



HLF Project No. OH-17-03044

ABERYSTWYTH AT WAR:

EXPERIENCE, IMPACT, LEGACY, 1914-1919

FINAL REPORT: September 2019

Contents

Section A: The project

- Project details
- Approved purposes
- Project budget
- Project management

Section B: Publicity and marketing

- Initial publicity
- Media coverage
- Social media presence

Section C: Delivering the project

- The volunteers
- Materials and artefacts loaned to the project
- Approved purposes
- Associated outputs
- Additional activities

Section D: Summary and conclusions

- Summary of project outcomes and achievement
- Measuring our project against HLF outcomes
- Testimonials from volunteers

SECTION A: THE PROJECT

A 1 Project details

The project **Aberystwyth at War: Experience, Impact, Legacy, 1914-1919**, explored the impact of the First World War (WWI) on the people and communities of Aberystwyth, a small coastal tourist town in mid-Wales that is also home to Aberystwyth University and the National Library of Wales, through the collaborative efforts of volunteers, local archives, the university, local history societies, schools, and performance and arts groups. Together these groups engaged with wartime records, letters, newspapers, photographs, music, war memorials and personal histories held at the National Library of Wales, Ceredigion Archives, Ceredigion Museum, the Aberystwyth University Library and public places in the area. Over 30 volunteers captured and interpreted these community histories in activities, displays, exhibitions, performance and accessible online resources.

A 1.1 Background

With the centenary of the end of WWI falling in November 2018, it was felt that this was an appropriate opportunity to carry out a community-led project that would explore, interpret and preserve the stories of the Aberystwyth community as it was during wartime one hundred years ago. It was decided to apply to the HLF's 'Our Heritage' programme rather than their First World War programme in order to stress the wider heritage value of the project to the volunteers and to the community beyond simply exploring the experience of wartime itself.

A 1.2 Application

After a consultation process involving local organisations and community groups including Ceredigion Archives, the Ceredigion Museum, the National Library of Wales, the Aberystwyth Arts Centre and the Penparcau History and Heritage Group, an application was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in September 2017.¹ We received permission to start in November 2017, though owing to events outside our control we were unable to commence the project proper until spring 2018. Because of this late start, we successfully applied in early summer 2019 for an extension to the project to the end of September 2019; this meant that the project would run for its originally intended 18 months.

A 1.3 Rationale

The underpinning rationale for our project was, as articulated in the consultation sessions we held, that there were significant obstacles that prevented local people engaging with their heritage. We learned that people in this area had a lack of knowledge about their local history and how to access it, and a lack of skills and confidence in both accessing and interpreting this heritage. There was also an absence of opportunity, and of identification with like-minded groups with which to share the knowledge and learning, in both traditional and non-traditional ways.

We wanted to respond to these needs with activities which included training workshops, guided access to local archives and local history research, community art, performance, and display, for as wide a range of local volunteers as possible, and by creating a digital legacy

¹An earlier iteration of this proposal was submitted to HLF in March 2017. After feedback from HLF we resubmitted in September 2017 with a proposal that significantly enhanced the community engagement elements of the project.

going forward. We were keen to establish a collaboration with different heritage, art and community organizations to pool resources, jointly programme events, and ensure that we responded to the needs of the community.

Lastly we wanted to host a community-led project that would offer people of all ages and backgrounds the opportunity to take part in free activities and events, skills building workshops, volunteering and group discovery of the past, to allow people to engage emotionally with their heritage, and to help connect them directly with the impact and legacy of the Great War.

To these ends we would:

- Appoint a Project Coordinator and Community Engagement Officer (PCO) to coordinate the project and manage the budget.
- Establish a Project Steering Group (PSG) representing key stakeholders in the project to monitor and review the project's progress. The Project Lead (PL) would chair this group and the PCO would act as secretary to the group.
- Identify, recruit and train c. 30 volunteers to undertake research, write blog posts, help with and lead events etc.

A 2 Approved purposes

A 2.1 The approved purposes for the project were as follows:

- Four training workshops in research skills and methods and digitisation for volunteers.
- Four schools workshops with Year 7 and 8 students from Penglais and Penweddig secondary schools
- Three presentations of findings to local community groups
- Four days of community art workshops run by an artist at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre
- A drama workshop and performance of a play based on the letters of 'Dot and Billy'² by Aberystwyth Arts Centre.
- 'The Fox', a play based on D.H. Lawrence's story set in 1918 about the aftermath of the War, performed by the Aberystwyth Arts Centre Theatre Group (subject to funding from Arts Council Wales)
- Two film screenings open to all in Ceredigion Museum's historic theatre auditorium
- Five bilingual interactive guided tours of Aberystwyth, based on the project's mapping initiative, following a route that identifies the homes of former WWI volunteers and conscripts, conducted by role-playing volunteers

² The 'Dot and Billy' letters were the correspondence between Agnes Dorothy French, an undergraduate at the then University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, and Stanley Wilbrahim Burditt, a Captain in the Cheshire Regiment, who met at Aberystwyth in the summer of 1915 and corresponded until October 1917 when, shortly after they had become engaged to be married, Billy was killed in France. These letters – 170 of them - were loaned to the project by Mrs Jane Bradly on behalf of Mr Tom James, the son of Dot's close friend, and were an important resource identified in our initial application. However, we did not at that point expect that the letters would prove such a key element in the project outputs and impact, as can be seen throughout this Report.

- A concert introducing local school and county youth ensembles to the music of WWI (Ceredigion Schools Music Service)
- A six-week display of the community arts project mentioned above, at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre Café
- Archiving of materials through Ceredigion Archives, People’s Collection Wales, and Aberystwyth University
- Provision for the Welsh language throughout the project
- High visibility acknowledgement of the Heritage Lottery Fund on site, online and in all activities. As well as using your project to acknowledge and thank National Lottery players.

A 2.2 Associated outputs identified in the project application

There were also two associated outputs identified in the project application and underpinning but not formally listed as approved purposes. They were as follows, and are discussed further in section C3 below:

- A project blog, featuring posts by volunteers based on their own research for the project.
- An online resource in the form of a digital map that identifies all those who served from Aberystwyth, with their addresses and other military and personal details (ie the project’s mapping initiative mentioned above).

A 2.3 Additional activities not originally identified in the project application

As the project developed, several additional community activity opportunities presented themselves to us. Our proposed contributions to them fitted within our own budgetary remit, and the PL and PCO, supported by the Project Steering Group, felt that our participation in them came under the underpinning remit of the project and would further both the project’s aims and the community spirit and outreach it sought to engender. These activities were as follows, and are discussed further in section C4 below:

- Volunteer drop-in sessions
- Lecture on Belgian Refugees by Dr Rhian Davies
- Penglais School Armistice Tea
- St Michael’s Church Armistice Service and Community Tea
- ‘Pages of the Sea’ Armistice event
- Gregynog Festival sponsorship
- End of project celebration and ‘thank-you’ event

A 3 Project budget

Our original application to HLF, based on the above aims, was for £50,600. This budget would include the costs of volunteer recruitment; project officer’s appointment, salary and expenses; money towards the training and expenses of volunteers; equipment; promotion and marketing costs; budgets for specific events; and the costs of evaluation and a final report.

A 3.1 Match funding

In keeping with HLF requirements, we budgeted to contribute match funding to the project, through externally funded bursaries for volunteers, and other funding, including £5,000 from the Arts Council Wales for the production and performance of a WWI-related drama production, D.H. Lawrence's 'The Fox'. Unfortunately, our application to ACW was not successful and we were therefore not able to undertake this particular approved purpose. However, we were able to maintain our match funding contribution to the project, with c.£4,000 from Aberystwyth University for three graduate trainee work placements and a further £1,000 to fund bursaries for student volunteers, as well as £2,500 for Welsh translation of display, promotional and learning activities.

Our total working project budget was therefore £46,600.

Our final spend is £46,400 (financial records attached)

A 3.2 Non-financial support and volunteer contributions

We received non-financial support from:

- Ceredigion Museum's historic Coliseum Theatre venue and equipment for two film screenings = £500
- Ceredigion Archives staff time in kind for 2 volunteer study skills sessions = £200
- National Library of Wales staff time in kind for volunteer study skills sessions = £240
- Arts Centre café space for arts exhibition Nov 2018-Jan 2019 = £1,000
- Installation of exhibition as above = £500
- Ceredigion Music Service staff time in kind = £200
- 'Dot and Billy' production team time in kind (80 hours) = £2,000
- PL staff time in kind at £24/hr, 4 hrs a week, over 45 weeks = £4,320

This has amounted to £8,960

Our volunteers' time in researching and writing up subject matter for the project blog, organizing and running events, attending meetings and training sessions, giving presentations is time given in kind too. We can record, with great pride and gratitude, that our volunteers have contributed 942 hours/125 days in kind, equivalent of £18,840 in cash towards this project, which exceeds our approved target of £17,900.

A 4 Project management

A 4.1 Project Lead

The project lead (PL), Dr Siân Nicholas, is Reader in Modern British History at Aberystwyth University. She has 25 years of experience teaching modules on the First World War in British history and was recently editorial advisor on the Adam Matthew Digital online archive collection, *The First World War: Propaganda and Recruitment*, though she had not experience up to this point in community outreach and research with non-academic participants. Her role was principally one of oversight of the project, with direct engagement in specific events and outputs.

