots of washing - we must try to get our clothes looking a bit cleaner before A's big brother arrives! Everything gets washed either daily or every other day, but soap doesn't seem to remove the grey tinge. We are now (2010) sat in the open air eating assorted slices of pizza & watching Italian life swirl noisily around us.

Tomorrow, a day of rest - Roger & Josephine join us in the afternoon & then on Wednesday we head down to the beach.

With luck we'll be able to get tickets for the Puccini Opera Festival when we get to the S end of the beach strip - then inland to lovely Lucca.

171959 Aug 04

Day 80 – Tue 17th Aug

Sarzana

R&J are safely here - their plane having been early & their train to Sarzana having arrived exactly on time (we did see a perpetual Mussolini calendar on sale in the market...).

Before they arrived, we had a quiet day; planned the rest of the walk (which ended up v similar to the draft done 4 months ago) & then went the 1km into town. We bought a couple of pairs of socks, looked at the Duomo & just wandered.

We even managed an extended lunch, followed by ice cream & then we met R&J at the station.

After they'd dumped their stuff, we returned to town & wandered round the antiques market.

Fortunately the fact that we had to carry everything, dissuaded us from buying anything.

We'd recce'd somewhere for dinner & sat down there & ordered, then realised that the lunchtime menu was about 50% of the price of the evening one & the cheapest wine was €18, so we walked out. We sat down in another place & then moved on to their adjoining restaurant when we realised that they only served variants of Foccacia.

Tomorrow, we intend to walk down to the sea & along the beach.

Over to R&J for the Guest PS

Ryanair did us proud but the heat hit us as we left the aircraft. By the time we had walked back to the hotel from the station we were glowing. Still trepidation about tomorrow. Sarzana delightful. Sitting at third restaurant enjoying delicious meal under the stars so not missing rain in UK. Hotel top of scale from what we have read so far. Tomorrow to beach to assess beach volleyball. Missing Olympics.



cappuccino from a Nescafé machine at breakfast - in a **** hotel!!) onto the present Via Aurelia & then took the road down to the coast.

The Med at last

The coastal strip is very varied - from v smart beach areas to a major shipyard via semi-derelict 1920/30 beach hostels (for Siena, Turin & the Edison Company). Eventually we found ourselves in Forte de Marmi & started looking for a bed in a hotel.



There weren't any - we spent 2 hours looking & were eventually told by the tourist office that there wasn't anywhere that wasn't full. So C asked for the number of the parish priest & we were directed towards the Sisters in Pietrasanta. We got a taxi (we will return to the point that we got into the taxi tomorrow morning) up to Pietrasanta & the Sisters very kindly took us in.



192035 Aug 04

Day 82 – Thu 19th Aug

Pietrasanta - Piano del Quercione.

A is starting to write this as we wait at a bus stop at 1700. We cannot find anywhere to stay & so are getting a bus to Lucca, where the tourist office says that they can find us beds for the next 3 nights. Tomorrow, we will get the bus back to here & walk, without packs, back to Lucca.

To go back a bit first - we were all in bed with the lights out by 2045 last night. At 2115, there was a knock on the dorm door & the Mother Superior came in with sheets for us. We had asked for sheets earlier, she'd said that there weren't any & we'd been so tired that we (even C) had been happy to sleep without any. However, she had clearly managed to find some & was very kindly delivering them. As no Italian would ever be in bed as early as 2100, she was a bit surprised to find us all nearly asleep!

This morning, A&C were up & out by 0730, leaving R&J to have a lie-in. We breakfasted & set off from Pietrasanta at a fast trot (without packs) for the coast, a couple of miles away. Once there, we turned right & found the main tourist office, who gave us hotel reservation numbers for Camaiore & Lucca. We also checked where we could get the bus back to Pietrasanta from. This was towards the crossroads where we'd got our taxi the night before, so we checked the time of the bus as we passed & strode on. We took 17 minutes to get there & turned straight round & kept on going back to the bus station. We had 10 minutes to spare & so bought our tickets - when the girl selling them told us that the bus was actually 25 minutes later, so we had time for a coffee. Irritatingly, the bus route passed through the spot where we'd got the taxi, so we could have saved ourselves a fast 17-minute walk & caught the earlier bus.

We are all together in the pilgrim dorm in the top of the convent.

If this is a bit short & disjointed, it's because we are all exhausted - it has been hot today - still 31 degrees at 1900. The Guest PS

We are exhausted & thankful that the Sisters took us in.

Tomorrow - wait & see

191051 Aug 04

Mad dogs etc.!

About to leave Pietrasanta in temp of 30+ with nowhere to stay tonight!

Love ACJ&R



The Convent in Pietrasanta

Mad dogs etc.!

We got back into Pietrasanta at about 1130, collected our bags from the Sisters & had a light lunch. Meanwhile we were trying to find somewhere to stay in Camaiore - which was said to be full. We are getting a bit fed up with tourist offices who have no desire to be helpful - the girl in the first one we tried to find somewhere to stay in last night 'wasn't allowed' to make any phone calls (even to her friends?) & could not help with hotels along our route as the next province started 300m away - the curse of provincialism.

Anyway, once we'd established that there were no hotel rooms, we tried the Comune, no joy, the parish priest, the same. We were given a number for Guiseppe, who might be able to help, but wasn't answering his phone.

So at about 1300, with the temperature at over 30 deg, we set off along the SS towards Lucca. We were going to turn L up towards Camaiore if we'd managed to get hold of Guiseppe. We stopped for one of our breaks in Capezzano Pianore, where the owner of the Gallo della Checca v kindly rang all the hotels & B&B places in Camaiore & managed to get hold of the elusive Guiseppe - no joy - so we kept on along the main road.

Eventually, we decided that we weren't going to find anywhere en route, so we caught a bus the last 20km into Lucca, where the v efficient & helpful tourist office found us a lovely hotel within the walls for the same rate as we'd paid for the pretend **** San Andrea in Sarzana - we are still amazed that a **** hotel can leave guests with a non-working loo overnight & can expect its guests to drink Nescafé Cappuccino for breakfast.

Enough - tomorrow, we are getting the 0700 bus back to the point where we got onto the bus this afternoon & will walk back, whilst R&J enjoy the delights of Lucca.

Now to R&J's Guest PS

A relaxed start to the day ha ha. Instructed to check with the local tourist office about hotels in Camaiore, we found that because it was market day, the tourist office was closed. For our breakfast we had a tea and focaccia in the square. A couple of American ladies with 2 children sat at the next table and had coffees. They clearly knew everyone, including the local Carabiniere, who greeted them fondly. When one of the girls went to pay, she was told the drinks had been paid for. As I said to Jo, I wonder if anyone has paid our bill. We left pm in the sun finishing up with a bus ride to Lucca. A fascinating town with shades of Venice, but much taller buildings. More tomorrow when we will be tourists but still with instructions.

202006 Aug 04

Day 83 – Fri 20th Aug

Piano del Quercione - Lucca

A quote from the Bracci Brothers' book on the VF:

"As the Jews entered the Promised Land after much suffering, so goes for the pilgrims. They must suffer through the cheating of the innkeepers, the climbing of the mountains, the tiring walking through the valleys, the terror of being robbed and the anxiety of finding the right way, in order for them to enter the celestial reign of the Father that has been promised to the faithful". The quote is from Aymeric Picaud in "Liber Sancti Jacobi".

Well - this is relevant. Last night, we were quite late out & so had difficulty finding somewhere that we could eat outside. Eventually, we found a bar that did food, so we sat down & ordered. When the bill arrived, it consisted of 3 little bar receipts with no details of what they were for & a bit a squared paper summarising the other 3. All this came to €80+. As the bill seemed to be about right, A agreed to pay it & offered his credit card. The machine was "broken". A expressed his surprise that these things could happen in N Italy. The Manager then waded in & things rapidly escalated. A asked for an itemised bill - hadn't we seen the menu? A asked if the bill we had was a proper bill for tax purposes. Before too

long, A was talking on the Manager's mobile to someone who, he was told, was Guardia di Finanza (the national tax police). Eventually, the owner arrived & arranged for a detailed bill, which was correct & we paid & left. This is a bit of a précis of 20+ minutes of entertainment!



reserve, which contains the lake on which Puccini had his house (at Torre del Lago) & then over the ridge towards Lucca.

We had a sandwich in an amazing little place called Nozzano, which has a tiny historic centre with a triangular castle with 2 towers, which surprisingly doesn't appear in any of the tourist brochures. Just S of Nozzano, we climbed up onto the bund along the river & turned L towards Lucca & then followed the river all the way towards Lucca. The only problem was that when we got to the bridge where the SS crosses the river, there was a track on both sides of the bund & no indication which was the advertised cycle track.

We got back into Lucca after about 13 miles at about 1430 & had a shower & a siesta.

We met R&J at 1800 in the old Roman Amphitheatre for a glass of prosecco & then went to an excellent concert of, mainly Puccini, tenor arias after which we went to a very good (& not too expensive) restaurant that R&J had found.

Tomorrow is a rest day.

Over to R&J for the guest PS

We have played the tourists today. Very much enjoying Lucca with all its 99 churches & all the history, giving the blisters time to recover. This evening's concert by 3 tenors in an old deconsecrated church & the excellent dinner in the open with A&C have provided a wonderful finish to an excellent day.

211834 Aug 04

Day 84 – Sat 21st Aug

Lucca

Not a great deal to report. We visited the helpful tourist office to book our next hotels - OK for tomorrow, but even for the helpful office here, impossible to book in the next province. One day perhaps the Italians will realise that foreigners don't really accept that provincialism is more important than serving your customers &

This morning, we were up at 0600 & walked over to the bus station, expecting to find a bar for breakfast before we caught the 0700 bus. We could find nowhere, which did rather surprise us. The 0700 bus took us back to where we'd finished yesterday & we had our breakfast there.

By 0745, we were walking along the main road towards Lucca from Piano del Quercione. After about an hour, we turned S & it started to rain - quite heavily. We hadn't taken our waterproofs with us, so we did get a bit wet.

Our route took us along the edge of a nature



will be prepared to offer help & information on adjoining provinces.

Then we wandered around the churches in the morning (Della Robbia, Tintoretto, Lippi, Guercino etc.), had lunch in the amphitheatre piazza (which was interrupted by a downpour) & went to a concert of chamber music at 1700. Then a short walk around the walls (**view from the walls above**) & supper. So, a good rest day - not much to do & a reasonable dose of culture to keep the brain going. Tomorrow, off SE towards Altopascio & 3 weeks to Rome.

Guest PS

Much the same - but walked all the walls am & went to the market - managed to resist any shopping!

220530 Aug 04

I gather that you've all heard from me several times again

I'd blame the 'canyons' of Lucca!



221738 Aug 04

Day 85 – Sun 22nd Aug

Lucca – Altopascio

Out at 0700 into very quiet streets. We found a bar for breakfast & were on our way out of Lucca by 0730.

The weather was not too hot &, once again, we had to walk along main-ish roads. We headed straight onto Altopascia & were there by about midday - only about 10 miles today. R&J decided to be more adventurous & took a diversion off towards the hills & up to Montecarlo.

The hotel was closed when we got to Altopascio & so we sat outside a bar in the square & read the newspapers & magazines that J&P & R&J had brought us.

Altopascio is an interesting mixture - there is a motorway right through the middle of town & a couple of hundred yards away is the medieval centre, which used to be the Pilgrim Hospital run by the Knights of Tau. The church still has a lovely CXII facade & there are a couple of the medieval gates still surviving.

We all got to the hotel at about 1600. A good, economical hotel tonight - with paper towels! A's had 3 holes it in by

the time he'd dried himself after his shower.

Tomorrow - on to San Miniato, which is just the other side of the River Arno.

The Guest PS:

We took a side trip up to a hilltop village called Montecarlo reminiscent of French Bastide towns like Beaumont. It is an attractive walled town with castle where we had lunch overlooking olive groves and vineyards. A worthy detour.

231945 Aug 04

Day 86 – Mon 23rd Aug

Altopascio – San Miniato

Last night we had supper in a restaurant called La Loggia in Altopascio, which we later realised was the loggia where the Knights of Tau had fed the pilgrims who were on the VF 1000 years ago. Our meal cost us the same as the night before in Lucca, but there was no comparison. Our tourist fodder in Lucca (with the exception of the pasta) was real lowest common denominator stuff (my pork had probably been cooked at lunchtime & Jo left almost all her chicken), whereas in the Loggia, we had an excellent mixture of antipasto followed by lobster spaghetti & the grappa bottle was left on our table. Certainly Lucca did not do us well on the restaurant/bar front, because as well as the disagreement we had with the bar on Friday night, we had another occasion where the waiter made a 'mistake' about the price of our bottle of wine. The perils of being somewhere that lives off the fat of tourists! La Loggia was the complete opposite & provided us with a really good evening that we all thought was excellent value. We let ourselves out of our hotel this morning at about 0800 & had breakfast in a nearby bar before turning S onto a minor road through Villa Campanile. One passing local stopped to advise us on the route, as he was worried that we were lost. We rejoined the main road at Galleno & had coffee there. Just S of Galleno, we saw a hand-painted sign 'Itinerario Via Francigena' off to the right. There was nothing on any of our maps & we lacked the faith to give it a try, so continued on the main road.

At Le Vedute, we did follow the maps which all indicated a track off to the right. Another driver stopped to advise us that we were on the wrong road, but he was contradicted by a local lady, who we decided to believe. In fact, we think that the road network has changed since the maps were drawn as we eventually found ourselves crossing a new bridge, that isn't on the maps, over the canal. Sadly in the process, we missed the medieval Medici bridge.

Once over the canal, we were in Fucecchio, where we had a good €10 lunch in a 'transport café' type place. This left us with about 5 miles to go to San Miniato. We stopped off at the railway station to check R&J's train for tomorrow & then climbed the 120m up to San Miniato, where we had our rooms booked. We arrived at 1715 - distance unknown as yet another of Silva's pedometers has fallen off A's belt.

San Miniato is a pretty little place along a ridge, but doesn't really have any large piazzas that enable places like San Gimignano to attract big numbers of tourists.

Once we'd showered & done our dhobying, we

wandered off into town, where we asked the tourist office to help us with our hotel for tomorrow, but of course this was 'not possible' as we are moving into another Province. We did the sights, had a glass of prosecco watching the sunset & then a light supper. Tomorrow, R&J return home & we walk on towards San Gimignano. We have another night en route &, as yet, nowhere to stay. No doubt all will be well.

Farewell Supper with Roger & Jo in S Miniato



And now the final Guest PS

It has been an entertaining week enhanced by the continual chatter in Italian between A and C and the various kind people we have met along the route. We go back home no lighter but enriched with Italian culture and food and drink. As we say farewell, we wish A&C and the BB all the best on the final thrust to Roma.

241844 Aug 04

Day 87 – Tue 24th Aug

San Miniato – Castelfiorentino

R&J left us this morning after a week. In that time, they always managed to appear neatly dressed - much more so than us. They also joined us in probably the hardest day we've had - when we eventually caved in & got a taxi to the convent in Pietrasanta - & saw the largest pack of guard dogs we've managed to arouse - 20 in one garden.



A has developed his first real blister - on his R heel - because the inner lining on the new boots bought in Pontarlier, just before we left France, has already worn away. We've just bought a roll of plasters & are going to attempt to patch the shoe. (**photo**)

Anyway - we said goodbye to R&J after breakfast in San Miniato & they headed downwards to catch the train to Pisa. We continued along the ridge through San Miniato, but it rapidly became obvious that something needed to be done to A's right boot - so we put a big Compeed plaster over the hole in the lining. This helped significantly.

On health in general, we're not feeling too bad as we

start on the final 200 miles. We both have several patches where straps/buckles etc. have rubbed, our digestions rarely manage more than 2 days without some kind of problem & our feet are just tired. C's are better than A's - several of his middle toes are semi-permanently numb & he is taking Brufen daily for the probable marching fracture in his left heel. Otherwise, we're fine.

Having sorted out A's boot, we walked on out of S Miniato. The Tuscan countryside is well known for its beautiful rolling hills - unfortunately, we are having to go up & down these hills - only about 50-100m each time, but certainly enough to notice.

Our route took us along a track that wasn't on any of our maps - this turned out to be a road, complete with lines down it (the minor roads here have no lines on them). Once over the main ridge, we were down in the Elsa valley, which we followed all the way to Castelfiorentino, where we arrived at lunchtime after 9.7 miles (R left us his pedometer - another of Mr Silva's products - let's hope this one has a longer life).

Castelfiorentino is not on the 'official' VF, though its publicity material claims that the VF ran along the river valley past it. We had thought of going to the YH, but it was closed until 1600 & A was keen to get his boots off, so we opted for a hotel in the town centre. Castelfiorentino is not a tourist stop &, of the three churches we tried to see, one was in restoration, one may have been & the third was closed at 1700. So we didn't do much, apart from buy some plasters to try to patch A's boot.

Tomorrow, we have 23+km to do to San Gimignano for a rest day. We can see it from the top of the hill here & it looks a long way with lots of beautiful rolling hills between here & there!

251710 Aug 04

Day 88 – Wed 25th Aug

Castelfiorentino – San Gimignano

We set off at 0700 from our hotel & had breakfast in the piazza. Our route took us back over the River Elsa - as we looked down we could see a mixture of ducks, geese & hens feeding off the grassy banks &



3 big furry rat like things - about a foot long in the body - Coypu?

