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PRESS RELEASE

Come Dancing's Quickstep to Hidden History

Black Country Living Museum researchers have discovered that TV's Come Dancing is a quickstep in the right direction to unearthing the history of 41 Hall Street, Dudley – the latest addition to the Museum's £10 million 'Streets Ahead' expansion programme.

The building, which will be known as Morrall's Gentlemen's Outfitters when rebuilt at the Museum, has been funded by a £45,750 grant from Biffaward, a multi-million pound environment fund, managed by the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, which utilises landfill tax credits donated by Biffa Waste Services.

Throughout its heyday in the 1970s, the Hall Street shop used to make dress and tail suits for the dancers of the hit TV show – Come Dancing. The long-running ballroom extravaganza – hosted by Angela Rippon, Judith Chalmers, Michael Aspel, Terry Wogan, David Jacobs and Rosemarie Ford was a family favourite and had a mammoth fifty year run from 1949 to 1998. Millions of viewers tuned in to watch the tears, the taffeta, the sequins and the satin as contestant's waltzed their way across the television screens.

Fancy footwork led Mr and Mrs Ashmore to create made-to-measure suits for the show's contestants as their passion for ballroom spilled into their professional lives. Setting up their tailoring business in 1954, the Ashmore's rented 41 Hall Street for the sum of £3 10 shillings from Mr and Mrs Hobbs who owned the chip shop next door. The dancing duo were members of a ballroom dancing formation team and knew exactly what cha-cha-cha changes to make to the cloth to ensure superb hand-finished suits. The couple also created suits for local people, prominent citizens and many of the Mayors of Dudley.

Hall Street will contain Hobbs Fish & Chip Shop and Morrall's Gentlemen's Outfitters and a grant of £1,164,300 from the European Regional Development Funding will ensure the project is fast-tracked, with completion taking place before January 2009.

-Ends-

Photographic Opportunity:

Images attached

Caption: Judith Chalmers during a recent visit to The Black Country Living Museum

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Editor's Notes:

1. In 1997 Biffa Waste Services agreed to donate landfill tax credits to the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) to administer under the fund name **Biffaward**. Grants made from the fund currently amount to over £96 million, supporting many worthwhile projects.

Biffa Waste Services Limited is a part of the Biffa Limited Group of Companies. Biffa Limited is owned by Waste AcquisitionCo Ltd, an entity formed by Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP), Montagu Private Equity & UCIL (Uberior Co-Investments Limited).

Biffa Limited is one of the largest single suppliers of waste management services in the UK. It collects, treats, recovers and disposes of municipal, commercial and industrial waste nationwide.

The **landfill tax** came into operation in 1996. Its purpose is to reflect the impact of landfill on the environment and also to help achieve the targets for more sustainable waste management. The tax, levied on the tonnage of all material disposed of in landfill sites and collected by Biffa on behalf of HM Revenue and Customs, aims to encourage recycling and reduce waste by raising the cost of disposal.

The regulations allow landfill site operators to direct approximately 6% of the tax they have collected towards approved environmental projects. However, any approved project can only receive 90% of its desired funding from the landfill tax. The remainder must come direct from the landfill site operator or from a third party organisation or company.

www.biffaward.org