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Forthcoming Events

Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th September 2017 - Re-enactment of the Battle of Mortimer's Cross 1461

Soon after the untimely death of Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York at the battle of Wakefield, his 18-year-old son Edward met and defeated a Welsh army under Jasper and Owen Tudor, who were moving east to support the Lancastrian king Henry VI. The battle of Mortimer's Cross proved a turning point in the Wars of the Roses and within a few weeks Edward was proclaimed king in London as Edward IV - the first Yorkist king.

The event takes place at Croft Castle, the National Trust property near Mortimer's Cross. It runs from 10.00 to 17.00 on both days. Normal National Trust entry fees apply. NT members free.

Saturday 30th September 2017 - The Treaty of Montgomery 1267

A one-day conference organised by the Powysland Club to mark their 150th anniversary and the 750th anniversary of the Treaty of Montgomery, in which king Henry III confirmed the status of Llewelyn ap Gruffydd as Prince of Wales. The speakers are

- Professor David Carpenter on *The English Government and the Treaty of Montgomery*
- Dr David Stephenson on *The Impact of the Treaty on Wales*
- Professor Huw Pryce on *The Historiography of the Treaty*
- John Davies on *The Ford of Montgomery*

Venue: Plas Dolerw, Newtown, Powys SY16 2EH; start 10.15; tickets £15 including lunch. Numbers are strictly limited so apply soon. Download booking form [here](#)

AUTUMN SYMPOSIUM

Saturday 7th October 2017

in Oscars, in Ludlow Assembly Rooms



Programme of the Day

- 9.30 *Registration and Coffee*
- 10.00 **Networking the March: A History of Hereford and its region from the 11th-13th centuries**
Matthew Lampitt - *Mortimer History Society*
- 10.50 **A Foreign Exchange: English Royal Marriage in the 12thC**
Dr Beth Thomas - *University of St Andrews*
- 11.40 *Coffee*
- 12.00 **The Production of a Medieval Bestseller: The Prose Brut**
Kirsten Lawton-Smith - *Mortimer History Society*
- 12.50 *Lunch - make your own arrangements*
- 14.20 **Isabella of France: The Rebel Queen**
Kathryn Warner - *author of the book of the same name*
- 15.10 **Sir Thomas, the Mortimer Bastard**
Sara Hanna-Black - *Mortimer History Society*
- 16.00 *End of the day*

For more details about the talks and speakers see below

Symposium Fee Members £12, Non-Members £15

Booking Options

1. Online using credit or debit card or Paypal - [click here](#)
2. Send a cheque made out 'Mortimer History Society' to Philip Hume, Waterloo Lodge, Orleton Common SY8 4JG giving your full contact details, the names of all those for whom you are booking and whether they are members or not.

Parking

The largest car park is Galdeford (pronounced Jailford) in the centre of the town. This is easily reached from the A49 which bypasses the town. Leave the A49 at the more southern of the two roundabouts, by the supermarket and petrol station, and follow Sheet Road down, under the railway bridge and then up the hill. As you turn right at the top of the hill, the entrance to the car park is immediately on the left. NB the car park is on sloping ground and parking is cheaper at the lower levels. Make sure that you are in Zone B. The postcode for satnav is SY8 1QF.

If you have any queries

about the day phone Philip Hume on 01584 831654

Networking the March: A History of Hereford and its region from the 11th-13th centuries

Linking Herefordshire to locations from Ireland to the Holy Land, this talk charts the various networks of the individuals and communities of Hereford and its border region from the eleventh through thirteenth centuries. Such networks include those instantiated by trade routes, feudal holdings, familial relations, military orders, the Jewish community, the Crusades, and the Norman diaspora, as well as scholarly, ecclesiastical, and architectural connections.

Matthew Lampitt is a postgraduate student studying for a PhD in French at Kings College, London. Having been brought up in the Welsh Marches, this subject is close to his heart. His work draws on network and actor-network theory and his thesis explores literary texts in French, Latin, English and Welsh. Matthew is currently a visiting scholar in the Welsh department at Aberystwyth University. Matthew's entry in the 2016 MHS Essay Competition was commended by the Judges and he has been awarded honorary membership of the Society.



A Foreign Exchange: English Royal Marriage in the 12th century



Henry II's wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine

Before his accession, Henry II made one of the most significant royal marriages of the Middle Ages, entangling himself and the English throne with political spheres far beyond the British Isles for generations. By the strategic betrothals and marriages of his seven children, Henry solidified his position as one of the most powerful rulers in Europe. This talk will examine these betrothals and marriages, the motives behind them and their success, as well as why Henry chose to make the alliances he did, both outside the British Isles and within.

