

# ON THE BRINK

The Politics of Conflict  
1914-1916

VOLUNTEER STRAND  
EVALUATION





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On the Brink: The Politics of Conflict 1914-1916 has been supported by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Thanks to National Lottery players, we have been able to actively engage local communities in the North East of Ireland with a multi-perspective approach to exploring the contemporary impact of the outbreak of the First World War on the home front; the Easter Rising and Battle of the Somme within a national and international context; and their current legacies.

The following summary report sets out the key evaluation findings of the Volunteer Strand of the On the Brink Project: The Politics of Conflict 1914 - 1916, set within the context of the wider project. In carrying out this work, I would like to acknowledge and thank the staff team from the respective Museum Services of the Causeway Coast and Glens and the Mid and East Antrim Councils for their help and guidance.

I would particularly like to thank the Volunteers for giving their time to be interviewed and for all their insights into what makes a successful Volunteer Heritage Project and the potential for community heritage “advocates” to be inspired and enabled to make a difference within their communities. As always, the opinions and findings are the responsibility of the author.

Joe McVey  
Blueprint Development Consultancy  
January 2017

The Mid and East Antrim and Causeway Coast and Glens Councils wish to acknowledge and thank the Heritage Lottery Fund for its support and encouragement throughout the Project.



CAUSEWAY  
MUSEUM SERVICE



# ON THE BRINK

The Politics of Conflict 1914-1916 Project

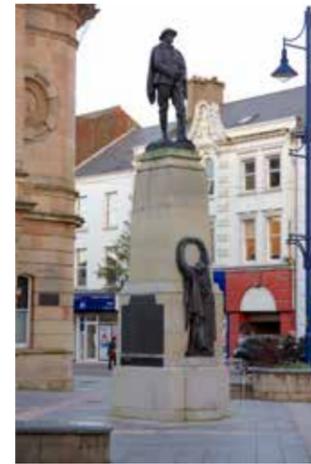
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War Memorial, Portrush.

## SECTION 1



# ON THE BRINK

## SECTION 1 Introduction

- 1.1** On the Brink: The Politics of Conflict 1914 - 1916 is a three-year heritage-based project which explores with local communities the impact and legacy of the outbreak of the First World War, the Battle of the Somme and the Easter Rising within a local, national and international context. The Programme recognises the significance of the period as a pivotal time in Irish and British History which continues to resonate today. It was intended that those participating and engaged through any aspect of the Programme would be encouraged and challenged to see the links and interrelatedness of regional, national and international events.
- 1.2** The project was delivered between April 2014 – March 2017 with community groups living within the three participating Council areas of Antrim & Newtownabbey, Mid & East Antrim and the Causeway Coast and Glens with the support of the Councils and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Central to the project methodology is a commitment to encouraging and harnessing the interest and passion of the local community and local volunteers as a central feature and resource for the initiative. Alongside this is the partnership experience and skills of the two Museum Services. Through the Programme it was intended to develop a cohort of skilled heritage activists acting as a resource within the local community and potentially adding to the capacity of the Museum Services.
- 1.3** The Programme combined a range of discrete and interlinked activities and events including two travelling public exhibitions, public talks, workshops, tours including scripted bus tours, walks, workshops in schools and with community organisations, a cross border element and, throughout the 3 year programme, an intensive training and support programme to develop the heritage Volunteers. The Volunteers, recruited in two phases, are at the heart of the initiative, contributing to all aspects of the On the Brink Programme, while engaged in their individual journeys of education, professional and personal development and transformation.

MANUALS OF EMERGENCY LEGISLATION.

# DEFENCE OF THE REALM REGULATIONS

MADE TO  
MAY 23rd, 1916.

REPRODUCED IN

## CONSOLIDATED FORM

AS PROVIDED BY ORDER IN COUNCIL,

WITH

### NOTES, TABLE OF THE REGULATIONS, AND ORDERS MADE UNDER THE REGULATIONS.

2nd EDITION.

EDITED BY

ALEXANDER PULLING, C.B.,  
OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND OF THE INNER TEMPLE,  
BARRISTER-AT-LAW.  
PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY.

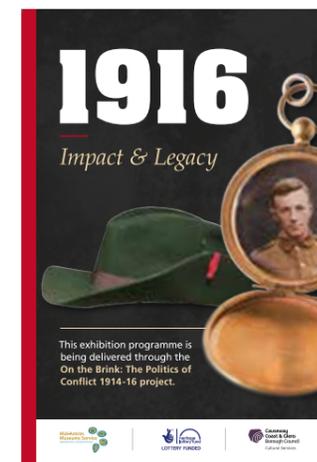
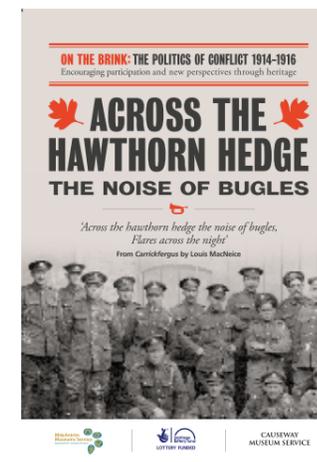


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Defence of the Realm Regulations made to 23rd May 1916.  
Ballycastle Museum.

