

Canterbury Cathedral

3 October – 1 November 2009

Henry VIII: Man and Monarch on Location

Touring programme linked to the British Library's major exhibition on Henry VIII visits Canterbury Cathedral from 3rd October to 1st November 2009, celebrating 500 years since the accession.

Henry VIII is not only England's best-known king, with his wives, his girth and his bloodthirstiness; he is also our most important single ruler. When he came to the throne, Henry was the Pious Prince who ruled an England at the heart of Catholic Europe; when he died, he was the Great Schismatic, who had created a national Church and an insular, xenophobic politics that shaped the development of England for centuries after his reign.

This superb touring exhibition highlights events that depict pivotal moments in the life and reign of Henry VIII, showing the man behind the monarch. The exhibition will examine the extraordinary transformations - personal and political, intellectual and religious, literary, aesthetic and linguistic - that took place in Henry's reign, taking us behind the myth and exploring the King's own mind.

The display will be accompanied by an enthralling 'Turning The Pages' interactive kiosk, enabling members of the public to digitally flick through the lavish pages of Henry's Psalter. Through the use of such technology, visitors will be able to read hand written notes, musings and annotations made by the great Tudor monarch. The digital display will also be accompanied by a wonderful facsimile of a Two Part Double Cannon written in honour of the King and in celebration of the Tudor dynasty.

The exhibition will also be supported by a range of exciting educational and family events including:

Drama and clay modelling workshops, held at Canterbury Cathedral

Family activity days at museums in the Canterbury district

Children's tours of the cathedral

Public lecture by Dr Glenn Richardson

Twilight training session for local teachers

Themed visits to the Cathedral and the Museum of Canterbury for local schools

Canterbury Cathedral and Henry VIII

In Canterbury, Henry is remembered very differently from 'the dashing King'. At the time, Canterbury was one of Europe's most important pilgrimage centres, thanks to St Thomas Becket. Archbishop Thomas Becket was murdered in the Cathedral in 1170 and when soon afterwards miracles started to happen, pilgrims came in their thousands to pray and pay respect at the tomb of Thomas.

Henry VIII's break from the Roman Catholic Church (as he wanted to divorce his first wife) changed all that. Monasteries were destroyed and on the orders of the king, Thomas Becket's tomb was destroyed and windows and statues were smashed. Fortunately, many medieval stained glass windows survived and the Cathedral still holds the most important collection of medieval stained glass in the country. Now, a candle marks the site of Thomas' tomb.

A window in the Cathedral Chapter's House shows a dashing Henry VIII.

For more information on the programme and activities, please contact the Cathedral Archives on 01227-865330 (email archives@canterbury-cathedral.org). To book a visit, contact the Visits Office, 01227 762862, visits@canterbury-cathedral.org, or the Schools Department on 01227-865262 (email schools@canterbury-cathedral.org).

Roger Walsh, the British Library's Head of Learning commented: "The British Library is delighted to be working with partners throughout the country to explore new aspects of Henry's reign with new audiences. Henry's impact was simultaneously national, international and local, and we hope this tour will enable visitors young and old to explore those connections for themselves."

For further detail on the British Library's exhibition, please contact the British Library press office on 020 7412 7105 or email press-and-pr@bl.uk

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