

The project will use local archives, letters from Wilfred Owen himself and oral histories to create a smartphone app to be used on the heritage trail which charts the time spent by Wilfred Owen in Dunsden. A booklet, new interpretation boards along the trail, exhibitions and an official launch event will all form part of the project to open up this important part of local history.

Owen, the great First World War poet, spent two formative years of his life in the Oxfordshire village of Dunsden as assistant to the vicar of All Saints' Church, before abandoning thoughts of a religious calling to follow his poetic vocation. In 1918 he lost his young life in the First World War, one week before Armistice.

Jennifer Leach, joint Chair of the Dunsden Owen Association, and Director of Outrider Anthems, says of the award: "The generous grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund enables us to celebrate this unique connection with one of England's greatest war poets. We plan to develop the Dunsden trail as a Smartphone app and an online trail, and will base it on the compelling letters Owen wrote home during his time here. There will be alternative formats for non-technically minded visitors."

John Bodman, also of the Association, adds: "There will be a number of additional events between 2014?18, including a memorial concert on 8 November 2014, some inspiring new musical commissions by the A440 choir and local composer David Breeze, and the marking of a cultural friendship link with Ors in France, where Owen was killed."

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South East, said: “Through his poetry and letters, Wilfred Owen painted a vivid picture of the atrocities of the First World War. He put pen to paper to express his feelings of anger at the cruelty he’d witnessed giving us a rare glimpse at the changing conditions for local people in the run-up to the conflict. We’re proud to be supporting this project that, especially on World Poetry Day, that will enable local people to learn about, remember and record this part of his tragically short life and explore the moving work he created.”

Culture Secretary, Maria Miller, said: “I am delighted that this project will celebrate one of the most profound and distinct voices of the First World War. To help ensure that Wilfred Owen’s voice – and those of other war poets - lives on through this next century we have today launched a series of audio recordings as part of World Poetry Day. If you listen in to our Audio Boo app, you’ll hear, for instance, Christopher Timothy reading *Dulce et Decorum Est*, one of Wilfred Owen’s most memorable poems, Professor Mary Beard reciting one of her favourite war poems, Shirley Williams reading verse by her mother, Vera Brittain, as well as Culture Minister, Ed Vaizey, and me also making our own contributions."

The association is hoping that visitors to Dunsden will be spurred on to read Owen’s poetry, which includes some of the most honest and compelling war poems ever written.

Further information

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