Keats love letter to return to Keats House following successful City of London Corporation bid

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The letter was bought at auction in London for £80,000. With fees the amount paid was £96,000.

The City of London Corporation which manages Keats House (where the letter was written) says it will now be displayed there. The associated HLF project also includes one year of educational activities including workshops, digitisation and training for volunteers.

In the letter, Keats wrote: "I shall Kiss your name and mine where your Lips have been - Lips! why should a poor prisoner as I am talk about such things." He said his "consolation" was "in the certainty of your affectation". Fanny Brawne lived next door to him in Hampstead, north London. "You had better not come today," was scribbled on the outside of the letter.

Michael Welbank, Chairman of the Keats House Management Committee at the City of London Corporation, said: "We are absolutely delighted that our bid was successful. Keats is a hugely important part of our cultural landscape, and it is thrilling to know that we will now be able to display the letter where it was written. This letter, and the many other items on display at Keats' House, will help visitors from home and abroad to gain an even deeper understanding of Keats' life, and the passions that drove him to produce such wonderful work."

Sue Bowers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for London, said: “The Keats Love Letter really captured the imagination of the HLF London Committee, and this is tremendous news for Keats House. This acquisition not only saves the letter for future generations to enjoy, but will also brings the letter back home to the place where it was written nearly 200 years ago. It will complement the existing collection at Keats House which includes other letters and the ring given to Fanny Brawne on Keats' departure to Italy (in Sept 1820).”

Tim Harris, Head of Access and Buildings at Keats House, said: “Everyone connected with Keats House was excited when this letter came up unexpectedly at auction. We knew we had to put together a strong bid as it was a once in a generation opportunity. With support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Victoria and Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund, the Friends of the National Libraries, and the Friends of Keats House, the City of London has been able to save this important literary treasure for London and the Nation.”

Notes to editors

Keats House in Hampstead, London is where the poet John Keats lived from 1818 to 1820, and is the setting that inspired some of Keats’s most memorable poetry. Here, Keats wrote “Ode to a Nightingale” and fell in love with Fanny Brawne, the girl next door. It was from this house that he travelled to Rome, where he died of tuberculosis aged just 25.

Keats House is managed by the City of London Corporation as part of its contribution to the heritage and cultural life of London and the nation. The interior of Keats House has been sensitively and painstakingly restored thanks to a

Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £424,000. The culmination of four years of preparation and research work, the refurbishment sought to reflect the original decoration of the property, creating a living space that Keats would have recognised and providing an authentic example of Regency style.

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