

PROTEST

A Collection from Local Museums in Northern Ireland



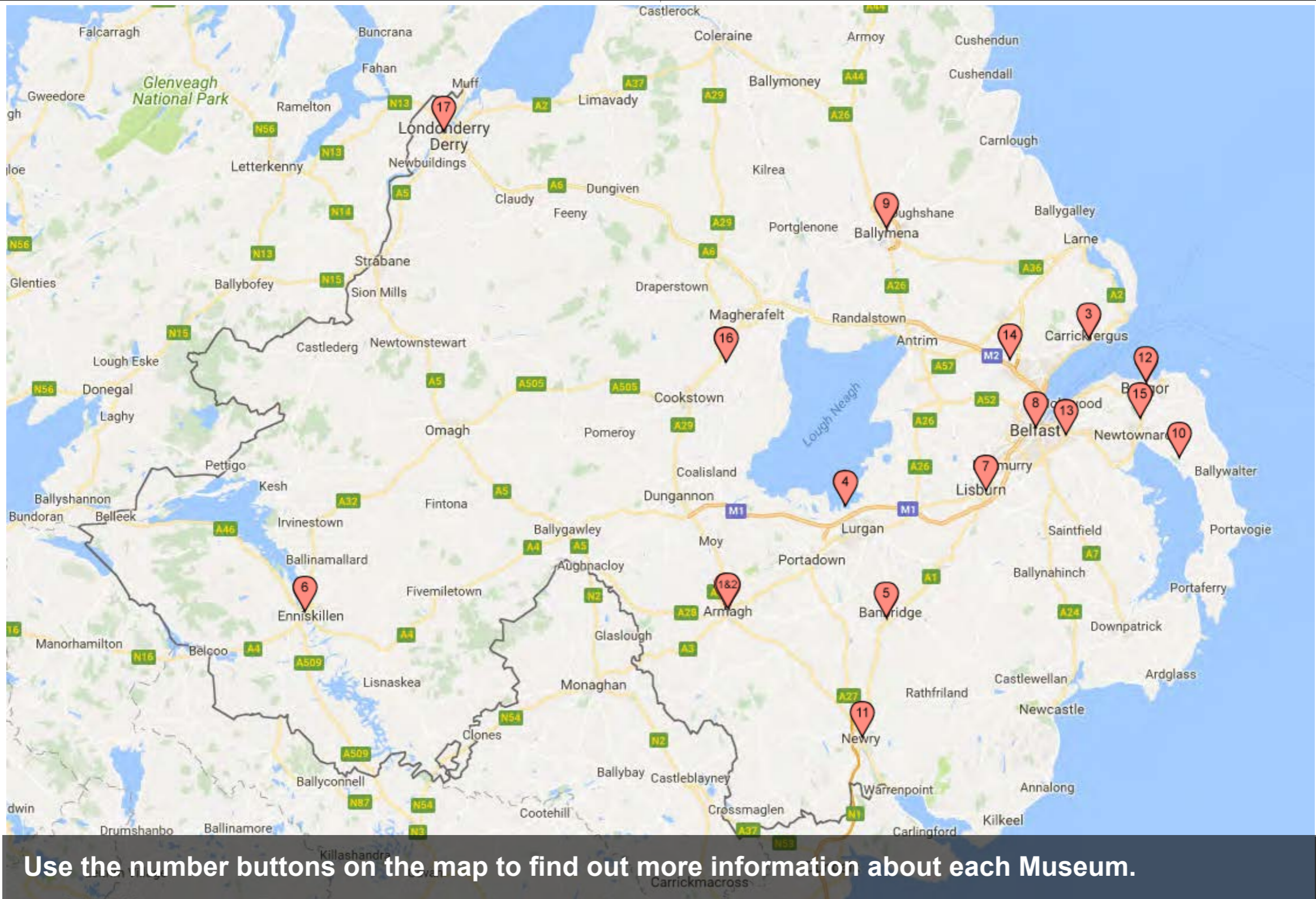
Protest: A Collection from Local Museums in Northern Ireland

Examples of protest are all around us, we are presented with it on the streets, through the airwaves and on our social media channels. Individuals and groups use objects in many ways to communicate disapproval, and to campaign for economic, social and cultural rights. But what of protests in the past, what did they look like, what did they object to, and are they still relevant today?

From a trade union poster to a punk record, this digital trail examines the powerful role of objects to protest. The trail features images of objects along with descriptions as well as details of the local museums across Northern Ireland which care for them.

Use this trail to explore how objects can be used to highlight campaigns, stand up for different values and ideas, and help bring about or disrupt change. The collection portrays real events and conditions, but more poignantly, taps into sensibilities, objections and perceived struggles which are of local, national and international relevance.

Map of Museums on the Trail





Belfast in 1976 was the birth place of The Peace People movement which was a community-led reaction to the violence of Northern Ireland's Troubles. Within weeks a branch was set up in Armagh and during the autumn and winter several rallies attended by church leaders took place in the ecclesiastical capital. Later that year its founders Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan were awarded the Nobel Prize for their peace building efforts. This banner was made and carried by Armagh's Peace People and its simple message was an iconic visual emblem at these gatherings.

