

Butterfly Bridge – Crossing the Generations

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The project will be led by a consortium of volunteers from five local history societies, Sunnyside, Swalwell, Whickham, Winlaton and Winlaton Mill - all from the North East.

The grant will be further supported by a cash contribution of £900, and significant contributions in kind by volunteers working on the project.

Volunteers will dig deeper into the history of the Winlaton Mill area on the river Derwent and explore its fascinating and varied past to record the considerable heritage of the area. They are hoping to unearth tales from as far back as the Roman times when they used the ford crossing the river at this point as well as Cromwell's army during the Civil War. There was also Crowley's Iron Works together with a model village for the workers which was operating in the early 1700s. Later there was a massive coke works with its products not only for home use but also exported around the world.

The project will also tell the story of the footbridge erected over the river in the mid-1800s, its successor destroyed in the great flood of 2008 and a new bridge erected by Gateshead Council two years ago. The bridge affectionately known as the Butterfly Bridge since Victorian times when the area became a favoured picnic site with an abundance of butterflies adding to the attraction, providing the title of the project.

Project participants will record and share the local history via interpretation panels, a pamphlet, web site reference and a DVD and will also introduce a programme of periodic guided walks around the site. Gateshead Council, the land owner of the site, is fully supportive and will be providing a financial contribution.

Commenting on the award Colin Douglas, Chairman of Sunnyside History Society, who is leading the project, said: "This is great news. With Heritage Lottery Fund investment and support from other partners we can bring four history groups together for the first time to jointly explore, record and share the amazing stories that make up the history behind the place we all call home."

Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund North East, Ivor Crowther, said: "Supporting the 'The Butterfly Bridge' project will enable so many untold stories to be revealed and give a greater meaning to this historic area. Using the HLF grant, this project will create valuable opportunities for local people to celebrate and share the history of Winlaton Mill, its surrounding environment and the important roles they have played within the local community throughout history."

Further information

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