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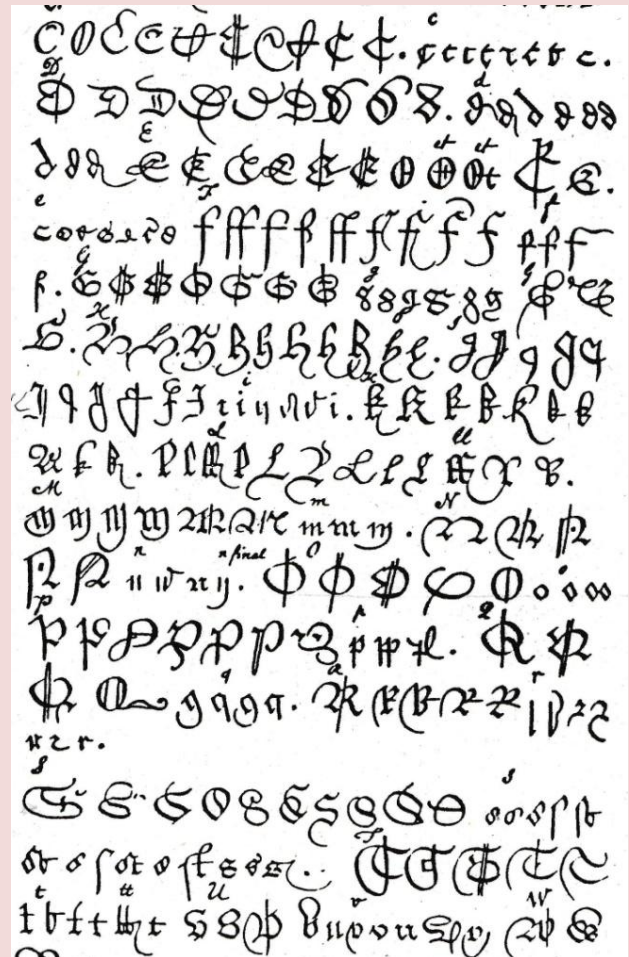
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This sheet showing different forms of letters was used at the two recent MHS workshops on research methods run by Paul Dryburgh and Helen Watt. The page comes from 'A General Alphabet of Old Law Hands' from 'Court-Hand Restored' by A. Wright 5th ed. 1818.

## Forthcoming MHS Events

### Wednesday 4th September 2019 - Tours and Tea at Wigmore Castle (Members Only)

See the next page.

### Saturday 5th October 2019 - The Ludlow Castle Heraldic Roll: A Window into Tudor Times

A joint one-day conference with the Friends of Ludlow Museum, to be held in Ludlow Methodist Church

### Saturday 30th November 2019 - Lordship and Enduring Influence: The Mortimers in Ireland

A morning mini-conference to be held in Church Stretton High School

### Saturday 15th February 2020 - The Experience of Medieval Warfare

A morning mini-conference - venue to be announced.



# MORTIMER

## *History Society*



**MEMBERS ONLY EVENT - WEDNESDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER**

### **10TH ANNIVERSARY STUDY VISIT & GARDEN PARTY AT WIGMORE ABBEY**

The patrons of the Mortimer History Society, Carol and John Challis, have very kindly offered to host a society visit to their home, Wigmore Abbey. John will lead a tour of the beautiful gardens and the ruins of the abbey church, followed by refreshments of tea/coffee, sandwiches and cake. The tour will also include the interior parts of the medieval abbot's lodging and will visit the abbot's parlour, library and undercroft. Please note photography is permitted in the gardens but not inside the house.

Space at the Abbey is limited so to maximise the number of people who can attend, there will be three groups - 1.00pm to 2.30pm; 3.00pm to 4.30pm; 5.00pm to 6.30pm. Please book into your preferred time. The cost is £10.00 (non-member partners are welcome, cost £13.00), including tea/coffee, sandwiches and cake. If you have one, please bring a camping chair.

There will be an opportunity to purchase signed copies of John Challis' beautiful book on Wigmore Abbey and how they have developed the garden at a special offer price for the afternoon of £20.00 (cash only, RRP £30.00)

**Advance Booking is Essential**  
**for more details and online booking [click here](#)**  
**or phone 01584 831654**

### Recent Events

#### Members' Workshops on Research Skills

A total of 40 members attended two workshops in March and April held in Ludlow. Ably coached by our President, Dr Paul Dryburgh, and Dr Helen Watt, they learnt how to make some sense of medieval manuscripts. The workshops were very successful and such was the enthusiasm of the members that 18 people are keen to form an MHS research group to further develop their skills. They plan to transcribe and translate relevant Mortimer documents, which we will then publish on the website.

