

## **Harvesting the Past; Memories from Rural Worcestershire**

**Date for your Diary - Tuesday 19 May 2009**

**Do you know someone with great stories to tell about life around Martley in the 1930s, 40s and 50s? Someone who really ought to be recorded for posterity?**

If so, we would like to hear from you! It's for a new oral history project called 'Harvesting the Past; Memories from Rural Worcestershire' which has two main aims; to create an archive of farming and countryside stories for the Worcestershire Record Office and to create a community play based on people's memories and experiences. The play will be written by a local scriptwriter and produced and staged at The Chantry High School... and it's hoped that as many local people as possible will get involved.

The project will be holding an open evening at The Chantry on Tuesday 19 May. This will be a chance to come along and find out more, without committing yourself to anything! It starts at 7pm in the school hall and there will be entertainment and refreshments on offer.

Coordinating the project is former BBC producer Julia Letts, who has spent the past 10 years recording oral history interviews in Worcestershire and Herefordshire.

"I am very excited about Harvesting the Past," admits Julia. "I know there are some wonderful characters out there with amazing stories to tell. We all lead such busy lives these days that often we don't find time to listen to the older generations. Here's a chance to change that. Thanks to funding from Worcestershire County Council, we have the opportunity to record the experiences of people who've lived around here all their lives. The next stage will be sharing these stories with the whole community."

Julia explains that she is relying on the people of Martley and the surrounding villages to help find the interviewees and get involved in the community play.

"People often say "if only I'd interviewed so and so before it was too late". Well, now is our chance. I can reassure anyone who's interested in being recorded that it

is a very informal process, and quite fun. I'm not only looking for stories and anecdotes, but also descriptions of everyday life, details of all the farm chores in the days before machinery, and memories of the various events in the farming calendar."

As the project develops, the team will also be looking for amateur actors and actresses, and anyone with any theatrical or technical skills. If you'd like to find out more or suggest an interviewee, please contact researcher Sue Broome on 01299 251512.

Julia is also interested in any old photos or documents that reflect farming and country life which could be used in a small exhibition. As the project develops, the team will also be looking for amateur actors and actresses, and anyone with any theatrical or technical skills.

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