

West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust

Media Release



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Outdoor art gallery of pupils' artwork brightens up building site

Primary School children from around the Lye area have created large colourful paintings inspired by both the former Lye and Wollescote Cemetery Chapels in Cemetery Road and key features of the town centre. Thirty large pictures have been created focusing on the buildings, monuments and features to brighten up the external contractor hoarding around the Grade II listed Victorian building now undergoing repair and regeneration.

Year 4 pupils from Rufford Primary School and Year 5 from Thorns Primary School, close to Lye town centre, worked with local Wollaston mural artist Dj, of artbydj, to create a series of vibrant paintings celebrating the buildings. Pupils worked in pairs within school using a variety of painting techniques under the guidance of Dj to create the individual panels. These have now been installed facing into the cemetery forming a temporary outdoor gallery.

West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust owns the property following successful grant applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other charitable sources. The Trust will

safeguard this Victorian landmark and create a suite of facilities for use by Dudley Council Citizenship & Registration Services.

Alice Middleton, Headteacher of Rufford Primary School said, ""As Lye residents, the children are really proud of the artwork that they produced with Dj. It was a great experience for them to work with a professional artist, and are looking forward to the completed chapel project."

David Priestley, Headteacher of Thorns Primary School noted, "Our children were particularly enthused to work with Dj on such an important project and very proud of their art work, they now feel they are part of the history and future of Lye."

Bob Tolley, Chairman of the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust added, "As we launch our third 'live project' we are delighted by the engagement and involvement of local schools, an essential part of our mission. An appreciation of the built environment and our historic heritage is so important at a time when the threat to these is still a reality in many urban areas making the work of Building Preservation Trusts such as ours even more necessary. The active involvement of young people is always encouraged and it is a personal delight to see the way they respond as I have found with my own grandchildren who do not escape the occasional visit to an historic site somewhere in the Midlands!"

End

Notes to editors:

Photographs enclosed

Photo credit Dj.

Rufford Primary School Year 4, Headteacher Ms. Alice Middleton and artist Dj.

Site access is via the 'side' gateway into the cemetery off Springfield Avenue, Lye.

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 arrange photographs with the school pupils present, please contact Andrew Meredith who is coordinating specific educational activities, 01684 575842, 07941 609525 or ameredithassociates@tiscali.co.uk

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

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 35,000 projects with more than £5.3bn across the UK. www.hlf.org.uk.