



King's, Lords, Soldiers and Horses: The reality of medieval warfare

Ready for a fight? Our first event for 2020 takes you to the medieval battlefield.

How does a medieval commander decide whether and when to commit to pitched battle? How were soldiers recruited? What were their motives to fight? And how was the medieval super weapon – the warhorse – bred and prepared for battle?

These are just some of the questions to be

answered at the first Mortimer History Society meeting of 2020 on Saturday 15 February in Ludlow.

The day begins with a morning of presentations and ends with a display of medieval arms and armour as well as an opportunity to try your arm at archery.

Cont/d...



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Keep the date!

2020 is set to be a busy year. Make sure you've got these dates in your diary and look out on Twitter, Facebook and Mortimerhistorysociety.co.uk for more information.

Saturday 15 February:

King's Lords, Soldiers and Horses: The reality of medieval warfare

Half-day conference with full day option.

Saturday 28 March:

Mortimer History Society AGM and Lecture

10am, Weobley Village Hall.

Saturday 16 May:

Mayhem, Murder and Marriage: The Mortimers and the Welsh Princes

This full day conference will be held in Knighton in partnership – for the first time – with the Radnorshire Society.

Wednesday 17 June:

Mortimer History Society Annual Summer Lecture

This year's lecture will be given by Dan Power, Professor of Medieval History at Swansea University. Join us at Grange Court, Leominster from 7pm.

Sunday 19 July:

Study Visit to Hellens, Much Marcle and Kempsey

Saturday 3 October:

'The King's Writ does not run here': The Medieval Welsh Marcher Lordships

This full day conference in Ludlow will examine the operation and unique independence of the Marcher Lordships.

Saturday 21 November:

Decorated in glory: Churches, church building and people in Herefordshire in the 14th century.

A half-day conference. Join us between 10am and 1pm in College Hall, Hereford Cathedral.

Let's take this outside...

In the afternoon you get to play soldier with demonstrations of archery and the crossbow with Mortimer Society members and weapons experts, Jason O'Keefe, Mark North and Mike Beazley. If you've ever wondered if you've got the strength to pull a longbow, this is your chance to find out, with a have-a-go-archery session overseen by the Archers of Teme, one of the oldest archery clubs in Shropshire. And, if you're not actually spoiling for a fight yourself, there'll be displays of medieval arms and armour to spike your interest.

Our speakers

Mathew Strickland, Professor of History at Glasgow University

is currently engaged in a study of aristocratic rebellions in England and Normandy from the Norman Conquest to the 13th century. His presentation, The Place of Battle in the Context of Civil War under the Anglo-Norman and Angevin Kings, will consider how the decision to fight was made – and the consequences of success or failure that would have weighed heavily on commanders' minds.

Dr Andy King, Lecturer in History at the University of Southampton,

will look at The Soldier's Experience from 1295 to 1453. Tracking real military careers from surviving records, he'll help us understand exactly who ended up on the medieval battlefield and why. He'll consider changing patterns of recruitment, different soldier-types and the extent to which individuals were motivated by pay, principles or ideas of chivalry. Andy has published extensively on England's wars with Scotland and France and worked as a research fellow on the Soldier in Late Medieval project.

Rob Liddiard, Professor of History at the University of East Anglia,

will look at the Landscape of Horse Studs in Medieval England. A landscape historian with an interest in the castles and high-status locations of medieval England, Rob is currently engaged in a three-year study at the University of Exeter that's using archaeology to understand where warhorses were born, reared, trained and provisioned. To date our understanding of the horse's role in war has come from documentary evidence. Rob will take us to the bones of the matter, with an investigation of both their physical remains and the stud farms that bred them.

Where and when?

Saturday 15 February 2020 at Moor Park School, Ludlow. In the morning we'll be in Henderson Hall, then retire to the Sports Hall for optional afternoon activities. Bring a packed lunch if you're staying for the full day. Registration and refreshments from 9:15 for a 10am start.

If you want to join for the morning only it's £11 for members and £15 for non-members. The optional afternoon session is an additional £5 for members and £7 for non-members.

For a full itinerary and to reserve your place click [here](#) or, if you don't have online access or prefer not to pay online, email philip.r.hume@gmail.com or call him on 01584 831654.



An Introduction to Medieval Welsh Marcher Lordships

The first in a series of articles investigating the history and significance of the Welsh Marches and their lords, by Society Secretary, Philip Hume.

From the outset, the purpose of the Mortimer History Society has been to study and disseminate information, not only about the medieval Mortimer family, but also about the wider cultural and political history of the Welsh Marches and the Marcher lords from 1066 to 1500. This purpose is embedded in the formal aims and objectives of the society, as set out in the constitution.

A shared interest in the Mortimers and the Welsh Marcher Lordships is natural, since the two are inextricably linked. Once established at Wigmore within ten years of the Norman Conquest in 1066, the Mortimers survived and thrived as Marcher lords for generations longer than any of the other original Marcher families. Their initial conquests to carve out more lands and lordships in Wales became a bitter two-hundred-year struggle. Once that was achieved, though, the Mortimers rapidly took ownership of more lordships through strategic marriages or gained them in reward for services to the crown, coming to control over a third of the Marcher lordships during the fourteenth century. Although they also amassed a huge empire of lands spread across England and Ireland as well as Wales, Wigmore remained their principal seat for over 250 years, and the Marcher lordships an important source of their power and wealth.

Presumption or reality?

It is understandable, therefore, that when Roger Mortimer (d.1330), at the height of his powers as the effective ruler of the country in 1328 following the forced abdication of Edward II, was raised to the highest rank of the nobility he chose the title 'Earl of March'. Contemporaries though were amazed and furious, since the adoption of this unprecedented title, encompassing as it did such a vast area, appeared to signal that Mortimer was setting himself above other earls. The title, however, reflected the reality that the Mortimers' land, wealth and power were rooted in their growing domination of the Welsh Marcher lordships. Here, they exercised the unique, almost regal, powers

of Marcher lords in the independent lordships that had developed as a territorial zone that lay between England and Wales, and administratively were not in either country.

