

Rev'd David Munchin has cycled 1,500 miles from Welwyn to Rome!

Welwyn's Team Rector, David Munchin is taking a three-month Sabbatical (extended study leave) from 1st September to 1st December 2018. This is something all clergy are entitled to every 12 years.

On Sunday 2nd September he left Welwyn to cycle to Rome where he will spend a month at the Anglican Centre, returning (not by bicycle) to spend his final month in Norfolk.

On Thursday 27th September he arrived in Rome having cycled some 1,500 miles with only three rest days. During the 26-day journey he cycled for a total of 111 hours.

His journey was entirely self-supporting and completed solo. He is raising funds for 'Herts Welcomes Syrian Families' www.hwsf.org.uk



Sunday 2nd September 2018

Leaving St Mary's Church and travelling solo and light on his Felt Z4 road bike, equipped just with a couple of travel bags. Washing and drying clothes en route was a challenge!

The first leg was to Canterbury, and then onward following the Eurovelo 5 (a long distance European cycling route) which, with few deviations, is an old pilgrim route from Canterbury to Rome. The Via Francigena dates back to at least the 8th century, but the first proper description of it comes from the splendidly named Archbishop of Canterbury, St Sigeric the Serious, who wrote a detailed record in 990. He was on the way to Rome to collect his pallium (stole of office) from the Pope.

David's cycling adventure took him through France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland before reaching Italy.

The journey was undertaken entirely solo with support from no-one.

He stayed in a variety of places from mixed dormitory hostels, to farmhouse b&bs using booking.com to locate the cheapest place to stay.

Key to the journey were cycling shops to stock up on inner tubes to mend punctures, and laundromats to wash the few clothes he took with him.

Supermarkets were also vital to stock up on significant calorie loss, although he did have the occasional restaurant meal.

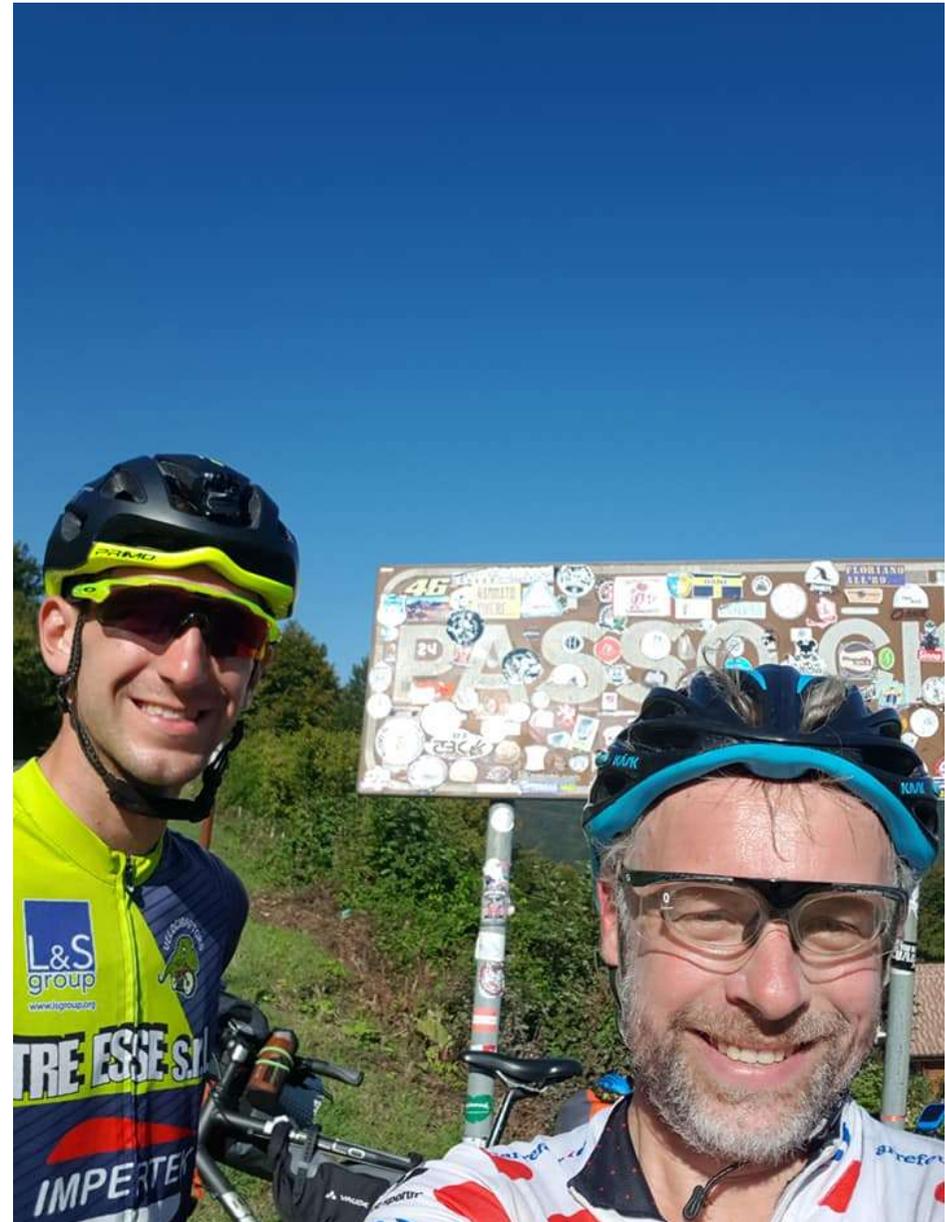
The 1,500 mile ride included ascending and descending the Alps and the Appenines.

He battled the rain and wind (with some nice weather thrown in) and many less than satisfactory road or track surfaces for a road bike.

The top of the Gotthard Pass, the Alps conquered!



Cycling up the Appenines with cyclist Matteo, met en route – still smiling!



Thursday 27th September 2018

Arriving at the Anglican Centre in Rome: The smile says it all!



“And so I am here in Rome. So before I completely lose your attention, I want to say a little bit about raising money for ‘Herts Welcome Syrian Families’. To be honest with you I was a bit reluctant to have this ride sponsored - I was worried things could go wrong, and I didn’t particularly want the responsibility - however I realised that it was too good an opportunity to miss. And it was not me but members of St Mary’s Welwyn who suggested HWSF. However at the end of the ride I can say what an inspired choice it was. So I learnt a lot on this ride. Mostly what I learnt was this - I had money, technology, a certain bed every night, a passport. I was in touch with loved ones as often as I wanted or needed to be. I could navigate my way to a supermarket, a laundry (v important), a hotel. I was never stopped at a border. I had a fantastic carbon fibre bike. And I enjoyed the whole experience, and it was certainly a terrific rewarding thing to do. But here is the rub - at times it was tiring, exhausting, frustrating, isolating and lonely - and if I hadn’t had all those advantages it would have been grim. And I had a destination and a home to return to in good time. So I can only imagine what it must be like to be in the situation those Syrian families have found themselves. It doesn’t matter about the politics - those families need our help and our care. So if you haven’t already given please give - you can do it though following the links on the church website - www.welwyn.org.uk - it would be great if you could. Now it’s time for more beer and more food so I will take my leave”