

MORTIMER
History Society

MORTIMER *Matters*

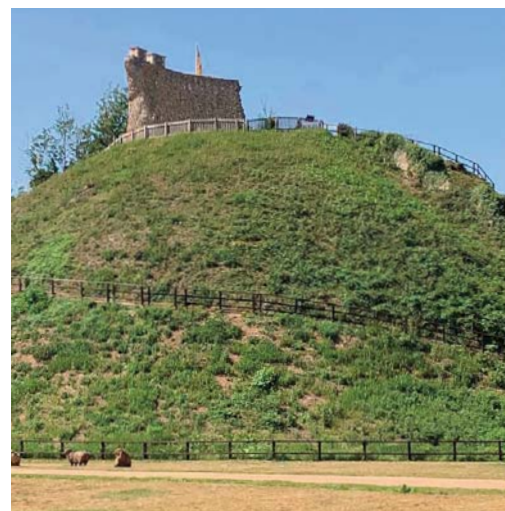
The Lordship of Clare and the mystery at the Swan Inn

Heraldry enthusiast Hugh Wood unravels a fourteenth century Mortimer mystery hidden in a Suffolk pub sign and gives us an account of the Mortimer family's connection with Clare – its lordship, castle and priory.

Brightening up the front of the Swan Inn in Clare in Suffolk is this colourful piece of carved wood. Its shape suggests that it was once the sill of an oriel window. The pub itself is thought to date from the 17th century, but the sign is much older, and much more interesting for us, as it comes from nearby Clare castle. Look closely and you'll see the royal arms tucked away at the far left and, balancing them, on the far right, the quartered arms of Mortimer and de Burgh. Dating and understanding this artefact presents an interesting challenge. But first, it's worth exploring how the Mortimers came to be associated with Clare.

The history of the holders of Clare

After 1066, the Conqueror awarded Ralph Mortimer estates across the country, so it's tempting to assume that Clare was one of those. However, Domesday shows that Clare was held by Richard FitzGilbert. Richard's family continued to hold Clare for a further 128 years. After several alternate Richard FitzGilberts and Gilbert FitzRichards, they finally settled on being called 'de Clare'.



Clare castle



In This Issue

Features

Lordship of Clare – a mystery	1-3
The Law of the March	4-5
The uses and abuses of wardship	5-6

Society News

Welcome new members	5
Upcoming events	7
February 2021 conference	8
October 2020 conference: review	9
International Medieval Conference	11

Reviews and recommendations

Royal Seals – power and majesty	10-11
Marcher Lordships – volume 1	12-13
Cecily – 15th century matriarch	13
For Her Good Estate	14
For your bookshelf	15



Arms of the 4th and 5th Earl of March

We'll take up the story with the 7th in line, Richard de Clare 6th Earl of Gloucester (1222 to 1262). Although Richard was a prominent figure in England and a powerful Marcher lord, it's his spiritual side which concerns us here. He was the first person to bring the Augustinian or Austin Friars to England, and they established their first priory at Clare in 1248. These friars were respected for their poverty and for their willingness to visit people in their homes. One of their chief patrons, following Richard's death, was his widow Maud de Lacy.

Richard and Maud's son Gilbert de Clare (d1295) was a strong supporter of Simon de Montfort, who knighted him just before the Battle of Lewes in 1264. Much later, after everything had quietened down in England, Gilbert was still seen as a potential threat to the stability of the crown.

Following the collapse of the 8th crusade, Prince Edward, heir to the English throne, continued to the Holy Land and stayed for some months at Acre. In April 1272 his wife, Eleanor of Castile, gave birth to a daughter who is known to history as Joan of Acre. By the time she was 12 her father, now King Edward I, greatly strengthened his position by betrothing her to his erstwhile enemy, Gilbert de Clare.

They were married in 1290 when she was 18 and he was 46.

Joan loved Clare and continued to live in the castle after her husband's death. She built a new chapel in the priory and is buried there.

Their only son Gilbert was 23 and childless when he was killed at the battle of Bannockburn in 1314. Ownership of Clare then passed to his sister, the famous Elizabeth de Clare (1295-1360). Married three times and with a child from each marriage, she was the founder of Clare College in Cambridge. Her first husband was John de Burgh (d1313) son of the 2nd earl of Ulster, and Clare subsequently passed to their granddaughter Elizabeth de Burgh Countess of Ulster, who married Lionel the second son of King Edward III. Both Lionel and Elizabeth are buried in Clare Priory. With the marriage of their only child, Philippa, to Edmund, 3rd earl of March, Clare passed to the Mortimers.

Let's return to the carved sign at the Swan Inn. When was it created and who is represented in its coats of arms?

There are a couple of strange things about the quarterings on the shield to the right of the swan. Firstly, the inescutcheons are black rather than silver. That's easily explained: it's not uncommon for silver to degrade to black over time and it was probably repainted black in error. More problematical are the round knobs or rings in the centre of each inescutcheon. It's tempting to assume that this could be a cadency mark, indicating a younger son, but the lack of a suitable candidate rules that out. These marks remain a mystery.

The first person entitled to quarter the Mortimer arms with those of de Burgh is the 3rd earl's son, Roger 4th earl of March who died in 1398. His son Edmund, the 5th earl, also used them. As owners of Clare, the Mortimer arms on the Swan Inn must represent one or other, or both, of them. But the other emblems on the Swan Inn take us in a very different direction. First the swan itself: a white swan ducally gorged and chained like this one was a badge of the Lancastrian kings. Its position here suggests that it is representing the crown. But why should that be?



The arms of the Prince of Wales



Before going any further, it's important to stress that these carvings must have been repainted several times. So, we may be seeing the colours and interpretations put upon them by later generations. Nevertheless, these are not just flat images, which could easily have been misinterpreted, but carvings with the charges in clear relief, so while the colouring may be suspect, the charges are probably original.

The other shield in the display shows the royal arms. This is the key to explaining and dating the carving. The arms in the 1st and 4th quarters are called *France Modern*. Previously, *France Ancient* had a blue field with lots of fleurs-de-lys, but Charles V reduced these to just three in 1376. In England, however, the change wasn't implemented until 1411, so these arms at Clare can't be earlier than that.

Of greater significance is the blue label across the top of the shield. A plain label is used specifically to indicate the heir to the throne, and the only Prince of Wales after 1411 who was a contemporary of the earls of March was Henry, later King Henry V. The reason why the arms of the Prince of Wales should be on this carving with those of Mortimer is not instantly obvious, but becomes clear when we look at dates and the documentary evidence. When the 4th earl died in 1398 his son Edmund was only six and, as was customary, all his estates reverted to the king until they could be given back when he reached adulthood. In the National Archives there is a manuscript dated c.1408 which explains what happened. King Henry IV granted Clare to the prince during the minority of Edmund Mortimer, earl of March and this carving on the Swan Inn appears to have been done during that period. On becoming king in 1413, Henry V granted Edmund all of his estates, which gives a very small window indeed for this carving to have been accurate and relevant, namely 1411-1413. But let's not get carried away – further evidence may emerge that might place it a few years either side of this narrow date range.

