

Northwich War Memorial EVALUATION

Executive Summary:

As a Town Council, our regular activities include maintaining parks and cemeteries as well as maintaining and managing allotments and hosting multiple events. We have councillors and the town mayor.

In 2016/17 we applied to HLF for funding to work on this project. It was focused on the physical rejuvenation of the existing Northwich War Memorial but also focused on engaging the community in developing and understanding the memorial and its meaning. This would be done through research, artwork and sharing our findings with the local people.

The investment was sought to improve the landscaping, planting, boundary wall, the memorial itself, the surfacing, lighting, marble plaques and the overall setting of this historic and important monument. Since the unveiling in 1925, the memorial has been extremely important for the annual Remembrance Services but changes in road layout and the growth of mature and dense trees have resulted in the site being partially hidden from view.

The physical works offered a fantastic opportunity to move this project on a step further also and gave us the chance to engage with schools, Cheshire West Councils heritage team, the local heritage society, local artists, local church and the archivists at the Cheshire Archives centre to educate people about the First World War, the War Memorial itself and the local people from Northwich who went to war. It was important to us to increase understanding in social history for younger project participants as well as engaging participants in heritage research. Engaging the local community more widely was crucial - the longevity of the project depends upon people working together to ensure that information about, and pride in, their local heritage can be strengthened and passed on to future generations over many years.

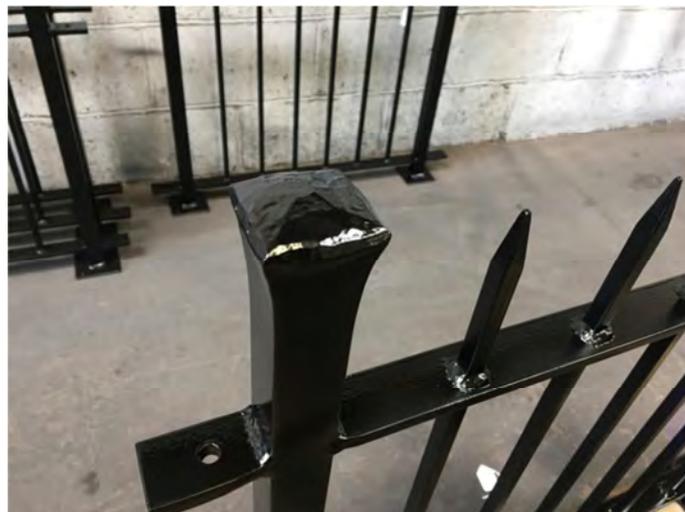
The project started in 2017 and was completed in 2018. It has been a great success. We've engaged with over 60 volunteers directly and reached hundreds more people via the local press, word of mouth, the online / digital support documents and the Cheshire Archives research leaflet that we've created which will be accessible for years to come. The local children researched soldiers from their own families – their lives before, during and after the war - and shared their findings with friends and family. This personal, individual, connection to the project gave them a real passion for social history and an understanding of the importance of memorials like this one. The children's artwork **has been displayed in the town centre, on the leaflet as well as a long lasting flag** and is a lovely way to connect our past heritage to the present. The celebration events have proved to be incredibly popular with local people and the story of the renovations, and the local soldiers, is now being showcased and celebrated long-term in a town centre shop.



Project Aims and Objectives

This project was primarily a heritage education and engagement project that also enabled us to restore and rejuvenate an important, historical monument. The Northwich War Memorial has been located in the grounds of the main church cemetery since 1925. The stone column is in a small garden and records the names of the men who fell in both World Wars. The monument had become dilapidated and was in need of much repair and we aimed to use the physical renovation needed as a pathway to our greater aim of education, engaging and energising all elements of the community to research, understand, respect and connect with their social history and heritage.

