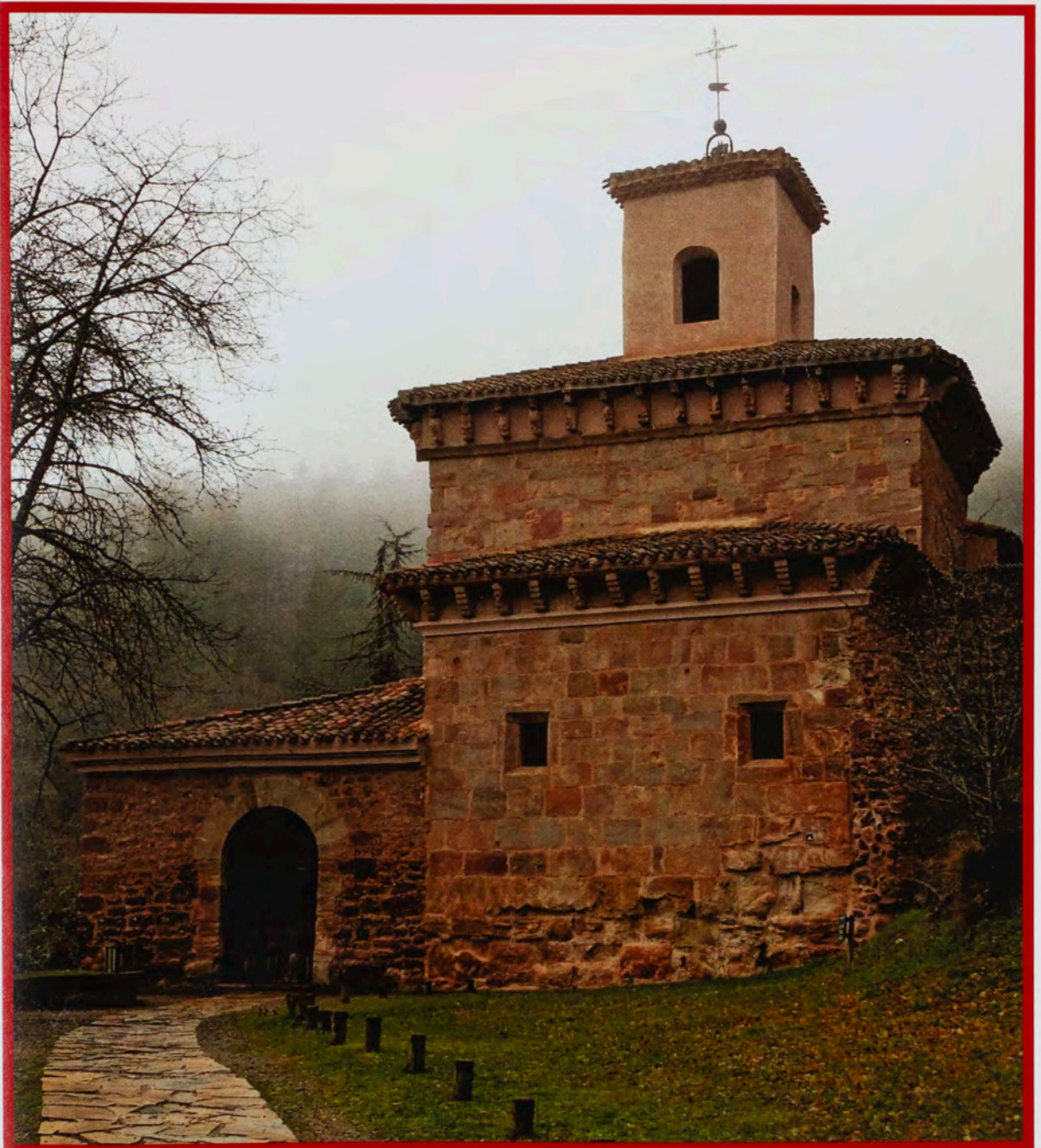




# Bulletin

The Confraternity of Saint James | Autumn 2020 | No. 149



**Cover photo:**

The tower of monastery of San Millán de Suso, courtesy of Michael Kenning. See full article in this issue of the Bulletin.

**About the Bulletin**

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For further guidance email the office.

**All views expressed in this Bulletin are those of the author and not necessarily of the Confraternity of Saint James.**

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# Editorial

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## Patricia Read-Hunter

This edition of the Bulletin is my first as editor, and I have enjoyed – and been uplifted – by the wonderful articles and photographs submitted by the membership.

At this time, some Camino routes have been reopened, albeit with reduced accommodation, generally requiring reservations, and distancing rules that go far to reduce the collegiality that makes the Camino spontaneous and fulfilling. In this issue, several articles show how people have responded to the current situation and interiorised the spirit of pilgrimage. In addition, we have some fascinating explorations of the hagiography of the Camino, thoughtful accounts of previous Caminos, and some moving poetry.

Lastly, might I remind readers that subscription renewals are coming due? Timely renewal is critically important right now, when so many ordinary sources of income have been cut off.

And don't forget, in between issues of the *Bulletin*, you can access "Camino talk" on social media. The Facebook page for official announcements is <https://www.facebook.com/CSJUK/> and the Members Group page is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CSJ.UK/>.

**Buen Camino!**

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## MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

### Check your emails!

Where possible we are sending renewal reminders by email so please ensure to check your Spam/Junk folders. If we do not have an email address for you, you should receive a letter as normal. Please note Membership will lapse one month after your renewal date if payment is not received.



## Trustees' Statement

Rev Colin Jones

The CSJ trustees would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support and generosity, either through good wishes, donations or taking on voluntary roles to help us stay connected over the last few months. The Covid-19 crisis has presented new challenges for everyone, not least small businesses and charities everywhere. We are very fortunate to have such a strong base of loyal and devoted members

Particular thanks must go to the committee members of Refugio Gaucelmo (Rabanal) and Albergue San Martín (Miraz), as they have continuously monitored the situation on their respective Camino routes and communities, keeping volunteers informed at every stage. We express our appreciation, too, to our cohort of hospitaleros for their understanding and patience; as well as our Sponsor-a-Week donors, who have all been so generous to us this year.

The trustees and albergue committees have taken some difficult decisions over the last few months: closing our hostels, our London office, and placing staff members on furlough. Now with the benefit of hindsight, we are confident that these were the right steps to take in order to ensure the future of our organisation. We are, therefore, pleased to report that at present, a break-even situation looks very likely for the current financial year.

As ever, we are indebted to our members and rest assured we will make every effort to provide you with the advice, guidance, community and Confraternity that you deserve. To that end, we hope you enjoy this edition of the Bulletin and hope to see many of you at our Annual General Meeting in January.

# Chairman's Report

## The Confraternity of St. James Receives the Castelao Medal

The CSJ, along with all official, non-profit associations of St. James, was recently awarded the Castelao Medal in recognition of our commitment to promoting the Camino and its spiritual and cultural values. Following is a copy of the letter we received from the Xunta de Galicia.



XUNTA DE GALICIA

Presidente



Alberto Núñez Feijóo

Santiago de Compostela, June 30, 2020

Associations of Friends of the Camino de Santiago

Dear friends,

I am writing to congratulate you on the Castelao Medal that you were recently awarded. As you know, this is one of the most important recognitions that the Galician Government grants to those people and organisations that stand out for the exceptional work they have done benefiting our region.

The Associations of Friends of the Camino de Santiago that exist around the world undoubtedly deserve this recognition as they are repositories of the ancient tradition of Jacobean hospitality. For this reason, it is fair to recognise their contribution to keeping the spirit of the various routes alive, the routes on which hundreds of thousands of people from over 180 countries make pilgrimages on each year.

In addition, you receive the Castelao Medal at a moment of particular importance. Firstly, we are nearly at the next Holy Year. The great celebration of the Caminos de Santiago will be a fundamental tool to recover normality, both in terms of the Jacobean route itself and in terms of our country.

Moreover, secondly, the values of the Camino have become fundamental in the midst of the exceptional circumstances we are experiencing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The world needs hospitality, generosity, harmony, a culture of hard work, the capacity to sacrifice, these are the hallmarks of the Camino de Santiago that you are the greatest and best advocates for.

As a result, I want to reiterate my congratulations. I am also obliged to ask that you continue with your commitment to promoting the Camino and advocating its identity and values. Its work is more important today than ever.

With all the gratitude and affection of the people of Galicia, best wishes.

Con mi consideracion

## In Praise of the Short Camino

Ann and Martin Weiler

If you consider the classic Camino, then the Francés probably comes to mind – a good five- to six-week 800km walk from St. Jean-Pied-de-Port at the foot of the French Pyrenees to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, northwest Spain. Some double this, and start way back in France in places such as Le Puy or Vezelay. Others take months more, with momentous walks from all over Europe, often just walking out of their front door and keeping going. But there is an alternative – the short and complete Camino, and we would like to make a case for trying this, either as an introduction to the Camino or an alternative to a longer hike.

There can be no doubt that a long Camino brings all sorts of benefits, along with the physical and mental challenges of

extended exertion. The very length of the time out from “normal” life is a real gift. Many find re-entry difficult after the simplicity of life on the road, missing the space for self-reflection and new friendships. We have certainly enjoyed walking the Francés and Norte in one go, and also the Primitivo, which is about half the length.

But we don’t always have the time or inclination to set off for many weeks or more. It can be a terrifying thought for the Camino beginner or just simply impossible with other commitments, even for seasoned Camino walkers.

It’s true that you can just walk part of a long Camino and perhaps complete the route in stages. Many do this. But if you like the idea of completing a full route

**“It’s true that you can just walk part of a long Camino and perhaps complete the route in stages. Many do this. But if you like the idea of completing a full route in one go, then this is where the short Camino comes in. The beauty of it is that many of these are complete routes in themselves, with all the trappings of the longer versions (signage, credenciales, albergues, and compostelas or equivalent certificates at the end). Most take no more than a week.”**

## Camino Life

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in one go, then this is where the short Camino comes in. The beauty of it is that many of these are complete routes in themselves, with all the trappings of the longer versions (signage, credenciales, albergues, and compostelas or equivalent certificates at the end). Most take no more than a week.

So what short Caminos are on offer? Let's start with the Camino Inglés, which is wholly in Galicia. Immediately we have on offer two short Caminos, because you can follow a route from either Ferrol (118km to Santiago) or A Coruña (72km). The routes join beyond Bruma, and depending on the one you take, you will need between three and six days. This was the traditional route taken by the English and is a relatively gentle and uncrowded introduction to Camino life. The early stages, particularly from Ferrol, pass beautiful coastal scenery. Staying in the albergue in Pontedeume gives you the chance for some sneaky sunbathing on the nearby beach. There are not too many steep climbs and lots of scenic woodland paths. In Neda, you even pass a tree planted by the CSJ to mark the 2004 Holy Year.

There is a technical point to be addressed when choosing your starting point on the Inglés. If you want to receive a compostela on completion, then – as on all Caminos – you have to demonstrate you have walked at least 100km. Ferrol meets this requirement, but A Coruña does not. But fear not, as the CSJ has negotiated an agreement which allows you to walk the “missing” distance on a recognised pilgrimage route in your country of origin,

then add this to the A Coruña total and receive your compostela.

There are two other short Camino options once you have reached Santiago, which can be also be done as stand-alone walks. These are the Camino Finisterre and the Camino Muxía. These were traditional routes followed by pilgrims who had already walked to Santiago and wanted to visit the “end of the world.”

You can choose the direct path to Finisterre (84km), which can be done in three or four days. Taking a similar amount of time, you can go to Muxía by taking a right at the fork shortly after Hospital. There are separate certificates on offer from the Finisterre and Muxía authorities. Whichever way you go, you can complete the loop by walking the 27km between Finisterre and Muxía or vice versa.

These routes “beyond Santiago” offer beautiful rural walking, with some simply stunning beaches and coastline at the end. Many find peace on these Caminos after the rather hectic last 100km on the Francés. Of course, you can enjoy the tranquility without going on any of the main Camino routes at all: These work as short independent breaks.

Getting away from Santiago, we can thoroughly recommend the Camino San Salvador, which can be walked either as a link between the Francés and Primitivo, or simply on its own, as we did last year. We were very grateful to CSJ luminary, Tom Barton, for recommending this. It's a stunning 120km walk between the historic cities of León and Oviedo and takes



around six days. It has its own credencial for collecting stamps along the way and a certificate can be collected from the Cathedral in Oviedo on completion.

Various holy relics, including a shroud said to be from Christ at the crucifixion, are held in the Cathedral, and the Camino San Salvador was originally promoted as an alternative or must do addition to the Francés or Norte routes. There is a famous slogan “Whoever comes to Santiago, and does not come to Oviedo, visits the servant but forgets the Lord.” An early example of Camino marketing.

There is plenty of history along the way, as well as spectacular mountain scenery. There are some long steep climbs, but the views make it well worthwhile. It’s also not overrun with pilgrims – you are often totally alone with nature – and is very well signposted. As it does cross mountains, you need to be careful with the weather. We walked it in August and it was perfect.

Before corona virus, we were going to walk a longer Camino this summer (the Portugués) but we have our eyes on other short Caminos in the future. There is the Camino Liébana, for example, which runs off the Camino Norte at San Vicente de la Barquera and into the Picos de Europa mountains. It takes around three days and 72km to reach the Monastery of San Toribio de Liébana in Potes. You could make a week of it, by starting in Santander. Another variation would be to go from Potes and follow the Camino Vadiniense to the Camino Francés at Mansilla de las Mulas – eight stages covering around 200km.

So that’s the long and the short of it – there’s a Camino length to suit all tastes and circumstances.

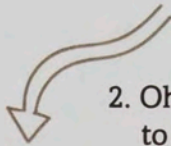
Buen Camino!

## Camino Diary in Photos

Charles Jacques



1. Find the confraternity, pop in for passport and books. The reception could not be better... great Camino start.

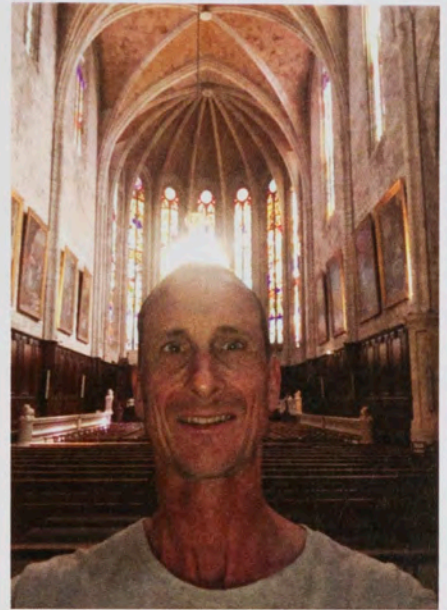


2. Oh what to pack?



3. From Arles to Santiago, a rather daunting sign post.





4 and 5. Searing heat through southern France and the author in St. Fulcran Cathedral.



6. I never booked accommodation ahead. This lady worked at the cathedral in photos 4 and 5. Her mansion had a room for three pilgrims, complete with kitchen and bathroom. Bliss.

# Camino Life



7. GR signs - red and white bands



8. Fellow pilgrim!



9. It is the journey not the destination... such fabulous countryside and villages.





10. Spirit-lifting Camino waymarkers.



11. Near the pass over the Pyrenees, French side: pilgrim meets monastery.



12. Tiny Spanish village minuscule population, ancient church.



# Camino Life



13. Compact but friendly hostel!



14. Morning coffee stop



15. Cruz de ferro





16. A proper staff served very well keeping rowdy dogs at bay and wobbly body upright.



17. A more encouraging sign post.



18. The completed passport, fabulous memories.



*Images were provided by the author and should not be reproduced without permission.*

### On the Trail of St. Roch

Kate Nichol

I first came across St. Roch, as the French call him (to English speakers, he is St. Rock, or in Scotland, St. Rollock) in south-west France, in the early 1990s. I initially confused him with St. James, as he is often portrayed in pilgrim garb. It later became clear that he is a completely different individual, with his own mythology and symbols and soon I found myself deliberately seeking him out.

