

# The Medieval Magazine

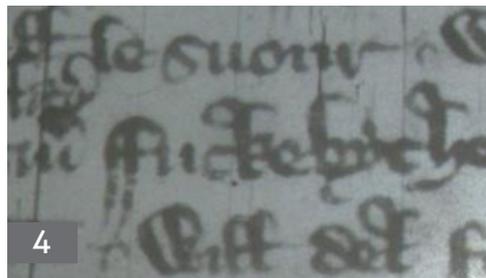
Number 33

September 14, 2015

## Fall TV Preview for Medievalists

Two new series set in the Middle Ages are premiering. What will viewers see?

The Earliest F-word



4

Nancy Marie Brown on Ivory Vikings

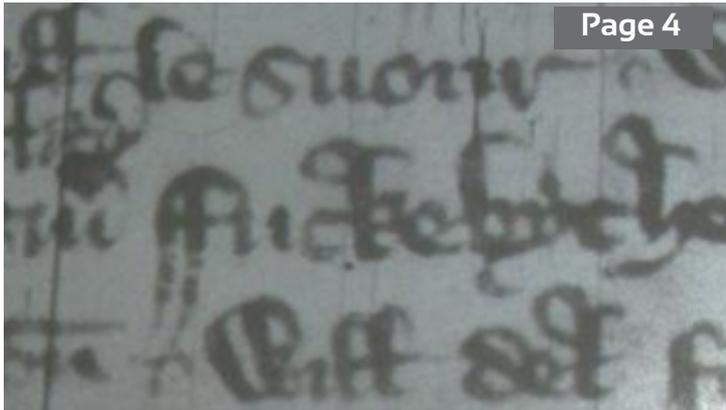


10

Warwick Castle



30



## The earliest use of the F-word discovered

An English historian has come across the word 'fuck' in a court case dating to year 1310, making it the earliest known reference to the swear word.



## The Bastard Executioner

Set in early 14th century Wales, can a knight leave his past behind in a violent world.



## The Last Kingdom

This BBC series, set in 9th century England, is adapted from the novels of Bernard Cornwell.



## Wit and Wisdom from Medieval Monarchs

Here are ten quotes from medieval Kings and Queens that we wanted to share!

# Table of Contents

- 4 The earliest use of the F-word discovered
- 6 What do Cod Bones from the Mary Rose tell us about the global fish trade?
- 10 Telling the Story of the Ivory Vikings
- 13 Egypt: Faith after the Pharaohs comes to British Museum
- 16 Anselm on Free Will
- 18 Rosh Hashanah in the Middle Ages
- 20 Fall TV Preview: The Bastard Executioner
- 22 Fall TV Preview: The Last Kingdom
- 24 The Longest and Shortest Reigns of the Middle Ages
- 26 A Medieval Weather Report
- 30 Ten Castles that Made Medieval Britain: Warwick Castle
- 36 Wit and Wisdom from Medieval Monarchs

## THE MEDIEVAL MAGAZINE

Edited by:  
Peter Konieczny and Sandra Alvarez

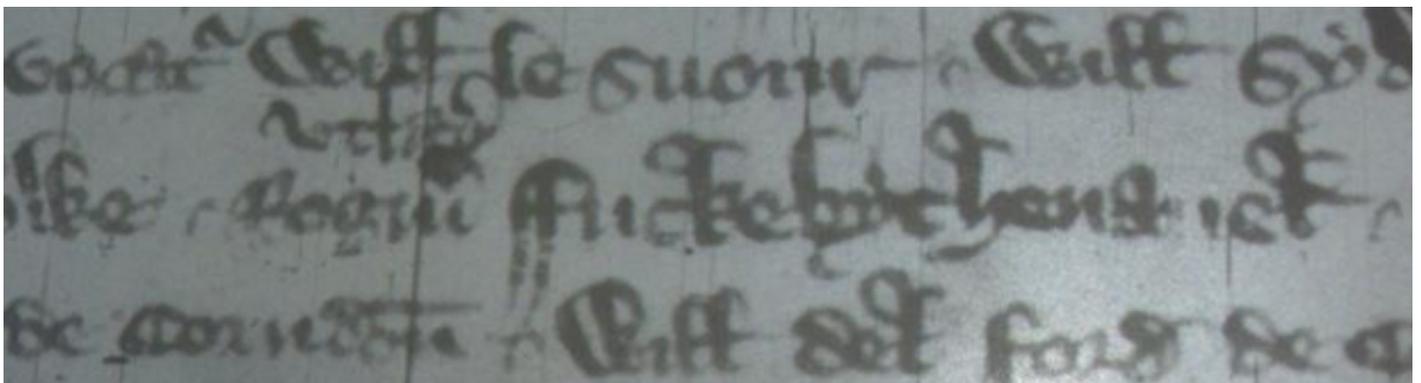
Website: [www.medievalists.net](http://www.medievalists.net)

This digital magazine is published  
each Monday.

Cover Photo: **The Bastard  
Executioner**. Photo: Olli Upton/FX

# The earliest use of the F-word discovered

An English historian has come across the word 'fuck' in a court case dating to the year 1310, making it the earliest known reference to the swear word.



**'Roger Fuckebythenavele' as seen in the Cheshire County Court Rolls – TNA CHES 29/23 – photo by Paul Booth**

Dr Paul Booth of Keele University spotted the name in 'Roger Fuckebythenavele' in the Chester county court plea rolls beginning on December 8, 1310. The man was being named three times part of a process to be outlawed, with the final mention coming on September 28, 1311.

Dr Booth believes that "this surname is presumably a nickname. I suggest it could either mean an actual attempt at copulation by an inexperienced youth, later reported by a rejected girlfriend, or an equivalent of the word 'dimwit' i.e. a man who might think that that was the correct way to go about it."

Prior to Dr. Booth's discovery, the previous

earliest use of the word was in the poem *Flen flyys*, written around 1475. It had a line that read "fvccant vvivys of heli", a Latin/English mix meaning "...they fuck the wives of Ely". Historians have come across earlier uses of the word in medieval England, but have doubted that it was being used as a sexual reference. For example, the name John le Fucker appears in 1278, but this likely could be just a different spelling for the word 'fulcher' which means soldier.

In his book, *The F Word*, Jesse Sheidlower explains "fuck is a word of Germanic origin. It is related to words in several other Germanic languages, such as Dutch, German, and Swedish, that have sexual meanings as well



# What do Cod Bones from the Mary Rose tell us about the global fish trade?

New stable isotope and ancient DNA analysis of the bones of stored cod provisions recovered from the wreck of the Tudor warship Mary Rose, which sank off the coast of southern England in 1545, has revealed that the fish in the ship's stores had been caught in surprisingly distant waters: the northern North Sea and the fishing grounds of Iceland – despite England having well developed local fisheries by the 16th century.

Test results from one of the sample bones has led archaeologists to suspect that some of the stored cod came from as far away as Newfoundland in eastern Canada.

The research team say that the findings show how naval provisioning played an important role in the early expansion of the fish trade overseas, and how that expansion helped fuel the growth of the English navy. Commercial exploitation of fish and the growth of naval sea power were “mutually reinforcing aspects of globalisation” in Renaissance Europe, they say.

“The findings contribute to the idea that the demand for preserved fish was exceeding the

supply that local English and Irish fisheries were able to provide in order to feed growing – and increasingly urban – populations. We know from these bones that one of the sources of demand was naval provisions,” said Dr James Barrett, from the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research at the University of Cambridge.

“The existence and development of globalised fisheries was one of the things that made the growth of the navy possible. The navy was a key mechanism of maritime expansion, while at the same time being sustained by that expansion. The story of the cod trade is a microcosm of globalisation during this pivotal period that marked the



**These are cod bones (cleithra) recovered from the Mary Rose, with a stained modern example for comparison. Photo by Sheila Hamilton-Dyer**

beginning of an organised English navy, which would go on to become the Royal Navy," he said.

The study, led by researchers from the universities of Cambridge, Hull and York, had been published in the open access journal *Royal Society Open Science*.

Built in 1510, the Mary Rose was one of the most famous ships in England, a former flagship of Henry VIII's fleet, when it mysteriously heeled over and sank in the Solent channel during a battle with an invading French fleet in 1545, taking almost all of its crew – over 400 men – down with it, as well as a full store of provisions. Rediscovered in the 1970s and raised in 1982, the remains are an extraordinary time capsule of naval life during the Tudor period.

Among the remains of the ship's supplies were thousands of bones from dried or salted cod from casks and baskets – staples of Tudor naval diet. The researchers took a small selection of eleven bones from the various different holds of the ship, and analysed them using two techniques: stable isotope analysis, which reflects the diet and environmental conditions of the fish based on the bone's protein chemistry, and ancient DNA analysis, which reflects genetic drift, gene flow and natural selection.

