

The Medieval Magazine

Volume 2 Number 13

April 25, 2016



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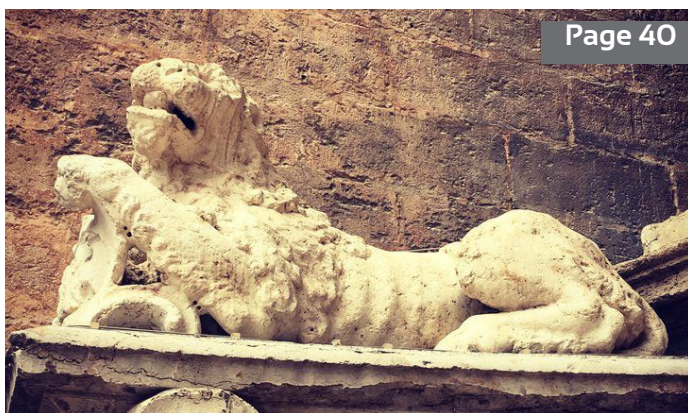
Danielle Trynoski offers great tips on how to look like your from the Middle Ages.



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Daniele Cybulskie looks at five things you would find in your typical medieval monastic garden.



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Cover Photo: An early 16th century tapestry, created in southern France, which now hangs in the Musee de Cluny, in Paris, France. Photo by Danielle Trynsoki

Medieval News

Æthelred the Unready, King of the English: 1,000 years of bad press

He was just a boy when he became King of the English and his reign was marked by repeated attacks by the Danes. Æthelred, who died 1,000 years ago on 23 April 1016, is remembered as 'the Unready'. But his nickname masks a more complex picture.

A silver penny struck more than ten centuries ago (on display in the Fitzwilliam Museum) shows Æthelred, King of the English. The obverse shows the king in profile and the reverse a Christian cross. Thousands of similar coins have survived. Many are in collections in Copenhagen, Oslo and Stockholm. This coinage is material evidence of 'Dane-geld', money paid to England's enemies in attempts to forestall Viking invasions of England.

Inevitably remembered as 'the Unready', Æthelred died exactly 1,000 years ago on 23 April 1016 – 50 years before the Norman Conquest. The same date in April is recorded as the day of the death of William Shakespeare (in 1616) and also celebrated each year as St George's Day.

Born around 968, son of King Edgar and Queen Ælfthryth, Æthelred died in London, a place that had recently been established as political and commercial centre of England. He was the first monarch to be buried in the old cathedral of St Paul which much later became one of the most notable casualties of the great fire of London.

Æthelred's nickname is a pun that may date from as early the 11th century. Æthelred means 'noble-counsel' while the noun unræd means 'an ill-considered or treacherous plan. "The nickname degenerated from 'Æthelred unræd' into 'Æthelred the Unready', and 'Æthelred no-counsel', giving rise to further stories about him," says University of Cambridge Professor Simon Keynes.

Keynes, a historian in the Department of Anglo-Saxon Norse and Celtic, has worked extensively on the Anglo-Saxon period – especially the charters and coinage that offer new windows into a time of turmoil. He was the organiser and keynote speaker at a conference last week.

Æthelred was just a boy aged around 12 years when he became King of the English, and his long rule was marred by repeated incursions from the Danes. Far from keeping English shores safe from attack, the vast amounts of money paid to the Danes (estimated at £250,000 – a huge sum at the time) simply whetted their appetite for English riches. They took the money and continued their raids. In 1016 England became, for some 50 years, part of an empire of the North Sea.



Silver penny from the reign of King Æthelred

Credit: Fitzwilliam Museum Æthelred II, Helmet type, Cambridge, Cnit CM.33-1935

From the 6th century onwards, England had converted to Christianity while the Danes continued to worship Norse deities. Æthelred believed that this placed God on his side – but prayer proved useless. So did reprisals on Danish settlers. Fruitless attempts to bribe or defeat the Vikings sealed Æthelred's reputation as a disastrous king who deserved to fail. Sellar and Yeatman's 1930s classic *1066 and All That* echoes this sentiment: the "Wave of Danes" who overran the country were "undoubtedly a *Good Thing*".

"Throughout history, Æthelred's payment of Dane-geld has been used as a short hand for drastic mismanagement and poor decision making," says Keynes. "But there is another, more complex, picture to be painted of Æthelred's reign, and the ways that he and his councillors tackled the considerable challenges that they faced as they sought to administer a kingdom and protect their respective interests."

Much of what we know about Æthelred's reign comes from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle - an account by an anonymous chronicler of

each year's notable events. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is far from impartial: its verses were composed by court poets, or skalds, who celebrated the deeds of the leaders of the Viking armies. "The story told in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and retold many times thereafter, is very superficial. But there is plenty of other evidence for the period, and the deeper one looks, the more complex and interesting it all becomes," says Keynes.

Keynes says that no single body of evidence is richer than the 130 charters that survive Æthelred's reign. More properly called 'royal diplomas', these charters are documents that record agreements made at assemblies held four or five times a year. Such meetings, which took place at major festivals, such as Easter and Pentecost, were an opportunity for both ceremony and business. The charters, written in Latin, were witnessed by prominent members of the church and key land-owners.

"In comparison to the Anglo Saxon Chronicle, which is a wonderfully vivid narrative in the vernacular, the diplomas are dry and seemingly impenetrable documents – and

it's true that individually they appear to yield little. But considered collectively, they offer an opportunity to reach below the surface of recorded events," says Keynes.

The majority of the charters issued during Æthelred's reign represent grants of land. Others give detailed details of the forfeiture of land into the king's hands or confirm the entitlement of a religious house to lands and privileges which have been lost.

"Royal diplomas were highly valuable documents in their own right. It was the possession of the charter itself which gave an individual the right to the land described even if the individual in question was not named. Not surprisingly copies and forgeries were made – which, for the historian, makes puzzling them out even harder," says Keynes.

"The diplomas also have long lists of witnesses which, when tabulated and analysed, enable one to detect interesting changes in the composition of the king's councillors over the course of Æthelred's long reign – suggesting perhaps who was gaining in power and who was declining."

Exeter Cathedral holds one of the most beautiful surviving charters, written in ink on parchment. Æthelred's diploma for Bishop Ealdred of Cornwall (994) confirms Ealdred's status as bishop of Cornwall, at St Germans, and states that he is to have the same rights as the other bishops have in their own dioceses. "This charter was probably the outcome of a determination on the part of Archbishop Sigeric to set things in order," says Keynes.

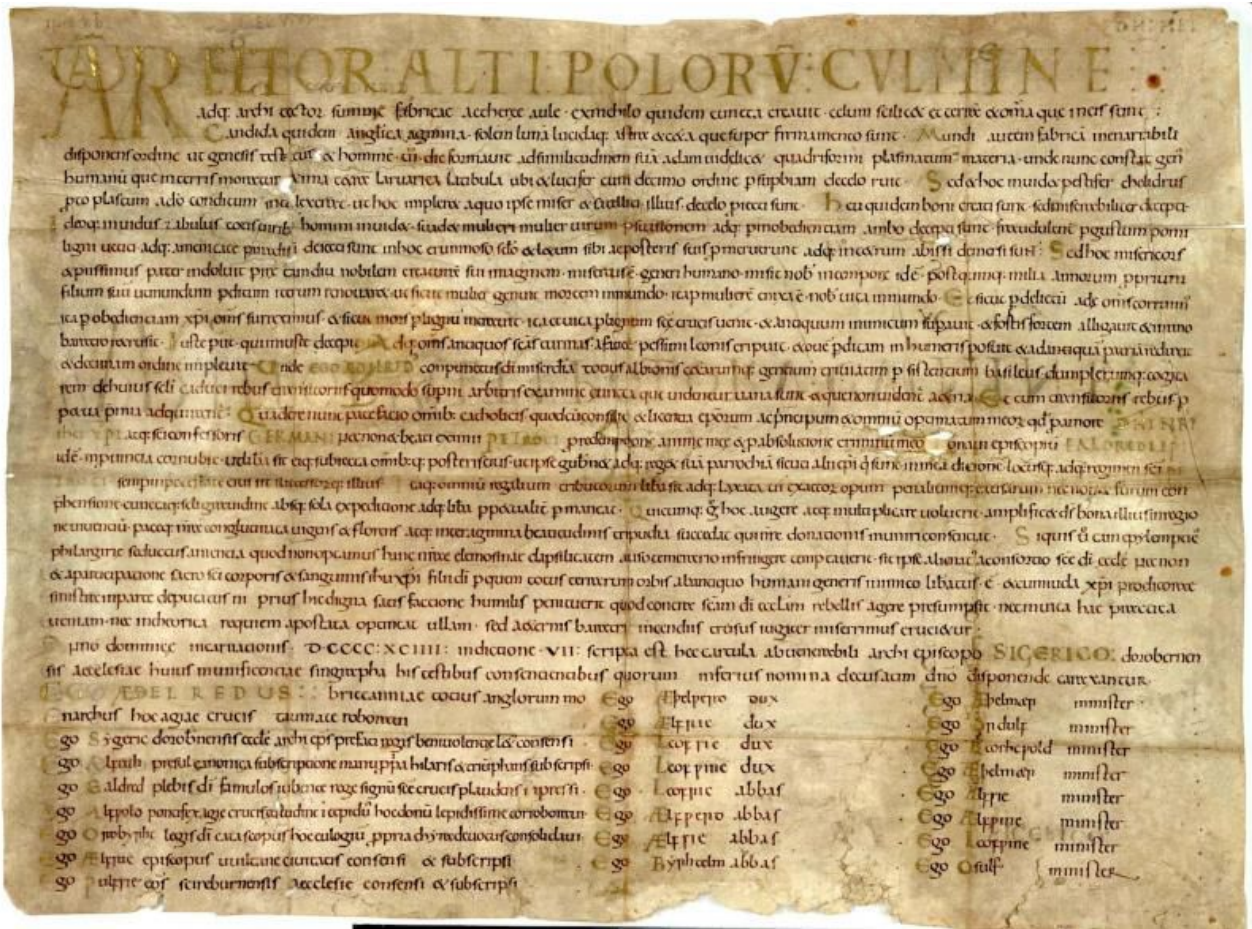
"The English were under severe Viking attack, and this was one way of making arrangements more pleasing in the sight of God. The diploma was issued at a royal assembly, and was witnessed by a number of bishops, ealdormen, abbots, and thegns - in other words by the great and good of the land."

