

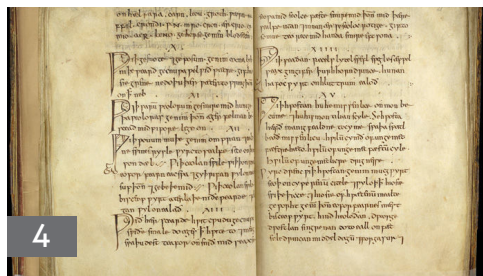
# The Medieval Magazine

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## Richard III Laid to Rest

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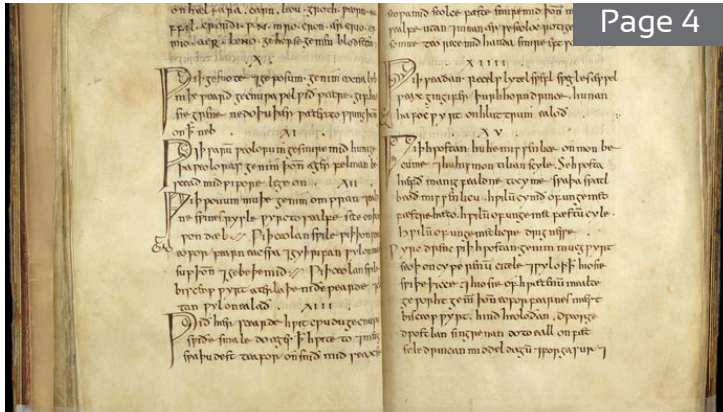
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**Interview with Philippa Langley about Richard III and Henry I**



# The Medievalverse

March 30, 2015



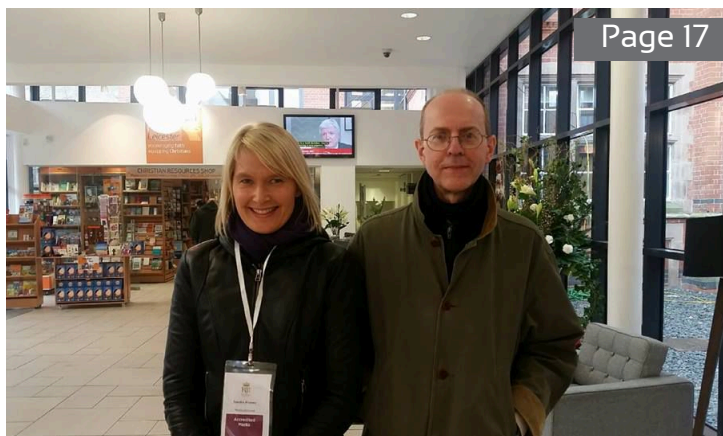
## Anglo-Saxon medicine is able to kill modern-day superbug, researchers find

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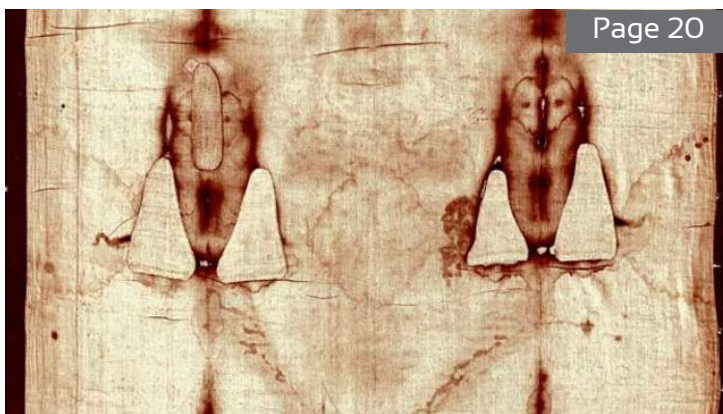
## Richard III Laid to Rest

The remains of King Richard III have been laid to rest at Leicester Cathedral, the culmination of a remarkable series of events that began when his body was discovered in 2012 after being lost for hundreds of years.



## Canadian Behind the Casket

We speak with Michael Ibsen, whose DNA allowed for Richard III to be identified, and who built the wooden casket that he was buried in.



## 15 Medieval Mysteries

The Shroud of Turin, the Vinland Map, what happened to the Norse in Greenland - we take a look at 15 mysteries from the Middle Ages.

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## Hug a Medievalist Day!

Every March 31st, at least since 2011, it has been International Hug a Medievalist Day! Yes, just because we deserve it :)

The day was created by Sarah Laseke, who created a Facebook page and surprisingly got people to sign up - thousands of people in fact.

Sarah says, "I wanted to create a day which puts medievalists in the centre of attention. Medievalists come from various disciplines and our research is varied and exciting. Also, I see the Hug a Medievalist Day as an opportunity to introduce the wider public to Medieval Studies. "

So make sure you get some hugs!

## THE MEDIEVALVERSE

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# Anglo-Saxon medicine is able to kill modern-day superbug, researchers find

A one thousand year old Anglo-Saxon remedy for eye infections has been found to kill the modern-day superbug MRSA in an unusual research collaboration at the University of Nottingham.

Dr Christina Lee, an Anglo-Saxon expert from the School of English has enlisted the help of microbiologists from University's Centre for Biomolecular Sciences to recreate a 10th century potion for eye infections from Bald's Leechbook an Old English leatherbound volume in the British Library, to see if it really works as an antibacterial remedy. The Leechbook is widely thought of as one of the earliest known medical textbooks and contains Anglo-Saxon medical advice and recipes for medicines, salves and treatments.

Early results on the 'potion', tested in vitro at Nottingham and backed up by mouse model tests at a university in the United States, are, in the words of the US collaborator, "astonishing". The solution has had remarkable effects on Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) which is one of the most antibiotic-resistant bugs costing modern health services billions.

The team now has good, replicated data showing that Bald's eye salve kills up to 90% of MRSA bacteria in 'in vivo' wound biopsies from mouse models. They believe the bactericidal effect of the recipe is not due to a single ingredient but the combination used and brewing methods/container material used. Further research is planned to investigate how and why this works.

## Historical curiosity

The testing of the ancient remedy was the idea of Dr Christina Lee, Associate Professor in Viking Studies and member of the University's Institute for Medieval Research. Dr Lee translated the recipe from a transcript of the original Old English manuscript in the British Library.

The recipe calls for two species of *Allium* (garlic and onion or leek), wine and oxgall (bile from a cow's stomach). It describes a very specific method of making the topical solution including the use of a brass vessel to brew it in, a straining to purify it and an instruction to leave the mixture for nine days before use.

The scientists at Nottingham made four separate batches of the remedy using fresh ingredients each time, as well as a control treatment using the same quantity of distilled water and brass sheet to mimic the brewing container but without the vegetable compounds.

