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### Discoveries

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**DISCOVERIES** summarized by Amy Young, Kenyon College '16

***Jesus' House? First-century structure may be his childhood home***

Archaeologists working in Nazareth have identified a house dating to the first century that was regarded as the place where Jesus was raised. It was first uncovered in the 1880s by nuns at the Sisters of Nazareth Convent, but it wasn't until 2006 that archaeologists, led by Ken Dark, a professor at the University of Reading in the United Kingdom, dated the house to the first century, and identified it as the place where people who lived centuries after Jesus' time believed he was brought up.



The archaeologists found that the Byzantine Empire (which controlled Nazareth up until the seventh century) decorated the house with mosaics and constructed a church known as the "Church of Nutrition" over the house to protect it. Crusaders who ventured into the Holy Land in the 12<sup>th</sup> century fixed up the church after it had fallen into disrepair. This suggests that both the Byzantines and the Crusaders believed that this was the childhood home of Christ. In addition to the archaeological evidence, a text written in 670 by Abbot Adomnàn of the Scottish island monastery at Iona -- alleged to be based on Frankish Bishop Arculf's pilgrimage to Nazareth -- mentions a church "where once there was the house in which the Lord was nourished in his infancy." (Translated by James Rose Macpherson).

Re-written from <http://www.livescience.com/49997-jesus-house-possibly-found-nazareth.html>

## ***4<sup>th</sup>-Century Beardless Image of Christ found in Spain***

Archaeologists in Spain claim to have found one of the world's earliest known images of Jesus engraved on a 22 cm glass plate, dating to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The plate is believed to have been used to hold Eucharistic host as it was consecrated in early Christian rituals. Fragments of the plate were unearthed outside the southern Spanish city of Linares and pieced together. The Christ figure looks quite different from later depictions: he has no beard, his hair is not too long and he wears a philosopher's toga. The find made scientists "review the chronology of early Christianity in Spain."



Re-written from <http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-29480874>

## ***Archaeology: Fifth-century Christian Basilica found in Bulgarias' Bourgas***

Archaeologists working in the Kraimorie area of Bourgas on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast have found a Christian basilica said to date from the fifth century. The church building measures 19.5 meters x 15 meters. The find was announced at a news conference where Todor Batkov, the businessman who has a 200-million leva (about 100 million euro) project to build a residential and holiday complex at the site, said that the Bourgas



municipality would apply for European Union funding for the preservation of antiquities. The archeological studies at the site have been financed by one of Batkov's companies, Foros Development AD, and carried out with logistical support from Bourgas municipality.

Re-written from

<http://sofiaglobe.com/2014/08/08/archaeology-fifth-century-christian-basilica-found-in-bulgarias-bourgas/>

### ***Bulgarian Archaeologists find lead pilgrim ampulla filled with ashes from John the Apostle's Grave during Excavation of Ancient Fortress Burgos (Poros)***

Ashes from the grave of John the Apostle have been discovered in a pilgrim ampulla or vial (referred to in the article as a "lead tube reliquary") by Bulgarian archaeologists during excavations of the ancient and medieval port of Burgos in today's Black Sea city of Burgas. The ampulla, measuring only 2.2 cm long (less than an inch) by 1.7 cm wide, is dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> century. On one side is an image of a Greek cross inside a medallion, and on the reverse are two overlapping Greek crosses. Its neck is also decorated with crosses.

A total of only 43 pilgrim ampullae from this time period are known to survive, but this example differs because its imagery matches that found on clay ampullae produced in ancient Ephesus. According to some historical sources, Christian pilgrims would gather at John the Apostle's grave in Ephesus, sprinkle rose petals on the rock above the basilica, and the next day wonder-working powder would appear on the rock. This powder, believed to cure all kinds of diseases, was collected and taken home by the pilgrims in as evidence of their pilgrimage or as an amulet to guard against evil.

