

Participants of the Old Wives project

The project, named Old Wives Tales, will create of a series of short stories documenting the journey of young Bangladeshi girls who married Bangladeshi men returning home from the UK in the 1950s and 1960s. It will follow them through their transition to the UK and their current lives within the communities in Birmingham.

Legacy WM is leading the project armed with a group of volunteers, and aims to film and tell the story of Birmingham's Bangladeshi women through interviews, memorable objects such as saris and suitcases, and gather photographs to provide a unique insight into the culture and heritage of the Bangladeshi community.

Aftab Rahman, Director of Legacy West Midlands, said: "The Old Wives Tales builds on the work that Legacy WM is working towards to document stories of minority groups and their contributions to society and to share this history with a wider audience.

"The aim of this project is to highlight the courageous role which Bangladeshi women have played in making Birmingham what it is today. We want to share the story of the challenges that they faced when they came to a new country and how they settled in along with their lives today."

Old Wives Tales will particularly focus on women who arrived in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s, when they left their home country to join their husbands who had already begun to establish a life in the UK.

Reyahn King, Head of HLF West Midlands, said: “Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, diverse communities across the West Midlands have been able to explore and share the heritage that matters to them. This project will shed light on the fascinating hidden heritage of our Bangladeshi community and bring people of different backgrounds together to celebrate an important part of Birmingham’s unique character.”

Material collected during the project will be archived at the Library of Birmingham, providing a compelling and much-needed addition to the city’s record of its Bangladeshi heritage. A short documentary and exhibition will also be created.

Partnership funding for the project has also been secured from KPMG Birmingham, who are making possible the creation of an illustrated book, which aims to share the stories of the women.

Andy Argyle from KPMG explains further how initiatives such as Legacy WM’s Old Wives Tales are important in providing local communities, including their employees, with insight into their surrounding environment.

He said: “Some of our employees are coming to work in the city for the first time, so enabling them to gain a better understanding of the city’s heritage, together with visiting areas outside of the city centre core, is an important factor in exploring and understanding where they work. Old Wives Tales is a great example of how we can do this and we’re pleased be involved in the production of the book which will provide a valuable insight into an important part of our community.”

Old Wives Tales is now underway and will run throughout the year, for further information visit the Legacy WM website.

Notes to editors

About Legacy West Midlands

Legacy WM was formed as a constituted organisation in April 2010 by a group of people with an interest in recording the heritage of the post-war, migrant communities. In April 2011 it became a registered charity (1141498). It has since broadened its aim to include work with young people, wellbeing and arts. The organisation has developed an excellent track record for delivering high quality, interactive, cultural heritage projects.

Old Wives Tales builds on valuable relationships Legacy WM formed during another HLF funded project. Awarded £47,500 in 2010, Bangla Food Journeys explored the experiences of Bangladeshi migrants through their stories of food and recipes. In 2012 Legacy WM was awarded £42,000 for the development of a heritage trail for Lozells & East Handsworth, which is still running. Legacy WM is the lead partner in the developing Peoples’ Heritage & Arts Centre (PHAC) project. PHAC will focus on the heritage of the area and its people from 1931, the year the building was built.

About KPMG

KPMG’s role in the project to date is to fund the printing of the book. As part of its CSR activity one of its Birmingham office staff will sit on the steering committee to help coordinate the interviews and with launch activity and publicity.

For more information about the organisation visit the KPMG website.

Further information

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