

Farfa Abbey 775 AD

Brief history

The Germanic tribe, the Longobards, has been in power of northern Italy since the 6th century. In the middle of the 8th century they were threatened by the big and mighty Frankish kingdom, which expanded in northern Italy. The decisive battle took part in 774 when the last Longobardian king, Desiderius, was defeated by the Frankish king, Charles the Great, Carlo Magno. Charles the Great proclaimed himself king of the Franks and the Longobards.

Farfa Abbey

Farfa Abbey was founded in the mid sixth century. After a decline it was revived around 680 AD. In the 8th century the abbey expanded with new and magnificent buildings.

The abbey was strategically important, at the doorway to Rome. The abbey obtained many privileges, first by the Longobards and later by the Franks. If you had control over the Farfa territories, it was easier to control Rome.

In 775 Charles the Great granted Farfa the privilege of being exempted from any Episcopal power and was instead under the power of the Emperor himself. This privilege was very fruitful for Farfa and in a couple of decades the abbey became one of the richest and most important abbeys of the European Middle Ages. The scriptorium was well-known and today the abbey has probably the oldest library in Europe.

Abbot Probato and Farfa

In the 760s bishop Guidoberto was the abbot of Farfa. He was appointed without asking the monks and they considered him as an intruder and didn't trust his spiritual guidance. When the monks opposed his decisions they were whipped and beaten. After complaining to King Desiderios the monks were invited to elect a new abbot. In 769 they chose Probatus as the new abbot of Farfa.

Probatus was born 705 in Sabina, near Farfa. He was educated in Rome, at the famous Lateran school for pontifical chanters, studying the Holy Scriptures and Music.

Abbot Probatus was a very active person and worked hard for the benefit of the abbey. He soon became popular among the monks. Probatus travelled a lot, increasing the power and the reputation of the abbey. Many farms in the neighbourhood were returned.

The abbey buildings were rebuilt and modernized, even running water was installed through a three km long aqueduct. The life in the abbey flourished under abbot Propatus with studies in art and music and in the Holy Scriptures. The abbey garden had many herbs and plants used for cooking and as medicine.

Probatus was a good friend of the Pope Adriano, both of them supporting the Frankish king Charles the Great. In 775 the Pope Adriano died. Abbot Propatus travelled to Rome to take part in the funeral.



Scenario, Farfa Abbey, May 775 AD

There is optimism at the abbey in Farfa. After Probatas became the abbot many new things have happened, new houses have been built, and others have been renovated. The privileges from Charles the Great also improve the conditions for the abbey. Life is becoming more prosperous; more and more people visit the abbey. It is getting richer and the cultural life is flourishing.

People come to the abbey to take part in the services and the spiritual life but also to meet other people, to discuss, eat and drink. Some of the men are interested to be postulants at the abbey, which is the first step towards life as a monk. If they will be accepted as postulants they will help with the chores at the abbey: cleaning, gardening and of course at the services. After some years they could give certain vows and become novices, which is a step further to the full life as a monk.

Many women also come to Farfa and the abbey. They take part in the spiritual life, go to the church every day and to confession. Some of them are widows, other virgins, or maybe daughters and wives of noble men.

There are many pilgrims coming to Farfa, from all over Europe. Groups of people with men, women and servants. Their goal is mostly Rome, but on their way they stay some days or weeks in Farfa. Some groups are even greeted by the abbot himself.

Farfa Abbey has a reputation of a good scriptorium, good singing and chanting, fine art and a garden with many plants and herbs. People come to listen to the songs and maybe have a chance to see the garden or the scriptorium. And sick people seek cure for their diseases.

Abbot Probatas left the abbey some weeks ago for the funeral of the Pope Adriano. But he is expected back any day now. Many people gather in Farfa to welcome Probatas back to the abbey – pilgrims as well as men and women from the region.

