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Edited by:
Peter Konieczny and Sandra Alvarez

Website:
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Cover Photo: The Seventh Crusade - from BL Royal MS 16 G VI

Anglo-Saxon skeleton shows leprosy may have spread to Britain from Scandinavia

An international team of researchers have found evidence suggesting leprosy may have spread to Britain from Scandinavia.

Foot Bones of Anglo-Saxon skeleton – photo courtesy University of Southampton

The team, led by the University of Leiden, and including researchers from Historic England and the universities of Southampton, Birmingham, Surrey, and Swansea, examined a 1500 year old male skeleton, excavated at Great Chesterford in Essex, England during the 1950s. Radiocarbon dating reveals that he lived between the years AD 415–545.

The bones of the man, probably in his 20s, show changes consistent with leprosy, such as narrowing of the toe bones and damage to the joints, suggesting a very early British case. Modern scientific techniques applied by the researchers have now confirmed the man did suffer from the disease and that he may have come from southern Scandinavia.

Archaeologist Dr Sonia Zakrzewski, of the University of Southampton, explains DNA testing was necessary to get a clear diagnosis: "Not all cases of leprosy can be identified by changes to the skeleton. Some may leave no trace on the bones; others will affect bones in a similar way to other diseases. In these cases the only way to be sure is to use DNA fingerprinting, or other chemical markers characteristic of the leprosy bacillus."

The researchers tested the skeleton for bacterial DNA and lipid biomarkers to confirm the man had definitely had leprosy and to allow them to carry out a detailed genetic study of the bacteria that caused his illness.

Professor Mike Taylor, a Bioarchaeologist from the University of Surrey, notes that, "Not every excavation yields good quality DNA, but in this case, leprosy DNA isolated from the skeleton was so good it enabled us to identify its strain."

The results showed the leprosy strain belonged to a lineage (3I) which has previously been found in burials from Medieval Scandinavia and southern Britain, but in this case it originates from a much earlier period, dating from the 5th or 6th centuries AD.

The identification of fatty molecules (lipids) from the leprosy bacteria confirmed the DNA results and also showed it was different from later strains.. Emeritus scientist David Minnikin, from the University of Birmingham, says: "With Leverhulme Trust support, we recorded strong profiles of fatty acid lipid biomarkers that confirmed the presence of leprosy. However, one class of the lipid biomarkers had distinct profiles that may distinguish these older leprosy cases from later Medieval examples."

Isotopes from the man's teeth showed that he probably did not come from Britain, but more likely grew up elsewhere in northern Europe, perhaps southern Scandinavia. This matched the results of the DNA, and raises the intriguing possibility that he brought a Scandinavian strain of the leprosy bacterium with him when he migrated to Britain.

Project leader Dr Sarah Inskip of the University of Leiden concludes: "The radiocarbon date confirms this is one of the earliest cases in the UK to have been successfully studied with modern biomolecular methods. This is exciting both for archaeologists and for microbiologists. It helps us understand the spread of disease in the past, and also the evolution of different strains of disease, which might help us fight them in the future. We plan to carry out similar studies on skeletons from different locations to build up a more complete picture of the origins and early spread of this disease."

Although leprosy is nowadays a tropical disease, in the past it occurred in Europe. Human migrations probably helped spread it, and there are cases in early skeletons from western Europe, particularly from the 7th century AD onward. However the origins of these ancient cases are poorly understood.

The article notes that:

The Great Chesterford case is thus of particular interest in understanding the origins of leprosy in the British Isles, being one of the earliest radiocarbon dated cases with supportive DNA evidence and genotyping of the isolate. The earliest purported example of leprosy from Britain that has been described in the published literature dates from the 3rd-4th century AD and comes from Poundbury, Dorset. This burial comprises lower leg and foot bones only. Although these show changes that are compatible with leprosy, the presence or otherwise of the more firmly diagnostic facial changes could not be ascertained, so the diagnosis is controversial. The first cases of leprosy in Britain showing diagnostic facial signs date from the early Anglo-Saxon period.

The article, 'Osteological, Biomolecular and Geochemical Examination of an Early Anglo-Saxon Case of Lepromatous Leprosy' has now been published in the journal *Plos One* – **click here to read it**.

New book sheds light on Hereford's medieval past

A leading archaeologist, who uncovered the remains of what might be a wounded Knight, will reveal extraordinary details of medieval life in Hereford in a new book.

Possible knight – a man of Norman origin whose injuries might be consistent with violence or combat – photo courtesy Headland Archaeology

Andy Boucher and Luke Craddock-Bennett are speaking at the Hay Festival to launch their book, '*Death in the Close*', which digs down through 900 years of local history, thanks to recent archaeological discoveries in the grounds of Hereford Cathedral.

Death in the Close was written following excavations carried out by Headland Archaeology as part of a £5m project facilitated by Hereford Cathedral Perpetual Trust to refurbish the Cathedral Close. The project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and has also unlocked some of the Saxon history of the cathedral site.

Andy, director at Headland Archaeology, will be joined by co-author Luke on the Hay Festival's Good Energy Stage at 2.30pm on Friday, 22 May. The pair will discuss their book and invite questions from the audience, who will then have the opportunity to secure a signed copy.

The findings of the book made headlines earlier this year when after a detailed osteological study, one of the 2,500 plus bodies found in Hereford Cathedral Close turned out to be a Knight.

Andy comments: "What we found has produced exciting glimpses into life, disease, accident and injury from the Norman Conquest through to the 19th Century.

"The individual believed to be a Knight was of

"The individual believed to be a Knight was of particular interest and has numerous injuries likely to have been sustained through jousting – fractures to the ribcage and the right shoulder, and an unusual twisting break to the left leg. Analysis of his teeth, undertaken in collaboration with Durham University, suggests that the man was likely to have been brought up in Normandy and moved to Hereford later in life.

"Although we can never be sure how people came about their wounds, in this case there is a considerable amount of evidence that indicates this man was involved in some sort of violent activity. The fact that he was still doing this after the age of 45 would suggest that he was very tough."

Death in the Close explores the finds from Cathedral Close and how they question perceptions about the past inhabitants of Hereford, uniquely framed within a 'murder mystery' style narrative. With catchy chapter titles such as 'Chronicles unchained', 'Sifting the sands of time' and 'Deliberating the verdict', the book has a literary feel, designed to be engaging and user-friendly for non-archaeologists. For those in the know, the book is also technically and academically correct, with key facts and figures in footnotes for easy reference.

Andy added: "I am really proud of the way the book has come together, and have carefully set it out so that it appeals to both an academic and non-academic audience. The event at the Hay Festival will be a great way for people to learn about the work that goes into projects such as the Cathedral Close excavation, which can tell us a huge amount about our past.

"We've planned an exciting and engaging talk, with some unique video footage and possibly some other surprises in store.

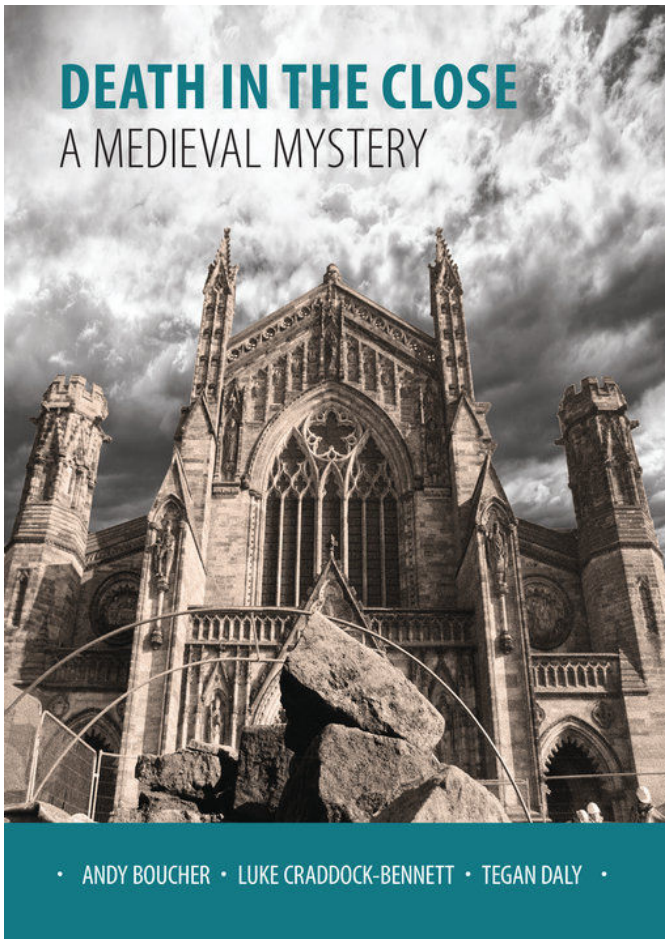
Andy is based in Headland Archaeology's Hereford office, one of four centres around the UK. Headland is one of the largest privately-owned archaeology companies in Europe, and provides heritage services to the development and construction sectors throughout the UK and Ireland.

Death in the Close is printed in full colour, made possible by funding from the Marc Fitch Fund obtained through Hereford Cathedral Perpetual Trust. Priced at £15 for a paperback and £25 for a hardback, proceeds from the sale of the book will go towards the continued restoration and maintenance of Hereford Cathedral.

Tickets for the event cost £7 and can be purchased directly from the Hay Festival Box Office (The Drill Hall, 25 Lion Street, Hay-on-Wye HR3 5AD), by phone on 01497 822 629 or on the Hay Festival website.

Copies of the book are available from Hereford Cathedral Perpetual Trust: email **trusts@herefordcathedral.org**.

For more information about Headland Archaeology, please visit **www.headlandarchaeology.com**



The Seventh Crusade: Battle for Egypt

Peter Konieczny takes a look at King Louis IX of France's attempt to conquer Egypt in the mid-thirteenth century, one of the most important campaigns of the crusades.

