

## To Remember or not to Remember?

Born in London, I only thought of the red Remembrance poppies as mildly controversial. Do people wear poppies to remember all those individuals who died, or instead to commemorate 'our' war dead, who died defending 'our' country and 'our' values, and as a sign of pride in our country's armed forces? Would it be better to wear white poppies to acknowledge the human sacrifice but question the militaristic and often jingoistic language that piggybacks on that human sacrifice?

But then I moved to Northern Ireland. The wearing of the red poppy and public commemorations tend to celebrate all British war dead, including those who have lost their lives more recently during the conflict. If you have differing understandings of the causes and consequences of the conflict, the display - or refusal to display - one's support for some of those who lost their lives in the Troubles, but not others, can be problematic. Moreover, the experience of the First and Second World Wars is viewed very differently, depending on whether you consider yourself Irish or British.

If you self-identify as Irish, the Easter Rising coincided with the terrible losses on the Somme and, though you might well have had relatives fighting on both battlegrounds, you may now identify more with the former rather than the latter. If you consider yourself British, the Ulster losses on the Somme are a tragic

folk-memory, compounded by a sense that Irish nationalists were 'betraying' the cause by pursuing their struggle for independence when Britain most needed loyal support. Similarly, attitudes to the Second World War are divided. There was no conscription in Northern Ireland because of the perception of divided loyalties (the Irish Republic stayed officially neutral) but the existence of important shipyards ensured that it suffered serious bombing and loss of life.

So the experience in NI is that the wearing (or not) of the poppy epitomises the risks involved in 'remembering'. Who remembers what? And is the very act of remembering used as an occasion to 'other' people, and to stoke current or future tensions? But there are also great risks involved in deliberately choosing not to remember the past. The peace agreement talks of the 'tragedies of the past' requiring a new beginning and it deliberately looks forward. That was probably a necessary stance if any negotiations were to be successful, but can the peace truly hold over the longer term without any shared understanding of what has gone before? More and more people in NI think not. They are beginning to call for more truth-telling and dialogue. After all, it is not necessary to agree with someone else's interpretation of events, but understanding why their interpretation might be different to your own, makes genuine dialogue and bridge-building much more possible.

Maggie Beirne, West London Justice and Peace

## Office News

### Final call for Remembrance 2018

Order our postcards to distribute on 11 November and see all our liturgy, visual and story resources for Remembrance here: [tinyurl.com/PaxRem](http://tinyurl.com/PaxRem).

If you are in London on 11 November, come to Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ between 2-5pm to meet peace activists and find out more about peace campaigns. Live music, films, books, stalls and children's programme - all welcome.



### Planning for Peace Sunday 2019

19 January is the date chosen in England and Wales to mark the Pope's Peace Day Message. It is in the Liturgical Calendar of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

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At the end of November we will send resource materials to all parishes, and to members in December. Everything we produce will be posted on our website too. Please put the date in your parish diary now and consider how YOU can help your parish mark the day. Could you give a short presentation or arrange a collection for Pax Christi? Could you arrange to have a peace stall and give out free literature? Your help is essential to making things happen on the day.

### Welcome to Aisling

This month we were delighted to be joined by our newest member of the office team, Aisling Griffin.

Hello, I'm Aisling, the new youth and schools education officer. I'm very excited to be starting this new role with Pax Christi and to carrying on Matt's great work with young people, teachers and schools to promote peace. Hopefully I will get to meet some of you soon, but please don't hesitate to get in touch with me at:

[education@paxchristi.org.uk](mailto:education@paxchristi.org.uk)

### Pax Christi—Our Values

Pax Christi members live by the biblically inspired values of **Peace, Reconciliation, Nonviolence**. These values are supported by the witness of peacemakers down the ages and the experience of the Pax Christi community.

Pax Christi is rooted in Catholic Christianity but is open to all who are in sympathy with its values and work.

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# Justpeace

## PAX CHRISTI

International Catholic Movement for Peace

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## Remembrance 1918 – 2018

In this issue of *Justpeace* we will explore the theme of remembrance and how we as a peace community can challenge the ways we commemorate war. How we can make sure peace is central to our remembrance?

Gerry McFlynn tells us that 'remembering is a condition for peacemaking'. We hear from PAX Netherlands about how they work with those who were directly affected by the Srebrenica genocide. A modern peace garden project that transforms remembrance of a bitter battle of 1513 is described by Sr Bernie Roche following her recent visit. 'Who remembers what?' asks Maggie Beirne, reflecting on the divergent memories she heard when living in Northern Ireland.

## Remembrance: a condition for peacemaking

Of all European cities, Berlin is arguably the best suited for a discussion on remembrance. A recent visit there taking in the Wall, the Holocaust, Roma/Sinti and other memorials and museums (see [www.stiftung-denkmal.de](http://www.stiftung-denkmal.de)) gave the theme added resonance for me. Despite its growing reputation as a "cool" city-break destination, Berlin's past is everywhere present.

