

The Medieval Magazine

Number 32

September 7, 2015



Back to School

Life in the Medieval
University



19

Dear Dad, Send Money:
Letters from Students



22

Read an Excerpt from *Ivory
Vikings*



39

Cast of Bede's Skull Rediscovered | Windsor Castle | Off with your... nose?



Page 19

Life in the Medieval University: The Swedish Experience

The recently published book, *Swedish Students at the University of Leipzig in the Middle Ages: Careers, Books, and Teaching*, edited by Olle Ferm and Sara Risberg, details the education and careers of over 200 students that came from Sweden to study at the University of Leipzig in northern Germany.



Page 22

Dear Dad, Send Money – Letters from Students in the Middle Ages

"I ask of you greetings and money."



Page 24

Medieval Back-to-School Shopping List

In the Middle Ages, students entering university had to gather together materials, too, before they headed off to places sometimes very far from home like Oxford University, the University of Salerno, or the University of Paris. Here's a list of five things that would be on a medieval back-to-school shopping list.



Page 36

A clerk there was of Rowan County also....

What the Kim Davis Case Tells Us About America's Long Middle Ages

Table of Contents

4	Cast of Bede's Skull Rediscovered
7	Scholar discovers previously unknown Magna Carta scribe
10	Archaeologists explore threatened medieval site on Cyprus
12	Off with your ... nose?!
14	Finding the Battle of Bannockburn
19	Life in the Medieval University: The Swedish Experience
22	Dear Dad, Send Money – Letters from Students in the Middle Ages
24	Medieval Back-to-School Shopping List
27	The Long History of Teachers Complaining about Students
30	Ten Castles that Made Medieval Britain: Windsor Castle
36	A clerk there was of Rowan County alsoWhat the Kim Davis Case Tells Us About America's Long Middle Ages
39	Book Excerpt: Ivory Vikings, by Nancy Marie Brown
44	Medievalists.net Tote Bag

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Cast of Bede's Skull Rediscovered

A cast of the skull of Bede – the 'Father of English History' – has been rediscovered by a University of Leicester academic, within the anatomical collections of the University of Cambridge.



Cast of Bede's skull - Photo: J. Story, with permission of the director of the Duckworth Laboratory at the University of Cambridge, Leverhulme Centre for Human Evolutionary Studies

An exhibition showcasing the cast of the skull – recently rediscovered by Professor Jo

Story of the University of Leicester's School of History – and the story behind the excavation of Bede's tomb in 1831 and the preservation of the skull found there, will be opening on 8 September at Bede's World,

Jarrow, Tyne and Wear.

Bede (also known as The Venerable Bede) lived from 672–735. He was one of the most influential scholars in medieval Europe. His most famous work, completed in AD 731, is the 'Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum'

or 'The Ecclesiastical History of the English People'.

It is the key source for understanding early British history and the establishment of Christianity in England, and it was the very first work of history to use the AD system of dating which is still in use today.

In 1831 Dr James Raine excavated the tomb of Bede in Durham Cathedral. This tomb contained the bones that had been venerated throughout the middle ages as those of Bede. The medieval tomb was destroyed at the Reformation but the bones it contained were carefully laid out in a new tomb in the Galilee Chapel at the western end of the cathedral, where they remain today.

The new Jarrow exhibition explores the medieval devotion to Bede, and the discovery, preservation, and fierce debate about the authenticity of the skull in the mid-19th century. This story is revealed in a new article by Professor Story and Richard Bailey (formerly Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Anglo-Saxon Civilisation at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne) just published in *The Antiquaries Journal*.

By kind permission of the Society of Antiquaries of London, this article on 'The Skull of Bede' has been made free to view online by Cambridge University Press, to coincide with the opening of the exhibition.

Professor Story said: "The story of 'The skull of Bede' is one that takes us to the heart of 19th-century ideas about race and the peopling of the British Isles in antiquity. It traces the thread of evidence that links the cast in the Cambridge cupboard back to the excavation of Bede's tomb in Durham Cathedral in 1831, and from there back to the destruction of the medieval shrines of saints in Reformation England, to the devotion to the memory of Bede throughout the middle ages, to the creation of Durham

Cathedral in early twelfth-century Norman England."

Professor Bailey said: "Thirty years ago, when working on the cult of Bede, I discovered Dr Raine's handwritten note which showed that he had ordered three casts of the skull he had found in Bede's tomb. I tracked the subsequent fate of one of them through to the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries but it had disappeared by 1900. Every other trail I tried to follow then went cold on me. Imagine my surprise therefore when Professor Story e-mailed me with a photograph of the Cambridge cast! Of course, that means that there may still be one more out there somewhere."

The article uncovers the tale of Alfred Westou, a thieving monk who, in the early eleventh century, is said to have stolen the bones of Bede from his original grave in the monastery of Jarrow and secreted them into the tomb of St Cuthbert at Durham for safe keeping.

The bones were discovered there in 1104 when St Cuthbert's tomb was moved from the old Anglo-Saxon cathedral into the magnificent new Norman building, where it remains today.

In the article, Story and Bailey argue that the skull recovered in Durham by James Raine in 1831 was almost certainly that which was discovered in Cuthbert's tomb in 1104, and thus that it was the skull that Westou had excavated, and which he believed was that of Bede himself.

Raine was perplexed by the shape of the skull found in Bede's tomb, and had a plaster cast made before reintering the bones. Three copies of Raine's cast were made in 1831.

Raine gave one cast to Dr John Thurnam, a pioneering psychiatrist and Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, who had developed a specialist interest in

ethnography and archaeology alongside his medical work.

All the casts were since believed to be lost, but Professor Jo Story recently discovered Thurnam's cast in the collections of the Duckworth Laboratory in the Leverhulme Centre for Human Evolutionary Studies (LCHES) at the University of Cambridge.

The cast of the skull of Bede sits there alongside remains of the earliest hominids, which are the focus of the pioneering research at LCHES.

A copy of the Cambridge cast has been made for the museum of Early Medieval Northumbria at Bede's World in Jarrow, and is the centrepiece of the new exhibition which opens on Tuesday 8 September at Bede's World, Jarrow.

It is exciting that we have been able to acquire a cast of the skull of Bede for permanent display at the museum, but the story behind the cast opens up a number of fascinating questions about what happened to Bede's bones after his death along with the celebration of his cult in medieval Europe. The project has been a very successful collaboration between Bede's World, the University of Leicester and the University of Cambridge and I hope that there will be further opportunities for us to work together in the future."

The 'Skull of Bede' by Professor Jo Story and Richard Bailey is free to view online from 4 September until 31 December 2015: http://journals.cambridge.org/Skull_of_Bede

Information about Bede's World is available here: <http://www.bedesworld.co.uk/>

Matt Storey, of Bede's World, said: "Not only

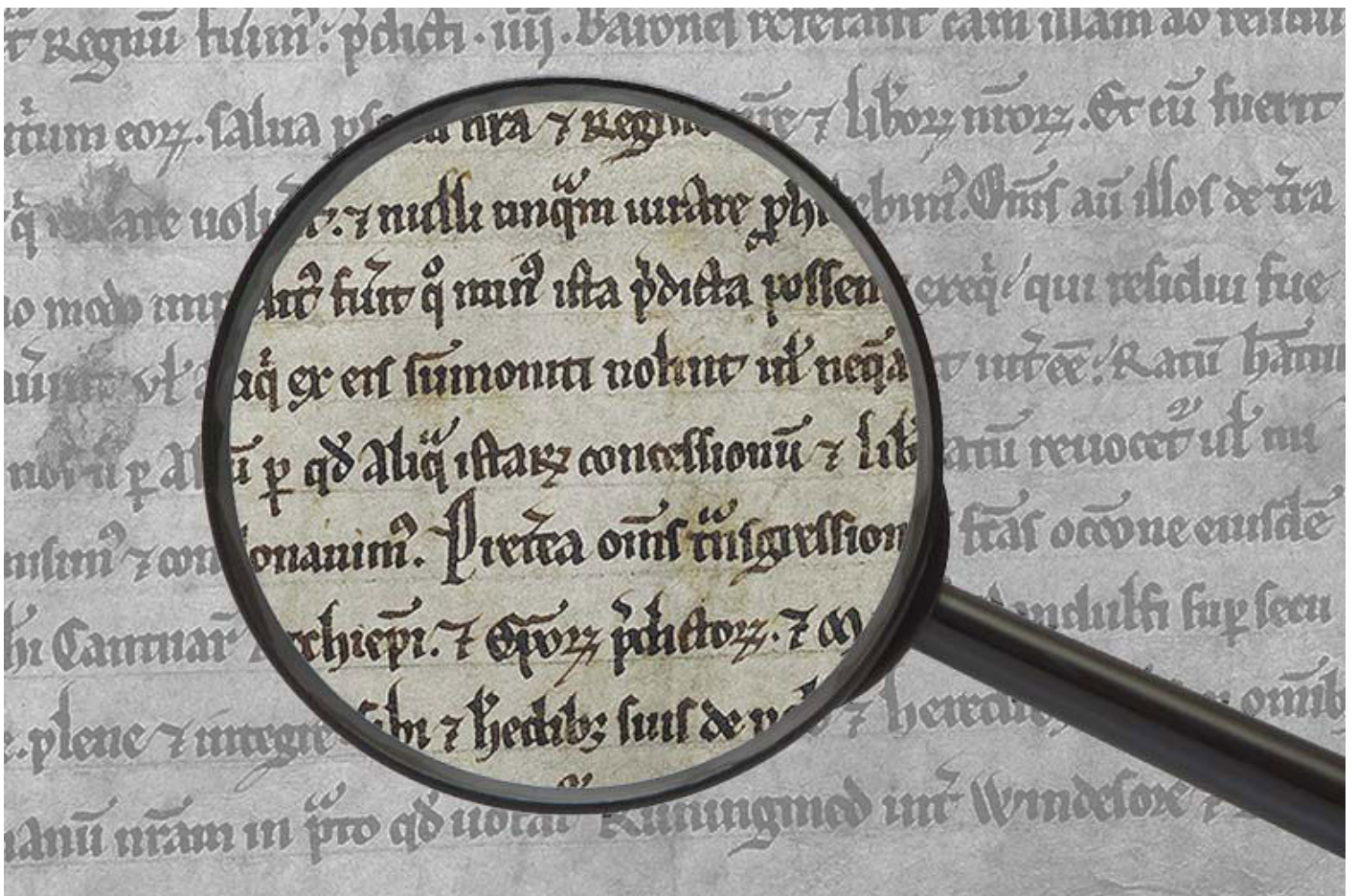


Skull of Bede Exhibition – Photo by Bede's World

Scholar discovers previously unknown Magna Carta scribe

By Angela Becerra Vidergar

Using handwriting analysis, Stanford manuscript expert Elaine Treharne shows for the first time that one of the world's most famous documents was written not by the king's own scribes, but by a cathedral scribe outside the central court.



