

COMMEMORATION OF THE CENTENARY OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR:

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION GROUP – SIXTH MEETING

10:30 – 12:30, Tuesday 17 November 2015

Meeting Room 1, Pierhead Building, Cardiff Bay

Present:

[St Cyres School Official 1] ([job title redacted] St Cyres School, Penarth)
Professor Sir Deian Hopkin – First Minister's Expert Advisor on the First World War
[RWF Trust Official 1] (Royal Welch Fusiliers Trust)
[AC-NMW Official 1] ([job title redacted] National Slate Museum)
[Aberystwyth University Official 1] (Aberystwyth University)
[RWF Trust Official 2] (Royal Welch Fusiliers Trust)
[WFA Official 1] (Chair, Western Front Association, Gwent Branch)
[Swansea University Official 1] (Swansea University)
[Welsh Government Official 1] (Welsh Government)
[Welsh Government Official 2] (Welsh Government)

Apologies:

[Cardiff University Official] (Cardiff University)
[Bangor University Official 1] (Bangor University)
[Aberystwyth University Official 2] (Aberystwyth University)
[Regimental Museum of the Royal Welch Official 1] (The Regimental Museum of the Royal Welch)

1. Welcome and minutes of previous meeting

[St Cyres School Official 1] welcomed group members to the meeting.

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

[St Cyres School Official 1] noted that a meeting had taken place in July to discuss the commemoration of the centenary of the Battle of Mametz Wood, with a further meeting to take place in December. A meeting to discuss Passchendaele and 2017's commemorative activities have not yet taken place but details will be provided in due course.

[Swansea University Official 1] indicated that the bid to AHRC for funding for a historical conference in July 2016 has been unsuccessful.

2. Update on the Wales at War educational app

Paper circulated – [St Cyres School Official 1] noted that the app had been launched in an event held on 2 November at St Cyres School, Penarth, which was attended by Huw Lewis, Minister for Education and Skills. [St Cyres School Official 1] praised the

contribution of Year 10 pupils of the school who took part in the launch. The app is available to download, and via the Hwb website.

[St Cyres School Official 1] summarised that overall the app is excellent (with particular highlights being the virtual HMS Caroline and First World War trench tours), although some minor improvements are needed. For example, the app currently only contains details of servicemen who were killed during the war and it is intended that details of those who survived the war will be added. Members felt that databases such as that of RCAHMW, the War Office's 'Burnt Documents' records (although these incur a cost) and The National Archives could be integrated into the app, or that links could be provided.

[St Cyres School Official 1] asked members to review the app and report any feedback to him via e-mail.

Department for Education and Skills' £1k grants to secondary schools

It was noted that although all secondary schools in Wales are eligible for £1,000 grants provided by the Welsh Government Department for Education and Skills (DfES), only 46 completed applications have been received. Members noted that the £1,000 offered by the Welsh Government was not enough and that schools might not feel that the work involved in making an application would be worthwhile. Furthermore, it may be the case that they do not know what to do with the grant available.

[RWF Trust Official 2] suggested a new grant programme whereby schools had the chance to apply for a limited number of grants of between £10,000 and £15,000, on a first come first served basis, and that this might engage more schools.

DH raised his concerns over the grant scheme and asked if there is a contingency in place should all the funds available not be spent. He suggested that there should be more flexibility in terms of the grant scheme and asked if DfES could draw up some new plans for the scheme.

[St Cyres School Official 1] suggested perhaps DfES could share some ideas with schools in terms of the kinds of projects that could be developed. For example, the grant could be spent on subscription to Ancestry.com and that pupils could use the website to research servicemen's histories for inclusion in the Wales at War app. [WFA Official 1] suggested that schools could pool the grants together and develop projects jointly. He also asked why primary schools are being excluded from the scheme.

The group concurred that the turn of the Financial Year would be a good barometer of the success of the project – if there has not been a significant increase in the number of applications by April, with the centenary of the Battle of Mametz Wood (a major centenary for the commemoration in Wales) on the horizon, then perhaps DfES should consider revisiting the parameters of the grant scheme.

Action: Welsh Government Official 1] agreed to relay members' queries and comments to DfES for their response.

3. Update on the Historical Conference

There was a consensus among the group that a conference should be held and that 2018 might be the best time. The issue of funding the Welsh conference was discussed. DH suggested that discretionary funding is available in Welsh universities. He suggested that an estimate of the total cost be calculated and an approach be made to Welsh universities. It was agreed that the total cost would mostly relate to the travel and subsistence costs of the speakers and needn't be too onerous – approximately £5-10k in total. Each contributing university could be promised a lecture slot. Delegates could be charged a nominal entry fee if necessary. [RWF Trust Official 2] also suggested that the conference could be held on a distributed basis – i.e. a video link to each university.

