



Irish Trust Talk



Preparing for our return to **LOURDES** **EASTER 2023**



RISE & SHINE



The Irish Pilgrimage Trust

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20009953
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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 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**



**Deputy Designated Liaison Person
Catherine Foley**

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

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to

The Irish Pilgrimage Trust

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www.irishpilgrimagetrust.com/donate

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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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Basillica Notre Dame de Lourdes & Lourdes Scene

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Our First 50 Years



A Word from the Chair

Charles Digney

It is a great privilege to be appointed to the role of chairperson of The Irish Pilgrimage Trust. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our former chairperson Helen Kirwan for her leadership. It was not the term of Chairperson Helen would have envisaged when she accepted the role. However she can be very proud of what she achieved during what was one of the most challenging periods in the history of the Trust. We are all very grateful Helen.

The past 3 years have been very challenging for many people and have impacted upon us all in varying ways. Some of our Trust family are no longer with us, wonderful people for whom we have great admiration and who shaped this organisation that we all love. We continue to remember them in our prayers.

As an organisation we are very fortunate to have an extremely talented and committed staff in our office in Kilcuan. I thank them for the various contributions they have and continue to make to the success of The Trust.

Over the years thousands of young people and their families have benefited from pilgrimage holidays with the Trust. Their joy, enthusiasm and unique personalities have helped shape our organisation and hopefully the experience has had a positive impact on their lives.

There is a great sense of optimism as we look to the future. Over the last few months we have had some groups travel to Lourdes and others have had friendship weeks in Kilcuan, we have had a cycle around Ireland and group and regional meetings have taken place and volunteers are full of enthusiasm for our return to Lourdes at Easter 2023.

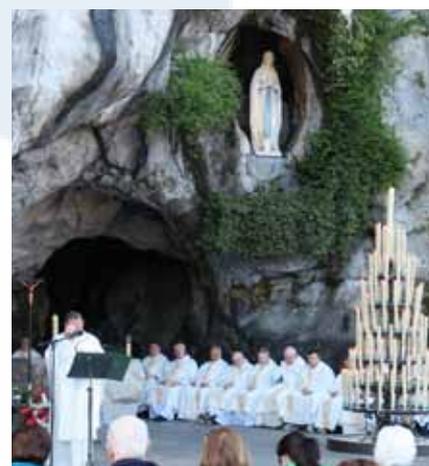
The emergence of COVID in our lives also came at a time when our organisation hit the 50 year milestone. When I think of how the Trust has developed and evolved over the past 50 years, youth groups, family groups, forever friends group, our cycle, Camino, development of Kilcuan and Cois Cuain etc. it makes me wonder what the future will bring.

The one common element with all those developments however has been our volunteers. Our organisation has been blessed over the last 50 years to have had the skills and personalities of thousands of people who have given freely of themselves for the benefit of others. Some of us are fortunate to be able to travel to Lourdes with the Trust while many no longer can for one reason or another. Whether we travel to Lourdes or not we are all still part of this wonderful family and our association with the Trust has created a unique bond between those that have experienced it.

When I accepted the role of Chairperson I did so with a certain trepidation when I thought of all the talented people who have come before me, developments of the organisation over the years and what the future may bring. 3 things however provide me with reassurance and encouragement and those are:-

- **We have an organisation full of fantastic committed volunteers**
- **There are many many young people and their families who would benefit from what the Trust can offer them.**
- **The call of Our Lady to go on pilgrimage to Lourdes is as relevant today as it was just over 150 years ago.**

The Trust has been on a journey for the last 50 years. Many different people have been with us at differing points of that journey and made a contribution with their skills and talents. I look forward to continuing on that journey with you as we start our preparations for Easter 2023.



Our Lady of Lourdes Pray for us.

St Bernadette Pray for us.

Charles

VOLUNTEERING SPIRIT

Volunteering Spirit

Trust volunteer Jackie Cullen, (Group Leader,

Group 174) along with her friend Brendan Pierce from Kilkenny responded to the tragedy of the war in Ukraine in a very practical way.

They raised funds for medical and other essential supplies, loaded a van and took unpaid leave from their jobs. They drove from Kilkenny to Dublin, got ferry to Pembrokeshire, drove to Hull and caught the overnight ferry to Rotterdam. Then, over 2 days, they drove to Ukraine to meet their contact, a Ukrainian company who took their medical supplies to frontline doctors.



Following the transfer of the essential supplies, Jackie and Brendan travelled on to Miejsce in Poland. There they visited a group of Michalite sisters who shelter children misplaced due to the war. They have remained in contact with the children's home and continue to send essential items by courier.

Jackie and Brendan found this to be an epic journey

and a humbling experience. Back in Kilkenny they are part of the Kilkenny Helping the Homeless and deliver food parcels fortnightly to families.



RETURNING TO LOURDES - Some Thoughts



A People Place by William J. Crocker

**If this is not a place where tears are understood,
Where do I go to cry?**

**If this is not a place where my spirits can take wing,
Where do I go to fly?**

**If this is not a place where my questions can be asked,
Where do I go to seek?**

**If this is not a place where my feelings can be heard,
Where do I go to speak?**

**If this is not a place where you'll accept me as I am,
Where can I go to be?**

**If this is not a place where I can try to learn and grow,
Where can I be just me?**

REFLECTION on the PANDEMIC

Its been 3 long years....

