
Steam engine ecumenists help open new 3 million pound train museum



Rev Canon John McKegney, Chairman of the Railway Society at Whitehead Railway Museum

Few strangers would have guessed that the hard-working man sweating over odd - and dirty - jobs at the new Whitehead railway museum in

Co Antrim at the weekend had been involved in a very different role in very different surroundings just a short time earlier, Ivan Little writes in the Belfast Telegraph.

For the 77-year-old steam train enthusiast in the well-worn blue overalls had been kitted out in rather more pristine vestments to do God's work for over three hours in Maghaberry prison, where Fr Eddie Creamer is a part-time chaplain.

The Clonard Monastery-based Redemptorist priest, who's originally from Bray in Co Wicklow, has been a member of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland for nearly 40 years.

"I was always fascinated with trains from childhood," he says. "When I was working in the Philippines I joined the RPSI just to get their magazine sent to me, but when I returned to Ireland I came to Whitehead to take a few photographs of the trains.

"I asked if they needed anyone to help them and they haven't let me go. And now I'm here once a week. I find it very relaxing."

Fr Eddie's not the only 'white collar worker' in the organisation, whose chairman is retired Church of Ireland rector, the Rev Canon John McKegney.

Today the two men of the cloth, who could be described as the personification of rail ecumenism, will see the RPSI's prayers answered with the official opening of its magnificent £3m museum which incorporates a series of attractions including exhaustive historical displays in a series of buildings together with the chance for visitors to see the society's rolling and static stock up close and personal.

Mr McKegney, who has been associated with the RPSI for half a century, says the museum is an exciting red letter day for him and the society's 1,000 members around the world.

He adds: "A lot of our engines and carriages are tucked away from public view for most of the time - apart from our excursions here and on the mainline lines.

"But now we will be able to share our treasures after the opening of the museum, which will operate on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, with one-hour guided tours by our team of around 30 volunteers."

The deceptively large facility has been on track for seven years after the RPSI bought the Whitehead site and got itself accredited with museum status, meaning that it could go full

steam ahead with its plans and applications for funding to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other council, tourism and rural development organisations.

The RPSI's links with Whitehead go back 51 years, to when it set up a rudimentary base at what was the old and derelict Whitehead excursion station, but it has travelled a long way since, literally and figuratively. Old photographs in the museum's galleries not only capture the social history of the railways, but also of Whitehead. One amazing picture shows thousands of day trippers from Belfast descending on the excursion station of Whitehead which flourished after the arrival of the railway.

"On one day alone in 1904 it's said that 7,000 people came by train to Whitehead, which must have been the Blackpool or Spain of its day," says retired Belfast Telegraph journalist Robin Morton, a founder member of the RPSI.

Anglican Oriental–Orthodox International Commission welcomed to Dublin's Mansion House



The members of the Anglican Oriental Orthodox International Commission with the Lord Mayor of Dublin Mícheál Mac Donncha in the Mansion House

Members of the Anglican Oriental–Orthodox International Commission were welcomed to the Mansion House in Dublin for a reception with the Lord Mayor Mícheál Mac Donncha on Tuesday evening, October 24.

The Commission is meeting in Dublin this week (October 23 to 28) for the first time since its foundation. Hosted by the Archbishop of Dublin,

the Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson, the Commission is meeting in the Deanery of St Patrick's Cathedral. Their discussions centre around working to complete an agreed text on the Holy Spirit and they will also explore areas around authority in the Church.

Welcoming the members of the Commission along with faith leaders and representatives of a number of the city's faith communities, the Lord Mayor noted that the Mansion House belonged to all the people of Dublin, no matter what their creed. He said his political tradition stressed common rights regardless of a person's religion and also highlighted the importance of human rights.

Archbishop Jackson gave members of AOOIC an insight into the diversity and inclusivity of Dublin city. He said Ireland was home to people of over 200 nationalities. "These people bring their culture and their faith along with their humanity, their gifts and their sorrows. They are people who are our neighbours in this city, in other cities and in the rural areas of Ireland. Our aim is to embrace them with human equivalence and personal respect and to be embraced by them likewise," he said.

To those who were not members of AOOIC the Archbishop said the members were not strangers to the people of Dublin. “We who form the membership include members of the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Indian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Orthodox Church as well as members of a number of Anglican Provinces worldwide. All of these traditions are our friends; in Dublin they are our neighbours and fellow–citizens; we worship with them and they worship with us. Together we all co–operate through The Dublin Council of Churches and The Dublin Inter Faith Forum with Members of World Faiths other than our own,” he commented.

Derry C of I Youth Officer thanked for unstinting service

Last Friday marked the end of an era for the Diocese of Derry and Raphoe as Martin Montgomery steps down as Diocesan Youth Officer after six years in the post.

Bishop Ken Good, his wife Mary and members of the Diocese’s Communications Team joined colleagues from the Diocesan Centre for a lunch at the Bishops Gate Hotel to mark Martin’s departure.



Bishop Ken Good and Martin Montgomery

Wishing him well for the future, Bishop Good thanked Martin for his unstinting service to the Diocese, not only at annual events such as ‘On The Move’ and the Garvagh-based SPARK Week, but in operating and maintaining the Diocesan website – tasks which were “over and above” his responsibilities.

