

## **'STORYTELLING' AUDIT**

AN AUDIT OF PERSONAL STORY, NARRATIVE AND TESTIMONY INITIATIVES RELATED TO THE CONFLICT  
IN AND ABOUT NORTHERN IRELAND

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# 1. BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Healing Through Remembering Project

Healing Through Remembering is an extensive cross-community project made up of individual members holding different political perspectives. They have come together over the last five years to focus on the issue of how to deal with the past relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.

In March 2000 the *All Truth is Bitter Report* was published. It documents the visit of Dr. Alex Boraine, then vice-chairperson of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It reports on his discussions with a wide variety of groups and individuals on the lessons to be learnt from international examples of countries emerging from conflict.

*All Truth is Bitter* recommended wide-ranging discussion to explore and debate ways of examining and remembering the past to build a better future. After the visit, a number of individuals were invited by the authors (NIACRO and Victim Support Northern Ireland) of *All Truth is Bitter* to form a Board. After much discussion, in June 2001 a diverse group of individuals formally agreed to become the Healing Through Remembering Project Board.

The Board carried out an extensive consultation which asked individuals, organisations and communities the question: "How should people remember the events connected with the conflict in and about Northern Ireland and in so doing, individually and collectively contribute to the healing of the wounds of society?" In June 2002 the Board published its findings in the form of the *Healing Through Remembering Report*. This report summarised the views expressed by respondents and grouped the issues raised into five recommendations including a Healing Through Remembering Initiative.

## 1.2 Views expressed on storytelling through consultation

The *Healing Through Remembering Report* presented the views expressed on storytelling and oral history. The full text of the report states:

Storytelling was the form of remembering most often suggested to the Healing Through Remembering project. In general it was felt the process of telling one's story could be a cathartic one. It could equally be inspirational and informative for the listener.

Many felt that it would be important to record the stories of individuals' experiences of the conflict as a historical resource, and a way of enabling society to examine the wealth of meanings and learning connected to the conflict. Some submissions expressed concern that, unless a wide range of accounts are recorded and archived, a singular, exclusive narrative of the conflict will become dominant over time. This appeared to be particularly important to people who felt that their experience of the conflict had been ignored.

It was also suggested that the person telling their story, if listened to empathically, could experience a degree of healing. Equally, it was recognised that recounting painful experiences of the past could, in the words of several contributors, 'reopen old wounds'. It would be essential that support services be made available throughout the process and afterwards. Some contributors felt that it would be important that individuals—particularly victims—be given the chance to tell their stories in their own words. They did not want to involve the media as they felt they had been manipulated by the media in the past and had in some cases lost control of their own story.

While storytelling might occur locally, most contributors felt that it would be important that the stories be collected into a central archive. This archive would include stories from a wide range of contributors. Some submissions suggested the stories might then be published in an anthology of ordinary peoples' stories. A similar book to *Lost Lives* but produced by victims' themselves, was also proposed.

In fact, a wide range of methods of presenting stories was suggested, including CD-ROMs, multimedia databases, recording testimony similar to the Stephen Spielberg victims of the Holocaust project, as well as video and audio representations and documentaries. Internet archives of stories interspersed with video and audio recordings were also recommended.

That said, mention was also made of some of the challenging issues around storytelling and archiving of stories. A number of contributors felt that some may not feel free to speak openly if they knew that their stories would be made public. Fear still existed that active combatants may target them, or that what they said may result in criminal prosecutions of either themselves or others. To overcome this, some suggested that the individual could be involved in the editing of their own story, and the original destroyed. Storytellers might also decide to be anonymous, or have an embargo put on their story for a period of time.

Some had expressed concern about their stories being presented alongside those of perpetrators, or of others with whom they disagree. However, the inclusive nature of the collection of stories (in whatever form) was clearly articulated by the majority as a key condition of the success of such a process. Many were hopeful that—provided the process was well managed by skilled facilitators—the hearing of each other's stories might develop understanding and compassion, and lessen the chances of a return to violent conflict. As was noted:

Through the physical recording of stories and an ongoing storytelling process, opportunities for individual healing and societal healing may emerge, as well as providing a forum for a shared and diverse history.

The report indicated that 42 submissions were in favour of some form of storytelling process, while two were against.

### 1.3 Recommendation on Storytelling

The *Healing Through Remembering Report* proposed a recommendation that a ‘Collective Storytelling and Archiving Process’ be developed. The full text is reproduced below:

#### Recommendation

We recommend the establishment of a storytelling process known as ‘Testimony’. Stories and narratives will be collected from all who wish to tell of their experiences of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. These stories—collected by those already undertaking this type of work and community groups through a flexible but standard method—would form part of an archive housing the stories of the past and serving as a vehicle to learn lessons for the future.

#### Purpose

Our society is becoming increasingly conscious of the psychological, emotional and spiritual effects of the conflict. Many of us have some personal experience of hurt and damage caused by the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. Some have not been able to come to terms with what has happened. Others still wrestle with the legacy of our recent past.

One way of dealing with what has happened is to seek understanding of our separate psychological, emotional and spiritual wounds through their disclosure to each other. It is our belief that we need to share our stories, tell our truths, actively listen to each other and document what has taken place. As such we recommend that storytelling continues and becomes a national project in which all our stories are recorded and archived. These narratives should be available for future generations to learn from the past.

Storytelling is happening at many different levels within our society today. It is an internationally recognised coping and healing mechanism for individuals and communities living through painful memories.

The specific purpose of the storytelling and archiving process would be to:

- Affirm the work of all those who are already engaged in storytelling and archiving work;
- Promote the healing power of story telling and giving of testimony;
- Affirm our individual and collective experience and in so doing learn to know ourselves and other people, consequently shaping our identity, emotions, hopes, dreams and desires;
- Make individual and communal stories—both positive and negative—available to all sections of our community, thus opening the possibilities of hearing the human and emotional, as well as the factual and forensic, detail of events;

- Develop an understanding and appreciation of different perspectives and perceptions of events and in so doing strengthen the healing process that comes with accepting the diversity of ‘truths’ that exist in our society;
- Build an archive of stories that documents and preserves the past so that lessons can be learnt for the future, and
- Actively demonstrate that different perspectives can be housed together in a sensitive and tolerant way, and in so doing preserve individual dignity, strengthen our communal forms of remembering, and increase respect and tolerance for all.

### **Principles and values**

The following values should underpin this initiative:

- Commitment to involve and work with appropriate individuals, groups and organisations at all community levels;
- Commitment to work collaboratively with—and take guidance from—those already engaged in similar initiatives;
- Commitment to value every story;
- Commitment to treat all stories—and those relating them—with dignity, respect and due privacy;
- Commitment to promote the usefulness of documentation of living accounts as it enables people from all levels within our society to become the authors of our own history;
- Commitment to stress the importance of our perceptions recorded in context, and not having those perceptions interpreted or misinterpreted at a later date;
- Recognition and acknowledgement of differing motivations, the impact of various actions taken or withheld, and the consequent legacy, to help people to come to terms with, and make sense of, the conflict, and
- Understanding through recognition and acknowledgement to move our society towards positive peace with the knowledge that as a society, ‘Yes we have suffered, but we have also caused hurt’.

### **Obstacles**

Different and sometimes contested truths exist. A danger is that facts and stories can be manipulated and events sensationalised and used to score political points. Although this is a risk, a mechanism that allows all equal opportunity to speak for themselves of their own personal experience in a supportive environment may be the best way of recognising multiple views, experiences and perceptions.

Other obstacles might be the questions of safety and disclosure. The question of safety we believe splits into two strands: 1) safety with respect to emotional participation in an event; and 2) safety with respect to a sense of personal security from reprisal as a result of telling one's story.

With the former it will be the responsibility of those co-coordinating the process (see Next Steps below) to engage with other professionals and experienced personnel to ensure that emotional safety is primary for the process. Existing support programmes could be consulted and utilised in this regard. The latter concern for personal security is something that could be addressed by way of using existing precedents like the methods employed by governments with respect to sensitive public records being embargoed for up to thirty years. This option could be offered to concerned individuals. It could, under exceptional circumstances, be extended to cover the lifetime of the storyteller.

There may also be disclosure difficulties with regard to public servants and members of State security organisations who took an oath towards secrecy of sensitive material. Some protection could be offered by employing the thirty-year embargo rule in some cases. However, if this option were realised, further discussion with governments and others would need to follow to see if, without compromising the judicial process, a legislative solution could be sought.

Another potential obstacle to the success of this process might be apathy and denial. Some would say that these states of mind contributed to and/or prolonged the conflict. The only solution is to make the process as meaningful, user-friendly, open and accessible as possible. All stories should be sought, i.e. from those directly involved, and those affected, as well as those who have always felt—rightly or wrongly—that the conflict did not involve them. It is only with the help of all that we may establish a fuller picture of the past and learn lessons for the future.

### **Proposed activities**

A storytelling process will be developed, and opportunities to tell of their stories and experiences would be afforded to all the people of Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and on the island of Great Britain, along with others affected around the world. Stories would be recorded through a flexible but standard method. This method should be designed by drawing on the experience of those already undertaking this work and using local expertise.

Local community groups and those already undertaking this work would record the stories. They would be trained to use the standard method of story gathering. All would be encouraged to come forward and tell their story if they so wished. Stories would then be housed within an archive available, on permission of those whose stories have been recorded, to the public. Consideration should also be given to stories already recorded by various organisations and whether these can be immediately included in archive. Other resources like publications, videos, films and testimony-type programmes, similar to Radio Ulster's Legacy Project, could also be housed in the archive.



For this process to work effectively it would require the support of all sections in our society and traverse the vertical as well as the horizontal divisions existent in our present context. In essence, this form of storytelling would offer the opportunity to give voice to those who have suffered both directly and indirectly as a result of the conflict, thereby creating a new open culture with a transparency of liberty and inclusivity. Institutions and other agencies involved at the coalface of the conflict also have an important voice that needs to be heard and acknowledged, particularly those that had to respond to the aftermath of violence in all its forms.

This work would necessarily require a wide range of resources, for example audio, video, text, arts (necessary for symbolic expression for those yet unable to articulate their experience), etc., allowing people to best express their own experiences and relate to the 'other'.

### **Next steps**

To realise the above recommendation we suggest the following course of action be considered:

- 1) Promote debate at all levels on the value of the collective storytelling and archiving process as conceptualised in this proposal;
- 2) Encourage existing story-telling projects and bodies, and other appropriate agencies and organisations, to identify the knowledge and skills required for such a project;
- 3) Encourage the governments, donor agencies and private bodies to set aside resources for such a storytelling process and archive;
- 4) Hold a debate in the Assembly, relevant government bodies and the Civic Forum on the principle and importance of documenting stories of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland as conceptualised in this proposal;
- 5) Set in place a representative steering committee made up of interested parties and those with experience in the field of storytelling and archiving;
- 6) Design a flexible but standard method for collecting stories drawing on local experience;
- 7) Ensure that those who are to tell their stories have a say in the nature of the subsequent archiving;
- 8) Develop a culturally sensitive and event-focused training programme for those gathering the stories;
- 9) Train facilitators (including initial and follow-up training) from within community/neighbourhood groupings and the voluntary sector to undertake the collecting of stories;
- 10) Offer and organise support for those who may need assistance psychologically or otherwise in telling their story, and
- 11) Compile the stories; then index, archive and house them in a collective memorial or museum site.

## 1.4 Establishment of the Storytelling sub-group

Following the publication of the *Healing Through Remembering Report*, the Healing Through Remembering Initiative was established as a company. It brings diverse people together to address how to further the reports' recommendations. In order to do this, the Initiative formed sub-groups which – like the original Board – are comprised of a wide range of individuals with different perspectives. The Storytelling sub-group is one of five sub-groups formed. The other four sub-groups address issues relating to a Living Memorial Museum, a Day of Reflection, a Network of Commemoration and Remembering projects and Acknowledgement and Truth Recovery. In August 2004, a group of interested individuals met to consider forming the Storytelling sub-group. In subsequent months, the membership of the group was expanded and met under an interim chair from the original HTR Board. In April 2005, a chair and vice-chair were appointed.

## 1.5 Early discussions

The early meetings of the Storytelling sub-group centred on the ways in which the recommendation on storytelling presented in the *Healing Through Remembering Report* could be brought forward. Initial discussions acknowledged the need to document storytelling initiatives which focused on the human experiences of the conflict and, where appropriate, the community and institutional stories. From the outset, the group began to explore some of the ethical issues around storytelling, the motivation behind the initiation of storytelling projects, the methodologies adopted and the dissemination and archiving of stories from all sections of the community who wish to be involved.

It was agreed that, before implementation any of the recommendation on storytelling, an audit of current and previous storytelling initiatives would be necessary. Following this audit, a conference on storytelling would be convened by the sub-group to present its findings and would facilitate a broader discussion on the theoretical, ethical and practical issues around storytelling, locally and internationally. It was envisaged that a broad range of individuals and organisations with an interest in, or involvement with, storytelling processes would be invited to attend.

## 1.6 Commissioning of the audit

The Healing Through Remembering Project (HTR), on behalf of the Storytelling sub-group circulated a call for tenders for a local researcher to carry out audit research on storytelling relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. The author of this report was awarded the tender.

The stated objectives of the research were to:

- Identify storytelling initiatives focusing on the conflict in and about Northern Ireland;

- Through interviews and desktop research, collate information on approach and methods of storytelling processes;
- Create a database and directory of the information collected providing a comprehensive list of and details on storytelling initiatives;
- Gather and assess the knowledge, contacts, and skills that can further develop a collective storytelling process;
- In a comprehensive report, make recommendations regarding the methodology required to undertake the collecting of stories and a collective storytelling process; and
- Present the results to a conference on this study and related issues.

The timeframe for the research was six months, beginning in early January and completed in early June 2005.

### 1.7 Presentation of the draft audit report

In June 2005, a draft of the audit of storytelling projects was submitted to the storytelling sub-group and a seminar was held at which the findings of the audit were presented. The discussions which followed the presentation focused on two main issues: the use of the term 'storytelling' and other potential descriptions of the initiatives documented in the report, and the recommendations for future work suggested by the audit author.

Although no final decision was made at the seminar, it was felt the term 'storytelling' did not necessarily best describe the nature of the work being undertaken by some of the initiatives documented. In addition, the audit researcher reported a degree of hesitancy or confusion in individuals and groups when approached to discuss their work in 'storytelling', as they did not necessarily describe their work in these terms. Alternative terms suggested during the seminar included 'personal experience narratives' and 'testimony work'. While no agreement was made to change the name of the sub-group, as it was recognised that the researcher had been asked to complete an audit of storytelling projects, the seminar participants agreed to keep the issue of terminology and definitions on the agenda of the storytelling sub-group as an ongoing issue for discussion. In July 2005, the Storytelling sub-group agreed to amend the title of the final version of the audit report to *'Storytelling' Audit: An audit of personal story, narrative and testimony initiatives related to the conflict in or about Northern Ireland* to reflect the discussion around broadening the description of the work being undertaken.

In relation to the recommendations presented, the seminar participants discussed each one in turn and suggested amendments and additions. The recommendations at the end of this report therefore reflect both the views of the author and the discussions at the June seminar and the July sub-group meeting.

## 2. ESTABLISHING AUDIT PARAMETERS

### 2.1 Introduction

A story or narrative in its broadest sense is anything that is told or recounted, normally in the form of a causally linked set of events or happenings, whether true or fictitious.

Stories are a medium for sharing and a vehicle for assessing and interpreting events, experiences, and concepts to an audience. Through stories we explain how things are, why they are, and our role and purpose within them. They are the building blocks of knowledge and can be viewed as the foundation of memory and learning. Stories link past, present, and future and telling stories is an intrinsic and essential part of the human experience.

Stories can be told in a wide variety of ways, which can be broadly categorised as oral, written and visual, and are so all-pervasive in our everyday lives that we are not always aware of their role as a tool of communication in all societies.

### 2.2 Storytelling and the conflict

Early discussions of the Storytelling sub-group produced a working definition of a storytelling initiative as:

*“A project or process which allows reflection, expression, listening, and possible collection of personal, communal and institutional stories related to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland”.*

Approaching the concept of storytelling as it relates to conflict-related incidents and experiences, reveals a vast array of projects and processes having elements that could be classified as ‘storytelling’. These range from factual accounts of events to interpretive discussions on the meaning of events. While distinctions may be made between literal, abstract and interpretive accounts of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland, such an exercise is subjective. Therefore, in the context of this report, ‘storytelling’ is taken in the broadest sense to include both fiction and non-fiction, leaving the ‘audience’ to make their own judgements on how to interpret the story in relation to its veracity.

### 2.3 Scope of the storytelling audit

To focus the lines of inquiry, the sub-group agreed to place several parameters on the audit of storytelling projects. It sought to document initiatives designed specifically to assist individuals to convey their stories of the conflict and have them acknowledged and/or preserved in some form. This decision was not intended to deny the array of initiatives, programmes and projects which also include elements of storytelling in and about the conflict in Northern Ireland. It is important to recognise the broad scope of

storytelling and acknowledge each form in contributing to the overall narrative of the conflict, but for this research, some parameters had to be drawn to focus the inquiry.

The many storytelling vehicles have been divided into three main categories: verbal or oral storytelling, written storytelling, and visual, creative arts and multimedia storytelling, acknowledging the significant overlap between them. Insertion of a form of storytelling in one category does not, therefore, exclude it from another and should not be viewed as doing so. A play, for instance, can be heard on radio, for example, viewed in a theatre or read as a written script. While not described in detail, the range of methods is documented and, where appropriate, references for further sources of material are provided.

### 2.3.1 Verbal or oral

Oral storytelling is perhaps the most traditional and natural way in which stories are imparted, whether through conversations, speeches, discussions and debates. Yet, oral storytelling is more difficult to document as it is more ephemeral in nature and does not necessarily result in the formation of a tangible 'product'. Many forms of oral storytelling address aspects of the conflict and its scope ranges in breadth, including individual conversations, private counselling and psychotherapy sessions, radio programmes, judicial hearings and parliamentary debates.

Psychotherapeutic, counselling and befriending sessions are subject to strict guidelines of confidentiality, yet are instances where storytelling related to the conflict occur. Outside these confidential settings, a range of initiatives that bring people together in groups almost inevitably result in people making some reference to their own experiences of the conflict. These include both single-identity and cross-community projects, which engage individuals, groups and communities in exploring political, economic, social and cultural issues related to the conflict. Throughout the period of the conflict, organisations have convened focus groups, workshops, seminars, conferences and dialogue groups which create opportunities for storytelling, either in public or private settings. Occasionally, such discussions are recorded and edited and placed in the public domain or archived for future use. Specific storytelling projects have been initiated to provide individuals with the opportunity to discuss their experiences of the conflict within a facilitated environment, without producing written or recorded materials. These projects are explored in detail in chapter four.

Local history, life histories and reminiscence groups and projects are another typical setting in which stories of those who live in a particular area, or lived through a particular period or events, are recounted. Stories related to the conflict may emerge from such initiatives, but may not be the sole intention or motivation of the group. Local history projects that consciously focus on the post-1968 conflict and on individuals' experience of the events of the conflict are presented in detail later in this report.

Oral storytelling related to the conflict can also take the form of official statements in the context of legal testimonies presented at judicial inquiries, public hearings, tribunals,<sup>1</sup> parliamentary debates<sup>2</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> For information on conflict-related official inquiries in Northern Ireland see <[www.bloody-sunday-inquiry.org.uk/](http://www.bloody-sunday-inquiry.org.uk/)> for the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, [home.btconnect.com/COLLUSION\\_INQ/hamill/](http://home.btconnect.com/COLLUSION_INQ/hamill/) for the Robert

Northern Ireland Affairs Committees.<sup>3</sup> While typically presented orally, many statements are transcribed and exist in the form of public record. Journalism and academic, policy-focused and community-based research focused on the conflict relies heavily on collecting primary data taken orally from individuals and groups. Typically, the ownership of much of this material remains with the enquirer, as does editorial control over how the information is used. However, archives of recorded information and research data exist, notably at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, the Linenhall Library and in national archives.<sup>4</sup>

### 2.3.2 Written

Arguably, the most easily accessible form of storytelling is written accounts of the conflict. These are plentiful, perhaps disproportionately so for such a small region. They exist on a broad continuum of first person to third person accounts, spanning the spectrum of both fiction and non-fiction, literal and abstract. They can be viewed as vehicles through which personal, communal and institutional stories related to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland are disseminated.

Though by no means exhaustive, below are some examples of methods by which stories related to the conflict have been documented, with sources provided for accessing written materials.

#### *Academic and community-based research*

Much literature about conflict uses first-hand accounts from individuals gathered under the auspices of research. Used to contribute to academic knowledge of the subject, stimulate intellectual activity, uncover new information, identify needs, developments or influence policy, an abundance of research has been undertaken on the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. Research for books, reports and academic articles have, at times, provided an opportunity for people to have their stories heard and acknowledged, often for the first time. As the primary motivation for the collection of stories in this case is typically to present a particular theory or argument, storytellers do not necessarily have input into the manner in which their stories will be edited or disseminated and not all examples are documented.<sup>5</sup> That being said, chapter four includes some processes which are primarily research projects. These examples have been included in the project descriptions, because of the level of control over the editing and dissemination of the interview material which was given to the individual interviewees.

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Hamill Inquiry and [home.btconnect.com/COLLUSION\\_INQ/nelson/](http://home.btconnect.com/COLLUSION_INQ/nelson/) for the independent public inquiry into the death of Rosemary Nelson. For information on the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland see [www.cjsni.gov.uk/](http://www.cjsni.gov.uk/)

<sup>2</sup> For UK Westminster Parliamentary debates see [www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm/cmhansrd.htm](http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm/cmhansrd.htm). For the Republic of Ireland Houses of the Oireachas (Dail and Seanad) debates see [www.dail.ie](http://www.dail.ie)

<sup>3</sup> For full transcripts and written submissions to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee see [www.parliament.uk/parliamentary\\_committees/northern\\_ireland\\_affairs.cfm](http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/northern_ireland_affairs.cfm)

<sup>4</sup> See Ulster Folk and Transport Museum [www.uftm.org.uk/collections\\_and\\_research/archival\\_collections/](http://www.uftm.org.uk/collections_and_research/archival_collections/), The Linenhall Library, Belfast [www.linenhall.com](http://www.linenhall.com) and the UK National Archives, [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/) and Republic of Ireland [www.nationalarchives.ie/](http://www.nationalarchives.ie/)

<sup>5</sup> For comprehensive sources of mainly academic research on the conflict in and about Northern Ireland, see Online Research Bank (ORB) at [www.ark.ac.uk/orb](http://www.ark.ac.uk/orb) and the Research and Special Collections Available Locally (RASCAL) at [www.rascal.ac.uk/](http://www.rascal.ac.uk/). For community-based research, the Political Collection in the Linenhall Library [www.linenhall.com](http://www.linenhall.com) and the Community Relations Council Resource Centre [www.community-relations.org.uk/resources/document\\_library/](http://www.community-relations.org.uk/resources/document_library/) have extensive collections.

### *Print media and popular literature*

The print media in the form of newspapers, magazines, periodicals, pamphlets and online sources narrate the conflict as it unfolds and places events into context.<sup>6</sup> In addition, thousands of books outside the academic disciplines have been published, often quoting from individuals first-hand accounts, and are easily retrieved using one of many bibliographical databases available.<sup>7</sup> Increasingly common are autobiographies written by individuals with experience of, or associated with, the conflict. These warrant particular recognition in the context of storytelling, given the first-person narrative style. Biographies of individuals, told in the third-person, are also a valuable source of stories about the conflict, and many have been published.<sup>8</sup> Hybrid forms of biographies such as *Lost Lives*,<sup>9</sup> a publication that provided biographical details on each individual who died because of the conflict with details of their death, are also examples of how aspects of the conflict have been narrated. This example has not been included in the audit as it relies on secondary, rather than primary data in its compilation.

### *Novels, short stories, plays, poetry*

Works of fiction focusing on the conflict in and about Northern Ireland include novels and short stories,<sup>10</sup> plays<sup>11</sup> and poems.<sup>12</sup> These may either use the conflict as a backdrop for a purely fictitious story or may involve fictionalised accounts of particular events related to the conflict. The authors may well be drawing on their own experiences of the conflict. They also may fictionalise events or characters using them as a vehicle to recount experiences too difficult or sensitive to describe in a literal way. Community-based

<sup>6</sup> For a list of newspapers from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, including links to online versions, see <[cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/media/mediaorg.htm](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/media/mediaorg.htm)>. For media reports on Northern Ireland from a range of sources, updated daily, see <[www.nuzhound.com](http://www.nuzhound.com)>

<sup>7</sup> See Northern Ireland Publications Resource at <[www.nibooks.org/](http://www.nibooks.org/)> which is searchable by author, title and keyword and the CAIN Bibliography of the Northern Ireland conflict at <[cain.ulst.ac.uk/bibdb/cainbib.htm](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/bibdb/cainbib.htm)> which is searchable by author, title and year.

<sup>8</sup> For a comprehensive list of biographies and autobiographies of leading individuals 'prominent during the Troubles' see <[cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/people/index.html](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/people/index.html)> The site is searchable by first initial and full name.

<sup>9</sup> McKittrick, David, Kelters, Seamus, Feeney, Brian and Thornton, Chris (1999) *Lost Lives: The stories of the men, women and children who died as a result of the Northern Ireland troubles*. Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Company Ltd.