## SECTION 2



1916 Easter Rising Postcard.  
Coleraine Museum



Autograph Book  
Kilmainham Gaol Museum, Dublin

# ON THE BRINK

## SECTION 2

### Project Overview Aims and Objectives

#### 2.2 The Agreed Aims of the Project are to;

- Build community capacity to engage with their shared heritage relating to 1914/1916.
- Develop social history research and interpretative skills within local communities transferable beyond the lifetime of the project.
- Promote appreciation of material and built heritage associated with key people and events in the Mid-Antrim and Causeway areas.
- Research, interpret and display artefacts from museum and private collections relating to 1914/16 and material on loan from groups and individuals within local communities and to support the potential for new acquisitions to the public collections held within accredited museums in the MAMS/CMS.
- Create real and sustainable change in attitudes and perceptions by myth busting and providing factual and accurate historical information.
- Address contemporary community socio-political concerns through heritage-based programming.
- Promote volunteering opportunities and develop a role for community volunteers around on-site interpretation of their local War Memorials and sites associated with local prominent nationalist figures linked to the Easter Rising.
- Engender respect for the natural environment by a 'green' approach to site visits and tours.
- Promote positive cross-border relations and enhance understanding of the interlinking nature of local, national and international events.
- Engage positively with ideas of national identity, citizenship and acts of remembrance.



Drum.  
Carrickfergus Museum.



Cross border residential visit to Kilmainham Gaol by On the Brink Volunteers. October 2016.

## SECTION 2

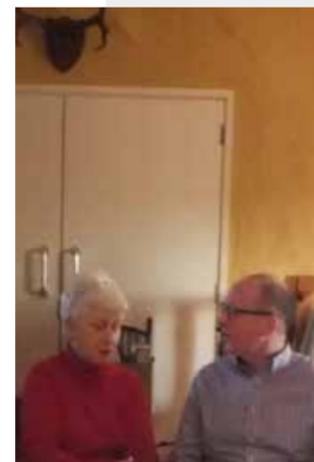


- 2.2** The overarching objective of the Volunteer Strand is to support the development of transferable tour guiding skills within communities in Mid-Antrim and the Causeway Coast and Glens areas. This would be achieved through:
- Locating, accessing and generating research on local commemorative places or sites and associated people relating to WWI.
  - Editing, researching and structuring content into a coherent narrative or script.
  - Learning to communicate their narrative through practice guiding with trainers and peers and receiving written feedback which enables the sharing of learning.
  - Safely leading and managing a group during a site tour.
- 2.3** The key learning outcome for the initiative is to deepen community understanding and ownership of a multi-perspective and inclusive approach to 1914-1916 related to site interpretation and the use of relevant locally focused stories.



On the Brink Volunteers and Officers at Evaluation Workshop. November 2016.

SECTION  
3



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SECTION 3  
The Project Evaluation

**3.1** Blueprint Development Consultancy was appointed in August 2016 to provide an independent external evaluation of the Volunteer Strand of the Programme. It was agreed that the evaluation would attempt to capture and report on the achievements or outputs, the heritage outcomes or changes evident and offer an assessment of the likely impact or legacy of the Volunteer Strand. The framework for the evaluation was set within the requirements of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and of the Councils' Museums Services. The HLF requirements as set out in the Letter of Offer (L.O.O) emphasised the need to focus upon the heritage outcomes anticipated in terms of people, community and heritage in keeping with HLF's outcomes framework .

The Council Partnership was also keen to focus on the following considerations;

- The motivation to volunteer and project objectives.
- The challenges and lessons learnt by volunteers and staff.
- What the volunteers achieved.
- The relevance and effectiveness of training.
- Personal achievements in terms of knowledge, skills and confidence.
- The way forward for volunteers.
- How lessons learnt from the volunteer strand will influence future volunteer programmes in each service.

**3.2** Given the nature of the Programme the Volunteers were central to the evaluation and offered proposals and feedback as to the approach and findings at key points of the evaluation.



On the Brink Volunteer Kevin McGowan with a public tour in Ballycastle 2016.

