Community to remember organic farming pioneer

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Arthur Hollins died in 2006. His legacy is Fordhall Organic Farm at Market Drayton, Shropshire; one of England's oldest organically-managed farms and the country's first commercial yoghurt producer. After his death, the farm was saved from industrial development by an imaginative community scheme when, following a national campaign, more than 8,000 people each bought a £50 share to enable the project to continue as a working farm and educational resource.

Now a People's Heritage project will train teams of volunteers to record the memories of those who worked on the farm over many years, to research and collate material charting the farm's progress and produce web-pages, a souvenir booklet, and exhibition displays. The project is being led by the charity which manages the farm, Fordhall Community Land Initiative.

For the Heritage Lottery Fund, Head of HLF West Midlands Reyahn King, said: "This is a tale of dedication, imagination and perseverance against the odds. Arthur Hollins was a true pioneer whose contribution to healthier nutrition and sustainable agriculture deserves the widespread recognition which this project will ensure."

At present the original paper records of the venture exist on paper in 160 boxes stored at Shropshire Archives. Much of the material has been damaged by damp and requires careful cleaning and conservation before being digitised to create a comprehensive online archive available through a dedicated website.

There are also Arthur's diaries, recordings of talks and newspaper cuttings covering the period from the 1950s onwards when he was an energetic advocate for organic farming methods that are more widely accepted today but were then novel and experimental.

Arthur's work included developing a year-round outdoor livestock rearing method known as 'foggage farming', promoting the health benefits of yoghurt, and inventing an alternative to the plough, the Cultureseeder, that fed and prepared the soil for sowing without causing too much disturbance.

The project organiser for Fordhall Community Land Initiative is Arthur's daughter, Charlotte. She says: "We have spent a long time developing this project and it is with thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund that we can now move full steam ahead with it. We will be looking for your stories and memories of Fordhall, and we know there are many. Our father spent his whole life immersed in organic farming and we want to ensure that his life's work is recorded and safeguarded for posterity."

If you think you have an interesting memory or story about life at Fordhall over the last 100 years then you are encouraged to contact the office on **01630 638 696**.

Notes to editors

- Fordhall Organic Farm has been chemical free for over 65 years. Rearing cattle, sheep and pigs on an outdoor extensive grazing system and being in community-ownership sinced 2006, Fordhall is pioneering in every sense.
- By securing Fordhall Farm, the Fordhall Community Land Initiative (FCLI) and the community landlord is committed to building a sustainable future whilst guaranteeing that farming will be an affordable way of life for generations to come.

Further information

For further information please contact Vicky Wilford, HLF press office, on 020 7591 6046 / 07973 401 937, email vickyw@hlf.org.uk or Phil Cooper, HLF press office, on 07889 949 173.

Charlotte Hollins, Fordhall Organic Farm, on 01630 638 696