

# Evaluation Report

## Bottesford Parish First World War Centenary Project



Bottesford Squad Mobilisation 1914

Courtesy of Christopher Harris

## People, Community and Memory

## Bottesford Community Heritage Project



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## Heritage Lottery Fund Award OH12-11006

### 1. Executive Summary

With the support of a Heritage Lottery Fund award (OH12-11006) the Bottesford Community Heritage Project (BCHP) marked the centenary of First World War over the period March 2014 - June 2017. The BCHP is a community group that investigates the history of the parish of Bottesford, including Muston, Easthorpe and Normanton in north east Leicestershire.

'The Bottesford Parish First World War Centenary Project: People, Community and Memory' focussed on people from the Parish who served in the Great War and how the community coped with the consequences of that conflict. Research findings were used to devise activities and events designed to sustain the memory of the conflict within the community. Over 3000 people benefited from the project through direct engagement with both planned and numerous extra events and activities marking the centenary of the First World War. Many more have engaged at a distance through bi-monthly newsletters, website pages and social media (Facebook and Twitter). The project was reported in the local press and media in addition international coverage in Canada. In addition, the project resulted in the creation of the Bottesford Primary School First World War commemorative banner and the production of a collectively authored book - 'Lest we forget: Bottesford and Muston in the Great War'.

Throughout the project evaluation has demonstrated a very positive participant experience and increased knowledge and understanding of the local history of the Great War, the impact of conflict on the community and the life stories of those who served from the parish. All major events and volunteer participation were evaluated. Many project volunteers were particularly appreciative of working with people beyond their routine networks of association eg., working with pupils from the local schools. For many, engagement with their local community was the best bit of the project. This included a sense of feeling welcome into the group by those who were new to the village. A core of group of 25 volunteers contributed their expertise to events and many developed new areas of interest and expertise. Indeed for some involvement in the project and the community's heritage has been life changing eg., one volunteer is moving into full-time writing and genealogical research.

*I have really enjoyed being part of the project. Making new friends, learning from research, being a "detective" to find the truth has been great. I feel part of the village again. (Recently retired volunteer)*

*I think the project has brought the community together. I have always been amazed at the numbers of people who came to the different events. (Project Volunteer)*

## **Bottesford Parish First World War Centenary Project: People, community and memory**

### **2. Project Background**

'The Bottesford Parish First World War Centenary Project' originated in the research of a previously funded Heritage Lottery Fund supported project; 'Bottesford, a Living History' (2007). That project revealed artefacts and local stories relating to First World War and the parish. However, at that time there was insufficient expertise, time and resources to explore in detail the impact of the Great War on the parish. The HLF grant programme for centenary commemorations was an opportune moment to revisit and investigate the experience of people, families and the community during the extended period of the conflict.

### **3. Heritage Focus**

The past century has fragmented the memory of the First World War in parish of Bottesford. Our centenary project focused on over 250 recruits and their wartime biographies, memorabilia, and memories of them still within the community. We also examined how the parish mobilised in response to the demands of wartime life and the consequences for local employment and education, entertainment and fund raising, health and illness, food and welfare, and remembrance.

Volunteers from village societies, church and chapel congregations, schools and youth organisations volunteered to participate in both heritage research and First World War centenary activities. This promoted cross-generational conversations and learning as part of re-enactment events, exhibitions, publications, production of website material, and a growing online archive of previously dispersed local heritage. In addition to the core volunteers over 400 people from the community worked together to retrieve, explain and secure for the future hitherto hidden local heritage of the First World War.

### **4. Approved Purposes**

The project accomplished and in many cases exceeded, with prior approval, purposes approved by the Heritage Lottery Fund in granting the award.

#### **Working with volunteers, research the First World War history of the Parish of Bottesford through various resources**

An average of 13 volunteers from a total of 25 core volunteers have attended 25 monthly Project Coordination Meetings over the period of the Project. These meetings were held on the 3rd Thursday of every month except during holiday periods. Core volunteers have been engaged in working on:

- 41 biographies of those who served and fell in the First World War from the now combined parish of Bottesford and Muston;

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- 206 biographies of those from the now combined Parishes of Bottesford and Muston who served in the armed forces during the First World War and survived. We exceeded the original intention to research the service history of 50 First World War veterans. We also anticipate adding a further 40-50 biographies by November 2018);
- the social history of the village during the period of conflict and immediate post war years.
- research involved the use of: online genealogy and internet resources; local library archives; digital copies of First World War memorabilia, eg., letters, postcards, documents and mementos.

The project also extended to a 3rd strand of biographical research on 16 servicemen whose relatives have moved into the community since the time of the Great War.

### **Ensure volunteers receive appropriate training where necessary**

Training in the use and interpretation of online material, service records and donated memorabilia were mostly delivered during well-attended monthly project meetings. Training needs were routinely reviewed. In addition, prior to the re-launch of our website ([www.bottesfordhistory.org.uk](http://www.bottesfordhistory.org.uk)), a two day workshop in website editing and administration was delivered by the site providers – CommunitySites Ltd. 6 volunteers attended. Volunteers have also participated in focused discussions on oral history interviewing, interpreting historical photographs from the period, and the use of Ancestry.co.uk and other genealogical online resources eg., Find My Past; British Library Newspaper Archive; Imperial War Museum - Lives of the First World War.

### **Engage a good range of people and organisations to ensure learning is shared as wide as possible**

Over 400 individual volunteers in addition to the 25 core volunteers have actively engaged in the work of the project. 40 local, regional and international organisations have also contributed or been directly involved in the delivery of the project. These included local primary and secondary schools, Church and Chapel congregations, voluntary organisations, youth groups and other Heritage Lottery Fund supported projects in the neighbouring counties of Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire.

(See Appendices - **Document 1** for a list of organisations).

To date over 20,000 hours of volunteer's time have been recorded and over 3000 people have attended project events.

