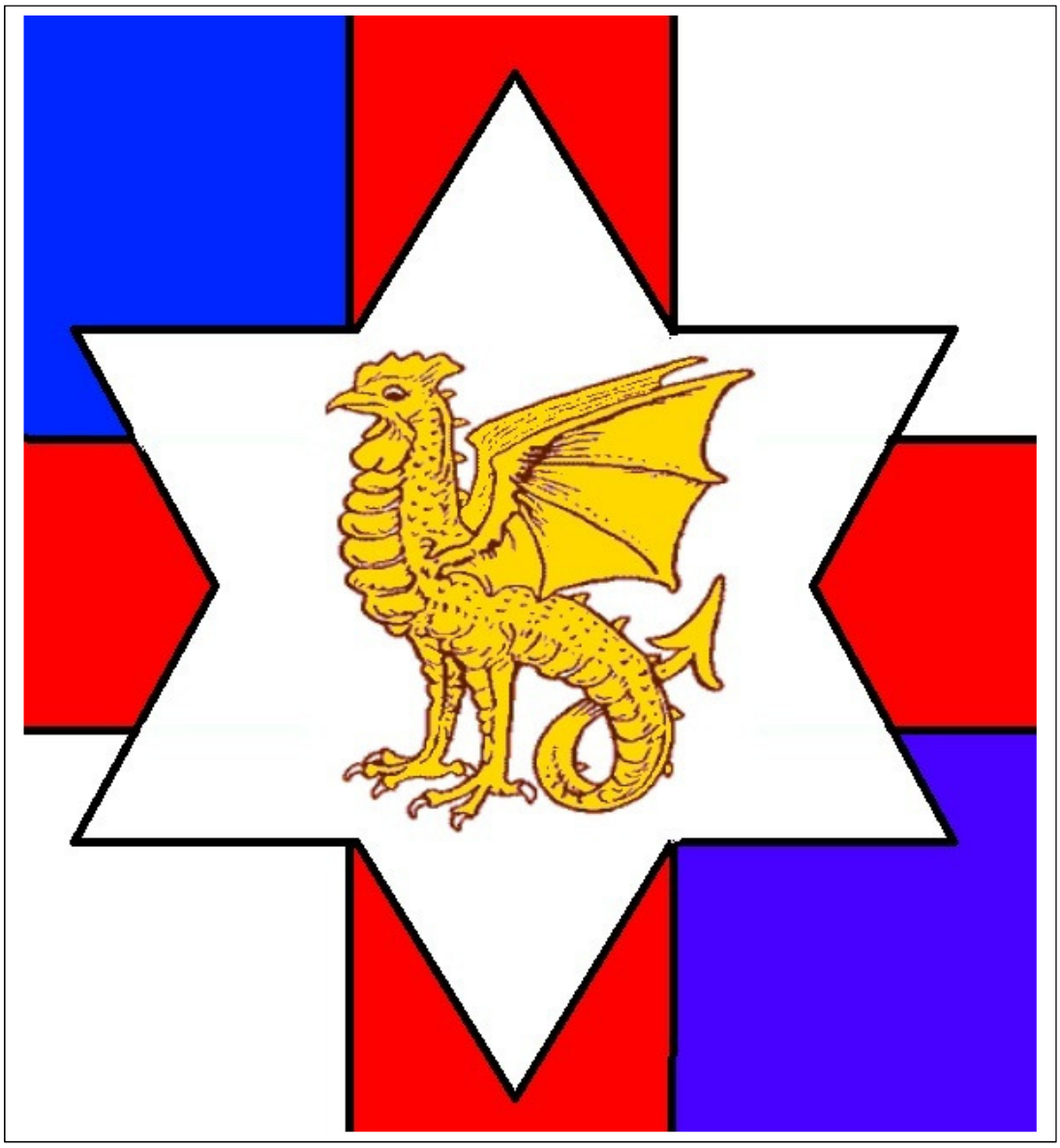
Cockatrice



January A.S. 48

Cockatrice by Lady Gabriella Borromei

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From the Editor

Welcome to the January edition of Cockatrice! I would firstly like to take the opportunity to welcome on board Lady Christine Bess Duvant of Ildhafn! Lady Christine will be Deputy Editor in charge of developing the Cockatrice website. This is particularly exciting as I am looking forward to being able to an online space where all editions of Cockatrice can be accessed.

As you will have noticed Cockatrice has had a recent hiatus in the second half of last year. This was unfortunately due to a very bad case of mundane life on my part. 2014 however is going to be an excellent year and Cockatrice will be back to its soon to be normal quarterly editions!

Of course for this to happen I need YOU! Please send me in your articles, book reviews. recipes, dance reconstructions and your photos! I would love to have a gallery in upcoming editions of Cocktrice where photos and pictures of the wonderful creations of Lochac can be displayed. If you have made something particularly spectacular recently then please send me a photo!

I do hope you enjoy the edition. We have an interesting array of articles from a fascinating piece of research on Medieval animal trials, an interesting article on the effect of ergot on Medieval Society and more Irish myth, the first part of which was a particular favourite in the last edition. Happy reading!

En Servicio

Elisabetta Foscari

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Cockatrice Calendar AS 49 (2014)

May AS 49 Edition	Submissions due	1 April
	Published	1 May
August 49 Edition	Submissions due	1 July
	Published	1 August
November 49 Edition	Submissions due	1 October
	Published	1 November

Medieval Law: The Animal Trials

Countess Liadan ingen Fheradaig

Introduction

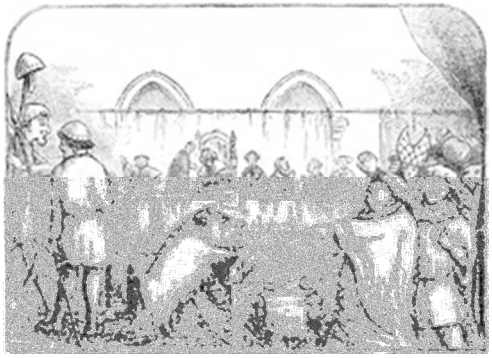

Illustration from *Chambers Book of Days* depicting a sow and her piglets being tried for the murder of a child in 1457

The strange occurrence of "animal trials", where domesticated and wild animals were tried in court following the same procedure as in human courts, occurred throughout the Medieval period in Europe, with a peak between the late 15th and late 17th century. There are records of animal trials occurring in the Southern and Eastern parts of France, and in adjacent parts of Germany, Italy and Switzerland. They were also evidenced in Portugal, England, Scotland, Yugoslavia, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Russia.

There were two main types of animal trials—those held in Ecclesiastical Courts and those held in Secular Courts. The first was used where an animal had caused a public nuisance, and mainly concerned wild animals and insects like rats and locusts. The second was used for animals that had caused physical injury or death to a person, and mainly involved domesticated animals like dogs and pigs. Each followed a strict procedure which generally mirrored those used in normal Courts, including the appointment of lawyers, the hearing of evidence, and, if guilt was found, a punishment ranging from hanging to burying alive to excommunication or banishment, depending on the court and the alleged crime.

A variety of theories for the occurrence of animal trials have been suggested, but the causes are likely to have varied significantly across ecclesiastical and secular courts, and across time periods and geographic location. Some commonly cited explanations behind various animal trials include: upholding the order of nature dictated in The Bible (i.e. God, Church, State, Human, Animal, Plant), following biblical rules regarding the punishment of animals, the inherently human need to control something in an un-ordered and dangerous world, to build trust in the Church and its general power, to eliminate danger to a community by removing the offending animal and encouraging its owner to be more careful next time, or just for basic retribution. Whether or not the animal trials of the Medieval period have

actually ended, or just continue in another less public form, is a question that I will leave for another time.

I will discuss the system of law that allowed the animal trials to occur, the two main types of animal trials, and go through what they were, the procedures involved, the justifications given, and provide some historical examples. The paper will then conclude with a discussion about the Medieval mindset behind the trials, and I have included a list of resources for further reading.

1. Basic introduction to Medieval Law in Europe

Animal trials occurred primarily between the 13th and 18th centuries throughout Europe, but particular in France. Most legal systems across Europe had a strong basis in Roman Law, and so there were similar themes throughout each country.

Around the 6th and 7th century European Kingdoms such as the Visigoths, Burgundians, Salian Franks, Saxons and Lombards started converting unwritten law to written law. Charlemagne (Charles the Great) reformed Frankish law and ordered all law to be written down. He issued many administrative and legislative commands, known as *Capitularies*. These regulated secular and ecclesiastical matters. Around the same time the Germanic Kingdoms also started compiling written recordings of customary law. It is Germanic law that gave us the adversarial procedural system known as "the Ordeal", the importance of oaths in procedure, and the application of laws personally rather than based on territory.
It was in the 11th century, during the rise of Medieval scholasticism, that jurists, or legal academics, began seriously studying and teaching ancient Roman law. The actual laws being taught were compiled by the Emperor Justinian in the 6th century, entitled "*Corpus iuris civilis*".[1] This became a foundation document, which provided a legal model for contracts, rules of procedure, family law, testaments and a strong monarchical constitutional system. The document included a number of parts, including the *Codex,* containing Imperial legislation from the 2nd to the 6th century, and the *Digest,* which was a compilation of excerpts from Roman legal academics. The *Digest* was the key to understanding Roman law because it defined terms, discussed theoretical difficulties, cited court cases, and made the legislation found in the *Codex* understandable and therefore usable. The *Digest* enabled Roman Law to have a huge impact on European Medieval legal systems.

[1] Pennington. K, *Roman and Secular Law in the Middle Ages*, (accessed March 2013, http://faculty.cua.edu/pennington/Law508/Germanic%20Law/histlaw.htm)

The name given to Medieval common law, being the law created by the decisions of the courts, was *ius commune*, and combined both Canon law and Roman law.
In the 12th century Italian provinces started compiling their own laws, which were shaped by the law of the *ius commune* and local practice. Genoa issued its first statutes in 1143, Pisa in 1162, Piacenza in 1135, and Milan in 1170. It was around this time that witness testimony started being recorded.

In the 13th century "the great English treatise on law" was written by Bracton, an English legal academic, and it frequently referenced *the ius commune*, albeit generally incorrectly due to Bracton misinterpretations.

Between 12th and 15th century, jurists were heavily engaged in analysing Justinian's *Corpus iuris civilis* and produced considerable literature on ~~it~~ the topic – exploring ideas, posing questions, analysing other jurist's works and creating doctrines etc.

The legal systems of Medieval Europe were a complex combination of written law and customary law. Ecclesiastical Courts had tremendous power, and there remained many areas, such as within merchants classes, where no written law was available as it was considered outside of the purview of the legislator.

Throughout the next few centuries an increasingly large proportion of law was written down, legal academics continued to publish their opinions, and legal systems became less flexible and more controlled. In many European legal systems, the written law still contains words and even entire pages copied directly from Emperor Justinian's *Codex and Digest*.

From this brief history it is evident that, despite the geographically diverse countries that animal trials occurred in, many of their legal systems were based on Roman Law. As such, they were surprisingly similar in terms of procedure and punishments etc.

2. What were the 'Animal Trials'

The phrase "Animal Trials" can be applied to a broad range of proceedings against animals, with the main theme being that an animal is accused of an offence, a trial occurs to determine whether they are guilty, and if they are found to be guilty, they are punished in similar ways to how human defendants would be punished. The majority of recorded animal trials occurred between the 13th and 18th century, although there is evidence that they continued throughout later centuries.

The idea of Animal Trials seem bizarre to us, primarily because we know that animals do not understand human law so are incapable of making the conscious decision to breach it, and are likewise unable to atone for their actions. The punishments which were frequently carried out also seem very cruel and strange to us, and are generally much more primitive than the punishments courts hand out today.

There were two main types of Animal Trials – Ecclesiastical, and Secular. Which type occurred depended on the alleged offence and the type of animal involved. Each had its own procedure and range of available punishments, but precedents could be used interchangeably between the two Courts.

2A. Ecclesiastical – Procedure, Reasons, Examples

Ecclesiastical Courts were used where the animal caused a public nuisance such as the destruction of crops intended for human consumption. It was commonly used for wild animals and insects.

Ecclesiastical Courts started in Switzerland and the bordering areas of France, Germany and Italy. They spread much further than the secular courts due to the large reach of religion throughout Europe. Eventually Ecclesiastical Courts spread to Ethiopia, Scandinavia, Canada, Brazil, Turkey and Denmark.

Trials in Ecclesiastical Courts were taken very seriously, and legal customs and formal procedural rules were strictly adhered to. The community usually paid for the accused animal to have a defence lawyer, and the animal lawyers would raise complex legal arguments on behalf of their clients. Usually the trials would occur *in absentia*; that is, in the absence of the defendant. Prior to, and during the trial, larger animals that had been captured were sometimes detained in jail alongside human prisoners.

It was common in Ecclesiastical trials for a large group of animals to be named as the defendants, for example: moles, mice, rats, snakes, birds, snails, worms, grasshoppers, caterpillars, termites, various types of beetles and flies, and other unspecified insects and 'vermin'. Even eels and dolphins were named as collective defendants at some point.

<u>Procedure</u>

The typical ecclesiastical proceeding went something like this:

1. The persons alleging harm presented their complaint to the Ecclesiastical Court.

2. The judge receiving the complaint would then send an investigator to determine the extent of the damage allegedly inflicted by the animals.

3. The court would often then demand public processions and prayers to allay heaven's anger before the trial process began.[2]

4. If prayer failed, the court would then summon all of the offending class of animals to appear in court and appoint a procurator; ie., a lawyer, to represent the animal defendants.

5. The lawyers for each party would make arguments on behalf of their clients.

6. The court would decide whether the animal or collective of animals were guilty, and if they were found so, they were often ordered to vacate the area within a set time, such as 6 days.

7. Should the animals fail to comply with the court's order, they were often *anathemized*. This is a ritual whereby the church solemnly pronounced a curse against the offending creatures. For all practical purposes, an anathema is a sort of "animal excommunication", in which the defendant animals were considered damned.