We headed off about S to rejoin the classic VF along the ridge. This led us up a lovely straight (Roman?) road that climbed about 200m in 1km. A good start to the day!

Just before Gambassi Terme we passed one of the churches quoted by Sigeric - S Maria in Chianni - sadly it was closed.

In Gambassi Terme we had our first break & assessed the route to come. It looked (rightly) as if we would find nowhere to eat or drink before S Gimignano, 12km away, & so we bought a picnic.

The Towers of San Gimignano in the distance

We then entrusted ourselves to a guidebook that had excellent looking maps for the paths to San Gim. Initially, we walked along farm tracks through picture postcard countryside & then - we came to a section which the guidebook admitted was confusing - it even produced an extra section of map - but were there any signs to provide reassurance - after all, one track out of a field can look v similar to another? We assessed as best we could & ploughed on (it was 1130 & quite hot by now). Then, once we were feeling that the map & the ground were reconciled, we found a VF sign - better late than never. Further on, we came to an unmapped Y-junction - fortunately a Dutch family en route their holiday home were able to reassure us that we were on the right track.

Eventually we found ourselves within the Comune of San Gim - much built up since we were last here 10 years ago - even little estates of executive boxes (with no views of San Gim itself) off the main road. Once inside the walls, we remembered why San Gim is such a deservedly popular tourist spot. You couldn't design a film set like it because no one would believe it. The wonderful mixture of architectural variations that blend so well together just have to be seen to be believed.

We are in a B&B near Porta San Matteo. We had to go to a shop in the centre to book in & were then taken off to our lodgings in a side street - in a medieval building with terracotta floors & ceilings & period furniture (but shared bathroom).

We will enjoy our rest day here tomorrow

261810 Aug 04

Day 89 – Thu 26 Aug

San Gimignano

We started off with the 2km walk around the walls, just to keep our feet in training & then pottered around this beautiful hilltop city that really does just encourage wandering & looking (at the people, as well as the architecture).

Several of the churches on the guidebook list were closed, but the Duomo (which surprisingly for a Catholic church one has to pay to get into), was open & has wonderful, startlingly fresh, frescoes. We

also had a new twist on the 'can't help you with hotel bookings' game (even in the same Province) from the San Gim tourist office - "It's against the law"!

We lunched lightly off bruschetta & Chianti &, whilst we were in another church looking at more very

well preserved frescoes, the heavens opened to the accompaniment of some v loud thunder. We retired to our room - luckily close by - to read & look at tomorrow's route. The storm included a period of hail & lasted for over 90 minutes.

San Gimignano in the rain

We had booked a table outside, with views over the countryside, for dinner this evening. When we arrived at the restaurant, the waiter did look at us a bit oddly as we made to go upstairs to the roof terrace - oh no - all cleared away & so we have to eat inside. We have already noted that clothes shops are mainly selling winter clothes & we've also seen locals in their winter woollies. During our wanderings, we

found a shop selling VF perfume - complete with the pilgrim logo on the bottle. Having decided that perfume was a weighty optional extra on our walk, we resisted the temptation to buy a bottle. In fact, amazingly, we have, so far, bought nothing that we don't need en route. When we think of all the souvenirs, of varied tastefulness, that we've acquired during previous travels, this is a bit surprising. Tomorrow, an early start again & off S towards Siena. It's too far for us to do in a day, so we are breaking our journey at Strove, just near Monteriggioni - which is a really amazing little town that still sits within its complete medieval walls.



there was one other man going in our direction. As we left the walls, the view to the E was too picture postcard to be true - the mist was rising from the hills which stretched in waves into the distance. We followed the road out past Monte Oliveto, from which we had wonderful views back over San Gim, & then turned right, cross country, following the fairly well signposted Alleanza route, whose little

271833 Aug 04

Day 90 - Fri 27th Aug

San Gimignano – Strove

We saw San Gimignano this morning (at 0730) as very few foreigners ever see it - almost empty. As we walked up the main street towards the Duomo, 2 nuns crossed the road in front of us - otherwise,



guidebook we were following.

The first couple of hours were on deserted tracks through classic Tuscan countryside - olives, vines, cypresses & houses on little hilltops. Later in the day, the views became more normally rural & we had to walk on minor roads. As seems to happen quite often, there were significant differences between the 4 maps we are presently working from - mind you 100% concurrence would worry us too!

There is a lot of light industry being developed in this area & so new roads are appearing & old ones disappearing.

Our hotel this evening is the only one we could find to split the distance between San Gim & Siena. We are paying €75 for the room & have just discovered that the restaurant (there is no other eating place within walking distance) is a gourmet haunt, with prices to match. We will let you know tomorrow if it is worth it.

Tomorrow, we visit Monteriggioni en route Siena where we think we are booked into the YH at €13 per head.

If this is full of typos, sorry A is typing it by trendy pink candlelight - let's hope we can see the food!

281846 Aug 04

Day 91 – Sat 28th Aug

Strove - Siena

Last night's meal was very good - certainly worth the cost - & not just for the food, which included 5 different types of homemade bread. On one table we had an elderly man, with his family, who looked &



behaved like a peasant farmer who'd come into lots of money & on another was a suave business man (crisp white shirt, no tie, 'city' braces) & his new (?) girlfriend - she was dressed up to the nines & wearing the highest heels we've ever seen in real life! Great people watching.

We were out before 0700 this morning & off towards Badia Isola (originally Abbadia Isola - the Abbey on the island in the often flooded Elsa Valley). Our hotel didn't start breakfast until 0830, but "the bar would be open from 0700 in Badia Isola". It wasn't. Eventually we found a bar just below Monteriggioni & had coffee & a porchetta focaccia for breakfast, before the 40m climb up to

the walls.

Monteriggioni is an amazing little hilltop village of 1 street surrounded by an oval wall with all its towers (8 of them?) still intact. We were there at 0830, before any other tourists & had our second coffee to the accompaniment of the locals cleaning & clearing up (the crashing of bottle banks being emptied etc.).

From Monteriggioni we rejoined the Alleanza route, which took us along a wooded ridge - excellent for shade, but no views. Our path ended about 3 or 4 miles out of Siena & then we had to join the Cassia (the Roman road to Florence), which, unexpectedly, climbed steadily all the way until we were nearly into the city.

We found the YH easily enough by 1300 after 10.7 miles & decided to book in for one night only. We spent a week here one February & have seen all the museums, beside which we had a day off in San Gimignano & so don't need another yet.

Having dumped our bags - the v friendly receptionist gave C a kiss when she told him that we were walking all the way from Canterbury to Rome & then he felt he ought to give A one too - we walked the final 3km into the city along the old Roman road which leads straight to the Campo - surely one of the

most amazing city squares in the World?

We found the tourist office, who booked us somewhere for tomorrow night & then sat on the paving of the Campo looking at the view eating an ice cream (€1.50 rather than €5 sat at a café). Our only other task was to download the camera to a CD. The first shop we found near the Campo wanted €9. A told him that the price we'd paid so far had been 5, 4, 5 & 2 (the last being in Italy 3 weeks ago). As the shopkeeper was unrepentant, we decided to try elsewhere. This being Saturday afternoon & August, we couldn't find one open, but fortunately we do have another smaller memory chip.

We had seen an ad for a concert in the English

church, so arrived at 1715 to get our tickets. By start time, 1730, there were 4 of us - the other couple being Australian, Jenny & Evan - he had just sung in the Eisteddfod & was in Swansea last week. The concert consisted of a selection of piano pieces, tenor arias & Neapolitan songs (of which we were encouraged to join in the chorus). In addition, an excellent & vg value supper was produced in the interval. We both felt very sorry for the organisers (Franz & Ilse Moser) & for the tenor (Giacomo Miro) for having such a sparse audience, but they took it all in very good heart &, in effect, we had an excellent private concert party. They even gave us a lift back to the YH afterwards.

Tomorrow, we head off into the unknown - we couldn't find anywhere to stay in Vescovado, where we hoped to be, so are having to go a ridge W of the track - let's hope we can find our way back to the VF after this diversion.

291759 Aug 04

Day 92 – Sun 29th Aug

Siena - Castello di Grotti

Not a good day.

Those of you who've read yesterday's dispatch will remember that we left our bags etc. in the YH (we couldn't occupy our room until 1400) & headed straight into Siena, where a young lady in the tourist office convinced us that there was nowhere to stay in Vescovado & persuaded us (she was another graduate of the dealing-with-tourists 'charm' school) that we should stay in an agriturismo near Casciano.

We left the YH at about 0750 & waited for a bus - although there did seem to be a paucity. Eventually, we gave up & got a taxi as far as the city walls (we had walked this section yesterday, so don't worry). The Rione (loosely = ward) just inside the gate had been celebrating last night because today is their Saint's day & we found two marching bands parading down the street - in full period costume complete with banner wavers & throwers. It was striking that, when dressed for the period, many of the faces could have come straight from a renaissance painting.



We strolled across an empty Campo, had a coffee in the SE section of the city & then left by the Tufi Gate.

Our next task was to cross the by-pass (the Tangenziale) & get onto the little road that heads S to Casciano. We tacked across the junction between the tangenziale & the autostrada for about an hour (yes walking up & down slip-roads) until we found the way out. In retrospect, we think that the road on the map has been absorbed into an industrial estate. Once clear of the city (it was 1030 by now), we found ourselves walking along a ridge heading S, so we had the opposite of yesterday's problem - lovely distant views over the countryside, but no shade (quite hot this morning) & no bars either - the girl in the tourist office had told us that we were heading into an untouristy, agricultural area.

At 1230 we reached Le Ville de Corsano - about 7km N of Casciano & stopped for a light lunch. C had earlier rung the Senora at the agriturismo that we were booked into to ask which direction we should approach from & we had been told that we were booked in for dinner, so a light lunch seemed like a good idea.

About an hour later, as we were leaving, we asked the restaurant staff if they knew exactly where our agriturismo was - oh yes - 17 or 18 km further south - with the actual place 3 or 4 km further on up a hill!

After scrutiny of our map, this was obviously so - some of the rural districts (Comunes) here do stretch a long way & so the named town & the actual place can be quite far apart.

A was sent off to ring the agriturismo (C does most of our phoning as people seem to find her Italian easier to understand, but some things are a 'man's job'!), where the Senora said that she hadn't really expected us as she hadn't thought that we'd be able to walk that far from Siena.

Meanwhile, C was trying to find somewhere closer for us to stay. Eventually, the v helpful restaurant staff (it is useful travelling with a Blonde, especially in Italy!) found us a room in the local castle, from where this is being written - in a room with a frescoed plaster ceiling & a chamber pot in A's bedside cupboard as a thunder storm rages outside. And the only place we can eat this evening is where we had lunch - about 800m away.

The lesson of all this is that we should not have gone into Siena yesterday without doing our homework first & should have taken our maps with us. Unfortunately the map on which the girl marked the position of the agriturismo had a map of Siena on the other side & this evidence was put in a bin as we left the city limits. This is also the first time we've paid a 'deposit' to a tourist office for a hotel booking - now forfeited - the cynic in A wonders if this has anything to do with the fact that we were misled.

Our problem now (apart from the fact that we may get v wet going out for our pizza) is that we are well to the W of where we really wanted to be. We should have followed our instincts & walked down the SS2, the Cassia, (pretty quiet on a Sunday) rather than pretended to be 'proper' walkers out in the countryside. Now we will have to cut almost due E to get back onto the Cassia before we can go S again. Having decided to postpone our rest day, we may now have just wasted it instead.

Oh well - that's life



More fun & games tomorrow
PS Now in the restaurant & dry so far.

301650 Aug 04

Day 93 – Mon 30th Aug

Castello di Grotti to Buonconvento

Another 'interesting' day. Carole cooked scrambled eggs on toast + coffee in our apartment in the castle & then, at about 0740, headed off E towards the Cassia. The weather was a bit odd - low cloud/mist until mid-morning, so a bit cooler, but limited views. After a couple of hours & just E of Radi, we decided to follow the numbered, signposted & featured on maps footpath to Quinciano. We found the starting signpost where expected & could see the path stretching ahead. All was well for about the first km, when the path disappeared. We could see tractor tracks heading up to the top of the next ridge & so followed them - to be confronted by an enormous ploughed field (surrounded by nice new barbed wire) where the track should have been - we vowed never to take another path whilst in Italy.

Loathe to turn back, we turned towards the river, climbed over a wire fence, forced our way through a thicket & got onto the unploughed edge of the troublesome field. Eventually, we got into the next field (corn) & then found a real track - which led down to & across the river. Trying the other way, we found a track more where the one on the map was, which eventually led us to Quinciano - & as we got onto the road, we found both a map showing the 'path' we'd just come along & a VF sign pointing the way we'd come...

Having discussed the path behind us with a couple of locals ("difficult to find"), found where the next path was ("much easier") & established that there was no bar nearby, we sat down & ate our marmite & tomato sandwiches.

Despite our vow not to trust footpaths again, we looked at the next one (actually a 'white' road) & took it. The first 3km were fine - lots of blackberries for C - until we crossed the railway (as per the map) & the track disappeared. There was a 'closed' field in the way, but we could see a narrow overgrown path down the side of it. We decided that shorts were not a good idea & so got our long trousers out. As C

was putting hers on over her shorts & A was sitting on the ground zipping the legs onto his shorts, the only train we'd seen all day came past. I don't know what the driver thought we were doing, but he gave us a toot.

In fact, the narrow path wasn't too bad & once past the 'closed' field, the track restarted & ran, as expected, to Punto d'Arbia, which is on the Cassia. Here we saw our first road sign to Rome (204km) & found that Siena was only 19km N of us. We had lunch

We then followed the Cassia S to Buonconvento, which is where we now are.

Buonconvento is another of those comparatively unknown Italian gems - an almost complete little medieval town with 90% of the walls still surviving.

We are both feeling a bit tired & a little fed up - the next few days are going to be hard walking & there aren't that many places to stay. The mental stresses on someone doing a walk like this on their own must be very hard - at



least we can support each other & we're not usually both fed up simultaneously.
So tomorrow - S initially on the Cassia & then off into the hills to Castiglione d'Orcia.

311923 Aug 04

Day 94 – Tue 31st Aug

Buonconvento to S Quirico d'Orcia

A very pretty day, but we didn't get quite as far as we'd hoped. Pedometer giving random results so no further distances, except for the Cassia Countdown.

One sometimes overhears wonderful snippets of conversation in bars - easy when it's in English & especially when children are involved - last night we had "Grandfather heard about it from the barber... She is now denying your grandparents access to xxxx & xxxx...." & much more - certainly enough

around which to be able to construct a Tuscan 'Jilly Cooper'!

We were staying in the Hotel Roma - on the Roman high street (also the VF) in Buonconvento. The 1/2 board was €46 - just over £30 - really excellent value as last night's dinner was good local fare, with superb pork chops.

So this morning we set off S in better heart than yesterday & rejoined the Cassia at the 200km post at the S end of the town. We walked the first 6 miles along the Cassia - the traffic wasn't too bad - & then branched off on the original Cassia into Torrenieri.

Almost the first building we came to was a



Cantine dealing in Brunello di Montalcino (probably the most expensive Italian wine). We went in, explained who we were, & asked if we could buy a glass of wine. Certainly not, we were told by the patron, Mario Ciacci, he would give us a glass. Torrenieri is one of the places mentioned in Sigeric's diary & there is a plaque over the Cantina Abbadia Ardegnano Poggio's door recording this fact. After a couple of tasters of their ordinary red, we were given a very generous taster of the 1988 Brunello (we could certainly taste the difference) & then a tour of the cantina. Reluctantly, we left & continued along the old Cassia. The views on this section (we were quite high by now) are wonderful - especially over towards Montalcino on its hilltop.

One oddity is that the old kilometre stones continue along the old Cassia, but the new route (in effect the Torrenieri bypass) is 1km further.... So how can the new & old distance markers (from Rome) have been exactly the same at Buonconvento? Answers on a postcard please to the Italian Transport Minister in Rome!



The old Cassia finally led us into S Quirico d'Orcia, where we decided to stay - even though we'd only covered about 9 miles today.

S Q d'O is another outstanding little walled town - with 3 Romanesque churches & much of its walls still intact - it even has a still identifiable medieval pilgrim hostel.

Tomorrow, we have decided to abandon the Cassia & try the white roads to the S of it. We think that there will be somewhere to stay in tomorrow night.



011731 Sep 04

Day 95 – Wed 1st September

S Quirico d'Orcia - Vivo d'Orcia

Today we went from 409m to 450 to 240 to 540 to about 500 & finally back up to 811. All over a distance variously listed as being between 20.2 & 24 km. Fortunately it wasn't too hot (high 20s) & the early afternoon was mainly overcast. We started out from S Quirico at 0740 & climbed up to Vignoni & then back down to Bagno Vignoni. BV clearly has heavy tourist traffic at certain times, as there were lots of car parks. At about 0900 it was comparatively deserted. The attraction is the central 'piazza' which is actually a square pool fed by warm mineral rich spring water - much frequented by Catherine & Lorenzo de Medici in their time. We continued briefly down & along the old Cassia for a hundred yards before turning right & starting the steep ascent up to Castiglione d'Orcia, which has a wonderful castle tower + substantial remains of a second. We stopped at an enoteca for an early lunch of cheese & tomato sandwiches + Chianti & then started (at about 1200) the final 12 km, initially along

the ridge, then sharply up to Vivo d'Orcia. The last 3 miles were all up along a dirt track. The real 'killer' was that Vivo d'O is along a ridge, which rises continually, & the hotel is at the S & highest point of the town. At least tomorrow, we are that much closer to the top, which marks the watershed between Tuscany & Lazio.

