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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Sunday 11th June 2017 - Field Trip - On the Trail of the Mortimers in Wales

A tour led by Philip Hume visiting Mortimer-related sites in and around Presteigne on the Welsh border. The day includes a visit to the site of the battle of Bryn Glas (or Pilleth) where Owain Glyndwr defeated an English army under Sir Edmund Mortimer in 1402. Meet at Presteigne Assembly Rooms, in the centre of Presteigne, at 10.00 for refreshments and an introductory talk. If you'd like to come contact Philip on 01584 831654 or email trail@mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk Travel is in own cars (or car sharing). Please bring a picnic lunch. Members £3, non-members £4. There is a car park next to the police station on Hereford Road (LD8 2AR). The Assembly Rooms are at the main crossroads in the centre of the town.

Tuesday 11th July 2017 - MHS Summer Lecture - Rebellion and Warfare in the Marches: 1066 to 1154

Prof. Matthew Strickland (University of Glasgow)

6.30 for 7.00 at Grange Court, Leominster. Members £5, non-members £6. For full details [click here](#)

It helps if you let us know that you are coming - 01584 831654 or secretary@mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk

Professor Strickland is an excellent speaker.

Saturday 7th October 2017 - MHS Autumn Symposium

Following last year's successful innovation we are again presenting an fascinating collection of talks on a wide range of subjects, both local and national but with a strong Mortimer and Marches flavour. This day of talks will be suitable for the anyone with an interest in medieval history.

Provisional lecture titles are:

- Isabella of France: The Rebel Queen
- Foreign Exchange: English Royal Marriage in the Twelfth Century
- Sir Thomas: the Mortimer Bastard
- Networking the March: A History of Hereford and its Region from 11th-13th centuries
- The 'Traitor's Arms' in Ashperton Church, Herefordshire
- Exploring Medieval Manuscripts

Full details later.



Queen Isabella

The Marcher Lordships Project

On the Trail of the Mortimers has proved so successful that the first print of 1,000 sold out in 10 months and Logaston Press have already reprinted it. Philip Hume's next big project is to write a popular introduction to the Marcher Lordships, which Logaston have already agreed to publish in 4 volumes, based on the different regions of the Welsh Marches. There were over 50 Marcher Lordships and their history covers a span of 500 years, so a work of this magnitude and importance is a major undertaking. Philip has established a link with Huddersfield University and seven second-year undergraduate students have applied to the Society to do their compulsory work placement with us. Philip is supervising them over the summer term while they research and write brief histories of a group of Lordships and biographies of the Lords who held them. We are also making links with the larger countywide historical societies in the Welsh Marches to explore possible areas of co-operation. Several MHS members are already contributing to the research and writing. If you think you would be able to help with the project please contact Philip Hume -

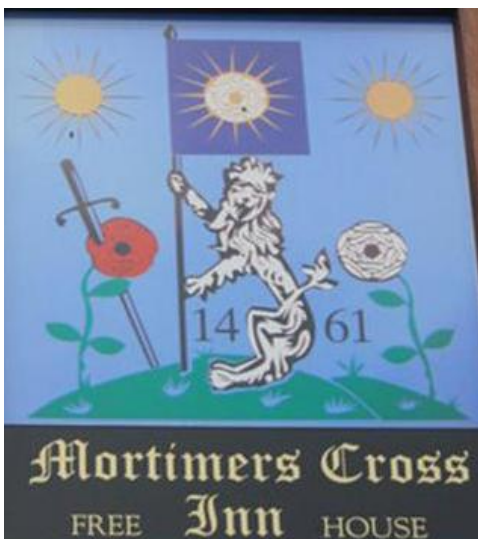
philip.r.hume@gmail.com or ring him for a chat on 01584 831654. Contributions could include researching and writing histories of specific Lordships, researching and writing biographies of specific Lords, or providing photographs of castles and churches.