Coinage offers another window into Æthelred's reign and management of money is likely to have been on the agenda at royal assemblies. In a collaboration with the late Mark Blackburn, Keeper of Coins and Medals at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Keynes took a keen interest in the coinage of Æthelred's reign. "Coinage was struck at as many as 80 minting places across England. It was produced in huge quantities for export as part of the tribute money paid to Viking armies and the army tax paid to a standing mercenary force," he says.

"Variations in coin designs over time suggest that Æthelred and those working with him developed and maintained a system of staggering complexity. To control the economy, the authorities recalled coins of one type from circulation and exchanged them for coins of a new type. The designs tell their own stories. The earliest types feature the hand of God issuing from a cloud, perhaps to signify divine approval. Later the emphasis shifted to the king's portrait and he is shown initially bare-headed and later wearing a helmet."

The rarest of the coins struck in Æthelred's time is a short-lived Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) type. Worldwide, just 24 survive, one of which is in the collection of the Fitzwilliam Museum and displayed in the Rothschild Gallery. What makes this coin so remarkable is the absence of king's portrait: the obverse features the Lamb of God and the reverse a dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit. "The design represents a desperate appeal for peace, in perilous times," says Keynes.

In portraying Æthelred's reign as a time of turmoil, historians have drawn on a sermon given by one of the king's most powerful advisors. Archbishop Wulfstan's message to the English people is full of gloom: "For it is clear and manifest in us all that we have previously transgressed more than we have amended, and therefore much is assailing this people. Things have not gone well now



Æthelred's diploma for Bishop Ealdred of Cornwall (994) (Exeter Cathedral Archive).

for a long time at home or abroad, but there have been devastation and famine, burning and bloodshed in every district again and again."

The forces ranged against Æthelred were impressive and implacable. In 994 a Viking fleet of more than 90 ships came up the Thames to London. In 1009 the Vikings came again. Almost ten centuries later, in the 1920s, a group of battle axes and spearheads, dating from around 1000, was found in the river close to old London Bridge. Vivid reminders of the raiders who sailed up the estuary to strike at the heart of England, they are on display at the Museum of London.

The eight battle axes, with their fearsome curving edges, also pose a question: how could the king and his councillors overcome a threat of such a kind?

In September 1666 the great fire of London destroyed St Paul's cathedral, taking

Æthelred's tomb with it. Today Æthelred is remembered in the cathedral coffee shop where a stone commemorates all the tombs known to be lost. "It's quite touching to see Æthelred's name close to the place where he was buried in 1016 and where he lay for the next 650 years," says Keynes. "It's highly unlikely that he will never shake off the damage done to him by his soubriquet – but it's well worth continuing to challenge the accepted versions of the history of a fascinating period."

Coins from Æthelred's reign are displayed at the **Fitzwilliam Museum** in the Rothschild Gallery. Æthelred's charter for Bishop Ealdred of Cornwall (994) is available for consultation at **Exeter Cathedral** on request.

This article is courtesy the University of Cambridge

Early Medieval Glassworks discovered in Israel

An extraordinary archaeological discovery was revealed in an excavation of the Israel Antiquities Authority prior to the construction of a road. During the excavation remains of the oldest kilns in Israel were discovered where commercial quantities of raw glass were produced. These kilns, c. 1,600 years old (dating to the Late Roman/Early Medieval period), indicate that this area was one of the foremost centers for glass production in the ancient world.



According to Yael Gorin-Rosen, head curator of the Israel Antiquities Authority Glass Department, "This is a very important discovery with implications regarding the history of the glass industry both in Israel and in the entire ancient world. We know from

historical sources dating to the Roman period that the Valley of 'Akko was renowned for the excellent quality sand located there, which was highly suitable for the manufacture of glass. Chemical analyses conducted on glass vessels from this period which were

discovered until now at sites in Europe and in shipwrecks in the Mediterranean basin have shown that the source of the glass is from our region. Now, for the first time, the kilns have been found where the raw material was manufactured that was used to produce this glassware”.

The excavation of the kilns has caused great excitement in recent weeks among glass researchers throughout the world, some of whom have come especially to Israel in order to see this discovery first hand. According to Professor Ian Freestone of the University College London, who specializes in identifying the chemical composition of glass, "This is a sensational discovery and it is of great significance for understanding the entire system of the glass trade in antiquity. This is evidence that Israel constituted a production center on an international scale; hence its glassware was widely distributed throughout the Mediterranean and Europe”.

This enormously important site was discovered by chance last summer by archaeologist Abdel Al-Salam Sa'id, an inspector with the Israel Antiquities Authority. While overseeing infrastructure work being conducted on the new railway line from Haifa to the east, he suddenly observed chunks of glass, a floor and an ash layer inside a trench. He halted construction work at the site and began preparations for an archaeological excavation, the important results of which are now evident.

According to Abdel Al-Salam Sa'id, the excavation director, "We exposed fragments of floors, pieces of vitrified bricks from the walls and ceiling of the kilns, and clean raw glass chips. We were absolutely overwhelmed with excitement when we understood the great significance of the finds”.

The kilns that were revealed consisted of two built compartments: a firebox where kindling was burnt to create a very high temperature,

and a melting chamber – in which the raw materials for the glass (clean beach sand and salt) were inserted and melted together at a temperature of c. 1,200 C degrees. The glass was thus heated for a week or two until enormous chunks of raw glass were produced, some of which weighed in excess of ten tons. At the end of the manufacturing process the kilns were cooled; the large glass chunks that were manufactured were broken into smaller pieces and were sold to workshops where they were melted again in order to produce glassware.

During the Early Roman period the use of glass greatly expanded due to its characteristics: its transparency, beauty, the delicacy of the vessels and the speed with which they could be produced by blowing – an inexpensive technique adopted at the time that lowered production costs. Glass was used in almost every household from the Roman period onward, and it was also utilized in the construction of public buildings in the form of windows, mosaics and lighting fixtures. Consequently, large quantities of raw glass were required which were prepared on an industrial scale in specialized centers. The installation that was discovered in the excavation is an example of one of these ancient production facilities.

According to a price edict circulated by the Roman emperor Diocletian in the early fourth century CE, there were two kinds of glass: the first was known as Judean glass (from the Land of Israel) and the second – Alexandrian glass (from Alexandria, Egypt). Judean glass was a light green color and less expensive than Egyptian glass. The question was: Where were the centers that manufactured this Judean glass that was a branded product known throughout the Roman Empire and whose price was engraved on stone tablets so as to ensure fair trade. The current discovery completes the missing link in the research and indicates the location where the famous Judean glass was produced.

Sicily's History on view in new British Museum exhibition

The British Museum has opened its new exhibition, Sicily: culture and conquest, which explores over 4000 years of history on the Italian island, including its vibrant medieval past.

The exhibition, which runs until 14 August 2016, sheds light on the remarkable artistic and architectural achievements of the island through objects in the British Museum's own collection alongside outstanding loans from Sicily and around the world, including many objects coming to the United Kingdom for the very first time.

Sicily is the largest island in the Mediterranean and across time it has been shaped by the aspirations of many different peoples and cultures. Its perpetual allure lay in its fertile soil, fed by the volcanic dynamics of Mount Etna. Across time, people from as far and wide as the eastern Mediterranean and northern Europe settled on Sicily, forging a varied and sophisticated culture. The exhibition will focus on two major eras: first, the arrival of the Greeks from the latter half of the 7th century BC and their encounters with earlier settlers and with the Phoenicians, and second the extraordinary period of enlightenment under Norman rule, about AD

1100–1250. The exhibition will explore how an astonishingly rich material culture flourished in both of these periods.

Over 200 objects will be brought together to reveal the richness of the architectural, archaeological and artistic legacies of Sicily. When the Greeks made their first official colony at Naxos in around 735 BC, they brought new ideas and forged cultural and trading links with the earlier indigenous settlers. Sicily's undemocratically elected rulers, known as 'Tyrants', and civic governing bodies displayed their wealth and power through the building of temples, sometimes of colossal dimensions, competing against the largest temples in Greece and the ancient Greek world.