Notwithstanding their close connection with the Mortimers, the Marcher lordships are a fascinating subject in their own right and, at the outset, it's important to clarify their geographical area. Typically a March is a border region or frontier area, thus 'Marches' existed in many places, including the north of England and Normandy. Today, when people envisage the Welsh Marches it is often the picturesque area that straddles the central part of the English/Welsh border in Shropshire and Herefordshire that comes to mind. It's likely that, in the eleventh century, this was also the perception. However, during the medieval period it greatly expanded to encompass an area that ran from north Wales and the Dee estuary down to the Severn estuary and across all south Wales to the coast of Pembrokeshire in the west.

Defined by the nearly fifty Marcher lordships that were created, the Welsh Marches became a unique area as a border region that lay between Wales and England, with its own laws and with exceptional powers exercised by their lords. It was referred to as 'Marchia Wallie' to distinguish it from 'Pura Wallia', and was politically separate from both Wales and England. Many of the areas, having been conquered from the Welsh were no longer politically part of Wales; other lordships that initially sat in England were effectively withdrawn by their lords from the institutions of royal governance. The

Marcher lords were barons of England and held their lordships from the king, yet they were not subject to many of the institutional and legal structures of the English crown. The Marcher lord claimed and exercised within his lordship many of the powers which the king exercised in his kingdom. The Marcher lords retained their powers until the reign of Henry VIII, when the Laws in Wales Acts of 1536 and 1542 removed their independence, incorporated the lordships into the governance and jurisdiction structures of the new counties of Wales or the border counties of England, and for the first time defined a border between Wales and England.

The principality of Wales and the Marcher lordships



The king's writ does not run here...

For over 400 years Marcher lords had proclaimed their rights and powers. Here are just a few examples of repeated claims from lords that the king's writ 'does not run' within their Marcher lordship.

- In the 1290s, Edmund Mortimer, resisted the collection of taxes from his lordship of Wigmore, but not his other lands in Shropshire, on the basis that his tenants in Wigmore did not answer the summons of the itinerant justices, that the king's writ did not run there, and jurisdiction belonged solely to the lord of the liberty and had done so from time immemorial.
- In the late 1270s, Edward I had instigated 'Quo Warranto' proceedings to investigate the basis on which his subjects, including the highest nobles, claimed to hold franchises and to recover for the crown those which were held without due warrant. A Marcher Lord (Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, Lord of Glamorgan) answered the Quo Warranto commissioners by holding up a rusty sword with the words: 'Here my lords, here is my warrant! My ancestors came with William the Bastard and conquered their lands with the sword, and I shall defend them with the sword against anyone who tries to usurp them.'
- In a similar vein, on receiving instructions from Henry III that offended him, Walter Clifford, Lord of Clifford, responded in 1250 by forcing the messenger to eat the king's letters - wax seals and all!

The correspondence of kings and royal officials refer to Marcher lords as 'lords royal' who exercise a 'royal lordship'. In a

future article I'll explain in more detail the powers of Marcher lords which included, for example, the right to build castles without prior permission from the crown; exemption from taxes; the right to raise their own army to wage war against the Welsh and between themselves; running their own courts with their own laws.

Exciting new work by your Society

The Mortimer History Society Committee is keen to develop its work on the Marcher lordships, in large part because their role in both Welsh and English medieval history deserves to be better understood, and partly to broaden the Society's appeal to a wider range of members. Some exciting work has been initiated that will come to fruition this year and next.

- Three members have been working on a series of books on the Marcher lordships. The first volume, covering the central and northern region, will be published by

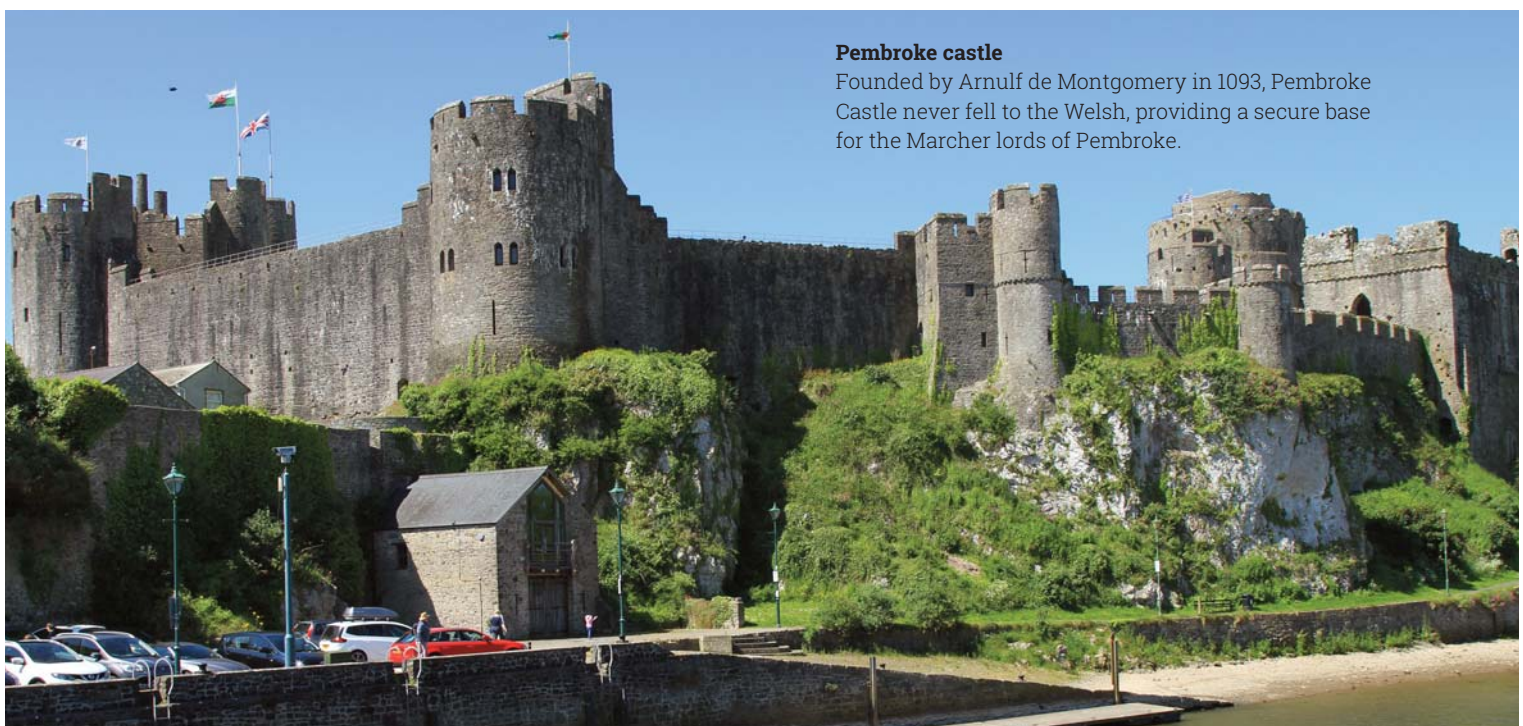
Logaston Press this year, with two more (the south-west, and the south-east) due to be published in 2021;

