



LEGACY MAKERS

Local people invited to take part in a new community history project for Darley Abbey

Local people are being invited to take part in a new community history project called Legacy Makers - exploring what life was like for the residents of Darley Abbey and surrounding areas in the nineteenth century and the village's links to slavery.

Made possible by money raised by National Lottery players, the project is launching on Saturday 27 July at St Matthew's Church in Darley Abbey from 2.30 pm to 5pm and everyone is welcome to come along and find out more.

Legacy Makers is being led by Bright Ideas Nottingham, a pioneering social enterprise that co-ordinates a range of community-led arts, cultural, heritage, education and well-being projects across the East Midlands, supported by a £87,300 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, together with additional support from Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Great Place Scheme.

The project will use the bicentenary of St Matthew's Church, built by local mill owner Walter Evans in 1819, as a starting point to explore what was happening in Darley Abbey around that time.

Dr Helen Bates, lead researcher on the project, explained:

"History in the Derwent Valley often focuses on mill-owning families like the Evans, Arkwrights and Strutts. Through Legacy Makers, we want to tell the story of the people who worked for them. St Matthew's Church is a great place to start as it holds many clues to that time. From the church bells and clock calling the mill workers to their shift, to the baptisms, marriages and burials that took place there. You can still see the mill workers' grave-markers, paid for by a burial subscription club."

As well as local history, Legacy Makers will delve into what was happening regionally, nationally and internationally at the time, including Darley Abbey mill's use of cotton that was grown and picked by enslaved Africans.

Building on Bright Ideas Nottingham's Slave Trade Legacies project, which explored the hidden history of enslavement connected to Derwent Valley, currently on exhibition at Cromford Mill Visitor Centre, Legacy Makers will focus on the untold story of the Evans' cotton supply chain and its connection to enslaved labour in the Americas. It will particularly seek to understand more about the lives of enslaved people on cotton plantations at this time.

The project will also bring history alive by looking at daily life and popular culture in Britain during the early nineteenth century, including songs, music, dances, poetry, political speeches and recipes.

The Legacy Makers project is planning to work with local children from Walter Evans Primary School and other schools to explore how children in the village lived back then, as well as Darley Abbey Research Group (DARG), Derbyshire Record Office and Derbyshire Family History Society. They are also inviting community groups and businesses to take part in the project, from book clubs who would like to read works published around 1819, to pubs and restaurants who could create drinks and dishes from the time.

The research uncovered by the project will be used by project participants to create a range of activities for including a concert at St Matthews church in 2020, a pop-up/digital exhibition and a new interpretation board for Darley Abbey. There will also be a project website to share the stories uncovered with a wider audience and a learning resource for schools.

Helen concludes:

"There are lots of ways to get involved in the project, from sharing an ancestor's story or a recipe from the time to contributing to our online archive or helping us with research as a volunteer. We're also keen to hear people's thoughts and ideas about what we should research as part of the project - nothing is set in stone so there's plenty of opportunity to have your say."

To book your free place on the Legacy Makers launch at St Matthew's church on 27 July please text your name and the word **'launch'** to **07989 302571**.

To find out more about the project please email: helen@brightideasnottingham.co.uk

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