Beth Thomas came to the UK to study at the University of St Andrews, and has never left. She completed her undergraduate degree, MLitt, and PhD in Medieval History, focussing primarily on the Angevin period in England, in particular royal marriage patterns and foreign diplomacy. Her interests also cover early Stewart Scotland, especially the reign of James I, and more recently the effect of disease on history, particularly the Black Death.

The Production of a Medieval Bestseller: The Prose Brut

The medieval prose *Brut* is a legendary and historical chronicle of England named after its first hero, Brutus, a descendent of Aeneas and the epic founder of Britain. Espousing chivalric ideals and celebrating the deeds of knightly heroes, the *Brut* resembles aristocratic chronicles in content. History and romance are at times difficult to distinguish, especially in its earlier sections, which include the stories of King Lear, Merlin, Arthur, and others of legend. Yet even the descriptions of Edward III and Henry V are suffused with a concern for the noble and heroic.



The *Brut* survives in an astonishing 240 manuscripts written in Latin and Anglo-Norman but with the majority existing in Middle English. With various extensions of text, the *Brut* became *The Chronicles of England*, published by Caxton and going through 13 printed editions between 1480 and 1528. Using this large corpus of late medieval manuscripts we can explore the production of books in this period and how scribes, illuminators, sellers, patrons and readers were involved in the making of these wonderful artefacts. We will also briefly look at how technology may unlock further secrets of their materiality.

Kirsten Lawton-Smith has just completed a Masters at Birmingham University and lives in Herefordshire.

Isabella of France: The Rebel Queen



Medieval roof boss at Malmesbury Abbey thought to represent Isabella

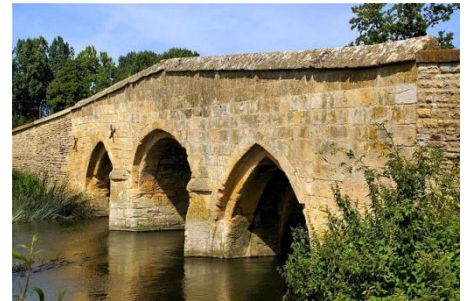
Isabella of France married Edward II in January 1308, and afterwards became one of the most notorious women in English history. In 1325, she was sent to her homeland to negotiate a peace settlement between her husband and her brother Charles IV, king of France. She refused to return. Instead, she began a relationship with her husband's deadliest enemy, the English baron Roger Mortimer. With the king's son and heir, the future Edward III, under their control, the pair led an invasion of England which ultimately resulted in Edward II's forced abdication in January 1327. Isabella and Mortimer ruled England during Edward III's minority until he overthrew them in October 1330. Kathryn Warner explores Isabella's life and what led her to this remarkable act.

Kathryn Warner holds two degrees in medieval history from the University of Manchester, and is the biographer of Edward II, his queen Isabella of France and their great-grandson Richard II. Her work has appeared in the English Historical Review and she has presented a paper at the International Medieval Congress.

Sir Thomas, the Mortimer Bastard

Sir Thomas Mortimer was the illegitimate son of Roger Mortimer, 2nd Earl of March (d1360). He was brought up as one of the family along with Roger's legitimate children and was subsequently knighted. For a time he enjoyed great success and rose to high office in Ireland. But his good fortune was not to last.....

Sara Hanna-Black is a professional researcher for historians and writers. She is currently writing a book on 'The Last Mortimers' for Amberley Publishing.



Old Radcot Bridge

Forward Dates

AGM - Saturday 17th March 2018

Spring Conference - Religion in the Marches - Saturday 19th May 2018 in Leominster

News Items

Finding Good Speakers

We try very hard to find speakers who are expert in their field but who are also able to communicate well with a general audience. This is not always easy. Members can help by recommending good speakers to us. Although the Society focuses on the medieval Mortimers and the Marches, we are interested in hearing of anyone who can speak well on any medieval subject, down to 1500.

Contact secretary@mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk

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
Frances Channon & Mark Castell, Tenbury Wells 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, Herefords. UK
Alan Stewart, Ludlow, Shropshire UK
Jane Stirling, Twitchen, Shropshire UK
Richard Tongue, Worthen, Shropshire UK

Unidentified Subscription

We have been unable to identify a person who made a payment of £12 on 11th July. It came from a branch of Santander in London in the name of Anne Smith. If this means something to you please contact Hugh, details above.

