



glass of peace



EMMA

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} foreword

After my initial meeting with the 'lads' concerning this project, I had genuine doubts as to whether we could actually achieve what we were setting out to do. The project entailed each individual making a stained glass panel that reflected an aspect of their life within the era of 'The Troubles' - an experience, an emotion, an aspiration, that could be translated into colour and glass and serve as a tiny window into their private world. I can say now that it was a journey for all of us!

Beneath the bravado I found that each of the men has been profoundly affected by their own personal experiences, and the images that unfolded, although quite simply constructed, are both unique and complex in their symbolism and the feelings they evoke deep within the mind and heart of the maker.

It was an extreme pleasure for me to be able to work with this group and they have my continuing respect and admiration, not just for what they have endured but for their positive outlook and determined desire to always look forward.





Alice McGuinness

Alice McGuinness



WELCOME
IN PEACE



} introduction

The Stain Glass Project is a creative storytelling initiative which enabled a group of men to come together from across the divide and through glass conveyed their story.

At the outset none of us imagined how therapeutic and enriching this process could be, and were somewhat surprised and enlightened by the dedication and commitment by all who participated, some of whom actually took their stain glass piece home to finish and perfect.

The journey for some at times was challenging but very fulfilling. This initiative had taken on another aspect apart from being therapeutic; it also provided a 'safe place' in which the men felt comfortable, relaxed and able to build trust and mutual respect for one another.

Like many areas in the north, segregation has divided our society leaving a legacy of distrust and hurt. As you will discover reading through this publication it is almost unanimous that the men found a great comfort and strength as they shared their stories and experiences of difficult times



and still had the ability to laugh at and with one another.

Without the assistance of Alice McGuinness, the facilitator, our project may not have become reality. Her ability to connect with the men and enthusiasm and hard work all contributed successfully to the end result.

All that is left to mention is the great group of men who participated fully and with their good humour and craic made every session one of great enjoyment for us all. But in particular I, myself, gained a firm understanding and appreciation of the strength and character of these fine men.



} gerry carolan *the shamrock of peace*

I decided to come to WAVE for support due to the ongoing anguish and mental pain I was experiencing as a result of being injured in several bomb attacks and because of the despicable treatment meted out to me whilst serving in the (now disbanded) Royal Ulster Constabulary by senior police officers and sectarian, bigoted colleagues. WAVE was a place of safe refuge for a broken poor piece of humanity, and coming to WAVE was a desperate cry for help. Having been aware of the work, I felt that this was an organisation that might possibly be able to organise a fragmented and disorganised individual who was struggling with the emotional pain and anguish that co-existed within me.

The image I decided to use was the Shamrock. My reason for choosing such an unusual image was primarily because of the fact that the shamrock is considered the national emblem of the island of Ireland, both North and South. Over the last thirty five years so many murders, bombings, beatings,

shootings etc were all carried out in the name of Ireland. History tells us that St Patrick when he purportedly came to Ireland, used the Shamrock as part of his teaching re the Holy Trinity. It is my belief that if it was good enough for him then it would be equally as good as a sign of peace in our fragmented and wounded society. The three leaves also represent the two sides in the conflict, namely those who fought for peace and against it., and those who took the middle ground.

At anytime there were the Republicans fighting with the British Army, the Loyalists fighting Republicans



and internecine feuding always present. The top leaf represents the good people within society who were marginalised through fear and intimidation and who were literally caught in the middle. However within all these people there was always the omnipresent hope that peace would eventually be brought about and as we all know there is an interim peace process functioning at present. The choice of white glass is to let people see there's no difference in those who took sides and those who took the middle ground. Now is the time for a new beginning and everyone has a new opportunity to embrace the peace process with an unsurpassed equality.

The most important thing I have taken away from this project is the sense of achievement and the knowledge that when I'm not around, having gone to ground on a permanent basis (i.e dead) that my contribution to peace for the future generations of this island will be remembered in the stained glass when I am long forgotten about. Hopefully I have contributed to a better society for both my children and grandchildren so that they won't have to suffer the loss, pain, hurt and distress that those who were involved in the creation of the stained glass project had to use as an expression of their journey

on the road of hope and understanding. We must all continue to climb the golden stairs towards peace for the future.







} joe caughey *my angel*

This piece of stained glass means everything to me for one reason because of my daughter; she meant everything to me. I remember sitting in the house and had a premonition about an angel, I gathered them around me, everywhere I go, there is a wee angel, a photo of one or a statue of an angel. I actually took it home with me one night to do the piece as it meant everything to me. I remember sitting the pieces on the kitchen table and although when I looked at it the pieces weren't stuck together, they were just pieces of glass and I slowly put them together. Although it looked as if it wasn't going to happen I have seen the image of what I wanted and how I expected it to turn out.

