PUBLIC NOTICE

TAKE NOTICE that the Chapter of the Cathedral Church of:

The Cathedral and Metropolitical Church of St Peter in York, also known as York Minster

has on this date: 3 February 2023

applied to the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for approval of the following proposal:

Loan of the Horn of Ulf to the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, for temporary exhibition.

Summary of the nature of work and its extent (and materials) [or in the case of an object, a short description of it and details of the proposal]

Display of the Horn of Ulf in a temporary exhibition, ‘Gifts and Books’, in the S.T. Lee Gallery, Weston Library, University of Oxford. The exhibition dates are 15 June to 29 October 2023. This exhibition charts the symbiotic relationship between gift-giving, writing and story-telling, from early myths and legends to contemporary cultures.

The Horn of Ulf is an eleventh century oliphant. It is said to have been presented to York Minster about 1030 by a Norse nobleman named Ulf (or Ulph), as a horn of tenure, representing the lands and property in ancient kingdom of Deira (northern England) that he was presenting to the cathedral.

The horn is particularly striking, being of great size and weight, and intricately carved with plant and animal motifs. A lion preys on an antelope or deer, while a unicorn and other mythical beasts pace round the rim. Silver mounts were added in 1673.

It was probably made in southern Italy, in or around Salerno or Amalfi, which had strong trading connections with Africa and with the Islamic world. The design of its carved decoration has been influenced by this exchange of artistic ideas.

Plans, drawings, specifications or other documents

Copies of the plans, drawings, specification and other documents accompanying this application may be examined online at https://yorkminster.org/about-us/statutory-applications/
REPRESENTATIONS

If you wish to make representations about the whole or any part of the proposal described in this Notice you should write to

The Secretary of the Cathedrals Fabric Commission:
c/o Cathedrals and Major Churches Officer
    Church Buildings Division
    Church House
    Great Smith St
    London
    SW1P 3AZ
    rosanna.smith@churchofengland.org
    020 7898 1862

So that it reaches the Secretary not later than: insert a date ending 28 days after the time of the commencement of the period for representations.

3 March 2023

DIRECTIONS TO CHAPTER

1. This public notice (or a copy of it) must be displayed for a continuous period of 28 days in a prominent position inside and outside your cathedral where it is readily visible to the public.

2. A copy of this notice must be sent as follows:

   (a) to the Fabric Advisory Committee of your Cathedral Church
   (b) to Historic England (formerly English Heritage)
   (c) to the national amenity societies as applicable (see list on Form 8)

   and

   (only if the proposal is for works as described in section 2(1)(a) of the Measure)
   (d) to the local planning authority.
A loan request has been received for the Horn of Ulf, from the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford. The Horn of Ulf is denoted as of Outstanding Significance on the Inventory of York Minster.

The Bodleian are curating a display, Gifts and Books, in the S.T. Lee Gallery, Weston Library, University of Oxford, 15 June to 29 October 2023.

The Weston Library is the home of the Bodleian Libraries special collections. It is a working library and research centre, as well as containing public events and exhibitions space. It is centrally located in a modern building on Broad Street, Oxford, and regularly puts on high quality temporary exhibitions.

https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/libraries/weston

Description of Object


The Horn of Ulf is an eleventh century oliphant (a horn carved from elephant tusk). It is said to have been presented to York Minster sometime about 1030 by a Norse nobleman named Ulf (or Ulph), son of Thorald, as a horn of tenure, representing the lands and property in ancient kingdom of Deira (northern England) that he was giving to the cathedral. Later King Edward the Confessor (c.1003–1066) confirmed the land transfer. The oliphant is particularly striking, being of great size and weight, and intricately carved with plant and animal motifs. A lion preys on an antelope or deer, while a unicorn and other mythical beasts pace round the rim. Although documentary evidence is scant, by tradition Ulf is said to have placed the horn – filled with wine – on the altar, and to have dedicated his lands to God and to the Church of St Peter in York.

