East Midlands projects help launch HLF's new First World War programme

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HLF is making at least £1m available per year for six years until 2019. It will provide grants between £3,000 and £10,000 enabling communities and groups right across the UK to explore, conserve and share their First World War heritage and deepen their understanding of the impact of the conflict.

Helping to launch the scheme at the House of Commons today, community groups from Leicester and Lincoln joined others from across the UK currently exploring what the legacy of the First World War means to them to share stories and welcome the news for future projects hoping to mark the Centenaries.

From how the First World War on the homefront in Leicester revolutionised the role of women in society, to the experiences of Leicestershire's diverse Sikh, Jewish, Gurkha, and Quaker communities during the conflict, there are so many stories to be told the legacy of which continue to impact and shape the lives of communities today.

Welcoming the launch of First World War: then and now Culture Secretary of State Maria Miller, said: "It is completely right that we mark the centenary of the First World War with a national programme capturing our national spirit and saying something about who we are as a people. But what we do also needs to help create an enduring cultural and educational legacy for communities. The HLF grant programme announced today will play a big part in this, and builds on the substantial investment they have already made towards the Centenary."

Sebastian Faulks CBE, broadcaster, novelist, author of Birdsong and member of the Government's First World War Centenary advisory group, said: "HLF's First World War small grants programme is an opportunity for every street, town or village to make sure they remember the cataclysmic events of a hundred years ago. It is a chance to learn and to commemorate in whatever way they choose."

Vanessa Harbar, Head of HLF East Midlands, said: "The impact of the First World War was far reaching, touching and shaping every corner of the UK and beyond. The Heritage Lottery Fund's new programme will enable communities in the East Midlands to explore the continuing legacy of this war and help young people in particular to broaden their understanding of how it has influenced our modern world."

Successful projects will include:
researching, identifying and recording local heritage;
creating a community archive or collection;
developing new interpretation of heritage through exhibitions, trails, smartphone apps etc;
researching, writing and performing creative material based on heritage sources; and

The new programme can also provide funding for the conservation of war memorials.

If a grant of more than £10,000 is needed for a First World War project, applicants can apply to HLF through its open programmes. HLF has already invested £12million in projects – large and small – that will mark the Centenary of First World War.

If you have a project idea to mark the Centenary, an online application pack is available on the programme page or by contacting the East Midlands Team on 0115 934 9050.

Note to editors

Examples of HLF funded First World War projects in the East Midlands:

Lincoln War Stories
Young people researched how the First World War impacted on Lincoln paying special attention to life on the home front and the changing role of women. The project, supported by an £8,300 grant to the Shooting Fish Theatre Company, meant the researchers could study personal letters from the Beechey family which lost five sons in the conflict. They also investigated the design and manufacture of the British Army's (and the world's) first tanks by a Lincoln-based company.

Using their discoveries they created a script, produced, directed and acted in a radio play which was broadcast to local schools and community groups. They also built web pages detailing the project. Sounds associated with the War, both at home and in the trenches, were recorded as a mobile phone app and a special event was mounted for the Museum of Lincolnshire Life's First World War exhibition.

Laura Kavanagh, Education and Community Outreach Co-Coordinator for Shooting Fish, commented:
"With the centenary of the First World War coming up in 2014 this seemed a natural and relevant subject to explore. Many of the group became fascinated by the effects this event would have had on the lives of those who experienced it and research into local involvement in WW1 revealed just how prevalent Lincolnshire's contribution was towards the war effort. The project was born out of a natural curiosity from our young performers about how the First World War affected people and an eagerness to celebrate Lincolnshire's achievements. Receiving the Heritage Lottery Fund Grant meant that Shooting Fish, with the help of heritage experts, were able to nurture the young people's curiosity and turn it into a thorough and much deeper understanding of the events of that time as well as offer them a space to creatively engage with their local history."

Leicestershire in the First World War
The contribution of Leicester's diverse communities to the First World War effort was uncovered in this project led by 20 local adults but which also included workshops in local primary schools. Involvement in the conflict by various groups, including the Sikh and Jewish communities, Gurkhas (one of whom won the Victoria Cross), Quakers and suffragettes was all researched. Previously unknown facts came to light as a result.

The project, carried out by Crystal Clear Creators with a £17,800 grant, sourced material from the Records Office, sporting organisations, the YMCA and local war memorials, including several that were rediscovered. A series of exhibitions is now providing local people with a far more vivid picture of how the War impacted on the lives of the city's inhabitants.

Sue Mackrell on behalf of the project, said: "The interest and enthusiasm of adults and children participating in the project has led to the uncovering of many previously untold stories of Leicester citizens' experiences of the war in the armed forces and on the home front. Researching individual stories from names on memorials has personalised the individuals and given them a 'voice', while exploring the experiences of women VAD's, munitions workers and refugees. By working in partnership with professional historians and archivists, participants have gained skills, expertise and confidence which will enable them to continue to develop knowledge and understanding of their community history."

Keeping the Home Fires Burning?
This Nottinghamshire community history project focuses on those left behind while the men of the village of Flintham went off to fight in France: it will investigate the women, children and older residents of the village, and how their lives, and the village at large, changed. Supported by a £16,710 grant the Flintham Society has recruited volunteers to research, record and display historic material relating to nine aspects of village life at the time: agriculture; social life; education; employment; religion; village economy; housing and health; population and migration; and gender issues.

The findings will be shared on the museum website and the project will culminate in an exhibition at the village hall in 2015. Each of the nine themes will have a separate talk and factsheet, which will be published together as a pack to give away to residents, exhibition and museum visitors.

Eyam 1914-18 A Second Sacrifice
As well as the centenary of the start of the First World War, the Derbyshire village of Eyam will next year also be commemorating the 350th anniversary of the arrival of the bubonic plague in their community. With the help of a £21,000 grant Eyam Museum will raise awareness of an historic parish calendar published in 1916 that included the names of 72 local men who had gone to fight in the War. Researchers will uncover the stories of these 72 men whose sacrifices mirrored those from centuries earlier who tried to stem the outbreak of the plague.

A special exhibition will be created with assistance from museum committee members, local volunteers and students from Hope Valley College whose research will range widely from local oral history and newspaper archives to records held at the Imperial War Museum in London.

UK Government Centenary plans
In October 2012, the Prime Minister set out the Government's plans to mark the centenaries of the First World War commencing in 2014. These plans include a £35m refurbishment of the First World War galleries at the Imperial War Museum (IWM); The Government's principal partners in the commemorations will be the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the IWM, but will encompass support for a multitude of other initiatives, large and small, as they come together in the months and years to come.

Speaking at the Imperial War Museum in October, Prime Minister David Cameron, said: "A truly national commemoration cannot just be about national initiatives and government action. It needs to be local too...Let's get out there and make this centenary a truly national moment in every community in our land."

Further information

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