News spread throughout Europe in the fall of 1244 that the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem had suffered two deveastating losses - first the city of Jeruaselm had fallen to the nomadic Khwazarmians, who had been hired by the Sultan of Egypt al-Salih Ayyub. Then a joint Crusader-Muslim army was defeated by the Khwazarmians at the Battle of Gaza few weeks later, killing most of the Templars and Hospitallers who were protecting the Kingdom.

The loss of Jerusalem was a tremendous blow for Christendom. Thousands of Christian had given their lives to defend their most holy city, the place they believed Jesus Christ was crucified and then resurrected. To have it once again under the rule of the Muslims was just an unacceptable situation for Christians, and almost immediately their were calls throughout Europe for a new crusade to recover the city. Jerusalem had been captured before, by Saladin in 1187, and this act brought about the Third Crusade, where the Holy Roman Emperor (ruler of Germany and parts of Italy) and the kings of England and France all lead their armies to the Middle East.

But Europe of the 1240s lacked the strength and unity needed for such a large counterattack. The Papacy and the current Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II, were involved in a power struggle that threatened all out war in both Germany and Italy. The next two most powerful medieval rulers, Henry III of England and Louis IX of France, had gone to war in 1242 over the control of some French provinces, and were likely to do so again. To the south, the rulers of Castile and Aragon were busy with their own reconquest of Muslim lands in Spain, while in the east, the lands of Poland, Moravia and Hungary were only beginning to recover from the destruction brought upon them by the Mongols. It seemed as if it would take a miracle to have any of them come to the Crusaders' aid.

But it was actually a near-death experience. The king of France at this time was Louis IX, who was 29 years old when Jerusalem fell to the Muslims. His life had already been eventful – his father, also named Louis, died when he was 11, and his mother, Blanche of Castile, became the regent of France, ruling in the young Louis' name until 1234. Once he assumed his throne, Louis faced several serious threats to his rule, including invasions by the English monarch Henry III

When he was young, Blanche said to her son, "I would rather see you dead at my feet than guilty of a mortal sin." Louis took these words to heart, and by all accounts he lived a very pious life. He would spend long hours taking part in prayers, fasts and penances, and he made it a key part of his government to see that royal justice was administered fairly to all his subjects. His contemporaries saw him as the model of an ideal Christian king.

The only flaw in this king was his chronically poor health. Many of subjects believed his reign would be a short one, and when illness struck him again in December of 1244, they thought the end was near. Louis lost consciousness, and his mother brought Christian relics to his bedside, in hopes that they could save him. At one point, two of his female attendants argued whether or not to cover over his body with cloth, since one of them thought that the king was already dead. But Louis continued to live, and he regained consciousness. Once he could speak a few mumbled sentences, Louis asked the bishop of Paris for a cross, one that meant he would undertake a journey to the

Louis IX on a ship departing from Aigues-Mortes, for the Seventh Crusade. - BnF, Français 5716, fol. 40

undertake a journey to the Holy Land and fight the enemies of Christianity.

This was a great surprise for the people around the French king, since Louis had never indicated a personal desire to go on crusade before, although he had financially supported previous efforts. Once he had completely recovered, the king was approached by many of his followers, including his own mother, who tried to dissuade him from fulfilling his vow. These people were worried that by leaving France, his kingdom would be vulnerable to another rebellion or invasion, particularly from the English. The bishop of Paris tried to talk Louis out of it, saying, "when you took the cross, uttering without reflection a vow so difficult to accomplish, you were ill in mind and body." The bishop added that the journey to the Holy Land would be very difficult, and no help would come from the rest of Europe. After he spoke, Louis' mother also pressed her son to relinquish his vow: "My dearest son, hear and heed the counsels of your discreet friends, and do not strive against your own prudence; remember what a virtue it is, and how please it is to God, to obey and comply with the wishes of your mother."

After hearing everyone implore him against going on crusade, Louis rose from his seat and said to all, "You plead that the loss of my senses was the cause of my assuming the cross, therefore, according to your desire and advice, I lay aside the cross." The king tore the cloth cross from his clothes, saying "My lord bishop, here is the cross which I have assumed; I voluntarily resign it to you." Seeing this, the court was very relieved, thinking they had avoided such a dangerous enterprise. But Louis only paused for a moment, and then he spoke up again: "My friends, now I am not devoid of reason or sense, I am not powerless or infirm; therefore I now require my cross to be restored to me. For He [God] who is ignorant of nothing knows that nothing shall enter my mouth until I again bear the sign of the cross." Louis' determination to go on crusade was now obvious to the court, and his followers had to accept it. Thus began the war known to historians as the Seventh Crusade, perhaps the greatest ever Christian invasion of the Islamic world.

Several eyewitnesses and contemporary historians have recorded the events of this Crusade, which gives us a detailed account of how this war developed. The most important eyewitness on the Christian side was Jean de Joinville, a minor noble in the Kingdom of France. Jean was in his mid-twenties when Louis made his vow to go on crusade, and he decided to follow his king to the Middle East. They met each other there and became good friends, with Louis sometimes acting as a father figure for the younger Jean (Jean's own father had died when

he was a teenager), giving him advice on ethics, spiritual matters, and even on moderating his drinking of wine. After the crusade ended, Jean remained one of Louis' advisors and confidants. As Joinville reached his later years, he decided to write a history of Louis, including their journey to the Middle East. Although he wrote the work to praise the French king, Joinville does not blindly agree with everything Louis did. His history is also very much an autobiography, explaining to his readers, often vividly what was happening to him during this war.

Another important source of information from the crusaders' point-of-view comes from several letters written while on campaign. Among the letter writers was Jean de Sarrassin, one of Louis' chamberlains, and a knight known only as Guy. Some of these letters have been preserved in the Chronica Majora by Matthew Paris, a Benedictine monk living at St. Alban's abbey, near London. Matthew is considered to be one of England's finest medieval chroniclers, and although he wasn't anywhere near the Middle East during the Seventh Crusade, he does have some valuable material on what happened.

The main source of information from the Muslim side comes from Jamal al-Din ibn Wasil, a historian who lived in Cairo as this war began. His work, entitled The Dissipator of Anxieties Concerning the History of the Ayyubids was drawn upon by other Islamic historians for their own works. Muhammad ibn al-Furat and Taqi al-Din Ahmad al-Maqrizi both made use of ibn Wasil when they wrote histories in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, but also added new details. Drawing upon all these sources, one can trace out the planning and events of this crusade.

Preparing for War

The first step for Louis in this endeavor would be to obtain as much help as possible from the other European rulers, or at least make sure that France would not be attacked after he departed for the Middle East. He wrote to all his counterparts throughout Europe, asking for their assistance, but did not get any positive replies. Most of the monarchs were too occupied with their own lands at this time, and the few who might have gone decided for their own reasons not to go. The Norwegian king, Haakon V, who had made a pledge to go on crusade in 1237, turned down offers from Louis to join him, despite being offered ships and provisions from the French king. Although Haakon's stated reason was that the Norwegians and French would not be compatible enough to work together, he may not have wanted to go to war with the Muslims in the first place, and had only made the crusading vow to allow him to get extra taxes from the clergy.

Although the English king Henry III would certainly not have joined the crusade under his French rival, about two hundred English knights decided to take the vow, led by William Longsword, who at the time was pursuing his claim to be the rightful earl of Salisbury. Although this group was small, it was important for nobles from England to be part of this crusader army, since Henry would now be less likely to take advantage of Louis' absence from France to invade French areas that were in dispute between the two kings - it would be morally shameful for Henry to go to war against Louis while his own men were helping him fight for Christendom.

Beyond this English contingent, very few of those who went on crusade came from lands outside of France. A few Italians and perhaps some Norwegians took part, but the other peoples of Europe were too preoccupied for such an undertaking. Still, Louis was able to gather a huge number of men to take the vow and go on crusade. According to some of the eyewitnesses to these events, the crusader army included between 2500 and 2800 knights and 5000 crossbowmen.

Historians have also figured that there must have been another 5000 to 5600 mounted serjeants and about 10 000 infantry in this army, giving Louis a force of about 25 000 soldiers. By comparison, most medieval armies at this time would be no more than a few thousand people, while about 11 000 soldiers took part in the Fourth Crusade. There would have other people who followed behind the troops, such as tradesmen who would build the siege machines, medical personnel who would tend to the wounded, and prostitutes who provided their own unique services.

Portolan Chart from 1489 showing the Eastern Mediterranean

Moving all these people was a huge task in itself. Because much of Asia Minor was now in Muslim hands, it was impossible for the Crusaders to march overland to the Holy Land, unless they wanted to spend valuable time and resources fighting their way through. Instead, the only practical way for the crusaders to travel would be to go by sea. In 1246, Louis signed contracts with shipowners from Genoa and Marseilles to have 36 fully outfitted vessels carry the men and their horses to the eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus. Other French nobles made similar agreements, albeit on a much smaller scale, to have them and their retinues shipped to the Middle East. For example, Jean de Joinville teamed up with his cousin, the Count of Sarrebruck, to have one ship carry both of their parties, consisting of themselves, their eighteen knights (nine knights each), and some foot soldiers and servants.

Louis ordered that most of the ships carrying the crusaders were to depart to the Holy Land from the port of Aigues-Mortes. Until a few years before the crusade, this port was a small, insignificant fishing village on the French Riviera. But the French king was interested in building a port that would be under his direct rule, unlike the ones at Marseilles and Narbonne, which were under the control of its own city officials. Aigues-Mortes was not the best choice for a port – among its problems was that the city had a very small fresh water supply and its harbour would be constantly silting up – but Louis put a lot of money into building the port's infrastructure and facilities, and it was able to accommodate the task of shipping thousands of crusaders to the Middle East.

