What did you do in the war, Mummy?

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded a £16,710 Your Heritage grant to the Flintham Society to undertake a First World War centenary project in the Nottinghamshire village of Flintham. Volunteers will 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. Their discoveries will produce material for a website and a local exhibition.

Keeping the Home Fires Burning? will focus mainly on those left behind while the men of Flintham went off to fight in France: the women, children and older residents of the village, and how their lives, and the village at large, changed.

Emma Sayer, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East Midlands, said: “As we approach the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War many people will want to learn more about the individual stories that will make this world-shattering event relevant on a personal level. The emphasis on the families left behind will quite literally bring the conflict home to people.”

Flintham nowadays is a typical modern village, with a church, village hall, primary school, cricket pavilion, pub, small museum and community-run shop. But few of its current residents have any links to the people who lived in their homes a hundred years ago.

The project will use the history of Flintham’s houses as a jumping off point to capture people’s imaginations and connect them with past lives. Volunteers, drawn from all age and social groups of the village, will look into how the agricultural, social and cultural rhythms of life were disrupted, how women took over traditional male roles, how education was affected and whether employment patterns changed, even down to how people’s eating and shopping habits altered. Women came to the village with ‘land armies’, for example, and the project will try to discover whether any of them stayed.

It will build on material already held at Flintham Museum that looks at rural life through the eyes of a village shopkeeper. Other local material including school log books, church documents, newspapers and resources kept at the University of Nottingham Manuscript Department, will also be explored, as well as external sources such as the 1911 census, the 1910 Land Tax Survey and the National Archives at Kew.

The findings will be shared on the museum website and a dedicated blog, and the project will culminate in an exhibition at the village hall, which will run until December 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 and exhibition visitors.

The HLF’s Your Heritage grant will allow basic conservation of archives housed in outbuildings at Flintham Hall, which have not been listed and are at risk of deterioration. Young people taking their Duke of Edinburgh Award certificates will receive database training so that the museum card catalogue can be computerised.

“People are skilled in researching their own family history, but they tend to work in isolation,” says Sue Clayton, secretary of the Flintham Society, which runs Flintham Museum. “Our project aims to utilise those skills and apply them to the more communal activity of researching the village history. This will inspire us to use the material in different ways

and also bring people together.”

Further information

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