Re-written from <http://archaeologyinbulgaria.com/2015/03/25/bulgarian-archaeologists-find-lead-reliquary-with-ashes-from-john-the-apostles-grave-during-excavations-of-ancient-fortress-burgos-poros/>





## ***Byzantine-era Church uncovered in Jerusalem Highway expansion***

Road workers expanding the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway found the ruins of a Byzantine-era way station and church, thought to be 1500 years old, near the entrance of Abu Ghosh in June of 2015. Found along a Roman-era road, the 16-meter-long (52 feet) church building has a side chapel 6.5 meters long and 3.5 meters wide, with a floor tiled in white mosaic. A baptismal font shaped like a four-leaf clover, symbolizing the cross, is located in the northeastern corner. Shards of plaster that had been painted red were found in the piles of dirt that covered the remnants of the building, an apparent indication that the walls had been decorated with frescoes. Oil lamps, rings, glass vessels, and shards of marble and mother-of-pearl shells were among the artifacts found during excavation.



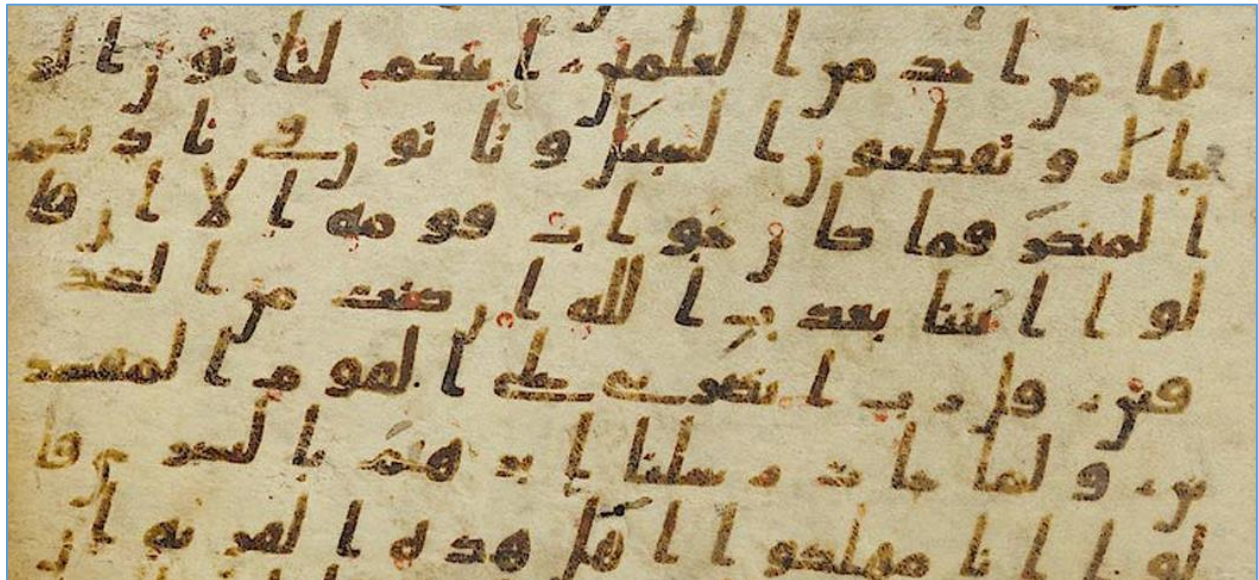
Re-written from <http://www.timesofisrael.com/byzantine-era-church-uncovered-in-jerusalem-highway-expansion/>

## ***Sensational Fragment of Very Early Qur'an Identified***

Experts have recently studying three samples of a fragment of a Qur'an, which has been in the University Library in Tübingen since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, have concluded that the parchment, with a 95.4% statistical probability, can be dated to the period between 649-675, 20-

40 years after the death of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. The date was established through modern C14-radiocarbon analysis at a lab in Zurich.

The Tübingen manuscript belongs to a collection of more than 20 Qur'an fragments in the holdings of the University Library. The parchments are quite small in comparison to what is common in other early manuscripts, so their very early date surprised the experts. Another early manuscript is the so-called Sana'n fragment, found in the Great Mosque in Sana'n, Yemen, is believed to date earlier than 671.



