



Confraternity of Saint James

# Bulletin

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**June 2011**

**No 114**

# Camino Calendar

- » Thursday 23 June to Sunday 9 October  
**Treasures of Heaven exhibition at British Museum**  
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- » Sunday 17 to Friday 22 July  
**St Arilda Pilgrimage**  
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- » Friday 22 to Sunday 24 July  
**Reading Abbey and St James**  
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- » Thursday 1 to Friday 16 September  
**Northern Routes Walking Pilgrimage**  
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- » Saturday 24 September  
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- » Friday 30 September  
**Screening of 'The Way' at British Museum**  
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- » Thursday 6 to Saturday 8 October  
**Matter of Faith Conference**  
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- » Friday 21 to Sunday 23 October  
**Retreat for Returned Pilgrims**  
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- » Saturday 29 October  
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- » Tuesday 2 to Saturday 6 November  
**Reflections on a Renaissance Conference, Utrecht**  
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# Editorial

Gosia Brykczyńska

This year in England spring has been hot, dry and early. The proverbial flush of June flowers seems to have come in May and my old English Pilgrim rose is in full flush. Therefore not surprisingly this June *Bulletin* also seems to evoke a decidedly high summer feel. This is only confirmed by the fact that members of the CSJ will have already been to Rabanal and Miraz for anniversaries and opening blessings/ceremonies – and come back full of renewed energies – even before we begin to celebrate this year's feast of St James in Reading, the usual highpoint of the summer!

Meanwhile much is happening behind the scenes at the CSJ office. While all the time we are maintaining Thursday open days, promoting the bookshop, arranging to have the CSJ website updated and working on the production of a new leaflet about the Confraternity the trustees of the CSJ have been busy considering its future. Being all of twenty-eight years old (!?) the CSJ has been in need for some time now of serious reflection about its aims, objectives and long-term goals. Not quite a mid-life crisis – but certainly as we enter the eleven year Holy Year gap an opportune time to take time out to ponder what we are about. More people than ever before are undertaking the pilgrimage, and no doubt the recently-released film *The Way* will prompt many others to take up their staffs and lace-up their walking boots. Such increase in pilgrim activities always has repercussions for the office. However, if the CSJ is to continue to run the office effectively with its bookshop and library and advice-giving activities and if we are to successfully train *hospitaleros* and run our two *refugios* then we need more than ever committed members who – each in their own way – are prepared to support the many and various CSJ activities.

Shortly the CSJ trustees will be asking you for your ideas and comments on how you would like the CSJ to function. Please keep those letters and emails coming; look at our new website when it is launched and interact with it; but above all share your enthusiasm about the camino with your friends and acquaintances. Completing the camino is a life-changing and life-enhancing experience which can affect us to the very depths of our being. Such spiritual adventures

should find an echo in our lives.

This *Bulletin* has articles about our *refugios* (look out in the September *Bulletin* for accounts of the June festivities) but also information about historical events in Spain (as they impact on pilgrims passing through the Spanish landscape). There are articles about undertaking the pilgrimage to Santiago from the Marian shrine in Walsingham (which this year is celebrating its 950 anniversary) by Ian Smith and about pilgrimage through Switzerland (Bill Jones). There are also reminiscences of encounters along the camino and an account by Patricia Quaife of life as *hospitaliers* in the quiet town of Corbigny along the Vézelay route.

It therefore only remains for me to wish you all a very happy St James's Day – wherever you may be – and if not on the camino then hopefully with us in Reading, or celebrating with your local associations in Ireland, North America, Australia etc! Meanwhile between now and September if you could all think about what you would like the new face of the CSJ to look like – please let us know.



# The Cross and the Shell Pilgrimage

Ian Smith

## The route details and background

My wife, Alison, and I walked from Walsingham in North Norfolk to Santiago last year. We left immediately after Easter, having walked on the Student Cross pilgrimage during Holy Week. We walked from Walsingham through London to Portsmouth. After crossing to Le Havre we took a bus to Honfleur on the other bank of the Seine and walked from there, via Chartres, to Vézelay where we joined the Nevers route to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port and the Camino Francés to Santiago.

We called our journey the “Cross and Shell pilgrimage” because of the links we were making between Walsingham and the Student Cross pilgrimage to that ancient site (the symbol of the pilgrimage is a red cross made of cloth or ribbon) and the Camino to Santiago with its enduring shell symbol. We carried both with us all the way.

We had planned the route to connect some major pilgrimage sites together. In England we walked to Willesden from Walsingham as they are both significant medieval Marian shrines and both were targeted for special treatment during the Reformation. For example, at the end, in 1538 the Lord Privy Seal (Thomas Cromwell) had, amongst others, the Mary statues from Walsingham, Ipswich, Worcester and Willesden burnt at Chelsea as if they were living people – an indication of how hard they worked at trying to stamp out what was called the “cult of Mary”. Of course, the Reformation was also instrumental in curbing the tradition of pilgrimage in Britain, but that is the topic for another article.

We also wanted to connect Walsingham with Vézelay because of their shared history. In June/July of 1946 Vézelay was the focus of the first post-war peace march when fourteen groups of people carried large wooden crosses from a number of locations across France. They converged on Vézelay and you can see the crosses in the Basilica as they form the Stations of the Cross there. This march, called the Peace Cross pilgrimage, was the inspiration for three cross-carrying pilgrimages to Walsingham. One mirrored the Peace Cross pilgrimage

and involved parishioners from fourteen dioceses in England carrying crosses to Walsingham. These crosses form the Stations of the Cross in the grounds of the Catholic Shrine, between the Slipper Chapel and the Chapel of Reconciliation. Peace Cross also inspired a group of ex-servicemen who were studying at London University to carry a cross to Walsingham during Holy Week in 1948 and this grew into the annual pilgrimage called Student Cross. A third Pilgrimage timed for the feast of the Assumption was organised by the Guild of Ransom and involved carrying a cross from London to Walsingham. This pilgrimage ran from the early fifties until quite recently but is now a truncated event, as far as I have been able to ascertain.

So we walked via Chartres to Vézelay in order to walk on part of the route taken by the British Cross (much of their route followed roads that are now motorways) and our pilgrimage was able to make a link between these major sites.

Our commitment to walk to Vézelay meant that we undertook the Vézelay route to Santiago. It was after several discussions at Confraternity days that we decided to opt for the Nevers branch of the route – a choice I think we were both pleased with. We left Walsingham on 5 April and walked into Santiago on 19 July 2010.

### **Some notes on the route**

Of course, our journey is too long to give a blow-by-blow account here – I am in the process of writing the book at the moment. However, there are a few things I think we could share with you now. As most, if not all, who read this will have their own experiences of pilgrimage I need not dwell too much on the sheer joy of spending nearly four months on the road. Despite my continuous problem with blisters (Alison was almost completely unaffected by them) we thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience – so much so that we are planning our route to Rome now.

As an overview we can divide the walk into a number of different types of experience. Firstly, our walk through England had its own character. Partly on roads and some of it on footpaths we found most of the walking good. There were usually good places to stop at lunch time (Norfolk did have a number of villages where the pubs had closed down) and generally food was available, too. We slept on church hall floors, in friends' and acquaintances' houses and were put up by very kind parishioners on the way, too. There could have been more pavements and better paths and we did suffer from treacherous

walking surfaces created through the use of heavy tractors to cut the grass along some paths – such practices should be banned! We also suffered from paths that had been destroyed by off-road vehicles, horses and some motor bikes and mountain bikes. Such mixed use is only a major problem for walkers – who happen to be the largest group of users on most of these paths.

Planning the route and organising overnight accommodation was generally quite easy in England, although there were a small handful of days when we ended up not knowing where we would be sleeping that night until quite late in the day.

In contrast, France on the unofficial route presented quite a few problems. We were put up by priests on a couple of occasions but rural France has a small and dwindling population of priests and they are looking after more and more parishes. One priest (in Châteauneuf-en-Thymerais) was looking after over thirty parishes on his own. Other problems included poor data on the internet – a small town will claim to have a couple of hotels and when you arrive you will find that neither are open or they have closed permanently. The same will be true for campsites and commercial premises such as bar/*tabacs* and bakers.

So for the walk between Honfleur, Chartres and Vézelay we experienced a wide range of different types of accommodation, often walking further just to find somewhere to stay or camp and we carried our lunch with us so we would not be left without food during the day (sausage and bread worked well). The pattern of the week is also significant in France with many places closed on Sunday and Monday, so these days were always the most “interesting” ones for us. Amongst our experiences we can list spending a night in a rural campsite where the incessant singing of a nightingale kept us awake all night, one day when we walked 47km and still ended up sleeping rough and, on our last day before Vézelay, we stayed in a lovely *chambre d’hôtes* called “el camino” in Mailly-le-Château where the owner is a seasoned walker and camino enthusiast.

Weather was quite mixed during the first two stages but the rain began to fall seriously just as we drew closer to Vézelay and the deluge on our night there was just the beginning of a long period of terrible weather that lasted almost three weeks.

Our good friends, and camino mentors, Dugald and Betty Macdougall joined us from Vézelay for about ten days – they actually walked out and met us on the road into Vézelay. So, while we



thoroughly enjoyed walking with them we were sad that their time with us was marred by such poor weather. However, as seasoned walkers, they took it all in their stride and proved great companions.

The Vézelay route is much quieter than the le Puy route and this low level of pilgrim traffic is reflected in the level of facilities available along the way. Some refuges are very small with four and sometimes even just two beds available. The limits on space tend to be countered by the great welcome and hospitality that is offered by those who run many of these little refuges. For the first few days out we only encountered one other pilgrim (a French woman). Shortly before Dugald and Betty had to leave us we encountered another two (two men - one French and one German). After Gargillesse we shared the route with between four and six other pilgrims at different times. So the walking was very quiet with an occasional encounter with another pilgrim in a bar or cafe. Later on it became important to 'phone ahead to book places in refuges because with such small places if you didn't book you might end up arriving to find the place full resulting in your having to stay in a *chambre d'hôtes* or hotel. The variety of places was impressive. We stayed in small chalets on camp sites, in convents, schools, old houses, rooms in the Mairie and so on.

The final couple of days into Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port were a bit of a culture shock even when we knew what to expect. After the Gibraltar *stèle* we began to meet more and more pilgrims and the places we stayed in were bigger and bigger. The Ferme Gaineko Etxea just the other side of Ostabat was a good way to get into the new frame of mind. There were some thirty people there, we ate together in a large dining room at long tables, the food was good, generously portioned with copious wine and our host led us in some excellent singing (mainly in Basque).

Our crossing of the Pyrenees was spectacular for a number of reasons. Obviously, the scenery was wonderful (mist and almost cloud-free for much of the day) and the walking was really good – not difficult but, of course we had been walking for well over a thousand miles by then so we were well seasoned and took the slopes in our stride. We had a wonderful rainbow to guide us out of the town but by the time we had reached our coffee stop the wind was getting very strong and people were staying there or turning back because of it. It grew so strong that it blew Alison over and so we linked arms from then on and ploughed up the mountain straight into the wind. We had our lunch in a tiny mountain refuge with the wind pounding noisily

at the walls. Roncevalles was our first experience of a Spanish *refugio* and our first Spanish pilgrim menu (it was quite a poor experience as far as the food and service were concerned) but the accommodation was good despite the mass of people.

We got to know a number of pilgrims from different countries and enjoyed a huge number of experiences. I suppose the Spanish leg of our journey came in two main parts. Pre-Rabanal we walked mainly on our own with occasional conversations and shared times on the road but we had our pace and other people had theirs. Much of our time with other pilgrims was in the evenings at the *refugios*. The variety of places to stay ensured that we had a rich and varied experience as we walked. Surprisingly, the sort of people we tended to talk to and enjoy time with also seemed to choose the same sorts of *refugios* as we did. We enjoyed the fact that there were enough beds in most places as this meant that we didn't need to plan ahead in any detail. You walked to the place you planned to get to for the day and then went to the *refugio* you thought would be the preferred option for you and mostly that was the one you got into.

By the time we got to Rabanal there were three things that changed our journey. The first two were good changes – two of our friends, David and Christina Mottram, joined us there for the last part of the pilgrimage. As David was the original source of the idea for the walk (suggested after some good wine and even better malt whisky) it was only sad that they had not been able to spend more time on the pilgrimage with us. The second good thing was the fact that Dugald and Betty were two of the *hospitaleros* at the CSJ *refugio* in Rabanal (not a coincidence, they had planned it this way) and this fact made the *refugio* even better than it is. One small note – the Rabanal *refugio* is a seriously good place and is more than just a credit to the Confraternity, it is a shining example of what can be done when you have a group of dedicated, generous people involved.

The only down side was the fact that the numbers on the camino had been growing each day and Rabanal seemed to be the point where numbers began to seem important. As we walked each day we saw more and more people on the road and every *refugio* we entered seemed to be filling fast. At times we were being turned away from our preferred option.

One of our many highlights was turning up at the La Faba *refugio* which is run by the German Friends of St James. In a wonderful setting with a truly lovely little church next to it and spectacular views it would

be a good enough place to spend a night, but the accommodation and the staff are also excellent. The added bonus was the fact that the Franciscan who came to conduct the pilgrim service for us that night invited us to come and stay in the Franciscan monastery later in Santiago. We took him up on his invitation and discovered that it is one of the best kept secrets on the camino. It is just down from the Cathedral behind the part of the monastery that is now a very expensive hotel and it is a comfortable, convenient and friendly place (and it is *donativo*); a welcome discovery to make in a Jubilee year just a few days before the St James celebrations.

Final highlight on entering Santiago was being greeted by Dugald and Betty who had left Rabanal and were in Santiago for the Jubilee celebrations. They had seen us off in Walsingham, joined us at Vézelay and hosted our stay in Rabanal. All six of us (including David and Christina) were photographed in front of the cathedral and our story and picture were featured in the local newspaper!

