



Bangor Abbey clock faces are being cleaned

Bangor Abbey faces clean

Bangor Abbey was featured on BBC Newsline on Tuesday because the clock faces on the famous tower were removed for refurbishment.

After being in situ for approximately 180 years it is no surprise that they are in need of some TLC

but it will also be an opportunity for the clock mechanism to be fully automated.

One of the most important Christian sites in Ireland, Bangor Abbey was founded by St Comgall around 558. The abbey was burned in 1572 by Sir Brian O'Neill, whose grandson Con hid here following his escape from Carrickfergus Gaol. That escape was arranged by Sir Hugh Montgomery as part of a deal which would lead to the private plantation of Scots settlers in North Down and Ards.

Bangor Abbey was rebuilt by Sir James Hamilton between 1617 and 1623. The first Protestant minister in Bangor was Scotsman John Gibson, who was appointed Dean of Down in 1609. Sir James Hamilton had the church rebuilt, though the tower is from the 14th century. Robert Blair, Gibson's replacement as minister, and many of his congregation were on board the Eagle Wing, the first emigrant ship to sail to America from Ulster, on its ill-fated trip in 1636.

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Bangor to become a spiritual haven for pilgrims from Europe after lottery grant

He has been described as Ireland's most influential emigrant.

Belfast Telegraph - And now Bangor is to be transformed into a spiritual haven for pilgrims from across Europe attracted by the story of St Columbanus.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has provided the money for North Down Borough Council to uncover the life of St Columbanus, regarded across Europe as one of Ireland's greatest saints.

In the sixth century a group of monks led by St Columbanus set off from Bangor - described by St Patrick as the "Valley of the Angels" - and went to the continent to reclaim Europe for Christianity at a time when it was rife with anarchy and chaos.

The HLF has now given £40,000 so the council can tell the extraordinary story through a number

of initiatives, including training volunteers as guides.

This includes the story of the ancient monastery and its contribution to the revival of Christianity in the Dark Ages.

This year marks 1,400 years since the death of Columbanus and the council says it will now have the means to explore the spiritual heritage of the town and the important role Bangor played in the spread of Christianity throughout Europe.

It also plans to develop a "heritage meditation trail" so that visitors can walk in the footsteps of the saint's and use new technologies to explore the history of the town's key sites. There will also be spaces for contemplation provided by local churches on the trail.

Alex Irvine, Tourism Development Officer at North Down Borough Council, said:
"Unfortunately little remains today of the original monastic settlement, yet parts of the coastline that they would have walked are very much the same as in ancient times."

The former Irish President Mary McAleese has described Columbanus as Ireland's most

influential emigrant. Pope Benedict XVI called him the first European and there is currently a petition for Pope Francis, to name St Columbanus a Patron Saint of Europe in 2015. Born in Leinster, Columbanus became a monk at Lough Erne and then at Bangor under abbot Saint Comgall.

In middle age, Columbanus felt a call to missionary life and set off with 12 companions, travelling to Scotland, England and then France in 585, settling at the Roman fortress of Annegray in the Vosges Mountains following their welcome by the King of Burgundy.

Centenary of Arthur Edward Guinness - Dublin Parish Concert and Music project

All Saint's Church, Raheny, plans to mark the 100th anniversary of the death of Arthur Edward Guinness, Lord Ardilaun, with a concert by Irish Harpist, Anne-Marie O'Farrell, the UCD Choral Scholars and Organist and Traditional Irish Musician, Donna Magee. The concert will take place in the church on Sunday January 18 at

7.00 pm and will feature a varied programme from both traditional and temporary composers including some new works based on poetry from the Great War era.



All Saints' Church, Raheny, Dublin

The concert will form the backdrop for the launch by Minister of State Aodhán Ó Ríordán of a new Music Education and Development Project at All Saints' aimed at enabling young people from north Dublin engage with choral and musical development. Advisors to the project include Dr Desmond Earley, Artistic Director (Music) of the

January 15

Performing Arts Strand of UCD School of Music and Lt Col Mark Armstrong, Director of the Defence Forces School of Music. The concert will also be attended by the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Michael Jackson



*The other
Arthur
Guinness*

Arthur Edward Guinness (Lord Ardilaun) died on January 20 1915 at his home at St Anne's, Raheny. A great-grandson of Arthur Guinness, founder of the brewery, Lord Ardilaun was a

businessman, politician and philanthropist and is best known for giving St Stephen's Green to the people of Dublin.

Lord Ardilaun also funded the building of All Saints' Church in Raheny which was built on the grounds of his estate at St Anne's and is regarded as an architectural gem in the Dublin Diocese.