Even though they held multiple lordships, in England, Wales and sometimes Ireland, Clare and its castle clearly meant a lot to its successive owners. They continued to support the priory and, when the 5th earl of March died in Trim in Ireland, his body was brought back to Clare priory, for burial alongside some of his illustrious non-Mortimer ancestors.

About the author: Hugh Wood is a founder member of the Mortimer History Society with an interest in Mortimer genealogy and heraldry. He has held the positions of treasurer, membership secretary and editor of *Mortimer Matters*. He remains responsible for the website.

From your editor

Hello!

Well, who'd have thought we'd be starting 2021 in lockdown! Grim for all of us, I know, but there's still plenty going on in the Mortimer History Society. For the time being our events will remain virtual, you'll find a full programme on page 7. I'm certainly excited about the February conference, when women will take centre stage! We very much hope that, later in the year and as the vaccine kicks in, we'll be able to return to actual events. Let's keep our fingers crossed, I for one can't wait!

There's also plenty of book news in this issue, with several reviews and reading recommendations, as well as fascinating articles on everything from pub signs to wardships!

We'd love to hear what you think about this issue. Why not drop me a line at mm@mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk to let me know your thoughts and any suggestions for improvement? And, remember, this is your newsletter so you should also 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 early May and will start planning in early April, so please get in touch with your ideas as soon as you can!



The Law of the March

In this, the fifth article in our Marcher lordships series, Dr Sara Elin Roberts examines the development of a customary legal system in the March, which adopted and adapted laws of both England and Wales to suit the purposes of the Marcher lords and the complexities of a mixed society.

Magna Carta acknowledges three systems of law used to settle disputes across England and Wales in the thirteenth century: The Common Law of England, the Law of Wales, and the Law of the March. While the Common Law and Welsh Law, known as *Cyfraith Hywel* (the Law of Hywel), were well known and clearly codified, the Law of the March was less recognisable and may appear at first to be a surprising reference in the charter. However, its inclusion is a clear sign that, in the March, things were done differently. Legal cases would be settled in a particular way in the March, where neither the Common Law of England or *Cyfraith Hywel* was followed.

What was the Law of the March?

Defining the Law of the March is problematic. In many ways, the reference to it in *Magna Carta* is

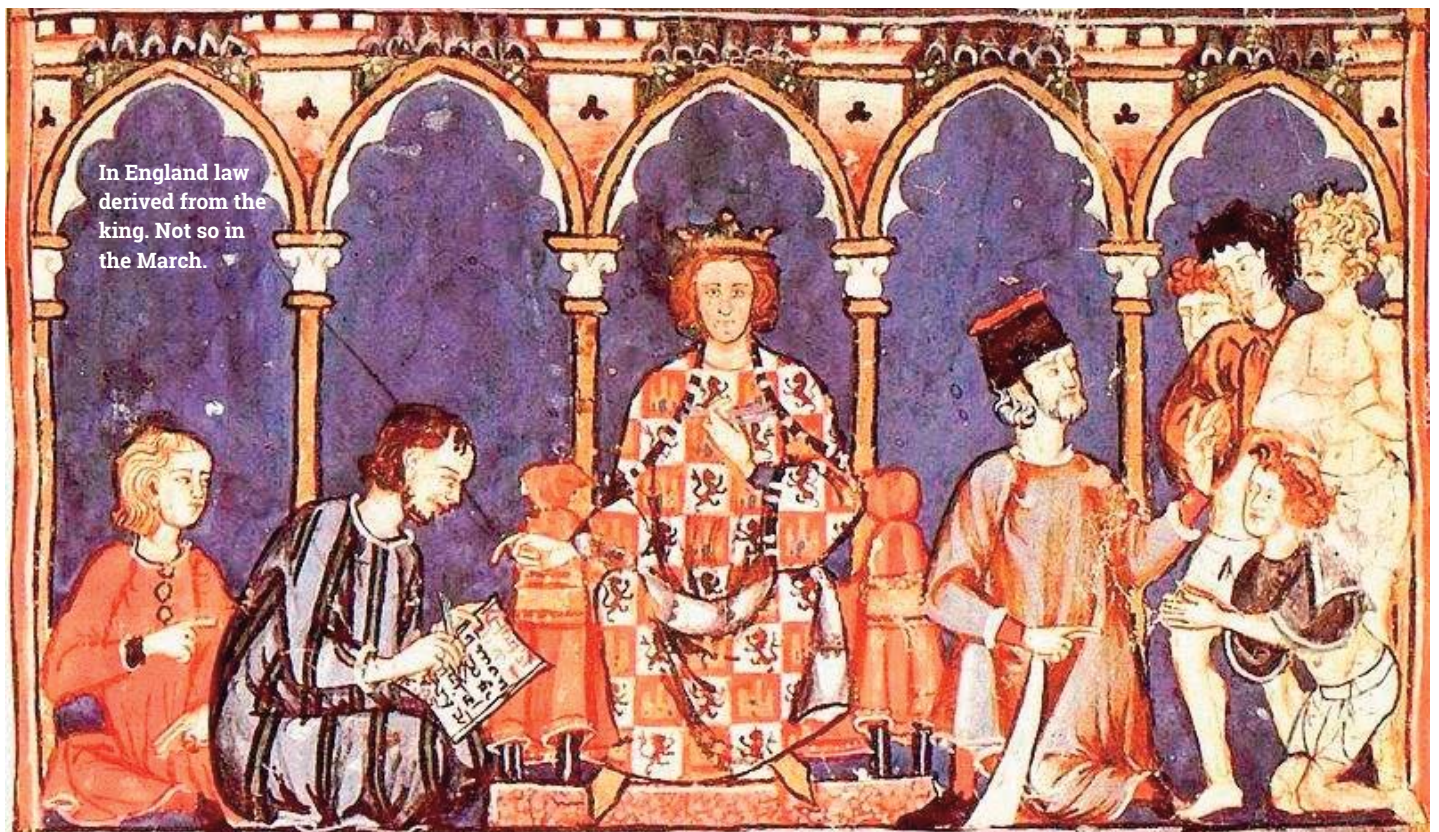
misleading. While there's no doubt that things were done differently in the March, the lack of records make it difficult to summarise what the law was and how it worked. Indeed, one of the main problems with attempting such a definition is that the Law of the March was not a single legal system, but would vary according to time and place. The same is true, of course, of the March itself, which was not a single unified or uniform entity. The Law of the March was not written down in a single book – as Welsh law was – and the system of detailed case records, which was at the heart of English Common Law wasn't followed in the same way. Instead, in the March, the law would be whatever the lord felt it ought to be; it was flexible and adaptable to circumstances.

It is often said that the Marcher lords claimed that 'the king's writ does not run in the March'. This was a statement of independence by the lords – they didn't have to answer to the English

king in any sense, including in the legal sphere. There's clear evidence that the Marcher lords, with their regalian rights, were able to – and did – make their own laws. This was largely done by borrowing and adapting legal practices and laws in order to create a bespoke system. In the March's melting pot of cultures and society they had two legal systems they could draw upon – English and Welsh – to suit their own purposes. Again, this didn't involve drawing up a book of law, or summarising law for particular issues, more likely this was piecemeal work. There may never have been a complete legal system in many or, indeed, any Marcher lordships.