The first destination for the entire crusader army would be Cyprus, where Louis was preparing to have a large amount of food and other supplies stored. The lack of provisions had been the downfall of many medieval armies, and the French king was determined that he had enough supplies stockpiled for his own troops. Food such as salted pork, wheat and wine were collected throughout France, Italy and other lands, and then shipped to the island. The site of all these supplies was impressive at least to Joinville, who wrote that the barrels of wine were stacked up so high that they looked as if they were barns, while the wheat and barley were piled up into mounds that were so big, "you might have imagined they were hillocks."

The cost of hiring ships and preparing supplies for such a large army would be huge. Furthermore, many of the men who went on crusade also had to be paid money by Louis, since they ran out of their own soon after they set out from France. Historians have estimated that the total cost of this crusade would be 1,500,000 livre tournois – by comparison the annual income of the French king was about 250,000 livre tournois, and a person could buy three or four cows for a single livre tournois. To raise the funds necessary to undertake his crusade, Louis had to make his government as efficient as possible, and seek out new sources of revenues.

Louis' accountants and bureaucrats were very good at bringing in extra money by making sure that taxes and other payments owed to the king were collected, while at the same time sharply reducing the amount of money spent on the upkeep of roads, bridges and other building projects. The French government also confiscated properties belonging to the Cathars, a heretical group of Christians living in the southern part of the kingdom, as well as many Jewish people, who afterwards were expelled from France. Louis was also able to obtain gifts or loans from the towns of France, ranging from 10 000 livre tournois from Paris, to 1750 from Beauvais and 151 from Courcy. But the largest contributor to the funding of the crusade came from the Catholic Church. The Papacy granted Louis the right to collect one-tenth of the annual income from every parish church for three years. Although this tax was meant to be paid by every Catholic church in Europe, little or nothing was collected outside of France – a priest living in Ireland or Germany would not have been willing to give up this money to a foreign ruler, and he could easily find ways of avoiding making any payments. In the end though, Louis raised enough money for him to cover the costs for this military campaign.

All of these preparations took time, and it was not until late August of 1248, nearly four years after Louis first made his vow to go on Crusade, that the king and his army set sail from Aigues-Mortes. The fleet set out for the island of Cyprus, which would provide a friendly base for the army.

army. With generally good weather and winds, it took less than a month to for the fleet to sail across the Mediterranean and reach Cyprus. But once they arrived, it was decided that the Crusaders would remain on the island over the winter, since this season typically had much rougher seas, and Louis did not want to risk his losing his ships in a storm.

This delay proved costly in two ways. First, disease hit part of the Crusader army, causing the deaths of over 250 knights and numerous other soldiers. Many other Crusaders would have also left Cyprus at this time, to escape these diseases, had not Louis prohibited anyone from doing so. Secondly, if they had invaded Egypt before the winter of 1248-9, the Crusaders would have attacked them just as its Sultan and much of his army was outside the country – they were besieging a city in northern Syria at the time.

One might ask why Louis and his army were going to invade Egypt, since the objective of the Crusaders was to regain Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Part of the answer is that the sultan of Egypt, al-Salih Ayyub, was the one who ruled over Jerusalem, so he had to be defeated if the Crusaders before the Holy Land could be secured from the Muslim enemy. But Egypt was also a very important land on its own, being very fertile and a main center of trade. Louis may have hoped that he could conquer this country and turn it into part of his own kingdom, or turn it over to his brother, Robert of Artois. With its wealth and resources, Egypt would be more than able to support enough knights and soldiers to protect the Holy Land. Another reason to attack Egypt was that it was an easy target – the seaports of Damietta and Alexandria had good defenses, but the interior of the country had few fortifications. A couple of victories could bring to crusaders to Cairo, and whoever held that city would control the rest of Egypt. This was the objective of the Fifth Crusade, which was able to capture Damietta in 1219, but then faltered two years later.

Louis used the winter to continue his preparations for the upcoming campaign. He also found time to meet with two envoys from the Mongols, who arrived on Cyprus in December. These men were Nestorian Christians from Mosul, and they carried a letter with them from a local Mongol commander named Eljigidei. The letter stated that the Mongols wished Louis success in his crusade, and that they were going to aid the Christians by attacking another major Muslim state – namely the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad – and then help the Crusaders regain Jerusalem. The letter also stated that the current Mongol ruler, Guyuk Khan, was very supportive of the Christian peoples.

Louis and the other Crusaders saw this letter and embassy as very good news. Some thought that this would be a first step towards the formation of an alliance that would destroy all the Muslim nations. Intrigued, Louis sent a small group of men as an embassy to Eligidei and Guyuk, along with gifts such as magnificent tent that could be used as a chapel, as well as fragments of the True Cross (the cross that was believed to be the one where Jesus Christ died on). It would take many months for this embassy to reach the Mongol ruler, and much would happen during this time.

As the winter season ended and the Mediterranean was deemed safe enough to sail on, Louis consulted with all the leading nobles of his Crusade on where they would begin their attack. They had learned that al-Salih Ayyub was very ill. The Crusaders thought he was poisoned, but the sultan was actually suffering from both tuberculosis and gangrene. This would be more good news for the Crusaders, who would have believed that the Muslims would be greatly weakened by the loss of its leader. Louis and the other nobles agreed that the invasion of Egypt would begin at the ancient port of Alexandria, and soon the troops returned to their ships in preparation for the crossing. Meanwhile, Muslim spies had reported this news back to the Sultan, who ordered that extra troops be stationed there to await the Christians.

Landing on the Beaches

The great Crusader fleet left Cyprus in late May, and after a week of sailing, they approached the mouth of the Nile River. Just then, a fierce storm came down on the ships, scattering many of them. While the Crusaders must have felt this to be an inauspicious start to their invasion, it actually turned out to be a stroke of luck – as the fleet regrouped, one of the pilots spotted land, and then discovered that they were very close to the

Attack on Damietta - image from British Library Royal MS 16 G VI

the city of Damietta. Louis ordered the ships to drop anchor and summoned all of his commanders for a meeting. It was decided that Damietta would be attacked first instead of Alexandria, but there was disagreement on whether or not they should wait for the rest of the scattered fleet to arrive before they made the assault. The French king decided that if he waited, the Muslims would be able to call in reinforcements, while his fleet would be exposed to another storm which could even do worse damage to his ships. So the orders went out that the attack would commence on the next day..

That day, June 5th, began with Louis rallying the men with this speech, recorded by Guy the knight: "My friends and faithful soldiers, we shall be invincible if we are inseparable in our love of one another. It is not without the divine permission that we have been brought here so quickly. I am neither the king of France nor the holy church, you are both. I am only a man whose life will end like other men's when it shall please God. Everything is in our favour, whatever may happen to us. If we are conquered, we shall be martyrs; if we triumph, the glory of God will be exalted thereby – that of all France, yes, even of Christianity, will be exalted thereby. Certainly it would be foolish to believe that God, who foresees all, has incited me in vain. This is His cause, we shall conquer for Christ, He will triumph in us, He will give the glory, the honour and blessing not unto us, but unto His name."

As the king inspired his men with this speech, four galleys sailed out from Damietta, probably attempting to see whether or not this fleet was their enemy. The Egyptian vessels approached tentatively, and once they knew that it was the Crusaders that had come, they turned around and headed back to Damietta. But Louis ordered his fastest ships to intercept them, and the four galleys were caught before they could reach the safety of the coast. The Crusaders began a fierce naval clash with the Muslims, firing their mangonels, which could hurl five or six stones with each shot, while at the same time shooting crossbow bolts and bottles filled with blinding lime at them. Three of the four Egyptian galleys were sunk, and the fourth barely escaped, despite being heavily damaged. The Crusaders fished some of the Muslim sailors out of the sea, but only so they could be torture them for information. The prisoners revealed some good news for the Crusaders – the main Muslim force was at Alexandria, where the attack had been expected.

Encouraged by what they had learnt, the Crusader fleet sailed out towards the beaches of Damietta. Although their larger ships could not move to close to the shoreline, since they would become lodged in the shallow waters, the Crusaders could use the smaller boats, which had been built in Cyprus over the winter just for this kind of

Crusaders could use the smaller boats, which had been built in Cyprus over the winter just for this kind of circumstance. These craft would be used to make a landing on the beaches, where the Egyptian armies awaited them, commanded by the Sultan's vizier Fakhr al-Din. John Sarrasin estimated that there were two thousand Egyptian cavalry, as well as many crossbowmen. Joinville thought the number of Muslims soldiers was more like six thousand. Regardless of the exact figure, it is clear that they were much smaller than the Crusader army. Still, the outcome could not be assured, as the Muslims had an advantage in that the Crusaders would be exposed and disorganized as they tried to come ashore.

Once the two sides were within bowshot of each other, the Crusader and Muslim crossbowmen opened fire, leaving John Sarrasin to remark that the arrows were coming in "so fast and so thick that it was a wonder to see." The Crusaders started to go down into the landing craft, and drag their horses into them as well. Some were so eager to get into the ships that they fell overboard and, weighed down by their armour, drowned. Other ships were so crowded that their crews feared that they would sink. A few of the larger Crusader vessels were also able to approach close enough to the shoreline for their men to land safely. Joinville recounts seeing the galley belonging to the Count of Jaffa, powered by three hundred oarsmen, racing towards the shore until it ploughed into the sands.

Meanwhile, the Muslim forces started massing along the shoreline, with some of their men actually wading into the sea to get closer to their enemies. The tension among these men as well as their enemies onboard the landing craft must have been close to unbearable. They would be hearing many noises – the Crusaders were playing drums and trumpets from their ships, while the Muslims sounded their horns in response; the firing and fall of hundreds of arrows, many of which would splash into the water; the wails and cries of the wounded and dying – all would intermingle with the shouts of men as they made orders or encouraged their men.

