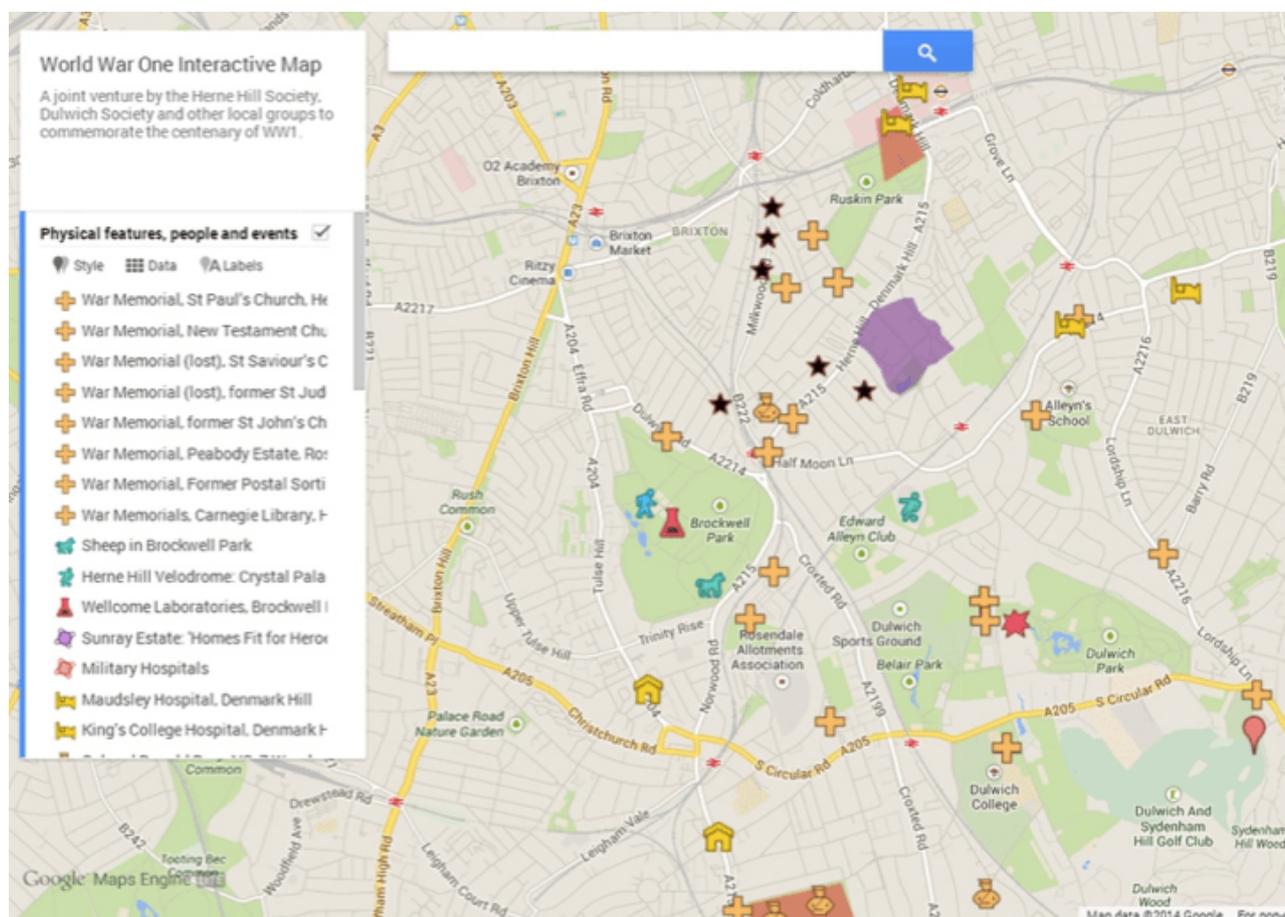


# Remembering Herne Hill 1914-18 (FW-16-08034) Project Evaluation Report for National Lottery Heritage Fund

Colin Wight  
Chair  
The Herne Hill Society  
27 February 2018



In 2015, working in collaboration with the Dulwich Society and other local groups, the Herne Hill Society plotted local (South-East London) First World War memorials onto an interactive Google map. We subsequently added related items, such as attacks on “German”-owned shops, Hiram Maxim’s machine-gun testing, cemeteries, military hospitals, sheep grazing in the park, bomber attacks... Many of these “Home Front”



stories were little known or understood.

