

A Newsletter for Pilgrims Everywhere

# The Aussie Camino

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## Editorial WELCOME PILGRIMS

### THE FIRST NEWSLETTER FOR THE AUSSIE CAMINO

Since our inaugural camino at Easter this year there have been numerous people who have contacted me and inquired further about the Aussie Camino. In the absence of a website I thought it would be a good idea to keep those people who I have spoken to in touch with where what's happening next and whether there will be any further caminos. I also want to open up the discussion and share information about a whole range of other caminos and news from fellow pilgrims from around the world. There seems to be a growing worldwide interest in pilgrimage so it seems the time is right to start sharing some stories from what is an ancient Christian tradition. I would also like to share any books or DVD's that come my way and would love to open it up to any other contributions from readers.

All readers of this newsletter have at some stage have expressed to me an interest in pilgrimage and caminos. I have been gathering people and email contacts over the past few months and as there seems to be a growing number I thought it would be a good way to build some interest and keep you informed.

In this edition I have featured an article that I wrote which was published in various places. Hopefully this will be a useful way of keeping in touch and sharing this wonderful metaphorical and spiritual journey.

Buen camino!!

Luke

*Our pilgrimage in this world must have an end. Then, but not till then shall we have our rest and reward.*

Mary MacKillop



Luke and Steve outside the Mary MacKillop Museum East Melbourne



On "The Way"



Cape Nelson Lighthouse



Photos taken from our very first Aussie Camino With Steve and Mick

# The Aussie Camino

THIS ARTICLE ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN CATHOLIC LIFE, KAIROS AND AROUND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

There are many different reasons why people travel - health; to broaden the mind by seeing other places and other cultures; for holidays; while working for multinational companies; and for sport. People today, both young and old, are travellers. It is only within the last fifty or so years that the terms globe-trotters, and jet-setters have been coined. A pilgrimage has a different objective. It is a journey with a religious purpose, to visit holy or sacred places called shrines associated with a saint where people can feel near to the saint either through relics or miraculous stories.

It is as well to remember that Australia has no history of pilgrimage. Australia is not a country that people associate with pilgrimage. For pilgrimage to become part of the Church's witness in a particular country one needs saints and a kindling of the desire to visit places associated with their lives. Although there are many Aboriginal sacred sites and Aborigines go "walkabout" to reach them that is not pilgrimage in the Christian sense when pilgrims are intent on honouring those who lived and died for the faith. There is no tradition of Christian pilgrimage in Australia as there is in countries such as Spain, France, Italy and the Holy Land. With the canonisation of Mary MacKillop in 2008, the tradition of pilgrimage has begun to take root in Christian consciousness.

In April 2013 Luke Mills, Steven Murphy, Anthony Mills and Michael Dillon from St Francis Xavier College set out for the journey to where it all began. This was a first ever - there is no record that any other pilgrimage has ever been undertaken before from Portland, Victoria to Penola, South Australia.



**St Mary MacKillop**

According to the Oxford Dictionary, there are two meanings of the pilgrim. A pilgrim is one who travels to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion. A pilgrim is a person who regards life as a journey future life. It is this sense of pilgrim that Bunyan used in his book, *Pilgrim's Progress*; and that Vatican II was promoting when it put forward the idea of the Church as a pilgrim people who are moving together in the same direction towards their heavenly home.

Pilgrimage was derived from the Latin 'peregrinus' meaning stranger, one who travels in foreign lands. We do this from choice today but a pilgrimage could be imposed on a person. A stranger in foreign parts suggests banishment and exile. *Peregrinatio pro Christo* gives the sense of being a stranger for the sake of Christ. Pilgrimage was a journey undertaken as a penance. In the Middle Ages pilgrimages were penitential. Travelling to shrines in those days was very hard and dangerous. There was no penance as a reason for our pilgrimage which just shows how the concept of pilgrimage has changed. In more modern times a pilgrim follows in the footsteps of

others, to sites and shrines associated with miracles, or with the life and death of Jesus or a saint, and to deepen faith.

Pilgrimage is closely connected with shrines. Shrines are a focus of religious devotion. They are signs of God and of God's intervention in history. They are not places that one hurries into and out of again. Pilgrims go to shrines in order to feel nearer to a saint, or to Jesus Christ if one goes to the Holy Land. A shrine is above all a place of prayer. But it is also a focal point for people of all cultures and faiths.

## Mary MacKillop and Pilgrimage

Mary MacKillop was a traveller. Her work took her all over Australia and New Zealand. Almost a hundred years before Vatican II, she urged her Sisters - *Remember we are but travellers here* (1867). She did not mean that they were to be travellers in the sense of packing their bags and moving on. These words have been inscribed on her tomb in the Mary MacKillop Memorial chapel in Sydney. They are a reminder to all of the reality that we are pilgrims, only passing through this world where we do not belong. She wrote to her mother, Flora MacKillop:

*Our pilgrimage in this world must have an end. Then, but not till then, shall we have our rest and reward.*

Obviously, the image of life as a journey, where there is no permanence and where there is need for endurance, was very meaningful to Mary MacKillop.

