

**CONFRATERNITY of
PILGRIMS to
ROME**



NEWSLETTER no. 25 2019

CONFRATERNITY OF PILGRIMS TO ROME

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CONTENTS

Editorial

News items

- Appointment of Canon Emma Pennington at Canterbury
- Report on Canterbury Pilgrim Festival
- News from the EAVF
- Alison Raju

Reflections on walking – Brian Mooney

An English Pilgrimage: the Pilgrims Way – Julia Lewis

“Trees and stones will teach you” – Fr Tim Redmond

The spiritual dimension of pilgrimage – Johnnie Walker

Saint Benoît Labre: pilgrim, vagabond, saint – Andrew Dennis

Canterbury Cathedral – the still centre of the turning world – Canon Emma Pennington

Calais: a pause on the way to Rome – David Matthews

A cyclist on the Via Francigena discovers the Benedictine legacy – Joe Patton

Sigeric and the beginnings of taxation – Cecilia Weston-Baker

The Via Michaelis – Carlo Laurenzi

Book Reviews

- ‘In Praise of Walking’ by Shane O’Mara
- ‘Stepping Out’ by Alison Gelder and Ian Smith

Confraternity Who’s Who

EDITORIAL

Welcome to our 2019 annual newsletter.

Members will know it has been a busy and significant year for the Confraternity. Just before a well-attended and successful AGM at Southwark Cathedral in March we received notice that our application to become a registered charity had been passed, thanks to the hard work of Carlo Laurenzi and other members of the team. After an EGM in May when members unanimously approved the changeover, Carlo then took over from Brian Mooney as chair, though we are delighted that Brian remains very much on board as vice-chair. Charitable status means we can apply for funding for potential projects such as the development of feeder routes, the enhancement of the Via Francigena between Canterbury and Dover route, new signage, and possibly a pilgrim hostel.

We continue to communicate with our ever-increasing number of members via four e-newsletters a year, our annual print journal, our website www.pilgrimstorome.org.uk (now with a shop where you can buy badges, cards and a Via Francigena map), which aims to provide comprehensive information for the walking pilgrim, and a further email information service: info@pilgrimstorome.org.uk.

In all this change and busyness it is easy to forget what pilgrimage is: a chance to step away from the bustle and pressure of the quotidian, to look inside ourselves, reflect, and be open to what comes. In compiling this print journal a theme began to emerge from the contributions – the spiritual dimension of pilgrimage. This is a question debated frequently in online pilgrimage forums and social media groups.

Those who have walked these ancient ways will probably agree that the spirituality of pilgrimage is not dependent on faith or religious practice. We also know that a pilgrimage becomes a metaphor for life, with its ups and downs, joys and sorrows, pains and pleasures; with its encounters with the unexpected; with the people who cross our path, and the people with whom we walk a stretch and more, and sometimes also the loss of those same companions. As in life, it is how we deal with all of this that brings to light our true self, and the necessity of transformation.

As well as this reflective theme there is much more to enjoy in this issue: news, book reviews, and even a sideways look at taxation – thanks to Sigeric himself.

As always, we would welcome members' contributions for both our e-newsletters and the print edition. Contact us at editor@pilgrimstorome.org.uk. E-newsletters tend to be more informative and practical, and our print journal for reflection, culture and history, as well as news and information.

Mary Kirk

NEWS ITEMS

Canterbury Cathedral appoints a new Canon Missioner

Dr Emma Pennington has been appointed Canon Missioner at Canterbury Cathedral, and was installed by the Archbishop of Canterbury in March.



Emma was Vicar of Garsington, Cuddleston and Horspath in the Oxford Diocese from 2008, before which she was chaplain to Worcester College in Oxford for five years. She has also been a prayer and spirituality adviser for that diocese and an area dean.

Following the announcement of her appointment Emma said: "I am delighted and thrilled to be taking on this new role for the Cathedral which combines pastoral care of the staff and congregations with missional outreach to the local, national and international community, along with sharing in the full liturgical life of the Mother Church to the Anglican Communion."

Emma trained at Ripon College, Cuddesdon, from 1997 to 2000, and was a tutor for the Initial Ministerial Education Reflective Practice: Ministry and Spirituality courses and a co-founder of the successful Festival of Prayer day conference run in association with the Bible Reading Fellowship. She has given talks and led retreats and quiet days both in the UK and abroad, and also tutored and lectured extensively on Christian Spirituality, especially at Oxford University, where she completed her doctoral research on Julian of Norwich in 2014.

Emma and her husband Jonathan Arnold, currently Dean of Divinity at Magdalen College, Oxford, have two children, Katie (14) and Thomas (12).

The Canon Missioner is a residentiary canon role and will have the tasks of the former Canon Pastor position together with the ministry of outreach and welcome opportunities offered by the Cathedral's restoration and development project, The Canterbury Journey.

• *Emma Pennington writes about Canterbury Cathedral as the still centre which has always drawn pilgrims to it on page 29.*

The Canterbury Pilgrims Festival – report

In June of this year, the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome led a three-day festival designed to highlight the history and traditions of pilgrimage in Canterbury. The festival followed on from the great success of the Pilgrims Festival held in Wye in September 2018.



Background

Funded by the Heritage Lottery for the celebration of the North Downs Way 40th anniversary, the festival in Wye was organised by the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, whose aim was to 'communicate the variety of ways to celebrate and enjoy pilgrimage and long-distance walking.'¹

The North Downs Way and the famous Pilgrims Way pilgrimage route are the same path for much of the journey from Winchester to Canterbury. As such, the Kent Downs is currently working on several projects to explore the benefits of pilgrimage, including the economic development of rural areas along Kent's pilgrimage routes, as a means of protecting cultural and natural heritage and providing spiritual and well-being benefits to pilgrims. Funding for these projects from Interreg Europe and the National Heritage Lottery fund were made available to the CPR to organise the second Pilgrims Festival in Canterbury.

The Festival programme

As Canterbury Representative of the CPR, Julia Lewis was well placed to lead the Canterbury Pilgrims Festival, relying on the participation and

support of local contacts to deliver a diverse programme of events. The programme included led walks of varying distances along Canterbury's pilgrimage routes the Via Francigena and the Pilgrims Way; a full-day pilgrim workshop at Canterbury Cathedral, a poetry workshop, a labyrinth walk, and a pilgrim feast. Events took place across Canterbury, incorporating many historic sites: Canterbury Cathedral, the medieval Poor Priests Hospital, the church of St. Paul's Outside the Walls and the labyrinth on the University of Kent campus. Attendees to the festival came from both near and far – one dedicated pilgrim even came from Georgia in the USA.

The festival was made possible through the work of Julia Lewis, co-organiser, and CPR member Victoria Field, Jane Cook of the Kent Downs, and with the support of CPR chair Carlo Laurenzi and trustee Cecilia Weston-Baker.

Conscious Café Labyrinth - Journey of Life

This was an exploration of the journey of life using walking the labyrinth as a metaphor of life's journey, and looking at the value of walking as a tool for meditation and reflection while drawing on the history of walking labyrinths as a form of pilgrimage.

Poetry and Pilgrimage - led by poet Victoria Field

The workshop - for anyone interested in creative writing, poetry and ideas of pilgrimage - included close reading of pilgrimage literature, discussion of ideas in the texts and writing in response.

Guided walk through Canterbury on the Augustine Camino

A walk led by Andrew Kelly, founder of the Augustine Camino, through Canterbury, to see some of the lesser-known pilgrimage highlights including the od leper hospital at Harbledown, the relics of Saints Thomas More and Thomas Becket, and St. Martin's church, the oldest in continuous use in the English-speaking world.

Pilgrim Workshop at Canterbury Cathedral

A full day of talks exploring the pilgrimage routes of Canterbury, engagement with natural and built heritage while on a pilgrimage, concluding with a panel of experienced pilgrims reflecting on their motivations for undertaking a pilgrimage.

Chilham to Canterbury on the North Downs/Pilgrim's Way – led by Walk Awhile

Starting with a discussion on Hilaire Belloc's and Julia Cartwright's pilgrimage routes to Canterbury and the Victorian and Edwardian revival of interest in the Pilgrims Way, the walk followed the Pilgrims Way through

rural Kent passing No Man's Orchard, the villages of Old Wives Lees and Chartham Hatch, in landscape typical of the Garden of England with its rustic oast houses, hop gardens, orchards and woodland. It included a visit of Bigbury Camp earthworks, an iron-age hill fort where Caesar defeated the British tribes in 54 BC, along with the village of Harbledown, which Chaucer referred to as Bobbe-up-and-down in the Canterbury Tales as his pilgrims made their way to Canterbury.

First steps on the way to Rome on the Via Francigena

A walk on the first leg of the Francigena from Canterbury to Shepherdswell. Starting with a blessing at Canterbury Cathedral, the route passed the UNESCO heritage sites of St. Augustine's Abbey and St. Martin's church. There were refreshments and talks at the churches of Patricbourne, Womenswold and Shepherdswell.

Charing to Canterbury on the Pilgrims Way - led by The Charing Palace Trust

A 19-mile walk along the North Downs Way/Pilgrims Way from the archbishop's palace in Charing to Canterbury.

Pilgrim Feast

Pilgrims, weary from a day of walking, gathered together for a communal meal to share reflections of the day and to drink and be merry as Chaucer's pilgrims did on their way to Canterbury. The Canterbury Pilgrim Festival feast featured medieval entertainment from Sandwich band Rough Musicke and a delicious buffet.



