

<b>Institution: Queen's University, Belfast</b>		
<b>Unit of Assessment: 28</b>		
<b>Title of case study:</b>  Reassessing 1916: the centenary of Ireland's Easter Rising		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> <b>2008-2016</b>		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Professor Fearghal McGarry	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Professor in Modern Irish History	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> Sep. 2002 - present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> <b>2014-2017</b>		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No.		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)  The centenary of the Easter Rising, a powerful symbol of Irish nationhood, generated enormous interest in Ireland and beyond. Due to the Northern Irish peace process, liberalisation of Irish society, and adoption by the Irish government of a reconciliatory commemorative framework, the Rising's significance was radically reassessed by the Irish State and general public. Through high-profile collaborations with public-history partners, and institutions such as the Irish Post Office and Abbey Theatre, McGarry's research on the radical impulses which motivated rebels from ordinary backgrounds challenged conservative nationalist understandings of the Rising, facilitating a more pluralist and inclusive commemorative programme in 2016.		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)  The underpinning research analyses both the Easter Rising and the evolving historical memory of that event over the past century. Each of these strands emphasises how socially conservative interpretations came to dominate both public understanding and popular historiographical interpretations of the rebellion after Irish independence. Adopting a 'history from below' approach which mined recently-released witness testimony and pension records detailing veterans' experiences, McGarry's research restored to the historical record the experiences of rank-and-file revolutionaries from ordinary backgrounds, particular radicals who were marginalised after independence. By promoting greater public awareness of how progressive impulses such as feminism and socialism were obscured after 1916, as Catholic nationalist representations gained ground in a more conservative state and society, his research helped to shape a pluralist commemorative programme in 2016.  Key themes of his research include:  <b>Radicalisation</b> [1] <i>The Rising</i> , the first history of the rebellion 'from below', and [2] <i>Rebels</i> , an edited collection of first-person testimony from a recently-released oral archive (the Bureau of Military History) analysed the radicalisation of activists from ordinary backgrounds. This research demonstrated how family background, cultural influences and		

communal pressures were more central to politicisation than republican ideology. *The Rising* was described by *Irish Economic and Social History*, 37, as 'The finest account yet of the 1916 Rising'.

### Conservatism

The gulf between radical republicans' progressive social aspirations and the Irish revolution's prosaic outcome was explored by [3] *The Abbey Rebels. A Lost Revolution*. This collective biography of seven working-class revolutionaries, including three women, who were active within the Irish National Theatre demonstrated how disillusioned radical veterans struggled to come to terms with the increasingly conservative nature of Irish society and politics after the Irish Revolution. It illustrated how the marginalisation of feminist, socialist, and liberal Protestant activists after 1916 was shaped by gender, class and religion.

### Memory

[3] *The Abbey Rebels* analysed how, after 1916, the reimagining of the Easter Rising as a symbol of Irish nationhood influenced not only Irish politics but culture and identity. The historical memory of the Easter Rising was further analysed by two additional publications. McGarry's essay, [4] '1916 and Irish Republicanism: between Myth and History', explored the mythologizing of the Easter Rising after 1916. Co-edited with Prof. Richard Grayson, [5] *Remembering 1916: The Easter Rising, the Somme and the Politics of Memory in Ireland* analysed the relationship between history, memory and identity. This book demonstrated how the significance of the Rising and Somme resulted not just from their immediate impact but the complex processes through which they came to be constructed as iconic moments in state- and identity-formation. The book was described as a 'timely' and 'authoritative' study 'for scholars and for those who are currently involved in commemorative events' (Prof. Mary Daly, president, Royal Irish Academy), and as 'one of the most significant studies to emerge from the explosion of recent research on this extraordinary episode in Irish history' (Prof. J.J. Lee (NYU)).

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising. Ireland: Easter 1916* (Oxford University Press, 2010, 2015, 2017). This major study was widely reviewed by scholarly journals including *Irish Historical Studies*, 37/147 ('outstanding . . . indispensable'); *English Historical Review*, 128/530 ('McGarry's compelling study will have a significant impact on the historiographies of Ireland and revolution').
2. Fearghal McGarry (ed), *Rebels. Voices from the Easter Rising* (Penguin, 2011)
3. Fearghal McGarry, *The Abbey Rebels of 1916* (Gill & Macmillan, 2015)
4. Fearghal McGarry, '1916 and Irish Republicanism: between Myth and History', in John Horne and Edward Madigan (eds), *Towards Commemoration: Ireland in War and Revolution 1913-1923* (RIA, 2013)
5. Richard S. Grayson and Fearghal McGarry (eds), *Remembering 1916. The Easter Rising, the Somme and the Politics of Memory in Ireland* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

#### A: Museums and the arts

With Prof. Diarmaid Ferriter (UCD), McGarry led an academic team to develop content for a €10m museum at Dublin's General Post Office. It drew directly on McGarry's research [1, 2, 3] by highlighting the lived experiences of civilians, and radical impulses of rank-and-file rebels.

