



MORTIMER
History Society

MORTIMER *Matters*

The fall of Normandy and the collapse of the Angevin Empire (1202-04)

This summer Daniel Power, Professor of Medieval History at Swansea University, will give the Society's inaugural John Grove Memorial Lecture. His theme will be the impact of the fall of ducal Normandy in 1204 on members of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy, who struggled to maintain land holdings on both sides of the Channel. Prominent among this group, of course, were many of the Marcher lords, including the Mortimers. In anticipation of his talk, Daniel has taken the time to provide us with a background to Normandy's fall – how it came about and its immediate, cataclysmic effects.

In June 1204, the army of the king of France, Philip II Augustus, besieged Rouen, the capital of Normandy. The duke of Normandy, King John, was far away in England and failed to come to the rescue of the city, which surrendered to the French army on Midsummer's Day. Since early 1202, Philip had been waging a war to wrest John's continental possessions from him: The French king's court had condemned John and his predecessors as rebellious subjects who were unfit to rule or hold their hereditary lands in France. The capitulation of Rouen was the culmination of a series of campaigns that Anglophone historians have customarily called the 'Loss of Normandy', and which had huge significance for the history of both England and France.



Fall of Rouen 1204

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Tour Jeanne d'Arc, last survivor of the fortress built in Rouen by Philip Augustus after he captured the city in 1204.

A four-part disruption

The war of which the siege of Rouen formed a part had four main dimensions. First, it ended ducal rule in Normandy, which stretched back to King John's ancestor Rollo (Hrólftr), the Scandinavian warrior who had wrested the area around Rouen from the king of the West Franks in the early tenth century. Second, the fall of Rouen marked the end of the Anglo-Norman realm established by William the Conqueror in 1066. Ever since the Battle of Hastings, William's descendants had ruled in both England and Normandy, and most of the time, the same man controlled both territories at once. The fall of Rouen shattered that political union. After 1204, mainland Normandy formed part of the domains ruled directly by the king of France, and when English armies invaded Normandy during the Hundred Years War, notably in 1346 and 1415-19, it was in very altered circumstances and for quite different reasons. Thirdly, John's loss of mainland Normandy marked the beginning of the Channel Isles' special association with the English Crown. Until 1204, the islands had formed an integral part of the duchy, but thereafter they remained under the rule of John and his descendants, detached from the Norman mainland, although their culture remained Norman in most respects.

Finally, John's defeats by Philip Augustus not only broke in half the venerable Anglo-Norman realm, but also led to the collapse of the much more short-lived Angevin or Plantagenet

of England (1154); he subsequently took over Brittany (1158-66) and inaugurated English royal rule in Ireland (1171).

While Henry planned to divide these disparate territories amongst his sons, all except Ireland passed at his death in 1189 to his eldest surviving son, Richard I (the Lionheart). By then, Philip Augustus was exerting pressure upon the weak points of the Angevin Empire. He exploited Richard's captivity in Germany during his homeward journey from the Third Crusade (1192-4) and the succession dispute following Richard's death (1199) to gain lands, castles, and baronial loyalties. Richard's prowess checked Philip's attempts to conquer the Angevin lands in France, but the succession crisis after Richard's death between his brother John and their nephew Arthur, duke of Brittany, seriously weakened the political unity of the empire. Philip exploited these troubles by subjugating Anjou, Maine and Touraine in 1202-3. This tore the heart out of the Angevin Empire and allowed Philip to attack Normandy from the south as well as the east. The death of Eleanor of Aquitaine, less than three months before the fall of Rouen, allowed Philip to claim her duchy as well, and in August 1204 he took Eleanor's capital, Poitiers. However, his advance faltered, and the kings of England retained parts of Aquitaine until the end of the Hundred Years War in 1453. Nevertheless, from 1204 all the territory from northern Aquitaine to Normandy lay under the hegemony of the king of France.

Empire, which had incorporated the Anglo-Norman realm since the mid-twelfth century. Between 1135 and 1154, the counts of Anjou had accumulated a vast collection of territories through marriage, inheritance, and hard campaigning. The central figures in this dynastic aggrandisement were Geoffrey Plantagenet, count of Anjou, and his wife Empress Matilda, the daughter of King Henry I of England; their eldest son Henry II; and Henry's wife Eleanor, duchess of Aquitaine. Henry became successively duke of Normandy (1150), count of Anjou, Maine, and Touraine (1151), duke of Aquitaine (1152), and king



The castle of Arques, near Dieppe, one of the last Norman fortresses to surrender to the king of France in 1204.

Why Normandy fell

The reasons for King John's loss of vast lands in France in 1202-4 have been debated ever since the surrender of Rouen. Many chroniclers on both sides of the English Channel accused John of alienating his continental subjects through arbitrary and oppressive rule, and of failing to provide inspiring military leadership like his brother Richard. Others argued that the wealth and prestige of the French monarchy had grown too strong for the kings of England to defy its authority in their continental duchies and counties. A third approach was to blame John's continental subjects for their fickle loyalties. Modern historians have largely replicated these different views, while adding nationalist interpretations more redolent of the age of empires and nation states than the aristocratic, dynastic culture of the early thirteenth century.

There can be no doubt that John's errors and misdeeds contributed to his loss of Normandy and Anjou. These included the murder of his nephew Arthur; high-handed treatment of many barons in Anjou and Aquitaine; and military miscalculations, including the failure to relieve key fortresses and the use of rapacious mercenaries who alienated the populations they were supposed to be defending. An inveterate plotter himself, John placed little trust in most of his continental subjects and received little loyalty in return. Yet John also faced serious obstacles in attempting to govern the continental lands of his parents and elder brother. John's legitimacy was undermined from the outset by the challenge of a serious dynastic rival, and he had to make damaging concessions to win support or acceptance as Richard's successor, including to the king of France, who



The exchequer hall in the castle of Caen, one of the principal seats of Norman ducal government in the 12th century.

extracted major territorial concessions from John in 1200 as the price of recognising him as heir to Richard's dominions in France. Furthermore, John's lands had already been burdened by many years of taxation for wars, the Third Crusade, and Richard's ransom, while some key border fortresses were already in French hands. Although the coffers and energies of Philip's subjects had also been drained by war, the king of France used his status as overlord to undermine John's rule in his territories. In some of these dominions there was a long tradition of resistance to princely rule, meaning that all the Angevin rulers faced frequent rebellions: Richard I himself had lost his life attempting to crush a revolt in Aquitaine. There was also little cohesion or common sentiment between the different regions in France under John's rule.

The collapse of John's lordship from

Normandy to eastern Aquitaine was therefore the outcome of short-term political and military mistakes combined with long-term financial exhaustion and traditions of resistance to the heavy-handed rule of Henry II and his sons. John compounded these weaknesses and disadvantages by fleeing in fear to England at the end of 1203, leaving his French lands leaderless. With promises to be a good lord to the Normans, Philip marched around central Normandy in spring 1204 before turning on Rouen and putting an end to the ducal regime, and demanding that all Normans should do homage to him or forfeit their lands. Members of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy who held lands on both sides of the Channel were faced with an impossible conflict of loyalties. Their attempts to retain or restore their cross-Channel estates would be an important aspect of Anglo-French politics for over half a century.