Stanford literary scholar Elaine Treharne painstakingly examined every letter and punctuation mark of the Salisbury Magna Carta in making her discovery about the document's origin. Photo illustration by L.A. Cicero / Stanford University

Eight hundred years ago, one of the world's most important documents was born. Issued by King John of England in 1215, the Magna Carta ("Great Charter") acknowledged the rights of citizens and set restrictions on the power of the king. The Magna Carta has influenced the structures of modern democracies, including the writ of habeas corpus of the U.S. Constitution.

Thanks to meticulous comparative handwriting analysis, Stanford literary scholar Elaine Treharne has uncovered new information about who wrote one of the last four surviving original versions of the 1215 Magna Carta, preserved at England's Salisbury Cathedral.

Scholars have long thought that the Magna Carta was issued by the king in the Chancery, the king's central court, written by his scribes there and then sent out to other locations in the shires, or counties, of England.

According to Treharne, her research suggests the Salisbury Magna Carta was not just received and preserved at Salisbury, but that the Salisbury Magna Carta was written at Salisbury by one of the cathedral's own scribes. She recently co-published her findings with University of Glasgow historian Andrew Prescott.

Treharne, a professor of English at Stanford, says that knowing about this difference in authorship "changes the way we think about the transmission of texts in the Middle Ages from the court."

Instead of the charter being something passive that the king produced and sent out from the central court to be put away in satellite locations, Treharne says versions of the charter "were written in the regions and then taken to the court for sealing by the king's Great Seal."

This reconfiguration of the Magna Carta's path signals "a much more proactive

relationship between institutions and king," the scholar says. "It makes us look again at the role of the church in relationship to the king. They become much more partners, really, in the production of texts."

Painstaking work

Treharne made the unexpected discovery while working on a larger project profiling the rich archive of Salisbury Cathedral. She was analyzing texts in a book that belonged to Salisbury in about 1215 or 1220 when she noticed "that a couple of the scribes' work in that book looked very similar to that of the Magna Carta scribe."

In particular, she noted similarities in the handwriting of the Salisbury Magna Carta and a document called the Register of St. Osmund, which contains regulations, charters, writs and other documents pertaining to the cathedral.

Through her work on the Salisbury archive and other long-term projects such as Stanford's initiative Text Technologies, Treharne pursues her fascination with the history of documents and the development of texts and handwriting from the Middle Ages to today's digital texts.

The archive at Salisbury has not been digitized, so Treharne has been traveling there from Stanford for several years to examine the documents firsthand.

The scholar says she first noticed similarities between the Register of St. Osmund and the Salisbury Magna Carta through her overall visual impression of the manuscripts. Then, she says, came the most painstaking part of the process: the "accumulation of proof" through a meticulous, letter-by-letter handwriting comparison.

"You would truly begin with an 'a,' and look at the 'a,' and the way that it was formed with a pen, and then move to the 'a' of the other

document and look at the 'a' there."

Treharne proceeded to do the same for the whole alphabet in lower case and upper case. She says she then examined the punctuation, abbreviation, "the angle of the pen and the number of strokes for each character. So it's really incredibly painstaking work."

Treharne explains that just like our handwriting is particular to each of us, medieval scribes wrote particular letters in ways that were "absolutely specific" to each scribe.

In the case of the Magna Carta and Register of St. Osmund, she has identified at least four "remarkable letter-forms," including a particularly noteworthy 'g' with a "looped tail," that point to the handwriting of one person – a Salisbury scribe.

The importance of access

Treharne's work is a testament to how sometimes big discoveries can come unexpectedly from the pull of scholarly curiosity and from nurturing a fertile field of research.

"I didn't set out to find anything out – I just thought it was quite interesting to look at the hand of the Magna Carta scribe," she said. "But it struck me really forcefully when I first saw this Register of St. Osmund. When I opened it I thought, goodness, that really looks like the Magna Carta scribe."

Treharne emphasizes that discoveries like these highlight the importance of both preservation and access. Her work on the Magna Carta is now part of the larger book she has been writing, *Collective Memories in Salisbury Cathedral Library and Archive, 1200-1800*.

The scholar says the history of the Salisbury archive is "an incredible story of collecting

and preserving and producing, and actually protecting."

For example, Treharne says, "When the Reformation came they had a public book burning and a lot of the Salisbury books appeared to have been lost. But somehow they managed to save stuff that they should've had to get rid of."

Treharne says this project shows the benefits of collaboration. She has been working with Prescott, who focuses on the historical aspects of the findings, and other scholars in the UK. Their findings are additionally confirmed by different evidence from research being done on the Magna Carta by historians David Carpenter (King's College London) and Nicholas Vincent (University of East Anglia).

Treharne says the findings also show the value of keeping an open mind in scholarship. "Although we think we know so much about history, we know so much about people of the past, we know so much about our institutions, all the time scholars and interested citizens are making amazing discoveries."

Learn more about Elaine Treharne's research at **Stanford Text Technologies**

Archaeologists explore threatened medieval site on Cyprus



Foundations of one of a number of late Roman or early Byzantine harbour buildings exposed by winter storm wave action at Dreamer's Bay, Akrotiri. © Prof Simon James, University of Leicester

Archaeologists from the University of Leicester are in a race against time to uncover the heritage of a threatened 1,500-year-old site on a Cyprus shoreline.

Between 9-23 September an expert team, from the University's School of Archaeology and Ancient History, will conduct a small-scale archaeological excavation at Dreamer's Bay, inside the UK's Cyprus airbase, RAF Akrotiri.

This site, a late Roman/early Byzantine harbour complex, is a significant part of the heritage of the Akrotiri Peninsula, and has been known about for some decades but not adequately explored and documented.

The archaeological project is being led by the University of Leicester School of Archaeology & Ancient History in close collaboration with a range of other partners, stakeholders and authorities.

Simon James, Professor of Archaeology at Leicester, said: "We aim to conduct a rescue excavation on wave-threatened heritage remains along the shoreline, in the form of a series of simple masonry buildings, probably warehouses, which appear to belong to the port which existed here in late Roman/early Byzantine times, probably between AD 300 and 600. These structures are being rapidly eroded by the sea during winter storms. Their exploration and recording has been identified as a priority by the environment team of the UK's Defence Infrastructure Organisation which is responsible for looking after the land on which RAF Akrotiri stands. The work is also being conducted with the agreement of the Republic of Cyprus Department of Antiquities.

"The September exercise will act as a pilot for a proposed larger scale and longer term research programme on the archaeology of the peninsula: the Ancient Akrotiri Project. It will be led by the University of Leicester School of Archaeology & Ancient History, in close collaboration with a range of other partners, stakeholders and authorities. These already include, DIO, SBAA, and British Forces

Cyprus, plus the Department of Antiquities and the Western Sovereign Base Area Archaeological Society.

"Our excavation will also provide an opportunity for further reconnaissance of the archaeology of the peninsula and for discussions regarding future fieldwork plans, at Dreamer's Bay and we hope other sites, on a larger scale."

Professor James added that the aim of the initiative was for it to be more than an academic research project. He said: "Our wider mission as an educational institution includes heritage preservation and communication, outreach, widening participation and public engagement in archaeology. In this connection an important objective of the September season is to form a picture of the current state of knowledge and attitudes regarding the local archaeological heritage among the community that lives on the base. I am already in contact with local schools, and we hope to conduct a questionnaire survey of public attitudes to the heritage among the base community at RAF Akrotiri during our stay.

"We further very much hope that any future work at Akrotiri will also involve an extension of our longstanding collaboration with the award-winning OPERATION NIGHTINGALE, a scheme run by the Defence Archaeological Group to help wounded, injured and sick UK Service personnel and veterans to recover by engaging them in archaeological fieldwork."

The September work is being funded by a small research development grant from the University of Leicester, and would not be possible without logistic and other support kindly provided by DIO, UK Armed Forces and WSBAAS. The University team will comprise six staff, including several professional field archaeologists from its in-house commercial unit, University of Leicester Archaeological Services.

Off with your...Nose!?

In the summer of 2010, Aisha Bibi was featured on the cover of *Time* Magazine. The photo was harrowing; a beautiful girl from Afghanistan, with her nose cut off. Aisha was forced into marriage at the age of 14 as a means of resolving a family dispute. She escaped her abusive marriage but was returned to her husband's family who, in an act of retaliation, took her into the mountains and cut off her nose and ears.

