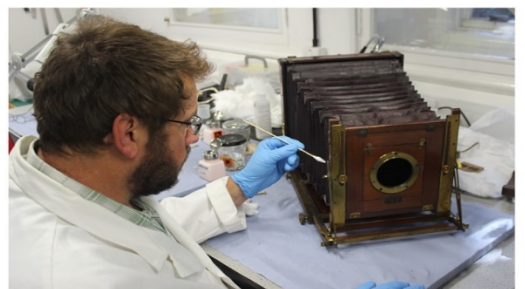


Evaluation of Heritage Lottery Fund's First World War Centenary Activity: *Year 4 report - Case Study Summaries*

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Author(s):

Elaine Batty

Will Eadson

Mark Stevens

Nicola Verdon

**Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) and Department of
Humanities**

Sheffield Hallam University

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The New Zealand Rifle Brigade & Cannock Chase 1917-19

Organisation: Association of Friends of Cannock Chase

Funding Stream: Then and Now

Funding Amount: 8,600

Location: Staffordshire

Summary

Friends of Cannock Chase (FoCC) membership is drawn from Cannock, Hednesford, Rugeley, Stafford and Penkridge. In the early post war period, FoCC campaigned for recognition of the heath as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to give the Chase greater protection. The group has a programme of walks and visits and it monitors all aspects of events on the Chase. In the autumn and winter, it also undertakes heathland management work and in the summer litter picks. There are currently around 100 members.

In 1914, two large army camps were constructed on Cannock Chase. Training trench systems still survive, as well as extensive archaeological remains of camps, including hut bases, former roads and railways. The HLF project 'The New Zealand Rifle Brigade & Cannock Chase 1917-19' focused on commemorating the 5th (Reserve) Battalion, New Zealand Rifle Brigade (NZRB) arrival and two years stay at the army training camps on Cannock Chase through delivery of a series of school workshops, events, tours and family activities.

This grant was the third in a series of four independently awarded WW1 heritage grants to the Society by the HLF. Although 'The New Zealand Rifle Brigade (NZRB) & Cannock Chase 1917-19' was a discrete award this evaluation has included reference to the other projects supported by the HLF. It has done so because the partners involved in their delivery believe them to hold continuity.

Background

This case study report is based on a review of project documentation (including HLF application, case paper, and progress report. The educational pack and other exhibits from the projects work were also made available). Interviews were conducted with:

- The project lead, and Secretary of the FoCC.
- A stakeholder from the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership.
- A volunteer, member of FoCC and secretary to a local history society.
- A stakeholder from the Young Archaeologist group, and staff member of Cannock Chase Museum.

Motivations

The motivation for applying for HLF grant funding preceded the 'The New Zealand Rifle Brigade & Cannock Chase' project and appears to have been part of wider funding strategy

initiated by the AONB charged with the duty of care for the chase. The stakeholder working from the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Beauty and the Project lead explain below:

“As a partnership we wanted to commemorate the First World War, these two camps, from 2014 to 2018, and so we assisted the FoCC to put in the applications. They are a small organisation, a small charity, but as a partner we were quite happy we could support them ... The idea was that there would be something in each year for the commemorations, and so working with them we worked on a project profile to do the 4 years but rather than having a lump sum at the beginning which is a bit daunting, by putting in yearly proposals they were able to have these grants, they have worked really hard and really well ...”

“I was approached by a couple of local groups to take part in the Great War projects ... initially the meeting was to find access to funding because I am from a registered charity - the FoCC- it was ideal for us to do the actual application because we would have more chance of being successful, which we were, and from then we did three projects with a fourth in the pipeline ... My group the FoCC have really not had that much involvement in it – they are an aging group, so really the group has only benefited from the publicity of our name, which has had a knock-on effect – more hits on our website and a few new members” (project lead)

Activities

The project delivered of the following:

- A freelance educational worker developed and co-ordinated opportunities for young people from the Cannock Cadets Detachment and the Young Archaeologist Club to take part in activities which researched and told the story of the NZRB’s time on the chase; exploring NZRB graffiti on the Triumphal Arch at the Shugborough Estate.
- A series of guided walks were conducted around the Chase which interpreted the NZRB, the Messines Model (a model village built by the NZRB to support training) and areas of Brocton Camp.
- A freelance educational worker created a suite of curriculum-linked learning activities delivered alongside the library to two local schools.
- A freelance worker delivered a series of creative family sessions held locally, focussing on the NZRB and some of their individual stories. Using archive images of the NZRB, diary entries, postcards and graffiti – the project interpreted their story through art and theatre.

Support received

The project lead and the stakeholder from the AONB were largely positive about the support they received from the HLF, the grants amounted to a sizeable contribution to their activities on the Chase and gave them a focus upon the heritage of war. These projects would not have gone ahead if HLF funding had not been forthcoming.

As was the case elsewhere in this evaluation, the only concern was with the high staff turnover of grant officers leading to a lack of continuity:

“In the beginning there seemed to be a lot of fluctuation in personnel at HLF - you just about get used to one person and then they would move but in the past couple of years they have had good support ... in their (the HLFs) terms it is small amounts of money, but it has made such a difference” (Stakeholder from AOB)

Engagement

Partnership working

Although the named applicant on the grant application is the FoCC, it appears that the staff on the Cannock Chase AONB had a central and guiding role in determining the nature of the grant request and the way activity would be delivered. In terms of partnership working this ensured that the FoCC allied their intended activities to the strategic goals of the AONB:

“We helped with the message – where it fitted in with (the AONB) management plan, provided a letter of support, and then knowledge and expertise on protected landscape, helped them with Job descriptions and adverts and interviews for co-ordinators of projects so they did not have to employ them (a step too far)”

The secretary of the FoCC believes that project activities have increased the links of his society with those of other history groups, both locally and further afield:

“yes, it has strengthened those and enriched them, we have met a lot of the local history groups, in fact I have joined one as well. We have even had the Durham medical core come down, we gave them a guided tour of the hospital site ...”

The stakeholder from the AONB observed that the project had had a positive impact through creating community volunteering links for the Local Authority (LA) to foster in their efforts to manage green spaces in the future:

“The benefit to the partners, especially the LA, is the pot of volunteers which they can call upon (now), so it has helped the Area of Outstanding Beauty unit, the local council that there is a small pool of volunteers to help out which they are very grateful for ... if people have free time they will support the LA with anything that might be going on.”

The Museum of Cannock Chase was also an important partner and beneficiary from the HLF grants, both drawing audiences to its existing exhibits, including those relating to WW1, and supplementing its knowledge of the NZRB and the camps on the Chase. Their facilities and museum space were also used for talks, family fun days and meetings. The Young Archaeologist group who participated in the graffiti project were engaged through the museum itself who run the group on a voluntary basis.

Volunteering and participation

The application stated that the project would aim to target of 220 people for attendance in its the talks/events, family workshops and guided tours and to engage 30 volunteers. In addition, the school's sessions would work with 4 local schools, and reach a minimum of 120 local school children. The evaluation could not determine these figures, but those who were interviewed pointed to a variety of ways people were successfully engaged through volunteering and participation.

The projects activities were, in the main, designed and delivered by free-lance professional (paid) workers (i.e. project co-ordination, the production and delivery of school's packages, family fun days and the archaeology graffiti exercise). This entailed that voluntary engagement appeared to be rather circumscribed in this tranche of HLF funding. The argument was made by several interviewees that this was necessary because the free-lance worker would have the necessary skills and expertise to deliver a 'professional job'.

“Yes I am the project lead, I have got support from the AONB, and a couple of other committee members, but primarily the project lead, but on each occasion we have employed a project co-ordinator which is necessary – they have so much experience to bring to it, I would not say it would have been a flop but it would not have been as

professional [] He had his own company called Audio Trails so he had got a lot of business experience and a lot of work in with schools ... he produced some superb documentation, especially for the schools and for the two youth groups we worked with.” (project lead)

The volunteers who helped on the historical research for the project, and in facilitating walks were also drawn from the pool of volunteers that had existed due to previous award activities; engagement in these projects appears to have attracted a core of committed members:

“The volunteers from the first phase, we did we got a hardcore of about 12 volunteers and they have come through to this third project, amazing people they put all the time in...” (project lead)

“This one wasn’t so heavy on the volunteer side, but a lot of research has gone on, one volunteer came in to teach others how to do the research, she saved you wasting your time, telling you the proper web sites to go to, that has been a big help. About half a dozen volunteers help with walks, leading the walks, and others help run the Great War hut (previous grant), which before the project started was only open every other weekend ... they are open now every weekend, 10-4 rain come shine, even on New Year’s Day ... that is one of the greatest things we have done...” (Project lead)

The background of those engaging in the project is mixed in terms of age, but with the older and typically retired volunteers doing most of the active work whilst the young were recipients of educational sessions or engaged through family fun activities. The project lead felt the core volunteer group were reflective of the wider population groups:

“I would say on the tours and walks it has been mainly retired people, mainly whiter, if not all; although we have shown younger groups around on tours – the young archaeologists and cadets and the schools; but low ethnicity - mainly white, but that is probably our area, not through choice obviously.”

The activities of FoCC have been mindful of people who would find access to the Chase otherwise difficult, and in addition the Graffiti project engaged children with special needs in a positive manner:

“With the coach tours we tried to get an audience who did not have ready access to the Chase, they would be poor mobility people ... a lot of the walks we have scoped out ... there is a lady from Cannock where they have a very poor rating for obesity and drinking ... out of work and so on, and her role is to try and get people active and we have a load of walks devised that she is going to have , and we are trying to get them walking ...”(Project Lead)

“The one thing I will say is that because it was a more hands on practical thing some of the children who have got difficulties – slight autism or they are ADHD - are happier doing something like that and learn a lot more rather than sitting at a desk.”
(Stakeholder)

It was not possible to ascertain at the time of evaluation the nature of the engagement with the schools because there was nobody who participated in the project available for comment. The intention to work with four schools, however, was reduced to two, and the project lead observed there were difficulties engaging with them, or in getting feedback afterward.

Dissemination

The primary means of dissemination of knowledge about the 3 HLF projects and WW1 heritage has been through the guided walks, coach tours and talks to history societies and other interested local organisations (horticultural societies for example):

“We can get anything between 10 and 50 (on the walks), we have also been asked to give talks to various groups and Trevor and one of the volunteers we trained up is doing that; a lot of talks, and from that you get groups who want to come out and walk, the second part of the project also included coach tours around the area, 4 or 5, and they were really popular” (Stakeholder from AONB)

The material gathered, and knowledge unearthed has been shared, but there appears to be no central physical or online resource from which it can be accessed; although the schools project was realised in a resource pack with an educational loan box of learning that can be accessed through the library:

“All the research we have done has been put into documents that we can send to people, and we take them to show them, we talk about it, there is a mountain of information on my computer at home, and on other volunteers, that we can send if anyone wants it ... I want everyone to enjoy what is out there ... some of it has gone on the local Great War web site, and on Staffordshire past track ...” (Project Lead)

Making a difference

How the project achieved outcomes for heritage

Heritage is better identified and recorded.

The graffiti had only recently been discovered by the National Trust Archaeologist and was yet to be photographed/recorded. The project photographed and recorded the graffiti and have shared the information they found when carrying out research:

“I located a diary in New Zealand that had not been found before, a personal diary of one of these men, an officer, and I was involved in getting that transcribed and sent over for the project and that information has told us far more than we ever knew about what they were doing here ... the training, what type of training ... a lot wider picture, we even had a little bit of contact with some of the families that were descendants from these men in NZ” (Volunteer)

The research undertaken by volunteers in this project adds to the increased knowledge of the WW1 heritage that other HLF projects have unearthed and complements the Staffordshire local Authority archaeological study of the Chase also funded by the HLF

“The two strands of initial (HLF) project were to manage our visitors so they could get a good experience safely without exposing a protected landscape to hordes of visitors - there are those delicate balances about giving people good experiences and being there telling them what they are looking at rather than giving them a leaflet and letting them off willy nilly ... the HLF enabled a trainer and co-ordinator to come on board. The second one was research on who was here, and again we picked up more volunteers who researched in the record office in Stafford, so we could get more of an idea who was here, not just soldiers, so again we have more stories ... and then the third phase ... all about the NXR who came.” (AONB stakeholder)

Heritage is better interpreted and explained

The walks and talks organised through the FoCC have been a way of disseminating the research gleaned by volunteers about the New Zealand Rifle Brigade, and they have been well attended, and productive of more understanding of the history of the Chase.

“Next week we have another tour of the New Zealand lines at Brompton camp, the first one we did we had 25, a surprise given the horrendous conditions ... the knock-on effect of that was amazing ... I got contact with lots of follow up material, ... and others who had been on bringing others around [...] the ripple effect of showing the public what is available out there has been impressive ... so the public are getting to know about the camps.”

The free-lance worker appointed by the project worked with Staffordshire Libraries Service to provide local school children with literacy activities linked to the NZRB and the First World War. Peter Millet, the author of ‘The Anzac Puppy’ (a children's book about the First World War and the NZRB through the lens of their dog mascot on the Chase) agreed to take part in the project from his home in New Zealand and gave a storytelling and Q&A sessions via video link.

A suite of curriculum-linked learning activities was developed for delivery alongside the project and for future use. The children were encouraged to write their own story and taught storytelling skills which they would use back at school. The evaluation was unable to speak to any of the children or staff from the two schools involved, but the materials were open for inspection and appeared a comprehensive and engaging way for children to be introduced to the history of WW1 (“... they did have a lot of hands on dressing up which is why we did the school loan box, lots of tools for them to play with ...”). These resources are now available on loan from the library for schools to use in the future.

A volunteer, with a keen interest in war heritage and researcher from the previous phases of the HLF grants to FoCC, carried out the research on the names graffitied on the Triumphal arch and this information adds to the store of WW1 local heritage knowledge emerging from the HLF grants that preceded this one:

“It opened a lot more than we thought about when we researched the names and got this information ... it snowballs and opens more questions and we are finding the community are wanting to set up their own little projects as a result of that.” (volunteer)

How the project achieved outcomes for people

People developed skills

The stakeholder from the AONB believed that one of the important elements of the HLF funding stream had been that it had enabled a core group of volunteers to form who had acquired the knowledge and skills to act as guides to the area, both in terms of its heritage and in terms of alerting publics to conservation issues:

“There is not much there now (of the army camps). Lumps of concrete, but you can interpret what is now underground and that is where the volunteers have been really useful, and this process has been really useful because it started off that we wanted to train people to lead walks so that they are knowledgeable about the project but also how to lead walks, how to prepare for a walk and do the visitor management side of things, because for us the other part of it is what is there on the chase now that still needs to be protected.”

School children were given insights into the processes of storytelling.

Volunteers were trained in researching and recording historic information and developed skills in organising events.

