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The Medieval Magazine

August 24, 2015

Author Dani Trynoski (left) and associate curator of manuscripts Kristen Collins (right) with Saints Mary and Elizabeth on the exhibit's title panel.

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18 Millionth Visitor comes to JORVIK Viking Centre

McKee family outside JORVIK with Viking re-enactor, Arnor (Max O'Keeffe) – Photo courtesy York Archaeological Trust

JORVIK Viking Centre has welcomed its 18 millionth visitor through its doors. The McKee family consisting of Andrew, Penny, William and Evie from Manchester,were informed of the news at 11.10am yesterday morning, whilst waiting to enter the attraction.

JORVIK Viking Centre opened to the public on the 14th April, 1984, attracting people from all over the world to discover what life was like over 1,000 years ago in York. Many famous faces have also experienced the reconstructed city of Jorvik, with the like of HRH The Prince of Wales, HRH The Duke of York, York's very own Dame Judi Dench, Tony Robinson, Liv Tyler and even Timmy Mallet visiting to name but a few.

Based on an archaeological dig by York Archaeological Trust in the 1970s which led to over 40,000 Viking-age artefacts being unearthed, JORVIK Viking Centre was a world first incorporating all the sights, sounds and smells of Viking-age York. It truly was a significant step that changed the face of museum interpretation.

David Scott, Head of Marketing for York Archaeological Trust, comments "Now in its 31st year, JORVIK Viking Centre continues to educate and entertain families from all over the world on the Viking Age and as a not for profit organisation, income generated by our paying visitors helps to fund the Trust's charitable activities to ensure the past is something that is enjoyed by all."

Click here to visit the Jorvik Viking Centre website

New Fight over the Battle of Northampton

On July 10, 1460, Yorkist and Lancastrian armies met near the River Nene in Northamptonshire. This battle from the Wars of the Roses ended with the capture of King Henry VI. Now, 555 years later, partof the battlefield where this took place is under threat from a developer looking to build a parking lot.

Delapre Golf Club has made an application to the Northampton Borough Council to create a parking lot that would have room for 41 cars. Earlier this year they even began removing soil from the site, before the local council ordered them to stop.

While the golf club claims to have made an archaeological survey of the site, in which they made discoveries of "no importance", heritage groups and historians have criticized their actions and call local officials to deny the rezoning application.

The Northampton Battlefield Society has led the efforts against the parking lot. In a statement, they said:

The application claims that there no finds of archaeological importance, and this has been reported in the local press. This is contrary to the archaeological report, the key part of which has been strangely tucked away at the back of the photographs section of the documents. The broach is potentially of national significance as it is of high status with a French inscription and as the report admits, may be from the 1460 battle.

Crucially, the report clearly states there has been insufficient evidence found to date that can categorically discount the round shot from being from the 1460 battle. There has also been numerous finds of round shot of these sizes found elsewhere in England and dated to

the medieval period (see Portable Antiquities Scheme database). The only way to determine the date of the shot is 'uranium thorium lead isotopic analysis' and this has not been carried out. If, the shot is proved to be from 1460, then this could not only be a crucial part of the battlefield but also of national significance in that it is the earliest known use of hand-gunnes in England, and be the oldest surviving small round shot in England too.

Until the whole registered battlefield has been archaeologically investigated and understood, the true significance of this area cannot be known. In the long term, this area might prove to be a part where a future battlefield trail etc. could be sited. It is therefore extremely short-sighted to allow any development of this sensitive area at this time.

They society is calling to have a "full archaeological survey before any planning permission can be considered." Other heritage groups, including Battlefields Trust, Tudor Society, and Richard III Society have also made objections.

The matter will be decided by the Northampton Borough Council in September.

Drone Technology Aids in Discoveries at Medieval Irish Sites

Unmanned aerial vehicles served as important tools in research at the Lough Key archaeological site. Photo courtesy Saint Louis University

By Jeanette Grider

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) have been gaining attention in the news for the last few years, but archaeologists like Saint Louis University history professor Thomas Finan, Ph.D., have always appreciated what aerial photography could accomplish.

Finan says UAV technology, along with high speed computer applications and mapping software, and sensors that can collect multi-spectral image are changing archaeology, adding that unmanned aerial survey is the next great jump in archaeological technology.

For nearly 20 years, Finan has spent summer breaks on archaeological digs, often taking SLU students to areas such as North Roscommon in Ireland in search of ancient sites, relics and a deeper glimpse of history.

Finan has now partnered with Paul Naessens, director of Western Aerial Survey, and a field archaeologist he has worked with for two years in North Roscommon, to further their exploration through the use of UAVs.

"Paul is not only a great archaeologist," said Finan. "He is fully licensed by the Irish Aviation Authority to carry out these surveys and broaden our knowledge of the area."

Finan has been working in north County Roscommon for the last two decades, conducting archaeological explorations at a number of sites, including the ecclesiastical complex at Kilteasheen, the Rock of Lough Key, the MacDermot moated site stronghold near the Rock, six ringforts (smaller agricultural settlements) and the Kilbrian ecclesiastical site. He says the landscape is breathtaking, but the archaeology is even more incredible.

"In 2013-14, we identified what we believe to be a major medieval Gaelic settlement in

proximity to the Rock of Lough Key, a stunning island fortification," Finan said. " This year, we focused our attention on some lesser known sites in the area, including a ringfort that shows great promise for medieval settlement and what appears to be a major settlement in association with the parish church at Kilbrian."

The survey, conducted as part of an ongoing field survey of north Roscommon, brings together the latest in archaeological technology to enhance the understanding of sites that had been identified before.

"Most of these sites are found in the inventory of the National Monuments Service, but are often given cursory classification distinctions," Finan added. "My interest is piecing together various medieval settlements (high status lordly sites, ecclesiastical sites, lower status agricultural sites) to explain social dynamics and the events of the thirteenth century in particular."

Finan's team uses traditional tools such as gradiometry, electrical resistivity and topographical surveys to identify features in the landscape. The aerial survey adds a completely new element to the study.