Commenting on the concert and the development of the music project, the rector of All Saints', the Revd Norman McCausland said:

"The concert marks the significant anniversary of the end of the life of Arthur Edward Guinness but the occasion also looks forward to the beginning of something new. The 'Ardilaun Music Project' will provide opportunities for choral development especially with young people while also engaging in a collaborative way with Traditional Irish Music performers and composers. This will be a major addition to the cultural life of north Dublin and we are delighted to make this contribution to the Decade of Centenaries".

The Ardilaun Music Project will be funded by subscriptions and by income from a regular

series of concerts. Both the Concert and the Music Project are quickly gaining interest with a number of community leaders and professional musicians indicating their support.

Admission to the concert will be by ticket only. Tickets cost €12 (€10 concession) and are available by contacting (01) 8313929.

Irish Presbyterian couple begin work in Nepal

Two new PCI mission personnel arrived in Nepal last weekend to begin their overseas service.



Laura and Stephen Coulter, members of Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian Church in East Belfast, were commissioned for service overseas last Sunday (4th January) by East Belfast Presbytery.

They are going to serve with Presbyterian Mission's partner in Nepal - [United Mission to Nepal \(UMN\)](#).

Following a period of language study and orientation, Laura will be taking up the role of Peace-making and Mediation Advisor for UMN, and Stephen will be taking up the role of Mental Health Advisor within UMN and to a wider mental health network.

They write,

"We are both excited and nervous about leaving home and going to work overseas....

Going to a new country is exciting, but there will be so much for us to learn and adapt to - please pray that we will settle in well.

We have been offered a flat for the first two months, which is great as this will give us a

chance to look around for something more permanent."

Lisburn Cathedral live on Radio 4

A service in Lisburn Cathedral on Sunday 1 February will be broadcast live on Radio 4 and BBC Radio Ulster, reaching more than two million listeners.

The Cathedral has described this as a privilege, which presents a 'fantastic opportunity for the Cathedral to convey our hope in Christ and to give a strong sense of worship of our great God to those tuning in.'

The service will be broadcast live at 8.10am on Radio 4 and repeated at about 10.15am on Radio Ulster. The congregation needs to be seated at 7.45am.

Sinn Fein and major education problems in Northern Ireland

Education minister John O'Dowd accused of 'breaking rules and failing schools' in draft budget -

Education minister John O'Dowd has been accused of failing schools in his draft budget during a heated debate on cuts to the sector.

DUP MLA Michelle McIlveen, who chairs the Education Committee, claimed that Mr O'Dowd had broken a number of "golden rules" in his draft budget, and had failed to protect classrooms.

She also lashed out at the department's director of finance, Trevor Connolly, who revealed during an appearance at the committee in December that 2,500 teachers and support staff will lose their jobs under the draft education budget.

"For the director of finance to come to the Education Committee and talk in a cavalier fashion about 2,500 redundancies - 1,500 non-teaching and 1,000 teaching - thereby ignoring collective agreements, periods of redundancy notices and the reality of the school year, which crosses two financial years, is theatrics of the worst type, and it really was not an Oscar-winning performance," she told the Assembly as she proposed a motion calling on Mr O'Dowd to ensure protecting the classroom is his first priority.

More at - <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/education/education-minister-john-odowd-accused-of-breaking-rules-and-failing-schools-in-draft-budget-30906071.html>



Portora Royal School

Setback in bid to stop closure of Enniskillen grammar

Supporters of the Collegiate Grammar School in Enniskillen have suffered a setback after a move to review the decision to close was knocked back.

Belfast Telegraph - Education Minister John O'Dowd approved the closure of both Portora Royal School and the Collegiate last November. The two institutions will be replaced by a new amalgamated school.

The decision sparked outrage locally, with 7,000 people signing a petition against it.

The DUP tabled a petition requiring the Speaker Mitchel McLaughlin to refer the decision to the full Executive.

But Mr McLaughlin yesterday told MLAs he had received a valid petition - but refused to refer it to ministers.

"Having consulted the parties and given the matter full consideration, I have certified that the Minister's decision does not relate to a matter of public importance. I will not, therefore, refer the decision to the Executive Committee for consideration," he said.

TUV MLA Jim Allister blasted the move as a "studied kick in the teeth to the unionist community in Fermanagh".

"The decision by the Sinn Fein Education Minister to force the closure of the Collegiate Grammar School in Enniskillen rightly caused dismay among many in Co Fermanagh," he said.

"In his first action as Speaker, Mr McLaughlin threw it back in the DUP's face and refused to refer the matter to the Executive."

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/education/setback-in-bid-to-stop-closure-of-enniskillen-grammar-30905911.html>

The strange smile of Tony Blair

The former PM is summoned to Parliament to explain why letters were sent to IRA suspects, including John Downey, telling them they were no longer wanted by police.



