



news release

**PLEASE NOTE EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 SUNDAY 4th
AUGUST**

One Year to Go –Victoria Cross Winners put at the heart of plans to mark centenary of First World War in 2014

- **Victoria Cross winners will be recognised for their valour and sacrifice
across the country**
- **Help for local communities to restore and refurbish war memorials**

One year away from the start of the First World War four year centenary programme a new series of measures have been announced that will see help to restore war memorials up and down the country, and Victoria Cross winners honoured.

Victoria Cross winners will be at the heart of the Government's plans to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. Special commemorative paving stones will be laid in the home towns of all those in the United Kingdom awarded the Victoria Cross for valour 'in the face of the enemy' during the conflict.

As part of the four year centenary programme, Communities Secretary Eric Pickles has announced a national competition to design specially commissioned paving stones which will be presented to councils in the areas where those Victoria Cross recipients of the First World War were born.

The stones will provide an enduring legacy in local communities of their local heroes- a fitting tribute to mark the centenary of their extraordinary bravery and service fighting for their country. This will also enable residents to gain a greater understanding of how their area fitted into the story of the First World War.

Communities Secretary Eric Pickles said:

“It is our duty to remember the British and Commonwealth troops who lost their lives fighting in the Great War and we are determined to make sure their bravery for King and Country is not forgotten.

“Laying paving stones to mark these Victoria Cross heroes will ensure that there is a permanent memorial to all the fallen who fought for our country and the competition is a great way for people from all corners of the United Kingdom to get involved.

“This will connect communities to their shared history, help residents understand how their area played its part in the Great War, and ensure memories of that sacrifice for British freedom and liberty are kept alive for generations to come.”

Culture Secretary Maria Miller said:

“The First World War had a fundamental effect on the course of our history. It also saw nearly a million British military and civilian deaths, heroes from communities across the commonwealth who fought for King and Country. But as time passes, the living links that connect that terrible time and the present day have dwindled. So it is really important that we mark the centenary which, saw some of the darkest days in our history, and remind everyone of the sacrifice that was made - and how it has affected all our lives

today.”

With one year to go until commemorations begin the Government has also announced more help will be made available for local communities to restore and refurbish their war memorials. A new website will be created, to help make sure that people across the country can get funding and support so that all First World War memorials are in good condition for November 2018.

Communities are now feeling the real benefit of Lottery funding. Today the Heritage Lottery Fund is announcing the first grants under its new £6 million ‘First World War – Then and Now’ small grants programme. From Devon to Durham, and from Brecon to Bridlington – the Lottery is supporting local people who are commemorating the centenary in exciting and imaginative ways.

As we look ahead to this time next year, music and culture will play an important part at the start of the centenary on 4 August 2014. The BBC will reflect the importance of the centenary in their planning for next year’s Proms season. And in Wales, the Eisteddfod in Llanelli will feature events with a centenary theme. People up and down the country will be able to take part in events as part of the creative and artistic programme which will run throughout the centenary period. And they will also be able to be a part of a multi-faith Vigil which will take place in cathedrals, churches and elsewhere. With just one year to go, this is an invitation to everyone to play a part in a centenary that is a truly fitting commemoration of this world-altering event.

Today also sees the launch of a campaign to get 100 employers signed up to the new Centenary Apprenticeship scheme in 100 days. The aim is to get companies who existed 100 years ago, who focus on crafts with a modern application, to join the scheme. Any who join up will be able to badge the apprenticeship with the Centenary logo.

Skills Minister Matthew Hancock said:

“Apprenticeships originated from centuries-old trades like stonemasonry and clock making, and today reflect the broad sweep of the modern economy. So it will be fitting to mark 100 years since the start of the First World War with Apprenticeships in skills that existed at the time.

“The Centenary Apprenticeship Programme will give young people the unique opportunity to be part of an important commemoration while also acquiring skills that are valuable and relevant today.”

