When West Sussex went to war

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The Library Service will be working with the County Record Office plus volunteers, teachers, schoolchildren and students to create a vivid picture of how towns and villages, families and individuals were affected by what was called 'the war to end all wars.'

A major focus of the project will be to create 40 case studies telling how the war affected people in different ways - from servicemen to those on the home front. The project will delve into the family backgrounds of local people involved, and try to discover their fate. Domestic issues such as recruitment, home defence, morale and dissent, internment of foreigners, rationing and the threat of zeppelin air raids will be explored. So will the effect of the war on the towns and villages of the county.

West Sussex schools will be involved in putting together teaching packs to aid further study. County newspapers covering the period 1910 to 1925 will also be digitised, to cover the years leading up to the War and its aftermath.

The results of the project will mean a new a dedicated website to help researchers and residents trace family histories, a new book entitled West Sussex at War 1914-18, and a travelling exhibition that will tour county Libraries during the summer of 2014.

"We are delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has given us this grant," said County Council Deputy Leader Lionel Barnard, who oversees the Library Service. "It means we can respond to a growing public interest in World War One, and the increasing number of requests for information about how local people were affected."

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South East England, said: "As we approach the centenary many people want to learn more about the individual stories that will make this world-shattering event relevant on a personal level."

Volunteer researchers will be scouring accounts from the County Record Office, local newspapers from the period and the extensive archives of The Royal Sussex Regiment. Records show that four servicemen from the county regiment won Victoria Crosses.

Parochial recruitment brought huge losses to local communities during the key battles of the trench war on the Western Front. The regimental history records the heavy casualties suffered by the three Southdown battalions during the attack on the Boar’s Head near the Rue de Bois which was staged as a diversionary tactic on June 30 1916, the day prior to the Battle of the Somme. It has been referred to as 'The Day Sussex Died.'

Notes to editors

- *The Battle of Boar’s Head was fought on June 30 1916, at Richebourg L'Avoue. Three battalions from the Royal Sussex Regiment took part and over a period of five hours lost at least 17 officers and 349 men killed. A further 1,000 men were wounded or taken prisoner. Among the casualties were 12 sets of brothers including the Blakers and Pannells of Worthing, the Bottings of Horsham and the Bristows from Wiston near Steyning. The following day the Battle of the Somme claimed 20,000 allied lives on the first day.
- 2014 sees the beginning of a series of centenaries marking the First World War. Key events and developments relating to the conflict will be commemorated, including the Battle of the Somme, the Gallipoli campaign, the

changing role of women, the Armistice and the dedication of the first war memorials.

- HLF can provide funds to help organisations mark these important anniversaries by exploring the history and legacy of the war and helping people understand how it impacted on communities across the UK, especially their own.
- HLF is working with Imperial War Museums (IWM), who are leading the UK's cultural commemorative programme for the centenaries. HLF applicants can access IWM expertise and resources by joining the centenary partnership.
- There has recently been increased interest in the condition of war memorials across the UK. There are a number of sources of funding available to help people look after and learn from their local war memorials and to commemorate the heritage of sacrifice and conflict.

Further information

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