Use of social media has both promoted and disseminated research findings, events and activities. All forms of media have been the focus of sustained audience interest. The Twitter account @BottesfordWW1 attracted over 1600 followers. Facebook posts also resulted in some striking levels of interest with one post receiving over 700 views in less than 24 hours. A HistoryPin page showing where those who are listed on parish war

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memorials had lived received 728 views. We also have a presence on the Imperial War Museums 'Lives of the First World War'.

### **Develop and deliver a range of activities including events, exhibitions and heritage trails that will enable people to learn about the conflict and its impact**

Events and activities were delivered in line with the detailed submitted plan including First World War Heritage Trails for both Bottesford and Muston. All of these events and activities have provided opportunities for people to learn about the conflict and its impact on the local communities of Bottesford and Muston.

Research findings have been used to animate events engaging people living within the Parish and beyond.

All main events were evaluated in terms of audience feedback. They all received very positive feedback especially in regard to enjoyment and community engagement. We also received positive feedback in a case study report commissioned by the Heritage Lottery Fund in Spring 2017 and produced by Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR). That case study report was based on a review of project documentation (including our HLF application, case papers, and progress reports). It also consisted of 6 interviews with 5 of the core volunteers and one stakeholder. (See Appendices: **Document 2** - CRESR HLF Case Study Report; **Document 3** – Evaluation Summary Table; **Documents 3.1 – 3.9.1** - Evaluation examples & analytic summaries).

### **Restore, conserve and re-dedicate the Roll of Honour in Bottesford Chapel**

The process of restoration, conservation and rededication was completed in March 2015. The reframed Roll of Honour now hangs in the Bottesford Methodist Chapel on Devon Lane in a place directly accessible to all visitors and members of the congregation. The rededication and associated displays were very well received.

In addition we have conserved and framed a silk cushion donated to the project. This was embroidered to mark the end of the Great War and has been displayed at exhibitions and will feature in a legacy event to mark the Centenary of the Armistice in November 2018. (See Appendices: **Document 4.1** – Restored Great War Cushion Cover)

### **Create an online archive of material including oral histories gathered from the community**

We collected and recorded family stories about those who served in the First World War. This has included the recording of short stories and extended oral history interviews (25). We have also digitized of First World War memorabilia from over [40 families](#). We currently have in excess of 600 digitised items for inclusion in the online catalogue and archive.

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The new website has a section dedicated to the First World War Centenary Project and over 300 web pages have been created to date in addition to commencing the cataloguing of items in the online archive associated with website.

We routinely update and archive the Bottesford History website - [www.bottesfordhistory.org.uk](http://www.bottesfordhistory.org.uk). The website was selected for permanent record as part of the British Library Web Archive, The Australian War Memorial and most recently the Bavarian State Archive.

### 5. Project Activities

*The events have been so enjoyable, the launch event in the village hall (was typical) ... the guy playing the last post, the choir singing, the talks and the exhibition; it was a terrific village event but one out of the ordinary, and everyone was putting in... and then there was the flower show, the horse show ...*  
(Volunteer)

The project engaged the community through the provision of over 30 activities and events including 8 exhibitions.

Highlights included:

- A project launch event (300 people attended).
- A Bottesford Primary School 1st World War activities day (Recruitment, Training, Trench life and First Aid, Life at home, and exhibits from the war including an 1/8<sup>th</sup> scale working First World War tank, uniforms and equipment) (250 pupils, 41 staff members; and 21 volunteers participated).
- A concert held at St Mary's church with choirs from the Vale of Belvoir U3A and the local primary school, and readings from school pupils and community volunteers (120 attended and 85 performers including the U3A Choir, the Primary School Choir and volunteer readers).
- Two exhibitions - 'Bottesford in the Great War' in the newly restored west end of St Mary's Church (400).
- The restoration and service for the rededicating of the Roll of Honour at the Methodist Chapel (50 attended);
- Muston First World War Flower festival and Great War exhibition display (396 attended). £1000 was raised in aid of the Muston Church restoration fund.
- Bottesford First World War Commemorative Lions Gala and exhibition (1193 passed through the exhibition and First World War Field Exhibits including a battle field First Aid station; officers tent; a German horse drawn mobile kitchen; horse ambulance; an extensive range of First World War images and memorabilia; and arena demonstrations of battle field riding skills by the History Revisited Nursing Yeomanry Troop.
- Two Commemorative Muffled Bell Ringing and open tower participative bell ringing (180 participants).
- A Battle of the Somme Centenary including an early morning whistle blow to mark the onset of hostilities; a half-muffled bell ringing; and a community and secondary school screening of the 1916 documentary film – 'The Battle of the Somme' organised in collaboration with the Imperial War Museum (255 attended).
- Bottesford and Muston First World War Heritage walks – illustrated maps with guided walks (50 walkers).

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- A quilted banner created by Bottesford Primary School under the artistic direction of the textile artist Sue Rowland commemorating the First World War; an unveiling ceremony (291 attendees) and on permanent display at the school (produced by 70 pupils and 12 volunteers and a textile artist - Sue Rowland).



- 'Forgotten Heroes: Horses in the Great War'; a display of equestrian art, and books (196 attended).
- Two First World War project newsletters were produced by year Belvoir High School students (9 students).
- Bi-monthly project bulletins published in the Bottesford Village Voice magazine distributed to 1800 households, delivered by the Village Voice distribution team.
- The publication of over 300 First World War related web pages on [www.bottesfordhistory.org.uk](http://www.bottesfordhistory.org.uk) and a collectively authored page book - 'Lest we forget: Bottesford and Muston in the Great War.'

For photographs and a detailed list please see appendices: **Document 4** - Project Photographs;  
**Document 5** - Activities and Events.

### 6. Key Outcomes

- This intergenerational project developed working partnerships with other organisations to deliver outcomes specified in the original proposal. These were designed to reintegrate the fragmented memory of the Great War back within the community as means of securing future remembrance of the heritage and consequences of the conflict.