It is amazing to see when you look at this now sitting on the kitchen table, just looking at me and telling me that I'm not alone. It's hard to describe, you know to people, unless you have lost someone like this and how I feel about it. Because the picture itself, (I'm trying to define this without sounding

mad or anything else) but when I look at it I don't see a stain glass window I see an angel that's giving me hope and that's what I never had before.

But to be honest I'm overwhelmed. If I can try to explain, I lost a daughter that I truly loved. The daughter that I lost is never coming back, and I know that now. But when I look at this I see that now I'm in love with an angel. That means more to



me than anything else. I'm actually in love with an angel now which will bring me probably through the rest of my life. When I come up here and tell my story I know deep down there is a guardian angel protecting me. This is one of the reasons why I done this, because I knew I would be up in WAVE. I do get jittery when I leave WAVE but when the frame goes on I know she will be here with me and I feel safe.

That was one of the main reasons, I needed to know I wasn't alone and that was very important to me. When I feel like that, I'm in big trouble. I'm my own worst enemy to be honest, but things have started to turn 2 years ago. I was probably seconds away from death – something happened to me, I can't explain it. All I know is that, that night I truly believed I was close to dying, but from that night 2 years ago I have came through a long journey.

I know deep down, although the thoughts of suicide are gone, I can now honestly and truthfully look at this angel now and know the only way I'm going to die now is if God takes me. That is very important to me. I really couldn't take it, it really was scary. Although it's not as frightening as the first journey after her death, it's more a journey of reflection of

peace of mind, but most of all its peace within me that has given me hope.



} peter fox the horses head

I've had ongoing hassle from the police and army since 1971 – we have 'peace' now but I am still experiencing it. It all started in 1971 when a car I was traveling in was stopped by the Paras as we traveled down Corporation Street. There were four of us in the car and the soldiers got us all out and started asking us our names – I think they picked on me because I was from a Republican family. The soldiers were ignorant and arrogant and very aggressive, even though we had done nothing wrong. They bodied searched us and I remember being squeezed by this big Para, almost as though he was using a pair of pliers – next they got us into the back of their big armoured car, they used two of these things to take us to Girdwood Barracks – two in one car and two in the other. Once in the car they held a revolver to my head and told me that if anyone was to open fire on the armoured car on the way to the barracks, they would shoot me dead.

After that the raids started on our house and numerous times I was picked up and questioned about all sorts of things – questioned but never convicted because their case always didn't add up. Things didn't get much better when the peace process kicked off. It got so bad that a few years ago I moved to Glenarriff - its beautiful out here and things have improved but every now and again I would still get stopped by the police, so I have little trust for them – I guess I haven't seen much change.





Moving to the country has brought me close to nature, especially horses. I have always loved horses and one of the first things I did when I moved here was to buy a horse for my daughter. She was four years old when she first sat on a horse and she just loved it. Being with horses is very relaxing – it's like another world away from all that I have known growing up in West Belfast. My daughter competes at show jumping events and that has meant me getting to know lots of other people from all walks of life, as I am the one who usually takes her. It doesn't matter whether they are Catholic or Protestant, everyone just gets along and that's the way it should be.

It's this connection with horses and all that it has meant that has been the inspiration for my stained glass piece, 'The Horses Head'. I've been coming to WAVE for a couple of years now – I did try a place in Ballymena that deals with Victims for a while, but then I found out about WAVE. I suppose, a bit like the horses, being at WAVE I have met lots of other people from different backgrounds. The 'Stained Glass Project' was good because it allowed us to think about our own stories, and it was particularly good for me because I have always had an interest in working with stained glass, I think it has to do

with the shapes and colour. Even though we were all from different backgrounds and our stories very different they will all come together in the final piece, which is a large cabinet type structure housing the different windows.





} liam hamill band of trust

The creativity of this programme appealed to me in many ways, the chance to work with the various tools and equipment and to learn a new skill to create a design that means so much to me and the chance to let my family see how much they have helped me over the years since I was injured. It also gave the Men's Group the opportunity to work together on multiple pieces that would become one representation of our pain and our journey in what means so much to each of us.

Personally I took so much out of the programme that I along with others in the group took my piece home with me to work on it as I wanted to try to do the best job that I could. Working together on the project helped the group create not only this piece of art but also created a bond between the group members a bond that is continuing to grow.