When I took to the Camino for real in 1996, I met him at Hornillos del Camino. Then, on a later trip along the Arles route



St. Roch in Lodève Cathedral

**“St. Roch is usually represented with a leg wound and accompanied by a dog carrying bread. So, what is his story?”**

in 2008, he was waiting for me again, in Arles and Lodève cathedrals and at Montpellier, where he is patron saint, on the eve of his feast day.

St. Roch is usually represented with a leg wound and accompanied by a dog carrying bread. So, what is his story? During the recent lockdown, I set out to ascertain what I could online (without recourse to Wikipedia!). This is therefore not an academic article, but an exploration of some of the themes that emerged from my reading. Little did I know how much scholarship exists on the topic....

#### The Life of St. Roch

Roch is one of many referenced in the *Golden Legend*, a compilation of hagiographies by Jacobus de Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa (1275). The *Legend* was translated into English by William Caxton in 1483. The first biography, the *Vita Sancti Rochi*, by Francesco Diedo, appeared in 1478.



The received wisdom is that Roch was the son of a noble Montpellier family. His father's deathbed wish was that Roch serve God, use his wealth for charitable works, and help out in the hospitals for the sick and the poor. Roch accordingly gave away his worldly goods and set off on pilgrimage to Rome "... clad ... in the habit of a pilgrim... with a bonnet, a scrip on this shoulder and a pilgrim's staff in this right hand...." On the way back, in northern Italy, Roch helped care for the victims of plague, curing all whom he touched, but finally contracted the plague in Piacenza. He retreated to the forest, where he lived in a rustic hut, taking water from a spring which arose spontaneously on his arrival. A local dog brought him bread and licked his wounds. The dog's master, Gothard, later became Roch's disciple. Roch was eventually cured and set off for home. However, he was imprisoned on the way, and died.

Versions of events disagree as to the location of Roch's death. *The Golden Legend* mentions Voghera in Lombardy. An angel is said to have brought a table into the prison and placed Roch's head there. All who prayed to him were cured of pestilence. In an alternative version, he was imprisoned as a spy on returning to Montpellier and posthumously identified by a red, cross-shaped birthmark.

So goes the story. But is Roch a real historical personage, or a legendary figure? There appears to be a lack of contemporary, documentary evidence about Roch's life. Indeed, there are some

well-established contradictions, not least as to when he lived!

## Conflicting "Facts"

*Catholic Online* reports that Roch lived from 1297-1327. However, this seems inconsistent with his inclusion in the 1275 *Golden Legend*. An alternative set of dates from the International Association of St. Roch suggests 1348-1376/9<sup>1</sup>, while the *Oxford Dictionary of Saints* suggests 1350-80<sup>2</sup>. In fact, the dates are intrinsic to the discussion that has gone on over the years as to Roch's existence.

Scholars in the "legend" camp are quick to observe that, as there were no widespread outbreaks of plague in Italy during the first set of dates, Roch could not have ministered there. The notorious Black Death that swept across Europe occurred around 1346-53 (a little early for the second dates), with outbreaks in Italy 1468/69 and 1477/79 (too late).

That the *Vita Sancti Rochi* was written in 1478, during the latter epidemic, is unlikely to be a coincidence. As populations began to pray for intercession against the ravages of the disease, promoting a new plague-saint was entirely logical and not dissimilar to the emergence of Santiago during the Moorish occupation of Spain.

Whenever he lived, Roch's fame spread from the early fifteenth century onwards:

- The opening of the canonisation process is thought to date back to 1377, although there are no surviving relevant documents<sup>3</sup>.

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1. <https://www.christianiconography.info/roch.html>

2. Farmer, D. H. (2011), *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford, UK: OUP

3. <http://www.scuolagrandesanrocco.org/home-en/St.-roch/devotion-and-following/>

# Camino Life

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- It is reported that at the Council of Constance<sup>4</sup> in 1414, prayers were offered for his intercession
- In 1485, his body was transported [some say stolen!] from Voghera to Venice, where it is buried in the Scuola de San Rocco, now famed for the Tintoretto paintings which feature the saint alongside other biblical scenes. You can visit the website to view these without traveling.
- St. Roch's sanctity was officially recognised "ex consensu Ecclesiae: culto immemorabile," in a decree of 1625, and he was canonised by Pope Gregory IV.

## Biography or Hagiography?

When considering the existence of St. Roch, we must concede that the account of his life is typical of contemporary hagiographies of saints<sup>5</sup>: the renunciation of privilege, helping the needy, living in the wilderness and bearing suffering with fortitude. Anyone setting out to create a new saint, especially for an epoch of plague, would surely incorporate all these features.

The President of the International Association of St. Roch, Paolo Ascagni, acknowledges the caution that must be exercised in accepting medieval hagiographies as biography<sup>6</sup>. Nonetheless, he does use several 15th century hagiographies as evidence of the

Italian towns Roch passed through on his journey, including Voghera.

Another giant of St. Roch scholarship is the Belgian, Pierre Bollé, who has written extensively about the cult of St. Roch and is sceptical about his existence. He contends that the legend of Roch was conflated with that of another saint, Racho of Autun (in Burgundy) who died as early as 660<sup>7</sup>.

Bollé observes that this Racho was venerated not only in Burgundy but across Languedoc, hence the association with Montpellier. He supports his theory by pointing out a linguistic coincidence involving Racho: the latter was associated with protection from storms ("tempêtes" in French) a word which is close to the word for plague ("pest").

## Roch as Pilgrim

Roch is often depicted as a pilgrim, in statues and other works of art. Why should this be?

Firstly, there are strong parallels between Roch's life and the pilgrim experience. Pilgrims are far from home, seek humility rather than luxury (unless you stay in paradors, of course!) suffer poverty (or, at least, a simpler life) and, in the worst-case scenario, die in a foreign land. Former pilgrims will recall how the road becomes your home and your rucksack your entire wealth, while you move in new yet limited

4. From Encyclopaedia Britannica: **Council of Constance**, (1414–18), Following the election of two rival popes in 1378 and the attempt at the Council of Pisa in 1409 to resolve the Great Schism by the election of a new pope, the church found itself with three popes instead of one. The aim of council at Constance was to reunite Christendom (but also to examine the Protestant teachings of John Wycliffe and Jan Hus and to reform the church).

5. Eloquently set out by Louise Marshall in her 2009 paper, *A New Plague Saint for Renaissance Italy Suffering and Sanctity in Narrative Cycles of Saint Roch CIHA 2009* cited on Academia.edu.

6. See Ascagni's article on <http://www.St.-roch.com/saint-roch/hagiographies-paolo-ascagni/>

7. Où en est aujourd'hui la recherche sur saint Roch, published on [www.etudeshaultaises.fr](http://www.etudeshaultaises.fr)

social circles during your time away.

Secondly, Roch is connected with pilgrim travel by the Via Francigena which passes through northern Italy. Several pilgrimage routes converge here: to Compostela, to Jerusalem (by sea from Venice) and to Rome in the south. Piacenza sits on the Via Francigena. (Readers wishing to travel this Via from their armchairs can do so by acquiring a guide from the Confraternity shop.)



*St. Roch in the church at Hornillos.*

## Roch at Montpellier

A St. Roch chapel was established in Montpellier in 1421 and August 16th adopted as his feast day around 1440. This day is celebrated with a procession every year. The city also offers Roch-themed walks and proudly notes that the city was spared by cholera during an outbreak in 1854.

In terms of relics, 17th century Italian pilgrim Domenico Laffi records seeing Roch's staff in the church in Montpellier, although, alas, it was burned during the Revolution.

So, was there really a St. Roch? My "research" neither proves nor disproves his existence. However, I wonder if it really matters? If Roch has been, and maybe even continues to be, a source of inspiration and

strength to worshippers and pilgrims, that is good enough for me.

## Where Next?

I have spent many interesting hours learning more about the cult of St. Roch. I hope to visit him again soon.

Post-lockdown, I aim to visit some key Rockian churches in Britain. A Scottish contender is St. Roch in Glasgow, sited close to the site where King James IV built a chapel around 1506. Why Roch? Well, James had

connections to France and even aided them against the English at the Battle of Flodden. In England, at Pendomer, the cult of St. Roch has been celebrated since the late 13th century. In 2005, the church installed a new stained-glass window depicting his life.

I can't wait to see it!



*House in Montpellier described as that of St. Roch. Images were provided by the author and should not be reproduced without permission.*

# St James the Greater in the Fairford Windows

John Read

The church of St. Mary Fairford is unique among British parish churches in having a complete set of stained glass from the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Only one other church – St. Neot in Cornwall – has a similar set, but this is incomplete.

No one knows how Fairford's windows survived the Reformation and the Civil War, but despite being in existence for over four often tumultuous centuries, they remain an outstanding artistic witness to the Catholic faith of around 1500, which was to undergo such a cataclysmic change only a few years later.

The windows depict, in vivid colours, scenes from the Old Testament, followed by a depiction of the life of Christ, from birth to Pentecost, with a quite spectacular Crucifixion at the East End, facing Christ in Majesty, and Judgement at the west end. The north aisle windows show representations of Old Testament prophets which face the south aisle series of apostles, saints, and doctors of the church.

St James the Greater makes his first appearance in the south aisle series in window 10. The portrayal is consistent with the medieval depictions of St. James and shows him with a scallop shell in his hat, laced up shoes, a staff in his left hand, a book in his right. He is dressed in a sleeved robe, which is buttoned in front and tied with a belt, over which is

**“The church of  
St. Mary Fairford  
is unique among  
British parish  
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stained glass from  
the late 15th and  
early 16th centuries.”**

a mantle held by a band at the neck and supported under the right arm.

On a panel at the base of the window is the Latin inscription *Sanctus Jacobus* and on a scroll surrounding St. James's head is the text *Qui concepitur est de spiritu sancto natus ex maria vir(gine)* – *Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary*. Many of us will recognise this as a quotation from the Apostles Creed – the Christian statement of belief. The entire Creed is depicted in the apostle and saints series in the windows. How many of the parishioners of St. Mary's in the 16th century would

have been able to read the Latin is a matter for speculation – probably very few, but they would have been familiar with the sound of these words from the Catholic mass.

There are three other portrayals of St. James the Greater in the Fairford windows: in the background of window 13, again showing St. James as a pilgrim with staff, book, and scallop shell in his hat. St. James also makes an appearance in the Transfiguration window, number 7, with St. Peter and St. John, and in window 5, also with St. Peter and St. John in the agony in the garden.

St. Mary Fairford has many other features of interest to church visitors, as a glance at Pevsner's architectural guide for Gloucestershire or Simon Jenkins's *England's Thousand Best Churches* will readily show. The church also happens to be situated in a beautiful area of the Cotswolds, and Fairford would make an excellent centre to explore the local countryside when the current restrictions are lifted.



*St. James, Window 10, south aisle*

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*If any CSJ members are interested in a tour of St. Mary's, please contact me at [robertjohnread@me.com](mailto:robertjohnread@me.com).*

*Images were provided by the author and should not be reproduced without permission.*

# Eyam and the Derbyshire “Peak Pilgrimage”

Julian Sankey

I am writing this at the height of lockdown during the coronavirus pandemic. Some of you may be aware of, or have seen recent mention in the media, of Eyam (pronounced “Eem”), the Derbyshire Plague Village. It has become a place of pilgrimage, and in advance of Eyam's 350th anniversary in 2015, a new pilgrim trail was established, crossing the southern part of the Peak District National Park, and ending in Eyam.

As is the case with many places of pilgrimage, the original facts have gathered legend and myth, but the basic story can be outlined quickly. In 1665, London was afflicted by the plague, and a parcel of cloth, received by the village tailor in Eyam, was infested with infected fleas. The tailor, and others in the household, quickly fell ill and died, and as the disease spread through the population, the village Rector inspired the population to communally self-isolate. Arrangements were made for supplies to be left at designated boundary points, the church was closed, and village meetings and services were held in the open air (suggesting that they had some idea of social distancing). Although the village paid a high price, losing some two-thirds of its population, its isolation succeeded in preserving the surrounding towns and country villages from the potential spread of the disease.

As my home in Sheffield is only 15km from the village, Eyam is a regular staging

**“...in advance of Eyam’s 350th anniversary in 2015, a new pilgrim trail was established, crossing the southern part of the Peak District National Park, and ending in Eyam.”**

point on local walks, and I had picked up the leaflet advertising this new route as “a soul-restoring walk through the Peak Park: a pilgrimage, a walk, a holiday, a spiritual experience.” And so, in 2018, as part of my preparation for my first Camino, I decided to incorporate this route in a short expedition, and purchased the official guidebook. This is a well-produced, pocket-sized book, which is both guide and credential, having spaces for the stamps of each participating church, maps from the Ordnance Survey, route descriptions, and some very gentle spiritual thoughts and prayers.



*Waymarker of the Peak Pilgrimage*

The guide suggests various options for completing the pilgrimage, whether in day sections or a single trip. I decided to complete most of the route over several days, carrying my pack in the traditional way, and using youth hostels as the nearest (but still rather grander) equivalent to refugios, filling in the “gaps” on day trips (which actually were completed before my pilgrimage proper).

The trail begins in the far south of the National Park, at Ilam, which is itself a pilgrim site, commemorating St. Bertram, a Saxon prince who after personal tragedy became a hermit, and whose shrine is in the village church. About 200 years ago, a rather more recent lord of the manor built a hall (now a very grand youth hostel) and laid out parkland beside the river.

Ilam is quite remote, and I decided to precede the pilgrimage by following a section of one of the modern trails across the Peak Park, the Limestone Way, the northern part of which I had been

exploring on day walks. Having finished a previous section at Matlock Bus Station, I could easily pick the route up again, just leaving it for the final few kilometres to Ilam, giving me a first day stage of around 23km. This route took me through wide-open limestone country, with many stiles (often quite an obstacle with my pack on) and through a number of pretty villages, including the private village of Tissington, the first touristy place of my route. Following a heavy afternoon shower, the evening turned fine, enabling me to enjoy the amenities of the hostel and the surrounding parkland, and to make my visit to the shrine of St. Bertram, where I obtained my first stamp. Everywhere I had to stamp my own guide, using the stamp provided.

Next morning, after a good night’s sleep and a hearty breakfast, I was ready to begin the pilgrimage proper. A short walk across fields brought me to the foot of Dovedale, one of the best known and most visited sites in the National Park, as indicated by the number of tourists around, even soon after 09:00. Once I had crossed the stream by the famous stepping stones, and continued up the dale, it became much quieter, and I could enjoy the spectacular gorge. At Milldale, a hamlet near the head of the dale, the route left the valley to climb the plateau above, visiting a tiny chapel and the village of Alstonefield, with its rather grander church. Here I took the opportunity for a welcome drink (again self-serve), to supplement my rations for the day.

Having disregarded my guidebook warning, I soon found myself descending

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a rather steep and scary hillside to drop into Wolfscote Dale, a continuation of Dovedale, equally attractive, but quieter, until the dale opened out and a short field walk brought me to the village of Hartington, and my next evening's resting place, another old manor converted to a slightly less grand youth hostel. The village is very attractive, with a village green and a duck pond, and interesting buildings clustered around the village square, overlooked by the church, where I could collect my next stamp.

My third morning brought a change in both the character of the walking and the scenery, as I joined the Tissington Trail and the High Peak Trail, both utilising the track beds of long-closed railways. While some sections were through cuttings, others were across embankments, allowing lovely open views across the White Peak landscape. Parsley Hay, although busy, with a cycle hire centre, offered a cafe for a mid-morning break. Resuming the trail, I took the turn off for the village of Monyash, another isolated but pretty and historic village, with a popular walkers' cafe, and of course another church.

After my lunch break, I was eagerly anticipating my afternoon walk down Lathkill Dale, which for me is more attractive than Dovedale, with craggy cliffs, lush vegetation and woodlands, and the crystal-clear waters of its stream. Reaching Over Haddon, and our next church, the official route leads down into Bakewell, the largest town on the trail, with a number of possibilities for accommodation and eating, and a very

interesting and historic church on the hillside above the town. Near the church is Bakewell Old House Museum - one of those delightful, but slightly eclectic local museums which are a joy to visit. Bakewell sits in the valley of the (Derbyshire) River Wye, with an attractive riverside walk. It is also of course the home of the Bakewell Pudding (don't call it a tart), which bears little resemblance to the commercially produced tarts available everywhere.

