

2016

### Discoveries

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#### Recommended Citation

. "Discoveries." *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 5, 3 (2016).  
<https://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal/vol5/iss3/8>

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## 1500-Year-Old Mosaic Map Found



A rare 1,500-year-old mosaic discovered in Israel that unusually depicts a map with streets and buildings. Painstakingly restored, the mosaic measures about 3.5 meters (11.4 feet) by 3.5 meters and was found two years ago in an industrial park in the southern Israeli town of Kiryat Gat. According to the Israel Antiquities Authority, it adorned the floor of a church dating to the Byzantine period. The church did not survive, but the mosaic was excavated and moved for restoration.

The mosaic, done with 17 different colors of tesserae, depicts buildings arranged along a main colonnaded street of a city. Buildings are portrayed in detail and in three dimensions, and have two–three stories, balconies and galleries, roof tiles and windows. 🐣

Re-written from: <http://thenanoneews.com/news/1500-year-old-mosaic-map-found>

## **Fifth-century church with beautiful frescoes discovered in Turkey's Nevşehir**



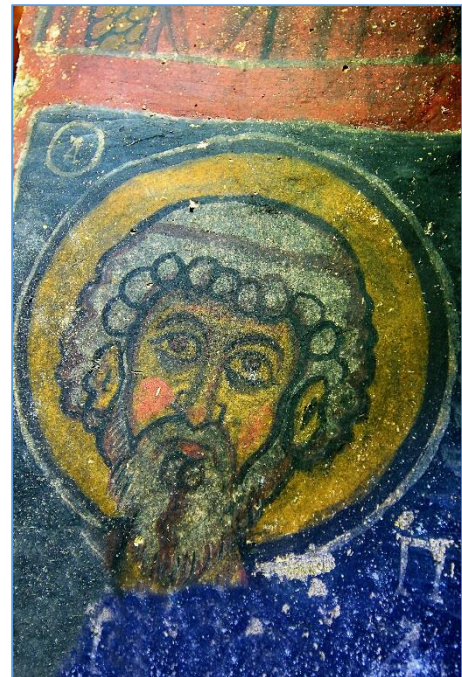
Another historical church has been unearthed in the Cappadocia region of Central Anatolia and experts are excited about its frescoes, which depict scenes hitherto unseen. The church was uncovered by archeologists during excavation and cleaning work in an underground city discovered as part of the Nevşehir Castle Urban Transformation Project, implemented by the Nevşehir Municipality and Turkey's Housing Development Administration (TOKI).

The rock-carved underground church is located within a castle in the center of Nevşehir that spreads over an area of 360,000 square meters, within a third-degree archaeological site that includes 11 neighborhoods in the city center. Built underground, the church might date back to the 5th century.

Archaeologist Semih İstanbulluoğlu said the thin walls of the church collapsed because of snow and rain but they would be fixed during restorations. İstanbulluoğlu said the church was filled with earth and the pieces of frescoes had to be collected one by one.

"The structure was found a short time ago. The frescoes on the walls will return to their original look after restoration and cleaning work," he added.

Fellow archaeologist Ali Aydın added that the side walls of the church were still underground and the frescoes there may still be intact. "Only a few of the paintings have been revealed. Others will emerge when the earth is removed. There are important paintings in the front part of the church showing the crucifixion of Jesus and his



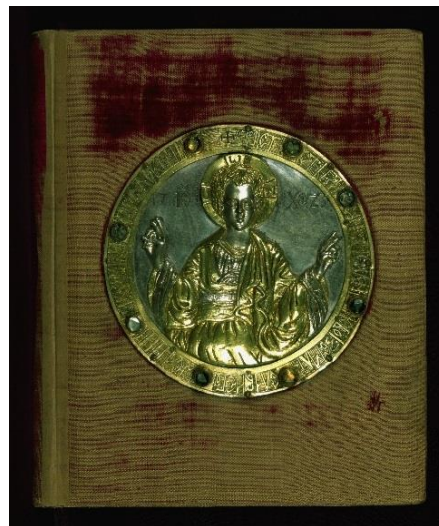


ascension to heaven. There are also frescoes showing the apostles, the saints and other prophets Moses and Elyesa,” he said, adding that they had also found the real entrance of the church used in the past but had yet to expose it. 🐞