Notes to Editors

Commemorative events

Across the four years of the centenary, the Government will lead the nation in acts of commemoration. These start on 4 August 2014 with a service for Commonwealth leaders in Glasgow, a candle-lit vigil in Westminster Abbey and an event at the military cemetery in St Symphorien. Other key dates will be marked including: the centenaries of the Gallipoli landings, the Battle of Jutland, the first day of the Battle of the Somme, the first day of Passchendaele and, finally, Armistice Day. Planning for these events is currently underway.

The Vigil

The Church of England sees 4 August 2014 as an important opportunity for people to come together in prayerful reflection as they remember a moment which impacted on every British family. The Church will encourage all of its 16,000 parish churches to open their doors and hold a prayer Vigil in the course of 4 August. The Church will be working with other Churches and other faiths to make the start of the centenary commemoration an occasion in which all can participate across the UK.

Wales

Professor Sir Deian Hopkin, Special representative for Wales said:

“The centenary of the declaration of war in August 2014 coincides with the annual National Eisteddfod, one of Wales’ most important cultural festivals and one for which the First World War has a strong resonance. Next year’s Eisteddfod in Llanelli is set to feature events linked with the anniversary of the start of the war. Wales will play its part in the UK-wide programme of events, including discussions around the proposed project to commemorate Welsh recipients of the Victoria Cross. A full programme of events, both in

Wales and beyond, led by the First Minister Carwyn Jones, is being planned for between 2014 and 2018 to commemorate significant events during the First World War as well as considering its impact on Wales and its people. The Welsh Government will be making an announcement on the details of the programme for Wales later this year.”

Northern Ireland

Jeffrey Donaldson MP, Special Representative for Northern Ireland said:

“Simultaneous to the events in London and elsewhere, a special interdenominational service of commemoration will be held in Belfast Cathedral on 4 August 2014 to mark the beginning of the war and the voluntary service so willingly provided by people from all over the island of Ireland and from both traditions. Acknowledging this shared period of British and Irish history, the main themes of the commemoration in Northern Ireland will be remembrance and reconciliation and these will be reflected in the service and at subsequent events throughout the centenary years.”

Victoria Crosses

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have announced an open competition for a design to be put on to commemorative paving stones to honour Victoria Cross recipients throughout the UK. There will also be a QR reader on each stone giving the recipient’s details. There were 28 VC medals awarded in 1914 and these stones will be unveiled in 2014. The stones of winners from 1915 will be unveiled in 2015, and every 100 years after an individual won the VC.

Lucy Graham Secretary of the VC and GC association said:

“The Victoria Cross and George Cross Association welcomes and supports the Victoria Cross Campaign to commemorate the many gallant individuals who were awarded the Victoria Cross during the First World War.”

Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Grants

Grants announced today include the first to be awarded through *First World War: then and now*, HLF’s £6million small grants programme announced by the Prime Minister at the Imperial War Museum last October which aims to help communities explore, conserve and share their First World War heritage.

First World War Centenary Partnership

The First World War Centenary Partnership, established and led by IWM (Imperial War Museums) since 2010, will present a programme of cultural events and activities to

commemorate the centenary of the First World War. These events and activities are being organised by not-for-profit cultural and educational groups, large and small, to mark the centenary in a way that is meaningful to them. This collective international programme, in addition to the large-scale national events, will enable millions of people to discover and commemorate the First World War.

The Partnership is a growing network of over 1,400 local, regional, national members from across 28 countries including the UK, Australia, America, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Serbia, South Africa, Slovenia, Turkey and many others.

In autumn this year, IWM will launch the Partnership's programme with an online centenary cultural events calendar on 1914.org. This website will become the central hub for all the Partnership's centenary activities showcasing how people can get involved and mark the centenary.

For more information about the First World War Centenary Partnership visit www.1914.org

For Press Enquiries about the Victoria Cross winners and Centenary Apprenticeship Scheme please contact the DCLG Press Office 0303 444 1201 (24/7 number)

For Press Enquiries about the Heritage Lottery Fund Grants please call the HLF Press Office 0207 591 6143

For Press Enquiries about IWM (Imperial War Museums) and the First World War Centenary Partnership please call the IWM Press Office 0207 416 5311/ 0207 416 5316

For other Press Enquiries please contact the DCMS Press Office 0207 211 6271/6276

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