In January 2017 the Society was approached by history teacher Daniel Townsend to consider forming a partnership with the Charter School North Dulwich, which would research the lives of all First World War casualties with a strong Herne Hill connection, beginning with and building on the names on individual church and community war memorials (there is currently no major civic war memorial in Herne Hill).



With the help of Dan Townsend we produced a long list (over 500 names) of possible casualties. We knew that this was certainly fewer than the true number, since some church memorials have been lost (for example, from St Jude's, Dulwich Road). We sent an Expression of Interest to the Heritage Lottery Fund's "First World War Then and Now" programme followed by a Grant Application in May 2017, together with a formal partnership agreement from the Charter School and a letter of support from Lambeth Archives and Helen Hayes MP. In July 2017 our Application was accepted and the Herne Hill Society was awarded £5,200. We set up a small steering group to establish a timeline for delivering the



agreed objectives and to ensure that activity and expenditure was accurately profiled and monitored.

In September 2017 our first e-newsletter went out to volunteers and other supporters and continued on a monthly basis for the duration of the project. [<https://us5.campaign-archive.com/home/?u=2e1595da317d1c5e78b5de863&id=7c3d88338b>] News of the grant and launch of the project was carried in our own *Herne Hill magazine* and, through a press release, in the local press as well as in social media.

[<https://www.southwarknews.co.uk/news/remembering-herne-hill-residents-fought-lived-great-war/>]

By mid November 2017 we had recruited 25 adult and school volunteers (including Society members and parents of school students) and held two training sessions at the Charter School, led by professional historian Dan Hill and supported by specially compiled "Notes for Researchers". The main online resources for the research would be [ancestry.co.uk](https://ancestry.co.uk), [findmypast.co.uk](https://findmypast.co.uk), <https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk> and <https://www.cwgc.org>. Trainees were also shown how to use Google to find additional resources, such as war diaries and schools' archives.

We set up a Twitter account [[https://twitter.com/Hernehill\\_WW1](https://twitter.com/Hernehill_WW1)], and a website subdomain to hold the new database. Over the following 12 months our volunteers, each initially allocated 5-15 names, uploaded their research findings via an online form to our database. Their contributions were checked for obvious errors of fact and consistency by



a former web professional with extensive experience (ex-British Library) before being added to the test site. Owing to a number of resignations from our volunteers, progress was proceeding at a slower pace than expected, so it was decided to postpone the go-live date of the memorial website until Armistice Centenary / Remembrance Day.

With the assistance of Lambeth Archives, we also arranged for the digitisation of *South London Press* 1914-18, which uncovered further names and associated stories. We interviewed two brothers who have lived locally all their lives and whose whose uncle, Private Basil Hamley, was killed in the war. (Four other brothers served and survived.)

At the same time we started to investigate the experiences of the many people of German origin who lived in the area, using *Kelly's Directory*, parish magazines and





