



Herts At War Project: Research Reconnaissance

This newsletter is intended to keep our research helpers and volunteers informed of progress. It therefore only gives a one dimensional picture of what is happening with the project. It tends to ignore the many other elements of the project and does not generally seek to cover all the great work being done by other volunteers and project officers.

Content by Roll of Honour Research Coordinator: jontywild@hertsatwar.co.uk.

www.hertsatwar.co.uk

This newsletter is aimed specifically at those with an interest in the Herts at War research and its progress. To that end it is not generally distributed but is available for download by interested parties.

The aim of this newsletter is to provide information on relevant progress, aims and explain what is needed. It is therefore directly related to various aspects of research so if you lose interest in one section just move on to another!

Progress:

You may have seen in the general newsletter some information about progress - here is more detail.

We have said elsewhere that most of the work being carried out has been behind the scenes, and that has been the case for about 12 months.

When the old website was switched off there were about 5,700 biographies on it, but in preparation for the new database-powered website we had stopped uploading for some weeks/months before. We still had new biographies being supplied, at first in the 'old' Word format and then in a newer format, which reflected the fields in the new database. We now have a backlog of these to process, but more of that below.

In the period between websites the main 'research-related' work was the conversion of the existing biographies, which were in Word form, so that they could be imported. This was a massive task and one beyond those with normal Excel skills. Fortunately, I was able to get the help of two former colleagues; Andy Palmer who helped with the preparation of the locations (towns and villages etc.) and Andrew Selby, who by some form of wizardry worthy of Harry Potter, bulk converted the Word documents to Excel – *no I don't know how either!* Even this does not tell the whole story:

- The old website content had to be uploaded to the new – *we are still working on elements of this!*
- After conversion, all 5,700 records needed 'sense' checking before importing and many needed further work before 'switching' on the new website.
- The new website, database, bulk upload and new online data input all had to be tested.

Database

Current User: Jonty Wild / Change P...

Add New Record

Forenames:

Initials:

Surname:

Rank:

Service Number (if available):

Regiment (or part of):

War Dead Survivor

* If any existing records match the details you have entered above, then you will be given an option to review any matches before a new record.

Cancel

Since the new website went live various individuals and groups have supplied mass research – *we thank all of them for sharing our view that all the men and women should be commemorated and sharing their research with us to that end.* We need to thank all those involved in projects researching Abbots Langley, Ver Valley, Rickmansworth, Croxley Green, St Albans (in progress), Ware (in progress) and others – *more detail and acknowledgements can be seen at www.hertsatwar.co.uk/research/*

The above, together with individual researchers, have increased the biographies (online) by about another 3,800 records, with another 1,000 to 1,500 in progress. However, once again, this still does not tell the whole story. A major problem with how we used to produce and store the biographies meant that many were duplicated. This would happen when the same man or woman appears on multiple memorials – *I recently came across one man who is listed against six Hertfordshire locations.* At the moment, I am guessing, that the 9,500 biographies we now have, probably represents well over 19,000 memorial and locations names, so now many hundreds of duplications have been removed and their biographies improved.

What Now?

We need to encourage individuals or small groups of researchers to work on locations or individuals. So, whether you are new to research or are an experienced researcher and maybe you have already done locations for Herts at War - *can you / will you help?*

There is a lot of information about our research on the website under the 'Research' tab, but broadly we are looking for two types of researcher; those who have access to genealogy websites such as Ancestry or FindMyPast and those who do not. Have a look at the information under the respective heading, below and if you will help or wish to consider helping, please get in touch.

Those with genealogy site access, can help us by:

- Researching a location or individuals and necessary guidance and help will be given.
- Choosing an element of research to add to existing records such as service medal allocations.

And, if you do not have access to a genealogy website (although often access can be gained at local libraries), help us by:

- Photographing memorials and the names appearing – *pretty straightforward but guidance will be given.*
- Processing Word biographies to the database – *done by copying and pasting.*
- Writing up war memorial information.
- Checking the website's Roll of Honour for:
 - Duplicated entries
 - Whether the man/woman is correctly shown as 'on' or 'not on' a location's memorial(s) and that the memorials are listed correctly.
- Searching the Internet for existing information and photographs, which we can seek permission to add.

For any of the above please contact jontywild@hertsatwar.co.uk or make contact via the website. We track who is doing what to prevent duplication of efforts wherever possible.

Let me know if there is any aspect of our research that you would like explained in a future newsletter

Jonty Wild