SECTION  
4



ON THE  
BRINK

SECTION 4  
The Project Results

- 4.1 The evaluation indicates that the Volunteer Strand achieved and exceeded its outputs in terms of voluntary activity and engagement, and through this, delivered the anticipated outcomes and impacts. The overarching objectives of the Volunteer initiative and the key learning outcome and aims have been successfully achieved. Any variances from the initial targets and intended outcomes are positive and reflect the experience of the Council, the efforts of the Staff team and the commitment of the cohort of the Volunteers recruited.



On the Brink Volunteers Leith Burgess and Nina McNeary.

**SECTION  
4**

| OUTPUT TARGET   | ACHIEVEMENTS /VARIANCES  |
|---|--|
| 20 volunteers (10 per museum service area) recruited through the MAMS/CMS funded Interim Programme  | 16 volunteers were actively engaged (see below) *  |
| <b>SPECIFIC SUB TASKS:</b>  |  |
| • Recruitment sessions (Interim Phase, Phase One and Two).  | Undertaken   |
| • Introduction and completion of learning logs (Phase One and Two).   | Partially achieved   |
| • Research training (Interim Phase, Phase One and Two).   | Achieved   |
| • Script development (Phase One and Two).   | Achieved   |
| • Coaching (Phase One and Two) by CMS and MAMS staff and external trainers.   | Achieved   |
| • Tour Guide Training (Phase One and Two).  | Achieved   |
| • World Host Ambassador Training (MAMS).  | Achieved   |
| • Community Working Group sessions for all volunteers.  | Achieved   |
| • Development and delivery of two inter-regional exhibitions, one on 1914 and the other on 1916. Each exhibition will tour to eight Council venues (one venue per participating Council) and potentially to community venues. | Achieved   |
| • Development and delivery of two secondary school/community group workshop programme and the production of a final learning resource to sustain future work  | Achieved   |
| • Volunteer attendance at academic learning opportunities e.g. QUB 1916, PRONI conferences, NICRC/HLF Creative Centenaries seminars.  | Achieved   |
| • Cross border residential for all volunteers.  | Achieved   |
| • Pilot tours (Phase One and Phase Two).  | Achieved   |
| • Public tours post completion of training in Phase One and Phase Two.  | Achieved   |
| • Tour Guide Accreditation OCN Level 2, introduced  | Achieved with 9 Volunteers achieving Level 2 (one additional to complete by February 2017) |
| • Complimentary Volunteer WWI initiatives outside scope of Project - e.g. talks   | Achieved (see below)   |
| Establish a Community Working Group   | Achieved (see below)   |
| Promotion and dissemination of learning by volunteers at launch and seminar.  | To be completed in February 2017   |

\* At least 12 more volunteers assisted with researching and developing local case studies and interpretative materials for the exhibitions and learning resources. Local community groups Ballykelly Mens Shed, Ballysally Community Centre Nimble Needles and Coleraine Academical Institute (now Coleraine Grammar) also played a significant role as a part of the “informal” volunteering contribution.

SECTION  
4



“  
For the first time  
I realised what  
was happening  
at the same time,  
a real parallel  
history  
”

On the Brink Volunteer Joanne Doherty leading her practice tour with her fellow Volunteers.  
From left to right: Leith Burgess, Kevin McGowan and Etta Mann.



4.2 Volunteer Strand Outcomes and Impact

The Volunteer Strand successfully delivered the anticipated Heritage outcomes in terms of Outcomes for People, Outcomes for Communities and Outcomes for Heritage:

“...If we can tell the stories in a respectful and unbiased manner we will have achieved a great thing here educationally and socially. We have a big project here but a very worthwhile one...”

**Outcomes for People:**

The volunteers have clearly learnt about history and the wider heritage world (PRONI, national and local museums, NI Tourist Board Community Relations Council and Queen’s University), “focusing on facts”, “...For the first time I realised what was happening at the same time, a real parallel history...”, “nationalists and republican were and are not synonymous”, developed skills (research, script writing, presentation and technical), achieved accreditation, changed their attitudes, developed understanding “Allowing you to challenge and question with some confidence”, “Parts of our history have been airbrushed out”, had an enjoyable experience and volunteered time both during and outside of the formal initiative.

**Outcomes for Communities:**

Through the work of the Volunteers more people, and a wider range of people have engaged with heritage; there is a greater appreciation of heritage and heritage sites and memorials and therefore local areas and communities have the potential to be a better place to live, work or visit.

**Outcomes for Heritage:**

Through the learning and development and sharing of knowledge heritage sites and artefacts can be said to have a greater chance of being managed and protected, kept in better condition, better interpreted and explained, and identified and recorded. New material has been accessed and brought into the public domain, and collections from National Museums of Northern Ireland and Kilmainham Gaol have been accessed at a local level.

