



NEWSLETTER – MAY 2021 LE CŒUR DU CHEMIN

Last time I wrote “spring is nearly here and Corona is on the retreat”. Both are still true but everything is taking much longer than anticipated but at least we are moving in the right direction. The same is true with the Pilgrims refuge Le Coeur du Chemin. Also there I am undetermined on the final goal but progress is much slower than hoped.

Still a lot happened looking back two months. The main thing, and main focus has been finding a suitable building. As I am getting better at searching the list of potential buildings is getting longer and longer. I had to start entering them in a spreadsheet to maintain overview. At this moment I have found 23 buildings that are located close to one of the Chemins in France. For a lot of different reasons at this time I only consider 5 as real potentials. The main drawback has been that 95% is located on the via Podiensis mainly in the regions Lot, Gers and Occitanie. Nice regions, but more south. You can read about the search in [this article](#) I wrote for the Jacobsstaf, the magazine of the St Jacobs genootschap in the Netherlands.

In the Netherlands you have to spend a certain percentage of a building on art, so I started looking for “pilgrims” decorations. From the Pelgrimshoeve Vessem I got a 40cm large St Jacobshell dish, nice for decoration. I also scavenged Leboncoin, Marktplaats and Catawiki for objects. I did not find much during my searches until one night suddenly a 16th century statue of St Jacobus de Meerdere, Saint James the greater popped up. I saw it and I immediately knew this would be the center piece for the refuge. It was on auction and still 8 days to go. There was a very eager bidder that raised the price 8 times in the following week. In the meantime I had contacted the seller in Bruxelles and got more information and

pictures. The last minutes of the auction were very intense since I had put myself also a limit on the bidding. Counting down, 2 minutes to go, 1 minute to go, 20 second and no other bid. 3, 2, 1 0 Yes it was mine.

The head is made in the Renaissance style and was made in Burgundy in the beginning of the 16th century. Most likely it was made as part of a tableau in a church maybe along the Chemin or maybe in a private chapel by an Aristocrat who had been to Santiago. It is striking that coming out of the dark ages such a magnificent piece of art was made. The colors have endured 5 century and the gold emblazing still shines. The Saint is wearing a hat with symbols or "insigniae" of his pilgrimage : a pilgrim badge with image of the saint standing ; the scallop and the begging cup with gourd and crossed pilgrim staffs.



My network in France strengthens with the help of my French friends. I have now to real-estate agents actively looking, and am getting more and more contacts in the region. I really hope, that once I have been vaccinated I can travel down and visit some of the houses.

So the masterpiece for the “French dream” is already at home. I am convinced that “Saint Jacques” will be able to offer me a wonderful opportunity in a miraculous way. And if it is not Saint Jacques directly, it could be you who know or have heard of a building that could become a Pelgrims hostel ! So, don't hesitate, send me your tip by e-mail at lecoeurduchemin@gmail.com.

Le Coeur du Chemin

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