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- Additional events and activities were also organised in response to research findings and the emergent interests of the community and the developing expertise of the core volunteers, eg., 'The Forgotten Heroes Horses in the Great War' exhibition was the initiative of a village resident who is an expert of equestrian art.
- The project created a comprehensive presentation and interpretation of the community and its people during the First World War through exhibitions, re-enactments of community events, web pages, social media and printed publications including a 300 page book. – 'Lest we forget: Bottesford and Muston in the Great War'. (see appendices **Document 6** - Book review)
- Events and activities organised by the BCHP and its partners succeeded in engaging the interest of the residents of Bottesford throughout the period of grant. In addition the group's activities also received regional (local press and radio) and international press coverage in Canada. (see appendices **Document 7** - Rosetown Eagle , Canada)
- Discovery and dissemination of First World War heritage was accomplished with the support of 400 additional volunteers who assisted in organisation and presentation of community events and activities.
- The project has established legacy events and proposed activities in collaboration with the Hose and Harby Branch of the Royal British Legion (centenary ceremonies on the anniversary of those people named on Parish war memorials); the Bottesford Community Library (monthly heritage meetings focused the online archiving of heritage material including that generated within the current project) ; Muston Parochial Church Council (application for a CWGC headstone for Pte. Isaac Johnson) and the Bottesford Parish Council (proposed restoration of the Old School bell in time for the centenary of the Armistice in November 2018)
- The Bottesford Parish First World War project has enhanced the resilience of the Bottesford Community Heritage Group in terms of: widening its membership and research interests; securing the Bottesford Living History website and online archive for at least 5 years ([www.bottesfordhistory.org.uk](http://www.bottesfordhistory.org.uk)); creating an accessible heritage archive.

### 7. Evaluating Outcomes

#### **Heritage will be in better condition**

Restoration and conservation to professional standards of the Chapel Roll of Honour preserved this heritage asset in a better condition. In so doing we brought this hitherto relatively unknown memorial to wider community attention. Project volunteers in collaboration with the Methodist Chapel's premises officer organised the restoration of the Roll of Honour. This is one of only three known examples printed for use by Primitive Methodist Chapels soon after the outbreak of what was then identified on the Roll as 'The Great European War'. It provides details of the who served from the Chapel Sunday School and the Congregation. Its design allowed the entry of names as the war progressed. We were fortunate to be able to work with the conservator Lorraine Finch who provided most helpful advice prior to cleaning, repairing and stabilising the

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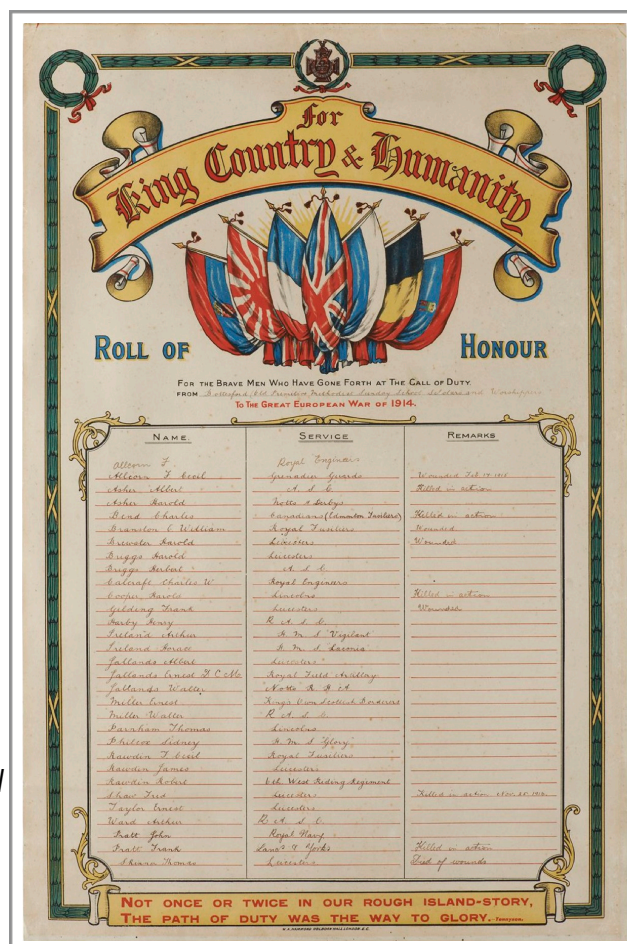
document (LF Conservation & Preservation, Yarmouth). It is now in a protective frame and is displayed in a prominent position out of direct sun light in the Bottesford Methodist Chapel. A display designed to interpret its symbolism and history of its production was appreciated by 50 people who attended its rededication. A high quality image was produced to professional standards. This was published in post card form and made available on the website.

19 people gave feedback at the rededication, 5 of whom had no prior knowledge of the Roll's existence.

*'I enjoyed the fellowship with everyone and learning about roll of honour'*

*'I enjoyed the colours of the Roll of honour on the original are clear and effective'*

*'I enjoyed meeting relatives of those names on the roll of honour and the effectiveness of it's quiet understated presentation of the names on the roll of honour.'*



### Heritage will be better interpreted and explained

Exhibitions and associated activities (e.g., heritage walks, reenactments and concerts), books and web pages, made available and explained previously dispersed First World War heritage within the Parish. The extent to which these addressed the needs and interests of attendees and readers were judged in relation to community feedback on whether content was informative, enhanced understanding, and improved experience. We had originally planned two main exhibitions and a flower festival. Given the emergent interests of the community we organised 12 more displays and events including: 'Bell ringing in the Great War'; Great War Displays in the Community Library; 'Muston in the First World War'; 'First World & Bottesford Parish' display at the inaugural Loughborough University Heritage Network; two Remembrance weekend displays at St Mary's Church (2015 and 2016); 'Great War Poetry Exhibition and Interactive Display' at the Community Library; 'Commemorative May Gala Display' in collaboration with the Vale of Belvoir Lions and the reenactment of Nursing Yeomanry horse skills by HistoryRevisited horse riders; Somme Centenary events including a community screening of the 'IWM Battle of the Somme' and display, 'A dawn whistle blow' on the 1st July 2016 broadcast live by BBC Radio Leicester and a 'Muffled bell ringing

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in remembrance of the fallen at the Somme'; 'Forgotten Heroes - Horse in the Great War' art exhibition and a restaging of the County Council's Museum Service 'Leicestershire Yeomanry Exhibition'.