<sup>10</sup> The CAIN website provides a bibliography of works of fiction relating to 'the Troubles' compiled by Prof Bill Rolston. The site is searchable, alphabetically by author or by title and chronologically by date of publication. See <[cain.ulst.ac.uk/bibdb/fiction.htm](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/bibdb/fiction.htm)> The above link also offers an appendix to *Gangsters or Guerrillas? Representations of Irish Republicans in 'Troubles Fiction'*. Belfast: Beyond the Pale Publications (Magee, Patrick. (2001), which provides a chronological list of 480 novels in English dealing directly with the conflict (1969-1999), detailed by year of first publication. Other publications which document and analysis fiction related to the conflict include: *Fiction and the Northern Ireland troubles since 1969: (de-)constructing the north* by Elmer Kennedy-Andrews. (Four Courts Press, April 2003); *Writing the North: The Contemporary Novel in Northern Ireland: by Laura Pelaschiar* (Fonda grafiche multimediali s.r.l, Trieste, 1998), extracts of which are available on the CAIN website at <[cain.ulst.ac.uk/literature/novels/pelaschiar.htm](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/literature/novels/pelaschiar.htm)>

<sup>11</sup> For a comprehensive source of information on drama related to the conflict, contact Hugh Odling-Smee, curator of the Theatre and Performance Arts department of Linen Hall Library; Tel: (028) 9087 2218. [theatrearchive@linenhall.com](mailto:theatrearchive@linenhall.com). The Community Arts Forum (the umbrella and networking body for the community arts in Northern Ireland) is also a source of information on conflict-related drama. See <[www.community-arts-forum.org/](http://www.community-arts-forum.org/)>

<sup>12</sup> See: Frank Ormsby, ed 'A Rage for Order: Poetry of the Northern Ireland Troubles' (Belfast: Blackstaff Press. (1992); Neil Corcoran, ed., *The Chosen Ground: Essays on the Contemporary Poetry of Northern Ireland* (Bridgend: Seren Books, 1992); Patricia Craig, *The Rattle of the North: An Anthology of Ulster Prose* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1992)



creative writing classes and groups also provide a forum in which individuals may write from their personal experiences of the conflict and numerous programmes of this type are conducted annually.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.3.3 Visual, creative arts and multimedia

Projects that fall under the visual, creative arts and multimedia categories of storytelling include television documentaries, videos, films, drama and performance art, exhibitions and new technologies, including websites and interactive DVDs. A powerful and immediate tool, visual depictions of the conflict have taken various forms over the past 30 years.

#### *Television and video productions*

Hundreds of news reports and documentaries on various aspects of the conflict have been created, many of which use first-hand accounts of individuals' own experiences, though heavily edited in most cases. These productions generally focus on specific topics, and place events into a broader narrative context and are often time-bound. A number of anthologies and databases of television programmes about the conflict have been compiled and are useful starting points in exploring this specific genre.<sup>14</sup> In addition, a number of community-based media projects have produced documentary and drama-based productions, often working closely with individuals and communities in assisting them to tell their stories on film. These are often based on or include conflict-related material.<sup>15</sup> The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, based in Cultra, Co. Down, houses an extensive archive of still and moving images of Northern Ireland, the BBC Northern Ireland Archive (material from 1924 to the present day) and an extensive sound archive, which includes oral history interviews.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, the Nerve Centre, based in Derry / Londonderry, hosts the Northern Ireland Digital Film Archive which contains over 55 hours of newsreels, documentaries and archive footage of daily life in Northern Ireland over the past century. This material can be accessed from their centre.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Feature-length films and television dramas*

Over the years of the conflict, a number of feature-length films and television dramas have been created, either based on actual events related to the conflict or fictionalised stories using the conflict as a backdrop to the overall narrative. The CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet) site has a comprehensive list of 'Movies with 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland as a theme (1968–Present)'. This list includes information

<sup>13</sup> For more information on creative writing groups in Northern Ireland see <[www.creativewritersnetwork.org/](http://www.creativewritersnetwork.org/)>

<sup>14</sup> The CAIN Project has a searchable database of television programmes related to the conflict (1968 to 1996), available at <[cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/media/tvprogs.htm](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/media/tvprogs.htm)>, a list of television documentaries (and some major news stories) about the conflict and politics, that were broadcast between 1981 and 2004 compiled by Peter Heathwood, available at <[cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/media/heathwood/index.html](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/media/heathwood/index.html)> and a series of links to web sites which contain transcripts, and other details, on television programmes about the conflict and political developments in the region.<[cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/media/transcriptsguide.htm](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/media/transcriptsguide.htm)>

<sup>15</sup> For two significant community based media arts centres, see Belfast based Northern Visions <[www.northernvisions.org](http://www.northernvisions.org)> and Derry / Londonderry based Nerve Centre <[www.nerve-centre.org.uk](http://www.nerve-centre.org.uk)>

<sup>16</sup> For more information on the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and their archives, see <[www.uftm.org.uk/collections\\_and\\_research/archival\\_collections/Introduction/](http://www.uftm.org.uk/collections_and_research/archival_collections/Introduction/)>

<sup>17</sup> For more information on the Nerve Centre see <[www.nerve-centre.org.uk/](http://www.nerve-centre.org.uk/)>

on the films year of production, country of origin, running time, director, producer, cast, location, production company and a brief abstract (not a synopsis) of the story. To date, 37 films have been documented by CAIN.<sup>18</sup> Copies of films and dramas for viewing are available in a number of archives.<sup>19</sup>

### *Drama and performance art*

Drama is a powerful tool means of presenting stories and a significant number of plays making direct or indirect references to the conflict have been produced.<sup>20</sup> Stage productions can provide an opportunity for the 'teller' and the 'audience' to engage in a safe creative space to explore and debate sensitive and often contentious issues. A number of community-based organisations have also developed interactive drama workshops to explore issues related to the conflict with an audience,<sup>21</sup> many based on first-hand accounts and narratives of individual experiences.

### *Painting, drawing, sculpture, graphic arts, photography*

The conflict has provided subject material for many artists, sculptors and photographers. Their work appeals primarily to the visual sense and typically requires more effort at interpretation by the viewer. Examples that could fall under this type of storytelling include the Relatives for Justice Remembrance Quilt and the WAVE Trauma Centre stained-glass window project. (See project descriptions in chapter four.) Both are made by victims and survivors who tell their stories, albeit through images or needlework. Photography has also played an important part in recording the conflict, which has been undertaken by both professional<sup>22</sup> and community-based projects<sup>23</sup> alike.

Different forms of creative art have been used to assist people to tell their stories of the conflict, and a number of examples are presented in chapter four. In addition, community-based organisations have chosen to represent aspects of the conflict in visual form, as described in chapter four.

<sup>18</sup> See <[cain.ulst.ac.uk/images/cinema/](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/images/cinema/)> and 'Pettitt, Lance. (2000), *Television drama and the Troubles*', in 'Screening Ireland: Film and Television Representation'. Manchester: Manchester University Press available at <[cain.ulst.ac.uk/images/cinema/pettitt/pettitt00.htm](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/images/cinema/pettitt/pettitt00.htm)>

<sup>19</sup> Northern Ireland Film Council, 21 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast, BT2 8HD; Film Institute of Ireland Archive, 6 Eustace Street, Dublin 2; Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linenhall Library, 17 Donegall Square North, Belfast, BT1 5GD; Film and Sound Resource Unit, University of Ulster at Coleraine, Cromore Road, Coleraine, BT52 1SA; Irish Studies Centre, University of North London, Faculty of Humanities and Teacher Education, 166-220 Holloway Road, London, N7 8DB

<sup>20</sup> For a comprehensive source of information on drama related to the conflict, contact Hugh Odling-Smee, curator of the Theatre and Performance Arts department of Linen Hall Library; Tel: (028) 9087 2218. [theatrearchive@linenhall.com](mailto:theatrearchive@linenhall.com).

<sup>21</sup> For an example of a community-based drama project, aimed at provoking discussion and dialogue around challenging, and often conflict-related issues, see Sole Purpose Productions <[www.solepurpose.org](http://www.solepurpose.org)>

<sup>22</sup> The most comprehensive archive of photographs related to the conflict is held by Belfast-based press agency Pacemaker International Ltd. <[www.pacemakerpressintl.com/](http://www.pacemakerpressintl.com/)>

<sup>23</sup> Community-based photographic projects such as Belfast Exposed which focuses on the development and exhibition of community photography and training of local communities in the use of photography to record and understand their environment. The organisation also has an archive of around half a million images. See <[www.belfastexposed.com](http://www.belfastexposed.com)>

### *Websites and multimedia*

A number of organisations have used websites as a medium through which to disseminate stories of the conflict. A number of victims / survivors groups, in particular, have created sections of their website for presenting stories of individuals who have been affected by the conflict.<sup>24</sup> The London-based Forgiveness Project, which works with grass-roots projects in the fields of conflict resolution, reconciliation and victim support, includes a number of testimonies on the theme of forgiveness from individuals who have personal experience of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.<sup>25</sup>

Interactive educational projects, including the BBC's *A State Apart*, consist of a CD-ROM made up of personal testimonies, video footage, photographs, newspapers, election results and maps related to the conflict.<sup>26</sup> The CAIN website in its entirety could also be considered as an example of this type of project.

### *Exhibitions*

Exhibitions on themes relating to the conflict have been compiled for commemorative, educational and advocacy purposes by several organisations. The Cost of the Troubles Study assembled a number of exhibitions based on their work around the human cost of the conflict, including an exhibition marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dublin and Monaghan bombs<sup>27</sup>. Belfast Exposed has hosted a range of photographic exhibitions on conflict-related themes. During 2004-05 the Ulster Museum staged a large exhibition entitled *Conflict – The Irish at War*, a section of which was dedicated to the 'troubles' and featured a series of artefacts, short narratives and exhibits related to the conflict.

## **2.4 Audit parameters**

The broad purpose of this audit is to "carry out research about storytelling relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland".<sup>28</sup> As demonstrated above, the scope of storytelling related to the conflict is potentially immense. Therefore, a more limited focus was required, which nonetheless had to be sufficiently comprehensive for the extensive nature of the topic, and also had to be manageable within the relatively short timeframe. At the same time, a more detailed picture of the initiatives which are *specifically* focused on providing the space and opportunity for individuals to tell their stories was being compiled – a need identified by the storytelling sub-group in initial discussions.

As a result of discussions between the sub-group and the audit researcher, a set of criteria were established to assess which initiatives to include in the detailed audit process.

<sup>24</sup> For examples of such initiatives, see Disabled Police Officers Association <[www.dpoani.org/stories.html](http://www.dpoani.org/stories.html)>, FAIR <[www.victims.org.uk/stories.html](http://www.victims.org.uk/stories.html)>, Victims and Survivors Trust; [www.victimsandsurvivorstrust.com/TellingTheirStory/Witness.htm](http://www.victimsandsurvivorstrust.com/TellingTheirStory/Witness.htm); Cunamh <[www.cunamh.org/oral\\_history\\_project.asp?x=5](http://www.cunamh.org/oral_history_project.asp?x=5)>.

<sup>25</sup> See [www.theforgivenessproject.com/stories/](http://www.theforgivenessproject.com/stories/) for a selection of stories.

<sup>26</sup> For further information on 'A State Apart' see <[www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/learning/history/stateapart/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/learning/history/stateapart/)>

<sup>27</sup> The exhibition contained edited stories from survivors of the bombs and relatives of a number of individuals who lost their lives. The exhibition is currently in storage.

<sup>28</sup> From Healing Through Remembering research tender, December 2004

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### 2.4.1 Geographical and temporal boundaries

No specific limits were placed on the geographical parameters of the audit. It was agreed that all initiatives that focused on the conflict in Northern Ireland, wherever located, should be included in the study. This would therefore include projects based on, or involving, individuals and communities in Northern Ireland, Britain and the Republic of Ireland, and, potentially any other location identified.

In relation to the time span of the audit, it was felt that while the late 1960s was commonly viewed of the start of the so-called ‘troubles’, there is no agreement on this issue. Therefore, the researcher was instructed to take a broad view of this criterion by including projects before the late 1960s if they were deemed to have relevance to the more recent conflict.

### 2.4.2 Primary motivation

The defining criterion for inclusion of projects in the detailed audit was the identifiable rationale and motivation behind them. The focus of the audit was on projects that allow for telling, reflection, expression, listening and collecting of stories as the *primary* and *core* motivation behind their inception and implementation.

### 2.4.3 First-hand narratives

Projects that focus on providing individuals with the opportunity to tell their stories in the first-person, and where control over how and when their stories would be disseminated more publicly, was an essential criterion for inclusion in the audit. While an emphasis on the individual experience was stressed, it was also acknowledged that collective, communal or institutional stories would emerge from the combined experiences of the individuals’ stories, and should also be considered.

### 2.4.4 Confidential, therapeutic processes

While it was agreed that counselling and psychotherapy could legitimately be categorised as a form of storytelling, the sub-group agreed that such processes would not be documented in detail as they are inherently private in nature and bound by codes of practice and ethics which maintain confidentiality for the client. However, this decision was not intended to exclude groupwork intended to be psychologically or emotionally therapeutic or healing and a number of examples of such initiatives are detailed in chapter four.

### 2.4.5 Involvement of the storyteller in the process

An important factor in selecting initiatives for inclusion in the audit was the manner and level of involvement of the storyteller. Processes in which the narrator (in whatever form that took) had control over how their story or testimony would be disseminated or presented, and could withdraw their consent during the process, were included in the audit. Where the storyteller was given little or no control and were not consulted on the final product, the projects were excluded.

## 2.5 Commencement of audit

Having agreed on the criteria for inclusion of processes and projects in the audit, the research methodology was implemented. The criteria were revisited during the audit to ensure their continued relevance. While at times difficult to apply strictly, the audit parameters provided a useful framework for defining the field of study, while leaving some scope for flexibility, as the range of projects detailed in chapter four demonstrates.

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## 3. AUDIT METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

Conducting an audit of embryonic, well-developed and existing organisations, requires both a systematic approach to uncover all possible avenues of information, and flexibility in following identified lines of inquiry using a snowballing or referral methodology. Both methods were adopted for this audit of storytelling, personal narrative and testimony initiatives. This resulted in documenting a diverse range of projects focused on the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.

### 3.2 Research questions

Based on the research objectives of the audit, several main themes were identified. These provided the structure for the analysis of literature and the conduct of interviews with project co-coordinators and staff members. The main lines of inquiry, which were supplemented with follow-up questions, are detailed below. Interviews were adapted to each initiative and only relevant questions posed. A semi-structured interview schedule was used and questions included:

- a. What is the background to the organisation and to the storytelling project which is / has been undertaken?
- b. What was the rationale or motivation behind the initiation of the process or project?
- c. How has the process or project developed over time?
- d. What approach or methodology was adopted?
- e. Where there any tangible outputs from the project?
- f. What other resources have been developed by the project (e.g. training materials on storytelling, written articles on the project)?
- g. How have the tangible outputs from the project been archived?
- h. What access is there to these outputs and what are the boundaries on such access?
- i. What is / was the project timescale?
- j. How can you be contacted in the future?

### 3.3 Identifying relevant projects

The Storytelling sub-group spent considerable time discussing how best to utilise the time and resources available for the research, while providing as comprehensive an audit as possible. As previously outlined, it was agreed to focus on the projects whose *primary* intention was to facilitate individuals to convey their stories of the conflict and to have their stories heard and acknowledged by others, if not immediately, then at some point in the future.

While this provided the researcher with guidance about which to research, it was difficult, at times, to ascertain the primary motivation of certain projects, and judgments were made, in consultation with the sub-group, about which to include.

The researcher and Storytelling sub-group worked collaboratively to compile an initial list of projects and organisations known to be undertaking, or had previously been involved in, storytelling work.<sup>29</sup> All projects so identified were followed up. These included projects with which members of the sub-group are themselves linked. In this case, arrangements were made to meet with them individually to discuss their projects in detail.

In addition, other avenues of inquiry were followed. Annual reports and lists of grants awarded from relevant funding bodies (including the Community Relations Council, the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, the Community Fund, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Local Strategy Partnerships administering EU Peace and Reconciliation Funding) were examined to identify relevant storytelling projects funded in recent years. A search of the Community Relations Council's library of publications and the Northern Ireland Political Collection at the Linenhall Library in Belfast was undertaken. Contact was also made with the Community Relations Outreach Worker with the Ulster Museum who has a background in commemorative work and worked closely on the museum's *Conflict: Irish at War* exhibition.

Members of the four other Healing Through Remembering sub-groups (Day of Reflection; Acknowledgment; Museum; Network of Commemoration and Remembering Projects) were informed about the audit and requested to inform the researcher of any storytelling projects of which they were aware.

Given that many of the storytelling projects have been carried out by organisations supporting those directly affected or involved in the conflict, the researcher contacted a broad range of victims and survivors groups, ex-prisoners groups, justice and advocacy groups and community relations and reconciliation projects to ascertain their involvement, or interest in, storytelling initiatives. They were also requested to suggest any other organisations or individuals they knew of who may be undertaking storytelling work related to the conflict. This approach proved particularly fruitful in uncovering a number of previously unknown projects, as well as opening discussion with other groups that are not undertaking storytelling projects and exploring their reasons why. This is discussed in further detail in chapter five.

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<sup>29</sup> Initial trawls of storytelling projects for the storytelling sub-group was undertaken by Maria Truno, researcher with the Healing Through Remembering project in late 2004, including searches of the Linenhall Library Political Collection and the Community Relations Council Resource Centre.

### 3.4 Reviewing existing literature and resources

A number of storytelling projects and initiatives are no longer active, having completed their objective, or in some cases, stopped their work after encountering funding or resourcing difficulties. With these projects in mind, existing literature and other related resources were collected as part of the audit. Most projects that had completed their objectives had detailed information on their establishment, methodology and outputs. Where contact was not possible, existing information was the most useful source of knowledge on the project. References to available resources on each project are listed at the end of its description below.

### 3.5 Conducting interviews

For projects still in existence, initial contact was made by phone with project co-ordinators or key workers in the initiatives. The objectives of the audit were explained and, for those who were unfamiliar with the Healing Through Remembering project, more specific details about it were presented. 32 semi-structured interviews were conducted either in person or by phone. These lasting between 30 and 90 minutes and covered the research questions outlined earlier in this report.

Relevant materials were requested and received. These informed this report. All information provided has been deposited at the Healing Through Remembering office for reference purposes.

### 3.6 Compiling descriptions

Following literature reviews and interviews, each project was written-up, using a previously agreed template of headings to provide clarity to the reader and to ensure that all aspects were thoroughly documented in the audit. The general structure of the descriptions included:

- Project Background (and initiating organisation, if relevant)
- Project Development
- Project Rationale
- Process
- Product (*if relevant*)
- Archiving and Accessibility (*if relevant*)
- Dissemination of Learning / Collaboration (*if relevant*)
- Reference Materials
- Timeframe
- Contact Information

In all but a few cases, a draft of the project description was given to the participating individuals for additions, amendments or corrections. In addition to the contact details provided in the body of the report,



a detailed electronic database (using Microsoft Access) of all projects was compiled for use by the Storytelling sub-group. An additional database was also developed of organisations not currently involved in storytelling but interested in the topic or hoping to develop work in the future.

### **3.7 Analysis of data**

Having compiled a broad range of project descriptions and discussed the role of storytelling with a wide range of individuals and organisations, the author / researcher made a number of observations. These are detailed in chapter five.

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## 4. PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

### **Abhaile Arís - 'Ár Scéal'**

The Abhaile Arís Centre, based in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, was established in 1999 and services the needs of the republican ex-prisoner community and people displaced because of the conflict in the Donegal area. It provides services including a drop-in centre, education and training, information and advice, counselling and advocacy. The organisation started an audio-visual storytelling project entitled '*Ár Scéal*' (*Our Story*) which documented the experiences of local republican ex-prisoners and displaced people.

#### **Project Development**

Having identified a range of services for the needs of the republican ex-prisoner and displaced communities, the project identified a need to document the experiences of these groups and to have their experiences acknowledged within the wider community. They agreed to identify and record the experiences of republican ex-prisoners and displaced people from the Donegal area and to create an edited video of people's experiences which would be disseminated widely.

#### **Project Rationale**

The rationale for the project was to record and disseminate to the wider community the experiences of the republican ex-prisoners and displaced people from the Donegal area. Abhaile Arís viewed the project as an important historical record of one community's story of conflict and felt the process of a community documenting their own experiences and having control over their stories. The project viewed the video as a means by which to obtain acknowledgement in the wider community. The video started out as a counselling tool and was later used for publicity purposes when networking with other community groups.

#### **Process**

The project began by identifying and approaching individuals who might be interested in recording their experiences of the conflict. An outreach worker for the organisation undertook the interviews, which varied in length depending on who was being recorded. All interviews were recorded on videotape. No formal request was made for written consent for use of the tape.

Forty interviews were undertaken in all. The interviews were then reviewed and seven were chosen to be edited into a 25-minute video entitled '*Ár Scéal*' (*Our Story*). Editing was done by a commercial company.

#### **Product**

The video was completed and publicly launched in November 2004 in Letterkenny to an audience of around 180 people. According to the organisation's press release:

*“The video is a documentary of seven remarkable stories and whilst they are individual accounts they are nonetheless representative of the collective experiences of the community we work with. We had recorded the stories of over 40 individuals in total for archive purposes but have used seven examples for this video. The video tells the story of men and women caught up in the conflict. Included are Johnny Walker of the “Birmingham 6”, Hugh Doherty captured during the famous “Balcombe Street” siege and imprisoned for 24 years, Tony Kelly, one of the 38 prisoners who escaped from Long Kesh in the famous breakout in 1983, Marion Kelly who was displaced from her home town of Dungiven, Una Eakin, whose late husband Gerard Casey was shot dead beside her in their bed by unionist paramilitaries, Jim Boyle, whose young daughter died while he was imprisoned in Portlaoise, and Mary McLaughlin, whose late husband Reamonn was imprisoned in English jails for 10 years.”<sup>30</sup>*

The video is currently used as a tool to inform people about the organisation and has been presented at a number of events throughout the county.

The project co-ordinator has received positive feedback from a number of interviewees who found the process to have been both therapeutic and a positive bonding experience. In addition, the project has had a positive impact in reviving the organisation’s ‘history group’ which had dwindled in numbers before the project. The project has expressed a hope to purchase their own equipment to undertake more testimony work, as they felt it was a very valuable project and there were many other stories that they were not in a position to record at the time.

### **Archive and Accessibility**

The original video recordings of the 40 interviews are held in a personal archive by the organisation and are not available to the public at present.

With the permission of those involved, copies of the edited video are available for purchase at the various public showings and from the Abhaile Arís offices for five euro. These funds are used to offset costs.

### **Timescale**

2003–present

### **Contact**

Anne Marie Blair, Project Co-ordinator, Abhaile Arís, 65 Lower Main Street, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Rep. of Ireland

T: 00 353 74 91 28610

F: 00 353 74 91 28609

E: [deblarach@eircom.net](mailto:deblarach@eircom.net)  
[abhailearis@eircom.net](mailto:abhailearis@eircom.net)

<sup>30</sup> Abhaile Arís press release, 6 December 2004

## An Crann/The Tree

Founded in 1994, An Crann/The Tree was an arts-based, charitable organisation ‘*dedicated to providing a space in which people can tell - and hear - the splintered, complex, often contradictory stories of the ‘Troubles’ as part of a process which contributes not only to the ethos of peace, healing and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, but also to building a more inclusive, rounded story of the conflict.*’ [from organisational literature]

### Project Development

In December 1994 a public meeting was held in the Old Museum Arts Centre in Belfast. Several hundred people attended and the idea was discussed of setting up an organisation to facilitate those who wished to tell their stories of the conflict. An Crann was established that year and headed by Damian Gorman, a Northern Ireland poet and playwright. According to Gorman, the An Crann project came from a simple idea that came to him: “*I was wondering to myself that if the Troubles were over, who is going to tell the story of it. The story can’t be told by professionals alone – by historians, broadcasters, writers, receivers of grants – for they are witnesses to only what they have chosen to see. There is, obviously much more ‘sight’ among people at large.*”<sup>31</sup>

Gorman had been facilitating creative writing workshops in Northern Ireland for a number of years and was interested in using the creative arts as a tool to assist in the storytelling process. The original long-term vision for the organisation was that the stories which were collected would form the basis of a ‘living museum’ that would tell a diverse narrative of the conflict from a range of perspectives. In the early years of the organisation, Damien Gorman facilitated dozens of creative writing workshops with community groups across Northern Ireland and other artists and facilitators worked with groups on workshops in drama, photography, video and painting.

### Project Rationale

The core of An Crann’s work was to:

1. facilitate safe and secure workshops which use creative tools and processes to allow individuals and groups the opportunity to recount their experiences and listen to those of others;
2. create a multimedia repository of personal stories, which would be securely archived to each individual’s wishes.

The organisation hoped that, in putting these stories into circulation among the wider community new and diverse interpretations of experiences and the past would be developed. The organisation aimed to work inclusively with all communities, believing that everyone’s perspective has a place and value in building a more respectful and tolerant society. An Crann promotional literature stated that:

*...it is only by embracing all perspectives of the ‘Troubles’ that we can, as a society, break through prejudice and suspicion to rediscover our similarities, respect our differences, and chart a fresh course for our future together.*

<sup>31</sup> Fortnight Magazine, December 1994

## Process

### ▪ Workshops:

During its existence the organisation facilitated numerous workshops that utilised the creative arts (including drama, textiles, creative writing, oral storytelling and photography) to allow people the opportunity to tell their stories of the conflict. In the early years, Damien Gorman facilitated many of these workshops, and on his departure from the organisation in 1998, freelance facilitators and artists were engaged to work with specific groups and organisations. The workshops took on different forms depending on the methodology and creative tools adopted by the facilitator. Some workshops were once-off events while others were lasted over a number of weeks or months. Projects were generally process-focused, but often resulted in the development of a product, such as poems or short stories. Some of these were submitted to the An Crann archive. A number of projects involved producing a publication (examples below).

In 2000/01, a project officer was employed in Derry / Londonderry to develop the organisation in the north-west region and conducted many storytelling workshops and delivered training based on the Stories in Conflict model (see Training Programme below) five times for both organisations and individuals interested in conducting storytelling projects in Omagh, Strabane and Derry. In addition, a project was undertaken in the Creggan area of the city, which culminated in the publication *All Our Yesterdays*.

## Product

### ▪ Bear in Mind: Stories of the Troubles

*Bear in Mind* is a compilation of written memoirs, letters, poems and edited interviews taken from the archive of An Crann. Contributors included British soldiers, political prisoners, relatives of victims of the conflict, police, politicians, community activists, members of ethnic communities, young and older people.

Around one-third of the contributions are from interviews which were conducted as part of the process of compiling stories for the publication (and to be placed in the An Crann archive). Potential interviewees were contacted and asked if they would be interested in having their stories recorded. The interviews were then transcribed and extracts were selected from the interviews to be used in the publication. All interviewees signed consent forms giving their permission for extracts of their interviews to be used in the publication and to be placed in the An Crann archive.

The other two-thirds of the contributions were taken from the An Crann archive of materials which were gathered through writing workshops conducted over several years, or gathered in response to an open invitation for contributions to the book in the autumn of 1999. Pieces from the archive were chosen for publication. Where possible, all contributors were then contacted to gain written consent for their story to be used in the book.

*Bear in Mind: Stories of the Troubles* (Lagan Press: Belfast, 2000)

- **My Story, The Living and Real Account of Growing up in Northern Ireland**

This publication emerged from a writing programme organised by Derry City Council and An Crann in which young people were invited to write their personal story of how living in a society marked by violence has affected them. Around 1500 contributions were received, all of which were donated to An Crann's archive after an award ceremony in Derry in June 1999. This project is now an annual event organised by Derry City Council.