One consequence of all this climbing is that we have had superb views - often in both directions - for much of the day. Tomorrow, we will be over the top in about 30 minutes & then down into Abbadia S Salvatore (church 1036 with a CVIII crypt) & onto Piancastagnàio. A short day to prepare ourselves for the 27km of the day after - forced on us by geography/hotels down to Acquapendente.

021744 Sep 04

Day 96 – Thu 2nd Sep

Vivo d'Orcia – Piancastagnàio

Last night's hotel was another in the Fawlty Towers mode. We were the only guests & the phone rang in our bedroom at 1930 & the patron just said 'mangiare!'. So we took ourselves downstairs to the dining room where we realised that we were the only diners. Our starter was v good homemade (by the patron) pasta, which was followed by a choice of rabbit or pheasant - we both had the latter. This was followed by fresh fruit & then we went off to bed (about 2030). Throughout the meal the TV blared away in the corner & the patron & his wife popped in & out of the dining room to either watch the TV or us.

Breakfast this morning was a similar performance. Mind you, we did have the best room - a lovely



balcony & a new shower - a chrome pipe coming vertically out of the ceiling. The floor had been dished a bit around the drain, but not enough to prevent water flowing over the marble floor into the bedroom. To cap it all, there was an electrical socket in the shower corner - sellotaped over to stop the water going into the holes! We were careful not to touch it. We said that we were at about 830m last night, but we now know that we were at over 900m & our initial climb out of Vivo took us to over 1000m before we descended to Abbadia S Salvatore at about 860m. Abbadia has a v austere Abbey (about 1000 years old) with a crypt full of wonderful Romanesque columns

with every capital carved differently - cattle, sheep, man holding horses head etc. Some of the columns are carved too.

From Abbadia we went on along the level to Piancastagnàio, where we arrived at about 1130 & decided to stop to have half of the rest day we'd foregone in Siena.

Tomorrow we have about 16 or 17 miles to do, so we thought that we should start well rested. We found a pensione, dumped our bags & wandered off to the old town - which clings to the edge of the ridge. It is another of those places which has changed little in the last 500 years, but this one is v untouristy & is still lived in by people who work here. We found a little enoteca called Saxa Cuntaria (hardly a name one could use in Britain). They were doing an €11 lunch, including wine, so we ate v well again (the pasta was with roasted whole almonds, French beans & Parma ham) & then returned to our pensione for a siesta. From about 1530 to 1630 there was a very heavy thunderstorm right overhead. Had it happened yesterday at the same time, we'd have been drenched.

One of today's bits of admin was to sort out A's platypus, which has been growing! We'd noticed some grey marks on the tube, but had assumed that they were on the outside where it rubs on the rucksack. However, when grey spots started appearing, closer examination proved them to be inside the tube - worse in the section that is outside the rucksack & so exposed to heat. Sticking a cotton bud into the tube produced a nasty black stuff, so action was necessary. Having soaked it in the bidet for an hour this afternoon in sterilising solution perhaps A won't have quite so many stomach upsets!

Tomorrow, we go down & down & down (although inevitably we finish with an up to Acquapendente) - out of Tuscany & into Lazio. Abbadia S Salvatore is 100 miles from Rome, so we should be there soon.

031746 Sep 04

Day 97 – Fri 3rd Sep

Piancastagnàio

Last night's hotel (Pensione Restaurante Anna) was a great find - we had a v good meal & with our puds a bottle of vin santo was put on the table followed by one of limoncello with coffee! To cap it all, the bill was about 60% of the night before & the Patrona gave us a bottle of wine to take away with us.

This morning, we were up at 0630 & out of the hotel by 0655. We found a café for breakfast & then started the fairly steep descent down to the valley floor in which the Cassia runs. The area is volcanic & smells strongly of sulphur. There were several probable geo-thermal power plants on the way, as well

as the biggest complex of greenhouses either of us has ever seen - presumably heated with waste heat from the power plants.

We were on the Cassia within a couple of hours & spent the rest of the day on it. There was v little traffic &, by timing the km posts, we were able to work out that we can sustain 3.5 MPH along a reasonably level road. We are also now on our last 1:100000 map & out of Tuscany into Lazio. All these distances & speeds should be put into perspective - Joe Patterson, who has done the VF before, is leaving Lausanne today & aims to be in Rome on 3 Oct. He will need to average nearly 20 miles per day to achieve this - we have planned on & achieved 12.5 miles per day & 1 rest day per week.

The countryside is still worth seeing - rolling hills & there is always at least one castle in sight.

Our destination today was Acquapendente - just N of Lake Bolsena, one of the volcanic lakes that run down Italy's spine. We found our hotel by 1430 (we'd picnicked off porchetta sandwiches & the bottle of wine we'd been given by Anna) & showered before a siesta. Today was market day in Acquapendente & all the shopkeepers seemed to be finishing lunch together as we arrived, which augurs well for dinner.

At 1600 we got up, did the washing & went out to look for the tourist office. There are lots of VF signs hereabouts & so we were hopeful of finding a useful map. They were v helpful but all they had was one of the leaflets produced for the Jubilee Year (2000) in German - all the others have gone. Nevertheless, we did get a useful list of places to stay for the next few days.

Tomorrow, we climb up to the rim of the volcano from where all of Lake Bolsena will be visible & then down to Bolsena for the night.



0506xx Sep 04

Day 98 – Sat 4th Sep

Acquapendente to Bolsena

Last night's meal was not quite as good as the night before's & the waiter was just a bit too laid back....

What we failed to mention last night was that the cathedral in Acquapendente has yet another CVIII crypt, with wonderful carved Romanesque column capitals of sheep, cows etc.

We were out of Acquapendente by 0730 & on the Cassia towards San Lorenzo Nuovo. S L N is on the rim of the collapsed volcano that is now Lake Bolsena & the

view down over the lake, which contains 2 islands, was beautiful in the soft morning light.

After a comfort stop in S L N, we started down towards the lake & then took a well-signposted path that kept us about 1/2 way up the slope. The lower half of the slope is covered with assorted crops, whilst the upper half, right up to the rim, is wooded. Sadly, after about an hour, we came to a fork in the path, with no indication which we should take, so we bailed out & took the next track that led directly down to the Cassia, by then running along the shoreline.

We got to Bolsena at about 1300 & wandered up through the bottom edge of the fortified old town & then turned hard right towards the lake. There was a hotel at the intersection with the Cassia, so we booked in, left our bags & went the 400m down to the lakeside for lunch. Bolsena was developed as a

'seaside' resort in the 30s & so has some lovely lakeside walks & avenues of beautiful mature Plane trees.

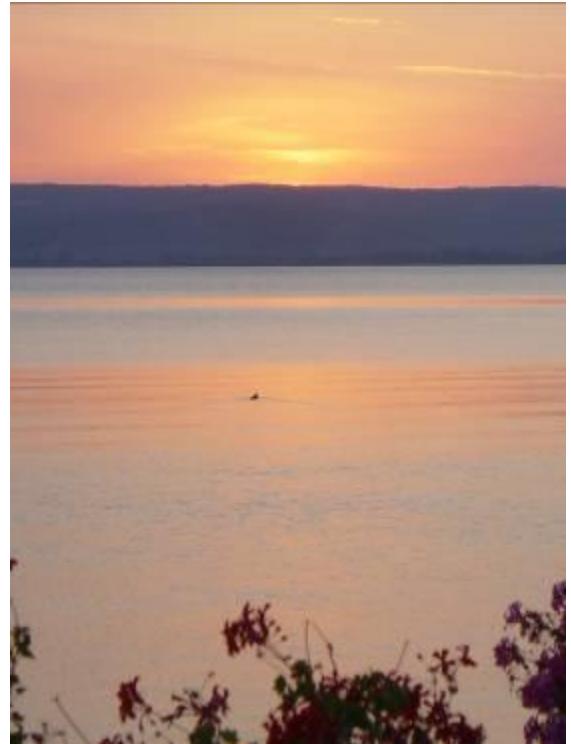
This afternoon was the Bolzano triathlon - billed to start at 1600 - at 1550, we were told that it would start in about 15 minutes, then at 1605, it was in 15 minutes, we had a couple of 'quasi-pronti', a 4 minute call & at about 1630 it started. It doesn't really matter, of course, but how do they make the trains run on time? And how do they cope in international competitions?

More than enough of Victor Meldrew for today (however, if you'd like more - try Tobias Smollett in "Travels in France & Italy" - possibly one of the most xenophobic travel books A has ever read). They say that travel broadens the mind - sometimes too much travel can narrow it & make one wish for the certainties of home - where you understand how society works.

Bolsena also has the Sanctuary of Santa Christina - an 11 year old martyred at the beginning of the CIV in Diocletian's last persecution of the Christians. Under the Sanctuary they have discovered both Santa Christina's sarcophagus (grave robbed in the CX) & a catacomb of the CIV to CVI. Sometimes the history that we are witnessing on this trip leaves us almost speechless with wonder - we often think that we have fairly old buildings in Britain, but we have nothing to match some of those here.

This evening we've eaten on a platform out on stilts over the lake - just a simple meal, but in almost idyllic surroundings - watching the sun set over the lake & the stars come out overhead, so do take VM's rants with a pinch of salt!

Tomorrow, we have to climb back out of the crater & up to Montefiascone - the home of the famous white wine Est! Est! Est!



051813 Sep 04

Day 99 – Sun 5th Sep 04

Bolsena - Montefiascone

Another short day - clearly Sigeric was reluctant to leave Rome, as we are following his stages & he was only covering 10 or so miles a day as he started home to Canterbury.

We left Bolsena at about 0745 on the Cassia, which runs along the flat plain by the lake initially. This being Sunday morning, there was almost no traffic & we were mostly in the shade too. In several places the old (pre-Napoleon's enforced metrication) milestones have survived. The road starts to climb after a few miles, but never too steeply.

About 2/3rds of the way to Montefiascone, there is a Commonwealth War Cemetery. Beautifully looked after, as always; this one marks the place where the Germans made their first stand after they abandoned Rome. There was a major tank battle involving the S African Armoured Corps & about 50% of the graves are of S Africans. Considering that the cemetery is well off the road, it is surprisingly well visited - there seemed to be at least 5 entries per day - about 1/2 from Commonwealth countries & half from Italians. Many of the latter had written 'Pace' against their entries - there are lots of Pace flags to be seen in Italy at the moment - protests against the war in Iraq. We hope that the comments in the

Cemetery Visitors' book are not just a reflection of the present political climate & are a recognition that in that place they are surrounded by the human price of peace.

For the final section into Montefiascone, we followed a little white road that cut the last corner - by so doing, we missed the 100km to Rome marker.

Montefiascone sits on top of a hill on the ridge overlooking Lake Bolsena & the countryside all around. We are in a little pensione at the top of the old walled town & so, from our 4th floor room (no lift); we have splendid views over the roofs towards the lake.

The main reason that most people have heard of Montefiascone is the Est! Est! Est! white wine. We learnt the story from our first Italian text book before we came here on A's NATO posting 10 years ago - in 1111, King Henry V of Sweden was travelling to Rome. One of his courtiers, obviously a bon viveur, sent a servant on ahead every day to find the place selling the best wine. He was to chalk Est on the door of the hostelry that he selected in each place. In Montefiascone, he was so impressed that he wrote Est! Est! His master agreed, left the king's service & stayed in Montefiascone, where he is buried. He left money to the town so that a barrel of Muscatel could be poured over his tomb on the anniversary of his death every year. All these details were faithfully recounted in our school text book - except the courtier's name - clearly this was to spare the teachers' blushes - his name, in Montefiascone, is recounted as Giovanni Defuk. We are passing the CIX church in which he is buried on the way out tomorrow.

Tomorrow, to Viterbo - a walled city that was once the seat of the Papacy & in which the only English Pope is buried.

061745 Sep 04

We know you're all interested, so here is our intended programme for the next few days:

Tue 7th

Rest day in Viterbo - our first full one in 11 days

Wed 8th

To Ronciglione

Thu 9th

To Trevignano - staying with Igor & Jackie Leto

Fri 10th

To Anguillara (where we lived for 3 years, 10 years ago)

Sat 11th

To N Rome - tea with Signora Spinelli, our Anguillara landlady

Sun 12th

To All Saints for 1030 Eucharist. John Hollidge, the NA, & his wife will join us for the final leg to St Peter's

Mon 13th

??

Tue 14th

To Vatican to collect tickets

Wed 15th

Papal Audience

Thu 16th

1155. BA to Gatwick. Will get train out to Dulwich. O/n with Mother

Fri 17th

Dulwich

Sat 18th

To Plymouth - train or coach - we will not be walking!

061846 Sep 04

Day 100 – Mon 6th Sep

Montefiascone – Viterbo

We started off down the hill in the old town to a bar for breakfast & then on down to S Flaviano - the church containing Giovanni Defuk's tomb. This turned out to be one of the most amazing churches we've been into. We entered on the top floor, which is a big balcony round all 4 sides, with its own series of Romanesque columns. Downstairs about 50% of the walls were frescoed (CXIV) & there were some wonderful column capitals - for example, a man being eaten simultaneously by two wild beasts. After this feast for the senses, we had another coffee (0830 by now!) & took a short cut to the Cassia - not really thinking that during the rush hour, lots of locals are also taking the same short cut in their cars. Eventually we got to the place where we expected to join the Cassia, to find it was elevated above us. With local help, we found a set of overgrown, broken steps & emerged from the vegetation through a gap in the Armco barriers onto the bridge that we'd seen from below.

About 3 hours later, we walked into Viterbo - a city that we've visited several times before, but as we are discovering, you see things differently on foot.

We found a ** hotel (set up in the late CXIX for pilgrims going to Rome) & had a light lunch before a couple of hours siesta. Then a wander round, a visit to the tourist office to discover where the English Pope is buried (blank looks), an internet café to clear the inbox (filled with 12MB of cod war photos,

which gave the BB severe indigestion) & then to see the Macchina of Santa Rosa - of which more tomorrow.

Tomorrow is our first full rest day in 11 days & we probably need it.



070823 Sep 04

Oh well - between finding out about the BA flight & making our booking, someone booked a school party onto the flight, which is now full. This may be a good thing as Alitalia is close to bankruptcy yet again & the unions are threatening to close Fiumicino. We are now booked on Ryanair from Ciampino, the other Rome airport, arriving Stansted at 1200 Thu

071735 Sep 04

Day 101 – Tue 7th Sep

Viterbo

Not that much to report - Viterbo is a city that we've visited about half a dozen times before, often bringing family & friends here when they came to stay with us.

It was quite badly damaged by Allied bombing in 1944 & several of the very old churches were reduced to rubble. Nevertheless, they rebuilt as best they could, often uncovering older bits of the buildings in the process. Today it looks & feels like a medieval city.

So we wandered through the bits we remembered & discovered that A's memory (& probably the Cadogan Guide) are wrong in that the English Pope was Hadrian IV, & it's actually Hadrian V who is buried here. We also found the church where Henry, Duke of Cornwall, was murdered on the high altar by two de Montforts in 1271.

We mentioned the Macchina of Santa Rosa last night. S Rosa is the patron saint of Viterbo & every year a 'Macchina' is carried through the narrow medieval streets after dark on 3 Sept by a gang of about 100 men in relays (they change over in the piazzas). The Macchina is a tower about 6 stories high weighing about 6 tons made of GRP & covered in candles. A new Macchina is made every 4 years. The present one has 4 angels on each of 3 levels with the saint on top. Sadly we just missed this year's procession, but the Macchina is still on display outside the church of S Rosa &, even close up in daylight, it is impressive.

Brother Bryan has drawn our attention to a bit in a recent Spectator about the Camino saying that one's mind dwells on thoughts of where the next meal & the next bed are coming from. It's very true - one's horizons certainly decrease - it must have been much worse for pilgrims on the VF 1000 years ago with all the uncertainties of travel then

Tomorrow, we head S again (the Cassia goes SSW) & follow the westerly lip of the volcanic crater that contains the Lago di Vico down towards Ronciglione. We are well into 'home' territory & by Thursday night will be overlooking Lake Bracciano - the lake on whose western shore we lived for 3 years about 10 years ago.

For those of you who have been thinking of reaching for your chequebooks to pay up on your kind offers of sponsorship - the nominal distance is 1200 miles (we've probably exceeded that by about 10%, but that's our problem). Our section of the Give a Child a Chance Appeal has already raised nearly £650 &, courtesy of PO Writer Dave Hatfield, A's PA in Islamabad, the Senior Rates Mess in HMS Sutherland have raised nearly £1000.

You can find sponsorship forms on our website, but even if you don't have access to the web, please send your cheques to Graham Parkinson, Fundraiser - Child Health, Level 12, Derriford Hospital, Derriford, Plymouth, PL6 8DH. Please make your cheques out to the 'Give a Child a Chance Appeal' & put a note in the envelope indicating that you are sponsoring us

Many thanks indeed to those who've already given (we don't know who you are yet, but Graham will show us the list once we're home) & to all those who are about to give.

081852 Sep 04

Day 102 – Wed 8th Sep

Viterbo - Ronciglione

Quite a long day, but that is partly explained by the 2-hour lunch!

