

The Medieval Magazine

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Getting High in the Middle Ages

Executions in the Middle Ages



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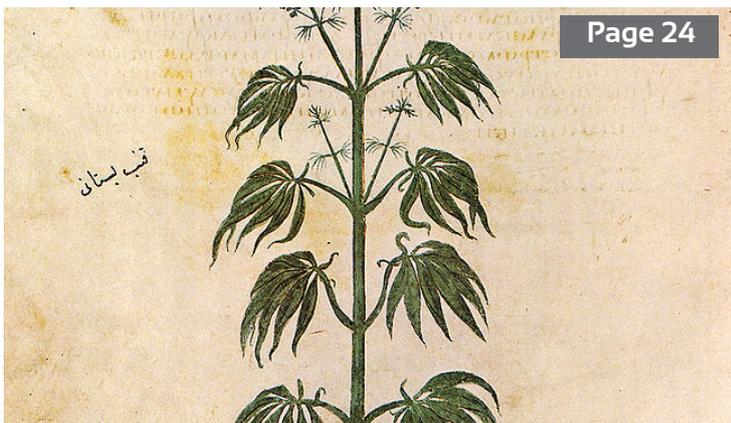
Medieval village unearthed in Scotland

Thousands of motorists each day travel along the M74 motorway, to the south of Glasgow, unaware of the fascinating 1000-year history emerging from the edge of the hard shoulder.



Executions in the Middle Ages

Daniele Cybulskie explores one of the more grisly aspects of the medieval period.



Hashish: Getting High in Medieval Egypt

Using cannabis to get high is not just a modern issue. Here is how it was dealt with in medieval Egypt.



Joan of Kent: The First Princess of Wales

Read an excerpt from this new book by Penny Lawne.

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Cover Photo: 12th century depiction of a Cannabis plant - from British Library MS Sloane 1975 f. 44v



Medieval village unearthed in Scotland

Thousands of motorists each day travel along the M74 motorway, to the south of Glasgow, unaware of the fascinating 1000-year history emerging from the edge of the hard shoulder.

Just opposite the Hamilton Services on the M74 in South Lanarkshire, GUARD archaeologists have discovered what could be the remains of the lost village of Cadzow. Cadzow was the name given to the community which lived on the edge of the River Clyde here in medieval times. In 1445, King James II gave his permission for the place to be renamed Hamilton and the residents were forced to move a mile or so south to the town's current location.

The discovery was made by a GUARD Archaeology team led by GUARD Project Officer Kevin Mooney, as part of the M8 M73 M74 Motorway Improvements Project. The work was undertaken for the Scottish Roads Partnership (SRP), the company responsible for the improvements on the Central Scotland motorway network, with a construction joint venture of Ferrovial Agroman and Lagan Construction Group. To safeguard anything of historical interest unearthed during the £500 million roads project, SRP, under the

advice of GUARD Archaeology, committed to notifying them when construction work that could impact on areas of archaeological potential would take place.

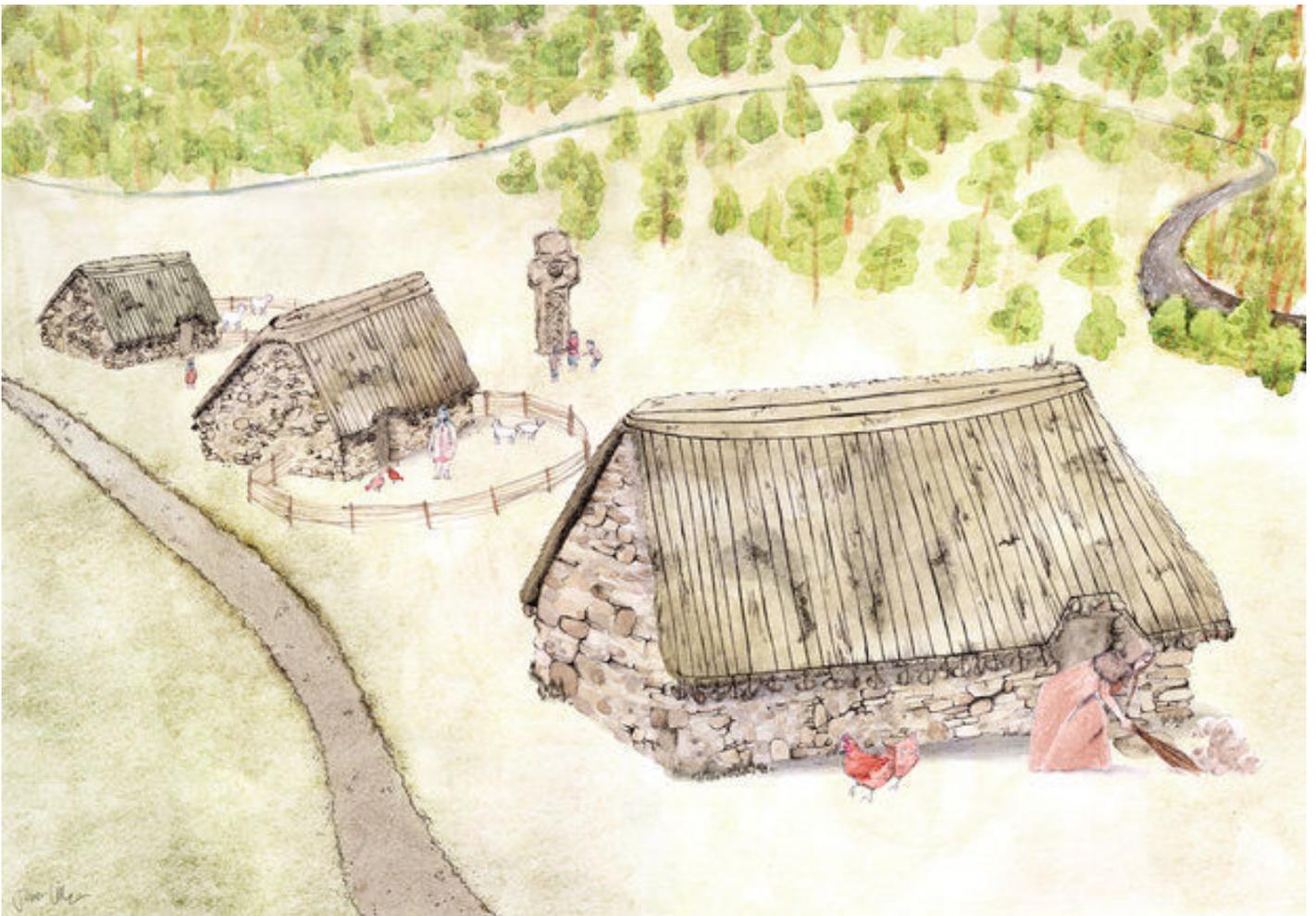
GUARD Archaeology were immediately contacted when the Netherton works began and while monitoring the preparation of the ground for a new lane of the M74 southbound, Kevin Mooney noticed old stone work just a few inches below the surface. Work stopped in this area to allow GUARD Archaeology to reveal the remains of two medieval buildings linked to the nearby spot where the 1000-year-old Netherton Cross once stood. This was a major religious monument, erected in the tenth or eleventh centuries. In 1925, Hamilton Town Councillors decided to preserve it by relocating it to the grounds of Hamilton Parish Church, where it is still considered to be the most important Christian relic of the area.





Six of the medieval coins and one of the gaming counters recovered from Netherton Cross © GUARD Archaeology Ltd

Previous Page: GUARD Archaeologists excavating the remains of a medieval building at Netherton Cross © GUARD Archaeology Ltd



Reconstruction by Jennifer Colquhoun of medieval Netherton Cross and Cadzow Village © GUARD Archaeology Ltd

Warren Bailie, who managed the project for GUARD Archaeology, said: 'We are not sure of the age of the structures yet but as the Netherton Cross was tenth or eleventh century, the surrounding buildings could date from the same period. So we could be looking at something that's 1,000 years old. No-one thought anything like this could have survived right on the edge of the motorway.'

The memorial stone, which marks the former position of the Netherton Cross, lying in the bushes next to the discovery site may provide a clue as to why the immediate area has survived being disturbed before.

The GUARD Archaeology team also found nine medieval coins, fragments of animal bone and over 200 sherds of glazed medieval pottery that could date to the 1400's or earlier. 'We've also discovered two gaming pieces, one carved of stone and the other a circle of green-glazed medieval pottery, which could have been used in a medieval game of some sort,' said Kevin Mooney. 'This provides us with an all too rare glimpse into the past, shedding light on the medieval beginnings of Hamilton.'

Virtual Florence: religious art is 'restored' to its original setting

A team of experts has pieced together the architectural context of two treasures of Renaissance art in the National Gallery collection. The research behind the 3D-visualisation combines traditional and digital methods – and benefits from invaluable input from the local community.



San Pier Maggiore revisualised in 3D with the pointcloud outline nestling within today's buildings. Image Credit: Donal Cooper/Francois Penz, University of Cambridge

An **exhibition** at the National Gallery tells the story behind some of the most remarkable examples of religious art in its collections. Two large-scale paintings from the 14th and 15th centuries, which show scenes of the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin, originated as altarpieces in the church in Florence called San Pier Maggiore (or Saint Peter Major, so named to distinguish it from other churches dedicated to the Apostle

Peter in the city).

Until recently little has been known about San Pier Maggiore as the setting for these masterpieces. Once one of the city's oldest and most important churches, it was demolished in the 1780s to make way for a market place. Now detective work has enabled a team of academics and curators to produce a virtual reconstruction of the

church complete with its bell tower which would have been a prominent landmark.

As an important church, San Pier Maggiore had been endowed with splendid altarpieces, commissioned by rich patrons. Today these paintings are dispersed around the world. The National Gallery in London holds *The Assumption of the Virgin*, painted by Francesco Botticini in the 1470s and *The Coronation of the Virgin*, painted by Jacopo di Cione a century earlier.

The exhibition at the National Gallery is accompanied by a short film which explains some of the challenges that faced the small team who undertook the virtual reconstruction.

Combining their skills were Dr Donal Cooper (Department of History of Art) and Professor Francois Penz (Department of Architecture) from Cambridge University, Dr Jennifer Sliwka, assistant curator in Renaissance painting at the National Gallery, and Dr Miguel Santa Clara, a film-maker and graduate of Cambridge's Department of Architecture.

As an art historian of Renaissance Italy, Cooper knows Florence well. But when he arrived in the city in the hot summer of 2015 to begin the research, he felt disheartened. Walking around the area where the church once stood, he could see the arches of the elegant portico that was added to the church in the 17th century and a number of piers enveloped by later buildings. But there seemed to be few obvious clues to help create a clear picture.