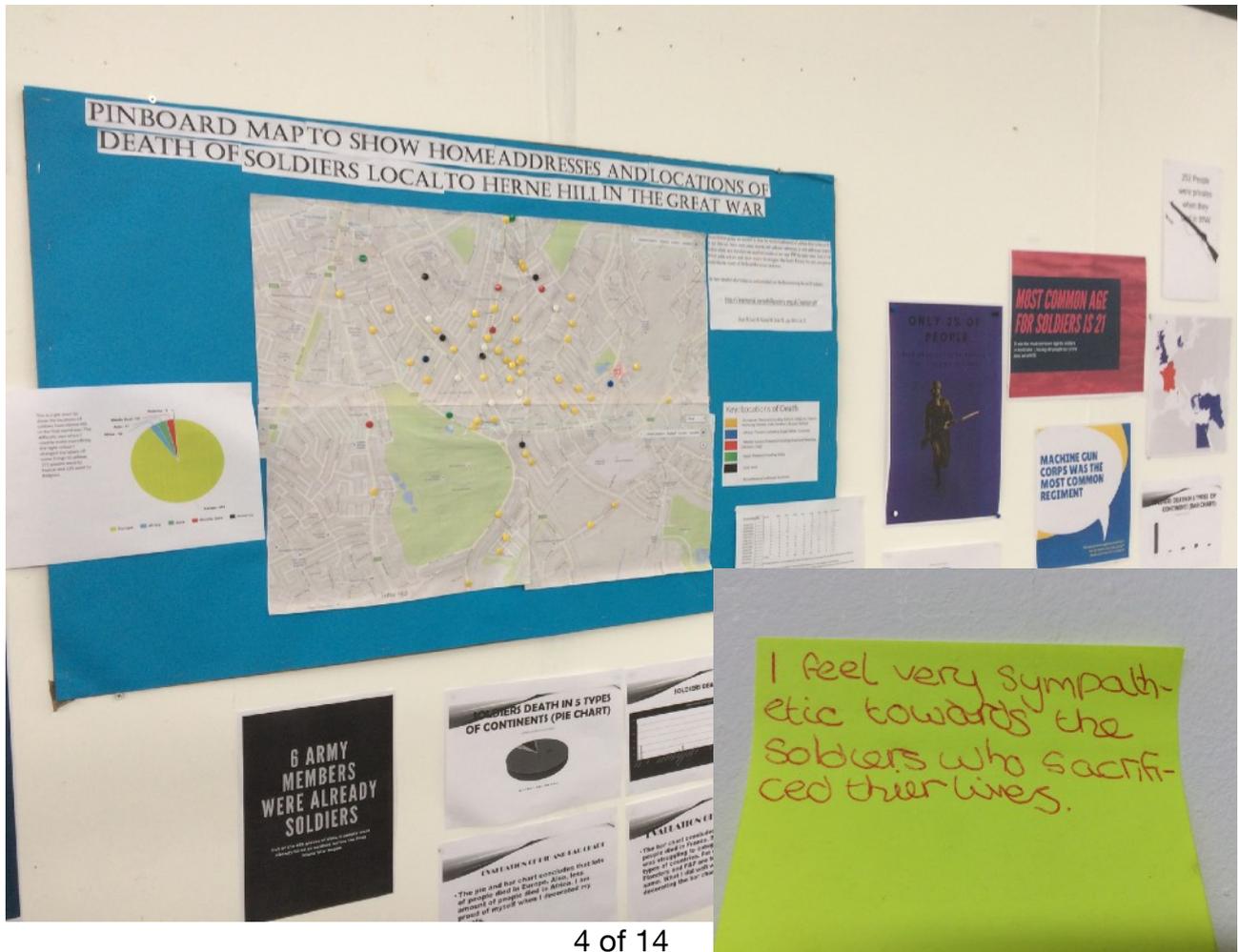
Census records. This will form the basis of a smaller, follow-up project. (We are not currently seeking funding for this).

Some researchers visited the following physical archives: London Metropolitan Archives, King's College Hospital Archives, Lambeth Archives, South London Press, St Paul's Parish Archives, Dulwich College, The British Library, Alleyn's School and James Allen's Girls' School.

While researching one of the casualties, "F. Lucas", we discovered an unpublished memoir by his daughter, Grace. With the agreement of the Lucas family and after consulting two eminent historians (Prof. Michael Roper and Prof. Jerry White), we decided that it was publishable, once lightly edited and with notes and illustrations. (It was subsequently published by and distributed through the Herne Hill Society as *Grace's*

*Story: Growing up in Herne Hill During the First World War.*)

On 16 and 18 July 2018, Head of History Dan Townsend and his colleagues held two project days at the Charter School for the entire Year 7. The children created maps, sketches, videos and a short play based on Grace Lucas's memoirs.



The Herne Hill Society was invited by Civic Voice to give a presentation on 27 September 2018 at the Imperial War Museum: “Sharing the Stories of the First World War Memorials Programme”.



