

Today, Willaston Village Festival Society has received £9,800 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a project, Lest We Forget – Willaston Remembers Its First World War Fallen. Awarded through HLF's First World War: then and now programme, the project will focus on researching the background of the 34 names recorded on the village war memorial.

Students from Neston High School will be undertaking research into the lives of soldiers who attended Public Schools including Eton College.

Members of the local Church Youth Group will conduct research at Liverpool Cathedral.

The Darby and Joan Club will visit the Cheshire Military Museum and then record their memories related to the affects of the War on their families.

It is also hoped that Willaston Primary School will examine the church records relating to the casualties buried in the churchyard.

Volunteers will be researching Cheshire and Wirral archives as well as those held at Port Sunlight Museum.

All this research will be published in a book and on a DVD to form a lasting record.

The Village Festival in 2015 will feature an exhibition presenting all this material and an End of War street party for the children will be held at the same time.

To mark the Centenary of the First World War, the project will enable local people in Willaston to come together to preserve the memories and heritage of the villagers who lived through the War. Many volunteers of all ages will undertake research. They will, also, contribute to the publication of a book and DVD recording this project.

The father of Lt Lonsdale, one of those commemorated , actively worked to ensure the construction of the memorial. David Percival is commemorated on the First World War memorial plaque while his son, Joey, is commemorated on the Second World War plaque, the only family to lose both father and son in war.

The Festival Society's Heritage sub-committee said: "We are thrilled to receive the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and are determined to use the grant to ensure that those recorded are not just names but are remembered as villagers who left behind families and ways of life very different to our own."

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West England, said: "The project will span the generations with young and old researching and contributing stories to show how the impact of this global conflict was felt among the families in this small community.

Notes to editors

Willaston Village Festival Society was founded in 2007 to organise a major Festival in our village every three years. The next Festival will be in 2015. The aims of the Festival Society are:

- To encourage village community spirit;
- To celebrate the village's cultural achievements and interests
- To provide enjoyable events for all
- To support village groups and projects

The Festival Society actively supports village heritage projects such as this First World War research.

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HLF-funded First World War projects include:

- First World War Centenary Project, IWM London
- An HLF grant of £4.5m is transforming IWM London (part of Imperial War Museums) by creating new ground-breaking First World War Galleries.
- Flintham Society – Keeping the Home Fires Burning?
  Keep the Homes Fires Burning? is a community history project looking at the impact of the First World War on life in the Nottinghamshire village of Flintham.
- Tank Museum – Access all Areas, Dorset
  Holding the world's finest tank and armoured vehicle collection, The Tank Museum is a popular visitor attraction in the heart of Dorset. HLF's grant is being used to house 130 'at risk' vehicles, putting the entire collection indoors for the first time.

Through its First World War: then and now programme, HLF is making at least £1million 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.

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 www.hlf.org.uk/firstworldwar.

UK Government Centenary plans

In June 2013, the Government set out its 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 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.

Further information

For further information, images and interviews, please contact Joan Butcher at Willaston Village Festival Society on 0151 327 5191, email: infoconf@dircon.co.uk