

Mortimer History Society

Newsletter No.4 October 2010



A Call to Members

In our first year we have already reached over 120 members. We are sure that you would like to have opportunities to meet each other and share ideas and news. We therefore invite you to consider contributions to **the Gazetteer**. Keep looking at the updates on the website and add anything you know of that is an above-ground Mortimer building, or related place, shield, tomb etc. Send these to the gazetteer editor (1)

Write short notes on anything Mortimer and medieval history related for **the Newsletter**. These can be your personal genealogies or experiences or questions or reports of other history meetings, visits and seminars (2).

In particular we are publishing a **Journal** for members at Easter. Anything on history, archaeology, art, fashion, literature as well as reviews of books or local meetings. Photos are welcome: friends should contact the editors (3)

We would like to hear about any **local meetings**. If you would like to host a local meeting for members in your part of the country, or run a seminar, or invite someone to take a seminar, do contact the Chairman. He would welcome any ideas for future development. We need a person - for example - who is experienced in contacting schools.

Some of you do not have access to the Internet or emails and we would welcome your contribution in different ways. Do please contact the Chairman – John Grove, 9 Preston Brook Close, Ledbury HR8 2FL.. We are certain that MHS will flourish and become even more interesting if every member would join in our activities.

- (1) gazetteer@mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk
- (2) chairman@mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk
- (3) mhseditors@gmail.com



Margot Miller with the Mortimer History Society exhibition displayed at Ross-on-Wye Market House during September and at Ledbury Heritage Centre during October.

Display available for your local history group or heritage centre - from Margot

The Mortimer Chronicle

The MHS is pleased to announce that it will publish an annual journal every Easter. **The Mortimer Chronicle** will include articles and features by leading historians, members and invited guests. The journal is principally intended for members and hope that many members will contribute articles or short notes on any aspect of the story of the mediaeval Mortimers - history, archaeology, art history, architecture and house history, fashion, literature, poetry, theatre. There will be regular features, such as book reviews/recommendations, a travelogue and a "How To" section to help members with their own research. Pieces can be supported by digital photographs, maps, and also transcriptions or translations of text.

Notes and queries, pieces and reviews should be no more than 1000 words and articles no longer than 5000 words. All articles should, where possible, be submitted in electronic format by 31 January 2011. To discuss your submission, contact the editors,

Paul Dryburgh and Helen Watt
mhseditors@gmail.com

Blanche Mortimer's tomb at Much Marcle

This superb medieval tomb of Blanche, Sir Peter Grandison's young wife and daughter of Roger Mortimer 1321 -1347, is in need of restoration. The structure and condition of the beautiful memorial has been surveyed and an early report on what repair work needs to be done, prepared for the Friends of St. Bartholomew's Church.

Mortimer History Society Autumn Field Visit

**Saturday 23 October
10 am-12.30
St Bartholomew's Church
Much Marcle**



The wooden figure of Walter Helyon

Guided tour with Paul Remfry around Much Marcle Church - Blanche Mortimer's effigy, the tomb which may be a memorial to Isolde Mortimer and her second husband Hugh Audley, and the unique wooden figure of Walter Helyon. Also a visit to Much Marcle's castle motte.

MHS Ludlow Conference held on 18 September

Talk by Professor David Carpenter - professor of mediaeval history at King's College, London; his latest book is **The Struggle for Mastery 1066-1284 (Penguin 2004)**. He appeared on television recently in Michael Woods' series on Kibworth history.

For nearly ten years, Roger Mortimer fought to get his inheritance when his grandmother Isabel died in 1252. Eventually in 1261, King Henry III settled the legalities, by giving Roger compensatory estates in the Midlands. An angry and frustrated Roger, went on to wage his own civil war against his rival Simon de Montford.