A rare and spectacularly well preserved, brightly painted terracotta altar, dating to about 500 BC, is one of the highlights of the

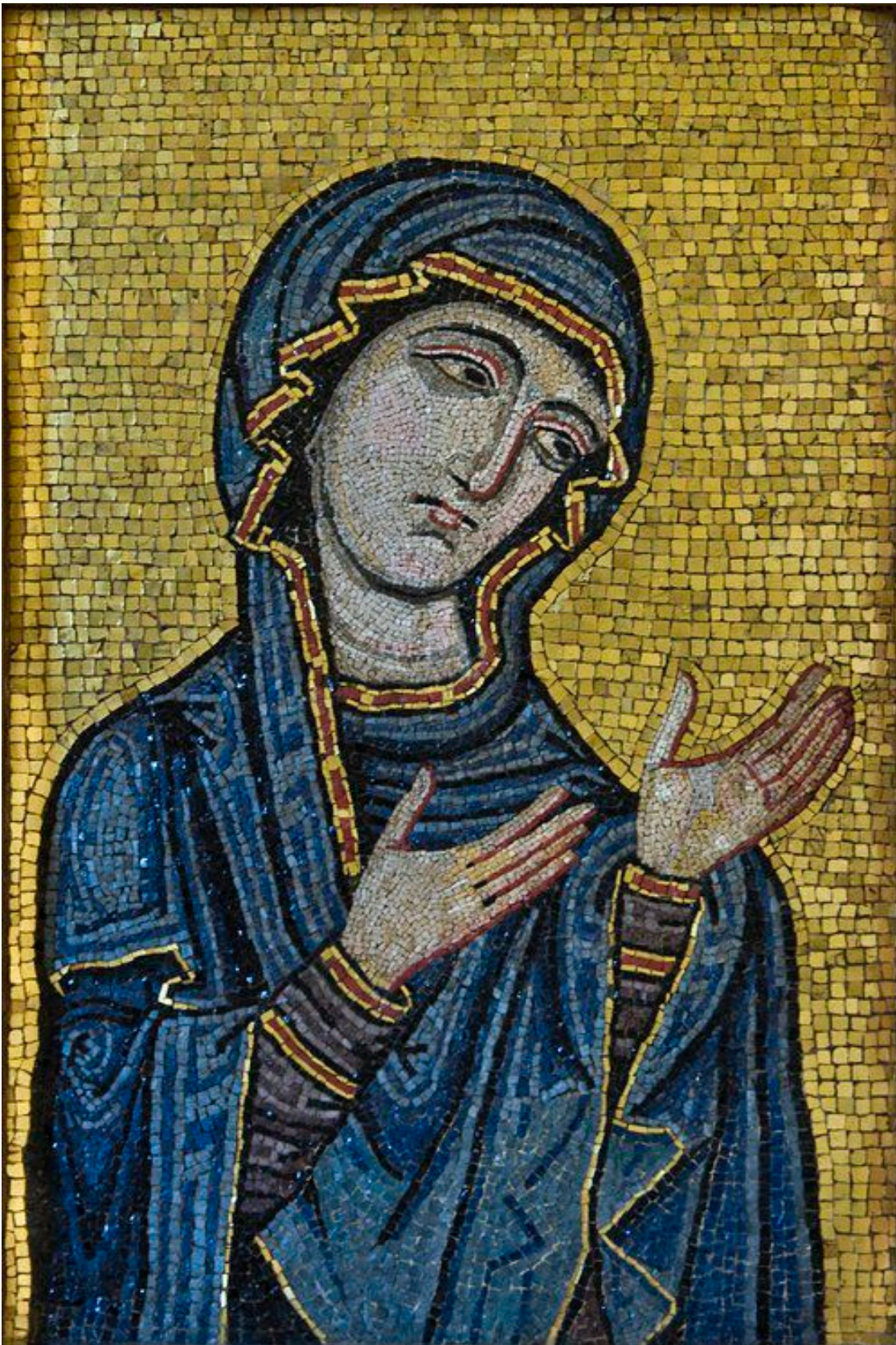


14th Century copy of a map of Sicily A double page map of Sicily from Al-Idrisi's Treatise, Unknown, c.1300–1500AD © The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford

loans coming from Sicily. It shows a scene of an animal combat on the upper tier, while below stand three striking fertility goddesses. The British Museum is also receiving on loan a magnificent terracotta architectural sculpture of a Gorgon, the famous Greek monster, that was once perched on the highest point of a building at Gela in south-east Sicily. Terracotta ornaments were frequently used to decorate the upper levels of buildings on Sicily and are amongst the finest that have survived from the ancient world. Another important Sicilian loan is a rare and iconic marble sculpture of a warrior from ancient Akragas, modern Agrigento. Marble statues were likely to have been commissioned, carved and imported into Sicily from overseas or made by local sculptors, trained in the Greek tradition. Such rare statues decorated major temples or were part of sculptural groups, most of which are long gone.

After a long series of wars involving Greek Sicilians, Carthaginians, and Romans, the island was eventually conquered by Rome. The exhibition will include a direct remnant of the final battle of that conquest which took place on 10 March 241 BC: a bronze battering ram that was fitted on the front of the Roman warships to sink enemy ships, and which was only recently excavated from the waters around the island. For Rome, Sicily's primary role was to supply its population and its armies with grain; otherwise it cared little for the province.

Following Rome's 'fall', Christian Byzantines and Muslim Arabs competed for domination over Sicily, each ruling the island for several centuries. At the end of the 11th century, however, Norman mercenaries who had been settling and ruling in the south of Italy, in turn conquered the island, now inhabited by Byzantine Greek, Muslim, Jewish and



Byzantine-style mosaic showing the Virgin as Advocate for the Human Race. Kept at Museo Diocesano di Palermo, originally from Palermo Cathedral, c.1130-1180 AD. Museo

Norman people. Under Kings Roger II, William I and William II, Sicily once again became one of the Mediterranean superpowers, easily rivaling the Byzantine Empire in the East, the Fatimid Caliphate of Egypt and the Papal States around Rome.

Through the coexistence of Norman, Islamic and Byzantine cultures on Sicily, Roger II

created a climate of multicultural collaboration. Unique forms of art and architecture emerged from the mixture of influences. In 2015 nine buildings in the Arab-Norman style that emerged in Palermo and the surrounding area were elected as UNESCO world heritage sites.

Coming on loan from several of these buildings are a twelfth-century Byzantine-style mosaic, and marble and wooden Islamic-influenced architectural decorations that will give visitors a sense of this extraordinary architectural style that emerged under Roger II. At the same time, the palace workshops produced beautiful objects, from ceremonial glassware and ivory, gold pendants and intricate enamel mosaics and cameos. Each object demonstrates the skills of the craftsmen and the variety of cultural influences that inspired their artistic production and experimentation.

Roger also welcomed scholars of all races and faiths to his court and took a direct interest in scientific innovation. The exhibition will display one of the oldest surviving copies of a new world map that Roger commissioned from al-Idrisi, an Arab cartographer, instructing him to base it on new research. The interest in innovation and scientific experiment was continued by Roger II's grandson, Frederick II, who as Holy Roman Emperor ruled a large part of Europe, but based his court in Palermo. His desire to found a new Roman Empire was unfulfilled when he died heirless, and for the rest of its history, Sicily returned to being part of larger empires and states, rather than being its own master.

The British Museum has worked closely with the Sicilian Ministry of Culture since 2010 on several loans, both at the British Museum and in Sicily. This exhibition presents the next collaboration between curators of the British Museum and Sicily. Objects of outstanding cultural significance have been carefully selected through consultation with Sicilian specialists from different museums across the island. These objects will be displayed alongside loans from Italy, the US and the UK, as well as items from the British Museum collection. The exhibition will also be accompanied by an events program with contributions by Sicilian lecturers and artists.

Joanna Mackle, deputy director of the British Museum said, "It gives me great pleasure to announce the British Museum's exhibition on the rich cultural history of Sicily. We are hugely grateful to Julius Baer for their long term partnership with the British Museum and their generous support of this exhibition. We are also delighted to be working in collaboration with Sicilian colleagues to bring the fascinating story of this island to life."

To learn more about the exhibit,
please visit

www.britishmuseum.org/sicily

Viking invaders struck deep into the west of England – and may have stuck around

By Derek Gore

It's well chronicled that wave after wave of Vikings from Scandinavia terrorised western Europe for 250 years from the end of the eighth century AD and wreaked particular havoc across vast areas of northern England. There's no shortage of evidence of Viking raids from the Church historians of the time. But researchers are now uncovering evidence that the Vikings conquered more of the British Isles than was previously thought.

At the time England consisted of four independent kingdoms: Wessex, to the south of the River Thames, and Mercia, East Anglia and Northumbria to the north of it. The latter three were all conquered by Scandinavian armies in the late ninth century and their kings killed or deposed – which allowed expansive Scandinavian settlement in eastern and northern England. However the kings of Wessex successfully defended their territory from the Viking intruders (and eventually went on to conquer the North, creating the **unified kingdom of England**).

But precisely because **Wessex** remained

independent, there has never been much examination of Scandinavian influence in that part of the United Kingdom. But **we're beginning to get a different picture** suggesting that Viking leaders such as **Svein and his son Knut** were active as far south as Devon and Cornwall in the West Country.

In 838AD, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle recorded a battle fought at **Hingston Down** in east Cornwall in which the local Britons joined forces with the Vikings against King Egbert of Wessex and his attempts to expand his kingdom. The fiercely independent Cornish appear to have held out against West

Cardinham churchyard.
Photo by Jonathan
Billinger / Wikimedia
Commons



Saxon control and presumably cast around for a strong ally in their fight. But why were Viking leaders interested in aiding the Cornish? Perhaps it was a political move, made in the hope of gaining a foothold in the peninsula in order to use it as a strategic base against Wessex. If so, it was thwarted, as the allied army was soundly defeated.

There are also records of raids for plunder in the West Country. A Viking fleet sailed up the river Tamar in 997, **attacked the abbey at Tavistock** and brought back treasure to their ships.

There is further evidence indicating Scandinavians in the West Country in a close examination of stone sculptures in Devon and Cornwall which has revealed Scandinavian art motifs and monument forms. A Norwegian Borre ring chain

ornament decorates the cross in Cardinham churchyard in east Cornwall and a mounted warrior is in one of the panels of the Copplestone Cross near Crediton, mid Devon. Both are matched by examples in northern England in the Viking Age, but seem out of place in the West. Late versions of the "hogback" memorial stones, which have a pronounced ridge and look like a small stone long house, are well known in Cornwall too – the best example is at **Lanivet** near Bodmin.

