“From sleepy villages to industrial hubs”:
Engaging South Gloucestershire with the First World War Centenary

An evaluation of a Heritage Lottery Funded Project

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“From sleepy villages to industrial hubs”: Engaging South Gloucestershire with the First World War Centenary
An evaluation of a Heritage Lottery Funded Project
Rowan Associates South West
Summary

Engaging Local People in South Gloucestershire with the First World War Centenary ran from April 2014 – December 2018. Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and South Gloucestershire Council, it developed and offered activities and resources about the impact of the First World War on South Gloucestershire Communities. 8 local museums were active partners, working with Council Officers and a project Engagement Officer who worked part time on the project.

- The project produced three travelling exhibition which were displayed at 37 venues and visited by over one million (1,186,458) people.
- 4,000 postcards were produced and distributed to promote awareness of the project.
- 4,000 Bookmarks with recommended reading lists were distributed, promoting books on the First World War available in South Gloucestershire Libraries.
- 729 books on the recommended reading lists were loaned.
- Between 2014 and 2018, there were 21,525 page views of the project’s web pages
- A micro-site was created for South Gloucestershire’s War Memorials, which attracted 46,773 total page views.
- QR Codes on individual War Memorials were scanned at least 400 times throughout the period up to November 2018.
- A real-time “Twitter play” to commemorate the Centenary of the Battle of the Somme was produced. Over 91 days, it gained 288 regular followers, produced 446 tweets and achieved over 150,000 impressions.

The engagement of schools and students was a major part of the project. Between 2014 and 2018

- 3,914 pupils were engaged through the delivery of workshops, training and access to learning materials about the First World War.
- Training workshops were delivered in 21 schools (3 Secondary, 18 Primary).
- 50 teachers were trained to use the learning resources produced by the project.
- By July 2018, approx. 3,000 children had engaged with the Poppy Gardens Project
- 7 themed learning packs were produced and will be available after the end of the project as downloads or through South Gloucestershire’s Library Service.
- The learning materials were used by a range of family and community groups including Scouts, Boy’s Brigade, and South Gloucestershire Museums.

The project aimed to support the museums sector in South Gloucestershire. This was both by leaving the legacy resources, such as the exhibition materials, with local museums, and by developing a programme of volunteer training. Throughout the course of the project:

- 10 volunteers received training in different elements of the project, including using resources and researching war memorials.
- 32 volunteers attended social media training.
- 7 local museums reported that they had gained new volunteers through their involvement with the project.
- Volunteers contributed a total of 316 days’ time to the project, equating to £47,709 of value.
1. Introduction

1.1. About the Project

The project *Engaging Local People in South Gloucestershire with the First World War Centenary* (‘the project’) ran from April 2014 – December 2018.\(^1\) It aimed to offer a range of activities to improve interpretation and understanding of the impact of the First World War on South Gloucestershire:

- Focusing on the local First World War heritage held in a variety of community organisations, including museums, heritage centres and community heritage groups
- Bringing these resources to the wider community through the development of new learning resources and a touring exhibition
- Working with local communities and community-based organisations (including churches) to highlight the names and stories of those from the First World War who are remembered on local War Memorials
- Supporting volunteers in local heritage organisations with training, e.g. in social media.

The local museums and heritage organisations involved included:

- Filton Community History
- Frenchay Village Museum
- Kingswood Heritage Museum
- Rolls-Royce Heritage Trust
- Thornbury & District Museum
- Yate Heritage Centre
- Avon Valley Railway
- Aerospace Bristol (from 2017)

*See Appendix 2 for further details*

The project was managed by South Gloucestershire Council’s Museums and Heritage Officer, guided by a steering group. A part-time Engagement Officer was appointed to build relationships with community heritage groups, work with partners to develop project resources such as the exhibitions and learning resources, and to take these into schools. The Engagement Officer also supported local work on the War Memorials project.

The post holder’s hours varied over the four years of the project, with increased hours at the beginning and end of the project to allow for the greater intensity of activity during these periods.

The total project cost for the four years’ work was £66,900. This included the Engagement Officer salary, the costs of producing learning resources and the exhibitions, training offers and all on-costs. Non-cash contributions from South Gloucestershire Council officers were

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\(^1\) One element, the installation of QR codes near War Memorials, was extended to the end of June 2019. This was because of staff sickness and staff departure in the SGC Street Care Department, which resulted in a delayed completion.
made, including from the Strategic Management, Museums and Heritage Officer Project Management, IT, Strategic Comms, Graphics Department and Business ECS. In addition, there were contributions in kind such as the printing of exhibitions. There were also significant volunteer contributions.

1.2. Evaluation – aims and methods

In order to capture the range and scope of the project activities and the way the activities delivered the HLF outcomes, the evaluation was framed around four core evaluation questions:

i. How many people have participated in the different elements of the project?

ii. Has understanding of the First World War, and its impact of South Gloucestershire Communities increased?

iii. Has the project enabled better partnership working in the heritage sector in South Gloucestershire?

iv. What are the lessons for replication for heritage projects in the future?

These questions shape the evaluation report.

Methods

This is a summative evaluation, carried out at the end of the project. It draws on routine, primarily quantitative, monitoring data gathered throughout the project. A small number of tools were developed specifically for this evaluation at the end of the project:

- Evaluation Form for use in schools, when delivering workshops
- An e-survey (via Survey Monkey) for project partners, which was completed by 31 partners
- A questionnaire used at a small number of events at the end of the project, which was completed by 13 people.

The evaluator also ran a Focus Group discussion with members of South Gloucestershire Museums Group, in which there were 16 people.

We note that qualitative data was only gathered at the end of the project; and while a great deal of quantitative data was collected throughout the project, systematic methods were not put in place throughout, for example to gather feedback from the exhibitions.