Separately, the techniques gave very broad answers, but when cross-referenced with each other and the historical record they provided researchers with increasingly reliable evidence for which waters the cod had been fished from almost 500 years ago. The best indication for three of the samples was that they were fished in the northern North Sea, possibly the Scottish Northern Isles, where there were known fisheries that produced dried cod preserved in salt.

Another seven of the samples probably came from waters off the coast of Iceland. Due to the cold and dry climate, many Icelanders

preserved cod by air-drying it during winter months, a product known as 'stockfish', which was frequently traded with the English. English fishermen also worked Icelandic waters themselves, to produce salt cod. At the time, England to Iceland was a three to six month round trip, usually departing in spring and returning in early autumn after a season of trade and/or fishing.

One bone sample appeared to have come from the other side of the Atlantic. While not definitive, the most likely evidence pointed to Newfoundland, an island off the northeast Canadian coast famous for its historical cod fishery. While such distances for fishing may seem surprising for the time, James Barrett says that – as the English Newfoundland fishery had begun in 1502, in the wake of John Cabot's exploratory voyage of 1497 – this is entirely plausible. French, Spanish and Portuguese fishermen also took advantage of this new source of cod.

"At the time of the Mary Rose in 1545, Newfoundland was a small-scale seasonal fishery where mariners went to fish and then come home. Within a century the Newfoundland fishery had become a major economic concern, of greater value than the fur trade, for example," said Barrett.

"The need for fish stocks was an important driver of involvement in north-eastern North America. The fish trade was one of the key links in the causal chain of European expansion to that continent," he said. A typical outbound journey time from England to Newfoundland was around five weeks.

Records from just after the time of the Mary Rose show that a standard daily ration of preserved cod was a quarter of a fish served with ship biscuit, two ounces of butter and a gallon of beer. This was dished up three times a week. The bone samples show that these fish could range from approximately 70cm to over a metre in length, so a quarter of cod was a significant portion. "Preserved cod was

great value for money as a provision, particularly as space and durability were an issue on board a ship," said Barrett.

Before the reign of Henry VIII, another driver for the cod fisheries was the fact that fish was a suitable food during Christian fasts such as Lent as an alternative to milk and cheese, and, as Barrett points out, "urban populations didn't have room for cows in their backyards".

Once Henry VIII split from the church and the Reformation was ushered in, religious associations with meals of fish started to dissipate, threatening to send England's fisheries, and subsequently its navy, into decline.

Thus Elizabeth I, Henry's successor, instigated weekly 'fish days' to encourage domestic consumption and consequently a commercial fleet to not only help feed the navy but also ensure a supply of mariners to help run it when needed.

"The importance of 'victualling' the navy continued to grow in the seventeenth century, most famously during the Restoration when its administration was systematized under Samuel Pepys," said Barrett.

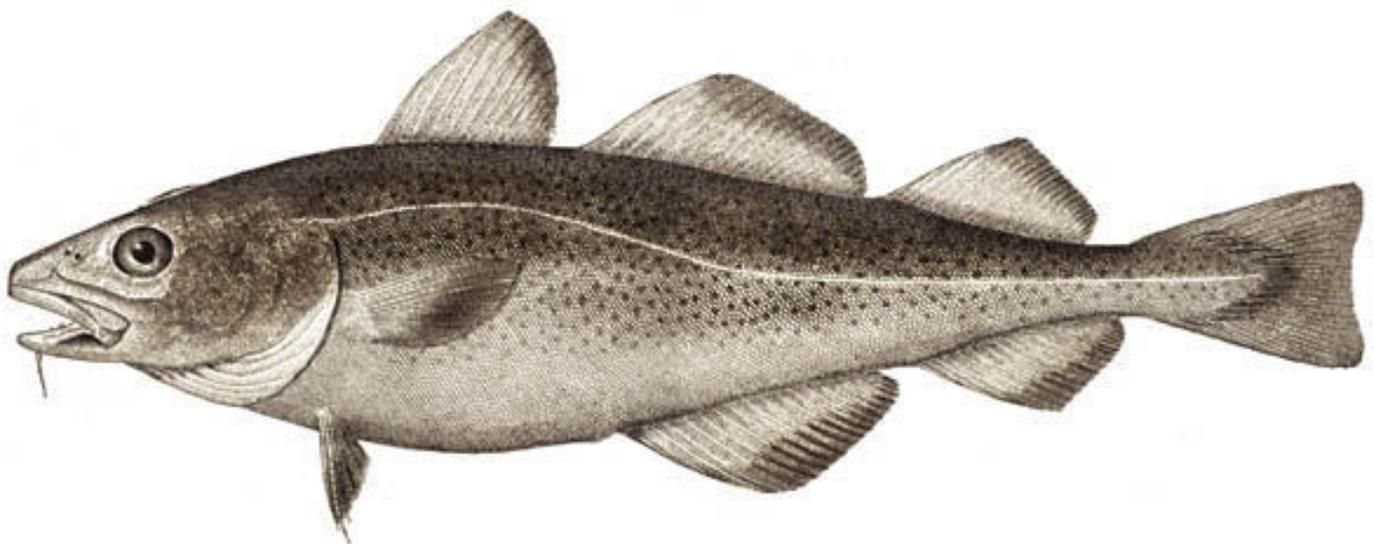
"Military sea power was a prerequisite for the concurrent – and subsequent – development

of England's sea-borne colonialism. Yet by sourcing the cod bones from the Mary Rose, we see that the navy itself was first sustained, in part, by fishermen working distant northern and transatlantic waters," he said.

Arguably the most challenging aspect of the research was creating the historical context, the 'base map', for the researchers to compare their Mary Rose specimens to. Due to chemical pollution of the world's oceans over the last few hundred years, and changes in the genetic structure of cod populations due to fishing pressures and climate change, the team had to find and use ancient cod bones for their study's comparison controls, as modern cod bones would have been useless.

"Thankfully, when making dried cod, part of the process was chopping the head off," said Barrett. "This meant we could use skull bones from archaeological sites to get both genetic and isotopic signatures for all these regions. The lion's share of the work was finding and analysing the over 300 control samples."

The research was funded by the Leverhulme Trust, with an accompanying grant from the Fishmongers' Company, one of the twelve livery companies of the City of London.



# Telling the Story of the Ivory Vikings

By Nancy Marie Brown

One book leads to the next. It's a truism among writers, and particularly apt for explaining how my latest book, *Ivory Vikings: The Mystery of the Most Famous Chessmen in the World and the Woman Who Made Them*, published by St Martin's Press in September, came to be.

*Ivory Vikings* is a biography of the Lewis chessmen, the famous walrus-ivory chessmen found on the Isle of Lewis in far western Scotland in 1831. While gathering illustrations for my previous book about medieval Iceland, *Song of the Vikings: Snorri and the Making of Norse Myths*, I was surprised to learn that these chessmen, long considered icons of the Viking Age, had actually been carved over a hundred years later, between 1150 and 1250, during the lifetime of Snorri Sturluson.

According to one theory I read, they may even have been carved by a woman in Iceland whom Snorri knew, Margaret the Adroit, who worked for Bishop Pall of Skalholt, Snorri's foster brother.

In *Song of the Vikings*, I argued that Snorri was responsible for most of what we know about Norse mythology. I argued that he invented

the genre of "saga," which his countrymen in the 13th and 14th centuries developed into the masterpieces of world literature they are now universally acknowledged to be. I included an image of one of the Lewis queens in that book, referring to the theory of their Icelandic origin in a caption. But there was no room in *Song of the Vikings* to develop the idea that medieval Icelanders may also have been exceptional visual artists as well as world-class writers.

That idea nagged at the back of my mind. I wondered why I'd never heard anything like it before. Was the author of this Iceland theory of the Lewis chessmen a crackpot? I did some basic research and learned that the theory was, in fact, a very old one: Frederic Madden of the British Museum, who was the first person to write about the Lewis chessmen, the year after their discovery on the Isle of Lewis in 1831, concluded that they had been



**Lewis Chessmen at the British Museum – photo by Justin Ennis / Flickr**

had been made in Iceland in the 12th century. And yet, when Icelandic civil engineer and chess aficionado Guðmundur Þórarinnsson reintroduced the Iceland theory, he was ridiculed. Alexander Woolf, a professor of medieval studies from the University of St Andrews, was particularly dismissive. Responding to a reporter from the New York Times, he said that Iceland was too poor and backward a place to produce such stunning works of art. "A hell of a lot of walrus ivory went into making those chessmen, and Iceland was a bit of a scrappy place full of farmers," he said, adding, "You don't get the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Iowa."