People developed confidence in talking to groups of people whilst delivering tours

People will have learnt about heritage

Amongst the core volunteers the interest in history is keen and those interviews cited examples of volunteers devoting much time and energy to uncovering and interpreting the details of the Cannock Chase military camps, but also of moving on to new projects, and to further their own knowledge by pursuing higher education courses;

“(the) main skills base is retired people interested in local history ... very much local history, some people have had an interest and then their interest has been furthered by some of the things we have done; we’ve got one person who was on the second block of work who volunteered on the research in the archives and he really got into doing research on people - he has been researching people from a visitors book, but that led him to a postgrad degree that he started at Wolverhampton university on local historical studies – he is a retired person ... that was great because he now has that interest in his own locality.” (volunteer)

The graffiti project conducted by a freelance worker with the young archaeology and cadet group introduced young people to heritage in an interesting and engaging way, helping them to think of local heritage and the war, but also how research is conducted and what can be used as evidence and how. The two groups met for two separate events at Shugborough Triumphant Arch. They were introduced to the estate and the monument. Attendees were asked to study the graffiti and say what caught their eye and why. It was discussed why people make marks like the graffiti and whether it was criminal damage; looking at it from the perspective of the ‘artists’ and the landowner. The story of the NZRB was introduced and the etchings were recorded. Photographs, drawings and rubbings were taken and some of the group drew plans of the arch and indicated on which faces the graffiti was located.

“Because they are young children it is trying to get them to look at what is a primary source, what is a secondary source and the different kinds of primary sources ... so that was good.” (Stakeholder/partner)

Whilst the two groups of young people were reported to have enjoyed the exercise (“It did provoke some good answers from the children, got them thinking”) it appears that the intention of engaging them with archival research was not realised:

“They did want to carry on and do some research afterwards which was the idea but unfortunately due to the fact they came in August and we don’t meet again in August they were not able to do that ... but in November we went on the three memorial walk ... they saw the graves of the NZRB and so it all became a bit more imbedded in the history, they understood it a bit more - so it helped us really in that respect”

The Museum of Cannock Chase was used as a base for some of the family events and activities and this would have introduced its existing audiences to learning more about the NZRB on the Chase. The tours of the archaeological earthworks of Brocton Camp (where the NZRB were based) and the Messines model which they oversaw the construction of, and used for training, brought to life some of the remaining WW1 heritage that would otherwise have been difficult to interpret by the public. The activities aimed towards young people were attempts at engaging younger people with the heritage of war:

“If you are not careful all you will do is speak to likeminded people with an interest in military history; we try and set a few seeds for the young ones, so that when they become adults they might want to carry it on a bit further ... it just sows a seed.”

Changing attitudes and/or behaviours and thinking differently about heritage

The application stated that the project 'will support the development of a greater respect for the built, cultural and natural environment through an increased understanding of how the heritage is managed', and has been stated elsewhere, this appears to have been realised through a greater understanding of the heritage of the Chase, and the need to manage the environment and the visitors to the heathland.

The intention of the project to engage young people in archaeology, the school project focus on the Anzac puppy, and the 'fun' family activities at local events was clearly an attempt to reach new audiences. Volunteers, too, as they undertook research into the graffiti and the camps more generally reported thinking differently about heritage

"it has changed your thoughts of what went on ... when you learn a bit more you change your view point don't you?"

"You don't often think of things like that ... this is a hundred years old it was put there for a reason, I didn't realise the graffiti was on the arch, and I had been over to Shugborough many times, volunteered over there quite a lot, so I did find out that."

Providing an enjoyable experience

The evaluation was unable to speak directly to any of the children involved in the educational project, or the family activity days or those involved in the graffiti project. The stakeholder working for the AONB believed that the volunteer group which had formed through the various projects had all enjoyed their time:

"They have made friendships, ... built up a rapport with each other and I really enjoy being with them, I hope they will continue, and I think the interest will continue after the commemorations, there will still be that interest" (AONB Stakeholder)

The project lead from the FoCC believed that all those who had participated and engaged in activities were satisfied, "I don't think I have had a murmur off anybody in a negative sense', and observed of his own sense of enjoyment that a highlight had been 'meeting likeminded people ... the socialising":

"...it has given so much pleasure as well, the people you meet, the enjoyment of people who come on board, the buzz on those tours" (project lead)

People will have volunteered time

Volunteers gave their time in researching, supporting and delivering this project.

How the project achieved outcomes for communities

There was consensus amongst those interviewed that the 6 activity days were fun and engaging ways of drawing attention to the heritage of the Chase to the attention of the wider community

"(We) employed a person with right skills to do that and she devised events that you could do – all free - and she set up at these venues on specific days, loads of photographic evidence of the children coming along making the periscopes, the food from the period the soldiers would have eaten, shelters, even glove puppets of Freda the Anzac puppy .. a lot of children attended those events. A family occasion really" (project lead)

Additional outcomes

Environmental

The AONB, as stated earlier, have found that HLF funding has enhanced the respect towards the environment of the Chase, as well as facilitated a voluntary engagement with its daily maintenance and management:

“Part of it is introducing new visitors to the chase but giving them the right message about the protection of the chase and protecting what we still have and can still see so it has been useful and from our partnerships point of view – in the unit we only have three members of staff so we would not be able to do that ourselves - working with the FoCC we have been able to have this body of volunteers, and this body of knowledge itself”.

Resilience

“What the project has done is that it has brought us a different group of volunteers, most our volunteering has been about the practical tasks and survey work but this has brought a different group of people to volunteering and they bring with them an enthusiasm and understanding and knowledge and interest but also they have taken on board our point of view on protection of this landscape and they are able to convey this to new visitors ... what is there to be interpreted and what is there to be protected” (Stakeholder, AONB)

In addition to contributing to the resilience of the AONB (above) the grant activity has also strengthened the FoCC “it has made a huge difference, it has helped us to get more volunteers and harnessed some of the interest in WW1”. The secretary of the society emphasised that the purchase of equipment was a very effective capital improvement to its activities, allowing it to be more professional and self-reliant, particularly in relation to its talks and walking guides:

“Whereas previously we begged and borrowed equipment, I used to borrow a projector from the council, we have been able to get our own, our own laptop, even a laminating machine; when you take people on walks you want it laminated ... just the tools to have to do the job properly has been amazing”

Wellbeing

The project lead believed the project had improved the well-being of volunteers including himself (“it’s got me out and about”). Like other projects, volunteering appears as an effective way of overcoming social isolation, particularly - in this case - amongst elder persons:

“This woman says she suffers so badly from depression for years, but she must go out and walk and this is helping her ... another one, one of the volunteers – a quiet bloke barely says boo to a goose, he is coming out and having some socialising.” (project lead)

Lessons learnt

The project lead believed that there had been some draw backs to the employment of free-lance professionals. Those recruited were not locally based and this meant that they could not be as hands on and had less of a presence within the local communities, perhaps one of the reasons there was a sense of lack of engagement and feedback from the schools

The Impact of World War I on the Communities of Llansteffan, Llanybri and Llangynog

Organisation: Llansteffan History Society

Funding Stream: 'First World War: then and now'

Funding Amount: £6,700

Location: Carmarthenshire

Summary

The HLF awarded a grant to the Llansteffan History Society (LHS) to enable it to carry out historical research on the role and experience of the villages of Llansteffan, Llanybri and Llangynog during the First World War. The material gathered by volunteers was to be used in the production of:

- A travelling and bi-lingual exhibition focusing on the effect of the WW1 on the rural communities and displayed at local community venues and events.
- An Illustrated pamphlet-book (with Welsh and English preface).
- A commemorative stained-glass panel created and installed in the Llansteffan Primary School.
- A musical and dramatic performance, with sketches & songs associated with WWI.

Many of the primary sources of research material for the book were held at The Carmarthenshire Record Office, but this had had to be closed for a prolonged period because of an outbreak of mould. The difficulties caused by this closure entailed that the project has overran its completion date substantially. These problems were recognised by the HLF grant officers who have given an extension to the project to finalise its work.

In addition, the research conducted by the project lead and volunteers has resulted in a wealth of historical material being mined and gathered, and the original expectation of publishing a brief illustrated pamphlet has been replaced by the determination to publish a more substantial book, for which there is now a final draft.

'The Impact of World War I on the Communities of Llansteffan, Llanybri and Llangynog' was a project that was resourced through a relatively small grant of £6, 700. The voluntary activity, the village events, memorial services, walks, school project, and extensive exhibitions would have been a more than adequate return. The historical research and voluntary commitment of the project lead and others, however, promises to deliver a lasting legacy with its publication of the book. A draft of the book has been edited and approved and a publisher found. 'Service & Survival' is being put forward for print (300 copies) and will be available in November 2018 in time for the final commemorations of WW1.

Background

This case study report is based on a review of project documentation (including HLF application, case paper, and the LHS committee reports). It also consisted of interviews with:

- The project lead.
- The Head of Llansteffan primary school and several of her students.

- 5 members of the LHS committee established to realise the HLF grant objectives, all volunteers/participants.
- 3 further volunteers (a member of the Women's Institute responsible for creating and coordinating the drama production, a volunteer with historical research skills who assisted with the production of the book, and a volunteer who helped out with the practicalities of the travelling exhibition).

Motivations

The project was motivated by the desire “to honor those who lost their lives in the conflict, to pay tribute to those who survived (but who had to live with harrowing memories), and to salute the contribution made to the War Effort on the Home Front in three distinct communities.” (Project Lead)

Activities

In addition to the substantial work of researching the material for the book on the rural experience of WW1, the project has carried out the following activities:

- An open day introducing the project to residents. Volunteers from all the local organisations in the surrounding areas were invited to help trace descendants of people from the period, to gather artefacts, letters, and memories, to complement the corpus of academic research gathered by the project lead and other members of the history society.
- Artefacts brought in included service medals, a ‘Dead Man’s Penny’, a variety of commemorative china, German and British helmets and other field equipment, postcards, original photographs, contemporary periodicals and books, and a portable Officer’s desk.
- Three Exhibitions entitled ‘World War 1 & Llangynog’ held in Llangynog Hall (October 2015) ‘Llanybri & WW1’: held in Llanybri Community Hall (April 2016) and ‘WW1 & Llansteffan, Llanybri & Llangynog’ held in Llansteffan Memorial Hall (August 2016).

The exhibitions consisted of photographic displays illustrating distinctive features of the villages and their shared common features such as farming at the time of WW1. They focussed on the war effort on the Home Front, the effects of the Defense of the Realm Act, and of recruitment and conscription at the outbreak of War (including transcripts of local Tribunals). Other panels were devoted to the activities undertaken by local servicemen in the navy and those who served in a variety of Regiments - including infantrymen, cavalymen, airmen, dispatch riders, medical men and women, a stretcher-bearer, a chaplain and a trumpeter. Attention was also paid to conscientious objectors.

- A Fiesta Walk (2016) included a series of performance monologues delivered along a route through the local environs providing a glimpse of village life during WW1, attracting 60 people.
- The Llanstephan Women’s Institute worked in partnership with the LHS to realise a ‘Llansteffan at War’ show held in April 2016. The performance was, to quote the Programme, ‘the story of how the little village of Llansteffan was affected by the pressures of War, how they welcomed foreigners and visitors into their Community, sewed and knitted for soldiers overseas, and lost their nearest and dearest in battle. Life still went on despite all the First World War could bring’. The performance attracted at least 140 people and was ‘standing room only’ in the Hall.
- Educational sessions with Llansteffan primary school children. This project saw a thorough engagement of young students in local history, but also literacy and design

activities, and amounted to a fortnights work in total. Members of the history society visited the school and talked to children about the Belgium refugees that came to the villages, asked questions, read newspaper and journal reports of the time. Together, they prepared a detailed synopsis of these events and the refugees experience and reception. In further sessions a stained-glass window maker explained the process of making a stained-glass window to children, and the children then designed the window, and this was sent back and forwards until it was agreed upon. The stained-glass window will be installed at the front entrance of the school

Support received

“Everyone I dealt with in the Cardiff office was most helpful at every stage, and we have continuing help from our Case Officer” (project lead)

All those spoken to in the evaluation praised the HLF and noted that its support had allowed them to engage in a project commemorating WW1 on a scale that would otherwise have been impossible. The local school, as a stakeholder, were also grateful for the HLF support because it had realised “a lasting memorial” that they “would never have been able to fund” and had been ‘beneficial for the children, who really enjoyed it’. Members of the local history society believed that the HLF grant “gave (us) credibility with other people”.

Engagement

Partnership working

The project has been facilitated through numerous informal partnerships through the contacts of many of its participants. The project lead, for example, drew on her familiarity with Carmarthen archives and Antiquarian society, other local history societies and historians: “we used the links to develop the project, all very informal; this is what you find you see, all very informal; we don’t have meetings, well we have a working party, but our liaison is very much on what people you know”.

Members of the LHS have been diligent in supporting a complementary project with the College of Art commemorating the centenaries of the deaths of local servicemen.

Volunteering and participation

“Llansteffan is a very interesting village, I observe it from a slight distance, it has a very strong community feeling here, very strong, probably the strongest - very well bonded , the rest of the county is scared of them , but it has been of benefit that there has been this ongoing programme of events and I don’t think anyone has been excluded from it , and everyone has had something they can contribute, because I think virtually every house in the village was standing during the first world war.” (Volunteer)

Recruitment was done through “word of mouth and existing social networks”, with the project lead observing that “it is a small village and I know most of the people in it”. The make-up of volunteers was primarily of older residents, although the primary schools project successfully engaged two classes of students. Engagement of secondary school age children appears to be low aside from “the girl now living next door who is hot stuff on the computer, very, very helpful”. This appears to be the result of a perceived apathy of teenagers toward history and volunteering in community projects such as this one; “Primary school kids are very keen, but when they go to secondary school – no”.

In terms of targeting people from socially or economically disadvantaged backgrounds, the lead believed that this was not wholly relevant to the composition and context of Llansteffan village life; “I can’t think of any with disadvantaged backgrounds ... the cost of houses in

Llansteffan is horrendous ... it is an affluent area". The three villages involved in the project do, however, face particular problems with "so many holiday homes ... the numbers in schools are going down, and the house prices are pushing out local people".

Volunteers took up a variety of roles that included historical research for the book, helping with the displays and exhibitions, contributing personal letters, postcards, photos, and household items from the WW1 period, setting up hired glass display units, and making teas and providing refreshments. Others helped with writing a script and producing and performing the play including costumes, props, music and WW1 promotional materials.