Report Structure

- Section 2 looks at Project Delivery. It is a descriptive section outlining the main project activities
- Section gives the main findings of the evaluation. It looks at
  - The reach of the project (Evaluation Question i.)
  - The extent to which the project has delivered the HLF Outcomes
  - The impact of the project, themed around Evaluation Questions ii. and iii.
- Section 4 highlights the Learning & Legacy of the project.
2. Project Delivery:

The activity plan for the four-year project Engaging Local People in South Gloucestershire with the First World War Centenary was lengthy and complex and are described in reports to the HLF on the project’s Approved Purposes. Many of the elements of the project were interconnected, and below we have summarised the activities under a set of key themes. The reach and impact of each of the activities will be discussed in section 3 below.

2.1. Production of resources to raise awareness of the impact of the First World War in South Gloucestershire Communities

The activities within this theme were
- the development of touring exhibitions that would visit venues in South Gloucestershire
- the creation of a web-page about South Gloucestershire War Memorials.

Three exhibitions were produced in pop-up banner format. Between July 2014 and November 2018, they were located in 37 different venues ranging from supermarkets such as the Tesco Mega-Stores in Yate and Bradley Stoke to a Mother’s Union event in Yate, and including libraries, community centres, churches and museums as well as at First World War events. One of the exhibitions was taken to Witzenhausen, Germany, as part of the partnerships with Twinning organisations. Over 1 million people visited the venues whilst the exhibitions were on display.

A War Memorials web page was created on South Gloucestershire Council’s website: http://www.southglos.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/museums-and-galleries/war-memorial-sites/. This contains a list of all of the 62 War Memorials in South Gloucestershire, and information about some of the 1500 family and military histories of the 1500 people named on the Memorials. The project has instigated ongoing research within local communities about the people commemorated on local War Memorials.

As early as January 2015, research and consultation was underway about the use of QR code signs as a mechanism to enable passers-by to access information about the individuals named on the Memorials, in cases where information had been researched added to the war memorial page on the web site. The first QR code sign installation was launched in Olveston, by the Parish History Group, in July 2015. In addition, to provide access to those without a QR code reader on their mobile phones, as web site link has been added to QR codes. By the middle of February 2018, there were 12 QR code signs placed near local War Memorials with around another 20 planned for installation by the end of June 2019. A link to the war memorial information will also be added to the Know Your Place West of England website.

2.2. Work with schools to raise awareness and understanding about the impact of the First World War on local communities

A great deal of work was carried out in South Gloucestershire schools. This included the development and production of learning materials: lesson plans, loan boxes, handling
items and user guides. The project benefited from the appointment to the Engagement Officer post of a teacher with experience of working in the heritage sector.

7 themes were explored in the downloadable resources, which are still available on the project’s web pages and via South Gloucestershire Libraries. They cover life in the trenches; the contributions of school children to the war effort; the role of factory girls in munitions works in South Gloucestershire; the ways in which the war affected a large family in Hambrook and the roles that each person played in the war; what home life was like for children in the First World War; food – a handling box showing the food that people ate and the ways in which the navies kept the country fed; what life was like for nurses and soldiers in a local convalescent hospital during the First World War.

Throughout the project period, a total of 28 visits were made to 21 schools, delivering 50 workshops. The First World War project Engagement Officer carried out 8 visits to 8 schools and delivered 17 workshops to 470 pupils. The Yate Heritage Centre Education Officer carried out 18 visits to 11 schools (some receiving multiple visits) under the auspices of the project, delivering 33 workshops to 1496 pupils. Two further workshops were run by the Library Service in two schools. Of the 21 schools, 3 were Secondary schools; and 18 were Primary Schools. By the end of the project, the resources had been downloaded and used by over 4,000 primary and secondary school children in South Gloucestershire. The Engagement Officer also ran a series of 30 teacher training sessions in South Gloucestershire schools, which enabled the resources to be used by more schools than the Engagement Officer could work with directly. Similar training workshops were also run with community organisations including Scouts Groups. A presentation to Head Teachers was also delivered. This element of the project was aimed at having the effect of ensuring a life for the learning resources beyond that of the project itself. Through these activities, 3,914 children were engaged with the project activities.

An additional activity was added for the November 2018 Centenary. This was the Poppy Gardens activity, which invited primary schools to create displays of clay poppies around their local War Memorials or churchyards. Each poppy could be inscribed with a name chosen from those listed on the war memorial. The project gave instructions and a template for making the poppies. The Poppy Garden workshop was used by at least 12 schools and 3,000 children. There was a particularly strong take-up of this activity in the Yate and Sodbury areas, and Aerospace Bristol also ran a workshop with children to make poppies which were displayed in some of its galleries.

2.3. Support the local museums sector in South Gloucestershire by developing resources, training and materials

The project aimed to increase locally held resources about the First World War, by drawing out the information in existing collections, and adding to local knowledge about its impact on local communities. This enabled a specifically local focus and relevance to the information produced.

The project offered training to museum staff and their volunteers. It should be noted that only two of the participating South Gloucestershire museums are accredited, and 3 of the museums listed above have paid staff – the rest being volunteer run. This included social
media training. Another element of the project was its own social media and marketing campaign to promote the project and the local museum sector. One of the outputs linked to this activity was a Twitter Play about the Somme 1916. Although this was a separate activity, it served to raise the profile of the project overall.

