Laundry's life and times project wins HLF grant

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Many in the present generation have no knowledge of the Irthlingborough Co-operative Laundry standing in the Crow Hill Estate and the ways in which it impacted the lives of so many local people. With the building soon likely to disappear through redevelopment the Irthlingborough St Peter's Historical Society is to conserve and make widely available a unique archive of photographs and documents relating to it, as well as recording the memories of former workers and customers.

The laundry has been a local landmark for more than 70 years and was a major employer, the Estate having been built to house the workers. Households would send their family weekly wash to the laundry which also served as a centre of social activities for the workforce.

It was a former employee who collected more than 700 photographs, documents and original posters from when the premises opened in the 1930s to its recent closure. The Historical Society is to have these catalogued and preserved as well as made available through an online searchable database.

Material will be mounted for a mobile local exhibition and recordings of former employees will be made following a series of reminiscence events. Recordings and images will be made available on a DVD and the project will link with work already being carried out with Irthlingborough Infant School.

Emma Sayer, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East Midlands, said: "This project will capture the images and memories associated with a building that played a major part in the lives of so many local people and make them available to a wide audience. Wellingborough is a priority area for HLF and we are delighted to provide support for this project."

For Irthlingborough Historical Society, member Bob Thorogood, said, "We are thrilled to be associated with the Heritage Lottery Fund and are extremely grateful for their generous contribution that will enable us to complete the project and provide a lasting momento of the Co-operative Laundry, which was much more than just a company. It was an institution and so important for the local people and the development of the town of Irthlingborough."

Further information
Roy York, Chairman, Irthlingborough Historical Society on 01933 650 607.