



# LIVING LEGACIES

1914-18

## FROM PAST CONFLICT TO SHARED FUTURE

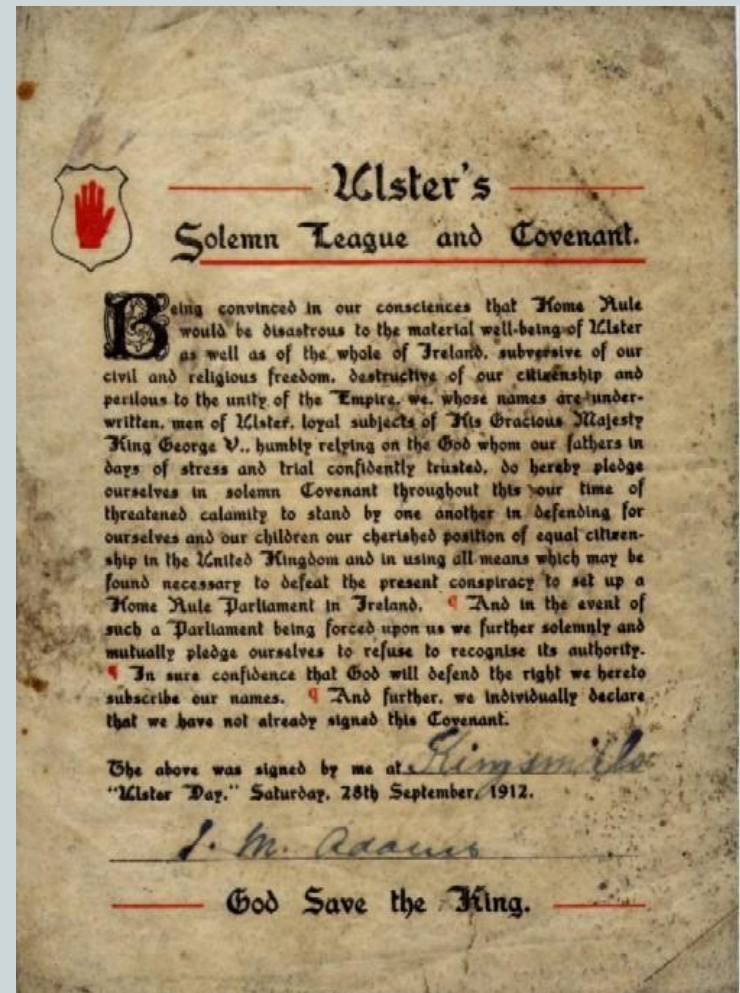
The Living Legacies 1914-18 Engagement Centre is a focal point for connecting academic and community researchers interested in how the First World War lives on in the twenty-first century world.

# Researching WW1 in Northern Ireland- a Divided Society?

Northern Ireland as a politico-geographical entity was forged out of division- and armed opposition.

The image on the right is a signed declaration by 237,368 men and 234,046 women who pledged to resist the imposition of Home Rule and the creation of a Dublin government.

In 2016, Northern Ireland remains divided. We have a segregated education system, segregated social housing and segregated services (health centres etc.).

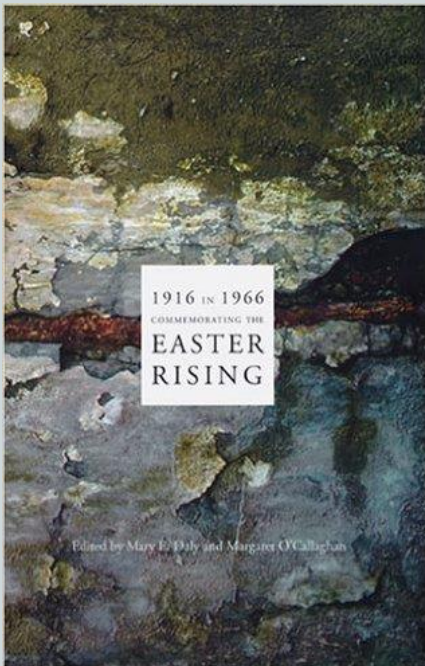




# Ethno-national divisions and their consequences for commemoration

*2011 census data for NI*

- 40% of usual residents had a British only national identity*
- 25% had Irish only national identity*
- 21% had Northern Irish only national identity (NISRA 2012)*



“1916 in 1966: Commemorating the Easter Rising' looks closely at how the Irish government reinvented the message of Easter 1916 through the official golden jubilee celebrations of the nationalist Rising. This collection of essays explores the organization of various unofficial commemorations in Northern Ireland in 1966 and the significance of these for nationalist and unionist politics in the mid-1960s.”

# Grassroots discourses on the Somme and the Easter Rising – Oppositions to ‘Shared’ Remembering

**- A civic event should be held to mark the centenary of the Easter Rising, a Mid and East Antrim councillor has suggested.**

Sinn Féin’s Patrice Hardy made the comments during last Monday night’s meeting of the local government authority (NewsLetter 2015, online)

“They are entitled to remember their dead, but holding a civic reception to honour the rising is extracting the urine. Innocent people died when their 'heroes' tried to hold wartime Ireland to ransom. There was nothing honourable about that heinous rebellion.”

“A memorial service to remember the 116 British soldiers and 16 RIC men killed would be acceptable.”

