

JESUS COLLEGE OXFORD

JC:PI65

LETTER FROM THOMAS HEARNE, 1728/9

It is not known when this document came to Jesus College, or how or why – not least because neither Thomas Hearne, nor his addressee, James West, had any links with it. In the old catalogue of manuscripts it was assigned the reference MS 374.

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30 Jan 1728/9

Letter from Thomas Hearne (address, St. Edmund Hall) to James West (address no. 7 in Figtree Court in the Inner Temple). Hearne discusses editing and publication work. He expresses surprise that Mr. Jebb is carrying out proof-reading work, and discusses differences in the text of MS copies of Thomas de la More's life of Edward II. He also refers to unspecified catalogues of Dr. Friend and Dr. Woodward. Hearne hopes to publish the Black Book next, while his editing of the life of Richard II is progressing well. He is going to ask Mr. Graves for advice on the history of Evesham Abbey, and expresses himself unimpressed with the learning of Bishop Nicholson. He has just read Salmon's book on the antiquities of Hertfordshire. He does not know him, but understands that he is a non-juror.

Thomas Hearne (1678-1735), a member of St. Edmund Hall, was the most important antiquarian working in early eighteenth-century Oxford. James West (1703-1772) matriculated from Balliol College in March 1719/20, and joined the Inner Temple in 1721. He enjoyed a successful career at the Bar, but was also MP for St. Albans from 1741-68 and Boroughbridge from 1768-72, and President of the Royal Society from 1768-72. He was also a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, and a keen antiquarian, hence his corresponding with Hearne.