Museum will bring bygone Basing House back to life

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The grant will mean Hampshire County Museums and Archives Service, supported by the Friends of Basing House, can create a new, permanent museum in The Lodge, a later building that now stands on the site.

The new exhibition will concentrate on presenting and explaining the archaeological finds that relate to the mansion's golden age – from the Tudor and Stuart periods to the fall of Basing House during the Civil War in 1645.

The museum will enable more artefacts than ever before to be displayed giving important clues about the lives of the people who lived there and the final siege and destruction of the House that followed. Such relics range from the humble clay pipe, forerunner of the cigarette, to exotic items such as a decorated ivory cup from West Africa and stoneware bottles from the Rhineland. There will also be fragments of armour and weaponry, ranging from small lead pistol shot to hefty cannonballs of stone and iron.

The project will also produce educational information for Hampshire schools and a scheme for training volunteers. The exhibition will be ready in summer 2010 and contribute towards the re-launch of the site as Basing House History Park, a project to which the HLF gave a grant of just over £1million last December.

For Hampshire County Museums and Archives Service, Head of Service, Alastair Penfold, said: "Archaeological investigations have been going at Basing House for decades. The grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the generosity of the Friends now provides an opportunity to put many more of the finds on display to help tell the story of this fascinating site."

Commenting for the Heritage Lottery Fund, Head of HLF South East England, Michelle Davies, said: "Visitors to the new History Park and Lodge museum will be able to gain a much clearer understanding of the scale and importance of this once great house, its inhabitants and its final destruction at the hands of Oliver Cromwell."

In its heyday, Basing House was the largest private home in England. It had welcomed Queen Elizabeth I on two occasions and later, during the Civil War, became a major Royalist stronghold surviving two sieges until August 1645 when it was targeted for a third time. On this occasion the siege – the longest of the Civil War – intensified in October when Oliver Cromwell himself arrived to take charge bringing with him the largest siege guns then in existence.

The assault that followed the breaching of the walls was bloody, claiming the lives of up to 100 defenders. The house was ransacked and subsequently destroyed by fire. Parliament ordered the ruins to be razed to the ground and the debris was carted away.

Notes to editors

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 more than 28,800 projects, allocating over £4.3billion across the UK, with over £378 million to more than 2,660 projects in South East England.