
LINCOLN CATHEDRAL

LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2016



A PRICKLY HIGHLIGHT

I thought I would take this opportunity to highlight one of the library's treasures, manuscript 302, a 15th century book of Penitential Psalms, which I came across purely by accident whilst looking through the manuscripts for suitable illustrations for a new guide book about the library. I had previously had no reason to look at it, and picked it off the shelves at random. I am so glad that I did. Every page is exquisitely decorated with the most delicate

flowers and foliage. Gold leaf fills nearly every border. At a quick glance a tiny flower may appear white, but on closer inspection you see hints of blue, with delicate lines and shading on the petals. Toni Watts, the Artist in Residence has used this as inspiration for one of her illuminations which will form part of her exhibition in September. She and I refer to it as the "thistle" manuscript as several pages picture tiny thistles with beautifully detailed pink

flower heads. This is definitely one that will be on display later this year. On display until the end of July are books and documents with a royal theme including the 1072 writ of William I, a document signed by Elizabeth I, photographs of the current Queen and her family and a letter from Anne Boleyn's father. Also on display is the Cathedral oldest book, the late 10th century Bede's Homilies.



ONGOING PROJECTS

Although not open to the general public, Exchequergate Arch provides vital storage space for part of the library's modern reference collection, approximately half of its rare early printed books and its collection of 261 medieval manuscripts. Over the last couple of years, thanks to Claire Arrand, Special Collections Librarian at Lincoln University, who is seconded to us for 2 days a

week, the rooms in the arch have undergone a transformation. Claire has been busy reorganising, tidying and rationalising the stock, making it a more useable resource....an unenviable task as each room is accessible only via spiral staircases. Claire also oversees the steady flow of researchers coming to consult the manuscripts and has helped to further extend our links with the University,

bringing interested groups to the library to make them aware of the resources available to them. The NADFAS team are also currently checking, cleaning, recording and doing minor repairs to the pre 1801 books which are housed there. The stock check in the Wren Library is nearing completion and the audit of manuscript illustrations is progressing well.



HOW ILLUMINATING!

Earlier in the year library volunteers were treated to 2 sessions in the Wren Library with Toni Watts, in which she demonstrated how she prepares her pigments and paints and applies the gold leaf to her illuminations. The amount of work that goes into the preparation and the patience required, before she can even put brush to parchment, is incredible. Visitors to the Wren library have also enjoyed watching Toni in action and discussing her work. We look forward to her exhibition in the Chapter House later in the year.



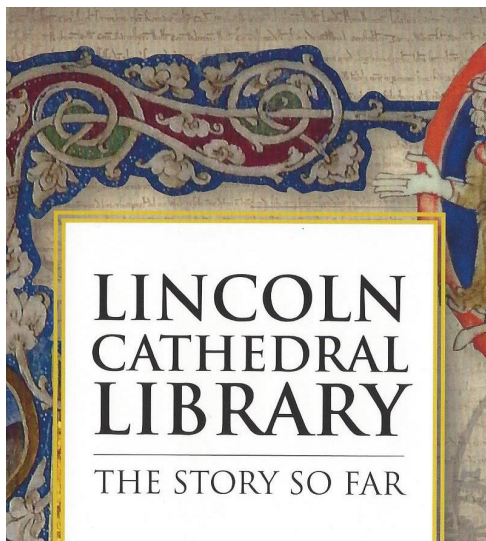
MEET THE MANUSCRIPTS

In March it was lovely to welcome 9 groups of staff and volunteers from across the Cathedral to “meet the manuscripts” in the Wren Library. Each group was introduced to a selection of manuscripts, some interesting for their age or what they tell us about the Cathedral's collections and others for their illustrations and illuminations. They were then given time to look through the manuscripts. Everyone really appreciated

what they called the “privilege” of being able to touch the manuscripts and actually turn the pages. Comments like this reinforce my thoughts on how lucky I am to be working with such wonderful treasures. We do not wear gloves when handling the books and manuscripts, but clean hands, free from nail varnish and hand cream are essential. To the amusement of the other group members, 3 members

of staff from the Works Department, coming straight from their workshops, had to be sent away like naughty schoolchildren to wash their hands before re-joining the group! Due to the popularity of these sessions, I hope to be able to repeat them later in the year, in order to highlight even more of our treasures.





NEW FOR 2016

I am pleased to announce that the new guide book about the library "Lincoln Cathedral Library: the story so far" has now been published and is on sale in the Medieval Library during normal opening hours. It will also be on sale in the Cathedral shop. The guide follows the story of how, from small beginnings, the Cathedral's collection of books grew, resulting in the building of a chained library in the early 15th century and then the Wren Library in the 17th century. It also highlights some of the Cathedral's treasures. It has 72 pages and is illustrated throughout and costs £6-99.

AND FINALLY ...

After a few years without a conservator, a new program of book conservation is now underway. With the help of The Bindery, a Hull based company, books are once again being repaired and rebound, helping to preserve them for future generations. Priority is given to books that have been adopted or those, which through regular use, are in need of a little tender loving care. The process can be long, slow and expensive but the finished results mean

that the books can be studied or displayed without fear of damage.

Normally to be found in the Wren Library, two Books of Remembrance containing the names of all those from the County of Lincolnshire who died in the First World War, are now on display in the Morning Chapel. These form part of a display which commemorates the Battle of the Somme and links in with the poppy installation at the

Castle which runs until the end of September. The library holds the database which contains the information about the names in the books.

Hopefully in the next few weeks, new, updated display boards will be fitted at the foot of the library stairs.

And finally, don't forget that during July and August the library is open to the public Mon-Sat 11am to 3pm.

A PLACE TO...

EXPLORE

4 Priorygate, Lincoln LN2 1PL

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