Library restored to its 19th century glory

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At a gathering of all those who have been involved in the project, the Hon David Legh, whose grandfather gave Lyme to the National Trust in 1946, formally opened the library, which is home once again to the rare 15th century prayer book printed by William Caxton, England's first printer.

Substantial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, The Art Fund and many other organizations and individuals meant that the project to return the Missal to Lyme Park, enable visitors to discover and learn about this unique book through state of the art digital turning page technology; and restore the library to how it would have looked in the late 19th-century when the Missal was last displayed there, has now been completed.

David Morgan, Lyme Park's General Manager, said: "The library looks simply amazing – and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our supporters, staff, volunteers and craftsmen whose dedication and hard work can now be seen and enjoyed by our visitors. To be able to come into this wonderful room as it would have looked over a century ago, sit down on the furniture, read a book or delve into the secrets of the Missal via our 21st century 'turning pages' is a fantastic way to really connect with history – and one we hope lots of people will come and experience."

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: "The Missal wonderfully captures the religious, social and political history of the local area. Caxton's printing methods were at the cutting edge of 15th century technology, and therefore it is fitting that within the setting of the library we are using 21st century technology to let visitors access and enjoy their heritage. By celebrating the ingenuity and invention of past generations we can inspire the imaginations of future generations."

Stephen Deuchar, Director of the Art Fund, said: "We're really pleased to have helped bring the Lyme Caxton Missal to Lyme Park. The striking work helps tell the story of 15th century England and it's so important that people see it within its original context. We thank all our members and supporters for helping bring it back where it belongs – and now that the fantastic library has been restored, we hope that many more people will come and be inspired by it."

The restoration of the library began with the removal of 841 books from the library shelves in order that the modern wallpaper could be stripped away ready for decoration. When the wallpaper was removed, it revealed the shadow impression on the plaster beneath of the original 19th century wallpaper and actual fragments were found behind the bookcases, showing the colours to have been crimson and bright gold on a stone ground. This evidence helped with the process of making the new paper, which was carried out by a specialist company in France, the Atelier d'Offard.

Meanwhile, new velvet for the library curtains and upholstery was commissioned from another specialist company, 'Lelievre' of Paris and London. A huge roller was used to produce the unique pattern on the fabric - and aptly named 'The Lyme Park'. The original stamped velvet was found on chairs now situated in Lyme's Entrance Hall, and was able to provide useful information when it came to replicating the pattern and colour for the library.

The 15th century Lyme Caxton Missal itself returned to the library in July 2009 after an absence of sixty three years, and went on public display, along with new state of the art digital 'turning pages' technology which allows visitors to dig deep into the layers of history in the book which they could never do with the original. A replica copy of the Missal was

also made so that people could actually pick up and ‘feel’ the book and flick through the pages - which gave added impetus to understanding the Missal and its story.

The skill and dedication of craftsmen was in evidence throughout the project: spending 8 weeks balanced on scaffolding and bent over backwards in order to paint a ceiling is not everyone's cup of tea. But that's just what specialist painter David Wynne did when he returned the library ceiling to its original decorative state of looking like oak boarding. David used traditional pigments and varnishes to paint the ceiling, and specialist tools known as 'combs' to create the specific effect which is known as ‘graining’.

One of the final pieces in the library restoration jigsaw was the laying of a new carpet in August this year. Measuring 9.4m by 6m, the carpet was woven in Bulgaria in the last surviving hand made carpet factory in Europe, run by D & S Bamford. Eight ladies took 6 months to weave it from a design based on a similar library carpet at Belton House in Lincolnshire. The colours of red, blue and gold are the same as those used in the original Lyme library carpet which has unfortunately not survived, but the carpet has created considerable interest in Bulgaria and even warranted a visit by the Bulgarian Minister of Culture to the workshop earlier this year!

James Rothwell is the curator who has overseen the project from its very beginning. “It’s been an astounding team effort” says James. “We’ve had many challenges along the way but we’ve also learnt an amazing amount of new information about the library and the Caxton Missal as the project has unfolded. The story doesn’t stop here though – the next chapter is looking at how we can involve and engage our local communities living around Lyme Park and in Greater Manchester with the Missal, its history and its setting. It’s a very exciting time as we look ahead to all kinds of future possibilities”.

You can see the library and the Missal on display at Lyme Park until 31 October, 11am – 5pm when the house closes for winter. It re-opens for the new season on 26 February 2011. Meanwhile the park and Timber Yard Coffee Shop remain open daily throughout the year (closed 25 December). For more information or call 01663 762023.

Please note entrance to the Hall between 11am and 12 noon is by guided tour only.

For further information please contact Debbie Peers, National Trust Press Office: T 0161 925 4341/M: 07887 630218/email: debbie.peers@nationaltrust.org.uk.

