



MORTIMER

Matters

A successful medieval marriage: Roger and Maud Mortimer of Wigmore, 1246-1282

At our conference in May Dr Emma Cavell, Senior Lecturer in Medieval History at Swansea University, gave a fascinating talk on medieval marriage. She pointed to the marriage of Roger, 1st baron Mortimer and Maud de Braose as an example of a successful aristocratic marriage – a mutually supportive working partnership that stood the test of time. Here she looks at their relationship in more detail.



You'd be forgiven for thinking that marriage in the Middle Ages was a wholly miserable affair: misogynistic, violent, oppressive, and arranged without your input. To some extent, you'd be right. Medieval marriage *could* be awful and usually were arranged by a couple's parents or guardians, without the involvement of either bride or groom. This was particularly true of first marriages in society's upper echelons. Violence was expected, Welsh law even sets out the manner in which a husband is permitted to beat his wife and for which causes (though, on the bright side, it also outlines married women's rights). A supremely negative view of medieval marriage is taken by several eminent medievalists, including Judith Bennett and the late Georges Duby. Their work leaves little room for doubt that medieval

marriage, for women in particular, was a Bad Thing.

Yet dysfunctional marriages were probably no more the norm in the Middle Ages than today. There are many reasons to believe medieval marriage could work, and plenty of evidence of cases where it did. And, indeed, socio-political marriage contracted by parents or guardians was not the only route to a lawful union. Quite unlike today, lovers could effect their own marriages, either by uttering words of present consent ('I take thee') or by speaking words of future consent ('I will take thee') and then having sex. 'Self-marriage' (my term) could be undertaken anywhere at any time and was considered binding, though it did lead at times to disagreement and risked upsetting families who had other plans for their



Wife beating – sanctioned in Welsh law (within limits)

offspring. The 1469 'self-marriage' of Margery Paston to her family's bailiff is a prime example. Margery's parents had to accept the *fait accompli*.

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Self marriage – no priest required

Even for arranged marriages, consent was considered to be the founding principle and annulment on the grounds of non-consent offered a way out for unhappy couples. Marital relations could also be loving: in 1307, a widower by the name of William Quyntyn of Conynton recalled his debilitating grief some years earlier when he had buried his wife. Yet perhaps the easiest evidence to find is that of long-standing working partnerships between married couples of the medieval elite. This is where Roger and Maud Mortimer come in, for their marriage was a strikingly co-operative one.

A strikingly co-operative partnership

Roger Mortimer and Maud de Braose married in November 1246, when Maud was in her early 20s and Roger in his teens. The marriage brought Roger important kinship links in and around the central Marches – for Maud was a member of the Braose clan and related

to the Marshals and Clares through her mother – as well as a cache of new lands in the form of Maud's own inheritance. Most importantly for our purposes, the marriage also brought Roger a dynamic and compatible life partner.

The Mortimers' marriage lasted thirty-six years until Roger's death in late October 1282. The relative wealth of documentation available for thirteenth-century England and the longevity of the couple's marriage provide plenty of opportunities to see the couple working together, in cooperation and with common objectives and ambitions.

A joint enterprise in law

Together they turned to the royal lawcourts almost as soon as they were married, to defend Maud's property rights against the parallel and competing expectations of a range of adversaries. (A married woman could not go to court without her husband, even for her own inheritance). Their adversaries included Maud's two younger sisters and their husbands, other leading families of the realm who had a stake in the Marshal inheritance, and eight dowagers, including Maud's mother Eva (d. late 1246) and her grandfather's widow Gwladus Ddu (d. 1251).

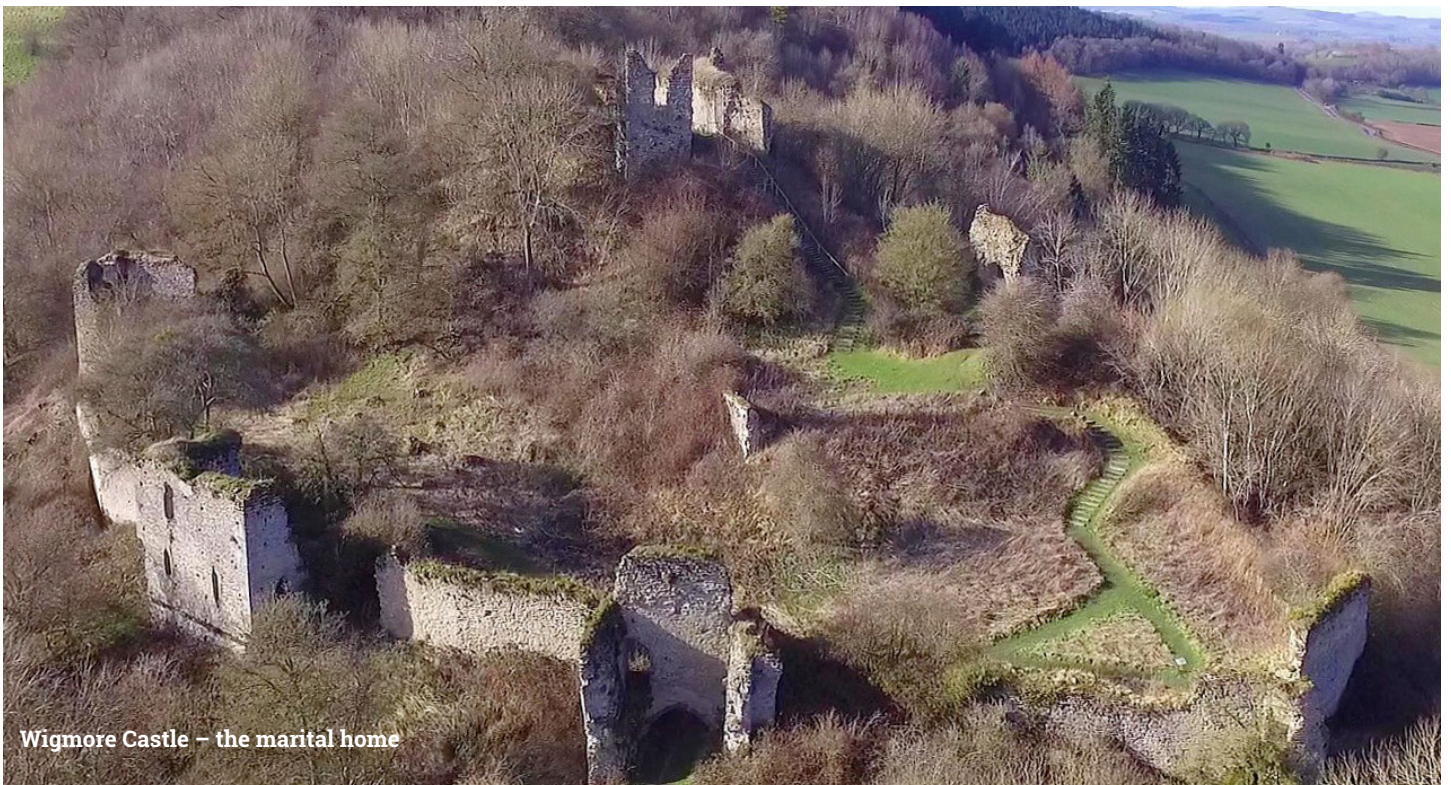
Over the decades, Maud and Roger were involved in multiple interconnected lawsuits that outlasted many of the original suitors and required the Braose and Marshal estates to be re-partitioned several times. The couple also pursued

