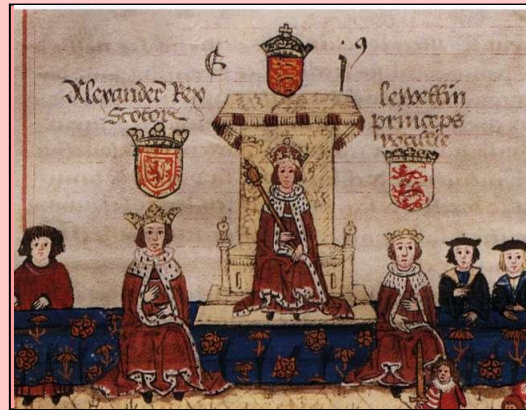


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### *MHS Writers*

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## Forthcoming MHS Events

### Dates for your Diary - See further details of the Spring Events on subsequent pages

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Saturday 17th March 2018 | <p><b>AGM followed by Medieval Leominster: what is there still to see?</b><br/>         Grange Court, Leominster (near the Priory) - see details on the next page.<br/>         10.00 AGM - all welcome - refreshments from 09.30<br/>         11.00-13.00 Duncan James will speak and lead a tour of medieval buildings in the town. Members free - non-members welcome (£5 on the door)</p>  |
| Saturday 19th May 2018   | <p><b>Spring Conference - Religion and Faith in the time of the Mortimers</b><br/>         Our conference will be held at Leominster Priory with an impressive array of speakers including Dr Ian Mortimer, Prof. Janet Burton, Prof. Helen Nicholson, Prof. Nigel Saul, Dr Sophie Ambler and Ian Bass.<br/>         Leominster Priory - 9.15 refreshments for a 10.00 start; finish 16.30<br/>         Tickets: members £17.50; non-members £22.50; pre-booked lunch £10<br/>         See below for more details and booking.</p> |
| Thursday 21st June 2018  | <p><b>William Herbert and the March of Wales: Politics and Poetry in the Wars of the Roses</b> - Helen Fulton, Prof. of Medieval Literature at Bristol Univ.<br/>         7.30 The Market Theatre, Ledbury, Herefordshire.<br/>         Tickets: members £5, non-members £8</p>  |

Sunday 22nd July 2018

### Field Trip to Cefnlllys Castle and Abbey Cwm Hir

Cefnlllys was a Mortimer castle near Llandrindod Wells. It played an important part in the ongoing wars between Roger Mortimer (d1282) and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and was sacked several times. The Cistercian Cwmhir Abbey near Rhayader was established by the Welsh but subsequently passed into the hands of the Mortimers. This evocative site is the traditional burial place of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.

Saturday 6th October 2018

### MHS Autumn Symposium

We have a good range of speakers lined up for this inexpensive and informal day in Ludlow.

Saturday 10th November 2018

### Castles in the Welsh Marches

A morning of lectures. More details later.

## Medieval Leominster - what can we still see?

### A Talk and Town Tour led by Duncan James

11.00am Saturday 17th March in Grange Court, Leominster

(following our AGM which is at 10.00)

**Duncan James** has been recording, analysing, and writing about early buildings in Herefordshire and the surrounding counties for many years. Much of the fabric of Leominster predates the year 1500. Duncan's talk will describe that which survives along with an explanation of its historic significance and the tour will visit some of the visible remains.

**Venue:** Grange Court , Leominster - on the green, south of the Priory.

**Parking:** Use Broad Street car park HR6 8DD

**Mobility Problems?:** There is a little parking at the venue HR6 8NL

**Tickets:** £5 on the door - MHS members free

**Timing:** 11.00 to 1.00

This event follows the MHS AGM which is at 10.00 - all welcome



### [The MHS Website](#)

It is **no longer necessary to log in** to see all parts of the website as the decision has been taken to make it freely available. Many members of MHS have agreed that their names, general location and interests may be shown on the website. We think that, without compromising the privacy of our members, it gives a good impression of a vibrant society, thereby encouraging others to join. You can see the page by [clicking here](#) . If you are not already on the list, consider participating. You don't have to have any special interests and can just say something like "A general interest in medieval history". To add your name [click here](#)