At last the Crusaders made their landing. As Guy the knight explained, "Immediately began a very cruel combat." Some of his fellow knights jumped off their landing craft, and started fighting with the Muslims while waist deep in water. The men from other ships were able to get on land before they were attacked. Joinville, for example, was able to get ashore with his men, but the Muslims quickly charged down on them. "As we saw them approach," he wrote, "we fixed the points of our shields into the sand and the shafts of our lances with the points towards the enemies; and when they saw that they were nicely set to pierce them through the belly they turned tail and fled."

The Crusader forces were landing on a wide area, and there were not enough Muslims to defend the whole beach. This allowed many of the Crusaders to get ashore unmolested and get into formations. King Louis watched as the first of his men got ashore and began fighting, but he would not sit idly be while his army fought for their survival. Despite the attempts of his servants to stop him, Louis took a lance and jumped off his ship and went into the water waist-deep. He was able to reach land safely, and there led his army in the battle. He would even have personally attacked the Muslim soldiers, but his followers physically held him back, fearing that all would be lost if their leader were killed or captured.

The battle for the beaches lasted several hours, from early morning to midday. The Muslim forces made several charges on the Crusaders, hoping to drive them back into the sea, but the Crusaders held their ground. As he saw his attacks fail and his force outnumbered, Fakhr al-Din decided he could not continue to defend the beach. He ordered his forces to retreat back towards Damietta.

The Crusaders watched as their enemies withdrew from the beach – Guy the knight and his companions wanted to pursue them, but their commanders ordered them to stay where they were, since they feared that it could have been an ambush. Instead, the Crusaders celebrated their victory and tended to their wounded. According to Jean Sarrasin the number of Muslim dead was close to five hundred, while only a few men on his side were slain. The only notable death among the Crusaders was that of Hugo Brun, the earl of March. According to Guy the knight, the earl "rashly rushed into the midst of the enemy," and was severely wounded. He died soon after the battle, from heavy blood loss. The recklessness of the earl and other Crusaders was a common theme in during this campaign, as it

the enemy," and was severely wounded. He died soon after the battle, from heavy blood loss. The recklessness of the earl and other Crusaders was a common theme in during this campaign, as it had been in other crusades. Religious fervour, disdain for the Muslim enemy, and the excitement of battle all would push Christian soldiers to risk their lives. Many of them believed that God would keep them safe, while others thought that if they were killed, they would become martyrs and go to heaven. As it will be seen, the boldness of Crusaders would lead to both great acts of courage and terrible losses.

Meanwhile, Fakhr al-Din and his forces continued to retreat. They did not even stop at Damietta, but continued on back towards Cairo. The soldiers inside Damietta, along with its few remaining residents, seeing that they would now face the Crusader army alone, decided to flee from the city during the night. A few Christians from the city, who had been captured years before and were serving as slaves in the city, also saw what was happening and ran out towards the Crusaders. Guy the Knight described how he saw these slaves "full of joy, rushed to meet us, applauding our king and his army, and crying 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'."

On the following day the Crusader army cautiously approached Damietta, not knowing what kind of resistance they would face. They were surprised to see that no one was stationed on its walls, and that its gates were wide open. Thinking that it was a trick to lure his troops in, Louis only sent a small force to reconnoitre the city, but they soon came back relating the good news – Damietta was empty and could be taken without a further blow. Louis and the rest of the Crusaders triumphantly marched into the city, finding only some native Christian residents and other slaves, some of whom said they had been held in servitude for over twenty-two years. More importantly, the Crusaders found a huge cache of food, weapons and supplies, which the Egyptians had carefully stored in case of a long siege.

The easy liberation of Damietta was seen as a great start for the Crusaders, especially since they all knew how the men of the Fifth Crusade took over a year to capture it, and only after the Muslim defenders ran out of food. The main mosque of the city was once again turned into a Christian church, and Louis and his men held a mass there, thanking God for this victory. Guy the Knight wrote that he felt that this turn of events was like a miracle, and he and the other men were certainly thinking that the conquest of the rest of Egypt would soon take place.

Meanwhile, Fakhr al-Din and the other soldiers from Damietta reached al-Salih Ayyub's camp, where they made their excuses about why they had lost the battle and the city. The sultan, bedridden and weak from his illness, was nevertheless enraged at what had happened, ridiculing Fakhr al-Din by asking, "were you not able to stand before the Franks for a single hour? " It looked as if he would order the vizier's execution, but the sultan decided it would be death for those who had been stationed in Damietta and had fled the city after the battle. These men pleaded to the al-Salih, saying "What did we do wrong? When all the Sultan's troops and amirs fled and burnt the arsenal, what could we do?" But the sultan did not listen to them, or to his own advisors who also beseeched him to be lenient, and dozens of soldiers were hanged.

Now holding an important stronghold, and with his army healthy and in high morale, Louis had to decide on what to do next. A bold option would be to continue his advance, and try to attack the Sultan's army or even march upon Cairo. But Louis displayed his cautious and meticulous way of thinking, and decided to remain at Damietta for the next few months. There was too major reasons for him to do so: first, the Nile river was about to undergo its annual flooding, a dangerous time for any army to be marching around; secondly, Louis was expecting that reinforcements, led by his brother Alphonse of Poitiers, would arrive soon and make his army even stronger.

The Crusaders set up a fortified camp outside of Damietta, while in the city itself, merchants, pilgrims and other people started to settle into the abandoned homes. This included Louis' wife, Margaret, who had become pregnant, and all the other noble women who were traveling with their husbands or other family.

For the next few months, the war progressed little, as both sides only made small-scale raids

little, as both sides only made small-scale raids against each other. The Muslim writers reported that Crusaders who were taken prisoner were being brought in groups to Cairo – on July 13th there arrived 36 prisoners, on the 18th another 39 were brought in, two days later 22 more, and so on. During one encounter, a group of Muslim cavalry approached the Crusader camp in hopes of provoking the Christians into battle. Jean de Joinville asked that he and his followers go out to fight the Muslims, but Louis ordered that no one was to leave the camp. Although Joinville listened to this command, another French noble, Walter of Antrenche, put on his armour, mounted his horse, and charged out of the camp to single-handedly fight the Muslims. Before he reached them, Walter was thrown from his horse and the Muslims attacked him, battering the fallen Crusader with maces. Several other knights came to the Walter's rescue, driving off the Muslims, but three days later Walter died from his wounds. Joinville writes that when the king heard of the nobleman's death, "he answered that he was glad that he had not a thousand such men, for they would want to act with his orders as this man had done."

This period also saw some victories for the Crusaders, some of which were due to the efforts of the English contingent under the command of William Longsword. According to Matthew Paris, William and his men were able to capture a small fort near Alexandria and take prisoner some wives of Egyptian nobles. According to the writer, this act only made the French troops jealous of the English, leading to complaints from both sides. Soon after, William discovered that a merchant caravan was traveling in the area and was lightly guarded. He gathered his fellow English crusaders and secretly set out at night from Damietta. The English were able to find the caravan and attack them, and quickly killed or took prisoner all the Muslims they found. The casualties among William's men were light, with only one knight and eight other soldiers killed. The Crusaders then brought the caravan back to Damietta, along with all of its valuable spoils, including gold, silver, and precious silks. Upon their return, the French nobles came to them and scolded William and the others for disobeying the king's orders by leaving Damietta without permission. They then took all of the plunder and distributed it among the whole army, which the English protested was theirs alone. The whole matter was brought before the French king, who tried to placate both sides. But his pleas to the English leader to accept the seizure of the plunder was met by scorn from William, who said to Louis, "you are not a king, as you cannot give justice to your people or punish offenders...henceforth I serve not such a king – to such a lord I will not adhere." The English crusaders then boarded a ship leaving Damietta and sailed to Acre, where they remained for at least two months. They would eventually return to Louis' army, but the bitterness between the English and French would not be patched up for the time being.

The Battle of Mansourah

The long-awaited arrival of Alphonse of Poitiers in late October 1249 ushered in a new phase to the crusade. With these reinforcements, and with the cooler winter season approaching, Louis decided he could now move forward with his army. Now the question was where to go – most of the nobles wanted to besiege the city of Alexandria, feeling if that they could capture it they would have a second port in their hands, making it easier for them to bring supplies in, while hurting the Egyptians' ability to get the same. But Robert, count of Artois, who was another brother of the king, argued that the crusaders should march to Cairo and battle the sultan. The way Robert put it, according to Joinville, was that if you want to kill a snake you must crush its head. Louis agreed with his brother's reasoning, and on November 20th he led his army and part of his fleet out of Damietta towards the city of Mansourah, where the sultan had massed his forces.

The Crusaders had only begun their march when their spies reported more good news – al-Salih Ayyub had finally died. His long illness had paralyzed the Egyptian army over the last few months, since they could not form a plan of action to deal with the Crusaders while their sultan remained bedridden. But now that he was dead, the situation became even more instable. Al-Salih's heir, Turan Shah, was stationed in the region of Jazira, which lies in northeastern Syria/northern Iraq. It would take months for him to be notified of his father's death and return to assume command.

To avoid any problems before Turan Shah's arrival, Fakhr al-Din and al-Salih's widow, Shajar ad-Durr, decided that they would try to conceal the death of the Sultan. The vizier would take charge of the Egyptian army, while Shajar and her officials would maintain that the sultan was still alive, but not well enough to meet with anyone. While the secret of the sultan's death seems to have leaked out, since even the Crusaders knew of the situation, Fahkr was able to keep the Egyptian army from breaking apart. He kept the army based at Mansourah, placing most of the army inside the city, while he stayed at a camp closer to the Nile.

