

Notes on Remembering Bucks in the Great War meeting, 29 March 2014

The meeting at Viney House, Aylesbury was opened by Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher, Bt. (Lord Lieutenant), who welcomed especially a number of groups not represented at the two previous meetings.

Professor Ian Beckett (Bucks Military Museum Trust) reported that an exhibition had opened at Waddesdon Manor on 26 March and that the exhibition at Wycombe Museum was due to open on 7 April and that at the County Museum in Aylesbury on 26 July. The Trust was contributing items to each of these exhibitions and would make available generally a list of its Great War collection. The Trust's own bid for the Buckinghamshire Great War Virtual Trail had been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). As expected, one of the five Arts and Humanities Research Council Great War Co-ordinating Centres had been allocated to a consortium led by the University of Hertfordshire. In theory, funds would be made available by these centres to support local and regional projects but, as yet, no firm details on financing or objectives had been forthcoming from AHRC. While the AHRC funded BBC World War One at Home project was nearing its end, it would still be possible to feed potential stories into BBC Three Counties Radio, since BBC East was responsible for the Bucks part of the project. Attention was drawn to the BBC World War One at Home website where the broadcast stories generated from Three Counties would be progressively posted. Currently, there were stories on both Waddesdon Manor and RFC/RAF Halton during the war.

Laura Cotton (Centre for Bucks Studies) reported that the Centre's joint bid with the Bucks Military Museum to the HLF, now entitled 'Great War Buckinghamshire', had also been submitted. The bid requested approximately £100,000 to run over four and a half years. As previously indicated, digitalisation of resources would be at the heart of the project. It was also intended to ascertain what Great War resources relating to the county existed elsewhere. In the meantime, work was to proceed on re-cataloguing the military collections in the Centre. Volunteers would be required not only for this initial re-cataloguing but also for the main project if the funding bid was successful. The Centre was receiving many requests for assistance, such as that for a forthcoming exhibition at Amersham in July, and in some cases loan material was limited although digital copies were available for some particularly desired items such as the 'Bucks Boys Come Over Here' poster, and the Centre's other recruiting posters. A school pack of artefacts was available together with a supporting CD Rom: however, while there were multiple copies of the CD Rom, there was only one pack of artefacts. The Great War toolkit giving advice on exhibitions was now available on the County Council website [<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/media/1794200/WW1-Toolkit-v11.pdf>]

Lt. Colonel Simon Wilkinson (Bucks Military Museum Trust) announced that the Trust had established a sub-committee to help co-ordinate commemorative activities under the chairmanship of Colonel Mike Vince. 145 (South) Brigade had now appointed an officer to work three days a week for the next four years on Great War commemoration and some finance would be available for some activities such as battlefield tours, as would also be some funds from the Armed Forces Community Covenant. Attention was also drawn to the assistance that might be available from Royal British Legion Branches. The Trust also had a good contact in BBC Three Counties Radio to assist in publicity for events.

VC Pavement Stones. There was some discussion of the VC pavement stones, two of which were allocated to the county for Wycombe (Frederick Youens) and Oakley (Edward Brooks), the basis being that an individual had been born in Bucks. An Oakley representative indicated that the Oakley stone would be stored until the anniversary of the award in 2017. Similarly, Wycombe District Council would be placing the Youens stone in 2017 though its location was as yet undecided. It had been pointed out that other VC winners were closely connected to the county by residence or, indeed, burial. Francis Grenfell VC, for example, had been born in Guildford but had lived for most of his life in Beaconsfield. Beaconsfield Town Council had ascertained that it could obtain a copy of the pavement stone awarded to Guildford for £300 and this might be an option for other VCs connected to the county. Geoffrey Drummond VC had been born in London but was buried at Chalfont St Peter. A slightly different case was that of Frank McNamara VC, who was born in Australia but is buried in Gerard Cross, since it was unclear whether the scheme was intended to cover VC winners born overseas. [Note: The Beaconsfield decision to purchase the duplicate appeared on the local BBC website on 4 April]

AVDC. A total of £27,000 had been made available as an Armed Forces Community Covenant grant for a project involving six schools to produce mobile exhibitions and a magazine.

Buckinghamshire Remembers. Attention was again drawn to the work of Buckinghamshire Remembers and the invaluable database compiled by Clint Lawson of references to Bucks servicemen in such sources as the wartime local press. Philip Sturtivant also drew attention to the map prepared on the locations of homes of Buckingham servicemen, which was a relatively cheap means of producing something of value for the future. It was suggested from the floor that a useful exercise would be to try and pull together details of gallantry awards to Bucks servicemen if these were not apparent from the local press although citations were rarely given in the *London Gazette* for those decorations awarded in relatively large numbers. Buckingham Library had produced four handouts on resources to trace ancestors who served in the war and these would be made available through the Bucks remembers website.

