

THE ST ALBANS PSALTER

For the handing over of a facsimile copy of the Psalter by the Bishop of Hildesheim at Evensong in St Albans Abbey on 16th August, the Dean, the Very Revd Jeffrey John, wrote:

The St Albans Psalter is the greatest treasure that was produced by the scriptorium of St Albans Abbey. Lost to us at the Reformation, it is now preserved in Hildesheim. We are profoundly grateful to the Bishop of Hildesheim for making us a gift of this beautiful facsimile edition. It is a joy that once again this perfect jewel of medieval Christian art will be seen in the place where it was created.



The Psalter was made in the second quarter of the twelfth century and is renowned as a superb example of English Romanesque manuscript. It is associated with Christina of Markyate and is believed to have been put together for her as a gift from Geoffrey de Gorham, Abbot of St Albans from 1119 to 1146.

The first section is a **calendar** with an illustration for each month. A **cycle of miniatures** follows - forty full-page colourful pictures within gold-rimmed borders depicting The Fall, The Incarnation, The Life of Christ, The Ascension and Pentecost. (There is no depiction of The Crucifixion as a wooden crucifix would have hung in Christina's cell.) The next section is the **Life of St Alexis**, and then, the **Psalter**, the largest section of the book: all 150 psalms followed by canticles, creeds, the litany and prayers with 214 vividly coloured initials as their introduction. The final items in the book depict the martyrdom of St Alban and King David the musician (see above).

This facsimile is an exact copy of the original manuscript and was created in Germany using a high standard of technical reproduction and craftsmanship including applying 22ct gold where the original has gold leaf.

The copy is now on display in the Treasury at St Albans Abbey.

The Psalter and a commentary may be viewed at www.abdn.uk/~lib399/; and for information on the facsimile see www.muellerundschilder.de/