*My Story, The Living and Real Account of Growing up in Northern Ireland* (An Crann / Derry City Council, 1999)

- **Night Rider**

An Crann commissioned Harry Brandsma (a Dutch film-maker and photographer) to make a documentary on the life of a Belfast taxi-driver. Entitled *Night Rider*, the sixty-minute video records the stories of Philip, and his wife Lily, and their experiences of the conflict. The video was shown at the Foyle Film Festival in 1999 and launched at the Queen's Film Theatre in Belfast. The video formed the basis of a number of workshop sessions in community venues with facilitated discussions (at times involving Philip and Lily) which explored the issues raised in the documentary.

*Night Rider* (An Crann/The Tree, 1999)

- **Crossings—Reminiscence Project**

An American volunteer with the organisation undertook a reminiscence project with elderly people in nursing homes in the Greater Belfast area. Working in consultation with activities managers at the homes, interviews were conducted with elderly residents about their experiences of life in Northern Ireland and living through the conflict. All interviews were transcribed and returned to the residents for any necessary revisions. Once agreed the residents were presented with a bound copy of their story for their own records. Edited transcripts were placed in the An Crann archive. A publication of the stories was produced in 2001.

*Crossings: Long-term perspectives of the Troubles* (An Crann / The Tree, 2001)

- **All Our Yesterdays: Accounts from women growing up in Derry / Londonderry**

This publication was a compilation of edited stories recounted by women who live in Derry (from the Creggan, Rosemount and the Waterside areas of the city) and are users of the Creggan Health Information Partnership. Some of the women had direct experiences of violence, while others were less directly touched but nonetheless were affected by the violence in their communities.

In terms of methodology, all contributors were asked to complete a consent form, which contained a written assurance of confidentiality and anonymity, and gave them an undertaking that they would be shown a final version of their interview before agreeing to its publication. A number of the contributors

had their stories tape-recorded by an An Crann staff member, while several chose to write their own accounts. The interviews were semi-structured, dealing with broad themes such as childhood memories, family life and the impact of the conflict on their lives. The tapes were transcribed verbatim and returned to each person to read and edit in their own time. All the contributors made amendments, additions or deletions to their original text. Some contributors provided photographs and poems to put alongside the stories and all were consulted on any other photographs which were used alongside their stories.

*All Our Yesterdays: Accounts from women growing up in Derry / Londonderry* (An Crann/The Tree 2001)

- **What's it all about? Poems and Stories by Young People from Strabane and Castlederg**

On behalf of Strabane District Council, An Crann/The Tree worked with a writing facilitator to conduct a series of workshops with four schools in Strabane District (Castlederg High School, The Convent Grammar, Our Lady of Mercy High School and Strabane Grammar.) During the workshops, the young people talked, improvised dramas, wrote and drew, drawing on their life experiences. One written piece was selected from each, mainly Year Ten students. The book contains four sections, exploring memories from childhood, loss and grief, opinions that the young people feel are important to them and hopes and dreams for the future.

*What's it all about? Poems and Stories by Young People from Strabane and Castlederg*, (An Crann/The Tree, 2001)

### **Archiving and Accessibility**

Much of the information gathered by An Crann was disseminated through the various publications. In line with the objectives of the organisation, An Crann archived workshop materials, interview transcripts and tapes and information submitted by the general public. With the closure of their offices in 2001, it has not been possible to locate the archived materials held by the organisation, despite efforts to do so.

### **Training and Dissemination of Learning**

- **Facilitation Materials**

As part of a process of documenting techniques which allow facilitators to develop workshops around storytelling, the project commissioned two workshop resource packs. The first was a 20-hour workshop programme using the visual arts. It was called *As Within, So Without* and was devised by Chris Head, an experienced facilitator and teacher of art. The second was a 20-hour workshop programme using oral storytelling and writing entitled *Remembering the Past, Remembering the Future*, devised by three Scottish based consultants, Aine Kennedy, Chris Dolan and Michael Duke. The purpose of the resource packs was to provide facilitators with an awareness of An Crann/The Tree, its ethos and approach to facilitation and the sensitive nature of this work; provide and adapt original and stimulating mediums and exercises to help with expressing memory and personal life experience relating in particular to the

conflict; to facilitate personal development and individual self-esteem of group members through the central tenets of respect, listening and confidentiality.

Complementary to both these programmes, the organisation also commissioned the production of an information pack which set out the role of the community facilitator working with groups in a storytelling process. This was produced by Rosie Burrows.

Parts of both workshop programmes were piloted during 2000, but none of the above materials were ever circulated to the wider public or produced for sale or distribution.

- **Training Programme**

An Crann devised an introductory training programme for those interested in running storytelling projects for those affected by the conflict. The training programme was entitled 'Stories in Conflict' and covered aspects such as Listening as a Skill, Ethical Challenges to the Listener and Teller, Writing Personal Narratives, Stories and Audio, and Designing a Storytelling Project. It was delivered several times to interested groups and individuals in Northern Ireland using trainers skilled in the relevant topics.

- **Interview Methodology**

An Crann produced a draft methodology for recording personal stories. The manual was based on other training manuals published on oral history and on the experience of project staff and volunteers who had conducted interviews covering all aspects of the interview process, including preparation for the interview, consent, the interview process, transcription, editing, follow-up, a charter of good practice and a methodology for setting up an oral history project. The document particularly focused on those conducting interviews with people who have been affected by the conflict and contain sections which deal with interviewing the elderly and children. The manual was only made available to An Crann staff and support workers during the autumn of 1999 but was not distributed more widely.

**Timeframe**

1994 – 2001

**Contact**

Organisation is no longer in existence.



## Ardoyne Commemoration Project

The Ardoyne Commemoration Project (ACP) was established in 1998 to document the stories of Ardoyne residents in North Belfast who lost their lives as a result of the conflict between 1969 and 1998. The project culminated in the publication of *Ardoyne: The Untold Truth* in 2002. The project describes itself as a 'testimony', rather than a 'storytelling' project.

### Project Background

The idea for the project came about as a result of informal discussions between victims' relatives, concerned individuals and members of community groups in the years following the 1994 ceasefires. These discussions were set within a context in which people were beginning to discuss the impact of the conflict on individuals and communities, as the 'victims agenda' was coming to the fore, and the Bloomfield Report, *We Will Remember Them*, was published. There was much debate going on, particularly around the so-called 'hierarchy of victims', within nationalist / republican communities.

Against this backdrop a number of victims' relatives, concerned individuals and representatives from community groups called a meeting in the Ardoyne in June 1998 to discuss the 'victims agenda' and to explore ways in which the community could commemorate their own victims of the conflict, in their own way. While no decision was reached at that meeting, there was a general consensus that something should be done to record the experiences of ordinary people in Ardoyne during the conflict and mark the sense of loss produced by so many deaths. After several further meetings, much discussion and debate, the idea of a commemoration book emerged. The Ardoyne Commemoration Project was set up and a committee was elected. The committee provided the organisational framework for the day-to-day running of the project and members of the committee were also very active in carrying out the project itself, with the assistance of a wider network of individuals who provided support, advice, time and energy. All but one of the committee members were from the Ardoyne area. The project was funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Community Relations Council, Making Belfast Work and the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust (now Community Foundation for Northern Ireland).

### Project Rationale

As set out in *The Untold Truth*, the project offered a number of potential benefits:

- Providing people with the space and opportunity to tell the stories of those who died during the conflict without constraints or censorship, many of whose stories had not been recorded;
- Challenging perceptions of the past;
- Challenging hierarchy of victims concept by the inclusive nature of the project;
- Uncovering 'the truth' and publicly acknowledges wrongdoings of all combatants involved in the conflict (including the British State, republicans, loyalists) as an essential part of the healing process for victim's families;
- Creating awareness and politicising individuals and groups;
- Documenting such experiences to prevent history from being lost, rewritten or misrepresented;

- Putting a human face on the statistics of deaths, contextualising the deaths in terms of historical events and gives social recognition to the victims of the conflict;
- Opening the possibility for a society to learn from the past;
- Giving contributors ownership and control over what was written about their loved ones (which had not always been the case in the past); and
- Public recognition of loss and human rights abuse to provide a cathartic experience for victims' families.

## **Process**

From the outset, it was an overarching objective of the project that it should be designed, developed and led by the community itself. During all stages of the project, the ACP made every effort to seek the views and opinions of the participants and the wider community.

The first task for the project was to establish which victims were to be included in the book. The publication explains the process of defining the project parameters in detail (see pages 4-8). In brief, it was agreed the project should focus on all those victims who, at some point in their lives, had been Ardoyne residents, irrespective of who killed them.

Identifying who these individuals were and how to contact their family members was the next difficult task. A database of victims, contact details of family members, friends and eyewitnesses was collated and continually updated during the four-year process. In the end, 99 individuals had been identified and their stories included in the book. The geographical parameters of the project were established and specific geographical boundaries were drawn up (described in detail in the book).

### **▪ Interviewing**

Over 300 interviews with victims' relatives, friends, eyewitnesses and key individuals within the Ardoyne area were conducted during the course of the project. Each victim's story is made up of a case study which usually contains at least two or three, and sometimes more, interviews. In a few cases there are no interviews at all, as no relevant interviewees could be identified, despite strenuous efforts. So other sources of information were used, such as official and media material. As these sources are not necessarily reliable or objective, their use for information purposes was kept to a minimum or cross-referenced with other available evidence.

Having identified the victim, the project sought to make initial contact with the closest next of kin whose permission was sought for an interview. If this was granted, the victims' families were then asked to suggest a close friend, eyewitness or other significant person to be interviewed. Over time, other possible avenues were pursued to try to build up a rounded portrait of the life and death of each person.

- **Editing and returning stories**

Interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim and carefully edited by volunteers who had a personal and political commitment to the project. The majority were conducted in the interviewees own homes or venue of their choosing. Every effort was made to ensure that all interviewees received a copy of the edited case study, as it would appear in the book. The testimonies were hand-delivered to the participants' home with a letter explaining that they were free to make changes or include additional information to their own testimony. Their copies were then collected, and volunteers talked through, clarified and documented any changes individuals had requested. Participants were then asked to sign the returned testimony indicating consent for publication. The final case presented in the book had to be approved by the family or closest relative. This process was thought vitally important to the project for three reasons: firstly, it gave the interviewee control and ownership over what was written. Secondly, it was important that the relatives were given the opportunity to read what other participants had said about their loved one during interviews. Finally, returning the testimonies was a way of disclosing 'the truth' or details about the circumstances of death that had been hidden or lost in the chaos of the time.

The project members admit the testimony interviews involved a fairly steep learning curve and several 'mistakes' were made in the early stages, including changes to the semi-structured interview techniques and difficulties with the initial recording methods used. The project also underestimated the extent of the task of returning testimonies. A fuller explanation of the methodology used is documented in the publication.

It was envisioned that each of the 99 individual stories would be of around equal length. However, some cases are longer than others, usually because of varying levels of detail and insight available. In addition to the testimonies, interviews were conducted for the chapters which set up the historical context to the deaths. The book is structured around a series of chronologically organised chapters that are designed to highlight distinct phases of the conflict. Each chapter begins with an historical context. The individual cases of the Ardoyne are accompanied by a photograph, if one was available, key biographical details and testimonies of the relatives, friends and eyewitnesses interviewed.

### **Product**

*Ardoyne Commemoration Project: Ardoyne: The Untold Truth, (Beyond The Pale: Belfast, 2002)*

This substantial publication tells the story of 99 people from the Ardoyne in North Belfast who lost their lives as a result of the conflict in between 1969 and 1998.

### **Archive and Accessibility**

Currently the ACP holds the original interview recordings and transcripts. Future plans for their archiving are being discussed by the ACP committee. If the ACP decides in the future to use or make available any material other than that which they obtained consent to be published, they would have to return to each participant for further consent.

### Dissemination of Learning

Following the publication of *Ardoyne: The Untold Truth*, two of the project co-ordinators undertook a research project<sup>32</sup> to examine critically the usefulness of 'truth-telling' processes for post-conflict transition. Using the ACP as an example, it explored the methodologies and mechanisms employed to develop a model of best practice for possible use by other community groups. A substantial report was published in 2005 entitled *Community, 'Truth-telling' and Conflict Resolution* and is available through the Community Relations Council.

Lundy, Patricia and McGovern, Mark (2005) *Community, 'Truth-telling' and Conflict Resolution: A Critical Evaluation of the Role of Community-based 'Truth-telling' Processes for Post-conflict Transition: A Case Study of the Ardoyne Commemoration Project*, (University of Ulster, Edgehill, January 2005)

### Reference Material

Ardoyne Commemoration Project: *Ardoyne: The Untold Truth*, (Beyond The Pale: Belfast, 2002)

#### *Related Academic Material:*

Lundy, P. and McGovern, M. (2001) 'The Politics of Memory in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland', *Peace Review*, Vol. 13, No. 1.

Lundy, P. and McGovern, M. (2004) 'You understand again': Testimony and Post-Conflict Transition in the North of Ireland: The Ardoyne Commemoration Project, 1998-2002', *Words and Silences: Journal of the International Oral History Association*, Vol. 2, No. 2.

Lundy, P. and McGovern, M. (2005) 'The Ethics of Silence: Action Research, Community 'Truth-Telling', and Post-Conflict Transition in the North of Ireland', *Journal of Action Research, Special Edition* (forthcoming 2005).

Lundy, P. and McGovern, M. (2006) 'Participation, Truth and Partiality: Participatory Action Research, Community-based Truth-telling and Post-Conflict Transition in the North of Ireland', *Sociology* (forthcoming in either issue 39(4) Oct 2005 or 40(1) Feb 2006).

Lundy, P. and McGovern, M. (2005) 'Inside Silence: The Ardoyne Commemoration Project, Community-based Truth-telling and Post-Conflict Transition in the North of Ireland', in Ann Perotin-Dumon *et al.* (eds) *History and Memory: Argentina, Chile, Peru*, Electronic Publication, Santiago, Chile.

### Timeframe

1998 - 2002

<sup>32</sup> Funded under Measure 2.1: Reconciliation for Sustainable Peace, EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland 2000-2004

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## Borderlines

Borderlines is an oral and photographic project that was established to record stories from people's experience of life living along the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The project is a Gallery of Photography (Dublin) Outreach Project, organised in collaboration with Dara Training and Consultancy Ltd. The project specifically targets individuals and groups from the border areas of Armagh, Cavan, Derry/Londonderry, Donegal, Down, Fermanagh, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan, Sligo and Tyrone. The focus of the project is both process and product as equal parts of the whole.

### Project Development

Prior to the establishment of the Borderlines project, the Gallery of Photography with the Dara personnel had been involved in a previous cross-border photography project and had identified a gap in knowledge and activity around certain aspects of border life. They were aware that whilst there was a lot of cross-border and cross-community activity (particularly supporting by the EU PEACE Programme), the stories from the borders were not coming out more publicly, particularly around the rural areas. These stories and experiences needed to be heard and acknowledged if the people of the border areas were able to make some sense of their personal and communal past and look to the future. Over subsequent years they talked through different ideas which could combine both the visual arts, in the form of photography, with oral history around people's experiences of life in the border counties, from different generations and backgrounds. After much negotiation, they secured PEACE II funding through Co-operation Ireland to undertake the project in collaboration with Dara Training and Consultancy, supported by Dublin Institute of Technology's School of Media. The project began in 2004 and is intended for completion in 2006.

### Project Rationale

The project has two stated guiding aims:

- to create an archive which records peoples' experiences of the border for present and future generations;
- to contribute to personal, community and societal development and healing.

This is further elaborated as five project objectives:

- To give expression to 'forgotten people' who have been affected by the troubles north and south of the border. The project will provide a publicly accessible means of gaining an insight into the lives, opinions, past and present experiences and hopes for the future of people from different communities and traditions.
- The production of a sustainable oral, text and visual archive for the border counties that records and acknowledges the legacy of the conflict on rural areas.
- Increased community involvement.
- Increase in the willingness of groups and individuals to engage in cross-border contacts.
- Increased level of involvement of socially excluded groups who have not previously been involved in cross-border contacts and developments.

## Process

### ▪ Recruiting and Training Interviewers

From the outset, it was envisaged that a team of 'researchers', themselves being of, or from the border region, or having particular links and affinity with the area, would be trained to undertake the interviews with identified individuals. In this way, it was hoped the project would have legitimacy, sustainability and local ownership. The researchers were seen as an integral part of the project itself. Each interviewer is required to identify, make contact and interview ten individuals within their geographical area.

Advertisements were placed in local newspapers which serve the various border areas to recruit the researchers. In addition, local organisations were contacted to spread the word and advertisements placed in recruitment magazines. Around 60 people applied for the positions. Thirty-two people were interviewed. The project co-ordinators were anxious to have a broad geographical spread as well as gender, religion and age balance. They also looked for strong communication skills, experience in cross-community work, and good IT skills. The project was keen that the interviewers chosen would be self-motivated and have a genuine interest in, commitment to, and ownership of the work.

Having contracted the ten interviewers, the project ran a residential session and four one-day training sessions for the team of researchers. The first session explored the aims of the project, drew up ethical guidelines for the work and mapped the researchers own areas of interest. The ethical guidelines addressed issues such as personal safety, confidentiality, respect and trust. The second training session focused on practicalities, and addressed interviewing skills, taking photographs and gathering of other images from the interviewee. (These could include newspaper cuttings, portraits of interviewees, photographs of the border areas, and /or family photographs, which will be scanned and returned to the interviewee.)

The two main Peace and Reconciliation Consultants have responsibility for maintaining contact with and providing support and guidance to five interviewers each.

### ▪ Recording of Stories

Each researcher is responsible for undertaking ten individual interviews and taking, or assisting the interviewee to take relevant photographs that might illustrate or accompany their stories. Engaging the interviewees and conducting the interviews are agreed in advance and take a standard form.<sup>33</sup> Having identified potential interviewees and secured agreement that the interview will take place, the interviewee is given a Guideline Sheet. This provides them with practical information on how the interview will take place, the length of the interview, and information of what will happen to their recordings.

<sup>33</sup> *Borderlines – Oral Archive Guidelines for Interviewees* offers practical advice on how interviews should be conducted and details the procedure for seeking consent from the interviewee.

The interviews are recorded on minidisks, an affordable and unthreatening method. Photographs are taken with digital cameras. This has the advantage of an LCD screen so there is an opportunity to see the picture straightaway and agree to it being used.

On completion of the interview, the disks are sent to the Gallery of Photography for transcription.<sup>34</sup> A copy of the recording is also made for the interviewee. The researcher is then given the transcription and a copy of the interview to bring it back to the interviewee. The interviewee is encouraged to listen to the recording, read the transcript and advise the researcher of any aspects they would like to remove. If any changes are made to the transcript or recording, the originals are destroyed and a new copy saved for the archive. The interviewee is then asked to complete a consent form, which advises on how the interviews and photographs will be used and agrees restrictions on use. Interviewees can choose to be anonymous if they so wish. The consent form is viewed as protecting the rights of the interviewees. In legal terms, the Borderlines project has the right to use the materials as agreed, but any other use requires separate consent by the interviewee.

The project is ongoing and interviews are currently being conducted. Regular meetings are held with the project managers and researchers to monitor the progress and to identify any possible gaps in information or explore issues that are emerging from the interviews.

## Product

The project has not yet produced any material, but is committed to a number of dissemination methods for the stories collected.

- **Website**

The archive will be made available on the internet for two years from December 2005 and will include sound files of the interviews, written text and photographs.

- **CD-ROM**

Extracts from the archive will be available in CD-ROM format, which will be made available to relevant organisations and institutions. The exact shape that the website and CD will take is yet to be agreed.

- **Book**

It is envisaged that extracts from the interviews, with accompanying photographs, will be published in book form. To bring the archive to the attention of local communities, the book will be launched in several venues along the border, with the assistance of heritage museums, local community organisations and possibly local councils. The book is viewed as a promotional device for the project archive.

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<sup>34</sup> The project has drawn up a set of transcription guidelines to ensure a standardised transcription style and an agreed procedure for return of the transcript to the interviewee for editing.



▪ **Public Exhibition**

Extracts from the archive (possibly from the book itself) and accompanying photographs will be displayed in a public exhibition to reach the wider community. The exhibition will support the launch of the book and will tour a number of venues along the border.

**Archive and Accessibility**

Agreed extracts from recorded interviews, photographic and digital images gathered by the research team will form the archive. As this is an ongoing project, not all issues with regard to the archiving and accessibility of the materials has been fully agreed. The project intends to set up an editorial panel to explore issues of cataloguing and indexing, searchability and access to the archive in its various forms. A number of such issues are yet to be fully resolved by the project. It is proposed that the panel will include interviewees.

**Reference Material**

Borderlines Project Brochure (available by contacting project).

**Timeframe**

October 2004 – Spring 2006 (as current funding stands)

**Contacts**

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## 'Brits Speak Out' Project

'Brits Speak Out' is a book that focuses on the impressions and experiences of British soldiers who served in Northern Ireland after 1969. It was published in 1998.

### Project Background

During the spring of 1998, John Lindsay, a writer/researcher for the Guildhall Press based in Derry / Londonderry, made contact with a number of former British soldiers who had served in Northern Ireland since 1969. His goal was to record the opinions of soldiers and ex-soldiers from as wide a range of backgrounds as possible, and who had served in Northern Ireland during as many different phases of the conflict as possible. These soldiers shared their stories with Lindsay who compiled them into the book entitled *Brits Speak Out – British Soldiers' Impressions of the Northern Ireland Conflict*.

### Process

Identifying and approaching British soldiers to tell their stories of serving in Northern Ireland proved challenging. In the introduction to the book, the author identified one of the difficulties as being the paranoia and suspicion of some as to how the information would be used. An early decision was made not to enlist the help of the Ministry of Defence and the army press department in identifying interviewees, as "Soldiers talking about their experiences at the behest of the MoD would be under enormous pressure to give accounts that coincided with the MoD's vision of what their role *should be*" (from publication). Not working with the MoD did raise its own difficulties, however, as the book documents.

To identify potential interviewees, the author wrote to some 50 local newspapers and magazines in Britain asking soldiers who wished to tell their stories to get in touch. The letter stated the intention to publish a book about the impressions and experiences of British soldiers who served in Northern Ireland on tours of duty in the years since 1969. It requested that anyone interested in sharing their experiences with a wider audience make contact. It clearly stated that the author was interested in hearing opinions, political or otherwise, but had no interest in any information that could jeopardise anyone's personal security. It also stated the book "*should not be a work of propaganda either for the army establishment or for any political or paramilitary grouping. Rather, I intend that at a time when there is some reason for optimism about the future of Northern Ireland, this book will contribute in a small way towards building greater understanding between people who have been, willingly or not, involved in the conflict here.*"

Once contact had been made, interviews were arranged either in person or by telephone. Those who did not wish to be interviewed directly were sent a questionnaire, dealing with their perceptions, views and experiences of Northern Ireland during their service there. (Questions listed in the book.) From all the responses he received—whether by interview, questionnaire, general correspondence or, in some cases, fully written accounts—Lindsay compiled 14 stories for the book.

Research for this book was carried out between October 1997 and June 1998, with a backdrop of multiparty talks, the peace agreement and subsequent referenda. It was a time, according to the author,

of uncertainty about republican and loyalist ceasefires, occasional riots, a spate of sectarian killings around Christmas and the announcement of an inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday. According to the author *"These events may have coloured the opinions of many of the contributors, so I have endeavoured, in the preamble to each soldier's story, to indicate the time at which it was recorded."*

**Product:**

*Brits Speak Out - British Soldiers' Impressions of the Northern Ireland Conflict* (Guildhall Press, 1998)  
Extracts from the book, including the foreword, introduction and three of the 14 individual stories are available at <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/people/accounts/lindsay.htm>

**Dissemination of Learning**

The book reinforced the idea there was a need for a safe storytelling space and was influential in forming Towards Understanding and Healing (of which the author is a board member) and the first residentials, which sought to include all individuals impacted by the conflict. The project website states:

*"In the course of the research it became apparent that there are many combatants and ex-combatants who suffer from social and psychological problems as a consequence of their experiences in Northern Ireland. Among those interviewed, there were soldiers who expressed the need to confront their past and the experience of serving in Northern Ireland. The soldiers who articulated their story felt that describing their experience was in some ways therapeutic. A number of soldiers expressed an interest in revisiting Northern Ireland to engage in dialogue with a community that they perceived as the "enemy." <sup>35</sup>*

**Timeframe:**

Early to late 1998

**Contact:**

John Lindsay

T: 028 71377894

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<sup>35</sup> See [www.thejunction-ni.org/towardsunderstandingandhealing.htm](http://www.thejunction-ni.org/towardsunderstandingandhealing.htm)

## Cost of the Troubles Study

The Cost of the Troubles Study was a research project that aimed to examine the effects of the conflict on the general population, using participatory action research principles. While the main motivation of the project was not storytelling – rather information gathering for research purposes – interviewees were given ultimate control over how their stories would be presented publicly. The presentation of each individual's personal experiences may be viewed as a contribution to telling stories of the conflict.

### Project Development

Following the 1994 ceasefires, a group of people from different communities and backgrounds in Northern Ireland who had direct experience of being bereaved or injured in the Troubles, were brought together to discuss the potential for conducting research and advocacy work around the needs of those affected by the conflict. Following discussions, the group formed The Cost of the Troubles Study. This became a limited company and a recognised charity, with a management structure involving a range of people with direct experience of the effects of the conflict. In partnership with academic researchers the study of the effects of the conflict was undertaken, using participatory action research principles. The research included a mapped distribution of deaths, an exploration of the relationship between deprivation and the geographical distribution of deaths, and a measure of the extent and range of services used by those affected by the conflict, and their evaluation of those services. (From Final Report of the Cost of the Troubles Study)

### Process

As part of the research, detailed qualitative interviews were undertaken with individuals to explore their experiences of the conflict and the needs of those affected by the conflict. These interviews provided qualitative data on the range and diversity of people's experiences and offered a subjective assessment of the effects of the conflict on a range of people interviewed. The interviews also formed the basis of further quantitative research the project would undertake. Interviewees were required to sign consent forms prior to the recording of the interviews. These were transcribed and a transcript returned to the interviewee to make any additions, deletions or amendments. The transcripts were then amended and the original destroyed.