However my plan took me to the nearby twin villages of Youlgreave and Bradford, and my youth hostel for the night. Youlgreave is unusual in having a private water supply, and when I was there, water was rationed, though not so much as to prevent me having my shower. Walking out in the evening into Bradford Dale, it was obvious that the stream was low, but some of the local children were enjoying paddling in one section which was dammed to make a bathing spot.

If you stay the night in Bakewell, you will start the next day with a climb through woods and across meadows, crossing into the Chatsworth Estate. My variation followed another path through the same woods, avoiding the town, rejoining the main route as it enters the parklands of Chatsworth, with views across the River Derwent to the spectacular house and gardens. Before passing near the house, our route takes us to the estate village of Edensor, with its Victorian church, containing family memorials, and the next stamp. The village tea-rooms are a good place for a morning break, and before continuing it is worth exploring the village, as each property is distinctive,

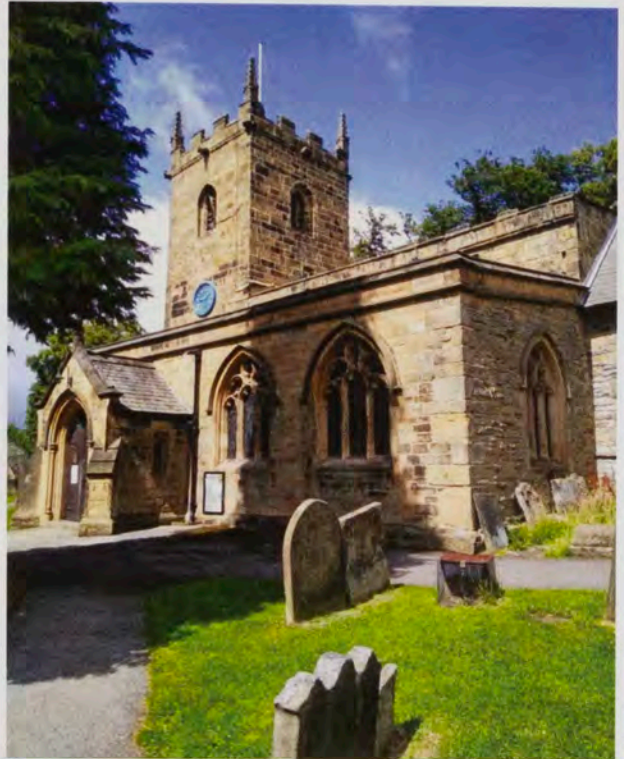


leaving one with the feeling that it is a bit of a fantasy location.

Leaving the village and walking towards the house, you may find yourself among the visiting crowds, but once over the River Derwent, you leave the tourists to cross the open parkland towards Baslow. It is here that you have to decide which of the official variations to take. The shorter option follows the river valley until the point where you turn off for the final section to Eyam itself. The longer option requires a climb, but leads into a new landscape, as the path follows one of the Derbyshire Gritstone Edges – cliffs which are a magnet to rock climbers – but still on safe, easy paths with wide views. This variation leads back down into the Derwent Valley, and offers a very pleasant low-level walk, across meadows and woodland, before becoming a riverside path rejoining the other, shorter route.

In your eagerness to complete the pilgrimage, do not omit to linger in Stony Middleton with its warm springs and unusual octagonal church. There follows a steady climb across meadows to Eyam itself. You will know you are close when you reach a prominent boulder, one of the boundary markers during the plague, a place where letters or supplies could be exchanged with the outside world.

As you walk up to the church, you will see indications of the tragic history, and the church itself has a display regarding it. Although there is no formal equivalent of a “compostela,” you can obtain a small memento of having completed



*Eyam Church*

the pilgrimage, as you collect your final stamp. Apart from its history, Eyam is an interesting village to explore, before leaving, which for me was by the summer bus back into Sheffield.

I really enjoyed my English Camino, and can recommend it as a beautiful walk, in a lovely area of the country, which has much to offer in addition to the walking. I trust that the Confraternity will include it on the list of English pilgrimage routes, even though it has no connection with St. James.

*Note: There is an official website [www.peakpilgrimage.org.uk](http://www.peakpilgrimage.org.uk), from which you can order the guidebook, and which gives further information, and suggestions.*

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# Hermits & Horseshoe Arches: A Detour To San Millán de la Cogolla

Michael Kenning

In my last article for this bulletin (Spring, No.41), I described a visit to the Cistercian abbey at Cañas on the first section of a two-day detour that my friend David King and I took on the Camino Francés. Instead of walking direct from Najéra to Santo Domingo de la Calzada, we walked southwards, “off-piste,” to visit not only Cañas, but also the monasteries of San Millán de Suso and San Millán de Yuso. This article covers the second half of our adventure.

The road from Cañas runs uphill, with a slowly ascending gradient, until an exposed roundabout is reached. A left turn then takes you downhill for a considerable distance. It started to rain at the roundabout, and we were very hungry, as we hadn’t eaten since we left Azofra, but we gritted our teeth and marched on. In the rain, the walk seemed arduous, interminable, and very unpleasant, but after about one and a half hours, we reached a café at Berceo and were able to have wine and tapas. Thus fortified, we made a final push to the guest house that we had booked beside Yuso Monastery.

The village of San Millán de la Cogolla sits at the end of a beautiful valley, whose steep sides are thickly wooded. Large sandstone bluffs protrude in places from the trees and add dramatic beauty to the scenery. Even though it was raining when we arrived, and continued to drizzle

lightly during our stay, this seemed only to add to the beauty, as wisps of mist clung to the trees on the higher slopes.

The suffix of the place name de la Cogolla means “of the cowl” and refers to the monastic cowl or hood and is variously thought to be a reference to the shape of the valley or the monastic history of the area. This is because San Millán is primarily famous, not for its scenery, but for its two monasteries, San Millán de Suso, founded in the 6th century, and San Millán de Yuso, founded in the 11th. Suso and Yuso mean “upper” and “lower” in archaic Castilian (from the Latin “sursum,” “above” and “deorsum,” below). San Millán de Suso developed first, high up the side of the valley in the forest and then later, because there was little room to expand the monastery buildings, San Millán de Yuso was built on the valley floor.

In 1997, both monasteries were declared UNESCO World Heritage sites, for two main reasons. Firstly, because San Millán de la Cogolla is considered, as UNESCO acknowledges, “the birthplace of the modern written and spoken Spanish language” – the third most widely spoken language on the globe. Sometime in the 11th century, an anonymous monk in the scriptorium at Suso wrote a codex manuscript now called the *Glosa Emilianenses*. The main text was written

*San Millán de Suso*



in a simplified form of Latin, but he wrote notes or marginalia around the edges in medieval Basque and a medieval form of a hispanic language. Scholars debate whether this was Castilian, Old Spanish, or alternatively, Navarro-Aragonese. The main point is that these notes are the earliest written example of the Basque language and one of the earliest examples of early Spanish, though probably not *the* earliest. The Real Academia Española declared in 2010 that written Spanish found in another medieval document, *Cartularies of Valpuesta*, from the Province of Burgos, is actually earlier.

The second reason for the UNESCO declaration is that the two monasteries show the transition from the earlier eremitic monastic tradition, where a hermit would live in a cave and slowly gather a group of followers, to the cenobitic or community tradition, which became the dominant form of monasticism. Cenobitic monks live together under a monastic rule.

The monastic history of the area begins during the Visigothic period. San Millán was born in Berceo in 473 and according to tradition, lived over one hundred years, dying in 574. He spent his early years as a shepherd in the mountains, but about the age of 20 he had a dream and decided to dedicate his life to serving God. He became a traveling hermit (or gyrovagus) living in the mountains and remote regions between Logroño and Burgos.

Tradition says that he spent much of this period, about 40 years, living in the hills around La Cogolla.

Although ordained a priest, apparently against his wishes, he soon returned to the wilderness and became famous for his holiness, miracle working, and compassion for the poor. In his last years, although his lifestyle became more ascetic, he allowed a small band of disciples to live with him in his cell. The monastery of San Millán de Suso was built over the site of his

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hermit cave and tomb, and became an increasingly popular site of pilgrimage as the Camino de Santiago developed.

In 1030, Sancho the Great ordered San Millán's relics to be exhumed and displayed, as part of his efforts to develop the Camino de Santiago. At the same time, San Millán was declared a saint, and in time came to be considered the patron saint of Castile and Navarre.

Sancho's son Don Garcia of Najera began the construction of a second monastery, San Millán de Yuso. The two monasteries had separate abbots until the 12th century and eventually became Benedictine foundations. Work on Yuso was finished in 1067, during the reign of Sancho IV el de Peñalen, and around the same time, a marble reliquary for San Millán's remains was completed. Later figures linked with the monasteries include Santo Domingo de Silos (or Cañas), Santo Domingo de la Calzada (who was considered so intellectually dull that he got thrown out of Yuso), and a poet famous in Spanish literature, Gonzalo de Berceo.

Yuso and Suso can only be viewed via guided tours. Part of the Yuso complex has been turned into a hotel, and beside it is a modern visitor centre and reception facing the external courtyard, where tickets for the guided tours of both monasteries can be purchased.

Each tour takes approximately one hour. Although the tour guide spoke only Spanish, there were excellent information boards in French, English, and German throughout the complex.

The monastery complex of San Millán de Yuso is an enormous edifice, with a stupendously opulent Baroque interior, and we greatly enjoyed our tour. The church itself was built between 1504 and 1540 and is the first Spanish example of a hall church or so-called hallen-kirchen (a church with a nave and side aisles of approximately equal heights). The front part is used as the monastery church and the rear as the parish church. An interesting feature of the screen between these two sections is a large open circle above the door, where on the spring and autumn equinoxes at 17:30, the sun shines through, forming a perfect ellipse on the choir floor that shows the west – east axis of the church.

Before leaving the monastery, we were taken to see the chapel where are kept the silver reliquaries containing the remains of San Millán and San Felices de Bilibio. Both were created in 1944 under the orders of General Franco; "Prudentissimo Duci Maxim," as the inscription on San Millán's reliquary styles him. San Millán's reliquary is decorated with delightful 11th century ivory plates showing scenes from his life and miracles. These panels are one of the most important surviving pieces of Romanesque art in Spain. I spent a long time enjoying the panels, with their intricate carvings of religious scenes and their evocation of medieval chapels, castles, knights, horses, and costumes, with the hand of God blessing all from above.

The following morning, we took the first tour of San Millán de Suso. The monastery is much smaller and more



*Reliquary of San Millán and (right) detail of ivory panels*

ancient than its grandiose sister Yuso. Due to factors such as the age of the structure, past neglect, its geographical location on a hillside, the rainfall levels in the area, and the vicissitudes of history (it was burnt by Almanzor, de facto ruler of El Andalus in 1002, and sacked by the Black Prince, son of Edward III of England, in the 1300s), the building has been severely damaged and has required restoration and reinforcement. This means that access is only with a tour guide in timed groups of about 20 people.

A small bus took us up the mountainside on a winding road through mature deciduous woodland. Arriving, the first thing that struck me was the sense of tranquility. I was mesmerised by the sound of birdsong, woodpeckers, and sheep bells drifting through the dripping trees. I could easily imagine San Millán and his band of followers living here in the surrounding caves as hermits in the 6th century.

San Millán de Suso combines Visigothic, Mozarabic, and Romanesque architectural elements. The square tower beside the

entrance gate, with its overhanging eaves and tiled roof, is very picturesque when viewed through the woodland. The entrance gate leads to a cobbled narthex with arched openings, from which the valley below can be viewed.

The cobbling dates from Visigothic times, and covers the tombs of the Seven Infants of Lara, together with the tomb of their tutor, Don Nuño Salido. The legend of the Seven Infants of Lara is told in a Spanish epic poem, which mixes real events and people with wildly exaggerated myths, like the *Chanson de Roland*. It is a story of blood feud and revenge, set against the backdrop of the Umayyad caliphate in Córdoba. This is not the only literary association with Suso. According to tradition, the narthex is said to be the spot where Gonzalo de Berceo, the 13th century Benedictine monk, wrote his poetry in the developing vernacular



*The tower of monastery of San Millán de Suso*

language of his time, thereby creating the earliest literature by a known author in Spanish. As noted earlier, it was also at Suso that the *Glosa Emilianensis* was written.

At the other end of the narthex are the tombs of three queens of Navarre – Doña Toda, Doña Elvira, and Doña Jimena – dating from the 10th and 11th centuries. The walls of the atrium are covered with graffiti written by pilgrims and monks in the 11th and 12th centuries.

Accessing the main building through a Mozarabic doorway from the atrium, one can distinguish the three different phases of construction, although it seems quite complicated at first. The first phase is in front of the original caves where the hermits lived and has been built onto the original cliff face. It is Visigothic and dates from the 6th and 7th centuries. The most westerly facing cave contains bones

from medieval burials, and beside this is the Oratory Cave of San Millán, where the saint was originally buried in 574. Although his actual relics were removed to Yuso in 1030, a dark alabaster sepulchre was placed in the cave in the 12th century and includes one of the oldest statues in Spain.

In front of the caves can be seen the 10th century Mozarabic monastery, with characteristic horseshoe-shaped arches. This second part of the building took advantage of some of the caves and is oriented to the south and west. In 1002, Almanzor burnt this part of the building and the original monochrome decoration on the arches was largely destroyed. The third part of the building was completed in the 11th and 12th centuries when the Benedictines arrived and lengthened the horseshoe arches with two further Romanesque ones.

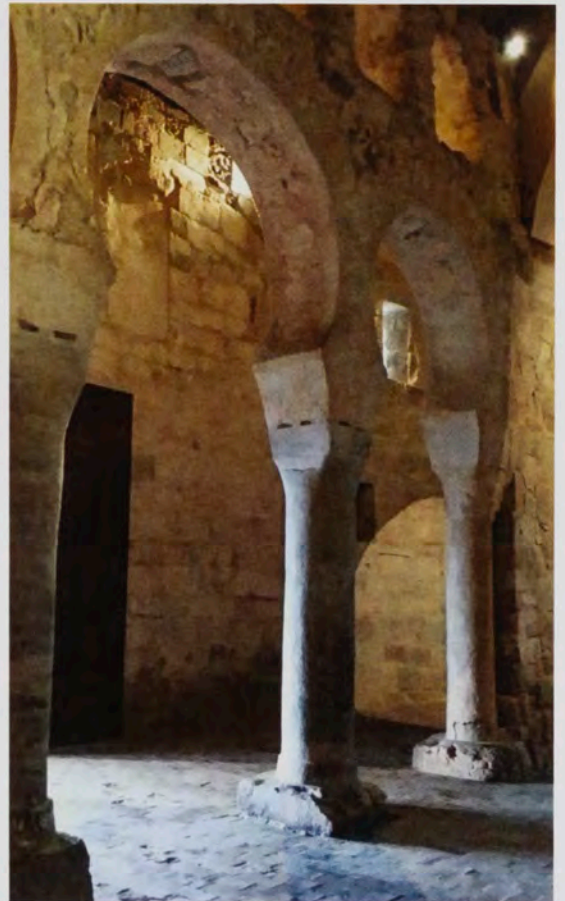


*Sepulchre of San Millán. Below, right: Mozarabic arches*

It was now time to leave our musings of early Spanish monasticism and get back on track.

We headed towards Santo Domingo, following the same road out of the village and up to the roundabout, where we then turned left, in a north westerly direction. To our surprise, the walk to Cirueña (all on tarmac) turned out to be much easier than we expected. Maybe it was because we had had a good breakfast, or maybe we were just in good spirits after seeing the monasteries, but whatever the reason, we set what was for us a blistering pace of 6km an hour and rejoined the Camino Francés at Cirueña in two hours. Not bad for 59 and 47 year-olds!

