



# Irish Trust Talk



The Irish Pilgrimage Trust, Kilcuan, Clarinbridge, Galway  
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Charity Registration Number 20009953 CHY (Revenue) No. 5992

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## The Irish Pilgrimage Trust

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## The Irish Pilgrimage Trust

The Trust was established in 1972 to provide special pilgrimage holidays to Lourdes for children and young people with special needs. The Trust also provide special summer holidays for people with special needs to Hosanna House in Lourdes and at our purpose built holiday homes - Kilcuan in Clarinbridge, Galway and Cois Cuain, Kiltrane, Wexford.

Check out our website on [www.irishpilgrimagetrust.com](http://www.irishpilgrimagetrust.com) for more details or call +353 91 796622

The Irish Pilgrimage Trust is a Registered Charity - C.R.N. 20009953; Revenue Chy. No. 5992



## The Irish Pilgrimage Trust Safeguarding



**Designated Liaison Person  
Bernadette Connolly**

**Person Designated with responsibility for the safety, welfare and protection of our guests**

## Please consider DONATING to The Irish Pilgrimage Trust

**You can DONATE online by visiting our website  
[www.irishpilgrimagetrust.com/donate](http://www.irishpilgrimagetrust.com/donate)  
or  
email to [info@irishpilgrimagetrust.com](mailto:info@irishpilgrimagetrust.com)  
or  
Contact us by 'phone on +353 91 796622**

**You can support your local Group by simply pressing the  
DONATE button on our website and make your  
Donation on Just Giving and note the Group No.**

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# A Word from the Chair

## David Whitty

Dear Friends,

A warm welcome to our Spring edition of the Trust Talk. How quickly the year moves on, and it's wonderful that our Easter Pilgrimage holiday to Lourdes is almost upon us again. It's that exciting time of year when our special Guests have been selected, visits completed, and Group Leaders and carers are working hard to ensure the finishing details are put in place to make our week as magical and memorable as possible!

As it is my first year in the role as Chairperson, I am looking forward to a very different type of week. It will be strange not being part of a Group dynamic, as it's the only Lourdes experience I know! Nonetheless, I look forward to meeting all the Trust family throughout the week.

2024 will be a very special and memorable year for the Irish Pilgrimage Trust, as it the anniversary of our 50th Pilgrimage. From humble beginnings in 1972, the Trust has grown to be the wonderful organisation it is today. You should all be very proud of the individual contribution you have made in shaping the Trust, and the indelible marks of love, laughter, fun, compassion and joy, which you have left on the tens of thousands of young people who have travelled with us since our mission began.

This year will also be a very poignant one, as we lost a wonderful friend of the Trust in Charles Digney, last September. Lourdes formed an extremely important part of Charles' life, and we will honour his legacy during a mass at the Grotto on Tuesday night at 10.30pm. I hope that you can join us for this, whether it be in person or online.

Although we've reached the momentous occasion of our Golden Anniversary, we need to work together to continue the important mission of the Trust, and to ensure it is alive and vibrant for our next 50 years. Your input and support will be crucial in this revitalisation, and I look forward to sharing some progress on a number of initiatives over the coming months. Putting that aside, it's also important to acknowledge this milestone and we hope that the weather will be kind for our 'Party on the Prairie' on Tuesday afternoon.

This year, our HCPT friends in Scotland will lead the Pilgrimage with the theme of "Let Your Light Shine". Lourdes is often a place where we can truly be ourselves - it is an opportunity to let our own light shine. By giving of our talents and kindness, we are very fortunate to receive the gift of many new friends throughout the week.

Another important event in 2024 is the biennial cycle to Lourdes, which charts a new route for the first time from Nice to Lourdes, across Southern France. Although the thoughts of cycling along the Cote d'Azur may seem very idyllic at first glance, I'm reliably informed that the route is a challenging one and our cyclists will need all the compassion they can get! We wish them all the very best of luck in their final preparations, and a safe week on 2 wheels.

We are so lucky to have such wonderful people in our Trust Family, from our Group Leaders, Nurses, Doctors, Volunteer Carers, Student Carers, Regional Officers, Trustees and dedicated HQ Staff. I ask you to work to protect and look after each other during our very busy week in Lourdes. The safety and protection of our Guests and Volunteers is paramount and must be at the heart of everything that we do.