Participation and attendance of activities by the public (walks, exhibitions, open days, and performances) was exceptional and included 'incomers' as well as residents of the villages themselves. The exhibitions, particularly the culminating one in Llansteffan "exceeded all expectations. We had an excellent response from Llangynog village, and we had visitors from the surrounding villages of Llansteffan, Llanybri, Llangain and Bancyfelin":

"We certainly brought in the punters for our fiesta week and our big exhibition (and had) no problem getting people involved in this village ... everybody has had something (to bring in and contribute), sometimes not directly relevant to Llansteffan because they are incomers and they are talking about relatives elsewhere but it all builds up the picture." (Project Lead)

"The number of people from Carmarthen, and around, who have come down to see and take part in things - I think you are talking about hundreds and hundreds of people ... I think people from the town have been very moved by the ability of a village community to do something in a way that a town community quite frankly can't, it is quite interesting." (Volunteer)

Dissemination

Dissemination about the projects activities and findings has been through utilising existing social networks and historical associations and societies:

"I think one of the main things (we) have learnt ... is how important it is to make other people aware of what we are doing all the time, they have been very good at putting me in touch with their circle of people ... we all work in different circles, very good at keeping the profile of the project going and that is very important" (project lead)

In addition to the exhibitions themselves, the LHS have taken their research findings out to many local organisations and have given talks to these throughout the duration of the project. For example, but not exclusively:

- To the Llanybri Ladies Circle: A sketch "Llanybri in 1915".
- To the Llansteffan & Llanybri Evergreens: a talk on "WWI: The Home Front".
- To the Llangynog Evergreens: a talk on "WWI: The Home Front".
- To the local branch of Merched y Wawr: a talk on "Y Ffrynt Gartref".
- To Friends of the Carmarthenshire Archives.
- To the St Peter's Probus Group in Carmarthen.
- To the Llanllwch Mothers' Union on 'Women on the Home Front'.

"I have given a lot of talks on what I have discovered, and the material is written up in our newsletters and if anyone wants the information I pass it on, share everything" (project lead).

Making a difference

How the project achieved outcomes for heritage

Heritage is better identified and recorded

The research conducted by the project lead and volunteers has resulted in a wealth of historical material being mined and gathered. This has meant that the original expectation of publishing a brief illustrated pamphlet has been replaced by the determination to publish a more substantial book, for which there is now a final draft of around 80,000 words. The central aim of the research conducted through HLF activity has been to identify and record, through interpretation, the hidden histories of the Communities of Llansteffan, Llanybri and Llangynog during WW1:

“The military battles of World War I have been recorded in detail, but the battle for survival when dealing with grief and deprivation in rural communities has yet to receive full recognition ... and I have had that satisfaction, my book is not going to be ... the world’s greatest contribution to culture but at least it has resurrected the voices of people who might not have been heard otherwise, and that is very satisfying” (project lead)

The project lead has previously published her work, and is respected in her fields of expertise as a local historian and former Librarian in the Welsh national library; books have included ‘A Nation and Its Books- A History of the Book in Wales’ ‘Carmarthenshire memories of the twentieth century’ and ‘Libri Walliae - A Catalogue of Welsh Books Printed in Wales, 1546-1820 (2 Vols)’. Those who contributed to the evaluation all believed that the book when finally published would be an important contribution to knowledge.

“(It) is full of little things, the things that get lost in the big history. It is full of minutiae, a microcosm of what went on in any rural community ... and all this is new research ... it is a description of life in Llansteffan and its surrounding areas; as complete a picture of life as could be made under the circumstances... a great deal of material is drawn from newspapers, some from school, chapel and church records and the rest from what people have passed on in the form of the letters, and the stories - quite a bit of oral history, checked against other sources.” (Project Lead)

Whilst the tangible legacy of the project will be the book, the projects activities also helped to identify and safe-keep a number of artifacts from the war period; “the other legacy is that the stuff people have got (and shown at exhibition) will now be preserved, I do often say to people if none of your family want it put it into the museum or archives don’t let this go and that is taken on board by a lot of people”. The project also commissioned a photographer to record those items brought in by participants and to take records of the local memorials and graves.

Heritage is better interpreted and explained

The project used varied mediums to express their research on WW1 and the three villages during time of war including exhibitions, plays, performance walks, talks and the proposed book. These mediums successfully engaged their publics in learning about heritage (see section ‘People have learnt about heritage’).

The research into WW1 has contributed towards families from the villages understanding their heritage more clearly:

“There are a lot of myths around (WW1) and a lot of family legends that have grown up and I think what this project has done is unpack those and got a lot closer to the reality ... now you always get the moral dilemma then - the family think he died running up the beach blowing his bugle or shall we let the family know he died having a

cigarette in the quarter masters store ? There is always that sort of moral question, ethical question within history, but I think what this has done is set these half-remembered stories, half-truths that have always existed and put them into the proper contexts and verified them, and I think that is a very satisfying thing to do, isn't it?" (Volunteer)

It has also extended peoples understanding of what the war entailed for those living on the 'domestic front':

"(It) actually made people think about the consequences here, and I don't think that is what anyone would have engaged with before , and I think this project has made them do that very well, they always thought the bones were over in France , but now they are thinking oh Mrs. so and so has got to run a farm on her own now." (Volunteer)

The project lead highlighted the importance of the book as an act of interpretation and as an artefact of its time:

"The danger of putting things on the web is that you have lists of facts, whereas a book, written at a particular time is an interpretation of a period, and that interpretation is an historical artefact as much as anything, and that is the importance of the book" (Project Lead)

How the project achieved outcomes for people

People developed skills

Whilst there was no formal training delivered to volunteers, the project engaged residents in a variety of activities that entailed that they learnt new skills through participation and through learning from others:

"Skills - I think we all have – multi tasking on a grand scale, even simple things like putting up the exhibition boards in half the time because you are doing it so often ... I had to examine historical sources unfamiliar to me and I had to learn about military history (and) In the broadest sense I think people have discovered skills they did not know they had in terms of public speaking and recording history, interpreting uncle Fred's diary or this old tin I have at home ... there has been that aspect but not in a formal sense (of training)" (Project Lead)

"Certainly, the people taking part in the reenactments here were gaining historical knowledge they never had, but also, I very much doubt if they have stood out on the streets and performed ... I think that is good (and) the reason they did it was to commemorate the people who died." (Volunteer)

"(The theatre production) was a good learning experience for a lot of people because they had never been on the stage before, they began to enjoy it and one woman in particular- she said you have transformed my life, when are we doing something else!" (Volunteer)

The schools project, as well as its focus on WW1, was a worthwhile activity because of the breadth of its learning opportunity, which was taken up and enjoyed thoroughly by the children spoken to in the evaluation:

"They learnt the history of the village, a very important part of it, and literacy skills as well; they learnt about the process of making stained glass windows, design skills – realizing things about detail, and they learnt about the whole process. They made the design, and the company produced one design that tried to incorporate all the children's ideas and then from then onwards it came back and forth because they were changing things and we were changing things; so, it taught the children about the process of

editing and checking as well - we spotted a spelling error in the Belgium national anthem on the window design.” (stakeholder)

People learnt about heritage

The project successfully used varied mediums to express their research on WW1 and the three villages during time of war. These mediums successfully engaged their publics in learning about heritage. The three exhibitions were reported to be very well received and attended and ‘very high class, very well developed’, providing their publics with opportunity to learn about many aspects of rural life in times of war:

“We had quite a shock, well over 100 people to each one ... and a lot of youngsters who knew very little about WW1, and to see them going around the exhibitions and asking questions. That I think was a lasting benefit, an education. It was good. When a child sees, seeing what happened – and let’s face it – it was a terrible event; and a lot of children looked at what was there and benefited from it.” (Volunteer).

“It took people a long time to walk around it to read it all ... a lot of information and clearly labelled and categorized, not just a jumble of pictures and things, there was a progression to it.” (Participant).

The drama production involved volunteers researching and resourcing the event with costumes, promotional materials, plot lines and content including poetry and news dispatches - all gleaned from Llansteffan during the war period; “it was all educational ... a lot of people researched music (of the time) ... we had the Belgium National anthem, and we had Belgium flag ... (one volunteer) did a lot of research to produce these excellent (flyers)”. The stained-glass window project, too, was a very effective way of introducing the importance of local heritage and the history of WW1 to a younger audience:

“It was very important that the school children were aware of the history of the village ... the story of the Belgian refugees coming to Llansteffan.” (Stakeholder)

The walks offered residents and visitors, alike, with insight into the heritage of the villages and of their past residents:

“... they did this excellent – well it had the cooperation of the whole village, a walk around the village where you pitch up at a certain place and there would be a short dramatization of something relevant to that point in terms of what was happening in the village, and people had to assume these other roles...the people were quite staggered ... and given a completely different perspective of what the village had contributed.”

Volunteers and participants drawn from Llangynog, Llanybri, Llansteffan and Carmarthen also attended the following:

- Day-schools centered on the theme of Cymru’n Cofio / Wales Remembers, organised by the Welsh Government and the Imperial War Museum.
- A visit to the Regimental Museum of the Royal Welsh, accompanied by an introductory talk.
- A visit and guided tour of the World War I Frontline Trench System built in Morfa Bay, Pendine.

Members of the history society have disseminated their findings through the delivery of many talks and walks to various societies and groups such as the Women’s Institute, the Carmarthen antiquarian society, friends of Carmarthen archives, old people’s associations and history societies. More broadly, there was a real sense, gained from speaking to people

in Llansteffan, that the project had collectively engaged many of its residents in learning about the heritage of their communities. Outsiders, too, were engaged and often very impressed with the work that had been carried out:

“It has had the capacity for everyone to contribute to the cannon of history - otherwise people just think of it as ‘ the local historian they are the ones who can contribute, they are the ones who understand,’ but this has made people feel that everyone can contribute ... this has been a fantastic example of a community saying this is what we are going to do and we will benefit from the fruits of it at the end , the fact there will be a book apart from all the exhibitions which I have attended here, hundreds of people have attended these exhibitions, people have seen what you can actually produce from having a focussed project and a single aim.” (Stakeholder)

“It made people realise what war was like for the local people,... I did not know much about the Belgians coming over, and that was very interesting how it involved the whole village, It seemed to galvanize the whole community and I think that whole community spirit still lingers in Llansteffan.” (Stakeholder)

The following extract from a talk by the project lead is illustrative of the ways in which the project and its volunteers actively sought to develop and reflexively think through their approach to gathering and interpreting archival material:

“Get the technicalities sorted. Like learning a new language. F.A.N.Y. P.I.Y. R.V.C. (Rifle Voluntary Corps). Service Ranks. Badges, stripes ...Get a clear idea of contemporary life, here and in the country in general. Avoid the assumption that people then thought in the same way as we do. Danger of knowing what came after the War, World War II.”

Changing attitudes and/or behaviours and thinking differently about heritage

“I hope they have done what I have done which is to have increased respect for those who were left at home, for what the women did ... and the way they kept the show going under great difficulty, that did change my attitude - they would do all the jobs the men used to do, there was no moaning ... it was just we carry on, the courage, the fortitude of those people has never had much attention ... the ordinary persons courage has been undervalued I think ... this was a generation to be admired.” (Project Lead)

The evaluation found ample evidence that the projects participants and volunteers had deepened their understanding of WW1 and its impact upon local communities, and this was expressed in terms of new perspectives on the role of women and mental health, a new understanding of heritage for children, strengthened emotional attachments and increased sensibility, and recognition of the value of the personal and domestic to the historical record:

“One of the things that has come out of this is an understanding of the mental illness and consequences of war, there was someone here who came back and committed suicide later and that was just like a big disgrace for the family , but it is not a big disgrace now because people have developed this understanding, people did come back and they did have mental problems, that is a definite outcome of it, people recognising ‘oh my god he shot himself’ because, you know...” (Volunteer)

“I love that putting things into context, I have stood on Remembrance Sunday and read the names out and now you know where they came from and that was his brother and ... it’s this almost reawakening, an awareness of what it meant.” (Volunteer)

“Apparently, the children of the village used to give their pocket money (to the Belgium refugees) so the children were amazed at that, and they learnt about life in the First World War as well, and how it was for the Belgian refugees arriving here, so they learnt

a lot They just enjoyed the whole process and they have done something themselves, that they can be proud of and remember ... every time they look at the front door they will have something to remember” (Stakeholder)

“The elderly people realised the importance of what they had , they do treasure them the more when they realise how excited I was ... someone leant me his father’s medals and he was absolutely thrilled that they had been cleaned up ... he said he didn’t realise how important they were , not just to him but to everyone else and this was true to him but a lot of other people , they realised it is not just a family heirloom , but something that belongs to the nation ... that their relatives role was important.” (Project Lead)

Providing an enjoyable experience

As this case study has made clear, the project has given pleasure and interest to many and engaged people across a range of activities. At the heart of the project is the sociality and companionship of those who participated, helping the project to progress through the four-year period; “the chatting during the refreshments was just as much part of it as the exhibitions”:

“It has really kept peoples’ interest going in a way that I have not seen elsewhere, it has sustained them for the four years , everybody kicked off the commemorations well... but there are very few places where I have seen the interest sustained, ‘oh my God it is the WW1 again’ ... but that has not been the case here, there has been these rolling events that have said to people this is about your place.” (Stakeholder)

People will have volunteered time

There can be no doubt that the project has seen the commitment of many in its different realisations - the exhibitions, the walks, the schools project and the research for the book together with the drama production involved the commitment of “hours, hours, and hours, and hours, hours ...” (Volunteer) of peoples’ time:

“They are quite remarkable down here ... if anyone is ill or anything everyone will do what they can, it is that kind of community we do not even think of it as volunteering, it is what you do ... it proved to be a tremendous success. It was very much a community effort, involving people in many roles, and we are greatly indebted to all concerned, from those who lent us their treasured artefacts to those who guarded them, from those who helped with the setting-up, to those who came to view the end-product” (Project Lead)

How the project achieved outcomes for communities

The project lead was keen to emphasise the existing strength of the communities of Llansteffan, Llanybri and Llangynog, rather than lay claim to 'outcomes':

"No as far as I am concerned the place was paradise when I arrived, and it will be paradise when I have gone... but it has been entertainment for them and anything that has been entertainment enhances, entertainment and learning and a bit of emotion as well."

Other volunteers believed that strong community ties were drawn together through the focus on WW1:

"It's brought all the different aspects – the Women's Institute, the church, the primary school, bringing them all together with the same idea, and the very senior people from the tapestry club."

On an individual level, too, the project has served to enhance the wellbeing of those spoken to in this evaluation, including the project lead herself:

"I have had a wonderful time, met people I would not have met otherwise my brain has had a jolt and I have found it a very rewarding experience because I did not know a lot about it before ... It had a lot of impact on my wellbeing because I had to learn something completely new and I am now 82 and it has been a tremendous boost to the old brain box so speaking personally it has had a great impact. (A)nd some of the other volunteers too, it has given them (...) in particular, he has been so involved it has given him a new dimension, and he lost his wife very suddenly ... it gave a focus and helped a great deal."