The Horn of Ulf was probably made in southern Italy, in or around Salerno or Amalfi, which had strong trading connections with Africa and with the Islamic world. The design of its carved decoration has been influenced by this exchange of artistic ideas.

The horn has been modified over the centuries. A gold chain was added to it in 1393 by John Neutron, the treasurer of the cathedral, whose bequest of books to York Minster also essentially re-founded the cathedral library. It was lost when the oliphant was removed from the Minster, probably during the Reformation. The horn was returned in 1675 by Henry Fairfax, a prominent local nobleman, and its silver mounts were added at this time. The current chain appears to be of later date. The inscription on the mounts reads:
Cornu hoc Ulphus in Occidentali Parte Deirae princepts Una Cum omnibus terris et redditibus suis olim donavit. Amissum vel abreptum. Henricus Dom Fairfax Demu restituit. DC de novo ornavit An Dom 1675

[In translation: This horn Ulphus, Prince of the western parts of Deira, formerly gave [to York Minster] together with all his lands and revenues. When it had been lost or conveyed away, Henry, Lord Fairfax restored it. The Dean and Chapter decorated it anew, AD 1675]

Please see photographs, appended, for detail of imagery and design.

Rachel Backa notes that roughly around 75 oliphants are known to survive, a number originally in church treasuries (some now transferred to museums). Little is known of their exact use. There is evidence that in some cases, sacred oil was carried in oliphants on Maudy Thursday, during a Mass marking the Last Supper. A document of 1315 describes a large ivory horn suspended over the High Altar at Canterbury Cathedral. Rachel Backa, 'A Viking Treasure: The Horn of Ulph', in Hanna Vorholt and Peter Young (eds), 1414: John Neuton and the Re-Foundation of York Minster Library, June 2015, https://hoaportal.york.ac.uk/hoaportal/yml1414essay.jsp?id=6

Exhibition

The Bodleian have provided the following details about the exhibition:

In the summer of 2023 the Bodleian Library will open the exhibition Gifts and Books in the S.T. Lee gallery of the Weston Library. This exhibition charts the symbiotic relationship between gift-giving, writing and story-telling, from early myths and legends to contemporary cultures. A key aspect of the exhibition is to explore the way that gifts are not only inert objects, but also tell stories about relationships. From myths of origin that include symbolic or sacred gifts; to acts of donation that might be recorded by or sealed with objects and texts; to gift books that reveal subtle relations of between patrons and authors: acts of giving and receiving have consistently been bound up with those of writing, making, donating and collecting books.

We are planning to display a wide range of material, including Sumerian tablets; medieval manuscripts with narratives of exchange and desire; early modern books that were gifts from and to monarchs; love tokens and ‘posies’; early examples of book tokens; and modern and contemporary writing for children that foregrounds ideas of gift, exchange and inheritance. In the section on medieval material, we will focus on books, stories and objects that suggest the complexity of gift exchange in the period, and its links to personal and national identity. We are planning to display an opening from Bodleian Library MS. Junius 11, one of the great poetic codices containing Old English poetry, at a point in the poem Genesis where God casts Lucifer into Hell because of his breaking of the bonds of mutual loyalty and exchange between lord and retainer. We will also show a charter of King Æthelred, granting to an ealdorman land whose previous possessor had been deprived of it because of unlawful killing.

The Horn of Ulf would be an ideal item to display in this context. As a tenure object, it fits directly into the context of gifts and objects that the exhibition tells. The legend surrounding the horn, that Ulf placed it on the altar of the monastic church to seal a gift of land, and in order to settle a dispute involving his sons, echoes the ideas and motivations surrounding the charter and the Old English Genesis. We also plan to show one or more manuscripts of the romance narrative about a hero called
Horn, whose exchange of gifts with his lover (including via a drinking horn) and pointed punning on his name, demonstrates the resonant qualities of horns in medieval gift exchange: as legal evidence, drinking vessels, sounding instruments, markers of status, and carriers of legendary narratives. The Horn of Ulf would be a crucial part of the story that the exhibition tells, and would attract further scholarly interest and attention in Oxford by being displayed in this way.

The Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and the Scottish Poetry Library have also been approached for loans.

Considerations

The Bodleian have provided facilities and security reports. The facilities and security are of high professional standards, and the specialist museum cases, light levels and environmental conditions (16-19 degrees Celsius, 45-60% RH) are suitable for the display of the Horn of Ulf. LED lights can be dimmed to 50-60 lux while glass in the display cases excludes 99% of UV radiation, and there are no windows or skylights. Cases are alarmed. The gallery complies with Government Indemnity Scheme (GIS) standards of security and environmental controls and would apply for GIS cover for this loan.

Any loan carries risks of damage through movement and transport of an object, however these will be mitigated by professional handling and packing, under the supervision of professional curators. To prevent damage through fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity, I will specify a climate controlled vehicle (the professional standard) and acclimatisation before installation. A curatorial staff member of the Collections department of York Minster will travel with the couriers, and oversee installation. The Bodleian will bear all insurance, transportation and installation costs for the loan. NB The Bodleian advise: ‘We have not yet appointed a transport agent but plan to use Momart, Constantine, or Crown Fine Arts, all of whom have climate-controlled vehicles’. If the loan is agreed, the horn will be displayed within a museum case on a custom-made support on a plinth, to securely balance the horn and bear its weight evenly, without pressure on fragile elements including the silver mounts and decorative carving. It will not be suspended by the chain. I will discuss and review the mount specifications with the Bodleian and a specialist conservator and mount maker following approval of the loan, and share these with Janet Berry in due course for advice and oversight. (I have previously specified and commissioned mounts for a wide range of artefacts, and worked closely with mount makers and conservators on the fit-out of the Museum of the University of St Andrews and various temporary exhibitions).

A loan would mean that the Horn of Ulf is temporarily removed from display in the Undercroft Museum, where it is a popular exhibit. A replica will be placed on display. However, a loan would bring new audience into contact with the Horn of Ulf, facilitate new research, and raise awareness of York Minster and its collections.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a book published by the Bodleian Library’s publishing division and edited by the exhibition curator Dr Nick Perkins, Associate Professor and Tutor in English at Oxford University.

The loan initiates a relationship between York Minster and the Bodleian Libraries, one of the world’s pre-eminent libraries, which may lead to further collaborations, to our mutual benefit. The Weston Library, a 1940 Grade II building completely refurbished 2011-15, is a useful comparator for our
ambitions for the development of the Old Palace site, and may inform our strategic planning for the site, including facilities development, audience evaluation and engagement, through planned consultation with the Bodleian Libraries’ professional staff.

**Condition Report**

A condition report has been prepared by me as an experienced curator (appended). Before the loan goes to the Bodleian, if approved, I will commission a report from a specialist conservator, to include advice on mounts. I had planned to achieve this in January, but the conservator has been unexpectedly ill for some weeks (as discussed with Janet Berry). This will be provided to Janet Berry in due course.

**Approvals process**

The loan request was approved by the Chapter of York Minster on 29 September 2022, subject to CFCE consent. An extract of the Minutes, approved 1 December 2022, is provided.

It will be considered by the FAC of York Minster at the meeting on 16 March 2023.

Dr Helen Rawson  
Head of Collections & Interpretation, York Minster  
1 February 2023
Meeting of the Chapter of York

Thursday 29 September 2022

9.30am, in the Large Meeting Room, 8/9 Minster Yard, York

MINUTES

PRESENT: The Revd Canon M Smith (Chair) Acting Dean & Canon Pastor (MS)
The Revd Canon M McLean Canon Missioner (MM)
The Revd Canon Dr V Johnson Canon Precentor (VJ)
Canon Sir W Worsley (WW)
Canon A Dunsmore Canon Treasurer (AD)
Canon L Tembey Lay Chapter Safeguarding Lead (LT)
Canon P (N) Thompson (NT)
Canon L Ali (LA)

IN ATTENDANCE for all Agenda items:
Kathryn Blacker Chapter Steward (KB)
Jo Clarkson Chief Finance Officer (JC)
Andy Oates Chapter Clerk – Minutes (AO)

IN ATTENDANCE at specific times for specific Agenda items:
[...]
Helen Rawson Head of Collections & Interpretation for 08.i - 08.ii (HR)

The Chapter meeting was opened with the traditional prayer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>MINUTES</th>
<th>DECISION/ACTION</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[...]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Collections Update and Statutory Permission Requests

Helen Rawson (HR), Head of Collections & Interpretation, joined the meeting, at 12.26.

