Rare Sheffield 'Reading Room' wins support

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The money will see the much-loved building - built by public subscription in 1789 to provide free education for poor children as well as a place of worship free from influence of the Parish Church - fully restored by the Old School Charity (OSC) and returned to the heart of the community. In addition to bringing it back into its original use as a reading room, the venue will be brought back to life as a community centre - running an extensive range of heritage learning activities for people of all ages.

Fiona Spiers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund Yorkshire and the Humber said: “The Reading Room in Grenoside is important in the context of non-conformist religious changes in the north of England in the 18th and 19th centuries, and its former uses mark an early forerunner to our modern welfare system. Once restored, the building will provide an invaluable resource to locals and visitors alike from community heritage volunteers to students studying conservation and restoration.”

Closed as a school in 1893 to become a reading room, institute and library, the building once restored will interpret its history through reinstating collections of original objects and artefacts as a publicly accessible community archive. This will include local/general heritage publications and materials from the OSC, Grenoside and District Local History Group, and the Sorby Natural History Society. Planned exhibitions and events will explore the local history of the Grenoside area and how it played a key role in the early Sheffield steel industry, of which evidence of a crucible and refining and casting workshops still exists in the village today. In addition, the garden will be redesigned and conserved to reflect the buildings history, offering lots of opportunities for local school children to get involved.

A David Rickards, Chair of the Trustees for OSC added: "We are absolutely delighted that thanks to HLF the Grenoside Reading Room will get a new lease of life. By restoring its historic features and preserving its heritage it will make it possible for the local community and visitors to use the building and garden for various heritage and education themed activities, making it a real asset to the local area.

"When complete, our project will enable much wider use of a building of heritage importance and encourage recognition of the significant place both the building and the village hold in the development of education, non-conformism, steel making and the early years of a welfare state in England during the19th and 20th centuries.”

The restoration of the Grenoside Reading Room is expected to take approximately nine to ten months and will open to the public in late autumn 2012.

Notes to editors

Grenoside Reading Room
Further information regarding the history of the Reading Room can be found at the Grenoside Reading Room website.

Further information

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