Naturally, it was very common for the defendants to fail to appear in court, and where this occurred, they would lose by default. This meant that the majority of animal trials held in Ecclesiastical Courts were found in favour of the complainant rather than the animal.

The lawyers appointed to defend the animals during Ecclesiastical Trials usually took their job very seriously and devoted a great deal of time, knowledge and legal experience to the defence of their clients.[3] There were specific arguments and strategies that were frequently used:

1. Lawyers would use dilatory tactics in order to delay and obstruct the trial, to annoy the opposing lawyer, and to delay consideration of the case.
2. Lawyers frequently argued that the Court had no legal jurisdiction over animals and so the trial could not proceed.

[2] Cohen. E, *Law, Folklore and Animal Lore*, Past and Present (Oxford University Press, 1986) (110)

[3] Cohen. E, *Law, Folklore and Animal Lore*, Past and Present (Oxford University Press, 1986) (110)

3. Lawyers attempted to vindicate their clients' actions, for example by arguing that they were entitled to take the action that they did, or argue that it actually benefitted the complainant in some way.
4. Lawyers would argue that the animals were God's creations, and therefore had as much right to enjoy the fruit of His earth as the plaintiffs.
5. Lawyers could also argue that his clients were animals. This simple and logical argument was not usually accepted though.

Some animal defence lawyers became famous and were paid quite highly. One of the most renowned animal defence lawyers was Bartholomew Chassenee, who later became the first president of the Parlement de Provence; the equivalent of being appointed Chief Justice of our modern High Court. Chassenee acted in the 1522 matter against the rats of Autun, which is one of the most famous animal trials of all time. There is a movie called "The Advocate" (1993), which focuses on a trial involving a pig accused of murder, where a young lawyer named Richard Courtois, based on Chassenee, was the pig's defence lawyer.

Why were Ecclesiastical Trials done?

There are numerous theories on why animal trials occurred in Ecclesiastical courts, and it is likely that were a number of reasons, each differing according to the individual case. The most common theories include:

1. **For revenge against the animals.**[4] The idea of retaliation through the phrase "an eye for an eye" (*lex talionis*) was popular throughout the Medieval period, and required the infliction upon a wrongdoer of the same injury which he has caused to another.[5] Justice Holmes said "the early forms of legal procedure were grounded in vengeance."[6]
    a. *Noxal surrender:* under this principle the guardian of an animal accused of harming a person was required to surrender the animal to the injured party, purportedly so that the injured party could exact vengeance and do his or her will upon the animal offender (Holmes).

2. **To maintain the hierarchic order established by Genesis** - God, Church and state, humans, animals and plants. When an animal hurts a human this chain is in danger of being violated, and the animal trails address this. It served as a gesture to restore divinely ordained equilibrium.[7]

[4] Girgen. J, The Historical and Contemporary Prosecution and Punishment of Animals, 2003 (accessed March 2013, www.animallaw.info/journals/jo_pdf/lralvol9_p97.pdf)
[5] Blacks Law Dictionary (6th Ed, 1990)
[6] Oliver W. Holmes, *The Common Law 2* (little, Brown & Co. 1963)
[7] Cohen. E, *Law, Folklore and Animal Lore*, Past and Present (Oxford University Press, 1986)

a. "[T]he "crime" of the ox that gored a person to death is not just to be found in the fact that it [sic] had "committed homicide." . . . The real crime of the ox is that by killing a human being—whether out of viciousness or by an involuntary motion, it [sic] has objectively committed a de facto insurrection against the hierarchic order established by Creation."[8]
b. "Thus, during the maiming and hanging of the infamous sow of Falaise, her screams were an audible representation of the reimposition of order on the world"[9]

3. **To prevent the animals from doing any further damage**, rather than to punish them for the harm they had already caused.[10] This is based on the fact that humans could not control pests, and it was commonly held that the Church could, using its supernatural punishments. Some supposedly supernatural punishments, such as issuing an anathema is a no-lose situation – if the insects left, the church's anathema had worked – if they didn't, then the failure could be attributed to the sins of the people. "In either case the prestige of the Church was preserved and her authority left unimpaired."[11]

4. **Because it was consistent with the Bible**, specifically the early Hebrew Law that was laid out in the Old Testament. For example:
   a. as early as Genesis 3:14–15, God curses the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Later passages in the Bible encourage, and sometimes outright demand, that animals be held accountable for their actions.
   b. Exodus 21:28 specifically commands the stoning of a goring ox. Genesis 9:5–6 makes clear that the general law of blood-revenge that God revealed to Noah after the Great Flood applies to both animals and humans.
   c. Exodus 22:18 orders the death of animals used in, or themselves accused of, witchcraft.
   d. Leviticus 20:15–16 requires the death of the animal victim of bestiality; the person who had assaulted it was also to be killed.

   Taken together, these biblical references laid the written foundation for animal trials of the Middle Ages and later.
5. **Because of the extremely crude, obtuse, and barbaric sense of justice at the time. A result of the childish disposition to punish irrational creatures and**

[8] Finkelstein. J*, The Ox That Gored*, 71 Transactions of the Am. Phil. Socy. 59 (1981)
[9] Keith Tester, *Animals and Society: The Humanity of Animal Rights* 91 (Routledge 1991)
[10] Finkelstein. J*, The Ox That Gored*, 71 Transactions of the Am. Phil. Socy. 59 (1981)
[11] Evans. E, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* 140 (Farber & Farber 1987)

inanimate objects, which is common to the infancy or individuals and of races.[12]

6. **Because of the "animism of primitive man,"** that is, the attribution of a soul and consciousness to animals, plants and inanimate objects.[13] If you thought that animals had souls, then you may also believe that they are therefore capable of conscious choice, and thus may punish them when they decide to break the law.

Actual Ecclesiastical Trials:

There are many recorded instances of Ecclesiastical trials, and it is likely that hundreds more occurred where either written records were not made, or they were destroyed.

Some famous ones that have reliable evidence include:

- *824 Valley of Aosta, Italy* - a group of moles were excommunicated for committing a crime. (Further details unknown)
- *1386 Falaise, France* - a pig mangled the face and arms of a small child and killed her. The pig was tried and declared guilty of the crime. Punishment was for the pig to be maimed in her head and upper limbs and then hung in a public square near the city hall.[14]
- *1519 – commune of Stelvio, Italy* - a group of local moles were prosecuted for damaging crops by burrowing. Lawyers were appointed. Many witnesses testified that the animals had caused serious damage to their fields and had caused them financial hardship. The lawyer, anticipating that the judge would order the moles to evacuate the field, requested that they at least be guaranteed a safe passage away from the vicinity, free of possible harm from dogs, cats or other enemies. The judge granted the request and ordered that "a free and safe conduct and an additional respite of 14 days be granted to all those which are young and to such as are yet in their infancy." After their 14 days reprieve however, the judge warned that every mole must have left "irrespective of age or previous condition of pregnancy".[15]
- ***A very famous case:*** *1522 – Autun, France,* the rats of Autun were accused of trying to destroy the province's barley crop. Their lawyer, Bartholomew Chassenee, in defence of his clients' failure to appear before the court in response to its formal summons, first argued that because his clients lived in different locations in several villages, a single summons would fail to notify them all of the complaint. The court agreed, and a second citation was read from pulpits in all the parishes inhabited by the rats. When the rats still did not appear after this second summons, Chassene argued the legal principle that defendants could refuse a summons if making the journey to court placed their lives in

[12] *Ibid.,*

[13] Cited in Girgen's article - Hans Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and Strate* 4 (Anders Wedberg trans. Russel & Russell 1945)

[14] Girgen. J, *The Historical and Contemporary Prosecution and Punishment of Animals*, 2003 (accessed March 2013, *www.animallaw.info/journals/jo_pdf/lralvol9_p97.pdf)*

[15] Evans. E, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* 140 (Farber & Farber 1987)

danger. Since every rat was under constant threat of being eaten by cats, they could not be expected to appear in court unless the prosecution was able to guarantee safe passage. The trial was adjourned to give the prosecution time to figure out how to keep every cat in town from killing a rat on the day of the trial. However, no date was set to reconvene, so the case was essentially dropped without a proper verdict. Chassenee went on to be considered one of the finest and fairest lawyers in French history.

- *1545 – Mount Cenis, France* – weevils ravaged the vineyards of Saint Julien, which was renowned for its wine. After the various arguments were heard, the official issued a proclamation recommending public prayers "to implore pardon for our sins". In May 1546, the public offered prayers, and soon afterwards, the weevils disappeared. Thirty years later the weevils returned and resumed their destructive habits. A trial occurred and new counsel appointed. Pierre Rembaud, the lawyer for the weevils, made a motion to dismiss the case. His argument was that, according to the Book of Genesis, God had created animals before human beings and had blessed all the animals upon the earth, giving to them every green herb for food. Therefore, the weevils had a prior right to the vineyards, which had been conferred upon them at the time of creation.[16] While the legal wrangling continued, the townspeople organized a public meeting in the town square to consider setting aside a section of land outside of the Saint Julien vineyards where the insects could obtain their sustenance without devouring and destroying the town's precious vineyards. They selected a site and described the plot "with the exactness of a topographical survey." The weevils' attorney declared that he could not accept, on behalf of his clients, the offer made by the plaintiffs. The land, Rembaud argued, was sterile and not suitable to support the needs of the weevils. The plaintiff's attorney insisted that the land was, in fact, suitable and insisted upon adjudication in favour of the complainants. The judge decided to reserve his decision and appointed experts to examine the site and submit a written report regarding the suitability of the proposed area.46 It is not clear how the case ended as the last page of the records, upon which the final decision of the case was written, has ironically been destroyed by either rodents or insects.47 Evans suggests that "[p]erhaps the prosecuted weevils, not being satisfied with the results of the trial, sent a sharp-toothed delegation into the archives to obliterate and annul the judgment of the court."48
- *1713 – Piedade no Maranhao in Brazil* – a Franciscan monastery was attacked by termites – they devoured the friars' food, destroyed their furniture, and threatened to topple the walls of the monastery. The friars requested an act of interdiction and excommunication from the bishop, and the termites were summoned to appear before an Ecclesiastical tribunal. At the proceeding, the lawyer appointed to defend the insects argued that because they were God's creatures, the termites were entitled to sustenance. The trial

[16] *Ibid.,*

ended with a compromise in which the friars promised to provide suitable habitat for the termites, who in turn were commanded to remain at that site. The appointed counsel also cheekily praised the industry of his clients and declared them to be, at least in this respect, superior to the friars who had initiated the prosecution.

Ecclesiastical Trials without reliable evidence:

- *666 - Avignon, France* - cursing and burning of storks by Saint Agricola
- *728* – expulsion of venomous reptiles from Reichenau Island in Germany by Saint Perminius
- *Time unknown – Trier, Germany* – a group of swallows disrupted churchgoers with their chirping and earned the ire of the Bishop of Trier, when they "sacrilegiously defiled his head and vestments with their droppings when he was officiating at the alter". The bishop responded by placing a curse on the birds, forbidding them to enter the church on pain of death. According to Evans, "it is still a popular superstition at Trier, that if a swallow flies into the cathedral, it immediately falls to the ground…".[17]
- *Time unknown – Foigny, France* – Saint Bernard cursed a swarm of flies that had been annoying the worshippers and church officials, and the next day they were all dead. It was suggested that the deaths were caused by a sudden frost, rather than the supernatural powers of the church.

2B. Secular Trials: Procedure, Reasons, Examples

Secular courts were commonly used where an animal caused physical injury or death to a human. Usually the animals involved were domesticated animals such as pigs, dogs, cows, bulls, horses, mules, oxen, goats and sheep. These types of trials did not spread as far as the Ecclesiastical trials because they were heavily dependent on the legal system of each region. The most common areas where secular trials occurred were the Southern and Eastern parts of France, and in adjacent parts of Germany, Italy and Switzerland. They were later evidenced in Portugal, England, Scotland, Yugoslavia, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Russia.[18]

The first recorded secular trial occurred in Prytaneum, or The Public Hall, of Ancient Athens.[19] At the Prytaneum there were three types of murder trials – (1) when a person had been killed, but the murderer was either unknown or could not be located, (2) when some

[17] Evans. E, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* 140 (Farber & Farber 1987)

[18] *Ibid.,* and Cohen. E, *The Crossroads of Justice: Law and Culture in Late Medieval France,* 121 (E.J. Brill 1993)

[19] Hyde. W, *The Prosecution and Punishment of Animals and Lifeless Things in the Middle Ages and Modern Times*, 64 U. Pa. L. Rev. 696, 700 (1916)

inanimate object, such as a stone, had caused a human beings death, and (3) when an animal had caused a human beings death.

Procedure

The procedure that was followed in secular trials depended on the timing and location of the trial. In Ancient Greece in a trial held in the Prytaneum, the animal was charged and "finders of fact and law" were appointed. Evidence was heard and the "finders of fact and law" determined if the animal was guilty. They usually decided that the animal was in fact guilty, and sentenced it to be executed. The executed animal was then "cast beyond the border" to rid the land of pollution.[20]

Secular trials predominantly followed this format:

1. Charges were levied against an individual animal offender.
2. Once the filing of a formal complaint alleging harm had occurred, the animal was arrested and brought before the court.
3. A public prosecutor prepared a formal accusation, and the judge assigned defence counsel to assist the accused animal in responding to the charge.
4. At trial, witnesses were examined and evidence was presented.
5. The decision was rendered according to common law precedents, and the animal was usually found guilty and sentenced to death.[21] Very occasionally the Court found in favour of the animal.
6. The punishment inflicted was usually corporal (as in physical), not supernatural.[22]
7. Defence lawyers could appeal unfavourable verdicts in a higher court, and this would sometimes result in a change or annulment of the lower tribunal's judgement or an acquittal.[23]

Often the defendant's demeanour in court worked against them. "In court, [pigs] would frequently act disrespectfully—grunting, squealing and trying to poke their noses through the bars of the prisoner's box. Disorderly conduct of this kind often told against them in sentencing. An animal that remained quiet during proceedings would, on the other hand, receive a certain measure of consideration for its demeanour."[24]

[20] Hyde. W, *The Prosecution and Punishment of Animals and Lifeless Things in the Middle Ages and Modern Times*, 64 U. Pa. L. Rev. 696, 700 (1916)

[21] Berman. P, *Rats, Pigs, and Statues on Trial: The Creation of Cultural Narratives in the Prosecution of Animals and Inanimate Objects*, 69 N.Y.U. L. Rev. 288, 298 (1994)

[22] Evans. E, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* 140 (Farber & Farber 1987)

[23] Evans. E, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* 140 (Farber & Farber 1987)

[24] Philip Jamieson, *Animal Liability in Early Law*, 19 Cambrian L. citing Gerald Carson, *Men, Beasts and Gods* 29 (1972) and Edmund Collins, *Animals Tried in Court,* 19 Our Animal Friends (1891)

In the same way that the animal trials mimicked human trials in terms of procedure, they also copied the punishments available. Punishments included hanging, which was the most common[25], being burned alive, especially during the latter half of 17th century and was frequently applied where the case involved bestiality[26], strung up in the gallows by hind legs, being buried alive, beheaded, or, where the Court chose to invoke the biblical mandate of Exodus 21:28 – stoned to death.[27] Some other punishments included being dragged and hung like human murderers, strangling or just a knock on the head.[28] If the animal was valuable, it was more likely to be confiscated or pardoned.