"All I had to guide me were historic plans and maps which show more or less where the church stood. Today the area is a mix of small businesses and apartments with scooters whizzing through the portico arches," he says. "Although street names indicated the former existence of the church, it was a real puzzle to imagine its ground plan and its structure – or to perceive where the paintings would have been situated."

Cooper was joined in Florence by Penz, Santa

Clara and Sliwka. The team's fortunes began to change when they met café owner, Ricardo Camporesi, whose premises act as a hub for the local community. A flyer was distributed in the neighbourhood. It asked people to get in touch if they were willing to open their houses to the team. The response was overwhelmingly positive and the team was invited into several apartments and businesses.

"It was a mixture of archaeology and anthropology as we began to explore the elements of the church that exist within the present structures which had been wrapped around some of the remaining features of the church," says Penz. "In a kitchen we found a chapel arch and in a bathroom a finely carved Renaissance column. One of the most exciting moments was when the owner of an apartment opened the door of an airing cupboard to show us some stone steps inside."

The spiral steps in the cupboard led upwards to a small roof terrace with a view over the city rooftops. The 40 steps that remain today are part of a stairway that was originally inside a 14th-century bell tower or campanile.

Using a combination of site surveys and the latest photogrammetric techniques, the researchers have been able to create a visualisation of the church with the later buildings 'wrapped' around it. "We hope the 3D visualisation we've produced will help experts and the public to understand the context within which these paintings were experienced by Renaissance viewers," says Cooper. "In museums they are removed from their intended architectural settings, which often informed their design and iconography."

The people of Florence were hugely enthusiastic about the project and the Florence edition of *Il Corriere della sera* carried a three-page article about it. But the



Campanile staircase photogrammetric reconstruction. - Image Credit: Donal Cooper/Francois Penz, University of Cambridge

team is keen to avoid the temptation of filling in the gaps in their visualisation.

"One of the key research aims was to visualise degrees of uncertainty in the 3D virtual representation of the church, reflecting a variety of hypotheses invariably present in art historical research of this nature. And this is why we used the point cloud modelling technique that allows room for the imagination," says Penz.

"Moreover, we see 3D visualisation as much more than the representation of research data. The process itself was a potent means for generating new findings that would not have emerged from conventional empirical research. But it is only the beginning and this pilot project has paved the way to more ambitious research projects in the future."

The project was funded by a Cambridge Humanities Research Grants Scheme Research grant together with a Kress Foundation grant to the National Gallery.

The altarpieces of San Pier Maggiore

Jacopo di Cione's polyptych, originally more than 5 m tall, was one of the largest altarpieces ever painted for a Florentine church. The central scene depicts the Virgin being crowned as Queen of Heaven by Christ. The so-called 'Coronation of the Virgin' was believed to have occurred at the Virgin's death and Assumption into Heaven. The Virgin and Christ are surrounded by saints and angels, with pride of place given to St Peter, as the titular saint of the church. Jacopo painted the apostle holding not only his traditional attribute of the keys of heaven, but also a miniature representation of the church of San Pier Maggiore.

Botticini's altarpiece also depicts the Virgin being crowned in heaven, albeit in a very different fashion, set amidst ascending circles of angels and with an expansive landscape showing Florence and the surrounding countryside filling the base of the picture. In Cambridge, the Fitzwilliam Museum owns another painting from San Pier Maggiore. Tommaso Mazzuoli's Visitation (1560) is on permanent loan to Trinity Hall where it serves as an altarpiece in the college chapel. Others paintings from the same Florence church are in Russia and the USA.

Our thanks to the University of Cambridge for this article.



Detail of Jacopo di Cione St Peter - image courtesy University of Cambridge

York's Medieval Attractions Commemorate the Battle of Towton

History is full of stories of warfare; sieges and strikes, invasions and withdrawals and English history is no exception to this. So, the team at The JORVIK Group, the operators of JORVIK Viking Centre, are looking to shine a light on a fascinating, if not sometimes confusing period of our nation's history; the Wars of the Roses, a time that shaped the monarchy for centuries to come, with a series of special events commemorating the 555th anniversary of the Battle of Towton.

Danielle Daglan, Head of Festivals and Events for York Archaeological Trust, the owners of The JORVIK Group, explained, "the Battle of Towton is seen not only as the bloodiest battle on English soil but also a defining moment in the Wars of the Roses, when the newly crowned Edward IV, a Yorkist and brother of the future Richard III, defeated the army of the mad Lancastrian king, Henry VI. It sets up the events that lead to the Tudor Age, so it is truly an exciting time in our history and something that should be explored."

The Battle of Towton took place on 29th March 1461, Palm Sunday, a day of huge religious significance, especially in the Middle Ages. Yet both sides agreed to fight in order to solve the continued problem in English politics at the time, namely having two kings vying for the throne of England.

Over 50,000 soldiers fought at Towton, with casualties reported at 28,000 just days after the battle.

With so much to cover The JORVIK Group have enlisted all three of their medieval attractions to play host to a series of exciting and informative events on Saturday 19th March.

First up, the historic medieval townhouse, Barley Hall, will be the place to discover the function and fashion of warfare in the Middle Ages, with costumed guides on hand to take you through how a knight put his armour on to what the civilians of the period would have been wearing. Then it is onto the city walls and Monk Bar where visitors can learn about the tough lives of the soldiers who



Paul Toy, from the Richard III Experience, Monk Bar, prepares to welcome guests and commemorate the 555th - photo courtesy The Jorvik Group

took part in the Wars of Roses. Finally, at Micklegate Bar visitors can meet a Plague Doctor and discover some truly horrendous medieval 'cures'.

"With so much to cover, on this the 555th anniversary of the Battle of Towton, it seemed right to focus on specific aspects of the Wars of the Roses across our medieval attractions. You can uncover the harsh lives and grisly injuries they suffered at our two attractions in the city's gatehouses and then discover the changing fashions of the period, truly a unique medieval experience in York for this commemorative weekend," Danielle added.

The Battle of Towton was fought during the English Wars of the Roses on 29th March 1461, near the village of Towton in Yorkshire. It brought about a change of monarchs in England, with the victor, the Yorkist Edward, Duke of York—who became King Edward IV (1461–1483) displacing the Lancastrian King

Henry VI (1422–1461) as king, and thus drove the head of the Lancastrians and his key supporters out of the country.

Between 25,000 to 30,000 soldiers fought on each side, with approx 28,000 casualties on the day, making Towton one of the bloodiest battles ever fought on English soil.

The Battle of Towton Commemorative Events take place at Barley Hall, off Stonegate, the Richard III Experience at Monk Bar and the Henry VII Experience at Micklegate Bar between 10am and 3pm on Saturday 19th March. Check www.barleyhall.co.uk for specific event times. Normal admission prices apply at each attraction or purchase The JORVIK Group's Medieval Pass to gain entry to all three for one price.

When a Castle Restoration Goes Wrong



A botched restoration attempt in Spain has garnered international attention and condemnation from locals, historians and conservationists. Located in Villamartin, a city in the province of Cádiz Spain, the crumbling Moorish castle has been wrecked in an bungled attempt to save it from further destruction.

The castle was built in the ninth century by Christian convert, Omar Ben Hasfun (850-917 AD), and was last officially used five centuries ago to defend against Moorish incursions. The 1100 year old ruin was already in a delicate state after heavy rains

caused its final vault to crumble three years ago. Recent complaints over inaction to protect heritage sites in Cádiz prompted conservationists and city officials to undertake a restoration project to salvage what was left of the ancient structure.

The result which added in a shiny, new, modern looking wall, outraged locals and historians while provoking a storm of anger and mockery around the globe

Professor Roberta Gilchrist wins Archaeologist of the Year award for 2016

Roberta Gilchrist, winner of the 2016 Archaeologist of the Year award, with Julian Richards (Meet the Ancestors) who presented the awards at the Current Archaeology Live! 2016 conference on 26 February. (Photo: Current Archaeology/ Aerial-Cam)



Top honours for Archaeologist of the Year at the prestigious Current Archaeology Awards went to Professor Roberta Gilchrist. A pioneer in social approaches to medieval archaeology, she has addressed new questions on gender, age, and belief, and has published numerous major studies on medieval nunneries, hospitals, castles and burials. Her recently published monograph *Glastonbury Abbey: archaeological excavations 1904-1979* brings together the results of 36 seasons of excavations for the first time.

'I am truly honoured to have been voted Current Archaeology's Archaeologist of the Year 2016 and I would like to thank the CA readers and wider public who voted for me. I'm delighted that my work on Glastonbury Abbey has captured the public imagination, and I would like to pay tribute to my co-nominees Vince Gaffney and Philip Crummy, whose work I have long admired. I am particularly proud to be the first woman voted Archaeologist of the Year and to see that women dominated all categories of the Current Archaeology Awards 2016.'

Over 14,000 votes were cast for this prize. Accepting the award, Roberta Gilchrist said:

How you can join the hunt for Holy Island's lost monastery

By David Petts

The distinctive outline of Lindisfarne Castle perched on top of a rugged crag of basalt is one of the best-recognised images of north-east England and is a potent reminder of the important part the island played in the early history of Northumbria. This tidal island – only accessible at certain times of the day – lies close to the modern border between England and Scotland. Standing on its south-east corner was once one of the most important centres of Christianity in early medieval Britain.

As part of an exciting new project, Durham University and **DigVentures**, an innovative archaeological social enterprise, are planning a new investigation of this important site to find out more about this mysterious early monastery.

We know little about the prehistory of the island, although the flint tools of Mesolithic hunters and gatherers have been found close to its rocky northern shoreline. It's only in the seventh century AD that it suddenly emerges into historic view.

The early years of the seventh century had been tumultuous for the rapidly expanding kingdom of Northumbria. Under King

Aethelfrith, the kingdom had been forged from two competing dynasties, and under King Edwin, the Northumbrian rulers began to adopt Christianity, having been converted from the worship of their pagan gods by missionaries from Kent. In the inevitable inter-dynastic scuffles typical of early medieval kingdoms, Edwin's rival and successor Oswald had been exiled to Scotland, where he too converted.

Crucially though, Oswald adopted a different strand of Christianity from the monks of the Scottish isle of Iona, where it is thought he first encountered the church. When he arrived back in the heartlands of Northumbria he wanted to make a religious



Lindisfarne with its castle in the background - photo by xlibber / Flickr

statement that set him apart from Edwin and his legacy. Working with monks from Iona, he established a new monastery on Holy Island.

This was not some remote island fastness, where ascetic monks could escape to confront god in the wilderness. Instead, it straddled major sea and land routes and was just across the water from the great Northumbrian palace at Bamburgh. The monastery rapidly achieved prominence, helped by its royal patrons.

Miraculously, the monastery survived the fall-out of the **Synod of Whitby** in 664, when the Scottish-influenced Christianity brought to the north by Oswald gave way to the pushy Roman and Kentish traditions initially promoted by Edwin.