“You have been extremely generous in making your considerable talents available to the Diocese,” Bishop Good told him. “You’ve haven’t restricted yourself to those duties laid down in your job description. You’ve always been willing

to go the extra mile for the Diocese, and for that I am very grateful.”

Among the other clergy who paid tribute to their departing colleague was the editor of n:vision Magazine, Rev Katie McAteer. Rev McAteer said Martin had often come to her rescue when technology had threatened to get the better of her and said his technical expertise would be greatly missed.

Martin thanked his colleagues for their kind words but reminded them that they had not heard the last of him. While moving to pastures new, he would continue to be an active member of his local parish and would continue to provide technical advice and support to the Diocese. He said he would continue, too, to contribute to the General Synod.

New minister for Hope Community Church, Craigavon

The Revd Craig Cooney and his wife Becky were given an enthusiastic welcome as Craig was introduced as Minister-in-Charge of Hope Community Church, Craigavon.

Archdeacon David McClay preached from Ezekiel, encouraging the church to believe for



significant growth as it reaches out to the Craigavon community.

His exhortation was echoed as Bishop Harold Miller and the church members gathered round to pray for Craig and Becky and the mission of the church.

Commenting on his appointment as Minister-in-Charge, Craig said: “I am genuinely thrilled to lead Hope Community Church into this next stage of its journey. Having had the joy of preaching there on a number of occasions during the past two years, Becky and I have always loved the warmth of welcome, informality, vibrant worship and openness to the

Holy Spirit. There is also a strong desire among the congregation to engage the local community in Craigavon with the good news of Jesus in real and creative ways.

“In the months ahead our priority will be becoming inwardly strong and outwardly focused, building on the great foundations laid by my predecessor, the Revd Alan Kilpatrick.”

Craig, originally from Portadown, is married to Becky, a Speech and Language Therapist. They have an energetic 5 year old boy, Elijah.

After studying Communication, Advertising and Marketing at University of Ulster, Craig spent 5 years working in marketing, including 2 years in the US.

He was ordained in 2006 and served for 5 years as Curate-Assistant in Shankill Parish in Lurgan. Craig and Becky then moved to inner-city Dublin where he served as Minister-in-Charge of CORE (later renamed St. Catherine's) for 5 years.

Under Craig's leadership, St. Catherine's (CORE) experienced significant growth through reaching out to the local community, with people from more than 25 different nations becoming part of the congregation.

Following their time in Dublin, during a season of sabbatical, Craig, Becky and Elijah spent a year at the Causeway Coast Vineyard where Craig served as Teaching Pastor and Becky was employed as Pastoral Associate. It was during this time that they began to sense God's calling to Hope Community Church, located only a few miles from where Craig had spent his childhood.

Flute band plays at church 'What does it mean to be a Prod?' event

Around 100 people attended a special evening at Willowfield Parish Church on Monday, 23 October, entitled 'What does it mean to be a Prod?' The event, which marked the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, featured music from the Pride of the Raven Flute Band and the singer Sarah Myles.

Guest speaker Philip Orr – a local historian, actor and playwright – took the audience on an historical journey, from the Roman Empire to the emergence of new ideas and the printing press on the eve of the Reformation. "The Great Reformers like Martin Luther believed it was important to get the Bible into everybody's hands," he remarked. Mr Orr also outlined how the Reformation came to the British Isles, through John Knox and King Henry VIII, and later

influenced the development of Methodism and reform in the Roman Catholic Church. Mr Orr remarked that Protestantism involved an emphasis on the Bible being printed and sent out into society and a focus on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; he also spoke about the history of Protestants' concern for justice.

Captain George Newell, a Church Army evangelist, spoke Martin Luther and linked it to personal salvation. Luther's life, he said, was "messed up" and far away from God "and the only way he could get back to God was a faith – and faith in Christ alone." Captain Newell added that God would ultimately not ask us about our denomination but instead: "What did you do about my Son? That's the question that we all have to answer because that's the only question that's really important."

Majority of young Irish people feel church attendance is optional

"Minding your own business" is one of the moral values many Irish youth prioritise, while a majority of young Irish people feel that church attendance is optional (65%) according to a new

study on Irish teenagers and young adults' faith, worries and perceptions of Christianity.

The Finding Faith in Ireland research, which was commissioned by Christ in Youth and carried out by Barna Group, was launched at St Paul's Church on Arran Quay, Dublin last week.

Seven-hundred-and-fifty young people responded to the survey online. Face-to-face interviews were conducted by researchers with 96 young people all over Ireland and additionally 51 youth workers took part online and 12 in person for the study.

In keeping with the high percentage of Irish youth who regard themselves as Christians, nearly all have experience of church services.

One-third of Christian youth (33%) attended church in the last week, as did 5% of non-Christian youth.

Three-quarters of non-Christians (75%) have attended a regular church service, but more than half say it was more than six months ago (53%).

Even those of no faith still go to church at least occasionally (22% in the past six months).

