



Friday 10 May 2013

## Westminster School Archives launches online Exhibition 'Edward Lear's Grecian travels'

A unique journal by Edward Lear, held at Westminster School Archives, goes online today as the School launches [edwardlear.westminster.org.uk/](http://edwardlear.westminster.org.uk/), to commemorate the bi-centenary (12 May 1812) of his birth.

The online exhibition, a collaboration between Westminster School Archives, academic Dr Rowena Fowler; and a variety of museums, galleries and private collections, explores Lear's beautifully-observed landscape watercolour drawings and aims to digitally reunite the journals and drawings Lear made whilst travelling through Greece in 1848.

26 of the sketches including pictures of Athens and Thermopylae which have never been seen in public will be available together for the first time, and provide rare insight into Lear's life and his travels to Greece.

Additionally, his images and journals reveal important archaeological sites as they stood before the rapid developments of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Charles Lewsen, Lear scholar** commented:

*"This exhibition valuably displays Edward Lear as travel writer, landscape painter and, at one point, Nonsense poet; and Charles Church's transcription of the text and his evident wish to see it in print are testimony to Lear's capacity to inspire long friendship. Publication of the journal and pictures should enlarge Lear's public, draw attention to the wealth of his landscape work in public collections – and, if the manuscript of the journal survives, perhaps encourage its current owner to make known its existence."*

During a two-month tour to Athens, mainland Greece and the island of Euboea, Lear made over 150 landscape drawings and kept a diary of his experiences and

impressions. Many years later, Lear's travelling companion, Charles Church, (1823-1915), later Dean of Wells, described his own reminiscences of their trip, incorporating parts of Lear's diary.

Visitors can view categories on the website, ranging from journals to maps and pictures, and scroll across pages filled with images, text accounts, and historical perspectives.

**Elizabeth, Archivist and Records Manager, Westminster School Archives** said:

*"We're trying to trace the 150 drawings and have already had one come to light since the launch of the website. The great mystery surrounding the project, which remains unresolved, concerns the provenance of the typescript. It is recorded as being present in the School's Archive in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. However there is, as yet, no clue as to how it came to be there.*

*And I have been unable to discover a connection between Charles Church, who went on to become Canon and Sub-Dean of Wells Cathedral, or Edward Lear and the School. The mystery continues!"*

The public will be able to explore and experience the online exhibition, part of the Archive Awareness Campaign, in much the same way they would a physical exhibition.

**-End-**

For press enquiries or images of Lear's Death Duty Accounts held at The National Archives, please contact **Angela Owusu, PR Executive/Press Officer at The National Archives on 0208 392 5234** or by email:

[Angela.Owusu@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Angela.Owusu@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

### **Notes to Editors**

**Edward Lear** is remembered as humorist, zoological draughtsman, poet and musician, but perhaps his greatest works are his landscape drawings and watercolours. He began his career at the age of sixteen, drawing animals and birds in the London Zoo. After 1837 he made his living as a landscape painter, travelling throughout Europe and India in search of new places to draw.

The project has been collaboration between the Westminster School Archive, which holds the only known copy of Lear's 1848 journal; Dr Rowena Fowler, academic and Lear scholar; and a variety of museums, galleries and private collections which generously allowed Westminster School to reproduce Lear's art work to illustrate the text.

### **Public Information**

Westminster School online exhibition: *Edward Lear's Grecian travels*

For further information photographs or to arrange interviews, please contact **Elizabeth Wells**, Archivist and Records Manager, 020 7963 1110.

Westminster School Archive, Westminster School, Little Dean's Yard, London, SW1P 3PF

[archives@westminster.org.uk](mailto:archives@westminster.org.uk)

<http://www.westminster.org.uk/about-us/the-archives-collection.html>

### **About Westminster School Archives**

Westminster is an independent boarding and day school in the heart of Central London next to Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. Boys can join Westminster at 13+ and girls and boys can join the co-educational sixth form at 16+.

The School Archives contain records of the school's activities, administration and alumni, predominately dating from the 1868 split from Westminster Abbey. The Archivist, Elizabeth Wells, also manages the school's heritage collections, including paintings, rare books, manuscripts and a wide range of artefacts.

### **About the Archive Awareness Campaign**

The Archive Awareness Campaign (AAC) was originally designed to address issues of under representation of UK archives, particularly in comparison with the museum, gallery and library sectors. It was spearheaded by the Archives & Records Association [www.archives.org.uk](http://www.archives.org.uk) and funded by The National Archives [nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk). It provided a means for local archives to promote their services through open days, exhibitions, tours, workshops, competitions, performances and many more to help the public discover a piece of their own history. A new archive awareness campaign will be launched to the public in autumn 2013.