While the interviews do not fall directly under the banner of storytelling in that they formed part of a research project, they were disseminated as stand-alone stories, without commentary from the researchers, in accessible forms, including an exhibition and a publication.

### Product

- Exhibitions:

#### Do You Know What's Happened?

This exhibition is composed of over 20 personal stories, presented in 'poetised' format (short sentences for ease of reading), with excerpts from a further 55 stories. They were presented alongside images and

other statistical findings of the Cost of the Troubles Study research. It was launched in November 1998 and toured a number of venues in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and the UK during 1999 and 2000. The exhibition was accompanied by 140 minutes of tape-recordings of the exhibition text, a 16-page catalogue and a publicity poster. The exhibition is currently in storage.

### **Do You See What I See?**

This is an exhibition and an accompanying publication of young peoples experiences of the Troubles using their own words and photographs. The exhibition was created in partnership with young people from Woodvale Youth Group, Sunningdale Youth Group, Survivors of Trauma in North Belfast, The Alexander Park Project in Belfast, The Peace and Reconciliation Group and St. Eugene's Primary School in Derry / Londonderry and the Cost of the Troubles Study. Children and young people were interviewed or wrote about their experiences of the conflict, their views and their hopes for the future. Belfast Exposed worked with the young people in Belfast in training them to take their own photographs, which were used in both the book and exhibition. Extracts of interviews are presented in the publication, documenting young people's experiences of growing up in the conflict. [See [www.conflictresearch.org.uk/publications/cotts\\_do\\_u\\_c.html](http://www.conflictresearch.org.uk/publications/cotts_do_u_c.html) for extracts from the book.]

*Do You See What I See? Young people's experience of the Troubles in their own words and photographs* (INCORE, Derry / Londonderry, 1998)

- **Publication**

#### **Personal Accounts from Northern Ireland's Troubles: Public Conflict, Private Loss**

This book is based on the stories of individuals who were interviewed for The Cost of the Troubles Study. Edited accounts from people from diverse backgrounds are presented.

*Marie Smyth and Marie-Therese Fay (eds.) Personal Accounts from Northern Ireland's Troubles: Public Conflict, Private Loss. (Pluto Press, London, 2000)*

### **Archiving and Accessibility**

On completion of the study, the Cost of the Troubles Study staff contacted all of those who participated in the qualitative interviews to gain their consent on how to archive their interview transcripts and original unedited tape recordings. The majority of interview transcripts and some tapes have been archived at the Linenhall Library. A number have been embargoed for designated periods of time. All other copies of transcripts and tapes were destroyed.

### **Training and Dissemination of Learning**

- **Film**

#### **"And Then There Was Silence"**

In December 1999 the organisation completed a 55-minute video film based on the work of the project, made by Northern Visions and financed by the United States Institute of Peace. It contains extracts of

interviewees speaking about their experiences of the conflict, compiled by theme. This video is aimed at general viewers and is also designed to be of use in training professionals to deal with the human impact of the conflict. Training materials were designed to accompany the video and to be used in group discussions. Copies of the video are available from the Institute for Conflict Research.

### **Reference Materials**

Final Report: The Cost of the Troubles Study (Cost of the Troubles Study, April 1999)  
see [www.conflictresearch.org.uk/publications/cotts.html](http://www.conflictresearch.org.uk/publications/cotts.html)

### **Timeframe**

1996–1999

### **Contact**

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### *For publications and resources:*

Institute for Conflict Research, Unit 14, North City Business Centre, Duncairn Gardens, Belfast, BT15 2GG

T: 028 90742682

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## Coiste na n-larchimí, Dublin

Coiste na n-larchimí is the umbrella organisation co-coordinating groups and individuals working for the social, economic and emotional well-being of republican ex-prisoners, displaced persons and former activists and their families. The Dublin office of the organisation has undertaken a small storytelling project involving republican ex-prisoners who have contact with the organisation.

### Project Rationale

The organisation felt that it was important to capture the personal experiences of those who had been incarcerated in various prisons, both in Ireland and the UK. They held a number of discussion groups with guest speakers which allowed people the opportunity to tell their experiences. These discussions were recorded and have been archived in DVD format.

The rationale for recording these stories was to ensure that the history of the prison experience would not be lost, or, if it was retold, that it would be accurately done, which they felt has not always been the case in the past. They felt that those who have spent time in prisons, particularly in Britain, were being 'written out of history' and it was important to retain their history.

### Process

Life histories were compiled by interviews and recorded both visually and aurally so they would be available as an historical record of the individual for the future.

### Product

The interviews are stored on DVD.

### Archive and Accessibility

At present, the organisation is holding copies of the DVDs and has no immediate plans to open them to the public. They did not have a process of gaining written consent from the contributors at the time of the recording, so would be required to go back to the individuals for such consent if they were to make the interviews more widely available.

The organisation currently lacks the funding and time to make them more public, for example, as exhibition, although this is something they would like to do in the future in order to raise awareness of the experiences of these ex-prisoners.

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## Cuimhneamh

Cuimhneamh (meaning 'reflection') is a living history project which aims to record the experiences of people living in the border region of south Armagh, north Louth and south Monaghan areas. The project is in its infancy and is currently being run by volunteers.

### Project Development

A group of individuals involved in various community development activities in the south Armagh area came together to discuss an article written by the project co-ordinator about the Dúchas Living History Project (see project description) which someone had come across in a newspaper. They felt that a similar project could usefully be developed in the South Armagh area. A number from this initial group met with the co-ordinator of the Dúchas project to explore how they might set up a similar project in their area. A project proposal was drawn up and a project committee formed. An application was submitted to the local Strategy Partnership and they received Peace and Reconciliation funding to purchase recording equipment and provide for overhead costs such as office rental. The project is currently in the process of establishing an office base at the newly reopened Mullagh Bawn Centre in South Armagh. Funding has been provided from both the Newry and Mourne Local Strategy Partnership and District Council.

### Project Rationale

The aim of Cuimhneamh is to develop an archive of people's memories and experiences of living in the border area of South Armagh from their own perspectives. Through audio/visual interviews, combined with documents and photographs, Cuimhneamh wishes to provide an oral history from local people's own perspective, while trying to encourage a wide spectrum of contributors to share their life experiences.

### Process

Before embarking on collecting stories, a number of training sessions were provided by the project co-ordinator of the Dúchas project on both the practical and ethical aspects of recording of stories. Initial interviews were recorded on audio tape. However, having completed several, the project felt it would be more powerful if the interviewee's face were seen, so they began to use video recordings. In recruiting potential interviewees, individuals whom they know, or have knowledge of within their own community, are approached or are referred by other interviewees. The interviews are currently being conducted by members of the committee, although it is hoped to secure funding for a dedicated worker to manage the project and interviewing. The interviews take a life history approach, asking interviewees to begin where they wish, although there is a focus on the interviewee's personal experience of the conflict.

### Product

Currently around 30 interviews have been conducted, either in audio-tape or video format. No interviews have yet been transcribed and interviews have not been edited. The project intends to return a transcription to the interviewee to confirm the content and make any changes necessary.

### **Archive and Accessibility**

It is hoped that in the future the recordings, photographs and relevant documents will be made accessible to the public through the centre from computer terminals. This is currently in the early stages of development. It is envisaged that the current archive, which contains artefacts, manuscripts and other materials relating to the area, and which is at the Ti Chulainn Cultural Activity Centre could serve as a repository for the recordings.

### **Timeframe**

2003 – present

### **Contact**

Anthony Flynn (Board member), Cuimhneamh, Ti Chulainn, Mullagh Bawn, Bog Road,  
Co. Armagh  
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## Cúnamh

Cúnamh was established in Derry / Londonderry in 1997 as a community-led mental health project. The rationale underpinning the development of the project was that the peace building process needed to cater for the emotional and psychological impact of the conflict upon people's health and well-being. Previously no such service provision existed within republican/nationalist communities as a result of the prevailing mistrust of the statutory sector. (from Cúnamh website) The organisation offers a range of support services including supportive listening, counselling, advocacy, information seminars and essential skills training. Under the banner of 'Creative Remembering' the project has undertaken a number of storytelling projects related to individuals' experiences of the conflict, particularly in the north-west region.

### Project Development

The organisation's focus has been on the mental health and well-being of those who lived through the conflict. As part of the process of supporting its members the organisation recognised the importance of allowing them the opportunity to tell their stories and to engage in creative processes in a supportive and safe environment.

According to the organisation:

*"Genuine healing cannot occur without an acknowledgment of the event or action, which caused the wound. This allows the grieving process to begin and a personal and community healing to occur. The discourse of recent years has sought to exclude an acknowledgment of many individuals' experiences of the conflict, especially those affected by the actions of the State and State sponsored forces. Throughout the past five years Cúnamh has co-coordinated many initiatives aimed at collating past experiences, exploring the impact of these experiences, and transforming the knowledge gained into positive learning opportunities for the future."* (from Cúnamh website)

### Project Rationale

The organisation view its creative remembering projects as an opportunity for people to explore their own stories and experiences and take their experiences from the private to the public. They view this as a therapeutic aspect, although it is not a counselling process, which the organisation offers as a separate service.

### Na Cuimhneacháin

An ongoing oral history project undertaken by Cúnamh is 'Na Cuimhneacháin' (Memories) which was begun as an opportunity for people to have their experiences of the conflict recorded and to be placed in the public domain via the organisation's website.

- Project Rationale

The rationale behind the project came from a sense within the republican community that the political and policy discourse around victims of the conflict was becoming divisive, hierarchies were forming and funding decisions were less than transparent. The organisation felt that working within this environment, they had an obligation to challenge the discourse and advocate for those whose experiences were not being acknowledged. They wished to give the 'silent voices' a platform through telling their stories.

- Process

Interviews are carried out by a Cúnamh staff member, who also is a trained counsellor, and who also undertook their transcription. The project co-coordinator then reads the interview and makes any small changes necessary to organise the material coherently. The interviews are returned to the contributor for them to remove anything they do not wish to have in the public domain or make any corrections.

- Product

The entire (possibly amended) transcripts are then placed on the organisations website, listed by name of the individual. The vast majority of interviewees give permission to have their stories on the website, although they are given the opportunity to have the tape and transcript destroyed or embargoed for some time. Around 40 stories are currently available in PDF format.

- Derry News

Since March 2003, a local newspaper *Derry News* has published an edited account of stories from the Na Cuimhneacháin project.

The organisation approached the newspaper with the idea of printing stories collected by Cúnamh and any other individual or organisation wishing to submit their own story of their experiences of the conflict. A general word-count and length of the stories was agreed, although there is some flexibility in this, and a story may run over more than one week. The stories generally appear weekly unless the newspaper holds a story back due to lack of space.

This has enabled a broader community access to the project and has provided an opportunity for individuals who are not Cúnamh users to participate. The project has encouraged other groups supporting those affected by the conflict (via the local trauma advisory panel) to collect or encourage their members to contribute to the series, but, to date, only one story published has come from an individual unconnected to Cúnamh.

- Archive and Accessibility

The edited transcript of the interviews is currently available on the project's website at [www.cunamh.org/oral\\_history\\_project.asp?x=5](http://www.cunamh.org/oral_history_project.asp?x=5) Around 40 stories are available on website in PDF format.

The project holds the original tape and transcript of the interviews on file and would have to seek permission from the interviewees if they were to be placed in the public domain in any other format than

has been currently specified in the consent form. A copy of the published piece in the *Derry News* is also stored by Cúnamh.

### **'Annie's Bar' Project**

In December 1972, Annie's Bar, in the Top of the Hill Gobnascale, Derry was attacked by Loyalist gunmen. Five men watching a football match were killed and those responsible for the attack was never fully established. Given the scale of deaths during 1972, it was felt that this event had been forgotten by many. Prompted by the upcoming 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tragedy, Cúnamh made contact with some of the surviving family members in August 2002 and invited them to a special 'Remembrance Service' dedicated to all those who lost their lives during the conflict. The organisation and a number of local community activists undertook to compile a publication to acknowledge those who died and provide an opportunity for the families and friends of the bereaved to meet, many for the first time.

- **Process**

In October 2002, volunteers conducted interviews with one person from each of the five families who lost loved ones. The interviewees were given the opportunity to retell memories they had of their family members and recount the events on the day of the shooting and thereafter. A commemorative booklet was produced, whose foreword placed the event in the context of the time. It contained memories of the five men by surviving family members and a reflection from Eamonn McCann, local writer and journalist. The publication launch provided an opportunity for the families to meet with each other.

- **Product**

*The Forgotten Massacre: Annie's Bar, Top of the Hill, 20 December 1972.* (Cunamh, 2002)

### **Drama: Teacht Abhaile**

This project initially began as group of women who met under the auspices of Cúnamh to share their experiences of being partners or wives of political prisoners. Through their group discussions common issues emerged, such as isolation, low self-esteem, poverty and loneliness. The group felt it was important to bring some of their experiences from the private to the public to demystify, destigmatise and normalise their experiences for others. It was agreed that the women's experiences would be recorded. This was viewed as being part of the process of healing for them and their need to be acknowledged, particularly within the republican community.

- **Process**

Interviews were undertaken by Cúnamh staff and were transcribed in their entirety. Copies of the transcripts were given back to the individuals for their own record and to make any amendments they felt were necessary. The transcripts were then edited to identify the key themes that had emerged from the discussions. It was agreed that the group would work with these themes to create a drama based on their experiences. A facilitator / writer was brought in to work with the women on the writing and production of a drama, which was seen as an empowering process for all participants. The drama was

called 'Teacht Abhaile' and dealt with the impact of imprisonment (and subsequent release) on the families 'outside'. The play was performed a number of times in 2000. All but one member of the cast had family members who had been imprisoned.

A second drama emerged from a group of female ex-prisoners, whose stories were also recorded, using the same approach. A facilitator was brought in to work with the women on the writing of the drama, but the process was not as participatory as previously.

- Archive and Accessibility

The original interviews and transcripts from the drama production are held by Cúnamh. If the interviews were to be made more public or accessible, the organisation would have to seek additional consent from the participants, as the contracts signed only allowed permission for the stories to be used for the purposes of the drama project and by Cúnamh and the facilitator. A number of the women involved would have had their stories recorded again for the purposes of the oral history project for the *Derry News*. (see under Na Cuimhneachain)

In addition, Cunamh members have attended workshops to create squares of deceased loved ones for a 'Remembrance Quilt', co-coordinated by Relatives for Justice.

### Timeframe

1997 – present

### Contact

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## Falls Community Council - Dúchas Living History Project

The Dúchas project was developed by Falls Community Council in 1999 to record the experience of the conflict in nationalist West Belfast through oral history accounts. The purpose of the archive is to enable people to record their history and experiences in a way that allows for exploration and learning. Falls Community Council plan to create a centre where people can visit and access this history of the conflict told by people in their own words in oral history narratives.

### Project Development

Falls Community Council is a community development organisation set up in 1974 to work for economic justice and social inclusion for the community in West Belfast. The idea for the Dúchas archive took root at the start of the peace process in the mid 1990s when Falls Community Council began to discuss the significance of history, memory and peace building. Underpinning the discussions was the belief that enabling a community deeply affected by the conflict to contribute their experience to a historical record could contribute to the process of change.

Funding to develop the project was secured from the European Special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (Peace 1) in 1999 and the project was set up in December of that year. A separate advisory panel to guide the project was also set up. This met frequently in the initial years of the project as principles and procedures were agreed. These structures are now in place and the panel now meets only when a policy issue is under discussion.

The early work of the project focused on the establishment of the structures for undertaking oral history recordings, choosing the focus for the first series of interviews, undertaking background research, identifying and approaching contributors. Only then were interviews undertaken and the archiving of recordings and transcripts begun.

When the project first began it tended to focus on specific events that had particular significance to the area, such as the attacks on Catholic homes in the Clonard and Divis areas of the city in 1969, the introduction of internment in 1971 and the hunger strikes of 1980/81, and sought interviewees who had experience of these turbulent times. Prior to interviewing, the project undertook documentary research on the period under focus.<sup>36</sup>

At an early stage in the development of the project it was decided to expand the interviews to include a life history approach. This was the result of researching and learning from other oral history projects. The project is now committed to this method which allows a more holistic view of the interviewee and places

<sup>36</sup> The pros and cons of such as approach are discussed in more detail in 'Recording Oral History: Practical and Ethical Issues', in *Hear and Now ... and Then ... :Developments in Victims and Survivors Work* (NIVT, January 2001)

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their experience within a broader context of their life story. It is felt that this approach also facilitates a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the conflict.

The project began with two members of staff. It currently has one full-time staff member. The project has received core funding from the first European Special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation and the Irish Government's Department of Foreign Affairs Reconciliation Fund.

### **Project Rationale**

The Dúchas project is motivated firstly by the belief that it is important to 'make the past count.' In this sense the archive is an instrument for bearing witness about the past in order to create change in the future.

The project feels that many aspects of the experience of the conflict have been suppressed or ignored and that there is an imperative to reveal this hidden history. Oral history is viewed as a method which can give a more complex and nuanced account of history, as well as giving voice to those most marginalised. In doing so, it is felt that there is the potential for deeper understanding and for a history that places 'ordinary' people as agents rather than objects of history.<sup>37</sup>

While the process of telling their story might bring therapeutic benefits to interviewees and a number have acknowledged that this has been the case, the project views 'healing' as an individual process. The project seeks to create the conditions in which such benefits may happen rather than strive for this as a primary outcome of the oral history process.

### **Process**

In the main, the project approaches individuals to record their history. Individuals are identified either through local knowledge, community development organisations with which they have connections, through research into particular events, themes or communities (for example, displacement, discrimination and imprisonment) and following leads. The project is particularly interested in interviewing older people so as not to lose their memories of events, people and experiences. The project is committed to recording the widest possible range of experience and also aims to have equal numbers of men and women in the archive.

Having researched and explored other formats, the project records interviews on minidisk because of the sound quality and the ease of transfer to computer sound files.

Although most of the interviews have been carried out by two staff members of the project, a number have been gathered by volunteers who received training. An oral history training course has been designed by the project and covers ethical issues, interview techniques, procedures and use of

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<sup>37</sup> *ibid*



equipment. This training course was advertised in the local newspapers and individuals applied to attend. The course has been run four times. The project encourages the participation of volunteer interviewers because it increases community ownership in the oral history process – both by the volunteers themselves and the people they select to interview, who might not otherwise be known to the project.

All interviewees are given a copy of 'Information for Contributors' which explains the background and rationale for the project, the interviewees' rights over the recording and Dúchas' responsibility for the recording which they hold in the archive.

All interviewees receive a copy of their recording on tape and a full transcript of the interview. They are given the opportunity to delete any part of the interview directly following the interview or after hearing it or reading the transcript. Dúchas give assurances that any deletions that are requested are made to all copies of the recording or transcript. Interviewees sign a permission form in order to release the interview into the public archive.

### **Product**

All interviews are placed in a public digital archive for access by any visitor. Digital copies of the recordings and the interview transcripts are made so that interviews can be read or listened to. The archive is an interactive computer database which can be searched by defined criteria or by keyword.

Material from the archive has been published as a video, in print and as a CD.

A decision was made early in the project that full names would be given for all archived interviews and interviewees are made aware of this from the outset. To date, forty three interviews are accessible in the archive. Only one interview is currently under embargo at the request of the individual and is not available on the public archive.

### **Archiving and Accessibility**

Once completed and edited, if requested, the minidisks of the interviews are backed up on cassette tape and CD. The master copies are archived in a safe.

The general public have access to both the audio recordings and transcripts of the interviews at the Dúchas project on computer terminals. Currently the archive is available by appointment. By August 2005 visitors will be able to access the archive in a public room in Falls Community Council with four computer terminals. In the longer term there are plans to develop a living history and peacebuilding centre. This will be located along with the rest of Falls Community Council's work in the St Comgall's property recently purchased by Falls Community Council.

The project policy with regard to the archive is that if researchers, academics or journalists wish to use quotes from the interviews, they are asked to take a note of the sections they are interested in and to

pass them to the project co-ordinator. The project co-ordinator then contacts the individuals concerned and requests their permission for use of the quote. While it is felt this process is important in terms of the interviewee maintaining control over their stories and reducing any fears of being misquoted, it is very time-consuming. The project is currently exploring other ways in which consent can be obtained.

There are no current plans to make the archive available on the internet, as this is seen as a significant step in terms of accessibility which would have to be explored. However, with the development of the St. Comgall's property by Falls Community Council, the intention will be to make the archive a central part of the centre and to use the archive for educational purposes.

### **Training and Dissemination of Learning**

The project co-ordinator has provided training on both practical and ethical considerations in relation to the recording of stories for a number of groups and individuals who are considering or are undertaking such work. There have been a number of publications and presentations that reflect on the material in the archive and its significance. The project has developed education materials from the archive for courses on young people and citizenship, and women and peacebuilding.

### **Reference Material**

'Recording Oral History: Practical and Ethical Issues' in *Hear and Now...and Then...: Developments in Victims and Survivors Work* (NIVT, January 2001)

'Making History: Dúchas, Falls Community Council's Oral History Archive' in *Contexts*, Volume 2, Issue 1/2003 (CAFÉ, Dublin) see [www.communityartsireland.com/](http://www.communityartsireland.com/)

Written Evidence (Ev325) in *Ways of Dealing with Northern Ireland's past: Interim report – Victims and Survivors* Tenth Report of Session 2004-05 Volume II (House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee)

'Narratives of political activism from women in West Belfast' in *Irish Women and Nationalism* (2004) edited by Margaret Ward and Louise Ryan.

### **Time Period**

December 1999 – present

### **Contact**

Claire Hackett, Dúchas Living History Project, Falls Community Council, 275-277 Falls Road, Belfast, BT12 6FD

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## ***'epilogues'* - Gaslight Productions**

Based in Derry, Gaslight Productions was formed in 1998 by Stephen Gargan, Jim Keys and Tony Doherty to exploit the potential of new media for progressive education. In 1999 the company was commissioned by Channel 4 to undertake the research and development of a script on Bloody Sunday, which resulted in the production of *SUNDAY*, a drama documentary film of the events of Bloody Sunday in 1972. Following from this experience, Gaslight Productions are currently engaged in the development of a project entitled *'epilogues'* which is an accessible workshop based education programme. It utilises multimedia interactive learning tools in the form of a DVD and web site to engage grassroots communities in the everyday work of peace-building and responsible citizenship that is the positive side of conflict transformation. The core of the programme is based upon the first-hand narratives of people who have been affected by the conflict. The project's development was funded by the Derry City Council area Local Strategy Partnership under the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation and by the Community Relations Council with support from the Nerve Centre.

### **Project Development**

The *'epilogues'* project emerged from the experience of working on the development and production of *SUNDAY* about the events of Bloody Sunday. While 'SUNDAY' looked at one key event of the conflict primarily from the perspective of the community that suffered it, it became increasingly clear to Gaslight as they heard the detail of individual testimonies that the dynamic of conflict always requires the burial of stories on all sides. This provoked the realisation that, if Gaslight's work was to make a meaningful contribution to the dynamic of peacebuilding then it needed to be about developing the mechanisms to excavate those stories. Coming out of *SUNDAY* Stephen Gargan was also profoundly aware of both the power and limitations of television to deal with these stories and realised the need for mechanisms to create the time and space that would allow for a more comprehensive exploration of them. It was these insights that shaped the concept that would become *'epilogues'*.

Gaslight began to discuss the possibility of exploring the conflict in its widest sense using storytelling and peoples' personal experiences as a tool for discussion and debate to open out the issues.

### **Project Rationale**

The overall aim of the project is to engage grassroots communities in the everyday work of peace-building and responsible citizenship that is the positive side of conflict transformation. Gaslight understands the potential of film as a means of challenging peoples' pre-conceived ideas. According to the project, it will do this by exploring, within the model of a democratic society, six key themes that are central to an understanding of violent political conflict: Violence, Loss, Revenge, Forgiveness, Justice and Human Rights. The exploration will be deepened through direct engagement with the perspectives of both victims and former combatants of, the violent political conflict in and about Northern Ireland.

At the core of the programme's methodology are three insights a) the understanding that drama has the power to help us transcend the culturally constructed 'sides' of the conflict and give us a deeper appreciation of universal human responses to violence and loss that fuel conflict; b) that there is nothing

more poignant than the testimonies (the *'epilogues'*) of people who have lived or suffered conflict when they have the courage to speak truthfully of their experience and c) that the insight gained from this deeper understanding of conflict powerfully underscores the central importance of justice and human rights and the need for all of us to become active citizens in developing and promoting those values. In their own words: "Gaslight's interest is in excavating, developing and ultimately producing stories that have the power to resonate and speak to people at a universal level. It's about empowering people and making a contribution towards a greater understanding of different situations and differing perspectives." The programme aims are to:

- give participants both an overview, and an insight into, the underlying causes of conflict;
- help develop a culture of justice and human rights;
- better equip citizens to play an active role in peacebuilding.

### Process

Gaslight began consultations with around 50 organisations, institutions and groups in Northern Ireland and the Republic including those representing both victims of the conflict and ex-combatants to discuss the concept of developing an educational DVD and related workshops and get their advice and input. These discussions formed the basis of the first concept paper on the project. The project identified the six key themes which would form the basis of the workshop discussions.

In January 2004, Gaslight began a series of interviews with individuals who had been directly affected by the conflict and individuals who have directly participated in it. According to Gaslight *"These have been sensitively selected to include the key voices that comprise all parties to the conflict."* Many of the individuals were approached via existing contacts, many made during the consultation phase, or through support organisations.

The interviews were conducted to allow people the opportunity to present their life experiences and how the conflict has affected them. The interview questions were structured in such a way as to explore the project's six key themes. All interviews were conducted by the project team and were recorded on digital video.

33 interviews were conducted in all and represent a broad range of individuals in terms of their cultural background, political opinion, gender and age. The interviews averaged three hours in length. Each individual interviewee maintains control over their interview. The interviews are currently being edited into sections around the six themes previously identified. Gaslight will go back to the interviewees to show them the material they wish to use, delete changes where necessary and secure permission for use of the interviews in the finished DVD. The DVD will be the core resource of the eight-week Workshop Education Programme (NIOCN Accredited Level 2). It will be supported by a dedicated project website. Additionally, a Training-the-Trainer Programme will be developed in Year 1 of its three-year Funded Delivery Phase. This programme will train facilitators, drawn from the project's various target groups and the key agencies working within the conflict transformation sector who will then be equipped to cascade the learning within their own constituencies.

An *'epilogues'* prototype DVD was piloted with some 20 organisations and institutions across the project's target groups working with the legacy of the conflict. The feedback across all of the sessions was, without exception, extremely positive.