The pace of the Crusader march up the Nile was very slow, largely because they had trouble crossing some of the smaller streams and canals that fed into the great river. Small-scale raids and attacks by their Muslim opponents added to their hindrances. Finally they reached the vicinity of Mansourah on December 21st, where they found Fakhr al-Din and the Egyptian army. Although the Crusaders were eager to attack Mansourah, they had to cross to the other side of the Nile to do so. The river was too deep and wide for them to ride their horses through it, and they did not have enough ships to allow the Crusaders to be ferried across it. Louis and his men also could not march further up the Nile, since the river split into two sections just a further bit upstream, with a large Egyptian fleet nearby that would prevent the Crusaders' ships from getting past them. It was also too dangerous for the Crusaders to simply wait on their side of the river, since they would be exposed to Muslim attacks on them and their supply-lines.

The first choice for the Crusaders was to try building a bridge or causeway across the river, and then use this to bring the troops to the other side. Teams of men were selected to carry earth and stones to the riverbank, while two large fortified towers, called cats, were built to protect these men. Fakhr al-Din was able to see what the Crusaders were trying to do, and had sixteen siege engines, such as trebuchets and mangonels, placed on his side of the river, and had them and his archers fire at the two towers. The Crusaders, not to be outdone, also built eighteen siege engines and had them attack the Muslim mangonels.
After a couple weeks of sometimes intense stone throwing and arrow fire, the Muslims brought in their most dangerous weapon. A trebuchet that could throw naphtha, or Greek Fire as the Crusaders called it, was brought forward and began assaulting the towers. Naphtha is a colourless flammable liquid, derived from oil, which had been widely used in Middle Eastern warfare since the early Middle Ages. The liquid would be poured into clay pots, which then could be fired by a catapult. When it landed, this bomb would explode, causing a great amount of destruction. One historian has described it as "something between a Molotov cocktail and a crude hand grenade." Jean de Joinville, who spent some of his time guarding the towers, gives a vivid description of what it was like to be attacked by this weapon: "it came straight at you, as big as a vinegar barrel, with a tail of fire behind it as long as a spear. It made such noise as it came that it seemed like the thunder of heaven; it looked like a dragon flying through the air. It gave so intense a light that in the camp you could see as clearly by daylight in the great mass of flames which illuminated everything."

Despite the valiant efforts of the Crusaders to put out any fires caused by the naphtha, the two towers were burnt to ashes. A third tower was then built, but this lasted only a short while before it suffered the same fate as its predecessors. By this point the causeway was far from being completed – although the Crusaders were able to build it a long way into the river, the Muslims on the other side dug away at their own bank, thus widening it. Eventually Louis saw the futility in continuing this approach, and looked for another way to get across the Nile.

During this whole time, several small battles and skirmishes were fought, with both sides having their wins and losses. The Egyptians, who knew their native soil well, used this advantage to secretly cross the Nile and make surprise attacks on the Crusader camp. After one engagement they were able to capture sixty-seven Christians, including three Templars. During another battle, the Muslim sources reported that their forces were able to kill forty knights, although the Crusader sources related that they defeated this Muslim attack and made them suffer higher casualties. There were even some very small-scale attacks: Ibn Wasil wrote of how one Muslim soldier hollowed out a melon and put his head

Battle of Mansourah - image from British Library Royal MS 16 G VI

scale attacks: Ibn Wasil wrote of how one Muslim soldier hollowed out a melon and put his head in it. He then went into the river, and swam towards the Crusader side. The Crusaders only thought that it was a melon floating down the river, and one of them went into the water to retrieve it. He must have been quite surprised when the Muslim came out of the water, seized him, and dragged him back to his own side.

All of these attacks were slowly, but surely, diminishing the Crusader army. The Egyptians had enough reserves to overcome the loss of some of its men, but Louis could not rely on any more reinforcements arriving from Europe. If he allowed this war of attrition to continue, it would only be a matter of time before he would be defeated. The solution was to get his army across the river and engage the Egyptian army in battle – and if he won, he could conquer the country all the way to Cairo. Although his plan to build a causeway had failed, a new opportunity suddenly presented itself. Several Muslim soldiers had deserted to the Christian side over the last several weeks. One of them, a Bedouin, revealed that he knew of a secret ford where the river could be crossed, and he would show it to the Crusaders for a payment of five hundred bezants (a small fortune). Louis agreed to this condition, and plans were made for a secret crossing to be made on the following day.

The operation began in the early hours of February 8th, 1250, either at dawn or just before it. Part of the Crusader force, including all of the infantry would remain behind at the camp, since only those on horseback could cross the river. Louis and the rest of the army made their way to the ford, which was guarded by only a few men (who promptly fled once they saw the Crusaders coming across). The French king gave strict orders that the entire force was to remain together, and not leave to attack the enemy on their own. The Templars would be the first to cross the river, followed Louis' brother Robert, count of Artois, the English knights led by William Longsword, and a contingent of mounted crossbowmen. These forces were given the task of seizing a nearby bridge that was occupied by a couple hundred Muslim troops, and then wait there until the rest of the Crusader army had safely crossed the river. As the soldiers and their mounts began to traverse the ford, they realized that this would be a very difficult crossing, as the water was deeper than the Bedouin had said, and the banks on both sides were high and muddy. Joinville

were high and muddy. Joinville noted that some of the riders drowned as they attempted the crossing, and another writer added that among the Crusaders "there was not one of them, however good his horse, who was not in great fear of drowning before he got across."

Once they reached the other side, Robert of Artois and the Templars quickly routed the Muslim defenders at the bridge. But then they decided not to wait for the rest of the army, but rode out towards the Muslim camp outside of Mansourah. They were able to surprise the camp completely, with many of the Egyptian soldiers still asleep. The Crusaders charged into the tents and began slaughtering everyone they came across, including women and children. The cruelty of the attack even affected the writer of the Rothelin Continuation who noted "it was indeed sad to see so many dead bodies and so much blood spilt, except that they were enemies of the Christian faith."

According to Ibn Wasil, Fakhr al-Din was in the camp, washing himself in a bath, when he heard the shouts and cries of the attack. Fakhr hastily got on a horse, without even putting on armour, and went with a few men to go and see what was happening. But before he could get very far, a band of Templars attacked his party, and those with Fakhr fled. The Templars gathered around the amir, and the Muslim commander was pierced in his side by a spear, and then finished off by the Crusaders' swords.

So far the battle had gone amazingly well for the Crusaders, even though the advance units had disregarded Louis' careful plan. The Muslims had been taken completely by surprise, and their leader was now dead. Pigeons were being sent back to Cairo with messages revealing the dire straits the Egyptians were in. When they arrived in the city, the people began panicking, fearing that the Crusaders would be marching on them within days.

What happened next was the turning point of the battle, and perhaps of the entire crusade. Having shattered the Muslims at the camp, Robert of Artois demanded that they continue the attack into the city of Mansourah, where the bulk of the Egyptian forces were stationed. The Grand Master of the Templars tried to persuade him not to go there, but instead attack the Muslim siege engines that had caused so much damage to the Crusader camp. Hearing this, one of Robert's knights cried out, "There now, there's wolf's fur in that!" a reference to the old tale of a wolf in sheep's clothing. The knight added, "If the Templars and Hospitallers and the men who lived here really wanted it, the land would have been conquered long ago."

Another of Robert's men said to the count, "My lord, don't you see that the Turks are beaten and running? Won't it be wicked and cowardly if we don't pursue our enemies?" Robert agreed, and told the Templar commander that he should stay behind if he was so scared of the Muslims.
"My lord," the Templar answered, "neither I nor my brothers are afraid. We shall not stay behind, we shall ride with you. But let me tell you that none of us expect to come back, neither you nor ourselves." Just then, a group of messengers arrived from the king, demanding that Robert wait until the rest of the army had caught up to them. The count again disregarded orders, saying that the Muslims were beaten and he could not wait.

Robert then led his knights towards the city, and they charged through the gates, killing anyone who got in their way. Although their mounts must have been tiring by this point, the Crusaders continued to press them as they raced towards the Sultan's palace. Ibn Wasil called this "the moment of supreme danger" for the Egyptians, with many of its soldiers and officials already fleeing the city.

It was at this critical moment that Robert of Artois and the other Crusaders reached the palace, but there they found themselves face-to-face with the Bahriyya and the Jamdariyya, the elite Mamluk troops, who according to some sources was led by Baybars. The Mamluks charged the Crusaders and the two sides smashed into each other. Robert and his men fell back, and then broke apart as they were repelled by this assault. Only then did the Crusaders realize the folly of their attack – for in urban warfare the advantage always lies with the defender. As they retreated, the Crusaders found themselves divided into small groups, all of whom were lost in a maze of narrow streets and alleys. The Muslims now climbed up onto the roofs of their houses, and

roofs of their houses, and threw stones down onto the Crusaders. Many of the crusaders tried to escape, but the Mamluks quickly caught these small groups and destroyed them.

With his men now routed and being slaughtered, Robert of Artois saw no hope in continuing the fight and tried to flee. According to Matthew Paris, who gave the English point-of-view of these events, Robert saw William Longsword and his men surrounded by the enemy and called out to him, "William, God fights against us – we can no longer resist! Seek your safety by flight, and escape while your horse can bear you away, or you may begin to want to do so when you have not the means."

William continued to fight, and shouted back, "God forbid that my father's son should flee from any Saracen! I would rather die happily than live unhappily." Robert continued his getaway, but he came to a river, either the Nile or a smaller stream, and tried to traverse it. By now his horse must have been exhausted, and is it got halfway across it fell and through its rider into the water. Robert, with all his armour weighing him down, sank to the bottom and drowned.
Very few of the Crusaders who entered Mansourah would escape from it. William Longsword and his men kept up their fight, but soon he and all his men, except for one knight, were dead. The Templars too, suffered huge loses, for 280 of them were killed in the city, with just four or five escaping. According to Joinville, over three hundred knights were killed, while Ibn Wasil figures that the Crusaders' total loss was closer to 1500 (some of the discrepancy between these two numbers may be because Joinville did not consider the deaths of the squires and other mounted soldiers to be worth mentioning).