(Woolf has since retracted his statement. The reporter had caught him off guard. Since meeting Guðmundur and visiting Skalholt in Iceland, Woolf has become a supporter of the Iceland theory.)

Woolf's comment stung me. Having just spent several years researching and writing about the Iceland of that period, I knew he was

wrong. Iceland in the late 12th and early 13th century was at the peak of its Golden Age: rich, independent, and in a frenzy of artistic creation.

The man Guðmundur suggested may have commissioned the Lewis chessmen, Bishop Páll of Skalholt, was not only the foster brother of Snorri Sturluson, he was the great-grandson of King Magnus Bare-Legs of Norway (1093-1103), who conquered northern Scotland and the islands and took his nickname from his fondness for wearing kilts. Magnus's line ruled the Norwegian empire without interruption from 1103 to 1264, when northern Scotland and the islands were ceded to the Scottish crown. During that century and a half, King Magnus's Icelandic kinsmen routinely visited Norway, where they were recognized as royalty. Many were knighted; Snorri Sturluson became the first Icelandic baron of Norway; his son-in-law became the first Icelandic earl of Norway.

Bishop Pall himself was a well-educated, well-traveled nobleman—hardly a “scrappy farmer.” As a youth he became a retainer of Earl Harald, who ruled the Orkney islands and Caithness in northern Scotland. Later, Pall traveled to England to attend school at a cathedral university, probably Lincoln, where his uncle and predecessor at the see of Skalholt, Bishop Thorlak, had studied. Pall returned to Iceland and became a wealthy chieftain, marrying and having several children. He was famous for the breadth of his book-learning and his excellent Latin, the extravagance of his banquets, the beauty of his singing voice, and his love of fine things.

He was known to have in his employ several artists, including Margaret the Adroit, known as the best ivory carver in Iceland.

The Lewis chessmen are the most famous chess pieces in the world. They are considered masterpieces of Romanesque art, among the most important archaeological finds from Scotland and the most popular exhibits at the British Museum. If there was a chance they could indeed have been made by a woman in Iceland around the year 1200, that was a story I needed to tell.



Lewis chessmen – photo by Sarah Ross, Flickr

**[Click here to learn more about Nancy Marie Brown from her blog](#)**

**[Click here to learn more about her book Ivory Vikings from St. Martin's Press](#)**

# 'Egypt: Faith after the Pharaohs' comes to British Museum

This autumn the British Museum presents a major exhibition looking at an important transition in Egypt's history never explored before in its entirety. *Egypt: faith after the pharaohs* explores 1,200 years of history, providing unparalleled insight into the lives of different religious communities. This exhibition of around 200 objects will show how Christian, Islamic and Jewish communities reinterpreted the pharaonic past of Egypt and interacted with one another. The transitions seen in this period have shaped the modern world we know today.



Ivory pyxis box depicting Daniel with arms raised in prayer is flanked by two lions, Egypt or Syria, 5th or early 6th century AD © The Trustees of the British Museum

The exhibition opens with three very significant examples of the Hebrew Bible, the Christian New Testament and the Islamic Qur'an, paired with three everyday stamps associated with each religion. These more humble objects sit alongside the three grand codices and together emphasise the relationship between the institutional side of religion and its everyday practice, two key themes of the exhibition. As the founding scriptures of the three faiths, the books represent both the continuity of the Abrahamic tradition and the distinctiveness of each. Among these three luxury productions is the New Testament part of the 4th century AD Codex Sinaiticus now held in the British Library, the world's oldest surviving Bible and the earliest complete copy of the New Testament. This rare loan is included in the exhibition to emphasise the readers and users of scripture in Egypt.

The first main section of the exhibition begins in 30 BC after the death of Cleopatra and Mark Antony, when Egypt became part of the Roman Empire, and continues until AD 1171 when the rule of the Islamic Fatimid dynasty came to an end. During this time, Egypt became first a majority Christian, then a majority Muslim population, with Jewish communities periodically thriving. The wealth of material – surviving uniquely in Egypt – illustrates the country's role in the wider region, the relationships between faith communities and the legacy of ancient Egypt. Due to its arid climate, Egypt preserves an abundance of organic material that survives nowhere else. An extraordinary pair of complete 6-7th century door curtains measuring 2.74m high depict motifs such as erotes (cupids) and winged Victories from the Classical period. The Victories hold a jewelled cross flanked by Christian nomina sacra, showing the interaction between classical and Christian motifs. The expansion of the Roman Empire saw the development of Judaism and the emergence of Christianity. In Egypt, the iconography of these religions fused. Sculpture shows the

adoption of Roman symbols of power to articulate authority – such as a statue of the falcon-headed ancient Egyptian god Horus wearing Roman armour. Magical texts on papyrus and so-called magical gems show the layering of aspects of deities especially from the Egyptian, Greek, Roman pantheons. In this period the God of the Jews and Christians is one among many.

The exhibition demonstrates the physical and conceptual transformation of the landscape, as the ancient monuments of Egypt were sometimes destroyed, adapted and reused or reimagined. By c. AD 400 the Great Pyramids of Giza were interpreted as the granaries of Joseph in accordance with the account in the Bible. Parts of ancient temple complexes were sometimes transformed into churches. At Alexandria, the Caesareum started by Cleopatra VII and completed by Augustus became the location of the Great Church of Alexandria in the centre of the ancient city. After the Muslim conquest of Egypt in AD 639-642, the sacred landscape was again transformed. For example, al-'Attrin Mosque in Alexandria was built reusing hundreds of Roman columns and capitals. Medieval Muslims were fascinated by the standing monuments of ancient Egypt, recording at once the tradition of the Great Pyramids as Joseph's granaries and as the tombs of ancient kings. Such records show that the study of ancient Egypt did not originate with modern Western scholars.

The rubbish heaps of ancient and medieval towns in Egypt have preserved the earliest fragments of scripture, legal documents, letters, school exercises and other texts showing how religion was lived. Their survival is treasure from trash providing unparalleled insight into everyday society. There are copies of official letters, including one from the emperor Claudius (r. AD 41-54) concerning the cult of the divine emperor and the status of Jews in Alexandria, and another from a mosque to the half-sister of the Fatimid caliph, al-Hakim (r. AD 985-1021),

the Fatimid caliph, al-Hakim (r. AD 985-1021), demonstrating relationships between the state and religion.

The exhibition finishes with the astonishing survival of over 200,000 texts from Ben Ezra Synagogue in Cairo, where they were kept in a genizah (a sacred storeroom) for ritual disposal. By an accident of history they were not destroyed. Mainly dating to the 11-13th centuries AD and written in Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic, Aramaic and Arabic, they show a thriving Jewish community with international links extending from Spain to India. Together the collection is not only the best evidence for the daily lives of Jews in Medieval Cairo, but for the wider Medieval Mediterranean society including Muslims and Christians.

The exhibition is a collaboration between the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and the British Museum, and includes many other exciting loans and objects from almost every department at the British Museum. This exhibition of around 200 objects will tell the story of the transition from a traditional society largely worshipping many gods to a society devoted to One God. This transition has shaped the modern world, and the journey Egypt took in this period continues to influence the country and wider region today.

'Egypt: faith after the pharaohs' runs from 29 October 2015 – 7 February 2016 in Room 35 of the British Museum

