



The Armagh Robinson Library has a first edition of Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels

New chapter for re-named Armagh Robinson Library

Northern Ireland's oldest library, where a bizarre armed robbery of a first edition of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* made headlines around the world 18 years ago, is writing a new chapter

in its story, Ivan Little reports in The Belfast Telegraph

The former Armagh Public Library has undergone an extensive transformation and has been renamed after Richard Robinson, the Archbishop who founded it beside the Church of Ireland Cathedral in the city in 1771.

The Armagh Robinson Library is also set to reveal a series of new stories and discoveries about its history ahead of its 250th anniversary in four years' time, with the aim of attracting thousands of new visitors.

In December 1999, two armed, masked men tricked their way into the library and held an assistant at gunpoint as they took a valuable first edition of Gulliver's Travels and a dozen other historical volumes.

Police north and south of the border launched a major investigation into the crime, with RUC sources indicating that they believed the 18th century book had been stolen to order on behalf of a collector.

The former Church of Ireland Primate, Dr Robin Eames, issued a public appeal for the return of the book, which was unique because it had been annotated in the margins in his own handwriting

by Swift, who was once the Dean of Armagh and was said to have been angry over mistakes in the first edition and made corrections and amendments for the second.

Twenty months after the robbery occurred, the book was recovered in Dublin and handed back to the library, which launched its rebranding last night at a special function.

Experts from across the UK have spent months delving into the library's collections and have uncovered hidden gems like rare casts of Louis XIV commemorative medals from 1690 and fine art prints by famous artists such as Englishman William Hogarth and Italian Giovanni Battista Piranesi.

The library's collections, which include rare architectural books by Sir Christopher Wren, who designed St Paul's Cathedral in London, have been said to be of huge cultural and heritage significance to the whole island of Ireland

Paul Mullan, the head of the Heritage Lottery Fund which financed the project, said: "The library is an amazing repository of heritage within a fantastic heritage building, which was created through the vision and foresight of Archbishop Robinson.

"At Heritage Lottery Fund, we think the UK's heritage is precious.

"That's why we invest National Lottery players' money to help protect and sustain it for future generations.

"Heritage organisations, such as Armagh Public Library are adapting so they can not only survive in these challenging financial times, but thrive."

The current Archbishop of Armagh, Dr Richard Clarke, who is the chairman of the library's governors and guardians, said they were grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for all its assistance.

He added: "We are delighted with the treasures and stories that have been uncovered and we look forward to sharing these with our visitors."

Irish churchmen lead delegation to visit Italian refugee projects

Alan Meban and Damian Jackson are currently leading an Irish and British delegation to visit Italian refugee camps. Between Monday 3 and Saturday 8 April, seven young men from churches across Britain and Ireland are visiting Italy to hear first hand testimony from refugees

and staff in camps and support projects on the islands of Sicily and Lampedusa.

The fact-finding trip is organised by [Churches Together in Britain and Ireland](#) (CTBI) and follows on from a [delegation of women who visited refugee women and families mainland of Greece and one of the islands in May last year](#).

Overland Balkan routes into Europe are all but closed. After the signing of the EU agreement with Turkey last April, the primary entry point into Europe switched from Greece to the central Mediterranean, with the majority of people crossing by sea into Italy from sub-Saharan Africa. More than four in five (83%) of first time asylum seekers in the European Union in 2016 were less than 35 years old.

Alan Meban coordinates CTBI's [Focus on Refugees](#) project and is co-leading the delegation. Before leaving for Italy, he explained:

“We are going to Sicily and Lampedusa to encounter, to listen and to reflect with refugees – and in particular the young men – who are making the perilous journey to safety in Italy safety.

“Our visit brings men, mostly in their twenties, to meet the similarly aged men making the journey

by sea to Europe. This is a key demographic who are often misrepresented and demonised. We want to hear their stories, to put ourselves in their shoes, so we can understand their choices, and pass on their experiences and their journeys to others on our return home.

“As well as meeting with refugees, we will see first hand the work of staff from the charity [Mediterranean Hope](#) who are working on Lampedusa and Sicily.

“We will be ‘living letters’ to our churches and communities, seeking to make visible what is currently invisible, and to amplify the testimony of those who do not have our privileges of voice and access.”

