



MORTIMER
History Society

MORTIMER *Matters*

1326 to 1330: When England was ruled from the March

Between now and 2030, the Mortimer History Society will mark a series of 700-year anniversaries of events occurring during a four-year period when the Mortimers changed the face of England, partnered in an invasion, brought down a king, and exercised quasi-royal power from the Welsh March. It all began in September 2026, when Roger Mortimer of Wigmore arrived from France to turn the country upside down.

Roger, a long-term supporter of Edward II, fell foul of the king after royal favourite Hugh Despenser – with Edward's sanction – began a land grab in Roger's territory. Not surprisingly, Roger rebelled and, in 1322, was captured and imprisoned in the Tower. A year later, he escaped and fled to France, where, in 1325, he met Edward's disaffected queen, Isabella. Isabella had her own beef with Edward due to his seizure of her lands and property. And yes, as you might guess, Hugh Despenser was up to his neck in that particular abuse of power, too.

Roger and Isabella were a perfect fit. Both had justifiable grudges against the king and neither had anything to lose. Roger was a proven fighter, while Isabella controlled access to Edward's heir, the then teenaged Edward III. Separately they could do little. Together they became an unstoppable force.

Their invasion landed in Suffolk on 24 September 1326. Expecting a fight, they were surprised to achieve an effectively bloodless coup, as all of England abandoned Edward and welcomed their arrival. Though Edward – and his much-hated



Roger Mortimer, as he appears in the windows of St Lawrence's church

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favourite – fled, both were quickly captured. Hugh was duly (and gruesomely) executed. Hanging being too good for him, he was also drawn and quartered.

Roger and Isabella probably never intended to depose a king. It's likely their ambitions didn't extend beyond Despenser's removal. But you know how it is; sometimes, when you start something, it takes on a life of its own. It quickly became clear that the only real way to a secure England was to remove him, too.

By Christmas 1326, the whole business was pretty much done and a few weeks later, in January 1327, Edward II relinquished his throne in his son's favour. Not that he was given much choice about it, to be fair. Roger went on to dominate the council that governed on the new king's behalf until he reached his majority.

What happened next? Download an introduction to the four years that changed England at

www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk/mortimer-in-power

Between 2026 and 2030, the Mortimer History Society will mark a series of 700-year anniversaries of events when Roger Mortimer of Wigmore changed the face of England. It was a period rich in drama, and the Mortimers were in the absolute thick of it. Over the next four years, through a programme of events, publications, visits to key locations and talks by leading historians, we'll provide you with a window into the tangled history of the time – a time of high-stakes politics, sexual intrigue, vicious rumour and even more vicious violence.



Roger and Isabella, with Hugh Despenser being executed behind them

Making a medieval manuscript

Ahead of our online conference on medieval manuscripts in November, we've invited speaker Dr Sara Charles to introduce us to the complex business of medieval manuscript production.

Most people, when presented with a medieval manuscript, can instinctively recognise that a lot of time and effort will have gone into producing it. The leaves – made from animal skin that were then handwritten with specially made ink, then decorated perhaps with gold and brightly coloured pigments, and then sewn together and attached to wooden book covers – would have taken an immense amount of knowledge and skill from a variety of different craftspeople. In this short account, we'll explore the making of a manuscript from a 12th century English monastery, considering the logistics that would have gone into creating a beautiful, illuminated manuscript.

The first prerequisite was a healthy bank balance. Manuscripts were not cheap to make and only the wealthiest religious houses, such as St Albans or Canterbury, were in a position to produce the sumptuous tomes we see today. The St

Alban's Psalter or the Eadwine Psalter of Canterbury are fabulous examples. Next, you'd need access to livestock, a group of well-trained scribes and artists, and reliable trade networks to obtain gold leaf and pigments, as well as skilled bookbinders. Calfskin, which produced a creamier and less-greasy finish than sheepskin, was the preferred material for deluxe volumes, but was also more expensive. Accounts from Beaulieu Abbey show that in 1269/70 the cheapest calfskin still cost more than the most expensive sheepskin. We also know that monasteries could use their own livestock for the parchment, but probably more often purchased the rest of the materials from outside.

It starts with an animal...

Producing parchment is a visceral, immersive process. The skin needs to be removed from the animal as soon as possible, and would come to the parchment maker in a bloody, mud



A monk buying parchment from a layperson

(Hamburg Bible C1255 GKS 4 folio II, fol. 183r)

and faecal-ridden state. First, the hair would be removed, so the skin would be washed and then soaked in a vat of lime to begin the process of depilation. Once the hair started to loosen, the skin was taken out of the vat and laid on a

semi-circular surface to allow the hair to be scraped off. Once all the hair was gone, the lime was rinsed off and the skin stretched taut across a wooden frame and held in place by pegs. The parchment maker would then scrape the skin with a special semi-circular knife called a lunellum to create a thin, smooth writing surface. Pumice was also rubbed into the skin to remove any residual grease and to further smooth the surface.

Starting to write...

Once the parchment had been cut from its frame, it was passed to the scribe, who would then decide about the layout and rule it out with a lead stick. The scribe would then begin to write – probably using another text as an exemplar. The scribe (who might be male or female) would be writing with a goose quill, dipped in iron gall ink. The goose feathers would have been easy to get hold of from local birds who shed their plumage naturally in the summer. The feathers were collected and trimmed, then had the thick end shaped into a nib with a sharp knife.

Ink was made from galls, which are small natural growths on an oak tree, formed when gall wasps lay their eggs on a branch. The galls were picked and crushed, then mixed with water, iron and gum Arabic to create a deep, permanent black ink. While local oak galls (known as apple galls) could be foraged, Mediterranean marble galls were also imported – so it may have been a matter of preference and resources. Many medieval recipes for ink still survive and it's quite easy to make the ink today following their instructions. A scribe writing in the 12th century would be trained in an Anglo-Norman script (also known as protogothic), a neat, upright script that sometimes used contractions to shorten words, allowing more text to be fitted on the page. Many scribes found being

hunched over a desk for hours very wearisome, and they often scribbled their complaints in the margins – desperate for the last verse and a welcome drink!

Illumination!

Once the text was written, it was passed to an illuminator if it was to have gold added. While some religious houses had accomplished artists among their inhabitants, some chose to bring lay artists in from outside. Bury St Edmunds, for example, hired a Master Hugo to decorate its bible in c.1135. Once the image had been sketched out with a lead stick, a base layer for the gold would be applied. This was often a sticky substance, such as egg glair or gum Arabic. By the 12th century, gesso was being used, a lime solution that set hard to create a solid base for the gold. The gesso was left to dry and then activated by gently rewetting, either with a moist cloth or human breath. The gold was then carefully pressed down onto the surface and polished to a dazzling shine with an animal tooth.

Pigments were then added with paintbrushes made from animal hair – anything from squirrel, to cat, to badger. Again, it would probably have been a matter of preference and what was available. The range of pigments would also depend on your budget, site amenities and trade networks. Lapiz lazuli, a bright blue rock mined in caves in Afghanistan, was very popular in English manuscripts in the 12th century, and its lavish use would indicate the wealth of the monastery or patron. Some pigments could be manufactured onsite if the necessary infrastructure and experienced craftspeople were available. Red and white lead were produced by leaving lead sheets over vinegar and then heating the accumulated residue to a high temperature. Vermillion (a bright red) could also be manufactured by mixing mercury and sulphur together

and heating. Verdigris was made by suspending copper sheets over vinegar and scraping off the residue. While none of these processes would have been great for the lungs, it did enable a range of colours to be produced onsite within a large monastery. Natural colours could also be obtained from plants, such as madder (pinky red) and woad (indigo), which would also have been easily grown within a monastery.

