

Five Alive



The Magazine of the Redruth Team Ministry
St Euny Redruth, Christchurch Lanner, St Andrew Pencoys
St Andrew Redruth and St Stephen Treleigh
(REDRUTH PCC - registered charity no 1204231)



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FIVE ALIVE MAGAZINE

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LATEST DATE FOR ARTICLES FRIDAY 22 MAY 2026

A Restorative Place

I'm writing this just after my post Easter break, and before the APCM. This year was one of those times when I did not realise how much I needed my break. For some reason it has been an incredibly busy few months, with the number of funerals seeming to increase, and lots of other bits and bobs to do. I also started a Master degree last September, and had a deadline after Easter, so that contributed to things!

We went to a cottage in Mullion for the week, and I felt like I really unwound. I appreciated being able to take very familiar walks, and I always find the coast path a restorative place. I won't say I feel rested and energised again. In all honesty, I can't remember the last time I did. The reality of ministry is that there is a constant vista of unachievable tasks. Even the most resilient person (and I count myself pretty resilient!) can only maintain so much pragmatism. But it's good to be back for the APCM where we review last year. We should be really proud of all we achieved in 2025.

But we are also in yet another time of change. Chris has departed to Newquay, and Jason is soon to go to Camborne. We will gain Esther, and Nigel Harris is soon to join us as Reader (we are just waiting on the final bits of paper work to transfer him to us from Birmingham. I will let Nigel tell his own story!).

I do not take for granted at all the fact that we maintain something of our team capacity. Of course, Esther will be a deacon for her first year with us, and therefore her ministry is slightly different for that first year. It focuses on word and service (preaching and other "stuff" which might include pastoral care, leading small groups, and funerals). The landscape in the greater Church of England, and certainly in our diocese is one where ministry is often declining. (Hence the constant vista of unachievable tasks!).

My favourite thing on my holiday was on the first day. I had the privilege of conducting a wedding blessing for two of my best friends. I have known Will since my curacy (back in 2013), and Hannah was 17 when she first came to camp. They met on camp all that time ago, and life has happened. Then in 2023 Will's life had taken a few swipes, and I faced burn out, and decided to walk the coast path. Will asked if he could come along. Another of our friends, Becky, joined us too. Will and I, in very different ways, both found our way back to healing on that walk. Will mentioned it in his speech at his wedding. He quoted the reading they had during the service. *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you."* (Isaiah 43.2). Will talked about how this passage had sat with him in the tough times, as a reminder of God's promise to hold us and sustain us.

..... *continued*

..... *continued*

And as we walked the cliff path, he was reminded of the power of water, the way it constantly changes the coast, and yet God remains faithful and the same.

(Along the way, Will and Hannah suddenly noticed each other; there's nothing lovelier than two dear friends finding their happy ever after in each other!)

So as we look at the vista of never ending, and we sense that shifts seem far beyond our control, I remember that I have been overwhelmed, but the waters did not overwhelm me. God is faithful and remains the same. Even as the Straits of Hormuz seem to cause global chaos, and Cornwall council is wanting to use herbicides, and the roof at St Andrew's leaks... God is faithful. and as long as that is true, the rest can sort itself out! (although we might need to be a little proactive with the roof!)

Revd Becca Bell

FROM THE REGISTERS

FUNERALS

30 March	2026	Phyllis Vera Phillips	St Stephen Treleigh
08 April	2026	Anthony Kenneth Eva	St Stephen Treleigh

INTERMENT OF ASHES

30 March	2026	Derek Collins	St Stephen Treleigh
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FLAPJACK

You will want know that the Pencoys church is back open. Sadly, only some of the heating has been restored, but we are working on that!! We are very grateful for The Chapel for its generous hospitality during both storms and cold!!

PARKINSONS DISEASE

Brian and Sheila organised a beautiful service to honour those living with Parkinson's Disease. The Chapel was packed and £700.00 was raised (this includes the £100.00 raised at the April quiz). The event saluted the courage of both Brian as a husband and carer to Sheila who lives with Parkinsons.

