

**Ruth McManus & Gerry O'Reilly**

*Heritage Tourism and the Commodification of Contested Spaces: Ireland and the Battle of the Boyne site*

FINAL DRAFT VERSION (September 2016)

The role of heritage in Irish tourism has undergone recent re-evaluation by the industry's national development authority, Fáilte Ireland, as part of its strategy for cultural tourism. Today it is no longer enough to regard heritage as simply a niche product, but rather something which should become mainstream and be interpreted 'in ways that are usable for the visitor'. However, the delicate balance required by this approach is also long recognised. This chapter questions the implications of a more complex heritage strategy in relation to one of Ireland's most contested heritage sites, the Battle of the Boyne site at Oldbridge in Co. Meath, which was officially opened to visitors a year after the new strategy was published in 2007. The Battle of the Boyne site was purchased by the Irish state in 2000 and opened to visitors in Spring 2008, catering for different heritages in the context of the Northern Ireland Peace Process. Oldbridge, at the epicentre of the Battle, symbolises a defining event in the colonial process and creation of two ethno-religious proto-nationalisms in Ireland; its drums still echo in Northern Ireland's streets each summer. This once-bloody place is central to identity foundation concepts of Unionist citizens in Northern Ireland, while for a majority of people on the island of Ireland, this inherited 'traumascape' also holds subliminal echoes of 'negative heritage' and a 'troubled history'.

Oldbridge's location in the culturally-rich Boyne Valley landscape implicitly affords it much potential as a tourism, reconciliation and educational space. Site preservation can be economically sustained by being part of other visitor-tourist 'commodified' locations. In this context, questions must embrace sustainability of heritage space, values and feelings that may

be connected with Oldbridge, and future site usage. This chapter reports on perspectives of multiple voices and considers shifting meanings of the site, before it was officially opened to the public, during the development process and following the opening of the visitor centre. It reflects on the impacts of commodification, considering the implications of current official tourism strategy. In the final part of the paper, we argue that for contested spaces, commodification may be a way of ‘neutralising’ the past, but this may be seen as a political and social necessity.

### **Heritage Tourism in Ireland**

Tourism in Ireland has long been recognised as having significant economic importance, accounting for 4% of GNP and providing approximately 200,000 jobs.<sup>1</sup> In 2014, total tourism revenue amounted to €6.56 billion.<sup>2</sup> Unprecedented tourism growth in the 1990s saw Ireland outperforming the rest of Europe, but by 2001 it had become less competitive; a series of strategies and reports in the early 2000s sought to enhance the Irish tourism product, one important aspect of which is heritage. In 2007, Fáilte Ireland’s *Tourism Product Development Strategy* observed that ‘Ireland’s cultural and historical heritage is one of the strong magnets for tourists coming to Ireland.’<sup>3</sup> At the same time that the new strategy was rolled out, a report specifically addressing cultural tourism was also launched. A more modern, positive, holistic and visitor-focused approach is suggested by the definition of cultural tourism as embracing ‘the full range of experiences visitors can undertake to learn what makes a destination distinctive – its lifestyle, its heritage, its arts, its people – and the business of providing and interpreting that culture to visitors.’<sup>4</sup> This definition reflects the importance of providing access for visitors to culture, broadly defined, and interpreting it in ways that are usable for visitors. Such an approach emphasizes high quality, distinctive and ‘authentic’ experiences. It also addresses the conundrum at the heart of the commodification process: how to promote

heritage (and benefit economically from it) while being sensitive to various needs and perspectives. Whereas in the past it could have been argued that Irish tourism risked overdevelopment, thereby ‘killing the goose that laid the golden egg’,<sup>5</sup> the 2007 strategy was explicit in stating that economic benefits should not come at the cost of integrity or authenticity:

the object of this strategy is not the delivery of economic performance through tourism at all costs, nor is it about realising short-term tourism gains at the expense of sacrificing Ireland’s heritage or artistic integrity. Rather it is about communicating and building recognition about the overlap and opportunities for synergy that exist between the agendas of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Heritage and Education and providing a platform for the development of sustainable, authentic, high quality Cultural Tourism – that benefits overseas and domestic audiences alike – as a result.<sup>6</sup>

The development of sites along the multi-themed, overlapping and flexible tourist route, the Boyne Valley Drive (Slí na Bóinne), reflects this strategy.<sup>7</sup> Without destroying the cultural resource base, strategic tourism finances the upkeep of physical heritage sites and generates local and regional employment at sites ranging from the UNESCO World Heritage Newgrange Neolithic necropolis to others, including the Oldbridge/Battle of the Boyne site.

