



Research Reconnaissance

This newsletter is intended to keep our research helpers and volunteers informed of progress, but hopefully is also of interest to others.

Comments, questions & copy to (jontywild@hertsatwar.co.uk)

Some readers will remember that we have sent out this occasional newsletter in the past, but it has been a long time since we did so. We have given 'high' level updates in our normal newsletter and that is probably enough for most people, but for those who are more interested in our project's research, here we go into more detail.

If this newsletter inspires you to get involved, please read the last section for more information.

Statistics

Pure statistics will never tell the whole story, they simply do not show the effort of our volunteers, who never cease to amaze me with their hard work and the quality of what they produce. When they started some were already experienced researchers, others have gone from undertaking basic research to impressive HAW biographies. I believe that they all enjoy the challenges and we are very grateful to all of them, our current researchers and those who have gone before.

Research News & Stats (all numbers approx)

For a long time we guessed that the number of Great War dead from Hertfordshire (and therefore the number of biographies) could be as high as 20,000. It is always going to be difficult to estimate because the number of names on memorials is around 29,000 and, very importantly, we have to add a guess for the number of names that do not appear on our memorials and we feel commemorating them is vital. Also, the overall numbers do not take into account the duplication of names on memorials in different locations - *we have recently had to increase the number of locations that we can record a name against from five because we have a number of examples of 6 and above.* However, for quite some time now the number of unique names in our database has hovered around the 12,500 to 13,000, so for now this seems to be a more realistic estimate.

At present the numbers in the HAW database are 12,625 war dead, these are spread across 950 memorials in 422 locations (cities, towns, villages and hamlets). We also have 838 survivor biographies - *obviously a tiny proportion of those who served* - these are not our main priority, but we are always grateful to received information and do add it. This means for the war dead we currently have 12,625 entries, but this does include all qualities of biography, some duplicates entries and a few names which we have yet to positively identify.

Biography Quality

To help target future research work we allocate a guide grade number to each biography, in a sense this is a guide to how easily a biography could be improved:

- 0 No biography (yet)**, i.e. name only and no information from CWGC or elsewhere to identify the person
- 1 Basic biography**, e.g. CWGC information only, but man uniquely identified.
- 2 Better than 1**, but could easily be improved, e.g. by adding SDITGW research etc.
- 3 Good biography**, but looks as if it could be improved subject to additional research, e.g. additional census or service record – this of course assumes that this information is available!
- 4 Very good biography**, e.g. is already extensive, however of course even these could be improved if more work was done or with family input.
- 5 An excellent biography**, such as those produced by extensive research for a book or by a family member.

I had hoped to provide a guide to the number of biographies in in each grade, but currently that is not possible. Our progress is almost always in the right direction, but occasionally we take a backwards step, and this is one of them. Although every biography approved was graded, unfortunately a glitch meant that the grading was not saved and only 2,932 currently have a grade, but I am working on it and can hopefully report next time!

Of course a perfect biography never exists as there will always be more to add if only it can be found. Our experienced volunteers usually produce '4's. Of course we would like all our biographies to be 4 and above, but realistically we should currently aim for them to be 3 and above. We would welcome volunteers with internet access to help move grade 1 biographies to 2s and those with Ancestry or FindMyPast access to help move grades 1, 2 or 3 biographies to 3 or 4s and all help needed to get started can be given. If you don't wish to do this, there are other areas you could get involved in such as checking information in a location for accuracy or adding newspaper information, photographing memorials etc.

There are many rewards in undertaking the research: the completion of the names on a memorial, a positive identification of a difficult name, identifying men and women with a connection to a location who are not on a memorial and commemorating them, but one of the best is adding a face to the name.

Volunteering explore how you might help contact me jontywild@hertsatwar.co.uk.

