



NEWSLETTER 23

October 2015

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MHS AGM AND VISIT TO CLEOBURY MORTIMER AND KINLET

Saturday 12th March 2016

Venue - Cleobury Country Centre, Love Lane, Cleobury Mortimer DY14 8PE (Tel: 01299 272300)

10.00 Arrival - tea/coffee

10.30 Business Meeting

11.30 Talk by Robert Hodge, Chairman of Cleobury Mortimer & District History Society

www.cleoburymortimerhistory.co.uk followed by a guided tour of Cleobury Mortimer.

13.00 Lunch near Kinlet followed by a visit to Kinlet church - more details later.

OTHER FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Thursday 22nd October 2015 - The Mortimer History Trail

John Grove will be looking at all ten villages and towns with historic Mortimer links and outlining the latest state of the trail's development. 7.30 at Richard's Castle Village Hall (on B4361, 4 miles south of Ludlow)

Monday 26th October 2015 - Medieval Pilgrims: a Window on their World

An illustrated lecture by Tim Porter. 7.30 in Leominster Priory (Retiring collection).

Thursday 14th to Sunday 17th April 2016 - The Castles of the Hereford and South Shropshire Marches

The annual conference of the Castles Studies Group. For more details [Click Here](#)

A PARHELION SEEN FROM LUDLOW IN SEPTEMBER 2015

A note by Hugh Wood

When the Yorkist army arrived at Mortimer's Cross near Wigmore in February 1461 they saw three suns in the sky and thought it was a bad omen. Edward, the young Duke of York, convinced them that it was a sign that the Holy Trinity were on their side and they duly beat the Lancastrian army under Jasper Tudor. What they actually saw was a parhelion or "sun dogs", a rare atmospheric phenomenon caused by refraction through ice crystals. Appearances of

parhelia have been photographed across the world, but it was exciting to see one recently from Ludlow. It was not specially impressive, as parhelia go, and it would not have frightened any soldiers, but there can be no doubt that it was a genuine parhelion. It was seen over quite a wide area with reports coming from Telford in Shropshire, Llandrindod Wells in Powys and as far away as South Yorkshire. Parhelia are most commonly noticed when the sun is near the horizon. In 1461 it was just after the dawn and the Ludlow example was just before sunset. To see more examples look for 'parhelion' on Google Images.



The recent Ludlow Parhelion - interesting but not frightening



*A parhelion photographed in Fargo, North Dakota in 2009
- much more scary!*

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members:

Mary Cooper (Herefordshire UK)

Denis Holly (Worcestershire UK)

Martin Lewis (Essex UK)

John Manson (British Columbia, Canada)

Vicki Melton (California USA)

Marion Moulton (Cheshire UK)

Anna Russell (Herefordshire UK)

David Sudlow (Worcestershire UK)

Jessica Tudzin (California USA)

Karen Unwin (Shropshire UK)

Robert Wigmore (Wellington, New Zealand)

Kathleen Wild (Gloucestershire UK)

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PROGRESS ON THE MORTIMER HISTORY TRAIL

You will be aware from previous newsletters and the website that John Grove had the inspiration to create a Mortimer History Trail. A few months ago John asked Philip Hume to take on lead responsibility for developing the trail as Philip lives in the middle of the trail area making it much easier to make contacts in the local community and do local research. Over the summer there have been exciting developments as Philip describes below.

The original vision for the Mortimer History Trail was to use QR codes in each location to enable people to directly access online a range of information about the Mortimers and the location. Unfortunately, it quickly became apparent that this would not work due to the very poor mobile internet coverage in north Herefordshire/south Shropshire.

As one door closed, though, exciting new possibilities opened up. A chance conversation about the trail in the Castle Bookshop in Ludlow resulted in Stanton Stephens exclaiming – ‘if you do it as a book, people will buy it’ – which was followed by Stanton putting us in touch with local publishers, Logaston Press. The people at Logaston liked the ideas that we put to them and have agreed to publish the Mortimer History Trail as a booklet of c60-70 pages.