"We have collected an unprecedented amount of digital data," Finan said. "The 3D landscape data allows us to see minute changes in the topography that can be defined as structures and human occupation. The digital data collected with the geophysics is then wrapped around that 3D data to give us an amazing understanding of what is there without sinking a spade."

Finan says managing this data has been a challenge. The amount of data collected in aerial survey fills hard drives quickly, and dealing with archiving and storage is a major pre-occupation for the team.

"We build a great deal of redundancy into the project, but in reality the management of the data revolves around developing tools that can both archive and present the data in new ways. This is really where the cutting edge of digital archaeology is right now. We have tons of digital data, but what do we do with it? From our perspective, we have chosen to make the data freely available to anyone who wants to use it for scholarly purposes with proper attribution using an open-data policy. Our next step is to integrate that database with other archaeological information that has been collected over the years from excavations, archives and even aerial photos from a hundred years ago."

While the project is ongoing, Finan is content with saying that the process of data collection is reaching a significant milestone after only three years.

"When combined with the rich collection of historical sources that we have for north Roscommon in the thirteenth century, this research has huge potential to change the way we understand that century. But what is more important to me is that the local population in north Roscommon appreciates this research and has been so helpful to us all these years. Farmers have told us about sites not recorded, have given us access to their lands, and have been thrilled to see students from America working in their area. It continues to be a great experience for all involved."

For additional information, contact Dr. Finan at **finantj@slu.edu.**

Stanford historian says falsified medieval history helped create feminism

Through research into the first historians of medieval Europe, Professor Paula Findlen discovers that an interest in women's history began much earlier than is assumed.

By Kathryn Dickason

Today, feminism is often associated with the political protests of the 1960s or the earlier women's suffrage movement, but Stanford historian Paula Findlen's latest research reveals that the impetus to champion women started in the late Middle Ages.

A scholar of the Italian Renaissance, Findlen has collected biographies of medieval women, written in Italy from the 15th to 18th centuries, several centuries after the women lived.

Through a close examination of these texts, Findlen found that these early modern writers were so passionate about medieval women that they sometimes fabricated stories about them.

As Findlen carefully tracked down the claims in these stories, she found they varied from factual to somewhat factual to entirely false.

These invented women were often mentioned in regional histories, with imaginary connections to important institutions. They were described as having law degrees or professorships, claims that turned out to be fictitious.

Findlen argues that these embellished tales represent what could possibly be described as the origins of a certain kind of feminism.

"Early modern forgers used stories of women to create precedents in support of things they wanted to see in their own time but needed to justify by invoking the past," Findlen said. "While debating the existence of these medieval women, the writers also contributed to the science of history as we know it."

Expanding her archival base from Bologna to other Italian cities, and observing how these stories traveled beyond Italy, Findlen found that the stories of local women gained international recognition.

Findlen described her foray into conjectural history "a project partly about how early modern medievalists invented the Middle Ages, claiming and defining this past." She added, "Making up history is a way of ensuring that you get the past you want to have."

In her forthcoming publication, currently titled "Inventing Medieval Women: History, Memory and Forgery in Early Modern Italy," Findlen pays particular attention to Alessandro Macchiavelli, an 18th-century lawyer from a Bolognese family.

Macchiavelli was passionate about finding evidence to support Bologna's reputation as a "paradise for women." He created stories and footnotes about learned medieval women from the region, including writer Christine de Pizan.

Detail of a presentation miniature with Christine de Pisan presenting her book to queen Isabeau of Bavaria. Illuminated miniature from The Book of the Queen (various works by Christine de Pizan), Britih Library Harley 4431.

Christine de Pizan.

According to Findlen, "He aggressively made up [biographies of] medieval women and supplied the evidence that was missing for them."

Presented as facts, these fables forged the medieval origins of Bologna's female intelligentsia. Findlen initially worked on this material because she was searching for – and failing to find – evidence of medieval precedents that kept being invoked in early modern sources. "In the end," she said, "it

intrigued me."

While people later recognized that Macchiavelli was a forger, it was true that he brought critical attention to women's lives.

In a sense, Macchiavelli demonstrates "a quirky early modern male version of feminism," Findlen said. He also contributed to the beginnings of the discipline of medieval history. When he forged a document, he did so based on extensive knowledge of the archives and a fine understanding of historical method.

"Medieval history is one of the really important subjects where people develop a documentary culture during the late 17th and 18th centuries, and they begin to identify and select the documents that matter for defining the Middle Ages," Findlen said.

Imagining the women of Bologna

Between the 15th and 18th centuries, Findlen said, representations of medieval women enhanced a city's reputation.

For example, scholars in Bologna wanted to learn about its presumed tradition of learned women. They craved information about medieval women who could provide historical precedents for someone like Laura Bassi, the first woman who can be documented as receiving a degree and professorship from the University of Bologna in 1732. Having precedents made her seem like a reinvention of the old rather than someone threateningly new.

Findlen first turned to Christine de Pizan (c. 1364-1430), the daughter of a University of Bologna graduate and professor. She is perhaps best known for her writings praising women.

In her Book of the City of Ladies (1405), a catalog of illustrious women, Christine contemplated her Italian roots. This longing

for her past inspired Christine to imagine " what the ingredients were of this world that made her, and other women like her," Findlen said.

Although inspired by some kernels of truth, Christine's writings invented evidence to fill out her narratives, Findlen said. In this way, Christine provides a starting point for Bologna's interest in women's history that will unfold over the next four centuries.

What we want from history

Findlen's project rethinks our compulsion to write about the past. "Some of the stuff we take for granted is legend, not fact," she said, " but I think that I'm even more interested in having people understand why we want it."

Despite the presence of fake facts in medieval women's biographies, Findlen emphasized that "the unreliability of the past is also part of the evidence that we have to account for." Moreover, she added, this project requires "knowing the archives … well enough to catch the nuances."

"The process of creating a history of women," Findlen said, "starts with this impulse to create collective biographies in the 14th and 15th centuries onward."

Envisioning the wider impact of her work, Findlen said: "I would like this project to offer an interesting window into the invention of history, taking Italy as a case study, to understand why [early modern] people were so passionate about the Middle Ages."