[...]

08.ii Loan request – Horn of Ulf
– University of Oxford Bodleian Libraries, as reported to SET

A briefing paper produced by HR had been circulated in advance of the meeting and was NOTED.

HR advised that she was satisfied with the condition reports provided and with the University of Oxford’s proposals for the packing and handling of the Horn of Ulf, all of which will be carried out by conservators. The loan will involve the Horn being briefly removed from display in the Minster. A replica of the Horn will be put on display in the Undercroft Museum as a substitute object that can be handled. The Horn will be featured in a publication and in
scholarship discussion after the exhibition. This is the sort of exhibition that it would be excellent to host in future in the Minster, and the relationship with the Bodleian Library is an important partnership for us to develop.

The proposed loan was **APPROVED in principle**, for consultation with FAC and subsequent consideration by CFCE, who will have the final say on the matter.

MS thanked HR on behalf of Chapter for her advice and assistance and she left the meeting, at 12.41.
The Horn of Ulf is exhibited in the Undercroft Museum, where it has been on display in its current case since the York Minster Revealed project in 2013. Temperature and relative humidity are closely monitored: a chart of the last 12 months is provided below.

There are four silver mounts, designated from brim (wide end) to end (small end) as S1-S4. There are five areas of carved decoration, designated from brim to end as C1-5 (NB C1 and C2 adjoin). There are two plain sections of undecorated ivory, designated from brim (larger section) to end (smaller section) as P1-P2. Please see annotated image.

Left and right side are designated as left side of horn and right side of horn if horn was held with small end closest to observer (ie raised to mouth for drinking).

The horn is in good general condition, though bearing evidence of wear and handling over its c. 1000 year history. There are striation marks on the ivory, particularly visible on the plain (uncarved) sections of the horn. There is also some loss of surface patina, possibly though handling throughout the ages, and difference in surface colour, with some areas of ivory darker than others. The carved sections have old in grained dirt.

The silver mounts are tarnished. Remnants of gilding remain, but most has been lost. There are scratches and general wear to all four mounts. S2 and S3 – the silver bands are very slightly raised and in places do not quite meet the ivory.

The chain, which appears later in date, is not gilded.

The inside of the horn bears dark stains – possibly evidence of liquid.

There is a split, c. 200mm long, running between the brim (S1) to second silver mount (s2), through the ivory of C1 and C2 (griffin and carved decoration) – this has not changed in the last decade, by comparison to an image taken in 2013.

Overall the horn is in good condition, and fit for loan.
**Left side**

P1 undecorated section - Scratch, 1cm long, near top, c. 8cm left of C3
P1 – dark mark, c.1.5cm, c.20cm from S2. c.6cm above this is an indentation, c.1cm long
On P2, upper side, small hole, like a knot in wood. Appears to be natural flaw in the ivory.

**Right side**

S3 – scratch / split to top. This silver band is very slightly raised and does not quite meet the ivory on which it sits.
On P2, close to C5, mark in plain ivory
P1 – darker colouring / staining and 3 scratches

**Underneath horn**

Striation marks to P1, darker staining / colouring mid-way along. Tiny hole (loss?) in detail of carving on C4 (doublecheck whether C4 or C3 for final report to Bodleian, note unclear).
ENVIRONMENTAL CHART

Horn of Ulf case, 3 Jan 2022 – 3 Jan 2023
Split in ivory of C₁ and C₂
Detail of inscriptions
Carved decoration
Carved beasts