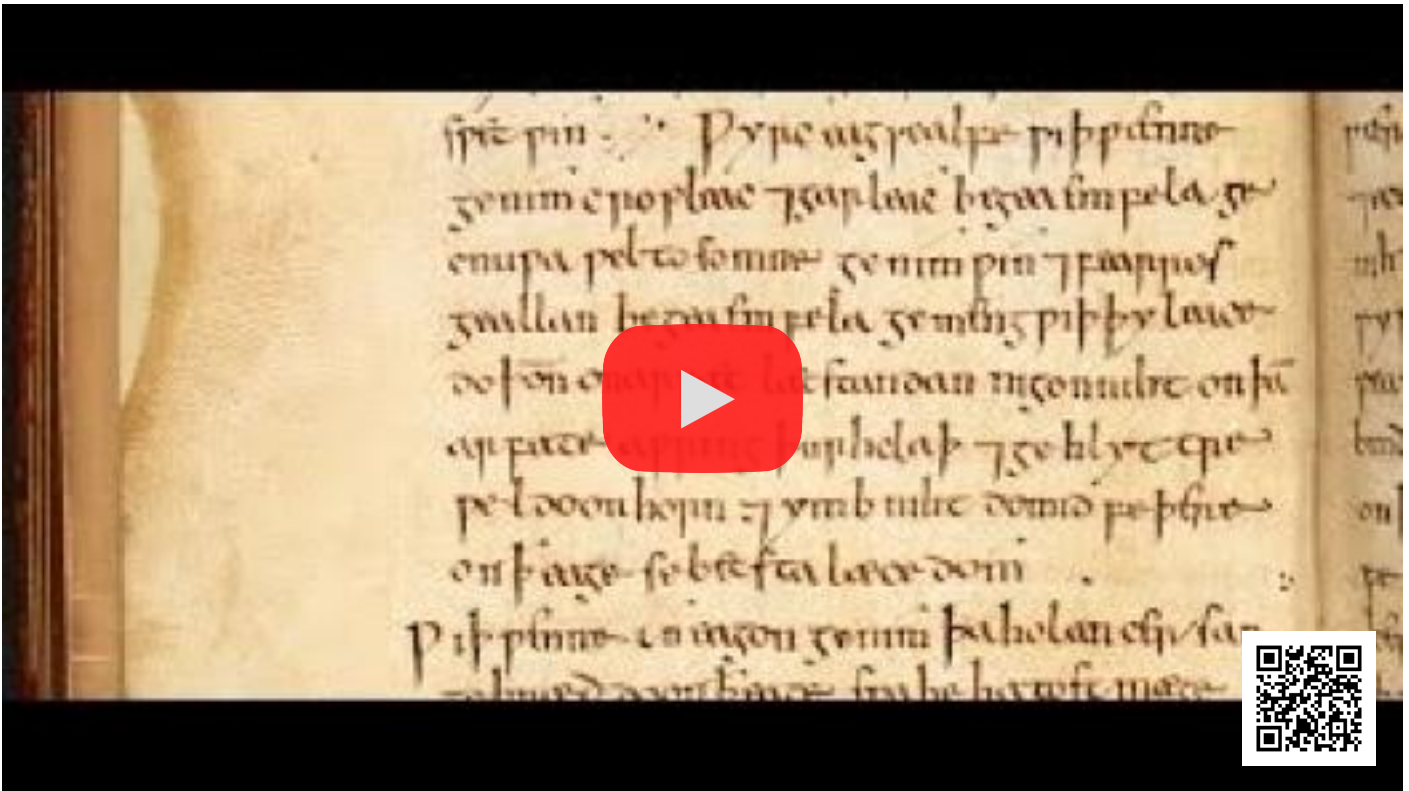
## Triple threat testing

The remedy was tested on cultures of the commonly found and hard to treat bacteria, *Staphylococcus aureus*, in both synthetic wounds and in infected wounds in mice.

The team made artificial wound infections by growing bacteria in plugs of collagen and then exposed them to each of the individual ingredients, or the full recipe. None of the individual ingredients alone had any measurable effect, but when combined according to the recipe the *Staphylococcus* populations were almost totally obliterated: about one bacterial cell in a thousand survived.

The team then went on to see what happened if they diluted the eye salve – as it is hard to know just how much of the medicine bacteria would be exposed to when applied to a real infection. They found that when the medicine is too dilute to kill *Staphylococcus aureus*, it interfered with bacterial cell-cell communication (quorum sensing). This is a key finding, because bacteria





bacterial cell-cell communication (quorum sensing). This is a key finding, because bacteria have to talk to each other to switch on the genes that allow them to damage infected tissues. Many microbiologists think that blocking this behaviour could be an alternative way of treating infection.

### Arts informing science

"We were genuinely astonished at the results of our experiments in the lab," Dr. Lee comments. "We believe modern research into disease can benefit from past responses and knowledge, which is largely contained in non-scientific writings. But the potential of these texts to contribute to addressing the challenges cannot be understood without the combined expertise of both the arts and science.

"Medieval leech books and herbaria contain many remedies designed to treat what are clearly bacterial infections (weeping wounds/sores, eye and throat infections, skin conditions such as erysipelas, leprosy and chest infections). Given that these remedies were developed well before the modern understanding of germ theory, this poses two questions: How systematic was the development of these remedies? And how effective were these remedies against the likely causative species of bacteria? Answering these questions will greatly improve our

understanding of medieval scholarship and medical empiricism, and may reveal new ways of treating serious bacterial infections that continue to cause illness and death."

### "Genuinely amazed"

University microbiologist, Dr Freya Harrison has led the work in the laboratory at Nottingham with Dr Steve Diggle and Research Associate Dr Aled Roberts. She will present the findings at the Annual Conference of the Society for General Microbiology which starts on Monday 30th March 2015 in Birmingham.

"We thought that Bald's eyesalve might show a small amount of antibiotic activity," Dr Harrison comments, "because each of the ingredients has been shown by other researchers to have some effect on bacteria in the lab – copper and bile salts can kill bacteria, and the garlic family of plants make chemicals that interfere with the bacteria's ability to damage infected tissues. But we were absolutely blown away by just how effective the combination of ingredients was. We tested it in difficult conditions too; we let our artificial 'infections' grow into dense, mature populations called 'biofilms', where the individual cells bunch together and make a sticky coating that makes it hard for antibiotics to reach them. But unlike many modern antibiotics, Bald's eye salve has the power to breach these

antibiotics, Bald's eye salve has the power to breach these defences."

Dr Steve Diggle added, "When we built this recipe in the lab I didn't really expect it to actually do anything. When we found that it could actually disrupt and kill cells in *S. aureus* biofilms, I was genuinely amazed. Biofilms are naturally antibiotic resistant and difficult to treat so this was a great result. The fact that it works on an organism that it was apparently designed to treat (an infection of a sty in the eye) suggests that people were doing carefully planned experiments long before the scientific method was developed."

## Testing in the US

Dr Kendra Rumbaugh carried out in vivo testing of the Bald's remedy on MRSA infected skin wounds in mice at Texas Tech University in the United States. Dr Rumbaugh said, "We know that MRSA infected wounds are exceptionally difficult to treat in people and in mouse models. We have not tested a single antibiotic or experimental therapeutic that is completely effective; however, this 'ancient remedy' performed as good if not better than the conventional

antibiotics we used."

"The rise of antibiotic resistance in pathogenic bacteria and the lack of new antimicrobials in the developmental pipeline are key challenges for human health," Dr Harrison concludes. "There is a pressing need to develop new strategies against pathogens because the cost of developing new antibiotics is high and eventual resistance is likely. This truly cross-disciplinary project explores a new approach to modern health care problems by testing whether medieval remedies contain ingredients which kill bacteria or interfere with their ability to cause infection".

The AncientBiotics team at Nottingham is seeking more funding to extend this fascinating research which combines the arts and sciences, past and present. This includes starting a crowdfunding campaign to raise £1,000 in order to hire a student to undertake further testing of their Anglo-Saxon antibiotic.

**[Click here to visit their crowdfunding campaign page](#)**





# The Medieval Saints of Sweden and Denmark

There is a clear link between the celebration of native saints and the ecclesiastical organisation that emerged in Scandinavia in the 12th century. Yet, according to a new doctoral thesis in history from the University of Gothenburg, important differences can be noted between Sweden and Denmark.



Parchment fragment of a medieval church book. Photo: Sara Ellis Nilsson/ University of Gothenburg.

Local cults of saints emerged during the Early Middle Ages in the area of Scandinavia that was separated into the ecclesiastical provinces of Lund and Uppsala, roughly corresponding to modern-day Denmark and Sweden. Dioceses and other institutions were established in both provinces in the 11th and 12th centuries. This period is the focus of research for Sara Ellis Nilsson, who recently defended doctoral thesis, *Creating Holy People and Places on the Periphery: A Study of the Emergence of Cults of Native Saints in the Ecclesiastical Provinces of Lund and Uppsala from the Eleventh to the Thirteenth Centuries*.

This first-ever comparative study of all 23 native saints in both provinces yields a comprehensive Scandinavian perspective that has been missing in previous research on European cults of saints. Nilsson explains, "these early cults of saints served several purposes. The celebration of local saints supported the Christianisation, but cults were also a way to confirm sacred places. It wasn't unusual that churches and monasteries were built in these locations. New sacred places could also be used to support local leaders or to create new pilgrimage sites and thereby facilitate the

create new pilgrimage sites and thereby facilitate the undertaking of pilgrimages for the new Christians.”

These saints were often individuals who had lived in the location in question, such as Elin of Skövde, Botvid of Södermanland, Thøger of Vestervig and Margareta of Roskilde. They were important role models for people in areas that had recently been Christianised. All saints were considered to have performed miracles, which were documented in their biographies. Some saints were martyrs, whereas others were canonised based on their good deeds. For example, Elin of Skövde collected money for the construction of a church.

Nilsson shows that Denmark was interested in papal canonisation much earlier than Sweden, indicating stronger ties to the Papacy. “In Denmark, the holy person had to be canonised by the pope in order to be officially celebrated by the church. That wasn’t necessary in Sweden,” she adds.