During the Renaissance, "people are increasingly concerned with documenting the history that was," Findlen said. "They're interested in the history that might have been. And then they're also interested in the history that should have been. And those are three different approaches to history."

# Touching the Past: The Hand and the Medieval Book

Medievalists.net's West Coast correspondent Danielle Trynoski tours the Getty Center's latest exhibition with curator Kristen Collins.

Touching the Past: The Hand and the Medieval Book invites visitors to get in touch. Well, not literally since we're discussing medieval manuscripts, but the exhibition wants viewers to consider the tactile side of books and manuscripts. Manufacture, Manipulation, and Manus are the sub-sections which all draw from the same Latin root as manuscript, and encourage the consideration of the creation, use, and connection to books in the medieval era.

Most of the pieces are drawn from the Ludwig collection, which originally contained paintings and manuscripts from the private collection of Peter and Irene Ludwig. J. Paul Getty, the founder of the Getty, did not collect manuscripts but when an entire collection of over 100 pieces came available from the Ludwigs, the Getty Center jumped at the chance to add it to their collection. Since the acquisition of the original collection in 1983, the Getty has doubled its size through donations and purchases. These new acquisitions frequently inspire exhibits such as this one. An unfinished leaf by the Rohan Master leaf became available through a dealer and was purchased for the Ludwig Collection. The partially finished artwork includes line drawings and paint applications and provides a wealth of information about the creative process behind manuscripts.

This process inspired graduate intern Megan McNamee to curate an exhibit which focuses on the tactile aspect of medieval manuscripts and books. Now, these items are kept stored away and displayed behind glass in climate-controlled conditions. In the past and the present, books are meaningful objects that have a physical and emotional connection and the pieces selected for the exhibit strive to demonstrate that. This focus also results in a delightful exhibit that highlights the rare and often overlooked physical elements of manuscripts including curtains, monkey fists, and covered-up mistakes.
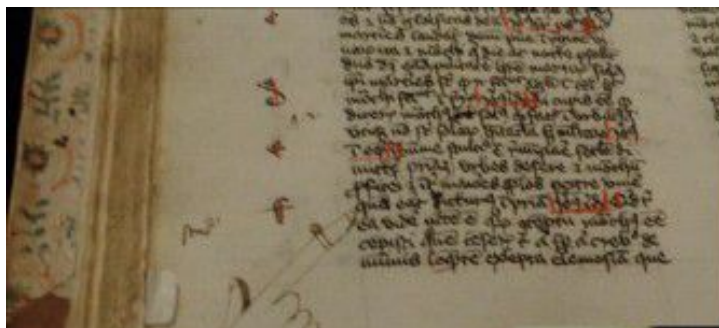
Examples of manicules, used to draw attention to specific passages of text. Note the long fingers, sleeves, rings, and other details.

*all photos property of author.
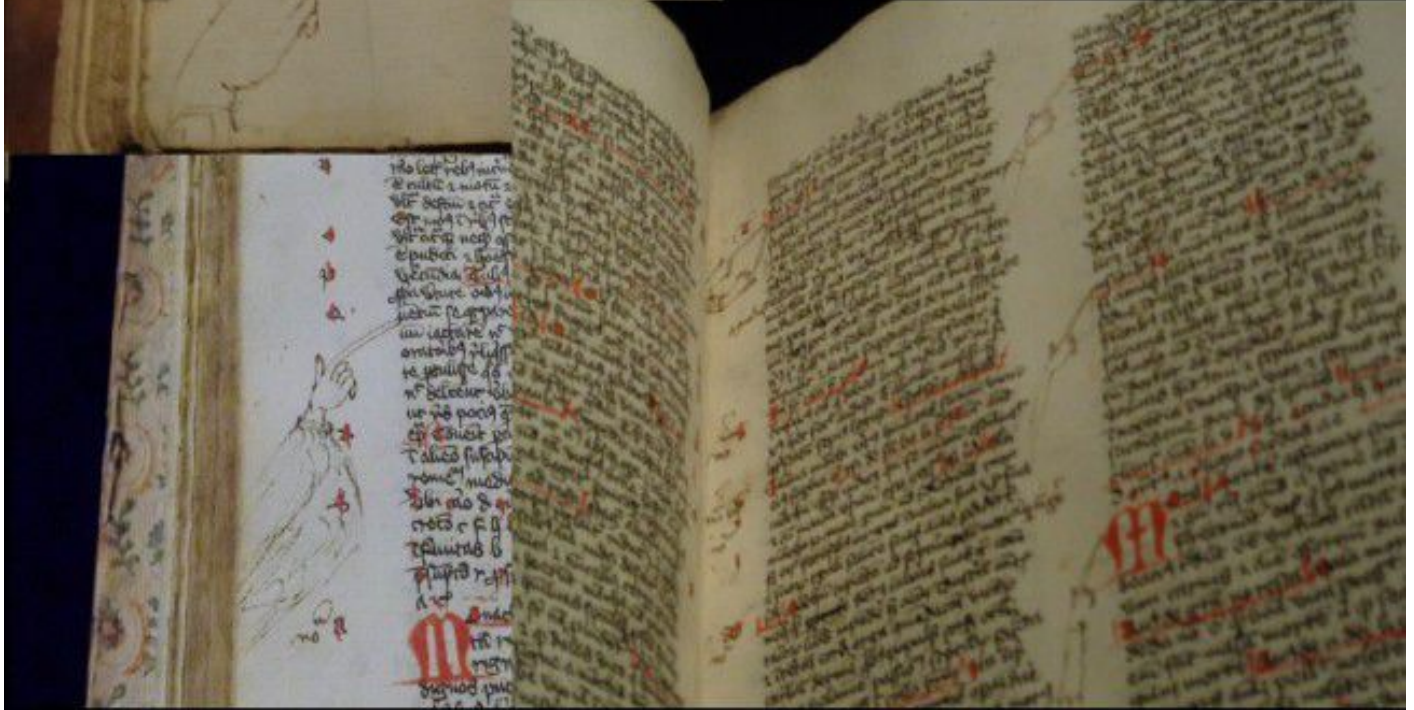
Photos by Danielle Trynoski

and covered-up mistakes.