The inaugural John Grove Memorial lecture will be held on Wednesday 22 June at Grange Court in Leominster. As a hybrid event, you may choose to attend in person or via Zoom. For full details, and to secure your place, go to www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.

About the author:

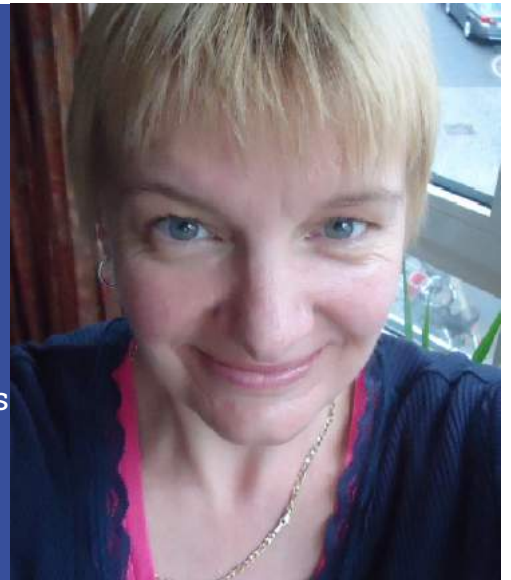
Daniel Power has been Professor of Medieval History at Swansea University since 2007. He studied at the University of Cambridge, completing his PhD in 1994, and subsequently taught at the University of Sheffield. His research concerns France, England, and the Welsh March between the 11th and 13th centuries, especially aristocratic power and society: his many publications include *The Norman Frontier in the Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 2004).



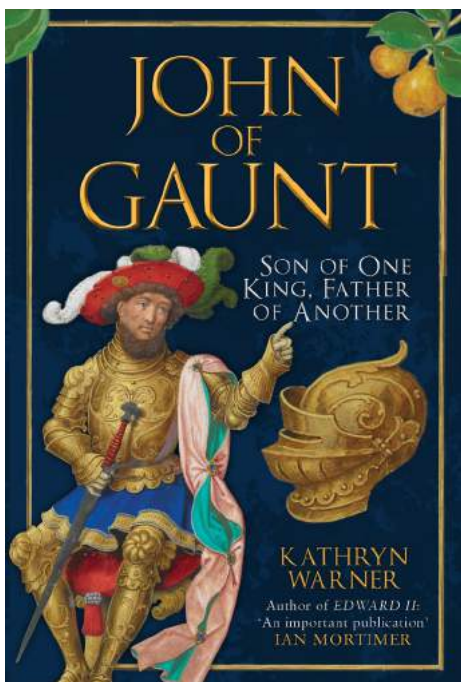
Daniel Power at Llangennith Church on the Gower Peninsula, which belonged between the 12th and the 15th century to the Norman abbey of Saint-Taurin at Évreux

John of Gaunt – family man, loyal friend and affectionate lover

Historian, prolific author and Mortimer History Society member Kathryn Warner has just published her much-anticipated biography of John of Gaunt whom she describes as ‘a man she has learned to like’. As the post-publication excitement gathers pace, she took time out to chat to *Mortimer Matters* editor, Annie Garthwaite.



Opinion on John of Gaunt's character tends to be polarised. He's either the romantic can't-put-a-foot-wrong lead in Anya Seton's much-loved novel *Katherine*, or he's the epitome of power-hungry arrogance who well deserves his 'most hated man in England' epithet. The truth, according to Kathryn, lies somewhere in between.



John of Gaunt book cover

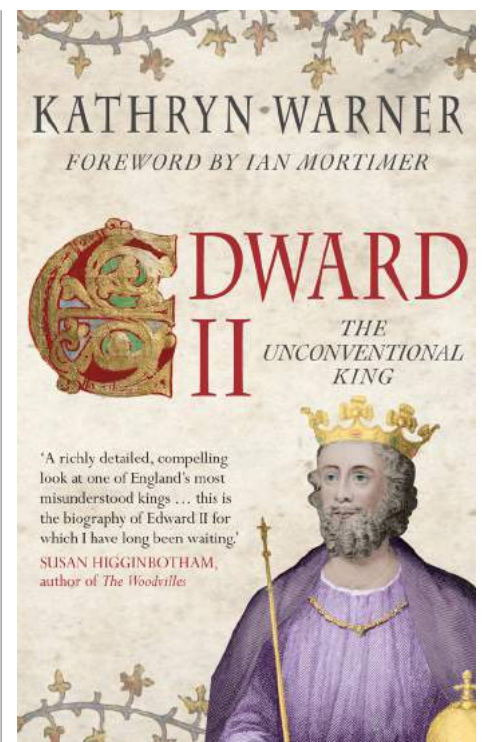
"Sure," she concedes, "John of Gaunt could be arrogant, aggressive and ruthless but, hey, he was a high ranking medieval nobleman, so that pretty much goes with the territory. On the other hand, there's clear evidence that he was a loyal son to his father Edward III, that he cultivated positive relationships with his brothers, cared deeply for his children and maintained strong female friendships throughout his life." Kathryn also points out that John was

consistently loyal to his nephew the young Richard II when, arguably, he gained little in return.

A 'personal' biography

So, perhaps the time is ripe for a rehabilitation of John's reputation? If so, Kathryn is well placed to lead the vanguard. Her book has been described as the first 'personal' biography of John. I asked her what she thought was meant by that. "I guess it's simply that I've focused on his relationships," she says. "History, for me, has always been more about people and their motivations than about battles and statutes." This is doubtless a good place to start if we're going to understand John of Gaunt. John came from a large family in which most of England's political power was concentrated. And he certainly had a complex love life, with two marriages under his belt before he eventually tied the knot with his long-term lover Katherine Swynford. His elder brother, the Black Prince, died young, leaving him to play the difficult role of uncle to a young king for a good part of his life. Other men might have been inclined to make a bid for power. "There's no evidence," asserts Kathryn, "that John ever did so."

To gain her 'personal' perspective on John, Kathryn has mined both his letters and his registers, which have survived for key moments of his life and have often been disregarded by other historians. She hints at the respectful relationship they reveal between John and his wives, especially the second, Costanza of Spain who, fascinatingly, was born out of wedlock and later legitimised, just as John's children with Katherine Swynford were. Kathryn also speaks movingly of the affection between John and his son Henry, and the heartbreak they both suffered at their separation.



Edward II book cover

The first man

But while John has won a place in Kathryn's affections, it's Edward II who has been her lifelong passion. She describes how, while studying medieval history at Manchester University, her realisation that this was the king she knew least about sent her on a trail of discovery that ended in obsession. "Edward came out of nowhere and has taken up 70% of my headspace ever since," she says. She points to this as a common experience among historians; the realisation that there is one person in whom they'll have a consuming interest. "I just realised he was 'my man'," she confirms, "the man who my career as a historian would be founded upon."