Last night, as we were going to bed, we had one brief moment of excitement. As one does, we'd hung the washing out to dry on the inside of our shutters, which were secured partially open. As A was getting the washing in, his nicks fell off the coat hanger & disappeared into the street below. Opening the shutters & looking down, a half-naked A saw that they were caught on some wires about 4' below the window - well at least they hadn't landed on someone's head in the street. Fortunately, he was able to use one of his walking poles to retrieve the offending garment & all was well.

We left the hotel at 0730 this morning & walked for about 1km through the streets of Viterbo before exiting through the Porta Romana. The Cassia here goes SSW, but we headed SE to S Martino & on up to the rim of the extinct volcano in which lies the Lago di Vico. It was quite a climb up (over 2 hours, including a coffee break in S Martino) & we were glad that we'd done it early in the day.



Paddling in Lago di Vico

It had become clear towards the end of lunch that the agriturismo belonging to Alessandro's cousin, being 6km beyond Ronciglione, was going to be too far. Fortunately, we found another agriturismo just before Ronciglione, run by a woman whose husband was also a cousin of the woman who ran the other agriturismo & promised to tell her that we weren't coming & stopped for the night at 1630.

Tomorrow, we climb up a bit to the Etruscan town of Sutri & then descend into the next volcanic crater, which contains Lake Bracciano, where we will be staying with Jackie & Igor, friends from when we lived here

100513 Sep 04

Last night's DD

Sorry - there wasn't one. Too busy gossiping with Jackie & Igor. Just about to write it

101212 Sep 04

Day 103 – Thu 9th Sep

Ronciglione – Trevignano



Sorry that this is 15 hours late - for reasons that will become clear later on.

We left the main piazza in Ronciglione after breakfast, at about 0830 &, once out of the town & over the railway, turned right towards Sutri. Sutri is a v old settlement (C 2500 years) - it was Etruscan long before it was Roman. We were there within a couple of hours & had a coffee in the central piazza, before looking at the old town, including the cathedral, with yet another v early crypt. After an early lunch, we left by the old gate (the Porta Francigena, aka Francigena?) & rejoined the Cassia briefly. Cut into the Tufa here (Tufa is a volcanic rock that is quite soft & easy to work, but hardens once exposed to air) is the Church of S Maria del Parto - built into a CI mithraeum with CXIV frescoes of pilgrims. Unfortunately, we couldn't find the custodian, but we have been there before. Sutri also has an amazing amphitheatre carved from the solid Tufa.

Leaving Sutri

We then had a 1-hour descent down to the level of the lake. It was on the way down that a car stopped & the driver asked us where we were going. Half an hour later, Alessandro, who is hoping to do the Camino to Santiago, had kindly arranged somewhere for us to have lunch on the lakeshore & had found us a place to stay for the night. We strode on until about 1315, when we saw Alessandro's friend's restaurant & turned down towards the lake. Our table was laid & ready! We had a very good lunch (shared plate of antipasti, picci (handmade rough spaghetti) with fish sauce, battered perch fillets & salad + one pud between us). After a brief paddle in the lake (it was now 1530), we strode on towards Ronciglione.

After a mile or so, we turned R off the Cassia again & started the climb up towards the rim of Lake Bracciano. This road takes you through acres & acres of hazel trees - the nuts are a major crop. Also, at one stage you can see through to Mount Soratte (Soracte to the Romans, including Horace for those old enough to have done Latin poetry at school) - an 'island' in the Tiber Valley that has a v distinctive shape.

Our old friend Igor met us at the entrance to his road, from where he took us to his house in the woods overlooking Lake Bracciano.

We spent the rest of the afternoon & evening gossiping, eating & drinking with Jackie & Igor - hence no DD until Friday lunchtime

As A writes this, we have already walked into the Provincia di Roma & are sitting on the lakeside in Anguillara, having lunch in a restaurant run by Audrey, who was C's (S African) Italian cookery teacher when we lived here.

More in a few hours - we'd forgotten how beautiful Anguillara is & how lucky we are that the RN sent A here for three years to work with the Italian Navy



Trevignano Castle & Lake Bracciano

The lake is still comparatively unspoilt, although there has been quite a bit of building since we were here. After a coffee in Trevignano, we turned right & followed the road along the shore to Anguillara.

Anguillara is on the S side of the lake & consists of a pretty little medieval town on a promontory, with a much larger modern area spreading inland. The inland end of old Anguillara still has its medieval wall & gate. When we lived here, our hired house was about 1/4 mile from old Anguillara. Having found ourselves a hotel, about 100m from where we used to live, we had an excellent lunch in Audrey's restaurant on the lakeshore. The magical views across the lake & towards old Anguillara reminded us of how lucky we'd been to live here for three years.

After lunch, we wandered up past our old house (not much changed), had a chat with one of our old neighbours & then returned for a nostalgic wander around the old town.



Tomorrow, we will walk the 15-16 miles into Rome, so that we have about 5 miles to do on Sunday morning.

On Sunday, we are due to be at the 1030 Eucharist in All Saints Anglican Church, where we will meet up with John & Julianne Hollidge, who live in Plymstock. John is presently serving as the British Naval Attaché in Rome & has been very helpful in sorting out our programme for next week - of which the main event is a Papal Audience on Wednesday.

After the service in All Saints, all 4 of us will go on to The Vatican, which marks the end of our pilgrimage along the Via Francigena.

111008 Sep 04

At 1200 exactly we crossed the GRA (the ring road about 10km from the Forum). We are in Rome

111741 Sep 04

Day 104 – Sat 11th Sept

Anguillara to N Rome

One of our concerns last night was where we were going to stay tonight - rightly as it transpired. We bothered the little tourist office set up on the Lungolago in Anguillara several times & the Dutch lady running it was very helpful - we left with several ideas, depending on how far we walked

One of the truisms of an itinerant life is - don't return to somewhere where you were happy years ago, expecting it to be the same & for you to feel the same. Either your memory will be wrong or the place will have changed for the worse or ...

Anyway, contrary to this bit of folk wisdom, as we walked out of Anguillara this morning, we both agreed it was, if anything, better than we'd remembered & that we would be back

We had asked our hotel twice for breakfast at 0700 & they had agreed 'no problem'. At 0705 (perhaps a bit over-punctual for Italy) we left our money in an envelope & walked off down to the square for breakfast. By 0720, we were striding out along the Anguillarese - the road towards Rome - through several kilometres of ribbon development littered with memories of shops we'd used, the excellent patisserie (we did call in), our garage, the place where Ewok (our dog) managed to let the handbrake off & to glide elegantly across the main road into a storm drain.... All these memories were revisited as we strode onwards - covering distances that we'd never have dreamt of when we lived here (walk to the station (3km!)). We joined the Braccianese (the road from Rome to Bracciano) & passed the cash machine outside the Italian (nuclear) research establishment where A used to get cash all those years ago (cash machines that one could use a UK card in were not plentiful then) & onto rejoin the Cassia. By this time, we realised that we'd covered 15km in 3 hours & were getting ahead of schedule. We crossed the Rome ring road (much further in than the M25) at exactly 1200 & then called in to see our landlady, Signora Spinelli, from all those years ago.

She was in good form & fed us on homemade cooked peppers, ham, cheese, Foccacia & wine (we had thought that we were just calling in to say hello).

After 90 minutes, we returned to the Cassia, determined to go another mile or so - just enough so that we could be sure to make All Saints by 1030. In the event, we went on & on - across the Tiber & into Rome proper before we found a hotel. Perhaps it was the scent of the finish, but we didn't feel too tired & could probably have gone on to St Peters.

As it is, we are in a hotel about 1 mile from All Saints & will make a leisurely progress tomorrow to Piazza del Popolo for coffee & then onto Communion & finally to St Peters - where we expect to be at about 1230.

Surprisingly, we are finishing exactly on the outline programme that A wrote over 4 months ago.

We have a fairly full programme for Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday, & so that our enthusiastic readership don't suffer too sudden withdrawal symptoms, we will continue to send brief DDs until we catch our Ryanair flight to Stansted

120629 Sep 04

We really are here now

We've walked past All Saints & are biding our time sitting on the Spanish Steps (**photo right**)



121041 Sep 04

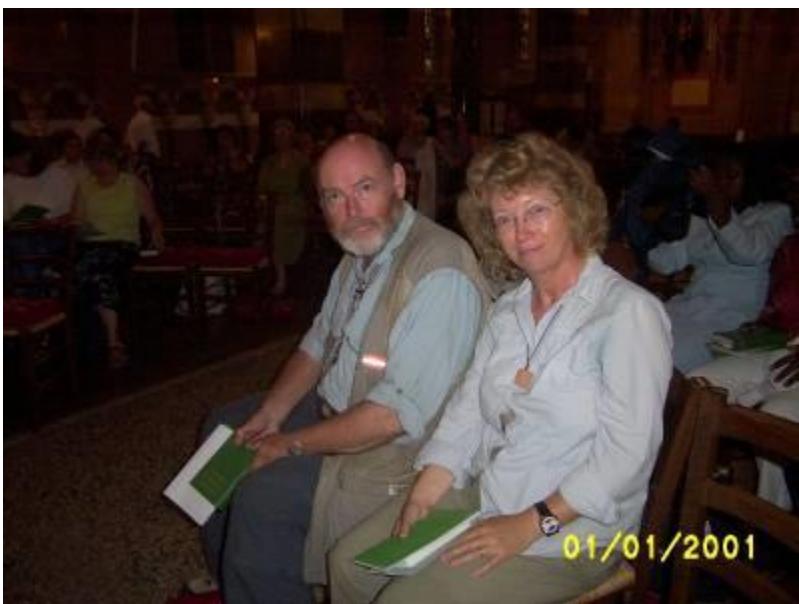
Arrival

At 1240 we walked into The Vatican

121626 Sep 04

Day 106 – Sun 12th Sep.

The finish



We had a leisurely start this morning, but were still within the Roman walls of the city by 0850. So we had a quick fix of culture - the two Caravaggios in S Maria del Popolo, one of the 3 churches on Piazza del Popolo & then a coffee in Rosati's - standing at the bar (€1.10) as we couldn't bring ourselves to pay the price of sitting down outside (€4.30). We still had plenty of time in hand, so we walked down the Corso & up Via Condotti (the street with Rome's most expensive shops in it) to Piazza di Spagna, where we sat by the fountain at the bottom of the Spanish steps & contemplated.

At 1015 we walked into All Saints

Anglican Church, where we were warmly welcomed by the congregation, who had kindly included Bunyan's To be a Pilgrim in the order of service for us. The celebratory glass of fizz was v kindly provided by a Christening party.

John & Julianne Hollidge joined us at All Saints & walked the final mile, back over the Tiber, to St Peters with us.

We crossed into the Vatican City, to complete our pilgrimage, at 1240 & after lots of photos, went off for a celebration lunch, followed by putting almost all our clothes into Julianne's washing machine & then the siesta that has become our norm.



Tomorrow, we have to be in St Peter's at 1030 to receive our Testimonium from the Vatican & the Via Francigena Association. We are also being interviewed by Telepace (Vatican TV) in Italian & Vatican Radio in English.

131907 Sep 04

Day 107 – Mon 13th Sep

Rome

We both woke up, unsurprisingly, before 0700, but managed to stay in bed for a bit.

Last night we had emailed the arrival photos off to the UK, so hopefully they will be appearing in the Evening Herald & on the website shortly.

Our first engagement today was at 1030 in the Sacristy of St Peter's (still in our pilgrim walking clothes) with Don Bruno Vercesi. Don Bruno looks after pilgrims & organises the testimoniums saying that you have made a pilgrimage on foot to St Peter's. As well as giving us our parchment certificates, he conducted a short private service in the tiny chapel next to St Peter's tomb & showed us the tomb of Hadrian IV, the only English

Pope. (photo right)

Then we were off to our TV interview with Elisabetta Mancini of Telepace (Vatican TV). We did this in Italian (about 10 minutes before editing) on the pavement outside the St Anna gate into the Vatican

After this, we had a chance to talk to Adelheid Trezzini, who has almost single-handed resurrected the historic VF & continues, as President of the VF Association, to be the driving force behind almost everything to do with the VF.

After a slice of pizza & an ice-cream, we went along to Vatican Radio, where Philippa Hitchen interviewed us in English for about 30 minutes on everything from

what we'd seen along the way to what we'd thought about via why we'd done the walk at all.

We were then 'free' & walked back across the Tiber & through some of our favourite bits of Rome (Piazza Navona & the Pantheon amongst them) to John & Julianne's flat on the Aventine Hill

This evening, J&J are out at a diplomatic dinner party & we are writing postcards of thanks to those along the way who helped us particularly.

Tomorrow, A&J are having lunch with the Italian Navy Admiral who used to be A's direct boss when he worked in the Italian Naval HQ & we have to return to the Vatican to collect our tickets for the Papal Audience, as well as to post the postcards



150602 Sep 04

Day 108 – Tue 14th Sep

Rome

Sorry about the delay in last night's DD - too much chatting!

Yesterday, we wandered into the city again, bought a couple of little things & then A left C to continue her sightseeing/shopping whilst he had lunch with his ex-boss, Admiral Campregher & John. They discussed everything from personalities to politics via the state of Italian mapping.

We had agreed to meet outside S Anna gate to the Vatican as Adelheid had arranged with Monseigneur Giuseppe Conte for us to see S Pellegrino's church within the Vatican itself. Unfortunately, lunch overran & C had to wait for about 45 minutes, but she was v understanding.

We entered the Vatican, met Msr Conte & then he explained to us that the section of road we were on (running parallel to the wall) was actually the final section of the VF.

The chapel, which is now the private chapel of the Swiss Guards, was originally built somewhere between CII & CVI. It has the only apse painting of Christ Pancreator left in Rome. The floor is now about 2m above where they think it was originally.

After thanking Msr Conte for his kindness in showing us around, we retired to a café to stick stamps on 99 postcards (we'd written them the night before & C had got all the stamps whilst A was lunching). Cards were posted; we queued to get through the Vatican security checks again & collected our tickets for the Audience & then got a taxi back to J&J's - just as it started to rain heavily.

Last night, J&J kindly entertained Adelheid & her husband (a VF widower! He clearly spends quite a bit of time queuing in post offices etc. & doesn't get quite as much of Adelheid's time & attention as he'd like!). The other guests were Alberto Alberti, a regular walker who lent us his maps & the DA & his wife, Mike & Caroline.

Today, we have to check on how we'll get to the airport, attend a Papal Audience in St Peter's Square, possibly call on Rome's City Hall, pack & attend the official Battle of Britain Reception (still in our pilgrim clothes!)

150817 Sep 04

Papal Audience

In St Peter's Square. It may well rain heavily. We, at least have our hats. The reaction of the rest of the crowd (not that well behaved anyway) could be interesting

151645 Sep 04

Day 109 – Wed 15th Sep

Rome

We set off, with John, for Termini to research bus times for tomorrow morning, to find that John's car had a puncture, so we abandoned him & started walking at our best speed towards the Vatican. This took us about 45 minutes & so we were in our seats about 45 minutes before the Papal Audience started.

St Peter's Square is divided into three sections. The top of the steps has a real VIP section to the left, the covered Papal enclosure in the centre & the pseudo-VIP enclosure on the right (i.e. Embassy nominees like us). At the bottom of the steps, there is an enclosure for 'official' guests. Today, we had a large party of sailors from the Brazilian Navy on one side & on the other, a Bersaglieri (they have the enormous black plumes on their hats) brass band, a row of v smart Italian Red Cross nurses, what seemed to be an Irish Folk Group & some Polynesians in national dress. The rest of the square was the public area, mainly filled with school & church groups. The weather was overcast & rain looked very possible, but in fact it held off until about an hour after the Audience finished

The Pope arrived in his converted Landrover 2 minutes early & progressed all around the public areas before coming up the central ramp to the Papal enclosure. The crowd in our enclosure all stood up - some even stood on their chairs, so it was impossible to see what was going on. It took the security staff (and the other people in the enclosure) several minutes to get them to sit down. Once order had been restored, the Pope read his message for the day. He sounded a bit stronger than we'd expected, having seen him on TV from Lourdes recently. A French-speaking priest then read out the names of the French-speaking groups represented & précised the Pope's message. This was followed by the English, German, Spanish, Polish & Italian groups' names & précis. Some groups, like



sitting around aimlessly at Ciampino waiting for Mr Ryan to take us to Stansted.

161301 Sep 04

Safely back in UK & on the coach to Dulwich, albeit without C's bag.....

161328 Sep 04

Final DD – Day 110 – Thu 16th Sep

In London

Last night's Battle of Britain Reception in the Italian Air Force Club brought back to us both acute memories of life as an Attaché & wife. Those that have been there will know what we mean! On return to J&J's flat, C went to bed & A&J had a couple of whiskies whilst putting the world to rights & discussing what sort of boat we should buy. Julianne had flown to the UK that morning.

This morning, we left at 0630 & were in Ciampino airport in less than 2 hours. Our Ryanair flight was about 30 minutes late leaving (caused by a very heavy thunderstorm) & we were similarly late into Stansted, where we discovered that C's rucksack wasn't on the flight. Further delays whilst we reported this fact & we are now en route to London on the coach.