Roles

The participants are the people who have gathered in Farfa to welcome the abbot back from Rome. Some are pilgrims from far away, others seek help for their diseases, others just want to take part in the cultural, spiritual or the public life in Farfa. Some of the men are interested to be postulants at the abbey. Everybody will get a role card before the time travel.

Key questions

- The future of Farfa and the abbey. Things are getting better now with the new abbot and the privileges by Charles the Great. But can we trust them? Or maybe life was better before?
- The future for me. What do I want to be – a monk, a good Christian? What do I learn from life at Farfa, that I would like to bring with me back home. Or do I want to stay in Farfa?
- What is the proper way to live? The virtues – believe in God, hope for salvation and eternal life, love God and one another, justice and be fair, be brave and stand up for your beliefs, share with other people, seek knowledge. The mortal sins – greed, jealousy, anger, indifference, gluttony, pride/ arrogance (to think you are better than others), voluptuousness (only think about yourself).



Activities

- Gregorian chanting Nicola, Giuseppina
- Herbs and medicine Cristina, (Germana)
- Scriptorum Mario, Lucilla Secchiaroli
- Cooking Helen

Time plan

- 13.30 Gathering outside the Swedish Institute, Via Omero, leaving for Farfa
15.00 Tour of Farfa Abbey
15.45 Time Travel, Farfa.
Introduction, Role cards
Changing of dresses, time travel ceremony
16.30 Prayer, Don Massimo
Activities
Meal
18.30 Travel back, changing of dresses
19.00 Leaving Farfa

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Roles

Benedict monks, Don Massimo, Don Agostino

Don Massimo – Probatas

Eugenia – Noble woman. Name? (Christian/ Lombard?)

Ebbe – Magister postulantes et novices. Prior? Don Pietro (Adelchi?)

Inger – Noble woman. Name?

Helen – Cook, servant. Name?

Cristina – Magistra farmacorum, Servant from the garden. Name? (Christian/Lombard?)

Mario – Don Almichi, Magister scriptorium, Monk.

Lucilla – Magistra scriptorium, Noble women?. Name? (Christian/ Lombard?)

Nicola – Magister cantorum. Name? (Christian/ Lombard?)

Giuseppina – Magistra cantorum. A church woman good at singing. From the lateran school?

(Alboino, Clefi, Paredeo, Trasmundo, Giudesclaco)

Role cards

.....**noble woman**, *Eugenia*

You are a noble woman that have donated a lot to the abbey. Because of that you have been able to see most of the rooms in the abbey and know all the monks. You often mention times before and after the war, before and after the abbot Probatas. At the meal you give a speech about your ideas for the abbey in the future, maybe a prosperous future.

Armatora, cook, servant, *Helen*

You are a servant at the abbey helping with cooking and cleaning. You talk about life before and after Probatas, before and after the war and you mention the importance of the virtues all the time.

Felicia?, Magistra farmacorum, servant, *Cristina*

You are a servant at the abbey, helping with the garden. You know all about the herbs and plants and can make all kinds of medicine.

Don Almichi?, monk, Magister scriptorium, *Mario*

You have been a monk for many years and is responsible for the abbey library. You know all the books and are the expert in writing.

Hanna?, Magistra scriptorium, *Lucilla*

You are a noble woman, helping with the writing in the abbey.

Don Clefi?, monk, Magister cantorum, *Nicola*,

You are the best singer among the monks and lead the choir.

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**Sara, Magistra cantorum, Giuseppina**

You live close to the abbey and are in the church every day. You often help Don Clefi leading the choir.

Don Pietro, monk, Ebbe

You have been a monk for thirty years and are the leader of the abbey when the abbot Probatius is not there. You can compare life under bishop Guidoberto and have been beaten yourself several times when opposing him. You are the leader of all practical work in the abbey.

Males**Paldo, postulant1 (longobard) Jan**

You are a person from the area, working on a farm. You are very interested in the abbey life. You have an obvious calling from God and are absolute certain you want to be a monk. You talk to everyone about how God has called you to be his servant and a monk. So now you start as a postulant.