Reflections

The Canterbury Pilgrims Festival generated much local interest in Canterbury's pilgrimage traditions and history, and feedback was overwhelmingly positive. It has helped further develop a local network of interested organisations and individuals, making it likely that similar events will be planned for the future. Current discussions envision festivals taking place annually along the pilgrimage routes of Kent and beyond.

If you would be interested in being involved in future festivals or if you have suggestions for events, please get in touch with Julia Lewis: canterburyrep@pilgrimstorome.org.uk. The panel at the pilgrims workshop was particularly well-received and the CPR has decided to copy this format for their next AGM in spring 2020. We would like to thank all those who

were involved in the organisation of the festival and those who attended events, sharing their passion and enthusiasm for pilgrimage.

A special thank you to:

Victoria Field, Jane Cook, Nicki Batchelor, Carlo Laurenzi, Cecilia Weston Baker, Catherine Lloyd, Andrew Kelly, Jack Bright, Keith Adams, volunteers at St Paul's church Canterbury, St Mary Patrixbourne, St Margaret of Antioch in Womenswold and St. Andrew, Shepherdswell

Panelists: David Matthews, Paulo Seth, Alice Charrington, Mark Holihan

Speakers: Leigh Hatts, Dr. Eirini Saratsi and Dr. Sheila Sweetinburgh

¹ <https://www.interregeurope.eu/greenpilgrimage/events/event/1558/wye-pilgrims-festival/>

The Pilgrims Festival was sponsored by:

North Downs Way

NATIONAL TRAIL 



News from the EAVF

Those who follow our Via Francigena Facebook group (an invaluable source of pilgrim-to-pilgrim information) will see that potential pilgrims often seek advice about the infrastructure on the French part of the route – only to be answered by those who walked that way some years ago that there is virtually none! Some even advise missing out France altogether.

This is absolutely not the case: accommodation and way marking have increased and improved, thanks to hard work by the French branch of the EAVF (European Association of the Vie Francigene), which has also ensured that local knowledge of the Via Francigena has grown enormously.

Here **Martine Gautheron**, vice-president of the EAVF, tells us about the progress that has been made.



The mission of the EAVF, under the aegis of the Council of Europe and funded by it, is to develop, promote and provide information on The Via Francigena from Canterbury to Rome.

In France the Via Francigena is coterminous with the GR145, one of the network of Grande

Randonnée paths, and stretches some 1000km from Calais to the Swiss frontier, passing through 244 villages and towns, with an exceptional heritage of buildings, landscape and history. 2019 has seen a considerable increase in the number of *communes* and *départements* joining the EAVF, and a greater involvement of local walking and pilgrim associations.

Several major projects are now being developed, made possible by the increased interest within the three regions the VF traverses, and the appointment of a full-time communications and development officer, Leslie Maussang (answerable to Martine Gautheron, who is based at Champlitte)

- Local cultural and environmental events made possible by the collaboration with FFRandonnée and the support of the local departments – for example the 'I LOVE FRANCIGENA' walks (five days in Bourgogne-Franche-Comté from Champlitte to Montboillon in May/June, and four days in the Hauts-de-France from Laon to Reims in October. This means local residents can begin to “own” the VF and understand more what it is and what it offers.



- A guidebook from Canterbury to the Great St Bernard Pass due out end 2019/2020 published by Favre.
- New signs and practical and tourist information along the way and in the towns and villages.
- Updated accommodation list for pilgrims which will be on the EAVF portal from the end of 2019. New pilgrim accommodation has been provided in Bar-sur-Aube, Blessonville, Leffond, and Champlitte.
- A diagnostic study on the VF in collaboration with the University of Toulouse which highlights the necessity of developing a network of all stakeholders in the Via Francigena.
- A preliminary study together with the Ministers of Culture of the four VF countries to have the Via Francigena recognised as a World Heritage Site.

Email viafrancigena.champlitte@gmail.com or ring +33 6 88 33 23 29.

The EAVF General Assembly in Besançon 14 June



At this meeting a special issue of the Via Francigena magazine devoted to the Via Francigena del Sud was presented. The cover shows Monte Sant'Angelo, the historical pilgrimage destination, and a UNESCO world heritage site. This marks a growing interest in the continuation south of the VF. This edition of the magazine, published in Italian, French and English also reports on the development of the VF from Calais to Pontarlier.

Alison Raju



Many members will have heard with sadness that Alison Raju, the doyenne of walking pilgrims and the author of many guides to pilgrimage routes all round Europe, and a member of the Confraternity's steering group for many years, had fallen earlier this year, and was in a coma in hospital near her home in Nottingham.

We are pleased to be able to report that by August Alison was out of her coma, was awake most of the time, and was able to speak quietly, and eat. According to the latest report Alison still spends much of the time in bed, but has been taken up to the hospital roof garden in a wheelchair to enjoy being out of doors.

We send best wishes and wish her a complete recovery.

Reflections on Walking

by Brian Mooney

Brian Mooney, author and journalist, is vice-chairman of the CPR and was formerly chair (2015-2019). In retirement, he has clocked up more than 15,000 km on long distance walks, including to Rome and back from his home in Coggeshall, Essex, and from Walsingham in Norfolk to Santiago de Compostela, and from Gibraltar to London. He has crossed Britain on foot three times and walked the entire width or length of France six times – most recently from Marseille to Cherbourg.



When asked why I walk the way I do, my standard answer is “Because I am an anarchist”. If I am miked up for talk, such an admission can produce uncomfortable ripples in my audience. I hasten to explain what I mean: that walking is one of the last human activities which is not regulated in some form or another. Within reason, we can walk where we want, as far as we want and whenever we want. There are no rules about walking, and certainly no EU directives! In that sense walking is perhaps one of our last freedoms.

Each of us, of course, has his or her own interpretation of this freedom; it is the common denominator of what we do. In sharing these reflections, I am not being prescriptive; we each have our own understanding, and every viewpoint is as legitimate as the other.

In a talk, I like to start with this absence of rules. No one can say how far or how fast we should walk in a day. Some people walk to see things along the way, others to get to their destination. That could be the difference between 20 km and 50 km. Some people are happy at 4kph, others feel unchallenged unless they are burning up the ground at 6kph.

Terrain depending, I prefer something in between, although I don't feel I have had a full day unless I have chalked up least 35 km. With a few breaks, this entails a very manageable eight hours of walking at around 5kph. I like to think of that as the pace at which our first ancestors moved across our planet. But whatever the distance, and whatever the time it takes, it is a sobering thought that it is virtually impossible to travel any slower than on foot.

Slow travel gives us time to reflect; it puts us back in touch with our environment and reconnects us with nature. We swap the ceiling of a room for the canopy of the ever-changing sky, and we have time to look both inside and around us. I can hold and develop a thought all through a day, and at the same time I actually start to see again. I enjoy looking at buildings and I like to pick out every plant, bush and tree that I pass, though I will never be able to name them all.

On foot, we appreciate the contours and shape of the land. An open horizon on the flat, a track winding uphill, an undulating path or a steep climb – all bring with them the promise of the next step and the anticipation of a view to come.

Like all of us, I seek out tracks and footpaths, but unlike many fellow walkers, I am not averse to walking on roads. Obviously the smaller and quieter are better and safer; narrow country lanes sprouting grass in their centre are the best, but I am prepared to put up with traffic, walking the hard shoulder for the odd kilometre. When I am heading into traffic, I feel safer than cyclists; walkers can see and hear what is coming towards them, cyclists have their back to the traffic. The cars that frighten are those overtaking and coming from behind on the offside. That is the one that will get me.

It is commonly maintained that a true traveller is the person who sets out in the morning without knowing where he or she will sleep that night. That disqualifies me; I like to know that I have a bath, a meal and a bed for the

night, and I book ahead. Moreover, I enjoy time spent poring over maps and searching online to plan my long-distance walks.

I admire those who set off in the blind hope that at the end of the day providence will come to their aid, though I worry that the expectation of hospitality is sometimes abused by people who are essentially on a middle-class holiday. I don't like seeing elderly priests disturbed to help find accommodation for healthy young pilgrims from prosperous homes in Europe and North America.



At Omaha Beach, walking from Marseille to Cherbourg 2019

Much, but not all, of my walking has been on ancient pilgrimage routes, and I love following the prayerful and historical footfall of pilgrims; but I have no idea whether I have ever been a genuine pilgrim, and long ago I ceased even trying to define who is and who is not a pilgrim. Each to their own.

Although I use Google Earth for navigating in and out of towns and cities, I also take maps. I like to see the big picture. But I carry very little else in my rucksack. While I acknowledge that this puts me in a privileged bracket of being able to afford hotels and B&Bs, I always say that a plastic bank card weighs considerably less than a tent. Apart from the cost, hotels have one major disadvantage; I like to get away early, and it is often hard to arrange breakfast before 6.30 am.

I am frequently asked about blisters to which I reply that there is one simple solution: don't get them. Few things are worse on a long walk. I have avoided them over many thousands of miles, and over many years, by sticking to a brand of German boot with a wide last and by wearing double-skinned 1000 Mile socks.

Every walker, the five miler and the forty miler, can do with the reassurance that comes when lacing up trusted footwear. A contented pair of feet sets us up for all the good mental and physical benefits of walking.

