

Latest FoGLHP News

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GLHP awarded Green Flag again in 2018! Following an inspection in May, The Great Lines Heritage Park has been awarded a Green Flag again. Many thanks to all who contributed throughout the year, for example on our litter picks.

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 GLHP awarded Green Flag again! The GLHP have been awarded the coveted Green Flag Award it was announced today (18/07/2017) so that makes a total of 33 in Kent! The Green Flag Awards note that research shows that people will only visit a park if they perceive it to be clean and safe, and the awards aim to demonstrate which parks meet high standards.

£1.8million to help unlock the secrets of Chatham's past Medway Council together with Fort Amherst Heritage Trust, have been successful in securing the funding to help the area reconnect with its military roots and discover secrets from the past.

This is the second round of HLF funding the project, named Command of the Heights, has received. In June 2015, £214,000 was awarded to develop the project plans which can now be turned into reality thanks to the latest grant.

The huge project will include the careful demolition of Riverside One, which sits within the walls of the historically important Barrier Ditch. The Ditch was built during the Seven Years War (1754-1763) and it ran from where Riverside One currently stands and across into Fort Amherst. It was a critical part of the defences - an un-scalable ditch and embankment which dramatically divided the military and civilian areas of Chatham. During the restoration process, it is expected that cannons and other military items could be discovered buried beneath the surface.

Command of the Heights will also see the creation of a new entrance to Fort Amherst from Chatham town centre as well as the restoration of the Spur Battery - the highest part of Chatham within Fort Amherst once used for troop encampments, siege warfare training and military punishment. This will be transformed into an amphitheatre with seating to allow for outdoor performances, and the restoration of this area will also open up even more public green space at Great Lines Heritage Park.

Throughout the project there will be many opportunities to learn about the heritage of Chatham including the history behind Gun Wharf (Medway Council HQ), which was the original location of the Tudor Dockyard. A busy programme of activities will encourage the public to get involved in events such as community archaeology, cataloguing of the large ordnance collection, performances in the amphitheatre and much more.

Works will begin in January 2018 and are expected to be complete by June 2020. Command of the Heights will extend and complement the HLF funded Command of the Oceans programme running at the Historic Dockyard, Chatham.

Medway Council's Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships Cllr Rodney Chambers said: "I am pleased we have been successful in securing funding for what is going to be an exciting project in Chatham. There is a lot to learn about the area's military and naval history, and through Command of the Heights we hope to capture the imagination of Medway residents and those from further afield.

"This project also ties in nicely to our Battle of Medway commemorations taking place in June. Fort Amherst was built to defend Chatham and the river following the Battle of Medway in 1667 when the Dutch launched a daring and successful assault on the British upon the River Medway. We'll be commemorating 350 years since that embarrassing defeat in a big way, it's a dark and often forgotten time in Medway's naval history, but it heralded a new era for the navy."

Les Snowdon, Chair of the Fort Amherst Heritage Trust said: "This grant will enable the Trust to realise a long held ambition to open the Spur Battery to the public and at the same time provide for the people of the Medway towns an exciting new outdoor performing arts arena.

"Our trustees, staff and volunteers are looking forward to the opportunities that this brings to the Fort, as

reconnecting the barrier ditch to the River Medway restores both physically and historically our close relationship to both the river and the dockyard that the Fort was built to protect.

"We hope that many local people will be as excited by this announcement as we are and will want to become involved with the project. As a volunteer run organisation the Fort is always pleased to hear from potential volunteers who would be interested in joining our team maintaining the site, working in events or in our busy on site cafe. We are also keen to hear from people that may be interested in joining our board of trustees to help us deliver the Command of the Heights programme."

Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East, said: "Thanks to National Lottery players, this exciting new project will restore Fort Amherst, reconnect it with the waterfront, and help join the dots for locals and visitors alike on the unique story of Chatham's significant military heritage."