Certainly she has written at least two books about him. The first, *Edward II – the Unconventional King* seeks to rehabilitate his reputation, while *Long Live the King* tackles his mysterious death, around which several salacious myths have developed. “Edward is a man,” she insists, “who has been poorly treated by historians, many of whom have allowed lies about his life to proliferate without correction.” She recounts a particularly shocking tale that Edward took all of the wedding gifts destined for his wife Isabella and gave them instead to his lover, Piers Gaveston. It would be damning if this were true but it is, in fact, a 19th century invention that has been repeated unquestioningly by historians ever since.

Perhaps, I suggest, the tendency to stereotype Edward as an immoral and debauched gay man, and his wife as a sexually frustrated victim rather than a woman of considerable political acumen, says more about historians than it does of the people concerned?

“Perhaps so,” she agrees with some chagrin.

So, if you like your history people-focused and revealing of character, you could do no better than get some of Kathryn’s books onto your library shelves. Alongside John and Edward, she’s written about Edward’s wife Isabella of France, Richard II, Philippa of Hainault, the Despencers and the Clare sisters. She’ll soon be returning to her first love though, with a book on Edward II’s sexuality and relationships – which is a subject overdue for rational consideration, I’d say.

Kathryn’s biography of John of Gaunt is published by Amberly in hardback at £20.

Writing Transnational Histories

When David Green, Senior Lecturer in British Studies at Harlaxton College, was asked to write a new history of Britain and Ireland it led him to reflect on the concept of empire and the artificial nature of national borders. Here he reflects on the book he is now writing in response to this request – a comparative study of the post-millennial medieval period freed from both geographical boundaries and ingrained pre-conceptions.



During the dark days of lockdown when time seemed to be a rather different commodity I was contracted by Yale University Press to write a new history of Britain and Ireland in the middle ages. The publisher had been asking for something along these lines for some time, and I’d been trying to decide if I had anything new to say or, at least, a different way of telling a familiar story. Their initial proposal had been for an English national history, but I had no wish to tread that ground again. Much of my published research in recent years has explored and compared governance and policy in the Plantagenet estates in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It was this sort of comparative methodology that shaped the eventual proposal. Given the interests of the Mortimer History Society in cross-border and transnational studies, I hope the following thoughts on possible approaches to a work, very much, in progress will be of interest. I welcome and invite communication and comments from members of the society that may help as the project develops from ‘aspiration’ to actual words on a page.

From your editor



Hello!

Spring has definitely arrived and, with it, a return to in-person events! There are details of many of them here – from our Covid-delayed conference on the Mortimers and the Welsh Princes in May, right through to our not-to-be-missed How to Build a Castle Day in July. You can see our full 2022 programme on page 10.

We’ve got some great features for you in this issue. I’ve been intrigued by Daniel Power’s insights into the fall of Normandy in 1204 and it was a real thrill for me to talk to Kathryn Warner about one of my heroes, John of Gaunt. And thanks to David Green for his thoughts on a transnational approach to history.

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

Four nations' history and porous national borders

Four Nations' History or what used to be called the 'new British History' is, of course, no longer new. As long ago as 1975, J.G.A. Pocock called for this sort of comparative approach in a now, much-cited article in *The Journal of Modern History*. In the field of medieval studies, the call was taken up most notably by Rees Davies and Robin Frame who, initially, built on their deep knowledge of conditions in Wales and Ireland respectively, to offer comparisons with circumstances elsewhere. Following in their footsteps, various scholars have extended the chronological boundaries of such considerations - beyond the ebb of Davies' *First English Empire* (Oxford, 2000), which he dated to c.1340, and beyond 1400 the date at which Frame concluded his classic work *The Political Development of the British Isles* (Clarendon, 1994). From a range of different perspectives, such studies argue that we can best understand Britain and Ireland (or, better perhaps, the British Isles and Ireland) as a collective, an amalgam, a unit of some sort, although by no means a homogenous one. Furthermore, a consideration of the links, commonalities and distinctions shared by those within the 'Atlantic archipelago' and among their neighbours, most notably in France, reveals the porous and often artificial nature of national borders. Several other works have, of course, adopted this approach and done so very successfully. Few, however, have sought to conceive of the entire period of the middle ages, post-millennium, from this perspective.

Where to begin? Time and mindset

A series of questions is, however, raised by such an approach, not the least of which is the date at which such a history should begin. 1066 is an obvious choice from an English point of view, but the significance of the battle of Hastings elsewhere is limited, at least in the short term. It did, however, come hard on the heels of the reign of Gruffydd ap Llywelyn (d. 1063), which might be a suitable date for considering the emergence of a new political dynamic in Wales. From an Irish perspective, 1014 and Brian Bóraime's (Brian Boru) victory at Clontarf, might mark a better time for a beginning. In Scotland, should we look back to the reign of Cináed mac Ailpín (Kenneth MacAlpin, 848-58), forward to that of Dabíd mac Maíl Choluim (David I, 1124-53) or let Shakespeare do our thinking for us and start with the rivalry between Duncan and Macbeth (c.1040)?



Medieval Britain as the English liked to see it: Edward I flanked by Alexander III of Scotland and Llywelyn ab Gruffydd

Another question concerns the broad trajectory of the narrative. If we are seeking points of political connection between the four 'nations' will this prejudice and promote an Anglo-centric perspective in which 'English' territorial ambition becomes the primary concern? Furthermore, if we do so, does this assert that an imperial mindset has shaped 'English' approaches to its neighbours from the time of the Norman Conquest? 'Empire' is a seductive notion and one which provides an extremely useful methodological lens through which to view political culture in medieval Britain and Ireland. It is, however, problematic in other respects, and by embracing empire, there is a danger that we simply replace an English national approach with a British imperial model.

Perhaps, instead, we could adopt a framework bound up with the development of the state. In many ways, this is even more problematic: in an essay published in 2003, Rees Davies spoke of the tyranny of the concept. We have to be wary of anachronism and ensure that such constructs do not unduly influence our attitudes towards these polities. But to speak of 'state development' may be helpful in certain ways. It will, for example, require us to consider the nature of the borderlands between nascent states (if such they were). Work on frontier societies such as those in the Welsh marches has done much to shape our understanding of transnational political cultures, especially in those periods in which national differences are being said to have been increasingly distinct. It has been through the study of these 'contact zones' that we see the realities of existence for many medieval people living far from centres of power. They reveal how many commonalities were shared by those with different political allegiances. This, in turn, requires us to consider the nature of links within and between nations. Some historians have favoured ideas of 'centre and periphery' as a means of describing the ways by which political authority and expectations of social and cultural behaviour radiated outwards. Others view this as reductive and propose a 'cellular' model - arguing for the greater significance of local factors such as geography, law, and social structures in shaping identities.