- The conference on 3rd October will focus on the marcher lordships.
- It's hoped that the new Mortimer Society website, now in planning stages, will feature interactive information about each of the Marcher lordships;
- A series of articles in Mortimer Matters – of which this is the first – will explore the fascinating history of the Marcher Lordships, looking, for example, at how they evolved during the two centuries from the first arrival of the Normans on the Welsh borders to the Edwardian conquest of Wales in the 1270s and 1280s; explaining what the unique powers of Marcher Lords were and how they developed; presenting some of the fascinating characters who were Marcher lords; the history of particular lordships; and finally, investigating why the Marcher lordships came to be seen as an anomaly to be abolished in the sixteenth century during the reign of Henry VIII.



Chirk Castle

The Marcher lordship of Chirk was granted in 1282 to a younger son of Roger Mortimer (d. 1282) by Edward I. This son, another Roger, subsequently founded the castle.



Pembroke castle

Founded by Arnulf de Montgomery in 1093, Pembroke Castle never fell to the Welsh, providing a secure base for the Marcher lords of Pembroke.

A Literary Diversion:

Revealing links between the Mortimers and England's greatest medieval poet

In the summer of 1358 a triple betrothal ceremony was performed in the Queen's Chapel in the presence of Edward III and a host of royal princes and nobility. Among those present, it seems, was the sixteen-year-old Geoffrey Chaucer, destined to become England's foremost medieval poet.

The three unions made that day were intended to further Edward III's dynastic ambitions by assimilating into his family a number of royal and noble titles whose interests spanned England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland. Edward's youngest daughter, twelve-year-old Princess Margaret, was promised to John Hastings, Earl of Pembroke, while his third son, John of Gaunt, vowed to marry twelve-year-old Blanche, co-heiress of Henry of Grosmont, Duke of Lancaster. The third and youngest couple were Philippa, the three-year-old daughter of Edward's second son, Lionel of Antwerp, Earl of Ulster, who was betrothed to Edmund Mortimer, the six-year-old heir to the Earldom of March. Chaucer, as a member of Lionel of Antwerp's household at the time, was likely a witness to this grand ceremony.



Geoffrey Chaucer

Early Mortimer connections

In her recently published book, *Chaucer, A European Life*, Marion Turner explores in

great detail Chaucer's life and the cosmopolitan world in which he thrived. Chaucer was born around 1342 into an affluent London wine merchant's family. The first surviving documentary reference to Geoffrey is in 1357 when he appears as a servant in the household accounts of Lionel of Antwerp's wife, Elizabeth de Burgh, Countess of Ulster. That Chaucer was employed in such a prestigious household so close to the king is an indication of the wealth and connections of his father who at one time had been an agent for the purchase of wine for the royal residences.

That first reference in the household accounts is for providing Geoffrey with a new suit: a paltok or short tunic, black and red hose and shoes. This was a controversial style of clothing that became very fashionable in the early 1360's, when it received much criticism for its lack of modesty in the shortness of the tunic, the revealing nature of the tights and the unnecessarily elongated shoes. It seems that the household of young Edmund Mortimer's future bride was into sartorial trendsetting!

It's not certain how long Chaucer remained in Lionel's household, but he is thought to have served in one of the princely households in the early 1360s and, by 1366, was a retainer in the household of the King. He remained in royal service for the rest of his life, holding diverse administrative posts and frequently travelling abroad on diplomatic missions.

A spectator at many royal events

Lionel and Elizabeth were based at Hatfield Manor in Yorkshire but like all large medieval households they regularly moved around the country, often attending great royal celebrations. It's likely that Geoffrey



Arms of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, Earl of Ulster and Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster from Ludlow Castle Heraldic Roll.

travelled with them. In 1348 Edward III had founded the Order of the Garter. The order was dedicated to St George, the patron saint of England and its membership was limited to the King and Prince of Wales and twenty four knights appointed from the nobility. It held an annual formal ceremony on 23rd April, St George's Day, usually at Windsor Castle where the knights have their chapel. While Chaucer was in their service Lionel and Elizabeth attended the annual garter ceremony at Windsor, where Roger Mortimer, a founder member of the order, would also have been in attendance with his household. They also entertained royalty at Hatfield and attended royal gatherings in London, Windsor and Woodstock and probably many of the spectacles, tournaments and celebrations held after the victorious return of Edward, the Black Prince, from France in May 1357.