Opened by Taoiseach Enda Kenny, GPO Witness History was the ‘flagship exhibition’ (*Irish Independent*, 10/12/16) [S3] of Ireland’s commemorative programme. It received 160,833 visitors between March–December 2016, 100,343 in 2017 (46% Irish; 21% USA; 8% UK; 25% other international), and 87,899 in 2018. Evidencing active engagement, visitors provided 129,620 responses to its ‘What do you think?’ touch panels in its first year. Ranked in the top 5% of Dublin’s visitor attractions on TripAdvisor in 2018, over 90% of 1,875 reviewers rated it as excellent or very good [S2].

In 2017 the exhibition won the European Museum Academy’s prestigious Micheletti Award (2017) [S1]. The judges stated: ‘The Centre is a perfect example of 20th century history in retrospect, dealing in an even-handed way with a very emotive subject . . . It is an extraordinary achievement, an historical challenge which has been transformed into a reconciliation centre which also poses questions for the future.’ The Association for Heritage Interpretation described it as ‘a model for conciliatory interpretation’ which ‘demonstrates how highly controversial events can be interpreted in ways that encourage social and political cohesion and understanding’. It also won Best Cultural Experience (2017 Irish Tourism Awards).

In 2012 Ireland’s national theatre commissioned playwright Jimmy Murphy to adapt [2] *Rebels* for the stage. Featuring archival testimony, the production dramatised ‘ordinary’ rebels’ experiences, bringing to public attention their radical motives. Staged at the Abbey Theatre in 2014, 2015 and 2016, it also performed to sold-out audiences in London, Manchester, and New York in 2016. The Abbey commissioned McGarry to research its links with the Rising, leading to [3], which informed its public engagement programme, culminating in a memorial unveiled at Easter 2016.

#### *B: Private sector*

*An Post* appointed McGarry to its 1916 stamps sub-committee to identify themes for sixteen commemorative stamps to ‘acknowledge the multiple identities and traditions which are part of the historic story of the island of Ireland’. The sub-committee consulted with the public, Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations, and Irish Cabinet. Drawing in part on McGarry’s research, the stamps brought to prominence overlooked feminists, British-army soldiers, policemen and child fatalities. They were praised as ‘a genuine attempt to show something of the complexity of Irish identity’ (*Belfast Telegraph*, 22/2/2016), and ‘magnificent’, ‘subtle’ and ‘mature’ (BBC Radio Ulster, 25/3/2016). Circulating internationally, over 90 million stamps were issued. Each could be scanned via QR to a website featuring McGarry’s interpretive text: *An Post* reported ‘strong engagement . . . with worldwide traffic to the site’. 45,000 souvenir products were sold, and 2,000 copies of McGarry’s supporting text sold out [S4].

#### *C: Civil society*

Through collaboration with civic and public organisations, McGarry’s research supported post-conflict commemorative approaches. He provided the keynote lecture on Protestant revolutionaries at Christchurch Cathedral, 17 February 2016, in a widely-reported initiative which saw the Northern Irish First Minister, British ambassador, and Irish Taoiseach mark the centenary together [S8].

#### *D: Education*

School trips accounted for 12% of visits to GPO Witness Centre (32,000 children between March 2016-Dec. 2017). Awarding a Dublin Civic Trust Award (2017), the judges noted: 'The exhibition provides a key resource as a cultural and historical education tool for schools and students of all ages, as it links closely to elements of school curricula.'

McGarry, with Dr Jennie Carlsten, developed a module (focusing on research themes outlined in Section 2) forming part of the Nerve Centre's Teaching Divided Histories project featuring digital technology to support conflict-study. Training over 50 teachers across 9 counties, this EU-supported initiative won recognition for its educational impact [S7].

*E: Public Discourse:*

In addition to his publications' direct impact on readers, press coverage of McGarry's research shaped public attitudes [S5]. Scotland's largest-selling newspaper, the *Herald*, cited his research on commemoration. Public intellectuals such as Fintan O'Toole and Colm Tóibín cited his work to contextualise the Rising for an international audience, while the *New York Times* recommended [1] *The Rising* as among 'the most noteworthy titles on the [1916] shelf'. The *Irish Independent*, Ireland's largest-selling newspaper, noted that his research on [3] the Abbey rebels gave 'voice to less well-known people' who lived 'in penury and chronic disappointment in the conservative, illiberal, clerically dominated . . . Ireland they had sacrificed all for.' His extensive TV and radio engagement also generated public impact [S6].