## SPRING CONFERENCE 2018

# Religion and Faith in the Time of the Mortimers

19th May 2018 in Leominster Priory

### Programme

*Registration and refreshments from 9.15*

- 10.00 Welcome
- 10.05 **Religious structures in the Middle Ages: an overview**  
*Dr Ian Mortimer*
- 10.20 **An introduction to Leominster Priory**  
*Prof. Janet Burton*
- 10.30 **Monasticism in the Welsh Marches**  
*Prof. Janet Burton*
- 11.10 **The role of the bishop in 13th century England: the Marches and beyond**  
*Dr Sophie Ambler*
- 11.50 Refreshment break
- 12.15 **Templars and Hospitallers in the Welsh Marches**  
*Prof. Helen Nicholson*
- 12.55 Panel Session
- 13.20 Lunch - included in the ticket and served in the priory
- 14.20 **Saints and miracles in the Welsh Marches: their role in people's faith**  
*Ian Bass - winner of the MHS Essay Prize 2016*
- 15.00 **Churches, chantries and chapels:  
the religious patronage of the Mortimers and their circle in the 14th century**  
*Prof. Nigel Saul*
- 15.40 **The personal experience of medieval religion: some thoughts**  
*Dr Ian Mortimer*
- 16.00 Panel Session
- 16.30 Finish

### Tickets & Booking

Tickets cost £17.50 for MHS members and £22.50 for non-members. Some people may prefer to bring their own food, so we've decided to make lunch optional. The cost of lunch is £10 and it must be booked and paid for in advance. Note that the conference timetable doesn't really allow adequate time to get a meal elsewhere in Leominster.

### Parking

The best place to park is Broad Street Car Park on the north side of the town (HR6 8DD). The charge for 24 hours is £2.50 (as at November 2017). The Priory is visible from the car park and is a short walk away.

## The Lectures and the Speakers

To read about the lectures and the speakers, please [click here](#) and then scroll down.

## Booking

You can pay online, or by bank transfer or by cheque,

**but first please complete the BOOKING REGISTRATION FORM - [click here](#)**

NB If you don't use the internet please send full details to Philip Hume with your cheque (address below). Give the names of all people attending and whether members or not. Also state how many lunches you want and whether there are any special dietary requirements.

### **Methods of Paying**

1. By cheque made out to 'Mortimer History Society' and sent to the Philip Hume, Waterloo Lodge, Orleton Common, Ludlow SY8 4JG - Make sure that you have already completed and submitted the booking registration form so we have all your details.
2. By direct bank transfer to Mortimer History Society, Lloyds Bank 30-94-99 account number 01255435 - Make sure that you have already completed and submitted the booking registration form so we have all your details.
3. By Paypal, credit or debit card. After completing the Booking Registration Form [click here](#) and scroll to the end of the article.

## News Items



### **RESULTS OF THE 2017 ESSAY COMPETITION**

#### **Winner (£750)**

*Periphery to Core: Mortimer Women and the negotiation of the King's Justice in the thirteenth century March of Wales*

**by Emma Cavell**

#### **Joint runner-up (£250)**

*The Loyal Mortimer: The Career of Roger Mortimer, second Earl of March*

**by Matt Raven**

#### **Joint runner-up (£250)**

*Fishing in troubled waters: Scottish intrigue and interference in Wales 1315-1327*

**by Ethan Gould**

## **New Members**

We are pleased to welcome the following members who have joined the Society since the last edition.

Robert Anderson, Herefordshire UK

Janine Bryant, Herefordshire UK

Dr Emma Cavell, Cardiff, Wales UK

Alison & Martin Crowdy, Shropshire UK

Dr Margaret Clamp, Nottinghamshire UK

Dr Margaret Clark, Shropshire UK

Catherine Hunt, Worcestershire UK

Chris & Deborah Jarman, Herefordshire UK

Barry & Joy Jenkinson, Shropshire UK

Joe Kerr, Herefordshire UK

Tom Kerr, Gloucestershire UK

Jonathan Moor, Shropshire UK

Julia Radburn, Shropshire UK

Matt Raven, Worcestershire UK

Lynda Sargent, Gloucestershire UK

Peter Smith, Monmouthshire, Wales UK

Cathrine Stone, Herefordshire UK

Bridget Thomas, Herefordshire UK

Ann Turtle, Herefordshire UK

Julie Williams, South Yorkshire UK

## Changes in the MHS Hierarchy

The structure of the Society has recently been rationalised as follows:

Founder: John Grove  
Patrons: John & Carol Challis of Wigmore Abbey  
President: Dr Paul Dryburgh  
Vice-President: Dr Ian Mortimer  
Chair: Jason O'Keefe

The 12 trustees are elected annually.