A case displaying a stretched goat skin is beginning of the Manufacture section. Also featured is the new acquisition, "The Rejection" by the Rohan Master. This is a rare unfinished leaf dated to c. 1410. The sketched line drawings are framed by whimsical architectural elements and animal details similar to those found in contemporary tapestries. This piece has some of its color applied, with the first layers laid out in limited areas. Bold colors needed several layers to reach a finished hue and lighter colors were used to create effects and mottling.

Around the corner from "The Rejection" is a book of fables with clear attempts to edit the illustrations. The illustrations are unevenly spaced on the pages, and previous erroneous drawings are unsuccessfully covered by an opaque white paint. The label elucidates the fact that most visual artists did not know how to read, and would have to add illustrations in and around the existing text. This particular piece demonstrates a miscommunication of what illustration aligned with certain text, with illuminating results. This collection of fables is likely from Trier and dates from c. 1450-1475.

Moving through the exhibit, visitors come into the Manipulation section containing some very interesting object selections. On loan from the Huntington Library in Pasadena, California is a rare belt case with an intact folding liturgical calendar from the mid-fifteenth century. This set was created for the owner to wear and use on a daily basis, making its survival rare and the clear etching on the case remarkable. Displayed in conjunction

Unfinished leaf from the Rohan Master (above and top right). Edited illustrations from a book of fables (lower right).

conjunction with this calendar and case is a bound manuscript open to an illustration of Mary and Elizabeth, "The Visitation" by the Boucicaut Master, c. 1415. Not only are both women shown with prayer books being carried with them, but Elizabeth has a chemise binding on her book. Chemise binding was a method of attaching a sack-shaped cloth to the binding of a book, allowing the excess fabric to be knotted to the user's belt. Surviving chemise bindings are extremely rare, again owing to the high volume of daily handling and manipulation. The calendar case displayed alongside this reminder of chemise bindings reminds us of the easily transportable nature of books. Now we carry e-books on our smartphone or electronic device, but there is a long tradition of people carrying their favorite reads with them.

Another unique manuscript in the Manipulation section is an astronomical text.

"Astronomical and Medical Miscellany" stands out not only for its scientific subject matter, but also for its movable pieces. These parchment dials, known as a volvelle, can be rotated to provide astronomical information for certain dates. This manuscript was assembled in England likely after 1386. Another survival, a silk curtain, is displayed nearby. Small pieces of silk were commonly sewn into manuscripts to protect the color and/or metallic leaf on illuminated capitals. According to Getty curator Kristen Collins, the holes from these curtains remain on many manuscript pages but are now lost considering the prevalence of rebinding manuscripts. Shown here is the intact silk curtain on the Marquette Bible meant to cover the "Initial E" dating from c. 1270.

Other manuscripts showed additional examples of touch and interaction. Monkey fists, the "common" name for the small leather knots applied to frequently

referenced pages, were a delightful feature intact on several of the displayed bibles. Evidence of devotional touching seen in worn illustrations, later editing and changes, and marginalia all highlight the daily use of these manuscripts in past lives. The illustrations that invited touch or suffered from faded colors were among curator Kristen Collins' favorites, because of this tangible link to past individuals. A particular type of marginal drawing, manicules, were added to draw the reader to particular sections of the text. What makes these sketches so amusing, apart from the abstract elongated pointing fingers, are the small details like sleeves or jewelry.

Considering the fact that this exhibit does not allow visitors to touch, manipulate, rotate, feel, turn, flip, or physically interact with objects, the displays provide an amazing degree of dimension. Rather than being a flat art show, visitors experience unique objects and can clearly identify the special, tactile nature of the pieces on display. The manuscript gallery at the Getty Center changes its exhibit every 3-6 months to protect the manuscripts from light exposure, so be sure to visit before this exhibit closes on September 27, 2015! **Plan your visit here** and get more information about the exhibit (including the illustrated checklist and exhibit text) **on this site**.

A special thank-you to associate curator of manuscripts Kristen Collins for her time and answers to my questions during a very pleasant exhibit tour!

An illustrated example of chemise binding (lower left) and the attachable calendar (upper left and below).

*all photos property of author

Monkey fists on two manuscripts (left) and "Astronomical and Medical Miscellany" with its intact volvelle (above).

*all photos property of author

Author Dani Trynoski (left) and associate curator of manuscripts Kristen Collins (right) with Saints Mary and Elizabeth on the exhibit's title panel.

Touching *the* Past

The Hand and the Medieval Book

How a Medieval Bed Should Look Like

One of the most important pieces of a furniture in the medieval home was the bed – it would not only be the place to sleep and have sex, but also where one would give birth and often where people would have their last moments.

During the Middle Ages the bed would become elaborate and expensive. Writing about medieval England, Roberta Gilchrist notes that there would be "bed curtains from as early as the 11th century, and by the 14th century, elite houses possessed beds with elaborate canopies. Middle-ranking people owned wooden bedsteads with simple headboards, to which were added feather mattresses, sheets, blankets, bolsters, coverlets, and pillows. Peasants had mattresses stuffed with straw, wool., hair, rags and feathers, which could be rolled up and tidied away during the day, while the poorest people slept simply on straw or hay."

The following contract was made between Vincenzo Politi, who came from an upper middle class family in the Italian city of Pistoria, and Niccolo di Jacopo Onofrio Paoletti, a woodworker from the same city. Signed on January 12, 1488, it gives details how Niccolo would sell to Vincenzo "a bed with its chests and all suitable accessories, and a day-bed" . It begins with a description of what the main bed should look like:

The headboard [should be made] of white poplar wood, well seasoned, with a walnut veneer, surrounded by decorative frames with a carved inlaid spiral motif. In the middle panel of the said headboard [there should be] a garland, that is a marquetry swag made of spindle-wood, held by two putti, and in the said garland [there should be] the marquetry coat of arms of Vincenzo and his wife. All this should be smoothly planed, with a frieze, cornice and architrave, in the modern fashion as is the custom today. The board of the bed should be all white, that is white poplar, framed all round... The side facing inwards should be all white, and should be framed all around with walnut. The chests around the bed should be all veneered in walnut, with decorative frames, and a carved and inlaid spiral motif, all framed, all smoothly planed, with a base and skirting, with the usual inlaid spiral motif, all smooth, all round the bed.

