NEWSLETTER 19   **December 2014**

Mortimer History Society Lapel Badges for sale

These neat MHS badges measure just 2cm by 2.5cm. UK members can buy them by sending a cheque for £4 (£3 + £1 postage) to our Chairman, Jason O'Keefe, 151 Belmont Road, Hereford HR2 7JR. Members in other locations please contact Jason by email at jason.okeefe@btopenworld.com to check on postage rates.

New Members of the Mortimer History Society

We welcome the following new members:
- Jeremy Mortimore (Devon UK) interested in heraldry and costume
- Aine Bonnefoy (Trim, Ireland but also Provence, France) - studying for a masters degree in medieval history researching the life and family of Geoffrey de Geneville
- Barbara Skellern (Shropshire) a history graduate keen to know more about the medieval Mortimers
- Jayne Adams (Liverpool)
- Dr Ellie Pridgeon (Essex) - an archivist with a PhD in medieval wall paintings
- Gary Young (Virginia USA) interested in the genealogies of the Mortimers of Wigmore and Richards Castle
- Katherine Prawl (Texas USA) - a descendant of the Mortimers who is interested in writing historical fiction based on her ancestors' lives.

Book Review - "The Image of Aristocracy in Britain 1000-1300"
by David Crouch. Routledge 1992

David Crouch provides a broad definition of aristocracy by examining the ways aristocrats behaved and lived between 1000 and 1300. He analyses life-style, class and luxurious living in those years. A distinctive feature of the book is that it takes a British, rather than Anglocentric, view - looking at the penetration of Welsh and Scottish society by Anglo-French ideas of aristocracy.

`Crouch is perceptive and often amusing. He has brought together a wealth of recent scholarship unavailable to the general reader, and has given us a work that is a major contribution to the understanding of the evolution of aristocracy in the country, and a must for anyone with any interest in the subject.' - *Literary Review*

A Mortimer History Trail for the Middle Marches

MHS is supporting the development of a brand new history trail covering Mortimer sites in the Middle Marches. It is the brainchild of our founder, John Grove who has provided the following information.

Everyone knows that the Mortimers were crucial figures in the history of the Marches. Few, perhaps, know that, as well as Wigmore Castle, there are a good number of other visible remains that are linked to the Mortimers. We have begun to develop a history trail in Mortimer country that will give individuals and families the opportunity to visit ten attractive villages and towns. The trail will include ten fine historic churches and eight castle sites. There will be a leaflet including a map and a guide but it will also be available in an online format which will be developed over time to include more and more Mortimer-related information. We hope this will lead visitors to a greater interest in the Mortimers and urge them to join the Society and make use of the website which covers many more Mortimer castles, churches, places and 'things' not only in England but also in Wales, Ireland and Normandy.

The ten places to be included in the trail are Ludlow, Richard's Castle, Orleton, Kingsland, Pembridge, Presteigne, Lingen, Shobdon, Wigmore and Leintwardine.

Our hope is that, once the trail is completed, it will be recognised as one of the best medieval history trails in Britain. If you would like to help in any way, especially if you live in Herefordshire or Shropshire, do contact the coordinator John Grove. john.grove37@gmail.com

Trim Castle and Dublin - A Report on the Society's Visit in October 2014

At 7.00pm on 17th October a group of 26 of us assembled at the Belvedere hotel in Dublin for our most ambitious field trip so far. The party consisted of highly enthusiastic MHS members together with several friends and 'other halves'. The bulk of us had flown from Birmingham but members also came by plane from London and the USA while a couple travelled by boat from North Wales.

The background to our visit to Trim

The weekend started with a most interesting talk by Michael Potterton, the author of *Medieval Trim*, who set the context for the Mortimer involvement in Ireland. He explained that Diarmait MacMurrough, the exiled king of Leinster, sought king Henry II's aid in re-establishing his position in Ireland. After Diarmait swore allegiance to the English king, Henry gave him *carte blanche* to recruit supporters from among his nobility. In 1169 a force including Welsh archers invaded Ireland and easily established control of various key towns. They were followed in 1170 by Richard de Clare, Earl of Pembroke (the younger *Strongbow*) and in 1171 king Henry II arrived in Ireland himself; this marks the official start of English rule in Ireland. Diarmait had died in 1170 but in 1171 Strongbow married Diarmait's daughter Aoife. Henry II granted him the kingdom of Leinster but, concerned at Richard's growing power in Ireland, in 1172 he established Hugh de Lacy in the lordship of Meath to the north as an effective counterweight, granting him 1,000,000 acres.

Meath is a fertile area north-west of Dublin with the river Boyne running through it. The settlement of Trim is on the Boyne and there was a monastery here from very early times founded possibly by St Patrick who left it in the care of his nephew St Loman. During the medieval period Trim was a place of pilgrimage with three monastic houses, a fine parish church, a leper hospital and a frankhouse, as well as a guildhall, fortified townhouses and an impressive circuit of walls punctuated by gate-houses and towers. The castle Hugh de Lacy built on high ground overlooking the river was the largest in Ireland.

