Today's Scouts unearth story of Anglesey Scout



1st Menai Scouts find out more about the First World War Paul Pickard

The 1st Menai Bridge Scout Group is embarking on a two-year project to explore the role of the local Scouts and Scout leaders during the First World War. As they aim to bring the past to life, they are also investing in the latest technology to develop a digital map which highlights the contribution made by Scouts during the conflict.

In particular, the group are keen to discover more about John Fox Russell, an Anglesey Scout from Holyhead who received the Victoria and Military Crosses. He was a Captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps and was killed in Palestine in 1918.

17 year-old Elin Thompson is a current Scout with the 1st Menai Bridge group, and is interested in the project because of their very personal connection as part the Anglesey Scouts: “Learning about John Fox Russell means we will get to find out about someone just like us, but from 100 years ago.

“Going through old papers and documents makes it so real, and it’s scary to think that one of us now could just go to war, but that’s exactly what he did do. I’m glad that Scouts had the courage to fight in the war even though they were so young.”

Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the project is one of many featuring today at a special event at the Senedd in Cardiff, where visitors will be encouraged to consider new ideas for activities to help them mark the Centenary milestones of the First World War.

The group has made some interesting discoveries already, as Scout Leader Stephen Mudge explains: “The Scout Group was founded in 1909, although it closed temporarily in 1916 as many Scout Masters and Scouts had gone to war.

“We want to find out more about these young men and what happened to them, developing a digital database where we can cross-reference people, places, events and items. We will also be touring around Anglesey to visit, document and photograph key places and war memorials to make sure these local stories are not forgotten.”

Their aim is to travel to the Imperial War Museum in London to see the largest collections of VC medals and then to visit the RAMC museum in Aldershot to find his medals – experiences such as these will bring it all to life for today’s Scouts."

Stephen Mudge continues: “And although we are looking at the past we have invested in modern technology, quadcopter cameras that will help us develop a digital map of burial sites for these Scouts across north Wales.”

Heritage Lottery Fund has supported a variety of projects throughout Wales and the UK that help people to find out more about their First World War heritage, with 63 projects being awarded a grant in Wales so far.

Due to its success, HLF has made an additional £4million available for communities looking to explore, conserve and share their local First World War stories and connections. Grants are available from £3,000 to £10,000 from the First World War: then and now programme, particularly those looking to explore the Somme in 2016.

Richard Bellamy, Head of HLF Wales, explains: “The demand for National Lottery funding for projects that help communities to explore and share the heritage of the First World War has been overwhelming. As we can see from this excellent project at Anglesey, we know that there is huge interest in marking the Centenary and exploring that heritage and stories in new and different ways.

“However, there are still more stories to tell, many of which have never been told or have been forgotten over the years. Some of these are thought-provoking and inspiring, some are uncomfortable and create debate. We want to encourage communities to explore these stories. The additional funding we have announced will help even more people to get involved and explore a greater range of stories that ultimately give us a better appreciation of how the war shaped the world we live in today.”

For more information about the First World War, have a look at our Understanding the First World War feature.

Further information

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1st Menai Bridge Scout Group wins Heritage Lottery support