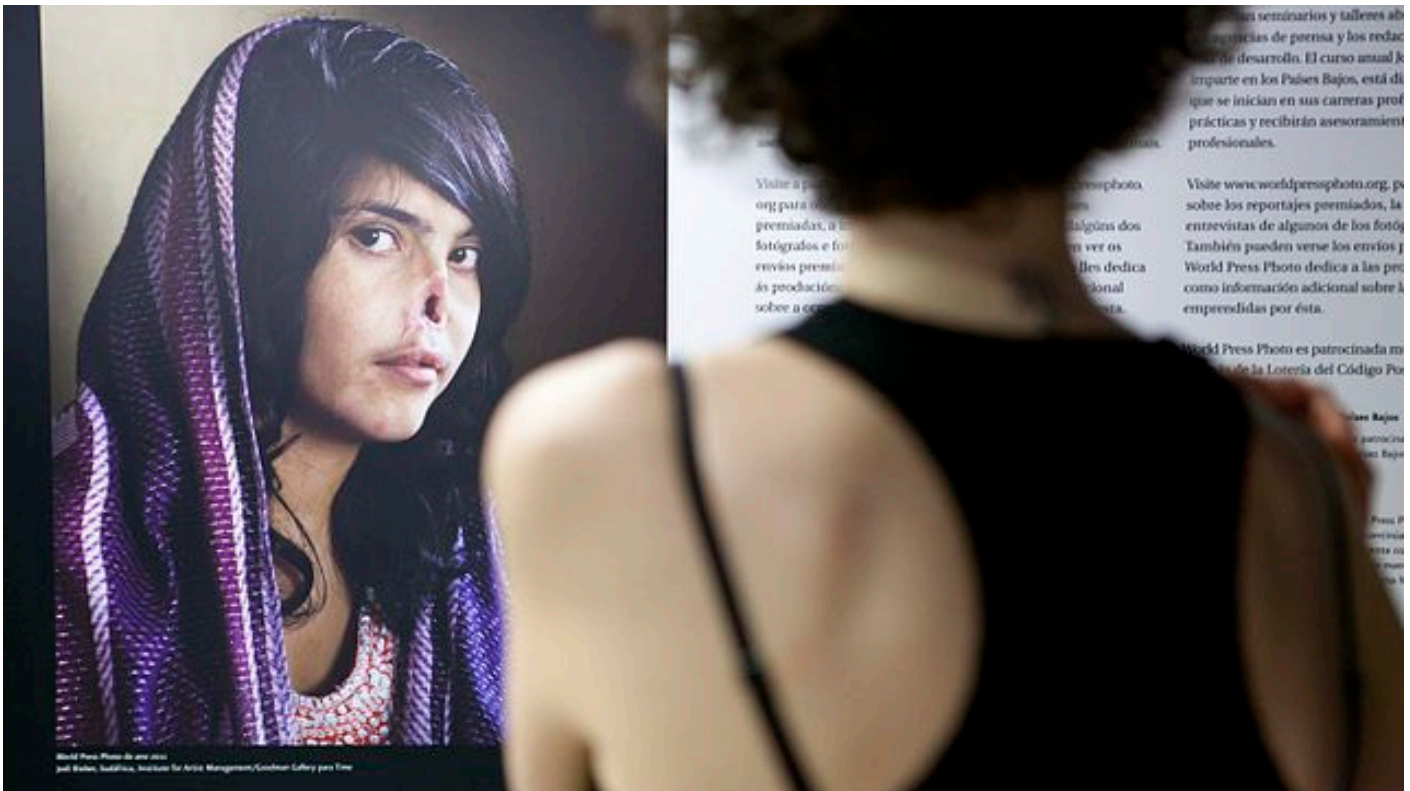
Horrific. Barbaric. "Medieval"....or is it? Does this act have a precedent in the Middle Ages? Were medieval acts of barbarity against women perpetuated for similar reasons? How common was this form of mutilation and can it explain the reasons behind this practice in certain facets of modern society?

In a fascinating article on the topic, "Blaming it on the 'Barbarians': Alleged Uses of Nose-Cutting Among the Franks", published in the *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 26:1 (2014), Bonnie Effros debunked the notion that the mutilation of women was a common occurrence in the Middle Ages. Although there are several incidents in the early Frankish period that would suggest that this was a regular form of punishment, in reality, they were isolated incidents.

According to historian Valentin Groeber, in the Middle Ages, 'a person without a nose was perceived as a non-person'. Was the attack on Aisha by her husband's family a means of relegating her to a person of no status? Does this action against Aisha harken back to an entrenched medieval practice to shame or punish women? Effros suggested this was too

simplistic an explanation, and that it's all too easy to overlay medieval motivations to try and understand the reasoning behind modern actions. While there were Frankish law codes penalizing people who mutilated others, it didn't necessarily mean that this was a common problem. In Gregory of Tours' *Historia Francorum*, he indicated that amputation of the nose was reserved for serious offences, like those who transgressed against royal authority.

In the case of the 589AD revolt at the monastery of Holy Cross in Poitiers, the amputation of noses did not occur to the nuns for causing the uprising, but to the lay men enlisted to aide them. The nuns revolted against the installation of a new abbess, Leubovera, and once the rebellion was quashed, their male supporters were mutilated. The nuns fled unscathed, and were able to escape to the nearby church of Saint Hilary's. This case no longer supports arguments that mutilation was regularly perpetrated against medieval women, or that we can look to such incidents to explain the brutality inflicted upon women like Aisha.



Aisha Bibi - photo by Museos Científicos Coruñeses / Wikimedia Commons

There were cases of purported mutilation, where nuns cut off their noses in the early Middle Ages. However, these were stories of self harm by ascetic women, not of harm caused by being attacked. Queen Radegund, founder of the rebellious Holy Cross monastery, was devoutly religious. Radegund was said to have branded herself with a burning crucifix in order to invoke the suffering of Christ. There were several other cases of self harm by religious women when they were attacked by Vikings or Saracens. In the 8th century, the nuns at St. Cyr in Marseilles cut off their noses, and in the 9th century, the nuns in Coldingham, England, did the same to render themselves unattractive to their attackers, in hopes of preserving their chastity. Effros suggests that these instances were more likely stories told in order to reinforce social mores, than actual historical events.

The image of cutting off a woman's nose resurfaced frequently in the later Middle Ages in hagiographic narratives, which were written by male clerics who sought to demonstrate examples of self-sacrifice by nuns for religious edification. There was one

other example of a mutilation of a Visigothic bride, in the 6th century which had nothing to do with religious reasons; her nose was cut off on suspicion of treason. Effros was quick to point out that this type of violence was an isolated case. As for disfigurement indicating societal ostracisation, this was not guaranteed. Effros mentioned the discovery of a disfigured teenage girl in Edix Hill. She suffered from leprosy but was still given a respectful, compassionate burial, her grave filled with many goods. This indicated that she was not shunned due to her deformity since great care was taken in burial.

The study concluded with the suggestion that historians should not rely heavily on past sources to explain current events or actions. As these cases demonstrate, they cannot be easily suffused into modern situations since many of the sources are scant at best or written with the purpose of reinforcing the social belief systems of that period. Many of the stories were written centuries after the fact, further complicating their use as accurate sources in demonstrating the origins of today's behaviours in a medieval past.

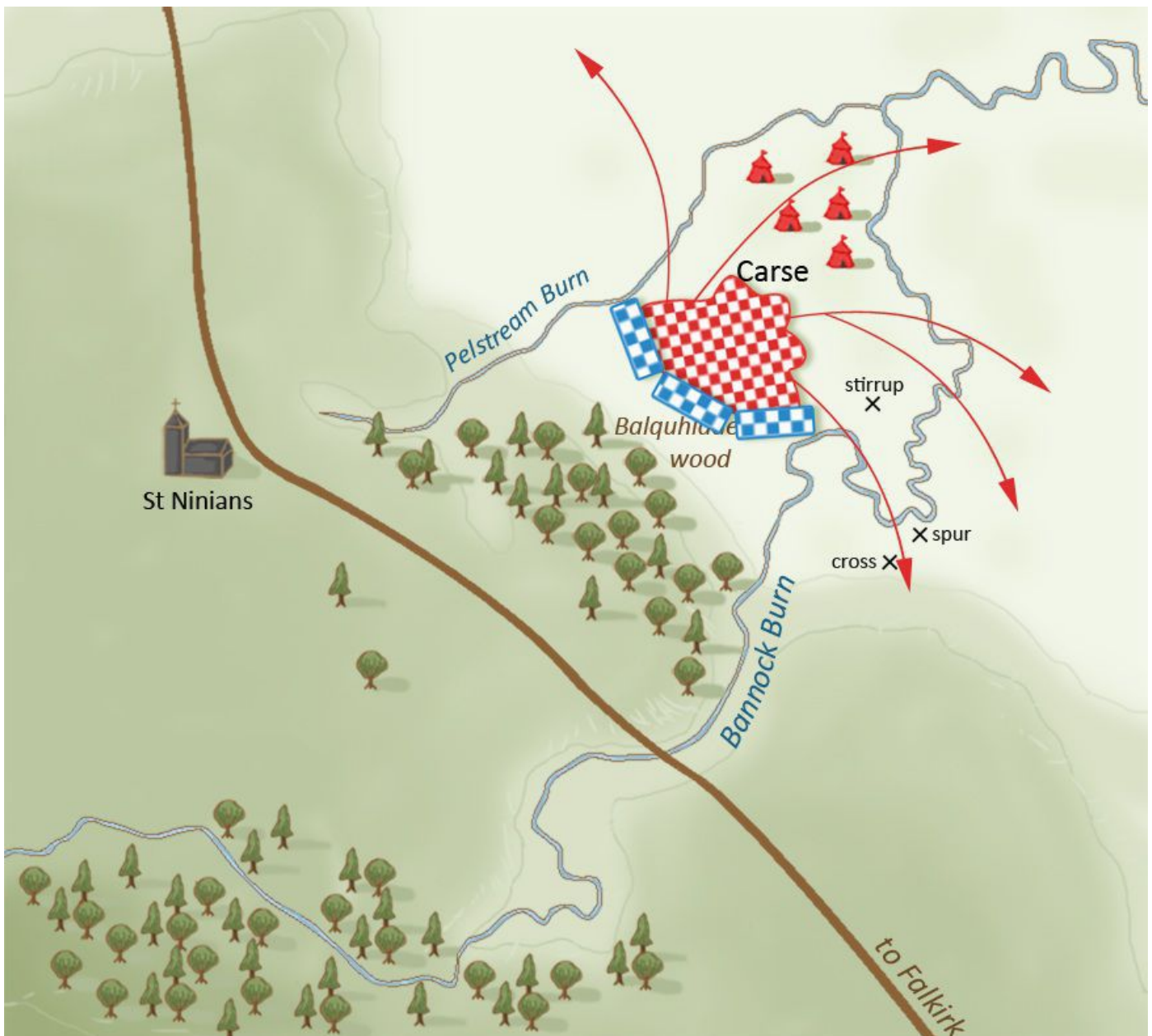
Finding the Battle of Bannockburn

Bannockburn is the most iconic battle of Scottish history and was the key battle in the Scottish Wars of Independence. Fought over two days, the 23 and 24 of June 1314, the battle was a resounding victory for Robert I's army over a much larger force led by Edward II of England. The victory established Robert the Bruce as de facto King of Scots and ended any realistic claim of the Plantagenets to the Scottish throne, by both removing the last significant English garrison and the Bruce's Scottish enemies from the country.