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Lottery funding kick starts £2m heritage project in Chatham Chatham is a step closer to a £2m archaeological exploration and heritage regeneration project thanks to support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).Medway Council together with Fort Amherst Heritage Trust, have been successful in securing funding to help the area reconnect with its military roots and discover secrets from the past.The £214,000 grant will be used to develop the plans for the project named Command of the Heights, and the council will apply for the full grant at a later date.*The huge project will include the careful demolition of Riverside One, which sits within the walls of the historically important Barrier Ditch.The Ditch was built during the Seven Years War (1754-1763) and it ran from where Riverside One currently stands and across into Fort Amherst. It was a critical part of the defences - an unscalable ditch and embankment which dramatically divided the military and civilian areas of Chatham. During the restoration process, it is expected that cannons and other military items could be discovered buried beneath the surface.Facilities currently at Riverside One will relocate to Kingsley House in Gillingham in July.Command of the Heights will also see the creation of a new entrance to Fort Amherst from Chatham town centre as well as the restoration of the Spur Battery - the highest part of Chatham within Fort Amherst once used for troop encampments, siege warfare training and military punishment. This will be transformed into an amphitheatre with seating to allow for outdoor performances, and the restoration of this area will also open up even more public green space at Great Lines Heritage Park.Throughout the project there will be many opportunities to learn about the heritage of Chatham including the history behind Gun Wharf, which was the original location of the Tudor Dockyard. A busy programme of activities will enable the public to get involved in events such as community archaeology and much more.Phase one of Command of the Heights will consist of development and planning and this will begin next month.Restoration works are anticipated to begin in early 2017 , with completion expected in late 2018.Command of the Heights will extend and complement the HLF funded Command of the Oceans programme running at the Historic Dockyard, Chatham.Medway Council's Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships Cllr Rodney Chambers said: "I am pleased we have been successful in securing funding for what is going to be an exciting project in Chatham. There is a lot to learn about the area's military and naval history, and through Command of the Heights we hope to capture the imagination of Medway residents and those from further afield."Keith Gulvin, one of the original Fort Amherst Trustees, said: "This valuable funding represents the last major piece of a twenty acre jigsaw which will have taken over three decades to complete. The work will be the culmination of a project started in 1984 that has continued relentlessly thanks to the dedication of our Trustees and volunteers who have donated their time, energy and skills to the project - all that has been missing is the financial support required for such expensive work, which this grant from HLF will now provide."Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East, said: "We're delighted to support this ambitious project which will create both a physical and learning gateway into a fascinating part of Chatham's rich history. As well as restoring the remnants of the past, the involvement of the local community will ensure these stories are not forgotten. We look forward to seeing the plans develop."

Friends of The Great Lines Heritage Park Annual General MeetingWas held on Thursday 26th February 2015 at Fort Amherst Visitor Centre and we now have a new chairperson Sally Luoto, our previous chairperson Pam Wood stood down due to other commitments, so now we have a new vice chairperson Chris Norman and we wish them all good luck in the future. Some of our achievements over the past year are that for the first time in its 25 year life as a public open space, the Great Lines Heritage Park has been handed a prestigious Green Flag Award.

Keep Britain Tidy's Green Flag Award scheme manager Paul Todd said: "A Green Flag Award provides national recognition for all the parks managers, staff and volunteers who, through their dedication and hard work, have helped to create these fantastic places for everyone to enjoy. "Quality green spaces are a vital resource for communities and that is why it is so significant that we have given out more awards than ever before." Also we had been given a supply of poppy seeds to mark the centenary of the outset of World War 1, the sowing took place on the evening of 11.06.2014. The Great Lines has been used by the military for many years as a place to train soldiers in warfare and also as an emcampment before being sent away to fight.

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New Phone Application For Fort Amherst. Fort Amherst Trail-Walls and Garden FREE mobile phone application is now

available to download. Remember it's FREE!! <http://www.mobile-explorer.co.uk> Available in English, French and Dutch, the tour explains many features of the Fort's parkland and building's. Download in the confort of your own home before you visit the site. A trail of the GLHP will be available soon!