What evidence do we have?

The evidence for the Law of the March can be gleaned from two main areas – first, from records originating from the





The lords of the March re-worked the laws of England and Wales for their own purposes.

Marcher lordships, including charters of liberties outlining certain aspects, legal records such as court rolls and (rarer) transcripts of cases. The second area is from the western side of Offa's Dyke, where evidence for the Law of the March can be traced in Welsh legal texts and other writings in Welsh.

Court records for Wales and the March are few and far between, but there is a large and rich collection from the Marcher Lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd. There we can see Welsh legal terms mixing with English, and two legal systems operating side-by-side to create a functioning and useful situation. The court records are largely silent on procedure, and mainly show how cases were concluded. However, because Welsh law, as a codified system, is rich in sources, it is possible to see the different processes at work. In addition, many of the lengthy Welsh legal texts, of which forty survive, were written in the fourteenth century, when the March was in its heyday, and several originate from the March. These show development of Welsh Law, and show how English influence on the law or Wales came via the March.

In general, it can be said that the concepts and ideas found in Welsh

law were heavily borrowed into the Law of the March, perhaps because English Common Law didn't have the same written authority as *Cyfraith Hywel*. However, the methods of working the law – with its emphasis on procedure – were largely taken from the English legal system of the time. While this made for a distinctive legal situation in the March, it also meant that the Law of the March was not original. It didn't have its own legal ideas and concepts, but simply borrowed heavily from both sides of the border.

Why pick 'n mix?

Why would the Marcher lords pick and choose in this way? Firstly, because they could. They were not constrained by royal rules and could therefore do as they pleased. But it was also far more convenient to draw on existing processes than to rebuild the wheel and start from scratch. Borrowing in this way was more likely to create a situation that would work in their territories – they governed over areas of mixed population, with different cultures, languages and peoples living cheek-by-jowl. This meant that the familiar was combined with the unfamiliar, but created a system where at least some aspects might be recognisable to all. Finally, picking and choosing created profitable opportunities for the Marcher lords. There is evidence that in law, the most profitable option (to the lord) was often chosen, to maximise income.

Summarising this mixed, varied and constantly changing legal system – if it can even be termed 'a system' – is subject to endless caveats. In general, however, the Law of the March was customary law, rather than an organised and recorded system, which borrowed heavily from Welsh legal concepts and English procedure, to create a practical working solution for this mixed frontier society.

New members

Fourteen new members have joined the Society since the last edition of *Mortimer Matters*. Total membership now stands at 402. Welcome all! We hope you're enjoying your membership and look forward to seeing you soon.

Danna Messer
York

Jane and Samuel Alsop
Wolverhampton

Charles Veale
Ontario, Canada

Paul Jones
Cardiff

Emma Burrows
Iver Heath

Richard Mortimore
Crawley

Helen and Terry Pearson
Leintwardine

Diana Powell
Harpenden

Michael Guest
Leintwardine

Val and Mike Saunders
Ludlow

James Petrie
Barcelona, Spain

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

About the author: Dr Sara Elin Roberts is an academic specialising primarily in medieval Wales. She has published widely on various aspects including women, medieval Welsh law, and fourteenth-century Welsh poetry.

Kingship, Nobility and Gentry: The uses and abuses of wardship from Edward III to Henry IV (1350 to 1413)

Connor Williams' PhD thesis offers the first conclusive investigation of the feudal incident of wardship and its impact on landholders during the later 14th century. After nearly six months of research, he summarises the scope and significance of the project for *Mortimer Matters* readers.

The term wardship can legally be defined as a feudal incident that occurred upon the death of a landowner before their heir attained majority. In lay terms, this meant a period of guardianship of the estates and person of the minor until they reached maturity – aged twenty-one for boys, fourteen for married girls and sixteen for unmarried girls. The estates of wards and their marriages could be sold by the crown to the highest bidder, making them a very lucrative source of income which did not require parliamentary approval. While several feudal incidents became largely redundant after the restrictions of *Magna Carta*, wardship prevailed into the Tudor period. As the Middle Ages progressed, the administrative apparatus which surrounded wardships became progressively more sophisticated as the crown tried to better exploit wardships. However, landowners also began to develop legal devices to circumvent the intrusiveness of wardship in an attempt to retain control of their assets during minorities.



Children at play in the 14th century. From the *Omne Bonum* manuscript.

Despite their significance, wardships have been woefully neglected by modern scholarship, with the only full-length study being Scott Waugh's *Lordship of England* published in 1988. However, Waugh's study is limited both chronologically

and thematically. His primary concern was to chart the descent of royal lordship – of which wardships were just one example – in the aftermath of *Magna Carta*, but not investigating beyond 1327. Furthermore, Waugh seems to have focused exclusively on the relationship between the crown, titled nobility and the baronage, with any consideration of the gentry (knights and esquires) being largely overlooked.

Therefore, the purpose of my research is to shift the focus towards the later fourteenth century where, in the aftermath of war, pestilence and political instability, mortality rates increased and the number of wardships grew accordingly. I have identified three principal strands worthy of attention:

- 1. Exploring how wardships were used by the crown as a means to shape landed society to serve the king's interests.** The king could use wardships as a form of patronage to reward loyal servants and trusted retainers without permanently alienating land from his personal demesne. However, by granting wardships to a third party, the crown was denying itself a valuable source of income. My research looks to uncover how three English kings balanced these competing demands on their resources.
- 2. Investigating wardships from the perspective of those who received them from the Crown.** By identifying the custodians of wardships I hope to ascertain how they were chosen – was it simply the king's choice, or did other practical factors come into play? I also consider how the estates were managed by these custodians; did they discharge their obligations responsibly or did they abuse and exploit the estates for their own benefit?
- 3. Ascertaining the experience of families whose heirs were subjected to wardship.** This is an area that has been largely overlooked. Wardships had profound impacts on the families they affected as they effectively removed young children from their families and placed them in the care and family of their custodian – regardless of whether they were an orphan or their mother still lived. While this could cause problems, it could also lead to mutually advantageous social and political networking between families via marriage and association.



The death of the 2nd earl of March at age 31 caused a 13-year wardship of the Mortimer Estates.

So, what has this to do with the Mortimers or the Welsh Marches? Well, as many of you will know, the later Mortimer family in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries were subjected to consecutive and lengthy wardships as a result of Mortimer lords dying young.

During the period of my study (1350 to 1413), the Mortimer family experienced 41 years of wardship, with no earl of March inheriting at an age greater than eight years. The first iteration of my PhD thesis was actually an in-depth study of only the Mortimer wardships – including that of the 2nd earl of March, which is now beyond the scope of my present study. However, on discovery that Patrick McDonagh had beaten me to a survey of the Mortimer family (see the overview of his thesis in the October 2020 edition of *Mortimer Matters*), it was decided that I would embark on a more general study of wardships. Despite this wider scope, the Mortimers remain a valuable case study, which will undoubtedly warrant close attention throughout my research.