*Shobdon Arches - all that remains of Shobdon Priory,
the precursor of Wigmore Abbey which was built
around 1140 and pulled down in 1753*

We agreed deadlines to write the booklet so that it could be designed, printed and published by Easter next year for the start of the 2016 summer season, with an official launch event later in the summer. The trail will follow a loop that links Ludlow, Richard's Castle, Orleton, Mortimers Cross, Kingsland, Shobdon, Pembridge, Presteigne and Stapleton, Wigmore, Leintwardine, Leinthall Earls and Pipe Aston,.

The booklet will interweave the history of the Mortimer family, its impact on this area and the whole country, with the physical remains in these locations that are a visual link to those times and people. Thus, it will use the buildings and artefacts as connections and windows to bring alive and give insights into the fascinating history of the Mortimers and the times when this area was of great importance nationally.



A carved head from Orleton said to represent Queen Isabella, the wife of King Edward II

For example, the 6 heads carved in stone which are mounted in Orleton Parish Church have for a long time been believed to represent Roger Mortimer (1st Earl of March), King Edward II, Queen Isabella, Piers Gaveston, Adam of Orleton (Bishop of Hereford), and an Abbot of Wigmore Abbey though Ian Mortimer shows that there is no actual evidence for this. The church and the stone carvings provide the touchstone to the times of Roger Mortimer, his affair with Queen Isabella, and the deposition of Edward II.

The booklet will also include quizzes, I-Spy and Mystery trails to engage children and families and help to convey information.

Another exciting aspect of the work on the trail has been the development of a project with primary schools in the area. Seven schools are already committed with a further 5 interested. This will involve the schools developing curriculum content on the Mortimers and medieval life in their areas for their local history studies. We are exploring with them the possibility of a living history event to bring it to life for the children. Detailed planning is being done during Autumn term with delivery in Spring/Summer. This has the potential to involve over 200 children (plus their parents and families) each year in finding out about the Mortimers and being involved in the history trail.

So, great progress has been made and over the next few months the work will be done to turn it all into reality with the booklet published at Easter, a launch event in the summer and a presence at local events over the summer to publicise both the Mortimer History Society and the Trail. If you would like to email us about the trail, please go to the "Contact Us" page on the website and choose the "Mortimer History Trail" option. [\[Return\]](#)

DOLFORWYN CASTLE

The extensive remains of Dolforwyn castle sit on top of a ridge high above the A483 a few miles north of Newtown in Powys, Wales. On 20th June a party of MHS members visited Dolforwyn under the expert leadership of Paul Remfry.



Notes on the History of the Castle by Philip Hume

Dolforwyn Castle was built for Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1273. As Prince of Gwynedd in north Wales, Llywelyn had been extending his power and control in the 1250s and 1260s into other parts of Wales, which brought him into the territory of Cedewain, disputed at that time between the local prince and Roger Mortimer (d1282). In 1267 Llywelyn was recognised by Henry III as 'Prince of Wales' and a few years later he began to build a castle on the ridge above Dolforwyn ('Our Lady's Meadow') with a new borough attached. Records show that £173 6s 8d was spent on the work from April 1273 to April 1274

Llywelyn's new castle at Dolforwyn was typical of Welsh-built castles in being constructed on a high and prominent crag, unlike most Norman castles. As such it was really too high to effectively defend the land below it and was more use as a statement of power, influence and wealth, as well as a look-out point. It was a very visible threat to both the royal castle at Montgomery and to the Princes of Powys, and earned Llywelyn a rebuke from the king's councillors.

