NLHF Project:
Archive research volunteer

Take Shelter is the volunteer-led charity which runs the only school air raid shelter open to the public in the south. We run a busy schools and community programme which welcomes more than 4000 people each year. Access to the shelter is through guided tours of groups of no more than 10 people at the time. In addition to the guided shelter tours we run wartime themed activities in our wartime themed museum space and are fortunate to have a number of veteran volunteers, who were all children during the war, sharing their first-hand experiences. On our community days we also run a gift shop and Tea Room.

As a volunteer led organisation we could not deliver either our schools or community programme without the support, skills and dedication of our volunteers.

About our National Lottery Heritage Fund project: *'Capturing Brighton's last wartime veterans project'*

Take Shelter has been awarded an £85,575 grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to capture and share the experiences of the city's last wartime veterans. Working with volunteers, we will present these first-hand experiences alongside artefacts, wartime documents, photographs and films drawn from the partner organisations to create a rich story of wartime Brighton, saving it for future generations for whom the Second World War is not within their lifetime.

During the war every school would have had an air raid shelter. Today the only accessible one in the south is located under the playground at Downs Junior School in Brighton. Take Shelter is very aware that the last wartime generation will not be with us for much longer. Without this funding from Heritage Fund we would not be able to take this last opportunity to record and preserve the memories of our veteran volunteers, who were all children during the war, and others of their generation across the city. Their recollections, alongside other original wartime material from Brighton Museums, Mass Observation Archive, Screen Archive South East and The Keep will provide the personal and social context for the air raid shelter and life in wartime Brighton.

This project will see Take Shelter work with volunteers to record the veterans' memories, research and select original archive material for display, curate new physical museum displays, develop content for new digital touchscreen, and create an interactive bombing map of key locations across the city. The final project resources will be informed by consultation with advisory groups drawn from the local community and school teachers We will also be working with an access advisory group and young people with additional needs to ensure that we are meeting their needs as fully as possible.

What will I be doing?

You will be researching and selecting wartime themed documents and similar from the Mass Observation Archive based at The Keep in Brighton. These documents will be used to help to add extra information to new displays, hands-on activities and a digital touchscreen to increase understanding of what it was like to live during the Second World War. An introduction to the Mass Observation archive and the Second World War will be provided.

Key tasks:

- To take part in an introductory session to the project.
- To attend the introduction and initial research session at the Mass Observation Archive
- To work with the Project Officer to research and select a series of documents which are appropriate to key wartime themes.
- To help identify how your selected documents can be used in the different elements of the project from displays, schools sessions, touchscreen and so on.
- To support the project by helping at related events and open days.

Where will I be based?

The project is based at Downs Junior School on Ditchling Road, Brighton. BN1 6ED. Access to the school during the week is via the entrance on Rugby Road. At the weekends access is via the gate on Ditchling Road. The air raid shelter is located underneath the top playground. Training will take place at the school but it is anticipated that interviews will take place in locations across the city.

How much time will I be expected to give?

The introductory sessions to the project and to the Mass Observation Archive will take between 2-3 hours each. Research sessions after that will be decided upon depending on the time you have available. We hope that all our research volunteers will be able to do a couple of research sessions.

What skills, qualities and experience do I need?

No experience or qualifications are necessary as this is a good opportunity to gain new skills. However this role would suit people who:

- Have an interest in the Second World War
- Have an interest in research and working with archives
- Have good communication and listening skills
- Are proactive with a good eye for detail
- Enthusiastic and interested to learn about the project and life in wartime Brighton
- Reliable, friendly and polite
- Comfortable working as part of a team
- Are able to work with and without supervision

What support and training will I receive?

All volunteers will receive an induction and including background to Take Shelter and the NLHF project including a tour of the air raid shelter. An introduction to the Mass Observation Archive and how to use the search room will also be provided by the MOA team. Ongoing support for the activity will be provided by the Project Officer.

What will Take Shelter expect from me?

- To be the friendly face of Take Shelter and be ambassadors for the project in the wider community.
- To be reliable in attendance and dependable.
- Maintain good working relationships with other volunteers, Project Officer and wider Take Shelter team.
- Undertake appropriate training and attend volunteer meetings.
- Complete, wherever possible, a couple of research sessions to help select documents for the project.
- To help at events and open days related to the NLHF project.

What can I expect from Take Shelter?

- A welcoming and enjoyable experience.
- The opportunity to learn and develop new skills and experience.
- To be treated fairly and with respect.
- To become part of a friendly, motivated and dedicated team.
- Recognition and appreciation for your contribution.
- The opportunity to meet people from all walks of life and make new friends.
- Satisfaction of giving back to the community; promoting the work of the Museum.