

## Finding Fifty Lives

### A journey back to the first world war with Ian Macmillan the Barnsley Poet

We have five memorials from three churches in our church at Christ Church, (two not yet re-located from their move from elsewhere) with 50 names from WW1 and WW2 of people who died in Stocksbridge and Deepcar from the three churches of West End Primitive Methodists, Stocksbridge Congregationalists and Wesley Methodist in Deepcar.

I'm new to this appointment and realised in November that most people now in church, especially the children, do not know who these people were, what they came from, where they lived, how they died and what families they belong to.

(A few, very few, are known to living survivors as family members.)

So I suggested a collaborative project between some of the young people and some of the adults, to do the following:

1. Research who each person was, their 1911 census image and family, where they lived, what they did, their Commonwealth War Graves records, their military records as posted online in various archives, any other biographical details, and there are some, and write a piece about who each person was;
2. Produce a book/folder, with a section/page for each person and place it in a newly made oak and glass cabinet for all time;
3. Using Ancestry.com explore all the people who are currently doing their family histories and who have each fallen person included in their tree. There are unlikely to be many direct descendants for obvious reasons, but sampling has shown that most of them appear in someone's research. And these researchers are all round the world.
4. Write to each researching family with an invitation to come to a special memorial event on Sunday Nov 10 Remembrance Sunday this year, and perhaps for a photo or more details for the research project.
5. Talk with schools about their potential involvement, as we could see this has potential for activities in history, writing, research, and English, and music and possibly other disciplines.



Ian Macmillan "the Barnsley Poet"  
with Luke Carver-Goss

*@IMacMillan*

*I can't tell you what a delight it was to receive your email this morning. The Memorial project operates at so many different levels that we'd like to suggest a number of activities*

Well, once the idea was suggested it has mushroomed. The research project is underway with 6 young people and 8 adults.

I invited Ian MacMillan to write a poem and his agent came back within six hours really switched on, and said they could see this working on so many levels. They were keen on my suggestion about involving Ian in schools. We have tentatively suggested, and Ian's team is working on the following elements:

1. Ian writes a poem specially for the project;
2. He cannot be there on the 10<sup>th</sup> due to a prior, but we will work with him to get him on film reading his poem and we will project that film at the memorial festival. We are looking for a film unit;
3. Ian goes into a school with a music colleague for one day and with a group or whatever, he writes with them a song or songs, and they sing it (and possible film it?);
4. Ian goes into another school on another day with a cartoonist artist colleague and they do a day of cartoon workshop around the theme; not necessarily humourous, but more like war-cartoons, as his colleague has already done elsewhere... or it could be a poetry writing day or perhaps a bit of both!

As you will know Ian is very good value and really connects with his earthy poetry.

Other components we have in mind are:

1. The school groups present their work music, art, writing, at an exhibition around the festival that day in Christ Church, and after that for a week or so in Stocksbridge Library;
2. We invite everyone we can think of to join in on November 19<sup>th</sup> for a special Memorial Celebration of the lives of the fallen and the work and creative activities of the school and the research project. The church will be packed;
3. We invite a school choir to sing on Remembrance day at the memorial celebrations;
4. We invite a local male voice choir to sing as well.

As you can see this has lots of legs.

No decisions have been made about which school might want to do which bits. I have spoken to Stocksbridge High school, Stocksbridge Junior School, and who are both keen. I am asking Deepcar St Johns because they have a choir and there were many who died from Deepcar, not just Stocksbridge in these 50 names. Ian's agent and I have initially suggested that we might do the music day in school with a junior school and the cartoon and writing day in a high school. But this is not fixed. Though we do recognise that it has the potential to be the foundation for a longer project leading up to Nov 2014.

We have applied to the Arts Council for a grant to cover the costs of the artists and the costs of the special event. We are not asking the schools for funds. It is important to point out that this project will only be able to involve the schools if the Arts Council comes up with the funding. The church is not able to pay the artists fees. There may be some flexibility if we are only granted a portion of what we are seeking. There may be another related project to re-locate the memorials and erect a glazed screen to make a new meeting place and peace chapel, but that is not part of this activity.

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