## An Appeal to support the MHS Schools Ludlow Castle Day



300 primary school children visit Ludlow Castle for a Living History Day each summer organised by MHS as part of our Schools Project. We're establishing a contingency fund to provide some shelter for the children in the event of bad weather. We're aiming for £4,000 and have reached £2,105. Very many thanks to all the members who have already donated. We're very grateful.

If you haven't donated already and would like more information please [click here](#). You can donate online or by cheque or bank transfer.

## 10th Anniversary Celebrations

In 2019 the Society will be 10 years old and we want to mark this important anniversary in a number of ways. You'll hear more about our plans throughout this year, but here is a taster. If you have ideas for other things we might do to celebrate, please let us know.

### **Two major conferences**

Perhaps the most important news is that there will be two conferences in 2019 and they will both focus directly on the Mortimers. Our usual Spring conference is on 18th May and this will concentrate on the early Mortimers up to the execution of Roger Mortimer in 1330. We've also organised a joint conference on 29th June with the **Richard III Society** and the focus for this event will be the later Mortimers, Earls of March, and the importance of the Mortimer inheritance for the House of York. This second conference will be in Ludlow as the town provides a strong physical connection between the Mortimers and the House of York.



*The crown created for Richard III's reburial*

### **Introducing the Mortimers**

At some point in 2019, we plan to publish a booklet based on the short articles on each Mortimer lord which are appearing in *Mortimer Matters*. This should prove a good introduction to the Mortimer family for new members.

### **The Story of the Mortimers in Music**

For our tenth anniversary the English folk rock group *Legendary Ten Seconds* are producing a Mortimer-themed CD and this is your opportunity to write a poem or song for it. They have already recorded five albums telling the story of Richard III and the Wars of the Roses and Ian Churchward, the main vocalist, has started writing and recording songs for the Mortimer CD. However he will welcome contributions of poems or songs from MHS members. He may have to adapt words and some may not be used, but the writers of the three he ranks as the best will receive free copies of the CD. Entries should be sent to Philip Hume [secretary@mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk](mailto:secretary@mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk) The band's website is [www.thelegendary10seconds.co.uk](http://www.thelegendary10seconds.co.uk)

## [The Mortimer's Cross Battlefield Project](#)

Following a grant of £84,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Mortimer's Cross Battlefield Project is pleased to announce the appointment of three specialists to conduct the work on this Wars of the Roses battlefield of 1461. Little is known for certain about the battle, so there is lots to find out. The project is to be officially launched at 7.30 on Wednesday 18th April in Kingsland Church when the investigating archaeologists will speak about their roles. Much of the work on the site will use volunteers to support all aspects of the project including education, visitor experience, landscape archaeology, site investigation and events. Contact [patricia@pothecary.net](mailto:patricia@pothecary.net) to get regular project updates. Please follow this link to see more details and to hear about the Battlefield Walk on April 28th. [click here](#)

## The Marriage of Edward II and Isabella of France: A Reconsideration

**by Kathryn Warner** *A member of MHS, Kathryn has written books on Edward II and on his queen, Isabella of France. 2018 will see the publication of her latest book on Hugh Despenser the Younger. She writes a blog on Edward II - see <http://edwardthesecond.blogspot.co.uk>*

The wedding of King Edward II of England and Isabella of France took place in Boulogne on 25 January 1308, having been arranged almost a decade previously as a way of making peace between their warring fathers, Edward I of England and Philip IV of France. The marriage produced four children: King Edward III (1312-77); John of Eltham, earl of Cornwall (1316-36); Eleanor of Woodstock, duchess of Guelders (1318-55); and Joan of the Tower, queen of Scotland (1321-62). Edward II, born in April 1284, was much Isabella's senior; she was probably born in late 1295, and had only recently turned twelve when she married the twenty-three-year-old Edward. It is therefore hardly surprising that Isabella did not become pregnant until four years after their wedding, when she was sixteen. As well as their four surviving children, Isabella probably had a miscarriage in or a little before November 1313 when pennyroyal was bought for her, and one chronicle states that she gave birth to another daughter in 1319, between Eleanor and Joan (though if so, the infant must have died soon afterwards).