A 4.2 Project Co-Ordinator and Engagement Officer

The decisive management and co-ordinating role in the project was played by the Project Co-Ordinator and Engagement Officer (PCO), a 0.5 FTE appointment over the duration of the project. Although the project was originally scheduled to begin in November 2017, delays in the HR process (including a series of strike actions by UCU and Unison employees at Aberystwyth University in early 2018) meant that the post of PCO could not be advertised until March 2018 and was not filled until May 2018. The post was advertised in the local newspaper, popular situations vacant sites, and on the Aberystwyth University Jobs Page. Fourteen applications were received (rather higher than we had anticipated) and four candidates were shortlisted for interview in April 2018. The successful applicant, Kate Sullivan, took up post on 14 May 2018. She has some experience with HLF projects and community engagement activities, having previously worked with Women's Archive Wales, and is fully bilingual in Welsh and English.

A 4.3 Project Steering Group.

The Project Steering Group (PSG) first met in May 2018. It comprised representatives of all the key organisations involved with project delivery, met monthly, and was an opportunity for the PL and PCO to report project progress and discuss matters arising.³ Bilingual agendas and minutes were compiled and distributed by the PCO and these will be archived, electronically and in hard copy, along with the rest of the project materials.

The membership of the group (excluding the PL and PCO) varied from meeting to meeting, from ten at the initial meeting to typically four or five thereafter, with some members dropping out once the events they were directly involved in were over. However, there was an enthusiastic and consistent core of steering group members who met regularly every month (aside from the August holidays and the run-up to Christmas) and who continually supported and promoted the project, bringing ideas, suggestions and relevant artefacts to the meetings. Their expertise, advice, feedback and suggestions were an integral part in the ongoing success of the project, and the monthly meetings were an invaluable method of maintaining the project's momentum and accountability.

A 4.4 Evaluation and feedback

Throughout the project we sought to monitor and evaluate the success (or otherwise) of our events and activities, to identify best practice and to respond as swiftly as possible to any issues arising. In terms of participation and outreach, our evaluation methods involved quantitatively assessing attendance at all events and qualitatively assessing the demographics of our volunteers and other project participants. In terms of impact and success, we requested written feedback in feedback forms and questionnaires where appropriate (eg after training and art workshops, or the War Walks), and solicited and were alert to oral feedback in conversation where we felt requests for written feedback would be inappropriate and/or intrusive. Feedback from our various project activities is noted and commented on throughout this report.

³ PSG meetings were held on the following dates: 24 May, 26 June, 30 July, 17 September and 19 December 2018; and 22 January, 13 February, 11 March, 29 April, 6 June, 4 July and 5 September 2019

SECTION B: PUBLICITY AND MARKETING

B 1 Initial publicity

Successful recruitment of project volunteers was key to the success of the project as a whole. The PCO took the lead in this, aided by suggestions and contributions from the PSG.

Our recruitment strategy began in May 2018 with a bilingual Welsh/English project flyer designed by the PL and PCO that was circulated widely throughout the town and university, and displayed on local community, library and college notice boards. It was also handed out at a series of volunteer engagement events held over the next few months (outlined below).

We also designed a project logo based on the Aberystwyth War Memorial which then featured in all our publicity material, along with the logos of the Heritage Lottery Fund and our project partners – National Library of Wales, Ceredigion Archives, Ceredigion Museum, Aberystwyth Arts Centre and Aberystwyth University.

The logo was also used to design a project button badge, five hundred of which were purchased and distributed to participants at all our events throughout the project.



Project Logo based on a photograph of the Aberystwyth War Memorial taken by the PL and designed by Rowen King, Year 9 pupil at Penglais School, Aberystwyth

The PCO also emailed local centres and institutions directly and asked them to promote the project and put out a call for volunteers. These included the National Library of Wales, Ceredigion Museum, Aberystwyth Public Library, Ceredigion Archives, Ceredigion local history groups and Cletwr Community Shop and Café. Posters and flyers were also distributed to local shops.

We also sent out emails publicising the project to all departments of Aberystwyth University, to staff and to students, and ran an advert for four weeks during June and July 2018 in the weekly university e-bulletin. The university also ran a press release on the project, focussing in particular on the 'Dot and Billy' letters, which resulted in the PL being invited onto the BBC Radio Wales breakfast show (see below) and being invited to contribute an on-line article to the popular academic website The Conversation (see below).

On 4 June 2018, the PCO gave a presentation to Penparcau History and Heritage Group, advertising it beforehand on the group's social media pages. Out of the six people who attended the presentation – at which a display was put up and leaflets given out – one signed on as a volunteer and attended the first volunteer study skills session at Ceredigion Archive. This was perhaps the least successful event we held for the project – Penparcau is a very non-traditional audience with multiple barriers to participation – but though the audience was

small they were appreciative and we felt it was very important to have taken the project outside the immediate locale of Aberystwyth to one of its nearby communities.



PCO Kate Sullivan at the Penparcau History and Heritage Group, 4 June 2018

On 20 June 2018, the PCO went to the Aberystwyth Volunteer Fayre to discuss further means of recruiting volunteers with the representative of CAVO (Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organizations). The Fayre was not very well attended by the public but the PCO talked to and gave flyers to the representatives of the National Library and Coleg Ceredigion volunteer groups, and two volunteers later joined from the National Library group.

On 21 July 2018, the PL and PCO attended a Royal British Legion event on the promenade in Aberystwyth. This was an RBL fundraising event to raise money for a memorial bench, and they invited the project to bring a display board and talk to visitors about the project. We also sold project button badges for donations to the memorial bench. Several people expressed interest in the project, and one volunteer recruited there has been actively and enthusiastically engaged ever since. We also made contact here with Gareth Pugh of the RBL, who has engaged enthusiastically with the project, provided us with links to other members of the RBL and its various events, and who invited the project to participate in the town's official centenary Armistice commemoration in November 2018 (see section C 5.4, below).



Project Lead Siân Nicholas at RBL event, July 2018

The PCO also met up with several potential volunteers during June and July, who heard about the project via social media, articles in the *Ego* magazine, the *Cambrian News*, and via local radio (see section B2 below). Volunteers began to come on board in increasing numbers, some for a few weeks, others for the duration of the project. A list of research topics and tasks were drawn up and emailed out to those who expressed interest in volunteering.

On 26 September 2018, the PCO attended a volunteer fayre run as part of the Aberystwyth University Freshers Week, where the project display attracted a lot of interest and several sign-ups as volunteers. We followed this up with an introductory volunteer meeting for students on 10 October 2018 to introduce new and returning students to the project and to inspire some of those studying history in particular to become involved. This was a well-attended session, with thirteen students present, from a range of academic disciplines and including a couple of visiting students from overseas. Several who attended joined the project volunteer base and actively and enthusiastically engaged in project research in their spare time, including attending study skills training sessions at the NLW and contributing to the project's weekly blog (see below). At least two of them then chose project-related topics for their undergraduate and masters dissertations respectively. However, as we expected, the participation of many of the initial student volunteers has tended to be erratic due to the demands of their studies.

Most the volunteers engaged in the first months of the project 'friended' us on Facebook and followed us on social media, as did many of those who, while expressing interest in volunteering, could not do so for various reasons. These followers frequently 'liked' and shared the project's social media posts across the duration of the project.

B 2 Media coverage

B 2.1 Newspapers and magazines

The project also attracted publicity in local newspapers and magazines. In June 2018 the *Ego*, a free monthly magazine widely circulated around Aberystwyth and district, printed a full-page illustrated article about the project written by the PL, and we received several comments and expressions of interest from people who had read about the project.

Also in June 2018, after discussions with the PCO, the *Cambrian News* printed the first of what would be several features on the project. The *Cambrian News* is the main weekly newspaper for Aberystwyth and the surrounding areas, with a circulation of around 7,000 readers and an active online presence. This first article was a full page spread in the newspapers 'features' section. It focussed on the aims of the project, the sources to be looked at, planned events and activities, the partners involved, how to participate, etc. The project also featured in the *Cambrian News*'s Armistice supplement in November 2018. Several of our project events were also advertised in the *Cambrian News* throughout the project, particularly the film screenings, the 'Dot and Billy' theatre performance, the 'Songs of the Great War' concert and the guided walks (see below, section C2, for details).

For Armistice Week 2018 itself, the *Cambrian News* featured several articles and adverts highlighting our work and aims and our own Armistice weekend events, including a feature and advert in the newspaper's special Armistice supplement, and in the edition following the

Armistice a report on our activities and a letter from RBL representative and local councillor Paul Hinge thanking us specifically for our contribution.

Likewise, after the Armistice commemorations in November 2018 *Aberjabber*, the newsletter of St Michael's Church, Aberystwyth, with whom we collaborated on the commemoration services and the Armistice tea afterwards (see below, section C 5.4 for details) printed a front-page article on the service written by the PCO, with an additional quarter-page splash on page 3 detailing how to get involved and who to contact.

B 2.2 Radio

The Aberystwyth University press release on the project (see above) led to the PL being invited to appear on the BBC Radio Wales breakfast programme to discuss the project, with a focus on the 'Dot and Billy' letters and the 'everyday tragedy' they represented.

On 20 June 2018, the PCO was invited onto the Brunch Show at Radio Bronglais, the local hospital radio, to discuss the project. This was a particularly successful event as regards publicity, as the show attracts a wide audience within the hospital and has a range outside the hospital too. (We requested listening figures for that day but they sadly have not been supplied). The PCO talked about the project aims and how people could get involved. A member of the nursing staff, Heather Jones, came in during the slot and talked about her grandfather's experience in the First World War; she has kept in touch with the project ever since, following us on Facebook and sharing our posts. The project also helped her track down some information on a very unusual medal she has that was presented to her grandfather in Egypt, possibly the Siege of Kut. Heather is now following up this hitherto unknown history of her relative.

