

Summer
2019



Welcome to the Maple Cross Fellowship Newsletter

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I started producing this newsletter in early February, when the weather was cold and wet, but I ended the month sitting outside in shorts and T shirt, in some of the warmest February weather on record.

Fast forward to late July, as I complete this, we've just had the hottest ever weather in the UK, followed at the end of the month by a month's rain in 4 days and mega hailstones in the North.

Nothing much changes except that you can't really tell what part of the year it is from the weather any more.

I try to write parts of this as soon as possible after the event so that it is still fresh in my mind, and so I don't have too much to do in the run up to the publication date. So four days before we left for our holiday in Mexico, writing this seemed like another good way of postponing the packing. Why do today what you can put off till tomorrow, the saying goes. But of course tomorrow, figuratively, does eventually come and you suddenly have to bite the bullet and get on with it often with insufficient time to properly consider what you need.

Luckily I've managed to fit most of the writing around my holidays, but I was away for 45 days in April - June, then again for a week in July. So this copy is a bit later than I'd have liked but hopefully you'll find it interesting.

On my long break I walked an ancient pilgrimage route in northwest Spain to Santiago de Compostela. Many routes,

called Caminos, converge on Santiago - the one I followed starts in the French Pyrenees (read about it from page 14).

Thanks to Nigel Burrows for his story on page 10, a very interesting journey.

Hopefully some of you reading this will have a story to tell, and can provide me with the information. I'm happy to do the pagination & layout, Shirley does the spelling etc. I just need the information. It's always useful if you can send some photos as well, they help to fill space. As they say a picture paints a thousand words, and fills column inches. Well I added that last bit, but you understand.

The winner of the Prize Quiz from the last edition is **Peter Moriarty** who correctly guessed the answer was Petra in Jordan. His was the first correct answer out of the hat.

There isn't a prize quiz in this edition - I ran out of space and time.

Jeff Taylor



Jeff on the Camino

Organiser's Report

"Well done to our Arthur Bishop who chose to carry out a parachute jump"

Welcome again to Jeff's latest newsletter for summer 2019. We have held a number of excellent events so far this year however due to the current situation within Kier Group, the Fellowship Trust were forced to cancel the Summer Garden Party at short notice this year. As you may be aware Kier Group have for the last 21 years fully financed the event, but with the incoming of a new Chief Executive Officer to Kier in the spring, he needs to understand all the niceties of Kier and where all the costs are heading before he decides on future funding of this event. It is with regret that I have to advise that the local joint 25 year service/Fellowship Member Luncheon in October is also cancelled this year. I hope to be in a position later in the year to advise that normal service will be resumed for next year. In fact the Fellowship Trust Board is exploring new ideas for the Annual Garden Party next year with a view to self-funding the event.

Thank you again to Jeff for all his hard work in gathering information for this and future newsletters. Please be aware that the newsletter will only be as good as the information that you are able to forward to him, either by post through me at my address or by email to kfmaplecross@virginmedia.com. All contributions will be greatly received and Jeff or I will assist with editing if you require.

One of our members who celebrated his 90th birthday at the end of June this year decided to undertake a challenge for charity on his birthday. Well done to our Arthur Bishop who chose to carry out a parachute jump. Even though I'm so impressed with this I will not be following in Arthur's footsteps (I'm scared of heights!!).

Welcome to our new members that have joined us Nigel & Anna Burrows and Kevin & Pauline Burns. Both have already attended some events and met other members. In fact Kevin, Neil McMinn and myself have started to play golf, if anyone wishes to join us please contact me and I will try to include you in our games at various venues and times that suit all our hectic social lives and holidays.

That is all for now but please keep an eye on your emails and post boxes for future events. Also if you have an email address that we do not have, please let me have it to update our records. It is a lot cheaper to send invites and information electronically than by post. Your email address is held centrally and will not be passed on to others without your permission.

Norman Elliott

Sayings from Duncan

Support bacteria. They're the only culture some people have.

If you think nobody cares, try missing a couple of payments.

Remember, half the people you know are below average.

A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.

42.7 percent of all statistics are made up on the spot.

Change is inevitable, except from vending machines.

Why do psychics have to ask you for your name?

D Mort



Valentines Day Meal



For once the Valentines meal was on February 14th, it is usually difficult to get a good deal on the day itself but Biggles at Denham came up trumps. I didn't get lost this year (I set Sat Nav this time) so arrived in good time to have a chat and take a same pictures. I didn't hear any tales of woe so assume everybody else made it as well.



We had 37 members attend the lunch and once again had a lovely meal. Norman didn't give a speech partly because of the layout of the room and also because as mentioned previously there were also tables with non fellowship members on. Still I don't think anyone minded.

Whilst taking some early pictures of the tables a couple who were not part of the fellowship asked what it was all about. They were interested and amazed that a company would help former employees to continue to meet up and enjoy subsidised events. I think it's great as well and haven't heard of anything like it except for the Rolling Stones Club run by William Moss which became part of Kier.

A special day for Warwick and Dorothy



Warwick & Dorothy Stevens

Just before we left I had a chat with Warwick who told me it was their 38th wedding anniversary on that day. What a great day to chose to get married. Congratulations to them both.

It was still sunny when we left, so nice weather for the journey home.



St Georges Day Meal

We returned to the Belvedere Ristorante Italiano in St Albans for our St Georges day meal on Thursday 25th April.

We had 31 people attending including Kevin Byrne and his wife Pauline, whose visit was the first to the fellowship since his retirement.



It was a lovely sunny day so we sat in the conservatory chatting over drinks before the meal.

Norman told of the plan to organise a trip for the fellowship to visit Brooklands where members will be able to view Concord.

After a nice meal the members made their way home in the evening sunshine.

“Arthur Bishop surprised many by announcing that at 90 years old he’d decided to take part in a skydive ”



Arthur Bishop surprised many by announcing that at 90 years old he’d decided to take part in a skydive in June. It goes to show that you are never too old to try something new.





