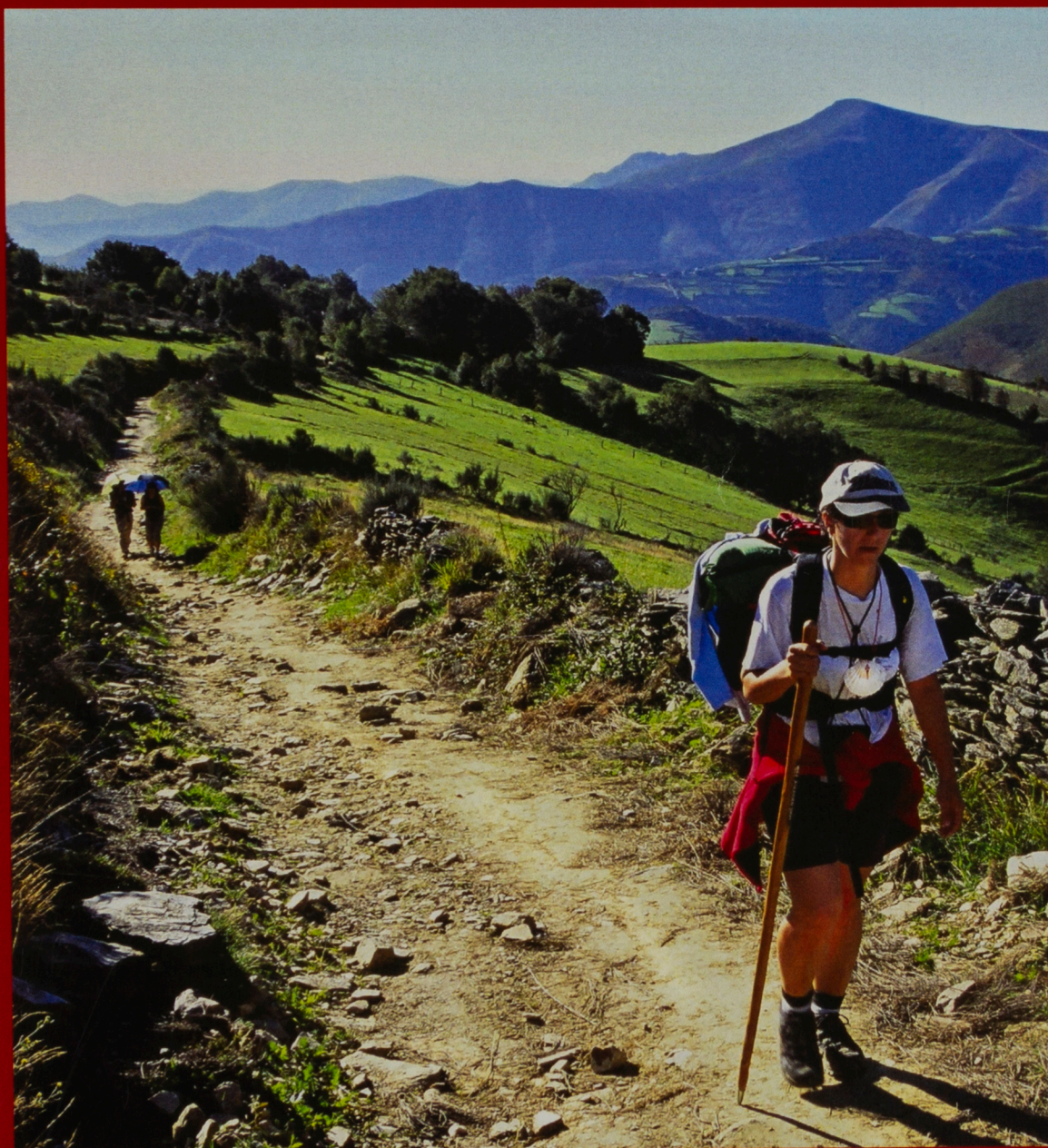




Bulletin

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Editorial

In July this year 50,868 people arrived at Santiago de Compostela's pilgrim office. That is a massive increase of more than 8,000 individuals over July 2017, and it is not even a Holy Year. It is a Holy Year when the Feast of St James falls on a Sunday – that, just for the record, will next occur in 2021 – which always causes a spike in the statistics.

Mostly the 50,000 or so arrived last July on foot in true pilgrim style, though just less than half gave their reasons for making the journey as straightforwardly religious, 41% saying their motives were “religiously cultural”: “Religioso/cultural” in the terms used by the pilgrim office, whatever that expression may mean.

Having done a fortnight's stint in the office I remain sceptical of this statistic: I was aware of quite a number saying that their reason for walking the Camino was solely “cultural” but afterwards changing their minds and claiming some sort of religious motivation simply because the “religious” Compostela looked distinctly more attractive than the purely “cultural” one.

I have been reflecting on this partly because of an on-going debate on the meaning of pilgrimage and partly because of the obvious, and growing, interest in pilgrimage despite the apparent decline in religious belief.

If one wants evidence of this see the coverage of Guy Stagg's *The Crossway*, an account of how Mr Stagg, at least at the outset an unbeliever, took ten months walking from Canterbury to Jerusalem, in all some 5,500 kilometres. It was widely and sympathetically reviewed in many newspapers and magazines – including this one (cf. the Books pages). His journey turned out to be a quest, though that was not how

he had envisaged it when starting out. The second thing which made me wonder about the notion of pilgrimage in the modern world was a remark on the Confraternity's Facebook page: a contributor sought advice from an “experienced pilgrim”. I rather bridled at the phrase.

One can have an experienced walker, I ruminated, but can there be an experienced pilgrim? A pilgrim is seeking something personal to him or herself: it cannot be replicated and – despite the accounts which appear in these pages – fully narrated. Or so I thought. Then there arrived a letter – well, an email – to the editor, a very rare occurrence, suggesting that the etymology of pilgrim as “per agros”, “across the fields”. So I turned to what reference tools I had available on my shelves, in particular that great stand-by *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. According to the OED it transpires that the primary meaning of pilgrim is simply “one who travels from place to place; a wanderer”.

It is only the secondary meaning which relates it to someone who undertakes a journey to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion. Such a journey is usually long, adds the OED, though in his latest collection of essays, *Royal Books and Holy Bones*, Professor Eamon Duffy suggests that medieval pilgrimages were rather more frequent, and undertaken by many more people, than we tend to imagine – and, more to the point, pilgrimages were generally fairly short, visits to a neighbouring shrine rather than to a distant one. When I started to ponder on the meaning of pilgrimage I wanted to be able to distinguish between those who set out on a long and arduous trek for some religious motive, from those who were simply walkers. At the end of this reflection I realise that the distinction is not as simple as I had believed.



The Jacobean Tradition

Alberto Solano. Translation by Joseph McClain

Part 2

ORIGIN OF THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO

What really is the origin of the mythic Camino de Santiago?

History gives us the primary answer: its origin lies in the discovery of the sepulcher of the Apostle James in the lands of Galicia during the high Middle Ages. Nowadays we can have doubts regarding the identity of the remains that have been venerated, but this discovery is the only factor that can credibly answer the question.

Some people theorize that the origins were much earlier, a product of supposed pagan, pre-Christian antecedents along the Galician Coast. The existence of such cults is undeniable. One might even say that it is an obvious fact, since the existence of religious worship is inherent to human nature at all times and certainly prior to the life of Christ. What one cannot say with certainty, however, is that a cult chronologically preceding another is necessarily the antecedent of a later one.

It is also an undeniable fact that there is syncretism between pagan cults and Christianity. This syncretism is a phenomenon of every culture and every historical epoch. All cultures that impose themselves on others have already absorbed elements of previous ones. Neither should this process be thought of as cultural annihilation, a reproach often leveled at Christianity.

Cultural assimilation, however, is a spontaneous process resulting from the concomitance of cults and customs that the people themselves mix and fuse into a new one. In the merger of the two, one seems to submit to the other, and yet can exist below the dominant force, sometimes even very recognizably.

Not that this is the case with the Camino de Santiago. The Camino is not a product of a syncretism. Diverse authors have well demonstrated and identified its origin as its own unique socio-cultural phenomenon. This is not to deny the existence of preceding cultures, but simply to pinpoint an origin and, in so doing, to determine whether an archaic process has influenced an event following after, or whether it is simply chronologically anterior. Many things have existed in the long trajectory of the Camino de Santiago. However, whether a phenomenon is a cultural subsidiary of another, previous, one or whether it has established itself as its own peculiar event with its own set of idiosyncrasies is easily determined.

If we look for relationships, we must begin in the Paleolithic age from which emerged the first human migrations. Or perhaps we should look into the migrations of the first humanoids. However, if we analyze with minimal care, there is no alternative but to accept the existence of the Camino as an element of the city of Santiago de Compostela's medieval rise, clearly intertwined with the discovery of the Jacobean sepulcher in the first thirty years of the ninth century.

The Camino de Santiago came into being oriented towards a specific place, towards a specific person, enshrouded in a specific significance. It did not exist before in another form nor did it transform itself at a certain moment into something else.

The theories that propose pagan antecedents as the origin of the Camino de Santiago have a meager basis in reality (and in my judgment, none). They are often enshrined in esoteric, pseudo-scientific sensationalism. At times they are aided and abetted by certain editorial and nationalistic interests designed to recreate popular ideas of a people's roots and exclusivity. The more distant in time, and the more connected to influential present-day opinion, the more widely such theories will be accepted. The Celtic cults much cited in these theories were nothing more than local groups limited to specific and immediate geographical surroundings. They were not pilgrim cults traversing the European continent on paths that were then non-existent.