their right of esneky (first choice) in the inheritance they shared with Maud's sisters. Maud had been the second of the four daughters of William de Braose and Eva Marshal, but with the death of Isabel, the eldest, the Mortimers could choose first from the estates they shared with Maud's remaining sisters. Hence, for example, they selected the main castle of the old Marshal barony of Offaly (modern-day co. Laois in Ireland).

Indeed, Maud's maternal inheritance looms large in the couple's joint litigation. Every birth and death in the extensive Marshal kinship network further complicated the patterns of expectation and disagreement and drew the couple, with Maud's sisters and their husbands, into a web of action over Marshal property that ground on for many years. The lordship of Haverford in the earldom of Pembroke was one bone of contention that not only brought the Marshal co-heirs, especially the Bohun and Valence families, to court repeatedly, but even resulted in direct, violent intervention in the lands themselves. Roger was himself accused of thuggish and destructive behaviour at one point.

Political and military alignment

Maud and Roger's legal partnership is, however, nowhere near as telling as their co-operation in high political intrigue and frontier warfare. Rather remarkably (since widows are typically far more visible in the records than married women), Maud's role as a frontier



Wigmore Castle – the marital home

powerbroker is as evident during her marriage as in the years following Roger's death. During the Montfortian rebellion of the 1260s, and again in the period of the Anglo-Welsh wars in the '70s and '80s, Maud could be found quite literally holding the fort at strategic posts on the frontier of Shropshire and Herefordshire while her husband was in the field. From the evidence that survives, there can be little doubt that she was a key contributor both to the royalist victory at Evesham in 1265 and to the fall of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1282.

Maud was probably drawn into the violence of her husband's feud with Simon de Montfort in early 1264, when an army led by de Montfort's eldest sons, Henry and Simon, descended on Wigmore and Maud's own barony of Radnor. She certainly appears to have been at Wigmore in late May the following year, when she is said to have received the Lord Edward as he fled from Montfortian captivity; and it was at Wigmore once more that she allegedly learned, in gruesome fashion, of the outcome of the battle of Evesham on 4 August. Roger Mortimer is reported to have had de Montfort's severed head, and perhaps also his genitalia, conveyed to his wife at Wigmore Castle. A Valentine's Day present this was not; but it was, without doubt, an acknowledgement by Roger of his wife's centrality to the affair and her equal delight at the earl's demise.



Simon de Montfort – his head became a gift for Maud

While Maud was at Wigmore from May to August 1265, she was probably at or near Clun around March 1274, when she received word from a loyal follower that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, prince of Wales, was planning to visit the area. In what was essentially

an intelligence report, Hywel ap Meurig, a long-standing servant of the Mortimers and others in the central Marches, informed Maud that the Welsh ruler intended to visit the region borderlands in the coming week. He advised Maud to have Clun readied for whatever happened next and to convey the news to her husband. There still survives a damaged letter from around the same time, written by Roger Mortimer to Robert Burnell, then archdeacon of York, in which Roger relays what he has been told of Llywelyn's movements.

In fact, in the context of the struggle against Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, conjugal (and familial) cooperation ran deeper still. Maud and Roger controlled the FitzAlan barony of Clun in 1274 because their daughter Isabel had been married to John FitzAlan (III), lord of Clun and Oswestry, until the latter's untimely death in 1272.

Roger Mortimer had been granted formal oversight of the barony during the minority of his grandson Richard, and soon also had custody of the boy himself. Isabel had dower and custodial interests along the frontier at Shropshire, and by 1279 had been awarded control of Oswestry castle, where she subsequently set up a garrison. In the run-up to the final war with Wales in 1282, Roger, Maud and their daughter Isabel were together responsible for the security of much of the Anglo-Welsh border from the lower edge of Cheshire down to southern Herefordshire.

Royal approval

The successful marriage of Roger Mortimer and Maud de Braose, and their well-documented working partnership, is far from unique among medieval aristocratic couples. Maud's great-grandparents, William de Braose and Matilda de St Valery, enjoyed a similar relationship which contributed to their success. Nevertheless, the strength of Roger and Maud's union is especially clear in the surviving evidence, which suggests that even Edward I recognised the value of the couple's partnership to his own enterprise. Strong dynastic marriages among the medieval elite, based on shared objectives, principles and ambitions not only contributed to the happiness of husband, wife and offspring, but could also strengthen the social structures on which the security of kings depended.

FROM YOUR EDITOR

What a summer!

It's been two years in the planning, but The Great Escape, our event to celebrate Roger Mortimer's escape from the Tower of London in 1323, is just days away. I hope you've all got your tickets! And we have a programme of exciting events still to come for the rest of the year. See in this issue details of our Autumn Symposium and our November half-day conference which, for the first time, will focus exclusively on historical fiction. We also report on a stunning evening at Powis Castle for this year's John Grove Memorial Lecture.

Our support for academia goes from strength to strength. In these pages you'll find details of how scholars can apply for our new Bursary Scheme and enter the 2023 Essay Prize. And lots more news besides, as you'd expect from your busy society.

We'd love to hear what you think about *Mortimer Matters* and the activities it reports on. Why not drop me a line at mm@mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk and let me know your thoughts? And, remember, this is your newsletter too, so get in touch if you're keen 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


I'll then get in touch to discuss your ideas and give you some useful tips on submitting your copy. We plan to publish our next issue in November and will start planning it soon, so please get in touch with your ideas quickly!



THE GREAT ESCAPE

just days away

Our most ambitious event to date is finally upon us. In just a few days – on 1 August – we'll commemorate the 700th anniversary of Roger Mortimer's escape from the Tower of London, at the Tower itself.



If you don't already have your ticket, hurry along to www.mortimerhistorysociety.org, where you'll be able to book your last minute place and download the full programme.