Not currently on display however accessible for research requests by contacting [Armagh County Museum](#)

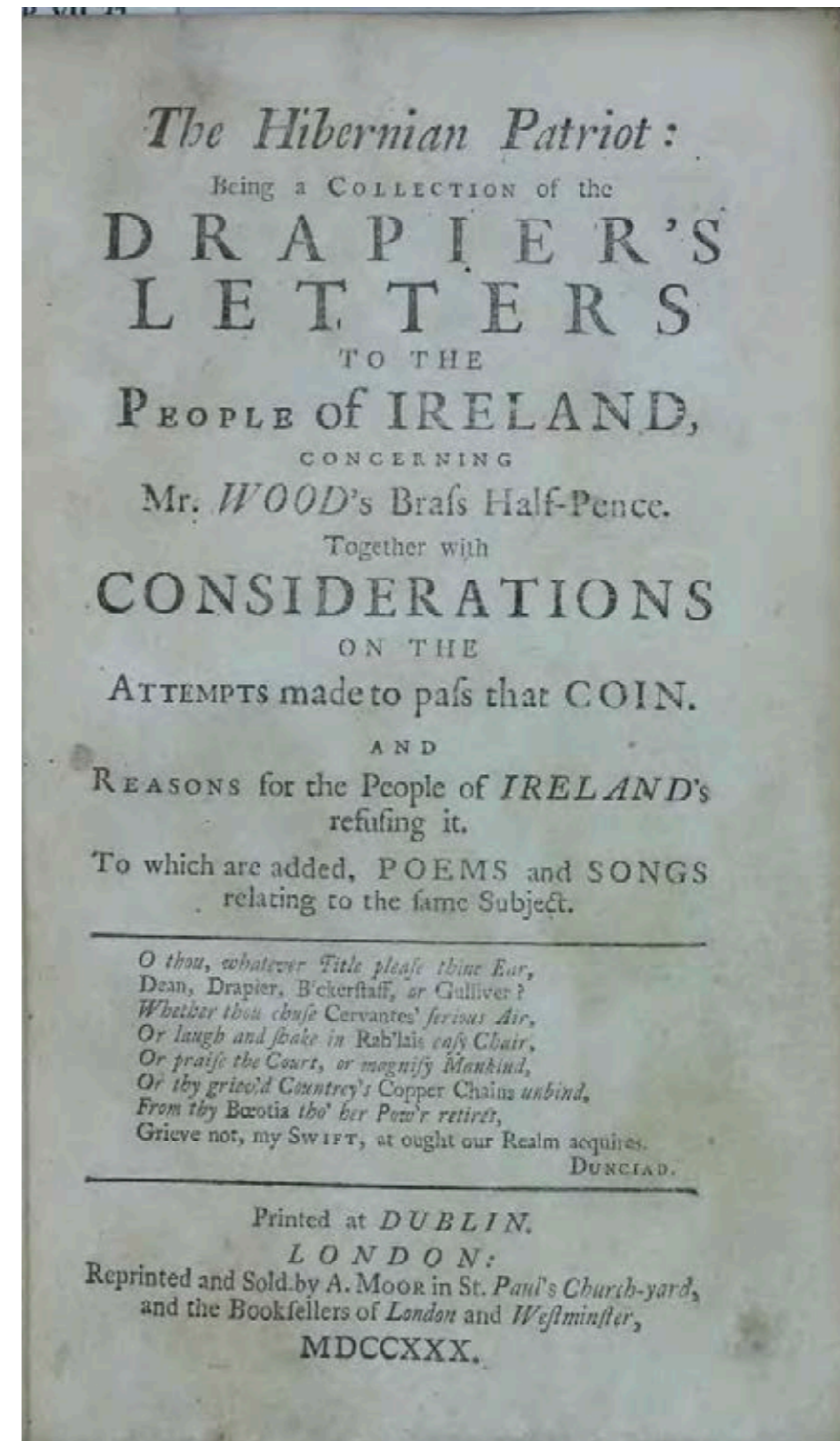
MUSEUM 2

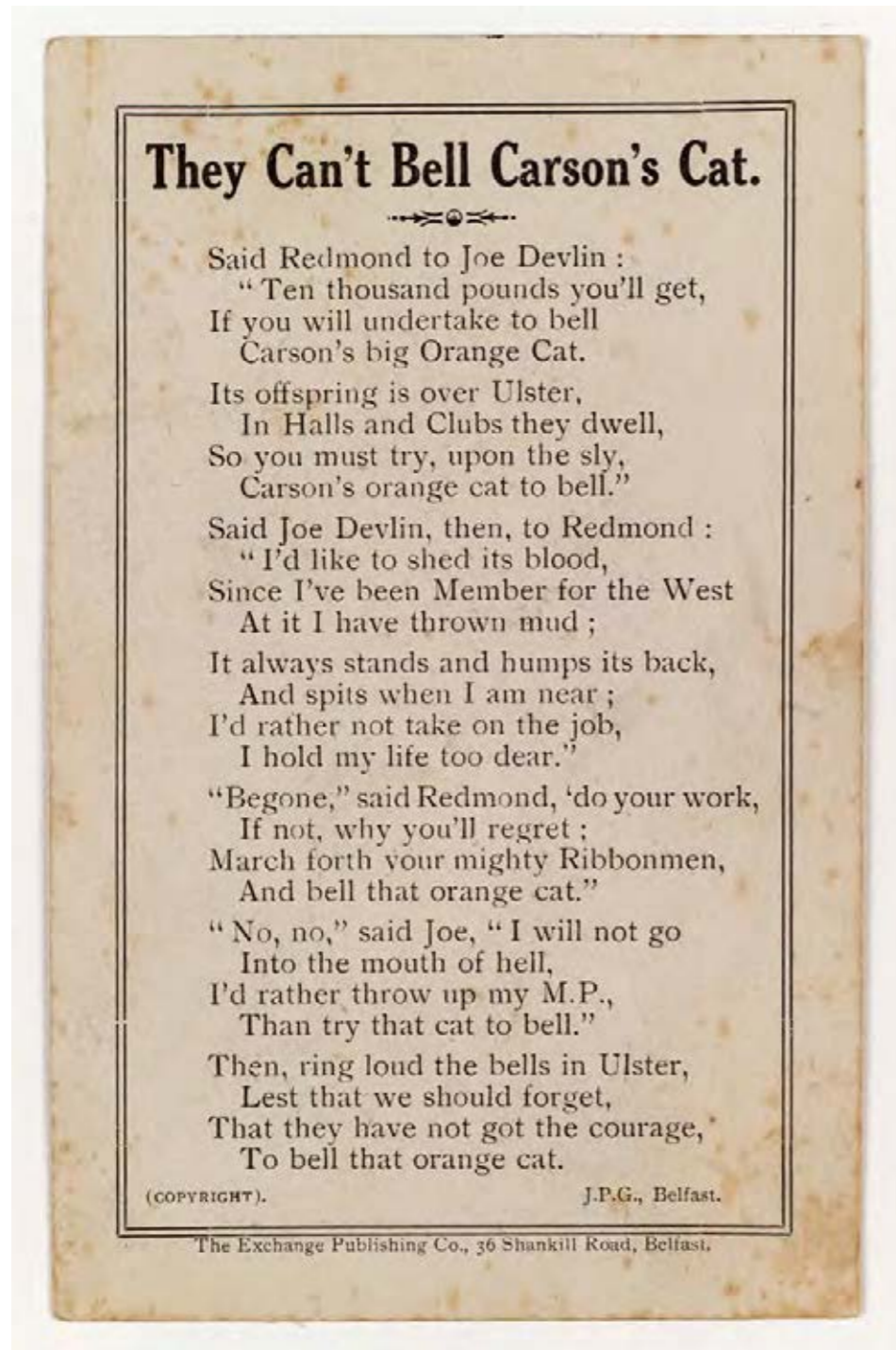
'Drapier's Letters to the People of Ireland' Jonathan Swift, 1730

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These letters were produced in order to provoke the opinion of the Irish people against the newly privately minted coinage by William Wood. Swift believed the coinage to be of inferior quality and viewed the licensing patent to be corrupt. Swift presented the idea that Ireland was constitutionally and financially independent from Britain. As this was a politically sensitive topic, Swift wrote under the pseudonym, M.B Drapier in order to conceal himself from retaliation. Despite the letters being condemned by the Irish government, they did inspire popular sentiment. This led to the boycott and the eventual withdrawal of the patent.

Not currently on display however accessible for research requests by contacting [Armagh Robinson Library](#)





This poem is about Edward Carson 'the voice of Ulster Unionism' and his battle against Home Rule and John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Edward Carson was the first man to sign 'Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant' on 28 September 1912. The Covenant was a pledge by Carson and hundreds of thousands of others to reject devolved 'Home Rule' for Ireland and retain the Union with Great Britain. There were several poems around this time about Carson and his orange cat; the first verse of this one was a popular chant with children of the time:

Sir Edward Carson has a cat
 It sits upon the fender,
 And every time a mouse it gets
 It shouts out "No Surrender!"

Not currently on display however accessible for research requests by contacting [Carrickfergus Museum](#)

“The Army Hitler Forgot”, that is what the Women's Voluntary Service were unofficially known as. The badges form part of the WVS uniform, which had been donated to Craigavon museum Services from Rosalind Hadden, whose aunt owned the uniform and was part of the WVS. Lady Reading founded the WVS, later to be titled the WRVS. The Women's Voluntary Services is the largest voluntary organisation in British history. With over one million members during WWII the WVS women in green gave service beyond self to defend the civilian population of Great Britain in its darkest hour.

