Hidden LGBT+ heritage uncovered thanks to

Worthing WOW Oscar Wilde workshop with young people

2017 marks both the 60th anniversary of the publication of the Wolfenden Report and 120 years since Oscar Wilde was released from Reading Gaol.

Thanks to National Lottery players, three groups have received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for projects to reclaim, record and celebrate the previously unexplored stories of LGBT+ heritage in Reading, Worthing and Hampshire. The projects aim to support and educate young people, particularly in LGBT+ communities, and give them a better sense of their heritage.

Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East England, said: “It’s fantastic that we can support these three great projects to shine a light on parts of history that have traditionally been overlooked. Thanks to National Lottery players, these fascinating stories will be rightfully brought to the fore and preserved for future generations - an important record of the challenges and achievements of the LGBT+ community.”

The Wolfenden Report

Support U Ltd has been awarded £77,200 for a project researching and sharing the history of the 1957 Wolfenden Report on the 60th anniversary of its publication.

Chaired by Lord John Wolfenden, then vice-chancellor of the University of Reading, *The Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution* changed the course of LGBT+ rights in Britain and led to the decriminalisation of homosexuality ten years later in 1967.

Thanks to National Lottery players, this project will explore the events and effects of this significant moment in local and national LGBT+ heritage. Working in partnership with the University of Reading and Reading Museum, Support U's youth group will create a documentary about the report, examining local archives and interviewing figures relating to the report.

Their research will form the basis of an exhibition and events programme with the University of Reading, as well as lesson plans, educational materials and teachers' training sessions for schools in the Thames Valley.

Lynden Kingston, Chief Executive at Support U Ltd, said: "We're so pleased to be working with the Heritage Lottery Fund on this project, following the great success in our first LGBT+ project, Hidden Voices. There are plenty of opportunities to get involved, so please get in touch to be part of one of the most fascinating LGBT+ activities the area has seen in a long time."

Voices for Heritage

Y Services for Young People has received £49,600 for their intergenerational oral history project recording and comparing the experiences of LGBT+ people of different generations in Hampshire.

The Voices for Heritage project will train young people in oral history research and documentary film making to enable them to record the memories of older people in their community, who grew up in a society where being gay or transgender was less socially acceptable, and often even illegal. These oral histories, which will discuss topics including how it felt to come out, will become part of the Hampshire Archives.

Led by a group of young people, the two-year project will also provide a range of educational materials, including posters, lesson plans and short films, to raise the profile of LGBT+ history and ensure the community's voice is preserved in history.

Eleanor Leinster, a participant with the Voices for Heritage project, said: "Voices for Heritage is all about a sense of belonging and community, and knowing where you come from, and those like you that came before you. Sharing experiences can also make people feel less alone and that the problems or situations we as young people face today maybe similar to people before us, and obviously they got through it somehow to get to this point, so by hearing their stories it can help us get through our hard times too."

Wilde: Worthing rediscovers its lost connection

Worthing WOW has been awarded £9,700 for Wilde: Worthing Rediscovers its Lost Connection, a project researching and celebrating Worthing's connection to writer Oscar Wilde.

2017 marks 120 years since Wilde was released from Reading Gaol, following his scandalous imprisonment on charges of gross indecency. Three years earlier, he had holidayed in Worthing with his wife and two sons. During this time, he wrote his last, and perhaps, most famous play, *The Importance of Being Earnest.* During 2017 and 2018, Worthing WOW will uncover the town's hidden heritage and create a comprehensive picture of the Worthing that Wilde would have experienced in 1894, through a trail around Worthing Museum, an exhibition at St Paul's Gallery and a series of educational walks, talks and packs for schools.

Melody Bridges, Artistic Director of WOW Worthing, said: "We're delighted that our charity has been awarded National Lottery funding to enable our celebration of Oscar Wilde. I'm currently preparing the educational workshops for local primary schools – it's a very exciting time."

Further information

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