



MORTIMER *Matters*

From allies to enemies

Author and historian David Pilling examines the relationship between Dafydd Prince of Wales, Edward I and the Marcher lords. And how it ended in tragedy.

On 3 October 1283, in the marketplace at Shrewsbury, Prince Dafydd of Wales was executed with hideous savagery. An English chronicler gave this account of his death:

“Dafydd himself was first drawn as a traitor, then hanged as a thief; thirdly, he was beheaded alive, and his entrails burnt as an incendiary and homicide; fourthly, his limbs were cut into four parts as the penalty of a rebel, and exposed in four of the ceremonial places in England...”

This was done on the orders of King Edward I, known as Longshanks or the Hammer of the Scots, after Dafydd had been convicted of multiple offences at a parliament held in September. The execution of Dafydd effectively marked the end of Welsh independence.

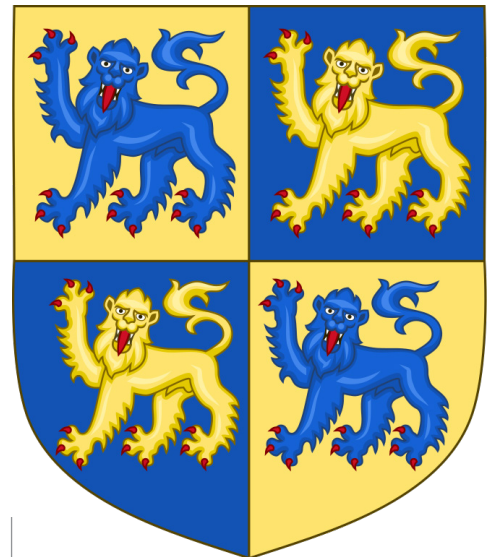
What compelled this unusually brutal punishment? Edward and Dafydd had not always been enemies. Indeed, they were firm allies for almost twenty

years, before the Welsh prince tired of his former paymaster and led the Palm Sunday Revolt in the spring of 1282. During that time Dafydd also forged effective partnerships with several of the Marcher lords, and fought alongside them against Edward's enemies.

Who was this enigmatic Welsh prince?

He was born into the House of Aberffraw, a royal kindred that produced some of the most notable rulers of medieval Wales. His father, Gruffudd, was the eldest son of Prince Llywelyn ab Iorwerth (c.1173-1240) known as Llywelyn the Great. Dafydd, born sometime in the mid-1230s, was the third of four brothers. The two eldest were Owain Goch (Owain the Red) and Llywelyn, the youngest Rhodri.

Dafydd played an uncomfortable role in Welsh politics. Dissatisfied with his share of the inheritance in North Wales, he fought against his brother, Llywelyn, who wished to unite the whole of Wales under his banner. At first defeated,



Lions rampant – Dafydd's coat of arms

Dafydd served Llywelyn loyally for a time, before defecting again and joining the future Edward I in 1263. He would remain the English prince's ally for the next nineteen years.

Allies in war

Edward soon put his new ally to good use. In early 1264 warfare exploded in the Marches of Wales, where the royalists fought for control of vital towns and castles against the followers of Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester. The key town of Gloucester fell to a daring ruse by the Montfortians, who then split their forces. While part of the army under Simon's eldest son, Henry, laid siege to the castle, another split off under Robert de Ferrers, earl of Derby, to sack Worcester.

At this point the alliance of Edward and Dafydd came into play. Edward

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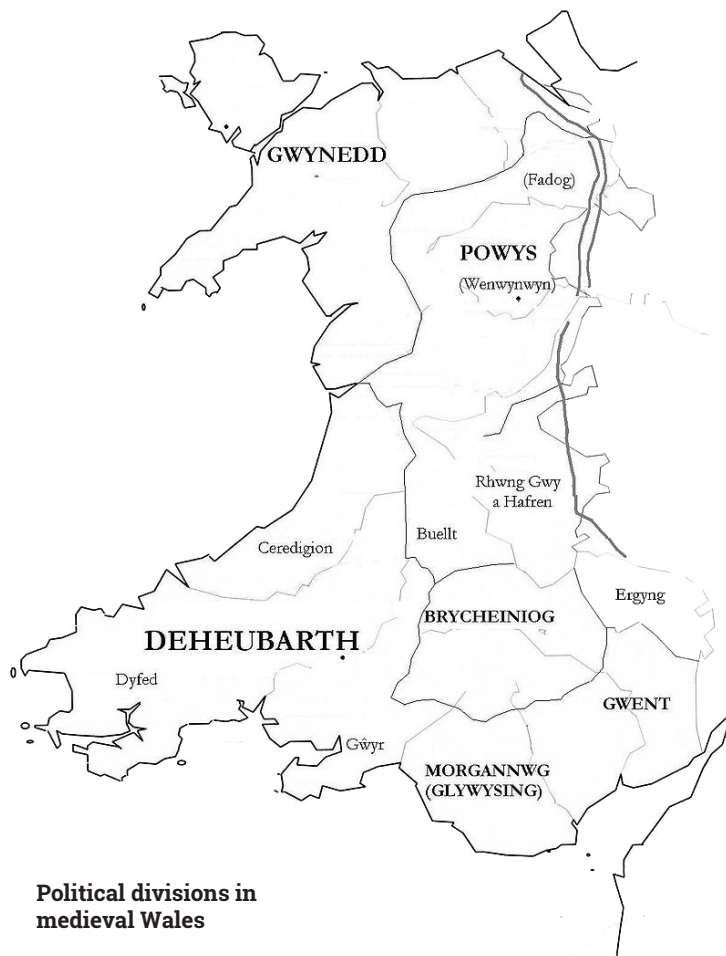
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himself rushed into Brycheiniog to attack Henry de Montfort and his Marcher allies. The rebel barons evaded battle and withdrew, so the prince laid siege to the castles of Huntingdon and Hay, held by Humphrey de Bohun. Once these were taken, he delivered them to his friend Roger Mortimer, lord of Wigmore. Having shored up Mortimer's position, Edward then swung round to relieve the hard-pressed royalist garrison at Gloucester.

