

WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

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The deeper current

THE OBITUARISTS have been, perhaps unexpectedly, kind to John Bruton, the Irish politician from a wealthy farming background who was not afraid to rattle the country's household gods. As a youthful finance minister he had unwisely proposed adding VAT to the price of a pair of children's shoes; in his retirement he declared the Easter Rising of 1916 neither helpful nor just; his favourite sport, he confessed to incredulous colleagues, was tennis. The eulogies acknowledged his decency and good humour, and his part in unleashing the Celtic Tiger and laying the foundations for the peace process. What few noticed was the ground beneath Bruton's feet: a clear-eyed but unshowy Catholic faith. It coloured everything he was and did.

While Bruton often seemed to be swimming against the tide – challenging the failure of imagination that blotted out a million unionists from the national story and, later, casting a sceptical eye on secularisation – he touched on a deeper, older current in Irish life, a kindness, a peaceableness, a curiosity about the lives of others, and a willingness to make a difficult situation a little better without making a huge fuss about it. He was, perhaps more



than anyone, responsible for the ban on divorce being removed from the constitution, yet was pro-life in a way that brought together a lifelong resistance to violence as a means to achieving political change with advocating a "No" vote in the 2018 abortion referendum.

In his homily at Bruton's funeral in Dunboyne, Co. Meath, last Saturday, Bruce Bradley SJ quoted Seamus Heaney's remark that the biggest shift he had seen in his lifetime had been the evaporation of the transcendent from our inner life, and our "exile into a universe with no up or down, no internalised system of moral longitude or latitude, no sense

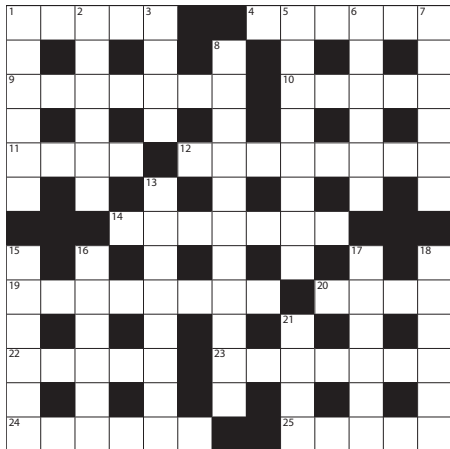
of a metaphysical roof over our heads". Bruton was always keenly aware of the unexpected chills that can strike a society when its metaphysical roof has blown off.

BRADLEY WAS headmaster of Clongowes when Bruton's son Matthew was at the school. Himself a past pupil, Bruton accepted his invitation to attend Union Day at Clongowes (a combination of family day, past pupil gathering and prize-giving) a few months after he had unexpectedly become Taoiseach in December 1994. He was 47, the youngest man ever to attain the office, and was surprising everyone by his smooth handling of the difficult dynamics of the improbable Rainbow Coalition of his own centre-right Fine Gael, the Labour Party and the Democratic Left.

Bradley tells us that Bruton was presented with a framed photograph of his great hero and fellow Old Clongownian, John Redmond, whose gradualist constitutional politics had been swept aside in the nationalist fervour that dominated the 1918 election. In his address Bruton pointed out that Redmond's political career had been extinguished for reasons beyond his control and the ability of anyone to foresee. "The end of our life," he advised his young audience to remember, "is not in this world but in the next."

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 891 Alanus



Across

- 1 Comic character and humorous magazine founded in 1841 (closed 2002) (5)
- 4 Heinrich -----, pre-eminent German composer before J.S. Bach (6)
- 9 She had a box with hope at last (7)
- 10 City near Venice associated with St Anthony (5)
- 11 National emblem of Wales (4)
- 12 Music instruction to play notes sharply detached (8)
- 14 Mythological goddess of law, daughter of Zeus and Themis (7)
- 19 St John -----, one of the first of the Forty Martyrs to be killed (8)
- 20 & 24: Victorian author of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (4,6)

- 22 Bd Alain de la -----, Dominican priest who revived the Rosary after the Black Death plague (5)
- 23 Jewish sect generally held to have produced the Dead Sea Scrolls (7)
- 24 See 20 Across
- 25 Gulf country in ongoing civil war (5)

Down

- 1 "Vox -----, vox Dei", "the voice of the people is the voice of God" (6)
- 2 Edict of -----, 1598, granted rights to Protestants in Catholic France (6)
- 3 "I remember, I remember" the poet (4)
- 5 Member of an order of Franciscan friars (8)
- 6 In fiction, the nature of a zombie (6)
- 7 A fanatic for a religious or political cause (6)

- 8 Apostle who brought Christianity to Armenia (11)
- 13 Bishop saint of 21 Down kingdom, linked to Lindisfarne and Durham (8)
- 15 Angelic spirit between Seraphim and Thrones (6)
- 16 Sieneese artist of famous religious works such as *Maestà* (6)
- 17 Person's name spelt backwards to serve as a nom de plume (6)
- 18 *Age of -----*, novel by Sartre, politico-philosophical work by Paine (6)
- 21 King of Northumbria, brought his realm into conformity with the Church at the Synod of Whitby (4)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 17 February, The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY. Email: thetablet@thetablet.co.uk, with Crossword in the subject field. Please include your full name, telephone number and email address, and a mailing address. Three books – on the Book of Common Prayer, the Old Testament and Methodism – from OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random.

SUDOKU | Hard

				9				
		3	4			2	9	
8	1		3					
				8	6		3	
7	8					1	4	
3		1	4					
			9			3	6	
4	2		1		7			
			5					

Each 3x3 box, each row and each column must contain all the numbers 1 to 9.

Solution to the 27 January puzzle

5	4	3	1	6	7	9	2	8
2	9	8	3	4	5	6	1	7
6	1	7	2	8	9	3	4	5
7	2	5	4	9	6	8	3	1
8	6	9	5	1	3	4	7	2
1	3	4	7	2	8	5	6	9
9	5	2	6	7	4	1	8	3
3	7	6	8	5	1	2	9	4
4	8	1	9	3	2	7	5	6

Solution to the 27 January crossword No. 888

- Across: 7 Casina; 8 Banker; 10 Roadies; 11 Elton; 12 Iris; 13 Began; 17 Organ; 18 Ruhr; 22 Axiom; 23 Toronto; 24 Turtle; 25 Jesuit.
Down: 1 Scarpia; 2 Usuals; 3 India; 4 Lateran; 5 Skate; 6 Drone; 9 Esperanto; 14 Primula; 15 Quintus; 16 Ariosto; 19 Sarto; 20 Diary; 21 Tries.

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