

SERVICE NOTRE DAME REPORT 2019 – ANNAROSA DUNNIGAN

A little history of the service Notre Dame

In 1834, the sisters of Nevers settled in Lourdes to take care of the municipal hospice.

In 1909, Bishop Schoepfer asked the sisters to create a community that would support the reception of sick people at Asile Notre-Dame.

From the beginning, different centres have been built to facilitate the coming of sick pilgrims to Lourdes:

1874 the Accueil Marie-Saint-Frai,

1877 the Asile Notre-Dame

1975 the Accueil Sainte-Bernadette

1997 the Accueil Notre Dame.

Service Notre Dame

Today, sick pilgrims are still welcomed by the hospitalières of Notre-Dame service in the Accueil Notre Dame accommodation centre. The hospitalières of Notre-Dame service also look after the reception at the Accueil Notre Dame and at the Accueil St John Paul II, lost property, flowers, petitions, sewing, sacristies, service at the station and the airport, service at the Grotto, ceremonies, first-aid post, service Nazareth and lending of white coats, service at the Abri St Michael.

Their aim is to ensure that the sick pilgrims are welcomed as Christ, for He Himself will say: *I was a stranger and you welcomed me.*

From February 2019 the Service Notre Dame has a new responsible: Anne de Loynes.

The season 2019 has seen an increase in the number of English-speaking voluntaries from the Philippine predominantly during the summer months. The stagiaires and hospitalières, apart from French, Spanish and Italian, coming from every other country in the world are welcomed as English-speaking voluntaries.

A difficulty of the last few years in allocating the service has been created by the increased number of voluntaries booking full board in hotels with the meal time schedule that corresponds to the time of service at the Accueil Notre Dame.

A challenge, perhaps not only for the Service Notre Dame, is how to encourage young voluntaries to come to Lourdes to help and how to retain them, offering both a spiritual and practical experience during their stage.

Every service is important but frequently younger stagiaires questioned the requirement to spend the first four years of stage working in the kitchens without having an overview of all the services.

Next February, during the Service Notre Dame meeting, new ideas and suggestions will be discussed by the counsellors to offer the best experience to all our voluntaries.

A big thank you to all who helped during the 2019 season.

SERVICE STE BERNADETTE REPORT 2019

2019 has been a year of both change and continuity for the Saint Bernadette Service. Change in that Veronique Cavalier has taken over from Gilles Leroux as Vice-President of the service; continuity in that, apart from some minor tweaks, the Formation programme has remained largely the same. However, as always, things might be different in the season to come.

There is, however, also a recent change to report: Father Jim is leaving Lourdes and will not be there next season. He has been a great support for all of us, not only in Formation but in the wider community of English speaking Hospitalité members. We will miss him greatly.

I would like to thank our team of English-language formateurs; through their commitment and flexibility, they have ensured that there was at least one English-language formateur for each week of the season this year. And, thanks in great part to the groundwork of my predecessor Gerard, the team is steadily growing. Last year two "formateurs en formation" completed their period of training, this year another two and we have two more undergoing training.

So, on the supply side, things are looking reasonably healthy. The challenge, however, lies on the demand side of the equation. We are all aware of the upsurge in numbers of English speaking stagiaires worldwide. Some of these come in large groups, and when two or more of these groups coincide this can result in unprecedented peaks in numbers. In one week in July, English-speaking stagiaires totalled 136, including 97 first years! Whereas before we may have been satisfied to provide an English-language formateur for every week of the season, we must now look, in some weeks, to providing two or more formateurs.

It is wonderful to welcome so many people from every corner of the world, but we need to find better ways of anticipating and dealing with this demand. I know this is a challenge for all services, and it is not made easier by the fact that some groups may arrive with little or no notice. But whatever other measures are taken, I think it's clear that the Ste. Bernadette Service will need to recruit and train more English-language formateurs.

Officially, the pre-requisites for becoming a formateur are a strong interest, if not passion for, the message of Lourdes and a desire to deepen one's understanding of it, a spiritual life led within the church, and you must have made your "engagement" – there is no longer a qualifying period as hospitalier before becoming a formateur. It is also very important to have a reasonably good standard of spoken French. Unofficially, I would add that you must be a confident communicator, sensitive to the different linguistic and cultural backgrounds of English-speaking stagiaires, with good facilitation skills and a capacity for listening as much as for speaking. Flexibility in the dates you can serve in Lourdes is also highly valued. If you know of anyone who you think might fit this bill, or you are interested yourself in becoming a formateur, please contact me in the first instance.

Finally, I would like to mention two aspects of serving with the St. Bernadette Service that had an impact on me this year. First was the keen interest and involvement of our new President, Daniel Pezet, in the day to day running of the service. Invariably, he took part in the Sunday planning meeting, was there on Mondays to welcome first year stagiaires and, in order to get to know the new Engagés, took part in the rehearsal for the Hospitalité Mass. Everyone in the St. Bernadette Service greatly appreciates his participation. Secondly, every Wednesday morning, the rehearsal for the Engagement ceremony was briefly interrupted by the reliquary of St. Bernadette being brought out from the St. Joseph's chapel sacristy where it was kept overnight and placed at the foot of the altar. After a moment of prayer, it was then carried to Pie X for the International Mass. To have Bernadette in their midst for a few minutes on the day they made their Engagement was always a very moving moment for the candidates present and for those accompanying them.

