

Notes on 'Remembering Bucks in the Great War' meeting, 30 November 2013

Following an introduction by the Lord Lieutenant, Lt Colonel Simon Wilkinson announced that, in accordance with the decision at the first meeting on 6 July, the Bucks Military Museum Trust (BMMT) website (www.bmmt.co.uk) would begin shortly to carry news of commemorative activities in the county as well as a range of information to ensure co-ordination and the avoidance of repetition. Those attending the meeting were asked to fill in the forms made available to enable the Trust to begin to list events and projects.

1) Professor Beckett of the BMMT then outlined a number of initiatives being undertaken at national and local level. The Department for Communities and Local Government had announced a commemoration project for VC winners commencing in August 2014. Pavement plaques, the design for which had now been agreed following a design competition, would be offered to those local authorities in which VC winners had been born. The cost of the pavement plaques and their engraving would be borne by DCLG but local authorities would need to accept them, find the most suitable location and maintain them. Two VC winners had been born in the county. 2nd Lieutenant Frederick Youens of High Wycombe, and a former pupil of the Royal Grammar School, had been awarded a posthumous VC while serving with the 13th Durham Light Infantry in July 1917. Youens was buried in the Railway Dugouts Cemetery in Belgium and the TA Centre at Booker, Youens House, was named after him. Company Sergeant Major Edward Brooks of Oakley had enlisted in the Royal Bucks Hussars but had then won the VC while serving with the 2/4th Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry in April 1917. He died in 1944 and was buried in Rose Hill cemetery in Oxford: Edward Brooks Barracks at Abingdon was named after him. Accordingly, the paving plaques would be offered to Wycombe District Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council respectively.

It was pointed out by June Underwood of Buckinghamshire Remembers that two further Great War VC winners were buried in the county, namely Lieutenant Commander Geoffrey Drummond (1918), who was buried at Chalfont St Peter, and Air Vice Marshal Frank McNamara, (1917), who was buried at Gerrards Cross, but they were born respectively in London and Australia. Additionally, Lieutenant Basil Horsfall (1917) was a former pupil of Sir William Borlase's School but had been born in Ceylon. Captain Francis Grenfell (1914) was a long term resident of the county at Wilton Park but had been born in Guildford: the Mayor of Beaconsfield was to contact the Mayor of Guildford to request that the pavement plaque be given to Beaconsfield.

It was announced that the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) had been involved in two separate commemorative projects. The first was linked to the BBC 'World War One at Home' project, with radio stations in each BBC region being tasked with producing approximately 100 stories related to its particular locality for broadcast on radio or local television over the next four years. Unfortunately, the county fell between two regions, in that Three Counties Radio (BBC East) would be responsible for generating Bucks stories but BBC South covered most of the county in terms of local television. Professor Beckett was the adviser to BBC South (including Radio Oxford and Radio Berkshire) but Professor Jane Chapman of the University of Lincoln was the adviser to BBC East. It was suggested that any interesting local

stories be channelled to Professor Beckett for onward transmission though the timescale was relatively short in that the BBC broadcast journalists were meant to research the stories by the end of February 2014. The AHRC had also now announced five regional university-led centres to be given approximately £500,000 each to spend over the next two years in their regions on community commemorative projects. It was not at all clear as yet how the centres would be managed and the money distributed to local projects. However, the three regional centres in England were based on consortia led respectively by the University of Birmingham, the University of Kent and the University of Hertfordshire. The latter, therefore, would have funds to allocate within the county but would service a wide area, other partners being the University of Essex and the University of Northampton. As Professor Beckett was at the University of Kent he would be able to advise on the opportunities available in due course. Contact: i.beckett@kent.ac.uk

It was also announced that the Bucks Military Museum Trust itself was preparing a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for support towards the Buckinghamshire Great War Virtual Trail. Based on the existing Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies (CBS) 'Bombs over Bucks' site, there would be a map of the county and clicking on the icons would bring up a Great War photograph of that location with modern image of the same location, and an appropriate caption. Museums and other local collections in the county would be approached for the use of their Great War images, as well as an appeal made to the public to make the coverage as wide as possible.

Attention was again drawn to the Imperial War Museum-led First World War consortium, which any local organisation could join. Apart from providing a forum for information, there were already many aids to local exhibitions that could be downloaded such as timelines and illustrations. See: www.1914.org

Attention was also drawn to the expertise of Dr Mike Senior (Bucks Battalions), author of *Fromelles, 1916: No Finer Courage - The Loss of an English Village* (Pen & Sword Books, 2011): see www.pen-and-sword.co.uk; E. John Hounslow (Royal Bucks Hussars), author of *Fighting for the Bucks: The History of the Royal Bucks Hussars, 1914-18* (History Press, 2013): see www.thehistorypress.co.uk; and John Sheldon (researching war memorials), author of *The Stewkley Lads: Fallen in the Great War* (Stewkley Local History Group, 2009): see www.stewkleyhistory.org.uk.

2) In view of many enquiries already received at County Hall, Vanessa Mason, Bucks County Council Events and Sponsorship Team Leader, clarified the County Council's position. It was emphasised that no county money was available for commemorative projects. However, the expertise of the events team was available to advise on the organisation of, and publicity for, commemorative events including, for example, the various thresholds on appropriate permissions required for differing scales of event. The Events and Sponsorship Team would be undertaking a scooping exercise to review events already planned and through its own website, the County Council would direct enquiries to that of the BMMT.

It was reported, however, that South Bucks District Council was making grants of £300 available to each parish council to support commemorative activities, these grants having to be applied for through the relevant parish council. This was an

initiative by South Bucks District Council only and did not apply to either Aylesbury Vale or Wycombe District Councils.

