

MORTIMER
History Society

MORTIMER *Matters*

A policy of suppression – Edward I and the Marcher Lords

Author and historian David Pilling examines the testy relationship between the Mortimers, the Marcher Lords and Edward I.

In the winter of 1282 England and Wales were at war. Seeking to open up a new front, Prince Llywelyn ap Gruffudd left Gwynedd and, in early December, marched into Gwrtherynion in mid-Wales. There, according to the chronicle of Peterborough Abbey, he found a coalition of Marcher lords waiting to receive him including: "Lord Roger Lestrangle having been appointed captain by the king, Lord John Giffard, the three sons of Lord Roger Mortimer, the two sons of Lord Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn, Lord John Lestrangle, Lord Peter Corbet, Lord Reginald Fitz Peter, Lord Ralph Basset of Drayton, Lord Simon Basset of Sapcote, Lord Andrew Astley and all the power of the Marches of Wales."

Llywelyn had come to the March at the invitation of the Mortimers, who lured him there with false promises of friendship. He was separated from his army, seized by the servants of Edmund Mortimer and beheaded. The prince's head was then sent to the king, Edward I, at Rhuddlan. Afterwards it was paraded on a spear through the streets of Westminster, crowned with an ivy wreath in mockery of a prophecy that Llywelyn would one day be crowned in London.

Chronicle accounts agree the chief instigator of Llywelyn's gory demise was Edmund Mortimer, eldest surviving son of Roger, who had died in November. Since he had engineered the death of Edward's great enemy in Wales, it might be expected that Edmund would be showered with rewards. Instead he fell under a cloud of royal disfavour. He was not



Edward I

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Prince Llywelyn, beheaded by Mortimer (The Peterborough Chronicle)

knighted by the king until 1285, even though, by then, he had been the de facto head of the Mortimer family and lord of Wigmore castle for three years. In the following years his lordship was twice confiscated by the crown, only redeemed for a fine of 100 marks. This was accompanied by a surreal royal instruction; Edmund was ordered to hang an effigy of a dead felon on the gallows at Montgomery, after he had refused to hand the man over for trial and, in fact, had hung him himself in his own jurisdiction.

A letter and a warning

One explanation for Edward's attitude towards Edmund may lie in a remarkable surviving letter, written in the wake of Llywelyn's death. On 17 December John Peckham, Archbishop of Canterbury, met with Edmund at Stretton Sugwas in Herefordshire. He obtained a report of the circumstances of Llywelyn's death, and sent the details to the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Robert Burnell. Peckham also asked Burnell to warn the king to be on his guard: "From this schedule the bishop can sufficiently guess that certain magnates, neighbours of the Welsh, either Marchers or others, are not too loyal to the king, wherefore let the king be warned unless he come to some danger."

The 'schedule' Peckham referred to was a coded letter found in Llywelyn's breeches, which he describes as 'expressed in obscure words and fictitious names'. It would be interesting, to say the least, to be able to read this mysterious document. Unfortunately there is no trace of it, or the copy Peckham offered to send on to Burnell.

From this it seems obvious that Peckham was ignorant of the plot to kill Llywelyn, and by extension so was King Edward. The archbishop wrote to Burnell to beg him to warn the king of danger, since he suspected the Marchers of disloyalty. Along with the Peterborough chronicle, it would appear the plot was entirely a Marcher conspiracy. This complex truth is obscured by the fact that England and Wales were at war, and Llywelyn was Edward's mortal enemy.

The king's somewhat rough handling of Edmund Mortimer in the following years suggests he took Peckham's warning seriously. After all, what had been done to Prince Llywelyn could be done to him. The Marchers were both powerful and virtually independent of the crown, with the military clout to threaten even the strongest king.

Asserting royal authority

There were other motives too. After the chaotic reign of his father, Henry III, Edward was determined to restore royal authority. This applied everywhere, even in the Marches where the king's writ seldom ran. For two hundred years the lords of the March had acted as a buffer zone between England and Wales, as well as a springboard for royal invasions into Welsh territory. The effective conquest of the principality meant the March no longer served a military purpose, and Edward I was not one to tolerate over-mighty subjects. He had made this clear in the Statute of Westminster in 1275: "In the Marches of Wales, or in any other place where the king's writ does not run, the king who is sovereign lord will do right...to all such as will complain."

The Marchers ignored this warning of royal intent. In

1286 Edward went overseas to his duchy of Gascony in south-west France. While he was gone the fragile peace of the March started to unravel. Earl Warenne and Reynold Grey engaged in a private war over their rights to the newly created lordship of Bromfield and Yale. Humphrey Bohun, earl of Hereford, fought John Giffard, lord of Builth over their competing rights in Brecon. Peter Corbet, lord of Caus, attacked and robbed merchants at Shrewsbury. A major dispute blew up in 1290, when the Earl of Norfolk accused Gilbert de Clare, the mighty earl of Gloucester and lord of Glamorgan, of attacking his Marcher lordship of Chepstow. At the same time Bohun claimed that Clare had raided his lands.

Norfolk and Hereford called upon King Edward to aid them in the dispute. This meant they had freely abandoned the customary principle that Marcher lords settled their own disputes, with no outside interference from the crown. A grave error, since it handed Edward all the pretext he needed to act.

Edward chose to focus on the private war between Clare and Bohun. On 25 January 1290 he issued a strongly worded proclamation, ordering the earls to cease hostilities. Clare's men carried on fighting regardless. This state of affairs could not last, and in 1291 Clare and his rival were summoned to appear before the king at Abergavenny.

The outcome was an utter humiliation for the earls. Clare and Bohun were committed to prison and only released upon payment of heavy fines. Edward seized Clare's lordship of Glamorgan

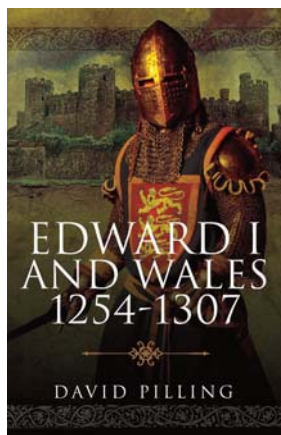


Peckham's letter refers to a 'schedule' now lost

and Bohun's lordship of Brecon, to be held in royal custody for the term of their lives. The king had made his point. Two of the greatest powers on the March had been humbled, and nobody could doubt that Edward was master in his own house.

His campaign to break the Marchers to the royal will gathered pace. Theobald de Verdun, lord of Ewyas Lacy, was accused of breaking Edward's prohibition against private war and temporarily imprisoned. The king further stamped his authority by imposing a heavy tax on several Marcher lords; this was meant to show that the March was the same as any other land in the realm. He also continued to intervene in private feuds. In 1293 the earl of Arundel protested that the king had stopped a war between himself and Fulk FitzWarin, lord of Whittingdon. As a 'baron of the Welshry', Arundel claimed, he was entitled to March custom.

Such protests were in vain. Edward's attitude was neatly summarised in a letter to William de Valence, earl of Pembroke. Valence had been accused of unjustly arresting certain tenants of the lordship of Pembroke, and was ordered to desist: "The earl is to understand that if he is unwilling or dilatory in addressing that wrong, the King will not fail to act severely towards him and his possessions, being within the King's realm and in his obedience."



The inevitable backlash

Unsurprisingly, Edward's heavy-handed policy provoked a reaction. In 1297 several of the Marcher lords met to discuss their grievances inside the Wyre forest in Worcestershire, adjacent to Cleobury Mortimer. They included four earls – Norfolk, Hereford, Warwick and Arundel – and the inevitable Edmund Mortimer. If the crisis had degenerated further, the man who destroyed the Prince of Wales may well have led an army against the King of England.

Edward responded by exploiting complaints against Edmund by the Welsh tenants on his estates. The latter was forced to appear in parliament to defend himself, and then to issue charters of liberties to the Welshry. In the face of this display of royal wrath, Edmund backed down and agreed to send troops to fight for Edward in Flanders. His allies from the Wyre forest meeting also returned to the fold.

The crisis passed, but the Marcher lords had only been cowed into temporary submission. Under the weaker rule of the next king, Edward II, they broke loose. In the so-called Despenser War of 1321-22, the Marchers pillaged with abandon all over England and Wales. Finally, after a disastrous 19-year reign, Edward II was toppled by his consort, Queen Isabella, and her ally Roger Mortimer. Roger was the firstborn son of Edmund, the slayer of Prince Llywelyn. Thus, in the space of just two generations, the lords of the March had slaughtered one crowned head and torn another from his throne.

About the author: David Pilling is a writer, researcher and history addict who spent much of his childhood exploring Welsh castles. His study of Edward I's Welsh wars was published in June and was anticipated in the last issue of *Mortimer*

From your editor



Hello!

This is for sure an action-packed edition of *Mortimer Matters*, with features from author David Pilling and Warwick history specialist Tim Clark. I'm especially pleased to see a sweeping intro to Marcher history from our Society's own Paul Dryburgh and Philip Hume – recovering old ground for some, perhaps, but a great intro for our Society's many new members.

And there's news of events! It's been great to be able to meet together this summer, so in these pages, we look back to celebrate happy reunions as well as forward to a busy autumn and winter agenda. Over the colder months, much of our event programme will return to Zoom, allowing members to join in wherever they are and without the need for winter travel. Look out for a fascinating conference in December that examines Edward III's kingship, and a very special book launch on 25 November.