However, despite its iconic status, the precise location of the actual battlefield was unknown, with a variety of potential sites beneath and around the modern village of Bannockburn the subject of academic debate.

Between 2011 and 2014, a new search for the site of the Battle of Bannockburn took place, spurred on by the 700th anniversary of the battle and the National Trust for Scotland's new state-of-the-art Bannockburn Battlefield Centre. Led by a team of archaeologists, historians and environmental experts drawn from the National Trust for Scotland, the Centre of Battlefield

Archaeology at Glasgow University, Stirling Council, Stirling University, the Treasure Trove Unit and GUARD Archaeology Ltd, every available resource and technique was put to the test. LIDAR, aerial photography, map regression, documentary research, geophysical prospection, walk-over surveys, metal-detecting surveys, excavation trenching and systematic test-pitting was carried out with the support of metal detectorists from the Scottish Artefact Recovery Group and Detecting Scotland and the participation of over 1,314 enthusiastic local, national and international volunteers of all ages. Supported by BBC Scotland, the



Map of Bannockburn showing the new archaeological find spots and the likeliest course of the battle over 23 and 24 June 1314. © Tony Pollard / GUARD Archaeology Ltd

international volunteers of all ages. Supported by BBC Scotland, the work culminated in a two-part BBC 2 documentary 'The Quest for Bannockburn', presented by Neil Oliver and Tony Pollard, which aired in June last year.

'There is very little on the ground to mark where the battle apparently took place', said Warren Bailie, who led GUARD Archaeology's team. 'The Bore Stone at the summit of Brock's Brae, was according to tradition where Robert the Bruce's standard was set during the battle, but this doesn't actually

appear in written accounts before 1723 and even then only one fragment of the original bore stone still survives at the Bannockburn Visitor Centre.'

As with any new development in an archaeologically sensitive area, archaeological investigations were undertaken across the footprint of the new Bannockburn Battlefield Centre prior to its construction. These did not uncover any evidence from the battlefield, but rather a number of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age fire pits, which brought home the enormity

of the task, not simply trying to discern the archaeology from the intensively developed landscape of modern-day Bannockburn but discerning archaeology from one event 700 years ago from the archaeology accumulated over many thousands of years.

The launch event for the Bannockburn 700 project took place on Monument Hill exactly 700 days ahead of the 700th Anniversary of the battle. The work here established that the Roman Road, reputed to have led both the English and Scottish armies to this position, did not actually lead here. Instead it was surmised that the Roman road lay below the current main road which sweeps past this site on lower ground.

The Roman road was encountered, however, during subsequent excavations by local volunteers, led by Murray Cook of Stirling Council, in an area just south of Randolph's Field. This was a key feature in the landscape during the Battle of Bannockburn as it was

the principal road to Stirling Castle from the south and revealed the route by which Edward II's army approached the battle, and where Robert the Bruce's soldiers opposed them.

Cambuskenneth Abbey is another significant landmark that was in existence at the time of the battle and features in numerous records of the period. The Abbey is one of the few places specifically mentioned in near contemporary accounts of the battle. It was here that Robert the Bruce kept his army's baggage prior to the Battle of Bannockburn, though it is possible that this was also where supplies related to the on-going siege of Stirling Castle by the Scots were stored (it was to relieve the siege that Edward II brought his army to Bannockburn). The investigations around the ruins of the Abbey, which have been dated no earlier than the thirteenth century, involved geophysics, test-pitting and metal detecting led by GUARD Archaeologists. A trench close to the Abbey



xGUARD Archaeologist Bob Will offering guidance to one of the volunteers during the Big Dig © Callum Bennets @ Maverick Photo Agency

Abbey ruins revealed an assemblage more consistent with the medieval beginnings of Cambuskenneth Abbey. But a metal-detecting survey across the fields to the south and west of the Abbey recovered, amongst over 1,000 finds, a silver Edward I/II coin that was minted in London during the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. This coin would have been in circulation at the time of the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, and could derive from booty taken from the defeated English army.

Exactly one year before the 700th Anniversary of the Battle, the Bannockburn Big Dig took place, investigating Braehead, Balquidderock Wood and Broomhill over 7 days. The findings included 133 metal artefacts, mostly iron and of eighteenth century, but from amongst the 139 test pits excavated was recovered an assemblage of medieval artefacts including white gritty ware and Scottish red ware, both types potentially contemporary to the battle, as well as considerable amounts of later medieval pottery. The evidence here, dispelled the myth that the Carse was an uninhabited bog during the middle ages, indicating instead that parts of the Carse were inhabited during the medieval period. The nature of these interspersed habitable areas across an unfamiliar and otherwise boggy landscape may have been a major factor in the outcome of the battle, given that the accounts that when the Scottish army surprised the English army early on the second day of the battle, the English forces were driven across the Carse towards the Forth, where flanked by the Pelstream to the north and the Bannock Burn to the south, they had nowhere to run.

A survey at Redhall Farm involved test-pitting and metal detecting of 10 ha along the eastern banks of the Bannock Burn. Among the hundreds of artefacts recovered was one spur fragment that turned out to be of medieval date. This was the first indication of medieval equestrian equipment found on

any of our investigations to date. The test pits along the inner meanders of the Bannock Burn also turned up some sherds of medieval pottery, again evidence of medieval occupation of this landscape.

Another metal detector survey at Carse Fields covered another 10 ha area and recovered a medieval stirrup. This was now the second artefact that could be potentially attributed to medieval cavalry.

Broadley's Farm is spread over many fields along the courses of the Pelstream and Bannock Burn. The land therefore provided opportunities to investigate wide areas on the Carse as well as the inner meanders and river banks where it was hoped that artefacts from the battle might await discovery. The metal detecting survey of 30 ha of land and excavation of 50 test pits turned up more medieval pottery, further evidence that the Carse was habitable during the medieval period.

'In true dramatic archaeological style the battlefield kept us all waiting to the bitter end for the most treasured of artefacts', said Warren Bailie. With the help of GUARD Archaeology colleagues, Maureen Kilpatrick and Christine Rennie, and fifty local volunteers, a last ditch attempt to recover more evidence of the battle got under way on 15 February 2014. While lots of non-descript iron objects were discovered – a few horse shoes, recent coins, nineteenth century horse harness pendants – one of the volunteers found something a little more special, a copper alloy cross harness pendant which even then appeared significant. Analysed soon after by Dr Natasha Ferguson of the Treasure Trove Unit, traces of silver gilt and blue enamel were identified. XRF analysis later found traces of gold too. This cross pendant dated to the early fourteenth century and once adorned the horse harness of an English nobleman's horse. Its location here, on the Carse, understood in the context of the other findings of the project, provides

the clearest archaeological evidence found so far for the location of the Battle of Bannockburn.

The medieval material culture discovered during the Bannockburn investigations demonstrates that the Carse was settled in the medieval period when for so long many dismissed the area as an inhospitable and boggy environment during that period. The new key equestrian artefacts – the spur,

stirrup and cross pendant – which may relate to the rout of the English army from the battlefield on the second day, substantiates the location of the Battle of Bannockburn on the Carse here too.

Our thanks to GUARD Archaeology for this article - you can visit their website at <http://www.guard-archaeology.co.uk/>



Cross Pendant for a Knight's Horse Harness © GUARD Archaeology

Life in the Medieval University: The Swedish Experience

The recently published book, *Swedish Students at the University of Leipzig in the Middle Ages: Careers, Books, and Teaching*, edited by Olle Ferm and Sara Risberg, details the education and careers of over 200 students that came from Sweden to study at the University of Leipzig in northern Germany. In the first chapter, Olle Ferm makes use of the university's records to give more details about the daily lives of university students in the Later Middle Ages. Here are fifteen things we learned:

- 1.** The University of Leipzig was officially founded on December 2, 1409. Most of the 367 students who started that first year had actually come from the University of Prague, and had decided to leave that city because of political and religious turmoil. About ten of those students came originally from Sweden.
- 2.** Between 1409 and 1520, about 200 to 230 Swedes enrolled at the University of Leipzig. The largest share - 74 students - came from the region of Uppsala.
- 3.** After arriving at Leipzig, new students needed to be enrolled and placed into a bursa - a type of student housing. "The bursa was a religious community, where fixed routines regulated daily life, built around meals, religious devotions and teaching. Standards existed for dress and deportment, with Latin as the only permissible language... Life in the bursa was designed to educate the student in the basics of academic studies, which included speaking and writing good Latin, and being able to debate using all the finesses of the art."
- 4.** Fees were paid for both the winter and summer terms, and varied depending on how wealthy the student was. The highest fees were 10 ½ groschen, and the lowest was two groschen, but even then students that were considered "poor" were exempted from paying any fee.
- 5.** At least 28 of the Swedish students had their own version of 'scholarship' money in the form of religious benefices. These were paid from Cathedral Chapters or from a local parish.



Seal of the University of Leipzig

6. The university maintained minimum ages that one had to be in order to be awarded a degree - 17 for a Bachelor of Arts and 21 for a Master of Arts. Most students began their education in their late teens or early 20s.

7. "Everyday life was formally structured. The day's schedule began at 5 am, but the end of the day came early, already at 9 pm. In addition to the classes at the bursa, several activities were obligatory, such as participation in public lectures, exercises and disputations. Limits were placed on these activities. Students were not allowed to attend more than two lectures per day...Some leisure time was allowed. Besides life at the bursa, which was not always agreeable - parodic songs were written about the bad food - the Saxon nation apparently had a lot to offer, such as celebrations of saints' days and the like."

8. Among the things that students were forbidden from doing included fighting, spending time with prostitutes, gambling in taverns, or walking around the city during night. If you got caught, you could be fined or spend a couple of days in prison. Theft and murder would result in expulsion.

