

The Medieval Magazine

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The Book of Kells

Byzantine monastery discovered in Israel



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A Medieval Guide to Predicting the Year



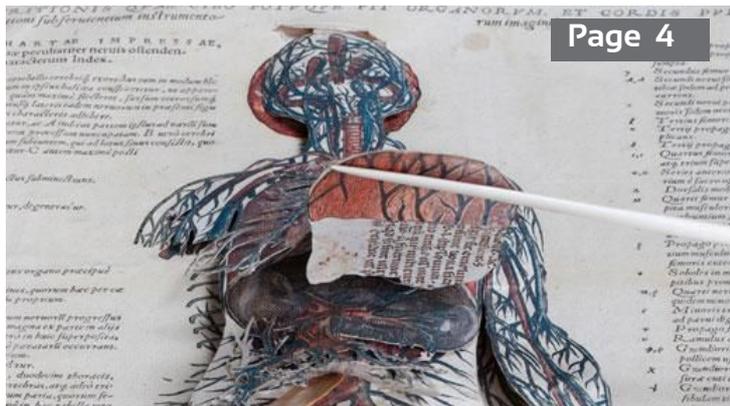
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Medieval News

Cambridge University Library turns 600

In 2016, Cambridge University Library will celebrate 600 years as one of the world's greatest libraries with a spectacular exhibition of priceless treasures – and a second show throwing light on its more weird and wonderful collections.



**Cambridge
University Library -
Photo by Philipp
Hertzog /
Wikimedia
Commons**

Older than the British Library and the Vatican Library, Cambridge University Library was first mentioned by name in two wills dated March 1416 and its most valuable contents stored in a wooden chest. The library now holds nine million books, journals, maps and magazines – as well as some of the world's most iconic scientific, literary and cultural treasures.

Its priceless collections include Newton's own annotated copy of *Principia Mathematica*, Darwin's papers on evolution, 3000-year-old Chinese oracle bones, and the earliest reliable text for 20 of Shakespeare's plays.

But is also home to a bizarre assembly of non-book curiosities, collected over centuries, including a jar of ectoplasm, a trumpet for hearing spirits and a statue of the Virgin Mary, miraculously saved from an earthquake on Martinique.

The first catalogue listing the contents of the Library was created in 1424, barely a decade after it was first identified in the wills of William Loryng and William Hunden. At that time it had 122 volumes, and by 1473 the library had grown to 330 volumes.

Since 1710, Cambridge University Library has also been entitled to one copy of each and every publication in the UK and Ireland under Legal Deposit – meaning the greatest works of more than three millennia of recorded thought sit alongside copies of *Woman's Own* and the *Beano* on more than 100 miles of shelves. With two million of its volumes on open display, readers have the largest open-access collection in Europe immediately available to them.

To celebrate the Library's 600th birthday, a spectacular free exhibition, *Lines of Thought*, will open on March 11, 2016. Featuring some of Cambridge's most iconic and best-known treasures, it investigates through six distinct themes how both Cambridge and its

collections have changed the world and will continue to do so in the digital era.

As well as the iconic Newton, Darwin and Shakespeare artefacts mentioned above, items going on display include:

Edmund Halley's handwritten notebook/sketches of Halley's Comet (1682)

Stephen Hawking's draft typescript of *A Brief History of Time*

Darwin's first pencil sketch of Species Theory and his Primate Tree

A second century AD fragment of Homer's *Odyssey*.

The Nash Papyrus – a 2,000-year-old copy of the Ten Commandments

Codex Bezae – 5th New Testament, crucial to our understanding of The Bible.

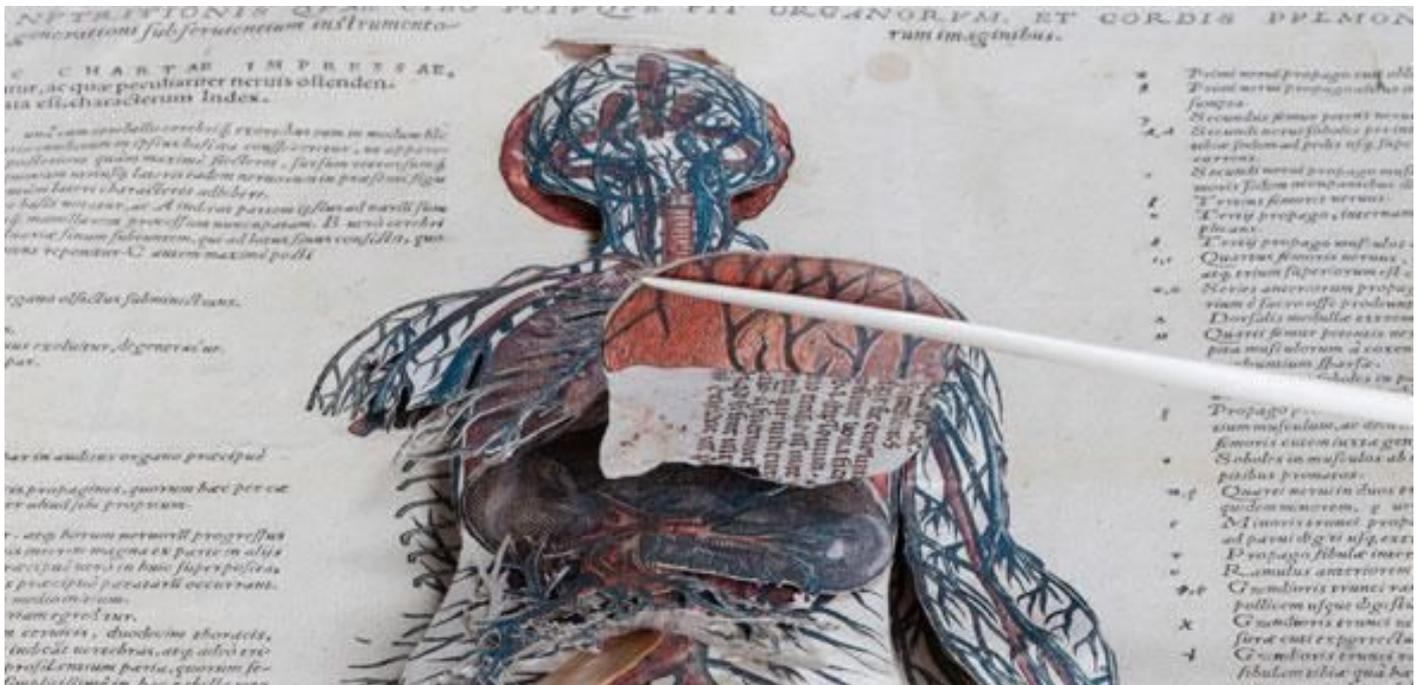
A hand-coloured copy of Vesalius' 1543 *De fabrica* – the most influential work in western medicine