Tony Blair answers questions from the Northern Ireland Affairs select committee at the House of Commons

Daily Telegraph sketch - When normal people smile, they do so, usually, because they're happy. Or because they're grateful, or because

they're relieved, or because they're being friendly. Sometimes, they smile because they're nervous and don't want to show it, but in general, they smile to express some form of pleasure.

Not [Tony Blair](#). Or at least, not Tony Blair when he returned to Parliament today to be interrogated by MPs about IRA fugitives. During the two-hour hearing, Mr Blair did a lot of smiling, but his smiles were not happy smiles. They were indignant smiles, agitated smiles, frustrated smiles, bewildered smiles, weary smiles, exasperated smiles, even angry smiles. Unless you count Mr Punch, he is the only person I've seen who can smile at someone while simultaneously berating them. It's a peculiar sight, and more than mildly unnerving.

After nine months of dragging his heels, Mr Blair had finally agreed to appear before the Northern Ireland Affairs committee to explain why, during his premiership, IRA suspects still on the run were sent letters telling them they were no longer wanted by police. The committee put this question, in various forms, to Mr Blair many times; doggedly, Mr Blair gave each MP the same answer. Sitting in the public gallery behind him, as he did so, were families of IRA victims.

He knew, he said, that some people would always feel “anger and anguish and even betrayal”. But the letters were “essential to getting Sinn Fein on board”; they were “absolutely critical to the peace process”; and without them, there **“would not have been a peace process”**, it would have “collapsed”. He referred back to the Good Friday Agreement: “When we decided we would release prisoners, no one felt anything other than repugnance at doing that... But we would not have had peace unless we had [done it].”

Mr Blair is not often ruffled by questioning. Normally, he’s as smooth as the wheels of a limousine. But his exchanges here with Ian Paisley Jr – the DUP MP and son of the late Rev **Ian Paisley** – were sizzingly tense. This was when we saw the most furious smiling.

Mr Paisley Jr kept demanding Mr Blair apologise to victims; Mr Blair, eventually, said he **apologised for failing to prevent “error”**, but not for the policy itself. (The “error” in question being that one of the “On the Run” letters was sent to John Downey, ultimately causing **the collapse of his trial** for the 1982 Hyde Park bombing.)

Mr Paisley did not seem satisfied with Mr Blair's answers. "You sit in the decision-maker's seat for a moment!" snapped Mr Blair, hotly.

He dealt better with the other MPs, but you could still sense, underneath, his impatience, his irritation (smile smile).

As I listened, for the eighth or ninth time, to his defence of the letters policy, I found myself intrigued by the colour of his skin. Never before had I seen someone look both tanned and pale at the same time.

Tony Blair says 'on-the-runs' letters were crucial to keeping North's peace process on track - Irish Times.

See:

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/uk/tony-blair-says-on-the-runs-letters-were-crucial-to-keeping-north-s-peace-process-on-track-1.2064319>

C of E paper on hindrances to mission released

The Church of England yesterday published the report of the Simplification Task Group ahead of

a discussion at the February meeting of the General Synod.

In a [blog](#) and [video interview](#) to accompany the publication of the report the Bishop of Willesden, Pete Broadbent introduced the work of the group:

“The remit of the Simplification Task Group has been to identify hindrances to mission. We asked bishops, archdeacons and dioceses – “What is it that prevents you from making changes that will enable parishes, churches and congregations to flourish and new initiatives to take shape?” The response was overwhelming, and cumulatively ran to ninety or so pages of A4. Our report lists a swathe of legislation – canons, measures and regulations – which are too complex, cumbersome to operate, and militate against change.

“Top of the poll came the regulations around Common Tenure, closely followed by the Mission and Pastoral Measure and the over-elaborate procedures for Bishop’s Mission Orders. Whether it’s provision for new mission or reorganisation of the church on the ground, the framework for change is far too complex and bureaucratic.”

A wide consultation was carried out with dioceses as part of the group's work. Responses were received from Bishops, Archdeacons, Diocesan Secretaries, DBF Chairs, and Diocesan chairs of Houses of Clergy and Laity, with the consultation deliberately couched in wide terms, inviting views on aspects of existing legislation which might be considered an impediment to the mission of the Church.

The nineteen key recommendations of the group are intended to address three levels of concern:

- Immediate major hindrances to mission, including pastoral reorganisation and diocesan/parochial management.
- Weighty and worthy bureaucracy and procedure that is of its time, but is no longer fit for purpose.
- Matters which generate redundant paperwork which could easily be simplified.

