



**DURHAM
CATHEDRAL**
THE SHRINE OF ST CUTHBERT

Press Release
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Family donates Cathedral window in memory of daughter

The parents of a Durham University student, who died whilst studying in the city, have donated a new stained glass window in Durham Cathedral, in memory of their daughter.

Sara Pilkington died suddenly from a cardiac-related condition in February 2012, during her final year studying Combined Arts (BA Hons) at Durham University where she was a member of Collingwood College. Now a new stained glass window will be installed in her memory in the North Quire Aisle of the Cathedral.

Sara's parents Jonathan and Jools Pilkington, have been working closely with the Chapter of Durham Cathedral and a team of experts, to consult on the design and installation of the new window. Their hope is that the design will reach out spiritually in some special way to all people entering the Cathedral and honour and celebrate the unique link between the Cathedral and the University, which was felt so strongly by Sara during her time in Durham.

Chichester-based glass artist Mel Howse has been commissioned to create the piece, which is expected to be installed in 2018. Mel has 24 years experience of creating and installing contemporary stained glass into listed buildings and also of creating cutting edge contemporary architectural glasswork. Her previous commissions include work for Winchester University College Chapel, Boxgrove Priory, Sainsbury Milton Keynes and St James' Hospital Portsmouth.

She is a scholar of The Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust and has been awarded a number of Heritage Awards for her work. Mel said: "Working on any memorial piece, but especially one that will be set in a place like Durham Cathedral, is a great responsibility but one that I am thrilled to have been offered the chance to

take on. It is an opportunity of a lifetime and one that many glass artists can only hope for, so I am incredibly excited to have been awarded this commission.”

Mel will create the new window at her own studio in Chichester, and at local industrial facilities where she has space to create works of this scale. She added: “Since I started working on this piece, it has become a very personal project for me and I really feel like I have got to know so much about Sara through the wonderful testimonials from her family and friends. I hope that I will be able to reflect beauty and wisdom through the design of the window, which will be situated close to St Cuthbert’s Shrine; a place of such sanctity and calm in the Cathedral.”

Durham Cathedral’s Head of Development, Gaye Kirby, said: “We are hugely grateful to the Pilkington family for their very generous gift. The new window will replace one which is currently in need of repair, bringing with it colour and light to the Cathedral’s North Quire Aisle and reflecting the joy that Sara brought to those who knew her. It will be a beautiful and poignant piece of art which visitors to the Cathedral will be able to enjoy and find meaning in for many generations to come.”

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Notes to Editors

Durham Cathedral is a Christian Church of the Anglican Communion, the shrine of St Cuthbert, the seat of the Bishop of Durham and a focus of pilgrimage and spirituality in North East England. It inhabits a treasured sacred space set in the natural and human landscape of the World Heritage Site.

Its purpose is to worship God, share the gospel of Jesus Christ, welcome all who come, celebrate and pass on its rich Christian heritage and discover its place in God’s creation.

The building of Durham Cathedral commenced in 1093 and took around 40 years to complete. It replaced a Saxon cathedral built by the Community of St Cuthbert after it arrived in Durham in 995 following its flight from the 'Holy Island' of Lindisfarne 80 miles north of Durham. The body of St Cuthbert is enshrined in the Feretory at Durham Cathedral and the Tomb of the Venerable Bede is in The Galilee Chapel. The Cathedral existed as a Benedictine Monastery until 1539 when it became one of the Church of England's major Cathedrals.

It continues to be a focus for pilgrimage and attracts over 700,000 visitors each year from all over the world. The Cathedral has internationally important collections of artefacts, manuscripts and books that include St Cuthbert's coffin and his pectoral cross; superb examples of Anglo-Saxon craftsmanship. Durham Cathedral is often referred to as the best example of Romanesque architecture in Europe, or as American writer Bill Bryson put it, 'the best Cathedral on planet earth.'

Since its construction Durham Cathedral has been alive with people and a centre for community activity. The Cathedral is home to a vibrant worshipping community and continues to celebrate the English Choral Tradition with sung services by its highly acclaimed Choir. As a new century unfolds Durham Cathedral aspires to enrich the many different ways in which it engages with people and organisations. It is cherished equally by those who live, work and study in the region and by those who come to visit.

Open Treasure: Durham Cathedral has just unveiled Open Treasure, a £10.9 million programme of development, transforming some of the Cathedral's most historic spaces into a world-class exhibition route, taking in the 14th Century Monks' Dormitory and the medieval Great Kitchen, alongside purpose-built state of the art gallery spaces.

Open Treasure tells the story of Christianity in the North of England, monastic life in Durham and the life of the Cathedral today, through the Cathedral's magnificent collections and a rolling programme of exhibitions including loans from notable institutions. Open Treasure received a £3.9 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.