

Magna Carta Anniversary: City of London commemorative events

The National Commemoration of Magna Carta

1. 2015 will be the 800th anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta and the 750th anniversary of Simon De Montfort's Parliament, the earliest recognisable forerunner of a modern Parliament. Together, both events can be seen as marking the beginning of development of Parliamentary democracy in the United Kingdom, and, indeed, the world. This note outlines national and City events intended to commemorate these anniversaries. More generally, 2015 will be an exceptionally busy year for those interested in British history and the history of Parliament. It will be the 600th anniversary of the battle of Agincourt and the establishment of the office of the Serjeant at Arms, 200 years since the battle of Waterloo and 50 years since the death of Sir Winston Churchill. The commemorations of the Magna Carta and the De Montfort Parliament take place against this background.
2. The Magna Carta Trust has set up an 800th Anniversary Committee, chaired by Sir Robert Worcester, to coordinate activities around the 800th anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta through a mixture of events, exhibitions, commemorative wares, academia, and press and broadcast media. A number of activities leading up to and during 2015 have already been agreed to in principle; Magna Carta exhibitions at the British Library, National Archives, Library of Congress in Washington, public libraries and comparable international initiatives; a Magna Carta Prom at the Albert Hall; the repeal of the Papal Bull of 1215, which was issued by the Pope at the request of King John to annul Magna Carta. The City Corporation has contributed funding to the work of the Anniversary Committee.

City of London Events

Guildhall Fund Raising Event

3. The Magna Carta 800th Anniversary Committee will hold a fund-raising event at Guildhall in October 2014. The City Corporation is meeting the premises costs associated with this event.

Guildhall Art Gallery

4. In September 2014 the City of London Heritage Gallery will be opened at Guildhall with Magna Carta on display. A media reception will be held to help launch the Gallery, and the City's Magna Carta programme will be publicised as part of the event.
5. From June 2015 to January 2016 the Guildhall Art Gallery will host an exhibition on "Black British Art in Action: 1960-1990", which will reflect the themes of the Magna Carta anniversary celebrations.

Guildhall Library

6. From June to August 2015 the Guildhall Library will host a Magna Carta exhibition with selected items from its collection. The exhibition will be designed to complement the display of Magna Carta in the Heritage Gallery. A short programme of free lunchtime talks on the themes of liberty and law is also likely to be held.

Temple Church

7. On 7th June 2014, the Temple Church hosted an international conference on “Magna Carta, Religion and the Rule of Law” in association with the Institute of Contemporary British History, the Dickson Poon School of Law and the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at King’s College, London. In February 2015, the Church will host a three-choir concert to celebrate the bringing together of all four surviving 1215 Magna Carta at the British Library. The Church will also commemorate the London Charter with a service early in May 2015, and on 14th June 2015 it will present a rededication to the Charter’s principles. Finally, the Church’s open weekend in September 2015 will focus on the role that Temple Church, Middle and Inner Temple played in the Magna Carta story.

The Lord Mayor’s Show

8. The Magna Carta will be a theme of the November 2014 Lord Mayor’s Show. As part of the show, a specially commissioned anthem will be played at the Royal Courts of Justice. 2015 will be the 800th anniversary of the Lord Mayor’s Show, and the Mayoral Charter will replace the Magna Carta in the Heritage Gallery.

Magna Carta Lecture

9. In November 2014, the City Corporation will host a lecture followed by a reception on the the Magna Carta, with an emphasis on its connection to London. Professor Linda Colley of Princeton University is expected to deliver this lecture.

Global Law Summit

10. The Ministry of Justice, along with partners including the City Corporation, is organising a major international law summit in February 2015, with a Magna Carta theme. The summit will be held from 23rd to 25th February 2015 at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, Westminster. The City Corporation will be invited to host an event for delegates in the City.

The De Montfort Cake

11. On January 20th 2015, the anniversary of the sitting of the De Montfort Parliament, there is a proposal to mark the occasion with a giant ‘birthday’ cake, shaped like the Palace of Westminster. It is hoped that the cake will be provided by the City livery. It is to be exhibited to the public in a marquee in

Parliament Square. The Speaker of the House of Commons has agreed to cut the cake and make a short speech in a ceremonial 'cutting' event

Guided Walks

12. From 1st June 2015 until 27th September 2015, the City Guides will offer free guided walks on the theme of Magna Carta, running between Temple Church and the Heritage Gallery. The walks will explain the links between the Mayoral Charter and Magna Carta.

Community Programme

13. The City will host a community programme of educational, heritage and visitor related activities. The programme will cover the role of the City in the creation of Magna Carta and the politics of the period, the rights highlighted in Magna Carta, and Magna Carta as a physical document, i.e. its parchment, ink and seal. The City's Visitor Development Team has been working with the national Magna Carta Tourism Sub Committee to develop a marketing campaign to promote a trail through England's charter towns, including the City.

Spitalfields Music Festival

14. Debate and the rule of law will be themes of the Spitalfields Music Festival from 12th to 27th June 2015. The festival will include a number of talks and debates, and a collaboration with the Bishopsgate Institute is likely for 15th June.

City of London Festival

15. In June or July 2015 the City of London Festival is likely to host a public debate in Mansion House under the Magna Carta window. The details of the event are yet to be finalised. It is expected that the debate will include high profile thinkers and commentators, and will a focus on applying the themes of the Magna Carta to the present day.

Huguenots of Spitalfields Festival

16. Between the 9th and 20th July the Huguenots of Spitalfields Festival will include events on the theme of religious liberty.