Her research on local cults has at times consisted of meticulous detective work to sort through the remains of medieval church books. After the Reformation, these books were cut up in pieces and used as new book covers, often for 17th century account books. One hundred years ago, efforts to catalogue the fragments were initiated. This work has resulted in a digital catalogue of

the Swedish fragments, which means that these valuable sources can be used once again.

Nilsson has studied parchment fragments of church books and other texts, which comprise the earliest preserved evidence of these cults. “One can find a lot of information in these texts,” she notes. “The native saints were venerated and celebrated in church and had their own days in the Calendar. For example, in dioceses where they were considered to be important, the saint’s feast day was for everybody to enjoy and not just the priests. This was the case for Elin, who continued to be venerated in the Diocese of Skara for a long time. In contrast, the status of the Danish female saints was not nearly as long-lasting, probably because they did not have enough support from wealthy families and the Church. They were never given their own official feast days.”

[Click here to read Sara Ellis Nilsson’s dissertation, \*\*Creating Holy People and Places on the Periphery. A Study of the Emergence of Cults of Native Saints in the Ecclesiastical Provinces of Lund and Uppsala from the Eleventh to the Thirteenth Centuries.\*\*](#)

You can also follow Sara Ellis Nilsson on Twitter [@ellisnilsson](#)





***More Medieval News...***

## **WMU Medieval Institute names new publications director**

Dr. Simon Forde has been named the new director and managing editor of Medieval Institute Publications at Western Michigan University.

From 1988 to 1996, Forde was director of the International Medieval Institute in Leeds and editor of the International Medieval Bibliography. Forde then moved on to Brepols Publishers, where he was commissioning editor for medieval and Renaissance studies from 1996 to 2013. He most recently worked for Amsterdam University Press.

"With Simon Forde as its director, Medieval Institute Publications now has a deeply experienced and internationally minded expert at the helm," says Dr. James Murray, director of the WMU Medieval Institute. "We expect new and exciting initiatives in the future."

## **New Publisher of *Speculum***

The Medieval Academy of America has announced a 5-year-contract with the University of Chicago Press to serve as publisher of *Speculum* from 2016 - 2020 (Volumes 91 - 95). In a statement the academy commented "Chicago has throughout its institutional history had a deep commitment to international scholarship. As such, it seems a fitting symbol for the place of medieval studies in American scholarship: centrally-located in the country while clearly marking its roots in the European tradition. The press's interest in publishing *Speculum* speaks to this interest in reaching as broad an intellectual community as possible, both within the United States and around the world."

## **'Cry Havoc!' War, Diplomacy, and Conspiracy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance - symposium at the University of Tennessee**

The dangers, intrigue and violence of medieval and early modern warfare and statecraft will be the focus of the twelfth annual Marco Symposium at the University of Tennessee - Knoxville from April 9 to 11.

The symposium, "'Cry Havoc!' War, Diplomacy, and Conspiracy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance," will feature scholars from various disciplines and will explore these issues and assess their relevance to contemporary times. The symposium will consider conflict, threat, and contact from the Crusades through the Hundred Years War to the Thirty Years War. It also will explore strategies of terror and piracy as well as technologies of surveillance and intelligence gathering.

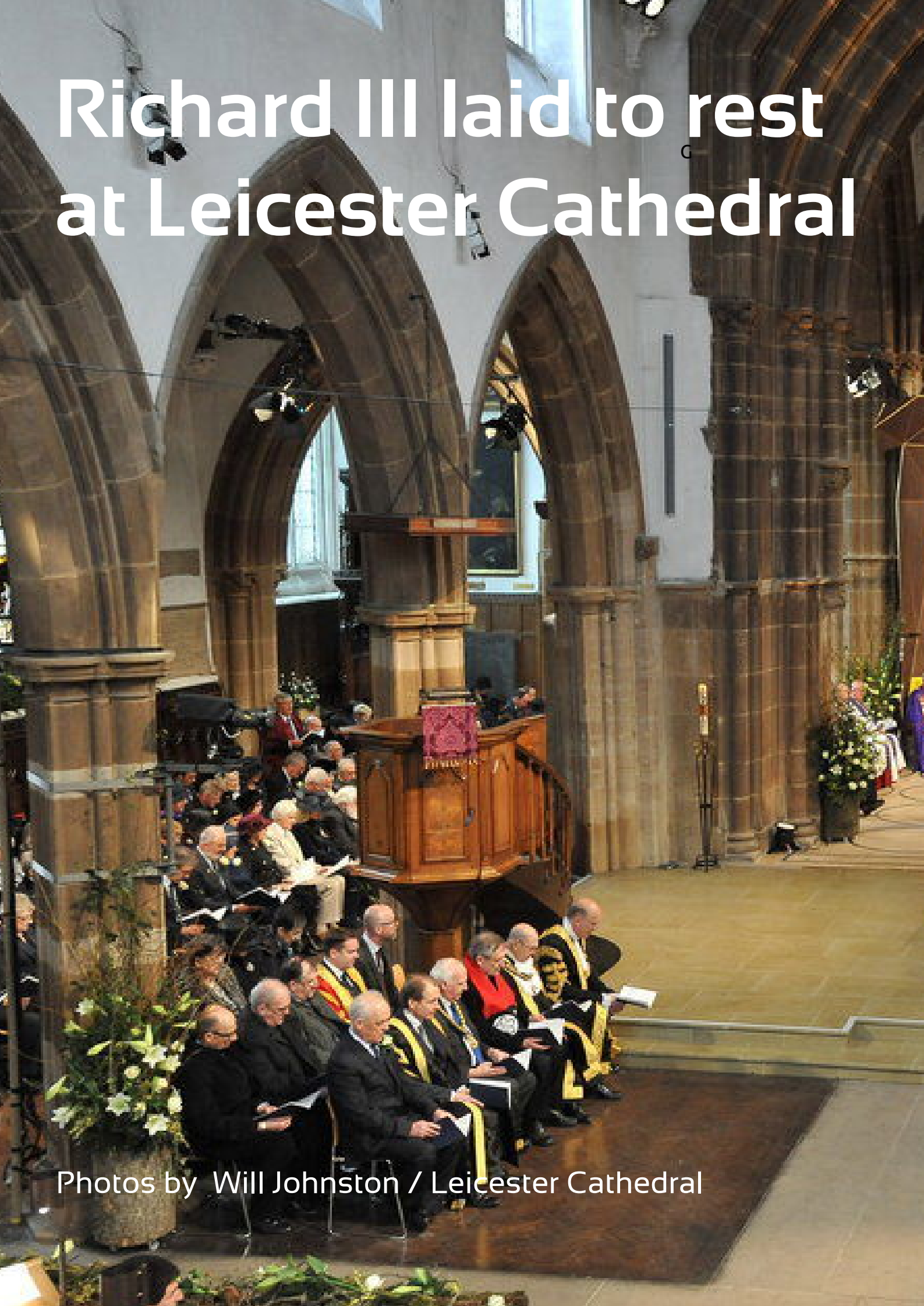
"The past is always relevant to the present, but the later Medieval and Renaissance periods' toxic cocktail of religious violence, *raison d'état*, and espionage is especially so, since we live in an age awash in the same drink," said Thomas E. Burman, Riggsby Director of the Marco Institute.

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

## **Very Tall Man from 4th/5th century discovered in Bulgaria**

Archaeologists working on the the port city of Odessos (now Varna) in Bulgaria have uncovered the skeletal remains of a very tall man, which they believe date to the late fourth or fifth centuries. The remains have not been fully excavated yet, but the archaeologists speculate he may have been a worker who helped built the fortress wall for the port, and perhaps died from a construction accident.