Just downstream, the settlement of Newtown Trim was developed from around 1202 by the first English bishop of Meath, Simon de Rocheford. He moved his diocesan seat from Clonard and sought to establish Newtown as a major ecclesiastical centre, in opposition to the temporal power of the Lacys in Trim Castle. Newtown Trim now contains a most interesting collection of ecclesiastical ruins, dominated by the remains of the Augustinian priory incorporating what is left of Simon's huge cathedral of St Peter and St Paul. As well as the remaining monastic buildings there are the ruins of a small parish church. Just over the Boyne are the impressive remains of the priory of St John the Baptist built by the Crutched Friars and incorporating a hospital.

Hugh de Lacy died in 1186 and the lordship of Meath passed to his young son Walter who lived until 1241. By this time Walter's son Gilbert was dead and his inheritance was split between his granddaughters Margaret, the wife of John de Verdun, and Maud whose second husband was Geoffrey de Geneville, a Savoyard who arrived in England in the retinue of Henry III's queen Eleanor of Provence.

Geoffrey de Geneville was lord of Trim for many years, from his marriage to Maud de Lacy (somewhere around 1250) until he retired in 1308. In 1263 he had established a Dominican friary just outside the town walls on the north side of Trim and it was to this Black Friary that he retired to live out the remaining years of his life. He died in 1314. His heir was his granddaughter Joan and it was through her marriage to Roger Mortimer of Wigmore (d1330) that the considerable Lacy estates in England, Wales and Ireland (including Trim and Ludlow) were added to those already held by the Mortimers of Wigmore.

Our day at Trim

Even before we'd reached Trim it was clear that this is an exciting place for the lover of medieval history. With the great keep of the castle starting to appear ahead of us, we suddenly caught sight of the extensive remains of Newtown Trim down by the river on our right. But would we have time to explore all that lot as well as Trim itself?

The Priory of the Crutched Friars by the Boyne at Newtown Trim

The Sheepsgate with the castle keep beyond

When we arrived in Trim, the scale of the huge castle became apparent. We had a little time to look around us before our castle tour and questions arose immediately. What is that amazing tower with the other ruins on raised ground just across the river? It turned out to be the "yellow tower" that is all that remains of the church of St Mary's Augustinian abbey. To the east of the abbey is a low section of the original town wall and the "Sheep's Gate", the only one of the medieval gates that survives.

The remains at the castle are very extensive and include a water gate giving access to the river Boyne and a most impressive barbican tower. On the north side of the bailey near the water gate are the remains of the great hall and solar built by Geoffrey de Geneville when he decided that he would like a bit more comfort than he could experience in his rooms in the keep. The keep is only accessible with a guide and we were fortunate in having a leader who made the visit both entertaining and informative, even if we were not always able to catch every word, as he spoke very rapidly with, of course, the Irish brogue. It was useful that he reiterated many of the points made by Michael Potterton the night before, helping us to fix the history in our minds.

Our guide explaining the construction of the castle keep

After our castle visit and a break for lunch we met Cynthia Simonet who led us on a tour of the town of Trim. Cynthia spoke enthusiastically and knowledgably about Trim's early history and her walk took us past St Patrick's cathedral. The Anglican Bishops of Meath have been enthroned here since 1536 but it only became a cathedral in 1955. Unfortunately the cathedral was locked but we had a good view of the Mortimer arms on the church tower. These show Mortimer quartered with de Burgh suggesting that they refer to the 4th or 5th earl of March.

The church of St John the Baptist of the Crutched Friars at Newtown Trim

The arms of the 4th or 5th Earl of March on the tower of the cathedral showing Mortimer quartered with de Burgh

Our town tour culminated at the site of the Black Friary founded by Geoffrey de Geneville in 1263. As mentioned earlier he lived in the friary from his retirement in 1308 to his death in 1314. There is an ongoing archaeological dig at Black Friary and we were shown around the site by Finola O'Carroll, the director of the project. There is little to see above ground at present apart from the bases of some of the columns in the nave of the church. Nevertheless, Finola managed to make the visit very interesting and memorable.


Preparing for our tour of the site of the Black Friary

After leaving Trim we were able to stop for a few minutes at Newtown Trim. We just had time to visit the Priory of St John the Baptist before we needed to set off for Dublin. We'd seen a great deal in the day but had tantalising glimpses of yet more treasures - things we've had to put off for a return visit perhaps.

Throughout our visit we were impressed by the knowledge, enthusiasm and warmth of the Irish people we met. After they had finally won the battle for independence from Britain in 1921, there was a strong urge to get rid of everything associated with the hated oppressor. There was even a serious move to dismember Trim castle and use the stone elsewhere. More recently there has been a change of heart and sites like Trim are recognised as being important parts of Irish history and not just symbols of oppression.

