

ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY WAR HERITAGE GROUP

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

TUESDAY 16 JUNE 2015
6.00 pm COMMITTEE ROOM 3A
HOUSE OF LORDS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Present: Lord Faulkner, Jeffrey Donaldson MP, Lord Clark of Windermere, Lord Cope of Berkeley, Lord Selkirk, Baroness Sharples, Professor Peter Doyle (Secretary).

Apologies: Lord Crathorne, Meg Hillier MP

In attendance: Dr George Bailey (BCMh), Frank Baldwin (Battlefields Trust), Simon Bendry (UCL Institute of Education)

Minutes of the last meeting. The minutes of the last meeting were circulated. Lord Cope proposed that they were an accurate record of the meeting held on Wednesday 9 July 2014, and this was confirmed.

Election of officers. Professor Doyle was invited to take the chair to take nominations. It was noted that new rules required that the Chair be a Member of the House of Commons. Lord Faulkner proposed Jeffrey Donaldson MP as Chairman, seconded by Lord Clark, and was duly elected. Taking the chair, Jeffrey Donaldson proposed that Lord Faulkner should take the role of Co-Chairman. This was seconded by Lord Cope, and Lord Faulkner was duly elected.

Turning to the election of Vice-Chairs, Lord Faulkner proposed Lord Astor of Hever, Lord Clark of Windermere and Lord Cope of Berkeley, Jeffrey Donaldson indicated his willingness to continue as Treasurer. In addition, Kevan Jones MP was suggested as a Vice-Chair, subject to his agreement¹. These were nominations were moved *en bloc*.

Appointment of secretary. From the chair, Jeffrey Donaldson MP thanked Professor Doyle for his hard work over the previous year, and noted his willingness to continue in his role. He was duly re-appointed.

Treasurer's report. Jeffrey Donaldson MP will prepare an opening balance, but reported that there has been no change as of the previous AGM. There will be some fees, with website maintenance continuing. A summary will be prepared in due course.

¹ Kevan Jones MP agreed post-meeting to take on the role of Vice-Chair, and was duly appointed.

Turning to subscriptions, Lord Faulkner suggested that Jeffrey Donaldson MP propose the All Party Group to the whole parliament, in order to increase membership. He proposed a subscription of five pounds, which was agreed.

Jeffrey Donaldson MP closed the business and invited Simon Bendry, from the Institute of Education (UCL), to make his presentation.

Simon Bendry (Institute of Education) thanked the group for the invitation, the opportunity to outline the work of the First World War Education Programme to date, examining achievements and outlining future developments.

Mr Bendry commenced by explaining briefly how the First World War Education Programme has developed since being announced in 2012. The Programme is jointly funded by the Government's Great War Centenary funds and by Local Government. It provides the opportunity of all State Schools to visit the battlefields of France and Flanders, and so far, 1089 schools, some 46% of the total, have been involved in its first part. There are three components.

1. In its basic form, the Programme involves one teacher and two pupils from each state school (though in some circumstances two teachers are needed due to educational requirements), each to be taken on a tour of the battlefields in order to deepen understanding.
2. In addition to this, and in view that of the fact that the development funding went to UCL's Institute of Education (IoE), there is also an aspiration to assist in the development, within the teaching profession, of developing an innovative and research-based experience, working with teachers to develop this.
3. Finally, the third element is a legacy programme, with the view of developing a lasting legacy. This involves students and teachers taking back their experiences, and getting involved in community based projects, and talking with the communities.

Mr Bendry then showed a short video that provided an indication of the role of the Programme. The film expressed the nature of the work, and showed young people in the battlefield setting and visiting Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) sites in the key areas of the Western Front. He then went on to explain the main achievements of the Programme to date.

