

Mortimer History Society

Newsletter No.3 July 2010

Message from John Grove Chairman - Mortimer History Society

Dear Friends

In less than a year we have extended our membership to Australia, USA, Hong Kong, Spain, Sweden and Hungary with now over 100 members. This has come about in part through the great success of our first national conference at Ludlow in May, where we had strong Welsh representation, and our excellent website started by Paul Remfry: mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk.

We hope to have a quality programme commensurate with such a membership. After our highly promising Autumn conference this September, for 2011 we have invited Ian Mortimer, and Alison Weir, two authors of international repute, to speak to us on May 21, and we hope to produce our *Mortimer Journal* by Easter. This will be an annual publication with longer articles on the Mortimer dynasty and related topics; the journal is in addition to our informative newsletters.

We now invite members to make their own contribution via the website, and also by considering the possibility of local seminars and events that will bring Mortimer and medieval history aficionados together in particular locations. Do contact me if you have any thoughts in this direction.

We send our congratulations and best wishes to the staff and students of the new Earl Mortimer College that is opening in Leominster in September. This is a specialist sports college, and the governors and its principal, Adrian Long, wanted to name the college in such a way that it had clear local connections. The Principal is keen that students learn about the importance of history, and I am sure that there will be many contacts in the near future.

My very good wishes to you all - John Grove

MHS Field Trip

In June, some ten members visited two Mortimer castles - Cefnlllys and Tinboeth in Mid-Wales - and enjoyed an excellent and illuminating commentary from Paul Remfry. The weather, the scenery and the company were superb! We learned a great deal about the importance of Cefnlllys for the Mortimers in the thirteenth century.

"Some Mortimer Castles" booklet

This booklet - the first MHS publication - was launched at the May Conference - where the first copies were sold out by lunchtime. Researched and produced by MHS members, it is a useful little booklet for you to take with you when you go discovering Mortimer Marcher castles. *See below.*

Major Annual MHS Events

February	AGM
May	Spring Conference
June	Field Visit
September	Autumn Conference
October	Field Visit
Newsletters	June, October, February
MHS Journal	April

Introducing Members

From: Michael William Mortimer,
Pullman, Washington, USA

My interest in Mortimer history began as a child while listening to stories about the Lancastrian and Yorkist battle for the throne in the War of the Roses. I heard the Mortimer name pop up from time to time in those stories and I found the idea interesting that I might be related to those Mortimers. It was only much later, as a university student, that I discovered the truly fascinating history of the Mortimers during the High Middle Ages. The account of Roger and Isabella and the intrigue that followed is one of the most captivating stories in English mediaeval history and for me epitomizes that era entirely. My other historical interests include the Crusades and the technology of the Moors.

I am also a genealogist and very interested in finding my English relatives. It is written in early American histories of the colonies that I am descended from a Mortimer who came from England and landed in Boston Harbor in 1685. My known lineage dates back to the mid-1700s and John Mortimer and wife Jane who found themselves in Berks County, Pennsylvania. Through DNA testing, my Haplogroup has been determined as R1b1b2 which places my ancestors in Western Europe and the frequency of genetic matches places my recent ancestors in England and Wales. I highly recommend other Mortimer males to have their DNA tested. This is a great way to determine genetic links between paternal Mortimer lines. Go to the website "Family Tree DNA" at www.ftdna.com. While there, you may also want to visit the Mortimer Project.



*'He obtains
who defends'*

I will be adding my own paternal family tree to the MHS website in due course.

Furthermore, I have in my possession a Coat of Arms that apparently was brought to America in 1685 by my Mortimer ancestor. I have been in contact with the College of Arms in London and they have determined that the Arms appear genuine. It would be very interesting to discover to whom the Arms were granted. This of course might be a key to discovering the identification of the Mortimer who emigrated.

Alas, the cost of identification is prohibitive. However, a cursory study of the Arms reveals much. Note that quartering No. 1 (top left corner of shield) is clearly Mortimer and that quartering No. 3 (bottom left) appears to be those of England (1406-1603) with the addition of an ermine canton. The quarterings on the right side of the shield; the lion rampant (top right) and the six annulets (below) are unknown to me. The motto, "*Acquirit qui tuetur*" is translated as "*He obtains who defends*" and is often found on Mortimer Arms.

From: Professor Gruffydd Aled Williams
University of Aberystwyth

I enjoyed the MHS May conference immensely, and would like to congratulate you on an outstanding success. I was drawn to the conference by previous Mortimer interests and by your lecture on the Battle of Usk (Pwll Melyn). I am giving a lecture to the Friends of the National Library of Wales in July on the Welsh literary patron Hopcyn ap Tomas (who commissioned the *Red Book of Hergest*) and was eager to hear what you had to say about the battle.

A few months ago I came across a reference in Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon* (c. 1440) which states that Hopcyn ap Tomas (which it describes as a *belliger insignis*) was taken prisoner at Pwll Melyn. My previous interest in the Mortimers derives from my work on Iolo Goch's poem to Roger Mortimer, fourth Earl of March (d. 1398).

