Swale’s historic tales get Heritage Lottery Fund support

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Young people from Sittingbourne Community College will be leading one investigation that will delve into the last 2,000 years of the area’s history, from when St. Augustine first set foot in Britain on the Isle of Sheppey.

A second project, run by the local authority, will recruit community volunteers to trace the history of Milton Creek, a topic that has been largely overlooked in local museums and archives.

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South East England, said: “Taken together, these two projects will shine a light onto the past times of Swale giving young and old alike opportunities to learn more about the history on their doorstep.”

The young people’s project, A Potted History of Swale, has received a £22,400 HLF grant. It will identify between 30 and 40 key events from the area’s past, including the birth of British heavier-than-air flight at Eastchurch in 1909, the establishment of the country’s oldest brewery in Faversham, and the planting of the first cherry tree in Britain at Teynham.

Once gathered, the information will be relayed in both ‘ancient and modern’ formats, being used as subjects for pieces of pottery and ceramics, and as recorded stories that will be accessible through iPod technology. A new community radio station, Sfm, that is soon to start broadcasting, will be supporting the young people along with local historians and the heritage museums in both Sittingbourne and Faversham.

Head of History at Sittingbourne Community College Laura Sennett, said: “We are really pleased and excited that the Heritage Lottery Fund has agreed to support this project. Whilst Swale as a name is not widely recognised, as a place it has witnessed many interesting and significant events. Young people are interested in where they live and this project has a huge potential to develop their ‘sense of place’ and inspire them to research Swale’s history.”

The Milton Creek project, for which a £49,400 grant has been awarded to Swale Borough Council, will concentrate on Sittingbourne’s industrial heritage where the creek was important as a hub for brick-making, barge building and paper manufacture.

Older members from the local community will be interviewed and their memories recorded looking back at the industrial activities from the 1950s. The interviews will be done by young people and an essay competition will also be run encouraging local school students to imagine what life was like locally in days gone by.

The Friends of Milton Creek will be involved in a range of activities, including recruiting volunteers and developing a website. Once the recorded interviews have been gathered aspects of local history will be used to create songs and a dramatic performance for a celebration event at the culmination of the project during September 2012. The information collected will also be used to create learning packs for local schools.

Councillor David Simmons, Executive Portfolio Holder for the Environment, Swale Borough Council, said: “We are very excited about this project which will help bring the fascinating history of Milton Creek alive and bridge the generations

from young people to senior citizens. There is so much history in the area and this project will allow local people to really appreciate the importance of Milton Creek in the development of Sittingbourne and Milton."

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 more than 33,900 projects, allocating over £4.4billion across the UK, with over £428m granted in the South East alone.

Further information

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