*Isabella's French family in 1315 - from left to right: her brothers Charles and Philip, Isabella, her father king Philip IV, her brother Louis and her uncle Charles de Valois*

Edward II was, famously, involved in some kind of intense relationship with a nobleman of Béarn called Piers Gaveston, whom his father placed in his household in the late 1290s and whom he made earl of Cornwall shortly after he succeeded to the throne in 1307, though whether the two men were lovers or not must remain a matter for speculation. It is often stated as though it is certain fact that Isabella of France was hostile to her husband's beloved Gaveston. It is not impossible that she was, but it is certainly not an established fact. A letter supposedly sent by Isabella to her father in 1308 complaining about Gaveston is often quoted in support of the assertion that she hated and resented him, but

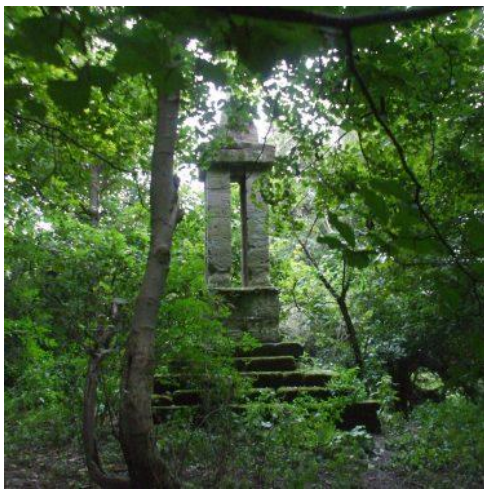
this letter was fabricated by the chronicler Thomas Walsingham (died c.1422) the best part of a century later. Walsingham, a monk of St Albans, had no possible access to the queen of England's correspondence to her father many decades previously, and it is a little disingenuous for some modern writers to cite his text as though they have found the letter in Philip IV's archives and as though Isabella herself actually wrote it. One story, frequently repeated as 'fact' even today, that Edward II gave his new wife's jewellery or wedding gifts to Gaveston and that Gaveston flaunted himself in front of the unfortunate queen wearing her own jewels, was invented by the writer Agnes Strickland in the nineteenth century. An inventory of Isabella's luxurious trousseau still exists, and her jewels and many other lavish possessions went to England with her and remained in her possession.

Isabella seems even to have aided Gaveston financially when he was banished from England for the third time in late 1311, and another often-repeated tale, that Edward II abandoned his pregnant and weeping wife at Tynemouth in May 1312 to take the returned Gaveston to safety instead, is also a myth. Another St Albans chronicler, writing decades later and 270 miles away from Tynemouth, mixed up events of 1312 with those of 1322, a year Queen Isabella truly was in danger at Tynemouth Priory from a Scottish



*The remains of Tynemouth Abbey*

army. She and Edward left Tynemouth together in early May 1312, but as Isabella was in the first trimester of pregnancy she did not accompany her husband and Gaveston down the coast in a boat, but travelled by land and met Edward in York a few days later.



*Memorial to Gaveston at the place where he met his death near Warwick*

Gaveston was murdered, or executed - depending on your point of view - by some of the English magnates in June 1312, and Isabella and Edward's first child Edward III was born five months later. The royal couple made a long visit to Isabella's native France between May and July 1313, and we are fortunate to have eyewitness testimony to their visit in the person of Geoffrey of Paris, a rhyming chronicler. He comments that the couple overslept one morning and that Edward was late for a meeting with Philip IV, because of their night-time 'dalliances'. When they were staying at Pontoise, their silken pavilion caught fire one night, and Edward saved Isabella's life by scooping her up and rushing out into the street with her, even though they were both "completely naked." An impressed Geoffrey of Paris comments on Edward's bravery and boldness, and states that he wished to save Isabella because of his love for his wife ("love made him do it," he says).

Unfortunately, hindsight and assumption can both be major issues when it comes to evaluating Edward II and Isabella of France's relationship, both for chroniclers of the later fourteenth century and for modern writers. Geoffrey of Paris, who saw them in person in 1313 and who viewed their marriage as an unqualified success, died in c. 1320, and is thus a very useful source for how matters really stood as this was long before Isabella took one of Edward's greatest enemies, Roger Mortimer of Wigmore, as her ally and invaded her husband's kingdom. After all, because a relationship ends badly does not necessarily mean that it had been a tragic and unhappy disaster from the beginning, and the notion that Edward II was a cruel, abusive and neglectful husband to Isabella is simply a modern invention.