### **Symbolic places of memory and tourism**

Oldbridge was at the epicentre of the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, between the armies of (Catholic) James and his son-in-law (Protestant) William. Resulting in a victory for William, the battle is seen as a watershed for Irish, British and European history.<sup>8</sup> The site was later occupied by the Oldbridge Demesne, with its 1740’s limestone mansion, parks and canal. The

*'Protestants of Great Britain and Ireland'* erected a memorial obelisk, which was exploded in 1923. In the twentieth century, despite formal decolonization and national tenant land redistribution to owner occupier farms, the Coddington family maintained the manor and farming activities at Oldbridge.<sup>9</sup> Following state purchase in 2000, a multi-million Euro restoration project was undertaken on the 200 hectare (500 acre) property. The house is the location of a visitor centre which was opened in 2008, while five different walks have been designated throughout the park. Aside from physical preparation of the site for visitors, the development process also required decisions as to the information to be presented to visitors at this contested site. It could be argued that discourses attempting to manufacture consent were (and continue to be) constructed for this site.<sup>10</sup>

Nuala Johnson has examined how 'spaces of heritage translate complex cultural, political and symbolic processes to popular audiences.'<sup>11</sup> Here there is no attempt to reduce mnemonic sites of tragedy, grief, or darkness to a one size fits all, but rather to illustrate how the uniqueness of each holds multiple narratives and opportunities for visitors. Essentially most tourists seek entertainment in the broadest sense, while many also pursue cultural, ethnic, intellectual and spiritual experiences. This can range from visiting the cemeteries of Père Lachaise (Paris), Highbury (London), Arlington (Washington DC) or Glasnevin (Dublin), to battle sites such as Hastings, Culloden, Waterloo, Normandy's D-Day beaches, or Field of Crows in Kosovo, much cherished by Serbian nationalists. All are places that physically symbolize defining moments in the lives of people, groups, nations, which have become part of individual and collective narratives, interpretations and mythologies passed down the generations to the individual visitor's experience. While South Africa's National Heritage Site of Robben Island, the Iziko Slave Lodge Museum and Cape Town's District Six are all symbolic places associated with the horror of apartheid, they are also spaces for tourism, reflection and dialogue. In contrast, symbolic sites of massacres, such as those at

Katyn (Russia), Srebrenica (Bosnia), and Markale (Sarajevo), remain highly contested; raw histories within living memories.<sup>12</sup>

Categories of ‘dark’ and ‘grief’ tourism respectively are experienced in forms ranging from places of memory associated with the Holocaust to New York’s Ground Zero, with each holding multiple human, official and unofficial narratives. Officially-recognized dark and grief symbolic sites also exist in Ireland, including those associated with the Great Famine (1845-48) and Kilmainham Gaol, execution site of Irish revolutionary leaders. In Northern Ireland, contested official and unofficial symbolic sites have drawn niche tourism throughout the period of the Troubles (1969-98) and since then. These include Belfast’s Falls and Shankill Roads and Derry’s seventeenth-century city walls and Bogside areas. Notorious sites including South Armagh’s Murder Triangle and Belfast’s Crumlin Road Gaol are being (re)negotiated. Many have been mythologized in wall murals and ballads, interweaving with visitors and researchers in cultural tourism; walking, taxi and bus tours facilitate the tourist trails.<sup>13</sup>

Individuals may pass on cultural and historical burdens.<sup>14</sup> While some forms of dark tourism may be seen as problematic, perpetuating abuses of symbolic places in the present, other approaches such as Nora’s Realms of Memory (*Lieux de mémoire*) can occasion histories in multiple voices. Nora is ‘less interested in causes than in effect ... less interested in 'what actually happened' than in its perpetual re-use and misuse, its influence on successive presents.’<sup>15</sup> Nora’s conceptual stance affords people a chance to ‘move on’ in a constructive manner. Kenneth Foote and Maoz Azaryahu see public memory as part of the symbolic foundation of collective identity. Questions such as ‘who are we?’ are answered with ‘where do we come from?’ and ‘what do we share?’ in positive or negative ways. They argue that the geography of memory locates history and its representations in landscape. This helps answer

the question, 'where is memory' in terms of places that cast a certain vision of history into a mould of commemorative permanence.<sup>16</sup>

### **Contested space and identities at the Battle of the Boyne site**

The Oldbridge Battle of the Boyne site caters for different identities and traditions in the context of the Northern Ireland Peace Process. This symbolic place is central to identity foundation concepts of UK Unionist citizens in Northern Ireland, despite the spatial paradox. Note that, in order to present diverse standpoints here, broad categories are used: Unionist, Orange and Loyalist (referring to those who cherish British heritage and linkage to the UK), and Nationalist, Republican and Green (sections of the population in Northern Ireland and throughout the Republic).

