

Brother Francis in Drumelzier

One Saturday in June our doorbell rang at lunchtime to reveal a young man in a tattered Franciscan habit asking if he and his two companions could spend the night in the Kirk. They had apparently spent the previous night in Manor Kirk and had been assured of a warm welcome in Drumelzier!

They claimed to come from a Franciscan monastery in south Germany which had eight monks and a dozen medical staff offering alternative therapies. They were on a five year walk through all the countries in Europe, following in the footsteps of St Francis, who, they said, went everywhere without money, relying on the generosity of the communities he visited. They had been walking for three and a half years with another one and a half years to go. On leaving us they were heading for Iona with no clear idea of their route or when they planned to get there.

To spend the night in the Kirk did not seem very suitable with no water or sanitation. We therefore arranged for them to stay in the Village Hall, which at least had water and toilets, and a brand new kitchen. We felt obliged to give them food for their supper and breakfast as they said they had no money and depended on donations. Brother Francis was in his thirties and spoke perfect English, as did his companion who was a doctor. The doctor's girlfriend had joined them for two weeks holiday. They each pulled a cart, as you can see in the photograph, with their website painted prominently – www.lebensabentur.de -on the side.

They left on Sunday morning at 9.00 am and we suggested they went to Broughton Kirk at 10.00 but it appears they did not. They could not have been more friendly but we were left wondering quite what they were achieving compared to the original St Francis who was preaching the Gospel and healing the sick wherever he went.

Rosalind and Julian Birchall