Not currently on display however accessible for research requests by contacting [Craigavon Museums Service](#)





'Buy More Art' is one of F.E. McWilliam's Banner series dating from 1975-6. These small figurative works depicting women with placards or banners, were inspired by contemporary media images of demonstrations in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. Each work includes a verbal message which range from literary references to playful and ironic statements. 'Buy More Art' is a humorous comment on the art market and the artist's plea to his audience for financial support. Appropriately, this work has been adopted as the logo of the Friends of the F.E. McWilliam Gallery.

On display at [F.E. Mc William Gallery and Studio](#)

MUSEUM 6A

Belleek Pottery - Gladstone Chamber pot, First Period
(1863-1890)

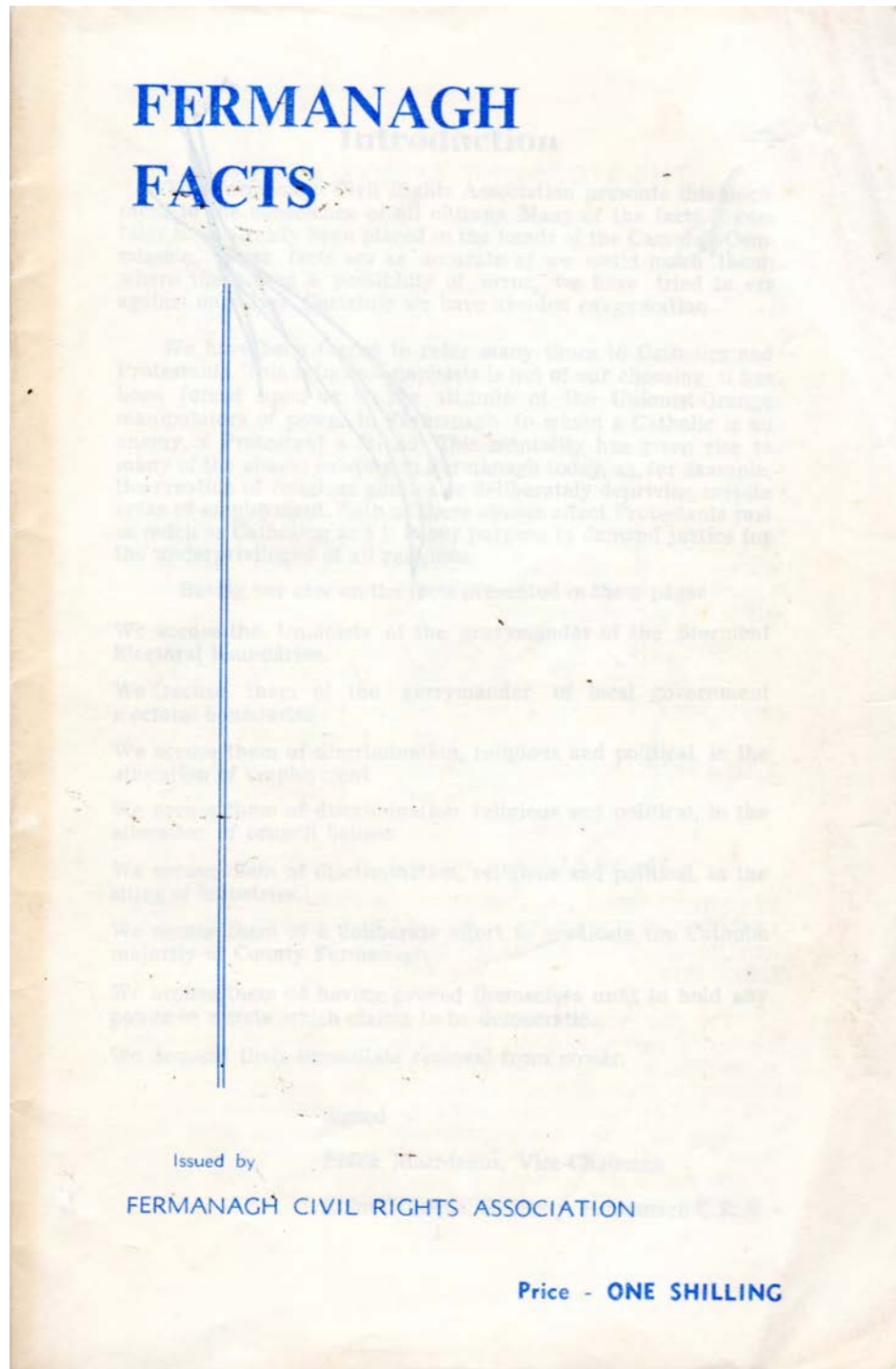
Porcelain chamber pot with a portrait of the Liberal politician William Ewart Gladstone, placed ignominiously on the inside bottom. Gladstone served four times as prime minister during the Land League activities and he supported the Home Rule cause for Ireland. This pot was produced as a protest against Gladstone's policy of lowering rents for the Irish tenantry; thus appealing to Irish landlords.

