The Living Memorial Museum Sub Group in Berlin

In March 2010, members of HTR’s Living Memorial Museum Sub Group visited Berlin in an effort to gain an international perspective on memorialisation and dealing with the past. The group used the visit to establish links with the House of the Wannsee Conference. Funded by PEACE III and the International Coalition for Historic Sites of Conscience, 17 sites were visited over the course of five days, both as a group and individually, including the former Stasi prison, the Stasi museum, the House of the Wannsee Conference, the Berlin Wall Documentation Centre, the former ‘Death Strip’ between East and West Berlin where the Berlin Wall once stood, the Chapel of Reconciliation, the Jewish Museum, the Holocaust Memorial, Checkpoint Charlie Museum, and the Centre for Witnesses to Contemporary History.

“A good range of projects, big and small, were visited... The educational dimension to several of them, as opposed to simply displaying artefacts or located on a particularly historic site, was very beneficial as we attempt to realise in practice what our concept of a Living Memorial Museum could look like.”

Sub Group Member

“It gave me a greater sense of the value of HTR’s work and of the purpose and importance of our own group.” Sub Group Member

As Berlin is a city where memorials and museums are so prominent, it was important to include a variety of sites that were relevant to the current work of the Sub Group and would also inform the wider debate surrounding a memorial museum of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. Some sites had a strong educational element, others had a commercial edge to them, and others focused on the significance of the site itself. Each site generated much discussion amongst the participants, which has in turn shaped the future plans of the Sub Group.
On the 21st of June, Healing Through Remembering promoted the Day of Private Reflection. It was the fourth year that the Day of Reflection has been marked, and follows previous years where the initiative has received widespread public support. The Day offers a chance for all those affected by the conflict in and about Northern Ireland to reflect on the past, acknowledge the suffering caused, and to make a personal commitment that such loss should never be allowed to happen again. The 21st of June was chosen as it is the longest day, and therefore the day with the most light, in the calendar year. It represents a shift in the seasons, and a time of transition.

While the emphasis is still on private reflection, HTR encourages individuals and groups to mark the Day in a way that feels appropriate to them. This may include sharing stories, holding a minute’s silence, lighting a candle, or going to a quiet space for individual reflection. Activities in 2010 included launching a stain glass window in memory of local people killed in the conflict, showing a film about people’s personal experiences of the conflict, and visiting the Crumlin Road Gaol in Belfast to allow individuals to reflect in a creative way on the past.

HTR has commissioned independent evaluations following each Day of Reflection, which have indicated support for continuing the initiative. The evaluation of the Day of Reflection 2009 was completed recently, and greatly informed the work of the Day in 2010. The evaluation noted that the Day “…is increasingly seen as positive by many and non-threatening by others” and “…interest and support came from across the community and was embraced by groups and individuals from both of the main traditions.”

**Day of Reflection 2010**

**21 June**

In October 2009, HTR held an initial discussion on ‘Considering New Perspectives’, which was a free flowing and informal opportunity to discuss the journey that dealing with the past entails and to consider questions such as ‘What was the first step?’, ‘What keeps you going?’, and ‘How do we involve other people?’ (This discussion followed a Sponsored Walk by some HTR members and staff up Cave Hill, which raised over £1500 for HTR core funds.) A slideshow was created using images of scenery and of HTR which was conducive for the debate about engaging in difficult conversations about how to deal with the past. Since then, the slideshow has been developed into a short film with the aim of using it as a resource in the work of HTR. Laurence McKeown, HTR member and playwright, wrote the piece and produced the film.

It is envisioned that this film will aid the HTR conversational workshops and be a valuable resource for all those groups and individuals interested in engaging in the debate on dealing with the past.

HTR would like to thank all those who participated in the event and/or the Sponsored Walk. More fundraising and social events will be held this year.

**Considering New Perspectives**
A workshop to launch WYSSSS was held in Sligo on Tuesday 11th May. The aim of the workshop was to facilitate an information session on dealing with the past and to help people from the area to explore the possibilities of addressing the legacy of the conflict. The workshop was hosted by Sligo PEACE III Partnership and facilitated by two of HTR’s delivery partners, Joe Blake and Janie Crone.

On the 5th of March HTR held the first meeting of the Members Council. The purpose of the Members Council is to create a regular forum in which HTR members can collectively discuss and inform the development of the organisation. Discussions at the meeting covered the current strategic priorities for HTR; the long term remit of the organisation; and the revision of the organisational structure. The Sub Group Chairs presented a review of each group’s Strategic Plan from 2006 to 2009 including the achievements, lessons and plans. The Members Council plans to meet quarterly. All HTR Members and Sub Group Members are welcome to attend.

The team of Delivery Partners continues to engage with groups and organisations. In the last few months workshops have been held in Belfast, the North West, Monaghan, and Sligo. The workshop participants have included ethnic minorities, retired prison officers, former security force members and community groups.

For further information on the conversational workshops please contact Laura Coulter, Project Co-ordinator.

Kate turned an overview of the work of HTR. One of the four workshops was facilitated by HTR Delivery Partners Joe Blake and Martin Snaddon. Entitled ‘Whatever You Say, Say Something’, the workshop was attended by participants from Northern Ireland, Macedonia, Nigeria, Spain and Republic of Ireland. It provided an opportunity to explore why and how to talk about dealing with the past.
Staff Update

HTR would like to welcome Laura Coulter as the newest member of staff. Laura is taking over as Project Co-ordinator from Angus Lambkin who is leaving to pursue international work.

Laura has worked in the past as a community worker in both the voluntary and statutory sectors. She has been active in peace and reconciliation work for at least 20 years. She is a trained mediator and has wide experience of mediating disputes in workplace, neighbourhood and church contexts. Recently she worked for the Parades Commission as an Authorised Officer and for the Presbyterian Church as Peacemaking Officer. She was appointed Project Co-ordinator in May 2010.

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HTR Reports to Order

Copies of all reports produced and published by Healing Through Remembering are available to order direct from the office or online in the resources section of the HTR website: www.healingthroughremembering.org

Ethical Principles – Storytelling and Narrative Work

At the End of the Day – Commemoration: Forward Thinking into the Past

Momentum and Change: An overview of the role and remit of Healing Through Remembering

Artefacts Audit: A report on the material culture relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland

Without Walls: A report on the Open Call for Ideas for a Living Memorial Museum


Making Peace with the Past: Options for truth recovery regarding the conflict in and about Northern Ireland

Making Peace with the Past – Executive Summary

The Viability of Prosecution Based on Historical Enquiry

Acknowledgement and its Role in Preventing Future Violence

A Day of Private Reflection: Discussion Paper and Proposal

A Day of Reflection: Local Scoping Study

Storytelling as the Vehicle? Conference Report

International Experiences of Days of Remembrance and Reflection

Storytelling Audit: An audit of personal story, narrative and testimony initiatives related to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.