Describing a shared past

In short, the ways in which scholars seek to explore and understand the history (or histories) of these islands are rich, varied and contested, and when seeking to construct a new narrative of medieval Britain and Ireland, these are the sorts of questions that need to be addressed. Yet, despite these vibrant debates, 'national stories' - those of independent and separate nations - continue to dominate popular views of the middle ages. The recent and current political climate has done nothing to change this, although it has generated a good deal of interest in the political, social and cultural evolution of Britain and Ireland. Arguments concerning the future of the United Kingdom and, indeed, whether it should have a future in its current form are often framed by competing narratives concerning Britain's past and the lessons different communities believe the past should teach. Similarly, campaigns such as 'Black Lives Matter' and 'Brexit' offer very different perspectives on the nation's/nations' complex and inter-connected history/histories. The reality, of course, is that such competing narratives are themselves an integral part of British and Irish history. It is only through exploring those competing narratives and considering the various and different ways in which we can conceive of our shared past that we can better understand it.

David Green is a graduate of the Universities of Exeter and Nottingham and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. Prior to joining Harlaxton College, he taught at the universities of Sheffield, St Andrews and Trinity College, Dublin.

Murder, Mayhem & Marriage: The Mortimers & the Welsh Princes

A joint conference with the Radnorshire Society, held at Knighton and District Community Centre on Saturday, 14 May 2022



Our first in-person conference of 2022 explores the inevitably explosive relationship between the Mortimers – most powerful of the Marcher families – and the Welsh Princes they came into contact (and conflict) with. From Llewelyn the Great to Owain Glyndwr, through matrimony, war and uneasy alliances, we consider how Wales was shaped by dramatic clashes of ambition and personality.

Our eminent historians



Competition and conquest: Native Welsh society and early Norman inroads

Dr Euryn Rhys Roberts, Lecturer in Medieval and Welsh History at the University of Bangor, argues that the advent of the Normans marked the biggest break in the history of Wales since the departure of the Romans.



The land between Wye and Severn: A Mortimer obsession

Dr David Stephenson, Honorary Research Fellow in Welsh History at the University of Bangor, describes how for 200 years after the Conquest the Mortimers struggled to master the land between the Wye and Severn, bringing them into conflict with native Welsh princes.



Conflict and co-existence: Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and the Mortimers

Dr Rhun Emlyn, Lecturer in Medieval History at the University of Aberystwyth, examines how the rise of Llywelyn the Great in the early thirteenth century impacted the Mortimers and their land holdings in Wales.



Cousins at War

Society Secretary, Philip Hume, explores the conflicts between the two grandchildren of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth – one a Marcher baron, the other a Prince of Gwyneth and Wales.



Simon de Montfort, Roger Mortimer and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: The War of the Marches, 1264-5

Dr Sophie Ambler, Deputy Director of the Centre for War and Diplomacy and Reader in Medieval History at Lancaster University, argues that, at the Battle of Evesham in 1265, England's constitutional future and the balance of power in Britain were at stake.

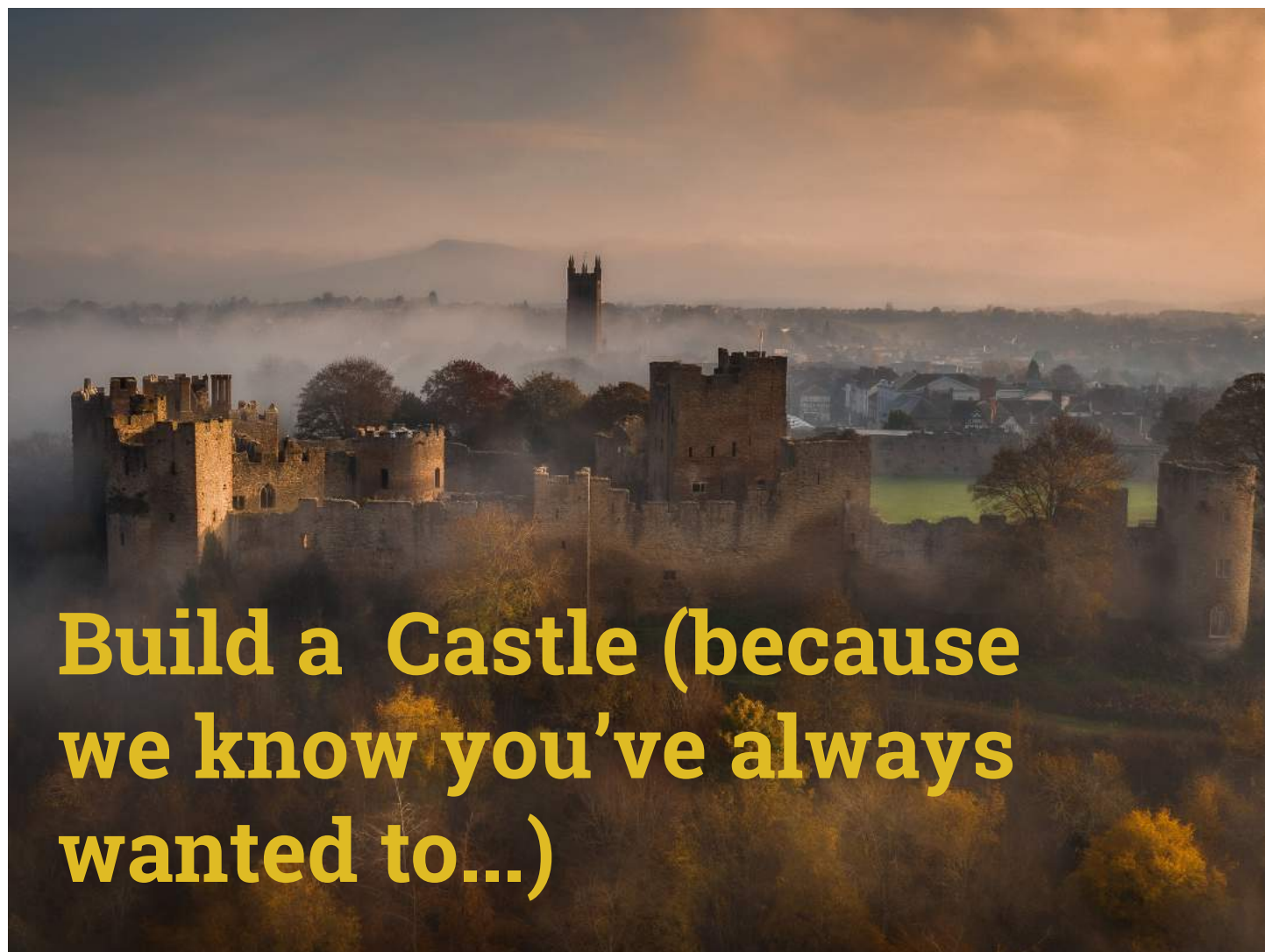


A notorious association: Owain Glyndwr and Sir Edmund Mortimer

Gruffydd Aled Williams, Professor Emeritus of Welsh at the University of Aberystwyth investigates the relationship between these powerful men and its consequences during the Glyndwr revolt.

Our first in-person event of 2022

This much-anticipated conference can be attended in person or via Zoom – though we hope you'll relish the opportunity to meet with your fellow history buffs! Reserve your place at www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk/events.



Build a Castle (because we know you've always wanted to...)