Thanks, as ever, to all of our contributors and reviewers. It's always a joy to put each issue of *Mortimer Matters* together, thanks to the talent and generosity of everyone who takes part.

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

- Recommend a topic you'd like to see covered in *Mortimer Matters*
- Volunteer to write a book review or feature
- Tell us about a news item or event you'd like us to mention

I'll then get in touch to discuss your ideas and give you some useful tips on submitting your copy. We plan to publish our next issue in January and will start planning in late November, so please let me have your ideas as soon as you can.

What's love got to do with it?

Katherine Mortimer, the fifth daughter of Roger, first earl of March, died in August 1369. She is buried alongside her husband of some forty years, Thomas Beauchamp, the eleventh earl of Warwick, who died just four months after her. Their pioneering tomb in the chancel of St. Mary's, Warwick, is well worth close examination, argues church guide Tim Clark, as a display of enduring love.



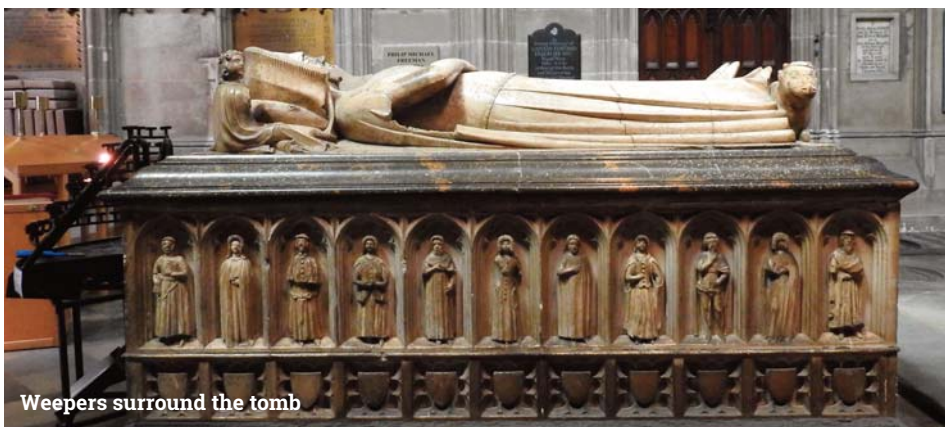
Thomas and Katherine, buried together in St Mary's chancel

'where my husband shall appoint'. It's worth pausing to consider what she meant by that, as testators were normally more specific about their final resting place. She is surely saying 'I don't mind where I am buried, as long as it's with my husband'. She got her wish, and she lies with him in a double tomb, centre-stage in the chancel.

The effigies are carved from alabaster, a relatively recent innovation. Thomas wears a short jupon (tunic) over a hauberk (suit of chain mail). Six crosslets, from the Beauchamp arms, are shown on his chest, though their gold colouring has long gone. It is thought that the crosslets were added to the arms by Earl William Beauchamp

St. Mary's can be fairly described as the church of the earls of Warwick. Henry de Beaumont, the first earl of Warwick started to create a college at St. Mary's but died in 1119 before he had finished. His son, Earl Roger, duly fulfilled his father's wishes, issuing the charter that granted St. Mary's collegiate status in 1123. Roger went on to rebuild the church in c. 1140 - 1150, the crypt of which survives.

Fast-forward two hundred years, and by 1340 St. Mary's was so derelict that it was said that it could barely function. The earl was now the youthful and ambitious Thomas Beauchamp, who had married Katherine Mortimer in (probably) 1318. He increased St. Mary's endowment to fund urgent repairs, but more was needed. In 1364 he obtained papal consent for the promulgation of new statutes for St. Mary's, issued by the bishop of Worcester in 1367, no doubt following consultation with the earl. These were aimed at addressing absenteeism among the canons, and their seemingly insatiable desire to pay themselves more than they could afford, while neglecting the management of their prebends. Thomas was, in effect, re-founding St. Mary's.



Weepers surround the tomb

These reforms enabled Thomas to set about rebuilding the church, but he died before much work, if any, was done. It was left to his son, also Thomas, to complete the project, which he did by 1394. The tower, nave, and transepts were destroyed by fire three hundred years later, but, thankfully, the chancel and chapter house, as well as the stunning Beauchamp Chapel (1441 - c. 1457), were saved. Thomas and Katherine's tomb was damaged when part of the chancel roof collapsed, but not irreparably.

Thomas had directed that he be buried in the chancel of St. Mary's, but Katherine merely asked to be buried

(died 1268) to signify pilgrimage, so their inclusion on Thomas's effigy is both familial, and an expression of piety. Katherine is dressed in a tight-fitting kirtle, laced from top to bottom with sleeves fastened by several buttons. Her headdress is made of a fine material, perhaps linen, that has been crimped and drawn to form a honeycomb pattern around her face. A mantle is pinned to her shoulders with a brooch, the only accessory that she wears, and which would have been jewelled.

Two angels, one on either side, reach out to the effigies of Thomas and Katherine, whose heads rest on cushions. This detail is typical of a London workshop,



but the carver is not known. A bear sits at Thomas's feet, a Beauchamp emblem that would later be integrated with one that harks back to the mythical earls of Warwick, the ragged staff. Katherine has a sheep, for reasons I've been unable to establish.

The tomb is surrounded by thirty-six figures, known as weepers, eleven on each side, with another seven on each end. They would have been identifiable from their heraldic shields, but, unfortunately, the enamelling wore off before being recorded. Most, if not all, would have been family members, and their principal purpose may be to record the family dynasty, rather than display mourning or piety: some look positively jaunty. They present a fascinating record of contemporary dress-style.

The date of the tomb is uncertain. Thomas and Katherine's tomb would normally be constructed within a year of their deaths, in time for the annual obits, but the chancel was then a building site, and would be another twenty years or so. This gives rise to the possibility that the tomb was erected only after the chancel was finished, in about 1392. Most, but not all, commentators accept that the tomb dates from 1370, but when the tomb was made goes to the heart of an important question about the relationship between this tomb and its contemporaries.

That brings us to the tomb's first unusual facet. Double tombs had been rare in England, and although they were beginning to grow in popularity by 1350, they were by no means the norm, and, moreover, were confined to the gentry. Women of higher rank preferred to be buried either in their birth family's mausoleum, or at a religious house which they had supported - and no doubt for many of them, the prospect of lying

alongside their husband for eternity was too awful to contemplate! Not only did Thomas and Katherine buck the trend, but they were the first noble - or royal - couple to be buried together.

Also notable is Thomas and Katherine's choice of where to be buried. We can see this by looking at examples from Thomas's peers within the Order of the Garter. Of twenty-two original members when the Order was founded in 1348, of whom Thomas was one, eighteen were buried in abbeys or priories, three in non-monastic cathedrals, and only one - Thomas - in a parish church.

A rare joining of hands

But there is one particular feature that really makes the effigies of Thomas and Katherine stand out from the crowd: they are shown holding hands. This is featured on only twenty or so English tomb effigies pre-1500. They are even rarer on the Continent; there are just five. The earliest known example is one in low relief, probably made between 1300 and 1330. There is then a gap until a cluster of three with high relief effigies: John of Gaunt and Blanche of Lancaster in St. Paul's Cathedral, made between 1375 and 1380 but lost in the Great Fire of London; Richard Fitzalan and Eleanor of Lancaster, (Blanche's younger sister), originally in Lewes Priory but now in Chichester Cathedral, and dating from the same time as the Gaunt/Lancaster tomb; and Thomas and Katherine.

If the tomb at St. Mary's was made (or designed) within a year of the deaths, in other words by 1370, it is earlier than those at St. Paul's or Chichester and is truly ground-breaking. However, if it is later, it is likely to have been influenced by one, or both, of the others.

The Gaunt/Lancaster tomb was made by Henry Yevele, the greatest mason of the age, and the Fitzalan/Lancaster tomb has confidently been attributed to him as well, though without conclusive proof. Yevele can be ruled out as the sculptor of Thomas and Katherine's, which suffers from some rather pedestrian carving. Thomas's face, for example, is straight out of a pattern book, and is similar to several others, including that of Sir Richard Pembridge in Hereford Cathedral. However, the treatment of Thomas and Katherine's hands is particularly sensitive. Joining

the effigies in this way was technically difficult, and at Warwick is achieved with a delicacy that, frankly, outshines the carving of the rest of the effigies. The tomb is, therefore, an amalgam of the standardised and the bespoke, which suggests that the working of the hands is in imitation of, or, at least, influenced by, one of the other tombs, making Thomas and Katherine's tomb later than 1370 and, therefore, after the completion of the chancel.

There is one last point to consider: why are Thomas and Katherine holding hands at all, given that it was so unusual? Various theories have been put forward. First, it may simply imitate of one of the other hand-holding tombs (assuming that the Warwick tomb is later), without any deeper significance than reflecting a new fashion. That is possible, but I suspect that more thought would be behind such a departure from convention. Second, that it is symbolic of a marriage alliance between two great families that had settled a bloody dispute over land; but that could be said of many a medieval marriage, and it seems an implausible explanation for such an innovative image. Third, that it shows the power of man over woman. There are numerous arguments against that, and space does not permit a full rehearsal of them, but suffice it to say that Katherine's is the dominant hand, with only Thomas's thumb resting on it. The palms are open, there is no grip, and the sculpting exudes tenderness.