All these events were well attended and very well received. Participants noted how the standard of presentation, especially the use of well designed visual material aided and enhanced their understanding of the conflict in the context of the local community. They found exhibition content both informative and surprising, e.g., the service of local people in the Canadian armed forces; the extent of local contact with the Machine Gun Corp training camp at Belton House near Grantham; and the numbers of men who came through the village on 3 day route marches from Belton around the Vale of Belvoir - up to 3000 who were provided with tea made from boiling water in laundry coppers. The epic nature of that task found voice in one of the stories recorded in the oral history interviews.

### **People will have developed skills**

#### **All the targeted skills were enhanced across the volunteers**

Volunteers and those involved from collaborating organisations both shared and acquired expertise in a range of cognate skills essential to the success of the project including:

- oral history interviewing and digital recording, (4 volunteers);
- digital photography and scanning, (4 volunteers);
- use and interpretation of historical archives and heritage resources, both physical and online, including the interpretation of service records, military insignia, photographs, military abbreviations, shipping manifests, census records, (9 volunteers);
- web page editing and online cataloguing and archiving, social media (4 volunteers);
- presentation skills using a variety of media including speaking, writing and visual display (9 volunteers);
- evaluating project activities and output. (All volunteer were involved in gathering evaluative comments from participants, 3 focussed on collation, analysis and reporting of evaluative feedback.

The project drew on a wide range of skills and experience in the volunteers ranging from authentic skills from the period such as knitting on 4 pins to present day skills such as IT, graphic design, and online historical research.

The volunteers also contributed project management skills and experience including coordination, planning, writing, research and project evaluation.

A small nucleus of the volunteers had been involved in previous village history projects but the majority had not. It is not surprising therefore that over half the volunteers recognised that they had developed their historical research skills. From the high quality of project outcomes e.g., the biographies, the book and quilt etc., it is clear that a high degree of competency was achieved. This included using online research websites such Ancestry,

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Find My Past, the National Archives, Imperial War Museum partnership resources, the British Library Newspaper Archive, as well as source material such as trench maps and information in the Village and Leicestershire Archive. The development of social media skills was particularly valuable in publicising project events and output. Volunteers identified the management and advance planning in the scheduling of events and activities as providing a very good context for the effective use and development of their interests and expertise.

### Skills in other community settings.

Skills in other areas of activity of relevance to the local heritage of the First World War were also promoted:

- Pupils at the Bottesford Primary School worked along side community volunteers and a professional textile artist in developing proficiency in embroidery and drawing on silk to the remarkable standard displayed in the Primary School First World War Commemorative Banner. Many of the pupils had no sewing skills or experience with painting on silk. The unveiled banner revealed a production of stunning quality, thoughtfulness and vibrancy. What the Head Teacher described as a 'real wow moment!'

## MACHINE KNITTING MONTHLY Clubline

Why not let us know about your club activities? We're all interested in fund-raising, fashion shows and special events so write to Clubline at the address on page 3 or email us at [mail@machineknittingmonthly.net](mailto:mail@machineknittingmonthly.net)

David Middleton



Denys Cave (left) and Sue Dunsmore at the U3A Knit & Natter display of WWI garments in Bottesford

Bottesford Community Heritage Project



Knit & Natter Group, left to right: Denys Cave, Ruth Wilkinson, Sue Nagy, Jan Roberts and Sue Dunsmore

Neil Fortey



Great War U3A Knit & Natter display

## Centenary project

The story starts with a letter we printed on **Page 12** of the **February 2015** issue from **Denys Cave**. She runs the local **U3A Knit & Natter Group** and **Sue Dunsmore** runs the **U3A Local Heritage Group**. They were asked by **David Middleton**, leader of the **Bottesford Parish First World War Commemoration Project**, if they could knit some garments similar to those sent to the armed forces during the **Great War 1914-1918**. The garments would be shown at an exhibition and concert to be held in **St Mary's Church, Bottesford** on **18th and 19th April 2015**.

Denys and Sue recruited other members of their groups to help and co-ordinated the collective

effort of **Ruth Wilkinson, Sue Nagy** and **Jan Roberts** in over 300 hours of research, knitting and spinning. Meeting monthly they searched for patterns, sourced and spun yarn and then set about recreating a selection of garments similar to those sent to the soldiers at the front. They worked from patterns published by the **American Red Cross Society** and rose to the challenge of interpreting unusual instructions, hence the letter to **MKM**.

Cones of suitable navy and air force blue came from Denys' yarn stash, but they couldn't find anything for the soldiers until Denys went to a meeting of **Mapperton Knit & Natter Club**. To

her amazement some surplus yarn was on sale in khaki. Even though it was very fine, Sue wound 18 strands together to produce yarn for the correct tension. Although no-one could knit with so many strands on four needles, they made a couple of simple garments. They also knitted two or three different versions of balaclavas, gloves with the thumb and first finger missing for the gunners plus mittens, socks and scarves. One lady in her mid-90s spun some fleece from a **Jacob sheep**, as the breed was prevalent in the village during the Great War. She produced some **mitten**s to demonstrate what would have been easily available for the villagers to knit.

