



The essential daily brief on the Irish churches

Official Launch of BCM Dementia project

Health Minister Edwin Poots and Director of Belfast Central Mission Brian Burns at Stormont, look at the plans for Copelands, a new dementia and nursing care home in Millisle, Co Down.

Full house in Parliament Buildings on 4 March for the official launch of Copelands, Dementia & Nursing Care hosted by Minister Edwin Poots.

Copelands is one of the latest projects of the Belfast Central Mission (BCM). It will be a state of the art centre for those living with dementia, enabling older people to live a full and active life within a protective and caring environment.

BCM was founded in 1889 as part of the Methodist church's response to problems inherent in inner-city life. It is involved with all sectors of the community, irrespective of religious or political affiliation. It aims to support those most in need in society and enable them to reach their full potential. BCM does this through diverse social care projects, cross-community programmes and their two congregations.



Health Minister Edwin Poots and Director of Belfast Central Mission Brian Burns

Service to mark 40 years since murder of Irish politician

A memorial service has been held in the Republic to mark 40 years since Irish politician Billy Fox was murdered by the IRA.

News Letter - Taoiseach Enda Kenny and representatives from Innocent Victims United (IVU) were among those in attendance at the service in Ballybay, Co Monaghan.

Mr Fox was the only member of the Republic's administration to be murdered as a result of the Troubles.

He was 35 when he was shot dead by gunmen on March 12, 1974.

Mr Fox, a Protestant, belonged to Anaghmullen Church of Ireland, where yesterday's service was held.

The Bishop of Clogher John McDowell officiated at the service.

An official government wreath was also laid at the grave of Mr Fox following proceedings.

A sermon preached by the Bishop of Clogher, at the Service of Commemoration for Senator Billy Fox held in Christ Church, Aughnamullen, 9 March 2014 is available at - <http://ireland.anglican.org/news/5020>



L-R: Bishop John McDowell, Archdeacon Helene Steed, Taoiseach Enda Kenny, Fr Thomas Quigley (PP Latton), Heather Humphreys, TD

Order: Adams must say sorry for murders of our members

The Orange Order has called on Sinn Finn's Gerry Adams to acknowledge the murder of 332 Orangemen by the Provisional IRA in the Troubles.

News Letter - The Order, in a current editorial in its newspaper The Orange Standard, said this was the largest institutional loss for a civilian organisation during the Troubles, and the pain and hurt will not simply go away.

“That loss must be addressed by Sinn Fein. At the time of the murders, Sinn Fein and the IRA were inextricably linked. While not all of the murders were committed by the IRA, the great majority were.

“Therefore in our view, Sinn Fein, as a political party, bears responsibility on this matter.

“Is it too much to ask that Sinn Fein can take the courageous step of expressing remorse to the Orange Institution for what happened during the Troubles?”

The editorial challenges Sinn Fein president Mr Adams to acknowledge, as a first step, the loss of the Orange Order's murdered members.

“Sinn Fein needs to find the political maturity to mean what it says if it talks about remorse. We are not into cosmetic handshakes or words without depth.”

Last month, Mr Adams called for a meeting with the Orange Order and described the institution as “one of our national traditions” in Ireland.

“Orange is one of our country's national colours,” he said at his party's annual ard fheis in Wexford. “And Sinn Fein wants all our traditions freed up from sectarianism from any quarter.”



Orange is one of our country's national colours

Gerry Adams

Neil Hannon's new song cycle inspired by his dad

Divine Comedy frontman Neil Hannon was inspired to write his new song cycle, *To Our Fathers in Distress*, by his father's diagnosis of Alzheimer's.

RTE - Hannon was asked to compose a piece by London's Southbank Centre for the Royal Festival Hall's newly refurbished organ and says he immediately thought of his father, retired Church of Ireland clergyman Rt Rev Brian Hannon, who was Bishop of Clogher from 1986 to 2001.

Writing in the *Guardian* newspaper (March 11) , Neil says: "It's six years now since my father told me he had Alzheimer's disease. At the time I was rather nonplussed by the revelation. I did my usual trick of ignoring it and hoping it would go away.

"Six years on and I wish he'd told me his legs had been chewed off by a combine harvester instead. At least then we could have discussed the gory details while I wheeled him around. But Alzheimer's disease is a miserable, slow retreat from the world, and from all that you are.

"It's not fair on him, or Mum. The irony that he will never be able to fully comprehend or appreciate my new composition *To Our Fathers in Distress* is perhaps its most pertinent reason for existence."

To Our Fathers in Distress is "a kind of oratorio on the subject of an average Hannon family Sunday in the 70s and 80s. It begins with a breakfast of lard, ends with Ireland being beaten in the rugby and visits the church and the woods in between. Not forgetting the obligatory awkward Sunday lunch with a visiting cleric of course."

The new piece will be performed as part of Neil Hannon's Guide to the Organ on Saturday 22 March at the Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, London.



Alzheimer's disease is a miserable, slow retreat from the world, and from all that you are

Celebrating 25 years of healing services in St. Finnian's

There has been a service of divine healing almost every Tuesday evening for the past 25 years in St. Finnian's Church, Cregagh.