In addition, the project aimed to

- build links between the Twinning and heritage organisations in some of South Gloucestershire’s communities
- Support local commemorative activities with small grants for specific events such as local Armistice Day commemorations, Poppy Gardens events, lighting Beacons, etc.²

![Crowds of people watched beacons lit in Siston and Yate, Centenary 2018](image)

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² These were run by local projects. Evaluative data for these events is descriptive, and reports that the events were successful at engaging people in local communities with the commemoration of the Armistice.
3. Findings

In 3.1., we will highlight the reach of the project. Given the scope of the project and number of activities that were run throughout the four year period, we can give a snapshot only in this report. 3.2. gives a summary table to match the project’s Approved Purposes against the HLF Outcomes. 3.3. will discuss the impact of the project Engaging South Gloucestershire with the First World War Centenary.

3.1. Reach: The project in numbers

3.1.1. Travelling Exhibitions
Three travelling exhibitions were produced. Between November 2014 and November 2018, they were displayed at 37 venues. Over one million (1,186,458) people visited the venues where the three exhibitions were on display.

- 828,933 people viewed Exhibition 1
- 235,950 people viewed Exhibition 2
- 121,575 people viewed Exhibition 3

3.1.2. Promotional materials produced
Materials were produced to raise awareness of the project activities. Post cards and bookmarks were agreed to be the more accessible than a project leaflet.

- **4,000 postcards** were produced and distributed
  - 2,000 general postcards
  - 2,000 postcards for schools
- **4,000 Bookmarks** with recommended reading lists were distributed
  - 2,000 recommended reading bookmarks for adults produced
  - 2,000 recommended reading bookmarks for children

The bookmarks promoted books on the First World War available in South Gloucestershire Libraries.

- **729 books** on the recommended reading lists were loaned. The most popular books were *War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo and *Stay Where You Are And Then Leave* by John Boyne (for children), and *First Casualty* by Ben Elton (for adults).

3.1.3. Web Presence and Social Media

Between 2014 and 2018, these pages were seen by over 20,000 people

- **21,525 total page views**, of which there were
  - 11,496 unique page views
  - Specific project activities caused spikes in page views. For example, there were 2,530 page views during the Somme twitter play period (15 April – 14 July 2016).

A micro-site was created for South Gloucestershire’s War Memorials
• 46,773 total page views, of which there were
  o 27,036 unique page views

QR Codes on individual War Memorials throughout the area were scanned at least
• 400 times throughout the period up to November 2018.

There were numerous social media posts via the South Gloucestershire Council Facebook and Twitter Accounts throughout the project. Twitter was used for a commemoration of the Centenary of the Battle of the Somme, through the production of a real-time “Twitter play” about the battle.
• Over 91 days (from 15 April 2016) @thesomme_sg
  o produced 446 tweets
  o achieved over 150,000 impressions
  o had 288 regular followers
  o was retweeted 479 times.

**3.1.4. Engagement with schools and students**

Throughout the course of the project:
• 3,914 pupils were engaged through the delivery of workshops, training and access to learning materials about the First World War
• Training workshops were delivered in 21 schools (3 Secondary, 18 Primary)
• 50 teachers were trained to use the learning resources
• By July 2018, approx. 3,000 children had engaged with the Poppy Gardens Project
• 7 themed learning packs were produced (See Appendix 3). The loan boxes will be available after the end of the project, bookable through South Gloucestershire’s Library Service, and the learning packs will be available for South Gloucestershire schools to download.
• Learning materials were used by a range of family and community groups including Scouts, Boy’s Brigade, and South Gloucestershire Museums

**3.1.5. Supporting the museums sector**

Throughout the course of the project:
• 10 volunteers received training in different elements of the project, including using resources and researching war memorials
• 32 volunteers attended social media training 7 of the 31 partners who completed the evaluation survey said that they had gained new volunteers through their involvement with the project
• Volunteers contributed a total of 316 days’ time to the project, equating to £47,709 of value.

3.2. Delivering the HLF Outcomes

The chart below shows the degree to which the project’s Approved Purposes delivered the HLF Outcomes.
From sleepy villages to industrial hubs: Engaging South Gloucestershire with the First World War Centenary
An evaluation of a Heritage Lottery Funded Project
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HLF Outcome</th>
<th>Approved Purposes/Core Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage will be better interpreted and explained</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage will be identified</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People will have learnt about their heritage</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People will have developed skills</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People will have changed their attitudes</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People will have had an enjoyable experience</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People will have volunteered time</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The area will be a better place to live, work and visit – through stronger community connections</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation will be more resilient</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Meeting HLF Outcomes
3.3. Impact
This section of the report will assess whether the understanding of the First World War has increased in South Gloucestershire communities, and whether the project has contributed to better partnership working in the heritage sector in South Gloucestershire.

3.3.1. Has understanding of the First World War, and its impact of South Gloucestershire Communities increased?

Towards the end of the project, evaluative data was gathered at two small events. 12 out of 13 respondents said that their understanding of the First World War, and its impact on South Gloucestershire communities has increased “a lot”. One person replied, “a little”.

Comments from the survey for this evaluation, and those gathered throughout the project show that the very local nature of the information presented throughout the project enabled strong connections to be made within local communities. Survey respondents from South Gloucestershire museums and heritage organisations commented that

“The displays were of interest to our existing customers, particularly when about local places” [Survey respondent]

and that

“The project has generated a lot more community spirit. People who attended were very positive about being part of this unique event.” [Survey respondent]

Several people said that they had been unaware of the ways in which the First World War changed many local communities, turning them from sleepy villages to industrial hubs. The pattern of industrial development which was sparked by the needs of the war machine fascinated many, as did the clarity of information about the roles played by women in war work. Overall, people from heritage organisations and the general public gained

“… a better understanding of how the war changed the towns and villages of South Gloucestershire...” [Survey respondent]

through the telling of

“local stories which they didn’t know before, [for example] about Yate Aircraft repairs, Douglas Motorcycles in Kingswood, military boot production in Kingswood, or the role of Bristol engines and aeroplanes and how important they were to the war effort...” [Composite: Museums Group Focus Group]

Partners were asked in the Survey about the benefits to their organisations from their involvement with the project. Their responses show the ways in which the project both fostered greater understanding of the First World War in South Gloucestershire and brought new visitors to the museums.
Knowledge gained through involvement with the First World War project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge gained</th>
<th>Survey respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We have been able to increase our knowledge</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has helped us to increase our collections</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has improved public awareness of our collection</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has enabled our First World War collections and resources to become more accessible to more people</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has given us more resources that we can use with the general public</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has given us new resources that we can use with schools</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has brought in new audiences</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Knowledge gained from project: 28 survey respondents completed this multiple options question.