The contract then turns to what the day-bed should look like, with the idea being that it should be similar to one by one of Vincezo's family members:

The day-bed should be lined with white poplar and veneered with walnut, with decorative frames and inlaid spiral patterns, and with spindle-wood marquetry. It should have two armrests decorated in walnut, and it should be similar to the bed, with a large cornice and a frieze and an architrave at the same level as the bed's. [Both should be] similar to the day-bed belonging to Master Lorenzo Politi, which is in the bedroom of the said Master Lorenzo, and with a similar work intarsia and marquetry, the difference being that the cornice is without brackets and does not turn like that one, but it is all on one plane.

The contract end with a few more details on how the beds should be made, and when and where they are to be delivered:

All this work must be made well and finished, made in the right way according to the judgement of a honest and intelligent man, knowledgeable about art. It has to be delivered at the end of the next month of May, completely finished in the best possible way, to the house and bedroom of the said Vincenzo. This should be done the said Niccolo, to whom Vincenzo promises to give for the bed and day-bed twenty-five large gold florins in gold.

You can read more about beds, furniture and other artwork in **Women and the visual arts in Italy, c.1400-1650: A sourcebook**, edited and translated by Paolo Tiangli and Mary Rogers.

Five Fun Facts about...

Robin Hood

Robin Hood has enthralled generations of readers and movie goers. This English outlaw-hero has become of symbol of freedom against tyranny, stealing from the rich to give to the poor. But who was Robin Hood? How much is grounded in myth and how much is reality?

1. Who Was Robin? Better Yet...Who Wasn't He?!

Robin's identity has been disputed by scholars for years. Scraps of evidence from various documents pointing to different men in different periods during the Middle Ages. So which guy was actually Robin? Well, Robin wasn't just one guy, he was more like 5! There was a Robin of Loxley (appearing as "Robert de Locksley" in 1245 in court rolls). There's a Robin Hood of York who appeared in the York Assizes when he was declared an outlaw in 1226. There is also a Robin Hood of Wakefield, dated to the 14th century, and even a "Roger Godbeard" who was a supporter of Simon de Monfort in the 1260s but never definitively proven to be the outlaw. So many Robins!

2. Robin Hood and King Richard the Lionheart

What entrenched Robin as a contemporary of Richard wasn't any hard and fast historical evidence, but a whim. Up until the 16th century, Robin was placed in many different periods, ranging from the rule of from Richard I to Edward III. In the 16th century, Scottish philosopher John Mair proposed this new date (the 1190s) and it stuck. Robin was now permanently associated wit the late 12th century.

3. Victorian Robin Hood

The Victorians were obsessed with the Middle Ages, so in the in the 19th century, it came as no surprise that Robin's tale took on added bits and pieces. During this period, the notion of Robin as a Saxon fighting an evil Norman Lord evolved. It was thought that this idea was influenced by the popular medieval novel by Sir Walter Scott, "Ivanhoe". Victorian illustrator Howard Pyle also contributed to the myth. Pyle was well known for his depictions of Robin Hood and was credited with developing several characters in the legend.

4. The Merry Men

Although in some tales, there were well over 100 "Merry Men" lurking about Sherwood forest with Robin, the original outlaw band only consisted of: Little John, Will Scarlet (Scarlock), and Much the Miller's Son. Friar Tuck and Alan-a-Dale didn't come along in the legend as prominent players until much later. Friar Tuck didn't appear until 1475, and Alan-a-Dale, the minstrel, first appeared in a 17th century ballad alongside David of Doncaster, Arthur a Bland, and Will Stutely. The latest member to join the Merry Men occurred in the late 20th century with the addition of a Saracen, Nasir. The band as we know it in Hollywood films today has been cobbled together with members stretching across several centuries.

5. Maid Marian

Robin's sweetheart was initially associated with medieval May Day celebrations. Marian was originally symbolic of the Virgin Mary and it wasn't until the 16th c. century that she was firmly established as Robin's love interest. At this point, she was also turned into a medieval noblewoman. In later adaptations, Marian became rebellious, and is often depicted as a strong female character.

Ten Castles that Made Medieval Britain

Dunstanburgh Castle

By James Turner

Castles are interesting. Crude brutal constructs designed for a crude brutal use, they gradually evolved into the skyscrapers of their day, a mergence between science and art on a truly grand scale, epitomising the pinnacle of medieval engineering. Similarly the applications of castles were equally dualistic; ideal for exerting control over territory, not to mention handy for hiding behind, a castle was also a great canvas upon which lords could scrawl their pretensions and aspirations. Few ambitions were ever so grand or manifestos so proudly proclaimed as those writ into the walls of Dunstanburgh Castle. The power of such fortifications wasn't just limited to their considerable heft but was rooted in their role as the stronghold and home of the great men and women of the age who sought to rise above the aristocratic crab bucket they found themselves in and cast a great ripple into the river of history.

The shadow of this grip on the human psyche lingers still where such fortifications function as both a potent reminder of the realities of the past and a catalyst without equal for the imagination. The castle as an enduring symbol of medieval society then, reminds us how similar, yet impossibly removed, we are from our ancestors, much like the gulf between the marmite lovers and haters of the modern era. We share the same drives, yet context has bequeathed to us very different dreams. It remains important, of course, never to drift too deeply into nostalgia and away from historical accuracy; had we been born during the Middle Ages most of us would have been dead before our fortieth birthday which may have come as something of a relief after enduring medieval toilet facilities. The proud echoes of Dunstanburgh Castle make this rule very easy to forget.

Like many of Britain's greatest fortresses, the strategic and tactical concerns which informed their placement remaining immutable for more than a millennia, Dunstanburgh is a site with deep roots. Archaeological surveys performed in the 1920s revealed the existence of both Celtic and Roman habitation of the site, although unlike many of its contemporaries, this occupancy was not continuous and whatever Iron Age fortifications stood at Dunstanburgh were eventually abandoned and left to decay in solitude until the Middle Ages.