9. To earn a degree: "Required for the Bachelor's degree were nine 'books' or themes, presented through nine lecture series - 13 lecture series after 1436/7, since some books were added. The Master's degree required another 15 'books' and as many lecture series. Additionally, a student would have attended seven 'exercises' and participated in a large number of disputations for each of these degrees before he could apply to the Dean to enroll for the degree examination.

10. Most Swedes who attended the University of Leipzig never graduated. Of the 212 Swedish students, 102 earned a Bachelor's degree. 37 of these continued on to receive a Master's degree. Ferm adds that Swedish students performed somewhat better than the average student - the graduation rate as a whole for a Bachelor's was 32%, while only 5% of students who started at Leipzig would go on to achieve a Master's degree.

11. On average, it took a student 31 months (2.7 years) to earn a Bachelor's degree, and another 29 months (2.4 years) to finish the Master's degree.

12. Between 75 and 80 Swedes also taught at Leipzig during the period 1409 to 1520. During this time, four Swedish teachers served as Rector, the highest position within the university - they each served terms of six months.

13. "Of 212 Swedish students in Leipzig, 136 can be identified in Sweden after their studies. Most, at least 95, can be linked to their Cathedral. Twelve became bishops and 84 became members of a Cathedral Chapter. At least 71 of the 95 had completed an academic degree.

14. Among the other students who attended Leipzig, 30 would go on to become vicars, 2 would enter a monastery, and 6 became knights (none of the knights had actually gained a degree).

15. A few of the graduates went on to produce more scholarly works - for example, Kristoffer Larsson, who became an Archdeacon, spent his time translating Latin works into Swedish and writing on theological matters.

Swedish Students at the University of Leipzig in the Middle Ages: Careers, Books, and Teaching, edited by Olle Ferm and Sara Risberg, was published by the Centre for Medieval Studies, Stockholm University, in 2014.

Dear Dad, Send Money – Letters from Students in the Middle

If you have a son or daughter attending university, most likely you will be getting a message from them asking for money. Apparently, this is part of a long tradition that goes back to the beginning of universities in the Middle Ages.



A recent poll in Canada revealed that 51 per cent of post-secondary students had asked their parents for additional financial support last year because they ran out of money. This news prompted experts to comment on how necessary it was to teach students "the importance of balancing a budget." However, the idea that students were asking their parents for money is not a new phenomenon—it began soon after the emergence of

universities in medieval Europe. As one medieval Italian father puts it, "a student's first song is a demand for money, and there will never be a letter which does not ask for cash."

Here is a typical example from the 1220s:

B. to his venerable master A., greeting This is to inform you that I am studying at

Oxford with the greatest diligence, but the matter of money stands greatly in the way of my promotion, as it is now two months since I spent the last of what you sent me. The city is expensive and makes many demands; I have to rent lodgings, buy necessities, and provide for many other things which I cannot now specify. Wherefore I respectfully beg your paternity that by the promptings of divine pity you may assist me, so that I may be able to complete what I have well begun. For you must know that without Ceres and Bacchus Apollo grows cold.

Some students made sure to note how well they were doing at university before making their appeal for money. In this twelfth-century letter from France, two brothers lay it on thick:

To their very dear and respectable parents M. Matre, knight, and M. his wife, M. and S., their sons, send greetings and filial obedience.

This is to inform you that, by divine mercy, we are living in good health in the City of Orleans, and are devoting ourselves wholly to study, mindful of the words of Cato, 'To know anything is praiseworthy.' We occupy a good dwelling, next door but one to the schools and market-place, so that we can go to school every day without wetting our feet. We have also good companions in the house with us, well advanced in their studies and of excellent habit – an advantage which we well appreciate, for as the Psalmist says, 'With an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright'. Wherefore lest production cease from lack of material, we beg your paternity to send us by the bearer, B., money for buying parchment, ink, a desk, and other things which we need, in sufficient amount that we may suffer no want on your account (God forbid!) but finish our studies and return home with honour. The bearer will also take charge of the shoes and stockings which you have to send us, and any news as well.

There are many examples of letters home with demands for support, along with a few replies in which the parents send money along with admonitions against spending it too quickly. Perhaps the best example of a medieval student asking a parent for money comes from the French writer Eustache Deschamps (1346-1406). In his youth he attended the University of Orleans before going on to work for the King of France. In the year 1400 he penned this imaginary letter from a student to his father:

Well beloved father, I have not a penny, nor can I get any save through you, for all things at the University are so dear, nor can I study in my Code or my Digest [these are legal texts], for their leaves [pages] have the falling sickness. Moreover, I owe ten crowns to the provost, and can find no man to lend them to me. I ask of you greetings and money.

The student has need of many things if he will profit here; his father and his kin must supply him freely so that he will not be compelled to pawn his book, but will have ready money in his purse, with gowns and and furs and decent clothing; or he will be damned for a beggar; wherefore, that men may not take me for a beast, I ask of you greetings and money.

Wines are expensive, as are hostels and other good things; I owe in every street, and am hard put to free myself from such snares. Dear father, deign to help me! I fear being excommunicated; already I have been cited, and there is not even a dry bone in my larder. If I cannot find money before this feast of Easter, the church door will be shut in my face; wherefore grant my supplication. I ask of you greetings and money.

Well beloved father, to ease my debts contracted to the tavern, at the baker's, with the professors and the beadles, and to pay my subscriptions to the laundress and the barber, I ask of you greetings and money.

Medieval Back-to-School Shopping List

By Danièle Cybulskie

It's back-to-school shopping time and the stationery stores and Ikeas of the world are full of university students gathering what they need to start this year's journey of knowledge. In the Middle Ages, students entering university had to gather together materials, too, before they headed off to places sometimes very far from home like Oxford University, the University of Salerno, or the University of Paris. Here's a list of five things that would be on a medieval back-to-school shopping list.

1. Wax Tablet

Because parchment was expensive, it wasn't used for the type of hastily scribbled notes that would be taken by students during lectures. Instead, students would bring wooden tablets covered in wax, so that they could take notes by scratching into the wax with a wooden stylus. Erasing was as easy as scraping away the words and writing afresh. If the notes were particularly important, they could be transcribed onto parchment or into a book later. Because of the relatively small size of wax tablets, and the length of lectures, however, most of the information students received would have to be retained in their own heads. Interestingly, tablets and styluses (styli?) are once again on university

students' back-to-school lists, although the new ones are a bit more high-tech. (Here's a rudimentary wax tablet I made at home.)

2. Textbooks

Because textbooks were even more expensive in the Middle Ages than they are today (hard as that may be to believe), books would be more of teachers' back-to-school requirements than students', but if a student could afford a book, it would certainly be a worthwhile investment. Depending on the student's subject of study the books required would (naturally) be different, but a student couldn't really go wrong with buying a book by one of the church fathers, or a respected scholar or lecturer like Thomas Aquinas. A



Students enter the 'Natio Germanica Bononiae', the German section at the University of Bologna, image from the 15th century

Aquinas. A good book for a student would have ways to quickly find information, whether that was a table of contents, large illuminated letters (although that would have been terribly expensive), or other handy tags. Finally, a student or teacher would want a book with large margins for writing notes, questions, and references.

3. A Gown

In the Middle Ages, everyone's station in life was meant to be recognizable immediately by what they were wearing. For medieval university students, that meant gowns. While

most students would have had to buy or make their own gowns, sometimes wealthy patrons stepped in to help. According to Berthe M. Marti, fourteenth-century students at the Spanish College, an "endowed residence" for Spanish students going to school in Bologna, were given

one new academic gown adequately furred with sheepskin, such as the students at Bologna are normally accustomed to wear and ... another unfurred gown of cloth of the statutory colour, and a hood of the same colour, or suitable cloth[.] (p.84)

Looking good, but not fashionable was important to medieval schools, and the same Spanish College statute goes on to say, "Their clothes shall be decent, and they shall not wear unsuitable robes and garments or shoes with pointed toes" (p.84). Wearing shoddy or too-fashionable clothing got you a fine. Students were there to work, not to be fashion plates, especially if (like most students), they were studying religious material.

4. Quills, Ink, and Parchment

While I mentioned that parchment was too expensive to take notes on, a student still needed some parchment for copying important information, or (perhaps more importantly) writing letters home. As with students now, medieval students spent a lot of time writing letters home – to ask for more money. In his look at medieval student letters (a worthwhile read), Charles H. Haskins provides this translation of an Oxford student's letter home (from British Museum, Add. MS. 8167, f. 104):

B. to his venerable master A., greeting This is to inform you that I am studying at Oxford with the greatest diligence, but the matter of money stands greatly in the way of my promotion, as it is now two months since I spent the last of what you sent me. The city is expensive and makes many demands; I have to rent lodgings, buy necessities, and provide for many other things which I cannot now specify. Wherefore I respectfully beg your paternity that by the promptings of divine pity you may assist me, so that I may be able to complete what I have well begun. For you must know that without Ceres and Bacchus Apollo grows cold. (p.210)

One has to wonder what the things are that the student is not able to "specify", but in any case, he puts parchment and words to good use getting funding, skills every student needs to learn.

5. A Good Knife

Medieval people regularly carried knives for eating, trimming (hair, nails, stubble), or for whittling, but students didn't always put their knives to good use. Records from the Middle Ages are full of conflicts between "town and gown" when students got out of hand or townspeople got sick of students. Whether it was because students hid behind ecclesiastical privilege that protected them from harsh penalties or because they were giddy with the freedom of being away from home, students often got into fights or sometimes all-out rioting with each other or with townspeople. Cambridge University, as their website affirms, was established in 1209 by "scholars taking refuge from hostile townsmen in Oxford". According to British History Online, "The townsmen [of Oxford] hanged two clerks for a murder of which they were apparently innocent". Another stunningly violent town and gown clash in Oxford was the St. Scholastica's Day Riot in 1355, during which 63 students were killed. While a sharp knife was always handy for cutting meat and bread, it was also something many students felt the need to keep with them, just in case.

While this list of medieval back-to-school items (mostly) looks like something out of a Harry Potter book, the fundamental needs of medieval students were not much different from those of modern students though the technology has changed. If you're heading to university to learn or to teach this year, be proud to be taking part in an old, venerable, and fun tradition.

