



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE on 4th February 2020

J M W Turner Watercolour of Malmesbury Abbey is ‘saved for the nation’ by Athelstan Museum Malmesbury.

Athelstan Museum Malmesbury are thrilled to announce their acquisition of the watercolour of Malmesbury Abbey by the famous artist Joseph Mallord William Turner. This acquisition was made possible by £380,900 National Lottery funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and funding from Art Fund. The watercolour over pencil of Malmesbury Abbey was painted by Turner in 1827 when he was visiting Malmesbury aged 52. Originally part of an exhibition of sixty-six Turner watercolours from the series displayed at the Moon, Boys and Graves Gallery at 6 Pall Mall, London in 1833, the painting has been in private hands for over 40 years. The watercolour shows Malmesbury Abbey from the north, early on a glorious summer morning, the foreground flooded with light and cattle warming themselves in the early sun. The 12th century ruins had captivated Turner since his first visit to Malmesbury aged only sixteen in 1791.

Following renovations to Athelstan Museum Malmesbury in early 2020, the painting is expected to be on display from late spring 2020. Over the following 18 months, a wide programme of art and creative activities based around the artist will be developed by the museum, designed to educate and develop skills for all audiences including children. Activities will include regular Turner lectures from experts and an art therapy programme, centred on those with dementia or who are living in isolation. The programme of events will culminate in a spectacular Son et Lumiere in Malmesbury’s stunning 12th Century Abbey planned for Autumn 2021.

Sharon Nolan, Chair of Athelstan Museum, said: ‘I am very proud that we have managed to save this watercolour for the nation and, more especially, that it is returning to its rightful home of Malmesbury.’

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Turner was born in London in 1775, the son of a barber. He entered the Royal Academy in 1789 at the age of 14 and became a member of the RA in 1802 and Professor of Perspective in 1807. His varied work included drawings, etchings, watercolours and oils. He last exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1850 and died in 1851 with his body laid to rest in St Paul's Cathedral.

Stuart McLeod, Director London & South at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "Thanks to National Lottery players, Turner's Malmesbury Abbey now belongs to and can be enjoyed by the nation for the first time in decades. It's incredibly exciting that its new home is Malmesbury, enabling people to see and explore this wonderful painting in the setting which inspired its creation."

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About the National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we **Inspire, lead** and **resource** the UK's heritage to create **positive and lasting change** for people and communities, now and in the future.

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About Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. In the past five years alone Art Fund has given £34 million to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections. Art Fund is independently funded, with the core of its income provided by 151,000 members who receive the National Art Pass and enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions and subscription to Art Quarterly magazine. In addition to grant giving, Art Fund's support to museums includes Art Fund Museum of the Year (won by St Fagans National History Museum near Cardiff in July 2019) and a range of digital platforms.

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