LENT STUDY GROUP

Both Christchurch and Lanner followed the same course. Based on 'GIVING' the six meetings used Bible passages and catechetical questions to consider giving through 'the first fruits' not from what is 'left over'.

HELPFUL DATES

Saturday	April 25	Chapel Sausage & Mash	from 11.30am
Sunday	April 26	St Euny Evensong	6.00pm
Monday	April 27	ZOOM Bible Study <i>(see FP for link)</i>	4.30pm
Sunday	May 3	FLAPJACK Meeting in the Chapel	12.30pm
		First Sunday Event Pencoys	6.00pm
Tuesday	May 5	Treleigh Church Healing Service	7.00pm

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Many thanks to Jenny and her team for providing a most moving supper and service in the Chapel on Maundy Thursday

The food bank continues in the porch area which remains open 24/7. Thankyou, Brian & Sheila.

PS. The swallows will soon be back in the porch of the church

FP

CHRISTCHURCH LANNER



Christchurch remains open 10.00am– 4.00pm and Holy Communion is celebrated each Sunday at 9.30am. The third Sunday is a Communion with new music and each Wednesday there is a Prayer Book Communion Service at 11.00am followed by a Bible Study. *The LAST Sunday of each month will continue to revolve through the six worship settings and starts at 10.30am.*

OTHER EVENTS AT CHRISTCHURCH: *Margaret's Last Monday Tea Party 2.00pm – 4.00pm.*
The April date is Monday April 27 The MAY date is Monday May 25

FUTURE EVENTS: The games afternoons and the film nights are advertised in the weekly pew sheet. **BUT GAMES HAS RETURNED TO EVERY OTHER TUESDAY 2pm – 4pm. Future dates include: May 5, 18 etc.**

FILM NIGHTS: The next date is **MAY 29 / 6.30pm for 7.00pm.**

METHODIST / ANGLICAN LINKS: Building on the success of the first joint service a very successful First Sunday Event was held in March which was led by Pastor Jenny. The Event raised £160,00 for the Cinnamon Trust which re-homes cats when the owner is no longer able to do so.

SEASONAL SUNDAYS: The project has been devised by Julia KB. and hopes to attract an inter-generational congregation but with a new approach to church. There will be opportunities for play, singing, Bible reflection, activities, refreshments, informal seating arrangements and prayers. People of all age are really welcome and SEND provision is a priority.

The third event was held on **SUNDAY MARCH29 2.30pm.** The focus was on the road Jesus travelled on the first Palm Sunday. Seen from different angles, the children and adults created palm trees, foot prints, thoughts and images. The resulting work was **AMAZING!!** It remains in the church. **THANKYOU JULIA.**

HOLY WEEK AT CHRISTCHURCH

Many thanks to **Linda** who led a moving Monday of Holy Week prayer event.

Thanks also to **Ron** for masterminding the First Fire of Easter. Thankyou also to the other churches for leading their particular Holy Week events and services.

May God's blessing continue to rest upon Rebecca our Rector and her family.

FP

St Euny

Easter was celebrated with a moving dawn service as we reflected around the bonfire demonstrating the light of the resurrection. The tradition of the Easter Fire in some northern European countries is thought to pre-date Christianity as a symbol of the coming of spring and the end of winter. In the lee of Carn Brea in our beautiful graveyard we feel a timeless connection with the natural world as well as with all those people who have celebrated this festival before us. It is, for many of us, one of our favourite services in the church calendar. We were a group of just over twenty this year and most people stayed for a breakfast of bacon rolls and hot cross buns, a wonderful opportunity to share time and stories.

As reported in the previous two editions of this magazine, work continues on the boundary wall and is nearing completion, albeit a little later than originally anticipated. We can see the headstones of graves which have not been uncovered for many years, and the clearance of the vegetation, whilst depleting some of the habitat, gives an open view of the Carn. The speedy growth of our vegetation will almost certainly soon cover much of this!

At Open Café we celebrated with chocolate Easter eggs in Easter Week and we were treated to a chocolate Easter Cake after the service on the First Sunday in Easter, thanks to David Doble's baking skills. Dog attendance has grown on Wednesdays, reaching a record six dogs on the Wednesday in Easter week. FP gives all of our pets a special blessing, so that every Wednesday is a pet service day incorporated into the service of Holy Communion. Given the setting and the importance of the church lands to dog walkers in our community, this is a distinctive and much appreciated offering of ministry.