The Marcher Lordships c.1400

Mapping the Mortimers and the Marcher Lordships

We are almost ready to start work on the first of a couple of very exciting interactive mapping projects, the results of which will be available on our website. The first of these is connected to the Marcher Lordships Project above and will allow members to glide easily over a map of the Marcher Lordships and will display relevant information about each lordship in pop-up form when required. In the longer term we also intend to produce a map of England displaying Mortimer manors, but also highlighting places where there are still things relating to the medieval Mortimers to be seen: heraldry, monuments, monasteries, castles etc. A lot of work mapping Mortimer manors has already been done by MHS member Stefan Zachary. If you have skills relating to online interactive mapping, or if you'd like to help anyway, please get in touch with Hugh (membership@mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk or 01584 876901).



Mortimer and Yorkist symbols on the pub sign: white lion of March; sun in splendour; rose en soleil plus the parhelion

A Request for Help: The Battle of Mortimer's Cross

We intend to man an MHS stall at this re-enactment event which is taking place on 9th & 10th September at Croft Castle in Herefordshire. As this is the only event at which we will be promoting the Society this year, we want to make a strong impact. So we need plenty of volunteers to help man the stall. If you are available on either of these two dates and can offer a few hours of support, please contact Philip (01584 831654 or philip.r.hume@gmail.com)

Problems with the Captcha security code

As a security device we have a captcha code that you need to copy when completing an online form. The one that comes as standard with the software we are using is sometimes very difficult to decipher and we apologise to anyone who has struggled to copy the code and then, maybe, given up the fight. We are currently looking for a replacement that is much easier to read, so please bear with us. Having some sort of security device is important as, without it, we get bombarded with lots of random computer-generated rubbish.

New Members

We welcome the following new members who have joined the Society since the last edition.

Pamela & John Bell, Abergavenny, Wales UK
Pam Benstead, Kempsey, Worcestershire UK
Elizabeth Bown, Croydon, Surrey UK
Carol Chase, Ludlow, Shropshire UK
Rupert Crew, Ludlow, Shropshire UK
Kris Johnston, Aymestry, Herefordshire UK
John R Kenyon, Llandaff, Cardiff, Wales UK

Allison Mortimer, San Francisco USA
Elizabeth Norton, Surbiton, London UK
Ann & Andrew Pearson, Clehonger, Herefordshire UK
Alan Stewart, Ludlow, Shropshire UK
Jane Stirling, Twitchen, Shropshire UK
Richard Tongue, Worthen, Shropshire UK

The Wigmore Centre

Wigmore was once one of the richest and grandest of the Marcher castles. It was built shortly after the Norman conquest to establish control over the Welsh frontier and, as we all know, was the powerbase of the Mortimer family in medieval England. From the Mortimers it passed to the Crown and then to the Harley Family in 1601. It met its demise during the Civil War when it was slighted by Lady Brilliana Harley to stop the Royalists from fortifying it against her. After hundreds of years of neglect the site became an important wildlife haven and at the end of the 1990's came under the guardianship of English Heritage and was their first 'soft-capping' restoration.



Just below the castle stands the very impressive church of St James. The nave dates back to the 11th century and is a fine example of herringbone masonry; the tower, chancel and aisles were added by The Mortimers in the 14th century and make for a very grand building as one would have expected in a medieval village that was frequented by royalty. It has withstood the ravages of wars and time and is in fine structural shape but it sadly does not have a large enough congregation to sustain it.