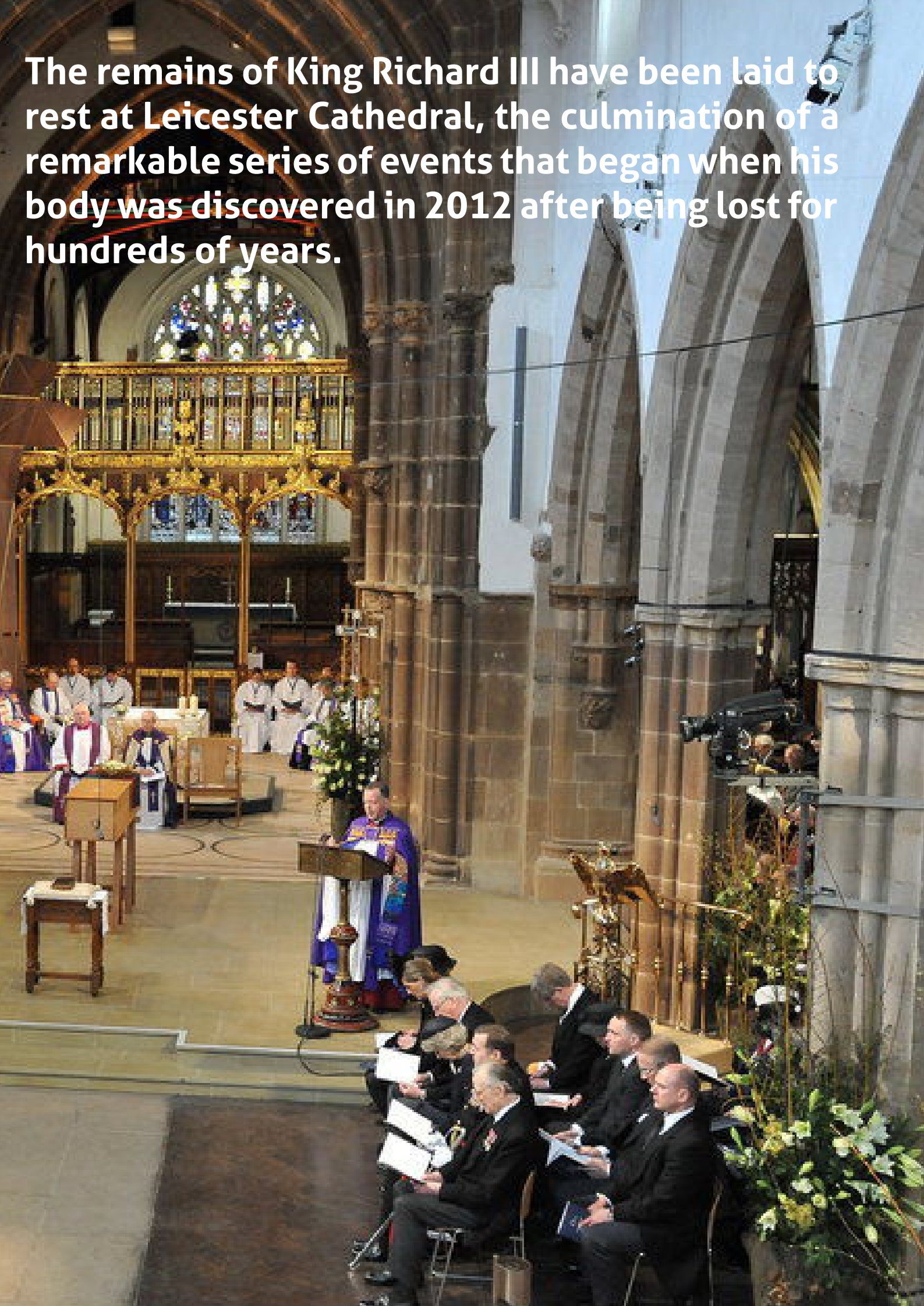
# Richard III laid to rest at Leicester Cathedral



Photos by Will Johnston / Leicester Cathedral



The remains of King Richard III have been laid to rest at Leicester Cathedral, the culmination of a remarkable series of events that began when his body was discovered in 2012 after being lost for hundreds of years.





The reinterment service was led by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Among the guests on hand were Sophie, Countess of Wessex, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, and Philipa Langley, who led the search for the English monarch's remains.

During the service, The Rt Rev Tim Stevens, Bishop of Leicester, said that "People have come in their thousands from around the world to this place of honour, not to judge or condemn but to stand humble and reverent ... Today we come to give this King, and these mortal remains the dignity and honour denied to them in death."





# Richard III Poem

Actor Benedict Cumberbatch, who recently learned that he is also a descendant of Richard III's family, reading a poem at the service, which was written by Britain's Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy.



*My bones, scripted in light, upon cold soil,  
a human braille. My skull, scarred by a crown,  
emptied of history. Describe my soul  
as incense, votive, vanishing; you own  
the same. Grant me the carving of my name.*

*These relics, bless. Imagine you re-tie  
a broken string and on it thread a cross,  
the symbol severed from me when I died.  
The end of time – an unknown, unfelt loss –  
unless the Resurrection of the Dead ...*

*or I once dreamed of this, your future breath  
in prayer for me, lost long, forever found;  
or sensed you from the backstage of my death,  
as kings glimpse shadows on a battleground.*

# Interview with Philippa Langley: End of the journey with Richard III, and maybe a new one with Henry I

By Sandra Alvarez

Amidst all the excitement, and the whirlwind that was Richard III's reburial in Leicester, I managed to catch up with one of the world's most famous Ricardians, 'the Kingfinder', Philippa Langley. Langley was kind enough to take the time to chat with me in spite of the insanity that surrounded her this week. We chatted about Richard's reputation, the importance of his discovery and what it means going forward, and lastly, what's next for Langley once the dust has settled on this chapter in her life.

**What are your emotions going into these final few days before Richard's burial?**

I think that's a really difficult question to answer because there's been so much excitement, you know, since Sunday and so much of it has been overwhelming that tomorrow is the end of it all, really, it's the climax, it's the final reburial. I really don't know how I'm going to feel until I get in there and I think we're all going to be the same because at the moment it's such a buzz in Leicester, and everything is so exciting, that I'm sure you can't be feeling that tomorrow.

**What do you think have been the most important things we have learned about Richard III since he was discovered in September 2012?**

I think looking at some of the mythology that we've been able to discredit. Let's look at some of the things we now know: We now know that he wasn't dug up at the time of the Dissolution, we know his remains weren't carried through the streets of Leicester by the jeering, angry mob, we know that he wasn't thrown into the River Soar at some time later, we know that he wasn't hunched backed. That's the most inappropriate word but we don't have another because he didn't have Kyphosis. We now know that the grave was cut too short for him, so he was hunched in the grave. What the scientists do

know is that he had a Scoliosis, and we know from the account of Richard when Richard hadn't been dead for very long, John Rous described him as having one shoulder slightly higher than the other, and we now know that that was correct because he had this Scoliosis. Scoliosis is a condition, it's not a disability, and I think the only way that I can think about that in terms of the modern day is our Queen, Elizabeth II, has one shoulder higher than the other. Now, do we discuss that? Is it a big topic of discussion? Do we all make a big thing about it? Do we call her the deformed Queen? Do we think that because she's got one shoulder higher than the other that she's evil? No, we don't, so that's been able to blow a huge amount of those myths. The other thing is we know that he didn't have a withered arm, we know he didn't have a limping gait, we know that his head didn't bang against Bow Bridge when he was slung over the horse and brought back into Leicester because there's no marks on his skull to suggest that it cracked against stone. So this is just some of the mythology that surrounded Richard III that we can now say, 'Sorry guys, you all thought that was true, but it's not'. Even down to the fact that he's always portrayed as having very dark hair and dark eyes; he had quite light hair and blue eyes, so it's a whole raft of things. And they all said that he was incredibly small. He must've been small in stature because people said so but actually, in





**Philippa Langley at Richard III's casket. Photo: Will Johnston – Leicester Cathedral.**

small in stature because people said so but actually, in the grave with his femur bone he was 5'8". That is not too small; and we know from people who have Scoliosis, that you lose about a couple of inches, like Dominic Smeeth, he's lost a couple of inches. Richard was about 5'6", so compared to Edward, his brother, he would've looked small, but he wouldn't have been that small in medieval times.

**Do you think finding Richard and this recent exposure has changed public perception of him as a monarch?**

I think there's been a seismic shift, because we've brought his story into the daylight now. I think people are reading widely about him. I think the general public perception now has shifted from the Shakespearean caricature to the medieval king, to the warrior king, the last Plantagenet; that's a huge change.