We are looking forward to seeing Jason ordained deacon on the Friday evening service at Petertide in the Cathedral. It would be great to have a good contingent from the parish to celebrate and recognise this culmination of his years of hard work and spiritual progress which has benefitted us all. The service will be on 26th June, exact time to be confirmed.

We have been keeping the church open with a diminishing number of helpers, so would appreciate any support that anyone could offer, particularly over the summer when our regulars might be away. The comments in the visitors book are always appreciative of the serenity and spirituality of this special place and we wish to maintain this service. We are looking particularly for help on some Tuesday and Thursday evenings, to lock up.

There are two worrying damp patches on our west walls. The wet spring has been good for plants, but Oh Dear!

Linda Beskeen

ST STEPHEN TRELEIGH



“As Mary said in the last edition, the churchyard continues to show God’s wonderful bounty to us and there have been many positive remarks from those people who regularly walk through the churchyard, often with their dogs.

Holy Week at Treleigh started with our Palm Sunday service when people gathered in the Hall where the Palm Crosses were Blessed and sprinkled with Holy Water by our Rural Dean, Reverend Graham Anderson who then led us down the path into church singing “All Glory Laud and Honour” where we continued the Service of a Sung Eucharist.

On Maundy Thursday before the 10am service we were visited by the children from the Busy Bees Nursery who had made us a beautiful hanging decoration in the form of an Easter Egg and also an Easter card both of which are being displayed in the church throughout Easter. The children sat in the chancel where Fr. Peter talked with them about Easter. As they left, Easter chicks containing chocolate eggs were given to them to take home. There followed a very moving service of Morning Prayer, composed by Mary and a few congregation members, then “Stripping of the Altar” in silence, by the people and Fr. Peter.

On Good Friday at 10am, Licensed Lay Minister Jim Seth led us around the Church in a moving “Stations of the Cross” which was hoped to have been held in the Churchyard but once again the inclement weather intervened. We were pleased to have members from other churches join us.

On Easter morning our Churchwarden, Mary, took our Paschal Candle to St. Andrew’s Church for the Parish Easter Sung Eucharist, where it was lit from the Easter fire.

For the first time at Treleigh Church our Easter Garden has been displayed in the porch, our Wayside Chapel, where it can be seen by those people who don’t go into church but who often sit there and leave a prayer on the Prayer tree. The prayers that have been left throughout the year have been prayed for and burnt on the Easter Fire at Christchurch on Holy Saturday, thus symbolising those prayers ascending to God.

On Sunday 12th April, the church looked beautiful with all the flowers that had been arranged on the previous Thursday. After the Sung Holy Communion Service knitted Easter chicks containing chocolate eggs were distributed to the congregation by Reverend Margaret who had blessed them. It has been the custom for many years to do this on Easter Day and as we celebrated Easter with the Parish in St. Andrew’s Church we decided to continue the tradition on the following Sunday. Some ‘chicks’ were taken to those past members who are no longer able to attend church.

The next Tea Party with Treleigh school will be on Tuesday 12th May from 2.30pm.

The date for our Annual Fete is Saturday 11th July from 2pm in the Hawthorn Garden, in the hall if wet and for the Christmas Fayre in the Hall, Saturday 28th November 11am - 2pm, more information will follow nearer the time.

We keep in our thoughts and prayers the staff of what was the Busy Bees Nursery who are now part of Treleigh School and hope the transition runs smoothly for all concerned.”

Christine Cunningham

St Andrew Redruth

I love a to-do list. I keep a notebook with my to-do lists in them. Sometimes I even get to cross things off the list and those that do not get crossed off go onto the next list. Occasionally, some things cease to become relevant and disappear, sometimes because they were not particularly important and sometimes they leave me feeling a bit guilty that I had not managed to get round to it.

