

Location:Canterbury

Km's to Rome: 2027

We all have an itch which will just not go away and it occupies far more of our attention than it should. The Via Francigena has been that itch for me for 15 years. In 2017 I attempted to walk from Rome to Canterbury but circumstances intervened and I was only able to complete 1500 kilometres of the journey . This time I am very hopeful of being able to complete the full journey and to finally once and for all to remove that itch.

Today I visited Canterbury after arriving here from Australia yesterday The cathedral in Canterbury dominates this sky of the small city. It's a beautiful building that unfortunately needs a lot of repair. That seems to be an ongoing project for most of these old cathedrals . The artwork is no match for the renaissance paintings you see in Italian churches but the grandeur is equal to all except St Peter's.

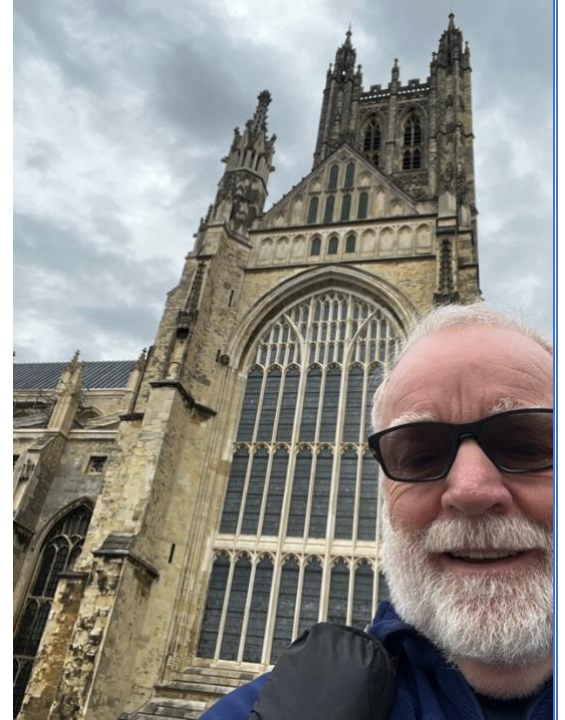
I was a little bit surprised that the Via Francigena was not made more of here in Canterbury, after all it's the starting point for one of the most important pilgrim walks in Europe. There is very little about it. I asked a couple of the attendants what they knew about the walk which was not very much, one of them referred me to a Pilgrim stone which is the start of the pilgrimage. I promptly went out and stood beside an understated little stone in the garden at the cathedral, but nevertheless the starting point of the 2000 kilometre journey . Today was only a very short part of that journey because I was staying outside of Canterbury in a little village called Bridge and in the morning I caught the bus to Canterbury and walked back to Bridge along some lovely country lanes.

Canterbury like a lot of England looks a very tired place, perhaps a harsh judgement given such a small sample of the United Kingdom that I've seen from Heathrow to here. But there's very little evidence of renewal. Brexit doesn't seem to be making things better around the place it is quite the opposite, there's quite a lot of poor people on the streets. You'll see from this photo of a tower in Canterbury that the rough sleeper is actually using it to sleep in, see the little white bundle in the photograph.



Tomorrow I head down towards Dover to catch the ferry and spend the night in Calais and then on French soil for the next 4 weeks. The weather here today is very overcast, so for those people back in Australia don't be too envious of the sun that I should be getting over here, hopefully in the next few weeks I'll get some.

This is me about to start the journey from Canterbury Cathedral.



Readers of my previous blog would be aware that I like to run a travelling book club so I would welcome any suggestions for books on the journey. The only criteria is they be of some relevance to a place that I am passing through. For the literary buffs I will also be embedding in the texts some literary quotes, starting next blog, you can spend a little time trying to work out what's my rather turgid writing and what is real writing and who wrote it. It's not too late for you to give me your list of sins to carry to Rome on your behalf, I promise I won't publish them in this Blog, bye for now.