Events, however, were turning against Llywelyn. The new King Edward I sought to insist on the homage owed to him by Llywelyn in accordance with the treaty of 1267. Llywelyn refused, which provided Edward with the justification to initiate a campaign into Gwynedd in 1277, King Edward's first Welsh campaign. This campaign and his subsequent ones resulted in the final conquest of Wales. Roger Mortimer and Henry de Lacy were tasked with the capture of Dolforwyn. The new borough outside the castle was burnt down, and when, after a short siege, Llywelyn failed to relieve the castle, the garrison surrendered.



The undercroft of the Great Hall

Initially the castle was given to the Prince of Powys, but was soon given to Roger Mortimer, who replaced the destroyed borough with a new one at Newtown in the valley bottom. The Mortimers maintained the castle and made various additions and alterations but by 1381 it was in poor condition and played no further part.

Notes on the Visit to Dolforwyn by Mickie O'Neill

Seldom have I enjoyed a Castle visit so much, not just the venue but the smooth and erudite guidance of Paul Remfry. He really is the Welsh Castle supremo. The setting of the Castle is just spectacular and the position commanding, yet it is impossible to see from the busy A483 just north of Newtown. After a brief introduction Paul led us up a short sharp lane, stopping mercifully part way up for yet more information and a breather. The last stretch up to the ridge was far more gentle and worth every step.

Paul gave an extensive and detailed tour of the ruins, pointing out more than we could ever have imagined with our

inexperienced eyes. Most of the excavation and restoration has been undertaken in the last three decades and there is still much conjecture about form and function. For example a single round tower seems to have replaced an earlier square tower. Was it a change of mind or the destruction of the earlier tower?

I think I can speak for us all by heartily thanking Paul for coming all the way from beyond Canaerfon to provide such a great visit. Looking forward to another trip like this, there's a lot of castles out there! [\[Return\]](#)

THE FATAL QUARREL OF SIMON DE MONTFORT

An article by John Grove, Founder of the Mortimer History Society

After the battle of Evesham on August 4th 1265, Simon de Montfort's head, draped with his testicles, was sent to Lady Maud at Wigmore Castle by her husband Roger Mortimer (d1282). Roger had personally led an assassination squad under the direction of Prince Edward. What was the underlying cause of this brutal and barbarous act, unusual even in medieval warfare? What were the causes of this deed of personal hatred and animosity?

Simon de Montfort (1208-1265) was in many ways a great man, and this is the verdict of history. He had an extraordinary career. Coming from France as a penniless younger son, he became Earl of Leicester, brother in law to the King, a military leader in Gascony, and the main protagonist for reforms that went even further than the Magna Carta. His idealism shone forth in his religious conviction, in his commitment to his promises and, as a crusader for reform. He had support from churchmen, like the bishops of Worcester and Lincoln, from knights, sheriffs, Londoners, many of the common people, and from his wife Eleanor - the king's sister - and their 4 sons and 3 daughters.

His greatness is undoubted. Within a few years people were regarding him as a saint, and today he is seen as a founder of the democratic institution of Parliament. In 1264 he called the first parliament that included sheriffs and knights from each shire/county, and in January - March 1265 two burgesses from each town were also invited, all hoping to get justice for the people of England. Over a period of 30 years, however, a fatal quarrel had developed with none



Paul Remfry leading the party in search of the garderobes



A commemorative stamp issued in 1964

other than the King himself, Henry III. It gradually extended to a quarrel with Queen Eleanor, and Prince Edward, and nearly all the nobility. The aim of this article is to examine the causes of this quarrel which lay deep in Simon's character.

Simon's Ambition

In 1238 there occurred the first of many angry confrontations with the King. Simon had been created Earl of Leicester, and married the King's sister, Eleanor (aged 23), but he had serious money problems and later became bitter because of his debts, blaming the King for failure to pay his expenses, and for the lack of a proper dower. Simon not only wanted the earldom, but the lifestyle that should go with it. He had borrowed heavily, using the King's name as guarantor without permission. The confrontation took place in the Tower of London and the King's charge against him was extraordinary, covering not just Simon's financial misconduct, but that of seduction. "*You seduced my sister before her marriage - When I discovered this, I gave her to you, though unwillingly, to avoid scandal.*" Simon had to flee to France to avoid the King's anger. He was then aged 30.