The rain had stopped but the cloud remained as we made our way to the Racecourse at Windsor. We were waiting outside the enclosure before the allotted meeting time of 4:30 pm. Norman arrived bang on time with the tickets, and we made our way into the Heidsieck enclosure to secure tables for everyone.



Studying the form

Along with the entry ticket we also got a free programme with all the runners and riders, a drinks voucher and a Fish & Chips voucher, plus a little something to make a bet or two.



Parade Ring

From the Heidsieck Enclosure you can also go and see the horses in the parade ring before they race and the winners enclosure. You can get quite close, and its nice to see these thoroughbred animals.



Winners Enclosure

There were 7 races starting at 17:40 & ending with the 20:45. The first races went with out a hitch with some horses being withdrawn due to conditions, then in the 6th race one of the horses decided to say neigh, and threw his jockey on the way to the starting gate. It took about 15 minutes to recapture the horse who seemed to quite enjoy running up and down the course on his own.



“One of the horses decided to say neigh, and threw his jockey on the way to the starting gate”

In the 7th and last race, first one horse didn't like the starting gate & in the process of trying to push the horse in, the other horses became spooked and had to be let out again. After a number of attempts to get all the horses in the gates the stewards decided to retire 4 of the runners as it was obvious they'd never get all the horses in at once. Eventually they started 15 mins late and the favourite won, so obviously wasn't affected at all.

In the end some people had winners & most had losers, but everyone enjoyed the evening out, which really is the point. Some people stayed on afterwards for a Massaoke sing along to a live band.

Fiddler on the roof

We met outside the Playhouse Theatre on a cloudy but warm Thursday in July. People were chatting, waiting to receive their tickets from Norman who arrived precisely on time as usual.

The theatre had changed its seating layout so that the actors could use paths through the auditorium. As an added touch trees were used as you entered the seating area giving the idea that you were actually within the set. There was also birdsong being played which added to the effect.

decides “on the other hand” he wants her to be happy. His second daughter wants to marry a young Student and they tell her father rather than wait for the matchmaker. He mulls this over and again “on the other hand” agrees though doesn’t like it. His 3rd daughter wants to marry outside the faith and they tell him they’re going to marry. This time he decides there is no “other hand”, it is a step too far and he disowns them.

It contains the well known songs "Matchmaker, Matchmaker", "Sunrise, Sunset" and "If I Were a Rich Man"

The story, based on the Jewish pogroms in Russia, is actually about the generational changes in society which are common in the world. In fact when it first opened in Japan in 1967 they thought the story was so Japanese that it might not be understood in America!

At the end they get evicted from their homes and the whole town goes in different directions, some to America, some to Warsaw and the Matchmaker, played by Anita Dobson, goes to the “promised land” to escape persecution.



It was a good story well acted, and the intimate staging made the story come alive. It contains the well known songs "Matchmaker, Matchmaker", "Sunrise, Sunset" and "If I Were a Rich Man".

It centres around the main character Tevye, who wants to follow tradition and decides to marry his daughter to the local elderly Butcher so she would be looked after. However she wanted to marry a young tailor. When the tailor asks for her hand, Tevye is at first incensed then

After the show which lasted about 3 hours with the interval, 21 of us headed up Northumberland Avenue to Prezzo to have a meal and a chat which was enjoyed by all. A great way to spend an afternoon.

Brooklands Museum



Apart from the timed tickets to Concorde you could wander around the whole site as you pleased. The site has a motor museum which has early to late racing cars, a Formula 1 simulator which allows you to “drive” laps of the original Brooklands circuit in an F1 car, and an area with road cars, motorcycles and bicycles.

On Thursday 25th July 24 fellowship members, 13 from Maple Cross & 11 from Solent gathered at the Brooklands Museum in Surrey. Many had thought that this was a visit to a Motor museum as they’d heard of its claim to fame as the first motor racing track in the world which opened in 1907. However it was a surprise to find that many aircraft had been built here including most of the fuselage and giant tailfin of all of the Concorde ever built.



1923 Halford Special

“Our entry included a “flight” on the Concorde, where you sit in the cabin and feel the vibrations as the aircraft takes off and lands”



Concorde Cabin

Our entry included a “flight” on the Concorde, where you sit in the cabin and feel the vibrations as the aircraft takes off and lands, with a video screen explaining all about the aircraft. They have also removed some of the inner lining so you can see the water cooled windows (required because of the heat generated at supersonic speeds) and the outer skin.



1964 Cooper T72 F3



Concorde Engine



2001 Jordan Honda EJ11



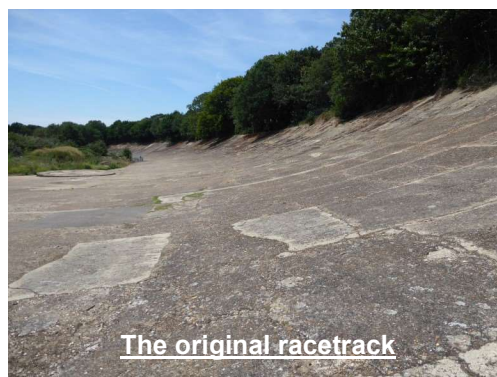
Concorde cooled windows

Brooklands Museum (cont.)



Hawker Fury (replica)

You can walk a section of the old racing track which has extremely steep banking around the curve. The world land speed record was held by Brooklands in 1909, when a 21.5 litre 200hp Benz car reached 115 mph over 1 mile. This was raised to 124mph in 1914 in a similar car. The final record held by Brooklands was in 1922 when a 18.3 litre 350hp Sunbeam reached over 133 mph over a kilometre.

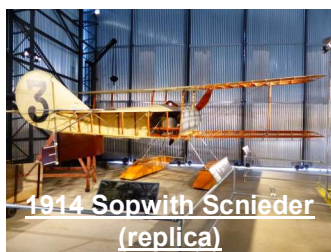


The original racetrack

“The cockpit of the Harrier was very complex with lots of switches and dials”

Next to the finishing straight is a test hill built in 1909 to facilitate the testing of cars ability to climb steep hills and of their brakes ability to stop them coming down! It has 3 sections, the first being 1 in 8, then 1 in 5 and the final section at 1 in 4.

A hanger building contains many different types of aircraft from biplanes to fighter jets. Some of these you can also sit in, and guides can give lots of information and answer any questions you may have. The cockpit of the Harrier was very complex with lots of switches and dials, it's amazing that anybody could even fly it, let alone go to war in it.

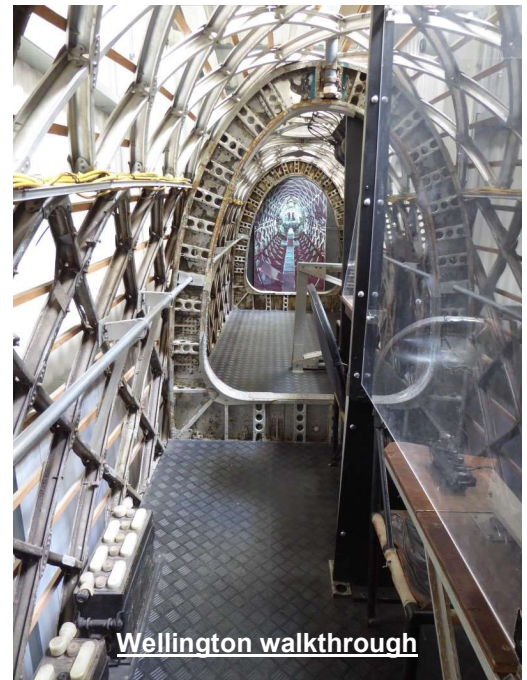


1914 Sopwith Scnieder (replica)



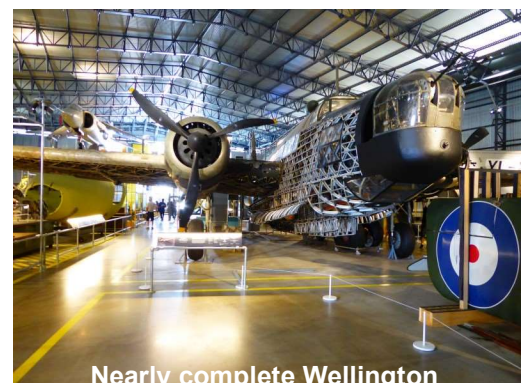
Harrier Cockpit

They also have a section of the fuselage of a Wellington Bomber, made at Brooklands. It has no fabric skin but you can walk through it and see the geodesic design of the aluminium frame.



Wellington walkthrough

A connected area called the aircraft factory shows how aircraft were designed and built. There is a nearly complete Wellington here, recovered from Loch Ness. The Wellington was designed to meet an air ministry requirement issued in 1932 and Barnes Wallis designed the frame which was very strong and light. It came into service in 1938 and continued flying till 1953. Over 11,400 were produced, the largest number of any British bomber.



Nearly complete Wellington

Brooklands Museum (cont.)



Stratosphere Chamber

Nearby is a Stratosphere chamber designed by Barnes Wallis who headed up the R & D department. This he designed to reproduce atmospheric conditions from sea level to 70,000 ft and temperatures from -65°C up to $+55^{\circ}\text{C}$. It was not only used to test aircraft, such as Vickers Viscount, VC10 and Vanguard, but also to develop clothing for Antarctic exploration. In the 1950's it was used to solve the mystery of the loss of two fishing trawlers in arctic waters. Using models in the chamber they ascertained that in freezing conditions the ice build up on the rigging led the trawlers to capsize.

There is a full size replica of the Alcock and Brown Vickers Vimy, the first plane to fly the Atlantic. In 1994 this working replica also flew from England to Australia, replicating the journey made in 1919.



Vickers Vimy (replica)

Apart from Concorde, there are other aircraft which can be boarded. There is a Vickers Viscount one of the most successful aircraft ever produced. It was cheap to run and people liked the large windows. Also the Turbo prop engines were very smooth and quiet. Vickers produced 445 of the aircraft at Brooklands between 1948 to 1963. The last one ceased flying in 2009.



Vickers Viscount (huge windows)

There is also a VC10 once owned by the Sultan of Oman which has a state room, two double beds, a kitchen, and an area of seating for the staff which is slightly less salubrious.



Sultan of Oman state room VC10



Inside the Viscount



Sultans bedroom VC10

Lastly there is the London bus museum which houses about 35 buses from 1875 to 1979. Some of these are still working and offer rides around the site. There is also a lot of memorabilia from uniforms to ticket machines, medals, signs and examples of works of art used but the bus companies.

After seeing all that we wanted, we met at the Sunbeam Café for an afternoon tea, or ice cream etc, before heading home before the traffic outside got too busy. It was a great experience and well worth the trip.



London Buses
©Brooklands Museum

The Maiden Voyage of the Anna Marie

by Nigel Burrows



The Anna Marie

The adventure started on the 7th March when I took handover of my new 35 foot sailing yacht, a Dehler 34 at Hamble Point marina which is between Southampton & Portsmouth. Myself and two friends had planned to sail her in a number of legs over the following days to her home port of Suffolk Yacht Harbour. This is located on the River Orwell just up river from Felixstowe Docks, a total distance of 196 M nautical miles (M = approx 1.15 land miles) in a boat that would average 6 knots (M/Hr).

I'd named the boat Anna Marie, after my wife, back in October in order to register it for a radio license. She dropped us off at the marina and saw for the first time that I'd named the boat after her, which went down well.

The first day was spent going through all the systems on the boat with the Dehler rep Russell, which should have included a sail but by the afternoon it was too windy, an insight of things to come!

Hamble Point Marina to Portsmouth



Preparing to leave Hamble Point with my sailing buddies Steve Hale and Dave Fawcett

The winds died down overnight and the following morning we headed out into Southampton water to learn the intricacies of the reefing system and automatic pilot. After a couple of hours we headed back to Hamble Point marina, filled up with water and diesel and dropped Russell off.