On display at [Fermanagh County Museum](#)



MUSEUM 6B

Pamphlet, 'Fermanagh Facts' Issued by the Fermanagh Civil Rights Association, circa 1969



Pamphlet highlighting the infringements of Nationalist rights in County Fermanagh at the beginning of 'The Troubles'. A polemic pamphlet, it outlines the protest campaign and statistics to anti-Catholic discrimination in employment, housing, electoral procedures and policing. The Civil Rights campaign and the hostile reaction to it, was seen to be a precursor to a more violent period in Northern Ireland's history.

Not currently on display however accessible for research requests by contacting [Fermanagh County Museum](#)

MUSEUM 7

A fragment of glass from the Lisburn Cathedral bomb, 1914

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A founding member of the Lisburn Suffrage Society, Lisburn woman Mrs Lilian Metge had grown frustrated at the lack of progress in the campaign for 'votes for women', resigning from the organization in 1914, and joining up with the militant WSPU. As part of a wave of campaigns against the establishment in Ulster Mrs Metge registered her protest by planting a bomb in Lisburn Cathedral on the night of 31 July 1914. This fragment of stained glass is all that remains of the East Window of the cathedral, in what was the most militant act in Irish suffragette history.

On loan from Lisburn Cathedral, on display in 'Lisburn 1912-23' exhibition at [Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum](#)





The Peace People was formed by Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan in August 1976 following the deaths of Mairead's sister's three children who were killed by an IRA getaway car. The movement held large-scale 'peace rallies', and was the first organisation to achieve significant cross-community mobilisation for peace. In 1977 Williams and Corrigan were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

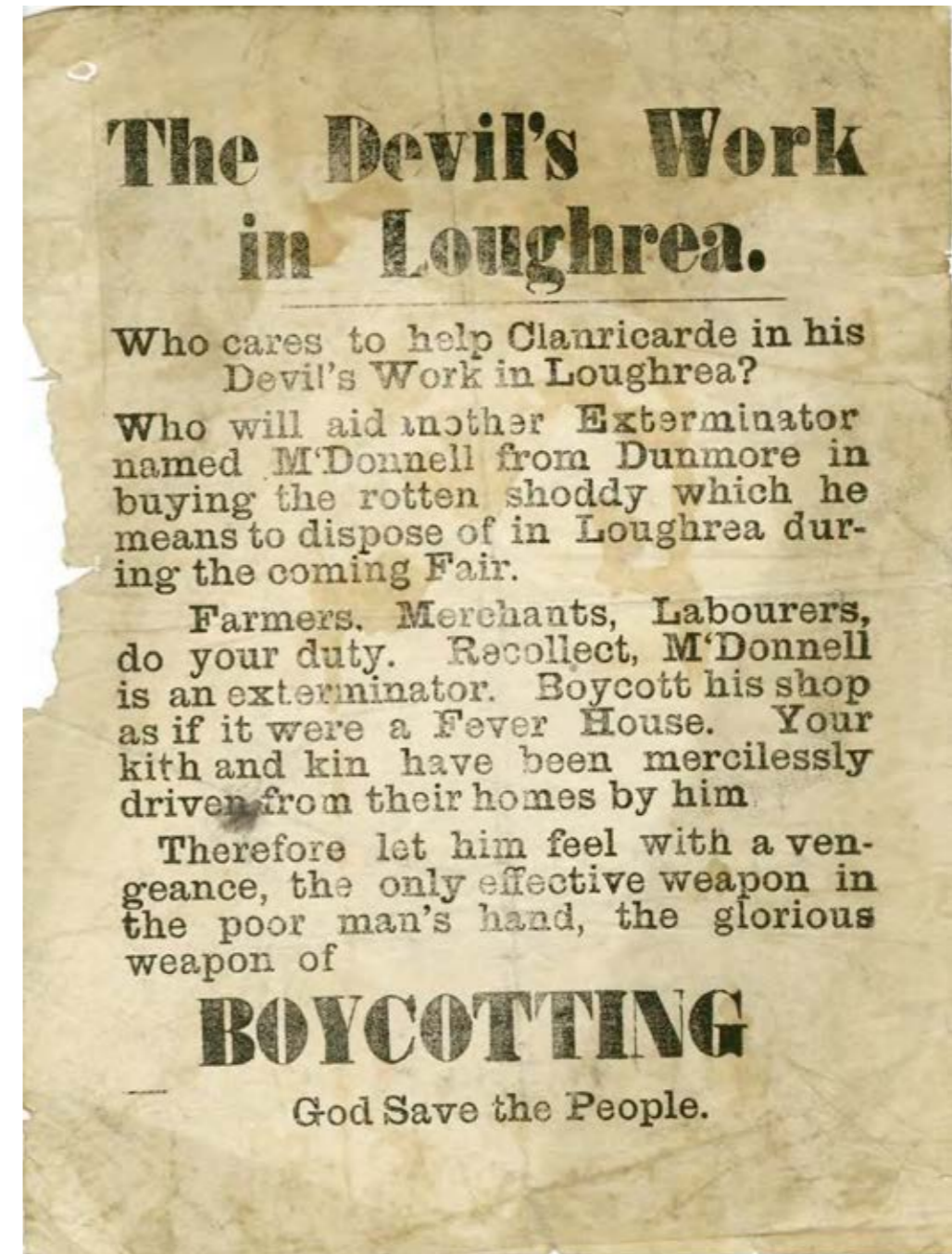
Courtesy of the Peace People Archive, Linen Hall Library.