Fourth, and the most likely, is that it is an expression of a love so unusually deep that it was considered worthy of immortalisation, as the defining characteristic of their relationship. This is what they wished to be remembered for. And, to clinch it, Thomas's head is tilted slightly towards Katherine's, a reassuring glance as they journey together to the Promised Land. Love must, surely, have had *everything* to do with it.

About the author: Society member Tim is a volunteer guide at St. Mary's, Warwick and his book on the history of the church is due to be published in 2023. To book a guided tour of St. Mary's, including the Beauchamp Chapel, email Tim at history@stmaryswarwick.org.uk

All images are the author's own.

Tranquil land, turbulent history: the central marches of Wales and the Mortimer family of Wigmore

In the past year our Society has gained many new members, as interest in the Mortimers and the Welsh Marcher lordships continues to flourish. So, we thought it apt to provide this whistle-stop tour of the Mortimers and the lands in the central Welsh Marches that came to be theirs. Philip Hume and Paul Dryburgh bring new members up to speed.

The tranquil border counties of Shropshire, Herefordshire, and Radnorshire contain many castles, churches, and artefacts that provide a physical link to the area's often-turbulent medieval history. In particular, they illustrate the rise of the medieval Mortimer family of Wigmore. Settling here after the Norman Conquest, the Mortimers survived over 350 years to become one of the medieval period's most powerful families. When the male line died out, their Yorkist descendants drew on their Mortimer ancestry to claim the throne.

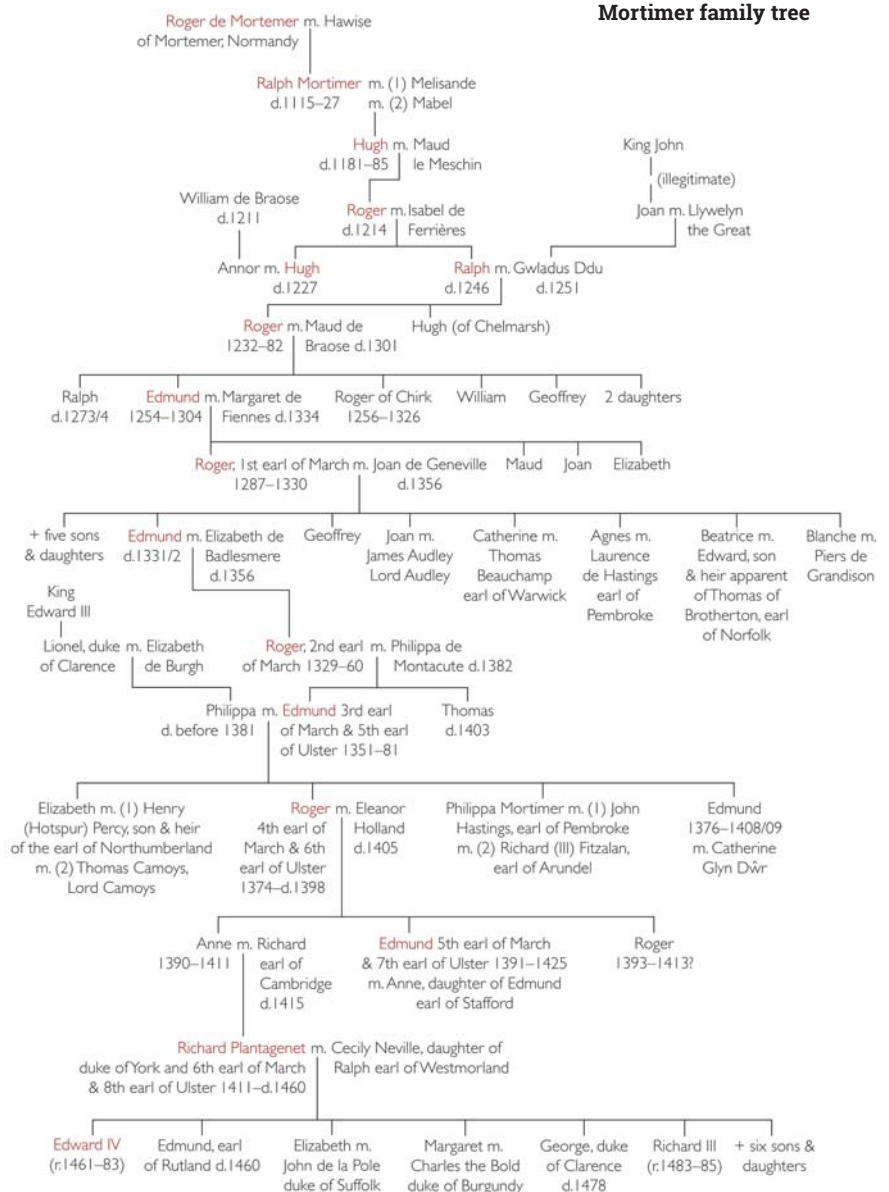
Though often described as tranquil today, the medieval central Marches were a disputed border region dominated by Marcher lordships. Today, their many ruined castles and earthworks bear witness to a turbulent past.

Introducing the Mortimers

Above all other Marcher families, the Mortimers made their mark. In the years after the Conquest, they were granted land across England, with their 'caput' at Wigmore in north Herefordshire. From there, through conquest in Wales, rewards for royal service, strategic marriages and direct political action, successive generations came to dominate first the Welsh Marches, then the whole country, becoming one of the most wealthy and powerful families across England, Wales, and Ireland. Eventually, having married into the royal family, the Mortimers became embroiled in disputes over the succession to the crown at the end of the fourteenth and start of the fifteenth centuries.

Ludlow's magnificent castle in south-west Shropshire demonstrates the influence of the Mortimers at the height of their power

Mortimer family tree



in the fourteenth century. Probably the most well-known Mortimer, Roger (d.1330), created 1st earl of March in 1328, had been distinguished by loyal service to the crown. However, the political troubles of the time forced Roger to oppose Edward II's favourites

– Hugh Despenser, father and son – and consequently the king himself. Forced into submission, Roger was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Tower of London from where, on 1 August 1323, he made a daring escape.

Taking sanctuary in the French royal court, Roger formed an alliance (possibly sexual) with the estranged wife of Edward II, Queen Isabella. They returned to England and forced the unpopular king to abdicate in favour of his thirteen-year-old son, Edward III. For nearly four years during the young king's minority, Roger Mortimer, with Queen Isabella, was the de facto ruler of the country, being raised to the highest rank as the 1st earl of March. His supremacy, though, could not last. As the young king approached the age of 18, and wishing to free himself from the control exerted by Roger Mortimer and his mother, Edward III engineered Mortimer's capture, trial, and execution in 1330.

A vow fulfilled

At the height of his power, however, Roger Mortimer redeemed a vow made on the eve of his escape from the Tower by building a chapel dedicated to St Peter at Ludlow Castle where he also built the Great Chamber Block and the Garderobe Tower, creating one of the finest range of buildings in the country.

imprisonment, his exile in France and his relationship with Queen Isabella.

Early Mortimers

During the 230 years before Roger's rise to power, the Mortimer family had secured its rise to wealth, power, and influence from Wigmore, just six miles west of Ludlow. Although probably not present at the Battle of Hastings in 1066,

encompassed twelve English counties. From Wigmore, the Mortimers joined the Norman advances into Wales in the 1090s, conquering for themselves Maelienydd, (now part of Radnorshire). Their hold on this land, though, was precarious and it took 200 years to secure control with the final conquest of Wales by Edward I at the end of the thirteenth century.



Wigmore castle. © Philip Hume



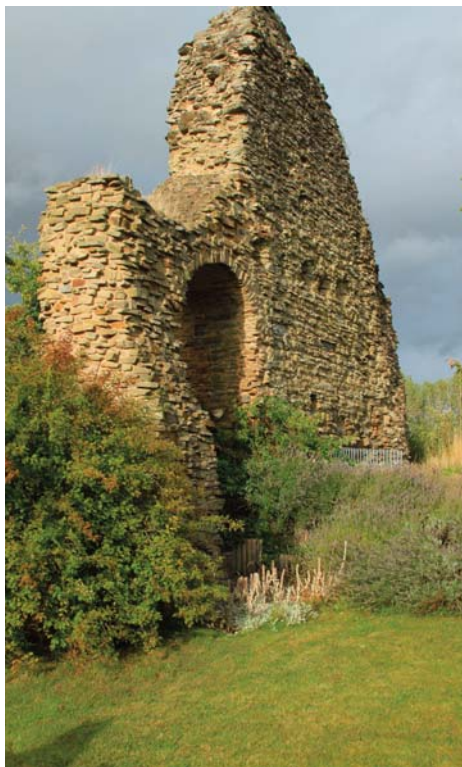
St Peter's chapel, Ludlow Castle. © Philip Hume

Ludlow Castle had come into the control of the Mortimers only a short time before, through the marriage in 1301 of Roger Mortimer to the heiress Joan de Geneville. Roger and Joan had a successful, probably loving relationship, until they were torn apart by Roger's

the Mortimers became active in England soon after, with Ralph Mortimer (d.1115 x 27) establishing the family's principal seat at Wigmore.