To achieve this, it was vital to prevent the Montfortian armies from converging again. Thus, as Edward sped towards Gloucester, Prince Dafydd came storming over the border to attack the Ferrers estates in Staffordshire. He brought with him an army of Cheshire men, co-led by William de la Zouche and James Audley, and was joined by 'many men of Shropshire' commanded by Hamo Lestrangle.

This was an interesting choice of allies. With the exception of Roger Mortimer, most of the Marchers had thrown their weight behind Simon de Montfort, when he returned to England the previous spring. However, their sole concern was to re-affirm their position with Edward, and pressure him into dismissing his hated foreign mercenaries. Once he agreed to do this, the way to conciliation was open. Thus, in August 1263, the Marchers performed a spectacular volte-face and flocked back to Edward's allegiance.



Political divisions in medieval Wales

Dafydd and the Marcher Lords

This in turn enabled Edward and Dafydd to draw upon the military strength of the Marches. The Welsh prince and his new confederates were scarcely natural allies. James Audley, a former sheriff of Shropshire, had gained a formidable martial reputation fighting the Welsh; he would later die

in Ireland of a broken neck after falling from his horse in a skirmish. Hamo Lestrangle, one of the Lestrangle of Knockin in Shropshire, also spent much of his military career fighting his enemies in Wales and the March. William de la Zouche, a slightly more obscure character, can probably be identified with a baron of the same name who fought on the royalist side at the battle of Northampton in April. Along with Mortimer and Audley, he appeared among an impressive phalanx of Marcher barons who held true for the king, Henry III.

However awkward the relations between Dafydd and this band of Marcher lords, their alliance was effective. The combined force first captured the town of Stafford and then stormed the Ferrers castle of Chartley. This was no mean feat, since the castle had been strengthened earlier in the century with a stone keep and curtain walls. At least one prisoner, Geoffrey de Gresley, was taken by the men of Hamo Lestrangle during the assault.

Upon their return, Dafydd and his new friends burnt the town of Stone, to the north of Stafford. This action was timed to coordinate with Edward's first attempt to relieve Gloucester, and might well have been intended to lure Ferrers back from Worcester to defend his lands. The allies continued to pillage his estates, and on 12 March launched a second assault on Stafford. This time they were repelled by a force of barons hastily drawn from the Midlands. In revenge, the allies turned northeast and sacked Eccleshall, where they razed the bishop of Lichfield's castle, plundered churches and took 'many captives and much spoil'.

This destructive sortie served its purpose, and distracted Ferrers just long enough for Edward to come to a hasty truce with the Montfortians at Gloucester. When he heard of it, Ferrers quit the campaign in disgust:

"The earl Robert de Ferrers, when he came hither, he was well-nigh mad for wrath that they had made agreement. He smote his steed with his spur, as did all his company. And turned himself for wrath again, as quick as he might hasten." (Robert of Gloucester).

That was not the end of Dafydd's alliance with the Marchers. He took no part in the fateful battle of Lewes, fought on the Sussex Downs on 14 May, where King Henry and his son Edward were captured. Instead the Welsh prince remained on the Marches, where he, along with Audley and de la Zouche, still offered resistance. Their movements over the summer months are unknown, but in the autumn they attempted to occupy the lordship of Chester. This had belonged to Edward, but was contested by Simon himself as well as Robert de Ferrers.

Ferrers now had his revenge. In November, after seizing Nottingham, he collected a large army and marched on Chester to confront Dafydd and his allies. When the two sides lined up for battle, the Marchers were struck by a wave of panic and fled without striking a blow. Over a hundred were killed or captured in the pursuit, while only one of the earl's men was wounded. Dafydd and his fellow commanders escaped, but could take no further action.

Almost a year later, on 14 August 1265, the tables were emphatically turned at Evesham, where Simon and his army were obliterated. Several of the Marchers fought at the battle, but Dafydd's presence is uncertain: Simon had recently packed him off to distant Northumberland, and he only appears again at the siege of Kenilworth in the summer of 1266.



Dafydd ap Gruffudd dragged to his death in Shrewsbury
(Chronica Roffense, ©British Library Board, Cotton Nero Ms D.ii, f.182r)

In the following year, 1267, Dafydd was formally reconciled with his brother Llywelyn via the treaty of Montgomery. Relations between the two remained difficult, however, and within a few years they were at loggerheads again. In 1274, while Edward was abroad, Dafydd entered into a conspiracy to assassinate Llywelyn and proclaim himself Prince of Wales. The plot failed, and Dafydd and his co-conspirator Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, a lord of Powys, were forced to flee into England.

Upon his return, Edward used the fugitives as political leverage against Llywelyn, who had refused to pay homage and fealty to the new king. There was no immediate slide into conflict, but in 1276 war finally broke out between England and the principality. Dafydd served in the royal army at the head of two hundred men, and fought alongside the earl of Warwick in North Wales. When Llywelyn surrendered to the king, in November 1277, Dafydd had the satisfaction of being granted lands in Gwynedd and Anglesey. However, Edward ruled that these would only come to Dafydd after Llywelyn's death. The king's ally was obliged to wait for his inheritance.