The willingness of Courts to alter punishments where the animal was valuable was demonstrated frequently. For example, in 1395 on the Mediterranean island of Sardinia in Italy, wild or domestic cattle caught causing damage could be lawfully killed, while donkeys accused of similar harm were treated less severely. "For the first offense of trespassing on a strange field, one ear was cut off; for the second offense, the other ear; for the third offense the criminal was confiscated to the Crown."[29]

Communities took animal trials very seriously, and where proper procedure was not followed when bringing an animal to justice, there was often public outcry. For example, in 1576 in Schweinfurt, Germany, a hangman, lacking legal authority to do so, took matters into his own hands and hanged a sow who had killed a child. As a result of his unlawful action he was permanently banished from the community. According to Evans, "It was not the mere killing of the sow, but the execution without a judicial decision, the insult and contempt of the magistracy and the judicatory by arrogating their functions, that excited the public wrath and official indignation."[30]

Why were Secular Trials done?

In terms of why secular animal trials occurred, there is relevant literature related to Ancient Greece which gives us insight to the Medieval mindset. The literature indicates that the primary purpose of trying animals was the same as their purpose in prosecuting inanimate objects – it was to reinstate balance in their divinely ordered world, which had been disturbed by the crime. Essentially, it was the removal of the pollution that, because of the

[25] Hyde. W, *The Prosecution and Punishment of Animals and Lifeless Things in the Middle Ages and Modern Times*, 64 U. Pa. L. Rev. 696, 700 (1916)

[26] Evans. E, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* 140 (Farber & Farber 1987)

[27] Finkelstein. J*, The Ox That Gored*, 71 Transactions of the Am. Phil. Socy. 59 (1981)

[28] Cohen. E, *Law, Folklore and Animal Lore*, Past and Present (Oxford University Press, 1986) (110), citing C. Giraud, *Essai sur l'Histoire du Froit Francais au moyen age 302 2*

[29] *Animals as Offenders and Victims,* citing *M. Mimaut, Histoire de Dardaigne 445, 446 (Parison 1825)*

[30] Evans. E, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* 140 (Farber & Farber 1987)

crime, had "contaminated" the community.[31] The Ancient Greeks believed that after a murder they had to appease the Erinys, being the (personified conscience of the) avenging spirit of the dead person, lest misfortune fall upon the state.[32] They "held the general notion that the moral equilibrium of the community had been disturbed by the murder and that somebody or something must be punished or else dire misfortune, in the form of plagues, droughts, reverses in men's fortunes, would overtake the land."[33]

Plato, at some point between 428 and 348 BC, said: "If a beast of draught or other animal cause homicide, except in the case when the deed is done by a beast competing in one of the public sports, the kinsmen shall institute proceedings for homicide against the slayer; [and] on conviction, the beast shall be put to death and cast out beyond the frontier."[34]

The rationale behind secular trials in other cultures remains an area of conjecture, and are very likely similar in many ways to the reasons behind ecclesiastical trials. Some theories include:

- **Retribution** – the idea of "an eye for an eye" as discussed earlier.
- **Deterrence** - to dissuade would-be criminals, both animal and human, from engaging in similar offensive acts.
    - **Deterrence of other animals:** In the first instance, the subsequent punishments inflicted upon animal defendants might have served as a sort of general warning to other animals. For, "if word got around about what happened to the last pig that ate a human child, might not other pigs have been persuaded to think twice?"[35] For example, in Africa, lions were sometimes crucified to drive away other lions, in Germany, wolves were hanged for the same reason, and in various localities, peasants nailed birds of prey to the doors of their houses, presumably to keep away other such birds.[36]
    - **Deterrence of Humans**: Alternatively, some of the trials and executions may have been aimed at deterring humans from committing similar offenses, by inspiring in their minds the horror of the crime. Dressing the *sow of Falaise* in human clothes before executing her, gave the proceeding the semblance of a human trial, perhaps thereby impressing upon the people witnessing the execution

[31] Katz. M, *Ox-Slaughter and Goring Oxen: Homicide, Animal Sacrifice, and Judicial Process*, 4 Yale J.L. & Humanities 249, 270 (1992)
[32] Hyde. W, *The Prosecution and Punishment of Animals and Lifeless Things in the Middle Ages and Modern Times*, 64 U. Pa. L. Rev. 696, 700 (1916)
[33] Ibid.,
[34] Plato, *The Laws of Plato, book IX, 263–264* (A.E. Taylor, trans., J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd. 1934).
[35] Hartog. H, *Pigs and Positivism*, 1985 Wis. L. Rev. 899, 902, 922 (1985)
[36] Ewald. W, *What Was it Like to Try a Rat?* 143 U. Pa. L. Rev. 1889, 1913 (1995)

an appropriate moral lesson, and serving to remind them *"that even pigs must pay the penalty for law-breaking."*[37]

- **The owners of animals:** the trials may also have served as a warning to animal owners to better monitor their charges, both humans and animal.[38]
- **For the incapacitation and elimination of future danger to the community.** The idea behind this is that having already caused injury, the animal had already proven herself to be dangerous. In other words, "[a] pig who has killed once may do so again. . . . [B]y sentencing the pig to death the court made life safer for everybody else."[39]
- **To establish cognitive control over a disorderly world.** "…The animal trials were derived from a search for order. People needed to believe that the natural universe was lawful, even when certain events, such as a pig killing a human child, seemed to defy all reasonable explanation. So they turned to the courts…Just as today, when things are unexplained, we expect the institutions of science to put the facts on trial . . . the whole purpose of the legal actions was to establish cognitive control."[40] "Thus, medieval courts made sense of these otherwise unexplainable events by 'redefining them as crimes and placing them within the rational discourse of the trial'."[41] According to Humphrey, *"What the Greeks and Mediaeval Europeans had in common was a deep fear of lawlessness: not so much fear of laws being contravened, as the much worse fear that the world they lived in might not be a lawful place at all. A statue fell on a man out of the blue; a pig killed a baby while its mother was at Mass; swarms of locusts appeared from nowhere and devastated the crops. ...To an extent that we today cannot find easy to conceive, these people of the pre-scientific era lived every day at the edge of explanatory darkness."*[42]
- **Rehabilitation of offender.** This is very unlikely because the animals were usually executed.
- On **economic grounds.** This is unlikely, except for cases where the animal was confiscated.

[37] Ewald. W, *What Was it Like to Try a Rat?* 143 U. Pa. L. Rev. 1889, 1913 (1995)

[38] Beirne. P, *The Law is an Ass: Reading E.P.Evans' The Medieval Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals*, 2 Soc & Animals 27, 38 (1994)

[39] Hartog. H, *Pigs and Positivism*, 1985 Wis. L. Rev. 899, 902, 922 (1985)

[40] *Ibid.,*

[41] Berman. P, *Rats, Pigs, and Statues on Trial: The Creation of Cultural Narratives in the Prosecution of Animals and Inanimate Objects*, 69 N.Y.U. L. Rev. 288, 298 (1994)

[42] Hartog. H, *Pigs and Positivism*, 1985 Wis. L. Rev. 899, 902, 922 (1985)

- Not because of the crimes, but rather **so that the hateful act might be forgotten** (12th century Italian canonist Gratian[43]) This, however, appears somewhat counter intuitive as the trial prolonged the memory of the act.
- **To maintain the hierarchic order established by Genesis**, as discussed previously.

Ultimately, the rationale behind the trials were largely dependent on the time, the region and the individual case. Most trials probably share features of control, order and revenge. Jen Girgen, an American academic, asserts: "*In the end, a combination of the human needs to establish cognitive and hierarchical control and to exact revenge seems to offer the best explanation for the animal trials and executions.*"

Actual Secular Trials:

- *1266 Fontenay-aux-Roses- France*: a pig was tried and executed for killing an infant.
- *1379 Saint-Marchel-le-Jeussey, France*: two herds of pigs were feeding together, and three animals suddenly attacked and killed the herd keeper's son. The three sows were tried and condemned to death.[44] In this case it was also found that, "as both herds had hastened to the scene of the murder, and by their cries and aggressive actions, (it) showed that they approved of the assault, and were ready and even eager to become *participles crimins*, they were arrested as accomplices and sentenced by the court to suffer the same penalty."[45]
- *1408 Pont de Larche, France* - a pig accused of killing a child was kept in the towns prison for more than ~~3~~ three weeks until it was hanged. The jailer charged two deniers tournois a day for the pig's board.
- *1457, Savigny-sur-Etang, France* - a sow and her six piglets were caught in the act of killing a five year old boy, and were imprisoned and tried for murder before the seigneurial justice of Savigny.[46] The sow was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged by her hind legs to a gallows tree, but her offspring were pardoned on the basis of their youth and the bad example set by their mother.[47]
- *1553, Frankfort on the Main, Germany* - several swine were executed after killing a child and their bodies were thrown in the river.[48]
- *1567, Senlis, France* - a sow was hanged for her "cruelty and ferocity" in killing a ~~4~~-four month old girl.[49]

[43] Hyde. W, *The Prosecution and Punishment of Animals and Lifeless Things in the Middle Ages and Modern Times*, 64 U. Pa. L. Rev. 696, 700 (1916)
[44] Evans. E, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* 140 (Farber & Farber 1987)
[45] *Ibid.,*
[46] Cohen. E, *Law, Folklore and Animal Lore*, Past and Present (Oxford University Press, 1986) (110)
[47] Evans. E, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* 140 (Farber & Farber 1987)
[48] *Ibid.,*
[49] *Ibid.,* citing *Grenier. D, 20 Manuscrupts de la Bibliotheque Nationale de Paris, 87*

- *1621 Leipsic, Germany* - a cow pushed a women, causing her death, and the punishment decided by the Law Faculty of the University of Leipsic was for the cow to be killed and buried unflayed, with neither her flesh eaten nor her hide made into leather.[50]

3. Why did the animal trials end?

Animal trials did not end abruptly, but they did seem to slowly peter out. Some possible reasons for this include a rise in humanitarianism, increased urbanisation which meant there was less interaction with animals, and an emerging human rationality.

Whether the animal trials have truly ended is a question for a more modern class. Dangerous dog matters are an example of a modern day trial. Here a formal complaint is filed, a hearing is held, evidence is presented, and a declaration is made about whether the dog does or does not meet the statutory definition of dangerous. If so, the dog's guardian is ordered to take certain measures to prevent further incidents, the dog is ordered to be put down or removed from the jurisdiction. If the guardian does not comply, they can be fined or jailed.[51] Most cases are only heard formally when the media and politics get involved. Otherwise generally a quick process occurs and the dog is put down – its *summary justice*. People who kill their own animals after they attack someone are very rarely charged with animal cruelty.

Jen Girgen, reflecting on the animal trials of medieval, said that, "in short, by killing and permitting the killing of animals who have harmed human beings, we achieve two ends: vengeance on behalf of the injured person, and restoration of the hierarchical order. Prosecutors, in refusing to press animal cruelty charges, and judges and juries, in refusing to convict, further affirm the notion that we have an innate right to achieve these ends."[52]

4. Conclusion

Animal trials seem bizarre and cruel to us, yet they occurred for many centuries across Europe without any obvious protest. While the procedures and outcomes varied between the Ecclesiastical Courts and Secular Courts, central to both was the theme of animals or groups of animals being held responsible for their actions and then punished, in often cruel and unusual ways, accordingly. We do not know for sure the exact reasons behind the

[50] Evans. E, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* 140 (Farber & Farber 1987)
[51] Randolph. M, *Dog Law*, 12/2 (3rd Ed, Nolo 1997)
[52] Girgen. J, *The Historical and Contemporary Prosecution and Punishment of Animals*, 2003 (accessed March 2013, *www.animallaw.info/journals/jo_pdf/lralvol9_p97.pdf)*

animal trials, although reasons such as retribution, deterrence, seeking to impose order and control in an otherwise unordered and potentially chaotic world, in addition to removing tangible dangers from a community are all logical theories.

As pointed out by Evans and quoted by Girgen,

> "the increasing frequency of animal trials was contemporaneous with the so-called revival and acceptance of Roman law, with the great codifications of criminal law, and altogether with an ever-increasing coherence of rational systems of law and thought."[53] The phenomenon reached its climatic point—with both the ecclesiastical and secular trials reaching their point of frequency and greatest geographic spread—in the early 1600s, an age of relative enlightenment.[54]

The increase in the number of animal trials paralleled an increasingly formalised legal system, which doesn't seem to make sense to us today - especially when you consider that people became more educated and less superstitious with each passing century. As Cohen states, these facts are "difficult to square with the picture of humanity advancing in linear progression from the superstitious Middle Ages to the rational nineteenth century."[55]

What we do know, is that thousands of animals were excommunicated, exiled, killed and injured as a result of these animal trials, and that they are likely to remain a bizarre, intriguing and yet unexplainable element of European Medieval Law for a long time to come.