Lessons learnt

As was found elsewhere in the evaluation, projects that emerge from cohesive and relatively small rural communities with existing social networks and capital to draw on, can make a success of their voluntary activity that outstrips the funding given by the HLF. Like the example of Bottesford (2017 report), however, these networks and resources are pulled together through the energy and commitment of the project lead. Llansteffan, is no different; the project exemplifies the importance of the role of a committed and capable co-ordinator and emphasises the need for the HLF to ensure one is in place before awarding grants:

"She is what has held it all together...I don't think it would have been seen through in anything like the way it has without her contribution , many people have contributed here ,the local councilors, and so on but I think you have to have someone of Eiluned's intellectual capacity to pull it all together and keep it going ... I am sure you have realised her great integrity, and the regard she is held around here, nobody turns Eiluned down, and her tremendous background of course, in terms of the national and British library and so on. She is genuinely one of the most respected people in the county, everybody knows her."

What makes a committed and capable coordinator, is – in part – the ability to engage others and to make them feel that they have ownership, and that their role is an important one:

"This has been the secret of it all – the belonging to the community – it has not been one person's idiosyncrasy - it has belonged to everybody and that has kept it going." (stakeholder).

The volunteer co-ordinating the drama production (below) reiterates the experience of other projects in this evaluation. Engaging young people in heritage is of high value, but often

secondary schools themselves find it difficult to engage with voluntary groups. There is a need for the HLF to work more strategically with the educational sector if it is to find ways to realise what should be a productive and symbiotic relationship with curriculum learning. Until then, intended outcomes involving school engagement should be evaluated with caution unless they run alongside a commitment from the schools themselves:

“We tried to use the children in our play but it was too difficult, all the legislation and CRB checks ... we could not bring them to the Hall and I wasn't allowed to transport them ... in hindsight if I had asked the parents outside of school they probably would have come, but because I had approached the school it was too late – that was it.”
(Volunteer)

No Man's Land – Young People Uncover Women's Viewpoints on the First World War

Funding Stream: Young Roots

Funding Amount: £34,400

Location: Impressions Gallery, Bradford

Summary

This project was devised and conducted by New Focus. Based at Impressions Gallery in Bradford, they are a group of young volunteers aged between 16 and 25 years. In partnership with the Peace Museum, Bradford, the University of Leeds, and the Imperial War Museum, they researched the lives of women photographers to coincide with the gallery's exhibition No Man's Land: Women's Photography and the First World War. Their findings were published as a book, which they showcased at a variety of local events and schools.

Background

Impressions Gallery shows five exhibitions a year, and aims to educate audiences and challenge them to think about important issues through the medium of photography. New Focus began in 2012 and is managed and co-ordinated by the gallery's Learning and Audience Development lead (hereafter named NF lead). It started as a consultation group of young people, aged 16-25, who were recruited via social media campaigns, Fresher's Fairs and other local events. As the NF lead explained:

"It started because Bradford has one of the fastest populations of young people and we thought the best way to engage young people was to develop a kind of consultation group ... and ask them the best way to reach others like them."

However when it became clear that participants were keen to gain professional skills in cultural industries, it began to be involved in project-based activities. The volunteers explained that they had heard about NF through talks at local schools/university and had joined because they were interested in learning new skills in the arts sector and wanted to gain some volunteer experience.

Members of New Focus had previously worked with Apple-Box and other youth groups in Bradford on the project 'Changing Bradford' (2013), interviewing representatives from the South Asian community. The No Man's Land project however, was developed and completed exclusively by New Focus from start to finish.

Given a list of the forthcoming gallery programme, New Focus were initially sceptical about whether an exhibition on female photographers would inspire and engage young people. However after the Head of Programme at the gallery and curator of the exhibition talked them through some of the stories behind the images, the group became enthusiastic about developing the project. They saw that the exhibition was unique and could challenge young people's preconceptions about history in general and about the history of the First World War in particular. One volunteer explained:

"I saw that it combined my love of feminism and history and literature together and then also just wanting to learn and expand my mind a bit."

Another who was studying history and photography, was intrigued by the technical side:

“I collect old cameras and getting an insight into how people actually used them, I found it really interesting.”

Another understood the uniqueness of the exhibition content:

“The topic about women in the First World War, I think before this project I didn’t know there were any female photographers ... it just kind of surprised me how they managed to do all this during war and battle ... and also just to get more of an insight into the First World War, it is very vague to most of us, we know so much about the Second World War ... The topic really intrigued me.”

New Focus supported the writing of the application to the HLF by creating a short film explaining why the publication of a book was important, and they devised and drove the whole project once funding was secured.

Support received

The New Focus lead had prior knowledge of the Young Roots funding stream and had attended a talk in 2014 at the Kala Sangham south Asian Arts centre in the city, given by the HLF. She explained: “We realised it was really suitable for New Focus but we also realized that with a clear heritage focus we needed to wait for the right exhibition to come along that might fit with it”. No Man’s Land was the perfect fit. The process of application was ‘reasonably straightforward’, with the HLF providing “fantastic” help and advice during the writing of the bid.

The Young Roots funding changed the nature of the project and what New Focus was able to achieve. It was:

“Absolutely key, the project would not have happened without HLF funding ... New Focus has run for 5 years and Heritage Lottery is the first time it’s had official funding. We’ve never even written a funding bit, we’ve always worked with core funding from the gallery ... never really had a budget ... This was the most ambitious project we’ve worked on to date ... if we hadn’t have got the funding New Focus might have run a small social media campaign about the exhibition, blog post, at the most made a short film. There is no way we would have had the capacity to publish and print a book, employ a designer, work with all the partners, connecting with all these schools ...” (NF lead)

Engagement

The project worked to engage a range of different audiences, across the age range. They put on number of their own events (in association with the gallery), visited several local schools and took part in the Women of the World festival in Bradford.

- Women of the World festival. Originally the project had intended to invite young people from Bradford into the gallery where New Focus would talk to them about the No Man’s Land book, but it was decided that a larger audience would be reached by joining in with the Women of the World Schools Day, held in Bradford on November 17th 2017. New Focus had a market stall where they talked about the contents of the book and how they put it together. They also distributed free copies of the book. Around 150 students attended the event. One of the New Focus members also wrote a poem inspired by the book (‘Freedom is for Everyone’), which she performed at an open-mic event at the City Hall (an event ran by Wowsers, the youth group of Women of the World).

- Photobook Fair, New Impressions gallery. This is an annual event with booksellers and speakers, which attracts an audience interested in photography. In November 2017 members of New Focus ran a brunch event as part of the days programme on the No Man's Land exhibition, where they discussed the book and its contents in an informal talk with questions and discussion. Around 30 people attended.
- Time for Tea. This is a programme for the over 55 age group run by the gallery, with an event laid on for each exhibition. New Focus organised the event for the No Man's Land exhibition, gave a talk about the book and performed their poem over tea and cakes. In addition New Focus delivered a session on the book for the Hale Charity older people's group, and it is hoped that New Impressions will work with them again on future projects.
- Local schools. In their original application New Focus aimed to work with three local schools. In the event they went into 5 schools, delivering 3- 4 lessons with different age ranges in these schools, across Years 8, 9 and 10. The volunteers talked about their research, the technical aspects of photography and showed pupils a range of images from the book. The project lead explained:

“Normally New Impressions wouldn't have the capacity to deliver free sessions in schools – there would be a small charge – but because of the HLF funding we were able to do that. Schools were more than happy to invite us in and hopefully we can maintain those relationships with the schools”.

The project developed partnerships with three key organisations:

- The Peace Museum, Bradford. Members of New Focus initiated this partnership as a couple of them had worked there previously and one had a Peace Studies degree from Bradford University.
- University of Leeds, Liddell Collection. This was co-ordinated by the exhibition curator who already had a connection with the Imperial War Museum North and through this was introduced to the Gateways to the First World War hub and Professor Alison Fell at the University of Leeds.
- The Imperial War Museum London, which held collections from three of the main photographers in the exhibition.

Making a difference

The project was able to demonstrate outcomes across heritage, people and community domains, but with particular emphasis on the latter two, with members of New Focus developing new skills, learning about heritage and reaching out to a wide and diverse community.

How the project achieved outcomes for heritage

Due to the nature of the project it was not an intended outcome to manage heritage or ensure its condition. However it did lead to awareness among the group of the different ways images are stored and can be accessed, and the different reactions that could be generated from different types of material. Looking at digital images stored on the IWM database for example was “nothing compared to seeing the physical objects ... which is like you can actually meet the person, understand the person’... [New Focus] ‘got to understand the importance of archives and accessibility and the experience of seeing the physical objects.” (NF lead)

There are two areas where the project did achieve outcomes for heritage.

Heritage will be better interpreted and explained

The interpretation and explanation of heritage was achieved through the different project outputs, including the No Man's Land book, the exhibition talks and the schools events. To date around 1500 copies of the book have been distributed, including to all schools and libraries in Bradford, free of charge. Making the book accessible was central to New Focus' mission: their own experiences of learning history in school were dry and boring. They wanted to put together a book that was interactive, engaging and reached a wide audience. The impact on schools was especially notable. After New Focus had visited their Art and Design lesson, one teacher is endeavouring to develop a Photography GCSE in their school. Another teacher told New Focus that their session was the best experience that he'd ever had for his pupils, who had all really engaged with the subject.

Heritage will be identified/recorded

The project has been very successful in identifying, researching and recording the lives of female photographers in the First World War. Some of the women were fairly well-known, such as Olive Edis, who was an officially commissioned war photographer, but other women are completely unheralded. Whilst their photographs have survived and are housed in publically-accessible archives, the research conducted by New Focus members has led to a new understanding of these women's working lives. The No Man's Land book records their contribution and brings it to public attention in a lively and accessible way. This is very significant, as the NF lead recognised: "... what's amazing is that as part of the book, New Focus have actually developed new research, academically, which is unbelievable ... I never really thought that was going to happen".

How the project achieved outcomes for people

People will have developed skills

There was strong evidence of people developing skills in a number of different ways, but in particular in relation to research and communication.

New Focus was given initial training in two sessions. The first was with Professor Alison Fell from the University of Leeds, which outlined the history of the First World War and women's roles at the time; the second was with the exhibition curator and taught the volunteers how to 'read' different photographic images. These skills were essential to the archive visits that followed. At the Peace Museum, the collection manager taught the group how to use the data software and they then searched for relevant material. They looked through diary entries and letters home from two soldiers. At the Liddell Collection, they were given eight photography albums that had been created by women during the war. In small groups they explored the background of the photographers they had been given and fed back to the whole group. One volunteer explained: 'Thanks to their photo albums we got to learn a lot more about their lives. "The archives helped us to have a more hands on approach to the research". Here they discovered a new photographer, Mary Porter, who they had not known about ("how had she not been noticed before?!") At the IWM three of the key exhibition photographers were researched.

Volunteers had come into the project with different interests but all felt that their skills had been developed. They explained the process as 'learning and building':

"You build those skills through the project. I think everybody who started had different skills, that might be communication, social, research or whatever ... but we've been in the project doing all the different activities and everything else, those skills are built by doing that and by building the confidence and everything else ..."

In addition New Focus were invited to Leeds Beckett University to see the specialist printing staff reprint the International League for Peace and Freedom printing block and two of the group who were particularly interested in the design and printing aspect of the project, also visited Evolution printers in Sheffield, to see the process of printing the book.

Other skills beyond research were developed. The young people learnt how to work as a team and were proud that the project had been conducted in a democratic way (“It wasn’t the case that one person wanted to take the lead”). Some developed confidence in public speaking at the various school and gallery events (“I don’t really like speaking in front of people so I found that hard but I think from being in New Focus my confidence has got better”). Learning to communicate with young school children was challenging but rewarding (“not to fill their minds with so much knowledge that they get bored of it, but to deliver it in a different approach that stays appealing to them”). One broadcast two 15-minute slots on local radio to publicise the project (“The first time I went on I was very very nervous beforehand but really enjoyed it...”)

It was not only the volunteers from NF who developed skills, but also the project lead:

“I’ve always worked with NF and I develop education at the gallery so working with schools was familiar ... but directly going into schools is not something I’ve really done ... I feel a lot more confident in doing that now. Schools normally come into the gallery, so actually going into schools was out of my comfort zone and a little but daunting; I’m teaching the students whilst teaching NF how to teach. It was really successful; I’d love to go into schools much more, it was great”.

People will have changed their attitudes/behaviour

The project introduced the volunteers to a side of the First World War that they had not known previously. It made them more interested in the war in general, and of women’s role in the war in particular. They were able to draw some relevance between the lives of the women they researched and today’s society:

“Trying to keep that history alive ... it’s not that long ago really ... to think about how much has changed, but also how much has not changed ... trying to keep people’s memories, stories alive, trying to keep those voices there ...”

“The level of involvement these women had during the FWW ... before this project I had no idea they did anything other than being housewives ... that’s the main thing I learned, the different roles they had ...”

“At school I hated history, I just wouldn’t pay attention ... I found it boring ... ask me now what I did at school in history and I have no idea, but looking at it from a different perspective ... I think I’ve learnt more and taken it in better”

The impact on one volunteer at the Peace Museum was profound:

“it just sort of really struck me that I was reading about their lives and looking at pictures of them and reading their personal letters that they’d sent to their family ... yet they’d never know that I existed, it’s just really peculiar and led to a lot of introspection, thinking about how they will never know I existed but I know so much about them”.

The NF project lead explained:

“I think its massively changed people’s perceptions of the FWW ... everyone we’ve spoken to ... Young people don’t realize how much the FWW had a massive impact on women’s equality in society, no idea ... a lot of young people were amazed. They were able to have an emotional reaction because they were able to identify with some of the women ... like “oh my gosh she’s just like taking a selfie”... they were able to put

themselves in the women's shoes, and they were able to react emotionally and to imagine these women are just like me and they weren't even allowed to vote".

People will have learnt about heritage

Some of the volunteers explained that they had not heard of New Impressions gallery before they volunteered and they were proud to be associated with the organisation. The project had introduced them to the history of the war, which, as outlined above, they previously had little knowledge of.

People will have an enjoyable experience

All the volunteers interviewed were unanimous that they had enjoyed working on the project. They put forward various reasons for this:

"It was a great experience ... one of the most exciting projects that I've done with New Focus 'cos there was a lot more of our input into this project so I really enjoyed that element of it."

"Meeting new people that are interested in the same things I like and we got to work with designers, printers ... talk to people from different museums ..."

"Seeing the final product, especially at the book launch ... connecting with people in Bradford and further afield"

"It made my art teachers really proud of me ... doing something off our own back that we hadn't been told to do, especially something like this ... also it gave me my first chance to go to London."

"What I enjoyed most was going to the archives because I've never been to them before ... quite a daunting thing to approach ... I also really enjoyed the launch, where everyone got to see the book and all our hard work. I loved seeing everyone dive in to get a book..."