His Sharp Tongue

Simon was known for his persuasive eloquence, but his silver tongue too often became a weapon. In 1242, after seeing that King Henry's poor leadership was bringing about disaster in the Poitou campaign, he confronted the King at the castle of Saintes. Montfort insulted the King in an angry outburst: "*You ought to be taken and locked up like Charles the Simple*" - who had been imprisoned after the battle of Soissons in 923. This was never to be forgotten.

His Overbearing Nature

In 1252 Simon was on trial before the king in the refectory of Westminster Abbey, accused by Gascon lords of violent and unjust conduct. He had been appointed by the King in 1248 as Lieutenant of Gascony but then seized castles, took hostages, and met violence with violence in an uncompromising manner. In 1251 he had had a row with the King over Gascon accusations of harsh government, and the King's refusal to pay his expenses. At his trial before Parliament he clashed with the King and both men lost their tempers. Simon even questioned the king's religious sincerity saying '*Who can believe that you are a Christian?*', and charged him with not acting on resolutions made at the confession. The nobles were with Simon over Gascony, but the King was against him.

His Grievances

At the dining table of the great hall in his main home of Kenilworth Castle, he often gave vent to his grievances against the King. He was plagued by money problems, largely caused by the King's unwillingness to meet Simon's demands over his marriage settlement and the lack of help with his Gascony expenses. Whatever the King's personal feelings, Simon was still his brother-in-law and a respected counsellor. He often brought his grievances to Henry and on several occasions sought to manipulate the king into granting him favourable treatment.

His Idealism

The Provisions of Oxford were a series of demands aimed at making the king consult with, and listen to, Parliament and they were even more radical than Magna Carta. Simon took an oath to uphold these Provisions in the Great Church of the Dominicans in Oxford. Having sworn such a sacred oath, his temperament and Christian commitment made him a formidable enemy to the King. However both sides appealed to Louis IX of France as an arbitrator, who recognised where the provisions were leading. In his judgement of 1264, known as the Mise of Amiens, he came down firmly on king Henry's side. '*I would rather break clods behind a plough than have this sort of kingly rule*'.

Simon had no patience with fellow nobles who in any way prevaricated. He made his opinion known to Richard de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, who had failed to implement the Provisions in his own domain. '*I do not want to live or have dealings with men so fickle and deceitful. For we have promised and sworn together to do what we are discussing.*'



Simon de Montfort's seal

His Crusading Spirit

It was an age of increased religious enthusiasm. Henry himself had re-built Westminster Abbey in honour of his patron saint, Edward the Confessor. Simon had developed an affection for the austere Franciscan friars and reformer churchmen, and one of his chief advisers was Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln. His conscience became more acute as he practised the confession, now a prominent feature of Catholic discipline. His devotional practices grew more disciplined – dark clothes, frugal diet, midnight prayers, and the famous hair shirt.

Thus the implementation of the Provisions became a personal crusade. On the hills above Lewes in May 1264, Simon exhorted his army - *"You are about to fight for the kingdom of England, the honour of God, of blessed Mary, of all the saints and of the Holy Church"*. They all lay prone on the ground, with arms extended, praying for victory. They confessed their sins and donned the white crosses of crusaders. From the outset, the battle was a total victory for the Montfortians, and led to the arrest of the King and Prince Edward. The semi-captivity of the royal pair for over a year added venom to the fatal quarrel.

His Quarrelsome Nature

When Simon left Evesham Abbey on Tuesday August 4, 1265, his supporters were few in number. He had quarrelled with most of the nobility. For example, he had fallen out with Roger Mortimer of Wigmore, the most powerful of the Marcher Lords. Given his own grievance over the manor of Lechlade, Roger was at first attracted by the proposed reforms, but soon came over to the King's side and joined Prince Edward. He was helped to make this decision by the fact that Simon was now allied to the Welsh Prince Llewellyn ap Gruffydd who was making incursions into Roger's lands.