Though the Battle of Aughrim (1691) was the final clash in William and James's wars in Ireland, the 1690 Battle of the Boyne is perceived by all traditions as a defining place for the subsequent conflictual histories and identities that arose in Ireland.<sup>17</sup> To one tradition, the Boyne is associated with defeat of native Gaelic and Catholic populations, colonization bringing a different culture, language and Protestant traditions, creation of a dual 'us and them' society, and eventual partition of the island in 1921, creating captive communities on each side of the border, especially within Northern Ireland. To another tradition, Unionist and Orange, victory at Oldbridge helps legitimate their culture, identity foundational concepts and rightfulness for the existence of Northern Ireland within the UK. Victorious interpretations, symbols and iconographic wall murals of the Battle were created and transposed across generations to areas including East Belfast; opposing street murals are visible in West Belfast, where residents constructed their own places of memory as counter-memorials to Orange traditions. William's victory and construction of dual society in colonial Ireland can be seen as leading to variations on conflicting 'Orange' and 'native'/'Green' identities which were

associated with rebellions, revolutions and eventual partition of the island. However, identity clashes became most evident in Northern Ireland (1969-98).<sup>18</sup>

### *Orange traditions*

The Orange Order was not founded until 1795, a hundred years after the Battle of the Boyne, its name being a tribute to King William. A most cherished song associated with the Battle states: 'On the green grassy slopes of the Boyne... Orangemen ... fought for our deliverance... the bones of our forefathers lie awaiting (God's) trumpet... we cherish their memories... praise God for sending King William, Orangemen will be loyal ... our war-cry (is) "No Surrender!" so long as we've God on our side... we ... true Brethren will ... fight...'.<sup>19</sup> Another ballad, *The Boyne Water* tells of William's bravery, leadership and virility. Ethnicity of enemies is articulated with 'a bullet from the Irish' and 'disorganized, cowardly' 'cunning French' fleeing 'in darkness'. With divine help William becomes the leading general crossing 'the river' and attacking foes threatening 'Protestants like the minority at Drogheda'. Emphasis is on religion as the foremost ethno-national identifier at the time and this is legitimated with God's blessing of William. Mural paintings of William and the Battle are recurrent in contested spaces in Northern Ireland especially during the 'Marching Season', but not in the Boyne Valley or Republic of Ireland more generally.<sup>20</sup>

### *Green traditions*

Following the Treaty of Limerick (1691) and Flight of the Wild Geese (expatriation of the native elite and military leaders to the continent), the remaining ruling class of old Gaelic and Gaelic-Norman order were displaced by Williams's supporters, a watershed in the events that led to the creation of two major ethno-national identities within Ireland. Irish-speaking and Catholic literary forms, especially poetry, changed in the years following 1690 from elitist

styles to popular formulae, largely due to emigration of the traditional elites as illustrated here: '*Séamas an Chaca a chaill Éirinn; lena leathbhróg ghallda is a leathbhróg Ghaelach ...*' (*James the cowardly shite who lost Ireland, with his one boot in England and the other in Ireland*), and '*Cuirimse mo mhallacht ortsa, a Rí Séamas...*'. (*I put my curse on you, King James...*).<sup>21</sup> The victim theme due to trauma and uprooting evolved, reflecting coping strategies of the colonised.<sup>22</sup> The allegorical *Sean Bhean Bhocht* (Poor Old Woman) and *Caithlín Ní Houlihan*, symbols of Ireland, became embedded in nationalist traditions. In hues of Green, nationalist and republican traditions, and associated ballads and iconography, from the nineteenth century on, significantly there are no references to the Battle of the Boyne.

### **Oldbridge: Shared Heritage Space and Tourism**

Irish, British, Ulster and European multi-layered shared histories and identities form part of the landscape at Oldbridge. As early as 1999, the Taoiseach<sup>23</sup> described the 1690 Battle as 'a hugely important part of our shared heritage' and 'one of the most important events in our island's history... [with] a wider European significance. It should be remembered and understood by all of us...'.<sup>24</sup> The potential political sensitivity of the site was acknowledged from the earliest stages of its acquisition, which was identified as fulfilling a symbolic purpose: 'It had been recognized for some time that the site of the Battle... is one of major historical importance. Additionally it was recognized that the site was of special significance to many people in Northern Ireland. It was in this context, and also that of peace and reconciliation, that the decision was taken to purchase the property and to preserve and present it to the public'.<sup>25</sup> Commemoration of mnemonic sites reminds us of shared pasts with divergent narratives, where denial of places, events, or people is no longer a sustainable option. There was close consultation with representatives of the Unionist tradition, local authorities and community groups concerning site development.<sup>26</sup> As 'this initiative ... is in



the context of Peace and Reconciliation... The history, myths and symbols of the Battle are deeply ingrained in this [Unionist] community's identity and must be approached with great sensitivity'.<sup>27</sup>

