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The Last Post Project 2014 Evaluation



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Overview

The Last Post took place from the 4th – 18th November 2014, and saw over 40,000 people engage with local heritage events in their community. Events took place in a diverse range of settings including schools, residential homes, churches, prisons, community centres, sports clubs and libraries.

93% of attendees said that the First World War commemorations had brought their community closer together and 75% of attendees said that since they attended a Last Post event they have become more interested in First World War history.

This evaluation brings together feedback from volunteers, participants, members of the public who attended events and team members to give a picture of events in November 2014.



Performance of the Last Post on the Indian dilruba by UK Punjab Heritage Society



Headline figures

- **238** free, open access events held across the UK from the **4th – 18th November**
- **40,250 participants** - average of 175 attendees per event
- **2,530 volunteers** - average of 11 volunteers per event
- **8,400 volunteer hours** given to organise each Last Post event; average of 30 hours per volunteer
- **5,520 performers** - average of 24 performers per event
- 63 people attended training events in Dungannon, London, Leeds, Birmingham and Treherbert
- 80% of attendees said that they learnt something new about the First World War at a Last Post event
- 93% of attendees said that the First World War commemorations had brought their community closer together
- 55% of attendees said they attend heritage events less than annually
- 75% of attendees said that since attending a Last Post event they have become more interested in First World War history.
- 48% of volunteers involved had never organised a heritage event before
- 94% of respondents said they are more likely to organise heritage events again in the future having taken part in The Last Post
- 88% of organisers said that they had the audience numbers they had hoped for
- 74% of events were organised in partnership with other organisations and partners



Geographical Spread

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| • South England | 71 events |
| • Central England | 37 events |
| • North England | 51 events |
| • Wales | 23 events |
| • Scotland | 6 events* |
| • Northern Ireland | 50 events |

*Changes with staffing in Scotland mid-way through the project resulted in far fewer events in Scotland than originally anticipated.

Performances of the Last Post

The Last Post was played on a range of different instruments at events, including:

- Glockenspiel
- Saxophone
- Guitar
- Flute
- African string fiddle
- Banjo
- Hand bells
- Steel pans
- Indian dilruba
- Traditional Chinese instruments including: Pipa, daruan, erhu, gaohu, xiaoruan, flute and yangchin

At all events, the Last Post was played to remember an individual or a group of people:

- *“We remembered the many lost relatives of choir members, but in particular my father's brother, Corporal John Lawrence Viles. Tank Corps, who died of pneumonia on 10th October 1918, having survived many battles in his tank.”*

North Yorkshire Chorus

- *“We remembered the VAD nurses that went out to the front line.”*

North West Lodestar CIC



- *“We remembered black hero Walter Tull from Tottenham Spurs who followed other fellow footballers and signed up with the 17th (1st Football) Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment. Walter became the first British-born black officer in the British Army. Walter led his unit, at the Battle of Piave on the Italian Front, through extreme weather conditions and brought his men back safely without a single casualty. Tragically, Walter Tull was killed in action during the second Battle of the Somme in March 1918 aged 29. He was such a popular officer that several of his men tried to recover his body and bring it back to the trenches. But their attempts were in vain.*

Innovative vision organisation

- *“We remembered Khudadad Khan and Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus in general “*

Staffordshire University

- *“We remembered 1st class boy: James L. Gordon, Stoker: Garn Wood, Both lost on HMS Monmouth 01.11.1914, Crew of SMS Blucher lost at Dogger bank 24.01.1915”*

Victoria Primary School and Newhaven Community Choir

- *“We remembered the 140,000 Chinese Labour Corps”*

Pagoda Arts, Liverpool

- *“We remembered Privates Elliot and Belcher – Wolverhampton library assistants who joined up to serve as ambulance-men. In 1917 they are recorded as dying side by side on the same day at the same time. Both were awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.”*

Women of Wolverhampton, Howling Wolves Community Choir

- *“We remembered Young Officer Albert B.P. Spencer (Wiltshire Regiment), aged 17, killed in action 10/03/15. The Great Uncle of one of our performers, Ken Rich, who was lost at sea just before the war ended.”*

The White Hart Pub

- *“We remembered Pte Edward Murphy Royal Innis. Fus. Died 1st July 1916 age 31 and Pte James McGerr Royal Innis. Fus. died 13th May 1918 age 29. Both were members of the local orange lodge who then set up Benburb Memorial Pipe Band in memory of those 2 men and others in the local area that fought and/or died in the war.”*

Benburb Memorial Pipe Band



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Participating groups and diversity of events

- Football and rugby clubs
- Churches and faith groups
- Schools – primary and secondary
- Brass bands and community music groups
- Scouts and Guides
- Community choirs
- History societies
- Theatres
- Pubs
- Prison
- Residential homes and day centres
- Libraries
- Cemeteries

