



LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY
LUCAS
CENTRE for ARCHIVE STUDIES

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Issue Highlights

Welcome to our new look newsletter! You will find interesting articles and information about LUCAS' projects and events as well as new sections focusing on the work of our Centre. We hope that you enjoy reading this issue!

AGM The 7th Annual LUCAS AGM was a great success with a thought-provoking lecture from Dr Gerry Slater, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. Read an event report and extracts from the lecture.

Research Seminars Find out more about LUCAS' most recent initiative, the popular Research Seminar Series that began in February.

LUCAS 7th Annual AGM

On 16th February 2005, the LUCAS 2005 AGM took place at the Sherrington Building, University of Liverpool and attracted over 70 attendees.

This venue provided an excellent backdrop for the discussion and networking that took place between the archive and record management professionals, postgraduate students and interested members of the public.

The Chief Executive of the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Dr Gerry Slater, presented his perspective on the archives of Northern Ireland in the lecture entitled: *Archives Amid Division: The Northern Ireland Experience*.

Dr Slater analysed government documents depicting a Northern Ireland community divided by history, politics and religion. The documents recount the experiences of individuals caught up in violence and acts of terrorism, which claimed nearly 4,000 civilian lives. The discussion focused on the realities of community division, examining the conflict in the context of an Irish history built on triumph and defeat.

Dr Slater explained "There is no era that requires more understanding than the three decades of 'The Troubles'. These were the years of destruction, pain, suffering and



Dr Gerry Slater enjoys a drink and discussion after the lecture with Professor Marianne Elliot, Director, Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool

death – and thousands of individuals in both communities have shared those dreadful experiences in full measure. The archives capture in frightening detail the community memory of these awful events."

Caroline Williams, LUCAS Director, added: "Dr Slater's research is important in addressing the issues of the past and future for Northern Ireland. The event was a great success"

Extracts from Dr Slater's lecture are presented on pages 2 and 3 of this newsletter.

AGM Lecture Summary

Extracts taken from 'Archives Amid Division: the Northern Ireland Experience'
Dr Gerry Slater, PRONI.

The greatest enemy of the truth is very often not the lie - deliberate, contrived, and dishonest, but the myth persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic. Belief in myths allows the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.

President John F. Kennedy

I have the privilege to work in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). We provide 'an integrated archival service', which means that we have a statutory responsibility for the Northern Ireland archival heritage. We hold 'the documented community memory' – 54 shelf kilometres of it - including the evidence of the great events that have moulded our identity (or identities) over the last 400 years.

TRIUMPH AND DEFEAT

Those great events - from the early seventeenth century right up to the present day - are seen in Northern Ireland as either triumphs or defeats for the Roman Catholic/Irish Nationalist/Green or the Protestant/Unionist/Orange tradition. Thus history – or rather what passes for history - is not complicated by nuance or by the reality of this-or-that event. Either 'we' won or 'we' lost.

The divided loyalties in Northern Ireland eventually exploded into the 30 years of violence and terrorism known as 'The Troubles'. To the outside world Northern Ireland became known as a land that time had left behind, had condemned to live (and die) in a bloody past. It represented all that was strange, negative, unacceptable and peripheral.

Of course, the image was, in some respects, quite wrong. While no part of Northern Ireland was wholly safe nonetheless the populations of large parts of the province experienced no violence at all and watched it unfold on their televisions.



MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES

How on earth could a country find itself in such a situation? That is the crucial question. It is one I am convinced that can be addressed fully only from a research-based historical perspective. That means delving into and exploiting to the full the richness, the variety and the depth of the archives, 'the documented community memory' to which I referred earlier. Indeed, it could be argued that the failure to engage with sufficient vigour in such delving and exploitation for too long left the field to those who, for whatever motive, peddled stereotypes and myths and thus contributed to the setting of the scene that led to 'The Troubles'.

It may sound a sweeping claim. But it is all too easy to slide into the negative stereotype and the demonising mythology when we are denied the insight into difference that flows from a true understanding of history. Northern Ireland has been fed on a diet of simplistic misrepresentations of the 'history' of the island of Ireland. With scant reference to what actually happened, wholly different interpretations were placed on events and, where appropriate, events seen as central by 'the other side' were dismissed as trivial or quite simply ignored.

We hear much within the peace process about building up trust. An essential part of the healing process and a foundation for peace must be a bridging of the gap in understanding each other's identities and the experiences that have helped to mould those identities. In that we have a frighteningly long way to go in Northern Ireland. The present-day reality is that the two communities have projected from them - and back into them - versions of history that strengthen community identity at the expense of reinforcing stereotypes and myths of 'the other side'.