Given the symbolism of the site, it is unsurprising that its development as a visitor centre was a slow undertaking. In the interim, the public was promised that 'protection works... will ensure that the property can be adapted for whatever usage it is finally decided'.<sup>28</sup> The context of development was particularly complex, because of ongoing processes of 'normalisation' within the Northern Ireland peace process, but also due to its timing in relation to the new tourism strategies discussed above. Regarding this symbolic microcosm of contested identities and spatial paradoxes, the Office of Public Works (OPW) noted that 'a balanced interpretation and presentation strategy must be acceptable on a cross-community basis'.<sup>29</sup> In a *Dúchas*, the (Irish) Heritage Service brochure in 2003, before the visitor centre formally opened, an attempt was being made to establish the European context of the site. 'The Battle ... between King William III (of the Dutch House of Orange, married to Mary of England) and his father-in-law, King James II (of England), was fought on 1 July 1690... At stake were the English throne, French dominance in Europe and Protestant power in Ireland'.<sup>30</sup> This text has been largely retained in current online and on-site presentations. A contemporary Dutch historian stated: 'In Dutch history books ... the battle is mentioned ... there is no remembrance of the consequences of events for Ireland... parades of Orangemen don't recall ... kinship... They relive an attitude that can only be called a 17th century vision. That is a vital difference: history seen as past, gone and done, and history constantly relived, re-enacted'.<sup>31</sup> ( KING BILLY ILLUSTRATION, 3.1 ABOUT HERE)

For politicians, civil servants and advisers aware of the potentially fraught nature of the site, and for professional historians or academics, it was clear that issues raised in the

preceding theoretical discussion had to be carefully measured at the site, due to its centrality in the heritages of the island of Ireland and by association the UK. Failure to achieve inclusivity, with balances and checks, and any form of over-simplified revisionist histories, or political point-scoring, would have had negative repercussions on the cultural authenticity of the site, and on policies embedded in other strands of the Belfast ('Good Friday') Agreement targeting sustainable democracy, especially for future generations.

Younger voices, the majority of whom were under twenty years old, help to reveal the mixed expectations and possible realities of future generations, represented here by a group of fifty (Irish) third-level geography students who were interviewed prior to a visit to the partly-developed site in 2007. They were somewhat conscious of the site's symbolic importance for the Orange/Unionist community, as the following representative quotes reveal: 'It gives the Orangemen a link to Ireland as their history'; 'Unionists celebrate William's victory each year and this causes conflict... it is part of their culture'. One student recognised the site as a traumascap from the 'Green' perspective: 'I would expect to feel a sense of loss with the vast space of the site operating as a vast hole in our cultural heritage. ... It represents great emotional extremes to two different races of people, representing a birth and death respectively. There is probably no heritage centre as it represents a sense of defeat in our heritage.' When asked what they expected to see at the Battle site, typical responses included 'another interesting historical site...' ... 'Graves, with some evidence of Battle' .... 'Mounds of earth that were bombed and that have become part of the landscape'. There was also an expectation that this site would offer a commodified tourist experience: 'A guided tour, and many tourists...' .... 'An information centre...'.

In both written and oral forms, student comments showed a lack of factual historical knowledge, no intellectual empathy with the Unionist perspectives, and tended to see the Orange Order as root cause for historical and contemporary conflict. A certain fatigue and lack of empathy with the situation of Northern Ireland was evident, although students from the border counties of Donegal, Monaghan, Cavan and Louth showed more factual knowledge and empathy with the Northern Ireland populations. Overall, students tended to interpret Oldbridge, the 'Troubles' and the peace process as internal issues for Northern Ireland having little relevance their own identities within the Republic. In response to a question concerning the future of Oldbridge, all but one student supported its further development as a cultural heritage area, stating that 'it is part of shared heritage space.' When asked what they would prioritise in further site development, answers fell into three broad categories: (i) Museum with interpretative space and visitor centre with more arms, medals and similar artefacts; (ii) More mock-battle displays; and (iii) a 'real' souvenir shop, with better prices in the café and more facilities. Generally, the students tended to assimilate the Oldbridge site with whatever historical or heritage tourist spaces they were familiar with. While interested in the building and unique narratives, a certain ambiguity was evident in that students expected a more familiar ubiquitous 'tourist' site product as promoted and diffused by globalizing economics and marketing targeting the widest number of clients possible. Hence the challenge in the tourism agenda in preserving and rendering the site culturally unique on the visitor map, respecting the contested heritages associated with it, and also drawing in visitors with little or no knowledge of heritages on the island of Ireland.