Isabella called her husband "my very sweet heart" (*mon tresdoutz coer*) five times in a letter sent to him personally on 31 March 1325, and called him her "very dear and very sweet lord and friend" (*treschier et tresdouche seignur et amy*) in another letter of 5 February 1326. This latter style especially is most unconventional and speaks to Isabella's great affection for her husband, and this was written several months after she had refused to return to him from France. The couple spent almost all of their time together from 1308 to 1322, and on the rare occasions when they were apart sent each other letters; Isabella sent Edward no fewer than three letters when they were separated for four days in 1312, for example. Even when Edward took more male 'favourites' in the mid-1310s, there is no reason to suppose that Isabella was hostile to them - she even gave one, Sir Roger Damory, splendid and costly gifts for his chapel - or that his relations with the men impeded Isabella's access to her husband politically, personally or sexually.



*Hugh Despenser the Younger*

Edward's last 'favourite' Hugh Despenser the Younger, however, did impede her access to him. Married to Edward's eldest niece since 1306, Despenser was appointed royal chamberlain in 1318, and parlayed his position close to the king into immense power and wealth. Edward II, it seems, became infatuated with a man he had previously distrusted and even disliked. In and after 1322, Despenser did his utmost to oust Isabella from her husband's side, both as Edward's intimate partner and as his queen. It is surely significant that Isabella is not known to have become pregnant after the birth of her daughter Joan in July 1321, even though she was still only in her mid-twenties. When Edward went to war against Isabella's brother Charles IV of France in 1324, he began to

treat his wife as an enemy alien. The woman Edward had allowed to intercede with him frequently, who had been given custody of the great seal on occasion, who had shown him nothing but loyalty, the woman with whom he had had a mutually affectionate and supportive marriage for many years, was cut almost entirely out of her husband's life. Isabella herself blamed Hugh Despenser. She loathed and feared him, and felt herself in physical danger from him.

Safe at her brother's court in Paris - where she had been sent as a peace negotiator - in late October 1325, Isabella made a speech stating that she and her son Edward of Windsor would not return to Edward II unless he sent Hugh Despenser away from him. She also took to wearing widow's clothes to symbolise the loss of her husband and the insertion of a third party into her marriage, and swore to destroy Hugh Despenser. Some months later, after Edward refused utterly to exile Despenser, Isabella allied with his and Despenser's enemies the English baronial exiles at the French court, including Roger Mortimer of Wigmore. They, exiled from their homeland, were the men with the ability and the will to help her bring Despenser down.

In her speech, Isabella was not declaring her love for Roger Mortimer and her defiance of her husband, but was issuing Edward an ultimatum, to send Hugh Despenser away so that she could return to a marriage in which she had been happy. There is no reason at all to think that she did not mean what she said, no evidence at all that she began a flagrant and passionately sexual affair with Roger Mortimer in or before late 1325 (and perhaps not even afterwards), and no evidence at all that she hated her husband or was repulsed by him or wished or him ill. There is not even any real evidence that she sought her husband's downfall, though by the end of 1326 or early 1327 after her invasion, it had become clear to everyone that Edward II's support had collapsed entirely and that he could not continue as king. As late as November 1326, a few weeks after her invasion of his kingdom and after Hugh Despenser's capture, one chronicler states that Isabella fell to her knees before her husband and begged for his forgiveness. A furious Edward, however, refused to talk to her or even look at her.



*Isabella presenting her son Edward to do homage to her brother Charles IV of France*

The notion that Isabella of France hated her husband is based on nothing but assumption, and their marriage was far more successful for far longer than is commonly supposed.

Kathryn Warner



## Introducing the Mortimers 4: Roger Mortimer (d1282) - the slayer of Simon de Montfort

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 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.

We come now to the Mortimer who first propelled the family to the forefront of national affairs. On the death of Ralph Mortimer in 1246, the lordship of Wigmore devolved on his son **Roger Mortimer (d1282)**. Despite continually being at war, either in England, Wales or France, Roger survived everything and died a rich and honoured supporter, advisor and friend of king Edward I. We understandably tend to hear more about his famous grandson, Roger Mortimer (d1330) who rebelled against Edward II and ruled England with Queen Isabella, but the grandfather was a man of almost equal stature and significance in the history of England.

