



Bulletin

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Cover:
Stones collected from
the river near to the
Ermita Santa Marina,
which will be ground
into natural pigment.
More in *The Art of
Pilgrimage* article.

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not only the guilt of sin, but also all the penalties attached to it. “What, every time?” said the cardinals. “Yes, every time”, replied the Pope. The cardinals promptly fell on their knees, wrote Southern, “crying ‘us too’, and the Pope replied, ‘All right, you too’”.

Michael Walsh

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE CONFRATERNITY’S OFFICE

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The Jacobean Tradition

Alberto Solana de Quesada

Translated by Joseph McClain

Part I

INITIAL APPROACH

When one arrives with the spirit and body of a pilgrim in Santiago de Compostela, enters the Cathedral through the Puerta Santa, descends to the Apostle's Tomb below the altar and then climbs high to the small chamber above the altar to embrace the shoulders of Santiago's image, one senses a magic atmosphere floating like a mystical hum through the imposing plazas of the Quintana, the Obradoiro, the Platerías and the Azabacherías. It is impossible at that moment not to wonder whether the remains venerated down the centuries are really those of the Apostle James the Greater.

If one takes into account the legend briefly described in tourist guides, esoteric literature, books, essays, rediscovered occult writings or even in nightly radio/television programmes targeted at a consumer mentality and the superficial visitor's fleeting curiosity anxious for novelty, the question of authenticity is inevitable. This legend presents an account of the body of James arriving in Galicia in a stone boat that floated on water, guided by supernatural forces, having traversed

from Palestine to Galicia the waves of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic.

Even the most basic logic renders this assumption implausible, calling into doubt the integrity of the entire Jacobean legend. It is, thereby, reduced to a pietistic tradition without any historical basis, a non-scientific tale hardly meriting serious study, or a discredited myth obeying the dictates of political, military, ecclesiastical, cultural or doctrinal interests. It relegates the possible story of the evangelistic efforts of St James in Hispania and the localization of his tomb in Galicia merely to ecclesiastical motives aimed at a Machiavellian cover-up for pagan precedents. In this process, elements from many traditions have been conveniently brought together to make the diffusion of the story easy. A permissive and acritical attitude towards esoteric assumptions, a desire for sensational novelties supposedly hidden through the course of history by doctrinal forces, further eased the spread of the information. It all plays out on a field abandoned by the anthropological re-interpretations of the modern age. Our society's anti-clerical tendencies have become more influenced by a culture of

science and progress and encounter a totum revolutum in which it has become difficult to defend even the legitimate elements of the ancient Jacobean Tradition.

But what, then, should one think of this colossal cathedral, so impressive when seen from the Plaza del Oradoiro, the beautiful Pórtico de la Gloria, the prodigious centuries-long pilgrim phenomenon, the thousand-year cult of the Apostle St James? Is it nothing more than tattered bits of legend, perhaps inspired by nothing more than simple faith, naiveté, mistaken assumption, opportunism, convenience, imagination, fantasy, fanaticism or even lies? The conflict here is such that one is forced to examine the tradition through a multi-disciplinary and objective approach in order to see if it contains indications and suggestions leading to a true story or whether, to the contrary, it is based simply on false-hoods, well appropriated through the course of history.

Such then is the objective of this article: to provide a rigorous analysis of elements of truth in the Tradición Jacobea. It will, however, not be an easy task given the material's chronological span and the substantial epistemological compass encountered. In addition, this analysis will run counter to current attitudes which tend to see the Camino de Santiago as an attractive life-style choice, rather than a system of facts based on an unprecedented sociocultural phenomenon: the medieval

discovery of the tomb of the Apostle James.

Few today are interested in this topic and, in addition, there are hypotheses which invent earlier origins of the pilgrim tradition. These theories ignore the early history of the Santiago Pilgrimage, inventing other supposed roots which discredit the original ones. Defending the Jacobean Tradition nowadays is, at the same time, therefore, defending the very origins of the Camino de Santiago. It is clear that the Camino is a causeway on which the pilgrim's route took place and its cultural and ideological content is an essential part of its originating impetus. Both elements, causeway and content, merit careful consideration since they each define the Camino's geographic, historic and cultural identity.

Don Miguel de Unamuno¹ reflected on the question in an article written in Salamanca in 1912. The piece was chosen from a selection of essays that present a poetic, folkloric vision of Spain. The collection of pieces, of undoubted literary quality, were called "Andanzas y visiones españolas." Don Miguel considered the belief naïve that the actual body of St James might be resting in the tomb in Santiago. He saw Compostela's emergence as a city the result of the centuries-long pilgrimage which also greatly influenced the formation of European and Spanish culture. He wrote about the possibility that Priscillian,² the supposed heir and reformer of Celtic law,

1 Unamuno (1864-1936) was a poet, novelist, essayist and, importantly, a philosopher as well as being professor of Greek. He served two terms as Rector of the University of Salamanca, being removed first by Primo de Rivera and then by General Franco.

2 Priscillian (c. 340-385) became bishop of Avila in 380, despite doubts about his orthodoxy. He was executed for heresy at Trier – an action opposed, incidentally, by the Pope – and his body was later returned to Galicia, where he may have been born.

might possibly be the person actually entombed in Santiago. He maintained that “a modern man, of critical mindset, cannot accept, whether Catholic or not, that the body of James the Greater might be the one in Compostela. Whose body is it then that they venerate. How and why did this cult begin?”

This is today the common view of the Jacobean Tradition. The argument reduces the Tradition to an ancient pietistic belief with no real basis in truth and opens the way to supposed Celtic legacies. In so doing, it seeds doubts about the true occupant of the Compostela sepulchre, generously handing over to Priscillian that which would be denied St James.

We are not proposing here to open an interrogation and express opinions without having found our way to essential information, neither are we hoping to arrive at one opinion, closing the door to others. The Jacobean Tradition is not the fruit of blind faith, but an ancient cultural legacy whose origin is not ecclesiastical, but rather of the people. Neither is it a doctrinal principle which might define the degree of one's Catholicism.

The clanging bells of criticism which the esteemed and admired Don Miguel heard were then sounded again by a man of the Catholic Church itself, Monsignor Louis Duchesne.³ the Monsignor stated clearly that, like it or not, the Jacobean Tradition was never a doctrinal principle

of the Catholic Church in whose bosom, moreover, we see the most tenacious detractors of the Jacobean Tradition.

Another citation that defines the historical scientific approach towards the Jacobean Tradition comes from Don Claudio Sánchez Albornoz.⁴ He writes: “It is improbable that during the years after the death of Our Lord Jesus Christ, years of extreme difficulty for his disciples, that one of the most authoritative disciples might have abandoned the original Jerusalem nucleus and equally implausible that it would have occurred to him to cross the Mediterranean, transporting himself to the extreme far lands of the known world, to Hispania.” We will see that there are solid arguments to suggest that Don Claudio was wrong. It might be said that history tends to adopt aprioristic postures when an opinion, difficult either to prove and or to refute, is elevated to the status of fact. If Medieval History is riddled with gaps, then Ancient History even more so. It is not acceptable to take a personal opinion as fact, much less subjective or abstract evaluations. All the data and evidence that flow together in the case of St James must be considered. Even Don Claudio himself says: “nothing guarantees the authenticity of the magical relocation of the apostolic body to Galicia, but, on the other hand, nothing requires its denial since history is full of accounts no less illogical and improbable as this one”. Since Don Claudio seems willing

3 Monsignor Louis Marie Olivier Duchesne (1843 – 21 1922) was a French priest and distinguished historian. His critical approach led to his study of the early Church, published 1906-1911, being put on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1912.

4 Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz y Menduñá (1893 – 1984) was an eminent medieval historian who left Spain for, eventually, Argentina after the Spanish Civil War. He served for a time as President of the Republican government in exile, refusing to return Spain until after the death of General Franco.

to remain uncertain about all the issues involved, he opens a loophole which history does not have the requisite tools to close and invites us to leave open the possibility that the Tradition merits further unbiased and multi-disciplinary investigation.

Interestingly, this is not the usual posture of historical science. Responses might normally range from omitting the Tradition's very existence, to considering it a Christianized version of a pagan antecedent, or rejecting it entirely as an unjustified product of fervent desires. The very consideration of the question might even be judged unscientific.