On Christmas Eve, Denys fell after attending a carol concert and unfortunately broke her right shoulder. She was in hospital for five weeks, so had to leave Sue to organise all the knitting and bring updates when she visited. Eventually, everything was finished and generated much interest and admiration. When the project is completed, the garments will be donated to local causes. The whole experience was fun, challenging and enjoyable and for further details of the **Bottesford Parish First World War Centenary Project**, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, please visit [www.bottesfordhistory.org.uk](http://www.bottesfordhistory.org.uk)

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- The Bottesford Knit and Natter group interpreted authentic First World war Knitting Patterns and learned new skills to produce a range of very high quality knitted garments These were displayed at numerous events and exhibitions during the period of the project. Their activities were reported in Machine Knitting Monthly.
- The Commemorative Bell Ringing events we used to recruit ringers to the Bottesford Tower. 3 out of 6 initial recruits have now reached a level of proficiency sufficient to contribute to an event planned to mark the centenary of the Armistice in November 2018.

### **People will have learnt about heritage.**

As already described above the project provided a wide range of opportunities for volunteers, school pupils, members of youth organizations, village organisation, local residents and visitors to develop knowledge and understanding of local heritage associated with the First World War. This was achieved through their participation in centenary research and activities organised with the support of the HLF award. The focus of the award was on those who served; their stories and those of their families; the community and their engagement with life on the home front. Retrieved memories were used as resources in centenary events designed to promote future remembrance. The aim being to reimagine the significance of the conflict using local heritage material in ways that would 'stick in the memory'. Knowledge, and understanding what difference the Parish Centenary Project has made, was demonstrated in commentary, both written and verbal, recorded during their participation in events, via social media, website comments, questionnaires and discussion.

Participants found that hands on nature of exhibits both stimulated interest and understanding. Younger members of the community were particularly interested in stereoscopic displays of First World War photographs. The handling of knitted garments, especially created by the Knit and Natter Group, was noted as providing people with the 'texture' of what soldiers would have worn during the hard winter conditions of the front lines. Being able to touch First World War memorabilia and listen to a sound scape of front line sounds was especially engaging for pupils at the Primary School First World Activity Day.

Key to the success of exhibition display was the use of visual material to illustrate and explain the research findings concerning the way the community reacted to the conflict was. For example, the School Log Book of the period describing the details of pupils' contribution to the war effort was used by present day pupils to create silk drawings that for incorporation into a commemorative banner (1.5 x 2.5 metres). The range and nature of what children accomplished during the conflict was illustrated by present day pupils at the Primary School eg., blackberry picking for cordials, gathering horse chestnuts for explosive production, vegetable cultivation, flag day collections and the sale of war bonds. Audiences also commented on the impact of using dramatised commentary in the First World War concert to present community history concerning how

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people coped with the increasing demands and strictures of life on the home front.

Of note was the 'Forgotten Heroes: Horses in the Great War Exhibition'. Two classes from the primary School attended especially arranged viewings. The pupils noted the impact of the works of art in capturing the vitality of horses and their handlers in ways different to photographic images. We were privileged to have been loaned original drawing and paintings from private collections and to have access to the expert curation of equestrian art by a local resident. Again, being able to touch objects such as horse tack and saddles on loan from the 'Museum of the Horse', Tuxford, added to the pupils learning experience.

The CRESR HLF Case Study Report based on our project also commented on:

### **Changing attitudes and/or behaviours and thinking differently about heritage**

'The BHP First World War events, such as the school's activity day, created memories for the future through engagement and through enjoyment and they affected and changed people's attitudes and perceptions of First World War heritage. Another example is provided by the making of the commemorative banner which was inspired by the children's activity day. The embroidery, silk printing and textile skills used to create it were also the medium through which the children's understanding and perception of First World War was deepened; *'the children said they felt a real connection (with the soldier who they were threading through onto the banner), a lot of children said that...'* (project lead). The secondary school screening of the Somme film also had an impact; it was on *'a massive screen, and the hall was totally blacked out, stunning, it had all the pupils sat there in silence'* (project lead)

Adults, too, were affected by their engagement in the project. As mentioned previously, some volunteers went on to engage in further heritage activity through the provision of talks and the establishment of a heritage resource at the library whilst for one volunteer (below) their involvement entailed a personal journey;

*(the project) has made me think more about First World War, going through the war diaries and seeing the day to day suffering and casualties – (as a result) I went out to the Somme to retrace my grandfather's steps, and we went to the village where he was posted ... you go to the cemetery and the Leicester regiment were just part of it, you walk through hundreds of graves to reach the back wall and then there are 100-150 from the people who served with him ... very moving; and then you think this is terrible, awful and how lucky my grandfather was just to survive that first year let alone the next four and the Somme. You stand back and that cemetery stretches before you, it became real (volunteer 4)'*

### **People will have had an enjoyable experience**

Feedback from the experience of participating in heritage activities and events consistently demonstrated that people both enjoyed and appreciated the quality of the material presented. They noted their interest in the

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details revealed in the biographies of those who served. They were particularly engaged with the mapping of where those named on the Bottesford and Muston War memorials. (see appendices **Document 8** - People and Places)

Intergenerational conversations enhanced enjoyment of the Primary Schools First World War Activities Day; the production of the Commemorative Banner; the presentation of the First World War Concert Commentary which involved both young and older members of the community; and the exhibition – ‘Forgotten Heroes: Horses in the Great War’

*My friend and I were fascinated by the delicate paintings hung on the walls. My favourite has to be the first one as it looks like it has a light shining in the centre of it. Thank you for taking your time to explain the map to us and make clear which each one was famous for in the village of Bottesford. As we read and watched the play ‘War Horse’, I imagine(d) most of it. But now, the picture in my head has become much more clear’*

Bottesford Primary School Pupil

### **People will have volunteered time**

With the increased volunteer base we exceeded the target hours of volunteers time and recorded over 20,000 hours of volunteer time over 39 months (March 2014 - June 2017). Volunteers provided feedback on their enjoyment and engagement in addition to time spent volunteering on the project. Their interests and expertise was discussed at the first monthly project meetings. After a year these were reviewed and a final evaluation evening round up was organised at the close of the project in March 2017. At that final event responses were received from 17 of the regular members of the project and all took the trouble to think through their responses to elaborate their feedback. 88% were involved from the launch and it is a credit to the project that there was such good retention, continuity and engagement of core volunteers.