A reflection on the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic



Just like the rest of the country and indeed the world we had to come to terms with a rapidly evolving situation. The memories from March 2020 are ones of uncertainty, fear, and disappointment. The life of the Trust was immediately impacted as society went into lock down! All plans for our 2020 annual Easter pilgrimage to Lourdes, our Cycle to

Lourdes, summer Friendship Weeks and Hosanna House trips were suspended. Under the stewardship of Trust Chairperson Helen Kirwan, the Board and staff immediately swung into action to safeguard the organisation and its finances and navigate those exceptionally difficult times.

The Board of Trustees regularly “met” via now famous “Zoom” calls and kept abreast of current developments. The Trust staff led by National Co Ordinator Bernadette Connolly continued to work under the restrictions imposed by the Government and Health Authorities. Staff took an immediate pay cut and the Trust availed of the Government’s employment support schemes.

The Irish Pilgrimage Trust quickly became involved in the national effort to deal with the pandemic when our holiday home Kilcuan in Clarinbridge was provided to the Brothers of Charity Services and the HSE for emergency Covid-19 accommodation and training. Later, as the vaccines came on stream Kilcuan became a special vaccination centre to serve persons in care with additional needs.

Apart from managing the business of the organisation, staff availed of this period to compile a Trust archive, a project that was under consideration for some time prior to the pandemic. They also developed “online” forms for the future and assisted in reviewing Trust policies. Several successful

online fundraising events were undertaken involving Trust volunteers. During this period the Trust’s golden jubilee history project was completed. “Golden Memories” our recent publication celebrating the first 50 years of the Trust was compiled, edited, designed and produced entirely “in-house” by the Trust. The Trust’s new Charities Governance Code, required under recent Charities legislation and itself a huge project, was undertaken and completed. This brings our organisation into compliance with the requirements of the Charities Regulator.

Thanks to Trust Chaplain Fr Michael Murphy, we were able to celebrate and broadcast Mass via Facebook from Kilcuan on several occasions. It was encouraging that these broadcasts reached a wide audience, with viewers joining from around the world. Sometimes, when reflecting on those first few months of the Covid-19 pandemic, it can feel like a dream. But of course, for many it was anything but a dream. The sadness of loss on so many levels, personally and as a society is a legacy that remains. Many of our Trust volunteers and families have suffered loss and this is deeply felt within our organisation. The loss of opportunity for so many of our special guests who lost out on their special trips in 2020, 2021 and 2022 is also deeply felt within the Trust.

Along side the many emotions that arise, there is also a sense of great pride in the Trust’s medical and care volunteers, chaplains and those involved in so many essential services who served and contributed to the efforts that guided our country through those difficult times.

There is also a positive dividend from this period as many took time to slow down, reflect on their lives and availed of the opportunity to improve their well being. Exercise, walks in the countryside and reduced stress in our lives was a welcome change. Of course the world also moves on and new challenges arise. Lets hope we can retain the good habits and personal improvements in our lives.

At it’s AGM in June 2022 the Board of Trustees decided that we should commence preparations for Easter 2023. We are now looking forward to returning to Lourdes in pilgrimage next Easter where we will once again come together in that special place where Mary, through Bernadette called us to gather.

The Editor



Vinny's GOLF CLASSIC 1993 - 2022

Michael Hanly Group 165 reviews a unique Fund Raising Trust event that has endured for the past 30 years. Spearheaded by Vinny Savage, Group 165, this is fondly known as **Vinny's Golf Classic**.

Somewhere in the old documents held by the Trust, there may well be some reference to the formation of a new Group (165) in the Midlands back in the mid 1980's. However it really started back in 1975 when a young lad named Vincent Savage, then a pupil of the Vocational School in Nenagh was asked if he would like to go to Lourdes with the IHCPT. Vinny and two other lads from the school went to Lourdes with Group 61 the following year (1976).

Some years later a new Group known as 'The Jet Set' was formed and Vinny went to Lourdes with them as a 'helper' and liked the experience. The following year (1984) group 165 was formed in North Tipperary and was joined to group 114 (Birr) and group 108 (Longford) as the Midlands Region. Vinny spread the word about the Children's Pilgrimage and with the help of family, friends and work colleagues helped to raise the necessary funds through various means.

Fundraising has often required ingenuity, guile and commitment by all involved with the Group. In the early years one could depend on the many 'church-gate' collections to reach our targets, but not so much in recent years. We have had busking days, poker and darts classics, raffles, table quizzes, marathons, sponsored cycles, arm-twisting and the generosity of good neighbours everywhere that helped us reach and often surpass our targets every year. We have also been blessed by the support of many Schools and Teachers that have encouraged many guests to travel with us and also raised funds.

But more than anything else, golf has been our 'God-send'. Back in 1993, Paddy Heffernan, the Captain of Nenagh Golf Club (and a work colleague of Vinny's) suggested to Vinny (or Vinny arm-twisted Paddy!) that the Club could run a 'golf-classic' in aid of the IHCPT and Group 165. That offer was accepted before Paddy had any chance of changing his mind and a date was duly inserted into the Golf Club diary. Detailed plans were prepared, time sheet allocated and some 'no-cost' prizes sourced. The other 'Helpers' of 165, some of whom were also members of the Golf Club, supported the venture by cajoling others to take part in the event. The result was a full timesheet for an evening 'shotgun' start, with more playing earlier in the day.