From: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/historic-church-discovered-in-turkeys-nevsehir-could-change-history-of-orthodoxy.aspx?pageID=238&nID=94309&NewsCatID=375>

## Great list of on-going medieval manuscript digitization projects

The Medieval Manuscript Project has a very helpful list of on-going digitization projects categorized by country, city, library or provenance. This marvelous list was assembled by Albrecht Diem, History Department, Syracuse University. 🐞



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From: <http://www.earlymedievalmonasticism.org/listoflinks.html#Digital>

## The Sound of Byzantine Thessaloniki recreated

Technicians bring high-end microphones, speakers, and recording equipment to a particularly resonant space— and they capture what are called “impulse responses,” signals that contain the acoustic characteristics of the location. The technique produces a three dimensional audio imprint—enabling us to recreate what it would sound like to sing and play instruments in that space. Since 2014, Sharon Gerstel, Professor of Byzantine Art History and Archeology at UCLA, and Chris Kyriakakis, director of the Immersive Audio Laboratory at the University of Southern California, have worked to capture the sound of Byzantine churches in Greece. Using video and audio recording, they had chanters in a studio recreating the sounds that filled the spaces in the early Christian centuries. As another member of the team, James Donahue, Professor of Music Production and Engineering at Berklee College of Music, noted that the

churches had been acoustically designed to produce specific sound effects. “It wasn’t just about the architecture, they had these big jugs that were put up there to sip certain frequencies out of the air... They built diffusion, a way to break up the sound waves... They were actively trying to tune the space.” In addition, the researchers discovered slap echo, which in the Middle Ages was described it as the sound of angels’ wings. 🐦



For recordings and video, see <http://www.openculture.com/2016/03/mapping-the-sounds-of-greek-byzantine-churches-how-researchers-are-creating-museums-of-lost-sound.html>

Re-written from <http://www.openculture.com/2016/03/mapping-the-sounds-of-greek-byzantine-churches-how-researchers-are-creating-museums-of-lost-sound.html>

See also <http://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/measuring-the-sound-of-angels-singing>



## Seventh-Century Anglo-Saxon Burial discovered in Norfolk

Tom Lucking, a 23-year-old undergraduate student of Landscape History at the University of East Anglia, stumbled upon the find of a lifetime this past December in Norfolk. While combing over a farmer's field with a metal detector, Lucking and a friend were surprised when the metal detector picked up a strong signal which turned out to be from a bronze bowl buried underground. After uncovering the bowl, Lucking knew he had found something extraordinary, and immediately stopped to call in the Suffolk



Archaeological Field Group (of which he is a member), and Norfolk County Council's Heritage Environment Service to begin a professional excavation. The archaeologists at the site have uncovered a seventh-century burial of a woman with jewelry and other valuable metal grave goods in the area that once was the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of East Anglia, a find nearly priceless to scholars of Anglo-Saxon history, archaeology, and material culture.

The tomb contained a string of artifacts dating to the mid-seventh century, including several pendants, two gold beads, a knife, an iron buckle, and a ceramic

pot. Within the grave deposit, archaeologists uncovered two pendants made out of Merovingian coins, one of which enabled them to assign an approximate date to the burial. This coin was minted under the Merovingian king Sigebert III during the period c. 630–656, providing the *terminus post quem* and other grave goods the possible latest date, c. 720–30.

