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News Release

Middlesex Guildhall celebrates 100th birthday with public exhibition

Tales of a young man tried for spying on Queen Victoria in her bedchamber, a former church belfry converted into a pub, and foreign courts sitting in central London during World War II are all revealed in a new exhibition marking the centenary of one of London's legal landmarks.

The free exhibition opens to the public today (1 August) and charts 100 years of the Middlesex Guildhall, now home to the UK Supreme Court. The Guildhall originally opened on its prominent Parliament Square site in 1913 as home for Quarter Sessions courts and Middlesex County Council. For more than 50 years it served as the headquarters for the county's administration, with the main council chamber and key public departments using offices alongside space for judges, juries, witnesses and defendants.

The exhibition explores the history of the site stretching back almost one thousand years, during which time it has always been connected with the administration of justice and local democracy. The illustrated panels and exhibits explore each stage of the site's life, from early beginnings as a place of sanctuary in the shadows of Westminster Abbey and the first sessions house built for the Middlesex Justices in 1805, through to two rebuilds of the Guildhall on the same site before the major refurbishment of the building to become the home of the UK Supreme Court in 2009.

While the current building never sat within the boundaries of Middlesex, until 1888 much of Greater London north of the Thames did, and it was only at the end of the nineteenth century that the Guildhall's predecessor court building was marooned from its home county – the boundaries of which were then restricted to a section of north and west London.

Middlesex was abolished as an administrative county in the major changes to local government in London in 1965, but the building's role as a hub for local justice continued, with the move to serving as a Crown Court from 1971.

The exhibition includes silverware from the Middlesex Guildhall Art Collection, images taken from the archives of Middlesex County Council and artefacts associated with the Middlesex Regiment to

help narrate the story of the building's uses over the years. Creative activities based on the exhibition are available for younger visitors, alongside a free audio tour of the outside of the building.

The exhibition is now open to the public from 9.30am – 4.30pm on weekdays until the end of September, when Supreme Court sittings resume after the summer recess. Admission is free.

Ends

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