Before describing Roger's life in detail it is worth drawing attention to one important aspect that was present for most of his adult life. As mentioned in the last chapter of this series, Roger's maternal grandfather was Llywelyn ab Iorwerth (Llywelyn the Great) Prince of Gwynedd, and perpetual foe of the two previous lords of Wigmore. Some years after the death of Llywelyn, his mantle was taken up by another of his grandsons, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. For years he fought to reclaim Wales for the Welsh and to achieve official recognition of himself as 'Prince of Wales'. Roger Mortimer and his cousin Llywelyn were to be fierce enemies for most of their lives. A thorn in each other's sides, they both died in 1282 but in very different circumstances. Roger died of natural causes greatly honoured by his king. By contrast, just six weeks later, in the area around Builth in central Wales, Llywelyn became separated from his main army, perhaps through trickery, and was murdered by a force that is said to have included Roger's two sons Edmund and Roger. For the next 15 years Llywelyn's head was on public display at the Tower of London.



*Statue of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd  
above Llandovery*

Roger is thought to have been only about 15 when his father died in August 1246, but it was not long before he paid a substantial sum to the king to gain personal control of his lands, despite still being a minor. By the end of 1247 he had married Maud de Braose, seven years his senior and one of the four co-heiresses of William de Braose who had been hanged on the orders of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in 1230, on suspicion of having slept with the latter's wife. This marriage brought with it extensive estates including the lordship of Radnor and a share of the Brecon lordship as well as important lands in South Wales, England and Ireland and this greater wealth was an important factor in the rise in national significance of the Mortimers.



*Orthez in Gascony, home of Gaston VII,  
Viscount of Béarn and implacable foe of the English*

While king Henry III was holding court at Winchester in 1253 he personally conferred the honour of knighthood on Roger and later in that year he accompanied the king to Gascony. Back in 1248 king Henry had appointed the Frenchman Simon de Montfort as Viceroy of Gascony with a brief to bring some order to a lawless and unhappy region. Simon's approach was extremely oppressive and many complaints were made against him. Though officially exonerated, Simon was dismissed in 1252 and the king's expedition to Gascony was an attempt to to repair the damage done.

Returning to England, for the next ten years Roger was embroiled in serious unrest on two fronts. As well as the continuing problems with Llywelyn in Wales, he was completely caught up in the developing crisis between Henry III and his barons that was to result in the Second Barons' War.

Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was now flexing his muscles and becoming a significant threat and in 1256 he recaptured Gwrthrynion, the lordship to the north-west of Llandrindod, previously held by Roger. Alert to the threat of resurgent Welsh nationalism, Henry III made provision to strengthen his position and in 1258 Roger was promised substantial financial aid to continue the fight. Roger can't have been very successful, however as, a year later, he was engaged in negotiating and signing a one-year truce with Llywelyn.

In England things were becoming very serious indeed. Despite the issue and re-issue of Magna Carta since 1215, the king still sought to exercise personal power over many areas without reference to his barons. As well as feeling the general disaffection, Roger had other, more personal, grievances. The money that king Henry had promised him to help fight the Welsh had never materialised and there had been protracted disputes over the Braose inheritance.

Matters came to a head in 1258 when Simon de Montfort called a great Council with the object of reforming the state. Called the 'Mad Parliament' it consisted of 12 nominees of the king and 12 chosen by the barons. The fact that the 27-year-old Roger was one of those nominated by the disaffected barons underlines the esteem in which he was held by his peers. This council's deliberations resulted in the Provisions of Oxford which severely restricted the freedom of the monarch. The Provisions established a Privy Council of 15 to advise the king and exercise control over the administration. Roger Mortimer was one of the nine barons appointed to this permanent council. It is interesting to note that the disenchanted barons had a significant supporter in Lord Edward, the heir to the throne, who gave his approval to the Provisions of Oxford.



*A rather fanciful impression of a council presided over by Edward I*

In 1260, as soon as the year of truce was over in Wales, Llywelyn attacked and captured Builth Castle. Roger Mortimer held Builth for the Lord Edward, and he was partially blamed by the prince for its loss. Roger now found himself in an increasingly difficult position. An ambitious man, Simon de Montfort was developing an ever-closer rapport with Roger's arch-enemy Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. Montfort also quarrelled with Richard de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, who was one of Roger's closest associates. Then the Lord Edward became reconciled with his father and abandoned the barons' cause. With the barons divided, Henry took the initiative against the reformers. He revoked the Provisions of Oxford and forced the barons to compromise and accept his authority. Several of the key barons were pardoned by the king. Simon de Montfort retired to France to bide his time but, encouraged by financial inducements, Roger Mortimer moved onto the king's side and was to stay loyal for the rest of his life.

