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New Announcements and Notices

Wealth of medieval Hebrew manuscripts uncovered in Spain

Stuffed inside the covers of books, at the Provincial Historic Archive of the northeastern town of Girona, Spain, are what may be the largest collection of ancient Hebrew manuscripts in Europe. The first manuscript fragment was found several years ago but archive personnel thought it was a one-time discovery; but recent recent investigations unveiled up to a thousand document fragments hidden in the covers of books and the archive believes there could be many more.



The fragments studied and restored so far included texts from the Book of Genesis and the Torah as well as marriage and business contracts. Girona was one of the most important Jewish population centers in Spain prior to the expulsion of all non-Catholics in 1492 by the Catholic kings Isabel and Ferdinand. Matas believes the town once had some 700 Jews. The Hebrew documents are most likely remnants of what Jewish families left behind them when they fled. The archive has restored the fragments found in five books and plans to leave the rest in the book covers. The archive is currently looking for financial support to recuperate all the texts. It plans to stage an exposition detailing the discovery in October.

--Story condensed from an Associated Press report, March 20, 2003

An Armrest for Charlemagne

When an engraved stone was found in 1911 on a building site, it didn't excite many. But now Mechthild Schulze-Darhlamm, an archeologist at the Roman-Germanic Museum in Mainz, has determined that it's actually part of Germany's oldest throne, sat in by Emperor Charlemagne. The piece was catalogued, briefly described and promptly put away to gather dust in a museum storeroom. After seeing the engravings on the piece, she realized she had more than a medieval signpost on her hands. Further



research and comparisons with other royal artifacts showed that the object supported the royal arm in the year 790 at the latest, making it older than the marble throne in Aachen which dates from around 800.

--Story condensed from a DW-World.de report, February 21, 2005.

<http://www.dw-world.de>

15th-Century Tunnel Re-Opened at Canterbury Cathedral

A 15th-Century tunnel at Canterbury Cathedral which allows pilgrims to visit the site of the murder of Thomas Becket has been reopened to the public. Built around 1420, it allowed pilgrims to go under the pulpitum (which feature the steps to the choir) to visit the site of the Martyrdom without disturbing the monks performing their daily duties.



It links the southwest transept to the northwest transept where Becket was killed. For the last 40 years, it was closed off for storage. The Cathedral's official website notes, that The Very Reverend Robert Willis, Dean of Canterbury, said the tunnel would give proper access to people in wheelchairs to the Martyrdom - one of the most important parts of the Cathedral. "The Cathedral has hundreds of steps which can make life difficult for anyone who finds it hard to climb up and down steps," he said. "Now it has been cleared and reopened, it also gives tantalizing new vistas of two central areas of the Cathedral."

<http://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/>

New Scholarly Society

The Society for Popular Culture and the Middle Ages (PCMA) was co-founded in the fall of 2004 by Carl James Grindley and Michael A. Torregrossa. The goals of PCMA are to encourage and promote scholarship dealing with topics traditionally seen as being "low brow" and attempt to bring such studies into the mainstream. The Society merges and incorporates the various sites and

discussion lists formerly part of the Society for Arthurian Popular Culture Studies, which was founded by Torregrossa in March 2003 to foster research on Arthurian popular culture from all periods in which representations of the Arthurian legend appear.

<http://home.att.net/~mtorregrossa/index.htm>