By the time Domesday Book was compiled in 1086 their estates

Ralph Mortimer returned to Normandy at the end of the eleventh century and it seems the Mortimers remained absent from England until Ralph's son, Hugh (d.1181 x 85) appears in the records in the late 1130s. Hugh arrived in England to take control of the Mortimer lands in the early years of the civil wars between King Stephen and the Empress Matilda, becoming the leader of the forces in the region that remained loyal to Stephen. When the civil wars ended with the accession to the crown in 1154 of Matilda's son, Henry II, Hugh badly misjudged the determination of the young king to assert his authority. Ordered to surrender back to the crown the royal castle of Bridgnorth, Hugh refused. Henry II marched north to besiege not just Bridgnorth but also the Mortimer castles of Wigmore and Cleobury Mortimer. In his later years Hugh provided the land and paid the building costs for Wigmore Abbey, living long enough to witness its dedication in 1179. When he died a few years later, he became the first of many Mortimer lords to be buried there.



South transept, Wigmore Abbey. © Philip Hume

Contesting Welsh land

Hugh's son and heir, Roger Mortimer (d.1214), was in prison when his father died. During the civil wars, the local Welsh princes had regained control of Maelienydd and, with the crown recognising their position, Hugh had been powerless to unseat them. The frustration spilt over in 1179 when his son's men murdered the ruler of Maelienydd, Cadwallon ap Madog, as he returned from court with a royal safe conduct. Roger was imprisoned in Winchester for up to three years. Sixteen years later, following a change in royal policy after Richard I succeeded to the throne, Roger was finally able to reconquer Maelienydd in 1195. However, by 1215, it was regained for the Welsh by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, the prince of Gwynedd, who was establishing his supremacy across all Wales.

During the early years of the thirteenth century, Roger and, after his death in 1214, his son, Hugh, remained loyal to King John. When Hugh was killed in a tournament in 1227, he was succeeded by his younger brother Ralph (d.1246), who in 1230 married Gwladus Ddu, daughter of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth. Although this marriage brought relatively little land to the Mortimers, its importance lay in the connections and lineage that came with Gwladus. As

descendants of a daughter of Llywelyn, subsequent generations of Mortimers could claim descent not just from the princes of Wales, but through them from King Arthur himself.

Despite the family relationship, Ralph was unable to regain Maelienydd during the lifetime of his father-in-law; however, after Llywelyn's death in 1240, Ralph quickly secured the lands again for the Mortimers. Abroad in the service of the king, Ralph gave to his twelve-year-old son, Roger (d.1282), the task of securing the land by building castles at Cefnlllys in the west and Knucklas close to the border with England. This precocious young man grew up to take a prominent role in national affairs and to propel the Mortimers into the forefront of the English barony. Shortly after inheriting, he married Maud de Braose, one of the four heiresses to the de Braose lands on her father's side and, through her mother, the lands of the Marshals. Amongst other estates, Maud brought to the Mortimers the Marcher lordship of Radnor that lay alongside Maelienydd.



Radnor Castle. © CPAT image 4236-3409, Julian Ravest

Friend to kings and princes

Roger's connections with two powerful men were critical factors throughout his career – Lord Edward/Edward I and Roger's cousin, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, prince of Wales. As relationships between Henry III and the baronial

faction led by Simon de Montfort worsened, Roger initially sided with the barons, but soon switched to the royal party. When Lord Edward was imprisoned at Hereford after the battle of Lewes (1264), Roger engineered his escape, providing the basis for a strengthening friendship. He was one of the commanders of the royal army at Evesham in 1265, where he killed Simon de Montfort. Roger was one of those chosen as trustees for Lord Edward's children and estates when the heir to the throne went on crusade in 1270. Henry III died two years later while Edward was still away, thus Roger and two other trustees acted as virtual regents until the new king's return in August 1274.

Although, as grandsons of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, they were first cousins, Roger and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd were often at war. Llywelyn captured Cefnlllys in 1262 seizing Maelienydd from Roger, who was unable to win it back. However, although the Treaty of Montgomery in 1267 recognised Llywelyn's supremacy across Wales and acknowledged his title

of 'Prince of Wales', it permitted Roger to refortify Cefnlllys while being ambiguous over who controlled the land. The castle that Roger had built as a child was at one end of a large natural ridge that rises from the ground on all sides. Instead of fortifying this castle,



The site of Cfnlly castle. © CPAT image 4236-2025, Julian Ravest.

Roger built a new one at the other end of the ridge. Llywelyn's protestations failed, largely because Roger was one of those running the country in Edward's absence.

When Edward I returned, his relationship with Llywelyn deteriorated. When the king decided on war and conquest in 1277, Roger played a crucial role in achieving Llywelyn's humiliation. Mortimer control of Maelienydd was secured and Roger was granted further Marcher lordships, making him one of England's most powerful nobles before his death in 1282.

Fast forward

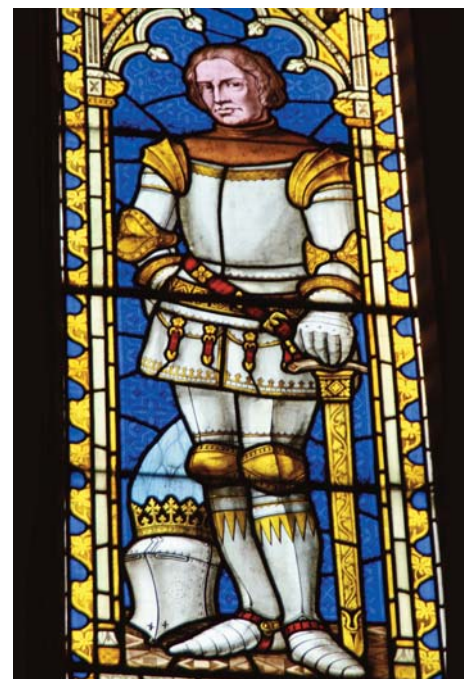
We started with the turbulent career of this Roger's grandson (Roger d.1330), who raised the family to the highest level when he was made 1st earl of March, but whose life ended in disgrace and execution. His grandson, another Roger (d.1360) succeeded in rehabilitating the family, receiving back all the Mortimer lands and titles, and becoming the 2nd earl of March in 1354. He became a close friend of the Black Prince, the heir to Edward III's throne, and before his early death aged 32, betrothed his six-year-old son, Edmund, to Philippa the only child of Lionel, duke of Clarence, second son of Edward III. When this young couple married in 1368, their joint inheritances made them the fourth largest landholders in England

and the largest landholder in Ireland, with the earldom of Ulster and their children entering the line of succession to the throne.

Close to the throne

As a young man, Edmund took the prominent role in national affairs expected of his status and lineage. However, he died at the young age of 30 whilst on campaign in Ireland, leaving a seven-year-old heir. This became part of the pattern in the fourteenth century, with successive Mortimer lords dying young and leaving infants, which limited the family's scope to dominate national affairs or compete for the crown.

Fast forward, now, to the childless reign of Richard II, when the fourth earl, another Roger, represented a possible alternative to a poor king, but died young leaving a child heir. Instead, it was Henry Bolingbroke, son of John of Gaunt, who deposed Richard II and seized the throne. As a usurper, Henry IV was conscious all his life of threats to his crown but, despite this, he made no attempt on the life of young Edmund, 5th earl of March. This, though, didn't prevent others from rebelling against Henry IV with the intention of replacing him with Edmund Mortimer. The most notable rebellion was in the early years of his reign when Sir Edmund Mortimer (Edmund's uncle) allied with Owain Glyn



Edmund Mortimer made a royal marriage.

© Philip Hume

Dwr to place his nephew on the throne. The rebellion, however, fizzled out.

When Edmund Mortimer died childless in 1425, the Mortimer inheritance passed to his sister's son, Richard, duke of York (d.1460). This wealth enabled Richard to become the foremost magnate in the kingdom, with Ludlow a favoured home. When circumstances forced Richard to claim the throne, it was on his Mortimer ancestry that he based his claim. After his death at the battle of Wakefield in 1460, he was succeeded by his eighteen-year-old son, Edward, who had grown up at Ludlow and Wigmore. Within months of York's death, on 3 February 1461, Edward triumphed at the battle of Mortimer's Cross, close to Wigmore and Ludlow. The victorious young man marched to London, where he was proclaimed king, and crowned Edward IV on 28th June 1461 – a Mortimer grandson had taken the throne.

About the authors: Paul Dryburgh is President of the Mortimer History Society and Principal Records Specialist (Medieval Records) at The National Archives (UK). Philip Hume is secretary of the Society and author of several books about the Mortimers and the Marcher Lordships.

This article is an abridged version of one first published in *The Historian* [the magazine of the Historical Association], issue 149, Spring 2021.

The House of Magnificence: aspects of Edward III's kingship

A half-day online conference

Often described as England's greatest king, Edward III ruled for 50 years and turned England into one of the most powerful military forces in Europe. Our online conference on Saturday, 4 December brings together three eminent historians to examine his rule and his legacy.

During his long reign, Edward initiated the Hundred Years' War with France, reshaped the role of the English Parliament, created the Order of the Garter and led his country through the devastation of the Black Death. Popular in his lifetime, he died isolated and alone. His life, and his later years in particular, are inextricably linked with the fortunes of the Mortimer family, making him central to the interests of the Mortimer Society.