SECTION  
4



“ Offered a window into a whole new world ”

On the Brink Volunteers completing their OCN Level 2 training 2016. Left to right: Brian McKay, Alan Nicholl, Etta Mann and Nina McNeary.



**4.3 Volunteer Strand Impact and Legacy**

While the Programme has not yet finished, there are a number of impacts evident at a personal and professional level, at a community level and for the Council which suggests the Programme and Volunteer Strand leaves a very positive legacy “launching her fourth career”. Through this work there can clearly be seen to be “circles of influence” within the local community which create “a ripple effect”.

“...Opened up a hidden world...” and acted as a “...Pin hole to another world...”

**4.4 The Impact upon the Councils**

From a Council perspective, there are several areas where the impact can be seen summarised as follows;

- The development of the new Mid and East Antrim Council Volunteer Policy, working actively with Volunteer Now and contribute to the new Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Volunteer policy
- A renewed focus on volunteers is also evident within the reference to volunteers within the emerging Mid and East Antrim Council Community Plan and the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Cultural Services Strategy 2016 - 2021.
- In the medium term the learning from the experience of running a volunteer programme and the development of the Volunteer Policy will allow other Departments to understand the requirements, opportunities and challenges in successfully embedding volunteers with Departmental activities e.g. in Leisure Services, Parks or Community.
- In terms of heritage capacity, the newly trained volunteers offer a cohort of trained, enthusiastic and skilled individuals who offer a new resource to the Museums Services potentially building the capacity of the service, if appropriately utilised.
- The success of the Programme and the methodology will also allow the Councils to develop new initiatives such as the proposed Carnlough Industrial Heritage Programme and to consider looking for further opportunities for new joint initiatives.

SECTION 5



On the Brink Volunteer Cross Border Residential visit to Arbor Hill.

“  
The Programme was both Life Changing and life affirming, taking part saved my life  
”

ON THE BRINK

SECTION 5  
The Volunteers

- 5.1 Over the lifetime of the Programme 16 Volunteers were formally engaged in the Volunteer Strand. The group was, in the words of one of the volunteers a “...very broad church...” a “...diverse group...” in terms of age, background, training, life experience, education and motivation with on the surface “...very little in common...”
- 5.2 What united the group was an interest in history and, specifically, local heritage related to their area and in some cases to a family connection with the WWI experience. Personal interests in the period under consideration, involvement in local heritage and research experience were all factors in attracting the Volunteers. In meeting with the Volunteers and in the comments offered by the staff and trainers it is reasonable to describe the Volunteers as “...passionate, interested, committed and enthusiastic...” who as individuals “...made great progress and strides...”
- 5.3 While the Volunteer Strand evaluation focuses largely on the Volunteers participating directly in the learning and development opportunities, it is also important to reflect upon the additional contribution made by the volunteers directly and indirectly to a number of aspects of the overall Programme including the research and case studies influencing the content and artefacts available in the Touring exhibitions during Phase 1 and Phase 2 and the impact the local case studies had on those attending the exhibitions, in the development, participation and leading of mini tours and talks and in the development of the content which influenced the workshops offered to schools and community organisations.



What the Volunteers said about the Programme

“...a fantastic, excellent Programme, would highly recommend the Programme and the experience...”

“...The content, pacing and delivery was all highly commended...”

“...The Programme was both Life Changing and life affirming, taking part saved my life...”



Cross Border Residential Visit to G.P.O. Dublin.

SECTION  
5



The Cross -Border Experience

“...Listening to all the tour guides telling us about the sites re the 1916 Rising. It was good to hear about what happened in Dublin and to compare that with what was happening at the Somme during 1916. The tour guides were very informative and it was interesting to hear about all the people involved in the Rising. As I had not visited the places we look at before all this was new to me and has given me a better understanding of what happened...”

“...Yes, I can now use this information to speak about the 1916 Rising and the 1916 Battle of the Somme and compare the two events when I am doing tour guiding. I will also be able to pass on this information to others, family, friends, colleagues, when speaking about the commemorations next year...”



“...One thing that surprised me was the number of men from the Republic of Ireland who served in the First World War. I also found out some new individual stories from the period, which really brought the human cost of war and conflict home to me. I did not know about the existence of Grangegorman military cemetery before the residential. So, this is a site that I was introduced to for the first time...”

“  
On the Brink  
Volunteer  
hours: target  
of 105 days  
exceeded  
”

SECTION  
5



On the Brink Volunteers during Community Working Group Assessment of pilot tour of Belfast lead by War Years Remembered.

“  
Shared  
history offers  
understanding  
but you don't  
have to  
agree  
”

**Personal Development and Change**

Being critiqued by professional Tour guide trainers and “...surviving the ordeal...” and “...passing the test...” was described as a “...considerable achievement...”. The development of friendships and camaraderie between volunteers and across the group leading to, as one Volunteer described, some “...unusual...” friendships between people with very different background and beliefs.