On Saturday, 30 July your Society will stage a full-day conference every castle lover will flock to. A series of talks enhanced by visits to Ludlow castle for hands-on instruction will tell you everything you need to know about how Ludlow Castle was built and how it developed over the years. Ahead of the event, Society Secretary Philip Hume reflects on our abiding passion for castles and the significance of Ludlow.

For many, an interest in medieval history is rooted in childhood memories of family outings to the ruins of medieval castles and abbeys that dominate our landscape. This is certainly true for me and, I know, for many Society members. As children much of the pleasure came from running around, clambering on stones, climbing dark twisting staircases, and playing hide and seek. Today, my grandson is as captivated as I was, and strides ahead of me to make sure no dragons are lurking around corners!

As we get older, we begin to think about the people who lived in these buildings 500 or 1,000 years ago: who they were; what their lives were like; and how have their thoughts and actions across the centuries shaped our history. These evocative structures are a tangible connection to the people of the past, and thus we are drawn into an abiding interest in medieval history.

Ruined castles also prompt questions about how they were built, given the construction techniques and materials available nearly a 1,000 years ago; how were they designed to withstand and repel attack, and to provide accommodation for the lord and lady, their family, retinues and servants? In what ways did design adapt and change to improve the defensive capabilities of castles in response to the evolving circumstances of their inhabitants over time.

Ludlow – a case study in castle-building

Ludlow Castle is an excellent case study, allowing us to investigate how it was first built and how it evolved across the centuries, particularly as it passed, through marriage into the hands of the Mortimers. It's one of the very few castles that was built in stone from

the outset, when the walls and towers of what are now the inner bailey were built towards the end of the 11th century. Further building stages came later, both to enlarge and enhance the overall size of the castle, and to improve the living accommodation. In the second half of the 12th century, the size of the castle more than trebled when a new curtain wall, complete with towers and a new gatehouse, was built to create a large outer bailey. Over a span of 40–50 years from the end of the 13th and the start of the 14th centuries, the massive accommodation blocks and the Great Hall were built to create the magnificent North Range. This included the Garderobe Tower, built on the instructions of Roger Mortimer (d.1330) that breached the curtain wall on the top of the steep cliff – a fascinating piece of engineering that provided en-suite facilities. Further buildings were constructed in the 16th century, when Ludlow was the base for the Council in the Marches of Wales.



Our castle building conference

Our castle building conference will combine illustrated talks in the Ludlow Assembly Rooms with visits to the castle



Malcolm Hislop

itself, under the expert guidance of our impassioned speakers.

In the morning, Dr Malcolm Hislop, an acknowledged expert on the construction of castles and author of *Castle Builders: Approaches to Castle Design and Construction in the Middle Ages*, will examine early castle building in England, including choosing a site, earthwork construction, water defences, early timber, and stonework.

Professor Matthew Strickland, a leading expert on medieval political and military

history, will put the theory into practice when he sets Ludlow castle within the wider context of the design and function of some of the first Norman stone castles built in the wake of the Conquest. He will discuss how the transformation of the early Norman gatehouse at Ludlow into an imposing great tower or keep in the 12th century relates to important re-interpretations of the nature and purpose



Matthew Strickland

of such great towers. The morning will conclude with a visit to Ludlow Castle to examine more closely its 11th and 12th century buildings.

The afternoon will resume in the Assembly Rooms when Dr Hislop will give a detailed examination of castle planning and building in stone, with particular reference to some of the more

ambitious construction projects of the medieval period.

Then, Dr John Kenyon, a leading expert who has been studying and writing about castles for 50 years or more, will guide us through developments on the north side of Ludlow Castle's inner bailey from the late 13th century onwards, with the domestic ranges that are a hallmark of the castle and amongst the finest in the country. Some comparisons will be made with developments at other sites, particularly in the 14th century. He will also examine the 16th century lodgings in the inner bailey, and touch on relevant buildings in the outer ward. The afternoon will conclude with the second visit to the castle to examine the fantastic buildings of the inner bailey.



John Kenyon

For full details of the programme, and to book tickets, please go to www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk/events.

Usk and the Mortimers

A half-day conference in memory of Society founder, John Grove

The Barn, Usk Castle
Saturday, 9 July



In the last issue of *Mortimer Matters*, we reported the sad death of the Society's founder, John Grove. In celebration of his life and interests, and in recognition of his contribution to our society and to the Friends of Usk Castle of which John was also founder, the two societies have joined forces to present a half-day conference that investigates the Mortimer family's connections with Usk.



Usk and the Marcher Lordships of Gwent
Kirsten Lawton-Smith



The Mortimers and Usk
Connor Williams



History of Usk Castle
Will Davies

Tickets limited – sign up now!

The conference venue at Usk Castle can accommodate only 80 people – 40 from the membership of each society. Tickets are free, but you must register as soon as possible to be assured of your place. If you'd like to attend, please email clive_jupp@msn.com. The Friends of Usk Castle will provide refreshments and a buffet lunch, for which donations will be asked on the day.

The conference will begin at 10am and conclude at 12:30 with lunch followed by a visit to the castle.

Keep the date!

Our summer programme is heating up! Here's a summary of what's in store. By the way, throughout the warmer months our events will be held in person and on location! Some though will be hybrid, which means you can come and join us or tune in live via Zoom.

Full details of all events – and details of how to book – are on our webpage, www.mortimerhistorysociety.org

Saturday, 14 May

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

Twice cancelled because of Covid, this full-day event, hosted in partnership with Radnorshire Society will be held at last in Knighton. It features a great lineup of speakers who will explore the tempestuous relationships between the Mortimers and the princes of Wales. Attend in person or via Zoom. See full details on page 7.

Wednesday, 22 June

Annual Summer Lecture: The Rupture of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy after the fall of ducal Normandy in 1204

Professor Daniel Power, one of the country's most respected medieval historians, examines the aftermath of Normandy's fall – and what it meant for the March. Attend in person or via Zoom.

Saturday, 9 July

Usk and the Mortimers

A free half-day conference with lunch in memory of the Society's founder, John Grove, To be held in The Barn, Usk Castle and in partnership with Friends of Usk Castle, of which John was also the founder. Members only – places limited, so book early! For details see page 10.

Saturday, 30 July

How to Build a Castle

A special full-day conference exploring castle construction and development using Ludlow Castle as a template. Held partly in Ludlow Assembly Rooms and partly in the castle itself, this will be very much a hands-on experience! In-person attendance only. See full details on pages 8-9.

Saturday, 8 October

Autumn Symposium: Castles of Wales and the Marches

A whole day given over to an eclectic range of talks on castles in Wales and the Marches.

Saturday, 3 December

Medieval Christmas

This half-day conference has a festive theme, and examines how Christmas was celebrated during the Middle Ages.

A full-day given over to an eclectic range of talks on castles in Wales and the Marches.

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

Grab your camera!

In 2024 The Mortimer History Society will publish its first ever calendar – and we're launching a photography competition to find the best photographs to illustrate every month of the year. So, grab your camera and get out there!