But why remember? Why the need for memorials and Days of Remembrance? Can we not just draw a line under the past, forgive and forget and get on with the difficult enough business of living in the present? And mention of forgiveness reminds me of a comment once made by my Belfast priest friend and Pax Christi supporter, Des Wilson, who said that the people who are best at forgiving are those who do not forget since they know how much forgiveness is going to cost them. That's why remembering the past, dealing with its tragic events and healing its memories, poses the greatest challenge to peacemaking in conflict situations.

But remember we must, because remembering is a condition for peacemaking. We owe a debt to the victims of war and violence by telling and retelling what happened. By doing so, we not only prevent forgetfulness from killing the victims twice, we also prevent their life stories from becoming commonplace. As Primo Levi said: "It did not matter that they might die along the way; what really mattered was that they should not tell their story". And we are witnesses to "their story".

We not only commemorate the victims but we also stand with those witnesses who stood by



Widows of Srebrenica visiting the exhibition by Sake Elzinga commissioned by Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork (Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork)

them, and still do when it comes to discrimination and violence against any ethnic group.

When the basic human rights of one group are violated, no group is safe. The French philosopher, Paul Ricoeur argues: "there are perhaps crimes that must not be forgotten, victims whose suffering cries less for vengeance than for narration". Remembrance and memorial ceremonies are part of that narration and a recognition that commemoration to be meaningful needs to remember the past if we are to have a better future.

And so we need to go often to where that silence is, to bring back the voices of those decreed to be of no account, those separated from us as "others", as less than human. Once the concept of "otherness" takes root, the unimaginable becomes possible. Indeed, we must never tire of giving voice to that silence, and symbolic resonance to memorial events which synthesize the horrors of the past, and present. A more peaceful and just world order depends to a great extent on how well we deal with the past.

Fr Gerry McFlynn

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## The fragile task of building trust

PAX, a Dutch peace organization and part of Pax Christi International, has been working in conflict areas around the world (e.g. Western Balkans, Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, South Sudan, Congo) for decades. Supporting victims of violence is central to our work, through supporting actual peace initiatives on the ground (peace dialogues, strengthening victims' organizations, memorialisation initiatives) in combination with research, dialogue, lobbying and advocacy in different political arenas. To make it more concrete, I would like to highlight one memorialization initiative in Srebrenica.

### Inclusive memorialisation? PAX helping to set up an exhibition in Srebrenica

In February 2017, an exhibition opened at the Potocari Memorial Centre (PMC) in Srebrenica, (Bosnia and Herzegovina). It was titled "The Srebrenica Genocide - the failure of the international community". The exhibition shows the events during the conflict between '92 and '95 in Srebrenica, with a special focus on July 95 when more than 8000 Muslim boys and men were murdered by Bosnian Serbian and Serbian forces.

The exhibition was developed in a joint effort by PAX, the Potocari Memorial Centre, and Camp Westerbork (a former Dutch transit camp, with experience in building exhibitions). What is special about this exhibition is that it not only tells the story of the survivors and victims of the massacre, which was ruled genocide in 2004 by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. It also incorporates perspectives of Dutchbat soldiers [the Dutch battalion under UN command in former Yugoslavia] who were stationed in the UN safe area Srebrenica at that time, under the UN mandate. Without going into detail about what happened during those days in July 95, it is important to briefly explain the role of Dutchbat during those days because then it will be easier to understand why it was so difficult to include both voices in one exhibition.

After the fall of Srebrenica, some 14,000 men tried to reach safe territory through the woods. Approximately half of them were captured and killed. There were also some 1,800 men among the 25,000 refugees in and outside the Dutch compound, who had fled from the Serbian troops. They hoped for safety. However, when the Serbs arrived in the area surrounding the compound, they started separating the men from the women refugees and the elderly. A day later, the refugees who had stayed in the compound were ordered by Dutch troops to leave. They were also separated by the Serbs, in some cases helped by Dutch soldiers. The women and children were put on buses to the border, where they walked into safety. The men and boys were taken away by the Serbs. All of them were killed. In total, more than 8000 men from Srebrenica were killed.

### Negotiating different narratives among the actors

It became clear that different processes of negotiation took place during the creation of this exhibition among the main actors involved; the four widows' associations



Dutchbat soldiers laying a wreath at the memorial site, during the opening of the exhibition by Sake Elzinga commissioned by Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork

based both in Sarajevo and Srebrenica, former Dutchbat soldiers, the PMC, PAX, Camp Westerbork, the Dutch embassy, and the Dutch ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs. These were not only negotiations on, for example, which narratives of the conflict could be shared in the exhibition, but also on how and which artefacts to present, which words to be used, etc. Virtually every aspect of the exhibition was debated.

### Process of trust-building between different actors

Both PAX and Camp Westerbork worked together on Srebrenica (PAX already from '95 onwards), organizing visits for the widows to the Netherlands and of former Dutchbat soldiers to Srebrenica. These visits and of course the resulting dialogues between these groups were crucial for this current exhibition. Without this process during which relations were built (without using the word 'trust') between both sides, the exhibition in its current form would not have been possible.

