New First World War programme opens in London

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Today, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is launching First World War: then and now, a £6m small grants programme to help communities mark the Centenary of the First World War.

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, a community group from East London 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.

Restoring a unique set of memorial church bells in East London with the help of local young people is just one of 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."

Sue Bowers, Head of HLF London, 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 London 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 London Team at London@hlf.org.uk or 020 7591 6151.

Notes to editors:

Examples of HLF funded First World War projects in London:

Revealing the Memorial Bells
A unique memorial to East Londoners killed in the First World War has been restored by the Memorial Community Church in Plaistow, thanks to a £40,800 grant. One of the church towers houses a set of bells that bear the name of 197 local men that died in the conflict. The bells are played using a clavier, or wooden keyboard. The project, involving local volunteers of all ages, has made it possible for the bells to chime once more. The people commemorated on the bells have been revealed and their lives researched enabling a permanent exhibition to be installed in the church. All the information about the project has been included in a dedicated website. At a special open day to mark completion of the project, 15 local young people led tours of the church and four have been taught how to play the bells. Philippa King, Project Manager on the Revealing the Memorial Bells project, said: “The bells were put in the church so local people would hear them ring and remember the men who had died in the First World War. But the bells had been forgotten up in the belfry, too rusty to be played, too dirty to even read all of the 200 names on them, so the men were forgotten. Thanks to funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the bells are ringing out again and now everyone who comes into the building can see and read about the bells; and remember those who were lost in the war.”

Crayford’s Unknown Warrior – The Story of Private William James White
Private William ‘Chalky’ White was the first Crayford soldier killed in the First World War to be buried in his home town. He died, aged 23, in July 1916 after being wounded in battle near Ypres in Belgium and his funeral became a focus for local families who were also grieving for loved ones lost in the conflict. Supported by a £39,500 grant Crayford Town Archive and Bexley Council created a website to tell not only Private White’s story, but also that of the War and how it impacted on the town. A wide range of historic documents, included Private White’s personal autograph book, were researched and digitized and the information collected was used to create a range of activities and resources that are now available for anyone to download for free from this website.

Welling will Remember
Volunteers from the local community are being trained to research and tell the stories of the men from Welling in Bexley who fought in the First World War. The project is being organised by The East Wickham and Welling War Memorial Trust backed by a grant of almost £32,000. As well as portable displays, the Trust will be producing a book and establishing an online war memorial which will have links to the stories of each of the men who died. There will also be a programme of educational events to engage new audiences in the project. As well as telling the stories of those whose names are already recorded on the existing memorial and others who survived the conflict, the project will seek to identify any local servicemen who have been forgotten so as to add them to the memorial.

From WW1 VAD Hospital to Community Church and Arts Centre
Shortly before the First World War started work began to replace an old tin structure used by St John’s Church, in Hallowell Road, Northwood, with a brick building. While construction continued the tin structure was pressed into service as a Voluntary Aided Detached Military Auxiliary Hospital. As soon as the new church building was completed it, too, was converted for hospital use just in time to receive casualties from the Battle of the Somme in 1916. The church continued to fulfill this role for the remainder of the War and on into 1919. During this time more than 2,300 patients were cared for.

The story of the church's wartime role will be told by Nothwood Community Arts, helped by a £10,000 grant, using photographic images, newspaper reports and first and second hand accounts, to create a temporary exhibition. The stories uncovered will also be presented as visual artwork and dramatised scenes, helping the community to mark both 100 years of the church building and the War.

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

Phil Cooper, HLF Press Office on 07889 949 183 or phillipc@hlf.org.uk