Notes to editors

The Sarum Missal
William Caxton (1422-1491) was England’s first printer. The 1487 Sarum Missal (STC 16164) was contracted out by him to the French printer Guillaume Maynal, and was produced by him in Paris. This is the earliest known example of an English publisher contracting out work to an overseas collaborator, a phenomenon which later became common. It is also the first book printed in Paris in two colours – then cutting-edge technology – and the first book with Caxton’s famous woodcut publisher’s device.

Printed throughout in red and black, the book contains 243 of the original 266 leaves, and two full-page hand-coloured woodcuts (a Crucifixion and a God the Father enthroned). Additional decorated initials have been added by hand, though some were never completed.

The Missal’s nineteenth-century binding incorporates fragments of the fifteenth-century original. The Sarum rite or use applied to the liturgical customs, rites and calendar associated with the medieval cathedral of Salisbury, which was also

known as Sarum.

The Sarum Missal and Lyme Park

The Missal was removed from Lyme Park when the Legh family left in 1946. Many country house libraries lost many of their best books in the difficult period after the war, often sold to America. At Lyme the pattern was different. In the late 1940s there was no intention that the Library would ever be open to the public, so the more ordinary books were dispersed, and the most important retained by the Legh family. In recent years the Missal has been held for safe-keeping in the John Rylands University Library in Manchester, while other parts of the historic library have returned to Lyme. There was general agreement in Manchester, at the Trust and from the Legh family that the Missal should not only stay in the north-west, but it should also go on display in its historic home.

The many annotations and notes which have been added to the printed text of the Missal make clear that this was very much a working liturgical book, used to say Mass. It was not a trophy or a collectable. The annotations are in several different hands, and it is hoped that future research might reveal to whom they belong. It is possible that the original owner may have been the priest Sir Piers Legh (ca.1455-1527), who founded nearby Disley church as a chantry chapel. If so the Missal could have been at Lyme Park ever since it was printed, as Sir Piers was the first member of Legh family to make his principal residence there. It has certainly been in the hands of the Legh family since at least 1508. The next earliest continuous ownership of a book printed by Caxton dates back only to about 1530.

The Missal was rediscovered at Lyme in 1874 by William Brenchley Rye, of the British Museum, and was displayed in a glass case in the Library in late Victorian times. This book is the only near-complete copy of the first edition of the Sarum Missal to survive. Only fragments of one other copy survive, at Durham University.

Funding Sources

The full list of funders for the acquisition of the Lyme Missal are: The Heritage Lottery Fund, The Art Fund (with a contribution from The Wolfson Foundation), Royal Oak Foundation, The Friends of the National Libraries, The Foyle Foundation, The Pilgrim Trust, The Robert Gavron Charitable Trust, Eric Nilson and S. Jeffrey Mostade, in memory of Donald and Carol Campbell, The Peak District Centre, (A Voluntary Association of National Trust Members).

The Missal was acquired in 2008 at a net cost of £465,000. The total cost of purchase, conservation, display and re-presentation of the library is £669,000.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the **Heritage Lottery Fund** (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK, including over £500 million to the North West.

The acquisition of the Lyme Missal was supported by The Heritage Lottery Fund with a grant of £316,000.

The Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for works of art and plays a major part in enriching the range, quality and understanding of art in the UK. It campaigns, fundraises and gives money to museums and galleries to buy and show art, and promotes its enjoyment through its events and membership scheme. Current initiatives include sponsoring the UK tour of the ARTIST ROOMS collection, and running a major campaign in partnership with the National Trust to raise £2.7 million to save Brueghel's The Procession to Calvary for Nostell Priory. The Art Fund is funded by its art-loving and museum-going members and supporters who believe that great art should be for everyone

to enjoy.

Lyme Park is set in 1400 acres of moorland, woodland and parkland on the edge of the Peak District. Originally a Tudor House it was transformed by the Venetian architect Leoni into a stunning Italianate palace. It was acquired by the National Trust from the Legh family in 1946. The opulent 17-acre Victorian garden is surrounded by a medieval deer park, whilst the house contains superb Mortlake tapestries, woodcarvings attributed to Grinling Gibbons and an important collection of English clocks. Lyme appeared as ‘Pemberley’ in the 1995 BBC TV adaptation of Jane Austen’s ‘Pride & Prejudice’ starring Colin Firth.

The National Trust is Europe’s biggest conservation organisation and looks after special places across England, Wales and Northern Ireland for ever, for everyone. People and places are at the heart of everything it does. Over 3.5 million members, 60,000 volunteers, 500,000 school children, and millions of visitors, donors and supporters help the Trust look after its 300 historic houses and gardens, 700 miles of coastline and 250,000 hectares of open countryside. There are over 150 historic libraries in Trust properties, containing in excess of 200,000 books.