



Meriden's First World War Centenary  
Commemoration 2014-2018



## **Meriden Parish Council nets Heritage Lottery Fund support**

A Meriden Parish Council project to understand the impact that the First World War had on the village will kick off in style later this month with a commemorative football match – the first in a series of events funded through a cash boost from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Meriden's First World War Centenary Commemoration 2014-2018 is being led by volunteers from the local community and has received £8,700 in HLF funding.

The project will enable the local community to understand the impact of the First World War on Meriden and its inhabitants and the men who served and fell. It will also bring the community together for the events that are planned from now until May 2016. The first event supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund is a commemorative football match at Meriden Sports Park. Cricket players from Meriden Spartans CC will kick-off against the army's signallers from 37 Signal Regiment on Saturday 11 October 2014 at 2.30pm.

Meriden Scouts will be there cooking up sausages and burgers on the day and local volunteers are on hand to serve up coffees and teas with homemade cakes. All profit from the food will go to ABF The Soldiers' Charity.

The impact of the First World War on Meriden created memorials of national and local importance. Meriden is the historic Centre of England and for this reason was chosen as the home to the nation's Cyclists' War Memorial which was erected in 1921. A memorial service has taken place every year in May ever since.

Meriden's servicemen came from a wide spectrum of society ranging from Lord Aylesford's heir to his farm labourers. One of Meriden's fallen, Captain Edward Nugent Bankes of Meriden Hall, was remembered by his widow Letitia Bankes who commissioned a stained glass window in St Laurence Church to his memory. She also organised the construction of Meriden's war memorial in the village and was the founder of Meriden's Women's Institute.

The project's logo is the chestnut tree that stands in the car park of the surgery and village hall. The surgery is housed in what used to be Meriden's Old School. After the First World War the Warmingham

brothers planted two chestnut trees outside the school to remember the pupils who had lost their lives during the war. Only one tree survived and is recognised as the first WW1 memorial in the village.

Commenting on the award, Chair of Meriden Parish Council Cllr Melanie Lee said: “We are thrilled to have received the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and we are confident the project will encourage the local community to take pride and interest in Meriden’s heritage.

We have chosen a commemorative football match as one of our planned events to bring home the importance the sport played during WW1. The Imperial War Museum states football helped keep men fit and morale high and was used as a recruiting tool.

“And more memorably, it brought together troops on both sides during the 1914 Christmas truce on the Western Front.”

Reyahn King, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands said: “The impact of the First World War touched every corner of the UK . The Heritage Lottery Fund has already invested more than £58million in projects – large and small - that are marking this global Centenary; with our small grants programme, we are enabling even more communities like those involved in Meriden’s First World War Centenary Commemoration - to explore the continuing legacy of this conflict and help local young people in particular to broaden their understanding of how it has shaped our modern world.”

**ENDS**

## **Notes to editors**

### **About Meriden’s First World War Centenary Commemoration 2014-2018**

Meriden Parish Council has developed a partnership with local organisations and community groups made up of Meriden’s local historian, Doreen Agutter, Meriden Rotary Club, Meriden Scouts Group, Meriden School Governors, Meriden Beavers, Meriden PPC, Meriden Tree of Thought, Meriden Village Hall Committee, Meriden Women’s Institute, Meriden Cameo, Meriden Brownies and St Laurence Church, Meriden. This partnership is planning community events and activities which will raise the profile of Meriden residents who served in WW1 and the impact it had on the village.

See our website [www.firstworldwarmeriden.co.uk](http://www.firstworldwarmeriden.co.uk) and Facebook page First World War Meriden.

### **About the Heritage Lottery Fund**

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) aims to make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities across the UK and help build a resilient heritage economy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported over 36,000 projects with more than £6bn across the UK. [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk).

### **For further information, images and interviews, please contact**

Cllr Melanie Lee, Chair of Meriden Parish Council on 07768 218872 or email [mellee@talktalk.net](mailto:mellee@talktalk.net).