The monasteries of San Millán are interesting and atmospheric places, evocative of so much Spanish and Camino history, with the added benefit of being in a beautiful location. They are well worth the effort involved in taking a detour off the main Camino Francés.



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*Michael Kenning has walked the Camino Francés, the Finisterre circuit, and the Voie d'Arles/Camino Aragonesa from Pau to Santa Maria de Eunate.*

# The MacKillop Woods Way – A Walking Pilgrimage from Melbourne to Sydney

Seán Deany

A pilgrims' trail for Australia had been on my mind since first walking the Camino de Santiago in 2004. This seemingly weird idea had remained only that, until my return from another pilgrimage to Santiago in 2009. By then the Catholic church in Australia was making advanced preparations for the canonisation of locally born Mary MacKillop. The canonisation was slated to take place in Rome on October 17, 2010, creating a good reason for a pilgrims' way here.

Mary Helen MacKillop was born on January 15, 1842, in Fitzroy, an inner suburb of Melbourne, then a fledgling colonial outpost of the British Empire. The Australian continent was being rapidly opened up to pastoralists, and at 18 years of age, Mary went to work as governess on her aunt Margaret and uncle Alexander Cameron's property on the outskirts of Penola in South Australia. In her own time, she did her best to assist others in need, in particular the Aboriginal community, decimated due to colonial expansion.

It was at Penola she met Fr. Julian Tenison Woods, the Catholic priest in charge of the Penola Mission, which covered an area approximately one-third the size of Scotland! Woods was born in Southwark in 1832 and first arrived in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) in 1855. He completed his diocesan studies under the Jesuits

at Sevenhill, South Australia, and was ordained in Adelaide on January 4, 1857. His first posting as priest was in the remote southeast corner of the colony at Robe. As well as pursuing a missionary life, he was a keen scientist and naturalist, writing highly regarded papers on the geology of the Limestone Plains. He was a great traveler, and later ventured to Southeast

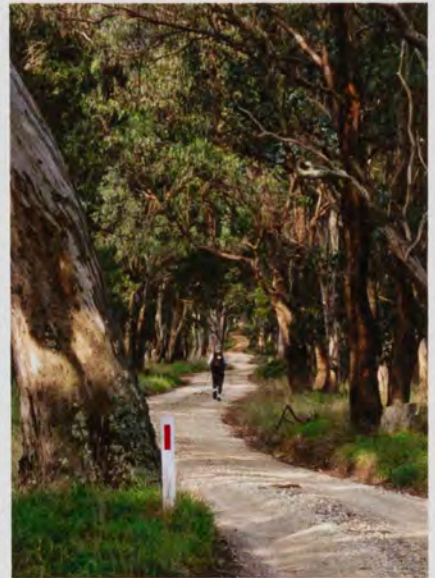


*St. Mary of the Cross window*





*David Schütz, Sean Deany, and Josh Martin on day one at the birthplace of Mary MacKillop. Right: Walking the back roads of Gippsland.*



Asia, before returning to Australia. He died in Sydney in 1889.

Due to the lack of a government-funded Catholic education system in the colony, and inspired by the work of an order of nuns he had met in Le Puy-en-Velay in southern France, Woods set about establishing a similar order here in Australia. On March 19, 1866 – the feast day of St. Joseph – he and Mary MacKillop established their first schoolhouse for any child who wished to learn, regardless of parental ability to pay. On August 15, 1867, she took her religious vows and became Sister Mary of the Cross, the first Josephite sister. Others joined her, but there were many challenges ahead, and there were some in the diocese who didn't approve of the sisters' independence and way of thinking.

On September 22, 1871, Bishop Sheil of the Adelaide Diocese had Sister Mary excommunicated and the order disbanded. On his death bed in March

1872, Sheil had a change of heart, and had her excommunication lifted. However word had reached Rome, and Pope Pius IX appointed an Apostolic Commission that in due course came to MacKillop's aid. Between March 1873 and January 1875, she travelled to Rome to have an audience with Pope Pius IX, besides visiting convents in Italy and Germany. She made a pilgrimage to the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Paray-le-Monial in France, as well as to her ancestral home in Scotland. Sister Mary was an active traveler for her time – on horseback, stage coach, rail, and steamship.

In no time at all, the order of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart flourished, expanding their work of assisting the poor and needy across the country and abroad. Mary MacKillop was made the Congregational Leader of the Josephites based in North Sydney. She died on August 8, 1909, and was buried in the convent grounds. Her tomb was later moved to the chapel. The order survives

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to this day, and her tomb is a well-visited pilgrimage site.

In February 2010, I wrote to the Mary MacKillop Penola Centre in South Australia and presented a scenario for an Australian “Camino,” a plan endorsed by their committee members, Margaret Muller and Claire Larkin. A couple of years later, I visited Penola while making a bicycle pilgrimage from Port Augusta to Melbourne, traveling through a number of locations significant to the lives of both St. Mary of the Cross MacKillop and the pioneering priest Fr. Julian Tenison Woods. There was great enthusiasm for my idea for an Australian Camino – the MacKillop Woods Way. A couple of more years passed, and I was working aside Luke Mills, who was setting up organised tours to Penola called the Aussie Camino.

In 2014, we walked the inaugural group pilgrimage from Portland in Victoria to Penola, along with about 25 others. It was a wonderful experience to be with like-minded people. And this walking pilgrimage was when David Schütz, a former Lutheran Minister, came into the picture. He also shared my interest in an authentic pilgrims’ way for Australia and importantly – through his work at the Melbourne Catholic Archdiocese – was an excellent networker. In my original plans for a pilgrims’ trail, I had envisaged the Way to also connect with North Sydney; however, my original idea of a direct inland route didn’t look attractive.

Later in 2015, David informed me that he was aiming for a multi-staged walking pilgrimage from the birthplace of Mary MacKillop, in my home suburb of Fitzroy,



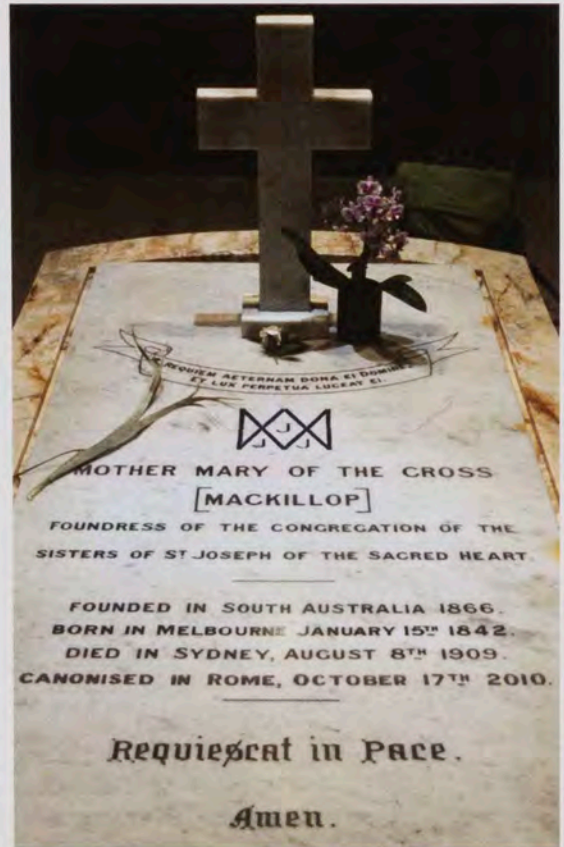
*Serenity of the Towanba Valley in SE New South Wales.*

to her burial place in North Sydney, and asked me, "Did I want to join him?" The answer was an enthusiastic, "Yes!" The walk would go through the picturesque region of Gippsland in Victoria, with its rail trails and minor roads, then reach the remote southeast of New South Wales via the coastal town of Eden, and eventually lead up the heavily indented coastline to Sydney. Eden, which has some resemblance to Muxía in Spain, is also significant in the life of Mary MacKillop. It was there where her mother Flora drowned tragically in a shipwreck in 1886. The story goes that her body was found some days later in a peaceful state of rest. Eden's original Catholic church is now a dedicated museum to the Josephites.

After detailed logistical planning and much poring over maps, David set about corresponding with the Catholic parishes along the route. There was some considerable interest and even endorsement from the bishops of those dioceses we would be traveling through.

In Holy Week of 2016, David and I, with another enthusiastic pilgrim, Josh Martin from Tasmania, commenced our long and ambitious walking pilgrimage to the tomb of our saint in North Sydney. We decided that it was best for this 1275km ramble to be segmented into four stages or "legs," as David calls them. And legs became the mode of travel.

Getting out of Melbourne was made simple by using the network of bicycle pathways and walking routes out through the Dandenong Ranges. We planned to walk along as few main roads as possible,



*Tomb of St. Mary of the Cross, North Sydney*

while maintaining a direct route first to Eden and later up the New South Wales coastline. Arrangements had to be made for our accommodation along the route, as pilgrims' hostels did not exist as yet. Accommodation took the form of B&Bs or the convivial Australian pub, where a cold beer or two was always available for refreshment. Many kind people provided us with superb hospitality.

Sitting at the table drinking wine over a hearty meal took my mind back frequently to walking the Camino. The spirit of the Way was constantly with us. As this was an authentic pilgrimage, we carried scallop shells on our packs, and before departure I had had a pilgrim's passport

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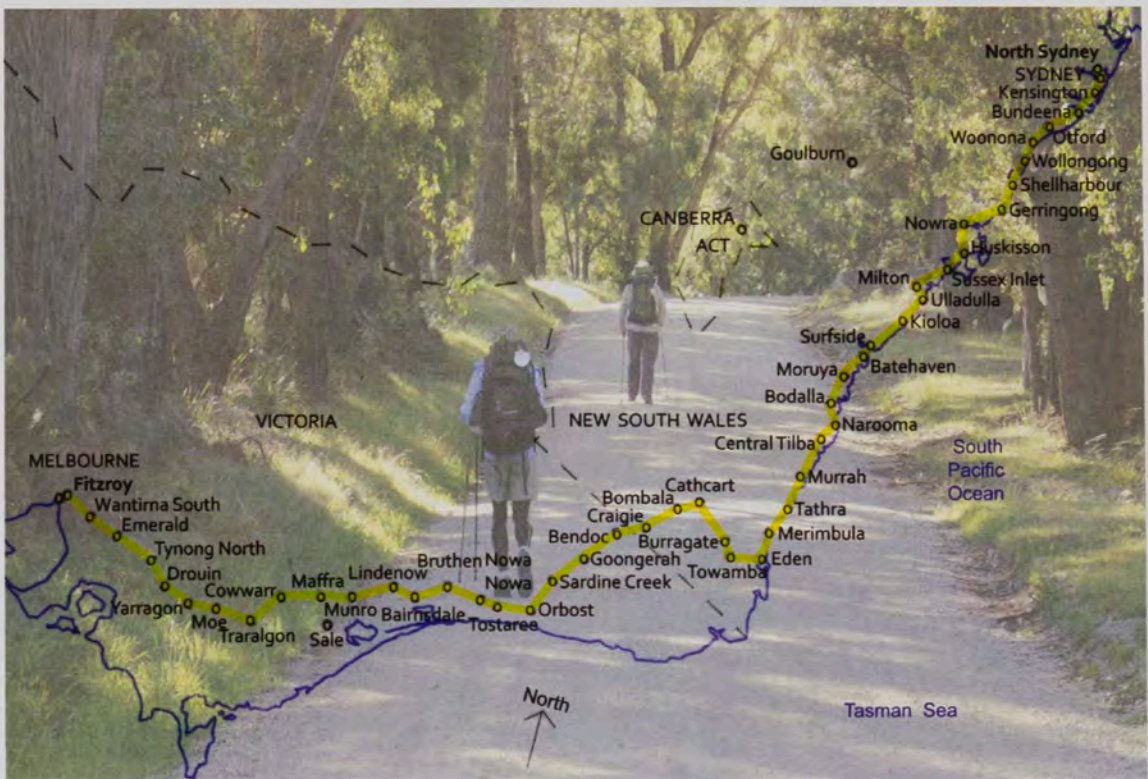
printed for the MacKillop Woods Way. Where a stamp of the usual variety wasn't available, some improvisation was always found to authenticate our arrival.

There were many logistical, physical and emotional challenges encountered on our way. I was ill for a couple of days, and for Josh, the leg through Victoria's remote and hilly eastern extremity was best avoided. Tragically, David's father passed away during the final leg, but fortunately he was able to return home for the funeral shortly after our completion of the pilgrimage. For David, his determination and commitment was to walk every step of the way. This was paramount and was realised – an achievement of which his father would surely have been very proud. Finally on April 26, 2019, we made our way into the heart of Sydney, Australia's

biggest metropolis. We detoured to the Waverley Cemetery to pay our tributes at the grave of Fr. Julian Tenison Woods, and later on we crossed over the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge to arrive at the tomb of Australia's first saint, Mary of the Cross MacKillop. It was in some respects a triumphal ending, but most of all an emotional conclusion to the authentic pilgrimage along the MacKillop Woods Way I had first envisaged years earlier.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the many communities of southern NSW through whose beauties we walked, devastated by the bush fires of 2019-20.

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# Bound (Eventually) for Santiago:

## My Path to the Camino

Robert Hay

One of the unexpected pleasures of the internet is the opportunity to search the catalogues of second-hand booksellers across the world. Gone are the days of raking through damp and dusty storerooms, risking fungal infections, for that book you have pursued for years. The only problem is the outrageous cost of some items: I was astonished to find that a modest little local history book that I published years ago was for sale in California for \$200.00.

Recently I used the system to find, at last, a grubby copy of *Camp and Trek* by Jack Cox, described on the title page as “Editor of *Boys Own Paper*.” This book came into our house, somehow, soon after it was published in 1956 and became a favourite browsing book in my early teens. I can’t imagine how I tolerated some of the underlying attitudes, but the allure for a bored teenager was twofold: the excitement of taking the open road, and extremely detailed descriptions of how to do it and all the kit you might need.

I realised later that it was probably inevitable that I would be restless. In my family, four out of the last five male ancestors were common soldiers, seeking adventure. As family archivist, I hold a photograph of my grandfather in the massed ranks of Seaforth Highlanders in front of the Taj Mahal in 1903, and his 1908 North West Frontier medal. Even

my father, a natural pacifist and blind as a bat, volunteered in 1939, and was away in the desert and Italy for nearly four years, helping to run field hospitals. He never really settled down to domestic life afterwards; the sound of a train horn in the distance was enough to set him off into a reverie about “freedom.”

As my freedom expanded, the great woods of lowland Moray, the gorge of the river Findhorn, the Culbin Sands and, later on, the high moorlands of Braemoray, offered the possibility of long days of exploration, and honed my navigation skills. These years culminated in the first real “camp and trek” circumnavigation of the Eastern Cairngorms, in the first years of the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, carrying the heavy tents and kit of the early 60s. Long-distance walking and running became an integral part of my life, mostly in the mountains of Scotland and the Lake District, but with some more exotic expeditions, including a six-day ski across the Norwegian Hardangervidda in the steps of Nansen, and a taster of the Appalachian Way. So many of these miles were in the company of my long-suffering wife. However satisfying, these expeditions did not fully meet my early vision of the “open road.”

It was not until my late fifties that a work conference took me to Roncesvalles, where I was intrigued by the scallop

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waymarking of the Camino and began to read about the long-distance routes to Santiago. Other events intervened, including retirement and building a house on St. Moluag's, Isle of Lismore, and it was not until September 2011 that four of us senior walkers arrived at St. Jean-Pied-de-Port to start the Camino Francés. From the start, we agreed to walk without rest days, carrying our packs, taking what accommodation was available at the end of each stage (mostly municipal dormitories, some monasteries, and one church floor), and fueling our walk with pilgrim menus. In that year, it was reasonable to manage on 20 euros a day, and eat well.

