



# Irish Trust Talk



**HAPPY EASTER and THANK YOU for 50 Years  
To All Past and Present Trustees, Volunteers, Guests,  
Supporters, Benefactors & Staff**

**Issue 103**

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

**Spring 2021**



## 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, Kilrane, 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; Chy. No. 5992



## The Irish Pilgrimage Trust Safeguarding



**Designated Liaison Person  
Bernadette Connolly**



**Deputy Designated Liaison Person  
Catherine Foley**

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

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## 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

Helen Kirwan



Dear Friends,

Easter is fast approaching and we should be preparing for our 50<sup>th</sup> pilgrimage! When we cancelled last year's Easter pilgrimage little did we think that we would also have to cancel this year's pilgrimage. It has been a very tough year for so many people and none more so than the young people and families who are so special to us. Most people with additional needs have been deprived of far more than the rest of society. Their services, schools and social outlets closed overnight and many of these people could not comprehend the reasons behind this and were left without vital support. As a Trust we would so love to be able to bring these special young people to Lourdes at Easter or even to bring them on a day trip to a local farm. I met a parent today in my local bank whose daughter was due to travel with us last year and his first question when he saw me was "Any chance of getting to Lourdes?" Of course, he knows there is no chance this year but he still holds out hope and we too hold on to that hope. The hope that keeps us going that confirms in our hearts the heartfelt desire to get back to work as soon as possible.

Since our last Trust Talk, we have been busy in very different ways to normal. Ber, Zoe, James and Celine are working hard on archiving and putting together the History of the Trust and we hope to publish the Trust History in the Summer. We hope this publication will evoke many memories and will keep the spirit of the Trust truly alive for the next 50 years. A big thank you to all who have contributed to this work in any way.

This Trust Talk marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Trust pilgrimage from Ireland. Over those years thousands of people have been enriched by the experience of travelling to Lourdes as part of the Trust family. Our deepest gratitude to Anthea O'Grady who set out on that first journey. A huge thank you also to all the volunteers who have travelled over the years. I urge you right now to recall how you personally first heard of the Trust and say a little prayer of thanks for the person or people who introduced you to this family.

We remember particularly all the young people who have travelled over the years and who have enriched the lives of all those they met. A big thank you to all parents who allowed their sons or daughters to be part of our pilgrimage.

We could not travel without funds so our benefactors have been key to our success. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to all those people who raise funds for us tirelessly whether they are people who do a church gate collection once a year, those who organise fundraising events or cyclists who cycle hundreds of miles and raise thousands of euro for us we couldn't do it without this support and we say a big thank you.

As I mentioned earlier hope has been keeping us all going in these difficult times. We hope and we promise that as soon as restrictions are eased we will begin the work of the Trust again. We look forward to trips, breaks and friendship weeks in the not too distant future.

This Easter let us cherish the memories and friendships of past pilgrimages. Why not get in touch with someone you have met through the Trust in the past evoke some memories and bring some joy to their day.

Wishing you all a happy and blessed Easter time. Keep safe and look after each other. I look forward to meeting everyone as soon as possible here in Ireland and getting back to Lourdes in 2022.

Best Wishes, Helen

## Easter Week Virtual Schedule

**Beginning on Easter Saturday April 3rd to  
Saturday April 10th -**

A Daily post on the Trust Facebook Page  
Featuring a Video of Greetings and Messages  
from a different Region each day.

**A Daily Post and Reflection**

**Tuesday APRIL 6th at 6.30pm**

Irish Trust Mass, celebrated by Trust Chaplain  
Fr Mike Murphy, broadcast Live on Facebook  
from Kilcuan

**Friday 9th April at 6.30pm**

Benefactors Mass broadcast Live on Facebook  
from Kilcuan

# The National Lottery GOOD CAUSES Awards 2021



As one of the 36 finalists from around the country we are anxiously awaiting the final results. Each category winner will receive an award of €10,000 with the overall Good Cause of the Year being awarded an additional €25,000. The winners will be announced on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May in the Mansion House in Dublin. We have been informed that the awards ceremony will take place as a virtual event.