Dafydd prospered in other ways. In addition to lands in Wales, he was granted the manor of Frodsham in Cheshire. He also acquired further estates by his marriage to Eleanor de Ferrers, a wealthy noblewoman. As an extra gift, Edward granted Dafydd funds to build a castle at Caergwrlle in Hopedale, the last castle built in Wales by a native prince.

The road to destruction

On the surface, Dafydd had little to complain of. All he had to do was wait for his older brother to die, and everything would fall into his lap. Yet there were problems. In 1281 he became embroiled in a lawsuit against an Englishman, William Venables, who brought an action against him in the Cheshire county court. Venables claimed Edward had granted him the lands of Hope and Estyn in 1277. An inquisition found that these lands were in Wales, not Cheshire, but Venables pressed his case anyway. Frustrated, Dafydd made a dramatic appearance at the hearing. In a loud voice, he placed the disputed lands 'in the peace of God and the king', and then stormed out.

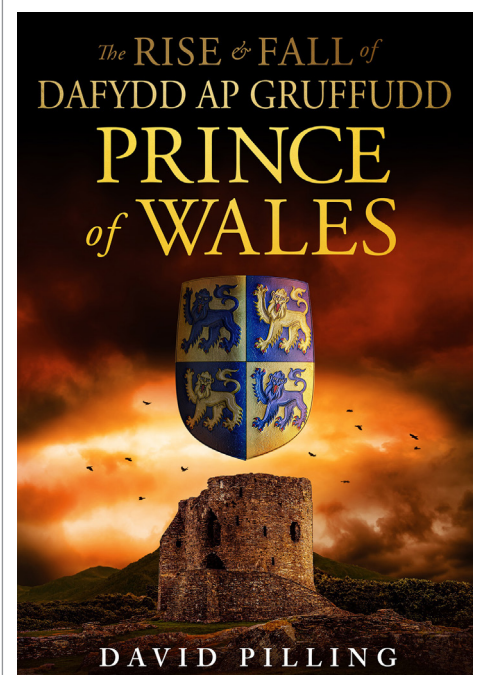
Dafydd later claimed other grievances. He protested that when he had first done homage to Edward in 1263, he was promised lands held by his aunt Gwenllian de Lacy, after her death. Instead, these had been retained by the king. Further, the justiciar of Chester had allegedly taken timber from Dafydd's woods at Lleweni and Hope, which he had no right to do, and sold it off. Dafydd claimed he had not seen a penny of the profits. He had also, he alleged, been warned of a threat to seize him or his sons as hostages.

These private grievances may have combined with more general concerns about the state of Wales and the oppressive behaviour of Edward's administrators. The king himself seems to have been blissfully unaware of the growing discontent and had turned to other affairs in England and France.

While the royal back was turned, Dafydd made contact with other disaffected Welsh lords and planned the conspiracy that would burst into open revolt in spring 1282. In doing so, he took the first step on the road to Shrewsbury and his execution.

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 2021 and his account of the life of Dafydd, Prince of Wales, published last month. See our bookshelf review on page 16.



Floored! Mortimer treasures underfoot in Worcestershire church

The trustees of the Mortimer History Society recently paid a visit to the beautiful 12th century church of St Giles in Bredon, Worcestershire. There they saw a fascinating collection of 14th century heraldic floor tiles. Society Chairman and heraldry enthusiast Hugh Wood investigates.



The heraldic tiles at Bredon are decorated with the coats of arms of many important medieval families. Several of these display variations of the Mortimer arms, suitably differenced to identify brothers and sons of the head of the household. The importance of this collection lies in the fact that some of these variations don't seem to occur anywhere else, nor do they appear in contemporary rolls of arms.

By the end of the 15th century, a standard system had been introduced for differencing a coat of arms for cadency. The eldest son added a label to his father's arms, which he removed when he, himself, became the head of the family. The second son added a crescent, the third a mullet (or star) and the fourth a martlet, which is a heraldic bird like a swallow. Before this 'modern' system was introduced, however, families had complete freedom over the method they used to difference their arms for cadency. Typically, a simple geometric shape would be added to the normal arms as for William Mortimer, or a charge of some sort, such as the added rampant lion in Roger Mortimer's coat of arms. Or, in some cases the colours are altered. As we can see, the Mortimers of Chelmarsh swapped blue for red.



William Mortimer
(died 1297)

Roger Mortimer
(died before 1324)

The Mortimers of Chelmarsh

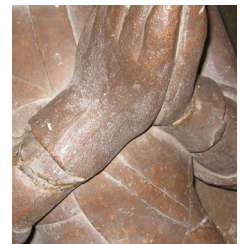
These cadency differences seldom survived for more than a generation or so, and it's often impossible to identify the person to whom they belonged. A similar difference to that on the shield of William Mortimer appears in a late 14th century document, attributed there to an unknown Ralph Mortimer. This difference also appears on a tile at Bredon and, interestingly, on an effigy in the church in Montgomery, Powys. All three of these representations appear to date from around the same period. But difference marks were re-used from time to time, so we're left with some interesting questions. Do all three relate to the same person? If so, was he actually called Ralph? There is no record of such a person, so who was he? Could the attribution to 'Ralph' be a mistake?