Selecting my piece was not really that hard as the wedding rings symbolise what has got me through my problems and the fact that without the support of my wife and family I would not be were I am

today, looking forward instead of backwards. I put my wife and my two daughters through a lot over the last few years. How do I ever repay them for seeing that I could become the husband and father that I once was.

Very few people see the aftermath that hits a family after one member of the family goes through a major trauma, the anger, the depression or the fear. It took another major event in my life for me to realise that I could not continue with my life the way it was, my wife left me. I had become this



stranger to her and my daughters an angry stranger who took out his anger on the ones closest to him. Not physically but verbally and mentally.

After Denise left me I had to take a long hard look at myself and I did not like what I saw when I looked in the mirror, I promised myself that if I was to ever regain the trust of my family again I would have to change and admit that I needed help, help that I had always scorned thinking I could do it myself. Thankfully Denise never lost faith in me that I could be helped and she persuaded me to seek out that help. Denise and I are now back together and dealing with the adversity has helped us build an even stronger relationship.

I have still a lot of work to do in repairing my relationship with my youngest daughter Rachel unfortunately she bore a lot of the brunt of my anger. How come what is in your mind is not always what comes out of your mouth? While our relationship is improving I know that I have a long way to go but it is a journey that I am more than willing to undertake.

Denise, Emma and Rachel have seen me through the really bad times and I hope in the future we

can continue to progress and return to the happy family unit that we once were. Knowing that my family loved me and wanted to help me helped me come to terms with what happened to me and with their support I now know that I can cope with what lies ahead. I still have a long journey ahead of me but it is a journey I know I need to travel and I have already taken the first step.







} seamus harkin *no ordinary ying and yang*

Mine's is the ying and yang, the green and orange ying and yang. Instead of ying and yang being black and white I done it green and orange. We went on a trip with WAVE down to Kilmainham Gaol - now I'm from Ardoyne where the tri-colour has been flown all my life. The girl down there turned round and said to us "Do you know what the flag means"? I had heard this rumour before that it was Catholic for the green and the Protestant community for the orange and white in the middle meant peace. I heard this before but never ever believed it. But I always wondered why is there orange in our flag, I mean the Irish flag.

So then I said to myself, well that wouldn't be a bad idea to do ying and yang, where you can't have one part of the community without the other. So maybe by doing this it explains to people what actually the tri-colour represents. Because this country is full of people, myself included, all ignorant of other people's religion. If people weren't as ignorant there wouldn't be as much violence in the country.

I know an awful lot of the trouble in this country is down to ignorance, and that's what it is. It's down to ignorance.

Most of the people that come to WAVE have been affected by the violence. That's why I come because there are people who have been through similar things. It's no use me going to people that reads this all out of a book - I would rather be with people that have actually been blew up as well!" you know what I mean. You can talk to somebody that's been blew up about being blew up, because they



know what you are talking about then. If you go to a psychiatrist or something, they are just looking at you and going ah right, right, they don't really know. But here you are getting a comrade.

Now I was blown up by so called loyalists, but it was the British Government that bombed me. There are people in here that has been blown up by the IRA and all, although we were blown up by different fucken parts of the thing, we have something in common. That's what I mean, being there with other people from other backgrounds from me has been good for me. This project has been good for me too - there's all us getting together and doing that with the glass but it's not just the glass, we also built a big wooden frame for it and we have all been involved in it in one way or another. The friendship and getting together was great, although we all worked on individual pieces, it's all going into one big thing at the end.







} john kennedy the windmill

My stain glass piece is a windmill, I enjoyed making it because you could just go in and sit down and do it. I enjoyed the craic and the banter with the rest of the guys who were having a bit of a laugh and a carry-on. We were talking about different things and the camaraderie was good. It was a good laugh, even when you done things wrong, like it didn't matter because everybody did things wrong. It was OK you know.

I was coming through a very hard time and everything came back to me, it was like a flashback from the past. So many incidents, a bombing, hold-ups, guns held to my head, within inches or seconds of your life being taken and different things. I have been abused as a child as well. All those things come through your head and makes life difficult. But this has helped, just sitting down to do a piece of stained glass. It's all bits and pieces and you don't know where they go at first, then you have to join them altogether and it ends up the picture is not as bad as you thought. The glass itself is very sharp and you have to file it down - it's like all these other wee bits of my life. I am just looking at the

windmill now and I can see it smooth - it's a picture but there's blemishes in it, just like my life.