The ceremony will be hosted by Grainne Seoige from the studio in the Round

The National Lottery Good Causes Awards celebrates the inspiring and innovative work being carried out by individuals, groups and clubs around the country who have benefited from National Lottery Good Causes funding. Between 2014 and 2019 The Irish Pilgrimage Trust benefited from Lottery funding in support of our Friendship Weeks program in Cois Cuain, Wexford. As a past beneficiary the Trust is therefore eligible for the National Lottery Good Causes Awards.

In November 2020 we submitted our entry and in December we were informed that the Trust was short listed in the Youth Category. We were delighted to receive a cheque for €1,000 for being shortlisted.



James McHugh and Ber Connolly outside Kilcuan proudly displaying the Good Causes trophy received for reaching the Final



Naturally, we are very excited about the prospect of winning the Youth category, but first we had to make a submission and meet the interview panel. The new Covid-19 restrictions in January meant that plans for a visit to Kilcuan by the National Lottery film crew had to be abandoned. The interview and adjudication process was rearranged and conducted on Zoom. We worked on our submission and on the 16th February Trust Chairperson Helen Kirwan based in Wexford and National Coordinator Bernadette Connolly based in Kilcuan did an excellent job on our presentation to the judging panel.

Room of the Mansion House. All the finalists, including the Trust, will be connected into the ceremony and will be meeting the presenter in the course of the broadcast. The ceremony will be broadcast LIVE online from 1.00pm on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May so that our volunteers, guests, friends, family, neighbours and supporters can tune in and watch live. The broadcast will conclude at approx. 2.30pm with the announcement of the Good Cause of the Year.

A link for the ceremony will be provided in advance and we will share this link with you once it is available. We are keeping our fingers and toes crossed!

**Put the date in your Diary -  
Saturday 29th May 2021, from  
1.00pm to 2.30pm  
Please join us LIVE Online for the  
National Lottery  
GOOD CAUSES AWARDS  
Ceremony**

# KILCUAN Friendship Weeks

## FRIENDSHIP WEEKS 2021

Kilcuan will be prepared and ready to host the 2021 Friendship Weeks program from July through to September this year. This period has been reserved for our Groups to avail of the facilities in Kilcuan in response to the great need and demand that exists. Some of our existing Friendship Week groups have already contacted HQ and expressed their desire to proceed with their week once conditions allow.

The Trust remains hopeful that the overall situation will improve as the vaccination program ramps up and reaches the wider community. At the time of going to press we feel confident that the expected additional

supplies and sources of the vaccines will see significant progress by late June. The present use of Kilcuan as a Vaccination Centre is expected to end by then.

We therefore expect that it will be possible for our Friendship Weeks to mobilise and provide a summer holiday program during July, August and September. Final arrangements will be coordinated with the Trust HQ in Kilcuan. Any further developments will be communicated through the Friendship Weeks group leaders and their guests.

Cois Cuain is presently occupied on a longer term basis by a group of young people with additional needs and their teams of support carers.

## RISE and SHINE - Easter '21 challenge

### RISE and SHINE for the Trust.



In response to many requests and suggestions from Groups around the country we launched an online Easter 2021 fundraising event called **RISE and SHINE** for the Trust. Group leaders who contacted HQ also asked for assistance in creating an initiative that would help their groups to remain connected and engaged during this challenging time. And so, the RISE and SHINE Challenge was devised. We availed of the *Just Giving* online donation platform and set up the event designed to allow each group to set up their own group's fundraising page. We set a national target of €50,000.

The **RISE and SHINE Challenge** invites participants to **WALK, RUN or CYCLE 50kms in 21 days**, starting on 21st March and ending on the 10th April. The dates coincide with our Easter holiday week when we would normally be in Lourdes. Volunteers in each group can come together virtually and decide on the challenge that they wish to undertake. Each volunteer seeks sponsorship

for their participation and the funds are lodged into the *Just Giving* account. All funds raised will be allocated to the participating groups.

The Office in Kilcuan is coordinating the overall event and providing full backup support to the Groups. This includes help with setting up their fundraising pages and any other technical queries. The event progress can be monitored in real time.

This method of fundraising will be with us for the foreseeable future and it is vitally important that the Trust has a visual presence on Social Media and virtual fundraising platforms. The wonderful example of Capt Sir Tom Moore's success in raising millions of pounds for the NHS in the UK is a shining example of the possibilities that now exist.