In the following years, Lindisfarne achieved a new prominence under its abbot, Cuthbert, a monk torn between his desire for the life of a hermit and the demands of high religious office. Soon after his death he was created a

saint and his cult was promoted by the monks on the island. The creation of the great illuminated manuscript known as the **Lindisfarne Gospels**, one of the great monuments of Western art, was probably part of the campaign to promote Cuthbert carried out by the religious community.

Ousted by Vikings

The monastery became increasingly wealthy, but in the late eighth century suffered one of the first Viking raids on Britain. The tempo of these attacks increased and according to the monastic historians, the monks left the island in 875. After a century-long exile, they set up a new home in Durham.

Yet, despite the high profile of the monastery in Northumbrian history, remarkably little is known about the monastery itself, beyond passing observations in the works of Bede and other early writers. A fine collection of Anglo-Saxon sculpture has survived, but

little is known about precisely where it was found. The ruins of a later Norman priory now dominate the village, and may stand over part of the earlier monastery. Early medieval monastic centres were large, dispersed and sprawling settlements, and it is likely that Cuthbert's monastery may have extended beyond much of the area covered by the modern village.

In recent years archaeologists are starting to get a better understanding of the archaeology of the island. Looking at the finds discovered – but never analysed – by Victorian gentleman archaeologists who crudely cleared out the later priory, a number of Anglo-Saxon objects have been recognised. These have been supplemented by the occasional appearance of similar items in small-scale archaeological investigations that have taken place in advance of construction.

A major new geophysical **survey** around the village has also been carried out. This has identified a number of areas where possible traces of the monastery have been identified, although of course, until we excavate, we won't know for sure.

Play a part

This project is one of the first archaeological projects to use crowdfunding. The project has been launched on the DigVentures website, allowing anyone interested in discovering the past to pledge support. In return for backing the project, supporters become part of the dig team.

By using **DigVenture's** crowdfunding and

crowdsourcing model, we are hoping to get people who subscribe into the field, where they will be using an entirely paperless recording system. By using a bespoke app, every object and discovery will be logged live from the trenches via iPads, tablets and smartphones, making it instantly accessible from anywhere in the world. As the site is recorded, all the data will be uploaded online, allowing subscribers to follow the progress of the excavation as it happens. It will also give the excavation team a chance to solicit information and advice from the international research community. These new approaches set to provide archaeologists with a model for carrying out fieldwork.

The centrality of the first Lindisfarne monastery in the history of the Anglo-Saxon Britain and its – until now – elusive nature gives this dig the potential to be one of the most important archaeological sites in the UK to be worked in recent years. This collaborative and open process of research and scientific excavation is the future of discovering the past.

**David Petts is a Lecturer in
Archaeology at the Durham
University**

**This article was first published in
The Conversation**

**Learn more at
<http://digventures.com/lindisfarne/>**

Videos

Dr. David Petts speaking about his archaeological project: An investigation of the Monastery and people of Lindisfarne (Holy Island) off the Northumbrian Coast.



A video from DigVentures, about the work they are doing in supporting archaeological research.



The View from the Scaffold: Executions in the Middle Ages

By Danièle Cybulskie

It's definitely true that medieval people used capital punishment far more frequently than we do today, and that the methods of execution could be pretty gruesome. To dismiss medieval executions out of hand as acts of simple bloodlust for the amusement of a crowd, though, is to misunderstand their purpose and their impact. Like the legal system that evolved over hundreds of years, medieval capital punishment was extremely complex and considered. Let's take a brief look at what judicial execution was really like in the Middle Ages.

The acts for which a medieval person could be executed were various and ranged from crimes against property, to those against people, to those against cultural beliefs. Mitchell B. Merback sums it up succinctly in his book *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*:

Throughout most of Europe and across the better part of a millennium, hanging was the punishment of thieves; breaking with the wheel was inflicted on murderers, rapists and

those who committed aggravated theft; arsonists, like heretics, witches and sodomites were burned; women charged with offences against religions or morality, such as adultery or infanticide, were drowned; and decapitation was used for a wide range of offenses, including manslaughter, robbery, incest, infanticide or major fraud. (p.140)

Merback rightly points out that the most gruesome executions were for "arch criminals" (p.140), like traitors and assassins, who might be hung, drawn, and quartered. While some of the acts listed are not considered criminal in the West anymore (thankfully), it's important to note that these medieval crimes were considered serious because they were thought to be threats against the pillars on which society was built—people were not hanged for jaywalking. It's also important to remember that to be charged with these offences was not tantamount to being sentenced to death: judges could still find people not guilty, or negotiate terms, or the sovereign could pardon the offender.



14th century depiction execution scene from the Chroniques de France ou de St Denis - British Library Royal 20 C VII f. 203v

Medieval European culture, and therefore its legal system, was firmly rooted in Christian theology. Because of this, executions were not just about revenge, but they were also fundamentally about atonement for the crimes committed. As with other sins, a Christian could ask forgiveness, make reparation, and be acceptable to God. So it was with convicted criminals: they were meant to show remorse, make reparation through the pain of their execution, and become once again acceptable to God (and

therefore the community). For this reason, as Merbeck mentions, medieval people were not as nervous as modern people are about executing an innocent person: an innocent person would simply be made more perfect through Christ-like suffering, and then enter the kingdom of heaven (p.156). We moderns think of execution as depriving a person of life; they thought of it as speeding a person to the afterlife, and the method with which criminals met their deaths would decide whether heaven or hell. As Merbeck

emphasizes, execution was considered an opportunity for a criminal to confess and repent, and to earn himself a "good death" (p.144) – something that, perhaps, he had denied another person.

The classic medieval mob scene is of people jeering and throwing things at the poor unfortunate on his way to the scaffold, but it seems that medieval people took the procession to the site of execution pretty seriously. While there were certain instances in which ridicule was an essential and acceptable part of a punishment, like time in the stocks, a prisoner who did not aggravate the crowd on the way to his execution did not necessarily have to expect to be mobbed. Not everyone's journey to the scaffold was dignified – sometimes criminals were tied or dragged, depending on their crimes or reputations – but it was the stoicism that criminals showed in the face of this which was essential to their good deaths. In some medieval traditions, the procession to the site of execution even involved revisiting the

scene of the crime in order for the convicted person to remember before their public atonement (Merback, p.138).

Once the criminal had reached the scaffold, they often had the opportunity to speak, to ask the crowd to pray for them, and/or to forgive the executioner. This was a public spectacle of repentance, which would then be followed by the punishment being carried out. While the body might suffer, the soul was given the opportunity to achieve perfection: no one was permitted to be executed without the chance to be shriven after the fourteenth century (p.148). For the crowd watching, this was an opportunity to satisfy a certain curiosity about how someone who has done awful things might act when faced with eternity, and a time to reflect on what he might do himself when faced with death. While there were some sadists in the crowd, no doubt, there were also devout people struggling with their own sins and asking themselves if they had the courage to meet their own deaths with fortitude.



15th century depiction of the execution of Amerigo Marcel - British Library Harley 4379 f. 64



**The execution of
Anne Boleyn,
German engraving
circa 1630**

The ideal death involved accepting the punishment, and willingly submitting to it with courage and humility. Anne Boleyn, although executed in the sixteenth century, reportedly had what medieval people would have considered as the best kind of death: she repented of her sins, praised the king, laid her own head on the block, and lost it with one stroke of a sword, like a warrior. The crowd watching would have seen someone so confident in her faith and forgiveness that she could accept death without fear of hellfire. Although Anne's death was relatively private, this was a huge part of the purpose of public executions in the Middle Ages: to instruct other members of society to have faith in justice and in God.

People have always been interested in the crimes and punishments of their fellow citizens, as borne out by the legions of true

crime books, television shows, and movies modern society keeps churning out. While our interest has remained the same, though, our views on the meaning and purpose of capital punishment are different. When we look at medieval executions, it is important to keep their purpose in the context of the time before deciding how much more savage our forebears were.

There are many great books on medieval crime and punishment, but I recommend Mitchell B. Merback's *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel* for a good overview of the rationale behind medieval justice and its penalties.

**Danièle Cybulskie is a weekly
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Hashish: Getting High in Medieval Egypt

It had nicknames names like "shrub of emotion", "shrub of understanding", "peace of mind", "branches of bliss" and "thought morsel" However, in the medieval Arabic world, cannabis was usually known as "the Herb", and not just because of its use in medicine. It was used to produce the hallucinogenic drug hashish, which could be found in wide use in places such as late medieval Egypt. Like today, medieval Egyptians debated much about the use of cannabis - whether or not it should be legal, and how harmful was it for the people.

Few historians have examined illicit drug use in the Middle Ages, but one of the most important works is Franz Rosenthal's book *The Herb: Hashish versus Medieval Muslim Society*. Published in 1971, the book focuses on Egypt from the 13th and 15th centuries, where it examines how the drug was written about it, both positively and negatively.

It had been long known that cannabis could be turned into a hallucinogenic drug, with ancient sources throughout Eurasia noting its mind-altering effects. Some medieval chroniclers believed that it was introduced to the Arab world by the Nizari Ismailis, an Islamic sect, who would go by the name Hashishin, other stories said that Sufi mystics were responsible for bringing it to the masses. Regardless of its source, cannabis was being cultivated around Egypt and sold openly in markets by the 13th century. The plant could be turned into hashish by a couple of methods - the leaves could be baked and turned into a paste, which was then sold in a pill form. Another way was to have the leaves dried, toasted and husked, to which sugar and sesame was added to make a food that could be chewed.



Sixth-century depiction of the Cannabis plant. Illustration from the Vienna Dioscurides.

Like those in our own day who use marijuana, the medieval Egyptians who consumed hashish commented on how the drug made them high, as well as hungry and a little lethargic. Some even reported that music sounded better when on the drug. Al-Ukbari, a seemingly pro-Hashish writer from the 13th century, described its effects like this: "Only intelligent and well-to-do people use hashish. When taking it, a person

should consume only the lightest of foods and the noblest of sweets. He should sit in the most pleasant of places and bring around the most distinguished of friends. In the end, he will go on and be concerned with thinking about sweet and food and assume all this is reality whereas in fact, he is asleep."

One can find many positive references to hashish among the poets and writers of that day. For example, this account noted:

By its subtlety, it clothes the dull person with frivolous wit so that he becomes smart and a good companion, in contrast to wine which is nasty in its effects and causes fear of being unexpectedly caught by authorities.

