Lottery grant to help young people uncover lost Abbey at Ramsey

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The students, from Abbey College, will receive specialist archaeological training and carry out the dig thanks to a £24,800 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Ramsey Abbey, created in AD960, was one of the richest ecclesiastical establishments in the Fens during the medieval period. Today, little of the Abbey survives above ground and the interpretation of the remains is subject to much debate.

The new project, called Monks Down Under, will bring together the students with professionals from Oxford Archaeology East to carry out a programme of investigative works. With learning and participation at the heart of the project the participants will gain a host of new skills and practical experience through planning, excavating, recording, drawing and photographing the onsite archaeological activities. They will also visit museums and other historical sites, as well as attending workshops on a range of subjects such as ceramics and pottery through the ages, to enable them to learn more about the medieval period and the historic artefacts they may uncover.

The project, given a grant from the HLF's Young Roots programme, will be managed by 15 young people with a further 60 involved in the various activities. They will learn from professional archaeologists how to carry out a geophysical survey to plan where to excavate the site and how to record what they find during the dig. Local schoolchildren and adults will have the chance to come and watch the young investigators in action at a special open day. The results of the project will be displayed at a special exhibition and feature on a DVD.

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: "This is a fun and exciting way for young people to get directly involved in exploring the history right on their doorstep. Uncovering the fascinating history of Ramsey Abbey is a great opportunity to learn a wide range of new skills, to fill gaps in our knowledge about the site and to share findings with the wider community."

Rachel Green, Community Co-ordinator at Abbey College, said: "The Abbey College site hides a wealth of information and many clues to its past. Our students are enthused and excited to discover more about what lies beneath their feet, the lives of those who may have lived and worked here and the impact such a building would have had on this community."

Notes to editors

Heritage Lottery Fund is always looking for new projects to fund, especially from The Fens and surrounding areas. If any group has an idea for a project, they should call 01223 224 870 and ask to speak to the development team.

Further information

Please contact Roland Smith at the Heritage Lottery Fund, on 020 7591 6047 / 07713 486 420 / rolands@hlf.org.uk, or Phil Cooper on 07889 949 173.

Rachel Green, Community Co-ordinator at Abbey College, on 07721 058 948.