You can follow Danièle Cybulskie on Twitter [**@5MinMedievalist**](#)

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The Long History of Teachers Complaining about Students

It is not too difficult to come across teachers writing about how bad their students are. They might blog about it, share details of dumb things said by students, or write about the causes of the supposed decline in students' performances. However, these teachers can take comfort in the fact that even in the Middle Ages there apparently was a lot to complain about when it came to student performance.

Our favourite medieval complaint comes from Egbert of Liege, who was writing in the 11th century. He explains that:

Scholarly effort is in decline everywhere as never before. Indeed, cleverness is shunned at home and abroad. What does reading offer to pupils except tears? It is rare, worthless when it is offered for sale, and devoid of wit.

His words would be echoed again and again. The thirteenth-century bishop and theologian, Jacques de Vitry, said of the students at Paris: "Some studied merely to acquire knowledge, which is curiosity; others to quire fame, which is vanity; others still for the sake of gain, which is cupidity and the vice of simony. Very few studied for their own edification, or that of others. They wrangled and disputed not merely about the various sects or about some discussions; but the differences between the countries also caused dissensions, hatreds and virulent animosities among them and they impudently uttered all kinds of affronts and insults against one another."

Meanwhile, in the fourteenth-century Álvaro

Pelayo, who studied at the University of Bologna, commented "They attend classes but make no effort to learn anything....The expense money which they have from their parents or churches they spend in taverns, conviviality, games and other superfluities, and so they return home empty, without knowledge, conscience, or money."

Here is a letter written by a 10th-century Byzantine scholar writing to the father of some of his students:

I hesitated whether to write to you or not, but decided that I ought. Children naturally prefer play to study: fathers naturally train them to follow good courses, using persuasion or force. Your children, like their companions, neglected their work and were in need of correction. I resolved to punish them, and to inform their father. They returned to work and studied for some time. But they are now occupied with birds once again, and neglecting their studies. Their father, passing through the city, commented acidly on their conduct. Instead of coming to me, or to their uncles, they have run away to you or to Olympus.



acidly on their conduct. Instead of coming to me, or to their uncles, they have run away to you or to Olympus. If they are with you, treat them mercifully as suppliants. Even if they have gone elsewhere, help them return to the fold. You will have my gratitude.

When word of poor performance reached the parents' ears, they might be the ones that had to upbraid their children. In this letter from 12th century France, a father named Bescancon writes to his son, who studying in Orleans:

It is written, 'He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is also a great waster'. I have recently discovered that you lived dissolutely and slothfully, preferring license to restraint and play to work and strumming a guitar while the others are at their studies, whence it happens that you have read one volume of law while your more industrious companions have read several. Wherefore I have decided to extort

you herewith to repent utterly of your dissolute and careless ways that you may no longer be called a waster and that your shame may be turned to good repute.

Apparently the old trick of going to the washroom to get away from class is a very old trick, according to his comment from an Oxford schoolmaster:

As soon as I come into the school, this fellow goeth to make water and he goeth out to the common draught [ie. privy]. Soon after another asketh licence that he may go drink. Another calleth upon me to have licence to go home. These and such other layeth my scholars for excuse often times, that they may be out of the way.

Even the medieval librarian would have cause to complain about students. For example, around the year 1345 Richard de Bury, who studied at Oxford, and was the tutor to the young Edward III, wrote Philobiblon, in which he offers these complains about how

Philobiblon, in which he offers these complains about how students treat books:

You may happen to see some headstrong youth lazily lounging over his studies, and when the winter's frost is sharp, his nose running from the nipping cold drips down, nor does he think of wiping it with his pocket-handkerchief until he has bedewed the book before him with the ugly moisture. Would that he had before him no book, but a cobbler's apron!

His nails are with fetid filth as black as jet, with which he marks any passage that pleases him. He distributes a multitude of straws, which he inserts to stick out in different places, so that the halm [stalks] may remind him of what his memory cannot retain. These straws, because the book has no stomach to digest them, and no one takes them out, distend the book from its wanton closing, and at length, being carelessly abandoned to oblivion, go to decay.

He does not feat to eat fruit or cheese over an open book, or carelessly to carry a cup to and from his mouth; and because he has no wallet at hand he drops into the books the fragments that are left. Continually chattering, he is never weary of disputing with his companions, and while he alleges a crowd of senseless arguments he wets the book lying half open in his lap with sputtering showers. Aye, and then hastily folding his arms he leans forward on the book, and by a brief spell of study invites a prolonged nap; and then, by way of mending the wrinkles, he folds back the margins of leaves, to the no small injury of the book.

Of course, students had their own views about teachers. Here is how one 15th-century English student talks about school life:

On Monday in the morning when I shall rise,

*At six of the clock, it is the gise
To go to school without advise
I have lever to go twenty miles twice!
What availeth it me though I say, nay?*

*My master looketh as he were mad:
'Where has thou be, thou sorry lad?'
'Milked ducks, my mother bade.'
It was no marvel though I were sad!
What availeth it me though I say, nay?*

*My master peppered my arse with well good speed:
It was worse than finkle [fennel] seed
He would not leave till it did bleed -
Much sorrow have he for his deed!
What availeth it me though I say, nay?*

*I would my master were an hare,
And all his books hounds were,
And myself a jolly hunter:
To blow my horn I would not spare!
For if he were dead I would not care.
What availeth it me though I say, nay?*

Ten Castles that Made Medieval Britain

Windsor Castle

By James Turner

At one time the greatest palace complex in Europe and a favoured haunt of the British Royal family to this day, Windsor Castle is a still living relic of a time where out of necessity, the sum of a nation's sovereignty and a State's very existence as a politically distinct identity rested upon a crowned head. In England, more often than not the place where that crowned head rested was Windsor Castle. Emerging out of the bedlam and cultivated political distortion that followed the Norman Conquest, Windsor Castle would gradually blossom into a magnificent and much favoured royal residence cultivated by the successive generations of monarchs who dwelt within it.

While its face and form have undergone almost continual revision to better reflect the perceived or claimed glories of its patrons and to adhere to the advancing demands of luxury and fashion, the Castle has enjoyed a remarkable continuity of purpose. Transitioning by degrees from military installation to royal palace, Windsor has at one time or another housed the Court or personage of every English and later, after the Union of Crowns, British King or Queen. In addition to serving as one of the principal and most prized residences of the foci of the medieval political community in the high

Middle Ages, under the direction of one of Europe's greatest warrior Kings, Windsor through its role as the centre of England's Chivalric and martial cult was transformed into a powerful tool for the consolidation of Royal authority and England's temporal power. The ideological and constitutional role of the Monarchy has, like all social institutions and values, waxed, waned and been heavily altered since its heyday, yet Windsor Castle in which so much of their history is anchored, well articulates and preserves what potency remains.

Considering its current splendour and the long, rich history that stretched out before it, Windsor Castle has humble, rather grubby, origins. While William the Conqueror was crowned King of England in 1066 following his bloody victory at the Battle of Hastings, a great deal of the actual nitty gritty of conquering took place in the years following his coronation. The occupation of England by the new and land hungry Normans was a tumultuous and muddled affair complicated by the presence of an entrenched and still functional political elite. There were a substantial number of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Danish Earls who had not been present at Hastings and for whom, alongside the Anglo-Saxon dominated church, the grudging



**Windsor Castle at sunset as viewed from the Long Walk in Windsor, England.
Photo by DAVID ILIFF. License: CC-BY-SA 3.0**

the Anglo-Saxon dominated church, the grudging acknowledgement of William's status following a tense period of negotiations was vastly different from genuine acceptance. These remnants of the old elite would only be replaced haphazardly over the following decades following a series of unaffiliated and often selfishly motivated rebellions.

Almost as dangerous to King William's person and the establishment of any form of coherent governance was William's now largely dispersed army composed not just of his liege men in Normandy but also mercenary adventurers, desperate nobility and brigands from his often hostile neighbours over whom he now had to exert control. In order to safeguard his hard won acquisitions and as a way to transmit his will throughout the country, as he bent the full powers of his brilliance and casual brutality

to its governance, William embarked upon a great spree of castle building. Windsor was part of a network of largely temporary castles guarding the approach to London, the site being chosen for its strategic value overlooking the Thames as well as its location nearby an Anglo-Saxon royal hunting lodge and its accompanying forest which as the draconian Norman forestry laws can attest to, was a major source of royal income. Partly because of the amount of resources they consumed and partly because the of limitations of communication technology for much of the middle ages, Royal Courts were nomadic in nature travelling from royal centre to royal centre but despite his extremely active kingship and continued sojourns through his newly won country, William never visited the then spartan Windsor himself. Nor was it particularly favoured during the reign of his second son and immediate successor, William Rufus. The

William Rufus. The Castle being ignored in favour of the nearby hunting lodge of Old Windsor and William's pet project, Westminster Palace into which he poured a surfeit of resources.

The Castle first attracted royal affinity, which it enjoys to this day, during the reign of the last of the Conqueror's sons, the savagely intelligent and politically methodical Henry I who greatly expanded the Castle, furnishing it with a stone keep where he held his Pentecost Court in 1110 and creating a new burgh at the Castle's feet, effectively abandoning Old Windsor. In 1121, the already picturesque Windsor was chosen by Henry as the venue for his marriage to Adela, the daughter of the Duke of the Lower Lorraine.

During the reign of the energetic Henry II, the Castle underwent further fortification and renovation replacing the wooden palisade with a new stone curtain wall as well as rebuilding the royal apartments and the central keep. When Henry's son, Richard I was captured and held for ransom by his old rival, Duke Leopold of Austria, while returning from the Third Crusade, his younger brother the unscrupulous Prince John seized Windsor Castle, seeking to use Richard's capture as a chance to co-opt the royal authority the castle already represented. However, John was swiftly compelled to vacate the Castle by the timely intervention of their mother, the formidable Eleanor of Aquitaine. During John's own turbulent reign, succeeding to the throne over the body of his second brother Geoffrey's son, Arthur of Brittany, Windsor was his favourite residence and he went to some expense to remodel and expand the royal apartments there.

As a result of John's now legendary quarrels with his barons, the Castle was besieged in 1214 and later served as his base of operations during the period running up to his reluctant signing of the Magna Carta.