At the same time, one could find many others who condemned its use, like this poem:

*Say to those who eat hashish in ignorance:
You live the worst life imaginable when you eat it.
The worth of a man is a jewel. Why then,
You fools, do you sell it for a bit of grass.*

While medieval physicians knew about the health benefits of cannabis - it was used as diuretic for instance - they often also warned people about the bad effects of hashish. A 14th-century Egyptian, az-Zarkashi, gives a complete list of all the problems the drug caused:

It destroys the mind, cuts short the reproductive capacity, produces elephantiasis, passes on leprosy, attracts disease, produces tremulousness, makes the mouth smell foul, dries up the semen, causes the hair of the eyebrows to fall out, burns the blood, causes cavities in the teeth, brings forth the hidden disease, harms the intestines, makes the limbs inactive, causes a shortage of breath, generates strong illusions, diminishes the powers of the soul, reduces modesty, makes the complexion yellow, blackens the teeth, riddles the liver with holes, inflames the stomach, and leaves in its wake a bad odor in the mouth as well as a film and diminished vision in the eye and increased pensiveness in the imagination. It belongs to blameworthy characteristics of hashish that it generates in those who eat it laziness and sluggishness. It turns a lion into a beetle and makes a proud man humble and a healthy man sick. If he eats, he cannot get enough. If he is spoken to, he does not listen. It makes the well-spoken person dumb, and the sound person stupid. It takes away every manly virtue and puts an end to youthful prowess. Furthermore, it destroys the mind, stunts all natural talent, and blunts the sharpness of the mental endowment.

Throughout this period there was much debate among Muslim scholars on whether or not hashish was forbidden, and the viewpoints differed sharply. Some believed that because it was intoxicating like wine, it should not be allowed, while others pointed out that since the Qur'an and the early sayings of the Prophet Muhammad

never mention its use, it should not be considered illegal. The debate over its legality would even involve topics such as whether a man could ask his wife for a divorce while high (yes) and was it permitted to give it to animals (no, unless you were doing it to make them eat so you could fatten them up).

The Mamluk sultans of Egypt, as well as local officials, seemed to have changing views on whether or not the use of hashish should be allowed. Some took a hard line, with a few sultans called for the death penalty for those convicted, while another ordered that anyone caught have their molars removed. On the other hand, during an outbreak of plague in 1419, the local market inspector decided that the only restriction against hashish use was to prevent it from being sold in the open - presumably he was fine if it got sold in private buildings.

For those who wanted restrictions on hashish, they seem to have been fighting a losing battle. By the 15th century the drug was being sold more and more openly, and was being used by many. You could find it consumed at public baths or during parties in private houses. This also led to addicts as well, often described as members of the lower classes, who would congregate at certain sites to get their fix.

The historian al-Maqrizi, noting how widely hashish was being used in the early part of the 15th century, complained that this was ruining society: "Character and morals became overwhelmingly vile, the veil of bashfulness and shame was lifted, people used foul language, boasted of faults, lost all nobility and virtue, and adopted every possible ugly character quality and vice. Were it not for their human shape, nobody would think them human. Were it not for their sense perception, nobody would adjudge them living beings."

On the other hand, here were the words of another medieval poet on the issue, perhaps indicative what the ordinary person thought about the drug:

*I said to the man occupied with hashish:
Woe unto you! Do you not fear this grain?
People are dying of a plague that has appeared.
He replied: Let me live eating this lump.*

Further Reading:

Robert C. Clarke and Mark D. Merlin, *Cannabis: Evolution and Ethnobotany* (University of California Press, 2013)

Franz Rosenthal, *The Herb: Hashish versus Medieval Muslim Society* (Brill, 1971)

Women's Work and Family in the Viking Age

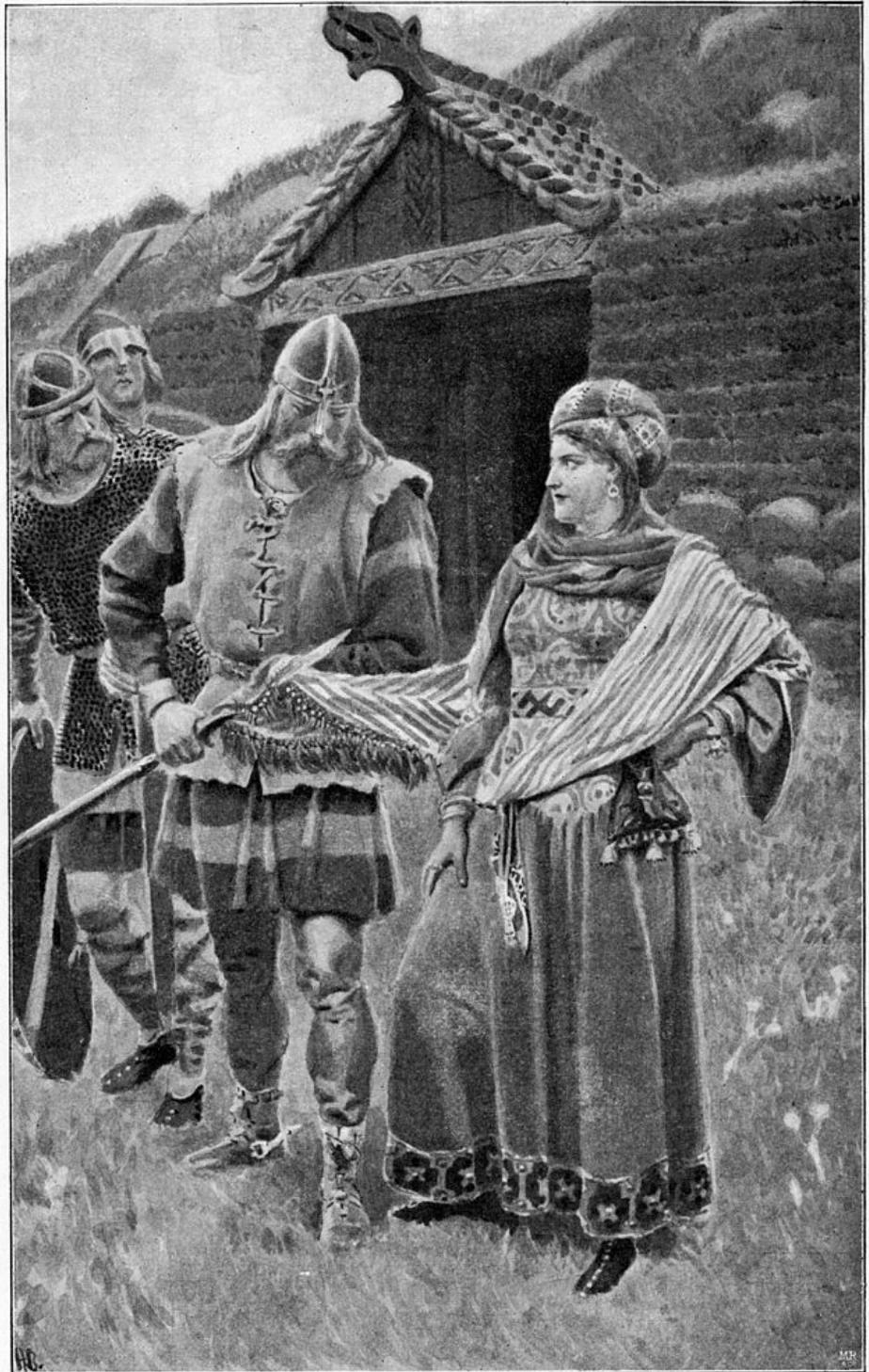
By Susan Abernethy

Women played many fundamental roles in Scandinavia during the Viking Age (eighth to eleventh century). Their positions ranged from slave to farmer to landholder and their tasks varied from the spinning and weaving of cloth, manufacturing garments and hangings, preserving, producing and cooking food and drink, tending livestock, working in the fields, cleaning and laundry to warming beds. There is little known about women in urban areas but if they were married to craftsmen or merchants, presumably they helped with their husband's business. The main sources of information on Viking Age women are archaeology along with the written sagas, poetry and runes and depictions of women in art.

Preparing and Serving Food

Women during this historical era managed all of the affairs related to inside the house while men were in charge of everything outside the house although women did venture outside for tasks related to their duties inside. The most telling evidence of women's work comes from the preponderance of goods found in graves. Women were buried with the tools of housekeeping and weaving while men were buried with items related to warring and fighting. Women would maintain and run farms while the men were away.

Women were in charge of the dairy operations. During the summer months, the Vikings made their home in the mountains in a shieling, a small house. The milch cows and ewes would be together near the shieling with a herdsman but the other animals would be free to roam. The women would perform the milking and create the dairy products which were an important part of the Scandinavian diet. This included fresh butter and a long-lasting butter made from sour cream and highly salted. They also made a soft cheese from sour fermented milk and a form of cheese curds called skyr. They would usually drink plain or boiled whey instead of



**From the Laxdæla Saga:
Guðrún and Halldor -
illustration by Andreas
Bloch in 1898**

the whole milk and would turn the whey into buttermilk.

Women would help with the harvest and the haymaking as the presence of sickles in graves indicates. In poor families, women would work in the fields during the harvest. In wealthier families, servants or slaves did some of the harder outdoor work. Women would collect berries, mosses, herbs, seaweed, wild fruit and bird's eggs. Women washed clothes, usually in streams and they were also responsible for drawing and

fetching water for drinking, cooking and bathing.

Women were responsible for the preparation and serving of meals. There were usually two meals a day; one in the morning about eight or nine and one in the evening after the men's work was over about seven or eight. Meals were eaten in the main room of the house. The food was served in wooden bowls and dishes carried by women servants. They also filled the tankards and drinking horns. If there were guests, the mistress of the

household and her daughters may have helped serve.

Foods that required no cooking included cheeses and skyr, salted meat or dried raw fish. Cooked meat and fish, porridge, gruel and bread were staples. Evidence exists that meat was roasted on a spit or baked in a pit filled with embers and covered with earth. This system was also used to bake bread and oat cakes and to make stews. The main drink was ale. Wine and mead were imported from countries further south.

Cloth and Weaving

A task women performed year round was the making of cloth which would be for household needs and also for export to Norway and England. Linen was made but the most common cloth was wool. This involved the shearing of sheep or goats and then cleaning and grading the wool. The wool was degreased and then carded with fingers or a comb to straighten it and separate the fibers. Next it would be spun on a distaff and spindle. The wool would be drawn out into a thread and then wound up, repeating the process until they had enough for a large ball of yarn. The thread may or may not have been dyed. The spinning process could be done in the arms, allowing the women to sit or walk around while performing the task.

Weaving was done on an upright loom against a wall in the house and the pattern was worked from the top downwards. The thread was passed back and forth and then beaten up with a wooden or whalebone "sword". The standard width of the cloth was probably about two ells (roughly three feet). More valuable cloth was made from dyed wool often in stripes or a pattern. The most popular color was red from the rose madder or *Rubia tinctorum* which grows freely in Iceland. Other colors were reddish-browns and violets from certain lichens and black from bog-mud permeated with iron. Some mineral dyes were also known.