### **And finally**

The whole of the pilgrimage was full of experiences, people and places that will stay with us for the rest of our lives. I confess, I spent much of my time assuring people that I was not going to write a book on the walk – we did not do it for that reason and, as a writer, I like to think that I am the one who chooses what I am going to write about. However, by the end of our journey I was beginning to realise that I would have to write at least something about it. So, I am in the process of writing the book of the walk. It is turning out to be more like a “pilgrim scrap book” which will provide the reader with a rich and varied set of scenes from the pilgrimage alongside the journal kept by Alison. I want people to be able to gain a good sense of what being on pilgrimage is like while following the simple narrative of the journey.

In the meantime, I am putting together a Google map of the route with night and lunch stops and a mixture of street-views and attached photographs to allow people to follow our route through Europe. A link to the map can be found on the Cross and Shell blog and on the facebook site, too.

See [www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=317230699049](https://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=317230699049) for the Facebook group and [crossandshell.blogspot.com](http://crossandshell.blogspot.com) for the blog.

A final thank you is also in order – thank you to all of those in the Confraternity who gave us such useful advice and hints before the walk, your help and advice was put to good use!

# Civil War, reconciliation and the Heights of Oca

Evan Rutherford

## The monument

The Camino Francés passes a monument on the Heights of Oca, about a day and a half's journey before Burgos. Unlike most of the relics of the Civil War which are visible all over Spain, it was not put up by the winning side. It is marked on a guide map published in Santiago in 1993 and must date from the years since Franco's death in 1975. The Republican dead commemorated belong to the early phase of the Civil War, the months after the rising of 17/18 July 1936.

It will not be clear to most of the pilgrims passing what it commemorates. Of the four sides of the concrete pillar, the one facing the direction from which pilgrims come has no inscription. The date 1936 is shown on the three others. There is a dove in the style of Picasso on the side which pilgrims would pass. On the side opposite the direction of approach is an inscription which may be translated:

*Their death was not useless  
Their execution was useless*

Just before the pilgrim reaches the monument a pair of cypresses is growing, shortly to overtop the three metres of the column. Freshly laid bunches of flowers show that there are regular visitors.

## The local context

A "Law of Historic Memory" is now in force to deal with the aftermath of the war. In practice, the detailed gathering of information is a very delicate subject indeed. The Centre for Documentation in Salamanca, where the relevant archives are kept, will only give details to those with strong family reasons for inquiry. Here is a brief reconstruction from what can be found there and around the site.

The word translated as "execution" does not really fit the case, implying as it does that shooting was from a short distance following some kind of judicial process. This was almost never what happened, at least during the critical months of 1936. Most of those killed would



have been victims of the *paseo*, a forced entry by armed men in the middle of the night, followed by a car ride from which there would be no return. Witnesses have told of the appearance of heaps of bodies along the banks of streams on the Heights of Oca, and on other hills nearer to Burgos.

This area, together with the rest of the camino, rapidly came under the control of the Franco side. There was a rapid increase in support for the Falange, the nearest Spanish equivalent to a Fascist party, and killings of anyone associated with left-wing politics or trades unions soon followed. However, the very first killings were of military men by other military men. This was to ensure that those whose support for the rising was doubtful would be unable to oppose it.

A further group associated with the monument includes persons whose relatives now come from as far East as Logroño. The province of Navarre had been the seat of the Carlist rebellions in the nineteenth century and was the recruiting ground for Franco's best troops, out of those recruited in peninsular Spain. The Carlist wars have been described as the shocked reaction of a deeply conservative, religious society to the pressures arising from industrialisation. Those who died as a result of actions by their neighbours would therefore have been victims of other pressures than the newly risen ideology of the Falange.

## **The broader context**

The Spanish Civil War was very complex, involving several local wars and a number of foreign interventions. It could be described as the first campaign of the Second World War and the first of the Cold War. The winning side described it as a "Crusade" to save Spain and Europe from atheism and Bolshevism.

A very unusual feature of the war was the killing, in large numbers, of unresisting prisoners. There is an emerging consensus that the total roll of deaths up to Franco's victory on 1 April 1939 was about 450,000; and that killing of prisoners accounted for something very close to 50 per cent of this number.

There is not a consensus about what happened in the repression after the war, roughly up to 1948. Figures vary from 50,000 to 150,000 deaths. The winning side had control of the records, including executions for real or imagined war crimes.

A war of words, which continues, arose over the relative criminality of each side. There is well-documented evidence of persecution of



the Church in Republican-dominated areas. 6,835 clerical persons, including thirteen bishops, together with monks and nuns, were killed, as well as 3,000 lay persons chosen for no other reason than their Catholicism. Religious practice was generally impossible except in a way reminiscent of the catacombs of Ancient Rome. It has been claimed that this persecution was the most severe in history, at least in numerical terms, exceeding that of the Roman emperors and the French Revolution of 1789.

These killings happened for reasons both internal and external to Spain. The Republicans had material aid from the Soviet Union and manpower from some 50,000 international volunteers. Franco had 70,000 Italian “volunteers”, the Condor Legion of the German Air Force, and 110,000 Moroccans who belonged to the regular Spanish Army. From time to time acts of intervention or non-intervention by foreign powers altered the course of the war. However the bulk of the conflict was between Spanish conscripted armies, up to a million strong on either side. They called their opponents “Fascists” and “Reds” but the motivation on each side was more complex than this.

Franco’s successful prosecution of the war was due, at least in part, to his uniting of supporting political forces under his own leadership. The Falange, the Carlists, various small right-wing parties and the Church were linked in a “National Movement”. Acts of terror against civilians had the common aim of frightening conquered areas into submission. No public questioning of this was permitted.

On the Republican side there was no political unity and the authorities made desperate efforts to stop the massacres carried out by their own supporters. The various strands of political belief produced their own crop of acts of terror.

The anarcho-syndicalist movement, with its CNT trades union branch, was the most violently anti-clerical. Sometimes known as “collectivist”, it followed extreme anti-authoritarian ideas derived from the nineteenth century Russian writer, Bakunin. These led to a quasi-religious anti-clericalism under the slogan *Ni Dios ni amo* – neither God nor master. The result was the burning of churches and, once the war started, the shooting of priests.

Anarchists and Communists found themselves in deadly opposition, sometimes including armed conflict, over the question of authority. Anarchist revolutionary experiments were suppressed by the Communists, using methods linked to those adopted by Stalin in his purges. The Gulag effectively developed an enclave in Republican

Spain.

Nominal Republican government authority was largely shared between Left Republicans –a group analogous to the French “Jacobins” of 1789 – and Socialists. On the outbreak of war they were faced with a revolutionary spontaneous uprising on their own side whose excesses they were unable to restrain. Eventual re-imposition of control was only possible with the aid of the Communists, at a political price dictated by the Soviet Union.

## **Reconciliation**

It might be hoped that pilgrims could take a position on national reconciliation in general, and the Heights of Oca in particular. Such a difficult matter can best be approached from three directions, which can be called Right, Left and the Church.

### **THE PATH FROM THE RIGHT?**

A line can be traced from the actions of Franco at the end of the war, through his later policies, and finishing with a “revisionism” in two varieties of “hard” and “soft” which are still current in some political circles.

In the last months of the war, when the Republic had obviously lost, Prime Minister Juan Negrín replaced a previous thirteen-point set of negotiating terms with a single one: that after the end of hostilities there should be “No Reprisals”. Franco responded with a “Law of Political Responsibility”. This effectively said that any person who had supported the Republic had committed a punishable offence.

Various changes occupied Franco’s later rule until his death in 1975, starting with a realisation that the Axis were losing the Second World War and continuing with the technocrats recruited from Opus Dei. This did not alter the message put over by Franco’s gigantic monument to the war, the “Valley of the Fallen” to the West of Madrid. It has been described as a memorial by Franco in his own image and likeness. In theory it is now a monument to all the fallen, being also the resting place for a number of republican dead. While it contains the tombs of Franco and José Antonio, the founder of the Falange, there is no reasonable prospect of it producing reconciliation. It is more likely to hinder it by providing a virtually indestructible statement in stone of the one-time ideology of “National Catholicism”.

It is obvious that those who supported Franco cannot be entirely without political descendants. “Revisionist” writers have a certain

following. “Hard” revisionism takes the form of a conspiracy theory, according to which there was a Communist plan to make Spain part of the Soviet world. Franco, having sensed this plan, had no choice but to act. “Soft” revisionism suggests that violent revolutionary tendencies in Spain would only disappear if they were suppressed by force for a time. The once-powerful CNT, it is alleged, ceased to be a force in the 1950s for this reason. Tourism then completed the softening process Franco had begun.

### **A PATH FROM THE LEFT?**

Reconciliation was publicly suggested by the clandestine Spanish Communist Party (PCE) in 1955. Despite the illegality of any other labour organisation than the Falangist “vertical syndicates”, centres of resistance led by the left were in existence by the late 1960s and were treated as negotiating parties by employers.

Following Franco’s death a gradual shift took place, with a transitional period under the formerly Francoist Prime Minister, Adolfo Suárez. A referendum held in 1978 endorsed a new constitution which eventually made it possible for Right and Left to alternate in power. According to some, the constitution itself was the act of national reconciliation.

It is sometimes said that an unspoken “Pact of Forgetfulness” enabled this to happen. Whether there was lasting forgetfulness may be doubted. It is more plausible to say that former Franco ministers were tactically necessary for short term continuity of government. Having seen that keeping their former powers was impossible, they committed collective political suicide.

The major difficulty in accepting this change as a complete reconciliation is the one-sided view it leaves behind. It is as if the Republican side won the war after all. Monuments to the opponents, of which many survive in towns and villages, are described as “Fascist” in documents at the Salamanca Centre for Documentation. This description may be true but it is not the whole truth.

### **DID THE CHURCH SET A PATH?**

The Church in Spain was probably the most significant agent of change during the Franco years. This included appeals for reconciliation during the war itself. While the Franco military leaders were prohibited from stepping out of line, the Bishop of Pamplona issued an appeal:

We cannot be like our brothers of the other side, these blind brothers, poisoned with hatred, who know nothing of forgiveness.

For some time there was a fusion of nationalism, Catholicism and the so-called “Crusade”, which went by the name of “National Catholicism” and worked closely with the regime. Spanish clerics who arrived at the Vatican II conference of 1962-5 adhered to the historically traditional view that Spanish Catholicism was the true embodiment of the faith. They left with the thought that humanitarian values were what mattered.

By 1971 this led to the resolution of the Episcopal conference, which did not quite reach the required two-thirds majority, but was still seen by Franco as a stab in the back:

*If we say that we have not sinned, we make ourselves liars to God and his word is not in us (1 John 1,10). Therefore we humbly recognise and ask for pardon because we have not known how to be true ministers of reconciliation in the body of our people, divided by a war between brothers.*

Social changes which were already taking place under Franco continued and gathered pace after the war. The Church seems to have begun the move towards change before there were matching changes among the people as a whole.

The initiative taken single-handedly over the camino by Don Elías Valiña Sampedro has already been described in earlier issues of the *Bulletin*. When asked by Civil Guards why he was painting yellow arrows, his reply was “preparing a great invasion”.

## **Pilgrims and the monument**

The camino has so many lessons for pilgrims that it seems right to include this monument as well.

Guide books mention it briefly but there are pilgrims who follow the arrows without a guide book. The Spanish inscription is in a position where it may not be noticed, and needs translation for many.

Supposing permission could be obtained, a plaque could be displayed on the approach from the East. This could say in Spanish, English, French and German that the monument commemorates persons killed by their political opponents during the Civil War, whose bodies were abandoned in the surrounding area.

Such a thing would require the consent of those caring for the monument. This might be difficult to obtain, especially if their lost

relatives had belonged to a movement driven by anti-clericalism.

Reconciliation is a matter for Spaniards rather than those visiting from other countries. Truly even-handed memorials may have to wait for many years. There is a precedent in the memorial to the last major battle between England and Scotland, at Flodden Field. It was not erected until 397 years after the battle. The inscription says:

*To the brave who died on both sides*

### **Select Bibliography**

The Spanish Civil War has generated more writing than the Civil Wars of Russia or China. In English, the best known works are those of Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*. Auden's poem *Spain* was suppressed by the poet and is accessible through the Penguin *Poetry of the Thirties*.

Histories of the war have been written by Professors Hugh Thomas and Paul Preston. *The Spanish Labyrinth* by Gerald Brenan explains the politics of the Republic. Smuggled translations were influential during the Franco years.

Basic sources in Spanish are *La Guerra Civil Española*, edited by Edward Malefakis, and *Historia de España*, Vols. 12 and 13, published by Espasa; sections written by Javier Tusell. A running account is given in *Una historia de la Guerra Civil que no va a gustar a nadie* by Juan Eslava Galán. The publicist Pío Moa is a leading "revisionist" whose *Los mitos de la Guerra Civil* is a best-seller.

Two books entitled *El Valle de los Caídos* have been written by José María Calleja and Fernando Olmeda.

Pilgrims passing through the province of Burgos this year will have access to the local newspaper, of which the weekend edition features an item *75 years ago*. Monday 18th July 2011 will be that anniversary of the Franco rising in Spain. The newspaper item will be very compelling, then and later, both for what it may say and what it may not say.



# Reminiscing an encounter

Alan Jordan

“*Hola.*”

“How far is it to León?”

“Six days my friend.”

“How far? How many kilometres?”

“Where did you start your camino my friend?”

“Burgos.”

“A good place. You are six, maybe five days away from León my friend.”

“But why are you sitting here in the heat?”

“The *meseta* is a beautiful place don’t you think? Savagely beautiful... Yes. Savagely beautiful. I will write that in my journal.

Are you writing a journal?! My friend Alessandra is keeping a good journal, she writes it every afternoon, she calls it her homework.

Savagely beautiful and yet... did you stay in Hornillos? I hope you got a bed in the refuge by the church, the overflow in the sports hall round the corner looked very basic. I guess it depends how tired you are...

I was very tired when I got to Roncevalles in the snow, yes, snow in May. The monastery is very beautiful and the Mass touched my heart and my soul... *el Camino* talks to my soul every day...

So, you started in Burgos. This is the end of day fourteen for me, I’ve come from Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, maybe another twenty days walking to Santiago and another three after that to the ocean.