The current list includes,

- Contact a bereaved family about a funeral
- Look out my funeral notes and file... and what I do when the funeral is both at church and crem.
- Prepare for the Domestic Abuse awareness Course for PCC/DCC
- Write to Readers (Licensed Lay Ministers) and remind them of their training day in Bodmin.
- Find out what I have to do on the readers training day ... (I usually have a couple of roles to fulfil.)
- Read through the questions and prepare for the post Licensing year Learning Needs assessment interviews for the Readers Licensed last year and write reports recommending whether they should or should not be licensed for another three years.
- Plumber, garage, tidy shed, collect shopping, mow the lawn (again) etc.

That is the trouble with being retired, one does not get a day off! And this morning two emails popped up, one a reminder to write this article by tomorrow and the other about spiritual Direction Supervision which needed to be answered.

But I am not complaining, I could say, 'No' if I really wanted to (such as standing down as safeguarding officer for the parish at the AGM) but I would rather be busy than not have anything to do!

The trick is being grateful for each day, and that people still need you to do things.

I like to quote the hymn, "Brother Sister let me Serve you" which goes on "let me be as Christ to you – *Pray that I may have the Grace to Let you be my servant too.*" Allowing others to help us is not a weakness, sometimes it is a strength. We like to help each other and to be useful and we need to have the grace to allow others to help us when we need it.

It links very nicely into safeguarding. We all have a responsibility for the safeguarding of others and that means noticing when people are struggling or when something is just not quite right.

continued

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The Zoom morning prayer group is a great example. I have written about this before, but it is a good reminder- There have been times when a regular attender has been missing or been taken ill and we have been able to phone someone to help or to follow up.

The home groups too are vital for social as well as spiritual connection – but the zoom fellowship just as much as the home group need people there to provide that mutual support. Oh I have just thought, I need to add letting Simon know to include that Tuesday evening Upper Room Group are watching the latest Pilgrimage series as a focus for discussions for coming weeks.

And if Lez gets her promised new hip, I will drop as much as I can to hold her back from doing too much while she recovers! Maybe “drop some tasks on the to do list” should be on the to-do list?

Remember Jesus words, ‘whatever you do for the least of these, you also do for me.’ Be joyful in serving and joyfully grateful in receiving help

Jim Seth

FIRST SUNDAY EVENTS: April 2025 – March 2026

THANKYOU so much for your generous support over the past year's events.

2025			£
April	Four Lanes Chapel	The people of Cambodia	250.00
May	St Andrew, Pencoys	The building of a playground	150.00
June	Christchurch, Lanner	Colorectal Conditions	500.00
July	Four Lanes Chapel	Redruth Age Concern Café	175.00
August	St Andrew, Pencoys	St Julia's Hospice	300.00
September	Mary's Barn	RSPCA	250.00
October	The Crypt	RABI	100.00
November	St Stephen's Treleigh	Penhaligan's Friends	150.00
December	Christchurch, Lanner	Pentreath Health	120.00

2026:

January	St Andrew, Pencoys	Marie Curie Nurses	250.00
February	St Euny	Vocal Mix	200.00
March	Lanner Methodist Chapel	Cinnamon Trust	160.00

YEAR TOTAL: £2,605.00

Thank you so much for your faithful support throughout the year.

The new year, the 15th year of First Sunday Event started well in April when £700.00 was raised to support those living with **PARKINSON'S DISEASE**

The **MAY EVENT** will be at St Andrew, Pencoys when the topic will be **THE RUSSET GREY-HOUND TRUST.**

FP

THE SUNRISE APPEAL



Please book your tickets now for this uplifting evening of music with a sprinkling of magic. The event is part of Father Peter's fundraising 'Marathon' for the Sunrise Appeal. RCHT's Sunrise Centre delivers cancer treatment to people all across Cornwall and is currently undergoing a significant renovation and technology upgrade. All money raised for the Sunrise Appeal is vital and much appreciated. The Centre is extremely significant for so many within the Church family.

**PLEASE SEE POSTER ON NEXT PAGE
FOR DETAILS ON HOW TO OBTAIN
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or Hilary on 07484 746182

THE
SUNRISE
Appeal

Psalm to Fr Christopher

We are here to say farewell to *Father* Christopher and to his family, Becca, Izzy, Isaac and Dougie the beagle.

