100 years of Teesdale Heritage saved thanks to Lottery Funding

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded over £35,000 to ensure that 100 years (1854 – 1954) of the Teesdale Mercury will be newly archived and saved for future generations.

The Teesdale Mercury was founded in 1854 in Barnard Castle, where it's still published and so is steeped in history. It is one of the oldest surviving, local, independently run newspapers in the country, and is widely thought of as one of the most of the most important historical records of Teesdale life. Since the beginning, it has been documenting important news and historical events that have happened over the last century, including the intimate details of the people who lived and worked in the area.

The project will open up a world of history that has not previously been easily accessible. During those one hundred years, 5,200 copies of the newspaper were issued which translates into 45,000 pages. Existing copies are being stored at the Witham, the Bowes Museum and the Teesdale Mercury offices; they are in poor condition and are under threat of being lost. Using the money awarded by HLF, the project will be able to update and archive all the original copies and digitize them, thus ensuring their survival for years to come.

Ivor Crowther, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund, North East, said: "This project is a fantastic opportunity to bring the history of the Teesdale Mercury back into the light. It will provide countless resources for historians and the public alike, providing them with first hand accounts of important historical events. With the help of HLF the original copies of the paper can be preserved and the new digital archive will provide the community with a valuable sense of their heritage."

Important historical facts such as the rise and fall of the lead and mining industries, scientific discoveries, two world wars and the effect these had in the local community were all covered by the newspaper and will now be available for all to see.

This fascinating project will result in a comprehensive digital archive, a travelling exhibition and an educational booklet. Using these elements the project will be able to engage with and inform the community about an important part of its rich history. By creating a searchable online archive, the project will allow a wider audience to gain access to the records.

Roy Tranter, chairman of The Teesdale Mercury Access Project (TMAP), said: "This is an amazing opportunity to explore and learn more about the history of Teesdale. The Teesdale Mercury has played such an important role over the years in documenting Teesdale life and events that have happened, it would be an awful tragedy if those records were lost. By transferring all the records onto an electronic database we can ensure that they are easily accessible and will be preserved for the future."

Notes to editors

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic

places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported more than 26,000 projects, allocating over £4billion across the UK.

Further information

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