

The Story of the Sculpture erected beside the turning circle at Corrymeela

An extract from what Kathleen Davey said on Saturday, 29 April (2010 ?)

Not many of you will know the background to this work, let alone when it was presented, so I shall try and briefly sketch the context. When Ray returned home after the war, he was appointed as first full-time Presbyterian chaplain at Queens in 1946. Two years later a large and rather dilapidated house was acquired at 7 College Park East and became known as the Presby Centre or more fondly No 7. Besides being a centre of all kinds of activities, including a Saturday night Hop, where many a student met his life-partner, we also provided accommodation for upwards of 20 students in extremely cramped and inadequate conditions.

Until one day... something happened. It was a wet Saturday afternoon - out of term - for there were no students about, when Ray looked out of our upstairs flat window and saw 2 men, wearing trilby hats and long raincoats, prowling about the garden and peering into the windows. He immediately said: 'I'll sort them out' and promptly ran down the stairs. The next thing I knew was he had asked them in and was now sitting with them in deep conversation. As it turned out these were the Bryson brothers - John and Herbert - known to many of you here through Bryson House. They had a proposal to make. In order to honour the memory of their late mother, they wanted to offer us £1 for £1, if we were prepared to have the existing building demolished and a new Centre created.

To end the story Robert McKinstry was invited to draw up a plan and the new Centre was opened in 1962. And that is how Cherith, his late wife, became involved. Cherith McKinstry as an artist has made such a reputation for herself both north and south of the border not least for her masterpiece on the ceiling of the Opera House, after its restoration following the 1980 bombing. Cherith wanted to be associated with the new Centre that Robert had designed, so she most generously gave us this sculpture, so painstakingly created and representing 'I am the Vine - you are the branches'.

So, thank you to Roger Curry for retrieving this unique work from the fatal crunch of the bulldozer. And thank you to Eastwoods, the demolition firm, for so willingly and generously transporting it free of charge here to Corrymeela. And above all, thank you to Cherith, for your imagination and skill in translating into tangible and lasting form the truth that is everlasting - 'I am the Vine - you are the branches'. So may it continue to speak its message to many more passers by for the next 40 years".

The Presbyterian Centre was where the first meeting took place that led to the formation of the Corrymeela Community.