**Minutes of the Public Meeting of the Dunsden Owen Association**

**Tuesday, 28th January at 7.30pm**

**at Eye & Dunsden Village Hall**

**Attendees:** Jennifer Leach, David Woodward, John Bodman, Linda Glithro, Beth & John Timms and members of the public.

**Introduction:** Announcement that the letter announcing that we had been awarded a Lottery Heritage Fund grant had arrived on Saturday, 25th January.

The aim of this public meeting is to go through the different projects/aspects of what we plan for the next year and the future.

1. **Launch of Website**

The logo, based on Wilfred Owen’s handwriting, has been produced by design students from Reading University. The website will be based on Wilfred Owen’s time in Dunsden and will be where people can find out about the trail of places connected with Wilfred Owen and also any events taking place.

There will be links to the Wilfred Owen Society and Reading Museum and the Heritage Lottery logo will be prominently displayed above the banner on the website to signify the funding we have received from them,

1. **The Wilfred Owen Trail**

Jennifer Leach, helped by Reading University students has been responsible for this.

The Trail first and foremost should be accessible and downloadable onto smartphones, plus there will be a paper format and details on the website. It will introduce the letters Owen wrote from Dunsden, giving a unique picture of life here at the turn of the century and will therefore be an interesting mix of Owen and Dunsden.

Two actors will speak Owen’s words and auditions will take place to find an authentic accent. Archive pictures will help make it very visual as well as audio. Recording the script and capturing visuals will be done, then it will be handed to students to produce.

**We need as much visual images as possible, so if anyone has old photos of the area then we would like them to get in touch with us.**

1. **Oral History**

Two families, the Ambrose’s and Rampson’s, were mentioned Owen’s letters. These letters will be recorded and incorporated into the Trail.

We are interested in people contributing memories of Dunsden in the past to get a fuller picture of the area as it was. We are hoping that there are people who might know about Owen’s revolver or other objects that were connected with Owen.

We are hoping that students from the Museum of English Rural Life might take on the oral history aspect as a project.

1. **Exhibition**

The Exhibition will hope to display the war time stories of the people in Dunsden and how the war changed their lives. It will also feature Wilfred Owen’s time in Dunsden.

Harry Staff has been researching the names of soldiers from Oxfordshire who died in WW1 and has done some research for us on the names on the War Memorial on Dunsden Green and the one buried in Dunsden Churchyard. He has researched the official details but we do not have their life histories.

Mike xxxxx has been researching men who fell from Henley and recently put on an exhibiton based on his research. “For too many years men have just been names on memorials whereas ‘Each one was some mother’s son’”. Mike has records of 15 men who died in WW1 from Dunsden and photos. He attended the last exhibition of WW1 Memorabilia and has photographs of people featured in that project.

Mike was at the meeting and explained that he is writing a book which has a chapter on Dunsden and is to be published in August 2014, however as he received Heritage Grant funding he is not allowed to sell it. It will be printed by the Henley Standard and anyone wishing to obtain a copy will need to contribute £10 to his project ‘**Lest we forget - Each one was some mother's son’** [**http://www.henley-lestweforget.co.uk**](http://www.henley-lestweforget.co.uk)

A new member of Dunsden Church, Matthew Dixon, has been for some years researching Edmund Ford.

1. **Vigil**

This is part of a nationwide event and will be a candlelit event at Dunsden Church featuring A440, a choir of approximately 40 singers whose conductor has set 3 of Owen’s poems to music.

1. **Concert at Dunsden Church**

On 8th November, 2014 there will be a concert based on the letters Owen wrote to his mother (600 letters altogether). John Bodman his organizing this as well as the vigil mentioned above. He is seeking 18-24 year olds to take the part of Owen in the concert; they need to be about 5’5” tall and around 10 stone in weight in order to be able to wear the WW1 uniform which John has been loaned.

David Woodward will contact a cellist he knows and also soloists needed to sing short items.

John mentioned that the Royal British Legion will be having their service at the war memorial on Tuesday 11th November so there will be a normal service at Dunsden Church on Sunday 9th November.

1. **Visit to Ors**

It was proposed that a group visit Ors sometime over the summer months to strengthen the link already established. Unfortunately, the powerpoint slides were not available due to a computer crash. Please see below the information that the presentation would have contained. Anyone interested in visiting Ors is asked to contact John or Beth Timms on beth.timms@btinternet.com or 01189 461987.

**The meeting was then opened up for questions/comments from members of the public**

A question asked about the route of the trail and was told that it starts on the Green which is where the Mission Hall once stood, was the site of the well and where the Playhatch incident (bolting horse and death of mother and child) happened. Nearby was the Village Hall, then it proceeded to the Vicarage, the Church and churchyard, the Thatched Cottage on the bend after Bishopsland, Alpenrose in Sonning Common and the house opposite Caversham Court in Emmer Green.

David Bentley of Charvil suggested that it would be possible to look up the 15 men who died in WW1 in the census of 1911 to find out more about them and it may also enable us to see a pattern of life in Dunsden at the time. He volunteered to look up their birth certificates if he was given their dates of birth. He would also check the 1901 census.

Ann Latto asked if there were any Conscientious Objectors from Dunsden. David Woodward volunteered to contact the Quackers to see if they had records of any.

It was also pointed out that some of those who fought in WW1 could have survived and returned to Dunsden and that this should be investigated.

It was suggested that we apply to Sonning for access to their archive which might have information that would be of interest.

Village Voices, the oral history of Sonning £9.50.

**Information on Ors**

Ors is about 2 hours from Calais, on the free autoroute via Dunkerque, Lille and Valenciennes and probably quicker on peage via Arras and Cambrai, it is found using 59360 Ors on Google Maps and is situated near Le Cateau-Cambresis, Landrecies and Catillon-su-Sambre in the far SE corner of Nord departement.

There is nowhere to stay in Ors, but there should be gites and camping sites in the vicinity and hotels in towns such as Cambrai, Valenciennes, Le Quesnoy and Le Cateau.

The Wilfred Own museum at the Forester’s Cottage is located on the road between LeCateau and Landrecies (close to where the road north from Ors meets this road in the forest).  It is not always open and visitors may need to arrange for access on a specific date/time. There are two military cemeteries at Ors, one near the site of the action on the canal, and the other which is within the main village cemetery, which is where Owen is buried. There is annual remembrance ceremony at the grave on November 4th.

Ors has a bar, tabac and a Wilfred Owen Library sited at the school. They have water jousting on the canal in August and there are various places of interest in the surrounding area including [Maroilles](http://www.francethisway.com/places/maroilles.php) 10 km. away with its riverside setting, abbey and mill, and the garden Jardin de Sylvie Fontaine; it is also the source of the cheese used in the local speciality Flamiche or Tarte au Maroilles. Le Cateau-Cambresis has a Matisse museum and Le Quesnoy is the site of a major storming of a walled town in November 1918 by NZ troops.  Also nearby, some 20km west is the site where Owen won his MC, in the action to take a strategic bridge over a canal gorge.