Dunstanburgh's founder, Thomas, Earl of Lancaster and Leicester, was the second richest man in England, an aristocratic magnate of the first order, infused with a

Dunstanburgh Castle - Photo by James Turner

magnate of the first order, infused with a potent combination of royal blood and heaps of cash that propelled him into the heart of the turbulent political storm that would soon come to beset the reign of his much maligned cousin, Edward II of England.

Born in 1278 Thomas was the eldest son of Prince Edmund Crouchback, the third son of Henry III. Edmund, who had briefly been King of Sicily, was a noted Crusader and able royal lieutenant who had made his fortune through his unflinching service to his elder brother, Edward I. When Edmund died in 1296 while besieging the city of Bordeaux on the King's behalf in an attempt to shore up their family's shaky grasp on Gascony, Thomas succeeded to the entirety of his father's lands and titles. At first, Thomas seems to have emulated his father's model of faithful and close service to the senior branch of the royal family, spending much of his early political career participating in England's hegemonic war in Scotland, even fighting in the Battle of Falkirk, as well as playing a key and symbolically charged role in his cousin's coronation.

However, Thomas soon found himself entangled in the King's disputes with the fractious and disgruntled nobility. The key to success for any medieval English king was to build cohesion with the aristocracy, bringing their interests into alignment with the King's own. It was a lesson well learnt by Edward I who had successfully harnessed his subject's natural acquisitiveness to the old dream of English military and political domination of Britain. However, the growing monopolisation of royal favour and its accompanying material benefits by Edward II's closest friend and confidant, Piers Gaveston began to destabilise the equilibrium of the realm, as an irate and belligerent aristocracy sensed a threat to

belligerent aristocracy sensed a threat to their continued prosperity.

Earl Thomas was one of the leading figures in Gaveston's removal from power, contributing a large quantity of troops in the army assembled to apprehend the royal favourite and serving as a judge in his resultant trial held in one of the Earl's Warwickshire holdings. Thomas and his fellow judges quickly came to the conclusion that the most efficient and expedient way to prevent Piers from gaining access to the King was to have him executed and he was duly beheaded. Thomas had now emerged not only as a leading figure in the delicate political ecosystem of medieval England but also as a rival and stringent critic of the King.

Dunstanburgh Castle was to be his shiny new Ferrari with which he hoped to drive around England impressing the other nobles with his wealth, power and impeccable taste, tempting them away from the King and into an affinity with his own alternative court existing in parallel. Work on this ostentatious but undeniably impressive display began in 1313. Thomas spent a vast sum of money on the Castle which was constructed using the latest architectural techniques and heavily modelled upon the royal castles his uncle, Edward I raised in the course of his great building programme during the conquest of Wales.

The Castle's walls and towers continued to grow at an impressive pace until they could easily be seen by the King's custodians squinting off into the horizon at nearby Bamburgh Castle, its location perhaps a calculated challenge. When Edward's government was thrown into crisis in the aftermath of the Battle of Bannockburn, Thomas took the reins of leadership, although here the Earl suffered from the tragic irony that has plagued back seat drivers the world over as he too struggled to curb the fractious dissent of the nobles and halt the catastrophic reversal of the English position within Scotland and was soon removed. While Dunstanburgh appears to have served its purpose most admirably, its mastermind met an unfortunate end in 1321 when, while once again in rebellion against the King, he was captured and swiftly executed trying to flee north to the Castle.

Dunstanburgh and Thomas' vast collections of lands then fell to his younger brother Henry, being restored to him piecemeal by Edward II and later by his son Edward III over the next 6 years. Henry would finish what his brother started, participating in Queen Isabella's successful coup and being appointed jailer of the unfortunate former Edward II. He became one of Edward III's primary advisers and was given control of the Scottish marches, directing these defences from his seat at Dunstanburgh on the very edge of the Border. Henry's son and successor, Henry of Grosmont, was one of the new King's closest companions and childhood friends; they shared a love for heady tales of chivalry and acts of martial valour, a widespread sentiment which Edward, like his grandfather used as a tool of mobilisation for war.

Henry, now the master of Dunstanburgh Castle, was created Duke of Lancaster and following only Edward, himself, was the second member of the Order of the Garter, at the forefront of a new generation of aristocrats who would lead England to the height of its temporal power. From there, Dunstanburgh eventually came into the hands of another great royal consigliere, John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, one of Edward III's sons and the husband of Henry's daughter Blanche.

John undertook extensive repairs and refurbishment, further fortifying the Castle, creating a new gatehouse and transforming the previous one into a purely domestic building. However, lamentably the Castle figures little in John's long and distinguished career. During the War of the Roses, where the descendants of the Castle's old master,

Lilburn Tower, Dunstanburgh Castle -photo by UncleBucko / Flickr

Dunstanburgh Castle - photo by James Turner

the descendants of the Castle's old master, John of Gaunt, vied for the throne, it was held by the Lancastrians but was twice captured in 1461 and 1464 by the Yorkists. Sadly, the damage inflicted during this conflict was never to be repaired since the Castle, isolated from any major population centres, lacked strategic significance. Thus after its heyday of lavish splendour, Dunstanburgh Castle was left to quietly decay by the sea.

As previously alluded to, not much of the Castle remains today, although those parts of it that abide are impressive enough particularly the front of the Castle with its massive double turreted gatehouse which housed the Earl's own apartments and great feasting hall. While the uppermost storeys no longer survive, those levels which remain are readily accessible for exploration, although for the sake of those easily spooked I recommend this be done on a golden Summer's day. The rest of the Castle stands as a skeleton of its former self; the only other structure which has survived in anything approaching good condition is the Lilburn Tower on the north side.