A written record of the earliest known human dissection in England (1564)

A Babylonian tablet dated 2039 BCE (the oldest object in the library)

The Gutenberg Bible – the earliest substantive printed book in Western Europe (1454)

As well as *Lines of Thought*, 2016 will also see dozens of celebratory events including the library's 17-storey tower being lit up as part of the e-Luminate Festival in February. Cambridge University Library is also producing a free iPad app giving readers the chance to interact with digitised copies of six of the most revolutionary texts held in its collections. The app analyses the context of the six era-defining works, including Darwin's



Detail from Vesalius' Epitome, a companion piece to his 1543 De fabrica, - the most influential work in western medicine - Photo Credit: Cambridge University Library

Darwin's family copy of *On the origin of species*, Newton's annotated copy of *Principia Mathematica*, and William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament into English, an undertaking which led to his execution for heresy.

From October 2016, an exhibition featuring some of the University Library's most unusual curiosities and oddities will replace *Lines of Thought* as the second major exhibition of the sexcentenary.

Over the past 600 years, Cambridge has accumulated an extraordinary collection of objects, often arriving at the library as part of bequests and donations. Some of the library's more unusual artefacts include children's games, ration books, passports, prisoner art, Soviet cigarettes and cigars and an East African birthing stool.

University Librarian Anne Jarvis said: "For six centuries, the collections of Cambridge University Library have challenged and changed the world around us. Across science, literature and the arts, the millions of books, manuscripts and digital archives we hold

have altered the very fabric of our understanding. Thousands of lines of thoughts run through them, back into the past, and forward into tomorrow. Our 600th anniversary is a chance to celebrate one of the world's oldest and greatest research libraries, and to look forward to its future.

"Only in Cambridge, can you find Newton's greatest works sitting alongside Darwin's most important papers on evolution, or Sassoon's wartime poetry books taking their place next to the Gutenberg Bible and the archive of Margaret Drabble. Our aim now, through our Digital Library, is to share as many of these great collections as widely as possible so that anyone, anywhere in the world, can stand on the shoulders of these giants."

- Article courtesy University of Cambridge

New Visitor Centre and Museum for Rievaulx Abbey



Rievaulx Abbey - photo by Archangel12 / Flickr

Rievaulx Abbey, which was founded in northern England in 1132, is getting a new visitor centre and museum, thanks to English Heritage.

The museum is being completely redesigned to create a permanent object exhibition and contemporary museum-gallery space, that will explore the evolution of Rievaulx through history. Many of the special objects featured in the exhibition will be going on display to visitors for the first time.

Susan Harrison, Collections Curator at English Heritage, explained "We will identify the core elements of what the Cistercians were about

and how that underpinned everything at Rievaulx. We will invite the visitor to explore this through themes focussing on piety, the people and the place."

Among the items to be displaced in the museum is an exquisitely crafted Christ in Majesty statue, fragments from the tiled floor and painted glass windows from the abbey, and a lead fother, stamped with King Henry VIII's seal, which was used to strip lead from the roof after it was closed down by the English king in 1538.

The new museum and visitor centre will be open in May.

Byzantine Monastery discovered in Israel



Remains of a Byzantine monastery. Photo: Israel Antiquities Authority

The Israel Antiquities Authority has announced the discovery of the remains of a Byzantine monastery in the central part of the country near the city of Rosh Ha-'Ayin.

According to Amit Shadman, excavation director on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, the 1500 year old monastery was discovered along with a 2,700 year old house.

The monastery was exposed on one of the hills in the area and included a church, an oil press, residential quarters and stables equipped with mangers and troughs, etc. The floors of the church that was built in the monastery were made of colorful mosaics that included geometric and other designs. In addition, a Greek inscription ascribed to a priest named Theodosius (a common name

in the Byzantine period) was revealed in one of the mosaics – "This place was built under Theodosius the priest. Peace be with you when you come, peace be with you when you go, Amen".

Hundreds of years after the monastery ceased to function a lime kiln was established there in the Ottoman period, which destroyed large parts of the monastery.

