Youngsters win grant for 'most important battle of WWII' research

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The group of up to fifteen young people from ‘Nani Hathi,’ a young people’s arm of Hathi Productions, have been awarded over £23,000 by HLF. Their project will focus on the history of the 4th Indian Division and their role in the battle.

Using arts and heritage inspired activities, they will recruit a further forty young volunteers and teach them heritage skills, help them to learn about, appreciate and share their heritage. Together, they will engage members of the community and conduct oral history research and recordings.

Project outcomes will include an archive of soldier’s testimonies and a theatrical script based on the research. This will be a musical celebration at the Curve Theatre attracting an audience of around a thousand people. Participants will receive an accredited Certificate for progression into Higher Education.

On awarding the funding, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for the East Midlands, Emma Sayer said: “The idea for this project came entirely from this group of young people who were moved by the story of the British Asian contribution in WWII. Their motivation, sense of ownership and desire to enlighten the rest of their community is commendable. It will equip them with many useful skills as they uncover the details of a significant event in world history.”

Battle of Monte Cassino

Also known as the ‘Battle for Rome’ this is arguably one of the most important battles of WWII. The Monastery of Monte Cassino stood as the strongest point of the German defensive line. Monte Cassino effectively blocked the Allies route north to Rome and had to be taken despite the difficulties of doing so from a military point of view. The battle lasted for four months and left the monastery destroyed, an estimated quarter of a million dead or wounded, but the hill had been captured leaving the route open to Rome.

Note to editors

An extract taken from specific memories raised in a discussion on the role of the Indian troops in the Italy Campaign featuring the Battle for Monte Cassino.

Solider Lance corporal FS Simons (now deceased) 7th Lancers Amoured division detailed to support 4th Indian divison:

“The night was pitch black, not a light anywhere, no a cigarette end burning red like an inviting target. On sentry duty; alone, afraid but numb. All feeling lost from the freezing cold and the thin icy driving rain. Then the tap on the shoulder, not the Red Cross but your mate Baz; one of the Indian soldiers with a cup of his special cha. Not a word spoken except through the eyes, understanding, caring knowing. Probably couldn’t have talked to each other anyway. Just me and Baz, in his turban with his special cha. That’s what I remember about being on ‘the Hill’.”

Further information

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