Mortimer Family History

MHS is not a family history society, being concerned only with the medieval Mortimers. Many of our members, however, claim descent from the early Mortimers and are very interested in their family trees. Roger F Mortimer runs the "One-Name" site http://one-name.org/name_profile/mortimer/
A member of MHS, Roger seeks to link Mortimer genealogies together and he would be delighted to hear from anyone with Mortimer antecedents. Email him at roger.mortimer@one-name.org

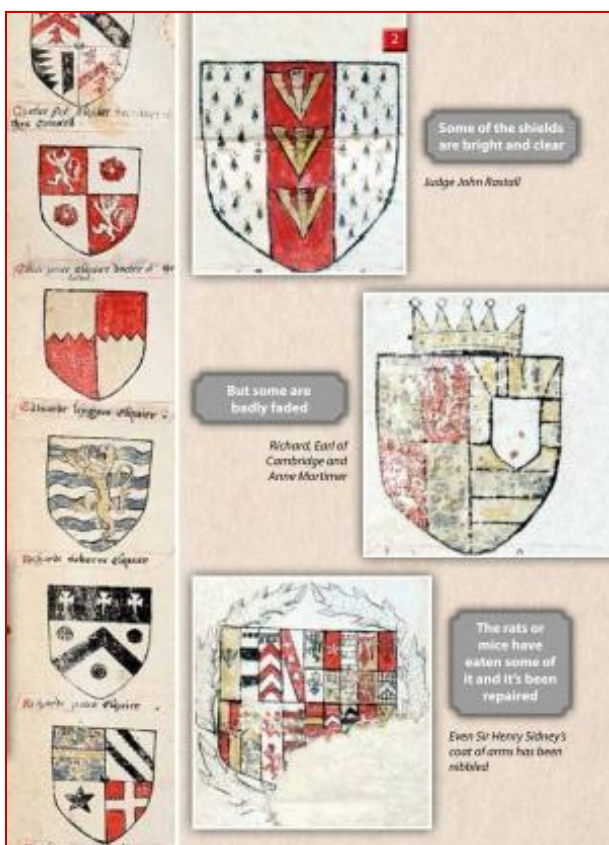
Entertaining MHS Members from Abroad

We are seeing an increasing number of members from other countries coming to Ludlow and the Marches to visit important Mortimer sites like Wigmore Castle, Wigmore Abbey and Ludlow Castle. Armed with a copy of *On the Trail of the Mortimers* they have enjoyed exploring Mortimer Country. We like to welcome members from overseas when they come, and show them around the main sites. In the last 12 months we have enjoyed meeting several members from America as well as visitors from Australia, Canada and Bermuda. We are looking forward to meeting our two Chinese members when they visit in October. The picture shows David Bullivant from Long Beach, California (on the left) with Hugh Wood and Philip Hume.



The Ludlow Castle Heraldic Roll goes into Schools

Following a successful appeal spearheaded by members of MHS, the Ludlow Castle Heraldic Roll has been purchased, facsimiles have been made and one of these has been incorporated into the heraldry unit of our MHS Schools Local History Programme. During July a facsimile was taken into 6 schools in and around Ludlow. The children were able to get really close to the roll and were quite fascinated with it. It was good to have this historical artefact example to reinforce what the children had learnt on their special day at Ludlow Castle which is a key part of our schools programme. The children were all presented with a special booklet about the roll. The image below shows a page from the booklet for children. To find out more about the roll and to see, or download the booklet, see the longer article on the website by [clicking here](#)



The Pembridge Effigies and their costumes



In Pembridge church, Herefordshire, are the effigies of Nicholas Gour, Serjeant-at-law with his wife and their son John Gour, a steward of the Mortimers, with his wife. The costumes they are wearing have been recreated and are currently on display in the church. For more detail [click here](#)

Two MHS Authors

A surprising number of our members are published writers of history or historical fiction. Two of our overseas members are introduced here.

Katherine Ashe

is an American author best known here for her 4-volume novelised biography of Simon de Montfort. She is not to be confused with Katharine Ashe, also American, who writes historical romances. The four books in our Katherine's series are:

The Early Years 1229-1243

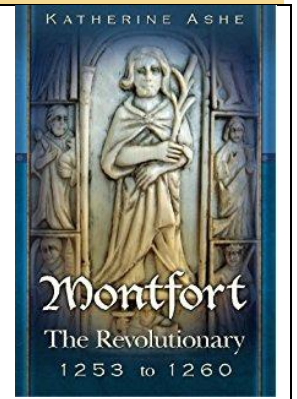
The Viceroy 1243-1253

The Revolutionary 1253-1260

The Angel with the Sword 1260-1265

Katherine came over and spoke at our Spring Conference in 2012.

