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The Book of Kells

By Katharine of Caithines

The book of Kells is one of the most well known of the medieval manuscripts and attracts almost one million visitors to Dublin Ireland every year. For those who are unable to travel to the capital of the emerald isle to see this masterpiece of Hiberno-Saxon Style Manuscript. Fear not though the magic of the internet Trinity College Library has taken the pages they originally scanned and captured in 1990 put them on the internet. They have rescanned them using the most up to date state of the art imaging technology. These new high resolution digital images (so far) are akin to viewing the book in person.

The book is thought to have been made on the Scottish Island of Iona in 806; it was then transferred to the monastery of Kells after a viking raid. Most likely for safe keeping although the Vikings were known to raid Ireland too. The book consists mainly of the four gospels as well as indexes called canon tables. What makes this manuscript unique is that it is believed to be primarily for display and not reading. Not many people were able to read then pictures were a reliable way of telling a story or passing on knowledge. The illustrations are quite detailed and elaborate while the text was carelessly done with words missing and misspelled and Long passages being repeated. Thanks to careful preservation the Book of Kells has weathered the centuries well for its age. This includes the five rebindings it has endured over the centuries. In its original form the book was both thicker and larger, thirty folios of the original manuscript have been lost though the centuries. The

manuscript as it exists now was trimmed severely during its rebinding in the nineteenth century.

The College is offering a free online course on the manuscript explaining what materials and techniques that were in use several hundred years ago. For those interested in the online course or seeing the manuscript virtually search for Trinity College Dublin Book of Kells on your favorite search engine.

Witchcraft in the Middle Ages

By Katharine of Caithness

Witchcraft has been around since ancient times, the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans all practiced some form of it. In the middle ages the practice continued. The attitude was ambivalent toward them. Every City, town, Shire and Village had their own wise women or man who dispensed folk remedies, conducted yearly rituals for the community or a good harvest.

For the most part of the middle ages the church looked at these people as foolish and harmless rather than evil. Therefore the relationship between church and society in the early middle ages and witchcraft was ambivalent.

Casting Spells was clearly not considered evil if it was done to encourage a good harvest or aimed at healing someone who was ill. The church thought this may be foolish and misguided but not evil. The only way magic could be considered malevolent was if someone tried to bring about harm to someone, curse someone or create some effect that could be considered evil. This type of magic was classified as Maleficent and those who practiced it were known as maleficos.

The first witch hunt of any consequence took place in 1428 in Valais Switzerland. A total of 367 witches were hunted down and killed over eight years. The Valais trials were studied by Johannes Nader who wrote a treatise between 1435-1437 known as Formicarius. He was the first to connect witchcraft with devil worship and did not advocate mass witch hunts. The treatise was widely circulated in the church but the general public remained unaware of it.

Enter Heinrich Kramer a Dominican monk and Johannes Gutenberg inventor of the printing press mixed in with Martin Luther. In 1484 Kramer persuaded the pope to issue a papal bull authorizing him to extend his inquisitorial work to investigate witchcraft anywhere in Germany. Kramer got over zealous in Innsbruck and the investigation was shut down by Bishop Georgia Golser in 1486. Kramer was not deterred from his mission. He like Nader, wrote down his findings in a book, a guide on how to hunt down and interrogate witches titled *Malleus Maleficarum*. Around this time one other thing was happening: Johannes Gutenberg was inventing the printing press . Kramer had his book printed and it became a bestseller. It would have a significant impact on how witches were viewed and dealt with over the next few centuries.

Jacquetta of Luxembourg

By Katharine of Caithness

Known for being the mother of Elizabeth Woodville, Queen consort to King Edward IV, she was also accused of witchcraft.

Jacquetta Was the oldest of nine children. Though little is known of her childhood she most likely lived in Brienne. She married John Duke of Bedford when she was 17 years old and he was 43 years old . They lived in both England and France. The marriage was a short one. John died in France while in negotiations for a treaty they had been married less than three years.

Her second marriage was to Richard Woodvile in secret in 1437. They had fourteen children. Their eldest daughter Elizabeth married Sir John Grey and had two sons. During the Wars of the Roses the family was on the losing side. Since the Yorkist won all of Jacquetta's land was confiscated by the new King along with Elizabeth's . There are many stories of how Elizabeth and Edward IV met the end result was that they were secretly married. In Grafton 1 May 1464. Much to the delight of Jacquetta 's family and the dismay of Edward's council and a guy named Warwick. Land and titles were restored to Jacquetta and the Woodville's . After all, Elizabeth was queen and her son's

inheritance was secured. As the Woodvilles ascended in royal favor Warwick seemed to be on the descent.

Having nothing to lose Warwick changed sides and went over to the Lancaster side supporting the deposed King Henry VI. In the process Warwick was responsible for the deaths of several members of the Woodville family. Elizabeth sought sanctuary in Westminster. In 1470 Jacquetta was arrested and accused of practicing witchcraft and using it to cast a spell on Edward IV to marry Elizabeth. She was tried and cleared of all charges. Richard III resurrected the charges after the death of King Edward IV this time with Parliament's consent as part of an act declaring King Edward and Elizabeth's marriage invalid and thus their children illegitimate. The main argument was an existing contract of marriage Edward had made to another woman who was conveniently dead. To make sure the case was decided in favor of Richard, the charge of witchcraft was added on. This time not only was Jacquetta involved, Elizabeth was accused of working with Jacquetta to enchant Richard King Edwards' brother. They were found not guilty. Richard became King Richard II Elizabeth made peace with King Richard and Jaquetta died 30 May 1432.

This shows that even during the peak of the witch hunts and the War of the Roses that not even a Duchess or a Queen was safe for being accused of witchcraft.