Church’s history seen through young eyes

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Recently, St Mary in the Castle has enjoyed a new lease of life as a temporary arts centre and the young people involved are hoping to develop this usage into the future. The research project, run by Hastings Trust and the young people themselves, will delve into the past of the 187-year old Pelham Crescent in the centre of which stands a Grade II listed church built into the cliff face standing immediately behind it.

The magnificent Georgian church, with its unique circular auditorium, was designed by architect Joseph Kaye in 1823 for the Earl of Chichester. A natural spring flowing through the building was once used for baptisms. In its heyday, the church, which could seat up to 1,500 people, welcomed prominent visitors, such as William IV’s widow, Queen Adelaide, who had a reserved pew.

The young people will create an archive using photography, artwork, new media, music and performance to share the information they discover with as wide an audience as possible. As well as learning more about the heritage of their town they will also gain a range of skills. They will be working with Hastings Museum, F-ISH Creative Trust, members of Old Hastings Preservation Society and the Friends of St Mary in the Castle.

The grant has been awarded under the Heritage Lottery Fund’s Young Roots programme. Alastair Fairley, committee member for the HLF’s South East England region and founder of the Hastings Arts Forum, said: “The history of St.Mary-in-the-Castle is closely interwoven with the history of Hastings itself. This project will help young people to understand their local heritage and build a connection with the past, present and future of the town while creating a lasting archive to inform and interest others.”

Mel Bonney-Kane, Executive Director of the Hastings Trust, said: “We are delighted to be able to help young people to research the heritage of this building thanks to funding from theYoung Roots programme – young people themselves asked for this opportunity to learn more about the building in order that they could share what they learn with others as part of their drive to protect and preserve this valuable landmark in the town.”

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 33,900 projects, allocating over £4.4billion across the UK, with over £428 million granted in the South East alone.

Further information

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