## The Aussie Camino

Luke, Steven and Michael work together in a Catholic senior school and were discussing a movie they had seen called 'The Way' starring Martin Sheen and Emilio Estevez. This real-life Hollywood father and son team play the same roles in the story. When the son is killed in a freak storm the day before commencing 'El camino de Santiago de Compostella' the father flies from the U.S. to France to identify the body of his son. He is handed his son's backpack and ashes, he then becomes determined to complete the camino in honour of his son. Although it is a fictional story it could be based on any number of stories of pilgrims who make the journey through northern Spain. Along the camino he meets many pilgrims who also have made personal commitments- some spiritual some secular.



The movie struck a chord with us – *Why are there only caminos in Europe and the Holy Land? Why can't we have one here now we have a saint of our own?* Our destination of Penola was the obvious choice. Although Mary travelled widely throughout Australia and New Zealand this town is widely accepted as the birthplace or her order; the Sisters of St Joseph. Penola is a small town with a population of only 1300. It is 383km from Adelaide and 412km from Melbourne and although it has been made famous for its wine growing and its association with Mary MacKillop many Australians would not have visited it since it is not on the main highway between the two large cities.

Steven and Luke began the task of planning a camino that would be challenging but

achievable, it was also important to determine an appropriate commencement point. Mary travelled widely but her last teaching post as a lay teacher was in Portland, from here she was called by her mentor and co-founder priest Fr. Julian Tenison-Woods back to Penola where they first met a few years before. It was at this time on March 19, 1866 that Mary wore her black habit for the first time and declared herself Sister Mary. 'It seemed obvious that we too should start from this same point' says Luke. And although her path is not recorded she would have passed through many of the same towns as the Aussie Camino. Every day was planned with an average of 31km to walk each day.

'We wanted to make it like the camino in Spain with a guide book a passport for each stop,' said Luke. 'Unfortunately we didn't have passports because there would be no one to stamp them. However we made up a guide book of all the maps which included a reflection for each day.'

Every day began with a lively "Buen camino!!" in the main street of each town,.

Another important part of the camino was to 'bookend' it by visiting the Mary MacKillop Museums in Penola and in Melbourne. 'This provided a certain structure which we wanted to achieve,' Luke recounts.

With maps in hand we set out for our destination each day which would include eight hours of walking. Each day was long but spectacular as it was planned to be both a spiritual and religious experience. It was important to have a camino that recorded the places of Mary MacKillop but also appealed to people who have a sense of awe in creation. This was certainly the case as the camino includes walks along cliff tops, beaches, sand dunes, goat trails and farm tracks. Only about 10km of the whole camino was on major highways.

'I wanted to stay in the local pub (hotel) of each town and meet the local people. At the front bar of every small hotel in the country

you are likely to meet very colourful characters that are only too happy to share their stories. This was certainly the case and whenever anyone asked if we were walkers we said, 'No, we're pilgrims. We are on a camino.' Needless to say we were met with curious looks but a little bit of humour and good spirit we were able to enter into a lively discussion about what our journey was all about. I don't think there would be many front bars in Australia that would be discussing Mary MacKillop so it was certainly a moment of revelation for many of the local people along the way.'

Luke goes on to say 'This was a terrific week. The three of us got well and although we were tired at the end of each day, with a shower a hot meal and a good sleep we were ready for the next day. The peace and solitude combined with the steady rhythm of the feet and walking poles provides many moments of reflection. In this busy life often we don't get a chance to really talk with one another, but after spending eight hours on the road we were able to reveal very personal experiences of each others' lives. I really enjoyed it and I hope to do it again next year'

After 217km and 7 days of walking the three weary pilgrims were met by the director of the Mary MacKillop Museum; Clare Larkin and Krystyna Moore a representative of Cobb and Co. We left a tour of the centre until the next day as we were concerned by the smell of our pilgrims' clothes which we used everyday. We convened for dinner with other members of the Penola community all of which were interested to hear our story. Where else but at the local pub? This time we could claim the Royal Oak Hotel does have significance since it was once owned by Mary MacKillop's uncle.

*A short video of Our Aussie camino which you can find at:*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3aqX7pikBQ&feature=youtu.be>

*Or search for Aussie Camino on Youtube.*



Steve, Luke and Mick outside St. Joseph's Penola



Discovery Bay: Great South West Walk

## Update Aussie Camino 2014

Many people have enquired about a follow up camino in 2014 from Portland to Penola. I have been doing some preliminary planning and have found a suitable time that may good for a few people so I am sticking with it. It is over the first term holidays but still away from Easter so any people who are going away for Easter will still be able to do so.