King Edward with St George, Westminster Palace, by E W Tristram.
© Parliamentary Art Collection

Examining Edward III's legacy



Edward III and a Plantagenet apanage policy

Dr David Green, Senior Lecturer in British Studies and History at Harlaxton College, examines how Edward III made use of his sons to achieve his war aims in France and manage business at home. He asks, was this a policy that helped shape a Plantagenet empire in the later middle ages? David has authored several books and many articles on chivalry and on the life and career of Edward the Black Prince. His exploration of the Anglo-French struggle, *The Hundred Years' War: A People's History* was published in 2015.



Edward III and the lords of the Welsh march: Power and privilege

Dr Matt Raven, a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the Department of History at the University of Nottingham, considers how lordship in the Welsh marches was reshaped by Edward III. Marcher lordship, he argues, emerges during his reign as something tightly entwined with the wider politics of the realm, despite the privileged constitutional position of the March itself.



Edmund Mortimer, Alice Perrers and the Good Parliament of 1376

Dr Laura Tompkins, Research Manager at Historic Royal Palaces, describes the Good Parliament, in which a number of Edward's senior ministers were impeached and his mistress, Alice Perrers, banished. Looking first at the tensions that led to these events, she turns her attention to the Parliament itself and, in particular, the role played by Edmund Mortimer, his steward Peter de la Mere and, of course, Alice. Laura's 2013 PhD thesis focused on Alice Perrers and the politics of Edwards later years. She has since published extensively on these subjects.

Online for all!

This conference – and all our winter events – will be held online via Zoom to make it easy for members to attend, wherever they are and whatever the weather. We'll return to in-person events in Spring 2022. You can reserve your place at www.mortimerhistorysociety.org. Please note that we have introduced a small charge for Zoom events of £3 for members and £5 for non-members, to help cover costs, so you will need to book your place!

Keep the date!

As autumn draws in, it's time to look ahead. Our 2022 programme is coming together, so here's a summary of what's coming up next year and in the remainder of this. We'll flesh out the details as we go, but make sure these great events are noted in your shiny new diary. By the way, winter events will be held online for easy access and we'll return to physical meets in the summer months. Our learnings from the Covid experience have shown that members (and other history buffs) appreciate the chance to attend online and Zoom events have massively increased your Society's reach and influence. We're also investigating how we can hold some events as 'hybrids' – both online and in person. More on this later!

Thursday, 25 November 2021

Launch of Dr David Stephenson's book, *Power and Patronage in the Medieval Welsh March*. See page 12

Saturday, 4 December 2021

The House of Magnificence: aspects of the kingship of Edward III

Afternoon online conference exploring the reign of Edward III and the contribution of the Mortimers.

Saturday, 12 February 2022

Passion and Power in the Marches

An afternoon online conference.

Saturday, 26 March 2022

AGM

Morning event to be held in Weobley, followed by our AGM Lecture on Medieval Weobley.

Saturday, 14 May 2022

Murder, Mayhem and Marriage: the Mortimers and the Welsh Princes

Cancelled in 2020 because of Covid, this full-day event, hosted in partnership with the Radnorshire Society will be held at last in Knighton.

Date TBC:

Annual Summer Lecture

Professor Daniel Power examines the rupture of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy after the fall of ducal Normandy in 1204.

Date TBC:

Annual study day

An examination of castles and how they were built. Includes castles!

Saturday, 8 October 2022

Full-day Autumn Symposium

An in-depth study of the castles of Wales and the Marches

Saturday, 3 December

Afternoon online conference

Details TBC

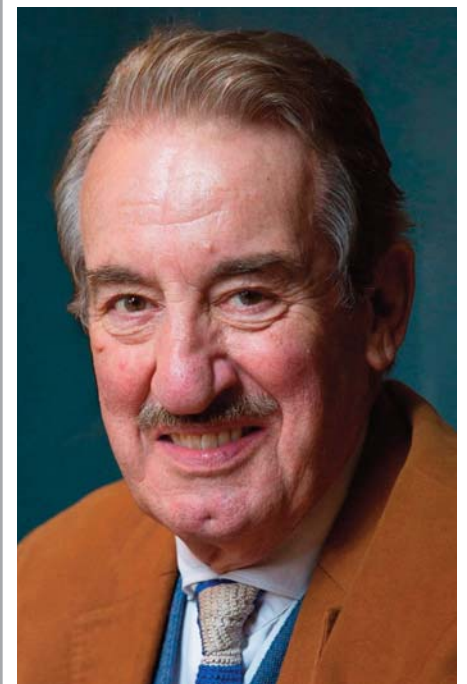
See future issues of *Mortimer Matters*, plus our web and social media pages for updates to our event schedule as our plans develop.

Obituary: John Challis

It is with great sadness that we report the recent death of John Challis, the actor most famous for his TV role as Boycie in the long-running comedy *Only Fools and Horses*.

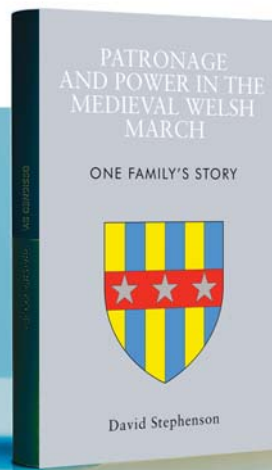
In 1998 John came to live at Wigmore Abbey, the burial place of many of the medieval Mortimers, and threw himself into local life and activities. As owners, guardians and restorers of Wigmore Abbey, John and Carol Challis were obvious choices to be honorary presidents of the Mortimer History Society in its formative days. This task they performed with genuine interest, style and real friendliness, and we remain forever grateful for their contribution.

John and Carol hosted several tours of the abbey for MHS members and John was a welcoming and informed guide. With his commanding presence, John also chaired more than one of the Society's early meetings, and his contribution enabled our early activities to flourish. He continued to support the Society and in 2016 presided over the launch of *On the Trail of the Mortimers*. We know from several of his writings that he had a great interest in the Mortimers, but this was just one aspect of his broad fascination with life and history. He will be sorely missed.



Book launch: Patronage and Power

The Mortimer History Society and the University of Wales Press join forces to launch Dr David Stephenson's new book profiling a fascinating Marcher family.



In the summer edition of *Mortimer Matters* Dr David Stephenson, one of the country's most revered Welsh history scholars, gave us an insight to his life as an academic and writer. We're thrilled to announce that we – along with his publisher, the University of Wales Press, are to co-host an online launch of his latest book.

Patronage and Power in the Medieval Welsh March: One Family's Story is a full-length study of a single Welsh family from the thirteenth to fifteenth century. The family was of obscure origins, but the patronage of great Marcher lords – including the Mortimers

of Wigmore – helped its members to become prominent in Wales and the March and, increasingly, in England. One branch of the family actually became Marcher lords themselves. Another was prominent in Welsh and English government, becoming diplomats and courtiers of English kings. Over five generations many achieved knighthood. Dr Stephenson's examination of their progress and their fascinating careers hints at a much more open society than is sometimes imagined.

Join us on Zoom

The launch of *Patronage and Power in the Medieval Welsh March* will take

place via Zoom at 7:30pm on Thursday, 25 November. Zoom joining details will be sent to all members in advance. Attendance is free and all are welcome. Society Secretary Philip Hume will introduce David, who will then talk about his book and about the careers of this fascinating family.

The book, which will be published in November, is available to pre-order now from www.uwp.co.uk, price £14.99. University of Wales Press is generously offering a 20% discount on that price to all Society members. Simply use the discount code MORTIMER20 when ordering.

Medieval mayhem at the heart of Evesham

On a fine weekend in August, a crowd gathered to re-enact the infamous Battle of Evesham. The Mortimer History Society was there manning a stall and joining in the fighting! Mike Beazley reports...

It was certainly an energetic weekend and the weather was kinder than expected, with just a few showers. That was a relief for those of us who would not need to spend hours cleaning rust from weapons and armour! Two battles were, in fact, re-enacted; the Battle of Evesham (August 1265) and the Battle of Lewes (May 1264). The king's forces lost at Lewes, but won at Evesham, where Mortimer's guard surrounded Simon de Montfort and Roger killed him with a lance.

Back in 1265 the real Simon was then decapitated and emasculated. His head and other parts were then sent to Roger's wife Maud at Wigmore Castle. There are various theories about why Roger sent the body parts to Maud. My own is that Simon and his Welsh allies had attacked the castle during their progress towards Evesham, and Roger wanted to assure his wife that the attack had been avenged. Simon's hands and feet were also cut off and sent to his enemies in diverse places as a mark of dishonour to the deceased. What little remained was buried at Evesham Abbey.

After each battle re-enactment the participants (more than 500) and a very large audience held a minute's silence to honour the dead of so many years ago.

The Evesham re-enactment is a popular event and growing



Roger Mortimer and his retinue visit the MHS stand before the battle of Evesham, 1265. MHS members Mark North (2nd from left) and Mike Beazley (extreme right) are armed to the teeth.

every year, with a spectacular force of cavalry as well as foot soldiers, and is increasingly busy with traders' stands and local history societies.

The Mortimer History Society had its own stand, of course, and used it to promote our activities – not least the then upcoming October conference on the Battle of Evesham and the 2nd Barons' War. Over the two days we recruited several new members, had strong book sales and introduced many people to the society. We'll be back next year, I'm sure!

Anthology writers...

