



The Raphaël Recorder

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Welcome

Welcome to this ninth edition of the Raphael Recorder.

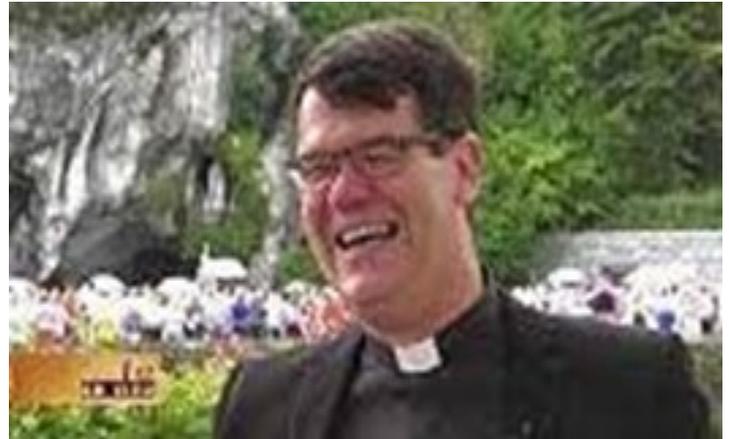
Our mission is to take the sick and disabled to Lourdes, to care for them in every way during the pilgrimage and with them to offer prayers for all those who suffer in any way.

From the Director

I would like to be able to impart good news but sadly the news from Lourdes is disappointing. Largely this is because of the continuing lockdowns in France and in the UK and of the restrictions imposed on those crossing international borders. For those of us in the UK we would certainly be required to self-quarantine on returning and may be required to do the same entering France.

The Chaplains are continuing to celebrate Mass at the Grotto and the Sanctuary is soliciting petitions which are presented at the Grotto of Massabielle. It is also planning an international pilgrimage on 16th July marking the 163rd anniversary of the last apparition to Bernadette. We are invited to join this day pilgrimage but, in truth, only French people will be able to be present.

Hoping the situation would improve by October, the Society of Our Lady of Lourdes had planned a three day pilgrimage but this has only recently been cancelled. As far as we are aware the short pilgrimage offered by Tangney Tours is still going ahead at the end of August. However, the British Lourdes Medical Association still advises against any sick pilgrims from travelling; certainly, insurance cover could be difficult to obtain.



Mgr Xavier D'Arodes de Peyriague

Further sad news (from a pilgrimage point of view) is the departure of Mgr Xavier D'Arodes to a new appointment in his native diocese of Toulouse. He joined the Sanctuary team as international co-ordinator and has been a breath of fresh air. He had worked in the US as a diplomat for ten years and in that time he was ordained priest. When he came to Lourdes there was an immediate difference of opinion as to his role. Fortunately, Xavier won the argument through reason and personality.

Mgr Xavier has helped to modernise the Sanctuary by persuading the authorities to embrace the challenges of the protection of children and vulnerable adults. In addition the Sanctuary has approved and adopted guidelines on matters of Health and Safety. This had helped significantly during the lockdown during which protocols have been implemented. Many of the reforms would not be obvious to the casual visitor but they have equipped Lourdes for the 21st Century to address current litigious attitudes.

Credit for the drafting of the reforms must go to the British Lourdes Medical Association and the Association of British Lourdes Pilgrimage Directors. Credit for the implementation goes to Mgr Xavier.

Mgr Xavier will be sorely missed.



"I can't walk in these shoes, which is a problem, because I can't sit down in this skirt."

A Happy Tale from Wenda & Julie Cordell

At last, we Essex girls are out and about. What do they say is an Essex girl's favourite whine "I want to go to Lakeside ". Well, these two Essex girls have been to Lakeside shopped and enjoyed a walk round the beautiful lake there. Julie took photos of the wildlife and which she is at the moment working on Photoshop and adding very cool and funny captions to create into artwork. We had a lovely afternoon and it was a beautiful sunny day.

We have also been to the cinema to see an amazing true story film called Dream Horse which is about a lady, Jan Vokes who was fed up with her boring life as a bar tender and just decided to breed a racehorse. She found an old retired mare for £300 and then got together with the village she lived in and persuaded 20 people to start a syndicate putting in £10 each a week and when they had enough money they took the mare to a stud farm to be mated. Oh, I forgot to add this mare was kept on their allotment in a stable her husband built!! The mare did have a foal but sadly had to be put down after giving birth. It is this foal for which the syndicate kept saving in order to convince a training stable to take him. They trained him and he won important races which the syndicate all went to. To add more drama the horse sustained a serious injury which they had to decide whether to treat or put him down.