The aims for the physical monument restoration were: Cleaning, repointing, restoring plaques, replace railings, repair copings and pillars at the boundary, resurface around the monument, install lighting and add new sensory planting to create a reflective space place for contemplation and to enhance the experience for all visitors. The physical improvements of the war memorial were more than we hoped. We secured a fantastic project manager and lead professional to help us coordinate the delivery and lead us to a contractor / contractors with the relevant experience required to do a really good sensitive job. This was achieved with fantastic outcomes. Every detail was completed with care and to a high standard – even the railings:



Below are some comments lifted from the general evaluation of the War memorial:

“Great job.”

“The site was kept tidy whilst still allowing a good platform for viewing the onward progress of the work”

“This site is now up to the standard you would expect out of respect to those it represents and honours.”

“It has raised the profile of the site in the community”

“Allows better access and the inscriptions are more clearly visible”

“Residents from other countries use it to remember their lost loved ones from their respective countries.”

“People come to sit and reflect, pleasant environment, some people leave flowers on the steps of loved ones”

“With the addition of lighting the monument it will be more of an attraction to the local community”

Using both the practical restoration and the social heritage events we hoped to encourage more people to appreciate their local history and protect the monument in this area.

The aims for the education and community engagement aspects involved several different activities:

1: We aimed to run **Heritage workshops** where participants could visit the Cheshire Archives Centre and research the history, background and links to individual soldiers of the war memorial in Northwich. This was a huge success with 30 children and 4 adults taking part in researching members of their family or names from the war memorial. The children learnt to use the computers to research understood they could access the archives as a member of the public, were able to use the microfiche to gain a deeper understanding of what the mood of the general public was at the time of the first world war and also get an understanding as to why we need an archives office in the first place. Here is some of the information we found out about some of the relatives of the children:



Gerald Humphrey Moore: Corporal 6th Battalion Royal Irish Rgt (No: 8438)

Killed in Action on 7th June 1917

The children researched Gerald using an Ancient Faces website and confirmed the date of his death and that he is buried in Ypres, Menin Gate, Memorial Panel 33, Belgium. They also discovered that 3,867 soldiers died on this date. On the Menin Gate Memorial Roll of Honour site they discovered a picture of him. Gerald was only 31 when he died. He was the son of Joseph and Alice Moore of Child Okeford and husband of Evelyn Ella Moore of New Milton, Hampshire. The Library Ancestry site confirms that he enlisted in Christchurch, Hants on 3rd Sep, 1914. Clicking through the documents / WW1 Service records it confirms when he enlisted and died and that he completed 2 years and 281 days. Documents list his occupation as 'groom' and there a medical forms confirming height and measurements, along with vaccination information. The children also discovered that he had 4 children born between 1909 and 1914

Garabaldi William Davies: 2nd / 1st East Anglian Ambulance (Royal Army Corps)

Killed in Action on 20th July 1917

The children found a site about The Bedfordshire Regiment that confirmed that Garabaldi died aged 31. They discovered that he is buried in the Gaza War Cemetery. He was born, resident and enlisted in Ipswich, Suffolk. He was the son of Mr and Mrs Ixer, Ipswich. He died on the first night of the Umbrella Hill raids. The West Wales Memorial Project site – Pembrokeshire – Maenclochog War Memorial tells us that his full name was Garabaldi William Davies. Private, 61766, Royal Army Medical Corps. Born 5th May 1886. Parents were called William and Martha. He worked at Ocean Quarries. He married Margaret Elizabeth Pearce at Bridgend on 28th March 1910. He enlisted in 26th July 1915 in Cardiff. He served in Gallipoli and Palestine and was hoping to rescue men wounded on the battlefields during the Battle of Gaza but KIA, on 20th July 2017. Welsh site Llandoidy.com says

he was part of the pre-war territorial force and he landed in Gallipoli, Sulva Bay on 10th August 1915. After fighting on the Peninsula they were evacuated during December and moved to Palestine via Egypt. On the Library Ancestry site the children confirmed info similar to above, and also found census info for the household, that shows that he had a child, Eurog born 27th June 1914.