Ralph Mortimer?
William Jenyns'
Ordinary



A 14th century floor
tile, Bredon



Effigy of a
Mortimer Knight,
Montgomery, Powys

The reference 'bible' for medieval heraldry is the 4-volume *Dictionary of British Arms* (DBA). In it, thousands of documents and seals in libraries, museums and other collections have been carefully studied and catalogued. But, helpful though the DBA is, the compilers were unable to include all of the medieval coats of arms existing in churches across the country. So neither the Bredon tiles nor the Montgomery effigy are listed. Of course, this would not be much of a problem if all the arms in churches were duplicates of ones in DBA, but this is not the case. The Mortimer tiles at Bredon include two which have cadency differences not recorded in DBA. It is possible that there are duplicates of these tiles elsewhere but, if so, I haven't come across them yet.

Here they are.

Difficult to make out, but on the central escutcheon there appears to be a bird with raised wings – an eagle displayed?



On the central escutcheon on the shield on the left, is the top half of a lion rampant which, significantly, also appears on the arms of Joan de Geneville (d1356), the wife of Roger Mortimer (d1330) 1st earl of March, also at Bredon (right). Is this demi-lion an allusion to her?



This strange-looking tile can be described as either a Mortimer coat of arms surrounded by an ermine border, or an ermine shield with a Mortimer escutcheon placed in the middle. This coat of arms does appear in DBA as it occurs on the 'Boroughbridge' Roll of 1322, where it is attributed to Sir Thomas Blaunfront.

It's not the only Mortimer-related coat of arms on that heraldic roll, as Sir Hugh Turpington also placed a Mortimer escutcheon in the centre of his shield. By including the Mortimer arms on their shields, these knights appear to be showing their close affinity to the rebellious, and recently-imprisoned, Roger Mortimer (d1330).

If any of you feel tempted to visit St Giles in Bredon your visit will be well rewarded. The tiles aside, this is a beautiful historic church. It's open daily from 10am to 4pm. This changes to 10am to 3pm after the clocks go back in October. Here's the address: Church Street, Bredon, Worcestershire L20 7LE

Mortimer History Society Essay Prize 2022 Now open for entries!

The Essay Prize goes from strength to strength and we're delighted to confirm that entries are now open for the 2022 competition.

The competition welcomes essays that relate to:

- Any aspect of the history, geo-politics, topography, laws, economy, society and culture of the medieval borderlands, including comparative studies, between 1066 and 1542.
- Or...
- Any aspect of the medieval Mortimer family of Wigmore, including its cadet branches and its impact on the history and culture of the British Isles.

And, of course, anyone can enter.

There will be a first prize of £750, a second prize of £300 and a third prize of £200. Also, this is a great opportunity to have your work published in next year's academic journal if you're selected by our esteemed judges led by Chris Given-Wilson, Emeritus Professor of Medieval History at the University of St. Andrews.

The closing date for entries is 1 March 2023. Further details about the prize and entry requirements can be found at www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk.

FROM YOUR EDITOR

Hello!

It's so great to be having in-person events again – now if we could only have a little more sunshine! There's lots still to look forward to, including our deep dive into the castles of Wales and the Marches in October. One of our speakers, Chris Jones-Jenkins has given us a wonderful introduction to the fascinating world of castle reconstruction to whet our appetites! See page 8 for this and page 11 for a list of all of upcoming events for the rest of the year.

Thanks to everyone who has submitted great features for this issue. Having been to Bredon church myself I found Hugh's expose of its heraldic floor tiles fascinating – read all about then go along and visit for yourself! And we have introductions to two fascinating – though very different – characters in this issue; the contentious and tragic Dafydd, Prince of Wales, and Edmund of Cornwall, who was Edward I's regent. Thanks to

David Pilling and Michael Ray respectively for those.

And lots of news from your Society, including exciting new developments at Wigmore Castle and the revival of our Schools Programme. It's great to see what a positive impact we can have in our communities.

We'd love to hear what you think about *Mortimer Matters*. Why not drop me a line at mm@mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk to let me know your thoughts and any suggestions for improvement? And, remember, this is your newsletter 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 October and will start planning in soon, so please get in touch with your ideas quickly!

Power behind the throne? Edward I's Regent Revealed

Society member Michael Ray's first book is a fascinating account of the life of Edmund earl of Cornwall – friend, defender and regent of Edward I. Here he gives us the briefest of introductions to this fascinating man's eventful career.

Edmund of Almain was born at Berkhamsted castle during Christmas 1249. His father was Richard of Cornwall, the only brother of Henry III. His mother was Sanchia of Provence, whose sister was the wife of Henry III. Another sister was Queen of France. He had an eventful childhood. In 1257, his father was elected King of the Romans (hence the soubriquet Almain). Edmund visited Germany several times. When the second Barons' War broke out in 1264, Edmund was with his father and they were both captured following Simon de Montfort's victory at Lewes on 5 May. Both were imprisoned for over a year in three different castles. While they were at Wallingford castle, a determined attempt was made to release their fellow prisoner, Edmund's cousin, the Lord Edward, Henry III's elder son and heir. This was only aborted when the garrison threatened to send Edward over the walls from a mangonel. When Edward later escaped from Hereford, Montfort had Edmund and his father put in irons. They were not released until September 1265, a month after the defeat and death of Montfort.

In 1269 Edmund was again in Germany when his sixty-year-old father remarried the fifteen-year-old Beatrice von Falkenburg. When the Lord Edward went to join his uncle, Louis IX of France, on crusade, Edmund and his older half-brother, Henry of Almain, went with him. On their arrival in Tunis in November 1270, they discovered that Louis had died. Early in the following year, the brothers were given the task of escorting his dead body home. When they reached Viterbo in Italy, Henry of Almain, whilst at mass, was dragged from church and stabbed to death by two of Montfort's sons.