With speakers including Ian Mortimer, Paul Dryburgh, Laura Tompkins of Historic Royal Palaces and Chris Given-Wilson of the University of St Andrews, we've got every aspect of Roger's life covered. Not just how he escaped but why he was imprisoned and what happened next, when he returned to England to put down a king.

We'll also be celebrating the publication of *The Mortimers of Wigmore 1066 to 1485: Dynasty of Destiny* (see page 11 for details). Buy your copy at the Tower to get a 20% discount on the cover price and save on postage. And, of course, you'll be able to get it signed by some of the contributors who will be in attendance!

Regicide or rexit? The mysterious fate of Edward II

At this year's Autumn Symposium Kathryn Warner, scholar and biographer of Edward II, will examine the evidence for and against the king's death in Berkeley Castle in September 1327. Here she whets our appetite with a taste of what's to come.



Edward II tomb effigy,
Gloucester Cathedral

Edward II, often considered England's most unsuccessful king, was forced to abdicate in January 1327 after his wife, Isabella of France, turned against him and formed an alliance with Roger Mortimer of Wigmore, later first earl of March. One of the few things about medieval history, that just about everyone remembers being taught in school, is that Edward was killed at Berkeley Castle, Gloucestershire in September 1327, a few months after his abdication, by means of a red-hot poker inserted inside him. This lurid tale is a myth, but is endlessly repeated as though it is a certain fact, often with lip-smacking relish.

Oddly enough, this is one of the times when truth may prove even stranger than fiction. Evidence has merged to suggest that Edward II didn't die at Berkeley Castle in 1327 at all, but lived on for years after that date. It seems his half-brother the earl of Kent, his Scottish friend the earl of Mar, the bishop and mayor of London, and the archbishop of York were among several important people who firmly believed that Edward was alive in 1329/30 and being held captive at Corfe Castle in Dorset. They even recount trying to help and free him.

Later, in the 1330s, an Italian nobleman, a notary of the pope who later became bishop of Vercelli in northern Italy, addressed a fascinating letter to Edward III detailing his father's escape from Berkeley Castle and survival in a hermitage sixty miles south of Milan.

There are three other peculiarities of note. Lord Berkeley, Edward II's custodian in 1327, made a statement to parliament in 1330 which makes little sense if Edward did die at Berkeley in 1327. Eleven years later, Edward's son, Edward III, spent time with a man who claimed to be his father. We don't know who that was, but the claim may be given further credence by the fact that even Edward's close family didn't see his body after his death.

On the other hand, not a single English chronicler of the 14th century heard the story of Edward II's possible survival, or perhaps they did hear it but gave it no credence. All of them wrote that he died at Berkeley Castle in September 1327, even if they couldn't account for how. What we do know is that the English government swung into action after the teenaged Edward III, holding parliament at Lincoln in September 1327, received news that his father was dead, and the disgraced former king's funeral was held in St Peter's Abbey in Gloucester, later Gloucester Cathedral, in December that year. We know too that a number of knights, abbots and burgesses from the Bristol and Gloucester areas, who would certainly have known Edward II by sight and been able to recognise him, travelled to Berkeley Castle in the autumn of 1327 to view his body before burial. Though even here there is something of a mystery, as one chronicler states that they saw it only 'superficially', leaving some room for doubt.

Perhaps the strongest argument

against Edward II's survival past 1327 is that he made no attempt to claim his lost throne and didn't show himself in public, at least not to people who had known him well and been able to identify him. Stories of his survival might, therefore, be nothing more than rumour, misinformation, and wishful thinking on the part of some people who had cared for him and regretted his forced abdication.

A mystery unsolved

There is much evidence that Edward did die in 1327, yet also much evidence to suggest he did not. As these alternatives can't be reconciled and one of them must certainly be untrue, Edward II's fate remains one of English history's most intriguing mysteries. Was he murdered in an act of regicide, if not by red-hot poker, then by strangulation, poison or some other means? Did he die of natural causes? Or was his death announced to the public to put an end to his friends' plots to free him from captivity and perhaps restore him to the throne, while he was secretly kept alive? Was Edward allowed, or even helped, to leave England and live out his last years in a foreign country, in what we might term a fourteenth-century Rexit?

Join Kathryn on 7 October for an in-depth look at the evidence.

Our Autumn Symposium comes to Ludlow on 7 October. See page 8 for details.

You're probably descended from the Medieval Mortimers

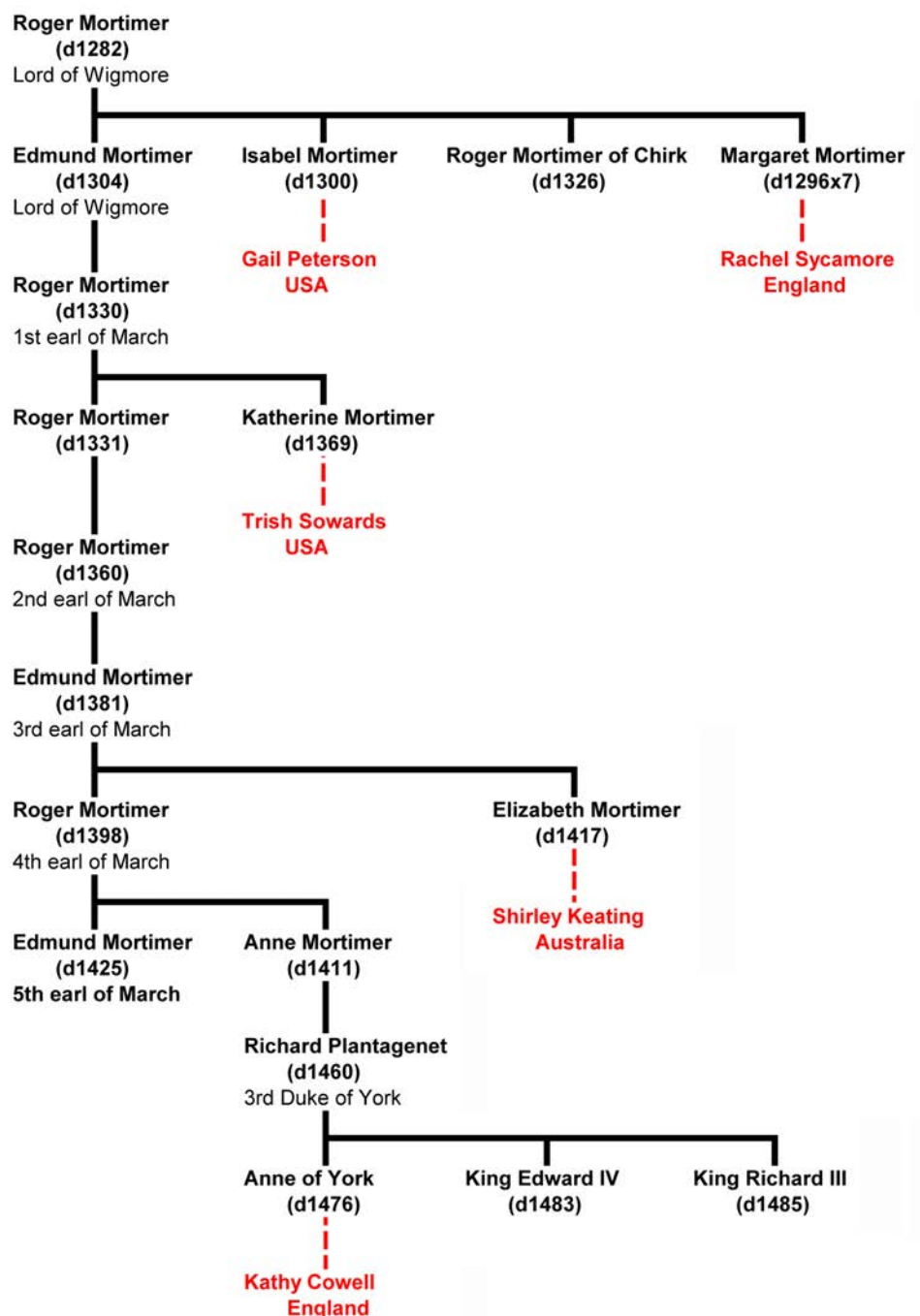
The idea that you can claim ancestry with the Mortimers isn't as far-fetched as you might think. Hugh Wood explains why, and traces the ancestry of two members right back to the first baron Mortimer.