**RISE and SHINE** for the Trust is our first effort in mobilising our National organisation to take part in this method of fundraising. We hope to learn many lessons from this event while also raising funds for the future and offering our groups and regions an opportunity to engage and contribute in a meaningful way.

**Anyone who would like to support and donate to their local Irish Pilgrimage Trust Group or wish to donate to the Trust can follow the link below**

[www.justgiving.com/campaign/riseandshineforthetrust](http://www.justgiving.com/campaign/riseandshineforthetrust)

**And so, in the true spirit of the Trust,  
let's all RISE and SHINE!**

# On the Front Line

Trust me, I'm a... staff nurse in Letterkenny University Hospital and have travelled with group 70 since 2013.

My name is John Havlin. I travelled firstly as a student nurse with our group and for the last few years as group nurse. I have been working on a frontline covid ward since the start of the pandemic. I contracted the virus myself last March and was hospitalized in April for 10 days with severe complications. I recovered thank God with the help of my wonderful colleagues in the hospital. I was discharged on the day we were all due to travel to Lourdes last year, Easter Sunday. I miss the opportunity to travel with group 70 just now as the anticipation is a great motivation throughout the year. Whilst lockdown is hard to deal with I feel privileged to be able to go out to work and make a difference to the patients experience during their difficult days. I wish all my Trust colleagues the best for 2021 and that they stay safe so that we can experience some of that special Lourdes magic as soon as possible again.

John Havlin.



John at work on the Front Line

## KILCUAN REPORT



During the past 12 months the Board of Trustees has taken time to review our facilities in Kilcuan. As many in the Trust will be aware Kilcuan was developed in the mid-1990s to provide a unique holiday facility to cater for people with diverse additional needs. Since opening its doors in the late 1990s Kilcuan has continued to cater for our own Trust groups, Friendship Week Groups as well as many other organisations from around the country serving people with additional needs. Kilcuan has been a cherished experience for so many special people and a highlight of their year for many who return each summer.

Now Kilcuan is facing many challenges as we plot the future for our special home and the services it should

provide. The building is approaching the time when major renewals and upgrades will be required to respond to several issues. Changes to building standards, improvements to the building regulations, disability access and use requirements and sustainability are adding to these challenges.

Several months ago, the Board appointed a Consultant Engineer to prepare a report on the condition of the building and also separately appointed a Mechanical and Electrical Consultant to report on the building services. Following their inspections the reports from both consultants were presented to the Board before Christmas. These reports highlighted significant issues that must be addressed. Many of the issues raised by them will require extensive and invasive renewal and reconstruction work.

The Board has now embarked on the next stage of its review process. A consultant Architect is being appointed to draw up plans for the renewal of Kilcuan and to advise on the cost of the works. The Board is anxious that the renewal of the facility will ensure that families as well as the larger groups will be catered for and able to can avail of Kilcuan. Flexibility in the accommodation and use of the building will be a most important element of this review. Further news and announcements will be made once the Board has received the Architects plans for the redevelopment.

# VidHug

## VidHug - A Virtual Easter Hug from the Irish Pilgrimage Trust



We are all feeling that disconnect due to the pandemic restrictions and lockdowns. This is particularly true at this time of the year for all of us in The Irish Pilgrimage Trust. By now, all our plans would normally be in place and we would be in Lourdes for the wonderful Easter week of celebration and fun. Our volunteers and Guests would be up to their eyes in fun and games, making new friendships and meeting old friends. Group Leaders, Nurses, Doctors, Chaplains, Staff and Trustees, Shop and support groups would be working hard to make sure that everything runs smoothly. Alas, all of this is not to be as we are not going to Lourdes for Easter 2021.

But that does not mean that we can't have some fun and be connected. We devised an ingenious plan to make sure that Easter would not pass by unnoticed. By now every Trust group in the country is aware of that new tool in our kit box – the dreaded VidHug. Where have you been if you haven't heard from Ber or Celine or Zoe or James in the past couple of weeks? "Send in your video" must be ringing in your ears!

We are thrilled with the response and the creativity from groups in all the regions. The results of all your hard work will be posted on the Trust Facebook page from Easter Sunday April 4<sup>th</sup> until Saturday 10<sup>th</sup>. Each day a different Region will be given the spotlight. You will see old friends, guests, group leaders, greetings, SMILES, and craic to rival our Thursday Party Night in Lourdes. So tune in, don't miss out, everything is worth watching. And don't forget to share your Region's VidHug with family and friends. If we can't be there we can still share one of the most important experiences of Easter in Lourdes – our wonderful MEMORIES!

