

Dig for Victory at Beningbrough Hall

08/02/2013

Beningbrough Hall has received over £42,000 from HLF for an exciting project, Beningbrough at War, at Beningbrough Hall and Gardens, 8 miles north of York. The project will show a series of displays and exhibitions and develop events for general visitors to the site as well as schools, and community events to engage local people with the stories of the men and women who were based at Beningbrough Hall during the Second World War. The project will also mark 70 years on from the Hall being used as a billet for the Royal Canadian Airforce, giving the project an international flavour.

Beningbrough at War will enable people to learn more about this more hidden part of Beningbrough's history. During World War II, Beningbrough was used first as a billet for RAF Linton-on-Ouse and then for the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1943 as both a billet and a mess. There are tales of love, loss, play and peril – showing the dichotomy between the rural idyll of the Beningbrough estate and the perilous skies of the bombing raids.

One of these stories is from Clifford Hill, who was billeted at Beningbrough and met Lady Chesterfield, the owner of Beningbrough who moved out of the Hall during the war, in the walled garden, whilst on one of her regular walks around the property. She accused Clifford of treading on her vegetable patch, for which he claimed to know nothing. When a footprint was pointed out to him, he quickly apologised on behalf of others and moved the conversation on quickly! Lady Chesterfield ended their conversation with “Good Luck, boy! And don't tread on my vegetables!” This story will be encapsulated in a new World War II vegetable patch being dug in our walled garden by families on Sunday 27 January at 1pm. At this event we will turn the soil, make paper pots and plant seeds; then later in the year plant some of the vegetables into the plot, add some World War II items and interpretation and in autumn, harvest the plot!

Commenting on the award and the upcoming Dig for Victory Gardens, Wendy Taylor Beningbrough at War Project officer, said: “We are thrilled to have received the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and are excited about creating a ‘Dig for Victory’ allotment with families and local people. This will be one of the first activities of the project and form the first part of the Trail through the House and Gardens that will tell the story of Beningbrough at War.

Fiona Spiers, Head of HLF Yorkshire and the Humber, said: “As we rapidly approach the commemorations of the First World War, it is important to remember the huge impact that all conflicts have at home and abroad. Beningbrough at War will investigate the effect of the Second World War on the Hall and its community, exploring the stories of local people and improving the Hall's interpretation of the period.”

Notes to editors

Built in 1716, Beningbrough Hall is a grand red brick mansion, just north of York. Today the hall is home to the National Portrait Gallery's collection of 18th century portraits, whilst the garden boasts labyrinth paths, grand borders, hidden woods and a working walled kitchen garden. Beningbrough is currently open winter weekends 11am – 3.30pm. twitter: @NTBeningbrough Beningbrough Hall website

Beningbrough at War is a project running from 1 March - 4 November 2013. It will show portraits, displays, exhibitions and items from World War II and also encompass a series of events and programmes for general visitors, schools and community groups.

Further information

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