



Sharing Private O'Brien:

Heritage Lottery Funded projects at Gwent Archives help commemorate a Monmouthshire WWI Soldier.

Gwent Archives has recently received £9,400 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a project called 'Sharing Private O'Brien' based on the Abersychan area. Made possible by National Lottery players through HLF's First World War then and now programme, the project will focus on a series of letters written by Private William O'Brien that have been given to Gwent Archives. William wrote most of the letters to his sweetheart in Abersychan while he was training in Britain and then stationed in Europe during WWI.

The project will enable people in Monmouthshire to participate in events that will commemorate William and others from Abersychan as well as learning more about an ordinary soldier's experiences during WWI and about the heritage of Abersychan. Schoolchildren from Abersychan will create two animated films based on William's letters, while adult volunteers will research and stage a guided walk of Abersychan using the letters and other documents. Young people will also create a roll of honour for Abersychan as part of the project.

The letters and other WWI related documents are important for understanding our ancestors' experiences of WWI, on the home front as well as at war, and for understanding the importance of commemoration of the fallen for the communities that lost so many people. The information produced by the volunteer projects; films, images, education packs and the roll of honour, will be made available for the wider public to access so that they can share, commemorate and find further information about the lives of the people of Abersychan.

Commenting on the award, Tony Hopkins, County Archivist said: 'We are thrilled to have received the support of the National Lottery for this exciting and innovative project. William O'Brien's experience of the Great War was similar to many thousands of soldiers. What is remarkable about William is that his story is documented in the vivid and poignant letters he exchanged with his sweetheart. Through them the project will bring the War and war-time Abersychan to life. 'Sharing Private O'Brien' centres on one soldier but it commemorates the sacrifice of all who gave up their lives for their country.'