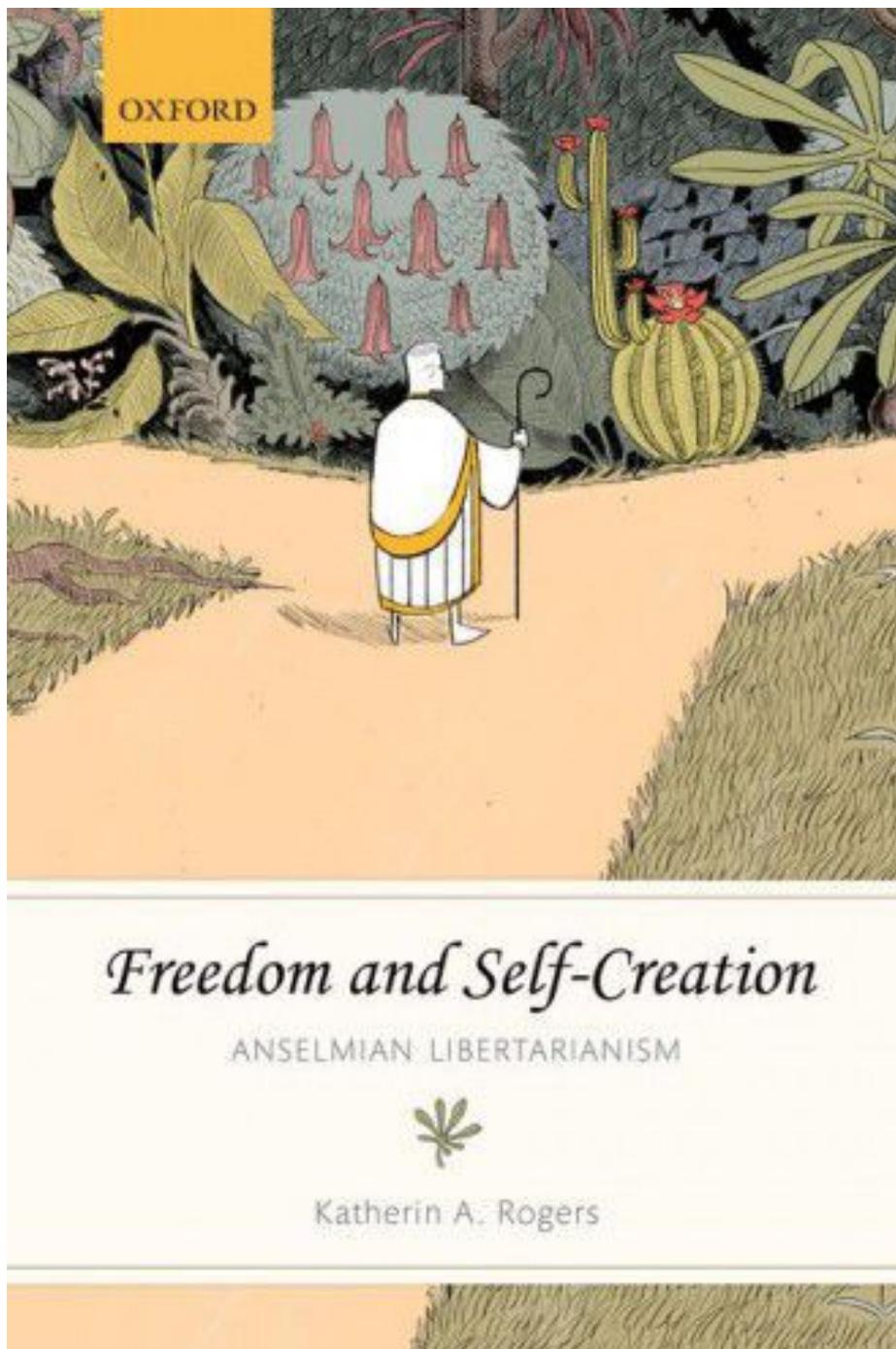
**Please visit the British Museum website for more details.**



**Gravestone of 'Abraham, the perfected monk', Egypt, 7th century AD © The Trustees of the British Museum**

# Anselm on Free will

By Ann Manser



Katherin Rogers particularly likes two aspects of her new book about free will — the way a monk who lived 900 years ago provides a useful perspective on a 21st century philosophical controversy, and the eye-catching cover illustration created by her daughter.

Rogers, professor of philosophy at the University of Delaware, received bachelor's and master's degrees in philosophy from UD in 1975 and 1976 before earning her doctorate at Notre Dame. She focuses her work on medieval philosophy and the philosophy of religion, with an emphasis on St. Anselm of Canterbury, an 11th century Benedictine monk, theologian and philosopher who applied reason in exploring the mysteries of faith.

Her new book, *Freedom and Self-Creation: Anselmian Libertarianism*, will be published next month by Oxford University Press. The illustration on the cover was drawn by her daughter, Sophia Rogers, also a UD alumna and an artist and graphic novelist whose professional name is Moro Rogers.

Katherin Rogers, who has studied Anselm for 40 years and published two previous books about his work, said she made a new discovery while rereading him not long ago.

"I realized that he had a lot to say about free will, which is a fundamental issue in philosophy—a super-important issue—and also happens to be a very hot topic right now," she said. "It turns out that what he had to say has a lot to contribute to the current debate."

Topics that attract a great deal of scholarship and debate in philosophy can be cyclical, Rogers said, and free will is an example. Although it has been an important issue since the fourth century, many philosophers in the mid-1900s considered the question settled. "People said: If you can do what you want, then you're free," Rogers said. "So you have free will, even if what you want has been

determined by your genes or other outside factors."

But opinions shifted in the 1990s, and philosophers began questioning whether a person doing what he or she wanted was truly exercising free will if something was causing those actions.

Anselm, who wrote that human beings originate their own choices based on the tools that God gave them, worked out an ingenious theory to explain how a human being — a "free agent" — chooses between options, Rogers said. In the book, she defends and develops that theory.

"I never realized before that Anselm does this neat thing with free will that connects so well with what is being debated today," Rogers said. "I don't think anybody had noticed before how clever he was about free will. It's always nice when someone from 900 years ago has something to contribute to the current debate."

When Oxford University Press agreed to publish the book and asked her about possible cover designs, Rogers suggested a livelier look than what is used in many academic books. She offered some ideas and mentioned that her daughter is a professional illustrator.

The publisher took a look at samples of Moro Rogers' work and selected her drawing for the cover. It features a monk, seen from behind, standing at a crossroads where each path extends into a fanciful kind of woodland.

"The guy at the crossroads was my mom's idea to show choice and free will," Rogers said. "I researched what a medieval monk might be wearing, and then I thought it would be cool to draw the vegetation so that it looks something like a [famed children's book illustrator Maurice] Sendak drawing."

# Rosh

# Hashanah

# in the Middle Ages

As the Jewish High Holy Days takes place, we take a look at how Jews celebrated Rosh Hashanah in the Middle Ages. Although the holiday pre-dates the period, some foods and traditions were adopted during then and have been retained to the present day in the celebration of this Jewish holiday.

Rosh Hashanah is celebrated in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, Tishri. It is a solemn time when Jews reflect and reconcile themselves with God, and also commemorates the creation of the world. In ancient times, the holiday wasn't always celebrated in Tishri, (which tends to fall in September and October in the Gregorian calendar) it was celebrated in the spring, on the first day of Nisan. Early practices were minimal, as Rosh Hashanah was originally considered a minor holiday. The exact date when it was celebrated as a major holiday is unsure, suggesting that its deeper significance may have been lost, however, it's believed that its importance as a major holiday started around the time of the Second Temple. The first recorded mention of Rosh Hashanah was in the *Book of Ezekiel 40:1*.

During Rosh Hashanah three books are opened during: a book for the wholly wicked, a book for the wholly good and a book for

the average class. The fate of this final class hangs in the balance between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. If you can prove yourself worthy, you are inscribed into the book of life (the book of the good). This period of reckoning between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur has been known as, "The Days of Awe" since the 14th century. This is the first of the High Holy Days, which got its name from the English medieval phrase: "High Day and Holydays".

## Medieval Additions

Although the holiday pre-dates the Middle Ages, there were several traditions that arose during this period that have remained popular to the present day. The tradition of dipping apples in honey, which signifies starting off of the New Year sweetly, was not initially practiced by the ancient Israelites, "Apples are not an ancient custom...Biblical Israelites were not consuming apples at Rosh

Israelites were not consuming apples at Rosh Hashanah", according to Professor Jordan D. Rosenblum. Another tradition that developed in the Middle Ages was the eating of pomegranates. This arose from the erroneous belief that there were 613 seeds in a pomegranate, the exact same number as the Jewish commandments. In the 15th century, the tradition of emptying your pockets into bodies of water such as wells, rivers, or the sea, grew out of the belief that this was a way of shedding sin. Rosh Hashanah is also known as, "The Feast of the Trumpets", where the Shofar, usually a ram's horn, is blown up to 101 times. The practice of blowing it 101 times was first mentioned in the medieval commentaries on the Talmud, the Tosafot. Tosafot literature originated in France in the 12th century, where scholars added their commentaries to Rashi's commentary on the Talmud.

fish, an Ashkenazi tradition that replaced the ancient tradition of eating a calf's head. There were also Tsimmes, a sweet baked carrot and fruit dish popular with Ashkenazi Jews in the Middle Ages. Herring, salmon and carp were the preferred fish of choice and were usually grilled, fried or jellied. Chicken was also a food found at the medieval Rosh Hashanah table. In Provence, Jewish families ate white figs, white grapes, white dates and calf's head symbolic of the sacrifice of Isaac. Other foods that could be found at the medieval Rosh Hashanah table were cucumbers, spiced mushrooms, fennel in broth, salted herring, roast lamb, roast beef, frumenty, blanche porre (which was a leek type soup), apples dipped in honey, and hypocras, a drink of wine mixed with sugar and spices.