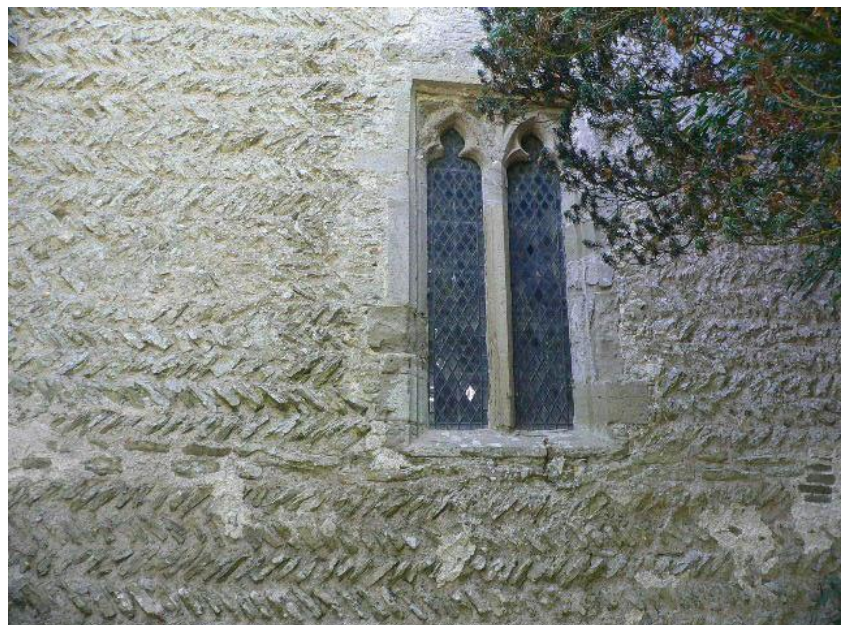
The church was on the brink of closure when a team of enthusiastic locals stepped in and managed to obtain a Heritage Lottery

Fund grant to transform the building into an Interpretive, Heritage and Community Centre for the whole area. The work has started: the architects are working on the designs and surveyors and specialists are keeping a watchful eye on proceedings.

It is hoped that The Wigmore Centre will be up and running by the end of 2018. As well as providing a welcome meeting place for enthusiasts and walkers – there will be a café and toilets – it will have a parking space for disabled access and house displays, exhibitions and a research resource for those interested in The Mortimers and the history of the Marches.

For updates and further details see the website www.thewigmorecentre.org . If you haven't visited the church then take time out to do so. There is much to see inside and it is a very imposing building. The tower houses a rare birdcage clock and six fully functional bells that were donated by The Harley Family in 1721 – tower tours are available by appointment during the summer and details will be posted on the website.

There is no parking at the church: for weekend and evening events parking will be available in Wigmore School car park; visitors during the week please use the village hall car park.



Some of the herringbone masonry 

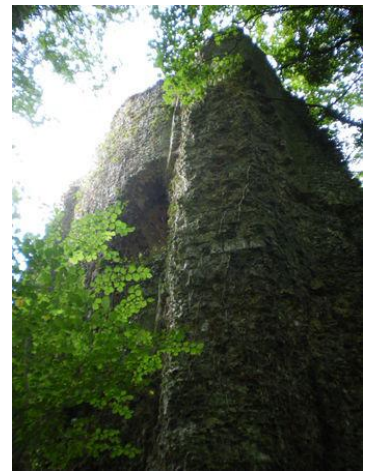
Introducing the Mortimers

The story of the Mortimers spans the whole of the later medieval period from the 11th to the 15th centuries. With 15 generations of Mortimers it is difficult, initially, to get one's head around which Roger, Edmund, Hugh or Ralph we are talking about and how they relate to each other. We'll be publishing a simple introduction to the Mortimers of Wigmore in short chunks in successive editions of *Mortimer Matters* to help new members build a picture of this colourful and important family. *Hugh Wood is the Society's Membership Secretary*

Part 1: Origins in Normandy

Like so many old English families, the Mortimers were Normans who arrived in England in the wake of William the Conqueror's invasion of 1066. But it is rather surprising to learn that they adopted the name 'de Mortemer' only a few years before the Battle of Hastings. The Mortimers were actually part of the Warenne family, another dynasty to thrive in England after the Conquest. Firm dates from this period are difficult to come by, but a Ralph de Warenne is recorded as being around in both 1035 and 1050. A relative of Duke William, he had at least two sons. The eldest, another Ralph de Warenne was born around 1020 and his son, William de Warenne fought at the Battle of Hastings and was subsequently created Earl of Surrey.