In 2023, the Mortimer History Society will mark the 700th anniversary of Roger Mortimer's escape from the Tower by publishing an anthology of Mortimer-related essays by respected scholars. Here two of those scholars, Paul Dryburgh, Medieval Records Specialist at the National Archives and Chris Given-Wilson, Emeritus Professor of Medieval History at the University of St Andrews give us an insight into their coming contributions.



Estates and Economies of the Mortimer Lordships

Paul Dryburgh

"At the death of Roger Mortimer, fourth earl of March, in 1398, the estates of the Wigmore branch of the Mortimer family formed arguably the greatest lordship acquired by an English noble family in the Middle Ages," says Paul. "Through a combination of advantageous marriage, political astuteness and royal favour over three centuries, successive Mortimer lords had gradually accumulated valuable estates not simply on the marches of Wales, centred on their caputs of Wigmore (Herefordshire) and Ludlow (Shropshire) but also as far afield as Pembrokeshire in Wales, East Anglia, Dorset and Kent in England and Ulster, Connacht and Meath in Ireland.

"It was the extent and diversity (in landscape, legal culture, productivity and wealth) of the Mortimer estates that underpinned the rise of the family from baronial to comital status and ultimately to potential rivals to the Lancastrian throne. There have been several excellent studies of the estates and economy of the family, perhaps most notably the unpublished, and now dated, 1934 University of Wales PhD thesis of B. P. Evans, *The Family of Mortimer*. In my contribution to the Mortimer Anthology, I'll aim to synthesise the latest research and provide a fuller portrait of the landed wealth of the family in the late Middle Ages."



Mortimer Family Support

Chris Given-Wilson

Between 1354 and 1425, the earldom of March was held by four members of the Mortimer family none of whom lived beyond the age of thirty-three: Roger II (died 1360, aged 31); Edmund I (d. 1381, aged 29); Roger III (d. 1398, aged 24); and Edmund II (d. 1425, aged 33). "Throughout these 71 years," says Chris, "there were 30 years during which the earldom was held by an active adult earl and 41 years when it was held in wardship for a minor; and not just any minor, but a succession of boys with a popular and plausible claim to be the next king of England.

"Even for the greatest inheritances, minorities were widely regarded as periods of jeopardy, when estates might be exploited or asset-stripped and heirs married off in the interest of those to whom the king happened to have granted the wardship of either the lands, or the heir, or both. The questions which this paper poses are, firstly, to what extent was the Mortimer inheritance preserved from predators during these successive periods of minority, and secondly, by what means was this done?"

"I'll focus principally on the relatives, by blood and by marriage, legitimate and illegitimate, of the successive Mortimer heirs, and their role in maintaining, not just the inheritance itself, but also the Mortimer claim to the throne," Chris concludes. "The history of the Mortimers between the 1360s and the 1420s is not so much the history of its earls as the history of a clan."

The anthology, slated for publication by Logaston Press will be launched at the Tower of London on 1 August 2023, when the Society will meet to commemorate Roger's daring bid for freedom.

A (not so) new man at the helm

Hugh Wood takes over as Mortimer History Society Chairman as longstanding Jason O'Keefe steps back.



Hugh Wood, founder member and now Chairman

Nobody can fail to recognise Hugh. He's a founder member of the Society, has held the positions of Treasurer and Membership Secretary, and edited this newsletter for many years. He is also inordinately proud of learning WordPress and building the Society's current – and very excellent – website!

On 8 September, Hugh took the chair at his first Society AGM, taking over from the admirable Jason O'Keefe, who stood down from the post after eight years. During Jason's tenure, the Society's membership has grown from just 100 to 450 from all over the world. "We've increased our events and extended our remit to give greater scope to the study of the Mortimers, the March and the medieval world in general," says Jason. "Our books, publications and papers have gained respect, we've launched an annual essay prize that brings new scholarship to the fore and our work with local schools is contributing to early years understanding of history. Even Covid couldn't dampen our spirits," he concludes, "with events and conferences moving online."

Jason is justly proud of the Society's achievements during his time in office. To mark his departure, at the AGM on 8 September, Hugh Wood, presented him with a thank you gift on behalf of the Society's Trustees and members - a commemorative print of Ludlow castle, based on a photograph taken by society Secretary, Philip Hume.

"Jason has achieved so much," says Hugh, "and provided calm, helpful and kind leadership throughout even the most testing times. We're sorry to see him stand down, but grateful that he'll still be around as a Society member and – hopefully – even more relaxed!"



Jason (left) accepts his thank you gift from new Chairman, Hugh

Arrivals and departures

At the AGM on 8 September, the Society welcomed three new Trustees.



Angela Iliff

Angela, Lesley and Annie may already be familiar faces to many of you, as they've been doing a sterling job for the society for some time, but here are the formal introductions...

Angela Iliff has been the Society's Membership Secretary since September 2019, and is a byword for calm efficiency. Much of her working life was spent in Australia in a variety of roles, from being the youngest female account executive in an Australian advertising agency to managing finance and events in a fish factory! Returning to the UK in 2003, she joined the Soil Association. Since retiring as the association's governance administrator, she's been indulging a lifelong interest in medieval history and the women of the period. She's also a member of the Richard III Society and the Treasurer of one of its branches.



Lesley Frith

Lesley Frith has been interested in medieval history since primary school. After a career in the NHS, working as a community paediatrician involved in assessment and support for children with neurodevelopmental problems, she has now retired. This means she now has plenty of time to be involved with the MHS, supporting the organisation of events, conferences and the schools' programme.



Annie Garthwaite

Annie enjoyed a thirty-year career in international business before changing tack to write full time in 2017. Her debut novel, CECILY was published by Penguin in July this year and reflects her lifelong interest in fifteenth-century history, the Wars of the Roses and, in particular, the House of York. Annie has edited *Mortimer Matters*, the Society's quarterly magazine, since early 2020.

As Angela, Lesley and Annie arrive among the Trustees, we mark the departure of four others. Andrew Colby, Stanton Stephens, Jean de Russet and Jason O'Keefe have all stepped back from this demanding role because of exacting life and work commitments. "All four remain as members of the Society," says Chairman, Hugh Wood. "We are profoundly grateful for their work over the years, and I'm sure we'll be seeing and hearing from them in the future."



Murder at Evesham? Reviewing the action at our autumn conference

After over a year of lockdowns and virtual conferences in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, members of the Mortimer History Society, Simon de Montfort Society and Vale of Evesham Historical Society were finally treated to five fascinating papers about the Battle of Evesham, delivered face-to-face at The Henrican, Evesham. Turnout was strong, with around 90 people attending despite heavy rain, and a further 65 or so tuning in live via Zoom, says historian and Society member, Connor Williams.



David Carpenter

The first paper was presented by Professor David Carpenter, the preeminent scholar on Henry III's reign, who focused on Henry's captivity and his role in the lead up to the Battle of Evesham. A year

before the battle, Henry had been captured by Simon de Montfort and his followers at the Battle of Lewes alongside his brother, Richard of Cornwall, and his son the Lord Edward. Holding Henry under house arrest, Montfort ruled in his name. Based on years of research, Professor Carpenter held the audience entranced as he traced how the experience of captivity must have distressed the king, who saw his household purged and filled with strangers far removed from his family, while his abilities to give alms to the poor and patronage to his followers were heavily curtailed. Though Henry has been dead for nearly 750 years, Professor Carpenter revealed deep insights into his personality by discussing his piety and religious dedication – particularly to the cult of St Edward the Confessor whose mass he heard 21 times in the lead up to Evesham between January and August 1265. Despite being one of England's longest reigning medieval monarchs, Henry III has often been shunned by academics and popular

historians alike as a poor king, undeserving of the same attention as his scheming father or all-conquering son. However, Professor Carpenter's more nuanced picture of a naïve but temperate king, both with crippling faults and incredible ambition, has done much to rehabilitate him.



Sophie Ambler

embodiment of the Anti-Christ, as shown in the Trinity Apocalypse from around c.1250s/60s where a knight wearing the Montfortian arms is shown fighting on the side of the Devil. However, to many (particularly those in the reformist camps) he was a saint and martyr, who like Thomas Becket stood against tyranny and died for a righteous cause. While the Papacy condemned the reforms of Montfort, a large number of the English clergy wholeheartedly supported him – going so far as to excommunicate opponents to the new regime. Despite this support, the cult of Simon de Montfort failed to achieve canonisation, despite

Next came Dr Sophie Ambler who profiled Henry III's rival – Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester. Dr Ambler painted Montfort as someone who was incredibly polarising. To some he was the

over 100 miracles credited to him in the 50 years after the Battle at Evesham. Dr Ambler put this down primarily to the costly and lengthy process of canonisation from the 1200s as the Papacy attempted to monopolise the practice. That, combined with a lack of support from the crown or nobles meant efforts gradually fizzled out. Nevertheless, the cult managed to extend as far north as Northumberland and Scotland, where the Montfortian Vescy lords of Alnwick preserved Simon's foot as a relic to the fledgling cult. This may have influenced the fifteenth century *Scotichronicon*, which invoked the memory of Simon as a cause for Scottish resistance against English tyranny.



