



## *A Cleftlands (Middle Kingdom) Newsletter - 2/7/2021*

### **News of the Realm**

#### **SCA News -**

- Video from the Board of Director's meeting on January 24, 2021 is available here: <https://www.sca.org/news/board-of-directors-january-2021-meeting-video-available/>
- A new guide for conducting sanctions-related investigations was approved for use within the SCA: <https://www.sca.org/news/investigators-guide-approved/>
- There is a 40% off sale on the SCA Marketplace through the end of February: <https://www.sca.org/news/the-sca-marketplace-40-discount-sale-february-2021/>
- The Society is looking for Nominees to the Board of Directors. Learn more about what this means: <https://www.sca.org/news/the-society-needs-you/>

#### **Kingdom News**

- Duke Cellach put forth a challenge to do a summer activity - in the snow. Post a photo or video and tag it with #MidrealmSummerOlympics

#### **Baronial News**

- We'll be running a newsletter special feature on favorite memories from Regular Events in the past. Please send in your memories and photos to [clariciadlm@gmail.com](mailto:clariciadlm@gmail.com) - and thanks!

## **A Review of the Netflix Movie “The Dig”**

*By Duke Talymar gan y LLwyn, Baron Middle Marches*

A recent Netflix movie, ‘The Dig,’ based on a 2007 book by the same name and written by John Preston has brought a popular renewal of interest to the Sutton Hoo ship burial both in the realm of historians and reenactors.

If you have the opportunity, I would recommend viewing “The Dig.” That being said, like most historically based movies, writers, directors, and producers must decide on what aspects to include, which to emphasize, and which to reduce in importance for the story they wish to tell. This movie is no exception.

If you are interested in marveling at the gold and treasure the dig into Sutton Hoo Mound One yielded, you may be disappointed. A virtual tour through the display by the British Museum might be a better option. However, if you are interested in the background, history, and personal relationships of the dig at Sutton Hoo, you will probably like the film.

To make movies ‘interesting’ certain aspects of an otherwise true story are often over and/or under emphasized. For example the romantic interests of Edith Pretty and Peggy Piggott appear to be entirely fictional and both women were much stronger personalities than the film portrayed.

I think some license was given to the character of Mrs. Edith Pretty by the more youthful look of actress Carey Mulligan. Regardless, Mrs. Pretty was a very active, cultured, well-traveled, and interesting woman in her own right. She came from wealth and high society, was a philanthropist, a local magistrate, raced yachts, flew an airplane, and no stranger to archaeological digs. She was invited to be a Member of Parliament but refused, and was also offered the Order of the British Empire by Winston Churchill for her donation of the treasure of the ship burial to the people of England—again refusing the honor.

*Continued on page 2.*

## “The Dig” - continued

Edith Pretty’s insistence on digging into Mound One was never fully explained in the film. In reality, it was based on the revelation from a spiritualist friend who stated that she had seen ghostly figures in strange armor marching around the mound, and a relative who did dowsing determined that there was gold in the mound.

Peggy Piggott, portrayed by actress Lily James, was not just a pretty face but was a highly experienced archaeologist in her own right. She held multiple degrees from Cambridge and the Institute of Archeology in London; she had previously led her own excavations, and was considered an expert on the Bronze Age. Archival photos show her in the same type of coveralls her male counterparts were wearing – not shorts and bare midriffs.

I would highly recommend reading a biography of either lady or referring to “We Need to Talk About the Dig on Netflix and How it Portrays Women” – a blog post on Wardrobe Oxygen, February 2, 2021.



*The king’s helmet from Sutton Hoo*

As much as the personalities of these two ladies were under-emphasized, I felt their fictional romances were over-emphasized, as was the conflict between Basil Brown and Charles Phillips from the British Museum.

Nevertheless, there are many positive things to be said about the movie. The British Museum has written about the amount of research that writers and actors did at the museum, and the Sutton Hoo National Trust has made positive references to it. Reviews from archaeologists, historians, and reenactors have been largely positive and enthusiastic.

I was interested to see who received the credit for finding the first piece of gold and what it was. Both were accurately portrayed. Peggy Piggott found one of the gold and jeweled sword ‘pyramids’ and did immediately hand it to Mrs. Pretty. Basil Brown did indeed carry the trays of gold and hid them under Edith’s bed.

On a personal note, Melisande and I have been to Sutton Hoo and its museum on two occasions, once with Anglo-Saxon reenactors. The filmmakers did a great job of seamlessly combining the actual site with a movie set. In fact, all the sets, especially the one showing the outline of the burial ship, are spot on and could be mistaken for photographs from the actual dig.