We then set sail for Portsmouth Harbour and in particular Haslar Marina just 13M away. The wind was beginning to build again, 17knts, so we reduced the area of sail by putting a reef into the main sail, basically pulling a section down and rolling a section of the front sail (jib) in. The entrance to Portsmouth Harbour is very narrow. There is a recommended yacht track on the west side and at the pinch point the ferries come very close. We arrived at Haslar Marina which is on the Gosport side at 15.30 after leaving Hamble Point at 12.55 giving an average speed of just over 5 knts.

After mooring up we found our way to the Harbour Masters office to pay the mooring fees. We decided we deserved a drink and found a bar just opposite the office. This worked out well as there was a retirement party going on and we were invited to help consume the food that had been provided. We didn't need to be asked twice.

Portsmouth Harbour Haslar Marina to Brighton Marina



Motoring out of Portsmouth Harbour. A ferry had just overtaken us at the narrow entrance in the background. I'm sure we could have touched its sides.

Next morning it was cold and blowing 15 knots. I was glad I specified a heating system for the boat. We set off for Brighton marina at 07.00hrs in order to get a favorable tidal flow. In particular we needed to get through the Looe, a narrow channel off Selsey Bill, where tidal flows can be 3knots. We motored out of Portsmouth and put the sails up with one reef in the main. After an hour the winds had increased to 21knots, gusting to 25 and with the seas building we reduced the main sail area again.

Once we got through the Looe Channel our direction of sailing would mean that the wind would be directly behind us. As we were already getting overpowered we decided to take down the main sail and continue under the jib only. The wind continued to increase to 30 knots and we raced towards Brighton at just under 9 knots with just a small section of the jib up. We arrived outside Brighton marina at 13.40 having averaged a speed of just under 7 knots.

The entrance looked pretty wild with waves breaking over the harbour wall on both sides. We dropped the jib and waited for a period of smaller waves at which point I increased the engine revs and we surfed in and around the harbour wall to calmer water.

Once we had moored up I looked at the weather forecast for the next few days and it was looking extremely windy for the rest of the week. I decided to leave the boat in Brighton marina and start again the following week. With this in mind we retired to the pub to have a few beers, watch the rugby and have something to eat.

The wind speeds increased over night and was blowing at 50knots by morning. The jib had started to unfurl and needed to be dropped. To do this we had to unroll it before it could be taken down. This needed the three of us plus two of the marina staff to handle it in the high winds. After that exercise we decided we needed a full English breakfast before closing the boat up and catching the train back home.

Arriving Brighton Marina. It looks calm but there was still a strong wind blowing on the side of the boat making it difficult to steer in a straight line. The harbour master was surprised to see us and sent a couple of his crew down to help us moor up.



The Maiden Voyage of The Anna Marie *(Cont.)*

Brighton to Sovereign Harbour Eastbourne



Updating the passage plans with the tidal flows for the revised dates of sailing

Having studied the weather forecast and tidal information I decided that Monday 18th March looked good to restart the voyage. Gathering my crew we all met down at Brighton Marina during the afternoon on Sunday 17th March. We got the jib out of storage and put it up and filled up the fresh water tank.

We left Brighton the following morning at 07.10 heading to Sovereign Harbour Eastbourne, a distance of 25.6 M. The winds started off light but slowly increased to 15 knots as we rounded Beachy Head, helping us increase our speed from 3 to a maximum of 7knots.



View back at Beachy Head

We arrived at the safe water mark off Sovereign Harbour at 11.50. To get into the marina we had to pass through a lock which operates on the hour and half hour. Hoping to make the 12.00 lock we called up the harbour master who confirmed that we were to make our way in. We followed a fishing boat into the lock which as soon as the gates were closed started cleaning out its fish boxes which was pretty smelly.

Eastbourne to Ramsgate Harbour



Sunrise exiting the lock at Eastbourne

To get the most benefit from the tides we had an early start the next day and we were in the lock at 05.50 hours. We exited the lock to a spectacular red sunrise. In contrast to the previous week there was now too little wind, in fact zero.

We motored past Hastings at around 08.00 and saw a porpoise which continued to follow us at a distance for a while then swam off. As we approached Dungeness at around 10.00 the wind began to fill in and we hoisted the sails. We started to make good time, reaching Dover at 12.30. We decided to push onto Ramsgate and dodging ferries, which seemed to be coming from all sides, we sailed past the two entrances that go into Dover Harbour. With a steady wind and the tide in our favour we headed to Ramsgate at 7.2 Knots.

We reached Ramsgate at 15.30, having covered 62.1M at an average speed of 6.5 Knots. Ramsgate is a working harbour and permission is required from the Port Authorities plus calling the marina Harbour Master before entering. We duly did this via the radio and were told to wait until another vessel had exited. This vessel turned out to be a coastal protection vessel, presumably going on patrol in search of boats crossing the channel with illegal passengers.

Once we had got the boat ship shape I worked out the route from Ramsgate and around and through the channels of the many sand banks that occur in the Thames Estuary. The tidal flows are fairly complicated in this area. There are a number of routes through the sand banks. The wind direction and the time you leave in relation to high tide will determine the fastest route. Fortunately I have a very thick book called Crossing the Thames Estuary which has all the options in matrix form.

Home - The River Orwell

We departed Ramsgate at 07.50 passing the moored coastal protection vessel which must have come back sometime during the night. The wind was just under 6 knots and we had just over 1 knot of tide against us. We hoisted the sails and cruised along at just over 4 knots.



Rounding Dungeness Headland

The Thames Estuary is a very busy shipping area and we had to cross a number of shipping lanes. A good watch has to be kept as these ships are probably doing in excess of 20 knots to our 4 and come up on you very quickly. On our passage we saw another porpoise and a seal. The seal followed us for a quite some time and just when we thought he had left us up would pop his head again.