The first Ralph had a younger son called Roger de Warenne who was made lord of Mortemer-sur-Eaulne (also known as Mortemer-en-Bray), a village about halfway between Rouen and Amiens, and he became known as Roger de Mortemer. This first 'Roger Mortimer' was to fall foul of Duke William and it happened like this. As well as the lordship of Mortemer, he had other lands, some of them held of Ralph de Montdidier to whom he owed feudal duty. In 1054, when Henry I, king of France, invaded Normandy, Roger was one of the leaders of a Norman force that defeated the French at the Battle of Mortemer. Prisoners were taken and Roger found himself in the embarrassing position of having captured his feudal lord, Ralph de Montdidier, who had fought with the French. He decided to release him, but when Duke William heard that he had done this he was furious and seized all Roger's estates in Normandy. They were subsequently reconciled and Roger was given back all his lands except Mortemer, so the Mortimers' ownership of the place from which they take their name was short indeed.



Mortemer Castle

After 1066, William the Conqueror established three earldoms along the borders with Wales: Chester, Shrewsbury and Hereford. The castle at Wigmore was founded as one of a string of castles along the Welsh Marches by William's great supporter, Earl William FitzOsbern, sometime before 1070. Within a very few years, however, it had been granted to the Mortimers and this castle remained their chief seat or *caput* until the main male line died out in 1425. It is not known whether Roger de Mortemer ever came to England and the first Mortimer to live in the country for any length of time was his eldest son, Ralph, of whom there is written evidence between the years of 1070 and 1115. Before beginning the story of the Mortimers in England, however, it's important to introduce a couple of related matters.

Perhaps surprisingly, the Mortimers of Wigmore were not the only Mortimers in England in the 12th centuries. The Mortimers of Chelmarsh were part of the Wigmore family, but there were also Mortimers of Richard's Castle; of Attleborough; of Aberdour; of Coedmore and so on. None of these families can be conclusively connected to the Mortimers of Wigmore. Records from this period are incomplete and it is possible that the Mortimers of Attleborough, for instance, were a younger branch of the family, but firm evidence is lacking. If the Attleboroughs and the Wigmore were part of the same family, then they must have been quite closely related, given that the name *Mortimer* had not been in use for very many years. In that case one would expect to see some evidence of the family connection. But there is no such evidence - they didn't, for instance, witness each other's charters, as one might have expected.

The coats of arms of these other Mortimers are quite different from those of the Wigmore Mortimers, but it must be remembered that heraldry as we know it did not really become established until the



Richard's Castle



Richard's Castle



Attleborough



Sir William Mortimer

second half of the 12th century, by which time, we assume, any split had already occurred.

As we've seen, the name Mortimer comes from a village called Mortemer in France. The word *Mortemer* brings together two French words, *mort* meaning *dead* and *mer* meaning *sea* or *water*. So the word *Mortemer* literally means *dead water* referring to a boggy or swampy area. Indeed in Latin documents, the Mortimers of Wigmore are usually referred to by the name *de Mortuo Mari*. Now the problem with that name is that areas of wet, boggy land occur in many other places too. Just 40 miles south of Mortemer-en-Bray is the Cistercian monastery of Mortemer and this has no connection with 'our' Mortimers. Indeed there are at least three other Mortemers within that same



The circle shows 'our' Mortemer and the stars three others

part of France. Anyone coming from a place called Mortemer might well be called *de Mortemer*, so we're left with the problem that some or all of these other Mortimers in England might possibly be related, but that probably they weren't. It is safer to assume that these other Mortimers had no family connection at all with 'our' Mortimers. (to be continued)

Two Mortimer Ladies in Shakespeare

In this article, John Grove introduces two ladies of significance who were around at the start of the 15th century. One is a true Mortimer and the other a Welsh princess who was a Mortimer by marriage.

John Grove founded the Mortimer History Society in 2009.

Elizabeth Mortimer

Elizabeth was born at Usk Castle in 1371, the eldest child of Edmund Mortimer, 3rd Earl of March and a great-granddaughter of Edward III. She married Harry Hotspur, Lord Henry Percy, son of the 1st Earl of Northumberland and bore him two children, Henry and Elizabeth. 'Gentle Kate', he calls her.



