

19,633
 VISITORS

#44 OF 451 THINGS
 TO DO IN BELFAST

2025
 ANNUAL REPORT



★ **5 Stars** - 'Small space, very interesting place. Great exhibition pieces, and friendly staff. Recommend this for anyone visiting Belfast'. ★

OFFICIAL VISITS:

- Department of Communities visit by **Minister Gordon Lyons MLA**
- VE Day 80 visit by **Secretary of State Hilary Benn MP**
- VE Day 80 visit by **US Consul General James Applegate**
- Visit from **Chinese Consul General Li Nan**
- Armistice Day visit by **Lord-Lieutenant of Belfast, Dame Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle**



Faith House Care Home - 'Just wanted to say a massive thank you for your hospitality during our visit yesterday. The talk was great, and we really enjoyed looking around the museum. The residents had a brilliant time and are still chatting about it!'

38 GROUP VISITS



706 VISITORS



SOCIAL MEDIA

www.niwarmemorial.org

21,400 VISITS TO WEBSITE



Facebook Reach

101,859

66,578

X Impressions



Instagram Impressions

9,373

4,020

Pinterest Impressions



YouTube Views

9,445

ON-SITE PRIMARY SCHOOL VISITS

3,571
PUPILS & TEACHERS

124
CLASSES

80
SCHOOLS

VISITED THE MUSEUM IN 2025

OUTREACH WITH SCHOOLS

2,485 PUPILS AND TEACHERS
PARTICIPATED IN

60 OUTREACH WORKSHOPS AT
THEIR SCHOOL OR
COMMUNITY SETTING

MAKE, DO AND LEARN BUNDLES

2,791 FREE MAKE, DO AND LEARN BUNDLES
CREATED AND DISTRIBUTED IN 2025



LOAN BOXES

522 PEOPLE ENGAGED WITH OUR LOAN BOXES IN 2025
These contain objects from our handling collection and are borrowed by preschools, community groups, and retirement homes.

Belvoir Park PS - 'As always a fantastic trip. The presentation was very interesting. Great questioning to keep the children's attention. We had a mix of mainstream and SEN unit children and they all had a great time. They loved the museum and were really interested in the exhibitions. The children from previous years still talk about this trip. Looking forward to next year!'

INTERGENERATIONAL CHRISTMAS CARD PROJECT

NIWM Education Officer, Dr Rebecca Watterson, and Research Officer, Michael Burns, led a Christmas intergenerational project with primary school children designing Christmas cards for 2025's oral history interviewees. Michael & Rebecca visited Maghaberry Primary school & Derrychrin Primary School on Friday 5 December delivering a Christmas presentation followed by a card making workshop based on individual oral history interviewees.

These cards were then collected and sent to the interviewees with an explanation of the project. Over 25% returned a letter/card to thank the children which were passed onto the students. This project sought to connect the older people who still live in the community and are more susceptible to social isolation and loneliness than older people living in a sheltered community or home.



POST PRIMARY

550
PUPILS & TEACHERS

18
CLASSES

17
SCHOOLS

took part in our post
primary programme
in 2025

RECONCILIATION FUND

NIWM was successful in securing a grant for €8,400 from the Reconciliation Fund which is administered by the Irish government through the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade. The grant covered the travel costs of eleven schools from the Republic of Ireland who visited the museum in 2025 for a free tour of the gallery and Blitz Walking Tour. The remaining €2,400 was allocated for lesson plans and online resources which were created through StoryMaps & our Blitz Comic Book.

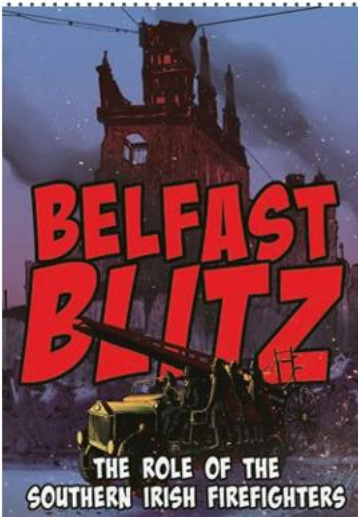
STORYMAPS

Reconciliation Fund covered the costs of an institutional licence for StoryMaps through ArcGIS online which allowed for the creation of 6 StoryMaps tailored Leaving Certificate: History Topic 3: 'The Pursuit of Sovereignty and the impact of partition, 1912-1949' as well as Junior Cycle topics exploring local history. These resources combined NIWM oral histories, objects and tailored practice questions & classroom activities. A launch took place in October 2025 at St. Benildus College, Dublin.



