# How Hertfordshire went to war in 1914

12/12/2013

Letchworth-based Herts at War has been formed to mastermind the project with support from Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and local community groups, historical societies and schools.

An ‘army’ of 500 volunteers will be recruited to carry out research, the results of which will include a travelling exhibition and a detailed website through which the public will gain a real-time picture of the War, the Centenary of which begins next summer.

Information held in local museums and county archives will be augmented by the memories of local people whose relatives were involved either as serving soldiers or on the Home Front. A particular task will be to investigate the names, more than 17,747 listed on 742 war memorials spread around the county to see what can be discovered about the men and their families.

In addition to those who fought, the local history detectives will be exploring the lives of those left behind looking at wartime civilian life, women’s suffrage, local conscientious objectors -many of whom came from Letchworth Garden City - and Belgian refugees,  more of whom settled in Hertfordshire than in any other part of the country. Also studied will be air raids by Zeppelins and their effect on the local population.

Herts at War will be working with a wide range of specialist partners, including the Imperial War Museum,  the National Army Museum, the North Herts Museums Service, the University of Hertfordshire, North Herts District Council, the Royal British Legion and the Hitchin-based 254 Medical Regiment Territorial Army.

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: “This project mobilises local communities throughout Hertfordshire connecting residents of today’s towns and villages with those whose lives were touched by the conflict a century ago. It will help to give young people in particular a more vivid understanding of the effects of the conflict.”

Jon Grant, Herts at War Project chairman (and Head of History at the Highfield School, Letchworth), said: “It is amazing to see the value placed on such a project that will enable people to really see the First World War as a conflict involving individuals who lived in places that we are familiar with, the only thing truly dividing us being the distance of time. With the support of the HLF we will be able to mark the centenary in a very personalised way; by local people, for local people.”

Helen Grant, Minister for the First World War Centenary said: “The centenary of the First World War next year is about so much more than big national events taking place in the full glare of media attention. Just as importantly, there will be thousands of smaller local initiatives highlighting how smaller communities coped with the terrible events unfolding around them. So it’s absolutely right that the Heritage Lottery Fund is helping bring all this work to fruition. ‘Herts at War’ is a brilliant example of how quite a modest grant, coupled with the passion and determination of volunteers can create something that will be valuable for generations to come.”

**Further information**

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