DH informed members that Professor Sir Hew Strachan had contacted him regarding a pan-UK conference and to request Welsh representation on its board.

[Swansea University Official 1] informed the group that he is developing the *Welsh Memorials of the Great War, a Living Legacies*-funded project to map the 'unofficial' war memorials of Wales (i.e. those located in chapels, clubs etc. such as the one near the entrance to the Pierhead Building, where the meeting is being held). The information collected will enable a database to be built, and will be shared through the Wales at War app. The intention is to work with community groups and schools in certain areas on related projects. The post of Research Assistant has been advertised and will close tomorrow. Once the Assistant is in place (before Christmas) it will then be possible to start receiving information and inputting it onto the database. [Swansea University Official 1] asked that any information to be included be sent to him via e-mail.

4. Update on the Fron-goch Centenary

Paper circulated – [Aberystwyth University Official 1] thanked the Welsh Government's *Cymru'n Cofio* Wales Remembers 1914-1918 Programme for its support towards the Ireland-Wales Academic Symposium which will be held in September 2016. The symposium will be arranged by [Aberystwyth University Official 1] on behalf of the Ireland-Wales Research Network and will look at the juxtaposition of both nations' varying histories in 1916 and pose new questions about the consequences of events in that year. For example the history of the Easter Rising and that of the unionist and catholic involvements on the Somme and, from a Welsh perspective, the Battle of Mametz Wood, the anti-war movement and the accession of David Lloyd George as Prime Minister. As well as academics, the Ireland-Wales Research Network is looking to draw in people from outside academia to offer a different perspective to the symposium.

[RWF Trust Official 2] highlighted the need to recognise the fact that there were many catholic soldiers among British regiments, and that the focus shouldn't be restricted to unionists. [AC-NMW Official 1] suggested that one interesting perspective might be that of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist chapel in Dublin and the reaction of its congregation to the Easter Rising. [RWF Trust Official 1] highlighted the literary link between Hedd Wyn and Francis Ledwidge, who were both killed at Passchendaele and are both buried at Artillery Wood Cemetery.

5. Review of The Welsh at Gallipoli Exhibition

[RWF Trust Official 1] informed members that the touring exhibition is visiting 6 locations in Wales; it has been displayed in Penmaenmawr, Newtown; the National Library in Aberystwyth;

[RWF Trust Official 1] noted the welcome that the exhibition had in Penmaenmawr. [RWF Trust Official 1] also noted that the exhibition will be returning to Penmaenmawr following its stay in Gregynog.

New unseen photographs unearthed.

Cardiff University were collection items relating to the exhibition.

[RWF Trust Official 1] said that the Welsh at Gallipoli Exhibition format can be used by community groups and other groups as a template to create their own commemorative piece of work.

[RWF Trust Official 1] and [RWF Trust Official 2] noted the commemoration of Palestine is upcoming and that planning work should preferably begin in Spring 2016. Noted there was an image in a Gloucester museum which would be very relevant to the commemoration.

6. Any Other Business

Thiepval – DH will be visiting the site of the memorial to the 38th (Welsh) Division in Mametz on 2 December. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has estimated that 10,000 people will be attending the UK commemoration of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July.

Mametz – [RWF Trust Official 2] said that the Royal Welch Fusiliers Staff Officer and Staff Secretary attended the visit to the site of the 38th (Welsh) Division on 11 November.

There are some concerns regarding the fact that use of the land adjacent to the memorial has not yet been secured for commemorative events on 7 July. The landowner has requested compensation for the loss of crops during the event. The issue will be discussed at the Programme Board meeting later this afternoon.

Commemoration of Passchendaele in July 2017 – DH informed members that there is to be no UK commemoration on 31 July 2017, and therefore arranging a Welsh commemoration in Langemark on that date will be more straightforward. However, there may be an Irish commemoration in the same area on the same day.

Meetings of the group – [RWF Trust Official 2] and DH suggested that there should be more frequent Historians meetings.

Funding – DH suggested that the Welsh Government should consider continuing to fund commemorative events after 1918 to include the Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War.

Christmas Truce – [RWF Trust Official 2] noted that the Christmas Truce Exhibition is on display again in Caernarfon and now includes material on the second Christmas Truce, which is to be the subject of a Daily Telegraph article in December.

[AC-NMW Official 1] played a video extract of 'I'r Gad, Fechgyn Gwalia!', a drama produced by Theatr Bara Caws commissioned by Amgueddfa Cymru – National

Museum Wales to correspond with the 'For Freedom and For Empire' exhibition, which looks at the reaction among the slate quarrying communities of north Wales to the First World War recruitment campaign before conscription was introduced in 1916.

7. Date of the next meeting

Welsh Government officials will circulate suitable dates for the next meeting in due course.

November 2015