Examples of some groups involved:

- UK Punjab Heritage Association
- Scale and the Courtyard Café Yeovil – adults with disabilities
- Black Voices UK
- Women of Wolverhampton
- Staffordshire University – Muslim contribution to the FWW lecture
- St Michael's & All Angels Church – young people from Stonebridge, London
- Pagoda Arts – Chinese contribution to FWW
- Sandy Row Community Centre Northern Ireland



Last Post participant survey results

- 62% of attendees heard about events through word of mouth (7% local media, 7% local poster or flyer, 24% other)
- 40% of attendees attended with their families (34% attended with friends, 24% attended alone and 2% other)
- 86% of attendees travelled less than 5 miles to attend events (8% travelled 10-20 miles, 6% travelled more than 20 miles)
- 80% of attendees said that they learnt something new about the First World War at a Last Post event
- 77% of attendees said that they learnt something new about their LOCAL First World War heritage at a Last Post event
- 53% of respondents said that they attend local history events less than annually
- 68% of attendees said that they met new members of their community at a Last Post event
- 85% of attendees said that hearing stories from the First World War made them feel better connected to their community
- 93% of attendees said that the First World War commemorations had brought their community closer together
- 75% of attendees said that since they attended a Last Post event they have become more interested in First World War history
- 52% of attendees donated money at an event
- 72% of attendees rated Last Post events as excellent
- 97% of attendees said that they would attend a Last Post event again in the future



Resources

- 70% of organisers played songs from the Last Post song book at their event
- 63% of organisers rated the song book as very good
- Future recommendations for the song book:
 - A separate page for lyrics for ease of photocopying
 - Perhaps some songs from other countries involved such as France
 - Reproducible versions of the WWI photographs in the songbook would assist with local publicity
 - Easier to print in black and white with fewer images
 - Some more contemporary songs and peace songs like Where Have all the Flowers Gone, Johnnie I Hardly Knew Ye
 - More well-known songs, or perhaps a sing along cd?
 - Backing tracks for organisations without piano players
 - More accompaniments or harmonies
 - More songs that provide music for different instruments – like the last post
 - More local songs for Irish groups



Performance of the Last Post by students from Merchants' Academy, Bristol at Arnos Vale Cemetery



Feedback from volunteers

“It was a great event and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the evening and found it very moving. It was a great opportunity to personally mark the First World War in a safe and encouraging environment.”

North West Lodestar CIC

“We had to deal with perceptions that black people did not fight in the Great War; we believe a small group can make a difference and the audience pledged to carry out more awareness events about the First and Second World War.”

Innovative Vision Organisation

“Really enjoyed working with others to put on this village event; people who attended the event, really enjoyed it. We received many compliments about how moving it was to hear the Last Post and how moved people were to see it played by a young person, who was not only willing to stand up and play it to a completely silent church and in front of so many people, but who captured the sense of the occasion. A young person playing it who would have been not a great deal younger than many of the young men who set off for war in World War One seemed to mean a great deal to the people attending.

Shimpling Village Hall

“Everyone really enjoyed our event. Our residents find this type of event really important and it means a lot to them. They enjoyed getting involved beforehand with choosing poems and creating decorations for the room. It was great to be part of something wider and to have resources to call on.”

Milford House Care Home

“The coming together of people with an event that has touched all lives and family histories is very powerful and healing.”

Walcot State Choir

“It has proved an amazing event, inspiring our group to be constituted later this year and hold regular events for now on! Thanks”

Muckamore Covenant and Somme Society



“The concept of the piece was very well received by the participants and the performance of it was very well received by the audience. It was an enjoyable thing to do and to be a part of.”

The Irene Taylor Trust ‘Music in Prisons’

“This was a unique experience of personal remembrance. I felt that the personal nature of the event was completely different to formal and traditional commemoration. It was very moving. One of those who attended wrote to me: “I loved last night. I found it hugely poignant but also very real and personal. And I couldn’t help thinking how amazed all the people we were remembering would be to know that we were ‘honouring’ them in this way in London a hundred years on.”

Friends and family, Penn Road plus Penn Road community plus St Luke’s Church congregation

“It was a great event, well attended and a real springboard for planning future events to draw the community together. Indeed we have quickly pulled together plans for a Community Carol event and plans are afoot for our collaboration with Rockcliffe First School for Our Big Gig.”

Rockcliffe Community Association

“This project has helped the young Chinese in our community feel aware and feel part of belonging to their local history. For a while, the young Chinese (and many older Chinese) were not aware of the Chinese involvement during the WW1, and were not able to feel part of local commemorations. After this project, our young people can have more reason to take part during the WW1 memorial services.”

