



NEWSLETTER 14

2nd March 2014

Welcome to this new style of newsletter. In the future, we plan to contact you more frequently, with a simple newsletter that brings you Mortimer news, news of the Society and information about what to look for on our website. As you will see, each item is quite brief, but you'll be able to get more information about anything that interests you, by looking on the website. Members without internet access will receive paper copies of these newsletters and they can request hard copies of any articles on the website that particularly interest them. We'd welcome feedback - use the 'Newsletters' option on the 'Contact Us' page.

Spring Dates

Saturday 8th March

MHS AGM at Pembridge Village Hall, Herefordshire

10.00 arrival & coffee

10.30 AGM - there's lots of interesting stuff to tell you about!

11.45 Duncan James will speak on the history of Pembridge - A Mortimer village

Lunch in the village (2 pubs and a café)

14.30 Duncan will lead a tour of the village [full details](#)

Wednesday 12th March

7.30 John Grove is speaking on *The Marcher Lords* at Usk Civic Society. [more details](#) on the home page

Saturday 17th May

MHS Spring Conference: *Britain & Ireland: Colonisation and Civilization* [more details](#)

Blanche Mortimer's Coffin Discovered at Much Marcle

Blanche was the youngest daughter of Roger Mortimer 1st Earl of March (executed 1330). At the age of about 15, she was married to the 43 year old Baron Peter de Grandison. Much Marcle in Herefordshire was a Mortimer possession and when Blanche died in 1347 aged around 31, she was buried in the church of St Bartholomew there. The lovely monument in the church, includes a stunning effigy of Blanche, one of the most beautiful 14th century sculptures in the country. A magnet for tourists for many years, a major conservation project began in 2013.

It was assumed that Blanche's coffin would have been buried in the ground somewhere near the monument. Imagine the feelings of the conservators on discovering that Blanche's coffin was lying inside the monument itself, just inches away from visitors. One might have expected the body to have been in a rectangular box of some sort, but it was wrapped in lead sheeting and looked more like a mummy than a normal coffin. Through existing holes in the lead casing it was possible to insert a small camera, but all that could be seen was.....dust! See the home page of the website for more details.



Ian Mortimer's Family Tree of the Mortimers of Wigmore

Dr Ian Mortimer is the author of many important books including *The Greatest Traitor* about the life of Roger Mortimer, 1st Earl of March and *The Time Traveller's Guide to Medieval England*. He is a President and great supporter of the Society. Being a Mortimer himself, Ian has devoted many years to studying the medieval Mortimers and he has made available to us his outline genealogy of the Mortimers. Not only does this include the Mortimers of Wigmore, but also the descendants of Roger Mortimer of Chirk (the uncle of the 1st Earl of March) including Sir Hugh Mortimer of Martley & Tedstone Wafre who was killed with Richard, Duke of York at the Battle of Wakefield in 1460. Also included are details of the descendants of Geoffrey Mortimer, younger son of the 1st Earl of March who escaped execution with his father in 1330 but was exiled for life. He became Lord of Couhé in France.

Ian's detailed lineage of the Mortimers is available to members on the website. You can access the family tree by choosing the 'Mortimers' tab and selecting 'Genealogy' but you will need to be logged in to follow the link to the article. [access page here](#)

Castles held by the Mortimers

The Mortimers held Wigmore castle from soon after the Norman Conquest until it was inherited by Richard, Duke of York on the death of the last Mortimer Earl of March in 1425. Roger Mortimer of Wigmore (later 1st Earl of March) also acquired Ludlow castle when his wife, Joan de Geneville, inherited it in 1308 from her grandfather. Although these were the two greatest of their castles in England, the Mortimers were associated at one time or another with many other castles in England and Wales. Some of these have left impressive and romantic ruins as at Harlech, Clun and Montgomery. Some like Cefnlllys, Cymaron and Tinboeth just survive as impressive earthworks, having often been fought over and lost and won several times over the centuries of Welsh wars. Other have left little trace - maybe just a few bumps in the ground or a short section of wall to show that there was once a castle there. You can find articles on many of these Mortimer castles, both large and small, on the website. Under the Mortimer tab choose 'Mortimer Castles' or [follow this link](#). You will need to be logged in to see most of the articles.



Intrepid MHS Members on a field trip to the Mortimer castle of Cefnlllys near Llandrindod Wells

96 Mortimer Churches listed and described on the website

Soon after the Norman Conquest, Ralph Mortimer of Wigmore was awarded lands right across England. As well as his core holding in Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, the Domesday Book records him as holding estates in Berkshire, Hampshire & Wiltshire as well as a sizeable group in Lincolnshire and East and North Yorkshire. To these can be added odd manors on Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire and Somerset.



The wonderfully preserved 12th century tympanum at Pipe Aston church in Herefordshire



The old church at Botley in Hampshire

Several of their manors in Shropshire and Herefordshire were given to the Augustinian abbey they founded at Wigmore. Others went at an early date to help support the Abbey at St Victor-en-Caux which they had founded in their homeland of Normandy. Other places came under Mortimer control later, including Ludlow in Shropshire, Much Marcle and Pembridge in Herefordshire, Martley in Worcestershire and several in Powys.



Ribbesford church, Worcestershire which contains what appears to be a coffin lid carved with the Mortimer arms



Bleddfa church, Powys, held by the Mortimers of Richards Castle from 1211 to 1304

The website contains short articles about most of the churches associated with these Mortimer villages, together with images and links for more information. Also included are articles about those churches held by the Mortimers of Richards Castle during the period 1211 to 1304 when they held the barony of Burford (also known as Richards Castle). These are concentrated in Shropshire, Herefordshire and Powys.

To access these churches select 'Mortimer Churches' on the 'Mortimers' tab of the website or [follow this link](#). The churches have been arranged here in categories but it is also possible to see an alphabetical list and also a list arranged county-by-county.

If you have any comments on, or contributions for, the newsletter please choose 'Newsletters' on the 'Contact Us' page of the website.