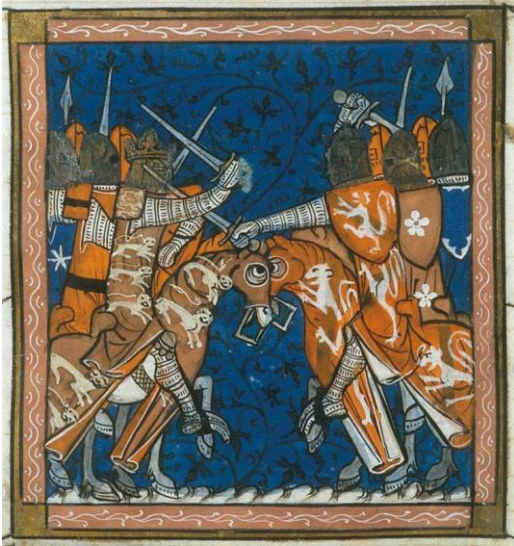


*Site of the Mortimer castles at Cefnlllys - the destination of a planned field trip on 22nd July*

Over the next few years things became increasingly tough for Roger. His Welsh tenants in Maelienydd rose in revolt, calling on Llywelyn, who attacked and captured several Mortimer castles including the great castle at Cefnlllys near Llandrindod. In 1263 Simon de Montfort returned to England, gathering around him a group of discontented barons. When Henry refused to reinstate the Provisions of Oxford hostilities began again, the barons receiving support from Llywelyn.

1264 must have been the worst year of Roger Mortimer's life and it now became very personal between himself and Simon de Montfort. Roger was seen as one of the rebels'

most dangerous opponents and, with Welsh help, they attacked his lordship of Radnor, besieged Wigmore and levelled most of his other castles.



The battle of Lewes 1264

At the national level things escalated and, despite being heavily outnumbered, Simon won a great battle at Lewes taking many prisoners including the king, Prince Edward and Roger Mortimer. He forced Henry to agree to new demands in a document called the Mise of Lewes and imprisoned the Lord Edward as a hostage for the king's future behaviour. Simon made a big mistake, however, in allowing the royalist Marcher lords to return home to secure the Welsh border. Not surprisingly they ignored the Mise of Lewes and, infuriated, Simon moved against them. Roger's lands were laid waste and in August he captured Wigmore castle. Roger eventually surrendered at Montgomery and submitted to Simon. So ended a terrible year.

Luckily things improved dramatically the following year. It has been suggested that it was Roger or his wife Maud who hatched a plan for rescuing Prince Edward. He was being held at Hereford

Castle but, apparently, was sometimes allowed out under supervision, to exercise. On 28th May 1265 he got permission to go out into fields away from the castle to race some horses. Edward got on a good fast horse and, at a signal from one of the waiting rescue party, he put spurs to his horse and just galloped off with them in the direction of Wigmore. His jailers at Hereford must have felt pretty stupid and one can imagine Simon's reaction when he heard the news. Maud is said to have fed and watered him at Wigmore and then sent him on to Ludlow Castle.... How true a reflection this narrative is of Edward's escape is not clear, but it certainly makes a good story.

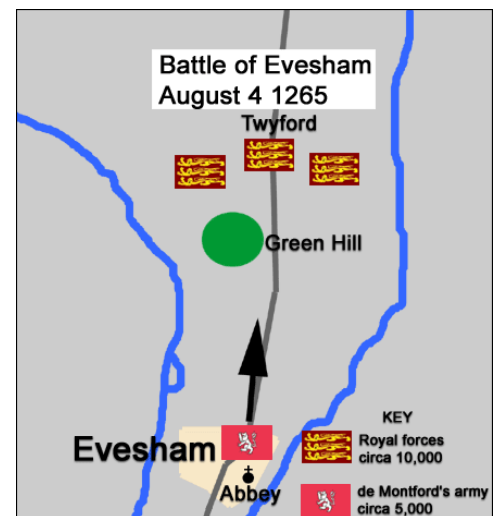
Things had not been going all that well for Simon since the battle of Lewes and in August it came to a pitched battle against the royalist forces at Evesham. Prince Edward had greatly superior numbers and the rebels were finally defeated. Roger Mortimer fought his way through the crowd and personally killed Simon de Montfort. He then sent the severed head to Maud at Wigmore. There is a story that she organised a big party and displayed Simon's head on a pike in the Great Hall with his testicles in his mouth.

