

A Road Too Wide
The Price of Reconciliation in
Northern Ireland

by
David Armstrong
with Hilary Saunders
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Epilogue

A letter from a Northern Ireland church magazine, summer 1985

'There's only one . . .?'

'There's only one Pat Jennings, one Pat Jennings . . .'
'There's only one Dennis Taylor . . .' Not a bad week for Northern Ireland, eh! Dennis Taylor tests our pacemakers to lift the World Crown at Snooker, Norman Whiteside heads two goals past the Turks, and Pat Jennings becomes the most capped player in England and Ireland.

So here I sit—hoarse from my shouting—happy for those who have 'done Northern Ireland proud'—but overcome with sadness as I watch on TV a man who gave many of us happiness—'done us proud'—yet has been pushed out to live across the water. This guy saw people for what they were, accepted that, and tried to build a bridge across the labels and barriers that we too readily adhere to today. What is wrong with our religion that we feel too threatened to go to speak to others from another? Why not recognise, as this man did, that the fundamental factor is love and humanity—regardless of whether they are 'the same as us' or not.

Many people disagreed with what he did. Why? I don't understand. Sure we have differences in our religion—does that make us so élitist that we ignore the rest? How can WE decide who's right and who's wrong? Let's accept each person, whatever religion they follow, and show more of the understanding and love this man showed.

Then again there's probably lots of people who agreed with what he did. Sure he was a nice fellow, if only there were more people like that, shame he has to go.

Did we try to do anything about it? Did we write him a letter of support? Did we write to our Assembly supporting this work? Did we write to our ministers insisting they try to do something – or to our session?

NO! We have lost a man who felt isolated, saddened and dismayed because some people felt he was a threat to their religion!

‘There’s only one David Armstrong, one David Armstrong . . .’ or maybe there’s more. **LET’S MAKE SURE WE DON’T LOSE THE NEXT ONE!**

Thank you David. Take care.

David Armstrong
with Hilary Saunders

A Road Too Wide

The Price Of Reconciliation In Northern Ireland

A Sunday night in Limavady, Northern Ireland. A massive explosion rips through a newly completed Catholic church. Presbyterian minister David Armstrong, whose own church stood opposite the scene of destruction, sharing the guilt and shame of the crime, offers sympathy to the local Catholic priests.

So began a sincere and influential friendship with the potential of bridging the deep gulf between Protestant and Catholic. But the deep-seated and sinister powers of suspicion and hatred, which for centuries have torn apart communities in Northern Ireland, were also at work, and hostility finally drummed David Armstrong out of Limavady and out of the Province.

Now studying at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, David Armstrong tells the costly story of his attempts at restoring peace.

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