

The AHRC is marking its **tenth anniversary in 2015** through a number of activities to showcase the achievements of the arts and humanities research community over the last decade, to look forward to the coming decade and to celebrate the role of the arts and humanities in all areas of our national life.

For further information: www.ahrc.ac.uk/ahrc10

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10

YEARS OF THE AHRC

A DECADE OF
SUPPORTING
EXCELLENCE IN ARTS
AND HUMANITIES
RESEARCH

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Foreword



As the arts and humanities often remind us, a decade is barely the blink of an eye in the grand sweep of things. And yet, in the span of a human life, ten years is of course not an inconsiderable length of time - time enough, indeed, for work to begin, for patterns to be set, for challenges to be met and for successes to be won.

Ten years ago the AHRC received its Royal Charter. It was an achievement not without its obstacles (see page 6), but it was an achievement secured by the sustained and committed efforts of many within the arts and humanities - as well as our many friends beyond - who argued that the arts and humanities both needed and deserved a Research Council, with the sustained and targeted investment that this would bring.

It is perhaps for others to say whether the hopes and the trust invested in us a decade ago have been repaid or not, but perhaps this anniversary publication can help remind us of those many things we have to celebrate, whether they be those projects that have inspired and impacted on new and increasingly diverse audiences, doctoral students or early career researchers achieving extraordinary things at the very outset of their careers, senior research leaders guiding their subject areas into new and interconnected fields, programmes and areas of work that have galvanized whole disciplines and communities of interest.

What it illustrates above all is that the story of the AHRC in the last decade simply *is* the story of the thousands of arts and humanities researchers who, like those featured in this publication, have asked and answered new questions about our human world and who continue to do so.

Like any anniversary, the AHRC's tenth gives us the opportunity to pause and reflect and this has been an important feature of this past year. But paradoxically perhaps an anniversary is as much about the future as it is about the past. It's a time to renew commitments, after all, to refresh and reinvigorate and to build for the future, and we hope this will be an important legacy of our tenth anniversary.

So, while looking through this publication and reflecting on the distance the AHRC and the wider community has travelled in this relatively short time, we should certainly celebrate what together we have achieved, but we should also take time to think about the future and its challenges and what we still have left to do.

Professor Sir Drummond Bone
Chairman, AHRC

“An anniversary is as much about the future as it is about the past”

The faces of the dead

An extraordinary online archive has documented the tragedies of the Troubles in Northern Ireland but in doing so has provided a symbol of hope and reconciliation, writes **Matt Shinn**

‘What we call the Troubles weren’t the first in Northern Ireland,’ says Dr Martin Melaugh, Director of the CAIN project at Ulster University. ‘There was another period of Troubles, in the Twenties, when around five hundred people were killed in Belfast. But by the late Sixties, a lot of young people weren’t fully aware of the earlier conflict, and how sectarian and vicious it had been. There were many similarities with the most recent conflict – it took place in the same areas of the city, it involved organisations with similar aims and tactics, it impacted most heavily on similar sections of society.’

‘The question is, if people had known more about the history of the earlier conflict, if they had access to information and photographs of the five hundred people killed, would they have rushed headlong into the Troubles in the Sixties?’

Remembering the victims

CAIN (the Conflict Archive on the INternet) is a source of information on the Northern Ireland Troubles, from 1968 to the present day. It has been developed by Incore (the International Conflict Resolution Institute), which researches the causes and consequences of violent conflict in Northern Ireland and around the world, and promotes strategies for conflict resolution. And with AHRC support, the team behind CAIN undertook a two-year project, culminating in an online archive of materials relating to the victims of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and the ways that they are remembered.



Right: Sculpture entitled ‘The RUC George Cross Medal’ is one element in the memorial garden in Belfast which commemorates police officers killed during the conflict in Northern Ireland

Some 3,500 people died during the conflict. But before the CAIN project, there had been no online impartial source of information about who those people were. ‘We were keen to compile details of all the people who had been killed,’ says Martin Melaugh. ‘The official police statistics on the dead, held by the RUC, did not list people killed in the Republic of Ireland, England or Europe. In looking for more complete information we found resources that had been compiled by

people from ordinary backgrounds who were not academics or part of official agencies.’

