New First World War programme opens in the North West

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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, HLF-funded Lancashire-based project, Accrington Pals, 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.

From the shattering losses suffered by a battalion from Accrington on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, to the untold role played by Black soldiers from Liverpool on the battle fields, there are so many stories to be told, the legacy of which continue to impact and shape the lives of communities today.

Dan Rowbottom, Accrington Pals project, said: “The First World War had a devastating impact on the Accrington community; nearly everyone living in the area had a relative or friend who was killed or wounded when the battalion suffered extensive losses during the first day of the Battle of the Somme. Thanks to Lottery funding, our project enabled young people to explore and understand this tragic story which has shaped the town in which they live today.”

Sara Hilton, Head of HLF North West, said: “The impact of the First World War was incredibly far reaching, touching and shaping every corner of the UK and beyond. The Heritage Lottery Fund’s new programme will enable communities in the North West to explore the continuing legacy of this war and help young people in particular to broaden their understanding of how it has shaped our modern world.”

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."

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.”

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 HLF North West Team at northwest@hlf.org.uk or 0161 200 8470.

Notes to editors

Examples of HLF funded First World War projects in the North West:

PALS
A group of 15 young people studied the tragic story of the Accrington Pals, the British Army battalion recruited from the Lancashire town's population which suffered devastating losses on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. They used their findings to explain the story in a way relevant to their own age group. Working with the organisation Rowbot Street and supported by a £11,200 grant, the young people scripted and acted out the story in a short film that was screened for families, friends and partner organisations.

Their research included tracing old photographs of the town to link past and present. They also researched dress and hairstyles to add authenticity to their production. A local over-60s choir recorded period songs for the film soundtrack. In addition, the young participants led workshops about the story in ten secondary schools.

Black Families in the First World War - The Liverpool Story
Although over 100,000 Liverpool men enlisted during the First World War, there is little documentary evidence publicly available relating to those soldiers who came from BME communities living in the city and surrounding area. Some Black Liverpool families are able to trace their roots back as many as ten generations and the city has one of the oldest BME communities in Europe, yet photographs of Black soldiers in local archives are incredibly rare.

Supported by a £10,000 grant National Museums Liverpool is asking BME families to look back into their own family history to uncover the stories of the men (and women) who answered the call for King and Country. The project will produce a collection of oral histories and also the potential to enhance museum collections with both objects and archive material. The project will culminate in an exhibition and series of events at the new Museum of Liverpool on the waterfront.

Lancashire Cavalry in the First World War
The untold story of the Lancashire Hussars in the First World War will be told thanks to this project. The volunteer cavalry regiment, which dates back to 1848, was asked to serve in France early in the war and in November 1915 'D' Squadron was posted overseas followed by 'C' Squadron some months later. They were reformed as a cavalry regiment in May 1916 and held in reserve for the expected breakthrough on the Somme that never happened.

A grant of £9,900 means that 'D' Troop Lancashire Hussars can research the story of the individuals that served during the War, create a 'mobile museum' for use around the North West, build an interactive website about the unit's history and produce a period riding display to inspire, entertain, and educate whilst raising funds for local charities.

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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