The Wigmore Chronicle in Trinity College, Dublin

The day after our visit to Trim, most of us decided to visit the Old Library at Trinity College to see their copy of the Wigmore Chronicle which had been specially displayed for our visit. The Wigmore Chronicle is a set of annals created by the monks of Wigmore Abbey which were begun around the end of the 13th century. The original is lost but there are two independent copies, one at the John Rylands Museum in Manchester and the other, which is rather later, at Trinity College. Dublin's version, particularly, contains important information about the genealogy of the Mortimers of Wigmore. Another beautifully illustrated document in Chicago also gives details of the Mortimer history and coat of arms.
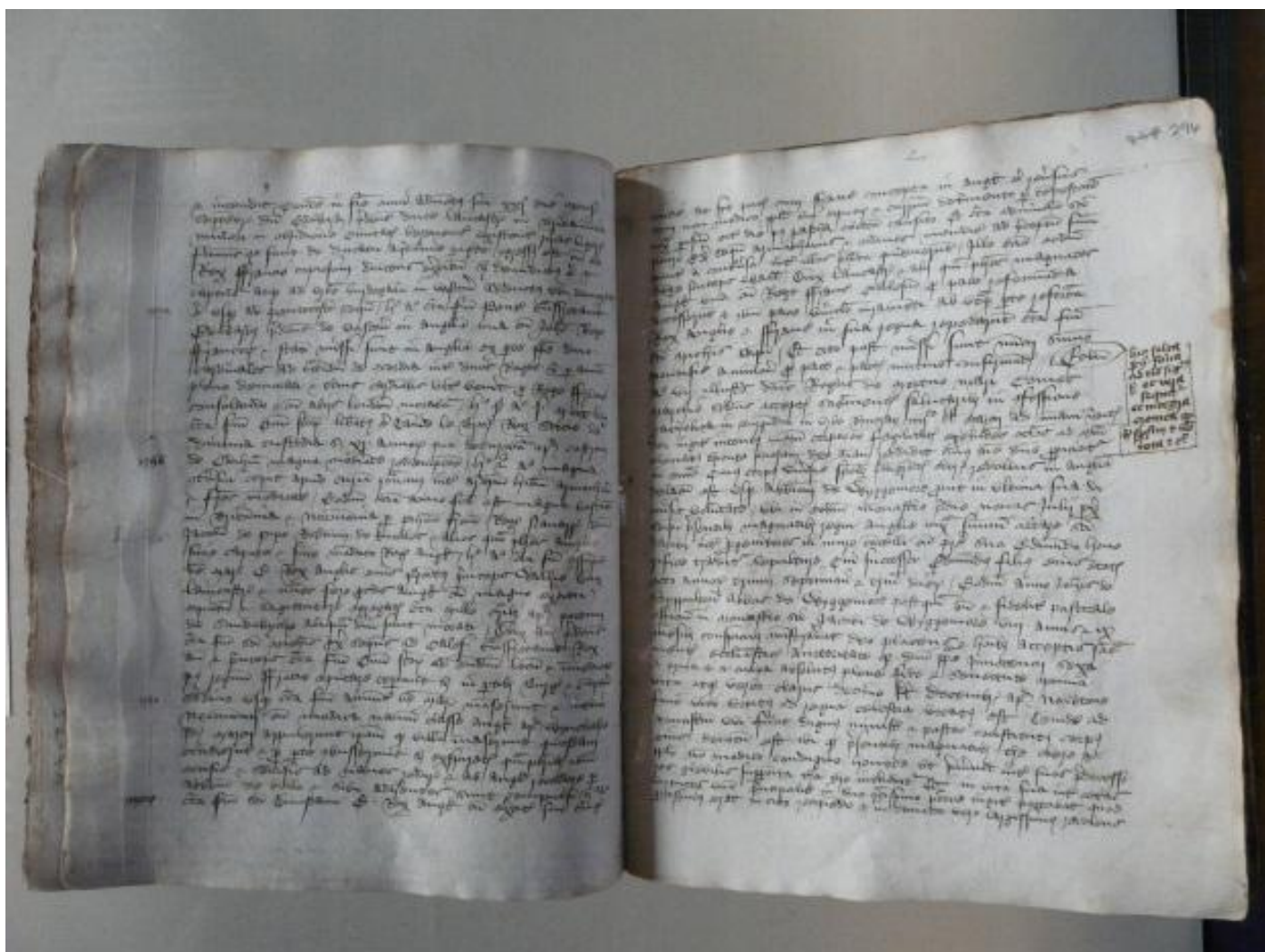
Finally

This was a very happy and successful trip blessed with excellent weather. Our thanks go to Jason and Stella for organising it and to Margot for arranging for the Wigmore Chronicle to be on display.

