



The Aussie Camino

For pilgrims everywhere



Welcome home first group of 2014!!



After much preparation and almost as much trepidation the first large group of pilgrims set out on the Aussie Camino on April 5. What started out from an idea from 3 workmates a year earlier came to fruition when 30 pilgrims made camino from Portland to Penola.

For me personally I was immensely pleased in the way each placed their trust in me with little more than a wing and a prayer. Everyone got one wonderfully well and embraced the pilgrim spirit even when the going got tough on occasions. Some remarked that it was harder than they had imagined some less so. No matter what the experience, I am sure each pilgrim was tested in one way or another along the camino. For me personally I was overawed by the trust each pilgrim placed in me and came on the the camino with a great sense of good will.

Even the blokes that had to sleep on the floor of the Kalangadoo Hotel bounced out of bed and were as chirpy as sparrows at breakfast the next morning. Another pleasing aspect was the terrific reception we received from all the locals, hoteliers, parishioners and well wishers along the way.

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

Mary MacKillop



.....hitting the Media

During the camino one pilgrim; Laura passed the ABC radio in Mount Gambier and without a second thought hastily arranged an interview for the camino that aired on morning radio. Although we didn't hear it a few locals honked their horns and pulled up for a chat later that afternoon. The word is out and is was great to see the locals showing support.

In this edition I have included a few photos but you can also see some more on the new Aussie Camino Facebook page. Currently there is a webpage under construction at <http://www.aussiecamino.org>

I have also included an article that was written by Jesuit Publications (Madonna Magazine) in the December issue. It gives a little background on how the idea came about. A short interview on the 'Spirit of Life' program on Channel 31 also gives some background information. The link is on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7y7q9BNQ6NM&list=UUejtL9LVfuK-ULXTXexXEw>

One pilgrim; David Schutz; Kept a wonderful diary on his blog site which can be accessed at:

<http://scecclesia.wordpress.com>

Aussie Camino December 2014

Much planning has begun and guidebook will be available shortly. All this will be available in time for another camino later this year in December. See page 7 for the expression of interest!!

¡Buen camino!

Luke

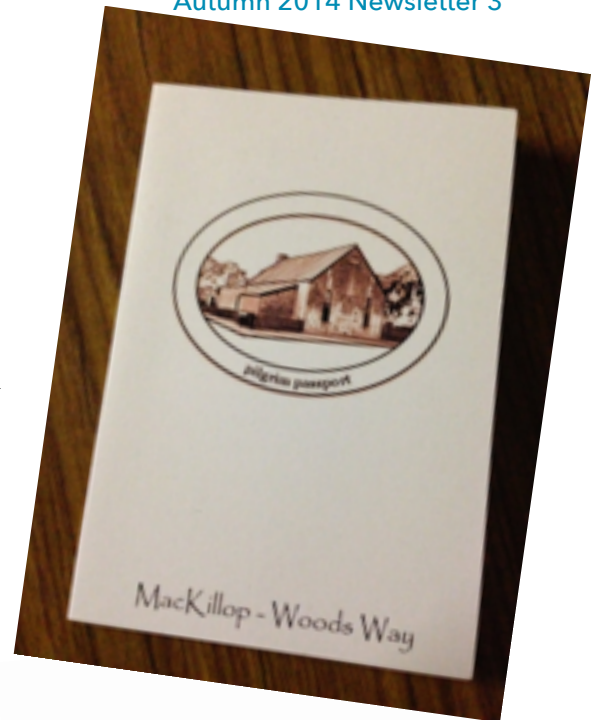
Easter 2014



Camino Souvenirs

Among the items each pilgrim carried this year were the passbook, a bag tag, the guidebook, The scallop shell and upon the completion the credencial based on the Camino de Santiago de Compostela.

Below is a photo of me handing over the register to Claire Larkin at Penola of all the pilgrims who completed the camino. We hope one day it will be full!!





An Aussie Camino

Luke Mills spent seven days walking 217 km from Portland to Penola in April 2013. He and two friends undertook the walk as pilgrims following the path of Australian saint, Mary MacKillop. In truth, Luke's journey to Penola has taken years.

The 'Aussie Camino' as Luke calls it, was a chance to reflect on the life of Mary MacKillop and to be a witness to the values and faith that underpinned her great work, much of it carried out in the area between Portland and Penola, a small South Australian town of 1300 people. It was also a chance for Luke to reflect on his own life, which changed dramatically in 2008 when his wife of 15 years died of cancer.

Since the April walk, Luke has been overwhelmed by the interest shown by people from around Australia, keen to join him for the planned second pilgrimage in

Easter 2014. Luke is now working behind the scenes to make the pilgrimage more accessible to other pilgrims, but he isn't setting himself up as a tour operator. 'I don't want to own this pilgrimage. We have set it up in a simple way, but it really belongs to whoever wants to do it. It will take on a life of its own, as pilgrimages around the world have', Luke says.

Ironically, it was a journey of sorrow during the preceding four years that, in some way, led Luke to the Mary MacKillop pilgrimage. Five years ago, Luke's 42 year-old wife, Gabrielle (Gay), was diagnosed with leukemia and died after an eight month battle. For the next four years Luke, father of Philippa, 18, Charlotte, 17 and Christopher, 15, was in a wilderness, struggling to keep his family, and his job as a teacher, going.

'Gay became ill at the time when we were in between houses, I was in between teaching jobs and the

kids were young. When she died, I was distraught and it felt like my whole world ended. For a long time I was living in a bit of a daze.

'The first two years after Gay died were really bad. The third year was one step forward, two steps back. By the fourth I started putting my life slowly back together. This walk came about by chance at a time when I was starting to feel I had the energy to take on something.'

Last year Luke and Steve Murphy, a teaching colleague from St Francis Xavier College, Beaconsfield, watched the film, *The Way*, and seeds of the Aussie Camino were sewn. 'We started having some really good discussions about the Camino in Spain, but for various reasons, including finances, that sort of trip is a few years away for us. Then I began talking to another couple I work with, who had done the Camino in Spain, and the Aussie Camino idea really developed', Luke says.

Luke became interested in the meaning of pilgrims throughout history and how this might translate to a pilgrimage in Australia. St Mary MacKillop and the land where she spent her early years seemed an ideal starting point for an Aussie Camino. Their destination was Penola, widely accepted as the birthplace of St Mary's order, the Sisters of St Joseph. He believes being a pilgrim is a declaration that

Pilgrims on the way

with Rosie Hoban

you are open to connecting to others. For some that is a desire to connect more closely to God, for others it is finding meaning in the fellow pilgrims along the way, or the environment through which they walk.

The group chose roads that Mary MacKillop almost certainly didn't travel, but were important for safety. They walked through towns that St Mary would have passed through at some stage. Portland was chosen as the starting point because it was her last teaching post as a lay teacher. The three pilgrims walked some 30 kilometres each day, starting with a reflection or reading about St Mary MacKillop, followed by a discussion that could last for hours and be interrupted by some magnificent views along the southern Australian coastline. At night they stayed in local hotels and enjoyed the hospitality of the front bar.

'Telling people that we were pilgrims certainly provoked some conversations, particularly about Mary MacKillop. Once people

knew what we were on about, they really wanted to talk to us. The pilgrimage was not overtly Catholic, because in the end it is a personal journey', Luke says.

Luke's personal journey is ongoing, but the pilgrimage gave him a focus and a sense of excitement that has been fostered by the continual support and interest from other potential pilgrims.

'I am a teacher and a single dad with three children, so I don't have much time to do outside things. But I can do this and I enjoy it and I look forward to it being taken over by pilgrims who make it their own.' He is interested in setting up a Society for the Australian Camino.

'It would be good to have the pilgrimage and shelters signposted. And there are aspects of the pilgrimage that could be enhanced, such as a passport marking the route travelled, a more developed book of reflections and a certificate at the end.'



'Luke believes that being a pilgrim, in the traditional sense, is a declaration that you are open to listening to others, connecting to others.'

Next year's pilgrimage will begin on Saturday 5 April with a Mass on Saturday evening at Portland and conclude a week later at the Mary MacKillop Interpretive Centre in Penola, followed by Mass on the Sunday morning.

Luke believes many people are interested in the Mary MacKillop Aussie Camino because it is a good Catholic Church story, at a time when being a Catholic is 'a bit on the nose'.

'We wanted to give the Catholic Church a good news story and declare publicly that there are lots of things to embrace about being a Christian. In Australia, in our rush to be a secular society, a lot has been lost and this is a way of reclaiming the good by tapping into an ancient tradition and shining a light on a marvelous woman.'

If you wish to find out more, please contact

Luke at: lukej.mills@bigpond.com.

Luke has also made a YouTube clip that covers the Aussie Camino: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3aqX7pikBQ>.



Logo



Designed by Julian Tenison Woods the distinctive badge worn by the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart (the Josephite Emblem) has its origin in tradition, and is symbolic of the devotions that were special to Mary MacKillop and Woods. In the early days, the Sisters wore a monogram of blue braid on the front of their brown habits. The shape of the monogram was the A of 'Ave' and the M of 'Maria'.

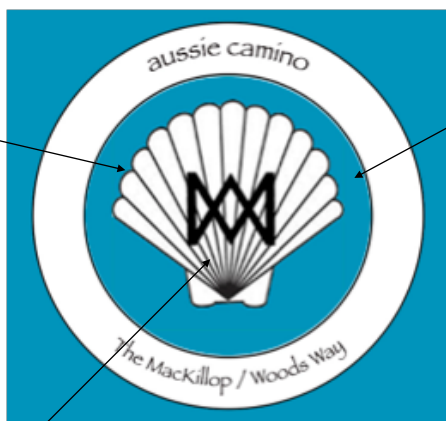
Inside the blue monogram, the Sisters embroidered three Js to remind them of the importance of **J**esus, **J**oseph and **J**ohn the **B**aptist in their lives.