Father Christopher was trained in *Trinity* College, Bristol. He thought church vestments were made of curtaining material but on Mothering Sunday this year, he told the people of Treleigh and Saint Euny, they *should* have dressed him in pink.

During his time in Redruth, Father Christopher has taken many, many, many, many, *many* funerals, he has kept a detailed list and *don't* we all know it.

Father Christopher came to the attention of the diocese for his architectural skills, they used him to redesign *All Saints*, Highertown, and now he has drawn up plans to re-order St Andrew, Redruth including the *removal* of all the pews.

But this isn't all he has achieved, he initiated the warm space in the crypt, the memorial books in *St Euny* and the provision of new chairs for Treleigh which some think are *too* heavy to lift.

During his time at Redruth Father Christopher worked under three *training* incumbents, two were proper and one was described as interim, under their guidance Fr Christopher has grown into a remarkable priest with a *heart* for all of his people.

The young people of the TOAST youth group had a wonderful youth event where *you* are standing, it included a silent disco, sumo wrestling, a photobooth, lots of pizza and TOAST has grown from twelve to over sixty because of *all* he has done.

But his work didn't stop right there, the sound of his motorbike embraced the Air Training Corps in Portreath, and his Essex background in boxing made him a wow on the rifle range as he *always* hits the mark.

But now it is time for you to go and to watch over the six churches of Newquay and a newly made *Deacon*. He should have gone months ago, but there was *asbestos* in the vicarage.

Go with our love and thanks *Father* Christopher, and our love and thanks to Becca, Izzy, Isaac and Dougie the beagle. Heaven help you in the parish of Towan Blystra and heaven *help* the people of Newquay

A quick guide to the Thurifer and Thurible (The 'Server' magazine)

Prepare the thurible for loading with incense. It is carried in the left hand until it has been blessed. The thurible is then opened so that the celebrant can impose incense. Once blessed it is transferred to the right hand and closed. It is swung gently from the top of the chain and a blessed thurible is always in your right hand.

The thurifer will lead the procession into church and walks to the front of the altar. Bow then with the rest of the servers and proceed to the next point which is usually the south end of the altar.

Swing the thurible up to catch the chain in your left hand and then pass it to the priest to cense the altar.

The priest returns the thurible. Swinging gently in the right hand, the thurible is taken into the Sacristy to hang on the thurible stand.

During the next hymn or reading, the thurible and boat are taken to the priest to lay on incense. Once it is blessed, the lid on the thurible is lowered and made secure. The thurifer will stand facing the altar waiting for the Deacon to walk towards you with the Gospel book. Once it has been announced, the thurible is passed to the Celebrant to enable censuring, it is then returned to the thurifer who then moves back to the appointed place and swings the thurible until the Gospel reading is complete. The thurifer will then lead the procession back to the sanctuary, bow and exit to the Sacristy and return the thurible to the stand.

Just before the offertory hymn starts, the thurible is cleared of the burnt incense and extra charcoal is added as required. If the celebrant is alone then it is usual to wait while he/she sets up the altar ready for communion. He/she will then impose incense and take the thurible to cense the altar. Once this is complete, he/she will return the thurible and turn to face the thurifer. The thurifer will then cense he/she 3 doubles (if a priest) 3 triples (if a Bishop) and then bow at the start and finish. Censing should always be given to priests first (3 doubles), deacons next (2 doubles; other servers (1 single each or 3 singles if all together) and finally the congregation (3 singles).

At the consecration the thurible is gently swung until the elevations and each element is given 3 triples at the same time as the gong is rung. First as the host is raised, second as it is lowered, and third as the celebrant genuflects. At the end of the consecration the thurible is returned to the stand in the Sacristy.



BOOK CLUB

In the middle of April we met to discuss *The Bloomsbury Girls* by Natalie Jenner. We generally agreed that this is a gentle and enjoyable read with a good plot and all the loose ends were tied up neatly at the end. Bloomsbury Books is an old fashioned book store in London which has resisted change for hundred years, run by men and guided by 51 unbreakable rules. The three women working in the shop have plans to change the business for its own survival, and the changing world of 1950 provides the backdrop to the story. We had a good chat about the different characters of the book and how they changed throughout the story. We were able to make links to books we have recently read including Du Maurier's *My Cousin Rachel* and Shafak's *There are Rivers in the Sky*. We would recommend this book.