About the author: Connor is a first year PhD student at the University of Nottingham and has been a member of the Mortimer History Society since 2019. He won the second prize in the 2019 MHS Essay Prize and currently volunteers as an editorial assistant on *Mortimer Matters*.

Keep the date!

As usual we've planned a wide-ranging and stimulating programme of events for 2021. As the COVID-19 crisis continues we anticipate that, at least for the early part of the year, we'll be hosting events on Zoom, so that members and guests can attend virtually and free of charge. We'll keep you posted – via our website, Twitter, Facebook, *Mortimer Matters* and direct emails – of our plans as they develop. In the meantime, here's a rundown for the year.

Saturday, 15 February
Cherchez La Femme: Queenship, Law and Marriage in Medieval Wales and its March

A half-day conference featuring presentations by Dr Sara Elin Roberts, an expert in women and Welsh law, Dr Cordelia Beattie, Senior Lecturer in Medieval History at the University of Edinburgh, and Dr Danna Messer, a specialist in the wives of native Welsh rulers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. See interview with Danna Messer on page 8.

Saturday, 27 March
Discovering 1461 – The Battle of Mortimer's Cross: A community archaeological project

A presentation by Gary Ball, Director of the Mortimer's Cross 1461 Battlefield Project. Please note that this was also the planned date for our Society's AGM, which will probably now be re-scheduled later in the year. In light of that, we plan to recruit more speakers and expand this event into a half-day conference. Look out for more news on our webpage and social platforms.

Saturday 15 May
Mayhem, Murder and Marriage: The Mortimers and the Welsh Princes

Held over from May 2020, our Spring Conference will examine the relationship between the Mortimers and the native princes of Wales. It will be hosted in partnership with the Radnorshire Society.

Tuesday, 22 June
Annual Summer Lecture: Perceptions of the Past in the March of Wales

Huw Pryce, Professor of Welsh History at Bangor University, explores what's known about the medieval writers of Welsh histories and chronicles, and the reasons why they made their records.

Saturday, 2 October
'The Murder of Evesham for Battle it was None: The 2nd Barons' War and the Battle of Evesham

Our first joint conference with the Simon de Montfort Society and the Vale of Evesham Historical Society will include presentations by Professor David Carpenter on Henry III, Dr Sophie Ambler on Simon de Montfort, Dr Andy King on Roger Mortimer (d1282), Louise Wilkinson on Eleanor de Montfort, and Dr Andrew Spencer on the Lord Edward. Each speaker will tell the story of the 2nd Barons' war from the viewpoint of their character.

See future issues of *Mortimer Matters*, plus our web and social media platforms for updates to our event schedule as our plans develop. We hope to hold a series of study visits during summer 2021, but these will be dependent on Covid-19 restrictions. We are also planning a half-day conference in November. Watch this space for more news!

Let's talk about the women...

Our first event of 2021 takes a close look at the status, role and experience of women in medieval Wales and the Marches. Prepare to be surprised, says *Mortimer Matters* Editor, Annie Garthwaite.

By now I hope you've all booked your tickets and are getting ready to power up your Zoom! February is upon us.

Ahead of what looks sure to be an eye-opening half-day agenda, I jumped on a call with one of our three eminent guest speakers Danna Messer, whose recent book *Joan, Lady of Wales: Power and Politics of King John's Daughter* has been an Amazon sell-out in recent months.

Alaskan by birth, Danna fell in love with Wales and Welsh history when a study year abroad programme from the University of Denver brought her to Bangor University. This is where her now flourishing interest in aristocratic Welsh women of the Middle Ages began.

"It became clear to me very quickly that women played a much more important role in medieval Welsh power politics than most people – indeed most historians – have realised," says Danna. "I think it's time we lifted the lid on their stories and developed a more balanced view of how women – particularly the consorts of powerful

men – exercised authority, influenced policy and drove political strategy."

Chief among Danna's interests, and the subject of her recent book, is Joan, Lady of Wales. As the illegitimate daughter of England's King John and sister of Henry III, Joan undoubtedly brought much of her French Norman culture with her to Wales when she married Llywelyn the Great in 1205. But, Danna contends, Joan's political vigour as a noble consort is no anomaly. It needs to be viewed as part of a clear Welsh tradition in which women exercised authority, mediated within social hierarchies and managed great estates either independently or in partnership with their husbands.

"Certainly, Joan's ability to influence Anglo-Welsh relations was helped by her closeness to the English throne," says Danna, "but there's no evidence to suggest that her activities were unusual or outside of the norm."

In Danna's view it's time we gave medieval women full credit for the vital roles they played – leading to a more nuanced and rounded view of the history of Wales and its relationship



Danna Messer

with England. "Who knows," says Danna, "were it not for Joan's positive influence on Anglo-Welsh 13th century relations, Wales may have been conquered a lot sooner than it was."



Danna returned to the UK after completing her degree in Denver and has lived here ever since. Recognised as an expert on the wives of native Welsh rulers in the 12th and 13th century, she has published extensively on various aspects of Welsh queenship. She is also acquisitions editor for Arc Humanities Press, the publishing arm of CARMEN Worldwide Medieval Network, and executive editor of the *Encyclopaedia of the Global Middle Ages*, a partnership project between Arc and Bloomsbury Academic. She is currently editing the first volume of the *English Consorts, Power, Influence, Dynasty* series, which will focus on Norman and early Plantagenet women. It is due to be published by Palgrave in 2022. Her recent book *Joan, Lady of Wales: Power and Politics of King John's Daughter*, was featured in the last edition of *Mortimer Matters* and is available from www.pen-and-sword.co.uk, RRP £25.

Go to www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk for full details of the February conference
– and book your place if you haven't already!

Decorated in Glory: Church building in Herefordshire in the 14th Century

A report of the conference held on 21 November last year by Mortimer Matters assistant editor, Connor Williams.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, many historical and community events faced postponement or cancellation in 2020. However, on an eventful morning in November, the Mortimer History Society embraced technology once again to virtually meet via Zoom for the launch of Professor Nigel Saul's recent book, *Decorated in Glory* – the first in a series of occasional papers released on behalf of the Mortimer History Society. Over 100 people tuned in to listen to our speakers – Professor Saul, Dr Ian Ball and Tanya Heath – talk about the wonders of medieval church building and decoration in the later middle ages.

rebuilding of Herefordshire cathedral and the societal practice of chantry building in the early fourteenth-century combined to create a proverbial explosion of religious expression in the region. He also explained how, despite his extraordinary qualities, Roger Mortimer, first earl of March, displayed quite an ordinary expression of piety at this time, while the Mortimer widows of the early fourteenth-century were responsible for some of the most enduring monuments of the decorated period which survive today, particularly on the former Mortimer estate of Kingsland.



Thomas Beckett and Thomas Cantilupe, St Mary's, Credenhill (copyright David Griffith)

was the relationship between St Thomas Cantilupe and St Thomas Beckett – showing how the two began to develop a symbiotic association in the later middle ages. Becket's cult, it was argued, provided a basis for the foundation of Cantilupe's.