Other positions which lead equally to discrediting the Tradition are the esoteric, initiatory and rediscovery theories that claim the St James Pilgrimage is the usurper of a more ancient reality. This asserts that the legend of the Apostle James is nothing more than an attempt to hide and redirect an ideological or virtual historical scenario, completely at odds with the Jacobean Tradition. For some, the Jacobean Tradition conceals a pagan, pre-Christian antecedent in which the Celtic past is the true historical root. For others, the truth of the matter lies in both legends and mysteries in which the tomb of the Apostle is often considered a secondary issue or even fictitious, a veritable cover for the process of moral initiation into truths only appropriate for the elected few. Yet others say that Santiago is only a myth, in the shadows of which symbols and signs are hidden that must be interpreted, messages entwined with the "Game of the Goose", the ritual world and secrets of the Templars, of the builders and stonemasons, of the mystery of the Grail, of the Camino's true ending not at

all in Compostela but at the ocean's edge in Finisterre. There it is said a supposed ancestral camino ended with rituals connected to the Afterlife, rituals merely taken over by Christianity. And for yet others, the Jacobean world is nothing but a farce, a historical invention benefitting military and ecclesiastical interests in which the only thing of interest is the fabulous cultural and artistic creations produced all along the Camino de Santiago. They all omit the entire value of the only motor propelling an unprecedented phenomenon: the Jacobean Tradition.

Between these two very distinct tendencies, the one erudite and scientific, the other esoteric and parapsychological, there remains only a narrow margin of credibility left to the old Jacobean Tradition. The possibility of attention and analysis by either world of thought is thereby limited. On the one hand, the world of intellectual scientific historical thought yields no space to the legitimate options of the Tradition, relegating it merely to a matter of faith not based in reality. On the other hand, the speculative and enigmatic tendencies dazzle audiences hungry for novelty, receptive to the most speculative presumptions. They are excited by innovative proposals but closed to anything perceived as conventional, especially if they appear to have ecclesiastical connections. Indeed, the most interesting and accredited works on the Jacobean Tradition have been gathering dust in forgotten shelves because of the academic and esoteric world's lack of attention. Nevertheless, erroneous Jacobean studies keep being published in history books. Information continues to be made public through books, novels

and broadcasts which diffuse the most discredited illusions, omitting any criteria or indications reasonably favourable to the Tradition.

Between these two opposed options, the Camino has evolved into a scenario in which the pilgrim of today is uncomfortable speaking of faith, of any religious motivation or of apostolic roots. And, indeed, many pilgrims are unfamiliar with its importance, or at best consider the issue secondary or non-existent. In these days, they seek renewal, a disconnection with daily life, a personal experience. For them, the least important element is the historical antecedent, the driving force of the fabulous process which is the Camino de Santiago: The Jacobean Tradition. "What matters is the experience of the road" is an ambiguous, pleasant phrase that converts the Camino into an end in itself. "The door is open to all" is the message of a well-known medieval poem that should not be understood as "anything goes" but rather as "all of us have access."

*"La puerta se abre a todos, enfermos y sanos,
no solo a católicos, sino aun a paganos,
a judios, herejes, ociosos y vanos; y más
brevemente, a buenos y profanos."*

*"The door is open to all, to the sick and the
healthy. Not only to Catholics, but also to
pagans, to Jews, heretics, the sinful and the
vain, to the good and the profane."*

(Poem from the 13th century)

Today, because the Camino is open to many interests, all motivations are to be respected without, however, forgetting that

the Camino de Compostela is a cultural expression of the Christian identity of Europe with roots deep in the Jacobean Tradition. Today tourists and the curious, rather than pilgrims, focus on the Camino de Santiago. It is also subject to commercial exploitation and promotion by tour operators. They have converted the Jacobean Route into a market or a theme park. The deterioration of the Camino is so grave that the Asociación Gallega de Amigos del Camino de Santiago (AGACS) convened a press conference in Santiago on the 18th of December 2010 when, together with the combined forces of numerous Jacobean associations, they denounced the situation, appealing to UNESCO to include the Camino de Santiago in the List of World Heritage Sites in Danger, similar to some sites in the third world.

Confronting the secularization and exploitation of the Camino de Santiago, and also taking into consideration the narrow margin of credibility remaining between academics and speculators, I propose studying the Jacobean Tradition as the genuine content of the Camino, that which gives the Camino its most authentic meaning. In this process, we shall look for its historical truths and their value for the 21st century.

Madrid-born Alberto Solano de Quesada is physician with a practice in his home city and a long-standing interest in the history of the Camino.

Part II will appear in the next issue of the Bulletin.

Adventures on the Camino Lebaniego and Ruta Vadiniense

Chris Slater

Marian from Cataluña and I had met in the chaotic albergue at San Vicente where she was helping out as an *hospitalera*, a role in which she had previously served in Spain and Italy. Tony was an intrepid English adventurer, Daniel an immensely tall, lean German with a bubbling sense of humour. The four of us became the only pilgrims on the Camino Lebaniego.

After the jovial, popular, asphalt-heavy Camino del Norte reaches San Vicente de la Barquera in western Cantabria you begin to notice a strange addition—what is this strange red symbol, and the red arrows accompanying the familiar yellow ones? This continues for several kilometres, past Hortigal where the guides suggest a divergence, which never appears. Increasing doubt is erased at Muñorrodero where the red arrow invites you to turn sharply left, through a village as straggling as its name. Marian and I were then directed to a riverside trail, immediately appreciative of the lack of traffic noise replaced by birdsong, tinkling cowbells and babbling waters as the trail faithfully followed the meanderings of the Río Nansa. None of the typical monotony of riverside paths here—from the gentle, beaten-earth path at the riverside to inching across vertical cliffs clinging to the guide rope secured by hooks drilled into

the rock—we were continually serenaded by these sounds of nature. Seven kilometres of this were punctuated by a sign promising a bar at Camijares, which was open and welcoming for an early lunch. We continued, ignoring the divergence of the Camino up a hill to the right, following instead the “Senda del Nansa” which continued along the delightful riverbank and duly delivered us to the remote farming community of Cades with its little albergue—four beds, but plenty of floor space. Tony preceded us and got the *hospitalera* to open up. There was a bar across the square, but—ominously—no signs of life. Assurances that the bar would open became less credible as the hunger grew, and eventually someone contacted the bar owner who was enjoying a fiesta in Serdio. But the spirit of the camino was alive—he interrupted his recreation to come and make food for us.

Sobered by this occurrence, the next day we set our sights on Quintanilla, eight kilometres distant, which had the area’s solitary store, only to find it closed. But word of our arrival had spread and the owner appeared, cheerfully swinging keys—her family also runs the adjacent bar. So starvation was again averted. From there a short hop took us to the splendid twenty-bed albergue in La Fuente where we had called ahead to Michal the Polish *hospitalero*, who

lives a monk-like existence of meditation and pilgrim-care in this beautiful, remote mountain village. There we were privileged to be shown the church and the source of the sweet water, which give the village its name. Daniel joined us and the four of us enjoyed the simplicity and purity of his simple food offerings. The next day we set out for Potes by a splendid mountain stage with capricious views of the nearby Picos, still snow-studded in May, which alleviated the agonies of a hard walk. Again, the promise of a bar at Cicera was dashed as it was closed—this area depends on small-scale farming and some tourism in summer, neither of which support regular business. We descended to Lebeña and hoped to stay there rather than climb to Cabañes where there was promise of beds but no food, but when the Casa Rural opened they had no rooms because of an influx of temporary workers from Potes nine kilometres away. Instead we chose to brave the traffic through a narrow defile where we had to press our weary bodies against the guardrail when a vehicle approached. Fortunately, the valley soon widened and we could drag our exhausted bodies in relative comfort to the bustling town of Potes.

We finally located the albergue, not expecting it to be under a parade ground, but delighted to find that all the dormitories had wide arched windows with the rushing river immediately below. A phone call summoned Mercedes who was delighted to welcome two pilgrims to her otherwise empty sixty-bed albergue. We stayed two nights, and on the second we were joined by Tony who had braved the climb to Cabañes and found enough food to stay alive. A gentle morning stroll, soon joined by the pounding feet of

Daniel fresh from the luxury of a *pensión*, took us to the goal, the monastery of Santo Toribio de Liébana, a dignified presence in a niche of the hill. Deserted. Not a vehicle in the parking lot. Just a friendly monk watering the flowers. Could this be the celebrated location, one of only five with the privilege of granting perpetual indulgences, the others being Rome, Jerusalem, Santiago de Compostela and Caravaca? Apparently so. After a few minutes conversation with the monk, he was apparently satisfied by our authenticity and humility, and took us to the adjacent chapel and unlocked the cabinet containing the silver gilt cross in which was embedded the ultimate relic—reputed to be the biggest existing piece of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. Each of us in turn was permitted to touch the piece of wood, which has been authenticated as a species of cedar native to the Holy Land. This relic was conveyed to Astorga in the fifth century and later sent to its current location for safekeeping when the Moors were threatening.