While travelling through the Boyne Valley, students can observe Newgrange rising up from far, far away on the horizon, appreciate the exotic site and its location, and enjoy the movie showing mysterious planetary movements, seasonal changes, and penetration of sunlight into the main chamber during the winter solstice so symbolic for the culture of

Neolithic people and still connecting with people today. Excellent facilities, including the souvenir shop, are appreciated. Students similarly enjoy the impressive location and size of twelfth century Trim Castle; they like walking around the grounds and are enthused by associations with the filming of the 1995 *Braveheart* movie. Although that narrative relates to the thirteenth century Scottish hero William Wallace who led the Scots in an independence war against the English king, the movie may have created a sense of positive ‘connecting’ for mass audiences.

Restoration work is completed on Oldbridge House and grounds catering for the Visitor Centre, exhibitions and interactive presentations; timber frames of the destroyed village houses have been erected; information panels installed and walkways created. In addition to specific features associated with the Battle, general recreation is catered for by walking routes and picnic tables in the parkland, a café and redeveloped walled garden of the mansion house. The Visitor Centre may help facilitate reconciliation or more ritualized forgetfulness in this symbolic place.<sup>32</sup> The current (2015) Battle of the Boyne visitor centre experience is outlined here. Two seventeenth century cannon guns flank each side of the front door going towards the main reception area in the ‘Big House’, with a large map of seventeenth century Europe used to explain competing geopolitical forces in Europe at that period; over the past 10 years, the official narratives of the Battle are emphasize the European aspects and give greater detail of the different ethnic or national groups involved in each army. Entering the first exhibition area, mannequins in period dress represent the historical actors (kings, soldiers etc.). The following room is adorned with official paintings as well as an interactive laser display detailing the battle. In the final room, quotations from the protagonists and others directly connected to the Battle are given on the walls, before exiting a corridor where everyday expressions in English, such as ‘to keep your powder dry’, trace their philological origins to the Battle. The visitor route then exits the house and enters a

courtyard, where period weapons and cannons are displayed, beyond which a cinema presents a 13-minute audio visual show. The film gives factual details of the night before, and the day of the Battle, with some broad contextual statements, similar to those found in the brochures. At the end of the film, originally there was about one minute speaking of the so-called 'Glorious Revolution' of William and Mary stating that it was a major step towards modern parliamentary democracy in the UK; this has since been removed.<sup>33</sup>

While most of the information presented at the Oldbridge centre focuses on the history of the battle itself, there is one significant example of present-day symbolic use of the past. This takes the form of a displayed musket, given as a gift on 11th May 2007 by Northern Ireland's First Minister Ian Paisley to the Republic's Taoiseach while on their historic visit to the site of the Battle. On that day, the Taoiseach offered First Minister Paisley a walnut bowl made from a tree on the site, reputed to have been there in 1690. A tree was also planted to mark the historic occasion as this was a major step in furthering the peace process and encouraging mutual recognition between conflicting traditions.<sup>34</sup> Within a week of this event, Bertie Ahern addressed both houses of the UK parliament, the first Taoiseach ever to do so, and made strong reference to the symbolism of the ceremony at the Battle site.<sup>35</sup>

### **A commodified tourism experience: contemporary tourist voices (2015)**

The visitor centre at the Battle site presents a complex story to a popular audience, much as Johnson outlined. At the time of writing, some seven years after the opening of the centre, it has become 'just another' tourist stop in the Valley, rated number 17 of 56 'things to do' in County Meath. According to Tripadvisor website for the Battle Visitor Centre, and based on 157 reviews, the visitor rating is 59 excellent, 61 very good, 24 average, 10 poor and 3 terrible.<sup>36</sup> While necessity of treating such anonymous reviews with caution is recognised, Tripadvisor comments nonetheless give a sense of how the contemporary visitor views their

experience. Many comments refer to car-parking, toilet facilities and café, revealing the emphasis for most visitors on the site as offering ‘a day out’. Some reviews discuss the nature and quality of the information presented, with a variety of perspectives evident:

‘An excellent presentation of an historical event. The walkabout tour of the museum gives a detailed account of the events of the battle. Manikins dressed and displayed in scenes of the times are superbly done. ... descriptions of the battle are easy to follow and read. Tour also included a musket demonstration by a costumed interpreter, very impressive.’ (Canadian visitor, 22 July 2015)<sup>37</sup>