The PCO appeared on Radio Bronglais again in May 2019 to talk about the forthcoming 'Dot and Billy' theatre performance and schools concert of WWI-related music, and to give an update on the project. The radio staff were very interested, and 'plugged' us on more than one occasion. The broadcast was also made into a podcast, available at <https://radiobronglais.cymru/en/podcast/kate-sullivan-talks-about-upcoming-performance-dot-billy-16-05-2019/?fbclid=IwAR2IwjIMkjaKl38Q7xZJGRxdb7L0kbhE8sqSWC5Oc24klBxibA-DYg9Dsfe>

B 2.3 Online media

In the lead-up to the Armistice commemorations in November 2018, the PL was invited to write an article for the popular academic online site 'The Conversation', referencing the project and focussing on the 'Dot and Billy' letters, specifically on the fact that, unlike today, letters were the only way soldiers could communicate with their families and loved ones back home, and how these letters tell the story of not just people's wartime experience but also of everyday life. The article, which can be found at <https://theconversation.com/dot-and-billy-how-love-letters-document-the-stories-of-lives-torn-apart-by-world-war-i-106680>, has been shared 90 times on Facebook thus far.

B 3 Social media presence

In June 2018, the PCO set up **Facebook** and **Twitter** accounts for the project - [aberystwyth.atwar](https://www.facebook.com/aberystwyth.atwar) and [@AtAberystwyth](https://twitter.com/AtAberystwyth) - linked with the Aberystwyth University social media pages. We used our Facebook and Twitter pages mainly for promotional purposes to give information of events and activities being held and to link to the project blog (see below). Our Facebook page gained a steady flow of followers, which currently number 82 ‘friends’, and is growing all the time, with posts shared by our followers and regularly ‘liked.’

The project and HLF logos are prominently displayed on our social media pages and all our posts on Facebook and Twitter are uploaded bilingually by the PCO.



<https://www.facebook.com/aberystwyth.atwar>

SECTION C : DELIVERING THE PROJECT

C 1 Project participants

C1.1 Volunteers

We had originally hoped to recruit around 30 volunteers on the project. In fact over 70 residents of Aberystwyth and the surrounding community signed up to our volunteer list, and donated time when they could. Our volunteers ranged from townspeople and residents of surrounding villages, retired people, students, newcomers to the area and university staff, with an age range of between 18 and mid-70s. If we also count those who contributed by performing or engaging in project-related activities, our volunteer reach was well over 100, considerably more than we had anticipated, and a measure of how much interest the project generated.

It is important to note, that 24 individual volunteers contributed most regularly and extensively to our project, both in terms of researching and writing blogs and devising and leading guided walks and group presentations. They were also proactive in publicising, promoting and raising the profile of the project throughout the year. We are therefore greatly indebted to these volunteers in particular for their dedicated and unstinting support.

C 1.2 ‘AberForward’ graduate placements and Aberystwyth University Fund bursaries

As part of our match funding Aberystwyth University financed two ‘AberForward’ work placement students, Nathan Davies and Otto Jones, to join the project for a month in February 2019. These were recent graduates of the departments of History and Welsh History and International Politics respectively who had expressed a wish to work in the field of historical research. During the first part of their placement they researched topics for the project blog – the diary of an Aberystwyth soldier stationed in Egypt, conscientious objectors and wartime recruitment, student soldiers and the university during WWI. During the second part of their placement, they worked on the soldiers’ database for the project’s online digital map, filling in gaps by locating missing data. They were also invited to attend PSG meetings as part of their career development.

Comments from our February AberForward graduates:

“I’m happy to have had the opportunity to participate in such an interesting and worthwhile project. Having the chance to conduct research into the role of Aberystwyth in the First World War has been an insightful and educational experience, for the work experience I have gained as well as the knowledge. I genuinely felt that my research and input was a valued contribution to the project and the skills I developed will aid me in my future career.” OJ

“Overall, I really enjoyed the AberForward experience, and I think it will be useful both in my work and when applying for jobs with my CV. I particularly enjoyed writing my blog posts, especially the ones about Jack Watkins and Thomas Parry-Williams, as they let me use my research skills extensively in various places and allowed me to get a truly personal insight into WWI, something that is very lacking in the wider historiography of the period. Publishing a blog that got regularly interacted with was also very rewarding..” ND

In July 2019, another AberForward graduate, Tom Morgan, joined us for a further month, again as match funding. Tom’s main focus was in further filling in the gaps in our digital map using various sources at Ceredigion Archives and the NLW and online, as well as doing some footwork around the town to physically locate some of the addresses. Tom also wrote an article on the Aberystwyth Volunteer Corps for our project blog.

The project also secured £1000 in match funding from the Aberystwyth University Fund to provide bursaries for undergraduates to undertake work placements on the project during the summer of 2019. With this money we provided bursaries of £500 each to two students for a fortnights’ equivalent work experience. Alice Sargent joined us for two weeks in July/August 2019 and Jack Atherton joined us in September, again contributing to our blog and filling in remaining incomplete data on the soldiers’ database. For Alice’s feedback, see section D3 below.

C 1.3 Queen’s University of Charlotte, North Carolina, USA, summer school volunteers

During July 2018, a study group of fourteen students from Queen’s University of Charlotte, North Carolina, USA, visited Aberystwyth University on a summer school organized by the PL and became an unexpected and valued further addition to our project volunteer community. The group and their tutor, Professor Barry Robinson, were very enthusiastic about the project and engaged in a number of activities, from volunteer study skills sessions and tours of the Aberystwyth archives to Welsh lessons. They also initiated the research on

our Aberystwyth soldiers' database, creating and sharing with the project an initial spreadsheet, which will form the basis of the online digital map (discussed further below), and even walking around the town to verify addresses. Most of them had never visited the UK before, and fewer than half of them were history students, but they fully enjoyed the experience, learned a lot about Wales and the Welsh people in WWI, and went home as true adopted Aberystwythians.



Queen's University of Charlotte students at the Aberystwyth War Memorial, July 2018

C 2 Material and artefacts loaned to the project

Several people, while not volunteering as researchers, donated materials that were used by the project and formed the basis of various research, blog posts and events.

The 'Dot and Billy' letters were made available to the project by Mrs Jane Bradley and, as well as being the basis for the theatre performance in May 2019, also featured in the Arts Centre Exhibition in November and December 2018, the Armistice readings at St Michael's Church and at the Ynys Las Armistice 'Pages of the Sea' event, and the PL's' article in *The Conversation* (see below).

Dr Susan Davies made available to the project a number of articles belonging to her relative, E. Howell, who served in France. These were photographed for the Aberystwyth Arts Centre exhibition (see below), along with other wartime items belonging to her.

The Ceredigion Archives and Ceredigion Museum also made available several wartime artefacts that we photographed for the exhibition, notably a rare Princess Mary Christmas Box with intact contents, and a Great War Memorial Plaque (aka a 'Dead Man's Penny').

Mr Ceredig Evans of Penrhyncoch donated some papers relating to his great uncle, Richard Evan Hughes, which were extensively researched by one of our volunteers and formed an interesting blog piece written by volunteer Robert Jones.

A further Dead Man's Penny was loaned to the project by Mrs Gweneira Davies of Comins Coch. This was exhibited by the PL during her public presentations (see below) and generated considerable interest, not just for its symbolism as a memento of a dead family member but for its sheer size and weight, which one had to see and feel for oneself to really appreciate.

C 3 Approved Purposes

C 3.1 Four training workshops in research skills and methods and digitisation for volunteers

Four training workshops were initially planned, to introduce volunteers to new skills and give them confidence in embarking on their own research. In the event, we were able to organise five training workshops, at three different venues, and with three different points of focus. They were attended by a total of 34 volunteers, from a range of backgrounds and interests.

2 x Ceredigion Archives research skills training sessions

Two research skills training sessions for volunteers were held at Ceredigion Archives on Thursday 14 June and Thursday 19 July 2018. The first was held in the afternoon and the second in the evening, to give people who were working the opportunity to attend. The County Archivist, Helen Palmer, ran both sessions. She introduced the sources held at the archives and talked about how to access them and research them, putting out various items like wartime letters, scrapbooks, school and minute books, voting cards and copies of the local newspaper, the Cambrian News, for 1916 and 1918. The first session was attended by eight volunteers and the second by fourteen, which included a group of six Queen's University of Charlotte student (see above, section C1.3).

Feedback forms were handed out at both these sessions and was very positive indeed. Comments included the following:

“I thought the session last Thursday was interesting, informative and stimulating. It was great to see so much enthusiasm along with your warm welcome to the project. I am already learning a great deal about WWI and hope to expand on this.”

“The above session was enjoyable, comprehensive, and immensely interesting. The friendly atmosphere fostered by Sian and Kate was enriched by a detailed and entertaining talk from County Archivist Helen Palmer, which included a hands-on look at some of the principal primary sources available, and a tour of Ceredigion archives. It was a great opportunity to meet the other volunteers, learn more about the project, and get a taste for primary research. I look forward to getting stuck in!”

“Very informative. Gave me a lot to think about and was a great introduction to what the Ceredigion Archives hold. Helen's passion definitely shone through and this in turn made me excited to find out more. I loved that we were able to look at and handle some of the items/collections at the end of the session.”

“I am very pleased with the direction of the project and I am looking forward to all information we can gather. The story behind each and every man is very particular, therefore understanding their lives and their paths that led to the war is very interesting.”