They took the risk and the expense and he recovered to win the Welsh Grand National in 2009, an amazing feat. The foal named Dream Alliance was retired in 2012 and Mrs Vokes is now working on another young foal: how amazing is all that ???

We are out and about again on Wednesday to the Tate Modern to see the free exhibitions and have also been invited to Ralph's exhibition at Docklands campus; Ralph is someone with whom Julie worked at Havering College when she was doing her degree. He was the print room technician who helped her a lot and who works there part time whilst finishing his PhD. Lovely man!!

We will be having many more adventures will keep you up to date with the Essex girls' adventures in the near future.

Editor's note: Lakeside is an Essex girl's dream. It is a large shopping mall built near the entrance to the Dartford Tunnel on the Essex side of the river. Fashion shops tend to economise on material and specialise in selling short skirts and shoes with unwearable high heels designed to attract attention from admirers.

Thoughts

- If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.
- Money is the root of all wealth.
- Behind every great man is a woman rolling her eyes
- You get what you want if you look serious and carry a clipboard.
- If it wasn't for the last minute, nothing would get done.
- Experience is bitter but teaches best.



Our Lady of the Rosary Basilica

The Rosary is a prayer dating from the Middle Ages. It was instigated by St Bernard and the Dominican Friars. The Rosary was the only prayer known to and recited by St Bernadette at the time of the Apparitions.

The Rosary Basilica is the third church built one on top of the other at the end of Rosary Square. Strictly speaking the Rosary Basilica was built underneath the other two churches. It was designed specifically in honour of the Rosary so that in each arch of the church there is a chapel with an altar but with walls decorated in mosaic with a decade of the Rosary. In total there are 2,000 square metres of mosaic all of which was donated and set in place by an Italian specialist company, Facchina.

The Basilica is in the shape of a Greek cross. Work to build began in 1883 and took six years to complete although it was another twelve years before it was officially consecrated. Decoration of the church, the positioning of the mosaics started in 1894 and only finished in 1907. The main decoration inside the dome, The Virgin of the Apse with the inscription 'Through Mary to Jesus') was finally blessed on August 15th, 1920.

Above the Basilica stands a gilded crown, a gift from the people of Ireland. Time has not been kind to the Basilica and towards the end of the twentieth century work was commenced to renew the mosaics and its structure. Sadly, there had been ingress of water which pushed the mosaics off the walls. The roof of the dome needed new lead tiles and the Irish crown needed to be regilded. The work was finally completed in 2004.

However, further remedial work has needed to be continued to preserve the upper Basilica dedicated to the Immaculate Conception.

At the time of building there were three mysteries of the Rosary celebrated. These were the Joyful, the Sorrowful and the Glorious mysteries. Then in 1978 Karol Józef Wojtyła, a Polish Cardinal, was elected Pope and it was he who introduced the fourth mysteries of the Rosary, the Luminous mysteries. It was not possible to include these mysteries inside the Basilica so the mosaics were placed on the exterior wall facing east either side of the main doors.

Apart from the fifteen chapels and the main altar, there are further chapels one of which, on the right hand side serves as a vesting area beside the Sacristy. The other on the left hand side houses the Statue of Lady which we use to during the Flambeau, torchlight procession. Inside the Sacristy, apart from control panels for lighting, heating and sound transmission, there is quite the largest safe outside a bank which can only have been installed during construction of the Basilica. Looking at the three basilicas there are two towers built in 1908. Both towers are functional and give access from ground level to the Crypt. One houses a lift which may be used by prelates (bishops, archbishops, abbots and above) while the other boasts a spiral staircase. (In the early 20th century, prelates tended to be shorter and fatter than their successors and needed help to go from one floor to another). The entrance to both towers is at the back of the Rosary Basilica. From time to time a permanent member of the Sanctuary of Lourdes can be seen using the lift since at the top there is easy access to the Chaplains' Residence.

While pilgrimages may book the Rosary Basilica for liturgies, it also hosts one daily Mass at 9.00am celebrated in French by the Sanctuary of Lourdes. This is aimed at persons not on an organised pilgrimage.



Dorothy Abbott RIP, Mother of Kath Scahill

Dorothy Abbott was born in April 1920 in Cabin End Row, Blackburn. She attended Accrington Road School leaving at age fourteen to take up an apprenticeship in confectionery in Clitheroe and by the age of 19 she had been awarded a First Class City & Guilds Diploma in flour confectionery.