As the lead group of Crusaders was being annihilated in the streets of Mansourah, King Louis and the rest of his army had successfully crossed the Nile and were making their way to the Muslim camp. As they reached the camp, they found that the Muslim cavalry had regrouped and was now charging down on them. Joinville writes that as he tried to come to the aid of one his men, his own horse was struck by a lance and as it fell to its knees the rider was thrown off. More Muslim cavalry attacked him and his comrades, knocking Joinville to the ground again, and even trampling him. Fortunately, Joinville gathered his few soldiers, some on horse and others on foot, and got them to take shelter in the ruins of a house. There the Muslims surrounded them, and a bloody fight took place where the Crusaders desperately tried to hold them off. One of the knights had a sword cut into his face, leaving his nose hanging over his lips; another had blood pouring out of his body from a wound between his shoulders. Finally one knight mounted his horse and escaped by charging through the Muslim soldiers. He soon returned with reinforcements who were able to drive off the Muslims and rescue Joinville and the others.

By this point, it is difficult to figure out what was taking place on the battlefield, as it seems that fighting was taking place in several areas at the same time. Louis was receiving word that his brother and the other Crusaders were trapped in Mansourah, so he sent some of his men in a failed effort to relieve them. Meanwhile, the French king led the rest of his army towards the battery of siege machines that the Egyptians had placed along the Nile. Louis was probably hoping that he could get close enough to his own camp that it would allow the soldiers still there to try to cross the river and help them in the fight.

By now the battle was becoming a disaster for the Crusaders. They had no crossbowmen or archers in their ranks, for they had all been killed at Mansourah or were on the other side of the river in the Crusader camp. This allowed the Muslim archers to fire unopposed at the Crusaders, causing scores of men and horses to be wounded or killed. Joinville states that five arrows hit him and fifteen more struck his horse. The Crusader cavalry tried made charge after charge against the Muslim archers, but this would only scatter the archers for a few minutes. Although things looked bleak for the Crusaders, one French count joked with Joinville, saying "Seneschal, let these curs howl; by God's bonnet you and I shall yet talk in ladies' chambers of this day's work."

The battle at the riverbank lasted for several hours, but the Crusaders were able to hold off the repeated Muslim attacks and endure the withering arrow fire. As they did this, those

Crusaders who were left behind at their own camp were hastily building a bridge using the unfinished causeway. As sunset arrived the bridge was completed, allowing the rest of the crossbowmen to come to the aid of the Crusader cavalry. Once the Muslims saw these reinforcements they broke off their attack and returned to Mansourah.

As night brought calm to the battlefield, Louis and the other Crusaders could now think about what had occurred. Henry of Ronnay, a Hospitaller who was one of the few men to escape from the city of Mansourah, said to Louis, "Ah, your Majesty, take comfort in that thought that no King of France has gained such honour as you have today. For, in order to fight your enemies, you swam across a river, to rout them utterly and drive them from the field. Besides this, you have captured their machines, and also their tents, in which you will be sleeping tonight." The king mumbled back that God should be praised for all that he had given him, but everyone could see that "big tears began to fall from his eyes", as Louis thought of his own brother and the other brave men who had died that day.

Louis may not have realized it at the time, but this battle was an enormous blow for the Crusaders. While they could claim that they had won the day, since they were able to cross over the Nile and capture the Muslim siege machines, they failed to take Mansourah. More importantly, the destruction of their advance force under Robert of Artois was a disaster for the Crusader army, since they had lost their best troops and suffered so many casualties that it would be impossible for Louis to have enough men to capture Mansourah or even continue with his campaign. The recklessness and arrogance of the Crusaders, which had before caused the deaths of Hugo Brun and Walter of Antrenche, now took the life of the king's brother and jeopardized the war for Louis.

Destruction of the Crusader Army

There would be little time for the Crusaders to dwell on what had happened at Mansourah. Knowing that the Egyptians would resume the battle on the next morning, Louis had all the captured siege machines disassembled, and used their pieces to construct a stockade around the Crusader army. The hurried fortifications were soon put to the test, as the Egyptian army made repeated attacks against it, although they were not able to break the Crusader defences. After several days of fighting, the number of dead was so great that corpses were clogging the rivers and putrefying the air. Louis ordered a hundred men to clear away all of these corpses – the Muslim dead were thrown into the Nile so they could drift downstream, while the bodies of the Crusaders were buried in mass graves.

It may have been prudent for the Crusaders to retreat back to Damietta at this time, but Louis decided to keep his army where it was. Perhaps he thought they could remain there and hold off the Muslims until reinforcements joined them – their earlier victories had encouraged more Europeans to take the vow and go to Egypt. But Louis may have also been in denial about the difficulties he was in, or he could not bear to retreat after coming so close to defeating the Muslim enemy.

Meanwhile, the Egyptians were busy themselves. First, Turan Shah arrived in the country on February 28th. The death of al-Salih Ayyub was officially announced, and his son was now made the new Sultan. Secondly, and more importantly, a secret plan was set in motion that would prove to be the downfall of the Crusader army. The Muslims had many of their ships dismantled, and then clandestinely carried them in pieces on the backs of camels to a point on the Nile between Mansourah and Damietta. After these ships were rebuilt, the Muslims attacked and devastated a Crusader fleet that was carrying supplies from Damietta to the main army. Ibn Wasil reported that fifty-two Crusader ships were captured in this operation, with over a thousand sailors taken prisoner.

More significantly, the Crusaders' supply-line was now severed. The Crusaders relied on their fleet to bring them reinforcements, information from abroad, and most importantly, all the food and other supplies needed by the army. It seems strange that the French king, whose main characteristic was his fixation with proper preparations, would be so unprepared for this Muslim attack on his ships.

Without fresh food, the Crusaders had to rely on salted meat. The result was that many of the soldiers in Crusader camp were sickened by scurvy, a disease common among the crews of early modern ships. It is basically caused by the lack of vitamin C in a person's diet, occurring if they do not eat fresh fruits or vegetables. Joinville called it "camp fever", and said it "caused the flesh on our legs to dry up completely and the skin to become covered with black and earth-coloured spots, just like an old boot. When we caught the disease the flesh of our gums began to rot away. Nobody recovered from it, and it was always fatal."

Louis attempted to negotiate a truce with the Muslims, suggesting that they would surrender Damietta in return for Jerusalem, but this proposal was turned down. A second Crusader fleet was sent up the Nile to bring food to the army, but it too was intercepted and destroyed. Joinville now wrote that the "epidemic in the camp began to grow worse; our men so much dead flesh on their gums that the barbers had to remove it to enable them to chew food and swallow. It was most pitiful to hear all over the camp the moans of men from whom the dead flesh was being cut away, for they moaned just like women in the pains of childbirth."

Louis, who was also suffering from dysentery, finally decided that it would be hopeless for his army to remain where they were, and ordered the retreat back to Damietta. If all went well, the Crusaders could reach this city within eight days. On April 5th, the Crusaders began their withdrawal, with many of the sick soldiers having to be taken by ship. This fleet would move back down the Nile River, while the soldiers traveling by land would remain close by, so that they could be assistance if necessary. Although very sick, Louis refused to be taken on board one of the ships. His brother the Count of Anjou bluntly told him that his obstinacy was slowing down the army, to which the King replied, "if you think I am burden to you, get rid of me; but I will never leave my people."

But it was already too late for the Crusaders to escape. The Egyptian forces quickly caught up to them, and began to rout the Christians on both land and on the river. Jean de Joinville had developed scurvy and was too weak to travel by land, so he and his remaining men were sailing down the river with the other ships. The Muslims attacked them from the riverbank, showering the vessels with burning arrows. Joinville's men draped a hauberk over their leader to protect him from the arrows. Meanwhile, the pace of the retreating fleet was too slow, since the winds were against them, and the Muslims began to capture the ships. Joinville saw that his fellow Crusaders were being killed and thrown overboard, and that nothing could now be done to save them. He asked his knights and men whether they should surrender to the Muslim soldiers on the riverbank, or to those on the galleys that were chasing them. The soldiers all agreed that it would be better to surrender to the galleys, since they stood a better chance of being kept together as prisoners. One of Joinville's servants disagreed with this surrender, saying, "I think that we should all allow ourselves to be killed and thus we shall all go to Paradise." Joinville wrote, "we paid no attention to him."

As Joinville and the other Crusaders on the ships were being taken prisoner, their comrades traveling by land were faring no better. The main body of troops were surrounded near Fariskur and attacked, when a soldier named Marcel began shouting, "My Lords, knights, surrender yourselves, for it is the King's order, and do not cause the King to be slain!" The Crusaders believed him, and they all surrendered.

Marcel was actually lying, probably thinking it would save his own life, for Louis had not given this order. He and the men with him and had taken control of a small village, but by now Louis' sickness was so severe that he could no longer travel. The king was taken into a house and put into bed, while his men protected him. Another attempt was made to get a truce with the Muslims, promising them that they would unconditionally leave Egypt, but once it was learned that the main army had surrendered all negotiations ended and the French king was himself taken prisoner.

Louis IX ill and captured - image from British Library Royal MS 16 G VI

The Fight for Egypt

Only a very small number of men and ships were able to get back to Damietta and report on the fall of the Crusader army. Panic soon spread through the city, with many people thinking that they should abandon the city. Queen Margaret prevented this from happening, knowing that the city was the only bargaining chip that could be used to negotiate the release of her husband. It was at this time that she gave birth to a son, who was named John Tristan.