Even more decorative weaving could be done on smaller looms. Narrower bands of cloth were sometimes woven which were used to trim the edges of garments and for headbands. These were created by a method called "tablet-weaving". The warp threads were passed through the corners of a small square board or bone plaque. Examples of this type of weaving have been found in graves and have silver and gold threads woven into them. Some sagas mention these decorative weavings and ribbons.

Objects found in Norse women's graves related to textile work include distaffs, spindles, and small looms, weaving "swords", wool-combs and large bone needles. Needle cases have also been found along with tweezers and different sizes of scissors. This indicates women practiced needlework and embroidery. They used wool, imported silk and silver threads. Narrative art in needle work was a skillful practice for women too.

Women's Clothing

There is a surprising consistency in the basic costume Viking women wore. They always wore a large pair of oval brooches, about four to five inches long that are known as "tortoise brooches" due to their appearance. These were worn in the area of the collar bone and held together with links of silver chain or beads. Dangling from the right hand brooch hung chains with other items such as keys, a knife, a comb, scissors, needles and maybe a purse. There may have been an additional brooch in the middle of the chest. Its shape varied from square or three-lobed, long or round.

Women wore a linen shift next to the skin which may or may not have had sleeves. It also may or may not have had pleats. Over the linen shift was a twofold garment which hung from two loops, held in place by the tortoise brooches. It appears this twofold garment was wrapped under the arms, one



Modern day depiction of a Viking woman - photo by Hans Splinter / Flickr

from right to left, and the other from left to right. The material of these garments was sometimes wool and sometimes linen with the outer material always of better quality material than the inner. Over all these garments was a fine woolen cloak or shawl which the third brooch held in place. These dresses hung loose or were tied up with an apron or a knotted girdle.

Viking women loved jewelry judging from the archaeological evidence. They wore the requisite brooches along with arm and finger rings, neck rings, and even toe rings. These rings were made from silver, gold and sometimes jet. Necklaces were made of domestic glass, bronze or amber beads and some were made with imported semi-precious stones such as crystal, cornelian or obsidian. Pendants were also popular.

Women and Family

It is most likely girls during the Viking Age in Scandinavian society did not receive much

in the way of education. They were expected to marry, have children and manage the household which she could learn from her mother. The "Sagas of Icelanders" notes a considerable number of cases where girls married at the age of twelve or in their early teens. Women didn't live as long as men due to the vagaries of childbirth so they had to marry early.

The distinguishing factor for a man between a wife and his concubines was the bride-price he paid for the wife. It was normal practice for the bride to receive a dowry from her father and a gift from her husband the day after her wedding. A portion of these gifts were retained as her own property. A valid wedding ceremony included drinking "bridal ale" before witnesses and the witnesses leading the man to the wife's bed. The wife kept her name and patronymic and her ties with her kinsmen were never broken.

A woman's main duty was to provide children and preferably male children. The upkeep of

of small children would have taken up the bulk of a woman's time. Children were breast fed for a long time. Women also were responsible for tending to and nursing the elderly and the sick. Rich Viking men had concubines and relations with slave women and many illegitimate children. The status of these children never suffered. All the children, legitimate and illegitimate, were usually brought up at home although some male children could be sent to another home as foster-sons.

Adultery by a wife was a crime. According to some provincial Danish and Swedish law, a wife's adultery gave the husband the right to kill her and her lover if they were caught in the act. Men generally had more leeway in committing adultery. The evidence points to polygamy being practiced by many Scandinavian earls and kings.

Divorce was easy and had no stigma for either party. Either the husband or the wife could declare before witnesses their complaint and their intention to divorce. The woman would usually return to her family with her personal belongings and her dowry. It is clear the woman kept her dowry so she would not become destitute after divorce.

Rune stones from the Viking Age show that the system of kinship was bilateral, meaning women could inherit property as well as men. Sons were usually given a stronger claim than their sisters but daughters had precedence over their uncles and grandfathers. Most importantly, women could inherit land from their sons and daughters who died without issue. The significance of securing family property was more important than maintaining the system of patriarchy.

There were unmarried women during the Viking Age. Those who were not needed at home could hire themselves out to do work such as cloth making and washing, cleaning, baking and brewing. Widows enjoyed a certain amount of freedom. She was no

longer beholden to her father or her husband and may have inherited considerable property giving her economic security. The most notorious Viking women held power through their children and could maintain considerable respect if they had lucrative dowries and landholdings.

There are some accounts of women who had personal power and wealth. There's the story of Aud the Deep-Minded who led her family to Iceland and meted out land among them as if she were a chieftain. There are inscriptions on rune stones attesting to bereaved women who paid for and erected the commemorative stones or built causeways and bridges in memory of their loved ones. A few of these stones were raised in honor of women. Some of the richest graves are those of women, indicating great respect, especially of older women. Grave goods buried with women could include pairs of scales representing good housekeeping or with keys to food or treasure chests indicating their authority in the home.

Women, on occasion, would participate in the proceedings to make laws called "things" but mostly as companions to men. They played a primary role in practicing medicine, using herbs and meting out advice handed down through generations. Women were also practitioners of magical medicine, using charms and incantations.

In summary, grave goods signify the type of work related to women during the Viking Age. These objects indicate women's tasks were related to the preparation of food and clothing. Women were responsible for bringing up children and caring for the elderly. They did have the ability to become merchants, work outdoors on the farm and perform carpentry and leatherwork as well as practice medicine. Burials indicate women could achieve a high social standing in rural communities. The sumptuous burial of Oseberg especially shows women attained

power, influence and wealth. But these women were the exception.

The introduction of Christianity in Scandinavia opened up the opportunity for women to travel on pilgrimages to the far reaches of the known world. It is clear from the rune stones and saga evidence that women did travel and helped colonize Iceland, Greenland, Scotland and the Faroe Islands and even North America. There is clear evidence women also accompanied men on trading and raiding voyages, especially in England. Burials in the trading centers of Birka, Hedeby and others suggest women did engage in trade and manufacturing and crafts either alone or with their husbands. It is clear women played an integral role during the Viking Age.

Further Reading:

Jonathan Clements, *Everyday Life in the Viking Age* (Running Press, 2005)

Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age* (Boydell, 1991)

Jacqueline Simpson, *Everyday Life in the Viking Age* (Hippocrene Books, 2007)

Kirsten Wolf, *Viking Age: Everyday Life During the Extraordinary Era of the Norsemen* (Sterling, 2013)

Susan Abernethy is the writer of The Freelance History Writer and a contributor to Saints, Sisters, and Sluts. You can also follow Susan on Twitter @SusanAbernethy2

The Global Side of Medieval at the Getty Center

By Danielle Trynoski

You know that you're going to experience some of the best, the brightest, and the shiniest when you visit the Getty. The current manuscript exhibit delivers some pretty shiny manuscripts, plus a hefty load of big bright ideas. I was fortunate to receive a tour of the exhibit from curatorial assistant Rheagan Martin and curatorial intern Alexandra Kaczenski, who provided abundant insight into the themes of the exhibit and pointed out exquisite details of the selected art pieces. Traversing the Globe through Illuminated Manuscripts will be open from January 26-June 26, 2016, and examines the concept of a Global Middle Ages through geography, religion, trade, and art. Bryan C. Keene, assistant curator of Manuscripts at the Getty and primary curator of the exhibit, focuses on medieval narratives aside from conflict, Christianity, and monarchs. When considering East versus West, the Crusades are a popular topic yet there are a multitude of components to consider as Keene illustrates in his thoughtful pairings and comparative displays of material created in the 9th-17th centuries.



Dani and Getty Staff - all photos by Danielle Trynoski

Traversing the Globe will be open for six months, longer than most of the manuscript exhibits at the Getty. On April 12, 2016, many of the manuscripts on display will (ahem) turn over new leaves. This minimizes potential damage to the text and illustrations. The turn-over in April presents a distinctive challenge to the curatorial staff. It made the original selection of manuscripts more difficult, to ensure that multiple leaves would fit the exhibit's themes, but it does require certain displays to have new labels produced. The additional planning pays off in extending the life of the overall exhibit by increasing the amount of time the manuscripts are exposed to light and exhibit conditions. The longer exhibit life also allows visitors the opportunity to view some special pieces on loan from multiple organizations, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Norton Simon Museum, the Huntington Library, private collections, and the Charles E. Young Research Library at UCLA.