# A Word from the Chair - cont'd

Unfortunately, the dreaded fundraising word is never too far from our thoughts at this time of year! With so much else going on, it can be difficult to keep on top of, but there is also opportunity, as people are getting fired up in anticipation for our unique and special trip. It's a good chance to also ask families of Guests if they may be able to assist in fundraising efforts. Please don't forget the "donate" button on our website, for family and friends who may wish to support our work.



Although the focus is on our Easter Pilgrimage at this time of year, our Hosanna House Groups have been working diligently in trying to prepare for the summer pilgrimage season. Unfortunately, HCPT have increased the cost of Hosanna House to reflect cost pressures that they have experienced. This will make the cost of running the summer pilgrimages more expensive and, as a result, some Groups have decided not to travel.

Overall, increasing costs are something that we will have to face up to in the coming years. Please bear in mind that our Trust property in Kilcuan is available for Friendship Weeks, which are low cost to run, and you can be assured that our Guests get just as much enjoyment from.

Finally, a sad piece of news to report is that, after much consideration, the Board has decided to sell its other property in Cois Cuain, Co. Wexford. The property is a constant flood risk and we simply do not know when the next flood will occur or how bad it will be. Our financial resources can only cover the repair costs so many times, and it is for this reason that we have decided to sell.



But for now, please embrace everything that the next few weeks has to offer before we board that bus and begin our very special journey! To reach the occasion of 50 is no mean feat, and we ask Our Lady to protect us and keep the Trust and its people safe for many more years.

With every best wish,

David

**Our Lady of Lourdes pray for us.**

**St Bernadette pray for us.**



# Our Trust Postcard 2024

Each year the Trust produce a postcard that will be send home from Lourdes to families, friends, supporters and donors. The Irish Pilgrimage Trust Lourdes postcard is an important means of telling those at home that we remember them while in Lourdes. It is also a very important means of saying a simple "Thank You". The Board of Trustees decided that this year we would invite postcard designs and artwork from past guests.

A few weeks ago, the Trust contacted the Groups inviting artwork and designs for our 2024 Lourdes postcard from past guests. The designs were to signify and celebrate the Trust's special 50th pilgrimage/holiday to Lourdes. We were pleasantly surprised with the response and the entries received.



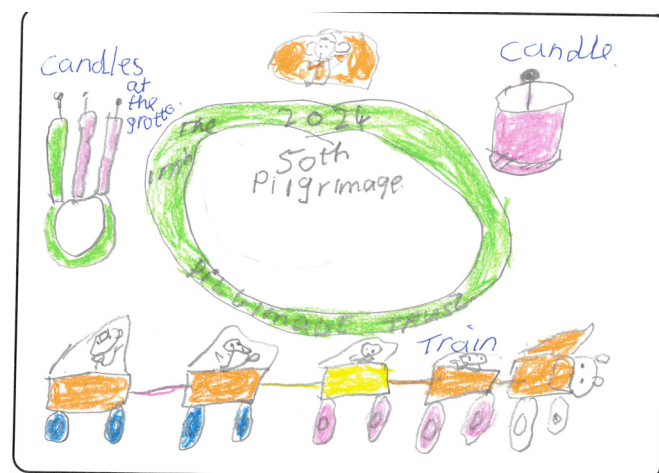
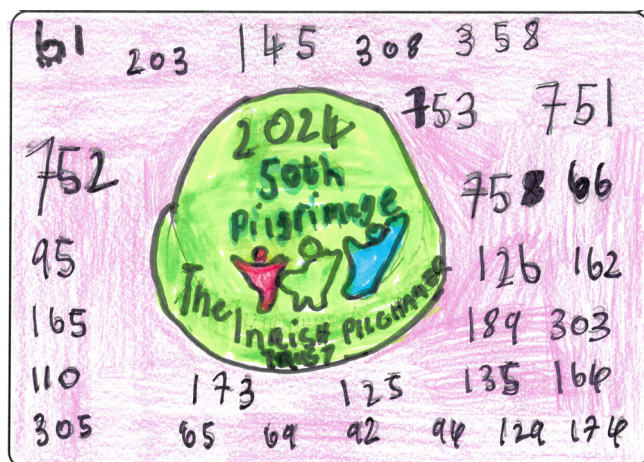
Design & Artwork by Jemma O'Kane for the 2024 Postcard from Lourdes

As with any art "competition", selecting the one to put on the postcard was a most challenging task. We can truly state that every entry was a winner. But in the end, we had to select the one to feature on the 2024 50th Pilgrimage postcard from Lourdes.