‘I think the OPW have done a fair job in keeping the site of a potentially very inflammatory site neutral so that no one will feel isolated or alienated by anything here, however would have liked to have seen a few more exhibits and other period features from extended accounts of those present on both sides and what a lot of the combatants did with their lives after the battle’ (Belfast-based reviewer, 5 April 2013).<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps the most insightful critique comes from a Republic of Ireland-based visitor who observed: ‘Signage to the Centre is very poor and it’s surprisingly difficult to find. Having arrived we felt that this place hasn’t quite sorted out its identity - is it a battle site, a Great House, a symbol of reconciliation or just a pleasant park-like place to be?... This was a place where men fought and died - but there was no atmosphere of conflict and struggle... for us it was a disappointment’ (Reviewed 3 September 2015)<sup>39</sup>. Visitor numbers for Brú na Boinne (Newgrange) and the Battle of the Boyne sites suggest that, while the former destination still

receives significantly more visitors, the gap between the two sites is lessening. Whereas in 2009 there were 130,083 visitors to Brú na Boinne and just 41,799 to Oldbridge, the comparable figures for 2013 were 133,616 and 60,796 respectively.<sup>40</sup>

### **Concluding remarks**

At Oldbridge, no monuments or gravestones exist; the predominant visitor experience is of an understated tranquil site. However, living history displays every Sunday and Bank Holidays with 20 minute demonstrations by Musketeer and Cavalry Officers are appreciated by children and visitors alike.<sup>41</sup> The experience contrasts strongly with reconciliation and educational experiences found at *Frontlines* Cathedral Museum in Ypres/Iper in Belgium with exhibits not just on WWI, but also conflict and propaganda, past and present, throughout the world. Nearby is the Messines Memorial where soldiers of different traditions from Ireland fell in battle. Their identities and contested traditions are being re-examined in the symbolic Irish Peace Park with its iconic monastic tower inaugurated by the President of the Republic and Queen Elizabeth II in 1998. In 2011 during the first official visit of a British monarch to the Republic, Queen Elizabeth and the Irish President laid wreaths at the Islandbridge War Memorial dedicated to all soldiers from Ireland who died in WWI, and also visited Dublin's Garden of Remembrance dedicated to 'all those who gave their lives in the cause of Irish Freedom'. Another symbolic site they visited in the context of Irish nationalism was Croke Park.<sup>42</sup> Oldbridge, less than 50 kilometres from Dublin, was not amongst the many sites selected by both UK and Irish governments for a royal visit.

Acquisition and development of the Battle of the Boyne site, a significant contested space, was of great symbolic importance at a key early stage of the Peace Process. It might be argued that its political potency has waned as the site has been normalised into a commodified tourist attraction. To the vast majority of the general public, Oldbridge presents itself as a

pleasant family day out, with a minority connecting with the site's root origin and symbolism. This can be seen as a successful 'normalization of the abnormal', which is good for democracy. Both politically and socially, commodification of the site to present a 'typical' tourist experience helps to neutralize the past and nurture (or manufacture) consent.<sup>43</sup>

The Oldbridge site has been explored here through different and alternative voices. The role of the Irish authorities in developing the shared heritage space, with support from institutions in Northern Ireland and the UK is embedded in the Belfast Good Friday Agreement (1998) with 'parity of esteem' for various traditions. With the Peace Process, people come to new understandings of their symbolic meaning and thus (re)construct new identities and memories. This can be supported in a positive and non-threatening manner through tourism, as at Oldbridge. With the burgeoning market in cultural tourism, along with a continuing well-managed development process, the Battle of the Boyne site meets many needs.

---

<sup>1</sup> Fáilte Ireland (2014) *Tourism Facts 2013*. Online. Accessed 5 October 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Fáilte Ireland (2015) *Tourism Facts 2014, latest updated figures*. Online.

<http://www.failteireland.ie/Research-Insights/Tourism-Facts-and-Figures.aspx>. Accessed 5 October 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Fáilte Ireland (2007a) *Tourism Product Development Strategy 2007 – 2013*: 32; Fáilte Ireland (2005) *Heritage Research*.

<sup>4</sup> Fáilte Ireland (2007b) *Cultural Tourism – making it work for you: a new strategy for cultural tourism*: 4

<sup>5</sup> R. McManus, 'Heritage and Tourism: an unholy alliance?', in *Irish Geography*, 30 (2): 1997, 90-8; R. McManus, 'Identity Crisis? Heritage Construction, tourism and place marketing in Ireland', in M. McCarthy, ed., *Ireland's Heritages: Critical Perspectives on Memory and Identity*, (London: Ashgate, 2005), p. 235-50.