The finished product...

Once the manuscript had been decorated, it would be gathered together in booklets and sewn together. The bookbinder may have been a resident of the religious house or, again, brought in from the outside. Parchment is a tough material so it would have required a fair amount of dexterity to sew a large manuscript. Boards made of a hardwood like oak or cherry would then be attached to the sewing supports to form the covers and then wrapped in leather to finish the process.



Example of the Channel Style, with concentric circles and animal motifs
(BSB, Clm 835, fol. 55v, Public Domain)

Before the 12th century, monasteries were still the main producers of manuscripts, but during this century there was a shift. Largely due to the beginnings of the universities, book production started to be centred around university towns, such as Oxford, Bologna and Paris. Skilled lay scribes and artists moved to these places and set up workshops, producing a wide range of texts to meet growing demand. While religious houses still continued to produce manuscripts, the increasing appetite for books among the nobility and merchant class (as well as scholars) meant that secular artisans could step into this space without the restrictions of religious life. This also resulted in new innovations in book production, such as improvements in parchment production, changes in page layout and developments in artistic styles.



After a busy day's writing!
(British Library, Sloane MS 2435, fol. 44v)



A palette of medieval pigments
(© Sara Charles)

By the end of the 12th century we see a 'Channel style' developing, with artists in France and England working alongside each other to create intricate images of concentric circles decorated with animal motifs.

Making a medieval manuscript was dirty, laborious and difficult, and required an immense amount of resources. You needed animals, such as calves for parchment and geese for quills. You needed plants and trees for inks and pigments, as well as book

boards. You needed trade links to source materials from overseas, such as lapis lazuli, plus skilled humans – whether parchment makers, vermilion makers, scribes, artists or bookbinders. You also needed someone to oversee and co-ordinate the whole process – ensuring that the correct text was chosen, the layout and images would work and that there was no disruption in the supply of materials. A project manager for such a task would have to be highly competent. There are surviving examples where things have not gone according to plan,

for example, discarded leaves with abandoned page formats or manuscripts with images left unfinished. However, these can be immensely useful in reconstructing the process. Medieval manuscripts are a treasure trove of insights, physically relaying information such as the parchment making process, the quirks of a scribes' handwriting and popular pigments in the period. While a book's text is, of course, of interest, each book itself, as a physical object with its connections to the natural world and human handicraft, is unique.



About the author: Sara is a practitioner exploring the materials of medieval manuscripts and recreating manuscript production techniques to understand the practices of the past. She works at the Institute of Historical Research in London and has published on different aspects of book history, including *The Medieval Scriptorium*.

Hear Sara speak at our conference *Writing to Reach You: Manuscript culture in medieval England and the March of Wales*. See details on page 13 or go to www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk/events.

FROM YOUR EDITOR

You can't have missed our cover story that the MHS is about to embark on what might amount to our best years yet – four years in which we'll celebrate, mark and investigate some of the most controversial and impactful events in the history of the Mortimer family. Roger Mortimer the 1st earl of March has been marked as a villain for centuries for murdering Edward II, yet in more recent times new arguments have been made for his innocence. Whatever you conclude, it can't be denied that his life was dramatic and left a lasting legacy. We have some exciting things in the pipeline and we'll be telling you about them first in subsequent issues of *Mortimer Matters*.

In the meantime, there's plenty here for you to enjoy. Ahead of our November conference on medieval manuscripts, Sara Charles introduces us to the mysteries of their creation, while Alyssa Benedetto share insights on the widowhood of Maud Mortimer. Our heraldry expert Hugh Wood talks

tiles and our Vice President Ian Mortimer concludes his *Mortimer A to Z*. And, of course, there's all your usual society news!

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 back to you to discuss your ideas and give you some useful tips on submitting your copy. We plan to publish our next issue in January 2027 and will start planning it soon, so please get in touch with your ideas as soon as you can!



Annie Garthwaite

The medieval Mortimers

– An A to Z

In the last issue of *Mortimer Matters*, our Vice President Ian Mortimer, began an A to Z of the medieval Mortimers. He got as far as M, but is back in this issue to finish off the alphabet. We hope you're enjoying this smorgasbord of fun facts.

Thanks, Annie. Let's start with something painful...

N is for Needles

Roger Mortimer (d. 1402) of Tedstone Wafer was a descendant of Roger Mortimer of Chirk, and thus a fourth cousin of the 3rd earl of March. He was wealthy enough to lend his distant kinsman £500 but otherwise did nothing to bring credit to the family. He had at least three illegitimate sons, and two of them joined him in 1397 in torturing John Asteley by sticking needles into his testicles. Charming.

O is for Ostentation

The bare walls of ruined castles today have a gaunt aspect, so it's easy to forget how showy life was for the social elite by the 14th century. Not only did their great halls and solar chambers have glass in the windows and peacocks strutting around the grounds, the lords themselves were dressed in the most magnificent clothes. Roger Mortimer, 1st earl of March, was given a robe of Turkish cloth by the king in 1330.

A few years earlier, when Edward III had been crowned, Roger had had his sons dressed in tunics, robes and caps consisting of scarlet and green cloth, miniver (fur) and 'cloth of gold of silken spinet'. Even their bedclothes were lavish, consisting of blankets of miniver-trimmed blue cloth.

P is for Plague

As far as I know, no medieval Mortimer died in the Black Death of 1348-9. However, there were further outbreaks of plague in 1360 and 1369 and roughly every fifteen years after that. It's said that Edmund Mortimer, 5th and last earl of March, died of plague at Trim in 1425. But did he? No one else records a plague outbreak in Ireland that year. Given that the Lancastrians were attempting systematically to eradicate all the Mortimers at this time – judiciously murdering Sir John Mortimer the previous year – it's possible that the last Mortimer claimant to the throne wasn't a victim of plague after all, but of something much more sinister. Sadly, we'll probably never know the truth.

Q is for Queen Isabella and Roger Mortimer

Were they lovers? Froissart's chronicle, written several decades after Mortimer's death, notes that their contemporaries in the English court thought so. The official charges against Roger only refer to him 'sowing discord' between Isabella and her husband, so perhaps not. Then again, Edward III would hardly have wanted to draw attention to his mother's immorality if she had been naughty with our Roger. All we can do is remember her (reported) immortal words, uttered on the night of 19 October 1330, 'Fair son, have pity on the gentle Mortimer.'



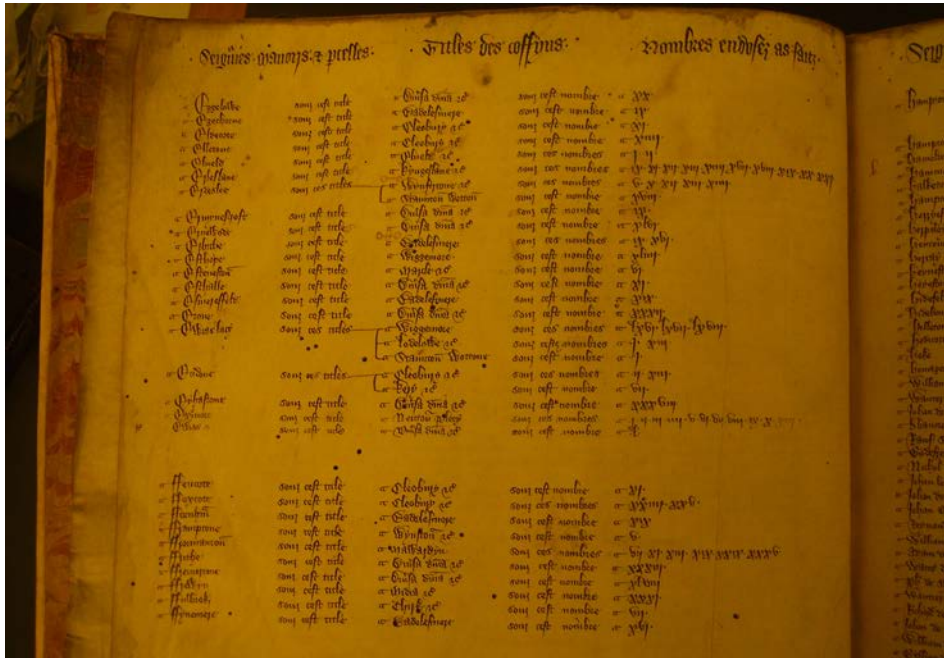
Roger and Isabella joined forces to invade England – but were they lovers?