Following a lot of consideration the artwork design submitted by Jemma O'Kane, a former guest with Group 110 was selected.

The postcards are being printed and will be available from the Trust Groups travelling to Lourdes this Easter and will also be available at our Trust Shop in Lourdes during our Easter pilgrimage holiday.

One of the most significant and special discoveries from our postcard "competition" was the memories shared in art from the



entrants who ranged in age from their late teens to their mid 50's. All of the entries display the happy experiences and fond memories of past guests. We have reproduced a number of the entries in this article that reflect the lifetime impact and memories from their trip to Lourdes with the Trust.

Jemma's slogan, "Celebrating the Past. Creating the Future" is really special and is a great reflection for this golden occasion.



# Eadaoin McAnulty, New Trustee

*We caught up with one of our new Trustees who joined the Board of Trustees of The Irish Pilgrimage Trust last November. Eadaoin McAnulty who hails from Co. Down has many years of personal experience travelling to Lourdes with the Trust as a carer and group leader. Her family ties to the Trust go back to the early days of our organisation.*



It is with a great honour that I have been asked to write a piece for the **IRISH TRUST TALK**, the Trust's Newsletter, that I have so often read over the last number of years.

I have been a member of The Irish Pilgrimage Trust for almost 15 years, firstly as a carer for Group 67 and in the last 7 years, Group Leader and my most recent appointment as a Trustee.

However my connection with the Trust goes much further back, with my parents meeting in Lourdes and our family business providing transport to the airport for over 50 years to Newry groups.



I have been so fortunate over the last number of years to make lifelong friends through the Trust and at present I am leading Group 67 with not only a fellow carer but a great friend Ryan.



I remember, as a child, going with my daddy to collect guests from the airport and not fully understanding the mixed emotions when guests were returned to their parents and it's only now that I comprehend the equal measures of elation and sadness.

When I first travelled as a group member, I felt I knew very little or in fact nothing in some cases about Lourdes and all that the week involved. The concept seemed daunting and very lonely but let me reassure you that while in Lourdes, we pray together, work together, eat together, sing together, laugh together and come away with some of the best friendships and memories that we will treasure for life.

Group 67 has had the pleasure of encountering many young people, who have enriched my life, humbled me and left a lasting impression. Regardless of the year they have travelled I still talk of guests and tell stories year after year which makes me laugh and reminisce with fondness.

Throughout my time as a carer in group 67 I have been able to use my skills as a special educational



# Eadaoin McAnulty, New Trustee

needs teacher to support fellow carers in providing the most suitable care for our guests. Whether that be the use of schedules, communication devices or supporting challenging behaviour etc and now as a Trustee I hope that I am able to support other groups.

Over the next number of years as a Trustee I hope that I can continue to support all that the Trust aspires to be. That we offer opportunities for all, where all individuals are valued and cherished as they are. That we provide a safe and nurturing environment where our guests can be completely themselves.

Lourdes and the Trust touches so many people in so many different ways, from the carers to our guests to the families trusting us with their children and young people. I hope to continue the work of previous Trustees in enabling us to grow and flourish in this modern world.

Eadaoin McAnulty





# CYCLE to LOURDES

*Dr Michael McGloin established and organised The Irish Pilgrimage Trust Cycle to Lourdes back in 1984. Now, on the 40th anniversary of that first Cycle, Michael reflects on the event, it's purpose, the wonderful people who have participated and supported the Cycle and the changes that have taken place over 40 years.*



*A Tea Stop in the early years, on the side of a French country road, with the yellow support van.*