Roughly 24 generations separate today's Mortimer History Society members from Roger, 1st baron Mortimer, who died in 1282. As the number of grandparents one can claim doubles with every generation, one could theoretically have as many as 16, 772,216 great (22 times) grandparents in Roger's generation. That's an astounding figure, especially when you take into account that the population of England in the thirteenth century was only between four and five million. Obviously, there'll be considerable duplication, with some people being your grandparent by several different routes. However, the conclusion is inevitable: if you have English ancestry, there's a good chance you're descended from a medieval Mortimer.

Several Society members around the world have researched their roots and, so far, six have been confident, or brave, enough to supply us with their family trees. As it happens, each one links to the Mortimer genealogy at a different point. While the Society can't vouch for the accuracy of the non-medieval parts of their family trees, we thought you might be interested in hearing about the earlier, medieval parts. Five of the six descend from Roger, baron Mortimer of Wigmore and his wife Maud de Braose, and the partial Mortimer family tree you see here shows the point at which each links in. The genealogy of the sixth is believed to connect with the Mortimers of Wigmore at an even earlier time, though details of the exact link remain unknown at present.

Let's take a closer look at the lineages of two members – one in the US and one in the UK, who can trace their ancestry back to the 1st baron.

MHS members who are descendants of Roger Mortimer of Wigmore (d1282)



Gail Peterson

Gail lives in Maryland, USA. Her medieval ancestry is particularly interesting, because her forebears were directly involved in some of the most important issues of the day. She descends from Roger via his daughter Isabella, who married John Fitzalan, lord of Clun and Oswestry. Their son, Richard, was the first Fitzalan to be formally styled earl of Arundel, and his son Edmund, 2nd earl of Arundel, served under Edward I in the Scottish wars. Edmund's story is inextricably linked with that of his distant kinsman, Roger Mortimer, 1st earl of March (d.1330). Initially they were allies, working together against Edward II, but later they were to become implacable enemies. Following the death of Edward I, Edmund became disillusioned with the new king and, in 1311, became one of the Lords Ordainers standing in direct opposition to him. With Thomas, earl of Lancaster and others, he was responsible for the trial and summary execution of the king's favourite, Piers Gaveston. But Edmund didn't remain long in the opposition camp. When his son Richard married Isabella, daughter of the king's new favourite, Hugh Despenser the Younger, Edmund decided that his interests now lay in supporting the king. This volte face led to him helping put down the 1322 rebellion of Roger Mortimer, his uncle Roger Mortimer of Chirk and Thomas of Lancaster. This support for Edward II sealed his eventual fate however as, on the dramatic return of Queen Isabella and Roger Mortimer from the Continent in 1326, he was immediately arrested and beheaded.

Edmund's son Richard was a contemporary of Roger Mortimer, 2nd earl of March (d1360). Like Roger, he was a staunch supporter of Edward III and a great military leader, serving both as a commander in the army and the navy. Having been gradually restored to his father's titles and estates, he was appointed as Admiral of the West. When he died in 1376, he was one of the wealthiest men in the country. His son, the 4th earl of Arundel, also named Richard, started well but came to a sticky end, just like his grandfather. Following in his father's footsteps, he became a great naval commander, being appointed Admiral of the North and West, and in 1386 he was created a Knight of the Garter. Unhappy with Richard II's rule, he became one of the Lords Appellants, who forced the king to delegate most of his powers to a commission organised by them.

In 1387, Richard II decided to remove him and the earl of Gloucester from the Commission and replaced them with several favourites, including Robert de Vere, 9th earl of Oxford. Gloucester and Arundel then formed an army and, with support from Thomas Mortimer, brother of the 3rd earl of March, defeated de Vere's force at Radcot bridge. At the Merciless Parliament that followed, they condemned Richard's favourites to death, an act the king neither forgot nor forgave. Ten years later, when he felt strong enough to exact revenge, Richard Fitzalan, 4th earl of Arundel, was attainted and executed.

Gail's lineage then passes through four women: Elizabeth Fitzalan, daughter of the 4th earl of Arundel; Joan Goushill, wife of Thomas, 1st baron Stanley; Katherine Stanley and Katherine Savage, sister of Sir John Savage KG, a prominent Yorkist under Edward IV. As Savage's connection with the Stanleys made Richard III suspicious of him, he supported the invasion of Henry Tudor. Commanding the left flank of the Lancastrian army at the battle of Bosworth Field, he is said to have defeated the duke of Norfolk in one-to-one combat.

Rachel Sycamore



Rachel, who lives in Hertfordshire in the UK, is descended from Margaret Mortimer, another daughter of the same Roger, 1st baron Mortimer. She was the wife of Robert de Vere, 6th earl of Oxford, a soldier who fought for Edward I, Edward II and Edward III in Wales, Scotland and France. Their daughter Ellen married Sir Hugo Naunton of Suffolk, whose granddaughter Margaret

married Sir Roger Drury (d1420). This Roger also became caught up in the tumultuous events of Richard II's reign. In 1386, he served in Ireland under Robert de Vere, 9th earl of Oxford, mentioned above in Gail Peterson's ancestry, and the following year was at sea, serving under Gail's ancestor, Richard Fitzalan, 4th earl of Arundel. Siding with the Lords Appellants, he was part of the army that defeated his old boss, de Vere, at Radcot Bridge, with Arundel, Gloucester and Thomas Mortimer. Later he was able to buy a pardon from Richard II, so avoiding Arundel's gruesome fate.