On display in 'Troubled Images' Exhibition in the [Linen Hall Library](#)

This handbill relates to events in the lead up to the passing of the Irish Land Acts. It's encouraging the people of Loughrea in Galway to protest against tenant evictions by boycotting goods sold by "McDonnell" who would appear to be working as an agent for the Marquess of Clanricarde, a notorious absentee landlord.

Copyright Linen Hall Library.

Not currently on display however accessible for research requests by contacting [Linen Hall Library](#)



MUSEUM 9

Sponger Badge worn by Ballymena Councillor William Wright, 1974



During the Loyalist Strike of 1974, British Prime Minister Harold Wilson made a telecast to the people of Northern Ireland, hoping to influence them to reject the call to strike and return to work. During his speech, he referred to the strike leaders as 'spongers'. His words had the opposite effect to what he wanted and multiplied the number of strikers. At a loyalist rally in Ballymena the next day, homemade sponge badges were proudly worn on lapels and a group of women chanted 'We are the spongers!' Wilson's words had illustrated the remoteness and lack of sympathy to the people of Northern Ireland by the British government.

Image reproduced with kind permission of Bryan Rutledge

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MUSEUM 10

A commemorative album on the subject of the Ulster Unionist Rally



This album depicts the Ulster Unionist Rally held in Belfast on 9 April 1912 and led by Carson and Bonar Law. The Rally was a public manifestation of opposition to Asquith's agenda for Home Rule in Ireland. Reputedly compiled by Theresa, Marchioness of Londonderry (whose husband the 6th Marquess played a central role at the rally and in Ulster Unionism in general), the album comprises original correspondence, related ephemera, and contemporary newspaper clippings from both the Irish and English press. It records the public reaction of Unionism to Home Rule, and precedes the signing of the Ulster Covenant on 28 September 1912. The celebration of conflict and defiance, inherent within this album, would continue to dominate the politics of Ireland for the next century.

Mount Stewart (c) National Trust / Bryan Rutledge.

Not currently on display however accessible for research requests by contacting [Mount Stewart](#)



NEWRY AND DISTRICT TRADES COUNCIL

In conjunction with the

BETTER LIFE FOR ALL CAMPAIGN

MAY DAY

PARADE

ON SATURDAY, 1st MAY, 1976

Theme: A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL

Assembling at 10-45 a.m. SOHO CAR PARK, Newry

Route: Mary Street, Bridge Street, Dominic Street,
Monaghan Street, The Quay, Sugar Island,
Kildare Street to Margaret Square

Special Guest Speaker from I.C.T.U.

 All people are invited to take part in the Parade
and support the "Better Life For All" campaign

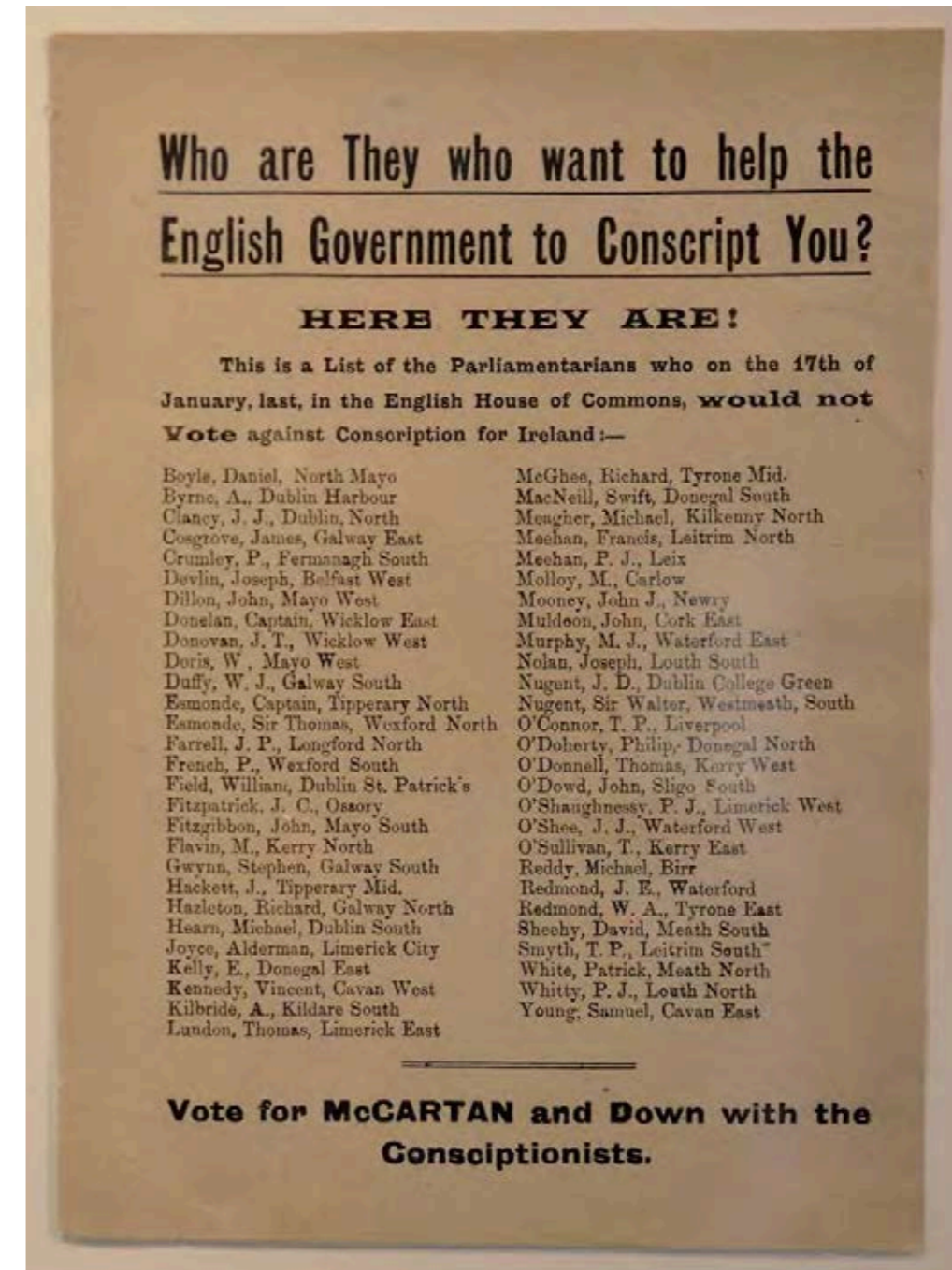
Peter Bennett Printers (Newry) Ltd.