"I was so shy before I came here, unbelievably... being thrown into a group of people who are complete strangers, it was a bit daunting ... but being here helped my confidence so much."

People will have volunteered time

The project ran from October 2016 to December 2017 and was a substantial time commitment for the volunteers. Altogether there was 38 young people involved in the project from start to finish, but there was a core group of about 20 who were really engaged, participated in the archive research, the school visits, gallery events and social media campaigns. NF met every two weeks for two hours, and they would carry out the research and writing tasks in their own time, with guidance from the NF lead. Most live locally but one travelled in from Liverpool where she had begun a university course. All enjoyed the project and were willing to commit to it. As one explained 'Each and every one of us came because we were excited to'. One of the volunteers came to every meeting ('so a substantial amount of my time was given to this project')

How the project achieved outcomes for communities

More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage

The project was successful in reaching the ethnic diversity of the local community – especially in the schools and at the WOW festival. As the project lead explained: "I think it's

definitely engaged schools with the gallery and hopefully some of those relationships can be developed”

Your local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit

Although this is hard to quantify, all involved felt that this had enhanced the local community. It had publicised the existence of the New Impressions gallery and reached out not only to young people in the local area, but to a really diverse mix of people across the age, gender and ethnic groups in Bradford.

Your organisation will be more resilient

New Focus is a very successful group. The gallery, like other cultural organisations funded by the Arts Council, began the group in 2012 to engage young people with galleries. Many of these have now stopped running or have been adapted but in contrast, New Focus is “stable, and has become something that a lot of people are quite interested in, because not many other organisations are still running them”. This has been greatly assisted by the success of the No Man’s Land book: “it’s definitely given NF real precedence as a young people’s project group that can deliver on an extremely successful project ... given NF quite a reputation ... and made it sustainable.” (NF lead)

Additional outcomes

One of the volunteers was able to use some of the material she had unearthed for the No Man’s Land project in her A Level Art portfolio; she has applied to do a foundation year in Art and Design, and because of this project she wants to learn more about experimenting with old photography.

Another volunteer used the confidence gained on this project to join other volunteer initiatives in the summer of 2017.

One now volunteers at the Tate Museum in Liverpool, organizing events, designing newsletters and so on. Involvement in this project helped with that.

Lessons learnt

The project was very successful in meeting its outcomes and was an overwhelmingly positive experience for all involved. The challenges were:

- Maintaining the group of volunteers. Many of the group were taking ‘A’ levels or were studying at university and found it difficult to maintain the time demands involved in the project over several months.
- Copyright. The issue of locating copyright permission to publish some of the images in the book was very complex and took a great deal of time to resolve
- Budget constraints. NF generated many great ideas for the project, but some of the more ambitious ones had to be trimmed back in order to stay within budget. New Impressions were determined that production values for the book were not compromised and therefore some money was reallocated from different budget headings for the printing of the book. As the project lead put it, they had to make ‘sure that NF felt that their ideas were represented within the book while staying within budget’.

Yr Ysgwrn

Organisation: Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri / Snowdonia National Park Authority

Funding Stream:

Funding Amount: £2,822,800 (81%)

Location: Snowdonia

Summary

Yr Ysgwrn is a Grade II* listed farmhouse, dating from the 1830s and part of a 163-acre agricultural unit and complex of historic agricultural buildings. It came to international recognition in 1917, as the home of the poet, Ellis Humphrey Evans, better known by his bardic name, Hedd Wyn ('Blessed Peace'). Hedd Wyn fell at the Battle of Pilkem Ridge on 31st July 1917 and in the same year was posthumously awarded the National Eisteddfod Chair; the highest accolade awarded to Welsh language poets and considered by many to be the pinnacle of Welsh culture. In the absence of its winner, the chair was draped in black cloth and has been known ever since as 'Y Gadair Ddu' ('The Black Chair').

The chair has for many become a symbol that represents an entire generation of lost youth and over the last 97 years, Hedd Wyn's story has become an icon of Welsh culture and national identity. Yr Ysgwrn itself also represents a significant period of Welsh social, cultural and agricultural history at the turn of the C20 with its historic and cultural heritage significance featured in Cadw's Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales.

The HLF grant focussed upon promoting Yr Ysgwrn as the principal centre of First World War commemoration in Wales with strategic link ups with Cadw, CyMAL and the Imperial War Museum. The project has worked to conserve and improve Yr Ysgwrn, increase public access to the site and its landscape (both onsite and virtual), improve the site's historic character and celebrate its heritage. It has strengthened links with the local community and improved the experience of visiting through better services, learning and participation activities, trails, tours and opportunities for quiet reflection and opportunities for training and volunteering. The site opened on June 8th, and a local open day was held on June 19th, 2017; the centenary of Hedd Wyn's death was marked in July 2017.

Background

National Parks in Wales share two statutory purposes to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities by the public. Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA) is required by law, in pursuing these purposes, to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities. If there are conflicts between the two statutory purposes, the established 'Sandford' principle requires that the first purpose (conservation) is given priority. SNPA's regular activities involve property management, communications, planning and policy, education, conservation and agriculture, warden and access services, forestry, ecology and general corporate services. SNPA is also the statutory planning authority and key policy maker for the Snowdonia National Park area.

This case study report is based on a review of project documentation (including HLF application, case paper, and progress reports). It also consisted of a visit to Yr Ysgwrn and interviews with:

- The project lead.
- A stakeholder from Friends of Yr Ysgwrn and the Trawsfynydd community council.
- Two project volunteers.
- The headmistress of a local school.

Motivations

Yr Ysgwrn had been preserved by the poet's nephew, Gerald Williams, who had endeavored to keep it open to the public whilst living and working on the farm. Due to limited financial resources and age, the cottage and collection had become increasingly in need of conservation work. Yr Ysgwrn was purchased by the SNPA, for the nation, in March 2012 following a long period of public concern about the future of the site amongst the local Trawsfynydd community, heritage and cultural organisations, and wider publics within Wales and further afield.

The purchase was made possible with the financial support of the Welsh Government and the National Heritage Memorial Fund, recognising the site's national cultural heritage significance. The objective of this funding was to safeguard the future of Yr Ysgwrn, as a unit, including agricultural land, the historic complex of buildings and the Yr Ysgwrn collection. The aim was to develop long term structural and cultural strategies for the site, to enable increased access and understanding of its collection. The HLF application for funds was part of this strategic plan.

The SNPA has worked with Gerald Williams since 2006 and the HLF grant activity has seen this relationship continue. The ways in which he has facilitated the change of custodianship of Yr Ysgwrn from himself to the SNPA, and the ways in which he has helped with making available the collection (essentially his former home and possessions) has been notable, as has the sensitivity shown by the SNPA toward him and the heritage of the site:

“There was a culture associated with Yr Ysgwrn of keeping the door open and that was almost the sub title of the project , there was always a feeling of what we do here should be in memorial of what the family had always done, we should be enhancing what has effectively taken place here for over a century now , there was a strong feeling of not wanting to destroy what makes the place very special , this sense of tranquility, the fact that we are in the core of the national park, literally in its heart ... it is an inspiring landscape (and this) means we should protect and safeguard it but also enable access.” (Project Lead)

Activities

The project has successfully completed the following capital works to a high standard:

- Key conservation works consolidating the Grade II* listed Yr Ysgwrn farmhouse.
- Repairs and adaptations to the Beudy Llwyd, creating a visitor's entrance gateway building.
- Repairs and adaptation to the south barn and pigsty supplying a themed interpretation and exhibition space.
- The Construction of a new agricultural barn and boiler house.
- The conservation of the Hedd Wyn chair collection and artefacts and the creation of a digital archive.

The employment of a project and property manager and an audience development officer for 5 years has allowed for the development of an accredited museum and heritage centre with education facilities at the site with open days, courses, rural skills training, workshops, guided tours, and extensive outreach cultural activity. These activities and the exhibitions have been thoughtfully organised and realised through a focus upon the following themes

- The life and literary legacy of the Welsh poet, Hedd Wyn.
- The First World War in its context, including pacifism and economic resistance to the War, literature and the socio-economic impact of the War.
- The social history of rural Wales at the turn of the C20.
- Agricultural heritage (enriched by sustainable, modern methods where relevant).
- Welsh language culture, including the Welsh bardic, literary and Eisteddfod traditions, including writers and poets inspired by the landscape and communities and war poets from the sixth century to the present day.

Support received

The application process for a large HLF grant involving capital works and a site of considerable cultural and historical importance was felt to be rigorous but necessary and not overly onerous:

“(you hear) of scare stories about the HLF – ‘those applications they are a nightmare’ and so on - I do not think they are, I think the HLF make it quite clear what they expect of you ... I don’t think it is as monstrous as people have made out; it is public funding, they have to make sure we are accountable, and I think the process works well, ... I would not have expected any less work for a grant that was 2.8 million, of course it should be like this.”

The project lead was also effusive in her praise for the support the project had received from the HLF throughout the application and delivery phases of the project:

“I do not have a bad word to say about the HLF, genuinely they have been fantastic throughout and the support has been wonderful, and we have been very fortunate that the officers and trustees have been able to understand the value and significance of this site... heritage is in very safe hands with them and I think that the ethos and aims and way they go about it is fantastic... I do not think the work they do towards heritage, and communities is celebrated enough.”

Aside from this praise, one problem was identified as the staff turnover of HLF staff grant officers, picking up on other projects that were included in this evaluation:

“It is just worth saying, and this was the only frustration and snag, that we had three different grant officers – all great – just you get to a certain point and you know the officer well ... we are on our fourth.”

Engagement

Partnership working

The SNPA continues to be supported in its aims and in its realisation of the Yr Ysgwrn’s project objectives by partners including MALD, Cadw and the National Museum of Wales. The existing project structure has been inclusive of significant stakeholders in the development of Yr Ysgwrn on international, national and local levels. Additionally, regional geographic and thematic partnerships have been formed to co-ordinate marketing and visitor

offer, including heritage sites and museums such as the Gwynedd Museum, the National Slate Museum and Llys Ednowain heritage centre and literary sites and venues, including Literature Wales, Ty Newydd National Writing Centre and Y Lasynys Fawr.

Consultation with stakeholders continued throughout all stages of the project and included the local Trawsfynydd community. Relations and contact established with the Trawsfynydd Community Council, Trawsnewid social enterprise and Llys Ednowain heritage centre have entailed regular updates and meetings at key points during the development. Work has begun on developing the international potential of the site including a pan-European schools twinning venture linking with Welsh, Irish, Belgian and Slovenian schools. The project worked with Wales Remembers on a Belgian commemorative event and hosted a Youth orchestra from Belgium in July 2017.

Gerald Williams was (and is) seen by the SNPA as the key partner. The project lead (below) provides brief insight into what was at stake, emotionally, in the conservation of heritage at Yr Ysgwrn and the need to ensure the HLF grant was managed co-operatively with Mr Williams:

“In terms of the chattels, they were the subject of a huge restoration project ... which was epic, it was an evocative project too because the house had to be emptied, which did not go down very well with Gerald at all, however it has been remarkable that he has been so supportive, he always knew there would be things that we would not be able to agree on, so it was ok, but the really lovely thing about that work is that he contributed to various films ... and that helped us to reveal the history of the chattels and the black chair itself and he has been such a key part of the whole project.”

The Trawsfynydd community, a mile below the farm, was also seen as a key partner and stakeholders from the council expressed their positive attitude towards the project:

“We never saw it as competition, we always saw it as an opportunity because it was important to have someone professionally managing this site; both ... could benefit from each other.” (Stakeholder, Trawsfynydd Community Council).

Volunteering and participation

The project is dependent upon volunteer support in its efforts to realise the grants activity plan for Yr Ysgwrn. Given its rural location this entails a need for a strong and enduring relation with the village community of Trawsfynydd. The evaluation found this to be the case;

“There has been very strong links with the community, we have been inspired to helping out here albeit in the softer manner, appreciating the jewel we have got from the community perspective and I think that is reflected in the volunteers associated with this place, they are stumbling over each other really to get their names down, so keen to be involved ... it shows that there is a deep rooted interest, that it is something coming from the heart ... they are doing it from the goodness of their hearts.” (Stakeholder, Trawsfynydd Community Council).

In all there are upwards of 30 active volunteers, with a view to doubling this intake in the future. The volunteer core is representative of the local communities surrounding the farm house, this entails that there is not much ethnic diversity in the volunteer group or many drawn from social-economic disadvantaged groups:

“It is fair to say they are mainly female, but not exclusively, 70/30 split, age wise predictably 50 plus, mostly retired people, but we have got a handful of young volunteers, one a university student really keen to get some experience, one is out of work and training and he is on the autistic spectrum and he has been fantastic and we

have seen him really blossom and the improvement in his communications has been fab” (Project Lead)

The recruitment strategy for volunteers appears to have been driven through existing SNPA avenues and through ‘word of mouth’ and publicity generated by the refurbishment and development. This has meant that specific groups who may benefit from volunteering at Yr Ysgwrn have not been targeted per se; ‘Not consciously, I can’t say we have - they have been general recruitment drives ... we will in the future, working with young people specifically’. The project has, however, made efforts to ensure that it provides volunteering opportunities for those wishing to learn Welsh and that the visitor experience is inclusive of both Welsh and non-Welsh speakers:

“We have made sure that the offer is open to Welsh learners ... everything we offer has to be available bi-lingually ... but we also want to be inclusive and we know Yr Ysgwrn’s importance for learners and for the opportunity to get an insight into Welsh culture ... so we have at least three Welsh learners on the volunteer books and that is the group we have most actively pursued ... we have a buddy system where if we had a Welsh learner or someone who does not speak Welsh, they would be paired up with someone whom is fluent in the hope they would improve skills, practice ... so that helps us to be inclusive but also provide a good service.” (Project Lead).

In terms of visits to the site, the project will look toward engaging groups with specific needs, for example ‘there is a dementia group in the pipeline and day care centers visit now it has more access’. As it stands, the project has attracted visitors and attention and interest locally, nationally and internationally:

“We always knew there was clearly a lot of interest, and the fact that the Passchendaele centenary was coming up ... with a BBC 2 programme broadcast about Hedd Wyn and the development here. Broadcasting that programme on the 1st Saturday in August was a watershed moment; after that there was so many more people outside of Wales or Welsh people who don’t speak Welsh who were coming, and that has been fantastic it really has.”

Schools, colleges, adult learning, and Welsh learner groups are a key audience, and Hedd Wyn remains on the curriculum for Welsh language courses and GCSE and A level. The Women’s Institute, the Welsh version (‘Ladies of the Dawn’), “come up on their annual trips and those kinds of things and they are definitely a key audience”. Footfall from areas surrounding the project is good, and the site is attracting many families.