**Volunteer involvement in the Project:** There were only 2 members of the project group who did not feel they were as involved as they wanted to be. For both individuals this was because of external factors unrelated to the project. Notwithstanding those factors they were able to support the project. One provided through service history research advice via email and telephone support to other volunteers. The majority of project members felt they were as involved as they wanted to be. 7 gave reasons relating to personal enrichment and use of skills. 4 valued the flexibility the project offered both in terms of the range of activities and when volunteers contributed. 3 particularly commented on how welcoming the project was. Volunteers were happy with the project and recognised it achieved far more than might have been expected and were happy with their level of involvement.

*‘It [the project] allowed me to contribute as much as I wanted when I wanted. The flexibility was invaluable.’*

**Best part of the project:** The range and breadth of activities in the project meant that the volunteers were kept engaged year on year and it was clear from the feedback that certain elements were very meaningful. Almost half the team enjoyed the historical research. Though this took many forms volunteers were able to work both

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individually on sources that were of a personal as well as project interest. Given that over 250 casualty and survivor/ veteran biographies have been completed against the target of 91 (41 named on the war memorials and 50 survivors) it demonstrates the level of commitment and skills developed within the team.

Project events were highlights for 64% of the volunteers and reflected their involvement in specific events. Almost one third of the volunteers specifically mentioned the Primary School Activities Day as a highlight of the project. It was a memorable day.

Interestingly many project volunteers particularly appreciated working with people and the engagement with their local community was a significant aspect of the project for them. This included a sense of feeling welcome into the group by those who were new to the village as well as contributing their expertise to events (such as the knitting project).

*'amazing number of events organised, so much community involvement and finally so many new friends made a really rewarding experience.'*

*'I think the project has brought the community together. I have always been amazed at the numbers of people who came to the different events. Even though the project is coming to a close there are still requests from community groups for a speaker to talk about aspects of the project.'*

**Volunteer involvement in future activities:** The majority of the volunteers wanted to get involved with future projects. Some were simply prepared to pitch in with anything. Others specifically mentioned the heritage group and local research. About a third wanted to continue with local and or family history research.

2 people specifically mentioned a permanent project archive and maintenance of the website to ensure a permanent record of the projects outcomes. 1 person suggested a centenary event to mark the end of the war in 2018.

**Project management:** All volunteers were complementary and appreciative of the project leadership and coordination and felt it was run well with enthusiasm and expertise. Volunteers felt it was enjoyable, worthwhile, first class and a privilege to be part of it.

Finally it was felt that the project brought the community together, with much community involvement and that it made one individual feel part of the village again. The friendliness within the project group, bringing people to work together on the different events, was recognised and valued.

*'It's been a first class project and a privilege to be part of it. We owe it to the 1914 - 18 generation to reconstruct their story.'*



### **Our organisation will be more resilient**

We achieved the outcome of increasing the volunteer base. However, the Parish Council's proposed application for HLF support to provide heritage storage and facilities with the Old school was not successful.

We have however negotiated access to the new Community Library, also located in the Old School, and have established storage space in recently purchased cupboards, with Heritage Lottery Fund support, dedicated to the use of the Bottesford Community Heritage Group. Overall, the project has enabled volunteers to identify their future involvement in local heritage work and interests in historical topics.

We have also contracted our website provider, CommunitySites Ltd, to support the website for another 5 years from January 2018. Book sales are progressing well and the generated revenue will assist further in funding legacy activities recommended in Section 12 below, thus further securing the resilience of heritage work within the community.

The CRESR HLF Case Study Report based on our project also noted that:

'The application did not claim to provide outcomes for Community other than the activities undertaken would make the BCHP more resilient. This shows an admirable reticence at claims making. It is unlikely, however, that there are many residents in Bottesford who were not touched in one form or another by BCHP activities. What was apparent in the case study interviews was that the depth of attachment and engagement in the project by the core volunteers had ensured that the wider community had all been positively affected by its activities:

*It has been enjoyable, stimulating, educational. I've realised how important it is, it is not just an educational exercise; it goes on to all sorts of areas ... the project has penetrated the collective consciousness of the village ... (volunteer 1)*

*When you look around the village, it has impinged on just about everyone...it certainly has been a vibrant and collective part of community life ... (stakeholder)*

## **8. Outcomes for the Parish - key recommendations**

### **Heritage assets**

- Maintain the momentum of the project in the recently established monthly Bottesford Community Heritage Project meetings. These aim to catalogue and upload all the remaining heritage material from the original HLF project and the recently acquired material from the First World War Centenary Project.
- Work with the Bottesford Primary School to arrange public annual public access in November to the Bottesford School First World War Commemorative Banner.

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- Collaborate with key community organisations in the permanent display of hard bound versions of the the book published by the Project – ‘Lets we forget: Bottesford and Muston in the Great War’ (Bottesford Chapel; the Parochial Church Council of St Mary’s, Bottesford and St John’s, Muston; Bottesford Primary School; Belvoir High School; Bottesford Community Library).

### **Heritage Engagement**

- Support and facilitate the work of the Leicestershire Century of Lives Project with the Bottesford Community Library in developing volunteer skills in First World War heritage research and commemoration.
- Organise self-funded visits to war graves and heritage sites in Northern France and Belgium associated with the Great War service of people from the Parish.
- Continue to provided a forum for the organisation of self-funded First World War research in Canada and France

### **Heritage Dissemination**

- Continue presentations to local groups on the projects findings and activities and provide a forum for further self fund research.
- Organise the placement of a digital touch screen display kiosk giving offline access to the project website <bottesfordhistory.org> within the recently established Bottesford Community Library.
- Keep social media updated to at least November 2018, including Twttter, Facebook, HistoryPin and IWM Lives of the First World War.