[53] Evans. E, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* 140 (Farber & Farber 1987)

[54] Evans. E, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* 140 (Farber & Farber 1987), Cohen. E, *The Crossroads of Justice: Law and Culture in Late Medieval France,* 121 (E.J. Brill 1993), Cohen. E, *Law, Folklore and Animal Lore*, Past and Present (Oxford University Press, 1986) (110)

[55] Cohen. E, *Law, Folklore and Animal Lore*, Past and Present (Oxford University Press, 1986) (110)

Reference List

Absolutely Key Resource:

- Girgen. J, *The Historical and Contemporary Prosecution and Punishment of Animals*, 2003 (accessed March 2013, *www.animallaw.info/journals/jo_pdf/lralvol9_p97.pdf)*

Essential resources:

- Beirne. P, *The Law is an Ass: Reading E.P. Evans' The Medieval Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals*, 2 Soc. & Animals 27, 38 (1994)
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- Evans. E, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* 140 (Farber & Farber 1987) (This is probably the most complete listing of animal trials to date)

Useful resources:

- Ewald. W, *What Was it Like to Try a Rat?* 143 U. Pa. L. Rev. 1889, 1913 (1995)
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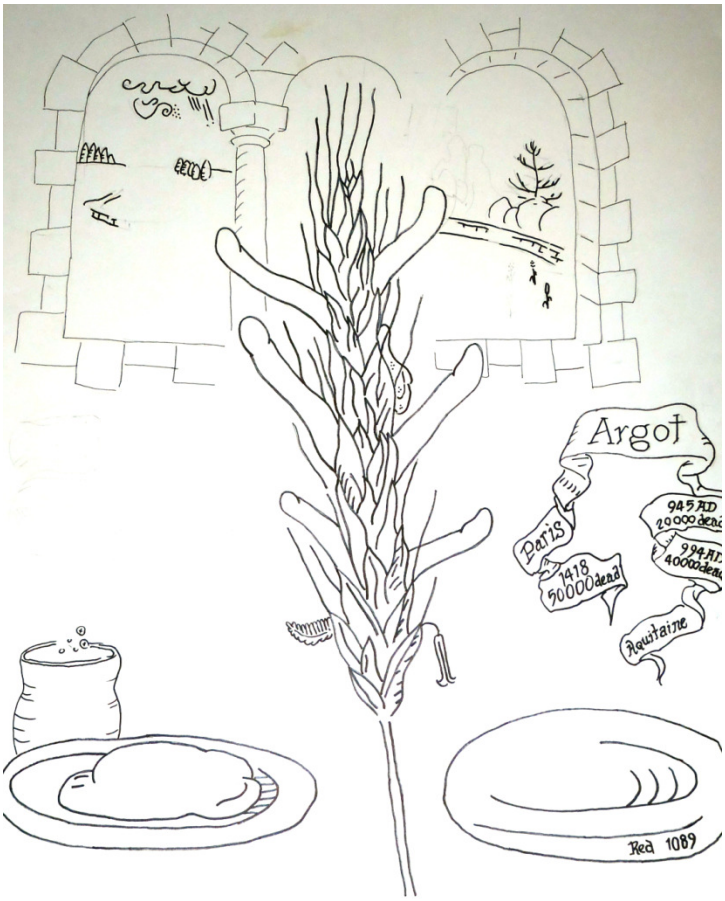
Ergot
The fungi that ate medieval Europe

Theophrastus von Oberstockstall



What is Ergot?

Ergot is a fungal infection of grass and cereal that results from wind carried spores opportunistically germinating in receptive developing grain ovaries. Completely reappropriating the nutrient assets of the cereal grain, ergot then to grows into a hardened grain-like toxic 'peg' in place of the grain in the cereal ear.

Once established in the grass/cereal ear, the fungus promotes a sugary secretion, "honeydew", from the developing grain that carries fungal spores to contaminate other grass spikelets. Continuing to develop within the grain, the fungus eventually replaces the ears' grain with a harden spur, three times the size of the grain it exploited. The spur contains a cornucopia of fungal poisons (*mycotoxins*).

A fungus with many names

As the fungus had a long history[56] within human society it is known by several names. Amongst the 46 known German names is the medieval *Mutterkorn,* the child of the *Kornmutter*; the medieval French predominately refers to *Angot*[57] amongst the 19 different names for the *cock's spur;* and the medieval English called in *Spurred* or *Horned Rye* initially considering it to be a part of the plant. Ergot was only recognised as a fungus in 1711 by Claude Joseph Geoffroy. In the modern Linnaean system it is *Claviceps purpurea,* named in 1853 by Louis Rene Tulasne. The

[56] Ergot infecting cereal crops dates back to Assyrian cuneiform clay tablet records of 600BC.
[57] The origin of later English *Ergot*. Its appearance in the English language was during French dominated period.

purple curved phallic spur shape is the most notable feature of the suspicious generally black[58] grain mimic, the fungal *sclerotia*.

Ergot can infect most cereal crops given the right conditions

In medieval Europe, Rye (*Secale cereale*) was predominately grown in a band from Holland to Russia and Austria to France. It is highly susceptible to windblown spores due to its exposed stigma during open pollination and takes longer to flower in cold wet conditions that promote fungal infection. Climatic conditions of Eastern Europe especially seasons remaining constantly damp increased ergot infectivity. Whilst rye is widely reported as the predominant host of ergot, many other grasses including wheat, spelt, oats, pearl millet and barley can be infected. Ergot infected seed from perennial ryegrass[59] (*Lolium perenne*) have killed pigeons and contaminated wild-rye (*Elymus virginicus*) has poisoned cattle. Crop fields mixed with wild rye or other grasses that are not harvested may develop ergot and act as an inoculation reservoir for future cereal crops.

Normally the sclerotia fall to the ground where silent contaminated soil maintains infection potential with the major fungal spread via wind distributed spores. Geographic constraints and climate variability characteristic of a wet season[60] ending in a windy dry environ[61] produced ideal conditions for ergot to germinate and infect grasses and cereals especially rye.

Medieval cereal demand drove rye expansion and ergot spread

Agriculture expanded during the medieval period. Under rising food demands, rye crops expanded into marginal areas that did not suit other cereal crops[62] including drained marshland, poor or marshy soils with inadequate drainage or high acidity soils. The *Statute of Merton* in England (1235) enabled Lords to enclose and develop 'waste' lands. The spread of rye coincided with the increased ergotism outbreaks. Indeed, different soil types[63] affect the ergot's mycotoxin profile which influences reported symptoms.

Continental Europe's dramatic ergot epidemics followed harvests seasonally climaxing in August and September. Though less susceptible wheat was farmed by peasants, wheat was a valuable trade commodity and sold or used as land rent. In medieval England, the acquisition of rye was not as widely accepted though pockets of local production were maintained.

[58] Or dark purple, as the Linnaean name implies. Powdered sclerotia exhibit a purple hue as does water extracts of the powder.
[59] The first grass to be domesticated to a cereal food crop.
[60] Wet spoil promotes soil based spores to germination from sclerotia.
[61] Dry winds broadly distribute spores from soil germinated mycelia.
[62] Such as wheat.
[63] Especially, eroded basaltic or acid sulphur soils.

Ergot: a Pandora's box of poisons

Ergot produces more than 200 clearly recognised compounds[64] including a diverse array of toxins that can comprise a staggering 0.5 percent of sclerotia dry weight. The quantitative compositions of toxins can vary widely in ergot infected cereals. Ergot strains isolated across Europe have exhibited different poison production with certain strains not producing certain toxins. The toxic substances produced in an infected rye ear vary largely influenced by climate and soil type, so regional variability is common. The chemical stability and reactivity of ergot toxins means that they can maintain influential stimulus for at least eighteen months.

Diets in medieval times were highly susceptible to ergot

Rye being the cheapest grain was predominately consumed by medieval European subsistence farmers making them more susceptible to ergotism. A typical medieval peasant diet could be composed in excess of 80 percent cereal carbohydrates. By way of example, in medieval Scotland, the peasant diet mainly consisted of multi-grain porridge, Sop (a boiled porridge-like soup), and multi-grain bread. Cheese or milk occasionally supplemented meals. An ergot susceptible diet was exacerbated by vitamin and mineral deficiencies, existing compromised health and internal parasites such as worms.

Accidental harvests and famine foraging increases ergot exposure

Accidental harvesting of other cereals and grasses occurs when the anticipated cereal crop is mixed with unintended plants. During famine years and poor harvests, starving peasants would scavenge any wild cereals including grass seed. Combining the ergot riddled grains to make porridge or bread-like meals, they would have unwittingly exposed themselves a broad array of *Claviceps* fungi including the highly hallucinogenic *Claviceps paspalum*[65]. The labouring families would desperately consume the meagre offerings which would only lead to their agonizing ergotic death.

Interestingly, in Germany and Russia during the early Middle Ages the general populous considered the unexpected appearance of ergot as a blessing and even considered it necessary to include at least one sclerotia to make good bread! Somewhat fortunately, the general tastes of the medieval English and Italian people preferred wheat over the 'less aromatic and coloured bread' from rye and thus unknowingly reduced ergotism epidemics.

[64] Such as *ergometrine, ergotamine, ergopeptines, ergocryptine,* and other lysergic acid derivatives.
[65] This closely related grass pathogen was utilised in Greek antiquity by the Eleusis Demeter Cult to induce mass mystical visions. Other mystic religious movements throughout history and across the globe have utilised ergot to inspire divine insight.

Strange coloured Bread and weird Beer

In 1089 just prior to two massive ergot epidemic years, Sigebert de Gremblour commented that the bad bread from Lorraine's was 'dark red'[66]. Robert Dumont later observed in 1125 that bad bread in France was 'violet' coloured. Considering approximately 50 percent of pharmacologically active toxins are inactivated during baking a substantial initial amount of ergot in the flour must have been present to sustain toxicity in bakery goods. In some reports a single meal was adequate to result in death. Importantly, baking or brewing transforms the ergot mycotoxins both compositionally and chemically. For example, the hallucinogenic mycotoxin, lysergic acid diethylamide[67], is enhanced during food preparation accentuating its manipulative power. Contaminated beer was common following epidemic years as mycotoxins, from using ergot infected rye or barley, was able to survive the malting and brewing process and remain active for over a year. This may have complicated the reputation of medieval brewers that had already been accused of adding hallucinogenic henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*) to beer to enhance inebriation. Milk drinks have also been reported to induce ergotism though presumably they are the result of tainted bread being included in milk blended beverages.

Medieval Ergot epidemics

During medieval epidemics, milled flour from spoiled rye or commonly a mixture of grains was widely distributed. As a result, all levels of society were touched by the epidemic, especially where diet contained higher proportions of grains as was the typical peasant's diet. Crucially, the epidemics were not associated with food poisoning. The common symptoms, especially *Ignis sacer* (discussed later) were interpreted as a punishment from God for sins. Suffering people would only find refuge and treatment in the church and religious hospitable services.
During the medieval period a mass poisoning epidemic occurred somewhere in Europe on average every 10 years, as calculated by Hirsch to be 130 events between 591 - 1879. As the disease usually did not lead to death but gross disfigurement it is considered the most horrific epidemic.

Unpredictable outbreaks of ergotism contributed to confusion

In medieval France records indicate the 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th centuries sporadically suffered 6, 11, 10 and 3 substantial outbreaks of ergot plaque respectively. Recorded fatalities are unreliable and mortality was estimated at 20 % of inflictions. It remains terrifying that by example one French epidemic in Aquitaine in 944-945 AD had 20,000 deaths and in 994AD the same defenceless region suffered 40,000 deaths in a single poisoning; 8,000 fatalities are attributed to

[66] The bread colour was presumably as a result of considerable ergot. contamination.
[67] Naturally occurring only in ergots.

one unexpected epidemic in Sologne, France and 50,000 gangrenous ergot related deaths occurred in 1418 in Paris. Confusingly, if we consider that the 20 thousand deaths in 945AD Aquitaine was estimated to be half the population at the time and that actual fatalities from gangrenous ergotism is proportionally low, therefore some form of poisoning may have been experienced by a large proportion of the population. Further, if we consider the reported fatalities are correct then a greater proportion of people experienced some form of poisoning in Aquitaine; nearly an entire region of Sologne inhabitants went partially mad; and early 15th century Paris was unpredictably decimate by ergoteers.

Table. Documented French Medieval Ergot Epidemics. (Taken from Duncan, 1993)

945	Paris		1089	Lorraine	1109	Orleans,	Chartes
994	Metz,	Burgundy	1092	Tournai	1128	Soissons,	Chartes
1041	Verdun		1093	Vienne	1129	Arras,	Cambrai
1085	Lorraine		1094	Limoges, Nivelles	1200	Vienne	
					1235	Aquitain	

The Black Death's improbable positive outcome

The impact of the contagious Black Death (1348-50) may have produced an unlikely reprieve from ergot's influence. Cross Europe some areas experience less bubonic plague deaths but the communities remained susceptible to ergot, whilst in other districts the plague was further hellish with a combination of ergotism. The outcome of a reduced European population[68] foremost removed agricultural production pressure. Farming moved toward a proportional increase of more profitable and less ergot susceptible wheat agriculture. Peasant diets during the late 14th century increased proportionally in wheat. 'Waste' lands where rye was preferentially grown were temporarily abandoned following the black death.

Symptoms of ergotism

In water the ergot sclerotia sink and toxins dissolve to establish an equilibrium mixture between inactive and active isomeric hydrophilic derivatives. Most of the toxins are easily orally absorbed. Individual poison tolerances[69] mycotoxins

digestive fluid interactions with poisons.

influence symptoms. Notably, consumed dosage and repeated exposure within the diet greatly influence the disease outcome. Continued exposure to the mycotoxins and sustained ergotic symptoms may end in irreversible physical damage.