**This has also been quite a journey for you over these last couple of years — what are you going to remember most about this project?**

Right now I think it's about closing the circle in

one sense because the ethos of the Looking for Richard was if we found him, it was to give him what he didn't get when he died on the field of battle in 1485. I think we're going to achieve that now. To do that, we do something incredibly important, because we make peace with the past. Whatever your view of Richard III, we are laying him to rest, and that's incredibly important. I think that's what I'll take away because we've achieved our aims, we've achieved our goals, and we fought long and hard behind the scenes to make sure that Richard was laid out anatomically that he wasn't just put in a box. We also wanted to make sure that he did get a tomb, because at first they weren't going to give him a tomb, they were just going to give him a slab. When Henry Tudor first buried him in 1485, he didn't get a tomb for 10 years. We didn't want to see that happen again. You'll see a big, beautiful plinth on the tomb design, and it has Richard's coat of arms on it. We fought for the boar, we fought for the white roses in the floor and we wanted his name on it, and his dates on it, all the things that make it his tomb, it's about the man. Up until then it was just going to be a featureless block of stone with nothing on it, and we thought that's just not right. We also wanted him to be confined in a holy place, not as

his name on it, and his dates on it, all the things that make it his tomb, it's about the man. Up until then it was just going to be a featureless block of stone with nothing on it, and we thought that's just not right. We also wanted him to be confined in a holy place, not as a scientific specimen, and not in a laboratory, and we managed to get that in the end. It was all about honouring him as a named individual, and I think we've ticked that box.

**Once everything has died down, what's your next project? What does the Richard III Society want to do going forward?**

I think there's two things to that. I think for the society and for research going forward, we are now searching archives because we think there's documentation out there. Nobody has really looked for this period because everybody thought, we know this story, but now we're going to say, ok we don't know this story and this project has shown us that. So we've got people in Spain, in Portugal, in Germany, in Austria who are specialists who are going to be looking in archives. We're going to be looking in this country, we're going to be asking for people who have private archives, the big families, to open them up, so we can go and search them.

**Does this all end for you on Thursday?**

No, no way. The Princes in the Tower, what happened to the sons of Edward IV? This is what we want to find out. Is there documentation out there that can help explain what happened to them? Can we solve this mystery? Now we're looking. The second thing is I'm just about to launch a project in Reading, and it's called the Hidden Abbey Project. This about looking for the beautiful Clunaic abbey that Henry I built in Reading, and of course, Henry I is buried there. It's a step by step project. The first thing we're going to do is ground penetrating radar. We want to then see what we can find in the abbey. We're then going to do some trial trenching to make sure that the GPR is telling us what we think it's telling us, and then we'll go from there. This isn't my search, Reading asked me to do this search for them so I've given this to the people of Reading.

**When are you starting this new project?**

We've had permission from English Heritage, that's in, and we're now getting permission from the landowners. We've had two permissions in, we're just waiting on the third permission, and then we're doing the GPR survey and we hope we're doing that this year.

**Highlights from the reinterment service for Richard III**





# The Canadian Behind the Casket: Michael Ibsen Builds a Coffin Fit For a King

By Sandra Alvarez



**Sandra Alvarez with Michael Ibsen In Leicester**

By happy accident I managed to run into Michael Ibsen, Richard III's matrilineal descendant, and his coffin maker, while I was in Leicester covering the events for Richard's reinterment last week. I was thrilled, to meet the Canadian connection to Richard III. It had been a manic few days for Ibsen with all the media swirling around him in Leicester so I was fortunate to find a moment, once the crowds had died down, to catch up with this quiet, kindly and unassuming man.

Ibsen chatted with this fellow Canadian about the events surrounding him since Richard was matched to his family's DNA 2 years ago. Ibsen, who knew about the possibility of this connection since 2004, when his mother was asked to confirm a connection to Richard's sister, Margaret of York (May 3, 1446 - November 23, 1503) in Belgium, said the experience has been surreal. He's been living with a lot of commotion for the past few years since Richard's remains

were discovered in a car park in Leicester in September 2012.

Ibsen was instrumental in confirming Richard III's identity through matched mitochondrial DNA passed down from Richard's elder sister, Anne of York (August 10, 1439 - January 14, 1476). Mitochondrial DNA is only passed through the female line of a family and Ibsen inherited it from his mother Joy. Ibsen is the missing genetic link to Richard III, and has now been confirmed as the 17th generation nephew of the infamous English king. Joy Ibsen was very proud of their royal roots, but sadly, passed away in 2008 before being able to see Richard and her family line confirmed. The confirmation was made by another Canadian, Dr. Turi King, the geneticist behind the Looking for Richard project who was able to verify that indeed, Ibsen and Richard III were related.



Leicester Cathedral asked Ibsen to make the coffin for Richard in early 2014 and he was delighted and honoured. Many people have remarked on the simplicity of the coffin's design. Ibsen said it took 3-4 weeks to make, and was the second iteration. He had initially created a much more elaborate piece but then disliked it because he said jokingly that, 'it looked like a piece of furniture'. He didn't feel it conveyed what he was looking for in a coffin fit for a king.

He went back to the drawing board and ended up creating an elegant and simple casket using 120 year old English Oak from Harewood End Estate in Herefordshire and beautifully carving it with Richard's white rose emblem and dates. Ibsen has been overwhelmed by the positive feedback about his work and along with Dr. Turi King, has put the Canadian connection to Richard III firmly on the map. O Canada, this is another one for the books.





# Castle for Sale in Germany: The Sauerburg

Asking Price: \$6,273,406 US / 5.796.000 € EUR



This ruined 14th-century castle in western Germany is now used as a hotel for the picturesque region that is designated a World Heritage Site. Located on a hilltop overlooking the town of Sauerthal, fortifications at this site date back to at least the 13th century. In 1355, the Archbishop of Mainz granted Rupert I "the Red", Count Palatine of the Rhine, "to built a castle which is called 'Surburne'".

The castle remained in the hands of the Counts until the 16th century, and after exchanging hands with other noble families, suffered a devastating blow in 1689 when troops of the French king Louis XIV set fire to the fortress, leaving it in ruins.

It was not until 1909-1912 that efforts were made to restore the castle, and in 2004 further renovations led to the site being used as a hotel. Events also take place on the castle grounds, including wedding receptions, medieval markets and classic car rallies.

Although in ruins, much of the 14th-century castle still survives, including a 6-storey tower that rises 22 meters high, the castle's walls, and others buildings. Sotheby's International Realty describes The Sauerburg as "freshly renovated, the impressive castle radiates the venerable splendour of bygone days. The great hall, a vaulted cellar, seminar rooms, the castle courtyard, a tower room, the castle chapel, a medieval skittle alley that is a protected historic feature and even its own registry office...the castle offers abundant space and rooms for every occasion amidst a one-of-a-kind ambiance."

For more details, please visit **Sotheby's International Realty** or the castle's own **website**.



# 15 Mysteries from

Looking to solve a scholarly puzzle? Here are fifteen medieval events or artefacts that have not yet been explained!

## **Why did the Norse disappear from Greenland?**

Although the Norse had settled in Greenland for over 400 years, their colony was at most only a few thousand people. By the later Middle Ages, the colony was in decline, but it seems the last visitor to Greenland came in 1420. What happened to its remaining residents - did they get killed off in a plague, or by attacks from the Inuit? Or did they just leave the island and return back to Europe?



**Ruins of a Norse church on Greenland**

## **What caused the Dancing Plague?**

In July 1518 a plague broke out in the town of Strasbourg - first one woman began to dance uncontrollably in the streets. Others soon joined her, and eventually over 400 people were afflicted, with some of them dying from heart attacks or exhaustion. The authorities tried to cure them by allowing them to keep dancing - they even paid for musicians to perform for them. What caused this dancing mania, which broke out on a few other occasions in Europe, between the 14th and 17th centuries?



# the Middle Ages

## **Who were the Green Children of Woolpit?**

Two English chroniclers reported a story from the 12th century - that the villagers of Woolpit discovered two children, a brother and sister, who had green skin and spoke an unknown language. Eventually their skin colour returned to normal, but the boy died shortly after being baptized. The girl grew into adulthood and learned to speak English - she explained they were from St Martin's Land, where everything was green, and they had been tending their father's cattle when they followed the animals into a cave. Emerging out of it, they found themselves in Woolpit. Many experts have tried to figure out if the story was some kind of folk tale, or was based at least in part on a true story.

## **What happened to the Princes in the Tower?**

The two brothers, Edward V, King of England and Richard of Shrewsbury, Duke of York, were only 12 and 9 years old when in 1483, Richard III seized the English throne. The boys were kept in the Tower of London, but by the summer of that year they had completely disappeared. Were they murdered, and if so by who? In 1674, some workmen at the Tower of London dug up a wooden box containing two small human skeletons - these bones now reside in Westminster Abbey and many believe they belong to the two brothers.

