Baptist Library and Archive secures Heritage Lottery Fund investment

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This funding will enable Regent's Park College to catalogue, conserve and provide opportunities for more people to learn from and participate in the heritage contained in the collection in the following ways:

- write and distribute image rich lesson-starters and in-depth teaching resources for young people studying history at Secondary School (KS3 and 4)
- work with IntoUniversity to develop year 10 and 11 archive taster sessions to enable students from disadvantaged backgrounds aspiring to go to University to learn how to use a range of original documents in an archive setting
- hold biennial lectures and exhibitions linked to national events like Fair Trade Fortnight, Black History Month and International Women's Day
- fully catalogue the collection and make it searchable online
- digitise the BMS World Mission missionary paper archives and make them available online
- work with churches to run a programme of training courses which will highlight the need for simple best practice archiving of church records and artefacts so that these important documents are preserved for future generations
- run courses on writing church histories so that congregations can record their histories and tell the story of their church

British Baptist life began in 1612 when a group of men and women returned to England from the Netherlands, where they had been sheltering from religious persecution, knowing they would face more persecution. From that day, until the late 19th century, when the final restrictions on Baptists and other nonconformists were lifted, Baptists faced fines, imprisonment and restrictions on their liberties. The Angus holds many volumes and documents which are critical to the understanding of this time in history and many of which cannot be found anywhere else in the world.

Emma Walsh, College Librarian at Regent's Park College, said: "This grant will help us to realise the dream of helping more people discover and engage with the unique riches that are held in The Angus. 400 years ago the first Baptist community settled in Spitalfields, London. It is exciting that in the year that this anniversary has been celebrated we can start a new phase of helping people engage with another aspect of the nation's shared history."

Dr Robert Ellis, College Principal, said: "We are privileged to have The Angus Library and Archive at Regent's Park College where it can be accessed alongside the unrivalled resources of the University of Oxford. The College's Governing Body is delighted that the HLF and BUGB are enabling us to further improve accessibility to and awareness of its unique contents. These grants are essential if the College is to ensure the collection is catalogued, conserved and that access to it is extended. However, funding for higher education has never been more precarious and The College's reliance on donations from alumni, friends and churches remains."

Stuart McLeod, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund South East, said: "Saving our historic archives is so important - they are a valuable resource for anyone wanting to explore their past. The Angus is bursting with stories and facts that give us clues as to what Baptist life was like and how that has shaped us into what we are today."

Notes to editors

About Regent’s Park College and The Angus Library and Archive

Regent’s Park College traces its roots to the formation of the London Baptist Education Society in 1752. This venture led to the development of the Stepney Academy in East London in 1810 - the impetus for the creation of the Academy arose from the fact that only members of the Church of England were given places at ancient universities. In 1856 it moved six or seven miles across London to the then rural Regent's Park, and adopted its current name. In 1927 the College moved to Oxford and became a Permanent Private Hall of the University of Oxford in 1957.

The core of The Angus collection was left to Regent’s Park College by Dr. Joseph Angus who was Principal from 1849 to 1893. The Angus now comprises over 70,000 printed books, pamphlets, journals, church and association records, church histories, manuscript letters and other artefacts from the late fifteenth century to the present day. The collection relates to the life and history of Baptists in Britain and the wider world.

Alongside this unique insight into Baptist and nonconformist history there is a considerable amount of material from non-Baptist sources relating to issues and controversies in which Baptists were involved. There is also an extensive hymnody collection from various denominations and cultures. Many of the items are only found in The Angus.

The Angus incorporates the former libraries and archives of: The Baptist Missionary Society (founded in1792), The Baptist Union of Great Britain (founded in 1832), The Baptist Historical Society and The Baptist Times.

Further information

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