In 1942 Dorothy married George Robinson in her Parish Church, St Oswald's, Knuzden. Tragically, George was killed fighting in Italy less than two years later. However, while George was away Dorothy had bought her own confectionery shop in Blackburn. Later she met Gerry Abbott from the Devonshire Regiment stationed in Whalley. They married in 1946 and four years later their daughter, Kathleen was born. The Abbotts were very much involved in the Parish life of St Oswald's with Dorothy very much in demand for baking, cooking and kitchen duties. Sadly, Gerry died in 1987 while Dorothy continued living in the family home until 2016 when she moved to a nursing home aged 97. The lockdown was particularly hard on Dorothy and her daughter, Kathleen Scahill. Visits were minimal and under strict conditions, no longer than half an hour at a time. An improvised barrier was erected in the residents' lounge so that residents could see their visitors but not be able to touch them.

Dorothy died quietly on 24th April after having just reached her 101st birthday. The vicar at St Oswald's, Rev Dr Anne Morris said of Dorothy she was a woman of great faith. She was independent with a lovely sense of humour. It was a life that was not without tragedy and upset but one that was lived in love and hope and joy. Dorothy is interred in the Cemetery adjacent to St Mary's, Osbaldeston. It is an idyllic spot with trees dampening the noise of the traffic from the busy A59 but not the happy cries of children from St Mary's Primary School. May she rest in peace.

A director's dilemma

Communication with the Sanctuary of Lourdes is not always the best. For seven years I was director of the Society of Our Lady of Lourdes Pilgrimage. After submitting our programme requests we were contacted about the International Mass held on Sunday. There was a choice, the regular Mass in the Underground Basilica at 9.30am or we might join the International Military Pilgrimage in Rosary Square at 11.00am. Our committee thought the Military Pilgrimage would be colourful and musical and so we opted for Military. On no less than three separate occasions we were asked to confirm our choice. The day came for our Mass and our contingent of six hundred pilgrims of whom some one hundred were in wheelchairs lined up on the bridge in front of the arches in Rosary Square. The Square was roped off to prevent the gatecrashers from taking reserved places but to my horror the soldiers manning the gate took this instruction to deny us entry. It was Sunday and we had missed the earlier Mass and now we were denied entry to our chosen Mass. Bravely I produced the confirmation of our booking and an NCO was despatched to find an officer. An Italian officer did appear, it was impossible to determine his rank because of all the plumage he was wearing. He gave a firm 'no' and marched away. I pleaded with the NCO to see if I could speak with another officer and fortunately an Irish Major was found. He explained that the military pilgrimage was exclusively for the military and my confirmation from the Sanctuary was meaningless. He was helpful and enquired how many we were and I was about to reply when a colleague trod on my foot and answered fifty wheelchairs and pointed to the line snaking across the bridge. The Irish Major offered to do what he could and returned to say that he had made space and we were admitted. I met the Major after the Mass and expressed my gratitude for his help and he smiled enquiring if all English groups had difficulty counting.



From Amanda Southall (Pilgrim)

Hello fellow Raphaelites, I'm Amanda Southall, 'Mandy' to most people who know me as the very shy, quiet, reserved person that I am.

Mom Joyce and I joined the Raphael pilgrimage for the first time in 2010. Little Ellen (Lofty) for many years had begged us to come along with her but unfortunately due to working for the NHS it was extremely difficult and awkward for me to get time off during the week Raphael left for Lourdes.

Mom had experienced the trip many years previously with our hospital chaplain Father Curtain who has now sadly passed. He very much inspired me to visit Lourdes one day.

I had started with the NHS as a domestic assistant in 1984 before progressing to an Auxiliary Nurse three years later; I desperately wanted to do my nurse training after that. Not an easy task I hasten to add. My qualifications when leaving school were zero. However, with determination I decided to attempt to return to further education in order to achieve some qualifications needed for nursing.

Mathematics was my favourite subject ha-ha!!! **I think not!** It took me several attempts to obtain the grade needed which was a C or above. I finally got to a grade D but I still kept trying. I also took the old fashioned entrance exam for which only three attempts were allowed and failed all three miserably. However, I was not going to give up that easily.

One day I saw an advertisement, stating "adults return to learn" and so with great interest I looked into it and at twenty eight years of age I returned to school. I entered a classroom full of fourteen year olds. It was very strange at first but I was very much made to feel welcome.