Initial signs of poisoning

Initially, peripheral vaso-constriction effects are noted for both gangrenous and convulsive ergotism[70]. Commencing one hour after consumption, experiences include initial pain, sweating, salivation, tingling and aching of the limbs most frequently affecting lower extremities. There may also be an accompanying combination of violent nausea and involuntary digestive tract evacuation resulting in partially digested and highly bio-dynamically active, stinking faeces possibly accompanied by dead parasitic worms. Sensations increase to a sensitivity spectrum from *formication*[71] to burning pain, *Ignis sacer*[72], or an intense cold-like freezing burn.

Gangrenous ergotism: a limbless life

In the more lethal and horrific gangrenous ergotism the limbs become numb and painless due to the death of the nerves. The loss of vascular circulation leads to the skin becoming cold, lifeless and any painless incisions being bloodless[73]. Secondary infection and eventually shrinking of the deprived limb culminates in dry stinking gangrene. Finally a bloodless and painless auto-amputation may terminate the limb. The blackened limb stump reinforced the belief that ignis sacer fire had burnt the appendage to a charcoal-like appearance.

Convulsive ergotism: dance till you're dead

In the recurrent convulsive form of the disease a muscular impulse spectrum develops from sporadic twitching[74], stronger irregular spasms[75], continuous convulsions leading to complete muscle constriction and limb contortions eventuating in possible bone breakage. Cutaneous extravasation or inflammation advanced from tissue damage and haemorrhages. Rigid limbs or strong convulsions were attributed to super-human powers

[70] Gangrene and convulsive ergotism: the two common distinct forms of the disease. Due to the distribution of symptoms they could almost be classified as French and German ergotism respectively divided across the Rhine.
[71] A sensation like ants are running or eerily crawling under the skin. Interestingly this symptom was not limited to the limbs but the entire body.
[72] A sacred fire characterised by the otherworldly description of an invisible fire that had no heat. Also known as Saint Anthony's or Saint Martial's fire.
[73] These symptoms would be used to accuse people of witchcraft, as is found in surviving court records.
[74] Irregular small muscle twitches appearing like bumps under the skin added to the distress of formication.
[75] Strong convulsions were associated with the mysterious dancing disease that may appear and disappear over days, with sufferers ultimately dying from exhaustion.

of resistance or strength. Degeneration of spinal cord and brain damage due to blood clots can result. In convulsive ergotism, the tongue muscles and vocal chords were affected causing a change in the voice, speech or reduction to making 'animal noises'. Vocal muscle damage in the victim led to their eventual speechlessness.
The entire degenerative processes can progress over several hours, days or weeks with greater speed in severe poisoning cases. Whilst gangrenous and convulsive ergotism has not been reported simultaneously it has sequentially been observed in individuals[76]. Recovering individuals have been reported as afflicted with voracious appetites that may have aided recurrent poisoning.

The madness of a fungus

Due to the psychoactive chemicals produced by Ergot[77], the fungus has developed a notorious attribute of eliciting confusion, delirium, maniacal excitement, temporary insanity, rage, hallucinations, tinnitus[78] and insomnia lasting several days followed by deep sleep induction. Fascinatingly, common medieval imagery of hallucinations included unsurprisingly fire[79], countless reports of flying sensations and macabre or mystical animal themes. Pupil restriction or dilation caused intense sensory magnification combining auditory amplification, light sensitivity, visual disturbance and spatial distortions[80]. Additionally, serotonin antagonism predisposed suffers to neuro-chemical depression.

Human fertility was heavy impacted by ergotism

Loss of lactation resulting from the ergot alkaloid *ergocryptine* complicates breast-feeding. However, reports indicate that infants have been spared ergotic symptoms from consuming breast milk. Menstruation termination, loss of fertility[81], increased stillbirths, deformed births and abortion are described and was partly documented in Parsees holy text in the 7th century related to ergot.

The medieval horror of recovery and survival

Surprisingly, the death rate was low with an overall mortality of 20 percent and even lower with treatment as will be discussed in reference to Saint Anthony's hospices. Victims experiencing gangrenous ergotism may lose all of their limbs and be pitifully crippled, so a general medieval outcome was a horrified survival. Convulsive ergotic

[76] For from different outbreaks of ergot poisoning.
[77] Especially *Claviceps paspalum*.
[78] Ringing in the ears.
[79] Associated with *ignis sacer*.
[80] Commonly reported as individuals observing large fluctuation in size and proportion.
[81] Also attributed to the gangrenous loss of the male member.

death from the calamitous interruption of respiratory function may perform a welcome alternative. However, the survival rate and consequential grotesque disfigurements[82] and strange ideas due to mental disturbances reinforced the highly religious nature of medieval society. *Studies of beggars and vagrants*, a late 15th Century sketch by Hieronymus Bosch, may be an indicator of the large proportion of the populous surviving gangrenous ergotism as strangely smiling hallucinating amputees. Combined all the symptoms appear too extraordinary to be from a natural or mundane cause. In the medieval mind, primarily cure was through forgiveness from God with 'medical' intervention an added bonus. Ergot symptoms supported a medieval belief of the *end of days*, the Last Judgement and the inevitable Christian Armageddon.

Ergot affects animals too

Livestock feed infected grain or foraging contaminated pastures also experience ergotism with gangrenous and convulsive symptoms appearing in cows, horses, pigs, dogs, cats, geese and chickens. Symptoms included oral foaming, loss of claws or hooves, hyperthermia syndrome, demented behaviour commonly witnessed as animals careering around paddock or pens and driving into water where uncoordinated limbs led to drowning. Spasms increasing to stiffness and paralysed limbs, miscarriages, deformed or premature births exacerbated agricultural losses[83]. Recovery from ergotism by animals is low. As animal husbandry knowledge was predominately distributed verbally during times of little ergot outbreaks the experience of animals suffering ergotism may have been lost.

In the late medieval period increased agricultural pressure including the advancement of enclosures[84] leading to restricted pasture availability of livestock amplified occurrence of ergot poisoning. Grazing animals restricted to confined fields met with limited ability to refuse to consume contaminated grasses. Moving animals to uninfected pastures[85] may also have been unavailable. Yet, St. Anthony's pigs (discussed later) were entitled to roam freely. Strangely whilst ergot is avoided by animals, after poisoning livestock maintain a taste preference for the toxic plants. Unfortunately, dried, milled and stored grain that was intended to supplement animals' diet remained toxic hence prolonging and exacerbating the disease.

[82] In the extreme, sufferers were reduced to limbless trunks.
[83] An exasperated addition to a family that may themselves be suffering ergotism.
[84] Especially during the *Tudor period*, 1485 – 1603, in England.
[85] Had the grass been questioned, which it was probably not. Medieval thought at the time considered Man to be living in God's garden with every plant being beneficial in some way to humans. Hence medieval herbal works are enormous prescribing benefits to countless worthless weeds. Poisons were generally confined to vipers and snakes with poisonous effects of plants attributed to contamination by those animals.

St Anthony of Vienne

St. Anthony was the patron saint of ergot sufferers. He was a Red Sea fasting ascetic (251-356AD) who provided inspiration by steadfastly refusing the visions and temptations (including naked encouraging women that would later reflect a mandrake side-effect) induced by his lifestyle. In his lifetime he was pestered by demons and later the hospices would voluminously produce pestering prays to St Anthony continuing his torment in heaven. It was a common belief that St. Anthony was the dictator of Ergotism and also its savour. Judgement, punishment and treatment in relation to ergotism were administered by St. Anthony. Only he could transform a victims suffering into a holy learning experience.

The first medieval hospice to treat ergot sufferers was established in approximately 1093 in the proximity of the St. Anthony's church in La-Motte-Saint-Didier, France. At the time this location had recently suffered the beginning of the major medieval ergot epidemics in 1085 (Lorraine), 1089 (Lorraine), 1092 (Tournau), 1093 (Vienne) and 1094 (Limoges, Nivelles). France witnessed proportionally more gangrenous ergotism than the convulsive form. Later, in 1297 the La-Motte-Saint-Didier church of Saint Anthony gained recognition as an Abbey.

The medieval beginning of the modern hospital

The hospice group received Papal recognition as a monastic order in 1227 and became custodians of Saint Anthony's bones to be used as relics. The Order grew by 1514 into a major European wide network of 372 hospices[86]. It was recognised as the fore-barer of large organised medical welfare infrastructure that had not previously existed. Whilst the majority of Antonine hospices were established on the *Cameno de Saintiago Compostella* to assist suffering pilgrims, later devotees would walk a path to Vienne rather than Spain for forgiveness and relief from ergotism. The medieval pilgrimage upsurge for repentant reduction of post-death purgatory potentially increased the spread of ergot amongst the cereal crops by unwittingly distributing spores in soiled clothes and footwear.

The medieval Antonine hospice network aimed to recover patients from disease and restore their social, mental and religious wellbeing in an architectural arrangement that

[86] 200 of the hospices where located along the four major roads on the pilgrimage pathways between France and Santiago, Spain. Enabling ergotees to progress along the pilgrimage road.

combined both infirmary and church in one open plan. Patients were perpetually in church, always able to see the sacraments directly. Whilst specific medieval 'mental treatments' are unknown it is anticipated that inclusion in daily pray routines and confession were central to the care of the soul. For bed ridden amputees with their accompanying severed limbs drying from their bed-heads, prays through the veil of hallucinations may have gained passionate pursuits. Alternatives were to resolve oneself to a life of virtuous despair in poverty.

Recognising a medieval Antonine hospitaller

The Antonine hospitallers could be recognised in the 12th century by an attire of black gown embroidered with a blue cross. Their alms collections would be attracted by bell ringing. In Northern European countries, affluent members of society would display their wealth not by offensive decadence but rather through sponsorship of a hospice. For example, the *Knights of St. Anthony*[87] was a patrician society that donated money to Antonine hospices. Members were recognised by a golden Tau cross necklace. The smaller hospices were little more than a converted house serviced by dedicated religious members with a dozen or so permanent patients. Medical care was primarily for the final days of suffers. Casualties would be moved there after the family members had grown exhausted of their madness or offensive odours.

Divine herbal wine with saintly bones

Most famously, the bone relics of St. Anthony that had been transported from Constantinople by the crusader *Geslin II* to France were employed to strain the *St. Vinage*, a holy herbal wine. The blessed wine was offered as part of an annual Feast of Ascension[88], a pseudo-communion rite to enable holy forgiveness and purification on the front doorsteps of St. Anthony monasteries. A sixteenth century survey of the bone relics calculated in excess of the equivalent of five red wine soaked skeletons attributed to St. Anthony distributed throughout the medieval hospice network. So popular was the St Vinage that three Papal Bulls reinforced the Order of St. Anthony's monopoly on its production. Its secret herbal ingredients (which may have opportunistically contained fermentation contaminates such as ethyl alcohol) encouraged counteractive vaso-dilative[89] and analgesic effects. Whilst the annual public availability of St Vinage was limited, for a large price the higher societal tier could avail themselves access to the curative liquor from the Antonine monastery apothecaries. Regular vaso-dilative medicine may have increased the recovery and reduced permanent damage.

[87] Established by Albrecht II of Bavaria in 1382.
[88] Occurring forty days after Easter.
[89] Dilating the capillaries.

Herbal treatments: a balancing act between temporary and permanent relief

High 'Cooling' humoured Galenic herbal extracts, to balance the 'hot' disease especially ignis sacer, including mandrake, henbane and plantain. The inclusion of analgesic herbs within the therapeutic treatment of ergot sufferers was in keeping with the herbal advice from the popular *Antidotarium Nicolai* of which 50 percent of the pharmacological recipes were for pain relief and amongst the major narcotic ingredients 20 percent included opium as an ingredient. However, overdose of mandrake, opium or henbane[90] would have led to permanent mortal escape of ergotism symptoms. Sadly, most of the Antonine apothecary knowledge was lost as was the treatments and herbal ingredients of the famous antonine-wine. Fourteen botanically correct herbs painted at the feet of Saint Anthony in an Isenheim altar triptych have been recognised for their therapeutic value and may have been associated with ergotism treatment.

Mandrake extract whilst providing analgesia services also contains the hallucinogenic alkaloids and toxins *hyoscyamine, scopolamone* and *hyoscine* (also found in henbane) adding to the distortion of reality by ergot. The roots and berries were used as an ingredient in the narcotic remedies administered before surgery and in common analgesic medieval remedies for ergot symptom relief. Mandrake and henbane is also considered an aphrodisiac as it has been attributed to erotic visions, promoting sexual arousal and increased fertility. However, the stimulatory side-effect may be disturbing amongst the other experiences overwhelming the ergotism recipient.

Antonine treatment of the obvious non-contagious disease included: ergot free wholesome food enhanced by the removal of 'cursed black grains', herbal treatments, therapeutic ointments, the highly reputed wines, and careful linen bandaging of gangrenous limbs. In Antonine hospices treatment decreased mortality to five per cent. The good quality ergot free bread in hospitals supplied from carefully harvested monastic fields was accompanied by meat from the abbey piggery. The Anthonine pigs were renowned and could be easily recognised by wearing a customary Antonine bell. The pigs may have also indicated harvest contamination by their death or distress from toxic grain-feed.

Medieval surgical measures reduce patient's lengths

[90] The major suspected ingredients of the wine.

Friars were prevented from violating the human body in 1215 therefore surgical fraternities arose to fill the vacuum. If non-invasive treatments did not avail disease abatement then limb amputation was exercised to prevent gangrenous attack to vital organs. Brutal amputations and excisions were routinely performed by military medics contract servicing the religious hospices. By way of example, *Hans von Gerssdorff* was reported to have performed more than 200 amputations over a short period in one Strassburg Antonine hospice.

As Catholic custom necessitated the complete bodily burial in preparation of the resurrection any amputated limbs either spontaneous or surgically removed remained with the suffering patient. Upon death the patient could then be interred 'whole' or often as was the case the recovered patient would gift the lost limb to an Antonine altar or shrine. A number of the limbs would be displayed in the entrance portals for convenient retrieval when the Last Judgement occurred. Whilst the male member may be gangrenously affected no commentary suggests that this lost anatomical feature was displayed. The impact on fertility would have certainly been cause for alarm. Curiously, a large number of medieval pilgrim badges include symbolic limbs and appendages.

