



CRC e-Bulletin

Shared space, shared past; a place-people biography of the White City c1947-1969

Prof. Marianne Elliott—University of Liverpool

Professor Elliott introduces her current research into the White City area of North Belfast before the Troubles

North Belfast and nearby Newtownabbey were traditionally mixed religion areas until the Troubles. I wish to tell the story of that hopeful post-war generation and their children, who lived there and have chosen the **White City** as an example. My study involves an account of the work of the *Housing Trust*, set up in 1945. The pre-war housing record of the NI Government was lamentable. 'Northern Ireland was really starting in 1945,' wrote the Trust's first Chairman, 'where Great Britain had started in 1919'. The result was a chronic shortage even before World War II and, because of the blitz and the return of ex-servicemen, a real crisis after it.

The Trust took its inspiration from successful social-housing schemes in Britain. Houses were allocated on a strict needs basis and so it became one of Northern Ireland's earliest and most successful experiments in cross-religious co-operation. Particularly influential was the English Victorian social reformer, Octavia Hill, most notably her ideas on the employment of an exclusively female group of housing managers and the promotion of green spaces, gardens and trees, and the provision of schools, post-offices and shops. 'Everything should be done to help large new estates to grow into real communities,' according to the founding ideal of the Housing Trust. Whether it succeeded in this aspiration will be one of the key questions posed by this project.



A view of Whitewell in the 1950s

September 2010

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Shared space, shared past continued

Why the White City?

As one of the first Housing Trust estates to be constructed (1947-9), it embodied all the ideals set out in the Trust's mission statements. And although houses were allocated on a needs basis, an unspoken convention ensured a religious balance. I also lived there 1949-63 and have retained contact with many residents. An insider's knowledge will inform my approach as much as scholarly research.

It is also a perfect example of the relationship of a local community with its environment. The White City was/is located below the Cave Hill (the iconic reference point for all the inhabitants of North Belfast), an area of rolling fields and surrounding forests. The land on which the estate was built was a compulsory purchase, and the Trust was very concerned in the 1940s about the conservation of vegetation and green spaces for communal usage. The importance and identification with the surrounding environment is emerging in pilot interviews with former residents.

North Belfast had historically been the most integrated part of Belfast. The keen sense of place noted above made people very reluctant to move far, when they were intimidated out of estates, hence the many sectarian interfaces in this area. Yet in North Belfast I have found the memory of living in a mixed community being kept alive by the older and middle-aged members of families who had experienced living in such areas before the Troubles. I have also found much evidence of cross-community family friendships being continued. However, as these residents with memories of mixed communities become older, the tradition is fading. It is time to tell our story before that happens.

If any former/current White City residents would like to share their experiences and memories with me, and confidentiality can be guaranteed if they wish, I can be contacted by phone: 0151-794-3831 (and I will call back) or email: melliott@liv.ac.uk and I can meet with them in Belfast over the next few months.

Professor Marianne Elliott is Director of The Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool

Historians and Conflict Transformation

Cillian McGrattan—University of the West of Scotland

As in other divided societies, the past in Northern Ireland is a major site of contention. The fears and suspicions that continue to drive inter-community discord and that inspire friction in the devolved institutions are often underpinned by perceptions of historic grievances and injustices. While the colloquial dismissal of these perceptions as 'whataboutery' can defuse self-serving arguments it contributes little to deeper, unresolved issues relating to trauma, sectarianism, segregation and violence that continue to characterise everyday life in Northern Ireland.

Given the resilience of these issues many have looked to history as a balm: in order to solve the problems of the present, the logic goes, we need to discern and diagnose their root causes. Drawing inspiration from the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission,

Historians and Conflict Transformation continued

a series of quasi-judicial inquiries have taken the place of a comprehensive mechanism for dealing with or working through these conflict-related legacies. While these inquiries have sometimes provided closure and even catharsis for victims of violence they are often highly restrictive in terms of their historical scope and upon what they can offer by way of explanation and accountability to those victims.

Partially in response to this lack of an overarching approach, a series of localised 'storytelling' initiatives have emerged. These projects speak to the promise of oral history for democratising the past and for archiving memories that would otherwise be lost. However, they also raise the question of whose memories are being chosen and why. The danger here is similar to that faced by other divided societies and relates to the temptation to (in the words of the historian Tony Judt), 'encourage citizens and students to see the past – and its lessons – through the particular vector of their own suffering (or that of their ancestors)'.