**“The simplicity of the Camino is beguiling and infectious; I have met so many pilgrims who have completed several.”**

When we got to the high plains of the meseta, I felt at last that I had found the “open road,” looking ahead each morning to where “we would lie this night” (misquoting from *Pilgrim's Progress*, but it did feel at times as if we were near the Delectable Mountains). It was a unique opportunity to walk, eat, drink, and sleep without distractions, and the weather was perfect, raining only once. That year we completed 17 stages to Carrion de Los Condes, returning in September 2012 to

complete the remaining 17 to Santiago.

The simplicity of the Camino is beguiling and infectious; I have met so many



On the meseta, 2011.



*Singing at Santiago, 2016. Robert Hay is second from left.*

pilgrims who have completed several. By May 2016, I was back, sailing to Santander to tackle the Camino del Norte, but this time alone. It was a different Camino, generally longer stages (averaging around 30km over 20 days); more pounding on hard surfaces; crossing the grain of the country over watersheds from port to port, before turning south into Galicia; rain and mud; fewer albergues; and fewer pilgrim menus.

This was even more the “open road” because of other kinds of uncertainty, including who might walk with me, and whether I should really be doing this at the age of 70. Moving from companion to companion, I walked the last stages with a lively party of French and Italians, whose only condition was that I sang with them.

In September 2018, the Francés team returned, now diminished to three, to walk the 250km from Porto. By now, into

our 70s, we decided to use the excellent service provided by the local transport company to carry our bags forward each day, but otherwise to adhere to the protocol. However, the need to identify our accommodation each day in advance introduced an unwelcome stress, diminishing the experience. The Camino Portugués does not yet provide the seamless support of the Francés; we particularly missed the budget pilgrim menus.

So, the open road of the Camino Francés remains the ideal, and I will probably not earn a fourth Compostela. The Caminos are becoming crowded, with numbers doubling since we started in 2011. News on the Norte in 2016 was that many walkers were diverting from the Francés because it had become a daily race to the albergue, with many pilgrims were booking their holiday in advance, pre-empting accommodation. All of this is

**“Walking the Camino is a unique experience. The Way is safe and supported: Pilgrims receive almost universal respect and help from day to day, and they experience some extraordinary kindness...”**

very positive and, indeed, invaluable to the Spanish economy, but there is a danger that the essence of the Way may be lost. There are also concerns about the reckless behaviour of some weekend cyclists, after some alarming experiences in Portugal, and the flood of pilgrims jet-setting in for a 100km sprint, fulfilling another of the items in their “bucket list” (a loathsome expression).

At Santiago, before we were awarded our certificates, we were asked to record whether our motivation was religious, spiritual, heritage, or sport. My companions could answer for themselves, but I had no hesitation in saying that the experience was spiritual (even though I would struggle to define the term). Walking the Camino is a unique experience. The Way is safe and supported: Pilgrims receive almost universal respect and help from day to day, and they experience some extraordinary kindness: Willing help to find the way, generosity in the provision

of food and drink, and the donativo households that provide hospitality for whatever you are willing to pay. Walking alone brings another perspective - companionship of complete strangers from other societies who ask to walk with you. In his 17th century language, George Fox encouraged his followers to “walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone; whereby in them you may be a blessing and make the witness of God in them to bless you.” Modern Quakers might prefer to refer to the “Inner Light” rather than “God.” On the Camino, this is a two-way process: in the words of Walt Whitman in his “Song of the Open Road,” “whoever accepts me, he or she shall be blessed, and shall bless me.”

*Images were provided by the author and should not be reproduced without permission.*



## Lockdown

Marilyn Daish

**E**lbow your way through doors,  
Avoid handles

Tuck in your fingers, make clubs of your hands

Run around the block and back before curfew

Hold tight to your wish list for tomorrow

Hold onto nothing else at all

Avoid Cornwall

Rejoice in the morning sun-dance on your wall

Reach beyond your window for clouds

Trace their circumference

Extend your stretch, expand your lungs

Do what it takes to cross continents

Stay indoors

Enjoy the postage stamp world through your window

Touch the stars when darkness falls

Then pocket them against the tipping of your mind

Laugh at a risible moon's bunny ears

Expand your margins, hold back time

Bin clocks

Avoid eye or any contact at all

Avoid Watford, Snowdonia, and Dover

Try loving net curtains, others and yours,

Make slow love to shadows

Smooch the stair rail, table tops, skirting board

with broom and feather duster.

Revel in wind waffle through unseen seams and cracks

Pull in your elbows to keep yourself closed

Avoid static surfaces

Note the smudge of your hand on clean white paper

sticky with honey and apprehension

Turn your gaze from circumstance

Explore the circumference of silence

The in-ness of being shut out

Let your well-thumbed life revisit the philosophers

Read Sartre's *No Exit* when going to bed

In your most comfortable chair, meditate

Don't monitor your movements, wallow

in corners,

be ensnared by the grab of regret

As evening comes unpin your shadow

Hook it on the door

Embrace the lacuna of your life

Brush off the crust of memory

Turn your back on Cornwall

# ¡Hostia! Flip-flops on the Camino Francés in Wintertime

Philip Constantine

“The path is forbidden. It is forbidden.”

So said the volunteer in St. Jean’s pilgrim reception centre. Not the usual space, more a backroom, just comfortable for three when I knocked, one surprisingly warm evening in mid-December. Two gentlemen provided me with a map, passport, and a list of albergues, together with if and when they might be open in low season. And the stern warning: To be caught by the Guardia Civil on the mountain path incurs a fine of 6,000 euros! My host put it differently. “We just got tired of people going up there and dying.”

Walking in winter? Christmas on the Camino? And New Year? Does that sound like heaven or a recipe for frostbite? I had not felt so uncertain, unsure of my ground, since my first Camino, what I tend now to think of as the “pilgrimage proper,” back in 2014.

Yet on December 12, 2019, I made my reservations, and a week later I was all alone in a gîte, surrounded by empty bunks, angry winds attacking the door again and again. Ominously, I pictured

myself digging snow-holes, being driven back by horizontal rain, my extremities turning red, blue, green; very festive, admittedly, but not very comfortable.

A turbulent landing into Biarritz had already put the wind up me. Getting walloped for 130 euros just to get a taxi up to St. Jean did little to restore my equilibrium. Not for the first time, industrial action in France was playing havoc with the network. Other pilgrims told me later of epic bus rides, or a series of buses, needed to get them to the foot of the pass. There were to be two more taxis, one at Larrasoaña (everything closed), and the same problem at Reliegos, a fortnight later.

And who walks-the-walk in wintertime, you may well ask. A hardy bunch of cheerful, wide-eyed vagrants, for sure.

From being alone in St. Jean, I reached Roncesvalles via Valcarlos and met travelers from Czech Republic, Germany, Russia, Spain, Sweden, and most of all, South Korea. A baker’s dozen, nearly

**“Walking  
in winter?  
Christmas on  
the Camino?  
And New Year?  
Does that sound  
like heaven or  
a recipe for  
frostbite?”**



*New Year's eve, to Castrojeriz*

double that number when we feasted together on Christmas Eve in Logroño. The Koreans come in winter because it fits their holiday timetable – the rest of us come for reasons more irrational, I suspect.

Buffeting by wind was the principal hazard while crossing the border. An intrepid trio who ignored the “forbidden!” and chose to trek the high path had to link arms if they wanted to avoid being blown over a precipice. Only the veteran pilgrim knows that there’s always the next one: first timers tend to believe it’s now or never.

Apart from a dearth of accommodation, what else challenged us on the Camino Francés in winter? Well, in my experience, after the wind in the valleys came the rain, albeit briefly, then the slippery mud which sent me flying after I carefully descended

the Alto de Perdón, and later the icy ground, perilous when setting off from Hornillos, treacherous on the approach to Astorga. There was also the freezing fog, lingering long into the afternoon. Fallen waymarks, sometimes broken, sometimes simply disappeared. Then there is the solitude. Walk all day, see no-one, meet no-one. Lastly, the uncertainty. You realise how absurd it is to panic over beds in the warmer months. There is a tradition of hospitality, of care, along the road that is more ancient than history itself. You *will* find a bed for the night. This is no less true in winter, but the vagaries of the season, and the conflicting reports available to us meant that doubt finally overwhelmed me in Ponferrada. But perhaps I’m getting ahead of myself.

Naturally, you need to pack extra layers. Dry-bags and gaiters aren’t a bad idea. A

## Camino Life

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*Fallen waymark on the Francés. Images were provided by the authors and should not be reproduced without permission.*

cellphone for those instances when calling ahead is recommended (try [aprinca.com](http://aprinca.com) for information on winter albergues). Trekking poles offer support and help fend off excitable dogs. A backup supply of dry snacks, to keep you going. Footwear? Go for waterproof and sturdy. For downtime I wore flip-flops; yes, flip-flops in winter. This gave me a reputation for “English” toughness that was truly undeserved. In preference, I recommend taking some other variety of rubber slipper which dries fast and can be worn with socks.

If there were privations and seasonal hazards, there was always an upside. The Camino senda, so wearying normally, resists ice formation and is therefore a godsend. Having but one albergue open

in any place (if that) greatly simplifies your decision making. With so few people walking, one tends to know everyone, so there’s more camaraderie.

Frozen mornings transfigure the winter light so as to make the eyes weep for beauty and not for wind chill. I saw the sun burn through the fog blanket as a silver medallion, and pour a torrent of gold upon the Pantano de la Grajera. I saw a white rainbow and a Brocken Spectre. I saw eagles on the meseta, red squirrels in the Rioja woods, deer outside Burgos, and a tame wolf in Torres del Rio.

I learned to say *gamsahabnida*; to order *cosechero* or *crianza* instead of plain old *vino tinto*. I visited Suso and Yuso

and marveled at the model Christmas villages on display in Santo Domingo. I finally found the altar mayor above Cruz de ferro – the latter mercifully free of bodies – when on all other occasions the pilgrim procession had led me away from it. Joan from Catalonia taught me how to barhop like a true Spaniard, where to find a cobbler, and which little kitchen tucked away off the main drag served the best empanada in Santiago de Compostela.

I think one returns to the way for those moments of grace and encounters that temporarily elevate us above the norm, closer to some worthier proposition of selfhood. But in the end, we always come back to ourselves.

Having last spring walked every step, from St. Jean to Santiago to Muxía to Finisterre, I felt I had nothing to prove to anyone this time around. With no reliable information to hand about the albergues in Galicia, and all the indications pointing to La Faba, O'Cebreiro and Triacastela being closed for new year, the Camino del Invierno ironically not recommended for winter walking, and that tiresome Dutch woman who thought she had to explain everything to me just a hop and a skip ahead, I finally grew weary of living in a state of negative capability and opted for the morning train from Ponferrada to Sarria. (As it happened, all the Xunta albergues were open for winter pilgrims.) If I was sorry to miss the challenge of walking up and over and into Galicia then I was fully compensated when I found Joan in a parrillada just shy of Monte de Gozo. I'd lost him at Grañon and was delighted, maybe even relieved, to walk

into the city of St. James with a friend. Thus, I completed my sixth Camino de Santiago.

In retrospect, much stays the same in winter as in other seasons on El Camino. You still encounter unlooked-for kindnesses. The gift of earplugs from a confessed snorer. Double helpings of desayuno from José (Santibañez), a prince amongst hospitaleros, just when it seemed nothing would be open for hours. A gift of fruit from David (Casa de los Dioses). Sharing Turkish coffee and Korean coffee in Hornillos, without which I would not have been able *to be* that day. There is as ever the joy of the unlooked-for reunion, perhaps coming at one's lowest ebb (lonesome in León), and above all, the same concern for fellowship that is in fact the hallmark of the pilgrimage road to Santiago de Compostela.

Despite its privations, some pilgrims insisted that they loved the experience so much they would only walk again in winter. It certainly has a magic all its own, but a little solitude, like so much that is testing, goes a long way. My hospitalier in St. Jean informed me that nothing beats autumn on the Francés; the temperatures are cooling, the crowds are thinning, it's the best. Having walked in spring, summer, and winter, if ever I return, it will be to follow his sage advice.

### Lockdown Camino

David and Pauline Aldous

In 2013, David and I walked the Camino de Santiago from St. Jean-Pied-de-Port to Santiago de Compostela. It took about five weeks and covered around 500 miles. It was a memorable experience, with obvious highlights as we passed through the fascinating ancient cities of northern Spain and varied and wonderful landscapes. Here we are in the spring of 2020, in UK middle of the lockdown for the Covid-19 virus in Britain, and rather improbably, we have begun to see parallels between the lockdown experience here in Wath and our travels on the Way of St. James.

So why does our Camino seem to have any similarity to our present predicament?

Being confined with the same people is definitely similar. The Camino Francés, the French route, is by far the most popular route to Santiago, and around 190,000 pilgrims tackle it each year. One of the curious features of the Francés is that despite the huge slice of humanity who walk it, the individual experience is that you are effectively in a small bubble of people making its way along the route at around the same pace. You may catch a brief glimpse of the cyclists flying past. They will be done in around ten days as compared to your five weeks. You may have a beer one evening with a couple of the fit and strong who are putting in a steady 20 miles a day, as compared with your 15. You will not see them again. But at coffee stops and hostels along

**“So why does our Camino seem to have any similarity to our present predicament?”**

the route, you will continue to meet up with the same random group of people traveling more or less at your speed. It is this group who will sympathise with you over your blisters, compare notes on life in Britain, Canada, Australia or elsewhere, discuss philosophy or religion or the absence of it, suggest where to eat or stay next, and debate whether to take the main or variant paths.

Here in Britain, we live in a small village in predominantly arable countryside. The available routes for our daily exercise are few. We see many of the same people as we circulate. We have neighbours with whom we have common ground and others with whom we share little but the location. All greet each other (Buen' Camino!). Some stop to chat, carefully socially distanced, as words are exchanged across a minimum two metre gap. We can't share a beer, unfortunately.

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*Walking during Lockdown*

On the Camino, there is a great sense of shared predicament. When we walked it, the impact of the 2008 economic crisis was all too evident. Enterprising youngsters would lug tables up a hill, setting up alongside the path to offer drinks and fresh bread or jam in return for a pilgrim donation. One homeless man was dispensing tea from his van on the outskirts of Logroño. Elsewhere, the stationary population generously offered fruit and wine to be taken. Not dissimilar to the community spirit of the Camino, the residents at Gallows Hill Farm offered Easter gifts to passers-by over the weekend, and all manner of people are thinking about how they can generously support their neighbours or the NHS.

Another similarity is the sheer domestic sameness. Up, out of bed in the dark, bag packed, start walking. A cup of coffee first if you are lucky, or maybe one a few kilometres on. Arriving mid-afternoon in another hostel and another village (small and not memorable for the most part), shower, wash your socks and underwear, repair this or that, or look out the plasters. Then read, talk until bed again. That walking and rhythmic, simple form of life offered huge space for thought and quiet. As your 15 miles a day were measured out step by step across the plains, your mind, too, had licence to focus or wander or pray.

Sometimes religion got a look-in. Some churches were open, if you happened to pass them at the right time. There would be a basket, book or board to leave a prayer or a place to light a candle. Priests traveling the Camino might say mass in a church where they could borrow the key, or outside in a hostel courtyard, where they could not. For some villagers, where mass was rarely celebrated in their remote churches, it was an occasion. In our lockdown today, church buildings are firmly shut, but religion has gone on line. We always need to be creative.

What we lack in our present circumstances is a goal. The great thing for the Camino was that you would arrive in Santiago de Compostela and join in the pilgrim mass in the Cathedral and embrace the statue of St. James. There was an end. Alternatively, if you were very keen or pagan, the end came a little further on at the sea at Finisterre, the ends of the earth, where another dry step was not

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“Faith and hope and charity were always to be found on the Camino. They will be there on our future path too, adapting to new circumstances.”

possible. For us now, we will go through this pandemic, and then what? Life will go on. I doubt that we will be returning to the life we left behind when we first started. It is true that the medieval pilgrims had to turn themselves about and start walking home again. It would have been another hard road, and without the sense of anticipation of the outward path. We, too, will continue walking into the future. A wider path, maybe, but one that is likely to be marked by loss of friends, family, work, and by a need to do all manner of things differently in order to keep ourselves safe.