We made it safely across the Thames Estuary and headed up the coast to the River Orwell and past the cranes of Felixstowe Docks to the boat's new home port of Suffolk Yacht Harbour. However fate had one more hand to deal. We knew that we would be arriving at the lowest of low tides but the channel into the marina should be dredged to 2.5m below this tide. The boat's draught is 1.95m. Due to the strong winds at the beginning of March the marina was behind with its dredging. We arrived at 17.10 and the dredger was actually in the channel dredging as we arrived. It moved over and waded me in but I soon touched bottom and decided to back out. The other choice was to pick a buoy up for an hour or so or head up river to Woolverston marina which we knew we could get into. We decided to go to Woolverston arriving at 17.48. We had covered a distance of 51M from Ramsgate.

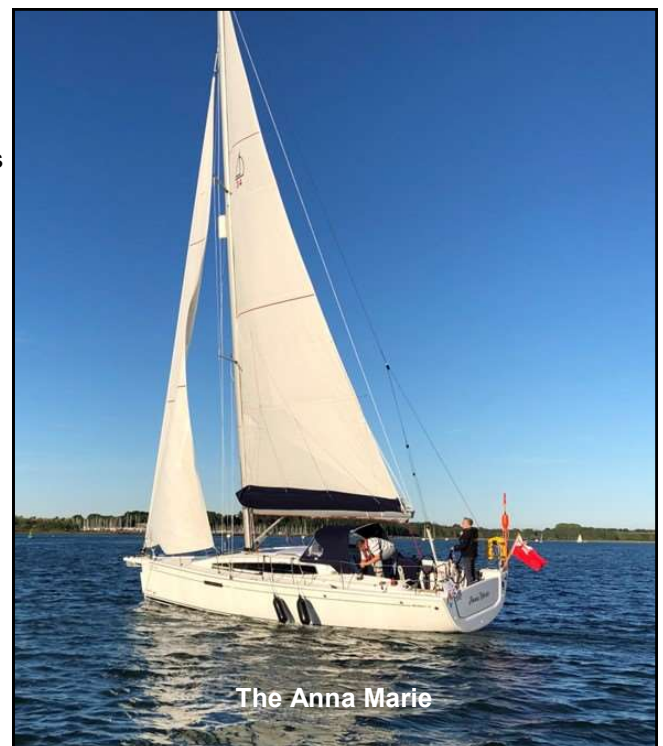
Suffolk Yacht Harbour

I sailed the boat the next day the short distance from Woolverston marina to Suffolk Yacht Harbour, making sure I arrived at high tide this time.

The log said we had covered a total distance of 196.1M in a sailing time of 33 hours and 20 minutes albeit over two weeks but that's sailing for you.



Anna Marie moored at her home port. The old light ship in the back ground serves as the club house.



The Anna Marie

Nigel Burrows

My Camino Francés *by Jeff Taylor*



The view on the way to Orisson Refuge

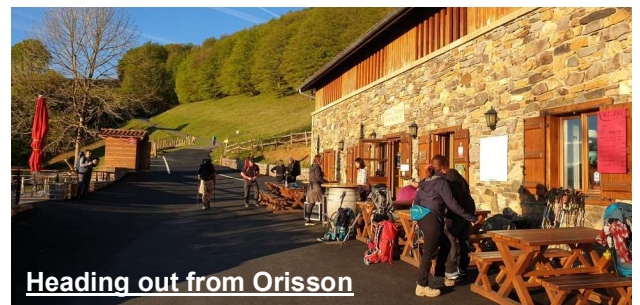
Here I was in St Jean Pied de Port at the foot of the Pyrenees in France about to start my 490 mile walk across northern Spain on my own. I'd left Shirley in Bilbao that morning after a 3 day holiday, and wouldn't see her again for over a month. After six months of planning, I was both nervous and excited, truly outside my comfort zone, alone in a foreign country. I wanted a stamp in my Credencial, a document you need to use Albergue lodgings on the Camino, but the office was closed for lunch. Rather than wait for an hour I decided to forego the "first" stamp and head up to Orisson Refuge, where I'd booked a bed for the night. Generally you just trusted to luck and got any bed available, however Orisson was small and there was nothing else around. Most people walked over the Pyrenees in one go, but that wasn't for me.

It was hot and steep so I kept stopping for a rest and to take on water, but it was very peaceful and the views were spectacular. It took me 2½ hours to walk the 5 miles with 2000 feet of climbing, not bad for a novice carrying a 9kg rucksack. Having the top bunk in a 6 bedded room was an interesting experience, especially going to the loo in the middle of the night, still I slept well. One chap, Evert, had walked from Belgium, so much for my 5 miles!

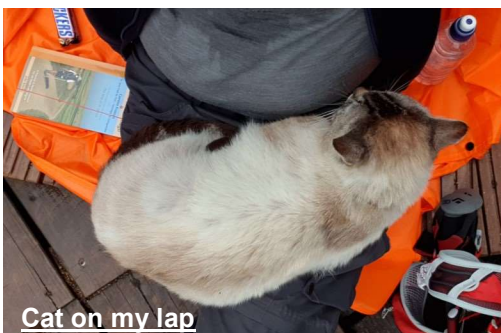
The general routine was to get up early, walk for a couple of hours, have breakfast, walk till lunch time, then find accommodation. I only had room for 3 days of clothes so washing them daily was also essential. Whatever time left in the day was for exploring and buying essentials.

I had a lovely walk over the Pyrenees, in bright sunshine. I heard later from other Pilgrims that 2 days before there was sheet ice and 3 days later it was thick fog, so I was lucky.

The first real problem I had was in Zubiri on day 3, all the accommodation was full. Using my phone I found a room 4 miles away but needed to get there. I went into a bar and asked the owner, "Necesito taxi". She was great, she ordered one for me. The taxi arrived quickly, took me to the hotel and the driver agreed to pick me up the next day 😊.