The richest man in England

Henry's of Almain's murder, which shocked Europe, followed by the death of Edmund's father in April 1272, totally changed Edmund's future. At just twenty-one, he became the richest man in England; the owner of thirteen castles and 800 manors in 27 counties stretching from Cornwall to Yorkshire. He had control of two large forests, Dartmoor and Knaresborough, and at least 38 parks.



During his lifetime, he received over 100 wardships, which meant that he could use the income of his under-age wards. This extended his land holdings into counties such as Cumberland and added more parks. In addition Edmund had control of the profitable tin mining industry in Cornwall and Devon. His income which, unlike that of the King, he could use as he wished, totalled over £8,000 a year (nearly £6 million in today's money). He was so wealthy he could afford to lend the King at least £24,000 (£17.5 million) and private individuals, £15,500 (£10.6 million).

Soon after his father's death, Edmund was knighted and made earl of Cornwall. He was married to Margaret, the sister of the powerful earl of Gloucester, Gilbert de Clare. Although there is evidence that she was pregnant at least once, the marriage was childless and, in 1289, Edmund began the protracted process of obtaining a legal separation, which was finalised in 1294.

Supporter of the Crown

As soon as Edmund became earl, he established himself as an ever-reliable support to the new king, his cousin Edward I. He witnessed the first of 230 royal charters in 1275. When the first Welsh war broke out in the summer of 1277, Edmund joined Edward's army in North Wales with 15 knights, the largest comital retinue. In 1279 he acted as regent for the King for a short period. When the second Welsh War started in 1282, Edmund was tasked with the supervision of the government in London. He never served in war again but he did attend the parliament and trial of Dafydd ap Gruffydd at Acton Burnell in 1283.

When Edward I left England for what was to be a three-year stay in Gascony in May 1286, Edmund became Regent.



Berkhamsted Castle, Hertfordshire, Edmund's birthplace

He was hampered in this task because the King took many of his experienced clerks with him. A year later, a serious rebellion began in South Wales. Rhys ap Iaredudd, a former ally of the King, made significant gains and captured a number of castles. Edmund took his responsibility very seriously and assembled and secured the finance for a large host that put down the rebels.

Support in hard times

The King relied on Edmund for more than money and loyal service. When in deep mourning for the death of his Queen, Eleanor, he spent the following month and held a parliament at Edmund's home at Ashridge. Ashridge was the seat of a new religious order, the Bonhommes, which Edmund had introduced into England. In addition, Edmund founded Rewley Abbey, Oxford which was associated with scholarship. He also rebuilt and extended the fire-damaged Hailes Abbey. When only eighteen, he had acquired the Holy Blood relic from Trifels Castle in Germany. He gave this to Hailes Abbey where it drew many pilgrims. In all, Edmund is known to have made at least 75 benefactions to 44 religious institutions.

Edmund was, of course, a direct contemporary of both Roger and Edmund Mortimer. He disputed lands in Rutland and Essex with Roger Mortimer and witnessed royal charters with Edmund Mortimer on seven occasions in 1286.



About the author

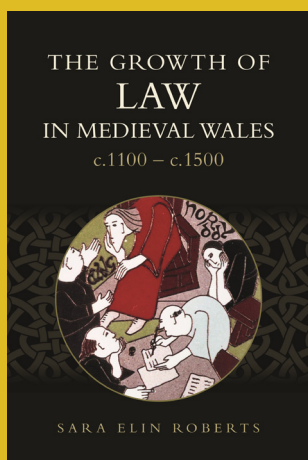
About the author: Michael Ray was born in Chester and educated in Shropshire before going to King's College, London where he read geography. After a town planning diploma, he pursued a career in planning, ending as Hove Borough Council's last Chief Executive. In the 1960s, he worked for Herefordshire County Council and Wigmore was on his patch. On retirement, he returned to King's and received a PhD. Since then, he has published in books, learned journals and on websites. *Edward's Regent* is his first book.

Society members can buy *Edward's Regent* at a 25% discount from www.pen-and-sword.co.uk (RRP £25). Just enter the code **EDMUND** when purchasing. Offer applies to this and all Pen and Sword books until 31 August 2022.



Book Launch: The Growth of Law in Medieval Wales c1100 to c1500

The Mortimer History Society and Boydell & Brewer join forces to launch Sara Elin Roberts' ground-breaking study of the lawbooks written in the changing social and political climate of post-conquest Wales.



Edward I's 1282 conquest of Wales brought major changes to society, governance, power, identity and, of course, law. Despite this, in the post-conquest period the development of law in Wales and the March flourished, and many manuscripts and law books were produced.

Sara's book is the first to reappraise the entire corpus of law manuscripts since Aneurin Owen's seminal 1841 work. It begins by considering the background to the creation

of the law from c1100 onwards, before turning to the golden age of law-making in 13th century Gwynedd.

Describing the book - and its significance - Sara says, "This book questions long-held assumptions about the old Welsh law books. Eschewing the viewpoints and preconceptions

of past editors, I've striven to get back to what the original medieval writers and compilers of the manuscripts might have had in mind. Each manuscript," she argues, "deserves to be viewed in its own right, in its own context and freed of the constraints of later ideas."

Join us on Zoom

The launch of *The Growth of Law in Medieval Wales c1100 to c1500* will take place via Zoom at 7pm on Thursday, 8 September. Zoom joining details will be sent to all members in advance. Attendance is free and all are welcome. Society Secretary Philip Hume will introduce Sara, who will then reveal the real driving forces behind the development of Welsh law. "I'm thrilled to be launching the book to Mortimer History Society members," says Sara. The influence of the March - its society and legal situation - was profound in this period, and is a strong thread through the book."