The most spectacular find from the dig, however, was a garnet pendant, measuring approximately seven centimeters in diameter and inlaid with more than four hundred pieces of garnet. While the future of the site is uncertain, more archaeological fieldwork may be conducted. According to Lucking, “there’s clearly a cemetery on the site, as other early Saxon metalwork has been found in the plough-soil from other burials being disturbed by ploughing. Interestingly, the other finds have all been slightly earlier, fifth to sixth century, so it would appear the site was in use over a long period of time.” Lucking also indicated that the site has undergone a geophysics survey, but a more in-depth geophysics analysis could happen later as part of a full-scale excavation. 🐾

Re-written from <http://arc-humanities.com/blog/>

## Gloucester Archaeologists discover remains of a 12th-century castle on the site of a former prison



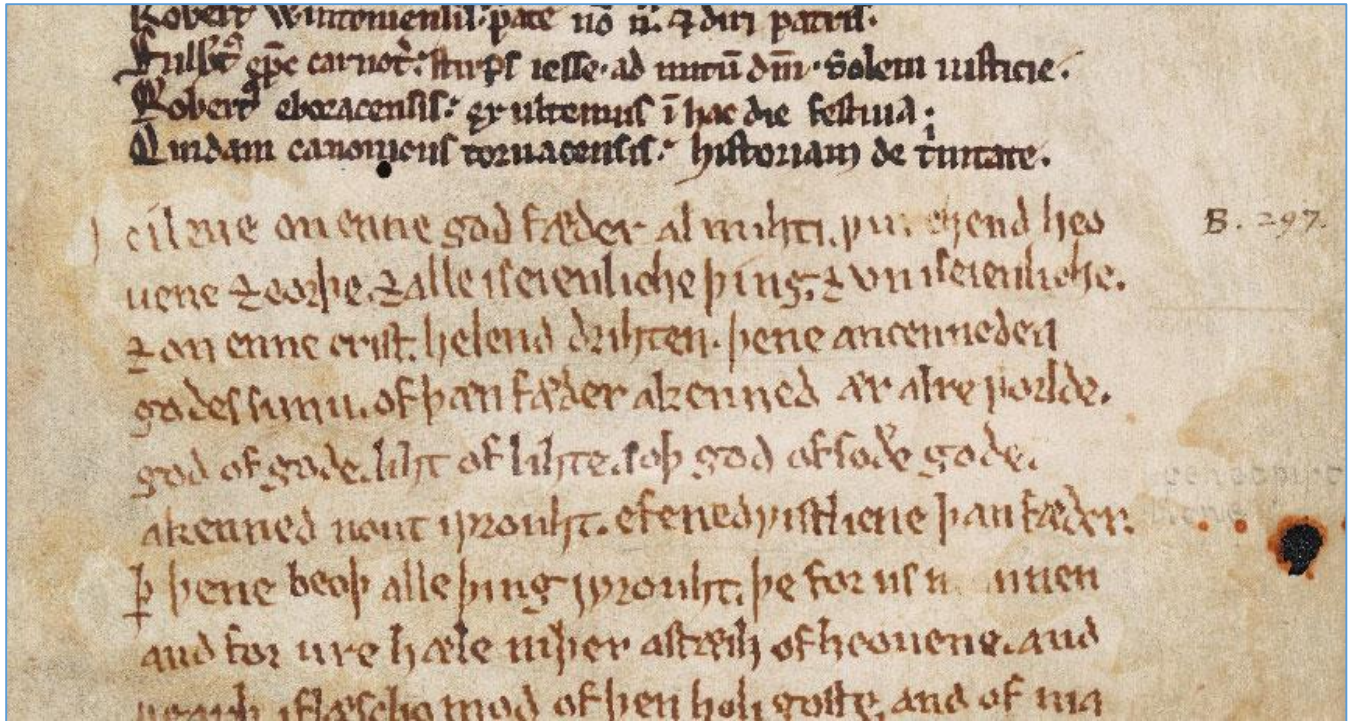
Cotswold Archaeology announced the discovery of the castle, probably built between 1110 and 1120, with a keep, an inner bailey, and stables. The keep was surrounded by a series of concentric defenses comprised of curtain walls and ditches, with the drawbridge and gatehouse lying outside the current site to the north.