See <http://www.katherineashe.com/>



Anna Belfrage

is Swedish and lives in Malmö. She writes historical fiction and her latest work is a 4-volume series called *The King's Greatest Enemy* in which the turbulent times of Roger Mortimer, 1st Earl of March, are seen through the eyes of his supposed loyal supporter Adam de Guirande. The three parts are:

In the Shadow of the Storm 1321-1323

Days of Sun and Glory 1324-1326

Under the Approaching Dark 1327-1328

The Cold Light of Dawn 1329-1330 (due 2018)

See www.annabelfrage.com

Introducing the Mortimers - Part 2

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. In successive editions of *Mortimer Matters* we are publishing a simple introduction to the Mortimers of Wigmore in short chunks, to help new members build a picture of this colourful and important family. In these articles, Mortimers with the same first name are not being distinguished by numbers, but by their dates. It is probably as easy to remember Roger Mortimer (d.1330) as to remember which is Roger Mortimer IV and less open to misinterpretation. The fact that Hugh I and Hugh II have recently been amalgamated underlines the possible ambiguities of the numbering system.

The First Two Mortimers of Wigmore

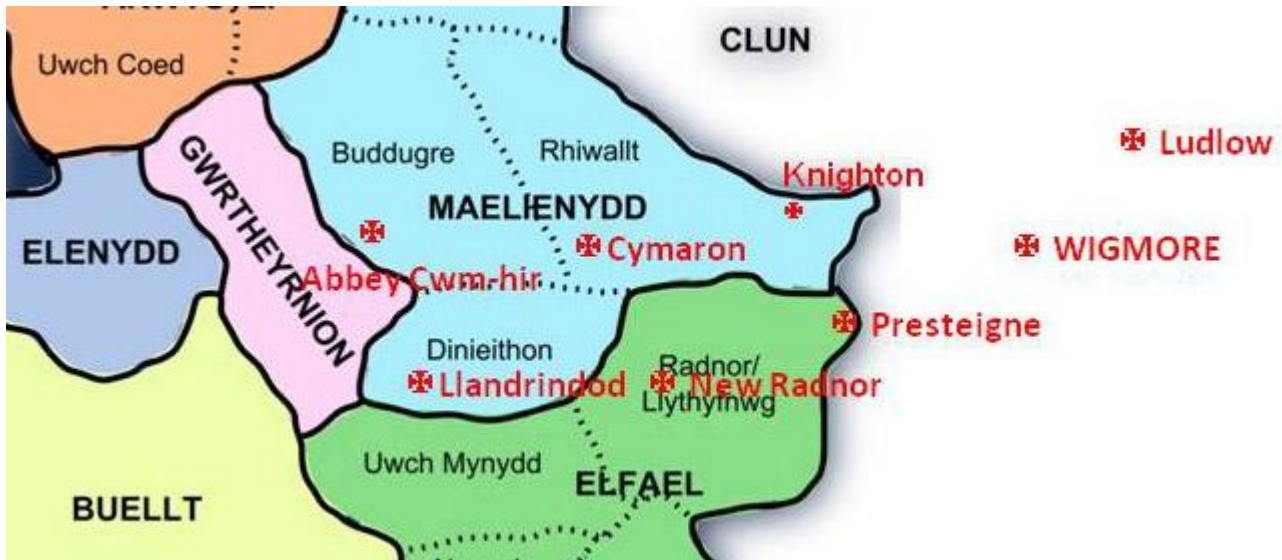
Ralph Mortimer (fl.1075-1115)

Hugh Mortimer (fl.1127-1181)

fl. = floruit or flourished = known to be alive

In the first part of this brief history, it was recorded that the ancestor of all the Mortimers of Wigmore, and the first to be called Mortimer, was Roger de Mortemer of Mortemer-en-Bray in Normandy. The first member of the Mortimer family to reside for any length of time in England was Roger's son **Ralph (or Ranulph) Mortimer (fl.1075-1115)**. It is not clear when he arrived in England, but apparently there is an account of him assisting King William in dealing with troublesome natives in the 1070s. In the Wigmore Chronicle, he is credited with capturing the rebellious Anglo-Saxon former magnate, Eadric the Wild. Ralph was certainly well-rewarded for his support and was given extensive estates, beginning with Worthy in Hampshire and Hullavington in Wiltshire. Soon afterwards he acquired **Wigmore Castle**, which had been built by William fitzOsbern (d.1071) and forfeited by William's son Roger, earl of Hereford, on account of his rebellion in 1075. This became the chief seat of the Mortimer family for the next 350 years. By the time of Domesday (1086), Ralph held more than a hundred manors in England, distributed over twelve counties.