A granddaughter of Roger and Margaret Drury, Alice Clopton, married John Harliston of Lincolnshire, and their son, Richard Harliston, was brought up in the household of Richard, duke of York. Following the accession of Edward IV, Harliston was created Vice-Admiral, and, in 1468, sailed to Guernsey with the ultimate aim of invading France and recapturing Normandy. This didn't happen, but he was to remain in the Channel Islands for 18 years.

Originally part of the Duchy of Normandy, the islands never belonged to France. St Ouen in Jersey had been the home of the de Carteret family for centuries, but the French had captured the castle of Mont Orgueil on the other side of the island in 1461. Harliston besieged and eventually captured the castle, completely removing the French presence. In 1473, he was appointed Captain in Chief of the Channel Islands, a role in which he became very popular. He was to prove ever faithful to the Yorkist cause, refusing to allow access to the emissaries of the new king Henry VII. When forced to give in, he went to Flanders and joined the court of Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, the sister of Edward IV and Richard III. He was later implicated in the abortive rebellions of both Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck, and attainted. Having married Philippe de Carteret, the Seigneur of St Ouen, his daughter Marguerite remained on Jersey, and this line of Rachel's ancestors remained on the island until the 19th century.

Coming soon...

Look out in the next edition of *Mortimer Matters*, where Hugh will investigate four other Society members who claim distant Mortimer ancestry. If you, too can trace your family tree back to the Mortimers, please let us know. Contact Hugh at hugh@hughanddorris.co.uk.

**KEEP
THE DATE!**

Looking ahead to an exciting programme of events for the second half of the year.

Tuesday, 1 August

The Great Escape: The Mortimers, the Tower of London and the Crown

Held at the Tower, this very special event will celebrate the 700th anniversary of Roger Mortimer's escape from the Tower on 1 August 1323. It will also mark the launch of the Society's most ambitious publication yet - *The Mortimers of Wigmore 1066-1485: Dynasty of Destiny* - an anthology of Mortimer-related essays. Speakers include Dr Ian Mortimer, Dr Laura Tompkins, Professor Chris Given-Wilson and Society President, Dr Paul Dryburgh.

Saturday, 7 October Autumn symposium

An eclectic range of presentations makes our major autumn event a highlight of the year. Attend in person at Ludlow Assembly Rooms, or via Zoom. See page 8 for details.

Saturday, 25 November - venue to be confirmed Writing the past: Great historical fiction and the medieval history that inspires it

This half-day conference will feature three historical fiction writers talking about the challenges of re-imagining the past and about the fertile ground that lies between historical fact and artistic creation.

Saturday, 27 January 2024 Women of Wales and the March

A half-day online mini-conference with a female bent kickstarts our 2024 programme. Details to be confirmed.

For updates to our events schedule see future issues of *Mortimer Matters* or visit our website, www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk.

Autumn symposium

Our Autumn Symposium will be held at Ludlow Assembly Rooms on Saturday 7 October and is not to be missed.

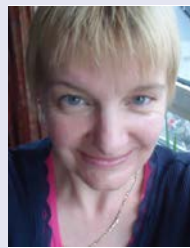
The last full-day event of the year features an eclectic programme designed to get you talking. Join us to hear five historians – all members of the Society – talk about the subjects that arouse their passions most, from troubled relationships between lords and princes to deadly unsolved mysteries and the Arthurian roots of the House of York's royal claim.

Our speakers:



Dr Joanna Laynesmith

Dr Joanna Laynesmith, a visiting fellow at the University of Reading and expert on elite women of medieval England, examines the Mortimer family's claimed descent from early British kings. A fascinating study of Anne Mortimer's Arthurian legacy and the prophecy of the red dragon.



Kathryn Warner

Kathryn Warner has written extensively on the reign of Edward II and penned biographies of both the king himself and his queen, Isabella. She'll interrogate the evidence for Edward's death in Berkeley Castle after his abdication in 1327. Was his life brought to an abrupt end, or did he live on in obscurity?



Dr Alastair Ayton

Dr Alastair Ayton, Society member, Associate Editor of its Journal and author of an upcoming book on the Marcher Lords, examines the life of Roger Mortimer (d.1282) and his relationship with the Lord Edward – the future Edward I – during the reign of Henry III.



Dr Shaun McGuinness

Dr Shaun McGuinness, Honorary Research Associate at Bangor University and expert on medieval Wales, examines a medieval mystery – what was the role of Anian bishop of Bangor in the betrayal (in the belfry at Bangor) and subsequent death of Llywelyn the Last.



Matt Lewis

Matt Lewis, author, historian, Senior Presenter of *History Hit*, Co-Presenter of *Gone Medieval* and Chair of the Richard III Society, explores the lives of two Mortimer boys whose fates offer a new perspective on the events of 1583 and the fate of the Princes in the Tower.

This eclectic conference can be attended in person or via Zoom – though we hope you'll relish the opportunity to meet with your fellow history buffs! For details of ticket prices and to reserve your place, please go to www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk/events.

Writing the Past: Great historical fiction and the medieval history that inspires it

Saturday, 25 November



Our final event of 2023 is something of a first – entirely focused on great historical fiction and the medieval history it brings to life. Chaired by Society Trustee and acclaimed fiction author, Annie Garthwaite, it brings together three writers who have found their inspiration in 14th and 15th century history. They'll talk to us about the business of writing fiction based on historical reality, or, as the late-great Hilary Mantel would have it, "Working with intractable facts and finding the dramatic shape within them."

Join us at Grange Court, Leominster to hear three of the UK's most acclaimed writers of fiction set in the medieval period talk about how fiction can add to our understanding of history and the people who lived through or made it.



Toby Clements

author of *The Kingmaker series*

The author of four novels set during the Wars of the Roses, Toby has gained a reputation for meticulous and surprisingly hands-on research. He'll take us on a journey of discovery that began with the *Ladybird Book of Warwick the Kingmaker* and ended with the intricacies of medieval surgery.



Victoria MacKenzie

author of *For Thy Great Pain Have Mercy On My Little Pain*

Prize-winning debut novelist, Victoria will explain how she has used their own writings to rediscover the lives and voices of 14th century mystics Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich. She'll explain the creative challenges posed by the source materials and the choices she made to blend research with fiction to create a vivid world.