#### The Mortimers to 1330: from Wigmore to ruler of England

About 140 members attended this one-day conference in May in Leominster Priory. There were lots of interesting talks and some excellent food, but the church was too cold to sit in for a long time and we won't use it again.

#### The Mortimer Inheritance: Key to the Yorkist Crown

This conference was a fitting climax to the first ten years of the Society. Organised by MHS in association with the Richard III Society, 220 people attended and 125 sat down to an impressive lunch. The conference had to be held in St Laurence's church in Ludlow because Ludlow Assembly Rooms are still out of commission. Though not completely ideal, it certainly provided a very suitable environment for a medieval conference. Delegates were given an impressive A4 conference pack that included biographies of speakers and synopses; the important genealogies needed by speakers and a guide to the Mortimer and Yorkist imagery to be found in St Laurence's. After the lectures many delegates were given a tour of Ludlow Castle by MHS Secretary, Philip Hume, and Treasurer Mike Beazley. As many people stayed in Ludlow overnight, Mike also led a tour of Ludlow on Sunday morning. The delegates were very enthusiastic about the event and we've had a tremendous amount of positive feedback.

#### Just Ten Years Ago.....

On 30th May 2009, at a packed meeting in Much Marcle Village Hall in Herefordshire, John Grove spoke of his desire to set up a Mortimer History Society to explore the history of the Mortimers of Wigmore and of the medieval Welsh Marches.

On 24th October 2009 the Foundation AGM was held in Wigmore and after a meal we enjoyed a tour of the castle led by Paul Remfry.

Ten years on the Society has over 400 members spread around the globe. Some are called Mortimer, so are bound to be interested, but others just love English history like our two enthusiastic members in China.



*The group at Wigmore Castle in 2009 includes our Founder, John Grove, President, Paul Dryburgh, Vice-President, Ian Mortimer and current members Anne Blandford, Andrew & Esther Colby. Peter Crocker, Yve James, Margot Miller, Martin & Denise Toms, Keith Wilson and Hugh Wood*



#### Success for Anna Belfrage

Congratulations to our Swedish MHS member, Anna Belfrage, who won the Dark Ages, Medieval and Renaissance category in the 2018 Chaucer Historical Fiction Book Awards.

*Under the Approaching Dark* is the third in her series *The King's Greatest Enemy*. It is set in the years immediately after the deposition of Edward II.



### A Tribute to Margot Miller from John Grove

One of our founder members, Margot Miller, has decided to take a rest from active membership of the Society for reasons of age and health. I personally would like to pay a tribute to her for all the enthusiasm and work that she brought to the Society, especially in its earliest years.

She did so much to inform others and promote the society in the early days and gave it a great impetus. She attended and helped organise many early Mortimer display stands and leaflets. In particular the inspiration that she gave to the Textiles group was considerable. The striking blue dress, giving us an impression of what Blanche Mortimer may have worn, will long be remembered. Margot and friends exhibited it in many places giving great publicity to the existence of the Society.

Margot's skills as an embroiderer were often seen in Mortimer cushions and bunting. She wrote articles on her special interests and research such as *Edmund Mortimer's Gap Year 1413*. She displayed her talents and dedication in a variety of ways. The Mortimer History Society thanks her for all the ways in which she helped lay its foundations, and I personally wish her every enjoyment in future years, and we hope to see her still at the occasional conference.

### Developments at Ludlow Castle

One of the glories of Ludlow Castle is the chapel in the inner bailey. Built in the early 12th century it retains its original circular nave. Until recently the chapel was completely open to the sky, but recently a long-cherished dream was finally realized when it was given a new roof. Beautifully crafted and unobtrusive, it will serve two important functions: by keeping the weather out it will aid the conservation of this iconic building, but it will also allow the chapel to be used as an atmospheric wedding venue.