### Medieval Foods for Rosh Hashanah

Another tradition that developed in the Middle Ages was the consumption of gefilte



**Detail of a marginal drawing of a man blowing the shofar, with an instruction to blow the shofar. British Library Additional 26968 f. 244**

Fall TV Preview

# The Bastard Executioner

Ten episodes airing in North America on FX beginning September 15th.



Set in the early 14th century, the series follows the story of Wilkin Brattle, a knight in King Edward I's army who experiences a vision during battle and decides to stop his career as a warrior. However, the life of the simple farmer does not last long as Wales gets caught up in strife and violence, leading Wilkin to take the job of executioner.

The mind behind *The Bastard Executioner* is Kurt Sutter, who is best known for creating the series *Sons of Anarchy*. Like that American biker drama, this medieval show is expected to be gritty and violent.

In an interview with *Rolling Stone*, Sutter explains, "It was a highly rebellious period, a very dangerous period. Violence, it is

definitely a part of their life."

Wilkin Brattle is being played by Lee Jones, an Australian actor that has a theatre background. He tells the website *PopSugar* "One of the best things about this job is getting to develop a different skill set. I've been craving doing more film and TV, and it's been a great lesson in working really fast. It's allowing me to flex a different muscle, and that's been really enjoyable."

Other cast members include Stephen Moyer, Brian F. O'Byrne and veteran actress Katey Sagal. Sutter even cast himself in the series, taking on the role of 'The Dark Mute'.

In another interview with Deadline.com Sutter explains how he was inspired to make this series:

*I love history and I think it's why I love writing such in-depth mythologies. I don't read a lot of fiction but one of my favorite authors is William Kennedy; his books to me almost read like historical dramas because the mythologies are so detailed as he wove fiction with the factual history of Albany. For this period, there's this great book *The Plantagenets*, which the BBC turned into a documentary series. I found myself stunned and appalled by this stuff, and if I'm stunned and appalled, it's got to be some really fucked-up shit. The level of intrigue and incest and backstabbing that went on with this lineage of non-English—they were mostly French—trying to hold on to England, was so fucking dark and insane. Those were strings that were helpful to me.*

Sutter's *Sons of Anarchy*, which ran for seven seasons on FX, was widely praised by critics and drew large audiences for the American cable channel. The challenge with this series is to bring the best elements from a show about biker gangs and reinvent them for medieval warriors.

Co-executive producer Paris Barclay, who also directed the pilot episodes, said "We wanted a Kurt Sutter experience, which means grittier, more immersive. We wanted the costumes to drag in the dirt. We wanted the fighting to seem un-choreographed, as much as possible. We wanted it to be more real, and more on-the-ground than we're used to seeing on television. And all of that ended up being much more difficult to execute, if you will, than it was to talk about."

Critics have already seen the first three episodes and have given mixed reviews so far. Time Magazine explains that in *The Bastard Executioner* "blood spurts, limbs fly, and a naked woman strolls among the carnage," and adds "it's already starting to

exhibit signs of developing into a bloody good show."

However, Slate.com dismisses the show, calling it "an incoherent *Game of Thrones* knock-off full of senseless carnage, wooden performances, a dash of nudity, and a few scenes so poorly executed they play like farce. The Bastard Executioner is monstrously fetid, a mound of gorgonzola stuffed into a dead catfish's gullet, smoked in sulfur, doused with heavy cream and left to rot for weeks inside a port-o-potty in full sun."

Meanwhile, IGN is among several reviews that state that viewers will need to give this series some time: "It isn't until the end of the pilot that the real intention of the show becomes clear. On the surface we believe we're following the tale of a man who executes people for a living, but when you dig deeper it becomes clear that this is very much a story like *Sons*. As we follow Wilkin Brattle on his quest for revenge, we follow a man who is trying to set right to the world. To make sense of the cards that he has been dealt in life he must do reprehensible things, and as such the story shifts to one of survival and morality."

The 10-episode season will be airing on Tuesday nights at 10:00 pm (with the first night featuring two episodes) on FX in the United States and Canada. No word yet on where the show, which was filmed in Wales, will air in the United Kingdom.

Fall TV Preview

# The Last Kingdom

Beginning in October, this eight-part series will air on BBC2 in the United Kingdom, and on BBC America in the United States.



This BBC production is based on Bernard Cornwell's best-selling series of historical novels known as The Saxon Stories. Set in the year 872, it takes place when the various king of Anglo-Saxon England, including Alfred the Great, are under attack from the Vikings.

The show released this synopsis of the plot:

*Eleven-year-old Uhtred was born a Saxon in 9th century Northumbria. He watches from a cliff top as invading Danish ships move toward his home, not knowing that his future will soon be turned upside-down.*

*Young Uhtred witnesses his father killed and the Saxon army defeated. That same day he is taken by the Danish warlord, Earl Ragnar. His fellow captive is a feisty, sharp-tongued girl named Brida. The orphans are brought up in the Danish camp.*

*Fast forward and the two have formed a close personal bond as kindred spirits and lovers. Uhtred is now a valiant young man and warrior. But it isn't long before he's forced to endure yet another painful and disorienting twist of fate when a group of Danes deliberately set his home ablaze in*

*Danes deliberately set his home ablaze in a vengeful, personal attack – murdering his surrogate family (including Ragnar, who Uhtred saw as his true father). A bloody feud between rival Danes ensues. Caught in the middle, Uhtred finds himself exiled – neither Saxon nor Dane – alone in the world with only his fellow outcast, Brida. Meanwhile, his inheritance and lands in Northumbria are taken by his scheming uncle, Aelfric. Enraged, Uhtred swears to avenge Ragnar and to reclaim his homeland. But his loyalties are ever tested as circumstances force him to choose between the country of his birth and the people of his upbringing. Uhtred must tread a dangerous path between both sides if he is to play his part in the birth of a new nation and, ultimately, recapture his ancestral lands.*

Produced by the makers of *Downton Abbey*, this season cost £10 million to make. Executive producer Gareth Neame of Carnival Films explains, "Cornwell's Saxon novels combine historical figures and events with fiction in an utterly compelling way ... we believe it will make original and engrossing television drama. In part, the epic quest of our hero Uhtred, it is also a

fascinating re-telling of the tale of King Alfred the Great and how he united the many separate kingdoms on this island into what would become England. Our cast has been drawn together from eight different European countries, providing us with the unique opportunity to create a truly international show, tap into a rich seam of talent, and bring them to a new global audience."

Alexander Dreymon (*American Horror Story*) takes on the lead role of Uhtred of Bebbanburg. Other cast members include Emily Cox (*The Silent Mountain*) as Brida, David Dawson (*Peaky Blinders*) as King Alfred, Rune Temte (*Eddie the Eagle*) as Ubba, Matthew Macfadyen (*Ripper Street*) as Lord Uhtred, Rutger Hauer (*Blade Runner*) as Ravn, Ian Hart (*Boardwalk Empire*) as Beocca, and Tobias Santelmann (*Point Break*) as Ragnar the Younger.

*The Last Kingdom* will premiere on October 10th on BBC America. It will also begin airing that month on BBC2.



# The Longest and Shortest Reigns of the Middle Ages

Last week Queen Elizabeth II became Britain's longest-reigning monarch – having been on the throne for over 63 years and seven months. She surpassed the record of her great-great-grandmother Queen Victoria. How do medieval monarchs match up?



**Coronation of Basil II as co-emperor, from the Madrid Skylitzes**

The answer to who had the longest reign is not as easy as it sounds. We could say that Bernard VII 'the Bellicose' had the longest reign of any medieval ruler at 81 years, 234 days. However, he was the Lord of Lippe, a tiny German state. It would not be until the 16th century that the rulers of this state would take on the grandiose title of Counts.

Therefore, we might want to look for a medieval ruler of something more like a kingdom. We have two Byzantine emperors that had reigns of over 60 years – Constantine VIII, who ruled from 962 to 1028, and Basil II, who ruled from 960 to 1025. One small problem here – for much of this time, they weren't ruling at all, or were co-emperors. Their father, Romanos II, had named his two young sons co-emperors, but when he died in 963, their mother married a Byzantine general who became Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas. The two sons would have

a Byzantine general who became Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas. The two sons would have to wait for his reign to end, as well as the reign of the man who murdered Nikephoros, before they were able to take real power in the year 976, which put their true reigns at about 50 years. It should be noted that Basil was the brother who was interested in governing, while Constantine preferred a life of partying and hunting.

Our next candidate for the longest-reigning ruler of the Middle Ages would be James I, King of Aragon, Valencia and Majorca, Count of Barcelona and Lord of Montpellier from 1213 to 1276. He was only five years old when his father Peter II was killed at the Battle of Muret. Regents would administer his kingdom for another 10 years before James reached his majority, but the rest of his reign would include many military victories, earning him the nickname 'the Conqueror'.

