

# THE GREAT ESCAPE

## THE MORTIMERS, THE TOWER OF LONDON AND THE CROWN

Celebrating the 700th anniversary of one man's daring escape from the Tower of London.



Imprisoned for rebellion by Edward II, Roger Mortimer escaped to France, returned with an army, and put down his king. For a time, he ruled England. His descendants became kings.

The night of 1 August 1323 changed history. Find out how.

**TUESDAY, 1 AUGUST 2023, THE TOWER OF LONDON**

- A morning of presentations by eminent historians
- All-day access to the Tower of London
- Book launch: *The Mortimers of Wigmore 1066 - 1485: Dynasty of Destiny*



**MORTIMER**  
*History Society*

Brought to you by the Mortimer History Society

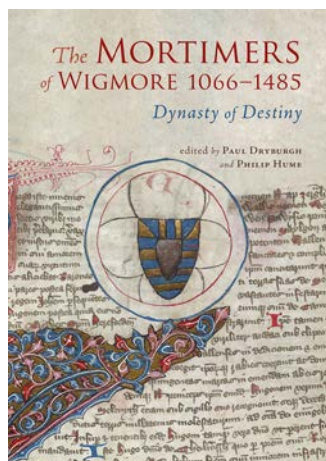
## AGENDA AT A GLANCE

9:00	REGISTRATION AND FREE ACCESS TO TOWER OF LONDON BEGINS
10:30	WELCOME AND LAUNCH OF <i>THE MORTIMERS OF WIGMORE 1066 - 1485: DYNASTY OF DESTINY</i>
10:40	PRESENTATIONS
11:40	REFRESHMENTS
12:10	PRESENTATIONS
13:45	LUNCH (OPTIONAL)
13:45 - 17:00	FREE ACCESS TO TOWER OF LONDON

9am. **REGISTRATION BEGINS**  
Free access to the Tower of London.

10:30 **BOOK LAUNCH:**  
**THE MORTIMERS OF WIGMORE 1066 - 1485:**  
**DYNASTY OF DESTINY**

To mark the 700th anniversary of Roger Mortimer's escape from the Tower the Mortimer History Society has commissioned this anthology of Mortimer-related essays from eleven historians, some at the start of their careers, others at the summit. During the course of the day you'll have the opportunity to buy your copy and have it signed by contributors attending the event.



10:40 **ROGER MORTIMER: THE MAKING OF THE MAN**  
**Paul Dryburgh**, Medieval Records Specialist,  
National Archives (UK)

Memorably described as 'The Greatest Traitor' in his only modern biography, Roger Mortimer, first earl of March, remains the most notorious member of one of medieval England's most powerful aristocratic dynasties. Attention has tended to focus on his relationship with Queen Isabella and their joint period in power, during which he had almost unrestricted access to the levers of royal authority and the person of the young king; and since when he has faced accusations of murdering Edward II, the king he brought down. Paul's talk offers a wider view, exploring the basis for Mortimer's rise to power, his strong personal relationship with Edward and his loyalty to the king's weak reign as it lurched from crisis to crisis. He places Roger's career within the broader context of English power across its wide dominions, and the personal



Paul Dryburgh

and political relationships he forged with and against his peers to enable him to engineer a bloodless invasion and the unprecedented removal of a post-Conquest king of England.

Paul is President and a founder member of the Mortimer History Society and edits the Society's journal. His doctoral thesis was on Roger Mortimer and his current professional research interests include government, politics, warfare and economy in Britain in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Paul is currently Co-Investigator of the Medieval Exchequer 'Gold Seam' on the Beyond 2022: Ireland's Virtual Record Treasury project, funded by the Irish Government. He is also Chair of the British Association for Local History.

11:10 **ROGER MORTIMER: ESCAPE FROM THE TOWER OF LONDON**  
**Dr Laura Tompkins**, Research Lead, Historic  
Royal Palaces

Roger Mortimer's escape from the Tower on the night of 1 August 1323 was a pivotal event in the reign of Edward II, which ultimately brought about the king's forced abdication and the succession of his son. Covering a dramatic prison break - complete with poison, intrigue, and a flight across the sea - Laura looks beyond the myths and rumours that have sprung up over the years to get back to what's actually known about the escape from the contemporary source material. In doing so, she considers the role of potential collaborators - including the queen, Isabella of France, the prominent part played by London and Londoners, and offers new thoughts on the actual location of Mortimer's within the Tower precinct.