<sup>6</sup> Fáilte Ireland (2007b): 22



- 
- <sup>7</sup> G. O'Reilly, 'Rhythms and Identity in Boyne Valley Landscapes', in T. Mels, ed., *Reanimating Places: A Geography of Rhythm* (London: Ashgate, 2004).
- <sup>8</sup> P. Lenihan (2004) King Billy – A Military Assessment, *History Ireland* (12) 1: 18-23; P. Snow and D. Snow (2004) The Battle of the Boyne, in *Battlefield Britain*, BBC Documentaries. [http://www.bbcprograms.com/pbs/catalog/battlefieldbritain/docs/episode%20desc\\_Battlefield%20Britain.pdf](http://www.bbcprograms.com/pbs/catalog/battlefieldbritain/docs/episode%20desc_Battlefield%20Britain.pdf) (Accessed 27/11/14).
- <sup>9</sup> G. Stout, *Newgrange and the Bend of the Boyne* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2002).
- <sup>10</sup> E. Herman and N. Chomsky (1988) *Manufacturing Consent: the Political Economy of the Mass Media*, London: Pantheon; Battle of Boyne Visitor Centre (2015) <http://www.battleoftheboyne.ie/thebattlebeyond/>(Accessed 30 July 2015)
- <sup>11</sup> N. Johnson, 'Where Geography and History Meet: Heritage Tourism and the Big House in Ireland', in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 86(3): 1996, p. 551-66.
- <sup>12</sup> C. Regan Wilson (2009) Routes of Reconciliation: Visiting Sites of Cultural Trauma in the US South, Northern Ireland, and South Africa. [www.southernspaces.org/2009/routes-reconciliation-visiting-sites-cultural-trauma-us-south-northern-ireland-and-south-africa](http://www.southernspaces.org/2009/routes-reconciliation-visiting-sites-cultural-trauma-us-south-northern-ireland-and-south-africa). (Accessed 18 July 2015); P. Connerton (1989) *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge University Press; D. Todman (2009) The nineteenth anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, in M. Keren and H. Herwig, eds., *War Memory and Popular Culture*. Boston: Twayne; L. Kong (1999) Cemeteries and columbaria, memorials and mausoleums: narrative and interpretations in the study of deathscapes in geography, *Australian Geographical Studies*, 37(1): 1-10.
- <sup>13</sup> N. Jarman (1997) *Material Conflicts: parades and visual displays in Northern Ireland*. Oxford: Berg; S. Causevic and P. Lynch (2008) Tourism development and contested communities: the issue of Belfast, Northern Ireland. *EspacesTemps* <http://www.espacestemp.net/articles/tourism-development-and-contested-communities/> (Accessed 29 July 2015).

---

<sup>14</sup> E. Hobsbawn, *On History* (London: Abacus, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> P. Nora, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past. Vol. I: Conflicts and Divisions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *The Country of Memory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> K. Foote and M. Azaryahu, 'Toward a Geography of Memory: Geographical Dimensions of Public Memory and Commemoration', in *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 35 (1): 2007, p. 125-44; K. Foote, 'Object as Memory: The Material Foundations of Human Semiosis', in *Semiotica* 69: 1988, p. 243-68; K. Foote, 'To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory, and Culture', in *American Archivist* 53: 1990, 378-92; J. Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); M. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980); P. Nora, ed., *Les lieux de Memoire*, 2 vols. Paris: Gallimard; B. Schwartz, 'The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory', in *Social Forces* 82: 1982, p. 374-402; B. Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> Battle of Aghrim Visitor Centre. 2015 <http://www.discoverireland.ie/Arts-Culture-Heritage/the-battle-of-aughrim-visitor-centre/49840> (Accessed 30 July 2015)

<sup>18</sup> P. Shirlow, *Fear, Mobility and Living in the Ardoyne and Upper Ardoyne Communities* (Belfast: North Belfast Partnership Board, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> Traditional Music (2015) [http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/song-midis/Green\\_Grassy\\_Slopes\\_of\\_the\\_Boyne.htm](http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/song-midis/Green_Grassy_Slopes_of_the_Boyne.htm) (Accessed 1 October 2015).

<sup>20</sup> N. Jarman, 'Painting landscapes: the place of murals in the symbolic construction of urban space', in A. Buckley, ed., *Symbols in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1998).

