War Widows' Stories Project Celebrates Award from Heritage Lottery Fund

Embargoed to 00.01h on 11 November 2016

What is it like to be a war widow in Britain? Every year we celebrate and commemorate the lives and sacrifices of those who have fought and fallen in service for our country. Still, we know little about the experiences of the wives and families they leave behind.

Now, Dr Nadine Muller, Senior Lecturer in English Literature and Cultural History at Liverpool John Moores University and author of The Widow: A Literary & Cultural History (2017), is working with the War Widows’ Association of Great Britain (WWA) - an organisation that has been fighting to improve the conditions of war widows and their dependants since 1971 – to explore and share their stories lest they be forgotten.

Together, they want to raise awareness of the everyday lives of war widows past and present in a new project, awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Sharing Heritage grant of £9,800. Called War Widows’ Stories, the project will give war widows and their close relatives the opportunity to tell their stories, be trained as interviewers to record the memories of others, and to learn about how war widows’ lives have changed over the centuries. The interviews will be available in print and on the War Widows' Stories website (http://www.warwidowsstories.org.uk) alongside a wealth of material that brings to life the history of war widowhood in Britain.

Commenting on the award, Dr Muller said: “War widowhood is an inevitable and undeniable, yet largely ignored, part of war. We want the War Widows' Stories project to help afford these women their rightful place in history by making their stories heard”.

Mrs Mary Moreland, Chair Elect and Public Relations Officer of the WWA, explains that a project like this is long overdue, and the Association is excited to work with Dr Muller: “Part of our mission to improve the lives of war widows and their families is to raise awareness of their circumstances and of what life is like as a war widow. Our members have so many different stories to tell - we are thrilled they will finally have the chance to share them”.

Nathan Lee, Head of HLF North West, said: “At Remembrance-tide, so many stories are told to ensure we do not forget those who lost their lives in the conflicts of the twentieth century and today. Now, this new project, made possible thanks to National Lottery players, will mean that the LJMU and WWA can do more to shine a light on the lives and stories of those war widows left behind and honour their place in history.”
Notes to Editors

About Dr Nadine Muller
Nadine is Senior Lecturer in English Literature & Cultural History at Liverpool John Moores, and author of The Widow: A Literary & Cultural History, which will be published by Liverpool University Press next year. She is a BBC New Generation Thinker and has presented programmes on the history of widowhood for BBC Radio 3’s The Essay and Free Thinking as well as having made a short film on Victorian widows for BBC Arts. Extracts from her work on the history of widowhood in Britain can be found on her blog at http://www.nadinemuller.org.uk.

About the War Widows’ Association of Great Britain
The Association was formed in 1971 and today has around 3,000 members. Its original aim was to fight for the removal of the tax burden from the War Widows’ Pension. An article in a Sunday newspaper in 1971 highlighted the plight of Britain’s “forgotten women”. Laura Connelly, who returned to live in this country from Australia, where the War Widows’ Pension was tax free, refused to pay tax and found herself in dispute with the Inland Revenue. The fourteen women who supported her formed the Association under the first chairman, Jill Gee. Partial success was achieved in 1976 with the removal of half the tax and the remainder went in 1979. The Association became a registered charity in 1991, and it achieved one of its main aims in 2015: parity of pensions for all war widows. The Prince of Wales is the WWA’s patron, and its Vice Presidents are Baroness Dean of Thornton le Fylde, the Rt. Hon. Viscount Younger of Leckie, and Baroness Garden of Frognal. The President of the WWA is Baroness Fookes, DBE, DL. The WWA is managed by a committee of trustees. It does not have any paid staff or permanent offices.

About the Heritage Lottery Fund
Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife. www.hlf.org.uk @heritagelottery

About HLF’s Sharing Heritage grants programme
Sharing Heritage is for any not-for-profit group wanting to explore their community’s heritage. With a commitment from HLF of £3m each year, Sharing Heritage grants between £3,000 and £10,000 are now available to groups who want to discover their local heritage. Projects can cover a wide spectrum of subject matter from exploring local archaeology and a community’s cultures and traditions to identifying and recording local wildlife and protecting the surrounding environment to managing and training volunteers, and holding festivals and events to commemorate the past.

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Contact: For further information, images, articles, and interviews, please contact Dr Nadine Muller by email (n.muller@ljmu.ac.uk) or phone (07486 379476).

Photo Opportunities: 12 November 2016, 12.30PM. War Widows’ Association Annual Service of Remembrance (The Cenotaph, Whitechapel, London). For alternative opportunities, please contact Dr Nadine Muller.