

Task-holders Meeting held on 26th October 2013 at Dartford Technical College, Dartford.

Some 40 Task-holders met along with the President, Vice-Presidents and the Trustees (Society Committee Members) to look at two important issues.

1. What should the Society do to mark the Centenary of WWI?
2. The Society has limited resources to spread over many activities. Any points that the Task-holders believe need to be considered, or any other ideas?

Both items resulted in a lot of lively debate with many points put forward for consideration.

What should the Society do to mark the Centenary of WWI?

Barbara Phillips, Publications and Projects Co-ordinator, gave an introductory talk on what the Society is carrying out, the War Graves Project. This involves many of our Members retaking photographs of War Graves at Cemeteries within our area which will be used to update the photographs on the War Graves Photographic Project which is a joint venture with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and assisting the Office of Australian War Graves, Canadian Veterans Affairs and the New Zealand Ministry of Heritage and Culture.

Pauline Heathcote, Editor of the Society Journal, also gave an introductory talk on the Journal and how it could be used to mark the beginning of WWI. In particular should there be a dedicated extra Journal, or should each issue of the Journal contain items re WWI?

In the following discussion a lot of ideas were generated and considered. The main points that were agreed on were:

Not to have a dedicated extra Journal produced. That each issue of the Journal contains articles, photographs and other relevant items. That the Cover of each Journal should carry a banner to note that this is part of the Centenary to mark the start of WWI. The involvement of Civilians and of women and children, Convalescent Homes and Hospitals should be featured in the Journal. **Since the meeting all these points have been agreed by the Trustees and the Editor is preparing the Journal along the lines proposed by the Task-holders.**

Other points that were raised: Publicity, involvement of Schools, U3A groups, Parishes and the Women's Institute could be contacted, Local Library Displays.

Since the meeting Local Library displays are being planned by the Society Library, Publicity is in hand, Barbara Attwaters of Sevenoaks Branch has provided an article which will be published by a local newspaper and there are plans to publish further information. Mike Weeks (Publicity and Vice-Chair). Barbara Phillips (Events) and other volunteers are taking part in WWI workshops as part of the Bromley WW1 Heritage Lottery Project during the year. An example of being involved with Parishes is the Vicar of St Barnabas church, Joyden's Wood has visited the Library and discussions included WWI possible Commemorations. Other points raised are being looked into.

It was felt important that the website should be involved as far as possible, a dedicated page/s and if possible a way for members to contribute to the website. **Update: Steve Archer, Webmaster, has been looking into setting up a dedicated page and as soon as the initial content is agreed will do so. Allowing members to contribute directly is a bit more problematic with our current technical set-up. It is something that could be explored, along with other changes at a later date. The Society has a Facebook page which could be used in the meantime.**

Other WWI Projects being carried out by the Society include the Bromley Branch's Absentee Voters List. The Branch is also looking at a WW1 exhibition where members could provide a small display of a WW1 ancestor on 1 or 2 A3 pages and that these could be placed around the room. **Update: the Absentee Voters List project is nearing completion.**

It was suggested that consideration should be given for an award to be instituted for the best article re WWI in the Journal. **Update: consideration is being given by the President, Vice-Presidents and Trustees about restructuring the Josephine Birchenough Bursary. This would still retain an award for Journal articles.**

The Society has limited resources to spread over many activities. Any Points that the Task-holders believe need to be considered, or any other ideas?

There was a short introduction by the President and Chair of the Society. The President in his presentation mentioned that the income from subscriptions was less than the annual expense of running the Society and that he thought some of the members did not realise that the subscriptions did not cover costs. Without additional income the Society would be bankrupt. He highlighted the work done by Task-holders and Volunteers to generate additional income e.g. by the Publications and Project Group. He thanked all task-holders for their efforts

The debate and points made regarding this subject were as would be expected many and far ranging. Pat Gooding, Treasurer, reinforced the need to do our best to ensure spending matched income. The main points raised were:

Review all costs with an aim to reducing them where possible. This includes requesting that members pay by standing orders instead of cheques (due to the bank instituting charges if the number of cheques is not reduced). **Update: Following the campaign instituted by the Treasurer and Society Committee there has been an improvement. So far an extra 100 members have signed standing orders. Though more standing order payments are needed to ensure we do not incur bank charges. Branch Costs are also being reviewed due to the high costs to the Society.**

Appeal for donations, donations for help at Library, Legacy donations, Life Membership, reduced subscription for under 18's, increase Membership fees, 50p levy to attend Branch meetings. **Update: The Branches have decided to have donation boxes at their meetings. The donations would be to the Society to help defray cost of the meetings. They are voluntary and there is no requirement to donate to attend the meeting. A 50p levy was not considered a viable option by the Branches. All branches now have a set minimum donation or price for coffee, biscuits etc. The Library now has a set minimum donation for help/assistance to members. Life membership and reduced subscriptions to under 18's would require a change to the Constitution. So need to be looked at in detail. An appeal for Legacy donations is being looked into. Increase of Membership fees, the Society Committee have decided not to do so at this stage, this has been supported by a majority of Members at an AGM.**

Branches should consider holding more Members' meeting – no speakers booked, holding raffles, creation of a 250 club. **Update one Branch already holds a raffle at each meeting; one is unable to do so as part of the condition of Hall hire. More member evenings is something that Branches need to consider. Regarding a 250 club, this needs to be looked at by the Society Committee/Treasurer.**

Increase the number of Fairs, Drop-ins that we attend. **Update: The Society Committee would support this if more volunteers were to come forward. The existing Events Team and Publicity are heavily engaged in such and have no spare capacity to attend more without additional volunteers being available.**

Consider the provision of Journals being available on-line so members could opt to have an electronic version of current Journal and accept advertisements on the website, in the Journal. **Update: The Journal already accepts advertisements, complications to doing so on the website. Back Journal up until 2008 are available on the website there would be a lot of work involved in allowing members to opt for an electronic copy of the current Journal. It will be kept under review by the Society Committee.**

Work-shops about editing and checking documents for projects should be run to encourage more volunteers to help complete project work ready for publication. **Update: this is being looked at by the Society Library with a view to implementing such work-shops.**

I would like to thank all the task-holders who attended and gave their time to look into these two issues. These meetings are very important to the Society and to the Trustees (Society Committee). Previous task-holder meetings have led to changes being instituted by the Trustees and this meeting has also resulted in changes based on the views and ideas put forward by the Task-holders. I would also like to apologise to the many task-holders unable to attend due to the meeting coinciding with school holidays. It was unfortunate that the only date that could be arranged fell into this period.

Thanks to David Cufley, President, Joyce Hoad, Vice President and my fellow Trustees for taking part and following up on many of the points that were raised. Last but certainly not least I would like to thank Janet Rose for arranging the booking, lunch and refreshments.

Walter Eves,
Chair,
NWKFS.