Connected histories: Muslim contributions in the



Punjabi Muslims in the British Army

More than 430,000 Muslims of South Asian origin joined the British Army between 1914 and 1918, after which many relocated to Britain. We Also Served, a project led by Xtra Mile West Midlands (XMWM), will focus on the lives and service of those who settled in Birmingham and the impact their involvement had on their descendants still living in the city.

As well as exploring local archives and collections, the project will collect memories, photos, medals and letters passed down to families of the servicemen to build a bank of knowledge about the little-documented aspect of the war. A team of 15 volunteers will receive training from Birmingham Libraries and Archives to carry out the research.

A digital gallery, exhibitions and a programme of events and workshops will bring the project alive for people of all backgrounds in Birmingham and give the First World War centenary added meaning for the city's Muslim residents.

XMWM are especially keen to involve young people in the project to highlight the role their ancestors, and their peers' ancestors, played a century ago and explore how it has helped shape today's diverse community.

As well as gaining HLF funding, the We Also Served project has already generated great interest in the city; with the Library of Birmingham contributing £10,000 of funding and Birmingham's Centre for Cultural Engagement set to play an

advisory role.

Haroon Ravat, Director of Xtra Mile West Midlands, said: “Britain’s wartime past is a legacy that belongs to everyone that contributes to our multi-cultural society. This important landmark project will help to archive stories that celebrate this shared endeavour and sacrifice for the benefit of future generations.”

The Heritage Lottery Fund has already invested more than £58million in projects – large and small – that are marking this Centenary. Head of HLF West Midlands, Reyahn King, said: "We are delighted to support this project, which reflects our continued work in Birmingham to encourage applications exploring our diverse heritage. The impact of the First World War was far reaching, touching and shaping every corner of the UK and beyond. Our small grants programme is enabling even more communities like those involved in We Also Served to explore the continuing legacy of this conflict and helping local young people in particular to broaden their understanding of how it has shaped our modern world.”

Notes to editors

About Xtra Mile West Midlands

Xtra Mile West Midlands (XMWM) is a community interest company that delivers arts, educational and cultural activities for young people living in deprived inner-city areas.

Further information

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