Given the impressive finds uncovered in the excavations, it was decided that the ancient remains will be conserved in situ, and will be displayed in the communal areas of the new neighborhoods that will be open for the benefit of the public.

From Milk to Slaves: How Farming changed in Early Medieval Ireland

While cows and the milk were a vital part of Irish agriculture and society during the Early Middle Ages, one article suggests that by the late eighth-century farming practices would begin to change on the island.

"The Decline of the Cow: Agriculture and Settlement Change in Early Medieval Ireland," was written by Finbar McCormick for *Peritia: Journal of the Medieval Academy of Ireland*. It uses documentary and archaeological sources to find that "cattle, more specifically cows, were of exceptional importance in the lives of early medieval Irish."

McCormick explains that the cow was the basic unit of wealth, with fines, tribute and marriage presentations being paid in cows. But it was not necessarily the cow that was valuable, but the milk she could produce. A whole range of dairy products were produced in early medieval Ireland, such as milk, cream, butter and cheese. The 10th century text *Tochmarc Ailbe* states that milk is the best food as it "is good when fresh, good when old, good when thick and good when thin."

The article also notes the importance of cattle raiding in early medieval Ireland, adding that ringforts between the sixth and eighth centuries were designed specifically to protect cattle. There is an estimated 40-50000 ringforts in Ireland - farms that had a bank and ditch which could hold the cows

if they were threatened by raids or attacks. "Protective scattered farmsteads of this type do not occur anywhere else in contemporary western Europe and they are a unique response to the value system of Ireland," McCormick writes.

McCormick also finds that the predominance of cows in Irish society began to decline by the late-eighth century, with farmers now starting to build ringforts that had an elevated setting for the dwellings, which were designed to be more protective of people. Furthermore, there was an expansion of grain processing, as seen by archaeological evidence such as mills.

McCormick suggests that Ireland was changing in the late-eighth and ninth centuries, becoming a "slave economy" where farms were changing from being ones that primarily raised cattle, to ones that grew cereals - a more labour intensive process that required the use of slaves and the means to protect them.

The article, "The Decline of the Cow: Agriculture and Settlement Change in Early Medieval Ireland," by Finbar McCormick appears in *Peritia*, Volume 20 (2008)

A Medieval Guide to Predicting the Year



Calendar page for the month of January with a man drinking from a bowl – from British Library MS Additional 21114 f. 1

It's January 1st and you want to know how the year will go? You can use this handy guide, written by a 14th century Italian merchant, in which he offers what to expect throughout year, based on which day January 1st falls on. His predictions cover the weather, what types of crops will be abundant, what diseases might strike, and even political news.

Here begin the events from one year to another, and how they may be foretold

If the first of January comes on a Sunday, the winter will be warm, and the spring will be damp, and the summer and autumn will be windy. There will be an abundance of sheep, and honey, and little wine, and few beans. Many young people will die, and there will be many thefts, and any news will be of princes and of kings.

If the first of January comes on a Monday, the winter will be ordinary, and the spring and summer will be temperate, and there will be a great flood, and great illness, and there will be little honey and wine and grain, and there will be great cold and ice and there will be a great mortality from iron, and many people will die of sore throats.

If the first of January comes on a Tuesday, the winter will be long, and spring and summer damp, and there will be much rain, and much snow, and the autumn will be dry, and there will be little grain, and there will be mortality among pigs and sheep, and mortality of women, and many ships will be lost, and there will be an abundance of honey, and a scarcity of flax, and there will be a great plague, and much fruit, and much oil, and there will be great disturbances among the Romans.

If the first of January comes on a Wednesday, there will be little grain, and an abundance of wine and of honey, and the winter will be warm, and spring will be damp, and the autumn will be temperate. There will be an abundance of oil and everything, and there will be dysentery and great mortality of people, and in various places there will be great famine, and much news to tell.

If the first of January comes on a Thursday, grain will be cheap, and flax and meat will be scarce. There will be many apples, and little honey. The winter will be temperate, and the spring will be windy, and the autumn, good. There will be mortality among pigs, and many eggs, and much oil and little beans, and much wine.

If the first of January comes on a Friday, the winter will be temperate, and the summer and autumn, dry. Grain will be cheap. There will be eye diseases, and many infants will die, and there will be movement of knights, and there will be much oil in some places.

If the first of January comes on a Saturday, the winter will be windy, and the spring long, and the summer will be unpleasant and stormy, and the autumn, dry. There will be little grain, and much illness from tertian fever, and mortality among old people, and abundance of fennel and wine, and great tribulations for Christians.

This text is from the *Zibaldone da Canal*, which was published in **Merchant Culture in Fourteenth-Century Venice**, translated by John E. Dotson (Binghamton, 1994).

The Book of Kells

"Look closely at it and you will penetrate the innermost secrets of art; you will find embellishments of such intricacy, such a wealth of knots and interlacing links that you might believe it was the work of an angel rather than a human being."