**Learnt about Heritage**

Their training, summarised by the Volunteers as “...focusing on the facts...”, allowed volunteers to both gain insight and in turn share some “...myth busting...” related to the period, e.g the “...accepted accounts...” and a greater understanding through research that “... nationalists and republican were and are not synonymous...”

“...For the first time I realised what was happening at the same time, a real parallel history...”

“...Offered a window in to a new world...” and “...Opened up a hidden world...” and acted as a “...Pin hole to another world...”

**Changing Attitudes and Behaviours**

“...Allowing you to challenge and question with some confidence...”

“...Parts of our history have been airbrushed out...”

“... Shared history offers understanding but you don't have to agree.”

“...The positive influence...” or “...ripple effects...” of their actions in working with groups and offering insights and encouraging other to consider new facts or insights.

“... if we can tell the stories in a respectful and unbiased manner we will have achieved a great thing here educationally and socially. We have a big project here but a very worthwhile one...”.



## Profiles of On the Brink 1914- 1916

### Accredited Volunteer Tour Guides January 2017



#### Alan Nicholl

Alan has a long-held interest in the Great War and its impact upon his local area of Randalstown, where a training camp was established to prepare and train volunteer recruits. Joining the Programme has allowed Alan to further develop his interest in this period of history and enhance his research, presentation and tour guiding skills. Alan has been able to make effective use of these skills within his local community where he has provided talks and tours relating to this period. He has also had the opportunity to lead community groups on various visits and tours including cross border trips where he has been able to offer interesting and challenging narratives which have led to increased understanding and awareness of this period in history.



#### Alistair Harper

Alistair has, for many years, followed his interest in WWI through family connections, undertaking research and offering talks to local groups interested in the period. His research interest focussed on the old War Memorial Building in Limavady, where the War Memorial is also located, and secondly the Green Lane Museum, where the War Memorial Boards originally located at the War Memorial Building are currently on display. Joining the Programme was a very positive experience, further developing Alistair's research skills while gaining some additional insights into offering talks and guided Tours. Participating has also encouraged Alistair to see a broader picture "opening his eyes" to other areas of history particularly in relation to the south of Ireland. The Programme also brought unexpected personal benefits of renewed self-confidence and unexpected friendships.



#### Betty McNerlin

Betty has enjoyed a very successful career in the public and private sectors and most recently as the founder and CEO of a social enterprise venture providing education and training. Betty has combined this with a long-term passion for genealogy and family history and moving into a new phase of her career decided to devote more time to this hobby, combining this with caring responsibilities and many other community activities. Having undertaken several related training courses, Betty joined the On the Brink 1914- 1916 Programme to develop and enhance her research and presentational skills offered through the Tour Guiding Training. This encouraged Betty to continue her research and develop tours focusing upon her locality of Limavady and Ballykelly, exploring the Commonwealth War Graves at Limavady Christchurch graveyard (Church of Ireland) and St. Mary's Church (Roman Catholic). Participating in the

Programme has encouraged Betty to look at other areas of social heritage particularly the role of women after the war and the social conditions of those returning from the War. It has also encouraged Betty, with other enthusiasts, to establish the Roe Valley Ancestral Research Association, continuing to promote local heritage, history and genealogy within a local community setting, embarking on her "4th Career".



#### Etta Mann

Etta has a background in local government, acting for many years as a local councillor in her native Newtownabbey and in the caring professions. Working with older people sparked her interest in history and heritage and the wealth of information that is held locally and often overlooked. Etta has been a long term active member of the Ballyclare and District Historical Society, ensuring additional names were added to the Roll of Honour on the Ballyclare War Memorial. Etta's initial focus was on her local area of Ballyclare allowing her to develop talks and tours focussing on the Ballyclare War Memorial Park and the Ballyclare Presbyterian Church to learn about the Royal Irish Rifles Drum displayed in the War Memorial window and the Knockagh War Memorial. Participating in the Programme has allowed Etta to develop and learn new skills particularly around tour guiding. Taking part has also encouraged Etta to see a "new

world, a hidden history" often not taught and/or discussed and to develop new areas of interest, particularly in social history and the role of woman before and after WWI. Taking part has strengthened her interest in heritage and Etta is likely to continue to offer talks and tours in the foreseeable future.