Altar Art therapy relieves ergot torment

For a hallucinating ergot sufferer the peculiarity of monastic life and subsequent hallucinatory medicine may have been overwhelming and impetus for painting themes of monastic artists. The Flemish artists *Matthias Grunewald* (1470-1528) and *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (1525-1569) and Dutch painter *Hieronymus Bosch* (1450-1516) all associated with hospices used ergot sufferers as authentic models. Purgatory and hellish scenery in church decorations especially altar triptychs in hospices and chapels, included the enormous diversity of ergotism deformities. Ergot symptoms were considered the first stages of decent into Hell. Inadvertently the artists also captured the medical inventiveness of the time with wooden legs, crutches and stilts employed by amputees. The disproportional depiction of amputees in the compositions may have been a reflection of the staggeringly proliferation witnessed in the communities. The contents of Bosch's surreal landscapes of immediate interest include nightshade plants, Antonine hospices, distillatory equipment and his most extensively painted saint, St. Anthony. The Lisbon St. Anthony triptych by Bosch is a fine example. His enchanting vision in the Garden of Earthy delights may have been an enjoyable welcome relief for the living horror of ergotism.

Candle magic in medieval Arras

St. Anthony did not monopolise the medieval cure of ergotism. Two arguing musicians who had separately had visions of the Virgin Mary instructing them to visit St Vaast Cathedral, Arras, France were rewarded with another visitation by Mary. On this occasion with an occupying priest, she presented them with *La Sainte Channdelle* (The Saints candle) with instructions that water that had the candle[91] dripped into it would cure ergotism. Elevating the candle to reliquary status[92] gained the cathedral pilgrimage status especially on Candlemas, 2nd February and a three day celebration in May when the candle was paraded around Arras. The painting *Legend of La Sainte Channdelle* by Michel Varlet in 1571 depicting the elaborate procession indicates that the candle therapy had maintained its power for over 350 years.

Other folk medicine knowledge

Interestingly medicinal folk knowledge includes uses for ergot. In Norwegian folk medicine ergot water was advised for hernia. Powdered ergot was used by midwives in the 1500's to induce contractions, accelerate labour, quelling postpartum haemorrhage and decrease the likelihood of a young mother dying in childbirth. Literature suggests approximately 2 grams of powdered ergot in 280 mL of boiling water may be administered in 90 mL oral dosages to labouring women. However the non-standard quality frequently produced unreliable results, unintended poisoning and negative outcomes from overdoses. Migraine relief was also reported from using ergot that would centuries later be investigated. Its causative agent the fungal alkaloid ergotamine has been identified and commercialised.

horizontal bands.

The Late Medieval ergot epidemics change to a sinister character

During the late medieval period swelling populations forced a need to enlarge agricultural production. Great demand returned to cereal availability seeing wheat become a higher commodity and even rye increasing in price. Increased rural population and metropolitisation accentuated food demands and strained community bonds. To meet rising cereal

production increased draining of marshes occurred with marginal lands utilized again by pioneering rye crops. In these conditions rye is more prone to ergot infection. In Finnmark, northern Norway, imported flour and grain to support the metropolitan populace disassociated them from an agricultural awareness. The grain was stripped of most information concerning the soil type it was grown in, the weather conditions during its production or harvest and especially its ergot content.

Monastery closures contributed to increased accusations of witchcraft

The Reformation and political land grabbing by European royalty[93] beheld the closure and seizure of monasteries. Ignorant destruction of the broader benefits of the monastic system due to the arguments of doctrine[94] led to the loss of medical knowledge and herbal treatments for ergotism. Eventually the loss of understanding and diagnosis of ergotism symptoms often resulted in the catastrophic interpretation of witchcraft as the causal agent of the symptoms in 16th century society. The loss of animal husbandry knowledge also led to ergot poisoning in livestock associated with accusations of witchcraft. Graphic descriptions preserved in court records indicate accurate ergot symptoms especially in central and Eastern Europe. Stronger convincing evidence for ergotism exists in Norwegian records than the popular America or England witch trials.

> *"..a black spot appeared later on, and a piece of her flesh fell off, so that they could see straight in at her bones, and not long after, she died in great agony".*
> Gangrene symptoms recorded at a Norway witch trial, 1670.
> *".. in the evening the boy had nausea and got such a pain in his leg that he screamed, so you could hear it far away out in the street, and he was stretched so badly, as if he was lying on a stretch-rack, and could hear a breaking sound In his body"*
> Convulsive ergotism in Stavanger trail records, 1662.

Unsurprisingly, higher incidences of witchcraft allegations in Late Medieval Essex focused around the lowland areas following the environmental conditions preferring ergot rye infection especially when tensions increased during elevated food resource competition.

Around 1600, ergot poisoning was associated with contaminate food. The implementation of preventative measures, such as grain beating and sieving to separate the ergot sclerotia and legislation of cereal quality, finally brought the ergot epidemics

[93] Such as England's *Dissolution of Monasteries* by King Henry VIII between 1536 and 1541 by legal manipulations.
[94] Especially by Martin Luther, though he may not have in the slightest intended to throw the baby out with the bath water.

under control. Today, the European Union imposes a strict maximum of 0.05% ergot in grain for human consumption.

There is always a nursery rhyme

It has been suggested by Queenan that the *Pied Piper of Hamelin* story[95] may be interpreted as an ergot epidemic with the death of rats attributed to ingesting toxic grain and the more susceptible youth experiencing a deathly dancing mania at the end of harvest resulting in their disappearance. Further, *Four and twenty black birds* is also interpreted to have resemblance to ergot epidemics with the pocket full of rye and black birds (sclerotia) in bakery and pastry dishes leading to singing and daintiness.

Of interest

In pharmacological history, ergot alkaloids have played two important roles:

1. The first identification of inhibitors of nervous system physiological receptors in the case of the brain transmitter serotonin and adrenaline antagonism, and
2. The awareness of minute dosage potential in the case of lysergic acid diethylamide of 30-100 micrograms (μg). In comparative context, until the discovery of the lysergic acid derivatives strength in the 20th Century previous medical dosage was a three-fold larger volume in milligrams (mg).

In conclusion

Imagine a French city at the end of the 11th Century; walking toward the market place you pass a hospice wafting the sweet stench of gangrene whilst over its door dried hands wave at you in the gentle morning breeze. The street is crowded by begging amputees and religious zealots ringing bells to attract attention to the insane ranting of the approaching Judgement. A dog limps past on paw less limbs, and from the local cathedral you can hear the yelling of devoted pray strained by hallucinogenic madness. Pausing at the open entrance of an artist's workshop you admire the breathtaking beauty of the heavenly panorama that has been commissioned for the local hospice altar. You stop at your goal, a bakery selling fresh morning bread. Another customer remarks at the delightful creativity of the cheap, burgundy coloured rye loaf. The medieval period can be such a delight to explore, enjoy your pilgrimage.

[95] A 1284 manuscript form of the story refers to the event as an earlier occurrence.

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A Brief Introduction to Irish Myth - Part 2: Dogs and Cattle and Demigods, Oh My!

Brían dorcha ua Conaill

The Ulster Cycle

The Ulster Cycle centers around the great hero Cú Chulainn, his contemporaries, and their adventures. The *Táin Bó Cuailnge* (Cattle Raid of Cooley) is at the core of this cycle, but it has accreted stories about most of the characters mentioned in it, and their stories. (Think of it like the Arthurian sagas: there is a base narrative about the conception, birth, childhood, reign and death of Arthur Pendragon, but there are also the stories of the various knights' Grail Quests, of Lancelot and Guinevere, of Nimue and Merlin, of Gawain and the Green Knight.)

The Ulster Cycle is both broad (covering events and people across Ireland) and deep (going into historical background and personal motivation behind various acts). It's easy to get lost in names and vendettas, especially if you don't know that *these* two people are in a friendly rivalry but are actually foster brothers and friends, but *those* two people are antagonistic towards each other because of events that happened before either of them was born, and would happily kill each other if it weren't impolite to do so in the circumstance.

The Life of Cú Chulainn in ten minutes

1. ***Compert Con Chulainn*** **- Cú Chulainn's Conception**
   He was born the grandson (or nephew) of *Conchobar*[96] *mac Nessa*[97], king of Ulster. Well... that's not strictly true. He was born to *Deichtine*[98], who was either Conchobar's daughter or sister, and she was married to *Sualtam mac Róich*. In whichever version of the story, however, Cú Chulainn's *actual* father was Lugh of the Túatha Dé Danann. (Magic was very definitely involved.) The stories also agree that the place of conception was *Brug na Bóinde* [99]. He was named Sétanta at birth,

[96] *Con + cobar* = "hound of desiring". This is a coincidence.
[97] *Ness* is his mother's name.
[98] Whose own mother was said to have been the daughter of Oengus Óg of the Túatha Dé Danann.
[99] Now known as Newgrange. *Brug na Bóinde* means "Palace (or "broch") of the Boyne river". The Boyne was named after the goddess "Bóann", whose name derives from the word for "cow". This is a coincidence.

and was known by this name for much of his childhood. After some argument over who was to foster Sétanta, an arrangement was made that his fostership would be shared between *Amergin* the druid and his wife *Findchóem*[100], *Sencha mac Ailella* the Judge, *Blai Briugu* the wealthy hospitaller, *Fergus mac Róich* (Sétanta's uncle, and himself a former king of Ulster[101]), and Conchobair himself. He first goes to Amergin and Findchóem in his infancy, at their home at Muirthemne Plain, and was raised alongside their natural son *Conall Cernach*[102]

2. **Childhood**

Sétanta's childhood is described (along with much other exposition) in flashbacks in the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*. In these flashbacks we learn that when he first met the children of the Royal Court, he made a faux pas[103] which led to them attacking him. After Conchobar had rescued the children of the court from him, he then had to rescue them again when Sétanta started chasing the children around the yard demanding that *they* ask for protection from *him*.[104]

3. **Culann's dog**

4. Conchobar and his court were invited to dine at the house of Culann the smith. Culann was known for his herd of fine cattle, and for the guard dog which protected it, as big as a pony and near unstoppable. Sétanta told Conchobar that he'd be along after his hurley game was finished, but by the time he was on his way they'd already released the hound. Sétanta was caught on the road, but killed the dog by hitting his *sliotar*[105] into the dog's mouth and out the back of its head, then smashing in what was left with his hurley stick. Conall was overjoyed that the King's foster-son wasn't dead, but dismayed at the death of his guard dog. Sétanta offered to guard Conall's herd until the dog's puppies were grown, at which point he was renamed "Culann's Hound": *Cú Chulainn*.

Taking arms

Cú Chulainn overhears Cathbad the druid making a prophecy: "anyone who took up arms on that day would become the greatest warrior in Ireland, bu–" ... Cú Chulainn immediately ran off to Conchobar and demanded weapons.[106] Cathbad was upset when he found this out, because he hadn't finished: "... *but*, that person

[100] Also said to be the sister of Conchobar, making Amergin the King's brother-in-law

[101] There is some History there, which will become important later. Fergus was married to Ness, Conchobar's mother, making him Conchobar's stepfather. This is part of that History.

[102] The name *Conall* is derived from *con*, which is a form of the word for "hound". This is a coincidence. Conall becomes an important hero in his own right.

[103] He joined a game of Hurley without first asking for their protection. Hurley is a particularly Irish game... think lacrosse, played with hockey sticks and a cricket ball at head height.

[104] At the time, Setanta was six.

[105] hurley ball

[106] Only Conchobar's personal set of weapons would withstand Cú Chulainn's strength

would have as short a life as a glorious one." Cú Chulainn was nonplussed at this news.

Putting out the fire

Not long after this, Cú Chulainn claimed a chariot[107] and went off in search of three brothers who were very proud of killing Ulstermen. Cú Chulainn, of course, massacred them, but came back to the royal compound still in his *riastrád*[108]. The court was terrified that Cú Chulainn would kill them all, not knowing friend from foe. The queen, however, went out to meet him with her ladies, and flashed him *en masse*. He averted his eyes, at which point he was grabbed and flung into a barrel of water – which exploded into steam, then a second – which boiled, then a third, which became a pleasantly warm bath.[109]

***Tochmarc Emire* - The Wooing of Emer**

While yet a teenager, Cú Chulainn was growing up to be beautiful, strong, smart, brave... and a threat to the marriage of every man in the kingdom. It was decreed that he must marry, at which point he was sent around looking for a suitable bride. The search ended when he met *Emer ingen Forgaill*. The scene where they meet is a masterpiece of geeky romance, because it is made clear that both Cú Chulainn and Emer are very intelligent, and have been educated by the finest minds in Ireland, because they proceed to win each over with a conversation held entirely in abstruse references and riddles, each matching the other in cleverness and erudition, and the whole conversation going over the head of everyone else present.[110] In summary: Cú Chulainn could have had any woman in Ireland, but he fell head-over-heels in love with Emer's *brain*. Emer's father *Forgall Monach*[111], however, was not pleased with this match, and declared that Cú Chulainn must go for training with the greatest teacher of warriors in the world, and then come back and ask again. It turns out that the greatest teacher in the world is a woman: *Scáthach*[112], who lives on the Isle of Skye. Almost as soon as Cú Chulainn has set off, Forgall attempts to

[107] Only Conchobar's personal chariot would withstand Cú Chulainn's strength

[108] Battle Rage or Berserker Frenzy. Also translated as "Warp Spasm" and "Torque", both terms implying a "twisting", or change of shape. It involved not only going berserk, but a physical transformation, with one eye the size of a dinner plate, the other shrunk to a pinprick, his hair standing on end, his muscles rippling and twisting, and generally terrifying anyone who looked at him.

[109] At the time, Cú Chulainn was seven.