-- Giraldus Cambrensis (1146-1223) on the Book of Kells



Photos by Giovanni Scorcioni from **Facsimile Finder**



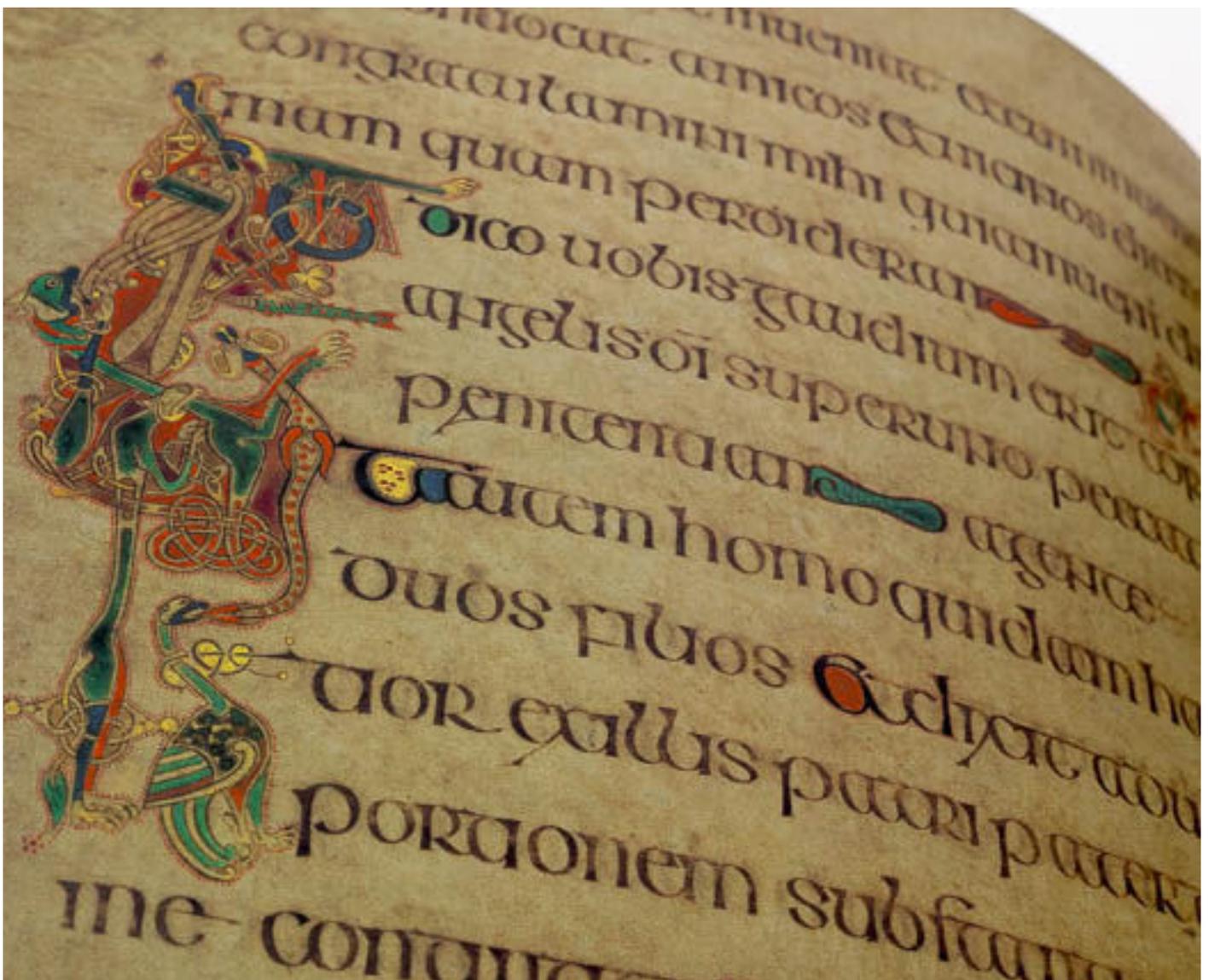
The Book of Kells (Trinity College Dublin MS 58) is a medieval manuscript containing the four Gospels in Latin text. It contains 340 folios, which measure 330 by 255 mm. Historians are unsure of when and where the Book of Kells was made. The book was created around the year 800 and that it took more than five monks to write the script and three artists to illustrate the pages.