ENGAGEMENT NUMBERS RECORDED (OCTOBER- JANUARY 2026):

Blitz: 231 views
Industry: 314 views
Victory: 91 views
Smuggling: 243 views
Americans: 179 views
Evacuation: 340 views
Collection (Landing Page): 269 views
TOTAL: 1667 views



BLITZ COMIC BOOK

Our Blitz comic book tells the story of the Irish firefighters who volunteered to cross the border and give their help during the Belfast Blitz. Created by artist Leeann Hamilton in partnership with the NIWM, the comic book includes learning resources for Junior Cycle students.



OUTREACH WITH COMMUNITIES

1,857

PEOPLE PARTICIPATED IN 81 OUTREACH WORKSHOPS WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS ACROSS EVERY LOCAL COUNCIL AREA IN NORTHERN IRELAND;

MICHAEL FRYER: 988 PEOPLE IN 46 WORKSHOPS

MICHAEL BURNS: 484 PEOPLE IN 16 WORKSHOPS

MARK WIGTON: 385 PEOPLE IN 19 WORKSHOPS

EVENTS

NIWM DELIVERED 62 EVENTS IN 2025 WITH A TOTAL OF 4,986 PARTICIPANTS

80 CANDLES FOR 80 YEARS

As part of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust's '80 Candles for 80 Years' project, NIWM asked Belfast-based artist Leanne McClean to create a candleholder dedicated to the memory of Helen Lewis MBE, teacher, choreographer, and innovator of modern dance in Northern Ireland.

A survivor of the Holocaust, Helen described leaving Auschwitz as 'the gift of hope'. She believed dance 'has a special power of drawing people together'.



The candle sculpture makes solid that sense of the weight of history and the hope of a dancer who was not defined by it. The candle was lit on Holocaust Memorial Day 2025 to mark the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and to commemorate Helen's life and all those affected by the Holocaust.

VE DAY 80

To mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day the NIWM engaged with 1,500 people over a period of 10 days (3 May-13 May):

Thanksgiving event at Belfast Cathedral - 350 people

VE Day 80 event at Stormont - 150 people

Stranmillis University College 21 Gun Salute - 150 people

VE Day 80 at Belfast City Hall - 400 people

Other VE Day Lectures and events - 452 people



BALMORAL SHOW



For the first time NIWM took a small stall at Balmoral Show 2025. Throughout the 4 days we engaged with 1,420 people, many of whom had not heard of us and have since engaged with NIWM through visits or outreach.



MUSEUM COLLECTION

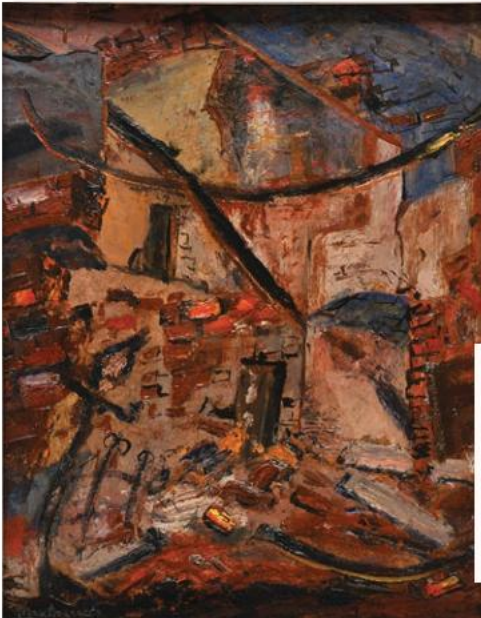
711

OBJECTS HAVE BEEN UPLOADED TO THE MODES DIGITAL CATALOGUE, OUR COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

204

OBJECTS HAVE BEEN DONATED TO THE MUSEUM, IN ADDITION TO 42 PURCHASES

NOTABLE DONATIONS



- 'Aftermath' oil on canvas signed by artist Max McCabe depicting a bombed out house in Belfast
- A complete ARP first aid kit, including original contents
- An ARP first aid kit from Harland and Wolff, post 69
- Home guard and ARP Mk II B and C austerity-grade helmets
- A 40mm Bofors shell manufactured at Mackies, dated 1942