I think the most important thing I liked was the sense of achievement and being able to mix with the other guys from different backgrounds. You get your eyes opened. I used to think my story was the worst, but when you hear somebody else's you start thinking about them instead of yourself. I



have come away and talked to a lot of the guys and I have been thinking about them. I feel for them now, because I never realized the situations they were in, you see their pain and their hurt and you know there's something wrong. Maybe I was part of their trouble too - I have a military background and some of the guys don't but you can only do your best at the time, yet because of the situations they were coming from they wouldn't have been too fond of me.

But now it's funny because we can sit in the same room and we don't hate each other and I don't have that fear of sharing with people that I used to maybe 10 or 15 years ago. You know, with a uniform on they blamed you and you felt guilty in some way – it didn't matter what side you were from, whether it was the Protestant side or the Nationalist side, you got the same treatment. I found that very hard because you would have thought that people who were supposed to be loyalist or whatever would be loyal to the crown, yet you put that uniform on as a defender of the crown and your standing there being spat on and urinated on, you know. Who do you turn to, because you are actually on your own? I still feel I am on my own at times because people just don't want you because you have had a military

background. They just don't want anybody like that now and it's very hard. It's a no win situation, but you can come in here and talk to the other guys and even have a laugh about it, but it wasn't funny at the time.





} jim mcbride st brigids cross

I became involved in the stain glass project after attending a residential to discuss the project. This was my first day at WAVE and everyone in the group behaved as if they had been together for years. I later discovered that most people had known each other for a few months. At first I said that I would not be taking part in the project as I thought that I would not be capable of doing the work as I have limited use of one of my hands, but I ended up giving it a go. My expectations weren't high but as the weeks went by my piece was taking shape and I half regretted not trying a more challenging piece. Some of the group were doing more complicated things like a 'football', 'horses head' and a 'hand'.

My piece was all straight edges - it's a St Brigids cross and I am proud of it – it's sort of a family symbol. I mean it's not in our coat of arms or anything but ever since I can remember there has always been a St Brigids cross in our family. Whenever any of us got married we always got a St Brigids cross as a present, right from my Granny and even before

her right up to the present day. The cross is special, it's not that I go to chapel or anything or am a devout catholic, but this kind of connects me to the family, as the family has always been important, particularly during the rough times.

I was caught up in a bomb over twenty years ago – 16th September 1982. I was at home in Divis Flats when the INLA decided to take out a British Army Patrol as it made its way along the balcony in front of my flat. (I think their thinkin was kill a Brit at any cost and who cares who else dies). Three of my



mates had just called for me and I went in to get my coat when the bomb went off – two of them were killed instantly along with one of the soldiers and I received some injuries to my hand. I actually received over two hundred injuries, mostly cuts and bruises but my hand was completely mangled and even now I have only limited use of it.

A mangled hand seems like nothing compared with those that lost their lives. I suppose it's for this reason that I seldom talk about it – I mean it's not really my story, I didn't die that day – that bomb should have killed me as well but I was lucky. The physical injuries are nothing compared to the mental scars that I have - every year I dread the anniversary. I feel guilty - why them and not me? If they hadn't been calling for me they would not have been there, or if I had of just gone out right away maybe we would have been far enough away to be caught up in the explosion.

As a direct result of taking part in the stain glass project I became involved in two other projects being organized by WAVE which helped me in some way on my personal journey to recovery. These were the Epilogues course which was very challenging but beneficial and the Bill Of Rights group which

was a cross section of members from all the WAVE centres. I found this was an amazing achievement as this diverse group were able to produce an agreed document on the Bill of Rights. Something that the people elected to govern this place have so far failed to do.

} sean mcNally *escape to the country*

When I was told about WAVE I put it off at first – I thought, ‘well I’m a man I don’t go to these groups’, but when I finally did go I met people sharing the same experiences, same problems and troubles as me. At the time everything was just building up and building up and my mind was ready to crack because of being shot. As time went on I wasn’t getting any better but I was taking it all on myself and then my mother went to WAVE because of my condition. She was telling me about it, go, go, go and finally I went. I’m glad I went now because I found out about other people’s stories and what they were doing and what they went through and stuff like that.

My piece of stained glass is like a rural country scene, just like your average country road that you would see in the country, trees, grass, and peace. It reminded me of more happier memories at the height of the ‘Troubles’. I was lucky enough to have relatives that lived in the country and me ma sent me out there to get me out of the road for mostly

all over the summer holidays. I remember being that young and it was like being a million miles away from Belfast city centre, but it’s only the guts of an hour, not that far now when you think of it, but it was a whole other world to me.