#### Kevin McGowan / Caiomhan McGabahan

Kevin is a keen amateur historian and can be found in the Ballycastle Museum volunteering his time and knowledge to the benefit of locals and visitors alike. He plays an active role in many historical societies, both locally and nationally and has recently begun to contribute to our local papers sharing his knowledge, in the most enjoyable fashion. Joining the Programme was an opportunity to develop further research skills and widen his areas of knowledge and develop confidence in offering tours and talks. This has allowed Kevin to develop and lead tours in Ballycastle and the surrounding areas and from this to arrange other tours and talks bringing in outside speakers. Building upon his strong nationalist and republican background, participating in the Programme has allowed Kevin to increasingly "see the connections" between the local and national and to understand that "shared history doesn't mean always agreeing but beginning to understand", focusing on the facts "allows myths to be challenged" more effectively. The Programme has acted as a catalyst for Kevin as he is determined to

continue to act as an advocate for local heritage and local history. He is also now a very well-qualified guide, with great experience and is building a reputation as being "the man to tour with when you come to Ballycastle and the surrounding area".



#### Leith Henderson Burgess

Leith has a lifelong interest in history, creative writing and heritage with a detailed knowledge of his local area of Doagh and Ballyclare as an active member of the Ballyclare Historical Society and a local creative writers group. Leith joined the Programme to further explore his interests and develop his skills in research and leading talks and tours. His initial interests focused upon the local memorials, leading tours of Kilbride Parish Church Roll of Honour, the Drumadarragh Estate and its role in the training of local soldiers, the Knockagh War Memorial, and Ballyclare Presbyterian Church. The skills and experience gained has allowed Leith to continue his interests including continuing to give local talks. He believes the Programme has had a significant positive benefit and impact upon him personally, challenging his own beliefs and values, recognising the "selective nature of history traditionally taught at school" and through the training which encourages you to "ask questions and challenge with confidence".



#### Nina McNeary

Nina's background is in archaeology and geology and she is currently living in the Causeway Coast. Her initial focus was on the Portrush War Memorial and families that participated in WWI and the Nationalist and Unionist perspective and experiences after the War. Participating has allowed Nina to explore the links between the local and international and to ask challenging questions around identity, myths, hidden histories, while developing new areas of interests such as the suffragette movement and social conditions during and after WWI and, uniquely, the German connection with Portrush. Nina's interest in the Programme was initially the Tour Guiding element, exploring the potential of establishing a tour guiding business in and round the Causeway area. The skills experience and knowledge gained has allowed Nina to follow through on this ambition and she is currently planning a new tour guiding venture.



#### Brian McKay

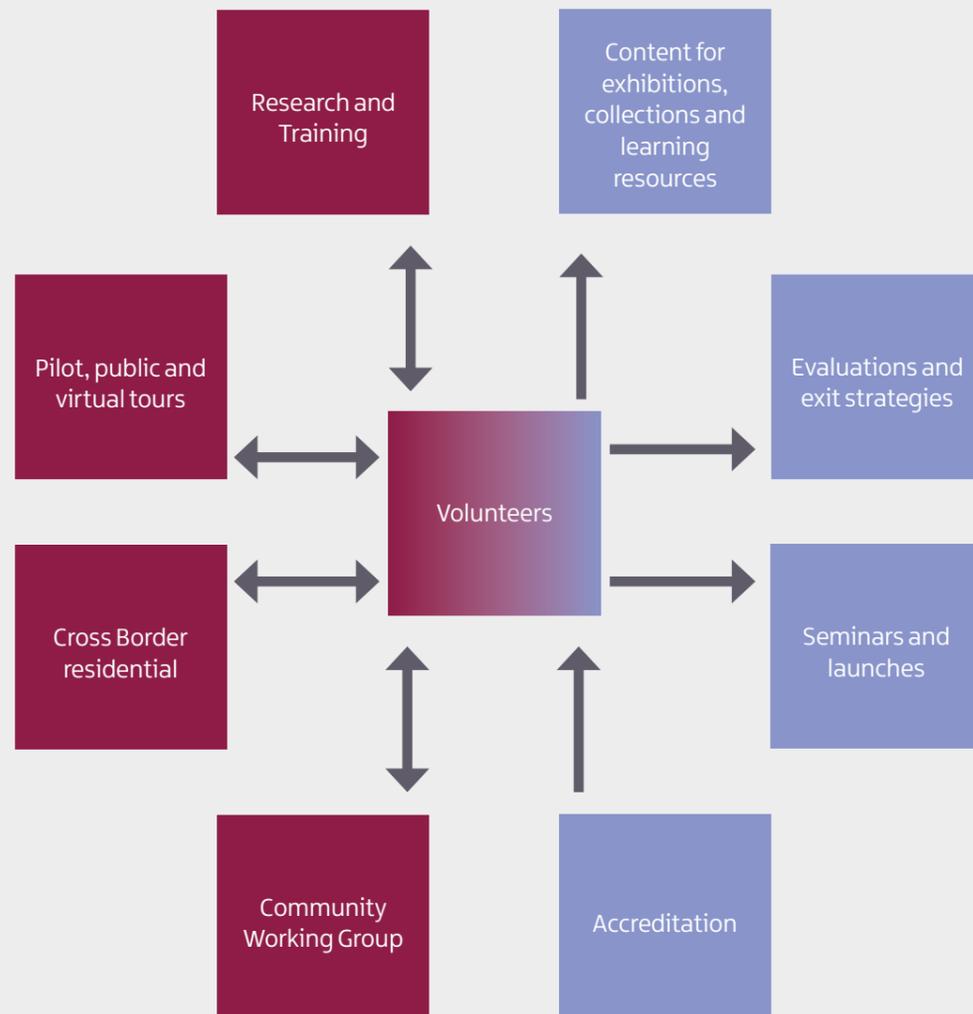
Brian has a background in Banking with many years experience in finance and financial management specialising in private banking and relationship management. Brian has a lifelong interest in WWI & WWII and had carried his own research into the background of family members lost in the conflicts. Brian joined the Programme to build on his interest and to gain some additional skills and contacts. Having lived in Larne for the past 27 years, he has concentrated his interests initially on the Larne area, examining the Impact of Home Rule and WWI in Larne through an examination of the Larne War Memorial, Drumalis House and Lame Harbour. Reflecting on the Programme he believes the training and support was very helpful and informative, encouraging all the participants to "focus on the facts" allowing you "to challenge some long-held myths and beliefs" and link the local activity into wider and international events. Given his interests and enthusiasm, it is likely that new tours will be developed and looking to the future, Brian sees the possibility of developing tour guiding as a growing hobby combining this with his other long held interest in traveling and hill walking.