Gisulf, postulant2 (longobard) Urmas

You are interested in the life at the abbey. Maybe you want to be a monk, maybe not. You want to be accepted as a postulant, be in the abbey for some years and decide later. You are very ambiguous about your future. So you ask others. Do they think that your future is as a monk? You ask over and over, maybe at the meal, too.

Andreas, postulant3 (roman) Jon

You have been a postulant for some years. Now you have to decide. Are you going to continue or not? Next week you have the chance to give your vows and become a novice. You haven't decided yet. But today you find the way. What is your future? At the meal you mention to everyone your decision. Novice?

Halvard, Pilgrim (Germanic) Lars-Åke

You are a pilgrim from the north, on your way to Rome. You have travelled for months and will now stay a couple of weeks at the famous abbey of Farfa. You tell other people about your trip and where you come from. You are a good singer and your dream is to take part in the singing in church. At the meal you and the other pilgrims testimony about your experiences as pilgrims.

Arthur, Pilgrim 2

You are an anglo-saxan pilgrim and have travelled for almost a year. You make the pilgrim travel to get new spiritual experiences. But your dream is also to see the scriptorium in Farfa. At the meal you mention the new experiences you have received in Farfa.

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Rachis, Lay brother (longobard) Lucia's son

You help with all the practical work at the abbey. You do cooking, cleaning, gardening. You are a committed layman. Everything has to be in good shape when the abbot is arriving.

Rufus, Noble man (roman) Toomas

You are a noble man from the area. You have the plan to give a donation to the abbey but you have to look for yourself first. At the meal you proclaim your decision. How big is your donation going to be? You can of course read and write, so you stay at the scriptorium most of the time.

Females

Sigrid, Pilgrim 1 (Germanic) Inger

You have travelled for more than a year from one abbey to the other. You are a seeker but now you believe that Farfa is the goal of your searching. You ask about how life is at Farfa and if it's possible to stay in the neighbourhood of the abbey. You stick to the other pilgrims and at the meal you declare why Farfa is the goal of your life.

Ingeborg and Gudrun, Pilgrim 2 and 3 (Germanic) Susanne, Leen

You are two happy pilgrims, singing songs all the time. You have travelled for months and now you have reached your goal, Farfa. You have heard so much about the abbey. Of course you are going to take part in the singing activities. You have a servant that helps you all the time. You ask her over and over again to help you, to give you water, dry your sweat, carry your stuff and so on. At the meal you make a speech about your experiences of life as pilgrims.

Disa, Servant to pilgrim 2 and 3 (Germanic) Anna

You are a servant of pilgrim 2 and 3. You carry their bags, dry their sweat, give them water in the heat and help them with everything that they ask. But you are very tired of them now. You try to sneak away as much as possible.

Ragnhild, Pilgrim 4 Agrita

You have committed a big crime in your home country far away. You have confessed and received forgiveness. But you have to walk as a pilgrim for nine months to do penance. You are a good cook and help with meal. You talk about your home country and that you are longing for your two children back at home. At the meal you confess your crime again and promise to follow the virtues in the future.



Susanna and Veronica, Two sister pilgrims *Agneta, Daiga*

You are two curious sisters from far away that have heard a lot about the abbey. You have travelled five months to get here. Four days ago you met other pilgrims and have travelled together with them since. You are happy persons that like to sing. One of you is rather loud and the other try to quiet her as much as she can. You are all very curious to see the abbot. Probably you go to the inn in the evening

Katarina, Widow1 (roman) *Maria*

You are a widow since two years, when your husband died. You want to be in the neighbourhood of the abbey all the time. You take part in church life and want to grow as a person close to the church. You know all the virtues, talk about them all the time and make a speech about the virtues at the meal.

Aurona, Widow2 (longobard) *Emma*

You became a widow last year, when your husband died in the war. You are tired of war and believe that everything was better before, when the longobards were in power. You even say that loud to everyone at the meal. But now you only want to be in the neighbourhood of the abbey and take part in church life. You mention the need for an abbey for nuns, maybe even at Farfa. You are very interested in the singing.

