New home for precious archives

22/01/2010

They will from part of the extensive collections held by Hull City Council and the University of Hull, which are being brought together for the first time thanks to a generous £7.7 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Hull History Centre is the first in the country to combine university and local authority archives into one, purpose-built centre, complete with staff from both organisations.

It will be home to extensive archives from notable figures including Hull-born slavery abolitionist William Wilberforce and pioneering aviator Amy Johnson, to pressure group archives such as those of Liberty. There are also thousands of metres of family and local history archives for those researching their ancestry or Hull and the surrounding region.

To mark its opening on 25 January, the Lord Mayor of Kingston upon Hull and the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hull will present the Royal Charter and one of Philip Larkin’s workbooks, filled with his pencil-written poems, to the History Centre. They will be stored in the Centre’s hi-tech archive storage areas, which are carefully controlled to ensure the items are properly conserved.

The £7.7 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund is the largest ever given to the city of Hull.

The Lord Mayor of Kingston upon Hull and the Admiral of the Humber, Councillor Karen Woods, said: “The idea for the Hull History Centre came about 10 years ago and it’s taken foresight and hard work from both partners to reach this milestone - the day the centre opens to the public. Local people cannot have failed to notice this impressive building taking shape and we hope they will be equally impressed when they get inside.

“Hi-tech but welcoming, the centre will transform the way people use and view the collections. It's a place for everyone and we hope it will encourage people who haven’t used the archives before to come inside, browse and even make some discoveries of their own.”

Vice-Chancellor Professor Calie Pistorius, said: “The University is proud to be the custodian of such nationally-important archives as that of Philip Larkin, our former librarian and renowned poet, whose workbook I will hand over. The University is delighted to be part of this project and share this striking building with our colleagues at the city council.

“As well as giving archive material the best possible environment to be stored in, the history centre will also make archive material more accessible to the public and hopefully engage more people with theirs and the city’s past.

“It will also provide students and academics from across the UK, and indeed the world, with access to material which will help inform and strengthen their research.”

Fiona Spiers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Yorkshire and Humber, said: “It's wonderful that Hull's treasure trove of an archive has moved into a new home and is now opening its doors to the public next week. The Heritage Lottery Fund is proud to have helped make this relocation possible and we congratulate both Hull's Council and its University for

undertaking this ambitious project.

“The History Centre will be a huge asset to the city, enabling visitors to view important documents including the city's Royal Charter and to learn more about famous local residents such as William Wilberforce, Amy Johnson and Philip Larkin.”

There will be a press call at the centre at 8.50am on Monday, 25 January at the Hull History Centre, Worship Street, HU2 8BG.

Lord Mayor and Vice Chancellor arrive at 9.10am for photo call and will welcome the public with very brief speeches at 9.30am. Interviews with the Leader of Hull City Council, Cllr Carl Minns and the University's Director of Academic Services and University Librarian, Richard Heseltine between 9.30 and 10.30am. There also be opportunity to get photos inside the building for the first time, public reaction and shots of historic material - the Royal Charter, a historic duelling glove from one of the collections, a caterpillar-shaped shipping gazette, a historic document containing the signature of the Hull-born FA founder, Ebenezer Cobb Morley.

Notes to editors

Monday 25 January marks the first day of operations for the Hull History Centre. A ceremonial opening with the unveiling of a plaque within the building is set to take place in the summer.

About Hull History Centre
The total cost of the project is £9.83m, of which £7.7m comes from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The centre will house important documents including the city's Royal Charter as well as collections of local, regional and national importance relating to the city of Hull and the surrounding areas, Hull's maritime history, political figures and pressure groups, and prominent figures in literature and drama.

The building was designed by architects Pringle Richards Sharratt and built by contractors ISG.

To explore the Hull History Centre and its collections.

To become a 'fan' of the Hull History Centre Facebook page

Examples of specific archives include:

Philip Larkin’s letters to his parents, his duffel coat, glasses, the workbooks he wrote his poems in, and even his own collection of books and LPs as part of his archive. This year is Larkin 25, a series of commemorative events to mark 25 years since his death.

In the Saltmarshe collection of letters, household accounts, diaries and papers is a tattered glove. It’s actually a duelling glove and was discovered as part of the move. Legend has it that the stain on the glove is from the hand of the loser in the pistol fight, one of the Saltmarshe sons (a Hull family line which has not survived to this day). The glove is inscribed with a date: 3 July, 1804. Staff have been looking for clues in newspapers and letters from the time about why he was fighting that day – and what the outcome was.

Countess of Nithsdale: orchestrated a daring escape for her beloved husband from his scheduled execution for treason, and on the eve of his execution she pulled off an incredible rescue plan. She writes about all the details in letters at the History Centre, available for the public to read. Without giving too many details away – alcohol and cross-dressing were involved, and there is a happy ending!

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. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

Further information

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