

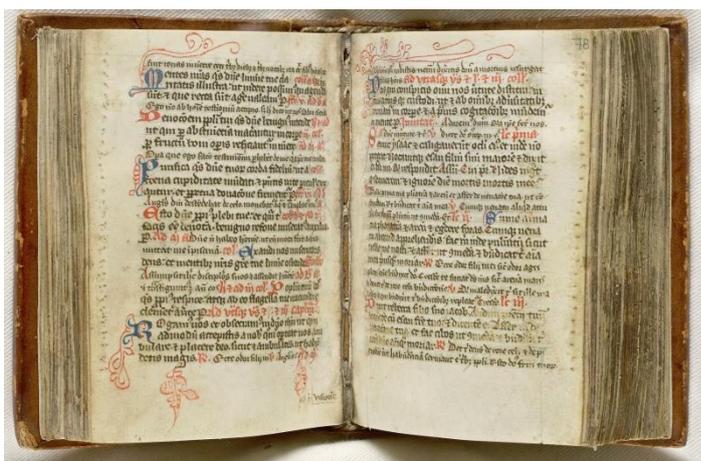


## Free school visits to “Lost and Found – The story of Sweetheart Abbey’s 14<sup>th</sup> century breviary”

### Exhibition at Dumfries Museum

Exhibition: Saturday 24 June – Thursday 31 August 2017

#### The Sweetheart Breviary



What can the Breviary tell us about monastic life in Scotland’s medieval past?

This pocket size 14th century religious book was made for the Cistercian or “white monks” of Sweetheart Abbey.

Written by hand in black and red ink on 200 vellum leaves it is a rare survivor of the Scottish Reformation

when many Catholic possessions were burned. It was in a private collection in 1715 and then disappeared for 300 years before appearing for auction in 2016.

*Liber sanctae Mariae de dulci corde* [a book of St. Mary of Sweetheart] is written on the first page. Sweetheart Abbey was founded c1273 by Lady Devorgilla, mother of the Scottish king John Balliol. The Abbey was founded in memory of her husband John de Balliol and is where his embalmed heart was buried with her when she died in 1290.

*The Sweetheart Breviary is displayed at Dumfries Museum courtesy of a loan from The National Library of Scotland.*

## **Facilitated visits with monastic re-enactor**

We have organized a number of free, themed sessions, which are described below. To register your interest in these sessions please contact Fiona Wilson at Dumfries Museum (Tel 01387 253374 or email [fiona.wilson@dumgal.gov.uk](mailto:fiona.wilson@dumgal.gov.uk)).

### **Dates and times (there is some room for slight variations in these start times):**

Monday 26 June: 9:30am, 11:00am, 1:00pm.

Tuesday 27 June: 9:30am, 11:00am, 1:00pm.

NB If these two dates book up, a further date may be added.

### **Before the visit**

Please explain to the class that when they arrive at the museum they will first meet a museum staff member who will ask them to imagine they are travelling back in time to the 14th century to meet a Cistercian monk, and explore the lifestyle of people who lived in Sweetheart Abbey, and its community, during this period. The character of Brother Alexander will be portrayed by re-enactor Simon Lidwell.

Brother Alexander lives a life devoted to Prayer, manual labour and study of scripture. He is supported in carrying out these tasks by the community living in the abbey. Much like the pupils his life is ordered by a timetable. The Abbey community tries to provide a safe space where the wider community can find timeless peace from the troubles caused by the wars of independence between Scotland and England. Since he is one of the older monks, instead of working in the Abbeys farms and the smithy, his Abbot has ordered that he work in the scriptorium making books and teaching the young to write. He hopes that the knowledge contained in the books he makes and the skill with letters he teaches will help people find resilience in their times of trouble.

### **What to expect when you arrive**

The class will be met and welcomed to the museum by a member of museum staff who will go through any relevant housekeeping arrangements.

The class will then be introduced to a Cistercian monk, who will lead them through the activities for the session. During the session the class will be divided into two groups. One group will practice calligraphy and learn about life in a medieval monastery, while the other will explore the rest of the museum on a “pilgrimage” searching for objects relating to spirituality.

The calligraphy activity can be adapted to meet the abilities of the children. The “pilgrimage”, will ask students to question the meaning of the objects they find throughout the museum. What do these objects tell us about the values of the people who made them? Do we see similar objects today? Can we find connections between the daily routines in medieval monastic life and our lives today?

The exploration of spirituality in the past, and reflection upon the present, aligns with the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes:

*It can engage children and young people actively in reflecting upon spiritual, social, moral and philosophical issues through, for example, drama or other activities*

*(Experiences and Outcomes for planning learning, teaching and assessment - EXA 0-01a – 4-01a, EXA 0-13a – 2-13a.)*

### **Optional extra – Camera Obscura**

If time permits the class could make a brief visit to the camera obscura. Part of the main visit will touch on objects or experiences in life which inspire a “sense of wonder”. A visit to the camera obscura can still give us this feeling now but imagine how Victorian children would have felt in the days before television or even photography? A maximum of 15 children can visit the camera obscura at any given time and so the class would need to allow an additional 40-50 minutes to allow 2 groups to visit (the second group could spend 15 min in the gardens for some active time there). **Please note that the Camera Obscura is weather dependent and cannot be operated if it is raining.**

**If you can introduce the following information to children before their visit it will enhance their understanding of the exhibition and help them to engage with the workshop.**

- We can learn more about how people lived in the past by looking at the things they left behind.
- The Breviary was made in Scotland between 1300 and 1350, over 700 years ago.

- It was probably made by monks at a “scriptorium” in Sweetheart Abbey, located in the village of New Abbey near Dumfries.
- Sweetheart Abbey was founded in 1273 by Lady Dervorgilla.
- The Breviary contains a calendar, liturgical text, and routines for monastic life for half of a year. A second book would have covered the other half year.
- The small format of the book would have made it useful for monks travelling as part of a pilgrimage.

## Self-directed visits

We will also be delighted to welcome school classes who wish to organise their own visit to The Sweetheart Breviary exhibition while it is at Dumfries Museum. Please call the museum on 01387 253374 to arrange a time. We will do all that we can to assist your visit. A member of staff will welcome you but will not be able to stay with you throughout the whole of your time here.

There will be gallery trails, colouring sheets and other activities relating to the exhibition. We can supply example paper copies of these or send digital files to class teachers.

If you have any questions please contact Dumfries Museum:

**Dumfries Museum and Camera Obscura, The Observatory, Rotchell Road, Dumfries, DG7 1SA. Telephone: 01387 253374      Email: [dumfries.museum@dumgal.gov.uk](mailto:dumfries.museum@dumgal.gov.uk)**