Following their involvement, we carried out a small evaluation with a group of children about the archives visit and here are some of their comments:

"I enjoyed it because there were lots of things to learn about"

"I enjoyed it because there was no right or wrong answer . It was fun and creative"

"I loved working on the world war topic because I learnt many new things about how bad it actually was finding out about my family member was probably one of my favourite things about the project."

"I enjoyed it the most because I got to see things in real life like the tanks and the uniforms"

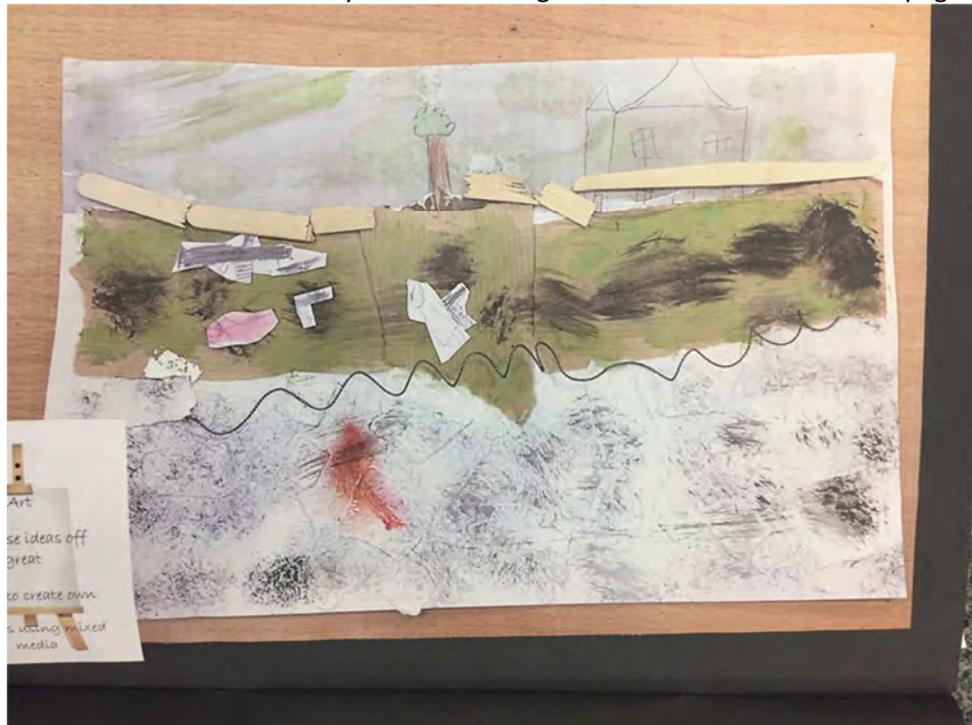
"i enjoyed it most because I liked seeing the things that there were in the war ."

"It was very fun and exciting for me to learn new art skills."

"It was perfect, I couldn't of made it any better"



2: We aimed to **Produce, Print and Distribute an Information Leaflet** outlining what was learnt through heritage research workshops at the archives. This was also a way of capturing the success of the wider project and ensuring people could learn what the project was all about. The leaflet will be readily available and distributed locally as well as being downloadable from the web page.



3: We aimed to **Produce Artwork** involving schools and a local. The children really enjoyed working with the artist, which was fantastic. However, the artist moved up to the Outer Hebrides (really!) before the project was completed so this made communication between the children and artist difficult. The finished product from the artist wasn't as good as we'd hoped for but, overall, the children enjoyed the process greatly. As a working group we discussed the finished product and agreed that we could use some of the children's artwork to produce something that would be more usable year after year in the remembrance parade and 2 new flags are being produced to be used in parade. Please see below for an image.