These sort of memorials **were popular with the Norse settlers in Cumbria and Yorkshire** and may be the work of itinerant sculptors bringing new ideas into the West, or patrons ordering forms and patterns which they had seen elsewhere. However, the possibility that the patrons may have been Scandinavian settlers cannot be excluded.

All in the name

People with Scandinavian names such as Carla, Thurgod, Cytel, Scula, Wicing, Farman are recorded as working in the mints in Exeter and at other Devon sites from the end of the tenth century – and, although such names became popular in the general population, there is an unusual concentration in these areas. Detectorists operating in the West Country are finding increasing numbers of metal objects from the period, many with Scandinavian connections. Scandinavian dress-fittings, lead weights, coins and silver ingots – and all manner of gear for horses have been identified in the past few years. A woman's trefoil brooch, probably made in Scandinavia, **was discovered where it had been dropped in Wiltshire**. This is the only example of the type yet found in Wessex, whereas 15 have been discovered in northern England.

Like these Viking artefacts, place names with Scandinavian links are well known in northern England – but we would not have previously expected them in the West Country. Yet the islands in the Bristol Channel: Lundy, Steepholm and Flatholme are hybrid names with Old Norse and Old English elements. Spaxton in Somerset was *Spacheston* in the Domesday Book, that is *Spakr's tun* another hybrid. Knowstone in central Devon, recorded as *Chenutdestana* in Domesday Book, combines Scandinavian *Knut* with English *stana* to give Knut's stone, perhaps named after the Danish king. More intriguing still are the 11 landholders in the Devon section of the Domesday Book with the personal name *wichin* which means "viking". These names are rare in England and do not occur at all elsewhere in the West Country, so the cluster in Devon is significant.

A combination of sculptural, archaeological and word usage evidence therefore points to a new appreciation of how far the Vikings travelled within the UK – and the dramatic reach of their influence.

**Derek Gore is a
Teaching Fellow of Archaeology,
University of Exeter**

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

Medieval Music: The Mystery of Women



Lecture by Christopher Page

Given at Gresham College, on February 18, 2016

During the last thirty years, the name of Hildegard of Bingen (d. 1179) composer, abbess and naturalist, has been gradually rescued from obscurity, notably by recordings of her works. The lecture will provide an opportunity to hear some of Hildegard's most impressive compositions but also to explore more widely the phenomenon of the medieval female composer. For while Hildegard was unique, she was not alone; the richness of the musical remains she has left eclipse every competitor, and yet there were many other female mystics who created rhapsodic spiritual song whose works have not survived. Many of them are little known, but here they will step into the light.



How to Create Your Own Medieval Costume

By Danielle Trynoski

Ever experience costume envy when you attend a re-enactment event? There are some beautiful costume kits available at these events and online, but you'll spend hundreds of dollars to get outfitted. Here are some tips to create your own thrifty costume! Head out to your local second-hand stores or charity shops with these suggestions (remember to cut off your tags and labels!) and soon you'll have your own "medieval" wardrobe!

Aim for layers

- **Stack multiple garments and cinch with a belt (a.k.a. girdle) or tie at the waist**
- **Long leather belts can be wrapped or tied around the natural waist or loosely buckled around the hips**
- **Use solid color scarves for a waist sash**
- **Some medieval girdles were highly decorated like this 14th century example in the Musée de Cluny in Paris, but I recommend you keep it simple**



Nature or Nurture? Natural is best in this case!

- Linen, wool, and rough cotton are better choices than polyester, gold-foil lamé, green sequins, or any overtly modern materials
- Silks and velvets are acceptable, but not always the most comfortable to wear
- Use leather for accessories rather than garments

Not all the colors of the rainbow

- Consider color based on your character goals
- Subsistence farmers, a.k.a. serfs, need muted colors like browns, tans, greys, creams, and soft pinks (yes, pink; it's dyed with onion skins)
- Use colors like cream or grey for a head covering or cap
Nobility can "afford" brighter colors like purple, bright red, vibrant yellows, blue, and black
- Play with bright colored accessories like drawstring purses, hats, scarves, gloves, and jewelry
- Clothing for merchants and tradesmen should be a mix of these palettes with select accessories like brightly colored ribbons

Garters aren't just for the bride

Garters or gartered stockings are easy to make. Buy a solid color flannel or cotton bedsheet. Cut two strips on the long axis, approximately 3 inches wide. These will be your garters. From the rest of the fabric, cut two rectangles. Ensure these rectangles are long enough to wrap your calf, covering the leg between ankle and knee. These stockings can cover your legs if you have short trousers or heavy leggings, and the garters will criss-cross around your calf, tying at the base of the knee. These are common for men's costumes and for lower class women.



14th and 15th c. examples of garters covering trousers and being used as leggings

Shoes in not so many shapes and forms

- Unless you have a penchant for wooden clogs, then leather shoes are best
- Simple flat shoes with a strap are good for men and women; you can get them for about \$20 USD at shoe stores or online. Buy these in a natural color. Flat pull-on boots in brown or black leather or canvas are good options too.



15th c. tapestry illustrations vs. \$16 at Urban Outfitters

A mantle for the cold days

A mantle is a cloak or outerwear garment to keep the primary outfit clean and the wearer warm. Early medieval and lower class mantles are large pieces of fabric knotted or pinned at the shoulder. Mantles from the High and Later Middle Ages are pinned at the neck or with a short chain across the chest. The bedding and household section will likely have some options for you here; look for flannel sheets or curtains in brown, yellow, or green. Thin coverlets with quilting and embroidery can serve as High and Later Middle Ages pieces. To keep it around your shoulders, look for sweater chains used to keep ladies' cardigans in place in the 1950-60's, or make your own with vintage buttons and chains.



**14th c. gisant
presumed to be
Marguerite de
Dampierre in the
Louvre. Note mantle
clasp, wimple, bliaud
and buttons on
sleeves. Above,
modern cardigan clip.**

Dolling it up & decking it out

- Use simple metal jewelry in bronze, pewter, and copper, but gold and silver was only attainable by a small part of medieval society. Circular brooches can be found second-hand, or you can glue pin clasps onto metallic buttons or necklace pendants.
- Focus on showing your character's "wealth" through the use of bright color, lace, or silk
- Pick out embroidery, lace, appliqués, and painted details rather than printed or dyed patterns
- Buttons are appropriate for characters based in the 14th century and later, otherwise brooches or lacing should be used for closures. Leather cord is available at most craft stores or online. Whatever you do, don't do a Google Image search for Leather Thong...

Tips for Women

- Peasant blouses and dresses with loose sleeves are your friend. These can easily imitate a shift/ chainse/chemise.
- Use blouses or dresses larger than your normal size to allow for draping
- Lower and middle class characters wear a more fitted sleeve for function, upper class characters wear long, wide sleeves to show off expensive fabric and embroideries.
- After finding a long-sleeved shift, look for a solid color dress or robe with short or half sleeves to be your b্লাউড, or over-dress. If your shift goes to the floor, then your dress can be calf-length otherwise get a full-length dress. Nightgowns and 1970's day dresses are good candidates for this. Buttons join the scene in the late 14th century; look for rows of small buttons à la 1980's wedding dresses on the front or on sleeves
- Use a sleeveless dress or long vest as a surcoat, and layer over the shift, b্লাউড, and belt
- Pick up sheer or solid color scarves and experiment with a wimple, draped veil, or head wrap using ribbon or a headband to keep it in place. The less visible hair, the better. Tuck under a scarf or head covering, or braid ribbons into one or two long plaits.

Tips for Men

- **Gents, some of your thrifty costume will likely consist of some women's items. Layers should consist of an undershirt or shift, then a long tunic or surcoat fastened at the waist by a belt. In general, shirts should be loosely fitting with large sleeves and trousers should be more tailored.**
- **You can alter modern seams by cutting along the top shoulder seams of large loose garments and reconnecting the front and back with ties, leather cord lacing, or brooches.**
- **For trousers, look for sweatpants in a single dark color.**
- **For more generic leg coverings, buy close-fitting leggings to be your hose and add garters (see above).**
- **Look for broad-brimmed hats in simple materials like wool, felt, velvet, or even straw. You can add feathers, grass, ribbons, or other decorations.**

I hope you have fun putting together your medieval outfit. Whether you make it yourself, buy it second-hand, or purchase it from a specialist, share a photo on Medievalists.net's Facebook page or Twitter feed of your own medieval look!

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





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Tiny Edens: Five Elements of Monastic Gardens

By Danièle Cybulskie

Spring is finally here, and with it that deep, human urge to dig in the dirt. In the Middle Ages, gardening was an essential part of life, especially if you lived in a monastic community. Some monasteries, like Benedictine ones, were encouraged to be as self-sufficient as possible, which meant extensive gardens to satisfy all of the (internal and often external) community's needs. Here are five garden elements you'd regularly find on a monastery's grounds.

1. Fountains

There were lots of places where monks could get water for themselves and their plants, including ponds, lakes, streams, rain barrels, and wells, but fountains were something special. As Sylvia Landsberg notes in *The Medieval Garden*, fountains meant more than just water: "The three states of water, namely the bubbling, sparkling source or spout, the shallow, moving sheet, and the still, silent pool" represented the Holy Trinity (they were also significant to Persian thought,

pp.59-61). A fountain would have been a visible and audible symbol of the monks' and nuns' purpose as they traveled back and forth to services several times a day. Landsberg mentions that fountains were most often placed next to the church (p.36), making them a perfect spot to wash on the way in, or to sit in quiet contemplation of the trinity after services.