• *Brian Mooney reviews Shane O'Mara's "In Praise of Walking" on page 47.*

An English Pilgrimage

Julia Lewis, the Confraternity's Canterbury representative, invites us to explore the beautiful Pilgrims Way



The view after Aylesford

With all that England has to offer, many pilgrims on the Via Francigena find the 20 miles on the official route from Canterbury to Dover insufficient in comparison to the weeks they will enjoy travelling through the landscapes and cultures of France, Switzerland and Italy. Maybe because of this the Confraternity has seen a trend of pilgrims either starting from their homes in the UK (even as far as Scotland), or pilgrims from overseas beginning their journey in London, or in Winchester on the Pilgrims Way.

The Pilgrims Way is a beautiful route connecting the two cathedral cities of Winchester, capital of the medieval kingdom of Wessex, and Canterbury, and joined by the route from London at Otford, Kent. Both Winchester and Canterbury are famous pilgrimage destinations. Winchester for the shrine of St Swithun, bishop from 852 to 862 and patron saint of droughts, and Canterbury for St Augustine (died 604) and St Thomas Becket, martyred in 1170.

Starting from Winchester, pilgrims will experience a variety of landscapes, from watercress beds and wild orchids in Hampshire, through two Areas of

Outstanding National Beauty in the Surrey Hills and Kent Downs, enchanting woodlands covered in bluebells in the spring, hedgerows of sweet briar roses, to little villages with their distinctive local thatched and timbered cottages.

Which route?

The history of The Pilgrims' Way as a pilgrimage route is not without controversy. Unlike the document drafted by Archbishop Sigeric's clerk listing the stops on their return journey from Rome in 990, and on which the modern Via Francigena route is based, there is no such explicit evidence for the route from Winchester to Canterbury. What is not disputed, however, is that the two cities are connected by ancient trackways following the chalk escarpment that today makes up the North Downs. Offering an elevated route to travellers, these downs (a word derived from the Old English for 'hill') are believed to have been used for trade from c1500 BCE. Two tracks developed over time - one high up on the ridge of the downs and the second, wrapping around the hillsides, and keeping out of the low-lying areas that were prone to flooding.

When Winchester and Canterbury became pilgrimage destinations, these routes would have certainly been used by pilgrims travelling in both directions. The controversy surrounding the Pilgrims Way lies in the name of the route, which only emerged in the 19th century and seems likely to have been thought up by the makers of the Ordnance Survey (Hatts), and in which path pilgrims should use along the downs – the high route now known as the North Downs Way, or the lower route that has become known as the Pilgrims Way.

Pilgrims are often motivated to follow the most 'authentic' pilgrimage route, and this poses many challenges, particularly as historic paths have often developed into major roads that are unsafe and unpleasant for walking. Seeking authenticity, a pilgrim may be drawn to follow the Pilgrims Way described in the recently-published Cicerone guide by Leigh Hatts. The route is relatively safe, if you do not object to walking along country lanes that can at times be narrow and windy, reducing visibility for traffic.

Pilgrims should not however feel compelled to follow the Pilgrims Way out of devotion to authenticity. Pilgrims historically did not follow specific routes, but rather took the safest and most passable way available to them, and thus 'authenticity' is hard to define. I believe that, as modern pilgrims, we should feel that same freedom to choose the route most appropriate to our needs. As such, the route following the ridgeway of the downs, the North Downs Way National Trail, should be considered.



For one-third of the distance from Winchester to Canterbury, the Pilgrims Way and the North Downs Way (NDW) are coterminous. Unlike the Pilgrims Way, the NDW is well maintained, as it is managed by the National Trails, and is well signed, making it easy to follow without a guidebook. GPS tracks are available, and there is extensive information available on the National Trails website and in guidebooks. Terrain is all important when selecting the route: the North Downs Way is rural, and takes walkers high up into the downs through sometimes dense areas of woodlands. It is a tranquil experience with some challenging climbs but rewarding views. Access to shops and accommodation is limited, and often off-route. The Pilgrims Way in contrast often follows roads and brings walkers directly into town and village centres with amenities, public transport, and churches and places of historic interest.

Recommendation

These two different routes from Winchester to Canterbury offer pilgrims an opportunity to tailor their own experience. I recommend giving yourself the flexibility to follow sections of each route that most appeal to you. Feeling too tired to climb that hill? Follow the Pilgrims Way until the NDW rejoins it. Fancy the shade of woodlands where you can escape the traffic and maybe spot a deer or two, follow the acorn symbol of the NDW.

If you are unconvinced to try the North Downs Pilgrims Way, Mandy Bright of Walk Awhile walking holidays describes what she loves about this route: *“I love the feeling of walking through history - starting with the awe inspiring Great Hall and Cathedral in Winchester, the route passes Jane Austen’s Hampshire home and through towns which were visited by William Cobbett, and later in the walk, Rochester, which has strong connections to Charles Dickens. There are Neolithic sites, a Roman battleground, ancient chapels with pilgrims’ doorways, and the well where Henry II commenced his penitent walk to Canterbury following Becket’s murder. On top of all that the scenery in the Surrey Hills and across the Kent Downs is stunning: rare wildflowers can be spotted in season, there are vineyards, lavender fields, watercress meadows, orchards and hop gardens!”*

This is echoed by Leigh Hatts, author of the Cicerone guide: *“My favourite stretch of the Pilgrims Way runs up the Darenth Valley linking Dartford to Otford. Chaucer missed this out by going on the direct London main road to Rochester but the eleven-mile Darenth diversion was used from*

early times. Thomas Becket came this way on his final return to Canterbury just before his murder. Historian Arthur Mee described it as 'unique on the map of England'. The church at Eynsford, opposite a ford, is where Becket's fatal feud with Henry II began. Further on, past a Roman villa with a pre-Augustine chapel, is Lullingstone Castle where Henry VIII paused on his way to Canterbury. Samuel Palmer compared the last few miles to Psalm 65 for its 'folds full of sheep' and 'valleys thick with corn'. The only change in landscape is the lovely lavender field alongside the path. At Otford this path meets the other Pilgrims Way coming from Winchester. Beyond here, swelling pilgrim numbers pass St Edith's Well at Kemsing and the many other secret signs of the road such as Halling's row of cottages which began as a pilgrim chapel. The Pilgrims Way is awakening as more people set out for Canterbury, Santiago and Rome."

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Aylesford from the medieval bridge

“Trees and stones will teach you” - the spiritual dimension of pilgrimage



Tim Redmond is a Catholic priest and serial long-distance pilgrim. Here he considers the spiritual dimension of pilgrimage - with the aid of poetry.

“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16)

Like many, but by no means all, people who walk the Via Francigena, I came to it having walked many routes of the Camino de Santiago de Compostela. That is, at the present time, a much more popular walking - and pilgrim - route, attracting perhaps as many as half a million people each year. There are no accurate statistics, but it is certain that last year 327,342 obtained the Compostela, the certificate awarded to those who have walked the last 100km and who declare that they have walked ‘for religious or spiritual reasons, or at least with an attitude of searching.’

The question about the religious or spiritual reasons for walking, and whether these are the same thing or different, exercises the minds of people writing on various social media forums connected with the Camino. Along with discussion of bedbugs, blisters and footwear, I usually shy away from such debates. They seem to me to eventually bring the worst out in (some) people. For me they are not worth fighting about. I find much less contentious discussion among those who walk the Via Francigena.

Nor do I get involved with discussions of who is, and who is not, a pilgrim, or worse again who is or is not a ‘true’ pilgrim. But I do go along with a simple definition that a pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place, for spiritual or religious reasons. Or at least, I can go along with the first part but I am still thinking about the ‘spiritual or religious reasons’. I am not sure they are two different things. I am certain a pilgrimage is not a trip just for exercise – I run marathons, 10k, and parkruns when I want exercise. Nor is it a cultural expedition. Neither am I personally in favour of picking my route according to the places I will visit on the way. They can be splendid, but they are for me not the point. And after many miles on the paths, I am more than ever convinced that journeying is more important than the arriving. And - perhaps controversially, - I do not go on pilgrimage

to make friends, although that often happens. I do not worry when I meet no fellow traveller for four or six weeks, though I enjoy transient meetings with the people who live along the way I travel.

I am starting to write this on the feast of St Bernard of Clairvaux. St Bernard (not of course the St Bernard of Menton of the Great St Bernard Pass) belonged to the contemplative order of Cistercians, or Trappists and founded the Abbey of Clairvaux in France in 1115. The present buildings, dating from 1708 have housed a high security prison, and no monks, since the French Revolution.



Tim Redmond at the Hospitalité St Bernard

The VF passes the prison/monastery and is approached through a hilly forest. There was, when I was there, a most hospitable hostel for the families of prisoners, run by religious sisters, who also offered a warm pilgrim welcome, though I believe they have left since. And this is what St Bernard said: *Believe me, you will find more lessons in the woods than in books. Trees and stones will teach you what you cannot learn from masters.* Interestingly this was in a letter to an Englishman, Henry Murdac, who later became a Cistercian monk, and later again Archbishop of York.