Anne O'Brien

Sunday Times best-selling author

Anne's most recent novels are inspired by the now famous Paston Letters, especially those of the family matriarch, Margaret. She'll talk to us about how those letters provide an insight to a medieval family on the rise and the conflict-ridden 15th century world that family inhabits.

For details and to secure tickets go to www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk/events. And do note that staff from the Castle Bookshop in Ludlow will be on hand throughout the morning, so that you can buy books from all three authors and have them signed!

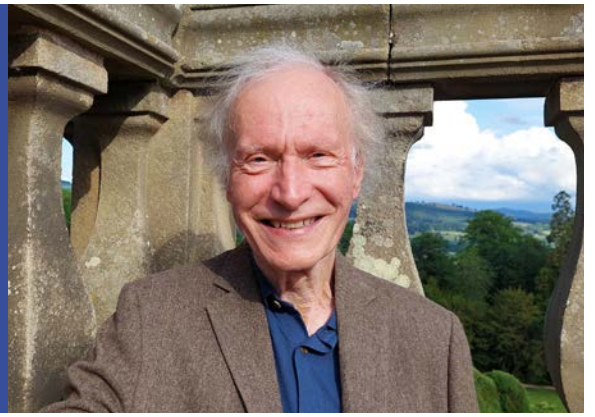
Welcome to new members

Nineteen new members have joined since the last edition of *Mortimer Matters*. Welcome all! We hope you're enjoying your membership and look forward to meeting you soon!

Craig Bradburn	Leeper, USA	Charles Jenkins	Devizes
Anthony Candland	Higher Blakley	Hilary Jones	Ledbury
Allison Coleman	Bow Street	Michael Jones	Bristol
Peter Cooks	Dublin	Andrew Kelly	Ludlow
Mary Epke	Cheltenham	Harry Lewis	Edinburgh
Michael Frieldsand	Lewes	Amy Reynolds	Wrexham
Angela and Martin Gibbs	Callow	Alexander Urka	Ludlow
Katherine Gladwin	Ledbury	John Vickers	Hereford
Linda and Peter Herbert	Ludlow		

A summer evening at Powis Castle

The second annual John Grove Memorial Lecture brought us to Powis Castle on a glorious midsummer evening to enjoy a fascinating lecture by Dr David Stephenson.



Dr Stephenson's talk focused on the eastern March – the Anglo-Welsh borderlands during the 12th and 13th centuries – and he prefaced it with two very important facts. First, that there is much we don't know and are forced to surmise about this place and period. Second, that the March can't truly be thought of as a single entity, rather a series of lordships of variable size, geography, leadership, population makeup and economic viability. He described a world where conflict – a characteristic of medieval life just about anywhere – was a constant, and where integration (between Welsh and English, both people and culture) was patchy and shifting.

He explained how the larger lordships, particularly in lowland, fertile areas, were typically dominated by Anglo-Norman lords and attracted English settlers. Proto-urban communities developed focused on trade and mixed agriculture. The uplands, by contrast, were economically poorer and, because less attractive to the English, retained much of their Welsh culture and identity. Sparsely inhabited and dependent first on cattle and later on sheep farming, they rarely saw their absentee Anglo-Norman lords, who put administrators (often Welsh) in place to make sure only that relevant dues and taxes were paid.

There is still, Dr Stephenson insisted, much scholarly work to be done to understand the complexity and diversity of the March. He offered particular praise to the Society's *Welsh Marcher Lordships* book series, which is looking in detail at the development and particularities of lordships in key areas of the March. This kind of close study of a divergent March is necessary, he said, and should be the focus of young historians today.

A summer's evening

Before David's excellent lecture, our audience was able to tour Powis Castle after the paying public had departed, and to take tea and cake in its sun-drenched courtyard. We are particularly thankful to the staff and volunteers of the National Trust, who take care of the castle, for making us so welcome and for guiding us around its treasures with such enthusiasm and expertise.



As guests arrived, our speaker Dr David Stephenson gave us a potted history of the castle, focusing on the period before it came into the hands of its present owners, the Herbert family, in the 16th century.



One of the castle's resident peacocks



Taking tea on the sundrenched courtyard before David's lecture

This annual lecture series, established in 2022, commemorates the life of John Grove, founder of the Mortimer History Society, passionate historian and teacher.

Dynasty of Destiny

1st August sees the launch of your Society's most ambitious publication to date. With contributions from 11 established and up-and-coming historians, its aim is to put the Mortimers – surely a dynasty of destiny – firmly back on the history map.

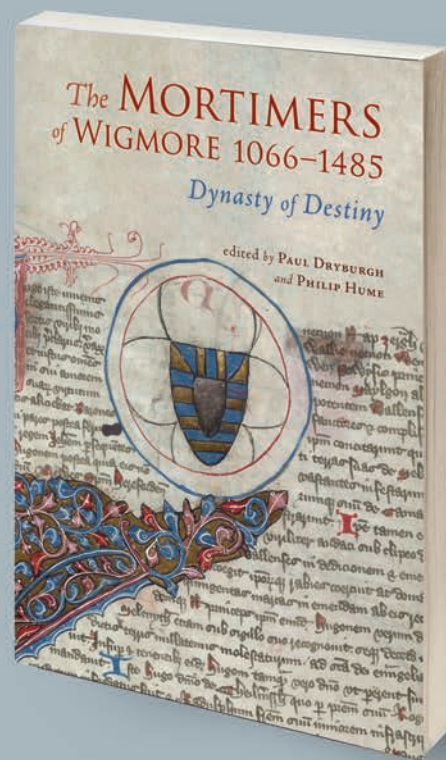
From their arrival in the aftermath of the Norman Conquest, the Mortimers of Wigmore grew to become one of our nation's dominant aristocratic dynasties. The family's 400-year rise culminated with the accession to the throne of Edward, earl of March, who gloried in his share of the family's blood when crowned King Edward IV. In the centuries since then, however, the family has fallen from public view. Indeed, beyond 'Mortimer country' in the central borderlands of England and Wales, its past glories are only now beginning to reach public consciousness – largely thanks to the work of your Society.

The against-the-odds survival of the Mortimer family over four centuries, and its prominence on the national stage during that time, mean that a study of its members and their actions can provide historians with unique windows into the late medieval history of three countries – England, Ireland and Wales.

The essays in this book cover important aspects of the political, military, social and legal history behind the family's rise to prominence, as well as the economic assets that

underpinned their power, wealth and influence. It charts their dramatic success in navigating the choppy political waters of medieval England until – at last – a Mortimer grandson could assert and exercise a claim to the throne.