Heading out from Orisson



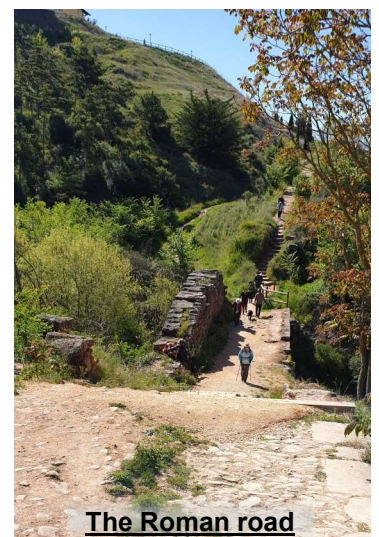
Cat on my lap

It was raining the next day so I had to wear my poncho. At breakfast, I was befriended by a cat, who after stealing my bread, decided my lap was nice and warm so made himself comfortable. The day was also memorable for a goat sitting on a roof and a little shrew on the path, who ignored the walkers. It was wonderful.

After 4 days & nearly 50 miles I got my first blisters, not bad considering all my training had been done on the "mountains" of the Thames Valley. Still I had to be careful as feet are pretty essential when walking.

On one long climb I realised that it was not only me outside my comfort zone. Shirley sent me a lot of text messages as she had a computer virus problem. We managed to solve it, but it was a learning experience for us both.

The scenery changed as we entered the Navarra wine making region. Scrub, trees & cereal crops were replaced with vines which made a nice change. I also walked on my first Roman road. You could sense the history of the pilgrims who'd travelled this route for the past 1200 years, but it felt like the upkeep of the road had ceased when the Romans left. It was very rough.



The Roman road

There are many water fountains along the route where you can fill up your bottles, although there are parts where little water is available for days. One morning we came across the Bodegas Irache which has a very ornate silver fountain. The best part though is that it dispenses both water and red wine, all free. This is how at 8am just after sunrise I came to be drinking red wine.

The weather also changed as the walk progressed. It gradually got warmer, but you could still have a frost in the mornings, so layers were essential.

The Logrono day is one I'll never forget for all the wrong reasons. It was 17.3 miles on a hot day, so I set out at 6:20am in the dark in order to beat the worst heat. It was a nice walk till the last 3 miles which was on a modern tarmac path, through an industrial estate, with no shade, it was really hot. I had to wait 2 hours for my accommodation, and my feet hurt a lot. It was here I contemplated giving up, but chatting to Shirley on the phone, she said "Wait till morning & see how you feel".

When I woke I didn't feel too bad, it's amazing what a night's sleep can do. It was supposed to be the first of my rest days with the following day being another 18 miles, but I decided to forgo the rest day and do a short walk of 8 miles. Then I'd only have 10 miles the day after and I'd still be on schedule. It was the best decision I made. Leaving the town that morning, I came across some mules. I saw them later with their riders; they were on the Camino as well.



The wine fountain



Mules in Logrono

Life on the trail was interesting, I came across an old couple playing "O Sole Mio" for passing pilgrims, in the middle of nowhere, and a few days later, a guy playing classical pieces on a guitar. This was all part of the joy of the Camino. I'd also meet new people and find out interesting things about them. There was a couple from Australia whose house purchase had fallen through. So they'd put all their possessions in storage and decided to see Europe and walk the Camino. They'd sort the problem when they got back.

I also met a lot of people who'd left the forces. I think the routine of the Camino gave them something they'd lost. One had walked it 9 years in a row. He said he couldn't settle into normal life, & it was something to look forward to.

I enjoyed my shopping expeditions, especially when something unusual was needed. I needed some elastic to replace the rubber band I used to keep my place in the guidebook. I ended up in an old fashioned haberdasher's shop where the assistant was delighted to sell me a 1 metre length of Lastico for 0.5€. She even wrapped it nicely.

11 days into the walk the top of my foot had started hurting, so I checked with Dr Google who suggested tendonitis or a fracture, and recommended 2 weeks rest. Dr Volterol had a better solution, lots of gel and strapping; this seemed to work & was how I walked the rest of the way. Also I occasionally wore sandals to give my feet a change.

At a nice looking breakfast stop in Granón, the chap in front of me presented his credit card to pay, but they didn't accept cards and he had no cash. The Camino is all about helping others, so I thought the best thing I could do was buy him breakfast, it was less than 5€. He was really grateful. That night at 'Albergue A Santiago' he was one of the four people in my room. He bought me a beer for helping him 😊. It was here I had a shower before it got busy. When I finished, I came out of the cubical and found four ladies standing there. I'd used the wrong one, luckily nothing was on show!



The breakfast van in Granón



Albergue A Santiago in Belorado

I'd been staying in a mixture of hotels, apartments, pensions, and Albergues. Nearly 2 weeks in I had a night which put me off Albergues for the rest of the trip. In a really rural area I managed to secure the second to last bed in the only place to stay in the area. Unfortunately it was in a 36 bed room. The night was very disturbed, people came in late, got up in the night to go to the loo and left very early, some before 5am. I thought never again! The only bonus was that I'd just completed 1/3 of the route, 163 miles, just 326 miles to go 😊.

My Camino (Cont.)



A typical Meseta path

The route headed onto the high Meseta with no services, little shade and higher temperatures. There was little tarmac and the crops were again cereals, not vines. Filling up with water whenever possible was essential.

One night I had a 2 bedroom chalet with a great view. After settling in a group of French people arrived and we got chatting. They invited me to have dinner with them. As there were 6 of them and they only had a 4 berth chalet, in the Camino spirit, I offered them my spare room. It was lovely to have nice company & home cooked food, a pleasant time.

Overnight 17 days in, there was a heavy storm, about 12mm of rain fell and the winds increased. As I left at 7:20am that morning, the rain had stopped but the wind, 17mph, was in my face. Walking was difficult. I decided on the scenic route as I couldn't face walking into the wind along a main road. If I had to walk into the wind I wanted something nice to look at. After about 7 miles battling the wind I just had to sit down. I was so tired I nearly fell over as I bent my knees, only my poles saved me. After a coffee stop I pushed on into Carrión de los Condes and reached my accommodation.