Re-written from <http://www.medievalhistories.com/sensational-fragment-early-quran-identified/>



### ***Anglo-Saxon pendant discovered in southern Norfolk***

Tom Lucking, a metal-detectorist, discovered a pendant in southern Norfolk that was once part of an Anglo-Saxon burial. The 7-cm long pendant is adorned with garnet inlays backed by gold foil, creating animal interlace patterns. The jewelry found indicates that the grave belonged to noblewoman, who was buried with chatelaine keys, two gold pendants from between 639-656, a beaten bronze bowl, a wheel-thrown pot, and a knife.

Re-written from

<http://www.medievalhistories.com/anglo-saxon-pendant-discovered-in-south-norfolk/>



## ***Fragments of an Irish-type reliquary discovered in Norway***

Two fragments of an Irish house-shaped reliquary, dating to the 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries, have been found in Hokksund, Norway. A bronze panel, ornamented with enamel with millefiori pieces and a bronze hinge, also decorated with enamel, were probably loot taken during Viking raids on Ireland or Scotland. These pieces are a significant addition to a small, but important corpus of Irish-type reliquaries from Scandinavia, which also include examples from Melbus and Setnes in Norway as well as the Copenhagen Shrine.



Re-written from <http://irisharchaeology.ie/2015/01/fragments-of-an-irish-type-reliquary-discovered-in-denmark/>

## ***Artifacts of Christian Nubia Revealed***

Thanks to the efforts of Polish archaeologists and a massive UNESCO-led international campaign, a unique assemblage of Nubian art and cultural artifacts from the Christian period (c. mid-6<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries) has been uncovered. Working under the direction of Prof. Kazimierz Michałowski in the ancient city of Faras near the present-day Sudanese-Egyptian border, the team discovered well-preserved ruins of an 8<sup>th</sup>-century cathedral church, hailed as the “miracle of Faras.” Over 120 paintings were preserved, 67 of which are today in the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw. Together they form what is the largest and most valuable collection of archaeological artifacts from overseas excavations ever acquired by a Polish Museum.

Now, following an extensive redevelopment, the national Museum in Warsaw’s new Professor Kazimierz Michałowski Faras Gallery showcases the finds. A room designed to evoke a temple interior will present the wall paintings in an arrangement similar to their original one at the Faras Cathedral, with the sound of authentic Coptic liturgical chants heightening the experience for visitors.



Re-written from <http://popular-archaeology.com/issue/fall-09012014/article/artifacts-of-christian-nubia-revealed>

***When the Arabs Met the Vikings: 9<sup>th</sup> -century Viking woman buried with ring inscribed with “for Allah”***

The discovery of a silver ring with an Arabic inscription in a Viking grave gave credence to the ancient accounts of Arab travelers and their encounters with Norsemen and points to a fascinating trade and cultural exchange. Arab traveler Ahmad Ibn Fadlan first recorded his meeting with the

“Rusiyab” more than 1,000 years ago as they were sailing their longships down the Volga looking for trade. A rare ring with an inscription in Arabic “for/to Allah” was uncovered at the burial site of a 9<sup>th</sup>-century woman just outside the Viking center of Birka, Sweden. While it is not the first evidence





of its kind regarding links between Vikings and the Muslim world, it is arguably the strongest evidence towards direct contact, as the ring most likely traveled directly from the Caliphate to Sweden.

Re-written from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/03/18/why-was-a-9th-century-viking-woman-buried-with-a-ring-that-says-for-allah-on-it/>

### ***Treasure Hunter Finds Viking Hoard***

Derek McLennan, a metal-detector enthusiast, has discovered one of the most significant Viking hoards of the past century in Southwest Scotland, his third outstanding find in less than a year. Working in a pasture owned by the Church of Scotland, he pulled out an arm ring with distinctive Viking patterns. In the hours and days that followed, Mr. McLennan and the county archaeologist unearthed more than 100 objects, including a silver Christian cross inlaid with gold, probably from Dublin, and a large Carolingian pot complete with its lid, one of only three of its kind known in Britain.

The hoard dates from the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century and includes stamp-decorated bracelets and glass beads similar to some found in Scandinavia. Other exceptional items include a golden bird pin, likely to be Anglo Saxon, and a large collection of silver and gold jewelry and ingots. The total estimated value is about £1 million.