Dissemination

Yr Ysgwrn has received widespread promotion and attention since re-opening with extensive coverage in the local, national and UK wide media. It has worked with Mald/Cymru'n Cofio and all its partners to promote the site as the principal centre for First World War commemorations in Wales and has worked hard to co-ordinate the marketing and visitor offer, including contact with heritage sites and museums such as the Gwynedd Museum, the National Slate Museum, Lloyd George Museum, The Royal Welsh Fusiliers Museum, Llys Ednowain heritage centre and literary sites and venues, including the Literature Wales National Writing Centre in Ty Newydd and Y Lasynys Fawr. Further work is planned for extending these relations and for shared marketing opportunities, especially during ‘low season’.

A good example of the project’s work with partners and its dissemination across different spaces, as well as its ability to harness and engage participants, was the contribution made to the anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele in Anglesey that coincided with the National Eisteddfod. The project worked to produce the ceremonies opening performance ‘Is there Peace’ with the National Eisteddfod, Gwynedd council, the arts council, literature

Wales, the BBC orchestra and Eisteddfod choir. The performance was the finished product of:

“A long process of community engagement beforehand, so the choirs came here to Yr Ysgwrn to learn about the way of life and about Hedd Wyn himself, with young people participating in our workshops... and then it was showcased at the National Eisteddfod and broadcast and it was great, a sellout performance and that was a really positive thing because it enabled us to work with other organisations to inspire them to think about Hedd Wyn and the war and to create a new body of work.”

Making a difference

How the project achieved outcomes for heritage

Heritage is in a better condition

This project has carried out much of the necessary work to safeguard the long-term future of Yr Ysgwrn as a historic environment. Prior to these works the dilapidation of the interior of the farmhouse, as well as the collection of chattels (including the Bardic chairs) had become of increasing concern. The project has conserved heritage through immersive conservation works to site buildings, structures and the Yr Ysgwrn collection of chattels leading to increased public awareness and understanding of Yr Ysgwrn and its heritage.

The restoration, and conservation of Hedd Wyn's collection of bardic chairs is an important contribution. These are of vast cultural and heritage significance illustrating the vibrant eisteddfod tradition in rural Wales at the turn of the C20, which continues to thrive in areas of Wales, including Trawsfynydd. Y Gadair Ddu is different to the local eisteddfod chairs, in terms of both style and significance, and is widely regarded the most iconic piece of Welsh furniture.

The consultation report highlighted the importance of Yr Ysgwrn's sense of place, the existing unique visitor experience of Yr Ysgwrn and the importance of conserving the collection there. There was an overwhelming consensus that Yr Ysgwrn should remain the collection's permanent home and the success of the project has, in part, been the nuanced ways in which it has improved and preserved heritage through keeping heritage 'in-place':

“This place could very easily have been taken down to the Welsh folk museum, by keeping everything here it brings the experience alive. You go into the house in the morning to make the fire and it is such a nice atmosphere ... it was a home and I like to think that is what the project has kept – it is a home.” (Volunteer).

Heritage is better identified and recorded.

The project has formalised the Yr Ysgwrn collection through cataloguing and accessioning of the collection and archives. Achieving museum accreditation for Yr Ysgwrn has safeguarded this unique collection of chattels and ensured that they're maintained to the highest curatorial standard. The creation of a digital presence including online educational resources, virtual tours of the site, 360-degree scan of Y Gadair Ddu and digitisation of collection has been mostly completed with some elements to be developed.

Oral histories of Hedd Wyn's family have been recorded, to ensure effective transfer of knowledge. Most importantly for the project, it was vital to continue to work with Gerald Williams to record his vast personal knowledge and memories. The oral history interviews, transcription of interviews and the Yr Ysgwrn Film, produced by Cwmni Da, all undertaken during the development phase have been supplemented by additional work.

Heritage is better interpreted and explained

A museum and heritage centre with excellent education facilities has been developed at the site with a strong relationship with National Museum Wales and the Cyngor Gwynedd Arts and Museums Service and the project is well on the way to gaining accreditation. Yr Ysgwrn is now considerably more developed in terms of making its literary, historical and agricultural heritage available for its publics than it was previously; for example:

- The creation of themed interpretation based on 5 key strands of Hedd Wyn's life and literacy legacy offers rich and varied seams of interpretation for visitors as they move through the site.
- The Activity Plan has executed a varied range of educational activities including open days, gardening, historical interpretation of artefacts, oral history, rural skills training, topic specific workshops.
- The project has begun to raise awareness of Yr Ysgwrn's heritage to a new, international audience, by digitising the collection and developing a web presence and online educational resources.
- Guided tours of Yr Ysgwrn are one of the core means of offering visitors an interpretation, but these have been greatly improved by the new facilities, and the installation of various exhibits.

"What was difficult before was that you had maybe an hour with every group and you wanted to say everything but you did not have enough time ... now people are able to take their (own) time to look around, wander around the site and to look at the exhibitions, watch the film so on; and to see the poetry is to hear the poetry crucially; before this development the opportunity to hear the poetry was limited by the guides, and so I think there is now more opportunity to understand the literary heritage."
(Project Lead).

The quality of project delivery and the way the site is managed and run (including the contribution of volunteers) entails that Yr Ysgwrn has a qualitatively improved educative offer for its visitors. A delicate balance has been struck that has avoided rarefication of heritage as commodity or sentiment, and left it available for enjoyment, appreciation and learning:

"What this place has done is to make (the history) come alive, pilgrimage is ok but this gives people employment, and it gives people an experience which they probably will not get anywhere else, something unique and in Wales there is a tendency to be precious about our poet ... you don't get that in this project which I am quite glad about." (Volunteer)

"It could be a dry old project but it is not it is alive and when you are around here you think 'Yes it is still alive in there', it's not dry history, it is living history ... reaching out to an audience who perhaps don't know anything about WW1 and I think it is so important to carry that memory on and the knowledge of that horrendous time." (Volunteer)

Awareness of the Agricultural heritage of the site is growing, and it is hoped that this work will develop in the future, with 2018 being the first year of guided talking tours of the surrounding fields. Project volunteers and workers observed in the evaluation that this learning strand of the visit to Yr Ysgwrn was often of interest to visitors and could develop further in the future; "that cultural peg that Hedd Wyn has its so strong that sometimes you forget the other things that would appeal to people as well..."

"The land is an integral part of it and farming as well, you can't ignore it - he was a farmer's son, you got to integrate everything like that into your talk ... with the paths opening it will become more and more integral to the experience." (Volunteer)

Future development and possibilities for educative activities and exhibitions that draw upon the current strands of interpretation are plentiful. As well as extending its work around agricultural heritage, the project is currently looking to work with the Lloyd George Museum to provide a contrasting story of war 'heroes' through a focus upon a different Welsh 'icon', the Welsh Wizard.

Environmental benefits

Yr Ysgwrn is a Grade II* listed building, representative of C19 traditional Welsh hill farms. This has guided the development of the project, as the historic environment is of greatest importance to the site's heritage and authenticity. Nonetheless the surrounding agricultural and natural environment is also seen as integral to the ways in which the Yr Ysgwrn develops as a visitor's attraction. The Farm Plan report demonstrated the integral holistic connection between heritage, the landscape and farmland at Yr Ysgwrn and underscored the SNPA's commitment to the long-term protection and enhancement of this connection as a special quality of Yr Ysgwrn's heritage.

Ecological surveys undertaken during the development phase highlighted areas of biodiversity and habitat interest and these have begun to be fostered. The holding's natural wealth and character are being protected and improved by sustainable land management practices and in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Government's Glastir agri-environmental scheme. Current work includes slate pillar fence laying, dry stone walling, and heritage gardening, and in future the project intends to inform visitors of conservation aspects through guided walks and tours.

In its work to improve the natural habitats at Yr Ysgwrn it has sought to build on the recommendation of the National Vegetation Classification survey report and through on-going farm management plans/ tree planting. In keeping with its primary objectives, the SNPA will strive to ensure that conservation works are maintained and renewed post project delivery. The complex play between environmental concern, heritage, tourism and the economic priorities and pragmatism of tenanted farm lands, will continue to need careful attention:

“(It) has been quite challenging, we have a tenant who manages the farm as his own business, as an Authority we are responsible for natural beauty, bio diversity and cultural heritage and we work closely with the agricultural community in Snowdonia and it was important that the farm was both able to make money and do the show case of how you can look after your environment and make a living. Those two things don't necessarily appeal to your ordinary farmer ... trying to make sure that both of those values are respected has been challenging but the intention was that we would always be able to foster the wild life as best we can. The farm is part of the advanced Glasdir scheme ... in return for the subsidy (the farmer) receives, the tenant is expected to for example restore part of the hay meadow, and have specific environmental stipulations.”

How the project achieved outcomes for people

People developed skills and received training

Staff and volunteers have developed their skills whilst working on the project, with both identifying IT, conservation, archival research, conservation and public speaking and skills in providing guided tours as examples. The way the volunteer group has been recruited and managed has also had a view to making the most of what skills are on offer, and ensuring that these are shared across the project for others to pick up on:

“I think what they have done well with all the volunteers – each of us have different skills and they utilize those skills as they see fit and in a very good way, ... I know my skill strengths lie in communication, and I use that to be with young people and children. I

have been here with poets and writers and so with my background (teacher) I can help in a hands-on way and take part in the workshops, I can be proactive, and I also take people around the house as well, and I love that.”

Training opportunities will be provided for people to gain skills relevant to the long-term management of Yr Ysgwrn, e.g. dry-stone walling, beekeeping, gardening and vegetable cultivation, historic research, genealogy and the care of collections. Current volunteers are very positive about their experience and the support and arrangements made around their engagement:

“Monthly, we have a volunteers meeting ... we are allowed to say what we think, it is non-threatening, you are not told you have got to do this and that, it is all discussed and we know which way the leaders want us to go and what our brief is, and you have lots of different strengths, academics and everybody approaches from their own perspective but with the core idea in mind.”

People will have learnt about heritage

“... one of the best things about the guided visits now is that there is so many more visitors coming from outside of Wales and being able to talk about the Eisteddfod and this unique tradition we have of giving as a prize a chair ... there is now an opportunity to talk more about those things, to raise awareness of the associated culture.” (Project Lead)

The project has enabled more people and a broader range of people to actively participate in heritage by running an annual programme of volunteering and training opportunities, including work experience placements and opportunities for students to learn Welsh through heritage. People have also benefited from new learning experiences and research opportunities, delivered through education programmes, and through access to the site and/or digitisation of the Yr Ysgwrn archive and collection.

A visit to Yr Ysgwrn is a wonderful way to learn about heritage:

“The really important thing from a cultural and historical point of view is that it is very difficult for us to imagine, appreciate, understand, what it means to lose 40,000 young men from one small country like Wales, but you can start to imagine and understand what it means for one family to lose their son ... it really makes it accessible and people get it, children understand it, and I think it has some universal value. It has all these strands; he did not want to be a soldier (his Bardic name means blessed peace), he lived in this tranquil environment, he was so clever, that he had won this chair- his life's ambition; it is really drawn together so well, it is such an evocative story that you can't help but think ...”

The project has helped people to learn about their own heritage and the heritage of other cultures, through thoughtful and innovative interpretation of Yr Ysgwrn's collection, drawing on the five key interpretation themes. New exhibition spaces, immersive interpretation and a reading room/library, allow visitors to immerse themselves in the entire site.

“... there are a lot of elements, the agriculture and not just local rural history but Welsh, British and world history, you bring everything in to what you tell people, and at times taking people around can be more of a conversation than a guided tour.” (Volunteer).

Yr Ysgwrn and its collection are also an unusually complete record of life in rural Wales at the turn of the C20, illustrating a way of life particular to Wales at the turn of the C20. Archival documents, such as the family's 1851 rent book, photographs of agricultural events, the family Bible, books and bills and receipts from local businesses illustrate a unique way of

life in rural Wales at the turn of the C20. As the volunteer guide observes, below, this collection is complemented by the house and its chattels:

“The children love the little things, the objects , ... the kids are fascinated they want to know about the little things ... you can see and they will ask you the most interesting things ... some people especially middle aged and older will come in and see the dairy, and buttery, they have personal experiences or memories – ‘oh my gran , my parents used things like that’. There is something somewhere that fascinates everybody.”

The former ‘by appointment’ only system of visiting the house has been replaced by open access with visitors free to ‘roam’ the grounds on newly laid walking paths or learn about heritage through visiting the various site buildings. Increased access was an important objective and this has been realised sensitively and creatively by keeping it in balance with preserving Yr Ysgwrn sense of tranquillity and conserving it as a site of historical importance. Access has also been improved by providing disabled access to the Yr Ysgwrn farmhouse and historic buildings and through the improvement of visitor facilities, with the provision of electricity, a lift to the first floor of the farmhouse, toilets and refreshment facilities.

Changing attitudes and/or behaviours and thinking differently about heritage

Volunteers observed that young and old people alike sometimes arrived on scheduled tours of the house with a slightly jaded attitude towards the poet and WW1, but left refreshed and enlivened by Yr Ysgwrn as living history:

“Oh, Hedd Wynn again why don’t we remember anyone else?’ But after being here they see why this had to be done ... it is the completeness of his story , the fact so much evidence has survived of his life, that is what makes it such a potent symbol and I think once people come here they are able to reflect , there is a general consensus that yes war is a bad thing, we want to create a better future. I think those values and the subtle way we commemorate war mean that people have more opportunity to reflect on the war more personally.” (Volunteer)

The Yr Ysgwrn collection provides opportunities for reflection on the world changing events and processes which coincided with the First World War. The surrounding landscape is the backdrop to the visitor’s introduction to Hedd Wynn and the projects interpretation of war. It reminds the visitors of the contexts from which 40,000 Welshmen were drawn; ‘we always say imagine having to leave here for the horrors of the trenches, and the people realise it’.

The chair, itself, was hand crafted by Flemish craftsman, Eugene Vanfleteren, a carpenter born in Mechelen, Belgium, who had fled to England on the outbreak of war and had settled in Birkenhead. Volunteers all commented how this made its audience particularly sensitized to the plight of refugees during the war, in the present, and their contribution to our collective cultural heritage.

As well as the focus upon the tragedy of war, the emerging increased socio-political role for women is illustrated, for example in a letter from Hedd Wynn’s sister Mary demonstrating how women challenged social norms and led the way for women suffrage and equal opportunities in education and public life. The experience of the non-conformist tradition during times of enlistment and conscription is also highlighted, and militarism and war are never simply celebrated. Volunteers report that visitors are also often moved to find out more about their own families during the WW1 period: “It really inspires them to do their own family research and re-engage with their own histories”.