R is for Record keeping

One of the most impressive relics of the medieval Mortimers is the *Black Book of Wigmore* in the British Library. This large volume, drawn up in the 1390s, records all the charters and grants that were then in the family treasury at Wigmore Castle. It's an extraordinary example of medieval records management. But the *Black Book* doesn't just copy the documents, it identifies in



Wigmore Castle, much less grand than when Roger the 1st earl entertained Edward III and Queen Isabella there in 1329



The Black Book of Wigmore's elaborate index

which press in the treasury the original was kept. Most remarkable of all, it has an alphabetical index. Perhaps there are older books with an alphabetical index, but I've yet to come across one.

S is for the Southampton plot

Edmund Mortimer, 5th earl of March, was not the sharpest tool in the box. Some people referred to him as a 'daw' or simpleton. His actions support such a verdict. When the English army was at Southampton, gathering for the Agincourt campaign, he was lured into a plot by his brother-in-law, Richard, earl of Cambridge, to oust Henry V and put him (Edmund) on the throne. It was idiocy; it wasn't a real plot, just some stupid banter between the two earls, plus their friends Lord Scrope and Sir Thomas Gray. But Edmund took it seriously and blurted out the truth to Henry V. Big mistake. The other three lost their heads and Edmund was never trusted again.

T is for Treason

In 1351 Edward III passed a statute defining what amounted to treason. He included 'compassing or imagining the death of the king' (note, compassing the death, not necessarily killing him), 'violating the king's companion' and 'levying war against the king in his kingdom'. There's no doubt that Roger Mortimer 'compassed' the death of Edward II (although he didn't kill him, as is traditionally claimed), and that he was widely believed to have slept with Queen Isabella. He also undoubtedly rode in arms against Edward II in 1322. So it seems Edward III had Roger very much in mind when he came to enact

this legislation. So, when anyone asks you what the Mortimers ever did for us? tell them they inspired the law against treason, which remains on the statute books to this day.

U is for University

How many medieval Mortimers went to university? Not many, it has to be admitted. Being a warlord doesn't normally require a degree. But Edmund Mortimer (d. 1304) did. He had an odd career, if you think about it. After initially being tonsured and prepared for the Church, he attended the University of Oxford, then left after the death of his elder brother in 1274. After that he was knighted, married, had eight children, attended parliament, fought the Scots, and died in a skirmish with the Welsh near Builth in July 1304. Not many of Oxford's medieval alumni could boast such a range of experiences.



Cont/d on page 7

V is for Victims

We don't generally think of the medieval Mortimers as victims. But occasionally that's exactly what they were. Joan, the wife of the 1st earl of March, was arrested and locked up in a nunnery during her husband's imprisonment in 1322-6. Her elder daughters found themselves similarly incarcerated. What had they done to deserve that? Eighty years later, Edmund Mortimer, 5th earl of March, and his brother Roger were locked up in Windsor Castle by Henry IV. For thirteen years. I've said it before and I'll say it again, it wasn't an easy job, being a medieval Mortimer.

W is for Wales

In the early 14th century, the justiciar of Wales was normally called Roger Mortimer. None of these men were popular among the Welsh, sometimes their tenants rioted against them. But you can understand this when you consider the family history. Hugh Mortimer had fought the Welsh repeatedly in 1140s, capturing several Welsh princes and having them blinded in their cells. His son Roger Mortimer (d. 1214) was imprisoned for three years in 1179 for murdering a Welsh prince who had letters of safe conduct from the king. In the 1260s Roger Mortimer (d. 1282) fought against Llywelyn ap Gruffydd and had such success that his epitaph in Wigmore Abbey proudly declared that he 'subjected all Wales to torment'. It wasn't a policy likely to win the hearts of Welshmen – except in the medical sense.

X is for eXecutions

How many Mortimers faced the executioner? Two: Roger, 1st earl of March in November 1330 and Sir John Mortimer in 1424. Both were locked up in the Tower of London for treason, both escaped. Roger fled to France; Sir John was instantly recaptured. Both men met their fate on the gallows at Tyburn.

Y is for Your ancestors

It's rarely appreciated that, given enough time, DNA completely suffuses

a population. But the fact is that, after about 800-900 years, every person in the initial cohort who has descendants living at the end of that period is a common ancestor of everyone then alive. For this reason you can be sure you're descended from the Norman kings of England and the early Plantagenets. If you're of English stock, the chances are you're descended from the medieval Mortimers too. There's very little chance you're not descended from Roger Mortimer (1232-82) and all his forebears. That means you are also descended from Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, otherwise known as Llywelyn the Great. Think about it: every peasant, every townsman, every slave and every lord in Domesday Book who has living descendants today – including Ralph Mortimer and William the Conqueror – is your ancestor. Puts a spring in your step, doesn't it?

Z is for Zenith

When was the zenith of the medieval Mortimers? This is, of course a matter of opinion. There are several options. Maybe it was when Roger Mortimer (d. 1282) rescued Prince Edward from Hereford Castle in 1265? Maybe when he killed his adversary, Simon de Montfort at Evesham? Or when he was appointed trustee of the king's children in 1270, which meant he became co-regent of England after the king's death in 1272? Or, perhaps it was when his grandson orchestrated the parliamentary deposition of Edward II in 1327, or when he was created 1st earl of March the following year? Or one of the double weddings of his daughters, when Queen Isabella and the young king came to Wigmore? Myself, I'm going to go for 1354, the year that the 1st earl of March was posthumously pardoned for all his supposed crimes and his grandson was restored to the earldom, becoming the 2nd earl. This took place just after Edward III came in person to Leintwardine to pray at the Mortimer family chantry. The 2nd earl, a great jousting and comrade-in-arms of the Black Prince, had not only come into his own but also dispersed the clouds that had hung over his family name. There's no doubt that 1354 was a good year for the Mortimers.

