Hoylandswaine painting to be revealed thanks to Heritage Lottery Fund support

18/12/2012

Led by volunteers from the local community, the project focuses on revealing and restoring the painting ‘The Ascendency of Christ’, by local artist John Roddam Spencer Stanhope, completed when the Church was built in the late 1860s. The painting, on the East Wall of Hoylandswaine Parish Church, complements the William Morris stained glass window. It was paid for by the local Spencer Stanhope family but was covered over in 1961. The older people in the village had always known the painting was there but it wasn’t until a Heritage weekend in 2009 that eyes turned to Hoylandswaine and its hidden treasure.

Now, with this HLF grant the story of the painting will be brought to life, enabling local people to discover the origins and explore the history of the church, the painting and the life and times of the painter. With the support of East Peak Innovation Partnership (EPIP) courses will be run in the Church and in local schools in arts and crafts aiming to produce a lasting memory of this voyage of discovery by creating a stained glass window.

Further activities, to be carried out in partnership with Green Estate in Sheffield and the University of Huddersfield, include: working with local artists and craft workers to create ‘Victorian’ needlework in keeping with the era to hang permanently in the church; offering children the opportunity to capture oral histories and stories by interviewing local older residents; and opportunities for volunteers to join teams of craft workers and learning about the painting in order to act as guides or by helping with the administration of the project.

Hoylandswaine Arts Group has joined forces with Hoylandswaine Parish Church in order to seek support and funds to uncover the painting. Villagers, led by Hoylandswaine History Group, have already discovered a great deal about the industrial heritage of the village – the flax weaving, mail making and of course farming. Little is known or recorded about the arts and this project will fill in that gap.

Commenting on the award, Elizabeth Charlesworth, said: “We are thrilled to have received the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and are confident the project will support local people in discovering more about their history. One of the children in the local primary school, when hearing about the painting being covered over said: “But why would they want to do that?”. Maybe we shall never find out but instead we must look to the exciting future of seeing it once again revealed to the world. The local support for the project has been tremendous and other groups, especially the Sports and Social Club, have supported and helped with the fund-raising.”

Dr Fiona Spiers, Head of HLF, Yorkshire and the Humber, said: “We are delighted to support the Hoylandswaine community in the conservation and restoration of this local hidden gem. The project will allow people to learn from a conservation expert and get involved in different activities to help them learn about John Roddam Spencer Stanhope and the wider artistic heritage of the area. Through the project, not only will the wall painting itself be revealed but the local community will play an important role in raising awareness of their local heritage.”

Notes to editors

Roddam is an artist of note with a growing reputation not only as one of the neglected artists of Barnsley but also as a painter of renown within the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The restoration of the painting is due to begin later this year following the appointment of an expert restorer and work is expected to be completed in the summer of 2014.

Further information

Elizabeth Charlesworth, Chairman, Hoylandswaine Arts Group 01226 764 797 or 07407 559 059.