Burgos... aah... did you stay in the new *albergue Municipal* near the cathedral? What a place, and only €5, what a place. I even got all my clothes washed and dried! But too many people for me... too many

people... how did you find Hontanas?

Hontanas. Now, there is my kind of place. How many people there? Fifty? Maybe seventy in total in the whole village. Peace. On the *meseta*, with the hot wind from the east and the big sky, savagely beautiful, yes, savagely beautiful.”

“Yes amigo, but why are you sitting here in the heat?”

“I am waiting, I have time, lots of time, *el Camino* has taught me that. It is good to wait... I have spent my life rushing... it is good to wait... sitting by this old Cross is a good place to be on a hot day on the *meseta*. Did you see the buzzards circling high over the Río Hornazuela? They say that the Convento de Santa Clara, over there across the fields, sells the most wonderful biscuits. I am waiting. My friend is coming, I have time to wait. When she comes we will go for a *cerveza* together, in the shade”.

“*Buen camino* my friend.”

# A very long walk in Spain by way of a book review

Pat Holland

Stuck to the wall in front of me at work is a poster showing the camino, the long distance walk which has taken such a grip of my heart. From time to time, I look up and dream I am back there, shuffling along some dusty track in the sun. I know there are many others like me, pining for the camino. What is it about this long-distance walk, along the route of a medieval pilgrimage, which has such an effect on those who walk it?

If you go to YouTube and put in 'Camino de Santiago' as your search term you will get hundreds of videos, many of them lovingly crafted amateur productions, of backpackers smiling through blister pain in the sun. Happy groups sit around restaurant tables and many shows end with deeply symbolic seated portraits on the rocks at Finisterre. Again and again the videos tell of 'my' camino, a journey that obviously has deep meaning for those pictured. There are so many videos that the barrage of relevance and sincerity is almost overwhelming.

In the printed media, there is an equal surfeit of literature. We have the academic studies of the art and architecture, the pilgrimage itself and dozens of personal accounts in different languages. The more popular accounts, while set on the camino, have fantastic elements which most pilgrims never encounter and regard with scepticism at least.

Julie Kirkpatrick's book, however, has a minimum of fantasy and a maximum of honesty. A lawyer, she decided to walk the camino with her daughter in the summer of 2009. This was not a carefully thought-out plan; rather it was a spur of the moment decision, perhaps a flight from too much responsibility and work. She had little idea of what was ahead of her but within her was a voice telling her to '*get rid of stuff*' as definitely as she wanted to get rid of heavy possessions on the first few days of walking. She had not prepared at all. '*I booked my plane ticket and flew from Canada less than three weeks later, never having carried a pack before in my life*'.

By accident, because of her fear of having nothing to do and

perhaps a fear of the void she would have to fill with her own thoughts, she decided to ask twenty-six friends to give her a task to do, one for each day of the walk. This device gave Julie Kirkpatrick a very powerful tool. She set up for herself a caring but probing framework of self-enquiry. It gave her an opportunity to examine herself as surely, but less formally, than business's 360 degree analysis or a life coach's powerful questions. The tasks ranged from the apparently simple *'observe windows'* to the fundamental *'pray'*.

The twenty six tasks proved to be very powerful ones. She did not expect to be given *'tasks with heart and soul in mind'*. She started off thinking that she was going to *'start walking, get into shape, and do my little tasks to keep my mind occupied. That was pretty much it. A very lawyerly approach....'* But by the end of the walk these tasks and her striving to be more than a lawyer forced her to *'move beyond all of those things that I think I am: small, unhealthy, a wife, a mother, a lawyer, and a daughter. She became 'more whole and full and alive than I remembered being possible'.*

The tasks, studied in the time, pain and joy of a very long walk allowed her to plumb the very depths of her life, to affirm her deepest fears and her bargain with whatever big thing was out there – Universe, God, Whatever. She writes of her secret deal with the Universe not to lose her mind like King Lear in the storm. Blindness and other ailments would be preferable. Her conclusion, after 600 kilometres, is a fundamental one, her deal is no deal. Life is what it is. One foot in front of the other. A pilgrim, walking, realises that her only future is to keep walking on the road, the camino of life, until it ends, whenever and however.

I think in essence Julie Kirkpatrick used the camino to redefine herself, to recast herself, to mesh her old values and new ways to find a new direction. It was far from easy. She was *'forced to think and think and mourn and pound [-] anger into the hard, cracked clay earth with [-] walking poles up endless, despised mountains'*. She went with her teenage daughter and she *'fought with, abandoned and made up ...many, many times'*. This redefinition had started some months before when she had let go all her staff and *'began working to slow it all down'*.

So why do people do the camino, walk for several weeks, suffer such blisters and hardship? There are many reasons and as many types of pilgrims. The traditional Catholic pilgrim is still very much present, and they are joined by both other Christians and those of other faiths,

by declared agnostics and the uncertain seeker of spiritual benefit. Those in middle age may be turning from a driven achievement of task to contemplation of a bigger picture. The lengthening light of spring brings out the nomadic instinct to throw off the sedentary shackles and walk off. The seeker of simple fun is present, sneaking tipsily into hostels during festival times, long after 'lights out', waking up to find a forgotten helium-filled balloon hovering, angel-like over their bunk.

Companionship and even a search for sex are also to be found along the Way with certain pilgrims acquiring definite reputations through the camino radio, that informal meal time gossip channel linking all the pilgrims. Lovers of art and archaeology will find much to enthrall them in the stunning medieval and Baroque art of cathedrals such as Burgos or in outwardly simple village churches. All along the Way are the symbols of hundreds of years of belief, their meaning kept alive by those walking and seeing them. While the pilgrim meals are simple but cheap, the wines are satisfying and the company at meals is ever-changing and endlessly fascinating.

The old-fashioned supplicatory promise, to walk the camino if a request is granted, and the seeker of religious or spiritual truth are joined by many looking not for answers but to formulate the question that is hiding behind the frantic day to day activity. Others walk to mourn a loss, be it death, separation or to mark a change such as retirement. In some ways the camino has become a wind-down space, where those who are frazzled by the constant stimulation of modern life and communications slow down and find their true values. There is even an undercurrent of struggle over the meaning of the camino between the Church and those pilgrims defining their own pilgrimage, rituals and meanings.

Many of the pilgrims are not so sure why it is they are doing their camino. I recently saw an interview of a young German pilgrim in the square outside the Santiago Cathedral. He was asked why he had walked the camino and he replied, 'I don't know' – and then the editor cut. As we know, if you stay silent after a response of 'I don't know', then the various reasons will start to emerge, combined and sometimes confused, like several coiled ropes, distinct in themselves but unclear when tangled together. As pilgrims walk on their journey, they often move along a personal trajectory – their camino of the mind. It is the unexpected benefits that are most striking. For my part, I looked forward to the art and archaeology, and expected the hardship of walking along the flat trackways. What was unexpected was the



spirituality of having so much time to oneself to think as we trudged along. The camaraderie of pilgrims was also a surprise. Whatever one's views of the authenticity of the relics in the cathedral, it is impossible not to be affected by the realisation that thousands have done this walk before you, on this path, and thousands will do it after you.

The camino is a phenomenon in which those who take part in it become part of it. On an early day we walked across the beautiful medieval bridge in Puente la Reina and heard a schoolteacher ask his class of young children to step aside to make way for the pilgrims. At that moment I realised, whatever my religious views, I was now a pilgrim. Each walker on the camino, however willing or unwilling, becomes a pilgrim, a *peregrino*. Julie Kirkpatrick wrote *'This is the fourth day. I have walked through the mountains, "become" a pilgrim, drunk more water in a day than I normally do in a month, fought with, lost, and made up with my daughter more than once, and have felt triumphant, more or less, at the end of each day simply for having arrived at a place of rest'*.

It is the unexpected moments and encounters that make the camino a truly European, world and human experience. All nations are there, all types of people, all reasons to walk. Retired American military men striding across the hot plains. Penniless Czech pensioners, relying on alms to survive. South Korean young women and men. German fathers and grandfathers with their families. Irish groups singing their way, having the *craic*. Pensioners of all nations walking, playing cards at night in the *albergues* and enjoying their retirement. Hundreds of Spanish people doing the last 100 kilometres to gain the *compostela*, the certificate which has become so much a part of the young Spaniard's CV. Walkers, talkers, holidaymakers, foodies, dieters, seekers after knowledge, sick, healthy, important, self-important, troubling, troubled, hopeless and the ever-hopeful – all of human life can be found, drawn along the Way by the magnet of Santiago.

The rich variety of people encountered is another unexpected blessing. Jinny from South Korea whose keen eye for photographs and advice to walk with an Open Heart, Open Mind are part of our scrapbook. Mike from Western Canada who shared a hilarious day with me as we strode across a very hot *meseta*. The stretch we did was supposedly the most arduous but we romped across it, laughing as we went, striding into the next deserted village as if we were cowboys entering a Western film set, bushes blowing in the breeze. The two Dutch women, pint drinkers and pipe smokers, who complained that

a surly *albergue* owner (a rare event) had been unfriendly to them *'even before we insulted him!'* The South African lady, who had never left home before and who was afraid to send photographs home by phone because an insect bite had given her a swollen eye which would scare her grown-up children. The young people we had such serious conversations with. So many varied and rich people, rich in experience, in wisdom and in camaraderie. For all of them the camino is now a valued part of their life story.

Coming home from the camino can be a real problem. At the end of our first two-week trip we began our homeward journey with a bus from Los Arcos. Because the new main road parallels the older camino, we sat there stunned as our last three days walking unfolded in front of us, in reverse, as we drove back to Pamplona. In an hour-and-half we saw the places where we had struggled, the shady spots where we had stopped and most upsetting we saw dear friends marching on as we went backwards. It took me several days, and a sharp wake-up call from a colleague, to become reconciled to being back at home and work.

This phenomenon of regret at finishing the camino, expressed in the trite but accurate cliché that the journey is the destination, can be explained in the context of the split between values/spirituality and material success. Whitmore, in his book *Coaching for Performance* (1992, p122) notes that in a perfect world we would match the growth of material success with a growth in our values and spiritual matters. We can have a growing unease and a strange and not fully understood draw to the idea of the camino and the chance to *'get away from it all for a while'*. This can result in pilgrims setting off uncertain and afraid, from St Jean. The space and time of walking, an activity which seems to lend itself to thinking, can bring pilgrims to an acute self-realisation of how little they value what they are doing now in life. This can be a cathartic moment.

Julie Kirkpatrick had her cathartic moments. She says it at the end of the first letter. *"And in the end, when you have read all the letters, I think you will see that I have discovered something very simple. I love myself for being the pure spirit of light that I am, and I love my life for being the pure light that it is. And I really mean it. I said it out loud. That's my new deal with the Universe, I will simply live."*

How then can we prepare for the camino? Julie Kirkpatrick prepared by asking her friends to give her tasks. As a coach I would have to say that some facilitated focused conversation might clarify

what is drawing someone to spend several weeks walking across Spain, sleeping in unisex hostel dormitories with rooms full of noisy strangers, eating basic foods and inevitably suffering at some stage. I put this suggestion out in a camino discussion forum ([www.caminodesantiago.me](http://www.caminodesantiago.me)). I received a fairly definite answer: No! You cannot prepare for the camino, I was told. You don't do the camino, it does you. So how can you prepare for what you don't know you need? As a young German girl told Julie *'Before you know the need, you need to have the experience'*. However much I value the powerful simplicity of coaching in clarifying what is within us, my heart tells me that the pilgrims may be right.

We can prepare for the walk by training, by carefully selecting our gear and learning some basic Spanish. But you cannot prepare for the effect of the camino on your heart and mind. It may be fundamental, it may simply be a very enjoyable walk. It is impossible to know in advance.

The magic of the camino lies in the unexpected. The helping hand of a stranger, the kindness of the Spanish people, the stunning calming silence of a small country church, the unsaid understanding between strangers talking of fundamental things along the road, the realisation that the stones beneath your feet are Roman paving stones, polished by countless pilgrim steps. The benefits are not just those derived from the break from the twittering modern world, or the exercise highs of constant walking or the simple ordered reflective days but from the opportunity to allow the mental elephants in the corner of our minds to come forth, to trumpet the message that we have been ignoring for months. People come home changed, not only by the camino, but by having the space and time to walk out their dilemmas, if they have any – or just having enjoyed being and living in the richness of the moment.

So while I might accept that a coaching session before the camino could clarify things that might need to be 'walked-out', and one after to clarify what actions will be undertaken, for me the main value of the camino is in itself, a long linear safe space in which pilgrims can rely on each other for a sympathetic ear. The services, accommodation, food, drink, places of silence have been there for pilgrims for hundreds of years. For some people and circumstances the camino can be a journey of exploration and letting go, a therapeutic space as outlined in the writings of Carl Rogers. Julie records that *'the pace is so different here, and I feel all of my clients and all of the needs of my home world*

*falling off me’.*

For Julie there was no preparation and yet a huge realisation and resolution. *‘Perhaps all of the research and all of the preparation that people do before a big trip is really of no assistance on the Camino. Perhaps the essence of pilgrimage is not in the preparation, but in the very simple act of putting one foot in front of the other, step after step, day after day, week after week, regardless of the starting intention. It is also a matter of consciously going in the same direction as other people, past and present, on the same path. Messy, snoring people who keep me up at night. Beautiful strong people who pass me with their sure footed saunter. All of the people on the Camino are all walking, and all going the same way. It’s the same as life itself really – forward in life onto death, or as my dad says often and so very wisely: “You just have to put one foot in front of the other until you fall off the cliff”.’* By the end of her camino, Julie had decided what to do in the coming years.

If we cannot know how long our lives will be, we can ensure that we make them richly broad ones. We can watch soap operas with their endless artificial drama-triangles or we can experience a richer life ourselves. Walking the Camino de Santiago is a very rich experience, one never to be forgotten and possibly life changing. Julie’s book will give you a good sense of the self-examination you may go through and the intense time you will have on it.