The view from my chalet in Castrojeriz

My room in the Nunnery

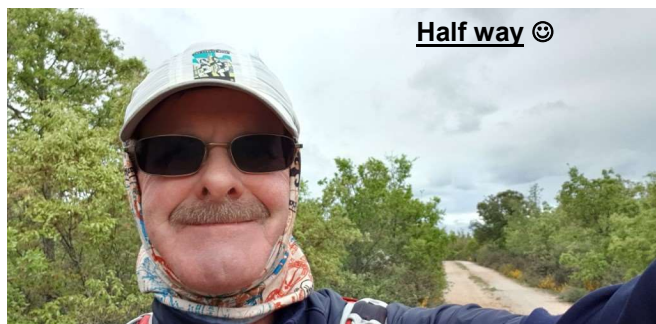
Sorry for the mess!



Unfortunately there'd been a mix up in the booking, and they didn't have a room for me after all. As it was their mistake they booked me a room at another place in the town. That's how I came to spend the night in a nunnery.

I'd been on the road now for 17 days without a rest and was beginning to feel mentally tired. At one stage I even phoned Shirley to ask her where I was, I just couldn't think. It was still 5 days till my rest stop in León and I had to hang on to that thought. Luckily the next day, I passed the ½ way point of my journey, a cheering thought.

The next few days were a bit of a blur. It was still windy and I reached the half way milestone ☺. At Sahagún you could buy a half way certificate, so I did, it was only 5€ & included a cardboard tube and entry to a museum. At least I had one certificate, but I really wanted the final one. At last I felt that I might just finish.



Half way ☺

On my next 2 days I used an alternative route as it followed a Roman road rather than a major highway. It was very quiet; one day I only saw 6 people apart from at the hotel. The route had no houses or shops, no water and little shade, but I was walking a road used by Augustus Caesar himself.



My new cap

The next day the wind dropped and I headed into León for my rest day, what a relief. I was able to book the rest of my accommodation up to Sarria, where I was meeting Shirley. This took the stress out of finding accommodation each day, and Shirley back at mission control booked the rest from Sarria onwards. I also managed to purchase new rubber pole tips, as I'd lost one the day before and worn the other out. Plus I bought a new cap as my other one had worn through. I'd stayed in León last year so didn't need to do sightseeing, but walked to my favourite Creperie & also bumped into the French crowd from Castrojeriz.

Leaving León, I again decided on the green route rather than walk along the highway. It was nice to be in the country again after staying in the city. That evening I chatted to a guy from Alaska - every day is different.

The next day I met a chap called Brett & his wife Karen, who I first met after Zubiri. He'd had really bad blisters then, but was still hobbling on. I hadn't thought he'd make it this far, so was really pleased for him. We talked for over an hour, which made the time go quickly, then he had to rest so I pushed on. I came to Hospital de Órbigo which had a magnificent 13th century bridge, one of the longest and best preserved in Spain.



Puente de Órbigo - 13th century bridge

I also met a group of Irish chaps, one of whom had lived in Kilburn. I told him of the time I found a drunk Irishman in a shallow trench outside the Galtimore nightclub one morning. He said "A drunk Irishman. No way!" We all laughed.

I reached the 2/3 point of the walk, and although it was nice to be making progress, I started to think about the finish. I was so enjoying the walk I didn't really want it to end, but I knew it must. We'd driven this part of the route in reverse last year so it was nice to stop at a café we'd used last year, it was reassuringly familiar.



Cruz de Ferro

The next day we reached the highest point on the Camino at La Cruz de Ferro (Iron Cross) a symbolic rather than amazing place. The climb to nearly 5000ft wasn't too bad as I started only 1300ft lower. I placed a stone from home at the foot of the cross, as is customary, and remembered my journey so far. Walking down was terrible, really rocky and at a 1:8 grade for 4 miles. It took me over 8 hrs to do the 16 miles, and my calf muscles were shot. I saw Brett & Karen here for the last time on the walk. I really wondered if he made it to the end.

Early one morning I was thinking that, as we were nearing the longest day, it ought to be getting lighter in the mornings, but it wasn't. Then I realized I was walking west, so was walking away from sunrise. So it now rose 1/2 hour later than when I'd started!

I now reached the 3/4 mark of the walk, the end seemed to be accelerating towards me. We were back in vine country and I noticed roses planted at the end of every row of vines. I presume this is to help with pollination. Whatever it was for it was pretty. Again I took the Green route to keep off the roads and had a lovely walk up in the hills and only saw 4 people the whole day. I loved the solitude and listening to the birdsong and animals.



Roses at the end of vines



A typical marker with the yellow arrow

The next day included what was said by my guidebook the longest steepest climb on the Camino; 5 miles with a climb of 2300ft, and it was due to be 33°C by lunchtime. I set off early and after 2hrs of walking reached the bottom of the climb. You could hire horses to get you to the top if you wanted, but I didn't think that was right, & hate riding, so off I went.

I found the climb remarkably easy as I was now a lot fitter than when I'd started! Near the top I passed a sign showing 160km (100 miles) to go to the end of the Camino. We moved from Castilla y León into the Galicia region and the path immediately improved, with much finer gravel and very flat surfaces. At the top of the climb in O'Cebreiro, there is the burial place of Don Elias Sampedro, the priest who started marking the Camino Frances with yellow arrows in the 1970's. This led to its revival as the major pilgrim route we see today.

Two days later I entered Sarria, my second rest day, but more importantly, it was where I was meeting Shirley, who was doing the last section of the walk with me. I hadn't seen her for the whole of May, the longest we'd ever been apart since marrying 40+ years ago.

The hotel was nice and I spent the early part of the day settling in, and walking the town, checking out restaurants and places to visit as she wasn't arriving till the evening and I didn't want to waste any time. I had lunch by the river and decided that would be a nice place for the evening. There was a better restaurant in the old town but I thought that would be better for the following lunch time.

