

Schoolchildren trace how Hackney went to war

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The project Hackney Remembers is being run by award-winning theatre company Fifth Word and has been made possible thanks to a grant of £45,100 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Pupils from Springfield School will investigate the effect of the war on East London men, especially those from Stamford Hill and Homerton, and will look especially at Jewish soldiers in the British army. Helping them with their detective work will be Hackney Archives, Hackney Museum, the Jewish Military Museum and the Imperial War Museum. Delving into personal letters, soldiers' diaries, memoirs, official documents such as call-up notices and killed-in-action telegrams, they will build up a picture of life on the frontline during the 'War to End All Wars'.

Meanwhile children from St John and St James Primary School will study the lives of the women and families left behind while the men were fighting in the trenches. Using images, artefacts, film, sound, letters and diaries the young researchers will tell the story of life on the home front and be able to compare life in Hackney now with a hundred years ago.

The project will culminate in a mobile exhibition for the whole community plus a digital resource pack for teachers at local schools to help them plan projects in time for the centenary of WWI in 2014. A documentary film will also be made about the project.

Community volunteers will be trained in a range of skills to research the information needed and the children taking part will act as young curators taking on the task of creating an exhibition for Hackney Museum.

Sue Bowers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: "As we approach the centenary many people want to learn more about the individual stories that will make this world-shattering event relevant on a personal level. The young people will be looking at history that had a profound effect on the lives of those that lived in their neighbourhoods."

For Fifth Word, Laura Ford, said: "Using drama teaching methods and resources from local museums, we can quite literally bring to life the personal stories of Hackney soldiers and their families. This will result in a meaningful travelling exhibition curated by the young people themselves looking at what happened on their own doorstep one hundred years ago."

Notes to editors

2014 sees the beginning of a series of centenaries marking the First World War. Key events and developments relating to the conflict will be commemorated, including the Battle of the Somme, the Gallipoli campaign, the changing role of women, the Armistice and the dedication of the first war memorials.

The Heritage Lottery Fund can provide funds to help organisations mark these important anniversaries by exploring the history and legacy of the war and helping people understand how it impacted on communities across the UK, especially their own.

HLF is working with Imperial War Museums (IWM), who are leading the UK's cultural commemorative programme for the centenaries. HLF applicants can access IWM expertise and resources by joining the centenary partnership.

There has recently been increased interest in the condition of war memorials across the UK. There are a number of sources of funding available to help people look after and learn from their local war memorials and to commemorate the heritage of sacrifice and conflict

Further information

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