Providing an enjoyable experience

“We have feedback forms for the drop boxes and from those 99.9 percent have been excellent feedback.” (Volunteer)

As will have been clear from other parts of this evaluation, there is much about Yr Ysgwrn that is pleasurable, as well as interesting and engaging. The enjoyment experienced by visitors, is in part transmitted by the volunteers who genuinely feel pride and value their work at the centre, as well as their privilege at being part of it:

“The volunteers always give great feedback and they enjoy being here and feel they are contributing toward something valuable and important, the visitors get that sense of tranquility, that view – it is good for the soul; just that feeling of being here enables people to just take that deep breath of fresh air.” (Project Lead).

Many of the Welsh speaking visitors enjoy “The fact that Yr Ysgwrn Yr is part of the Welsh psyche – it is on the bucket list for many people, yes, it is part of our identity”. Yr Ysgwrn, however, is inclusive and has a sense of relaxed informality that puts visitors at ease; ‘feeling that sense of welcome is the most important thing I think, as well as that learning’. It is hoped that its future success will reside in its varied appeal to visitors:

“I was volunteering on Saturday and I took round people; one was a minister at a chapel and she was fascinated by the architecture ... the other couple had seen a film of Hedd Wyn and they were in the area and thought they would pop in pop in. Then we had 10 local families ... and the kids who had been had said we had to tell dad to come here... and I have seen people very emotional up there as well.”

Economic benefits to local community

“In terms of local economy, we have not done any kind of evaluation, but I am aware that people are always asking us where we can go for lunch, where can we go for dinner after the visit, so I hope there would be an impact, a benefit. More broadly the fact that Trawsfynydd is on the map means that there is the opportunity for business to use Yr Ysgwrn in their own marketing.” (Project Lead)

The Trawsfynydd community has probably benefitted economically from the development, with anecdotal evidence suggesting that it has improved connectivity to Trawsfynydd village and its surrounds, bringing socio-economic benefits to the area. Given Hedd Wyn’s cultural importance it would be expected that the project will have an important ‘pull’ for the local economy in the future. Llys Ednowain Heritage Centre in Trawsfynydd, however, has been forced to close due to financial pressures and so the opportunity to collaboratively organise events and activities to ensure socio-economic benefits to the wider community from the development have been partially hampered.

The stakeholder from Trawsfynydd council and Friends of Yr Ysgwrn, pointed to the developing international aspect and draw of the project for the local community. It has worked to help foster a close connection with the community in Belgium where Hedd Wynn was killed. This has included visits from both communities to each other, and where the ‘connection is so strong from the village (in Belgium that they have installed) a bardic chair, a memorial to those who died from Trawsfynydd, and a shrine’ to mark the presence and sacrifice of the Welsh army.

This close connection is on-going and co-joined with the development of links with Ireland and the birth place of Francis Ledwidge a soldier/poet who died on the same day in the same battle as Hedd Wynn had done. Given the importance of Hedd Wynn to the literary and cultural heritage of Wales, and the fact that Yr Ysgwrn sits within one of the most

beautiful landscapes to be found, it would be unsurprising if the project does not increase the visitor draw to the area beyond the farms boundaries.

“It is much broader now than something Welsh and there is huge potential to open the audience up to our English friends, and the Scots, through literary and poetry societies. (And) there is much more to see than just Hedd Wynn, not just the beauty, but the historic places like the roman forts and the castle; all within easy distance.”

As it stands, the marketing of Yr Ysgwrn has been enough to make its peak season visitor numbers enough to press the current project team to the limit. Any concerted effort to increase numbers will have to be balanced by regard to issues of conservation, environmental concern and organisational capacity:

“We haven’t marketed because we simply have not needed to, it is probably something that could be done far better, we published a marketing leaflet and an advert in the national park newspaper which did bring in a lot of people who normally would not come in , we really are at maximum capacity but I am sure over the next couple of years we will take a more proactive approach.”

Sustainability

There is reason to believe that the growing relation between the project and the local community will foster Yr Ysgwrn’s survival and growth as a heritage site and visitor attraction. Trawsfynydd volunteers certainly understand that the relationship is symbiotic:

“What is important is that we make sure that steps are put in place, and those are now clearly being put in place, for its future sustainability so volunteers are there to help with that , and friends of Yr Ysgwrn are there for the softer things so once the lottery funding comes to an end - we know from experience that so many really good projects once the funding comes to an end go pear shaped , but hopefully and what I can see, there is the will there and there is an interest and an understanding and shared vision from the local community of the needs to keep the place going. There is a buzz from the community relating to Yr Ysgwrn.”.(stakeholder)

The ending of HLF funding after five years will be a crucial period of adjustment, but one which the project has been preparing for:

“We are making sure that events we are holding now are paying their way, so it is not a shock when the funding dries up, so we have tried to establish that mentality that everything has to pay for itself from the beginning.”

The current main sources of income generation (below) are steady and there are plans for raising further monies through provision of paid courses in conservation and agriculture but also by enriching the visitor experience of the farmlands (sheep shearing days for example). Work will be done to pack out low season with ‘more societies, clubs and perhaps join up with other attractions and combining to make one experience and becoming part of the footfall when people come here on holiday or visit’ (volunteer) As it stands, the project lead feels confident:

“Last year was hideous, but it was hideous in a good way ... everybody was so exhausted (it) was even better than we had anticipated but that did bring problems, we knew we were understaffed ... it was a very steep learning curve but we are in a better position now and it was such a good year financially that we are able to employ an additional member of staff for this year ... the diary looks quite full ... it is promising and we just hope we continue ... the forecast at the moment does look good.”

How the project achieved outcomes for communities

The stakeholder from Trawsfynydd Community Council emphasised that both the local council and the residents of the community have actively engaged and supported the project through its delivery:

“Good for people’s wellbeing in the village, given them ownership ... feel part of it, part of the community and I think that is what it is there is a community feel about it , it doesn’t just belong here but to everyone in the village – we had ... the street theatre which was absolutely fantastic, where we told Hedd Wynn’s story and we walked around places important to him in the village ... everyone who took part was from the village ... choirs singing, absolutely amazing.”

For the project to be a success, it was of importance that the community made such an investment in its development, and so the management team have promoted the establishment of a ‘Friends of Yr Ysgwrn’ group as well as worked closely with the village council:

“There was always a sense of custodianship for Yr Ysgwrn ... It is ours and Hedd Wynn’s story is ours, the people felt that they wanted to be a part of that, protective. So that was a way of engaging; tapping in to that feeling, and hopefully those people would become volunteers, and help us with fundraising and so on.” (Project Lead).

The project has maintained good relations by being seen to deliver on its promises, including the standards of its conservation work and provision of exhibition facilities:

“Everything seems hunky dory, you can see that perhaps there have been a few teething problems with the buildings ... but you would appreciate and expect a few minor problems - snags.... But nothing that would make you sit back and say, ‘oh god they got that all wrong, oh look how many thousands that has cost’, you see that happening in other projects ... it seems that from an outsider’s perspective that the project has been done well, it has been done professionally.”

Additional outcomes

The sense of purpose and engagement gained from volunteering at the project has led to increased sense of well-being for many participants. Within the evaluation, this was particularly marked for older and retired members of the community:

“Loneliness is something affecting us socially more than anything, and the older people that are getting involved, it is getting them out there, meeting people, creating the story of Hedd Wynn, and their minds are being moved, not stuck in front of the tv ... socially it is great and that is respect as well, and of course it is helping to deliver the project in its totality as well ... really good stuff.” (Stakeholder, Trawsfynydd Community Council)

One volunteer emphasised that her increased sense of well-being was closely related to improvements in mental health:

“Without going into detail, I gave up teaching because I burnt out after 30 odd years, but doing this because it is my choice it does give you a sense of wellbeing, you finish your tour and think yeah people liked that.”

Lessons learnt

The staff and volunteer team have all been on a steep but rewarding and enjoyable learning curve in terms of Yr Ysgwrn as an increasingly popular heritage destination. Sustainability, however, is at the centre of the project leads advice to other projects and the HLF:

“We were always charged (by the HLF) to make damn sure that we were sustainable ... what I can appreciate is how the smaller organisations, charities, community groups and so on do get themselves into hot water because it is very easy to rest on your laurels and take that for granted and not think beyond ... the sustainability, ongoing costs ... the warning signs are there throughout the application process but maybe it needs more attention ... we are all aware of projects that have worked well for a certain time and then fell... I wouldn't for a second say community groups should not be getting this funding, it is vital that they do, but I suppose they need more support to make sure that they are thinking about it and they do have a sustainability plan.”

Away from the Western Front

Summary

The project is a national project being delivered by the charity Away from the Western Front. The project explores the campaigns in other areas of the world such as the The Balkan Front, including Gallipoli and Salonika, The campaigns in Egypt, Palestine and Syria, The Mesopotamian Campaign (including Iran), The East African Campaign and The Italian Campaign. The project encompasses nine discrete projects:

- National Music Project
- Castle Drogo to Salonika
- Horses in the Desert
- Salonika Stories
- From Islington to Egypt Palestine and Syria
- Holy Lands
- From Lancashire to Mesopotamia
- The First World War. The Iranian perspective
- Health the Hidden Enemy

In particular, the project provides opportunities for people to research their local context, and portray stories of soldiers, their families, and regiments using art, music and drama together with exhibitions to showcase the life events in other theatres of war.

As can be seen from the number of discrete activities, the overall project has taken a national approach to highlighting the importance of the First World War campaigns away from the western front. The project has been successful in using little known archive material held within local areas, and linking these to local stories. In many cases the arts activities have provided new research, exploring local history sources and looking at them through a different lens. The activities have encompassed a wide range of activities and involved a number of different communities in geographical areas. In addition the projects have managed to involve a number of individuals from vulnerable circumstances. For example, the Salonika Stories project has given homeless veterans an opportunity to relate their own experiences to those of serving soldiers from a century ago, through art work. Other activities have included school children in Islington producing an animation, and young people producing a Drama. Involving Theatre groups, film makers, musicians and artists, the project has created a wealth of resources easily accessible to a wide range of people. Depicting events through theatre and art has not only helped those creating it to broaden their understanding of the campaigns but has presented the information in easily accessible format to reach others. All performances were recorded and are digitally available.

Background

Having completed a previous project exploring Gallipoli, (Gallipoli Centenary Education Project, (2014-2016)), it was felt there was a need for further exploration of the other campaigns away from the western front. It was thought that a further project could bring to life other First World War experiences particularly those from campaigns across the globe. Drawing on existing expertise and relationships with First World War Historians, Museums and Archives and historical associations and societies, including the Salonika Campaign Society, The Great War in Africa Association and the Gallipoli Association, Away from the Western Front was born. Due to a lack of a sponsoring organisation the registered Charity

'Away from the Western Front', was established to administer the project. 'Away from the Western Front' is a two year project (2017-2019) funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, with additional grants from the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (Gertrude Bell Memorial) and the Centre for Hidden Histories.

This project focusses on the heritage of the men and women from Britain and its former Empire who served in the lesser known campaigns of Salonika, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia and Africa. It focusses on capturing and bringing to life the unique personal experiences of soldiers, their families and regiments. The strong national dimension enables the project to draw out common themes: health, humanitarian issues, different environments, mechanised warfare, impact on UK communities and the legacy of the war on 21st Century British and international development.

Art, music, drama and film were particular elements of the project which were thought to be a useful medium with which to bring stories to life. It also encouraged the active inclusion of participants who were facing a broad range of personal issues.

"We wanted to focus on the historic occurrence and to use the material related to the historic archive research material to create arts projects. ...we needed to be able to delve down deep enough within the research available which was available on a range of different campaigns and use that quality elements of the research that would then be able to turn into an arts projects of some sort....you can't tell people about history- they have to take it on and engage with it. Using the arts is a way of taking that material and turning it around so that it means something to you personally, you can express your feelings towards that material." (Islington young people, Project lead)

Engaging partners to lead the small projects was a challenge as a Trustee described "locating good partners that could deliver was essential and time consuming. Identifying partners that could cover the stories for each of the campaigns was a fair challenge".

However, using previous connections and networks the project has been successful in working with a range of different organisations such as the Museum service, local archives, regiments and serving military personnel.

Support received

The project received support from HLF during the application and development process, and the officer gave some guidance on how they might develop their project to meet HLF aims and outcomes. Having completed a previous HLF funded project, a trustee and consultant felt that they had considerable expertise and experience with which to take the project forward. During the delivery of the projects, contact with HLF has been minimal. Although this has not been detrimental to the delivery of the project, there were some concerns that the lack of contact with HLF had not been helpful and there was an expectation that HLF could have taken a more proactive approach and shown an interest the project activities. It was also felt that HLF could have provided more help with publicity and linking other similar projects together.

Engagement

Engagement with participants and organisations.

The project has been very successful working in partnership with a number of organisations. Those involved in all the projects have included, museums, schools, animation and drama organisations.

Working with other organisations

As can be seen from the projects above, AFWF have worked with a range of organisations both nationally and internationally. Film makers, composers, young people, theatre groups, museums and historical associations have participated fully in a range of activities. Moreover, the projects have been able to include local groups and communities in research, and the translation of this into promoting heritage through the Arts.

The project has been successful in engaging a wide range of participants. Due to the number of smaller projects involved, engagement activities varied, but nevertheless, the smaller projects have been successful in reaching a diverse population both within the UK and internationally.

- **National Music Project** - A song - 'No Parades' uses the experience of the British West Indies Regiment to explore issues around colonialism and race. Those involved were An amateur choir, Recording engineer, composer. 'No Parades' was performed in front of an audience for the first time on 16 December 2017.
- **Castle Drogo to Salonika** - working in partnership with a local secondary school to develop a series of creative pieces to illustrate the impact of the First World War on Castle Drogo – the people and the place itself.
- **Salonika Stories** - Working with a group of military veterans who have either faced or lived through homelessness to produce art work. Drawing on the extensive knowledge and experience of the Salonika Campaign Society and the Imperial War Museum, with additional material, including letters, photos and works of art supplied by Sandham and the nearby Stanley Spencer Gallery, veterans have created art work.
- **Horses in the Desert** has not been as successful as anticipated and at the time of writing was in the process of being replaced with an alternative project.
- **From Islington to Egypt Palestine and Syria** - working with an animation company, young people in Islington created an animation. Participants also included an Under 5's workshop and children aged between 13- 18.
- **Holy Lands** - focuses on the stories of Devon men who were involved in fighting in Palestine. Participation has included a local history group and a drama performance by young people and information from Beaford Archive. Additionally a skype meeting was held between young people through local contacts, a link was set up with the Hebron International Resources Network a Palestinian resource centre providing support to different projects, including children.
- **From Lancashire to Mesopotamia** - following the stories of local soldiers. Four schools involved in creative work.
- **The First World War. the Iranian perspective** - Involvement of the Iranian Association
- **Health the Hidden Enemy** - Volunteers at the Great War in Africa Association have been transcribing the Pike Report.