It is positive that the resources from the project were given to local museums at the end of the project. In this way, the centrally organised project supported the museums sector in South Gloucestershire. This is a part of the legacy of the project. An additional legacy was the conservation of a jacket that was displayed at Dyrham Park and the Yate Heritage Centre, making a permanent contribution to the First World War collections held in South Gloucestershire. [Learning Point 1]

Methods of engagement
The exhibitions were the primary means for people to engage with the project and achieved a very high footfall. Exhibition 1 was seen by the greatest number of people: 828,933. This was not only the first exhibition to be produced and so was in circulation for the longest time, but it was also placed in two major local supermarkets for a month at a time. The footfall number reflects the large number of people calling in at these venues. Survey respondents said that

“It was good to see people looking at the banners”

and this

“has helped to engage the younger generation and raise their awareness of the realities of WW1 ... and ... really brings home the impact on local communities...”

[Composite: Survey respondents]
Exhibition visitors at a British Legion event were interested to read about the impact of the First World War on the towns around Bristol, and said that the banners

“...dramatically improved my understanding of South Gloucestershire in the First World War... I did not realise we had such a connection.... It’s interesting and somewhat saddening to see what our veterans went through...” [Composite: comments from exhibition visitors]

Between October 2014 and October 2015, Exhibition 1 also circulated around South Gloucestershire Libraries; as did Exhibition 3 throughout 2018. The footfall at the Libraries in 2014 was nearly 61,000 – a very significant number. While more people ‘saw’ the exhibitions when they were located in supermarkets, it is likely that the level of engagement was greater when they were in the Libraries.

We have not been able to assess the impact of the exhibitions in different venues as evaluative materials were not available at the time the exhibitions were set up in the different locations. This should be addressed with future projects, by developing an evaluation plan at the start of each project. [Learning Point 7]

War Memorials

Over 1500 names of local people, both military and civilian, who lost their lives in both World Wars are recorded on more than 62 war memorials across South Gloucestershire. The project created a microsite which aims to give information about each individual's family and military history. Given the scale of this task, this work is ongoing, and will be further developed through South Gloucestershire Council’s Second World War project. The
HLF funded project produced information about how to research this information, and worked with local churches, and heritage and community organisations to put the information together.

Image: Launch of QR Code at Olveston War Memorial, 2015

Volunteers who engaged with this part of the project commented about how difficult it was to find information about some of the people on the War Memorials, and how much they appreciated the clarity of the information from the project. Survey respondents commented that the War Memorials project

“...highlighted for our villagers that people still here knew the families of the fallen”

It also created local connections between agencies and active volunteers:

“...the Parish Council paid to have the war memorial cleaned... and has reminded people of the role of the church at the heart of the community across the centuries”

[Composite]

This element of the project was enhanced by the Poppy Gardens project and was particularly effective in

- Bringing a wide range of stakeholders, including local churches and the Diocese, to become active partners
- Making explicit the very local impact of the First World War in each community.

**Engagement in Schools**

Schools engagement and learning was an important part of the project. Seven themed learning packs were produced (see Appendix 3) and taken into both primary and secondary schools. In this way, nearly 4,000 children and young people participated in a range of activities to bring a greater understanding of the impact of the First World War within their communities.

The themes which the learning packs addressed enabled children to engage with the harsh realities of soldiers’ lives in the trenches. Hence, primary school children wrote that they learned that soldiers actually lived in the trenches, and were surprised that they

“lived in a hole... in tunnels ... underground” [composite of comments from several children]

and that in this environment

“there were lots of rats in the trenches... [and soldiers’] feet could turn black ...[and their] toes could fall off ... [and] they wouldn’t sleep for 5 days...” [composite]

Primary School children were very interested in the toilet arrangements. Many commented on this, summed up by the comment that not only did people live in ‘holes’ but

“...I learnt that you had to go to the toilet in a hole...”

Clearly, the conditions that soldiers endured left a lasting impression, as did learning how many soldiers died, and yet some were surprised

“...that people survived longer than I thought they would.”
Teachers said that the hands-on resources enhanced children’s engagement and enthusiasm. They were “relevant, interesting and thoughtful” and gave “just enough information without it being too upsetting.” So much so that one teacher commented that the class “... engaged with the activities and sat for an hour!”

Teachers reported that the resources would be easy to adapt for other age groups, and so would be used again throughout the participating schools. They said that they also learned a lot about life in the trenches as well as the impact back home. Local food supplies were cited as being of interest to staff and students. Teachers were also pleased that the resources looked at the role of women, and of the vital contributions made by people from other parts of the British Empire.