Celebrate the launch of this important book with us at the Tower of London on 1st August, where we're hosting an event to celebrate the 700th anniversary of Roger Mortimer's escape from the king that held him prisoner – and take the opportunity to meet many of its contributors. (See event details at page 4).



The Mortimers of Wigmore 1066-1485 is published by Logaston Press and available to order at www.logastonpress.co.uk. Society members receive a 20% discount – £20 rather than £25, with £3 delivery. Just enter the code **MORTMHS** when ordering.

Mortimer History Society Bursary – applications open!

Your society is proud to announce that it has established a £1,000 bursary to be granted to a student undertaking post-graduate doctoral research or a research-led Masters programme in the history of the Mortimers, the medieval Welsh March or its lordships. Applications for the academic year 2023 to 2024 close on 31 July – best get your skates on!

The bursary is intended to support a student whose study will help develop knowledge and understanding of the Mortimers and the Marches, covering any aspect of their history – social, religious, linguistic, cultural, artistic, legal or political. Applications will be judged by a panel of historians and Society trustees, and the successful candidate will be announced in August.

Our Bursary panel is made up of Helen Fulton, Professor and Chair of Medieval Literature at the University of Bristol, and Janet Burton, Professor of Medieval History at the University of Wales Trinity St David, alongside Society trustees Kirsten Lawton-Smith and Yve James.

This Mortimer History Society Bursary has been made possible thanks to the generous contributions given by Society members in response to our appeal in the last issue of *Mortimer Matters*. It's significant and praiseworthy that your commitment is helping to further knowledge of this important area of history – and providing one lucky student with much-needed funds!



Our bursary judging panel: Helen Fulton, Janet Burton, Kirsten Lawton-Smith and Yve James.

Finally, if you're a student – or planning to become one – you can find out more details and make your bursary application at www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk/society/bursary

Mortimer History Society Essay Prize 2023

Now open for entries!

The Society's Essay Prize goes from strength to strength and we're delighted to confirm that entries are now open for the 2023 competition.

As in previous years, we welcome essays that relate to:

- Any aspect of the history, geo-politics, topography, laws, economy, society and culture of the medieval borderlands, including comparative studies, between 1066 and 1542.

Or...

- Any aspect of the medieval Mortimer family of Wigmore, including its cadet branches and its impact on the history and culture of the British Isles.

And, of course, anyone can enter.

There will be a first prize of £750, a second prize of £300 and a third prize of £200. Also, this is a great opportunity to have your work published in next year's academic journal, if you're selected by our esteemed judges, led for the first time this year by Louise Wilkinson, Professor of Medieval Studies at the University of Lincoln.

Of her appointment Louise says, "Having served on the judging panel in the past and enjoyed reading the wonderful range of entries that we've received, I'm now delighted to chair the panel. I am also very grateful to Chris Given-Wilson for the model of good practice that he established as the previous Chair."

The closing date for entries is 1 March 2024. Further details about the prize and entry requirements can be found at www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk.

Our new chair of the judges – Professor Louise Wilkinson



Louise is Professor of Medieval Studies and Director of Research Students in the School of History and Heritage at the University of Lincoln. After completing her doctorate at King's College London in 1999, she worked at the National Archives and Canterbury Christ Church University, before joining Lincoln in 2020. Her research focuses on politics, society and culture in the thirteenth-century British Isles, with a particular emphasis on the lives of women, the aristocracy, and medieval records. Her books include *Eleanor de Montfort: A Rebel Countess in Medieval England* (2012) and *The Household Roll of Eleanor de Montfort, Countess of Leicester and Pembroke* (2020). She was a co-investigator of the AHRC-funded 'Henry III Fine Rolls' and 'Magna Carta' projects. After serving as its joint general editor for twelve years, she now chairs the council of the Pipe Roll Society, a scholarly society founded in the 1880s that is dedicated to the publication of medieval exchequer records and other associated documents. She is also a councillor and trustee of the Lincoln Record Society and the Historic Lincoln Trust. She co-edits Routledge's *Lives of Royal Women* book series.

Welsh Marcher Lordships Volume II

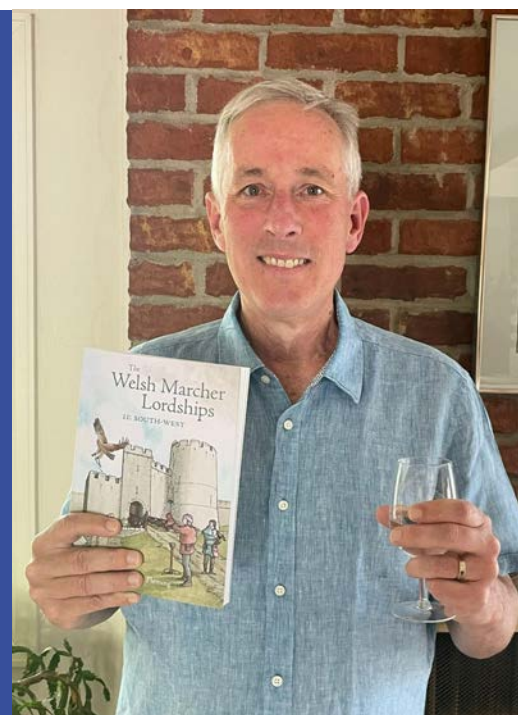
Society publications going from strength to strength

Society members raised a glass with author John Fleming on Saturday 20 May to celebrate the publication of the second volume in our Marcher Lordships series – and sales are powering ahead.

Publisher Su Wheeler of Logaston Press says, "We've been thrilled with how well John's volume – and the series – have been received. Bookshops across Wales and the Marches are stocking it, both within and beyond our usual geographic area. And sales are already exceeding our expectations."

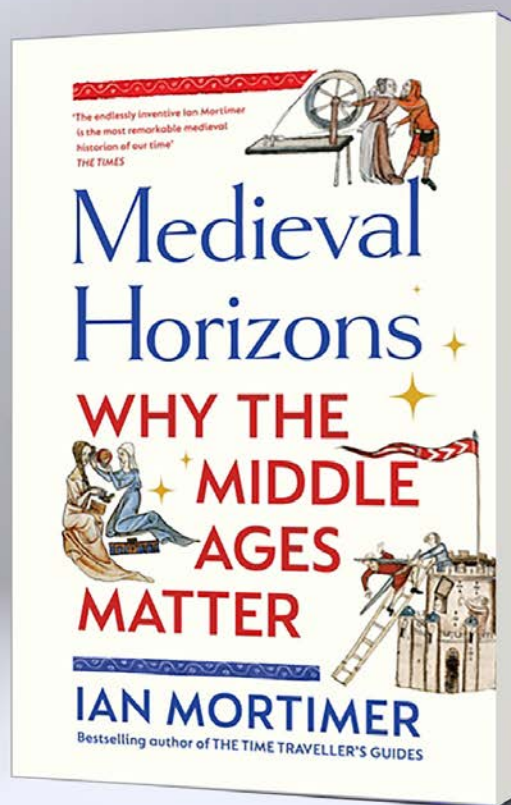
Su also points out that there is growing anticipation for the series as a whole: "We're already seeing a lot of interest in the third and final volume, which is scheduled for publication next year."