The project has recently secured substantial funding from the International Fund for Ireland for a major element of its planned three-year Funded Delivery Phase, scheduled to come on line in May 2005. This initial delivery is designed to establish this innovative multimedia approach to conflict transformation and integrate it into the portfolio of the organisations and institutions working with the legacy of the conflict within the project's respective target group.

## Product

*'epilogues'* - a multimedia Workshop Education Programme (WEP) exploring the underlying causes of conflict.

- **DVD**

The central resource of this innovative approach to conflict transformation is the *'epilogues'* DVD. It contains interviews with victims who have suffered as a result of the conflict and with former combatants who have directly participated in it. Each of the programmes six themes is introduced by selected extracts from a number of TV dramas that explore conflict. According to the project:

These extracts will function as dramatic illustrations of the key themes that the interviews will go on to explore in greater depth. It is the interviews themselves that will bring to the resource the reality of the violent political conflict and the tragic consequences of such a conflict on our society as a whole. In revealing the depth of the experience of loss on all sides, *'epilogues'* will underscore the centrality of human rights and justice in building a peaceful society.

- **Workshop Education Programme (WEP)**

When completed, the programme will consist of eight modules delivered over eight weeks, with an introductory module to outline the programme / approach; six theme specific modules, and a concluding module to integrate the learning and six hours of personal study. Each module will consist of a facilitated three-hour exploration of the respective theme. According to the project:

"While participants will find voices on the DVD that echo their own perspective, they will equally encounter voices that challenge it. The facilitation in the WEP and the personal study exercises will deepen this experience by inviting participants to reflect not only on their own experience but from the perspective of 'the other.'"

As mentioned above the programme will be NIOCN Level 2 accredited. The programme is intended to be used with identified constituencies, such as victims of political violence; ex-prisoners; former members of state security forces; youth; teachers and adult education providers; community activist and community relations workers; international students of peace and conflict studies.

- **Website**

The *workshop education programme* will require participants to use the *"epilogues"* website ([www.epilogues.net](http://www.epilogues.net) currently under construction) to complete specific exercises. The web site will have

two main educational functions. It will provide supporting information, primarily of a factual nature, on the interviewees' stories and the incidents referred to in their interviews. It will also be the interface to direct participants to other web-based and non web-based sources of information on the conflict and conflict transformation in an international context.

- **The Training-the-Trainer Programme (TTTP):**

The TTTP will train facilitators, drawn from the project's various target groups and the key agencies working within the conflict transformation sector, who will then be equipped to cascade the learning within their own constituencies. The completed Training-the-Trainer programme will be NIOCN Level 3 accredited.

### **Archiving and Accessibility**

The audiotaped recordings of the interviews conducted as part of the development of the *SUNDAY* film are currently held by Gaslight Productions and additional consent would be required from the contributors if they were to be placed in an archive or released more generally to the public.

The interviews conducted for '*epilogues*' are currently held by Gaslight Productions.

### **Timeframe**

The "*epilogues*" Development Phase commenced in April 2003 and will conclude in May 2005. The Funded Delivery Phase will commence in May 2005 and is scheduled to conclude in May 2008 with the project to become self sustaining thereafter.

### **Contact**

Stephen Gargan, Co-Director, '*epilogues*' Project, Gaslight Productions, 1 Westend Park, Bogside, Derry, BT 48 9JF

T: 028 71308980

F: 028 71308980

E: [sgargan@gofree.indigo.ie](mailto:sgargan@gofree.indigo.ie)

W: [www.epilogues.net](http://www.epilogues.net)

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## FAIR

FAIR (Families Acting for Victims' Relatives) is a victims organisation '*working for the interests of the innocent of terrorist victims based in South Armagh.*' (organisation website) They provide a range of support services for those affected by the conflict including befriending and advocacy services. Over the past number of years, the organisation has recorded the stories of individuals who have been affected by the conflict in the South Armagh area.

### Project Development

According to the co-ordinator, the telling of personal stories has taken place both in public settings such as meetings, conferences, speaking with journalists, and in more private settings since the organisation's establishment. This is ongoing work and ties in with the rationale for recording of stories. The organisation identified that people had felt 'lost and betrayed' in the past and there was a growing wish for them to tell their stories, particularly since the ceasefires. The group decided that they would offer the opportunity for people to tell their stories in a safe and supportive environment.

### Project Rationale

The major motivation behind the recording and documenting of people's experiences presented by the organisation is to allow people the opportunity to tell 'their side of the story', which they feel has been unheard in the past. They view the public accessibility to the archive of stories as having an educational role in terms of breaking the cycle of violence of the past. They also feel that the telling of individual stories has a therapeutic or healing aspect.

According to the co-ordinator, many of those from the South Armagh area who were killed were single men. Many of their friends or family members fear that they might be forgotten as they did not have an immediate family to think of them, and so feel a wish to have their stories recorded.

### Process

The most common way in which individuals eventually come to tell their stories is by coming in to contact with the organisation and beginning to talk to those involved about their experiences. After a few times, the individuals may be asked if they are interested in recording their stories of what took place and how it has affected them. According to the co-ordinator, the vast majority of people agree. Stories are either recorded on audiotapes or the interviewee takes notes and writes up the story in the first person. At present, the interviewees have not been offered the opportunity to listen to the stories or to amend the audio-tape. Few of the tapes have been transcribed to date.

In addition, a number of individuals have written down their stories and submitted them to the archive.

Most interviews have been conducted by the co-ordinator, although other staff members have also been involved. No outside facilitators have been brought in as it is felt it is important to develop trust between interviewer and interviewee over time.

### **Product**

Currently, audiotapes of interviews are held by FAIR with no public access available. Four personal stories are currently available on the organisation's website (see [www.victims.org.uk/stories.html](http://www.victims.org.uk/stories.html)). There are plans to transcribe the tapes and make them available in both written and audio form on the website, funding and time permitting. Although the interviews have not been counted, the organisation believes there are over 100 tapes and written notes in their archives.

### **Archiving and Accessibility**

Currently there is no public access to the stories held by the organisation aside from the four available on the website. The organisation's long term goal is to establish a 'Living Memorial Centre' where all the stories can be archived and made accessible to the public. For more information on the proposed centre, see ([www.victims.org.uk/lmc.html](http://www.victims.org.uk/lmc.html)). If established, interviewees would have to be approached to grant permission for their stories to be made public as no consent forms have been signed to date.

The project co-ordinator expressed concerns about any proposal for a living museum about the conflict in Northern Ireland as he felt that many of their members would have difficulty in having their stories displayed alongside those of perpetrators of violence, although he felt that this view may change in the future.

### **Contact**

William Frazer, Project Coordinator, 18 Mowhan Road, Markethill, Co. Armagh, BT60 1RQ

T: 028 3755 2619

F: 028 3755 2719

E: [info@victims.org.uk](mailto:info@victims.org.uk)

W: [www.victims.org.uk](http://www.victims.org.uk)



## Farset Community Think Tanks Project

The Farset Community Think Tanks Project emerged as a result of the launch of Island Pamphlets in 1993, which was a series of booklets seeking to open up debate on historical, cultural, socio-economic and political matters pertinent to Northern Irish society. The booklets developed as community groups became involved in the compiling of such pamphlets as a means of exploring, articulating and debating different opinions, experiences and perspectives on important and relevant issues. The Farset Community Think Tanks Project has now developed to with an established methodology, involving the recording of a series of group discussions, culminating in the publication of edited pamphlets documenting the discussions. Much of the facilitated discussions involve the sharing of people's individual experiences of the conflict and it is this aspect of the project which is the focus of this description.

### Project Development

The project founder and co-ordinator has been involved in community activity in Northern Ireland since 1968. Over the course of his work, he came to realise the difficulty in accessing views that were at variance with those being presented by the media. He felt that people had no real avenues to express their opinions and experiences, either publicly or privately. While opportunities for individuals to express their views did begin to emerge later, he viewed avenues such as phone-in radio discussions as adversarial and not providing people with the opportunity to fully reflect on their experiences or offer opportunity for personal exploration and change.

He began compiling a series of pamphlets, which were mainly history-based, and some plays that he wrote himself. Over time, the process developed as small group discussions which allowed people the opportunity to discuss issues of concern to them. Later, he responded to requests for information from communities who had seen the pamphlets or knew of his work. During this time, he was also being asked to document the discussions at public community conferences on relevant issues. Over time, the 'think tanks' process developed which could be broadly described as falling under three 'themes', namely:

- geographically based, e.g. issues facing an area and what has gone on;
- sectoral based, e.g. young people, ex-prisoners, victims;
- issue-based, e.g. cross-community work.

### Project Rationale

The rationale for the think tanks is the opportunity for ordinary people to express themselves, have their views documented and disseminated to others, many of whom they might not be in a position to have a direct conversation with. The project co-ordinator sees storytelling as often the best way for people to explain an issue by using personal experiences and giving it context. The project co-ordinator also feels that the process can be therapeutic, as it provides people with an outlet for their opinions and a sense of purpose that they are involved in attempts to get things moving on and changing. Groups utilise the pamphlet to explain what they are doing, raise awareness and for funding purposes.

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## Process

Usually, groups or organisations approach the project co-ordinator with an identifiable problem or issue they wish to discuss. He asks that the group organise another group that wish to participate in a think tank discussion and agree to engage in a conversation about the issue. These can be people who have opposing opinion; in fact, a diverse group of people with differing opinions is encouraged. The groups are not necessarily cross-community and the group themselves determine who should be involved, the venue, time of meeting, and so on.

In consultation with the group or organisation, a rough agenda is agreed and some basic guidelines and ground rules are set. The groups usually number between 8-12 people, although they have been both larger and smaller. The group are told that the discussion will be recorded and that the purpose of the pamphlet is to publish people's opinions and experiences and get a sense of the person and their lives. The discussion is confidential and the tape is destroyed after having been transcribed. It is explained that the pamphlet will be distributed to a broad range of groups and organisations and disseminated widely. Although the project co-ordinator begins by leading the discussion little facilitation is required once the group gains confidence in conducting it themselves.

The group usually meet three times for discussion, and mostly a fourth time to discuss the draft document and any changes they would like. If the group cannot meet, then they are sent copies of the transcript individually and requested to provide feedback.

## Product

The entire discussion is transcribed verbatim and then edited by the project co-ordinator. Although the discussion is usually trimmed by about 50 per cent, this is mostly to avoid repetition and provide some coherence of the discussion for the reader, not to censor what anyone has said. One of the goals of the editing is to retain as much of the personal stories necessary to be sure that each point made comes across clearly.

In some cases, the draft stage may be moved forward and the group provided with a copy of discussion before further meeting, so they can judge if they feel there might be something missing from the discussion. In either case, each member of the discussion group gets an edited copy and is asked to read it and identify anything they would which to be removed or amended. According to the project co-ordinator, this is an important part of the process as people often are surprised by what they have said, want something removed because it might be perceived differently than they anticipated or hoped. The participants are asked two questions:

1. Is this an accurate account of what was said?
2. Even if it is accurate, does it reflect what you wanted to say or put across?

Participants names are not used in the body of the documents and details of their story might be altered so they are not as easily recognisable to the reader. However, the project co-ordinator admits that, in reality, this does not fully guarantee anonymity.

### **Archive and Accessibility**

From the outset, the participants are informed that the early (unedited) drafts of the discussions are destroyed and will never be released into the public domain unless they release the draft copies that they themselves have been given. All recordings of discussions are destroyed.

### **References**

*A full list of Pamphlets produced by the Farset Community Think Tanks Project is available by contacting them (below). Pamphlets which included people's personal experiences of the conflict in particular include:*

Young People Speak Out: Newhill Youth Development Team (June 1999, Pamphlet No. 20)

Seeds of Hope: An Exploration by the 'Seeds of Hope' ex-prisoners Think Tank (March 2000, Pamphlet No. 27)

Left in Limbo: The experience of prisoners' children (in collaboration with Tar Anall) (November 2000, Pamphlet no. 31)

The forgotten victims: H.U.R.T. Victims Support Group (October 2001, Pamphlet no. 39)

The unequal victims: Loughgall Truth and Justice Campaign (October 2001, Pamphlet No. 40)

Turf Lodge Reminiscences: Voices Women's Group: Turf Lodge (in collaboration with New Voices) (April 2002, Pamphlet No. 43)

In search of a Haven: Haven, victims support group, South Belfast (in collaboration with New Voices) (April 2002, Pamphlet no. 44)

Shared Memories: Reminiscences by Springfield 50-plus inter-community group (March 2003, Pamphlet No. 49)

A lifetime's legacy: A personal exploration by members of WAVE Trauma Centre (March 2003, Pamphlet No. 52)

A Safe Place: An Exploration of the work of the Koram Centre, Strabane. (background and details of the organisation, why people became volunteers, the clients and their problems and services provided).

**Timeframe**

1993 – present

**Contact:**

Michael Hall, Project Co-ordinator, Farset Community Think Tanks Project, 638 Springfield Road, Belfast,  
BT12 7DY

T: 028 90778771

## Fírinne

Fírinne (meaning Truth) was established in the South Fermanagh area in 1998 by a group of people and their families who had been affected, either directly or indirectly, by State violence. The purpose of the group as stated is to:

- demand the truth from the British Government on its policy of state sponsored violence in Ireland;
- make contact with others in similar circumstances throughout County Fermanagh;
- document these experiences for posterity;
- have these experiences acknowledged by the State;
- address the inequality of victimhood;
- offer support and advice to all those affected by State violence;
- monitor ongoing abuses of human rights.

In light of the second purpose, the organisation undertook a storytelling project aimed at recording people's experiences of the conflict in the South Fermanagh area.

### Project Development

The concept of the storytelling project emerged from the early days of the organisation's establishment and development. It was felt that a safe space needed to be created in which individuals' experiences of the conflict could be articulated, shared, discussed and acknowledged. From their early discussions and events the Management Committee recognised that people were already beginning to informally tell their stories, and for many it was the first time they had had a space and opportunity to do so.

### Project Rationale

One of the initial objectives in establishing the organisation was for individuals to have their experiences documented for posterity and have them acknowledged, not just within their community, but the wider community, and particularly to highlight the sanctioned policy by the state. They wished to address what they felt were the inequalities of victimhood which were created and to document stories of intimidation and repeated harassment. In doing so, they hoped that this would serve to monitor ongoing human rights abuses and to assist people in contacting others of like experiences. The project felt the feedback from those who participated in recording the stories was positive and individuals expressed the view that it was very useful, and were pleased that their stories were being heard for the first time, acknowledged by a support group and documented.

### Process

Interviews are recorded on audiotape with a range of people from the rural Fermanagh area who have various experiences of conflict related State violence – either they have been bereaved, injured, suffered harassment or intimidation. Interviews take place in the individual's home or a place which they indicated would be most comfortable for them. All interviewees are offered other support services if they felt it was

necessary. Before stories are recorded, the interviewer explains how the process will work and consent forms are signed.

Interviews are then transcribed and edited for publication. An edited version is then returned to the interviewee who can make any changes necessary.

### **Product**

*The Untold Truth* (Fírinne, 2004)

A first volume of stories (ten in all) was compiled and published in 2004 entitled *The Untold Truth*. There are contributions from former republican prisoners, local people recounting experiences of harassment and farmers affected by the closures of border roads. As a result of the interest in the first publication, a second book is being planned, which they hope to produce as a DVD also.

### **Archive and Accessibility**

Currently the organisation holds both the original tapes and transcripts of the interviews.

### **Timeframe**

2002 - present

### **Contact**

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F: 028 67723602

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## Goitse - Carlann Project

Goitse is a support group based in the Lurgan area which providing support to ex-prisoners, their families and the local population in the Lurgan – Portadown – Craigavon areas. The organisation provides classes in computers, Irish language and traditional music as well as facilitating courses on parenting skills, self-development, community leadership training, child protection, peer education and capacity building. The project has conducted a few interviews with republicans from the Lurgan – Portadown – Craigavon area of Northern Ireland.

### Project Development

The Carlann project to document experiences of the conflict is only the early stages of development and a small number of interviews to date, as a result of limited funding and a lack of time. There are plans to begin collecting stories again in the summer of 2005.

### Project Rationale

The motivation was to capture tell the stories of Republicans as it was felt that their experiences are being forgotten and should be available for future generations as an educational tool. It is hoped that in the future the stories might form the basis of an exhibition documenting individuals' experiences of the conflict or might be placed within a relevant museum.

### Process

The catchment area of the interviewees is the general north Co. Armagh area, taking in the towns in Craigavon, Portadown, Lurgan and the surrounding areas. Through the organisations' own contacts, both members and non-members, interviewees are approached and asked if they are interested in having their stories recorded. In addition, they are asked other to give them names of others who might be interested and they are then approached.

The interviews take the form of a life history and are recorded on audio-cassette. Interviewees are requested to sign a consent form about archiving and dissemination. The organisation sought advice from the Dúchas Living History Project (see project description) with regard to the practical aspects of recording stories and gaining consent from the interviewees.

### Product

To date, no interviews have been transcribed and exist solely in audio form.

### Archive and Accessibility

The organisation is storing the interviews securely and intends to transcribe them when possible. No firm plans have been made to date.

**Contact**

Paddy O'Dowd, Project Coordinator, Goitse, 2e Prentice Yard, Woodville Street, Lurgan, Co. Armagh

T: 028 38316762

F: 028 38341218



## Healing of Memories Process

The Healing of Memories (HoM) is a workshop based process which originated in South Africa and has been adapted and developed in Northern Ireland by a number of experienced facilitators who have been trained in the process, initially by the South African Healing of Memories Project. The workshop involves small groups of individuals brought together to share their experiences within a safe and facilitated space. The Conflict Trauma Resource Centre, which inherited this project from Kairos, and other independent facilitators have organised Healing of Memories events in Northern Ireland over the past five years.

### Project Development

The Institute for Healing of Memories was set up in August 1998 in South Africa, having grown out of the Healing of Memories Chaplaincy Project of the Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture.

Headed by Fr. Michael Lapsley, the Institute for Healing of Memories is a trust that seeks to contribute to the healing of individuals, communities and nations. They offer Healing of Memories activities, such as workshops, seminars, talks and sermons. When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up, it was obvious that only a minority of South Africans would have the opportunity to tell their story before the Truth Commission. It was argued that platforms needed to be provided for all South Africans to tell their stories, and it was in this context that the Healing of Memories workshops were developed as a parallel process to the then forthcoming Truth Commission.

A two-day HoM residential workshop was developed to work with small groups. Initially the process was developed to deal with political violence and its aftermath but more recently it has begun to include people who have been physically, emotionally or psychologically damaged because of traumatic events in their life.

The Healing of Memories model was first applied outside of the South African context in New York in April 1998. Participants were asked to explore how their nation's past had affected them. Its success convinced Healing of Memories workers that the model could apply internationally, and was best suited to areas having experienced trauma.

The Healing of Memories process was introduced in Northern Ireland in 2001 by Fr. Michael Lapsley who trained a number of individuals to deliver the HoM workshops. The Kairos project became the first organisation to offer HoM workshops in Northern Ireland. Currently the Belfast based Conflict Trauma Resource Centre (CTRC) and independent facilitators are facilitating the workshop to individuals and organisations. The CTRC adapted Healing the Memories to the local context and made it more culturally sensitive. It presently holds story-sharing residential workshops approximately six times a year with individuals from urban and rural backgrounds. These are generally cross-community in make-up. They have also had participants from Britain, Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries participate.

### Project Rationale

The South African founders of the Healing of Memories project drew up a 'Healing of Memories Key Concept' and 'Workshop Ideologies' to articulate the rationale for the project.

### Healing of Memories Key Concepts

- Facilitating the healing process of individuals and communities in South Africa and internationally.
- Remembering the apartheid years and healing the wounds.
- Redeeming the past by celebrating that which is life giving and laying to rest that which is destructive.

### Healing of Memories Workshop Ideologies

- Emotional, psychological and spiritual rather than intellectual.
- Space and time for individual reflection, creative exercises, and group sharing.
- Healing memories doesn't mean forgetting the past, but finding a way of not allowing our memories to paralyse or destroy us.
- Part of the psychological, emotional and spiritual component of South Africa's reconstruction and development.
- Not directly involved with the official justice and reconciliation of the TRC.
- Creating a "structured forum in which individuals can constitute a new identity by gazing on the past in a highly personalized way".

The Healing of Memories is not a counselling process although it is intended to be therapeutic. According to the CRTC:<sup>38</sup>

*These workshops provide a unique opportunity for participants to examine and explore the effects of the past 30 years of conflict through telling their own stories and listening/acknowledging the stories of others. The workshops offer the opportunity for individual reflection, creative exercises and small group work. Throughout the weekend, participants and facilitators explore ways of preventing history in Northern Ireland from being repeated and of breaking the cycle of violence that people have lived with for too long.*

### Process

The focus of the workshops is on sharing personal stories in the hope of exploring differences, and creating a better understanding of one's own experiences and the experiences of others. The workshops are carried out by trained facilitators who have been working in the field of conflict and violence for a considerable number of years and who have been through the process themselves.

The storytelling workshops normally take place over a weekend, from a Friday evening to Sunday afternoon and follow a structure designed and adapted over time. Each workshop is facilitated by four trained facilitators and is attended by approximately 15 participants.

The first evening is an opportunity for the group to meet with one another and to have the process explained to them. The main body of the weekend involves people sharing their own stories in small, facilitated groups and having them respectfully heard. According to Fr. Lapsley, who developed the programme in South Africa:

<sup>38</sup> Murdock, Sandra, The Story of Healing with Storytelling in Northern Ireland (unpublished, CRTC 2005)

*'The essence of our methodology is storytelling in the context of journey—storytelling that encourages letting go, the acknowledgment of what is destructive because of what has happened to us. To use a health-related image, you take the bandages off the wounds. By looking at them, you're also cleaning them before fresh bandages are put back on. That happens through the process of storytelling.*

*In the workshops we get people not only to speak of their journey, but also to draw it as another way to be in touch with their feelings. Drawing also helps you to see your journey whole—not only to be aware of the actual distance you have travelled, but in addition to help you discover what the unfinished business actually is. People often feel they have been healed, but when they reflect on their journey, they may still find poison there. Toward the end of the workshop, we have a creative liturgy, during which people bring forward symbols of their journey that they themselves have created, in the form of various kinds of peace symbols.'*<sup>39</sup>

### **Dissemination of Learning**

CTRC's Training Co-ordinator has designed and implemented a facilitator-training programme that ran twice in 2004 and included training ten former participants of the Healing of Memories project.

### **Timeframe**

2001 - present

### **Contact**

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Alistair Little

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<sup>39</sup> Extract from interview with Fr. Michael Lapsley in America: The National Catholic Weekly entitled "South Africa and the Healing of Memories" (Vol. 184, No. 20, July 2001) [www.americamagazine.org](http://www.americamagazine.org)

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## If Stones Could Speak

In February 2005 a series of five articles appeared over one week in daily Northern Ireland newspaper *The Newsletter*. The series was entitled 'The Untold Story' and documented five stories (written in the third person but using edited quotes from interviewees) from people who had lost family members as a result of the conflict. The driver of the project was Alistair Wilson, an individual living in the city, who felt that the experiences of these families was not being acknowledged and decided that something needed to be done so that the people felt their experiences would be heard and not forgotten. *The Newsletter* began with the series of five stories. Subsequently, he was approached by a number of other people who wish to have their stories recorded and a book project was developed to disseminate a range of stories collected. The book was recently completed and contains 23 stories from individuals who have lost family members as a result of the conflict.

### Project Development

The project emanates from the series of five articles described above. The driver of the publication is Alistair Wilson, based in Derry / Londonderry who had, both personally and professionally, been in contact with many families who had lost loved ones '*by terrorists, whether by the IRA or the loyalist paramilitaries*'. He felt that the experiences of these families was not being acknowledged and decided that something needed to be done so that the people felt their experiences would be heard and not forgotten. Primarily those killed were members of the police and UDR, but there were also a number of civilian deaths told.

### Process

To date, interviews have been conducted by Alistair Wilson in the homes of the bereaved family members. Interviews are not recorded, rather handwritten notes are taken and are typed up at a later date. The style of the stories is a mixture of first-person narrative and third-person description. The edited version written up from the interviews is returned to the narrator so any amendments, additions or deletions can be made and a final version for public dissemination agreed.

### Product

*The Newsletter* printed a series of five stories over a one week period. Wilson's book is due for publication in September 2005, containing 23 stories about sons, daughters, mothers and fathers who lost their lives as a result of the conflict, told by their families. The publisher is Ambassador Press, Belfast.

### Reference Materials

*The Newsletter* 7 February 2005 – 11 February 2005

### Timeframe

February 2005 – present

**Contact**

Alistair Wilson

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## Inside Stories

The 'Inside Stories' project was initiated by Cahal McLaughlin, senior lecturer at the Royal Holloway University of London, and consists of interviews with three 'ex-occupants' of the Long Kesh / Maze Prison outside Belfast. The three interviewees returned to the now empty prison to recall their time, experiences and emotions there, which were recorded on digital audio-visual equipment. Their stories have been edited as a three-screen installation and a linear documentary.

### Project Development

The project was developed as a result of a recognition that with the closing of the Maze Prison and plans to reuse the site, there was a window of opportunity to record and audio-visual archive of stories from previous inhabitants. Having worked with survivor groups and ex-prisoner groups in the past, Cahal McLaughlin realised the importance of collaboration with participants and recording on location.

### Project Rationale

According to Cahal McLaughlin, Long Kesh / the Maze were the touchstone and tinderbox of the political conflict and so could contain stories from many sources. There is the potential to including prisoners, governors, prison officers, doctors, visitors, civil servants, teachers, gardeners, maintenance workers and the Quaker Visitor Centre volunteers and others in future work.

Beginning initially as a research project, 'Inside Stories' was produced in its two forms to address questions of memory and location in storytelling from societies in transition out of political violence.

### Process

During 2003 and 2004, Cahal McLaughlin separately recorded the testimonies of a republican ex-prisoner, a loyalist ex-prisoner and a prison officer within the prison itself. *"This allowed the materiality of the sites – the wire, the nissan huts, the yard, the cells and the circle – to stimulate memories and guide the narratives"* he said.

Collaboration lay at the heart of the production process. While no written consent forms were used, the participants had an ultimate veto over the production, editing and exhibition of the material.

### Product

**Inside Stories; Memories from the Maze and Long Kesh Prison**, an installation of 3x30minute projections at Catalyst Arts Centre, Belfast, April to May 2005.

