
A Medieval Workshop for Children in Karolinum

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Charles University in Prague is commemorating the 700th anniversary of the birth of its founder Charles IV (1316-1378) this spring. On Saturday the 21st of May, just one week after the anniversary of his birth (14th May), the university welcomed Prague's youngest citizens to celebrate and commemorate the anniversary by allowing them the opportunity to take a trip back in time and experience the Middle Ages with students and staff.

The courtyards of Karolinum, the ancient seat of Charles University, transformed into a medieval workshop where the children could exercise their penmanship with a quill and ink in the creation of medieval scribes; they were also given the opportunity to learn the technique of fabric weaving or try their hand at the difficult task of making chain-mail.

By wandering through the university grounds, children and parents alike were presented with a variety of workshops on medieval craftworks. Families engaged in the ancient fencing tournaments and participated in a marionette play.

The most popular part of the medieval children day however proved to be a game called "Catch the Thief." The children were divided into small groups whereby they had to explore the Old Town of Prague in an attempt to catch a robber named Jan (John) who stole silver spoons from his lady friend. Accompanied by Charles University students, the children travelled from station to station in the area surrounding the premises of Karolinum, in search for clues as to where the thief might have disappeared to.

On their way, the young detectives met the inhabitants of the medieval city of Prague who, once the children fulfilled their tasks, helped them with their mission to catch the thief. The tasks were varied and brought much fun and enjoyment to the children as well as the accompanying adults. They had to overcome the obstacle of being robbed by a group of burglars, play dice, translate a Hebrew text and help a monk with his counting whom they met during their journey.

Finally, the clues led the children to the Old Town Square, which served as the largest market of the Old Town of Prague in the Middle Ages. Here, they finally caught the thief and all of them were awarded a certificate to commemorate their participation in the game. Both the children and their accompanying adults shared in the enjoyment of the occasion and had an engaging learning experience about the era when Charles IV lived and ruled in Bohemia and the Holy Roman Empire – the late Middle Ages.

Aoife Brady is an Irish International Law student on Erasmus in Charles University. She enjoys observing and reporting on the cultural immersion of Erasmus students and the integration of foreign students studying abroad. She also has a keen interest in travel and is looking to improve her journalistic skills.