The poet Wordsworth, said to have walked 175,000 miles in his lifetime, seems to paraphrase this in his poem *The Tables Turned* thus:

*One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.*

And Shakespeare said something similar:

*And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.
I would not change it. (As You Like It, Act 2, Sc 1)*

Some lines from Herman Hesse strike me also:

For me, trees have always been the most penetrating preachers. I revere them when they live in tribes and families, in forests and groves. And even more I revere them when they stand alone. They are like lonely persons. Not like hermits who have stolen away out of some weakness, but like great, solitary men, like Beethoven and Nietzsche. ... Nothing is holier, nothing is more exemplary than a beautiful, strong tree. (Wandering: Notes and Sketches, 1920)

And an Irish priest, philosopher and poet, John O'Donohue who died too young in 2008, and who wrote about spirituality and landscape said, *I love mountains. I feel that mountains are huge contemplatives. They are there and they are in the presence up to their necks and they are still in it and with it and within it....So I think landscape is an incredible, mystical teacher, and when you begin to tune into its sacred presence, something shifts inside you.* (Walking on the Pastures of Wonder, edited by John Quinn, 2015)

Although I am a city person at heart, stirred as much by the sound of the early morning bin lorry as by the dawn chorus, I do like the countryside. The two loudest things in my garden in London are parakeets and foxes, and neither does very much for me. Until last year I lived in rural Ireland and have to say I found it a bit too quiet. The sound of a tree requires much attention to be appreciated. It takes time, and I think for me that is something which the VF gives. I discussed with a pilgrim on a forum once whether the VF, or the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, were occasions when special things happened. She maintained that they were. I said I thought that special things – acts, experiences, realisations – happen every day, but all too often we do not have the time to notice them. For me one of the essences of pilgrimage is time – time to recognise and appreciate what is happening and what is just being.

And that has been my experience as I have walked, especially as I have walked alone. There is time in the day to stay with one thought, or one idea, or even one word. It may be from the liturgy of the day but need not be. It may be something caught on a TV in a bar at breakfast time. Or an idea that surfaced over last night's supper in a glorious mix of languages.

An important part of pilgrimage for me is that I walk along a path that others have walked over generations and centuries. Robert Macfarlane in *The Old Ways* (2012) says: *For pilgrims walking the Camino, every footfall is doubled, landing at once on the actual road and also on the path of faith.* I don't obsess over the exact or 'authentic' path. I think myself that pilgrims of old were probably pragmatic and took the most practical and least dangerous road. For others, the authentic route seems more important, though I am often unconvinced by their arguments, and there are many

arguments! And I am happy to align myself with the eccentrics to whom Robert Macfarlane refers: *The hinterlands were filling with eccentrics, making their odd journeys in the belief that certain voyages out might become voyages in.*

Where does all this lead? Once again poetry has brought me the answer.

On the VF last year I was forced to abandon an attempt, early in the season, to cross the Great St Bernard Pass on foot. Others had passed earlier, but it was still very snowy and very cold. I managed to get to about five km from the pass but realised I could not see the way forward. It was misty, I was shivering, and I was sinking in fresh snow. I turned around and picked my way back down, with some difficulty. I cannot pretend it was not a little dangerous, but it was not I think foolhardy. I had taken advice before setting out and I had borrowed snowshoes. There is something elemental about confronting unyielding landscape and weather, and trees and stones. And surely I was walking in the difficult footsteps of earlier travellers. If it had been a holiday, I think it would have spoiled it. But as part of a pilgrimage, I could not dismiss it in that way.



A friend, long afterward, sent me these lines from Rainer Maria Rilke, the Austrian poet who died in 1926.

...But to have been

this once, completely, even if only once:

to have been at one with the earth, seems beyond undoing.

When I stopped, I think I was at one with the earth. We had come to an honourable truce.

Some time later I read the whole of that poem. It is the *Ninth Duino Elegy* and I found these lines:

For when the traveller returns from the mountain-slopes into the valley, he brings, not a handful of earth, unsayable to others, but instead some word he has gained, some pure word, the yellow and blue gentian. Perhaps we are here in order to say: house, bridge, fountain, gate, pitcher, fruit-tree, window – at most: column, tower... But to say them, you must understand, oh to say them more intensely than the Things themselves ever dreamed of existing. Isn't the secret intent

*of this taciturn earth, when it forces lovers together,
that inside their boundless emotion all things may shudder with joy?*

So I continued on my way, and reached Rome, with many more small realisations along the way. Long ago I had lived in Rome for four years, and so the experience of arriving was not as exciting as it is for some. But nor was it my final stop. I had unfinished business. I stayed one night and then took the night bus to Aosta and two more buses to the point near Bourg St Bernard in Switzerland where I had turned back six weeks previously. And on a glorious summer's day I reached the hospice at the Great St Bernard Pass. Although there was a sense of achievement, it was not as meaningful as my previous attempt. I took two days to rest and then started down towards Aosta.



That morning along the path I saw on a rock a white plaque, the letters rather crudely incised. Not like the gold inlaid tomb of a Pope in Tuscany. There was no date and there were no names, and the message was stark:

The Stagnini Gypsies/Travellers (Zingari), scattered on a nomadic life, vagabonds for the hard reason of just existing, were seized and overcome by a whirlwind of the whitest but deadly snow. Traveller, give a thought to them and pray for them.'

And I thought of my carbon fibre sticks, and wicking T-shirt, and 'ultralightweight' everything, and the GPS on my phone. And I felt very humbled. A stone to teach me.

Robert Macfarlane's books introduced me to the work of Václav Cílek, a contemporary Czech geologist and philosopher and walker. He says 'The earth will eventually confide the most to those who do not ask too loudly.' (*To Breathe With Birds, A Book of Landscapes*, Václav Cílek, 2015). And he compiled what he calls 'wayfarer's rules'. Here are a few: 'A small place with which I resonate is more important than a large pilgrimage site where I am only a visitor. A person is at home in only one landscape....A place in the landscape corresponds to a place in the heart.'

I had found my place.

• Since completing the VF from Canterbury to Rome, Father Tim Redmond has walked on to Brindisi and then from Dürres in Albania to Thessaloniki, with his eyes still set on Istanbul and Jerusalem.
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The spiritual dimension of pilgrimage

Johnnie Walker, the principal Camino Pilgrim guide writer for many years, was called to Santiago in the first place. Since he first answered that call, he has walked many pilgrim routes, written many guide books and met many pilgrims with a variety of motives for making the journey. Here he too considers how the walking pilgrimage can bring about profound change.



Over the years I'm fortunate to have walked the Camino routes to Santiago many times, from Florence to Rome via Assisi, and I've walked in and around Jerusalem and other centres of pilgrimage in the Holy Land. A few years ago I also walked the Buddhist pilgrimage route to the 88 Temples on the Japanese island of Shikoku.

To be honest in the past I've been very mealy-mouthed about the "spiritual dimension of pilgrimage." I often took the view that every journey along the routes to these holy places constituted a pilgrimage – whether the motive of the traveller was to have a holiday, enjoy the culture and food of a new country, simply to enjoy the hiking or indeed to reflect and pray along the way.

After walking thousands of kilometres I now have a different view. Perhaps for me it took that long to realise that there is no spiritual dimension to pilgrimage: pilgrimage *is* itself wholly spiritual. Whilst pilgrimage may be defined as a time set apart from normal life to travel to a holy place I believe now that the central and most important characteristic of pilgrimage is at least being open minded to the realisation that our search for God is at the heart of what motivates us to be pilgrims. For me that was a gradual process.

What of others who aren't committed or open to exploring this motivation? Are they pilgrims? The farthest I'd go in contributing to a debate about what makes a "true pilgrim" is that this must be self defining. I could quote from scripture and other spiritual writing, but I'm not into proselytising; all I can do is draw on my own personal experience.

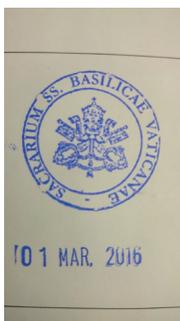
My very first pilgrimage on the Via de la Plata from Seville to Santiago in 2007 set in motion profound changes in my life. I had planned to retire to

Seville. Yet 36 days later when I arrived in the Cathedral of Santiago many of my intentions, including that plan, had changed. I decided I simply had to walk more of the pilgrimage routes. I loved the experience. The freedom. The liberating knowledge that if all else in my life failed I could pack a rucksack with a few things and be happy. Living the life of a pilgrim, sleeping in simple accommodation and eating simple fare, was the opposite of my life beforehand when I wouldn't book an hotel which didn't have 24-hour room service. More Caminos followed. So did more change. I began to reflect more deeply on my life than I had ever done before. I revisited old wrongs and resentments, as I believe we all do, but slowly I realised that I had to let many of these go if I was to have any peace. I also came to understand that many of the people who had hurt me had themselves been hurt. Perhaps the most difficult realisation was that I had often been the author of hurts and resentments, whilst I had always preferred to think of myself as the victim.

Then came God. Not in a blinding flash. Not in a great event. There was never a moment of conversion. I still have doubts and periods where faith fails me. But gradually as I stepped out more and more on pilgrimage I began to pray for other people, for my children, for myself. Almost embarrassed about this I would chide myself: "What are you doing, John? At best you are an agnostic!" But I would laugh at myself. "If that is true," I thought, "What on earth are you doing walking 1000km to the cathedral celebrated as the tomb of one of Christ's Apostles?"

As these journeys continued I enjoyed making many friends. I very much enjoyed engaging with local people. I enjoyed the food and collected recipes as I went along. I also started making lists of people to pray for – although I would never have admitted this to anyone! I began to think of myself as a pilgrim.

Rome



It was therefore in many ways inevitable that I would walk to Rome one day. I'd been brought up a Catholic and as an organist I had been active in the Church despite my profound doubts about the conduct of the institution. The last time I had been in Saint Peter's was to see our archbishop receive the red hat. As I watched the mitred heads entering the Basilica I remember thinking that this display of male power and authority was all I hated about the Church. Similarly I was disgusted that there wasn't a sign in the Vatican art galleries stating: "All profits from visits to these treasures go to feeding the hungry."