#### Joanne Doherty

Joanne is an experienced history teacher and senior teacher at St Louis' Grammar School in Ballymena, who has a long-held passion and interest in local history and heritage. The Programme offered an opportunity for Joanne to focus her efforts on the experience of local nationalists during the WWI, from Ballymena and Portglenone. The research skills and training in script writing and tour guiding has encouraged Joanne to deepen and widen her interest in local heritage skills which she shares with her pupils. The experience has acted as catalyst sparking Joanne's interest in offering tours if time permitted, perhaps a new career opportunity in the future.

Chart showing the planned Volunteer actions on the left and on the right demonstrating how the Volunteer Strand became an integral part of the wider On the Brink 1914- 1916 programme



# ON THE BRINK

## SECTION 6 Lessons and Learning

- 6.1** The success of the Volunteer Strand may be attributed to a number factors.
- The leadership and experience displayed by the Museums Services Team in developing and promoting a challenging heritage project with sensitive material, across number of Councils.
  - The dedication and commitment shown by the staff team and trainers ensuring the Volunteers were engaged, supported and challenged to ensure that the work, the research product and the tours were of a high quality and robust.
  - The quality and diversity of the Volunteers who are committed, passionate and motivated to take their own interest and topics and move beyond the local story. It is evident that each of the Volunteers gained much and offer a very positive return on the investment in terms of their contribution to the appreciation and promotion of local heritage.
  - The success of the Volunteer Strand reinforces the value of engaging and training volunteers to anchor and enhance programmes, offering an additional resource to the local Museum Services and the wider local heritage network.
  - The Volunteer Strand has the potential to influence how Local Authorities utilise volunteers not only within the Museum Services remit but across all departments.
  - The ripples generated by the Volunteer Strand and by the actions of the Volunteers have the potential to influence many people over a considerable geographical area.



On the Brink Volunteer Brian McKay leading a tour Larne Harbour.

**SECTION  
7**



**ON THE  
BRINK**

**SECTION 7  
Conclusions**

**7.1** The Volunteer Strand achieved and, in certain areas, exceeded its targets and intended outcomes. Its success reflects the track record and experience of the Museums Team, the ability to offer a flexible Programme with committed staff responding to a very enthusiastic and passionate Volunteer cohort. This very diverse group, embraced the opportunity and respond by undertaking primary research, developing their own scripts and designing and leading tours of a high standard, while gaining accreditation. In terms of future Heritage programmes the success of the Volunteer Strand reinforces the value of engaging and training volunteers to anchor and enhance programmes, offering an additional resource to the local Museum Services and the wider local heritage network. The success of the Volunteer Strand, the learning from the experience and the methodology which has been tested successfully, offers the potential to roll out similar initiatives across the region.

