

## Alexandra Lee Research Trip Report

I began my Research Trip in Poggio Mirteto (RI), where I participated in a [conference](#) ‘Il Percorso dei Bianchi.’ My thesis is about the Bianchi of 1399, a popular religious revival which spread throughout Northern and Central Italy. This provided me an invaluable opportunity to speak to other people working on the movement. The morning session was devoted to developing historical research about the Bianchi, and the afternoon to a touristic endeavour being arranged between Umbria and Lazio over the coming months to open up churches with Bianchi frescoes to the public along a pilgrimage route, tapping into the Jubilee this year of Mercy. I was also given the opportunity to present some of my work at the end of the conference.

The second day was a trip to visit some artwork related to the Bianchi in Umbria and Lazio. We visited the church of San Pietro ad muricentos in [Montebuono](#) (RI) and the church of Santa Maria Assunta in [Vallo di Nera](#) (PG). In the first church, there is a fresco of the Madonna dell’Oliva, a miracle which occurred at Assisi during the Bianchi processions in 1399. In the second, there is a lengthy fresco entitled ‘la processione dei Bianchi.’ This painting shows an encounter between two groups of Bianchi in Vallo di Nera, providing a useful insight into the actions of participants in the processions. Seeing this fresco in particular meant that I was able to see smaller details which are not apparent from photographic reproductions, such as peacemaking on a larger scale. It was wonderful to see these artworks in person, and I particularly benefitted from the guided tours. I am also now in contact with those who gave the tours to get further information about the churches and their contexts.

I next went to Florence, where I saw Manuscript C.152 in the [Biblioteca Marucelliana](#). The section I used was written by a poet who witnessed the Bianchi processions, recording a narrative as well as composing *laude* or hymns for participants to sing. I was able to transcribe this source which will be crucial for my discussion of Bianchi signing practices, particularly informing my analysis of divergent regional practices. While in Florence, I also looked for [crucifixes](#) which had been carried by the Bianchi, finding [six](#) of eight examples. Being able to see these crosses in their modern context has informed my final chapter on the legacy of the Bianchi, and in most instances I was also able to talk to a guide or priest in the churches in question who were able to provide me with more detailed information.

Finally I went to Lucca, where I read a volume on Lucchese religious confraternities. I was then able to follow up some leads from the book in the Biblioteca Capitolare. I also went to the state archive to follow up some further leads. I met Christine Meek there, the renowned scholar of Lucca, who had some very helpful suggestions of avenues of inquiry and particular items to look at in the archive. I was not able to visit the Bianchi crucifix in Lucca, as the chapel was closed, but will receive images from a librarian there once it reopens at the end of April.

Overall, it was a very productive trip, allowing me to make contacts among Bianchi scholars, carry out further manuscript research, and visit artwork and objects related to the Bianchi. I am very grateful to Medium Aevum for the generous funding they gave me which allowed me to participate in these numerous activities, enriching my PhD thesis.