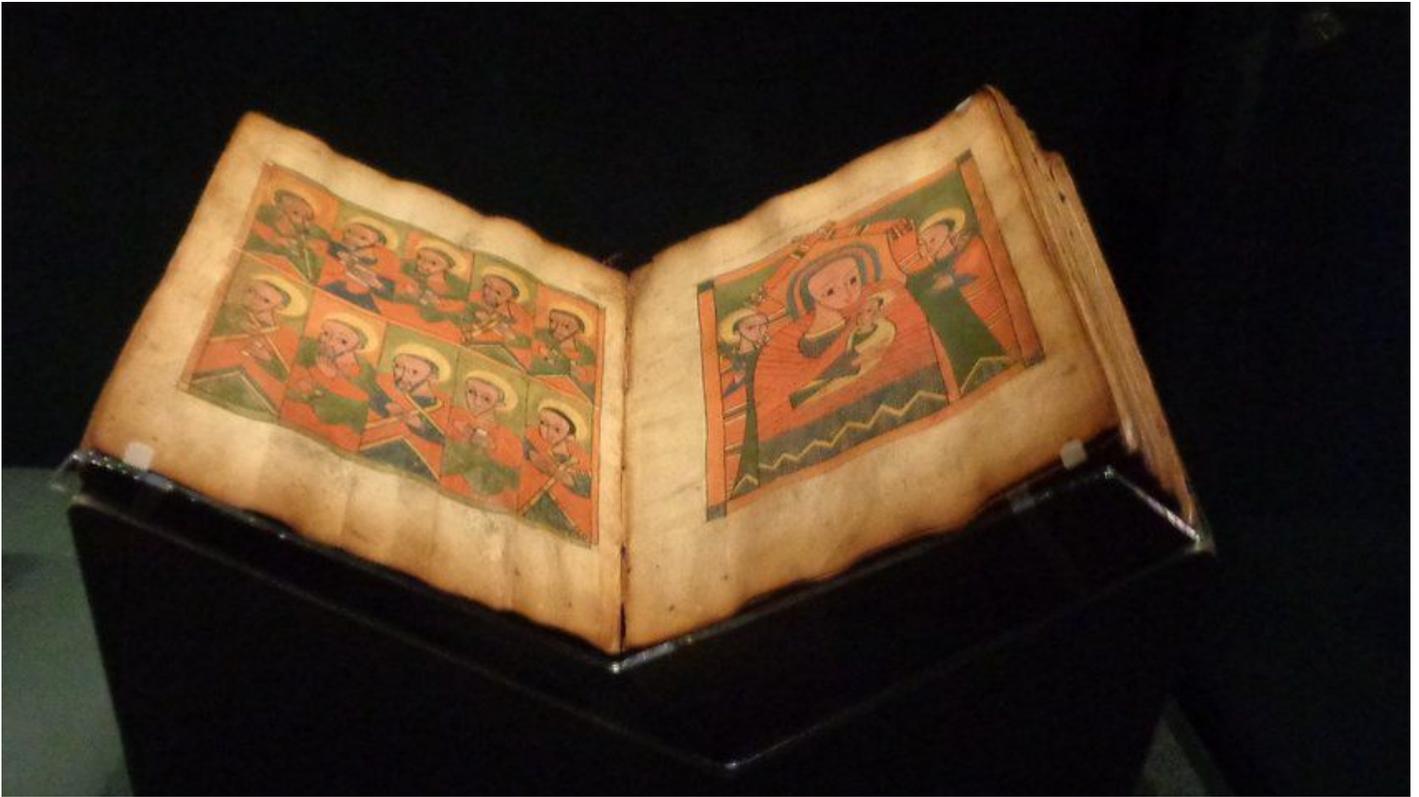
Atrium Map

This exhibit is all about telling alternative narratives and expanding the average visitor's understanding of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance. Keene is aiming to both broaden and deepen awareness using geography, comparison, and related artistic motifs as his tools. The exhibit is in two galleries connected by a central atrium. The central space houses a large platform with a map graphic (get the graphic here: http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/globe/globe_gallery_text.pdf). This platform provides an overview of the exhibit's central themes, and uses spotlight pieces to illustrate the geographic spread of the artworks' origins. It really is a global representation, with art in multiple media from modern-day India, China, Armenia, Italy, Ethiopia, Mexico, and more. The inclusion of this display in the central atrium really connects the two galleries; without it I think many visitors would gloss over the related themes in the two rooms. It is also one of the few manuscript exhibits to extend into two galleries, so thank you to the Getty for supporting medievalism!



Gallery View

One gallery was organized geographically, while the second gallery was organized by themes of religion, trade, and transmission. While a multi-faceted exhibit can reach a diverse audience, this seemed to be ever-so-slightly overreaching in its attempt to include multiple narratives. I applaud Keene's ambition to show the true diversity of the Middle Ages but the average visitor may be overwhelmed or need multiple visits to really grasp the scope of the exhibit (or need some prior knowledge of medieval history!). He touches on the transmission of materials, symbols, and religion; he illustrates the misconceptions and comical depictions of far-away cultures and creatures, shows diplomatic relations, provides examples of historic theories of geography and cartography, and encompasses evidence of trade and peaceful exchange, plus more. Traversing the Globe contains a lot of information; there are so many sub-themes illustrated that the average visitor may lose track of the main concept. You can be overwhelmed by too much good stuff in this exhibit; it's like a giant burrito: everything in it is really tasty but it's a LOT of good stuff! Perhaps I'm wrong, and visitors are delighted by the rich context. I hope that most visitors are charmed by many of the wonderful and unique pieces in this exhibit, regardless of their intellectual take-away. I know I definitely enjoyed the diversity and the attention paid to less-common narratives.

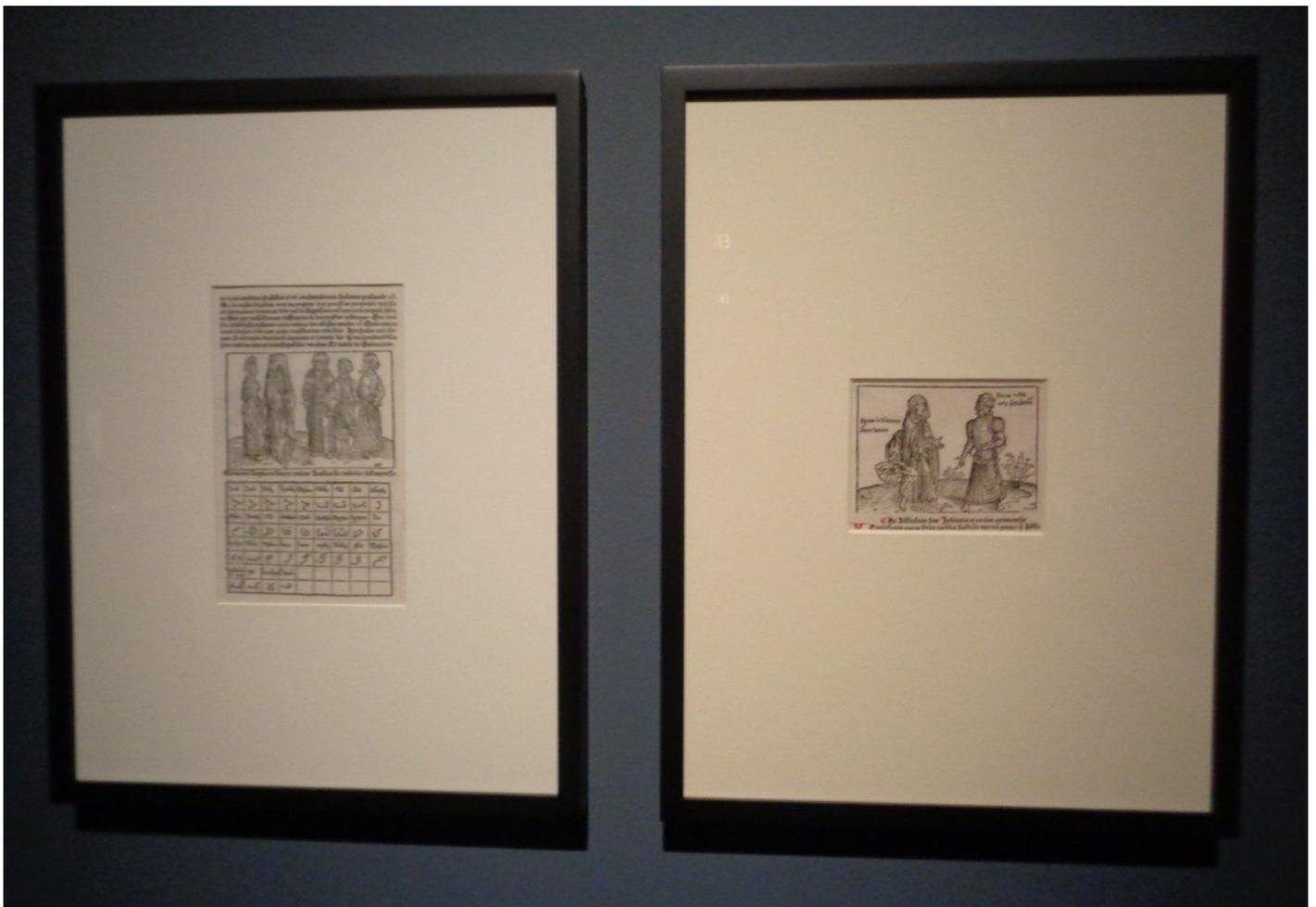


Above: Ethiopian Manuscript. Below: Chausable front



Trade and exchange is an important facet of the exhibit content and selected pieces provide evidence of political, economic, and artistic exchanges. Manuscripts were extremely expensive to produce, yet they were a relatively portable commodity. This made them ideal tools for use in diplomatic relations and communicated academic, religious, and artistic principles. The transmission of the *çintamani*, an artistic element, was glaringly obvious in the comparison of a manuscript from Istanbul and a chausable front from Venice both from the early 16th century. The *çintamani*, originating in a Hindu or Buddhist context, is used in multiple media and only becomes prevalent in Europe during the Middle Ages. Nearby, illuminated parchment medallions with text from the Qur'an and the Shah Abbas Bible with Arabic marginalia are further evidence of cross-continental exchange.

While many objects and materials were successfully exchanged in the Global Middle Ages, some ideas, concepts, and descriptions of foreign wonders didn't always make the trip with a high level of integrity. Several manuscripts from various locations and centuries offer very diverse interpretations of elephants, including one closer to a dog than a large pachyderm! An early print published in Germany in 1486 provides a helpful Arabic alphabet, along with a somewhat fanciful illustration of "Saracen" costume. The ambiguously draped tunics and turbans have somewhat of a fantasy element to them, and the viewer can't help but think that the artist used his imagination rather than an accurate description.



