

The Syon Abbey Collection (1415-2018)

Syon Abbey was a monastic house of the Order of our Most Holy Saviour, also known as the Bridgettines. The house was founded directly from the Mother House in Vadstena in Sweden in 1415, and the community followed the Rule of St Bridget of Sweden. This enclosed Bridgettine community - comprising both monks and nuns and governed by an abbess - was renowned for its dedication to reading, meditation and contemplation. In addition, it was unusual in being the only English Catholic community of religious to have continued existing without interruption through the Reformation period. Following Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries, the community dispersed into smaller groups, with some remaining in England whilst others sought refuge abroad. Syon Abbey was restored for a short period in England under Mary I; however, following the accession of Elizabeth I, the community went into exile. The community spent over half a century migrating through the Low Countries and France, before eventually finding a new home in Lisbon, Portugal in 1594. In 1861, amid rising religious tensions in Portugal, the community returned to England, where they initially resided in Spetisbury, Dorset. Following a further relocation to Chudleigh, Devon, in 1887, the community finally settled in South Brent, Devon, in 1925. On account of dwindling numbers and the age of the remaining nuns, the decision was made to close Syon Abbey in 2011. In the same year, the archive was transferred to the University of Exeter, where it joined other previously deposited collections relating to Syon Abbey, including printed books and manuscripts from the Syon Abbey library.

Archives and Rare Books resources held by the University of Exeter

EUL MS 95	Papers of Canon John Rory Fletcher relating to the history of Syon Abbey (35 volumes)
EUL MS 262	The Syon Abbey Medieval and Modern Manuscript Collection, including 191 volumes and 8 folders of unbound papers dating from the 15 th to the 20 th century
EUL MS 265	Papers relating to the library and its readership at Syon Abbey, comprising the papers of Marion Glasscoe and Claire Johnson compiled during the process of cataloguing the Syon Abbey library
EUL MS 389	The Syon Abbey archive, which includes records relating to the workings, business and people of Syon Abbey dating from 1467 to 2018
EUL MS 394	Papers relating to the Syon Reliquary and Marion Glasscoe's relationship with Syon Abbey

Printed books from the Syon Abbey library are listed in the University of Exeter Library's main [online catalogue](#) under the classmark 'Syon'.