*The Camino Letters: 26 Tasks on the Way to Finisterre* Julie Kirkpatrick, 2010 Pyxis Press, Post office Box 382, Millbrook, Ontario, Canada, L0A 1G0, ISBN 978-0-9865134-0-4.

# Corbigny: a pilgrim snapshot

October 2010

Patricia Quaife

Where, in the space of a fortnight in rural Burgundy, could one meet French, Lebanese, Slovenian, German and Swiss people, all with a common objective? The answer for us, in October 2010, was in the small town of Corbigny, some 30 kilometres south of Vézelay, where we were looking after the pilgrim refuge, housed in the wing of a private school, the Collège St Léonard. Our twelve pilgrims were all en route for either Nevers or St Amand, further south on the Voie de Vézelay, or for Santiago itself in the case of the Slovenian art historian from Ljubljana, who had hitchhiked across Europe to reach Vézelay.

We knew from William Griffiths, who had acted as *hospitalier* at Corbigny on several occasions, roughly what to expect and were not disappointed. The six-bed refuge shares the ground floor of the north wing of the school building with several Soeurs de la Sainte Famille (de Besançon), with their chapel squeezed between the *hospitaliers'* office and the pilgrim dormitory. Our internal kitchen/dining-room had clear glass walls (to improve the light) and we encountered the sisters, particularly the doyenne of the group Soeur Marie-Mathilde, several times a day as they went down the corridor to Lauds, evening prayer, or less often a Friday Mass. We had to ask pilgrims to be quiet at these times so their devotions were not disturbed, and to remember to be silent ourselves. It was Soeur Marie-Mathilde who kindly lent us a leaflet about the local saints, St Seine\*, patron of the parish church, and St Léonard\*\*, who gave his name to the school, as well as a copy of the town history, *Corbigny Hier et Aujourd'hui*. We had plenty of time for reading, often sitting outside in the sun in the tree-lined college grounds in the early afternoon, waiting for pilgrims to arrive.

Our two weeks ran from 1 to 15 October, the final stage of the pilgrim year. Early on our first day we made our way up the hill to the College where our Canadian predecessors (from Vancouver Island) gave us a thorough induction course on our duties for the next 14 days: welcoming, dealing with accounts, cleaning, providing information, preparing pilgrim breakfasts, shopping for water, milk and bread



amongst other things and generally being on duty from four in the afternoon until ten the next morning.

Nobody came for two days, which was disappointing, but a phone call announced the arrival of two Frenchmen, father and son on the Sunday afternoon. So we felt we could at last be useful, especially when the 60-something father arrived in a state of near collapse and needed to be revived with a hot drink. A couple of days later we knew to expect three young Lebanese men, one of whom we watched arrive in a car – which of course is not part of the pilgrim experience. But he explained that he had hurt his knee and had already walked over 20km from Vézelay; his friend arrived, on foot an hour or so later, while the third young man came late in the evening from the Paris train. The Lebanese had attended a Mass, with a blessing of pilgrims, the previous day at Vézelay and mentioned to us a young woman pilgrim they had seen there. She duly arrived the next afternoon, having spent the night before in a tent at Bazoches, a mid-way point between Vézelay and Corbigny. Martina was an art historian who had lost her job at home in Ljubljana and was so taken with Romanesque art and architecture that she decided to spend the autumn and early winter walking to Santiago, where she hoped to arrive by Christmas. We shared supper with her that night and were sorry to say goodbye to her the next morning.

For several days no more pilgrims came, but then a phone call, in faltering French, gave us notice of the arrival of two Germans, another father and son, Tobias and Rafael. Tobias spoke only German but 16-year-old Rafael managed both French and English so we had no communication problems. That evening, they found Corbigny's cheaper restaurants closed and returned looking disconsolate; we managed to make them some soup and an omelette which, added to their own provisions, made a reasonable supper and they cheered up considerably.

Two further quiet days followed and we were now well into our second week. On our penultimate day we were delighted when four very jolly, multi-lingual Swiss women arrived to stay. They had previously walked together from St Jean-Pied-de-Port to Santiago and were now exploring the French routes. They were teachers or retired teachers in their fifties or sixties, all very fit and enjoying themselves immensely. We enjoyed their company too and farewell photographs were taken the next morning.

As well as pilgrims we also received other visitors to the refuge.

The first, hardly a visitor, was Monsieur Gérard Vinot of the Voie de Vézelay association who was in overall charge of the refuge and to whom we could turn in the event of any problems. There weren't any but we were pleased to know whom we should contact if necessary. One morning a tall Belgian man knocked on the front door to ask if he could see round the refuge. He was a little vague about his reasons for coming and we hoped he wasn't thinking of trying to organise cheap holidays for non-pilgrims. A particularly welcome visitor was Monsieur Thionnet from the next village on the route, St-Révérien, where he looked after the small, two-bedded municipal refuge. We were to meet him again later in St Révérien on one of our local excursions.

Pilgrims and visitors apart, we were free between 10 and 4 each day to explore the town and surrounding area. Not having a car we were limited in how far we could go, but made good use of some local walks leaflets to which the Canadians had drawn our attention, and the invaluable Carte Bleue map belonging to the refuge.

As we didn't know this northern branch of the Voie de Vézelay one of our first walks took us on the *chemin* in reverse, i.e. heading north out of Corbigny. Once past the cemetery and in the woods we found the Fontaine Ste Agathe, a small, somewhat forlorn holy well which looked rather unloved. Further on at a road junction stood the tiny, 12<sup>th</sup>-century Chapelle de Sarre, wedged between two houses, and holding, it is said, the bones of St Léonard himself. I asked a lady tending her front garden if it was possible to borrow the key to the chapel and was told firmly, *Non* and that the chapel was open only twice a year, for a Mass in late July (St James's Day?) and in mid-September for France's *portes ouvertes* heritage weekend. However, one could – and did – peer through the front window to make out a small squareish space with stone altar. Still on the *chemin* but now on the road north we came to the Tuilerie, a traditional, family-run tile-making works, housed in a fine wide-roofed building stacked high with all types of tiles which were baked in a furnace on the spot. A notice offered tours of the Tuilerie but with no one around we wandered in and out, pleased to see what pilgrims would see as they headed for Corbigny and the refuge.

The nearest village to Corbigny is Chitry-les-Mines, which we walked to another day along an ancient trackway marked *ancienne voie Romaine* on our Carte Bleue. Chitry's claim to fame is to have been the home at different times of the prolific author Jules Renard

(1864-1910). His monument looms large in the churchyard and we also passed the two houses he lived in, the substantial La Gloriette up on the hill and a more modest home on the outskirts of the village. Just beyond Chitry lies the glorious Canal du Nivernais, the towpath of which we enjoyed both on foot and, one day, by bicycle. Hiring bikes was quite an adventure, particularly for Francis, who had not ridden one for thirty years or more. After an initial wobble or two, however, he pedalled away, fortunately on a quiet road, and we made for the picturesque, moated Chateau de Lantilly, about five kilometres from Corbigny. Another bike ride, albeit with much uphill walking, took us to the village of Cervon, notable both for the Romanesque tympanum on its church and its handy Hotel de la Poste. The former provided photo opportunities and the latter a filling 11 Euro set lunch.

We had thought of hiring the bikes for a third day and cycling the 20km to St Révérien (and 20km back ...), the next place on the Voie de Vézelay with a pilgrim refuge. But the bikes, though useful, were heavy and not too comfortable and we didn't like the look of some of the large lorries on the main roads. Instead, we splashed out on a 30-euro taxi ride to St Révérien where Monsieur Thionnet met us outside the *Mairie* and generally looked after us for the morning. St Révérien's little-known gem is its glorious Romanesque church, lofty and elegant inside with a pilgrim ambulatory and clusters of pillars in the nave surmounted by elaborate historiated capitals. Sixteenth-century wall-paintings and some 14<sup>th</sup>-century incised slabs also gave us plenty to look at and photograph. After visiting both the church and the tiny two-person refuge in the *Mairie*, we repaired to Monsieur Thionnet's handsome stone-built house for coffee and biscuits and to meet his elderly mother. He then kindly took us two-thirds of the way back to Corbigny, dropping us at the village of Pazy from where we able to walk 'home' easily, picnicking on the way.

Our last excursion the next day was equally rewarding and entirely different. By now the autumn sunshine of earlier days had given way to a chilly mist that hovered around all morning. After waving goodbye to our four Swiss pilgrims, we set off through the woods, cold and damp, making for the attractive-sounding village of Marigny-sur-Yonne. The countryside west of Corbigny is dominated by both the Canal du Nivernais and the river Yonne, and on the outskirts of Marigny we crossed them one after the other over successive bridges. Marigny turned out to be large, spreading circular village, with a huge neo-Gothic church perched high up on a hill. At canal level we

found, to our great surprise, that the former lock-keeper's cottage now housed a small restaurant, the Ecluse de la Môme, which, even more surprisingly, was actually open on this cold and gloomy morning. In we went, only to receive a welcome as chilly as the temperature outside. Maybe we looked a bit like tramps – I was carrying a rucksack and a stick found in the woods – but the young woman in charge reluctantly agreed to serve us coffee, looking pointedly at the clock as she did so (it was only 11.40 - not really lunch-time yet, even in rural France). Desultory conversation revealed that she didn't know if the church would be open or not and that, yes, we could return for lunch. A steep, circular walk duly took us up the appropriately named rue du Calvaire to the church (which was not open) and back down to the Ecluse de la Môme half an hour later.

As we ordered *kirs* to warm us up the young woman unstiffened slightly, and then more markedly as we asked her about Edith Piaf (la Môme) photos of whom adorned the walls. I then discovered, lying on the window-sill, a folder of information about Piaf and her long-term friend, confidant and mentor, Jacques Bourgeat. One side of the sheet of paper described the gift to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France of 120 letters, written over the years, by Piaf to Jacques Bourgeat, while the other consisted of a moving poem by Bourgeat himself, *Les Vieux Bateaux*. Further conversation revealed, to our astonishment, that the young woman was the great grand-daughter of Jacques Bourgeat, which was why her canal-side restaurant was dedicated to Edith Piaf. By now, aware of our interest, she had become very friendly and went upstairs to her office to do a photocopy for us of the Piaf/Bourgeat information sheet. In between times we had had an excellent and filling lunch (our sandwiches languishing in the rucksack) and as the coup de grâce, the young woman signed our sheet as follows: *Très heureuse de vous avoir reçus le temps d'un repas dans mon établissement l'Ecluse de la Môme - l'arrière-petite fille de Jacques Bourgeat, Isabelle.*

With renewed energy, we walked back to Corbigny, half hoping there would be no pilgrims, to do the last housekeeping chores, including a final visit to the recycling bins. Ahead lay our return journey to Paris and Exeter which, because of the strikes in France, was giving us cause for concern.

Thanks to Madame Vinot, who phoned back in response to the worried message I had left, we discovered that although there was no transport from Corbigny northwards on Friday, there would be just one bus from Clamecy at 4pm to Laroche-Migennes, a station

way beyond Auxerre, and that there would be just one train thence, going to Paris/Bercy soon after six. Madame spoke incredibly fast but I managed to jot the times down and she also assured us that her husband would take us to Clamecy station during the day (he was coming to the refuge in any case to close it up for the winter).

Miraculously all this came to pass and the next morning, from our Paris hotel, a taxi whisked us to Charles de Gaulle airport where a very small plane was waiting to fly us back to Exeter.

We would thoroughly recommend a tour of *hospitalier* duty at Corbigny, with or without car – and if any *Bulletin* reader would like a copy of the Piaf/Bourgeat information sheet please send an s.a.e to us at 1 North Street, Topsham, Exeter, Devon EX3 0AP.

\* St Seine (Sequanus), holy monk and later abbot, was born in Mesmont, Burgundy, circa 580. After a solitary life of prayer he became a priest and founded the monastery of Segestre which from the 9<sup>th</sup> century, was known as St Seine. The abbey gave its name to the town of Saint-Seine-l'Abbaye in the Côte d'Or department. In 1134 St Seine became the patron saint of one of Corbigny's two and later three parishes; in 1924 Corbigny was reduced to one parish only, that of St Seine.

\*\* The St Léonard of Corbigny is generally known as St Léonard de Vandoeuvre; he is different from St Léonard-de-Noblat, patron saint of the town of this name further south on the Voie de Vézelay. In the early 6<sup>th</sup> century, St Léonard built a hermitage in woods in the Sarthe area and attracted many disciples. After his death in 570 numerous miracles occurred and he was much venerated. His relics were translated at some point to Tournus and then brought to Corbigny by the monks of the town in 1882. This made the town a centre of pilgrimage in its own right, linked with Vézelay, only 30km away.

# **Via Gebennensis**

## **Geneva to Le Puy-en-Velay**

Bill Jones

Having walked the Camino Francés in 2002, I tackled in two stages the route from Le Puy to the Pyrenees in 2005 and 2007. During this time I met a number of German and Swiss people heading for Santiago who had walked from near their homes to join the Geneva path. This I later learned was a “designer route” set up in the mid-1990s as a continuation of the GR65 to enable such pilgrims to walk to Le Puy. They spoke so well of this section that I determined to do it.

There did not appear to be much information available and I have never seen any mention of this walk in the *Bulletin*. The Confraternity produces a booklet which is only an introduction, but I learned that it is 350km long and “very strenuous”. Also it passes through innumerable very small hamlets with no place of any size between the start and finish. That part sounded wonderful.

The Confraternity could also provide me with a guide in French and German, which lists accommodation, other services and distances between towns and villages, but only has rudimentary route maps and no directions. However the path is well waymarked and I took 1:100,000 maps. I found that the Swiss and Germans had a more detailed “Yellow Book”, but I found nowhere to buy one en route and did not really need one.

So, in July 2008, accompanied by my son Robert, I made a start from Geneva Cathedral. We only had time to do about half the route this time and found it highly enjoyable. After we left Geneva we were surrounded by mountains, some snow-capped, and the path was mainly through foothills of the Alps, then the Rhone Alps. The terrain was mainly upland pasture and woodland, some arable crops and vineyards, sometimes walking alongside the Rhone.