From military action to the Mortimer wedding

Chaucer's had his first taste of military action when he served with Lionel and the Black Prince in renewed hostilities with France in 1360 where he was taken hostage and ransomed. He also accompanied Lionel for the peace negotiations in Calais in October. There are no further documented references to Chaucer in connection with Prince Lionel, but many scholars think he was among the wedding party accompanying Lionel, now a widower, to his marriage to Violante Visconti in Milan in May 1368. In the same month the marriage of Philippa and Edmund Mortimer, now Earl of March, finally took place after their ten year betrothal. Was Chaucer also witness to this?

Lionel died a few months later resulting in Edmund acquiring his wife's inheritance of

the Earldom of Ulster and other lands in Ireland making him, at the age of 16, one of the largest landowners in the kingdom next only to the crown and the king's sons, Edward and John of Gaunt.

A trusted administrator

There is one other rather surprising connection between Chaucer and the Mortimers, which occurred during the long minority of Edmund's son Roger Mortimer, 4th earl of March. In 1390 Geoffrey Chaucer was appointed deputy forester of North Petherton in Somerset, part of the Mortimer inheritance. This forest had been the subject of a prolonged dispute between Roger Mortimer's trustees and Peter Courtenay who had assumed the rights to the forest. It is thought that Chaucer was appointed for his administrative acumen rather than any foresting skills to help to sort the accounts

and recover fees. He seems to have only held the post for a year or so, but was appointed to the position again for a year in 1398 probably to help administer the accounts following the unexpected death of Roger Mortimer, probably to help administer the accounts.

Two years later Chaucer was dead and the Earldom of March entered the new century in the precarious grasp of a young minor, Edmund. The century was to bring mixed fortunes for the family. The direct male line died out but, in large part through the marriage of Edmund to Philippa, the Dukes of York as heirs to the Mortimer inheritance were finally able to contest and win the English crown.

About the author

Rosalind Caird, is a Society member, archivist and co-author of the recently published Ludlow Castle Heraldic Roll.

Mortimer History Society Essay Prize – Winner Announcement

Three exceptional entries gain recognition in the 2019 awards.

Established four years ago, the Mortimer History Society Essay Prize recognises academic excellence among professional and amateur historians across the UK. This year's winners remind us just how widely Mortimer influence reached.



Simon Egan

First prize

This year's judges, chaired by Emeritus Professor Chris Given-Wilson, have awarded first prize to Dr Simon Egan of Glasgow University for his essay, *A Task Too Great for One Dynasty? The Mortimer Earls of March, the de Burgh Inheritance and the Gaelic Nobility c. 1370 to c. 1425*. The paper explains how, during the late 14th century, the Mortimer earls of March came into

possession of vast estates in Ireland. Drawing on primary source material from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, it explores how the earls pursued recovery of their Irish patrimony from the powerful native dynasties that controlled them. Dr Egan pays particular attention to the earls' relations with the Irish nobility and how developments within the wider Gaelic-speaking world of Ireland and Scotland shaped their efforts.

Second prize

Second prize goes to Connor Williams (Editorial Assistant of our own *Mortimer Matters*) for *Roger Mortimer, Fourth Earl of March – A Study in Minority, Royal Service and 'Proximity' to the Crown During the Late 14th Century*. This biographical essay uses state documents and chronicles to aid our understanding of this minor Mortimer lord during the reign of Richard II. Using Roger as a lens, it offers new interpretations of key issues related to Richard's reign, including his Irish policy, the succession and his overthrow following deposition in 1399. Connor argues that, despite his age, Roger had a profound and lasting impact on Richard's reign and deserves more scholarly attention.

And a commendation

Finally, a commendation is awarded to Doreen Bowen for *A Comparison of the*

Development of Two Neighbouring Townships, Wolstanmind/Trelystan (Welsh) and Marton (English) in the Medieval Marches of Wales between 1066 and 1542.

All three essays will be published, in full, in the 2020 edition of *The Mortimer History Society Journal* later this year.

Commenting on the results, Professor Given-Wilson says; "In just four years, the Mortimer History Society Essay Prize has established itself as a prestigious and sought-after award, attracting entries from university researchers from all over Britain, as well as local enthusiasts of Welsh Marcher history. As a result, it is encouraging wider and deeper interest in the history of the Welsh Marches and in the mighty Mortimer family and their followers. Publication in the Society's *Journal*, also ensures the dissemination of their research. This year's winning entry by Simon Egan is a reminder that it was not just in the Welsh Marches that the Mortimers were a great power, and that their story impacted upon the whole British Isles during the Middle Ages."

In addition to cash prizes, our three winners also receive three years' free membership of the Society. Connor is already a member of course, but we extend a warm welcome to Simon and Doreen.

For more information about the Mortimer History Society Essay Prize, and for details of how to enter this year's competition, visit www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk

Lost Heirs of the Medieval Crown

J F Andrews, Pen and Sword Books, October 2019

J F Andrews' latest book presents some important 'what ifs' of England's medieval history, with an exploration of potential kings and queens who, for good reasons or bad, never obtained the crown of England.

Anyone with an interest in royal genealogy will find *Lost Heirs* of interest, as Andrews effortlessly brings to life the stories of several lost heirs whom even the avid historian may know very little about. Its exciting narrative spans almost 400 years of royal familial conflict but, because each chapter is dedicated to a particular set of lost heirs, it's extremely easy to pick up if you only have time to read a chapter or two.