The keep, which measures approximately 30 x 20 meters, featured walls as thick as 12 feet, comparable to the Tower of London. The castle was likely destroyed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to make way for a jail, which was in use until 2013. Archaeologists have also discovered nearly 900 objects at the site, including medieval pottery and a six-sided die made of bone. 🐞

Re-written from: <http://www.medievalists.net/2015/12/09/12th-century-castle-discovered-in-england/>



## Manuscript analysis suggests 13th century writer had essential tremor



Professional scribes in the Middle Ages usually had excellent handwriting. That's not the case for one prolific 13th century writer known to scholars only as the Tremulous Hand of Worcester. Now scientists suggest the writer suffered from a neurological condition called essential tremor. Neurologist Jane Alty and historical handwriting researcher Deborah Thorpe, both of the University of York in England, wrote that the spidery wiggles that pervade the scribe's writing reflected an essential tremor, that caused shaking hands, head and voice. 🐞

Summarized from <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/neurological-condition-probably-caused-medieval-scribe%E2%80%99s-shaky-handwriting>

## Restoration work commences on newly discovered 13<sup>th</sup>-century Paintings at Poitiers Cathedral

Perched on staggered scaffolding and concealed behind an immaculate canvas, a restoration team is ready to start work on Poitiers Cathedral's southern transept. Scalpel in hand, the team is operating meticulously on a true rebirth: that of extraordinary decorative paintings that have fallen into oblivion. Surveys have revealed the presence of a monumental group of



mural paintings hidden by a whitewash from the 18th century and covered by work done on the vault to repair water leaks.

Across the vaults and interior elevations, there are 900 square meters (roughly 9,700 square feet) of decorative work: angels, saints, foliage, trompe l'oeil architecture. Everywhere, reds, pinks, purples, oranges and greens. Having been analyzed, the pigments are rare and precious (azurite, cinnabar). The divisions of the vault alternate deep blues and vibrant reds, enameled in a "rain" of stars. Each was created nearly 700 years ago by superimposing leafs of pewter and leafs of gold or silver.

"It's an almost unique example of complete Gothic decorative work in a cathedral," clarifies Anne Embs, Assistant Regional Historic Monuments Conservator. "These paintings, completed between 1260-1300, are contemporaries of the stained glass alongside which they function. The restoration will dramatically change the perception of the space."

The challenges of detaching these paintings are significant: "It's an irreversible gesture," admits Anne Embs. "In the entirely whitewashed cathedral, we could reproach ourselves for breaking the (artificial) homogeneity of the building." 🍷

From: <http://theglobalgrid.org/in-france-discovery-of-13th-century-murals-spur-poitiers-cathedrals-restoration/>



## 13<sup>th</sup>-century insult discovered etched in the walls of Nidaros Cathedral, Trondheim, Norway



Local historian Terje Bratberg, discovered the Latin inscription *LAURENSIUS CELVI ANUS PETRI* along the southern wall of the medieval church. Translated into English, it means “Lars is Peter’s butt.” Bratberg believes that the inscription was made around the year 1290, during a dispute between the local clergy at the cathedral and Jorund, who was the Archbishop of Nidaros from 1288 to 1309. The archbishop had sent one of his followers, a man named Lars Kalvssøn to Nidaros, to deliver a message excommunicating the local clergy. The locals responded by attacking Lars, stripping him naked, whipping him and throwing snowballs at him until he was rescued by soldiers loyal the archbishop. Bratberg adds that “the message is clear, but whether it is a reference to a love affair between two men – or it was meant to publicly ridicule them. I choose to believe that it’s about love.” 🍷

From: <http://www.medievalists.net/2015/08/27/13th-century-insult-discovered-etched-into-the-walls-of-nidaros-cathedral/>

## 500-Year-Old image of Wild Man found

Metal detectorists found a 15<sup>th</sup>-century spoon handle in the shape of a Wild Man near Woodbridge in Suffolk. Declared treasure just recently, it is believed to be one of the earlier depictions of the subject matter in three dimensions. The silver-gilt piece shows a jaunty, hairy figure





brandishing a club. It is currently being studied at the British Museum. 🐾

Re-written from <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-suffolk-35050026>



## Vibrant late-medieval panel painting survived the Reformation by being turned around

A rare medieval panel showing Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Christ survived the Reformation due to a remarkable instance of 16th-century recycling. Someone turned it around and used the back for another purpose – most likely to display the Ten Commandments and so it was saved from Puritan iconoclasts in the English civil war, who destroyed a lot of art that had survived the earlier purge in the Reformation, escaping the systematic destruction of thousands of church paintings.