For the popular version of the Republican or Loyalist interpretation of history, you could do no better than stand in front of gable walls in some of the most deprived areas of Belfast. It is clear that the interpretations of history displayed on the gable walls are charged with deep feelings and display the

uncertainties and concerns of both communities, at least in the working-class urban areas. If they are negative, it is because the feelings about 'the other side' are negative. Negativity sits at the very heart of conflict. 'The Troubles' were no different in that respect from any other conflict.

'THE TROUBLES'

In *An Index of deaths from the Conflict in Ireland*, Malcolm Sutton has set out the statistics of deaths over the 32 years between 1969 and 2001. Such statistics are cold figures. Behind them lie broken lives. The emotional pain of loss and the physical pain of injury know no political labels. The blood that flowed from a Republican or a Loyalist or a soldier or a policeman or an ordinary civilian was the same. The tears and the emotions were the same for those left behind. If we can concentrate on the shared humanity, on the shared suffering, then we can surely edge our way towards a true and lasting peace.

ETHNIC CLEANSING AND WINNING THE ESTATES

I now want to turn to some of the archive material recently released at PRONI, not simply to advertise its presence there but also to highlight the importance of what is being released in terms of understanding the traumas experienced over three decades.

The records for the early 1970s are, frankly, depressing. What happened in the predominantly Loyalist housing estates was replicated in the predominantly Republican ones. Amid the pages of detailed reports, there are a few that stand out rather surprisingly as not fitting in with the gloomy pattern and they deserve mention. The Army organised a week-long camp for 60 working-class youths, half of them from each community. It was totally trouble-free, which suggests that, if left alone, there remained enough decency to allow the young to rub along, to stand aside from the sectarian intimidation. The on-rush of ethnic cleansing is there in the form of numbers and reasons for affected families abandoning their homes and seeking refuge elsewhere.



Let us stop for one moment and imagine what these short entries actually meant. Imagine how the affected families lived.

REALITY OF TERRORISM

Violence can be all too easily romanticised and new myths created. The evidence as drawn from the archives tells a very different and horrifying story. Let me refer to just two incidents, but remember that the physical effects were in no way untypical of the bloody realities of terrorism.

WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

You will understand from what I have outlined about the violence in Northern Ireland that communities are often deeply scarred, and therefore contact with them requires particular sensitivity and a real need to respect their experiences and their views. You will be aware that the Archives Task Force Report – *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future* – highlighted community archives. I want

now to touch on some of the work that has been done by PRONI in regard to contact with communities. It steps well outside traditional archive work. I regard it as work that has a special importance in Northern Ireland as it involves recognition of the experiences of different communities, the experiences that have moulded them over generations and made them what they are today. These contacts are not linked to the 'The Troubles', though earlier experiences may eventually be seen as contributing to those later events if only because of the separation of the communities.

LINKING PAST AND PRESENT

I believe that the past has a great deal to teach all of us, if only we choose to listen and to recognise the possible links with our present-day circumstances.

Perhaps the good news from Northern Ireland – there is much of it now as peace continues – is that the sway of the myths and the stereotypes is weakening gradually.

The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey for 2003 indicated that 68 per cent of Protestants and 72 per cent of Roman Catholics actually would prefer to live in a mixed religion neighbourhood; the figures were even higher in favour of a mixed religion workplace; though integrated education could not quite reach 60 per cent in either community.

The murals on the gable walls remain in place, but understanding appears to be growing without abandonment of either principle or identity. If the momentum is to be sustained, then that understanding must embrace a better comprehension of what really happened in the past and must emphasise a common humanity whatever the religious differences or competing political aspirations.'

Dr Slater's lecture can be accessed in full at:

www.liv.ac.uk/LUCAS/slater.doc



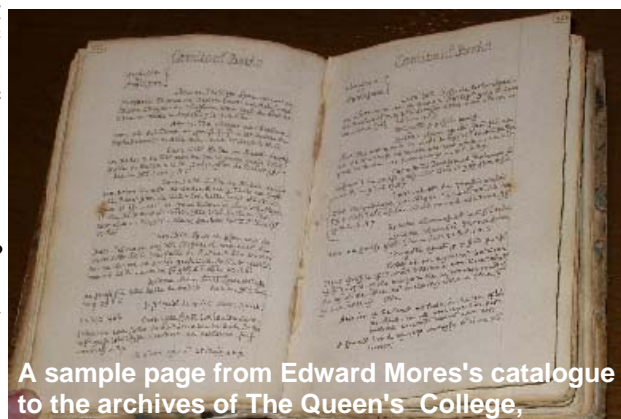
Research seminar series

One innovation for LUCAS this year has been the establishment of a Research Seminar series. The seminars, designed to explore the research potential of topics within archives and records management as a discipline, are aimed at practising archivists and records managers. They provide an opportunity for practitioners to revisit areas which were not covered in any depth during their Masters courses or/and who wish to investigate new and emerging subjects within the area. We hope that they'll also provide a sounding board for any practitioner considering re-engaging with ARM research.