After five nights, Rob had to leave and I walked the next few days with a German, Vladimir, one of the few fellow pilgrims we had met travelling in the same direction. The only others were an American couple. There had been cyclists and, coming in the opposite direction, a solitary man and two men with a donkey. I then had to leave



Vladimir, having covered about 200km.

In April 2009 I returned on my own. Rob was now a father with commitments and I found myself back again in the same *auberge* in which I had spent my last night the previous year. There were no other residents and, after my previous experience of very few fellow pilgrims and this being April, I was quite prepared for a solitary journey. However, the patron told me four German ladies had been seen the previous day.

Imagine my surprise when, within five minutes of starting walking, I met two Swiss pilgrims and I bumped into the four German ladies the following day. Then there were more and I was even approached by two Jehovah's witnesses! Whilst I mainly walked on my own, this stage was to prove much more sociable than the previous one and for the last few days I had an amenable companion, Erich, another German. The terrain was now changing, with more well managed forestry, and after leaving the vineyards by the Rhone, high pasture, lonely farmsteads and wonderful views. As we neared Le Puy, the volcanic peaks provided dramatic scenery.

I had entered my second stage with some trepidation, having read in the Confraternity booklet not only that the route was very strenuous, but it was "the equivalent of the ascent and descent of O Cebreiro several times a day..." The only day so far which had even approached the ascent of O Cebreiro had been the ascent of Col du Mont-Tournier and I was therefore expecting worse to come. This did not happen and the highest point of 1276m was passed unnoticed. Most of the climbs were quite gradual and once you were up you were up. I think my second stage was easier than the first and the scenery more spectacular.

Le Puy is a lovely city in which to finish and I spent a day looking at the sights and enjoyed the 7am pilgrim Mass in the cathedral, after which I was able to bid a fond farewell to good friends made on the journey. It was rather special to be able to start and finish at cathedrals.

The accommodation varied, as can be expected on a new route and, usually walking on my own, I like *gîtes d'étape*, because of the sociability and exchange of information (they are also cheap). In 2008 we found only two, one in the middle of a large caravan and camping site and the other at the end of the only really hard day over the Col du Mont Tournier. This was kept by a great character, Louis, who came looking for us in his car and gave us a good meal with plenty of wine

and provided a short service of thanksgiving for a safe journey in his “chapel” beneath the building. He drove the school bus and had started converting the building in the 1960s. It was far from finished and we kept a light on all night in case we got electrocuted by bare wiring.

Otherwise I had my first taste of private *chambres et tables d’hôtes*, which I had avoided on previous trips because I did not think my French was up to spending a whole evening with a local family. I need not have worried. On our second night on the trail, Rob and I had a lovely evening with a family and we were very happy to be able to watch the finals of the European Football Cup with the husband and his children, all cheering for the same team. On another occasion, after Rob left, I was a little surprised to be greeted by an American and his Chinese wife, who had gone out and bought a pizza for dinner. Not quite traditional French cuisine, but they were very welcoming. Other accommodation included a caravan and small hotels, all easily booked and perfectly adequate.

In 2009, the whole character of the route changed. Not only did the scenery alter and the number of walkers increase, but there were many more *gîtes d’étape*. Excluding the night before I started walking and the two nights after I finished, I spent only one night in a hotel. The first *gîte* was a bit run down and in a basement, but after that they were all in first class condition, either modern or recently renovated, probably municipally owned. Two situated in remote villages were booked through the local *auberge*, which provided a communal meal and *petit déjeuner*, all very enjoyable. I think they were ski *gîtes* in the winter. Otherwise there were restaurants nearby and good cooking facilities if you wanted them.

The few fellow walkers were all friendly and helpful, but they were not all pilgrims and in the later stages several were on circular walks, having left their car for a few days or being picked up. There was the usual strangely normal camino experience of people of several nationalities, who were almost complete strangers, sitting and enjoying a meal together like old friends. I also found the locals amiable and trusting. One evening, having settled into the local *gîte d’étape*, I wandered into town for a meal at a restaurant and the waitress took great trouble to find me a table with an amenable companion (a German cyclist) and after the meal, suggested I return for *petit déjeuner* in the morning. She refused to allow me to pay for the meal then, saying I could settle up in the morning. When I suggested that I might walk off in the morning and forget to return for *petit déjeuner*, she retorted that she could easily

catch me up on her bicycle. It certainly makes a change from having to have your card swiped before you can even order anything.

This has been intended as a practical description of the route and I will not deal at any length with reflections, but any walk of this nature must provide lasting memories, mainly the camaraderie and friendship which I have mentioned above and it was, of course, a great pleasure to be able to introduce my son to the camino.

As would be expected in a “designer route”, there is not the historical interest of monuments, but there is some pilgrim iconography and some interesting churches, particularly later in the journey. My German companion with his “Yellow Book” as guide pointed out special features to me and in Montfaucon, there were the exceptional twelve *tableaux du Flamand Abel Grimmer (1592)* in the chapel. There was always Le Puy to look forward to and, in its way, this was a spiritual journey.

I have tried to make the point that this is not a difficult walk and no one should in any case undertake something of this nature without experience. I am sure more British pilgrims would be made very welcome. For sheer pleasure in surroundings, this is the best part of the camino I have walked so far.

# Refugio De Peregrinos de Miraz

## “Miraz is Magnificent”

Tony Ward



**A**lthough the pilgrim season is now well under way on the Camino del Norte, Tuesday 7 June proved a milestone in the CSJ's history. It was then that the extension and effectively completely remodelled *refugio* at Miraz was formally opened.

At a Liturgy of the Word, conducted by the Bishop of Lugo D Alfonso Carrasco Rouco, in the Miraz church of Santiago, followed by a service of Blessing at the Refugio, among those present were: D Luciano, vicar general; Don Ramón, parish priest; Lita Fernández Fernández, president of the Spanish Federation of Associations of the Camino; D José Antonio de la Riera, President of Galician Association; the deputy mayor of Friol; Mario Clavell and Rebekah Scott. Many other hospitaleros, working party members and friends including the CSJ group which had travelled on from the Rabanal celebrations a few

days earlier were also present. (Watch out for extended coverage of this trip in *Bulletin* 115.)

It was great to be able to welcome several representatives from the Xacobeo, who had most generously contributed 100,000 euros towards the cost of the new building, including the new head, Dña. Camino Triguero Salas, Dña. Isabel Rivera Rivadas and Rosa Vazquez.

Singing was provided by the impromptu CSJ choristers, Intercession prayers were read by Judith Burrows and Maureen Wakeling and a fine sung rendition of *St Patrick's Breastplate* by our chairman Colin Jones. The happy throng, including many villagers (we invited all of them) walked down to the refuge where the facilities were inspected and much admired. Speeches and presentations were made and a fine buffet, prepared by Maureen and Keith Young, was enjoyed by all present including several pilgrims who had arrived that morning.

Many compliments have already been received from pilgrims as to our upgraded facilities and there can be no better acknowledgement than that from those whom we serve at Miraz in Galicia.

### **Reminder of the Story So far**

It was back in 2004, that a decision was made to seek a further refuge away from the Camino Francés to complement Refugio Gaucelmo at Rabanal near Astorga.

The *Casa Rectoral* at the tiny village of Miraz between Baalmonde and Sobrado (a long day between these two *refugios* of about 45km) was identified. This was a typical 1960s Galician 'bungalow' originally used as a 'priest's house' but more recently as a refuge for pilgrims but on a very ad hoc basis. The CSJ was given a long term licence to adapt the building as a pilgrim refuge by the Bishop of Lugo. In 2005 a considerable amount of work was done on the building so as to bring it nearer to a reasonable standard. New sanitary facilities were installed and plumbing and rewiring renewed and up dated.

It became quickly apparent that the needs and numbers of pilgrims exceeded what we could provide so a decision was made to build an extension. This has now been completed and the Refugio at Miraz is a modern purpose-built *refugio* and it's fair to say that the interior is exactly what would have been specified if a group of experienced *hospitaleros* had sat down and designed it from scratch.

Congratulations and Thank You to everyone who has been involved in bringing this ambitious project to fruition.



# News from Gaucelmo

Julie and Roger Davies

## 2011 Hospitaleros

May	Pat Chambers and Antonio Tejero Sanchez Pat & Martyn Singleton, Jenny Carr
June	Stewart Bliss, Peter Bevan, Dave Arthur Roger & Julie Davies, Inge Puri, Sarah McBain
July	John & Moira Burns, Hilda Staunton, Deidre Kennedy Clem & Ethel Nel, Istvan Igloi-Nagy, Walter Van Kersbergen

Gaucelmo looked particularly pristine and welcoming when the doors were opened to pilgrims on 1 April this year. Because of the cool, changeable and wet weather, the fire in the salon has been much in use and the 421 pilgrims that stayed during April, were very grateful for the dry, warm environment at Gaucelmo.

Pilgrims have over the years remarked that the premises at Gaucelmo have been kept in very good condition and repair. This is because the buildings at Gaucelmo have been in the care of Graham Scholes, Premises Co-ordinator. Graham has been responsible, over several years, for organising essential maintenance and building improvement works when Gaucelmo closes for the winter and opens each spring. We owe Graham and his volunteer teams an enormous 'thank you' for all the work they have done over the years!

One of the tasks carried out during the winter period was the refurbishment of the reception area, which has been re-tiled and a new boot rack installed. The boot rack (see photo) should help to keep the refuge spic and span and minimise the need for extra cleaning particularly in wet, muddy conditions.



Responsibility for organising the future maintenance and improvement of Gaucelmo is now in the capable hands of Brendan Nolan. Brendan knows Gaucelmo extremely well, and has been both a volunteer in the winter working parties and a *hospitalero*. He therefore has a good understanding of the many of the practical demands in managing and running the premises. However, it was a new experience when Brendan found himself for the first time on the



spring Working Party during March earlier this year.

The main role of the spring working party is to set up the refuge for the coming year. Routine tasks include such jobs as turning the water back on (and, hoping at the same time, that no water has been left in the system because that would almost certainly lead to burst pipes – temperatures at Rabanal during the winter are very low). Other routine tasks include warming up the refuge; tidying the outside areas; fitting mattress covers; arranging for Gaucelmo to be fumigated against bed bugs; repositioning the furniture and beds; and generally ensuring that the refuge is completely re-stocked and ready to welcome pilgrims on 1 April.

Members of the CSJ, who are familiar with the building and the way it operates, return at the end of each year to close down the refuge for the winter. The role of the winter working party is to carry out essential maintenance and determine what improvement works are needed for Gaucelmo. The working party also carries out routine maintenance such as, varnishing the doors and hand rails, decorating and cleaning walls in the dormitory areas, gardening, making sure everything in the bathrooms is in working order, etc. Often there are more working party volunteers than vacancies but sometimes there may be a need for a new volunteer or volunteers. Any person who would like to put their name forward can contact Brendan Nolan, Premises Co-ordinator at: [r.premises@csj.org.uk](mailto:r.premises@csj.org.uk)

Pilgrim numbers in Rabanal so far seem to be slightly higher than last year and feelings within the village appear slightly more relaxed and positive. There is, however, still concern that whilst pilgrim numbers are not as low as last year, 2011 may nevertheless prove to be a year of recession and relative unemployment. That will, of course, mean that business generally within Rabanal will be very poor again (many in the village have stated that 2010 was Rabanal's worst trading year that they can ever recall!). Let us hope history will not be repeated.

There has been a complete change in personnel in the adjoining Monastery (there are now four Monks in residence). The monks are familiarising themselves with their new role and are visiting Gaucelmo to speak to the pilgrims and sometimes take tea in the afternoon. The monks continue to ask for four volunteer pilgrim readers for vespers.

Thank you to all the CSJ members who offered their services for the *hospitalero* vacancies which we had at Gaucelmo. We are glad to report we now have a full rota, and even a few volunteers on the reserve list!

# Book Reviews

## **Holy Bones, Holy Dust: How relics shaped the history of medieval Europe**

Charles Freeman, Yale University Press, New Haven and London ISBN 9780300125719  
£25.00

From 23 June to 9 October this year, as mentioned in 'Other Events' in *Bulletin* 113 the British Museum hosts an exhibition entitled 'Treasures of Heaven; Saints, Relics and Devotion in Medieval Europe'. The relevance of this to Confraternity members needs no emphasis, since it was the presence of relics at places like Santiago de Compostela that were the *raison d'être* for pilgrims making arduous journeys to see them. The appearance of Charles Freeman's book is therefore extremely timely and it could be regarded in some ways as 'the book of the exhibition'. It can be said at the outset that this is an extremely readable book, partly as the result of dividing it into 26 relatively short chapters. These are largely thematic but arranged in chronological order: the first four chapters cover the Roman period and in particular the position of Augustine of Hippo who, after earlier scepticism, espoused a belief on the efficacy of relics. Then follow chapters on the Byzantine East (including iconoclasm); the post Roman West; England from Roman Britain to the Norman Conquest; Charlemagne; a dozen chapters on various aspects of the medieval world (including, the post-Charlemagne period, with pages 87-8 on Compostela and St James; medieval Christian pilgrimage to Rome and Compostela; Chapter 19 on 'The wondrous blood of Christ' with an excursus on the communion and transubstantiation (no mention of the miracle connected with O Cebreiro on the Camino Francés); chapter 21 on 14th-century pilgrimage with the pilgrimage to Jerusalem including William Wey and Marjorie Kempe. Chapters 22-24 deal with the Reformation from Wycliff and the Lollards to the birth of 'scientific rationalism' in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the belief in the efficacy of relics and indulgencies withered. The book concludes with a chapter on the Counter-Reformation and a final Chapter 26 giving a summary and conclusions. *Holy Bones, Holy Dust* is not merely a very readable account of the whole phenomenon of relics in the middle ages but it can also, to some extent, act as a reference book. The notes for each chapter commence with the principal secondary sources for

whatever topic is under consideration, and in theory the index can be used to track down relevant literature on particular items, by going to the relevant page and then looking up the note that goes with it. Thus one can look up William Wey in the index, find the relevant text entry (Chapter 21 pp 207-10), look up note 2 (p 284) and find a reference to the 1857 edition of the text of *Wey's Itineraries* and Francis Davey's translation of 2010. From this point of view, perhaps, the index could be a little fuller, for example, there is no entry for the Holy Lance of Antioch although this is mentioned in the text and there is an entry in the bibliography (secondary sources) – the article by Thomas Ashridge in *Reading Medieval Studies*. The only real quibble I have is an emphasis on secondary as opposed to primary sources and the referencing to secondary sources for quotations from medieval authors as opposed to primary ones. Thus there are over 200 secondary sources in the bibliography, but only a dozen specific authors listed with bibliographical details under Primary Sources – including, incidentally, both Marjorie Kempe and William Wey. This listing, it is true, is supplemented by the four collections of material given under Primary Sources – General. A few quotations in the text are unreferenced; of the others where there is a reference to the notes, a handful have the formula 'easily available on line', while most have a reference to a secondary source only. Of course this is inevitable as many – indeed a majority – of the primary sources will be obscure and difficult to track down, but one might have expected to find many more original sources referred to – and given in the bibliography than the few that actually appear. This dependence on secondary sources is occasionally unnecessary, for example the lack of references to the primary sources even when these are listed in the bibliography, as in Abbot Suger of St Denis. This may seem like a pedantic point but sometimes where it has been published, the primary source may be more readily available than the secondary one. This, however, does not detract from the interest and very real merits of the work.

