



MERTON
COLLEGE
OXFORD

LIBRARY MEDIEVAL STAINED GLASS APPEAL

YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO PRESERVE
THE UNIQUE UPPER LIBRARY
WINDOWS IN PERPETUITY





The historic Upper Library in Mob Quad at Merton is unique; it preserves rare examples of medieval stained glass made expressly for a library setting. The original windows, installed by the 1390s, were both functional as lots of clear glass admitted light for reading, even in Oxford's damp weather; and decorative, incorporating emblems representative of the college and its links with royal patrons. These windows are the oldest surviving examples of glazing for *any* English library – they stand as a stunning and arresting testament to the history and tradition of Merton.

Today, 14th-century glass survives in seven windows, while the other windows contain glass ranging in date from the 15th to the early 20th centuries. They include fragments from the lost transept windows of the chapel and the incredible 16th-century German panels in the library's great Oriel window, pictured above.

"To all our alumni and friends, this is an opportunity to conserve and protect Merton's heritage. This ambitious project will ensure that future generations experience the same magical atmosphere of the Upper Library for centuries to come." – Dr Julia Walworth, Fellow Librarian

A survey of the Upper Library windows carried out in 2015 revealed that the windows were suffering from corrosion and gradual loss of paint due to minute amounts of condensation forming on the interior surface of the glass. This loss is irreversible, but a pilot project in 2017–2018 demonstrated that a ventilated protective glazing system would halt this damaging process. A similar system has been used successfully at York Minster and other major buildings with historic stained glass.

The college has engaged experienced stained-glass specialists, York Glaziers Trust, to undertake a phased project to clean, conserve, and install ventilated external secondary glazing on all of the Upper Library windows. Each window will be removed, then cleaned and repaired at the studio in York, before being re-installed with protective glazing panels on the exterior. The secondary glazing also prevents the transmission of UV radiation, thus protecting the historical book bindings and other light-sensitive objects, such as the hand-coloured Senex globes, from further damage by ultraviolet light.

To enable us to do this, we're looking for benefactors to support the appeal, who will be recognised in a commemorative roll of honour within the Library. This is a rare opportunity to sponsor the conservation of these exceptional and unique windows, at the costs overleaf.



Detail of a lion mask in one of the late 14th-century original windows designed for the library in the Middle Ages. The lion refers to the royal arms of England.

The lamb and flag are attributes of St John the Baptist, patron of the college chapel.



Library Windows (each)

Lancet windows (33)

9,000 GBP 12,500 USD 10,500 EUR

Double-lancet windows (3)

15,000 GBP 20,500 USD 17,500 EUR

Tall south window

25,000 GBP 34,000 USD 29,500 EUR

Great Oriel window

60,000 GBP 83,000 USD 71,500 EUR



The Medieval stained glass conservation project will be undertaken in phases, with a completion target of 2024.

For more information, please contact the Development Office:

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Images courtesy of Scriptura Limited, York Glaziers Trust, and dpa lighting.