Heritage of Local Poet Weaved Together thanks to Lottery Grant

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Thanks to a £22,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), it was announced today. The grant was awarded to Ballycarry Community Association to support the year long project which will engage the local community with the history of this important local figure.

Born in 1770, James Orr was an Ulster Weaver Poet, whose compositions in both English and Ulster Scots earned him the name the 'Bard of Ballycarry'. In addition to his poetry, Orr was also a prominent United Irishman and Freemason. The 'Restoration of Ballycarry Heritage' project will involve the development of a heritage trail that will raise awareness of Orr and the local sites associated with his life and work. A leaflet will be produced to provide a self guided tour and interpretive signage will be displayed at the various sites of interest including Bellahill, which was the inspiration for Orr's poem 'The tree about Bellahill' and Millar's Public House, which was the site of the first Masonic Lodge in Ballycarry. A historical educational programme will also be developed to engage local school children with the heritage of Orr and his wider legacy as a poet, and will include the production of a booklet and exhibition.

Funding for the project was awarded through HLF's 'Your Heritage' programme which provides grants of up to £50,000 for projects that explore, conserve and protect all aspects of our diverse local and national heritage.

Commenting on the announcement, Head of HLF Northern Ireland, Paul Mullan, said: "We are delighted to be involved in supporting this project which will explore and interpret the heritage of James Orr. Orr is a historically important figure and the local community are rightly proud of his links to Ballycarry. This project will raise awareness of his connection to the village with new audiences through the development of the heritage trail and programme of educational activities, enabling the local community to celebrate their unique heritage".

Plans are also being developed to preserve and restore the listed Orr monument which was erected in Templecorran graveyard in 1831 to commemorate the life of Orr, who had died fifteen years earlier. Made in standstone by Belfast stonemason William Fitzpatrick, and decorated with Masonic emblems, the three meter tall monument is believed to be one of only two public Masonic memorials in Northern Ireland.

Dr. David Hume from Ballycarry Community Association, said: "We are absolutely delighted to have the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund in relation to this exciting project. We believe through the history of Orr, his life, and his works, we can bring tourists and visitors to Ballycarry.

"Orr was regarded by another great Ulster poet, the late John Hewitt, as having on occasion bettered the works of Robert Burns, yet it is ironic that few people have probably heard of him. He was a remarkable man, entirely self-taught at home by his parents, yet rising to such a high poetic status. We look forward to working with our other partners in this project, particularly the Masonic Order, who have raised considerable funds towards the memorial restoration, and the village primary school. We have worked very hard to get to this point, and we believe that this is excellent news for Ballycarry".

For more information about HLF's funding programmes.

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.

Since 1994 the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded £135 million to projects across Northern Ireland.

Further information

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