

Fielding and Platt Community Archive Project gains Heritage Lottery Fund support

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The Fielding and Platt Community Archive Project led by Gloucestershire Archives and Gloucester City Centre Community Partnership, will work with volunteers to record, preserve, and celebrate Fielding and Platt's history and its impact on the city.

Fielding and Platt operated from 1866 to the 1990s at its extensive 'Atlas Works' premises at the bottom of Southgate Street. It specialised in hydraulic engineering, producing a range of innovative machinery at the plant that was exported around the world for railway, bridge and ship construction.

Other products included Britain's first vacuum cleaner – carried to homes by horse-drawn cart in the early 1900s – and extrusion presses for the manufacture of armament and aircraft components during the First and Second World Wars. At its peak, the firm employed over 600 staff and ran a thriving apprenticeship scheme for local boys.

The project is recruiting and training volunteers to learn new skills which will enable them to gather and share the spoken memories of people who worked for or lived near the company whose former site lies under what is now Gloucester Quays Shopping Centre. They will learn how to record and edit oral histories and present them on a new community-led website that will bring the story of the company to life. These memories will then be preserved at Gloucestershire Archives and there will be opportunities for volunteers to handle and catalogue original archive material. The involvement of volunteers will be a key part of the success and ongoing legacy of the project.

“The Fielding and Platt factory operated until the 1990s so its activities remain in living memory,” says Barry Leach, Secretary of Gloucester City Centre Community Partnership, “that is why the community can play an important role in this project. Anyone with memories or memorabilia concerning the company or who would be interested in volunteering should contact our project officer.”

To celebrate the proud industrial heritage of this area of Gloucester, the project is working with the Gloucester Quays Shopping Centre and Gloucester Civic Trust to ensure that visitors to the quays will be able to learn about the heritage that lies beneath their feet.

“We are delighted to have the Heritage Lottery Fund's support for this project,” says Heather Forbes, head of Gloucestershire Archives, “there is little trace of where Fielding and Platt's large premises used to be and without the memories of former employees and residents of the Quays area, an important piece of local history will remain unrecorded and be lost with time.”

Commenting on the grant award, HLF's Acting Head of South West, Richard Bellamy, said: “For many people heritage means ancient buildings and precious artefacts, but the story of our industrial past is just as important for the communities and individuals who were involved with it. We are therefore keen to support projects such as this one, which will capture the memories and experiences of those who worked for Fielding and Platt, ensuring that an important part of Gloucester's history is captured for future generations to learn about and understand.”

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 over 30,000 projects, allocating £4.6billion across the UK.

Further information

Anyone with memories of or memorabilia concerning Fielding and Platt, or who would like to volunteer with the project, please contact the project officer, Ollie Taylor, please see contact details below.

Ollie Taylor, Project officer for The Fielding and Platt Community Archive Project on 01452 427591 or at oliver.taylor@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Or by writing to Ollie Taylor, Gloucestershire Archives, Clarence Row, Alvin Street, Gloucester, GL1 3DW.