Ceredigion Archives research skills training session 19 July 2018

2 x National Library of Wales research skills training sessions

A further two research skills training sessions were held at the National Library of Wales in October 2018. These were scheduled so as not to clash with people's holidays over the summer and in order to allow for attendance by new and returning students. The first session was held on Wednesday 17 October in the afternoon and the second on Tuesday 23 October in the morning, for the reasons given above. Both were run by Mr William Troughton, archivist at the NLW. The first was attended by six people, two of whom had attended the previous sessions at Ceredigion Archives and two of whom were students. The second was less well attended, with three people turning up, one of whom had signed on as a volunteer at the Royal British Legion event in July (see above, section B1). Wil made available a number of primary library records, such as wartime photograph albums, scrap books and copies of the *Cambrian News*, and talked about how to access these, both digitally and using the original item. He also showed the group around the library's manuscript department reading room and how to use the newspaper fiche reader.

Feedback from these sessions was not as full as that from the earlier Ceredigion Archives sessions, due to fewer numbers and smaller return of feedback forms, but comments included the following:

“William provided primary sources such as photograph albums and Comfort Fund letters from serving soldiers – all fascinating to look through and to listen to his explanations. He took time and trouble to speak to us individually about our interests and projects and to help those who were unsure where to start. In the reading rooms he showed us how to use microfilm, and ‘schedules’ of documentary history such as for Nanteos House [a local stately home and large historic landowning estate]. I guess the only thing I'd expected that didn't happen was being shown how to navigate the over-complex and rather bewildering online NLW catalogue (!) to actually identify resources to use, and how to order them – but I guess time and technology constraints prohibited, and we can ask library staff for help with this. Nevertheless, it was a session well worth providing and much appreciated.”

“The study skills session was very helpful and useful. I've learned how to use the microfilm and how to use the NLW computers to search for the information in the newspapers.”



National Library of Wales research skills training session 17 October 2018

1 x Digital Archiving Training Course

The fifth training course for volunteers, leading to Agored Cymru accreditation, was run by People's Collection Wales on Thursday 2 May 2019 at Aberystwyth University, led by tutor Gruffydd Jones. Five people attended the course, and learned about copyright issues, how to collect metadata, digitization techniques, and the importance of archiving. During the four-hour workshop, participants also carried out a practical element where each individual digitized items and uploaded them to the CyW website and completed a work booklet that qualified them to gain formal Agored Cymru accreditation. A slide show of the presentation and supporting documents were later sent to the participants.

Attendance was lower than we had hoped, which may have been in part due to the timing - being held during a weekday meant that those in employment likely could not attend. However, all the participant feedback was positive, with all five giving a rating of 'very satisfied' on the evaluation forms and the following comments:

“Gruffydd was a brilliant speaker and was very patient. Very impressed that the project offered this course to us. I enjoyed having the opportunity to practice the practical elements of digitization – scanning, using photoshop etc. Overall, a very good session.”

“The workshop was well taught and enjoyable, with plenty of opportunities to ask questions if I was confused or wanted further information. The scanning facilities were readily available and it was good to a hands on experience.”

“The tutor explained everything efficiently and clearly which made my enjoyment levels high and meant that I learned a lot. I now understand the process of digitization, which will assist me in my future endeavours.”



Hands-on practice at the digital archiving training course, 2 May 2019

C 3.2 Four schools workshops with Year 7 and 8 students from Penglais and Penweddig secondary schools

The first two of four planned schools workshops were held at Penglais School, with a class of twenty Year 8 children, on Thursday 27 June and Friday 5 July 2019. The school felt that in light of their respective history syllabuses, Year 8 was a more appropriate audience than Year 7. These occurred later in the project schedule than we had originally envisaged, but, again, it was important that we fitted in with the school's own history syllabus and timetable.

Penglais School is Aberystwyth's English-medium secondary school, and we had hoped also to run Welsh-medium workshops at Ysgol Penweddig, Aberystwyth's Welsh-medium secondary school. However, Penweddig did not take up our repeated offers to visit their school.

The first workshop introduced the pupils to life in Aberystwyth in the First World War, with a focus on visual materials including photographs of WWI-era Aberystwyth and stories of the impact of the war on the town. The pupils were very attentive and asked intelligent questions throughout. As with the Scouts talk (see C 3.3 below), the story - and photographs - of 'Julian', the tank that visited Aberystwyth in 1918 raising money for the war effort, attracted the most interest of all. The second workshop focussed on the digital map of Aberystwyth soldiers and their home addresses and gave the pupils an opportunity to explore it for themselves, a task which they took to with enthusiasm and genuine interest, and to offer written feedback on questionnaires on how they felt it worked. The class teacher also fed back favourably, particularly to the workshop's relevance to 'locality/ *cynefin*'.

Questionnaire responses included the following:

"I found out that a lot of people went to fight in the war from Aberystwyth. I also found out that not as many people died as I thought they did"

"Saw a family member and looked at them"

"I found that lots of the people that fought lived close to the centre of town and along the sea front"

"I liked how we could see who lived where and what they did and when they died".

"I found out that many men fought in France and also Egypt"

“I found out that someone lived in my house”

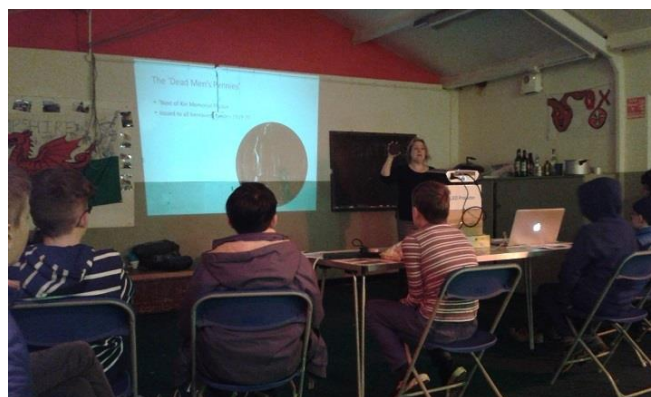
“The Donaldson Report will result in a revolution in education and will be rolled out in secondary schools from 2022 starting with Y7. Humanities is one of the six distinct areas of study and this requires an appreciation and study of their locality (*cynefin*). Below is the introduction to the Humanities area of learning and that is where it is first mentioned. Your project is therefore of great value.” (Mr Darren Payne, History teacher, Penglais School)

The second two workshops took place at Penglais School on 11th and 21st October 2019 and built on the learning of the first two to introduce Year 9 pupils to named Aberystwyth soldiers who served, and encouraged them to research their lives and wartime records on our online map and database and elsewhere as part of their WWI coursework. It is hoped that this will become a permanent feature of Penglais School’s Year 9 WWI studies.

C 3.3 Three presentations of findings to local community groups

It was originally hoped that project volunteers would do these, but in the event, due to the constraints of time and a certain reticence among the volunteers themselves, the PL gave two of the presentations. We were delighted that volunteer Lynne Blanchfield, despite many initial nerves, did the other.

1. Presentation to Aberystwyth Scouts, Saturday 10 November 2018, 10.30am-12pm. This talk was scheduled for the Armistice centenary weekend, and presented by the PL. Ten scouts were present, aged between around 11 and 13, as well as four scout leaders. The PL encouraged them to offer their thoughts and observations throughout the presentation and they listened and participated in an intelligent and enthusiastic way. They were particularly interested in a ‘Dead Man’s Penny’ that the PL took along, which none of the boys had ever seen before. They were also impressed by the story of Julian the Tank visiting Aberystwyth in 1918, and by photographs of soldiers marching through the town. After the presentation, the scouts went out into Aberystwyth to locate the exact streets featured in the photographs, and there was some discussion that they might re-enact the photographs later in the year (though to date we have had no update on this).



Project Lead Siân Nicholas with a Dead Man’s Penny at the Scouts presentation, 10 November 2018

2. ‘Notes on a Community History Research Project’ was a talk given by the PL on Wednesday 6 February 2019, 5-6pm, at Aberystwyth University. This was one of a weekly series of research seminars hosted by the Department of History and Welsh History at Aberystwyth University but open to all. It was very well attended, a full room in fact, with a significant proportion of the audience being students and non-historians. The PL stressed the community nature of the project and how it differed from traditional academic study, and outlined some of the research undertaken and events held. She also highlighted the key sources we were looking at; the diversity in volunteers, ie, a mix of students and people from the community, including some newcomers to the area, retired people and visitors; the material culture of the project; outcomes; individual experiences; and the sense of locality manifested in the project’s digital map.

3. ‘Virtual WWI Walk around Aberystwyth’. This ‘virtual walk’ presentation arose out of the ‘War Walks’ that were another of the project’s Approved Purposes (see below, section C3.8), and was given by project volunteer and War Walks presenter Lynne Blanchfield, in period costume, to the Aberystwyth Old Students Association at the Old College on Saturday 6 July 2019. The PCO also attended - also in period costume. There were twelve people present, all of them retirees from the local area. Lynne’s presentation was largely based on her own project research on the shops in the town during WWI, and despite her initial nerves she gave a confident and fascinating talk. Since some of those attending remembered a few of the shops mentioned by Lynne, the session was very dynamic, with lots of interaction and questions, and an unexpected opportunity to share memories of bygone Aberystwyth.