Monastery garden, by Heinrich Hoffmann (1824–1911)

2. Grass

Also close to the church would be a flat lawn of just grass, according to Landsberg (p.36). Not only is grass easy to grow and kind to sandaled feet, but the colour of it is also kind to the eyes. According to Hugh of Fouillo, green “refreshes encloistered eyes and their desire to return to study returns. It is truly the nature of the color green that it nourishes

the eyes and preserves their vision” (Landsberg, p.36). For monks and nuns who had been sitting within stone walls most of the day, depending on their tasks, a green lawn would definitely have been a welcome change for the eyes. Grass was also a cheap way to feed the horses of visiting guests in another part of the grounds (p.40), and lovely to sit on.

3. Medicinal Herbs

Monastic communities needed to be able to care for themselves medically, especially if the community was large. People in the greater community also relied upon monks for medical advice and treatment – after all, the monks had all the books. If you read (or watch) any of the **Brother Cadfael** mysteries by Ellis Peters, you get a sense of the many needs and various plants that could be found on monastic grounds, including some all-purpose ones, like sage, and some nefarious ones, like belladonna (deadly nightshade). Excess medicines could be sold outside the monastery for the good of the lay people, and to raise necessary funds for the monastic community, as long as they didn't charge too much.

4. Sacred Plants

Although we may not immediately associate Christianity with plants nowadays, the

medieval world was full of plants with religious symbolism. Certain plants became a natural part of the religious calendar, the remnants of which still remain in modern tradition, especially in the form of Easter lilies and palm fronds. Each monastery would have needed someone – the sacrist – to be in charge of making sure those plants were supplied. Landsberg writes,

Plants would include bay, holly and ivy at Christmas, yew and catkin hazel to be carried as 'palm' at Easter, birch boughs in May, red roses and sweet-woodruff for chaplets and garlands at Corpus Christi in June, and white lilies and red roses for the feasts of martyrs. (p.41)

I think it's easy to imagine medieval churches as dour, grey buildings, but the integration of symbolic plants into church ceremonies meant that the sanctuary was often a riot of colour and fragrance.



Red Roses - from British Library MS Arundel 66 f. 187

5. Cemetery Orchards

Like the sacred plants mentioned above, there were some trees that were planted for symbolic purposes, like the mulberry, which represented the crucifixion (Landsberg, p.41). Most trees that were planted, though, were for practical purposes, like fruit trees and nut trees. Apples, pears, and chestnuts frequently appeared in orchards all over Europe, but monastic orchards were dual-purpose: they could also be cemeteries (another part of the domain of sacrists, p.37). This is very practical; there is no wasted space, since the trees grow upward instead of along the ground, and in the same space, plants like lilies and roses could grow over the graves as both rich religious symbols for the departed, and for use in ceremony. But the cemetery orchards were not always treated as places of respect. As Landsberg notes, the trees provided some of the few spaces on the grounds where a monk or nun intent on mischief could hide, so cemeteries were often locked up at night, in order to guard lilies of the more euphemistic variety (p.37-38). Even in monasteries, it's hard to keep romance out of a garden.

For more on medieval gardens of every kind, Sylvia Landsberg's *The Medieval Garden* is a really worthwhile read. For more on medicinal plants, check out Toni Mount's *Dragon's Blood and Willow Bark* (also listed as *Medieval Medicine: Its Mysteries and Science*), and for a book in which pop culture and medieval gardens meet, have a look at *Brother Cadfael's Herb Garden: An Illustrated Companion to Medieval Plants and their Uses*.

Danièle Cybulskie is a weekly columnist for Medievalists.net. You can follow her on Twitter @5minmedievalist



Places to See

A Guide to Medieval Valencia

By Sandra Alvarez

My first foray into Spain was to sunny Valencia. As an introduction to Spain and Spanish culture, it was an excellent place to start. In terms of medieval "places to see", this city, founded by the Romans in the 2nd century BC houses an incredible number of intact, medieval buildings. Everything is nicely clustered in a central area, making it easy to visit sites if you're short on time.

We had a lot to see but not much time to see it all, so I strategically chose a few key medieval places to visit in the *Ciutat Vella*, the 'Old City'. The great thing about Valencia, at least where we stayed, was that we were smack in the centre of the old city, only minutes walking distance to all the medieval sites on my list! No need to take the metro, no need for cabs, no buses - we walked *everywhere*. This was a great money saver and allowed us to enjoy the sites without time wasted waiting for transport.



**The city centre of Valencia, a Spanish city of 1.5 million
- photo by Sandra Alvarez**

This ties into my next point about Valencia - it's truly a fantastic walking city. It's pedestrianized in many places. The architecture as you walk along is marvellous; the old city is filled with lovely colourful buildings with romantic miniature balconies, hidden courtyards, modern graffiti, palm trees, and narrow streets, all mixed in with spectacular historic buildings. As someone who loves walking, it's a city that's easy and fun to explore on foot - there is something to see in Valencia's *Ciutat Vella* around every corner.

Day 1

We landed Thursday evening so we unfortunately missed the famed Water Court, Tribunal de Las Aguas that takes place every Thursday at noon at the Plaza de la Virgen. The Water Court is an usual and extraordinary historic meeting that has been taking place without interruption for close

to 1,000 years. The entire event is held in Valencian, and is basically a meeting about the city irrigation system presided over by eight farmers dressed in traditional garb. The farmers meet briefly at the stroke of noon to make rulings and hand down final decisions. I wish we could've seen it, the tradition is reminiscent of the Ceremony of the Keys at the Tower of London, and it's actually a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage practice. If you are in the city on a Thursday before noon, I would suggest you make it over to see something that's been occurring regularly since the Middle Ages.

From the airport, we took a metro ride to Xàtiva station and then walked for about fifteen minutes to our Air BnB flat beside the Lonja de Seda and a beautiful Jesuit Church. Sadly, the Jesuit church, which we could see from our balcony, remained closed for most of our visit until the last day when it was briefly open for Church services.

La Lonja de la Seda (Llotja de la Seda): The Silk Exchange

We were fortunate to be located around the corner from this magnificent building, and it was the first stop on our trip. This beautiful place is a UNESCO Heritage site, and it cost only €2 to get in, €3 if you opt for the audio guide. This might have been a good idea since there was no printed material available to take with you to read so I had to do my research about the place separately.

Built over a 50-year period (between 1482-1533), La Lonja de la Seda was home to Valencia's booming silk trade.

When you walk in, you will see an immaculate orange tree garden. Climb up a few steps to visit a room called the Consulado del Mar (the Tribunal of the Sea) where the Tribunal met to make important decisions relating to commercial law and practice. Walk back down and head into the massive Sala de Contratación (the Trading Hall) with its incredible spiralling pillars and gorgeous vaulted ceilings. This room saw a lot of action in the Middle Ages; merchants met here to trade and make deals, and later this building became the silk exchange.

Although the building is large and imposing, there is relatively little to see for an extended period of time. There are no furnishings in the Tribunal room or the Trading hall so it's fairly quick to get through. The garden is lovely, but again, not a place to sit explore for a long time. It's a great place to take plenty of photos.

La Lonja de Seda open day between 9:00-19:00, Monday to Friday. On Sundays and public holidays, it's open from 9:00-15:00, and it's also free.

Valencia Cathedral: The Cathedral of the Holy Chalice

Also centrally located and mere minutes from La Lonja, is Valencia Cathedral and its famous connecting tower, the Miguelete. This was by

far the most expensive of all our admission costs at €10 per person, but it was well worth it. The building is magnificent, it has been serving Valencia's faithful since the 4th century. The current building was built over an earlier Visigothic structure, which became a mosque, before being turned back into a Christian Church again in the 13th century. It was officially re-consecrated in 1238 AD. Valencia Cathedral is also the home of the famed Holy Grail - yes, the Holy Grail. The chalice has been used by popes over the centuries and dates to the 1st century AD. Some people have speculated that this could very well be the actual cup used during the Last Supper! Regardless of whether it is or not, the chapel where it is located is stunning.

Art lovers take note: There are also two paintings by Francesco Goya (1746-1828) located in the cathedral in the chapel of St. Francis Borgia (1510-1572). One depicts St. Francis Borgia saying goodbye to his family and another, shows St. Francis Borgia with a dying man.

Although I'm usually not a fan of audio guided tours, in this case, I would recommend it as there is a lot to take in and for the cost, you certainly don't want to miss anything. Holy Grail, Two Goyas, incredible late medieval architecture. Be prepared to spend at least an hour and a half there. The cathedral is open from 8:00-20:00 daily.

Inglesia de Santa Catalina Mártir: The Church and Tower of Saint Catalina the Martyr

We trekked onto the next church, The Church of Saint Catalina. This is another church built over the site of a former mosque, attached to a tower. The church is lovely, but best part of our trip there was getting to climb to the top of the tower (again, only €2) and get a fantastic view of the city. This tower is actually Baroque, but the church itself dates back to the 13th century.



Hall of Columns in the Silk Exchange (Lonja de la Seda) of Valencia



**El Miguelete Tower attached to the Cathedral of Valencia
- photo by Sandra Alvarez**

Day 2

Mercat Central

Our first stop was the Mercat Central, supposedly in operation near, or on this spot, since the 14th century, making it one of the oldest markets in Europe. It's currently housed in a modern building but still impressive nonetheless. It's filled with hundreds of vendors selling delicious, fresh produce, meats, cheeses, and breads. Medieval site seeing is hard work - every medievalist needs some fuel before setting off so we bought some breakfast items there and went on our merry way to the Micalet. It's open daily from 7:30-15:00 so make sure to get there early.

El Miguelete: The Bell Tower Micalet

We didn't climb the tower the same day we went to the Cathedral because we had just climbed the tower at Santa Catalina so it was enough climbing for one day. We tackled the Micalet Saturday right at noon and were rewarded with its enormous bell going off right in our ears when we reached the top of the steep 207 stair climb. Why is it called the Micalet? It's affectionately named after the bell - "Miguel", which has been in this tower since 1532.