Meanwhile, the Muslims began to sort out their prisoners, which Joinville estimated to be at least ten thousand men. Those who were too sick or weak were killed, while the rest were taken back to Mansourah. Louis was able to recover from his illness, and made a good impression on his captors as an intelligent and sensible man. Ibn Wasil wrote that someone said to Louis, "How could it have come into the mind of a man as perspicacious and judicious as the King to entrust himself thus to the sea on a fragile piece of wood, to launch himself into a Muslim country defended by numerous armies and to expose himself and his troops to an almost certain death?" Louis smiled, but said nothing, so the Muslim continued: "One of our religious scholars thinks that anyone who exposes himself and his belongings twice to the sea must be considered as mad and that his testimony can no longer be accepted in law." The French king smiled again and replied, "He who said that was right."

The option of killing Louis and the other prisoners was only briefly considered by the Egyptians, but dismissed on the reasoning that the French king's execution would provoke the rest of Europe's rulers to go to war. Turan Shah originally wanted Louis to surrender fortresses in the Holy Land in exchange for his release, but the captive explained that legally these places were either under the jurisdiction of the Holy Roman Emperor or the Templars and Hospitallers, so he had no ability to trade them as a ransom. Instead, the French king insisted that his own ransom would be the return of Damietta, while the rest of the Christian prisoners would be freed in exchange for a payment of 500 000 livre tournois. The Sultan agreed to these terms, but then generously decreased the payment to 400 000.

As matters were being settled between Turan Shah and the Crusaders, new events threatened to undue the agreement. Unbeknownst to Louis and the Crusaders, a serious dispute had emerged between the new Sultan and the Mamluks. Turan Shah never got along with his father, and his enmity extended to the Mamluk soldiers who served al-Salih Ayyub. Showing that he was ungrateful for the victory that these troops had just given him, the new Sultan started to purge the Mamluks from their important positions, and gave them to his own followers, who Ibn al-Furat described as being "the lowest of the low." It also looked as if he would soon get rid of the Mamluks permanently. While he was drunk, Turan Shah would use his sword to cut off the tops of candles, and then say, "Thus I will treat the Bahriyya." Meanwhile, the Mamluks were not very impressed with their new Sultan either. Being men trained for war, they valued strength and courage highly, and saw little of that in Turan Shah. One writer said that he "did not think of mounting a horse to enter the battle, he rather sailed in a boat as a spectator."

The sultan may have been able to regain the trust of his troops had he not made another enemy by threatening his mother-in-law, Shajar ad-Durr. Once he reached Egypt, Turan wrote to her demanding that she return any of his father's money or jewels that she had in her possession. The lady went to the Mamluk commanders and appealed for their help.

In late April, Turan Shah was leading his army and the captives towards Damietta, in order to retake possession of the city. They stopped at Fariskur, where a large wooden tower was built next to the Sultan's tent. On the morning of May 2nd, a banquet was held in the tent, and as everyone was leaving, someone (some sources say it was Baybars) came at the Turan Shah with a sword. The blow came down, but the Sultan got his hand up to block it, although this cost him some of his fingers. As the servants flocked around Turan, the attacker fled. One of the men said, "it must have been an Assassin," but the Sultan replied, "No, it was a Bahriyya who did this to me. By God, I shall not spare any of them."

Assassination of Turan Shah. Image from Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, Vie de Saint Louis - BNF Français 5716 fol. 128

As a surgeon came to sew up the wound, word of the failed attack reached the Mamluk commanders, who said to one another, "Finish him off, or he will destroy you." They then drew their swords and went after the Sultan, who had fled into the wooden tower. The Mamluks surrounded the tower, and used fiery arrows to set it ablaze. As more soldiers from the Egyptian army had arrived on the scene, Turan Shah ran out of the burning tower, and was almost felled by a spear. The Sultan ran into the Nile, and standing in the river's shallows, he pleaded for his life: "I do not want to rule. Let me go back to Hisn Kaifa. O Muslims, is there not one of you who will do me a kindness and protect me?" Although there were hundreds, if not thousands, of men on hand, not one came to his aid. A Mamluk officer named Faris al-Din Aqtay jumped into the river and used his sword to end Turan Shah's reign and life. His body was left forsaken next to the burnt tower for three days, until the Caliph's ambassador to Egypt had it retrieved and buried.

The French king and Joinville were also present at this killing, and believed that the Mamluks would be the next to die. But to their relief, the Mamluks decided to honor the original agreement. On May 6th, Damietta was given back to Muslim control, and half of the ransom money was delivered. Louis and many of his men were then freed, and were taken by ship to Acre. Once he reached friendly shores, the French king was convinced that he had to stay in the Kingdom of Jerusalem for the immediate future for two reasons: first, it was a priority for him to obtain the release of the thousands of Crusaders still held in Egyptian jails, and secondly, to make sure that the Crusader states were protected in case the Mamluks or other Muslim enemies tried to invade. The loss of hundreds of Templars, Hospitallers and other soldiers during the Egyptian campaign had left many Christian areas poorly defended, so it was essential for Louis and many of his men to remain in Outremer until the situation stabilized.

News of the Crusaders' disaster soon reached the rest of Europe, probably coming as a shock to anyone who heard it. Many had thought that victory was assured after learning about the capture of Damietta; it was hardly believable that the French army would be completely defeated and that its king would become a prisoner of the Muslims. Soon, people were looking to find someone to blame for this tragedy. Matthew Paris wrote that Louis himself was responsible for the defeat, because he used his army to invade Egypt rather than go straight to Jerusalem and liberate those lands instead. Others would fault the king's brother, Robert of Artois, for his selfish charge that brought about his death and turned the battle at Mansourah. The strangest reaction was that of the peasantry from northern France and Flanders. With the encouragement of rogue preachers and self-appointed leaders, these peasants gathered by the thousands in order to go on Crusade themselves. Known as the Pastoureaux, they believed that they would be able to succeed where their knights and lords had failed. In reality, they were little more than a giant mob, ravaging the country as they headed south, causing trouble for local lords. Sometimes these peasants were openly hostile to clerics and nobles, and they also made attacks on any Jewish people they found, accusing them of somehow assisting the Muslims. After a couple months of causing trouble, the French government sent their troops against the Pastoureaux, breaking up the group and arresting its leaders. Some of the peasants did actually reach the port of Aigues-Mortes, and may have sailed to the Holy Land to join their king.

Meanwhile, the Mamluks had more important things do than worry about ransom payments for prisoners. Their coup d'état had left Egypt without a ruler, and no one existed who held a clear right to its throne. The first solution was to give power to Shajar al-Durr, the widow of al-Salih Ayyub, making her the first female ruler of Egypt since Cleopatra. While some historians have portrayed Shajar as a mere pawn being used by the Mamluks, it was more likely that she was an important player in these events. She was well-respected by the Mamluks, partly because she, like them, was originally a Turkish slave. Furthermore, she had been with al-Salih for many years, even when he was imprisoned. It would have been very interesting to see how she would have governed, but it soon became clear that the rest of the Islamic world would not accept this situation. The Caliph of Baghdad sent word that he would be sending his own candidate to take over Egypt, while various Syrian leaders were also claiming to be the new sultan. The Mamluk leaders met again and decided that Shajar would marry a Mamluk who would become the defacto ruler of Egypt and commander of its army. But there was still a lot of uncertainty on who would take this position. After two men turned down an offer to become the ruler, the Mamluks decided to give it to a largely unknown, middle-ranking officer named 'Izz al-Din Aybeg. He may have been given this position because the other Mamluks felt that he could easily be removed if necessary. His weakness

could be seen five days later, when a group of Bahriyya Mamluks led by Faris al-Din Aqtay forced Aybeg to accept a six-year old grandson of al-Salih Ayyub as the sultan. Of course, the boy would be the ruler in name only, and Aybeg would retain all of his powers, but for some Mamluks it was important to have an Ayyubid on the throne.

As the Mamluks were just beginning to achieve stability for their regime, a new danger had emerged which threaten to end their rule. The death of Turan Shah also left most of Syria without its ruler, but this void was soon filled by al-Nasir Yusuf, ruler of Aleppo and former ally of al-Salih Ayyub. Al-Nasir was a young ruler, only about twenty-years old at this time, but for many Syrians he was seen as the leader of the future, the one who could unite the Ayyubids and restore Muslim rule over all the Middle East. Having a lineage that included being the great-grandson of Saladin further added to the young ruler's reputation, despite the fact that he was still very much untested when it came to war. He gained his first success when his forces captured Damascus in July of 1250, but this was done without having to lay siege to its garrison, who for the most part welcomed him without a fight. During the rest of the summer he consolidated his hold over rest of Syria and prepared for an invasion of Egypt. By December, al-Nasir had assembled a large army that included troops from all the major cities of Syria, as well as groups of Mamluks. The Syrian leader also tried to persuade the Crusaders to support his attack on Egypt, offering to return Jerusalem to them once he achieved victory, but Louis declined the offer, citing the fact that he had made a truce with the Egyptians and they were still holding thousands of Christian prisoners who would be killed if the Crusaders attacked them. Although disappointed, al-Nasir believed that he could still defeat the Mamluks, who were still very much divided and unsure about their takeover of Egypt.