My own interest in the archeology of Sutton Hoo has been life long — a photo of the first reconstruction of the helmet hung on my bedroom wall from the time I was five until I went to college. My first ‘scratch’ helm, made by Duke Andrew and myself, was an attempt at the Sutton Hoo helm made suitable for SCA combat, and two out of my three crowns were won wearing it. For many years I have done research and worked with artisans to recreate pieces from the ship burial, and I have displayed a full-scale burial chamber at several SCA events, most notably the 50-Year Celebration. My Laurel in research and experiential archeology is largely based on my interest in the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial.

Finally, in spite of some of the imperfections that most all ‘historic’ interpretation films have, I would definitely recommend viewing “The Dig.”

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## Upcoming Cleftlands Events

- Tuesday, February 9 7:30pm EST Virtual Needleworkers’ Guild - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88261643621?pwd=UGx1TTdPcVdNNWtHZFhDZkxYR0d5Zz09>
- Thursday, February 11 8pm EST Virtual Armorers’ Guild Meeting - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84704344487?pwd=UGJrZUxqNW5JQ05jeHBtYWdLQUI4QT09>
- Thursday, February 18 8pm EST Virtual Armorers’ Guild Meeting - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84704344487?pwd=UGJrZUxqNW5JQ05jeHBtYWdLQUI4QT09>

## For the Combat & Ranged Arts

**Armored:** Duke Eik's Videos:  
9 Foot Spear 1 The Weapon:  
[https://youtu.be/NNI03XC\\_B84](https://youtu.be/NNI03XC_B84)

9 Foot Spear 2 The Armor:  
<https://youtu.be/1Vf7Eat-sYI>

9 Ft Spear 3 Guards & Grip:  
<https://youtu.be/DELDJAjVHmA>

**Sir Ustad's Videos:** 6ft Period Spears:

<https://www.facebook.com/ortega.hobson/videos/10221741963328748>

6ft Period Spears 2:  
<https://www.facebook.com/ortega.hobson/videos/10221742224495277>

Inexpensive, Lightweight  
Wooden Shields 1, 2, 3:  
<https://www.facebook.com/ortega.hobson/videos/10221488592154627>

<https://www.facebook.com/ortega.hobson/videos/10223204848419961>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17XEu8X-gY3s&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR3pdPog8E-Pv-W9VmwP7Ibl2L7ZgjhC-sixoVX6mvcqyaSzIXNqCm-wQq9OiY>

## Call for Content

We want to make sure there's a central place to get information and see posts that might get buried, or resources that might not be shared.

If you have info to share - an upcoming virtual gathering, activity ideas, or a great website, please contact me: [clariciadlm@gmail.com](mailto:clariciadlm@gmail.com).

Thank you and stay well!

## 5 Questions for Cleftlanders - Mistress Zuriel Aurelius Nightshade (mka Cindy Bank) (she)

### 1.) Who got you involved in the SCA?

I attended my first SCA meeting at the request of a college friend that was going on a 'date' with a member of the Cleftlands. It was an Eastwatch dessert revel/meeting 30 years ago and I've been hooked ever since. The friend I went with never really picked it up.

### 2.) What are your two main activities in the SCA? Archery (target and combat) and mead/cordial making

### 3.) What was it like being a Royal Champion?

It was a wonderful opportunity to represent and serve the communities I was Champion for: King's Archery Champion- Brannos/Rebekah; Equestrian Champion - Edmund/Kateryn; Missile Champion (target archery and CA) - Ragnvaldr/Arabella; A&S Champion - A'kos/Bella. I was able to promote each activity with the support of the Crown to the best of my ability.

### 4.) If you could have dinner with 1 person from SCA period, who would it be?

No idea. I have so many interests that it would be hard to pick just one.

### 5.) What's your favorite thing to do at an event?

Archery (CA/Target), talk arts with friends and hang out.



## Virtual Classes for February 7 through February 21:

- Sunday February 7 7pm EST - Equestrian Games in the SCA with Captain CuMhara o'Holyhead: <https://www.facebook.com/events/477750913213491>
- Monday February 8 8pm EST - Fighting in the French Style with Phillipe de Lyon: <https://www.facebook.com/events/161784168769343>
- Tuesday February 9 8pm EST - Drinks for Fighters with Verena Entenwirth: <https://www.facebook.com/events/2885601981686816>
- Wednesday February 10 7pm EST - Sword Edge Shaping with Ustad (repeat): <https://www.facebook.com/ortega.hobson/videos/10221417259131346>
- Sunday February 14 7pm EST - Movie Night with Duke EikBrandr and Sir William Rayne: <https://www.facebook.com/events/786019965327913>
- Monday February 15 7pm EST - Aggression for the Compassionate with Sir Jaime: <https://www.facebook.com/events/736994790343962>
- Tuesday February 16 7pm EST - How to Stay Sharp While Staying at Home with Count Seto: <https://www.facebook.com/events/738611180379744>
- Wednesday February 17 7pm EST - Using a Back-Up Weapon with a Spear with Sir Pelinor: <https://www.facebook.com/events/3530522357171962>
- Sunday February 21 7pm EST - 14th-15th Ce Arming Garments for Authenticity with Duke Sir Laurelen: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1176120449469843>



# The Best History Books of 2020

By THL Jolicica atte Northclyfe

It's time for best-of-2020 lists to make their appearance, including picks for the best historical fiction and non-fiction books published this year. Consider adding these medieval and Renaissance history titles to your bookshelf, or borrowing them from your local library.