It all started as a scheme to raise funds for my group going to Lourdes with the Irish Pilgrimage Trust in 1984. It was to be a one-off event. I had searched for fund-raising ideas and during a chat in Lourdes with some friends, the idea of a fund raising cycle from Ireland emerged. I thought that this was novel and decided to run with it. I knew nothing about cycling, but someone mentioned a Pat Jordan in Clarinbridge who was “into cycling”. Pat was enthusiastic about the idea and agreed to take part. A number of local young people quickly expressed interest. It only seems like yesterday that a crowd gathered in Eyre Square, in the centre of Galway to

wave goodbye to the first Irish Pilgrimage Trust cycle to Lourdes. There were six brave cyclists and a backup of two, who travelled in a van borrowed from a garage in Galway which had hoped the publicity might persuade someone to buy it. The group headed off across country, overnighted in Durrow, before heading for the ferry in Rosslare. From Cherbourg a route had been sketched to Lourdes, but otherwise the group were on their own. The cyclists camped in tents they had to erect each night along the way!

What a group they were! They made it to Lourdes without any major incident and on time – arriving just before the flights carrying



*Cyclists from the 1980's pictured on their arrival in Lourdes*

the Irish Pilgrimage Trust groups landed at Tarbes. The first cycle had been an outstanding success. And of course, the chorus immediately was “we’ll have to do it again”.

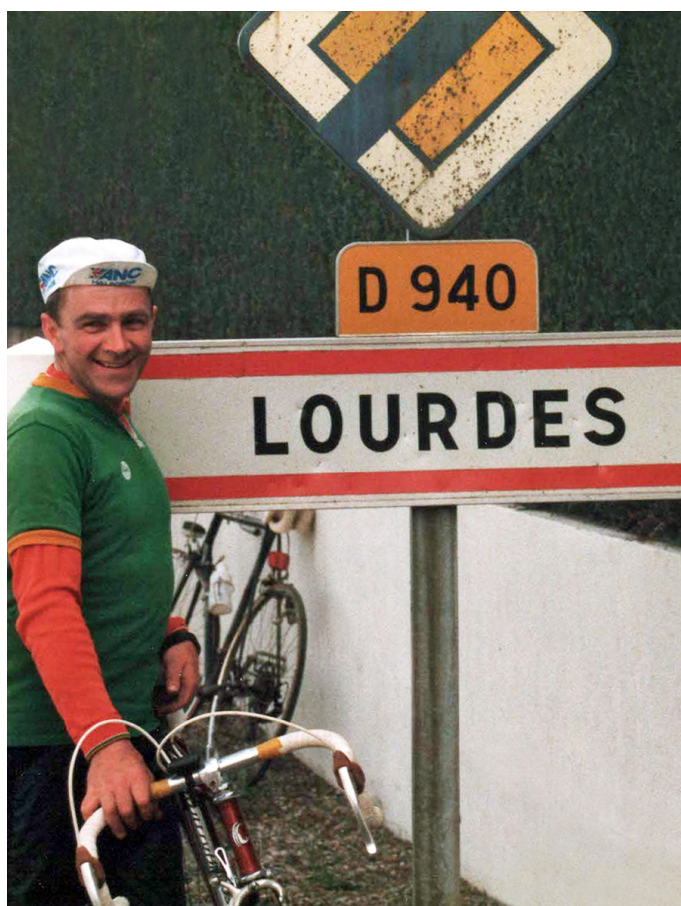


*L to R - Seamus Regan, Padraic Lynch and Eamonn McGowan*



# Celebrating 40 Years

And it is now forty years later and we are about to embark on our 20<sup>th</sup> cycle. Being a Jubilee year there is a certain nostalgia. I certainly remember the fantastic people who have been involved – many of whom have become good friends. Over the years a lot has changed both in society and with the cycle. Our numbers have grown, and this year the cycle group will be 90. We have moved from tents to using hotels. The route is carefully designed and reconnoitred. In early years, cyclists were dependent on a map, then for many years we had a team which drove well in advance marking the route with arrows. In the 80's and early 90's we had no way of contacting if a cyclist was lost or in difficulty. Now all have mobile phones, and this year, for the first time, the participants will be guided by GPS.



*1980,s - the legendary Pat Jordan, pictured beside the famous Lourdes sign*

This might sound as if the cycle has gotten easier, and this is certainly not the case. The participants must still prepare diligently to raise their funds and to train for over a year to be fit for the challenge. To save time, and to fit the cycle into a week, the cyclists no longer take a ferry but fly to the start. The daily distance has increased, and this year on some days the cyclists will cover 185km.