Suitably sobered by this experience, our mood was shattered when the coaches began to arrive in the parking lot, disgorging chattering hordes of shades-clad tourists and their cell phones. Would Santo Toribio have been amused or violated? We were saddened to learn that the monastery was struggling to survive through a lack of monks, and that the former thirty-eight-bed albergue was now closed.

After Potes, Marian and I were dissuaded from following the first two stages of the Ruta Vadiniense because of the treacherous underfoot conditions caused by melting snow. We opted instead for the route over the San Glorio pass—even higher but kept

clear by snow ploughs so we had to rely on unfamiliar trail markings. We wound round the mountain out of Potes, intrigued by the wayside trees whose trunks were stripped of bark. Our first thoughts were of deer, but a wayside information board informed us that these were *alcornoques*—cork oaks, which flourished there due to an unusual combination of local terrain and climate. We had the feeling of penetrating ever further into the unknown,

relief we descended to the metropolis of these parts, La Vega de Liébana, whose 184 inhabitants have a church and a restaurant for their succour. Regaled at the latter but drained by our exertions we decide to go separate ways. I was intent on walking on but Marian decided to rest and take a bus the following day. I staggered on to Villaverde, the last place in Cantabria before tackling the high pass into the province of León. Early to bed in the luxury of



Could this be the celebrated location, one of only five with the privilege of granting perpetual indulgences?



confirmed by the appearance of the recently abandoned hamlet of Porcieda, which seemed to symbolize the widespread occurrence of rural depopulation where in so many places the young have left and the elderly linger on, living their rhythmic, hardworking lives in the manner of their ancestors. Spain was late to experience what we generally call progress, so there's still a feeling in remote parts that such things as automobiles and telephones are just a current fashion which will pass, allowing a return to traditional ways. Our path took us through the tiny communities of Tudes and Tollo, whose harmonious names reflected their appearance, but we lost the trail and had to descend through a steep wood, fighting our way over barbed-wire fences and cow pastures until, wet and muddy, we found the semblance of a path. We had the distinct impression that the cows were amused by this. With exhausted

private room—bed and breakfast for the minimal sum of sixteen euros—there then came a knock on the door and a beaming Marian appeared, accompanied by a priest in traditional regalia, black-frosted beneath a wide-brimmed hat. Evidently the magic of the Camino remained alive and well.

I had come to appreciate how Marian's gentle persistence had opened several doors, but never before anything quite like this. She had wanted to visit the church in La Vega, which of course was locked, but an enquiry led her to Don Manuel who opened the church and engaged in conversation with her, and as a result drove her the seven kilometres up to Villaverde with the promise of returning there for breakfast and accompanying us up the mountain towards the pass! By lucky coincidence he was planning to follow the cows this way, presumably to bless them as they ascended to their summer pasture. Next day the cows

were delayed, so we went ahead anyway, Don Manuel again in priest gear striding uphill with Marian's backpack, and me gasping in his wake. He knew every mountain, every name, every elevation, every plant. We were concerned that he would be late for his 11 a.m. Mass but he said the four old ladies wouldn't mind waiting. The final thrust of this ascent brought us to the modern motor road, which was a series of hairpin bends. I was looking forward to the gentle grades of the road, but no such luck—Don Manuel reminded us that *peregrino* is derived from *per agrum*, through the fields, so we had to scramble up the steep, wet slopes between the loops of the road. At which point he decided he had shepherded us enough, took pity on my rough stick, gave me his beautiful carved hiking pole and scurried back down the hill towards his patient old ladies, a living embodiment of the promise of Psalm 121. Perhaps he had a good reason to return to his beloved mountain later to confer his blessing on the cows, while we were spared the aromatic nature of the accompaniment.

San Glorio did not disappoint, being wild and windy at the summit, our descent a relief after the long climb. Refreshed at the bar at Llánaves, we took refuge at the pensión at Portilla de la Reina where the threatening storm finally erupted. Portilla occupies a niche where two valleys join, totally dominated by mountains rising almost vertically on all sides. The next day, a relatively gentle stroll down the valley and alongside the lake with spectacular views of nearby peaks took us to Sunday lunch at Riaño, then a night at the albergue in the pretty village of Horcadas. As usual, we were just two. After Horcadas we soon bade farewell to the lake and descended past

the dam to join a section of the old Roman road that connected Ampurias in extreme eastern Spain all the way to Finisterre, thus forming a main artery for communication from Rome to its remote dependencies. Today it enjoys the proud designation of GR1. In the vicinity of Las Salas we came across a remarkable stretch where the track had been quarried through the rock; since this was in the days before dynamite the technique was to build a big fire to heat the rock, then quench it with water to cause it to crack. No doubt the availability of slaves helped this process.

This long day, never far from the River Esla with its burgeoning flow from the many tributaries destined to become the lifeblood of the parched plains, brought us to Cistierna. The mountains, so dominant earlier, retreated in stages with a final outcrop at Cistierna, bringing us to the irrigated plains of the Tierra de Campos punctuated by a few sandstone ridges where hermits had made their homes in caves in the early days of Christianity. On the way after Gradefes we visited the restored monastery of San Miguel de Escalada, its Mozarabic remains brooding over an empty countryside. From there it was just a short hop to the splendid, walled town of Mansilla de las Mulas with its chattering masses of pilgrims on the Camino Francés.

In no way did the Ruta Vadiniense disappoint, and we gained a healthy respect for the fierce tribe who repelled the Romans and gave their name to the route. And also for their present-day descendants whom we hope will attract more pilgrims to this great experience, where it's possible now to stay almost entirely in albergues, without resort to more expensive alternatives.

Mind over matter at Rabanal

Dermot Wynne

Dermot Wynne, who wrote a number of popular pieces for the Bulletin, died on 18 February, 2018. This short account of NOT going to the refuge at Rabanal, is reprinted in his memory. An obituary is going to be published in the next issue of the Bulletin.

Anyone who saw the film *Lawrence of Arabia* will no doubt remember the scene early in the movie when Lawrence is with some army colleagues in an office somewhere in North Africa. He picks up a box of matches, lights one and then without much more of a to-do puts it out by the simple expedient of putting his two fingers over the flame. There is not a flicker of a reaction on his face, and he walks away. One of his astonished colleagues picks up the box of matches, lights one and then tries to put it out in the same manner. The result is predictable. He yells with pain and says that it hurt. Lawrence, who is about to leave the room, turns around and says, "Of course it hurts. The trick is not to let it show".

I think it is most likely that everyone who has completed the pilgrimage to Santiago has had to go through some kind of pain barrier. How they dealt with it is very often a personal matter, but with some people the pain and suffering become a very public event.

I remember cycling along the road about fifteen kilometres before Belorado.

The footpath was immediately adjacent to the road and I noticed a young man walking along the footpath with a staff and a small bag slung over his shoulder. His dress seemed to be a kind of simple smock and most impressively of all he was walking barefoot! He was obviously a pilgrim and I had to admire his ability to walk without footwear. I cycled on to Belorado and booked into the refuge. Later in the day I saw him arrive, still barefooted and, it seemed, none the worse for wear. I felt that he must have conditioned himself not to feel the pain, or maybe there is a special way of walking that puts the minimal amount of "wear" on the feet? Anyway, he had about another five hundred kilometres to go before he would reach Santiago! I hope he made it. Quite a few of the wardens seem to have some expertise in physiotherapy or first aid because I saw a number of them practicing their skills in the refuges.

Before leaving England I had read a number of books about the pilgrimage and naturally I had heard a good deal about the refuge at Rabanal. I knew that the English

Confraternity had plucked the house, and perhaps the village, from oblivion. I had read how, with many hours of hard work and dedication by a whole team of people, the building was gradually renovated and how the village in general was now beginning to prosper. So a visit to the refuge was a must.

When I got to the village I stopped to look at a tourist panel at the beginning of the houses. As I went to get back onto my cycle I lifted my leg over the saddle, but the strap of my sandal got caught in the pannier bags. Unable to keep my balance the cycle and I crashed to the ground. My left knee took the full force of the fall and in a split second I knew that I had done more than just minimal damage. Two elderly Spanish ladies were approaching me as the accident happened. They must have thought that I seemed alright and, although I couldn't understand a word,

I received a proper finger-wagging and I suppose an instruction to the effect that an elderly cycling pilgrim should be more careful in future. In fact, I was in some severe pain and my left knee had ballooned up like a tennis ball. In a moment of unguarded attention my whole pilgrimage was in ruins!

