

Lacock

Church where Camilla's daughter got married sells 15th-century silver chalice for £1.3 MILLION despite parishioners' court fight to stop sale

- The Lacock cup was made from secular silver in the 1400s
- Heirloom has been on loan to British Museum since 1963
- St Cyriac's Church in Lacock, Wiltshire, needed funds to repair leaking roof
- Ecclesiastical court overruled parishioners' objections to sale
- British Museum and the Wiltshire Museum bought chalice together



The Lacock Cup has been sold by St Cyriac's Church in Lacock, Wiltshire, to the British Museum and the Wiltshire Museum for £1.3million

A church parish in need of funds for a leaking roof has sold a rare silver chalice for £1.3million.

The silver Lacock cup, dating from the 1400s, has been described as one of the best-preserved artifacts of its kind.

In spite of objections from parishioners at St Cyriac's Church in Lacock, Wiltshire, the heirloom has been sold to the British Museum and Wiltshire museum last week.

Director of the British Museum, Neil MacGregor said: 'I am delighted that this beautiful and rare cup has been acquired so that it can continue to be enjoyed by visitors to the British Museum as well as in Wiltshire Museum alongside important pieces from Lacock and the medieval period'.

Decorated and edged with gothic motifs and gilded twisted rope-work, the cup became a chalice for communion wine in a Protestant church in the post-Reformation era.

It had been on loan to the British Museum in London since 1963, though its value was not known until 2009 when experts estimated its worth as £2.2million.

The cup will remain on display at the British Museum for the foreseeable future before being transported to Wiltshire at a later date.

It is believed to have been donated to the church by Sir Robert Baynard of Lackham Manor 400 years ago.

Sir Robert, who was the MP for Chippenham in 1584 and Westbury in 1856, is commemorated at St Cyriac's Church with a collection of brass plaques that were stolen in 2004, but returned to the parish after a police appeal.

After his death, a series of brass plaques were placed in the floor of St Cyriac's Church in Lacock, commemorating his life. The plaques were stolen in mid-2004, but quickly returned after a national appeal by police.

Petitioners battled against the sale of the cup which they claimed was one of the few valuable, historic items left in the village of Lacock.

During an ecclesiastical two-day hearing however, Rev Justin Gau, Chancellor of the Diocese of Bristol, gave permission for its sale.



Local residents and parishioners of St Cyriac's Church (pictured) objected to the sale claiming the chalice was one of the few valuable items left in Lacock, Village

'I'm satisfied that the unique and exceptional circumstances of this case are sufficient reasons to justify the sale of the cup,' adding conditions of the sale to include that a replica worth no more than £5,000 be made.

A spokesman for the British Museum said: 'The Lacock cup is an extremely rare piece of medieval English silverware, with a history dating to the first half of the 15th Century.'

'The cup, which is in near perfect condition, began its life as a secular object but its function changed after the English Reformation as new religious practices meant that a larger communion cup was required to hold sufficient wine for the whole congregation.'



The Duchess of Cornwall's daughter, Laura Parker Bowles, was married at St Cyriac's Church in 2006



Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles (left) leave St Cyriac's Church in Lacock, Wiltshire, after the wedding of the Duchess of Cornwall's daughter to Harry Lopes (right) in May 2006

'As the cup has no religious imagery on it, it was a perfect substitute in a time when strict laws prohibited the use of images.'

The Lacock Parochial Church Council needed £350,00 to complete repairs on the roof of the church where the Duchess of Cornwall's daughter, Laura Parker Bowles, married in 2006.

The remainder of the cash will be put in a trust fund which would net the village £50,000 a year in interest.

By JENNIFER SMITH

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