Our next book is *Who She Was* by Tony Parsons, a crime thriller. Set in Cornwall, a young woman waits for an estate agent to arrive with the keys to her new life in a peaceful fishing village. She carries with her no trace of her previous life or the past she has left behind. The village locals quickly become intrigued by their new neighbour and we are promised long buried secrets exploding into the light.



Our next meeting is at 10:00am on Monday 11 May at Maggie's house. To find out more, please ring Maggie on 07779 913 292 or speak to her next time you see her. Do come along, there is always room for more.

Becca Harrigan

"Very many thanks to all who were able to attend the Second Sunday Event in April. There was a wide representation from Redruth Parish and Lanner Methodist Chapel and beyond, which all helped to raise £700 which will go towards helping people diagnosed with Parkinsons to fund activities with carers and provide information and support to those recently diagnosed."

Sheila and Brian Gannaway.

MY PARKINSON'S POEM 2

8 Years ago, when I was told,
It was a shock! How could this be?
I'd heard of it, but never gave a thought,
One day – it would be me!



Too late to know the causes,
But too early for a cure,
10,000,000 of us in the world!
The symptoms must endure.

Now 'Freezing' is the problem!
With feet 'stuck to the floor',
The rest of me 'flew cape a'flapping',
Through the open door.
To land there in a heap! and thought,
I won't do that no more!

But life can't all be doom and gloom,
We need to laugh – a lot!
This 'freezing lark' is very odd?
When I am always HOT!

So grateful for my family,
My friends with Father P,
You've helped me more than words can say,
And Bri – Thank you for every day.
Now 3 years on, I'm back to say,
My life has changed in many a way,
The Iceberg charts how symptoms grow,
The Tip as seen – hides all below.



Parkinson's day comes every year,
To make aware and see,
It may be every year to you,
It's every day! – to me.



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Lucie's Journey

This past year has been quite a journey for me - a time of discernment, learning, and beginning to see more clearly where I'm heading.

Redruth has been a big part of my life for many years, and there's a lot I carry with me from that time. With many shared moments - worship, serving together, conversations, and relationships that have shaped me more than I probably realise. I'm really grateful for all of that.

Over last summer it became clear to me that my right next step was to move on, and I am now settled into the Camborne Cluster. I began worshipping there last September before spending time completing a placement from January. This has enabled me to move into a place where I can continue to grow and where the kind of ministry I'm called to can continue to take shape.

Alongside getting to know people, I have been an active part of worship and community life. I'm enjoying being present in a way that's rooted in listening, relationships, and trust, and it feels like the right place for this next season of my ministry.

One of the things that is an integral part of my pioneer training is to recognise where God is already at work in the world around us - often in ways we might not expect, and sometimes the most important thing we can do is simply to notice, to listen well, and to join in with what's already happening. This has been encouraged and is how I thrive.

Having almost completed this year's studies in theology, ministry, and mission, I intend to extend my knowledge through Post Graduate study from September.

Over recent years I have had opportunities to feel recognised and to grow in confidence and practice, through the encouragement I have received as I am formed and shaped.

So, this feels like the right moment to say farewell, with real thankfulness for all that's been, and a clear sense of stepping into what comes next. I will see many of you around, and if we bump into each other in town; I would love a chance to catch up.

Thank you for all the ways we've shared life over the years - it's meant a great deal.