The earls and barons with estates located along the Welsh border were given a fairly free hand to invade, subdue and then take over adjacent parts of Wales. These Marcher lords enjoyed considerable independence from the English monarch, so increasing their estates at the expense of the Welsh was an attractive proposition. At the same time their Welsh holdings acted as a protective buffer for their English estates along the border. Incursions into Wales began fairly soon after the Conquest. In 1093 Ralph joined a Norman force including the Earl of Shrewsbury and Philip de Braose in a campaign in central Wales and built castles including Cymaron, which was then held by the Mortimers for a short time. The area of Wales directly east of Wigmore, including Llandrindod Wells, was called Maelienydd and over the years it was fought over several times as Welsh fortunes ebbed and flowed.



Ralph founded a college of priests at Wigmore Church (consecrated in 1105) but retained a close association with his Continental estates. Indeed, he seems to have retired to Normandy in later life, there being very few references to him in England after 1100. Ralph died between 1115 and 1127, almost certainly in Normandy.

His son **Hugh Mortimer (fl.1127-1181)** lived for such a long time that, until recently, it was thought that there were two of them, father and son. He seems to have grown up in Normandy, apparently not coming to live in England until some time after the death of his father. His early years as lord of Wigmore coincided with the Anarchy, the time of civil war following the death of Henry I, when Stephen and Matilda were fighting each other for supremacy. Hugh supported king Stephen rather than Matilda and became the leader of the royalist faction in the region. This brought him into direct conflict with Miles, Earl of Hereford and Josce de Dinan, the holder of Ludlow Castle who were supporting Matilda. Josce managed to capture Hugh at one point and imprisoned him in Ludlow castle, demanding a huge ransom. This must have been paid as Hugh was subsequently a free man again. There is a small gatehouse tower in the curtain wall of the outer bailey in Ludlow Castle called 'Mortimer's Tower' indicating the supposed place of Hugh's imprisonment. As the outer bailey was not built till the second half of the 12th century, however, this must be incorrect. Around this time he advanced into Wales, re-conquered Maelienydd, which had been lost, and rebuilt Cymaron castle.



→ *The beautiful site of Cymaron castle*

During the disruption and lawlessness of the Anarchy, many formerly royal castles were either granted by Stephen to his supporters or just taken over by barons. One way or another, Hugh Mortimer acquired the castle at Bridgnorth between 1138 and 1140. Having supported Stephen, he was understandably not particularly well-disposed towards Matilda's son, Henry II, when he came to the throne in 1154. The following year King Henry demanded the return of all estates and castles that had been royal property in the time of King Henry I, refusing to

recognise any grants that King Stephen may have made. Hugh was told to relinquish Bridgnorth Castle but refused. The king laid siege to Bridgnorth and the Mortimer castles at Wigmore and Cleobury Mortimer and Hugh eventually had to submit. He was allowed to retain Wigmore and the (now almost destroyed) castle at Cleobury Mortimer.

In the early 12th century, great churches were being built in the Romanesque style at many places in England. Some of these churches, including those at Reading Abbey, Tewkesbury Abbey and Hereford Cathedral, exhibited sculptural decoration of a most varied and often flamboyant kind. Aspects of these sculptures have been linked to work in western France, Ireland, Scandinavia, Italy and Santiago de Compostella, but also with earlier Celtic and Anglo-Saxon art in England. Initially this exuberant and costly sculpture seems to have been largely restricted to the great churches, but in Herefordshire something special happened. A group of cultured men, probably including Robert de Bethune, Bishop of Hereford (1131-48) sought to apply this new style to much humbler places of worship. So was created the famous **Herefordshire School of Romanesque Sculpture** that thrived in the middle Marches in the 12th century. There are many outstanding examples of their work remaining, their carvings displaying an eclectic mix of styles, with Kilpeck church as the prime example.