## **What is written in the Voynich Manuscript?**

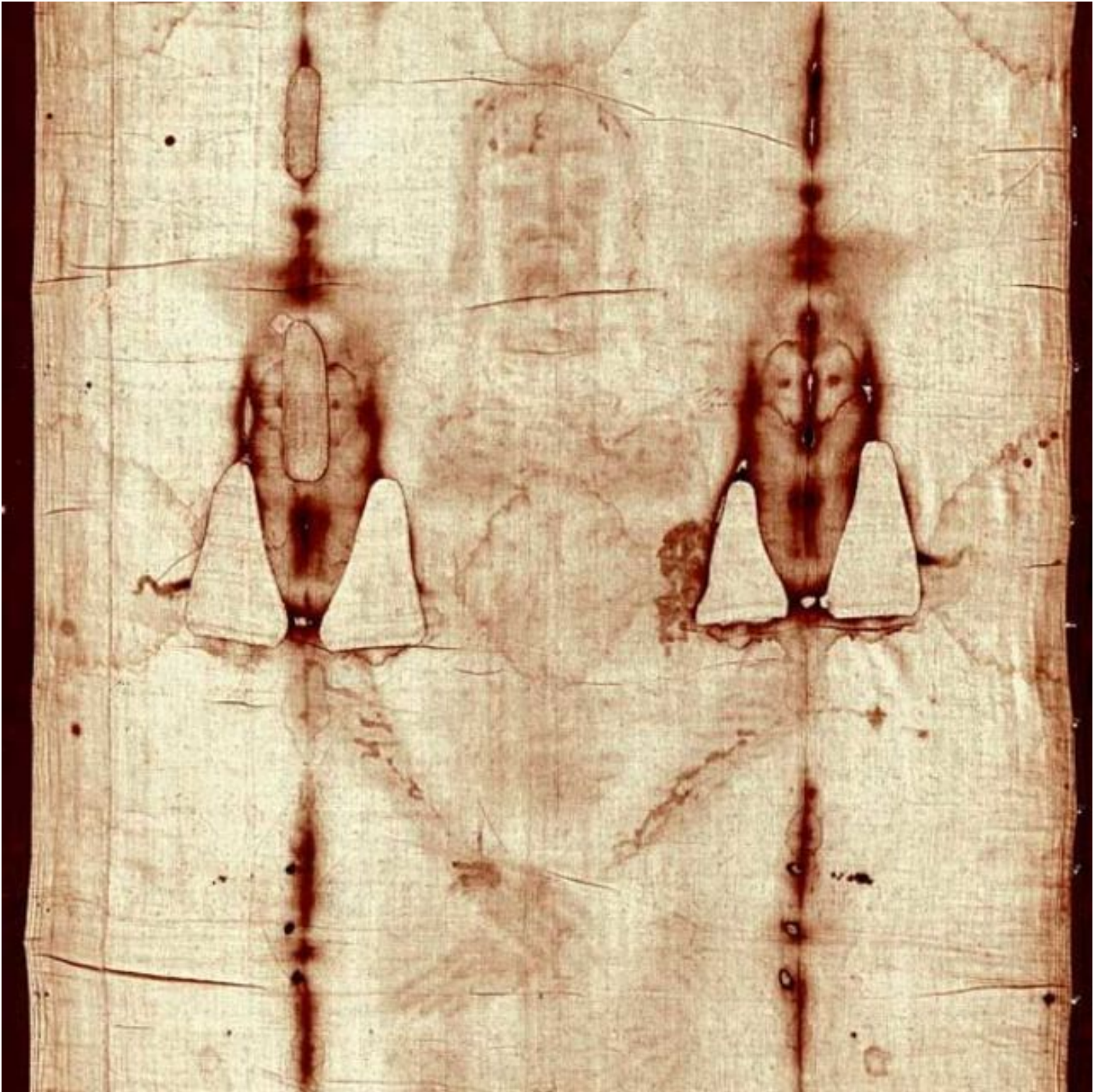
This illustrated manuscript comes from the 15th century, but it is written in an unknown language. Ever since its discovery in 1912, scholars have been puzzled over its words and its strange images of plants and astronomical signs. In recent years one scholar believes he has partly deciphered some of the text, figuring out a handful of words.

## **Did an army of Children go on Crusade?**

Dozens of accounts from the 13th century offer a story of 'children' attempting to go on crusade to reach Jerusalem. While the versions are often very different, they have a young boy from France or Germany preaching and leading up to 30,000 people on a march south to Italy. It was then said that merchant ship owners promised to take them to the Holy Land, but instead either sold the children as slaves in Muslim lands, or sank at sea. Historians have been very skeptical of these accounts, but some believe they might be poor men and women who were going on pilgrimages.

## **What was the fate of Owain Glyndwr?**

Owain Glyndwr led a Welsh rebellion against England starting in 1400, and over the next several years was able to take control of much of Wales - he was even proclaimed the Prince of Wales by his supporters. However, the English were able to gradually recover Wales, and force Owain from his strongholds. The last sighting of the Welsh rebel was in 1412, and one chronicler reports that in 1415 he died and was secretly buried. Folk legends continue to tell his story, and offer different versions of what ultimately happened to Owain.



## **Shroud of Turin**

### **What was the fate of John Cabot and his crew on their final voyage?**

The Italian explorer John Cabot was able to reach North America in 1497, the first European to visit the continent since the Vikings. A year later he tried again, but we are unsure what happened to him - did his fleet get lost at sea, or perhaps did they return back to England?

### **Who created the Shroud of Turin?**

Many theories have emerged of what this cloth is - some believe it shows an image of Jesus Christ when he was crucified. Radio carbon tests have revealed the cloth was made between 1260 and 1390, but it still disputed that the image comes from the Middle Ages or who created it. A recent study suggests that the shroud was created to be used in medieval church plays about the Resurrection of Jesus.



## What happened to Caliph al-Hakim?

From the year 996 to 1021, Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah ruled Egypt and parts of North Africa and the Near East as the Fatimid Caliph. While his enemies called him the 'Mad Caliph' his reign is usually seen as very successful. In the final years of his reign, al-Hakim became more interested in asceticism. On one night in February 1021 and at the age of 36, al-Hakim left for one of his journeys to the hills outside of Cairo, and never returned. A search found only his donkey and bloodstained garments. No one has ever discovered if he was killed, or perhaps engineered his own disappearance.

## How far did the Vikings travel into North America?

Archaeological discoveries have found that the Norse had set up a small colony at L'anse aux Meadows on Newfoundland, and had sailed to Baffin Island in Canada's far north. It is believed that they ventured further into North America - and since the 19th century some people have offered evidence that the Vikings had reached as far as Minnesota. Some of this evidence has been revealed to be a hoax, but scholars are still searching to see where the land of Vinland might have been.

## What happened to King Edward II?

Edward II had ruled England for nearly 20 years before he was deposed by his wife Queen Isabella and her lover Roger Mortimer in January 1327. It has been reported that several months later he was executed by the new regime, but some accounts say that he was able to escape his imprisonment and went on to become a monk. There are even reports of his son Edward III meeting with a man who claimed to be his father living in Antwerp.

## What was the secret behind Greek Fire?

This deadly incendiary weapon was invented in the Byzantine empire in the 7th century - and for centuries afterwards it was used to defend Byzantium. However, the formula for this weapon was a state secret, and now historians and scientists are unsure of what was actually used to create this liquid, which could burn on water.

## What was contained in the *Inventio Fortunata*?

The *Inventio Fortunata* is said to be a lost book, written in the 14th-century for England's Edward III. Penned by a Franciscan from Oxford who travelled the North Atlantic region in the early 1360s, he describes islands in the far north. How far did this person reach in his travels? His work has now become lost, but it was very influential with medieval and early modern geographers.

## Is the Vinland Map real?

In 1965 scholars presented to the world a 15th-century map that depicts part of North America. Ever since then scholars have disputed whether or not the Vinland Map is real or a fraud. The document can still be found at a library at Yale University.



# Palm Sunday in Me

THE ISABELLA BREVIARY (Flanders, last decade of the 15th C.) – Preserved in The British Library

f. 96r, ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM



A twenty-four line framed miniature over both columns of text of the Entry into Jerusalem (Mt 21 vv. 1-9), which is the Gospel for the day in the Dominican Missal. Christ, riding on the ass and followed by his disciples, has cloaks laid down before him as he approaches Jerusalem, whose entrance gate and city is in the background with many people beside the road. The iconography is completely traditional. There is a full border of the first category incorporating two men climbing in the acanthus foliage of silver-grey branches together with flowers, three birds and an ape on a pale yellow-gold ground. – Excerpt from the commentary volume of *The Isabella Breviary* by Nigel Morgan (Emeritus Honorary Professor of the History of Art, Cambridge University)



# Medieval Manuscripts

**BIBLE MORALISÉE OF NAPLES (Naples, c. 1340-1350.) –  
Preserved in Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris**

f. 162r (Matt. 21: 1-8)





The episode of Christ's entry into Jerusalem gave rise to several masterpieces in the pictorial art of the Italian Trecento in the first third of the century (Giotto's frieze in Padua, Duccio's predella panel in Sienna, Pietro Lorenzetti's fresco in Assisi). The Neapolitan miniaturist drew upon the canonical model of the great Tuscan masters for the illustration of Matthew's text glossed beneath the illumination, although all four evangelists related the event.