Not everyone trusted each other, but there were enough individuals that could be trusted by one or the other. Dutchbatters trusted the Dutch curator to include their side of the story; the widows trusted PAX after many years of cooperation. Although during the process trust sometimes seemed very fragile, the long term relationships were stable enough to keep everyone on board, even when harsh words were sometimes exchanged. In a sense, the actual process leading up to the exhibition, was as important as the exhibition itself. A process of trust-building and maybe even peacebuilding.

PAX is planning to continue its cooperation with the survivors of Srebrenica and the Potocari Memorial Centre. Together with partners, also other initiatives of inclusive memorialisation have been developed.

Simone Remijnse, PAX Netherlands

## Flowers of the forest—flowers of peace



Sister Mary in the Peace Garden

The savage battle of 1513 remembered in the famous lament 'Flowers of the Forest' (see right) resulted in the death of James IV and over 10,000 of his fellow Scots on a muddy field in Northumberland. Like many battles, its origins lay in a mixture of old resentments, genuine grievances and a misplaced sense of honour.

Henry VIII had declared war on Louis XII of France. Louis invoked the Auld Alliance, a treaty between France and Scotland, which stated that whichever country was invaded by England, the other would retaliate. The English and Scots armies met at Flodden resulting in the disastrous history-changing rout for the Scots.

On the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle in 2013, at the initiative of local people, the Flodden Peace Centre was opened at Crookham United Reform Church within

### Diary

#### 20–21 October Bristol (Sat-Sun)

Towards a nuclear-free future: building change from the grass roots. CND Annual Conference. On Saturday the AGM and Policy Conference. Sunday's open public conference will take place at Wills Memorial Building, Park Street, University of Bristol. <https://cnduk.org/about/cnd-conference/>

#### 23 October (Tue) Nottingham

A nuclear weapons free world: What can Christians do? Public meeting at 7pm in St Peter's Church, St Peters Gate, NG1 2NW

#### 24 October (Wed) Winchester

Pat Gaffney will be speaking at 12.30 in the United Church, Jewry Street, as part of an autumn series, Remembering War...Making Peace. Refreshments offered. [www.spaceinthecity.org.uk/](http://www.spaceinthecity.org.uk/)

#### 29 October (Mon) London

UN Symposium 2018: Moving towards a new United Nations. 6pm Hilton, London Euston. For details and registration go to: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/moving-towards-a-new-un-tickets-45828622644>



walking distance of the battlefield. Mary Taylor is the United Reform Minister who runs the Centre. Garden designer Dougie James created a commemorative Peace garden, wanting visitors to journey from war to peace through the separate sections. The garden starts in a mood of anger, fear, and repression represented with black gravel paths and black leaved plants. Moving through on to a red gravel path and red leaved plants and flowers with a circle of broadswords, the next section represents war and conflict. Loss and desolation follow as the pilgrim moves into in grey garden with a beautiful silver leaved weeping pear tree planted in memory of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Forgiveness is imaged in the white and gold space which sweeps round the back of the church. An imaginative "swords into ploughshares" sculpture leads to the peace garden complete with pond and peace bridge and a contemplative space under a weeping willow with a singing bowl.

The garden is a moving and evocative way of remembering the brutality of war, a way that asks questions of how we can travel beyond a glorification of conflict to working for genuine peace. In this year of events remembering the end of the First World War, we surely need to be asking those questions again.

#### The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away...

Dool and wae for the order sent oor lads tae the Border!  
The English for ance, by guile wan the day,  
The Flowers o' the Forest, that fought aye the foremost,  
The pride o' oor land lie cauld in the clay.

Flowers of the Forest - Lament commemorating the battle of Flodden 1513

More here: [www.flodden1513ecomuseum.org/places/local/flodden-peace-centre](http://www.flodden1513ecomuseum.org/places/local/flodden-peace-centre)

Sr Bernie Roche, Hull



#### 10 November (Sat) Leeds

Remembrance is not enough: a service on the centenary of the 'War to end all wars'. Guest speaker: theologian Andrew Shanks. 3.30pm Mill Hill Chapel, City Square, LS1

#### 11 November (Sun) London

A ceremony of Remembrance and Peace 1pm, Tavistock Square, WC1.

2-5pm 'Meet the peace movement' at Friends House: peace stalls, children's activities, music, film, café.

#### 17 November (Sat) York

Peace Now - the Personal Dimension, workshops at Friargate Meeting House, 10am - 4.45 pm. Introducing skills for practical peace-making, conflict resolution. adults £12 students/£7 - includes lunch. Booking via <http://www.yorkquakers.org.uk>

#### 29 November (Thur) Worldwide

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/palestinian/>

#### 11 December (Tue) London

Our popular Advent Peace Service 7pm in St Aloysius Church, Euston followed by our alternative Christmas market with fair-trade goods, goods from Palestine, Philippines and many more.

#### 13 December (Thur) London

An evening with Jim Forest: Reflection on Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day and Daniel Berrigan. 7-9pm St Pancras Church Hall, Lancing Street, NW1