In the executive summary to the report the group notes "that the Church has been over-cautious when framing legislation, with the result that in some instances it is unhelpfully restrictive in facilitating changes in the way in which we staff

our existing parishes or carry through pastoral reorganisation or new mission initiatives.”

In his blog Bishop Pete reflects: “If we’re given a mandate, there’s plenty more to do, and we’ll be asking parishes for their take on an agenda for the next five years. For the sake of the gospel, mission and the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ.”

Individuals will have an opportunity to comment on the paper in a specially created online forum on the Church of England Website at:

www.churchofengland.org/simplificationreport

Beached car transporter owners praised by Mission to Seafarers

A UK maritime charity has praised Hoegh Autoliners for the care of its crew after car transporter vessel Hoegh Osaka was dramatically grounded in the Solent off the Isle of Wight in the United Kingdom on the evening of Saturday 3 January.

Southampton port chaplain John Attenborough from the Mission to Seafarers attended the site of the accident to care for the crew and is providing ongoing care. He told IHS Maritime, "There is a

tremendous amount of support being offered by the company. There have been offers of counselling and talks - whatever they need, wherever they are."



Car transporter vessel Hoegh Osaka was dramatically grounded in the Solent off the Isle of Wight.

He said, "A concern was raised by the crew to see if they were paid, and again the company have been wonderful and assured the seafarers that full pay will be given,"

Describing the effects of the incident on the crew, Attenborough said that shock was the major issue affecting them.

He said, "Some seafarers were in tears, obviously physically and emotionally quite upset; some were shaking; some seafarers were just talking and talking, and some were just sitting very calm and very quiet, mulling things over."

Three charities have been involved in the welfare operation, including Apostleship of the Sea and the Seafarers Centre (Southampton).

Attenborough said the charities' main role was to provide "calm in the midst of the storm".

"There was a major operation going on to save life, and the coastguard agency and paramedics performed amazingly, but they were primarily involved with saving life as it happened. We were there to provide support, to listen, to calm, to talk," he said.

Attenborough said attending to the emotional state of seafarers will be essential to ensure they are fit to engage properly with the incident investigation.

"There will be an investigation. It is important that people are in the right state of mind to be able to ask and answer the right type of questions that the investigation will throw up.

"If somebody is not in the right state of mind, then to not give the correct information could muddy the waters," said Attenborough.

He said delayed shock reaction made continuous welfare assistance provision essential.

"Some seafarers did not need us at the moment [of the incident], but in the days after the event, those very worrying times in the very early hours of Sunday morning [came back to the seafarers], and varying degrees of shock, reliving the story, have come out in the days afterwards," said Attenborough.

He said an essential service provided by the charities was communications to call families.

Tribute book to Archbishop Michael Peers, former primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, published

A book that was commissioned as a tribute to Archbishop Michael Peers, former primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, has just been published. *More Than I Can Say: Michael Peers:*

A Memoir is a collection of memories, stories and reflections from more than 70 contributors.

The project was initiated by Archbishop Fred Hiltz, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, as “a tribute to Michael from a grateful church,” writes Bishop Michael Ingham, who edited the collection. Contributors include the former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson, Saskatchewan MP Ralph Goodale and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

In a foreword, Hiltz writes that collectively the contributions form “a profound testament to that sharpness of mind, generosity of spirit, and grace of demeanour for which Michael is held with such deep respect and genuine affection.”

He added that there were “many amazing moments in his primacy, but for me there are two that remain indelibly printed on the very soul of our church.” Hiltz describes one moment of great joy when Peers and National Bishop Telmor Sartison of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada signed the Declaration of Full Communion in 2001.

The second, Hiltz said, was one of “incredible humility” on Aug. 6, 1993 when Peers offered his

apology for the church's "part in the sad legacy of the Indian residential schools...Each utterance of the words 'I am sorry' was accompanied by 'more than I can say.' How appropriate it is that these words were chosen as the title for this book," Hiltz writes.

Speaking to the *Anglican Journal* about the book, Peers said, "Initially, I wasn't very enthusiastic about the project. It was the primate's idea. He wondered whether I wanted to write an autobiography, and I certainly didn't want to do that." But Ingham's suggestion to make the book a collection of personal essays was "a kind of painless way to get history collected," he said.

With typical self-deprecating humour, Peers added, "I'm sure they could have found some people who would have had more negative views of my time and my work, but that's ok, I don't mind."

He conceded that he is looking forward to the book launch, which will be held on Jan. 22 at the Toronto offices of the Anglican Church of Canada with a noon eucharist service and reception to follow.

The Anglican Foundation provided funds for the printing costs, according to its executive director, Judy Rois.

More Than I Can Say, ISBN 978-1-55126-575-9, is available from Augsburg Fortress Canada
www.afcanada.com.