A model showing the construction of the new roof

### New Members

We welcome the following new members to the Society. As this edition of *Mortimer Matters* has been delayed, due to all the major activity this year, the list is even longer than usual.

|                               |                    |                             |                      |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Sheelagh Barnes               | Herefordshire UK   | Dawn Hall                   | Shropshire UK        |
| Suzy and Stephen Barton       | Herefordshire UK   | Eleanor Harris              | Herefordshire UK     |
| John Berry                    | NSW, Australia     | Roger Hesketh               | Wirral UK            |
| Tanya Checkley                | NSW, Australia     | Michael Hickling            | Shropshire UK        |
| Dianne Coe                    | Essex UK           | Carolyn Lody                | Caerphilly, Wales UK |
| Elizabeth Collison            | NSW, Australia     | Ann & Anthony Malpas        | Shropshire UK        |
| Katherine Cowell              | Shropshire UK      | Joyce Marston               | Herefordshire UK     |
| Eizabeth & John Davies        | Powys, Wales UK    | Charlie Middleton           | Suffolk UK           |
| Jane Eccles                   | Surrey UK          | Janet Monnington            | Herefordshire UK     |
| David and Mari Frost          | West Midlands UK   | Kristine Moore & Dom. Costa | Powys, Wales UK      |
| Stephen & Janet Gallimore     | Herefordshire UK   | Angela Moreton              | Leeds UK             |
| Kathryn Gibson & H. Kimberley | Gwynedd, Wales UK  | Duncan Mortimer             | West Sussex UK       |
| Isobel & Ian Goddard          | Herefordshire UK   | Jeanette & Alan Mortimer    | Birmingham UK        |
| Amanda Green                  | North Yorkshire UK | Jamie Mortimer              | East Yorkshire UK    |

|                           |                   |                            |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Keith Mortimer            | East Yorkshire UK | Stephen Riggan             | Washington USA    |
| Keith Alan Mortimer       | East Yorkshire UK | Claire Robinson            | Newport, Wales UK |
| Mary Mortimer             | London UK         | John & Linda Whittall      | Shropshire UK     |
| Nicholas Mortimer         | London UK         | Connor Williams            | West Midlands UK  |
| Paul & Elizabeth Mortimer | West Yorkshire UK | Joan Williams              | Co. Durham UK     |
| Peter Mortimer            | Suffolk UK        | Rosemary and Jonathan Wood | Shropshire UK     |
| Sandra Osborne            | Essex UK          |                            |                   |

## MHS AUTHORS - Pauline Harrison Pogmore

Pauline's interest in history dates back to her school days when a wonderful history teacher taught her never to believe the first thing she read on a subject and to always delve further. So, as well as building an impressive library of books, she got into the habit of jotting absolutely everything down in a notebook, to the amusement of her family and friends. For the last ten years she has held the office of Secretary of the Yorkshire Branch of the Richard III Society and, in 2016, she was awarded the Society's prestigious Robert Hamlin award.

Her absorbing interest in the Wars of the Roses over many years has resulted in the publication of two useful reference books.

### Who was Who in the Wars of the Roses - £7 post free

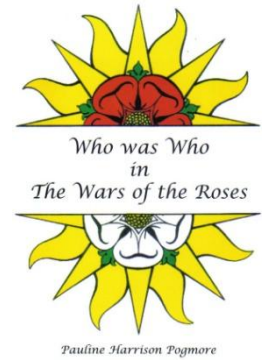
This book describes all the prominent characters of the period in an easy to read style including Nevilles, Mortimers, Mowbrays, Percys and many of those who died fighting beside Richard III at Bosworth.

### Richard III, The House of York and their Supporters - £8 post free

A companion to the above with a brief description of members of the House of York, and especially members of Richard's northern affinity including Conyers, Metcalfes, Parris, Harringtons, Huddlestons, Scropes of Bolton and Scropes of Masham.

### Order both books to just £12.50 post free

Send a cheque made out to Rosalba Press to Pauline Harrison Pogmore at 169 Albert Road, Sheffield, S8 9QX, or phone 0114 2586097.



### RICHARD III THE HOUSE OF YORK AND THEIR SUPPORTERS



PAULINE HARRISON POGMORE

## Who killed King Richard III?

### by MHS Member Ruth E Richardson.

*Ruth Richardson is a highly-respected Herefordshire-based historian, archaeologist, author and lecturer. She is an expert on the history of Dore Abbey and has written a biography of Blanche Parry, Elizabeth I's chief gentlewoman and confidante. Her other interests include researching medieval field names.*

King Richard III, the last Plantagenet king, died during the decisive Battle of Bosworth on 22nd August 1485. He was two months short of his 33rd birthday. He had fought bravely and had nearly managed close combat with his adversary Henry Tudor, who, as the victor, succeeded as King Henry VII. Henry Tudor's standard bearer was killed in the encounter. Then Richard's attempt to close with Tudor ended with his own death ... but who actually killed King Richard?