In December 1263 Henry granted, to Roger, Simon's manors of Dylwyn, Marden and Lugwardine. To assert his authority, Roger forcibly took over these manors hoping to distract Simon from going to France to plead his case with the French king. Simon broke his leg on the way to France but sent his sons twice to ravage Wigmore and other lands held by Roger. Roger's own home at Wigmore may have been sacked and his wife, Maud, insulted. At the Battle of Lewes, Simon captured Roger but then released him conditionally, his son William being retained as hostage. In the fatal year of 1265 Roger and Maud helped Prince Edward to escape from Simon. They were joined by Gilbert de Clare, the young Earl of Gloucester. The three then planned to attack and remove Montfort once and for all.

Finally

These features of Simon's character influenced his practical conduct and provided the background to his fatal quarrel with the King. The depth of the King's feeling is illustrated by a reported incident when Henry was in a violent storm on the Thames. He landed at the palace of the Bishop of Durham and was greeted courteously by Simon, who asked why he should continue to be fearful after the storm had passed. The chronicler records *"Not jestingly, and with a severe look, Henry burst out, 'I fear thunder and lightning beyond measure, but by God's head, I fear you more than all the thunder and lightning in the world' "*

Consequently the Battle of Evesham in August 1265 was fought in an atmosphere of hatred with no possibility of compromise. Edward suspended the laws of chivalry and appointed Roger Mortimer to head of a band of hand-picked knights to seek out Simon. Montfort, now aged 58, was outnumbered, but when sanctuary at the Abbey was proposed, replied *'churches are for chaplains, the field is for knights'*. It was the end of his fatal quarrel with the King.



A rather fanciful depiction of the Battle of Evesham with Prince Edward on the left and Simon de Montfort on the right

BLANCHE MORTIMER STUDY DAY

Based on notes provided by Mickie O'Neill

This day was a joint venture between sections of the Mortimer History Society and the Richard III Society which took place at *Hellens*, the fascinating house in Much Marcle, Herefordshire. Blanche's monument and effigy are, of course, in the church of St Bartholomew in Much Marcle.

The history of *Hellens* begins in 1096 with the de Balun family who retained it until the later 13th century. Around 1275 Walter de Balun married Isolde (or Iseult) Mortimer. Isolde's parentage is unsure. She may have been the daughter of Roger Mortimer of Wigmore (d1282) though some claim she was Roger's sister. Others think that she may have been an illegitimate child of Roger's brother Hugh Mortimer of Chelmarsh (dc1274). When her husband Walter de Balun died in 1288 without issue, *Hellens* passed to his widow so, for a short while, it became a Mortimer property. Isolde then married Hugh de Audley (d1326) and *Hellens* passed into the Audley family.



MHS members Ann Blandford and Margot Miller both gave talks in the morning. Ann spoke about the re-creation of Blanche Mortimer's dress, based on her effigy in St Bartholomew's church. Then Margot bravely attempted the daunting task of leading the audience through the complexities of the Mortimer lineage eventually arriving safely at the Yorkist kings. After lunch everyone visited the church and Blanche's tomb. [\[Return\]](#)

