

West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust

Media Release



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Press Release – BOOK LAUNCH - The Lost Twenty Nine, soldiers of the Great War

A new book has been published telling the moving stories of twenty nine local men who lost their lives in the Great War and who are buried or commemorated in The Lye and Wollescote Cemetery.

A special event was held on Saturday the 20th September at Christ Church, Lye, to mark the launch of this World War 1 Centenary book, produced by local historians and authors, Jean Weston and Marlene Price, and is an important milestone in The Lye and Wollescote Cemetery Chapels conservation project being managed by the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust (WMHBT).

The stories of the twenty nine men, fifteen of whom are buried in Commonwealth War Graves in the Cemetery and fourteen others killed in action abroad whose names appear on family graves, includes a family's search for a lieutenant missing on the Somme, a Shropshire Grenadier Guardsman commemorated in the Cemetery, the hero Private who volunteered when ammunition was low, and the tragic death of a young VAD nurse caring for the wounded in a local military hospital.

With detailed research and evocative imagery this fully illustrated book recounts vividly the impact of a devastating war which began a century ago and is

remembered poignantly today. In addition, an interpretive exhibition to complement the publication has been created which is demountable and is available for display in suitable venues.

Mr Robert Tolley Dipl Arch RIBA AABC and Chairman of WMHBT opened the launch and introduced the first guest speaker Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Keith Jeavons, who served in the Worcestershire Territorials and was with the army for many years, having a long standing connection with Stourbridge. He started with many poignant thoughts about the Great War.: *"In 1914 the 2nd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment were on their way to training camp in Minehead... all piling onto a train thinking of a fortnight's holiday by the sea... having joined, as they do now, because their mates had joined. Those lads didn't know where they were going. Try and picture how they felt. Some of them never came back."*

David Owen OBE, a Trustee of the Black Country Living Museum, was the second guest speaker and said... *'The Lost Twenty Nine, each one special, gave up family and friends and lives that had hardly started, so that we might live our own lives today in freedom from the tyranny which could have overtaken us. The authors, Jean Weston and Marlene Price, have worked so hard to give us a book to constantly remember those brave men, and the whole context of how this terrible war started, and how they responded to the call "Your Country Needs You".'*

For more information about how to purchase a copy of this beautiful publication and find out more about this exciting project, please visit the website

www.lyeandwollescote.info

Notes to editors:

About the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust

The West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust (WMHBT) is a registered charity, established in 1985, with specialists in the field of building conservation giving their time on a voluntary basis to serve as Trustees and funds coming from membership subscriptions. WMHBT's purpose is to safeguard buildings within the West Midlands that are of historical or architectural importance. Where this cannot be achieved by simply raising awareness to the issues, WMHBT will consider carrying out a conservation project itself. As a registered Building Preservation Trust, WMHBT is able to attract grants and low-cost loans to carry out the type of rescue scheme often necessary with 'Buildings at Risk' and in this way aims to cover the deficit in funding such projects.

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in safeguarding historic buildings. WMHBT organises a range of activities, focused on the West Midlands, which include a regular newsletter; specialist talks, events and visits to historic buildings; arranging public access (as appropriate) to buildings before, during and after repair; commissioning and publishing research into historic buildings; encouraging the involvement of schools and colleges in conservation projects; and disseminating information.

The first WMHBT project was 19-20 High Street, Kinver, South Staffordshire, a timber-frame building listed grade II. In the Staffordshire volume of 'The Buildings of England' series, the late Nikolaus Pevsner states that in Kinver High Street the best houses are numbers 17-20. To have lost an important building within that range would have been a tragedy, but when the WMHBT took the building over it was in a dangerous condition, with parts close to collapse. By that stage no-one was prepared to take up the arrears of maintenance because it would have cost more than the market value to put it right. As a result of the WMHBT project, 19-20 High Street has been transformed into a comfortable four-bedroom home and is now occupied by new owners. The high standards of the work were recognised by two awards: "The Carpenters' Award" presented by English Heritage in recognition of "the sensitivity of approach and excellence of craftsmanship"; and a "mention" by the Civic Trust for its "worthy contribution to the community".

The second WMHBT project was the grade II listed office building built as a living showcase by the former Harris & Pearson Company, firebrick manufacturers, in Brettell Lane, Brierley Hill, West Midlands. The building had been unoccupied for 13 years and was in a derelict state when acquired by WMHBT, with the costs of repair again being in excess of market value. The building was converted for modern-day use as prestigious offices and materials produced to interpret the associated heritage stories (see www.harrisandpearson.info). The project was a regional finalist in the RICS Awards, a national finalist in the Brick Awards, and was awarded a Civic Trust awards "commendation".

Both of the above projects were made possible by tremendous local community and local authority support and financial assistance from several sources, including primarily the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Architectural Heritage Fund.

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 almost 35,000 projects with more than £5.5bn across the UK. www.hlf.org.uk

Further information:

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Supporting information such as photographs and artists impressions are available on request.