Pagoda Arts

“The Last Post Project was a visionary event and a wonderful idea from Superact. It was a privilege for Grimethorpe to be involved and we would fully support any future events of this nature. We firmly hope that the Last Post project will encourage additional individuals and communities to engage with and become involved in the annual act of remembrance across the UK and wider”

Grimethorpe Colliery Band

“A fantastic opportunity, which inspired us to join in and hold a successful event for the whole community. Feedback included the following comments: Most enjoyable evening, very



poignant and nostalgic. Thank you for sharing your stories with us; The singing was great and the hairs stood on the back of my neck when the Last Post was played. Well done and very well organised; Stories were emotional and informative, well organised and good to see support from Mayor and councillors; A lovely tribute to the people we remember; A very interesting night. Everyone was made so welcome. I noticed mothers and grandmothers in the room with their children singing away and enjoying the complimentary food. A real sense of community spirit was felt; A night for family, the young, the old and for myself who can go on my own and mix with others; Learnt a lot about the First World War, look forward to move evenings like this; Very informative...Awesome...more of these evenings...."

Atlas Women's Centre

"I thought the idea brilliant and helped to forge links with the community and enabled schools to be involved in the act of remembrance."

Royal Welch Fusiliers Museum

"This was a great event that achieved far more than was thought initially, it brought knowledge out that we did not know existed in our group. The piper played a lament based on the theme of the last post that was written to remember the fallen airmen, it was very poignant. We also are working towards our group visiting the Somme over next few years."

Fermanagh Branch, Royal Air Forces Association



The Last Post being performed in Portaferry, Northern Ireland



Highlights from Regional Trainers

“Nationalists and unionists working together in a creative way to present a shared experience of WW1 created the best event I attended – it was Craic Theatre’s event – held in the Square Box Theatre. Involved the music of WW1, personal diary extracts, letters, and a script created from the shared experiences of nationalists and unionists who joined up in Ireland. However, there was no live playing of the Last Post, or naming of individuals it was commemorating.”

Cathie McKimm, Northern Ireland Regional Trainer

“ Butterknowle Primary - a tiny village primary school located in an ex- pit mining village in a very, very remote part of Teesdale. The whole school and community got completely involved; they’d used the event as a means to re-invigorate music-making for the whole school. They had soloists, small group brass performance, guitar ensembles, poetry readings, they’d built a copy of the village war statue and read out the names of every man who had been killed from the village. They sang songs from WW1 but also a modern song about peace (‘No Wars will Stop Us Singing’) which was just beautiful. Every member of the school was dressed in WW1 costumes as was every member of staff. They even had a WW1 themed school lunch. They also had an exhibition of the children work and they were clearly very inspired by the toolkit and song book too.”

Christine Spriggs, North of England Regional Trainer

“The Howling Wolves Community choir curated a free concert style event that was completely full. Everyone in the choir contributed to the programming and they successfully included the local Sikh community and told the story of a Sikh regiment involved in WWI. In Towcester the local guide group performed at an elderly care home. The songs and structure of the event encouraged the older and younger people to interact together. “

Nicola Toms, Central England Regional Trainer



Media Coverage

National

TV – One major national broadcaster featured The Last Post project as Ben Elton discussed the project with Lorraine Kelly’s breakfast show on ITV

Radio – Four of the BBC’s national radio stations featured The Last Post project in primetime shows including The Today Programme, WATO, Jeremy Vine Show and 5 Live Breakfast

Print & Online – Eight national and international media titles featured The Last Post project including Xinhua Chinese state paper, Global Post, The Daily Telegraph, The Mirror, BBC News, Daily Mail Online, 4 Bars Rest and others

Key national TV & radio highlights:

- ITV Lorraine Show – Ben Elton talks about The Last Post (1 million viewers)
- BBC Radio 5 Live – Superact discusses the aims of The Last Post on Breakfast (5.5 million viewers)
- BBC Radio 4 – The World at One plays Mark Knopfler’s Last Post performance (3.5 million listeners)
- BBC Radio 2 – The Jeremy Vine Show – 25 minute feature discussing The Last Post (7.3 million listeners)
- BBC Radio 4 - Today Programme features launch of the project with Paul Sartin (7.1 million listeners)
- TOTAL NATIONAL CIRCULATION – 24.4 million

Regional

Key regional TV & radio highlights:

- BBC General News Service – Paul Sartin plugs in to 15 regional BBC shows
- The Last Post project joins forces with BBC Bristol and World War One at Home Roadshow at Bristol International Balloon Fiesta
- 25+ appearances from Last Post event hosts and representatives on BBC regional radio stations
- Featured on BBC London’s Breakfast Show, BBC Points West and ITV West

Print & online – At minimum of 30 articles featured in local newspapers about the Last Post project.