With every blessing,

Lucie



MOVING ON

*Dad Chris, Mum Becca, Dougie the dog,
Izzy and Isaac too.
The family we've all had the pleasure to know,
But now we are losing you.*

*For this is the life of a young ordained minister,
Following where God may lead,
But also to care, with a heartfelt prayer,
To provide all that your family will need.*

*These three years have flown,
And your children have grown,
Joining in now with everything.
Izzy reads very well
Isaac rings on the bell,
And we all love the laughter they bring.*

*You've been searching so long,
And you've had to be strong,
Even when you were feeling low,
As you felt in between
What's to come and what's been,
God's now guiding you where to go.*

*Now as we say goodbye,
With no tear in our eye,
And you're not moving far away.
Cornwall tugs at your heart,
So we wont be apart,
As Newquay is where you'll stay.*

*So let's smile and be glad,
There's no need to be sad,
Although we will miss you so.
But we do wish you well,
As I am sure you can tell,
So be happy wherever you go.*

Sheila Gannaway March 22 2026

**For any younger readers, a picture to colour in
for Pentecost**



My way to Compostela
Day 25 Part 1
Acebo to Cacabelos
35KM

Our evening discussion over the pilgrim's meal centred on the next two days of the trail. The intention was to have a longer rest day in Villafranca de Bierzo before the 36.1km ascent of O`Cebreiro enabling us to experience a stay in the iconic albergue that sits at the top of this 1,310metre (4297ft) mountain. A longer walk today to Cacabelos will provide a much shorter one the following day to Villafranca, so with breakfast over we head out onto the trail. As we leave the village we are reminded of the potential dangers of walking the camino. Placed outside of the village cemetery was a sculpture of a bicycle, it was a memorial to a cycling pilgrim killed on the road, a reminder that the Camino is not a stroll in the park. After a careful walk along the road for 1.8km we turned off onto a track making our way to the hamlet of Riego de Ambros, a traditional mountain hamlet with houses that have iconic overhanging balconies. The road through the hamlet brought us onto a lovely path which passed a pleasant grove of giant sweet chestnut trees 'Castanes.' From this point our route took us for the next 4.5km down a most stunning and impressive valley, then crossing the Rio Maruelo via the aptly name Puente de Peregrinos 'Pilgrims Bridge' with a short stroll into the village of Molinaseca. In the guidebook this village is a recognised stop for pilgrims, as the road on which we walked into this medieval village dates back to the beginning of the 'Camino Real' Royal Camino and close by is believed to be the home of Dona Urraca who became Queen of Castilla y Leòn hence the historical significance of this mountain home of 800 souls. Just beyond the village we turn right to pick up the route running parallel to the road for 2.2km passing several fruit orchards, then back on the road again we come to the top of a rise from which point we can see the town of Ponferrada and our intended lunch stop. A short 1.5 km up and down on a gravel path brought us to Campo. This is a small historical village showing coats of arms on the front of the older houses and a still working Roman water cistern 'Fuente Romano.' Leaving Campo and following the way markers we take a looped track around an area of parkland which brought us after 1.2km into the beginning of the city suburbs, crossing the Rio Boeza by way of the 'Pons Ferrara' Iron Bridge which in turn, brought us into what is the oldest part of the city with many historical buildings dating back to the 12th century. Undoubtedly the most magnificent of these is the Castle of the Templars 'Castillo de los Templarios,' a Spanish national monument built during the reign of King Fernando II by the Knights Templar after receiving a decree from the King that the Templars should become the protectors of the city, a duty they carried out until 1312 when the order was outlawed and disbanded by the church who were afraid that they, the Templars were becoming too powerful. Ponferrada today is a city of some 62,000+ souls and the capital of the El Bierzo district. As we head into the centre of this modern city dodging the traffic (we don't want another memorial going up) we find a pleasant little plaza to stop and have lunch. We did not however, allow for the attentions of some of the pupils whose school overlooked the square. Clearly their favourite pastime during the lunch break was to throw paper balls from the second-floor classroom window at the pilgrims sitting in the square. I didn't have a pea shooter or catapult to fire anything back!!

Len Cunningham

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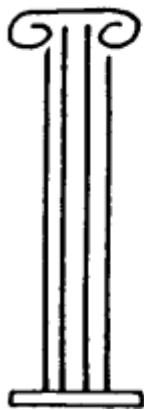


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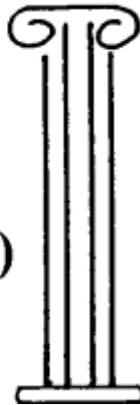
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