*[We look forward to hearing more from
Professor Williams in the future]*

Usk

Jim Tonkin

We are very sorry to record the death of one of our distinguished members, Jim Tonkin in April. Jim lived by Wigmore Castle, and was extremely knowledgeable about the Castle and Mortimer history. Jim and Muriel retired as officers of the Woolhope Club just a year ago, having been the mainstay of its administration for more than 40 years. Jim had been the Secretary for 21 years, Editor of the Club's *Transactions* from 1966 to 2005, and three times the Club's President.

Jim and his wife Muriel came to Wigmore in the 1960s when he took up the headmastership of the newly-established Wigmore secondary school and they continued living in the village after his retirement. Jim was a very popular headmaster, and a number of Jim's ex-pupils attended the memorial service. He led a number of parties around Wigmore Castle, and Abbey, where John and Carol Challis (MHS Presidents) will install a memorial bench in his honour.

Jim's primary interest outside work was the history, design and construction of old buildings. In his early days in Herefordshire, domestic architecture was little valued, but then came the newly-formed Vernacular Architecture Group, which changed all that. Jim was sometime President of the Group, and made sure that Herefordshire's wonderful buildings were given their due.

Newsletters by email or post

Because of the expansion of our membership and rising postage costs, we will be sending MHS newsletters out via email. Posted paper copies will be sent to those who do not have computers.

If you would prefer to receive your newsletter by post rather than by email, please let us know through the website:
membership@mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk

Successful first MHS conference 8 May at Ludlow Assembly Rooms

Prince Llywelyn, Owain Glyndwr
Shakespeare and the Mortimers

Spring Festival at
Ludlow Castle on
8 May 2010



More than 150 people crowded the Ludlow assembly rooms on May 8th, for the first national conference of the Mortimer History Society. The conference had a Welsh theme looking at Prince Llywelyn, and Owain Glyndwr as well as the Mortimers.

All four honorary presidents attended, John and Carol Challis, Paul Dryburgh and Ian Mortimer, who with expertise and good humour chaired all the sessions. He introduced Dr. David Stephenson, Research Fellow at Bangor University, who spoke eloquently on Prince Llywelyn, showing that he held sway over his Marcher and Welsh territories in just the same way as did the English Marcher lords. A summary of his lecture will be available to members on the MHS website.



Pilleth Church In 1402, Glyndwr's army was on the hill behind the church whilst Edmund Mortimer's men were down the hill. There is a memorial to the fallen in the churchyard. Photo by Hilary Belden

Paul Remfry gave an erudite description from contemporary sources, using - publicly for the first time - new translations from Latin documents on the Battle of Bryn Glas – Pilleth, 1402, where Glyndwr's army defeated Mortimer troops. This important set-piece victory, Mortimer's capture, and subsequent marriage to Glyndwr's daughter - all had significant consequences for the forward momentum to the Glyndwr campaign.

Below: Grosmont Castle



John Grove described vividly the background to the Battle of Usk – Pwll Melyn, 1405, where Glyndwr's forces suffered a dramatic setback at the hands of the Usk garrison. An earlier setback at Grosmont, and the under-estimation of the English forces stationed at Usk, contributed to the eventual Welsh defeat.

Ian Barge and the *Teme Players* provided a thrilling finale to the conference, as they explored 'Shakespeare's Glyndwr and the Mortimers' from *Henry IV Part One*. The clash between the king and Harry Hotspur over Mortimer's ransom set the scene, for a fine performance of the event in Glyndwr's court where he, Hotspur and Mortimer planned to divide the kingdom into three. Music was included in the performance by the harpist Hannah Coleman, and a Welsh song beautifully rendered by Sally Newman as Glyndwr's daughter. Emma Davis as Lady Katharine Percy (nee Mortimer) moved the audience with her excellent performance as Hotspur's intelligent and loving wife. The rest of the cast - Dave Tristram as Hotspur, Ian Barge as King Henry: Andrew Geldart; as Northumberland, Steve Piper as Edmund Mortimer; Mike Evans as Glendower - had memorised their parts well, and all gave a convincing performance.



The Teme Players taking a bow after performing excerpts from Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part 1*
Ian Barge - 2nd on the right,
Ian Mortimer far right

Blue and gold flowers - Mortimer colours - adorned the stage along with the red and gold of Glyndwr, and bouquets were presented to the actresses. The conference was very well received judging by many comments sent in, and we look forward to the next meeting at Ludlow Assembly Rooms on 18th September.

Gloucestershire drama group Rococo Players performed Marlowe's play *Edward II* in May at Berkeley Castle and at Gloucester Cathedral

MHS members went to see performances of Marlowe's *Edward II* at Berkeley Castle and at Gloucester Cathedral.



Berkeley Castle where Edward II was murdered in the room over the entrance to the keep.