Yet I was drawn to walk with a close friend from Florence to Rome one cold, snowy February. Two very powerful things happened on that journey.

One afternoon we climbed high to reach a simple little church on a hill top. As we entered, there beside the book of the Gospels was a bowl of ashes. It was Ash Wednesday. We two pilgrims made the mark of the Cross on each other's foreheads, saying the words, "Remember that you are dust and unto dust you shall return." This reminder of my mortality was one of the most energising lessons of that pilgrimage. Value each day, enjoy every moment.

Another day and another climb brought us to the Santuario of La Verna where Saint Francis meditated and where his presence there has been authenticated beyond doubt. Along the way I had read about this saint. He had been a rebel. He had rejected the luxurious living of many clerics in the Catholic Church. When he encountered lepers he simply stayed with them to help them. It was in this place I experienced, for the first time, an almost overwhelming sense that I was on the right path in my life both literally and figuratively.



That feeling was to be repeated one day in a Buddhist temple far away on the Japanese island of Shikoku. I had met Akiro in passing several times on the route. He always smiled serenely but never spoke. I entered Temple 55 one afternoon and performed the entrance ritual, washing hands and mouth and ringing the bell to let the deities know I was there. Akiro was standing slightly bowed praying aloud the Heart Sutra. As I listened to his lilting chant I closed my eyes. Reaching the end Akiro turned and said only four words in faltering English: "You pray, you pilgrim". There we have it!

Bunion said it in other words:
"His first avowed intent, to be a pilgrim."

Johnnie Walker www.johnniewalker-santiago.blogspot.com

Pilgrim, Vagabond, Saint: St Benoît Labre – an appreciation

The pilgrim on the Via Francigena walking between Calais and Arras will often stop in the village of Amettes, though many may be unaware this was the birthplace of a great pilgrim saint. CPR member Andrew Dennis explores his life and relevance



On 16 April 1783 Benoît (Benedict) Joseph Labre, an emaciated 35-year-old member of the Third Order of St Francis collapsed from exhaustion on the steps of the Santa Maria di Monti in Rome. He was taken to the house of a butcher at Number 2 via dei Serpente, laid out on a straw palliasso and given the last rites. Shortly afterwards ‘worn out by his sufferings and austerities’ he died.

News of the young man’s death spread like wildfire. Cries of ‘E morti il santo! The saint is dead!’ reverberated around the city, and the dogs stopped barking. During his funeral the city police were obliged to intervene to restrain the crowd.

In the weeks that followed more than 136 miraculous healings were attributed to his intercession. Flowers are said to have grown where he’d walked. On 8 December 1881 Benoît Joseph Labre was canonised by Pope Leo XIII. He is the patron saint of pilgrims, tramps and the homeless.

Tonight the racing pigeons are circling. They coo soothingly as they alight on the pantile roof of the old barn next to which I’m settled on a bench watching their flight. I’ve walked across the countryside of the Pas de Calais

and on through its lonely villages and hamlets. I've just dropped into Amettes where Benoît Labre was born. As soon as I saw his birthplace I knew I was in the company of a friend. Feeling-based intuitions of this kind chime deep.

The Labre family's cottage is very simple. Whitewashed and picturesque, it lies in a grassy dell beneath the parish church of Saint-Sulpice. One room and a kitchen on the ground floor; above, a large dormitory-style space and a smaller room where the young Benoît slept and prayed. I step inside and follow the gist of his story...



Benoît Joseph Labre was born on 26 March 1748, the eldest of 15 children, to Jean-Baptiste Labre, a prosperous shopkeeper, and his wife Anna-Barbara Grandsire. His parents, who were from the middle class, were able to provide him with a good education and he was sent first to the village school and then to an uncle, the curé of Erin, who taught him from the age of 12. We're told that, even as a child, he showed an aptitude for asceticism, only this was counterbalanced by a 'fund of cheerfulness' which never left him. I love that. He had a sparkle.

Benoît's piety grew and at the age of 16 he resolved to become a monk at the Abbey of La Trappe. However, he was considered too young by his parents to join an enclosed order and so remained with his uncle ministering to the needs of the parish. Then followed a series of attempts to join the Carthusians and the Cistercians but, in every case, either for reasons of ill-health or unsuitability, he was unsuccessful. He just didn't fit in. At the age of 22, after what might be termed a moment of illumination, he took the momentous decision to live the rest of his life as a poor pilgrim.

"He understood," wrote Marconi, his biographer and confessor, "That it was God's will that he should abandon his country, his parents, and whatever is flattering in the world to lead a new sort of life...not in a wilderness nor in a cloister, but in the midst of the world, devoutly visiting the famous places of Christian devotion."

If he couldn't practise his faith inside a monastery he would carry a breviary into the highways and byways of Europe.

But of what relevance is Benoît to us in a wider context, in a world of spiritual barrenness and ecological degradation. Where might we find him?

Unlike some of the better-known pilgrim saints such as St James or St Roch who appears regularly with his faithful hound, Benoît's a *shy* saint. He's no St Paul, St Joan of Arc or St George, all of them extravert or military types. Benoît stays modestly in the background. We meet him in Amettes where his effigy lies in the parish church placed on the sackcloth palliase on which he died, and then again in Rome where he's buried in a side chapel in the Santa Maria di Monti. Should you continue further south along the VF del Sud he crops up at the Santuario dell' Inconronata and more lyrically in the Santa Maria de Leuca where he's known as S Giuseppe Benedetto Labre. Beyond this he's largely invisible. It's necessary to look *inside* to find him.



And herein, I suggest, lies the key to his relevance. At a time when it's accepted that we cannot go on as we are if our delicate ecosystem is to survive, this quiet, self-effacing introvert whose gaze is directed inward, offers us the possibility of illumination. He invites us to put the chitter-chatter of the everyday world to one side and look instead into our deeper selves to a place where, if we're patient, we might hear the softly beating heart of the numinous and awaken a sense of the Sacred. Where we might encounter the golden voice of the imagination.

'Who looks outside dreams; who looks inside wakes' says Carl Gustav Jung. Benoît personifies this statement wonderfully well.

A pilgrim journey, I suggest, may be likened to a mandala. It consists of many different segments which in combination form a whole. The way, the pilgrimage, has to do with piecing these segments together. Getting to know them, acknowledging them and integrating them so that as you go along you draw closer towards the centre, without of course ever reaching it.

The pigeons circle. My host, Jean-Baptiste, a charming, self-effacing farmer describes how one of them, a six-year-old with a white head, flew back from Spain in a day and a half. 'A traveller' he says, 'like Benoît'.

The shadows turn purple, the temperature falls and I retreat inside the gîte where I'm the only occupant. Not far away in a little wayside chapel a vase of white carnations has been placed beneath an image of the saint. The door's left open for those who wish to visit.



Canterbury Cathedral – the still centre of the turning world

Revd Dr Emma Pennington



*If you came this way,
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
At any time or at any season,
It would always be the same: you would have to put off
Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity,
Or carry report. You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid.*

I often recall these famous lines from T.S. Eliot's poem *Little Gidding* when I receive a call from the Welcome Centre at Canterbury Cathedral to come and bless a pilgrim. It has been one of the many joys that I have discovered in my new role as Canon Missioner, which is shared with my clergy colleagues.

You never know who you will meet: from a lone pilgrim leaning on a staff at the start of the Via Francigena, to cyclists setting off for Newcastle, or the father and son who completed the Pilgrims Way from Winchester having documented modern-day Chaucer Canterbury pilgrims in verse and photograph. They all are different and each has a story to tell. Their stories

range from seeking spiritual depth, to walking through wounds of hurt and loss, thanksgiving for a safe return, to the triumph of the adventure. Yet so often, as I take them up through to the Quire, past St Augustine's Chair and then up still further in the heart of the cathedral, regardless of the route they have come or journey yet to make, there is that sense of the putting off of sense and notion, which Eliot captures so well. As we stand together in the Trinity Chapel, gazing at the candle at our feet which marks the former shrine to Becket, and contemplate the faces and stories of ordinary pilgrims from the past who speak to us through glass and light of the wonders that God has performed in mainly unremarkable lives, prayer and blessing become valid and history coalesces into the eternal now.

Canterbury and pilgrimage



I often ask pilgrims to remember us when they reach their destination and write and tell me about their journey: what was it like, when was it hard, who did you meet, what unexpected events happened, what did you discover? For we at Canterbury Cathedral stand not only at the beginning of the road but also at the end of the pilgrimage. The point of departure and the place of homecoming, 'the still point of the turning world,' to quote Eliot once again. As we

stand still in this timeless place of history we delight in hearing your stories, tales which continue our long tradition of pilgrimage. For going right back, long before those Canterbury pilgrims set out on their holy holiday from Tabard Street, Canterbury has been a place of journeying to and departure from. Since Augustine's arrival in 597, to Henry II's pilgrimage of penance, to Pope John Paul II's visit in 1982, to the person who finds themselves standing at Christ Church Gate today, all have journeyed to this holy place. It is still our long-held mission to show all who come here the love of Christ through stone, glass, music, word and most of all through human welcome and hospitality.