C 3.4 Four days of community art workshops run by an artist at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre

In the event, we were able to hold **five** rather than four workshops, since one of them required two sessions. These took place in March, May, June and July 2019 at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre. The timing was later than anticipated because the artist-in-residence at the time of the original proposed start date for the project (November 2017) had left post by the time the project commenced in May 2018 (see above, section A4.2), and the workshops had to be re-organised from scratch with the original artist’s replacement Amanda Trubshaw. The workshops each focussed on a different art medium, were each aimed at a different community group, and were held with different class tutors based within Aberystwyth, as follows:

Session 1: Aberystwyth Youth Justice photography session - Saturday 23 March 2019, 11.30am – 4.30pm. Tutor Brian Swaddling. Attended by a group of 18 young people aged 11-18

Sessions 2 and 3: Girls’ Group of the Youth Justice team pottery workshop - Thursday 14 March and Thursday 2 May 2019, 3.30-5.30pm. Tutor Laura Hughes. Attended by a group of 10 girls aged 12-18

Session 4: Aber Gwanwyn creative writing day - Monday 10 June 2019, 10.30am – 3pm. Tutor Damian Gorman. Attended by a group of 8 people aged 60+

Session 5: Free painting workshop, using mixed media - Friday 21 June 2019, 10am – 1pm. Tutor Karen Pearce. Attended by 6 adults.

All the workshops were well attended and dynamic, and participants included a diverse range of ages, abilities, interests and experience. The participation of the Youth Justice group was particularly satisfying to us as these young people come from backgrounds where engagement with heritage is especially low. Feedback was gathered using questionnaires, and responses indicated just how new and valuable the experience was to many:

Youth Justice photography session:

“The chance to do photography in group was a first, it was very enjoyable. I would love to do more workshops.”

“I found it all enjoyable because I’ve never done it before.”

“My favourite thing was taking pictures of things because I like photography.”

“I would like to do more, maybe from the top of Constitution Hill as it would be nice to see more detail in the images.”

Youth Justice Girls Group pottery workshop:

“We had the first session last night with the girls’ group – it was fantastic! Feedback forms attached. Many thanks for funding this opportunity – these young girls don’t have much access to the arts and they were thrilled at the chance to create and make with clay!” (Amanda Trubshaw, Creative Learning Manager, Aberystwyth Arts Centre)

“I like being creative, seeing the end of something I made. Learnt about poems and how to work with clay.”

“Really cool cos I made something new. How to think about assembling things.”

“How to do pottery as I’ve never done it before. It was fun and I learnt that we in Aberystwyth are the only ones with a naked lady [on the war memorial].”



A youth pottery workshop angel inspired by the Aberystwyth War Memorial

Creative writing day:

“Leading up to the date, some of the group were saying they were ‘fed up’ of always talking about the wars and focussing on such sadness. We explored how they felt and

did think that we might end up with writings about why they didn't want to write about WWI. However, they came up with (the topic of) 'waiting.' I hope you are happy with the work – they had an amazing session! (Amanda Trubshaw)

“Mixture of ages and different viewpoints.”

“The friendship and being able to do things I've never tried before.”

“Damian . . . encourages everyone to think they can write and is liberal with his praise.”

“Listening to others' stories. Yes, I would be interested in more workshops.”

“Wasn't too keen on WWI topic at first but Damian made it enjoyable.”

Free painting workshop:

“I had actually never looked at the monument as much as I did today- now plan to do more research.”

“Very knowledgeable and helpful tutor, extremely encouraging, particularly to step out of one's comfort zone.”

“Interested in doing more workshops definitely. Aberystwyth has so much to offer the artist – whatever the level of expertise. I had not visited the WWI memorial before today.”

C 3.5 A drama workshop and performance of a play based on the letters of 'Dot and Billy' by Aberystwyth Arts Centre

'Let Us Be Sweethearts', a performed reading of the 'Dot and Billy' letters, took place in the Round Studio, Aberystwyth Arts Centre, on 16 and 17 May 2019, following six months of planning and rehearsals.



Poster for 'Let Us Be Sweethearts', designed by Paddy O'Malley

The letters themselves were adapted and dramatised by Tom O'Malley, Emeritus Professor of Media, Aberystwyth University, and Mr Richard Hogger, a local resident with experience in community theatre. Mr Hogger then directed the performance based on the adaptation. Given the sheer number of letters (over 170 of them), shaping them into a coherent theatrical performance was a huge task, and both Professor O'Malley and Mr Hogger contributed well over the in-kind contribution initially factored into the bid. We therefore decided, in consultation with the PSG, that, over and above the £200 fee budgeted for directing the performance, we would make over the major part of any box office profits, after the Aberystwyth Arts Centre had taken their statutory 30%, to the performance team. The amount that came back to the project was £490, £400 of which was shared equally between Tom O'Malley, Richard Hogger, Caroline Clark, who sourced the costumes, and the two actors, Calista Williams and Patrick Cavanagh, and £90 of which was returned to the project budget.



'Let Us Be Sweethearts' dress rehearsal, Wednesday 15 May 2019

The play's success surpassed all our expectations. There were 45 in the audience on the first night and a sell-out of 60 on the second. A display board outside the theatre space provided the audience with contextual information about Dot and Billy and about the project. The audience for both events, which had been well publicised locally, included project volunteers and people new to the project, and a significant number of retirees from the local community. The first night was followed by a question and answer session, for which almost the whole audience remained. On the panel were Jane Bradly, Tom James, Richard Hogger, Tom O'Malley, Calista Williams, Patrick Cavanagh and the PCO. This was an opportunity both for the audience to discuss what had been a very emotional evening and for the performers and writers – all of whom were themselves volunteers on the project - to discuss their own responses to the letters.



Audience members for 'Let Us Be Sweethearts' at the display board outside the venue

The play was also filmed by a local company, AMP Media, shortly before its performance, and AMP Media then produced a DVD of the play that can be used by local groups and schools in the future.

C 3.6 'The Fox', a play based on D.H. Lawrence's story set in 1918 about the aftermath of the War, performed by the Aberystwyth Arts Centre Theatre Group (subject to funding from Arts Council Wales)

As detailed in section A3.1 above, we were unsuccessful in our bid for funding from ACW for this element of our project, so to our regret this particular Approved Purpose was not completed.

C 3.7 Two film screenings open to all in Ceredigion Museum's historic theatre auditorium

Screening 1, Friday 18 May 2018. This was a double bill film screening of *Battle of the Somme* (1916) and *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) in the historic Coliseum Theatre at the Ceredigion Museum. It was also the first public event organised and hosted by the project. As one of our project partners, the Museum provided the venue for free and charged tickets at the accessible price of £6.00 with students free to the first film, and concessionary prices of £5.00 for senior, unwaged and the school-aged. The audience of around 25 was a good size for film events at this venue, we thought - especially since it was the first really warm summer evening of the year! The PL introduced each film, explaining something of its history and contemporary impact, and also took the opportunity to publicise the project and thank Lottery players. It was a solemn evening but those who attended were very appreciative of the chance to see these rare films in a cinema setting.

Screening 2, Friday 9 November 2018, 6-9pm. To mark the 2018 Armistice weekend, the project in association with the Ceredigion Museum again hosted a double bill of First World War films in the Coliseum Theatre: *Mrs John Bull Prepared*, a government propaganda film from 1918 encouraging women into war work and men to appreciate women's wartime efforts, with live piano accompaniment by Dr C. Stephen Briggs; and the original 1930 version of *Journey's End*. We publicised the event in the *Cambrian News* and online, and

with a poster designed by the Ceredigion Museum. Tickets were free for the first film and £6.00 for the second, with concessions as before. This screening was again well attended (despite the weather this time being truly dreadful, with torrential rain and high winds), with an audience again of over 20. Again, the PL provided a brief introduction to both films. Both films were enthusiastically received, with *Mrs John Bull Prepared* especially appreciated for its novelty and humour, and for the excellent piano accompaniment which included current as well as WWI-era tunes. What was particularly striking to us was how many people stayed behind afterwards to discuss the films with the PL, PCO and each other.



Poster for the Armistice Weekend film event

C 3.8 Five bilingual interactive guided tours of Aberystwyth, based on the project's mapping initiative, following a route that identifies the homes of former WWI volunteers and conscripts, conducted by role-playing volunteers

The project held four guided walks between May and July 2018, namely two on 4 May (an English-language walk in the morning and a Welsh-language one in the afternoon), one on 22 June, and one on 27 July (both English-language, reflecting demand). The walks were advertised in the *Cambrian News* and on social media, and participants were asked to sign up at Ceredigion Archives. The maximum number for each walk was set at 10, to be manageable. We had originally intended to hold five walks, as stated in our application and in our 'Approved Purposes', but unfortunately in the event volunteer availability necessarily reduced this to four.

The initial interest was huge, and the first two walks were significantly oversubscribed, with twenty or so names placed on a waiting list for subsequent walks. The second two walks were less heavily populated, with 5 and 6 participants respectively, a total of 31 in all who'd booked previously, plus an extra 3 that turned up on the day for the first walk, so actual total was 34.

The four walks were led by two project volunteers, Nigel Callaghan and Lynne Blanchfield, in period dress. They started at the Ceredigion Museum, and then followed a route to the

promenade to talk about Julian the Tank's visit to the town during War Weapons Week in 1918, and the history of the Aberystwyth Red Cross Hospital (now the Cambria Hotel.) They went on to the Old College, and via Pier Street to Little Darkgate Street (now Eastgate Street) to point out the houses of some Aberystwyth men who served, then on to Market Street to talk about the billeting of soldiers in 1914-15 and to point out the site of Aberystwyth's first cinema (now the Pantyfedwen Centre) that provided entertainment for the soldiers. The walks then crossed into Chalybeate Street to point out the house of a RAF mechanic who died of flu in 1918; down Cambria Street to see the houses of several soldiers who became prisoners of war; into Terrace Road to show where several wartime shops stood; down Portland Road to talk about the underage soldier at No. 12 who died two months short of his 17th birthday and Aberystwyth's 'Patriotic Family', the Merediths of No. 41, nine of whom served on various fronts and all of whom survived; and into Queens Square, the location of the skating rink and other entertainments for the soldiers and residents during the war years. The walks ended back at the Museum where tea and coffee were provided during a feedback session with the participants. All those who attended gave very favourable verbal and written questionnaire feedback, and particularly appreciated the knowledge and friendliness of the guides.