MARK HASSALL

## **Every Pilgrim's Guide to Walking to Santiago de Compostela**

Peter Müller and Angel Fernández SCA, translated by Laurie Dennett, Canterbury Press 2010, 132pp ISBN 978 1 84825 026 0 £12.99

First published in German and then in Spanish, *Every Pilgrim's Guide to Walking to Santiago de Compostela* has now been translated into English by Laurie Dennett, whose Camino credentials include being CSJ Chairman from 1995-2002.

The book ends with a poem by one of its co-authors, the late Angel Fernández de Aranguiz SCA: titled *To Pilgrims*, it speaks of 'encounter...finding happiness...sanctuary at the end of the road...' and, in conclusion affirms 'Go/It is the Lord/Who goes with you.' This is very much the essence of *Every Pilgrim's Guide*.

Presenting itself as a *vademecum* with a difference, the Guide focuses on the pilgrim's inner journey: by offering perspectives into the spiritual dimension of the Camino's history and heritage, it explores the experience of pilgrimage and, ultimately, of life itself.

To help the reader make this parallel journey, the book has an easy-to-follow structure. Each chapter, covering a stage between Saint-Jean /Somport and Finisterre, is divided into three sections. First, the route; second, reflections around a theme; and third, additional background information which generally expands on the theme and also prompts further reflection.

Looking at the three sections more closely, it is perhaps the first - the route - which is the least successful. It is more than a checklist of places and points of interest but falls short of being a useful guide. But if this first section disappoints, the second - Stop and Think About It - and third - Between Past and Present - are much more rewarding. In the second section, themes for reflection ranges from stars, stones, bridges and doors to the desert experience, the cross and the scallop shell. For its part, the third section explores topics such as the chi-ro symbol, cloisters, León's stained glass, Visigothic glass and the Pórtico de la Gloria.

Providing an eclectic mix of information, insight and inspiration, the two sections normally complement each other. In the chapter which visits Santo Domingo de Silos, for example, Stop and Think About It highlights the corner relief in the monastery cloister which depicts Christ on the road to Emmaus. Starting with a beautiful description of this extraordinary sculpture, the text then delves

into its meaning: the transforming power of the Resurrection, the opportunities for encounter with Christ inherent in pilgrimage, and the constant presence of the pilgrim Christ beside us on the Camino and throughout life. The following section, *Between Past and Present*, remains in the cloister: it examines the cloister's role at the heart of monastic life, invites us to adopt its slow, silent rhythms, and interprets the 'homilies in stone' contained in the reliefs and other sculptures.

Much further along the Way, Villafranca del Bierzo with its *Puerta del Perdón* prompts a meditation on doors: symbols of welcome, liberation, engagement and forgiveness. In continuation, *Between Past and Present* focuses on the Romanesque doorway, its structure and significance.

Throughout, the text is accompanied by photos -those in colour are particularly attractive - and by a selection of anecdotes, quotes and poems. The sources for this additional material range from the Rule of St Benedict and Taizé's Brother Roger to Chinese folktale and the Bible. Many of the poems used are by Confraternity members.

The inclusion of anecdote and poetry adds variety to this volume and this is especially welcome at the beginning where the introductory chapters seem a little laboured. Part of the reason why is a tendency to overload sentences with a sequence of phrases or clauses; for instance, 'The Way...takes in everything: what moves us and what tires us, the person who encounters us and the things that happen to us, what we discern and what we put up with, what we aspire to and what we achieve...' And so it continues. Used sparingly this type of sentence construction makes an impact; used excessively, it numbs. But do not be deterred: perseverance pays off - as pilgrims surely know!

In its *vademecum* role, *Every Pilgrim's Guide* is intended for use on the Camino itself. Yet, given its scope and density, it would also be ideal for pilgrimage preparation. Or, indeed, as a wellspring for general prayer and meditation. But however the book is used, Laurie Dennett is to be congratulated for bringing it to an English readership.

(Hopefully, *Every Pilgrim's Guide* will one day need to be reprinted - an opportunity to correct photo caption oddities like 'Roncer valles' and the misleading statement that Las Huelgas lies to the **east** of Burgos)

CATHERINE DELL



## **Tolerance: learning from Medieval Spain**

Richard Brown, Strategic Action West Ltd 2010, 120pp, ISBN 1 874223 874, £5 from CSJ bookshop

In his book *Tolerance: learning from Medieval Spain*, CSJ member Richard Brown examines the multiculturalism of medieval Spain and asks if this model of co-existence and co-operation might have significance for us today.

In the first part of the book, the author offers thoughtful insights into al-Andalus – its personalities, achievements, challenges, contradictions – all through the lens of *convivencia*, the co-existence that then prevailed between Jew, Christian, and Muslim.

Brown introduces his study of al-Andalus by showing that, in fostering a cosmopolitan culture, the caliphs were following traditions established in both Damascus and Baghdad. He then looks at the innovations nurtured by Iberia's multi-cultural society such as Mudejar palaces built by Christian kings, cathedral belltowers incorporating minarets and Christian music resonant with Arab rhythms. But the innovation receiving most attention is the effect of *convivencia* on the spread of knowledge.

In the ninth century, Baghdad was a powerhouse of learning where leading scholars from the arts and sciences gathered to discover, debate and also to translate works from Greek, like Aristotle and Galen, and from other languages. As al-Andalus severed links with Baghdad, its own great cities – Cordoba, Seville, Toledo – developed into centres of intellectual excellence. Brown focuses on Toledo which retained and enhanced its reputation for scholarship during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries under Christian rule.

Toledo attracted scholars from across Europe who were eager to access the texts of ancient Greece through translation from Arabic into Latin. The explosion of knowledge – mathematics, philosophy, medicine, astronomy... that radiated out from medieval Spain and, in particular from Toledo, was a major factor contributing to the Renaissance.

Toledo was a meeting point for Muslim, Christian and Jew; a forum for interaction; a creative cauldron; a place where the three communities could live side by side and, despite their confessional differences, nurture a culture of tolerance and trust: convivencia. But while Toledo flourished, freedom of expression was already under threat further south where fundamentalist Almoravids followed by



the Almohads established increasingly repressive regimes. Two of the era's great names, the Jewish philosopher Maimonides and his Muslim counterpart Averroes, fell foul of the Almohads. Both were born in Cordoba; both died in exile.

Richard Brown devotes several pages to Averroes, with substantial extracts from *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*. These proclaim the relative value of all creeds; promote respect; and advocate reconciliation between philosophy and religion.

The rigid Almohads rejected much of Averroes' thinking - a warning death knell for *convivencia*. Echoing this, the second part of Brown's book begins with a chapter called "The erosion of co-existence" which shows how the fanatical Catholicism of Ferdinand and Isabella, reinforced by the Inquisition, led to the expulsion of Jews and Muslims, destroyed multi-culturalism and stifled the flow of knowledge.

In the book's final chapters, Brown discusses the role of tolerance, trust and openness in the development of individuals, society and the Big Society. Mindful of the current prejudice and suspicion fuelled by terrorism and ignorance, he quotes part of an address by Michael Bloomberg which includes the following words: "We may not always agree with every one of our neighbours...But we also recognise that being a New Yorker is living with your neighbours in mutual respect and tolerance. It was exactly that spirit of openness and acceptance that was attacked on 9/11" Remembering Toledo, Brown goes on to ask if today's universities should have a stronger cross-cultural, global vision (as former CEO of the Council for Industry and Higher Education, he is well qualified to reflect on this).

Although *Tolerance: learning from Medieval Spain* is a slim volume, it is not a quick read: its pages, packed with ideas and information, provide substantial food for thought. Readers might well wish to extend their knowledge of the subject and, to this end, a 'further reading list' would have been helpful. Colour photos enhance the text but sadly, the author has been let down by his editor/proof reader: there are too many spelling mistakes ('cannons' building Cordoba cathedral stays in the mind!) as well as inconsistencies such as Moslem/Muslim.

CATHERINE DELL

# Members' Pages

## From Jane and John Gillbe

We would like to comment on Sheila Kirwan's piece on the Members' pages in *Bulletin* 112 as our experience was very different. We arrived in Santiago in the first week of September having cycled from Le Puy in three weeks. The last 100km was crowded and had more of a holiday atmosphere than a pilgrimage but it would have been possible to block this out even as a walker. As cyclists who get low priority we never had problems finding accommodation so Sheila must have been unlucky. Santiago was a delight as we had gone expecting it to be as Sheila described having ourselves had bad experiences in Mont St Michel, Lourdes and Seville. But our experience of Santiago and the cathedral especially was very different. The cathedral was packed but had a very holy atmosphere. Yes, people were being asked to keep silence but in a very respectful and unobvious way and this was positively responded to. We were not aware of "tour" groups with tour information. The shops did not thrust their wares upon you and on the whole the "shopping" experience could be avoided. In fact, we bought some inexpensive and tasteful souvenirs. We did find churches to be locked in Spain. This was mainly because churches in Spain are shut on Mondays and for a large part of every afternoon. Opening times were very rarely displayed on the outside of the church building but we had information from the tourist offices that told us when buildings would be open. It would be one of our criticisms of all the guides we studied before we went that there was little made of Monday closing. We did not find that churches were increasingly closed as we went westwards. We are sure everyone will find some benefit from their camino experience and especially if they are well prepared. We find that preparation is part of the Pilgrimage and the destination itself is not the main part. We met wonderful people, both pilgrims and *hospitaleros*, and found beautiful places both natural and man-made and these all contributed to our spiritual experience of which we have great memories.

## From Thomas Joyce

If members in the postcodes noted below would like to start a local Oxford group for social purposes and to facilitate the exchange of camino stories and photos please email me on the address supplied. This could develop into group activities including even pilgrimages

and should encourage greater participation in CSJ affairs. Suggested postcodes: OX1; OX2; OX3; OX4; OX5; OX8. [jw.joyce@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jw.joyce@yahoo.co.uk)

### **From Sylvie Plested**

Whilst my children were cycling for 28 days I walked from Ferrol to Santiago, from there to Finistere and then along the Coast of Death to Muxia. So I received 3 certificates in the Holy Year.

I enjoyed being in Santiago during the Holy Year - it was a great experience. My friends Natalie and John and myself got up at 4.30 in the morning on the morning of the 25th July and we queued from 5.00 onwards. It was worth it as we were sitting 6 rows behind the King of Spain and his wife.

I have also some other good news. Last year there was an article in the *Bulletin* about the Archecofradia in Spain and that one could apply to become a member. Well I applied last May and in December I got the confirmation from the Board of Directors that I am officially a member. In January I received my membership card and this year on 25 July I will be getting my official medal in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

### **From Priscilla White**

Due to the late running of the building works at Miraz, we were unable to act as hospitaleros in Miraz as the building was still unfinished when we should have been there. We couldn't change our travel plans so we had a bit of time on our hands until we got the ferry back to England. We drove up to Potes on the Camino Lebaniego, arriving at Santo Toribio de Liebana where there is a charming small stone statue of St James as well as part of the lignum cruces in the chapel. There is also a pilgrims hostel with 14 places, but pilgrims are advised to ring ahead to make sure that there is someone to let them in. 0034 985 892 324 – 24 places.

### **From John Hatfield**

Are you planning to give a talk about your pilgrimage? Why not use the CSJ slide library to help you? Did you know that the CSJ's growing collection of over 3300 slides, available to UK members, covers not only the Camino Francés, but also the other main routes in France and Spain? Please give at least a month's notice so that a catalogue can be sent to you and your choice made. As soon as I hear from you, I can reserve the slides and dispatch them two weeks before your talk. I can be contacted at: 9 Vicary Way, Maidstone, Kent ME16 0EJ; Tel: 01622 757814

# News from Australia

**I**n 2010 903 pilgrims from Australia and 172 from New Zealand received *compostelas* in Santiago.

So it is not surprising that the Australian pilgrims have become more organised and formed their first official organisation, based in Adelaide. Contact Janet Leitch, tel (08) 8370 8182, [walkspain@chariot.net.au](mailto:walkspain@chariot.net.au) The website will be [www.afotc.org](http://www.afotc.org) Congratulations and good luck as they develop their links across Australia!

Several pilgrimage accounts by Australians have been published recently and also a compendium of practical advice and complementary weather-proof maps.

## **Camino de Santiago: 30 all weather walking maps.**

ISBN 978 0 646 52975 2, 2010, 39.95 Aus dollar, available from the CSJ Bookshop, price £20.