### **Commemoration**

- Present recent research findings to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for the placement of a headstone for Pte Isaac Johnson in the Muston Church yard.
- Continue working with the Hose and Harby Branch of the Royal British Legion on the centenary ceremonies for those lost from the parish in 1917 and 1918
- In November 2018 organise a community visit to attend the Cleethorpe’s Band’s commemorative concert. This concert will feature the cornet of Pte. Bob Sutton. Bob Sutton was born in Bottesford and volunteered aged 15 years old. He served as a bugler with the Manchester Regiment and for many years sounded the last post at the annual Armistice Day Parade in Bottesford. Manchester Regiment battalion bands developed close affiliations with both Cleethorpes and Bottesford.

## **10. Lessons Learnt - what worked well and why**

The evaluation has shown that the project was a great success, benefiting many people in the community and beyond. It made available community stories, the impact of the conflict on the community and integrated the fragmented memory of the First World War into tangible forms of remembrance that will extend beyond the period of funding. The following summarises the lessons we have learnt and what we might do differently next time.

## Volunteer Involvement

The involvement of volunteers was a very successful element of the project, both in terms of the research findings and how these were incorporated into activities and events designed to engage the community as whole. The monthly meetings were an essential element in keeping up the momentum of the project. They also became an occasion where volunteers assessed the direction of their own contribution, evaluated the projects progress and content, and presented the findings of their work and engagement in the project. The core volunteers developed their own networks of working together and felt a sense of ownership and allegiance to the project as evidenced in the numbers who remained engaged for the whole period of the award. New members of the community were able to use the project as a way of developing friendship and contacts. Established members of the community went beyond their habitual networks of affiliation especially in the many ways in which intergenerational conversations were initiated and sustained in the work with schools, guides and scouts, school choir and the under eleven football teams (girls and boys). The latter two teams recreated a football match played in 1918 between local women ammunition workers and a Grantham men's team. In the original the men played with one arm tied behind their back. Health and safety concerns of the 21st century precluded that feature!



'The Bottesford Ladies Football Team' c 1918  
From the collection of Dorothy Beedham

The CRESR HLF Case Study Report based on our project also noted that:

'Volunteers all identified positive impacts upon their, and others, health and wellbeing and spoke of the emotional enrichment of being part of the project and the sense of community cohesion its activities had helped to strengthen;

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*Wellbeing is partly about friendships and networking and integration; by nature, myself and my wife are not outgoing, so to be part of this and to be included has certainly contributed to our wellbeing (volunteer)*

*... yes, it is like Penny, she is 90 something, and she still walks to meetings; her local knowledge and her ability to make connections has been invaluable but it has also kept her interested, kept her going. So, on all levels it works for people (volunteer)*

The project lead identified the importance of the 'make up' of Bottesford for the successful realisation of the project. HLF funding had gone to an area *with an already established sense of identity, one with well-resourced and established social networks;*

*It is closely knit, defined for a long time by its parallel organisations: churches, choirs, societies, community library, schools. It is not too big and not too small and it is very resilient community, a boundary community where self-help has always been necessary. Each organisation has its own life and network but (at the same time) this allows you to tap into them and into their different knowledge bases and capacities; there is overlap but it is not total.*

HLF funding has no doubt helped strengthen these existing networks and helped to consolidate further the identity of Bottesford through enabling it to (re) construct its resident's memory and connections to the 1st World War.'

### **Project Management**

The effort put into advance planning and producing a detailed timeline of activities with clear goals and outcomes provided the basis for responding flexibly to unanticipated opportunities. For example, when approached by the textile artist, Sue Rowland, with an offer to coordinate the production of a commemorative banner we were able to adapt the means of recording the Primary School's Activity Day. The focus changed from an illustrated memory book to a quilted banner. The pupils learned skills that were not part of the school curriculum eg., silk painting and embroidery, and were mentored by members of the community with sewing skills. The pupils commented how the slow process of embroidering the names of those who had fallen into the fabric of the banner gave them a sense of coming to think of their name as a person - someone '*who had lived in the village, most likely gone to school in the village who did not return to their families, friends and jobs.*'

### **Popularity of Events and Activities - engaging research and content**

From the very beginning of the project we were surprised by the numbers who attended the events and exhibitions. Clearly there was an appetite within the community to learn about the First World War and to engage with well presented and informative content. Comments consistently praised the standard of publicity, presentation and insightful information about the First World War based on local research. We have generated a stock of visual display material for use on future occasions such as the centenary of the Armistice in 2018.

### **Opportunities for Training and Development**

Both the core volunteers and other volunteers were able to take advantage of a range of training and

development. For example:

- 150 children learnt First Aid skills as part of the recreation of a Casualty First Aid Station in the Activities Day.
- Volunteers developed effectiveness in engaging exhibition attendees in conversations evaluating the event. Very often these would also lead to further avenues of First World War research.
- The Bottesford Bell Tower recruited members as part of their demonstration and re-creation of muffled bell ringing.

### **Social Media**

The level of engagement with social media exceed our expectations. We were fortunate in being able to draw upon volunteers whose children were savvy with methods of enhancing audience participation in social media. Use of social media has both promoted and disseminated research findings, events and activities. All forms of media have been the focus of sustained audience interest. The Twitter account @BottesfordWW1 attracted over 1600 followers. Facebook posts also resulted in some striking levels of interest with one post receiving over 700 views in less than 24 hours. A HistoryPin page showing where those who are listed on parish war memorials had lived received 728 views. We also have a presence on the Imperial War Museums Lives of the First World War.