Think Countryfile calendar, but with a medieval twist. Our competition will find the best 12 photos to illustrate a high quality calendar that will be sold through the Society and in shops. The competition is open now and you have until 28 October this year to take and submit up to three photos.

So, what kind of photos are we looking for? The theme for the competition is The Medieval History of the Welsh Marcher Lordships. We've kept it deliberately broad and open to your personal interpretation. You could focus your lens on historic landscapes, castles, churches, stained glass or effigies – it's really up to you. Just make sure your photos are as stunning as you can make them! The medieval Marcher Lordships ran from the coast of north-east Wales down to the Severn estuary

and along all of South Wales to the coast with Pembrokeshire, so there's plenty of scope!

The competition is open to any Mortimer History Society member, wherever you live in the world, and to any UK resident. But this is a competition for amateur talent, so professional photographers should not enter. The Society committee will select the twelve best photos, which will all appear in the calendar, and one overall winner will win a cash prize of £100!

Good to go? Great! But first, make sure you've got all the details. You'll find everything you need – rules, guidance and entry form – at www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk/photography.

Good luck!



International Winner for Mortimer History Society Essay Prize

For the second time we have an international prize-winner, with a commendatory award in the 2021 Essay Prize granted to Miguel C Fernandes.

Miguel is a PhD student in history at the University of Chicago, specialising in medieval European intellectual and religious history. Miguel completed his BA at Nova University in Lisbon. Interestingly, he also has a BSc in applied mathematics and computation!

His essay is entitled *Diagrams, Poems, Dragons, Puns: the Mortimer visual project in the late 14th Century*. In it, he describes how that imagery used in Mortimer-sponsored documents to support Roger the fourth Earl of March's claim to the throne was aimed at shaping the viewer's perceptions of Mortimer identity and advocated an international kingship project.

A second essay was also commended. Deborah Gentry's *Finding Cornwall in Shropshire: Imaginary landscapes in Rhonabwy's Dream and Fouke Fitz Waryn* examines two important medieval narratives, one Welsh and one Anglo-Norman, and shows how the idea of Cornwall and King Arthur

reflected common concerns for both authors – and on both sides of the Welsh border.

Deborah initially studied classics before qualifying as a solicitor and pursuing a career in the law. Since moving to Ludlow four years ago she has completed an MA in Celtic Studies at the University of Wales, Trinity St David. She is already a member of the Mortimer History Society and you may remember reading her feature about *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* in Issue No.45 of *Mortimer Matters*.

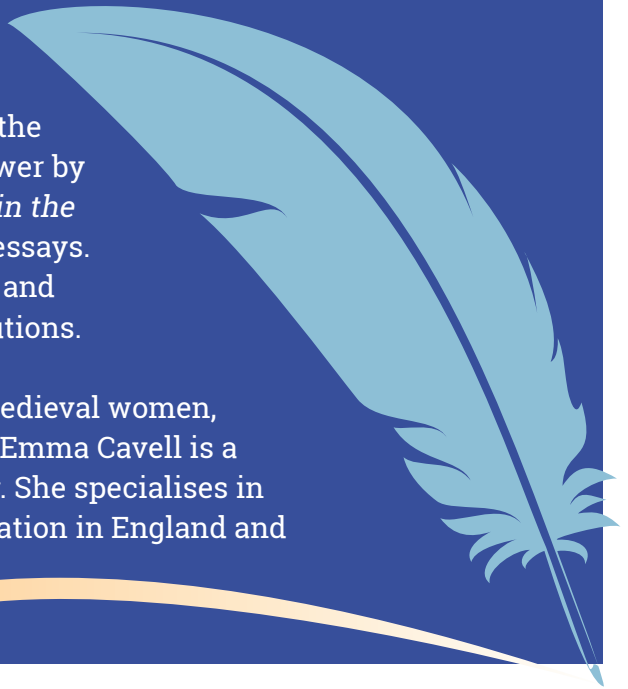
Both essayists will receive free membership of the Society for three years and their essays will be published in the next edition of the Society's Journal. Miguel will also receive £350 in prize money.

Watch out in the next issue of *Mortimer Matters* for details of the 2022 Essay Prize.

Anthology writers...

In just over a year, the Mortimer History Society will mark the 700th anniversary of Roger Mortimer's escape from the Tower by publishing *Dynasty of Destiny: the Mortimers of Wigmore in the Middle Ages, 1066-1485*, an anthology of Mortimer-related essays. Here two of our contributing scholars, Joanna Laynesmith and Emma Cavell, give us an insight into their coming contributions.

Joanna Laynesmith, bestselling author and specialist in medieval women, is a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Reading. Emma Cavell is a Senior Lecturer in Medieval History at Swansea University. She specialises in aristocratic women of the Welsh borderlands, law and litigation in England and Wales, and Jewish women in medieval England.



The Lion and the Hart: the Royal House of York and its Mortimer Inheritance



Joanna Laynesmith

In October 1460, Henry VI's son was disinherited. The king's new heir was Richard Duke of York and the legal justification for this was York's superior line of descent, via his mother, Anne Mortimer, from Edward III. The House of York's Mortimer connections were consequently crucial to justifying Edward IV's usurpation in 1461. The propaganda that accompanied Edward IV's accession celebrated both this recent lineage and the Mortimers' legendary association with King Arthur. Alongside this valuable ideological inheritance, the Mortimer estates across England, Wales and Ireland had been crucial to Richard Duke of York's power and identity, and so to the experiences that brought him into conflict with Henry VI's government. In the hands of his widow, Cecily, and their sons, these Mortimer properties enhanced the influence and opportunities of the Yorkist kings.

Joanna will explore this twofold inheritance, beginning with the Yorkist manuscripts, stained glass, carvings and wax seals that celebrated the legitimacy their Mortimer lineage conferred. The white lion of the earls of March was a favourite emblem, sometimes teamed with a white hart that signified their status as Richard II's heirs. Then she will examine the practicalities of the role the Mortimer estates played in the Wars of the Roses and in Yorkist administration.

Conquest to conquest: Mortimer women, dynastic power and the Welsh frontier c. 1066-1282



Emma Cavell

Emma will take us back to the earliest days of the Mortimer dynasty at Wigmore and trace the family's emergence as one of the leading border families – arguably the premier Marcher family – on the eve of the English conquest of Wales. Yet, while the standard narratives of the Mortimers' frontier greatness revolve around warrior lords and men at war, Emma will place the women in the foreground. Far from acting solely as conduits of land and alliance between men, the women of the Mortimer family, whether they were Mortimers by birth or marriage, were critical to the power of the dynasty at Wigmore.

Across the generations, Mortimer women not only brought to their marriages new land and connections to the great dynasties of the March and *pura Wallia*, but also (among other things) they managed estates and households, garrisoned castles, channelled intelligence within and beyond the borderlands and, ultimately, played a central role in the destruction of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1282. Only when we explore the women's contributions can we really understand the rise of an impressive border family which, in the fourteenth century, stood on the national stage.

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.



Meet the Family – a Mortimer Who’s Who

Interested in Mortimer genealogy? Ever wondered whether there are family links between the various medieval Mortimers? Now you can find out!