[110] This was, of course, the point. As Cú Chulainn explained to Lóeg his charioteer later, "*Dost thou not know that I am wooing Emer? And it is for this reason that we disguised our words lest the girls should understand that I am wooing her, for if Forgall knew it, we should not meet with his consent.*" (*The Wooing of Emer*, translated by Kuno Meyer: http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/T301021.html) And a good thing that they did, too, given that at least part of the conversation was Cú Chulainn complimenting Emer's breasts. In detail. And she was replying that he hadn't earned a closer look at them. Yet.

[111] Forgall the Wily, or the Clever. His house was at *Luglochta Loga*, or "Lugh's Gardens". This is a coincidence.

[112] "Shadowy"

marry his daughter to *Lugaid mac Noise*, king of Munster at the time. When Lugaid finds out that the woman he's been offered is the love of Cú Chulainn's life, he turns her down; preferring instead to live. On Skye, meanwhile, Cú Chulainn has a very interesting time. It turns out that Scáthach has a daughter *Uathach*[113], and a twin sister *Aife*. In between training, Cú Chulainn has an affair with Uathach. When he accidentally injures her, her lover rushes into the room, and Cú Chulainn kills him. Cú Chulainn then nobly makes the sacrifice of replacing him, and becomes Uathach's official lover. And when Aife attacks Scáthach, he defeats Aife and both sisters give him their, as the phrase goes, "friendship of the thighs"[114]. At the end of his training he is given the powerful magic weapon the *Gae bolg*[115], and unknowingly leaves behind a pregnant Aife. On returning to Ireland, Forgall refuses to give Emer over to Cú Chulainn after all. This is not a wise decision, as Cú Chulainn's response is to single-handedly defeat Forgall's defences, capture Emer, steal Forgall's treasure, and defeat his champion. On their return to Ulster, Conchobar had a dilemma: as king he had the right and duty of *Jus Prima Noctis*: to spend the first night with every new bride. If he didn't take advantage of it, he'd look like he was scared. On the other hand, he *was* scared: terrified out of his wits of enraging Cú Chulainn, and with good reason. The solution he found was to sleep in the same bed as Emer, but with a barrier between them, and witnesses that he never touched her. And everyone won. Except for Forgall, who was dead... but everyone *else* was happy.

5. ***Fled Bricenn* – Bricriu's Feast**

Bricriu was a troublemaker. He invited three great champions of Ulster – Cú Chulainn, Conall Cernach, and *Lóegaire Búadach*[116] – to a feast, and offers each of them the Hero's Portion; the best cut of meat. The three of them fight over who deserves it, until they are separated by Conchobar, Fergus mac Róich, and Sencha mac Aililla. At which point Bricriu offers the best seat to the wives of the three heroes, and they start to argue again.
They call *Cú Roí mac Daire,* king of Munster, to judge who was the best of the three. He chooses Cú Chulainn, but the other two refuse to accept the judgement. The next night, a "hideous churl" turns up and offers a game: he would let

[113] "Horrible"

[114] I believe kids these days call this sort of relationship "friends with benefits". Yes, this means that he was sleeping with a young woman, *and* her mother, *and* her aunt, at the same time – all while training to become worthy of his fiancée.

[115] "Spear of the bag". To be triggered it had to be thrown with a foot, but it had barbs which would extend and basically stab the target to death everywhere at once from the inside out. The main downside was that you had to scrub what was left of the corpse off it before you could use it again.

[116] There is no reason why you would have heard of him. He was a hero, but he died by getting out of bed to help someone, and doing so so enthusiastically that he knocked the top of his own head off on a lintel.

someone chop off his head, and the next night he would chop off that person's head, and that person would be the champion. Lóegaire goes first, but when the stranger's head is cut off, the body picks it up and leaves. The next night the stranger returns, whole again, but Lóegaire is nowhere to be seen. So Conall takes up the challenge, and the same thing happens. The last time around Cú Chulainn takes the challenge, but when the stranger returns, this time Cú Chulainn is waiting for him. He lays his head on the block, and the stranger swings and... stops with only a slight nick on Cú Chulainn's neck. He then reveals himself to be Cú Roí in disguise, and reaffirms his earlier judgement: Cú Chulainn is the greatest hero of Ulster, and this is now a legal fact, not just a matter of opinion. And the others now have no standing to challenge it. There is no indication that Cú Roí was wearing green while in his disguise.

6. ***Táin Bó Cuailgne* – The Cattle-raid of Cooley**

Just as the First and Second Battles of Magh Tuiread are the centerpiece of the *Lebor Gabála Erenn*, so the *Táin Bó Cuailgne* is the heart of the Ulster Cycle. It's the single longest and most elaborate of the stories, and features many of the other stories as asides when describing or explaining something else. The Táin Bó Cuailgne[117] begins *in media res*, with the King and Queen of Connacht – Ailill and Medb[118] – in bed, talking about how much each of them owned. After some haggling, it turned out that Ailill's herds included a magical stud bull called the *Finnbennach*[119] which Medb couldn't match in her own herds. She leaned that its only equal was a bull called *Donn Cuailgne*[120], which was in Ulster. So she decided to go get it. If Ulster accidentally got broken in the process, so much the better. Now, there's some back story to this: Medb had at one point been married to Conchobar of Ulster, but the marriage was not to her liking[121], so she left him. Moreover, when her sister was married to Conchobar in her place, Medb killed her. There may have been a rape and a war between Ulster and the High King involved

[117] A *Táin Bó* was a raid for cattle, both as an event, and a type of story, and Cualgne is a place in what is now County Louth.

[118] Medb (pronounced /með-əv/), later spelled Meadhbh (/meɣəv/), and in Modern Irish pronounced /Meiv/, is thought to be derived from Indo-European "méd^{h}u" = "honey, mead". So her name means "the sweet, the intoxicating".

[119] "White-horned".

[120] "Cooley Brown".

[121] she was basically a gift in apology from her father, *Eochaid Feidlech*, High King of Ireland, because he had killed Conchobar's father.

in there as well. The upshot is that Medb flat blank refused to be used as a pawn, and had nothing but contempt for anyone who did. To the point that she was Queen of Connacht in her own right, and Alill was essentially Prince Consort.[122] She and Ailill had seven sons, all renamed *Maine* after she heard a prophecy that her son "Maine" would kill Conchobar.[123] Anyway: she sent a message to *Dáire mac Fiachna,* who owned Donn Cuailgne, offering him anything up to and including her personal sexual favours if he lent her the bull for stud. He was about to agree when the messenger got drunk and was overheard saying that it didn't matter what Dáire said, Medb would take the bull anyway. So Dáire refused, and Medb raised an army to invade. Now there is more backstory: Years before any of this, there was a farmer named *Crunniuc*. One day a woman named *Macha* walked into his house and set herself up as his wife. While she was there running the household, Crunniuc grew more and more wealthy. Macha told him that this would continue so long as he obeyed the geas to never brag about her. Unfortunately, one day while drunk he couldn't help telling some friends how beautiful, strong, and above all, good a runner his wife was. Word of this got to the the (unnamed) King of Ulster, who sent word to Crunniuc to bring his wife to the capital and prove his boasting, or else be put to death. Macha, to save him, went. The King told her that she would race against a pair of horses. She pointed out that she was nine months pregnant. He reminded her that Crunniuc's life was forfeit. She begged for a sign of simple humanity from any of the men present, but was met with blank faces. Resigned, she went to the race track, and not only outran the horses, but gave birth to twins before the horses crossed the line. As she died from exhaustion and shock, she proclaimed a curse that when Ulster was in danger, that all fighting men of Ulster would suffer the *ces noínden*: the "sickness of nine"; they would all be stricken with labour pains when they were needed most.
Thus it was that the army of Ulster was rendered useless the moment Medb's army crossed the border. Except that Cú Chulainn was the son of a god, and therefore not technically of Ulster, and he was only seventeen years old and beardless, and thus not yet a man either. Still, it was him versus an entire army. And one of Medb's leading generals was Fergus mac Róich, one of Cú Chulainn's foster fathers, who had defected to Connacht, still aggrieved that Conchobar had taken the kingdom of Ulster from him.[124] There follows months of single-handed

[122] Like with Victoria and Albert, only with fewer corsets.

[123] And, indeed, one of them did. It was a different man named Conchobar, so it didn't make Medb any happier, but the prophecy *was* fulfilled.

[124] Here is the backstory between Fergus and Conchobar I warned you about earlier: Fergus was king of Ulster, and wanted to marry *Ness*, the daughter of his predecessor, who already had a son. She agreed to marry Fergus, on the condition that he allowed her son Conchobar to be king for a year, so that his sons would be the sons of a king. Fergus

guerilla warfare, with Cú Chulainn hassling the army, slowing it down, and meeting it at every river crossing, taking advantage of a custom that at a disputed ford crossing, it would be answered by a challenge of champions. Cú Chulainn met each of the champions of the Connacht army one by one, and beat them all. In the movie version, this would be a long montage of fight scenes, each epic but essentially indistinguishable. The original version makes a point to emphasise both that Cú Chulainn was fighting for months, and to highlight individual fights with various champions, most of whom are only notable for being a momentary challenge to Cú Chulainn, before being brutally killed.
At one point he is met by a beautiful woman who promises him victory if he will sleep with her. He turns her down and says that he will win victory in his own right, thanks anyway. She turns into a raven, reveals herself to be the *Mórrígan*[125], and swears revenge for the slight.[126] Her attempts to distract him during his next battle don't succeed, so she puts her revenge on hold until later.
Eventually, he is intercepted by a mysterious man who takes him aside and points out that even for a demigod, Cú Chulainn is at the limit of his endurance. This man sits him down, feeds him, treats his wounds, and reveals that he is Lúgh Samildánach, Cú Chulainn's natural father. Cú Chulainn then sleeps for three days straight.

During this time while Cú Chulainn sleeps, the boys of the Ulster Court rouse themselves. They gather weapons, they organise themselves into a fighting unit, they go to attack the Army of Connacht, and they are massacred each and every one. When Cú Chulainn wakes, he goes after the Connacht army again, but finds a pile of children's corpses: the bodies of the boys he had played hurley with when he first entered the Ulster Court. He was somewhat upset at this discovery, and he underwent a riastrád to make the skies themselves shake, killing six Connachtmen for each dead youth. Cú Chulainn is now slightly refreshed by his little rest, although still exhausted after months of nonstop fighting, but Medb is running out of champions. So Medb sends Fergus to meet Cú Chulainn at the next ford. Cú Chulainn agrees to yield, if Fergus will yield at their next meeting. And Cú Chulainn backs off and allows that crossing unchallenged.

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is assured by his advisors that Conchobar will be king in name only, so he agrees. Unfortunately for Fergus, Conchobar, with his mother's help, does so well that the nobles offer him the job permanently, and Fergus is deposed. He is publically a model subject and the first advisor of his stepson, but privately the whole time he is bitter about the whole bum deal.

[125] *Mór + rígán* = "Great Queen". The raven queen of battle and war.

[126] Foreboding!

And at the next ford along, Cú Chulainn is met by Ferdiad, Fergus' natural son. It is only now revealed that Cú Chulainn and Ferdiad are best friends and have known each other their whole lives. Nevertheless, they find themselves meeting from opposite sides, and neither will yield. The two fight in a physically and emotionally exhausting battle for three days straight, until Cú Chulainn, is forced to resort to the Gae Bolg to kill his own foster brother and best friend. This does not make him any better disposed towards Medb.
Finally, the Ulstermen start, one by one, to rouse, and come to the rescue. There follows a massive battle, where even Medb herself is forced to take up arms and shows herself to be no mean warrior in her own right. Fergus is about to kill Conchobar, but is stopped by *Cormac Condlongas* who is Conchobar's natural son and Fergus's foster son. Fergus, in frustration, takes his sword *Caladcolg*[127] and cuts the top off three nearby mountains. Eventually Cú Chulainn faces Fergus, and reminds him of the agreement they made when they met back at the ford. Fergus immediately withdraws his troops, and the Connacht army retreats back over the border, and Ulster is safe. And yet, Medb still won, because Medb sent a squad of men around secretly, who stole Donn Cuailgne while everyone's attention was on the big army marching on the capital. And Medb takes the Donn Cuailgne back to her herds, and shows him off against the Finnbennach. Which turns out to be a mistake.

Back Story Time!

It turns out that the two magical bulls were actually two swineherds who hated each other, and had embarked on an epic transformation battle. This is where one person changes into something – say, a wolf – and attacks the other, who himself changes into something and either flees or attacks back. So the second person might turn into a wolfhound and attack the wolf. And the wolf turns into a flea and bites the wolfhound. So the wolfhound turns into a salmon to drown the flea, and the flea turns into an otter to catch the fish, and the fish turns into a sparrow to escape and the otter turns into a hawk, and... You get the idea. So after a battle of unprecedented length and fury, the two turn into insects and fall exhausted into bales of hay, and are eaten by cows, and reborn as bull calves. And they're happy as bulls, right up until they see each other again, at which point they remember nothing other than that they hate each other more than anyone has hated anyone else before nor will ever after again. They immediately, of course, fight, and after a mighty struggle, Donn Cuailgne wins. Despite being mortally wounded, he staggers

[127] "Hard Blade", also (and more commonly) *Caladbolg*. A sword so famous it was known in Wales as *Caledfwlch*. Which is the Welsh name for "Excalibur". To get a better understanding of what the name implies, consider a Bronze-age society's first exposure to a sword made of iron...

across the length and breadth of Ireland, shaking off bits of Finnbennach's corpse hither and yon, until he too falls to the ground and dies. And now Medb and Ailill are equal once more, at the price of turning half of Ireland upside down, and *literally* setting brothers against brothers and fathers against sons. They don't even die as a result: Medb, Ailill and Fergus are all explicitly listed as having lived, and their deaths don't come until years afterwards.