On the rest day, we headed to the launderette to wash all our clothes, Shirley had spent a few days in Madrid before coming to Sarria so needed some washing done as well as me. The machine said it'd take ½ hour so we went exploring . We spotted a classic car show, so went to look. Shirley's eye was caught by a light blue Porsche which she said she'd like for her birthday ☺. (NB : It didn't happen -Shirley)

The rest of the day was spent exploring the town visiting churches and eating, just chilling out and catching up.



The light blue Porche in Sarria



100km to go

We set out early the next day walking before breakfast as I was used to. Shirley loved the quiet and birdsong so early in the morning as I did. We came to the 100km marker and I took Shirley's photo. This was the minimum distance required to gain a certificate of completion. It was lovely to walk with Shirley and have somebody to talk to, it helped pass the time. It was quite a tough day with a climb out of Sarria & another climb into Portomarin where we stopped for the night, but Shirley managed well, I had to remember I was fitter now so not to go too fast.

The following three days rain was forecast, so we used our wet weather gear quite a bit, though it didn't rain all the time. It'd stopped by the time we reached our hotel, so we sat out in the sun with a coffee and flan to enjoy the view.



The view at Os Valos

Shirley was a bit unwell the last three days of her walk, probably through dehydration. During my solo walk it'd nearly always been hot, so drinking was essential. But with the cooler wet weather we didn't really drink enough. Still she pressed on, walking up some steep hills, resting as needed. I'm proud of her.

The last two days had better weather and though the guidebook said to expect a lot of people on this part of the Camino, as some people only walked the last day or two, we found it relatively quiet. At one stop a wooden sculpture caught our eye. It was a piece of wood which looked like an otter on top of Camino marker. It was near the entry to a bar, and seemed to attract people, who after looking at it, came in. Well we did at least.

The last day came and we climbed up past the airport and onto Monte Gozo which overlooks Santiago de Compostela. It was with mixed emotions that I entered Santiago. The busy traffic & people were annoying, I'd hardly seen any in the last 40 days, but I'd finished my pilgrimage which was great. However my journey was finished & I'd miss it.

So what did I achieve?

In statistical terms, I walked 492.3 miles. About the distance from London to Aberdeen.

I climbed & descended 5¼ miles, nearly the height of Everest.

As for steps taken, it was more than 1¼ million - no wonder my feet felt a little battered.

It took me 40 days and 39 nights.

What did I learn, top three?

Well I can be a lone stranger in a foreign land and thrive. Company is good but so is solitude, and helping strangers in need makes you feel good.

Would I do it again? Yes, it was great fun.

In case you were wondering, Brett and Karen did make it. They arrived in Santiago the day after us. We actually met at the airport as we were about to board our plane ☺. It was lovely to meet up again, even for a few minutes.



Statue at Casa Tía



Jeff & Shirley in Santiago

Games & puzzles

Sudoku

		8	4					1
5	6			1		4	2	
4		1				9		
	9	6	2		7	3	5	
			3		9			
	8	5	1		4	2	7	
		3				1		6
	4	2		9			3	5
8					6	7		

Easy

6					5			
8	2	7		4	6			
			3	7			8	
2	5					8		
		9				4		
		8					1	7
	1			5	8			
			6	9		7	3	8
			4					1

Hard

Wordsearch

V	E	M	N	H	A	N	M	X	D
W	B	M	G	T	V	A	N	L	E
E	M	C	P	A	Y	L	S	E	I
L	A	H	C	E	N	L	B	E	S
L	J	U	A	H	I	I	A	P	G
E	O	R	L	L	W	M	W	L	I
S	R	C	L	B	D	C	P	L	T
L	H	H	A	R	L	A	R	E	D
E	Z	I	G	O	A	M	V	S	T
Y	N	L	H	W	B	X	J	S	S
Z	Q	L	A	N	D	O	O	U	G
G	N	I	N	N	A	C	K	R	O

Which of these Prime ministers is not in the list?

- 1 MAY
- 2 BROWN
- 3 MAJOR
- 4 CALLAGHAN
- 5 HEATH
- 6 MACMILLAN
- 7 CHURCHILL
- 8 BALDWIN
- 9 CANNING
- 10 WELLESLEY
- 11 GLADSTONE
- 12 PEEL
- 13 RUSSELL

Also who had the shortest term in office? Answers on the back page.

1969- 50 Years ago:-

February - The Boeing 747 flew for the first time.

April - The Harrier Jump jet entered service with the RAF.

June - The TV documentary "The Royal Family" had an audience of 30.6 million, more than half the UK population.

August - Iain Macmillan took the photo of The Beatles on the zebra crossing on Abby Road.

October - The 50p coin was introduced as replacement for the 10-shilling note.

December - Seiko introduced the world's first quartz wristwatch, with a guaranteed accuracy of five seconds / month.

Wordsearch - The words can be found forwards, backwards and on both diagonals and in either direction.

Kier Fellowship

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This magazine serves the Kier Fellowship members from the Maple Cross area. It is provided by members for members.

Please send any contributions you may have, such as anecdotes from your working life, photos, recent events, holidays etc. which may interest others, to Jeff Taylor, at :-

kfmaplecross@virginmedia.com

Please provide feedback on the newsletter, good and bad, so it can be improved. If there is anything you wish to see added, please send requests to the above e-mail address.

Also if you have any suggestions for other events please contact Norman Elliott.

Also Kier now have a dedicated Fellowship website go to :-

www.fellowship.kier.co.uk

Forthcoming Events (proposed)

23rd August Kier Fellowship Golf Day

19th September Late Summer Luncheon

Oct / Nov Possible meal TBA

12th December Christmas Luncheon

February Valentines day Luncheon

April St Georges Day Luncheon

May Show / Event

June Windsor Horse Racing

Wordsearch PM's :-

The shortest term PM is Canning with 119 days. Wellesley (Duke of Wellington) had a term of only 23 days as interim PM but also served for 2+ years

Wordsearch - The missing Prime minister is Gladstone.