

MEDIA RELEASE:

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Bradford residents take part in national campaign to preserve WW1 memories

- **Members of the public brought in their WW1 artefacts to Bradford City Hall to be digitalised to create an online archive, as part of a national campaign**
- **Lest We Forget: Keep Their Stories Alive is an ambitious project to create a digital archive of First World War artefacts stored in homes across the UK**

Today, the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation, in partnership with the University of Oxford, hosted a digital roadshow event at Bradford City Hall as part of its *Lest We Forget: Keep Their Stories Alive* project.

Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the scheme aims to preserve the country's memories of the Great War and create a lasting national digital archive.

The public rummaged through their attics, cupboards and garages and brought along their First World War heirlooms to Bradford City Hall – stunning experts with items as varied as army service buttons, handwritten letters and medals.

The Bradford digital roadshow event is the second of four roadshows the project will stage across the country, where members of the public will bring in their First World War mementoes to be digitised. The events across the UK are managed by a team of volunteers, who help stage the events and ensure each item is accurately recorded in the archive.

During the First World War communities throughout the North of England sent tens of thousands of their young men to fight. The Bradford Roll of Honour alone records the names of 10,500 individuals who served in the forces, some of whom would never return. Many Bradford boys joined local units such as the 1st Bradford Pals, so that they could fight with their friends. When these battalions suffered terrible losses, as the 1st Bradford Pals did on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, communities back home were devastated. Today, Bradford's boys are commemorated in CWGC cemeteries across the world, their service and sacrifice remembered.

Once the items are digitised at the roadshows, the stories are made available to the public through a large, free-to-use online database. The database and its contents are easily accessible, opening these stories and experiences to new audiences. Members of the public



can also upload their personal First World War to the online archive through the University of Oxford website: <http://lwf.it.ox.ac.uk/>

Liz and Kate Hall, both residents of Bradford, brought in many items to be digitised which belonged to their late Grandfather, William Whitfield. William served with the Tank Corps during the First World War, and one of the items revealed was his splatter mask, worn by tank crews to protect their eyes during combat.

Liz Hall said:

“Today’s event has been amazing. We have learnt so much about William’s time in the War, as well as historical context around his medals and his Splatter Mask. It’s hugely important for myself and my family to honour and remember his service to our country. Archiving provides a lasting legacy in which his memory will be preserved for future generations and the local community. Myself and my sister don’t have children, and we want to make sure his story doesn’t get forgotten. Archiving ensures that William’s story is never lost”

Max Dutton, Assistant Historian at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission commented: “Archives provide a vital link with the past. Thanks to the funding of the Heritage Lottery Fund, Lest We Forget: Keep Their Stories Alive allows us to preserve our First World War heritage for current and future generations. We hope that this event has inspired the local community across Bradford to learn more about their First World War past.”

Lord Mayor of Bradford, Cllr Zafar Ali, said: We were delighted to host the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation today as they carry out this important work. Bradford district has a proud tradition of honouring the men and women who served and sacrificed during the First World War.”

Notes to Editors:

For more information and images of the event please contact emily.mcghie@cwgc.org or on 07464544847

1. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org)

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) commemorates the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died during the two world wars. It also holds and updates an extensive and accessible records archive. The Commission operates in more than 23,000 locations in more than 150 countries and territories.

2. University of Oxford

The University of Oxford is the world’s highest-ranking University for the past two years (Times Higher). It is committed to teaching, learning, research and widening participation in



commonwealth
war graves
foundation
keep their stories alive



City of
BRADFORD
METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Higher Education. It is a centre of excellence for digital humanities projects and has been working on digital projects related to the First World War since 1991.

3. The Heritage Lottery Fund and support for First World War heritage

Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife. www.hlf.org.uk. Follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and use #NationalLottery and #HLFsupported. To date, almost £100million in HLF grants has been awarded to projects across the UK so they can mark the Centenary and explore all aspects of First World War heritage that matters to them. Through its First World War: then and now programme, HLF is making at least £1million available per year for six years until 2019. It is providing grants between £3,000 and £10,000 enabling communities and groups right across the UK to explore, conserve and share their First World War heritage and deepen their understanding of the impact of the conflict. To find out how to apply for funding visit www.hlf.org.uk/thenandnow If a group needs a grant of more than £10,000 for a First World War project, it can apply to HLF through its open programmes www.hlf.org.uk/firstworldwar to join the conversation on social media please use #understandingww1