The French poet and composer Jean Molinet (1435-1507), was noted for his prose version of the Medieval poem: *Roman de la Rose* [1]. For many years, from 1463, he was also a chronicler of events for Charles, Duke of Burgundy. In about 1490 he stated that:



***The king [Richard] bore himself valiantly according to his destiny, and wore the crown on his head ... His horse leapt into a march [marsh] from which it could not retrieve itself. One of the Welshmen then came after him, and struck him dead with a halberd, and another took his body and put it before him on his horse and carried it, hair hanging as one would bear a sheep.***

What can be accurately construed from this is that Richard was at a disadvantage due to the churning up of the land, a natural result of a hard-fought battle. What is also clear is that Molinet, writing five years after Bosworth, records that a Welshman killed him with a halberd. This exact injury was found on Richard's recently excavated skull [2].

More details of Richard's death are found in a poem by the respected Welsh bard Guto'r Glyn who wrote at least 124 poems [3]. He was highly regarded, especially in the 1430s-1493, and regularly visited a circuit of the houses of the nobility, two Deans of Bangor and the Abbot of Shrewsbury. One of his most important patrons had been Sir William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke (1st Herbert creation) whose rise to power he witnessed. Henry Tudor, when young, was a ward of this Sir William Herbert, a Yorkist, at Raglan Castle. Guto'r Glyn was an honoured guest at each house he visited and his listeners would have been well informed about the events his poems described. Therefore, Guto'r Glyn's description can be confidently taken as primary evidence for the Battle of Bosworth:

**In praise of Sir Rhys ap Tomas of Abermarlais** lines 35 to 42 [4]

*Cwncwerodd y Cing Harri*

*Y maes drwy nerth ein meistr ni:*

*Lladd Eingl, llaw ddiangen,*

*Lladd y baedd, eilliodd ei ben,*

*A Syr Rys mal sŷr aesawr*

*Â'r gwayw 'n eu mysg ar gnyw mawr.*

*King Henry won the day*

*through the strength of our master:*

*killing Englishmen, capable hand,*

*killing the boar, he shaved his head,*

*and Sir Rhys like the stars of a shield*

*with the spear in their midst on a great steed.*

*Brain o'i henw yw'r brenhinwaed,*

*Ni bu'r drin heb euro'i draed.*

*Those of royal blood are ravens of the same name as him,*

*the battle did not pass without dubbing him a knight.*

Guto'r Glyn's evidence certainly pre-dates that of Jean Molinet, internal evidence suggesting 1485 or 1486 making it nearly contemporary with Richard's death. It identifies Jean Molinet's *Welshman* as Sir Rhys ap Tomas (1449-1525) of Abermarlais, who was knighted for services rendered on the battlefield of Bosworth. His father, Tomas ap Gruffudd ap Nicolas (the Welsh 'ap' means the 'son of') had extended the family fortunes by judicious marriage. He had also taken Rhys with him to the Burgundian court when Jean Molinet was there. The family affiliation was Lancastrian so, despite an accommodation with Edward IV when the fortunes of the Yorkists were in the ascendant, Rhys was in contact with Henry Tudor and was his most prominent Welsh supporter. His continuing loyalty to Henry VII, which resulted in his appointment as a Knight of the Garter in 1505, was transferred to his son, Henry VIII.



*Tomb of Sir Rhys ap Thomas in St Peter's church in Carmarthen*



*A reconstruction of the head of Sir Rhys ap Thomas based on his effigy*



*Arms of Sir Rhys ap Thomas KG: presumably these are the ravens referred to by Guto'r Glyn*

Therefore, Guto'r Glyn's evidence, supported by that of Jean Molinet, shows without doubt that it was the men controlled by Rhys ap Tomas [5] who killed King Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485.

## Notes:

[1] *Chroniques de Jean Molinet (1474-1506)*, ed. G. Doutrepont and O. Jodogne, 3 vols. (Academie Royale de Belgique, Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques. Collection des Anciens Auteurs Belges, Brussels, 1935-7), I, pp. 434-6. (French; Michael Bennett's translation with assistance from Professor I.H. Smith, Department of Modern Languages, University of Tasmania).

[2] See: Fern, Susan, *The Man Who Killed Richard III: Who Dealt the Fatal Blow at Bosworth?*, Amberley Publishing, 2014.

[3] See: [www.blancheparry.com](http://www.blancheparry.com) for details about Welsh bards.

[4] See: *Poem 14: Guto'r Glyn.net*, edited by Dafydd Johnston. He includes the following note: The phrase *lladd y baedd* refers to the white boar which was King Richard III's emblem. The use of the verbal noun *lladd* is a means of avoiding specifying who was responsible for killing him on the battlefield at Bosworth, but this passage suggests that he was killed by a troop of soldiers led by Rhys ap Tomas. (Welsh 'Tomas' is often given as 'Thomas' in English).