Friends of Great Lines Heritage Park celebrate as Great Lines Heritage Park is named as a 'great park' For the first time in its 25 year life as a public open space, the Great Lines Heritage Park has been handed a prestigious Green Flag Award. Made by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, the award recognises and rewards the best parks and green spaces across the country.

Keep Britain Tidy's Green Flag Award scheme manager Paul Todd said: "A Green Flag Award provides national recognition for all the parks managers, staff and volunteers who, through their dedication and hard work, have helped to create these fantastic places for everyone to enjoy. "Quality green spaces are a vital resource for communities and that is why it is so significant that we have given out more awards than ever before." Poppy sowing on the Great Lines Friends of Great Lines Heritage Park have been given a supply of poppy seeds to mark the centenary of the outset of World War 1.

The first phase of sowing took place this evening (11.06.2014), and more will be sown in coming weeks. Great Lines Heritage Park is Medway's most prominent park with a unique military history. It includes a line of massive ditches to defend Chatham's naval dockyard from a land-based attack. Land, known as the 'Field of Fire', was cleared to remove cover for an approaching enemy. Soldiers used the open space to practise their battlefield skills. The park played a key role in World War 1. For example, this was a key training area. Bell tents and marquees covered the open grassland. And houses and large buildings in the surrounding streets of Chatham, Brompton and Gillingham were taking in recruits to cope with the tremendous mass of people arriving on a daily basis - literally ten's of thousands of young men departed from the Great Lines to battlefronts all over France and Belgium (see photographs in the Events and History Galleries). The Great Lines in the Great War The Great Lines and surrounding area played a key role in World War One. For example, this was a key training area. Bell tents and marquees covered the open grassland. And houses and large buildings in the surrounding streets of Chatham, Brompton and Gillingham were taking in recruits to cope with the tremendous mass of people arriving on a daily basis - literally ten's of thousands of young men departed from the Great Lines to battlefronts all over France and Belgium. FoGLHP is chairing a collective of local history groups - please contact us if you have family memories or memorabilia of the Great Lines in the Great War which you are willing to share.

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Brompton History Research Group Lecture series - The Great Lines in the Great War was on the 20th February 2014 To mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, our first talk of 2014 covered the impact of the opening months of the Great War on the Great Lines and surrounding area. For example, this was a key training area. Bell tents and marquees covered the open grassland. And houses and large buildings in the surrounding streets of Chatham, Brompton and Gillingham were taking in recruits to cope with the tremendous mass of people arriving on a daily basis - literally ten's of thousands of young men departed from the Great Lines to battlefronts all over France and Belgium. At Chatham Town Hall, large numbers of woman gathered outside as a rumour went through the Towns that three ships with Medway men on board had been sunk. As they anxiously waited, the list of names went up as the news came in of H.M.S.Aboukir, H.M.S.Hogue and H.M.S. Cressy sunk by the submarine U9 on the 22 September 1914. Local history groups are working together to gather Medway memories and memorabilia, particularly what life was like on the home front. Does your family have such stories? If so, we would like to hear from you.

..... You may be interested in research just posted on the Brompton History Research Group website on the history of the Garrison Gardens: <http://www.bromptonhistory.org.uk/buildings/archive/the-garrison-gardend>

This is the area of formal gardens and parkland inside the 'Chatham Lines' fortifications (the Inner Lines). The gardens (except the unrestored area) are accessible from Maxwell Road and Sally Port, Brompton.

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News from our open meeting (28 February 2013) The past year's achievements included: - a successful series of Bug

Hunts for around 250 local school children - a photographic display in Gillingham Library, and - a Friends' leaflet. We are now planning events for the summer including a picnic. Also, we hope the Kent Bat Group will lead a bat walk in the Lower Lines Park (which lies within the wider Great Lines Heritage Park area) in May. Looking further ahead, 2014 is the 25th anniversary of Gillingham Borough Council acquiring the Great Lines, and suggestions were invited on marking the occasion. Finally, there was a talk on Family Folklore.

Below is a link to a video filmed at Fort Amherst and on the new bridge linking the fort to The Great Lines Heritage Park, by "The Soldiers" singing "She". <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sVr5vb5S3jE>