Christ rides towards the holy city on an ass to convey his humility. His disciples follow him and as usual, artist A depicts Peter, the first apostle, walking along closest to Christ by the animal's hindquarters. There is no landscape but a gold ground illuminates the scene featuring a large, dark green tree with roughly drawn, thick foliage. A man clutches the trunk and cuts branches which he throws to the ground as mentioned in the paraphrase whilst another spreads his cloak on the road as carpet of honour. The crowd gathered at the city gates waves palm leaves to greet the prophet Jesus, the Son of David. The white buildings crammed together loom up above the wall to form a colourless ghost town with windows covered in iron grilles. This conventional, static painting merely translates the accompanying text exactly: commemorating rather than narrating. ~ Excerpt from the commentary volume of *Bible Moralisée of Naples* by Marianne Besseyre (Curator at the Centre de recherche sur les manuscrits enluminés, BnF) and Yves Christie (Honorary Professor, Université de Genève)



Thank you to **Moleiro.com** for providing us with these two images – you can visit their **website** to learn more about these two manuscripts and the facsimile versions they sell of them.



# Medieval Articles

## **Four Kidnappings in Thirteenth-Century Aragon: Christian Children as Victims of Christian-Muslim Domination**

By Brian Catlos

*Scripta Mediterranea*, Vol.19-20 (1998-9)

Introduction: In 1281 Marinel de Grailla, an inhabitant of Sariflena in Aragon, sold a young boy whom he supposed to be Muslim to his fellow townsman Johannes Carcassers in the market of Pamplona. When the boy began to protest that he was actually a Christian, Marinel and Johannes hurried him off to a field and put a knife to his throat to silence him. Thereafter they took him to the house of the latter, where they circumcised him by force and then threatened him not to divulge what had passed. The two went on to sell their victim at the convent of Sijena a few miles to the south-east, but not before rumours of their crime had become common parlance in their town.

In 1292 a complaint came to the ears of the infante Pedro of Aragon that the Commander of the Order of Calatrava at Alcafiiz was holding a boy whom the Order claimed to be a Muslim, but whom Pedro de Podio de Nina, an inhabitant of the same town asserted to be his own son Dominicus, a Christian. Despite the fact that the identity of the boy had been established to the apparent satisfaction of the law, the Knights refused to restore the boy to his proper faith and family.

**[Click here to read this article from York University](#)**

## **Petrarch's *Africa* I-IV: A Translation and Commentary**

By Erik Z. D. Ellis

Master's Thesis, Baylor University, 2007

Abstract: English-speaking scholars have neglected Francesco Petrarch's self-proclaimed masterwork, the *Africa*. Focusing on Petrarch's vernacular poetry and to a lesser extent his Latin prose, scholars overlook his Latin verse. Of Petrarch's major works, the *Africa* has received the least scholarly attention, inspiring to date only one monograph, one translation, and fewer than ten articles from English-speaking scholars. This discrepancy between Petrarch's opinions and those of his admirers inspired this thesis.

This thesis provides first-time readers of *Africa* I-IV with a translation that brings the reader to Petrarch's Latin. The translation aims to preserve the tone and literal sense of the Latin original while maintaining smooth readability in English. A commentary, including grammatical annotations and discussing Petrarch's sources, inspiration, and historical context, accompanies the translation.

**[Click here to read this thesis from Baylor University](#)**

# Lightning Strikes in Medieval Florence

Luca Landucci (1436–1516) was one of those regular people who lived in medieval Florence. He owned an apothecary, and while his business had its ups and downs, he eventually became prosperous. He married and had 12 children before passing away at the age of 80.

The reason why he stands out among the thousands of ordinary Florentines of his age was that he kept a diary, starting when he was about fourteen years old, and continued to write in it until his death. In it, Luca reveals much about the daily life happening in Florence, as well as what he knew about the greater political events that were taking place in his city and Italy.

More than a dozen times he writes about lightning strikes that struck in medieval Florence, as well as other instances that he heard about elsewhere in Italy. Here are some of his entries that talk about them:

**September 12, 1489:** "The Palagio de' Signori was struck by a thunderbolt at about 14 in the morning (10 am); it struck the lion and pursued it way downwards. There were two strangers at the top, just next to the bells, when it happened, a chancellor of the Pitigliani and another. The former fell unconscious, as if dead, and the other was little better; however, they did not die after all. Neither was there a great deal of injury done to the Palagio. It seemed wonderful that this should have happened to two strangers, when there were hundreds of Florentines in the Palagio. People went to look at the tower and bells afterwards.

**April 5, 1492:** At about 3 at night (11 pm) the lantern of cupola of Santa Maria del Fiore was struck by a thunderbolt and it was split almost in half; that is, one of the marble niches and many other pieces of marble on the side towards the door leading to the Servi were taken off in a miraculous way; none of us had ever in our lives seen lightning have such an effect before. If it had happened at the time when the sermon was being preached (for a sermon is preached every morning now, with 15 thousand people listening), it must of necessity killed hundreds of persons. But the Lord did not permit it. This marble niche fell and struck the roof of the church

between two doors which lead back to the Servi, and broke the roof and the vaulting in five places, finally fixing itself in the brick floor of the church. And many bricks and much other material from the vaulting fell also, reaching as far as the benches placed for the sermon, where many people would have been sitting. Some material fell in the choir as well, but not very much. Many pieces fell outside the building as well, beyond the door leading to Servi; one piece falling on the stepping stones in the street, and after having split the stone, burying itself underground; another piece was hurled across the street, and struck the the roof of the house opposite the said door, where it split the roof and many beams and vaultings, and finally buried itself in the ground under the cellar. Although the house was full of people, no one was injured. A man called Luca Ranieri lived there. You may imagine that they nearly died of amazement and terror at the fearful noise; for besides that which fell into the cellar, many pieces fell on the roofs all round.

**August 6, 1492:** There was a furious storm, the air seeming for some time to be full of bursting fireworks, so incessant was the thunder and lightning. When the storm was over, about eight different places were counted which bore visible traces of having been struck. One was the



## Storm over Florence - Photo by Alessandro Scarcella / Flickr

lightning. When the storm was over, about eight different places were counted which bore visible traces of having been struck. One was the Campanile of Santa Croce; another was Porta di San Gallo; another the Porta al Prato; another the Porta a Pinte, etc. But it did not cause much damage, and no one was killed.

**September 2, 1502:** An evergreen oak in my villa, only 50 paces from the house, was struck by lightning; and it was seared and dried up to very roots, never recovering.

**September 12, 1503:** In less than half an hour six or seven thunderbolts fell in Florence; amongst the rest, there was one which fell on the gate of San Piero Gattolino (Romana), and another on San Giovanni, which caused the cross to fall to the ground; and another in Via Gora, and others in several parts of the city. And outside there were yet more. At Peretola one Bartolomeo Nelli was riding along the road, when the lightning struck him, killing him and his horse; another horse which was a little behind was terrified and went lame. Two other deaths were spoken of, one at Poggio a Caiano, and one at Calenzano; whilst in a house in the Mugello a

man, woman and child were killed.

**June 4, 1506:** On this day, at my place at Vegna, the lightning struck quite near the house, touching a very large oak, which no one remarked, there not being a scratch upon it; nothing whatever to be seen. But in a few days the top branches, which were full of acorns, began to wither, and every day it went on withering lower down, till in less than a month it was dried up to the very roots, and has never shot up again.

**September 3, 1512:** A thunderbolt fell on the Palazzo degli Strozzi here, and killed a master-builder, who had built this palace, and now he had come back to give a look at something, and was so unfortunate, after having been in danger so often while building it, to die in this way when the danger seemed over; but so it pleased God. He was a good man.