Re-written from

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article4234585.ece?shareToken=6f664230e2c29f905f3ccd3d2249decb>

### ***Outline of medieval church revealed on pre-Norman Conquest building site***

The foundations of a medieval church has been discovered by workmen building a new home for the elderly in Leyburn, North Yorkshire. Archaeologists were brought in and their work has led to the clear outline of a Christian church dating back to before the Norman Conquest in 1066. Two bodies were also found at the site, both in a crouching position. It is thought that the remains of a young man and an older woman are early Christian burials due to the bodies' East-West alignment.

Projects officer Graham Bruce said: “The site is probably a family chapel, possibly dating back to Saxon or early Norman times, as it is a clean area with relatively little waste. There is probably a rubbish dump nearby. Interestingly, the Domesday Book mentions two manors in Leyburn and this may relate to the abandoned settlement.” The scientists’ work also unearthed two small structures that pre-date the church, possibly Bronze and Iron Age dwellings. Evidence of medieval farming was also discovered above the church foundation.



Re-written from <http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/11781620.display/>

### ***Northampton’s medieval chess workshop “first to be found”***

A workshop that produced early medieval chess pieces has been uncovered during an archaeological dig, ahead of redevelopment work in Northampton. Similar chess pieces have been found at digs near manor houses, but this find is evidence of their manufacture. The game had become popular the educated and wealthy by the mid- to late-12<sup>th</sup> century. Other finds at the Angel Street Dig include fragments of rare medieval linen and serpentine





marble. Archaeologists from the Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) were responsible for the excavations. The workshop was discovered at a site in Angel Street, the location of Northamptonshire County Council's new headquarters.



Re-written from <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-northamptonshire-30214707>

### ***Archaeologists believe they have found lost cloister in South Iceland***



It is believed the remains of the much-searched-for Þykkvabær cloister have been found at Álftaver in South Iceland, discovered by Icelandic and British archaeologists using ultrasound techniques. The discovery came as a complete surprise, as it was assumed the remains stood near the church of present-day Þykkvabæjarkirk



ja. The 1,500 square meter building served as a monastery for Augustine monks and was in use from 1168 until 1550. It is still possible the remains are of a cow shed – but in that case it would be the cloister’s own cow shed and therefore still relevant.

Re-written from <http://icelandreview.com/news/2015/05/07/archaeologists-believe-they-have-found-lost-cloister>

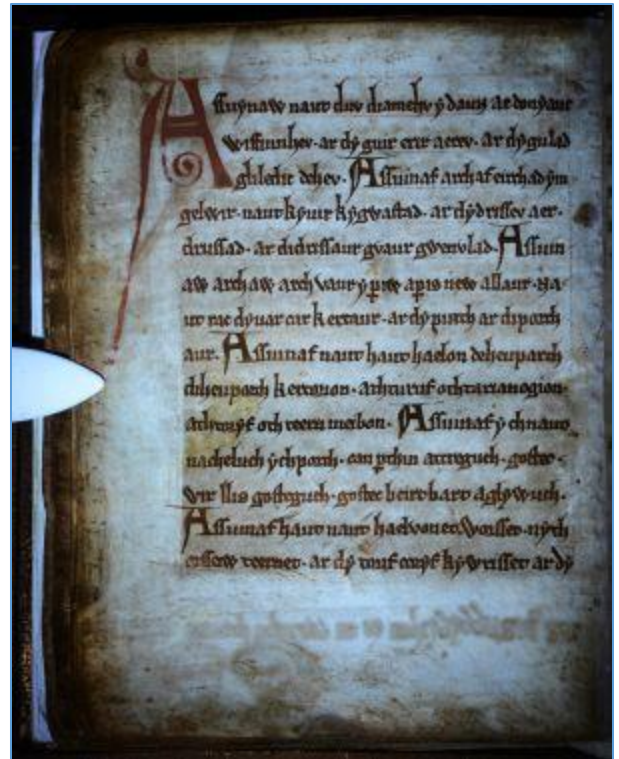
## *Ghosts from the Past Brought Back to Life*

Dating from 1250, The Black Book of Carmarthen, is the earliest surviving medieval manuscript written solely in Welsh, and contains some of the earliest references to Arthur and Merlin. According to legend Merlin was born outside Carmarthen, thought to have been the Black Book’s original home. Edmund Tudor died and was buried in the town, and his son Henry VII called on Arthurian legend to support his family’s claim to the throne.