And yet, many cyclists return year after year. It is absolutely amazing to see familiar faces when we gather for a training session or for the main event. This year, being a significant 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we will remember in our thoughts and prayers those, who were part of our group over many years, and who will not be able to join us this year. On the other hand, it is fantastic and refreshing to welcome new cyclists taking part for the first time – it is not clear that they have been told that it is addictive!

There has been much research on the topic of pilgrimage. What is it, and what has driven people of different cultures and religions to undertake a “pilgrimage” over the centuries. The experts describe a number of features of pilgrimage. Firstly it is a separation from the everyday routine. It is often undertaken in a group. Pilgrimage as a journey to a foreign or unknown place where a person experiences a new or expanded understanding about themselves, others, nature or a greater good. Pilgrimage leads to personal change.... and then the pilgrim returns to their daily life. We had a talk in Kilcuan some years ago on “Pilgrimage” and when asked what's the difference between a pilgrimage and a package tour, the speaker considered for a few minutes and said “Pilgrims don't complain!”. This year's cycle brings us along two pilgrimage routes. Firstly there is the new Irish Pilgrimage Trust Cycle route to Lourdes. In addition, the participants will cycle along much of the ancient Camino Route from Arles to Compostela which passed through Lourdes.

The Irish Pilgrimage Trust Cycle to Lourdes is of course fundamentally a fund-raising endeavour, but it is indeed a pilgrimage. We have never questioned if all participants undertake this journey for religious purposes, and no doubt many do. However, for all of our cyclists, the cycle is a life changing experience, on a shared journey in the company of other remarkable people.

Thank you to all who have participated over the past forty years and huge gratitude to those who have supported them with encouragement, prayers and donations.



**Dr Michael McGloin,**

Founder of the Cycle to Lourdes and Chairperson of The Irish Pilgrimage Trust Cycle Committee (IPTC).

# Charles Digney, An Appreciation

The Irish Pilgrimage Trust or IHCPT as it was originally known has been bringing young people with special needs to Lourdes since 1972. The Digney Family have been involved in and travelling with The Trust since the very early days.

Charles Digney senior became involved in the 70's and led group 93 from 1979 and was on the Board of Trustees 1987 to 2002 and chair of the Board from 1997 to 1999.

Charles first went to Lourdes as a youth carer 24 years ago when he was 16 years old and his father Charles Senior was then chairperson of the Trust.



In his resignation email to the Board of Trustees Charles said *"24 years ago I watched my father welcome the Trust family to Lourdes from the steps of St Bernadettes and it was a great honour for me to do the same this year with my own family present. My involvement with the Trust has shaped my life. I have met my wife in Lourdes and made friendships with some wonderful people"*.

Charles had a deep commitment to the Trust from when he first travelled in 1999 to last year when he travelled as chairperson of the Trust, he was actively involved in the joyous process of bringing deserving young people with special needs on a wonderful trip to Lourdes at Easter.

Charles led group 93 from 2008 to 2013. Charles joined the Board in 2016 and took over as Chairperson in 2022. He led the Trust with a steady hand, calmly overseeing everything but always using kindness and empathy in his decisions. He was a pleasure to work

with and was honest and forthright in his views and opinions but always treated everyone with respect. He will be deeply missed by everyone in the Trust family who knew him and his death brings a huge sadness and loss to us all.

His last words to David Whitty, Bernadette, the Board of Trustees and to everyone involved in the Trust were: *"I wish you, the board and the wider Trust family every success in the future. The trust is full of wonderful people and when you have those sort of people around you all can be achieved. May Our Lady and St Bernadette watch over you."*

We now say to you Charles and to your family May Our Lady and St Bernadette watch over you all at this very sad time.

## Train of Life By Jean d'Ormesson

At birth, we boarded the train of life and met our parents, and we believed that they would always travel by our side.

However, at some station, our parents would step down from the train, leaving us on life's journey alone.

As time goes by, some significant people will board the train: siblings, other children, friends, and even the love of our life.

Many will step down and leave a permanent vacuum. Others will go so unnoticed that we won't realize that they vacated their seats!

This train ride has been a mixture of joy, sorrow, fantasy, expectations, hellos, goodbyes, and farewells.