The first seminar took place on 24 February when Mike Riordan, archivist at St. John's and The Queen's Colleges, Oxford (and a former Liverpool student) and Robin Darwall-Smith, archivist at Magdalen College Oxford and University College spoke on *Archives for administrators or archives for antiquarians? Early archive catalogues from four Oxford Colleges*. With four colleges between them Mike and Robin related how finding aids and catalogues to the college archives had developed – and progress was certainly not all one way, with much harm being done by 'scientific' rearrangement as late as the mid C20.

On 19 April Dr Michael Cook presented a paper on *Problems in developing codes of ethics and practice in ARM* which considered the efforts made by the profession towards establishing frameworks in this area. He highlighted the 1990s as the decade of standardisation in general, with the development of codes of ethics/conduct paralleling the development of descriptive and methodological standards. The audience was generally sceptical about the standing of professional codes of conduct – enforcement is patchy and the process, certainly in the UK, opaque.

LUCAS Director Caroline Williams concludes the series on Wednesday 18 May. *Theory and practice: a troubled relationship?* will examine the issues for practitioners in interpreting theory in the workplace. The event takes place at 5:30 pm at 9 Abercromby Square, and will be followed by discussion and a glass of wine. Anyone wishing to attend should contact Margaret Procter mprocter@liv.ac.uk



A sample page from Edward Mores's catalogue to the archives of The Queen's College, Oxford, c.1760

6th North West Annual Conference on Archive Resources.

This conference is held at Edge Hill University College and aims to bring users together with providers in the archive world. LUCAS was once again represented at it.

The main business this year was to discuss possibilities in setting up collaborative partnerships. Professor Simon Roodhouse of the Bolton Institute for Historical Research was the lead speaker, on bringing scholarship and material culture together. His paper mainly dealt with ways in which members of the public could use the higher education system to acquire knowledge and usable qualifications, and undertake research. There are many ways

today in which Higher Education Institutions can recognise prior learning and work experience, and can stimulate and support research by people who have not come up through the traditional academic routes. There are also ways in which HEIs can find money and expertise to encourage people to develop themselves and enter the world of learning and research.

The second theme was the development of easier and wider means of access to primary research materials, in the archives, museum and library context. The Museums, Library and Archives Council (MLA) is supporting the Archives Gateway (part of the People's Network). MLA is also developing e-learning packages in collaboration with the Department for Education and Skills, and they are also seeking to widen access to

careers in archives, libraries and museums through its workforce development scheme. A programme for this will be published soon.

The conference also had a short exposition on the recently activated legislation on Freedom of Information. This is expected to attract a lot of interest in the user public.

We hope this annual conference will continue in future years, as it is an excellent bridge between the archive professionals (who can sometimes seem to inhabit a world of their own) and the users of their materials.



Amendment to Issue 12

We apologise for a mistake that appeared in the last issue of the LUCAS newsletter. The URL given for MLA North West in the newsletter was incorrect. You can find MLA North West at: www.mlanorthwest.org.uk

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Extra

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Visit our dedicated website to find out more information about LUCAS' events, publications and programmes.

www.liv.ac.uk/LUCAS

Have we got news for you?

Is there anything that you would like to see in the next LUCAS newsletter? If you have an idea or suggestion for the next issue we would love to hear from you! E-mail lwoulfe@liverpool.ac.uk with your comments.

Forthcoming Events

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Wednesday 18 May:						
Research seminar						
'Theory and practice: a troubled relationship?'						
9 Abercromby Square, 5.30pm						
June/July 2005:						
Publication of ' <i>Proceedings of Political Pressure and the Archival Record conference</i> '.						
November 2005:						
'Death in the Archives' Details to be announced						



Would you like to join LUCAS? If so, please complete and send to:
Margaret Procter, Associate Director and Secretary,
LUCAS, 9 Abercromby Square, Liverpool, L69 7WZ

I wish to join LUCAS and enclose cheque / postal order for £10 payable to the 'University of Liverpool'

Name (Block capitals):

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