Toy story: Heritage project helps mark Frank Hornby's 150th anniversary in 2013

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This project will celebrate the life and work of the legendary British toymaker who was responsible for creating Meccano, Dinky Toys and Hornby Trains.

The first stage of the project, which has received a £34,400 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), will be presented to the public in February at the 2013 Model World Exhibition in Brighton, UK.

The HLF grant will fund new screens, touchscreens and interactive displays for the museum, educational resources on Frank Hornby's life and his toys and a public Wi-Fi network that will help visitors learn about the exhibits. It will also fund an exciting programme of events and activities and a calendar of participating organisations and their 2013 events at FrankHornby150.org website.

A full-time project officer will be brought on board for one year to create long-lasting links with outside groups, oversee and publicise the project, and expand the museum's Knowledge Bank both online and within the museum.

Frank Hornby's career is a very British success story. Starting of as a clerk, he went on to invent a series of classic and much-loved British toys that turned him into a millionaire and inspired generations of British children to become engineers thanks to his Meccano construction sets

Museum Manager, Stacey Trumble, said: "Most people don't realise that these famous product lines were all the brainchild of one man. We're very excited about this project and how it will help the general public to learn about this key piece of British cultural history. We're also excited at the project's potential for bringing different groups together, and about the new opportunities that it will create for volunteers to participate in a national project."

Stuart McLeod, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund South East, said: "Thousands of people across the world will fondly remember playing with their Meccano construction sets or their Hornby trains as children so it's great to know that people will now have the chance to learn more about the man behind the toys. HLF's investment will enable Brighton Toy and Model Museum make the most of their existing exhibits through using innovative digital technology and displays - that will help bring these classic toys into the 21st century for us all to enjoy and be inspired by all over again."

Notes to editors

About Frank Hornby
Born in 1863 in Liverpool, England, Hornby had a modest start in life with little schooling, and by his late thirties was married with children and still working as a clerk in a meat-importing business.

Hornby realised that making metal toys for his children was easier if he used standardised parts, and in 1901 he borrowed money to patent the essentials of his 'Mechanics made Easy' metal construction set, which he later renamed 'Meccano'.

After World War One, Meccano Ltd. started producing model railways under the name 'Hornby Trains' and the company's range of trackside railway accessories expanded to include model cars, which then started to be sold as stand-alone toys in their own right under the name 'Dinky Toys'.

By 1931 Hornby was the owner of a multinational business, MP for Everton, and a millionaire.

About Brighton Toy and Model Museum

Founded in 1991 by Museum Director Chris Littledale, Brighton Toy and Model Museum fills a series of Victorian arches underneath the forecourt of Brighton Railway Station, on England's South Coast. Run mainly by volunteers, the Museum is a Registered Charity with MLA certification and houses nationally- and internationally-significant collections of toys and models, with a focus on Northern Europe in the first half of the Twentieth Century. The Museum's centrepiece is a working period 1930s "gauge 0" model railway layout, and the Museum is a focus for collectors and enthusiasts.

Further information

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