While continuing to build and test the website database we became aware that there had never been an open-air Remembrance Day Commemoration in Herne Hill and, with the support of Southeastern Railway, who run Herne Hill Station, and City & Country



Farmers' Markets, we called for two minutes' silence at 11am on Sunday 11 November, preceded by the playing of The Last Post by Walter Feeny, a 17-year-old student at the Charter School. The event was publicised by local traders, the press and on social media. The approximately 100 attendees included three councillors and the MD of Southeastern Railway, the company who run this busy commuter station.



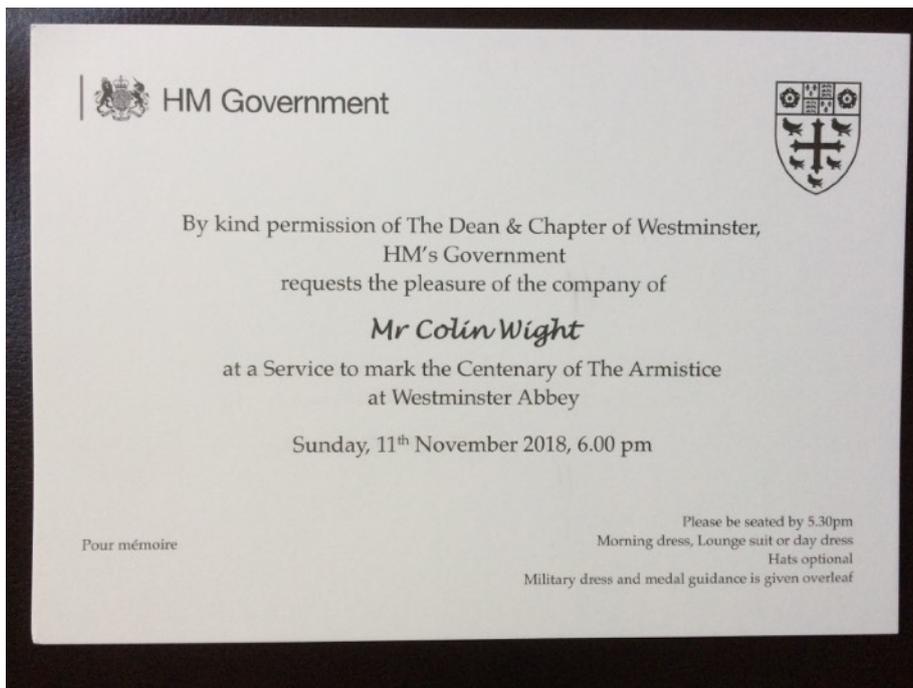
Social media and personal comments made to the organisers indicate that many people found it deeply moving. See, e.g., a blog by Antonia Senior [<http://the-history-girls.blogspot.com/2018/11/remembering-all-harrys.html>]

Southeastern also generously offered us space in their booking hall for two A1 information panels, which, at

the time of writing, remain in place. The panels feature the website address and a QR code. Stories about the project appeared the same week in *South London Press* and *Southwark News*.



The same morning we officially launched the Herne Hill First World War Memorial website, with a database of 380 casualties, the ability to search for information such as the ages of casualties, the street they lived in, and where they are buried, e.g “Age at death 16”, “Resident Railton Road”, “Place of death Egypt”. There were c.1,000 hits on the first day. There are also two Google maps indicating where each casualty lived, and where they are buried or remembered.



The memorial website is at [<http://memorial.hernehillsociety.org.uk>]

Colin Wight and Laurence Marsh, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Herne Hill Society, were honoured to be invited to the Armistice Centenary service at Westminster Abbey the same evening.