It was a truly memorable event with a huge attendance in the Golf Club that evening, not so much for the prize giving, but rather for the banter between Paddy (the Captain) and Vinny. This 'one-off event' became 2 in 1994 and thereafter has been pencilled into the Golf Club's diary every year up to and including 2022. Little did Paddy or any of us realise that this Vinny Classic would survive Celtic Tigers, bank collapses and Covid. The sooner the world wakes up to



1993 Event Photo - L to R Seated - Club President, Ossie Dennison, Lady President, Breda O'Regan, Vincent Savage (organiser), Lady Captain, Ann Griffin, Standing on right Club Captain Paddy Heffernan

the 'Vinny Principle', the sooner we will all understand that 'possible' and 'probable' are just words beginning and ending with the same letters. Vinny's '**Is Féider Linn**' principle works every time when people and circumstances allow.

Thanks to Nenagh Golf Club, its members and all who have sponsored, supported or played in this event every year since then, we have raised somewhere in the region of €100,000 for the Trust. All funds raised in the golf classic have gone to the Trust as **the Golf Club has never taken a cent**



Vinny Savage (right) meets Br Michael Strode, (seated) while in Lourdes some years ago. Br Michael was the founder of HCPT, our sister organisation in the UK
In the background, centre - Michael Hanly Group 165

Vinny's GOLF CLASSIC 1993 - 2022

and prizes (generally now 4-ball greenfees) were provided by various supporters or given freely by other golf clubs around the country.

We celebrated the 25th year of the classic in 2017 and thanks to the magnificent work of both past and then present members of 165 in securing additional green fees, T-box sponsors and the participation of golfers not only from Nenagh but also from many other clubs around the Midlands and further afield, we raised €9000.



2017 - A cheque for 9,000 presented to the Trust the proceeds of Vinny's Golf Classic

Nenagh Golf Club, Vincent and Paddy continued to keep the classic going even through the Covid years (with all the necessary precautions in place) and while the funds raised were lower, it enabled us to proceed as normal again on 8th July 2022. This was our 30th year and was marked by the



2022 - L to R - Enda Heenan, Vinny Savage Trust member, Paddy Heffernan Event Organiser, Michael Carroll Winning Captain, Damian Kennedy, Helen Kirwin Trust Chairperson. Missing from the photo is Adrian Hogan.

presence of Helen Kirwan, our Trust Chairperson

This Golf Classic would never have happened without these 5, Nenagh Golf Club, Paddy, Vinny, Group 165 and Guests. Whether or not it continues really depends on Group 165 having a Leader, a Nurse and young Carers to look after our Guests on the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes. We are already looking forward to Lourdes in 2023 and hopefully another day out in Nenagh Golf Club, with the entry fee of €100 per team of 4, as it has been for 20 years or more.

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.

Find out more by contacting Bernadette Connolly on 091 796622 or email info@irishpilgrimagetrust.com

Many of our guests make the trip to Lourdes despite huge challenges. This is only possible by careful preparation, planning, working with our guests, their family, medical advice and the complete Trust care team.

“Our son, Brian, went some years ago. A truly inspirational trip. The volunteers are amazing people. I can't thank them enough.

(Christine Spellman)

“They treated me like I'm like any other person”
(Hannah O'Sullivan aged 15)

For many guests it is the first time that they go on holiday without their parents and the trip to Lourdes gives their parents an opportunity to also enjoy a break and a rest.

In all cases our Trust medical personnel and carers are volunteers who freely give their time, expertise and caring skills. Their volunteering ensures that maximum value is gained from donations and fund raising to the benefit of our guests.

“It's about valuing people for who they are, in their hearts” (Denis McCarthy, past Chairperson of the Trust)

Trust Values

“We value the dignity of all.”

“We welcome and respect all faiths and none”

The Trust does not receive annual public funds and so its entirely driven by voluntary donations and fund raising.

FRIENDSHIP WEEKS 2022



FW 12 - Family Group enjoying a walk in Kilcuan



FW 7 - A day out at the Pet Farm

Friendship Week 2022

Friendship week 6 was the first of 4 friendship weeks to take place this year in Kilcuan. It was a very special week for us in 2 ways; firstly it was our first friendship week since the pandemic and secondly our first time in Kilcuan. It was a fantastic week and everything went off without a hitch.

Friendship week 6 is a group made up of helpers from the Enniscorthy area of Wexford. Our friendship week began in 2010 and was the first friendship week in Cois Cuain. For 10 years we had fantastic holidays in Cois Cuain and enjoyed the amenities and beaches of south Wexford. Cois Cuain is home territory to us and it was always very easy to find helpers, cooks and locals willing to help out. This year Cois Cuain was unavailable and so we decided we would travel to Kilcuan and we knew we would have a few challenges.

As we prepared for the week there were two main concerns in my head as group leader – Covid and the distance from home to Kilcuan. We are all very aware of how covid has impacted on us as a Trust and especially on the young people who travel with us and their families. We decided that the guests who would have travelled to Lourdes with group 94 in 2020 would be the guests for FW6 2022. We were determined to overcome covid and make friendship week a special time. We had to take precautions and had to have contingency plans in place if we had a covid case but thankfully we had no problem whatsoever. In fact, four friendship weeks took place in Kilcuan this summer there was only one covid case and that situation was managed very well by the group involved and no one else in the group contracted the virus. I was, of course apprehensive about the week but I was determined that it would go ahead. In fact, if I had had to cancel friendship week this year, I would have been more disappointed than I was when we had to cancel our Lourdes pilgrimages in 2020, 2021 and 2022 and that is a big statement!