[5] See: Griffith, Ralph, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his family: a study in the Wars of the Roses and early Tudor politics*, University of Wales Press, 1993, p.43. Also Wales Biography Online.

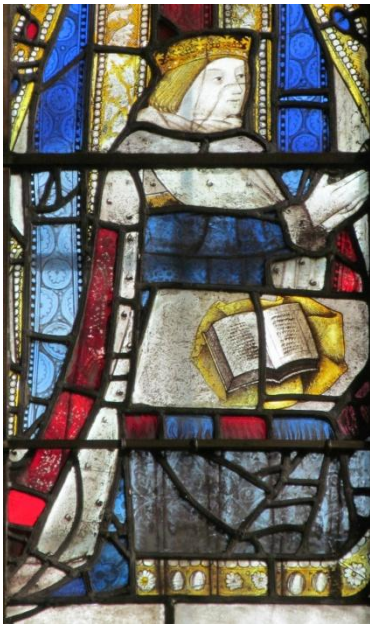
## **Little Malvern Priory: querying the guidebook**

**by MHS Member Noriko Horiuchi**

My husband, fiancé then, took me to Little Malvern Priory (St Giles' Church) in April 2012. As I had been living in London at that time and had never been to the area before I met him, I didn't know anything about the priory. He picked the place especially because of my passion for medieval English history and wanted to show me the east window stained glass in which is depicted the family of Edward IV. Sadly only two windows still have complete figures and the rest of them were gone or partly missing. Still amazing to see the fifteenth century art work and especially figures of historically famous people. However, while I was reading the information sheet which was provided by the priory, I was puzzled by the identification of the figures. So as soon as I went back to London, I composed the following letter and then sent it to the priory:

"I have visited Little Malvern Priory recently and admired the beautiful Alcock's stained glass window. According to the information sheet at the priory, the male figure on the second window from the left is Prince of Wales (later Edward V), the female figure with three other female figures are Elizabeth Woodville and her daughters Cecily, Anne and Katherine, and the figure with its head part missing is the Duke of York (Richard, the younger brother of Edward V). However, I was puzzled by these identifications. Please allow me to explain why I felt they were unnatural to me. I have put alphabets from A to F above each window to make it easier to identify them while I explain each of them.

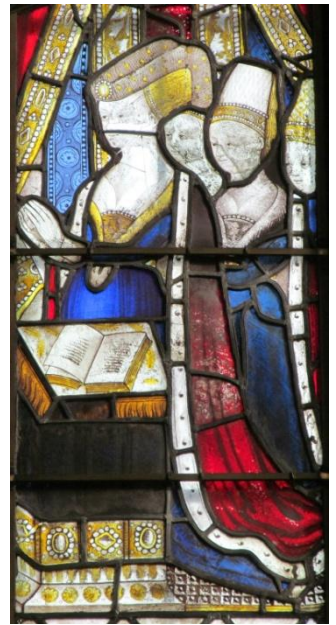




Window B



Window D



Window E

## 1. Positional arrangement

There are some other images of the positional arrangement of the Royal family. Canterbury Cathedral has stained glass windows with the same theme – Edward IV and his family. On that stained glass window, you can see that the King and the Queen are placed in the central windows, facing each other, with their sons by the King's side and their daughters by the Queen's side, elders are nearer to their parents. The same arrangement is seen on the painting of Henry VII and his family on show at Hampton Court Palace.

Therefore, it is natural to position King Edward IV on window C, his queen on window D and their second son, Richard on A. Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville had seven daughters and the figures in window E would naturally show the older ones. Window F most probably had images of their younger daughters.



photo: John Hopkins

## 2. Seniority, Size and Figure

Here are my thoughts:

- According to the information sheet at Little Malvern Priory the figure on the window D is Richard, Duke of York, who is junior to Edward, Prince of Wales, on the window B. However, the figure on D is bigger than the figure on B which is strange when the seniority is concerned.
- also the figure on the window D looks like a female figure – especially the curves around shoulder and belly (circled).
- on window E, there are one main female figure and three much smaller female figures and they are identified in the sheet as Elizabeth Woodville, Cecily, Anne and Katherine. However, the eldest daughter and future Queen to Henry VII, Elizabeth, is not mentioned at all which is very unlikely.