Answers to these questions and more can be found in the monumental 112-page *Outline Lineage of the Medieval Mortimer Family* exhaustively researched and developed by our Vice-President Dr Ian Mortimer. Following further study during lockdown, Ian has produced a new edition, which can be accessed via our website – go to ‘The Mortimers’ and choose ‘Genealogies’. Supported by extensive notes and references, this is the place to find all the known family members of the Mortimers of Wigmore from 1054 to 1425, as well as those of their cadet branches:

- Hugh Mortimer (d1273-4), younger son of Ralph Mortimer of Wigmore (d1246) was the founder of the Mortimers of Chelmarsh
- Roger Mortimer (d1326), younger son of Roger Mortimer of Wigmore (d1282) was the founder of the Mortimers of Chirk
- Geoffrey Mortimer (d1372x6), younger son of Roger Mortimer 1st earl of March (d1330) was the founder of the Mortimers of Couhé

Also included are the genealogies of several other, apparently unconnected, Mortimers who were in England in the same period. Some of these, such as the Mortimers of Attleborough and their cadet branches, including the Mortimers of Richards Castle, may actually be descended from the early Wigmore Mortimers, but documentary evidence is lacking - Ian discusses the arguments for and against in detail. Family heraldry only became widespread in England in the mid-12th century so it's not surprising, that any cadet branches formed earlier would have a different coat of arms and Ian has included these different arms in the document. In the list that follows, the Mortimers in each section are definitely related to each other.



Mortimers of Richards Castle



Mortimers of Chelmarsh



Mortimers of Auchinbaddie

The *Outline* includes genealogies of:

- 1a. The Mortimers of Wigmore, Herefordshire
- 1b. The Mortimers of Chelmarsh, Shropshire, and Luton, Bedfordshire
- 1c. The Mortimers of Chirk, Denbighshire, and Tedstone Wafer, Herefordshire
- 1d. The Mortimers of Great Bromley, Essex
- 1e. The Mortimers of Couhé, Poitou
- 2a. The Mortimers of Attleborough, Norfolk, and Kingston, Cambridgeshire
- 2b. The Mortimers of Richard’s Castle, Herefordshire
- 2c. The Mortimers of Bec, Normandy
- 2d. The Mortimers of Preston, Suffolk
- 3a. The Mortimers of Wilsthorpe, Lincolnshire, and Helpston, Northamptonshire
- 3b. The Mortimers of Tholthorpe, Yorkshire, and Eakley, Buckinghamshire
- 3c. The Mortimers of Grendon, Northamptonshire
4. The Mortimers of Ingoldsby and Dunsby, Lincolnshire
5. The Mortimers of Cliffe, Kent
6. The Mortimers of Cuckfield, Sussex
7. The Mortimers of Coedmore, Cardiganshire

The origins of the Scottish Mortimers are discussed in an appendix.

Welcome to new members

Our membership continues to flourish. Fourteen new members have joined since the last edition of *Mortimer Matters* – including a Roger Mortimer! Welcome all! We hope you’re enjoying your membership and look forward to meeting you.

Robert & Jacqui Bebb	Llanidloes	Gwyneth John	Bangor
Don Church	Taunton	Penelope Joy	Ystrad Meurig
Simon Dodd	Wrexham	Hugh Ridgeway	Sherborne
Anthony Holiday	Chester	Graham Shaw	Orleton
Sheila Hall	Montgomery	Barry Spear	Ellesmere
Patricia & Kathy Hughes	Wolverhampton	Karen Spooner	Hereford



Passion and Power in the Marches – Reviewing our February conference

As part of our blended seminar program, the Mortimer History Society met virtually for the first time this year on Saturday 12 February. Turnout, as always, was strong with around 100 people listening to three wonderful papers, each about fascinating families or individuals of the March. *Mortimer Matters* Assistant Editor, Connor Williams, sums up the day.

Our speakers, he says, went into rich detail about the lives of their subjects as well as the passions that drove them to seek and obtain power, not only in Wales and the Marches, but within the kingdom of England, too.



Dr Craig Owen Jones

Dr Craig Owen Jones started the day with an introduction to Gwenwynwyn ab Owain Cyfeiliog, Prince of Powys from 1197 to 1216. Finding himself in the unenviable position of being sandwiched between the traditionally stronger principality of Gwynedd in the west and the militarised Marches in the east, Gwenwynwyn has issues to confront with both of his belligerent neighbours. These included Gwenwynwyn's besiegement at

Welshpool in 1196 by Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury, who headed an army from Gwynedd, and his defeat at Paincastle in 1198, which temporarily thwarted his ambitions. Dr Jones described how, to consolidate his position in Powys, Gwenwynwyn followed a policy of aggrandisement which involved connecting himself to the kings of England; from 1191 he was of the allegiance of Richard the Lionheart, a connection which continued into the early reign of King John who in 1199 confirmed Gwenwynwyn's tenure of his land. It was also potentially under King John's auspices that Gwenwynwyn's marriage to Margaret Corbet was arranged.

Dr Jones argued that Gwenwynwyn's reputation as a "formidable warlord" with the ability to raise large hosts naturally predisposed John to the Prince of Powys who sought to stem the supremacy in North Wales of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, Prince of Gwynedd, otherwise known to history as Llywelyn the Great. The Princes of Powys and Gwynedd were open rivals in this period, as shown by Gwenwynwyn's sponsorship of Maredudd ap Cynan's claim to Elifionydd, as well as his use of the style *princeps Powise* and gradual development of a cash-based economy in Powys in emulation of Llywelyn's own endeavours. Gwenwynwyn reached the zenith of his power in the early 1200s. Between 1200-03 he embarked on multiple military incursions within Deheubarth and the neighbouring Marcher Lordships, as well as narrowly avoiding war with Llywelyn ab Iorwerth. He was also becoming a big deal diplomatically, as in 1204 he sealed an alliance with the earl of Chester, one of the principal lords in England, as well as

providing patronage for Strata Marcella abbey and supporting Gerald of Wales' campaign to make the bishopric of St David's into a metropolitan see.

Gwenwynwyn's prominence quickly faded in 1208 following his seizure of several of William de Briouze's lordships after William himself fell dramatically from grace. This led to King John arresting Gwenwynwyn at Shrewsbury in October 1208, which allowed Llywelyn ab Iorwerth to overrun South Powys in December. Gwenwynwyn never recovered from this setback and, despite being restored to his lands in 1210, he



Melissa Julian-Jones

was eventually forced into exile by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth – by this point his overlord – in 1216 for his adherence to the English. According to Dr Jones, Gwenwynwyn died soon after, probably in Cheshire under the protection of his ally the earl of Cheshire. Dr Jones concluded by supporting Dr David Stephenson's conclusions that Gwenwynwyn was stuck between a rock and a hard place which, while forcing him to negotiate with his strong neighbours, limited his ability to commit to any side for fear of offending someone else.