I hobbled the few metres to the centre of the village and found a café open. I went in and ordered a coffee. At that point, my only concern was how was I to get home? The thought of continuing was out of the question. My whole left leg had

gone stiff and the swelling on the knee was getting bigger. Should I try to find a hospital? Would the refuge be open and allow me to stay for a few days? Which would be the best method to get myself and the bicycle home? These and many other questions were racing through my mind as I tried to console myself in the Rabanal café, but most importantly I was convinced that my pilgrimage had come to an end. I am not normally prone to tears but I was feeling pretty close to desperation. My body temperature dropped and I felt alone.

How, why or what happened next is a little difficult to unravel but suddenly I had an amazing inspiration. What my knee really needed was not rest but exercise! From that moment the sun seemed to shine again. I limped out of the café, retrieved my bicycle and began to hobble very slowly out of Rabanal. After

some distance I managed to get on my cycle and somehow to ride only using my right leg. At any slight incline I had to get off and hobble along. I had no idea what lay ahead, whether the night was going to be spent in a ditch or a refuge, and it didn't seem to matter too much. I was making progress and going in the right direction. So although I did miss a visit to the Confraternity refuge, perhaps, like Lawrence of Arabia, a strong determination to overcome physical pain can be achieved – and maybe, just maybe, in my case, with a little help from St James?

■■■■■■■■■
**I knew that the
English Confraternity
had plucked the house,
and perhaps the village,
from oblivion.**
■■■■■■■■■

The Art of Pilgrimage

Basia Goodwin

Ritual and symbol

Like the bridegroom who was submersed into the sea and came out covered in scallop shells, so we are submersed into the liminal waters of transformation when we embark on the pilgrimage to Santiago. Whether we realise it or not, we are engaging in ritual and become a symbol in action. This can be a surprising experience for the modern pilgrim who belongs to the post-Enlightenment era which no longer values, nor knows how to respond to, numinous symbols and ideas. The medieval pilgrim, on the other hand saw ritual and symbol as perfect instruments to make the leap from the tangible to the transcendental and help facilitate an inward journey.

Beauty stirs the heart

We can find much of this wisdom transmitted by our medieval ancestors right under our noses on the Camino. Carved in stone and painted onto glass, adorning the Way, we can find beautiful rhythmic geometric symbols, forms and patterns – bursting with creative energy – celebrating the Sacred. Stylised birds, lions, buds, flowers and figures expressing higher truth peer down from the churches and cathedrals, silently witnessing the flow of passing pilgrims over the centuries.

My husband and I are deeply inspired by the Visigothic, Romanesque and Gothic art

and architecture of the Camino. We work with stained glass and paint using traditional techniques, and we are passionate about the use of geometry in sacred and traditional art and architecture. We have found that the more we research and create these beautiful forms the more our hearts are stirred. The modern-day person seeking spiritual nourishment can discover that our western and Christian tradition still has a lot to offer.

Flores Del Camino

As pilgrims of the Way, we have been so deeply inspired by the Camino and its reanimation that a few years ago we decided to move to the Camino Francés. We did not have a plan, we just followed our hearts. We bought an old Maragato house and poured all our love and soul into refurbishing her into a beautiful and nourishing space for guests. We called the house 'Flores Del Camino' and ended up becoming her worker bees.



We asked ourselves “how could we be of service”? Today, each morning we open up our gallery for passing pilgrims where they can take a “donativo” coffee and snacks while enjoying some beautiful rose windows of the Way that we were inspired to create for them. As well as looking after the village municipal albergue we also accommodate pilgrims at our home – now a casa rural. We found that some pilgrims were in need of a rest day or two. Some were intrigued and moved by the art we have created, and so we started to facilitate a creative retreat process for them, gently exploring the beauty of sacred art in relation to the Camino.

All are welcome

Today we also run a few group retreats a year, as well as facilitating individual ones. If it attracts, we would like to support you in exploring the deeper trails of the Path by exploring the wisdom of our ancestors through an experience of their art and its creative process. Like the Way, creating sacred and traditional art is made up of meaningful stages that facilitate a journey of “becoming” and self-exploration. It also invites us to slow down and to look inwards. You do not have to have any artistic background. It is open to all; people of all faiths or none, those that are walking the Camino by foot or spirit, those that are looking for a place to land and those that would like to return.

Castrillo de los Polvazres

A little on the side, away from the crowds on a one kilometre alternative route on

the Camino, we are situated just west of Astorga in Castrillo de los Polvazares, a beautiful Maragato village (considered one of the most beautiful in Spain and home to other artists). The village used to be on the medieval Camino because it once housed a pilgrims’ hospital. To our delight, when we stripped the modern cement off the old stone walls of our house, we found two beautiful carvings on the stones: a Templar cross and a goose. With this discovery, we felt as though the Way was “supporting” and welcoming our idea to provide accommodation for pilgrims and, by providing hospitality and sacred art retreats, to also bring more pilgrims back through the village once again.

From the head to the heart

We chose to live on a point of the camino that was meaningful to both of us. On a threshold, at the end of the meseta and at the foot of the highest point of the Camino – Cruz de Hierro – which marks a new stage of the Way through the mountains, this is poetically expressed sometimes as the transition from the mental to the spiritual or, from the head to the heart. As we dive deeper into our adventure this feels even more meaningful, since for us creating Beauty stirs the heart, and moves and changes us. We would like to share this and create beauty with others.

The Camino is a living dynamic tradition and we feel deeply blessed to be living on this beautiful road. It is our great joy to receive you. You can find more information about our offerings on our website www.floresdelcamino.com

◀ Photo on the next page: Flores del Camino gallery display

The St Paul Choral Society on the Camino to Santiago de Compostela

Stephen Mangion

I first walked the Camino Francés in 2012 from St Jean-Pied-de-Port to Santiago de Compostela. It was an unforgettable experience which led me to repeat the Camino every year thereafter with different starting points and routes. Each one would be unique – meeting different people along the way, seeing varying landscapes, encountering new spiritual experiences and coping with differing weather conditions – but all extremely uplifting each in its own way.

One of my passions has always been music. Some sixteen years ago I joined a choir in my native Malta. The St Paul Choral Society is one of Malta's leading polyphonic choirs with some seventy members. We have performed in many singing events in the Maltese Islands and in some wonderful venues abroad, amongst which are the cathedrals of St Pauls' and Westminster in London, St Stephen's in Vienna and Notre Dame in Paris. We plan an overseas tour every second year, so when it came to planning our tour for 2017 I thought of combining my love for the Camino with that for my choir. I proposed this to our committee and, after some initial hesitation, they agreed.

The idea was to follow the Camino Francés from Burgos to Santiago and to sing in a number of prime locations along

the way. It was not a simple exercise. There were some serious logistical problems: getting some seventy people to and from Madrid, organising the accommodation and the transport (we were not expecting our choristers to walk some six hundred kilometres) and getting permission to sing in the cathedrals of Burgos, León and Santiago, but after much effort and team work and with the help of a very able Spanish travel agent, it all fell into place.

We set off on the second of September and flew to Madrid. From there we took a coach to Burgos at which point we joined the route of the Camino Francés. We were scheduled to sing in Burgos cathedral, having got all the necessary permits from the cathedral authorities but were concerned whether we would have an audience or not. Although we had done some advertising via Facebook and other social media as well as in the local press, we were not sure whether this would produce results. Furthermore, we had a problem in that we could not do our pre-concert warm-up in the cathedral as there was a service on at the time so we had no choice but to stand on the steps outside the cathedral and do our warming up there. As it was, this was a blessing in disguise and the very best form of advertising we could have asked for. The square was thronged with people and they

all gathered at the foot of the steps to watch us and before we had finished there was a stampede towards the cathedral so they could get in line for the concert. We were really gratified to see that the cathedral was not just full but overflowing, with people even standing outside the area where the concert was being held. It is always very stimulating to sing in such circumstances and, of course, the wonderful surroundings really topped it all. We got a wonderful reception from the audience and it was a hugely uplifting experience for us all.

