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# News

September 2010

## E-Mail

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## NIMMA help for “Down Under” Graduate studies

**T**WO Australian students are the latest in an increasing number of foreign academics and undergraduates to use NIMMA material to add weight to their academic efforts.

Helen Taylor, pictured above, took time out from a busy six week European schedule to visit NIMMA's Belfast office as part of her final work for a Doctorate in Political Science and Sociology.

Helen has used NIMMA literature, including the comprehensive Reaves' report – “Celebrating the Work, Evaluating the Impact” – to help her focus on her doctoral research on intergroup relations in post conflict societies.

She said: “In particular, I am examining community attitudes in light of public policies implemented by the government and non-government sector in Northern Ireland that seek to promote contact between the Catholic and Protestant communities in the hope of fostering better intergroup relations.

“I know that NIMMA is playing its part in helping to build a healthier society”.

Meanwhile, Jesse Buck - an e-mail correspondent of NIMMA - has produced a 13 page report on the history of Mixed Marriage in Ireland that has won praise from one of our founding members.

William Odling-Smee, a former chairman of NIMMA who has been with the Association since 1974, said: “Jesse's work is very good, has an excellent bibliography and deserves to be published. I would like to see it in the public domain.”

The essay seeks to make the case that there was a tradition in Ireland that allowed for individuals to make peace, to fall in love and marry across the religious divide, and to show how this tradition was undermined by religion and politics.



Aussie academic Helen Taylor with the Mixed Marriage report at NIMMA's Belfast office.



## Not confused with [www.nimma.org.uk](http://www.nimma.org.uk)

The Internet is proving a valuable tool for students - young and not so young from around the world- who are majoring in works related to a “post conflict” Northern Ireland.

NIMMA is receiving regular requests for information from as far away as Australia, Canada and the US, as more and more students click onto our website to get background for their work.

Much of the focus of these works is on reconciliation, but most correspondents also seek background information about Mixed Marriage itself...its history....and how it has changed in the past 100 years. We are happy to help and Page 2 features an extract from one student's work.

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Copies of the NIMMA's report -Celebrating the Work - Evaluating the Impact” - priced £3 each - are available. Contact NIMMA on Belfast 90 235444 or e-mail [nimma@nireland.com](mailto:nimma@nireland.com)

# Reaching Out...



NIMMA is not only an information and support provider. We are constantly on the look out for ways in which we can play a part in the community. Cavan town was the latest port of call for a NIMMA visit.....

## Going South for the Summer

### Cross-border trip success

**NIMMA's visit to a group in County Cavan was "greatly appreciated", according to organiser Siobhan Wallace from the local County Council.**

Chairman Ken Dunn gave a history of Mixed Marriage talk to "Embrace Cavan", a newly formed group supported by the local council through its Peace III funding. The group was set up to explore the issues around inter-faith and inter-racial marriage/relationships and support the ever-increasing number of individuals who find themselves in this situation.

Siobhan said: "Ken's talk was thought-provoking and thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. The group hopes to continue to meet and grow in strength during the coming months and greatly appreciated the support, networking and kindness from a long established organisation such as NIMMA.



**NIMMA Chairman Ken Dunn pictured with members of the "Embrace Cavan" group.**

"Anyone doing similar work or wanting to link cross-border with Embrace Cavan, should contact Siobhan Wallace on 049 4378578". Ken also featured on local radio station 101.6fm during his trip south of the border.

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### From Page 1



Jesse writes: " It is not my contention that mixed marriages are a route to communal peace, both Bosnia and Rwanda had significant intermarriage yet they had significantly more conflict.

Harris, in her mid 20th century study of the people in Ballybeg near the border on the northern side, suggested that it bridged no gaps.

Conversely, members of the Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association, NIMMA, suggest it provides "an opportunity for more understanding of the position of the other, and therefore less blind hatred, and perhaps a loss of fear of each other."

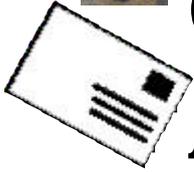
The children of these unions exhibit double-belonging and contribute to a long-term "lessening of the tension between the communities". For the purpose of this essay, mixed marriages are a symbol of individuals making peace, they are not a route to communal peace. There was a time in Ireland when people could fall in love across the religious divide, there existed a tradition that allowed for it. This essay has charted how religion and politics have undermined this tradition".

## Obituary

**Rev. David Turtle**

**W**e were saddened to learn of the death, at the end of June, of our friend David Turtle. David was our second longest serving Chaplain (after Canon Turner). Throughout his years as Methodist Chaplain in QUB the pastoral care of mixed marriage was a priority. He not only prepared couples for marriage but would attempt follow-up contact with them in their married life – a difficult task in our modern, mobile society. He brought the best out of students – the inter-chaplaincy group he encouraged for many years was called TAP (Taigs and Prods). When I gave talks to them on mixed marriage, I found a wonderful group inspired by David. NIMMA were encouraged to use the Chaplaincy for meetings and David would fuss over us ensuring that tea and biscuits were available and checking on how individual couples were doing. In later years, David and I would travel together to the Irish Inter-Church Meeting standing committee on Mixed Marriage. His quiet Christianity could be devastatingly effective in debate. Ecumenism and mixed marriage in Ireland have lost a true friend.

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# Postbox

## Changing Times Acknowledged



Most Reverend  
Dr Daniel Mageean

Dear Editor, Irish News

**N**o morning is complete without a read of historian Eamon Phoenix's Excellent "On This Day" column. Here, stories of war, disease and poverty sit cheek by jowl with incidents of the kind of black humour for which this part of the world is well known. The recipe is truly a mixed confection that reflects the times that were.

