

£2.8million Lottery grant success for Hedd Wyn's home

28/05/2014

As Wales embarks on four years of First World War commemorations, the HLF is playing a key role in the centenary by conserving the Grade II* listed home of the iconic Welsh poet who lost his life in the conflict.

Ellis Humphrey Evans, better known by his bardic name, Hedd Wyn, was raised at Yr Ysgwrn and penned one of Wales' best known war poems, *Rhyfel* (War), and reflected the horrors of war throughout his work. This National Lottery grant, awarded to the Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA), will ensure the conservation of Yr Ysgwrn, which inspired so much of his work, and will safeguard collections relating to Hedd Wyn, including *Y Gadair Ddu* (The Black Chair), the 1917 National Eisteddfod chair awarded to him posthumously after he was killed in action on the fields of Flanders.

Dr Manon Antoniazzi, Chair of the HLF Committee for Wales, said: "Yr Ysgwrn gives a vivid impression of life in rural Wales during the First World War and serves as a memorial for not only Hedd Wyn, but the generation of young Welsh men who also lost their lives in the First World War. This project will secure the future of Yr Ysgwrn and the legacy of Hedd Wyn and ensure that future generations understand the significance of this great Welsh poet and his work."

First World War Commemorations

During the next four years, a number of projects and events will be held across Wales marking key dates, events and developments relating to the conflict and the Heritage Lottery Fund is providing small grants to communities looking to mark the centenary through the First World War: then and now programme. Hedd Wyn represents a generation of young men killed in the conflict, whilst his former home, which remains largely unchanged since he lived there, provides an insight into life in rural Wales during that period in history.

SNPA Chief Executive, Emyr Williams said, "Yr Ysgwrn and its surrounding landscape have inspired several of Hedd Wyn's most well-known poems and continues to inspire people from all over the world who are fascinated by Hedd Wyn's story and Yr Ysgwrn's extraordinary heritage. Our aim now is to establish Yr Ysgwrn as an innovative cultural destination, which will convey messages about culture, society and war, to audiences in Snowdonia, Wales and the world. It also allows us to conserve Yr Ysgwrn's unique collection of artefacts and archives, as well as providing new opportunities for education and interpretation for visitors in a way which recognizes the sensitivity of this remarkable and historical site."

Welcoming the announcement, First Minister Carwyn Jones said: "We have a strong commitment to commemorate the centenary of the First World War through our 'Cymru'n Cofio Wales Remembers 1914-1918' Programme. I've been to Artillery Wood where Hedd Wyn is buried and it's good to be able to work with other organisations such as the Heritage Lottery Fund so that we can leave a lasting legacy for generations to come as we remember the centenary of the war's beginning."

'Keeping the door open'

Efforts to ensure the future of this important heritage site received publicity in 2009, after concerns were voiced about the future of Yr Ysgwrn by Gerald Williams, the nephew of Hedd Wyn, who then lived in and

managed the home. Visitors to the farmhouse have been welcomed since the poet's death in 1917, and his family have vowed to honour a promise made to Hedd Wyn's mother, "to keep the door open".

Eighty-five year old Mr Williams said: "Keeping the door open at Yr Ysgwrn is a way of keeping the memory of my uncle alive and although I have always welcomed visitors here I was uncertain whether this could be maintained in the future. The purchase of Yr Ysgwrn by the Snowdonia National Park Authority and the grant awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund will ensure that the door will now remain open for future generations to pay their respects and to learn about Hedd Wyn."

Notes to editors

This grant of £2.8million awarded today by Heritage Lottery Fund follows a previous development grant of £149,700 to the Snowdonia National Park Authority in November 2012 to develop detailed plans for Yr Ysgwrn.

About HLF:

The Heritage Lottery Fund is the UK's largest dedicated funder of heritage:

- It invests around £375million a year on a broad range of projects - from museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions
- HLF has supported just over 35,500 projects allocating more than £5.6billion across the UK since the establishment of the Lottery in 1994
- In Wales HLF has invested over £284 million and supported over 2,162 projects in local communities all over the country.

About Yr Ysgwrn

- Yr Ysgwrn is a 168 acre traditional hill farm in the heart of the Snowdonia National Park, two miles from Trawsfynydd, Gwynedd. The farm has a number of traditional buildings, and an array of land types from river valley, to improved grassland, up to high ffridd (scrubland) and open mountain.
- The farmhouse itself is a listed building dating from the 1830s but has international prominence because it was the home of Ellis Humphrey Evans, better known by his Welsh bard name of Hedd Wyn (Blessed Peace).
- Hedd Wyn was killed in the First World War, at the Battle of Pilkem Ridge on 31 July 1917 and was posthumously awarded the 1917 National Eisteddfod Chair at Birkenhead for his poem *Yr Arwr* (The Hero), the highest accolade awarded to Welsh language poets. The chair remains in the parlour of Yr Ysgwrn and will be a key focus of interpretation plans.
- Annually, Yr Ysgwrn receives over 2000 visitors.
- To arrange a visit to Yr Ysgwrn, contact the Snowdonia National Park Authority on 01766 770 27401766 770 274, email: yrysgwrn@eryri-npa.gov.uk
- For the latest news on the development of Yr Ysgwrn, follow @yrysgwrn on Twitter and Yr Ysgwrn: Cartref Hedd Wyn and Yr Ysgwrn: Home of Hedd Wyn on Facebook.

Plans for Yr Ysgwrn include:

- Five key strands of interpretation themes will provide a focus for the project
- Hedd Wyn's life and literacy legacy;
- First World War and its context
- the social history of rural Wales at the turn of C20
- agricultural heritage
- Welsh language culture
- Important conservation of the Hedd Wyn chair collection and artefacts
- Y Beudy Llwyd, a key farm building, will be repaired to become an important entrance gateway building to inform the visitor of what they will see via traditional and digital interpretation

- Oral history recordings have already been undertaken as part of the project to safeguard the vast knowledge of Hedd Wyn's elderly nephew of the personal and family history of Hedd Wyn, the farm and its working since the early 20th century
- The project will create over 823 training opportunities and will see local volunteers, Welsh Baccalaureate Students and University students benefitting from learning new skills

About Hedd Wyn

- Born Ellis Humphrey Evans, he is better known as his Welsh bard name, Hedd Wyn
- Much of Hedd Wyn's poetry focuses on the effects of the First World War on the local community of Trawsfynydd and rural Wales
- His poem *Rhyfel* (The War) is one of the most famous descriptions of war written in the Welsh language
- Hedd Wyn's life was the subject of an Oscar nominated Welsh language film in 1992

About Snowdonia National Park Authority:

- The Snowdonia National Park was designated in 1951, the first National Park to be designated in Wales.
- National Parks in England and Wales have two core purposes:
 - Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage
 - Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of National Parks by the Public. When National Parks carry out these purposes they also have the duty to seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities within the National Parks.
- Snowdonia National Park covers 823 square miles of diverse landscapes and is a living working area, home to over 26,000 people.
- Snowdonia boasts the highest mountain in England and Wales (Snowdon), and the largest natural lake in Wales (Llyn Tegid), as well as a wealth of picturesque villages like Betws y Coed and Beddgelert.
- Snowdonia is an area steeped in culture and local history, where more than half its population speak Welsh.
- Annually, more than 6 million visitor days are spent in Snowdonia.
- Yr Ysgwrn was purchased by the Snowdonia National Park Authority in 2012, for the nation and will be developed in partnership.