Louise Wilkinson

Professor Louise Wilkinson gave us the story of Eleanor de Montfort, who held strong familial connections with both the Royalists and Montfortians. She was the youngest full-blood sister of Henry III and aunt to the Lord Edward, but, in 1238, had married Simon de Montfort with the king's blessing. Drawing on the remarkable Household Roll of Eleanor de Montfort from the year 1265, which she edited and translated for the Pipe Roll Society in 2020, Professor Wilkinson guided attendees

through a near daily account of Eleanor's movements and activities as she spent the months leading up to Evesham moving around her estates entertaining prominent Montfortians and local lords on behalf of her husband. Professor Wilkinson was able to show how Eleanor's household went into panic mode when news of the Lord Edward's escape from Hereford reached Eleanor at Odiham in May 1265. Eleanor swiftly moved her household to more defensible sites – firstly at Portchester and then along the Cinque Ports before finally arriving at Dover. Eleanor continued to act on her husband's behalf up to the Battle of Evesham where, upon hearing of his death and their eldest son's, she moved swiftly to secure her younger children by sending them over to France. Eventually she secured the release of her son Guy who had been captured at Evesham before joining her children in French exile. With her husband's lands forfeit and her own estates severely diminished, Eleanor eventually entered a French convent where she died in 1275. The tragedy of Eleanor's later life was mirrored by the fate of her children who all met hardship or untimely deaths. Simon the Younger and Guy were both excommunicated following their murder of Henry of Almain in 1271. Simon died the same year while Guy continued as a mercenary before being captured in 1287 and dying in a Sicilian prison. Third son Amaury, who had entered the priesthood, was captured in 1275 and spent 7 years imprisoned at Corfe Castle before dying in

relative obscurity c.1301. Her youngest son Richard disappears from history c.1266 but may have died fighting in Navarre around that time. Finally, her daughter Eleanor died in 1282 in childbirth, having married Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, Prince of Wales, in 1275. Following Edward I's conquest of Wales, her widowed husband was killed while their daughter was captured and forced into a nunnery where she remained until her death in 1337.



Andrew Spencer



Andy King

Roger Mortimer, who became an important lieutenant. The marshal prowess of the Prince and the Marcher Lords ensured Simon was pinned on the

Our final two papers, covering the role of the Lord Edward and Roger Mortimer lord of Wigmore, were presented by Dr Andrew Spencer and Dr Andy King respectively. Both played incredibly important roles in the lead up to the Battle of Evesham. After Edward escaped Hereford Castle in May 1265, he sought refuge with the Mortimers. Edward rallied the Marcher lords to his banner, including

wrong side of the Severn by blocking all crossing points and overtaking his army before it could rendezvous with reinforcements. On 1 August, Edward and Mortimer marched on the Montfortian forces at Kenilworth, destroying them, before returning to Evesham by 4 August, where they had Simon de Montfort trapped.

Dr Spencer and Dr King showed how both men worked in tandem to ensure the Reformists were snuffed out by targeting Montfort and other key men for death on the battlefield. While Edward commanded the army, Mortimer reportedly led a kill squad of knights who sought out Montfort and killed him, horrifically mutilating his body. As his grizzly trophy, Mortimer is reported to have sent Montfort's head and testicles to his wife at Wigmore. Dr Spencer and Dr King showed how, after the battle, both men were crucial in ending the Second Barons' War with the Dictum of Kenilworth (1266), which allowed rebels to sue for pardon and return of their confiscated land in return for a heavy fine to the crown. By summer 1267, the rebellion was effectively over and Edward turned his mind to crusading. Mortimer had obviously become indispensable to Edward as he was left as one of three guardians of his estates and affairs. When old king Henry III died in 1272, Mortimer's position was elevated as he joined a regency council headed by the Bishop of Bath and Wells until Edward returned to England in 1274.

All in all, this was an excellent conference with thought provoking papers enjoyed by over 150 attendees. Success was entirely down to the cooperation of the three societies. The success of this in-person and on-line event is exciting – showing how we can get back to normal in a post-COVID future while still embracing the innovations that online conferencing has brought to us – in terms of outreach and engagement – over the past year.

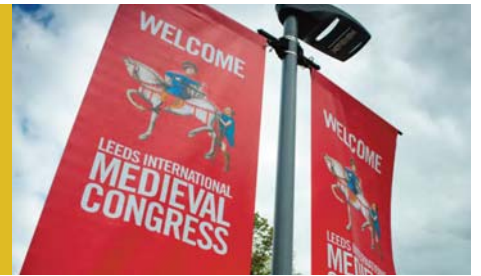
Welcome to new members

Our membership continues to flourish! 24 new members have joined since the last edition of *Mortimer Matters*. Welcome all! We hope you're enjoying your membership and look forward to meeting you.

David Barnes	Aberystwyth	Huw Owen	Aberystwyth
Jennifer Beale	Presteigne	Valentina & Ray Peate	Hereford
Tim Clark	Warwick	Clare Pickford	Worcester
Joan Cooksley	Walton-on-Thames	Anthony Rich	Berkswell
Shauna & Mark Delaney	Ludlow	Judith & Arnaud Roele	Kington
Jeremy Hickling	Ludlow	Claire Seymour	Ludlow
Dylan Jones	Corwen	Laura Sommerville	Stoke Edith
Sarah & John Morgan	Clacton-on-Sea	Keith Stenner	Bristol
David Mortimer	Maldon	George Tait	Evesham
Jacob Newbury	Horley	Vera West	Knaresborough

International Medieval Congress, 5-9 July 2021

Society President, Paul Dryburgh reflects on our successful sponsorship of this prestigious conference – held online for the first time



The online world, bewildering at times, enriching at others, is one with which many readers will have become increasingly familiar over the past eighteen months. The Society itself has staged excellent lectures and conferences throughout the current pandemic, even though we've had little chance to chat in person over tea and biscuits in a lovely marcher location.



Congress programme cover

In 2021, your Society entered the international academic conference scene, organising a strand at the renowned International Medieval Congress (IMC), the world's premier academic conference for medieval studies, first held in 1994. Conventionally held at the University of Leeds, this year, between 5 and 9 July, over 3000 delegates from all parts of the world logged on virtually to view over 2500 individual presentations on a vast array of topics across numerous academic disciplines. These are as diverse as archaeology, art history, history, language and literature, law, music and philosophy, and all came under the broad conference theme of "Climates". Our six speakers, including several familiar faces, presented short papers across two sessions in a strand

entitled "A Different Climate?: Politics, Culture, and the Law on the Medieval Marches of Wales".

Cultural interaction and difference



Session chair, Dr Kathleen Neal

Our first session explored the effects of cultural interaction and difference in the marches of Wales in the three centuries leading up to the Edwardian Conquest, with an emphasis on warfare, the law and legal codes, and marriage and gender. Chaired by Dr Kathleen Neal of Monash University, Australia, who recently presented to the Society, the session kicked off with a fascinating paper from Dr Melissa Julian-Jones of Cardiff University, which explored inter-marcher warfare in the two centuries from 1093 to the Edwardian conquests of the late thirteenth century. It offered a fresh perspective on the nature of war in the marches and the cultural interactions between communities at war and peace. As she has done at MHS events, Dr Sara Elin Roberts delved deep into the legal system in the Marches, presenting an engaging and informative insight into the distinctive nature of law operating in the marcher lordships. Finally, Dr Emma Cavell of Swansea University discussed intermarriage among elite communities in part-occupied Wales from 1067-1282, and showed how complex networks of family and marital relationships underpinned politics, warfare, economy and society in the medieval marches.

Cutting edge research

The second session combined the talents of two up-and-coming scholars working at the cutting edge of archival research into the late-medieval Mortimer family with an established

literary expert. The session examined in more detail the national and local standing, dynastic politics and military role of this most important of medieval English baronial/comital families. MHS communications officer Connor Williams (University of Nottingham) shared his latest research on the uses and abuses of wardship in late-medieval England by focusing on the troubling experience of minority of the Hastings and Mortimer families from 1375-94.



Patrick McDonagh – the Mortimers in Ireland

Patrick McDonagh (Trinity College Dublin) presented his exciting research into the Mortimer affinity in Ireland at a time of crisis (two earls of March dying in Ireland in the late fourteenth century); he demonstrated the continuity of connections between marcher families and the Mortimer lords in the administration of their Irish estates, as well as the employment of men local to those estates. Lastly, Professor Kristen Over, Associate Professor of English at NEIU in Chicago, examined Arthurian history and its marcher influence by discussing the text *Fouke le Fitz Waryn* and the making of *homo europeus*. This brought the role of literature and literary and historic culture into the formation of identity in the Welsh Marches, and introduced delegates into the complex web of influences in elite culture throughout the Middle Ages.

Both sessions produced lively discussion and were well attended, with just under 100 delegates present. The Society has confirmed it will repeat the sponsorship at the 2022 IMC where the overall theme is the even more suitable "Borders". Papers from several of this year's speakers will appear in the 2021 edition of the Society's Journal.

A summer outing in the Marches

After the long, dark days of lockdown, a group of MHS members met at Much Marcle on 15 August to begin a day of visits to three historically interesting sites in the Marches. Fran Norton reports on a grand day out!



Viewing the renovated tomb of Blanche Mortimer

Our first stop was Hellens, a medieval house with a colourful history vividly brought to life by our guide. We began in the courtyard, where we could see signs of bullet holes made by the Parliamentarians in the red brickwork and on the thick oak studded door. Later we learned of the violent murder of an aged priest in one of the bedrooms. Upon entering, we were shown into what was once the Great Hall, where, a stone table, [reputedly an altar], sat imposingly at one end. The house dates back to the eleventh century and once belonged to the de Audley family whose bloodlines include Cecily Neville, Edward IV and Richard III; Alice de Audley was, in fact, Cecily's great-grandmother. The tour continued through the house, where the many portraits of members of the Wharton and Walwyn families who had once lived there, looked down on our members; each with their own unique tale to tell. Hellens is still home to the Munthe family.