Damian Jackson from the Irish Council of Churches is the other co-leader of the team and said:

“We go as people of faith, moved by that faith, in a concrete initiative of putting ourselves alongside our fellow human beings who are in the direst situation of need and insecurity, even if only for a very short time.

“We want to show solidarity with those whom fear, danger, increasing poverty and despair have led them to embark on dangerous journeys

with no guaranteed outcome. And with our presence we want to support the churches, NGOs, volunteers and local people who have responded, often where governments cannot or will not, and often at cost to themselves, with generosity, humanity and compassion.”

CTBI’s director of international programmes Christine Elliott said:

“We want to challenge the political rhetoric that by providing support in the Middle East and Africa, less support is required in Europe and in Britain. Instead we say that there must be investment in both.

“The group come from different Christian traditions and from all over Britain and Ireland. We expect to meet those whose stories are so often told in impersonal and derogatory ways.

“The team will encounter people who have moved away from their homes and their families for many different reasons. They will meet those who have put their trust in smugglers and unsafe vessels, and are now vulnerable to abuse and trafficking. They will hear stories of families split apart by politics, conflict and climate.

“CTBI is confident that our churches and communities will be moved and challenged by

the stories the group will share with us and will want to ensure that this message will be laid alongside the new media headlines and stories.”

The delegation will document their visit through photographs, written reflections and recommendations that will be published here on the [Focus on Refugees](#) and the [CTBI](#) websites as well as [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

<http://focusonrefugees.org/>

Bishop of Cork's service to education recognised

The Bishop of Cork, the Right Reverend Dr Paul Colton, recently stood down as a member of the Church of Ireland Board of Education (Republic of Ireland) on which he had served for fifteen years, and as chairperson of the Secondary Education Committee, a post he held for seventeen years.

“It’s important that roles and jobs such as this ‘go round’ and that different people have the opportunity to get involved and to give leadership,” he said. “Also, for the first time in twenty–seven years I am not chairperson of a school board primary or second level,



Dr Ken Fennelly, Church of Ireland Education Officer and Secretary of the SEC, makes a presentation to Bishop Paul Colton on behalf of the members of the SEC.

somewhere in the State; at one time I was chairing three school boards,” he added.

The Secondary Education Committee (SEC), which administers the Protestant Block Grant, entertained Bishop Colton to dinner recently, and the members presented him with their gift: glasses and a decanter engraved with the logos of the founding members of the SEC (the Church

of Ireland, the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and the Religious Society of Friends).

Bishop Colton said: “I am very touched by my colleagues’ gift. The SEC is an ecumenical body and that has made it a very enriching experience. Also, through the grants it awards, it makes a very real difference in the education of young people.

“I could easily have drifted along in these voluntary roles within the Church nationally, but drifting like that is not good governance, in my view. This decision also comes at a natural break for me as, for the first time in twenty–seven years I am not the chairperson of a school board, primary or second level, somewhere in the State; at one time I was chairing three school boards.

“Of course, this not mean that my engagement in education issues ends. In this Diocese, I am patron of primary schools, co–patron of a second level school and a governor of two others.

“So I will still be keeping a watchful eye on education matters as they develop nationally, from a strong local perspective.”

Catholic Church in England concerned about Irish in UK post Brexit

There are some 3 million European citizens living in the UK, most of them from Catholic countries, and it is very important to reassure them about their future, so that they do not live in fear of not being allowed to stay, the spokesman for the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has said.

Speaking shortly after the historic triggering of Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, which marked the beginning of Britain's divorce from the EU, Liam Allmark said the Church was concerned with some matters that would be negotiated between the United Kingdom and the European Union – the rights of EU citizens in the UK in the coming years, the relations of Britain with other European countries, and the UK's role in the world.

The Bishops have asked, and will continue to ask MPs, what guarantees they can give to these people that their rights, as citizens of the United Kingdom, will be protected, he said.

