
LINCOLN CATHEDRAL

LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2017



GOING FOR GOLD

The golden spring daffodils may now have faded but there was still plenty of gold to be seen in the Wren Library on the 12th April when ten budding artists attended a practical introductory workshop on manuscript illumination run by Toni Watts, the Cathedral Illuminator.

The day started with an introduction to some of the Cathedral's own illuminated manuscripts by Cathedral Librarian Julie Taylor.

Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to be able to touch and turn the pages of these wonderful items, normally only viewed behind glass. How often does one get the chance to touch a book that is older than the Cathedral or turn the pages of a beautiful illuminated 15th century psalter?

Inspired by the manuscripts they had seen, the group then began the practical part of the workshop, starting with the application of gold leaf.

Toni demonstrated four different techniques using Acrylic Gold Size, Garlic (a smell not normally present in the Wren Library!), Improved Gold Body and finally Manuscript Gesso, the method used by medieval illuminators. Everyone produced a test piece using all four techniques. The general consensus was that using manuscript gesso was by far the most difficult technique.



THE CONCENTRATION WAS PALPABLE

Having learnt the rudiments of gilding, everybody chose a larger image to work on during the afternoon. Some chose to copy one of the illuminated letters from the Cathedral's own manuscripts, some invented their own designs. The images were either traced and transferred on to watercolour paper using dry pigment or drawn freehand. They were then gilded, many people choosing to use transfer gold (gold leaf

backed on to tissue paper for ease of handling) rather than battling with the very flighty loose leaves of gold. Painting was the final step in completing their designs. Toni brought some modern paints with her – watercolour and gouache – but the group was also able to try making their own paint from dry pigment and glair (egg white) as the medieval illuminators would have done. The day was enjoyed by all. It

was a great insight into the world of medieval manuscript illumination and everybody left with a greater appreciation of the patience and skill of those who originally created those beautiful books, presumably working in areas with poor natural light. Toni continues to work in the Wren Library on advertised days during normal library opening hours. Please see the website for details.



FUTURE WORKSHOPS

Because of the success of the workshop further similar sessions may be run in the library in the future. These will be advertised on the Cathedral website www.lincolncathedral.com but can be booked and paid for via Toni's website www.toniwattsartstudio.com. The workshop is designed for those with no previous experience of manuscript illumination. No artistic skills are required (although creativity is welcomed!) as there would be a selection of medieval designs to copy. The money raised goes towards the preservation of the library and its collections of rare books.

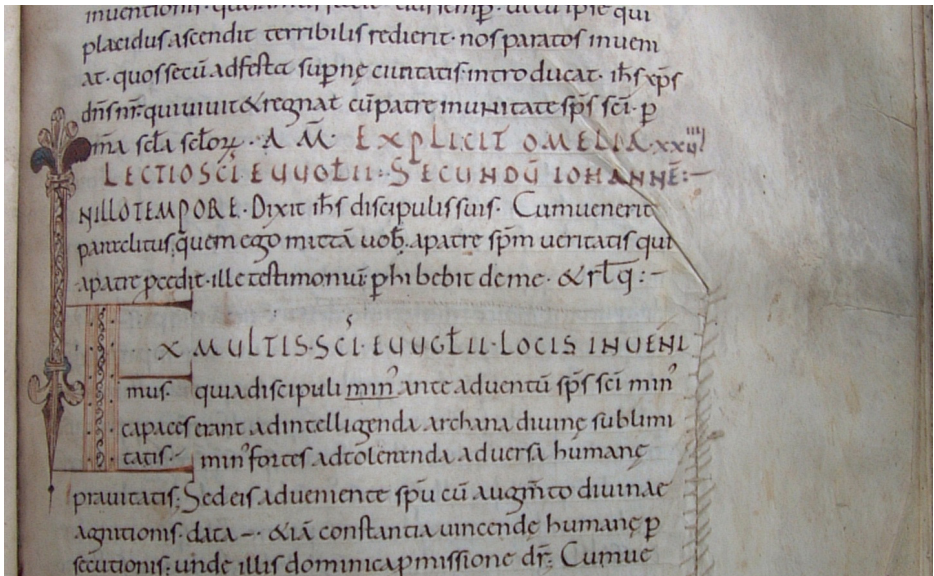


SUMMER EXHIBITION

2017 marks the 800th anniversary of the issuing of the Charter of the Forest and the second Battle of Lincoln, a decisive battle in the defeat of the army of Prince Louis of France in his attempt to take control of the English throne. To mark the anniversary the Collection Museum will be hosting a "Battles and Dynasties" Exhibition from the 28th May to the 4th September.

During this time the library exhibition will also feature manuscripts and books linked to this theme. When Remigius, the first Norman Bishop came to Lincoln on the orders of William the Conqueror he brought with him our oldest manuscript, a late 10th century copy of Bede's Homilies. This will be on display alongside the first known written poem linking Robin Hood with Sherwood Forest.

Some of the library's many English Civil War pamphlets will be on show as well as "The Gunpowder Treason" printed in 1679, open at the confession of Guy Fawkes. During May and June the library is open Monday to Friday 1pm to 3pm and Saturdays 11am to 3pm. Extended opening hours during July and August are Monday to Saturday 11am to 3pm.





ANOTHER STONE IN THE WALL

Visitors to the Wren Library over the next few weeks may notice the sound of hammering and drilling coming from behind the bookshelves. Essential work is currently being undertaken to replace 380 damaged pieces of stonework on the back wall of the Library, also the north wall of the cloister. New visitor facilities will later be built against the wall as part of the Lottery funded Lincoln Cathedral Connected project. Included will be an interpretation centre, education suite, café, shop and community rooms, all of which will be fully accessible.

AND FINALLY . . .

In December 2016 a new adoption scheme was introduced by the Librarian, The Adopt-a-Manuscript Page scheme. This has already raised £725. For £25 it is possible to adopt a page of plain text from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales; or for £75 a page with an illustration from Richard Rolle or for £150 an illuminated page from a 15th century psalter. Upon request, anyone adopting a page from one of the manuscripts can

visit to look through the manuscript itself. The Adopt-a-Book scheme also continues to bring in much needed funds. To date 1,379 books have been adopted. The money goes towards the conservation of the library's treasures and as they say "every little helps" as it costs upwards of £250 to conserve even the smallest of books. Use of the Reading Rooms by scholars, Cathedral volunteers and other

interested parties is increasing each year. Don't forget that all the printed books are listed on the Library Catalogue available on the Cathedral website at www.lincolncathedral.com/education-learning. Everyone is welcome to come and use the books although booking in advance is essential. The Wren and Medieval Libraries are once more open to the public and we are looking forward to another busy year.

A PLACE TO...

EXPLORE

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