The purpose of wall paintings

In the final talk of the day, Tanya Heath offered a unique window into the everyday lives of medieval people by examining the purpose and use of medieval church wall paintings. While these paintings are often considered to have been a means to educate the illiterate, Tanya used current research to reveal how their purpose extended to become an active part of Christian prayer and devotion. Wall paintings could be used to help the illiterate undertake the sacraments or to guide them in prayer. They could equally be used as a warning against 'sinful' behaviour such as working on a Sunday!

Not too late!

If you were unable to attend, have no fear. All these talks were recorded and are now available to watch on the Society's YouTube channel. Professor Saul's book, *Decorated in Glory*, is available to purchase now from Logaston Press RRP £10. Thanks again to all the speakers and Society officers for putting on a cracking event!



The building of Hereford cathedral led to an explosion of religious expression (copyright David Iliff)

An explosion of religious expression

The first talk, by Professor Saul, treated attendees to a visual show of the wonders of medieval churches in Herefordshire dating from the later decorated period (1280-1340) of English church building. Based upon the findings in his book, Professor Saul guided attendees through the processes of church building in Herefordshire, explaining how the canonisation of Thomas Cantilupe, the

The impact of Thomas Cantilupe

Following on from Professor Saul, Dr Bass investigated further the canonisation of St Thomas Cantilupe, who had been Bishop of Hereford between 1275-1282. The canonisation encouraged a rapid cult to grow up, focused on Cantilupe's tomb at Hereford. This in turn caused pilgrims to flock to the site, funding the large-scale rebuilding of Hereford Cathedral. Dr Bass' main talking point, however,

Royal Seals: The National Archives: Images of Power and Majesty

By Paul Dryburgh, Pen & Sword History

John Cherry reviews Paul Dryburgh's welcome introduction to the significance of medieval seals and the seal maker's art.

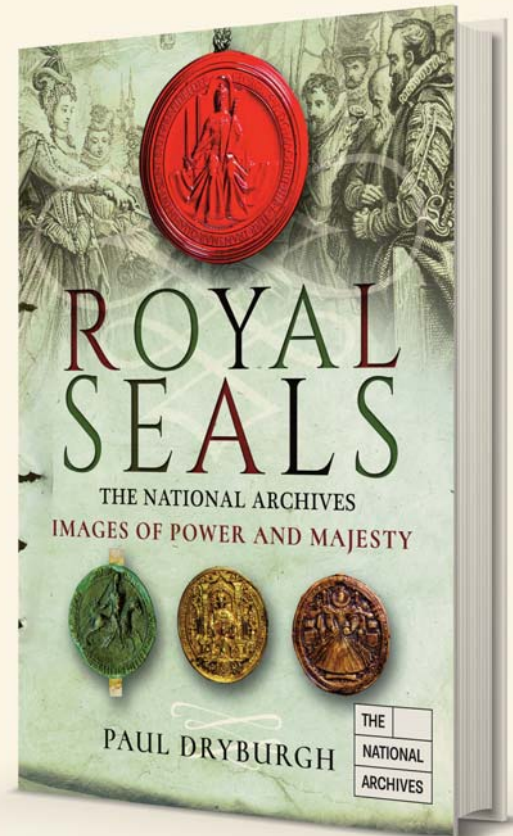
Many people think of seals as appendages to documents whose inscriptions are impossible to read and whose designs are difficult to understand. This book, with its splendid and large photos of royal and other seals, answers such doubts and is to be greatly welcomed. It is surprising that no one has written an introduction to royal seals before, and Paul Dryburgh, the National Archives, and Pen & Sword Books are to be thanked for filling this gap. Previously the easiest available chapters on royal seals were in Harvey and McGuinness (*A Guide to British Medieval Seals 1966*) (15 pages and 13 illustrations), or Elizabeth New *Seals and Sealing Practices 2009* (22 pages and 8 illustrations). Dryburgh has 114 pages and some 130 illustrations, of which about a hundred are of seals.

Different chapters deal with royal seals, personal seals, ecclesiastical seals and the materials.

The large round Great Seal (here shortened to Seal) usually has an enthroned monarch on one side and an equestrian monarch on the other. Even minor changes to this traditional design are interesting. The text provides a lively chronological account of the Seal from William I to Elizabeth II, and ably sets it in a historical background referring to major political events, such as the claim to France at the beginning of the Hundred Years

War and the political chasm of the Civil War. The account is divided up under the medieval kings, beginning with Henry I, after an introduction dealing with William I and II. Edward II, of interest to Mortimer History Society members, does not have a section, but is dealt with by reference to Edward I's Seal, which is, alas, not illustrated. The Seal of the Lancastrian Henry IV of 1406, which Paul Dryburgh describes as 'arguably the finest example of the seal maker's art in the Middle Ages', served as the early Seal of Edward IV, and was modified by a scattering of roses on the equestrian side. Edward IV, however, had a new Seal after 1471, which was later used by Richard III, and is illustrated in the book.

An illuminated image of Henry VIII from the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* begins the run of post medieval Seals, and here Paul Dryburgh provides new insights on the Tudor, Jacobean and Hanoverian Seals. The inclusion of royal portraits from the *Coram Rege* rolls gives added interest to the illustrations. The story of the Seal continues to the twentieth century noting how George V changed the equestrian side into an Admiral standing in front of a naval armada, while George VI reverts to an equestrian portrait. Both are illustrated by photographs of the Kings in relaxed mode. Elizabeth II's Seal is noted, but not illustrated.



Two summary chapters on personal and ecclesiastical seals follow. Although these are adequate, the space could have been better used to tell the story of lesser royal and governmental seals – the deputed seals and minor governmental seals, which are often more inventive and little studied.

The interesting chapter 'materials' owes much to the work of Dr Elke Cwiertnia on colour in seals, which was created by the addition of pigment (verdigris for green; vermilion for red). The fourteenth century accounts of the earls of Lancaster show the purchase of much wax, vermilion and turpentine for sealing. One wonders whether the Mortimer earls made similar purchases. The wax trade was important not only for seals but also for candles. Here more explanation of the four pictures showing cross-sections of pigmentation would have been helpful.

The photography is superb, but the book does not make the best of this. There is no numbering, and only occasionally are the photographs referred to in the text. Sometimes their placing is odd. Edward I's section lacks his Seal but instead has the obverse

Cont/d from page 10

and reverse of the seal of William Fraser, Bishop of St Andrews, which might have better adorned the chapter on ecclesiastical seals. No measurements are given of any of the seals and occasionally the obverse and reverse of the seal are reproduced at different sizes.

In the introduction there is a section 'What is a seal?', but the opposing illustration is not a seal but a modern plaster mould for reproducing seals. Surely there should have been a seal here. The National Archives have made great progress in the digitisation of photographs of their modern mould collection for reproducing seals, but this is not mentioned. Nor is the digitisation of the card indexes. In my search for an easily available image of the Great Seal of Edward I, I found an excellent online image from Warwickshire County Record Office - <https://www.ourwarwickshire.org.uk/content/article/seals-two-kings> **Waller of Woodcote docs.**

Perhaps The National Archives could follow suit by providing images of all the Seals of the Kings and Queens of England online. Until then, this guide will enthuse the enquirer.