We are going to do a lessons learnt, thoughts etc. piece, but now is not the time. It will appear on the website in due course

We would like to thank all our sponsors - the formal ones are on the website - the others are Fran Christie from Swansea, who has run the website, Pete & Les Stadnyk + all at Sigma Marketing in Plymouth, who have handled our photos & helped in several other ways, A's brother Bryan, who has researched things on the internet for us & Jane Ward, who has opened & dealt with our mail, as well as managing Rod the builder, who has been in our house for the last 2 months. We must also thank Adelheid Trezzini & all the friends of the VF who we have met along the way, without whom none of this would have been possible. And final thanks to John & Julianne for looking after us so well in Rome & to all those who've emailed us.

For those who offered sponsorship - sorry, but we made it & so it's now pay-up time. Details are on the website. For those that didn't offer sponsorship - please do - this is a good cause - we've been to see some of the children who will be helped & we've talked to the staff involved. The money raised by Give a Child a Chance will make a difference. Please be generous

That's it

With all our love & thanks again

Andrew & Carole

PS NO we are not going to do another long-distance walk! 'Though, we are going to finish the SW Coastal Path at some stage



Appendix I - Maps

Vademecum Volume 1 – Londres au Grand St-Bernard (2000 Edition)

Notes.

1. The two volumes of the Vademecum are essential.
2. The Association Via Francigena (AVF) produces VF maps from Canterbury to Grand St-Bernard. These were not available until after we'd finished & so we cannot comment on them in detail, but they look to be good.
3. We bought the lonely planet *Walking in France*. It is of little relevance to the VF.
4. We trimmed our maps to reduce weight. This is a good idea – but if, as we did, you decide to follow a different route, you may find that you've trimmed off bits that you need. This happened to us over the canal walk.

1. Canterbury to Dover

Ordnance Survey *Landranger 179 Canterbury & E Kent, Dover & Margate* takes you to Dover

2. Calais to Wissant

1. We bought Institut Geographique National (IGN) Map 903 *France Grande Randonnée* as a planning map (1:1000000). It served its function by showing us that there were not many bits of GR that coincided with the VF.

2. For our day-to-day walking, we used the IGN 1:100000 (blue cover) cycling series. Map 01 *Abbeville/Calais* takes you as far as Amettes

3. Wissant to Guînes

IGN 02 *Lille/Dunkerque* takes you from Wisques to Arras

4. Guînes to Wisques

5. Wisques to Amettes

6. Amettes to Camblain-l'Abbé

7. Camblain-l'Abbé to Arras

8. Arras to Bapaume

IGN 04 *Laon/Arras* takes you from Arras to Laon

9. Bapaume to Peronne

10. Peronne to Trefcon

11. Trefcon to La Fère

12. La Fère to Laon

IGN 09 *Paris/Laon* takes you from Laon to Reims.

13. Laon to Corbeny

14. Corbeny to Reims

IGN 10 *Reims to Verdun* takes you from Reims to S of Chalons. If you decide to take the Marne Lateral Canal, it starts you on that too.

15. Reims to Trépail

16. Trépail to Chalons en Champagne

17. Chalons en Champagne to Nuisement

1. IGN 22 *Troyes/St Dizier* takes you from S of Chalons to Chateauvillain.

2. If you decide to walk the canals from Chalons to Langres, the *Navigation Notebook The Canal from the River Marne to the River Saône* produced by the local tourist boards is invaluable – it lists lock numbers, distances, facilities etc.

3. You will need IGN 10, Reims to Verdun, 23 *Nancy/Bar-le-Duc & 29 Dijon/Chaumont* for the Canals.
- 17 bis. Nuisement to Le Meix Tiercelin**
- 18. Le Meix Tiercelin to Brienne-le-Chateau**
- 19. Brienne-le-Chateau to Bar sur Aube**
- 20. Bar sur Aube to Chateauvillain**
IGN 23 *Dijon/Chaumont* takes you from N of Chateauvillain to S of Les Archots
- 21. Chateauvillain to St-Martin-les-Langres**
- 22. St-Martin-les-Langres to Langres**
- 23. Langres to Les Archots**
- 24. Les Archots to Savoyeux**
IGN 30 *Besançon/Epinal* takes you from S of Les Archots to Besançon
- 25. Savoyeux to Fresne-le-Château**
- 26. Frasne-le-Château to Cussey-sur-l'Ognon**
IGN 38 *Besançon/Lausanne* takes you from Frasne-le-Chateau to Vevey
- 27. Cussey-sur-l'Ognon to Besançon**
- 28. Besançon to Ornans**
- 29. Ornans to Mouthier Haute-Pierre**
- 30. Mouthier Hte-Pierre to Pontarlier**
- 31. Pontarlier to Jougne**
- 32. Jougne to Orbe**
- 33. Orbe to Lausanne**
Swisstopo 1:100000 series Sheet 40 *Le Léman* takes one half way to Vevey. The Swiss maps are harder to read than the French 1:100000 ones. More contour lines are printed & the colours are not so varied. Obtained on line from www.swisstopo.ch.
Beware, the Swiss maps have no overlap between sheets.
- 34. Lausanne to Vevey**
Swisstopo 1:100000 series Sheet 41 *Col du Pillon* takes one beyond St Maurice.
- 35. Vevey to Aigle**
- 36. Aigle to St-Maurice**
Swisstopo 1:100000 series Sheet 46 *Val de Bagnes* takes one as far as Chatillon. The Swiss maps are harder to read than the French 1:100000 ones. More contour lines are printed & the colours are not so varied. Obtained on line.
Beware, the Swiss maps have no overlap between sheets.
- 37. St-Maurice to Martigny**
'3D' Map issued by Tourist Offices called *Au Pays du Saint-Bernard* is useful. Try www.saint-bernard.ch or info@saint-bernard
- 38. Martigny to Orsières**
The Touring Club Italiano 1:200000 *Piemonte e Valle d'Aosta* map covers from Martigny to Pavia. You won't need it until you run out of Swiss mapping at Chatillon.
- 39. Orsières to Grand St-Bernard**

Vademecum Vol 2 – Gran San Bernardo a Roma (Luglio 2003 Edition)

Notes:

1. The Italians are not into maps like other European countries. In Italy, we walked on roads most over 95% of the time & this is probably historically accurate, because most of the paths of medieval times became, in due course, roads. If you really want to follow the footpaths, you will get lost. We did nearly every time we left the road – found the signposting stopped abruptly or that the path had been ploughed up, leaving no trace of the way ahead.
2. The abbreviations & symbols used in Vol 2 of the Vademecum are not all the same as those used in Vol 1.
3. NB There is no ‘correct’ VF. You will find variations between every map that has a VF marked on it. This is undoubtedly how it was in the Middle Ages too.
4. We used *La Via Francigena 1000 Anni Dopo* by Gianfranco & Claudio Bracci gbracci@hotmail.com www.terraditoscana.com. Published by NaturArte 2000. The book covers from Colle S. Bernardo to Rome & is primarily for cyclists. There are no maps & the English is not good, but the path descriptions, especially of the pedestrian sections, can sometimes be useful.
5. We bought the lonely planet *Walking in Italy*. Of even less relevance to the VF than *Walking in France*.
6. We were lent Luciano Pisoni’s maps of the VF (Luciano_pisoni@virgilio.it for advice on where to buy them) & we used them extensively.

1. Colle S. Bernardo to St-Oyen

2. St-Oyen to Aosta

Istituto Geografico Centrale Carta dei Sentieri e dei Rifugi Map 5 *Cervino e Monte Rosa* at 1:50000. It covers from N of Aosta to Chatillon and does show paths, but probably concentrates on the popular areas N of the River Dora Blatea. We walked a VG path between Pallù & Neyran that is not shown. Better than nothing!

3. Aosta to Chatillon

Istituto Geografico Centrale Carta dei Sentieri e dei Rifugi Map 9 *Ivrea Biella Bassa Valle D'Aosta* at 1:50000. It does show paths. Better than nothing.

4. Chatillon to Pont St-Martin

End of coverage of Swisstopo maps

5. Pont St-Martin to Ivrea

The Agencia Turistica Locale di Canavese e Valli a Lanzo produce an Anglo-Italian booklet on the VF in the Ivrea Region – *Passeggiando Lungo la Via Francigena*. Worth looking out for.

6. Ivrea to Santhia

7. Santhia to Vercelli

8. Vercelli to Mortara

9. Mortara to Pavia

10. Pavia to Santa Cristina

The TCI 1:200000 *Emilia Romagna* map covers from Pavia to San Miniato

11. Santa Cristina to Corte S. Andrea

12. Corte S. Andrea to Piacenza

The ‘Ortelio’ (Edizioni Cartografiche Milanesi) map of Piacenza & the Province of Piacenza (1:110000) covers from Corte S.Andrea to just beyond Fornovo. Although it looks good, in fact, it shows nothing more than the 1:200000 Touring Club Italiano (TCI) maps – it’s just on a bigger scale!

13. Piacenza to Fiorenzuola d'Arda

1. *L'Eredità Guida di Pellegrini sulla Via Francigena* by Monica D'Atti & Franco Cinti, published by edimond 2001 covers the Italian section of the Santiago to Rome route & is, therefore, not relevant to the VF until Piacenza. We, perhaps foolishly, didn't take our copy with us & so cannot comment on its utility.

2. *The Via Francigena in the territory of Parma* is mainly a cultural guidebook (in English) & covers from Piacenza to Pontremoli.

14. Fiorenzuola d'Arda to Fidenza

15. Fidenza to Costamezzana

16. Costamezzana to Fornovo

The Club Alpino Italiano (CAI) map *La Via Francigena da Collecchio al Passo della Cisa* at 1:25000 is useful & shows footpaths. It covers from Medesano to Passo della Cisa – not from Fidenza to Pontremoli as shown on the map cover. We were sent our copy by Adelheid Trezzini.

17. Fornovo to Crocetta di Casola

18. Crocetta di Casola to Berceto

19. Berceto to Pontremoli

1. The TCI 1:200000 *Toscana* map covers from Berceto to Bolsena.

2. The Edizioni Multigraphic 1:100000 map *Lucca Massa Carrara* does show some footpaths, but none that we tried to walk, so we can't comment on its accuracy.

20. Pontremoli to Aulla

21. Aulla to Sarzana

The CAI Sezione di Sarzana map *Itinerari della Bassa Val di Magra* covers from Isola to Marina di Carrara at 1:2500. It is worse than useless as it is wrong. The map cover shows the area from N of Pontremoli to Pietrasanta, whereas the actual map only covers 1/7th of this area. In the area W of S Stefano di Magra it shows a network of footpaths that does not exist.

22. Sarzana to Massa

23. Massa to Capezzano

24. Capezzano to Lucca

25. Lucca to Altopascio

26. Altopascio to San Miniato Basso

27. San Miniato Basso to Gambassi

1. *La Via Francigena in Valdesa* by Albano Marcarini published by Alleanza Assicurazioni in Mar 2002 is excellent. It covers from Coiano to Siena with maps at 1:25000 & is 99% accurate. Unfortunately it is only in Italian and ‘good’ Italian (certainly above O level standard) at that. Nevertheless, worth having for the maps alone. This section was also signposted by Alleanza Assicurazioni at some stage (2002?) and most of the signs are still extant. We were sent our copy by Adelheid Trezzini.

2. The TCI map *La via Francigena in Provincia di Siena* covers from Coiano to Acquapendente at 1:175000 but is just an enlarged version of their 1:200000 map. It has no more information. The route descriptions are only in Italian. Not worth buying.

3. Multigraphic's Carta Turistica Stradale at 1:50000 covers from N of Gambassi to San Quirico d'Orcia. It does show some paths, but not all those that exist by any means. Again, better than nothing.
- 28. Gambassi to San Gimignano**
- 29. San Gimignano to Badia a Isola**
- 30. Badia a Isola to Siena**
- 31. Siena to Lucignano**
- 32. Lucignano to San Quirico d'Orcia**
- 33. San Quirico d'Orcia to Abbadia S. Salvatore**
- 34. Abbadia S. Salvatore to Acquapendente**
The TCI 1:200000 *Lazio* map covers from Acquapendente to Rome.
- 35. Acquapendente to Bolsena**
- 36. Bolsena to Montefiascone**
- 37. Montefiascone to Viterbo**
- 38. Viterbo to Vetralla**
Le strade del Pellegrino nella Selva Cimina produced by a group of local tourist organisations covers from Viterbo to Sutri & includes footpaths. There is no scale on the map & the descriptions are only in Italian, but worth having if you see a copy.
- 39. Vetralla to Sutri**
- 40. Sutri to Campagnano**
- 41. Campagnano to La Storta**
- 42. La Storta to Rome**

Appendix II – Expenses.

1. This spreadsheet lists everything we spent on getting from Plymouth to Canterbury to Rome & back to Plymouth. All our sponsorship money was paid directly to the Give a Child a Chance Fund Raiser at Derriford Hospital.
2. It is also quite easy to extract the names of the places we stayed in & ate in.
3. We made donations to every religious house that accommodated us. These can also be seen below.
4. A final few thoughts on our costs – this was Andrew's 'retirement cruise' after 35 years in the Royal Navy &, as you can see, it cost a similar amount (£45.85 each/day) – but we enjoyed the VF more than we would have done a cruise. We could have done the VF for considerably less if we'd taken a tent – 'though how much less is perhaps debatable. Stripping out all accommodation bills (which often included DB&B), we get an individual daily rate of £29.87 & removing the BlackBerry ('though I doubt that most people would want to go without some form of mobile phone), gives £28.80.
We have also, in effect, included our basic daily living expenses for the three & a half months we were away, so perhaps those should be discounted to give a truer picture of 'doing the VF'. I leave it to you to decide, but there's no doubt that 3½ months 'off' are not 'free'.
5. Final gloomy thought (in Jan 09), the Euro was 69p on average (Swiss Francs not adjusted) when we walked in 2004. Taking the rate as parity now, that makes our daily bill about £8.58 a day more each.

Date/Place	Item	Euros	Swiss Francs	Sterling
29 May – Plymouth -	Car Hire			£52.48
Canterbury	Fuel			£21.94
	Roadchef			£15.20
	Travel Ins			£194.56
	website			£2.69
30 May – Canterbury -	Miller's arms			£75.95
Kingston	Ice Creams			£2.00
	Pub in Kingston			£5.87
	DB&B Oast Cottage Kingston			£50.00
31 May – Kingston -	Lunch @ Crabble Corn Mill			£5.30
Calais	Cream Tea on Ferry			£2.45
	Supper	24.20 €		
	Room Hotel Folkestone,			
	Calais	23.00 €		
01 Jun – Calais -	Breakfast @ Hotel Folkestone	6.00 €		
Wissant	Coffee	2.20 €		
	Lunch @ Les Falaises	21.60 €		
	Room Hotel de La Plage			
	Wissant	38.80 €		
	Supper @ Chez Edwige	35.60 €		
02 Jun – Wissant -	Breakfast	5.00 €		
Ecottes	Coffee	4.85 €		
	Lunch @ Auberge Les 3 Pays	35.00 €		
	DB&B + Lunch 3/6 Ecottes	80.00 €		

03 Jun – Ecottes -	Coffee	5.70 €
Wisques	Beers	10.00 €
	Abbey @ Wisques	30.00 €
04 Jun – Wisques -	Coffee	4.60 €
Flechin	Boulangerie	2.10 €
	Coffee	4.40 €
	Lunch @ Le Morigny	29.10 €
	Supper	25.00 €
	B&B Flechin	43.00 €
05 Jun – Flechin -	Coffee	4.00 €
Marest	Lunch @ Le Country	37.15 €
	Supper	11.13 €
	Marker Pen	1.10 €
	Gites	40.00 €
06 Jun – Marest -	Coffee/Water	6.40 €
Camblain L'Abbe	Beers	8.80 €
	Ecole St J le B	30.00 €
07 Jun - Camblain	Beers	5.80 €
L'Abbe - Arras	Lunch	4.50 €
	Fanta	1.20 €
	Pre-Dinner	7.75 €
	Dinner @ Aux Grandes	
	Arcades	54.55 €
	Hostellerie St Vaast	36.20 €
08 Jun - Arras	Coffee	5.60 €
	Post Office	11.30 €
	O Juice	2.50 €
	Phone Card/PPCs	11.00 €
	Lunch	10.80 €
	Guided Tour	13.40 €
	Iced Teas	2.00 €
	Supper	30.60 €
	Hostellerie St Vaast	36.20 €
09 Jun – Arras – Le	Coffee	4.40 €
Sars	Machine?	2.80 €
	Croissant	2.00 €
	Coffee	4.40 €
	From Mobile Van	5.00 €
	Lunch @ Hotel de la Gare	20.00 €
	Supper	9.76 €
	B&B Le Sars	42.00 €