Some of the teachers who engaged with the project commented on the importance of hands-on activities, such as berry picking for jam making, and writing postcards from the front, and from home. It was felt that these activities were the most effective at engaging children with the impact of the First World War. This highlights the importance of experiential learning. The Engagement Officer was very creative in her approach to the development of these resources, given the impossibility of recreating ‘real’ First World War conditions. The hands-on nature of the materials and activities enabled experiential learning for children, and this led to greater awareness of the impact of the First World War on local communities. [Learning Point 2]

Partners also commented on the quality and range of the learning resources. 27% of respondents to the evaluation survey said that their involvement with the project had enabled more engagement with schools. Members of the South Gloucestershire Museums Group described the resources as being very well researched and carefully put together. They include good lesson plans with clear notes about their delivery. They made the point that volunteer run museums don’t have the time or money, and do not always have the expertise, to do this; and at the same time, schools are always looking for ready-made materials. Therefore,
“...it was fantastic to have them produced by the project officer, class room ready, curriculum linked, and intuitive to use...” [Composite: Museums Group Focus Group]

The Museums continue to loan them out to schools, who are “really appreciative.” It is increasingly the experience of museums that arranging school trips out is ever more difficult as schools have decreasing resources for this. Being able to bring resources to schools can encourage schools to see the benefits of wider engagement, and of trips to their local museums. Thus, the learning resources have supported the engagement between South Gloucestershire museums and their local schools, and this legacy has enabled the museums to carry on developing and rolling out the work.

The learning resources have been and are being used by community groups outside school as well. It was reported to the evaluator that Scouts, Guides and Beavers are keen to use them, and as described above, the packs offered accessible ways to share difficult information with young children. For example, one Beavers group used the resources as part of their activities to prepare children to participate in the annual Remembrance parade. Group leaders used the learning pack to give children

“...more of an idea of what we were remembering... [Through] seeing the pictures...[they] gained an understanding of life in the trenches. They also got to see how people left at home contributed to the war effort & were especially interested in seeing what the children did.” [Feedback after this event]

An additional project engaging schools was developed in 2018, for the centenary of the Armistice in November. This was the ‘Poppy Gardens’ idea which was promoted by the Engagement Office and taken up by many local schools, particularly in the Yate and Thornbury areas.

Poppy Gardens brought together schools and community groups including local churches, to create ‘gardens’ of clay poppies which were made by school children and placed near or around their local war memorial. Each poppy was to carry the name of a fallen soldier named on the War Memorial. The project used the Armistice Day Investigation learning resource, and integrated work in schools with the War Memorials activities and with local commemorations; and schools with community groups involved with those commemorations. It is estimated that 3,000 children participated in the creation of the Poppy Gardens. This was a visually highly effective and visual project. However, because it took place at the very end of the project period, there is no evaluative data about its impact.

Winterbourne Guides making poppies for a Poppy Garden, 2018
Overall, the learning activities provided
“...a wonderful opportunity to engage children’s enthusiasm and understanding.”
[Survey respondent]

3.3.2. Has the project enabled better partnership working in the heritage sector in South Gloucestershire?

Project partners were asked, via Survey Monkey, about their involvement with the First World War project. 40% of the 30 respondents (12 organisations) hosted project exhibitions or ran other First World War events. 37% (11 organisations) were active in promoting the project through their networks, including social media. 27% (8 organisations) carried out research into the names on their local War Memorial, 14% carried out new research into their own collections. 20% of respondents created new resources about the impact of the First World War in their local areas.

![Poppy Gardens at St Mary’s Church, Yate](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of involvement with the project</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hosting project exhibitions</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching local stories</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching our collections</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of resources about the local area</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in staff or volunteer training</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting project volunteers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer training</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting the project</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching information on War Memorials</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running an event for the project</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: How were partners involved with the project?
Numbers given are responses of 30 partners responding to this multi-option question
Tangible benefits included having a platform through which materials could be made more widely available to the public, thus raising awareness of local collections and the museums that house them. Several museums reported that this brought more people through their doors. The local nature of the information developed and displayed, for example in the exhibitions, enabled strong connections between today’s visitors and the stories of people living in their areas in the past.

The chart below, from the survey, shows that involvement with the project enabled closer working relationships between the partners.

Table 4: Benefits of partner involvement

Survey respondents and Museums Group members commented on the significance of partnerships at the community level, as well as between museums and with the local authority. For some, the project encouraged closer working with Parish Councils and their communities, and the War Memorials work created working relationships with the Diocese and with local churches. Survey respondents described using the project’s resources to engage with a wide range of local groups including to engage with local church and community groups including Scouts, Guides, Cadets, Community Centres and a local brass band. Links with local libraries were also cited as being very beneficial.

Members of the South Gloucestershire Museums Group discussed the gains to partnership working through the First World War project. They noted that the local museums have a good track record of working together and of working closely with South Gloucestershire
Council. However, they said that these relationships were enhanced by the project. This was partly through the production of permanent outputs, and the research that went into them. The ambition of the project pushed partners to do more that they might otherwise have done to commemorate the First World War Centenary.

This was, however, challenging at times for volunteer run museums, and in an area where the sector is made up of very small museums with even smaller resources.

“Each museum is different, and each one has different priorities and capacity... a different emphasis on what they will be willing, and able to do... There was no template to cover their involvement... which is hard for a centrally run project which needs things to happen along their time-line. But in small museums, everyone is already doing many tasks.... The greatest challenge is always time!” [Composite: Museums Group Focus Group]

This discussion highlights one of the learning points about the project, which is the need to, but complexity of, balancing the needs of the partners with those of the project. One Museum lead described this challenge:

“We were going to commemorate the First World War whether there was a project at all. We had a timetable for this, that incorporated our other projects as well. But the central project had its set timetable, which wasn’t our time table. At the start of the project, this was an issue because things [for the central project] had to be done by a certain time, which wasn’t when we were going to do them.