Again, it's only €2 for admission and worth every penny. Valencia has a multitude of great viewpoints around the city. I was able to look across Valencia three times during our stay from various historic sites.

Torres dels Serranos: Gates of the Serranos

Known for being the largest Gothic gate in Europe, it is one of the twelve that formed the Christian city walls in the Middle Ages. The structure, built initially as a fortification, was completed in the 14th century. The city walls were pulled down in 1865 but the gates remained. Over the years, it's seen some

reconstruction and cleaning activity but for the most part when you look at this gate, you're looking back through time. It's in immaculate condition.

What does Serranos mean? Locals say the gates were named after a powerful Valencian family who also happened to have a street named after them. The gates were considered the main entrance to the city, and were used for official ceremonies to welcome dignitaries and royalty to Valencia. The gates were also used as a prison for nobles. Torres dels Serranos is open daily from 9:30-19:00.

Farewell...

Sadly, there are many things I didn't get the chance to see because I only had two days in the city. I'd have loved to visit the museums, the other towers, spent more time on the beach, and visited a few more historic sites but, this is definitely not my last trip to Valencia.

If you're looking for a medieval weekend away while in Europe, without having to worry about transportation, where you can eat delicious food, enjoy plenty walking, and warm weather - then Valencia is the place for you. It's a brilliant city and I would gladly go back in a heart beat.



Torres dels Serranos - photo by Sandra Alvarez



Lion statue outside the Cathedral of Valencia - photo by Sandra Alvarez

Yolande de Dreux, Queen of Scots

By Susan Abernethy

Alexander III, King of Scots was married to Margaret of England from 1251 until her death in 1275. Alexander did not appear to be in a hurry to marry again. He had two sons and a daughter with Margaret so heirs were not an issue. But by the early 1280's, everything changed. His younger son David died in June of 1281 and within two more years, the other two children died. His daughter Margaret had married King Eric II of Norway and died after giving birth to a daughter named Margaret, best known as the Maid of Norway. At this point, Alexander's granddaughter was his only heir.

Alexander had Margaret declared his heir and then went looking for a new bride. His mother, the dowager Queen Marie de Coucy, had married Jean de Brienne, an officer of France. Jean had a stepdaughter named Yolande de Dreux and Marie may have considered her an eligible candidate to marry Alexander. In February of 1285, an embassy was sent from Scotland to France and they returned with Yolande who was accompanied by her brother John.

Born c. 1267, Yolande was the daughter of Robert IV, Comte de Dreux and his wife Beatrix, the only child of count Jean de Montfort-l'Amaury and Jeanne de Châteaudun. They were a cadet family of the French monarchy and she was a descendant of King Louis VI. Dreux was located about forty miles west of Paris and the family was influential, well-connected vassals of the French monarchy. Alexander and Yolande were married on October 14, 1285 at

Jedburgh Abbey, attended by a great many nobles of France and Scotland. The marriage was not destined to be long.

Five months later, on March 19, Alexander was holding a council meeting in Edinburgh Castle and was anxious to return to Yolande at Kinghorn in Fife. It was late in the afternoon by the time he left with three esquires accompanying him and two local guides. He may have wanted to celebrate her birthday and she may have been pregnant. The ferryman advised him not to cross the Forth as it was getting dark and a storm was brewing. At Inverkeithing, the bailie unsuccessfully argued with Alexander, asking him to stay the night in his house. There was only eight miles left and Alexander insisted on continuing. He rode off into the dark and soon became separated from his followers. It was the last time he was seen alive.

The next day, Alexander's body was found on the foreshore of Pettycur, less than one mile from Yolande at Kinghorn. He had been galloping along the shore when his horse stumbled in the sand, throwing Alexander off and breaking his neck. Yolande and Alexander had been married for four months and fourteen days, one of the shortest royal marriages on record.

Yolande moved to Stirling Castle and declared she was pregnant. The nobles met to discuss the succession crisis on April 28 and swore fealty to Alexander's granddaughter Margaret and vowed to rule until she arrived. There was a caveat. They swore that if Yolande had a son, the throne would go to him. Either Yolande miscarried or the baby was stillborn or died shortly after birth. Tradition says the baby was buried at Cambuskenneth. The council now made arrangements for Alexander's granddaughter Margaret to come to Scotland.

After her recovery, Yolande lived in Scotland with revenues from her dower provisions. She may have lived in Stirling Castle, with an annual income of £200 from Berwick, estates in the sheriffdom of Stirling and a horse stud at Jedworth. In 1288, the Scottish exchequer was still paying her revenues from her jointure lands. She eventually returned to

France. Eight years later, in May 1294 she married Arthur II, Duke of Brittany and earl of Richmond, a wealthy and influential French nobleman. He may have coveted the Montfort territories Yolande inherited from her mother. Together they had at least six children.

She had a son John in 1294 and a daughter Beatrice in 1295. Her daughter Joan, born c. 1296 married the son of the Count of Flanders. Alice, born c. 1297 married Bouchard VI of Vendôme. A daughter Blanche died young and her youngest daughter Marie entered a convent.

Yolande's husband Arthur died in 1312. His eldest son by his first wife became John III, Duke of Brittany. Yolande's country of Montfort passed to her son John who would later fight for his claim to his father's duchy in the Breton War of Succession. Yolande continued to manage and maintain her Scottish interests. In October of 1323, safe conduct was obtained for a French knight to go to Scotland to attend to business regarding Yolande's Scottish dower. There is mention of her making arrangements for the support of her daughter Marie in the convent. After that, she disappears from the record.

Further reading:

Scottish Queens 1034-1714, by Rosalind K. Marshall

British Kings and Queens, by Mike Ashley

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, by Janet Nelson

Susan Abernethy is The Freelance History Writer.

Follow Susan on Facebook at The Freelance History Writer, and at Medieval History Lovers.

Follow Susan on Twitter: @SusanAbernethy2

Tales of Bacon

A medieval comedy



Monty Python meets Chaucer in a brand new original medieval comedy web series, written and filmed in York.

Young noblewoman, Elfrida Deverwyck, (Gemma Shelton) is on an adventure after running away from home and following the pilgrim trails of medieval Northern England. She is accompanied by rascally Pardoner, Thaddeus Bacon, (Adam Elms) much to her annoyance but he does have his uses...

Set in 1380, the Plotting Films' produced *Tales of Bacon* series has many homages and in-jokes to the folk tales, songs, and historical figures of the period that have all helped to build an authentic world. Background research for the series has been assisted by and conducted with the help of many York academics and museums.

Tales of Bacon Director Natalie Roe explains, "We added real historical characters to give the show depth and to make it fun and interesting. It's a soft way to give information and it gives history fans a little extra to laugh at! During the writing, we thought too many shows don't add detail in case people don't understand it, we wanted to do the opposite. We have Chaucer, a young Henry Bolingbrook and Henry le Despenser, The Fighting Bishop of Norwich included too!"

The show is created by Plotting Films, a York based production company which is passionate about community and creating opportunity for people to try something new or improve their skills. For example, a



Natalie Roe with Gemma Shelton and Adam Elms
Photo: Plotting Films

number of the actors appearing in Tales of Bacon have many years' community theatre experience but had never appeared on camera until now.

The showrunners believe they have created a quirky yet authentic medieval story. Roe adds that, "I had the idea of writing something featuring a Pardoner on a long car journey one night. I thought that it was such an interesting profession; they were fraudulently selling relics and pardons for people's sins. They must have known they were duping people, I feel they were the medieval equivalent of used-car salesmen! Once I had the character of Elfrida Deverwyck too ('Deverwyck' meaning 'Of Jorvik' or 'Of York') a story began to form."

The first three episodes of the six-episode series have been filmed, and they have launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise £1,500. Roe explains that fundraising will "enable us to film the final three with the

production values and professionalism we feel it deserves. We need budget for transportation of cast and crew, insurance and of course, catering! The props, costumes, and location fees all add up too so we want to make the series the best it possibly can be to showcase everyone's hard work. Our joke with the budget has always been: 'The White Queen had £30 million; we had £3 to buy pasties!'"

Part of the money would go towards filming at Wharram Percy, one of the largest and best preserved deserted medieval villages in England. Natalie reveals "Wharram Percy would be a great location because we want somewhere that looks like a run-down village and it is just that! Another contender for that scene is an abandoned church near Towton, literally the next field from the battle ground. It helps to have genuinely old sites in the series since we have such a small budget. It was the architecture of York that inspired us to start writing. We're lucky to live in

Yorkshire and have easy access to both locations, it helps with production values to have something so perfect right on our doorstep.



To help support the crowdfunding campaign, please go to:

www.indiegogo.com/projects/tales-of-bacon-a-medieval-comedy-fundraiser#

Follow them on Twitter **@PardonMyBacon**

Book Excerpt

Medieval Mercenaries: The Business of War

By William Urban

Pen and Sword Books, 2015

ISBN: 9781848328549

The Middle Ages were a turbulent and violent time, when the fate of nations was most often decided on the battlefield, and strength of arms was key to acquiring and maintaining power. Feudal oaths and local militias were more often than not incapable of providing the skilled and disciplined warriors necessary to keep the enemy at bay. It was the mercenary who stepped in to fill the ranks.