1. **Professional development for teachers.** The Programme has provided an opportunity for teachers to develop their own understanding of the war, looking both overseas and at home. The IoE has run a range of opportunities for teachers, national face-to-face days with sessions and workshops to help and assist, and to explain available resources and materials. All of these provide opportunities to further develop understanding. The sessions have been supported by the Western Front Association (WFA), who provided travel funding for a range of Keynote speakers. The feedback from the sessions has been excellent, with 84% of teachers attending saying that they will change the way they teach the Great War to their students, with the hope that they can go beyond the current expectations. The feedback shows that teachers believe their knowledge had been improved by the sessions.
2. **Online modules.** A series of modules have been developed to help teachers with their learning plans. The IoE has been working with the Imperial War Museum in order to identify the issues, as well as with other national bodies, to support how and what they are delivering during the Centenary. In all, the Online Modules have been created in order to help develop subject knowledge. This has involved working with cemeteries and memorials, not only overseas, but also at home.
3. **Tours are the centerpiece.** Some 81% of teachers attending have rated the tours as outstanding, out of a number of 725 schools, 1400 pupils, and 800 teachers.

The First tours were from May, and there are two touring seasons. During September-October then in the spring seasons. To date, there have been two complete seasons. Already 396 schools booked for autumn, some 85% of places, and there are 69 left. Every school has a four-day trip, with a residential session in Ashford (Kent) in order to assist with the development of community, regimental, and other key Centenary links.

In Autumn 2015, there are plans to commemorate Loos, and then the following year, there will be Somme100. Each school will research a soldier, supported using the CWGC and Lives of Great War site, so that they can get extra information. After that, they will visit the resting place of the soldier they have researched. The impact of this type of activity is great, through association with an individual. Visiting the 44,000 soldiers at Tyne Cott in Belgium will allow pupils to think about the scale of loss, again by focusing on an individual. Trips will have one day in Ypres, one in Somme and then Ypres. Each site has a specific question, and then builds with a bigger question. This encourages pupils to consider the issues, and to explore the question. Each coach has a serving soldier attending, giving young people an opportunity what being a soldier is actually like. This is often a difficult issue to address, but serving soldiers provide the opportunity to discuss the nature of battle, their thoughts and feelings towards it. The trip is led by a Guild of Battlefield Guides (GBG) member. In all cases, the students are encouraged to consider what, and why of remembrance, and to discuss what should be remembered.

4. **Awards.** As a consequence of these activities, the programme has received two awards. The first was the Nathanaial Wade award of the Guild of Battlefield Guides, given for the development of battlefield guiding at the end of 2014. The programme also attained an award for the best educational product from British Youth travel awards. Finally, it has also been nominated for a UCL award, for outreach.
5. **Webinar.** The programme has a webinar group that accesses the niche of history teachers, and which provides the means for teachers to share ideas and materials. This has been successful, with other organisations providing materials, including suggestions and materials from a wide range of bodies, including the British Society of Quakers, and the Football Association, amongst others. At present there are 2,500 registered users, out of an estimated number of 6-7000 teachers of history.

Mr Bendry then went on to discuss the third phase of the programme, its legacy. He introduced the concept of 'Legacy 110', explaining that if each student representative was able to reach 110 people after their visits, then the total number of people who would be influenced by the programme could reach 888,000 – same number of British lives lost in the Great War.

He explained that the programme seeks to encourage the students to reach out to their communities on their return, with targets set for them, which extend beyond the school, with challenges set for them. This very much makes the idea a community project, touching upon such themes as diversity, women at war, sports teams and other areas. Such projects have been developed, and there is also a keenness for communities to 'adopt' a local war memorial. This legacy aim is supported by Britannica digital learning, who support the concept, with, amongst other things, the supply of a Certificate and badge to those who achieve their target of reaching out to 110 people.

In addition, there are plans to connect with other bodies, including *Never Such Innocence*, an arts based Great War commemoration programme, as well as other major organisations, such as the British Council, the CWGC and the BBC, at local

and national levels. There are plans to host an annual presentation event, which will highlight some of the most innovative collaborative activities. The programme is continuing to develop its educational activities, with links to the Imperial War Museum in particular to highlight some of the most significant events of the Great War in the coming months.

Mr Bendry concluded his presentation by explaining the programme is continuing to improve on its activities, and to raise the profile of its aims. He expressed the hope that, eventually, all schools will take up the opportunity, and reiterated that nearly 46% had already done so. It was Mr Bendry's aim to reach and encourage all schools to take part, and asked if the All Party Group would be interested in helping engage with schools, in order to get every school involved.

Jeffrey Donaldson MP thanked him Mr Bendry for his excellent presentation, and invited members to ask questions.

