

# St Margaret's Church, Womenswold within the 'Forest of the People of Wimel'

The Early English style of St Margaret's Church indicates its origin in the 12th and 13th centuries. It is dedicated to St Margaret of Antioch, patron saint of pregnancy and childbirth.



Walking on the Via Francigena, near Shephersdwell, Kent.

The patron saint's link to womankind is not however how the village got its name. Norman tax records of c. 1090 refer a place called 'Winlingsweald', derived from the Old English 'ingas', meaning the 'people of', and 'wald' meaning forest to give us 'the forest of the people of Wimel'. Other ancient place names along the Via Francigena route to Dover, such as Sibertswold (now Shephersdwell), also testify to the once extensive forest that covered this area.

Ancient history surrounds the village in the form of bowl barrows, or burial mounds, believed to be Bronze Age in origin. Three of these, known as Rubury Butts, located on Three Barrows Down are a Scheduled Monument. Burial mounds were often referred to as 'butts' as they made ideal target butts for practising archery.

St Margaret's welcomes all visitors. Please come inside to collect your pilgrim stamp. An outdoor drinking water tap is also provided.

Inside the church you will find this memorial to John Marsh of Nethersole House, sculpted by Sir Robert Taylor. In 1783 his descendant, John Marsh the renowned English composer and diarist, took up residence at Nethersole and decided to improve the view....

*"The church at Womanswold being a rather unsightly object from my house ... having a low flat tower without anything upon it, I ... had a pole with a gilt weathercock and letters under put upon it, w'ch much improved the appearance..."*

*The John Marsh Journals, The Life and Times of a Gentleman Composer (1752 - 1828), Vol 1*

John Marsh's weathervane stood atop the tower for some 230 years before it had to be replaced.



John Marsh memorial

## THE VIA FRANCIGENA A pilgrimage path to Rome



From Canterbury Cathedral to Rome, pilgrims have been walking the 1,900km Via Francigena since the Middle Ages.

You can follow in their footsteps along the UK's own 30km (20 mile) section of this historic 'Camino', between the pilgrim capital of Canterbury and the coast at Dover. You'll find spectacular views, fascinating history and wildlife galore along the way.

The modern Via Francigena is based on the route taken by Sigeric, Archbishop of Canterbury, on his return from Rome in 990 after receiving his investiture pallium from Pope John XV. Sigeric recorded his journey back to Canterbury in a diary, which is now held in the British Library. As many of the original paths have since developed into motorways, the modern route deviates slightly, taking advantage of quiet countryside paths, canal towpaths and mountain trails.

### A journey of inspiration

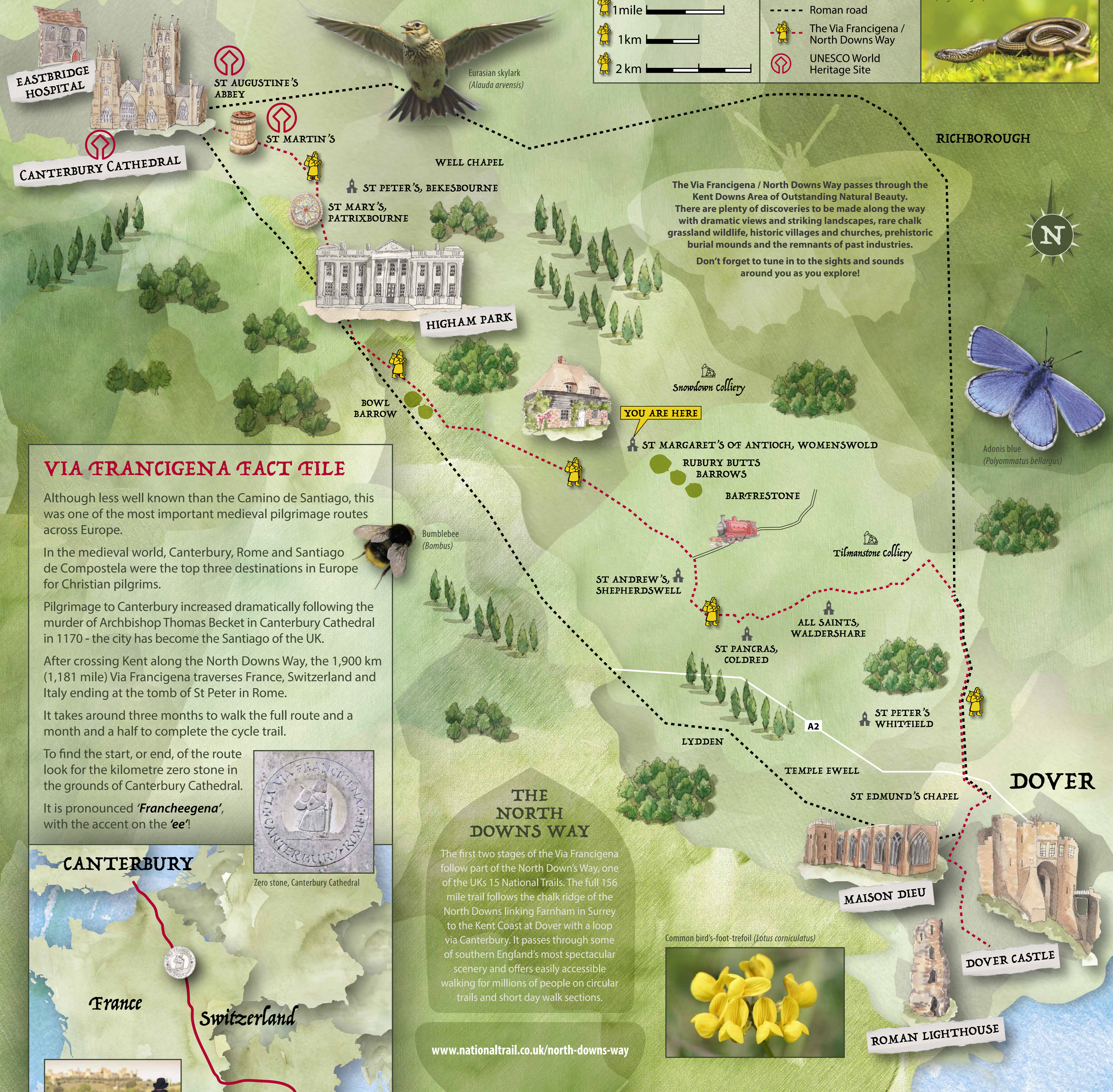
Generations of people have been inspired to follow pilgrimage routes for many reasons - some religious or spiritual and others for the sheer physical challenge. Most find the experience life changing. Hopefully you will find inspiration on your walk along part of the Via Francigena today.

Further information - [pilgrimstorome.org.uk](http://pilgrimstorome.org.uk)



St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury

## CANTERBURY



### VIA FRANCIGENA FACT FILE

Although less well known than the Camino de Santiago, this was one of the most important medieval pilgrimage routes across Europe.

In the medieval world, Canterbury, Rome and Santiago de Compostela were the top three destinations in Europe for Christian pilgrims.

Pilgrimage to Canterbury increased dramatically following the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170 - the city has become the Santiago of the UK.

After crossing Kent along the North Downs Way, the 1,900 km (1,181 mile) Via Francigena traverses France, Switzerland and Italy ending at the tomb of St Peter in Rome.

It takes around three months to walk the full route and a month and a half to complete the cycle trail.

To find the start, or end, of the route look for the kilometre zero stone in the grounds of Canterbury Cathedral.

It is pronounced 'Francheegena', with the accent on the 'ee'!



Zero stone, Canterbury Cathedral

## CANTERBURY