Our next stop was León. We drove there via Fromista where we stopped to admire the wonderful churches of San Martín de Tours and San Pedro. We got to León in time for our concert at the cathedral. It was an equally uplifting experience. Again, the cathedral was full – our performance at Burgos the day before had been reported in glowing terms in the local papers – so that helped. The performance went extremely well: there is a truly wonderful pipe organ in the cathedral, the acoustics are great and the superb architecture and stained glass windows really created a very spiritual ambience for us and the audience. In high spirits after the concert we went off to the Cuartier Humido for dinner under the stars.

Between León and Santiago the Camino crosses two mountain ranges, the Montes de León, where the highest point of the Camino is reached at the Cruz de Ferro past Rabanal, and the Cordillera Cantabrica with the pass at O’Cebriero. We stopped at this beautiful little hamlet to admire the wonderful view over the Bierzo valley and forward into Galicia. We visited the simple and very atmospheric little church with its strange legend before we pressed on to our

last stop in Santiago.

We had planned to spend three days here as we had two singing events set up. The first was at the monastery of San Martín Pinario, reputedly the second largest monastery in Spain. The monks of the monastery whom I had met on my previous visit had really prepared for our visit. We were all given a guided tour of this wonderful building. The concert was held in the church attached to the monastery and this was full, once again, thanks to their very effective broadcasting of the event. After the concert the monks had a party for us in the cloister of the monastery with some great tapas and with flowing Albarino wine.

The final event was the highlight of our trip. We were to sing in the *Misa de los Peregrinos* on the Friday evening. It had proved very difficult to persuade the cathedral authorities to allow us to sing the whole Mass. They originally insisted that we sing only a few hymns at the start and end of the Mass as they have a very strict programme and their own cantor. However, we managed eventually to get them to agree to our programme and we sang the various parts of the Mass, the Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus and Agnus Dei and various hymns at the start, during communion and at the close. The end of the Mass proved to be a very welcome surprise when the *botafumeiro* was swung through the transept of the cathedral. I had experienced it many times before but to most of my companions it was the first time they had seen it and were quite spellbound. It was a fitting end to what had proved to be a truly unforgettable experience and one which I am sure will lead to a new crop of pilgrims from among our members.

Discover the Camino through Pilgrims' Eyes

David Smith

Camino Society Ireland

An exhibition of photographs taken by pilgrims on the many Caminos de Santiago went on display from March 22 in Dublin. The exhibition, in partnership with Instituto Cervantes, is titled, "Discover the Camino through Pilgrims' Eyes" and features forty-five photographs chosen from more than 300 images submitted to Camino Society Ireland's first annual photographic contest.

The idea for the contest and exhibition came from Oihana Trojaola, a Basque native who has been living and working in Ireland, and who is an active member of Camino Society Ireland. Its aim was to engage and increase the Society's current membership, interact with pilgrims from all around the world through social media and build a collection of first-class photographs for future exhibitions.

It was decided to divide entries into 5 separate categories: 1) Landscape/Sights, 2) Traditional Food and Drink, 3) Camino Marking, 4) Culture, and 5) Building and Architecture. Entries for the exhibition came from all across the globe, from Ireland, the UK, North America, Australia and New Zealand. The photographic contest was organised by Camino Society Ireland and winning entries were scrupulously

judged and selected by a panel of experts: Alan Betson—a member of The Press Photographers Association of Ireland, Des Byrne—founder of the Irish Street Photography Group and Peter Varga of Humans of Dublin project.

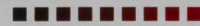
Many outstanding images have been received—from the sun gracefully rising over the Alto Del Perdon, to a simple stone marker with a slow snail taking its time, and some of the most beautiful scenery in Galicia on the Camino Primitivo. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, however, and everyone has their own story to tell. All forty-five selected photographs were displayed at St James's Parish Hall, Dublin on 16 December 2017 and all winning entrants were given time to talk about their own photo and the motivation behind taking them. Since this event, the Camino Society has been promoting the winning photographs through social media with great exposure.

Following the exhibition, the Camino Society proposed that the Cervantes Institute in Ireland should promote Spanish culture through returned pilgrims from the Camino. In 2017 alone, 301,036 people received the Compostela. You could at least double that number to estimate the number of pilgrims actually walking

the Camino in that year because many walk some etapas only and don't reach Santiago. Of those pilgrims last year, 47.39 percent gave their motivation for walking as "Religiosa / Cultural", and 43.46 percent gave their motivation as "Religiosa" only. We can be reasonably sure that those who say "Religiosa" only are in fact interested in culture and those who say "Religiosa/Cultural" are particularly interested in culture. And none who return from the Camino are disappointed in the exposure to the art, architecture, food and wine, music, and way of life along the Camino. In fact, they return enthused and motivated to learn more.

In our photographic contest, the appreciation for culture can be seen. And the great approach is not initially to teach or instruct but to question: it is to ask the photographer, "How did you see it?" or "Why did that matter so much to you?" and the answers give the start to a most wonderful and enthusiastic dialogue. We have seen this work. Here you have the beginnings of a wonderful dialogue on the culture of Spain through the Camino and the Camino Societies as a whole.

"Discover the Camino through Pilgrims' Eyes" opened on 21 March at Instituto Cervantes in Dublin at 6 pm. The exhibition was opened by Mr Victor Andresco, Director at Instituto Cervantes and guests included the panel of judges and Rev. Horace



Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, however, and everyone has their own story to tell.



McKinley, representing the Archbishop of Dublin. It continued until 7 April, with free admission.

For those who were unable to attend this event, the exhibition will be on display at the first annual Celtic Camino Festival in Westport, Co. Mayo. More details about this event can be found on www.caminosociety.ie

Loitering on the Camino Francés – The Fool on the Hill

Stephen J Cave – Alias Brian the Snail
Amazon e-book, 2018, £2.99

It is all in the title – a delightful, self-deprecating and amusing Camino account written by a Baptist minister (although I didn't know that when I read it), whose aim was to do “some serious loitering” on the way to Santiago. The “fool” is also, as a result of a sort of Epiphany or vision that he experiences, Christ and the Cross...the gentle, courageous “fool on the hill”.

From the start, this short book about a walking pilgrimage on the Camino Francés is lively, direct, informative and reflective and you will read it with a smile on your face, as the author's humour and humanity shines through with grace and humility and honesty.

He is aware of some of the limitations of being post 60: wearing lycra is one of them. He rejects a Mo Farah approach, detests a structured hike punctuated by lots of earnest map crinkling ... no “hi-tech” Camino for Brian the Snail. He opts for a take-it-as-it-comes approach, with six weeks to see the views, listen to the birds ... and enjoy a cold beer!

Clearly written in a deceptively casual style, there are no wasted words (albeit a few typos) and a wealth of practical advice and insights – all gifted to the reader with a dose of humour. This is a celebration of loitering, a reliving of the fun, the camaraderie, frustrations and hard bits, balanced by a reflection on his spiritual and religious experience on the road.

Stephen offers us a succinct “glossary”

of pilgrimage, gleaned from his own keen observation of his fellow travellers! The terminology (you'll have to read it to get the full definition!) includes the Camino Limpó, Meano, Vínó, Sacramínó, Beano, Leano and Odouro (can you guess what that one is!) Amusing, yes, but never gratuitous or forced. There is a smile and more for every page, making it delightfully refreshing reading.

One clear and telling suggestion: “Do your own Camino”. Never try to replicate or follow anyone else's options, advice or choices, but “allow the Camino to search you – not you search the Camino”. He reflects on the different feel of kilometres and miles, on Roman roads (“could have done better”), wine fountains, toilet paper (the shame of today's Camino), alternative routes, equipment, boots and clothing, “professional” Camino repeaters, painkillers, crossing bridges, the power of prayer, locked churches (frustration!), disorientation, inspiration from the hills, snorers, top bunks, Tigger onesies, torches, bedbugs (none), friendships (many) and the “mental Meseta” (he loved it!)

He explores with humility his own spiritual questionings and concludes that, for him, the Camino and its pilgrims had become his church, a church of the road, of continuous movement, of meaningful friendships and conversations, shared meals, miracles and (here a typical moment of bathos) sticking plasters. He is troubled by the denial of access to so many places of worship along

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the route, and as in Burgos, the detachment of the worship from the congregation. When so many pilgrims may be seeking some connection beyond the physical journey, the organised church is missing the opportunity to welcome them and their latent spirituality. He cites two profound spiritual experiences: the reflection area at Hontanas and at “our” Rabanal. He finds “the hostel run by the Confederacy (sic) of St James in the UK was a wonderful experience” and the evening service with the Gregorian chant was deeply spiritual and literally breath taking. Stephen found God in the communication and sharing with fellow travellers; the honest but respectful exchange of views (Brexit and Trump were however, too volatile as subjects and had to be banned!) and in the “sacrament of the road”. The last chapter concentrates on his quasi-mystical vision of Christ’s cross, to the tune of the Beatles’ “Fool on the Hill” but in the

midst of these reflections on the enormity of the human condition and the transformative “foolishness” of the Christian sacrifice, he can josh that “I like a bit of foolishness”.

