

The Rule of Law – the old and new:

the

MAGNA
CARTA

and the

South African Constitution



The British High Commissioner to South Africa, Mrs Judith Macgregor

ON WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE, in association with the Constitutional Court, the highest judicial body in South Africa, the British High Commissioner to South Africa, Mrs Judith Macgregor, co-hosted with the SA Chief Justice Mogoeng, an event to mark 800 years since the signing of the Magna Carta and 21 years of Constitutional Democracy in South Africa. Mrs Justice McGowan, sitting judge of the Queen's Bench Division of the Royal Courts of Justice of England and Wales spoke on the Magna Carta, its tenets and the

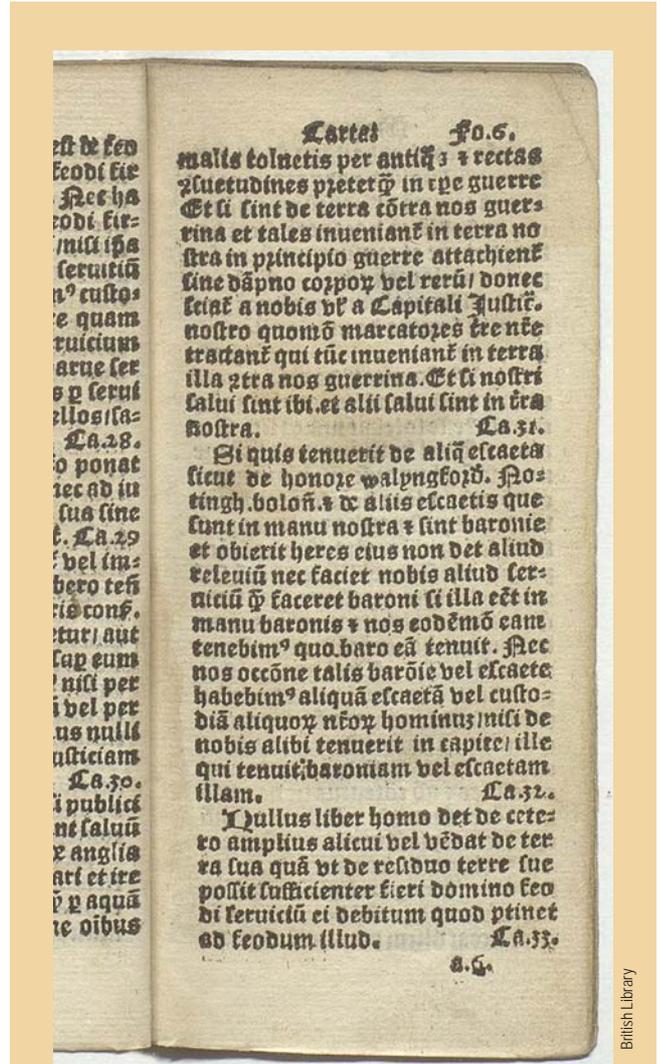
development of the rule of law in the United Kingdom since the signing in 1215. Chief Justice Mogoeng delivered the keynote address, 'The Rule of Law – the old and new: the Magna Carta and the South African Constitution'.

Both Chief Justice Mogoeng and Mrs Justice McGowan highlighted the fundamental freedoms and rights that were enshrined in the South African Constitution and the Magna Carta, echoing the comments by British Prime Minister David Cameron, who said at the Magna Carta 800th celebrations at Runnymede on 15 June, 'Liberty, justice, democracy, the rule of law – we hold these dear, and we should hold them even dearer today than we did almost a century ago.'

The South African event drew a high-calibre audience of leading judges, lawyers, academics, including former President Nelson Mandela's lawyer, Advocate George Bizos, and offered a unique platform to demonstrate the strong ties between the UK and South Africa, particularly within the legal and judicial communities. The Deputy Chief Justice, Dikgang Moseneke, who also spoke at the event, noted that many of the principles underpinning the South African Constitution were inherited from the Magna Carta.

To add to the sentiment and emotion of the occasion, the audience were treated to a musical performance by the Soweto Gospel Choir, who sang a number of famous songs, including those written by Jonny Clegg, recent recipient of an OBE.

In addition to the event marking the anniversaries of the Magna Carta and 21 years of Constitutional Democracy in South Africa, Mrs Justice McGowan's visit to South Africa also offered an opportunity to take forward legal skills training and mentorship programmes with the National Prosecuting Authority and the Thusanani Foundation, a non profit organisation that supports young black law students transform from academia to a professional career. **A**



Detail of the first ever printed copy of the Magna Carta, 1508.