The second apprehension I had was going to Kilcuan. This apprehension was very short lived. I was concerned about the travel and getting people to commit to coming for the full week. When in Cois Cuain we often had helpers just coming for the day but it would not be possible for people to travel from Wexford for just one day. We organised a bus from Wexford to Kilcuan which brought all guests, the student carers and some helpers. This was an extra cost but well worth it. We had 10 guests, 10 student carers (all from 5th year in secondary school) and 9 adult carers at all times. The guests and students stayed for the full week as well as four of the adult carers. The other adult carers came for half the week, one group from Saturday to Tuesday and the second group from Tuesday to Friday. The students were paired with a different guest each day and this worked a treat. These student were young, enthusiastic and caring and their companionship was very important to our guests.

When in Cois Cuain we always had a very clear plan for the week; like Lourdes we knew where we would be and what we would be doing every minute of the day almost. The challenge was to plan a week in Galway. We got advice from other groups who do FWs in Kilcuan and decided to do just 2 day trips, one to Bunratty and one bowling. The remaining days were spent in the environs of Kilcuan.

On arrival in Kilcuan the day before the FW I went into the house and looked at it in a very different way than any other time I have been in the house. I have spent many nights in Kilcuan over the years- however, suddenly I was bringing a group here on friendship week. This house would be our home for the week. The group arrived and settled in very well. During the week we thoroughly enjoyed the space both inside the living area in Kilcuan and the local amenities. The spacious living area allowed the group to be involved in lots of different activities, from playing cards to making cards, to watching a movie, to chatting or playing board games. We loved the space and yet the feeling of being

Memories from Friendship Weeks 2022



FW 3 take a stroll in Rinville Park in glorious sunshine



FW 6 Chilling in Kilcuan

together was fabulous. We had karaoke every night and live music one night. Everyone really enjoyed the singing and dancing! The house was truly alive. We just loved it!

Outside we used the new walkways around Kilcornan and the wonderful walled garden where we enjoyed picnics and walks and one day, we met with a group from Kilcornan who were doing a Zumba class and they invited us to join them. What a wonderful surprise!

Overall, we had a fantastic week and I was so delighted to be back doing the work of the Trust. Our guests had a great week, the students loved the experience and of course the helpers were delighted also. We will be back! If Cois Cuain is available to us next year it will be a tough decision to decide between the two places!

Helen Kirwan - Leader Friendship Week 6



FW 3 -on the high chair



FW 7 -Enjoy Afternoon Tea in Bunratty



FW 6 - Enjoying Games on the Lawn in Kilcuan



FW 12 - Taking a walk on the Galway Prom

Objects, Mission, Vision & Values

The Board of Trustees reviewed the Objects, Mission, Vision and Values of The Irish Pilgrimage Trust as part of their work in forming the Trust's new Governance Code. The outcome of their review is set out below in the new updated Objects, Mission, Vision and Values of the Trust with effect from 20 May 2021.

Objects

We bring people with additional needs on pilgrimage holidays to Lourdes and on holiday in Ireland and we fundraise to cover their costs