Kilpeck



Eardisley



Kilpeck

Hugh Mortimer's steward was called Oliver de Merlimond. He was an able and cultured man and he encouraged Hugh to patronise the Herefordshire School. Examples of their work are still to be seen at the Mortimer properties at Orleton, Pipe Aston, Rock, Ribbesford and Alveley. Hugh granted Oliver the manor of Shobdon, not far from Wigmore in Herefordshire where Oliver began to build a church. A visit to Santiago de Compostella in Spain will have done nothing to cool his enthusiasm for the new style. He incorporated it in the priory he went on to build at Shobdon. Little remains of Oliver's priory church but, when it was pulled down in 1756, the chancel arch and two other arches were set up at the top of a nearby rise as a folly. Shobdon Arches still retain their Herefordshire School carvings but they are now badly eroded.



Shobdon Arches

During the Anarchy, life wasn't easy for the Augustinian canons of Shobdon. Exactly what happened is not clear as there are conflicting stories. Oliver de Merlimond changed his allegiance and began to support Matilda. This made him Hugh's bitter enemy and, in his anger, Hugh not only took back Shobdon but, for a time, he seems to have reclaimed the gifts he had made to the priory, leaving the canons destitute. He subsequently relented and made new grants for their wellbeing. Shobdon lay at the very south of the Mortimer lands and therefore was vulnerable to attack by Matilda's supporters in the south. It may have been for their

safety that Hugh moved them further north. Over the next few years they settled at several places in the area before Hugh finally established them on a new site a mile or so north of Wigmore and upgraded the priory to an abbey. The foundation stone of **Wigmore Abbey** was laid in 1172 and the church consecrated in 1179. Little now remains of this important abbey that was the burial place of generations of Mortimers.



Only ten years after Hugh had rebuilt Cymaron castle in Maelienydd it was retaken by Cadwallon ap Madog and a personal feud seems to have developed between the Cadwallon and the Mortimers. In 1179 Cadwallon was called to court by Henry II to answer charges about disturbing the king's peace. Returning to Wales under a safe conduct from the king he was ambushed and killed. The attack on Cadwallon was instigated by Hugh's son Roger. By now a very old man, Hugh had at least some of his lands confiscated, but the consequences for his son were much more serious as he was imprisoned in Winchester.

MHS President John Challis hosting an MHS visit to his home at Wigmore Abbey

It is not known for certain exactly when Hugh died. The financial records of the Exchequer (the Pipe Rolls) note that from 1181, his son Roger became responsible for his father's debts. One chronicle states that Hugh resigned his lands to his eldest son and became a canon of Wigmore Abbey, dying in February 1185. Whether he died in 1181 or 1185, the earlier year marks the termination of his active life; he was buried in the church of Wigmore Abbey.

Mortimer Women of Significance: Katherine Mortimer (1314 - 1369)

In this short article, the Founder of MHS, John Grove, muses on the life of Katherine, 9th child of Roger Mortimer, 1st Earl of March and Joan de Geneville

Katherine's happy childhood at Ludlow and Wigmore castles ended abruptly at the age of 8, when her mother Joan was placed in custody by Edward II. Joan was caught up in the downfall of her husband Roger, who was a prisoner in the Tower of London following his rebellion against the king.

She was used to a life of luxury and the support of lady companions. As a younger daughter she was not arrested like her mother and may have continued to be well looked-after by her grandmother, Margaret de Fiennes, at her Radnor castle. When her father returned from France with Queen Isabella in 1326, Katharine rejoined her mother at Ludlow. Now, as a leading light in the kingdom, Roger was able to make good marriages for some of his 8 daughters. Katharine was about 14 when she married, and it must have been a great day when the weddings of both herself and her sister Joan were held at Hereford Cathedral in 1328.

Her bridegroom was Thomas, Lord Beauchamp, eleventh Earl of Warwick, to whom she had been betrothed since she was 4 or 5, and from the time of her marriage she may have lived in Warwick Castle. As a teenager, she must have been astonished by the events of 1326 - 1330; observing her father's rise to power and fame followed by his swift downfall and execution. When the marriage was consummated she began a family of 15 children, starting with Guy in 1337.



The Beauchamp and Mortimer arms on a roof boss above the memorial to the Earl and Countess of Warwick. In this early example, the two shields have been halved and then stuck together (dimidiated) rather than each half containing the full coat of arms (impalement).

Katherine was proud of her husband's achievements. He was a trusted military commander of Edward III, and fought at Crecy, and Poitiers, as well as being sometime guardian of the Black Prince. There are indications that their marriage was a true love match and Katherine must have been well cared for at Warwick. Her comfortable life was enhanced by being treated, on occasions, as one of the leading ladies of the court of Edward III and this would have entailed visits to London and other centres of the court. One highlight was her invitation to be a godmother to one of the queen's grandchildren. She may well have paid visits to her mother Joan at Ludlow. Her life would also have been brightened by the splendid weddings of her children to members of the Ferrers, FitzAlans, Cliffords, Staffords and other noble families. Several of her daughters also became nuns.