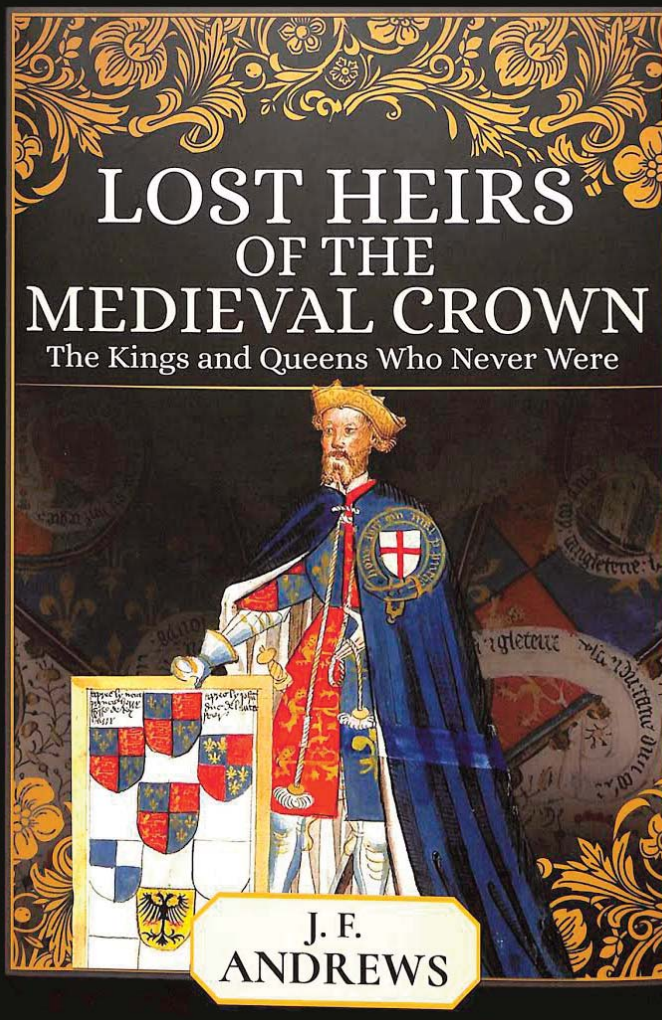
Andrews' style is tailored to a public audience; accessible and easy to follow with extremely helpful prompts, including family trees at the start of each chapter that help the reader get to grips with the inevitably confusing mix of Edwards, Williams or Richards. Nevertheless, the book has potential academic applications too, as Andrews provides a full set of endnotes linking to established scholarship and sources. She also offers her own take on some of the events, adding her own voice to the historiography of the medieval monarchy.

Edmund Mortimer

Chapter 7, dedicated to Edmund Mortimer fifth Earl of March, will be of particular interest to Society members. Let me provide some context; Edmund was the great-grandson of Lionel, duke of Clarence, the second son of Edward III. When Richard II lost the crown in 1399, the next 'legitimate' heir should have been Edmund, had the laws of primogeniture been followed. However, Edmund was only six and thus was passed over in favour of Henry Bolingbroke, who was descended from Edward III's third son. Henry Bolingbroke had been the architect of Richard II's downfall, so his ascendancy was a given in 1399. Nevertheless, Andrews shows Henry's clear sensitivity to Mortimer's claim. From the outset, he tried to circumvent it by enforcing his own royal descent and arguing that he was the nearest adult descendant to Edward I. As Andrews demonstrates, there were a series of plots centred upon the young Mortimer aimed at seizing the crown on his behalf. What's interesting, however, is Edmund's lack of central involvement in any of them.

Although several of the plots were hatched while he was a child, the 1415 'Southampton plot' occurred in his adulthood. Andrews explains how Edmund was responsible for its failure because he himself reported it to the king. She speculates about Edmund's possible involvement but concludes it would have been out of character given 'the cautious path he had trodden thus far in his life'.

In the end, Andrews' depiction of Edmund follows the established narrative – that there is really very little to say about him personally. He was a man 'anonymous in his own story', but appears to have enjoyed a solid military career in Henry V's French campaign, eventually being appointed to the regency council of Henry VI. The risk of his royal claim never left him however, and Andrews



speculates that his being sent into Ireland amounted to political exile. Certainly it solved the Mortimer problem for the crown, since he unceremoniously contracted the plague there and died at Trim aged just 33.

The chapter on Edmund feeds into subsequent chapters about Richard of York and his family, giving Edmund's contribution all the hallmarks of a prologue in some senses. It should be commended however that he was included at all, since Andrews herself admits he is 'probably the least well known of all the lost heirs in the book'. The Mortimer tale, in terms of the family's claim to the throne, is often condensed into the story of the House of York and the Wars of the Roses, so it's extremely refreshing to see a Mortimer take centre stage.

Minor quibbles

There are a couple of niggling issues with Andrews' narrative about Edmund. Her assertion that his father was the 'de facto' heir to Richard II is problematic. The question of the succession was never truly settled during the reign of Richard, with several candidates having very legitimate claims to the throne, including Henry Bolingbroke and the Lancastrians. Furthermore, Andrews' concludes that Richard II was 'without martial capability or the knack of inspiring loyalty – the exact opposite of what was needed for a successful medieval king.' This represents an outdated viewpoint and several recent books and articles have argued strongly against this conclusion. This may be something for the academics to mull over however and, since it doesn't detract from a very good telling of Edmund's story, shouldn't worry the general reader.

All in all, Andrews' *Lost Heirs of the Medieval Crown* is a refreshing new take on the men and women who came ever-so-close to obtaining the crown. It has much to offer anyone interested in medieval England, the monarchy or the Mortimers.

About the reviewer: Connor Williams is a postgraduate student at the University of Nottingham specialising in nobility, kingship and society in 1th century England.

The Song of Simon de Montfort: England's First Revolutionary and the Death of Chivalry

Sophie Thérèse Ambler, Picador, May 2019.

This comprehensive biography uses many sources to explore in detail the life and motivations of Simon de Montfort, but leaves many of his life's paradoxes unresolved.