However, it was acknowledged that the timetable became more flexible, and the expectations of local partners became clearer as the central project developed. [Learning point 5]

It is clear that the project was successful in increasing the understanding of the First World War and its impact on South Gloucestershire communities. This is further demonstrated by the word cloud below. This is a compilation of ‘three words to capture your views about the project’, from participants and partners at the end of the project.
4. Learning and Legacy

The tangible legacy of the project to engage people in South Gloucestershire communities with the First World War centenary were the resources that the project created, including exhibition banners, loan boxes and learning resources. These will continue to be used by South Gloucestershire libraries, museums and schools. For many museums, the exhibition materials, war memorial research and learning resources (available on memory sticks) will add to their exhibition/loan resources, archives and handling collections. This alone has made a positive contribution to the museum sector in the area.

**Learning Point 1**
Projects can achieve a lasting legacy by creating resources centrally which are left with local museums at the end of the project.

The next section of this report will consider the factors that contributed to the success of the project, what might have been done differently, and the learning from this project that can be applied to heritage activities in the future.

4.1. Success Factors

The quality and relevance of the tangible resources created through the project was cited as a critical success factor. Many of the comments received throughout the project, and for this evaluation, refer to the “excellent travelling exhibition” and the ways in which they were relevant to local communities. The format of the exhibitions was also praised

“The exhibitions were brilliant, much more accessible in banner format than if they had been on boards. Although it’s more expensive, it is well worth the expense to do them in this format.” [Museums Group Focus Group]

We have discussed (Section 3) the relevance of the learning resources, in relation to the curriculum, and how well they brought the First World War alive for school children.

**Learning Points 2: Investment in resources**
- Project budgets should allow for investment in high quality resources that can be used beyond the life of the project.
- Ensure high quality education resources that foster experiential learning. Handling Box materials create connections between children and long-ago events which might otherwise seem too different, socially and culturally, to be engaging.
- The project benefited from employing an education specialist who understood the needs of schools, and the curriculum links. If heritage education is part of a developing project, this knowledge will enable schools more readily to participate in heritage projects.
The skills of the project team were discussed by members of the Museums Group. We have discussed the benefits of having an education specialist developing and delivering the learning outputs. Other skills which contributed to the success of the project were

“the number of ideas [the Engagement Officer] had... the creativity she brought to the project...and the use of the project budget and realistic spend” [Composite: Museums Groups Focus Group]

This was enhanced by knowledge, ideas, networks and commitment of the South Gloucestershire Museums and Heritage Officer whose support and enthusiasm was described by partners as “outstanding.” It was felt that project resources were well directed: money was spent on lasting resources and on “small and accessible projects” such as book marks and reading lists.

Learning Point 3
Effective project officers will

• have a commitment to the project that included a willingness to be flexible about the remit of the project and the delivery role
• be able to demonstrate examples of creativity in project delivery
• have budget management skills

To deliver complex projects well, project officers need solid and creative organisational support that supports their work while keeping a track of the project, and its funders, requirements.
Partnership working was built into the project plan and was a key to the success of the project. (See 3.4) The benefits from the project included being able to engage with new audiences and gaining resources. Survey respondents commented that

“Having special projects encourages visitors to the library and gave us the opportunity for promotions and events we would not have the resources for.”

The War Memorials project, in particular, created connections between South Gloucestershire Council and Museums, and local churches. This element of the project, and the relationships that have come out of it, have formed the basis of work on other projects including the Second World War memorial project. The Twinning elements of the project brought some of South Gloucestershire’s Twinning communities into the project, thereby further extending the reach of the project.

The Engagement Officer, Cherry Hubbard, hands over loans boxes and learning materials to the South Gloucestershire Museums Group

There were challenges with the partnership elements of the project, which will be discussed below. One of the issues that arose, particularly with volunteer run associations was the changing personnel over the length of the project. “People change” in some groups, and relationships may need to be built and then re-built if the activity runs over several years.

However, some problems were overcome by the commitment of the project team to deliver outreach sessions and to take the project resources out to where people were, and where community-based activities were taking place. [See below, Learning Points for Partnership working.]

The development of specific local resources contributed to the success of the project. Partners commented that the project shone a light on the impact of the First World War on local communities
“The win-win for us was about the local knowledge and how Yate was transformed by the First World War. The airport repair depot was like a military – industrial complex compared to the sleepy Victorian place that was there before.” [Yate Heritage Centre]

This made the project resources both interesting and relevant to local people, and therefore more engaging. The focus on the role of women in the First World War, and how this changed, was another layer of relevance to audiences.

This fed into a high level of interest in the local events. Survey respondents commented that they were surprised and humbled by

“the number of individuals and people from the wider community who have shown an interest and a wish to be involved... and the level of community engagement and goodwill generated...” [Composite, Survey comments]

Overall, partners said that the project provided a systematic picture of the way South Gloucestershire communities were affected and changed by the First World War. It achieved this through the thematic and accessible nature of the materials presented. For example, using ‘Animals’ as a theme created connections for people who might have said they were not interested in information about a long-ago war.

Members of the Museums Group spoke about the impact of this local information across the local authority area.

“Although we had quite a lot of information about the impact of WW1 in [our own] areas, we all learned something about the First World War in other parts of South Gloucestershire....” [Museums Group Focus Group]

The impact was that the project helped to create “a more cohesive identity” across the unitary authority. Members of the Museums Group commented that South Gloucestershire is usually seen as a collection of small towns, or as an area without a clear identity:
The Museums sector, and museums audiences, benefited from learning about other parts of the unitary authority area, and the similarities and differences between the communities.

Learning Point 4
The project demonstrated that working thematically across the local authority area can bring people together both at a very local level, and at an area-wide level.

Wider community impacts were achieved through a mix of partnership working and outreach work with schools, museums and other local organisations. The importance of outreach must be taken into account in project budgets.

4.2. Applying the learning: Changes for future projects

Two-thirds of survey respondents said that they would become involved in another project of this scale, if they had an opportunity to do so. It is noteworthy that none of the respondents said they would not: one-third replied “maybe”.