***A Florentine Diary from 1450 to 1516 by Luca Landucci***, was translated by Alice de Rosen Jervis (London, 1927)

# Lancelot and His Upcoming Reboot: Forgiven or *Unforgiven*?

By Danièle Cybulskie



**Parting of Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere by Julia Margaret Cameron**

Yesterday, I read that Hollywood has two new King Arthur movies and two new Robin Hood movies in the works. Naturally, I was filled with the same mix of joy and trepidation that every medieval nerd feels when one of these reboots is announced. Each time, a movie about one of my favourite literary heroes has the potential to be every bit as stirring and epic as the medieval stories, and likewise the potential (like the last few Robin Hoods) to lose the heart behind them in an attempt to modernize.

The headliner from one of the articles I've just been reading is a film called *Man at Arms*, which is just getting started. It aims to tell a story of

Lancelot post-Camelot, on a "quest for redemption in his later years – based on an original idea by Brucks" (the screenwriter). "Great twist to the tried-and-true story," says the journalist. But, hang on a second. We already know what happens to Lancelot post-Camelot, and it's nothing like *Unforgiven*, as *Man at Arms* is meant to be. After the death of King Arthur (or his removal to Avalon after his grievous wound, however you like to look at it), Guinevere and Lancelot do exactly what medieval people would have wanted them to do: they retire to a life of prayer.



In Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, as soon as he hears the news of Modred's treason, Lancelot returns from *Joyous Garde* (his castle) to Dover, where he learns the rest of the story. He mourns Gawain for three days at Dover Castle, generously giving alms and food to the poor. Then, he rides off to find Guinevere, and discovers her already cloistered, a nun on her way to becoming an abbess. Guinevere says she can't stand to be around him anymore, considering the destruction they have wrought together, so she encourages him to leave and find himself a wife. Ever faithful to her, Lancelot swears he couldn't love another woman, so he will forsake the world as she does (Guinevere actively doubts this, which I love). True to form, though, he asks her for one last kiss before he goes away from her forever. To her credit, she refuses. Lancelot then rides away, weeping, until he comes upon a hermitage, in which he hears mass from the Bishop of Canterbury, and gets the rest of his news from Sir Bedevere, who happens to be there. Here's what happens next:

*And than the knelyd doun on his knee and prayed the Bysshop to shryve him and assoyle him; and than he besought the Bysshop that he might be hys brother. Than the Bysshop sayd, 'I wyll gladly.' and there he put an habyte upon syr Lancelot. And there he servyd God day and nyght with prayers and fastynges. (pp.877-888, The Works of Sir Thomas Malory)*

More knights of the Round Table discover him over time, and join him in being monks, and Lancelot becomes a priest after six years. One night, he has a vision that if he rides to Almesbury, he will find Guinevere dead; this happens as he foresaw, and he performs "al the observaunce of the servyce hymself" (p.879) for her, burying her at Arthur's side at Glastonbury. For six weeks afterward, he barely eats for weeping at their tomb, and he dies soon afterwards, following the Bysshop's vision that he was carried away by angels. When his body is discovered in his bed, "he laye as he had smyled, and [had] the swetest savour aboute hym that ever they felte" (p.881) (Saints were often said to have sweet-smelling corpses.) He was buried at *Joyous Garde*, having

had his face uncovered for the fifteen-day journey and fifteen days of lying at *Joyous Garde* – clearly, he was saintly enough not to decompose.

The *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, an earlier version of the story, has Lancelot dying in his own monastery without having made the journey to Guinevere, who dies shortly after Lancelot. (In this version, she also refuses to kiss him.)

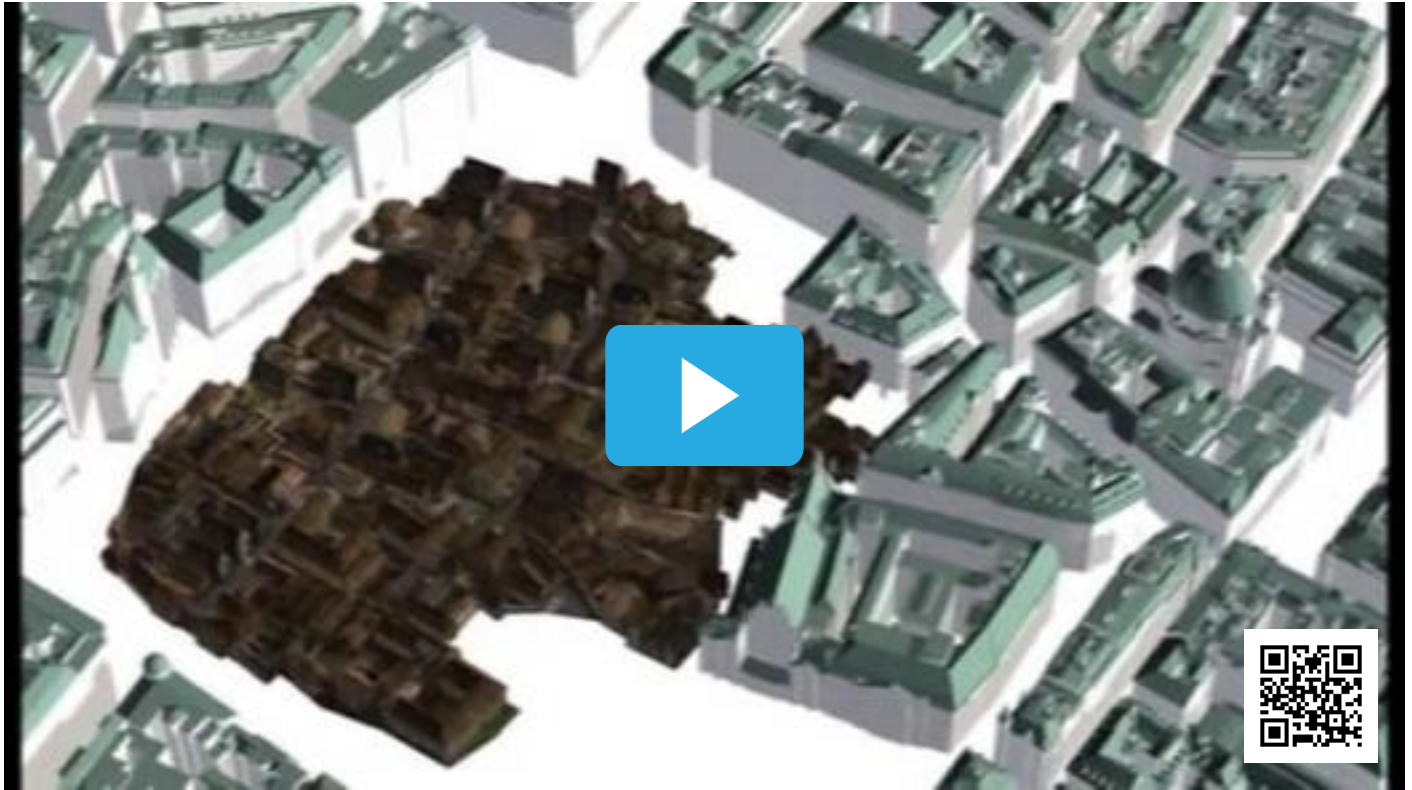
For medieval people, this is really the only satisfying ending there could have been to the story. It would have been hugely subversive for Guinevere and Lancelot to get together afterwards – they would basically have been rewarded for treasonous behaviour – not to mention callous with regard to Arthur, who was meant to be the best king who ever lived. Having the two lovers become penitent for the remainder of their lives neatly ties up this messy loose end, and also underscores the piety they were meant to have, especially Lancelot, who had earlier been on a quest for the Holy Grail. For hundreds of years, this has been the ending of the story, although it seems this is soon to be changed.

Remakes can be a really interesting way to get at the heart of a story, as long as they don't misplace that heart in the retelling. I'm hoping that the creators of the new films, especially *Man at Arms* look carefully at what it is that has made these stories so meaningful for so many years. The stories of the Round Table aren't about some amazing war machines, but about human beings with divided loyalties, trying to find, well, peace, actually. If Lancelot becomes cold-eyed and numb, he will lose that humanity that has him desperately longing for a kiss at the same time as desperately longing for the salvation he knows he will only get from totally forsaking his old way of life. Somehow, I don't think he'll be a saintly priest in this new movie, but, like my fellow nerds, I'm willing to wait and see.

You can follow Danièle Cybulskie on Twitter @5MinMedievalist

# Medieval Videos

## The Jewish District in Medieval Vienna



A virtual tour of how the Jewish community in 14th-century Vienna would have looked like.

## The story behind the Medieval Armenian Cross that's now in the Vatican Museums