This is an engrossing and well researched biography. Some historians excel at examining every relevant document and source, others at telling a complicated story with panache. Ambler does both and, in doing so, makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Simon de Montfort's complex character and history.

De Montfort, revered and reviled in both life and death, continues to divide opinion. Ambler is clearly an admirer. She begins with the claim that, from 1258 to 1265, he 'redrew the entire political order'; she favours the word 'revolution' rather than 'rebellion' to describe his actions, and presents him to us as a leader of monumental audacity and charisma.

Early chapters outline the influence of Simon's father on his early life, his contested ascension to his inheritance of the earldom of Leicester, his marriage to Henry III's sister and the animosity aroused by the marriage among the barons. Despite all this, Ambler points out, Simon succeeded in becoming one of Henry's favourite henchmen. Then follows the inevitable fall from grace. When de Montfort gives Henry's name in surety of a loan the king's rage is so great he is forced to flee, with his wife, to France.

Ambler then goes on to plot the tumultuous relationship between de Montfort and the king as it veers from friendship to animosity to recrimination and, ultimately, conflict. Her account provides a riveting ride. There is chaos and crisis, controversy and combat, deceit and desertion, treachery and treason, as power shifts between the king and barons. Those familiar with de Montfort's life will know that it all ends in tears with his death at Evesham in 1265, but they will relish every detail Ambler provides along the way.

As I've said, Ambler favours de Montfort and, for her, he can do little or no wrong. Nonetheless, I found several occasions to applaud her deft use of sources to reveal conflicting evidence about what he may or

may not have done. However, her partisanship leaves many questions unanswered. For example, though she details the reasons for his expulsion of the Jews from Leicester and his violence towards the Jews in London, she falls short of criticising him for it. Her attitude seems to be: *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner* – to understand all is to forgive all.

Ultimately, Ambler fails to address some of the interesting questions raised by her account of de Montfort's life. Was he an idealist determined to bring moral principles to the kingdom? Or did he spearhead the reform movement in order to punish Henry for perceived mistreatment of him and his wife? Did he clothe a personal vendetta against Henry in his own religious sentiments? Or, did abuses of royal power offend his sense of justice so greatly that he felt he had to fight to end them? Did he seek to destroy the feudal monarchy, or simply limit the powers of a spendthrift king?

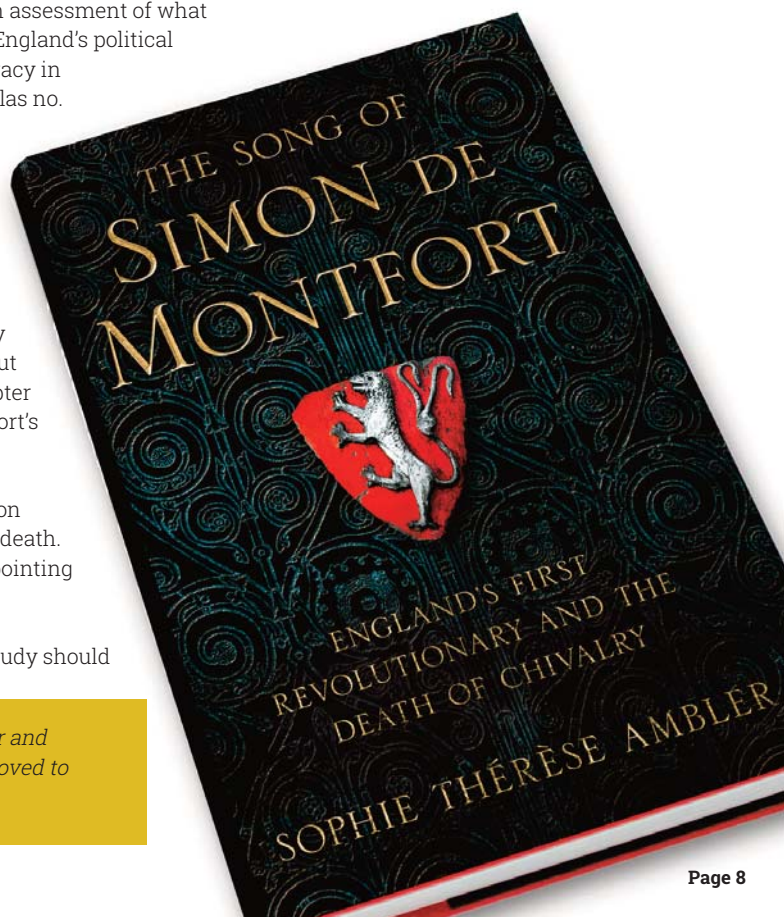
I had hoped, too, that Ambler's epilogue would discuss the political and constitutional consequences of de Montfort's brief rule and provide an assessment of what his rebellion meant for England's political institutions and democracy in subsequent centuries. Alas no. We are given some information about the lives of some of his story's main characters after 1265 and a short account of crumbling chivalric standards from the early 13th century onwards, but little else. The final chapter leaves us with de Montfort's sisters, at the family mausoleum in France, 'singing him to heaven' on each anniversary of his death. All in all, this is a disappointing and unsatisfying finale.

All that said, Ambler's study should

be welcomed by medievalists, monarchists, scholars, students and Simon de Montfort enthusiasts. Given her thoroughness with sources, I feel this biography is unlikely to be superseded for many years. Nonetheless, there remain many things to be explained about this paradoxical man.

A final word. The book benefits from an exhaustive bibliography, 51 pages of endnotes, a family tree, 30 well-captioned colour illustrations and seven pages of maps (though the scales on some are inaccurate). The index entries often have sub-entries, useful in a book with a large cast of characters and many significant events. There is a chronology, though it's hidden away in the index under Simon's name. A separate and more detailed timeline would have been useful, given the complexity of the period and the tumultuous nature of events.

A longer version of this review first appeared in The Almoner's Pen, the magazine of The Vale of Evesham Historical Society, 2019. It is reprinted here with their kind permission.