Following John's perhaps short-sighted attempts to enact bloody vengeance on the offending barons, elements of the nobility invited Prince Louis of France to invade and claim the English throne. As a result of this, the Castle once again came under siege in 1216 when a French army led by the Count of Nevers was heroically repelled by the Castle's sixty strong garrison. John's son, Henry III's tenure as King saw yet more momentous change to the structure of Windsor Castle including the erection of a great sweeping wall to cover the Castle's vulnerable lower ward, a structural weakness that had almost proved disastrous in the siege of 1216. Henry also invested a staggering amount of money on the Castle's domestic paraphernalia, creating a new Great Hall and remodelling and refurbishing the royal apartments for use by his young wife Eleanor of Provence, creating a palace of staggering opulence and refinement.

Edward III was born within the walls of Windsor Castle in 1312 during the aftermath of one of the great upheavals of his father Edward II's reign in which the King's friend and advisor, Piers Gaveston, had been arrested and executed by several outraged prominent members of the nobility worried they were being isolated from the levers of power by the royal favourite. Edward III was a dynamic and driven personality, a dreamer and romantic with the verve to pursue his vision. He became one of England's most successful warrior Kings. Although crowned in 1327, the young Edward only began to exercise power for himself in 1330 when he, alongside his childhood friends, stormed Nottingham Castle imprisoning his mother and her partner, Roger Mortimer, who had been acting as co-Regents. Following his assumption of royal authority, Edward threw himself into the reignited Second War of Scottish Independence, resurrecting his grandfather Edward I's plan to support the Balliol claim to the Scottish throne in exchange for acknowledgement of English overlordship. Following several stunning



Windsor Castle - Photo by Cristian Bortes / Flickr

victories and then a slow seemingly irreversible decay in the English position in Scotland, Edward began to pursue a claim to the kingship of France he held through his mother Isabella, daughter of the last Capetian King Philip IV, commencing the bloody and trudging conflict that came to be known as the Hundred Years War.

In the place of his birth, Windsor Castle, Edward, a fanatical devotee of chivalric culture and its accompanying pageantry, founded or perhaps in his mind renewed the Order of the Round Table. The tales of the Arthurian canon were the blockbusters of their day, read, enjoyed and obsessed over by the largely culturally homogeneous European nobility. Arthur was one of the nine worthies of chivalric lore, a universally acknowledged paragon of valour and virtue. Round Table Tournaments in which participants wore lavish Arthurian inspired costumes and re-enacted exploits derived from romance literature were widely popular throughout Europe. In England, however, this reverence for and emulation of Arthur and his knights took on a greater resonance, after all, Arthur had been an English King.

Moreover, an English King who had conquered the entirety of the British Isles and established a great empire within Europe, twin dreams which had burnt long and deep within the English national psyche and its Norman derived monarchy. The aristocrats and knights of England were the legendary Arthur's heirs and he a symbol of a lost age of martial valour and temporal power. When Edward created the Order of the Round Table in Windsor in 1344, amidst a fountaining of pomp and ceremony, he was not only presenting himself as Arthur's successor but also building political and cultural solidarity, harnessing the English nobility to his military ambitions through their shared legends and aspirations. Edward III would use the now Arthurian steeped Windsor Castle as a shrine to the cult of Chivalry, reigniting English ardour and

ambition, rallying the often fractious nobility about himself and mobilising the nation for war.

While the Order of the Round Table, despite the colossal home he built for it in Windsor, faltered, much like his early attempts to prosecute war in France, largely due to a deficit of funds, Edward persevered and his propaganda swiftly took root. The Order was remoulded and refined by a slightly older and wiser Edward in 1348 into the Order of the Garter, much reduced from the initial three hundred strong Round Table to a mere twenty four. The new Order was to be a command cadre composed of the most distinguished veterans of Edward's victorious campaigns and capable of overseeing and enacting the completion of the war. Meeting regularly, the Order of the Garter became one of England's most prestigious institutions housed in the great custom built Chapel of Windsor Castle and has continued with varying levels of enthusiasm and earnestness by his successors. In large part to make it more suitable for his chivalric enterprises and in order to celebrate and reflect his triumphs in France, Edward embarked upon a truly massive building project at Windsor, expending a vast fortune creating a great palace complex in which he intended to relax and recover from the taxing business of ruling both France and England.

Windsor continued to be an important royal centre in the approaching dusk of the middle ages with both Henry IV and Henry V often holding court and entertaining foreign dignitaries there; the most prominent being Emperor Sigismund in 1417. In 1421, the unfortunate Henry VI was born in the Castle, although his long minority saw a dispersal of English political unity and a waning of the Order of the Garter, one of the key tools for Windsor's upkeep. This position was reversed somewhat by Edward IV another chivalric-minded warrior King who proudly traced his ancestry back to Arthur, firstly through his links to the Mortimer family and then through



Windsor Castle by Paul Sandby circa 1767

through his links to the Mortimer family and then through them to the Welsh Princes. It was during his reign that the new Chapel of St. George in which the Order is based to this day was constructed. A revival further encouraged by his Lancastrian rival and dynastic successor, Henry VII. For both Kings, who dwelt extensively in Windsor, the Order of the Garter and Windsor's Arthurian connotations were used not to mobilise for war but rather to build a sense of conformity and unity following the ravages of the War of the Roses. As Windsor sailed smoothly past the middle ages into the modern era it has continued to be an important royal centre and residence of the successive ranks of the British monarchy, enduring wars, revolutions and depositions, all the way down to the current day. Yet increasingly as the tempo and philosophy of governance changed and

dare I say improved, Windsor took up a more cursory role in history, a symbol of royalty by mere dint of association rather than the manifestation of royal power and English ideological solidarity that it had once been.

While centuries of revisions and refurbishment have taken Windsor far from its original military role, the palatial Castle is truly a work of art and remains an icon of Britishness.

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

A clerk ther was of Rowan County also.... What the Kim Davis Case Tells Us About America's Long Middle Ages

By Richard Utz

Have you ever thought about the relationship between the words "clerk" and "clergy"? "Clerk" we associate with someone doing "clerical" work, like **Kim Davis**, the Rowan County Clerk who has now been jailed for contempt of court after refusing to issue marriage licences to same sex couples. County clerks are usually responsible for issuing various county licenses (marriage, motel, liquor, bingo), keeping records, issuing certificates of vital statistics (birth, death, marriage), computing tax extensions, and maintaining accurate county maps. "Clergy" we associate with any and all religious leaders, especially those ordained for religious duties in Christian denominations.

Linguistically, "clergy" and "clerk" are only same origin.

distinguished by one letter, "g" instead of "k" (we can safely disregard the suffix "-y"), and these two letters are homorganic velar consonants, which means that we pronounce them in the same articulatory position, by the back part of the tongue pushing against the soft palate, the back section of the roof of the mouth. Thus, while "clerk" today is niched within the realm of secular administration and public records management, and "clergy" belongs to the realm of religious practice, there is 'sound' evidence that the modern semantic distinction did not exist in the past and that both words go back to the

Medievalist Karl Krebs devoted an entire book to the semantic development of Middle English clerk, showing how the word's path, beginning with Late Latin clericus ("priest," "clergyman," "cleric"), points to a major shift in medieval educational practice.[1] Literacy, originally in the hands of members of ecclesiastic orders and clergy in general gradually moved to a lay class of city, county, and state officials, and Geoffrey Chaucer's Clerk in the Canterbury Tales ("**A clerk ther was of Oxenford also...**") is an illustrative example of the very transition Krebs



Mug shot of Kim Davis

was of Oxenford also...") is an illustrative example of the very transition Krebs describes. Moreover, anyone who has ever done genealogical research knows that the role of church authorities in serving as community notaries and public recorders did not end with Chaucer's fourteenth century. As soon as we reach back into our families' histories in the nineteenth century, we have to switch to church and parish records to access many birth, marriage, and death records. This would indicate that, until modern nations established a more definite separation between church and state, medievalist recording practices discontinued only very slowly, adding more evidence to some scholars' claims of a **longue durée** ("long duration") of the Middle Ages all the way into the eighteenth century.

Writing for the U.S. National Association of Counties, Jaqueline J. Byers reveals how the position of the medieval clerk moved smoothly and without much change across the Atlantic in early modern times:

English history shows that the role of the city clerk can be traced to 1272 AD. [...]

When colonists arrived in America, they invariably established the forms of government with which they were most familiar. In colonial Massachusetts one of the earliest offices created was that of the recorder, whose role it was to keep vital records of births, marriages and deaths for the church. This individual also maintained records of all of the governmental appointments, the deeds, the meetings and the elections of town officials. Early clerks in New England also had to sweep the meeting room, sell seats, ring the bell and other responsibilities that no longer exist. The title clerk started to appear around the middle of the 17th century. At that same time, the clerk's responsibilities also included maintenance of a list of each resident's property and its value to verify voting rights if necessary. The clerk also administered the oath of office taken by elected officials and was authorized to call local government meetings. ("The Role of the County Clerk")

Byers also indicates that the one major

Byers also indicates that the one major change to the medieval English position of county clerk in the United States is that most states turned it an elected one. It is her status as an elected official that has protected Rowan County Clerk Kim Davis from being fired from her job for not following a Supreme Court Ruling and a federal judge's orders.

This historical backdrop for the current conflict surrounding Kim Davis exposes fascinating continuities between her position and those in charge of notary and recording tasks in the Middle Ages. The way this specific position was adopted, almost without change, in the New World, recontextualizes Davis' decision. Not only did the early modern and modern position of a secular "clerk" originate within medieval church culture, but the position, in part because of the new nation's keen desire to protect a religious freedom endangered in the Old World, retained the time-honored semantic range that imbricates Christian convictions with a public administrative function. What I am saying, then, is that Kim Davis, in her rejection of the modern separation of church and state, is performing an act of political medievalism, albeit one she may well perceive as the simple adherence to an unbroken heritage.