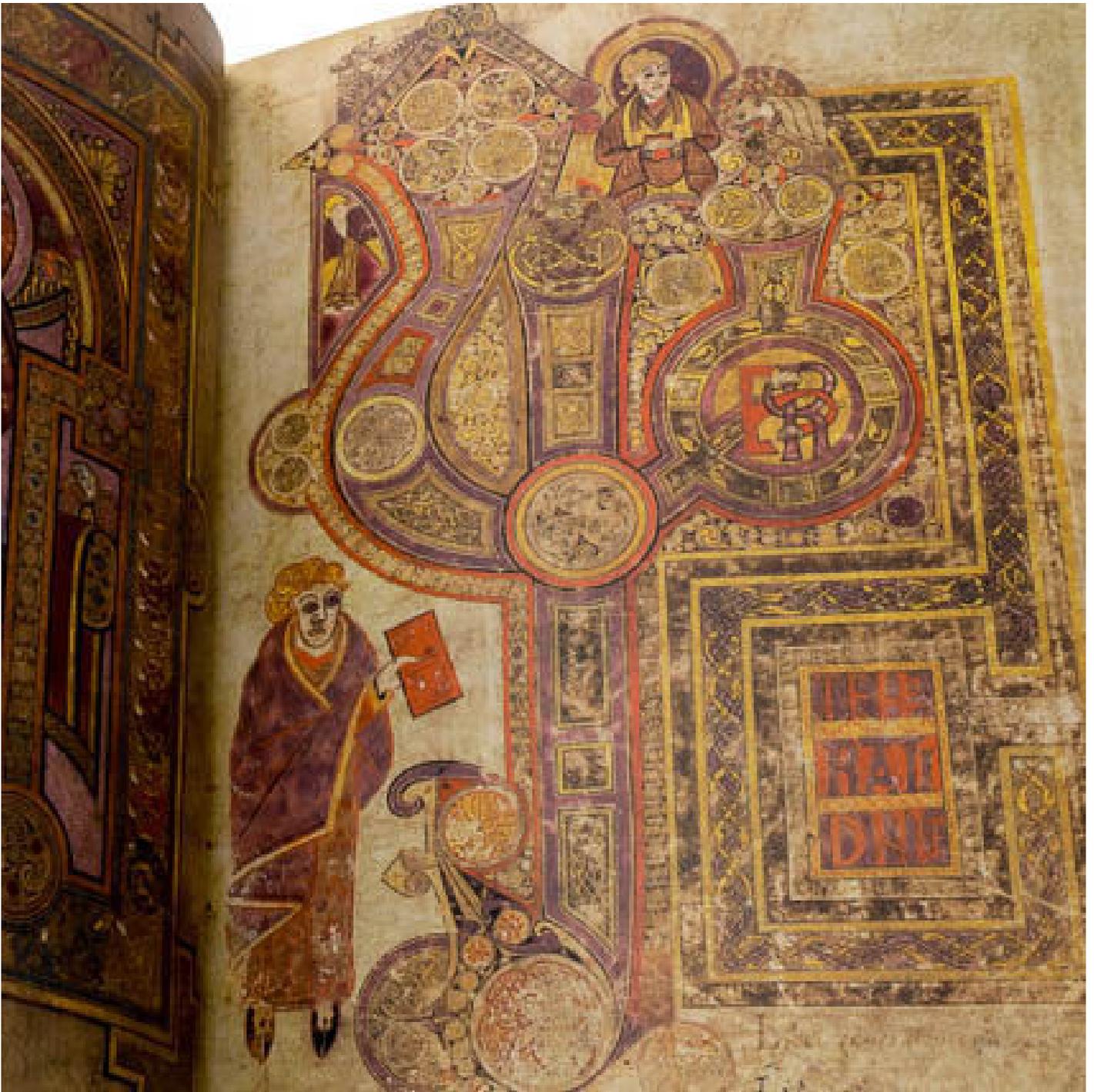
There is evidence to show that the manuscript was at least started in the monastery of Iona, off the western coast of Scotland, but others have suggested other places. In the year 806 Vikings raided Iona and killed 68 people. The remaining monks then took refuge at the monastery of Kells. The Book of Kells may have been finished here, and over the centuries it was usually kept here and was seen as a relic of St. Columba.



Bernard Meehan, one of the leading scholars on the Book of Kells, explains:

The extent, variety, and artistry of the decoration of the text pages are incomparable. Abstract decoration and images of plant, animal, and human ornament enliven and punctuate the text, with the aim of glorifying Jesus' life and message, keeping his attributes and symbols constantly in the eye of the reader. There are repeated images of the face of Jesus; the cross; the eucharist (grapes, chalices, communion hosts); and symbols of resurrection (the lion, the peacock, the snake). Certain images allude to the text; the word dicit (he said) is frequently composed of animals whose paws point at their mouths. Other images, such as those of men pulling each other's beards, present difficulties of interpretations.





While the images of The Book of Kells were produced with great care and detail, the writing itself seems to have been done very poorly. There are many instances when letters and whole words were accidentally omitted, and in one case an entire page of written text was repeated on the next page. Historians believe that the text was never meant for reading, but would be used for ceremonial purposes, such as taking it out as part of Easter celebrations.

The Annals of Ulster recorded that in 1006:

The wicked theft of the great Gospel of Colum cille by night from the airdam of the great stone church of Kells. The same Gospel was found after two months and twenty days, its gold stripped from it and a sod covering it.

This episode is probably the reason why some leaves from the text are missing from the beginning and the end of the manuscript. After that, the book was kept at Kells until the end of the Middle Ages. Sometime during the 11th or 12th centuries, someone used a few blank pages to record property transactions related to the monastery, and in the 15th century a poem was added to folio 289v.





In the 17th century warfare in Ireland reduced the monastery at Kells to ruins, and eventually the manuscript was given to the Trinity College in Dublin. The Book of Kells is now permanently on display there, and hundreds of thousands of visitors come each year to see it at the college's Old Library. For conservation reasons, the manuscript has been divided into four separate volumes, one for each gospel

[Click here to see the Book of Kells website at Trinity College Dublin](#)

In 1990, **Faksimile Verlag Luzern** (Switzerland) produced the first and only high quality Book of Kells facsimile edition of the beautiful insular manuscript. The facsimile, made in 1500 copies, was an immediate success and, despite the very high price tag (approx. 15000 EUR), it quickly sold out. Major libraries all over the world managed to purchase a copy, in many occasion with the help of generous donors.

Facsimile Finder shot high quality photos of the publisher's archive copy and Giovanni Scorcioni has shared some of them with us.

You can check out a full gallery of the facsimile edition on **FacsimileFinder.com**.