Sara's book is available to purchase at www.boydellandbrewer.com for the special price of £35 for Mortimer History Society members. Just use the code BB063 when placing your order. Offer valid from 31 July to 30 September 2022.

Castles in the air?

“Absolutely not,” says architect and castle reconstructionist Chris Jones-Jenkins. The castles he recreates are firmly grounded in reality, informed by an architect’s expert eye and a lifetime spent examining the form and function of historic buildings.



In his youth, Chris set out to become an architect and qualified from the Welsh School of Architecture in 1978. He describes his studies as a mistake. “I found I wasn’t much interested in designing housing estates and industrial units,” he says. “I was much more excited by architectural history.”

There weren’t a lot of relevant jobs around at the time, so Chris’ career aspirations seemed doomed to disappointment. Not so. After graduating, he took a temporary assignment at the then Welsh Folk Museum at St Fagan’s, now the National History Museum of Wales. “They had a lot of buildings that had been removed from their original locations and painstakingly rebuilt on the museum site,” he explains. “But they had never been properly recorded and there were no plans, elevations or drawings that could be used in guidebooks or retained for posterity.” So, that became his work for two years – taking rescued historic buildings apart on paper and showing exactly how they worked.

His career as a reconstructionist had begun. When the St Fagans project came to an end, he considered taking a further degree in vernacular architecture, but instead, he took another temporary job, that ended up lasting 29 years, in local government. That meant surveying footpaths by day, but by night and in his free time, he worked freelance first for Cadw and later for English Heritage creating images of the historic buildings – castles more often than not – in their care. These days, the local government job is gone and reconstruction drawings of historic buildings have become the day job. He should be retired by now, but the lure of one more exciting project, and then another, keeps him at his desk.

“I like to design buildings from the ground up,” he says. He begins by looking at what remains of a building, plus any documentation – old descriptions or drawings that still exist – and works from there. His designs are based on sound architectural principles rather than artistic or romantic fantasy. “I’m at least as much fascinated by how castles worked as by what they looked like,” he says. “So I’ll give you a castle that’s as close to the working original as my skills can make it.” His castles are functional, practical, and anything but romantic.

From the ground up

At our Society’s symposium on 8 October (which is all about the castles of Wales and the March – see page 10 for details) Chris will talk about one of his most demanding reconstruction projects. Thanks to extensive quarrying, almost nothing of Holt Castle in Denbighshire survives. “Just a raised stub of ground with a bit of wall on top, really,” says Chris. And yet, from this, he has created a full 3D model that shows everything about the castle and how it appeared before being all but lost to sight – from its spacious hall and great chamber to its functional water gate, store rooms and kitchen. In October he’ll explain to us exactly how he did it, suffice to say for now that it was a piece of architectural detective work that drew on centuries-old descriptions and a careful examination of the castle and its site.



Recreation of Holt Castle, Denbighshire

These days he does very little work for national heritage organisations. These days he’s busy with smaller concerns and private individuals, many of whom have historic buildings and castles in their care and want to know more about how they looked and functioned. In 2019 he undertook a re-construction of Ludlow Castle’s 12th century Magdalene Chapel. Next, only slightly diverted by interpretations of some of South Wales’ industrial archaeology, he’s working on a castle project on the Gower Peninsula.



The chapel at Ludlow Castle

View a video of Chris’ reconstruction of Holt Castle at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wv_sHru_OGO – then join us on 8 October to hear the full story.

Celebrating John Grove

On Saturday 9 July members of the Society and of Usk Castle Friends met to commemorate the life of John Grove, founder of both organisations and passionate history enthusiast, who died six months ago and is missed by so many.

A passionate sharing of his enthusiasm for history was a defining hallmark of John Grove's life. So what better way to commemorate and celebrate him than coming together in one of his favourite places to discover more of its story?

Thanks to Will Davies of Cadw and Society members Kirsten Lawton-Smith and Connor Williams for excellent presentations on Usk's castle, lordship and Mortimer connections. Thanks also to the Usk Castle Friends, who provided a most excellent lunch and refreshments, and to the Humphreys family, owners of Usk Castle, who made us so welcome.

The first presentation of the day was given by Will Davies of Cadw, who talked about the development of Usk Castle from an earth and timber fortress established by Anglo-Norman lords during the conquest, to a comfortable baronial residence of the late medieval period and, eventually, one of the most romantic ruins in any garden. Next up was Kirsten Lawton-Smith, who described how the Usk's strategic position and economic potential meant it was much sought after by the Welsh, the Normans, the Marcher lords and their widows. Usk became part of the much-contested inheritance of Elizabeth de Burgh. Connor Williams then went on to describe how Usk came into the Mortimer family in 1360 as part of the de Burgh inheritance, eventually passing to the House of York and the Crown in the mid-15th century. The Mortimers considered Usk an important lordship and instituted major building works at the castle during the early 1380s

All three presentations are now available to view on the Society website.



View of Usk from the castle's garrison tower, to which we were allowed privileged access for the day. Much of the town's medieval pattern remains. In view is Usk's beautiful church, originally the church of a Benedictine nunnery founded by Richard de Clare, second earl of Pembroke in the 12th century.



The sun was shining on one of the hottest days of the year so far as we toured Usk Castle with Will Davies of Cadw. His fascinating introduction to the castle's construction and development over time was enlightening. I think we all agreed we'd like to take him on every castle visit in future!



Making new friends between our two societies was one of the highlights of the day – and lunch was delicious too!