3) Laura Cotton of the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies updated the meeting on the preparation of the CBS and BMMT application to the HLF for the main Remembering the Great War in Buckinghamshire project. It was now expected to be lodged with HLF before Christmas though it was still possible to tweak the application in the light of suggestions that might be received from this meeting and from other groups and organisations that were still contacting Laura. A briefing sheet was provided for the project. As previously suggested, it was intended to digitalise, transcribe and interpret a range of materials held at the CBS. It would include re-cataloguing the military collections; digitalising, transcribing and indexing selected parts; generating and displaying online research into Bucks people during the war, and organising events and exhibitions. Funding was being sought for a part-time project officer, who would be assisted by volunteers. Contact: lcotton@buckscc.gov.uk

4) The meeting was thrown open to the floor, the following being announced:

i) Western Front Association Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Branch. Launching a 'regional notice (as is WFA Milton Keynes Branch) board' that can be customised for local displays within the Thames region. Outreach boxes will also be available and audio and Braille books are under preparation. The branch will launch its own website in January 2014. Contact: n-crompton@sky.com

ii) Burnham Royal British Legion (Bob Slater). Successful in its HLF bid to involve schools, scouts and other youth organisations in the preparation of a commemorative exhibition for local schools. An event will be held at Burnham Park Hall on 2 August 2014 with a special service around the war memorial on 3 August 2014. RAF Halton (Flight Lieutenant Andy Claesens). The restored Great War practice trenches (used by 21st Division in 1914-15) are now open for group visits by appointment. An HLF bid is being prepared and it is hoped to open the trenches generally one weekend a month for the general public from 2/3 August 2014. Contact: HAL-CareersSO3outreach@mod.uk

iii) Bucks Branch, Historical Association (Terri Bloxham). The 2014-15 programme of monthly talks will include Great War subjects (and be linked to the national curriculum) while the usual 'summer walk' concluding the 2013-14 programme will be to the trenches at RAF Halton.

iv) Milton Keynes Arts and Heritage Association (Lally Davies). A bid to the HLF was being prepared by the six partner organisations represented for a programme of exhibitions, performances and film events. Separately, the Living Archive had been successful in its bid to the HLF for funding digitalisation of material, for a drama production, and a 'book of days'.

v) Buckinghamshire Remembers. Clint Lawson's database with over 34,800 names of Bucks servicemen mentioned in sources such as the 1918 Absent Voters' List, the Bucks Roll of Honour, and local newspapers had now been added to the existing database of names on war memorials. See www.buckinghamshireremembers.org.uk

vi) Bucks Free Press (Mike Dewy). The newspaper was now featuring stories on local soldiers, and would be running a competition in June 2014 offering a prize for the most interesting story featured. Separately the Loudwater Local History Grip was researching its local war memorial.

vii) Royal British Legion (Kevin Taylor). Happy to provide talks and presentations on the poppy appeal. In High Wycombe, the RBL would be laying wreaths on all war memorials on 4 August 2014, while it was hoped that London Wasps would be playing a combined football and rugby match. There would be a competition for local schools to design a calendar based on poppies.

viii) Wycombe Museum (Dr Catherine Grigg). Planning was underway for an exhibition of Great War artefacts in April 2014.

ix) Bucks County Museum (Will Phillips). Plans were still being developed but there would be a Great War exhibition in 2014 possibly based in part on the CBS collection of wartime recruiting posters, but also tied to stories of local people whose experiences could be illustrated from the collections. It was also possible that the open events at RAF Halton would be tied into an open event at the BCM Technical Store in Halton. The small collections showcase area in the museum could also be made available for temporary exhibitions by local organisations and/or projects.

x) Bucks Advertiser (Mort Smith). The newspaper would be happy to publicise events in south Bucks and had already assisted in projects at Hedgerley and Chalfont St Peter. Mort also drew attention to the Heathrow Community Fund, on whose judging panel he sat and which could offer grants of up to £2,500 for community projects in the area of Heathrow. See www.airportcommunitiestrust.com/community-funds/heathrow-community-fund

xii) Aylesbury Vale District Council (Stephanie Moffat). Plans were still being developed, but with funding from the Armed Forces Community Covenant, AVDC was working on a mobile exhibition for schools and a film to be created by students.

xiii) Operation Reflect (Simon Wilkinson). Based at Aldershot and with a part-time project officer appointed, 145 Brigade intended to help run battlefield tours.

xiv) Soldiers of Oxfordshire Trust (Ingram Murray). The new museum would be opening at Woodstock in spring 2014. SOFO would be happy to assist with its records of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.

xv) Waddesdon Archive (Catherine Taylor). Waddesdon was working on an exhibition about the maintenance of the estate in wartime and, indeed, had been contacted by BBC East for the 'World War One at Home' project. In addition, Waddesdon was working with Waddesdon C of E School on a series of activities on the war's local legacy that would also involve BMMT and RAF Halton in July 2014. Future exhibitions would feature the Rothschild family at war.

xvi) SAFA (John Stevens). Looking for stories of families that were helped by SAFA during and after the war. Happy to assist in other projects but not planning any event of its own.

xvii) Tingewick Historical Society. Preparing a booklet on the war memorial. Would appreciate advice on sources of grant.

xviii) Wycombe Museum. Working with John Hampden School on a 'cemetery tour' of servicemen's graves in local cemeteries for June 2014.

xix) Chilterns AONB. Small grants were available.

xx) Amersham U3A (Bob Meredith). Had received HLF grant for its project on the war memorial. It was likely that this would appear in digital rather than printed form.

The Lord Lieutenant extended thanks to Lieutenant Colonel John Williams for making Viney House available for the meeting. It was agreed that there should be another meeting to be held in March 2014 for a further review of planned activities.