Rock of Cashel - photo by Giorgio Galeotti / Flickr

Rock of Cashel - County Tipperary

Many local legends and folklore surround this first pick on my list. St. Patrick reportedly converted the King of Munster to Christianity in the fifth century at the Rock of Cashel, and as a result, it became home to the kings of Munster until the Normans invaded nearly seven hundred years later. St. Patrick was also rumoured to have beaten the Devil here. The story goes that the Devil bit into a piece of rock twenty miles away (aptly named "Devil's Bit"), and after St. Patrick cast him out, he spat it out and the piece landed on what is now known as the Rock of Cashel.

There is plenty to see here; a cathedral that dates back to the thirteenth century, Cormac's Chapel, commissioned by the king of Munster, then later monk, Cormac Mac Carthaig (†1138). It's one of Ireland's earliest, and loveliest Romanesque churches and is tucked beside the cathedral and the famous Round Tower (a bell tower), which dates to 1100 AD. You can get a two-for-one experience and visit Hore Abbey while you're at the Rock of Cashel. The abbey is a short 15-20 minute walk away from the Rock of Cashel, and well worth a visit. This former Benedictine, then Cistercian abbey, is now a ruin. Founded in 1270, it was unfortunately another casualty in the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1540. It becomes a private residence and then eventually fell into ruin.

Corcomroe Cistercian Abbey - County Clare

Another abbey located in County Clare is Corcomroe, a thirteenth century Cistertercian House. The monastery stands out due to its elaborate detail because churches of this period were not known to be so ornate. The tomb of King Conor na Siudance Ua Briain (†1267) lies in the north choir section of the abbey. Local legend has it that he executed the masons who built the abbey so they could not recreate the work they did anywhere else. This reminds me of the legend behind the Prague Astronomical Clock where the clock maker was blinded so he could not repeat his work. How true this is about Corcomroe's masons, we will never know since there is no written proof of this happening, but it's a neat little legend nonetheless. Like the other abbeys listed here, it did not survive the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The monks were allowed to stay for some time but, eventually, he monastic community here died out in the early seventeenth century.



Corcomroe Abbey - photo by Lindy Buckley / Flickr



Ennis Friary - photo by Bea y Fredi / Flickr

Ennis Franciscan Friary - Ennis, County Clare

Founded in about 1250 by the O'Brien kings, a royal dynasty around since the tenth century, the Ennis Friary was built on an island on the river Fergus. King Donnchadh O'Brien commissioned the monastery in 1240 and gave it to the Franciscans. During the Middle Ages, it was also home to a renowned theological school, and the town flourished under the care of the mendicant order. It was a bustling medieval market town and still retains many narrow medieval streets today. In the fifteenth century, a bell tower and the south transept was added. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the sixteenth century, Ennis friary became home to the assizes courts (courts that heard the most serious crimes, usually criminal cases). This is a place I'd love to see not only for the friary, but because the town has maintained its medieval charm. Another reason I'd love to visit Ennis is that the friary is still intact - so many monasteries end up as ruins that it's nice to be able to visit one that is still in use today.

Timoleague Franciscan Friary - County Cork

About 45 minutes outside of Cork, lies the the Franciscan Friary of Timoleague. Named after St. Molaga, who was credited with having brought beekeeping to the Emerald Isle, Timoleague, translates to 'House of Molaga' (Tigh Molaga). St. Molaga founded the first monastic settlement in the area in the sixth century. Seven hundred years later, in 1240, the new Franciscan friary was built on top of the St. Molaga's monastery, commissioned by the founder of the powerful MacCarthy Reagh dynasty, Donal Gott MacCarthy (†1252). The friary was said to have housed the remains of many of the McCarthys.

The abbey was expanded in the fourteenth century, but once again, its fortune turned south in the sixteenth century as the Reformation made its way across Ireland. The monastery was confiscated by the crown in 1568 but the monks were permitted to return to the monastery, and remained there for a brief period in 1604. Sadly, the friary was destroyed by marauding English soldiers six years later. Surprisingly, it survived that relatively intact, but a fire in 1642 that engulfed the town finally signalled the demise of Timoleague as a religious house for good. The next time I'm visiting friends in Cork, I will be taking a trip here - it's a mere 48km away, not a bad jaunt for a medieval day trip.



Timoleague Franciscan Friary - photo by Tøssekaien / Flickr

**Kells Priory -
photo by
Adrienlesgo /
Wikimedia
Commons**



Kells Augustinian Priory - County Kilkenny

This remarkable and impressive looking priory was founded in 1193 by Geoffrey Fitzrobert de Monte Morisco (†1211). It's between 12 - 15km outside of the city of Kilkenny and boasts a series of six medieval tower houses, making it look like a castle. It was attacked three times between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries but it managed to survive and thrive until March 1540 when Henry VIII dissolved the monastery. After the Dissolution, it was initially turned into a farm but a year later, in 1541, it was given to James Butler, 9th Earl of Ormond (1496 - 1546). It's been a National Monument since 1893. If you're site seeing in Kilkenny, this is an easy stop just outside the city to catch another glimpse of an unusual and beautiful monastic house.

Eadgyth, Queen Consort of Germany and Duchess of Saxony

By Susan Abernethy

Eadgyth had an impressive pedigree. She was the grand-daughter of Alfred the Great, daughter of Edward the Elder and half-sister of Aethelstan, all of whom were powerful kings of Wessex in England. It was only by fate she ended up as the wife of Otto I, Duke of Saxony and King of Germany.

Eadgyth (also known as Edith) was born c. 911 and was the daughter of Edward the Elder, King of Wessex. Her mother was Edward's second wife, Aelflaed. We don't know much about Eadgyth's early life other than a short mention about the daughters of King Edward devoting their whole attention to literature by the twelfth century chronicler William of Malmesbury. She begins to appear in the chronicles when she was in her late teens.