Dr Melissa Julian-Jones proposed a reconsideration of the definitions of inter-Marcher warfare by using the Corbet family as an investigative case study. Her paper challenged the 'Marcher lords vs Welsh rulers' paradigm by investigating the familial relationships and bonds that existed between these two groups. Her thesis predisposed that these inter-group bonds did much to muddy the socio-political picture of the 13th century Marches, which provided the background for local feuds and violent confrontations at this time. This was certainly the case with Thomas Corbet, 5th Baron of Caus (d.1274), who certainly came across as a cantankerous and belligerent figure. Dr Julian-Jones explored Corbet's dispute with his nephew, Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn, Prince of Powys Wenwynwyn which was eventually converted into the Marcher Lordship of Welshpool (Powys) within his lifetime. This dispute was born over lands that Margaret, brother of Thomas and mother of Gruffydd, had been granted by her father Robert Corbet, probably as part of her dowry. The dispute rumbled on for several years, characterised by intermittent spats of violence and attempts at reconciliation. However, far from being a classic case of 'Marcher lord vs Welsh prince', Gruffydd ended up winning the support of other Marcher lords whom Thomas had also offended, such as the Stranges of Knockin (who were Gruffydd's in-laws), and the FitzWarins of Whittington. Dr Julian-Jones showed how Thomas' dispute provoked not only his secular neighbours but his temporal ones too, resulting in his excommunication for striking one of the Bishop of Coventry's clerics.

Eventually, Lord Thomas found himself surrounded, which led him to seek an alliance with the Mortimers of Wigmore. This would have drastic consequences for Thomas, as it dragged him into the Second Baron's War which was reaching its climax at that time – Lord Mortimer was a staunch royalist, while all of Lord Thomas' enemies were Montfortian, adding a national ponderance to the dispute. Ultimately, Corbet and Mortimer came out on top with Prince Edward's victory at Evesham in 1265. Dr Julian-Jones concluded by posing more questions – when does a feud become a war? Where does the church fit in? What counts as 'intermarcher'? Certainly,



John Fleming

these questions are not only tantalising but important, and can by no means be settled on nationalistic or ethnic lines.

Our final paper was presented by John Fleming, who chose as his protagonist Nest ferch Rhys, sometimes described as the 'Helen of Wales'. Her story itself has enough passion and intrigue to fill an entire conference! John began by outlining the chronology of Nest's life – she was the daughter of Rhys ap Tewdr, the last king of Deheubarth, whose death in 1093 opened up South Wales to conquest by early Norman adventurers in the late 11th and early-12th centuries. While Nest's life was tied firmly to the area which would become

Pembrokeshire after the early Norman conquest, it is suspected she spent most of her early life in England as a ward (or hostage) of William Rufus, King of England. At some point in these formative years, it is suspected she caught the eye of Henry, Rufus' brother and, eventually, king in his own right. Although Fleming challenged the dating of their dalliance, Nest and Henry ended up having an illegitimate child together – Henry FitzHenry.

As a son – albeit illegitimate – of a future king, Henry had a bright future ahead of him and certainly provided more security for Nest. However, Nest's destiny was not just to be a king's mistress. At some point in the early 1100s, she married Gerald de Windsor, constable of Pembroke Castle. This returned Nest to her home country, and with Gerald she founded a dynasty that is still extant today as the FitzGerald Dukes of Leinster. Gerald never had any hope of inheriting Pembroke directly, but as its constable he did build several lesser castles in Pembrokeshire such as Cilgerran and Carew which formed the basis of their family's early patrimony.

Life on the Welsh frontier was never safe, however, as in 1109 Gerald's castle at Carew was raided by Owain ap Cadwgan, a cousin of Nest. In this episode, Gerald was forced to flee while Nest and their children were captured. According to the *Brut*, Owain was infatuated with Nest, leading him to rape her and hold her for several months. Although some sources and historians have speculated Nest was implicated in her own abduction, Fleming instead argued that Nest, a seasoned and pragmatic survivor of Welsh border society, instead used her position to bargain for the release of her children. Eventually, Owain was exiled to Ireland along with his father and killed in 1116 upon his return to Wales by Gerald's men in retribution for this slight.

Nest, while not as militant as either of our previous protagonists, was able to wield power through the men in her life and the passion they held for her. Far from being a bystander, she influenced Pembrokeshire, and even national, society by her presence and actions – leaving lasting implications for Wales and the wider British Isles.

And that's a wrap! Thanks to each of our speakers for enthralling our members with an extremely enticing set of papers. Each presentation can now be viewed on the Society's YouTube channel. Keep the date for our next conference - Murder, Mayhem and Marriage on Saturday 14th May 2022. See page 7 for details.

For your bookshelf

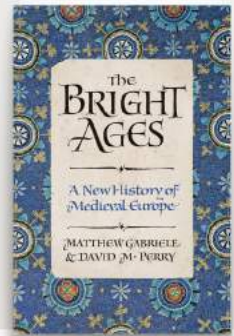
Four titles for spring reading,

The Bright Ages: A New History of Medieval Europe

By **Matthew Gabriele** and **David M Perry**

This new history of the Middle Ages challenges the common misunderstanding of the period as one of darkness, sickness and oppression. It helps us understand that, like all of human history, this was a time marked by beauty, sophistication and communion. The book takes us through ten centuries and crisscrosses Europe, the Mediterranean, Asia and Africa, revisiting familiar people and events to cast them in a new light.

Published by Harper Collins and available from bookstores and your usual online retailers. £20.

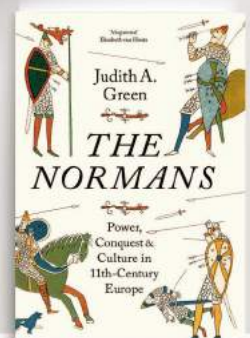


The Normans: Power, Conquest and Culture in 11th Century Europe

By **Judith A Green**

In this new history of Norman expansion, Judith Green challenges old certainties and explores the reality of Norman life across the continent. She reveals the Normans' profound impact, from drastic change in England to laying the foundations for unification in Sicily, to their contribution to the First Crusade. Going beyond the familiar, she looks at personal dynastic relationships and the important part women played in what at first sight seems a resolutely masculine world.

Published by Yale University Press and available from bookstores and your usual online retailers. £25.

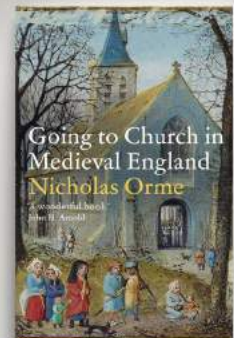


Going to Church in Medieval England

By **Nicolas Orme**

From the Anglo-Saxons to the mid-sixteenth century – an account of what happened in church and how the great festivals and life events from birth to death were celebrated. Engaging, thoughtful and richly illustrated.

Published by Yale University Press and available from bookstores and your usual online retailers. £20.



Creativity, Contradictions and Commemoration in the Reign of Richard II

Edited by **Jessica A Lutkin** and **JS Hamilton**

A series of essays in honour of Nigel Saul, which investigates a reign well known for its political turmoil as well as its literary and artistic innovations.

Buy direct from www.boydellandbrewer.com for £65. Also available in e-book format.