In recent years historians of the conflict have radically revised received wisdoms concerning the origins of the violence and the reasons why it persisted (largely as a result of documents becoming accessible under the thirty-year rule). Of course, their conclusions are rarely prescriptive. Yet, because dissent, division, debate and revision lie at the very heart of historical research, historians, paradoxically, have a major role to play in fostering the peace and the devolution of democracy in Northern Ireland. They challenge collective and selective amnesia and wilful blindness, and they help to pinpoint the inaccuracies and downright falsifications that can characterise political projects. They also challenge the ethical assumptions and compromises that often go unarticulated within such projects and that frame ethnic narratives of belonging and belief.

Although consensus is necessary for Northern Ireland to move towards a shared future, the dissent that historians sow and thrive upon is also required. In creating space for questioning, historians can play a vital role in ensuring that that shared future is based on negotiation and debate rather than muted acquiescence. By restoring otherwise forgotten narratives to the public sphere they contribute to a more plural and a more just society.

Cillian McGrattan is a Lecturer in Politics in the School of Social Sciences at UWS



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Compiled and edited by Patricia O'Neill and Ellana Tomasso

“Pushing Barriers” Drawing Down Walls

‘Draw Down the Walls’ are planning a series of events on Friday the 23rd September to coincide with Culture Night 2011. The theme of the day, “Pushing Barriers” will examine how the project has developed community relations across some of North Belfast’s most contested interfaces and has left a legacy of engagement which seeks to create the conditions to imagine a city without barriers. The programme, which is currently funded by Belfast City Council Development & Outreach, is unique in that it is a community relations project which utilises art as a primary engagement tool to engage traditionally hard to reach sections of community that have not previously been involved in good relations work with a primary focus on detached youth.



The day will consist of a project report launch, showcasing the work which has been created and displayed to date and telling the narrative of our progress together, a discussion exploring our relationships with barriers today with a panel of Political representatives, Statutory Agencies, Academics & Community Relations practitioners and the unveiling of the “Pushing Barriers” exhibition.

Itinerary:

- 11.00am: *Draw Down the Walls report launch:* Kerrie Sweeney Belfast City Council & Peter McKittrick US Consulate
- 12.00pm-1.45pm: *“Pushing Barriers” panel discussion;* “Can we imagine a city without barriers? What remains to be done?” Final panel of speakers to be confirmed.
- 6.00pm: *“Pushing Barriers” Drawing Down Walls-* An installation created to provide a new interaction with the interface barriers we live with every day.

Draw Down the Walls is a collaboration between the North Belfast Interface Network, Golden Thread Gallery, Lower Shankill Community Association, Ardoyne Women’s Group and Tar Isteach.

All events will take place at Golden Thread Gallery, 84-94 Great Patrick Street, Belfast.

For further information contact;

Breandán Clarke: North Belfast Interface Network, brendan@nbin.info Tel: 028 90751362

Ruth Graham: Golden Thread Gallery, Ruth@gtgallery.co.uk Tel: 028 90330920

If you would like to comment or submit an article for this bulletin or advertise a community relations event or publication, please contact Patricia at poneill@nicrc.org.uk or Ellana at etomasso@nicrc.org

Events

'Dealing with the Past'

Platform for Change will be holding its next general meeting on the theme of Dealing with the Past on the evening of Monday, 5 September, at 7.30 in the Black Box, Hill Street, Belfast. A dramatic presentation by the women who comprise Theatre of Witness of their personal stories of Northern Ireland's troubled past will stimulate a general discussion.

The September general meeting will also discuss the Platform for Change action plan for the coming year. Please give some thought as to whether you would want to contribute to any of the working groups and campaign team!

Draft action plan 2011-12

1. Themes

- a. Programme for Government / budget
- b. Governance structures
- c. Dealing with the past

Action: form working group in each case to draw on best intellectual talent we can to produce short, practical, agenda-setting papers.