Katherine and Thomas in St Mary's church, Warwick

She died at the age of 55, followed soon after by her husband, and her family had a superb tomb constructed which occupies pride of place in front of the main altar of St. Mary's church in Warwick. In death as in life, she affectionately holds her husband's hand, and is surrounded by mourners in a variety of intriguing costumes of the period. Her origins are proclaimed by the Mortimer arms on a roof boss high above her head.

Katherine follows a tradition of noble women who did more than produce a healthy new generation. As Countess of Warwick, she helped her husband in the administration of his estates and in providing a loving and comfortable retreat from the arduous duties of politics and warfare.

The View from the West: Some Welsh reactions to the March

David Stephenson gave an excellent lecture on this subject at the May conference and this article has been put together jointly by David, Ian Lambert and Hugh Wood

The term "The Welsh Marches" has colloquially come to mean those parts of England that border Wales, like Cheshire, Shropshire & Herefordshire. In this article, however, the term "March" is given its original meaning, so the "March of Wales" refers to those parts of Wales that were conquered and ruled by Marcher Lords who were based in England. The attitudes of the Welsh to the Anglo-Norman March were very varied and they changed significantly over the period from the 11th to the 13th century.

Initially it was a fairly simple situation. Norman lords were gradually moving into eastern and southern parts of Wales, with the Welsh-held lands being increasingly concentrated in the north and west. These Anglo-Norman invaders were the enemy. The Mortimers were fairly typical in having to wage a continual battle to maintain control of their Welsh acquisitions in Maelienydd to the west of Wigmore.

Indeed, there were times when Welsh raids into the March took on an almost ritualistic character. Such raids were used, it seems, to cement and celebrate political alliances between Welsh rulers. Thus in 1257 Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd gained the support of the ruler of northern Powys, Gruffudd ap Madog, or Gruffudd of Bromfield. The Chester Annals record the sequel:

‘About the feast of S. Michael [September 29] Gruffudd of Bromfield, having deserted our lord the king, returned to Llywelyn, and with him laid waste the marches of Hereford and Salop.’ And to celebrate their political accord in 1263, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and the lord of southern Powys, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, launched a similar campaign of devastation, for a scribe at Alberbury Priory dated a charter by reference to ‘the year in which Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn came together with a great army to destroy the marchers, and especially Roger Mortimer.’

Whether the Welsh or the Marcher lords held the initiative at any particular period was influenced by a couple of significant factors. Sometimes the Marcher Lords were preoccupied with matters within England and couldn't give their full attention to what was happening in Wales. Obvious examples include the civil war in the time of king Stephen, the disruption during the reign of King John and the Barons Wars that included the Battle of Evesham in 1265.

The other major factor that affected which side had the upper hand was the emergence of strong Welsh leaders. One of these, Rhys ap Gruffydd, had been bound by an agreement he had made with King Henry II. On the latter's death in 1189 Rhys no longer felt constrained and attacked Norman lordships surrounding his own territory. In 1196 he defeated an army led by Roger Mortimer (d.1214) and Hugh de Say of Richard's Castle near New Radnor and burnt the castle there. As Prince of Gwynedd in North Wales, Llywelyn ap Iorweth (Llywelyn the Great) consolidated his power across all of Welsh-held Wales. He was a major player in English politics, siding with the barons against King John in 1215, but he was also a continual thorn in the side of the Marcher lords.



The elevated and imposing site of Radnor castle dominates the town of New Radnor. The castle was burnt by Rhys ap Gruffydd in 1196

But the union of the Welsh under one prince was a rare occurrence. There was a history of infighting between the Welsh themselves and in the 13th century there was a significant change in the way the Welsh viewed the March. Increasingly complex alliances were forged between Welsh and Marcher lords and a sense of a shared community developed with many instances of intermarriage. Back in the twelfth century, in most regions of the March, charters issued by lords were witnessed by their leading Anglo-Norman tenants and officials. There were few Welsh witnesses.