Lord Cope enquired whether the programme was connected with War Memorials Trust (WMT), of which he is a Trustee. Lord Cope noted that the WMT was primarily engaged in conservation and restoration of war memorials, but that it has an education branch. Mr Bendry confirmed that he did indeed have links with the WMT, working with their educational officers, and noted that WMT flyers were provided for all teachers taking part.

Baroness Sharples asked how Mr Bendry how he planned to access more schools. Mr Bendry explained that there was now national interest in the programme, with more schools seeking it out, but that the programme staff were now targeting a range of professional media, with advertisements in the relevant trade press, as well as Teachers' conventions, etc, together with social media.

Lord Faulkner enquired how the students were selected? He asked whether there had been a competitive component, and whether there were many who were disappointed? He asked also whether the programme had been accessible for disabled students? Mr Bendry explained that many have to apply to take part in the opportunity, and some schools have assisted in ensuring that students with a range of backgrounds, abilities and needs were able to take part. He noted that the programme had been important for social development of those students with special educational needs, and he has noted the acceptance of all students of each other members of their tour. He confirmed that the tours are open to all, though some sites are physically challenging.

Lord Selkirk thanked Mr Bendry and commented that he was impressed with what the programme was managing to achieve. He further enquired whether the students considered the trip to be a 'grim' experience, and wondered what the main emotions were of those who visited? Impressive what they are doing. Mr Bendry commented that the students access the sites at many levels, and that was significant was how they reflected on the war individually. The serving soldiers have helped the students understand and interpret what individual soldiers went through. This is often solemn, but equally he has noted a sense of pride in the achievements of British people in positive light.

Lord Selkirk continued, exploring the whether there had been a meaningful justification, provided? And whether it was possible to make more connections with lives in the Second World War? Mr Bendry explained that this had indeed been discussed, and delivered through a range of questions. He explained that the 'adoption' of local soldiers' stories has assisted with completing these links.

Lord Cope noted that there was a focus on the Western Front, but enquired also of other fronts, such as Gallipoli, Palestine, Mesopotamia and so on. He wondered whether the programme was capable of giving a glimpse of the whole war? Mr Bendry explained that Lijssenhoek Cemetery in Belgium provides an opportunity to examine some of these questions, as, because it was a Casualty Clearing Station, most of the dead are known, Here are buried representatives of almost every nation that took part in the war – some 30 different nationalities.

Lord Faulkner asked whether Mr Bendry would encourage ‘flies on the wall?’, as parliamentarians may wish to attend to see the work of the programme themselves. Mr Bendry confirmed that this was the case, with Dr Murrison MP, the Prime Minister’s Special Representative for the Commemoration of the Great War, attending a whole tour in the spring. He confirmed that he would be delighted to have others join the tour.

Lord Faulkner and Jeffrey Donaldson MP thanked Mr Bendry for his offer, and confirmed that it would be useful to liaise with him over this matter.

Correspondence received

One item of correspondence had been received from Mr Robin Schäfer, a German citizen, who is campaigning to prevent the new museum at the site of the Battle of Waterloo, in Belgium, from displaying the skeletal remains of a known casualty of the battle, a member of the German Legion, who fought on the side of Lord Wellington.

Jeffrey Donaldson MP invited comment.

Lord Cope expressed the view that though distasteful, this was something for the Belgian authorities alone.

Lord Selkirk sympathised with Mr Schäfer’s views, and with those expressed by Lord Cope. In general, he felt that that the exhibit was disrespectful and undesirable.

Lord Faulkner considered that this matter might lie somewhat outside of the All Party Group’s ambit, and felt it was rather more for individual members to consider.

Jeffrey Donaldson MP concurred. He then went on to introduce another item, indicating his intention of writing to new Members of Parliament, in order to draw their attention to the CWGC’s database of war graves situated within each constituency. This idea was supported by the Group.

Jeffrey Donaldson MP then closed the meeting, thanking the contributors for their input to a useful debate.

The All Party Parliamentary War Heritage Group exists to promote and support the protection, conservation and interpretation of war graves, war memorials and battlefield sites.

Co-Chairs: Rt Hon. Jeffrey Donaldson MP, Lord Faulkner of Worcester

Vice-chairs: Lord Astor of Hever, Lord Clark of Windermere

Lord Cope of Berkeley

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