All this supports my idea in section 1 which is:

|  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| A – Richard, Duke of York                        | now blank                            |
| B – Edward, Prince of Wales                      | correctly identified                 |
| C – King Edward IV                               | now blank                            |
| D – Elizabeth Woodville                          | misattributed to Richard of York     |
| E – Elizabeth of York and her next three sisters | misattributed to Elizabeth Woodville |
| F – Younger daughters? or Bishop Alcock himself? | now blank                            |

This is just my idea and it would be highly appreciated if you could let me know the source of their identification which might explain the unusual arrangement and it will help my further study on medieval arts."

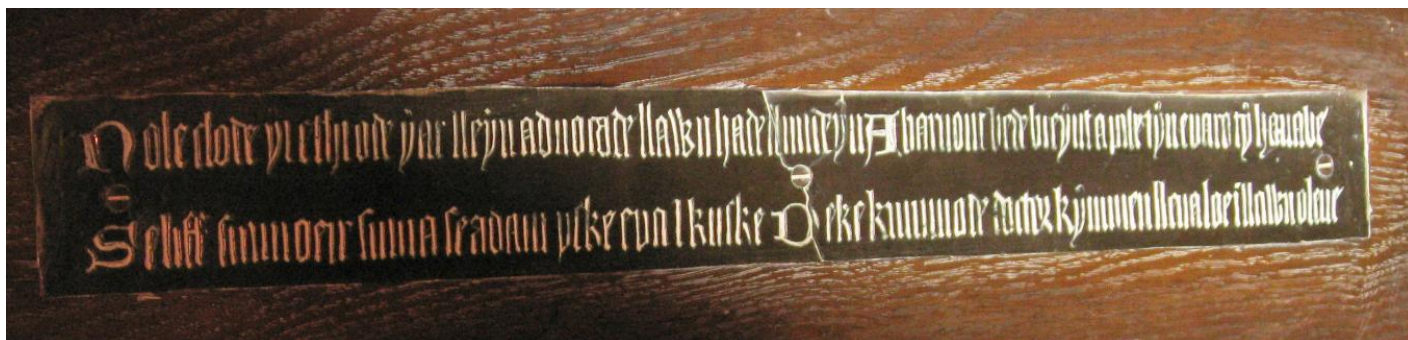
Two months later, I received the following email from an archivist at the priory:

'I agree entirely with your thoughts about the window and have always subscribed to that interpretation myself. I am trying to find out why the other names are given to the people in the window. Hopefully I will be able to find out for you soon. In the meantime I shall endeavour to change the current information.'

I haven't heard from her since then but when I revisited the priory in 2015, I noticed the crucial part of the information sheet was covered over with revised information and their guide booklet had a revised insert. There was no acknowledgement to me and surely several visitors in the past had the same idea as me, but it's quite satisfying to think that my letter might have made the church revise the identification.

## Adam of Usk

by John Grove, the Founder of MHS



***After fame. to the tomb, from on the bench  
The most skilled advocate of London  
And judge of the world by gracious privilege  
May the heavenly abode be thine, good sir.  
Lo! A Solomon of wisdom, Adam Usk is sleeping here,  
Wise doctor of ten commotes,  
Behold a place full of learning!***

This stylish and unusual epitaph of Adam of Usk is a translation from 15<sup>th</sup> century Welsh on the brass plate to be found in St. Mary's Church, Usk.

The Chronicle of Adam Usk was the subject of a fascinating talk by Dr. Philip Morgan (University of Keele) at the Mortimer History Society's conference in February. The Chronicle covers the years 1377-1421, and is a prime source of information on the reigns of King Richard II, and Henry IV, and Adam's patrons – the Mortimer family.

Adam was born in Usk, in the 1350s, in the gatehouse of the castle, as local tradition has it. His will refers to a brother and a sister Joan, and his Chronicle also indicates an affinity to noble women serving as nuns in the wealthy Usk Benedictine Priory. This may suggest that Adam had noble origins, at Usk Castle. Maybe the reasons for Sir Edmund Mortimer sponsoring Adam to go to Oxford University had more to it than Edmund's recognition of Adam's undoubted intelligence. Through his Oxford legal studies, and later

practice, he did indeed become *the most skilled advocate of London*. He worked for several years for three Archbishops of Canterbury, especially Archbishop Thomas Arundel.



*Usk Castle, Monmouthshire, Wales*

On arriving in Rome seeking preferment, the pope made Adam papal chaplain and advocate of causes, *and judge of the world by gracious privilege*. His long spell on the continent 1402–1411 was marked by wanderings, poverty and failure. He had fallen out of favour with Henry IV, and was suspected of covert links with Owain Glyndwr and the Welsh revolt. At various times the bishoprics of Hereford, St. Davids, Bangor and Llandaff were offered to him, only to be lost because of his English enemies.