Dr Laura Tompkins

Prior to her role with Historical Royal Palaces, Laura worked as a Medieval Records Specialist at The National Archives. She completed her PhD on Alice Perrers, the mistress of Edward III, at the University of St Andrews in 2013 and has subsequently published widely on Alice and the politics of 1360s and 1370s England. Her wider research includes the study of royal favourites across the late medieval period, queens and queenship, kingship, the royal household, and parliament. She is an Associate Fellow of the Institute of Historical Research.



# PROGRAMME



## 11:40 REFRESHMENTS AND BOOK SIGNING

### 12:10 THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF ROGER MORTIMER

**Dr Ian Mortimer**

After his escape Roger Mortimer fled to France where he joined forces with Queen Isabella. Returning to England with a mercenary army, they deposed Edward II and created a regency government that only fell with Roger's seizure in Nottingham Castle in 1330. Today, the public views Roger's period in power in a negative light, marked by acquisitiveness and self-interest. Ian's presentation strips away generations of propaganda and prejudice to give a balanced view of the man's achievements. He argues that Roger should be considered as one of a small group of non-royal medieval magnates who had a positive impact on the development of the English constitution and left a lasting legacy in areas including Parliamentary authority, military tactics and the laws of treason.



**Ian Mortimer, Historian and Author**

Ian is a founder member of the Society and the author of thirteen history books and numerous articles on the history of England between the 10th and 20th centuries. He has been described by *The Times* as 'the most remarkable medieval historian of our time'. His first book, *The Greatest Traitor*, was a biography of Roger Mortimer, first earl of March. He is best known, however, as the author of the four *Time Traveller's Guides* - to Medieval England, Elizabethan England, Restoration Britain and Regency Britain. He is a Fellow of both the Society of Antiquaries and the Royal Historical Society.

### 12:40 FAMILY SUPPORT: THE MORTIMERS, THE CROWN AND THE MANAGEMENT OF MINORITY

**Professor Chris Given-Wilson**, Emeritus Professor of Medieval History at the University of St Andrews

Between 1354 and 1425 the earldom of March was bedevilled by early deaths and long minorities, creating a period of jeopardy and risk. In his presentation Chris considers the extent to which the Mortimer inheritance was preserved and by what means. Focusing on the relatives, by blood and by marriage, legitimate and illegitimate, of successive Mortimer heirs, and their role in



**Chris Given-Wilson**

maintaining, not just the Mortimer inheritance but the family's claim to the throne, he concludes that the history of the Mortimers in this period is not so much the history of its earls as the history of a clan.

Chris is the author or editor of a dozen books on late medieval English history including *Henry IV, The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages*, and *Chronicles: the Writing of History in Medieval England*. He is also General Editor of *The Parliament Rolls Of Medieval England*.

### 13:20 SIR JOHN MORTIMER AND THE END OF THE FAMILY

**Dr Ian Mortimer**

Like Roger, Sir John Mortimer of Hatfield (d. 1424) was imprisoned in the Tower, escaped and was subsequently executed. But who was he? An imposter, a renegade, a bastard, or a genuine Mortimer heir? Ian looks at the men supporting Sir John, his connections with the Mortimer earls of March, and the possibility of his coming from a minor Hertfordshire family that preserved a memory of their ancestry in their coat of arms. Finally, he suggests a new and much darker reason why the Lancastrians locked Sir John up without trial and had him judicially murdered.

### 13:45 LUNCH

**(optional), book signing and free access to the Tower of London.**

### 17:30 TOWER OF LONDON CLOSES

## TOUR THE TOWER AT YOUR LEISURE

Entry to the Tower of London (usual price £30) is offered free to all attendees. Investigate the Tower at your leisure before the event starts (09:00 to 10:30) or after its close (13:45 to 17:30).





# SECURE YOUR TICKET

**TUESDAY,  
1 AUGUST 2023**

**THE BANQUETING SUITE  
NEW ARMOURIES  
TOWER OF LONDON**

Tickets are just £40 and can be ordered now at:

**[www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk/events/event-01-08-23](http://www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk/events/event-01-08-23)**

Your ticket includes:

- Attendance at all presentations and the book launch
- Mid-morning refreshments
- All-day access to the Tower of London (usual price £30)

You may also book lunch with us for an additional £18.75.

# ABOUT THE MORTIMER HISTORY SOCIETY

This event is brought to you by the Mortimer History Society. Founded in 2009, the Society provides a forum for all those interested in the medieval Mortimer dynasty and the history of the Welsh Marches. It has over 450 members worldwide.

**[www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk](http://www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk)**