Mopping up the opposition to the king took a further couple of years, with Roger at the centre of events. He was rewarded for his loyalty with lucrative new posts and estates, some of which had been forfeited by the rebels. Some of the victors took a

conciliatory line, counselling mercy for the disinherited rebels and the early restoration of their lands, but Roger strongly opposed this policy, fearing the loss of his newly-acquired estates.

Nearer in age to Prince Edward than he was to the king, they remained close friends for the rest of his life. When Edward went on crusade in 1270 he named Roger as one of five people appointed as guardians of his children and his interests. Henry III died in 1272 while Edward was still in Palestine and Roger was one of a small group who acted as regents until his return in 1274.

The Barons' War and its aftermath in England had, to a large extent, diverted attention away from what had been happening in Wales. Back in 1266 Roger had attempted to retake Brecon, only to have his army completely annihilated by Llywelyn. A year later Henry III decided to accept the situation and come to terms with Llywelyn. By the Treaty of Montgomery he received the homage of Llywelyn and formally acknowledged him as *Prince of Wales*, a title that had never previously been recognised. However, on his return to England, Edward I took a much harder line with Llywelyn and in 1276 he declared him a rebel and moved against him. Roger commanded the army that struck into the centre of Wales, capturing Dolforwyn castle. Indeed, for the rest of his life, Roger Mortimer was in the forefront of the fight against his old enemy and he was well-rewarded with new lordships.



By the year 1279 Roger was becoming an old man and he was given the great honour of being allowed to organize a grand tournament at Kenilworth castle. Writing in 1852 Thomas Wright says:

'After his sons had been knighted by king Edward I, Roger held a great tournament at Kenilworth and a 'round table', entertaining sumptuously for three days a hundred knights, with as many ladies, at his own expense; and having himself gained the prize of a lion of gold, on the fourth day he carried all his guests to Warwick. As was the custom, the tournament had been proclaimed in foreign countries and the fame of Roger's gallantry was spread through distant lands. The queen of Navarre is said to have fallen in love with him, and to have sent him wooden flasks of wine, bound with gilt hoops and wax which, when opened, proved to be filled, not with wine but with gold.



*Olympic cycling champion Victoria Pendleton tries modern-day jousting at Kenilworth castle*

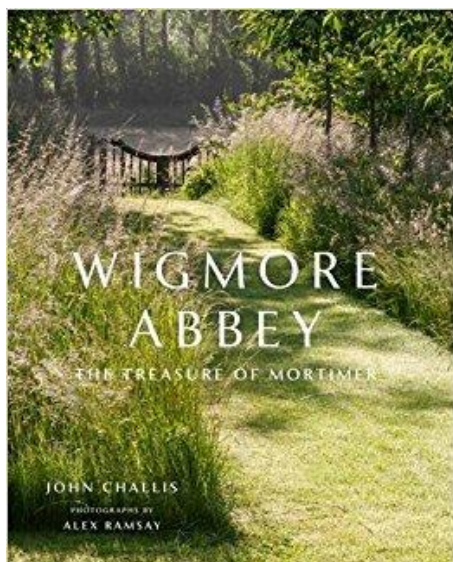
These 'flasks' were long preserved in the abbey of Wigmore: and for the queen's love Roger de Mortimer added a carbuncle to his arms for the rest of his life.'

Roger took part in Edward's 1282 campaign against Llywelyn, being in charge of operations in mid-Wales. He became ill in Kingsland and was buried at Wigmore Abbey, much lamented by the king. Writing to Roger's son, Roger Mortimer of Chirk, king Edward I says.....

'As often as the king ponders over the death of Roger's father he is disturbed and mourns the more his valour and fidelity and his long and praiseworthy services to the late king and to him recur frequently and spontaneously to his memory'

A moving tribute to an old friend and comrade.

## MHS Writers - John Challis



TV actor John Challis has lived in Wigmore Abbey near Ludlow since 1998. He and his wife Carol are Patrons of the Mortimer History Society.

2016 saw the publication of his book 'Wigmore Abbey: the Treasure of Mortimer'. This beautifully-illustrated book tells the story of their time at the abbey, the restoration of the Abbot's Lodging and the creation of the gardens. It also includes a short history of the abbey.