His Chronicle provides a prime source for the times, and a fascinating insight into the mind of a highly-educated medieval author, substantiating the claim that he was a *'Solomon of wisdom'*. He held

various benefices especially in Monmouthshire and Wales, and his reputation was high at various times. He was reckoned as a *Wise doctor of ten commotes* (in his native land).

In the Lady Chapel of St. Marys, Usk it can be said *'Adam Usk is sleeping here', Behold a place full of learning!* He never achieved his merited reward of a bishopric, but his links with the Mortimer family, the wider political and religious scene, and above all his Chronicle have assured his fame. *May the heavenly abode be thine, good sir!*

The Chronicle of Adam of Usk 1377-1421

edited and translated by Chris Given Wilson. Clarendon Press Oxford

### **Introducing the Mortimers 9: Roger Mortimer, 4th Earl of March (1374-1398) and his uncle Sir Thomas Mortimer (1350-1403)**

**by Hugh Wood.** *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.*

The lives of these two Mortimers were closely linked. Sir Thomas Mortimer played a significant role in some of the most momentous events in the reign of Richard II. His nephew, Roger Mortimer the 4th Earl of March, was just 24 when he was killed in a skirmish in Ireland. It is convenient to combine both their stories into a single narrative.

Sir Thomas Mortimer was a younger son of Roger Mortimer, 2nd Earl of March. Though he is thought by some historians to be illegitimate, he was certainly brought up as one of the family. By the time he was 30 he was an experienced soldier and had been knighted. His older brother Edmund, 3rd Earl of March, lost his wife in 1378 and then died himself in 1381 at the age of 29 leaving his young family as orphans. At the time of his death Roger, his eldest son, was only seven, and his uncle Thomas took on the role of father-figure. The two remained close throughout their lives. Roger's father had been Lord Lieutenant of Ireland with his brother Thomas as his deputy. On his death, Richard II inexplicably appointed the new seven-year-old earl to replace his father, but then made Thomas the Lord Deputy and Lord Chief Justice.

For two reasons, the young Roger Mortimer, 4th Earl of March, was a person of great significance. Firstly, he was very rich indeed: he inherited the vast Mortimer lands in Wales, the Welsh borders and in Ireland and from his mother he also inherited major estates in England as well as the earldom of Ulster and the lordship of Connaught in Ireland.

Of course, as a minor, Roger would not be able to enjoy possession of his estates for many years and the wardship of his lands was initially split between a number of minor figures. Unhappy with this arrangement, a group of magnates objected and, in 1383, his Mortimer estates in England and Wales were granted to a group that included Roger himself, with the earls of Arundel, Northumberland and Warwick and Lord Neville. Having returned from Ireland, Sir Thomas Mortimer was appointed as Steward of the Mortimer estates, a task which he performed very successfully



*Carrickfergus Castle: the main English base in Ulster*

Even more important than his wealth, however, was the fact that Roger was the eldest grandson of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, the second son of Edward III. As such he was a potential successor to the childless king Richard II. There is evidence that Richard actually named him as his successor publicly in 1386. Although the king may not have intended this seriously, and never seems to have repeated it, the possibility of Roger becoming the next king was certainly discussed openly.



*Richard II*

Richard II's reign was not going smoothly. Still a teenager, his critics believed that he was being manipulated by favourites at court including Robert de Vere, a highly unpopular man whom he created Duke of Dublin. In 1386, when the Chancellor, Michael de la Pole, asked parliament to approve swingeing new taxes for the defence of the realm, they refused and demanded his removal. Humiliated, the king eventually had to climb down, the Chancellor was sacked and a commission was set up to review the royal finances for a year. Robert de Vere and Michael de la Pole thought it wise to escape to the Continent.

The main opposition to the king came originally from his uncle Thomas, Duke of Gloucester and also from Richard Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel and Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, two men whose hands were greatly strengthened by their wardship of wealthy Mortimer estates. These three original leaders were later joined by Henry Bolingbroke, Earl of Derby and Thomas Mowbray, Earl of Nottingham and together they formed the group known as the Lords Appellant. Sir Thomas Mortimer identified strongly with this group and was popular with them.

Having been put down and embarrassed by parliament, the king now travelled around the country mustering support. He installed Robert de Vere as Chief Justice of Chester with the intention of creating a loyal army based in Cheshire. On his return to London he was confronted by Gloucester, Arundel and Warwick who formally presented an appeal of treason against de Vere, de la Pole and several others.