While the Castle's impressive former dimensions, its walls flexing to encompass the entirety of the hill, can still be seen, the large interior now reduced to waste ground eloquently articulates the scale of the Castle and the depths of its former grandeur as a court designed to illuminate the north of England and elevate its patron. The location of the Castle is so idyllic you'd actually be surprised if you didn't see Just Williamesque gangs of children skipping by looking for adventure and mischief with their canine friend. The Castle is located on a wide flat hill lounging comfortably next to the sea and is accessible by means of grassy ten minute stroll from the seaside village of Craster.

and is accessible by means of grassy ten minute stroll from the seaside village of Craster.

The Castle set like a gem in the green and pleasant Northumbrian seaside is truly beautiful and deeply evocative, its current ruination conspiring to make our perceptions of the court it once housed grander still. Dunstanburgh Castle remains a potent relic of a time when the nobility rolled dice for the destiny of nations.

Click here to learn more about Dunstanburgh Castle from the National Trust

Dunstanburgh Castle - just after sunrise- photo by Gail / Flickr

Questions and Answers with Alcuin

Want to get quick answers to questions like what is life or what is the moon? The medieval scholar Alcuin can give you them!

Alcuin of York was one of the greatest scholars of the Carolingian era. Invited by Charlemagne to come to his court in 782, Alcuin would write about theology, grammar and poetry. He was also the tutor to Charlemagne's sons Pepin and Louis. In one of his works, Alcuin created a dialogue between himself and Pepin, in which the young prince asks him a series of questions. Alcuin made use of ancient sources to create his answers, but his work offers some insights into the thoughts the scholar, which at times could be very shrewd and even very funny. The text begin with:

Pepin: What is a letter?
Alcuin: The guardian of history.

Pepin: What is a word?
Alcuin: The betrayer of the mind.

Pepin: What produces a word?
Alcuin: The tongue.

Pepin: What is the tongue?
Alcuin: The whipper of air.

Pepin: What is the air?
Alcuin: The guardian of life.

Pepin: What is life?
Alcuin: The joy of the blessed, the sorrow of the wretched, the expectation of death.

Pepin: What is death?
Alcuin: An unavoidable event, an uncertain pilgrimaged, the tears of the living, the final confirmation of a will, the thief of mankind.

In another section, Pepin asks Alcuin about parts of the body:

Pepin: What is a head?
Alcuin: The pinnacle of the body.

Pepin: What is the body?
Alcuin: The dwelling place of the soul.

Pepin: What is hair?
Alcuin: The clothing of the head.

Pepin: What is a beard?
Alcuin: A difference between the sexes, a token of age.

Pepin: What is the brain?
Alcuin: The preserver of memory.

Pepin: What are eyes?
Alcuin: The guides of the body, dishes of light, spies of the mind.

Pepin: What are nostrils?
Alcuin: Conveyers of odor.

Pepin: What are ears?
Alcuin: Collectors of sound.

Pepin: What are teeth?
Alcuin: The millstones of our biting.

Pepin: What is the lung?
Alcuin: The preserver of air.

Pepin: What is the heart?
Alcuin: The receptacle of life.

Charlemagne and Alcuin, painted in 1830, now at the Louvre

Alcuin even offers answers about nature:

Pepin: What is the sun?
Alcuin: The light of the world, the adornment of the heavens, the grace of nature, the splendour of the day, the dispenser of hours.

Pepin: What is the moon?
Alcuin: The eye of night, the bringer of dew, the foreteller of storms.

Pepin: What are stars?
Alcuin: A painting of the heavens, guides for sailors, ornaments of the night.

Pepin: What is water?
Alcuin: The helper of life, the cleanser of dirt.

Alcuin continues to give more answers to questions:

Pepin: What are vegetables?
Alcuin: The friends of physicians, the joy of cooks.

Pepin: What is it that makes bitter things taste better?
Alcuin: Hunger.

Pepin: What is that people never grow tired of?
Alcuin: Money.

Pepin: What is sleep for those who are wide awake?
Alcuin: A hope.

Pepin: What is hope?
Alcuin: A cooling off after work, uncertain success.

Pepin: What is friendship?
Alcuin: A similarity of minds.

Pepin: What is faith?
Alcuin: Certainty of what is unknown and wonderful.

You can read more of Pepin's questions, and Alcuin's answers in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader*, edited and translated by Paul Edward Dutton, which was first published by Broadview Press in 1993.

Medieval Pilgrimages: It's All About the Journey

By Danièle Cybulskie

Although religion in the Middle Ages was much more nuanced than modern popular culture might imply, Christianity was a pivotal part of medieval society in Europe, and people's everyday lives were saturated with it, from the way time was measured to the meals they ate. For medieval people, faith was more than just an abstract idea, it was tangible in the works they made (such as the great cathedrals) to glorify God, and the relics they could see with their own eyes. An integral part of this tangible form of faith was the pilgrimage: a spiritual journey to visit a holy site.

People made pilgrimages for a variety of reasons. Many holy sites were purported to have a healing powers, such as Walsingham, in Norfolk. Pilgrims who had an ailing loved one could seek divine help at a place like this, along with people who were ailing themselves (sometimes carried by friends), and people who had recovered from illnesses could also come to give their thanks to God. Penitents would also undertake pilgrimages in order to gain forgiveness for their sins, or to shorten time in purgatory for themselves or for others. When he was dying, Henry the

Young King (son of Henry II) asked William Marshal to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in his place in remembrance of his sins in life (Marshal did so). Sometimes, people went on pilgrimages to pray for fertility or safe delivery, too. Basically, as a pilgrimage was a journey of faith, anything a person felt they needed God's help for could be motivation for the journey.

Rome was an important site for pilgrimage because of the many ties to Christianity the city had (and still has). For the English, and

Detail of miniature showing the Lover, dressed as a pilgrim, setting off on his pilgrimage. British Library Egerton 1069 f. 145

other northern Europeans, Canterbury was hugely popular as the site of the martyrdom of St. Thomas à Becket (this is the place where Chaucer's pilgrims are headed in *The Canterbury Tales*). Another popular shrine was that of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, **still a UNESCO site**, established to honour St. James. Pilgrims also flocked to Jerusalem and other sites in the Holy Land, as they still do today. Pilgrim routes were well known and passed on to other pilgrims, so businesses like inns were built up along the routes to accommodate travelers, and clergy ensured that their own holy relics and sites were made available along the way. You could spot a pilgrim by their distinctive robes, hats, and staves, or by the pilgrims' badges they wore as symbols of the journey (like scallop shells from Santiago de Compostela).

