

Len's 45th letter from the Via

Date:27/08/17

Location

San Miniato

KM's to
Rome

497

Steps Today

45,069

Again, we left early today to avoid the hot afternoons, it was going to be a very exposed walk and the temperature was predicted to reach 36 degrees. These high temperatures are having a detrimental effect on the country and there is evidence of dieback on many of the plants, particularly on some of the more exposed grapevines.

Today was a significant day for me as it would mean that I have passed the 1000 kilometres mark and have less than 500 kilometres to go to reach Rome. By a strange coincidence I crossed the 1,000kms mark on an old Roman road in Galleno. This was part of the original Via Francigena and one of its claims to fame is that the Phillip the 2nd the French King in the thirteen-century stayed at Galleon and was carried by horse on this road, he didn't respond to his opponents call, a horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse. It didn't say what the French King was up to, probably on his way to sack some Duchy of its riches to fill up the depleted French Treasury.

There was a marker on the road that referred you to a notice board. The notice board gave details of a government study of the local roads in 1813 and this one was listed as in appalling condition and vehicles were being overturned. The solution was to create another road which bypassed approximately one kilometre of this historic road, which is lucky for us as we can see and feel the road as it possibly was a 1,000 years ago, a really great way to look at History.

It seemed in pretty good condition to me for a 1,000-year-old piece of infrastructure.

The walk continued through some forest which again was not unlike walking in some parts of Australia except for the species of trees. We emerged from the forest to walk into a little village called Ponte Cappiano. This was the historical border between Florence and Rome. In the village, we came across a typical Italian scene, a group of local men gathered around the local café for their regular morning meeting. We were unable to understand what their conversation was about but as you can imagine it was lively and animated, probably about sport or politics or perhaps 500-year-old border issues. Carol wondered whether they get out of the house to avoid their domestic responsibilities or they were kicked out so that the partners could have their own social interaction. It was a bit surprising to see how many alcoholic drinks were being served at 10.00 in the morning, we stuck to our sedate regime of Tea and Water. I later walked across the Arno, referred to historically as the Black Arno because it is so dirty, and it is, comparatively the Yarra looks positively pristine. It is a healthy river though as I saw a huge fish of about one metre swimming in the shallows and



heard lots of frogs. As I walked along the levy bank built up beside the Arno I came across these community gardens. I think community gardens are a great idea but why do they have to be messy. This one had used old beds as gates and fencing. There is a lot of rubbish along the roads and tracks in Italy, many people must throw their rubbish out the window or drop it on the track. Walkers are just as bad, many of the stops specially set up for pilgrims are littered with rubbish. It is particularly galling as

many of these stops have rubbish bins, come on Pilgrims, lift your game.