2. Campaigning points

- a. 'Three Ss': shared future, social inclusion, sustainable development
- b. Government by agreement, opposition by right
- c. 'Come clean': honesty about paramilitary and sectarian pasts

Action: establish single campaign team to communicate messages in each case, via conventional media and internet, and to lobby

MLAs/committees/ministers

3. Targets

- a. Influence forthcoming PfG and budget debate in advance of drafts
- b. End deadlock on governance reform in assembly executive and review committee
- c. Open up debate on need for a government of 'clean hands'

4. Roles of the committee

- a. Establish working groups and campaign team as outlined above
- b. Monitor campaign development
- c. Issue regular bulletins detailing progress and inviting feedback
- d. Organise regular events designed to capture a wider public audience and build up a more inclusive network of interest groups

If you would like to comment or submit an article for this bulletin or advertise a community relations event or publication, please contact Patricia at poneill@nicrc.org.uk or Ellana at info@nicrc.org.uk.

Events continued

Networking – its value to peace-building, Information and Networking Event

8th September 2011

9.30am – 2.00pm (*includes lunch*)

Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast

Irish Peace Centres (IPC) is a unique consortium of peace centres located across the island of Ireland. Within its remit (under Priority 1.1 of the Peace III programme) the consortium aims to create and maintain a regional network of practitioners and persons involved in peace-building and reconciliation work.

The aim of our information and networking event is to pool the resources, experience and knowledge of those who develop and deliver peace programmes in Northern Ireland and the border counties.

What is involved:

Reflective dialogue sessions where we can share ideas and learning on programmes;

Collaborative planning where we can identify how we can work together to the benefit of groups and communities in our areas;

Explore new opportunities to work with different groups and communities in wider society;

Understand the approaches and challenges of collaborative and integrated working from the Irish Peace Centres consortium.

Who is attending?

Mid-level and senior leaders from local councils;

Peace III funded organisations;

Senior level staff from government departments;

Training organisations in peace and reconciliation field.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me:

Bronagh Sharpe (Communications Officer)

bsharpe@cooperationireland.org

Tel: (028) 90891025 or 07872816661

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Events continued

Irish Peace Centres Book Launch

September 15-16 2011

Irish Peace Centres is launching two new research publications as part of its Experiential Learning Series. The new publications are borne out of action based research and are peer reviewed. 'Being the Other: transactions of a theological conference' and "The LGBT communities' experience of Faith and Church in Northern Ireland" are part of the "Faith and Positive Relations" thematic area of the consortium's work.

There are ten publications in the series with the five issues published to date having received excellent reviews from individuals, organisations and groups in Ireland and within the wider international network of Irish Peace Centres. In addition to the two publications being launched in September, there will be a further three publications issued in the Autumn.

The Faith in Positive Relations and Experiential themes are part of the Irish Peace Centres' programmes, funded under Priority 1.1 of the EU Peace III programme.

Launch of the publication of the papers from the 2011 Irish Peace Centres

Theological Student Conference:

Belfast

11:00am on Thursday 15th September at

At Edgehill College, Lennoxvale, Malone Road, Belfast.

For directions go to <http://www.edgehillcollege.org/Location>

Dublin

11:30am on Friday 16th September at

Long Room Hub (2nd floor), Fellows Square, Trinity College Dublin

The Long Room Hub is between the Arts Building and the 1937 Reading Room in Trinity College.

We will hear from conference participants and a representative of the Irish Peace Centres will be present to provide further information on this and other Irish Peace Centres initiatives. Morning coffee will be provided in each location. Share the invitation with others who may be interested or bring along colleagues. Please let us know if you are attending by emailing: conference@clanryeinitiatives.org

For more information and to download the published booklets in the series, visit

www.irishpeacecentres.org or contact Paddy Logue, Experiential Learning

Co-ordinator plogue@cooperationireland.org.