The Welcome Centre

Central to our ministry of welcome is good hospitality, thus following the principles laid out by our Benedictine foundation and set out in Benedict's little rule for beginners in the spiritual life, that 'all guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ.' Through funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, a range of charitable trusts and foundations, the Friends of Canterbury Cathedral and many generous individuals, this long tradition of welcome is taking a new, more substantial, form in stone and glass as our new Welcome Centre gradually comes to completion. Now our human hand of welcome will be shaped and held

within a wonderful modern structure which welcomes everyone to this holy place of pilgrimage. Not only will it be the point of entry for all pilgrims but will also house a viewing gallery from which to see the Cathedral, generous community space as well as shop and other facilities. Looking out into the street our welcome extends beyond the Precincts into the Buttermarket and beyond.

Events in 2020 – Becket commemorated



The site of the shrine

In the coming year we are especially looking forward to welcoming those who come to commemorate a special moment in the life and history of this sacred space. 2020 not only marks the 850th anniversary of the dramatic murder of Thomas Becket on 29 December 1170 but also 800 years since his body was translated on 7 July 1220 from a tomb in the crypt into the glittering shine in the Trinity Chapel. Throughout the year there will be significant services and occasions to mark these historic events which ensured that Canterbury Cathedral became the principal pilgrimage destination in England during the medieval period, and to celebrate the resurgence of pilgrimage today. Services will include a special act of worship on 5 July and 29 December, for which a new set of red copes based on a design from Hubert Walter's chasuble have been commissioned and funded by many friends and benefactors of the Cathedral.

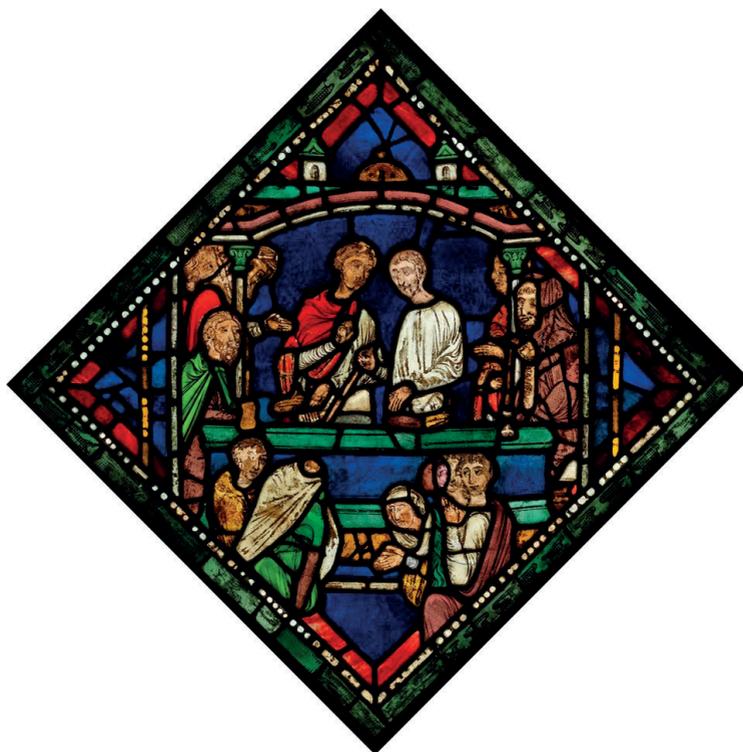
Along with our partners Canterbury Christ Church University, there will be a Medieval History Weekend from 3-5 April with talks by popular historians and guided walks through medieval Canterbury, as well as an academic conference on *Thomas Becket: Life, Death and Legacy* in early November. In addition to the annual Medieval Pageant and Family Trail on 4 July, the Beaney House of Art and Knowledge will be holding Medieval Canterbury workshops for children along with an exhibition on *St Thomas Becket – World Celebrity Healer* from 16 May-27 September. Finally, we look forward

to the opening of our new exhibition spaces in the crypt, water tower and undercroft which will highlight some of the treasures of the cathedral and provide new resources for all to learn about and experience pilgrimage for themselves.

Whether you are a curious seeker, devout worshipper, lover of the past in the present, avid Becket follower or pilgrim passing through, we look forward to welcoming you to this timeless and holy place, a space in which to linger, reflect and pray as well as a point of arrival and departure. In the words of Eliot:

*We shall not cease from our exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

Revd Dr Emma Pennington, Canon Missioner of Canterbury Cathedral
emma.pennington@canterbury.cathedral.org



Pilgrims gathered round the shrine of St Thomas Becket

A pause in Calais

CPR member **David Matthews** recounts how he stopped on his way to Rome, and what this came to mean for his pilgrimage and his life



Calais has, for hundreds of years, been Britain's portal to Europe and, often, the rest of the world. On a clear day, you can see the white cliffs of Dover from the sandy beaches in France. The city isn't listed on Sigeric's tenth-century itinerary because the town of Wissant, a day's walk down the coast, was the preferred port of disembarkation. Ever since shifting tidal patterns in the 12th century silted up Wissant's harbour, Calais gained its status as first port of choice.

And it remains so today. The English Channel is famously the world's busiest shipping area and, although our current Foreign Secretary was surprised to learn this fact in 2017, the UK is 'particularly reliant' on the Dover-Calais crossing. All of this makes Calais a place of extraordinary transit.

This transit isn't limited to goods. The ongoing migrant and refugee crisis that has worsened in recent years saw a large homeless and dispossessed population develop in Calais. By 2014 there were already more than a thousand refugees living in Calais.



They lived in a settlement that became known as the Jungle which, by 2016, was home to around 7000 people. Later that year the city made the decision to clear the Jungle, destroying the homes of those people.

Since then, the population of refugees in Calais has diminished but it still numbers many hundreds. The city continues to make these people feel extraordinarily unwelcome. The French border police and the infamous CRS (the interview process for which apparently selects those with a lack of empathy and propensity for violence) make frequent clearances of encampments. In these clearances any property, including tents and sleeping bags, are seized, leaving the refugees without any place to sleep. Excessive use of force and tear gas are also upsettingly commonplace.

Each refugee in Calais will have a different story of why they have put themselves through extraordinary hardship to arrive to a cold welcome at the cusp of the United Kingdom. None of these stories would be happy, however. They are all doing so to escape something so horrible that it has chased them from their home.



In the face of this misery and cruelty shines a bright light of love and charity: there is a small gaggle of organisations – NGOs and charities - that work out of a warehouse towards the edge of the city. They work together to provide as much support as they can to Calais and Dunkirk's refugee population. The Refugee Community Kitchen, for example, distributes 1200-1500 hot meals each day. Help Refugees coordinates clothing and other donations; they are always frantically trying to replace the tents which the police have seized. Other organisations provide medical support, or longer-term education projects.

In 2017 I walked the Via Francigena from Canterbury to Rome and just after I started I spent three nights in Calais and volunteered at the warehouse. Whilst there, I split wood for fuel and chopped more vegetables than I can remember. The warehouse is organised by long-term volunteers who have put their lives on hold to manage the industrial-scale operation. However, volunteers for as little as a few hours are made to feel extremely welcome. The warehouse itself is a strangely joyful place. It is very social and I had some excellent conversations over bowls of vegetable peelings.



What's more, they feed the volunteers the same delicious and nutritious food that goes out on distribution to the scattered refugee encampments across and around the city and beyond.

For me it was an extremely valuable part of my pilgrimage that otherwise involved a great deal of solitude. It was a place that was encouraging, hopeful, and full of possibilities.

As I continued my walk into Italy I met more and more 'boat people', as they are referred to. They were migrants (and often refugees) who had arrived on the Italian coast often by making dangerous sea crossings in unsuitable vessels. For them Italy might be the first port of call on their own journey through Europe. Again, these journeys will never be easy ones.

What I valued and continue to value about my time in Calais was an appreciation of my good fortune. As I was travelling south-east across the continent I was moving in contra-flow to countless people who had very little choice but to make that journey. As pilgrims, we think we know a little about moving ourselves around. We do this from a position of comparative luxury, and the sacrifices that we make along the way are nearly always symbolic. By recognising this fact I felt like I gained a valuable perspective that made my pilgrimage all the more enlightening.



If you are beginning at Canterbury, why not stay a night or so extra in Calais and take the bus out to the warehouse? If you won't be passing anytime soon, Help Refugees accepts monetary donations but is also always in needs of clothes, duvets, tents and sleeping bags. You can find out more information about the warehouse by searching online for Help Refugees or the Auberge des Migrants.

www.helprefugees.org/campaigns/donate/

Cycling the Via Francigena from Canterbury to Rome in June 2019 – reliving a Benedictine past

The road from Canterbury to Rome brings Joe Patton face to face with the extensive influence of the Benedictine order in Europe and on his own life. In this personal account he expresses his gratitude.

The reason why

An early childhood memory was the day Dad took the stabiliser wheels off my bicycle and firmly gripped the saddle keeping me upright. I started to pedal as he ran behind and with a leap of faith he released his grip, freeing me to balance the bike and discover the joy of cycling. It was a magical moment for both of us and a skill that has not been forgotten. *'You never forget how to ride a bike.'*

Another great memory was from 1963. Dad drove our family to Dover in a blue Standard 10 motor car for our very first sea voyage, a car ferry to France. He drove to Switzerland and manoeuvred onto the carriage of a car-carrying train that travelled through a long dark tunnel into Italy. We stopped at several places including Pisa where I climbed inside the world-famous leaning bell tower, an amazing experience. Our journey continued to Rome and the Vatican City. I clearly recall him saying that not many children of my age would have done this trip.