The book is a collection of 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> -century poetry along both religious and secular lines, drawing on the traditions of the Welsh folk-heroes and legends of the early Middle Ages.

Myriah Williams and Professor Paul Russell from Cambridge’s Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic (ASNC), believed that a 16<sup>th</sup> -century owner of the book, probably a man named Jasper Gryffyth, summarily erased centuries’ worth of additional verse, doodles, and marginalia which had been added to the manuscript as it changed hands throughout the years.

Using a combination of ultraviolet light and photo editing software, snatches of poetry were revealed -- previously were unrecorded in the cannon of Welsh verse. Currently the texts are fragmentary and in need of much more analysis, although they seem to be the continuation of a poem on the preceding page with a new poem added at the foot of that page. Ghostly faces also appeared. Professor Russell spoke of the discovery of the sketches last summer. “We were



looking at the text with the ultraviolet lamp and this pair of faces emerged in the bottom margin. It was actually quite creepy with them peering back. We thought: ‘Who are you?’” The scholars do not know who the faces represent but dated them to the 14th or 15th century. Alongside them is an inscription that suggests the donation of the book to a family member.

Re-written from

<http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/ghosts-from-the-past-brought-back-to-life> and <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/the-black-book-of-carmarthen-scholars-left-shaken-after-ultraviolet-light-reveals-ghostly-faces-staring-at-them-from-medieval-manuscripts-10147622.html>

### ***Winchester Cathedral opens Mortuary Chests***



The great Gothic cathedral of Winchester in Hampshire, England is considered the final resting place of the earliest Kings of Wessex and England. The remains of kings and bishops from as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century are said to be contained in mortuary chests in the church’s Lady Chapel. The chests, made hundreds of years after the original burials, were used when cathedral authorities replaced the remains were moved by Parliamentarians in 1642. By then, there was no way of separating and identifying individuals.

As part of a new development program to promote and preserve the Cathedral, the Dean and chaplain of Winchester have commissioned experts to study and document the contents of six chests. The results from the University of Oxford’s Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit found that the tested bones date to the late Anglo-Saxon and early Norman periods, confirming that Winchester Cathedral could be the first national mausoleum akin to the cathedral of St. Denis in France. It is possible that there will be enough evidence to loosely match the bones to the individual royalty and clergy Cathedral records claim are interred there.



Re-written from <http://www.thehistoryblog.com/archives/34702>

## ***Saint-Chapelle Windows Restored***

Consecrated in 1248, Sainte-Chapelle celebrated the Passion relics therein with beautiful painted windows that were engineered to look as though they made up the very walls of the church. The notion of ideal kingship was supported by select scenes from the Old and New Testament and the illustration of King Louis receiving the relics of Paris. The windows have suffered some neglect, deliberate vandalism, and more, meaning that now only two-thirds of the surviving glass is medieval. Funded by the Danish company Velux and the Centre des Monuments Nationaux, careful cleaning and re-leading of the windows is now complete.



Re-written from <http://www.architecturaldigest.com/blogs/daily/2015/05/restored-windows-sainte-chapelle-paris>

## ***Politics, piety, and propaganda: Archaeologists discover pilgrim souvenir of Thomas, Early of Lancaster***

A rare devotional panel/pilgrim souvenir depicting the capture, trial, and execution of Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, was found in remarkable condition while excavating the River Thames. Cast in pewter, the piece serves as a cautionary tale for ambitious politicians, while also elevating Lancaster to an almost saintly status. After trying to curb the king's power, Thomas was beheaded in 1322. Within six weeks of his death, miracles were recorded in connection with his tomb. This find reveals the maker's intended message in slightly garbled French. The panel



reads clockwise from the top left: “here I am taken Prisoner”; “I am judged”; “I am under threat”; and “la mort” (death). The Virgin Mary and Christ look down from heaven, ready to receive Lancaster’s soul.

Re-written from

<http://www.mola.org.uk/blog/politics-piety-and-propaganda-archaeologists-discover-fine-devotional-panel>