*The original bridge at Radcot*



*The Skirmish at Radcot Bridge*

While the king played for time, de Vere marched south at the head of a force of some 4,000 men. But they were surprised and routed on 19th December 1387 at Radcot Bridge near Oxford by a force led by the Duke of Gloucester and the Earl of Derby. De Vere escaped and his troops surrendered. There was little bloodshed, but when Sir Thomas Molineux, Constable of Chester Castle, attempted to escape, Sir Thomas Mortimer caught and killed him, ignoring his pleas for mercy.

The Lords Appellant were now in control. Leaving Richard II in place as titular head, they took revenge on the former favourites in what became known as the Merciless Parliament: six were executed and de Vere and de la Pole were sentenced to death in their absence. They appointed Sir Thomas Mortimer as Justiciar of Ireland, but the king somehow managed to block that appointment. Richard never forgave the Lords Appellant for all this and bided his time. Over the next nine years he quietly rebuilt his position and increased his power.

Luckily for Roger Mortimer, the 4th Earl of March, he was too young to be involved in these events or to be tainted by them.

Married at 14, he was knighted in 1390 at the age of 16. A couple of years later he was again appointed as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, but was unable to go there immediately. By 1394 he'd been granted livery of all his lands and had served on an embassy to the Scottish borders. That same year, when the king went on his first expedition to Ireland, both Roger and Thomas went with him. For Roger, there was a lot riding on this expedition: he needed to recover control of his estates in Meath, Ulster and Connaught, some of which had been quietly reclaimed by native Irish leaders. Achieving a permanent settlement proved very difficult, however. In 1395 he was appointed Lieutenant in those three areas and most of the rest of his short life was spent in Ireland, supported by his uncle.



*Robert de Vere escaping to the Continent*



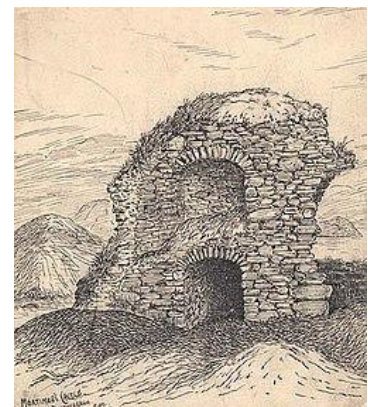
*Seal of Roger Mortimer, 4th Earl of March and 6th Earl of Ulster  
- Mortimer quartering de Burgh*

By 1397 Richard II felt secure enough to wreak vengeance on those who had humiliated him and executed his closest friends and supporters. He had Arundel, Warwick and his uncle Gloucester arrested: Arundel was executed, Warwick was imprisoned for life and Gloucester died while awaiting trial, presumably murdered. Sir Thomas Mortimer was high on the revenge list and his nephew Roger was ordered to arrest him in Ireland, but probably colluded with him in making his escape. Thomas was declared a traitor and had all his lands seized. He died six years later in Scotland.

Now 23 years old, Roger Mortimer, 4th Earl of March, was a dashing figure. In January 1398 he attended a parliament called by the king in Shrewsbury. Attractive, brave, open-handed and largely untouched by the turmoil in England when he was younger, he must have made a striking contrast with the 30-year-old weak, ruthless and childless Richard II. According to Adam Usk and the Wigmore Chronicle, Roger was met at Shrewsbury by a huge crowd of enthusiastic supporters wearing his livery colours. Despite this popular adulation he conducted himself circumspectly.

Back in 1394, with Richard II still childless, the king's uncle, John of Gaunt, had requested in parliament that his son be recognised as heir to the throne. When Roger Mortimer strongly objected on the grounds that his claim was stronger, the king refused to allow the subject to be discussed. While Roger was never awarded high status at court, his popularity and lineage clearly worried the king.

According to Adam Usk, Richard now set about plotting Roger's downfall. If he had aided his uncle Thomas to escape, then he was also a traitor. Earlier in 1397 his official position in Ireland had been renewed for a further three years, but it was now announced that it was to be abruptly terminated in five weeks' time. His brother-in-law Thomas Holland, now Duke of Surrey, was dispatched to arrest him and take over. But this was not to be. On 20th July 1398 he was killed in a skirmish with the Irish near Carlow. The Wigmore Chronicle says that he was dressed in Irish clothes and not recognised. His body was brought back to Wigmore Abbey for burial. The early death of this popular great-grandson of Edward III certainly cleared the way for Henry Bolingbroke's usurpation of the throne the following year.



*Mortimer Castle, Westmeath*