Volunteer guide Lynne Blanchfield, dressed as a WWI nurse, outside the former Aberystwyth Red Cross Hospital, 2 May 2019



Volunteer guide Nigel Callaghan, dressed as a WWI officer, on Aberystwyth Prom, 22 June 2019

The participants on the walks were a mix of people, from university staff and students, to townspeople, and included residents of places as far away as Llanidloes. Out of health and safety considerations, and in accordance with the preferences of the volunteer guides, the

talks were confined to adults over the age of eighteen. There were a mix of adult ages, with several pension-aged people. This was taken into account when pacing the walk, ie, keeping it to a moderate to slow pace so that everyone could keep up. The difficulty of crossing roads was overcome by informing the group in the welcome talk that when crossing we would like them to keep close together and cross only when it was safe to do so, with the PCO stopping traffic if necessary (which she did on several occasions). When the guide stopped at the particular points to talk about a particular topic, the group was asked to gather close to compete with the sounds of traffic and the town in general.

Comments gathered from participants of all four walks included the following:

“I enjoyed looking at Aberystwyth from a different perspective and having the time to reflect on the new facts I was learning. I also appreciated the opportunity to speak to experts and enthusiasts and fellow participants. The coffee break at the end of the walk was a good idea as it allowed us to develop the above. The costumes were great !!!”

“Taith ddiddorol dros ben, wedi ei chynllunio yn dda. Hanesion personol yn cael eu defnyddio'n effeithiol dros ben. Gwisgoedd yn ychwanegu at y profiad hefyd. Gobeithio bydd modd cynnal teithiau tebyg yn y dyfodol. Mae'n amlwg bod digon o ddeunydd i gael cyfres ohonnynt!”

“Hoffais yr holl daith a chael dod i wybod am hanes Aberystwyth y pryd hynny a'r effaith a gafwyd ar y dre'. Roedd yn dda edrych o gwmpas yn hamddenol ac edrych I fynny a sylwi ar rhai arwyddion ar yr adeiladau am y tro cyntaf. Yn dda gwneud hynny gyda rhywun a gwybodaeth helaeth.”

“I really enjoyed the fact that the gentleman leading the tour spoke clearly and the level of the Welsh language was accessible even for Welsh learners. The tea time shared with the attendees and the speaker at the end of the tour was very interesting too.”

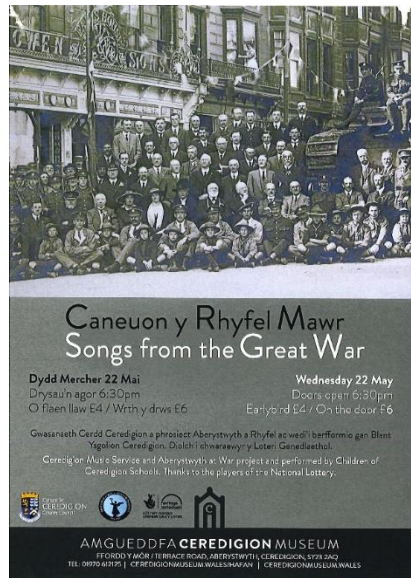
“The guide's knowledge and expertise meant she could answer questions too. This was an interesting and accessible way to connect with the history of Aberystwyth during WWI and the number of people attending suggested more guided walks would be well received.”

“I thought the personal aspect of having a character take the walk worked well. It was an informal walk but it had good structure due to the planning of the locations stopped at and the way the information had been researched. I also liked the way the walk allowed us to have a glimpse in to the general life of Aberystwyth soldiers. I felt that the tea at the end of the event was an excellent idea. This gave the group a chance to talk about the things they had heard on the walk and a chance to ask questions about the information that had been presented.”

C 3.9 A concert introducing local school and county youth ensembles to the music of WWI (Ceredigion Schools Music Service)

Our original intention with this particular Approved Purpose had been to hold an event based on the concert performed in Aberystwyth in 1914 by Belgian refugee musicians, in

collaboration with the Ceredigion Schools Music Service. In the event the CSMS felt the reproduction of the original Belgian refugee repertoire was too ambitious in the time and with the resources available. After consultation with the PSG and the CSMS we decided instead to host a concert of WWI-related songs and music featuring local schools ensembles. The concert, ‘Songs from the Great War’, was held in the Coliseum Theatre, Ceredigion Museum, 22 May 2019, 7-8pm. The concert programme gave details of the project, and specifically thanked HLF and the National Lottery players.



Poster for ‘Songs from the Great War’

The concert was performed by approx. 35 children of the Ceredigion schools’ music ensembles ranging in age from 7 to 17. The auditorium was full to capacity with an audience of about 50, mostly family and friends of the children. Tickets were priced at £6, with an early bird price of £4 and children free, with Ceredigion Museum retaining the takings in lieu of a venue fee. The first half of the concert featured pupils of Plascrug Primary School, who sang popular songs of WWI as well as some Welsh songs. The second half featured the Aberystwyth Youth Brass Band, with pupils from Penweddig and Penglais schools playing pieces including ‘Men of Harlech’ and ‘Abide with Me’. The concert ended with a reading out by two pupils of the names of the WWI dead of Aberystwyth, and a sounding of the Last Post by bandmaster Mr Aidan Hassan. All children participating received a project badge. Feedback was hugely positive, with parents enjoying the concert and children thrilled by the rare opportunity to perform in this historic and evocative space.



Plascrug School Choir, and the Aberystwyth Schools Brass Band performing in the 'Songs from the Great War' concert, Coliseum Theatre, Ceredigion Museum, 22 May 2019

C 3.10 A six-week display of the community arts project mentioned above, at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre Café

The original project plan, as reflected in our Approved Purposes, was to hold an exhibition featuring outputs from the scheduled art workshops. However, owing to the significant delay in holding the workshops, because their original organiser had moved away (see section C 2.4 above), it proved necessary to rethink this element of the project.

Therefore, and in consultation with the PSG and the Aberystwyth Arts Centre, it was decided instead to hold an exhibition of the project's visual finds and research in progress, to coincide with the Armistice centenary commemorations, over the period 8 November 2018-2 January 2019. This included high-quality photographic reproductions of material discovered in the NLW, Ceredigion Archives, Ceredigion Museum, and in private collections, including recruitment posters, images of material objects such as the Princess Mary Christmas Box and a field bible, a trench map of the Western Front, postcards of soldiers on parade around the town, newspaper articles about Aberystwyth boys on active service, advertisements for local entertainments, a reproduction of a 'Dead Man's Penny', and a map of Aberystwyth from 1906, in which pins indicated the homes of 200 of those who served, as a low-tech preview of our online map initiative (see section C 3.2 below).

The exhibition was launched on the evening of 8 November 2018 with refreshments provided free of charge by the Aberystwyth Arts Centre, at which a dozen or so people were present.

The exhibition itself was a great success and received a good deal of attention. The Arts Centre café was a particularly good location, with considerable footfall of people from both within and outside the university, and the timing, which coincided both with the Armistice centenary and the annual two-month long Arts Centre Christmas fair, was fortuitous. Oral feedback to Arts Centre staff as well as to the PL and PCO was universally positive and enthusiastic.



Project Lead Siân Nicholas and AAC Visual Arts Manager Ffion Erfyl Rhys discussing the layout of the exhibition; AAC technician Tim Walley having a well-earned cup of tea!



Exhibition launch, Thursday 8 November 2018



Map of Aberystwyth and Dead Man's Penny on end wall of AAC café

C 3.11 Archiving of materials through Ceredigion Archives, People’s Collection Wales, and Aberystwyth University

The successful archiving of our project outputs has always been a key feature of our project legacy, and we have consulted widely with local experts to ensure the best possible archiving of our volunteers’ hard work, as follows:

- The online digital map will be hosted by the Department of History and Welsh History, Aberystwyth University, and will be made available to the general public via a dedicated web page for a minimum of ten years. We will also make available on the same page the database from which the map was created, to facilitate searches of individual soldiers.
- The project blog will be likewise made available online by the Department of History and Welsh History for a minimum of ten years. We also hope to publish a book of the blog posts in December, bilingually, to be presented to volunteer contributors, distributed to local Welsh and English medium schools, and made available for purchase at Ceredigion Archives and Ceredigion Museum. This will be a unique learning resource written by the community for the community and about the community of Aberystwyth and surrounding areas.
- The framed photographs featured in the project exhibition will be housed by the Department of History and Welsh History, Aberystwyth University, and displayed and loaned for exhibition and educational purposes.
- The filmed version of ‘Let Us Be Sweethearts’ will be housed with the Department of History and Welsh History, Aberystwyth, and the DVD of the film will be offered to local schools for educational use.
- Physical materials donated to the project (see section C2 above) will be collated and deposited in Ceredigion Archives, Ceredigion Museum or the National Library of Wales as appropriate in consultation with the donor.

C3.12 Provision for the Welsh language throughout the project

Welsh language provision was an integral element of the project from the start. All publicity materials, including flyers, posters, handouts and feedback forms, were presented bilingually. We ran one of the four war walks in Welsh and would have run a second had there been the demand; and we offered our schools workshop in Welsh to the local Welsh-medium secondary school. Our Facebook and Twitter pages were presented bilingually in Welsh and English, and several of our blogposts were written and uploaded in Welsh. Our PCO Kate Sullivan is a fluent Welsh speaker and she was always on hand to ensure that Welsh speakers were equally welcomed and included in the project.