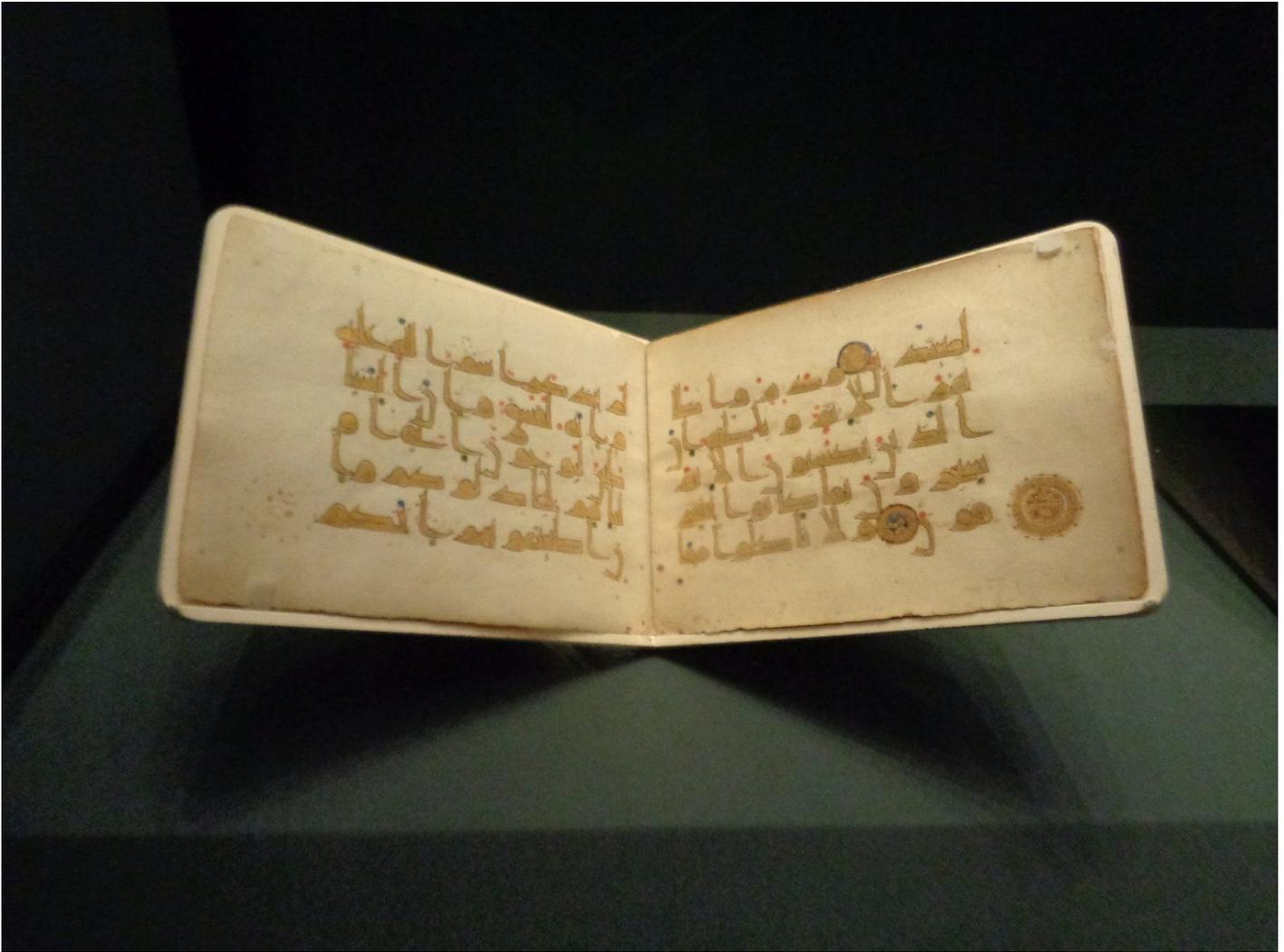
Arabic Alphabet print

A few other pieces are particular highlights for me. An illustrated 15th century bible from the Gunda Gunde Monastery in Ethiopia (above) blended local traditions of royal portraiture with Christian figures and symbology. The leaves displayed were instantly recognizable as Christian yet the style, shapes, and color palette was very distinctively non-European. Nearby, wooden staves with painted scenes from the life of the Buddha were remnants of an Indian manuscript binding system from 1075-1100. Leaves from Indian manuscripts were displayed in both galleries, and featured three red dots along the center horizontal axis of the rectangular page, through which cord would run and attach to the top and bottom boards. One of the leaves displayed still had a silk screen covering a gold-leaf illumination, in similar fashion to many European manuscripts.



Indian Manuscript Boards

The online media support is fantastic and includes the illustrated exhibit checklist and Medieval Manuscripts Live, an audio guide which provides opportunities to hear the text of manuscripts read aloud in original languages. You can access Medieval Manuscripts Live from your home or your phone, which means you can bring it right into the gallery and hear Old French or Medieval Arabic as you're looking at the 9th century Qur'an with gold-leaf lettering! (<http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/tags/medieval-manuscripts-alive/>) You can explore the exhibit and related materials online at this website (<http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/globe/>) or visit in person at the Getty through June 26, 2016. Plan your visit using this information (<http://www.getty.edu/visit/>).



Above: Ninth-century Qu'ran

Below: Getty Center Orientation Film

Danielle Trynoski earned her MA in Medieval Archaeology at the University of York in England. When she's not visiting museums and historical sites, she's riding horses or reading about Vikings. She currently lives in southern California and manages the website CuratoryStory.com



Stary Olsa: Where Rock 'n' Roll Meets Medieval Music

Not many medieval musicians become viral hits on Youtube, but that is what happened in the fall of 2014 when a video by the Belarus band Stary Olsa garnered hundreds of thousands of views. It was their cover of Metallica's famous song "One", performed with medieval instruments. Now, to capitalize on this success and the attention they received, the band is set to release an entire album of rock hits as if they came out of the Middle Ages.



Last month the band launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise funds to create an CD that would feature recreating songs such as "Another Brick in the Wall", by Pink Floyd and "Smells Like Teen Spirit" by Nirvana with medieval instruments. They had hoped to raise \$7000 (US) but the response was huge - they have raised double that amount with another two weeks to go before the campaign ends. They will use the extra funds to increase the number of songs on their album, while most of those donating will be getting CDs or digital downloads of the music, which is expected to be released later this summer.

Sary Olsa, which now consists of Źmicier SasnoŹski, Illia Kublicki, Aleś ČumakoŹ, Maryja Źaryj, SiarhieŹ TapčeŹski, and Aliaksiej Wojciech, was formed in 1999 and has already released eleven albums that feature medieval and early modern music from eastern Europe. This new album will represent an opportunity to mix their love of medieval music with modern rock music.



We interviewed the band by email to learn more about them and their project:

Your group has been performing since 1999 and has released nearly a dozen albums. How has Sary Olsa evolved over this period?

Źmicier SasnoŹski: At the beginning of our career we were barely familiar with the enormous heritage of the Middle Ages, that's why we're stylizing a lot and composing "in style". But with time (after 10 years of diving in Medieval!) manuscripts and notes and tabs from different countries started flowing into our hands from everywhere. We have got and are still getting lots of help especially from Belarusian and Polish historians, who work in archives and libraries. And now we get a genuine pleasure from the process of reading, recognition and interpretation of the ancient note scripts.

In addition to the repertoire the number of our instruments is constantly enlarging! The group membership has changed a bit too. Although the main members still remained, some really "infected" (in a good meaning) with the Medieval music people have joined us.

How did you come up with the idea of covering modern songs?

Maryja Šaryj: We love the old music, the history of our country and the sound of the old instruments. You know, at our rehearsals we used to make fun playing our favorite rock melodies on our instruments, as it sounded unusual. And one of our friends once said: «Why don't you play in my new show on TV!» So we tried. "One" became our first experiment; we wanted to draw people's attention to the actual content of this song by refreshing it with a different sound. Then we decided to keep going with the great classic – Deep Purple "Child in Time". This is actually our favorite cover) No, please, don't consider us as a cover band! This is just the way of drawing the attention of those, who are not familiar with the wonderful medieval music and the history of our ancestors and the rich cultural heritage, through the voices of our medieval instruments.

How challenging is it to play modern rock songs on medieval instruments?

Illia Kublicki: Modern instruments are undoubtedly superior to the ancient instrument in volume, range and technical capabilities. That's why in some covers we had to improvise instead of exactly repeating the melody or harmony. But this is the sense of a cover – to show your own vision, your interpretation of the song. At the same time due to the great possibilities of the lute, and namely its possibility to perform polyphonic music, the lute performed simultaneously the bass guitar part and the solo guitar part in Red Hot Chilli Peppers "Californication" cover. Working on the covers we got convinced once again that the old instruments are much richer than any other contemporary instrument in patch.

Your cover of Metallica's "One" became quite a viral hit on social media. What was your reaction to all this new found attention?

Maryja Šaryj: Yes, it was unexpected! Because it was just an experiment. Lots of feedbacks, comments, emails. Our website just burst from the visitors. We were very glad that having seen this video people got interested in the major work of the band, the instruments, the history and learnt a bit more about Belarus! And for ourselves it became the turning point in the further evolution of the band. Thanks to Metallica!

I've read in another interview that you like to have your live shows recreate the feel of performing as if in a medieval tavern. Why is it important for you to bring that kind of style and authenticity to your music?

Žmicier Sasnoŭski: It's not enough to listen to the music, one really wants to feel, touch and even drink/eat this amazing époque – The Middle Ages. Thus it is important to organize such concerts, where there are many features of the true medieval life such as dances, clothes, lights, music, etiquette and surely food, beer and wine. We are deeply convinced that our passion for the Middle Ages is not just a desire for naturality in everything from food to music, it is also a protest against plastic-asphalt-concrete world, that we got into by God's will.



**To support their project, please visit
their Kickstarter page at:**

**[https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/staryolsa/
stary-olsa-album-medieval-classic-rock](https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/staryolsa/stary-olsa-album-medieval-classic-rock)**

**To learn more about the band, please visit
their website at**

<http://staryolsa.com/>

Book Excerpt

Joan of Kent

The First Princess of Wales

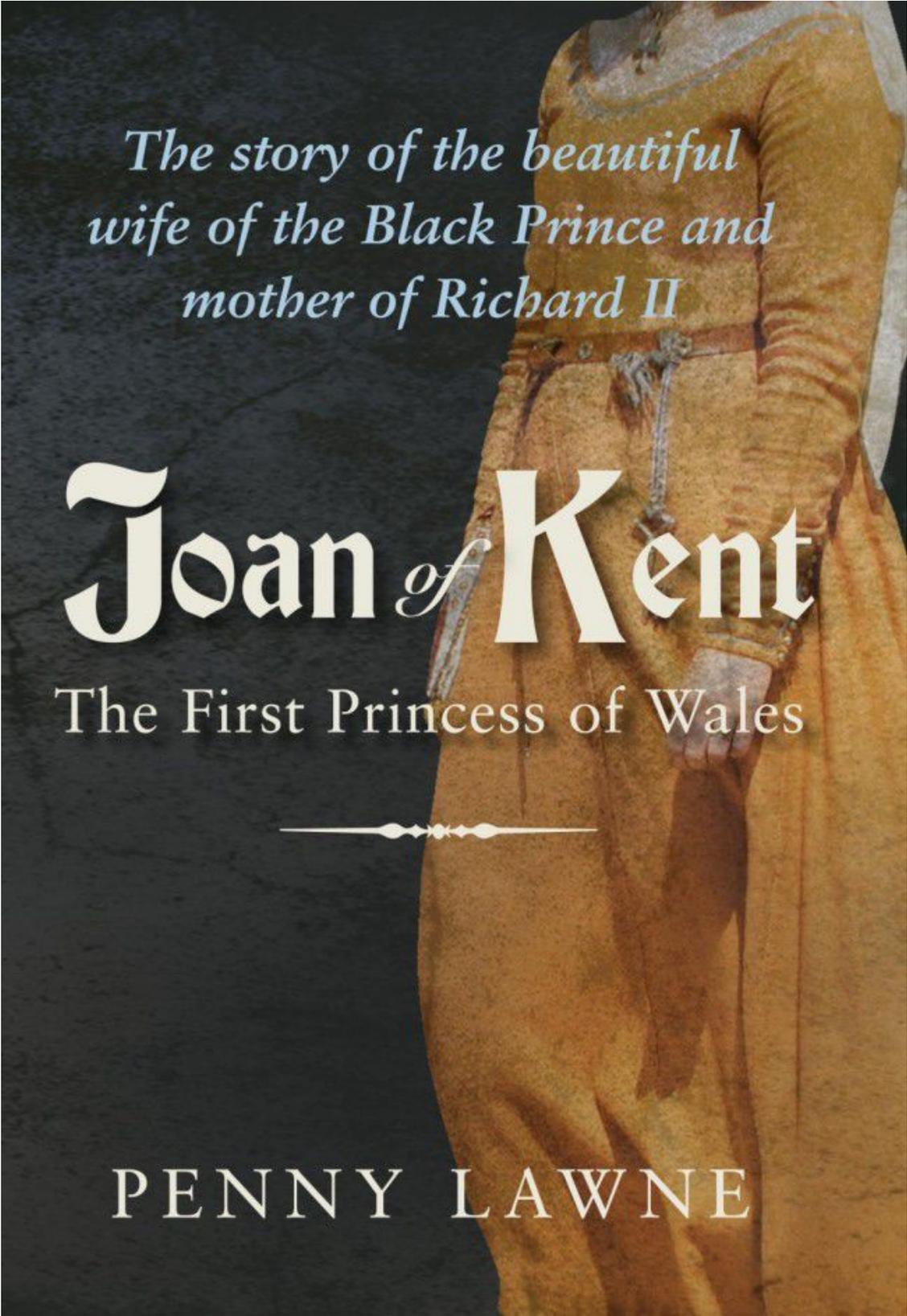
By Penny Lawne

Amberley Publishing, 2015

ISBN: 9781445644653

Immortalised by the chronicler Froissart as the most beautiful woman in England and the most loved, Joan was the wife of the Black Prince and the mother of Richard II, the first Princess of Wales and the only woman ever to be Princess of Aquitaine. The contemporary consensus was that she admirably fulfilled their expectations for a royal consort and king's mother. Who was this 'perfect princess'?