The documentary consists of three half-hour stories running simultaneously. In public viewings, the stories are shown on three separate screens which *"allows the participants to remain separate while in the same space, a physical relationship that was campaigned for in the prison. The issue of segregation*

*was the focus of protests, riots and hunger strikes. Audiences can choose to select whom to listen to and for how long.*"<sup>40</sup>

### Archive and Accessibility

The three interviews were open to the public to view at the Catalyst Arts Centre in Belfast during April and May of 2005.

A 94 minute documentary made up of the three stories, edited sequentially, is available and has been selected for inclusion in a forthcoming film festival, "Memory and Place", at the Imperial War Museum in London. It will also be screened in 2005 by NVTV, a Belfast community television station.

Plans are being developed to tour the exhibition in the UK and the USA. A much larger project, entitled the *Prisons Audio Visual Archive*, which will archive the stories of up to sixty users of the Maze and Long Kesh Prison is currently being developed.

### Reference Materials

#### *Documentaries*

- Director of *Inside Stories; Memories from the Maze and Long Kesh Prisons*, a 94 minute documentary, 2004
- Director of *A Prisoner's Journey* for An Coiste, an Irish ex-prisoners' group 2000. Screened at Feile An Phobail (West Belfast Festival), Belfast, 2000.
- Director of *Telling Our Story; the Springhill Massacre* for the Victims and Survivors Trust, Belfast 1999. Screened at Kino Film Festival, Manchester, 1999 and Grass Roots Film Festival, Manchester 2000.

#### *Publications*

- *Inside Stories*, essay by Dr. Louise Purbrick for Catalyst Arts Exhibition, 2005.
- *Telling Our Story: Recording Audio Visual Testimonies from Political Conflict*, in Barton, R., ed., 'Keeping It Real; Representing Ireland', Wallflower Press, 2004.
- *Collaboration as Research: testimonies from the apartheid era*, Journal of Media Practice, Vol. 3 No.1, 2003

### Timeframe

2003 - present

<sup>40</sup> From installation programme leaflet

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## 'Legacy' - BBC Radio Ulster

'Legacy' was an initiative of BBC Radio Ulster in 1999 which involved the playing of short extracts of interviews with anonymous interviewees who spoke of their experiences of living in Northern Ireland during the conflict.

### Project Background

The BBC wished to mark the end of the century with a programme that would give voice to ordinary people's experiences. It devised a programme which would involve the playing of short extracts from longer interviews conducted with a broad range of individuals who wished to share their thoughts or experiences of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Throughout 1999 at 8:58 am, before the 9am news on BBC Radio Ulster and Radio Foyle, ordinary people told how the events of the last three decades in Northern Ireland affected their lives.

### Process

BBC researchers made contact with known community-based groups to request access to individuals who might wish to participate by having their story recorded by a BBC researcher. In addition, a call was made by radio requesting that those wishing to contribute contact the BBC through a dedicated line and a team of researchers worked on arranging interviews at convenient places for the individual. People could choose what they wanted to talk about in the interviews, but the focus was primarily on the conflict.

Editing of the interviews was undertaken in discussion with the interviewee as a matter of policy.

*"The outcome, the producers felt, was that there really was an articulation of the 'common voice', and that the freedom from editorial control created a space where 'ordinary' people expressed their views and feelings with an eloquence often destroyed by preparation and scripting".<sup>41</sup>*

A decision was made early on that the stories would only be two-minutes in length as it was felt this would have a powerful impact on the listener. The interviews were edited and scheduled. An effort was made to ensure that two similar people were not broadcast on consecutive days and as wide a range of opinions and views as possible were presented.

### Product

The programme was introduced each morning before the 9am news bulletin with the phrase "and now, Legacy", and the stories, two minutes in length were then broadcast.

<sup>41</sup> Moore, Paul. *Legacy: Fourth phase public service broadcasting in Northern Ireland* *The Radio Journal: International Studies in Audio and Broadcast Media* Volume 1 (2) 2003 p87-100

### **Archive and Accessibility**

The full master tapes of the programme are archived at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra. Working with the Victims Liaison Unit in the Northern Ireland Office, E-lucidate (a graphic design and publishing consultancy firm) are currently in discussions with the BBC to make the audio recordings of the edited versions available on CD and publish a book of the transcripts, with an introduction to explain the programme and set the interviews in context. The BBC is in the process of having the tapes transcribed. The recordings and extracts in the book will be anonymous, in keeping with the spirit of the programme.

Extracts of the Legacy programme were played on a continuous loop at the Conflict: Irish at War exhibition in the Ulster Museum. Some of the recordings are currently available online at:

[www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/troubles/legacy/index.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/troubles/legacy/index.shtml) and  
[www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/history/legacy/index.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/history/legacy/index.shtml)

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## Legacy Project - Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Trust, Warrington

The Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Trust is an educational peace charity which aims to inspire and enable people to lead more peaceful lives by helping them understand the nature and causes of conflict. The Trust was formed after the IRA attack on Warrington which killed 12-year-old Tim Parry and 3-year-old Johnathan Ball. Based in a purpose built 'Peace Centre' the Trust works with adults, children and peace organisations on issues around conflict and its resolution at a local, national and international level. One of the projects of the Trust is the Legacy Project, which has recently completed a one-year needs analysis of victims and survivors of the conflict in Northern Ireland who live in England, Scotland and Wales. They now implement programmes aimed at addressing those needs. One such programme is a series of residential weekends which bring together a range of individuals in Britain who have experience of the conflict and wish to have an opportunity to share their experiences in a safe and supportive environment.

### Project Development

In November 2001, the Trust secured three years of funding from the Victim's Liaison Unit (VLU) of the Northern Ireland Office, to deliver the Legacy Project. The aim of the project was to identify and meet the needs of victims and survivors of the conflict who live in England, Scotland and Wales. This includes former soldiers, victims of bombings in Britain, their families, bereaved families of soldiers killed in the conflict, emergency services staff who attended incidents – those forced into exile in Britain as a result of paramilitary intimidation.

As part of the original work, the Trust commissioned an independent needs analysis, which identified the specific needs of victims and survivors living in Britain. Although the needs analysis was a research project, it also allowed the people who participated to tell their story in order to identify needs. This was the first time for many that they had been asked to recount their experiences as victims of the conflict and this proved to be a useful and positive experience for the participants.

The report entitled *The Legacy: A study of the need of GB Victims and Survivors of the Northern Ireland 'Troubles'* was published in November 2003 and made a series of recommendations. In terms of storytelling processes, the report recommended that the Legacy Project “*brings together groups of victims and survivors to tell their stories, be listened to, and supported*” and that they should “*establish an archive for victims on the Internet and by other means, alongside other organisations, and should explore its use for education, research and knowledge sharing in line with the philosophy underpinning the Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Trust.*”

Based on this report, the Trust was granted an additional three years of funding from the Northern Ireland Office to implement a number of these recommendations, including a range of support services and activities for victims/survivors. Alongside developing an interagency group, a peer support programme, an advocacy group, a signposting service, a website and a regular newsletter, the project has developed a

series of residentials where victims/survivors can come together to share their stories with each other in a supportive environment.

Prior to developing their own storytelling residentials, the Trust was involved in the development of the L.I.V.E. Programme (see project description). A number of individuals from Britain participated in residential workshops organised by the programme. In addition, a number of individuals from Britain participated in the early workshops and conferences organised by the Towards Understanding and Healing Project (see project description). The Legacy Project felt it was important to develop some opportunities for groups to meet in Britain and secured funding for a series of residential workshops based on storytelling related to individuals' experiences of the conflict. These individuals include people bereaved as a result of the conflict, those who were injured, or witnessed conflict-related incidents, British soldiers who served in Northern Ireland and their families and emergency service workers who attended the incidents in GB.

The Legacy Project has an advisory panel comprising experts in the field of Northern Ireland Victims Issues and Storytelling processes, and users of the project.

### **Process**

The project conducts storytelling sessions in a residential setting, with participants coming together in a neutral environment over a weekend. Before the residential, the project has a policy of meeting with, or speaking by phone, to all participants to explain the process and assess their suitability for the particular residential. Background information on the participant is discussed, including any medications they might be on or therapeutic work they may be engaged in, including treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Although previous residentials had up to 40 participants, the project now aims to have only between 16 and 20 at each residential, with no more than five people in one storytelling group. Contracts with participants and guiding principles used for the residential are similar to those used by the Towards Understanding and Healing Project.

Techniques and structures developed by the Towards Understanding and Healing and the Healing of Memories process (see project description) have been adopted by the project and adapted to suit the particular context. The weekends involve long storytelling work in small, facilitated groups, as well as creative work to help participants to prepare themselves for sharing their experiences in larger group settings.

Each residential has suitably trained facilitators and a clinically trained support worker available for the participants during the weekend. Legacy staff follow up with all participants in the first ten days following the residential to ensure that they have the support they need following the session. When necessary, the clinical support worker will also follow up with the participants.

To date, two storytelling residentials have been held.

### **Training and Collaboration**

The Legacy Project works closely with the Towards Understanding and Healing project and the Healing of Memories process (through the Conflict Trauma Resource Centre).

Both the Project Manager and Project Worker act as facilitators at the storytelling residentials, supplemented by other facilitators, some of whom have been trained in either the Healing of Memories or Towards Understanding and Healing process.

The Legacy Project have plans to hold its own training event for its facilitators in the autumn of 2005.

### **Archive and Accessibility**

Currently the project is not involved in the recording or documenting of stories. However, they are seeking funding for an 'Archive and Memories' project (this being two tiered to serve the local community in Warrington, followed by a wider national archive) which will produce an archive of experiences to offer recognition and acknowledgement of the experiences of GB victims/survivors. It is envisaged the archive will be available on the internet, through exhibitions and potentially a book.

### **Reference Materials**

*The Legacy: A Study of the Needs of GB Victims and Survivors of the Northern Ireland 'Troubles'* (Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Trust, November 2003)

The document is available for download at: [www.childrenforpeace.org/TheLegacy.pdf](http://www.childrenforpeace.org/TheLegacy.pdf)

Oral Evidence (Ev20) and Written Evidence (Ev12 & 20) in *Ways of Dealing with Northern Ireland's Past: Interim Report – Victims & Survivors* Tenth Report of Session 2004-05 Volume II (House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee).

### **Timeframe**

2001 – present.

### **Contact**

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## L.I.V.E Programme – Glenree Centre for Reconciliation

Since 1999 the Glenree Centre for Reconciliation, based in Wicklow in the Republic of Ireland has conducted a programme for victims of the violence in both parts of Ireland and in Britain. Under the name L.I.V.E. (Let's Involve the Victims' Experience) they organise workshops and conferences in which victims/survivors of the violence share their experiences and develop peace building activities, skills and new relationships. While not promoting itself primarily as a storytelling initiative, the L.I.V.E. programme does contain a substantial storytelling component.

### Project Development

According to the organisation, the L.I.V.E. programme was instigated in response to the expressed need for the victims/survivors to be heard.

This programme developed out of an interaction between Sir Kenneth Bloomfield and victim/survivors. He came to Glenree in 1999 to take depositions from those in the Republic who had suffered as a result of the conflict. This spurred Glenree to create a programme that would allow unheard voices to be heard and the L.I.V.E. Programme was developed. Following from the ideal of giving people voice, dialogue became central to the programme. Dialogue is viewed as a central component to the work and ideals of the Glenree Centre itself and is viewed as one of the early steps to reconciliation. The first aim of the programme, as voiced by participants, was to foster dialogue between victim/survivors from the two islands. The second aim, again coming from the participants, was to foster dialogue between ex-combatants and victim/survivors.

During these structured sessions, which vary in length, but are normally at least two days or a weekend, the participants are encouraged to speak openly within a safe and protected environment.

The sessions are open to those from all sides of the conflict and to those from a wide range of geographical boundaries. In addition, there have been sessions between victim/survivors and former paramilitaries that have also involved personal storytelling.

### Project Rationale

The Glenree Centre view storytelling as an intrinsic component of, and often a first step towards, reconciliation and therefore introduced a storytelling element into the L.I.V.E Programme.

According to the Programme co-ordinator, the rationale for using storytelling in the programme comes from evidence in psychological research that storytelling is a necessary step in the healing process. She refers to the work of Freud in the early 1900s when he termed storytelling as 'cathartic' when he saw changes in his patients and symptoms easing as a result of being able to tell of their deepest traumas – often termed 'the talking cure'. The project also indicates that other psychological theories and therapies

advocate the use of working through traumas by talking, including Gestalt, Rogerian non-directive therapy and more recently process psychotherapy and psychodrama.

### **Process**

The storytelling sessions follow a specific format with a set of directions for both tellers and listeners to follow. These directions include reference to the issue of confidentiality. In line with their core value of being non-judgemental, participants are invited and encouraged to adopt a particular listening attitude when bearing witness to the story of another. The listener is invited to listen to the story as if it were their own story they were hearing and having it listened to in a way that one knows it has been heard.

According to the programme co-ordinator *"It gives an opportunity for each to see the human face of the other."*

### **Product**

There is no recording or documenting of the stories told in these workshop sessions. However, the centre has previously organised sharing sessions at which invited members of the media have recorded the proceedings. According to the programme co-ordinator, the project will agree to working with the media "where it will advance the cause of our participants to have their voices heard, following a consultation process which includes guarantees around our inclusion in the editing process". Consent is given in the context of group discussion and guarantees are given by Glencree to participants that they will be involved at all stages of the process and that they can withdraw at any stage and have their contribution erased. Participants will have attended a course in 'Working with the Media' during their time with the LIVE Programme. On this course, all relevant aspects are covered along with questions participants should ask of film-makers before engaging in any recordings.

Some of these storytelling sessions have already been aired – both on BBC Radio 4 and on RTE Radio, and another will air on French TV in 2005. The Glencree centre exhibition area also shows a video of the stories of programme participants. This airs on a continuous basis.

In addition, Glencree have produced a recent publication entitled *'A Place for Peace'* that contains many stories of those associated with the L.I.V.E. programme. This includes both participants and Glencree staff. The stories were written by the contributors themselves; the originals are with the editors and minimal editing is done. The programme co-ordinator explains that any editing is *"purely admin without touching the content so the stories are very much as they were written."*

### **Archive and Accessibility**

For the L.I.V.E. Programme, a record is kept of the structure and content of the weekend and of the process followed. The project is currently in the beginning stages of collating all of their work and collecting material so it may be accessed in the future.

**Timeframe**

1999 – present

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## Pat Finucane Centre

The Pat Finucane Centre advocates human rights and encourages political development and social change in Ireland. Based in Derry, the centre promotes a nonviolent ethos and actively works to build alliances with groups and individuals within the radical and progressive wings of Irish politics. The centre believes that the attainment of human, political cultural and economic rights can only be achieved within the context of active self determination involving all the Irish people. (from organisation website)

The organisation had undertaken a range of initiatives which include the collection of personal testimonies from individuals who have lost family members as a result of the conflict. Three main areas of work have been identified, namely:

- The Recovery of Living Memories Archive;
- Recording of personal experience related to Derry-based conflict-related deaths;
- *Lifting a Dark Cloud* - Documentary DVD on the death of Kathleen Thompson

### Project Rationale

The organisation articulated a number of motivations for the documenting of individuals personal experiences related to conflict-related deaths. These include:

- The need to gather information related to the details surrounding the death of individuals;
- The desire to document individuals' experiences and information of the circumstances surrounding the relatives death and its consequences as a form of acknowledgment of their life and the experiences of the families;
- The wish to develop an archive of material for use by future generations;
- To raise the profile of individual cases;
- To advocate for action and response and acknowledgement from official sources.

- **Recovery of Living Memories Archive**

Over the course of approximately four years, the PFC has worked on a number of cases of state-force killings and collusion in the Armagh and Tyrone areas. In an effort to collect and collate detailed information on each case, the centre has established the 'Recovery of Living Memories Archive' which involves the collecting of information and personal testimonies from family members, friends and witnesses of the deceased. Information archived includes a range of documents, including notes and transcripts from interviews undertaken with family members, friends and witnesses of the events related to the death of the individual.

- **Derry-based deaths**

The organisation has been involved in advocacy and support work with a number of families in the Derry area who have lost loved ones as a result of the conflict. The organisation has recorded personal testimonies from family members, friends and witnesses of the events relating to the individual and the incidents surrounding their deaths.

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- ***Lifting a Dark Cloud - The Kathleen Thompson Story***

This 45-minute DVD documentary entitled *Lifting a Dark Cloud* tells the story of a mother of six from Creggan, Derry who was killed by soldiers of the British Army Royal Green Jackets Regiment in November 1971. The DVD emerged from a long period of working with the family of Mrs. Thompson to advocate for a full investigation into her death. Having explored the legal avenues, it was subsequently felt that that the family wished to tell their own personal experiences of losing their mother and reclaim their memories.

The DVD consists of first-hand interviews with five of the six children of Mrs. Crilly and the partner of the sixth and is described as "... *the story of the events of that night and the legacy it left for a family and a community.*" (from promotional materials) Family members were interviewed by the director. After an initial edit was completed, the family were shown the piece and had full control over any changes they wished to make and agreed the final version.

The DVD was directed by Ann Crilly and produced by the Pat Finucane Centre in association with the Nerve Centre, Derry.

#### **Archive and Accessibility**

There is currently no public access to the archive of materials held by the Pat Finucane Centre on conflict-related deaths. However, it is hoped that these documents will be utilised by official investigations or related advocacy work in the future.

In relation to Derry-based deaths, it is envisaged that the documentation collected will be contributed to the proposed Bloody Sunday museum, currently in development.

The *Lifting a Dark Cloud* DVD was premiered at the Nerve Centre, Derry, during the Foyle Film Festival in 2004 and subsequently screened at the Belfast Film Festival in 2005 and at a number of international festivals. The DVD is available for purchase from the Pat Finucane Centre.

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## Relatives for Justice

Relatives for Justice (RFJ) is a support and advocacy organisation, working with families and individuals who have been adversely affected by the conflict. RFJ works primarily with, and on behalf of, families who have been affected by state and state sponsored violence. They provide practical support, legal advice, befriending, peer counselling, documentation and campaign work.

The organisation has been involved in two projects which aim to document the first-hand experiences of individuals in relation to the conflict. The first, the Remembering Quilt, uses creative methods to visually record loved ones killed during the conflict, while the second, uses the print media as a method to disseminate personal stories of the conflict. In addition to these projects, RFJ organised a public storytelling event in August 2001, as part of the West Belfast 'Feile an Phobail' Festival. Taking place over an evening, people who had been affected by the conflict were given the opportunity to come and share their personal experiences of the conflict. Held in a public venue, attendees were encouraged to speak publicly of their experiences and number of individuals who have been bereaved or otherwise affected by the conflict shared their stories. The event was recorded and transcribed by Relatives for Justice. However, following the event a number of speakers and their families did not wish their stories to be put in a more public setting. RFJ are currently exploring ways in which some of the stories might be made public in some form in the future, with the individuals' consent.

- **The Remembering Quilt**

### **Project Development**

The Remembering Quilt project grew out of a recognition that a number of memorials to individuals killed as a result of the conflict had been publicly erected which excluded individuals' who died as a result of state violence. RFJ wished to do something positive to respond to the distress and anger of relatives. They decided to create a living memorial in the form of a quilt, which was inspired by the AIDS quilts which had been developed in the US and internationally. The quilt is made up of squares which have been dedicated to individuals who have died as a result of the conflict. The squares are designed and made by family members who wish to create some form of 'memorial' to them.

### **Project Rationale**

A number of reasons were offered as to the motivation for developing the project:

- The importance of remembering and acknowledging those who have died as a result of the conflict.
- Creating a lasting memorial to their life.
- The workshops may act as an avenue for participants to become more involved with the organisation or be an opportunity for other support services to be offered to them.
- The quilt is viewed as a contribution to truth and challenges those responsible for the deaths to publicly reveal and validate the truth and explain the reasons why.

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## Process

People both approach Relatives for Justice and are approached by the organisation to make a square of the quilt for their loved one. As the project has been on-going for some time, people often hear about it through word of mouth. Workshops are held every Wednesday evening at Relatives for Justice offices (and at other venues across Northern Ireland by pre-arrangement). Prior to making the square, family members of the deceased are asked to come together to discuss how they would like the square to represent their loved one. They are encouraged to write down some notes on the person to give them some ideas and guidance. They are encouraged to think about the life of the person and commemorate that, rather than the way in which they died. They are then assisted by the quilting tutor at the workshop (or in their own homes) to put their ideas on a 9-inch square of fabric, which often includes an image of the deceased and some personal items or clothing belonging to them. If they person cannot, or does not, wish to do the sewing themselves, other volunteers will help with it and follow the guidance given.

The individual involved in developing the square writes up an explanation of what they put on the square and what it signifies. The creation of the square and the written description typically involves discussion with other family members. If they feel that someone would like to have their stories recorded, the organisation refer them on to the Dúchas project. (see Dúchas description)

Once completed, the squares are brought together to form a large quilt.

The project has worked in collaboration with the Cunamh Project (see project description) in the Derry / Londonderry area.

## Product

The Remembering Quilt currently consists of eight panels, each with 49 squares. As each panel is completed the project organises a public launch of the panel, which all contributors are invited to attend. This provides them with an opportunity to bring other family members along and meet friends they have met through the process.

## Archive and Accessibility

The quilts are often displayed at different venues throughout Ireland, including festivals. At such events, the organisation provides information about Relatives for Justice and the quilt and hope others can contribute to the quilt themselves.

The organisation hopes that the quilts will, eventually, be housed in an appropriate museum or venue. Currently, they have concerns over the long-term protection of the fabric and need to explore how it can be conserved for the future.

- **Legacy – Andersonstown News**

### **Project Development**

In the wake of the ceasefires in the mid-1990s, RFJ observed that individuals who had lost family members were beginning to feel more comfortable in speaking of their experiences. It was also felt that individuals were irritated by the misinformation being reported about the deceased and the circumstances surrounding their deaths. During this period, the BBC was developing and broadcasting the 'Legacy Programme' (see project description) and the organisation felt that, while this was a useful programme, it did not necessarily tell the stories of their members. The organisation approached the local paper, the *Anderstowntown News* to run a weekly series of personal accounts from families who have lost loved ones as a result of the conflict. A journalist from the newspaper was assigned to the project, who worked on the project on a part-time basis over an 18-month period.

### **Project Rationale**

A number of motivating factors for the initiation of the project were identified by the organisation:

- Giving voice to those who were not previously heard and documenting their experiences/
- Correction of misinformation related to the death of their family member
- Providing individuals with a sense of empowerment and control over their stories.
- An opportunity for families to work with the media in a more positive manner than previously.

### **Process**

The journalist working on the project undertook training in trauma awareness and a period of time was spent in preparing him for the interview process. Initially around 15 families expressed an interest in having their stories told and it was agreed to run a pilot of 15 stories in the newspaper, on a weekly basis. All families were visited by the chair or the (current) vice-chair of the organisation as a preparation for subsequent interviews talked through the process which would occur during the course of the interview and got some background information from the family. The interviewer would later visit the family and record the stories from those who wished to place their experiences on record. The interviews were then transcribed and a first edited draft completed. This first draft was then returned to the interviewees for amendment, correction or additions. It was made clear to the interviewees that they could withdraw from the process at any time.

### **Product**

An agreed draft was published in the *Anderstowntown News*. The series ran in the newspaper over 18 months. Since the series was completed, a number of additional stories were recorded by the organisation and have been placed on their website: [www.relativesforjustice.com/audio/legacy.htm](http://www.relativesforjustice.com/audio/legacy.htm)

### **Archiving and Accessibility**

RFJ currently hold the original recordings of the interviews and transcripts and have no current plans to make them available to the public.

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## ROUTES Bus Workers Project

The Routes Bus Workers Project was an arts-based initiative that aimed to record the history and experiences of the men and women who worked in the Northern Ireland bus services over the previous three decades. It used various techniques and methods for engaging bus workers and documenting their experiences and resulted in producing an exhibition, documentary and website. The project was completed in 2002, although there are plans for a follow-up in the future.

### Project Development

In 1997 Ian Hunter from the Lancashire-based arts trust was invited over as artist in residence at St Columb's Park House in Derry/Londonderry. The residency was part funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and the aim was to develop a number of practical arts and environmental projects in support of the centre's peace and reconciliation work and its associated programmes with schools, community groups and the business sector. While there, he developed the idea of a project to address issues of sectarianism in the workplace and encourage discussion by workers on the issue of sectarianism in constructive and creative ways. It was felt that transport workers would be an interesting group to work with as *"the bus drivers were not only the 'eyes' and 'ears' of the N. Ireland community, but they regularly cross the boundaries that divided our communities, both literally and metaphorically."*<sup>42</sup>

He met with the local Amalgamated T&G representative in Derry and later a group of shop stewards and retired bus workers, where the idea of an exhibition and arts project that would record the bus workers experiences of working through the conflict was raised. Having received a favourable response, the project was developed with the co-operation and assistance of Transport House in Belfast, the Amalgamated T&G, Translink, An Crann/The Tree, Counteract, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI). In 1998 the project received two years funding from ACNI with a Lottery Arts Award and, later, additional funding from the Community Relations Council, Belfast City Council, the Transport & General Workers Union, Translink Plc and Business and the Arts. A management committee was formed in early 2000, involving artists and Ulsterbus, Citybus and Translink representatives. The role of the committee was to oversee development of the projects and the funding and implementation of the various artists projects, and to advise on direction of the ROUTES project overall.

### Project Rationale

The ROUTES project recorded the history and experiences of the men and women employed in the region's bus industry over the past 30 years, and gave them an opportunity to communicate their

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<sup>42</sup> Taken from a more detailed article of the development of the project is available from Littoral Arts entitled: *The Story of the ROUTES project*, Ian Hunter, LITTORAL Arts

experiences and talk about their contribution to the community, using their own words and images, as part of a major public celebration of the bus workers in the North of Ireland.

Some of the motivations documented by the project co-ordinator for the project included<sup>43</sup>:

- A desire to try to develop a different model for public art that would be more about issues of social engagement and transport policy.
- An initiative aimed at generating new audiences, contexts and modes of access to the arts for the wider community.
- An attempt to focus on new and imaginative ways of engaging the travelling public, and management and bus worker union members in many aspects of the conception, production and delivery of the actual artworks and projects.
- An opportunity to challenge the disabling stereotypes, and to explore more enabling iconographies presenting the bus workers as everyday heroes, and the bus industry as a positive force for democracy and promoting good community relations in Northern Ireland.

