New First World War programme opens in the East of England

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Today, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is launching First World War: then and now, a £6m small grants programme to help communities mark the Centenary of the First World War.

HLF is making at least £1m available per year for six years until 2019. It will provide 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.

Helping to launch the scheme at the House of Commons today, Bishop's Stortford Museum and Rhodes Arts Complex joined others from across the UK currently exploring what the legacy of the First World War means to them to share stories and welcome the news for future projects hoping to mark the Centenaries.

A rare collection of police records describing crime and policing on the Home Front in Bishop's Stortford is just one of so many stories to be told the legacy of which continue to impact and shape the lives of communities today.

Welcoming the launch of First World War: then and now Culture Secretary of State Maria Miller, said: "It is completely right that we mark the centenary of the First World War with a national programme capturing our national spirit and saying something about who we are as a people. But what we do also needs to help create an enduring cultural and educational legacy for communities. The HLF grant programme announced today will play a big part in this, and builds on the substantial investment they have already made towards the Centenary."

Sebastian Faulks CBE, broadcaster, novelist, author of Birdsong and member of the Government's First World War Centenary advisory group, said: "HLF's First World War small grants programme is an opportunity for every street, town or village to make sure they remember the cataclysmic events of a hundred years ago. It is a chance to learn and to commemorate in whatever way they choose."

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of HLF East of England, 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's new programme will enable communities in the East of England to explore the continuing legacy of this war and help young people in particular to broaden their understanding of how it has influenced our modern world."

Successful projects will include:

- researching, identifying and recording local heritage;
- creating a community archive or collection;
- developing new interpretation of heritage through exhibitions, trails, smartphone apps etc;
- researching, writing and performing creative material based on heritage sources; and
- the new programme can also provide funding for the conservation of war memorials.

If a grant of more than £10,000 is needed for a First World War project, applicants can apply to HLF through its open programmes. HLF has already invested £12million in projects – large and small – that will mark the Centenary of First

World War.

If you have a project idea to mark the Centenary, an online application pack is available on the programme page or by contacting the the East of England Team at eastofengland@hlf.org.uk or telephone 01223 224 870

Notes to editors

Examples of HLF funded First World War projects in the East of England:

Crime on the Home Front : Policing Bishop's Stortford during the First World War
A very rare collection of police records that covers the period of the First World War is being made fully accessible for the first time. Bishop's Stortford Museum and Rhodes Arts Complex are using the £88,600 grant to make available an archive made up of constables' journals, incident logs and charge sheets that create a vivid picture of how the town was policed during the war.

The information was digitized and former police officers interviewed with the help of volunteers. An exhibition in the museum, a smartphone app re-creating a policeman's beat from the period and a play created by primary schoolchildren working with a local theatre group are all helping to bring to life this fascinating glimpse of the home front.

Sarah Turner, Crime on the Home Front project, said: "A rare find of police records dating from the mid-19th century to 1919 was the initial catalyst for the project. We really wanted to give the public access to an area which is rarely looked at, but was a huge part of ordinary day to day life. Police forces suddenly had to deal with all sorts of incidents that they were unused to – including problems with billeted soldiers and horses being shipped to France. These "ordinary" stories can often be lost, so this is a great opportunity to preserve and share stories of the First World War from a unique perspective."

Orford Museum WWI Exhibition, community and archive project
The First World War had a major impact on Orford, Orford Ness and the surrounding villages and countryside. As well as claiming the lives of local men who went to fight in the trenches and serve in the navy, there were experimental activities carried out by the newly-created Royal Flying Corps, German prisoners of war, and casualties recovering from their wounds in a local Red Cross convalescent hospital.

These and other aspects of the conflict will be brought together in a special community-wide project to create a centenary commemoration next year at Orford Museum with the aid of a grant of £28,600. A special exhibition, commemorative book and Church trails will be created with help from volunteers of all ages, including pupils from three local primaries and one secondary school.

Bedford Physical Training College Stories, World War I and II
For the first time the wartime service of Bedford Physical Training College students will be told, thanks to this project run by the college's Old Students Association supported by a £10,000 grant. Trained in teaching and massage the 'Bedford Girls' tended war wounded during the First World War. They assisted the Almeric Paget Military Massage Corps and helped to treat Highland Regiments billeted in Bedford. They also helped with wounded servicemen during the Second World War.

By utilising the college archive and collaborating with the Bedford Scots Society, Highland Regiment historian,Richard Galley, local historians and volunteers, a DVD for schools, universities and communities will be produced detailing this little known history. A Friends of the Bedford Physical Training College Old Students Association is being formed and

will be assisting in the project.

UK Government Centenary plans

In October 2012, the Prime Minister set out the Government's plans to mark the centenaries of the First World War commencing in 2014. These plans include a £35m refurbishment of the First World War galleries at the Imperial War Museum (IWM); The Government's principal partners in the commemorations will be the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the IWM, but will encompass support for a multitude of other initiatives, large and small, as they come together in the months and years to come.

Speaking at the Imperial War Museum in October, Prime Minister David Cameron, said: "A truly national commemoration cannot just be about national initiatives and government action. It needs to be local too...Let's get out there and make this centenary a truly national moment in every community in our land."

Further information

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