Bexley memories saved thanks to Heritage Lottery Fund support

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Both will involve working with Bexley Council's Local Studies and Archives Centre and, in the case of one of the projects, the reminiscences collected will extend beyond borough boundaries to Eastern Europe.

For the Heritage Lottery Fund, Sue Bowers, Head of HLF London, said: "Between them, these two projects underline the importance of local memories to an area's heritage. One will preserve the hidden history of an area that could otherwise be lost through physical redevelopment, and the other will introduce young people from a mixed cultural heritage to wartime experiences both here and in Russia. Locally held archives will be enriched as a result of both."

London Borough of Bexley Arts Service will be running the project Tideline: The Voice of Regeneration to capture memories from communities living in the Lower Belvedere area. Working alongside writer Sarah Butler, the project, which has received a £46,500 grant, will recruit up to eight heritage 'ambassadors' to help unlock memories from local residents. Also involved will be pupils from Trinity School.

The information gathered will be used to create a series of texts to be installed in the area where major regeneration work is currently underway. One such text will be installed permanently along the Thames Wall. Stories will be posted on a new website and a series of books written by the 'ambassadors' and Trinity pupils will also be exhibited. Community workshops will be held to select relevant names for four water drainage dykes in the area and new signs created for permanent installation.

For Bexley Council, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Arts and Tourism Councillor Peter Catterall, said: "Oral history is a valuable means of recalling and passing on local identities and an understanding of how communities developed and people lived in the past. This project should prove an enriching experience for all who take part, as well as creating lasting memorials for the area. Both as a Bexley resident and a practising member of the Oral History Society I am delighted to see imaginative projects like this being supported."

The second project will engage young people from Erith in researching experiences from World War Two. This year sees the 65th anniversary of the Allied victory in Europe and the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the Blitz. Local multi-cultural organisation SERLS Friendship has been awarded a £23,900 grant under the HLF's Young Roots programme. Some 40 young people will interview local residents including those who settled in the area from Eastern Europe about their experiences as children during World War Two.

With help from the Local Studies and Archive Centre, the youngsters will undertake research and also visit the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich and the Imperial War Museum. They will also have the chance to visit Chelsea Football Club's museum to learn about the historical significance of the match between Chelsea and Moscow Dynamo in 1945.

The interviews recorded with the elderly people will be used to create a touring exhibition that will be seen at Bexley Libraries and Hall Place. Artwork will also be created for display. The recordings made and other material will be stored at the Local Studies and Archive Centre.

Commenting for SERLS, Galina Clark, said: “We are delighted to receive this grant. It will enable us to bring the history to life.”

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 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

Further information

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