Without denying syncretism in other instances, the Camino de Santiago does not represent the Christianization of preexistent pagan cults, making an impossible leap, as it were, over many centuries. In addition, the supposed ancient camino to Finisterre, if any ever existed, is not something converted later into the Camino de Santiago, but rather is simply a prolongation of the pilgrimage to Santiago and hence a consequence of the Camino de Santiago. A stone incinerator was used in an area of the Cathedral delineated

by a cross, called *dos farrapos* (of rags). Old clothes were burned there as a symbol of renewal, both physical and spiritual, a process which has been documented since the sixteenth century.

It, however, evidences a ritual even more ancient in which the *Cabildo* (Chapter) of the Cathedral gave new clothes to the pilgrims. When this ritual ended in Santiago, it emerged in modern times as an attractive, romantic gesture harking back to something illusory that had never taken place earlier in Finisterre. The burning of clothes there nowadays is a recent phenomenon that has scant basis in antiquity despite the fact that some would like to call it a pagan precursor to the Camino. It is a sham, which can nonetheless be found in present-day broadcasts and in ill-advised guides for tourists.

“The Camino is not a product of a syncretism”

For example, one guide published in Munich in 2010 dazzles its readers with phrases such as this: “Among the pilgrims from medieval times right up until today the tradition has been maintained of burning clothes worn on the Camino, in the vicinity of the lighthouse. If the ritual is practised in the correct order, first bathing in the ocean, afterwards burning the clothes, then watching the sunset, they are promised they will awake on the following morning as new beings”.

But let us now turn from issues about the Camino's origin. Again the question presents itself: Whose remains are venerated in Compostela? Is it plausible that they are those of the Apostle James?

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The discovery of the Jacobean Sepulcher took place in the first third of the 9th century. But it did not happen in 813 as cited in the earliest sources, which are still mentioned today as part of the legend itself. Obviously, the use of the year 813 was related to the prestigious, emblematic figure of Charlemagne who supposedly had a dream in which the Apostle James revealed to him that, at the end of the Milky Way, in the lands of Galicia, the Apostle's tomb would be found. Charlemagne, however, died on the 28th of January 814, and the discovery year 813 is thus an historical impossibility. At that time, Bishop Teodomiro of the diocese of Iria had not yet taken office. Teodomiro is presented as the chief protagonist of the tomb's discovery. But, at that time, his predecessor Quendulfo II occupied the bishopric. Quendulfo was still bishop on the 1st of September of 818. This date was archived in a document signed by Quendulfo found in Tomb A of the Monasterio de Sobrado. It is the last surviving document with his signature, which indicates that he must have died soon afterwards. Teodomiro could therefore not have taken up office in Iria before the year 819 – which is indeed the year assumed to be the first of his rule. For this reason, the discovery of the Compostelian Sepulcher could not have occurred before the date of 819.

It is more likely that the discovery of the Sepulcher occurred between the years 820 and 830. It was probably in 829, the date

of the first local writing that mentions the discovery, and these writings are from the time of Teodomiro, Bishop of Iria during the reign of Alfonso II The Chaste. Nevertheless, even in these documents there is little mention of the reliquaries' discovery. Still, the notice created an enormous impact in all of Europe. From that date, the town emerged which was to become the city of Compostela. Immediately thereafter the arrival of pilgrims began along a route whose trajectory fluctuated with the progress of the *Reconquista* in the upper third of the Iberian Peninsula. Soon after, however, the Camino became fixed along the route we now know as the Camino Francés. Bridges, monasteries, and hostels were built to aid the pilgrims. The route at that time also received edicts of royal protection aimed at repopulating, colonizing and developing the lands crossed by the Jacobean route.

“The Camino de Santiago does not represent the Christianization of pre-existent pagan cults”

Papal authorization of the Jubilee Year reinforced this history as an expression of the Christian cultural heritage of Europe. Goethe is attributed with having said that, “Europe was born through pilgrimage to Compostela and that Christianity is its mother tongue”. Quite apart from the words of the famous author, Pope John Paul II spoke similarly to Europe in 1982 while in Compostela: “Find yourselves again. Be yourselves. Discover your origins. Nurture your roots...” The Jacobean Tradition is one of those roots, perhaps the most important and influential in Europe. Its contents merit analysis.

James Of Zebedee: Between History And Legend

This analysis should begin with an investigation into the person of the Apostle James, a figure defined both by legend and history.

James the Greater was the brother of John the Evangelist, son of Zebedee and Salome. He lived in Bethsaida on the shores of what is called the Sea of Galilee. His family had land and a fishing business, which lent them a degree of social status. James and John would have had a certain level of education at least in the rabbinical schools, but, also, possibly at higher levels through contact with Greek culture and language, widely spread along the Galilean Sea shores. They would have undoubtedly been familiar with Latin, the language of the dominant political power, having, in all likelihood, exposure to it through the family business. Because of his family's standing, the High Priest knew John who later received the command from his crucified teacher to care for Jesus's mother, Mary.

The discovery of a boat from the 1st century, exhibited in the Kibbutz Ginosar Museum (Galilee), which many assume was used by the fisherman apostles and Jesus, gives us at least an idea of what life and the environment were like at the time the first apostles were called to Messianic service.

The Scriptures present a synthesis of Christ's call to the apostles. In addition, the scriptures also provide an understanding of the very personal nature of Jesus's and James's relationship, including their kinship as maternal cousins. Various New Testament passages give account of the relationship between the sisters, Maria and Salome, mothers respectively of Jesus and

James. John's crucifixion account refers to the close relationship between the two women, giving credence to the possibility that they were blood sisters. Salome was one of the women closest to Christ. She knew the special charisma of Jesus, manifested even from the moment he was separated from his family and found amongst the wise men of the synagogue.

They lived close to each other. Bethlehem and Haifa were separated only by three kilometers. There were family dealings during the time, perhaps interrupted at one point by professional obligations: Jesus's time as a carpenter in Nazareth and James's as a fisherman.

Another relevant connection between Jesus and the first apostles was John the Baptist, who was also Jesus's relative on his maternal side. John the Baptist was the one who revealed to John the Evangelist and Andrew that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. He also brought the message to James, Peter and other friends from Bethsaida. This first nucleus of disciples and apostles emerged from these connections with John the Baptist.

The friendships and shared experiences of Jesus and the Zebedee brothers are illustrated in the wedding at Cana in Galilee as related by John in his Gospel. The wedding was attended by Jesus and Mary, with other disciples and family members. One must deduce that John and his family attended and witnessed the extraordinary event since John's gospel is the only one to contain the wedding account.

There are various scriptural passages which make clear that what is often presented as a unique event is in fact a result of cumulative experience. Christ did not propose to the first

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people he encountered that they become fishers of men. He did, however, propose it to those with whom he shared common and reciprocal knowledge.

It is understood, therefore, that James, John and Peter were the three apostles closest to Christ. This fact is revealed in their presence at key New Testament moments: the Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor, the Resurrection of the daughter of Jairo, and the Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus also gave James a special name, calling him Boanerges or Son of Thunder. Some attribute the name to his temperament. I somehow feel that the name is related to his father's angry reaction when John and James suddenly left their fisherman's nets, the family business, and were followed by Peter and Andrew, day workers in the Zebedee fishing enterprise. The father's reaction is understandable, since in a moment he lost his sons and his most loyal workers. It is also possible that he lost his wife, Salome, at that moment. The scriptures refer to her as one of Jesus's most dedicated followers, frequently accompanying him among the closest disciples.

Matthew's gospel recounts Salome's request to Christ to grant her sons preferred places in his kingdom, which she believed would be an earthly kingdom. The Master uses the moment to gain the Zebedee brother's commitment and, at the same time, to instruct all of them: "Whoever amongst you wishes to be great, let him be your servant. And he who wants to be the first, let him be the slave of all". This instruction is in tune with his parable of the workers of the vineyards and the kingdom of heaven: "The first shall be last". The teaching also echoes in the Last Supper when the apostles discuss the question of who should be considered most important. Jesus tells them

that the one who wants to be most important must be the servant of the others, just as he, himself, had washed their feet.

These are all brushstrokes that allow us to remember the human dimension and history of the Apostle James, as well as his intimacy with the Master. In this light we might also understand better other earlier aspects of his story.

In the case of St James, however, there are also legendary elements that distort the historical dimension of his person. It is important to evaluate these elements in order to understand what significance they contain. After the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, some sources locate James as preaching in Spain. They also tell of his return to Jerusalem, his capture and condemnation to death by Herod Agrippa.

Let us finally cobble together a synthesis of the Jacobean Legend. After the Apostle's death, his disciples took the body, carried it to the port of Jaffa, and set sail across the sea to Ira Flavia in Roman Galicia. According to some sources, the journey was accomplished by seven disciples travelling seven days. They presented themselves to Queen Lupa, who then turned them over to the Roman representative, Dugio. Dugio arrested them as Roman fugitives. Shortly thereafter they were liberated by an angel; they fled; were followed and subsequently saved from their persecutors by the collapse of a bridge; they conquered a dragon and tamed wild bulls through the power of the cross. Afterwards, the bulls carried the holy body to its burial place. News of all of this caused Queen Lupa's conversion, which led her to make a donation of land for the Apostle's burial place.

A Seventeenth-Century Pilgrim¹

Salvador Ryan

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While the modern Camino pilgrimage has become familiar to many in recent years, no doubt further assisted by the release of the 2010 movie, *The Way*, featuring father and son, Martin Sheen and Emilio Estevez, the shrine of Santiago de Compostela has a long and rich history, with pilgrims making their way there in sizeable numbers since the twelfth century.

We know of Irish pilgrims travelling to Compostela from as early as the thirteenth century, but it is from the fifteenth century in particular that accounts of Irish pilgrims proliferate, most of them travelling by boat to A Coruña and making the journey on foot from there. Very occasionally, we are afforded more than a fleeting glimpse of the circumstances of such pilgrimages. Most dramatically, perhaps, in 1473, a ship carrying some 400 pilgrims returning to Waterford was captured by pirates who later released the pilgrims at Youghal.