It was special, no police, or no walls, no divisions, and just no fear. It was when the whole Hunger Strike was on that things kicked off. I was about 7 years old, it was 1981 and I was starting to notice stuff, I was coming to an age when I was noticing what was going on. But as I say I was lucky enough



to have relatives in the country and spent most of the summers growing up there. It was just Crossgar but it seemed to have been a million miles away when I was that age.

I enjoyed this project because it had art and creativity in it – also, personally for me it was like turning a tragic thing into something else - like turning a minus into a plus. Through what happened to me I was able to express it and make this thing, put energy into it, if that makes any sense. It was therapeutic. It was telling my story and putting it into a positive thing basically. It was everything I thought it would be and more. It was nice to say “I done that” do you know what I mean and it’s going to be there for God knows how long.

Apart from personally doing something constructive there was also meeting new friends, finding out about them and a bit of banter. Being able to laugh at things that have happened to us, not so much but look at the funny side of it because we can all relate to certain things, where you couldn’t with strangers or every day people. I got to know them and I would say I’ve made good friends, hopefully life long friends. But just knowing that I am not the only person going through personal stuff like

that there is important. There are loads of people out there.





} ciaran nugent peace

The Stain Glass Project was something I was very interested in. I like doing things with my hands and it is also something I enjoy. I think I surprised myself. I had very low expectations but once I started doing it I liked it and got into it - It is just the way I am, once I tried it I liked it and got into it and I discovered new talents.

Mine was a dove flying through a rising sun. I suppose people say that you do doves for peace and this that and the other. It meant more to me than that - the whole dove represented not just 'peace' but also peace of mind and the whole tranquil setting in the background with the rising sun is just me trying to find that setting.

The best thing about this project was the people I worked with and the atmosphere – the whole thing really, just doing things together. It helps to focus your mind on other things. People who come to WAVE have a lot of demons in their lives and this focuses you in a more constructive way. You put a lot of good energy into the piece you are doing and you feel proud of it.

I have a sense of achievement for actually sticking to it and doing it. Things like this here are very good. I could name a whole lot of things but I go too deep and I hurt my self so I try to use it as a positive thing and this is me trying to direct all that energy into something else other than destroying my mind and thinking about other things. It is very therapeutic because if I'm not doing something then I would be thinking different things like grieving. I just wouldn't be a good person to be around. So it is very positive – just being involved in something and belonging to something as well gives me a bit of confidence.





} neil rea *reaching my goal*

I witnessed the shooting of my boss – it was early in the morning and I had just gotten a lift to work. Then my boss pulled up and I said “morning” and he said “morning” to me – I noticed a fella across the street out of the corner of my eye but I just went on and never thought anything else about it – then it sort of bothered me a bit and I went back and had a look. The fella that was across the road disappeared, but there was something not right about it, because his bag and all was still sitting there. Next thing he was on the same side of the road as us - he had a scarf around his face at this time and then the next minute he pulled out his gun and cocked it. That’s when obviously the adrenalin took over and I ran after I saw that.

When I was running up the road I heard the bang being shot. I stopped at the butchers, obviously other people heard the bang, of the shots going off - they had all come out and were all asking me was I alright because I was as white as a sheet? I was just standing there, my body was there, but I wasn't.

Then the sirens started, the police and ambulance was there. People were still asking me was I alright? I just ended up disappearing up home, and then the police came up. They were actually looking for me to see whether I was there or not.

I was worried afterwards. I was sort of selfish - I accepted he was dead but I was more worried about my own case because I was there. I was worried they would come back for me, because I was questioned about it. After that I wouldn't go out and was looking over my shoulder all the time.



I didn't know whether they would come back after me, but that's the way you think. I would have had the whole house locked up, doors, windows, checking them. If a car pulled up I would be up at the window, to see who it was or where they were going or whatever.

My piece is of a football as it represents the goals I have come through since - getting my life back, going back to work again and start associating with people again. The project was something different – making something out of glass. It was something I had never done before. It helps you express what your feelings are after going through something like that. It has helped me because I get out a bit more now. Because before I was a quiet person but now I'm a bit more outgoing. I play 5-aside football on Thursday nights and go to Linfield matches on Saturday. It's easier to work with things like glass. You do not have to talk about it.





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Wave Trauma Belfast
5 Chichester Park South
Belfast BT15 5DW

t: (028) 9077 9922

f: (028) 9078 1165

www.wavetraumacentre.org.uk