Alnwick Castle, Northumberland

In Shakespeare she appears three times - first at her Northumbrian home, Alnwick Castle, where she declares her deep love for her husband and grave concern about his condition. She has observed his nightmares of war, and his loss of affection. He is very moody and depressed, hot-tempered and unhappy. She shrewdly analyses the cause... *'Some heavy business hath my lord in hand ...I fear my brother Mortimer doth stir about his title and hath sent for you to line his enterprise.'* The military alliance between Edmund Mortimer, Owain Glyndwr and Henry Percy is mentioned below.

The second occasion is in the Welsh court of Owain Glyndwr where the company are being entertained by minstrels and by the songs of Glyndwr's daughter, Catrin Mortimer.

Elizabeth, whom Shakespeare calls Katherine, shows her independence in declining to sing and her gentle manners in trying to curb her unruly husband.

The third occasion finds her a widow at Alnwick, pronouncing a wonderful eulogy of praise for her dead husband, who died fighting Henry IV at the battle of Shrewsbury in 1403...*'My sweet Harry...O miracle of men!'* She successfully persuades her father in law, the Earl of Northumberland not to join the armed rebellion against the king led by the Archbishop of York. We leave her shedding copious tears for her husband. She was later to gather his body parts and bury them in York Minister.

She later married Sir Thomas Camoys, and they may have had a son. Camoys was a respected military commander, in charge of one of the wings at the Battle of Agincourt. Their tomb with its marvellous brass top depicting them holding hands is in St. George's Church, Trotton, West Sussex.



Catrin Mortimer

A daughter of Owain Glyndwr, she was married to Sir Edmund Mortimer after his capture at the battle of Pilleth (Bryn Glas) in 1402. Sir Edmund was the brother of Elizabeth Mortimer (above). Unransomed by Henry IV, he had

thrown his lot in with Glyndwr. The couple had 4 children. Edmund himself died, probably of starvation, holding out against the royal forces besieging Harlech Castle in 1408.



Catrin was taken captive to the Tower of London with her 3 daughters and all were dead by 1412. A new memorial sculpture to Catrin and family stands in St. Swithun's garden, London, on the site of the cemetery where she and at least two daughters are thought to have been buried.

Her appearance in Shakespeare is brief, joining her husband, father and the Hotspurs in Glyndwr's court. Three times Shakespeare records her speaking Welsh, and Mortimer declares that they are besotted with each other. *'I understand thy kisses and thou mine'*. To him she sings *'like a fair queen in a summer bower'*. He does however make the early plaintive plea *'This is the deadly spite that angers me. My wife can speak no English, I no Welsh'*. This state of affairs was soon remedied.

For further information see :

Henry IV Part 1: Act 2 Sc 3 and Act 3 Sc 1;

Henry IV Part 2 : Act 2 Sc 3

The Mortimers - Hopkinson and Speight . Logaston pp 122 - 124

The Chronicle of Adam of Usk - Clarendon Press pp.159, 161, 242

The Black Book of Wigmore

This is a summary of the excellent talk given by MHS member Barbara Wright at the Society's 2017 AGM.

The *Black Book of Wigmore* is a cartulary containing copies of deeds and other documents relating to the lands of the Mortimer family. Cartularies like this were frequently produced by religious houses and the *Black Book* is one of the best secular examples to survive. Cartularies sometimes contained the whole text of a charter but often they were sets of abstracts, or edited highlights.

The *Black Book* was compiled for Edmund Mortimer, 3rd Earl of March (1352-81) and shows the full text of charters relating to his lands. There is a companion volume described as a *Register* of muniments at Wigmore. This repeats some of the information from the *Black Book* but also contains abstracts (but not the full text) of charters relating to lands inherited by his wife, Philippa of Clarence. Both books contain text in Latin and Anglo-Norman and are written on parchment. However, many of the Mortimer lands were held from the earliest times and do not figure in the *Black Book* because they didn't change hands.

The Organisation of the Cartulary

The unknown clerk who planned and oversaw their production was something of a visionary. He copied the charter texts according to the name of the manor and then numbered the charters in the order they were listed.