Farwalda and Terebella, Widow 3 and her daughter (longobards) *Tina, Sirje*

Your husband/ father died two weeks ago. You are afraid that you have to leave your farm. Now you need comfort and go to the church. You ask people if they can take care of you? What are you going to do? What is your future? You are looking for an answer today. At the meal you ask loud and clear if there is someone that will help you.

Helena, Sick person1 (roman) *Catrin*

You've had a disease in your stomach for many years. You've heard about the monks and their medicine. This is your last chance. You want to find a medicine that works. Or maybe prayers are better?

Cecilia, Sick person2 (roman) *Gunilla Gustafsson*

You have red spots on your skin. And it's spreading. You don't know what it is. You ask people and go to the medicines to find out. You are afraid that a big disease is coming. You talk about that disease, that's going to kill thousands of people.

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Anna, Virgin (roman) *Cristinas syster*

You have made a vow to stay virgin all your life. You want to be close to the church. You take part in the prayers and mass every day. You hate the mortal sins and talk all the time about the virtues. Maybe you will be a nun in the future and you say several times that you want to start a nunnery in Farfa.

Maria, Noble women (roman) *Lucia*

You are a noble woman from the region. You plan to give a donation to the abbey. At the meal you tell what your donation is and why you give it to the abbey. Everyone can see from a distance that you are a upper class.

Transamunda, Servant

You are a servant helping in the garden. You know all about the plants, used in cooking and used for medicine. You help in making medicine.

Sinigalda, Farmer's wife, from the area (longobard) *Ade*

You are a local farmer working for the abbey. You are not quite happy with the new rulers, the franks; more work, more taxes. Life was much better before. You tell your thoughts to everyone, maybe even at the meal. You have a servant with you

Grimrut, Servant of a local farmer (longobard) *Gunilla Carlsson*

You are the servant of a local farmer. You agree with your master that life was much better before. You help your master all the time.

Fatima, Tradesman and a servant, *Mary Ellen*

You are a tradesman from far away. You sell spices, herbs, fabrics and clothes. You show what you have, talk about your spices at the cooking, about the herbs at the farmacorom. Your husband died some weeks ago, when you came in the middle of the war. But now you continue the business yourself. You even promote your goods at the meal.

Children

Children to a character above



Participants

Leen Jõesoo, Tallinn Old Town Educational College
Urmas Jõesoo, Leen's husband
Sirje Rohtla, Tallinn Old Town Educational College
Ade Lehtse, Tallinn City Museum
Toomas Abiline, Tallinn City Museum
Jaan Märss, Tallinn City Museum
Agneta Regell, Vimmerby municipality
Lars-Åke Andersson, Frödinge skola
Gunilla Gustafsson, Vimmerby municipality
Anna Olausson, Vimmerby municipality
Agrita Ozola, Tukums museum, Latvia
Daiga Šmitenberga, Tukums museum
Susanne Friborg, Funkaboskolan
Catrin Karlsson, Funkaboskolan
Gunilla Karlsson, Funkaboskolan
Tina Lindström, Sjöängsskolan
Jon Hunner, New Mexico State University
Mary Ellen, wife of Jon
Ebbe Westergren, Kalmar läns museum
Helen Eklund, Kalmar läns museum
Maria Mamlöf, Kalmar läns museum
Inger Adriansson, Kalmar läns museum
Emma Angelin-Holmén, Kalmar läns museum

Anna Conticello
2 sons of Anna
Valery Hughes
Aniello Hughes
Giuseppina Pamphilj
2 sons of Giuseppina
Giovanna Ccapelli
Nicola De Tomasi
Eugenia Bolognesi
Rinaldo
Mario Antonio
Christina
Christinas mother
Christina sister
Christinas brother in law
Lucilla Secchiaroli
Paolo Massimo
Son of Lucilla
Massimo De Meo
Elisabetta

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Vittorio
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