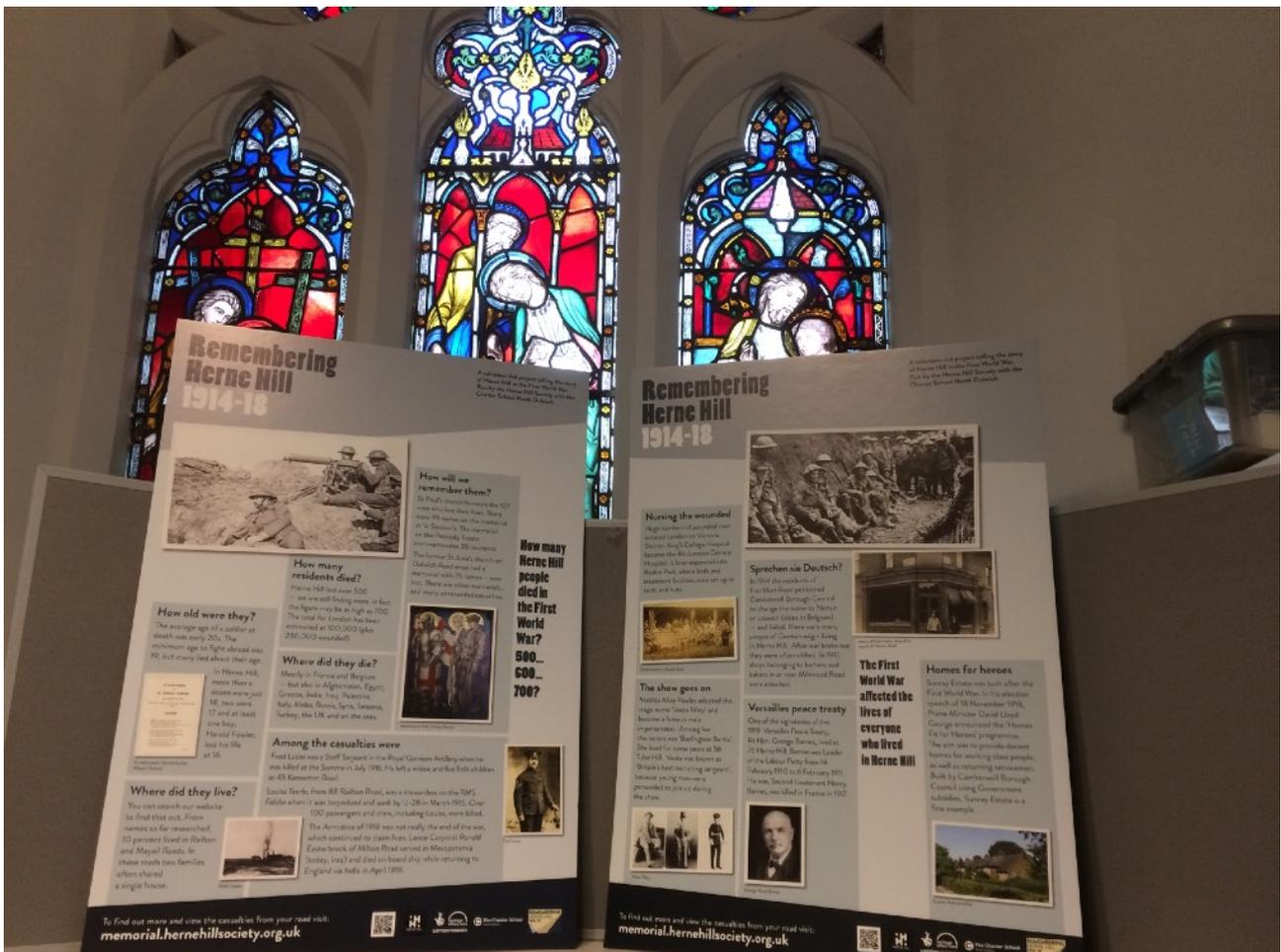
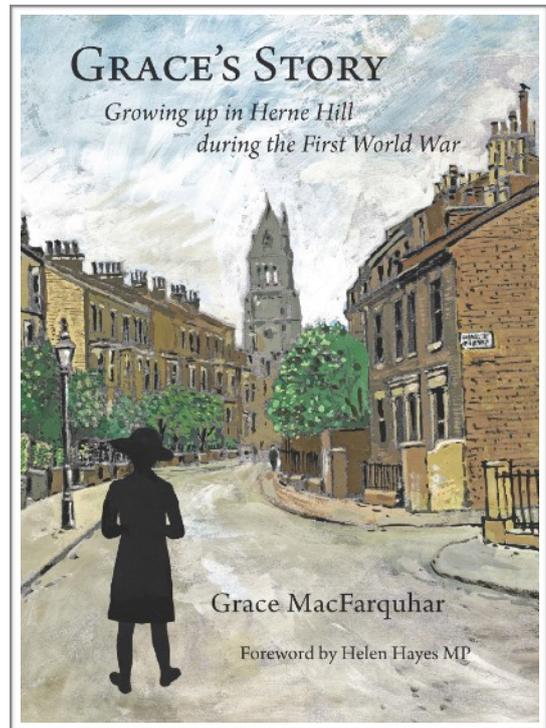
*Grace's Story*, with a foreword by Helen Hayes MP and extensive notes and illustrations, was printed in an edition of 250 and launched on 1 December 2018. All design work and editing was done free of charge in-house. Complimentary copies were presented to our