To embark on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St James was an expensive business, and it is little wonder that such journeys were restricted to the wealthier members of society. For instance, the Lord Mayor of Waterford, James Rice, took leave of office twice to travel to the shrine, in 1473 and 1483. Meanwhile, the wife of the Mayor of Galway completed the pilgrimage in 1510. Those who could afford to commission tombs often asked that the image of St James be featured on them, complete with

scallop shell, to indicate that the deceased had completed the pilgrimage for the good of their souls. Scallop shells have since been unearthed in medieval Irish burials discovered in 1986 at St Mary's Cathedral, Tuam, and in 1996 at the site of a thirteenth-century Augustinian priory in Mullingar. But, again, surviving Irish records can only offer us such tantalisingly meagre clues to how the Camino might have been experienced by our forebears.

This is what makes a largely forgotten document from the seventeenth century (forgotten, at least until 1997) so significant. While the account is not of Irish provenance, it nevertheless provides us with one of the most complete historical descriptions to survive, of a pilgrim's experience of the journey to Compostela. The author was a priest called Domenico Laffi, born in 1636 in a village in the foothills of the Apennines near Bologna, who undertook no less than three journeys from Bologna to Compostela (each of approximately 1,300 miles) in the years 1666, 1670 and 1673. Laffi wasn't your conventional parish priest; in fact, he was an indefatigable wanderer, professing that he had "no other joy but to travel", and was assiduous in recording the various sights, people and customs that he encountered on his journeys. He published his composite account of his three journeys to Compostela in the year 1681, but it remained largely ignored until it was translated to English by James Hall in 1997, at a time when interest in the pilgrimage was reviving.

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Laffi, who always brought a companion with him, followed the traditional Italian route to Santiago via Bologna, Milan, Turin, Montgenèvre, Avignon, Toulouse, Roncesvalles, Pamplona, Burgos and León. With an eye for detail, his notes bring architecture, religious customs, and, indeed, people, to life. His descriptions of monuments, sculptures and works of art that he encountered along the way has since become an indispensable and sometimes unique record of many of these, which have become lost or destroyed, or indeed of buildings which no longer stand. So what sorts of things attracted the attention of this somewhat untypical cleric and what can his account tell us of the experience of pilgrimage to Compostela in the late seventeenth century? Laffi's account is both long and detailed, and is well worth reading in full; what follows here provides but a taste of what seem to have been some notable highlights of the priest's journey.

Having set out from Bologna, upon reaching Reggio, in the territory of the Duke of Modena, Laffi relates that he had seen the image of the Madonna of Reggio which had been minted onto a gold coin, depicting Mary adoring her infant son with the words: *Quem genuit, adoravit* ("She adored Him whom she bore").

At Milan, Laffi called the cathedral an "eighth wonder of the world" and made special mention of its relic collection, which reportedly included one of the nails of the Crucifixion (a gift from the emperor Theodosius to St Ambrose) and no less than eleven bodies of the Holy Innocents killed by Herod. In the town of Vercelli, Laffi visited a Dominican monastery, which housed a chastity belt that, it was said, had been given by angels to Thomas Aquinas when he was

locked up in the family castle by his brothers who tried to dissuade him from becoming a Dominican by plying him with some young female company. After leaving the town of San Germano, Laffi recounted being driven by hunger to beg some food from a miller. The bread and cheese that the miller offered him were clearly not very fresh (and certainly were not the kind of fare that this cleric was used to) for Laffi quipped that they "must have been made in the age of Romulus and Remus".

Laffi arrived at Turin just in time for the festival of the Holy Shroud (4 May) and he describes how a new chapel was being constructed to house the prized relic (this would be completed in 1694). The cleric was impressed by the ensuing procession and ceremony, noting how the shroud was unwound by no less than "seven bishops wearing full canonicals" and how, upon its display, everyone knelt and wept out loud for the forgiveness of their sins. The variable conditions of travel along the pilgrim route can be observed in the fact that, while there, Laffi sought out the palace of Angelo Ranuzzi, a Bolognese nobleman who offered the travellers "many courtesies" and yet, nine miles further on, at Sant' Ambrogio, Laffi was back to more basic conditions, staying at a "hovel" of an inn where all he had to enjoy were a few chestnuts and a bed of dried leaves.

Seventeenth-century accounts of pilgrim travel are, incidentally, not without their humour, and Laffi is generous in providing us with many an encounter to make us smile. One of these involved his arrival to the town of Cesana, which saw Laffi and his travelling companion become inadvertent wedding-crashers, caught up in a procession to the

church ceremony and, thereafter, invited to the family feast afterwards. Their mirth was temporarily suspended, however, when a collection for the bride was made after the meal. Happily for the pilgrims, instead of asking for something, the bride donated some of the money collected to Laffi and his friend.

In another village, the Bolognese travellers scorned some country-dwellers to sing the Office of the Blessed Virgin, the efforts of which they likened to donkeys. Their attitude to the locals brightened, though, when one of the villagers invited them to supper; that is, until, when they were about to depart, the same villager asked them to pay up!

Laffi was in Avignon in May 1670, some months after the death of Pope Clement IX and before a new pope was elected. This occasioned his mentioning the local belief that all the olive trees in Avignon dry up and lose their leaves during the period of *sede vacante* (vacant seat), a phenomenon which Laffi professed to have witnessed: tales that included elements of the miraculous clearly appealed to him.

Also at Avignon he relates the story of a miracle wrought by “St Benedict” (a local twelfth-century saint called Jean Bénédet) concerning a boy who told a lie and who swore that if it was not the truth that his head should be turned back to front – which it duly was! A visit to the St Bénédet chapel was organised to reverse the damage.

Pilgrimage on foot in the seventeenth century was a risky business. On his way from Avignon to Colombier, Laffi met an Italian from Parma who was on his way home from the shrine and related how he had been attacked by a band of robbers, stripped, relieved of his pieces of eight, and then assaulted. Pitying him, Laffi offered him some alms. Hardly a mile further on the pilgrims encountered two hermits from Naples, who related how they had had a similar experience near Perpignan. In this case, though, the hermits had gone

“One wonders how many skilled pilgrims in Laffi’s day were offered work opportunities en route, and never, in fact made their destination”

to the local justices to complain. The magistrate sent constables with the pilgrims who were to show them the area in which the assault had occurred. After a thorough search, three perpetrators were apprehended, bound and led back to the city where they were summarily hanged and quartered, their quarters being thereafter returned to the scene of the crime.

At Montpellier, during a tour of the cathedral, the pilgrims were shown an unfinished fresco by a Bolognese master who had died prematurely. Laffi’s companion at the time was Domenico Codici, an accomplished artist from Bologna, and he was asked to consider staying on to complete it, but he declined, deciding to press on instead. One wonders how many skilled pilgrims in Laffi’s day were offered work opportunities en route, and never, in fact made their destination. At Béziers, Codici’s skills were put to good use when a priest offered the pilgrims a meal in exchange for having his portrait sketched with red chalk.

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Laffi had a keen interest in recording local liturgical customs and forms of popular piety. In Montpellier he recounts the tradition of lighting a row of large, red wax candles at the Elevation of the Host at Mass, which remained alight until after Holy Communion. In a town between Carcassonne and Toulouse, Laffi and a priest friend celebrated Mass in a Carmelite chapel, “and gave communion to many people, as it was Pentecost”. Afterwards, many of those attending asked them to go round the tombs and to recite the *De Profundis* and other prayers for their dead relatives.

Laffi celebrated the feast of Corpus Christi in the village of Orthez, which he described as being “full of heretics”. In describing the Corpus Christi procession he makes mention of “heretic scoundrels... laughing like lunatics while the procession passed”, one of many references he makes to contemporary divisions within Christendom. Although the inn at which they stayed was “run by a heretic”, Laffi nevertheless remarked that he “looked after us very well”. While at Mass in Roncesvalles, he noted the custom there of consecrating the bread and cutting it into little pieces just before the Elevation and, instead of exchanging the “kiss of peace”, passing around “a large metal plate” to kiss (the pax-board bearing a religious image was widely used in the later Middle Ages though Laffi seems to have been unfamiliar with it).

“all the olive trees in Avignon dry up and lose their leaves during the period of sede vacante”

The Spanish leg of the journey involved the pilgrims passing through such notable sites as Roncesvalles, Santo Domingo de la Calzada (with its legend of the unjustly hanged pilgrim saved from death by St James) and Burgos, where they visited the famous Crucifix of Burgos, allegedly one of three fashioned by Nicodemus. Among the remaining challenges they faced were dangers from wolves and plagues of locusts. At one point they came upon a dead pilgrim whose body they covered to preserve it from the ravaging insects. When eventually they came in view of Santiago, the pilgrims fell to their knees and, “having unburdened ourselves and spent our tears” together sang a *Te Deum*. Having reached their destination, they entered the church of St James and proceeded to the high altar where they knelt “in great joy”. Laffi continues: “we thanked God and the apostle for having led us safe and sound to the goal we had so longed for, after a journey of such length, with all its toils and anxieties. Then we went behind the altar and climbed a few steps, where we could embrace the apostle’s image”.

For the full account, see Domenico Laffi, *A Journey to the West: the Diary of a Seventeenth-Century Pilgrim from Bologna to Santiago de Compostela*, translated by James Hall (Leiden: Primavera Press, 1997).

1 The above account appeared on Facebook, and is reprinted by permission of Professor Ryan.

Walking into Retirement

William Morrison-Bell

July 2016. A hilltop basilica filled with light – a sacred spot in fecund Burgundy. My first thoughts of retirement – letting go of one (long) stage of my life and a starting point for the next. I decide I will walk to Santiago de Compostela. My wife objects to me calling this a “pilgrimage”: she is Catholic by upbringing but certainly not by inclination. It’s just a long walk, she insists.