Roger Mortimer plotted to have King Edward murdered at Berkeley Castle on 21st September 1327, and some weeks later the king was buried in Gloucester Cathedral where the magnificent memorial was erected by his son. The long play was well performed carried along successfully by the actor/King, although some of the players including 'Sweet Mortimer', were not quite up to his professional standard. The final scene was the gruesome red-hot-poker murder - mercifully played off-stage.



Detail from Edward II's tomb in the Cathedral at Gloucester

Is it or isn't it - the memorial effigy of Blanche Mortimer, Lady Grandison, in Much Marcle Church?

The Mortimer and Grandison arms, on Blanche's monument repainted over many centuries

Moira Gittos gave a convincing answer to this question on 12 June at the Much Marcle study day run by the Church Monuments Society. By describing Blanche Mortimer's place in the Grandison family, Moira Gittos explained why this magnificent 14th century monument is found in Much Marcle, and why it is most likely to be Lady Blanche's memorial. This is because Blanche's brother-in-law was John de Grandison. Before he became Bishop of Exeter, John established the abbey at Ottery St. Mary where his distinguished uncle Otto was to be remembered. By making a comparison of the sculptural work at Ottery St. Mary, Exeter and other examples, it appears that John must have employed a team of masons, and they could well have constructed his sister-in-law Blanche's memorial. During this time - 2nd half of the 1400s, Blanche was married to John's brother, Sir Peter of Stretton Grandison, and the manor at March Marcle had been given to Blanche as a wedding gift by her Mortimer mother Joan de Geneville. QED.

Restoration of Blanche's monument

Blanche's memorial is in serious need of repair and restoration. It is full of damp from below and from behind; over the centuries, bad materials have been used to patch it up; bits have been broken and cut off, the top of the canopy is coming away from the wall. Tests have been done, reports prepared, much money needs to be raised and decisions to be made as to whether restoration should return the effigy to its mediaeval style and colours, and perhaps remove the row of cupid faces and painted heraldry which have been added later.

MORTIMER HISTORY SOCIETY
AUTUMN CONFERENCE
18 SEPTEMBER 10 am - 12.30
Ludlow Assembly Rooms

The Mortimers in Action – case studies:

1. A Mortimer Manor - Tedstone Wafre
The history of the Mortimer family is rich and varied. Two distinguished speakers will give us examples of Mortimer influence and activity. Dr. Martin Toms will talk about *A Mortimer Manor – Tedstone Wafre*. He will be looking at Roger Mortimer of Chirk and the manor of Tedstone Wafre – the story of marriage and politics in a rural Herefordshire parish during the 13th and 14th centuries.

2. Prof. David Carpenter will talk about Roger Mortimer 1231-1282: Supporter of Edward I
Prof. David Carpenter, Professor of Medieval History, London University, is a co-convenor for the European History 1150-1550 seminar at the Institute of Historical Research. His most recent book, *The Struggle for Mastery in Britain 1066-1284* (Penguin, 2004), weaves together the histories of England, Scotland and Wales in a strikingly new way, arguing that the rulers of all three, in their different fashions, were competing for mastery in Britain. Professor Carpenter will be speaking on *Roger Mortimer 1231–1282 : Supporter of Edward I*

Tickets: MHS Members £6

Visitors £8

£8 tickets from the Ticket Office
Ludlow Assembly Rooms, 1 Mill Street
Ludlow SY8 1AZ 01584.874041
or £8 & £6 tickets, cheques (made out to
Mortimer History Society) with sae (C5) to
Madge Crocker, New Garth
Kent Avenue, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 5AH

The Ludlow Park and Ride system is recommended, and there is a linked event in the afternoon - **The Re-Enactment of the Battle of Mortimers Cross 1461:**

The Battle of Mortimer's Cross 1461

Richard of York had been executed after the battle of Wakefield in 1460, when a weakened Yorkist army was routed by the Lancastrian forces. Edward, Richard's son aged 19, with his own army, continued the action of supporting the Yorkist claim to the throne.

In February of the next year 1461 he destroyed an army of Welsh Lancastrians under Jasper, Earl of Pembroke and James, Earl of Wiltshire at Mortimer's Cross a few miles south of the Mortimer strongholds of Wigmore and Ludlow.

Edward was the grandson of Anne Mortimer and Richard, Duke of Cambridge, and had thus inherited some of the Mortimer estates.

Soon after Mortimer's Cross, Edward was crowned Edward IV, and the Mortimer dynasty climaxed through the female line, in the two Yorkist kings.

You may also like to go on to visit -

**The Re-enactment of
the Battle of
Mortimers Cross 1461
at the Wharf, Leominster
18th and 19th September
11 am to 5 pm**

**One mile north of Leominster
on the Main A49**

**Living history, mediaeval traders,
childrens' activities, Passamezzo dance,
mediaeval surgeon - and lots more.**

**Adult £5 Under16s free, parking free
Contact : Jason 01432.352755
Website: www.mortimerscross.co.uk**