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COWPER & NEWTON MUSEUM



Press Release

Amazing Grace 250: Celebrating a Diverse Legacy

Today the Cowper & Newton Museum in Olney is celebrating after receiving a grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund of £98,760 towards their exciting heritage project, 'Amazing Grace 250 – Celebrating A Diverse Legacy'.

Made possible by money raised by National Lottery players, and match funded by Milton Keynes Council, the project focuses on a yearlong programme of Olney and Milton Keynes based exhibitions, talks, walks and cultural and community events in collaboration with the Open University, the Friends of the Caribbean-MK, the Stables Music Venue, the African Diaspora Federation–MK, Olney Town Council, the African and Caribbean Arts & Heritage Union-MK, the Sierra Leone Committee-MK and St Peter & St Paul Church, Olney.

Written in Olney for the New Year's Day 1773 Service at St Peter & St Paul, 'Amazing Grace' is now sung around the world and has been transformed by time, place and events to become one of the best loved and most often sung hymns.

The Heritage Fund grant will enable the appointment of a Heritage Engagement Officer to manage the project as well as bringing in the advice and experience of Museumand, the National Caribbean Heritage Museum. In July 2022, 'Amazing Grace - Legacies at 250', a two-day conference programme, will be held at the Open University, St Peter & St Paul and the Cowper & Newton Museum. The Milton Keynes Youth cabinet will end the programme in July 2023 with an 'Amazing Grace Legacy' Youth Conference held in Olney.

Chairman of the Cowper & Newton Museum Trustees Paul Collins enthused: 'This is fantastic news for the Museum which has been developing its site and offer for several years to bring in new visitors and planning the 250th anniversary celebrations for many months – we look forward to sharing this internationally important story with everyone.'



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Stuart McLeod, Director, England, London & South at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "We are delighted to support Cowper & Newton Museum with their year-long project, 'Amazing Grace 250 – Celebrating A Diverse Legacy'. Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, this project will help communities in Olney and Milton Keynes develop and share their rich heritage through oral history, exhibitions, dance, art, theatre and music."

Cllr Robin Bradburn, Deputy Leader of MK Council and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Culture said: "The Council was incredibly proud to have provided funding for this project, so we're equally delighted to hear this latest news. It's a great result for the Museum, for Olney and for Milton Keynes, and is testament to all the hard work that's been done. The Council has worked with the Museum Trustees for many years as an important part of our Creative and Cultural Strategy delivery to ensure its significant heritage can reach and positively impact our residents, communities and visitors. I look forward to an amazing twelve months of activity."

The project will also capture new research into John Newton's role in the Transatlantic Slave Trade and interviews and contemporary collecting of people's personal experiences of the hymn 'Amazing Grace'. The Museum is also leading on bringing the partners together with new visitors and participants to co-create new displays and resources both in the Museum and online which will be available for education and other cultural venues to use, greatly increasing access to this important story and heritage.



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Notes to editors

About the Cowper & Newton Museum

This Accredited Museum exists to conserve, develop and maximise access to its buildings, collections and tranquil gardens, thereby promoting the public understanding and enjoyment of Cowper and Newton and some of the greatest stories of the 18th century. Olney is the home of the hymn 'Amazing Grace'. The Museum records the unique international heritage story of the writing of Amazing Grace, an anthem now known and sung the world over. 'The home of Amazing Grace' is a platform for the Museum to tell this story with great modern significance, for new and diverse audiences.

The house, which opened as a Museum in 1900, is situated in Orchard Side House, the home of William Cowper from 1768 to 1786. Cowper was a renowned 18th century poet, and his house gives a glimpse into Georgian life in a rural market town. The house has changed little since Cowper's time and items of original furniture and Cowper's belongings are on display.

The Cowper & Newton Museum trust works as an accredited museum to ensure over 4000 items in the collection are cared for and made accessible to all. As custodians of this historic site with Grade II* listed buildings the preservation and interpretation of the house and gardens to as wide an audience as possible is the paramount purpose.

The displays in the house tell of the friendship between Newton and Cowper. Visitors can discover how Newton's life and personal experience inspired him to write 'Amazing Grace' in Olney. Newton was a slave ship captain who later became curate of the parish church, played an important role in the campaign to abolish the Slave Trade and supported William Wilberforce.

The Museum and its 18th century gardens, run by volunteers with a Museum Manager, is open five days per week. The Museum runs programmes of activities for young people and for adults. The schools programme supports the local history curriculum, Arts Awards and offers sessions and resources for the study of the slave trade and the abolitionist movement. Downloadable resources are available on Georgian Life in Olney and the campaign to abolish slavery.

Talks are held at the Museum for adult groups and talks are offered on a wide range of topics to community groups in the area.



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The Museum also holds regular events, for example Georgian dance displays and tea and cakes are available in the garden during the Summer.

The Flower Garden is maintained by a small group of volunteers and is self-funding from the sale of plants, flowers and vegetables in season.

www.cowperandnewtonmuseum.org.uk/

Follow @CowpntNewtMuseum on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)

About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we **Inspire, lead** and **resource** the UK's heritage to create **positive and lasting change** for people and communities, now and in the future. www.heritagefund.org.uk.

Follow @HeritageFundUK on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #NationalLotteryHeritageFund

About Milton Keynes Council

The Culture Team sits in the Chief Executive and supports the growth and development of the city's cultural offer, taking a strategic lead on the delivery of the Creative and Cultural Strategy 2018 – 2027. The small team is responsible for managing the:

- City's cultural international programme,
- Culture Grants portfolio and cultural infrastructure capital investment programme,
- Public art commissioning programme.

The Culture team has the mandate to develop and deliver strategic cultural projects, programmes and commissions, often working in partnership and collaboration. These initiatives are developed to ensure that culture makes a real difference to the quality of lives of residents and visitors and contributes to the ongoing success of Milton Keynes.

Follow @CultureMK on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and at www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/culture

Further information about the project email
admincnm@cowperandnewtonmuseum.org.uk