

Bath Abbey receives Heritage Lottery Fund support

17/01/2013

The project is designed to capture the stories of the many individuals who were involved in caring for the Abbey's fabric or who worked on restoring the present Abbey building. Further funding of £7,000 has been provided by the Friends of Bath Abbey bringing the project total to £29,200.

Working in conjunction with Bath Spa University, the 'Creating Voices' project will collect and present people's stories from over a 60-year period of the Abbey's rich and inspiring history, from the 1942 Bath Blitz, which provided the impetus for the 13 year post-war restoration of the Abbey, up to the end of the Abbey 2000 Restoration. The formation of the Friends of Bath Abbey in 1948 was crucial to the preservation and enhancement of the Abbey during this period, as the Friends provided the driving force and much of the funding for both these programmes.

The Reverend Prebendary Edward Mason, the Rector of Bath Abbey, said: "We are thrilled to have received the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund. Thousands of people visit the Abbey and worship here every year but often take for granted the amazing architecture and atmosphere, not realising just how many individuals have helped contribute to this. If we don't act now, their stories will be lost forever. The project will open up a fascinating collection of memories and bring to life the post-war restoration programme, as well as the one at the turn of the millennium. It will help share these craftspeople's stories and hopefully engender a deeper understanding of the building and the connection many people have with the Abbey, which will be especially important in light of the next phase of redevelopment including the Footprint project."

Abbey volunteers and Heritage students from Bath Spa University will work together to collect and transcribe audio recordings of the memories of people who have worked on the Abbey fabric or been involved in its care between 1942 and 2000; these will contribute to a downloadable audio guide to be made available through the Bath Abbey website. In addition the project will include Activity Days covering topics such as stained glass craft and with demonstrations from sculptors, stonemasons and bell ringers.

Commenting on the grant award, Richard Bellamy, Richard Bellamy, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund South West, said: "Our great medieval buildings are often thought of only as relics of the distant past, but projects such as this demonstrate that they have continued to grow and develop across the centuries, maintaining their place at the centre of the lives of succeeding generations. We are delighted to be supporting 'Creating Voices' which will collect and preserve the stories of a more recent period in the life of Bath Abbey, allowing local people and visitors a wider insight into its long and fascinating history."

Dr Kristin Doern, Heritage Subject Leader at Bath Spa University, said: "This is an exciting time for the Abbey, and an ideal opportunity to look back and record the experiences of those who have

worked on the Abbey in the past. A particular strength of the project is the collaboration between Abbey volunteers and Bath Spa students, broadening the range of people our students work with, and helping the Abbey capacity build in terms of the skills of its core volunteers. Because the project runs over two years, it also give us the chance to be involved in something on a longer term basis which has opened up new possibilities for how we can be involved, and increases the number of students who will benefit from working with the Abbey team. We are delighted to be involved in a project that further develops what is already a key partnership for the University, and welcome the opportunities it will bring for our students.”

Bath Abbey’s oral history team are interested in talking to a variety of people particularly:

- those who worked in the key areas of stonemasonry and sculpture, conservation, the stained glass windows, the organ and the bells, clock and carillon
- employees of architects, Hayward & Wooster, between 1947 and 1960
- employees of Nimbus Conservation Ltd between 1992 and 2000
- people who were involved in fundraising efforts, particularly during the Post-War Restoration
- people who helped raise money through membership of the Friends of Bath Abbey

Notes to editors

If you think that you might be able to contribute to this project as a potential interviewee, please contact the Abbey Archivist, Lucy Rutherford on 01225 422 462 or email: archives@bathabbey.org.