

The Oakwood Clock has been an iconic feature in Oakwood for just over 100 years – ever since it was moved from Leeds City Market. Originally it served as a tram shelter but since the demise of the trams has been a meeting place, provided shelter and somewhere to sit for generations of people visiting Oakwood. It is a well loved landmark for local people and for those visiting Oakwood and Roundhay Park.

In recent years, the clock has fallen into disrepair and was in danger of getting into such a state that it would have to be removed for safety's sake. In 2012, a group of concerned local residents and business owners got together to see what they could do to save the clock. Now as a result of a lot of hard work and the generosity of many people it will be preserved for the enjoyment of future generations.

HLF awarded a grant of £100,000 for the restoration of the Oakwood Clock and to deliver an oral history project, led by OTRA in partnership with the local history group of the University of the Third Age and pupils from Roundhay School. This will involve interviews with people to share their stories about the clock and the surrounding area. The stories will be put into a publication that will be for sale locally, buried in a time capsule at the base of the clock and shared with the local media. The primary source material will be lodged with the West Yorkshire Archive Service. OTRA will also work with the History Club at Roundhay School and with Leeds Museums and Galleries to create educational resources for the local primary schools to use when studying local history. OTRA will also create a heritage trail with guided walks around the Oakwood area and will enable local residents and visitors to learn about the rich heritage of Oakwood.

The award of the grant from HLF, whilst large and very much appreciated, would still have left a significant shortfall in the funding necessary to restore the clock were it not for the generosity of a North Leeds couple as well as the concerted efforts of the local community. Grahame and Marilyn Stowe have made a donation of the balance of the funding necessary to restore the clock. Marilyn said: “Grahame and I wish to honour our late parents and at the same time thank the great City of Leeds which welcomed previous generations of our and other Jewish families fleeing persecution. My mum and dad in particular had a strong affinity with Roundhay and we hope the restoration and rejuvenation of the area will benefit everyone for years to come.”

Alexis Keech, Chair of OTRA said: “This is fantastic news for the whole community of Oakwood and North Leeds in general. This money means that the clock refurbishment can start almost immediately. We are very grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund and Marilyn and Grahame Stowe as well as the whole of the local community who have pulled together to raise funds to make this possible.”

Fiona Spiers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Yorkshire and the Humber, said: “This project will rejuvenate a much loved local landmark, bringing it back to the heart of the community for everyone to use and enjoy. By sharing people’s memories and stories of the clock it’s fascinating history will be revealed to a new generation.”

Councillor Mark Dobson, Leeds City Council’s Executive Member for Environment and Parks, said: “As a council we congratulate Oakwood Traders and Retailers Association on their receipt of the grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and we are really keen to see the Oakwood Clock restored to its former glory. Our Corporate Property Management team have advised OTRA on the restoration of the clock and the clock tower, and Museums staff and the Library Service are providing a range of resources and expertise to help involve the community with the project. There is going to be a special exhibition about the clock based in Oakwood Library and staff will be working with Roundhay School to help young people use library resources to explore the history of both the clock and Oakwood itself. As well as all of this, Museums staff are helping to shape the oral history being planned by the OTRA team and will be offering creative writing workshops and a tour of Temple Newsam House, where another well-known Potts Clock will be on display later in the year.”

Notes to editors

The Oakwood Clock Rescue and refurbishment campaign was initiated and is being managed by the Oakwood Traders and Residents Association (OTRA).

The clock tower at Oakwood, Leeds, has occupied the same landmark position at the southern edge of Roundhay Park for the whole of living memory, but in fact Oakwood is the clock tower's second home. A century after it was first moved to its outdoor location in Oakwood, the clock tower under which generations of visitors and residents have gathered is showing its age. The tower had originally been given prime position in the new city markets, which in 1904 replaced the existing covered market on Kirkgate in central Leeds. The manufacturer of the clock – William Potts & Sons – was a renowned firm of clockmakers, having already manufactured several clocks in Leeds, including the spectacular clocks for Thornton's Arcade and the Grand Arcade. The clock tower's home in the new city markets in central Leeds was shortlived. Within only eight years, the popularity of the new market meant that an extra entrance had to be created on Vicar Lane, and unfortunately the clock tower had to be moved out of the way. For one former Oakwood family, the removal of the clock is associated with a tragic story which has been passed down the generations and which is told by descendant Michael Parr in Memories of Oakwood Clock

The clock tower has fallen into a poor state of repair. It was the 1970s when it was last renovated, and the neglect has taken its toll. Cracks and rust are clearly visible, but it is the condition of the metalwork inside the tower which is causing

most concern as the internal metal supports are rusting through.

Further information

Oakwood Traders and Residents Association on info@oakwoodtra.org or visit the Oakwood Clock website.