VISIT TO THE MAGNA CARTA EXHIBITION AT HEREFORD CATHEDRAL

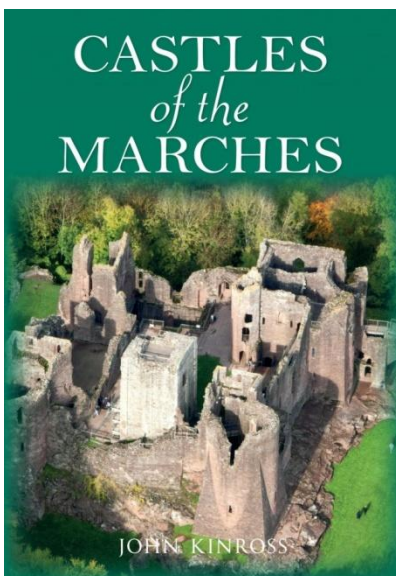
Based on notes provided by Judy Jacobs

On the day following the Mortimer History Society Conference at Hereford Academy, a group of us visited Hereford Cathedral for a "private view" of the Magna Carta exhibition. Although this was not actually a guided tour, there were experts on hand throughout the exhibition area to answer questions. In the chamber where the Cathedral's copy of the Magna Carta (issued in 1217) is currently displayed, Rosalind Caird, the Cathedral Archivist, who has spent the last few years studying the charter and preparing for this year's celebrations, showed me the names of William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, and Cardinal Guala Bicchieri, the Papal Legate, who sealed the document as Regents of the young King, Henry III. Sadly, the seals are gone, but their slots can still be seen.

The cathedral also owns the sole surviving copy of 'King John's Writ' - a letter from King John to royal officials across England instructing them to publicise the terms of the 1215 Magna Carta and make sure its terms were adhered to. Additionally the cathedral houses the famous Mappa Mundi, thought to date from the 1290s as well as the Chained Library.

NB at the time of publication of this newsletter, the Hereford Magna Carta and King John's Writ have been replaced with facsimile copies while the originals are on a world tour. [\[Return\]](#)

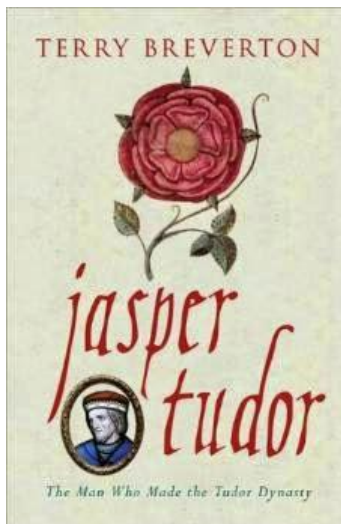
ROLLO'S BOOKS



Publisher's Blurb

In this stunning, full-colour book, John Kinross explores the fascinating history behind the castles of Herefordshire, Shropshire and the Welsh border. Areas characterised by their rural beauty and agricultural charm, it is no surprise that they are home to such extraordinary relics. From the majestic Goodrich Castle, which is situated on the River Wye and boasts one of the most intact sets of medieval domestic buildings surviving today, to the red sandstone fort at Shrewsbury, protected by the River Severn, each site tells a different tale. The castles of Herefordshire and Shropshire form the background of this book, but the Marcher Court, based at Ludlow Castle, controlled all legal affairs in the area of the Southern Marches. In the north the northern court was based at Chester Castle until being moved to Rhuddlan when the Welsh ceased to cause rebellions. Thus Cheshire castles are included plus the mighty Welsh castles like Chirk and Chepstow. For interest the many moated manors, used especially during the Civil War, are also included, where there are still some remains to be seen. Beautifully illustrated and extremely informative, *Castles of the Marches* is a must-read that brings the past to life.

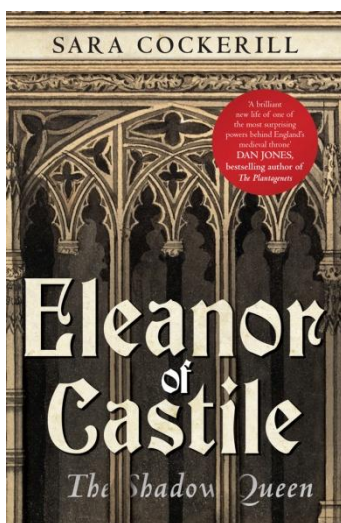
Amberley House: Sep 2015; ISBN 97814 45648002; 96 pages; paperback £13.48