My proposed dates are Saturday 5th April (departing Melbourne) till Sunday 13th April (departing Penola returning back to Melbourne). This leaves 7 days of walking with a day on each side to travel. A more detailed itinerary will be sent out soon but this will help people with plans if anyone was interested in coming. I will also ask for any expressions of interest in my next newsletter which will be around Christmas. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you want to know more

Until then,

Buen camino!

## Congratulations Mick!!

Our own pioneer pilgrim Michael Dillon has returned from the camino de Santiago de Compostela. After 4 months, 700km on bike in the 100th staging of the Tour de France and 1300km on foot through northern Spain Mick has returned to work back at St Francis Xavier College.

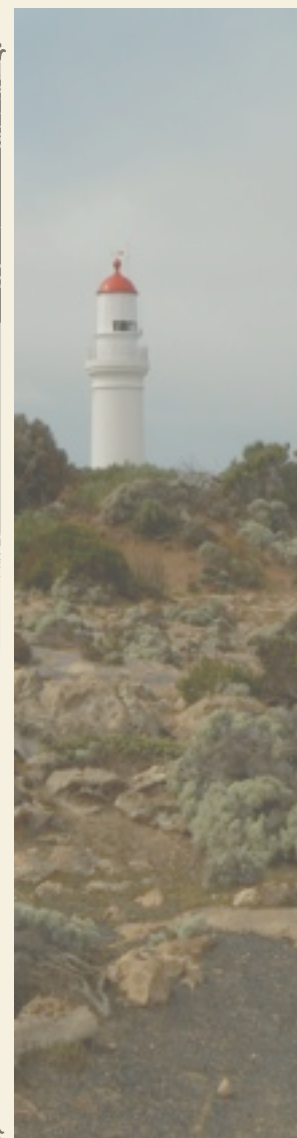
Mick kept a diary blog of the his journey with many fascinating accounts of the people and places he visited along the way. He gave himself the moniker 'Boomer'

in reference to that other great pilgrim Tom (Martin Sheen) from the movie 'The Way'. A must see movie for all pilgrims. Mick was an inspiration to us on the Aussie Camino and continues to inspire the students at school by making them see the important things in life and striving for their best.

You can follow all of Mick's adventures on:

[elcaminotourdefrance.edublogs.org](http://elcaminotourdefrance.edublogs.org)

Welcome home compadre.



## Book Review

### TOM TRUMBLE: UNHOLY PILGRIMS

#### HOW ONE MAN THOUGHT WALKING 800 KILOMTERES WOULD SORT OUT HIS LIFE

It's always good to get an Australian perspective on things. Often in radio and television we have been invited to listen to experts abroad to tell us how life is in another part of the world. We often get a uniquely Australian view. It may be irreverent, satirical even comical. It's refreshing to hear someone to sort out all the noise of TV news reports and cut through to the real message. This is the impression I got from Tom's first book 'Unholy Pilgrims'. It began as a summer read and I ended up finishing in about three sittings. A fascinating, cheeky yet remarkably well researched book about Tom and his faithful

companion Dave as they travel the 800kms from St-Jean-de-Luz, France to Santiago in northern Spain. Tom meets a huge number of pilgrims along the way, some interesting, some alluring some downright appalling. He presents very much as an Everyman, observing and immersing himself in the camino but he is not immune from the pitfalls of a big night out on the cerveza!! Tom said the journey took eight weeks to complete and 2 years to write. This pays off handsomely - as a historian he meticulously researched every part of the camino from the last shrine, monastery, gate, bridge, church

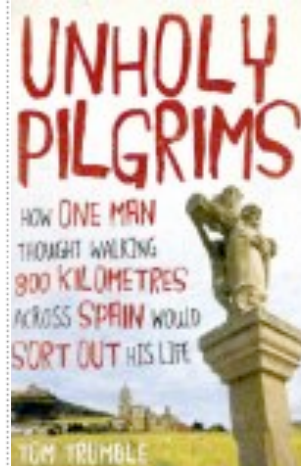
chapel and signpost. Everything seems to be covered all in his laconic and matter of fact way. His recounting of the final night melee in the bar is stuff of legend.

I was lucky enough to meet Tom when launching his new book "Rescue at 2100 Hours" a fascinating account of his own grandfather's evacuation from Timor in WW2. Another ripping read that shows Tom's ability to mix history and storytelling in one.

With a bit of luck Tom may even read this review. As far as I could see, somehow the Camino de Saniago de Compostela did sort his life out.



Courtesy of 'The Age'



Unholy Pilgrims