Heritage Lottery Fund helps to expose Braunton’s 'hidden' history

04/05/2010

The full story of how American troops were trained for the largest amphibious assault in history will be told for the first time by a project lead by Braunton and District Museum in cooperation with Braunton School and Community College and historian Richard T Bass.

As part of the project, students from the School will interview members of the local community to provide an 'oral history' to be held at the museum. They will also research the stories of individual soldiers which were chosen at random from those who were trained at the 'Assault Training Centre' the headquarters of which was at Woolacombe.

Fieldwork on Braunton Burrows and the beaches of Normandy will also be undertaken, supervised by Mr Bass who has spent more than twenty years looking into Braunton’s 'Hidden' history.

The idea follows on from the Explore Braunton project, a recent HLF sponsored project in the Village, which created much interest in the history of Braunton and the wartime activity in particular. This project will expand the information available on the Explore Braunton website providing a resource for everyone to access.

Mrs Jackie Edwards, Museum Administrator, said: “We are delighted that the HLF has given us this opportunity to enable the research on the American training for D-Day, which will be collated and maintained at Braunton Museum, to be made accessible to everyone. It is important that a small museum like ours has its profile raised, both locally and nationally, by a project such as this. We have been pleased by the response from the public and will contact those who have offered help and stories as soon as we can.”

Explaining the importance of the award, Nerys Watts, HLF’s Head of Region for the South West, said: “In the year in which we have marked both the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War and the 65th anniversary of the D-Day landings, we are very pleased to be able to support Braunton Museum in researching and telling the story of American forces in North Devon. This project will give Braunton’s present day young people the chance to learn at first hand about the unique and important events that took place in their area during the war, and will allow them to preserve those memories for future generations.”

The museum invites anyone with recollections or photographs and in particular those willing to be interviewed by the students to call 01271816688 or email brauntonmuseum@yahoo.co.uk

Notes to editors

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) enables communities to celebrate, look after and learn more about our diverse heritage. From our great museums and historic buildings to local parks and beauty spots or recording and celebrating traditions, customs and history, HLF grants open up our nation’s heritage for everyone to enjoy. Since 1994 it has supported more than 26,000 projects, allocating over £4 billion across the UK.