Publisher's Blurb

The Wars of the Roses were a bitter and bloody dispute between the rival Plantagenet Houses of York and Lancaster. Only one man, Jasper Tudor, the Lancastrian half-brother to Henry VI, fought from the first battle at St Albans in 1455 to the last at Stoke Field in 1487 and lived to forge a new dynasty – the Tudors. Fighting the Yorkists, rallying the Lancastrians and spending years in exile with his nephew, the future first Tudor monarch, Henry VII, Jasper was the mainspring for continued Lancastrian defiance. Jasper was twenty-four years old in his first battle, and fifty-three when he won at Bosworth Field in 1485. Now he could style himself 'the high and mighty prince, Jasper, brother and uncle of kings, duke of Bedford and earl of Pembroke'. Without the heroic Jasper Tudor there could have been no Tudor dynasty. This is the first biography of the real 'kingmaker' of British history.

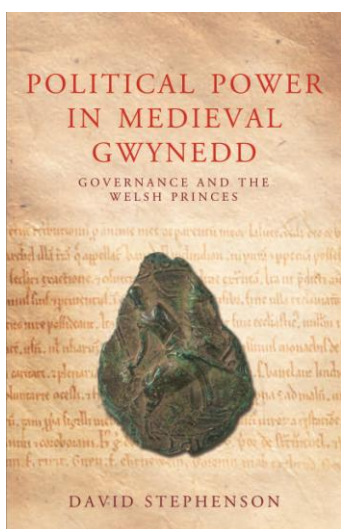
Amberley House: Aug 2014; ISBN 9781445633916; 336 pages; hardback £18



Publisher's Blurb

Eleanor of Castile, the remarkable woman behind England's greatest medieval king, Edward I, has been effectively airbrushed from history; yet she had one of the most fascinating lives of any of England's queens. Her childhood was spent in the centre of the Spanish reconquest and was dominated by her military hero of a father (St Ferdinand) and her prodigiously clever brother (King Alfonso X the Learned). Married at the age of twelve and a mother at thirteen, she gave birth to at least sixteen children, most of whom died young. She was a prisoner for a year amid a civil war in which her husband's life was in acute danger. Devoted to Edward, she accompanied him everywhere. All in all, she was to live for extended periods in five different countries. Eleanor was a highly dynamic, forceful personality who acted as part of Edward's innermost circle of advisers, and successfully accumulated a vast property empire for the English Crown. In cultural terms her influence in architecture and design – and even gardening – can be discerned to this day, while her idealised image still speaks to us from Edward's beautiful memorials to her, the Eleanor crosses. This book reveals her untold story.

Amberley House: Oct 2015; ISBN 9781445650517; 432 pages; £13.49 paperback, £22.50 hardback



Publisher's Blurb

First published in 1984 under the title *The Governance of Gwynedd*, this book has been reprinted to meet continued interest on the Princes of Gwynedd in Medieval Wales. *Political Power in Medieval Gwynedd: Governance and the Welsh Princes* investigates the governance exercised by the thirteenth-century Princes of Gwynedd, particularly Llywelyn the Great (fl. 1194 - 1240) and Llywelyn the Last (fl. 1243 - 82) as they strove to extend their political control over much of Wales. The analysis rests on the combination of different classes of evidence - literary texts, Welsh laws, thirteenth- and fourteenth-century record sources, and the results of archaeological work. After a descriptive survey of the work of the Princes' officials, the range of revenues available to the Princes is discussed, as are their attempts to increase their income. The recruitment of a privileged ministerial elite is examined and detailed prosopographical analysis reveals the Princes' attempts to overcome the segmentary nature of the political structure. Finally, attention is focused on the ways in which the rise of the Llywelyns and the increased pressures of governance imposed by their ambitions created tensions within Gwynedd and contributed to the final collapse of native rule in Wales. A new introductory section discusses recently published work.

University of Wales Press: Mar 2014; ISBN 9781783160044; 320 pages; £24.99 paperback [\[Return\]](#)