Table 5: Would partners participate in projects in the future?

Explaining a ‘conditional’ response, one person commented that it would depend on the availability of time and volunteer resources. This theme was also raised in the Museums Group Focus Group and was reflected by many of the active project partners. Some felt that there was not sufficient recognition that museums are busy, with their own timetables and project plans, and most are run by volunteers. At points in the project, this led to tension between the project’s needs and local museum’s plans and work programmes.
“I think we hadn’t appreciated at the outset what the time commitment would be, in terms of research that needed to be completed by a series of project deadlines, rather than our usual practice of setting our own deadlines and working to those...In an ideal world, we would have had more time to plan it out in greater detail but there was often not enough lead in for partners; not enough time to involve partners, and thinking through how we would achieve the widest buy in.” [composite: Museums Group Focus Group]

Partners said that there were clear benefits from participation, but that it was easier to achieve when the timetables were shared, and expectations were clear. For example, some of the museums were asked to do a considerable amount of research and provide materials and photographs from their collections for the exhibitions. Some made the running with engaging with their local schools, which they had not anticipated or planned for. As a result they had to

“...juggle work on the First World War with our planned work on other projects.”
[Survey respondent]

Some partners also thought that the publicity generated by the central (or ‘major’) project could dominate their own activities, sometimes at the expense of smaller events or activities. This was felt to be disadvantageous to local museums or community groups.

**Learning Points 5: Partnership working**

Partnership working is based on relationships and this can be a challenge with a long project. It is important that

- Expectations about the time commitment, time scales and work tasks required of both the project team and project partners are realistic; and are agreed at the start of the project. This could be written as a statement of expectations which could become a template for partnership working in the Museums Sector in South Gloucestershire. Such a template would be a valuable legacy of this project.
- Project plans take into account the agendas and plans of project partners; are flexible; and are developed with project partners
- Project design recognises the limitations of the capacity of volunteer run museums

[Ref: 3.3.2 p 16]

**Social Media**

The project aimed to increase the use of social media by partners. Based on the data gathered for the evaluation, this appears to have been the least successful activity in an otherwise engaging project. Although it was reported that 32 volunteers participated in this training, only 35% of survey respondents reported being involved with the social media activities or training. None of the members of the Museums Group Focus Group had participated in the training. 17% of survey respondents (3 people) said that they staff or volunteers from their organisation attended the training. 44% said that they already used social media ‘regularly’.  

“From sleepy villages to industrial hubs”: Engaging South Gloucestershire with the First World War Centenary
An evaluation of a Heritage Lottery Funded Project
Rowan Associates South West
Some partners said that the training came either too early (they were not ready to do so when the training was offered), or too late (they had already developed their approach to and use of social media). This is, perhaps, inevitable: developing the use of social media in the arts and heritage sectors is patchy. In small or volunteer run museums, it often depends on the willingness of one person with a particular interest in building a social media presence for the museum. This leads us to question whether social media training as one element of a complex project is an effective use of resources, or whether building the use of social media should be a bespoke activity; and how volunteer run museums can make the best use of digital technology and social media.

Learning Point 6
Digital programmes need to be carefully planned and targeted. It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to assess how local and largely volunteer run museums can make the best use of digital technology, and for what ends. Is it a platform to increase profile, or provide more information, build capacity, or make resources available digitally? What capacity is needed within the Museums Sector in South Gloucestershire to enable the growth of digital technology in museums? This is an issue of growing importance in the heritage sector. South Gloucestershire Council might consider a bespoke project that looks at this issue.
5. Conclusion

This summary evaluation report cannot fully do justice to a complex project which was run over 4 years and which included a wide range of activities and partners. This is particularly the case with a summative evaluation. Therefore, we have highlighted issues for which there was evaluative data, and that address the evaluation questions.

Learning Point 7
Evaluation plans should be developed at the start of projects and should include tools for gathering qualitative impact data as well as quantitative information.

There is, however, evidence to show that the project achieved a great deal with a small budget. It had wide reach across the South Gloucestershire unitary authority area. This was through the exhibitions in public locations, the involvement of local museums and the library service, and outreach work with South Gloucestershire schools. The project also successfully engaged new partners, for example local churches through the War Memorials project. A subsequent about the Second World War has continued to build these links.

Public engagement was further enabled by the quality, range and creativity of the resources which were produced, and which have been passed to local museums and relevant partners. Learning materials will be available for schools (and others) to download. This will ensure the legacy of the project and the longevity of the resources and will support the museum sector in South Gloucestershire.

It appears that the high level of activity and engagement, and the partnerships through which this was delivered, have engendered a greater understanding of the impact of the First World War on South Gloucestershire Communities – and beyond.

Last word comes from the project partners in Germany: Twinning delegates from Filton brought the exhibition materials to Witzenhausen, a small town in Germany with which Filton Town Council is twinned. They reported that

“... all thought they were interesting, well done and not offensive in any way. Having the panels ... did raise a debate during the evening, about the war with my hosts and my friend who joined us from Japan. The decision being that war was a total waste of lives.”
Appendixes

Appendix 1: Summary of all Learning Points

1. Projects can achieve a lasting legacy by creating resources centrally which are left with local museums at the end of the project.

2. Investment in resources: Project budgets should allow for investment in high quality resources that can be used beyond the life of the project.

   **Education resources** should be of high quality and should foster experiential learning. Handling Box materials create connections between children and long-ago events which might otherwise seem too different, socially and culturally, to be engaging. The project benefited from employing an education specialist who understood the needs of schools, and the curriculum links. If heritage education is part of a developing project, this knowledge will enable schools more readily to participate in heritage projects.