The headmaster greeted me on my arrival and his first comment was "make friends with these children and you will have friends for life"; they could not have been truer words. Each day they would help me overcome my struggles with the work set. They even showed me where I could go for my crafty ciggie "OMG how naughty was that?" Those were my smoking days, which I'm pleased to say are a thing of the past. It's been twenty seven years now since my stopping.

I continued with my studying by gaining several GCSE's along the way; unfortunately I still didn't manage a grade C for the nursing criteria except in English.

Finally, NVQ's were introduced and, hey ho, following an exam and a gruelling course I was accepted into the nurse training programme.

The training was for three years and I'm proud to say I passed with flying colours in 2004 and became a fully qualified Paediatric nurse.

It may have taken twenty years + but I finally got there. Just goes to show we can all achieve our dreams with hard work and sheer determination. Mom always said "if there was a qualification for stickability I would definitely have achieved an A Star.

I am now however retired, due mainly to suffering some health issues, but when I'm needed I work some shifts on the nurse bank with children's outpatients which I really enjoy. I have since given up my pin number as a staff nurse due to no longer practicing clinical duties, but I've realised, I've gone full circle, I'm now called a clinical support worker which means I'm back to being the old fashioned auxiliary nurse 37 years later.

Memories of a Stage Visit by Paul Affleck

In my early days of working as a volunteer for the Hospitality of Lourdes I was asked to be a 'Chef d'Equipe'. It is a rather grand title but the duty is less prosaic. All volunteers are required to undergo 'formation' which is essentially training. Students are taught about the message of Lourdes, the constitution of the Hospitality and the various duties which may need to be undertaken. The job of the Chef is to be a team leader, to accompany the group on its activities and to report on attendance and suitability of candidates and to identify possible future leaders. There was a nascent group from the US which lamented the lack of English speakers in the Hospitality and I was asked to take charge of groups of first year American students. Almost all were university students from the University of Ohio but spending a year in Garming, Austria. Each was aged between eighteen and twenty-three and each was eager, willing and possessed boundless energy. At the end of a week I was physically exhausted trying to keep up with them.

I was surprised about the collective naivety of the students. Their learning curve was steep and I consciously teased the groups and was pleased to provoke good tempered banter. A feature of American boys is that they like to have their hands in their pockets and they had difficulty in comprehending that this equated to laziness in our culture. A feature of both American boys and girls was that of punctuality. There might be a duty starting at 8.30. At 8.29 there would be no attendees and in the next sixty seconds there would be a full complement. How they timed it, perhaps hiding round a corner, they were never late and always just on time and impeccably dressed. What I could not do was give the groups sufficient to satisfy them. For example one of their favourite tasks was to work in the Baths. Americans are more tactile than Europeans; they demonstrate less reserve. The work itself is exhausting because it can require a lot of lifting and endless patience. Few Americans speak French but a number are competent in Spanish and Italian so communication with pilgrims did not present difficulties.

I could not commend them highly enough and even when they were given free time some volunteered for extra duties in the Baths.

The restraints of the European Working Time Directive did not seem to apply and It was not unusual to start at four in the morning at the railway station receiving or dispatching sick pilgrims and still be on duty at the Torchlight Procession when it finished at 10.30. at night.

What I did not know was that many of the American students were seminarians. I knew they were keen but many carried breviaries containing the 'Office'. I made the mistake on one occasion for chastising one colourful character for using his mobile phone during Mass. When he pointed out he was following the Gospel it was I who was chastened. Our schedule was sometimes punishing, more so when it was hot and it was no surprise that a student asked permission to rest while we were undertaking a walking tour of the Sanctuary. Two lads volunteered to stay with their colleague while the group continued the tour. I did not think anything about it until the evening when we reconvened and I was asked not to mention the incident. The student had experienced a mild epileptic fit which, had I reported the incident, might have prejudiced his continued studies. There was nothing in my instructions to report medical concerns and even had I done so, it would have been to the Hospitality of Lourdes and not to the University.

I was always very conscious of my position as an ambassador for Lourdes. My charges were people who might make one and only one trip to Lourdes. If I could imbue in them the same love of Our Lady of Lourdes then they might want to spread that love at home and encourage others to come to Lourdes. Helpers from my other stage groups did return and I will not take any credit for providing the impetus but I was gratified when some reintroduced themselves to me in subsequent years.

Editor's note

In French a 'stage' usually refers to work experience.