That anniversary will be celebrated on Tuesday, April 1 at 8 pm. The speaker will be one of the founder members of the service, Canon David Brown, rector of Knocknagoney.

Brother David Jardine, who organises and conducts the service, says *'There have been literally tens of thousands of people prayed for during all those years. It would be impossible to estimate the number of people who have been helped and healed. Thankfully, the service is going stronger than ever. We want to come together to thank God for that, and to thank all the people who throughout those years have helped to make healing prayer available every Tuesday evening.'*

Personal prayer and anointing with oil for healing will be available on April 1. You will be very welcome.



Leading Catholic grammar to stop using 11-plus exams

A leading Catholic grammar school - with strong links to the Church's most senior figure - is to stop using 11-plus exams.

Irish News - Education minister John O'dowd yesterday approved a proposal to transform St Patrick's grammar School in armagh into an all-abilities college. In a significant and symbolic move, that is expected to cause a knock-on effect through the sector, the school will abandon academic selection with immediate effect. It had initially been proposed that it would continue using tests in the short-term before completely ending the practice over time. It was feared, however, that a phasing out might have caused confusion and uncertainty for parents and children.

Mr O'dowd approved the plan, revealed in *The Irish News* last year, to create a larger St Patrick's. This will also incorporate the existing St Brigid's High School.

Cardinal Sean Brady, the head of the Catholic Church in Ireland, is chairman of St Patrick's board of governors.

St Patrick's will move to an entirely non-selective admissions arrangement and will also, over a two-year period, undergo a phased expansion up to 1,240 pupils.

Over the same period, St Brigid's will cease to admit Year 8 and Year 11 pupils and will close by august 2016.

"The evidence, both local and international, is clear - mixed ability schooling can deliver better outcomes for everyone. The top education systems around the world combine excellence with equality of access," Mr O'dowd said.

"The time has long passed for grammar schools to begin the process of ending selection by academic means. i hope that yet more grammar schools will show the bravery and fortitude to consider how they might make the change themselves." More at -

<http://www.irishnews.com/news/leading-catholic-grammar-to-stop-using-11-plus-exams-1341665>

New Rector is appointed to St Augustine's

St Augustine's Parish Church has a new Rector, following the historic departure of Rev Pat Storey, who was made Bishop of Kildare and Meath in September last year.

Londonderry Sentinel - The appointment of Rev Malcolm Ferry was announced on Sunday, March 9 at Services in St Augustine's and All Saints Clooney.

Rev Ferry is currently the Rector of Waterside Parish, All Saints Clooney.

Commenting on his appointment he said: "I am delighted to continue serving the people of a city that I have come to love. My years working with the people of All Saints Clooney have been really fulfilling and happy. However I am looking forward to the fresh opportunities of working with the parishioners of St Augustine's and to the future".

Welcoming the announcement, Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Ken Good, said: "Malcolm brings great creativity and experience to his new role in St Augustine's. He has shown a real commitment to engaging with the local community in Clooney and leaves that parish well placed for the future.

"We are very encouraged by the energy and commitment our parishes bring to the life of this city and I look forward to the contribution that Rev Ferry and the St Augustine's family are going to make to that".

Rev Ferry is married to Carol who is a qualified pharmacist. The couple have three children, James, Sarah and Rebekah.

Before his move to Clooney Rev Ferry served as Rector of Castlerock.



Anti-Irish racism and Scottish independence debated at St Patrick's festival

CROWD of over 100 people filled St. Patrick's Hall in Coatbridge on Sunday night for a debate on 'The Irish in Scotland: Past, Present and Future' as part of the Coatbridge St Patrick's festival.

Irish Post - A panel of speakers with roots in the Irish community in Scotland discussed a wide range of subjects including anti-Irish racism, the planned famine memorial in Glasgow, the north of Ireland, the future of Catholic schools in Scotland, and September's referendum on independence.

This included professors Tom Devine and Patrick Reilly, Catholic media spokesperson Peter Kearney, and MSPs Siobhán McMahon, Hugh Henry and Joan McAlpine, and Irish community worker Danny Boyle.

Tom Devine, professor of history at Edinburgh University, said that through Scotland's history Irish Catholicism was "marginalised".

"As late as 1952 the Kirk's Church and Nations Committee denounced all forms of racism there were still references to the Irish as an alien race and a menace," he said.

"Times have changed rapidly but...Africans and Asians seem to be more attractive for support and public recognition (than the Irish). It does suggest that there's a fear that such recognition would be divisive."

Hugh Henry, Labour MSP for South Renfrewshire, agreed that the Irish in Scotland still struggle for recognition.

"There's still a reluctance in this country to allow people like me to express their identity through an Irish identity or culture. We can stand up and sing as all Scots together and that's fine.

"But if I say I've different references and tastes I think there's still a discomfort about being too assertive about that." More at -

<http://www.irishpost.co.uk/news/irish-scotlands-struggle-recognition-debated-coatbridge>