7. ***Aided Óenfhir Aífe* – The Death of Aife's Only Son**
   Remember how Cú Chulainn left behind a pregnant Aife when he finished training with Scáthach? This is where he comes to regret that. The boy is named *Connla*[128], and when he is old enough, he is trained and sent into the world with three geasa: 1. Find his father, 2. never turn down a fight, 3. tell no-one his name.And so when he arrives on the shore of Ireland, Conall Cernach goes to meet him, asks for his name, is refused, and challenges him. Conall is not just beaten, but is humiliated, despite being no slouch himself, and sends for Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn arrives, also asks the boy's name, also is refused, and also challenges him.At this point Emer rushes down to the beach and starts yelling at them all to back down, and that she knows who the boy is, but she is told to stop interfering in men's business[129] – and the fight begins. The boy turns out to be a match for Cú Chulainn, and they fight to a standstill, neither of them willing to cede. At last Cú Chulainn is forced to resort to the Gae Bolg, and fatally wounds Connla. As the boy is dying, he whispers who he is, and praises the fighting men of Ireland. It's only then that Cú Chulainn realises that he has killed his own son.The tragedy is deeper when you remember that Connla was his *only* son.[130]
8. ***Serglige Con Culainn* – The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulainn, or, Emer's Only Jealousy**
   Fand, the wife of *Manannán mac Lir*[131], falls in love with Cú Chulainn. This is widely seen as a bad idea, not least by Manannán – who knows that Fand is immortal and will be somewhat upset when Cú Chulainn dies – and Emer, who is rather upset that the love of her life has confined himself to bed and is pining to death for the love of another woman. Emer, however, loves Cú Chulainn so much that she

[128] Remember how *con* is a form of the word for "hound"? This is a coincidence.

[129] They were enlightened enough to recognise that it was possible for the smartest person around to be a woman, and smart enough to acknowledge after the fact that everyone would have been better off if they'd listened to her in the first place, but there were still limits to women's equality.

[130] Not his only child, though, because there is mention of his daughter *Fínscoth.*

[131] Basically the god of the sea.

would rather see him with another woman and alive, than guarantee his death by keeping him. Manannán, on the other hand, has the ability to do something about the situation. He shakes his cloak between Cú Chulainn and Fand, ensuring that they will never see each other again, then gives Cú Chulainn and Emer a potion of forgetfulness, so that they won't be upset by memories of the incident. And none of them ever speaks of it again.

9. ***Aided Con Chulainn* – Cú Chulainn's Death**

It turns out that when your professional life revolves around killing lots of people, you make a few enemies. Some of these people got together, and received help from Medb, to get rid of Cú Chulainn. This conspiracy included several princes, including *Lugaid mac Con Roí*, son of Cú Roí king of Munster, and *Erc mac Cairbri*[132], son of the King of Tara, both kings having been killed by Cú Chulainn. Part of their their plot involved finding out the geasa that Cú Chulainn was subject to, and the prophecies he was described by. For geasa, he was forbidden to refuse hospitality, and he was forbidden to eat the flesh of a dog. And a prophecy had been made that his career would begin and end with the killing of a dog. So it was that the first part of their plan involved an old woman sitting by the road, roasting a dog on the fire, and offering some meat to Cú Chulainn when he passed. He knew full well that he could neither accept nor refuse, and so, knowing that either way he was damned, he chose the polite route, and sat down and ate. Lugaid meanwhile has had three spears made, and a prophecy is made that each will kill a king. The first kills Cú Chulainn's chariot driver *Láeg*, king of charioteers. The second killed his horse, *Liath Macha*, king of horses. The third, after a great chase and battle, mortally wounds Cú Chulainn. With his guts almost falling out of his belly, he makes his way to a river to drink. He notices an otter drinking the bloody water, and he kills it. Then he remembers the name of the creature he'd killed: *doburchú* – "water dog". Realising that he had fought his last battle, he found a standing stone and tied himself to it with his belt so that he would die standing up, raised his sword overhead, and waited. The group of his enemies were still wary of approaching near him, not trusting him not to be lying in wait for them to approach. It wasn't until a raven (symbol of the Morrigán) perched on his head that they realised that he had died while they were waiting. And even then, when they approached to cut off his head as a trophy, Cú Chulainn's arm dropped when Lugaid touched the body and cut Lugaid's hand off.

[132] Erc was the son of *Cairbre Nia Fer* (who was Ailill mac Dara's brother) and *Fedelm Noíchrothach* (daughter of Conchobar). So Erc was Cú Chulainn's cousin and Medb and Ailill's nephew. And after Cú Chulainn killed his father, he married Cú Chulainn's daughter, so he was also Cú Chulainn's son-in-law. Everyone is related to everyone else in this story, have you noticed?

> And that was the end of Cú Chulainn. There was some cleanup – Lugaid and Erc were killed by Conall Cernach in revenge, for example, but the man himself was dead.

What else? What have we learned?

While Cú Chulainn and his greatest war is the core of the Ulster Cycle, others do have more of their stories told. Cú Roí, for example, was the powerful, magical, and mysterious king of Munster. There is a story told of him in the Táin Bó Cuailgne where he decided to intervene when he heard of a particular hero who was planning to join the Connaught army, and he decided that he couldn't allow this to happen. So he and this champion began throwing stones at each other from over the horizon: these stones crashing into each other in the air over the Connacht army, showering them with a hail of stones. In the end the Connacht soldiers asked the both of them to stop, so they both went home, leaving *Magh Cloiche,* the "Plain of Stones" in the middle. Fergus mac Roich is said to have died when Ailill finally got jealous of him sleeping with Medb. Conchobar died when he heard of the death of Christ, which caused an old injury to kill him. (He had been struck in the brain with the petrified brains of another king, but the wound healed over and was fine for seven years until he became upset enough.)

There are other stories, not all of them related to Cú Chulainn or his backstory explicitly. One important one is *Scéla Muicce Meicc Da Thó*: The Story of Mac Datho's Pig. This involves Conchobar and Medb both asking for a great hound from the king of Leinster, who arranges for both of their warbands to arrive at the same time, and let them fight it out. The assembled champions have a boasting battle over who deserves the Hero's Portion at the feast to greet them all, which is eventually won by Conall Cernach and the Ulstermen. (The pig in the title was the one whose meat was being argued over.) This story is important not only because of its scope and satirical content (the author was playing up the over-the-top nature of the boasts, and yet Conall Cernach wins in a manner more surprising than even the most outrageous of the boasts.)

We meet the kings of all the kingdoms of Ireland. We meet most of the champions. We have an intimate insight into the King of Ulster's court and family, and the genealogical ties between it and the nobility of the rest of Ireland. We have direct personal intervention by no less than *three* gods (four if you include Fand).

What is more we have a glimpse of upper class life at the beginning of the Iron Age in Ireland. Swords and weapons so strong and devastating that they must have had magical powers. The importance of the fosterage system, and the way it tied together the nobility.

The importance of hospitality, and the importance of politeness and etiquette in society: so important that rules of behaviour themselves had magical force. That people would kill and die for slights and insults. That people were, still, people; with jealousy and resentment, and wisdom and impulsiveness, and love and grace. And in the middle of all this, they didn't always take themselves that seriously.

Wow, this is cool! Where can I read more?

Wikipedia

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulster_Cycle
  No, seriously. That page gives you just a *hint* of how much of a bare summary this article really is, and how much is out there in this Cycle.
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Táin_Bó_Cúailnge
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cú_Chulainn

Translations

- Augusta, Lady Gregory; *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* (1902)
- Gantz, Jeffrey; *Early Irish Myths and Sagas,* (Penguin Classics, 1981)
- Kinsella, Thomas; *The Tain*, (Oxford, 1969)
  The definitive translation.
- Meyer, Kuno; "The Wooing of Emer" in *Archaeological Review*. volume 1, (London, 1888) page 68–75; 150–155; 231–235; 298–307.
  http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/T301021.html

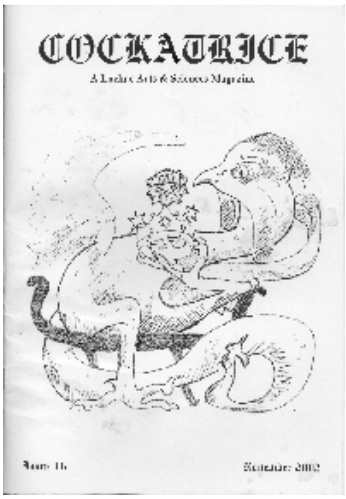
Critical Editions and original texts

How's your Old Irish?

- Best, R.I. and Bergin, Osborn; *Lebor na hUidre: Book of the Dun Cow* (School of Celtic Studies, Dublin, 1992)
  Based on a facsimile edition which has been transcribed independently by the CELT project:
  - http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/G301900/
- *Lebor Laignech: The Book of Leinster*
  - http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/G800011A
  - http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/G800011B
  - http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/G800011C
  - http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/G800011D
  - http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/G800011E
- *Scéla Mucce Meic Da Thó:* The Tale of Mac Da Thó's Pig

- http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/G301016/
- Lehmann & Lehmann: *An Introduction to Old Irish* (Modern Language Association of America, 1975)
  This is actually a textbook for learning the Old Irish Language, but it uses excerpts from the Tale as examples throughout.

Wanted!



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Do you have unloved past editions of Cockatrice lying forlorn on your bookshelf? Or if you love them so much you that you are unable to part with them then would you be prepared to scan/photocopy them?

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If you are willing to contribute with either unwanted copies or would be willing to scan/photocopy your own ones please email me at elisabettafoscari@gmail.com. I will cover all photocopying/postage costs.

Yours in Service – The Editor

Cockatrice FAQs

1. **Can I write an article for Cockatrice?**

Yes, you can! Cockatrice is all about sharing your research and your enthusiasm for your particular Art or Science. One of the best things about the SCA is the huge range of 'things' covered under the umbrella of Arts and Sciences from brewing to smithing to philosophy to music to embroidery to costuming to cookery to philosophy to carpentry to shoe-making to textile arts to book binding... Get the picture? The rationale for Cockatrice is to give the people of Lochac a place where they can share their research and passion for an Art or Science and to inspire their readers! This includes anyone interested in Arts and Sciences from Laurels to newcomer.

2. **But what do I write and how much**?

You can write an article on a particular area, like the ones in this edition. I would suggest aiming for around 1000 words as it gives you enough room to express yourself but is still short enough to hold the attention of your reader. If you don't think you could manage writing a full article then there are a number of other ways to contribute including:

- ♣ Write a review of book you have found helpful or interesting. This could be an academic work of research or a popular history or even a work of fiction set in the SCA time period.
- ♣ Write a song or poem. This could be something that you have performed at an event or written for a contest or even for fun!
- ♣ Draw a picture – have you been experimenting with period artistic techniques then send it in!
- ♣ Redact a recipe – send in your versions of favourite period recipes.

3. **But I don't know *everything* about my particular area of interest!**

Firstly, thank goodness! How boring SCA life would be if we did know everything. There are many stages in our research journeys in the SCA and Cockatrice is a place where you can tell other people where you are at this point in time. It doesn't matter if you have been studying one particular area for the last fifteen years or it is something relatively new to you, the purpose of Cockatrice is to give you a platform to tell people about what you have found out so far and to provide them with inspiration in their own journeys in the SCA.

The other point about research in the SCA is that it is often impossible to know *everything* about a particular area, often due to a dearth of primary sources[133]. Other barriers can include difficulties with language and access to resources. One of the fun things about the SCA is the creative part of anachronism – in other words – how did you overcome these particular obstacles. Again Cockatrice is a place where you can tell others about how you have been creatively anachronistic. If you have made modern substitutes then tell us how and why you did so.

Another thing to remember is that part of research is putting our own particular interpretations on period Arts and Sciences. We come up with theories about how and why people in period did things certain ways usually based on our reading of primary source evidence. Cockatrice is a place for you to explain your ideas about an area of interest and describing how the evidence you have collected supports your theories. This may not mean you are definitively right as after your article has been published new information may come to light that may damage your argument or you may rethink what you have said. The important thing to remember is that your article in Cockatrice is a reflection of where you are at on at that stage of the journey and the exciting thing about the SCA is that we always learning new things!

4. How do I reference my article?

There is nothing worse than reading an article full of interesting ideas and thinking where did they get them only to find that there are no references! If you are submitting an article to Cockatrice it is important that at the minimum you include a reference list of all the sources you have included.

For Referencing Websites:
Include the URL of the website and the date you accessed it. The date is important because due to website being often frequently updated this date tells us what version of the website was used.
This could look like:
French Metrology (*n.d.*).*The metre adventure*:
http://www.french-metrology.com/en/history/metre-adventure.asp,
viewed 30 September 2012.

[133] In case you are not sure of the terminology – a primary source is created at the time e.g. a period manuscript, tapestry, dress, embroidery, sword etc. A secondary source is a piece of research based on these primary sources e.g. examining period embroidery examples to present an article on the different stitches used.

For Referencing Books:
Book References should include the author, title, publisher, city and date of publications and look like:
Palmer, John, *How to Brew* (Brewers Publications: Colorado, 2006)

If you are including an article out of a book it should look like:
Geijer, Agnes, 'The Textile Finds from Birka' in N.B. Harte and H. Ponting (ed), *Cloth and Clothing in Medieval Europe*, (Heinemann: London, 1983), pp. 80-99

If it is an article from a magazine:
Gribling, Barbara, 'The Black Prince: hero or villain', *BBC History Magazine*, January 2013, vol. 14, pp. 30-40

For Referencing Images:

All images used in articles must be referenced for copyright reasons. It also pays to check that the owner of the website is happy for you to use their images in your own work! You can either include the referencing with the images in your article or create an image list at the end. This should be referenced like any other book or website.

Looking forward to see your articles!

The Editor

Contributors

Gabriella Borromei is a resident of the Canton of Stegby.

Brían dorcha ua Conaill is an early 11C Irish scholar living and studying in York.

Liadan ingen Fheradaig is currently a resident of the Barony of Politarchopolis, but she originates from Ynys Fawr. She enjoys participating in heavy fighting, combat archery, fencing, equestrian activities and in the Arts and Sciences. Countess Liadan has a particular interest in researching and teaching medieval law, and has presented classes at various events throughout Lochac and at Pennsic Wars. The Animal Trials paper is the first in a series of papers that she plans to write and then teach.

Theophrastus von Oberstockstall is a resident of River Haven.