Launch of Old Wives' Tales project charts journey



Old Wives' Tales charts young women's journeys from Bangladesh to Birmingham

Legacy WM have spent the last year working on this ground breaking project.

The Old Wives' Tales launch will consist of 20 Bangladeshi women collecting their stories and documenting their journeys. These journeys began when they were young girls in Bangladesh who married Bangladeshi men with UK citizenship. They talk about their life back home, their first impressions of the UK and how they made Birmingham their home in the 1970s and 1980s.

Through interview, Legacy WM has filmed the stories and unearthed black and white photos of the women. These photos and other memorable objects will be displayed at the exhibition which will provide a unique insight into the culture and heritage of the Bangladeshi community. There will also be on display paintings of Bangladesh by Ena Wyatt.

The launch event will be held at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery on Thursday 12 November from 6pm.

During the evening, guests will enjoy live traditional Bangladeshi music as well as have an opportunity to hear from some of the women. The exhibition will be open to the public from 13 November for a period of three months.

Material collected during this project will be archived at the Library of Birmingham, providing a compelling and much-needed addition to the city's record of its Bangladeshi heritage. Additionally, an illustrated book, funded by KPMG in Birmingham, will be created alongside the project sharing the stories of the women.

Aftab Rahman, Director of Legacy West Midlands, said: "The 'Old Wives Tales' builds on the work that Legacy WM has been carrying out to document the stories of minority groups and their contributions to society and to share this history with a wider audience. The projects has enabled use to document the extraordinary lives of these women, some of whom are in their 80s and 90s. Their stories demonstrate courage and resilience at a time when they faced many adversaries. We are fortunate to be able to collect their stories for people to enjoy now and for future generations."

According to Andy Argyle, partner from KPMG, initiatives such as Legacy WM's Old Wives' Tales are important in providing local communities, including their employees, with insight into their surrounding environment.

Mr Argyle, said: "Some of our employees are coming to work in the city for the first time, so to enable them to gain a better understanding of the city's heritage, together with visiting areas outside of the city centre core, are an important factor in exploring and understanding where they work."

Vanessa Harbar, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund, West Midlands, said: "Thanks to National Lottery players, diverse communities across the West Midlands have been able to explore and share the heritage that matters to them. This project will shed light on the fascinating hidden heritage of our Bangladeshi community and bring people of different backgrounds together to celebrate an important part of Birmingham's unique character."

Veryan Heal, Planning Director for Historic England in the West Midlands believes the exhibition will increase our understanding of how historic places had changed over time. Miss Heal said: "Neighbourhoods like Handsworth, rich in listed buildings and steeped in history, have seen great cultural and social change since the middle of the twentieth century. Historic England is delighted to be supporting Legacy West Midlands in helping the community understand and enjoy their local historic environment."

Notes to editors

About Legacy West Midlands

Legacy WM was formed as a constituted organisation in April 2010 by a group of people with an interest in recording the heritage of the post-war, migrant communities. In April 2011 it became a registered charity (1141498). It has since broadened its aim to include work with young people, wellbeing and arts. The organisation has developed an excellent track record for delivering high quality, interactive, cultural heritage projects.

Old Wives Tales builds on valuable relationships Legacy WM formed during another HLF funded project. Awarded £47,500 in 2010, Bangla Food Journeys explored the experiences of Bangladeshi migrants through their stories of food and recipes. In 2012 Legacy WM was awarded £42,000 for the development of a heritage trail for Lozells & East Handsworth, which is still running. Legacy WM is the lead partner in the developing Peoples' Heritage & Arts Centre (PHAC) project. PHAC will focus on the heritage of the area and its people from 1931, the year the building was built.

About Historic England

Historic England (formerly English Heritage) is the public body that champions and protects England's historic places. They look after the historic environment, providing expert advice, helping people protect and care for it and helping the public to understand and enjoy it.

Further information

For more information contact Aftab Rahman, Director for Legacy WM, on 0121 523 0580 / 07861 310 802 or Aftab@legacy-wm.org.



Participants of the Old Wives project

Old Wives Tales – from Bangladesh to Birmingham