Only two fixtures in an otherwise gossamer plan. The start point: Vézelay. The start date: 21 June 2017, my 61st birthday. The summer solstice, when a pathway of light runs down the centre of the nave of the basilica (those clever medieval builders!). But how long will I take? And how far will I walk? Do I go it alone or invite others to join me along the way? Does anyone believe I will really do this? Do I?

First step: negotiate terms. We agree I’ll take one month, with a plan to meet and walk together somewhere towards the end of that period. Next step: plot the route, my route, on an old road map of France. I underline in red the towns I will pass through. I pin the map on my wall so I can see it, remind myself that it’s real. I order my pilgrims’ guidebook. I get my *credencial*, my pilgrim passport. A few steps further. My retirement date slips from the end of April to the end of May, but I will hold to my schedule.

20 June 2017. I’m packed and ready to go. A sense of dislocation, unreality, before leaving home. A send-off dinner in the garden with my family: I imagine they think I may never return. A broken night and an early start the next morning. New walking

shoes and unfamiliar weight of the rucksack on my back. I decide to leave my carved stick at home, not sure if I can get it through security. I’ll find another along the way.

At Vézelay station I have my first encounter with another pilgrim. We share a taxi into town. The taxi driver complains about the heatwave: it’s 36 degrees, not good for walking. I’m lodging at the Centre de la Madeleine, my first pilgrim hostel. This is all very new to me. I’m bewildered, and very hot. As I register with the *hostelier*, I accept the offer of a pilgrim blessing the next morning in the basilica. Casually.

I sleep badly and wake before dawn. Just in time I get to the basilica. Two other pilgrims are there for the blessing: Mark, a tall, bearded American who appears to have fallen out of the sky, and Helios, a young man wearing a flat cap and a beatific smile who has walked all the way from Aachen. I am transported by the ritual, the transcendent ancient chants. The blessing is heartfelt and heartening. I leave with a copy of Luke’s Gospel and tears streaming down my face. My journey has begun.

The first day of walking is tough. I’m not prepared for the heat. By mid-afternoon I collapse under a tree outside a cemetery where there is a water tap. My head is pounding and I have another five kilometres before I reach my lodgings. I have no energy or will to move. But I have found myself a stick, a piece of coppiced hazel – it’s pleasingly crooked and I start to carve some marks on it. Eventually I summon the energy to get up and stagger on. I arrive at my lodgings, exhausted and slightly delirious.

On my third day, I walk thirty-one kilometres in sultry weather and mostly on tarmac. It is too soon to be so ambitious. I lodge with Claude and Bernard on the outskirts of Nevers. Claude sends me to the pharmacy to have a couple of ticks removed from my leg, hopefully averting Lyme disease. Next day, on my way into town to visit the cathedral, a Moroccan shopkeeper looks at my piece of hazel: "This is the stick Moses used to part the Red Sea". Later, I find myself in a side chapel called "La Chapelle du Passage de la Mer Rouge". How do these things work, I wonder?

I cross the bridge over the Loire. It feels significant, a passage pilgrims have made through the ages. The weather gets cooler. I am heading into rural France. I start to notice things, place names that make me laugh, the daily yellow post vans, carefully tended vegetable patches, barking dogs in every back yard – why so many? Romanesque churches, elegant and almost Protestant in their simplicity. The depressing frequency of derelict and abandoned houses in the villages. And the speed of traffic – why is everyone in such a rush?

Gradually, I'm finding my own rhythm and I feel well in my body, like a sturdy little pony. But my legs and feet are aching. I get my first blisters and chafing in my arse. I start to develop a small love affair with French pharmacies. After my first week of walking, I take a day off and stay in Chateameillant, once a Gaulish settlement and *Mediolanum*, now just a provincial town with a small museum. My lodging is a mobile home in a vegetable garden. I think I could grow roots, stay a while.

I have a sense of slipping out of time and entering into an altered state. My thinking mind is on vacation, not much in the way of concentrated or systematic thought: half thoughts, thoughts for nought, wisps that pass against the backdrop of mind, background noise, low static. Sometimes it gets in the way and I miss a turning, distracted, abstracted. Remembrances and fantasies. Earworms – tunes that are stuck in my head. As I walk I hum, sing out loud the bits of songs I can remember.

I'm alive to sights, sounds and smells, wind in the hedgerows, birdsong, cloud patterns, sunlight on fields, fresh-cut hay, old green lanes, Roman roads, forgotten byways, hollow ways, scooped-out tunnelled tracks through the woods. Each day starts on an up, those first few steps. Twirling my stick, heading off down

the road. For the first time in years I feel free, in a sort of ecstasy. The joy of not knowing what comes next, where I will sleep at night: an adventure.

The road, walking, becomes my meditation. I feel connected to land, nature, spirit, a force that flows through everything. My intuition feels much sharper. In churches I pray, clumsily because I can't find the right words, silently and out loud. Where the acoustics please me, I sing or whistle my own music. I understand these are sacred spaces. And so are the hedgerows. Which gods do you worship?

The Vézelay route is a solitary one. For the first two weeks I meet no other pilgrims along the way. I'm happy in my own company. But solitude can feel like loneliness when I'm the

**"I'm finding
my own rhythm
and I feel well
in my body"**

only one sleeping in a hostel. One night I lodge with Paul, an elderly widower, in the damp, musty wing of his large house. After falling asleep, I wake up to torchlight and muffled sounds downstairs. I lie there for ages, frozen in fear, before dozing off again. Come morning – I realise that what I heard in the night was Paul laying out my breakfast. I feel foolish and a little ashamed.

Being alone for long periods, I get lost in myself. Imagination becomes more potent than reality. What might it be like to go feral, live in the wild? Naked, unaccommodated, instinctual. Walking through great silent woods, I expect any moment to stumble upon a writhing, orgiastic mass of bodies. Pan and Lilith hold sway here. Feverishly I make up lurid stories and scribble down notes in my journal. Is this how the devil tempted Christ in the wilderness? Is this how Mara tempted Siddhartha, the soon-to-be Buddha? Am I also being tested?

I take another day off walking. A combination of blisters and the heat of the road has made my feet swell up painfully. I rest, get a massage, leave offerings at a *menhir* (standing stone). I meet Sylviane and Albane, grandmother and granddaughter walking together. It warms my heart to be with them. I start crossing paths with other pilgrims: Bernd, who has walking poles and a purposeful stride; Vanessa, who has lost her God; Patrick, who has written a sequel to *Lord of the Rings*; Bärbel, who wheels her tent behind her on a trolley. Mostly we don't walk together, only meeting in the evenings. We are nodes on a line, pearls strung out on a long necklace.

Heading slowly south, the landscape has been changing all the while. At walking pace, it's subtle, details you wouldn't notice flashing by in a car. Walnut gives way to chestnut, chestnut to fig. Cows become fewer, maize and sunflowers more prevalent. In the Dordogne, the countryside is still green. But the ground underfoot is harder, drier, rockier. I hear crickets for the first time. There is fruit in the hedgerows, though not yet ripe. This is still deep country but there are more foreign-registered cars and holiday homes.

I now feel as if I could walk forever, come rain or shine, blisters or no. But soon, all too soon, my journey is coming to an end. I've lost a few kilos and I feel fitter than I have for ages. I've got a magnificent farmer's tan. I feel a fresh sense of purpose and identity.

“For the first time in years I feel free, in a sort of ecstasy”

The plan to meet my wife and walk some of the way with my daughter for the final few days is abandoned. Relief for all of us as the logistics are tricky, and the late insertion into such a personal journey even more so.

18 July. I arrive in Perigueux, my stopping point for now. A large town, busy with tourists. I feel the tug back into everyday time. A new sense of dislocation, fear about reintegrating, settling down again. I'm going to miss so much of this, my companions who are continuing their journey to Santiago. The welcome relief of the pilgrim hostel at the end of the day. Conversations with strangers along the way. The friendliness and respect for those who make this journey. The simplicity of just walking, eating, sleeping.

The joy that has fuelled me along the way stays with me. This journey will continue. *Ultreya!*

On Being a Hospitalera

Margaret Simonot

What's it like, being a hospitalera?

It seems a contradiction to be writing about the experience of being a hospitalera when, for personal reasons, 2018 will be the first year of many when I won't be at Gaucelmo as a hospitalera. So much has been written, and in so many languages, about working as a hospitalera/o on the Camino it may seem there is little more to be said, certainly not a lot that would be totally new. Fortunately, people's experiences as hospitaleras are as different from each others' as are those of the pilgrims.

Much depends on what a hospitalera/o expects; sometimes when handing over or taking over a duty one is surprised by other people's assumptions and ways of operating as I'm sure some have been surprised by mine. For that reason, it is maybe no bad thing that the crossover between shifts is limited to twenty-four hours!

On the whole, however, there is a broad measure of agreement within the framework of the Guidebook and Handbook for those working at Gaucelmo, the albergue in Rabanal del Camino, that is run by the CSJ, and I'm sure the same goes for those working at Miraz and elsewhere. And, somehow, teams gell, wonderful friendships

are formed, and the albergue welcomes pilgrims to give them rest and shelter in a way that always produces positive heartfelt comments in the Visitors' Book.

Surprises on a practical level abound: the day there was no water in the albergue because a workman had put a pick into a village water main so that the Calle Real, so named because King Felipe II is alleged to have stayed there on his way to Santiago, was adorned by a 3 metre high fountain for a couple of hours. Then there was the morning we left last year when the sky was yellow from the fires in Galicia and everything was covered in falling ash, not to mention the skating rink the village had turned into during the Working Party last March. But there were nice surprises, like walnuts

dropping on pilgrims during tea-time.

When I did my first session as hospitalera several years ago, I wasn't really aware either of the long history of hospitality on the Camino, nor of the massive changes that Rabanal the village and Gaucelmo itself had undergone, nor was I aware of the wealth of evidence of religious activity in the area of El Bierzo on which Gaucelmo borders. Nearby there are several fascinating places such as the site of the Monasterio de Santa Maria de Carrecedo, founded in 990, though now no longer active, the Mozarabic church of Santiago de Penalba and el Valle del Silencio.