Angela Weisl, in *The Persistence of Medievalism* (2003), has diagnosed numerous similar examples of continuist medievalist patterns in professional U.S. sports and entertainment. "If the 'real' Middle Ages," Weisl finds, "are divided from us by time, distance, and language, popular culture provides us a contemporary Middle Ages from which we are not separated, to which we respond in all the immediacy of the present." [2] This sense of the "immediacy" is facilitated by an Anglo-American tradition that continues to view its medieval past as eminently usable: In recent years, **New Hampshire legislators** and director **Ridley Scott** simplistically linked contemporary individual liberties to the granting of Magna Carta (1215), British politicians considered punishing contemporary jihadism based on a **late medieval treason law** (1356), and Prince Philip

was appointed to a knighthood of the **Order of Australia**, a title the illustrious heritage of which dates back to ye olde 1975. [3]

Thus, when Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal recently explained to the **Huffington Post** that "[t]he United States didn't create religious liberty. Religious liberty created the United States of America. It's the reason we are here today. This is an essential freedom and an essential right and I don't think you give up this right by simply taking a job," he only confirms that church and state were never truly separated and, in his eyes, should never be separate in the first place. In Jindal's opinion, Kim Davis simply adheres to a view of the United States as a foundationally and unchangingly Christian and European country. Of course, North American slaveholder-gentlemen (and more recently the Ku Klux Klan), imagining themselves as the true successors of medieval (Christian) knights, created similarly continuist narratives to maintain their power and privilege. [4]

Notes:

1. Der Bedeutungswechsel von me. Clerk und damit zusammenhängende Probleme. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Soziologie der englischen Bildung (Bonn: Hanstein, 1933).
- 2, Angela Jane Weisl, *The Persistence of Medievalism. Narrative Adventures in Public Discourse* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 31.
3. On the "unique continuity" between postmedieval and medieval paradigms in the Anglo-American world, see Richard Utz, "Coming to Terms with Medievalism," the *European Journal of English Studies* 15:2 (2011), 101-13.
4. For a helpful first orientation on this topic, see Amy S. Kaufman, "Anxious Medievalism: An American Romance," *The Year's Work in Medievalism* 22 (2009), 5-13.

Click here to visit Richard Utz's website

Book Excerpt:

Ivory Vikings: The Mystery of the Most Famous Chessmen in the World and the Woman Who Made Them

By Nancy Marie Brown

St. Martin's Press, 2015

ISBN: 978-1137279378

In the early 1800's, on a Hebridean beach in Scotland, the sea exposed an ancient treasure cache: 93 chessmen carved from walrus ivory. Norse netsuke, each face individual, each full of quirks, the Lewis Chessmen are probably the most famous chess pieces in the world. Harry played Wizard's Chess with them in Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. Housed at the British Museum, they are among its most visited and beloved objects.

THE MYSTERY OF
THE MOST FAMOUS CHESSMEN
IN THE WORLD AND
THE WOMAN WHO MADE THEM

Ivory Vikings

NANCY MARIE BROWN

Questions abounded: Who carved them? Where? Nancy Marie Brown's *Ivory Vikings* explores these mysteries by connecting medieval Icelandic sagas with modern archaeology, art history, forensics, and the history of board games. In the process, *Ivory Vikings* presents a vivid history of the 400 years when the Vikings ruled the North Atlantic, and the sea-road connected countries and islands we think of as far apart and culturally distinct: Norway and Scotland, Ireland and Iceland, and Greenland and North America. The story of the Lewis chessmen explains the economic lure behind the Viking voyages to the west in the 800s and 900s. And finally, it brings from the shadows an extraordinarily talented woman artist of the twelfth century: Margret the Adroit of Iceland.

Excerpt: Civil War

If the Lewis chessmen were carved in the last decades of the twelfth century, two of the kings on our chessboard are Sverrir, who reigned from 1184 to 1202, and the king he deposed, Magnus V, who was crowned in 1164. Magnus V was killed in battle after twenty years on the throne: He was then twenty-eight. Sverrir was twenty-four when he first claimed the crown. Both are fantastic characters who challenge our assumptions of kingship in the Middle Ages and of the limits of the Norwegian realm. Neither spent much time in the city of Trondheim. Neither provided the stable, wealthy royal courts we assume an ivory-carver would seek out. Nor had the kings who preceded them

From 1130, when Sigurd the Jerusalem-Farer died, insane, Norway was engaged in almost constant civil war until 1240. The kings had no permanent royal court but moved among Trondheim, Bergen, Oslo, and other sites as the fighting and factions dictated. For much of the time, there was more than one crowned king: Traditionally, any king's son, born in

wedlock or out, could inherit the title, and two came from the farthest reaches of the realm.

Harald Gilli, for example, was raised in Ireland. He was living in the Hebrides when he met the young "master of nine skills," Kali Kolsson, who would become Earl Rognvald Kali of Orkney. Kali grew up on his father's estate in Norway. As Bishop Pall writes in the *Orkney Islanders' Saga*:

Kali was fifteen when he went with some merchants west to England. They had a good cargo and headed for a town called Grimsby. Great crowds of men had come there, both from the Orkney Islands and from Scotland, and even from the Hebrides. There Kali met a man who called himself Gillikrist; he was asking many questions about Norway. He talked most with Kali, and they became great friends. He told Kali in confidence that he was really named Harald and that King Magnus Bare-Legs was his father, but on his mother's side he was partly from the Hebrides and partly from Ireland.

Bare-Legs was his father, but on his mother's side he was partly from the Hebrides and partly from Ireland.

With Kali's encouragement, Gillikrist, or Harald Gilli as he began calling himself, went to Norway. King Sigurd was not too surprised to learn he had an Irish half-brother: Magnus Bare-Legs had left behind a love poem to an Irish girl who made him "feel young again." Still, to prove his paternity, Harald Gilli had to undergo an ordeal: to walk on red-hot plowshares. When his burns healed cleanly and did not fester, he was acknowledged King Sigurd's brother, even though "he wasn't fluent in the Norse tongue and often stumbled over his words, and many men mocked him for that," Snorri Sturluson writes in *Heimskringla*.

Upon the king's death, Harald Gilli and his nephew Magnus agreed to share the throne; their truce lasted four years. Harald Gilli, says Snorri, was merry, generous, and "not haughty." Magnus IV, in contrast, was not only haughty, he was greedy and a hard drinker. He was also, it's true, a great athlete and "more handsome than any other man in Norway," but in Snorri's opinion, "it was mostly his father's popularity that gained him people's friendship."

Fighting broke out when both kings decided to winter near Trondheim. Harald Gilli, the eventual victor, found ready allies in Denmark, for Magnus IV had made a political gaffe: He agreed to marry the sister of King Valdemar, then sent her back home to Denmark as unsuitable.

In a battle in Bergen, Harald Gilli captured his nephew. To keep Magnus from ever again sitting the throne, Harald had him blinded and castrated and cut off one foot. Magnus the Blind found refuge in the cloister at Munkholmen near Trondheim.

Harald Gilli then sent for the English bishop of Stavanger and accused him of hiding the

royal treasury. Bishop Reinald denied it. Harald Gilli fined him fifteen marks of gold. The bishop refused to pay. Harald Gilli sentenced him to hang. As the bishop walked to the gallows, "he shook off one of his boots and swore on his oath, 'I don't know about any more of King Magnus's treasure than what's in this boot.' In it was a gold ring." The king hanged him anyway. Wrote Snorri, "This act was much decried."

Harald Gilli made another blunder: He captured and imprisoned his half-brother, another Sigurd, nicknamed "the Sham Deacon." This Sigurd had been raised in the Orkney Islands and served for several years under King David of Scotland before coming to Norway where he, like Harald Gilli, proved himself a true son of Magnus Bare-Legs by undergoing an ordeal. Sigurd the Sham Deacon escaped and murdered Harald Gilli in 1136. He then released Magnus the Blind from his monastery, but the Norwegian nobles spurned them both. Magnus tried to reclaim his throne with Danish support, and civil war erupted again.

Norwegian historians say it's anachronistic to call these clashes a "civil war." Yet they did pit brother against brother. Take the experience of Ivar Skrauthanki. In 1140, Ivar (though an Icelander) would become bishop of Trondheim; his son, Eirik, would be chosen archbishop in 1189. But in November 1139, Ivar Skrauthanki was a fighting man aboard the dragonship of Magnus the Blind during a sea battle in the Oslo Fjord. When he saw King Magnus killed, Snorri writes, Ivar fled to the ship of his brother Jon—who was fighting on the opposing side. Jon arranged his ransom but could not save Bishop Ivar's companion and namesake, Ivar Dynta. "So said Bishop Ivar, that of all the things that had happened to him, the worst was when Ivar was led up onto land to the axe, and before he was beheaded, he turned to them and prayed that they would meet again." For this anecdote, Snorri is very clear about his sources. He writes, "So Gudrid, Birgir's daughter and the

daughter and the sister of Archbishop Jon, told Eirik Oddsson, and she said she had heard Bishop Ivar himself speak of it." Jon Birgisson of Stavanger became the first archbishop of Trondheim in 1153.

Instead of Magnus the Blind, the Norwegian chieftains acclaimed as kings two sons of Harald Gilli. Ingi the Hunchback was crowned at two years old; his half-brother Sigurd Mouth (called that because his was ugly) was a few years older. They admitted a third half-brother, Eystein, into the rule in 1142, but the three kings eventually fell out. Sigurd grew up to become brave and strong and well-spoken, but he was "a tremendously arrogant man and overbearing in all things," Snorri says. Eystein was "intelligent and sensible," but "the greediest and stingiest" of them all. Ingi, the only legitimate one of the three, was the least likely king, at least by the standards of the Lewis chessmen, who are all sturdy, impressive figures. "He was short in stature

and had difficulty walking alone, because one of his legs was withered, and he was a hunchback." He was kindly, Snorri concedes, and "openhanded with his wealth." But the secret to his popularity was that "he mostly let the chieftains rule the country with him." Because he was born in wedlock, he was also preferred by the papal legate, Nicholas Breakespeare, who established the archbishopric of Trondheim in 1153 and became Pope Adrian IV in 1154.

Ingi the Hunchback ambushed and killed Sigurd Mouth in 1155 and Eystein in 1157, before being killed himself by one of Sigurd's sons in 1161. Civil war erupted once more, as many noblemen held equal claims to the throne.

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