## **The Guide for the Spanish Camino: walking the Camino Francés as a 21st century pilgrim**

Marc Grossman, 4th edition, 2011, 978 0 646 51466 6, 39.95 Aus dollar, both available from [www.caminodownunder.com](http://www.caminodownunder.com)

These two publications are from Marc Grossman, who teaches camino preparation and walks regularly on the camino. The 30 maps are printed on special waterproof paper against the Galician rain. They show the camino from above, as an aerial photo, with geographical features, roads, towns, villages, rivers, lakes marked on. However, there are no churches shown. On the reverse there is practical information about albergues, restaurants, bars, post offices etc as well as the useful dates of the main fiesta in towns along the way. The maps are long and thin and spiral bound on the short side, which makes for floppiness and awkward for putting in the pocket. The aerial photography shows the landscape dramatically, especially in the Montes de León and the climb to O Cebreiro. I found it specially interesting to see the varied shapes of the 'tables', eg after Castrojeriz, on the Meseta. Town maps are lacking and I feel there is not really enough detail (compared with, say, the Brierley maps) to be really informative, or explanation given where there are alternative routes.

The Camino preparation Guide is very informative but swings between a CSJ Practical Pilgrim session, an academic lecture and frequently apologising for not really being convinced about the religious aspects of pilgrimage. Topics covered include those useful

prior to departure eg What to pack?, choosing equipment, suggested itinerary (interestingly a 34-day suggested pilgrimage while the maps have a 30-day breakdown), as well as some I think would be more useful en route eg Spanish phrases and vocabulary, especially for food items.

The author seems to me unduly worried about health issues and I would be pretty ruthless with doing without, apart from basics, the suggested medications, which are easily available in every *farmacia*. One new suggestion to me, the first item for the first aid kit, was to take a tennis ball to relieve stressed muscles. I would dispute that albariño is a 'low-alcohol' wine and that Refugio Gaucelmo has an 'Australian hospitalera in residence'. However, it is very thorough and gives some of my better bits of advice eg the importance of avoiding blisters in the first place (though he does not mention my favourite animal wool) and the usefulness of a sarong for female pilgrims.

For Australian pilgrims who cannot get to a gathering of returned pilgrims to glean all their favourite pieces of advice this would be a useful book. The maps I think do not compare well with either Brierley's Maps or the Pili Pala Camino de Santiago Map, both £10, both available from the CSJ bookshop. However, we do have copies available for purchase.

### **Unholy Pilgrims: how one man thought walking 800 km across Spain would sort his out his life**

Tom Trumble, 2011, 310pp, Penguin Australia, 978 0 14 320585 2,

An enjoyable and well written romp through an October pilgrimage for a 30- year seeking a new direction. The traditional story of how St James came to be in Spain and some of the other historical information is somewhat garbled. Tom and friend Dave fall into a motley crew of pilgrims and generally behave quite badly. It is a salutary account of how one can easily fall out with one's walking companions and the mental and spiritual struggle accompany Tom to Santiago. They meet Abdul and learn about the hajj and pilgrimage for Moslems. They are struck by the fact that Abdul seems to take the religious nature of the pilgrimage much more seriously than they do. Wonderfully, many reconciliations and understandings emerge by the end.



## **Memoirs of a Pilgrim: Footprints on the Road to Santiago**

Brad Kyle, 2010, 321pp, Zeus , Burleigh, Queensland, ISBN 978 1 921731 35 8, see [www.roadtosantiago.co.au](http://www.roadtosantiago.co.au)

Brad Kyle's footprints describe his camino, a journey of many highs and lows and deep ponderings on his life so far, his aspirations, his real being. A chance meeting with a pilgrim in London, the unexpected death of his father in Australia and resignation from work prompt him to set out on foot from Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port. Keeping a daily diary, he writes well, exploring honestly his emotional state and responses to other pilgrims. There is an ongoing thread on his feelings for a German pilgrim, Christine, and particular camino friendships with French Canadians Matt and Marie. Early trouble with his legs miraculously disappears; he later finds pilgrims have been praying for him. Historical anecdotes are woven in to the diary of his pilgrimage. I'm glad to find that Irish hospitaleros welcomed him with tea and hospitality at Refugio Gaucelmo. The final section of his walk through Galicia deals well with the combination of elation at approaching the end and the discontent with encountering 'pseudo-pilgrims' after Sarria, heavy rain and full refuges. Happily he is reunited with many camino friends in Santiago, flies to Munich to visit Camino Christine and returns home with many personal issues resolved, ready to start his life again. The book is a pleasure to read as he has taken trouble to check the historical content, and place names are pretty well correct. And he engages the reader with his straightforward honesty and integrity.

MARION MARPLES



# From the Secretary's Notebook

Marion Marples

## **RIP Bernard Roff 1922-2011**

Bernard was a keen cyclist, to whom the CSJ and the Camino Francés meant a great deal. He earned his first compostela in 1993 and then again in 1995. Our condolences go out to his wife, Margaret and to his sister's family in Canada.

As is our custom on 25 July – the feast of St James – the Confraternity will be praying for all of its members living and dead, especially those who have died during the past year. This year these commemorations will take place on Sunday 24 July in Reading. See Events page.

## **Have you been a 2011 Pilgrim?**

I'd like to draw your attention to several ways in which you might like to extend your pilgrimage experience. Do come and visit the office on any Thursday to share your experience with others who are still at the planning stages, or for one of our Saturday Open Days eg Saturday 24 September. Or, for a longer chance to reflect on the emotions and thoughts raised by your pilgrimage, join fellow pilgrims at the weekend retreat in the beautiful monastic surroundings of Ampleforth Abbey in 21-23 October. If you have received your compostela this year please return your Pilgrim Register Form (sent out with your Pilgrim Record) to Paul Turnbull, 55 Tollgate Drive, Colchester CO3 0PE. Paul records each pilgrimage in a register which members may inspect at each AGM.

## **Development of the Confraternity –web design skills urgently needed**

The trustees are in the process of reviewing everything that the Confraternity is doing to support and encourage pilgrims, including its publishing activities and what it is able to do for members. It has become clear that the website could do with a new look and talks are proceeding with a web designer. Howard Nelson, the current webmaster, who designed and built the original website has indicated that he would like to hand over responsibility for the new site. This would be a good moment for anyone who would be interested in

contributing to the discussions around the development of the website to step forward and get involved. We also need somebody with good graphic design skills to develop a new style for CSJ documents. Please contact the Office if you are interested.

### **Refuge-Gite de'Etape for sale**

We have had information from Karel Musch who runs the refuge in Le Chemin on the Vézelay route that he will be selling the house and is looking if at all possible to hand over the refuge to a fellow pilgrim. If you would be interested in such a venture or know of someone who might wish to buy the property and continue this work please contact Karel directly for more information. Karel Musch, Le Chemin, 58800 Anthien Email: *c.k.musch@inter.nl.net*, tel: 0031 317 616 404 or 0033 386 22 02 85

### **IV International Course in Jacobean Studies**

The University of Santiago is running a short summer course from 20-23 July, with 30 hours of lectures. The course, in Spanish, covers the latest thinking on the architectural development of the cathedral , a visit to a new exhibition 'Domus Jacobi: la historia de la cathedral de Santiago' and an evening guided visit; a lecture from the President of the Rio de Janeiro Confraternity; lectures exploring the 5 senses of the camino. The final day includes a walk along the camino of the Costa del Muerte, topped off with a sunset boat trip from Finisterre. See <http://leccionesjacobeas.blogspot.com/> for the full programme or email the office for a copy. Register by 8 July, cost 120 eur, concessions 70 eur, <http://www.usc.es/cultura/uveran11index.htm>

### **Office Volunteers**

I would like to say a special thank you to Alison Thorp and Christine Pleasants who have carried much of the office work while I have been out of action after my recent hip replacement operation. The office volunteers, including Wendy Beecher, William Bossert , Henriette van Zaelen and Robin Dorkings, have had their numbers increased by Richard Jefferies, Joyce Culnane, John Curtin and Ruth Abrahams.

Thank you too to everyone who has enquired about my progress; I am glad to say my strength is building up and I am gradually increasing the length of my walks.

# CSJ Events

## Friday 22-Sunday 24 July St James's Day Weekend

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### READING ABBEY AND ST JAMES

A weekend of history, music and pilgrimage.

#### THE WEEKEND PROGRAMME

- Friday 22 July, St James's Church, 7.30pm , Lecture by Prof Brian Kemp, former professor of history at Reading University and expert on Reading Abbey. Also Prof Lindy Grant, current Professor of Medieval History at Reading University , will present the plans to further conserve the Abbey ruins, develop the Museum displays and enhance Reading's place in European history.
- Saturday 23 July, St James's Church: Music workshops through the day for *Pilgrimage: A Cantata* by John Read. All are welcome to participate; music available in advance. There will be some rehearsals in Newent (Glos), London and possibly Reading in preparation. Non singers: walkers could take the beginning of the St James's Way- a non-historical route devised to take pilgrims from Reading to Southampton or Portsmouth for the start of a pilgrimage to Santiago either through France or through Spain. 7.30pm: performance of *Pilgrimage: A Cantata* in St James's Church followed by refreshments in the church. Tickets £8 to include refreshments.
- Sunday 24 July: 11am Mass of St James, with the parish of St James. The church of St Peter Marlow is very kindly lending the reputed relic of the Hand of St James for this occasion. Sunday lunch together in Reading. Afternoon walk in Reading to see last traces of the Abbey including the Gatehouse, St Laurence's church, the Hospitium, the Mill stream and mill, and visit to Reading Museum, with a display of fine 12<sup>th</sup> century carved capitals from the cloister of the Abbey.

Please email the office for full programme details and to book in for the various events. Please reserve your own accommodation

For more information about the History of Reading Abbey please see *Bulletin* 113, CSJ Events

## **Thursday 1-Friday 16 September**

## **Pilgrimage**

### **NORTHERN ROUTE WALKING PILGRIMAGE**

Fly out from Stansted on 31 August to Asturias, catch a local bus to Lueca where we begin the walk on 1 September. Return to Stansted from Santiago on 16 September. We hope to accommodate all reasonable levels of walkers and find various types of accommodation wherever possible.

Of course, as before, pilgrims will find their own way to the start and their own way back to whichever airport they choose. However, all possible help and assistance will be given on the walk.

We have allowed 16 days, a day to get there a day back + a day in Santiago. We worked the walk out into 12 stages leaving an extra day for either a rest day or to make one of the stages a bit shorter. Please contact Colin Jones on [pacharan@btinternet.com](mailto:pacharan@btinternet.com) or Dave Jones (no relation) on [d-jones56@sky.com](mailto:d-jones56@sky.com) to register your interest or learn more.

## **Saturday 24 September**

## **Office Open Day**

10.30am-4pm Office open for enquiries, browsing and information.  
27 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8NY

## **Friday 30 September**

## **Film Showing - The Way**

6.30pm at the British Museum. To be introduced by Dr William Griffiths, Hon Vice President of CSJ. CSJ will have some free tickets; first come, first served from the office or book at the Museum, £3.

## **Friday 21-Sunday 23 October**

## **Retreat**

### **Retreat for Returned Pilgrims**

To be held at Ampleforth Abbey, N Yorkshire, and to be led by Fr Ben Griffiths, chaplain at St James's Hospital, Leeds. This is an opportunity for a weekend of quiet reflection and lively recollection of all aspects of making the pilgrimage for those who have come back from pilgrimage in the recent past. Fr Ben uses music, poetry and prose to recall people and places and understanding of the complex thoughts and feelings aroused by the pilgrimage experience. There is an opportunity for an autumnal walk, worship in the Abbey church, excellent food and warm accommodation. Single and twin rooms available, price £120 per person. Please contact [office@csj.org.uk](mailto:office@csj.org.uk) for more information or

send £55 deposit, payable to Confraternity of Saint James to reserve a place. The programme starts at 6pm on Friday and ends after lunch on Sunday.

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**Saturday 29 October****Office Open Day**

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10.30am-4pm Office open for enquiries, browsing and information  
27 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8NY

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**Tuesday 2 –Saturday 6 November****Conference**

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*Reflections on a Renaissance* organised by the Dutch Confraternity in Utrecht. The sessions will be in English or translated. Opportunity to visit an exhibition about St James in the St Catherine Convent and the Pilgrimage in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Please contact the office if you would like to join others to attend this conference.

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**Saturday 26 November****Open Day & Lecture**

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10.30am-4pm Office open for enquiries, browsing and information  
27 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8NY  
Storrs Lecture at 4pm speaker and venue tbc

## Other Events

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**Sunday 17 July – Friday 22 July****Pilgrimage**

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**ST ARILDA AT OLDBURY ON SEVERN**

Oldbury on Severn in South Gloucestershire is celebrating its patron saint, and the Confraternity is warmly invited to join us for some or all of the following programme:

- Sunday 17 July: 6 p.m. Patronal Festival at St Arilda's Anglican church, Oldbury on Severn..
- Wednesday 20 July: 7 p.m. Walk from St Arilda's church to the well (approx. 1 mile) for a shared picnic and singing of the saint's hymns. Meet at the church gate.
- Friday 22 July: 7.30 p.m. Roman Catholic Mass in Oldbury Methodist Church (in the centre of the village).

N.B. There is no public transport to Oldbury, which is north of Bristol and some 3 miles west of Thornbury. Motorway access is good, for details please contact Jane Bradshaw, tel. 01454 413199. Email: [bradshaw@uwclub.net](mailto:bradshaw@uwclub.net)



**Thursday 23 June-Sunday 9 October****Exhibition**

Treasures of Heaven – saints, relics and devotion in medieval Europe. Exhibition at the British Museum, London. Open daily 10am-5.30pm, Fri open until 8.30pm. Tickets £12, Senior rate £6 available Mon-Fri 12 noon-4.30pm only.

- Special late night opening on Friday 8 July 6.30pm-9pm
- Curator's talk on Friday 23 July, Sat 10 September, Thursday 15 September, Thursday 22 September 1.15pm, free.
- There is an interesting programme of lectures and film showings, mostly on Fridays and Saturdays. These include Prof Paul Binski on Thomas Becket (Fri 29 July, £5); Grayson Perry and Marina Warner on parallels between celebrity bodies and the medieval veneration of bodies (Fri 16 July, £5), on Chaucer and The Canterbury Tales, Fri 16 September), £5.

