



MORTIMER *Matters*

Anne – the Mortimer link to England's modern royal family

The last of the Mortimers died in 1425, yet their bloodline flows on in our modern royal family. The lynchpin between the two is Anne Mortimer - eldest child of Roger the fourth earl of March, wife of Richard of Conisburgh, and mother of Richard duke of York. Here Dr Joanna Laynesmith, expert in the women of the Wars of the Roses, describes the life of the woman who defined the Mortimer claim to the throne.

Anne was born on the feast of St John the Evangelist (27 December) 1388, when her father was no more than a child himself: he was only fourteen. Earl Roger's father had died seven years earlier, so his marriage had been arranged by his guardian. This was Richard II's half-brother, Thomas Holland, earl of Kent. Kent arranged for Roger Mortimer to marry as soon as he was legally permitted to make a binding marriage and the bride was Kent's own eldest daughter, eighteen-year-old Eleanor. The bride is unlikely to have had any more say in the arrangement than her child husband.

Early life

Anne was Roger and Eleanor's first child and she probably spent her earliest years in homes belonging to her Holland grandparents – Lyndhurst and Brockenhurst, both in the New Forest, where we know her younger brother Edmund was born. She was five when her father was finally permitted to take control of all his estates, after which it is most likely that the family home moved to the Welsh Marches. Anne cannot have seen much of her father after this, as he travelled extensively on the king's orders and was killed in Ireland in 1498 when she was only nine.

Anne's mother, Eleanor Holland, was not only Richard II's niece but now a wealthy young dowager who could, theoretically at least, choose her own husband. Wealthy widows were sometimes forced into politically useful



Anne Mortimer – a lynchpin in Edward IV's family tree and royal claim

marriages by their kings, but there is no reason to imagine this was the case for Eleanor, since her next husband, Sir Edward Charlton, was merely the younger brother of John Lord Charlton of Powys. Charlton was the same age as Countess Eleanor and *elegantissimus* (most handsome/most elegant) according to the chronicler Adam of Usk. Perhaps it

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was even a love match. They were married less than a year after Earl Roger's death, causing further upheaval for Anne and her siblings. More turmoil was to come when Countess Eleanor resisted Henry Bolingbroke's invasion a few months later. Bolingbroke planned to ravage her lands, but Charlton quickly made his peace with the invader, apparently with Adam of Usk's help.

Edward Charlton's elder brother died without children in October 1401, which meant that he became Lord of Powys, and consequently acquired properties further west than the Mortimer children had lived before. While Anne and her sister Eleanor grew up far from the heart of politics in their stepfather's castles, Henry IV had taken their two brothers (Edmund and Roger) into the royal household. This was no doubt to keep them safe from potential rebels who might try to use them to challenge Henry's own right to the throne. (The Mortimer children were descendants of Edward III's second son, Lionel duke of Clarence, whereas Henry IV was only the son of Edward III's third son, John duke of Lancaster). Despite King Henry's precautions, in February 1405, the boys were kidnapped from Windsor Castle by the King's cousin, Constance of York. She tried to take them to the rebel Owain Glyndwr and their uncle, Sir Edmund Mortimer, in Wales. The plot failed, but the incident must have made Anne and Eleanor especially aware of their politically sensitive lineage. Their mother had two more daughters with Lord Charlton – Joan and Joyce – but she died in October 1405 as a result of her sixth pregnancy.

An orphan at sixteen

Edward Lord Charlton now had custody of Anne and Eleanor and the estates they would one day inherit, as well as some of their brother's future properties. However, he was struggling with the expensive business of defending Henry IV's interests and his own properties against Owain Glyndwr and the earl of Northumberland. In 1406 Henry IV granted Anne and Eleanor an allowance of £100 a year from their mother's lands. The king was almost certainly responding to a petition from the girls themselves, since the grant seems to be quoting such a petition when it refers to 'the king's kinswomen... destitute of all their parents and friends [who] have not wherewithal to maintain themselves and their servants'. Anne was now seventeen, whereas Eleanor was the youngest of the four Mortimer children, so Anne must have been taking

responsibility for them both. Although some record of Charlton's payments to the girls survive, further letters patent regarding the annuity were issued by the King in January 1408, so it clearly continued to be a source of contention. It was, perhaps, in part Anne's sense of neglect and isolation from family that prompted her to seize the opportunity for escape in a controversial marriage later that year.

Unwilling to be a marriage pawn

Nineteen-year-old Anne had good reason to suspect that Henry IV would be looking to marry her off to a safely loyal gentleman or very minor noble who would never be in a position to use her lineage to threaten the Lancastrian royal line. Clearly she had no intention of being a pawn in others' dynastic plans as her parents had been. Anne's chosen husband, Richard of Conisburgh, was the younger brother of Constance of York who had tried to pursue Anne's brother's right to the throne three years earlier. Richard was much younger than his sister, just three years older than Anne. In his late teens he had been in the service of the prince of Wales, the future Henry V, and it was probably in 1404 that he first encountered Lord Charlton and his family when both men were fighting Glyndwr's adherents. Richard of Conisburgh was the poorest of all Edward III's grandchildren. He had been left no property by his father, but his mother had bequeathed all her goods to Richard II with a request that he provide financially for her son. Richard II had committed to provide annuities of £100 and £233 6s 8d from the issues of Yorkshire and the exchequer respectively, until an opportunity arose to provide Richard of Conisburgh with estates worth 500 marks a year. But those estates were never forthcoming and Henry IV frequently failed to pay the annuities. Consequently, Richard of Conisburgh might have been expected to choose a wealthy heiress as his bride, rather than someone of Anne's modest fortune – he could not have guessed that her brothers would both die without children of their own. Nonetheless, he perhaps hoped that, if one of them did make good on their royal lineage, it would benefit his own family to be so closely related to a new king.

The couple married secretly early in 1408, although they knew full well that they were too closely related for a legitimate marriage. They also knew that, for an appropriate fee, the Church's default position in such circumstances was always to legitimise marriages with a dispensation. In May 1408 Pope



The Langley tomb, Anne's likely resting place

Gregory XII instructed them to undergo a short separation and penance and then 'contract anew' their marriage, after which any children conceived would be legitimate. Henry IV was doubtless angry not to have been consulted, but clearly recognised that he had been outmanoeuvred; even before the dispensation was granted he changed the arrangements for Richard's exchequer annuity, so that the money now came from the revenues the king was meant to receive from Anne's brother's possessions that were in Lord Charlton's custody. This proved to be a more secure financial arrangement, if not the landed estate Richard of Conisburgh must still have hoped for.

Marriage and an early death

The couple seem to have lived together at Richard's own birthplace, Conisburgh Castle in Yorkshire. This belonged to Richard's brother, Edward duke of York, but he had plenty of castles and preferred to live further south at Fotheringhay. The couple's first child was a daughter, whom they named Isabel, after Richard's own mother, Isabel of Castile. Their son and grandson were later to claim a right to the throne of Castile through Isabel, so this heritage was clearly very important to the family. On 22 September 1411 their second child was born, a son called Richard. His birth date is the last certain evidence that we have of Anne's life. It is possible that she died as a result of the pregnancy, but we simply don't know. By 1414 her husband had remarried.

There is no written record of Anne's place of burial. However, in 1877 when the tomb of her husband's parents, Edmund of Langley and Isabel of Castile, was opened in order to move it, an additional skeleton was found inside, securely lapped in lead with flaxen hair upon the skull. It was of a woman judged to be about 25 years old. The only woman close enough to the family who died at about that age seems to be Anne Mortimer, who was 22 when her son was born. It was a logical place of burial because, despite Anne's descent from Lionel duke of Clarence, her husband's parents were more immediately close to royalty than her own. Quite possibly her husband imagined, at the time, that he would one day sort out a tomb for the pair of them, alongside his parents at King's Langley.

In the event he did not long outlive her. In 1415 Richard recklessly tried to take advantage of Henry V's absence on his Agincourt campaign to set up Anne's brother, Edmund Mortimer, as king. He was betrayed at Southampton by Edmund himself, even before Henry V set sail, and was executed for his pains.

Anne's early death has tended to make her look like yet another tragic pawn of politics, but her determination to have her rights as Eleanor Holland's daughter, and her willingness to risk Henry IV's anger with a secret marriage, quite possibly indicate a woman as determined and politically savvy as some of the more famous women of the Wars of the Roses. Although he could have no memory of her, her son, Richard duke of York, named his eldest daughter for her. His decision to claim the throne of England by right of her lineage ensured that she would be remembered by historians thereafter.



About the author: Society member Joanna Laynesmith is the prize-winning author of *Cecily Duchess of York* and *The Last Medieval Queens*. She has taught at the Universities of Oxford, York and Huddersfield and is currently a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Reading. She has published extensively on medieval women.

FROM YOUR EDITOR

It's been a great year for the Mortimer History Society with so many 'firsts' and 'best evers'! Two of them feature in this issue of *Mortimer Matters*. On page 7 we announce the first recipient of the MHS research bursary, all part of our efforts to support academic study and research. And on page 4 we report on our most ambitious event to date – a celebration of the 700th anniversary of Roger Mortimer's daring escape from the Tower of London. Both of these have been outstanding achievements – but there's a lot more for you to enjoy in these pages.

Hotfoot from her presentation at this year's Autumn Symposium, Dr Joanna Laynesmith investigates the life of Anne Mortimer, the source of the House of York's claim to the throne. Hannah Boston describes her research into the influence of rumour on 15th century politics. There's nothing new about 'spin'. John Fleming describes the evolving management of the Marcher Lordships and Hugh Wood introduces us to Society members who claim Mortimer heritage.

We also report on recent events and look forward to an action-packed programme for 2024 – as well as one last highlight for this year, which is very dear to my heart, as it focuses entirely on historical fiction.

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 February and will start planning it soon, so please get in touch with your ideas quickly!



Our most ambitious event yet!

On a sunny Tuesday 1 August, over 160 people joined us at the Tower of London to celebrate the 700th anniversary of Roger Mortimer's famous escape from captivity in England's greatest stronghold. It was our most ambitious event yet and marked a milestone in the Society's history.

Two years in the planning, The Great Escape was an event that stretched all of our organisational and logistical skills to the limit but, thankfully, turned out to be a triumph, rapturously received by Society members and non-members alike. It coincided with the launch of *The Mortimers of Wigmore 1066 to 1485: Dynasty of Destiny*. Commissioned by the Society, this compendium of essays is now rapidly on its way to becoming a top-seller for its publisher Logaston Press.

"We were thrilled by the response to both the event and the book," says Society Secretary Philip Hume. "Our aim was to raise the national profile of Roger, the Mortimer dynasty and the Welsh Marches – and I think we did just that!"

Certainly, the bar has been set very high for future events. Watch this space to find out what grand schemes we cook up next. In the meantime, see page 12 for our events programme running into 2024.

"The Mortimer History Society can do GREAT things!" Dr Ian Mortimer



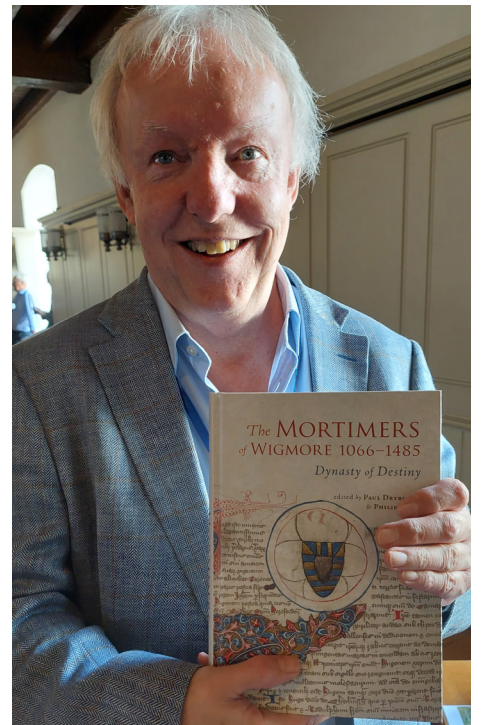
The organising team arrived early morning, before the Tower opened to the public. It was strange to see this usually bustling place so empty, with only the cawing of the ravens to break the silence.



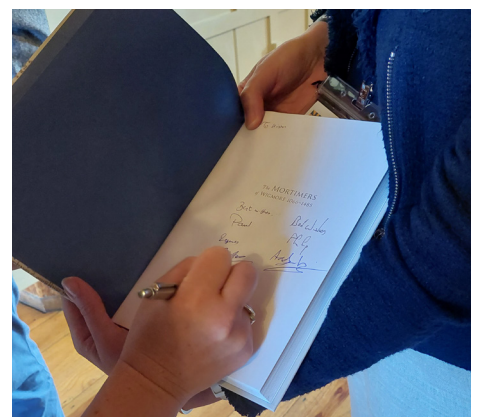
The crowd quickly gathered in the Tower's banquet suite to hear Dr Ian Mortimer, Dr Laura Tompkins, Dr Paul Dryburgh and Professor Chris Given-Wilson give presentations that encompassed the life of Roger Mortimer and the achievements of his dynasty.



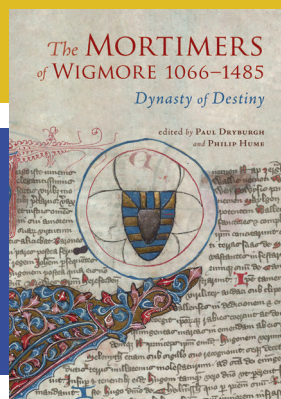
An avid audience discovers the career and fate of Roger Mortimer, 1st earl of March and – eventually – founder of the royal house of York.



Audience members snapped up copies of *The Mortimers of Wigmore 1066 to 1485* – a compendium of essays commissioned by the Society to mark this special anniversary.



Contributors to the book were on hand to sign copies.



If you still don't have your copy of *The Mortimers of Wigmore*, order it NOW at www.logastonpress.co.uk.



A school day at Ludlow Castle

On a sunny day in June, 285 children from seven schools took over Ludlow Castle for the Mortimer History Society's annual Schools' Day – a major part of our education programme aimed at the very young.

A little education and a whole lot of fun were on the curriculum for Schools' Day, on which a tour of the castle was followed by lessons in archery and fletching, weaponry and fighting, cooking and household skills, dancing and medieval medicine.

"Most of the children came from schools in Herefordshire and South Shropshire," says schools expert and Society Trustee, Kathy Cowell. "But we were also thrilled to welcome children from Montgomery in Powys for the first time – all part of our plans to extend our outreach."

Plans are already underway for the 2024 Schools' Day. "I'd love to hear from teachers from any schools that would like their children to be involved," says Kathy. Contact her directly at cowell.kathy@sky.com.



Archery was a core skill in the Middle Ages for which England was renowned. Our 21st century children learned to make and fire arrows from an absolute pro!



Our man at arms gave lessons in weaponry and proved himself ready for a fight!

Our student here looks a little less fight-ready, but the opportunity to try on armour is something the children always relish.



Why we do it

The Society's Schools Programme contributes to one of our key objectives: to spark an interest in medieval history – especially the history of the Marches and the Mortimers – among the young. "The opportunity to bring children outside the classroom and into the wonderful atmosphere of Ludlow Castle is so valuable," says Kathy. "We hope that, at least for some, this special day will spark a lifelong interest in the Middle Ages and what it was like to live in those times."

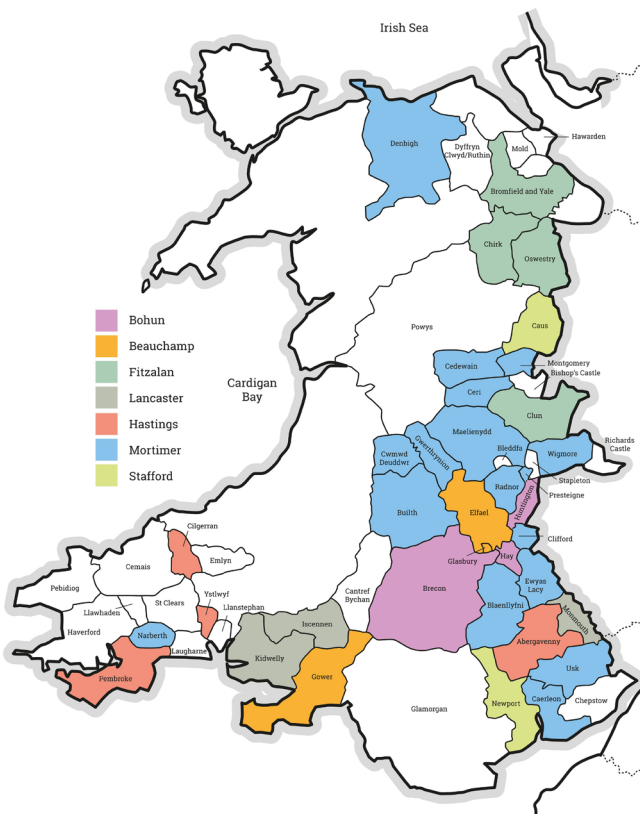
Managing the Marcher Lordships

Society Trustee John Fleming describes how the management of the Marcher Lordships evolved, following the Edwardian conquest, and how the effective management of this vital border delivered stability for both its lords and the English Crown.

The Marcher lordships experienced a tumultuous existence of conquest and re-conquest from the arrival of the Normans in the late 11th century until the Edwardian conquest of 1282-83. Historian R.R. Davies describes the area as, 'a land of war, interrupted on occasion by peace'. Post-conquest, King Edward I looked to stabilise the region. One of his actions was to formalise the structure of the governance of Wales by issuing the Statute of Rhuddlan in 1284, and, by default, acknowledging the structure of the Marcher lordships. This system survived for 250 years until the early 16th century when the Marcher lordships were dissolved under Henry VIII.

The concentration of the lordships

Whilst the lordships themselves lasted for that long period, the nature of the lords changed dramatically. The extinction of the male line was a catastrophe for a family and its lordship – if a lord had no male heirs when he died, his inheritance would be divided amongst the surviving female heirs and their husbands; if no heir existed at all, or the lord had committed treason, his lands and estates were taken into the hands of the Crown to be given to royal favourites. As this process evolved, the Marcher lordships became concentrated amongst fewer families. Also, these families were of much higher status. As an example, only one Marcher family, the Marshals, were earls in 1200. By 1300, 7 out of the 10 earls in England were Marcher lords. Being a Marcher lord was attractive, as it brought both status and extra revenues to a family.



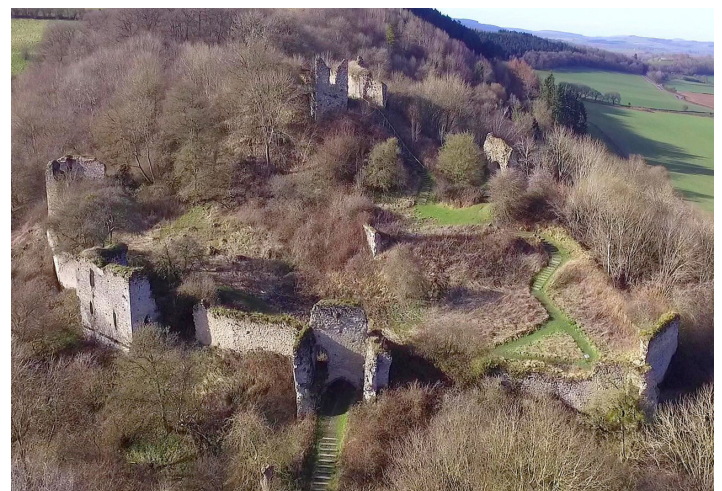
By the late 14th century Marcher lordships were increasingly held by a small number of powerful families

Absentee lords

This development meant that, with fewer families in the March and those families being of higher status, they were often not present in their lordships, as they were involved on the larger stage of court politics. Therefore, by the later 14th century, most of the Marcher lords were not from the March and spent very little time there, thus creating challenges in the management of these lordships in their absence. Lords typically established an administrative centre, which oversaw the management of all their estates. They would then rely on officials – in residence and often Welsh – to administer lordships at a local level. There were several ways they might do this. Sometimes, the lordship would simply be 'rented' out to a person, who would then try to maximise its revenue, which often led to an abuse of power. At other times, officials were installed in a region to manage it on the lord's behalf. In any case, it was challenging for a lord to manage centrally and keep control locally.

The Mortimers – a case in point

The Mortimers were a Marcher family with a strong presence from shortly after the Norman conquest until the male line died out in the early 15th century. Despite having their family seat firmly in the March, first at Wigmore and later at Ludlow, their holdings grew to such a large extent that they too were absentee lords with lands spread across England, Wales and Ireland. We get a good glimpse of how such a vast empire of lordships was managed through the accounts record from 1392 of their receiver general, Walter Brugge.



Wigmore – the Mortimers' family seat © P.R. Davis

In April of that year, Walter left Ludlow for Wigmore, where he stayed briefly before heading south to Usk, where he spent nine days. He then travelled to Clifford-on-Wye and Builth before heading west to the small Mortimer lordship of Narberth, near Pembroke, which he reached 20 days after setting off from Ludlow. He was able to get in a visit (perhaps pilgrimage) to St Davids, before returning east, stopping on the way at the lordship of Laugharne to pay a visit to its lord, William de Brian. He arrived back in Builth on the last day of April, having travelled more than 300 miles in less than a month.

Walter was not exceptional in this regard. Most Marcher lords would have had agents like Walter who travelled through their lands extensively. The Marcher lords had regal powers, but it was through administrators like Walter Brugge that they exercised them. That's not to say that the lord didn't control his lordships. The main decisions were made by the lord's council and were executed at the local level. It was important that this process ran smoothly and fairly, and in the case of the Mortimers, it seems generally to have done so.

Failure to manage Marcher lands successfully frequently resulted in lost revenues and dissatisfied tenants. Occasionally it opened the door to rebellion or uprising, as was the case in the early 15th century when the uprising of Owain Glyn Dŵr threatened not just the security of a single lordship, but England's dominion over the whole of Wales. This rebellion, which rapidly became a struggle for nationhood, demonstrates how the English Crown itself was dependent on the good lordship and effective administration of the Marcher lordships.



Glyn Dŵr's rebellion threatened England's security

Revealing the first Mortimer History Society Bursary recipient

We're delighted to announce that Gabriella Williams, just starting a PhD at the University of Winchester, is the first recipient of the Society's newly-created Research Bursary.



Gabriella's bursary application won through against tough competition for two reasons. First, for the detailed plans she has to use the bursary money and, second, for the intriguing nature of her research. Gabriella's PhD studies will investigate 'medieval misinformation' – the spread and impact of political rumour in 15th century England.

"My aim is to look at the different sorts of political rumours prevalent in the 15th century and how they shaped political narratives and events," says Gabriella. She'll be looking particularly at how rumours affected the careers of Mortimer-related figures such as Richard II, Henry IV and Richard duke of York, and Mortimer-related events, including Owain Glyn Dŵr's rebellion and the Southampton Plot of 1415.

"I'm interested in the way rumours were repeated through different generations of the Mortimer family," Gabriella explains. "For example, did Roger Mortimer, the 1st earl of March, inspire rumours regarding usurpation in later generations that may not otherwise have occurred? How did the rebellion of Sir Edmund Mortimer IV affect perceptions of Edmund Mortimer, the 5th earl, and did the latter's loyalty affect the way the Mortimers were portrayed in general? And how did all of this affect the rumours surrounding Richard duke of York in the lead-up to 1460, and rumours regarding Yorkist legitimacy in the later 15th century?"

Yve James, who chairs the Bursary Committee, says, "It's thrilling that the Society's first bursary award will support such innovative and ground-breaking research. We know

that political events – both in the 15th century and today – are often shaped and determined by the word on the street, sometimes deliberately placed, sometimes naturally occurring. I'm full of anticipation for Gabriella's research and the contribution it will make to our understanding of events that formed the history of the Mortimer family and the nation."

Yve was joined in the judging by Professors Helen Fulton of the University of Bristol and Janet Burton of the University of Wales Trinity St David.

Invaluable support

Like so many students, Gabriella is self-funding her PhD, so the £1,000 bursary monies will be more than useful! She plans to use it to finance trips to libraries and archives, and to access specialist books and primary resources – including trips to the National Archives and British Library in London. It will also finance her attendance at the 2024 Fifteenth Century Conference in Oxford. She's also excited about becoming a member of the Mortimer History Society – all part of the bursary scheme. "This will give me a rich opportunity to engage with scholars, researchers and members of the Society who share my interest in 15th century politics. I'm looking forward to collaborating and sharing ideas!"

Gabriella is also excited to contribute to future issues of *Mortimer Matters*, so you can expect to share in her investigations here as her work progresses.

'Private' charters and regional society, c.1000-1307

England saw fundamental social, legal, and political changes between c.1000-1307 that had a profound effect on everyday life. Often, though, the changes that we think about are ones caused by the élite— a new ruler, the introduction of new statutes or new demands from lords, for instance. Hannah Boston's postdoctoral research project will challenge this picture in two ways: by addressing how these big changes were felt on the ground in the regional societies of Shropshire and Lincolnshire, and by looking at how regional societies themselves could drive local or wider changes. Here she outlines her plan of work.

My project will use Shropshire and Lincolnshire as case studies to examine these issues. These are at first sight very different places. Lincolnshire has traditionally been seen as an area with a strongly Anglo-Scandinavian population, which brought with it more personal freedom, with a buoyant economy and land market. Ongoing drainage of the fens made for expanding areas under cultivation. Shropshire, as a border area, saw more low-level unrest throughout the period, but also cross-border influences and relationships. After the Norman Conquest, most of the land in the county was granted out to only a few lords, and localised seigneurial power remained strong with the development of Marcher lordships.

Structures of power and connections to property and landscape

I'm also interested in the position of women in these two counties. Lincolnshire is thought of in the historiography as having more female power and landholding versus Shropshire, which had more military-focused, male control of land. The position of towns in the two counties is also interesting. The ideas of property and structures of power in the 'planted' towns of Shropshire, such as Ludlow and Oswestry, contrast both with older sites within the county, such as Shrewsbury, and towns such as Lincoln, which has Roman roots. I will test the extent of these contrasts, or perceived contrasts, and use them to give valuable insight into deeper structures of how power, and power connected to property and the landscape, worked in the central Middle Ages.

Areas of research

For each of these counties, I will ask five main questions:

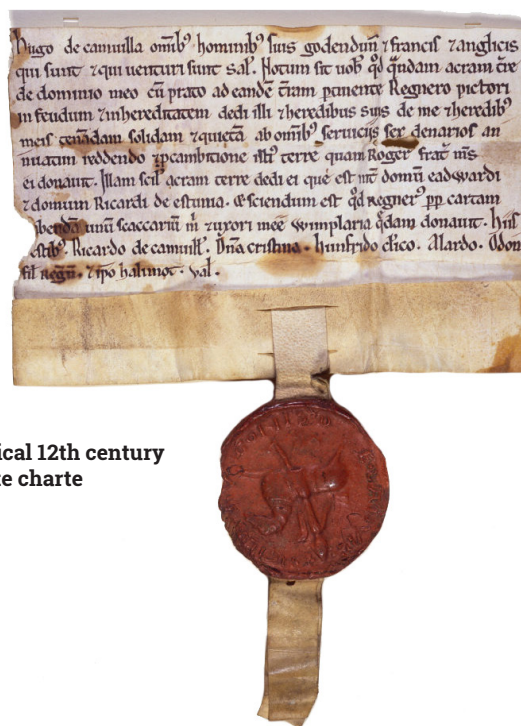
1. How did ideas about loyalty and property develop, spread, and change, and how did they vary between genders, groups, and regions?
2. How did events and developments on a national stage play out in regional political society?
3. How far can we see the existence or emergence of local 'communities' in this period?
4. How did authority and geography interact in this period? How far did longer-term changes in the human geography— such as village formation or desertion, clearing of new land or fights over common land— have an impact on aspects of social life, such as relationships between people, or how a lord might express his power?
5. Who was producing 'private' charters and other documents, and how were they used as sources of authority and social memory?

The rise of the Private Charter

Crucial to this study will be the 'private' charter. These are single-sheet records of grants and transactions, generally relating to the transfer of lands or rights. The period saw an explosion, or rather, a series of explosions, in the numbers of charters surviving, and probably the number that were produced: in 1000, our surviving charters are mostly those of the king or high nobility; by 1307, they were in regular use by peasants. As documents produced within, and for use in, regional society, they are some of the most important pieces of evidence for understanding medieval England on the ground.



Looking out from Stokesay Castle: How did lords see the landscape?



A typical 12th century private charter

Despite their importance, however, they have barely been studied in a systematic way. For both counties, I will collect and study all surviving and accessible charters: I estimate that there are at least 5,000 extant, either in their original form, as single sheets of parchment, or having been copied during the Middle Ages into collections known as cartularies. However, as anyone who has studied the period will know, charters have often been scattered far and wide since the medieval period— so trying to track down all documents relating to a particular place or person can be difficult and time-consuming. This project, then, will also aim to help future researchers to find resources more quickly and easily by compiling a free, publicly-available index of charters for

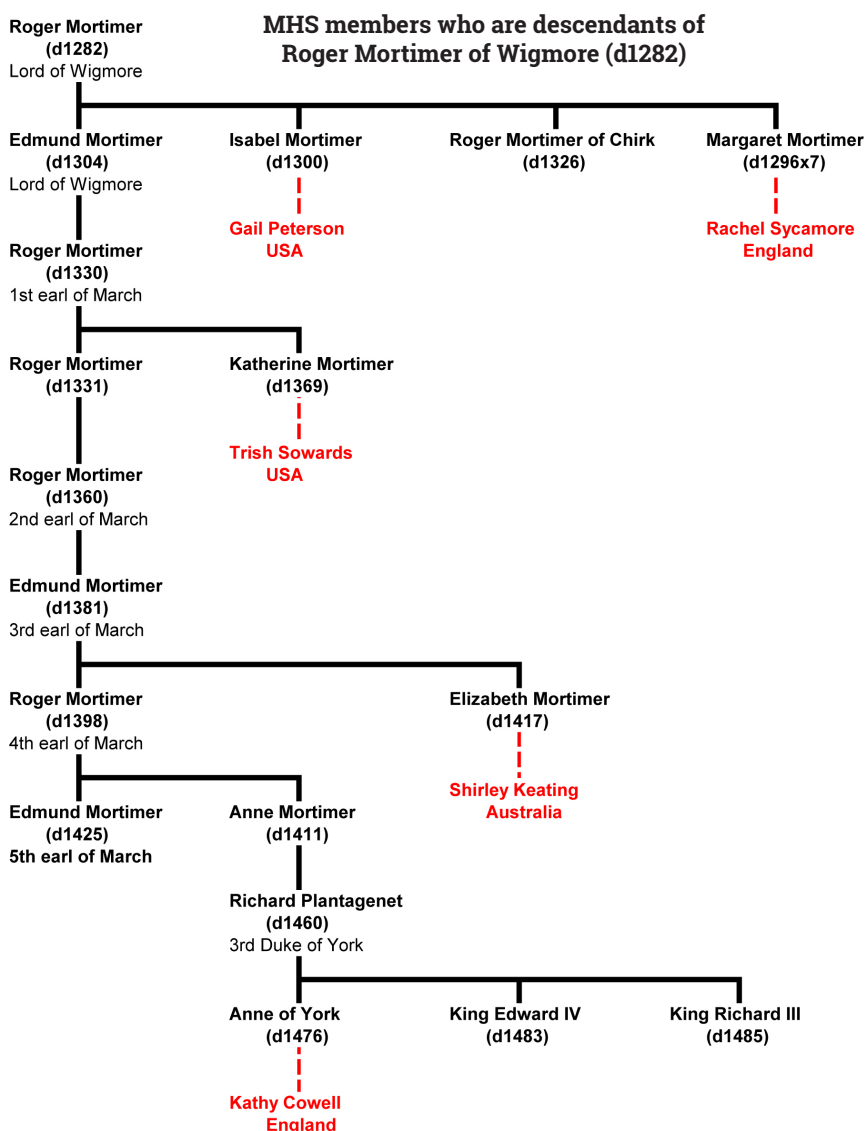
the two counties, containing as much information as I am able to provide. It will also produce editions of previously unpublished charters. This will be a pilot scheme for what I hope will be a future project: to create a free database for all medieval 'private' charters from across England. But that might have to wait a few years!

I have had the pleasure of meeting and talking with several Shropshire-based historians already, including Mike Beazley in Ludlow and John Pryce-Jones in Oswestry, but I would welcome hearing from others who are researching similar subjects, or about any overlooked local charters. Please drop me a line at hboston@lincoln.ac.uk.

Hannah Boston is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the University of Lincoln. She completed her doctorate at Trinity College, Oxford in 2019, and has since worked as an archaeologist at MOLA and Lecturer at Magdalen College, Oxford. Her first book, *Lordship and Locality in the Long Twelfth Century* will be published in January 2024, and examines structures of lordship amongst the lesser aristocracy of Leicestershire, Derbyshire, and Staffordshire.

You're probably descended from the Medieval Mortimers

In the second of two articles, Hugh Wood meets four more Society members who can trace their family lineage back to the medieval Mortimers. Today, they're spread across the world, but all four share a common heritage in the Welsh March.



If you had English ancestors at some point in the past, the odds are that you're descended from the Mortimers of Wigmore – you just have to find your route back! These intrepid Society members have done just that. Trish Sowards, Shirley Keating and Kathy Cowell have found their links to the main Mortimer family at different points. Thomas Howell Evans meanwhile, has uncovered a very different ancestry, which links him to a lesser-known branch of the family.

Trish Sowards

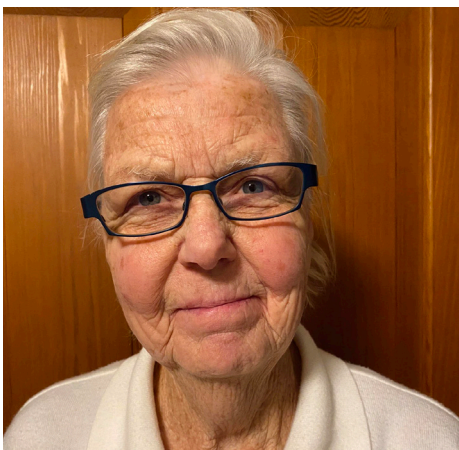


Trish lives in the state of Washington, USA. She is descended from Katherine Mortimer, a daughter of Roger Mortimer, 1st earl of March (d1330). Katherine married Thomas Beauchamp, 11th earl

of Warwick, an able soldier, much feared by his enemies, who commanded the centre at the battle of Crecy in 1346. He died in 1369 of the Black Death, three months after Katherine. Their joint tomb is in St Mary's church, Warwick. Their fourth son, William, fought in the Hundred Years War and was created a Knight of the Garter in 1376. He inherited Abergavenny in 1389 and was subsequently created the first baron Bergavenny. His daughter Joan married James Butler, 4th earl of Ormond, a very learned man, but difficult to get on with. Despite a bitter long-running feud with John Talbot, 1st earl of Shrewsbury, he eventually softened, and their offspring, John Talbot and Elizabeth Butler, were married.

Despite flirting with the Yorkists, following the first battle of St Albans, John Talbot, 2nd earl of Shrewsbury, threw in his lot with Queen Margaret, being made Lord High Treasurer before meeting his end at the Yorkist victory at Northampton in 1460. John and Elizabeth's daughter Anne Talbot married Sir Henry Vernon. He proved adroit at keeping in with the Yorkists without alienating the Lancastrians. Esquire of the Body to both Edward IV and Richard III, he was soon in high favour with Henry VII, who appointed him Governor and Treasurer for the young Arthur, Prince of Wales. Trish's family tree then goes through Sir Robert Corbet, of Moreton Corbet in Shropshire, to the Yorkshire family of Palmes where it remained for six generations.

Shirley Keating



Shirley, who lives in Canberra, Australia, has traced her family tree to Elizabeth Mortimer (d1417) the eldest child of Edmund, 3rd earl of March, and a great-granddaughter of Edward III. Her first husband was the ambitious and warlike Henry Percy (Hotspur). He formed an unholy alliance with Elizabeth's brother,

Sir Edmund Mortimer and Owain Glyn Dwr to remove Henry IV and then carve up England and Wales into three, with a piece for each of them. The rebellion failed and Hotspur met his end at the battle of Shrewsbury in 1403. Elizabeth appears in Shakespeare's Henry IV as Anne, Lady Percy and, later, as the widow Percy. Their daughter Elizabeth married John, Lord Clifford, who attended Henry V at Agincourt in 1415. In 1422, shortly after being made a Knight of the Garter, he was killed at the siege of Meaux.

Their daughter Mary Clifford married Sir Philip Wentworth, who was an eminent Lancastrian courtier. Despite Edward IV's crushing victory at Towton in 1461, disaffection persisted in the north of England. Sir Philip was part of a rebel Lancastrian army that was defeated at the battle of Hexham in 1464 and he was beheaded at Middleham shortly after. Fortunately, his son Sir Henry Wentworth did not suffer significantly, serving in France with Edward IV. After Bosworth he was at the court of Henry VII as a Knight of the Body and subsequently held several prestigious posts.

Kathy Cowell



Kathy lives in Ludlow, Shropshire in the UK. Her family tree links to the Mortimers through Richard Plantagenet, 3rd Duke of York, who married Cecily Neville. Their eldest daughter Anne of York was, of course, the sister of Edward IV, Richard III and of Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy. Anne married Sir Thomas St Leger, a strong Yorkist who fought at both Barnet and Tewkesbury. Following Edward IV's death he attended Richard III's coronation in July 1483, but soon joined Buckingham in rebellion, ostensibly appalled by the detention of the princes in the Tower. The rebellion was a dismal failure and both Buckingham and Sir Thomas St

Leger were executed. Anne of York died in 1476 giving birth to their only child, another Anne. She was a great heiress who married George Manners, 11th Baron de Ros about 1490.

Thomas Howell Evans



Thomas, who lives in Powys, Wales, has a very different family tree. His Mortimer ancestors were based in west Wales and are known as the Mortimers of Coedmore, a lovely wooded area on the river Teifi, just south-east of Cardigan. The family connection between the main Wigmore line and the Coedmore branch has not been established, but existing documents make it clear that the Welsh branch were recognised as 'family' in the early 14th century. Little is known for certain about this branch of the Mortimers, its first identified member being a Henry Mortimer who was around in 1250. In the early 15th century, a Hugh Mortimer was constable of Cardigan castle for several years. Another member of the family, Roger (d.1424) served in the garrison at Calais. His son, Owain Mortimer, was a man-at-arms at Agincourt in 1415 and served as mayor of Cardigan three times between 1421 and 1434. Howell's ancestral line continues with the Coedmore Mortimers down to a younger son, John, who was mayor of Cardigan in 1525. It's clear that the Mortimers of Coedmore were an important local family, but they appear to have been largely detached from the upheavals in 15th century England.

If you, too, can trace your family tree back to the Mortimers, Hugh would be thrilled to hear from you. Drop him a line at hugh@hughanddorris.co.uk.

Sponsorship of International Medieval Congress goes from strength to strength

This July, and for the third year running, the Mortimer History Society sponsored sessions on medieval Wales and the Marches at the Leeds International Medieval Congress (IMC) – Europe’s largest gathering of medieval scholars and students. Amy Reynolds of Bangor University chaired the sessions, along with her colleague Jennifer Bell. Here she reports on a resounding success.

The IMC is the ideal place to raise the profile of medieval Wales and the Welsh Marches to a wider, international audience. It attracts scholars and students from around the globe, who gather to hear over 2,000 papers on all aspects of the medieval world. All four sessions on medieval Wales were well attended, to the extent that we had to turn people away at the door!



Amy Reynolds – chairing the Society’s sessions

Topics under discussion included politics, economics, religious networks, and literary connections across Wales and the Marches, and generated really insightful and interesting discussions on the topic of Wales and where the discipline is headed. These discussions were, obviously, continued over tea and coffee, and in the bar. I was delighted to see a wide range of delegates engaging with Welsh history.

As well as sponsoring the sessions, the Society funded two speakers, Dr Shaun McGuinness from Bangor University and Caroline Bourne a PhD researcher from Reading University, and their attendance greatly added to the diverse discussion.

Following on from the success of this year, we are preparing for Leeds IMC 2024 under the theme ‘Crisis’! Once

again, the Mortimer History Society will sponsor some of the sessions, and I will be requesting a larger room this time! Given the interesting discussions that emerged this year, we will also be including a round table discussion as an opportunity to discuss the future of the history of Wales and the Marches.

An International launch for the Mortimers of Wigmore

The IMC also provided the venue for an international launch of the Society’s latest landmark publication: *The Mortimers of Wigmore 1066 to 1485: Dynasty of Destiny*, as Philip Hume reports.

To round off a fantastic day at IMC, the Society hosted a reception in University House to celebrate the international launch of its latest publication. The response to the event, hosted by myself and fellow editor Paul Dryburgh, was

overwhelming. For well over an hour, the room was packed with people looking at the book, purchasing copies, catching up with friends and discussing Mortimer and Marches history. With people coming and going during the session, it’s difficult to say exactly how many attended, but based on the drinks consumed (!), it was probably 80 – 100. It was great to see so many members and friends of the Society gathered together in one room.

Many scholars and academics took the opportunity to not only praise the quality of the book but to express their appreciation for everything that the Society does to encourage research into the Mortimers, the Marcher lordships and medieval Wales. This new book, as you know, is just one of our many initiatives, which include the annual essay prize, the Journal and the online seminar group. In particular, people singled out the practical support that the Society gives to students, researchers, and scholars through the Leeds IMC sponsorship and bursaries and the recently launched annual research bursary (see page 7). We were asked to pass on a huge thank you to all the members of the Mortimer History Society who make this possible.



Medieval Documents Group meets at Hereford Cathedral

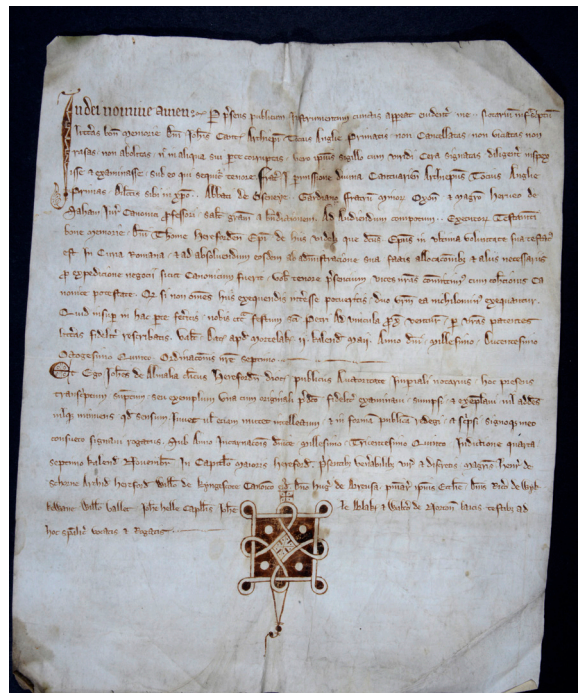
Yve James, co-ordinator of the Society's Medieval Documents Group, reports on a visit to the Hereford cathedral archive.

A most enjoyable time was had by our group on the weekend of 23/24 September; firstly, by visiting the Cathedral to view the Chained Library and Mappa Mundi, followed by a display of documents and a talk at the Archives there. The highlight was being able to view a wide variety of documents that Elizabeth, the cathedral's Archivist, had found for us. These ranged from a copy of an Anglo-Saxon document through to a book of the Visitations for the Hereford Diocese, dated 1397 and a letter written on an early make of paper.

Of particular interest were items dating from 1322 - 24 relating to an uprising involving Roger Mortimer and Adam of Orleton, the Bishop of Hereford. During Saturday afternoon and the whole of Sunday, these were among some of the medieval documents related to the Mortimer family that we were able to read.

Two more documents that caught our eyes were ones authenticated by notaries, though not by using seals or signatures. Elizabeth had found two completely different styles to illustrate them and if one did not know any differently, one could be forgiven for thinking the authentications were doodles!

The Medieval Documents Group meets regularly by Zoom when we learn how to decipher the many abbreviations and conventions the medieval scribes employed in the documents they wrote. If you are interested in what we do and would like to find out more, or join the group, please get in touch with Yve at medievaldocs@mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk



Excessively beautiful notary authentications © Hereford Cathedral by kind permission of the Dean and Chapter

Vital dates for your diary – and more details to come

Saturday, 25 November – Grange Court, Leominster
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. More details on page 14.

Saturday, 27 January 2024
Women of Wales and the March

A half-day online conference with a female bent kickstarts our 2024 programme. Details of this – and a series of evening events with a women at the centre – coming soon

Saturday, 23 March 2024
AGM

Details to be confirmed.

Saturday, 18 May
Spring Conference: Landscape of the Marches

Our first major conference of the year will be held at Ludlow Assembly Rooms and will feature presentations from archaeologists, landscape historians and castle experts. Details to be confirmed.

Wednesday, 19 June
John Grove Memorial Lecture

Professor David Carpenter will come with us to Montgomery to investigate Henry III's relationship with Wales. The day will include a study visit to Montgomery Castle, church and museum.

Saturday, 5 October

Autumn symposium focused on the research interests of Society members. Details to be confirmed.

KEEP THE DATE!

Autumn Symposium – from myth to murder mystery

This year's autumn symposium brought history alive with drama, intrigue and myth making and had our audience on the edge of its seats!



Our autumn meet is always an eclectic mix, featuring a range of presentations based on new and growing research interests. This year was no exception, and we were very pleased to note that all of our scholarly presenters are members of the Society – evidence of the top quality scholarship happening in our midst.

Though our aim was for eclecticism, we did note a common theme in three of our four speaker presentations. Kathryn Warner, Sean McGuinness and Matt Lewis gave us a series of medieval murder mysteries. But the question wasn't simply 'who done it' but, 'was it done at all?'

It's long been accepted that Edward II was murdered following his abdication in 1327, but, as Kathryn Warner revealed, the evidence is inconclusive, and it is equally possible that he left England, lived on for many years and ended his life in the Hermitage of Sant'Alberto di Butrio in Italy. There's even a tomb there purporting to be his. But, tantalysingly, it is empty of a body.

Matt Lewis challenged the traditional version of a story we all *think* we know – that of the Princes in the Tower. Their uncle Richard III has long been vilified as a child murdering tyrant, who had the boys smothered in their sleep and buried under a staircase at the Tower of London. It was fascinating to hear Matthew's alternative history, which has them smuggled out of England

before the Battle of Bosworth and living on to threaten Henry VII's early reign. Richard, he suggests may have taken the treatment of his own Mortimer antecedents Edmund and Roger Mortimer, some 80 years earlier, as his blueprint. Though they stood as possible heirs to the throne in 1399, they survived the usurpation of Henry IV unmolested, though kept captive.

We may learn more about the Princes later this year when Philippa Langley – leader of the team that found the remains of Richard III – unveils the results of research into their possible survival (see Bookshelf on page X).

Our final murder mystery was that of Llywelyn the Last, who was 'betrayed in the belfry at Bangor by his own men' and subsequently killed. His counsellor and confessor, Bishop Anian of Bangor, may not seem like the most likely suspect in that betrayal but, as Sean explained, letters now in the National Archive at Kew reveal Anian's growing animosity towards Llywelyn in the years and months leading up to the murder. Certainly, as Sean's presentation drew to it's close Anian was looking a little more guilty.

And, since these stories of medieval murder have undoubtedly involved a degree of myth-making (thank you, Mr Shakespeare), it seemed wholly fitting that our final talk of the day, by Dr Joanna Laynesmith, should involve

myth-making of a very different kind. Edward IV's Mortimer lineage allowed him to claim descent, not just from Edward III, but from the Ancient Kings of Britain. Joanna showed how successive kings drew upon such lineages – along with prophecies attributed to Merlin and others – to bolster the validity of their reigns.



The magnificent Edward IV Coronation Roll traces the king's origins back through the Mortimers back to the Britons, the Romans and the Trojans to the founding of the world.

Don't miss out!

If you weren't able to attend the Autumn Symposium on 7 October, don't worry. All of the presentations were recorded and are available now on the Society's YouTube channel.

Title picture shows our speakers, Joanna Laynesmith, Kathryn Warner, Matt Lewis and Sean McGuinness

Writing the Past

Saturday, 25 November

Don't forget to book your ticket for our final event of the year – another first from MHS – a day dedicated to great historical fiction and the medieval history that inspires it.



Toby Clements, author of *The Kingmaker* series

The author of four novels set during the Wars of the Roses, Toby will talk about the joys and challenges of historical research – the pursuit of accuracy and the journey towards deeper truth.



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

In conversation with Annie Garthwaite, prize-winning debut novelist Victoria will discuss her desire to recover the lives of England's earliest women writers, the mystics Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich.



Anne O'Brien, *Sunday Times* best-selling author

Anne's most recent novels are inspired by the famous Paston Letters, which provide a unique insight into a medieval family on the rise.

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 by all three authors and have them signed!

Welcome to new members

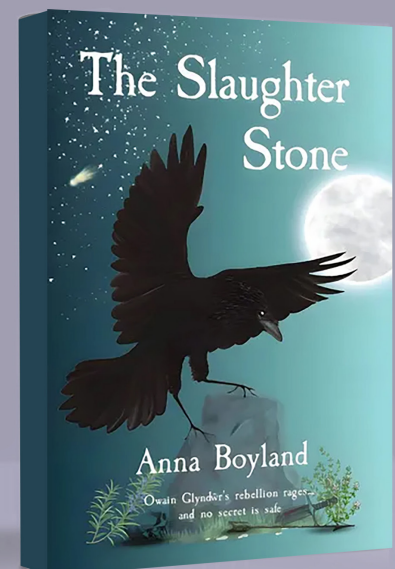
Twenty three new members have joined since the last edition of *Mortimer Matters*. Welcome all! We hope you're enjoying your membership and look forward to meeting you soon!

Joanna Armstrong	Heathfield
John Richard Baker	Bromley
Alyssa Benedetto	Glasgow
Lewis Bennett	Ipswich
Dr Hannah Boston	London
Dr Karen Brown	London
Deidre Burrell	Reading
Deidre Clark	Florida, USA
Louise Furse	Pembroke
Dr Rachael Harkes	Berkeley
Geoff Ilsey	London
Robert Jones	Wolverhampton
Rob Mortimer	Lewes
Lisa North	Yarpole
Dianna Powell	Harpenden
Kala and Michael Price	Rugeley
Christopher Samuel	Caldicot
Matthew Snape	Bretforton
Peter Sutton	Malvern
John Wareham	Haverhill
Gabriella Williams	Tenby
Mary Zimmerman	Texas, USA

Book News: The Slaughter Stone

Society member, Juliet Barnes (aka Anna Boyland) has published her first novel. Set in medieval Wales, *The Slaughter Stone* is inspired by Owain Glyndŵr's rebellion and, as you might expect, members of the Mortimer family are central to the story.

Available from [Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk) in e-book or paperback.



For your bookshelf

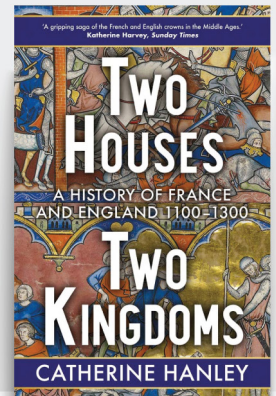
Autumn nights – perfect for reading. Here are four to curl up with. From cross-Channel relations to age old mysteries and the secrets of life and death in the Middle Ages.

Two Houses, Two Kingdoms: A history of France and England, 1100 to 1300

By Catherine Hanley

An exhilarating chronicle of the ruling houses of France and England during the 12th and 13th centuries. This was a time of personal monarchy, when friendships or feuds could determine the course of history. Catherine traces the frequent clashes and occasional friendships of the Capetian and Angevin dynasties and how they shaped nations.

Published by Yale University Press in July 2023 and available now in bookshops or online. RRP £11.99

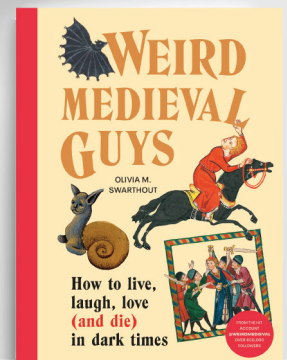


Weird Medieval Guys: How to live, laugh, love (and die) in dark times

By Olivia Swarthouse

Explore the medieval world through its art and its craziness. Chock full of hilarious, mad and bad advice for surviving and thriving on this mortal plane is guaranteed to make you laugh. A must-read for any of the nearly 700,000 fans who follow @weirdmedieval on Twitter. And, if you don't follow, you really should!

Published by Vintage 2 November 2023. RRP £16.99. Pre-order on line or in bookshops now.

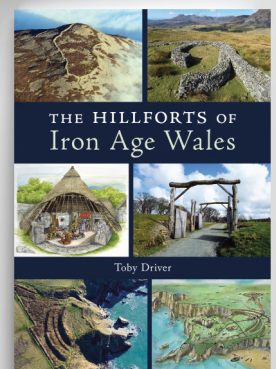


The Hillforts of Iron Age Wales

By Toby Driver

Showcasing the results of latest research and discoveries alongside the pioneering investigations of early archaeologists, this book examines hillforts and prehistoric life in Wales focusing on remarkable finds that tell the story of how early Wales developed and how the Romans conquered western Britain.

Published by Logaston Press in August 2023. Order from www.logastonpress.co.uk. RP £20.



The Princes in the Tower: Solving History's Greatest Cold Case

By Philippa Langley

Langley shook the world when she discovered the grave of Richard III in 2012. Here she reveals the findings of a new initiative to discover the fate of Richard's nephews, the Princes in the Tower. Using the methods of a cold case police inquiry, she sheds light on one of history's great mysteries.

Published by the History Press on 18 November. Pre-order your copy now online and in bookshops. RRP £25.

