

**MAKING HISTORY:  
ANTIQUARIES IN BRITAIN, 1707 – 2007**

**MAIN GALLERIES**

15 September – 2 December 2007

**Making History: Antiquaries in Britain, 1707 – 2007** explores the work and achievement of the Society of Antiquaries of London over the past three hundred years since its foundation in the early eighteenth century to the present day. The exhibition consists of 190 works, and showcases for the first time, treasures from Britain's oldest Learned Society concerned with the study of the past. It features unique works of art, antiquities and manuscripts of national historical importance, from one of the oldest museum collections in this country, including a Yorkist processional cross recovered from the battlefield of Bosworth (1485), the inventory of Henry VIII's possessions at the time of his death and an early copy of Magna Carta. Also on show are paintings of ancient sites and landscapes by Constable, Turner, Blake and an extraordinary collection of English royal portraits from Henry VI to Mary Tudor. In addition there are the only surviving visual records of objects long since lost or destroyed.

**Making History: Antiquaries in Britain, 1707 – 2007** explores key stages in the creation of Britain's historical narrative, from the earliest archaeological discoveries of the early modern age to the rise of professional historians and archaeologists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and insights into how we might study the past in the future. The exhibition culminates with a special study of Stonehenge, arguably Britain's best known monument. It reveals how our understanding of its history keeps on changing thanks to the process of research and to new discoveries such as a recently unearthed late medieval drawing of the megaliths, never before seen in this country.

The exhibition's guest curator, the celebrated historian Dr David Starkey FSA, says, "*For me, history has always been as much about things – buildings, paintings, jewels – as written documents. So this Exhibition won't simply be a display of the Society's treasures – wonderful though they are – it's also an opportunity to show how history is made and why it matters*".

The Society of Antiquaries of London was founded in 1707 following a meeting of three like-minded individuals; Humphrey Wanley, John Bagford and John Talman, at the Bear Tavern in the Strand. Their agreed aim was to further the study of British history prior to the reign of James I. In 1751 the Society received its Royal Charter from George II and was charged with 'the encouragement, advancement and furtherance of the study and knowledge of the antiquities and history of this and other countries'. Since its foundation, the Society has been at the forefront of research in archaeology and the study of the historic sites, monuments and artefacts of Britain. Through objects and biographies of leading antiquaries, this exhibition features milestones in the discovery, recording, preservation, interpretation and communication of Britain's past

through its material footprint and reveals how new discoveries and technologies have transformed understanding of our history.

## ORGANISATION

This exhibition has been organised by the Royal Academy of Arts and the Society of Antiquaries of London to celebrate the Society's tercentenary. **Making History: Antiquaries in Britain, 1707 - 2007** is curated by Dr David Gaimster, General Secretary SAL and Bernard Nurse, Librarian SAL together with Dr Adrian Locke, Exhibitions Curator and Sir Norman Rosenthal, Exhibitions Secretary at the Royal Academy. The exhibition is guest curated by Dr David Starkey FSA.

## CATALOGUE

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue which includes an essay by David Starkey and contributions by fellows and staff at the Society of Antiquaries of London. The catalogue explores the work and achievement of the Society of Antiquaries, from its foundation 300 years ago to the present day.

## DATES AND OPENING HOURS

Press View	11 September 2007, 10am – 2pm
Open to Public:	15 September 2007 – 2 December 2007 10am – 6pm daily (last admission 5.30pm)
Late night openings:	Fridays until 10pm (last admission 9.30pm)

## ADMISSION

£8 full price; £6.50 Registered Disabled and 60 + years; £5.50 NUS / ISIC cardholders; £4 12–18 years and Income Support; £3 8–11 years; 7 and under free.

## TICKETS

For advance tickets to **Making History: Antiquaries in Britain, 1707 - 2007** please visit [www.royalacademy.org.uk](http://www.royalacademy.org.uk) or call +44 (0)870 848 8484. Groups of 10 or more must book in advance call 020 7300 8027 or email: [groupbookings@royalacademy.org.uk](mailto:groupbookings@royalacademy.org.uk)

## IMAGES

Publicity images for **Making History: Antiquaries in Britain, 1707 - 2007** can be obtained from Picselect, the Press Association's image service for press use. Please register at [www.papicselect.com](http://www.papicselect.com) and once registered go to the Royal Academy of Arts folder in the Arts section of Picselect.

For public information, please print 020 7300 8000 or [www.royalacademy.org.uk](http://www.royalacademy.org.uk).  
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