About the Reviewer. John Cherry was a curator in the British Museum, studied medieval archaeological finds, and has published widely on metalwork and jewellery. A member of the Mortimer History Society, he lives in Bitterley, near Ludlow.

25% discount for Mortimer History Society members! Get your copy of *Royal Seals* for just £18.75 (RRP £25). Simply quote the offer code **MORT21** when ordering online at www.pen-and-sword.co.uk. But be quick! Offer closes on 28 February 2021.

Mortimer History Society to sponsor 2021 International Medieval Congress Monday 5 to Friday 9 July 2021



As part of the Society's efforts to promote interest in and understanding of the Mortimers and Welsh Marches, we've decided to sponsor a key stream at the International Medieval Congress (IMC), Europe's largest forum for ideas exchange within medieval studies.

The stream, which will examine the politics, culture and law of the medieval Welsh Marches, will feature six impressive speakers, five of whom are Society members:

Melissa Julian-Jones of the School of History, Archaeology and Religion at Cardiff University, will offer an overview of inter-Marcher warfare between 1093 and 1307.

Sara Elin Roberts, a specialist in medieval Welsh law, will look at how the laws of the March operated.

Emma Cavell of the department of History at Swansea University will discuss elite intermarriages between the English and native Welsh in the Marches between 1067 and 1282.

Ian Bass of the University of Wales Trinity St David, Lampeter, will examine the role of ecclesiastical Mortimers within the English church.

Connor Williams, PhD student at the University of Nottingham, will discuss how the wardships of Despenser, Hastings and Mortimer sons, who came to their titles early, affected the Marches.

Patrick McDonagh, PhD student at Trinity College Dublin, will look in detail at the Mortimer affinity during the age of crisis in the reign of Richard II

Together, these presentations will explore the effects of cultural interaction and difference in the Marches in the three and a half centuries after the Norman conquest of England.

Open to all who register!

Because of COVID-19 restrictions the IMC, usually held at Leeds University, will be a virtual event in 2021. While it's a shame that people won't be able to get together – typically delegates attend from more than 60 countries – this does mean that Society members can attend easily without the need for travel.

Attendance is £120 with a concessionary rate of £75 for students, retired, unwaged and low-waged delegates. This will provide access to the full online congress during Congress week and a short period before and after the event to access all resources and recordings. Unfortunately, due to technical limitations, it will not be possible to offer single day tickets. Online registration will be available in the Spring at www.imc.leeds.ac.uk, and all registrations must be made before 10 May 2021. Look out for more information in the April edition of *Mortimer Matters*.

The Welsh marcher Lordships, 1: Central & North

By Philip Hume

Mortimer History Society President Paul Dryburgh welcomes the first in a three-volume series that promises to reveal the uniqueness of the Medieval Welsh Marches.

When the Mortimer History Society was founded in 2009, its principal objective was to provide a focus and forum for people interested in the medieval Mortimer dynasty and the history of the Welsh Marches. I'm not sure whether the founders envisaged that within a decade the Society would have travelled so great a distance and successfully bridged the gap between the academic and popular spheres of history, literature and poetry, art and architecture.

New books

Simply in terms of new books on the Marches, the past year has witnessed a flowering. Firstly, Professor Nigel Saul published *Decorated in Glory: Church Building in Herefordshire in the Fourteenth Century* (Logaston Press), a wonderful scholarly volume supported by the Society. Hard on its heels is the first in a three-volume series compiled by members of the Society. Focussed on the Welsh marcher lordships in the Middle Ages, the series aims to answer a variety of questions and give readers an accessible introduction: What were the medieval Welsh Marches? What defined a marcher lordship and how did they evolve during the two centuries from the first arrival of the Normans on the Welsh borders to the Edwardian conquests of Wales in the 1270s and 1280s? What were the distinctive powers of marcher lords and how did they develop? Why did the marcher lordships become an anomaly to be abolished in the sixteenth century during the reign of Henry VIII? For anyone interested in the medieval Marches, regardless of

whether you focus on the Mortimer family or not, these volumes will go a long way towards answering these questions and to become a key part of your library for years to come.

A great start

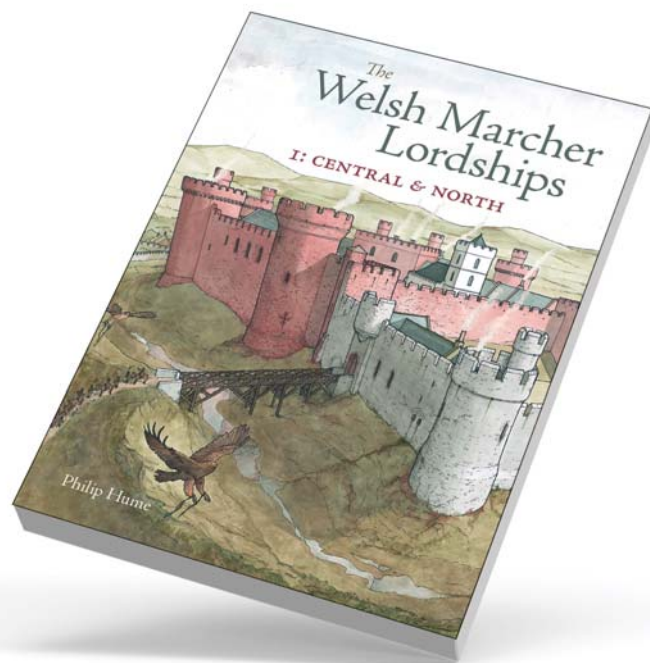
For this first volume, which focuses on the lordships of the central and northern March (those covered by modern Flintshire, Denbighshire, Shropshire, Powys, Radnorshire and northern Herefordshire), Philip Hume, Honorary Secretary of the MHS, has produced a brilliant work of synthesis, analysis and reference. The book is constructed of ten chapters, split essentially into three main sections – an introduction to the March and its distinctiveness; a narrative general history of the region from the Saxon period through to the Laws of Wales Acts of 1536 and 1542 abolishing the marcher lordships, logically divided into discrete chronological sections (chapters 2-7); and a lordship-by-lordship history (chapters 8-10), richly illustrated with photographs, maps (both historical reproductions and examples specifically compiled for the volume) and family trees of relevant marcher and Welsh princely dynasties. Throughout, he skilfully navigates the twists and turns in Welsh politics and in the relationship between the kings of England, marcher lords and Welsh rulers that dominated the political, social and legal history of the region. He has given us an accessible history of the distinctiveness of the marcher region, its leading families and the foundation,

development and ultimately extinction of the patchwork of lordships that dominated the borderlands between England and Wales over five centuries.

Managing complexity

One of the real successes of the volume is the weaving of complex issues such as the influence of topography, warfare, (inheritance) laws, religion and politics with the power of personality and the individual in discussions of the ebb and flow of lordship across the two centuries from the Norman invasion of England in 1066. The contributions of numerous generations of Welsh princes culminating in Llywelyn and Dafydd ap Gruffudd are given detailed analysis, as are those of English kings and the principal figures among the marcher community, the heads, for example, of the Mortimer, Charlton, FitzAlan, Grey, Lacy and LeStrange dynasties. One omission is a more detailed analysis of the 250 years between the enforcement of the Statute of Rhuddlan in 1284 and the Acts of Henry VIII's reign. In fairness, the clear and stated focus of the book is an exploration of the events that shaped the structure and unique powers of marcher lords, which necessitates a focus on the earlier centuries. Readers in search of a detailed investigation of the later Middle Ages, might try Charles Hopkinson and Martin Speight, *The Mortimers, Lords of the March* (Logaston, 2002).