Lucy Wrapson, the conservator who made the discovery at the Fitzwilliam Museum's Hamilton Kerr Institute, notes "This was basically repurposed and that's how it made it through. I can't stress how rare this is. I can think of one other image of Judas that survives from an English church of the period." The panel was bought by the Fitzwilliam in 2012 from the Church of St. Mary, Grafton Regis, Northamptonshire which could not afford to conserve it and used the purchase funds to fix the church roof.

The panel arrived in Wrapson's lab in a sorry state, covered in discolored varnish, bat feces, dust and cobwebs. Wrapson removed the plywood on its reverse and discovered faint traces of writing. Infra-red photography revealed that the painting must have been turned around in the 16th century, whitewashed and used as a board almost certainly listing the Ten Commandments.

The painting, dated to around 1460, shows Judas betraying Christ with a kiss accompanied by snarling soldiers and St Peter. In the background, birds sweep dramatically through the glowering sky. The panel, which would have been

part of a Passion of Christ cycle, was even more unusual, Wrapson said, because it was unscratched by devout Catholics who were known to attack images of Judas. The painting is now on display in its Rothschild gallery of medieval works and a replica will also be displayed at the Church of St Mary in due course. 🐾

From: <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/nov/24/judas-iscariot-painting-reformation-fitzwilliam-museum>

## Mid-16<sup>th</sup>-Century Dog Prints at Chained Library in Zutphen

The discovery of inky cat paws left by a cat that walked across a manuscript in the 15<sup>th</sup> century became something of a media sensation. Since then, other animal missteps have been discovered. Erik Kwakkel noticed the imprints of a large dog in the tiles of 16th-century chained library of Zutphen. As he writes, “Remarkably, throughout the library there are tiles with a dog’s paw prints. These 450-year-old traces of a large dog come with a local legend. One night, a monk called Jaromir was reading in the library while enjoying a meal of chicken, delivered to



him by some nuns. He was not supposed to do this: not only does one not eat in a library, but he was also going through a period of fasting. Then suddenly the devil appeared in the form of a dog, scaring the living daylights out of the monk. The devil ate the

chicken and locked the monk inside as a punishment - as devils do. Knowing the story, it’s hard to ignore the prints when admiring the books.” 🐾

[http://peregrinations.kenyon.edu/vol4\\_1/DISCOVERIESCatsPawsManuscript.pdf](http://peregrinations.kenyon.edu/vol4_1/DISCOVERIESCatsPawsManuscript.pdf)

<http://erikkwakkel.tumblr.com/post/97506480156/dog-prints-in-medieval-chained-library-i-made>

<http://erikkwakkel.tumblr.com/post/49509415868/the-chained-library-of-zutphen-i-took-these>



## **Drought exposes mid-16<sup>th</sup> century Church in Mexican Reservoir**

The church in the Quechula locality in Mexico was built by a group of monks headed by Friar Bartolome de la Casas, who arrived in the region inhabited by the Zoque people in the mid-16th century. Measuring 183 x 42 feet with a bell tower that reaches 48 feet, it was abandoned during the



18<sup>th</sup> century in response to terrible plagues in the area. It was submerged in 1966 when the Nezahualcoyotl dam was built. A drought this year has hit the watershed of the Grijalva river, dropping the water level in the Nezahualcoyotl reservoir by 82 feet. It is the second time a drop in the reservoir has revealed the church since it was flooded when the dam was completed in 1966.

In 2002, the water was so low visitors could walk inside the church. 🐸

Re-written from: <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/article39555465.html#storylink=cpy>