The *Black Book* section on Wigmore shows, for example, the full text of a charter numbered 38, with an abstract, relating to a grant by Roger Mortimer in 1329 of land in Leinthall Earls, a village within the manor. The clerk also included a table of contents, copied from the abstracts, and a very rare alphabetical index of place-names, each of which would direct the searcher towards the full text.

But they are incomplete

Between them, these two British Library cartularies mention 1,730 different charters, but unfortunately they are incomplete. From the clerk's numbering it is clear that the *Black Book* should contain 284 folios but it currently has just 125. The *Register* currently contains 106 folios but has clearly lost some at the beginning and end, particularly.

Barbara's Work on the Cartulary

Barbara Wright has completed the laborious task of transcribing and then translating all the information in both these documents. By detailed study of the organisation of both of them she has realised that 12 folios bound into the *Black Book* are actually the remains of a missing third volume containing the full text of Philippa's charters. Having translated the charters, Barbara combined her findings in a database and then went in search of the missing charters. In 1322, Roger Mortimer of Wigmore forfeited his lands and possessions because of his rebellion. Agents of the king came across a box of charters at Wigmore castle and catalogued them for the king. The *Egerton Roll*



*Workshops of the cartulary
Italy - 15th century*

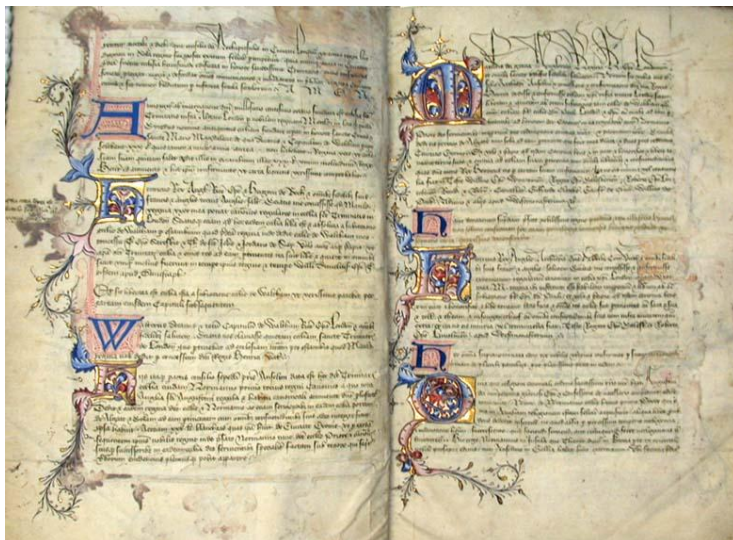
contains 199 Mortimer charters of which 152 re-appear 50 years later in the *Black Book*. Combining partial information about a particular charter from several sources has sometimes given Barbara enough information to track down the full text of the charter in the National Archives or elsewhere.

What is actually in the Cartulary?

As well as providing an important record of many of the manors owned by the Mortimers in the 14th century, the cartulary reflects the recent history of the family, with rebellion and forfeiture and subsequent restoration as well as the problems caused by the minority of the 3rd Earl of March. But it's not all about land. Some of the charters give us an insight into the kind of legal arrangements made when young children were betrothed, usually as part of dynastic alliances.

What next?

Barbara is still on the trail of some of the missing charters but she's planning to publish some or all of her findings in the not-too-distant future. This will be a very important event for students of the Mortimers, giving them easy access to a range of information about Mortimer lands and people, that is not at all easy to access currently. MHS will be doing all it can to help Barbara to achieve her objective.



The Cartulary of Aldgate Priory, London - 15th century

ROLLO'S BOOKS

MHS Member Rollo Crookshank, works in publishing and he makes sure that we're alerted to books that might be of interest to our members. Most of the books below are recent publications and we are including the publisher's blurb. We would be happy to receive reviews from members of these or any other books.