10 Jun – Le Sars - Peronne	Patisserie	2.20 €
	Coffee	4.10 €
	Lunch	5.80 €
	Beers	4.00 €
	Coffees	3.60 €
	Museum	14.00 €
	Wine	2.00 €
	Pizzas @ Le Central	20.20 €
	Hotel Chez Baby	41.00 €
11 Jun – Peronne - Trefcon	Pear Juice/Apples	5.00 €
	LDB&B	90.00 €
12 Jun – Trefcon - Vendeuil	Coffee	3.60 €
	Shopping	7.60 €
	Beers	3.30 €
	Dinner @ L'Auberge de Vendeuil	38.70 €
	Room @ L'Auberge de V	55.10 €
13 Jun – Vendeuil - Laon	Breakfast @ L'A de V coffee	16.40 €
	Lunch	3.00 €
	Supper @ Bar de L'Europe	21.00 €
	Hotel Commerce	37.35 €
		30.00 €
14 Jun - Laon	Breakfast	7.00 €
	Coffee	5.70 €
	Lunch @ Creperie St Jean	27.80 €
	Beers	4.00 €
	Cybercafé	1.50 €
	picnic	6.80 €
	stamps	5.00 €
	PPCs	1.80 €
	H Potter film	10.00 €
	Supper @ Le Retro	27.50 €
	Hotel Commerce	30.00 €
15 Jun – Lain - Chaudardes	Chocolate	6.00 €
	Groceries	9.00 €
	Economist	4.50 €
	DB&B @ Chaudardes	50.00 €
16 Jun – Chaudardes - Reims	Beers	4.90 €
	Champagne	4.00 €
	Ice Creams	3.60 €
	Beers	2.50 €

	Pizzas @ Pizza d'Erlon	30.20 €
	Washing Stuff	2.65 €
	Hotel	36.00 €
17 Jun - Reims	Cybercafé	6.40 €
	Mugs	5.00 €
	photos	5.00 €
	coffee	4.60 €
	map	5.00 €
	champagne	28.55 €
	crisps etc	4.25 €
	rubber foot	2.90 €
	PPCs	2.00 €
	post CD	1.00 €
	cybercafé	2.60 €
	coffee	3.00 €
	pre dinner drinks	3.27 €
	dinner	45.00 €
	tip	5.00 €
	hotel	36.00 €
18 Jun – Reims - Bouzy	Breakfast	7.40 €
	Champagne	5.00 €
	picnic etc	22.86 €
19 Jun – Bouzy - Chalons en Champagne	Pain Raisin	0.85 €
	coffee	4.60 €
	coffee/beer	8.20 €
	bus	0.80 €
	cybercafé	2.00 €
	pizzas @ La Landolina	37.90 €
	Hotel Du Pot D'Etain	65.00 €
20 Jun – Chalons en Champagne	breakfast	7.00 €
	Picnic	13.60 €
	coffees	5.40 €
	beers	3.40 €
	Website	£2.62
	supper @ Brasserie de la Bourse	41.10 €
	Hotel Du Pot D'Etain	63.00 €
21 Jun – Chalons en Champagne - Chausee	Breakfast	7.00 €
	breakfast/rolls	8.00 €
	Groceries	4.20 €
	Beers	4.00 €

	DB&B Le Clos Mutigny	128.90 €
22 Jun – Chausee - Vitry	breakfast	8.40 €
	coffee	4.40 €
	lunch @ Le Diabolo	20.78 €
	Tea	6.80 €
	Dinner	26.00 €
	Convent	25.00 €
23 Jun - Vitry – St Dizier	Breakfast/picnic	9.99 €
	beers	6.40 €
	ham/salad	5.33 €
	tea	5.50 €
	supper @ Au Petit Bourg	29.35 €
	B&B @ Hotel Picardy	49.50 €
24 Jun – St Dizier - Joinville	Fruit etc	4.24 €
	Ice Creams	5.00 €
	Picnic	8.40 €
	Coffees	4.80 €
	PPC	0.50 €
	Dinner @ Le Vesuvio	23.00 €
	Coffee/Pud	8.10 €
	B&B @ Hotel Le Nord	47.00 €
25 Jun – Joinville - Vignory	Beers	4.40 €
	Lunch @ La Source Bleu	47.00 €
	DB&B @ Le Relais	
	Verdoyant	114.20 €
26 Jun – Vignory - Chaumont	Coffee	4.20 €
	picnic	6.71 €
	bread	0.61 €
	food shopping	12.46 €
	Pastries	4.80 €
	Beers	3.80 €
	beer	5.70 €
	taxi	10.00 €
	DB&B @ Le Relais	86.80 €
27 Jun – Chaumont - Marnay	lunch @ Le Chalet	57.00 €
	Hotel de la Vallee	50.60 €
28 Jun – Marnay - Langres	Coffee/Breakfast	9.00 €
	Lunch @ Café de Foy	29.85 €
	Ice Creams	2.80 €
	Internet	1.50 €
	Supper @ Irish Corner	37.50 €

	YH	19.40 €
29 Jun - Langres	Breakfast	6.70 €
	Lunch	7.72 €
	picnics	7.21 €
	Beer/Lemon Soda	3.60 €
	picnics	5.33 €
	Tea	5.20 €
	Beers	10.50 €
	Dinner @ La Pignata	56.05 €
	YH	19.40 €
30 Jun – Langres - Les Archots	Breakfast	8.30 €
	Orangina	1.50 €
	Socks	11.95 €
	Braces	6.10 €
	beer/coffee	9.30 €
	DB&B @ Les Archots	66.00 €
01 Jul – Les Archots - Champlitte	Picnic	15.80 €
	Supper @ Clara Euvrard	45.80 €
	B&B @ Hotel Donjon	49.50 €
02 Jul – Champlitte - Dampierre	Picnic	22.35 €
	Dinner @ De La Tour	67.00 €
	B&B	45.00 €
03 Jul – Dampierre - Fresne-Le-Chateau	Boulangerie	1.20 €
	Patisserie	4.00 €
	picnic	3.54 €
	Foyer	20.00 €
04 Jul – Fresne-le-Chateau – Voray sur l'Ognon	Shopping	8.40 €
	Lunch @ Vieille Auberge	68.00 €
	Coffee	4.80 €
	Gite	30.00 €
05 Jul – Voray sur l'Ognon - Besancon	coffee	5.00 €
	picnic	3.42 €
	Boat trip	19.00 €
	Parcel post	6.90 €
	tea	8.30 €
	Economist	4.70 €
	Ice Pack	8.10 €
	Beers	4.40 €
	Dinner @ Le Lagon	30.20 €
	ppcs	3.20 €
	bus	2.85 €

	YH	28.50 €
06 Jul - Besancon	bus	1.90 €
	coffee	5.00 €
	picnic	18.95 €
	citadel	15.00 €
	lunch in Citadel	31.70 €
	dinner	15.20 €
	YH	28.50 €
07 Jul – Besancon - Foucherons	lunch @ Le Vezois	35.10 €
	Gite	20.00 €
08 Jul – Foucherons - Ornans	coffee	4.80 €
	lunch @ Hotel de France	51.00 €
	CD	6.00 €
	B&B @ Hotel de la Vallee	69.00 €
09 Jul – Ornans - Mouthier Hte-Pierre	coffee	5.00 €
	lunch @ La Truite d'Or	55.00 €
	Dinner @ Relais Prieure	33.10 €
	B&B	56.00 €
10 Jul – Mouthier Ht- Pierre - Pontarlier	coffee	4.40 €
	Boots	172.00 €
	Tea	8.80 €
	ppcs	0.80 €
	supper	47.45 €
	B&B Hotel St Pierre	69.20 €
11 Jul – Pontarlier - Joungle	coffee	4.20 €
	lunch @ La Bussiere	32.70 €
	wine	3.60 €
	DB&B in Maison L'Amitie	67.60 €
12 Jul – Joungle - Orbe	coffee	CHF 5.50
	picnic	13.70 €
	coffee	CHF 6.00
	chocolate	CHF 1.50
	dinner @ café la Croix d'Or	CHF 58.00
	B&B @ Hotel du Chasseur	CHF 105.00
13 Jul – Orbe - Lausanne	wine	CHF 13.00
	coffee	CHF 6.60
	lunch @ Le Boussinois	CHF 52.50
	supper	CHF 8.45
	YH	CHF 100.00
14 Jul - Lausanne	beers	CHF 7.60
	bread etc	CHF 12.00

	internet	CHF 8.00
	coffee	CHF 4.20
	beers	CHF 9.20
	picnic	CHF 17.10
	socks	CHF 7.00
	supper @ La Creperie d'Ouchy	CHF 65.50
	YH	CHF 100.00
15 Jul – Lausanne - Vevey	Ferry	CHF 54.40
	coffee	CHF 6.60
	picnic	CHF 11.50
	ice creams	CHF 6.50
	Orangina	CHF 8.00
	beers	CHF 6.60
	Dinner @ e La Place	CHF 86.00
	B&B @ La Place	CHF 140.00
16 Jul – Vevey - Aigle	Coffee	CHF 6.00
	Lunch	CHF 25.00
	DB&B @ Le Suisse	CHF 171.60
17 Jul – Aigle – St Maurice	Picnic	CHF 23.50
	Coffee	CHF 6.90
	picnic	CHF 21.50
	PPC	CHF 1.50
	Monastery	CHF 103.00
18 Jul – St Maurice - Fully/Branson	coffee	CHF 6.00
	Candle for Collins	CHF 22.00
	Liquor for Collins	CHF 30.00
	Room @ Collins	CHF 0.00
19 Jul – Fully/Branson - La Doue	picnic	CHF 8.40
	coffee	CHF 5.20
	Beers	CHF 6.00
	beers	CHF 6.00
	food shopping	CHF 7.60
	map	CHF 12.00
	Dinner @ Le Catogne	CHF 101.00
	B&B @ Le Catogne	CHF 90.00
20 Jul – La Doue - Bourg St Pierre	Coffee	CHF 5.20
	Wine/Crisps	7.50 €
	DB&B @ Les Charmettes	CHF 147.50
21 Jul – Bourg St Pierre - Grande St	Website	£2.59
	picnic	CHF 11.75

Bernard	Tea	CHF 2.00
	beers	CHF 9.00
	coffee	CHF 7.00
	chocolate	CHF 1.60
	DB&B @ Hospice S Bernard	CHF 88.00
22 Jul – Gran San Bernardo – St Oyen	lunch @ Hotel Suisse	76.10 €
	Beers/water	2.15 €
	Coffee	6.50 €
	DB&B @ Hospice St Oyen	54.00 €
23 Jul – St Oyen - Aosta	Lunch @ La Chaudiere	34.85 €
	Maps	14.00 €
	ice creams	5.20 €
	Standa	6.18 €
	Prosecco	10.00 €
	Supper @ Pizzeria Moderno	22.00 €
	Coffee/digestivo	6.70 €
	B&B @ La Belle Epoque	71.00 €
24 Jul - Aosta	Foot Powder	8.00 €
	CD	5.00 €
	coffee	2.60 €
	coffee/cakes	3.30 €
	lunch @ Il Baretto do S Orso	24.60 €
	supper @ Ristorante Moderne	31.00 €
	Swatch	42.50 €
	Hotel La Belle Epoque	60.00 €
25 Jul – Aosta - Chatillon	Breakfast	5.60 €
	coffee	6.20 €
	coffee	2.20 €
	beers	3.40 €
	lunch @ Des Alpes	37.00 €
	ice creams	2.20 €
	Dinner @ Le Bistroquet	34.90 €
	B&B @ Hotel Rendezvous	74.00 €
26 Jul – Chatillon - Donnas	Coffee	2.20 €
	beer	4.00 €
	lunch @ Bar Brenve	17.60 €
	lemon soda	2.60 €
	supper @ Murphy's Wallace	
	Pub	35.00 €
	B&B @ St Ours	55.00 €
27 Jul – Donnas - Ivrea	coffee	2.60 €

	beer	4.00 €
	lunch @ Centro Sportivo	22.00 €
	ice creams	2.00 €
	iced coffee	3.60 €
	Prosecco	5.20 €
	pizzas @ Da Romano	20.00 €
	Hotel Eden	80.00 €
28 Jul – Ivrea - Cavaglia	Coffee	2.20 €
	beer	4.00 €
	fish & wine	20.00 €
	water/ice cream	7.00 €
	beers	3.60 €
	B&B @ Agroturismo Rolo	50.00 €
29 Jul – Cavaglia - Vercelli	coffee	1.66 €
	picnic	4.57 €
	water/ice cream	1.60 €
	coffee	2.60 €
	ice tea	4.00 €
	ice creams	3.20 €
	maps	13.00 €
	Prosecco	6.00 €
	supper @ Del Capel Rosso	38.00 €
	Monastery	25.00 €
30 Jul – Vercelli	A's Haircut	20.00 €
	Breakfast	9.90 €
	C's Haircut	14.00 €
	Sandals	14.00 €
	Maps	13.00 €
	water/ice cream	0.34 €
	lunch @ Societa Cavour	24.06 €
	limoncello	4.00 €
	Prosecco	6.00 €
	supper @ Rialto	28.65 €
	Monastery	25.00 €
31 Jul – Vercelli - Mortara	Breakfast	4.00 €
	Coffee./water	3.90 €
	Lunch @ café Roma	16.50 €
	Wine/Water	3.00 €
	bar	4.00 €
	DB&B	65.00 €
01 Aug – Mortara -	Breakfast	6.30 €

Garlasco	Coffee etc	7.40 €
	Beer/Water	4.00 €
	Lunch @ Fly	31.00 €
	Supper @ Fly	30.00 €
	Ice Cream B389	3.00 €
	Hotel Pino	70.00 €
02 Aug – Garlasco –	Coffee	4.30 €
Pavia	beer	4.00 €
	lunch @ I Maltra Insema	37.00 €
	drinks	4.40 €
	drinks	9.00 €
	drinks	8.00 €
	coffee etc	7.20 €
	Hotel Aurora	60.00 €
03 Aug - Pavia	Breakfast	5.90 €
	coffee	4.00 €
	socks	5.40 €
	lunch @ Café il Ponte	23.20 €
	wine	6.00 €
	cold tea	6.50 €
	maps	4.65 €
	supper @ La Nuova Toscana	51.50 €
	Hotel Aurora	60.00 €
04 Aug – Pavia -	Breakfast	6.50 €
S Cristina	coffee	2.65 €
	beer	3.50 €
	lunch @ Friend's Bar	21.10 €
	wine	4.80 €
	ppcs/stamps	2.85 €
	drinks	5.70 €
	dinner @ Il Collegio	40.00 €
	Oratorio	20.00 €
05 Aug – S Cristina -	Breakfast	6.00 €
Orio Litta	Lunch @ Mazzetto Stefania	25.00 €
	coffee	1.60 €
	Coffee	4.00 €
	Dinner	80.00 €
	In the Gym	0.00 €
06 Aug – Orio Litta -	Boat trip	20.00 €
Piacenza	Sandwiches	3.60 €
	Beer etc	10.00 €

	Ice Teas	5.60 €
	Supermarket	6.30 €
	Supper @ Albergo Astra	32.00 €
	Albergo Astra	37.50 €
07 Aug - Piacenza	Breakfast	3.50 €
	Coffee/cornetti	4.50 €
	ppcs	1.00 €
	stamps	1.80 €
	Chemist	4.44 €
	Chemist	4.23 €
	Phone card	5.00 €
	Drinks	7.60 €
	Lunch	22.50 €
	gelato	3.40 €
	supper @ Albergo Astra	40.50 €
	Albergo Astra	37.50 €
08 Aug – Piacenza - Fiorenzuola (Wards join us)	Breakfast	4.00 €
	Coffee	2.60 €
	coffee/cakes	4.10 €
	lunch @ La Taverna	34.00 €
	Ice Cream	1.80 €
	Drinks etc	10.00 €
	Dinner @ Pizzeria Marechiaro	40.00 €
	Hotel	60.00 €
09 Aug – Fiorenzuola - Fidenza (with Wards)	Breakfast	2.10 €
	Coffee	4.15 €
	beer	4.10 €
	Prosecco	2.15 €
	dinner	36.00 €
	Hotel	60.00 €
10 Aug – Fidenza (with Wards)	Breakfast	9.32 €
	Beer	6.20 €
	Lunch	36.00 €
	Prosecco	10.00 €
	Duomo Book	10.00 €
	CD	2.00 €
	Fruit	1.50 €
	Supper by Wards	0.00 €
	Hotel	60.00 €
11 Aug – Fidenza - Medesano (with	Breakfast	10.00 €
	Coffee	6.10 €

Wards)	Lunch (for 5)	110.00 €
	water/ice cream	2.30 €
	DB&B	60.00 €
12 Aug – Medesano - Fornovo (with Wards)	Coffee	2.50 €
	Lunch	40.00 €
	Lemon soda	4.10 €
	Supper by Wards	0.00 €
	Hotel	90.00 €
13 Aug – Fornovo - Berceto	Panini etc	18.80 €
	Gelati etc	14.20 €
	Granita	4.00 €
	Drinks	6.20 €
	Supper @ da Rino	50.00 €
	Church	20.00 €
14 Aug – Berceto - Pontremoli	Breakfast	9.30 €
	Snack	10.00 €
	Picnic	9.10 €
	Fruit	0.70 €
	Ice Cream	3.50 €
	supper	30.00 €
	coffee	8.84 €
	Capuchin Monastery	20.00 €
15 Aug – Pontremoli - Aulla	Breakfast	5.70 €
	coffee	3.60 €
	beer	4.40 €
	lunch @ Roland	42.00 €
	supper	4.80 €
	Demy Hotel	75.00 €
16 Aug – Aulla - Sarzana	Coffee	3.20 €
	Beer	3.80 €
	lunch @ I Tre Anti	60.00 €
	Drinks	7.20 €
	pizzas @ Da Romano	16.80 €
	Hotel San Andrea	100.00 €
17 Aug - Sarzana (R&J join)	Socks	5.00 €
	Lunch @ Queens	23.30 €
	coffee & puds	17.00 €
	fizz	13.50 €
	2nd Fizz	15.00 €
	Dinner	38.50 €
	Hotel San Andrea	100.00 €