St. Mary's, Wath

Faith and hope and charity were always to be found on the Camino. They will be there on our future path too, adapting to new circumstances.

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**Note:** David and Pauline Aldous live in the small village of Wath, north of Ripon in rural North Yorkshire. The village is in arable farming country and there are relatively few walking routes around the village, unlike in the Dales or on the Moors nearby. Wath's church, St. Mary's, is closed for the duration and services have gone online.

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### El Confinamiento

Pam McKee

These are personal observations of an “extranjera,” writing from an old Spanish town in the Valencia region, not the busy melting pot of Madrid. Along with my husband, I decided to stay when lockdown was declared. I may not have got some issues regarding political motives and reactions of the people entirely right!

Grass and plants are growing and reclaiming the paths of those who have walked the Camino in previous years, decades and centuries. Wild life rediscovers its territory and wild boars will shortly roam not only the forest but the outskirts of towns. Airport terminal buildings are empty, shiny and quiet, as are the skies above, save for the odd Guardia Civil helicopter patrolling the movements of cars along the motorways to ensure second homers don't decant from Madrid to the coast.

Here in the old town, the swallows have arrived and are free to dip and dive to low levels in the narrow car-free streets as they nest and hunt for food. The silence is pierced only by their cries, along with those of the old town cockerels, chickens, and ducks who seem to be noisier than usual, as if compensating for the lack of any other noise. No sounds of the ubiquitous “motos” as they struggle to get up the steep hill outside our house. No shouts of children – they are indoors, and will be for the next six weeks, regardless of how small are their apartments and their need for access to outside space.

Their play-parks are fenced off by flimsy tape wafting in the wind. Even the smells of food which normally tease our nostrils are absent, as if forced to stay indoors too. No calls from rooftops, no rattle of persianas as neighbours hop in and out of each other's homes. Stay at home. Go out for essentials. Only just one person. Borders closed.

We arrived mid-February for our usual escape from the British winter, planning to stay five weeks. We came by ferry to Bilbao and drove down to the Mediterranean coast just south of Valencia. We managed to entertain two sets of family visitors and were planning on hosting a third when

**“We popped into our local bar on March 13th for an evening drink, only to be told that they would be closing the next day – we had been oblivious to any possible moves toward this...”**

## Members' Pages

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the shutters suddenly came down. We decided to stay: it would all be over by April, wouldn't it?

We popped into our local bar on March 13th for an evening drink, only to be told that they would be closing the next day – we had been oblivious to any possible moves toward this – we generally watch the Spanish news, but this came as a surprise to us! The following day, Pedro Sánchez addressed the nation and so did the king. The message was clear – we are in this together, we need to stick to the rules, and together we will get through.

The daily applause for the essential workers started almost immediately, probably motivated by scenes from Italy, and gave an opportunity to make NOISE – fireworks and saucepan bashing! Rainbows went up in windows and on balconies. “Un día más, un día menos,” “quédate en casa.” Simple unchanging messages. Compliance and acceptance were high.

Contagion peaked at 9700 on a single day as March turned into April and deaths rose to 1198 in a single day. There were distressing stories of people being abandoned in care homes (an investigation is underway), lack of personal protective equipment, and the Madrid Ice Rink being used as a mortuary. The ever-present Fernando Simón, Chief Health Officer, with piercing eyes and rasping voice, appeared with calm authority, giving daily updates, whether good or grim. On the political front, the state of alarm was extended after an initial three weeks and would end after 98 days, on June 20th.

**“Rules were simple and clear! Stay at home; one person to go out for essential shopping – food shops, tobacconists, petrol stations and pharmacies only allowed to open.”**

Rules were simple and clear! Stay at home; one person to go out for essential shopping – food shops, tobacconists, petrol stations and pharmacies only allowed to open. In the two week run-up to Easter, a further measure was put in place: only essential workers could go to work and a system similar to furlough was instituted. Supermarket supplies were low, with the inevitable run on shops for the first weekend, but within days, shelves were full again, with flour, yeast, and of course, bleach seeming to be the goods most in demand. The government delivered on its promise to ensure food supplies. It was interesting to see that laundries remained open – whether the washing was more essential than gossiping, I don't know!

No going out for exercise, no unnecessary car journeys, and no more than one person in a car unless “force majeure.” We had filled our car up on March 13th and in early June still had the same tankful! The national road was empty – traffic lights gave red and green lights to non-existent traffic. Pedestrians swerved on pavements to maintain distance. Even the weather went on lockdown, with more rainy and grey days than one would expect. Meanwhile, through the long quiet days, we got to grips with Zoom and WhatsApp. We played Scrabble, rediscovered canasta, and had our regular appointment with the Downing Street briefing, as well as catching up on events in Spain. A daily doorstep chat (at a slightly higher volume) with our neighbour across the street gave structure to the evening.

My lockdown birthday involved baking my own cake and sharing blowing out candles with my grandsons in Britain – they blew hard enough and, hey, it worked!! Home-made birthday and Easter cards were made for neighbours.

Probably, like most people we felt “all over the place” for the first couple of weeks, and then somehow a routine emerged, and the pace slowed as we adjusted. We did manage our hair – I cut mine via a mirror and just feeling my way, and also did my husband’s hair, so we managed to look reasonable. I only cut my fingers twice! Again, like others I am sure, food and meals became important – we established Pizza Friday – at least that way, we knew what day of the week it was! I can proudly say that nothing was repeated more than once. I think I made

my first ever home-made lemon meringue pie – all from scratch, and the lemons picked off the tree. Reading increased and I was delighted to attend my book club meeting via Zoom.

The easing of restrictions began with a four-stage programme in May. Phase 0 - planning, with adults and children allowed out for exercise, but at specific times; Phase 1 - easing and opening of some non-essential shops, bars and restaurants - outside areas only; Phase 2 - larger stores and indoor eating with social distancing and travel restrictions eased. Each autonomous region was able to decide whether to progress to the next stage, with Phase 3 being a general return to work, with social distancing and masks obligatory on transport and in public places where social distance couldn't be guaranteed.

The days turned, months passed, the sun got higher in the sky, blue skies and sunshine were punctuated by some heavy thunder storm when the temperature gauge climbed. Looking back, where did the time go? Those early sad days seem so long ago – welcome NEW NORMAL. Footnote: We returned to Britain on July 7th. One casualty of lockdown? I was due to walk the Camino Portugués from Tui in April – next year now!

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### One Lost Sock and Three Camino Angels

Annie Sparkes

Two days ago, I lost one of my socks while they were drying on my mochilla. I mentioned it to the bar owner in Naves, and she gave me a pair of her husband's. I kissed her thank you.

Then I passed through Nueva, and a man had a stall in the market selling trekking clothes. He only had socks in packs of three. I asked him if I could buy just one pair. He said yes. I asked him, "How much?" He said gratis. I kissed him thank you.

A day later I was in an albergue in La Isla, and a French peregrino said he'd picked up my sock from the path. I kissed him thank you.

I now have more socks than I need.

PS When I arrived to do my stint as hospitalera in Miraz on October 15th, there was a French peregrino looking sadly at his socks with holes in the heels. Just the man I needed! I gave him a pair of my spares.



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### The Trolley: In Memoriam

Maureen and Keith Young

You followed us faithfully from St. Jean-Pied-de-Port to Santiago, through the Pyrenees, the Rioja, Burgos, the meseta, uphill and down dale, through the montes de Leon via Rabanal on the Camino Francés, and then the Camino del Norte from Ribadeo through to Miraz, the Camino Inglés and the Chemin de St. Jacques from Le Puy en Velay, through the Lot valley to the Pyrenees until we had to give up walking. We entrusted you to the CSJ office for others to use but no one came forward to realise your potential! The final indignity was that the office was cleared, and to our dismay, you were thrown out with the rubbish!! Maybe you have been reborn as an aid to someone homeless. We can only hope so.



**“You followed us  
faithfully from  
St. Jean-Pied-de-Port  
to Santiago...”**

### A Virtual Camino

Jim Sollars

Although to my neighbours, I'm apparently sitting in my back garden in North Essex, in my mind I'm about 30km short of Rabanal del Camino and Gaucelmo, where I volunteered as *hospitalero* last October.

I first learned of the Camino when studying Spanish in the 70s. My teacher explained that if I were a Spanish boy, I'd be Catholic and expected to walk the Camino at some stage. I told him I would do so when I grew up! He looked at me in the way that teachers and grown-ups look at teenagers, but three years ago, I had an opportunity in my life to walk, and I did. On completing my journey, I tracked down my teacher, and in February this year, just before lockdown, I met him in Almería to say "thank you for being the best teacher in my life."

For more than a month, I've been walking with an elderly blind man who was savagely beaten, to help him regain his confidence. I also volunteer at a local animal rescue centre. I have a well-established routine – getting up at 6 am, having porridge and fruit for breakfast, and then out of the house by 6.45 am to walk the 4.5km to my blind friend's home. We walk around a park, with Sammy the guide dog running free, and my friend safe with his six-foot-six minder! Once my friend is back home, I walk to the rescue centre and grab a dog for a walk. My favourite is Saffron the Saluki, an emaciated hound who is now starting to respond to love and attention

by walking at 6km an hour! I walk home, having clocked up between 18 and 20km. A well-earned lunch, and sometimes a siesta, but more often afternoon exercise – the morning being work and volunteering, which can't be done at home!

When lockdown came, I decided to walk a virtual Camino, revisiting my journey of nearly three years ago. I'm fortunate to live in rural North Essex, on the East Herts border, an area crisscrossed with public footpaths. I started my journey on Tuesday, March 24th. My longest day

**“Although to my neighbours, I'm apparently sitting in my back garden in North Essex, in my mind I'm about 30km short of Rabanal del Camino...”**

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walking has been 36km. I'm never more than five miles from home (often much closer).

I have enjoyed watching nature wake up. I've watched the succession of snowdrops, daffodils, wood anemones and now oceans of bluebells. We have a pair of kites which soar overhead and a family of buzzards which hunt on the ground in the early morning in the park. The hedgerows are full of birdsong which I can't decode but do enjoy. I've seen countless skylarks, ascending to the heights, singing their incredible song to distract from their ground nests. My rarest sighting was a mink, swimming in the stream at the side of the footpath – a truly beautiful animal.

I meet few people, but when I do, we usually pass a few pleasantries and continue at a safe distance. My walking is helping with my mental health and my waistline! I'm already down one notch on my belt and heading for the next: As slim as I've ever been.

I miss much of the actual Camino, especially the evening pilgrim meal, eaten communally or sharing a table with fellow travelers. I cook well but prefer company at meals. I've recreated lentil soups, pasta dishes even the black pudding tasted when I was passing Burgos, but I miss being able to show off my Spanish!

I have an occasional *orujo de hierbas*, a digestif I discovered in Viana, where I also ate that well known tapa... pig's ear roll.

I think I'll be in Santiago in two weeks... Walking with a rucksack containing nuts and a litre of water is so much easier than a full pack.

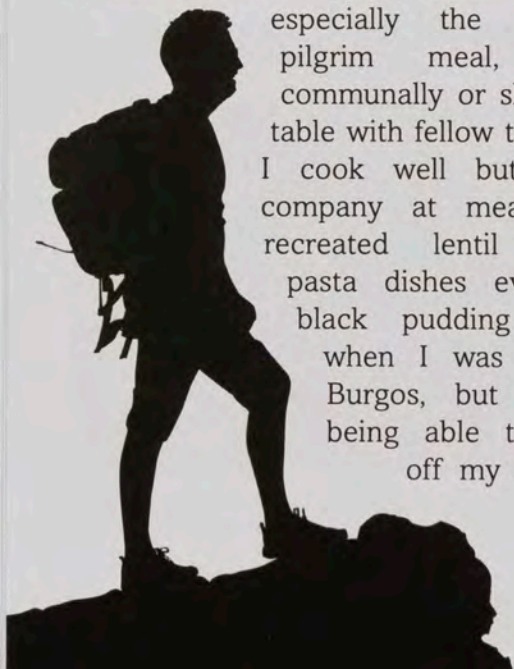
## Not All Pilgrims Are Athletes

Dr. Kimberly Saward

**What happens when a pilgrim soul is housed in a non-athletic body?**

I do not have a hiker's body – in fact, my body was really not made for great adventures, and I don't have an athletic bone in me. I have a spiritual heart, though, and pilgrimage in all its forms calls me to assess my limitations and take to the Path. Walking a Camino is not easy for me. I don't speak Spanish. I don't do well in heat. I am extremely blister-prone and allergic to many bugs. Most difficult of all, I have coeliac disease and cannot tolerate exposure to gluten in any form.

It took years to work through my fears, years in which I walked in France, read



voraciously about the Camino, and followed various other pilgrimage routes on foot, by car, and even once on a bike. Those that weren't done by car left my body in pain, but I couldn't ignore the fact that the Camino continued to call and I needed to prepare carefully.

There are, of course, many Caminos, and many ways to make a pilgrimage. The process of becoming a pilgrim starts with being honest about what it will take to successfully complete your pilgrimage. Some routes are more strenuous than others, some offer more amenities. Without insight into your strengths and limits, you run the risk of doing yourself more harm than good, physically and mentally. There is no such thing as a standard pilgrim. We are, now and always, of differing sizes, shapes, abilities, and every person carries personal challenges – only some of which will reveal themselves in the early stages of planning and preparation.

The route pages on the CSJ website give a brilliant summary of the various Camino routes. Look carefully at three things initially: length, elevation/climbs, and amenities. The routes vary in what they offer. Will there be an infrastructure to support you in taking care of your body? Will you need frequent breaks or rest days? Choices for food options? Might you need to find transport or pack portage to help you over certain points of the route? You will meet pilgrims who call this cheating so you'll need to come to terms with both your needs and your decisions. If you climb that hill, will you simply be tired or will you incur physical damage that might send you home early?

Only you can answer that. Listen to your body!

Personally, I love the feeling of independence and empowerment that carrying my pack affords - but the cinch strap causes problems for my damaged intestinal system, problems that I can't risk becoming permanent. Ultimately portage became a matter of being able to continue on to Santiago on foot or abandoning my Camino. That was the moment that I admitted that my body is my most essential piece of kit, the one that will go forward with me not only as I walk the Camino, but as I travel on towards old age.

*Note: I wrote an extensive set of tips and takeaways when I returned home from walking the Camino Inglés last autumn. I'm happy to share it with anyone interested. Please email me at [klsaward@gmail.com](mailto:klsaward@gmail.com) for a copy.*

Obituary:  
Patricia Quaife, 1940-2020

Freddy Bowen

It is with great sadness that we must announce the recent passing of a second CSJ founding member. Patricia Quaife was one of the original sextet who established the Confraternity of St James in 1983. Pat, as she was commonly known, was responsible for much of the CSJ's activity over its first two decades. During her active years, she held the roles of Bulletin editor, Secretary, and Chair, and was the organiser of many trips abroad, including the seminal CSJ pilgrimage from A Coruña along the Camino Inglés in 1993. This was reported to be the first English pilgrimage on the route since the Reformation, and was captured by the local Spanish media!

A fuller commemoration of her life and contribution to the Camino will be published in the spring edition of the Bulletin. In the meantime, our heartfelt condolences go to her husband, Francis, also an active CSJ member and pilgrimage author. Our thoughts and prayers are with him and their family at this difficult time.





### Obituary: Major Tim O'Neill McCoy, 1952-2018

William Griffiths

Tim O'Neill McCoy made seven pilgrimages to Santiago, in the face of severe and multiple disabilities, and has been described as “one of the bravest and most dogged people” in the Confraternity. He died on February 16, 2020.

His army career had been in the Special Forces. It was after transitioning to civilian life, in October 1993, that he was the victim of a severe mugging at Euston Station, leading to years in hospital and rehab. It was a friend who suggested pilgrimage to him, and he set out on his first one, on the Le Puy route, in 1997. Besides various orthopaedic difficulties, he suffered from anterograde amnesia (a tendency to forget what he had started to do), post-traumatic vertigo (causing him great difficulties on uneven ground), and Tullio's phenomenon (distressing disorientation caused by loud noises). He reached Aumont-Aubrac before being compelled to return home. He wrote accounts of this and his subsequent pilgrimages in two Bulletin articles (September 2003 and March 2007) and in Pamphlets 265 and 880, in the Library. He also spoke at a meeting on “Special Pilgrims” in October 2002.