volunteer researchers and other contributors and supporters, as well as local libraries and schools.

At the time of writing, nearly 100 free copies have been distributed and 80 have been sold, both direct and through local booksellers.

[[http://www.hernehillsociety.org.uk/news\\_articles/view/graces\\_story](http://www.hernehillsociety.org.uk/news_articles/view/graces_story)]

Additional copies of our First World War display boards were also delivered to the Charter School North Dulwich, St Paul's and St Saviour's churches, which both have (or had) war memorials, and subsequently to the Brockwell Hall café and the newly re-opened Carnegie Library.



In late November Dan Townsend led two Charter School groups (numbering 120 in all) to the battlefields of France and Belgium, taking them out of timetabled lessons for two days (a major achievement!). These trips will be repeated in 2019.



On 12 December 2018 we held a project presentation and reception at the Baptist Church, Half Moon Lane (the largest suitable space in Herne Hill), which attracted 60 attendees, including two councillors and relatives of several of Herne Hill's First World War casualties. We were particularly pleased to welcome descendants of Fred and Grace Lucas. At this meeting, three more volunteers came forward to continue the research work. We estimate that there are over 200 casualties still to investigate.

Finally, we invited historian Dan Hill to give a talk at Herne Hill United Church on 13 February 2019 about the Western Front, highlighting the experiences of six Herne Hill men who fought and died in six crucial battles. This event attracted 56 attendees, including nine 6th-formers from the Charter School. It was audio recorded and will go up on our website.



## Achievements and lessons learned

The project has achieved NHLF's principal objectives within the timescale and allocated budget.

- War casualties investigated: 440 (400 of which uploaded)
- Website: since launch, 1,086 unique visitors, with a total 10,410 visits
- Events (4), total attendance: c.250
- Volunteer researchers recruited: 36
- School students involved: c.300
- Grace's Story book, distributed so far: 175
- Physical archives consulted: 9
- Display boards, locations: 6

*It is impossible to estimate how many people have seen these, although Herne Hill Station is the busiest public space in Herne Hill – which does not have a town hall or central library. The QR link to the website has been scanned 217 times.*

However, we did not succeed in finding and researching all Herne Hill's First World War casualties by 28 February 2019. There was a reluctance of many Society members to become involved (we are currently investigating why) and the opting-out of a dozen people who had initially shown interest. The online research proved too challenging and time-consuming for some, but by no means all, of the school students. Whilst one adult volunteer told us that it took her, on average, only two hours to research a single casualty, others said it took a full day or longer. An average of 6 - 7 hours per casualty, including uploading to the database, followed by checking and editing, is an estimated figure. The website will continue to be supported, promoted and enhanced by the Society throughout 2019 and beyond.

Particular project highlights were: the holding of the Armistice Centenary event at Herne Hill's Sunday Market, together with two well-attended formal presentations; taking part in the sell-out Civic Voice event at IWM, the publishing of a very readable memoir (*Grace's Story*); the creation of a simple-to-use, database-driven website; the positive involvement of most of our councillors as well as the MP for Dulwich and West Norwood; the generous assistance of the management of Southeastern Railway (who are considering installing a plaque to the fallen of both world wars); and the recruitment of four new, younger members to the Society.