After a picnic lunch in the village hall, the group moved on to St. Bartholomew's church, where our guide told us of the extensive repairs to the beautiful tomb of Blanche Mortimer, Lady Grandison, and

of the expertise of the archaeologist in charge of the work. The heraldic devices of Mortimer and Grandison decorating the tomb are extraordinary and compliment the craftsmanship of the original sculptor. There is no doubt it is one of the country's finest effigies. But once again the Mortimers leave us with questions; why was she buried here and not with her husband Peter in Hereford Cathedral? Did Blanche die in childbirth or, of the 'Black Death'? We simply don't know! We also viewed the painted effigy of Walter de Halyon who once lived at Hellens.

Finally we drove to St Mary's at Kempley to see the medieval wall paintings. From the lane we walked through a yew archway to gain the front of the building and there, on that summer's afternoon, stood the little pink church! Inside, although time has faded the original bright paint, the images were still clear enough to tell their stories. 'Christ in Majesty' and the 'Wheel of Life' stood out on the stark white walls. Here, Hugh Wood gave us a brief talk on the Mortimers, thus ending a splendid day in and around Much Marcle.



The wheel of life describes the vagaries of fate

Want to find out more about Blanche Mortimer's Tomb? A book, *The Tomb of Blanche Mortimer, Lady Garrison* by Brian and Moira Gittos is published by Much Marcle Parish Council and is available from Castle Bookshop in Ludlow.

BOOK REVIEW

Matilda, Lady of Hay: The life and legends of Matilda de Braose

By Peter Ford, Logaston, March 2021

Matilda de Braose is one of only a handful of medieval Marchers who achieved notoriety in their lifetimes and maintain it to this day, despite the passage of 800 years since her death. To have achieved this as a woman is remarkable. Echoes of her life have now passed into legend, where she transforms into Moll Walbee, the giantess who could fling stones, raise castles and terrorise the Welsh.

This fascinating lady has manifestly caught the imagination of Society member Peter Ford, who is also the secretary of the Hay History Group. He has tasked himself – in this small, accessible volume – to ask, who was the real Matilda? What was her life like in Hay and beyond? What was her legacy if any and why did she inspire so many legends and more lately, a number of best-selling fiction books?

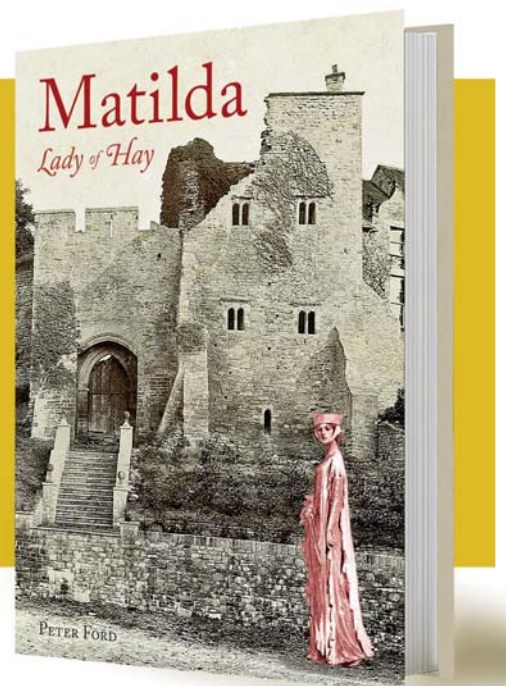
Ford sets out to answer some of these questions in several chapters on Matilda and her husband William de Braose (d. 1211), charting their rise to favour under King John and their subsequent disastrous fall from royal grace. There are short and useful biographies on Matilda's known children, as well as a summary on the unsubstantiated ones. Ford also takes the reader through the differing reasons for the de Braoses' downfall, drawing on the latest scholarship, which remains to this day extremely lively on King John's motivations for turning against the couple. He continues with the sad conclusion to Matilda's life and the possible influence this event had on the

drafting of the Magna Carta.

Ford has clearly researched his subject, and presents a good account of Matilda without allowing her story to be overwhelmed by the activities of her husband or King John. However, no author can escape the paucity of primary sources for women in this time and Ford uses the relevant chronicles to flesh out Matilda as much as can be expected. One of the few he has missed is the *History of William Marshal* and its dramatic account of the de Braoses' storm-tossed flight to Ireland. I would have also recommended the greater use of the Welsh Brut to bring a better nuance to his assertion that the Welsh blindly hated Matilda, as even they were horrified by her unjust death, as recounted in a chronicle stuffed full of violent deaths.

Structurally, the book does experience some problems with a tendency to jump around chronologically and between fact and fiction, which may confuse the more casual reader. There are also a few unnecessary digressions. For instance, the events leading up to the deaths of Matilda and her son are interrupted by a large diversion on medieval jails that spoils the pathos on the discovery of the bodies.

I would also add that Ford's repeated assertion that life for medieval women was bleak and completely dominated by men a little overdone. If anything, Ford goes on to show that resourceful women like Matilda could operate successfully within their own milieu. Examples of



other contemporary women, the obvious being the similarly martial Nicola de la Haie, would have greatly enhanced the text and have given greater depth to the author's account of the lives of twelfth century noblewomen. Matilda's unfortunate death did not necessarily mean that she and her husband were not ambitious and resourceful within the March for a few decades before their fall. And their fall did not end the de Braose family presence in the March. Their remaining sons managed to largely piece back the family patrimony for another generation or two.

Ford is to be commended for tackling a complex subject and he has written a charming volume which is to be recommended for those who know wish to know about one of the March's most interesting inhabitants. Beautifully produced as ever, by Logaston, the book is enhanced by well-chosen illustrations and family trees. It comes with extremely helpful notes, references and a bibliography for readers who wish to explore further. For readers who enjoy the legends of the March, Ford gives a helpful summary and exploration of the surviving Matilda folklore. We look forward to Ford's next work with anticipation.

Matilda – Lady of Hay is available from bookshops or direct from www.logastonpress.co.uk. Paperback, £7.99

About the reviewer

Kirsten is a trustee of the Society, has a MA in Medieval Studies from Birmingham University and is currently writing *The Marcher Lordships of South-East Wales*, in co-junction with fellow trustees Philip Hume and John Fleming.

For your bookshelf

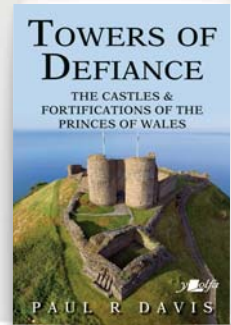
Three titles for your autumn reading list and one to look forward to next year. Everything medieval is here – from castles to royal power couples and the truth about medieval women.

Towers of Defiance: The Castles and Fortifications of the Princes of Wales

By Paul R Davis, Ylolf, July 2021

An exploration of the history and evolution of Welsh castles during the time the native rulers held sway (c.1066 to 1283). A comprehensive full-colour guide illustrated with spectacular new aerial photography, plans and reconstruction drawings.

£19.99 from www.ylolf.com

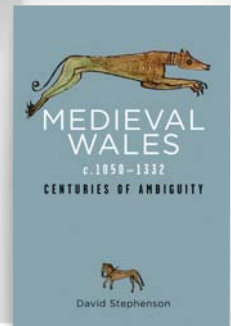


Medieval Wales c. 1050 – 1332: Centuries of Ambiguity

By David Stephenson, University of Wales Press, March 2019

This book takes a radical approach to its subject. Rather than discussing the emergence of the March from the usual perspective of 'intrusive' marcher lords, it is considered from a Welsh standpoint, explaining the lure of the March to the Welsh princes and its contribution to the fall of the principality of Wales. This is a book that introduces the reader to the celebrated and the less well-known men and women who shaped medieval Wales.

£16.99 from www.uwp.co.uk

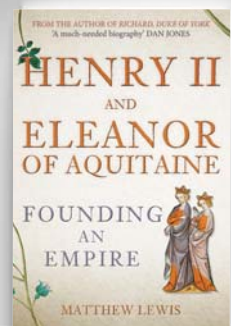


Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine: Founding an empire

By Matthew Lewis, Amberley Publishing, September 2021

This book charts the early lives of Henry and Eleanor before they became a European power couple and examines the impact of their union on their contemporaries and European politics. It explores the birth of the Angevin Empire that spread from Northumberland to the Mediterranean, and the causes of the disintegration of that vast territory, as well as the troublesome relationships between Henry and his sons, who dragged their father to the battlefield to defend his lands from their ambitious intriguing.

Available online at www.amberley-books.com and in bookstores, £20.



Femina: A new history of the Middle Ages

By Janina Ramirez, WH Allen, March 2022

Our understanding of the middle ages assumes a patriarchal society that oppressed and excluded women. BBC historian Janina Ramirez has uncovered countless influential women's names struck out of historical records, with the word FEMINA annotated beside them. By weaving a vivid picture of the lives of the women, Janina uncovers the misconceptions that distort our understanding of the past.

Available for pre-order online and in bookshops, £20.

