

Wales at War

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The impact of the First World War is still felt by us today. It is both a sad but significant part of our national heritage, our national story and our national culture.

But the scope of HLF funded work is not just at local level. We are also funding several national, Wales-wide projects which look at the War in different ways. One of the most innovative is linked directly to the Western Mail. This is why the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is providing funding to help communities mark the Centenary of the First World War over the next five years to 2019.

This commitment to remember and better understand the First World War and its implications is evident today as HLF announces funding for the major 'Wales @ War' project. This wide ranging initiative will provide an over-arching resource to record information about war memorials across Wales.

The National Library of Wales is leading the 'Wales @ War' project but it also involves a range of partners including the armed forces. HLF is committing £85,000 to this project and significant match funding has been secured from the Welsh Government which has integrated this project into the 'Wales Remembers' project board, of which HLF is a member. It was the project board which first made the case for Wales @ War, recognising the need for a single accessible and inclusive Wales-wide activity that would inspire everyone to get involved in the commemoration.

Nationwide research, largely led by schoolchildren, will identify locations and tell the stories and prepare biographies of the names featured on all Welsh war memorials. This wealth of information will be used to create a new digital app – a clever way of uniting the history of the First World War which started in 1914, with the technology of 2014.

This is, of course, not the only initiative we have funded. Since April 2010, we have awarded almost £3.5million to projects which explore the heritage of the First World War in Wales.

Many of these projects are funded through the 'First World War: then and now' grant programme, which provides up to £10,000 for community projects. Projects are also being funded through 'Our Heritage', which provides grants of £10,000-£100,000, and through 'Young Roots', where the projects are led by young people.

HLF awards are being made throughout Wales to help create greater understanding of the conflict and its impact:

- The Roll of Honour in St Augustine's Church, Penarth, will be re-gilded and restored to present the names of the 207 men who lost their lives. This restoration – utilising the engraving and gilding techniques used on the original Roll in 1920 - will also be accompanied by an exercise in connecting the names with the current families in the area, and thereby draw in the local community.
- In Grangetown, Cardiff, the Local History Society, which has never applied to HLF before, will work on a two year project investigating the 350 names which appear on the Grangetown Memorial.
- An impressive project is also being funded in the heart of Snowdonia. The First World War - A Great War? The bilingual exhibition, open free to the general public, will be held in the redundant St Julitta's church in Capel Curig in the summer of 2014. It will show many aspects of the impact of the First World War on the people of the Snowdonia area. Focussing on the 31 names on the war memorial in Capel Curig, the project will trace their war service, their regiments and where they served. It will also look at their families and the social conditions of the time and the effects of the war on work, leisure and tourism.
- In North East Wales, the Hope and Caegwrle War Stories initiative will use research and oral histories to create a short film and book to commemorate villagers who fought and died in the First World War.
- And in Torfaen an exciting initiative will explore and share the impact of the war in Torfaen on the county. This grant will research, explore, share the impact of, and raise awareness of the events of the First World War throughout Torfaen and local settlement areas. An eye-catching van, with digital equipment on board, will tour the county, targeting schools, youth clubs, supermarkets and libraries and capturing stories whilst on the move. This will give people from all walks of life the chance to share in the commemoration and understand more about the impact of the First World War in their area.
- The patriotic cartoons of J M Staniforth cheered readers of the Western Mail in Wales throughout the First World War and this project will digitise his wartime work and explore public feeling in Wales towards the First World War.
- Also of special note is a project carrying out research into 'The Role of YMCAs in Wales During the Great War and Beyond', which will help the public to learn, through an exhibition of photographs, memorabilia and historical information, about the work undertaken by local

YMCAs during the First World War and beyond. This touring exhibition will include a reconstruction of a YMCA First World War frontline hut, where drinks were served to the troops, depicted in a 1916 postcard entitled 'Walking Wounded'.

- Last November, HLF provided the Welsh Centre for International Affairs with an initial £32,000 development grant to make improvements at the Temple of Peace in Cardiff which houses Wales' National Book of Remembrance for the First World War. The Book of Remembrance itself will be digitised through the funding so that it will be accessible to all. The project will also look at existing information to enable people of all ages to better understand Welsh experiences during the war and the way that people feel now about conflict.
- And last month, HLF announced a major grant of over £2m to safeguard the home of Wales' most famous war poet, Hedd Wyn, near Trawsfynydd. Ellis Humphrey Evans was raised at Yr Ysgwrn and penned one of Wales' best known war poems, Rhyfel (War), and reflected the horrors of war throughout his work. The grant, awarded to the Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA), will ensure the conservation of Yr Ysgwrn, which inspired so much of his work, and will safeguard collections relating to Hedd Wyn, including Y Gadair Ddu (The Black Chair), the 1917 National Eisteddfod chair awarded to him posthumously after he was killed in action on the fields of Flanders.
 - Opening up Yr Ysgwrn to school children and to others was one of the key reasons for the award as it will make sure that future generations from Wales and beyond continue to be inspired by Hedd Wynn and the ultimate sacrifice he, and a generation of Welshmen, made in the First World War.
 - Like 'Wales @War' and so many other projects, Yr Ysgwrn brings alive the impact and history of the conflict not just on the battlefield, but for those at home too.

This small selection of projects demonstrates the breadth of First World War heritage from places, objects and literature, through to the stories of individuals. Over the coming years we anticipate that an even broader range of perspectives and explorations from across Wales will come forward, and our understanding of the conflict and its impact on our world today will undoubtedly be richer as a result of these projects.