NOTABLE PURCHASES

- A M27 Vickers helmet of the Irish Defence Forces from the inter-war period. Replaced by MkII Steel helmet in 1940
- A Morrison air raid shelter, which is now a key display in the education room
- A Luftwaffe summer flying helmet, similar to the one shown on the cover of Der Adler reporting the air raids on Belfast
- An M1 helmet belonging to the 34th (US) Infantry Division
- An Adolf Hitler pin cushion
- Éire ARP helmet
- RAF tropical shirt manufactured in Belfast



TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS



A case was developed using new acquisitions to examine the role and extent of Irish neutrality during the Second World War.

A combination of donations and purchases enabled the curation of a case displaying the Rivenwood bomb fragment and items relating to this including a Luftwaffe flying helmet, and an original German bomb fuse. All of this was complemented by the replica of a SC 500 bomb.

37

ORAL HISTORY
INTERVIEWS
CONDUCTED
IN 2025

36

TRANSCRIPTS
COMPLETED AND
RETURNED TO
INTERVIEWEES
FOR APPROVAL

6

WRITTEN
SUBMISSIONS

NOTABLE INTERVIEWS

W&M293 Molly Craig, aged 101, whose father was a Stormont MP for West Down, John Edgar Bailey. He told Molly that he had been taken by plane from Castle Archdale as an observer of the D-Day landings.

W&M320 Thomas Doherty, aged 99, one of the last surviving Northern Irish veterans who served in the Eastern theatre. He discussed his memories of the Blitz, joining up and experiences in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.



2025 ORAL HISTORY MEDIA



- BBCNI & Doubleband Film *Letters from the Blitz* follows the story of Julie Mackie née Turtle and her mother's wartime letters from County Down to America.
- BBC Radio Ulster *The Nolan Show: VE Day*
- BBC Radio Ulster *Your Place & Mine: VE Day*
- BBC Radio Ulster *Nazis on the Lough*, focusing on the role of Charles, 7th Marquess of Londonderry and his attempt to appease senior Nazi leaders.

2025 JOURNAL ARTICLE

VE Day Oral Histories were highlighted by an academic journal article in the Journal of the Federation for Ulster Local Studies entitled 'Victory: Voices from the Northern Ireland War Memorial 80 years on.'

STORY MAPS

From May 2025 we began to use StoryMaps to highlight our oral history collection:

- World Refugee Day: 154 views
- North Coast memories (for the 2025 Open Championship): 77 views
- The Ulster Home Guard: 78 views
- Outbreak of War: 62 views
- Rob the Para-Dog: 93 views

TOTAL: 464 views



SMALL GRANTS

Small grants of £4.1k towards projects aligned with NIWM objectives were made in 2025. Funds contributed towards:

- Publication titled Transport Number 4: Vienna 1941 by Mark Scott
- Publication titled Queen's University Air Squadron: A History by Guy Warner
- Acquisition of film footage in digital format of US presence in NI during the Second World War



BLITZ MEMORIAL

In May 2025 NIWM ran a public consultation process in partnership with Belfast City Council to produce a definitive list of names of fatalities to appear on the Blitz Memorial. Adverts were placed in the News Letter, Belfast Telegraph and Irish News and a number of relatives of Blitz fatalities made contact. Following work by NIWM's adjudication panel, a final list of 952 known fatalities was produced and approved by both the NIWM Board of Trustees and Belfast City Council.



The memorial will feature as part of the Council's plan for the transformation of Cathedral Gardens, an area between St Anne's Cathedral and Ulster University's Belfast campus. It is anticipated that the Memorial will be unveiled in spring 2027, when the revamped Cathedral Gardens open.

NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND APPLICATION / REDEVELOPMENT OF THE MUSEUM

In 2025 NIWM applied for and received a development grant of £77,400 (75% of the total approved project costs of £103,200) from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to redevelop the permanent museum exhibition. Plans include reconfiguring the building entrance and gallery facilities to improve accessibility and running a public consultation with stakeholders to inform the museum redevelopment process.

A development grant is recognition that the NLHF values our proposals and wants to have the opportunity to assess them in detail in a delivery phase application to be submitted by 27 November 2027.