Local volunteers explore the hidden art of Barnsley

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Led by volunteers mainly from the local community, the project focuses on the history and works of past artists born in or strongly connected to the district of Barnsley. There will be a learning programme in schools, colleges and with individuals and community groups of all ages over the next 18 months, starting this month. There are also opportunities for volunteers to participate actively and to learn new skills. As a culmination of the project, there will be an exhibition of the fascinating stories and outstanding works of nearly 26 past Barnsley artists. This will be in the Cooper Gallery, Barnsley from June to August 2014. In addition, there will be a range of ways people will be able to find out about the artists through booklets, online and in the Archives and Local Studies library.

The project will enable local people to find out how significant Barnsley's past artists have been as part of the nation's cultural history. They will learn about the wide range of their achievements often from surprising beginnings including from Barnsley's past industries (glass making, linen weaving and coal mining). The artists' personal stories will fascinate and enrich people's lives. Local people of all ages will be able to attend classes, workshops and lectures and to engage with some exciting activities (competitions, film making, digital model making). There will be classes for adults in primary schools and activities developed in some community colleges. Local community events will be organized.

Viewing and interpreting paintings, sculpture, drawings, architecture and stained glass can enhance the lives of the diverse range of people in Barnsley and provide evidence of how human skill and observation have developed over the decades. This can be inspiring and bring to people's attention the fine achievements of the past. The first of Barnsley's artists was born in 1747 and the last one the group has researched died in 1985. Some artists ran in families and there are 16 families with 26 artists included within the project.

Commenting on the award, Hugh Polehampton, Chair of BAYD, said: "We are thrilled to have received the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and we are confident the project will amaze, fascinate and inspire a wide range of people in Barnsley, including those who have not previously become involved in art.''

Fiona Spiers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Yorkshire and the Humber, said: "It is so important for people to learn about their past and understand where they come from. Often what they discover will surprise and inspire them. The Hidden Art of Barnsley project will provide opportunities for people to learn new skills and develop an alternative view on Barnsley's past."

Notes to editors

BAYD consists of a group of people mostly from Barnsley who have been researching the past artists of Barnsley for the last three years. The organisation was set up nearly two years ago and has been talking about their research with local history groups. Collaborative working has been arranged with many local groups and agencies (including Adult Learning Service, Darton and Horizon Community Colleges, Barnsley Civic Trust and Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council).

Further information

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