**Origins of the Tudors:** Smithsonian Magazine chose author Nicola Tallis' biography of Margarete Beaufort, Countess of Richmond, titled "Uncrowned Queen: The Life of Margarete Beaufort, Mother of the Tudors," as one of the best history books of 2020.

Although never officially a queen, Margarete was a leading figure during the Wars of the Roses and the person who orchestrated her son Henry Tudor's return from exile to win the English crown. Once Henry VII was on the throne, their close relationship ensured that she was treated as a queen.

"Ultimately, Margaret emerges as a more well-rounded figure, highly ambitious and determined but not, as she's commonly characterized, to the point of being a power-hungry religious zealot," Smithsonian Magazine writes.

Source: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/ten-best-history-books-2020-180976423/>

**Medieval Lives Explored:** Three people living in 997 find their lives intertwined as each crosses paths with a feckless bishop who is desperate to gain more power and wealth. That's the conflict at the center of "The Evening and the Morning" by New York Times bestselling author Ken Follett.

Goodreads picked "The Evening and the Morning" as one of its top historical fiction novels of the year.

Follett's main characters are a young boat builder and his family whose village is raided by Vikings, a Norman noblewoman who follows her new husband across the sea to a new land, and a monk dreaming of transforming his small abbey into a renowned center for education.

This book is a prequel to the first book in Follett's Kingsbridge series, "The Pillars of the Earth."

Source: [https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/49239093-the-evening-and-the-morning?from\\_choice=true](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/49239093-the-evening-and-the-morning?from_choice=true)

**Literary Biography and African History:** This year's Wolfson History Prize short list includes "A European Life," a biography of Geoffrey Chaucer by Oxford University English literature professor Marion Turner.

Turner focuses on Chaucer, who is often called the father of English literature and poetry, and his travels through Europe as a diplomat, bureaucrat and member of Parliament in the 14th century.

Also earning a spot on the Wolfson prize shortlist is "A Fistful of Shells: West Africa from the Rise of the Slave Trade to the Age of Revolution" by Toby Green, senior lecturer in Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) African history and culture at King's College London.

The book looks at the advanced, powerful and wealthy West African kingdoms— such as Benin, Oyo and Dahomey — starting in the 14th century.

Source: <https://fivebooks.com/best-books/history-2020-wolfson-richard-evans/>

## This Week in History

February 7 1497 - Cosmetics, art, and books are burned in Florence in the "bonfire of the vanities".

February 8 1587 - Mary, Queen of Scots, is executed after the Babington Plot to murder Queen Elizabeth I fails.

February 9 967 - [Sayf al-Dawla](#), founder of the Emirate of Aleppo (northern Syria and western Jazira), dies.

February 10 1258 - The Islamic Golden Age ends when Baghdad falls to the Mongols.

February 11 660 BC - Traditional date for the foundation of Japan by Emperor Jimmu.

February 12 1593 - At the Siege of Haengju, ~3,000 Koreans repel 30,000 Japanese invaders.

February 13 1542 - Catherine Howard, Henry VIII's fifth wife, is executed for adultery.

## Cleftlands Officers' Contact Information

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## Random Period Object - Cleveland Museum of Art



Mother Goddess, Northwestern India, Rajasthan, 5th-6th Century

Stone (schist) - <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1970.12>

Near the entrance to Hindu temples, statues of 7-8 mother goddesses were installed in side chambers. This is from a naturalistic set, which suggests connections with the Greco-Roman style from Gandhara (Pakistan). The simplicity of the garments is typical of the period.

This mother is depicted as attentive and loving, smiling at her child while patiently guiding him.

Schist is a coarse metamorphic rock made of layers of minerals that can split into thin sheets and flakes.

*Portrait photo of Mistress Zuriel credited to Lord Tarmach ben Yehuda al-Khazari.*

*The image of the king's helmet from Sutton Hoo is © The Trustees of the British Museum are available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)(Opens in new window) licence.*

*As of January 23, 2019, the Cleveland Museum of Art is an Open Access institution, using the Creative Commons Zero (CC0) designation for high-resolution images and data related to its collection. This means the public now has the ability to share, collaborate, remix, and reuse images of many as 30,000 public-domain artworks from the CMA's world-renowned collection—all without asking permission. In addition, portions of collections information (metadata) for more than 61,000 artworks, both in the public domain and those works with copyright or other restrictions, are now available.*

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