The Irish Pilgrimage Trust Mission, Vision and Values

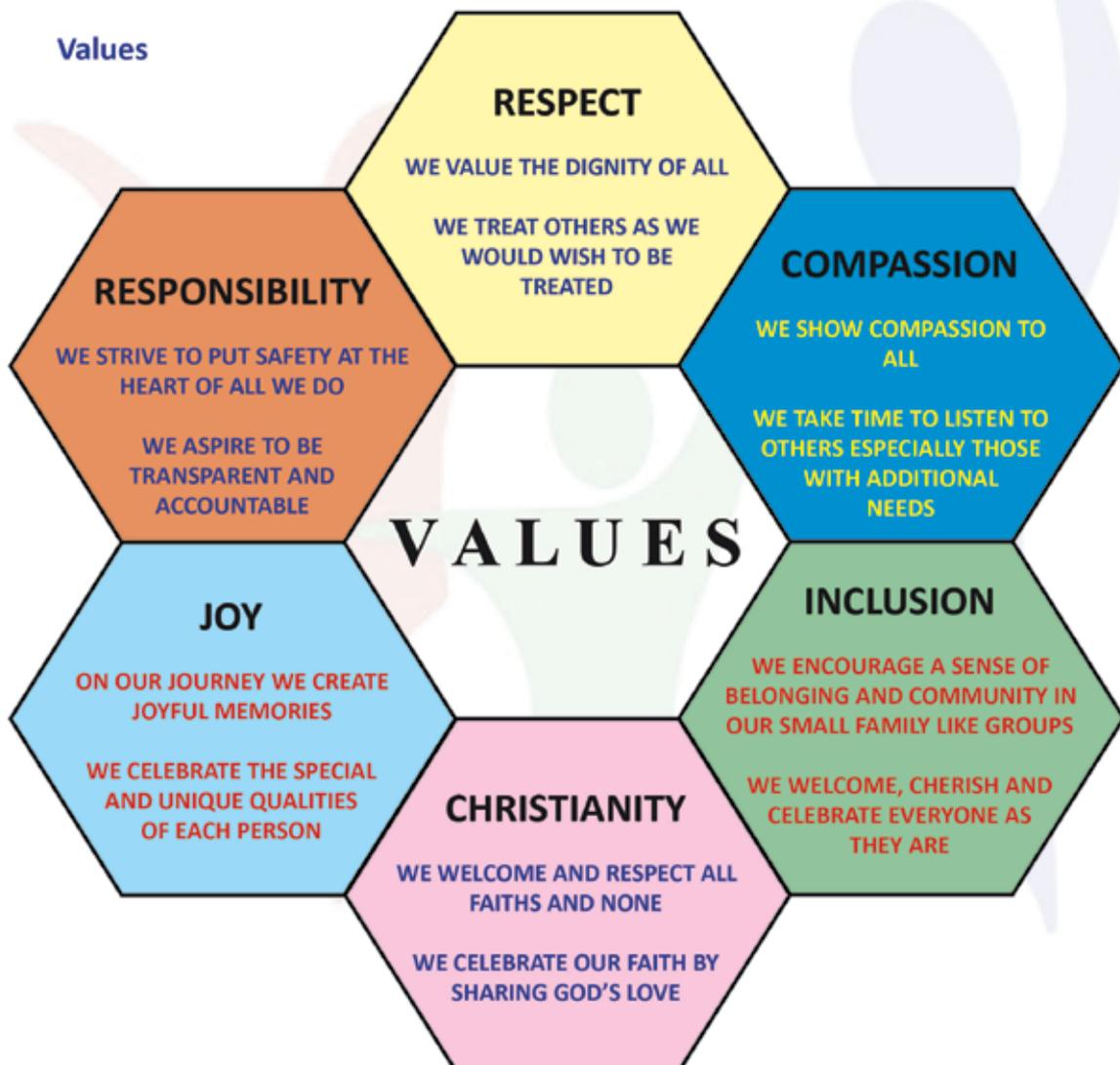
Mission

The Irish Pilgrimage Trust is a voluntary, Christian and charitable organisation that provides the opportunity for people with additional needs to go on volunteer supported pilgrimages and holidays to Lourdes and in Ireland. Our aim is to cherish the uniqueness of each person through sharing the gift of God's love with joy.

Vision

Enriching the lives of our Trust family

Values



CYCLE to LOURDES 2024

Reflections on the cycle to Lourdes.

A note from Dr Michael McGloin, founder of our Cycle to Lourdes

“The bicycles go by in twos and threes” -

There’s dinner in the Hotel Mercure tonight,

“And there’s the half-talk code of mysteries

And the wink-and-elbow language of delight”.

Apologies to Patrick Kavanagh for having hijacked this poem. I’ve been quite nostalgic about the Cycle to Lourdes recently.

A funny thing happened one day last week. Over the course of a few hours in Galway I bumped into James, then Aiden, and then Michéal, (in this case the names are real, and not “changed to protect the innocent”) - all people who had done the cycle over the years. And each meeting was a reunion with old friends. We had been on the road together, made the pilgrimage and we all have the tee-shirts to prove it, still worn with pride.

I had arranged to play golf with a friend, and he was to rope in two players more to make a foursome. Alan, who had done the cycle with his father while still a teenager, and now a successful accountant turned out to be one of his recruits.

At this stage it was getting spooky, but it was about to get even stranger. We had to finish after 15 holes as the course had been reserved for the Presidents Prize. As I went back

to the car, I heard my name being called. As I turned, I got a warm embrace from Helen who had done the cycle 20 years ago. I have not met her for years, but we chatted away and she asked about people she had met all that time ago and spoke fondly of her memories of the pilgrimage.

I am sure, in fact I know, it is the same all over the country. People who have done the cycle cherish their experience with all its aspects – the hard work in preparation, the tough journey, but most especially the friends they made.

It is hard to believe that we will have soon been “on the road” together for forty years. From small beginnings in 1984, the cycle in 2024 will mark that 40th jubilee and will have to be a year of celebration.

Like all other activities, we have had to put things on hold over the Covid years. It has however been a time to reflect on why, what and how we do things. A pause can be very productive – not everything that Covid brought was negative. And now, it is time to start planning again, refreshed, and open to new ideas on how to make the Cycle even better for participants, and a successful fund raising event for the young people to whom we commit our efforts.

Planning is already underway. Watch this space! We will soon be looking for cyclists to sign up for the **2024 40th anniversary Cycle to Lourdes.**

Michael

MOYNA

Moyna Troddyn RIP

Moyna Troddyn was a colossus in The Irish Pilgrimage Trust. As our National Secretary from 1979 to 2000 she was at the “helm”, working closely with the Board of Trustees, establishing the Trust office and steering the organisation safely through its greatest period of expansion. Moyna knew everyone in the Trust and everyone knew Moyna. Our special guests were always at the heart of her commitment to the Trust. She ensured that every deserving guest experienced the joy and fun of our annual Easter pilgrimage holidays in Lourdes.

We learned of Moyna’s passing in May this year. The depth of grief felt at her passing reflected the high esteem in which she was held. Following her retirement Moyna continued her association with the organisation and was beloved by all who knew her and interacted with her. Her



Moyna (centre) with friends Annette McDermott (past Trustee) and Dr Mary d'Arcy (Past Chairperson and Trust Doctor)

funeral Mass reflected her own love of the Trust and the central role it played in her life. It was also an occasion when we were able to come together, celebrate and give thanks for her life and contribution to the Trust.