Making a difference

The project set out to meet the following eight outcomes (taken from the project application form):

- Heritage will be better interpreted and explained
- Heritage will be identified / recorded
- People will have developed skills
- People will have learnt about heritage
- People will have changed their attitudes
- People will have had an enjoyable and inspiring experience
- People will have volunteered time
- More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage

Although the project is still ongoing, it has made considerable progress towards these outcomes. It was a particularly good example of engaging vulnerable adults and young people in heritage and the arts. All the projects have managed to make a significant contribution to raising awareness of FWW activities being undertaken in other parts of the world. Moreover, having a localised feel, the individual projects have managed to bring some of their local history to life.

How the project achieved outcomes for heritage

Heritage will be better interpreted and explained

Using the Arts has been a particularly successful way to portray localised stories and lived experiences of those serving in military campaigns. As the project lead points out:

[The arts] was to help them use that material to make something of it that meant something to them therefore we've got the instant link and therefore help them to appreciate the history. (Project lead)

The project lead commented that the projects had helped people to "Appreciate the history better than showing a slide show".

"I didn't really care about WWI before but I know that it means something now... knowing the details, the hardships of the individual stories... like Jock Christie and his act of bravery... it changes how I think about it" (Young people - Islington to Egypt, Palestine and Syria <https://awayfromthewesternfront.org/projects/from-islington-to-egypt-palestine-and-syria/feedback/>)

"I think if I were talking to people now, had I talked to people about the war diary last year, I would have given them the facts and figures and I would have said isn't that awful and how dreadful that must have been If I was to give that talk now, they would see in my eyes there was more to it. I think I would be able to bring that out now." (Volunteer Holy Lands project)

Heritage will be identified / recorded

International links have been made via social media which resulted in connections in Gaza. Photographs have been obtained of headstones of those who fell and were buried in Gaza and are now available on the project website.

The website includes a section on family histories where people are encouraged to submit family stories. Twitter has been particularly helpful in making connections with those wishing to research and share their family history.

Archive material previously stored in local military regiments has been used extensively in arts productions as well as being included in exhibitions.

Local history groups have been proactive in researching and recording local information.

“She [worker at the Athenaeum] had found things like the original Palestine guides and these would have been in the Library at the time when the soldiers were going over and possibly they or their families would have read or looked at the guides before they went.” (Stakeholder)

“We went back into the Yeomanry and things that had been recorded but not really used came to life because suddenly we knew how they were relevant.” (Stakeholder)

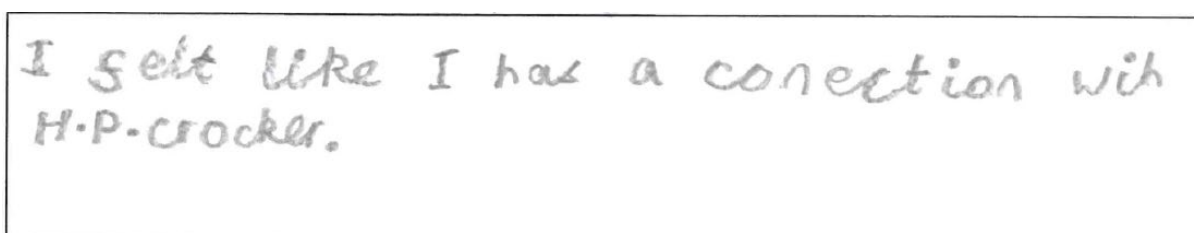
People will have learnt about heritage

“The arts project has the potential to help other people appreciate it.” (Project lead)

- The projects have unearthed previously unknown stories and information regarding the local aspect of War. In particular the Holy Lands project brought to life two diaries from local service personnel.

“Good memories speaking to the family was quite special and be able to interpret this diary that I have been so closely involved in for weeks and weeks and be able to say to the granddaughter of this man, my goodness you should be proud of this man.” (Volunteer)

- Other projects have told stories, exhibited artefacts and used drama and animation as a medium to convey heritage.



I felt like I had a connection with H.P. Crocker.

Taken from Young people's evaluation form - Holy Lands Project

- All the projects have highlighted the lesser known campaigns of the FWW such as the Balkans, East Africa, Italy and Mesopotamia and told these stories through the eyes of those serving. The national Music project has told the stories of the British West Indies Regiment around colonialism and race.
- The website provides an easily accessible digital archive available to all.
- The Holy lands project is not alone in enhancing the understanding of young people, not only about the FWW but the long term legacy and its meaning in today's society. The quote below taken from the projects website illustrates the feelings of a participant of the Iranian Project.

“I come from Tabriz in North Western Iran. My grandparents talked to me a little about the famine and diseases in Iran during the WW1. Unfortunately, there are not many oral history records about the WW1 in Iran. I learned a great deal from the Iranian Association's WW1 project. The research leading to the production of a timeline was an

effective way of learning about the history and understanding the big picture.”
(<https://awayfromthewesternfront.org/projects/the-first-world-war-the-iranian-perspective/feedback/>)

“That’s the great things about the film, now it will be a permanent feature of the First World War gallery on the interactive but also I will be able to go out as outreach there and present it with the objects.” (Stakeholder Holy Lands Project)

How the project achieved outcomes for people

People will have volunteered time

Volunteers have been a vital part of all the projects. They have been responsible for undertaking much of the local research and providing expertise and knowledge about local context.

The Langtree History Group helped with research contributing to a film production as part of the Holy Lands project.

Within the Castle Drogo project there has been a team of research volunteers who have unearthed relevant information including newspaper articles and announcements relating to the First World War.

People will have had an enjoyable and inspiring experience

It was reported that participants, visitors and all those attending the arts events had a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Young people involved in the Holy Lands project reported on their evaluation sheets that the things they liked best were looking at and touching the artefacts.

Volunteers reported a positive experience and commented how they felt comfortable and part of the project.

"it put me where I felt comfortable and forget all the illness and just be absorbed. If you can go through that- what have I got to" (Volunteer)

"Something I didn't expect I would spend two maybe three hours sometimes longer and after a while I thought.....and it occurred to me that I was spending a lot of hours totally engrossed in the First World war and I hadn't planned or expected that I would become part of the theatre of war to the extent that I did and I almost had to debrief myself at the end of the evening to come out of it " (Volunteer)

People will have changed their attitudes

Testimonies of young people on the website, suggest that they had learnt a great deal about the FWW and its global reach:

“All I really knew was that there was a war or something between Germany and England and some other places and that was it”

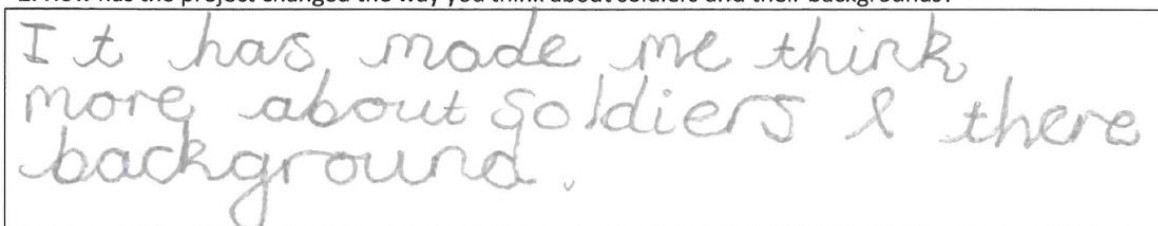
“WWI was a lot more global than I thought it was, I thought it was just a European war”

“I didn’t know WWI was in Egypt, like I knew there were pharaohs and pyramids In Egypt... But I didn’t knew that WWI continued into Egypt”

(<https://awayfromthewesternfront.org/projects/from-islington-to-egypt-palestine-and-syria/feedback/>)

Engaging with drama helped young people to look at the FWW from a different perspective.

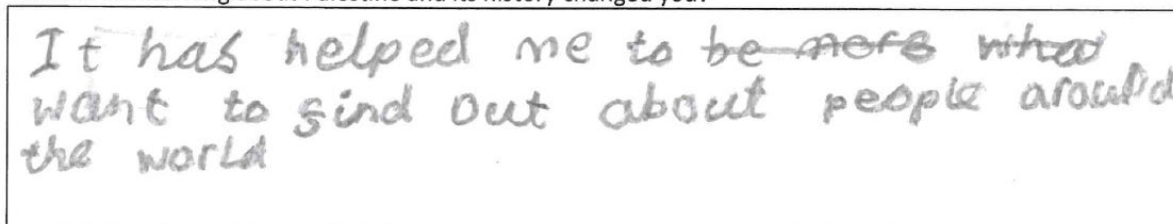
2. How has the project changed the way you think about soldiers and their backgrounds?



It has made me think more about soldiers & there background.

Taken from Young people's evaluation form - Holy Lands Project.

5. How has learning about Palestine and its history changed you?



It has helped me to be more what want to find out about people around the world

Taken from Young people's evaluation form - Holy Lands Project.

One volunteer working on the Holy Lands project described their feelings after reading war diaries.

"The biggest challenge was changing my whole perspective about the FWW I came across things that I thought I didn't think that, I didn't imagine that... I feel differently about the people that were in it [FWW]" (Volunteer, Holy Lands project)

"It moved me and it's changed my perspectiveI thought I knew a fair bit of the experience of war through the literature but I didn't expect that" (Volunteer, Holy Lands project)

Another volunteer involved in the Islington to Egypt, Palestine and Syria project commented "I've also gained a greater understanding of the Territorial Force; its origins, its officers and men, how it was deployed, what made it distinctive and how this could be observed in the campaign in general and amongst the Finsbury Rifles in particular."

<https://awayfromthewesternfront.org/projects/from-islington-to-egypt-palestine-and-syria/feedback/>

People will have developed skills

Using the Arts has proved an excellent medium with which to engage diverse groups and produce excellent results. The project website showcases feedback from participants all of which demonstrate enjoyable and fulfilling experiences. Being involved in animation, drama and creative arts activities has highlighted different opportunities and raised aspirations particularly within young people, as the feedback from young people who participated in the project in Islington show:

"I would like to try more different forms of animation, continue to broaden my mindset" (young person, Islington)

"I learnt...different forms of animation, something you don't get to know in real life..... (it) makes me want to do more in this direction, try more animation in the future' 'this gives you a nice foundation" (young person, Islington)

"I think I want to be doing a lot more animation in my future" (young person, Islington)

"I enjoyed seeing the stories come to life... I'm now going to try and convince my art teacher for A level to let me do something with animation for my project... I can say I've done it so I know how it do it" (young person, Islington)

"I would do it again, if it was like over the whole summer I would come every day if I could come" (young person, Islington)

"It's inspired me to be more creative... to keep animating" (young person, Islington)

<https://awayfromthewesternfront.org/projects/from-islington-to-egypt-palestine-and-syria/feedback>)

Participating in a drama presentation as part of the Holy Lands project, young people learnt how to interpret and understand history in a different way. Moreover, as the young person below comments, they also learnt valuable acting skills.

3. What new skills have you learnt?

How to perform in front of a camera.

Homeless veterans in Salisbury learnt how to create art, and use projection skills as a way of connecting their own history with those who fought in past campaigns.

Working within projects and using archive material volunteers have gained valuable research skills. Moreover, they have learnt the value of connecting archive material to local people and the importance of bringing these to life for future generations.

Other skills highlighted during interviews were improvements in using social media. Twitter in particular proved a valuable interface in highlighting project activities. Additionally, publicity skills were also reported to have improved. More importantly, the maintenance of and reawakening of existing skills was also considered to have been important aspects of participant involvement.

"I would say emotionally and possibly mental health wise it turned my corner for me."
"To me its saved my bacon. It gave me a huge amount of self-confidence I still can do it" (Volunteer, Salisbury)

A volunteer explained while working with children in the drama group, she was now able to communicate with them in different ways: "Being in a museum environment I've had a lot to learn. And to work with these children and to bring a response out of them. ...I feel like one of the team here- it has been a huge sense of personal value that I've got from it" (Volunteer, Salisbury).

How the project achieved outcomes for communities

More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage

- Projects involving local people have raised the profile of the contributions of local people to the war effort.
- The projects have helped to highlight the importance of local history.
- The projects have helped bring to life, stories about local people and communities and their contribution to the First World War.
- Encouraging and involving local people to research not only their local history, but also exploring the contribution of their family members.

- Using exhibitions to showcase local archive material has helped communities learn more about the experiences of all those involved in the First World War, either as serving personnel or those remaining at home.

“Another one of our aims is to explore the collections and make sure our volunteers feel ownership of that and then share that with the public.” (Stakeholder)

- The Holy Lands project was able to share artefacts from the FWW with a local young people's theatre group to enable them to develop a drama.

4. What things did you enjoy the most, and the least?

Best bits
touching the objects

Taken from Young people's evaluation form - Holy Lands Project.

Exhibitions, performances, and art available to the community highlighted the role of other campaigns across the world during the FWW.

Increasing the understanding about the FWW and learning about its implications in today's society.

“I have a greater understanding of the Egypt and Southern Palestine campaign as a part of WW1; its impact on and relevance to later & current political developments in the Middle East.” (Volunteer, <https://awayfromthewesternfront.org/projects/from-islington-to-egypt-palestine-and-syria/feedback/>)

A resource pack for teachers is in development to enable them to widen young people's understanding of the First World War.

Additional outcomes

It is clear from the testimonies on the website and talking to participants as part of this case study that everyone has gained considerably from their involvement. Alongside learning new skills, and changing their perceptions about war generally, participants gained extensive self-worth, self-esteem and confidence. Moreover, volunteers from the Holy Lands project gained a great deal in terms of personal enrichment.

“For me it's been a complete joy and it's been mega for me. It's been of value to people at the museum.” (Volunteer, Holy Lands project)

For one volunteer, involvement has highlighted to the community his extensive knowledge about the local regiment and as such he is now helping others trace the familial involvement, something that he commits to four days per week. As he commented, "it keeps me going".

Involvement through shared experiences brought participants closer together, widened their social circle and helped bring out new potential that may not have otherwise been captured.

“It opened up opportunities for me - being involved with the film. I am pleased for the filming because I really believed in the project and had such respect for the [diarist], it was important for the children to take something away- a huge personal responsibility to get that across in the film.” (Volunteer, Holy Lands project)

“Amazing opportunities came about that I could not have foreseen” (Volunteer, Holy Lands project)

Lessons learnt

The project lead felt that three things were necessary for successful delivery of projects:

- Community/ audience group - keen to explore connections and issues.
- Creative arts for interpretation
- Sound Historical knowledge

“There are three main elements to the sub- projects and getting them together and off the ground and successful outcomes. You need the community or audience group who are keen to explore their personal or local connections to these stories or issues connected with the campaigns. You need the arts practitioners to support the groups. You need sound historical knowledge to support it.” (Trustee)

Help with publicity from (for example) the HLF would help promote a national project.