Wells Remembers exhibition to open at Wells and



Church parade during the First World War in Wells

The exhibition, which is part of a four-year project supported by a grant of £8,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund's (HLF) 'First World War: then and now' programme, will evolve to tell the story of the events of 100 years ago.

Visitors will experience the sights and sounds of the trenches, see and learn about curious and disturbing artefacts and discover the stories of individuals from Wells and the surrounding villages, with displays covering the home front and the fighting fronts.

The exhibition will draw on the City Archives, the museum's collections of images and artefacts, and a wide range of objects which have been generously lent to the Wells Remembers Project, including the Knight Collection – a fascinating collection of weapons, uniforms and equipment. A second exhibition will take place at the Wells Town Hall, also opening in the week following the 4 August centenary.

The project is a partnership between the Wells and Mendip Museum, City Archives, Blue School, Wells Cathedral School, Cathedral, Bishops Palace, Wells Journal, City Council and the Royal British Legion and, as well as HLF's funding, has received a matching contribution from local donors.

Martin Grass, the Chairman of the Wells and Mendip Museum, said: “We are very excited to be opening this exhibition, which has been created by volunteers and a genuine community partnership. The stories being told are fascinating, engaging and moving – and more stories are emerging each week from the research being carried out and through members of the community coming forward with letters and memories. We want people to get involved – not just by visiting the exhibition but by attending events and sharing their families’ experiences.”

Commenting on the grant award Nerys Watts, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund, South West, said: “The impact of the First World War was far reaching, touching and shaping every corner of the UK and beyond. The Heritage Lottery Fund has already invested more than £57million in projects – large and small – that are marking this global Centenary; with our small grants programme, we are enabling even more communities like those involved in the Wells Remembers to explore the continuing legacy of this conflict and help local young people broaden their understanding of how it has shaped our modern world.”

The project also includes a programme of events listed on the Wells Remembers website. The project has been coordinated by a group of volunteers and a partnership between the Wells and Mendip Museum, City Archives, Blue School, Wells Cathedral School, Cathedral, Bishops Palace, Wells Journal and the Royal British Legion – and is supported by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project has a number of different facets:

- **The Trench:** Having visited the trenches of Flanders and the Somme, Year 9 pupils from Wells schools have been undertaking project work reflecting their experiences and volunteer Geoff Dixon has led the recreation of a trench in the museum, along with officers’ dugout, machine gun post and no man’s land.
- **Stories of Remembrance:** Each year we will be looking at the stories of individuals from Wells and the surrounding area. In 2014-15 we start with the early naval skirmishes, the first battles of the western front including Ypres, and the Gallipoli campaign. Julia Wood, the archivist, has also been researching the stories of past mayors for display in the Town Hall.
- **Wells a century ago:** With loans, discoveries in the city archive and help from residents we have assembled an extraordinary collection of images and records of Wells and the local area. We are creating parlour and school room scenes to help tell these stories – and the story of the soldiers billeted in Wells.
- **Website:** A new project website called Wells Remembers will be launched to coincide with the exhibition opening and has been designed by a Cathedral School sixth former to provide not only access to the exhibition to those not able to visit, but grow to provide more information on many aspects of the conflict and its impact on Wells.

Events

?The project will be supporting a wide range of events, including:

- July onwards: WW1 films at the Wells Film Centre
- August: Weird and Wonderful Wells family history day
- September: St Cuthbert’s Music Festival, Priddy Local History Group WW1 Day
- October: Festival of Literature Wells Remembers” events, Royal British Legion Poppy Concert
- November: Bookworms evening presentation, War Poetry workshop, Cathedral drama event for primary schools, Remembrance Sunday
- December: Bishops Palace Winter Festival

Donors and support

In addition to the support of the HLF, Wells Remembers has benefited from contributions of time, materials and funding from a range of organisations and members of the community, as well as artefacts provided on loan. We are extremely

grateful for this generosity and in particular would like to acknowledge the following: Mr Knight, Mr Paul, Wells Reclamation, HMS Flying Fox, the Fleet Air Arm Museum, the Wells Antique Centre and Creative Edge.

Further information

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