### Process

A team of photographers from Belfast Exposed, artists from the Flaxart Studios, and film-makers from Banter Productions worked with Littoral and with the bus drivers and associated workers over two years from 2000 to 2001 to develop the ROUTES project.

The bus worker/driver subjects were selected initially through contact with the shop steward. An advert was also placed in the trade union magazine and flyers were distributed to the various depots explaining what the project was about and that drivers/busworkers were invited to participate.

In the end, most of the oral archive work took place in and around Belfast. The project initially approached An Crann/The Tree (see project description) for help in devising the interview procedure. As they were in a process of change, a previous An Crann American volunteer was engaged to conduct the interviews. No consent forms were used, most interviews lasted 30 minutes and no editing of the stories took place. A number of the interviews were printed in the Busworker Newspaper.

### Product

- **Photographic Exhibition**

Two photographic exhibition about the experiences of busworkers (Ulsterbus and Citybus) and trade union officials in Northern Ireland over the past 30 years were developed. **Where To?** is a series of colour portrait photographs of bus workers taken predominantly from the Falls Road Depot. **In the Picture 1** are portraits of retired and serving bus workers, identified by shop stewards as exemplary for their contribution to their profession.

- **Play – *Kings of the Road***

As part of the ROUTES Project, Brian McAvera wrote and produced a play entitled *Kings of the Road* which expressed the experience of bus workers and their response to the conflict and sectarianism in

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<sup>43</sup> ibid



the workforce. It was performed at the Old Museum Arts Centre in collaboration with the Cathedral Arts Festival and at the Edinburgh Festival.

- **Documentary**

The ROUTES documentary provides a record of the role of the Transport & General Workers Union and its members in maintaining an essential public service and community lifeline over the past 30 years of conflict in the region. The project is also an investigation of shop-floor approaches to anti-sectarianism in the workplace. This was filmed and edited by Peter Millar.

- **Exhibition**

A travelling exhibition was compiled based on the busworkers' record of dealing with sectarianism and intimidation in the workplace.

- **Website**

A web site and collaborative digital art on-line projects were developed by bus workers and artists. The website is not currently accessible.

- ***The Busworker***

The project produced a special souvenir edition of *The Busworker* newspaper in May 2002 "as a tribute to the bus workers and as a public acknowledgement of their achievement in serving all sections of the community over the past 35 years". (from *The Busworker*) The paper included personal stories from transport workers and information on the project. Free copies of the newspaper were distributed to Northern Ireland busworkers and to the public on buses in Belfast. The text of the newspaper is available at <[www.routesproject.org/Newspaper%20Index.htm](http://www.routesproject.org/Newspaper%20Index.htm) >

### **Archive and Accessibility**

For information on the archive of the various materials, contact John Coffey Arts and Cultural coordinator T&GWU at Transport House, Belfast T: 07736 548 088.

### **Timeframe**

1999 - 2002

### **Contact**

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## RUC GEORGE CROSS FOUNDATION

The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) was awarded the George Cross in 2000 in recognition of the bravery of its officers and their families. The RUC George Cross Foundation was established the same year by an act of parliament, the Police Act 2000. The Foundation maintains the RUC George Cross Garden of Remembrance, holds an annual memorial service, encourages innovative policing through bursary awards and provides support to affiliated associations and PSNI officers. The Foundation is also planning a new Police Museum, an element of which will be personal reflections. Oral histories are being collected to cover the timescale of the existence of the RUC, 1922 – 2001.

### Project Development

The oral history element is in the early stages of development. A pilot project is being undertaken to complete in December 2005.

### Project Rationale

The Foundation is collecting oral histories of the RUC across its 79 year history. The stories will inform the development of the new Police Museum and record personal experiences from within the RUC. It is hoped that stories will be collected from family members and civilian colleagues as well as former RUC officers from the lifetime of the force.

### Process

The oral histories are being collected in two phases. Phase one will cover the period 1922 – 1967, phase two will cover the period 1968 – 2001. All interviewees are self-referred; information about the project is being distributed to internal police organizations and relevant external associations as well as through presentations and personal contact. Interviews are carried out by volunteers who are former police officers. They have all received training from experts working in local external organizations. A project board oversees the development and scope of the work.

### Product

The intention is to use the oral histories in the new Police Museum. A collection of stories will also be made widely accessible, perhaps through the medium of the internet or production of a book. This will be decided at a later stage in the project.

### Archive and Accessibility

The personal stories are digitally recorded and stored unedited and securely.

### Timescale

Currently the project is undertaking a pilot until December 2005.

**Contact**

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## SAVER / NAVER

SAVER / NAVER was founded in 2000 and offers services in counselling, befriending, alternative therapies, training and education programmes, health programme, women's programmes to those affected by the conflict in County Armagh and surrounding areas. The aim of the organisation is to assist people to move on and to see a better future for themselves and to assist them in recognising that, although they may be victims of the past, they are not prisoners of the past. (from organisation leaflet)

### Project Rationale

The motivation for the project came from the experience of individuals' who had lost family members as a result of the conflict, but had not been informed of the details of their deaths. Later, the family members learned such details through the dissemination of interviews with perpetrators while imprisoned or on their release. The organisation wished to record the personal experiences of the bereaved families and tell the stories of what their lives were like before – including the friendships which had existed – and there is hope for a better future.

### Process

Members of SAVER/NAVER agreed to develop a project to record the stories of individuals who had lost family members because of the conflict. The interviews were conducted by members of staff and focused on their lives before the tragedy and on their memories of their loved ones. The interviews were transcribed and edited and were then returned to each interviewee to make any changes, additions or deletions to the text and agree a final version. The participants met again to discuss and agree how the edited transcripts would be used.

### Product

The organisation is seeking funding to publish the individuals' accounts alongside photographs of their loved ones as a book. It is hoped that the book will be widely distributed and will be used within educational institutions.

### Archive and Accessibility

Currently the project is holding the original transcripts and interviews. The organisation has made no plans to archive the materials elsewhere.

### Timeframe

2004 - present

### Contact

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## ***'Telling our Story' - Victims and Survivors Trust***

The Victims and Survivors Trust (VAST), based in west Belfast, was established to support the needs of local people who have been bereaved or injured as a result of the conflict. They offer a range of services, including alternative / complementary therapies, new skills training, and an information resource centre. VAST also organises cross-community seminars and discussion and liaison groups. In 2000, in collaboration with Cahal McLaughlin (see *'Inside Stories'* project description) they produced a short video on the 'Springhill Massacre' in which five unarmed civilians were shot dead by British soldiers. It records the first-hand experiences of witnesses and those who lost family members in Springhill in June 1972.

### **Project Development**

VAST invited Cahal McLaughlin, an experienced director and producer of community documentaries, to work with the organisation to produce a short documentary on video that would both offer survivors of the conflict an opportunity to tell their story and to encourage others to come forward and to add their stories to the archive that VAST was hoping to build. As the documentary was intended to be short for promotional purposes and as it needed an accessible narrative, the story of the Springhill shootings was chosen. According to Cahal McLaughlin

*"Some research had already been done with the production of a pamphlet and a locally organised public inquiry the previous year. Other circumstances also aided the recording of this story - there were witnesses still alive, including some who were injured, the incident occurred during daylight so witnesses had a clear view and the case still required closure, because no prosecutions had ever been brought, which gave it a direct relationship to the present".<sup>44</sup>*

### **Project Rationale**

The organisation felt the deaths at Springhill had been forgotten by many and there had been little attempt to seek the truth of the events in 1972. They wished to have the event, and those who had lost their lives, to be acknowledged and to document the eyewitness accounts of those who have been present at the time.

### **Process**

Survivors of the 'Springhill Massacre' were contacted and asked if they would be willing to describe the events and its consequences of the day recorded on a video. Those who agreed were brought back to the site of the shooting to recount their experiences on camera.

According to Cahal McLaughlin:

*"The decision to record the interviews at the site of the original shooting was to encourage a recreation of the atmosphere and to offer stimulation to the storytellers. We hoped that the location would become a 'character' in itself and tell its own story to the audience. We planned to*

<sup>44</sup> McLaughlin, C. 'Telling Our Story, Recording Audio Visual Testimonies from Political Conflict', in Barton, R., and O'Brien, H., (ed.) *Keeping it Real; Irish Film and Television*, 2004, Wallflower, London. P.100-110.

*use as few cutaways as possible and allow the survivor and the environment to tell the story. Just as we wanted to minimise cutaway images in post-production, we also planned to make minimum intervention as 'interviewers' because we wanted to encourage the survivors to tell the story in their own way as much as possible. We, the documentary makers, were aware that we were making decisions which could control the direction and shape of the final story, but we strove for a collaboration where the survivors would achieve the space to decide what they wanted to include and what not, a relationship that we hoped was reflected in the title, *Telling Our Story*. The interviews were edited to create a sense of witnesses describing an event as it happened".<sup>45</sup>*

The stories were recorded using a digital camera, with one of the members acting as sound operator, others as assistants. The VAST Management Board were the producers of the documentary. Editing and post production of the video was completed by Cahal McLaughlin in London.<sup>46</sup>

Each stage was discussed and agreed with VAST and the participants, from the initial decision to choose what particular story and what questions to ask, to where to record and how a narrative could be constructed in post-production. Each rough cut of the editing process was sent to VAST and the participants for discussion and a final edit was screened to, and discussed by, an audience of all those involved.

### **Product**

*Telling Our Story: the Springhill Massacre* (2000, 17 mins.)

### **Archive and Accessibility**

Following a final screening of the video to participants and their families, the VAST Board and staff and invited members of the community, the group discussed distributing the video. One individual who participated in telling his story of the events of the day had concerns over his personal safety if the video was given a general release to the public. Therefore, the decision was taken to restrict the screening of the tape to controlled environments, such as community centres and festivals, but not to distribute the tape itself. To date, the documentary has been shown in local communities in Northern Ireland and at a number of events in England and elsewhere. According to VAST, ownership of the video remains with those who participated in it.

The original interviews are archived with the Victims and Survivors Trust.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*

<sup>46</sup> Media Arts Department, Royal Holloway University of London.

## Contact

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## The Wider Circle

The Wider Circle is a voluntary organisation and a registered charity which had developed a trauma programme “*in response to the needs expressed by people whose lives have been adversely affected by post traumatic stress as a result of the conflict in Northern Ireland.*” (organisational literature) Their structured 20-week ‘trauma programme’ aims to facilitate a process of self-healing through storytelling and creative processes.

### Project Development

Over the winter of 1997-98, a small cross-community group of people met voluntarily in Twin Spires Counselling Facility, Belfast. A number - though not all - were counsellors, and all had a common interest in helping people who had experienced trauma. A tentative and initial programme called ‘The Wider Circle’ was developed. The programme is based on one devised at the Gosport Naval Hospital in England which used to work with Falkland War veterans. It uses narrative and art therapy, but is also informed by comparative religious theory and educational techniques. All agreed to go through the course themselves with a view to redesigning it as a pilot group for the Northern Ireland context. Two separate courses were run in tandem by two different facilitators and the final design represents the combined work of both groups. It quickly became apparent that the volunteers on both courses had suffered their personal traumas. This meant that the original idea of helping family and friends was gradually replaced by a self-help group. Those on both courses who completed the current design eventually decided to amalgamate and to form one group, now called “The Wider Circle”, and to adopt the final programme as their own. The management committee is made up of representatives from the community, voluntary and statutory sectors.

### Project Rationale

The stated rationale of the project is to facilitate a process of self-healing through storytelling and creative work. The process provides an opportunity for people to reflect on their stories and help them engage in art work. The process is designed to enable people to heal themselves and, in so doing, raise their self esteem and confidence to a level that empowers them to help others and make a positive contribution to the communities in which they live and to the peace process in Northern Ireland.

### Process

The Trauma Programme usually runs for 20 weeks with the group meeting once a week for two hours. It consists of a structured self-help programme with a group of around 8 to 10 people. It is the organisation’s belief that those who experienced trauma or are suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) need a structured programme to address their needs.

Before committing to the programme, each participant is interviewed and relevant information shared with the facilitator to ensure safety and appropriateness of the programme.



The facilitation team consists of three people – the anchor or lead facilitator and two assistants. All the facilitators used have been through the programme themselves as well as having additional training. The first meeting of the group involves some discussion of the programme, showing a video about the process they will embark upon and selecting one person and a reserve who will recount their story of a traumatic experience, which could be one of many, to the rest of the group. The individual is asked to prepare their story in advance and, to tell the story, but to stop if it gets too difficult. The facilitators give the individual specific instruction on the way in which to structure the story. The other participants are asked to listen quietly and to make no comment on any aspect of the story in the speaker's presence. On completion of the story, the speaker leaves the room for a cup of tea with the facilitator of their choice.

The rest of the group are asked to split into smaller groups to discuss the story and to explore how to represent the story or an aspect of the story visually using collage using cut up magazines. Then, with the help of the facilitators, the group create a structured collage which they feel represents an aspect of the story. The speaker then returns to the room and each person gives him or her feedback on why they created what they did. There is no discussion about it. A professional counsellor is available for anyone who requires it.

Having gone through each individual's story of trauma over the course of a number of weeks each tell their life story, one person each session. This is done to place their traumatic experiences in context and to connect their life before and after the trauma. The individual is asked to describe their life from birth to the present time, being free to include or exclude whatever they wish. Again, a collage is created by the other participants and the process repeated.

At the end of these two activities, the group may wish to organise a social evening or a guest speaker before the programme is completed. Participants who wish to become facilitators of the process can receive training. The organisation keeps in contact with participants, who are invited to the AGM and other events. All facilitators are required to meet for supervision meetings every three weeks during the course.

At present this programme is being run twice a year. The organisation also runs regular information evenings which they advertise widely to give people more details on the Trauma Programme. Programmes tend to begin in September and, to date, have been run in Belfast, Antrim, Dundalk and Dungannon.

### **Product**

The output from the programme is in the form of collages, which the relevant participant can take home with them. No information is archived.

### Reference Materials

*The Wider Circle Teacher Training Manual*. This manual outlines the theory that underpins the programme and can be useful to anyone wishing to deliver this programme in their own community.

*The Sky before the Storm* is a book published in partnership with Breaking the Silence Project. It explains trauma in simple terms. A follow-up was written by Eamon McCreave entitled *The Beauty that Sleeps - Anxiety and Trauma*. All publications are available by contacting The Wider Circle office.

### Timeframe

1998 – present

### Contact

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## Towards Understanding and Healing

Towards Understanding and Healing was formally established in 2000 by Derry City Council and Holywell Trust as a project aiming to explore ways to allow people to come to terms with, and make sense of, the legacy of the conflict and its consequences in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain. The aim of the organisation is to *offer a safe space for people to begin to articulate personal stories and also to listen to other stories, or "truths," in a way that does not diminish their own experience.*

(organisation leaflet) This project emphasises the need to bring together the disparate narratives that comprise the story of Northern Ireland in order to better understand the effects of the past and the potential of the future.

### Project Development

Towards Understanding and Healing was formally established in 2000 by Derry City Council and Holywell Trust. It was informed by the work of An Crann/The Tree (see project description) the 'Brits Speak Out' project (see project description) and To Reflect and Trust<sup>47</sup> and emerged from the collaboration of several organisations over a number of years. In 1998 a working committee was formed, representing various agencies in the field of community relations and community healing, spearheaded by Derry/Londonderry-based organisations.

Based on the identified needs of their various constituencies, the committee began exploring the possibility of bringing a group of former soldiers and parents of soldiers killed in Northern Ireland to meet with various individuals interested in exploring and understanding the impact of the conflict and the consequences of the soldiers' presence in Northern Ireland.

In November 2000, the first Towards Understanding and Healing residential was held in a neutral location in Northern Ireland and brought together former British soldiers, parents of soldiers killed in Northern Ireland, victims of state and paramilitary violence in Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic, former paramilitaries and community members. There were international speakers with experience in working in areas of conflict and community healing. The following year, in November 2001, a similar residential was held using the same format. In August 2002, Towards Understanding and Healing, in partnership with To Reflect and Trust, organised an international conference entitled "Peace is Tough" in Derry/Londonderry. The conference brought together politicians and community activists from Israel/Palestine, South Africa, Germany, the US and Northern Ireland to explore the relationship between those at the decision-making and policy-making level and those working at the grassroots level.

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<sup>47</sup> Since 1992, To Reflect and Trust has conducted annual encounters amongst descendants of Holocaust survivors and descendants of convicted Nazi war criminals. The model concentrates on interactive workshops where participants are encouraged to share experiences at a personal level within a group setting. Since the summer of 1998, TRT has evolved to include additional participants from both sides of the current conflicts in Northern Ireland, in Palestine and Israel, and in South Africa.

These first three events took place on an ad-hoc basis as funding was secured. However, it was felt there was an identified need to place the Towards Understanding and Healing Project on a more stable basis and widen its scope of activities. In 2003, a fully constituted organisation was formed and funding was secured from the EU Peace and Reconciliation programme. In the autumn of that year, a full-time project co-ordinator and part-time administrator were employed.

### **Project Rationale**

The organisation's stated aims are:

- To facilitate the coming together of individuals from diverse groups to tell and hear stories in a safe environment.
- To facilitate a dialogue that allows people to speak fully and be listened to whilst creating opportunities for the exploration of each other's ideology, perceptions, attitudes, and sense of history.
- To develop strategies that enable individuals to access further support structures that allow them to move forward.
- To maintain ongoing links and create new links as ways of sharing ideas, models, and structures at local, national, and international levels, and to continually learn from other people's post-conflict experience.
- To build the capacity and sustainability of the organisation.

Each of the strategic aims has a corresponding set of objectives, which are detailed on the project website. (see below)

### **Process**

The organisation has developed a two-pronged approach to facilitating group encounters which they distinguish as 'storytelling' and 'dialogue'. They view storytelling as the process that allows participants to tell and hear personal stories in a fully supportive atmosphere. Dialogue is described as an opportunity for people to ask questions and have honest exchanges as critical issues are discussed. Both types of conversation can happen in single-identity as well as cross-community contexts.

Storytelling takes place within a residential setting, generally involving 12 to 18 people. In small, facilitated groups of between 4 and 6 people, participants are given the opportunity to talk about their life experiences in as much or as little detail as is comfortable. Each person can generally take as much time as is needed and speaks without interruptions. At the end, the speaker can decide whether or not to take questions or have any discussion about what they have shared.

In order to inform and guide their work, the organisation has developed a set of Guiding Principles and a Code of Practice. In brief, the guiding principles are based around the concepts of Diversity; Encouraging New Voices; Risk Taking; Creativity; International Learning; Re-Humanisation and Leaving a Legacy.

The Code of Practice was developed in acknowledgment of the potentially challenging nature of storytelling and the potential for feelings of vulnerability amongst those who participate. The Code of Practice was designed to ensure the safety of both facilitator and participant. The areas addressed by

the Code of Practice are: Flexibility (in terms of the methodologies used); Safety (including issues such as venues and facilitator training and selection); Effectiveness; Transparency; Preparation; Co-facilitation; Follow-Up; Confidentiality and Integrity in Work with Other Organisations.

According to the organisation, the work of Towards Understanding and Healing is adaptable to the needs of its users by creating programmes designed to provide specific groups or organisations with opportunities to engage in storytelling and/or dialogue.

To date the project has held four three-day residential entitled:

- **Our Stories: Women's Storytelling Residential** (July 2004 and November 2004). These workshops were specifically organised for women from Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Great Britain who have been impacted in some way by the conflict.
- **Storytelling Residentials** (February, March, May, June 2005). These weekend residentials are for people who have been affected by the conflict and are designed to provide individuals from Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Great Britain with an opportunity to come together to explore individual and shared experiences.
- **Storytelling in the Community: Community Relations Workers Residential** (October 2004). This residential was held for community relations workers to familiarise them with Towards Understanding and Healing's storytelling methodology. Participants took part in the storytelling process in small groups and received training in the process and ethics of storytelling.
- **Northern Ireland Veterans Storytelling Residential** (August 2004). This residential was organised for former British soldiers who were stationed in Northern Ireland. This single-identity storytelling residential was held in England in conjunction with the Legacy Project (Tim Parry and Jonathan Ball Trust).

In addition, the project has held an international residential dialogue-based conference entitled 'When the Fighting Stops... A Dialogue on Community Healing' in association with the Community Healing Unit of the Old Library Trust, based in the Creggan, Derry/Londonderry. 'When the Fighting Stops. . .' sought to highlight the increasing role of dialogue and storytelling as a way by which to give individuals a voice in piecing together the wider picture of what has taken place in Northern Ireland over the past 30 years. This conference drew together a fully-representative cross-section of society to examine storytelling and dialogue as a tool in addressing the affects of the conflict on individuals and communities. Participants spent much of the three days in small dialogue groups discussing issues, drawing on presentations by international speakers from the U.S./American Indian Country, Colombia, Palestine, and South Africa that helped conference delegates transfer the learning surrounding trauma from the experiences of those nations to that of Northern Ireland.

The event had two goals. The first was to provide people with the opportunity for critical encounters and opportunities for dialogue that could affect changes in thought which could move the peace process forward on the political level, while generating the potential for personal and community healing. The second was to provide people with various models of effective storytelling and dialogue. Increasingly,

people on both statutory and community levels are asking for opportunities to have dialogue about critical issues and to explore what storytelling really means in practice. This unusual and innovative approach to bringing people together created the space to accomplish both. See [www.thejunction-ni.org/Conference-TUH.htm](http://www.thejunction-ni.org/Conference-TUH.htm) for more details on the conference.

### **Dissemination of Learning**

A residential was held in January 2004 for community workers called *Relax, Reflect, Re-Vision: A Community Relations Workers Residential*. This gathering allowed professionals working with communities at various levels to take time out to reflect on their own work and the work of their organisations. The residential was the first step towards more comprehensive training, and allowed community workers to identify needs that could be met through training or other future opportunities. This residential was held in conjunction with the Derry-based Holos Project.

Towards Understanding and Healing has given presentations at various conferences and workshops, including Towards a Better Future: Building Healthy Communities (October 2003) and Derry City Council's Women's Conference (March 2005). In addition, Towards Understanding and Healing has organised a series of storytelling workshops for various groups at the request of the groups, as well as a workshop open to all interested parties called "Legal Aspects of Confidentiality in Community Relations Work."

Towards Understanding and Healing works closely with a variety of other organisations in regard to the development of ethical standards in the storytelling process, reciprocal facilitation, referrals of potential/past participants and other processes.

### **Reference Material**

*Towards Understanding and Healing* (Project Description Leaflet)

*The Storytelling Process* (Towards Understanding and Healing Leaflet)

*Towards Understanding and Healing Annual Report 2003-04*

*Policies and Procedures Manual* (50-page manual that can be referenced by other organisations setting up procedural structures)

Guiding Principles/Code of Practice

Training packs for storytelling and dialogue facilitation

Additional information on the project can be accessed via the project website at: [www.thejunction-ni.org/Conference-TUH.htm](http://www.thejunction-ni.org/Conference-TUH.htm), including a quarterly newsletter, the first edition of which was published in winter 2004.

**Timeframe**

2000 – present

**Contact**

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## *Unfinished Business: State Killings and the Quest for Truth*

*Unfinished Business* is a publication which emerged from research on state violence by Prof. Bill Rolston of the University of Ulster. The book, published in 2000 contains the first-hand accounts of people – mainly relatives – who have campaigned for justice for victims of state violence in Northern Ireland.

### **Project Development**

During the West Belfast Festival in August 1998, Relatives for Justice organised an event for people who have lost loved ones as a result of British state violence during the conflict. Entitled ‘Forgotten Victims’, the event was attended by around 200 people and many spoke of their personal experiences of losing a loved one and the associated impact.<sup>48</sup>

This event was a key moment in putting the issue of victims of state violence on the political agenda. The book was envisaged as pursuing the same purpose, gathering the stories of a number of instances of death through the action of state forces. To be considered for the book, the case concerned had to involve two elements: 1) the killing of some person or persons by state forces; and 2) a campaign for truth and justice carried out by relatives and/or others. In the end, interviews materialised in 22 such cases and were conducted with three long-term activists on the issue of state killings.

### **Project Rationale**

According to the author in the introduction to the book:

*“If the demands for truth and justice are to be met, then the message has to be carried beyond the audiences which are sympathetic, to the same state functionaries and institutions which have marginalised those people in the past.*

*The basis of this book is that these stories are important, not just at the level of pain and suffering - a fact that is equally true of any other stories that could be told - but because they starkly exemplify a number of factors about the past”.*

### **Process**

Identified individuals were contacted by the project team and requested to be interviewed for the publication. All interviews were carried out by the research assistant to the project, who then transcribed the interviews. The transcripts were then edited and a final version of each story returned to the interviewee for approval. Approval and consent of a final version was sought from the interviewees.

Interviewees were not asked to sign an official consent form, although it was made clear that the intention was to publish a book in which each interview would stand as a separate chapter.

<sup>48</sup> The event was recorded by Relatives for Justice and transcribed. However, the organisation has not disseminated the materials as it needs to gain consent from all participants. The organisation is currently exploring ways of making the transcribed materials more available to the public.



When the interview was transcribed and edited to ensure a clear and accessible narrative, the edited chapter was returned to the interviewee who was given the right to change any part of the draft. This was to ensure complete transparency in terms of what was to be published in their name. Most made only minor amendments. The introductions to each chapter were written solely by the author and were not vetted by each interviewee.

### **Product**

Rolston, Bill with Gilmartin, Mairead, *Unfinished Business: State Killings and the Quest for Truth* (Beyond the Pale, Belfast, 2000)

### **Archive and Accessibility**

The publication is available for purchase. A list of the contents and extracts from the book are available at: [cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/violence/docs/rolston00.htm](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/violence/docs/rolston00.htm)

The original tapes and transcripts are held by the author but are not publicly available. It was not intended that the interviews be disseminated in any other way than through the book.

### **Timeframe**

1998 - 2000

### **Contact**

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## WAVE Trauma Centre

The WAVE Trauma Centre was established in Belfast in 1994 to provide support for people who had been bereaved or traumatised as a result of the conflict. Now working in five centres (Belfast, Armagh, Omagh, Ballymoney and Derry/ Londonderry), the organisation provides a number of support programmes for individuals affected by the conflict, including Befriending / Outreach Visiting; individual Counselling and psychotherapy; complementary therapies, welfare advice and advocacy; personal development and creative arts projects; peer group support; programmes for children and young people and training courses.

The organisation, through its various centres, has been involved in a number of projects, using a range of methodologies with both adults and young people, which aim to provide an opportunity for people to tell their stories of the conflict using creative arts techniques and recording of stories.

### WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- **“Every Picture Tells a Story”**

The Every Picture Tells a Story project represented a combination of eight stand-alone projects undertaken over a three-year period with the WAVE Trauma Centre youth members. The projects were process-based and focused on giving young people an opportunity to express themselves and express their experiences of the conflict through the creative arts. All of the projects utilised various forms of art to explore thoughts and feelings about life experiences in Northern Ireland. Some of the projects were more directly related storytelling than others, although all had an element of this and most, but not all of the young people involved shared their experiences of the conflict. There was no obligation on them to do so if they did not wish to. Several artists and youth workers were involved during the three-year period.

An exhibition and a book were produced which describe the various individual projects undertaken over the three-year period and showed a selection of creative works produced, with some commentary from the young people involved. Combined, the projects involved around 70 young people aged five to 25 who participated in at least one of the projects. Much of the work was done in collaboration with the Ormeau Baths Gallery, Belfast.

The organisation views the creative arts as a powerful way in which people can express themselves and tell their stories in another format. The workshops took place in a safe and facilitated environment.

### Express Yourself

The ‘Express Yourself’ project involves young people from WAVE centres in Belfast, Ballymena and Omagh. The theme of the project was ‘exploring the past’ but also ‘making a statement concerning yourself’. Many of those who took part highlighted various traumatic experiences that had occurred in their lives, for example, being intimidated out of their homes or the death of a loved one as a result of the

conflict. A number of workshops were held and the ideas that were gathered were transformed on to t-shirts.

### **Project 2000 – OMAC Exhibition**

The exhibition contained around 20 framed pictures and a large canvas depicting some images of the children's parents who had lost their lives during the conflict. A glass cabinet of personal items representing special memories was also included. The project involved 25 young people over a three-year period. The exhibition was facilitated by the Old Museum Arts Centre and opened on their premises in May 2000. An accompanying publication contains five of the exhibits alongside a short text by the young person explaining a little about their picture and the loved one that died as a result of the conflict.

### **The Tunnel**

This was a joint project of WAVE Youth and Youth@CLC. The groups decided to put forward a submission to the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland consultation in the form of a creative piece of work. They devised a 'Tunnel' – a large structure, 12 feet long, seven feet high and five feet wide, in which they placed their ideas of what human rights means to them. The tunnel took three months to complete and was facilitated by two local artists. Some short extracts from the young people's explanations of why human rights is important to them, given their own experiences, is documented in the book of the project.

### **No Longer Poles Apart**

This project was the outcome of a number of residential conferences between WAVE Youth and the British Red Cross Venture Group. A total of ten young people from different sides of the community got together to discuss their ideas on the building of relationships. They used creative arts to express themselves and celebrate their similarities and differences. Facilitated by Earthform Ceramics, the group created a 'Totem Pole', a six-foot structure created from clay in five sections, each section portraying the interests and identity of a young person that took part. Each of the clay images were created following talks between the young people during several workshops. The totem pole is currently part of the *Conflict: Irish at War* exhibition in the Ulster Museum.

### **Every Picture Tells a Story**

Every Picture Tells a Story is a series of 15 paintings on the theme of 'Conflict'. Each painting is a snapshot of a newspaper story that was current at the time when the group was meeting. Each young person chose a story that had some significance for them. They then used paint and crayon to highlight certain key words and phrases which helped to portray the depth and meaning behind the story. The story was then blown up on acetate and a small section used to create an abstract effect. The finished painting was used to kick-start a discussion on how the conflict had affected individual group members.

The exhibition and its publication contain a number of the finished pictures from the children of two families (aged between 7 and 13), alongside a brief explanation from the young people as to what the painting means and about their experiences of being forced from their homes. Extracts from the stories

of two other boys (aged 12 and 13) who were involved in riots at a Belfast interface are also presented in the book and exhibition.

### **Jigsaw**

Jigsaw was the result of a six-week project undertaken with WAVE Youth members from Belfast, Ballymoney and Omagh. A giant double-sided jigsaw was created, made up of 16 individual pieces, each created by one of the participants. On one side is a happy memory and on the other, a difficult time they experienced. According to the organisation, while the puzzle is the final outcome of the project the process that the group went through to get to that point was more important. For most it was the first time they were encouraged to reflect upon their lives, identifying both happy and sad times – these occasions were represented by various patterns designed exclusively by each child. They then had to select those that had the greatest impact and paint them onto their jigsaw piece. The pattern representing that particular memory forms the perimeter of the piece. The publication contains a number of jigsaw pieces, with accompanying text from the children explaining their piece or describing experiences of the conflict.

### **Childsplay**

The Childsplay project uses a large floor puzzle to explore the relationship between children and conflict. The project highlights the situation in countries such as Northern Ireland, Uganda and East Timor, but also asks specific questions about Northern Ireland.

Childsplay was developed over three residential sessions by a group of 20 young people from WAVE, British Red Cross and the Spirit of Enniskillen. It is currently available for use in schools as a peer education resource.

### **Picture This**

This project sought to use photography as a mechanism for sharing a story. Seven young people were each given a disposable camera and sent off to take photographs that they could use to share their particular experience of the 'Troubles'. According to the project:

*"For some this was quite an emotional experience as it meant revisiting past events, places their loved ones used to go, things that were important to that person and therefore significant when retelling their story. Each story was different and each member of the group approached it in a different way but one thing most had in common was a determination to visit the scene of the murder".*

In the publication, the photo is shown with an accompanying text describing why the young person took that photo.

## Project 2008

Ten young people from the Ballymoney and Coleraine areas met as a group to put together a short documentary in partnership with Third Source Media and Big Tele Theatre Company. Throughout the project the young people investigated and documented current situations in their community and personal life as well as sharing their hopes and aspirations for the future.

Some of the issues raised by the documentary included: inadequate youth provision within local communities, safety, graffiti, rubbish and political influences on everyday life.

## Archiving and Accessibility

A number of the products from each of the projects are incorporated into an exhibition entitled 'Every Picture Tells a Story' which has toured around Northern Ireland. The project would like redo the exhibition which has become worn, and is currently exploring potential avenues for funding. The rest of the materials are held in store at the WAVE Centre in Belfast.

## Contact

Alan McBride, Youth Worker, WAVE Trauma Centre, Belfast

## WORK WITH ADULTS

The WAVE Trauma Centre has worked on a range of storytelling projects with adult members over a number of years, particularly focusing on the creative arts.

- **Stained Glass Windows**

Individual WAVE members participated in a series of workshops to create stained glass windows which contained images related to their personal loss of either being bereaved or injured as a result of the conflict. The workshops were advertised and open to members of WAVE to attend. An artist-facilitator worked with 19 families in the Belfast centre to discuss what images they would like to see in it. A family member from each of the nineteen families came along every week to work on their individual pane of glass. The group worked with the facilitator and a WAVE staff member over 15 weeks to design the windows and assist in its creation. The windows were publicly launched and were displayed as part of the *Conflict: Irish at War* exhibition at the Ulster Museum in 2004-05. The windows will be returned for display at the WAVE offices.

Following the production of the windows, the participants were interviewed by a staff member of WAVE using a series of semi-structured questions and the interviews were recorded. The interviewees were asked to explain the use of images in the glass and how they had become involved with WAVE. The stories were transcribed and returned to the interviewees for any corrections. The staff member then met with each interviewee to work on an edited version of the story to be used in a publication on the project. A book of these stories is soon to be published.

The original interviews and transcripts were destroyed, and the amended transcripts are archived at WAVE.

This process was repeated in the Ballymoney WAVE Centre. Seven families came together to make a stained glass window to represent their personal experiences of the conflict. The project differed in that the group met for two residentials to agree on the images that would form the basis of the windows. A booklet was published with the stained glass windows and the stories behind the images.

Publication: *Ballymoney Stain Glass* WAVE Trauma Centre, Ballymoney, 2003

Both stained glass windows were framed and are free-standing pieces. The windows were publicly launched and have been displayed at various public events. The Belfast stained-glass window was displayed as part of the *Conflict: Irish at War* exhibition at the Ulster Museum in 2004-05. The windows will be displayed at the WAVE offices.

- **Glass Mosaic**

In the Derry / Londonderry WAVE Centre, a group of women who had been bereaved as a result of the conflict met regularly. After a year of meeting, it was agreed that they would explore their experiences through creating stand-alone glass mosaic pieces.

The women worked with a creative arts facilitator to design their mosaic and learn how to create it from their design. The women were involved in all aspects of the process, including the cutting and gluing of the mosaic. The project lasted for 11 weeks and the final products were framed.

Following the production of the mosaics, the stories of the women were recorded, which both told their experiences of the conflict and gave an explanation of the meaning behind the mosaic they had created. Interviews were conducted one-to-one by a WAVE staff member and recorded on tape. The stories were then transcribed and returned to each individual for correction. They were edited and a revised version again returned to the women for approval. A collection of the stories and images of the mosaics were published by WAVE and publicly launched.

Each mosaic is framed and they all hang in the windows of the WAVE Centre to catch the light and bring them to life. The room in which the mosaics hang is used by members as a room of reflection.

Publication: *Remembering with Love and Healing Through Creation* (WAVE Trauma Centre, 2004)

- **Tranquillity**

At the WAVE Trauma Centre, Belfast, a group of women from different backgrounds have been meeting weekly for a number of years. They decided to do, as a joint project, a large ceramic mural of the WAVE house which “*symbolized for them the potential each individual has to rebuild from brokenness and to be*

*able to reconnect in a unique and meaningful way.*" (from publication). A ceramics facilitator worked with the group in creating individual 'tiles', which, when combined, formed a picture of the WAVE Trauma Centre house in Belfast. Having gone through the workshop process and created the ceramic mural (which is housed at the WAVE centre) each individual was given an opportunity to have their thoughts and experiences recorded and an edited version published in a booklet, entitled *Tranquillity*. It contains eleven stories from the women, in which they tell of their experiences and how they became connected and involved with WAVE.

*Tranquillity: A Journey of healing through creative art and storytelling.* (Wave Trauma Centre, Belfast, 2004)

### **Dissemination of Learning**

The WAVE Trauma Centre developed a training programme in Storytelling which is accredited at Level 3 with the Open College Network. The course has been designed for *"anyone who is interested in learning about the therapeutic use of storytelling and for those who wish to develop storytelling projects for groups."* (from project leaflet) The content of the course covers the following themes:

- Understanding how fundamental and powerful storytelling is in our everyday lives.
- Understanding the therapeutic benefit of telling a story.
- How words and meanings change as they are passed from teller to listener.
- Hear stories of others in an open and respectful way.
- Writing can be a powerful medium for storytelling.
- Understanding ethical issues involved in hearing, telling and gathering of stories.
- The use of visual image to raise awareness of personal stories.
- Skills required in recording the personal stories of other people.

The course runs for eight weeks and each session lasts for three hours. Participants are required to produce two assignments and a semi-structured journal identifying their learning from each session. Role-play, creative exercises and group work are used to support the learning.

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## 5. DISCUSSIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

As chapter four demonstrates, a wide variety of storytelling processes and projects relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland have been researched, involving a broad range of individuals and organisations, who work for a variety of reasons and with a diverse set of outputs. Taken together, they signify the development of a substantial body of experience and expertise on the facilitation of storytelling related to the conflict. Having explored a range of projects, it is useful to make a number of observations in relation to the audit findings and present a number of recommendations with regard to potential next steps for the work of the Storytelling sub-group.

### 5.2 Identifying projects

Despite the development of audit parameters to inform the scope of the audit of storytelling initiatives, the research represented a significant challenge in terms of identifying relevant projects, documenting their work in sufficient detail to be a valuable resource for the future, while not inadvertently overlooking or excluding any owing to a misinterpretation of the projects' rationale or methodology. All efforts were made to locate projects that conformed to the general criteria. However, unintentional exclusion of projects is possible and any suggestions of additional projects which should be included in a future audit would be welcomed. At a seminar in June 2005, a draft audit report was presented to the Storytelling sub-group and to representatives of the other four Healing Through Remembering sub-groups. The participants were requested to suggest additional projects or to challenge the inclusion of a project. Amendments were made to the draft, resulting in this final version.

### 5.3 Motivations and objectives

It is clear from a review of existing literature and discussions with programme staff that the motivations for undertaking storytelling projects and processes differ considerably. Additionally, the majority expressed more than one motivating factor in initiating the project. These generally related to the type of practice they are engaged in, whether research, support or advocacy work. That being said, from an analysis of responses provided, the dominant motivations of each project could be categorised as:

- ◆ **Advocacy / promoting change**
- ◆ **Healing / therapeutic**
- ◆ **Documentation / historical record**
- ◆ **Acknowledgement / commemoration**
- ◆ **Education**
- ◆ **Conduit to other services**



A core of organisations and projects has been specifically established with the primary focus of providing opportunities for people to tell their stories of the conflict. These projects tend to focus intentionally on the healing and therapeutic value of storytelling for individuals. A more common set of organisations have chosen to provide opportunities for storytelling as one of a number of services they make available. The motivation of these organisations in undertaking such work varies more widely. Such projects tend to emphasise the acknowledgment, commemorative and advocacy aspects of their work. While not diminishing the value of programmes developed by more broadly focused organisations, it is clear that the projects with a dedicated storytelling remit have had more opportunities to refine their programmes, progress their work and establish more theoretically grounded practices.

Research projects tended to be motivated by a desire for policy or advocacy change, while a number emphasised the importance of educating and informing the wider public on the experiences of individuals and communities as a result of the conflict. The use of individuals' stories to educate and stimulate discussions has been adopted by several projects, notably the *epilogues* project and the Cost of the Troubles Study video production *And Then There Was Silence*.

In discussions with a number of organisations, particularly those providing a range of services, an additional motivation was identified. Such organisations viewed the storytelling initiatives as a means by which individuals may become more comfortable in the telling of their stories, may grow in confidence and trust, and may then avail themselves of other services and programmes that are provided, such as counselling services or advocacy and justice work.

#### 5.4 Methodologies

A wide variety of approaches have been adopted to assist people to tell their stories of the conflict – some developed locally, others borrowed or adapted from international models for use in their own context. While varying in focus and technique, it is possible to broadly categorise the projects according to the methodologies employed.

- ◆ **Talking circle workshops** (person-centred group processes, with no material product)
- ◆ **Discussion-based workshops** (group discussion, involving sharing of stories)
- ◆ **Creative tools processes** (using creative arts to facilitate the telling of stories)
- ◆ **Oral / life history projects** (audio and audiovisual documentation of individuals' stories)

It is tempting to distinguish between projects that focus on the 'process' of storytelling and those which focus on the 'end-product'. However, during discussions with programme staff, it became evident that such a clear distinction was difficult to make. Although a substantial number of projects resulted in the development of a 'product', such as an archive of audio-recordings or a publication of an edited volume of stories, all initiatives placed a degree of emphasis on the process of engaging with the storytellers,

creating an environment in which they were comfortable telling their story and ensuring that it was a positive experience for the teller.

However, in terms of methodological approach, a distinction can be made between initiatives that focused on individual person-to-person work and group-work processes. Oral or life history projects tend to involve one interviewer, one narrator, some form of recording device and a potential end-product in mind. The particular methodology chosen will, inevitably, have an impact on the manner and form in which the story is told and heard. On the other hand, groupwork tends to involve several individuals – either from one community, group or sector or a range of backgrounds – sharing their experiences within a facilitated, confidential, structured space. In this context, the ‘audience’ is the rest of the group. As with individual work, the groupwork approach has a significant influence on the way in which the narrators tells their stories, and how the story is heard and interpreted by the audience. Groupwork more typically utilises creative tools, such as art, to provide an alternate focus to the storytelling process or as a means of telling their story through another medium.

Interestingly, while much of the early work of An Crann/The Tree involved creative writing workshops, no direct examples of such initiatives were identified in recent years. That being said, creative writing may be one element used in facilitated storytelling workshops more generally, and conflict-related issues may emerge as a theme in such settings.

### 5.5 Products and their dissemination

Of those initiatives that record stories in some way, a range of methods have been chosen. These may be summarised as:

- ◆ **Publications**
- ◆ **Audio**
- ◆ **Audio-visual**
- ◆ **Accessible archives**
- ◆ **Exhibitions**
- ◆ **Media**
- ◆ **Multimedia**
- ◆ **Creative processes** (including drama and visual arts)
- ◆ **Educational workshops**

Of the projects explored, audio recording of individual and group storytelling is the most common medium utilised. In most cases, these recordings are transferred to the written word through their transcription and editing. That being said, this is a time-consuming and often costly exercise and a number of projects have indicated that they have not had the resources to do so, to date. Video recordings have also been employed, but have typically involved professional input and have been edited down to short extracts for

public viewing. Publishing stories, either through established publishing houses or by community-based organisations, is the most frequent way in which stories have been disseminated and a range of examples have been documented. One example of a computer-based archive of recordings, with controlled access by the public, came to light, although several projects indicated their wish to retain their material in this form in the future, resources and expertise permitting.

The internet is increasingly being considered by projects for disseminating stories to a wide and international audience. Organisations such as Cúnamh and the Borderlines project have developed such approaches. However, the use of the internet requires a specific set of practical and ethical considerations in terms of consent and public accessibility and no organisation to date has developed any specific guidelines on its usage. In several examples, the print media has been engaged to circulate personal narratives to a wider audience, including Relatives for Justice, Cúnamh and *If Stones Could Speak*. In the case of the BBC Legacy programme, the broadcast media themselves initiated a storytelling project with a conflict-related theme. In discussions with organisations, it is clear that the use of print and broadcast media is only viewed as appropriate if the narrator was comfortable in having their stories disseminated widely and their anonymity could be assured. Several had concerns that the media might sensationalise the stories and therefore avoided this particular approach.

While many of the initiatives documented have educational components, only two projects had devised specific educational material related to the personal narratives collected. The *epilogues* project have developed an educational workshop utilising extracts of stories and the Cost of the Troubles Study produced a training video and manual based on edited extracts related to trauma and loss. Only the *'epilogues'* project is currently in operation, to the author's knowledge.

## 5.6 Archiving of materials

While the research indicates that a number of organisations have given careful consideration to the development of secure and well-catalogued archives of materials, such action appears to have been given least attention by most projects. The safe storage of materials represents a significant challenge for organisations, often working with limited resources and with inadequate knowledge of the technical and legal aspects relating to archiving. At present, a number of organisations are creating ad hoc archives within their own buildings, often poorly catalogued and inadequately protected. Groups are limited by funding restrictions and many have not given thought to putting contingencies in place for the transfer of archives elsewhere if the organisation should close down.

In terms of the archiving of the materials collected as a result of storytelling, testimony or narrative processes, access could be categorised as private, limited and public. A review of the initiatives detailed indicates that the majority of the projects provide only limited access (if any) to original material collected over time. A number of organisations have recorded stories of individuals using both audio and audio-visual devices. Typically, these recordings are transcribed and returned to the narrator for correction and

editing. While transcripts of stories are easily amended, many organisations do not have the capability to edit the original master recordings. During data collection for the audit, it transpired that a number of organisations retained master copies of interviews, even though transcripts have been amended. A surprising number of organisations have not adequately addressed the vital issue of written consent for the use of materials, particularly in the longer term. While many organisations had developed some means of gaining consent from individuals for use of their stories in a particular context, for example, a publication or submission to an archive of stories, few had sought advice on the legalities of using materials in other contexts or formats, or addressed the issue of seeking further consent from the individual or their families in subsequent years.

Currently no central or designated repository exists and there is the distinct probability that such materials, which might usefully be archived for future generations, may be damaged, lost or used inappropriately. It is acknowledged that some individuals, groups and communities may have objections to the establishment of a central repository, unless independence, confidentiality and professionalism could be ensured. However, some mechanism or set of guidelines to ensure that information is securely stored, catalogued and protected in accordance with the wishes of the storyteller is vital. Given the particular sensitivity around issues related to the conflict, this is an issue for future work.

### **5.7 Networking and dissemination of learning**

It was clear from interviews undertaken that significant levels of informal networking and more formalised collaboration is taking place around storytelling, testimony and narrative work. This is particularly the case for workshop-focused processes, such as Towards Understanding and Healing, the Legacy Project and the Healing of Memories process, where facilitators have been shared and best practices developed collaboratively. Such projects have also developed strong international links and have created opportunities for individuals from Northern Ireland to participate in international programmes as well as bringing a number of international storytelling practitioners to Northern Ireland for conferences and workshops.

Outside the therapeutic disciplines, the early work around the structured telling and collection of stories related to the conflict was developed by An Crann/The Tree, established in 1995. While no longer in existence, the continued references to the project by others highlights its significance in encouraging discussion on the role of storytelling and providing support and skills to other organisations wishing to undertake storytelling projects.

While it is clear from interviews that a significant cross-pollination of both knowledge and skills has occurred between storytelling projects related to the conflict, a number of projects have been initiated in relative isolation and have developed their practice somewhat through trial and error. However, structured programmes do exist. The Conflict Trauma Resource Centre, WAVE and Towards Understanding and Healing have developed training programmes on practical and ethical aspects of

storytelling and the Dúchas Living History Project has run a number of training sessions at the request of other organisations interested in oral history projects. While significant knowledge exists amongst individuals engaged in storytelling work in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, few organisations have found the time or resources to document their work and there is a danger of knowledge and skills being lost if a more systematic detailing of methodologies, codes of practice and accumulated knowledge is not undertaken.

### **5.8 Involvement and non-involvement in storytelling projects**

A number of avenues have been outlined for people to have their stories related to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland to be heard, acknowledged and, perhaps documented and disseminated more widely have been outlined. However, participation in many projects is limited as a result of the geographical, thematic, sectoral or community-of-interest focus and are not necessarily accessible to the wider public. In addition, not all groups and individuals wish to engage in such processes.

In the process of identifying relevant projects for the audit, a range of community-based organisations were contacted to ascertain their interest or participation in storytelling initiatives relating to the conflict. Several such organisations had initiated storytelling projects while others had directed their members or client group to existing initiatives. However, several organisations indicated that, in their view, storytelling or testimony work was either inappropriate for their members, or they did not feel that sufficient trust existed for people to begin to share their personal experiences outside a psychotherapeutic context. One organisation indicated that their membership would not consider professional counselling, given the macho atmosphere within their community, and that storytelling would be viewed in the same context as being unacceptable. Two organisations expressed concern in having outsiders facilitate storytelling sessions, given the mistrust that has developed as a result of conflict-related events which their members have experienced. One organisation felt it was premature to be discussing storytelling projects “as if the conflict was already over.”

However, most of those interviewed who are not currently engaged in storytelling, personal narrative or testimony work acknowledged its potential value and expressed a wish to engage in such work in the future, time and resources permitting. Most indicated an interest in learning more about potential processes and were interested in training seminars or conferences that may be offered. In addition, the majority of projects currently undertaking some form of storytelling work expressed a wish to expand these services in the future, funding and means permitting.

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## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Following receipt of a draft of this report, and a seminar at which the draft was amended and a number of initial recommendations for future development were presented by the researcher, the Storytelling sub-group discussed and agreed the following recommendations on their ongoing work.

- 6.1** Based on discussions during the audit and internal discussions to date, the sub-group should consider the appropriateness and applicability of the term 'storytelling' to their ongoing work.
- 6.2** To inform and clarify the future work and direction of the sub-group, a workable definition of 'storytelling' or another agreed term should be developed.
- 6.3** A critical examination of the value and impact of personal stories, narratives and testimonies related to the conflict to both the narrator and the receiver, and to society as a whole, should be undertaken.
- 6.4** The profile of the Storytelling sub-group should be raised and its work to date should be widely promoted.
- 6.5** Increased networking and information-sharing between organisations currently undertaking storytelling processes should be supported and encouraged. Significant learning and skills exist within a wide range of organisations and individuals, yet there is no systematic sharing or structured discussions taking place between groups. The Storytelling sub-group is a valuable first step but it must ensure it is as representative as possible of the variety of storytelling projects and processes if it is to maximise its potential and impact.
- 6.6** This audit of storytelling processes should be disseminated widely and made available in a format allowing for regular updating. This might usefully be achieved on the Healing Through Remembering website ([www.healingthroughremembering.org](http://www.healingthroughremembering.org)). Consultation with, and the permission of, all projects included in the audit will be required for their inclusion on the HTR website.
- 6.7** The audit of storytelling processes indicates that some communities and sectors more than others are engaged in personal storytelling, narrative and testimony work related to the conflict. The Storytelling sub-group should explore why this is the case and consider ways in which communities could be encouraged to participate in such processes.
- 6.8** Increased exchange of information and collaboration with the four other HTR sub-groups should explore the relationship of storytelling to other processes related to dealing with the past.

- 6.9** There is a need for a continued examination of the practical issues relating to storytelling including methodologies, gaining informed consent, development of appropriate modes of dissemination and establishment of adequate and long-term archiving facilities. The sub-group should work in collaboration with existing organisations and individuals to explore the potential to develop culturally sensitive training programmes and materials in various forms to facilitate storytelling regarding conflict-related issues.
- 6.10** A detailed exploration of international models of good practice and the role of storytelling in societies emerging from conflict should be undertaken in order to document lessons learned from other contexts. There is a need to identify relevant examples of how stories that may contradict each other can be presented together in ways which are sensitive to individuals' experiences and views of the past.
- 6.11** Potential sources of funding not only to support implementing storytelling projects, but also to document good practice and develop of quality training programmes should be identified and explored.
- 6.12** One issue of particular concern that was identified during the course of the audit of storytelling initiatives relates to the manner and means by which original and edited material is being stored and archived. There is a lack of information on the legal aspects of data protection, consent and privacy. There is also little sharing of best practice between relevant organisations and bodies, despite expertise being available within the region. The storytelling sub-group should explore how to inform and guide projects in the long-term archiving of materials, safely, securely and lawfully.
- 6.13** There is a need to engage with academic and community-based researchers to explore how interview data collected can be archived and can contribute to disseminating personal narratives about the conflict.
- 6.14** A conference or seminar on both the value and practical application of storytelling should be convened involving projects and processes undertaking relevant work to explore issues, identify gaps in knowledge and explore the future role of HTR in relation to these activities.
- 6.15** In relation to the HTR recommendation on establishing the *Testimony* project, the storytelling sub-group should:
- explore the appropriateness of the recommendation on the establishment of a storytelling process in light of the information gathered to date;
  - clarify what methodologies are being suggested as part of the *Testimony* project;

- initiate a process of discussion within the sub-group on the merits of the HTR *Testimony* recommendation;
- initiate a process of consultation with storytelling projects and the wider public on the merits of the HTR *Testimony* recommendation and assess support for such a proposal.