“It must be awkward sometimes for pilgrims to ‘live up to’ their national stereotypes”

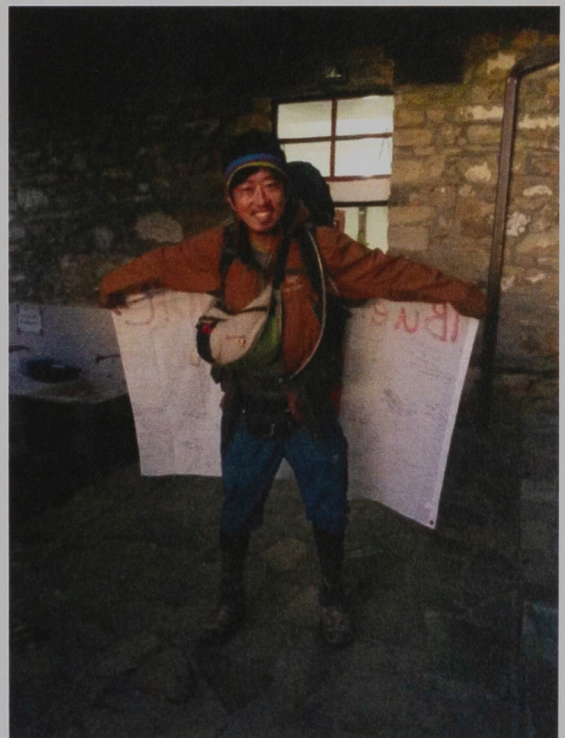
The demands on hospitaleros have changed too: early hospitaleros tell of people sleeping on the floor in Gaucelmo and other now “unthinkable” features, but the fundamental principle of welcome still operates even if it means a lot of elbow grease to clean the showers to keep up to twenty-first-century standards.

It must be awkward sometimes for pilgrims to “live up to” their national stereotypes. Why should all Italians cook communal meals? Why should all South Koreans be quiet and retiring? So we try not judge but instead to treat everyone with the same degree of warmth and recognition yet, inevitably, we do. I find that one of the main traps we can fall into as hospitalera/os is overlooking individuals. In October, for example, there are many English speakers, whether from the UK, Australia or the USA and sometimes you realise that other pilgrims feel a bit sidelined. I think, for example, of an elderly German woman who had not had English in the curriculum at school, and who, on arrival, was so pleased to be greeted and talked to in German, which she said had made her feel “recognised” because she hadn’t been able to talk to many people on the Camino.

A slightly different example was a Czech pilgrim, who could speak English, and whom I overheard giving a summary of Czech twentieth-century history to Americans round the table at Antonio’s. It was a revelation for several of them. And of course, this must apply even more so to the pilgrims who come from Korea or Japan. What links can they make? And I remember, too, a French pilgrim who arrived once when we were full, and whose insistence on staying at Gaucelmo was really hard to deal with, but who was so persistent that I

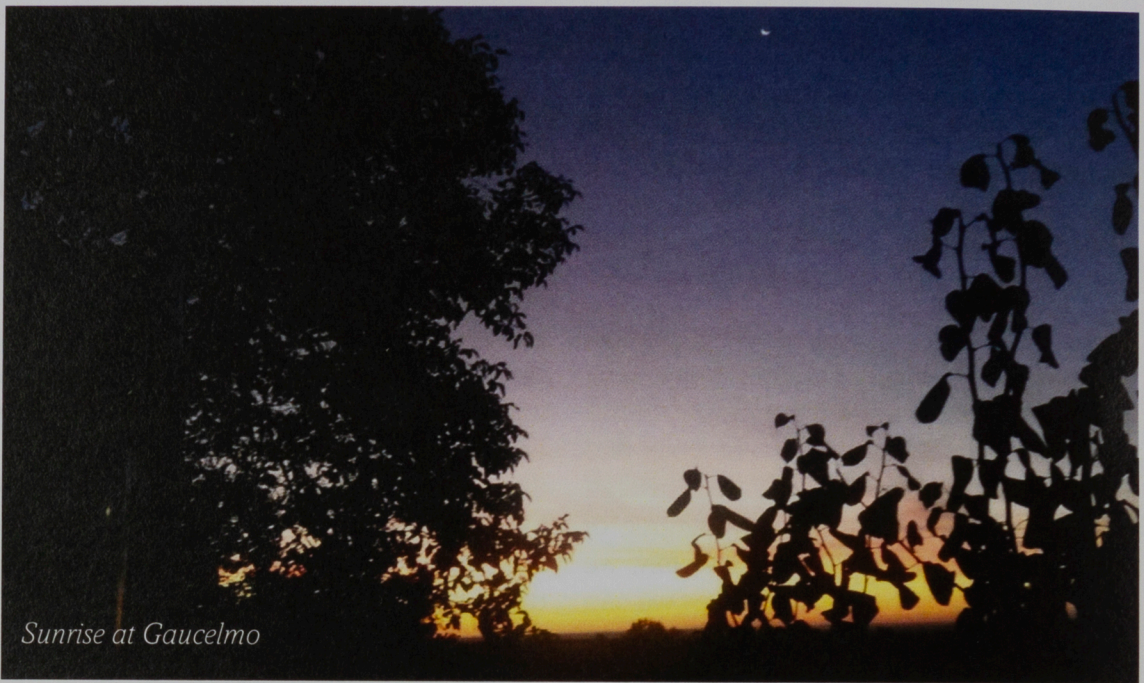
grudgingly gave in and gave her a mattress on the floor, only afterwards to hear her tale - she wanted to stay and unburden herself, and I think that happened and helped her.

Then there are the highs of being a hospitalera. In Gaucelmo in October, this starts first thing in the morning, looking out of the front door at the magnificent sunrise and continues (amongst the lows of cleaning, shifting the beds, humping the laundry down the garden, re-organising the recycling - why don’t people ever put the right rubbish in the right bins?) with chats with people, now friends, in the village and then opening up the door to the new arrivals, followed by the dread completion of bureaucratic forms now demanded by the authorities, and then tea round the table where pilgrims can get to chat to people they didn’t know before and for which they are always grateful - the Camino



An extrovert Japanese Pilgrim last year

Camino Life



Sunrise at Gaucelmo

can also be a blur of faces, especially if you don't share cultures. And in the evenings, enjoying a glass or two of the excellent local wine cannot go unmentioned as part of most people's experience of being, or working, on the Camino.

A great positive is the experience of the evening service in the church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción held by our neighbours, the monks at the Monasterio de San Salvador de Monte Irago; a quiet, unpretentious service in a quiet, unpretentious church that allows both believers and non-believers a space in which to reflect and be glad that they are where they are: a place in which "prayer has been valid".

As well as being part of the fabric of village life, that they worked so hard and successfully to attain, the monks contribute an extra layer of welcome and meaning to the experience of pilgrims in such a modest way that you could be forgiven for thinking it was unintentional.

One of the best parts of the evenings for me has been sitting in the salon with pilgrims, chatting, and listening to those who can sing and play the guitar, often very merry and on occasion quite emotional. There are also one-offs, such as the village party held in the week before Gaucelmo opens its doors, which this year happened to coincide with the Semana Santa and so was attended by generations of villagers, many of whom had come back to their village to visit families who live there. A near riotous occasion!

I'm sure that countless other hospitalera/os, wherever they have worked, could enlarge on this account, and that some of the experiences are common to us all. What remains for me, and I imagine for most of us, is that is in providing a welcome and hospitality we receive far more than we had ever expected.

Margaret Simonot is also the Confraternity's Librarian.

Ublines: Sexton in Rabanal

Etienne van Wonterghem



Ublines operating the bells

Note: For the background to this article, see The Members' Pages

In June 1991, Nelly, my spouse and I went to work as hospitaleros in Rabanal del Camino for the first time. We had responded to an appeal from Spain and had the privilege to be put to work there. We were just dropped in without anybody giving us any information [Gaucelmo opened officially on 25 October 1991]. Luckily there were neighbours, two ladies from Madrid, who spoke French and English so it was not too much of a problem for us to find out something.

The little Spanish we knew we had picked up along the Camino and from attending evening classes for about a year, but unfortunately it was of no great use. We learned rapidly, however, as once out of sight of our neighbours we had to communicate with the villagers.

At first they were somewhat suspicious and thought that we were English people posing as Belgians, like those from “Balduino and Fabiola”, the former Belgian king and queen. Over the years we have been working there, some eight months in total, we have got to know the villagers, and they us. We have become *vecinos* or neighbours as the villagers say.

Camino Life

One of the most striking personalities among the villagers is Bladimiro Carrera Fernandez. Never ask for Bladimiro, as he is locally only known as “Ublines”, whatever that may mean. He is a born and bred Rabanalian, a simple man who knows everything about the village and the people. He is their confidant, does all kinds of things and helps where needed. In particular he has an important function in this small community: he is sacristan-sexton.

Ublines is now 74. Since the death of his parents 20 years ago he lives on his own. The small house where he was born has been sold as a ruin and demolished. In its place now stands “La Posada de Gaspar”, a modern hotel-restaurant. In the past Ublines’s chickens had run there. They were the village’s most beautiful ones, laying its tastiest eggs. In his garden a bit further on he grows potatoes, the finest of the village.

This is how we got to know Ublines. One night, curious like any other villager, he



Ublines' house in Calle Real

“Never ask for Bladimiro, as he is locally only known as ‘Ublines’, whatever that may mean”

knocked at our door with a little hamper. “Surely you want to prepare something for yourself, once in a while?” was his question as he offered us the hamper. At the same time he had a foot in the door, because they surely are inventive there. We graciously accepted the potatoes and eggs and I must honestly agree: we have never had better potatoes and eggs. Thereafter we regularly went over to him to replenish our supplies. Obviously, the man had once been young, and as with everyone in the small villages of the

Maragateria, would have been expected to help out on the small farm of his parents. The property consists of 33 small pieces of ground spread around the village.