Although he gets to Santiago, this account ends at O’Cebreiro, which is where he had sensed would he would find the true culmination of his personal pilgrimage, find what he was seeking amidst the beauty of this landscape and the mystic power of the village. The author found his “home”, a coming together of the fool on the hill and the loitering pilgrim – his moment – his Camino.

So, short as this is (you can read it in a leisurely couple of hours), it is witty, succinct, comprehensive, informative and moving. I found it a totally engaging piece of writing and would recommend it as a welcome addition to pilgrimage literature.

Helen Willson

Le Chemin de Rouen au Mont-Saint-Michel: Itinéraires de Miquelots I

Les chemins du Mont-Saint-Michel, 2017
ISBN 978 2 951 9988 96

Pilgrims walking from England to Santiago (*jacquets*) often crossed the channel and walked to and via Mont-Saint-Michel when they were known as *miquelots*. This Guide is a 16 stage 340km route from Rouen westwards to the Mont. It is a way of getting to know Normandy in all its rich variety of landscape, history and food. You can walk to Rouen from Dieppe (<http://bit.ly/2IbQ2a6>) and this Guide takes the pilgrim from the

brass scallop shell in front of Rouen cathedral all the way to the Mont-Saint-Michel. The information is in French and the pack comes with a historical booklet and separate pages for each stage with maps and information on accommodation, transport links, bars etc.

Marion Marples

Copy is available in the CSJ Library

The Road to Santiago

Film by Alan Field
Released February 2016

This film, made by the pilgrim, Alan Field, a 41-year old from Liverpool, has an authentic feel to it and you rarely feel you are in the presence of a camera.

He was inspired to walk the Camino after experiencing a near-fatal fall down a 70-foot waterfall in Thailand. He subsequently read Paolo Coelho's book, *The Alchemist*, and felt the need to do something positive in his life after earlier misdemeanours. He had been baptised as a Catholic but brought up in a household hostile to any sort of religion, so although he didn't feel he was particularly religious, he felt drawn back to his earlier faith, and persuaded a younger friend, Jodie, to embark on the pilgrimage with him.

They had made no preparation and Alan wasn't particularly fit, so when they started at Saint-Jean-Pied-Deport in preparation for the climb up the Pyrenees it was somewhat of a shock. In the scene in the pilgrim office there, Alan, who talks to the viewer as he goes, joked that it might be the only pilgrim stamp he would get. The photography throughout is excellent, with very typical Camino views. While climbing up the Pyrenees, he saw a statue of the Virgin which moved him and refreshed him a little.

Every so often throughout the film a road sign indicates the distance to Santiago, and the first one they saw said 790km. Maps are put in from time to time to show where they have reached. They arrived in Roncesvalles and attended the pilgrim Mass. Jodie walked faster than Alan so they agreed he should push

ahead and they would meet further on. In Pamplona Alan felt his faith not very strong and he didn't understand the iconography in the cathedral. Here he met with other pilgrims whose pace is closer to his own and encountered Luciano (Spanish) who was nearly 60.

Alan was drawn to churches and describes his search for inner peace. After Puente la Reina he met Jodie again - the film also occasionally switches to Jodie, staying at various pilgrim refuges - which lightened his mood. At a pilgrim refuge was given a little pilgrim made of twisted wire when he expressed admiration. They ate grapes and (unripe) figs. When they got to Logroño they met a lot of Spanish lads singing, celebrating an international football success. Alan provided a cake for Luciano's 60th birthday and put the little metal pilgrim on it. He described the benefits of walking slowly, befriending Luciano despite language differences, and Jodie had met younger walking companions. They met again when Alan fantasised about a bacon and egg feast, and Jodie is seen tucking in. They visited the church at S. Domingo de la Calzada and heard the cock crowing and he recounts the legend. They also encountered a pilgrim travelling with a donkey, and Alan was devastated by the news that Jodie is obliged to return home. He didn't feel like carrying on, but soon after met a young Korean girl, Sun Ju (?) and they got on really well. She later says why she likes walking with Alan, he is funny, and honest, innocent, and just himself. He

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walks around Burgos cathedral and decides he must go on in any event, as he had arranged to meet Paolo Coelho in Geneva after his pilgrimage. Luciano had to leave after Burgos, and the meseta got Alan down, there being nothing to distract him from his thoughts.

At another refuge he was given two holy medals, which encouraged him again. An older woman in the street suggested that he hadn't walked all the way, but he eventually convinced her by showing his pilgrim passport, now full of stamps. His mood became more irritable because of the snoring in the refugios, and he accused a pilgrim of snoring all night and keeping him awake. Afterward he regretted his outburst of bad temper – was it worth it?

He sometimes mentioned Paolo Coelho to people along the way and asked if they had met him. On one occasion, referring to the film, he was asked to turn off the camera. It seemed Paolo Coelho was not always popular. After a 463km sign he met up again with Sun Ju and felt he should just walk for one day more. Then he met a French pilgrim priest who was 76, who had left at the same time. He recounted further thoughts about the fall at the waterfall when he might have died and felt he hadn't done what he needed to in life. He had damaged his foot on the Camino and was seriously thinking of stopping. He met an Irish pilgrim, Tommy, and they talked about Finisterra. The grim traffic is shown on the approach to Léon. He gazed with wonder at the stained glass in Léon cathedral and appreciated Tommy's knowledge. But he felt he would need to move on, taking the bus to give his feet a break. Afterwards, feeling bad about this lapse, decided to do a day's walk afterwards, mainly in the dark, to make up for it. He found a bed at the last place as

everywhere else full up. And a meal too!

At the Cruz de Ferro, he pondered and said he felt he had found God for the first time. At Ponferrada he met Tommy again, who had an inner calm. He also helped Alan with the iconography in the churches. He agreed to go in the (filming) motor home for a bit, to give his foot a rest, but it crashed. After that, no more lifts! After Villafranca he stopped at Las Herrerias before Cebreiro, where on checking email, found that Paolo Coelho had left Geneva but would arrange another date for meeting. He was very disappointed and felt he'd lost motivation. His feet were playing up again, and he was seriously thinking of giving up walking after the mountains. At Cebreiro he related the miracle and looked out over the mountains. Paolo Coelho's role ended there – now Alan felt he had a real goal – to complete his walk to Santiago. He saw some cows, and a 134km. sign. People who lived on the Camino helped with accommodation, and he got his foot checked – he had tendonitis and would just have to grind to a halt if it got really bad. He talked to Tommy about donations of food en route, and paying? He felt discouraged, and Tommy and Alan then visited a church together. He was offered a ride on a horse, and met a Paolo Coelho lookalike in a bar; and he thought about the many memorials to pilgrims who had died en route.

Alan decides to stay at Monte de Gozo to arrive in Santiago in daylight, so he and Tommy separate. He receives another metal pilgrim. Once in Santiago the long queue for a compostela in the Pilgrim Office is shown. He goes into the cathedral, and muses on pilgrims of days gone by, and – he has made it! He visits the tomb of St James, the botofumeiro swings.

He thinks about a possible reunion with other pilgrims, but continues to Finisterra,

where he burns his clothes. He tells us that he does eventually meet Paolo Coelho.

It is an absorbing film, with its own particular atmospheric feel about it. You get the feel of the measure of the challenge, how slowly things seem to be going and

the regular setbacks, loss of enthusiasm and reinvigoration, the pleasure of encounters with other pilgrims; and the joy of the landscape as revealed in the photography.

Elizabeth Key

Pilgrimage: The Road to Santiago

**BBC documentary mini-series
Broadcast in March 2018**

The BBC programmed *Pilgrimage: The Road to Santiago* for three successive Fridays, finishing on 30 March, Good Friday in the Christian calendar. It was shown over three weeks, in other words, rather longer than it took the select band of pilgrims to journey the almost 800 kilometres from Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, where they collected the first stamp on their *credenciales*, to the pilgrim office in Santiago, where they collected their Compostela. Ed Byrne, who vociferously resented the time he had spent learning the catechism, skipped about brandishing the Compostela with almost childish glee. Though for much of the way they were conveyed, they had walked over the Pyrenees, and to qualify for the Compostela they faithfully walked the last 100 kilometres. There was a telling moment when Byrne, the avowedly atheist Irish comedian, asked the group whether they would continue the pilgrimage were the BBC no longer paying them to do so. They all said they would, provided they could stay together. Clearly, the Camino had exercised an attraction that surprised them all. “I’m planning a return visit with

my kids,” remarked Byrne as he strode out ahead.