Bucks Television. It was hoped to video all major events in the county over the next four to five years.

Chalfont St Peter Local Heritage Group. A book by D J Kelly had been produced on the village's experience of war throughout history. There would be a child-led church service in July while a major project was to upgrade the memorial garden.

Flackwell Heath and Loudwater. There would be a guided tour of Wycombe cemetery on 22 June to highlight Great War graves with costumed interpreters. A website was also under development to record those named on the war memorials.

Haddenham. There will be an exhibition in the county library building from 6 November to 9 December, which was being put together with the assistance of the Western Front Association and a local researcher (Nick Burch). A play based on life in Haddenham during the war would be put on in St Mary's Church School on 14 and 15 November and there would also be a church service on 2 November and various

spiritual activities in the week leading up to Remembrance Sunday (9 November). The first of an annual series of commemorative lectures would take place on 27 November.

Hedgerley Historical Society. The 2014-2015 programme included a talk on wartime training at Halton on 4 June, a visit to the Halton trenches on 7 June, and a talk by Dr Senior on The Lee and Fromelles on 15 October.

Milton Keynes. A grant from HLF of £60,700 would be used *inter alia* to develop a 'Book of Days' for the MK area as a whole, with contemporary accounts and supporting other sources. Volunteers were undertaking the research and it was planned to launch the project at the end of the summer.

Oakley. In addition to the VC pavement stone mentioned above, work was being done on a collection of letters of a serviceman in the Machine Gun Corps. It was likely that the collection would go ultimately to the CBS.

RAF Halton (Tom Costello). It was reported that there would be a pre-view of the opening of the reconstructed trenches in July with a major event scheduled for 2-3 August. It would be possible for other groups to have displays at the event within the New Workshops. This event, however, would not be a public event due to the geographical limitations of the trench site and by invitation only. Information was available from tom@costello32.organgehome.co.uk

RAF High Wycombe. A project was being developed with local groups but was at an early stage. Assistance might be available to help plan visits to other county activities.

Royal British Legion. Amersham Branch was involved in a project to record the names of local servicemen who had returned from the war. There would be a band concert in the memorial gardens on 27 July, a display in the Market Hall on 26-27 July, and a show in the Legion Club by a local artists on 8 August. Beaconsfield Branch planned a church service on 3 August while there were plans for poetry readings on 12 April. Burnham Branch had been successful in obtaining HLF funding of £3,200 for work with seven local schools, but had also received additional funding from the Heathrow Community Fund, South Bucks District Council, and two other local funding organisations. As previously indicated, there would be an exhibition at Burnham Park Hall from 20 July to 6 August, with a concert and drama on 2 August. Chalfont St Peter and Chalfont St Giles Branch was contributing to the project to refurbish the memorial garden and to record names on the war memorial, as well as planning a concert and a floral display. Hambledon and District Branch was considering a number of events and would be collaborating with a war memorial project. Hazelmere and District is linked to Erquinghem-Lys in Flanders and will be handing over its standard for display there in the autumn, while it is also helping to refurbish the memorial lime trees planted in 1935. High Wycombe Branch will parade at each of the 14 war memorials in the district on 4 August and also plan a children's art competition. Holmer Green Branch is working on the name son the war memorial. Marlow Branch is contributing to the Marlow commemoration projects of Marlow WW1.

SSAFA. There would be a Great War memorial concert in Aylesbury on 4 October, which would feature both the Military Wives Choir and also the RAF Halton Band. SSAFA was working to develop resources for schools and was also keen to hear of any information available on the ways in which SSAFA case officers had assisted bereaved families and dependants in the county during the war to supplement the national archives it held.

Soldiers of Oxfordshire. The 'soft' opening of the new museum at Woodstock would be on 26 May.

Stewkley Local History Group (John Sheldon). Attention was again drawn to the guide to how to research a war memorial provided on the BMMT website based on the group's experience.

Wendover Remembers. The inaugural meeting would be held on 30 April, at which various ideas would be explored.

Western Front Association (Nigel Crompton). It was reported that the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Branch bid to the HLF for £4,500 had been unsuccessful though they could re-apply in 2016. [It was noted, generally, that funding could be sought for continuing projects once any bid was successful] The Branch had outreach boxes available and was assisting exhibitions at Beaconsfield, Burnham and Haddenham.

Womens' Institutes. The centenary of the WI fell in 2015 and the Bucks branches were developing a project on emancipation and the suffrage campaign in Bucks.

Wycombe District Council. Apart from the Youens stone and the Wycombe Museum exhibition, both noted above, a project was under way to highlight the role of the Quakers during the war. The Council had grants to a maximum of £1,500 available for local commemorative projects.

It was agreed that a further meeting would be useful in the autumn with the venue perhaps chosen to enable participants to see one of the commemorative projects being undertaken.