Richard, Duke of York: King by Right by Matthew Lewis

Amberley Publishing (Aug 2017) £8.99 ISBN 9781445672038

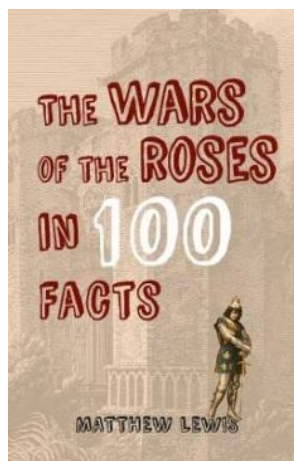
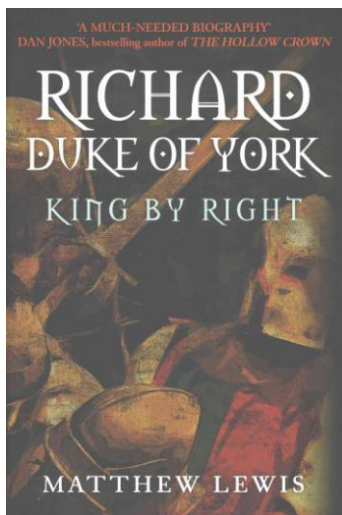
Richard, 3rd Duke of York is frequently used to recall the colours of the rainbow with the mnemonic 'Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain', wrongly believed to be the Grand Old Duke of York who had 10,000 men, or mistaken for his youngest son, Richard III. The son of a traitor, he inherited a dukedom aged four, became the wealthiest man in England at thirteen and later rebelled against his king, and if he is remembered, it is as a man who ignited the Wars of the Roses. Further eclipsed by two of his sons, who would become the mighty warrior Edward IV and the recently rediscovered Richard III, he is an ancestor of the Tudor monarchs and fifteenth great-grandfather to Queen Elizabeth II, yet the man himself is obscured from view.

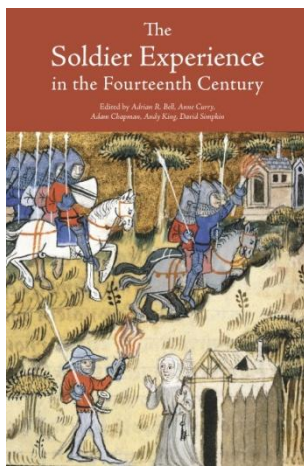
Matthew Lewis pushes aside the veils of myth and legend to challenge the image of Richard as a man whose insatiable ambition dragged a nation into civil war, revealing a complex family man with unparalleled power and responsibilities. The first person ever recorded to use the Plantagenet name, he pushed the political establishment to its limits, dared to fight back and was forced to do the unimaginable.

The Wars of the Roses in 100 Facts by Matthew Lewis

Amberley Publishing (Aug 2017) £8.09 ISBN 9781445647463

The Wars of the Roses were fought between the descendants of Edward III and stemmed from the deposition of the unpopular Richard II by his cousin, Henry Bolingbroke who became Henry IV. *The Wars of the Roses in 100 Facts* covers this dangerous and exciting period of political change, guiding us through the key events, such as the individual battles, and the key personalities, such as Richard, Duke of York, and the Earl of Warwick, known as 'the Kingmaker'. Matthew Lewis takes us on a tour through the Wars of the Roses, fact by fact, in easy-to-read, bitesize chunks. He examines some of the most important aspects of this period, from the outbreak of the conflict at the First Battle of St Albans, to Henry VI's insanity, to the character of Richard III and his final defeat at the hands of Henry Tudor.