C 3.13 High visibility acknowledgement of the Heritage Lottery Fund on site, online and in all activities. As well as using your project to acknowledge and thank National Lottery players.

All our publicity materials, with the sole exception of the button badges (where there was no room), prominently featured the HLF logo, and where possible, a written acknowledgement to HLF and a specific thank-you to National Lottery players. All talks likewise were

prefaced with a thank-you to both the HLF and National Lottery players. Our Facebook page, Twitter account and project blog all feature the HLF logo, and the on-line map will do so also in its final public-facing version.

C 4 Associated outputs identified in the project application

C 4.1 Project blog

The project blog was set up in June 2018 to publicise research undertaken by the project volunteers, and has proven to be one of our most unexpected and visible successes, with a new post added almost every week for the entire duration of the project – over 70 in total to date. We encouraged volunteers to research and write on subjects that interested them, and several people have contributed more than one piece.

Topics include: Aberystwyth Freemasons at war; the visit of Julian the Tank to Aberystwyth; Aberystwyth shops at Christmas; Aber boys overseas; the Women’s Land Army; the Children’s Egg Collection for the Wounded; Belgian refugees; Nanteos Mansion and the war; the Penparcau Sewing Circle; Cardiganshire politics in August 1914; ‘Dead man’s pennies’; the Aberystwyth Red Cross Hospital; Aberystwyth nurses in Serbia; local children and the war effort; and local individuals who served, such as Jack Watkin, Henry Ballinger, Richard George Read, Cyril Mortimer Green, Llewellyn Hughes, Llewellyn Hicks and scientist Margaret Turner.

The blogs are varied and interesting, with several of them breaking new ground. For instance, a blog by Ruby Radwan, a newcomer to the area from Egypt, on the Aberystwyth YMCA, proved that the Aberystwyth branch was established during the Great War, in 1917, and not after the war was over, as was widely held to be the case. A blog about the Aberystwyth Comforts Fund showed how Aberystwyth soldiers on the front line typically maintained a strong emotional attachment to home, rather than being – as much of the historical literature suggests of WWI soldiers – alienated from it.

The blogposts were mostly presented in English, reflecting the language of choice of the volunteer researcher.



<https://aberystwyth-at-war.blogspot.com/>

C 4.2 Online digital map

The online digital map is one of the most innovative of our project legacy outcomes. Over the course of the project a succession of volunteers, guided by the PL, has been compiling a database of every Aberystwyth serviceman that we can identify who served in WWI. This database includes as much information as we have been able to find about the servicemen's (and servicewomen's) name, year of birth, Aberystwyth address, pre-war occupation, branch of service, rank, regiment or equivalent, location(s) of service, medals won, whether they lived or died, and if the latter, cause of death and where buried. This information has then been used to generate a digital map of both present-day and WWI-era Aberystwyth and surrounding area using ArcGIS software, that pinpoints the home addresses of all those who served and also enables the user to drill down and map such features as branch of service, rank, location of service, and other key details. To date we have identified over 1200 individual service personnel, and their details are being updated daily. An early iteration of the map can be found at <http://arcg.is/019eDf>. A publicly accessible updated version will be made available via the website of the Department of History and Welsh History, Aberystwyth University, before the end of 2019 and archived for at least ten years, during which time we are likely to be periodically updating it.

This map has been one of the triumphs of the project: everyone who has seen the early versions, from volunteers to students to Penglais schoolchildren, has been hugely impressed by the scope and range of the information presented, the insights it gives into the town and its residents during the war years, the diversity of experiences of those who served, and the sheer impact of WWI on the demographics of the town and surrounding area. It provides a model of what can be done with relatively simple computer technology to make history visible and alive to communities, and rooted in the very streets they walk down every day.

We would like to acknowledge with thanks the invaluable help of Professor Barry Robinson, of Queen's University of Charlotte, USA, in introducing the PL to the ArcGIS software and in translating the database into the map itself.

C 5: Additional activities not originally identified in the project application

C 5.1 Volunteer drop in sessions

These informal sessions were run monthly during 2018 and 2019 in the café of the Ceredigion Museum, with the exception of December. They were open sessions where volunteers could pop in over the course of two hours, to share their research and findings, ask questions or raise issues, or just catch up with the project team and other volunteers over a coffee. The sessions proved both useful and stimulating and although not particularly heavily attended, were clearly of great social as well as intellectual value to the core group of regulars who attend nearly every one.



Volunteer drop-in session at Ceredigion Museum café

C 5.2 Lecture on the WWI Belgian refugees in Aberystwyth, by Dr Rhian Davies, Old College, Wednesday 31 October, 6pm. Since the project was unable to reproduce the 1914 Belgian refugees' concert as originally hoped (see above, section C 3.9), the PSG suggested holding this lecture by Dr Rhian Davies, Artistic Director of the Gregynog Festival and an expert on the concert and its history, as a way of fulfilling our original aim by other means. Unfortunately, due to a lack of publicity arising from crossed wires between the project and the Old College, the talk was relatively poorly attended, with an audience of 8. Those who did attend reported to the PCO that it was a very good talk. The talk is planned to be repeated in Y Drwm, National Library of Wales, as part of their lunchtime lectures, in early 2020.

C 5.3 Penglais School Armistice Tea, Friday 9 November 2018, 2-4pm. This was attended by the PCO, following an invitation from the school. We put up a display board about the project and attracted some interest from those attending, though the very tight schedule of music and readings by the schoolchildren meant it did not get the attention it has at other events. This was a shame as the school hall was full to capacity, with many veterans present.



Penglais School Armistice Tea, 9 November 2018

C 5.4 St Michael’s Church Armistice Service and Community Tea, Aberystwyth War Memorial and St Michael’s Church, 11-12.30pm and Old College 12.30-2pm.

Following our presence at the Royal British Legion event in July 2018 (see above, section B1), the PL was contacted by RBL representatives Paul Hinge and Gareth Pugh to discuss a contribution by the project to the town’s Armistice centenary commemorations, specifically the Armistice Service at St Michael’s Church that followed the town parade and wreath-laying ceremony at the Aberystwyth War Memorial. The PL prepared a series of extracts from the ‘Dot and Billy’ letters, which were read out during the service by the head boys and head girls of Penglais and Penweddig schools, while the letter to Billy’s parents telling of his death was read by Gareth Pugh. The emphasis on the commemoration was ‘hope’ and it was an emotional and evocative service, with the church full to the doors and standing room only.

The Armistice Tea was a highly successful follow-up to the service, with around a hundred people from the town and surrounding areas together with many veterans and service people coming over to Old College after the church. We put up a project display board which attracted many questions and comments and an invitation to write an article for the church’s monthly newsletter *Aberjabber* (see section B2 above). We collaborated with the Royal British Legion, St Michael’s Church and Aberystwyth Food Surplus on this event.



Our project display board at the Old College Armistice Tea, 11 November 2018

C 5.5 ‘Pages of the Sea’ at Ynys Las, Sunday 11 November, 12-4pm. This was a national event inspired by Danny Boyle and featuring sand pictures of WWI war dead drawn in the sand around the coast of Britain. The project was invited to participate in the local ‘Pages of the Sea’ event at Ynys Las by Ffion Erfyl Rhys, Visual Arts Manager, Aberystwyth Arts Centre, who was coordinating the event. The PL kicked off the ‘open mic’ session at the event with a reading from the *Cambrian News* of Armistice Week 1918, and four volunteers stepped up and read the ‘Dot and Billy’ extracts that had featured earlier that day at the St Michael’s Church Armistice Service. Several people got in touch with the project afterwards to share their family experiences of WWI.

C 5.6 Gregynog Festival, summer 2019. The project now had an established link with the Gregynog Festival’s Artistic Director, Dr Rhian Davies, after her talk for the project on the Belgian Refugees (as noted above, C5.2). We were keen to maintain this link into the

Gregynog Festival itself, as the Festival's theme in 2019 was '*Gweledigaeth* /Vision' and celebrated the efforts of the Davies Family of Gregynog for a better world rooted in culture and peace after WWI. We therefore acted as a sponsor of the Festival by advertising its events on our social media pages and among our volunteers, and by making a small financial contribution (£50) to the special organ recital by Merion Wyn Jones at Bethel Chapel, Aberystwyth, on Sunday 30 June 2019.

C 5.7 End of project celebration and 'thank you' event. It is planned to hold a 'thank you' event for our project volunteers and partners on 1 October 2019 at the Ceredigion Museum, with an opportunity to discuss and reflect on what we have achieved together over the past year and a half over drinks, and a premiere showing of the completed film of 'Let Us Be Sweethearts', the 'Dot and Billy' film.

C 5.8 The project had an extension between 1st October to 30 November to reproduce a selection of the online project blogs into a printed booklet. The blogs were edited by the PCO and, following translation to Welsh, will be printed by YLolfa, a local Welsh publishing company early next year.

SECTION D: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

D 1: Summary of project aims and achievements

The project, Aberystwyth at War: Experience, Impact, Legacy 1914-1919, set out to explore the impact of WWI on the people and communities of Aberystwyth, coastal town and historic centre of education and culture in mid-Wales, through the collaborative efforts of a wide range of local educational, archival, cultural and community groups, with a focus on volunteer engagement, upskilling and outputs that would provide a heritage legacy for the community, the area, and beyond.

