

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SAVED FOR SCOTLAND: AMERICAN DONORS ENSURE APPEAL'S SUCCESS

Boston, MA, December 16, 2021 – An international appeal to save a rare collection of British literature has been successful, reaching its goal of £15 million (\$20 million) with American support.

This means that the Blavatnik Honresfield Library (formerly Honresfield Library) – a treasure trove of items from the world's most beloved writers, unseen for almost a century – will no longer be sold at open auction and instead will be shared with libraries and cultural institutions across the United Kingdom.

The library, collected and curated by an English businessman in the 1800s, comprises priceless manuscripts, rare first editions, and irreplaceable letters. These include works by Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, Jane Austen, and the Brontë siblings.

A UK-wide consortium led by The Friends of the National Libraries, and including the National Trust for Scotland, Abbotsford, and the National Library of Scotland, was successful in raising half the funds needed from hundreds of individual donors, including dozens of generous Americans, as well as the Scottish Government and other organizations.

The balance comes from an important donation by Sir Leonard Blavatnik – the largest ever given to the UK by an individual for a literary treasure.

This achievement has also been made possible by the auction house's willingness to give the consortium the time needed to launch and run the fundraising appeal, to which countless people from Scotland, the United Kingdom, and the US contributed.

Arrangements will be made in the coming months for the eight consortium members to take possession of key works from the collection, conserve them, and make them publicly accessible. In Scotland, these will include an early volume of poems by Robert Burns in his own hand – containing some of his earliest recorded literary works – known as the *First Commonplace Book*, as well as individual autograph poems (*Cessnock Bank* and the *Brigs of Ayr*), and some of the poet's earliest correspondence, including the only extant letter to his beloved father.

Other Scottish material of huge importance is the complete working manuscript of Sir Walter Scott's iconic novel *Rob Roy*, part of the autographed manuscript of Scott's verse romance, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, his



Image: Robert Burns handwritten *First Commonplace Book*. Credit: Sotheby's

travel journal of an expedition off the Scottish coast in 1814, a copy of *Border Antiquities* with extensive manuscript revisions, and an exceptional group of Scott first editions in their original condition.

Phil Long OBE, Chief Executive of the National Trust for Scotland, said:

“This is the most fantastic news. We are so grateful to everyone who contributed to the appeal for acts of such astonishing generosity, as well as to the Scottish Government for the welcome support given.

“It was a pleasure to work with the Friends of the National Libraries and the other consortium members and this is a truly collaborative achievement that will benefit generations to come.

“Those lucky enough to view the collection items have said that they express a palpable feeling of history in the making, with some of the works being part of the very foundation of our shared culture. I’m looking forward to the opportunity to display items from the collection in Scotland so that as many people as possible can share in that feeling.”

Kirstin Bridier, executive director of The National Trust for Scotland Foundation USA, said: “This is a tremendous achievement, and we are proud to have collaborated with a dream team of libraries and heritage organizations across the UK to secure this remarkable collection for public benefit. We are deeply grateful to the many American donors who generously supported this effort, which will impact those who love Scottish and British culture no matter where they live.”

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Media Images: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1r6eeVnfjyMiuJeOkIJ0OyOdxklxP1C2F?usp=sharing>

About the National Trust for Scotland Foundation USA (NTSUSA)

An independent 501(c)(3) non-profit located in Boston; The National Trust for Scotland Foundation USA (NTSUSA) exists to support the work of Scotland’s largest conservation charity. NTSUSA makes grants for projects that protect Scotland’s natural, built, and cultural heritage on behalf of future generations. Since 2000, NTSUSA has granted nearly \$10 million to preserve Scotland’s most iconic and inspiring places, including Glencoe, Glenfinnan, Culloden Battlefield, Culzean Castle & Country Park, JM Barrie’s Birthplace, St Kilda, Iona, Crathes Castle, Hill House, and the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum.

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