3. Effective project officers will
   - have a commitment to the project that included a willingness to be flexible about the remit of the project and the delivery role
   - be able to demonstrate examples of creativity in project delivery
   - have budget management skills

   To deliver complex projects well, project officers need solid and creative organisational support that supports their work while keeping a track of the project, and its funders, requirements.

4. Working thematically across the local authority area can bring people together both at a very local level, and at an area-wide level.

   Wider community impacts were achieved through a mix of partnership working and outreach work with schools, museums and other local organisations. The importance of outreach must be taken into account in project budgets.

5. Partnership working is based on relationships and this can be a challenge with a long project. It is important that
   - Expectations about the time commitment, time scales and work tasks required of both the project team and project partners are realistic; and are agreed at the start of the project. This could be written as a statement of expectations which could become a template for partnership working in the Museums Sector in South Gloucestershire. Such a template would be a valuable legacy of this project.
   - Project plans take into account the agendas and plans of project partners; are flexible; and are developed *with* project partners
   - Project design recognises the limitations of the capacity of volunteer run museums.
6. Digital programmes need to be carefully planned and targeted. It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to assess how local and largely volunteer run museums can make the best use of digital technology, and for what ends. Is it a platform to increase profile, or provide more information, build capacity, or make resources available digitally? What capacity is needed within the Museums Sector in South Gloucestershire to enable the growth of digital technology in museums? This is an issue of growing importance in the heritage sector. South Gloucestershire Council might consider a bespoke project that looks at this issue.

7. Evaluation plans should be developed at the start of projects and should include tools for gathering qualitative impact data as well as quantitative information.
Appendix 2: Local Heritage and Museum Partners

The heritage which has been identified in the local museums and heritage organisations includes

**Filton Community History** Filton Community History holds a variety of archives relating to the First World War. This includes oral histories from the families of Filton residents at that time including the story of RFC pilot Ernest Tomkins. They also have maps and photographs of that period. Due to rapid expansion of the area almost nothing remains of the First World War and the group will use the First World War centenary to highlight the changes that have taken place since 1918. Filton was home to the British and Colonial Aeroplane Company (BAC) which brought many changes to the ‘village’ which continue to this day. BAC were a major supplier of aircraft in the First World War when air warfare became a significant factor. The F.2B Bristol Fighter, one of the outstanding aircraft of the 1914-18 war and a mainstay of the R.A.F during the 1920s was developed at Filton.

**Frenchay Village Museum (accredited)** Frenchay Village Museum has a few small artefacts from the First World War, such as a bullet converted into a decorative knife. Frenchay Parish Magazines from the period; give a month-by-month account of the effect of the war on the village and those serving overseas. There is also a collection of about 100 postcards from Cleve Hill Military Hospital in Downend, which show staff and many patients with their names and regiments.

**Kingswood Heritage Museum** (Arts Council England Accredited) Kingswood Museum has a variety of objects and information which includes a 1916 Model W Douglas motorbike, examples of trench art (including hand-drawn cards and hand-made cross pendants), “a widow’s penny” and images of the unveiling of the war memorial. They also have a hand powered invalid carriage, for those who lost their legs, which was a Red Cross machine and also a German Prisoner of War painting of Wick Rocks (a local beauty spot).

**Rolls-Royce Heritage Trust** The Trust has a model of the Bristol Fighter, which was built at Filton by the British and Colonial Aeroplane Co, and powered by Rolls-Royce Falcon engines built nearby in Fishponds. The collection also includes First World War engines such as the Cosmos Hawk.

**Thornbury Museum & District** (Arts Council England Accredited) The museum has a variety of objects and information with images of Thornbury during the First World War. The impact of the war on the local community is well illustrated through its collection of photographs, of soldiers and family groups. The museum has some biographies of the soldiers featured on war memorials. They also have good local contacts who will loan personal items for display.

**Yate Heritage Centre** Yate Heritage Centre’s First World War collection is in electronic form as part of the Murray Dowding collection. There are up to 50 images of different battalions on Sodbury High Street during each year of the War. There are a few written books from the time, reports and some recently acquired letters from local soldiers. Amongst the collections is a report from the Swiss Ambassador visiting the German POW camp on Westerleigh Road, Yate. Additionally, they have the 1919-20 maps which are so important in
demonstrating the effects of the war on the local areas and the landscape. There are a small number of objects, including some military items and social history objects.

**War Memorials** There are many tablets, plaques and statues in South Gloucestershire marking those who died in wars. Many are in churchyards or on private land, while some are on land owned by South Gloucestershire Council. A list of war memorials has been collated and the centenary is an opportunity to promote their care, but also undertake more research into the histories behind the individuals on the war memorials.
Appendix 3: First World War Learning Resources

Armistice Day Centenary Poppy Gardens
An opportunity for every primary school in South Gloucestershire and other community groups to create local displays of Poppies in November 2018.

The Great War – Life in the Trenches
KS2/3 – Downloadable Workshop and Loans Box - Alf Flux was a local man, this workshop uses what we know of Alf through images and documents and follows him to war.

School children in The Great War – messages and mufflers
KS1/2 - Downloadable. The story of the girls who knitted for the servicemen and the boys who kept the scout law

The girls who made grenades – The Warmley Grenadiers
KS 2/3 – Downloadable. The story of the local factory girls making munitions and their 'Billy Do’s’.

Empire Foods loans box
KS2/3 Bookable. The story of the importance of the Royal Navy through maps and the replica tinned food of the period.

The Hill and the Flux family
KS 2/3/4 Discover how the war affected a large family from Hambrook, how each one played their part in the war and how their lives were changed forever.

Amy Hill autograph book

Home life in the First World War
Key Stage 1/2. Children will learn what life was like at home for the children of the First World War through two contemporary photographs.