



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Canterbury Cathedral's fund raising cycle ride to Rome completed in style

27 pilgrims arrived in Rome this afternoon having travelled 1,200 miles by bicycle along the ancient Via Francigena from Canterbury. They were greeted with Solemn Vespers in St Peters and then presented with their Pilgrim Certificates.

Along the way they have raised over £100,000 for the £50 million Save Canterbury Cathedral appeal and 20 other local, national and international charities, whilst eating 600 loaves of bread, 1,500 bananas, 600 croissants, as well as 600 bowls of pasta and probably 200 pizzas. They have climbed over 50,000 feet, in temperatures from 5 to 40 degrees centigrade. The highest point they reached was the 8,200 feet of the Grand St Bernard Pass.

Canon Edward Condry, Canon Treasurer of Canterbury Cathedral, and one of the organisers of the ride, said, "It has been a fantastic ride. 27 people, supported by six wonderful volunteers, have achieved a lifetime's dream. Wherever we have gone we have been met by great friendship. Towns have welcomed us with meals and entertainment. We have had grand official receptions as well as one unforgettable moment when on a hot day in a small French village we stopped and a man came out with a crate of beer for us to share."

The youngest rider is 16, and the oldest 66 – his birthday was on the day the party reached Reims, so they celebrated it in Reims Town Hall with local champagne. There were six women and 21 men. Some were experienced cyclists and some had never cycled further than the nearest shop. Everyone trained hard for a year, and each one has achieved their goal.

Today, the final day, the weather has been blisteringly hot. The pilgrims were escorted into St Peter's Square by members of the Rome Fire Service where they were warmly greeted by representatives of the British and Italian governments as well as by Cardinal Comastri, the Pope's Vicar of St Peter's. Members of the cyclists' families had also flown out to greet them as they arrived in Rome.

Note: the Via Francigena is a route between Canterbury and Rome first recorded in 990AD when Sigeric the Serious, Archbishop of Canterbury travelled to Rome to see the Pope. His record of the route still exists in the British Library. The route is increasingly followed by pilgrims.

Notes to Editors

More details, including blogs and information on all of the riders, can be found at <http://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/RomeBikeRide.htm>

The Via Francigena was the major pilgrimage route to Rome during medieval times; today pilgrims still travel this route – indeed, in recent years, there has been renewed interest in pilgrimage routes across Europe. The route was first documented in the 10th Century when

Sigeric, Archbishop of Canterbury, travelled to Rome in order to receive a pallium from the Pope; this was a Y shaped woollen vestment covered with crosses that was a symbol of being an archbishop.

The other charities being supported by the cyclists are: Cancer Research UK, Christian Aid, Demelza House, Farm Africa, Footprints, Kent Air Ambulance, Lady Mayoress's of Canterbury Charity, League of Friends of Kent & Canterbury Hospital, MacMillan Cancer Support, Pilgrims Hospices of East Kent, Romanian Relief UK, Royal Marsden Hospital, St Margaret's Hospice Somerset, Save Canterbury Cathedral, Southern Housing Foundation, and Thanet Citizens' Advice Bureau

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