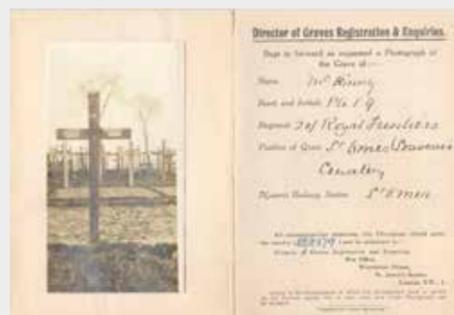
**Impacts**

- (slowly) increased community confidence,
- models for community planning, heritage projects and PEACEIV,
- volunteers through On The Brink skills development:-
  - creating new businesses,
  - moved into full time employment,
  - developing new tours
  - provide a community resource

The Project brought material from national and local museums collections out on public display across Mid Antrim Museums.



WWI Soldiers mess Kit.  
Larne Museum.



Private Tom McKinneys Grave.  
Mid Antrim Museums.



Cumann na mBan badge.  
Kilmainham Gaol Museum, Dublin.

Through their research and connections, Volunteers from the Causeway area helped reveal new material for exhibitions and in some cases for the collections.



Private James Harper Wallet contents.  
Alistair Harper.



HMS Caroline Crest.  
Robert Anderson.



James Henry Letters Collection. Coleraine Museum is grateful to James' sister Georgina Leighton (nee Henry) who kept the letters safe and to George Leighton and Isobel Trussler (nee Leighton) who handed the letters over to the Museum.

## SECTION 8

# ON THE BRINK

## SECTION 8 Recommendations

### Recommendation 1: Volunteer Programmes: Staff Resources and Support

The successful delivery of the Volunteer Strand was due in a large part to the commitment, skills and support of the staff team. The experience suggests that volunteer programmes need a dedicated staff resource whose focus is on supporting volunteers, requiring specific volunteer management skills and expertise.

### Recommendation 2: Volunteer Programmes: Management

All Volunteer programmes would benefit from clear role descriptions and contracts for Volunteers and Staff setting out roles and expectations from the outset, such as used by Causeway Museum Service for individual volunteers and student/work placements.

### Recommendation 3: Volunteer Programmes: Content

Future Volunteer programmes would benefit from a clear outline and schedule of activity, possibly a "route map" setting out the modules and options including accreditation if appropriate.

### Recommendation 4: Formalising Relationships/Exit Strategy

While the Volunteers will remain on the Programme until the Spring 2017 it would be helpful to consider how the relationship might be maintained and strengthened in an ongoing manner. An Exit Strategy should be part of any future Volunteer Programme planning.



1916 Student Year Book.  
Coleraine Academical Institution  
Museum



Autograph book.  
Kilmainham Gaol Museum, Dublin.



Drumadarragh WW1 Trenches.  
Mark Scott.

**SECTION  
8**

**Volunteers who participated in the Evaluation**

|                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Leith Burgess   | Betty McNerlin   |
| Etta Mann       | Nina McNeary     |
| Alan Nicholl    | Kevin McGowan    |
| Brian McKay     | Joanne Honeyford |
| Sally Cupples   | Hannah Campbell  |
| Alistair Harper | Joanne Doherty   |

**Volunteers who participated in the programme**

| Name             | Phases   | Engagement  |
|------------------|--|---|
| Leith Burgess    | Completed Phases 1 and 2                                       | Participated in the evaluation workshops and I: I interview |
| Etta Mann        | Completed Phases 1 and 2                                       | Participated in the evaluation workshops and I: I interview |
| Alan Nicholl     | Completed Phases 1 and 2                                       | Participated in the evaluation workshops and I: I interview |
| Brian McKay      | Completed Phase 2  | Participated in the evaluation workshops and I: I interview |
| Sally Cupples    | Phase 1 Volunteer  | Telephone Interview   |
| Alistair Harper  | Completed Phase 1 and 2  | Participated in the evaluation workshops and I: I interview |
| Betty McNerlin   | Completed Phase 1 and 2  | Participated in the evaluation workshops and I: I interview |
| Nina McNeary     | Completed Phase 2  | Participated in the evaluation workshops and I: I interview |
| Kevin McGowan    | Completed Phase 2  | Participated in the evaluation workshops and I: I interview |
| Joanne Honeyford | Phase 2(withdrew)  | Telephone Interview   |
| Hannah Campbell  | Phase 2 (withdrew)   | Telephone Interview   |
| Joanne Doherty   | Phase 2 (left in Aug 2016)                                     | Telephone Interview   |
| Lynn Black       | Phase 2 Volunteer (withdrew)                                   | Unable to Participate in the evaluation                     |
| Jim Cardwell     | Phase 1 Volunteer (withdrew)                                   | Unable to Participate in the evaluation                     |
| Claire Higgins   | Phase 2 Volunteer (only stayed around 3 months in the project) | Unable to Participate in the evaluation                     |
| Leanne Peacock   | Phase 2 (withdrew)   | Unable to Participate in the evaluation                     |