“Let them have their wee commemoration for the cowardly thugs, meanwhile I will be participating in and watching events where real brave men Protestants and Catholics died at the Battle of the Somme.”

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# The Ethics of Co-Production in a Divided Society

Living Legacies has  
outlined five main  
research strands...



[www.livinglegacies1914-18.ac.uk](http://www.livinglegacies1914-18.ac.uk)



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council



## The broad aims of Living Legacies Engagement Centre are to:

1. Explore, interpret and record the 'living legacies' of the First World War.
2. Help communities across the UK to:
  - tell their stories and share these stories with others;
  - rediscover the forgotten First World War heritage in our landscapes;
  - find out why and where people moved as a result of the war;
  - express stories about the conflict through drama and theatre.
3. Connect diverse stories and experiences, through collaborative research, to build a better, shared understanding of the living legacies of the First World War...



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Yet we undertake this work in particular *research and political environments*.

The ***research environment*** in the UK is one where funders are emphasising the role of co-production, community ownership, and academia breaking out of its traditional role to impact upon communities, public practice and often policy.

The ***political environment*** in Northern Ireland is one which is not yet post-conflict, with physically segregated communities (many of whom suffer Multiple Deprivations- see NISRA 2010) struggling to deal with the past, let alone engage in shared remembering.

My concern is that we pursuing ethically questionable outcomes, in seeking to modify our positions as researchers – whilst the expectations of the public remain the same – and also bring two distinct sets of memorialisation, and identity, together.

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## The Ethics of Co-Production in a Divided Society

1. The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) outlines their expectations for Societal and Economic Impact as follows:

The Research Councils give their funding recipients considerable flexibility and autonomy in the delivery of their research, postgraduate training and knowledge transfer activities. This flexibility and autonomy encompasses project definition, management, collaboration, participation, promotion and the dissemination of research outputs; this approach enables excellence with impact. In return, the Research Councils expect those who receive funding to:

- demonstrate an awareness of the wider environment and context in which their research takes place
- demonstrate an awareness of the social and ethical implications of their research, beyond usual research conduct considerations, and take account of public attitudes towards those issues
- engage actively with the public at both the local and national levels about their research and its broader implications
- identify potential benefits and beneficiaries from the outset, and through the full life cycle of the project(s)

(AHRC 2015: 86)



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- As we approach research into commemorative practices of the war, we are urged by Research Councils (the ESRC encourage co-production models too) to democratise the relationships between “researcher” and “researched”, or indeed, “Researcher” and “audience”.
- The aims of Participatory Action Research, the formal methodology used in working towards a more egalitarian research approach, are to craft something which:
- “is collaborative research, education and action used to gather information to use for change on social or environmental issues. It involves people who are concerned about or affected by an issue taking a leading role in producing and using knowledge about it.” (Durham University 2014:2)

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### From Past Conflict to Shared Future? Using WW1 to manage current conflict.

Commemoration – as J. Evershed argues in his doctoral research – has been appropriated by organisations such as the Community Relations Council – as a *peacebuilding* tool.

Groups who wish to obtain funding to visit the Somme, for example, are often required to demonstrate a “cross-community element” to their activities or research.

These groups will often have undertaken their own research, and meet regularly to commemorate the loss of loved ones and/or local soldiers in the War.

The war, for these groups, is an emotionally salient site of identity construction.

This is particularly true for the Protestant-Unionist Community, but equally so for Republicans remembering the Easter Rising.

# Can we have shared remembering of the Somme and the Easter Rising?

if any one event in the Great War might be selected as the moment which symbolized the psychological partition of Ulster Unionism from the rest of the island, it was probably the impact of the Battle of the Somme upon the Ulster Unionist psyche, and the Ulster Protestant community generally, coming as it did so soon after the Easter Rising.<sup>58</sup>

In the First World War thousands of Ulstermen left these shores and fought for King and Country. On the 1st July 1916 these men as part of the 36th Ulster Division launched [an] attack by British forces against the enemy. Thousands died in a matter of hours. They fought for our freedom, they fought and died that we might live in peace they fought and died that we would remain part of the UK. 90 years later we must never forget that sacrifice. It must be ingrained in our memory and we must do everything in our power to follow their example of loyalty; courage and sacrifice so that in 90 years time future generations will reflect kindly on this generation.<sup>67</sup>

Jim McAuley's forthcoming book *Very British Rebels*  
(2016)



# Separate lives and separate commemorations?

**Table 5.1** Have you ever taken part in historical anniversaries/commemorations?

Event	Total (%)	Protestants (%)	Catholics (%)
Not taken part in any	42	21	59
Remembrance Sunday	35	66	11
Boyne/12th of July	23	51	3
Battle of the Somme	9	18	2
Bloody Sunday	9	3	16
Hunger Strikes	8	0	17
Easter Rising	7	3	13
Relief/Siege of Derry	6	13	1
Closing of the Gates	3	7	1
Internment	1	0	3

Source: Adapted from Bell et al. (2010).

## Discussion Questions

- The research environment- are the public aware and/or amenable to moving from audiences/participants to 'co-researchers'?
- Do the public deserve to have 'experts' on hand – given the status afforded to senior academics?
- The political environment – is a shared remembering feasible, or even desirable?
- What are the ethical challenges of trying to transform commemorations- which are often the praxis of extremely salient, meaningful identities?