



Cycle 2008  
– A Very Different Kind of Pilgrimage

A word of congratulations to all the cyclists, back up crew and maintenance team for another excellent year of the Irish Trust Cycle! It's an extraordinary achievement for you all and we are very grateful for your willingness, enthusiasm and generosity of spirit to help The Irish Pilgrimage Trust in such a self giving way. A very special thanks to Pat Jordan and Michael McGloin who had the arduous task of organising the cycle and who did a wonderful job.

We decided to interview one of the first time cyclists, Andrea Heneghan from Co. Mayo to hear first hand what she thought of the cycle.

A big thank you to Andrea (Group 306) for agreeing to do this for us! Here are just a few of her thoughts!

**How did you hear about the cycle Andrea and what made you want to participate?**

“I heard about the cycle through friends but it was my mother who encouraged me to do it. There has been a lot of illnesses in my family over the last number of years so I felt I should do something while I was young, fit and able to help out those who will never be well enough to take on a challenge like this.”

**What did you do in preparation for the cycle?**

“In preparation for the mammoth journey, a huge amount of dedication and hard work was needed to get in shape. It meant cycling in all kinds of weather. My local Ballinrobe Cycling Club encouraged me to persevere and never lose courage, but most of the credit goes to my family and friends who stood by me all the way.

Even when doubts set in, in January, Pat Jordan was at the end of the phone supporting me and he believed that I could do it. So a huge thank you to Pat for that; for his support before and during the cycle.”

**What were your thoughts on the cycle itself?**

“The cycle itself was the best week of my life with all its highs and lows, and that's not just the mountains, it's the emotional roller coaster that we all went through every day.

I took on this challenge on my own but once I met the group of people I was cycling with, all my fears disappeared. It opened me up to lots of new people and experiences. It wasn't all sunshine, but the rain brought us closer together as we were all in the same boat. We never could have got to our destination without the fantastic back up crew and maintenance team."

### **What does pilgrimage mean to you on completing the cycle?**

The true meaning of pilgrimage comes to reality with this cycle. The community spirit, friendship and care of each other shines through as we struggled each day to complete our journey both physically and spiritually. It is the ideal preparation for the time spent after in Lourdes with the group as you're already so focused on the care of others and as the Group 306 Motto goes; 'In Giving, We Receive.'"

### **Any final thoughts to leave us with Andrea?**

"I am now looking forward to the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the cycle in 2010, and meeting up with all the fantastic people I met last week and Looking forward to meeting all the new recruits, young and old. Cycle 2008 was a fantastic experience and I would recommend it to anyone considering the Challenge."

We are now taking bookings for Cycle 2010, so if you are interested, please call into Pat Jordan in the Hemicycle for more info and express your interest.

A huge thank you to all involved with Cycle 2008 and to Andrea for sharing something of her experience with us.



876Km in 7 days from Dinard to Lourdes, definitely the most difficult thing I have ever had to do in my whole life. Saddle sore and weary sums it up, we started with two days of wind and rain but then a run of some beautiful cold but blue-sky days cycling through the French country side, passing vineyards and forests and crossing over the Gironde by ferry. The last two days were back to very cold and a gale force, cross wind that would knock you off the bike. Our last day was Good Friday and we all had our personal Calvary to get us up the hills into Pontacq and then into Lourdes. We had made it, huge personal achievements by everyone.

Without the support of the back up crew of Bridget Keane, the two Mary Wade and Mary McKeon, Phil Jordan, May Shaughnessy, Anne Forde, Fergus O'Loan and the baggage handlers/mechanics we couldn't have made it. Hats off to the first cyclists who literally pitched their own tents every night; what a way to go! The huge organisational effort from Michael McGloin and Pat Jordan ensured we all arrived safely and plans already a foot for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary cycle in 2010.

*John O'Reilly*



Lunch Break! Sheltering from gale force winds on Good Friday!



Enjoying a well earned break!



Arrived in Lourdes! When the 120 brave cyclists disembarked in Dinard to start their 867km trek to Lourdes, they were faced with heavy rain and strong winds for their first day to Rennes. This set the tone for the week for one of the tougher cycles in recent years, with rain, wind and some bitterly cold days to test the cyclists to the limit.

A high point of the cycle was on the Monday cycle into La Rochelle for St. Patrick's Day. Tar éis lá fada ar no rothair bhí oíche iontach againn lán de ceoil agus craic.

A tough few days followed, with the final day into Lourdes being a real epic because of the bitterly cold wind. Prayers to Our Lady of Lourdes really worked as the rain held off until the final group photo was taken at the grotto to mark the end of another memorable cycle.

***Bobby Power and James McHugh***

Following months of intense preparation, an enthusiastic group of 111 cyclists and 23 back up team began the 12<sup>th</sup> bi annual IHCPT Cycle to Lourdes. Setting off from Dinard in Northern France on the 15<sup>th</sup> March , the group braced themselves for the 540mile trek through the beautiful French countryside. We cycled through Brittany and the Bordeaux regions passing through quaint villages and miles of famous vineyards and overnight stayed in places such as La Rochelle and Rennes.

Although our group came from all over Ireland and was a mix of novice and experienced cyclists including many Grandads and even one Granny, a unique bond was formed through the encouragement and support which carried us through the week. Needless to say, the craic along was mighty with many an impromptu song to lift the spirits. On our arrival in Lourdes, the challenges of our pilgrimage became a distant memory as a wonderful sense of achievement pervaded the group. It was a worthwhile, challenging and very special experience for us all.

***Phil, Dara and Mary (Group 308)***