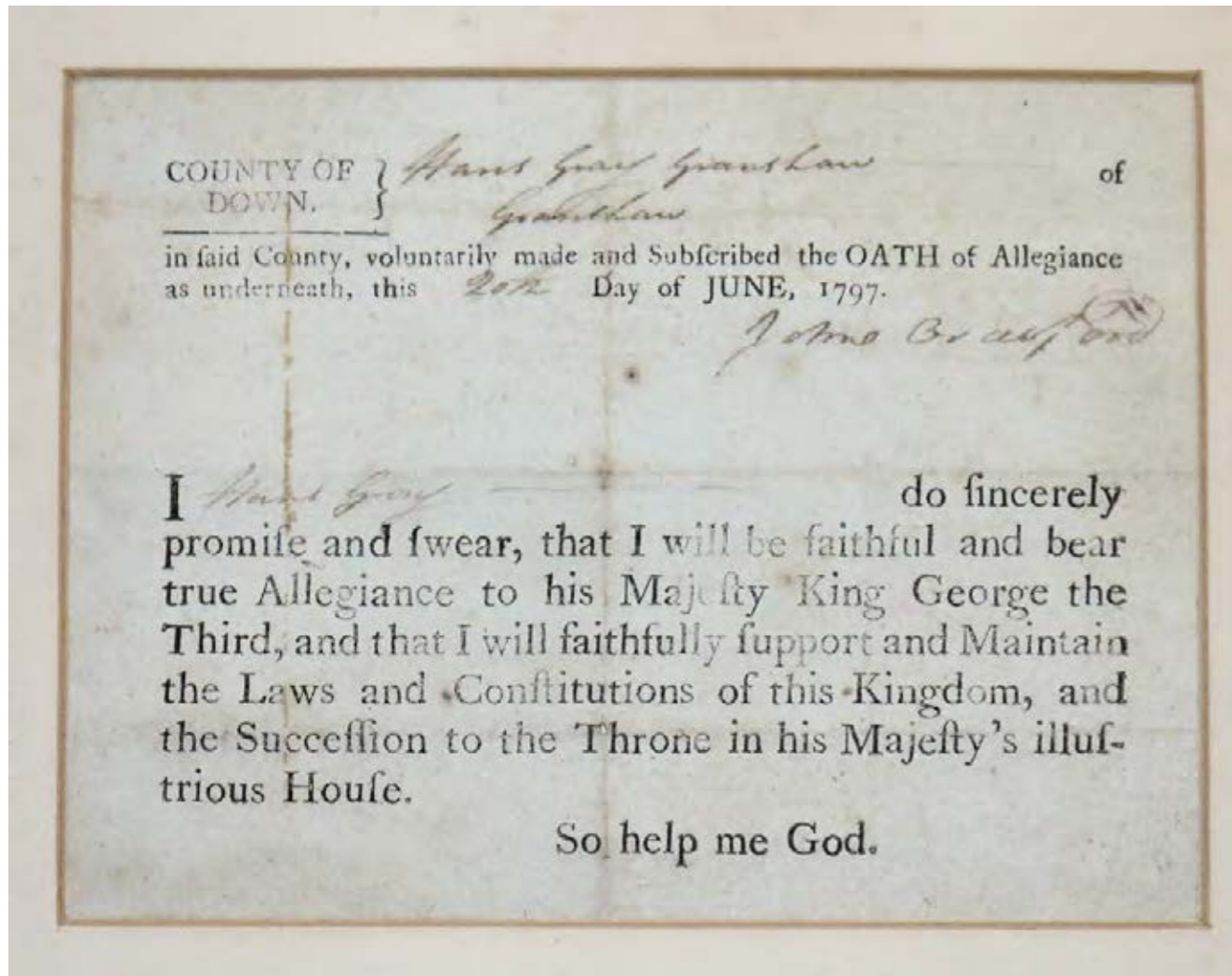
At the height of the Troubles, local Trade Unions launched the 'Better Life for All' Campaign, a forerunner of the Peace Process, aimed at reducing sectarian tension. The Newry May Day Parade was one of the events organised to support this campaign. May Day is also known as International Workers' Day and is a national holiday in many countries.