For his second pilgrimage, he set out from Chartres in 1998, planning to keep mostly to the hard shoulders of roads. He reached Santiago in 63 days, but on his last day had experienced what he thought

was severe indigestion. The hospital in Santiago diagnosed that he had suffered a heart attack. His third pilgrimage in 1999 was on the Camino del Norte, from Santander, again walking along roads. As the roads grew narrower, he found vehicles clipping him, and had to give up at Gijón.

In 2001, he obtained his second compostela, walking from Porto on the Camino Portugués, in 2005 a third one on the Via de la Plata from Salamanca, and in 2006, a fourth one on the Camino Inglés from Ferrol, accompanied by his niece Margaret. By the time of his seventh pilgrimage in 2009, he had lost the sight in one eye. He reached Santiago by the Camino Portugués to obtain his fifth compostela. As he wrote in the Bulletin, “through the pilgrimage I have now come to terms with my problems – to recognise and to accept my disabilities.”



### Obituary: Dr. Mary Remnant, 1935-2020

Dr Gosia Brykczyńska

Mary Teresa Elizabeth Remnant was a world-renowned scholar and enthusiast of early music and early musical instruments, author of several books and numerous articles on the subject. She was the daughter of a music teacher and an architect/art historian. Uniquely, Mary managed to combine these two fields of artistic interests, becoming an ambassador for early music when this was not a popular field of study or interest, as it is now.

A Churchill travel fellowship enabled her to study early musical instruments portrayed in carvings and on the walls of Spanish churches along the Camino. Her lifelong interest in early music stemmed from her deep appreciation of these representations of angel musicians. She played early music on reconstructed instruments modeled on ones she had seen along the Camino, many of them made to order by Alan Crumpler – e.g., her organistrum was based on the one found on the Pórtico da Gloria in Santiago Cathedral.

She delivered many an unforgettable lecture recital, often in aid of charity – several of them in the Purcell Room on the South Bank. She would demonstrate the sound of an instrument by playing a tune and would illustrate a point in the talk with pictures of the instrument in a carving, painting, or engraving.



*Dr. Mary Remnant, 1935-2020*

She was, to our great privilege of course, a founder member of the CSJ – or, as she said more than once, the convenor or midwife of the Confraternity, which was founded on January 13, 1983, in her house, at her birthday party, by a gathering of six early English pilgrims. Mary's interest in the Confraternity was to become total, and she was a committee member for many years, supporting the fledgling organisation in many different ways. Initially committee meetings took place at her house in Chelsea.

## Members' Pages

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*CSJ, the foundation group, January 1983.*

It did not take much time for Mary to set up a CSJ choir, which went on to meet regularly and sang together for the better part of thirty years. Many lasting friendships were made through the choir, and much fun was had by the pilgrim singers. Mary taught the pilgrim choir many medieval pilgrim songs and beautiful ancient hymns. Among pilgrim groups on the continent, we became known as the “singing association.” The choir sang at pilgrim weddings, funerals, on feasts of St. James, and even on the platform of the Paris Métro. The choir also performed at several of her lecture recitals – in the Purcell Room; in No 11 Downing Street, for a benefit concert to raise money for the restoration of Rabanal; in the ruins of Merton Abbey,

which is in an underground car-park; in Canterbury Cathedral; several times in Reading Abbey and the adjoining Church of St. James; and many other places besides.

Mary was a member of many academic societies and contributed much to the Early Music Society. She was a member of the Society of Antiquaries, and was an active member of the Catholic Writers Guild. Mary was also a woman of great faith, and a few years ago, in recognition for her lifelong work for the Church, she was made a Dame of the Order of St. Gregory the Great.

Finally, no recollection of Mary would be complete without recalling her love

# Members' Pages

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*At Downing Street.*

*Images were provided by the author and should not be reproduced without permission.*

of cats. She had several over the years, including the memorable pair, Ferdinand and Isabella.

Mary made a unique contribution to British cultural life and to the Church in Britain. She will be sorely missed by early music enthusiasts all over the world and by her pilgrim friends in Britain and on the continent.

## Milky Way

Stella Redburn

I'll never forget the night  
We sat on the rocks  
At the end of the earth.  
All that summer we had followed the path

Step by weary step  
Until, with surprised recognition,  
We embraced the saint.  
And now the road blazed ahead of us  
Crenellations of glory, leaping off into the  
dark sky  
Coruscated infinities  
Crowding together into another pilgrim  
way.

You recited Spanish poetry  
Dropping words into the black silence  
above the sea  
Then burnt your traveling clothes  
And dressed in white.  
While above us  
A million million stars shouted  
Danced rejoiced in abandoned praise.

### Wisdom Along the Way: Twelve True-Life Camino Tales with an Inspiring Twist

Elaine Hopkins

*Powerhouse Publications (2020)*

*William Griffiths*

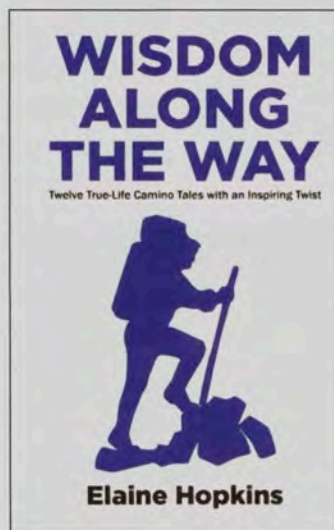
Perhaps the one thing that pilgrims, that diverse bunch of people, can agree on is that everyone's pilgrimage is unique. "A chacun son chemin," as the French say. Elaine Hopkins offers us twelve experiences from her 5000km of pilgrimage. The "inspiring twists" offered are derived from her personal experiences, but also from her practising as a "coach" and hypnotherapist, within the system called neuro-linguistic programming (NLP). She provides helpful book and website references to these fields, and a link to her own website ([elainehopkinsauthor.com](http://elainehopkinsauthor.com)) which offers some moving material besides what is in the book. Her background appears to be both British and American, with experience of both of the CSJ and American Pilgrims on the Camino. She warns that she has chosen to write in American English. Her transformation into a walking pilgrim (though there was an earlier cycling experience) seems to have come through Adam Wells (also a practising "coach"), who is known to many CSJ members.

She describes her first encounter with coaching and NLP at the age of 50. Three

or four years later, she recognised in herself the condition of dyspraxia and embarked on her seven or so different pilgrim routes and two spells as hospitalera. Each chapter begins with a "coaching principle" and ends with a reflection, and these are recapitulated at the end of the book. On her first pilgrimage, in 2014 on the Camino Francés, she encounters foul weather, snoring, and one or two unhelpful attitudes among other pilgrims. The same pilgrimage also gives rise to reflections on boots and being judgmental, before moving on to the Camino Inglés and the Chemin du Puy, and coming to terms with walking alone.

The next five chapters are drawn from a solitary pilgrimage from London (the traditional "front door") to Santiago by crossing to Mont St-Michel and the

Plantagenet Way, where applying the principles of Winnie-the-Pooh proves helpful when lost in a forest. The final chapters describe difficulties on the Via Augusta (Cádiz to Seville) leading to the decision to end the walk, and difficulties on the Voie de Vezelay, resolved by asking one's French hosts for a cup of tea. The book appears at a time when all pilgrims and others are encountering difficulties. Besides what the future holds on the ground, there is mention of another book in gestation.



# Book Reviews

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## Jack's Path

Jack Pilgers

Upper Bucklebury, UK: Sophodos Publishing (2020)

Helen Willson

"I needed to come to terms with my past and make sense of it - search for answers along the old ways and in the old places." The first chapter of this picaresque novel ends with the eponymous hero making this commitment – and as we might guess – those old ways and places are indeed found on the path to Santiago de Compostela.

This is an ambitious book which the author describes as something akin to Dan Brown out of Sophie's World. Those who are familiar with the Da Vinci Code genre will immediately think "mystery thriller meets philosophy as a means of understanding who and where we are."

"Jack" is the product of an unhappy childhood and a failed attempt at finding meaning through work and study. He plunges into a self-destructive, drug-fueled, hedonistic life in Asia. Having found true love and a potential family life, he has hope but it's not to be. He – like so many – embarks on the Camino Francés on a physical and spiritual search for meaning.

If you are looking for a guide to the Camino, this is nothing like a conventional record of the walk to Compostela, but the

author wrote to inspire potential pilgrims and he has the ability to evoke a distinct sense of place and movement. This is a mystical adventure story, grounded in real and recognisable places – a latter day Pilgrim's Progress mixing fantasy, history, theology, sacred nature, philosophy and psychology. The protagonist is transported through time, meeting agents for good and evil, who help or hinder him on his quest to find redemption, love, self-worth and wisdom. It is a dense text and keen readers may wish to follow up on all the allusions, which need time to digest.

Jack learns that pain, both actual and metaphorical, is often the price for new knowledge and understanding. He has to submit to a form of branding – a series of symbolic tattoos, which are the visible evidence of the challenges he must meet and overcome.

There are sudden shifts in time and place, back and forth, so one moment one is in a 21st century albergue, the next in the Spanish Civil War, then in the time of the Catholic Monarchs and so

on...an intriguing roller coaster of time travel, with a cast of enigmatic people as his companions. The day-to-day progress of Jack and his friends towards Santiago is interspersed with tales relevant to the Camino, flashbacks into parts of Jack's former life, and the exposition of many esoteric questions and ideas by his mentors.



When Jack reaches Santiago de Compostela, he has a vision of the whole historical panorama through the centuries, from the burial of St. James to the cavalcade of present-day pilgrims. This evocative piece of writing encapsulates very effectively all we know or believe about the pilgrimage.

Pilgers's writing is at its best in moments like this, when his illuminating sensibility to landscape and place is expressed in lyrical prose. Less successful for me is an overuse of dialogue, which can seem stilted rather than conversational. There is also a sprinkling of purple prose which I found unconvincing....the love interest has a "cerise nose"....another female is a "dainty, sparkling girl." The author's enthusiasm for colourful imagery overwhelms at times the simpler descriptions which would have sufficed. At other times, the language is very formal for the context. Why (tautologically) use "traversed through" when the simplicity and directness of "walked" or "went" would be fine? I also find "I was stood" (and I admit it's a personal reaction to that particular non-standard grammatical construct!) instead of "standing" very irritating in written prose. Small stylistic blips, but those, the few typos, and occasionally the feeling that less would be more, jerked me out of the story at key points, so a bit of judicious editing might lift any second edition. Note also that if you balk at ripe language, you are in for a peppering of expletives throughout the book a tad gratuitous, as the swearing and scatological passages didn't particularly add to the characters or the plot, and felt a bit laboured. That said, the whole concept is quite a tour de force!

The author – also a Jack – with a surname that evokes 'pilgrimage' (pilger=pilgrim in German) has drawn on his own academic specialisms, his knowledge of Spain and its language, his travels and his walking. I started by saying that this novel was an ambitious one. I think Pilgers largely pulls it off, and if you enjoy reading about the Camino and would be stimulated by the forays off-piste into the realms of mysticism, the pas\, and the questions and answers about what it is to be human, then you'll find this a good read.

There is a real sense of movement, action and discovery, and the novel is a kaleidoscope of intriguing and provocative ideas. It's a heady, technicolour mix; some sections need perseverance to comprehend all the ideas laid out, but the reader with an open mind will come away intrigued and enriched.

### **In Praise of Walking: The New Science of How We Walk and Why It Is Good for Us**

**Shane O'Mara**

*UK: The Bodley Head, Penguin Random House. (2019)*

*Margaret Simonot*

This is a book for our times. The longer we are in lockdown, the more we hear about walking and exercise, even if only to avoid using public transport. But without that as a reason, more and more organisations and social institutions are encouraging us to walk – for the planet's sake and for our own health.

# Book Reviews

Shane O'Mara is a neuroscientist and professor of experimental brain research at Trinity College, Dublin, and his book is rooted in the academic discoveries that have been made with regard to the relationship between walking and the brain. He starts with a chapter about why walking can enhance our physical, mental and social lives. He refers to recent scientific studies of brain activity linked to walking, and explains how it is that walking sets our brain in motion, strengthens brain capacity, and makes us more cognitively aware. Walking, even taking a five-minute break from the laptop screen, changes the activity in the brain concerned with seeing and hearing so that we can respond better and faster to what is going on around us.

In the course of the book, O'Mara reviews evolutionary changes in mankind: "Walking out of Africa," how we walk - the mechanics of walking, i.e., balance and sight, decisions about where we walk, and the influence of time and space, a kind of internal GPS. Each of these chapters is supported by references.

The chapter on walking in cities is fascinating, and highly topical. O'Mara concludes that city designers should use the acronym EASE: the walk should be easy, accessible, safe, and enjoyable. One hopes city planners will take note!

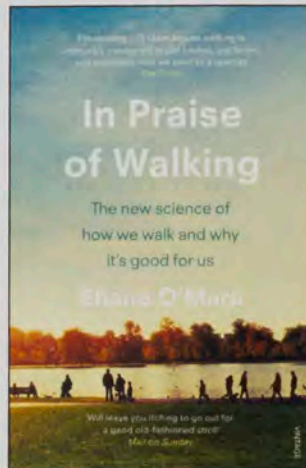
There follows a chapter on the positive influence of walking in nature (a message

that most pilgrims will know about from their own experience), followed by an exploration of the links between walking and creativity – and the possibility of finding solutions to problems, almost by chance. O'Mara suggests that those whose job it is to "solve complex political, organisational and other problems should not be cooped up in conference rooms. They should get out and walk their way to better solutions, and a better world."

In the final chapter, "Social Walking," O'Mara tells us that he has avoided some kinds of walking, such as a pilgrimage. It's not quite clear why, though he implies that it's because

it's not social. He has a misconception about pilgrimage, for he stresses the fact that walking can be a profound source of interaction with other human beings – as if a pilgrimage could not be that....

Most readers of this review will be impassioned walkers and need no encouragement to get out and walk in their daily lives as well as on a Camino. All the same, the book deepens one's understanding of why it is that we all feel so much better for walking and O'Mara's arguments constitute a plea to decision-makers to provide for better walking opportunities in our everyday lives.





## Gender, Nation and Religion in European Pilgrimage Catrien Notermans and Willy Jansen (Eds.)

Oxford, UK: Routledge (2016)

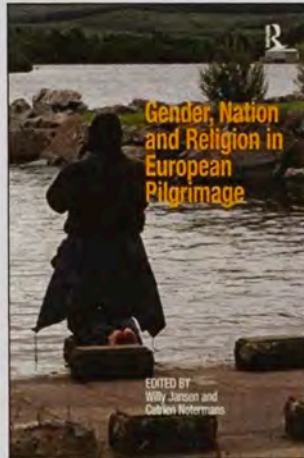
Margaret Simonot

This collection of papers arises from an international research programme, “Gender, Nation and Religious Diversity in Force at European Pilgrimage Sites,” in which researchers worked on the new meanings of pilgrimage in modern Europe. It reflects the issues that the practitioner is constantly required to address, that is to say, how has pilgrimage in the last 50 years either supported the old conventional view of pilgrimage as being rooted in a particular religious faith, or changed into an individual quest for spirituality, or even a leisure activity.

Overall, the project findings present pilgrimage as part of changing structures in European society. Some causes of the changes in pilgrimage, stem from “mass tourism and infrastructure, open borders, the euro, ecological concerns or body and health trends,” as Jansen points out in the introductory chapter. Literature, new media, and technologies have also had a strong influence on the individual and collective experience of pilgrimage.