Usk Castle's Norman keep, much changed and remodelled by successive generations of Lords of Usk.

Castles of Wales and the Marches

Our Autumn Symposium will be held in Ludlow's Assembly Rooms on Saturday, 8 October. And it's not to be missed!

We're giving you another opportunity to indulge your passion for castles. We've brought together some great castle experts to talk about the design, structure and use of these magnificent structures. From the building of Edward I's great royal castles, to the modern-day reconstruction of ruinous remains. We'll look at how castles were created, lived in and used as images of power and dominance.



Raglan, one of the UK's finest medieval secular buildings

Our castle experts...



Raglan Castle

John Kenyon has been studying castles for fifty years and is widely published on the subject. He'll introduce us to Raglan, one of the UK's finest medieval secular structures. He'll guide us through its history – from defensive structure to fine country house – and its destruction in the civil war.



Edward I's castles in Wales

Dr Andy King, a lecturer in history at the University of Southampton with a particular interest in warfare and castles. He'll discuss the military and political functions of these UNESCO recognised structures and the use of deliberate historical symbolism in their design and situation. How innovative were they? And were they the work of a single architectural mastermind?



The royal castles of Edward I and the English control of North Wales

Dr Jeremy Ashbee, Head Properties Curator for English Heritage, examines how well Edward I's royal castles, including Conwy, Harlech, Caernarfon and Beaumaris performed in the century after their construction. Were they really the principal centres of English government in Wales, or did they serve more practical purposes?



Castrum Leonis Roars Again: Reconstruction of Holt Castle, Denbighshire

Chris Jones-Jenkins architect and specialist in castle reconstruction, will talk us through the visual reconstruction of Holt Castle, from barely surviving ruins to a fully realised three-dimensional model, utilising detailed analysis of surviving medieval documents to put flesh on the scant remains.

Indulge your passion for castles

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! For details of ticket prices and to reserve your place, please go to www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk/events.

MHS supports restored access at Wigmore Castle

Wigmore Castle is central to the history of the Mortimers – their ancestral home for over 350 years. Now an evocative ruin, access to its mound has been closed since 2019. But that's about to change, thanks to your society working in partnership with English Heritage.

A romantic ruin, the site of Wigmore Castle is privately owned but in the care of English Heritage, which is responsible for its upkeep. The access route to the mound had followed a direct but steep line up timber steps which, over time, became slippery and began to crumble. When a visitor slipped, was injured and sued English Heritage, the decision was taken to close the access and remove the steps. Although discussions had begun in 2019 about reinstating the access, everything was delayed when Covid intervened.

Towards the end of 2021, Society secretary, Philip Hume, resumed discussions with English Heritage, which have now borne fruit. Initially, the discussions centred on whether it was possible to identify what the original medieval access route would have been. We concluded that there is no definitive answer, but the most likely route was indeed the steep direct line from the Great Hall, which the removed access steps followed. There was agreement, though, that it would be best if a less steep, more gradual, access could be created to make it easier for people to reach the keep without too much effort! However, despite this happy resolution, no funding had yet been allocated.

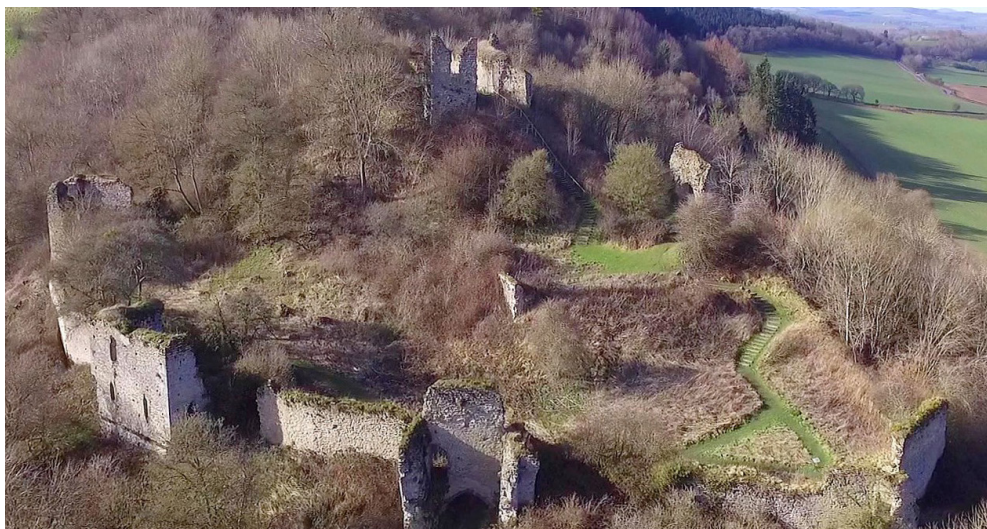
At the end of March this year, Society Chair, Hugh Wood, and Philip Hume met on-site at Wigmore Castle with senior managers from English Heritage, and a representative

from Wigmore Parish Council. Our purpose was to identify whether the topography of the site permitted an alternative access route. The meeting started with the great news that, in part due to the lobbying of your Society, English Heritage has now allocated to Wigmore £30,000 in its 2022-23 budget with a further £20,000 in its 2023-24 budget, meaning that a £50,000 scheme can go ahead in spring 2023, spanning the two financial years.

In preparation for the meeting, English Heritage had cleared a large amount of brambles and scrub to allow better access to assess the viability of an alternative route. We concluded that a more gradual curved access line should indeed be possible. However, more scrub needs to be cleared before a scheme can be fully designed and costed. Unfortunately, that can't happen until August or September, as such work isn't permitted during the bird nesting season. But, once that's done, it'll be all systems go!