The remains of the abbey church at Cwm-Hir in the west of Maelienydd, not far from the town of Rhayader

But in the thirteenth century this situation changed. An early sign comes in the great charter issued by Roger Mortimer to the abbey of Cwm-hir in Maelienydd in 1199. The witness-list is headed by the abbot, the prior and one canon of the Mortimer foundation of Wigmore abbey; they are followed by a member of the grantor's family, William Mortimer, and a number of men who were clearly drawn from Roger Mortimer's household and leading tenants, but the list closes with four Welshmen, notables of the Middle March; one of them, Gruffudd ap Heilyn, reappears as a witness to a charter of Madog ap Maelgwn of Maelienydd of about 1212, as does the son of another of the witnesses of 1199, Gruffudd *Velu*. By the mid-thirteenth century, Welsh witnesses to grants by marcher lords were becoming common throughout the March. Marcher lords increasingly employed able Welshmen in the administration of the March: William Marshal in Pembroke even employed a local Welsh lord to keep "the Welsh" under control.

One man stands out as an example of the many cases of assimilation of Welsh magnates into the political and social structures of Marcher society. Hywel ap Meurig had emerged as a royal negotiator by 1260, and he was clearly in Mortimer service by 1262, when he appears as the constable of the Mortimer castle of Cefnlllys in southern Maelienydd. Hywel, his wife and his sons were captured when the castle fell to local troops in that year, but it seems that he and his family were freed when Roger Mortimer appeared on the scene. In 1271 Hywel can be found in Cantref Selyf in northern Brycheiniog, amongst a group of Welsh supporters of John Giffard, who was helping Humphrey de Bohun, earl of Hereford to drive prince Llywelyn out of the region. In 1274 Hywel acted as a Mortimer agent, gathering intelligence about the movements of Prince Llywelyn in Cedewain and Clun. In the next year he appears in royal service as a surveyor of castles and lands in Carmarthen and Cardigan. Unsurprisingly in the context of the worsening relations between Edward I and Llywelyn, Hywel's royal and Marcher connections provoked the hostility of Llywelyn

and by 1276 he had been obliged to surrender his son John to the prince as a guarantee of his future loyalty. It is possible that John was released when his father found sureties totalling £100 for his loyalty to the prince. The money was put up by many of the leading Welshmen of the middle March, and including £40 from the abbot of Cwmhir. But whatever the pressures on him to remain obedient to the prince he emerged as a royal commander in the war which Edward unleashed against Llywelyn in 1276. He can be found leading a force of some two thousand seven hundred troops from the Marchland against Llywelyn in 1277. It is striking that of the twenty seven centenars, leaders of detachments of one hundred troops, who were in Hywel ap Meurig's force, twenty were Welsh, and most can be identified with confidence as men of the Middle March.



A party of intrepid MHS members on the site of the castle of Cefnlllys near Llandrindod in south-west Maelienydd. Roger Mortimer (d1282) appointed the Welshman Hywel ap Meurig as constable of the castle

Following the war of 1277 many honours and responsibilities came Hywel's way; he was appointed to take charge of the building of Builth castle for Edward I and had a grant of the mine nearby; he undertook a number of judicial commissions for the royal government in the March and in west Wales and in particular was appointed to the Hopton Commission to hear cases arising in the aftermath of the war of 1277. At some point before his death in the winter of 1281-2 he was knighted. His continuing association with the Mortimers is revealed by the fact that his name and coat of arms appear in St George's Roll, a Roll of Arms associated with the Mortimer family. Hywel's descendants continued to be of great importance and influence as administrators and Mortimer and de Bohun partisans through the late 13th and into the mid-14th century.



Llywelyn the Great (d.1240) on his deathbed with his sons

By the 13th century many of the Welsh hierarchy were trusted friends who worked happily and successfully alongside the Marcher lords – many of whom were by that period of mixed blood, for inter-marriage with Welsh princely lines had become common. It is perhaps Llywelyn the Great, ruler of Gwynedd and much of Wales in the period 1200-1240 who brought marriage into the ranks of the Marcher lords to its high point. Himself husband of a daughter of King John, he knew well the advantages that a cross-border marriage might bring. He secured a marriage for his sole legitimate son and designated heir, Dafydd, to Isabella de Braose, which brought the lordship of Builth as a dowry. And he married daughters into a number of the great families of the March: Gwladus Ddu first to Reginald de Braose and subsequently to Ralph Mortimer; Margaret to John de Braose and subsequently to Walter de Clifford; Gwenllian to William de Lacy, and Elen to John the Scot, the future earl of Chester.

Aggressive Welsh nationalism was to erupt again, notably under Owain Glyn Dŵr in the early fifteenth century – but, again, revision of the accepted story of Glyn Dŵr's career is needed: he did not have the support of all Welsh people – and particularly in eastern Wales there were many who resisted him.