About the reviewer: Linda Hart is a freelance writer, editor, researcher and lecturer. She became fascinated with Simon de Montfort when she moved to Evesham in 2018, to a house only a mile away from where he died.

Edward II of England: The Unhappy King

Free to view at www.arte.tv

Arte, the European cultural channel, recently put on-line and free-to-view its documentary about Edward II. Hurry to take a look – it's available only until 13th February.

Although the documentary's narration is in German (with English subtitles), the historians interviewed about Edward's reign speak in their own languages, a mixture of English, German and French. Members will easily recognise the historians Chris Given-Wilson and Kathryn Warner, who have both spoken recently at Mortimer Society conferences but also featured, is the rarely-seen distinguished historian, Seymour Philips, who has written the authoritative monograph on Edward II for the Yale English Monarch series.

Refreshingly, or perhaps more traditionally, the contributing historians are allowed to speak sitting down and unhindered for minutes at a time. The documentary also avoids the curse of many UK productions; cheap historical re-enactments which can often blight the narration. Instead the programme relies on illustrations and modern-day footage of historical sites. This

gives the production the requisite time to give a careful and relatively straightforward overview of Edward's reign without the clutter of distracting and time-consuming, soft focus action shots.

An unhappy reign

The epithet of 'unhappy king' is unusual. As Chris Given-Wilson rightly says, Edward is normally seen as the 'paradigm of the foolish king, unfortunately sandwiched between two of the most successful medieval English kings, his father and son respectively.

The main beats of the reign are covered competently: the astonishingly quick collapse of support from his barons in the first year of his reign due to his suffocating relationship with Piers Gaveston; the visceral hatred of his first cousin Thomas, Earl of Lancaster; the loss of control of northern England to the Scots; the

devastating famines and murrains during the middle years of his rule and, of course, the final revolutionary deposition of God's anointed king in 1327. Naturally, importance is placed on the nature of Edward's relationships with Gaveston, Queen Isabella and later, Hugh Despenser the Younger, but the emphasis is mostly on the political implications of these key relationships rather than the salacious detail which, rightly pointed out, cannot be judged from contemporary records.

Members will be delighted to see that Roger Mortimer's escape from the tower is covered, as is his return with Queen Isabella in 1326 to overthrow Edward II; the first successful deposition of an English king. Perhaps more pertinently, it was the kingdom and subjects of England that were unhappy with its king, rather than the other way round.

By **Kirsten Lawton-Smith**

Tried every diet in the book? Try medieval

If you're looking for the ideal post-Christmas detox, you could try adopting a medieval peasant's diet. Your doctor and dietician would probably approve.

Forget ready meals, fast food and sugar highs. The medieval peasant's diet consisted pretty exclusively of plant-based, low-sugar meals of locally-sourced, if not home grown, ingredients. But if all of this sounds a bit, well, unappetising, don't be fooled. Food was usually hearty and healthful and, after all, our medieval forebears did survive to pass on their genes, build cities and found empires.

Medieval diets varied widely from region to region, too, depending on what cooks could grow, forage or purchase from other locals. Everyone, in other words, was a localvore. Forget food miles. Nobody worried about that then. Each region had its own recipes for breads and cheeses, and its own dishes made with its own animals, herbs, spices and roughage.

These were the findings of non-profit volunteer history group, Iron Shepherds, who used primary texts, images and cooking methods to reconstruct ten 12th century recipes from their home country of Cumbria in the north of England. Lucky for you, they've compiled them in a recipe e-book, *Medieval Meals: Cook and eat in the 12th century*. Buy your copy at www.ironshepherdslivinghistory.co.uk/shop/medievalmeals for just £3.50.



TV cooks

But, if you don't fancy peasant food, what about the upper classes? How might, say, a nobleman eat? Or a knight's vassal? Well, you can find out. Modern History TV's Jason Kingsley and food historian Chris Carr have compiled a series of videos that tell you just that. Three videos investigate the diets of peasants, rich nobles and knights' vassals, and a fourth explores just how healthy medieval food might have been. You can find them all on YouTube. Just go to www.YouTube.com and search for 'Modern History TV Food'.

Bon appetit!

Big Interest in the Mortimer's in Ireland

Strong attendance for half-day conference on the Mortimers in Ireland

On 30 November last year more than 70 people attended a fascinating half-day conference that traced the Mortimer family's involvement in the politics of medieval Ireland. It's the first time the Society has addressed the subject in depth for several years and it drew a wide audience to a previously untried venue in Church Stretton.

The Mortimer connection to Ireland dates from the thirteenth century, when Roger Mortimer (d.1282) of Wigmore inherited the lordship of Leinster through his marriage to Matilda de Braose. The family's Irish powerbase extended over the next 200 years and more, and Mortimers served there regularly as the king's Lord Lieutenants. Until the late 15th century, Ireland proved to be an important source of wealth, influence and, on occasion, much needed military support for the ambitions of the Mortimers and their descendants, the House of York.

On the day, three excellent presentations plotted connections between the fortunes of the Mortimer family and English attempts to subdue Ireland to its rule:

Dr Colin Veach, Senior Lecturer in Medieval History at the University of Hull, took us back to the English invasion of Ireland in 1169, the ensuing struggle to impose English dominance, and the role played in that endeavour by successive



Our speakers; **Colin Veach, Simon Egan** and **Nigel Saul** (left to right).

Mortimers. He particularly highlighted the Scottish invasion of Ireland of 1317 – an attempt to divert Edward II's attention from his Scottish campaign – and Roger Mortimer's (d.1330) success in bringing it to an end. The status of Ireland, he concluded, was integral to English politics throughout the period, and the Mortimers never far from the centre of things.