He was a seasoned walker. None of the others were (though the singer Heather Small looked as though she might be), and they suffered. “Dentists’ drills don’t whine as much as these people,” said Byrne, though as time went on he became more forgiving. Debbie McGee suffered most and had to be looked after by former marine J. J. Chalmers, whose father was a vicar. In Afghanistan, Chalmers had stepped on an Improvised Explosive Device and spent much time in hospital: he has since taken part in the Invictus Games and is now a BBC presenter. Without his ministrations, one wonders whether the McGee feet would have recovered in time for her to take part in last year’s *Strictly Come Dancing*. Blisters apart, she appears to have suffered less, at least in the early stages, than the Reverend Kate Bottley, whose faith in God was seriously challenged by the need to walk up hills. “I’m so far outside my comfort zone”, she confessed at the outset, but this did not stop her dispensing spiritual advice to all and sundry. “I wouldn’t describe myself as religious”, she told the journalist

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Raphael Rowe, which I thought odd, as the Church of England, of which she is a priest, is, I would have thought, unquestionably a religion.

While the pilgrims were at Rabanal, Fr Javier from the next-door Benedictine monastery dropped by to give a little sane spiritual advice. The visit to Refugio Gaucelmo was one of the more curious incidents on the journey. The actor Neil Morrissey decided to cook, and the group ate together under an awning in the huerta. Were there no other pilgrims in the refugio, one could not help wondering, and, if there were, what had happened to them? On another occasion in a different refugio they had mixed with whomsoever they found round a table, which moved the overtly Christian Heather Small to say that she had there found community. So why not at Rabanal? Apparently, because of the exigencies of filming, they rarely stayed in refugios but rather in private, if basic, accommodation, thus missing out, one might think, on one of more significant aspects of the Camino experience. There was no mention of bed bugs, but there were many complaints, when on occasion they did stay in a *refugio*, of Morrissey's snoring.

As they set off, Ed Byrne remarked that he thought of it as a long walk rather than a pilgrimage. But that changed: "We've become pilgrims", said Morrissey before they arrived at the cathedral in Santiago. Pilgrimage, as distinct from walking, is a religious undertaking and it was inevitable that towards the end—the group made it to Finisterre, though not on foot—there would be discussion of its impact on their faith. Or lack of it. Three, McGee, Byrne and Morrissey are former Roman

Catholics. Byrne reckoned it had made him more tolerant. McGee at first said it had made little difference but she told the BBC later she was reconsidering. I got the impression that Heather Small sometimes found the Catholicity of the Camino a little too much, but was very taken when she encountered Guy Hayward of the British Pilgrimage Trust intoning a medieval chant in an appropriately medieval chapel. The journalist Raphael Rowe had started out saying that religion was the root of all evil, but at the end conceded faith in God was important to some people, and that had to be respected.

Years ago, in a very different television series, the waspish art critic Brian Sewell made the pilgrimage in his vintage car. He, too, was by this time an agnostic, but inside the cathedral in Santiago he leant against a pillar and wept for his lost faith. This new offering, filmed not by the BBC itself but by the religious programme maker CTVC (a fact which perhaps accounts for the sympathetic commentary), conveyed, or so it seemed to me, a fair picture of what it is like to walk the Camino, insofar as it is possible to do so in the company of a film crew. But I suspect no single incident in the three programmes will remain in my mind for as long as Brian Sewell's tears.

[The Brian Sewell episode can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k96exTLtz6A>, a link I owe to Joanne King]

Michael Walsh

Michael Walsh is editor of the *Bulletin* and for many years was the TV critic of *The Tablet*, the *Catholic* weekly.

South West Group of The Confraternity of St James

2018 walk and visit to Hailes Abbey, Gloucestershire, Wednesday 25th July, feast day of St James, a 2 to 3-hour walk.

Meet in the car park of Hailes fruit farm between 10.30 and 11.00am. There is a charge of £2.50 for a day's parking, but if you intend to end the day with a visit to the Abbey, you could park in the abbey car park and walk the short distance uphill to the fruit farm. The walk starts at the sign for the Cotswold Way [CW] outside the fruit farm. We will set off at 11.00 am.

The lane leads uphill through the woods to the CW sign across fields and up to Beckbury Camp. On ahead, at Stump's Cross, we leave the CW and turn downhill. Before dropping down to Wood Stanway, there will be a stop for a picnic lunch (please bring) at a place with a view. In Wood Stanway follow the yellow arrow through the houses and across several fields to join the minor road that takes us back to Hailes Church (medieval wall paintings) and Hailes Abbey. This was an important pilgrimage site in the thirteenth century, having a phial of the Holy Blood. It is run by English Heritage and owned by the National Trust. It is free to members, but costs £6.00 for

non-members with a £1 charge for an audio guide. There is a small museum alongside. Some of you may have heard of Margery Kempe who came here on her way back from Santiago in the fifteenth century. The Abbey, which closes at 6.00 pm, is beautiful and worth a visit. We will end with tea together at the tea shop at Hailes farm. The closest pub is The Pheasant at Toddington roundabout.

By car: exit M5 Junction 9 Tewkesbury. Take B4077 towards Stow on the Wold. At Toddington, turn right towards Winchcombe on the B4632 and left at the sign for Hailes Farm, not the Didbrook road just before it. Two miles further on is the farm shop.

By train to Cheltenham. There is a steam train from the race course which arrives at Hailes Halt at 11.25 am, see www.gwsr.com or phone 01242 621405

If anyone wants to come this way, please let Liz know and we could do the abbey visit first, meeting you at the gate to the abbey at 11.35am

My mobile is 07970101275 and home number 01179734502.

Liz Crean

It was about this time a year ago when seven well-known British personalities stayed at our Refugio Gaucelmo as part of the recently-aired BBC2 documentary mini-series, "Pilgrimage: The Road to Santiago" (reviewed on p26). Now that the programme has been broadcast, we have seen another surge of interest in the CSJ office with passports and guide books flying off the shelves! This year we have sent off record numbers of pilgrims, principally on the Camino Francés. How long before demand exceeds provision?

Guide books

We have recently released our pocket-size versions of our 2017/2018 guides to the Camino Francés, Camino Portugués Central Route, Camino Portugués Coastal Route, Camino Inglés and Camino Primitivo and all are selling very well. We plan to release 2018/2019 updates to these as well as our guides to the route to Finisterre.

We are also in the final stages of putting together a guide to St James' Way from Reading Abbey to Southampton – a recognised pilgrimage route for any British pilgrims needing an addendum to their Camino Inglés from A Coruña.

Events

Our three Practical Pilgrim Days in London, Manchester and Edinburgh were all a great success. Our day pilgrimage to Christ Church Cathedral was sadly postponed due to inclement terrain. However, we look forward to Saturday 7th July once the ground has hopefully dried out. We also look forward to the second of our day pilgrimages on September 1st to Worcester Cathedral. If you

would like to be put on the register of interest, please email or ring the office.

We have started off our camino wine bar evenings again, with growing amounts of interest. The second Tuesday of every month, a few of us gather in Blackfriars Wine Bar at 6:30pm, a stone's throw from the CSJ Office for wine and pizza to talk about all things 'camino'.

St James Day

In London we will be celebrating St James Day with two events. Members are welcome to join us! Tuesday 24th July – 3-course dinner at Brasserie Blanc, South Bank. 40 seats available. £30 per head excl. drinks.

Wednesday 25th July – 11am-3:30pm walk from All Hallows-by-the-Tower to Museum of London followed by evening service at St James Spanish Place.

If you would like to attend one or both of these events, please contact the office. First come, first served.

Remember too, that we have regional groups who organise their own activities. Get in touch with the office to find out where your nearest group is; or if you'd like to start your own!

Membership

If you would like to receive this Bulletin electronically, please email the office. Note that we will be sending reminder letters in the next few months to renew your membership. To make it easier, you can now do this by Direct Debit. Please see our website for further information.