May Moyna’s gentle soul rest in peace.

CYCLE IRELAND 2022



Some of our Cycle Ireland 2022 CYCLISTS assembled at Kilcuan before the start

On 9th April 2022, a bright warm sunny Saturday morning, an excited group of Trust Cyclists and their support crews gathered in Kilcuan, Clarinbridge to begin their epic 805km cycle around Ireland in support of The Irish Pilgrimage Trust. This was the culmination of months of planning, hoping and praying that CYCLE 2022 – Ireland could take place. Preparations in the lead up took place under the cloud of Covid 19, but in the end, everything worked out to allow the Trust begin it's first group activity since 2019.

Following a blessing by our cycle chaplain Fr Benny Flanagan, the group set out in glorious sunshine for Limerick, covering 100km, on **Day 1**. Our Tea Stop on route was set up



at Cois na hAbhna in Ennis. There we were provided with toilet facilities, parking and space for our catering crew to set up their wares. Fr Benny joined us at the Clayton Hotel



Moegie Maher (centre) with SuperValu staff & Cyclists at Twohig's Abbeyfeale

and celebrated Mass for the group before dinner. Marty Forde, Killian McGann, Ciaran Harte and friends entertained the gathering with their music and craic.

On **Day 2**, following an early breakfast on Sunday morning, the Cyclists left Limerick on their 110km journey to Killarney, in the Kingdom of Kerry.

Some of our cyclists availed of the wonderful new Greenway route from Rathkeale to Abbeyfeale. Our Tea Stop for the day



Backup Crews and Supporters ready to depart Kilcuan

was hosted by Twohig's SuperValu in Abbeyfeale. Our hosts supported our catering crew with donations of provisions, space and toilets. In the evening the group enjoyed a wonderful social occasion in Hotel Killarney, meeting many of our local Trust volunteers and families.

Day 3 began under the most challenging conditions imaginable for cyclists. Departing Killarney on their 143km (longest) stage to Clonmel our group encountered the four enemies of every cyclist –driving rain, cold, hills, and 'fierce' head wind. This was the "make or break" day for our cyclists. The weather conditions persisted for the morning, and everyone welcomed the warm, sheltered facilities at Ballyclough Community Centre. From Ballyclough the cyclists continued through, Doneraile, Mitchelstown, Cahir and finally to the Clonmel Park Hotel. Thankfully, weather conditions improved for the afternoon section, but the morning section will live long in the memories of everyone involved in Cycle 2022.

Day 4 saw our refreshed team depart Clonmel after breakfast on their leisurely 95 km Cycle to Portlaoise. It was delightful to meet Trust and Cycle friends enroute in Fethard where some of our cyclists enjoyed a short coffee break at Dooks Café. The weather conditions were far more benign and the group enjoyed a superb Tea Stop at Johnstown

CYCLE IRELAND 2022

Service Station. The donation of food and sandwiches was really appreciated. Our overnight stay was at the Midlands Park Hotel in Portlaoise where the facilities from bike storage, parking, meals, leisure centre and accommodation were of the highest standard.



Some of our CYCLISTS line up outside the Midlands Park Hotel Portlaoise before Etape 5 to Athlone



Our Garda escort preparing to escort the Cycliste from Portlaoise

Day 5 began with a Garda escort out of town as they sent us safely on our 95km spin to Athlone. Tullamore Fire Station hosted our Tea Stop. Our crew relished freshly made sandwiches and cake received from a very kind anonymous donor in Portlaoise. Memorable coffee stops and rests were taken in Peavoy's and John Feery's in Clonaslee, and Tuar Ard in Moate before arriving at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Athlone. Once again many of our local Trust friends and past cyclists joined us in Athlone for a great social evening.

Day 6 stage began with another Garda escort from the hotel, leading us across the River Shannon into Co. Roscommon and sent us on our way to Sligo. Weather conditions were once again mixed but tolerable. Elphin Community Centre hosted our tea stop and was an ideal location at halfway on the 120km cycle. Once again, the group was treated to the highest standards at the Sligo Park Hotel.



Local Trust members joined us for the evening in the Sligo Park Hotel

Local volunteers, cyclists and friends of the Trust joined us during the evening for a special occasion.



Our Mechanic Mick (centre) and his apprentice enjoy their daily Ice Cream

Day 7 was the final leg of the Cycle 2022 in Ireland as the group departed Sligo on the 142km journey back to Galway. After a murky start in drizzle, the day cleared up by the time the cyclists arrived at the Tea Stop in Torreen. The entire team of Cyclists and support crews gathered at McHugh's Pub outside Cleargalway where a Garda escort led the way into Galway City and the Connacht Hotel.

Following a service by Fr Benny our celebration dinner was a joyous occasion. The group was joined by supporters and Trust families and special tributes were paid to our support teams, Route crew, Catering crew, Logistics team, Mechanic and Medical support. A special tribute was paid to the wonderful group of cyclists who traversed 14 counties and battled the elements and travelled 805km over 7 days. Ultimately, the success of our Cycle gave a massive boost of confidence and hope for the future as we looked forward to returning to Trust business with summer Friendship Weeks 2022 and our Lourdes Easter trip in 2023.

