

OUR COLUMNIST TAKES A LOOK AT LIFE

Displaying the horror of genocide with small keepsakes from survivors' pockets

Every year since 2001, at the end of January, the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT) encourages remembrance in a world that's horrendously scarred by genocide.

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) falls on January 27, the anniversary of the liberation in 1945 of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp.

The UK played a leading role in establishing an international day of commemoration in 2000, when 46 governments signed the Stockholm Declaration, committing their countries to preserving the memory of those murdered in the Holocaust.

The declaration continues to be used as a basis for HMD activities today, including a pledge to remember the victims of more recent and on-going genocides.

On and around January 27, many thousands of commemorative events are held here and around the UK, and further afield, to remember the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust, the millions of people killed

under Nazi persecution and in subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur, just some of the countries devastated by conflict, torture and murder.

Each year HMDT selects a theme – this year's is Torn From

Home – encouraging us to explore, discuss, expose, sympathise and engage in dialogue about the Holocaust and genocide.

The Torn From Home theme helps us connect with people caught in the crossfire of past and present wars and to 'be at one' with folk who are tragically forced to flee and abandon their homeland and their country in their quest for a safe place to survive and live.

There's a UK-wide map showing local HMD events at www.hmd.org.uk and there'll be more details on Roamer's page in the run up to January 27.

A commemorative exhibition entitled 'Torn From Home: Remembering the Holocaust' has just opened in Belfast's Linen Hall Library.

The thought-proving and



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The exhibition also highlights the resilience and determination of those caught up in war who have cherished memorabilia and objects that are a vivid reminder of what they have left behind.

As well as marking Holocaust Memorial Day, the Linen Hall exhibition also highlights the 90th anniversary of the Second World War diarist Anne Frank's



birth in June.

On show for the first time are a number of personal items with immense historic significance to their owners: a lock for a truck that was used by Red Cross refugees striking out on a new jour-

ney from Naples to Argentina in the aftermath of the Second World War; a table napkin used during a stay at a refugee camp in Naples and a tape lace centrepiece made in 1905 that survived a Second World War concentration camp.

Other items on display include elaborate tapestries entitled Blood Trail and Never Again! depicting the entrance to the notorious German Second World War Auschwitz concentration

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camp where many lost their lives through starvation and torture. Both were created by artist Heidi Drahota “to remind (the world) that these things must never happen again.” Another remarkable tapestry is Stitches of Life by prize-winning textile-artist Ana Zlatkes depicting children being led to safety away from the Nazis in the Second World War.

Ana says: “Genocide continues, changes in form and geographical location, but it is still a reality and it is the responsibility of all of us to try

to prevent it.”

Artwork from other conflicts, each with a unique and often harrowing story to tell, are on display, and the Anne Frank anniversary is marked with a series of illustrations themed around the tragic

story of the little girl who became one of the best-known Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

Anne’s family went into hiding in Amsterdam during the Second World War but were betrayed and caught by the Nazis.

They all died in concentration camps except Anne’s father who later published her world-famous diaries.

Copies of the recent book ‘Anne: An imagining of the life of Anne Frank’ by Marjorie Agosin and illustrated by Francisca Yáñez will be available to purchase at the exhibition.

Curator, lecturer, researcher and activist Roberta Bacic told Roamer about some of the personal items and mementoes of war featured in the exhibition.

The lock from a Red Cross truck that started refugees on their journey from Naples to Argentina after the Second World War is still working!

There are photographs, books and drawings and “an array of things from people who survived,” said Roberta.

And very poignantly, the truck’s lock, the little cloth napkin and lace table-setting are “small objects that they could bring with them,” Roberta explained.

When you were “torn from home” all you could take were items that would “fit in your pocket,” she added, “like the little table-cloth that was underneath a glass

vase.

“This exhibition brings to light pieces never shown before that were part of private collections that survived persecution, the Holocaust, long journeys and time,” Roberta explained. “They have now become part of the Conflict Textiles collection.”

She hopes the exhibition will encourage people “to act in solidarity, bearing in mind that there is always something we can do when confronted with the horrors of war.”

Roberta will be giving a guided tour revealing the fascinating stories behind the exhibition items on Monday, January 28 at 11am.

Torn From Home: Remembering the Holocaust runs in the Linen Hall Library until February 28th and is free to view. Full details at www.linenhall.com.





Blood Trail by Heidi Drahota. Courtesy of Conflict Textiles



Stitches of Life by Ana Zlatkes. Courtesy of Conflict Textiles



Tape lace centrepiece. Courtesy of Conflict Textile



A page of Anne Frank's Diary. September 28, 1942