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Events continued

Launch of the Independent Evaluations Report, the Training Programme, the first showing of the **Football4Peace Ireland** Introduction Movie

The Nerve Centre,
L/Derry, BT48 6GJ
Friday 16th September 2011

"Football for Peace Ireland" Peace Building through Sport

Please RSVP: Inishowen Development Partnership:
Pound Street Business Park, Carndonagh, Co. Donegal
Telephone number; (00353) 74 9373083 Email address; damienf4pire-land@hotmail.co.uk

A Celebration and Observance of the UN International Day of Peace

Hosted by Rt Hon Lord Mayor Niall O Donnghaile

Presentation of Inspiration Awards

Time: 11.30am
Venue: Belfast City Hall
Date: 21 September 2011
followed by light lunch

Unveiling of Peace Day Mural

By Ivan Little

Time: 3.00pm
Venue: Northumberland Street
Date: 21 September 2011

RSVP: paula@springboard-opps.org before 15 September 2011 or telephone Paula Quinn on 02890 315111

www.springboard-opps.org
www.peacedaycampaign.com



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Events continued

Donegal Community Workers Co-operative

Harnessing Equality for Lasting Peace (HELP) Project

Seminar *Challenging Attitudes Towards Racism and Sectarianism and the Structures that Support Them*

Wednesday, September 21st 2011

UN International Day of Peace

From 9.30am to 3.00pm

Station House Hotel, Letterkenny

To mark the United Nations International Day of Peace on 21st September, the Donegal Community Workers Co-operative will host a seminar entitled *Challenging Attitudes Towards Racism and Sectarianism and the Structures that Support Them*.

The 'Harnessing Equality for Lasting Peace' (HELP) Project is funded through the European Union's Peace III Programme which is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body. The grant was secured under Theme 1.2 Acknowledging and Dealing with the Past, Strand 3 - Securing the Future that is administered by the Community Relations Council/Pobal Consortium.

Background:

One of the strategic priorities of the Donegal PEACE III Action Plan (Phase II), developed by the Donegal County Development Board (CDB) Peace and Reconciliation Partnership, is to challenge attitudes towards sectarianism and racism and the structures that support them. This seminar will seek to contribute to the understanding of what constitutes racism and sectarianism and to explore ways and means of challenging this. HELP Project staff members and guest speakers will set the current context in which these issues exist followed by workshop discussion to document strategies to support the implementation of this element of the Plan.

For further information contact:

CWC Donegal Network
2nd Floor, Riverfront House
Pearse Road Letterkenny
Co. Donegal,

Tel: 00353 (0) 74 9128792
e-mail angelaholahan@cw.ie

Closing Date: Friday 16th September 2011

If you would like to comment or submit an article for this bulletin or advertise a community relations event or publication, please contact Patricia at poneill@nicrc.org.uk or Ellana at info@nicrc.org.uk.

Events continued

Belfast City Council

A news series of free training events begins in September – if you would like to book a place please contact

Leish Dolan at DolanL@BelfastCity.gov.uk

Migration Awareness Training

Monday 26 September (9.30am to 1.30pm)

Thursday 10 November (9.30am to 1.30pm)

Migrant Awareness Training is a half-day workshop designed by South Belfast Roundtable and Belfast City Council Good Relations Unit.

It is an interactive session which explores inward and outward migration and the rights of migrant workers in Northern Ireland. It aims to dispel myths and provide practical information on issues relating to migration.

Ending Hate in our Communities Training

Tuesday 18 October (9.30am to 1.30pm)

Wednesday 30 November (9.30am to 1.30pm)

Ending Hate in our Communities is a half day workshop. It aims to give participants an understanding of the extent of bias, harassment and hate crimes in their community and the impact of bias and harassment on those targeted, as well as practical skills to help them respond to and prevent hate crime.

This project is part of the Belfast Peace Plan, funded under Priority 1.1 of the [Peace III programme](#) for Northern Ireland and the border region.

New stories, new possibilities

To create a new story for our community we need to free ourselves from the old stories.

Like fish in water we are unaware of the many tribal beliefs that shape our behaviour in the community. Some of these beliefs have been unquestioned for hundreds of years e.g. “We were here first”, “This is our country”, “We have never been welcome.” “No Surrender”. “Tiochaidh ar la”. This place should be called “Londonderry or Derry.” “The other side can’t be trusted.”

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Events continued

As a result the community remains stuck with its own separate convictions, unable to release the past and experience new possibilities in how we create the future together.

The purpose of this course is to teach participants a simple process of enquiry that, when applied to limiting beliefs, provides an opportunity to discover new perspectives that are truer and ultimately more effective in creating harmony in the community. This method of enquiry can also be used effectively in all areas of life, especially in conflict with others and personal stress. The only requirement from the participants is an open mind.