On display at [Newry and Mourne Museum](#)

In response to a fall in recruitment across the British Isles from 1915 onwards, various levels of conscription were introduced in a series of Military Service Acts. The threat of conscription being extended to Ireland became a contentious issue in Irish politics after 1916. This Sinn Fein election poster refers to a by-election contest precipitated by the death of the MP for Armagh South, Dr. Charles O'Neill, of the Irish Parliamentary Party.

On display at [Newry and Mourne Museum](#)





This Oath of Allegiance was signed by Hans Gray, father of Betsy Gray, the legendary figure associated with the 1798 Rebellion. The Oath was an attempt by the government to discourage supporters of the United Irishmen but many signed it without sincerity. The Gray family descendants were unsure if Hans was really on the side of the Crown or the United Irishmen.

Not currently on display however accessible for research requests by contacting [North Down Museum](#)

This poster was removed by police from a lamppost in a nationalist/republican area. It shows an image of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) wearing an Orange Order sash and holding a gun. It reflects the image of the RUC as an overwhelmingly Protestant force with links to loyalism in the eyes of many from that community. It was part of the wider debate at the time over the future shape of policing.

On display at the [Police Museum](#).



©Courtesy of Sinn Féin

MUSEUM 14

Bastille Jug, Late 18th century



The Bastille Jug at Sentry Hill celebrates the storming of the Bastille Prison in Paris, the event which sparked off the French Revolution in 1789. Many Ulster Presbyterians, like the McKinneys of Sentry Hill, looked to the French example and the new political ideas of 'liberty, equality and fraternity'. They also supported the Society of United Irishmen who sought to plant these ideas in Ireland.

On display at [Sentry Hill](#)

Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant, was signed by nearly half a million Irishmen on and before 28 September 1912 (named 'Ulster Day') in protest against the Third Home Rule Bill introduced by the British Government. This Brassard was worn by the City Hall Guard on Ulster Day. Hundreds of marshals wearing the armband guarded the perimeter of the City Hall.

Not currently on display however accessible for research requests by contacting [Somme Museum](#)



MUSEUM 16

'King William III at the Battle of the Boyne, depiction on silk. Circa 1830/1



This textile print depicts King William III (1650-1702) at the Battle of the Boyne with portraits of King William IV (1765-1837) and Queen Adelaide (1792-1849), the ruling monarchs at the time. It tells a fascinating story of an Ulster Protestant family, Lennox-Conyngham, who see the Battle of the Boyne as the triumph of Protestantism in Ireland. To have such a piece in one's home was a protest to the stirrings of the outside world, and shows how a domestic space was always socio-political. It can tell us so much about the conflict in Ireland in the 1830s and the way in which domestic items could be used as a form of protest.

Springhill (c) National Trust / Peter Muhly.

Not currently on display however accessible for research requests by contacting [Springhill](#).

The Undertones formed in Derry in 1974, the band members were five friends from Creggan and the Bogside. Despite growing up in the worst years of the Troubles the band focused on everyday issues such as adolescence, teenage angst and heartbreak through the medium of punk rock music, a musical genre associated with protest against the mainstream. The most famous record, 'Teenage Kicks' was released in October 1978 it reached 31 in the UK Charts. DJ John Peel stated that it was his all-time favourite song from 1978 until his death in 2004. The words "Teenage Dreams so hard to beat" is carved on his gravestone as his epitaph.

On display at [Tower Museum](#)



Acknowledgements



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Armagh County Museum
Armagh Robinson Library
Carrickfergus Museum
Craigavon Museum Service
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Fermanagh County Museum
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Mount Stewart
Newry and Mourne Museum
North Down Museum
Police Museum
Sentry Hill
Somme Museum
Springhill
Tower Museum

Thanks to Healing Through Remembering, Museums Association Transformers programme, and the Nerve Centre. If you would like to leave feedback on this trail please email devofficer@nimc.co.uk