

Notes on Remembering Bucks in the Great War meeting, 6 July 2013

Following the introduction by the Lord Lieutenant, Professor Ian Beckett of the Bucks Military Museum Trust gave a presentation on aspects of the county in the Great War, focussing on the themes of the nation in arms, the impact on society, and legacies. Laura Cotton of the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies then outlined the joint Trust and Centre bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The emphasis in the bid was upon digitalisation of records and the production of searchable databases, both exercisers based on collections held in the Centre. In addition, however, there would be a collaborative approach to cataloguing, using social, media, countywide exhibitions, and events to gather additional information (for example, on photographs). Funding would be sought for a project officer to co-ordinate the activities of volunteers. The bid would be submitted in July 2013 and, if successful, a project officer would be appointed for January 2014 and the call for volunteers launched in March 2014. Separately, the Trust and Centre were partners with Oxford University Computer Department in a second bid for digitalisation funds from the Europeana project.

It was accepted that the centenary would not happen solely in 2014 but that events would continue until 2018 or even 2019. In the general discussion, there was general agreement with the suggestion of that the war experience be reflected 'warts and all'. Attention was drawn to the Imperial War Museum-led centenary consortium, which was open to all groups, and also provided a range of downloadable resources such as timelines. Funding was available for smaller projects up to £10,000. Groups could register at www.1914.org In terms of other funding options besides the Heritage Lottery Fund, support from the Arts Council was available for museums. In addition, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) had invited bids from universities to become responsible for a number of regional centres that would have some funds available for local projects, and would also offer advice and support for such projects. The closing date was 9 July. Both Oxford Brookes and Hertfordshire Universities were certainly intending to bid but neither had any Great War specialists and it was not clear if either would be selected to cover this general region.

A number of groups and individuals indicated planned or anticipated commemorative activities:

- 1) Aylesbury Vale District Council. There had been a preliminary meeting on 18 June. The focus was likely to be on youth projects, which might include recording stained glass memorial windows in Bucks churches, or town trails related to commemoration such as that recently produced in Buckingham.
- 2) Bucks Branch of the Historical Association: The war would be reflected in the annual lecture programmes.
- 3) Bucks County Museum. The museum collections could be made available for exhibitions provided the required minimum standards of display and security were met.
- 4) Buckinghamshire Military Museum Trust. It was contemplated holding exhibitions related to the Royal Bucks Hussars at Gallipoli (2015), the Buckinghamshire Battalions on the Somme and at Fromelles (2016), the Royal Bucks Hussars in Palestine (2017), and the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion in Italy (2018). A display on mobilisation was also possible for 2014.

- 5) Milton Keynes Living Archive. A total of £60,700 had been successfully won from the Heritage Lottery fund to digitalise learning materials, and to produce a public book of days, a community play, and an exhibition. MK Museum Service was happy to advise on its experience in seeking funding.
- 6) Marlow Museum. A 'Marlow Remembers World War One' project was under consideration, which might include a garden of remembrance, potential use of the practise trenches in Pullingshill Wood, and a recreation in 2018 of the Grand Ball held in Marlow on the occasion of the 1918 armistice.
- 7) RAF Halton. A total of 154 yards of practise trench from the stationing of the 21st Division at Halton in 1914-15 had been reconstructed. It was anticipated that this would be open at least one weekend per month for general visitors but would also be attractive to schools.
- 8) Soldiers of Oxfordshire Trust. There would be a series of war-related exhibitions in the new museum at Woodstock when it opened in 2014, which would include representation of the Buckinghamshire Battalions. SOFO was co-operating with History Press in the production of a book on Oxfordshire in the war. Could offer advice on the recent successful meeting at Banbury to gather in and digitalise Great War material for the Oxford University Computer Department-led Europeana project.
- 9) Tudor Hall School. A series of lessons plans for primary schools on war-related themes were available on the School website for downloading. In addition, there would be a major photographic exhibition in the National Trust Gardens at Stowe of aerial views of the Western Front, with related events.
- 10) Waddesdon Manor. There would be a series of exhibitions on Waddesdon at War including the impact on the maintenance of the gardens in the absence of gardeners, and also on the war experiences of the Rothschild family.
- 11) Western Front Association (Milton Keynes Branch). There would be a series of annual one-day seminars, the first of which was scheduled for 9 October 2014. Each would normally comprise for talks by invited speakers.
- 12) Western Front Association (Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Branch). Programme of speakers.
- 13) Wycombe Museum. There would be an exhibition on High Wycombe and the war opening in April 2014. As with the County Museum, material could be loaned for exhibitions but the Great War holdings were limited in extent.
- 14) Chiltern U3A was unable to be present but intended to launch an 'Amersham World War One Memorial Record' project as an in depth study of the town's fallen.

It was agreed that the Bucks Military Museum website (www.bmmt.co.uk) would be the principal means by which information on events connected to the centenary could be communicated within the county. A series of links could be built into the website to those of other groups in the county.

The following would be made available shortly on the BMMT website:

- 1) Professor Beckett's presentation on Bucks in the Great War.
- 2) John Sheldon's presentation on how he researched the Stewkley War Memorial.
- 3) Details of Dr Mike Senior's book on the men from The Lee killed at Fromelles in 1916.
- 4) Details of John Hounslow's forthcoming book on the Royal Bucks Hussars in the Great War.
- 5) Details of other published sources on aspects of Bucks in the Great War.