My happy childhood came to an abrupt halt when mother died. My feelings of sadness, loss and emptiness were devastating. To avoid going home to an empty house I would have tea at the home of a local church family, and the Benedictine monks who served our parish arranged summer holidays at Douai Abbey in Berkshire where I enjoyed sports including swimming with other boys.

As a child I failed to recognise and appreciate what was done for me and have no recollection of ever thanking people. Now in my 65th year, the effort of this solo bicycle ride is dedicated to those who supported my childhood and my late father in this his centenary year.

Starting from Canterbury Cathedral

Canterbury Cathedral was founded by the Benedictine Order and became Anglican after the dissolution of the monasteries. After attending Choral Evensong I introduced myself to Canon Emma who took me to St Stephen's Chapel. Knowing that thousands of people have made pilgrimages to this chapel it was touching that Canon Emma chose here to give me a pilgrim's blessing.

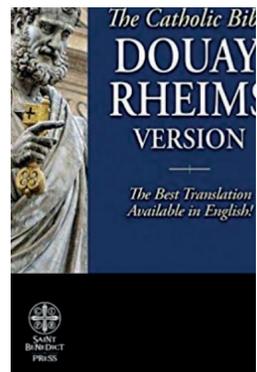
The following morning I cycled 20 miles to Dover. A delayed Brexit avoided bureaucratic border checks and travel delays.

Through France - and the Benedictine heritage

Cycling through France was considerably safer than my bicycle journey from Canterbury to Dover. The cycling infrastructure effectively segregates moving vehicles and pedestrians from cyclists. On the rare occasions this was not practicable, motorists gave me a wide berth. My directions through France were aided by using the cycle touring route planner. To avoid being viewed as a *gilet jaune* protester I wore a red cycling jacket.

On my second night in France I stayed at Douai where an English College was founded by Benedictine monks who fled here during the dissolution of English monasteries. Afterwards I cycled to Reims.

Reims is where the English translation of the New Testament was combined with translation work done on the Old Testament at Douai. When Richard Challoner fine-tuned these efforts, the Douai-Rheims Bible became the Roman Catholic Bible for many centuries. It was even used by John F. Kennedy at his inauguration to pledge his oath of office.



Dom Pérignon

Reims also marks the start of the Champagne region and my bicycle journey took me through many vineyards. Those ordained into the Benedictine Order are entitled to use the title Dominus, which is shorted to



Dom. Bottles of Dom Pérignon is named after this monk and sold by the Champagne house Moët & Chandon.

Dom Pérignon pioneered a number of techniques to keep Champagne fresh, sparkling and not cause the bottles to explode. He sealed the bottles with cork instead of wood, keeping the contents airtight and used thicker glass to reduce the risk of bottles exploding.

I continued through France and Switzerland, and on through Italy. On Tuesday 25 June I arrived at journey's end, St Peter's Basilica, having set out from Canterbury on Thursday 6 June. I decided not to collect my Testimonium. It didn't feel right to undervalue the supreme efforts of those who walk the route. They really earn this accolade. My journey is already way-marked by the stamps in the treasured pilgrim's passport issued by the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome.

I discern that there is an overarching truth from past travellers: it is that this route is about the journey not the destination.

- **Read Joe Patton's full account at harlechjoe@wordpress.com**



Sigeric and the beginning of taxation as we know it

CPR Trustee Cecilia Weston-Baker looks at the turbulent history of ninth and tenth-century England, and tells us that there is more to Sigeric than the Via Francigena



Sculpture of Sigeric at Glastonbury Abbey by Heather Burnley

It is an often-repeated phrase that the only certain things in life are death and taxes. Very true. But where does the idea of paying tax come from? Who was the bureaucratic somebody who whispered in the ear of their king “The people can pay for it, Sire”?

We know about Pitt the Younger who instigated the tax to pay for those interminable Napoleonic wars in 1798. We know about the undignified end to Simon of Sudbury, once Bishop of London, then Archbishop of Canterbury and finally Chancellor of the Exchequer. We know *he* whispered in his king’s ear and the mob tore him to pieces, literally, when they realised he’d raised a poll tax in 1380. That is a tax that has never been popular.

But perhaps one of the first taxes was far earlier than these. Perhaps it was a way simply to get rid of unwanted hordes... perhaps it was the notion whispered into the ear of King Aethelred the Unready by his most senior adviser, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sigeric.

The Vikings – raiders that were Danes, Jutes and Norsemen – set a precedent when they raided the shores of Britain at the end of the 8th century. They found a rich vein of loot protected by defenceless men in monasteries, and what was even better the loot was portable. They simply had to dash in screaming and waving their swords about and then, when all the hullabaloo had died down, pick up whatever was shiny and appropriate it. These monastery men - monks and lay brothers - were not trained in warfare and the Vikings got away with enormous amounts of gold and silver and jewels and coin too.



Britain was a rich country. However, we know now that they wanted more than just glittery riches – others wanted to settle and farm and raise children and live off the land. The problem was it wasn't their land and the owners weren't at all keen to give it up. The 9th century turned out to be turbulent and violent. Year after year they came and plundered and fought many battles in which they were usually victorious. *(Photo from 'Vintage News')*

Britain at the time, England really, was divided into a number of kingdoms. There was Northumbria, which included both Deira and Bernicia who were often at war with each other. East Anglia was closest to reach and easy to raid from the sea. Mercia, powerful and quite rich and successful, and then the kingdom of Wessex. There were a few minor kingdoms in Kent, Sussex and Essex but it was essentially the big four. These big four were eternally in competition with each other. Yes, they fought off the Viking raiders but they also fought each other. Land was what they lusted after, and they were always out to increase the amount they held. This made them rich and through that wealth they were powerful. So they battled as hard against their neighbours as they did against the invaders. That is, until the advent of one king, the only king in the long history of all of Britain to be called "great" – Alfred.

Alfred became king in 871 on the death of his three older brothers. His father King Aethelwulf had died when Alfred was a young boy, but as the youngest Alfred was spared taking over the crown, and he probably never thought to be king. The eldest was Aethelbald but he soon disappeared from the history books. It has been assumed that he died young. Next in line was Aethelberht who was king for only five years before he too died.

The next brother to have that crown placed on his head was Aethelred whose reign lasted from 865 to 871.



Aethelred I, 14th-century depiction

The same year that Aethelred became king an enormous army arrived on the coast of East Anglia. History, via the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, has named it the Great Heathen Army. It was led by the terrifying brothers Ivar the Boneless, Ubba and Hvitserk. A Norse saga tells us these three were sons of a man named Ragnar Lothbrok. Ragnar was a hit-and-run raider amongst the first Vikings to Britain. He was successful at it, but eventually his luck ran out and he died a horrible death when ultimately captured by Aella King of Northumbria. The Great Heathen Army was out for revenge as well as conquering the kingdoms, all of them. It was out for everything. Within a short time they took the kingdom of East Anglia, killing its king Edmund when he refused to stay on as their vassal and renounce his Christianity, and thus they created a saint at the same time: Edmund the Martyr. With East Anglia now theirs, the brothers and their great horde moved up to Northumbria to face Aella and destroy him and his kingdom. To do that they needed to capture his capital at York. According to the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle* they accomplished their goal in an extraordinarily short time – they had arrived midway through the year – won the kingdom of East Anglia and by 21 November they were ensconced in York and Ragnar had been avenged. They now had a major city of their own and all the land around it. They were here to stay.

Their next target was Mercia and the Mercian king begged help from Wessex so Aethelred, with Alfred, went to war together with their brother Saxons and fought desperately hard, but it was not enough. Mercia capitulated and the Mercian king was driven into exile. One of the tactics of the Great Heathen Army was that they didn't do pitched battles. They fought and ran, turned and fought and ran again. The English didn't fight like that. Time and again they died in droves, as the Norsemen wouldn't face them in a standard battle. Aethelred knew what was coming to Wessex now that Mercia had fallen. On 4 January 871 he suffered a heavy defeat at the Battle of Reading. Four days later Aethelred was out again, and this time Alfred is mentioned in the victory at the Battle of Ashdown. However, that was only one battle. By 22 January they fought again at Basing and lost many men and then again on 22 March at Meretun they were badly defeated. Poor Aethelred must have been so tired and may well have been injured in any one of these hard-fought encounters and on 15 April 871 he died.



Alfred was now king. Alfred's story is part of the legend of England because he finally broke the vicious cycle of the Danes' successes. It was at the Battle of Edington in May 878 where the Saxons of Wessex, Mercia and the men of all England stood side by side to defeat the Heathen Army under the command of Guthrum.

So, in the spirit of trying to live in peace and to fight no more, Alfred and Guthrum signed a treaty, an agreement on the limits of who held what land. This treaty delineated the land where Danes could live unmolested under self-rule and that where the men of England could live free of danger from ravaging armies. The agreement established the laws that were needed to avoid, where possible, any contentious issues between their different peoples that could lead to further bloodshed. The first recording of the name Danelaw or Dane's Law wasn't until the 11th century - Asser, Alfred's biographer, called it simply the Treaty of Alfred and Guthrum.

Peace, though, was not widespread. Initially there were small-scale raids but towards the end of the century it was again a serious problem. By this time Alfred was gone. His son Aethelstan and daughter Aethelflaed, the Lady of the Mercians, had fought hard against the Danes too. Then came kings Edmund, Eadred, Eadwig, Edgar and Edward. They had a far easier

time thanks to the struggles of those who had reigned before. But the Danes started raiding again with attacks in Dorset and Devon in 981 and 982 and then in 991, on 10 or 11 August, the problem reached what could be called the apogee of Viking success on the British Isles - the Battle of Maldon. Earl Brynoth of Essex faced Olaf Tryggvason (it is believed) and a large Viking force. Although fighting bravely and steadfastly (according to the poem of the *Battle of Maldon*), the men of England were defeated. The king, by this time the unfortunately-named Aethelred the Unready – the six times great-grandson of Alfred the Great – was flummoxed. So what now?

