Kempley’s Heritage Goes Online

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The award of £30,700 will allow the Friends of Kempley Churches to create an internet portal using a cascade of maps, both archival and newly created, through which users can explore a virtual model of the 20th century village and navigate backwards and forwards in time.

The central theme of the project is the documentary and narrative heritage of the two landmark churches within the parish. The village was settled in Saxon times and the C12th Church of St Mary's, an English Heritage site managed in partnership with the Friends, contains nationally important and unique medieval frescoes and wall paintings as well as highly regarded architectural features. The second church, St Edwards, was commissioned by the Earl Beauchamp; it is of importance for its contribution to the Arts and Crafts movement.

Through research carried out over the last 5 years the Friends group has amassed an ever-growing archive of artefacts, publications and recordings relating to the architectural, natural and social history of the village. These, together with new material collected during the life of the project, will be made available via the new website.

Project Manager, Chris Bligh, said: "By navigating backwards and forwards in time and exploring our research databases the reader will be able to gain information on a specific enquiry, or explore the wider background, or historical context, by clicking on one of our team’s commentaries. The reading experience will be just like browsing a map, so while looking for features of initial interest one will be intrigued by links to other aspects of the website. The longer-term objective is to motivate web-users to visit our area, so that they arrive with an informed appreciation of the village, its environment and its heritage."

Commenting on the award HLF’s Head of Region for the South West, Nerys Watts, said: "The heritage of the parish of Kempley is nationally important and this project clearly comes from an active community with a keen interest in exploring their history and making it available to as wide an audience as possible. We are delighted to be able to support their work, which will use 21st century technology to make the past accessible to everyone."

Notes to editors

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) enables communities to celebrate, look after and learn more about our diverse heritage. From our great museums and historic buildings to local parks and beauty spots or recording and celebrating traditions, customs and history, HLF grants open up our nation’s heritage for everyone to enjoy. Since 1994 it has supported more than 26,000 projects, allocating over £4 billion across the UK.

The church of St Mary's, Kempley has 'the most complete set of Romanesque frescos in northern Europe' in its chancel which includes the Christ in Majesty painting created in about 1120, also a fresco of a wheel of life, showing the life cycle of man, painted on the walls of the nave. St Mary's churchyard is very beautiful in the early months of the year often being covered in wild daffodils in late February/early March

The church of St Edward's (1903), described by Betjeman as 'a mini-cathedral of the Arts and Crafts movement', was built from local materials by local labour, under the direction of Randall Wells, clerk of works at All Saints, Brockhampton-by-Ross. The church was planned by the Lord of the Manor and major landowner, William Lygon, 7th

Earl Beauchamp, because St Mary's was too far away from the main centres of population in the parish at Kempley Green and Fishpool, and liable to flooding. The walls of the church are in Forest of Dean red sandstone.

The Arts and Crafts Movement was a British, Canadian, Australian and American design movement that flourished between 1880 and 1910. It was instigated by the artist and writer William Morris in the 1860s and was inspired by the writings of John Ruskin. It influenced architecture, domestic design and the decorative arts, using simple forms and a medieval style of decoration. It advocated truth to materials, traditional craftsmanship and economic reform.

Further information

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