We also have a Norwegian king – in fact, the first King of Norway, that reigned for about 58 years. This was Harald Fairhair, who was said to have unified Norway into one kingdom. His dates, from the years 872 to 930, are based on writings by Scandinavian historians from the 12th and 13th centuries, and there is much doubt that this is the correct period.

What about the shortest reign? Again, this is not as simple as it seems. There is an Emperor 'Yuan' of the Northern Wei of China that ruled for a few hours on April 1, 528. However, there is a strange story behind this reign. Yuan was born on February 12th of that year, the only child of Emperor Xiaoming. At this time, the true power of the dynasty belonged to Xiaoming's mother, the Empress Dowager Hu. She and Xiaoming hated each other. When this 'Yuan' was born, the Empress Dowager announced that it was a baby boy, although in fact, Yuan was a girl.

Before the truth about this matter emerged, Xiaoming died by poisoning on March 31st, and Empress Dowager Hu declared the 50-day-old baby girl Yuan the new emperor, while she herself would be the regent. Then a few hours later the Dowager changed her mind and installed Xiaoming's two-year old cousin on the throne. Once the details of all these palace intrigues became known, an angry general marched his troops into the capital and massacred the officials, including the new Emperor and the Empress Dowager. Most historians do not include the girl as an official emperor, not only because of her very short reign, but also because she was placed on the throne as an imposter.

We do have another Chinese ruler who reigned for less than a day – an Emperor Modi, who was on the throne on February 9, 1234. Modi was a general in the army of Emperor Aizong of Jin. When they were besieged by the Mongols inside the city of Caizhou, Aizong abdicated and Modi was chosen to become the new emperor. However, while he was having his own coronation, the Mongols were able to breach the city's defences. Emperor Modi would then be killed as Caizhou fell.

If we look for the shortest reign of a medieval European king, we would find that it belonged to John I of France, who reigned for five days. His father, Louis X, had died on June 5, 1316, while his wife Clementia of Hungary was pregnant. On November 15th she gave birth to John, who immediately became the King of France. Sadly, the infant died five days later, and is known as John the Posthumous. However, you might believe **the story of Giannino di Guccio** that he was the real King John and was switched at birth with an imposter, which adds another wrinkle into that story.

# A Medieval Weather

What was England's weather like 746 years ago? A document possibly written by Roger Bacon, one of the most important scientists of the Middle Ages, gives us the weather report.



**Photo by AvidlyAbide / Flickr**

The manuscript *Royal 7 F viii* at the British Library contains some of the works of Roger Bacon, a Franciscan friar and scholar from the 13th century. He studied and wrote about a wide variety of topics, including optics, nature and even how rainbows were created.

Twelve pages from the manuscript offer a calendar from March 1269 to February 1270 (during this time March was considered the beginning of the year) that tracks the phases of the moon and planets. Starting in August,

there are notes in Latin written down along the left-hand margin that offer observations of the weather. The first entry states "From the 3rd of August to the 10th there was continuous cold and often rain."

Although this calendar does not state who its author was, it could have very likely been written by Roger Bacon, who at that time was teaching at the University of Oxford. It seems to have been written from memory, perhaps around the end of February. Here are some

translated excerpts from these weather reports:

## September

*On the 4th there was brief rain at midday, with a south-westerly wind, and the same in the evening, but then the cold and gloom lasted till night and for another day, and it was like this with the moon in opposition for two days.*

*From the 27th there was rainy weather till the evening of the 5th of October, when there was fine rain at dusk, except that on the 28th there was hail, water and rain at the ninth hour, and the following night there was hoar-frost*

Beginning with November, the weather reports start to become more detailed and include most days.

## Fine (on the 5th).

*(On the 6th) rain, a strong wind all night and the next day dry and fine till the 15th, when there was no rain but it was misty and dull; the next day there was very clear weather.*

*(On the 18th) rain after midday, but before it was dull though dry. On the 19th it was cloudy and cold all day. On the 20th it began to rain gently at dusk and in the night, but afterwards it was dry though cloudy and cold, so that the stars did not appear either by day or by night until the night of the 27th, when the major stars appeared.*

*(On the 30th) rain in the daytime and rain the following night.*

In December the reports note the days when frost appeared, the time the weather was freezing, and when it improved. As winter set in, the author notes the arrival of snow in January.

*Cloudy and cold on the 5th, with a slight frost. But the following night there was a lot of snow and a great frost, and the same the next day, though about the eighth hour it rained a little and became a little less cold. It rained the following night and the next day till the frost began to melt and the snow had all melted. After this it was sometimes rainy and sometimes cloudy, but more often cloudy than clear, both by day and by night, and very unsettled weather till the 11th (inclusive), and similarly afterwards until the 21st (exclusive) it was sometimes clear, sometimes cloudy and sometimes rainy, very unsettled but pleasant and mild like spring weather.*

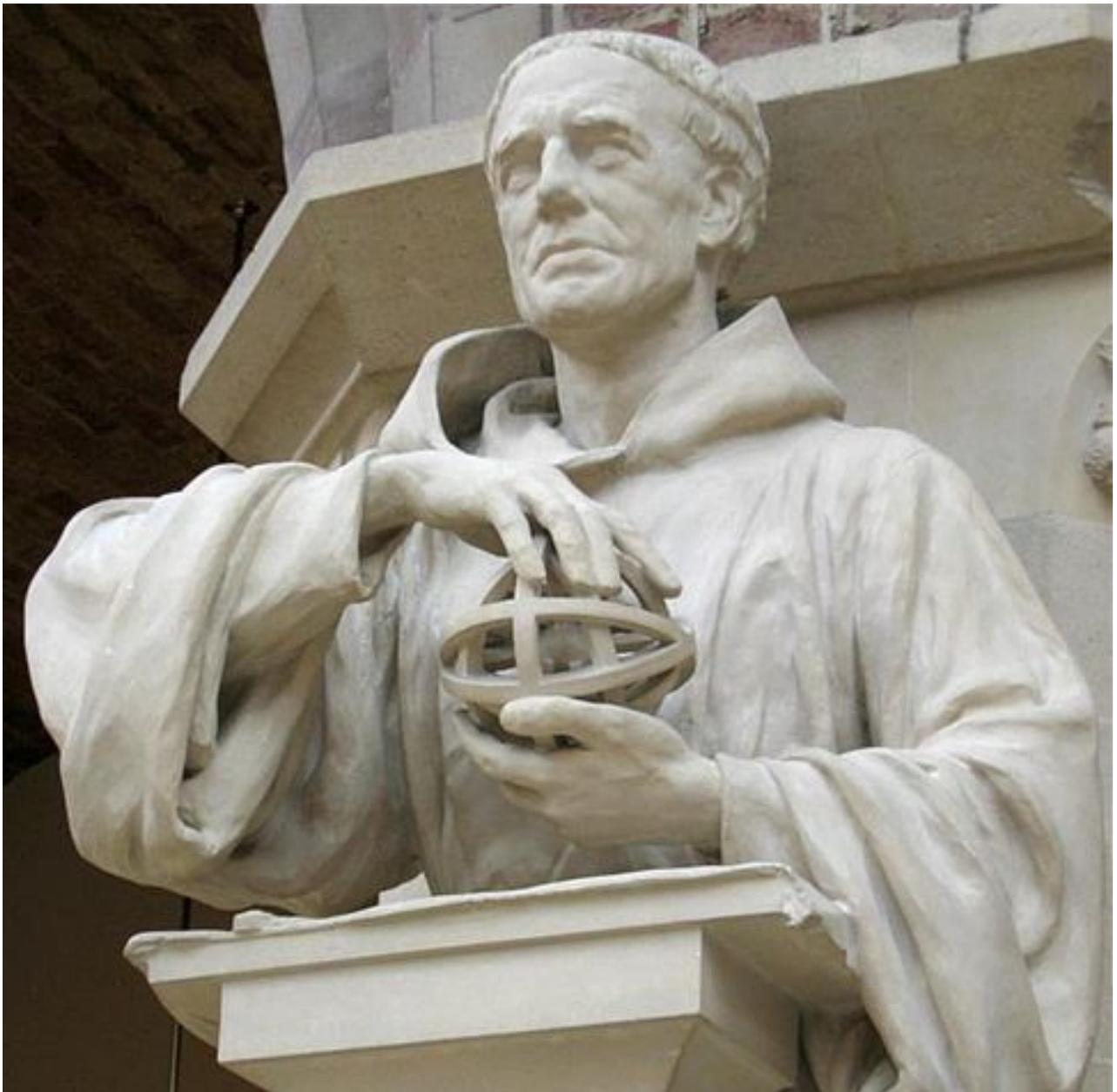
The final month covered is February, and it is the most detailed:

*From the beginning of the month the weather was rainy by pleasant until the 4th (inclusive). On the 4th, at third hour, there was snow with rain and great cold and nasty, rotten weather for 2 or 3 hours. In the night there was a little frost. On the 5th the frost was stronger and it was a clear day, and on the night of the 6th it was very frosty and cold, but that day, the 6th, there was a strong southerly wind in the morning and the frost melted; yet, it was colder than that than before, and very cloudy, though it did not rain. On the 7th it was pleasant and clear, and on the 8th until the seventh hour it really rained. On the 9th the weather was unsettled, but on the 10th it was clear. The following night, though, there was a little snow and slight frost. It was clear enough for the greater part of the 11th and on the 12th the weather was fine and pleasant, and the same on the 13th, 14th and 15th, but on the night before the 15th and on the 15th itself there was a frost. On the 16th the frost weakened in the night and it became pleasant but cloudy all night and all day and pleasant and dry for nearly eight days, except on the 22nd it was a bit rainy and cold. On the 23rd it rained at vespers,*

*cold. On the 23rd it rained at vespers, and it was rainy that night and on the 24th. On the night of the 24th there was a little snow and it got colder. On the 25th it was cold and cloudy and damp from the preceding rain and snow. The following night there was quite a frost, but the next day it melted by itself, without rain. On the 26th and the following night there was a great wind but much snow, and on the 27th it kept snowing till vespers. The next day at about the third hour it again began to snow heavily, lasting until ... But there was no frost those days –*

*the snow melted; nor was it very cold.*

You can read the entire translation in the article "The Oldest European Weather Diary?" by C. Long, which appeared in the journal *Weather*, Vol.29:6 (1974) pages 233-237.



**Statue of Roger Bacon in the Oxford University Museum of Natural History.  
Photograph taken by Michael Reeve / Wikicommons Media**

**Get Your Next Tote Bag  
from Medievalists.net!**



**Buy a Medievalists.net Tote Bag  
from Cafe Press for \$15.99**

# Ten Castles that Made Medieval Britain

## Warwick Castle

By James Turner

Raised amidst the settling dust of the Norman Conquest, the traditional seat of the Earldom of Warwick has continually throughout its millennia long and oft glorious history fundamentally reinvented itself, making it the Madonna of medieval military architecture. Growing steadily in the green and pleasant parkland in which it is set, Warwick Castle's rippling, ever changing, edifice has borne witness to much of the tumultuous political history of England, much of which authored by the great men and women that called the Castle home.

The seeds of Warwick Castle were sown in 914 during the first forging of England as a singular political entity when Æthelflæd, the Lady of Mercia and daughter of the celebrated Alfred the Great first fortified the site. The formidable Æthelflæd and her family were engaged in an extended campaign to fulfil their wilfully intertwined goals of unifying the fractured Anglo-Saxons and driving back the now settled and quite comfortable Viking invaders who had a generation before overrun much of Northern and Central England. Æthelflæd was a skilful tactician and inspiring leader who, following the death of her husband, ruled the former kingdom of Mercia in her own right; the defensive works at Warwick and others like

it were an important element of her eventually vindicated Revanchists' strategy.

In 1068, following the Norman Conquest and the sundering of the relatively recently restored line of Wessex derived kings, William the Conqueror established a Motte and Bailey castle above the old Anglo-Saxon fortifications. Essentially an IKEA style flat-pack castle of piled earth and sturdy timbers, the erection of such castles at any and every opportunity was a classic play from the Norman's book on how to occupy territory and subjugate people and hundreds rose up like dragons teeth in the immediate aftermath of the Conquest.

In 1088, the Castle and the Earldom which became synonymous with it, was granted to Henry de Beaumont by King William Rufus as a reward for his service in the dynastic struggle between the King and his brother Robert Curthose, the Duke of Normandy who had enjoyed the support of much of the now cross-channel aristocracy. Henry was the son of Roger de Beaumont, famous for both his role as one of William's most trusted counsellors and bizarrely for the quality and luxuriousness of his beard. Between Henry, his elder brother Robert and their sons, the family formed one of the most powerful



**Warwick Castle - photo by Zohar Manor-Abel / Flickr**

affinities in the freshly expanded Norman world.

Much of this power was to be spent and ultimately squandered during the grinding, stuttering violence of the Anarchy, a dynastic dispute fought between two of the Conqueror's grandchildren, Empress Matilda and King Stephen which consumed England between 1135 and 1154. While his dynamic cousins, Robert the Earl of Leicester and Hereford and Waleran the Count of Meulan and Earl of Worcester delighted in the effective breakdown of royal authority dancing between the rival claimants and prosecuting their own private agendas, Earl Roger, Henry's son and successor, simply tried to ride out the storm. Hunkering down within his Castle and attempting to avoid notice as his lands were slowly devoured piecemeal by opportunistic neighbours.

Unfortunately for the pious and gentle Roger, in 1153 during one of his infrequent sojourns to the outside world, his wife handed Warwick Castle to the Empress' son, the future Henry II, causing the nerve ridden Earl to die of shock. This may well have been seen as a fair trade by the least sentimental of the Beaumont descendants, for the newly ascended King Henry took advantage of his brief custodianship of the Castle to rebuild it in stone. The Castle and Earldom was eventually restored to the Beaumont family and Roger's son where it rested until 1242 when following the death of Earl Thomas the title passed through his sister Margaret to her husband, the sometime sheriff of Oxfordshire, John Du Plessis.

1263 found England in the throes of the Second Barons' War fought in part to re-establish the Magna Carta and curb what were seen by many of the largely isolated

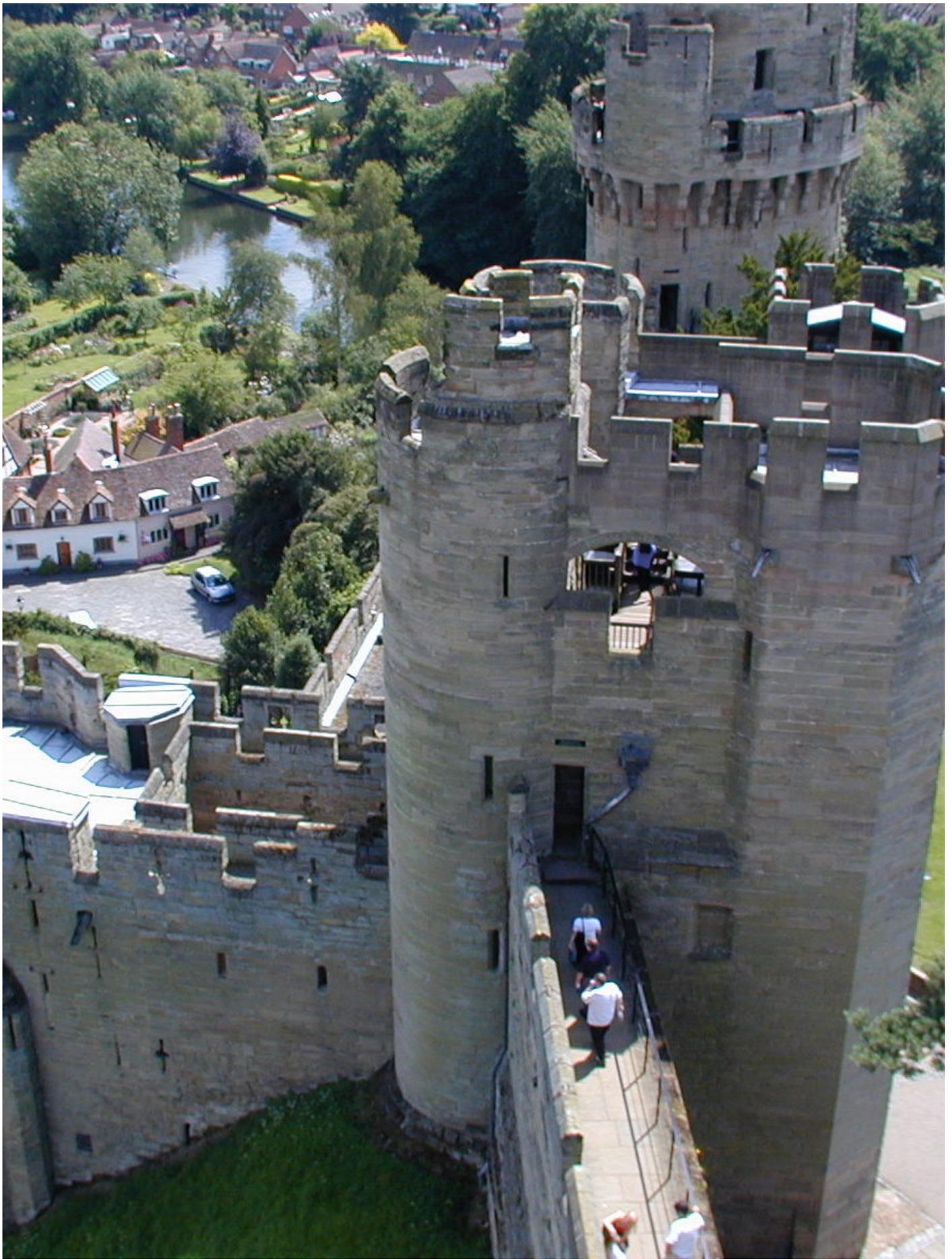
aristocracy as excessive royal rights and capital raising powers. During the second year of the war, the Castle whose master, Earl William Maudit, a relative of Du Plessis's, had stayed loyal to Henry III was stormed by the dashing rebel leader and famed crusader Simon de Montfort. Both the Earl and his wife were captured and held for ransom in de Montfort's nearby Castle at Kenilworth while the walls of Warwick Castle were partially demolished in an attempt to deny such an important strategic resource to avenging supporters of the King.