In 929, Henry the Fowler, Duke of Saxony and King of Germany (East Francia) sent an embassy to the court of Eadgyth's half-brother King Aethelstan at Canterbury, pursuing an alliance and a marriage for his son Otto. Henry was seeking to legitimize the Liudolfing family and to set his son Otto apart from potential noble adversaries by marrying him to a bride from a strong and well-

established Saxon family. Aethelstan was carrying out an ambitious and determined foreign policy which had begun under Edward the Elder, his father. Two of Aethelstan's sisters had already been married to men on the continent; Charles III, King of the Franks and Hugh, count of Paris and Duke of the Franks.

Eadgyth and one of her younger sisters, possibly named Eadgifu, were sent to Henry's court at Quedlinburg in Saxony, accompanied by Bishop Cenwald of Worcester in the fall of 929 and bringing gifts, treasures and their own retinue. When they arrived, Otto was given a choice between the two women. The chronicles talk of love at first sight. Of course we will never know if this is true but Otto chose Eadgyth. Otto was a seventeen year old seasoned soldier, having fought in campaigns against the Slavs and Hungarians. The couple celebrated a lavish and grand wedding ceremony in Quedlinburg either in 929 or 930 after a Saxon victory over the Slavs. Eadgyth's sister was sent to the Alps where she married Rudolf II or Konrad the Peaceable of Burgundy (the chronicles are vague).



A sculpture in the Cathedral of Magdeburg , Germany from ca. 1250, showing Otto I, Holy Roman Emperor and his wife Eadgyth. Photo credit Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-26654-0005 / Biscan / CC-BY-SA 3.0

The young couple initially traveled through the Rhineland. Although King Henry had named Otto his heir sometime between 927-9, the couple is missing from the sources until Henry died in 936. We know that Eadgyth gave birth to a son named Liudolf in 930 and a daughter named Liudgard in 931. Otto was crowned at Aachen upon his father's death. There is no mention of Eadgyth being crowned with her husband. However, another chronicle mentions she did go through a coronation, most likely later at another location.

There appears to have been some tension between Otto and Eadgyth and Otto's mother, Mathilda. The couple took Mathilda's dowry and she was forced to leave court and retire to her own estates in Westphalia. Mathilda, who was never crowned, may have resented Eadgyth because she was an

anointed queen. Mathilda was supporting her son and Otto's younger brother Henry during family squabbles in the 940's causing friction. Eadgyth did intervene and reconciled Mathilda with Otto, perhaps in 941. But Mathilda did not return to court until the death of Eadgyth.

While she was queen, Eadgyth worked to advance the Liudolfing family in many ways. As the mother of the heir to the throne she had an important role. She intervened in charters granting land, privileges and gifts to favored monasteries and memorials to holy women and saints. She managed the royal household and carried out her state duties. She was given Magdeburg as part of her dower and this gave her a role in east Frankish politics. Together she and her husband developed Magdeburg as the center of the family memory and a mausoleum. She

mausoleum. She maintained contacts with her sister in Burgundy and with England and her half-brothers, although details are scarce.

The famous German nun Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim wrote that Eadgyth was highly esteemed for her personal qualities. She said Eadgyth had a calm demeanor, was sincere and glowed with charm. Hrotsvitha was fifteen when Eadgyth died and these are all attributes given to women who were admired in medieval times. But it shows that Eadgyth had a positive legacy in Germany.

Eadgyth died unexpectedly on January 26, 946 and was buried in the cathedral in Magdeburg. When Otto died in 973, he was buried beside her. Her death may have been a blow to her son politically. Liudolf died before his father but Eadgyth's great-grandson became Conrad II and founder of the Salian dynasty of Holy Roman Emperors.

In 2008, a tomb in Magdeburg Cathedral was found and opened. A lead coffin was inside a stone sarcophagus and there was an inscription on the tomb with the name of

Eadgyth. It also said the coffin had been reburied in 1510. The remains from the tomb were examined and then brought to Bristol, England in 2010 for further testing. Isotope tests on the tooth enamel from the upper jaw of the remains were done as well as other analyses and investigations.

It was determined that the woman in the coffin had spent time as a youth drinking spring water from the chalk hills in the uplands of southern England. The woman was between thirty and forty when she died making her birthdate between 906 and 916. She had a diet rich in protein, especially fish, proving she lived a high status lifestyle. Her diet appears to have been altered when she was about nine years old and it is speculated she may have gone to live in a nunnery with her mother who most likely was repudiated by Edward the Elder so he could marry his third wife Eadgifu. Stress markers on her bones revealed she might have had some kind of infectious illness between the ages of ten and fourteen. Everything confirmed the remains to be those of Eadgyth and they were re-interred in Magdeburg Cathedral on October 22, 2010.

Further reading:

Entry on Eadgyth in the ***Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*** written by Pauline Stafford

Edward the Elder: 899-924, edited by N.J. Higham and D.H. Hill

Queens, Concubines and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages, by Pauline Stafford

Susan Abernethy is the writer of **The Freelance History Writer** and a contributor to **Saints, Sisters, and Sluts**. You can follow both sites on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/thefreelancehistorywriter>) and (<http://www.facebook.com/saintssistersandsluts>), as well on **Medieval History Lovers**. You can also follow Susan on Twitter **@SusanAbernethy2**

How did people sleep in the Middle Ages?