Perhaps it was now that his advisers whispered into his ear: “Sire, we cannot defeat them but we can pay them to go away; all we need do is get the money from the people and give it to them and they will go home – I’m sure of it, Sire”. The Archbishop of Canterbury was the closest adviser to the king; the Archbishop was his right-hand man – it was his voice that spoke loudest in the king’s ear. This Archbishop was Sigeric the Serious. The king was delighted with the suggestion, and the resulting payment was an almighty 10,000 Roman pounds, which was a huge amount - 3300 kg of silver. The first taxes were raised and Vikings went home. “But,” thought the king, “I like this money rolling into my coffers,” so even when he didn’t need to pay off the Vikings that marvellous “people’s money” paid for a standing army instead - just in case those heathens came back – and the first income tax was born.



Aethelred the Unready

Aethelred II, the Unready was given his nickname during his own lifetime. The name is actually a pun or joke. The name *Aethelred* itself means ‘well advised’, but his epithet the *Unready* means ‘ill-advised’. Perhaps he was ill-advised by Archbishop Sigeric all those centuries ago?

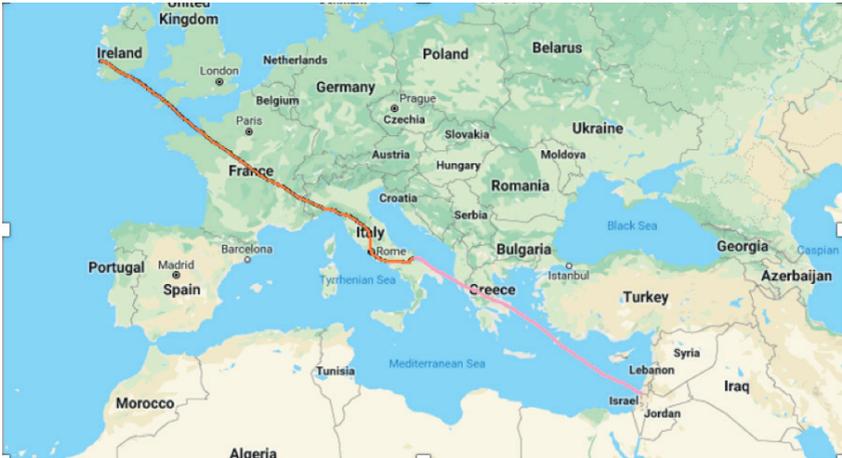
The Via Michaelis

CPR chair Carlo Laurenzi describes an ancient route that crosses Europe via Rome



In 2017 whilst walking the Via Francigena, I found myself flaked out after climbing up to San Miniato, in Tuscany. I sat amongst a small group of *pilgrimistas*, who began talking about a route - not a variant of the Via Francigena - but an alternative and ancient pilgrim route to Rome and beyond. I was drawn by the hushed tones and the sense of awe and respect these experienced walkers displayed. They referred to it as the Quattro Micheli – the four Michaels. On my return to the UK, I began an 18-month quest to find details on the four Michaels route, which was said to start in Mont Saint Michel, France and end in the Gargano town of Monte Sant’Angelo.

Being a member of the British Library should have given some advantage but I found not one reference there. I got my first lead from CPR member, Father Tim Redmond about a poster he’d seen in the Troia (Puglia) hostel, run by a certain Michele del Giudice. It turns out, at the time of writing, he is only person I have found that has actually walked that section. I say section, as papers I’ve been sent from Italy show that the route is far longer, starting off the west coast of Ireland, Skellig Michael, and completing its arrow-straight pathway at Mount Carmel in modern Israel. The four Michaels soon became eight!



The route is extraordinarily direct, and has some pre-Christian association with Greek God Apollo. What really fascinated me was the straightness of the route and how architects had chosen to build some of the continent's most challenging structures along an imaginary line at least 3000 km long and have dedicated them all to St Michael.

So I planned a route to start in Ireland and finish in the Gargano peninsula (Puglia, Italy). Time and resources permitting, I'll tackle part two, Italy to Israel next year.

The route

This year in May I started in Ireland by taking a three-hour return boat trip to the island of Skellig Michael from Port Magee, a trip which defeated me with bad weather and sea-sickness.



The VM then crosses Cornwall north-south, along the conveniently-named St Michael's Way, which runs from St Ives to Marazion, before landing at the marvellous Saint Michael's Mount. This I did ,and combined the walk to Saint Michael's Mount with the summer solstice festivities.

I intended to cycle the main length of the route, from Mont Saint Michel to Monte Sant'Angelo, Italy, all in one go, starting around 28 July and arriving at my destination sometime towards the end of September. Once in Italy I had planned a couple of detours - couple of nostalgic days on the Via Francigena, then inland for the Via Franciscana, which took me to Rome via Assisi and Perugia.

And that is as far as I got this year, for a badly swollen and painful knee persuaded me to return from Rome, and pick up the Via Francigena del Sud from Rome until I hit the newly-opened Via Mikael close to Puglia in the near future.



I am using this trip to raise funds for the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome and my JustGiving page is still open:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/carlo-laurenzi1>

In Praise of Walking

Brian Mooney reviews a scientific look at walking

No one has ever said that walking is bad for us. In fact quite the contrary – we all know that walking is good for us, and it seems that mankind has been aware of its benefits for several thousand years. We now have a book that explains the new science and medicine behind these benefits.



Shane O'Mara, Professor of Experimental Brain Research at Trinity College Dublin, has boiled down the mechanics of walking to 200 pages of densely-packed and deeply-researched analysis, *In Praise of Walking*. The book on one level is a journey through our evolution from sea urchin to bipedal human, with thoughtful and instructive sections on such things as how children develop from crawling on all fours to walking on two feet, and how we navigate. It is divided into eight chapters, all with enticing titles, such as “Why Walking is Good For You, How to Walk: The Mechanics, and A Balm for Body and Brain.” It tells us why we feel better and how we resolve problems simply by putting one foot in front of the other.

“Walking is the outcome of an extraordinary collaboration between top-down control by the brain, bottom-up input from the feet and legs, and a mid-level control system based in the spinal cord that functions as a ‘central pattern generator’ (CPG),” the author writes in one of his lighter observations. And when next out walking you might like to reflect that you are engaged in what he describes as “an astounding neuro-musculo-skeletal achievement.”

O'Mara likes walking, though by his own admission he is not keen on pilgrim walking, and he is at his best when he rises above the technical and lets walking talk for itself. He extols the benefits – both physical and economic – of walking in the city, and he calls for cities to be made more walkable and walker-friendly. And no-one could fault him when he writes ... *“One of the core takeaways from this book is to get out and walk lots over the course of the day, and to do this every day. It will repay you in more ways than you know.”*

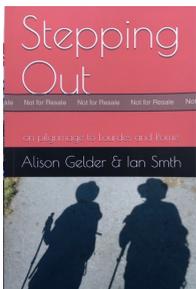
But the book on balance is weighed down by academic jargon and the science and medicine of its subject; there are no less than 25 pages of notes.

In Praise of Walking (The Bodley Head 2019, £16.99)

Stepping out – on pilgrimage to Lourdes and Rome

By Alison Gelder and Ian Smith

Pilgrimage forums are full of first-time pilgrims anxious to know, before they set out, the minutiae of the day-to-day detail of life on a long walking pilgrimage. Here is the book to tell them, for its authors call it a “total immersion experience.”



Alison Gelder and Ian Smith, both experienced pilgrims, had planned to walk to Rome following Alison’s retirement, but Alison also wanted to go to Lourdes. They decided to do both, following pilgrim routes via Paris, Tours, Saint Jean Pied de Port, then in the opposite direction along the foot of the Pyrenees to Lourdes, then the Piedmont route to Arles. They then took the newly-developed Via Aurelia through Menton, where they joined the Via della Costa, linking into the Via Francigena to Rome.

The book takes the form of a daily diary, but with notes and references, and there is an appendix with notes on guide books, and photos. It captures the very essence of pilgrimage on foot, with its ups and downs, good and bad weather, and meals, accommodation and sleep of varying quality. But more than that it is the essence of a spiritual journey. The authors write:

This whole experience was a pilgrimage. It was conceived as one and carried out in full as just that. We did not walk it to raise funds for a charity and it was not a walking holiday or vanity project. It was our spiritual journey together and...we were aware that people had asked us to pray for them on the way and at particular places, too. We had spiritual work, we took the time to reflect and we tried (mindfully) to be as open as possible to everything that happened to us, and to the people we encountered, on the way.”

I commend this book to every walking pilgrim.

Mary Kirk

Stepping Out – on pilgrimage to Lourdes and Rome, Alison Gelder and Ian Smith, Redleg Publishing 2018. Kindle £4.36, paperback £26.99

To end with a smile....



Photo: J. Walker

ARTICLES FOR CPR NEWSLETTERS

We welcome articles, news and photographs from members on any aspect of the Via Francigena and pilgrimage either for our e-newsletters, or longer pieces for the annual print bulletin which appears in the autumn. Please send inclusions as Word documents to editor@pilgrimstorome.org.uk

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