When the Sisters of St Joseph began to wear more modern dress rather than the brown habit, the design chosen for their emblem featured the traditional monogram and a cross.

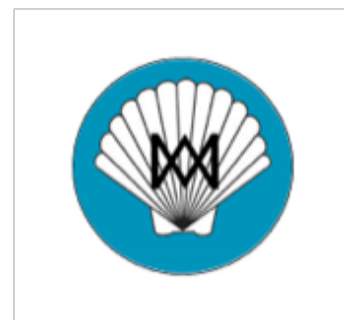
The Josephite Emblem symbolises the devotions that were most dear to Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods: The Cross, Mary called herself 'Mary of the Cross' and was called on to bear the cross many times throughout her life. Ave Maria, 'Hail Mary' is a popular prayer to Mary the Mother of God. Jesus was the one to whom Mary gave her life. Joseph was Mary's special patron to whom she prayed often and most fervently.

SCALLOP SHELL IS THE INTERNATIONAL SYMBOL FOR PILGRIMS



Turquoise blue is the colour used by the Josephites

A SECULAR VERSION OF THE AVE MARIA SYMBOL DESIGNED BY WOODS FOR MARY MACKILLOP



A SIMPLIFIED VERSION WILL ALSO BE USED ON OCCASIONS

Expression of Interest

Aussie Camino

December 10th to 18th 2014



I am asking for any expressions of interest from any interested pilgrims who are interested in coming on the Aussie camino from December 10 -18 this year. I already have 10 interested people but there is room for a few more so please get in touch with me by **September 30** if you are interested to know more.

Itinerary - December 2014

| | | |
|-------------------|----------|---|
| Wed 10th December | 10:00 am | Meet at Mary MacKillop Heritage Centre 362 Albert Street East Melbourne |
| | 10:30am | Registration and pilgrims' farewell mass in Chapel |
| | 12:00am | Depart to Portland by cars (arrive around 5pm) |
| Thursday 11th | | Portland - Cape Bridgewater |
| Friday 7th | | Cape Bridgewater to Bridgewater Lakes |
| Saturday 8th | | Lake Mombeong to Nelson |
| Sunday 9th | | Nelson - Port MacDonnell |
| Monday 10th | | Port MacDonnell - Mt Gambier |
| Tuesday 11th | | Mt Gambier - Kalangadoo |
| Wednesday 12th | | Kalangadoo - Penola |
| Thurs 13th | | Penola return to Portland (chater bus departing 11:30am) |

The costs are \$30 registration fee which includes passport, guidebook, bag tag and pilgrim shell, plus \$70 transport fee which includes all transport of bags as well as a bus trip back from Portland to Penola at the conclusion of the camino. **Please note accommodation and meals are not included in this payment.** Further details can be given to interested pilgrims on request.

If you are interested in this camino please contact me at: lukej.mills@bigpond.com or on 0433 301 196 by **September 30**.

¡Buen camino!

DVD Review: Pilgrimage (BBC)

BY SIMON REEVE

REVIEW BY LUKE MILLS



For centuries pilgrimage was one of the greatest adventures on earth, involving epic journeys across the country and around the world.



This series sees Simon Reeve retrace the exciting adventures of our ancestors. He learns about the forgotten aspects of pilgrimage, including the vice, thrills and dangers, that all awaited travellers. He explores the faith, the hopes, desires, and even the food that helped to keep medieval Britons and more recent travellers on the road.

Reeve journeys first from northern England to Canterbury. Then across France and northern Spain, before he treks high into the mighty Alps on his way to Rome. Finally he heads east to glorious Istanbul, Turkey, then on to the Holy Land and his final destination, Jerusalem.

Episode 1: Pilgrimage to Canterbury

Episode 2: Pilgrimage to Rome

Episode 3. Pilgrimage to Jerusalem

Reeve will be known to many watchers of SBS from his Tropic of Capricorn and Tropic on Cancer series in which he travels the globe along these latitudes. He has a warm and curious nature which draws the viewers in and allows him to develop a personal relationship with those he meets. But don't be fooled by his childlike innocence he has thoroughly researched all aspects of the caminos and he gets up close and personal with the pilgrims and the places along the way. He has an inquisitive nature and a keen eye for the absurd. Although he says many times he has no real faith one can't help but observe he is still asking the important existential questions.

My only criticism is that Reeve bites off more than he can chew. Each of these pilgrimages could easily be a series on its own. Squeezing 2000 years of pilgrimage in 3 hours is a handful and many times he takes private transport which really defeats the purpose. Unfortunately this makes the series look unnecessarily rushed when as real pilgrims we know that the slow journey is one of the many pleasures.



Having said that Reeves taps into the new found enthusiasm for pilgrimage and presents it in a new and exciting forum. Thoroughly recommended.