For medieval people, relics could be pieces of a Christian story, such as the bones of a martyr or saint, or pieces of Jesus' life, such as the tears or breast milk of Mary, or pieces of the True Cross. Of course, a relic that has gained a huge amount of popularity in modern consciousness, from Arthurian legend to Indiana Jones, is the ever-elusive Sangreal: the Holy Grail. Naturally, not all of these relics were true relics, but pretending they were could gain a swindler quite a lot of money. In The Canterbury Tales, the immoral Pardoner trades in fake relics like "pigges bones" for which he charges two months' salary (see this article by Robyn Malo for more on the Pardoner's relics). For Chaucer to have added such a detail implies that there was a definite market for relics, real or fake, and that it was taken advantage of by con artists.

In fact, pilgrimages were big business, from the money spent on food and accommodation, to the selling of **pilgrims' badges** as souvenirs, status symbols, or earnest reminders of the journey. Because there were no ATMs, pilgrims carried their wealth on their person, making them susceptible to thieves. The Knights Templar were created in part to protect pilgrims, although their role changed over time.

Following medieval pilgrims' routes is still big business today for history buffs and the devout, allowing modern people to follow in their ancestors' footsteps. You can check out one of these routes on the **UNESCO site for Santiago de Compostela**. For more on criminal behaviour by pilgrims (always an interesting topic), click here, and for the story of one who went on several pilgrimages, have a look at *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Also see **this interesting collection** from The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

You can follow Danièle Cybulskie on Twitter **@5MinMedievalist**

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The Five-Minute Medievalist

National Library of Wales teams up with Wikipedia to share digital images

Those looking for images of the history of Wales, including its medieval past, can now make use of thousands of digital images that have been made available on Wikipedia thanks to the National Library of Wales.

Peniarth MS 481D – from National Library of Wales

Madog. A crude illustration from a 15th century Welsh language version of Geoffrey of Monmouth's highly influential _Historia Regum Britanniae_ ('History of the Kings of Britain') - from National Library of Wales

In recent months, the National Library of Wales has been working with Wikimedia UK, a part of the charitable organization that runs Wikipedia, one of the world's largest and most used websites. So far they have uploaded over 4000 images, including those from their medieval manuscript collections.

Jasons Evans, the Wikipedian in Residence at the National Library of Wales, explains "One of the Library's key goals over the next few years is to provide 'Knowledge for All'. We want to make are collections available as freely and as widely as possible, and sharing material with sites such as Flickr and Wikicommons gives us an opportunity to reach a far wider audience than we could ever hope to reach via our own website alone."

Among the medieval images available on Wikipedia (as well as on the National Library of Wales website) are those from a 15th century account of the life and deeds of Alexander the Great, the Llanbeblig Book of Hours created in the late 14th century, and a copy of the History of the Kings of Britain, one of only a handful of medieval Welsh manuscripts to have been illustrated.

manuscripts to have been illustrated.

example."

Jason Evans believes that the project has been a great success. "Library collections get exposure and Wikipedia get quality images to go enrich Wikipedia pages," he said. "Everything we release to Wikipedia is also released on an open licence 'Public Domain' so these images can be reused by anyone for free. This encourages the development of educational and documentary resources for

He adds, "Already images from these manuscripts have generated staggering viewing stats. If you consider that the Wikipedia page for Alexander the Great is viewed on average 150,000 times a month, the one image from our collection used on that page is having a huge impact."

Llanbeblig Hours (f. 2v.) St. Peter, holding a key and a book - image from National Library of Wales

Click here to view the medieval manuscript images from the National Library of Wales

'Décapitation' by Femme No. 5 – get your own Tudor-inspired perfume at York

Catherine Howard, the fifth wife of Henry VIII who was said to have had an illicit liaison during her visit to York in 1541, is the inspiration of a new perfume now available at Barley Hall in York as part of its 'Power & Glory: York in the Time of Henry VIII' exhibition.

The perfume, called 'Décapitation' features scents that would have been in use by the nobility in the mid-16th century, including strong tones of rose, lemon, violet, cherry and musk to create a sensual fragrance designed to make a virile Tudor male lose his head – as did the subject of Catherine's affair, Thomas Culpeper.

The Barley Hall team worked with historic researchers and specialist European perfumiers to create the unique fragrance that they believe captures the essence of the femme fatale whose alleged affair led to the execution of both Culpeper and herself, crushing the infamous king's spirit and perhaps bursting his bubble of self-belief as the most eligible bachelor in the land.

"The Tudors were strong proponents of the idea that 'cleanliness was next to Godliness', so whilst the streets of 16th century York would have been unpleasantly odorous – and clothes would often be washed in water polluted with butchers' waste and sewage – the higher social classes took great care to keep their bodies clean and fresh smelling, with herbs and flowers sometimes added to the bath water," comments Sarah Maltby, director of attractions for York Archaeological Trust, the owners of Barley Hall.

The components of the fragrance:

Rose: Henry VIII described Catherine as his 'rose without a thorn', and it was the most fashionable perfume of the day

Violet: An essential flower for any true femme fatale, in Tudor England, the violet represented death and bereavement

Lemon: Lemons were more widely available in the late Tudor period, with some almanacs suggesting that the acid fruit symbolised a broken betrothal.

White musk: This is the modern counterpart of deer musk, which was a common base in Tudor perfumes, and thought to be an aphrodisiac in Tudor times

Cherry blossom: Representing star-crossed love – the perfect undertone for Catherine's perfume.

The perfume will be available to sample for visitors to Barley Hall throughout the summer. "Though we don't want to cause our visitors to embark on an illicit affair after experiencing the intoxicating bouquet, we hope that it will set the scene for those visiting York this summer to feel fully immersed in the city's rich history on this sensual journey through time," Sarah adds.

Click here to learn more about Barley Hall

Décapitation
by Femme No. 5

Don't lose your head...

Décapitation
Femme No. 5

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