

West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust

Media Release



Supported by

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Help the Friends of Lye and Wollescote Cemetery to care for Victorian graves

Local volunteers are needed to help to look after old graves in the cemetery. Many of the graves date from the Victorian and Edwardian periods and mark the final resting place of some of the town's most influential residents including Dr Darby the owner of the first motorised vehicle in Lye, Henry Wooldridge who invented the self fastening frost cog, and Owen Freeman who designed many of the buildings in Lye including the Centre Buildings and Rhodes Buildings.

Dudley Borough Council maintains the cemetery and ensures graves are safe, but it is the responsibility of families to care for grave sites. With no family left to tend to such graves ivy, holly and other weeds are taking over, hiding the inscriptions and damaging headstones and grave surrounds. In order to uncover and preserve these historical treasures, the Friends of Lye and Wollescote Cemetery and Chapels will be holding practical work days on **Saturday 4th July and Saturday 1st August from 10am to 12 noon**. The main tasks will be clearing ivy and pulling out holly seedlings. More volunteers are needed so anyone interested in getting some fresh air and exercise as well as meeting new people and learning a bit more about some of Lye's former

inhabitants should meet at the Springfield Avenue entrance. If you have gardening gloves, secateurs or rakes, please bring them with you. Hot and cold drinks will be available at the end of the sessions.

The creation of a Friends Group is part of the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, to repair the cemetery chapels.

For more information, please contact Carolyn Healy on 01952 433932, 07805 489296 or Carolyn@redkitenetwork.co.uk.

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Notes to editors:

More about this project

More information about this exciting project for the Lye & Wollescote Cemetery Chapels building can be found at the project website www.lyeandwollescote.info

To find out more about the wider Lye & Wollescote Cemetery Chapels project please contact David Trevis-Smith, Project Organiser: email david@dts-solutions.co.uk or phone 07711 601560

About the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust

The West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust (WMHBT) is a registered charity, established in 1985, with specialists in the field of building conservation giving their time on a voluntary basis to serve as Trustees and funds coming from membership subscriptions. WMHBT's purpose is to safeguard buildings within the West Midlands that are of historical or architectural importance. Where this cannot be achieved by simply raising awareness to the issues, WMHBT will consider carrying out a conservation project itself. As a registered Building Preservation Trust, WMHBT is able to attract grants and low-cost loans to carry out the type of rescue scheme often necessary with 'Buildings at Risk' and in this way aims to cover the deficit in funding such projects.

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in safeguarding historic buildings. WMHBT organises a range of activities, focused on the West Midlands, which include a regular newsletter; specialist talks, events and visits to historic buildings; arranging public access (as appropriate) to buildings before, during and after repair; commissioning and publishing research into historic buildings; encouraging the

involvement of schools and colleges in conservation projects; and disseminating information.

The first WMHBT project was 19-20 High Street, Kinver, South Staffordshire, a timber-frame building listed grade II. In the Staffordshire volume of 'The Buildings of England' series, the late Nikolaus Pevsner states that in Kinver High Street the best houses are numbers 17-20. To have lost an important building within that range would have been a tragedy, but when the WMHBT took the building over it was in a dangerous condition, with parts close to collapse. By that stage no-one was prepared to take up the arrears of maintenance because it would have cost more than the market value to put it right. As a result of the WMHBT project, 19-20 High Street has been transformed into a comfortable four-bedroom home and is now occupied by new owners. The high standards of the work were recognised by two awards: "The Carpenters' Award" presented by English Heritage in recognition of "the sensitivity of approach and excellence of craftsmanship"; and a "mention" by the Civic Trust for its "worthy contribution to the community".

The second WMHBT project was the grade II listed office building built as a living showcase by the former Harris & Pearson Company, firebrick manufacturers, in Brettell Lane, Brierley Hill, West Midlands. The building had been unoccupied for 13 years and was in a derelict state when acquired by WMHBT, with the costs of repair again being in excess of market value. The building was converted for modern-day use as prestigious offices and materials produced to interpret the associated heritage stories (see www.harrisandpearson.info). The project was a regional finalist in the RICS Awards, a national finalist in the Brick Awards, and was awarded a Civic Trust awards "commendation".

Both of the above projects were made possible by tremendous local community and local authority support and financial assistance from several sources, including primarily the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Architectural Heritage Fund.

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

From the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife, we use National Lottery players' money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about. www.hlf.org.uk @heritagelottery