In this first major biography, Joan's background and career are examined to reveal a remarkable story. Brought up at court following her father's shocking execution, Joan defied convention by marrying secretly aged just twelve, and refused to deny her first love despite coercion, imprisonment and a forced bigamous marriage. Wooed by the Black Prince when she was widowed, theirs was a love match, yet the questionable legality of their marriage threatened their son's succession to the throne. Intelligent and independent, Joan constructed her role as Princess of Wales. Deliberately self-effacing, she created and managed her reputation, using her considerable intercessory skills to protect and support Richard. A loyal wife and devoted mother, Joan was much more than just a famous beauty.



*The story of the beautiful
wife of the Black Prince and
mother of Richard II*

Joan of Kent

The First Princess of Wales

PENNY LAWNE

Read an Excerpt: Introduction

Jean Froissart, probably the most famous of the fourteenth-century chroniclers, described Joan as 'in her time the most beautiful woman in all the realm of England and the most loved' ('en son temps la plus belle dame de tout le roialme d'Engleterre et la plus amoureuse'). His description has proved remarkably enduring, and it is by her posthumously bestowed sobriquet of 'Fair Maid of Kent' that Joan is best known. Successive chroniclers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were fascinated by the legend of her beauty and desirability, and by the seventeenth century Joan had

identified as the blushing beauty rescued from embarrassment at the ball by Edward III in Vergil's account of the founding of the Order of the Garter. Although historians have rejected the Garter story, it is the view of Joan that generally remains. Yet this description is misleading, and belies the significance of Joan's life. Joan was Princess of Wales for twenty-four years, and one of the most important and influential women of her age. A granddaughter of Edward I, in 1361 she married Edward III's eldest son, Prince Edward (after his death better known as the Black Prince), and became Princess of Wales, the first member of the English royal family to have that title. Until the prince's death in 1376, Joan was expected to succeed her mother-in-law, Queen Philippa, as the next queen. For seven years she helped Prince Edward preside over the principality of Aquitaine, and bore him two sons. When Edward III died, a year after the prince's death, Joan's son Richard became king at the age of ten. As Richard's mother, Joan was in a position of considerable power and authority up to her death in 1385. Despite her distinction, there has been no full-length biography of her life, and her story remains largely untold. This book is an attempt to tell her story and examine the real woman behind the legend.

There are obvious difficulties in looking at Joan's life. There is no surviving collection of private correspondence by or to Joan, and there are no family or personal papers. None of the records kept for her, such as household accounts, administrative records, wardrobe accounts, livery rolls and estate accounts, have survived. Without such accounts, much that could be known about Joan is lost. The dearth of archive material relating to Joan is a serious handicap for a biographer, and partly explains why historical writing on her is lamentably limited. In addition, histories of the fourteenth century have traditionally been male dominated. The contemporary chroniclers and later historians concentrated their attention on war, politics and government, all areas from which women were largely excluded as they could not hold office, or go to war, and although they were allowed to own land they had no independent legal standing unless widowed. The law, reinforced by the Church's attitude, stressed the subordination of women. Inevitably the official records contain far more about the men in Joan's life (in particular the prince and Richard II) than they do about her, despite her rank and status. A biographer therefore also has to draw on the lives of those closest to Joan to help provide some of the missing details of her life.

Edward III's claim to the French throne initiated the start of the Hundred Years War, and the conduct of the war, the deliberate fostering of the chivalric culture by the king and the resulting upheavals in domestic politics, with the escalating tensions that culminated in the Peasants' Revolt in 1381, have fascinated writers for centuries. The fourteenth century is rich in tales of chivalry, expounded by contemporary writers such as Froissart and Jean le Bel. Men carry out brave deeds in accordance with a knightly code of conduct, often with the aim of winning the hearts of their fair ladies, as in Froissart's tale of the English knights at Valenciennes who vowed to wear eyepatches on one eye until they had performed feats worthy of their lady. Edward III consciously promoted the chivalric ethos of his court, with his creation of the Order of the Garter as its most visible symbol, to foster unity among his nobility and to

ensure support for his war with France. His eldest son, Prince Edward, was considered by his contemporaries to be the exemplar of chivalric knighthood. The Church assisted in the glamorisation of war, calling knights to the aid of fellow Christians on crusade. Tales of knight errantry and worthy deeds of arms were encouraged. Romantic literature with the tales of heroes like Arthur, Charlemagne, Roland and Oliver were popular reading among the aristocracy. Chivalry was an elitist culture, restricted to the nobility, in which women were portrayed as supportive adornments, and the dividing line between reality and fairy tale sometimes deliberately blurred, as in the depiction of Joan as one of the objects of gallantry at Valenciennes, and her representation by Chandos Herald as the perfect knight's lady.

Much that is known about Joan derives from the accounts of the contemporary chroniclers, who present her as a popular figure in her lifetime. Although there are no contemporary portraits, her beauty was undoubtedly a real attribute, firmly established by Froissart, and her depiction by the prince's panegyrist, Chandos Herald, as beautiful, pleasant and wise ('que bele fu plesant et sage'). The Chronique des quatre premiers Valois described her as 'une des belle dames du monde et moult noble'. Froissart and Chandos Herald had first-hand knowledge; Froissart was a member of Queen Philippa's household at the time of Joan's marriage to the prince and stayed at their home at Berkhamsted after the marriage, and he was later a guest in their house in Aquitaine when Joan gave birth to Richard in 1367, while Chandos Herald served Sir John Chandos, one of the closest of Prince Edward's friends and knights. The prince's marriage is recorded by most of the chroniclers, and these recite Joan's royal lineage and her marital history. Joan's desirability is evident from her colourful marital history; she was Thomas Holand's widow when she married the prince, but was known to have gone through a form of marriage with William Montague which had been set aside. The births of her two sons by the prince are recorded, and during Richard's reign there are more frequent references to Joan, particularly of her intercessions on behalf of John of Gaunt during the Peasants' Revolt, and her death in 1385 is attributed to her distress at her failure to reconcile Richard with his half-brother John Holand.

You can learn more about *Joan of Kent: The First Princess of Wales*, from Amberley Publishing, by visitng their website at:

www.amberley-books.com/joan-of-kent.html

Tales from Sacchetti

Gambling and

Murder

We bring you another tale from a work called *Novelle* by Franco Sacchetti. Sacchetti was a 14th-century Italian novelist and poet, who spent most of his life in Florence. He wrote various works, but is most remembered for the about 300 short stories he made. It is difficult to know which tales are real and which parts are fictitious, but often they are very funny and offer a look at the daily lives of medieval people that we rarely see. This story involves a gambling game called zara, which involved using three dice.

Messer Giovanni of Negroponte, having lost at zara all he possessed, goes to revenge himself and kills a maker of dice.

Messer Giovanni of Negroponte, a very great and clever jester and singer, having one day lost all that he possessed at zara, in the heat of his anger and under the impulse of the game, took a knife and went to seek a maker of dice, and killed him. And being taken and led before the lord of that land, who was a despot, but who had a great affection for him, the lord asked him:

"How now, Messer Giovanni, what had moved you to kill a wretched man and expose yourself to death?"

He replied: "My lord, it was only the affection I bear unto your person, and the thought of the love you bear unto me; and this is the reason. I had lost at play all that I had, and was very near killing myself; but as I prepared to do homicide, I reflected upon the love which you bear unto me, and how that you could not live without me, and in order that you might not lose me, nor I lose you, I went to spend my wrath upon the man who made the dice, thinking that would be a most worthy revenge. Many lords and rulers like yourself often inflict a punishment on those who play; but, considering how many evils come from gaming, I believe that it would be far better to destroy ail the makers of games all over the worlds as I have destroyed this one, rather than leave them alive. And if you do but reflect upon how many evils come



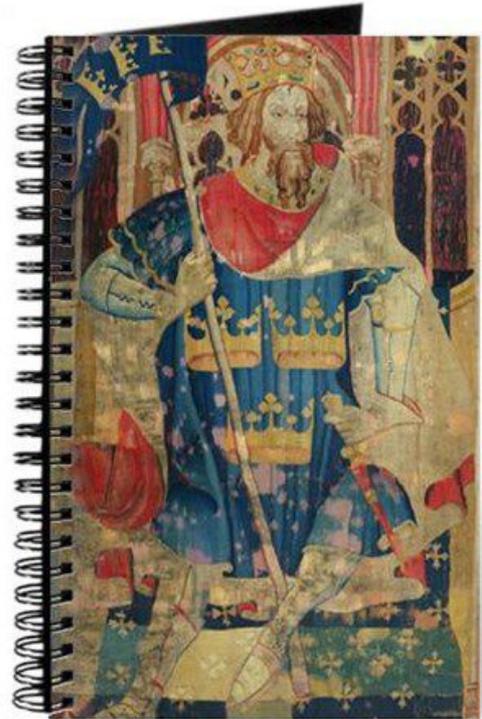
16th century image by Wilhelm Werner von Zimmern - from Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Don. A III 54, fol. 125v,

my reasoning may not displease you."

The lord, who was of perfect understanding, considered the excellent reasoning of Messer Giovanni of Negroponte, and made a law that in all his territory whosoever made dice should forfeit both his person and his possessions; and moreover, that whosoever made dice might be killed without any punishment falling upon the murderer and that whosoever should be found carrying dice should pay a penalty of a thousand lire or lose his hand; and whosoever was found playing where there were dice should forfeit his person and his possessions. And thus was extinguished throughout his territory this worst of sources, this most malignant root of evil, whence spring the cursing of God, the wasting of riches, the union of pride and anger, thieving and stealing through avarice, murder and gluttony, and, through this, the giving way to unbridled luxury and all the evils that nature can commit. And Messer Giovanni of Negroponte was pardoned, and he who made the dice and was killed paid the penalty.

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