Accrington Pals Centenary Commemorations Group

Wednesday, 23rd September 2015

Present:

Councillor Clare Cleary (in the Chair)
Helen Barrett, St John’s Church/Hyndburn Local History Society/Accrington Civic Society
Nick Collingridge
Councillor Wendy Dwyer
Ian McGuinness, East Lancashire Concert band
Anne Ellwood
Tommy Fox, British Legion
Helen Gee, Hyndburn BC
Cath Holmes
Michael Hughes, British Legion
Gayle Knight, Oswaldtwistle Arts Centre
Councillor Kath Pratt
Ruth Turner
Shelley Whitehead, Duke of Lancaster’s Regiment

1. Welcome and Introductions

1.1 Councillor Clare Cleary introduced herself as chairing the meeting in the absence of Councillor Miles Parkinson and invited those present to introduce themselves.

2. Apologies for absence

2.1 Apologies were submitted on behalf of Rev Ian Enticott, Cathy Kierans (Hyndburn BC), Councillors Judith Addison, Ken Moss, Miles Parkinson; Katherine Walsh (Accrington Library)

3. Minutes of the last Meeting

Agreed - That the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd February 2015 be received and noted.

4. Matters arising

4.1 Cath Holmes expressed disappointment at the decision to move the replica memorial of the Pals memorial in Serre, from the rose garden to another location in Haworth Park. She felt that as this was a more secluded location it may be more prone to vandalism.

4.2 Shelley Whitehead thanked everyone for the extremely good turnout at the annual Pals service at St John’s on 22nd February 2015.
5. **Project Updates**

5.1 The Chair invited updates on projects. Details were listed in the schedule included with the agenda papers. Specific projects/updates were discussed at the meeting:

5.1.1 **Creation of Pals Room**
Mrs Ruth Turner wished to thank everyone involved in the creation of the Pals Room in the Town Hall and for arranging the opening ceremony on 1st August 2015.

5.1.2 **Special Liveried Bus**
It was reported that Transdev planned to commission a special liveried bus to commemorate the First World War and the Pals and to be launched at the opening of the new bus station in Accrington in April 2016. Shelley Whitehead asked whether the bus would be ready for February 2016, in which case it would be good to use it as transport for various dignitaries at the annual Pals Service at St John's. Helen Gee said that she would make some enquiries.

5.1.3 **Prom in the Park, 2016 (Oakhill Park)**
Anne Ellwood reported that planning meetings were being held regularly to plan for the Prom on 25th June 2016. This would also include a special event for Armed Forces Day, to be organised by Michael Hughes and the British Legion. She pleaded for more volunteers to attend the planning meetings and to get involved in the various tasks.

5.1.4 **Civic Visit to the Somme**
Cath Holmes and Nick Collingridge reported on arrangements for the coach trip to the Somme, which would also include the Mayor and Mayoress of Hyndburn in the party. The trip was fully booked, with a waiting list, and people needed to pay in full by the end of January. There was mention of making a video diary, or live streaming the trip.

5.1.5 **Town Centre Heritage Project**
Councillor Clare Cleary updated the group on the development of the town centre heritage project. An exhibition was currently on display in the Market Hall, to get ideas. A project group was also in place and was meeting regularly to progress ideas. Shelly Whitehead asked if she could be informed of dates, times and venue for the project group meetings.

5.1.6 **Civic Arts Projects**
Gayle Knight updated the group on plans to broadcast the full version of the Accrington Pals Play on Radio Lancashire, which was still the intention. In addition, she also confirmed plans to stage Private peaceful at some stage, at the Arts Centre.

5.1.7 **Young People’s Trips**
Shelley Whitehead informed the group of plans to organise young people’s trips to the Somme. Some planning trips had already taken place and she would keep the group informed. In addition, she referred to the schools trips, which had been a pledge of the Government.

5.1.8 **Pals Beer**
Nick Collingridge and Cath Holmes reported that the beer would continue to be sold at Farmers’ Markets etc. until sold out. The beer had raised funds, which were available to fund various projects relevant to the Pals.

5.1.9 **Memorial on the Coppice**
The group asked if there was any more information about the proposed memorial on the Coppice, about which Miles Parkinson informed the group some months ago. Helen Gee undertook to obtain further information.

6. **Pals Trail**

6.1 Wendy Dwyer and Helen Barrett reported on progress to establish a Pals Trail. Gayle Knight had offered to work with the Civic Trust to get the project off the ground and an application for Heritage Lottery Funding was being drafted. A plan was in place and it was hoped that the trail would come to fruition soon.

7. **East Lancashire Concert Band**

7.1 Ian McGuinness updated the group on functions in which East Lancs Concert Band had participated:

- 26th July 2015 - Reveille at Blackburn Library, commemorating the names on the Thiepval monument with no known grave
- 7th June 2015 - Towneley Hall – commemoration for the Royal Edward, a troopship which had been torpedoed in the Dardanelles.
- 13th August 2015 - Memorial at Towneley Hall
- 6th March 2016 - Lions Regional Convention, with music, readings and narration

8. **Commemorations for the Somme Centenary, July 2016**

8.1 The group shared ideas and plans for the commemorations of the centenary of the Battle of the Somme on 1st July 2016. Various ideas were put forward, including

- Roll call of the whole Battalion
- Illumination of the Town Hall
- Commissioning of a visual representation of the event which would have significant impact
- Event at the bus station
- Musical ideas – St Christopher’s School Choir had offered to perform

8.2 A note of the various ideas was made and proposals/options would be shared with the group in due course.

9. **Date of Next Meeting - to be arranged.**