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

S1. Impact of GPO Witness History exhibition: Report of European Museum Academy judges on Luigi Micheletti Award (2017) for GPO Witness History:  
[http://www.luigimichelettiaward.eu/news/dettaglio\\_news.asp?id=75](http://www.luigimichelettiaward.eu/news/dettaglio_news.asp?id=75)

S2. Impact of GPO Witness History exhibition: Over 2,300 reviews of the exhibition can be read at: [https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction\\_Review-g186605-d10119599-Reviews-GPO\\_Witness\\_History\\_Visitor\\_Centre-Dublin\\_County\\_Dublin.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g186605-d10119599-Reviews-GPO_Witness_History_Visitor_Centre-Dublin_County_Dublin.html)

S3. Press coverage outlining impact of GPO Witness History exhibition:

- <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/1916/restored-gpo-takes-centre-stage-in-capital-celebrations-35275378.html>
- <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage/living-history-at-the-gpo-1.2488313>
- <https://www.irishcentral.com/travel/best-of-ireland/gpo-witness-history>
- <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/gpo-witness-history-exhibition-centre-to-open-on-march-29th-1.2519971>

S4. Impact of 1916 Centenary stamps:

- <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/an-post-issues-16-easter-rising-stamps-vpspgjz65lx>

S5. Evidence of impact of McGarry's research on public discourse via press coverage of his research:

- Analysis of memory of Easter 1916 by McGarry in *Time* magazine (22/4/2016):  
<http://time.com/4287509/easter-rising-commemorations/>

- *Irish Independent*, 20/12/15: <https://www.independent.ie/entertainment/books/a-volley-of-coffee-table-books-34297043.html>
- *Times Literary Supplement*, 23/12/16: <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/controversy-in-the-irish-tradition/>
- *Irish Times*, 16/1/16: <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/review-the-abbey-rebels-of-1916-a-lost-revolution-1.2498290>
- *An Phoblacht* ('highly accessible'), 5/1/2016 <https://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/25612>; *An Phoblacht* ('definitive'), 1/8/2016, <https://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/26262>
- Colm Tóibín, *London Review of Books* (31/3/16): <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v38/n07/colm-toibin/after-i-am-hanged-my-portrait-will-be-interesting>

S6. Evidence of impact of McGarry's research on public discourse via broadcast media:

- McGarry was a consultant and interviewee for Notre Dame's award-winning documentary series, *1916 The Irish Rebellion* (<https://1916.nd.edu/making-1916-the-irish-rebellion/academic-contributors/>). Broadcast in over 60 countries and 453 U.S. public television stations in 47 states (covering 92% of U.S. TV households), the impact of this documentary is detailed in *1916: The Irish Rebellion project. A preliminary report*: [https://1916.nd.edu/assets/220403/kni\\_1916\\_report\\_rev\\_v5.pdf](https://1916.nd.edu/assets/220403/kni_1916_report_rev_v5.pdf)
- McGarry was a key contributor to RTÉ's Easter Rising Primetime special: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtW1YXfsCZI> [interviewed at: 4.14; 11.23; 16.42; 23.23]
- McGarry provided on-air analysis for RTÉ's broadcast of the official State commemoration, viewed by 1.1m Irish people.
- McGarry was an interviewee in seven television documentaries broadcast over Easter 2016, and a historical consultant for the BBC's Voices 16 multiplatform media project. He was an interviewee in several BBC radio documentaries including BBC R4's *The Easter Rising 1916* [Part 1 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b073b5c6>: interviewed at: 3.20; 25.46], Part 2 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0745xks>: interviewed at: 3.15; 4.51; 21.10] and BBC R3's *The Women Who Staged the Rising* (2016) which was closely informed by his research on [3] the Abbey rebels: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b074z972> [interviewed at: 3.26; 6.19; 8.42; 10.49; 13.49; 16.21; 20.15; 22.15; 25.00; 30.56; 32.56; 34.06; 38.00]

S7. Evidence of impact of McGarry's research on education:

- AHRC report (2014) on the contribution of a module based on McGarry's Easter 1916 research to the Nerve Centre's Teaching Divided History on education: <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/project-reports-and-reviews/the-impact-of-ahrc-research/2013-2014/> (page 14).

S8. Press coverage of McGarry's role in commemorative activity by churches and civil society organisations during centenary period:

- <http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/arlene-foster-to-attend-1916-rising-event-1-7216586>
- <https://www.decadeofcentenaries.com/21-january-2016-presbyterian-church-of-ireland-conference-the-future-of-our-past-remembering-and-reassessing-1916-belfast/>