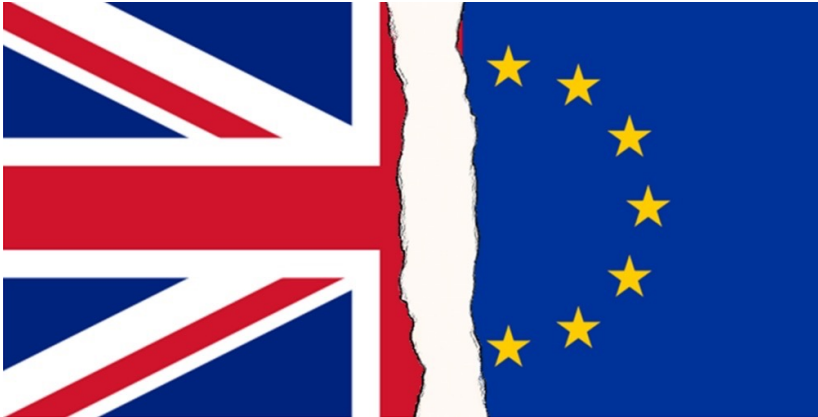
Speaking to the Italian SIR agency, Mr Allmark said another “key issue” for the bishops of England and Wales was the Irish people living in the UK. “There are about 342,000 Irish people in Great Britain, most of them Catholic, and the Bishops have cooperated also with the Irish Bishops’ Conference on this matter,” he said.

Commenting on Britain’s official triggering of Brexit, Cardinal Vincent Nichols said that many people in the UK would be “coping with a combination of anxiety and enthusiasm”.

The Archbishop of Westminster, who was taking part in a symposium on young people in Spain, said that the country had been divided on the issue of Brexit since the launch of the referendum, but now that the decision was made, “we need to move on”.

They were faced with two major issues, said the cardinal: the first, “the economic and financial repercussions” of the decision to leave the EU; the second, “the question of the movement of people across borders that are bound to change”, in particular, between Éire and Northern Ireland.”

Distinguishing between the EU and Europe, Cardinal Nichols insisted that “it should be pointed out that England does not want to leave



Europe,” but instead, “the issue at stake is the European Union”.

Two factors in particular had played an important role in the decision making process, he believed. One was the “feeling of distance and separation that citizens have constantly perceived from Brussels and Strasbourg”. The second was the way in which the EU had addressed the question of diversity.

The President of the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales highlighted that his nation still had a place in Europe. “We intend to be good neighbours for European countries,” he said.

UK churches provide discussion resources on Brexit

In readiness for the consequences of the UK triggering Article 50, four of the UK's largest Christian Churches, representing three quarters of a million members, are inviting their congregations to take part in discussions across the UK to explore what kind of society we should be seeking to create.

A spokesperson for the churches said - At a time when the UK is moving towards exiting the EU, there is naturally uncertainty about what our future as a country will look like, whichever way people voted in the referendum. Churches are being invited to take part in constructive conversations about the sort of society we would wish to live in, and hope to leave to future generations. Talking about things where people disagree can be difficult, so a pack - "Conversation Welcome" - has been provided to help.

The conversations will be held by local Baptist, Methodist, United Reformed and Church of Scotland churches. They are being promoted by the Joint Public Issues Team, through which the four Churches work together on issues of justice and inequality.

Baptist Minister, Revd Phil Jump, who is coordinating the initiative and an adviser to the Joint Public Issues Team, commented:

"Conversations are important at any time but the extraordinary recent political events have made the need more pressing. The EU Referendum campaign has left some mourning the loss of an important identity, while others are delighted by the opportunities that lie ahead.

"The process of leaving the European Union means making many important decisions that will shape the UK for years to come. By taking part in these conversations, people will discuss a vital underlying question - What kind of society should we be seeking to create?"

The Conversation Welcome discussion will suggest four questions to explore:

What sort of society do we want to leave for future generations?

How should we treat others?

How should we use our resources?

How should we make decisions?

The conversations can be held in any group size and the resources include prayers, reflections and videos. The resource pack is available here - <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/issues/eu-referendum/conversationwelcome/>



C of E slams BBC for cutting in-house religious programming team

The Church of England has criticised a decision by the BBC to close its in-house religion and ethics television production department.

Bishop of Norwich, Rt Rev Graham James, who comments for the Church of media affairs, was quoted by the Sunday Times as saying: "It is a failure of the BBC as a public service broadcaster."

He spoke after director of factual at BBC Studios, Lisa Opie, warned staff in a leaked email the recent loss of the contract to produce Songs of Praise "means we will no longer have a permanent religion and ethics department in Salford."