<sup>21</sup> B. Ó Buachalla, *Aisling Ghéar. Na Stíobhartaigh agus an tAos Léinn 1603-1788*. Baile Átha Cliath: 169, 1996; translation by Gerry O'Reilly.

---

<sup>22</sup> F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968); E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978).

<sup>23</sup> Equivalent of Prime Minister.

<sup>24</sup> Irish Government, press release, Office of *an Taoiseach*, 5 December 1999.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Office of Public Works, *Battle of the Boyne Progress Report*, Dublin: Office of Public Works, 3 May 2001.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> *Dúchas* (2003) *Battle of the Boyne / Cath na Boinne – Oldbridge Estate*. Information provided by the Military History Society of Ireland.

<sup>31</sup> H. Laloli (March 2004) NIWI: Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Interview.

<sup>32</sup> A. Ogle (2008) *Returning to places of wounded memory: The role of World Heritage Sites in reconciliation*. 16th ICOMOS General Assembly and International Symposium: ‘Finding the spirit of place – between the tangible and the intangible’, Quebec, Canada <http://openarchive.icomos.org/56/1/77-Fdq3-292.pdf> (Accessed 15 July 2015)

<sup>33</sup> Some commentators feel that in real terms the ‘Glorious Revolution’ and opening up of parliament was very limited to the mercantile class who adhered to the official state Anglican religion.

<sup>34</sup> BBC News (2007) [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/northern\\_ireland/6645119.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/6645119.stm) (Accessed 31 July 2014)

<sup>35</sup> B. Ahern (2007) Ireland and Britain: A Shared History - A New Partnership. [www.independent.ie/irish-news/bertie-aherns-full-speech-to-the-houses-of-parliament-26443390.html](http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/bertie-aherns-full-speech-to-the-houses-of-parliament-26443390.html) (Accessed 3 August 2015)

---

<sup>36</sup> Tripadvisor, 2015. [http://www.tripadvisor.ie/ShowUserReviews-g186628-d1159987-r128390562-Oldbridge Estate Battle of the Boyne Visitors Centre-County Meath.html](http://www.tripadvisor.ie/ShowUserReviews-g186628-d1159987-r128390562-Oldbridge_Estate_Battle_of_the_Boyne_Visitors_Centre-County_Meath.html)

(Accessed 4 October 2015)

<sup>37</sup> TripAdvisor review, online, by 'Locksley9', Niagara Falls Ontario, dated 22 July 2015. [https://www.tripadvisor.ie/ShowUserReviews-g186628-d1159987-r291538406-Oldbridge Estate Battle of the Boyne Visitors Centre-County Meath.html#REVIEWS](https://www.tripadvisor.ie/ShowUserReviews-g186628-d1159987-r291538406-Oldbridge_Estate_Battle_of_the_Boyne_Visitors_Centre-County_Meath.html#REVIEWS)

<sup>38</sup> TripAdvisor review, online, by 'Saytan', Belfast, dated 5 April 2013. [https://www.tripadvisor.ie/ShowUserReviews-g186628-d1159987-r156668019-Oldbridge Estate Battle of the Boyne Visitors Centre-County Meath.html#REVIEWS](https://www.tripadvisor.ie/ShowUserReviews-g186628-d1159987-r156668019-Oldbridge_Estate_Battle_of_the_Boyne_Visitors_Centre-County_Meath.html#REVIEWS)

<sup>39</sup> TripAdvisor review, online, by 'JaneA', Mallow Ireland, dated 3 September 2015. [https://www.tripadvisor.ie/ShowUserReviews-g186628-d1159987-r306591321-Oldbridge Estate Battle of the Boyne Visitors Centre-County Meath.html#REVIEWS](https://www.tripadvisor.ie/ShowUserReviews-g186628-d1159987-r306591321-Oldbridge_Estate_Battle_of_the_Boyne_Visitors_Centre-County_Meath.html#REVIEWS)

<sup>40</sup> Fáilte Ireland (2014) *Visitors to Tourist Attractions 2009-2013*. Accessed 20 September 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Heritage Ireland (2015)

<http://www.heritageireland.ie/en/media/Event%20Leaflet%202015%20%20for%20Web%20A.pdf> (Accessed 1 August 2015)

<sup>42</sup> RTE News (2011) [http://www.rte.ie/news/special-reports/2011/0513/301016-queen\\_visit/](http://www.rte.ie/news/special-reports/2011/0513/301016-queen_visit/) (Accessed 4 August 2015)

<sup>43</sup> N. Johnson, 'Memorialising and marking the Great War: Belfast Remembers', in F. Boal and S. Royle, eds., *Enduring City: Belfast in the Twentieth Century* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 2006): 207-20; K. Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).