Professor David Carpenter's talk was filled with interest and information about how Roger Mortimer satisfied his lust for lands, wealth and power during the second half of the 13th century. The Professor described how Mortimer swapped sides from the king (Henry III) over to the rebel Simon de Montford and back again to Henry; finally slaughtering and mutilating his arch-enemy at the Battle of Evesham in 1265.

Despite these tales full of blood, hatred and battles, David Carpenter's talk had many touches of humour. He described how he had had to "put up his hands" and admit that he had made historical mistakes and needed to alter what he had first written about the struggles between Roger Mortimer, Henry III and Simon de Montfort. When new documentary evidence comes to light, the historical account has to be adapted, amended and re-interpreted.

Map of Tedstone Wafre - the deer park outline can just be seen, with farmsteads around the edge



The Story of Tedstone Wafre

a lost Mortimer manor

In the second talk of the morning, Martin Toms described how he had stumbled upon the story of an almost unknown Mortimer manor when he was researching the history of his farmhouse in Tedstone Wafre. Martin unravelled this interesting tale by dividing it into 'acts' as in a play:-

- Act 1: Evidence from Roman times; the discovery of a mediaeval deer park - outlined clearly on tithe maps.
- Act 2: Politics & players in the 13th & 14th centuries.
- Act 3: Norman ancestry - Le Wafre & Baskervilles
- Act 4: Enter the Mortimers - Lucy de Wafre marries Roger Mortimer (Mortimer of Chirk Castle), Roger becomes lord of Tedstone Wafre.
- Act 5: Mortimers in literature - Shakespeare, Marlowe
- Act 6: The church & village; farms around the edge of the deer park; the Mortimer church crumbles and all but disappears; where is Lucy buried?
More stories of Tedstone Wafre to come - as Martin continues his search.....



Professor David Carpenter



Peter Crocker, Martin Toms

A Mortimer Manor - Tedstone Wafre and Roger of Chirk Castle

Talk by Dr Martin Toms at September meeting of the Bromyard History Society

Martin Toms gave a fascinating overview of Tedstone Wafre's connection with the Mortimer family. The manor of Tedstone Wafre, three miles north of Bromyard, appeared in Domesday Book when it was held by Roger de Lacy. Little is known about its history until the 13th century, but by studying surviving records, tithe maps and aerial photographs he has identified the site of a large medieval deer park. No trace has been found yet of the manor house, but there are a few remains of the original church and a 1960s photograph..

The manor came into Roger Mortimer's possession (possibly born c1255) on his marriage to Lucy, daughter and heiress of Robert le Wafre. Edward I granted Roger lands in North Wales, including Chirk from which he took his title. Martin bemoans the fact that Roger did not chose le Wafre for his title. Both Rogers had ruthless ambition: Chirk died a prisoner in the Tower of London in 1326, and the Earl of March was executed in 1330.

Martin concluded by saying that he had found Lucy le Wafre in Australia - a racehorse!



Battle of Mortimers Cross 1461 re-enactment held near Leominster on 18 September



The Herefordshire School of Sculpture: the Mortimer link

by Tina Negus

During the squabbles between Stephen and Matilda in the mid 1100s, the Herefordshire School sprang into being with a very characteristic style of work, which extended well beyond Hereford, into Warwick, Worcester and even Wales. The earliest church, at Shobdon, was founded by Oliver de Merlimond, who was chief steward to Hugh de Mortimer, Lord of Wigmore. At this time Oliver went on pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella, travelling through France. During his return journey he stayed with the canons of St Victor in Paris, who later sent some of their monks to Shobdon.

Oliver's travels took him along the pilgrimage route, and he visited many churches on the way. Evidently he was very impressed by the carvings of these churches, and either he or a mason travelling with him, must have produced a pattern book which later formed much of the inspiration for Shobdon, Kilpeck and other churches in the Herefordshire area.

