

**Second Meeting of the First World War Centenary Historical Interpretation  
Working Group**

**Thursday 30 January 2014  
Court Room, National Museum Cardiff**

**Present:**

[St Cyres School Official 1] ([job title redacted] St Cyres School, Penarth)  
Prof Sir Deian Hopkin  
[British Council Official 1] (Chair, British Council)  
[AC-NMW Official 1] ([job title redacted] National Slate Museum)  
[Aberystwyth University Official 1] (Aberystwyth University)  
[NLW Official 1] (Retired [job title redacted] – National Library of Wales)  
[Aberystwyth University Official 2] (Aberystwyth University)  
[Cardiff University Official 1] (Cardiff University)  
[RWF Trust Official 1] Royal Welch Fusiliers Trust  
[Welsh Government Official 1] (Welsh Government - minutes)

**Apologies:**

[AC-NMW Official 2] (Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales)  
[Swansea University Official 1] (Swansea University)  
[WFA Official 1] (Chair, Western Front Association, Gwent Branch)

**1. Presentation on the educational app**

[St Cyres School Official 1] welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a presentation on the educational app which is currently under development.

The educational app project *Wales at War* will develop an inclusive activity for schoolchildren all around Wales that will enable them to develop biographies of the names on the war memorials of Wales, as well as being a guide to First World War sites of interest in France and Belgium. The app will also give a variety of perspectives on the war, for example the peace movement and the home front. Communities and families can also get involved in the project, engaging the whole community. The information garnered will be uploaded to a central website for use by schoolchildren and the public alike, and will be free of charge. There will be editing of the website and this could be performed by teachers, local history groups etc. The website will also be linked to various other websites, such as the *Cymru'n Cofio* Wales Remembers 1914-1918 website, Hwb – the all Wales Learning Platform, the Imperial War Museums' [www.1914.org](http://www.1914.org) website and the Western Front Association's website.

The app is being developed by a partnership involving educators and schools in Wales, representatives from the armed services and the National Library of Wales. A successful application has been submitted to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund, and

an application is in development for the Heritage Lottery Fund “Our Culture” programme. A number of beneficiaries are also supporting the project, including the War Memorials Trust, Cadw, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and other heritage organisations.

There has been a great deal of early interest in the app and 12 schools have already signed up to pilot the app – 4 primary schools (2 Welsh-speaking) and 8 secondary schools (3 Welsh speaking).

[AC-NMW Official 1] mentioned a similar project in Dyffryn Nantlle, Gwynedd whereby local primary schoolchildren and social housing Gwynedd are involved in a project to research their local war memorial. The research material gathered could be linked to the wider Welsh project.

## **2. Discussion on the debate around interpreting the War and commemoration**

The group agreed that Wales should distance itself from the argument about the interpretation of the war instigated by Michael Gove MP in his column in the *Daily Mail* early in the New Year. There is a need to be clear that Wales’ approach to the commemoration is comprehensive and doesn’t focus solely on events.

DH informed the group that Wales’ commemorative plans were the subject of favourable comments from Professor Sir Richard Evans, President of Wolfson College and Regius Professor of History at Cambridge University, in a recent edition of BBC’s *Newsnight*.

## **3. Cymru’n Cofio Wales Remembers 1914-1918 website**

DH asked the group for their views on the *Cymru’n Cofio* Wales Remembers 1914-1918 website.

[RWF Trust Official 1] said that he was very glad that the Welsh commemoration has a website and commended those responsible for setting it up. However, the website needs to be populated in the same way as the Centenary News website is updated regularly. [Aberystwyth University Official 1] suggested that those developing the *Cymru’n Cofio* Wales Remembers 1914-1918 website could proactively contact organisations to see what events and projects are being developed. [Aberystwyth University Official 2] felt that there needed to be a broader spectrum of material available on the website. DH was concerned that the website isn’t dynamic enough – some news stories are uploaded too late, and some important items are not on the website at all.

**Action: CyMAL to relay the group’s views on the website to People’s Collection Wales.**

#### **4. Historical Conference**

[Swansea University Official 1] could not be present at the meeting, but he had indicated to DH that Swansea University would be happy to host the Historical Conference. The focus of the conference would be Wales and the War, broadly looking at the Battle of Mametz Wood. There could be 3 papers during the session on Wales, concentrating on:

- Recruitment from the chapels
- Competence letters released by the press
- The anti-war movement

The group felt that it was important that the conference would be open not only to academics, but also amateur historians and local history groups.

It was agreed that the conference should look at a spectrum of issues to ensure a balanced view, and to appeal to as many potential delegates as possible. [RWF Trust Official 1] said that there needs to be a clearer understanding of command and generalship, which changed during the First World War. This could be a topic to be explored during the conference and he indicated that he would be willing to provide a paper. There could be a particular focus on Welsh generals, or leaders of Welsh regiments. Another potential topic to be examined would be prisoners of war and forced labour.

DH suggested that Professor Sir Richard Evans or Professor Lord Peter Hennessey could be invited to give a keynote speech at the conference.

DH asked members of the group to begin a dialogue on ideas for the conference and suggested that ideas be relayed to [Swansea University Official 1] and [Swansea University Official 2] at Swansea University.

#### **5. The educational programme**

DH will be visiting France and Belgium on 5-6 February where he will be presenting the Welsh programme to the UK's deputy Ambassador to Belgium, the Director of the British Council, the advisor to the EU education Commissioner, the lead organisers for the Commemoration programme in Flanders and Belgium, the head of the Flemish Foreign Office and the mayors of Langemark and Mametz, with whom he will discuss the possibility of school exchanges/twinning. While there he will also be meeting officials from the Saxony Government with regards to the Christmas Truce project. [RWF Trust Official 1] also noted that representatives from the Saxony Government will be coming over to Wales in March. The Royal Welch Fusiliers are also unveiling a memorial in Zandvoorde on 26 October 2014 to commemorate the destruction of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battle of Ypres. [RWF Trust Official 1] suggested that if the Western Front Association is short of funding for the rededication ceremony for the Mametz Wood memorial then they should contact the Royal Welch Fusiliers Trust.

#### **6. History projects: How to ensure that outputs are circulated effectively**

[Cardiff University Official 1] reported that the project is underway and that a project officer has been appointed. The conference will take place at the National Waterfront Museum. The next steps are the outreach and the publicity campaign. The conference will present an opportunity for those who have received HLF funding to come along and provide details of their activities. DH stressed the importance of communication, and particularly agreeing on a means of storing the digital resources produced. Local History societies should be informed about the conference and invited to attend.

**Action: CyMAL to inform the group about all HLF-funded projects.**

## **7. The National Archives' First World War soldier diaries**

DH informed the group that the soldiers' diaries are now online, however the accessibility of the diaries is a concern. [St Cyres School Official 1] stressed that there should not be a cost for accessing the diaries and officers' papers should be digitised. [RWF Trust Official 1] pointed out that the military records kept at Wrexham can be accessed free of charge.

## **8. Historical Interpretation Working Group Terms of Reference**

The group indicated that they were happy with the terms of reference. DH asked the group to provide the names of any individuals who might be interested in joining the group to [Welsh Government Official 1] or himself. [AC-NMW Official 1] suggested inviting [Bangor University Official 1] (Bangor University) to join the group.

**Action: CyMAL to invite [Bangor University Official 1] to join the working group.**

## **9. Date of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Historical Interpretation Working Group will be held at 11am on 21 March 2014. CyMAL will arrange for those based in north and mid Wales to be able to link into the meeting via video conferencing.