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Friday, May 29, 2015

A Royal Endeavour – May 2015



It has been evident for some years now that the British Royal Family has undertaken the daunting task of transforming relations between two neighbouring nations. For many centuries these relations have been characterised by misunderstanding and animosity. Success in this mission would be for Queen Elizabeth a fitting and cherished legacy of her long Reign.

On 22 May *The Irish Times* carried a headline, 'Prince Charles welcomed to a Catholic Church in Belfast.' The article underneath reads in part, 'Prince Charles maintained the theme of healing and reconciliation when he visited Belfast yesterday. After his successful visit to the Republic, Prince Charles and his wife Camilla began the first of two days of engagements in Northern Ireland by participating in an ecumenical service at St Patrick's Catholic Church conducted by the Parish priest, Fr Michael Sheehan, and the Dean of nearby St Anne's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Rev John Mann.

St Patrick's is in an area of Central and North Belfast that witnessed some of the worst of the Troubles.

Among the people to greet the Royal Couple at the church were the First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness and Sinn Fein Lord Mayor, Arder Carson. Peter Robinson said the British Royal Family had 'played an extraordinary role in terms of reconciliation relating both within Northern Ireland and between Northern Ireland and the Republic, and between those of us on the island as a whole and those in Great Britain.'


Queen Elizabeth has visited half of the countries on the planet but has been forbidden by security officials from visiting the 'neighbour next door', even although she has long desired to make such a visit. Four years ago, Mary McAleese, then President of Ireland, persuaded a reluctant and fearful Irish Government to sanction a State Visit by Queen Elizabeth to Ireland.

Three years later when the President of Ireland visited Britain, the Queen made sure that his visit would be a triumph equal to her own visit to Dublin. She arranged for the President and his wife to stay with her in Windsor Castle and



not in Buckingham Palace as would be usual on such occasions.

Now the visit of the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall to the West of Ireland and Northern Ireland has added another powerful contribution by the Royal Family to the continuing improvement in Anglo-Irish relations.

Dr James Roderick Evans was born in County Meath, Ireland, in 1923. Graduating from Trinity College Dublin in 1947, he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland in 1951. He practised medicine in Dublin and London and later in Asia and South America and travelled widely with Moral Re-Armament in the Middle East and Southern Africa before returning in 1971 to live in Belfast which by then was engulfed in civil war. There he experienced at first-hand the unfolding of the historic developments in Northern Ireland over the last 40 years. He has written three pamphlets and a book which are available in pdf and html and can be read in full [here](#). 

NOTE: Individuals of many cultures, nationalities, religions, and beliefs are actively involved with Initiatives of Change. These commentaries represent the views of the writer and not necessarily those of Initiatives of Change as a whole.

Photo of TRHs The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall during their visit to Corrymeela, Ballycastle to mark the 50th anniversary of the community by Aaron McCracken / Harrisons, posted by the Northern Ireland Office on Wikimedia Commons



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