

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



New revelations on the past at conference this week

The presentation of groundbreaking research started off an international medieval and early modern studies conference at UTAS this week.

The Seventh Biennial International Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Early Modern Studies is taking place at the Hobart UTAS campus from the 2 – 6 December.

This is the largest conference of its kind in the Southern hemisphere, with more than 200 participants from Australia, New Zealand, the UK, the US, Europe and Scandinavia. More than 70 postgraduate students will present their research.

Professor Rod Thomson, Senior Research Fellow, UTAS School of History and Classics, delivered the opening keynote address today entitled *New Light on John Dunstable (England's Greatest Composer before the Tudors); Discoveries in Oxford and Cambridge Manuscripts*, which detailed his world-first discovery about the life of Dunstable.

When cataloguing medieval manuscripts at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, Professor Thomson discovered a book owned and partly written by Dunstable (d. 1453).

Over the last 35 years the foremost authority on Dunstable, Margaret Bent of All Souls College, Oxford, has identified more than 15 fragments from an early 15th-century English choirbook, including one in the National Library, Canberra.

“Margaret Bent thought that this showed him to have composed music in the book, but I can show that he was signing, not as composer, but as scribe and was probably responsible for copying most of the original choirbook.

“For the first time his hand can be identified with certainty, we now know that he probably received his exceptional education at Merton College, Oxford,” Professor Thomson said.

For more information on the conference, visit:

<http://www.anzamems2008.utas.edu.au/index.html>

***More conference highlights from the UTAS School of History and Classics below.**

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***To arrange interviews with other conference speakers please contact Dr Elizabeth Freeman.**

- **Mr Patrick Ball, postgraduate**
“English Archery and Unlawful Games: 1350-1600”

Legislative attempts to halt a decline in archery practice produced England’s first regulation of “unlawful games”. The laws involved developed between the 14th and 16th, as did the role they attributed to games. To what extent did unlawful games genuinely underlie the Decay of Archery? What part did concerns about archery play in the construction of attitudes to gambling?

- **Nicholas Brodie, postgraduate**
“Good Plenty of Birchyne Rods’: Sixteenth-Century Master Beggars in English Towns”

This paper uncovers something of the identity and function of urban master beggars in sixteenth-century England. Such an examination includes important aspects of the development and implementation of policies regarding the treatment of beggars and vagabonds in sixteenth-century England.

- **Dr Elizabeth Freeman**
“Visions, Visionaries, and Education in the Medieval Convent: Case Studies from German Nunneries in the 12th and 13th Centuries”

Medieval Christians were familiar with many different kinds of visions. While all visions were good, some were better than others. Medieval women seem to have experienced visions particularly often or, more specifically, we have written records suggesting that they experienced visions particularly often. The question of how female visionaries justified the fact that they were speaking/writing publicly about their visions has always interested scholars. This paper will focus not just on the female visionary herself but also on the function that her vision played within the wider convent. How were visions used as teaching tools?

- **Professor Pam Sharpe**

“On the Beach: Scientific Dreams and Aspirations in Eighteenth-Century Nevis and Van Diemen’s Land”

This paper looks at the development of scientific dreams and aspirations on the geographical limits of the eighteenth-century British colonial world by considering the shell collecting activities of William Smith in Nevis in the Caribbean and George Harris here in Van Diemen’s Land.