



Middle English Manuscripts in Durham October 2019-June 2020

Durham University's own collection of manuscripts is rich in items with texts in Middle English (amounting to almost a quarter of our total holdings). To coincide with the landmark conference here of the New Chaucer Society (12-17 July 2020; some 500 delegates) and with summer congregation, Palace Green Library will mount an exhibition of them. The proposed publication will serve both as the catalogue to that exhibition and as an independent guide to Durham University's important (and little-known) holdings of this class of material; it will also include findings from, and so will highlight our path-breaking work in, the scientific study of manuscripts. The publications will be written by Richard Gameson and will include pigment identifications by Team Pigment. Each item will be reproduced in colour and will be accompanied by a summary technical description appropriate for a specialist audience and a broader commentary aimed at a more general audience. A short introduction will outline the history of the collection.

Aims and objectives of the project

To produce an illustrated catalogue/exhibition guide to Durham University's collection of manuscripts containing Middle English; this will accompany an exhibition of the same in Palace Green Library.

Benefits to the applicant(s) and IMEMS beyond the immediate life of the project

- Publishing and publicising the most important single sub-group of Durham University's manuscript collection (the only published catalogue of which dates from the 1820s), in a durable and attractive form, appropriate to scholar and to interested public alike.
- Giving prominence to the manuscript holdings of Durham University (as opposed to Durham Cathedral).
- Highlighting the scientific study of MSS pioneered at Durham (to date, there has only been one publication on a Middle English manuscript that includes pigment analysis).
- Promoting Durham's resources and our pioneering work to one of the largest international communities of late medievalists: as the New Chaucer Society will distribute a copy of the work to each of its delegates (who are likely to want further copies for their university libraries), we can be certain that the publication will achieve wide circulation in relevant circles.