Through inheritance and acquisitions this was an inextricable patchwork quilt of small plots, and it has changed little. He also herded the sheep belonging to the villagers. There were then four shepherds to look after the 700 sheep the villagers possessed.

After his military service he worked for about three years in a coal mine as a driver and also assisted with drilling. When the production from the mine began to diminish he left to help with the construction of the high voltage line that passes through Rabanal. Later he went to work in forestry which permitted him to help out on his parents’ small farm where they had cows, sheep and also a horse. At the same time, and despite his busy and sometimes long working days, Ublines was also sacristan-sexton. For more than fifty years Ublines has wound the clock

in the church tower, and prepared everything in the church for Mass. He is the leader when the church has to be decorated for holy days and processions as only he knows exactly how it has to be done and how it always has been done; he says this is something he will never, never forget. He is also responsible for the *Ermita of San José* and the *Ermita of Santo Christo* which lie at the entrance of the village when coming from Astorga or Santa Colomba. There one can also find the cemetery, very well maintained by Ublines. Over the years in his role of sexton-gravedigger Ublines has dug 46 graves.

He is also the confidant of villagers who go away, sometimes leaving their houses empty for several months on end. In the living room his small home, just opposite the Posada, is a large board with keys, mostly large keys, hanging from nails.

In former days he had 30 or so dangling there. Nowadays there are fewer as more people are returning for retirement to take up permanent residence once again in the village. He still supervises some 20 dwellings that are uninhabited for long periods. He goes to air these houses and see if anything needs to be brought to the attention of the owners. In short, Ublines is irreplaceable. Ublines is Rabanal.

His knowledge of the village's history is perfect, and he has even put it into rhyme. In 120 *coplas*, or verses of four lines, he extols the history of the village and region with a central role for the *Maragatos* who in the past were waggons providing transport

over large distances. The visit of Philip II to *Cuatro Esquinas*, a house in the Calle Real, is mentioned. Also mentioned are the festivities graced by the *tamboritero* who, with drum and flute, accompanied the revellers on the cadence of the rattling *castañuelas*. Obviously Ublines was a *tamboritero* and occasionally he picks up his flute, but he does not have much time for it.

Everyone who has been to Rabanal and by lucky coincidence heard the bells ringing for Sunday Mass or some feast day has surely stopped to listen as Ublines lets the bells sing while practically dancing, hanging on to their chains. It's a beautiful sight and it is unique music he creates. He is not just a bell ringer, he is a champion! This is no exaggeration as Ublines holds various diplomas of first prizes and certificates of excellence for ringing bells. In former days,

trials or championships were held regularly and people came from afar to hear the bell ringers ringing, but even more to see them ringing.

As bell ringer, it was also his duty to ring a warning about bad weather, especially when thunderstorms were approaching, to let people know they were on their way. He therefore got very annoyed when pilgrims started to climb on the tower and started to ring the bells for fun. It did not take long for a notice to be put up asking them to stop. However, as *touristas* generally are unable to read, a railing was installed, and this worked. Strangers can no longer climb on to the tower without permission.

“For more than fifty years Ublines has wound the clock in the church tower”

Camino Life

Only for the *consejo*, the council meetings, has the treasurer asked for the bells to be rung to call the population together.

Ublines is everywhere. Each day he walks through the village. There is always something that needs to be done, he has never known boredom. You hear him whistling in the *Calle Real* or you hear him speaking loudly on the Plaza.

He is somewhere helping a *vecino* or you can find him having a meal in Antonio's Restaurant at his regular table, or sipping from a glass of wine in the Posada.

On Tuesday mornings he occasionally goes to Astorga to the market, one of his few outings.

Rabanal is his place, his village, and may remain so for a long time to come.

This article originally appeared in De Pelgrim 79, Dec 2004, magazine of the *Vlaams Genootschap van Santiago de Compostela*, and grateful thanks to its editor Dirk Aerts for permission to republish. Translated from Flemish by Jan van Lelijveld.



Ublines in familiar pose

The Crossway

Guy Stagg, 2018, ISBN 9781509844579

Guy Stagg set out on 1 January 2013 from Canterbury on a marathon 3420-kilometre walk to Jerusalem. He arrived ten months later, scarred from falls, thinner and wiser from encounters with exceptional people. He had lived through the history of religion and politics of Europe and the Middle East.

His personal inner journey is much influenced by remarkable self-awareness for one so young (he is just twenty-five). He speaks of earlier moments of deep despair and eventually admits to several suicide attempts. His decision to walk was “to mend himself”. He admits to no faith, but the presence of charitable works of hospitality done by a host of priests, religious sisters, monks, virtuous ladies and fellow travellers still surprises throughout.

There is not much information on the specific route, or kit carried, or preparation (very little). But we do learn of an extraordinary array of people who helped this young man wrestle with himself, of the religion and politics of Europe as well as, for example, how he experiences the realities of life in modern Istanbul as police use tear gas in Taksim Square. The big cities and crowds seem to bring him to the edge as in Rome and Thessaloniki.

There are however poetic descriptions of particular places and stages, of crossing the Alps against the odds over the St-Bernard Pass in February, of meeting with Danilo Parisi and crossing the river Po in the ferry,

as well as crossing the harsher landscapes of Albania, Macedonia, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. From here, the unsettled political situation meant that the attempted walk in Lebanon had to be curtailed, but soon, Stagg travelled via Beirut, Amman, by 2 coaches and 2 bus journeys until he finally arrived in the Golan Heights to take up the Israel National Trail.

But what makes this book different is the dual engagement with the detail of European history and religious development through the ages and his personal response to the way religion is still actively practised today. Four days into his pilgrimage, Guy arrived at Amettes, home of Saint-Benoit-Joseph Labre, patron saint of travellers, the homeless and the mentally ill, who wandered the world as a Franciscan mendicant, pondering and meditating on penitential self-sacrifice. Guy experienced the Epiphany at a boarding school run by religious where he recognised the Three Kings as the first pilgrims. His search for religious meaning resonates throughout the journey.

Reaching Rome on Maundy Thursday, Gabriella welcomed Guy, washed his feet and introduced him to the concept of the “Jubilee”. However, the Easter crowds unsettled the pilgrim and he soon set out on the next stage across Italy to Bari for brief protection by St Nicholas.

Once he arrived in Albania the language and religious customs were much less familiar and he had to learn a new liturgical language and calendar. He was directed from monastery to monastery and experienced a second, Orthodox, Easter. The city of Thessaloniki further unsettled him.

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He was helped by a week's stay on Mount Athos with a deeply felt monastic lifestyle, which unknotted his mind. Here he met Fr Constantine, a cultured Greek who had spent time living in London going to the theatre and restaurants – and who kept a secret supply of Fortnum & Mason Earl Grey tea in his workshop. Living now as a monk, the thing he missed most was “those little sandwiches from Marks & Spencer”.

The journey continued with reflections on the Crusades, Christian-Muslim relations, the development of Celtic Christianity and, surprisingly, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The final stages in Israel meant that Stagg met up uncomfortably with commercial pilgrim groups and some of the more oddball pilgrims.

It is an oddly inconclusive story, but encouragingly reveals that it is still possible to walk across Europe and the Middle East and be a welcome guest, cared for by an astonishing range of people, themselves all searching for the meaning of life. And there is some sort of acceptance of the healing.

MARION MARPLES

Shadows, Shells, and Spain: A fictional travel memoir about the Camino de Santiago

John Meyer, 2017. ISBN 9780987670366

This 327-page book is fiction but set firmly on the solid base of geographical and historical fact and travelogue detail about the Camino. It is partly based on the Canadian author's personal experience of walking to Santiago. Meyer likes alliterative titles and this novel follows *Bullets, Butterflies, and Italy* and *Bulls, Bands, and London* – all falling, as he states on his website www.johnmeyerbooks.com, into the travel literary genre. The alliteration continues in the chapter titles – *Sarria Sanctuary, Estella Euphoria, Camino Connection, etc.*

This is an engaging take on Camino writing: the ingenious concept is that the protagonist, Jamie Draper (a self-pitying and depressed failed teacher and author), holed up in Palma, Mallorca after his wife, Pam, has suddenly left him with no explanation, is galvanised to reconnect with life when he receives a mysterious letter from her urging him to follow her trail along the Camino Francés.

He picks up her often fractured and indecipherable letters in different hidden places and his wife's secret and his own self-development and re-engagement with life emerge as his journey unfolds.

I didn't empathise with Jamie initially and found the first couple of chapters to be trying too hard. Meyer obviously wants to capture our attention with a bit

Book Reviews

of action in the nightlife of Mallorca. I didn't find the encounter with his would-be seductress, Selina, entirely convincing and, be warned, if you are offended by frequent use of the "f-word", it is liberally sprinkled in conversations – I assume to reflect the personality of the characters.

Other than these minor gripes, however, once he embarked on his quest I warmed to the idea of Jamie's journey and the immediacy of his love (and at times loathing!) of his long walk. Meyer seemed on surer ground once he had Jamie striding out from Pamplona. He ensures a real sense of place with the combination of his travel guide sections and Jamie's own observations and reaction to the landscapes, towns and villages he passes through.

He encapsulates, with much perceptive humour, the characters Jamie encounters – with a sharp eye for the absurd. Snorers are "sleeping sociopaths"; he has little patience with the "Sarria starters" ("short on time and light on ambition"). The book is written in the first person which adds immediacy and Jamie's acerbic comments about people, places and situations are a delight. He nicknames his fellow pilgrims – Grumpy Abram, Melbourne Colleen, Madrid Paola, Melancholic Linnea and my favourite – Den Mother Betsy. He has an ear for a good image – the clickety-click of the walking poles breaking the silence and pilgrims like single-file ants on a mission.