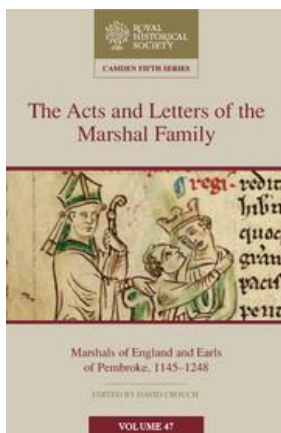




The Soldier Experience in the 14th Century ed. by Bell et al

Boydell & Brewer (Apr 2017) £19.99 ISBN 9781783272433

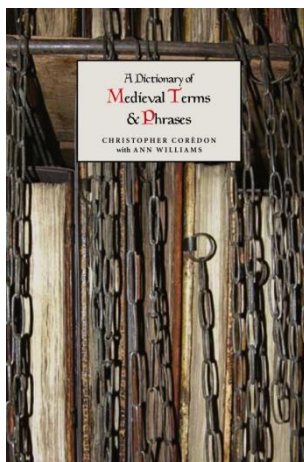
The "long" fourteenth century saw England fighting wars on a number of diverse fronts - not just abroad, in the Hundred Years War, but closer to home. But while tactics, battles, and logistics have been frequently discussed, the actual *experience* of being a soldier has been less often studied. Via a careful re-evaluation of original sources, and the use of innovative methodological techniques such as statistical analysis and the use of relational databases, the essays here bring new insights to bear on soldiers, both as individuals and as groups. Topics addressed include military service and the dynamics of recruitment; the social composition of the armies; the question of whether soldiers saw their role as a "profession"; and the experience of prisoners of war.



The Acts and Letters of the Marshal Family: 1145 - 1248 ed. David Crouch

Cambridge University Press (2015) £45.99 ISBN 9781107130036

This collection represents the surviving output of the clerks of the men and women of the most powerful magnate dynasty in England, Wales and Ireland in the thirteenth century. Its greatness was short-lived, but as a result of the Marshals' spread of interests and marriage alliances the charters and letters edited here embrace a remarkable diversity of lordships and societies. That fact and the central place the two Earls William Marshal held at the court of the young Henry III between 1216 and 1231, playing a decisive role in the establishment of Magna Carta, give this collection a unique interest for medieval historians of Britain and France, more so perhaps than for any other contemporary magnate family.

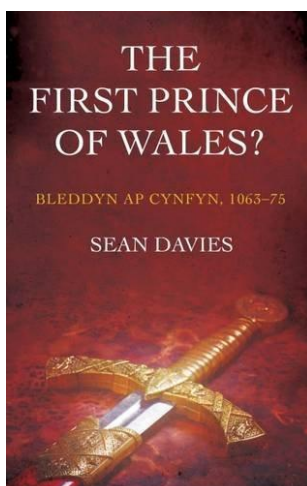


A Dictionary of Medieval Terms and Phrases by Coredon & Williams

Boydell & Brewer (2007) £14.99 ISBN 9781843841388

An interest in the middle ages often brings the non-specialist reader up short against a word or term which is not understood or only imperfectly understood. This dictionary is intended to put an end to all that - though such a claim is inevitably rash. However, it has been designed in the hope that it will be of real help to non-academic readers, and in some cases maybe even to specialists.

The dictionary contains some 3,400 terms as headwords, ranging from the legal and ecclesiastic to the more prosaic words of daily life. Latin was the language of the church, law and government, and many Latin terms illustrated here are frequently found in modern books of history of the period; similarly, the precise meaning of Old English and Middle English terms may elude today's reader: this dictionary endeavours to provide clarity. In addition to definition, etymologies of many words are given, in the belief that knowing the origin and evolution of a word gives a better understanding. There are also examples of medieval terms and phrases still in use today, a further aid to clarifying



The First Prince of Wales? - Bleddin ap Cynfyn 1063-1075 by Sean Davies

University of Wales Press (2016) £14.99 ISBN 9781783169368

This is the first book on one of Wales's greatest leaders, arguably 'first prince of Wales', Bleddyn ap Cynfyn. Bleddyn was at the heart of the tumultuous events that forged Britain in the cauldron of Norman aggression, and his reign offers an important new perspective on the events of 1066 and beyond. He was a leader who used alliances on the wider British scale as he strove to recreate the fledgling kingdom of Wales that had been built and ruled by his brother, though outside pressures and internal intrigues meant his successors would compete ultimately for a principality. Sean Davies's book provides a fresh, bold and persuasive account of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, king of Gwynedd and Powys and with ambitions to rule more widely in Wales. In six succinct and clearly written chapters, he skilfully deploys a range of often difficult sources to reassess the king's place in the turbulent politics of the mid-eleventh century.