Peter Chamberlain

SERVICE ST FRAI REPORT 2019 – ALEX KILKENNY

This was another year of hectic activity at Saint Frai. Thank you to all the stagiaires and hospitaliers and hospitalières who worked so hard, who adapted so quickly, and who welcomed and taught new people, especially the ever-changing groups of volunteers.

I hope each of you was thanked in person: be assured that Sr. Amal and all the Conseil appreciate each of you for your fidelity, your service, your adaptability and your exemplary esprit hospitalier, especially when we are understaffed.

Our spiritual backdrop for all our stages this year were the twin anniversaries of St. Bernadette and the theme of the year "Blessed are the Poor". Sr. Amal led her Wednesday chemin, with prayers and reflections in the 4 main languages, and the spiritual programme at St. Frai – weekly Rosary, Vespers and Mass – now has an additional missionary theme with live streaming of the Mass on the Saint Frai Stagiaires Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/StagiairesSaintFraiLourdes/>

The cooperation between the various Hospitalité Services has been very friendly and we have continued to receive timely assistance from the Services Notre Dame, Saint Jean Baptiste and Saint Joseph. The stagiaires are without exception delighted with their formation and the work of the Service Saint Bernadette is very much appreciated. Thank you all.

The Accueil Marie Saint Frai continues to strive for the highest standards of service for the hundreds of pilgrims we welcome through the year. Your participation and your ideas for the future are always appreciated. The Conseil will meet in February as usual: please feel free to send me your suggestions and I will do my best to convey them in that meeting: tfkilkenny@aol.com

Bernadette de Clermont-Tonnerre writes a letter to all Saint Frai stagiaires, hospitaliers and hospitalières after the Conseil meeting. I am conscious that since the transition from post to e-mail many of us have not received that letter. Efforts are being made to improve the system, but I will endeavour to make sure it is also posted on the various Facebook pages.

Frances Bailess has resigned from the Conseil due to ill health and the search for a new second Anglophone Conseillère is on. Thank you to Frances for her service and the many excellent qualities she shared with us in Saint Frai.

See you in Lourdes in 2020.

Alex

SERVICE ST JOSEPH REPORT 2019 - Paul Whitbourn

Accommodation - This year has been one of getting to know the Hotel Notre Dame! The reports I have had are that although the stability of the new accommodation has reduced some of the anxiety over bookings etc, there are many problems to resolve. Firstly, I have had various reports about the cleanliness of rooms, carpets not being hoovered after the previous occupant, no way of getting the femme de ménage to come and clean for those staying a fortnight or more, no Wi-fi, a lack of shower curtains in some rooms and in at least one case more recently no heating in the room. However, the biggest complaint I have heard this year is in relation to the cost at 22€ per night a lot of colleagues have reduced their length of stay. Cheaper alternatives such as the boxes at St Michel had a mixed reception and few seemed happy to have to go to the Hospitalet. I understand that the Bureau is considering widening access to the Homes Gabriel and Notre Dame to St Joseph at a cheaper rate. Wider discussions about cost are ongoing.

Piscine - This has been a very busy year for the men's baths and as ever there have been some occasions when there are not enough Hospitaliers and Stagiaire to man all the baths. I suspect this is not helped by some Pilgrimages either not providing teams for the baths or only doing so on the day of their passage. Some difficult discussions with certain English pilgrimages about safeguarding have been had. Some of the demands being made are entirely disproportionate to the problem. A charter on the issue will be published by the Sanctuary soon!

Grotto/Ceremonies - Generally a calm year in terms of service! There are still too many periods, Easter, Malta, Pentecost etc, where there are too many Responsables. We have weeks with 4/5 at each service all trying to do the same service and immediately followed by a fortnight of no one. Ultimately, there will only be two Responsables per service designated by the duty Councillor and Accueil Hospitalier. We should all have access to the login and password for the planning so it makes sense to check that before choosing your dates. If any Responsable has lost or forgotten the login details please contact me directly.

Gare/Airport - A busy year because of the lateness of Easter and the calendar, meaning we had some very busy days at the end of April particularly at the Station. There was no great impact from strike action on the railways in comparison to 2018. The airport seemed to be about the same level of service as last year but with changes to the Irish pilgrimage arrangements Fridays seemed a lot calmer.

We continue to have problems with the older Fourgons particularly the Renault which was out of service from the end of the Rosaire just till the last week of October. I believe some good news on this issue is on the horizon but will leave it to the President to make an announcement.

Finally, my thanks to all of you for your service, support and kindness throughout the year! The season is likely to commence for St Joseph on the weekend of the 28/29 March 2020. The first trains will arrive on the 3/4 April, which includes the Isle de France and Abiif. Anyone looking for a good time to come please take note. If anyone needs to contact me please do so on [07980658102](tel:07980658102) or email p.whitbourn@btinternet.com.