Another real strength of this book is the supplementation of the historic narrative with a cultural dimension.



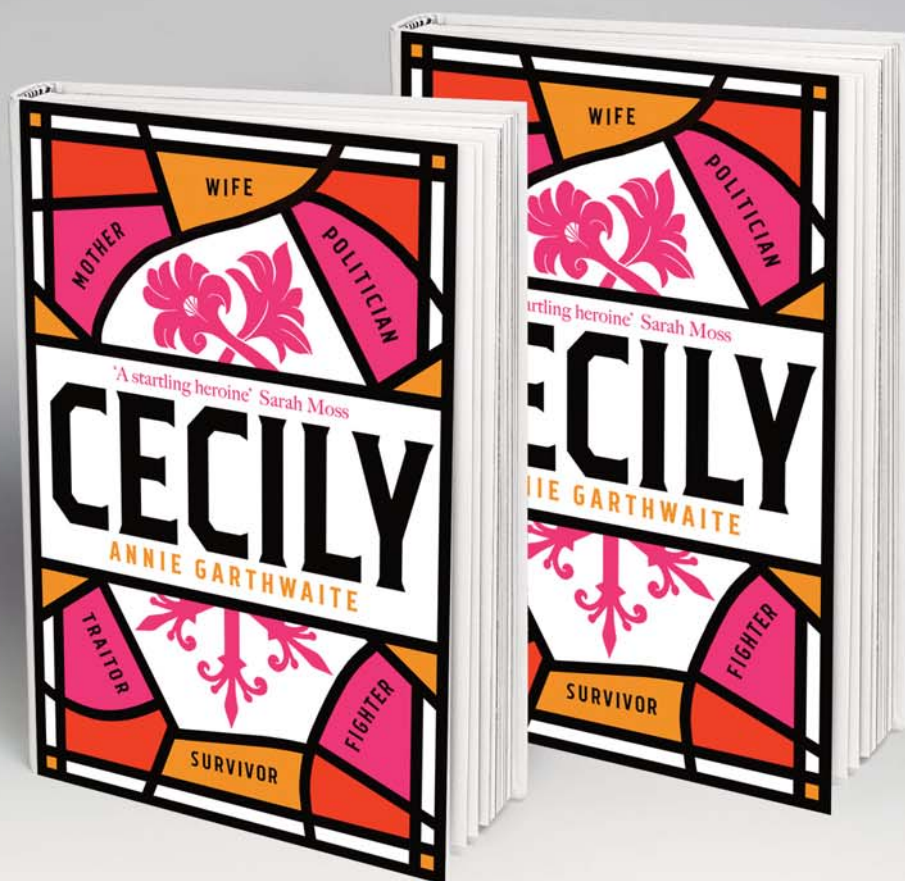
Guest essays from Dr Sara Elin Roberts and Dr John Kenyon are particularly welcome and give important context on, respectively, the Law of the March and castle building. Dr Roberts introduces readers to the influence of Welsh law codes (*Cyfraith Hywel*) and English Common Law into the distinctive customary law of the Marches, developed by individual lords over time by (in)judicious borrowing and adaptation. The importance of the cultural distinctions between areas of Englishry and Welshry, the lands of *Pura Wallia* and *Marchia Wallia*, is expertly drawn. Dr Kenyon guides us through complex discussions of conquest and resistance and their imprint on military architecture across the suite of marcher lordships covered in the volume.

A new popular history

This volume therefore condenses a huge amount of research, both antiquarian and modern, across several disciplines, to create a highly readable account of the rise, development and fall of marcher lordships in the northern and central March. A wide range of sources is brought to bear, archival, narrative, literary, archaeological and architectural. Endnotes give readers pathways to follow should they wish to find out more about many aspects of marcher history. As someone who has never been a fan of endnotes, and who wants to be able to follow references within the primary sources, the compromise to ensure readability for as wide an audience as possible is understandable. It can occasionally be frustrating, however, as, for example, when on p. 9 we are told that 'the courts contributed over 60 per cent of the total income of Maelienydd in the mid-fourteenth century', but we are not given the source from which that calculation comes. Ultimately, that is a relatively minor quibble, though. Philip Hume has set a high standard in developing a new popular history of the lordships of the Welsh March. I, for one am very much looking forward to the next two volumes in the series.

Secure your copy

Publishing in February with Logaston Press and available to Society members at the special discounted price of £14.50 (RRP £15.99) with free postage within the UK. Just enter the code **MHS21** when ordering online at www.logastonpress.co.uk.



A novel by Mortimer Matters editor Annie Garthwaite brings the 15th century's greatest matriarch to life.

Cecily, which reimagines the story of Cecily Neville, wife of Richard Duke of York and mother of Edward IV and Richard III, will be published on 29 July 2021 by Viking (Penguin Random House).

On acquiring the book for Penguin, editor Katy Loftus said, '*Cecily* is a riveting, visceral and beautifully rendered account of the greatest unknown player in the Wars of the Roses; an area of literature that is still overwhelmingly dominated by men. Annie is the perfect writer to bring *Cecily* to life. The moment I read the first chapter I knew this extraordinary woman would stay with me long after I'd finished the book.'

Annie wrote *Cecily* in just three years, after enrolling in a writing MA at Warwick University at the age of 55, following a long career in international business. At Warwick she was lucky enough to be tutored by the author Sarah Moss, who describes Annie's creation as 'a most startling heroine.'

Members of the Society will no doubt know that Cecily's husband, Richard, was the son of Ann Mortimer, and that he inherited all Mortimer lands and titles when his uncle Edmund, the fifth earl of March died childless.

Cecily can be pre-ordered online and in bookshops now. Watch out in future editions of Mortimer Matters for exciting plans to launch the book at Ludlow castle in the summer – COVID-19 allowing!

For Her Good Estate – The Life of Elizabeth de Burgh, Lady of Clare

By Frances A Underhill, Moonwort Press

Available in the UK for the first time, Frances Underhill's biography shows how Elizabeth de Burgh overcame preconceptions of gender to attain both prestige and lasting influence in the fourteenth century.

At Christmas 1326, Usk Castle was the scene of a splendid feast. Several hundred people participated and everything that flew along the Usk Valley was on the tables, including swans, herons, geese, and egrets. Thirtyfour gallons of wine were ordered and carcasses of beef, sheep, pigs, boar and deer. The feast was set out to celebrate the recovery of her estates by Elizabeth de Burgh, the inheritor of one-third of the vast de Clare inheritance, which came to her from her brother Gilbert de Clare following his death at Bannockburn in 1314. After three marriages, first to John de Burgh then to Theobald de Verdun and the rebel Roger Damory, and three children, some of her estates had been taken from her by Edward II and his Despenser favourites. Now, recognising her support for the new teenage king-to-be Edward III and his allies Queen Isabella and Roger Mortimer, the Welsh estates, including Usk, were restored to her.