HOSANNA HOUSE SUMMER 2022

Hosanna House 2022

Helen Kirwan reports on the 5-day August 2022 trip to Hosanna House with a group of helpers

Last Spring the Board of Trustees decided that the groups who travel to Hosanna House during the summer would not travel with guests. It was at that point that Mary Clancy and I decided to offer the opportunity of going to Hosanna House to helpers only and the trip would be just 5 days rather than the usual 8 days.

On August 1st a small group of us set off for Lourdes, excited to be returning but a little apprehensive as to how it would all work out. We were warmly welcomed by the staff of Hosanna House and it was lovely to be back in Bartres surrounded by the peace and tranquillity and by the breath-taking beauty of the Pyrennes. We were fortunate to have Fr Sean Neylon accompanying us as our chaplain, and we therefore were able to have Mass each day in the chapel in Hosanna House. What a special place that chapel is!

When we arrived, it was strange to be back and not have guests with us. We missed the guests very much but soon settled into the freedom and peace of the house and the daily visits to the grotto to participate in all the religious ceremonies. As a group we came from Galway, Roscommon, Sligo and Wexford and many of us did not know each other before but in true Trust style we became a family for the few days and the friendship and camaraderie enhanced the pilgrimage greatly. It was a different but very special trip and each of us who travelled was enriched by the experience.



Members of the group pictured at the Grotto in Lourdes where they included the prayers and wishes of the Trust on our behalf



Standing L to R - Catherine Buttle, Phil Flynn, Mary Kerr, Frances Beirne, Teresa Lee, Margaret Sinnott, Fr Sean Neylon, Enda, Furlong. Seated front L to R - Liam Buttle, Helen Kirwan, Maureen Rossiter, Catherine Malone



Praying the "high" Stations of the Cross

There were big crowds in Lourdes, mostly from France, Spain and Italy with a small number of British and an even smaller number of Irish. Most ceremonies were the same as they had been pre pandemic and there was little or no evidence of Covid. The only significant difference in the pilgrimage was the Baths. The Baths as we knew them are no longer operating but there is a very simple and moving water ceremony carried out in the Baths area.

Those of us lucky enough to travel thoroughly enjoyed the few days. While there we remembered everyone in the Trust family in our masses and prayers at the grotto. I think in the future a small group of helpers travelling to Hosanna House at a quiet time of year would be a valuable and enriching experience for helpers who may no longer wish to travel as carers in a group. For me personally this pilgrimage gave me great hope that we will be back to Lourdes as a Trust very soon and I look forward to Easter 2023 and to Hosanna House summer 2023.

A FAMILY STORY

Maggs shares an experience of one day in her life with her son who has autism. A timely reminder of the work and commitment of a parent carer. This story may give a little insight into the value of a family break when our Trust volunteers step in and provide a week-long supported holiday to their special child.

We don't eat out!

Written by Maggs Hay.

But you were recommended to us, by our holiday host, as serving the best Sunday lunch around. So I guess we had to take the risk!

And you didn't disappoint, with my son being in agreement, when he was served four sausages on a plate. No veg, no chips, no bread or butter!

Just four sausages which were consumed as he wandered around your pub. Sitting at one empty table and then locating to another. It was exactly what we had asked for. You met our requirement with no question, just a smile and as many sausages that he wanted.

I loved your barman's smile as my son removed a bar mat from the counter. It's coarse texture providing the perfect sensory input for his little fingers. The non verbal gesture told me you had no issue with the rearrangement of your bar accessories. You just smiled at his calmness and acceptance in your environment.

You made no comment about my boy's constant movement around the bar area, you were happy that he was happy and comfortable, and it didn't need words to show your acceptance, by happily letting him sneak behind the bar. There were no comments of "No kids behind here" or the face of dissatisfaction, as I have seen in other venues, you just smiled and joked about him helping out, offering him a job as long as he could manage to pour a good pint!



I am not sure he passed that interview requirement .

You let me eat my Sunday dinner at the outside table, the table in the corner, at the bar from a tall bar stool, and then watched it as I had to dash after my boy before he disappeared up the stairs. My food

was always waiting where I had left it, never cleared away or questioned as to its constant transportation around your restaurant.

My son was happy, he had his connection to Netflix, from your free WiFi (code displayed so I didn't even have to ask!). This was the ultimate settler for him, the ability for him to shut out the new smells, sounds and sights while his body regulated and then allowed him to ditch the phone and investigate the new feels and places.



You didn't even blink an eyelid at our uniqueness as a family, maybe it is because you get more trouble from the bloke down the road after a couple of Stella's, but I didn't know that. We did however not start any pub brawls, so I guess we made a reasonably good impression?



We don't eat out as a family. We don't because every trip out is a gamble. It is a risk because of how society sees my son. Of how triggers, which are a result of societies ways, can so easily result in meltdown.

Thank you for being a place of acceptance.

Oh and thanks for the larger than normal glass of wine... I think you realised I needed it.