*[www.britishmuseum.org/whats\\_on/exhibitions/treasures\\_of\\_heaven](http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/treasures_of_heaven)*

**Thursday 6-Saturday 8 October****Conference**

Matter of Faith, British Museum, in conjunction with Treasures of Heaven Exhibition. Papers to include:

- Manifestations of the medieval cult of relics and the cult of saints
- Pilgrimage, real and virtual
- Reliquaries and shrines; their construction, use and re-use
- Patronage and relic collecting

The paper we proposed to give was unfortunately not accepted but Marion Marples and Gosia Brykczynska will be attending. Please contact the Office for registration details if you would like to join the group.

**Friday 16-Sunday 18 September****Conference**

Conference in Oviedo about the Camino del Salvador, the connecting route between the Camino francés and the Camino del Norte between León and Oviedo. Includes a visit to pilgrim shrine of Covadonga.



# New members

Information is provided for members' use only.

## GREATER LONDON

Mr Kenneth Beedle	020 8672 6368
74 Manville Road London SW17 8JL	
Mr Paul Blezard-Gymer & Capt. Philip Amadeus	07952 177878
16 Kingsway London SW14 7HS	
Mr Hugh Caldin	020 8994 6368
60 Wavendon Avenue Chiswick London W4 4NS	
Mr Paul Carolin	07841 525295
1 Mortimer Lodge Albert Drive Southfields London SW19 6JZ	
Mr David Chapman	020 7630 9528
Flat 18 36 Buckingham Gate Westminster London SW1E 6PB	
Dr Judith Green	020 8361 9838
12 Union Road London N11 2SE	
Mrs Teresa Israel & Mr Marco Fabbri	020 7720 4849
10 Franconia Road Clapham London SW4 9ND	
Mr Luke Jensen	07771 701308
42 Clonmel Road London SW6 5BJ	
Miss Sarah McMahon, Mr Donald Grant & Miss A NicAthlaioch	020 8995 5668
c/o 65 St Mary's Grove London W4 3LW	
Mr Miguel Ramirez	07581 067297
10 Auckland London SE11 5HT	
Mr Grant Ringshaw	020 7274 2292
91 Fawnbrake Avenue London SE24 0BG	
Mr Gavin & Ms C Robinson	020 8767 8563
14 Marion Court Tooting High Street Tooting London SW17 0RU	
Mr Hal & Mrs Maria Robinson	020 8563 9982
20 Lochaline Street London W6 9SH	
Mr Paolo Savini-Nicci	07768 694119
14 Arundel Court London W11 2LP	
Mr John Soprackett	020 8788 1966
30 Gartmoor Gdns London SW19 6 NY	
Mr Edward Wethered	020 8994 6392
29 Burlington Road London W4 4BQ	

## HOME COUNTIES

Miss Clare Garbett & Miss Elizabeth Pratt	01608 683285
Woodcutter's Over Worton Chipping Norton Oxon OX7 7EW	
Mr Mark Williams	07846 670327
Flat 206 105 London Street Reading Berks RG1 4QD	
Miss Mary Bennett	07540 626103
1 Trevan Road Addiscombe Surrey CR0 6RP	
Mrs Carole Bond	
6 Peregrine Close Swanfield Drive Chichester W Sussex PO19 6AS	

Revd Chris, Miss Emily & Miss Theo Dobson	01342 715345
Sopers Ride Selsfield Road Turners Hill W Sussex RH10 4PP	
Miss Vicky Dobson & Miss Lisa Pastoriza	01276 504147
10 Highland Road Camberley Surrey GU15 4EX	
Dr Stephen Fleming	01635 299116
11 Byfields Road Kingsclere Ewbury Berks RG20 5TG	
Mrs Mary Hanna	020 8460 6908
41 Kingswood Road Shortlands Bromley Kent BR2 0NL	
Mrs Beverley Kenward	01303 238310
3 Henlion House 83 Seabrook Road Hythe Kent CT21 5QW	
Mr Keith Mullen	01323 840672
Pastures Lower Horsebridge Hailsham E Sussex BN27 4DN	
Mrs Jenny Newnham	07707 076092
15 Grantham Court 376 Richmond Road Kingston KT2 5LH	
Mr Sean O'Connor	01732 365378
54 The Drive Tonbridge Kent TN9 2LR	
Mr Michael Pitts	01323 484019
1 Marina Cottages Willingdon Lane Jevington E Sussex BN26 5QH	
Mr David Twiiner	01227 459080
31 Chaucer Court New Dover Road Canterbury Kent CT1 3AV	
Mr Steven Wright	01227 283787
70 Mickleburgh Hill Herne Bay Kent CT6 6DX	
Mr Owen De La Haye	07805 747548
91 Ayling Lane Aldershot Hants GU11 3ND	
Revd Mark Godson	01425 650855
The Vicarage 71 Church Street Fordingbridge SP6 1BB	
Mr David Johnson	023 9282 0305
29 Victoria Road North Southsea Hants PO5 1PL	
Mr Hugh Martin	01329 220602
32 High Street Fareham Hants PO16 7AD	

## **WEST**

Mr Roger Sargent	01225 317317
1 Southville Terrace Lyncombe Vale Bath BA2 4LZ	
Mr Neil & Mrs Brenda White	01225 837554
13 Oolite Grove Bath Somerset BA2 2UF	
Mrs Catherine Collin	01726 870833
Lombard Farm Mixtow Fowey Cornwall PL23 1NA	
Mrs Sarah & Miss Kate Golding	01275 877323
15 Wickfield Clevedon W Somerset BS21 5EU	
Mr Wayne Hamilton	07748 277372
5A Norrisville Road Montpelier Bristol BS6 5NB	
Revd John Luscombe	01803 864514
8 Manor Way Totnes Devon TQ9 5HP	
Mrs Merilyn Parker Armitage	0117 949 3471
52 Claremont Road Bishopston Bristol BS7 8DH	

## **WALES**

Mr Andy Tack	01654 703197
22 Maengwyn Street Machynlleth Powys SY20 8DT	

## **EAST MIDLANDS**

Mr Bob Webb & Mr Ed Power 07720 049612  
Primrose Cottage Bainton Green Road Ashton Lincs PE9 3BA

## **WEST MIDLANDS**

Mr Alan & Mrs Joy Barton 01384 896685  
26 Hadcroft Grange Stourbridge W Midlands DT9 7EP  
Mr Norman Fox 01386 555099  
18 Rushers Close Pershore Worcs WR10 1HF  
Mr Stefan Palacz 01477 534198  
45 Middlewich Road Holmes Chapel Cheshire CW4 7EH  
Mrs Helen Shaw & Mrs Valerie Smith 07920 510848  
Flat1, Amber Gate City Walls Road Worcester WR1 2AH

## **EAST ANGLIA**

Mr Stewart DaSilva 07778 811266  
1 Verbena Drive Wymondham Norfolk NR18 0FT  
Mr Iain Robinson 01223 870753  
Huddlestons River Lane Hastingfield Cambs CB23 1LX  
Mr Terry & Mrs Patricia Sibthorpe 01379 890188  
2 Oswald Mews Chapel Lane Botesdale, Diss IP22 1BH  
Ms Sally Webster 01473 780678  
1 Wendy Close Chelmondiston Ipswich IP9 1JB  
Mrs Joanne Aston 01609 883613

## **NORTH EAST**

Holly Tree Cottage Over Silton Thirsk N Yorks YO7 2LJ  
Mr Martin Booth 01748 824204  
Lindisfarne Hudswell Richmond N Yorks DL11 6BW  
Mr Robert Clarke 07879 055534  
Jacem Lodge Horrogate Street Bradford W Yorks BD3 0LE  
Mr Geoff & Mrs Gwyneth Watts 01482 645151  
23 Beverley Road Hessle E Yorks HU13 9AE  
Mr Tony Woodward  
1 Orchard Close Dishforth North Yorkshire YO7 3LL

## **NORTH WEST**

Mr Eamon Cowman 07778 124988  
3B Elmsfield Avenue Norden Rochdale OL11 5XN  
Mr Chris Howell-Jones 01270 626432  
35, Baronia Place Barony Road Nantwich Cheshire CW5 5PQ

## **SCOTLAND**

Mr Martin Blair 01224 647579  
26 Frater Place Aberdeen AB24 5DG  
Mr Christopher & Mrs Jane Bonnar 0131 665 5732  
7A Victoria Terrace Musselburgh E. Lothian EH21 7LW  
Mr Alan Brown 07874 005543  
7 Queens Court Dunfermline Fife KY12 7JD

Miss Frances Mary Crilly [Scot Group]	07891 720193
5B Dunbeth Avenue Coatbridge N Lanarkshire ML5 3JA	
Mr Dignan	07980 929053
7/5 Dunedin Street Edinburgh EH7 4JB	
Mr Martyn Hill	01997 421180
Cnoc-Na-Cuil, Coul Contin Strathpeffer IV14 9ES	
Ms Jenny Kalorkoti	0131 552 4406
17, Darnell Road Edinburgh EH5 3PQ	

### **CHANNEL ISLANDS**

Mrs Susan Taylor	01481 252966
Les Fries Ruetee des Fries Castel Guernsey GY5 7PW Channel Islands	

### **EUROPE**

Mr Paul Dowling	0035 3 8681 47120
Weston Eadestown Naas Co Kildare Ireland	
Mr Eero & Mrs Pirkko Kasanen	0035 8 5056 34397
Arkadiankatu 33 A 21 Helsinki 100 Finland	
Mr Etienne & Mrs Dorianne Micallef	0035 6 2701 9078
Sauletekis Triq Il-Hawt Zabbar ZBR 3212 Malta	
Ms Inge Puri	0049 211 4921768
Schwerinstrasse 66 Dusseldorf D-40476 Germany	
Mr Robert Van Dyke	0033 5 4538 2519
"a la Grando Bentado" Rue du Chateau d'eau Cellettes 16230 France	

### **NORTH AMERICA**

Ms Joan Collinge & Ms Brigid Cassidy	001 350 339 1004
1592 Guthrie Road Comox BC V9M 1A7 Canada	
Mr Tom & Mr Robert Beck	001 404 680 2325
2040 River North Parkway Atlanta Georgia GA 30328-1116 U S A	
Revd John Dennehy	001 973 275 6465
Seton Hall Uni 400 South Orange Avenue South Orange NJ 07079	

### **AUSTRALIA**

Miss November Constable & Mr Jason Davey	0061 2 6156 0747
17 Bavin St Curtin Canberra ACT 2605 Australia	
Miss Julie Gill	0061 4 1103 3629
25 Vista Way Scotts Head NSW 2447 Australia	
Mrs Jane Graham	0061 8 9331 5848
26 Pass Crs Beaconsfield WA 6162 Australia	
Dr Richard Harvey	0061 2 6688 8121
1037A Jiggi Road Jiggi NSW 2480 Australia	
Mr Laurie & Mrs Wilma King	0061 3 6282 4928
36 Buckingham Street Lara VIC 3212 Australia	
Mr Peter McAndrew & Ms Mary Salopek	0061 3 9543 3448
10 Sunnyside Road Mt Waverley Melbourne VIC 3149 Australia	
Ms Meredith Verge	0064 2 9438 2583
5 / 5 Balfour Street Greenwich NSW 2065 Australia	
Ms Irena Webster	0061 2 328470
95 High St Rutherglen VIC 3685 Australia	



## About the *Bulletin*

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Editor	Gosia Brykczynska
Proofreader	John Revell
Production Editor	James Hatts
Production Coordinator	Marion Marples

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If you send an attachment please make sure that it contains the title of the article and the author's name.

Please present your copy as simply as possible. Please take care with the spelling of personal and place names and ensure that accents are included correctly.

For further guidance email the office for a style guide.

# Confraternity of Saint James

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Information and Publications available from Registered Office:

**27 Blackfriars Road, LONDON SE1 8NY**

*usual opening hours Thursday 11am to 3pm (other times by appointment)*

telephone (020) 7928 9988 fax (020) 7928 2844 email [office@csj.org.uk](mailto:office@csj.org.uk) website [www.csj.org.uk](http://www.csj.org.uk)

*Honorary President*

H E The Spanish Ambassador

*Secretary*

Marion Marples  
45 Dolben Street, LONDON SE1 0UQ

*Pilgrim Record Secretary*

*Please apply with SAE (quoting membership number) to:*  
Tony Morwood-Leyland, 24 Soper Grove, BASINGSTOKE RG21 5PU

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*Vice-Chairman*

Gosia Brykczynska, 148 Carlyle Road, LONDON W5 4BJ  
[gosia.brykczynska@talktalk.net](mailto:gosia.brykczynska@talktalk.net)

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*Chairman*

Paul Graham, Somer House, The Street, CHILCOMPTON, Somerset BA3 4HB [p.graham2712@btinternet.com](mailto:p.graham2712@btinternet.com)

*Wardens' Coordinator,  
Refugio Gaucelmo*

Roger Davies, West Wing, Down Hall, Bedford Place, BRIDPORT, Dorset DT6 3ND (01308) 427295 [r&j@rogerdavies.go-plus.net](mailto:r&j@rogerdavies.go-plus.net)

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*Finance Manager*

Alison Thorp, 37 Elmer Cottages, FETCHAM, Surrey KT22 9BU  
[alison.thorp@virgin.net](mailto:alison.thorp@virgin.net)

*Treasurer  
and Company Secretary*

Tony Ward, Syracuse, ST NEOT, Cornwall PL14 6NJ  
Work (01579) 343215 [mail@tonyward.biz](mailto:mail@tonyward.biz)

*Librarian  
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Howard Nelson  
[howard@csj.org.uk](mailto:howard@csj.org.uk)

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*Digital Library Manager*

Michael Krier, Hyde, Temple Guiting, CHELTENHAM, Glos GL54 5RT  
[krier@btinternet.com](mailto:krier@btinternet.com)