The story is told with panache by the late Frances Underhill, Professor Emeritus of Medieval History at the University of Richmond, USA. Her book has not been easily available in Europe but now, supported by Elizabeth's foundation – Clare College, Cambridge – it is published both in paperback and in a splendid hardback edition, edited by Claire Barnes with new appendices. These include the preamble to Elizabeth's enlightened

Statutes for the College, with its 'precious pearl of learning'.

Underhill shows emphatically how, over a thirty-year period, Elizabeth maintained and fostered a wide ranging network of royal officers, senior clergy, legal advisers and friends, including the Black Prince, Henry of Lancaster, Marie de St. Pol, countess of Pembroke, and Queen Isabella to aid and support her in preserving and prospering huge estates based on Clare and Usk Castles.

She describes, too, how Elizabeth used her wealth to sponsor religious foundations at Walsingham, Clare, Ballinrobe, Anglesey, and the Convent of the Minoresses in London, where she was buried in 1360 with the intent that they these institutions should be generous with hospitality and in feeding the poor. She commanded the respect of regular meetings of her Council, and received the unstinting support of her officers over many years, men such as Thomas and Robert de Cheddeworth, Robert Mareschal, Nicholas Damory and Andrew de Bures. Livery robes – her uniform – were made every year in sumptuous style and distributed at Christmas. In 1343 some 250 men and women recieved these outward signs of loyal service.

In a special section Underhill outlines the work and profit involved in administering her estates in Ireland, eastern and

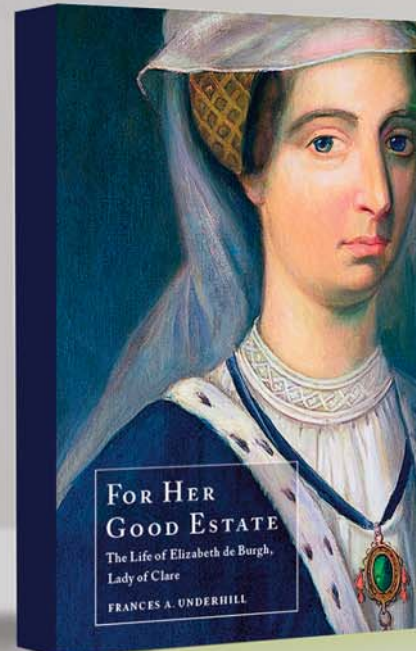
southern Wales, East Anglia, Dorset, and the Midlands. In the words of the other great authority on Elizabeth, Dr Jennifer Ward, Elizabeth 'proved to be one of the most formidable dowagers (widows endowed with the lands of their husbands) of the fourteenth century'.

Frances Underhill concludes that 'In practising good stewardship of her resources, deploying imaginative philanthropy and providing a good example of female potential, Elizabeth left a legacy more meaningful and precious than most of her more famous noble contemporaries.'

Elizabeth's great grand-daughter Philippa, was daughter of Lionel Duke of Clarence, son of Edward III. She married Edmund Mortimer in 1368, bringing her great estates into the Mortimer family, and ultimately into the House of York, and the Mortimer Yorkist kings.

Secure your copy

A limited edition hardback edition is available from Clare College, price £40, with all proceeds going to Clare College Choir. Go to www.chalrea.lumni.com/pages/media/for-her-good-estate. The paperback, RRP £24, is available via regular book channels



About the reviewer: John Grove read economics and theology at Cambridge, and has an MA from Warwick University for his research into Scandinavian education. He has worked in education and is the founder of both Usk Castle Friends and the Mortimer History Society. His interest in Elizabeth de Burgh comes from his acquaintance with her restorations at Usk Castle. He believes the splendid remains there show a feminine influence.

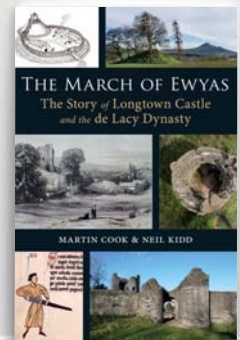
Four for your bookshelf

Let's get 2021 off to a good start with some great new books! Here are four for your bookshelf.

The March of Ewyas: The story of Longtown Castle and the de Lacy dynasty **By Martin Cook and Neil Kidd, Logaston Press, December 2020**

A detailed account of the de Lacy dynasty that makes a convincing case for which of them built Longtown Castle, establishing this as one of the earliest round keeps in Britain. It also presents new evidence for the castle's involvement in conflict and insights into the founding of its borough. A must-have for anyone with an interest in the archaeology and history of the medieval Welsh border regions.

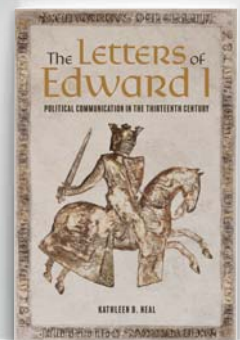
Available now RRP £12.95 from www.logastonpress.co.uk.



The Letters of Edward I: Political Communication in the Thirteenth Century **By Kathleen B Neal, Boydell & Brewer, January 2021**

This detailed examination of the letters of Edward I reveals them to be powerful and sophisticated political tools. Operating at the intersection of the spoken and the written, the performed and the observed, they produce a discourse that maximised royal authority and promoted solidarity between sender and recipient.

Readers of Mortimer Matters qualify for a 35% discount on the RRP of £60 – plus free postage and packing. Quite a bargain! Simply quote the offer code BB872 when buying on line at www.boydellandbrewer.com or by phone via the book's distributors, Wiley, on 01243 843 291.

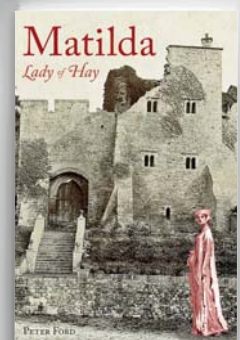


Matilda – Lady of Hay

By Peter Ford, Logaston Press, March 2021

Matilda's life is drenched in legend and story, but this account delves into this feisty lady's true history and the origin of the legends that have grown up around her. Married to one of the most powerful Marcher lords of her time, William de Braose, Matilda had sixteen children, led an army into Wales, was besieged by the Welsh, built Hay Castle in a single night and died after being outlawed and starved to death by King John. True? Read this book and find out.

Pre-order now for RRP £6.99 from the publisher at www.logastonpress.co.uk.



The Secret, the Sword and the Seal **By Fran Norton, YouCaxton, October 2020**

This novel by Society member Fran Norton traces the life and struggles of the real-life Eve de Clavering. Set against the compelling backdrop of Edward II's dysfunctional court, and within a country riven by civil war, violence and intrigue, Eve's story shows the courage and determination needed for a woman of her time to survive and find love. Society members will no doubt be interested to learn that, during her eventful life, Eve married two members of the de Audley family, who feature in the Mortimer family tree and have connections in the Welsh Marches.

Available online and in bookshops, RRP £9.99.

