First World War: Stories of the Empire to be



As the Centenary approaches, people of all ages throughout the United Kingdom will be reflecting on the events of the conflict, the experiences of men and women here and overseas, and how the war has shaped the last 100 years.

The event is hosted by the Victoria and Albert Museum as part of an ongoing programme of events and activities held across the UK to mark the Centenary of the First World War. Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) will also be on hand offering help and advice to people looking for support and funding for projects to share their stories of First World War History.

The V&A event will see a host of museums and cultural institutions large and small taking part. The Imperial War Museum, National Army Museum, Open University, Black Cultural Archives, Jewish Military Museum and United Kingdom Punjab Heritage Association (UKPHA) will join Westminster Archives, London Transport Museum, Eastside Community Heritage and the Nubian Jack Community Trust among others to explore themes around Black and Asian contributions to the First World War.

Key highlights include Dr Kurt Barling, broadcaster and Professor at Middlesex University talking about the First World War in Africa; Stephen Bourne reading excerpts from his new book *Black Poppies*; UKPHA leading a session on Sikh fighter pilots and the Asian contribution, and a panel discussion entitled ‘Who is remembering whom?’ exploring the diversity of stories related to the impact of the First World War and how they are presented in London’s heritage collections.

To date, £14.4million in HLF grants (part of £45million awarded UK-wide) has been awarded to projects across London so they can mark the Centenary and explore all aspects of First World War heritage that matters to them. Many fascinating stories are being told for the first time including: the significance of the first Cenotaph flag and it's connection with London's Docklands; Kingston poet John Galsworthy's campaigning for injured servicemen; projects revealing old Commonwealth recruitment to the Middlesex Regiment; and the experiences of Indian soldiers in the trenches on the Western Front.

"The story of colonial service during the First World War is a rich and fascinating story", said Suzanne Bardgett, Head of Research at Imperial War Museums. "We have investigated the levels of knowledge among communities in this country and those who have done projects have found there to be extraordinary material and stories to be uncovered. Communities across the UK have a special opportunity here. IWM's archives and those of many other institutions are just waiting to be investigated."

Wesley Kerr, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund London Committee, moderating the panel said: "The First World War was a seminal event in modern history, touching every continent and involving millions of civilians and soldiers throughout the British Empire. Troops from all over the world fought in the conflict, serving on various fronts, taking heavy casualties, and playing a crucial role. 2014 sees the beginning of a series of centenaries marking the First World War, and HLF will be working in closely with the Centenary partnership to help people uncover untold stories and commemorate the heritage of sacrifice and conflict that matters to them."

HLF is making at least £1million available per year until 2019 for small grants between £3,000 to £10,000 to enable communities and groups from all cultural backgrounds to explore, conserve and share their First World War heritage and deepen their understanding of the impact of the conflict. Follow us on twitter @heritagelottery, #understandingWW1 .

Notes to editors

Heritage Lottery Fund and support for First World War heritage

Through its First World War: then and now programme, HLF is making at least £1million available per year for six years until 2019. It is providing grants between £3,000 and £10,000 enabling communities and groups right across the UK to explore, conserve and share their First World War heritage and deepen their understanding of the impact of the conflict. To find out how to apply for funding visit www.hlf.org.uk/thenandnow. If a group needs a grant of more than £10,000 for a First World War project, it can apply to HLF through its open programmes, further information is available on our Understanding the First World War feature.

First World War: Stories of the Empire – Sackler Centre, V&A, Friday 24 January 6pm–9pm

Partner organisations and event activities include:

Panel discussion

Who is remembering whom? How is the diversity of stories related to the impact of the First World War on the Empire presented in London's heritage collections?

- Imperial War Museum – Suzanne Bardgett, Head of Research at Imperial War Museums
- UKPHA - Amandeep Madra
- National Army Museum – Alan Massie

- Kurt Barling, BBC London News, Professor Middlesex University London
- Black Cultural Archives – Steve Martin, Learning Manager
- Dr Santanu Das - Kings College London
- Wesley Kerr, Chair, Heritage Lottery Fund London Committee

Lectures and performances

- Westminster Archives: The Story of Walter Tull
- SS Mendi: Batani Marimba performance about SS Mendi
- UKPHA: The Sikh fighter pilot, the Red Barron and the Asian contribution to the First World War; Panel discussion
- Nubian Jak: Fighting On Two Fronts: African and Caribbean Heroes of WW1
- Stephen Bourne: Reading from his new book Black Poppies
- Kurt Barling: The War in Africa
- V&A: Voices of Memorality with Janet Browne
- Open University: The War at the Caribbean
- Phil Vasili and Nathan Ives-Moiba: Walter Tull 1888-1918, Officer and Footballer

Exhibitors

- Royal Airforce Museum
- London Transport Museum
- Eastside Community Heritage
- Postal Museum
- Jewish Military Museum
- Royal Geographical Society
- Fields of Battle
- The Fusilier Museum
- The National Archives