

As we left San Quirico I wondered about the origin of the name. The name is from Cyricus who as a three-year-old child with his mother in 304 AD was seeking refuge from persecution as Christians in Tarsus, which is in Southern Turkey. The Tarsus governor would only accept them into the city if they accepted the local religion, Cyricus responded by either boxing the governor's ears or scratching his face, depending on what story you choose to believe. The governor threw Cyricus down the stairs to his death. He then had the mother killed; both bodies were dumped outside the city from where they were taken by some Christian nuns and buried in sanctified ground. Cyricus and his mother were hailed as Christian martyrs. As time passed Cyricus started making appearances and causing miracles to happen which led to him and his mother being made saints. A long story the point of which is to say that many Welsh churches have glorified San Quirico (perhaps because of Cyricus' disrespect of authority) and while not in Wales there is a church in Taunton (in Somerset) that also has glorified San Quirico. Taunton is where my family on my father's side came from.

As today was only a short 9 kms. walk we decided to extend it to 15kms. by taking a deviation to Bagno Vignoni to take in the warm water baths of that village. It also gave us the added benefit of walking down a ridge that gave us views over the whole of the Val d'Orcia. This photo shows why I consider this one of the best places I have ever visited. On any ridge, you can see the whole valley from Montepulciano to Radicofani which is covered in the patchwork patterns and pencil pines so common in Tuscany. Why do pencil pines look so good here but look out of place anywhere else? People have requested some photos of Carol and I together so I have been experimenting with constructing an apparatus to take selfies with my phone. I didn't want to buy another piece of equipment to carry around. Initially I attached my phone to my walking pole using a rubber band (many



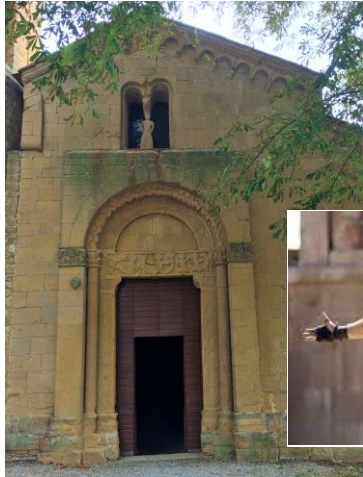
of which I store in Mary's tin) but it does not give any flexibility as the pole had to be positioned against a tree or some other supporting structure, so I hit on this idea, it works well as you can see. And with the timer pre-set on the iPhone you have ten photos to choose from. I am going to fine tune the design over the next few days walk and when perfected will provide a photo of the pilgrim couple.

Incidentally my camera has broken so I am relying on my

iPhone and iPod for photos until I can find a camera shop in Tuscany, said camera shop being very elusive. I don't believe those Apple ads; the iPhone can't possibly be taking the photos they publish. We arrived in Bagno Vignoni after a rather gentle stroll down the ridge. This is a lovely village to while away an hour or two looking in the bookshop, the gifts shops and of course the mandatory morning tea by the pools. These pools are naturally heated, the water coming up from under the ground and have been used for centuries for people to take the waters. Unfortunately, you are unable to use the pool anymore but it is a beautiful structure. Further down the hill from the pool there is some remaining infrastructure which allows you to put your feet in the waters running

out of the pool. I wouldn't say my feet are like a twenty-year old's again but in the afternoon, I positively glided up the hill to Pienza like Icarus, lucky it was an overcast day.

The climb into Pienza was quite steep and we rested on the way up outside this church. It is an old church but what makes it interesting is that the front facade has been recycled from an Etruscan church. And as the facade is so old it is quite authentic looking when



making films about gladiators with Australian actors as the leading man. Things must be slow in the



film industry now as Mr Crowe was out the front of the church trying to rustle up some fighting action. He allowed us to take a photo but only if we promised to watch his films. We continued on our way into Pienza and left Mr Crowe to do his best impressions of a gladiator.

We have been very lucky to get a room on the top floor of the Hotel with expansive views South over the whole valley, truly a room with a great view.



Day 65 was a rest day in our calendar but I had left an essential piece of memorabilia at San Quirico and Carol wanted to have lunch at a restaurant in Bagnio Vignoni so we decided to do a circuit including both villages. On our way out of Pienza (Mr Crowe had disappeared) we met a Canadian couple who were doing a walk along the ridge from Montalcino to Montepulciano which would be a spectacular walk and it also included a visit to the working Sant'Antimo Abbey which has a beautiful marble church. They live near the Rocky Mountains so this is a bit of a doddle for them both. They apologised to us for thinking we were English and being Canadians and not Americans they don't subscribe to the theory that you should never apologize as it shows your weakness. Fortunately, we didn't mistake them for Americans. We took the opportunity to have a bit of a chat and compare walk stories. You can just see Pienza in the background.

While we were having lunch, I took the opportunity to do some more design work on my selfie stick, this is version two. I think it is coming along, and if I want to



carry the stick around I can use it as a back scratcher, to extract ants from their nest if feeling a bit peckish and if all else fails as a defensive weapon against random pickpockets. It is very light and gives me a certain authenticity as it hangs off my pack, certainly

it will be a good conversation starter. I will test it out on our way to Montepulciano tomorrow.