Bishop Graham said it was a "strange" decision, given the BBC's pledge to the watchdog Ofcom - which begins regulating the corporation on Monday - that it would boost religious programming.

The BBC refused to say how many staff it now has in religion and ethics or how many might be lost following the changes; however, it did confirm an undisclosed number would remain.

Religion is only the latest area to experience cuts under a requirement the BBC puts programmes out to tender.

A BBC spokesman told Premier: "BBC Studios will continue to have a religion and ethics team, as part of its Pacific Quay Productions unit, making and producing top quality religious and ethics programming and we also have a wealth

of religious broadcasting expertise within news, radio and the World Service.

"It is a requirement of the new Charter that we commercially contest long running programmes. It's not something we can simply decide not to do.

"However, Songs of Praise remains firmly at the heart of our schedule, and in the coming days we'll announce exciting new commissions for Easter.

"While we already do more than any other broadcaster, we've been clear that we want to do even more for all faiths, including Christianity. That's why we have already announced a review some months back into how we can deliver even more.

"Ofcom's draft operating licence, which we welcomed, is consulting on more hours of religious programming and has nothing to do with who makes the programmes."

BOOK SPOT - The Challenge of the Lord's Prayer

You've said the Lord's Prayer so often that you know it off by heart. But does it still challenge



you? Can you truly stand up to the demands of this most holy and beloved of prayers?

In his new book, *The Challenge of the Lord's Prayer*, author John Cox forces us to face the prayer of Jesus head on and not to pray it lightly. He provides valuable insights into its meaning and relevance today, raising important questions to challenge those who have the courage to pray this ancient prayer with a true and living faith.

The Challenge of the Lord's Prayer insists that we put God first in our praying and demands that, as we ask God for forgiveness, we consider the needs of others and how we, in turn, forgive them. And it calls us to stand up to the evil in our world today.

Since ordination, nearly 40 years ago, John has been a parish priest; Senior Selection Secretary at Church House, Westminster; Director of Ordinands, and Canon at Southwark Cathedral; an Archdeacon and a Diocesan Director of Education. In retirement John has written many bestselling books for Kevin Mayhew. He chairs the governors of a primary academy and in spare moments enjoys golf and travel.

The Challenge of the Lord's Prayer insists that we put God first in our praying and demands that, as we ask God for forgiveness, we consider the needs of others and how we, in turn, forgive them. And it calls us to stand up to the evil in our world today.

Published by Kevin Mayhew at 12.95 sterling. It can be pre-ordered at - <http://www.kevinmayhew.com/the-challenge-of-the-lord-s-prayer.html?>

Today in History

April 4, 397: Ambrose of Milan, the most talented bishop of the early church, dies. Biblical exegete, political theorist, master of Latin eloquence, musician, and teacher, he brought

Roman Emperor Theodosius I to his knees in repentance after the emperor ordered a massacre of his citizens (This marked the first time the state submitted to the church). But he is perhaps best known for teaching his most famous pupil, Augustine of Hippo .

April 4, 636: Isidore, Spanish scholar and archbishop of Seville dies. His most extensive and famous work was his *Etymologiae* (Etymologies), an extensive encyclopedia of early medieval knowledge that, unlike other such works, used liberal arts and secular learning as the foundation of Christian education. (Isidore did remark, however, that it would be better to be without the knowledge of heretics than to be misled by their comments.)

April 4, 1507: Martin Luther is ordained a priest in Erfurt, Germany.

April 4, 1541: Spanish ascetic and theologian Ignatius of Loyola is elected the first General of the Jesuit Order (or the Society of Jesus), which he had founded the previous year.

April 4, 1687: James II issues a Declaration of Indulgence allowing full liberty of worship in England. The government allowed Nonconformists to meet (though justices of the

peace had to be notified), forgave penalties for ecclesiastical offenses and no longer required oaths of supremacy and allegiance for those in royal service. Thus the declaration severely threatened Anglican control of church and state.

April 4, 1742: Charles Wesley preaches his famous sermon, "Awake, thou that sleepest," to the University of Oxford. The sermon soon became Methodism's most popular tract.

April 4, 1968: Civil rights leader and Baptist minister Martin Luther King, Jr., is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

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