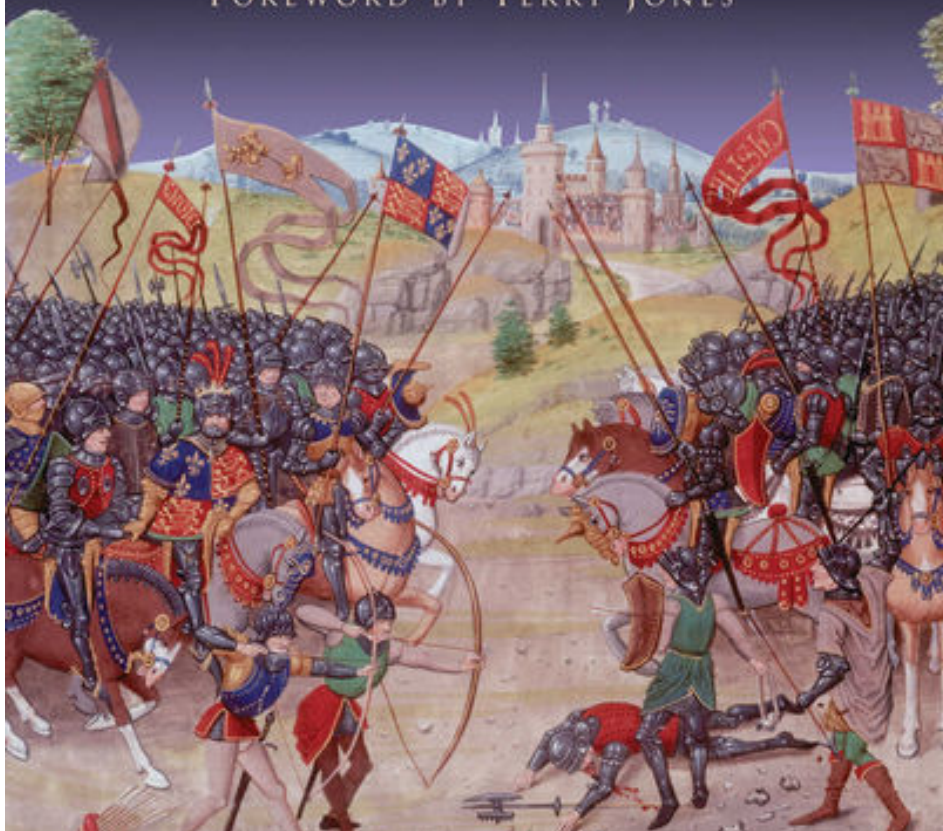
A mercenary was a professional soldier who took employment with no concern for the morals or cause of the paymaster. But within these confines we discover a surprising array of men, from the lowest-born foot soldier to the wealthiest aristocrat the occasional clergyman, even. What united them all was a willingness, and often the desire, to fight for their supper.

In this benchmark work, William Urban explores the vital importance of the mercenary to the medieval power-broker, from the Byzantine Varangian Guard to fifteenth-century soldiers of fortune in the Baltic. Through contemporary chronicles and the most up-to-date scholarship, he presents an in-depth portrait of the mercenary across the Middle Ages.

MEDIEVAL MERCENARIES

THE BUSINESS OF WAR

WILLIAM URBAN
FOREWORD BY TERRY JONES



Read an excerpt: Preliminary Observations

Mercenaries were needed because although medieval societies tried to rely upon feudal oaths and local militias, these were often insufficient. Also, neither knights nor peasants complained when strangers risked their lives for them in moments of crisis. Inquiries about personal morals, respect for the law, body odour and so forth tend to be kept short when survival is at stake. What employers wanted were mercenary units, groups ready for combat from the moment they arrived, not individual warriors of questionable background. Such units were thus a service commodity. Employers often

wanted to command the army, but not all had the talent or experience. Mercenary generals offered some hope of battlefield success. Hope at a price, of course. And at a risk. No one could guarantee that the new employee would perform as expected, or even that he would not attempt to take over the business. Outsourcing has its risks. Mercenaries also negotiated like unions, picking the most awkward moments to demand an increase in pay. As a student of mine once said of strikers in Paris who had shut down the entire transportation system, 'Don't they know that is inconvenient?' Employers were also

beseched by idealists to avoid armed conflicts, the argument being that war itself was questionable morally and in practice. If abandoning a disputed point was sufficient to make peace, giving way might be the cheaper and wiser course. Of course, hard-headed advisors would point out that if neighbours concluded that a peaceable lord was an easy mark, then bullying could be expected. Fighting had some benefits, even if the war was likely to be lost – the lord who fought back was at least likely to be respected, and therefore left alone. These aspects of medieval military practice tend to be forgotten. But historical truth is what people remember, as W.C. Sellar (1898–1951) and R. J. Yeatman (1897–1968) remind us. Their *1066 and All That; A Memorable History of England, comprising all the parts you can remember, including 103 Good Things, 5 Bad Kings and 2 Genuine Dates* (1930) said that history is not what you thought it was, but what you remember. What you can remember, for example, is the date 1066. Not what it signified. Moreover, they said:

The Norman Conquest was a Good Thing, as from this time onwards England stopped being conquered and thus was able to become top nation.

This parody of the Whig School of history is also worth noting, because it is so much like modern political correctness, which discourages the writing or reading of military history. According to the Whig School, every person and every action is judged Good or Bad according to whether the cause of parliamentary democracy and the middle class was advanced or retarded. Political Correctness makes similar judgments based on a combination of excessive politeness and tender-heartedness. Thus it occasionally seems that hurting people's feelings is worse than killing them. There is also a tendency to believe that if war is good for business, that is sufficient reason in itself to hate war.

In this the adherents of political correctness share an important attitude with the medieval Church – that making a profit from someone else's need is immoral. Thus, the merchant who rushed grain to a war-ravaged land sinned as much by making a profit as the mercenaries who looted and burned it.

Several decades later another humourist-historian gave us an additional insight into mercenaries. Richard Armour (1906–89), the author of *It All Started with Stones and Clubs. Being a Short History of War and Weaponry from Earliest Times to the Present, noting the Gratifying Progress made by Man since his First Crude, Small-Scale Efforts to Do Away with Those Who Disagreed with him* (1967), wrote:

The Vikings landed in the British Isles, sailed up the Seine to Paris, and traveled even as far as Russia and Constantinople. Whether the Vikings fought simply for the love of fighting, as some historians contend, or were primarily interested in loot, is a matter of conjecture, but there is no reason to believe that the two reasons are mutually exclusive. The Vikings proved that in war you can combine fun and profit, with travel thrown in as a bonus.

More seriously, the bottom line is this: in the Middle Ages rulers generally recruited professional warriors only for emergencies, did what they could to control them, and ultimately dismissed them. The alternative to hiring mercenaries was to suffer defeat, and defeat meant more than turning the cheek to receive another slap. I have been asked many times, rhetorically, 'What do wars really settle?' 'Nothing', I now respond, 'except who owns the land, who works it, what taxes and services will be demanded, what languages are spoken, what religions are followed. Other than that, perhaps not much'.

When important values are at stake – who lives, who dies, who flourishes, who suffers – one can understand hiring mercenaries. Some will do more for less justification.

Mercenaries were more than a gang of toughs. Nobles were mercenaries, too. As Maurice Keen says in his authoritative work, *Chivalry*, 'In terms of motivation, calculation and conduct the line between gentlemen and mercenary was simply too difficult to draw with precision'. Hence, this book will examine the old contention that gentlemen, even today, are too grand to soil their hands with commerce, especially with the business of war. As one who teaches in a small but good liberal arts college in the American Midwest, I am aware of a widespread academic tendency to pour scorn on programs which prepare students for employment – students should be educated, not trained. One extension of this argument is that ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps), which trains volunteer students to be officers, should be abolished. I occasionally ask, 'Where is a democratic nation to develop its future officers?' The response is usually a shrug – meaning 'not here' – but occasionally I get an answer that suggests that armies are no more necessary than police.

I can live with that. But only in a conversational sense, a willingness to humour overly excitable colleagues, not as agreeing that muggers will disappear as soon as governments do. This book will show that every society has individuals who will take advantage of disorder to indulge their worst instincts.

Also, if Sellar and Yeatman are correct in saying that history is not what you thought it was, but what you remember, I hope that readers will look at modern fictional accounts of medieval history with new appreciation and all movies with scepticism.

No one likes mercenaries. Yet everyone has used them. Advancing the awareness of this widespread practice of the past and the present should be justification enough for a book on mercenaries and the business of war.

Learn more about *Medieval Mercenaries: The Business of War*, from Pen and Sword Books, at:

www.pen-and-sword.co.uk/Medieval-Mercenaries-Paperback/p/11207

William Urban is a Professor Emeritus at Monmouth College. Visit his website at:

<http://department.monm.edu/history/urban.htm>

Book Excerpt

The Parish that Disappeared: A History of St John's, Hereford

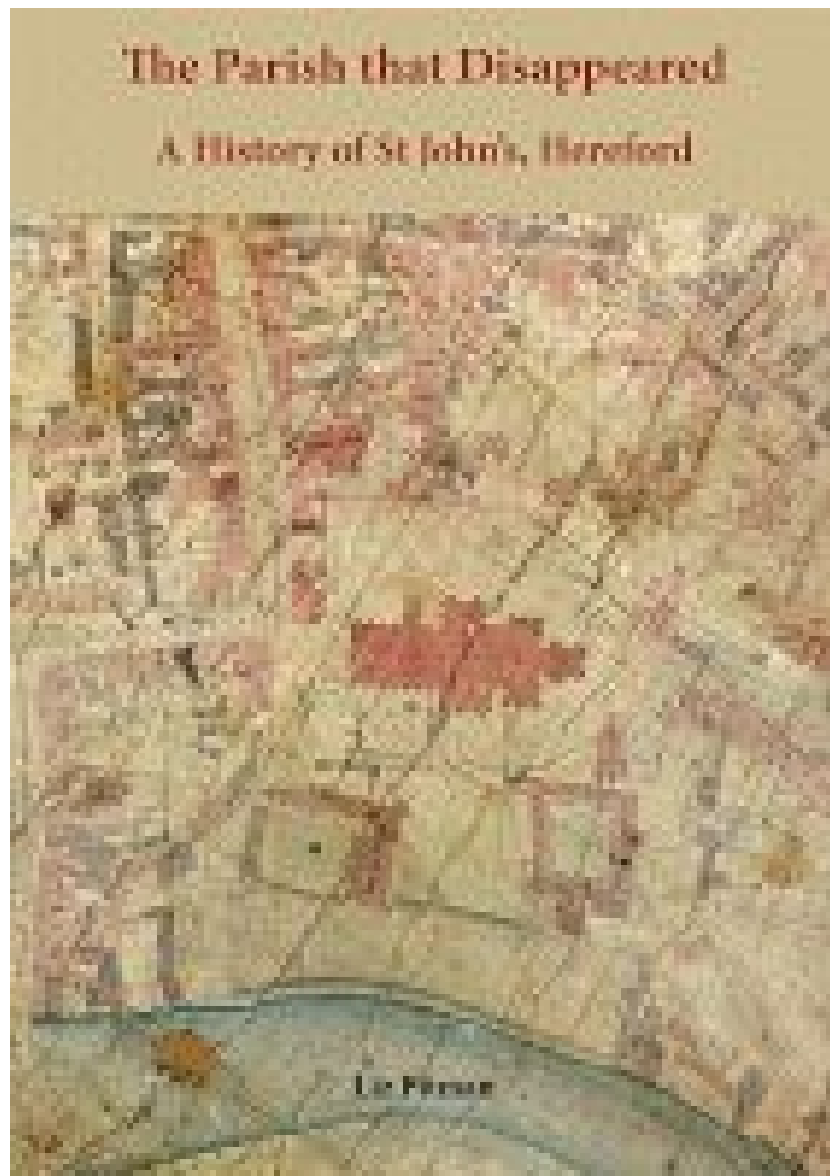
By Liz Pitman

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From early in the 12th century until its final dissolution in 2012, the parish of St John's was at the heart of Hereford. Its houses and shops clustered around the cathedral, but it also encompassed other locations: patches of ground along Widemarsh Street, at the foot of Aylestone Hill, along Whitecross Road, and at Blackmarston and other places south of the Wye, with extensive tracts of land at Belmont and what is now Newton Farm. In the 1900s these 'outliers' were amalgamated with other parishes, but the core around the cathedral remained until its very recent 'disappearance'.

St John's history was closely intertwined with that of the cathedral, where the parish, without a church of its own, had its altar. As this book explains, the relationship between the cathedral and the parish varied between amity and tension. But the history of the parish is as much the story of its characters, both the clergy who served it and the parishioners who lived within its bounds. There are indications of the awful lives of paupers, and of the range of humanity that lived at one time in the parish, including old sailors, a comedian, actors, feltmakers, wool staplers, Italian apprentices and whores, a Jewish silversmith, a clairvoyant, a reclusive member of Hereford 'gentry', a hatter turned manure manufacturer, a Polish émigré who probably committed suicide, and his daughter, who worked as a governess in Poland for many years. Body snatchers also make an appearance.



Read an excerpt: Chapter 1

The story of the early centuries of the parish and its 'church' within the cathedral is a difficult one to tell as records are scarce and it is easy to feel that the parish was, at least until more detailed records begin, almost invisible. As a result its early history, beginning about 900 years ago, has to be partially fleshed out by a series of questions with tentative answers rather than definite facts.

The first question to be asked is: 'When was the parish founded'? Hereford had been a diocese with a cathedral since Anglo-Saxon times. A stone church built by Bishop Athelstan (c.1015 – 1056) was destroyed when, in 1055, Aelfgar, son of the earl of Mercia, who had been outlawed by Edward

the Confessor for treason, raised an army of mercenaries against the new earl of Hereford, Ralph the Timid. The army sacked the city, burnt the cathedral and killed some of its canons. At that time, the parish system was still evolving and the pre-Conquest minster, in the absence of parish churches, would have had a significant pastoral responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the laity of the town, including the rites of baptism, marriage and burial. By the time the Norman cathedral was built (between about 1107 and 1148) parishes, each with their own church and vicar, had become the norm, but in the centre of Hereford something unusual happened. What must have been a survival from its earlier history occurred when a 'designated parochial altar seems to have arisen during the transformation of the old Saxon minster'. A parish was carved out

of the area around the cathedral, making it one of the earliest parishes in the city, with only St Peter's, c.1080, and St Owen's, c.1101, being earlier foundations.

The new cathedral became the place of praise and prayer in which the round of daily masses occurred, with the parish altar serving the cathedral laity and other people living nearby. However, from the inception of the parish, references to its vicar always refer to him as serving at the 'altar of St John', suggesting that the dean and chapter were at pains to emphasise that there was only ever a parish altar in the cathedral and not a parish church. Given the dignity of cathedral worship and the more hurly-burly life of a socially mixed parish, it is not perhaps surprising that the history of the relationship between, on the one hand, the parish vicar and his parishioners and, on the other hand, the dean and chapter seems, on many occasions, to have been marked by tensions and disagreements.

If the parish was created when the new cathedral was built, its first century of life is unrecorded, as there is no written or architectural evidence about it, but as soon as written evidence is found, the history of the parish, albeit still with many gaps, begins to emerge. The earliest written reference to the parish and its vicar occurs c.1201 when 'William of St John, and Hugh, chaplains', witnessed a deed relating to a piece of land being granted as a dowry to Helisend, the daughter of William Albus de Hereford. This same William, 'canon and chaplain of St John',

who was living in King's Ditch [King Street], witnessed several other undated 13th century deeds relating to land transactions. In addition, the 13th cathedral statutes stated that the cathedral treasurer must 'provide light for all who celebrate at the cathedral, with the exception of those who are celebrating at the altar of Saint John'. Certainly, by the time the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* was compiled in 1291, St John's was treated as a parish.

The main part of St John's parish was closely linked to the area known as the bishop's fee, that part of the city under the jurisdiction of the bishop rather than the king. Within his fee the bishop had considerable privileges, with his authority sometimes exceeding that of the civil authorities. Although the boundary of the two fees was ill-defined, it is likely that in Anglo-Saxon times the area within the city defences marked out the bishop's holding, and when the parish of St John was formed it followed this boundary line. By Norman times this area consisted of the cathedral Close, the east-west roads of Castle Street, King Street, West Street, East Street and, running north to south, Church Street, Broad Street and St John Street, with Gwynne Street and Wye Bridge Street running down to the river. The castle was also part of the parish but Castle Green was outside the city liberties. From the early days of the parish, there were canonical houses in Canon's Row [the Close] for, by 1321, they were already being described as 'old'. Other canonical houses could be found in Caboche Lane [Church Street] and Castle Street.

**Learn more about *The Parish that Disappeared* from
Logaston Press at:**

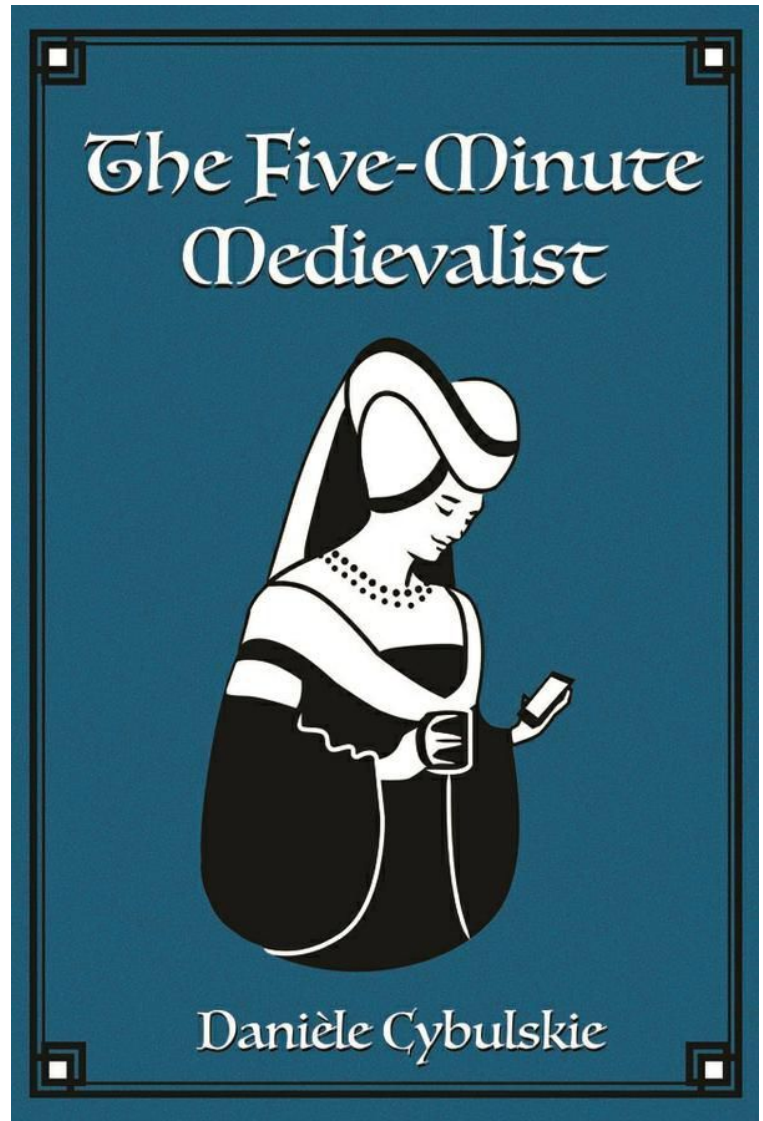
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