If you don't have your copy of *Volume II: South-west* yet, order now at www.logastonpress.co.uk with the Society discount code of **MHS23**.



Welcome to a revolutionary age

In his latest book Ian Mortimer defies outmoded views of the Middle Ages as six centuries of ignorance and stasis. Instead, he describes a time of fast-paced change, characterised by cultural, scientific and technological innovation. In conversation with *Mortimer Matters* editor Annie Garthwaite, he insists that the Middle Ages were a time of revolution and progress, during which the seeds of the modern age were set.



The seeds of the modern world

"Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, written in the 1390s, is often held up as a microcosm of medieval England," says Ian. "But the society it describes with such vigour had become anachronistic within two hundred years of its completion – as foreign to the people of the 16th century as Jane Austen's England is to us today." Just as it would be unwise to think of the 17th and 21st centuries as equally 'modern', he suggests, "It wouldn't enlighten us to imagine the 14th and 16th centuries as equally medieval."

It's certainly true that, within that period of time, everyday life in England changed dramatically. Religious and political institutions were swept away and feudalism was replaced by a market-based and increasingly global economy. But if our view of the Middle Ages is narrow, skewed and static, why does it matter? It is, after all, a long time ago.

"Because," says Ian, "it encourages us to see the medieval and modern worlds as completely separate. As a result, we fail to recognise that the way we live today is a result of societal developments between the 11th and 16th centuries. Many of our contemporary concepts, values and priorities originated in the Middle Ages. As did our cultural and social practices – from the use of money, the adoption of surnames and our reliance on the written word. In the Middle Ages," he concludes, "we see the formation of the modern world."

Metaphorical horizons

But how can this book help us grasp a better understanding of the 'medieval revolution'? Throughout, Ian adopts the metaphor of the horizon as a tool to understand societal change. Without question, for example, geographical horizons were expanded during the medieval period thanks

to maritime exploration and the discovery of the new world. Similarly, personal horizons were expanded by free movement as the collapse of feudalism liberated people from the fields, villages and societal roles to which they were born.

Ian's book uses multiple metaphorical horizons, including the commercial, religious, scientific and technological, to challenge our thinking of all things medieval, even a horizon of memory, in which the development of the written word and, later, the printing press, allowed people to document the past and record with accuracy the chronicles of the times.

It's a mind-stretching exercise. One that had me nodding in recognition and amazement as new understandings opened themselves up to me.

Overall, I was drawn to Ian's description of the Middle Ages as being "not about stasis, but about hope, vision, effort and change." The people of the Middle Ages he explains, "are not so different from ourselves. They hope for both immediate improvement – a better harvest this year – and progressive improvement – a better future for their children. This hope gives rise to effort. That effort, in turn, gives rise to innovation and achievement. A medieval peasant understood no less than we do the twin motivations of necessity (I need to eat today) and optimism (if I can make my land more productive, my children will eat better tomorrow).

In that, it seems to me, the medieval and modern worlds are equal – shaped by human effort, driven by a desire for a better future and by an urge towards innovation that's limited only by imagination. If you're looking for a better understanding, not just of the medieval age, but of the modern age it gave birth to and, indeed, to our very selves, I can't recommend this book highly enough.

Medieval Horizons: Why the Middle Ages Matter, is published by Bodley Head and available online and in bookshops. RRP £22.

For your bookshelf

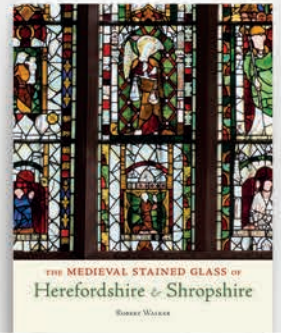
From Marcher stained glass to crusading women, the Wife of Bath and two fourteenth century mystics – we've got your reading requirements sorted...

Medieval Stained Glass of Herefordshire and Shropshire

By Robert Walker

This richly-illustrated book represents the first comprehensive study of the medieval stained glass of Herefordshire and Shropshire, and includes a gazetteer of all known surviving stained glass in the two counties for the period c.1300–1700. Given that this region lays claim to some of the finest medieval glass in the country, this is surely a must-have.

Published by Logaston Press in February 2023 and available at www.logastonpress.co.uk price £25.

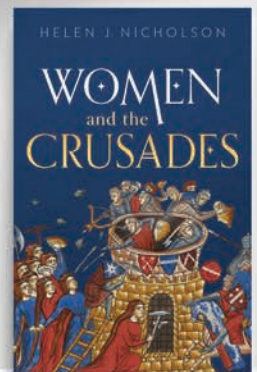


Women and the Crusades

By Helen J Nicholson

A comprehensive study of the varied roles women played on and off the battlefield during the medieval crusades. As defenders and aggressors, women were involved in recruiting crusaders and supporting crusades through patronage, propaganda and prayer. And certainly they were not absent from the battles themselves.

Published by Oxford University Press in February 2023 and available online and in bookshops. RRP £25.

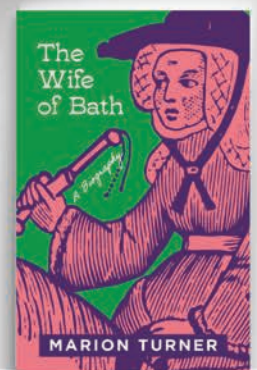


The Wife of Bath

By Marion Turner

An investigation of Chaucer's most engaging pilgrim and her literary influence from the Middle Ages to the present day. Arguably the first ordinary and recognisably real woman in English history, The Wife has obsessed readers from Shakespeare to Zadie Smith. Turner sets her fictional life against that of real medieval women and tells the story of her post-medieval legacy.

Published by Princeton University Press in January 2023 and available online and in bookshops. RRP £20.



For Thy Great Pain Have Mercy on my Little Pain

By Victoria MacKenzie

This extraordinary novel recounts the stories of two 14th century mystics – Julian of Norwich and Margery Kemp. More than just a wonderful piece of historical fiction, it's a nuanced exploration of religious conviction and a fearless investigation of the medieval mind.

Published by Bloomsbury and available online and in bookshops. RRP £14.99.