It seems normal that people go to sleep for seven to nine hours (or at least we hope we can sleep that long), straight from evening to morning, but was that always the case? A recent book on the history of sleeping shows that during the Middle Ages people typically slept in two periods during the night.



**A sleeping man in a medieval manuscript
– from British Library Royal 19 D III f. 458**

Roger Ekirch's book, *At Day's Close: Night in Times Past*, reveals that until modern times, when artificial lighting allowed us to stay awake longer, most people would go to bed around sunset. The actual time spent sleeping was split into two phases – known as first sleep and second sleep.

Ekirch writes:

Both phases of sleep lasted roughly the same length of time, with individuals waking sometime after midnight before returning to rest. Not everyone, of course, slept according to the same timetable. The later at night that persons went to bed, the later they stirred after their initial sleep; or, if they retired past midnight, they might not awaken at all until dawn. Thus, in 'The Squire's Tale' in The Canterbury Tales, Canacee slept "soon after evening fell" and subsequently awakened in the early morning following "her first sleep"; in turn, her companions, staying up much later, "lay asleep till it was fully prime" (daylight).

In between the first and second sleep the person would be awake about an hour – enough to say prayers during Matins, which would typically fall between 2 am and 3 am, study or even have sex. The French physician Laurent Joubert (1529-1581) even advised that couples have intercourse during this period, because "they have more enjoyment" and "do it better."

Ekirch adds:

Although in some descriptions a neighbor's quarrel or a barking dog woke people prematurely from their initial sleep, the vast weight of surviving evidence indicates that awakening naturally was routine not the consequence of disturbed or fitful slumber. Medical books, in fact, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries frequently advised sleepers, for better digestion and more tranquil repose, to lie on their right side during "the fyrste slepe" and "after the fyrste slepe turne on the lefte side." And even though the

French historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie investigated no further, his study of fourteenth-century Montaillou notes that "the hour of first sleep" was a customary division of night, as was "the hour halfway through the first sleep." Indeed, though not used as frequently as expressions like "candle-lighting," the "dead of night", or cock-crow," the term "first sleep" remained a common temporal division until the late eighteenth-century. As described in La Demonolatrie (1595) by Nicholas Remy, "Comes dusk, followed by nightfall, dark night, then the moment of the first sleep and finally dead of night."

Not everyone slept in two periods – Ekirch cites some people from the pre-modern period who note that they would sleep throughout the night. But does seem to have been common practice for people, dating back to ancient times.

Meanwhile, Jean Verdon, author of *Night in the Middle Ages*, notes that some medieval people had different sleeping patterns. Children, for instance, were advised to sleep the entire night, for nine or ten consecutive hours. However, for the very young, this task might be tricky. The fifteenth-century story La Farce du Cuvier, offers this verse on the troubles of getting one's child to sleep – something that every parent nowadays can relate to:

*At night, if the child awakes
As they do in many places,
You must take the trouble
To get up to rock him,
To walk, carry, and feed him
In the bedroom, even at midnight.*

Medieval monks were also required to sleep differently – according to the Rule of St. Benedict, they would go to bed about 7:00 pm, and then wake up for Matins around 2:00 in the morning. While other monastic rules allowed for a second sleep, the Benedictine monks would continue to stay awake (they

monks would continue to stay awake (they might be allowed to have a nap during the day). Some monks were tempted not to get out of bed – Raoul Glaber, who lived during the 11th century, wrote that he was plagued by a demon, who whispered to him:

I wonder why you are so eager to jump so quickly out of bed, as soon as you've heard the signal, and to interrupt the sweet rest of sleep, while you could give yourself up to rest until the third signal.

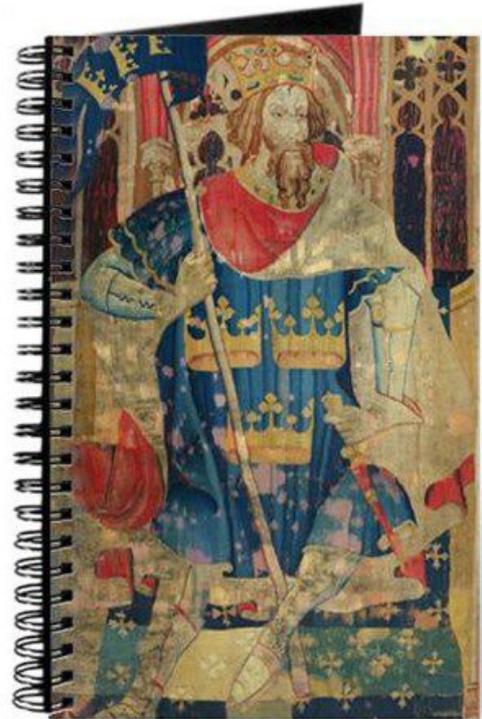
Verdon adds that medieval people could have the same problems related to sleeping that we do, including insomnia, sleeping too much, and even sleep-walking. The chronicler Jean Froissart heard the story of a noble named Pierre de Béarn who had a traumatic experience when he killed an exceptionally large bear in hand-to-hand combat. Afterwards, during his sleep he would rise, grab a sword and swing it around at the air. If he could not find his weapon, Pierre "created such noise and clamor that it seemed like all the demons of hell were there with him." Eventually, his wife and children would leave him over the problem.

Roger Ekirch speaking about his research on *The Agenda*



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