**Happy Easter everyone and always remember, let's all RISE and SHINE!**

## The Gardiner Brothers join in.....

Clarinbridge is famous around the world as the home of the Oyster! But now Clarinbridge can boast of two local gems or should that be pearls? We are referring of course, to Michael and Matthew Gardiner, Irish Dancing's latest and greatest sensation. These two local young men have more than 540,000 followers on TikTok and 200,000 followers on Instagram.

The brothers worked very hard to earn their well deserved reputation. Between them they have amassed more than 50 major championship titles including 5 World championships. They created Irish dancing history in 2015 by winning world titles in the same year.

Irish dancing has a worldwide audience and is hugely competitive, similar to many sports. "It's like any sport" Michael said in a recent interview in the Irish Times. "When you are at the top you make a lot of sacrifices and we owe a lot to our parents"

Both brothers were performing in the Riverdance 25th Anniversary Tour when the pandemic struck in 2020. Matthew was performing at the 3 Arena in Dublin while Michael was at Radio City Music Hall in New York. The break in touring gave them the opportunity to diversify into TikTok and they quickly became 'influencers' promoting Irish



The Gardiner Brother in full flight! How do they do that???

Culture, physical and mental wellbeing.

We were really thrilled when the brothers called to Kilcuan recently after hearing about our VidHug initiative. They brought along their dancing shoes and boards. You can watch a sample of their amazing skills that will be included in our Facebook VidHug posts during Easter week.

## A LEGACY FOR THE FUTURE

Please consider leaving a gift in your will to help ensure that the life changing work of The Irish Pilgrimage Trust can continue for many years to come.

### 50th Anniversary of the Trust

The Irish Pilgrimage Trust is almost 50 years old! For more than a year now we have been gathering information, trawling through records and compiling an archive of the History of the Trust.

This major undertaking was in part facilitated by the coronavirus pandemic as it afforded time to do this very important task. Preserving the memory of the Trust, the story of the humble beginnings to the growth of an established 32-county Charity serving hundreds of people with additional needs annually.

The joys and the struggles, the personalities and the characters, the stories and the anecdotes, tell a fascinating history of faith and service.

We hope to capture all this and more in our upcoming publication CELEBRATING 50 YEARS of The Irish Pilgrimage Trust. The book will be available from the Trust for € 10 euro.

Please contact HQ in Kilcuan to reserve your copy.  
Ph +353 91 796622  
or email  
info@irishpilgrimage.com

Quote-

*The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others - Mahatma Gandhi*

## Cycle to Lourdes

Following the cancellation of our 2020 Sponsored Cycle to Lourdes last Easter due to the coronavirus pandemic, our sister organisation in the UK, HCPT, also had to cancel their 2021 Cycle for the same reason. Just like so many other organisations we in The Irish Pilgrimage Trust continue to be impacted by the ongoing uncertainty, particularly over the past few months.



A blast from the past - members of the Kiltullagh group who participated in our 2016 Cycle to Lourdes

Our intention to hold a 5-day cycle around Ireland during the early summer months has had to be reconsidered. The planning and organisation required to run such an event takes months. Unfortunately, the

imposition, after Christmas, of restrictions on non-essential travel and group gathering made it impossible to plan with any certainty. Uncertainty surrounding the availability or reopening of the hospitality sector, challenges facing the roll out of the vaccinations to the general population by June and safety issues informed our decision. Route planning, reserving hotel accommodation or mobilising support crews was not practical under the circumstances. Many other organisations such as the RÁS have already cancelled scheduled events due to take place during the next few months. While all this is very disappointing, we continue to keep looking forward with hope.

The good news is that the Trust cycle organisers will begin looking forward to holding our Cycle in France for Easter 2022. As with the Trust's Easter Pilgrimage to Lourdes, we must plan for the expected return to our annual programs. Our cycle organisers will meet after Easter to hold preliminary discussions about planning for the cycle in France and options for preparation cycles here at home during the autumn. Our registered cyclists and crews from Cycle 2020 will be contacted directly with updated information when appropriate and we welcome enquiries from cyclists who might consider joining Cycle 2022.