As this report has detailed, the project has delivered on all of these aims. We have engaged directly with over 70 and indirectly with well over 100 participants in the project, while our wider outreach activities have reached hundreds more via local media and beyond. Our core group of volunteers have developed archival, digital and creative skills, and have researched and interpreted for a wider audience a significant range of wartime histories of Aberystwyth and the surrounding area. The project has hosted activities, displays, workshops, film screenings, a musical event, and guided walks. It has played a key role in the local Armistice centenary commemorations, and has commissioned and overseen the production and recording of a new play based on newly discovered sources. It has also developed new and publicly accessible online resources, viz an online blog and an open access interactive digital map of the area in WWI.

Inevitably, not everything worked as well as we initially hoped. Force of circumstance required the cancellation of one of our Approved Purposes ('The Fox') and curtailed the number of some of our planned events. Volunteer uptake was strong in some parts of the community, but less so in others. Factors such as miscommunication or poor (or good!) weather restricted audiences to some events.

D 2: How our project meets our specifically stated HLF outcomes

D 2.1 Heritage:

We have improved management by identifying, sharing knowledge of and encouraging public use of a significant range of locally available source materials relating to the local experience of WWI, and encouraged the deposit of more source materials in local archival sites, such as Ceredigion Archives, Ceredigion Museum and the National Library of Wales.

We have ensured better condition through encouraging and facilitating knowledge and understanding of the sources shared, by enabling volunteers to research, construct and publicly disseminate their own stories of the war and by making their work a part of the heritage awareness of WWI in Aberystwyth itself.

We have achieved better interpretation and explanation through coordinating the efforts of experts in our local heritage organisations to share their knowledge about resources and to participate in volunteer training, explanation and support. The project blog and database are direct evidence of volunteers' effective research skills learning. Our diverse schedule of project events has introduced a wide range of people to previously unknown aspects of their local heritage, and encouraged further research interests going forward.

We have also been able to better identify and record our community heritage of WWI, particularly – though not exclusively - through our blog and database, which will be permanent resources for the local community.

D 2.2 People:

We have been delighted at the extent of engagement achieved by our project. While some parts of the local community (for instance the Penparcau area) continued to show a reluctance to engage with the wider local heritage, our volunteer cohort comprised over 70 people of all ages and backgrounds, with an expected core – given our location - of retirees and students, but also schoolchildren and young people (some from significantly deprived backgrounds), veterans, newcomers to the area (including several from other nationalities, most notably a member of the Polish community and a newcomer to the area from Egypt), and a group of visiting US students.

Wider engagement has been and will continue to be achieved by the project's legacy outputs: the blog (which we hope to publish), the online map and database (which will be made publicly available), and the 'Dot and Billy' DVD, as well as the Year 8/9 secondary schools workshop. The blog and the workshop will be available in Welsh as well as English. The online map will, we hope, become a model for other national WWI resources.

Our volunteers have demonstrated new skills in research, and in blogging that research, in digital literacy, in performance (including public speaking), in the creative arts, and in teamwork. They have engaged in their local heritage in new and immersive ways, and have taken the opportunities provided by the project to work both individually and as teams. Their skills and hard work have been publicly recorded in our project legacy outputs.

D 2.3 Communities:

Over the duration of the project we have involved more people and a wider range of people in heritage activities than we had thought possible before we started. Active participation in the project, and involvement in group events and activities has been very gratifying. Our collected feedback confirms how much so many of those involved feel they have learned about their local area and about Aberystwyth's WWI heritage through engagement with the project, and how valuable they have found the access to local sources and resources.

It is hard to measure the effect of the project on our local economy. However, the project has made a distinct and distinctive contribution to the cultural heritage of the area; our collaborations with Ceredigion Museum and the Aberystwyth Arts Centre have brought revenue to those organisations; one job (the PCO's) and several work placement opportunities have been created; and volunteers have been up-skilled and given confidence and knowledge.

The project's exploration and promotion of our shared local heritage has been recognised by local media and has featured in community events such as the Armistice Centenary commemorations, bringing local residents of all backgrounds together in a greater shared understanding of the impact of WWI on this area.

Finally, the collaboration between the various educational, heritage and community organisations in the area promoted by the project has been one of its key successes, pointing the way to more effective pooling of local educational and heritage resources and greater shared engagement in heritage learning and capacity building in the future.

D 3: Testimonials from volunteers

We would like to conclude this report by quoting some more of the feedback received from our volunteers over the course of the project:

“I carried out research in The National Library of Wales. I worked with four volumes of press cuttings collected by a brother and sister throughout the war. It was immensely enjoyable, especially building up a collection of cuttings from local papers to write pieces for the blog. It required a lot of careful searching. The library staff were very helpful. The pleasure of finding out lots of interesting information that I would never have thought of researching if it had not been for the project. I enjoyed putting the pieces of information together often from lots of different articles to form a coherent piece. The National Library was a fantastic place to work in and that was a new experience for me which has led me to have a whole new appreciation of its resources, even though I only used a few of them in my research. I also found that friends were very interested in what I was finding out and asked me about it.” FF

“I learnt a significant amount regarding Aberystwyth's experiences of the Great War in relation to soldier's experiences and the situation on the Homefront via newspapers such as the Cambrian News. While much of this research was my own, the Aberystwyth at War project as well as Siân Nicholas made it quick and simple for me to decide a project to research on.” OS

“Not just an information about the war itself but the most lovely thing is knowing about the quality of life at Aberystwyth at that hard time, see the effect of the war on the people, feel them, imagine their situation, and how the war changed their thinking

and their behaviour. I did research about YMCA which was very useful and supportive to the soldiers and how the war encouraged the people in Aberystwyth to establish it. I read the letters written by Aber. men serving abroad in acknowledgment of parcels they received from the people of Aberystwyth. Just reading all of these lovely feelings toward Aberystwyth and her people and the support of Aber. people to their family and friends serving abroad was amusing and touchable.” RR

“Thoroughly enjoyed everything I did. Working with Kate, and the other project volunteers; Increased knowledge of home town in the War years; Opportunities to get to know local archives and resources eg NLW online newspapers, town library; Dressing up as WWI Red Cross nurse and leading guided walks round home town; Attending project meetings to find out what other volunteers were doing; Attending study skills and archive meetings to meet experts who were willing to help us. Stimulating dormant research skills (academic background in handwritten manuscripts); Developing research skills by getting acquainted with local resources and experts; Feeling I was giving something back in return for all my education at Aberystwyth University 70s-90s and current study, and to my home town; Ideas for future academic research and writing (academic and personal); Developing even deeper links with home town, eg November Memorial services and British Legion concerts have deeper significance now that actual people are known about and their experience publicly acknowledged; Meeting like-minded people with shared interests.” LB

“Pleser o'r mwyaf oedd cael weithio ar y prosiect. Cyfle i ddysgu llawer mwy am hanes Aberystwyth yn ystod y Rhyfel 1af, ond ar yr un pryd cwrdd â phobl newydd, a dysgu sgiliau ymchwil newydd. Syniad da oedd canolbwyntio ar fanion hanes y dre yn ystod y rhyfel, yn hytrach na straeon cyfarwydd y bobl a aeth i ffwrdd ac a fu farw. Dysgais lawer wrth wneud ymchwil ar gyfer blog y prosiect - am y bobl (plant yn arbennig) a oedd yn casglu wyau ar gyfer milwyr yn yr ysbyty. Hefyd am yr ymgyrch i godi arian i dalu am y rhyfel - a darganfod bu Aberystwyth y dre fwyaf hael yn yr Ymerodraeth! Fe fynychais nifer o'r digwyddiadau a drefnwyd gan y tîm - y noson ffilmiau oedd rhywbeth i'w gofio. Gofynnodd y trefnwyr i mi arwain teithiau tywys o gwmpas y dre hefyd - pleser mawr arall.” NC

Finally, Alice Sargent, one of the recipients of an Aberystwyth University Fund bursary in summer 2019. Her written feedback voices the informal feedback received by us from so many of our volunteers, from the local community and from further afield, over the life of the project as a whole:

“Completing this two-week work placement with the ‘Aberystwyth at War 1914-1919’ HLF-funded project has been an exciting opportunity which has undoubtedly advanced my research skills and historical knowledge. When I first applied for the position, I anticipated that I would be sitting in an office for the duration, trawling through records to discover more about Aberystwyth’s soldiers in the Great War; instead, I was able to do so much more than this! Some days, I was out exploring Ceredigion Archives for relevant primary records, whilst on others I was walking around Aberystwyth trying to identify specific houses where soldiers lived. It was brilliant! I really felt the past come to life, as I knew that I was standing in front of a

house where somebody had lived before leaving the close-knit community of Aberystwyth to fight in a horrific war of unprecedented scale. The whole project has added a new dimension to my thinking when I walk around Aberystwyth. Not only did the project offer me this sense of vibrant historical reality, but it also enhanced my research skills and awakened my ‘inner genealogist’. I learnt how to access primary materials and cross-reference the details of individuals to ensure that my new data was accurate. Being able to research my own specific interests and produce a blog contribution on it was also spectacular. Discovering an article in the Cambrian News about an ‘Aberystwyth Soldier Family’ who had four men fight in the war really inspired me, and I was able to trace their journeys and lives through records from Britain and Australia. This was something I had never done before, so at times it was very challenging, but I succeeded in putting together a mostly-flowing story of one family’s struggle, grief, and recovery from the Great War. Overall, working for this project has been an invaluable experience and one which may influence my future career path. I’ve enjoyed every bit of it – the only thing I would change is that I could work longer for the project!”