18 Aug – Sarzana - Pietrasanta (with R&J)	coffee	9.30 €
	beer	10.00 €
	lunch	20.00 €
	drinks/ice cream	6.50 €
	taxi	12.50 €
	supper @ Pizzeria Il Vicolo	25.00 €
	Convent	25.00 €
19 Aug – Pietrasanta - Piano del Quercione (with R&J)	Breakfast	8.10 €
	coffee	3.70 €
	bus	3.00 €
	water/ice cream	0.40 €
	lunch @ Bar Michelangelo	17.00 €
	coffee	7.75 €
	bus	2.00 €
	ice tea	1.60 €
	bus	1.20 €
	maps	11.00 €
	supper	43.00 €
	Hotel La Luna	110.00 €
20 Aug – Piano del Quercione - Lucca (with R&J)	Breakfast	5.20 €
	coffee	2.40 €
	beer	1.50 €
	lunch	11.80 €
	ice cream	2.80 €
	Prosecco	16.00 €
	concert	33.00 €
	dinner	69.00 €
	water/ice cream	0.60 €
	Hotel La Luna	110.00 €
21 Aug - Lucca (with R&J)	Breakfast	8.00 €
	PPCs	0.60 €
	Website	
	coffee	2.60 €
	post	6.20 €
	Farmacia	6.20 €
	lunch @ L'Emiliana	27.00 €
	calendar	5.00 €
	supper @ L'Antico Sigilucca	30.00 €
	ice cream	12.00 €
	Hotel La Luna	110.00 €
22 Aug – Lucca -	Breakfast	4.00 €

Altopascio (with R&J)	Coffee	2.50 €
	beer	5.80 €
	lunch @ Dell'Orlogio	21.10 €
	drinks	8.50 €
	Dinner	27.50 €
	Hotel La Loggia	55.00 €
23 Aug – Altopascio - San Miniato (with R&J)	Breakfast	6.00 €
	Coffee	3.30 €
	beer	4.15 €
	lunch	25.00 €
	Prosecco	3.80 €
	supper	25.00 €
	Centro Turistico	58.00 €
24 Aug – San Miniato - Castelfiorentino	Breakfast	8.50 €
	Beer	10.00 €
	Wine	2.00 €
	Lunch @ Osteria La Magona	29.80 €
	Prosecco	7.80 €
	Plasters	4.50 €
	Ice Tea	2.00 €
	supper	6.00 €
	Gelati etc	2.00 €
	Lami Hotel	60.00 €
25 Aug – Castelfiorentino – San Gimignano	Breakfast	4.50 €
	Coffee etc	5.20 €
	picnic	17.20 €
	Wine	5.20 €
	Prosecco	7.60 €
	supper @ Beppone	24.00 €
	Room	40.00 €
26 Aug – San Gimignano	Breakfast	9.55 €
	coffee	4.10 €
	Socks	3.00 €
	post	1.70 €
	calendar	3.67 €
	lunch @ Enoteca da Gustavo	21.00 €
	Gelati etc	3.00 €
	supper @ Enoteca il Castello	63.50 €
	coffee	4.00 €
	room	40.00 €
27 Aug – San	Breakfast	7.25 €

Gimignano - Strove	coffee etc	8.80 €
	coffee	1.60 €
	lunch @ Bar Venturino	13.40 €
	dinner @ Casalta	83.00 €
	hotel Casalta	75.00 €
28 Aug – Strove - Siena	Breakfast	9.80 €
	coffee	3.30 €
	lunch @ Il Jolly	26.40 €
	Gelati etc	3.00 €
	PPCs	3.00 €
	??	2.64 €
	drinks	7.50 €
	booking fee	9.00 €
	Bus Fares	3.60 €
	concert/dinner	24.00 €
	YH	30.28 €
29 Aug – Siena - Castello di Grotti	Taxi	6.60 €
	lunch @ Il Ristoro alle Ville	35.90 €
	coffee	2.90 €
	supper @ Il Ristoro alle Ville	24.10 €
	ice tea/water	4.30 €
	Castello	85.00 €
30 Aug – Castello di Grotti - Buonconvento	Lunch @ Bar H	10.00 €
	Prosecco	8.00 €
	CD	5.00 €
	DB&B @ Hotel Roma	104.70 €
31 Aug – Buonconven - S Quirico d'Orcia	Focaccia	0.70 €
	Coffee	3.20 €
	lunch @ Caffe Italiano	20.70 €
	Envelope	0.33 €
	food	7.20 €
	Sweets etc	4.10 €
	Hello	3.10 €
	Supper @ Bar Centrale	12.50 €
	Room	45.00 €
01 Sep - S Quirico d'Orcia – Vivo d'Orcia	Breakfast	5.65 €
	Coffee etc	6.50 €
	wine etc	11.00 €
	water/coffee	3.60 €
	Water/ice cream	4.90 €
	DB&B	143.00 €

02 Sep - Vivo d'Orcia - Piancastagnaio	Bar	4.40 €
	ppcs	0.80 €
	lunch @ Saxa Cuntaria	28.00 €
	drinks/phone card	8.80 €
	sterilising solution	3.80 €
	post	5.30 €
	bar	3.60 €
	DB&B	85.00 €
03 Sep - Piancastagnaio - Acquapendente	Breakfast	3.60 €
	lunch @ Il Girasole	13.60 €
	Ice Cream	4.70 €
	Prosecco	6.20 €
	D&B@ Albergo Toscana	70.00 €
04 Sep – Acquapendente - Bolsena	Breakfast	4.50 €
	Coffee	5.65 €
	Lunch	30.00 €
	Beers	2.05 €
	Prosecco	3.00 €
	Catacombs + PPCs	8.50 €
	coffee etc	6.90 €
	Dinner @ Del Moro	39.00 €
	Hotel Nazionale	50.00 €
05 Sep – Bolsena - Montefiascone	Lunch @ da Paolo al Miralgo	40.40 €
	Wine	5.00 €
	Prosecco	5.00 €
	D&B @ Dante	87.50 €
06 Sep - Montefiascone - Viterbo	Breakfast	3.20 €
	coffee	1.70 €
	Sweets etc	0.90 €
	Panini etc	2.00 €
	Lunch @ Valeri & Nonna	24.70 €
	ppcs	2.35 €
	supper @ Pizzeria Etruria	30.00 €
	B&B Albergo Roma	55.00 €
07 Sep - Viterbo	Coffee	4.00 €
	Lunch @ Onofri Moreno	17.00 €
	Internet	1.00 €
	coffee	2.80 €
	Prosecco	6.00 €
	supper	28.00 €
	coffee	5.30 €

	B&B Albergo Roma	55.00 €
08 Sep – Viterbo - Ronciglione	Fruit	3.00 €
	coffee	1.60 €
	coffee	4.80 €
	lunch	50.00 €
	pizzas @ Da Romano	5.50 €
	Room/wine	50.00 €
09 Sep – Ronciglione - Trevignano	Breakfast	5.00 €
	coffee	3.10 €
	Cecci	3.20 €
	lunch @ Tonetti Lucia	6.60 €
	Porchetta	3.65 €
	coffee	1.80 €
	DB&B @ Letos	0.00 €
10 Sep – Trevignano - Anguillara	Coffee	3.10 €
	lunch @ Chalet del Lago	45.00 €
	ices	2.00 €
	Prosecco	4.60 €
	supper @ il Vecchio salus	31.50 €
	Room	50.00 €
11 Sep – Anguillara - Rome	Breakfast	4.90 €
	Cake	2.40 €
	coffee	6.10 €
	flowers	5.00 €
	coffee	5.90 €
	supper @ Rist Perilli	55.00 €
	B&B	120.00 €
12 Sep – Rome – The Vatican	Coffee	2.20 €
	ppcs	16.00 €
	coffee	1.85 €
	lunch for Hollidges @ La Villette	125.00 €
	room @ Hollidges	0.00 €
13 Sep - Rome	pizzas @	7.80 €
	coffee	6.20 €
	coffee & presents	35.00 €
	limoncello etc	50.30 €
	Lunch @ Bar Moretto	22.00 €
	room @ Hollidges	0.00 €
14 Sep - Rome	coffee	3.00 €
	limoncello	11.20 €

	C's lunch	3.60 €		
	stamps	58.00 €		
	ice cream	1.50 €		
	room @ Hollidges	0.00 €		
15 Sep - Rome				
	coffee	2.20 €		
	Volpetti	67.35 €		
	lunch @ Da Sergio all Grotte	52.50 €		
	coffee	2.30 €		
	room @ Hollidges	0.00 €		
16 Sep – Rome - London				
	coffee	2.05 €		
	Ryanair	£97.60		
	Limoncello	10.50 €		
	Airport snack	11.35 €		
	Coach	£20.00		
	room @ Mother	£0.00		
17 Sep - London	lunch for Mother	£22.75		
	room @ Mother	£0.00		
18 Sep – London - Plymouth	coffee	£5.00		
	Trains	£92.00		
BlackBerry throughout		£238.40		
Totals	12,366.02 €	CHF 1,832.00	£912.03	
Sterling Totals	£8,524.76	£834.62	£912.03	£10,271.41
Cost/day of walking the VF	£91.71 ((£45.85 each)			

Appendix III – Stage Lengths from the VF Vademeucs

No	Vademecum 1	Stage - km	Total - km
1	Canterbury-Dover	29	
2	Calais-Wissant	20	49
3	Wissant-Guines	15	64
4	Guines-Licques-Wisques	33	97
5	Wisques-Amettes	30	127
6	Amettes-Camblain-l'Abbe	29	156
7	Camblain-Arras	16	172
8	Arras-Bapaume	23	195
9	Bapaume-Peronne	21	216
10	Peronne-Trefcon	15	231
11	Trefcon-La Fere	34	265
12	La Fere - St Gobain-Laon	29	294
13	Laon-Corbeny	22	316
14	Corbeny-Reims	30	346
15	Reims-Trepail	25	371
16	Trepail-Chalons en Champagne	26	397
17	Chalons en Ch-Nuisement	12	409
17A	Nuisement-Le Meix Tiercelin	34	443
18	Le Meix Tiercelin-Brienne-le-Chateau	35	478
19	Brienne-le-Chateau-Bar sur Aube	33	511
20	Bar sur Aube-Chateauvillain	31	542
21	Chateauvillain-St Martin les Langres	34	576
22	St M les Langres-Langres	12	588
23	Langres-Les Archots	14	602
24	Les Archots-Savoyeux	40	642
25	Savoyeux-Frasne le Chateau	18	660
26	Frasne le Ch-Cussey sur L'Ognon	24	684
27	Cussey sur L'O-Besancon	31	715
28	Besancon-Ornans	28	743
29	Ornans-Mouthier Hte-Pierre	18	761
30	Mouthier Hte Pierre-Pontarlier	22	783
31	Pontarlier-Ste Croix	22	805
32	Ste Croix-Orbe	31	836
33	Orbe-Lausanne	29	865
34	Lausanne/Ouchy-Vevey	20	885
35	Vevey-Aigle	26	911

36	Aigle-St Maurice	17	928
37	St Maurice-Martigny	15	943
38	Martigny-Orsieres	21	964
39	Orsieres-Gd St Bernard	8	972

Vademecum 2

1	Colle S Bernardo-St Oyen	12	984
2	St Oyen-Aosta	15	999
3	Aosta-Chatillon	24	1023
4	Chatillon-Pont St Martin	29	1052
5	Pont St Martin-Ivrea	19	1071
6	Ivrea-Santhia	33	1104
7	Santhia-Vercelli	25	1129
8	Vercelli-Mortara	31	1160
9	Mortara-Pavia	37	1197
10	Pavia-Santa Cristina	27	1224
11	Santa Cristina-Corte S Andrea	21	1245
12	Corte S Andrea-Piacenza	16	1261
13	Piacenza-Fiorenzula D'Arda	29	1290
14	Fiorenzuola-Fidenza	17	1307
15	Fidenza-Costamezzana	11	1318
16	Costamezzana-Fornovo	21	1339
17	Fornovo-Crocetta di Casola	20	1359
18	Crocetta di Casola-Berceto	15	1374
19	Berceto-Pontremoli	25	1399
20	Pontremoli-Aulla	24	1423
21	Aulla-S Stefano-Sarzana	18	1441
22	Sarzana-Massa	24	1465
23	Massa-Capezzano	24	1489
24	Capezzano-Lucca	26	1515
25	Lucca-Altopascio	18	1533
26	Altopascio-San Miniato Basso	17	1550
27	San Miniato Basso-Gambassi	29	1579
28	Gambassi-San Gimignano	12	1591
29	San Gimignano-Badia a Isola	26	1617
30	Badia A Isola-Siena	21	1638
31	Siena-Lucignano	18	1656
32	Lucignano-San Quirico d'Orcia	24	1680
33	S Quirico-Abbadia S Salvatore	27	1707
34	Abbadia S Salvatore-Acquapendente	28	1735
35	Acquapendente-Bolsena	22	1757
36	Bolsena-Montefiascone	16	1773

37	Montefiascone-Viterbo	18	1791
38	Viterbo-Vetralla	18	1809
39	Vetralla-Sutri	22	1831
40	Sutri-Campagnano	22	1853
41	Campagnano-La Storta	32	1885
42	La Storta-Rome	15	1900

Appendix IV – Archbishop Sigeric's Route

	Sigeric's Route in Latin	Sigeric in modern names	Via Francigena
1	Durovernum - Portus Dubri	Canterbury - Dover	Canterbury - Dover
	THE	ENGLISH	CHANNEL
2	Strouanne (Wissant) - Sombre	Sombre - Guines (Guisne)	Wissant-Guines
3	Sumeran - Gisne	Guines - Therouanne (Terovanne)	Guines-Licques-Wisques
4	Gisne - Teranburh		Wisques - Amettes
5	Teranburh - Brunwaei	Therouanne - Bruay-la-Buissiere	Amettes - Camblain-l'Abbe
6	Brunwaei - Atherats	Bruay-la-Buissiere - Arras	Camblain - Arras
7	Atherats - Duin	Arras - Doingt (Duin)	Arras - Bapaume
8	Duin - Martinwaeth	Doingt - Searncourt-le-G (San Martin)	Bapaume - Peronne
9	Martinwaeth - Mundlothuin	Serancourt-le-G - Laon	Peronne - Trefcon
10	Mundlothuin - Corbunei	Laon - Corbeny (Per Corbery)	Trefcon - La Fere
11	Corbunei - Rems	Corbeny - Reims	La Fere-St Gobain - Laon
12	Rems - Catheluns	Reims - Chalons-en-Champagne (Chalons-sur-Marne)	Laon - Corbeny
13	Catheluns - Funtaine	Chalons-en-Champagne - Fontaine-sur-Coole	Corbeny - Reims
14	Funtaine - Domaniant	Fontaine-sur-Coole - Donnemant	Reims - Trepail
15	Domaniant - Breone	Donnemant - Brienne-le-Chateau (Breone)	Trepail - Chalons en Champagne
16	Breone - Bar	Brienne-le-Chateau - Bar-sur-Aube	Chalons en Champagne - Nuisement
17	Bar - Blaecvile	Bar-sur-Aube - Blessonville (Blesanville)	Nuisement - Le Meix Tiercelin
18	Blaecvile - Oisma	Blessonville - Humes-Jorquenay	Le Meix Tiercelin -
19	Oisma - Grenant	Humes-Jorquenay - Grenant	Brienne-le-Chateau
20	Grenant - Sefui	Grenant - Seveux	Brienne-le-Chateau - Bar sur Aube
21	Sefui - Cuscei	Seveux - Cussey-sur-L'Oignon (Cuscei)	Bar sur Aube - Chateavillain
22	Cuscei - Bysiceon	Cussey-sur-L'Oignon - Besancon	Chateavillain - St Martin les Langres
23	Bysiceon - Nos	Besancon - Nods (Nodz)	St M les Langres - Langres
			Langres - Les Archots
			Les Archots - Savoyeux
			Savoyeux - Frasne le Chateau
			Frasne le Ch - Cussey sur L'Oignon
			Cussey sur L'O - Besancon
			Besancon - Ornans
			Ornans - Mouthier Hte-Pierre

