



Press release

8 April 2003

The Prince of Wales meets First World War veterans at The National Archives

The Prince of Wales is visiting The National Archives at Kew, south west London, today (8 April) to meet veterans of the First World War who are gathering together for the last time. The veterans, aged between 102 and 108, are attending an educational event organised jointly by the Dark Horse Venture charity and the World War One Veterans Association.

The veterans will spend the day sharing memories and experiences. They will meet His Royal Highness and talk to schoolchildren (in Year 10, aged 14-15) from Tring in Hertfordshire who are taking part in a World War One workshop organised by The National Archives. Other schools from Newcastle, Merseyside and Dublin will take part in a live videoconference link to the workshop, with a veteran and an actor playing the part of a Great War soldier.

Sarah Tyacke, Chief Executive of The National Archives, says:

"I am delighted that The National Archives is hosting this momentous event and especially honoured that the Prince of Wales is visiting us today. The National Archives – which brings together the Public Record Office and the Historical Manuscripts Commission – seeks to safeguard the nation's memory for present and future generations to enjoy. Today's meeting of World War One veterans and Year 10 schoolchildren is a marvellous opportunity to show how archives and oral history can bring history to life."

Tom O'Leary, head of The National Archives' education department, says:

"Today's event is just one example of the many opportunities which The National Archives offers for pupils of all ages to work as real historians, investigating original sources from the past through the technology of the future."

The National Archives holds a considerable amount of material about the First World War. Many records of individual soldiers were destroyed or damaged by enemy action in the Second World War. Those that survived – the so-called "Burnt Documents" – have now all been microfilmed and are available for viewing at The National Archives in Kew.

Roger Kershaw, historian at The National Archives, says:

"Anyone interested in the First World War will find a wealth of material preserved here at The National Archives. The records – ranging from high level policy documents to files covering the careers of millions of men and women – are available to any member of the public."

Steve Goodwin, Director of The Dark Horse Venture, says:

"The Dark Horse Venture is a national charity that operates the UK's largest award scheme for retired and older people - helping them to put their work and life skills to practical and creative use. It doesn't campaign on behalf of older people but helps them to speak for themselves through the things they aspire to and achieve. The ethos of the charity is to focus on what is right with older people rather than what is wrong with them."

“The event at Kew, so appropriately hosted by The National Archives, will highlight a new project of the charity which will turn oral history material into the latest virtual reality technology to create a learning resource for future generations.”

Dennis Goodwin, Chairman of the World War One Veterans Association, says:

"After 15 years of organising reunions and pilgrimages for the veterans of the Great War, the World War One Veterans Association is choosing to go out on a high note, rather than fade away. We are using our long- standing collaboration with The Dark Horse Venture to create a unique inter-generational event where veterans hand over their own archive recordings and memorabilia to launch a new resource for learners of all ages which will use the latest technology.

“The Association's focus has not been to look back but to look forward and this seems a fitting way to leave a legacy for the children of today.”

For further information please contact: Clea Relly or Siobhan Wakely at The National Archives Press Office, on 020 8392 5277 (email press@nationalarchives.gov.uk; fax 020 8392 5295), The National Archives, Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU. Website: www.national.archives.gov.uk

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Notes for Editors

1. The National Archives for England, Wales and the United Kingdom – which brings together the Public Record Office and the Historical Manuscripts Commission – was formed on 2 April 2003. The National Archives acts as the custodian of the nation’s collective memory as revealed in the records of government. It also collects and disseminates information about archives relating to British history wherever they are held. Its aims are:

- To assist and promote the study of the past through the public records and other archives in order to inform the present and the future
- To act as the chief source of authoritative advice and guidance on records management, archive policy and related information policy matters within government
- To provide impartial advice to custodians of records and papers throughout the public and private sectors on records and archives management

2. There are over 100 different series of documents at The National Archives recording the activities of Britain and its empire during the First World War. The records of the Cabinet (CAB series), the War Office (WO), the Foreign Office (FO) and the Admiralty (ADM) contain many of the government documents on the central direction of the war.

3. Amongst the most popular records in The National Archives are the service papers of British Army Officers and men during the First World War, 1914-18. These records were destroyed or damaged by enemy action during the Second World War. Over 33,000 boxes of service records (of some 2 million soldiers) survived but many were damaged by fire and/or water. The originals (the so-called “Burnt Documents”) are too fragile to be made available to researchers. With the aid of Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) and the Genealogical Society of Utah, The National Archives has recently completed a major project to microfilm this series, which is now available for viewing at Kew.

4. The National Archives’ busy programme of education events for schools and colleges brings over 4000 schoolchildren a year (from primary to A level) to Kew on group visits to work with original documents and with archival experts to bring history to life. Workshops are also provided for undergraduates. Using videoconferencing facilities, The National Archives is able to allow students from across the UK and Ireland to take part in the workshops.

5. Drawing on a wealth of archive material, The National Archives continues to publish, on its website www.nationalarchives.gov.uk, free online learning materials to supplement courses taught

in schools. Its **new online exhibition, *Britain 1906-1918 – contrast, contradiction and change***, at www.learningcurve.pro.gov.uk/britain1906-18/default.htm, includes a gallery on how the deadly struggle of the First World War changed life in Britain. In partnership with The Imperial War Museum, and funded by the New Opportunities Fund, The National Archives has also developed **an exhibition for lifelong learners – *The First World War: Sources for history*** – at www.pro.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/default.htm, described by *The Sunday Times* as “a multilayered marvel which simulates the excitement of hands-on research”.

6. The World War One Veterans Association was formed in 1988 by Dennis Goodwin and his son Stephen. It has helped over 200 veterans make pilgrimages back to the battlefields of France and Flanders and has organised reunions, travels and trips abroad.

7. The Dark Horse Venture (contact: Steve Goodwin on 0151 729 0092) is the largest award scheme for older people in the UK, encouraging them to get involved in new learning activities across the widest possible range of subjects and spheres of interest.