Thanks for the hospitality Red Lion, Llandyfaelog . We will pop in again if we pass

You can find more information about Maggs, her family and autism by visiting www.aandme.co.uk and Maggs also has an amazing Facebook page [A & Me](#)

Golden Memories - Our First 50 Years

GOLDEN MEMORIES

A Celebration of 50 Years of The Irish Pilgrimage Trust

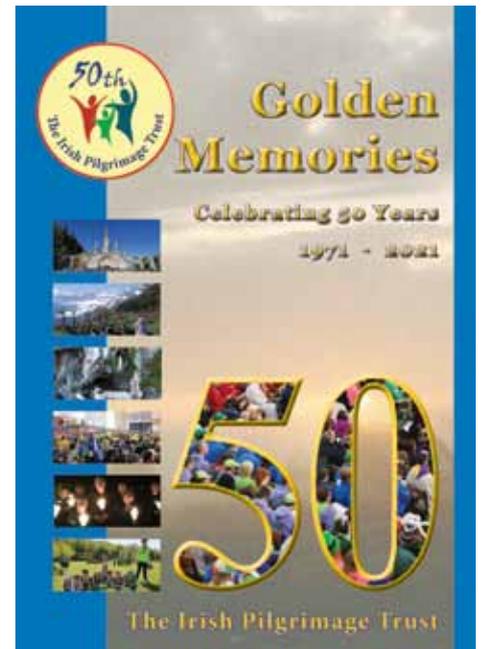
"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children"

Nelson Mandela.

The Trust recently published "Golden Memories" our book celebrating the first 50 years of this special organisation. Since its founding in 1971 The Irish Pilgrimage Trust has grown and today has over 1,000 volunteer members across the 32 counties. During the past 50 years some 21,585 young guests have experienced the joy and friendships of the Trust's special pilgrimage holidays to Lourdes in France, our summer Friendship Weeks here in Ireland and the Trust's Hosanna House summer trips to Lourdes.

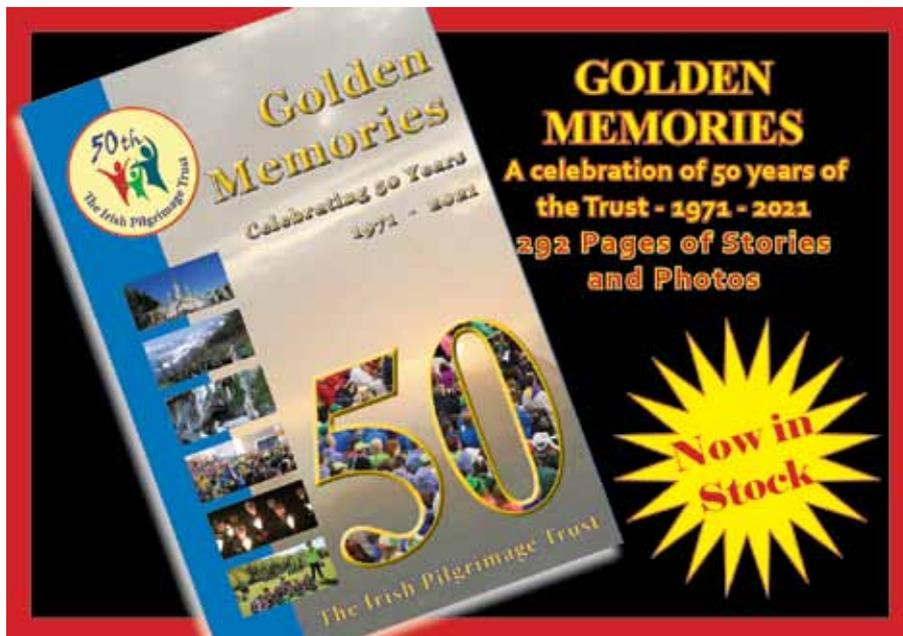
The book celebrates 50 years of activities and ground-breaking progress by the Trust for the inclusion of young people with additional needs. What started out as a "history" project very quickly blossomed into this remarkable collection of memories and stories from so many of those involved with this unique 32-county organisation.

holidays to Our Lady's Shrine in Lourdes in southern France. They would raise funds to pay all travelling, hotel and ancillary costs on behalf of the children. Crucially, all persons providing care and support, including medical personnel would be volunteers who would pay their own expenses.



From the outset The Irish Pilgrimage Trust core values include respect for the dignity of all, welcoming and respecting all faiths and none, celebrating the special and unique qualities of each person and welcoming, cherishing and celebrating everyone as they are. The Irish Pilgrimage Trust successfully navigated turbulent waters in the past including economic recessions, Airline strikes, Bank, Postal strikes, and Foot and Mouth disease. Golden Memories is record of triumph over seemingly impossible odds, stories of hope, encouragement, life-changing experiences. It is also a beacon of hope for the future, very timely in current challenging times.

These values shine through the stories, recollections, and reflections in **Golden Memories**. The variety of articles mixing humour, facts and anecdotes as well as historical records provide an entertaining and informative publication, that will appeal to a wide audience.



"Golden Memories" is full of facts, anecdotes, memories, and fun stories from across the decades. The random format of the book ensures that it is an "easy" read and not a mere history book. The facts are there as they should be, but the stories bring the history and memories of the Trust to life.

The philosophy of the founders was to establish an organisation that would give a helping hand to children with additional needs by offering fully supported pilgrimage

The Trust is particularly happy that the "Book" was an inhouse production completed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Compilation, design, editing and production was by the volunteers, guests and staff of The Irish Pilgrimage Trust. We can truly call it OUR Book.

The book is now on sale from the Trust Office in Kilcuan for €20.