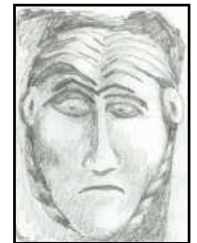
Of course, there were other continental links and influences in English Romanesque carving, the French links to Reading, Canterbury and Romsey Abbey are very evident. And there are other influences too in the Herefordshire School work, especially a northern Viking theme of interlace and dragons, but it is impossible to travel to Parthenay-le-Vieux and the numerous little churches of the Saintoigne, without being forcibly reminded of Kilpeck.

The French canons at Shobdon were unhappy with their stay here, they did not appreciate being caught up in the Civil War, and were especially disturbed when Hugh de Mortimer and Oliver de Merlimond fell out. Hugh seized Shobdon from Oliver, and the canons moved to Wigmore, the Mortimer centre, where they founded an Abbey.

As fashions in church architecture changed (much for the worse in my opinion), the glorious church at Shobdon was pulled down and a neo-classical building erected in the 18th century. The only original work here is the font which has all the attributes of the Herefordshire School though sitting in strange proximity to the new style. The arches and much of the important carving at Shobdon was re-erected as a folly now Shobdon Arches. Folly indeed, as the carving is now extremely eroded, though some plaster casts can be seen in the V&A. It is a very sad place to a lover of Romanesque carving.



'Soldier'? carving from the left-side of the doorway at Kilpeck Church.



Faces on the north-side corbels of Kilpeck church. Perhaps carvings of the masons who worked on Shebdon, Kilpeck and other Mortimer churches; maybe even the ones who travelled with Oliver de Merlimond to Santiago de Compostella?

At the time of Domesday (1087), Shobdon was held by Ralph Mortimer, who gave it to his steward Oliver de Merlimond, who built a castle, abbey and church there. Oliver went on pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella in 1124, probably taking with him a mason and sculptor. There are close resemblances between the tympani at Parthenay-le-Vieux, as well as similar themes in many Herefordshire churches. Shobdon was consecrated in 1131 by Robert de Bethune, bishop of Hereford. The arches were built in 1751; 260 years have wreaked havoc on the 12th century carvings.



The two tympani - removed to the Arches at Shobdon. Left: Christ in Glory Right: Harrowing of Hell. From "Churches of Herefordshire and their Treasures" John Blair, Logaston 2000



Shobdon Arches: re-erected as a folly in the park when the church was rebuilt 1751 in rococo style

The Pilgrim - by Tina Negus

On pilgrimage to Santiago, he came through France, seeking relief from English strife: the constant strain of war and rumour, embattlement, embitterment, and loss of life. And yet, amidst the shifts of power, schemed and planned a church, sublime, dreamed of building for tomorrow, perfection, now, to last all time.

Maybe he came in jostling crowds of other pilgrims, on their way, pressed into the holy places, called by bells at end of day; came in wonder, through the archway, gazed at colours, patterns, new; watched the master make his copies; daily, now, his vision grew.

In English fields the masons laboured, building chancel, apse and nave. Then the carvers, with their master, began to chisel, shape, engrave the images of heaven and earth: inspired from north and Celtic west, married here to southern forms; gave shape, in stone, to inward quest.

The church in France is empty now of colour; stone remains, and space. Carvings high above the altar: goat and lion, leaf and face, peering from shade, or caught in slanting light, strike freshly, as though the pilgrim staring stands but yesterday: familiar faces, known to us from distant Herefordshire lands.

In the western marcher shires, their work endures in arch and corbel. Life from stony mouths springs forth and stony ears beneath the gable, hear, and pass the message on. Fashion's folly, winter's stream; the seasons flow, the years unfold: undimmed by time, the pilgrim's dream.

To commemorate Oliver de Merlimond, who was inspired by the churches of the Pilgrimage route in the 12th century, and returned to initiate the work of The Herefordshire School of carvers at Shobdon and Kilpeck.