The course will also draw on the expertise of local historians.

Course 1

Venue: St. Augustine's Hall, Palace Street, Derry/Londonderry

Dates: Tuesday mornings, 13th, 20th, 27th Sept., 4th, 11th, 18th Oct

Cost: Free

Time: 10am – 1pm

Course 2

Venue: St. Augustine's Hall, Palace Street, Derry/Londonderry

Dates: Monday evenings, 20th, 27th Sept, 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th Oct

Cost: Free

Time: 7pm – 10pm

Tutors for both courses: Catherine Cooke and Tony Carlin

For further information or booking contact:

Tony Carlin Email: tony.carlin@btinternet.com Tel. 07843587757

Catherine Cooke: Email: fwin@btconnect.com Tel. 71266291

The Northern Ireland Assembly, working in partnership with Rural Community Network

'Get Involved' Conference
Loughry College, Cookstown
Friday 14 October from 9.15 am to 2.30 pm.

Your MLAs make decisions every day in the Northern Ireland Assembly which affect you and your community. This conference will provide an opportunity for rural community representatives to engage directly with some of these MLAs.

If you would like to comment or submit an article for this bulletin or advertise a community relations event or publication, please contact Patricia at poneill@nicrc.org.uk or Ellana at info@nicrc.org.uk.

Events continued

You will receive practical guidance on how to have your opinions heard, how the Committee process works and what happens during an evidence session if you are asked to represent a community issue.

Priority will be given to members of Rural Community Network. Please register your interest no later than Friday 30th September 2011 by telephoning Sarah Christie at Rural Community Network on 028 8676 6670 or emailing sarah@ruralcommunitynetwork.org

Advance notice - Community Empowerment Programme

Clooney Hall, Derry/Londonderry 9th-10th November 2011

This unique programme is for those individuals who, through their work and activities, are directly involved in working to make their communities better places to live. This program is not about negotiating, resolving conflicts, solving problems, or coming up with answers. Instead, it is designed to empower people in their relationship to their communities, giving them a new power and new tools to make their communities the places they want them to be

The workshop is designed to shift the common experience of a lack of connection or a lack of power within a community into the experience of having real power to make things happen and a central role to play in creating the future. It does this by asking participants to question and explore their assumptions and ways of thinking about community and by giving them access to new possibilities with which they can reclaim their power and create the communities they desire.

Many of us feel that our community is at a critical crossroads. The decisions we make and conversations we have today could well shape our community for generations to come. We hope you will join us for this important opportunity. We value your input and participation.

The cost of the workshop is £50, and we ask you to attend all sessions of the workshop, which will run from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. each day. Lunch will be provided both days. Thanks in advance for your consideration.

The course will be facilitated by the Mastery Foundation.
For further information or to book a place contact: Tony Carlin
Tel. 71350026/07843587757 email tony.carlin@btinternet.com
or Marella Fyffe, Tel. 8224 1973
Email: marella.fyffe@googlemail.com

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Promoting a peaceful and fair society based on reconciliation and mutual trust

WWW.NICRC.ORG.UK

New Publications

‘Children of the Revolution – the lives of sons and daughters of activists in Northern Ireland’ researched, compiled and edited by Bill Rolston.

Published by Guildhall Press (price £8.95). info@ghpress.com tel: 028 71 364413

Contains the stories of twenty people who had a parent politically active in Northern Ireland's recent conflict, the majority deeply involved in non-state combatant groups. Sons and daughters of republicans and loyalists, as adults now, recount their experiences of childhood and how the activities of their mothers or fathers impacted on their lives.

‘Madge Davison- A Revolutionary Firebrand’. Recollections compiled and edited by Lynda Walker. Published by Shanway Press (price £5.00)

info@shanway.com tel: 028 90 222070

Contains brief recollections from over 30 contributors on the life of Madge Davison, a campaigner for civil rights in Northern Ireland who died twenty years ago.

CRC Draft Strategic Plan

The Community Relations Council has published its draft Strategic Plan for 2011-14 and issued it for public consultation. Responses are invited by 23 September. The Draft Plan and the Questionnaire Response form are available on the CRC website. [MORE DETAILS](#)