

Len's 2nd letter from the Via Francigena 2022

Date:3/07/22

Location:Bridge to Enquin-les-Mines
(Four days)

Km's to Rome 1928

Today I left Canterbury to be greeted by heavy rain I was not too fussed about this because I had just bought a new raincoat in Canterbury yesterday so I was happy to test it out. It's a high tech coat, bit of an ugly green but very effective in the rain, and crucially no sweating under the coat. When I was walking the Larapinta Trail in Australia recently (often ranked in the worlds best ten walks) two of my fellow walkers made little mats to protect our bottoms when sitting, they are are godsend in the wet weather. Just for nostalgia here is a photo of the Australian outback.



In a small village Bridge where I stayed the night I counted three Ukrainian flags flying in the main street. Interesting this statement of support from English people to what's happening in Ukraine at the moment ,this is a photo of one flying from a typical small country church from one of the many in this



part of England. The photo above is of Mt Sonder a sacred place for the First Nations people of Australia, quite a contrast of places of worship.

The walk today was through open Woodlands and right-of-way's over farm properties, at times I was walking through wheat fields which where waist high, granted that's not very high but nevertheless there was plenty of wheat. I love the names of the villages and streets around this area of England I don't know where they come from, they are quite obscure

and it's very hard to relate the name names used to what you're actually walking on or through but they're all very amusing names. I eventually made my way to Dover where I was to catch

the ferry across to France I meet two young people from The USA who are hoping to do the walk in two and a half months which is an ambitious goal.



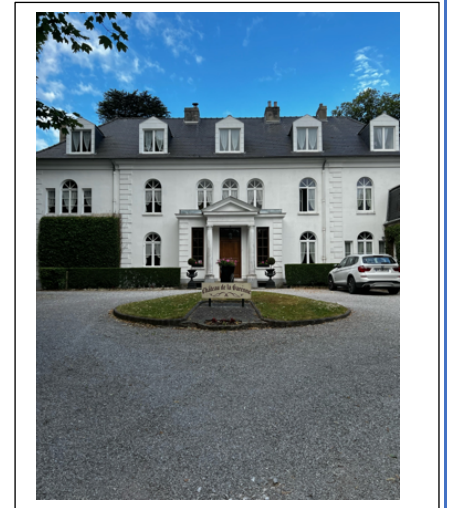
I am staying in Calais tonight which is hosting the Tour de France, arriving here on the 5th of July. Before I left Calais I had a chance to look at the Cathedral of Our Lady. Quite an impressive building which is the start of the Via Francigena walk in France.

Day 4's walk is a relatively short one from Calais to Guines nice and flat, a respite from yesterday's long walk. It was a bit of a grind out of Calais along a dirty messy canal through the suburbs but I emerged onto a beautiful walk along a river

towards Guines, lots of wildlife and trees. On arriving at Guines I was captured by a man from Leeds UK who insisted on telling me his life story including in detail the last half hour, must be Eric's cousin. I was too polite to walk away but isn't life not a thousand times too short for us to bore ourselves?

My accomodation was four km's out of the village but as an evening meal was not provided I called into the supermarket for some supplies where I was frisked on the way out by a security guard, obviously I raised some alarm bells on their app as I passed through checkout. The security around the supermarket is something new for me, perhaps increased because of the number of refugees that pass through.

Arrived at my accomodation in the shadow of the evening to this lovely building out in the countryside. At the moment I'm just relaxing on my bed listening to the birdsong while contemplating a 34 kilometres walk to Wisques. The Hostess here tells me that tomorrow is not going to be hot, much like today 20 degrees bit of sunshine and a nice breeze. I'm still facing the day with some trepidation though because 34 kilometres in one day is quite a lot. So I spent an hour ruthlessly culling items in my pack, I have shed about 1.5 kilos in unnecessary items but the bulk of the pack has been considerably reduced, so much so I have been able to get rid of my pannier's.



Set off early in the morning sending my excess luggage to landfill. I had hoped to shorten the distance by a few kilometres by taking a shortcut which was successful. Wandered into a small village around lunchtime to come across Erika and Nicholas again (of all the gin joints in all the world) who were receiving a French lesson from the owner of the café. Walked with them for the afternoon as they were staying in the same convent as myself. Erika is an actress and is currently making a film with Margaret Robbie and Brad Pitt.



The convent stay was an experience, a monk like cell for the bedroom and shared bathroom. It was good however to meet other pilgrims (7 in all) and share experiences.

Day 5's walk is to Enquin-les-Mines via Therouanne along minor country roads, although I could hear the A26 in the distance for most of the day. Collected lunch supplies in an underwhelming Therouanne but enjoyed it in a nice park, though the view of the town hall did diminish the experience a little, particularly as it was the place for depositing the towns rubbish into large collection bins.



Lots of wheat is grown in this area and therefore lots on mill ponds and flour mills, this is one of the many sighted over the day.

I am not sure how much of the flour is still locally made but I partook of a very nice apple and custard tart for lunch, which followed on from some lovely cereal bread.

One of the worst things in this type of travelling is turning up to your village for the night and not being able to locate the accomodation. My usually trusty mapping app took me to La Ferme des Templiers which turned out to be a rather rundown building with no signage indicating it was a B and B. Most of us have experienced the panic of wondering if you have

booked something in a village a 100 miles away. With the help of a local- much sign language-I was sent off in the right direction and ended up in an actual building that housed the Templars on their way to the crusades, drawbridge and all, it's a really nice place with a beautiful garden. I hope they let me out in the morning.



Jenny Fuge has suggested the first book, Fair Stood the Wind for France.

Bonne Camino