Thursday 17th June was no exception, but I was still shocked to see the words "Evil" and "Marriage" sharing a headline and relieved that nearly 70 years separate us from that.

His Lordship, Most Reverend Dr Daniel Mageean, the then Bishop of Down and Connor, during a Confirmation address in St Teresa' Parish, "warned" against the "evil" of mixed marriage. He said that the Church was opposed to mixed company keeping and mixed marriages, which "were a source of sin and scandal, endangering the faith of the Catholic party and bartering that of the unborn children".

### Divisive

Indeed, he praised a neighbouring Diocese where, he claimed, no mixed marriage had taken place during the tenure of four successive Bishops. The words were hard, the sentiments unforgiving and the combination of the two an attitude that was both divisive and derogatory.

It is sad that back in 1941 that those who put love before tribal allegiances should have had to face such hierarchical opposition, but heartening that, hopefully, we have seen the last of such oppressive and obviously unkind language.

Around one in ten of all marriages here are of the mixed variety and, thankfully, love, with much less criticism, continues to prevail over prejudice/ The Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association (NIMMA) has spent the past 35 years providing country-wide support and information to couples either in or contemplating mixed marriage. In a society where sectarianism is institutionalised,

NIMMA continues to lobby for the acceptance of mixed marriage, integrated education and shared social housing. We have, indeed, come along way from the dark days of 1941 and change of heart, and mind and regulation have been welcome, but as American journalist Mignon McLaughlin once wrote; "It is the most unhappy person who most fears change". Her words, also from the early 1940s and viewed today with the certainty and assurance of hindsight, ring truer than she could have known.

Yours faithfully,

**Ken Dunn**  
Chairman  
NIMMA



## Raising the Profile

Dear NIMMA,



**T**hanks for the prompt turnaround of info. The article about Joan Lingard, the prolific Scottish author, who is celebrating the 40th consecutive year in print for her once controversial Kevin and Sadie novels for youngsters, will be in The Sunday Herald, the sister paper of The Herald in Glasgow, this Sunday, July 11. You will be able to read and copy it online from [www.heraldsotland.com](http://www.heraldsotland.com)

I hope that it helps to raise NIMMA's profile. Bear in mind that the issues raised also affect couples in Scotland, so the messages are appropriate.

Lingard's quintet of titles dealing with childhood friendship, teen love and adult romance between Catholic boy Kevin McCoy and Protestant girl Sadie Jackson from Northern Ireland has achieved sales of more than 1.3 million individual books worldwide.

**Robert Stokes**, Freelance Journalist.



**ACCORD**  
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Simply ring us on Belfast  
90 235 444 or e-mail  
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NIMMA Chairman  
Ken Dunn

## From the Chair...



# Farewells and Futures

**W**e say goodbye to summer for another year and, despite our usual fickle weather, the season remains the most popular for marriages of all descriptions.

And, as usual, we fully expect Mixed Marriage enquiries to increase from now as couples gear up for next year.

This summer, we also said goodbye to a good friend of the Association, Fr Tom Leyden, when he was appointed as Provincial of the Irish Jesuit Province. He took up office at the start of August, but late in July made a whistle-stop trip to Belfast to meet up with old friends from NIMMA.

Tom had lived in Belfast for more than 12 years and was a tireless worker for ecumenism.

His friendship, understanding and generosity will be missed by all who had the good fortune to meet and work with him and we wish him well for the challenges ahead. Sectarianism remains the bugbear of our society, but



Fr Tom Leyden SJ

there are very many good people out there working for the day when a truly shared future becomes a reality. Progress is often slow, results not the spectaculars we would wish for, but, nevertheless, nothing worthwhile was ever achieved without a lot of effort and not a little luck. We in NIMMA have been busy over the summer dealing with enquiries – mainly of the marriage and baptism variety – playing our part, we trust, to provide the information and support that all couples need and appreciate. We eagerly await good news of our application for funding to produce a book about actual couples' experiences of Mixed Marriage and look forward to the day when such a book is required reading for young people right across our community.

*Ken*

## Book Review



# The Fethard-on-Sea Boycott

**Tim Fanning: Collins Press, 2010: £12.99**

**T**his book is a comprehensive study of one of the most infamous episodes to occur in recent times.

An interchurch couple, Sheila and Sean Cloney, living in Fethard-on-Sea in south Wexford are visited by the local Roman Catholic clergy and informed that the children **will** go to the Catholic school. The Church of Ireland wife disagreed with such an edict and took herself and the children to Belfast and on to Scotland. The local Catholics were convinced that a mere woman could not have managed this without help from her Protestant neighbours and relatives. They then instigated a boycott of the local Protestant-owned shops and farms. Even the elderly lady giving piano lessons had her young Catholic pupils withdrawn.

The main boycott lasted for five months, from the end of April 1957, although many local Catholics continued the boycott for many years. The local Roman Catholic bishop completely supported the boycott and Bishop Browne of Galway preached on the virtues of the boycott. The local Knights of Columbanus and Gaelic Athletic Association

policed and enforced the main boycott. De Valera eventually intervened to condemn the action, but, by then, this outworking of the Irish Roman Catholic clergy's take on Ne Temere was being used to reinforce the message that Home Rule was indeed Rome Rule. On a lighter note Justin Keating, a future Labour Minister for Industry and Commerce, as a protest would go with a friend to local pubs and purchase Jameson or Guinness. They would then say to the locals "you would boycott a Protestant piano teacher, but you are drinking the Protestant drink".

The book ends on a positive note with a description of how Sean Cloney stood up to the infamous paedophile priest, Sean Fortune, who served as curate from 1981-1987.

I would recommend this book for anyone interested in Irish history and interchurch relations. It gives a vivid insight into why we do not have a united Ireland.

*Ken*



## Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association

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