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FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

Lottery Win for Gloucestershire Traditions

Single Gloucester, a folk archive project developed by Gloucester Traditions, has been awarded a Heritage Lottery Grant of £27,000 to publish on-line the songs from Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire.

The old county of Gloucestershire has a rich history of folk music and song. Some of our local songs are known the world over, for instance the popular Christmas songs The Holly and the Ivy and The Gloucestershire Wassail - the latter was even covered by Blur. The success of these songs is partly the result of their being published in collections by Ralph Vaughan Williams in the early C20th. However, there are hundreds more Gloucestershire songs that lie forgotten and unpublished in manuscript and sound archives across the country as well as in Scotland and the USA.

Gloucestershire Traditions have a plan to put this right and publish all of the known songs and tunes from the county on an easily accessible web-site.

“There are over 1000 folk songs and tunes collected in the county,” says Gwilym Davies, folksong collector and one of the instigators of the project, “who knows how many of these will become the popular songs of the future?”

The project is ambitious and is the first of its kind anywhere in England. It will transcribe each song into easy to download formats, like song sheets, mp3 and MIDI files. This will enable anyone to pick up a song from their own village and sing it straight away.

Anybody interested in family history will also benefit from the website, as Carol Davies explains, “With each song we are also researching the person from whom it was collected. This means that you may find one of your ancestors is represented and learn a song that was sung in your family a hundred years ago. In many instances we have original field recordings, so you can actually hear the voices of history.”

Explaining the importance of the HLF support, the Head of Region for the South West, Nerys Watts, said: “This is an excellent project for the people of Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire. This comprehensive project gives everyone easy access to a part of their cultural heritage that would otherwise be hidden away. It provides the opportunity to learn new skills, but more importantly will help people build a stronger sense of identity with where they live.”

To make this project a reality the group had to find partners with the right kinds of expertise. Gloucestershire Archives has stepped up to the mark and will be working closely to make sure that the heritage material is properly conserved and managed. As County Archivist Heather Forbes says, “Without this project significant archive material would have been lost, so we’re delighted to be able to preserve it permanently.”

The Gloucestershire Music Makers will have an important role in taking songs from the archive and re-introducing them into the communities where they were collected. “We are very excited about the project and will be working in schools across the county, so that children can learn the songs of their forefathers,” said singing leader Liz Terry.

Sheila Macbeth, community choirs leader is also looking forward to the project, “Our choirs are a powerful expression of community, and this new source of very local material will strengthen the sense of identity for each choir, and really give them something to sing about.”

The project starts now, with training for volunteers to learn how to transcribe the songs into the different formats. The next few months will be focused on bringing the material together and making the web-site. Soon after there will be singing projects in schools and communities and a series of talks and performances around the county to help everyone discover their hidden heritage. Anyone who would like to volunteer or find out more about the project can contact Gloucestershire Traditions through their web-site:

www.gloucestershiretraditions.co.uk

Commenting on the award, Stephen Gale, chair of Gloucestershire Traditions said: “We are thrilled to have received the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund to help build an excellent and enduring resource for Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire. These songs and tunes are a wonderful part of our heritage, but in many cases only skilled and determined experts can get to them. Our project will make this important material easily accessible and bring it to life for everyone – not only enthusiasts, but anyone who wants to understand and enjoy the folk traditions from where they live, with just a click of a mouse.”

Notes to Editors – See below

PRESS LAUNCH EVENT 22nd August 10.30am Gloucester Folk Museum – see below.

About Gloucestershire Traditions

Established by a group of volunteers interested in all aspects of folk traditions from academic research, to education and performing, Gloucestershire Traditions is a small organisation dedicated to making our local folk heritage more accessible. Before starting on the Single Gloucester project they set up a website of Christmas traditions in the county, including folk carols, wassailing and mumming – you can find it at www.gloschristmas.com

Gloucestershire Traditions Website www.gloucestershiretraditions.co.uk

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) aims to make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities across the UK and help build a resilient heritage economy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported almost 36,000 projects with more than £5.9bn across the UK.

www.hlf.org.uk.



Press Contact Details

If you would like to attend this event for interviews, photos and audio/visual material contact : Stephen Rowley

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Press Launch and Photo Call

When: Friday 22nd August 10.30am

Where: Gloucester Folk Museum, Westgate Street, Gloucester.

Who: Representatives from Gloucestershire Traditions; Gloucestershire Archives; Music Makers.

Singers and musicians representing each area of the county.

This event will provide an overview of this exciting project featuring musicians and singers from across the Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire to showcase some of the material from the Single Gloucester project.

An excellent opportunity for press interviews and colourful photos and video, in an interesting location.

This is the launch of the first major county-based internet folksong publishing project in England, and the start of a story that will run and grow over the next two years. It will involve volunteers, schools and communities from across the area.

The event will provide you with a county story and a local story from your particular area.

Refreshments will be provided.