4: We aimed to **Organise Events** including planting events for schools and local community, wonderful celebration / opening events to showcase the renovations, all of the research, its findings and the artwork and also find a way for the project to be remembered and continue to inform people on a more long term basis. **The main celebration is still to take place but we had a lovely afternoon planting with the children and people who work at Northwich Town Council as well as project partners.**



Outcomes

In total we worked with over 60 people and completed 32 workshops, events and meetings with local people all eager to learn more about heritage and social history. The activity attracted a really diverse range of volunteers from school children and their parents wanting to learn more about the war, to local historians keen to share their knowledge and older members of the community who wanted to combine their interest in history with the opportunity to learn new research skills. By the end of the project / 18 months - the monument and the surrounding area are restored and look fantastic. The works have been carried out local contractors with an understanding of heritage and overseen by a lead professional landscape architect. The renovations have been a huge success and have guaranteed the residents of Northwich a strong monument, and a place for quiet reflection, for many years to come. As the landowners – Northwich Town Council – we will check the memorial on a weekly basis and are responsible for the site long term. We will maintain the structure with care and pride and ensure that any issues are dealt with in a timely and considered way. As so many local people have been an active part of the project we envisage that the community will respect the site and care for it alongside the landowners.

The heritage workshops were held at the school, Cheshire Archives Office and the Imperial War Museum. The workshops were such a huge success and we had to add on an additional visit to the Cheshire Archives as demand for places was high. People enjoyed the research element, learned new research skills which have inspired many to continue their own family and social research. The volunteers taking part have learnt about the history and heritage of the monument, the area and the social history of where they live.



The community now have a deeper appreciation for, and a great understanding of, not just the monument itself - but also a deeper understanding of the names on the plaques. The local children developed a genuine interest in the soldiers' lives before, during and after the war - and sharing their findings with friends and family has energised the community and connected people to the project. Capturing the social history and passing it down to future generations was something that was extremely important to the older members of the community involved in the consultation and helps children and parents learn and understand the meaning of this heritage piece in Northwich.



People who have benefited from the project include: Local residents in Northwich and Cheshire; individuals (young and old) associated with Northwich and District Heritage Society; local history and heritage societies; St Helens Witton church; Witton Church and Walk primary schools in Northwich. Stakeholders include Northwich Town Council and Cheshire West and Chester Borough Councils; local community volunteer groups such as Scouts and Guides, the Cheshire Archives department and the wider community through access to shared and freely available information.

In total, this project reached over 400 people directly – way more than we had originally hoped for. In addition, via the fantastic leaflets that we distributed, support by local press, promotion via local history and heritage groups we have reached hundreds more. Such a wide range of people have participated including very young people and people who were completely unaware of this element of local history - and the community are determined that their work will bring alive the rich heritage of the area ensuring it is not lost over the passing of the years.



People in Northwich have enjoyed the experience of working together, working in a team, achieving something which will empower them to maintain their local heritage and now enjoy and understand it more fully.

Review

We received great interest in the project and right from the outset / consultation phase. We also received lots of suggestions and ideas that really helped shaped the bid and the project as it unfolded.

The info gathered throughout the project at workshops, via questionnaires, by asking for feedback online and via social media was invaluable. We were able to collect data in a straight forward manner via numbers attending workshops, attending associated activities and events where people were eager to learn a new research skill and share in that learning experience. Please see the evaluations on the project page which demonstrates this and for further info.

<http://www.proffittscic.com/community-projects/northwich-war-memorial-cheshire/>



The physical aspect of the project, reinstating the monument and the surrounding area will remain in situ and in good order for many years to come. We envisage that more people will use the public space as a space for reflection, and a place to take other people to share what they now know about it and discuss the role that they played in transforming it as well as share their new understanding of the social history and heritage of the area.

The leaflet will be available to print on demand. The work and insight will remain on the project page <http://www.proffittscic.com/community-projects/northwich-war-memorial-cheshire/> for years to come. We will be holding a celebration in early September 2018 when schools return from their holidays and of course there will be a remembrance Sunday Parade – year after year where the school will be involved carrying the flag that they created together as a school.

Summary of lessons learnt:

The process took a lot longer than envisaged would think about carrying out over 18 months.

We would have a tighter artists brief, although we wanted the artist to be free to produce something that they could really relate with. We would find a balance anyway.