Faces to names

Launched in 2009, the online archive brings together material from many different sources, and from all sides of the conflict: by digitising it and putting it online, that material has now been preserved, and made available outside Northern Ireland. And it contains much more than just the bare

“ The lessons of the last fifty years need to be retained, made accessible, and used. We hope the CAIN resources can play a part”



A glass obelisk which forms part of the Omagh Bomb Memorial, on Market Street, Omagh, Northern Ireland

facts of what happened: ‘we were keen,’ says Martin Melaugh, ‘to complement the text with photographs of those who had been killed; to put a human face to the information on the dead. The AHRC funding allowed this particular work to be carried out.’

Often the original photographs show victims in casual circumstances, which make them especially poignant. One page shows just the victims who were

children. Most of the photographs were taken by family members and friends but the photographer’s name was not recorded. At the beginning of this work there were concerns about possible breach of copyright: ‘following consultation we decided to use the photographs but we included a disclaimer

saying that if family members wanted them taken down, we would do so. The only requests to date have been to replace some photographs with better quality images – everyone has appreciated what we are trying to do.’

For Martin Melaugh, this illustrates a wider point – that it is the victims’ families who have been key beneficiaries of this project. ‘Since we first made the information available we’ve received a huge amount of correspondence. Initially we often heard from close relatives who wanted minor corrections made to the information. Now we also hear from the children or grandchildren of victims, who sometimes say that they don’t know the whole story. And even at the time of the Troubles, a lot of people who were related to victims missed out on the press and TV coverage, because they were too traumatised: some of them are now searching for publicly available information about their loved ones.’

Set in stone

Another aspect of the project has been the development of a searchable database of information on, and photographs of, the physical monuments to the victims of the conflict. ‘The physical memorials,’ says Martin Melaugh, ‘together with murals and a few fortified police stations, are some of the last remaining visible reminders of the Troubles. Our work has included mapping the location of those memorials situated in public spaces.’

Never again?

The CAIN site has generated interest around the world. It has been used in comparative analyses on the legacy of conflict in Northern Ireland, the Middle East and South Africa, for example.

And what of its impact in Northern Ireland? ‘We did not promote the project as conflict resolution,’ says Martin Melaugh, ‘but we believe the resources will aid others who work directly in this field. We have compiled materials produced by a wide range of groups and individuals, we have ourselves generated new information to help fill some of the gaps, and we have preserved all the resources for the future.’

‘What worries me is that we’re not completely out of the woods. The modernity of the Sixties led some people to believe that the earlier Troubles would not be repeated. They were proved wrong. The lessons of the last fifty years need to be retained, made accessible, and used. We hope the CAIN resources can play a part in that process.’

Information on victims can be found at: cain.ulster.ac.uk/victims

“ It is the victims’ families who have been the key beneficiaries of this project”

Conflict Textiles collection

Among the activities that have been supported through the CAIN project there have been a series of exhibitions and associated activities that give an account of textile artworks depicting conflicts in different parts of the world. The core collection’s provenance is from the bloodshed in Chile in the 1970/1980s and Northern Ireland.

‘The Art of Survival: International and Irish Quilts’ in 2008 was the first exhibition of this kind that took place in nine venues in Derry/Londonderry. It was organized by the then Derry City Council Heritage and Museum Services. As of August 2015 the CAIN database has archived 131 exhibitions and events. The exhibitions have been curated by Roberta Bacic, who herself comes from Chile; they demonstrate how makers of quilts and similar textiles (mainly Chilean arpilleras) have been used to document people’s experiences of conflict around the world, and to share stories about it.

Arpilleras made during the Chilean dictatorship are hand-stitched pictures made from scraps of

material, often taken directly from the clothes of people who were killed or who had disappeared. As Roberta Bacic says, ‘they document the way that conflict has affected ordinary lives and communities. I wanted to make possible an open conversation, especially about what women have to say about conflict.’

The exhibitions have been shown in other countries with a history of conflict, where that conflict has been difficult to talk about – in Spain, for example. ‘This is a way of getting people to open up: by finding a different language to express people’s experiences, we’ve started to trigger a profound and intense discussion.’

The physical collection has recently been donated to Derry City and Strabane District Council. CAIN continues to add to the digital information on the exhibitions and also information on over 200 textiles. A new website will be launched on 19th November 2015.



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