In 1268, the old Earl, who had died the year previously, was succeeded by his nephew William de Beauchamp who would go on to be a close companion and trusted lieutenant of Edward I, also taking a leadership role in many of the domineering King's imperialistic wars. The Castle also served infamously, albeit briefly, as a prison during the turbulent and marred reign of Edward II when Earl Guy of Warwick captured Edward II's friend Piers Gaveston whose seeming monopoly of the material and temporal benefits of royal affinity made the unlucky courtier a lightning rod for the threatened nobility now brimming with discontent. Guy handed the royal favourite over to Edward's cousin and only rival in wealth or power, Earl Thomas of Lancaster, who later that year in 1312 had him executed following a perfunctory show trial.

Perhaps inspired by the increasingly dangerous tempo of English politics over the last few generations or as a result of a more acute awareness of his increased status, Guy's son and successor, Thomas, embarked upon an extensive modernisation of the Castle's defences, rebuilding its northern wall with the addition of a bulging and fortified gatehouse and raising a network of great towers around the Castle's perimeter which featured several architectural innovations derived from the Continent. It is fitting and perhaps unsurprising that Warwick Castle was to gain many of its most

obvious and lasting military attributes under Thomas' tenure for he was perhaps the most militarily proficient Earl to dwell there. A close friend of the glory hungry and driven Edward III, Thomas served as the Marshall of England. He commanded one of three English battalions during the resounding victory at Crecy before going on to further glories serving as a mentor to the Black Prince during his brutally effective chevauchée of 1356 prior to fighting at the Battle of Poitiers during the campaign's culmination.

When Henry de Beauchamp, the childhood friend of Henry VI died in 1446 with no immediate male heir, the stage was set for the Castle's most famous and notorious inhabitant, Richard Neville 'The Kingmaker.' Gaining the Earldom through marriage to Henry's sister Anne in 1449, Richard was already part of a powerful northern affinity; the son of the Earl of Salisbury and related through marriage to the Duke of York, the Earl was to play a pivotal role in the fratricide strewn War of the Roses. Warwick was a firm supporter of his uncle Richard of York's attempts to step in and exercise royal power on behalf of his then catatonic family member, King Henry VI. However, this brought the Duke and his emerging affinity into open conflict with another faction of royal ministers and relatives led by the King's wife Margaret of Anjou and the Duke of Somerset. Worse still, upon Henry's recovery it became clear that his trust remained with Somerset and that the King saw York's attempts to seize power in his absence as deeply threatening. Now isolated from royal support and threatened himself, Duke Richard felt that his only chance for survival was to persevere in his attempts to forcibly remove the pliant King from the custody of his rivals, sparking another spasm of violence throughout the kingdom in which he was aided by the cunning and redoubtable Warwick. Following the Duke of York's death at the Battle of Wakefield, the Earl declared his cousin, Edward Plantagenet the rightful King. The mainstay of the Yorkist war effort,



**View of Warwick Castle from the main keep - Photo by Morgan (PA) / Flickr**

King. The mainstay of the Yorkist war effort, he guided the young and talented King to victory whereby he firmly established himself as the foremost royal minister and most powerful noble within the land. However, Richard feeling that he was becoming increasingly excluded from royal favour and the mechanisms of power following the King's generous patronage of his new bride's vast cohort of relatives soon turned against the victorious Edward throwing his considerable power behind a Lancastrian rival. He was joined temporarily in this rebellion by his son-in-law the Duke of Clarence, a particularly grievous blow for the embattled Edward given that the Duke was his younger brother. This breaking of faith was ultimately to prove a fatal mistake; the mercurial Clarence defected yet again and 'The Kingmaker' was slain at the Battle of Barnet.

During the War of the Three Kingdoms, the dilapidated Castle was refurbished and refortified as a Parliamentary stronghold and successfully endured a Royalist siege.

From this point on, the Castle served largely as a stately home to the Greville family, although they struggled with the financial burden presented by the Castle and the continuing battle to modernise it in an evolving economy. In 1976 the Greville family sold the Castle to the Tussauds Group after which it fell into the clutches of Merlin Entertainment, the site's current managers, where Warwick nestles comfortably amongst its portfolio of equally crucial historical and cultural landmarks such as Alton Towers and LEGOLAND.

Set beside the gently meandering River Avon, amidst breezy emerald parkland and raiment of peacock strewn gardens, Warwick Castle is blessed with one of the most pleasant settings enjoyed by any English Castle. The sprung bow of the Castle's singular curtain wall rising above the defensive ditch and soaring machicolated towers almost grotesque in their size, is an imposing sight; their sheer high and bulky early modern gate houses, psychologically at least, compensating for any lack of depth.



**Warwick Castle, the East Front from the Outer Court (1752), painted by Canaletto, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham.**



**Warwick Castle - photo by L1mey / Flickr**

Sheltered behind the curve of the wall and nestled against the river are the Castle's sumptuous manor-like residential buildings erected far later than the rest of the Castle and refurbished and remodelled many times. They are crafted with sufficient levels of architectural synergy that they do not appear visually disruptive to the older curtain wall. Both the Great Hall and State rooms display a cornucopia of historical artefacts. Overlooking the rest of the Castle is the ancient Æthelflæds Mound upon the fastness of which stands the remains of the Castle's original stone keep which now plays home to part of the highly popular Horrible Histories Stormin' Normans Experience where children are inducted into the mysteries of Norman soldiery. This goal is achieved through the distribution and subsequent swinging around of large

wooden poles which no doubt contributes to its enduring popularity with its target audience and widespread despair amongst their parents.

The fact that children still play at and dream of being knights in the shelter of the ever adaptable Warwick Castle highlights one of the paradoxes of history. Which is that the context emphasizes the extent of our removal from our medieval forebears while the act itself illuminates an unyielding similarity.

**[Click here to visit the Warwick Castle website](#)**

# **Wit and Wisdom from Medieval Monarchs**

Here are ten quotes from medieval Kings and Queens that we wanted to share, part of the recently published book *Wit and Wisdom of Kings & Queens*, by Maria Pritchard

***Burn old wood, read old books, drink old wines, have old friends.***

- Alfonso X, King of Castile (1221-84)

***To have another language is to possess a second soul.***

- Charlemagne, Holy Roman Emperor (c.747 - 814)

***Evil to him who thinks evil.***

- Edward II, King of England (1284-1327)

***I desired to live worthily as long as I lived and to leave after my life, to the men who should come after me, the memory of me in good works.***

- Alfred the Great, King of Wessex (849-99)

***Grief is not very different from illness: in the impetus of its fire it does not recognize lords, it does fear colleagues, it does not respect or spare anyone, nor even itself. Pitiful and pitied by no one, why have I come to ignominy of this detestable old age, who was ruler of two kingdoms, mother of two kings?***

- Eleanor of Aquitaine, Queen consort of France and Queen consort of England (1122-1204)



Alfonso X, King of Castile

***Pride defeats its own end, by bringing the man who seeks esteem and reverence into contempt.***

- Henry IV, King of England (1367-1413)

***Let justice be done, though the world perish.***

- Ferdinand I, Holy Roman Emperor (1503-64)

***Fortune has something of the nature of a woman. If she is too intensely wooed, she commonly goes further away.***

- Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor (1500-58)

***The distance is great from the firm belief to the realization from concrete experience.***

- Isabella I, Queen of Castile and Leon (1451-1504)

***I would rather have a Scot come from Scotland to govern the people of this kingdom well and justly than that you should govern them ill in the sight of all the world.***

- Louis IX, King of France (1214-70), speaking to his son