Jamie (who is forced to take transport because of his bad foot) does not experience the myth of the Meseta as he calls it and rejects the popular concept that deep

insights arise solely from the monotony of the plain. He asserts that "self-revelation can be triggered by lush and green hills". Two hours in a coach compared to eight days walking result in relief, not guilt.

He is supported by the strangely named "Brie", an enigmatic pilgrim (with a dodgy London accent – "innit!") and an "Educating Rita" life; she is searching for a means of moving away from her past, and their individual journeys interweave. Jamie gradually gains self-awareness and hopes he has developed a "stable heart that could... give and receive love". He claims he can handle things better – so I found his regression to combative mode was a bit of a hiccup on his road to emotional maturity, and I wasn't sure whether his potential revenge and ungracious jealousy towards Ronald was effective or credible. Nonetheless, he reaches his goal and his experience confirms the claim that the Santiago pilgrimage is a way to come to terms with reality, with oneself (warts and all), to face the future and to say goodbye to the shadows.

This is a solid page-turning read – a lively book with bags of Camino atmosphere and some thought-provoking views of the complexities of being human. If you like reading about pilgrim experiences and about the Camino Francés; if you enjoy fictional accounts of the pilgrimage, a mystery story, or a combination of all these, then you will find this an intriguing read.

HELEN WILLSON

Book Reviews

Do you read what I mean?

Garry Goodfellow, 2018, ISBN 9781912639151

“Do you read what I mean”, the title of **this book by Garry Goodfellow, sums up the task facing the reader, both in terms of content and structure as well as style. The latter is idiosyncratic, reminiscent sometimes of books like Hoban’s *Riddle Walker*, especially because of the sentence structure, though this is not as consistent as Hoban’s.**

At times, there are flashes of pure poetry. Goodfellow’s tale is reflective and introspective, an amalgam of anecdotes , memoirs and his reflections on the state of his mind, especially after a brain injury in 2013 after which he claims to have been able to access past lives, many of which he describes re-visiting. He also has his own brand of philosophy, sometimes trite, sometimes profound.

This is not a book about conventional pilgrimage by any means since at the least, pilgrimage involves having a set goal on a path trodden by others before and usually with a religious end in mind.

Goodfellow, by contrast, is a person who is a wanderer, at times on foot, at times on horseback, travelling in the wilds of the USA, Canada, Scotland, Wales and, briefly, Spain where he mentions the Camino. It is more a pilgrimage of the mind than of the body.

It is not always clear what he is searching for, but woven into his quest for self-discovery are recurring features: his delight in nature and the wilds, his motivation to find a woman, to be accompanied by horses with whom he appears to have a very strong interactive,

even communicative, relationship and to explore what consciousness means. He writes interestingly and eccentrically all these topics. And there are frequent flashes of humour.

One needs time, patience and an entirely open mind to read the book because it conforms to very few rules, literary or otherwise, but it maybe contributes to the literary canon of movement and quests of the human race as well as giving some insight into the workings of a highly unconventional mind.

MARGARET SIMONOT

From Michael Walsh

We frequently receive from members accounts of their pilgrimages, many of which have appeared – or are waiting to appear – in the pages of the *Bulletin*. Please keep them coming. We would, however, quite like to vary a little the type of articles which are published, though obviously they have still to be somehow related to the Camino.

Although reports are published each month about the two Confraternity refugios at Miraz and Rabanal which do, admittedly, frequently recount the daily problems faced by the hospitaleros and hospitaleras, it would be good from time to time to hear directly from those who do stints at the refugios.

We hear that the pilgrims are (almost always) very appreciative, but what about a hospitalera's feelings about the pilgrims – anonymised, obviously! A few of these from Miraz and Rabanal would add colour to the *Bulletin's* rich tapestry.

The other set of articles we are looking for is rather more straightforward. While walking the Camino pilgrims pass through many villages, towns and cities with an interesting history upon which guide books, busy moving people on from one staging post to another, do not have time or space to dwell. To be personal for a moment, I am writing this note on the Feast of St Ignatius Loyola.

Because of the time constraints of the friends with whom I walked, I began my Camino at Pamplona, and it was at a battle in Pamplona that Ignatius received the wound that eventually changed him from a worldly courtier into the founder of a religious order:

Pamplona, therefore, would be one obvious candidate for such a series, but there are many more.

Please getting writing, whether as former, or regular, hospitalero or as an amateur (or even professional) historian of Spain.

From Marion Marples

News from Rabanal del Camino on the Feast of St James.

On 27 July 2018 a new bust was unveiled in Rabanal to honour Bladimiro Carrera "Ublines" "El Gran Colaborador". It is outside his former home. A small street outside his house has been named Calle Bladimiro Carrero "Ublines". Ublines himself was present at the ceremony to unveil the bust, together with many family and friends from the village. This reminded me of an article about Ublines, published originally in Bulletin 92, December 2005.

I have added a few notes in the text. Etienne and Nelly were the first hospitaleros at Gaucelmo. Etienne wrote of "Oublines" but I have followed the form given on the new plaque. In 1999 CSJ members raised £8000 to repair the stairway up the church tower so that Ublines could ascend safely to his bells.

Day Pilgrimages

At the CSJ we have been taking advantage of the fair weather by getting out and about. In early July, a group of around twenty pilgrims of diverse ages and nationalities came together to make pilgrimage from Abingdon to Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford on one of the hottest days of the year. Walking along the picturesque Thames Path the entire way, it was lovely to see other walkers, runners, rowers, boaters and swimmers making the most of this river. Some of our party were lucky enough to attend Evensong in the Cathedral afterwards.

In late July, a group of around thirty walkers took to the streets of the City of London to explore historical Jacobean sites for St James's Day, culminating at the Museum of London. And at the beginning of this month, another group walked from Droitwich to the tomb of the Worcester Pilgrim at Worcester Cathedral – a most interesting and enjoyable experience.

Upcoming events and guidebooks

We are now winding ourselves up for the autumn season, with Saturday Open Days planned for the 8th of September and 13th October. Our 2018/19 guidebook updates are due for release next month.

These will include: Camino Francés, Camino Portugués from Porto – Central, Coastal, Seaside and Spiritual variants, Camino Inglés from Ferrol and A Coruña, Camino Invierno as well as the much-anticipated guide to the St James Way from Reading to Southampton and Portsmouth. Keep an eye on our website and enews for further announcements.

Do not forget, too, that our CSJ Wine Bar event is ongoing – on the second Tuesday of each month from 18:30–20:30 we meet at Blackfriars Wine Bar opposite Southwark tube station to talk about all things camino. Whether it is to ask questions, answer them, reminisce or make new friends, it is always a very enjoyable evening full of discussion and connection.

Constance Storrs

And for the winter, we have our annual lecture in the memory of Constance Storrs. This year, it will be held at the prestigious Southwark Cathedral. Professor Giana Eckhardt and Dr Katharina Husemann of the University of London will be coming to talk to us about their research and insights into “Slowing down on the Camino de Santiago”. They believe that people increasingly feel the need to escape from today's fast-paced society.

Their research indicates that pilgrimage can be seen as an opportunity for people to slow down, a key insight into understanding the Camino's renewed popularity in contemporary times. In their talk, they will outline how people slow down in three ways: embodied, technological and episodic. Please contact the office if you would like to attend.

Annual General Meeting

This year, we will be holding the CSJ's AGM on Saturday 26th January at St Alban's Centre, Baldwin Gardens, London. This is an enjoyable day with talks, bookstalls, photography, presentations, performances, and a party. New members will also get a special reception from the CSJ trustees. More information to be released with the AGM papers that will be sent out with the December Bulletin.

Camino Pilgrim™

With the ever-increasing breadth of camino information services available online, the CSJ have been strategising for ways of reasserting ourselves in this market. For this reason, we have registered the Camino Pilgrim™ trademark. It is hoped that this will clarify our service provision, strengthen our commercial profile and increase our visibility in online searches. Whilst the organisation's name will remain the CSJ, we will be operating under this new brand name for all communications.

Regional Groups

We want to encourage you to get in touch with your local CSJ group. We appreciate that it is not easy for everyone to travel down to London. But if you look on the back of your *Bulletin*, you will be able to see contact details for leaders of our local groups who will be able to tell you about their events and activity. Here is an example of what the Bristol group did for Saint James' Day this year:

Walk in the Cotswolds

Two photos from our walk on Wed July 25th:



Walk in the Cotswolds

The group at Beckbury Camp next to a monument that marks the spot where Thomas Cromwell once stood and watched Hailes Abbey burn! From left to right are: Nigel Pain, Sue Low, Alf Cutts, Suzanne Villiers, Liz Crean, Joe Skivington, Rosie Skivington talking to George, Alastair Goldie, Chris Collier and Richard from Bristol. Mary Cutts, Dorothy and Dick Crean (taking the photo) were also there somewhere.



Walk in the Cotswolds

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the amazing views, the visit to Didbrook Church and then, those who still had energy, the visit to the very atmospheric Hailes Abbey. In yellow evening sunlight we sat at the site of the Holy Blood and ate ice creams. Tea in a group in Hailes farm shop was also a chance to swap pilgrim tales.

To show how glorious the weather was!

From Dick Crean

FREDDY BOWEN

CSJ GENERAL MANAGER



Newly painted albergue

Report from Albergue San Martín, Miraz

Priscilla White

After a dismal, cold wet spring, summer has arrived in all its glory, with hot, sunny days interspersed with thunder, lightning and electrical storms.

However, there was unremitting rain during the first fortnight in June and the wood-burning stove was lit each evening to give cheer to the pilgrims arriving drenched to the skin with dripping clothes and squelching boots.

Despite the rain, pilgrims often arrived with food and there were some lovely evenings when everyone clubbed together and created a communal meal for the people staying.

On one occasion, someone gave a reading and another pilgrim provided music. Someone else entertained the pilgrims by juggling, so a happy occasion all round.

Unfortunately, pilgrims often pass by La Goa without realising that there is a fully equipped shop where they can purchase ingredients that they could use to cook a meal in our kitchen.

They are understandably not very enthusiastic about returning downhill to Seixon to buy food, although there is a mobile shop selling provisions if they are lucky enough to catch it.

Pilgrims now come from all over the world: from eastern Europe to southern Asia; from the Baltic States to the Balkans; from both North and South America; from the old USSR, as well as many from western Europe and the UK.

Our concerns about the impact on numbers passing through Miraz and Sobrado with the advent of the variant at Baamonde appear to have been unfounded, and now that high summer is here all the albergues in the vicinity of Miraz are full-up most nights

Although the church is still not open on a regular basis, Don Ramon has been officiating at some of the services and on more than one occasion, Mass was celebrated at the albergue when a priest was staying the night. The pilgrims miss not being able to get a stamp from the church, especially as they require two stamps per day from Baamonde onwards and the Pilgrim Office prefers more official stamps rather than those from the local bars.

Pilar has generously donated produce from her garden to the hospitaleros, including lettuces, courgettes, cabbages and cucumbers. This has been accepted with great delight as fresh vegetables and salad can only be bought in Friol or Guitiriz, a taxi ride away.

She and her son Maxi went on pilgrimage by foot along the Camino del Norte and reached Santiago, which is a great achievement and such a wonderful experience for someone who has spent her whole life looking after, and providing for, her family as well as running the bar and digging and planting to grow vegetables in the kitchen garden, all with endless good nature and cheerfulness.

The building has now been painted in and out and looks both smart and welcoming to the pilgrims passing by. The garden benefited from the wet spring and the roses are blooming at the bottom of the orchard.

Volunteers have kept the grass mown and the hedges trimmed so that the pilgrims can enjoy some rest in the garden when they arrive.

The electronic input of data onto the Guardia Civil website seems to be working well and has not caused too much of a headache to the volunteers. It is an extra chore but one that we have to comply with.



Group of happy pilgrims at San Martín

Report from Refugio Gaucelmo in Rabanal

Julie Davies

Hospitaleros: Annie Sparkes (UK) and Andrew Horsey (UK), Catherine and Julie Davies (UK), Sue Hemmings (UK) Stefano Casaregola (IT) Dennis Morgan (CAN), Ann Anscome (UK) and Hope Nicholson (UK), Betty White (IRL) Mila Caceres (USA) Alan Pearce (AUS), Ann Dent (UK) and Peter Hullah (UK)

Enjoying tea and cake and talking about the weather appears to be quintessentially English! These two topics have featured heavily during this season at Gaucelmo, even with non-UK volunteers.

This year the erratic weather has caused both pilgrims and hospitaleros to dig deep into their physical reserves. The weather has been one of extreme contrasts. Relentless rain, very cold conditions, soaking boots, extra blankets needed and torrential apocalyptic storms – all very taxing conditions for everyone on the Camino. Pilgrims leaving Gaucelmo on days like these were faced with landslides and a Camino thick in mud.

Reports

Getting pilgrim clothes dry for the next day left the salon looking like a launderette with the dehumidifier working overtime. The wood supply disappeared and an extra load was delivered in the second half of June. It was necessary, even in July, to light the wood-burning stove for warmth. Cold and tired pilgrims really appreciated this feature at Gaucelmo. Their recovery in front of the fire was transforming and so rewarding for hospitaleros to see.

Hospitaleros responded very positively. They opened as early as they could when the weather was atrocious so pilgrims could get warm and start the essential drying-out process. “Hope’s Hats” were a great success.



Boots drying at Gaucelmo

Non-residents, hearing about “free hats”, visited to choose a hat and left a donation in return. The last baby hat was taken by a Korean pilgrim for her great nephew.

In contrast, there were days of glorious sunshine, with the laundry drying quickly in the *huerta* (garden) and pilgrims being offered cold drinks on arrival.

Tea and cake in the *huerta* was a pleasure, especially for hospitaleros who had previously delivered tea and cake in the salon surrounded by wet laundry and drying boots. At least the weather stayed dry for the Corpus Christi procession in June. No two days were the same and so it is continuing...

Pilgrim numbers have also been erratic. Gaucelmo has presented two silver shells to our 1,000th pilgrims - Oskars from Latvia and Bernard from Holland. The early part of the season (up to the end of May) saw an increase of ninety-seven more pilgrims over last year’s total, with the USA leading — having 149 pilgrims stay at Gaucelmo (thank you David Wesson for stats.).

During June and July, which can be busy months, hospitaleros could have days with pilgrim numbers in the low teens then soar into high thirties. No two days were the same, and so it is continuing...

A highlight during May was a visit by CSJ member John Snell, who came to view his late wife’s bench. He was accompanied by a coachload of very enthusiastic visitors from the Plymouth Diocese.

They were fascinated to see Gaucelmo after watching the recent television programme. John had been one of the early members of the working party at Gaucelmo and had hung the light in the reception area.



John Snell

It was fascinating to hear him reminisce about the Refugio. Gaucelmo has indeed changed over the years for the benefit of pilgrims and hospitaleros. Cold showers are now an accident due to the gas running out, not a permanent feature!

The television programme shown on BBC2 has undoubtedly created an interest amongst English pilgrims. During my duty in May we had many who had watched the programme and were drawn to stay with us out of curiosity.

The elevation to a TV celebrity of Father Javier was unexpected but joyful! Many pilgrims recognised him from the programme. Pilgrims turned into paparazzi, not taking “no” for an answer, with requests for “selfies”. Hopefully, as the season has progressed, interest will have waned and Father Javier can return to an anonymous existence!

Hospitalero Peter was invited on the Feast Day of Saint Benedict, 11th July, to say something in the church. Peter spoke on behalf of the CSJ “giving thanks”. Relationship with the monastery is good, with many pilgrims making the transition

to their Pilgrim House after staying at Gaucelmo.

There have been many interesting pilgrims at Gaucelmo. Pilgrim Ann had been recommended to stay at Refugio Gaucelmo by someone she met in Salisbury Cathedral, who is a CSJ member. Ann had walked all the way from Sheffield to Portsmouth, ferry to Bilbao, then Northern Camino backwards to San Sebastian, then the Basque Camino to Santo Domingo where she joined the Camino Francés. Whoever advised her will be glad to know she made it safely to Rabanal del Camino and was well looked after by hospitaleras Hope and Ann.

We are just over halfway through the season. Many, many thanks to all hospitaleros who have supported pilgrims and looked after Gaucelmo so carefully through the first half.

New CSJ Books

Recent additions to the CSJ Library

Books - stored under BKA unless otherwise indicated:

- Atienza, Juan G. Los Peregrinos del Camino de Santiago, historia, leyenda y símbolos. EDAF, 2004
- Conant, Kenneth John. Cluny, les églises la maison du Chef d'ordre. Mediaeval Academy of America, 1968 (stored under BKB)
- Flintoff, Vivianne. Kiwi on the Camino; a walk that changed my life. Balboa Press, 2017
- García Oro, José (ed.) Historia de las diócesis españolas 15; iglesias de Lugo, Mondonedo-Ferrol, Orense. Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2002
- Gomes, Leandro. Caminho Português de Santiago; os meandros de um caminho. fly books, 2016
- Gros, Frédéric. A philosophy of walking Verso, 2014
- Herrera Torres, Ramón. Cine Jacobeo; el Camino de Santiago en la pantalla. Mensajero, 2008
- Lacarra Ducay, Maria del Carmen (ed.) Los Caminos de Santiago. Arte, historia y literatura. Institución "Fernando el Católico", Colección Actas Arte, 2005
- Lalanda, Fernando . El "Boom" del Camino en sus años oscuros (1961-69). Vision Libros, 2011
- Lázaro, María Luisa and Villar Flor, Carlos. Viajeros y peregrinos ingleses en el Camino de Santiago Riojano. ier, 2004
- Leralta, Javier. Las Peregrinas casas del Camino. Ediciones la Librería, 1993
- Malabia, Vicente. Meditaciones de un peregrino. Cuadernos Narcea, 1999
- Martínez, José Tono. Hijos del trueno; mitos y símbolos en el Camino de Santiago. Ediciones Evohé, 2015
- Neillands, Robin. The Hundred Years' War. Routledge, 1990
- Novack, Brenda. The Camino; a walking meditation, images and reflections. Austin Macauley Publishers, 2017
- Olaizola, José Luis. El Camino de las estrellas; vida del apóstol Santiago. Palabra, 2007
- Padíxn, Angel. "Crunia" Puerto de Peregrinaciones. Asociación Amigos Museu Arqueológico a Coruoa, 1993
- Regalado, Antonio and Lahoski, Beth Ann. Un paso en el tiempo; historias de hospitalidad a la vera del Camino del Apóstel. Sílex, 2005
- Ruiz Carcedo, Juan. Burgos, Camino de Santiago. 2014
- Xunta de Galicia. Directory of Friends of the Camino de Santiago Associations, Brotherhoods and Centres for Jacobean Studies. Xunta de Galicia, 2015

Pamphlets:

- Camino Society Ireland. Celtic Camino festival. caminosociety.ie, 2018
- Confraternita di San Jacopo di Compostella. Santiago in Umbria; una tradizione sommersa ritorna alla luce, 2018
- Deputacion de Coruna. The English Way to Santiago/O Camino Ingles a Santiago. Deputacion de Coruna, 2018
- Griffiths, William. Faith and reason on the way to St James. faith.org.uk, 2018
- James, Isobel. Pilgrims' tale. BBC, 2018
- MARGARET SIMONOT, LIBRARIAN



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