A successful journey consists of having a good relationship with all passengers, requiring that we give the best of ourselves.

The mystery that prevails is that we do not know at which station we ourselves will step down.

Thus, we must try to travel along the track of life in the best possible way - loving, forgiving, giving, and sharing.

When the time comes for us to step down and leave our seat empty - we should leave behind beautiful memories for those who continue to travel on the train of life. Let's remember to thank our Creator for giving us life to participate in this journey.

(Poem selected by Charles)

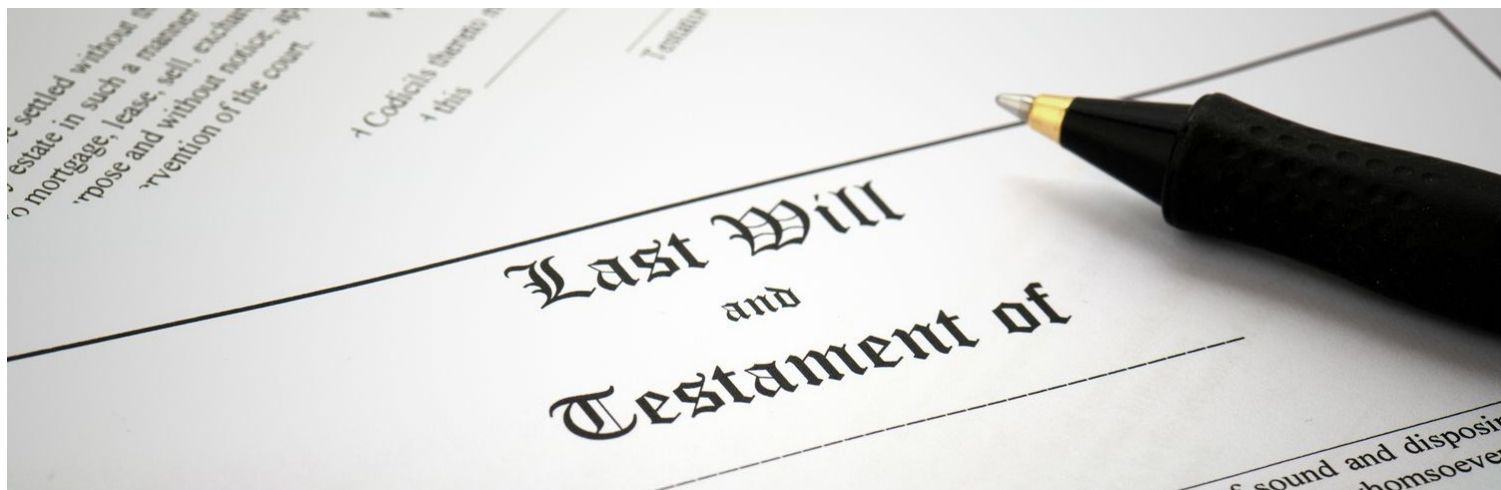


# Memories from Lourdes 2023





# YOUR LASTING GIFT



## *Please remember us in your Will*

**Y**ou may have supported our work in the past by contributing to our fundraising to bring young people with additional needs to Lourdes at Eastertime or to Kilcuan for a summer break with our Friendship Weeks. Or you may have volunteered and travelled with us to Lourdes and experienced at first hand the joy and happiness of the young people who join us as our guests for that wonderful week. Or you may have simply heard about The Irish Pilgrimage Trust for the very first time recently. Please be assured that your involvement is always remembered and appreciated.

One way to ensure your enduring support is to leave a gift in your Will. A gift means that The Irish Pilgrimage Trust can continue to serve future generations of special young people and give them the experience of that unique trip to Lourdes or to one of our holiday homes in Ireland.



The value of your gift is immeasurable for many reasons, for example,

- Maximum benefit is gained from donations and fundraising as our Volunteers pay their fares.
- Our Nurses and Doctors are Volunteers who also pay their own fares.
- Our Volunteers fundraise every year to raise the money to pay fully for the costs of the young people.
- Our organisation is run by a Board of Trustees who are volunteers and do not receive expenses.
- The precious memories of our guests are treasured for a lifetime and invaluable.

**If you wish to leave a gift to The Irish Pilgrimage Trust, please contact your Solicitor to make the arrangements.**

**THANK YOU.**