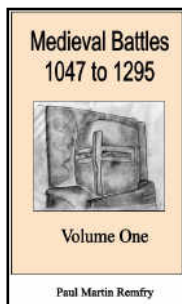
In the Shadow of a Tainted Crown

by Fran Norton
an historical novel just published
by Ellingham Press £9.99
ISBN: 978-0-9563079-2-7

Fran writes: Roger Mortimer stepped on to the pages of history as Queen Isabella's paramour - rising from Marcher baron to 1st Earl of March.

Researching this turbulent period prompted me to write down my findings in the form of a novel. I invite you to journey with me through events which rocked the medieval world. Fact is woven with fiction to highlight events that took place during the late 13th and early 14th centuries.

Much of the action is set against the backdrop of Ludlow, capital of Marcher capital. The fortunes of a nation in ferment are seen through the eyes of two young noblemen - telling a tale of love, loyalty, courage and vengeance.



Medieval Battles - 1047 to 1295 Volume 1 by Paul Remfry

Available now for £29.95, 398 A4 pages,
147 illustrations and maps
www.castles99.ukprint.com/books.html

Based on first hand translations of Exchequer documents & chronicle accounts, 'Medieval Battles 1047 to 1295' describes what it was actually like to be a knight or common soldier, and describes 11 campaigns. Our medieval counterparts had no electronic communications and to them the only weapons of mass destruction were famine and resultant plague; all sides were willing to use these when they chose. It is difficult to understand how medieval people saw their world. Life held different values in the Middle Ages and death, especially early death, was seen as part of life. These volumes will set out to give every possible detail of medieval military life.

FOWNHOPE LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Friday 19th November 7.30pm Fownhope New Memorial Hall
(Fownhope lies between Ross-on-Wye and Mordiford)

Tickets £8 & details: Margot Miller 01432.860040

The Life & Times of Sir John Cornwall

Knight of the Garter, Lord Fownhope

Illustrated talk by David V. Clarke



Fownhope's David Clarke has spent many years researching the story of Sir John Cornwall, who became Lord Fownhope after an eventful life, serving Richard II and three Henrys. His second wife was Elizabeth, sister of Henry IV.

The Mortimer Connection: John Cornwall was related to the Essex Mortimers through his great grandfather: by his marriage to Margaret Mortimer, daughter of Hugh, great grandfather Geoffrey acquired the barony of Burford on Teme.

SPRING CONFERENCE 2011

21 May 2011 - Ludlow Assembly Rooms

Theme: **The Royal Connection**

Speaker: **Ian Mortimer**
Mortimers and the Royal Family
New research concerning the succession in 1376-1460

Music: *'The Border Waits'* - talk with musical demonstrations, 14th/15th century music at the Royal Court and Castles

Concert: *'The Border Waits'* medieval music

Speaker: **Alison Weir**
Queen Isabella - She Wolf of France
Author of *'Isabella - She Wolf of France, Queen of England.'*

Dates for
your diary
Oct 2010 -
Oct 2011



- 23 October Morning visit to Much Marcle
- 19 November Evening *Mortimers of Wigmore* talk by Paul Remfry, Leintwardine Church
- 21 January Evening *Mortimers of Wigmore* talk by Paul Remfry Kington Primary School
- 12 February Morning MHS Annual General Meeting, Earl Mortimer College, Leominster
- 8 May Visit to Wigmore Castle
- 21 May Spring Conference: (see above)
Ludlow Assembly Rooms
Speakers: Ian Mortimer & Alison Weir
Autumn Conference (date to be arranged):
Paul Dryburgh *Mortimer Ladies*
Steven Blake *The Herefordshire School of Sculptors & the Mortimers*

Details of these and other events - from the website: mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk



SOME MORTIMER CASTLES

illustrated colour booklet listing 20 castles connected to the Mortimers, plus a short overview of Wigmore Mortimer history and family tree. Also grid references for your visits. 24 A5 pages. Available from margotmiller@live.co.uk
Price £3.50 + 50p&p