The Battle of Evesham Window at Fladbury, Worcestershire

Fladbury is a village halfway between Evesham and Pershore, just south of the A44. (grid reference SO996463 - postcode WR10 2QB)

The 'Mortimer' interest in the church centres on a window with 14th century glass showing six coats of arms. These are all clearly related to the Battle of Evesham 1265. It is said that the glass was transferred from Evesham Abbey following the dissolution.

The Battle of Evesham was the most decisive event during the Second Barons' War that raged intermittently between 1264 and 1267. Dissatisfaction among his barons with the rule of King Henry III had been mounting for a variety of reasons. Things came to a head in 1264 when a large group of barons rebelled under the leadership of the Frenchman, Simon de Montfort (Earl of Leicester). The rebels saw early success at the Battle of Lewes in May 1264, capturing both the king and his son, prince Edward. This marked the start of Simon de Montfort's short reign as 'uncrowned King of England'.

Roger Mortimer of Wigmore (d1282) was loyal to the crown throughout the war. He was captured at Lewes but was allowed to return home to help secure the Marches against the Welsh. This proved a costly mistake as he was able to continue working against the rebels. His lands at Wigmore had been attacked and wasted by Simon de Montfort, so there was no love lost between the two men. In May 1265, Roger was instrumental in securing the escape of prince Edward from custody.

In August 1265 Roger Mortimer fought alongside prince Edward (later King Edward I) at Evesham. The battle developed into a rout with severe casualties among the rebels but few among the loyalists. It is said that Roger Mortimer personally slew Simon de Montfort and sent his head to his wife at Wigmore as a trophy.

Of the six people whose armorial bearings are recorded here, two were on the king's side and four were for the rebels. At least four of them were definitely involved in the battle, one on the king's side (Roger Mortimer) and three against the king (including Simon de Montfort). The three rebels who are known for certain to have been in the battle were all killed. For details of the six shields - see below.
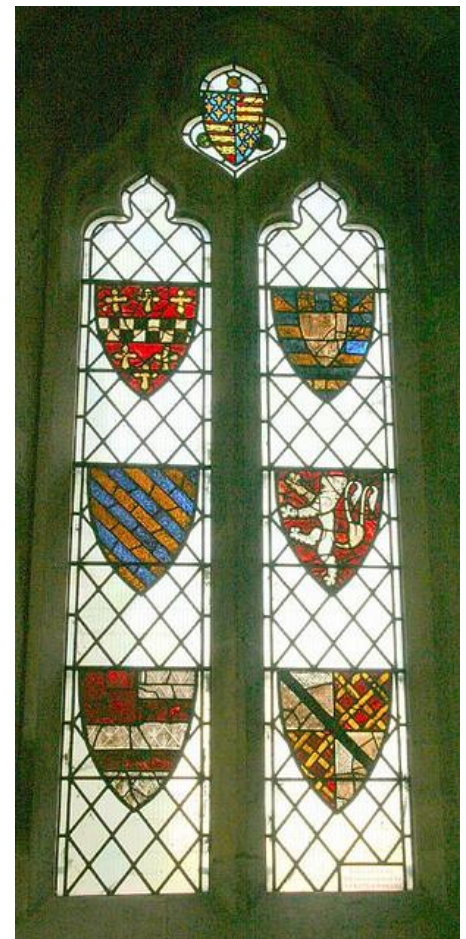
Roger Mortimer of Wigmore (d1282)
Fought alongside Prince Edward
Said to have personally slain
Simon de Montfort

Hugh le Despencer (1197-1265)
Father and grandfather of the two
hated Hugh Despencers
of the time of Edward II

Simon de Montfort (d1265)
Said to have been slain
by Roger Mortimer

Peter (Piers) de Montfort

of Beaudesert
(c1205 - 1265)
A strong supporter of Simon, though not a close relation, apparently. First 'Speaker' of the House of Commons

Ralph Boteler (d1281)

There is no evidence of his involvement in the battle but, in recognition of his loyalty, Henry III awarded him significant estates confiscated from the rebel families.

John de Bosco, Boys or Bois??

(Born 1228 - date of death unknown)
If he was still alive in 1265, John would have been about 37 and, though nothing is known for certain about his death, he is a prime candidate for this window. John was from a family that strongly supported the barons against the king. His father Ernald de Bosco III (1190-1255) had his lands temporarily confiscated by King John in 1216. His older brother Ernald IV de Bosco (1221-1277) would almost certainly have been at Evesham, but he had been ill for three years so was not implicated. His sister Joan de Bosco was married to the rebel Sir Thomas Astley who was killed at Evesham.

Source: George F Farnham; 'The Descent of the Manor of Claybrooke, Leicestershire' in the Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society Vol.12 Part 2 1921-2