24	Nos - Punterlin	Nods - Pontarlier	Mouthier Hte Pierre - Pontarlier
25	Punterlin - Antifern	Pontarlier - Yverdon-les-Bains	Pontarlier - Ste Croix
CROSS FROM			
26	Antifern - Urba	Yverdon-les-Bains - Orbe	Ste Croix - Orbe
27	Urba - Losanna	Orbe - Lausanne	Orbe - Lausanne
28	Losanna - Vivaec	Lausanne - Vevey	Lausanne/Ouchy - Vevey
29	Vivaec - Burbulei	Vevey - Versvey-Aigle (Versvei)	Vevey - Aigle
30	Burbulei - Sce. Maurici	Versvey-Aigle - St. Maurice	Aigle - St Maurice
31	Sce. Maurici - Ursiores	St. Maurice - Orsieres (Orsienes)	St Maurice - Martigny
32	Ursiores - Petrecastel	Orsieres - Bourg St Pierre	Martigny - Orsieres
CROSS FROM			
33	Petrecastel - Sce. Remei	SWITZERLAND	Orsieres - Gd St Bernard
34	Sce. Remei - Agust	Bourg St. Pierre - Saint Remy	INTO ITALY
35	Agust - Publei	Saint Remy - Aosta	Colle S Bernardo - St Oyen
36	Publei - Eueri	Aosta - Pontey	St Oyen - Aosta
37	Everi - Sce. Agatha	Pontey - Ivrea	Aosta - Chatillon
38	Sce. Agatha - Vercel	Ivrea - Santhia	Chatillon - Pont St Martin
39	Vercel - Tremel	Santhia - Vercelli	Pont St Martin - Ivrea
40	Tremel - Pamphica	Vercelli - Tromello	Ivrea - Santhia
41	Pamphica - Sce. Christine	Tromello - Pavia	Santhia - Vercelli
42	Sce. Christine - Sce. Andrea	Pavia - Santa Cristina	Vercelli - Mortara
43	Sce. Andrea - Placentia	Santa Cristina - Corte S. Andrea	Mortara - Pavia
44	Placentia - Floricum	Corte S. Andrea - Piacenza	Pavia - Santa Cristina
45	Floricum - Sce. Domnine	Piacenza - Fiorenzuola	Santa Cristina - Corte S. Andrea
46	Sce. Domnine - Metane	Fiorenzuola - Fidenza (B.go D. Donnino)	Corte S. Andrea - Piacenza
47	Metane - Philemangenur	Fidenza (B.go D. Donnino) - Costamezzana (Medesano)	Piacenza - Fiorenzuola D'Arda
48	Philemangenur - Sce. Moderanne	Costamezzana - Fornovo (o Felegara)	Fiorenzuola - Fidenza
49	Sce. Moderanne - Sce. Benedicte	Fornovo (o Felegara) - Berceto (Passo della Cisa) (S. Moderano (Bardone))	Fidenza - Costamezzana
50	Sce. Benedicte - Puntremel	Berceto (Passo della Cisa) - Montelungo (S. Benedetto (Berceto))	Costamezzana - Fornovo
51	Puntremel - Aquilla	Montelungo - Pontremoli	Fornovo - Crocetta di Casola
52	Aquilla - Sce. Stephane	Pontremoli - Aulla	Crocetta di Casola - Berceto
53	Sce. Stephane - Luna	Aulla - S Stefano di Magra	Berceto - Pontremoli
		S. Stefano di Magra - Luni	Pontremoli - Aulla
			Aulla - S. Stefano-Sarzana
			S. Stefano-Sarzana - Massa

54	Luna - Campmajor	Luni - Pieve di Camaiore	Massa - Capezzano
55	Campmajor - Luca	Pieve di Camaiore - Lucca	Capezzano - Lucca
56	Luca - Forcri	Lucca - Porcari tra Galeno e Altopascio	Lucca - Altopascio
57	Forcri - Aqua Nigra	Porcari - Ponte a Cappiano-t. Usciana (Paludi di Fucecchio)	Altopascio - San Miniato Basso
58	Aqua Nigra - Arneblanca	Ponte a Cappiano-t. Usciana - Fucecchio (Fiume Arno)	San Miniato Basso - Gambassi
59	Arneblanca - Sce. Dionysii	Fucecchio (Fiume Arno) - San Genesio Oratario	
60	Sce. Dionysii - Sce. Petre Currant	San Genesio Oratario - San Pietro a Coiano	
61	Sce. Petre Currant - Sce. Maria Glan	San Pietro a Coiano - Pieve a Chianti (S. Maria) (S. Maria di Chianni)	Gambassi - San Gimignano
62	Sce. Maria Glan - Sce. Gemiane	Pieve a Chianti (S. Maria) - San Gimignano	
63	Sce. Gemiane - Sc. Martin in Fosse	San Gimignano - Molino d'Aino (S. Martino F.)	San Gimignano - Badia a Isola
64	Sc. Martin in Fosse - Aelse	Molino d'Aino (S. Martino F.) - Gracciano d'Elsa	
65	Aelse - Burgenove	Gracciano d'Elsa - Abbadia a Isola Borgo Nuovo	
66	Burgenove - Seocene	Abbadia a Isola Borgo Nuovo - Siena	Badia A Isola - Siena
67	Seocene - Arbia	Siena - Ponte d'Arbia	Siena - Lucignano
68	Arbia - Turreiner	Ponte d'Arbia - Torrenieri	
69	Turreiner - Sce. Quiric	Torrenieri - San Quirico d'Orcia	Lucignano - San Quirico d'Orcia
70	Sce. Quiric - Abricula	San Quirico d'Orcia - Le Briccole	
71	Abricula - S. Petir in pail	Le Briccole - Voltole (Abbadia S. Salvatore) (S. Pietro in Puglia)	S Quirico - Abbadia S Salvatore
	S. Petir in pail -		
72	Aquapendente	Voltole (Abbadia S. Salvatore) - Aquapendente	Abbadia S Salvatore - Acquapendente
73	Aquapendente - S. Cristina	Aquapendente - Bolsena (S. Christina)	Acquapendente - Bolsena
74	S. Cristina - Sce. Flaviane	Bolsena (S. Christina) - Montefiascone (S. Flaviano)	Bolsena - Montefiascone
	Sce. Flaviane - Sce.		
75	Valentine	Montefiascone (S. Flaviano) - S. Valentino	Montefiascone - Viterbo
76	Sce. Valentine - Furcari	S. Valentino - S. Maria di Forcassi	Viterbo - Vetralla

77	Furcari - Suteria	S. Maria di Forcassi - Sutri	Vetralla - Sutri
78	Suteria - Bacane	Sutri - Bracciano	Sutri - Campagnano
79	Bacane - Johis VIII	Bracciano - La Storta	Campagnano - La Storta
80	Johis VIII - Urbs Roma	La Storta - Rome	La Storta - Rome

Appendix V – Our Planned Timetable

Surprisingly, we finished on the day predicted several months before.

Date @ 20km/day (12.5 miles)	No	Stage - km	Total - km
Tue 1 Jun	1	Canterbury-Dover	29
Wed 2 Jun	2	Calais-Wissant	20
Wed 2-Fri 4 Jun	3	Wissant-Guines	15
Fri 4-Sat 5 Jun	4	Guines-Licques-Wisques	33
Sun 6 - Mon 7 Jun	5	Wisques-Amettes	30
Mon 7 Jun + Rest Day Tue 8th	6	Amettes-Camblain-l'Abbe	29
Wed 9 Jun	7	Camblain-Arras	16
Thu 10 Jun	8	Arras-Bapaume	23
Fri 11 Jun	9	Bapaume-Peronne	21
Fri 1-Sat 12 Jun	10	Peronne-Trefcon	15
Rest Day Sun 13th + Mon 14-Tue 15 Jun	11	Trefcon-La Fere	34
Wed 16 Jun	12	La Fere - St Gobain-Laon	29
Thu 17-Fri 18 Jun	13	Laon-Corbeny	22
Fri 18 Jun + Rest Day Sat 19th	14	Corbeny-Reims	30
Sun 20 Jun	15	Reims-Trepail	25
Mon 21 Jun	16	Trepail-Chalons en Champagne	26
Mon 21-Tue 22 Jun	17A	Chalons en Ch-Nuisement	12
Tue 22-Wed 23 Jun	18	Nuisement-Le Meix Tiercelin Le Meix Tiercelin-Brienne-le-Chat	34
Thu 24-Fri 25 Jun	19	Brienne-le-Chateau-Bar sur Aube	35
Fri 25-Sat 26 Jun + Rest day Sun 27th	20	Bar sur Aube-Chateaumain Chateaumain-St Martin les Langres	33
Mon 28-Tue 29 Jun	21	Langres	31
Tue 29 Jun	22	St M les Langres-Langres	576
Wed 30 Jun	23	Langres-Les Archots	12
Wed 30 Jun-Fri 2 Jul	24	Les Archots-Savoyeux	14
Sat 3 Jul + Rest Day Sun 4th	25	Savoyeux-Frasne le Chateau Frasne le Ch-Cussey sur Ognon	40
Mon 5 Jul	26	L'Ognon	18
Tue 6-Wed 7 Jul	27	Cussey sur L'O-Besancon	24
Wed 7-Thu 8 Jul	28	Besancon-Ornans	31
Fri 9 Jul	29	Ornans-Mouthier Hte-Pierre	28
Sat 10 Jul + Rest Day Sun 11th	30	Mouthier Hte Pierre-Pontarlier	18
Mon 12 Jul	31	Pontarlier-Ste Croix	22
Tue 13-Wed 14 Jul (Quattorze Juillet)	32	Ste Croix-Orbe	22
Wed 14-Thu 15 Jul	33	Orbe-Lausanne	31
			805
			836
			865

Fri 16 Jul	34	Lausanne/Ouchy-Vevey	20	885
Sat 17 Jul + Rest Day Sun 18th	35	Vevey-Aigle	26	911
Mon 19 Jul	36	Aigle-St Maurice	17	928
Tue 20 Jul	37	St Maurice-Martigny	15	943
Wed 21 Jul	38	Martigny-Orsieres	21	964
Thu 22 Jul	39	Orsieres-Gd St Bernard	8	972
Fri 23 Jul	1	Colle S Bernardo-St Oyen	12	984
Sat 24 Jul + Rest Day Sun 25th	2	St Oyen-Aosta	15	999
Mon 26 Jul	3	Aosta-Chatillon	24	1023
Tue 27-Wed 28 Jul	4	Chatillon-Pont St Martin	29	1052
Wed 28 Jul	5	Pont St Martin-Ivrea	19	1071
Thu 29-Fri 30 Jul	6	Ivrea-Santhia	33	1104
Fri 30-Sat 31 Jul + Rest Day Sun 1st	7	Santhia-Vercelli	25	1129
Aug	8	Vercelli-Mortara	31	1160
Mon 2-Tue 3 Aug	9	Mortara-Pavia	37	1197
Tue 3-Wed 4 Aug	10	Pavia-Santa Cristina	27	1224
Thu 5 - Fri 6 Aug	11	Santa Cristina-Corte S Andrea	21	1245
Fri 6-Sat 7 Aug	12	Corte S Andrea-Piacenza	16	1261
Sat 7 Aug + Rest Day Sun 8th	13	Piacenza-Fiorenzula D'Arda	29	1290 Wards
Mon 9-Tue 10 Aug	14	Fiorenzula-Fidenza	17	1307 Wards
Tue 10 Aug	15	Fidenza-Costamezzana	11	1318 Wards
Wed 11 Aug	16	Costamezzana-Fornovo	21	1339 Wards
Wed 11-Thu 12 Aug	17	Fornovo-Crocetta di Casola	20	1359
Thu 12-Fri 13 Aug	18	Crocetta di Casola-Berceto	15	1374
Fri 13 Aug + Rest Day Sat 14th	19	Berceto-Pontremoli	25	1399
Sun 15-Mon 16 Aug	20	Pontremoli-Aulla	24	1423
Mon 16-Tue 17 Aug	21	Aulla-S Stefano-Sarzana	18	1441
Tue 17 Aug	22	Sarzana-Massa	24	1465 R&J
Wed 18 Aug	23	Massa-Capezzano	24	1489 R&J
Thu 19 Aug	24	Capezzano-Lucca	26	1515 R&J
Fri 20 Aug + Rest Day Sat 21st	25	Lucca-Altopascio	18	1533 R&J
Sun 22 Aug	26	Altopascio-San Miniato Basso	17	1550 R&J
Mon 23 Aug	27	San Miniato Basso-Gambassi	29	1579
Tue 24-Wed 25 Aug	28	Gambassi-San Gimignano	12	1591
Wed 25 Aug	29	San Gimignano-Badia a Isola	26	1617
Thu 26 Aug	30	Badia A Isola-Siena	21	1638
Fri 27 Aug + Rest Day Sat 28th	31	Siena-Lucignano	18	1656
Sun 29 Aug	32	Lucignano-San Quirico d'Orcia	24	1680
Mon 30 Aug	33	S Quirico-Abbadia S Salvatore	27	1707
Tue 31-Wed 1 Sep		Abbadia S Salvatore-		
Wed 1-Thu 2 Sep	34	Acquapendente	28	1735
Fri 3 Sep	35	Acquapendente-Bolsena	22	1757
Sat 4 Sep	36	Bolsena-Montefiascone	16	1773
Sun 5 Sep _+ Rest Day Mon 6th	37	Montefiascone-Viterbo	18	1791
Tue 7 Sep	38	Viterbo-Vetralla	18	1809

Wed 8 Sep	39	Vetralla-Sutri	22	1831
Thu 9 Sep + Rest Day Fri 10th	40	Sutri-Campagnano (Anguillara)	22	1853
Sat 11 Sep	41	Campagnano-La Storta	32	1885
Sun 12 Sep	42	La Storta-Rome	15	1900

Appendix VI – Our Kit List

We set off with the following bits of kit. Everything is individually wrapped in re-sealable freezer bags.
(VFA = Via Francigena Association - www.via-francigena.org)

Andrew Wearing

Hat
Long sleeved shirt
Photographer's waistcoat
Trousers
Knickers
Pedometer (the first of several.
None were a success)
Socks
Walking shoes
Sweat rag around neck
Handkerchief
Watch
Leatherman Micra
2 Walking poles
Whistle

In Waistcoat

Reading glasses
Sunglasses
Spare reading glasses
Compass
3 Pens
VFA Vademedcum (guidebook)
VFA Pilgrim passport
Radio
Digital camera
BlackBerry

In Money Belt

Spare cash

In Bumbag

Passport
Copy of C's passport
E-111
Torch keyring
Corkscrew

Carole Wearing

Hat
Long sleeved shirt
Glasses
Trousers
Knickers
Bra
Socks
Walking boots
Earrings
Map case + all maps up to N Italy
Watch

In Bumbag

Passport
Copy of A's Passport
Copy of E-111
2 VFA Pilgrim passports
2 rubber bands

Blister plasters	Notebook
Bank card	Lip salve
Credit cards	Whistle
YHA card	Pen
VFA membership card	VFA Membership card
Driving licence	Swiss Army knife card
Photo ID card	Can opener
	Handkerchief
	Comb
	Driving licence
	YHA card
	UK postage stamps
	Diary
	Credit cards
	Photo ID
	Cash

In Rucksack

Top Outer

Spare reading glasses

Binoculars

Camera charger/adaptor

BlackBerry charger

Top Inner

3 copies of Naval Review magazine

2nd VFA Vademeum

Camera handbook

2nd VFA Pilgrim passport

Notebook

Main Section

Spare trousers (convert to shorts)

Belt

Spare shirt

Lightweight towel

Platypus water container

Sandals

Sarong

2 pair socks

Handkerchief

Knicks

Assorted pills

Washing bag

Spare freezer bags + rubber bands

Bottom Section

Damart vest

Lightweight rain jacket

In Rucksack

Main Section

Shorts

2 Pair socks

Spare glasses

Knickers

Towel

Dress

Handkerchief

T-shirt

Sandals

Coathanger

Pills

Shampoo

Spare shower cap

Book – Multum in Parvo

9 spare waterproof bags

Platypus water container

Tampax

Spare laces

Spare pen

Washing bag

Bottom Section

waterproof trousers

waterproof jacket

Waterproof trousers	Suncream
	Winegums
	First aid kit
	Tissues
	KFS set

En route (in Reims) we bought 2 plastic cups – much used for picnic stops. And yes – it's true (to friends astonishment (horror?) right from the start) – Carole only took one bra for 4 months away. ***This was a mistake!***

For those of you who can't sleep, this is what we had in our first aid kit:

Plasters
Savlon
Immodium
2 Swabs
Tape
Paracetamol
Cleansing Tissue
3 packs Compeed (<u>Really effective</u>)
A's Gout pills
Glucosamine Sulphate (for A's creaking knees)

And in Carole's washing bag:

Rubber bands (No, nothing kinky! Just a convenient place to put them)

Toothbrush
Razor (for armpits)
Earplugs
Nail files
Moisturiser
2 Small tubes toothpaste
Spare cord for map case (see rubber bands above)
Sewing kit
Shower cap (plastic bag type)
Necklace
Hairbrush with mirror in handle
Soap

And in Andrew's

Universal bath plug

Foot file

Athelete's foot powder

Nivea

Cotton buds

2 Toothbrushes (A can flatten a toothbrush in 10 days)

Lamisil (for A's rotting feet)

Comb
Earplugs
Soap
Nail clippers
Dental floss
Foot padding

And what does all this weigh?

A's waistcoat	
	3 lbs
	1.5 kg
A's rucksack	
	15 lbs
	7kg
C's rucksack	
	14 lbs
	6.3kg

+ add 3 lbs/1.4 kg for our Platypi when full of water

And what do we weigh?

A on departure	
	16 stone 9 lbs
233 lbs for those of you in the USA	
	105.7 kg
C on departure	
	10 stone 8 lbs
	148 lbs
	67.1 kg

(These figures were placed on our website in the certainty that after walking 1200 miles,
WE WOULD BE THINNER).

And on arrival in Rome, whilst not wishing to be too accurate, A was about 2 stone down in Switzerland, but only 1 by the time we'd eaten our way through Italy. C 'couldn't' get the scales to work in Switzerland, but was about 7 pounds down by Rome.

Finally, contrary to our (& nearly all men's) experience, it always took Andrew longer than Carole to get ready each morning – a combination of C having no choice as to what to wear & no make-up to put on & the fact that re-loading A's waistcoat always took longer than expected.