### Gender

The papers on gender include studies of women’s experiences, from a Christian perspective (Mary as Mother of Jesus in African women’s pilgrimage to Lourdes, the critical perspective of Christianity linked to studies of Mary Magdalene, criticisms, from a Christian perspective of the EU’s perceived “liberal” gender stance towards abortion) as well as the more secular perspective that pilgrimage often assists women in redefining their femininity, as well as providing a means for exploring alternative versions of masculinity, including homosexuality.



### Nation

Several papers take up the question of national identity and the ways in which some pilgrimage sites owe their being to attempts to reinforce a national identity lost in a Europe that has seen societies displaced when geographical boundaries were redrawn. This ties in with the idea that the concept of national identity is often based more on a mythical re-invention of history than on current reality. In this area, pilgrimage can reconfigure people’s perception of local and national identity by breaking old perceptions and forging more trans-national identities and global connections.

### Religion

A series of articles examines the questions of the links between religion and nation. One study examines the generations of Poles who have made their home in Britain.

## Book Reviews

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In particular it focuses on the Marian shrine at Aylesford (on the pilgrimage route from London to Canterbury) that has played a major role in linking religion to national identity, whilst alluding to the fact that these may also shift over time. Another article explores the festivals of Moros y Cristianos in a historical context and shows how they remain a “folkloristic glorification of decisive local military victories...either against Muslims, or together with Muslims, but serving present nationalist purposes.”

In contrast, the links between Islam and Christianity are exemplified in an article that describes the overlap between Algerian and Christian pilgrimage sites, starting with a site in Oran in the 1960s and then a site near Nîmes where an annual Ascension Day pilgrimage to the Christian shrine took place in an area mainly populated by pieds-noirs. Subsequently, a mosque was built nearby and this has led to the creation of a shared space in which the original sanctuary of

Our Lady of Santa Cruz works together with the mosque on a pilgrimage route.

Consistently, the book shows how pilgrimage in Europe often cannot be contained within expected stereotypes, nor classified in traditional ways one might expect, but that it offers opportunities to a vast range of communities to cross borders (both literally and metaphorically) of religion, nation, gender, and identity.



# Camino Pilgrim™ Notebook

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## Freddy Bowen

Although all CSJ events had to be canceled during lockdown, we have recently found new ways to stay in touch with our members. Through Zoom, we have been able to host virtual coffee mornings, continue our monthly wine bars, and co-host biweekly international pilgrim meetings. These have proved an excellent platform for sharing information about the Camino and updates on travel restrictions, as well as building an online international community of pilgrims. So much so that we plan to continue these virtual meetings as a regular feature of the CSJ's event programme.

We have also been using Facebook as a means of staying connected during these isolating times. In addition to our Camino Pilgrim CSJ UK Page, we have now created a CSJ UK Members Group, which only our members can join, where we share ideas, memories, and discoveries. We also have our larger group, the Camino Pilgrim Discussion Group, which has been an invaluable source of up-to-date information from Santiago. Enormous thanks go to Kimberly Saward, an Essex-based member and volunteer, who has worked so hard to coordinate our Zoom and Facebook activities.

During the quarantine months, much effort has gone into keeping the CSJ Regional Groups connected. We now have a record number of twelve active groups, plus four newly forming, who are all remotely planning meet-ups and excursions for when it is safe to do so. Thanks must go

to another one of our members, Wendy Mason-Smith, who is doing a fantastic job of supporting group leaders and keeping spirits high. The updated list of Regional Group Leaders can be viewed at the back of this Bulletin.

The office has now re-opened for our regular Thursday Open Days, and we have held our first group walk (although with just five walkers) to mark our first Marion Marples Memorial Walk at the end of July. Our Regional Groups are also busy organising their own local activities – see their report at the end of this Bulletin. See our monthly e-newsletters, website, Facebook and Twitter for further announcements.

Please also look out for information regarding the Annual General Meeting in January. At this stage, it is unclear what form this will take, but information will be shared on the usual online channels. If you would like to be notified by letter or phone call, please let the office know.

# Refuge Reports

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## Albergue San Martín de Miraz

Priscilla White, Chair

Little did we know at our AGM in January, when Covid-19 was hardly heard of and even less discussed, followed by February, when we held our two preparation days for volunteers both old and new, that our plans for Miraz would be utterly disrupted. In March, life took a very different turn with lockdown all over Europe. We still clung to the hope that things would improve over the summer months and that we would be able to open up the albergue at the beginning of September, albeit in a much reduced way.

Some of our loyal volunteers who were in a position to travel to Spain had indicated that they would be willing to go out to Miraz to look after both pilgrims and the albergue itself and to this end, we were preparing a training update via Zoom. After reading through all the information from both the Spanish Ministry of Health and the Xunta of Galicia, we were confident that we could implement the strict guidelines and safety protocols required to keep both pilgrims and volunteers safe. We had been receiving regular emails from pilgrims to find out whether we were opening up at all this year, and whilst we knew we could only accommodate a very few pilgrims each day, we were keen to “put our toe in the water,” so that we were more fully prepared for 2021 and Holy Year.

I was therefore hoping to be writing to you after the Feast of St. James with some good news. However, the best laid plans of mice and men go oft awry, and as I

write this report, the British government has introduced a fourteen-day quarantine for anyone returning to Britain from Spain, and advised against all but essential travel.

This means that after all we shall not be opening up in the autumn. It is of great concern to the Miraz committee, as the building has now been empty since the beginning of November 2019 and it looks as if it may well be empty until the spring of next year. We also feel very sad that we are not in a position to help the pilgrims who are walking along the Camino del Norte and look upon the albergue as a safe haven. There are not many hostels that have a permanent presence of volunteers who can offer a warm welcome and a clean and safe environment for pilgrims to stay and relax, as mentioned so often in comments left in the Visitors Book, .

Although the immediate future looks rather bleak, I would like to take this opportunity to thank both our generous sponsors and dedicated volunteers for keeping faith with us throughout the year. We had such high hopes at the beginning of 2020 but they have all been crushed by this wretched virus.

Because we have no “boots” on the ground, I am unable to give you any news at all from Miraz apart from saying that Pilar and her family are well, which is so nice to know. I do hope that wherever you are in the world you too are keeping safe and well, and that I will be able to give you some better news for Holy Year in 2021.

## Refugio Gaucelmo, Rabanal del Camino

Julie Davies, Hospitalero Coordinator

It is no comfort to know we are all living through an historic event. Coping with a pandemic was not on Gaucelmo's agenda for 2020. Halcyon days of contented pilgrims sitting in the huerta, being served tea and biscuits by enthusiastic and happy hospitaleros was the model the Rabanal Committee was aiming for. Minimal sightings of bed bugs, healthy donations, a large footfall of pilgrims, and everything in the building working efficiently plus a full 2021 hospitalero rota was the anticipated conclusion to the 2020 season.

Unfortunately dreams are sometimes shattered, and this was sadly the case when the Rabanal Committee took the early decision not to open Gaucelmo during April, May, and June. As we all know, things did not improve, and eventually the decision was reluctantly made to keep Gaucelmo closed during 2020.

Refugio Gaucelmo has always been supported by an amazing group of volunteers, and the 2020 hospitaleros certainly exemplified this. No one complained that their plans and travel arrangements were destroyed. Hospitaleros from New Zealand and Canada had to rewrite their arrangements, other hospitaleros abandoned their Caminos. Offers of volunteering at any time flowed in.

Hospitaleros navigated lockdown by increasing their IT skills, using Zoom to keep in contact with friends and family; repointing stone barns and growing a beard in the process; developing gardening skills; and honing their photographic knowledge. One hospitalera, when she couldn't sleep, walked (in her head) from León to Rabanal, usually dropping off in Astorga. It's always sunny, and there are no blisters or tiredness - such are the wonders of the imagination! Most hospitaleros were drawn to the natural world, whether it was bird watching in their gardens or walking around their neighbourhoods.

We keep in contact through a weekly newsletter. It's an opportunity to remain in contact with everyone, pass on some Gaucelmo history, and share an experience which has turned the world upside down. Now, over half way through the season, I feel as if I know the 2020 hospitaleros as so much more than mere names on a rota. What started as a vague idea about hospitalero lockdown has now survived into the latter part of the season. It has only been sustainable by the contributions of so many different people - David Arthur, Paul Murray, Laurie Dennett, David Wesson, Graham Scholes, the hospitaleros themselves, and our very lovely neighbour in the Monastery, Father Javier.

During this time Father Javier has been sharing the monastery's own reality Camino with some of the many Benedictine monasteries in the Philippines, Venezuela, and Colombia (see <https://monteirago.org>). Many of the

## Refuge Reports

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*First two pilgrims*

contributors to the Reflection contained in each stage, have been hospitaleros at Gaucelmo and are now hospitaleros in the monks' pilgrims house. I believe the hospitalero bedrooms are rather refined, compared to the ones in Gaucelmo!! Such is the very special relationship we share with the Monasterio de San Salvador del Monte Irago - humour and love.

It was with great pleasure the committee were able to offer the garden to the monks for their use whilst Gaucelmo was closed - to pray, meditate, and generally reflect on these strange times. Nature does not stop for Covid-19 and it wasn't long before the grass was creating its own challenge



*The Church*

with its vigorous growth. Thankfully, this was eventually sorted out by Goyo, when he was able to travel from his village to Rabanal after lockdown had been lifted. The monks can now tip-toe through the grass without getting wet feet!

July 1st was the beginning of the awakening of the Camino, when restrictions were eased by the Spanish government. Emotions in Rabanal were mixed: apprehension, anxiety, and some curiosity as to what lay ahead. The first two pilgrims were cyclists from Extremadura and were old clients of Antonio's, staying there several times before.

# Refuge Reports

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*The Church tiles*

With careful social distancing, pilgrims were also able to participate in Compline. The numbers attending the church remained low, about ten for Vespers, with hardly anyone attending Compline. Numbers were higher on Sunday.

The church is getting a new roof that should be completed by the end of August. There is a lot of dust during the restoration work, and the occasional rain shower is a relief, damping everything down.

Where better to store the old tiles than in Gaucelmo's doorway!

Life in Rabanal remains quiet. The anticipated flow of pilgrims after the easing of lockdown did not materialise. This makes planning very difficult for the local establishments who have opened up. However, swallows did return to Gaucelmo this year and built their nest in the entrance. There is no doubt that we will return to Gaucelmo, just like the



*The swallows' nest*

swallows, and share the tranquility and calm of this special place with future swallows and pilgrims. Stay safe one and all.



# Regional Reports

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## *Wendy Martin*

### *Regional Group Coordinator*

Lockdown has been a busy time for the CSJ's Regional Groups. Wendy Mason-Smith (Plymouth, UK) volunteered to act as Regional Groups Coordinator, with a view to supporting existing Group Leaders and setting up new Regional Groups. She is grateful for the advice and support she received, and continues to receive, from the existing Regional Group Leaders. She would also like to thank Arthur Chapman and Jonathan Gaunt for agreeing to oversee the entirety of Scotland and Wales respectively, until such times as smaller Regional Groups emerge in each of these countries.

Existing Regional Groups work hard to continue to provide fellowship between pilgrims past, present and future in their local areas, and new groups formed in London/Middlesex, Norfolk/Suffolk/Essex, Yorkshire, Hampshire, Kent, and Cumbria. These groups have met on Zoom or will do very shortly.

If you are not yet in contact with your Regional Group, please don't hesitate to contact your Group Leader. If you have ideas for local activities, talks or visits that you would like to see taking place, or if you wish to become involved in helping to run one of the newly formed Regional Groups, please email Wendy: [wendyemartin@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:wendyemartin@hotmail.co.uk)

### *Upcoming Regional Events*

Most Regional Groups are now holding more-or-less regular Zoom meetings. Whilst it has proved difficult to organise

walks and other communal events, nonetheless, many groups continue to live in hope, and have varied plans afoot, albeit with the caveat that these may change depending on the regulations in place at the time. All "in person" meetings are subject to current Government advice about masks, hand sanitising, and social distancing. Bearing all that in mind, here is the state of play at the time going to press:

**Scotland:** After a successful initial Zoom meeting on St James's Day (July 25th), the Scotland Group has developed a set of aims, and is discussing comprehensive plans for the future, including various ideas for promoting the Camino and Camino Pilgrim (aka CSJ) in Scotland. Walks to do later in the year (possibly in September) were also discussed. Suggestions included Penicuik to Rosslyn Chapel, part of the St Andrews Way (in Fife) and the Northern Saints Way. Members living in Scotland should have received an email from Arthur with full details. If you have not received this email and would like a copy, please contact Arthur or Wendy.

**Wales:** Jonathan Gaunt has been working hard to establish a group to serve all members in Wales. As well as consideration of possible walks and an initial proposal for a Practical Pilgrim Day in Cardiff in the Spring, Jonathan is also busy organising a national Zoom event for all CSJ members:

Dr Andrew Breeze, a Celtic scholar based at the University of Navarre in Pamplona, will deliver a Zoom lecture on



## Regional Reports

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Welsh Pilgrimage, followed by a question and answer session. This online event will take place at the end of September, date to be confirmed. The focus will be on pilgrimage to two shrines in Wales: Bardsey Island (off the coast of Gwynedd) and Penrhys, (in the Rhondda), as well as pilgrimage from Wales to Santiago de Compostela. This will be a fundraising event. Anyone wanting to take part will be asked to make a donation in advance on the CSJ website, in return for a Zoom link giving admission to the event. The date, time and participating instructions will be included in next CSJ E-Newsletter in early September. If you don't subscribe to the CSJ E-Newsletter but are interested in taking part, please email [wendymartin@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:wendymartin@hotmail.co.uk) to register your interest, and you will be sent the details when they become available.

NB it is hoped that this event may be the first in an on-going series of talks. If you would like to present a talk, or suggest a future speaker, please contact Wendy.

***Ultreia Mancunia/NW England:*** There is a monthly Zoom call for UM members, organised by Barbara Jones, starting Monday, August 24th at 7pm, and then on the fourth Monday of each month.

A walk of approximately 8-9 miles is planned for 10.15am Saturday, September 5. Depending on the weather and how the walkers feel, the ascent to Stanage Edge and the stepping stones and riverside walk may be omitted, making the walk approximately 6-7 miles. Given the current restrictions at the time of going to press, this walk is restricted

to six people, with a waiting list in place in case the situation changes.

***Surrey:*** Despite cancelling the planned visit to Guildford Cathedral, the group is very active, and has a meeting planned for Wednesday, October 28th. Maureen is keeping tuned into CSJ news via regular attendance at the Zoom Coffee Mornings, to which all members are invited. Please feel free to email Maureen with any queries, ideas or suggestions.

***Sussex:*** The group has had a number of successful Zoom meetings which have helped to keep everyone connected. Thanks to Nigel Clark for his expertise in setting these up. There will be a walk around the mediaeval churches within and including the Roman walls of Chichester, led by Peter FitzGerald on Wednesday, October 14th. Meet on North side of Chichester railway station at 12 noon. This will be the first meeting of the newly formed Sussex CSJ group. Please check with Rosie Slough, Sussex Group, 01273 461451, at the end of September or early October to be sure the event will be going ahead. Rosie also plans a visit to the priory ruins in Lewes (weather permitting), followed by Christmas lunch on Sunday, December 6th. Please contact Robin for further details.

***Thames Valley/Reading and Wessex:*** please see the announcement under 'Sussex' about the shared visit to Chichester on October 14th.

***Devon and Cornwall:*** one-day pilgrimage walks are planned for autumn to both Truro Cathedral and Exeter Cathedral. It

## Regional Reports

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is hoped to hold a Practical Pilgrim Day in or near Exeter in March, dates to be confirmed.

*London/Middlesex:* the group has had its first Zoom meeting, with another planned for early October (date to be confirmed). The group is currently compiling a list of walks, visits and talks; if you would like to contribute, please email Wendy.

*Cumbria:* after an initial Zoom meeting, a walk was scheduled for August 23rd, exploring Grassmere/Rydal. Zoom meetings will be arranged to plan further events.

*Norfolk/Suffolk/Essex; Hampshire; Kent (three separate groups):* an initial Zoom meeting is planned.



# CAMINO PILGRIM™

THE CONFRATERNITY OF ST. JAMES

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