Dr Simon Egan, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Glasgow, explained how the marriage of Edmund Mortimer (d.1381) and Philippa of Hainault brought the Mortimers the largest property portfolio in late medieval Britain: including the Lordship of Connaught and Earldom of Ulster. However, recovering these lands, which had fallen into the control of resurgent Irish dynasties and Gaelicised Norman families, proved challenging for both the third and fourth Earls of March.

Finally, a fascinating talk from **Professor Nigel Saul**, Emeritus Professor of Medieval History at Royal Holloway, University of London, revealed how the seeds of Richard II's downfall were sown in two deaths; the untimely demise of Roger Mortimer in 1398 and the more predictable death of the king's uncle, John of Gaunt, in 1399. Roger's death led to the unravelling of Richard's Irish settlement, forcing the king to lead a new campaign to recover the territory in 1399. Richard's absence left the door open for Gaunt's son, Henry Bolingbroke, to return to from exile and seize the English crown.

The enthusiastic audience lingered at the close of the event to chat with the speakers and buy books. Several new faces were noted in the crowd too, drawn no doubt by their interest in the subject but also, perhaps, by the new venue, some way north of the Society's usual haunts in Ludlow and Herefordshire. "It's all part of our plan to extend the Society's reach and membership," says Society Secretary, Philip Hume. "We'll certainly return to Church Stretton in the future, and we're constantly on the lookout for new locations and partnerships."

Videos of the day's three presentations are available on the Society's website and YouTube channel.

Society wins new recruits at Ludlow's Medieval Fayre

They came to do their Christmas shopping. They stayed to learn about the Mortimer History Society.

The Society's stand at the 2019 Ludlow Medieval Christmas Fayre was the place to be for history lovers on the last weekend of November. Our volunteers were kept busy talking to the crowds about the Mortimers, the marches, the society and the benefits of membership. Four people joined up straight away and many more went away clutching leaflets and promising to sign up online. Based on book and merchandise sales, I'd say it's likely that quite a few people received Mortimer related Christmas presents!

The Ludlow Medieval Christmas Fayre is one of the biggest events in the town's calendar, with over 18,000 visitors from around the country in 2019 – a record! It's a great way for us to spread the word about the Society and to recruit new members. And certainly I and my fellow volunteers had a great time – dressing the part and enjoying the festive atmosphere.



Mike Beazley manning the stall



Fran Norton and Jason O'Keefe ready to welcome visitors

We'll be manning similar stalls this year at the **Leominster Medieval Pageant on 21 March** and at the **Battle of Evesham Medieval Festival on 1 and 2 August**. Come along and see us there or, better still, get dressed up and help man our stand! If you'd like to volunteer contact Philip Hume @ philip.r.hume@gmail.com.

New faces at Mortimer Matters

Mortimer Matters has a new editor. The inimitable Hugh Wood has stood down after more than five years and is replaced by Annie Garthwaite, an enthusiastic Society Member since 2016.

"I'm thrilled to be taking over from Hugh," says Annie, "but conscious that his are very big boots to fill. This is my first issue at the helm, so do please get in touch to tell me what you think. We've given the newsletter a fresh new look – we hope you approve. We're also constantly on the lookout for story ideas so, if you have any – email me double quick!"



Your new editor, **Annie**

Ably assisted...

Because it takes at least three people to match Hugh for energy, Annie is assisted by Kirsten Lawton Smith and Connor Williams. Unlike Annie, who makes no claims to be anything other than a keen amateur, Kirsten and Connor are 'proper' historians.



Kirsten

you posted! Kirsten is also a trustee of the Society, is in charge of publicity design, and helps out Paul Dryburgh on Twitter @MortimerSociety.



Connor

Mortimers as an important case study. When he's not 'making history' he's placing football, reading or visiting heritage sites in his native Warwickshire.

Annie has been a writer – for business and pleasure – for more nigh on thirty years. These days she dabbles in historical fiction.

Kirsten has an MA in Medieval Studies and is currently writing *The Marcher Lordships of South East Wales* in conjunction with Philip Hume and John Flemming.

It's due to be published this year or next – we'll keep

Connor is a postgraduate student at the University of Nottingham, specialising in nobility, kingship and society in 14th century England. His PhD research proposal centres around wardships, and features the

It's your newsletter... so have your say

Mortimer Matters is your newsletter, so please tell us what you want from it and what you can contribute. We aim to include a mix of Society news, interesting articles about the Mortimers and the Marches, along with book reviews and information about upcoming events. Get in touch with Annie at mm@mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk if you'd like to:

- Recommend a topic you'd like to see covered in Mortimer Matters
- Volunteer to write a book review or feature
- Tell us about a news item or event you'd like us to mention

Annie will then get in touch to discuss your ideas and provide helpful advice on submitting copy. There'll be three issues of Mortimer Matters in 2020 in addition to this one – in May, August and November.

Please get in touch with your ideas at least six weeks in advance if your idea relates to a specific publication date.



Welcome to new members

Twenty new members joined the Society in the last two months of 2019, bringing total membership to 432. Welcome all! We hope you're enjoying your membership and look forward to seeing you at upcoming events.

Gwyneth Bowyer	Shropshire	Paul Lambert	Shropshire
Sally Callaway	Leicestershire	Margaret de Lattre	Shropshire
Barbara Coles & Michael Shaw	Shropshire	Robyn Jane Lee	Herefordshire
William and Nycky Creaney	Herefordshire	Mary Macdonald and Richard Eastwell	Gloucestershire
Nicholas and Carol Ford	Shropshire	Elwyn Manuel and Jane Love	Powys, Wales
Andrea Green	Shropshire	Mavis Sweetman	Herefordshire
Graham Haynes	Shropshire	Joanna Wild	Shropshire
Jane Higgins	Herefordshire		

We're always interested to hear what new members think about the Society so, if you've any comments about your membership experience or ideas about what you'd like from us, please email membership@mortimerhistorysociety.org.com.