It is clear from comments received (below) that the project has enabled local people of all ages to acquire and develop research skills, learn about the First World War in general, and feel a closer attachment to the area. (Herne Hill is an increasingly well-to-do, middle-class area of South London into which, because of the good performance of its schools, many families without local connections have moved in recent years.)

The involvement of the Charter School was crucial, not only in immersing children and young adults in a period of history many of them knew little about, but in roping in their

parents. Younger, university educated and more digitally skilled than many of the Herne Hill Society's members, several became volunteers in order to assist their children and have gone on to become productive researchers without whom the online research element of the project would have struggled.

The experience of Colin Wight, Dan Townsend and web designer John Conway in running medium-sized projects on a tight budget has proved invaluable. Nevertheless, it has been difficult (impossible?) to ensure that volunteers carry out the tasks allocated to them. In effect this has meant spending a great deal of time on communication, and monitoring and re-allocating work. Although our outcomes were achieved, shortage of time and resources meant that we were unable to complete work on some of the interesting "Home Front" stories we were beginning to uncover (e.g. local music hall entertainers, and the experience of nurses and doctors working at the nearby 4th London General Hospital/King's.) Nonetheless we will continue to investigate these stories and report them on our blog in 2019.

Writing this account has brought home to myself, and to the other participants, what an ambitious and, ultimately, very satisfying project this has turned out to be.

### Comments received

The Herne Hill Society's "Remembering Herne Hill 1914-18" project is hugely exciting, helping school-age children living in Herne Hill to understand what the war was like for children just like them, living on the same streets, at that time. It is also a fitting memorial to all those from our local area who had the course of their lives irrevocably changed by the war, and whose courage and resilience was so remarkable.

*Helen Hayes MP*

Such an interesting project – and even in the few names in my batch such variety - one the son of a surgeon, and another who grew up in the George Road Camberwell workhouse!

*SM [volunteer researcher]*

It has been an enlightening and humbling exercise, especially when we researched people who lived in our street (a lady whose husband died before the War and then she lost both her sons in the war).

*CL [volunteer researchers]*

I have found the project really fascinating and truly heartbreaking. Those poor men/ boys... I love this project and find it very moving. I feel as if those people are being properly remembered now they aren't just names on a monument.

*AW [volunteer researcher]*

I found it altogether a very enriching experience – it felt a privilege to be involved in the project and to be trusted with the important task of enabling "my" soldiers to be

remembered. I was already a fairly mad keen family history researcher, so the territory was familiar, but the project opened up a whole new world of war history sources which I hadn't used before and I found that fascinating and exciting. The project also had the effect of adding a different dimension to the local area in my eyes. The stories, the mere fact of knowing some of the local history in such a personal way, adds colour and depth and a totally different level of interest in it. Whenever I drive down one of our local streets I think of the soldier's father who lived in one of the houses there until he died. I also found dealing with the organising team very enjoyable, by email they were very responsive and helpful, and the events were another very enjoyable way in which the project came to life. I'm not sure I can think of any particular way it needed to or should have been done differently!

ps I had a reply this morning through Ancestry from a great niece of one of the soldiers. Actually, he was the first soldier I started looking at, and managed to find out exactly how he died from an extract in the War Diaries.

*EC [volunteer researcher]*

I'm glad that these soldiers are being written up – so many of them gave their lives and have just become names in lists, rather than real people. It's great that their stories and families can be recorded before all the memories slip away. [Now doing] research into the lives of the soldiers commemorated in the war memorial church I've attended here in Brisbane since 1975. Until recently, I've never thought to find out about them – they've just been a sad list of initials and surnames on a roll of honour board. So I'm finding out their names, what they did, and where their families lived in the parish. Maybe I'll be able to make a booklet or website about them, which will enrich the knowledge of our congregation and maybe help people doing their family tree.

*LB [Australian relative]*

This is amazing – both the display boards and the website! I never imagined it would include so much. And it will be ongoing... Well done, congratulations to the whole team, it's a superb memorial.