Freddy Bowen
CSJ General Manager

Report from Albergue San Martín in Miraz

Priscilla White

The working party, consisting of Ted and Averil Jones together with Jane Oosthuizen, arrived at Miraz in late March to find that the *albergue* was without any water (hot or cold), with no oil in the tank and therefore no heat or facilities to wash or cook. They were obliged to spend a couple of nights in the local town before the contractors arrived to deal with all the problems. Galicia suffered a long harsh winter and one of the pipes had perished, causing all the challenges that the team encountered on arrival after four months with the building empty.

The *albergue* was ready for use by the beginning of Holy Week and the inside of the building has now been repainted so it looks fresh and welcoming. We are awaiting the painters to come and complete the outside now that the weather has warmed up.

The other challenge we have had to face is compliance with the new Guardia Civil rules that state that all *albergues* have to send through details of pilgrims spending the night via their website. This has meant buying a new laptop for the *albergue* as the information can only be sent electronically. The website has mostly worked well although there have been a couple of occasions when the Wi-Fi has dropped out, causing a delay in sending through the data.

Because of the cold wet weather at the

beginning of April, we were only averaging 22 pilgrims per week, but once the days lengthened and warmed up, the numbers increased to 140 for the first two weeks of May. We continue to receive encouraging feedback from the pilgrims passing through and they particularly appreciate the warm welcome from the *hospitaleros*, as well as a clean and safe environment to rest and relax before continuing their journey to Sobrado and Santiago. To date, there does not appear to be any effect on numbers with the variant Camino from Baamonde but we shall know more by the end of the season in November.

The *hospitaleros* have enjoyed the opportunity to attend Mass at the village church on several occasions, although the church is not open on a regular basis and to date we have not had the key returned to us. We have therefore not been able to open up each evening for the pilgrims to spend a quiet half an hour of prayer and reflection. On a more positive note, Mari-Carmen who runs O'Abriego, the other *albergue* in the village, has been most welcoming to the *hospitaleros* and baked a *Tarta de Santiago* for them that was much appreciated by all.

The *hospitaleros* have enjoyed their trips to Parga market where they sampled the great Galician dish, *pulpo gallego* – octopus boiled in a large copper cauldron, then chopped up and arranged on wooden platters, with or without potatoes, and

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sprinkled with *pimenton* (Spanish paprika), all washed down with the excellent local beer, *Estrella de Galicia*.

The geraniums are now beginning to flower in their pots by the front door and the grass in the orchard has been cut on a regular basis by the *hospitaleros*. Although

this is a remote corner of Spain, with the bird song and blossom on the trees, it is also a haven of the peace and quiet in the countryside that so many people enjoy.

We very much hope that *albergue San Martín* enjoys a successful season, full of pilgrims but free of bedbugs!



From top to bottom: Wisteria and Miraz village in May 2018



Wet weather gear, Miraz

Report from Albergue Gaucelmo in Rabanal

Julie Davis

Working Party: Margaret Simonot, Paul Murray, Lexi and Graham Scholes
First Duty Hospitaleros: Rowena and Bob Macdonald (UK)

The weeks prior to Gaucelmo's opening saw the Refugio turned into a building site. Gaucelmo Committee, having made the decision to have the electrics renewed, had to be patient and wait until the Spanish electrician and the associated workmen were able to start work. The main problem was the fuse box which was out of date. Nearly all the cabling did not conform to the latest standards which meant Gaucelmo was not compliant with Spanish Law. Any establishment offering services to the public has to display a certificate indicating the electric system complies with all rules and regulations.

We owe a big debt of gratitude to Auri the engineer who managed the project, to Alberto the electrician who did the electrical work and to Amando who did all the masonry work. The project was completed a few weeks prior to opening. Everything was covered in a film of dust and grit. Getting Gaucelmo ready for opening was destined to be a busy time.

Unfortunately, with two crucial members of the Working Party unable to attend for personal reasons, the working

party was only half staffed. The remaining two valiantly rose to the challenge and were thankful to have an offer of help from Lexi and Graham Scholes. Graham being a former Property Co-ordinator. After super human efforts from everyone, and amidst heavy snowfalls and appallingly cold weather, Gaucelmo opened on time – spotless and with new mattress covers.

The Village Party prior to opening was very well attended with about 50 persons. Being so close to Easter there were many extended families of all ages who had come from Madrid to visit relations in Rabanal: 7.45 pm proved to be the perfect time to begin, coinciding with the end of Vespers. David Wesson's photograph albums which he has gifted to Gaucelmo (they are kept in Antonio's for safe keeping) proved very popular with everyone.

For the 2018 season there are 35 hospitaleros on the Rota from a variety of different countries – UK, Italy, Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland and the USA. For eight volunteers this will be their first duty. Rowena and Bob from the UK were the first hospitaleros of the

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season. Last year their duty had been one of blue skies and warm sunshine. This year in sharp contrast had bitterly cold days and frequent heavy snow showers. Keeping everyone, including themselves, warm was a challenge: Gaucelmo being an old draughty building with no central heating this was a formidable task. The wood-burning stove was greatly appreciated by pilgrims and hospitaleros alike and became the focal point of each day.

Numbers were low at the beginning of the season with a maximum of 14. Pilgrims were arriving later in the day – the panic for beds had obviously not started. The first pilgrims of the season were Mark from Ireland and Rainer from Germany. The first casualty of the season was Hubert from Germany. He was taken to Leon hospital in an ambulance after arriving at Gaucelmo

in considerable pain with a torn Achilles tendon. He was bitterly disappointed to be finishing his pilgrimage in this way. The first four-legged pilgrim was Azucar together with his owner Juan from Cuba. Azucar spent the night in the woodshed and appeared quite content with the arrangement.

Our very good neighbours in the Monastery were supportive and welcoming as always. It is good to see their presence at Gaucelmo's tea-time, although tea is not every monks favourite drink! Rowena was invited to read in Spanish and English at the Maundy Thursday Service during the Washing of Feet.

It has been a good start to the 2018 season, thanks to the dedication and positive attitude of all involved – Rowena, Bob and the Working Party. Thank you.

Submitting your Article

1. Articles should be submitted by mid-January, mid-April, mid-July, or mid-October for possible publication in March, June, September or December.
2. An article should normally be no longer than 1000 words. If considerably longer, it may have to be published over two issues.
3. Although articles are read by a copy editor before publication, it would be helpful if all material sent in was presented to the CSJ after a thorough check by the author him/herself, to avoid subsequent misunderstandings.
4. Please double-check all foreign and English place-names and personal names for accuracy.
5. Submit the material preferably in New Times Roman and size 12 font. No special formatting is necessary, and is best avoided.
6. Put the title of the article and your name on the actual piece of work.
7. Send the article to the editor as a word document attached to the email.
8. Please italicise all foreign words and phrases – translating where appropriate.
9. Send any photographs as .jpgs separately, as attached files, with captions and photographer's name
10. Some pilgrimage-related foreign words like camino (though Camino, referring specifically to the Camino de Santiago, should have a capital letter) albergue, refugio have got into CSJ vocabulary and therefore do not need to be italicised.
11. Beware of, and try to avoid, using 'Camino lingo' - these words are not always cited correctly e.g., pelegrinos or Bon Camino
12. Our Bulletin is read by many overseas members for whom English is not their first language; please be mindful, therefore, to write clearly and carefully.

What to take particular care with

Confraternity of Saint James: spell out Saint in full

Other saints: St Peter: no full stop. Similarly, with all abbreviations that end with the letter of the word abbreviated such as Dr or Fr

Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port (all hyphenated)

Numbers 1-9, then ten, eleven etc. Three digit – and above – numbers should, however, be quoted as numerals.

Give the day of week where appropriate, Monday 2 June 2008

Use double quotation marks except for “quotes ‘within’ quotes”, and generally avoid using quotation marks where there is no dialogue.

And please, **use inclusive language** where appropriate.

Size of images for the *Bulletin*

Photographic Images

For the best quality of reproduction your photo should:

- Be shot in good lighting and not be blurred/fuzzy
- Not been cropped
- Not have been enlarged either in post-processing or by in-camera digital zoom (never use digital zoom!)
- Be emailed to us as a separate JPG (or TIFF) file and not embedded in the text document

Cover

Minimum – 3M (approx pixel dimension 2069 x 1552)

To allow some manipulation – 5M photos (approx pixel dimensions 2592 x 1944)

Preferred – 8M or bigger (approx pixel dimensions 3264 x 2448 or bigger)

Preferred aspect ratio (proportional relationship of width to height) – 4:3

Preferred mode – portrait not landscape orientated photos

Photos to accompany your article

Minimum – 2M (approx pixel dimensions 1800 x 1200)

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Other Images:

Reproduction of paintings, drawings, engravings, etc.

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