As the Syrian army crossed into Egyptian territory, Aybeg gathered his own forces and set out to meet his enemies near the town of al-Salihiyya, which lies on the eastern edge of the Nile delta. On the dawn of February 3, 1251, the two armies found each other near the village of Kura, with the battle beginning soon after. Al-Nasir was placed well to the rear of his army, where he would be protected by his Mamluk troops, while his top general, Shams al-Din Lu'lu, commanded the Syrian cavalry. Shams led a charge against the Mamluk troops, who went into retreat almost immediately. It seemed that the battle was over before it had even started, with most of the Egyptian force fleeing back to Cairo, with the Syrians in pursuit. As his army fled, Aybeg, Faris al-Din Aqtay and the 300 troops with them, decided to escape by heading eastwards to the castle of Shawbak. As they rode away, Aybeg spotted the small force of al-Nasir Yusuf, and he decided to make a brash charge at the Syrian leader. At this critical moment, al-Nasir's bravery failed him, and he fled in a panic. His own Mamluk guard, disgusted by this display of cowardice, immediately switched sides and fought with Aybeg. Al-Nasir's followers were the captured or killed, although al-Nasir himself managed to escape. To make matters worse for the Syrians, Shams al-Din Lu'lu had returned from his pursuit of the Mamluk army only to be captured and executed by Aybeg.

Meanwhile, the victorious Syrian army had regrouped near Cairo and was now waiting for their leader to arrive before they would march on the undefended Egyptian capital. But once they learned of the debacle at the battlefield, the army decided to return home, thus sparing the fledgling Mamluk principality. Al-Nasir's glorious chance to become master of both Syria and Egypt was now gone, as was much of his own prestige, because of his cowardly retreat.

The war between with Syria and Egypt would continue for two more years, but with little actual fighting. Both sides tried to make an alliance with Louis and the Crusaders, in which they promised that Jerusalem and other parts of the Holy Land would be given back to Christian control. But in the end, the Caliph of Baghdad mediated a peace agreement between Aybeg and al-Nasir, and Louis lost his last opportunity to salvage his crusade.

Once the threat by al-Nasir had come to an end, Aybeg decided it was time for him to secure his own rule over Egypt. In 1254 he invited his rival Aqtay, who earlier had forced him to accept al-Salih Ayyub's grandson as sultan, to his palace for consultations. Once Aqtay arrived he was met by Aybeg's personal Mamluks, led by Qutuz. They overpowered Aqtay, executed him and threw his head thrown over the palace wall to his followers. The other Bahriyya took flight and escaped Egypt, scattering themselves into service of other Muslim lords. Baybars went with about seven hundred other men to Syria, where they joined the army of al-Nasir Yusuf. Meanwhile Aybeg, now free of enemies, used this time to depose the child sultan and assume the title for himself. However, his rule did not last very long - three years later, Shajar al-Durr learned that Aybeg was going to replace her with a new wife, convinced two palace servants to stab the sultan to

with a new wife, convinced two palace servants to stab the sultan to death while be was bathing. This act only brought vengeance from Qutuz and the other Mamluks in the personal service of Aybeg. To avenge their fallen leader, they revolted and took power for themselves. Aybeg's murderers were crucified, and Shajar was beaten to death with wooden clogs after which her corpse was thrown into the palace's moat. The sultanate was passed down to Aybeg's young son, al-Mansur 'Ali, but the real power was put into the hands of Qutuz. By now, a clear pattern was emerging in Mamluk politics: it would be very violent, with only the strongest (or most cunning) being able to hold power. One medieval Egyptian writer called it the Law of the Turks: "He who kills the king is the king."

While the leaders of the Muslim nations were occupied with their own struggles, Louis was spending his time renewing the small Crusader kingdoms. The king negotiated truces with his Muslim neighbors, and used his remaining money to rebuild or strengthen the fortifications of Acre and the other important cities. He finally sailed for France in the spring of 1254, leaving behind a permanent contingent of one hundred knights, who would work to protect the Holy Land from future attacks. These troops, who were fully funded by the French king, would become a very useful force in the campaigns and battles yet to come.

When the king returned to France, he was a great deal different from the one who had left it six years earlier. Louis was convinced that the failure of the invasion, and his own capture, was the result of his own sins. It was as if God had divinely punished him and his people for their lack of true piety. If the Holy Land was to be regained, more had to be done to make the Crusaders worthy and pure. This meant changes to make the government more honest and just, as well as new laws to prohibit vices: gambling and dice were banned, prostitutes were expelled from cities and towns, and campaigns were launched to destroy all heretics.

Louis also changed his personal life to show penitence and regain virtue. Instead of wearing silks, he donned simple clothing. Rather than sleep on a pleasant feathered bed, the king would lie on a wooden board covered only with a cotton mattress. At one point he was going to renounce his crown and enter a monastery, but was talked out of doing so. But in the years to come, the king of France would prepare himself and his people for the next Crusade to liberate Jerusalem and the Holy Land. In time, Louis would get a second chance.

Louis IX leaving Egypt - image from British Library Royal MS 16 G VI

Accessus: Where Premodern Meets Hypermodern

By Danièle Cybulskie

The most exciting new scholarship often occurs at the crossroads of many different disciplines, and on the frontiers of new technology. This is the philosophy behind *Accessus: A Journal of Premodern Literature and New Media*, a free online publication sponsored by The Gower Project. *Accessus* looks at Western European literature written before 1660 CE, especially that of John Gower, in a way that "challenges academic borderlines, binaries, and traditional ways of thinking" (Introduction, p.1). Instead of the standard, paper format, Accessus' articles include hyperlinks, pictures, videos, and other various types of new media, allowing contributors the freedom to share more than just words, and greatly expanding the potential for discussion and further scholarship.

While the work of John Gower is a major focus of the journal, even if you've never heard of Gower before *Accessus* offers a wide range of related topics to pique your interest. A quick glance at the "Most Popular Papers" on the website reveals a range of topics from lawyers, to disability in Lancastrian England, to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight in performance, all of which are available free for anyone to download. One of Accessus' founders and co-editors, Eve Salisbury, believes this open format is the journal's great strength. "The most exciting thing about Accessus," she says, "is that it is accessible to independent scholars, nonaffiliated faculty, and graduate students around the world." Based in Kalamazoo, Michigan, *Accessus* has already attracted the notice of readers from as far away as Bangladesh and Bosnia, and its popularity is growing.

In order to ensure good quality scholarship, *Accessus* peer reviews all of its articles, so it's an excellent and reliable source of information for researchers and casual readers alike. Because of its rigorous review process, Accessus is also a good place for premodern scholars to publish new and interesting work. Its biannual format means that original scholarship is available frequently, and you can sign up for email or RSS notifications to make sure you don't miss out on new editions or announcements.

Anyone interested in premodern literature or culture, especially the work of John Gower, should check out Accessus for a new look at how traditional scholarship and new media can work together to push the boundaries of how we look at the past. For more information, or to submit an article, visit the **Accessus website**.

Medieval Articles

The Tercentenary of the Four Masters of Ireland

By James Kenney

Canadian Catholic Historical Association Report, Vol.12 (1944-45)

Abstract: Ireland is the end of the world. Such was the accepted belief of the Middle Ages. Beyond was the expanse of the Great Ocean, which encompassed the habitable world. Of course the existence of Iceland, or Ultima Thule, was known to geographers and to fishermen who went there to catch cod-fish, and some doubtless had heard of a colony of Norsemen still farther in the depths of the Arctic in a land called Greenland, and in the wealth of European stories and legends were many of the mythical, or semi-mythical, Vinland, and Hy-Brasil, and St. Brendan's Isle, and the Isle of the Seven Cities. But for practical purposes of everyday knowledge and intercourse Ireland was the western limit of human habitation. St. Patrick was impressed with this fact, and especially with the realization that he himself had preached the Gospel of Christ right out to the lands overlooking the Western Sea, the limits beyond which no man dwelt.

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The Middle Ages on the block: animals, Guilds and meat in the medieval period

By Krish Seetah

Breaking and Shaping Beastly Bodies: Animals as Material Culture in the Middle Ages, edited by Aleksander Pluskowski (Oxbow Books, 2007)

Abstract: Understanding the place of butchery in the medieval period requires a more in depth appraisal of the place of animals in medieval English culture. Fortunately, this period is perhaps one of the most interesting in terms of the lines of information available for this assessment. The rich historical evidence has led to research detailing the manufacture and uses of tools; the animals acquired and eaten in a number of different social contexts and accounts relating to the organisation of butchery.

From artist sources it would appear that animals played an integral part in medieval society with fauna portrayed in an array of genres. This ranges from depictions of animals within everyday settings, in some instances showing slaughter and processing of common domestic species, to the more fantastical. What is perhaps most remarkable is the sheer magnitude of illustrations and illuminations that have some faunal component included, many of which depict imaginary creatures or composites.

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Fingers, Compensation and King Canute

By Arne Bertelsen and Norman Capener

Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery, Vol.42:B (1960)

Introduction: The search for the origin of ideas is a fascinating exercise ; but it can lead one far into the forests of history. We started with digital nomenclature and modern schedules of compensation for injury ; we rapidly got to King Canute, but that was by no means the end of the story.

Click here to read this article from the Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery

Casting Light on Clandestine Marriage in Il Filostrato

By W.T. Rossiter

Marginalia, Vol.3 (2006)

Introduction: Despite claims made by a number of critics that a clandestine marriage is conducted between Troilus and Criseyde, no such claim has been made for Boccaccio's Troiolo and Criseida. In fact, the most vocal advocates of sub rosa nuptials in Chaucer's poem resolutely deny the possibility of a similar espousal in the English poet's Italian template, to the extent that their arguments even depend upon its absence.

And yet the case for the possibility of sponsalia per verba de praesenti (or even de futuro) in Il Filostrato is no less viable than that which has been made repeatedly for Chaucer's redaction. However, I am by no means declaring that a clandestine marriage definitely takes place in Boccaccio's poem, far from it. Rather I am querying the rationale which permits a secret union in the one text and denies it to the other, despite there being just as much (or as little, as the case may be) evidence for its occurrence in both. Indeed, the union in each text is not only concealed from the view of the ancillary characters but also from the view of the reader, due to the penumbral language employed by each poet; we too are faced with 'ignorance ay in derknesse'.

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Medieval Videos

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The wars that inspired Game of Thrones