While more non-Catholic (44%) than Catholic Christians (31%) attend church weekly, the proportions among the two groups who are dechurched — have not been to a church service in the past six months — are similar (27% Catholics, 21% non-Catholics).

A majority of young Irish people feel that church attendance is optional (65% “completely” + “mostly” true), the same percentage as Catholic youth (65%).

Though fewer non-Catholic Christians hold this view, 42% still don’t feel church attendance is mandatory.

Churchgoing is part of the family life of many young people, but the family expectations of going to church are usually relaxed at some point in secondary school.

Of youth who say secondary school is their highest level of education, 29% are dechurched.

This percentage climbs among students in post-secondary education who have not completed their bachelor’s degree (40% dechurched, compared with 49% churched). This is one of the symptoms of decreasing religious practice among young adults as they mature.

One of the key findings of the study was that one in four Irish youth are currently going through a crisis of faith. It also reveals that half of young adults (48%) say they are less spiritual today than when they were 12.

Still, a significant number (21% of teens, compared with 12% of young adults) say they are more active now than they were a few years ago.

The study shows that a majority of Irish youth are Christian; 70% are Christians, and 60% are Catholic specifically; 89% have attended a church service at some point.

Just three in ten young people feel confident about their knowledge of theology or the Bible. Even Christian respondents indicate a muddled understanding of core Christian teachings.

Teens are also more likely than young adults to have been to church in the last week (15% as opposed to 6% of young adults). Young adults confirm that their church attendance has declined over time; two-thirds of them (67%) say they are less active in church than when they were children.

The report explores the pressures that burden Irish youth searching for a sincere faith.

Three in ten practising Christians feel church teachings on sexuality are completely wrong.

Barna found that the subject of sexuality proves an obstacle in young people's willingness to identify with or practise Christianity.

More than 20 of the 96 in-person interviewees brought up homosexuality or gay marriage without prompting. None of those who brought it up saw a Christian theological stance against gay marriage or related progressive issues as a positive thing.

Of young practising Christians in Ireland, 71% want to find a way to follow Jesus that connects to the world they live in.

The study concludes that Irish youth need help in bringing substance to a more ceremonial understanding of religion.

New bells dedicated at Ypres Memorial Church

A church built in the 1920s in memory of the 500,000 British and Commonwealth troops who died during the battles for Ypres during the first World War has finally been completed with the installation and dedication of a ring of eight bells.



Nearly 90 years after it was built, the bell tower at St George's Memorial Church in Ypres, Belgium, has its first ring of bells.

St George's Memorial Church was built in the Belgium town of Ypres, which was all-but flattened during the war. The church's bell tower was given by the Knott family in memory of their two sons who were killed in the war, but there was insufficient funds to buy bells. On Sunday, the Bishop in Europe, Robert Innes, dedicated the new ring of eight bells.

In the intervening years, the bell tower had been used as storage space. A fund-raising campaign

to pay for new bells was launched last year as part of events to mark the centenary of the war.

The bell wheels were made by David Town of Northallerton, in Yorkshire, England; and were delivered to the foundry of John Taylor & Co in the Leicestershire town of Loughborough. Taylor's foundry is the largest bell foundry in the world and the last surviving bell foundry in England.

Once complete, the bells went on a journey which began in August with a civic send-off from the War Memorial Tower in Loughborough, took in the Great Dorset Steam Fair near Blandford, before being taken to the Tyne Cot Cemetery – the largest burial ground managed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, with almost 12,000 burials.

They left Tyne Cot, near Passchendale, on the back of two vintage lorries: a Thornycroft and a Dennis, which were both built in 1915 and saw service in the Great War. Before arriving at the St George's Memorial Church, they were taken to the Menin Gate – a memorial arch built in the centre of Ypres. The dead of the war are commemorated here every night with the sounding of the Last Post and a minute's silence.



Eight bells on the back of two 1915-vintage lorries at the Great Dorset Steam Fair, en route to their new home at St George's Memorial Church in Ypres.

On Sunday, more than 200 people gathered at St George's for the dedication of the bells, which, the church says, will "launch a new perspective to the remembrance of the sacrifice given by so many in [Ypres] during the Great War."

The church "was packed with local people, members of veterans organisations, and bell ringers from all over the United Kingdom," the Bishop in Europe, Robert Innes, said. "The service included some stirring traditional hymns,

and a reading from the Book of Numbers 10:1-10 – ‘the silver trumpets’. I had not previously noticed that Moses’s silver trumpets had two uses, just like English church bells have had – to summon people to assembly and also to warn of impending war.”

During the service, a set of 16 hand bells that had been cast in the 1800s were rung. They have been presented to St George’s by the grandson of former owner Charles Coles. They will be stored in the new ringing chamber to be used by local and visiting ringers.

Before the new ring of eight bells were rung for the first time, Bishop Robert prayed: “In the faith of Jesus Christ, we dedicate these bells. May they proclaim Christ’s message of love and salvation to this parish; May they warn the heedless, comfort the sorrowing And call all willing hearts to prayer and praise.”

As the bells rang, the bishop continued: “May the ringing of these bells awaken in the hearts of all who hear them the desire to worship God in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

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