Lottery funding bringing Brymbo’s history alive

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Over 3,000 photos and other material will also be digitised as part of the long term project along with the creation of a website and learning materials for local schools, colleges and universities.

Brymbo Ironworks is the sole remaining complete physical monument to the notable industrialist John Wilkinson and houses three scheduled ancient monuments and a Grade II* listed building on site. The site built in 1796 is a unique surviving example of a late 18th century ironworks and the project will help capture the memories of former workers which will then provide an opportunity for local residents and schools to learn about their heritage.

Colin Davies, project leader and a former worker at the site said: “The personal memories of workers like me reflect the spirit of the working class during the time of heavy industry in Wales. I feel that at the heart of this project is the focus on bringing different generations together to hear these memories and learn about Brymbo’s past and understand the key role the ironworks played in the area’s history. It is so important that future generations learn about how the village and the local community was years ago and I’m thrilled that Brymbo Ironworks' story will now be recorded and shared, bringing generations together.”

Oral Histories

The Brymbo Heritage Group has undertaken extensive work during the past 10 years to raise awareness of this significant site and to protect it from development but the physical remains of the historic ironworks continue to deteriorate as they have not been in use since the 1980s. Brymbo Councillor, Paul Rogers, said: “Brymbo Ironworks has played an important part in the local community for over 200 years and although it’s role has changed over that period of time, it is important that this site’s contribution to the local area is not forgotten and that it continues to be an important part for years to come.”

The first phase of this three year project will see the memories of those who worked at the plant recorded and used as oral history clips, reflecting the ironworks’ past and their experience of working at the site. The BHG feel that it is increasingly important to collect and safeguard this information now for future generations, as there are fewer former workers around to interview.

Welcoming the announcement, Jennifer Stewart, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Wales, said: “Capturing the history of this key piece of Welsh industrial heritage is an excellent way of keeping the story of Brymbo alive for future generations. The project will help secure the memories of former workers, and provide a creative and exciting resource which will ensure this heritage site is safeguarded and remembered.”

Internationally Significant Attraction

The group’s long term objective is to develop a Heritage Area in North East Wales which includes the ironworks as well as other nearby nationally and internationally significant attractions. The hope is that the designated area could become a major tourist attraction as a multi-use facility that will bring much needed regeneration to the area, together with employment opportunities and economic benefits.

Ken Skates, Assembly Member for Clwyd South, said: “I know how hard the Brymbo Heritage Group have worked over the years to secure funding to maintain this key part of Wrexham’s history and it is great to see the Heritage Lottery Fund has recognised this in the awarding of this grant.”

Notes to editors

Plans for the project include:

- Undertaking an oral history project to capture the memories of people who worked at the site, approximately 75 oral histories will be collected.
- Develop learning material in conjunction with local schools, colleges and universities to support the National Curriculum and lifelong learning.
- Arrange 10 visits to schools to use learning resources and a specifically developed app.
- Collect and digitise material related to the site (the intention is to gather over 3,000 photographs, documents and artefacts).
- Develop a website to present and explain the heritage.
- Establish a volunteer programme and provide training to volunteers to help them support the project.
- Produce 3,000 high quality information booklets together with a paper based survey of community views.
- Deliver a programme of guided tours of the site.
- Recruitment of a heritage officer post to oversee the project.

Further information

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