### **Effectiveness of evaluation**

The CRESR HLF Case Study Report based on our project noted that:

‘The volunteer responsible for co-ordinating the projects evaluation exercises offers the following advice to others:

*In terms of the evaluation we do it because we must – paperwork crunching; it is par for the course. But (the process) has generated stuff that was unexpected, very thoughtful comments. As time went by, it has become less structured and less formal; and this has allowed us to get more informative responses. As we have gone on through the various events we were more direct ‘well what did you think of this?’. We provided labels for people to stick comments on, evaluation was loose and open.*

BCHP were exceptional in the way they went about evaluating their activities as a process of continual self-assessment and through seeking feedback from participants throughout the project.’



## **11. Challenges**

### **Volume of material**

Keeping up with the volume of material to be entered onto the website was a challenge. We continue to deal with the backlog as part of the legacy activities of the project.

### **Website - migration to a new platform**

The migration to the new platform and the Bottesford Living History website was accomplished relatively smoothly. However, we underestimated just how much work this would entail and the learning curve to become proficient in administrating the site on its new platform. This hidden work is now complete and the site is available on a future proof WordPress platform.

### **Digital engagement**

We had planned to use online platforms such as Google Drive to circulate the developing range of project material. This excluded volunteers whose online engagement was limited. The web site became the primary means of shared information and developing portfolio of research findings. Core volunteers found this accessible and easy to navigate.

### **Book production**

Even though we had volunteers with experience in authoring and publishing we underestimated the amount of time need to put the book into print. The book developed into a volume that was greater in scope than originally planned. However, we felt it required the extra effort to do full justice to the material we had gather. It was projected to be 200 pages and went to print as 300 pages. We were very fortunate in being able to work with printers (Russell Press Ltd) who guided us through the process at no extra cost. (see appendices for a review of 'Lest we forget: Bottesford and Muston in the Great War').

### **Gaining the trust of residents to share their memories and memorabilia**

It cannot be assumed that everyone who had access to memories and memorabilia would by default wish to share that material. We developed conversations with residents over extended periods of time before requesting direct access to treasured possessions and were prepared to accept if they declined access. However, over the life of the project, and as confidence on the way the project used and presented material developed, we gained the trust that opened up access to a wider range of First World War material.

### **The difference the project has made**

The Heritage Lottery Fund award to the Bottesford Parish First World War Centenary Project provided us with the resources and opportunity to bring together the local history of the conflict. Those who worked on the project and

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those who participated in events are now more aware of the impact the Great War had on the community and the way in which it defined much of networks that make up the fabric of the community today.

Given the many national and international events marking the centenary over the period 2014 - 2018 we had expected there to be interest in a project focused on the local heritage of the Great War. However, the levels of interest went well beyond what we had anticipated. Intergenerational work on the project and the extensive commitment of volunteer time has made a real difference to the knowledge we now have of the people who served, those at home who supported them, and the collective remembrance of events that both traumatised and galvanized the community.

The material we have gathered together, the stories we have discovered, the events and publications we produced, have engaged a wide section of the community in a sustained programme marking the centenary of the Great War. Those events have left their mark within the community in terms of archive material that is now available in both conventional publications and online. But more than this, such sustained interest was also borne out of the sense of the community generated by the project both within the group of core volunteers and the organisations and individuals who were drawn to the project. The patient, determined enthusiasm of volunteers has given the memory of the First World War a new salience within the community. The names read out at the annual service of remembrance now have stories that will be carried forward into the future. The lives of those who served, survived and had slipped from memory are once again part of a continuing conversation. The circle of those engaged in such conversations is now wider and the knowledge deeper. The project has strengthened the capacity for heritage research within the community and deepened the knowledge base that will sustain that capacity beyond the generation of those who marked the Centenary of the First World War.

### Postscript

In researching the biography of Private Isaac Johnson from Muston we had failed to identify any photographs of him except one very indistinct local newspaper photograph in his obituary. Nor had we been able to trace any members of his family to provide further evidence to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission that he should be recorded as a casualty of the First World War. His death certificate records that he served with the Northumberland Fusiliers. We therefore proceeded to publish 'Lest We Forget: Bottesford and Muston in the Great War' with an incomplete story of Isaac Johnson's life and loss and the printing commenced. On the day the book went to press we were contacted by a family member responding to our website requests for information. We now have the complete story of his loss; access to many family photographs and the necessary evidence to make what we



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hope will be a successful submission to the CWGC for a headstone to mark his grave in the Muston churchyard.

### Acknowledgements

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### Bottesford Primary School WW1 Activities Day 25th September 2015





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### Appendices

<b>Document 1</b>	Partnership organizations and others
<b>Document 2</b>	CRESR HLF Case Study Report
<b>Document 3</b>	Evaluations – summary table
<b>Document 3.1</b>	Sample evaluation sheet - Launch
<b>Document 3.2</b>	Sample analysis - Launch
<b>Document 3.3</b>	Banner feedback summary and comments
<b>Document 3.4</b>	Banner feedback - Sue Rowland, Textile Artist
<b>Document 3.5</b>	WW1 Activities Day Primary School Feedback
<b>Document 3.6</b>	Forgotten Heroes Feedback Summary
<b>Document 3.7</b>	Forgotten Heroes Feedback sorted
<b>Document 3.8</b>	Forgotten Heroes Chestnut Class Letters
<b>Document 3.9</b>	Mid project feedback summary
<b>Document 4</b>	Example photographs & publicity posters
<b>Document 4.1</b>	Example photographs & publicity posters
<b>Document 5</b>	Activities and Events
<b>Document 6</b>	Book review - 'Lest we forget: Bottesford and Muston in the Great War '
<b>Document 7</b>	Example publicity: Rosetown Eagle Village Voice WW1 Bulletins Belvoir High School WW1 Newsletters
<b>Document 8</b>	People and Places; Bottesford Muston First World War Heritage Trail
<b>Document 9</b>	Compiled volunteer hours
<b>Document 9.1</b>	Compiled audience numbers