*Frances Lamb [Carnegie Community Trust]*

Congratulations on the project, and on bringing us all together in the square yesterday. It really was extraordinarily moving. It's difficult, I think, when you are not religious to find an appropriate way to hold the silence – I really hope that you do it again next year.

*Antonia Senior [journalist and novelist]*

Well done on organising such a moving memorial service today – it really was so incredible to have so many people pausing, remembering and paying their respects together at the heart of Herne Hill. I was brought to tears and know that others were too. You must feel very proud of all that you have done to ensure Herne Hill's fallen are not forgotten – it's amazing.

*Lucy Reynolds [Herne Hill Forum]*

The service on Sunday was really really good – good on you for pulling it together.

*David Statham [Managing Director, Southeastern Railway]*

Thanks Colin. It was wonderfully organised. The playing of the Last Post was extraordinary.

*Cllr Becca Thackray*

It was a great occasion and really good to be there; congratulations once more. 12<sup>th</sup> is in the diary and I hope to attend.

*Cllr Jim Dickson*

Looking back, I thought your words were exactly right, Colin, perfectly suited to the place and the occasion. Well done, and the whole event brings lots of credit to the Society.

*Patrick Roberts [Herne Hill Society]*

Just quickly to say hi and hope that you got to the Abbey and through security with no troubles, Colin. Really positive response from social media to the event, couldn't have hoped for better, and I even heard Jay Rayner saying to his wife "that was lovely" as they walked away.

*Alison Gill [Herne Hill Forum]*

Brilliant to hear that there were no hitches yesterday and that the turnout was better than expected – glad we could help in some small way. Big thanks and well done to you, Colin, and the rest of the Herne Hill Society. Until next year!

*Sophie Elder [City and Country Famers' Markets]*

Really enjoyed Wednesday evening, thank you for inviting us and sorry we could not stay.

*Simon Denegri MBE*

Thank you for such an interesting event yesterday, I really enjoyed the talk and chatting to people afterwards, and I'm delighted to have a copy of Grace's book which I started reading as soon as I got home! I look forward to finding out about "my" five new soldiers in the new year – delving into the soldiers' lives and becoming involved in the project back at the beginning of the year was one of the highlights of 2018 for me..

*EC*

Really enjoyable evening last night. It made me rethink about researching a soldier. I'd be interested in having a go.

*MB*

I thought the evening was very well run and enjoyed hearing about the project. I hope you are satisfied with the website. It is a great achievement. I have been really delighted to be a volunteer and am looking forward to continuing to do so.

*AW*

I came to the wonderful talk yesterday about the work that had been done researching the names on the Herne Hill memorials. I'd be happy to help if you're still looking for volunteers.

HC

Thanks very much to you all for an excellent talk last night. It was very informative and you had clearly spent some time on preparation. My congratulations to you all.

RG

I'm so pleased the evening went well. Congratulations to you and Laurence on the successful launch of "Grace's Story". I'm so glad that Auntie Grace's story is receiving attention as it gives readers such a powerful insight into the impact on one soldier's family of his death, given the context of the huge losses in WW1. I would like to congratulate you both on the quality of the publication and thank you for your devotion to this project.

FM

"Of great interest and will make a notable addition to what we know of London in the First World War."

*Professor Jerry White, Birkbeck, University of London*

"This is a wonderful account... I wish you all the best for publication."

*Professor Michael Roper, University of Essex*

### Twitter activity

<https://twitter.com/JimDicksLambeth/status/1072999312752295936>

Jim Dickson at our 12 December event

<https://twitter.com/SueEustace/status/1072992102173339649>

Sue Eustace at our 12 December event

<https://twitter.com/savehalfmoonpub/status/1061596617936195584>

Peter Blair on posters at Station

<https://twitter.com/tarapriya31/status/1078625996872523776>

"Spikey T"

[https://twitter.com/Hernehill\\_WW1/status/1061587621103788032](https://twitter.com/Hernehill_WW1/status/1061587621103788032)

Dan Townsend's video of 2 minutes' silence

<https://twitter.com/Tonisenior/status/1061888410518990848>

Antonia Senior on the event and website