

The Declaration of Arbroath – see it now for one month only at National Museum of Scotland

A 703 year old document of national importance will go on display at the National Museum of Scotland on Saturday. The parchment is considered so susceptible to light damage that the display will be open to the public for one month only.

The document is the Declaration of Arbroath which has not been on show for 18 years. National Records of Scotland are the guardians of the document and release it only occasionally to ensure that it is preserved for posterity.



Christine McKelvie MSP Minister for Culture with Alice Blackwell, Senior Curator of Medieval Archaeology and History at National Museums Scotland and Dr Alan Borthwick Head of Medieval and Early Modern Records, National Records of Scotland with the Declaration of Arbroath PHOTO © The Edinburgh Reporter

Even though Robert the Bruce was victorious at Bannockburn in 1314 he had not been recognised as king either by the English monarch or by the Pope (who had excommunicated him).

This is a letter dated 6 April 1320 which is written by around 40 noblemen of Scotland on behalf of the Kingdom of Scotland to Pope John XXII asking him to recognise Scotland's independence and acknowledge Robert the Bruce as the lawful king. In a plea to stop the hostilities of the long Wars of Independence, the Pope is asked to intercede on Scotland's behalf and speak to King Edward II of England. The Scottish nobility believed that their focus should be on securing the frontiers of Christendom rather than the fighting between two

neighbours.

The Pope did urge reconciliation and a truce was agreed in 1323. But this short lived peace only lasted until the Second War of Independence which began in 1332 and raged for 25 years.



Alice Blackwell Senior Curator of Medieval Archaeology and History at National Museums Scotland and Dr Alan Borthwick, Head of Medieval and Early Modern Records, National Records of Scotland with the Declaration of Arbroath, PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter

Alice Blackwell, Senior Curator of Medieval Archaeology and History at National Museums Scotland said: "It is great to be able to display the Declaration of Arbroath here at the National Museum of Scotland, the home of our nation's material history and the country's most visited attraction. We look forward to welcoming many visitors to enjoy the rare opportunity of seeing this hugely significant document in

person.”

Culture Minister Christina McKelvie said: “The Declaration of Arbroath is of great historic and cultural interest to people living in Scotland as well as the sizeable Scottish diaspora around the world.

“I hope people from across the country, and further afield, will take this rare opportunity to visit our wonderful national museum to view this iconic document which has played such an important part in the history of our country.”

Dr Alan Borthwick, Head of Medieval and Early Modern Records, National Records of Scotland, said: “The Declaration of Arbroath is one of the most significant documents we have in our collections. At National Records of Scotland we are hugely proud of the role we play in conserving it to ensure it is still here for future generations to see and study. We hope people from Scotland and beyond will take this rare opportunity to see it for themselves.”

The Pope wanted peace so that England and Scotland could assist in a crusade to the Holy Land. The Declaration promised that assistance if Anglo-Scottish hostilities were stopped.



Alice Blackwell Senior Curator of Medieval Archaeology and History at National Museums Scotland and Christine McKelvie MSP Minister for Culture PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter