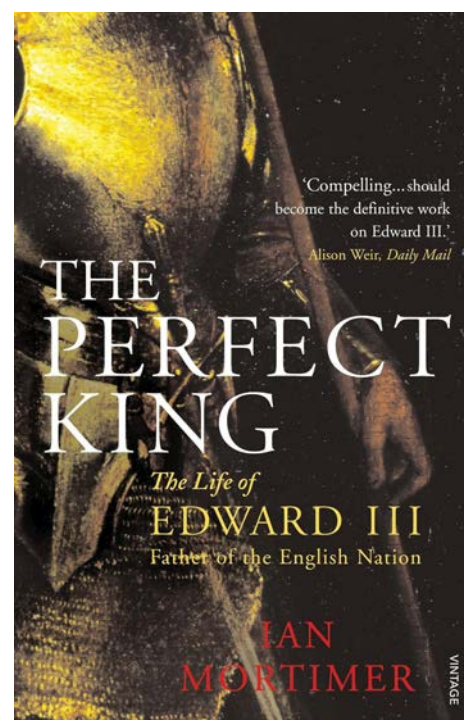
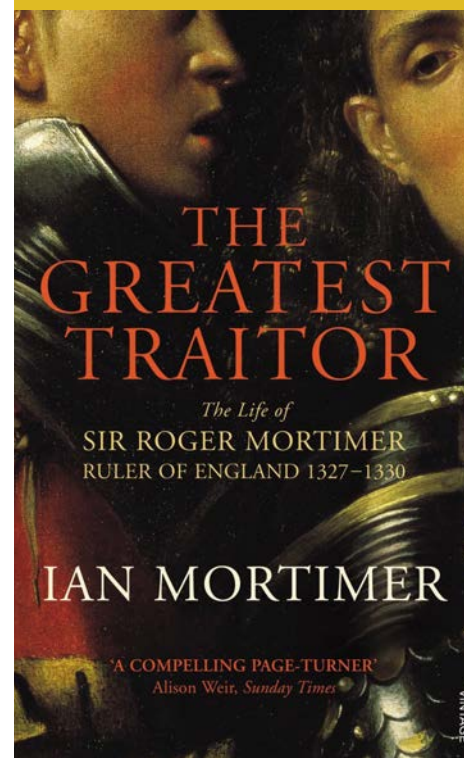


Historian and author Ian Mortimer is best known as the Sunday Times bestselling author of four *Time Traveller's Guides*, as well as four critically acclaimed medieval biographies, a prize-winning novel and several other titles. He's a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and the Society of Antiquaries. *The Times* describes him as 'the most remarkable medieval historian of our time'.

Thanks Ian!

Thanks so much, Ian for that whistle-stop tour through Mortimer History. I, for one, learned a lot! I'm sure our readers will find many jumping off points for their own research and discovery.

I absolutely recommend Ian's two Mortimer-related biographies, *The Greatest Traitor* and *The Perfect King*, about Roger Mortimer the 1st earl and Edward III respectively.





Musings on the Bredon Tiles

The church of St Giles at Bredon in Worcestershire contains one of the finest collections of 14th century armorial floor tiles in the country, all made in Droitwich between 1300 and 1350. A total of eighty-six tiles display 39 different coats of arms, with some duplication. Here our heraldry expert Hugh Wood explores the collection's possible Mortimer connections.

As you might expect, many of the greatest English families are represented in the Bredon tiles. But some glaring omissions lead to an interesting question: is there a logic behind the choice of tiles?

In the 1940s Elizabeth Eames was the British Museum's leading expert on medieval ceramics. She studied the Bredon tiles and pointed out that, when a church ordered a set of tiles for their floor, the busy tile factories often delivered a 'job lot' of whatever they had available. This would typically include a preponderance of the 'great and the good' mixed with some more-local families. Is that what happened here? Or is there a more deliberate plan at work?

Identification is not always easy

There can be some significant problems when identifying coats of arms from floor tiles. The biggest, of course, is that tiles are monochrome. Many medieval families had coats of arms that were identical apart from the colours, and there can be a problem sometimes, even when the colours are the same. Without some clue, it's quite impossible to be certain about many shields, once the tinctures have been removed. As well as the monochrome problem, some of the tiles are in poor condition, or only parts of them remain.



Cherleton



Fitzalan

Fitzalan and Cherleton were both major Marcher lords. But their coats of arms are indistinguishable once they are reduced to monochrome.

Over the years, the Bredon tiles have been studied carefully, and efforts made to identify the coats of arms they carry. But, as no record was made at the time the tiles were laid, it's now quite impossible to be sure about the identification of many of them.

The Significance of the Mortimers

It's tempting to agree with Elizabeth Eames' 'job-lot' theory but, despite Bredon being in Worcestershire and 50 miles away from Wigmore, there are considerably more examples of Mortimer coats of arms than of any other family. The basic Mortimer of Wigmore shield is duplicated several times, but five others have cadency marks added to the central escutcheon indicating younger sons, or other branches of the family. This leads one to wonder whether at least some of the tiles were selected quite specifically, and whether that selection was driven by a connection to the Mortimers. Let's investigate some possible theories...

First, could some of the coats of arms represent tenants, stewards or constables of the Mortimers? Well, probably not. With two exceptions, the other families illustrated at Bredon were not connected to the Mortimers in that way.



Philippe de Clanvowe's family held of the Mortimers the hereditary reeveship of Gladestry near Radnor



Lingen and Knill in Herefordshire appear to have been held by the Lingen family of the Mortimers

Could the tiles represent neighbouring Marcher Lords? Again, there's little to indicate this. Some of the families in the Bredon collection certainly held estates fairly close to the Mortimers' Welsh lordships, but the caputs of others were well outside the Central Marches, and the homes of some families were a considerable distance from either Bredon or Wigmore. So, the armorial tile programme at Bredon seems not to have been influenced by geographical considerations.

Could the tiles represent political allies of the Mortimers? While several tiles represent Contrariant families – those actively rebelling alongside Mortimer against Edward II and Despensers in 1321 – most took no part, and some even fought on the king's side. Similarly, if we consider the earlier 2nd Barons' War, there's no clear pattern. So, no, probably not political alliances.

What about intermarriages? Noble families intermarried over the years, so this could easily be a blind alley. But the Mortimer marriages do warrant consideration. Over a period of 50 years the Mortimers gained vast estates through marriages to three heiresses: Maud de Braose, Margaret de Fiennes and Joan de Geneville. Of the three, only the de Geneville arms are included at Bredon, but that in itself could be significant. Let's see...

Roger Mortimer, 2nd earl of March

Roger Mortimer the 2nd earl (Joan de Geneville's grandson) was three years old when his father Edmund died in 1331, just a year after the execution of his grandfather and namesake, Roger 1st Earl of March. He could have been whisked away to his widowed mother's home in Kent, but apparently he remained securely within the care of his Mortimer family. As he grew to boyhood, the people he would know best and feel closest to would be his mother, stepfather, grandmother Joan, and various aunts and uncles. It's interesting to note that a good proportion of the tiles at Bredon show the arms of people that Roger knew personally. So, it's instructive to look at how each coat of arms relates to Roger.

Let's look first at the Mortimer coats of arms... but first, a caveat. As mentioned earlier, it's often impossible to assign an individual tile to a specific family. The individuals and families mentioned in the rest of this article certainly did have the coat attributed to them here, but we can't absolutely prove the reverse.



Roger Mortimer
2nd earl of March



Edmund Mortimer
(with a label)
his father



Geoffrey Mortimer
(with a bend)
his uncle



John Mortimer
of Chirk
(Ermine)
cousin twice removed



Unknown
(with a demi-lion)



Unknown
(with an eagle)

Now let's look at other people, represented on the tiles, to whom Roger the 2nd earl was directly related. It's interesting to see that, in fact, many of the people closest to Roger have tiles at Bredon.



Joan de Geneville
paternal
grandmother



Elizabeth Badlesmere
mother



William de Bohun
stepfather



Margaret Berkeley
(née Mortimer)
aunt



Maud Cherleton
(née Mortimer)
aunt



Joan Audley
(née Mortimer)
aunt



Katherine Beauchamp
(née Mortimer)
aunt



Agnes Hastings
(née Mortimer)
aunt



Beatrice of Brotherton
(née Mortimer)
aunt



Blanche Grandison
(née Mortimer)
aunt

Now, it may be that, with the 2nd earl, I've just found a convenient peg on which to hang a theory. But it certainly looks as though up to 17 distinct tiles can be directly related to his close family members. Surely this must mean that at least some of the Bredon tiles, far from being a 'job lot', were, in fact, carefully curated. And without considering these Mortimer marriages and connections to Roger, it's difficult to find any reason why Badlesmere, Audley and Hastings, among others, would have been included.

Other Coats of Arms at Bredon

Other families that may be represented in the Bredon tiles include Balun, Blaunfront, Cantelupe, Clare, Clinton, Croft, Elmerugge, Ferrers, Fitzalan, Gibbes, Hakluyt, Latimer, Maltravers, Quincy, Trillek, Verdon, Vere, Wake and Warenne. If any of you out there have thoughts or theories about how these might link to the Mortimers – or any other reason for their inclusion in the Bredon scheme – I'd be fascinated to hear about them!



About the author: Hugh is a founding member of the MHS and leads the Society's work on heraldry. Contact him at heraldry@mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk, and find out more about our heraldry resources at www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk/heraldry.

Religious Patronage and the Widowhood of Maud Mortimer, 1283-1301

Alyssa Benedetto is currently pursuing a PhD at the Universities of Strathclyde and Aberdeen that combines historical research with creative writing to illuminate the life of Maud Mortimer (nee de Braose), wife of Roger Mortimer 1st baron Wigmore. Here she speculates on Maud's life – and religious patronage – during widowhood.



In the late 13th and early 14th centuries, widowhood on the March of Wales – including for English Marcher noblewomen – was characterised by increased religious activities, agency, and privilege. Growing fears of purgatory no doubt influenced this rise, as well as the widow's newfound role at Crown and local law courts. Advocating for their imminent future, like all members of Marcher nobility, English Marcher widows wished to safeguard and defend their properties and position. During the later High and Later Middle Ages, this determination extended beyond their mortal life and possessions. There are very few English Marcher widows, however, who acted with as much intention and rigour as Maud Mortimer.

Active widowhood

While much is known of Maud's involvement in the affairs of the March of Wales from the outset of her marriage to Roger Mortimer of Wigmore in 1247 to that of her widowhood in 1282, there are at present no studies that take into account the extent of her religious patronage in widowhood and how it may have been influenced. This is surprising. After all, Marcher widows constituted an influential social group of their own and proved far more visible in the records during widowhood than during marriage. The register of Richard de Swinfield, Bishop of Hereford (A.D. 1283-1317), for one, illustrates this trend; detailing not only Maud's religious patronage and activities from 1283 to 1301, but that of other Mortimer women and English Marcher widows that would come after her.

In my doctoral thesis, I explore the activities, agency, and privilege of Maud Mortimer and the multi-faceted

nature of her role as an English Marcher noblewoman in the events surrounding the Second Barons' War (1262-1267) and the wars with Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (1276-1283). The critical-creative nature of my thesis extends to a historical-biographical fiction novel of Maud's life in religious, political, and military spheres. Embracing the often-neglected role of the English Marcher noblewoman in historical texts and media, I approach Maud's character in the novel with great consideration to her relationships with dynastic enterprise, marriage and dealings of inheritance, Marcher politics and warfare, and religious patronage in widowhood. In connection with narrative structures, language(s), techniques, and strategies, I have conducted exhaustive archival and critical research on Maud, leading to the not-so-often considered imperative of patronage or purgatory. An idea which, in many ways, is key to understanding the later lives of English Marcher noblewomen as a flourishing community of religious patrons.

Similar to other aristocratic widows in the later 13th and early 14th centuries, Maud was met with growing societal fears for the fate of souls in purgatory – the liminal space between salvation and damnation. These fears surrounding purgatory encouraged a sense of spiritual responsibility amongst English Marcher widows, who embraced St Paul's model of the chaste, community-serving widow above all. This perpetuated a great deal of religious patronage in the later 13th century, particularly for widows of great piety and strong financial resources. For English Marcher widows who did not take up monastic orders, a sort of holy widowhood could be obtained by other means, including religious patronage. This begs the question: what was

considered religious patronage at this time? And how could acts of patronage be achieved?

Forms of religious patronage

In the High and Later Middle Ages, recorded acts of religious patronage most often took the form of donations or the presentation of certain persons to vacant positions at churches or monastic institutions. Presentations of persons generally occurred amongst aristocrats who wished to appoint favoured members of the clergy or loyal servants of good standing to churches or monastic institutions within their sphere of influence. Connections to these establishments were generally familial, rewarded, or inherited. For the English Marcher widow, these acts could help secure her own place in Paradise.

The register of Richard de Swinfield, Bishop of Hereford (A.D. 1283-1317) boasts 600 entries for presentations as acts of religious patronage between 1283 and 1316. Only 25 were enacted by English Marcher widows but, as evidenced in the table opposite, Maud – referred to in the list as Matilda Mortimer – accounts for the highest number, with six presentations to vacant benefices across Herefordshire and the central March during the period of her widowhood (1283-1301). That's more than any other English Marcher widow over the whole thirty-four year period during which the register was kept. Coming in a close second, with four recorded presentations, is another Mortimer widow, that of Margaret, widow of Maud's second son Edmund.

Maud and Margaret's relationship was likely formed around 1298, in the early years of Maud's involvement in the construction of Kingsland Church in

Year	Date	Benefice	Person Presented	Patron
1283	28 Jan.	New Radnor	Robert de Leneck, subdeacon.	Dame Matilda Mortimer
1285	6 Oct.	Kingsland	Geoffrey de Balecote.	Dame Matilda Mortimer
1287	29 Apr.	Pembridge	Hugh de Breusa, chaplain.	Dame Matilda Mortimer
	24 Sept.	Hope Bowdler	John de Cestria, subdeacon.	Dame Milicent de Montalt
1289	6 Dec.	Hope Bowdler	Richard de Bury, acolyte.	Dame Milicent de Montalt
1290	23 Sept.	Old Radnor	Hugh de Rysebury, subdeacon.	Dame Matilda Mortimer
1300	1 May	Stoke Bliss	William de Lingayne, priest.	Dame Matilda Mortimer
	14 Aug.	Old Radnor	Thomas de Mors, acolyte.	Dame Matilda Mortimer
1301	11 Apr.	Sutton St. Nicholas	Robert de Chandos.	Dame Margaret Frene
	7 Nov.	Almeley	Roger le Power, acolyte.	Dame Johanna Pichard
1303	11 Feb.	Monnington-on-Wye	Roger de la Leghe.	Dame Catherine de Andelys
1304	8 Oct.	Kingsland	William Mortimer, acolyte.	Dame Margaret Mortimer
1305	21 Oct.	Cowarne	Adam de Skenefret, acolyte.	Dame Joan de Valence
1306	20 Mar.	Monnington	Milo Pichard, subdeacon.	Dame Catherine de Andelys
	18 Aug.	Goodrich Castle	Matthew de Tibberton, priest.	Dame Joan de Valence
	15 Oct.	Sapey	Hugh de Sapey, acolyte.	Dame Petronelle de Sapey
1307	21 Dec.	New Radnor	William de la Lowe, priest.	Dame Margaret Mortimer
1308	18 Oct.	Brockhampton	Richard de Colcumbe, priest.	Dame Juliana de Fourches
1309	3 Sept.	Old Radnor	John de Walwyn, priest.	Dame Margaret Mortimer
1313	19 Jan.	Monnington	Roger de Breinton.	Dame Catherine de Audley
	13 Jul.	Tasley	Malcolm de Kynsidele.	Dame Lucy Devereux
	15 Sept.	Avenbury	Reginald le Rous, priest.	Dame Ellinor le Rous
1314	28 Aug.	Thornbury	John Normaund, priest.	Dame Margaret Mortimer
	16 Oct.	Llandinabo	John de la Minede, priest.	Dame Agnes Beresford
	29 Nov.	Avenbury	Robert Petit, subdeacon.	Dame Ellinor le Rous

Entries for noblewomen as patrons in the *Institutions and Collations to Benefices* of the register of Richard de Swinfield, Bishop of Hereford (AD 1283-1317).

Herefordshire. This was another act of religious patronage by Maud, and a fantastic achievement. It is possible, given the significance of Roger's death at Kingsland in 1282, that she was building this church to honour them both, as husband and wife. Supporting St Paul's model of the chaste, community-serving widow, devoted to protecting the memory of her late husband, she herself would have been considered in some respects dead-while-living; the joint identity of husband and wife an inseparable part of their marital union. Maud's coat of arms is depicted in the stained glass of the church, which still stands today.

By establishing a religious house, the English Marcher widow could express her social status and wealth, whilst also seeking a path to salvation through

the prayers of those benefiting from her benevolence. In 1299, it is recorded that Maud shared the task of erecting Kingsland Church with Edmund and Margaret. This may have been Margaret's first exposure to the sort of holy widowhood possible for Mortimer women as English Marcher widows.

Given Maud's intentional behaviour and conduct recorded across her life as a wife and widow on the March of Wales, I think it's also reasonable to assume that she may have had a corrody in place as preparation for her life in later years. Examples of her intentionality can be drawn from the earliest days of her marriage, where she fought endlessly in the law courts to secure both personal inheritance and Mortimer prosperity. Then, in her later years, she is recorded to have held the garrison at Clun against



Maud's coat of arms in window of Kingsland Church (top of left windowpane)

royal escheators, a rather remarkable feat, and petitioned the king for her late son's inheritance as well as all else that was owed to her as the widow of the great Roger Mortimer. These both seem to be acts of self-preservation, and her strong presence continues in the law courts in the 1280s and 90s, and through contributions of arms to King Edward I on the Scottish front, approaching the turn of the century. Thus, her historical footprint remains consistent up until her final presentation, that of acolyte Thomas de Mors to Old Radnor on 14 August 1300. The six month period between that date and the date of her own death, recorded in The Wigmore Chronicle at the beginning of March 1301, is silent and, therefore open to speculation. As such, a corrody seemed reasonable as a sort of retirement arrangement, most often permitted of the most wealthy, favoured, and loyal Crown servants.

Crown corrodies could be purchased in advance or granted at the time of their enaction – at point of need. The process of securing a corrody differs from person to person. Crown corrodies were also variable; whilst they might include cash, lodging, board, clothing, meals, and sometimes the recipients' servants and horses, for gentlefolk-pensioners these usually included food, clothes, shoe leather, servants, horses and grooms: conditions appropriate to the grantee's estate, which could encompass not

Cont/d on page 12

only the quality of food, drink and housing, but the company in which they ate.

A corrody would have allowed Maud ample time to make necessary arrangements for her effigy, burial(s), and death. Likely aware that her 77 years of life at war had begun to take its toll, there is good reason to believe that she may have made arrangements for a body burial as well as a separate heart burial. Choices of burial locations for English Marcher noblewomen and widows in the 13th and early 14th centuries were largely bound up with the religious interests and pious activities of the woman herself and of natal and marital families. Though Maud's body was recorded as being buried at Wigmore Abbey alongside her husband and other prominent Mortimer family members, there is a badly worn sandstone effigy of a late 13th, possibly very early 14th century, well-dressed noblewoman, with hands held to her chest, almost as if engaged in prayer or, perhaps, holding her heart at Radnor Church. It is strangely reminiscent of Maud's younger sister, Eva de Braose's heart burial effigy at St Mary's Priory in Abergavenny; displayed in comparative images below. The connection between inheritance and burial location is further evidenced in this period,



Maud's heart may be buried in Radnor, just as her younger sister's was buried in Abergavenny

particularly by widows who chose to be buried with their husbands, whilst having their hearts buried elsewhere. Radnor was Maud's patrilineal inheritance from her natal de Braose family, whereas Wigmore, where she'd spent the majority of her adult life alongside her husband and seven children, was marital. Though this conclusion is speculative, it seems that Maud – like her sister decades before her – had separate body and heart burials.

The surviving historical record for Maud Mortimer, whilst extensive in many respects – and particularly where her activities, agency, and privilege in religion, politics, and warfare on the March are concerned – is incomplete and leaves many questions begging about Marcher liberties, noblewomen's rights, their abilities to ascend in political and military affairs, and so much more. My critical-creative thesis – particularly my novel – utilises this incomplete history of Maud and other English Marcher noblewomen, as well as what we know of wider Marcher affairs and the later lives of English Marcher widows as patrons and humans, to investigate what might have been her real emotions and fears, and her desire to live up to or exceed the societal expectations of her day.



About the author: Following the completion of her Master of Research degree in Creative Writing at the University of Strathclyde, Alyssa's interdisciplinary doctoral project in creative writing and medieval history explores the role of 13th century English Marcher noblewomen through the recorded activities and agency of Maud de Braose (1224-1301).

KEEP THE DATE!

Our programme of events will keep you entertained right through to the year's end – and well into 2027!

Saturday, 21 November

Writing to Reach You: Manuscript Culture in Medieval England and the March of Wales

This half-day online conference takes a deep dive into the magical beauty of medieval manuscripts. See page 12

Saturday, 30 January 2027

Marcher Miscellany

Our annual online dip into assorted Mortimer related topics. Always fascinating!

Saturday, 20 March

MHS AGM

Details to come

Saturday, 15 May

Spring Conference In Sickness and in Health: Life and Death in the Middle Ages

From living healthily to making a good death – we've got all of medieval life covered! Join us in Ludlow for our first in-person conference of the year.

Wednesday, 9 June

John Grove Memorial Lecture

MHS President Paul Dryburgh on one of the chief architects of Edward II's deposition, Adam Orleton, bishop of Hereford and 'turbulent priest'. Part of our *Mortimer in Power* programme.

Friday, 17 September

Edward II at Berkeley Castle

To mark the anniversary of Edward II's reported death, we return to the scene for a special day. Hear top speakers delve into the mysteries of Edward's life, and visit the castle where his final days unfolded. Part of our *Mortimer in Power* programme.

Put these dates in your diary and look out for details of these and all Mortimer History Society events at
www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk.

Writing to reach you: Manuscript culture in medieval England and the March of Wales

Online conference, Saturday, 21 November, 2pm

Tickets are on sale now for our fascinating November conference – a deep dive into the glory (and the secrets) of medieval manuscripts. Find out more about how they were created and what they have to tell us – from the Mortimer claim to the throne to questions of loyalty during the reign of Edward II.



Mortimer Ambition: The political and historical context of Chicago University Library MS 224

Georgia Henley, Associate Professor at Saint Anselm College in New Hampshire USA, reveals how this document, likely compiled at Wigmore for the Mortimers, presents an argument for Roger Mortimer, 4th earl of March's legitimacy as the successor to Richard II.



Mortimer from the Margins? Sir Geoffrey Luttrell's view of faith and politics revealed in the marginalia of his psalter

Michelle Brown, Professor Emerita of Medieval Manuscript Studies at the University of London and formerly Curator of Illuminated Manuscripts at the British Library, reveals Sir Geoffrey's loyalty to Edward I and his reactions to the regime change that followed Edward II's deposition. The Luttrells, she insists, were colourful characters in a colourful age.



From Parchment to Binding: Materials and processes of the medieval manuscript maker

Working at London's Institute of Historical Research, **Dr Sara Charles** is a practitioner exploring how medieval manuscripts were created. Her talk will open a window into the life of a medieval scribe, examining every step of manuscript production, from the creation of parchment, ink, pigment and quills, to the binding of the final book

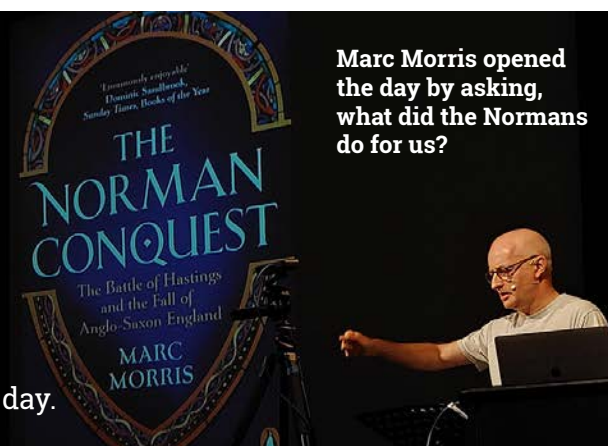
**Whet your appetite – read Sara's fascinating introduction to
medieval manuscript production on page 2**

View from wherever you are

This fascinating conference will be held via Zoom only. Details and tickets are available at
www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk/events.

Bayeux Tapestry comes to Ludlow

On 10 October five expert speakers at our Autumn Conference brought the Bayeux Tapestry to life for us in Ludlow. Thanks to all 160 plus people who attended in person and online for this fascinating and oh-so-topical day.



Marc Morris opened the day by asking, what did the Normans do for us?

Forget the British Museum, for one day only, Bayeux came to Ludlow as we investigated the tapestry's creation almost a thousand years ago, and what it still reveals to us today about a military campaign that changed the face of England and made Anglo-Normans of us all.

Marc Morris, author of *The Norman Conquest*, opened the day by explaining that the Battle of Hastings was merely the beginning of a multi-year campaign to reconcile England to Norman rule. There's no doubting its success. Within twenty years, only 10% of England's ruling class were 'English', and within seventy, the culture was transformed. The visible signs of that were the proliferation of stone-built castles and the rebuilding of every cathedral church and abbey. But these were only indicators of a more profound change, as Dr David D'Avray of University College London went on to explain.

David described how, post-Conquest, the grafting of Norman feudalism onto the Anglo-Saxon systems of shires and hundreds allowed England to develop a highly efficient and arguably unique social, political and economic structure that facilitated the distribution of

justice, the collection of tax and the building of armies for centuries to come. It also laid the foundations for our prevailing government structures, including the Exchequer and the Houses of Lords (Norman tenants-in-chief) and Commons (representative of the Anglo-Saxon boroughs and shires).

Dave Musgrove, historian and editor of History Extra, talked to us, not just about the history the tapestry reveals, but about its potency as political messaging both then and now. The tapestry might be seen as a mere 'might is right' story, 'But by opening a year before the invasion and culminating at the Battle of Hastings,' he says, 'it reveals William as the rightful inheritor of England and Harold as the worthy-opponent-turned-oath-breaker, who was justifiably displaced.' And even today the tapestry speaks to us. It was adopted by Napoleon and the Nazis as a justification for conquest and, today, its loan to the British Museum signals the potential for closer European cooperation post-Brexit.

Rhys ap Iewdwr, King of Deheubarth, at the hands of the French, was reported by Welsh chroniclers as the effective fall of the ancient kingdom of the Britons. Rebecca highlighted too how the Welsh chronicles reported the events of 1066 for their own purposes, viewing William as the rightful king and Harold as the usurper.

The day was rounded off by Katharine Keats Rohan, historian of the Conquest, who revealed the long route taken to London by William's advancing army after Hastings. William of Poitiers recounts the crossing of the river at Wallingford, the only available crossing point. Katherine brought to life events there, including the surrender of Archbishop Stigand, the last Anglo-Saxon archbishop of Canterbury, which paved the way for the eventual surrender of the English Crown at Berkhamsted and Duke William's coronation at Westminster.



Dave Musgrove says the tapestry is history and has a history of its own



Rebecca Thomas looked a Wales on the eve and in the aftermath of 1066

Historian and Welsh-language novelist Rebecca Thomas revealed how, for Wales at least, the impact of 1066 wasn't felt until 1093 when the Normans began to make their presence felt in the March and beyond, particularly in Ceredigion and Dyfed. The death of



Speakers in conversation with audience members long after their talks ended

Thanks to everyone who attended. We hope you loved the day. Our next event is an online half-day conference on 21 November that investigates the magnificence of medieval manuscripts. See details on page 13.

Meet your trustees: Clive Jupp

This month, meet Clive Jupp...



When did you join the MHS and why?

I first heard about the Mortimers from John Grove, the founder of the society, when we had a discussion about the Mortimer family as part of a social evening at his home. I had to admit that I was mostly unaware of the key role the Mortimers had played in medieval England and Wales. When the society was created in 2009, I didn't join immediately, as work was just too busy. Sadly I can't now remember exactly when I did join. Certainly, after 2012 when travel for work reduced, so it must have been sometime between then and going part-time 2016. Joining the MHS was my first real opportunity to explore history – always my favourite subject at school – since leaving full-time education in 1974. I was never a tremendous advocate for Tudor or later history, so a family that lived through the medieval world from Hastings to Bosworth offered a great way to explore these most interesting times. I still retain a great interest in pre-medieval history and do occasionally explore post-medieval topics to.

What's been your role in the society?

I was Treasurer for four years, still in the early days, but as the society's membership grew and the complexity of its activities increased, I realised I'd reached the limits of my bookkeeping capabilities. We were very fortunate to secure the skills and experience of Mike Beazely to take on this role at

this point. Around the same time Hugh Wood, a founder member, expressed a desire to step back from his role as website coordinator. Hugh had created the website, but now wanted to focus on heraldry, his passion. We shared the task for a year as I developed my web skills (Hugh and I are both self-taught), then took on the role full-time. Looking after the website also involves looking after the society's email system and the various technologies that support our online presence – from the archive to the online-shop and ticket sales.

So, I'd say over time the importance of the role has increased. Adding Ticketsource for our event ticketing was a big step forward, and taking care of that dovetails naturally with website changes as each new event is added. I'm a member of the Programme Group too, which means I can capture event details as they develop and add them to the site at the best moment.

And what about life beyond the MHS?

I retired from a career of Requirements Analysis (a cousin of Systems Analysis) and prior to that IT Support. Of course, in the 1970s it wasn't called IT Support, I simply 'worked with computers.' It was the time when websites – along with the PC, Internet and World Wide Web, were still the science fiction stories of the future.

Over many years as a Town Councillor in Ledbury, I became connected with

several organisations with which I'm still involved today. This includes Ledbury Places, an organisation that looks after heritage buildings in the town, including a Heritage Centre Museum concerned with the history of Ledbury buildings. I'm also chairman of a trust that provides small units for startup and developing businesses. Finally, I'm a committee member with Ledbury Twinning Association, which fosters links, mainly related to youth and music, with our twin town of Strömstad in Sweden.

And what's next?

The problem with having so many different interests is that they leave me with very little time to actually study history. I'm trying to reduce some activities so that I can follow a formal study programme. Before retirement I'd thought this might be a second degree, this time in history. But perhaps this would be a little ambitious and an A-Level standard course would be more appropriate.

Meanwhile, I have huge respect for my fellow MHS trustees with their level of knowledge of the Mortimer Family and the medieval world they lived in. I so value their ability to express their knowledge and ideas in words accessible to those of us with more pedestrian English language skills. They are all very supportive and I shall continue to strive to improve my knowledge and proficiency.

Welcome to new members

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

Lucinda Blackley-Jimson	Richmond, New Zealand
Jasmine Celtel	London
George Cobb	Gastonia, USA
Joanne & John Davies	Bromyard
Judith Doherty	Church Stretton
Christine & Nigel Evans	Ludlow
Karen Goodwin	Pembridge
Carol Kennedy	Wollaston
Graham Manning	Ludlow

Christopher Mortimer	Thornton Heath
Nick Mortimer	Sheffield
Mandy Louise Mulick	Yandin, Australia
Kieron O'Connell	Dublin, Ireland
Patricia Peate	Stourbridge
Christopher Price	Bromsgrove
Gabrielle & James Service	Ludlow
Maryann Smith	New York, USA
Jennifer & Jeff Walker	Church Stretton

MHS marks five years at the International Medieval Congress

For the fifth year running, the MHS sponsored sessions on Medieval Wales and the Welsh March at the Leeds International Medieval Congress (IMC), the meeting of medieval historians in Europe. Dr Alastair Ayton, MHS trustee, chaired a session and presented a paper this year. Here, he reports on our continuing contribution to this important event.



The IMC attracts up to 3,000 historians from across the globe every summer; each has a specialist interest in the Middle Ages and a fascination with the people, places, and proceedings of this critical period in human history. This year's theme was 'Temporalities', defined as the study of time, how people perceived it, and its impact upon the human experience of life, although submissions on all aspects of medieval studies were welcomed. This year's four MHS-sponsored sessions were all well attended, with plenty of discussion and debate.

The four MHS sessions were spread across an entire day, with topics ranging from the careers of well-known figures such as Geoffrey of Monmouth and Owain Glyndŵr, to the prophecy of St David and even the wonders of Herefordshire's Romanesque architecture. All speakers were warmly congratulated for delivering a rich and varied sequence of talks, and the day was drawn to a close with a lively roundtable discussion on a pressing and portentous

topic: the financial challenges currently confronting academic institutions and the worrying general trend towards fewer academics specialising in medieval history. Several points of concern were raised and discussed, though the speakers gave stout reasons to remain hopeful and ensured the day finished on a positive note.

As in previous years, as well as sponsoring several sessions, the Society funded the attendance of two of this year's speakers, Dr Ali Al-Khafaji (an MHS Essay Prize winner) and Alyssa Benedetto, both of whom gave rich and thoughtful papers showcasing their research. Attendance of early-career researchers like Ali and Alyssa at events like the IMC is vital, not least because it enables them to share their research and to test their ideas with colleagues and fellow historians. Our heartfelt thanks go to both speakers for their attendance and to all those members of the MHS whose generous support and donations made it possible.

Moreover, our sincere thanks to all those who chaired this year's sessions, including MHS President Dr Paul Dryburgh and Professor Helen Fulton. A special note of thanks must go to Dr Caroline Bourne, who not only made all of the necessary arrangements for this year's event on behalf of the MHS, but gave an exceptional paper and contributed to the roundtable discussion with thought-provoking comments on the future of Medieval Studies in Wales. Following this year's success, preparations are already underway for Leeds IMC 2027, where the special theme will be 'Communities', more specifically the study of groups of people, their sharedness, and how such groups defined themselves and managed challenges over time. We look forward to sponsoring some sessions again and further announcements (including a call for papers) will be made in due course.



The IMC bookstall – so many books, so little time!



Alastair with Dr Ali Al-Khafaji and Alyssa Benedetto after their successful session at the IMC.

Finally, a real highlight of the IMC is its annual bookfair in the university's famous Parkinson Building. It was heartening to see so many different publishers and editors being brought together with authors and readers. A plethora of publications were being sold at appealing prices. This year, the MHS was invited to showcase a limited selection of recent publications at the Yorkist History Trust's bookstall. Several attendees stopped to glance at and indeed to purchase these books and to chat about our work. Special thanks go to Dr Joanna Laynesmith for making this possible, as well as to all those (Drs Christian Steer, Philip Muijtjens, Lynda Pidgeon, Paul Dryburgh, Andy King, and Mark Laynesmith as well as Joanna herself), who manned the bookstall for the entirety of the IMC. If the success of this year's IMC is anything to go by, then roll on 2027!

For your bookshelf

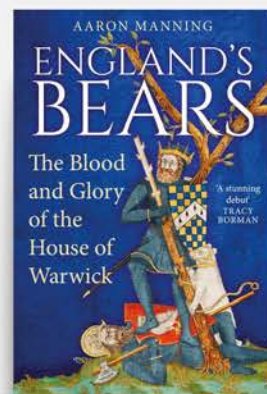
Kings and kingmakers feature in our book choices this time, from the warrior Harold and the decadent Richard II to the great earls of Warwick. And, into that mix, we've thrown some trailblazing medieval women. What more could you want for these autumn evenings?

England's Bears: The Blood and Glory of the House of Warwick

By Aaron Manning

Recounts 650 years during which the House of Warwick shaped the political and cultural destiny of England and its neighbours, from Edward II's 'Black Dog' to Edward IV's kingmaker and on into the 18th century when the family turned from political power to the arts, transforming from a house of despots and brutes to one of dilettantes and bards.

Published by The History Press on 8 October 2026 and available from bookshops and online. RRP £25.

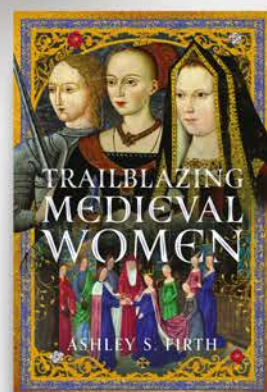


Trailblazing Medieval Women

By Ashley Sarah Firth

In a world dominated by men, the women in this book defied convention, challenged gender expectations, and carved out legacies as rulers, consorts, warriors, authors, and visionaries. From Anglo-Saxon female rulership to the political intrigue of the Wars of the Roses, they stepped beyond the roles assigned to them and transformed the world around them. Firth's meticulous research brings their voices to the fore.

Published by Pen & Sword in July 2026 and available from bookshops and online. RRP £25.

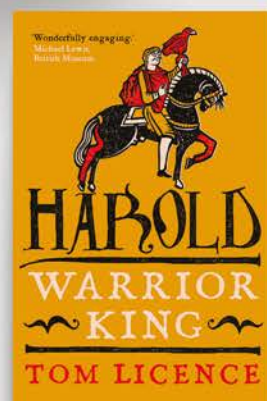


Harold: Warrior King

By Tom Licence

An authoritative life of the losing king at the Battle of Hastings. Licence questions the myths that have grown up around Harold to uncover the real man – from his childhood to his nine-month reign and the bloody battle that ended it.

Published by Yale University Press on 11 August 2026. Available online and in bookshops. RRP £25.



Richard II: King, Culture and the Court of Venus

By Gemma Holman

A fresh look at Richard's reign which argues that this was a golden age for arts and culture, during which women achieved greater importance at the heart of government. Gemma explores this fascinating period, offering us an extended biography, not just of Richard himself, but his infamous court.

Published by The History Press, October 2026. Available online, in bookshops. RRP £25.