The current plan is to clear the remaining scrub this autumn so that the new access route can be designed and costed. Work to create the route will then begin in Spring 2023, with the aim to have it officially opened before the key date of 1 August, the 700th anniversary of Roger Mortimer's daring escape from the Tower of London!

We'll keep you apprised of the work as it progresses.



Wigmore Castle. The steep steps are right of centre at the top of the picture. © Paul R Davis

KEEP THE DATE!

Our event programme is heating up! Here's a summary of what's in store through summer and into autumn. 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, 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.

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.

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

Anthology writers...

Just a year to go until we 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*. This anthology of Mortimer-related essays will be revealed to the world at a very special event at the Tower of London. Here two of our contributing scholars, Andy King and Patrick McDonagh, give us an insight into their coming contributions.

Andy King is a lecturer in medieval history at the University of Southampton and a tutor at the Department of Continuing Education at Oxford University. Patrick McDonagh is a fourth-year PhD student at Trinity College Dublin, researching the transnational Mortimer Lordship of the late 14th century.



Andy King

The Mortimers at War

Andy will examine the military careers of the Mortimers during the 150-year period of England's conflicts with Scotland and France, which began with Edward I's invasion of Scotland in 1296. The Mortimers served the king in these endeavours but also had a vested interest in campaigning to defend the king's lordship of Ireland, where their estates came under threat, first from the Gaelic Irish and later from the Scots.

However, the Mortimers also waged war against kings of England: they owed their rank as earls to their involvement in a military campaign against Edward II and, later, Edmund Mortimer became entangled in Owain Glyn Dwr's revolt.

Andy will show how, in the late Middle Ages, the interaction of war, military service and politics could bring a noble family like the Mortimers both social advancement and political disaster, and how military service could provide a route back from the wilderness.



Patrick McDonagh

The Mortimer Affinity in Ireland in the late 14th Century

Patrick's essay takes a deep dive into 14th century Britain's greatest transnational lordship – the earldom of March and Ulster, ruled over by the Mortimers. The Mortimer's Irish possessions assured them primacy among the colonial aristocracy. Nonetheless, they were primarily absentee lords, dogged by long minorities that threatened to undermine their lordship in Ireland. Patrick will examine one instrument of Mortimer authority in Ireland, particularly relevant in light of their frequent status as either absentee or child earls; the affinity. The affinity was the amorphous body of officials, servants, local tenantry, and other agents who could be relied upon to exert the authority of the earls. Such a body was fundamental to the exercise of lordship at a distance. The composition of this group and its activities will be the focus of Patrick's analysis.

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.

Photo competition

Entries are already pouring in for The Mortimer History Society's first ever photo competition. You've got until 28 October to submit your entries!

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 theme for the competition is The Medieval History of the Welsh Marcher Lordships. We're looking for 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.



Welcome to new members

Welcome to new members Our membership continues to flourish. Twenty 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.

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Flora Altin | Fownhope | David and Tanya Parkes | Presteigne |
| Paul Astin | Llandudno | Barry Spear | Ellesmere |
| Juliet Barnes | Pontypool | Elizabeth Sutherland | Much Wenlock |
| Philip and Isabel Bustin | Tenbury Wells | David and Jean Thomson | Hereford |
| Miguel da Cruz Fernandes | Portugal | Hugh Walters Ridgeway | Sherborne |
| Peter and Trish Haywood | Colwall | Doric Tong | Petersfield |
| Gillian Hollow | Twickenham | Gerald West | Bridgnorth |
| Michael Mortimer | Gauteng, South Africa | William Zajac | Caerphilly |

Getting down with the kids

The Society's Schools Programme is back at full throttle after Covid delays.
Philip Hume and Kathy Cowell report.

Having been forced to cancel in 2020 and 2021, it's been brilliant to complete the full schedule for the first time since 2019.

There are now fourteen primary schools involved in the programme from south Shropshire, north Herefordshire, and north-west Worcestershire, though the smaller schools with mixed age classes participate in alternative years.

The schools deliver some of the sessions themselves – such as daily

life in the Middle Ages, castles (which can include geography as well as design technology), illuminated letter writing and a local study. Whilst others are delivered in school by members of the Society. This year, Hugh Wood gave lessons on heraldry; Mike Beazley instructed pupils in some schools on the life of a medieval hunter or man at arms based at Ludlow Castle, whilst in others he gave insights into the life of a Ludlow Palmer, pilgrim or a Franciscan Friar. Kathy Cowell gave lessons on using street maps to learn about the medieval history of an area or town.

But the highlight of the programme is our Living History Day at Ludlow Castle attended by all the participating children from each school. It was held this year on 15 June, and in perfect weather – dry, blue skies, but not too hot. Over three hundred children from eight schools enjoyed and learned from a fun-packed agenda of activities designed to give them an insight into the lives of medieval people.

On arrival the children were met by the Lord of the Castle, Joce de Dinan, and his friar (accompanied by a man-at-arms)



An armed challenge



The dance master

and welcomed into the Castle where they were assigned to a spectacle of activities that they completed in rotation.

The Constable of the Castle gave the children a guided tour of the buildings in the Inner Bailey, while the Lady of the Castle showed them the kind of foodstuffs available in medieval times. She also showed off a range of needles and pins used in making and fastening clothes. In addition, the children were instructed in courtly dances by a master of the most fashionable 13th century steps.

The children met an archer who showed them longbows and arrows of the type that enabled the English to win at Crecy and Agincourt. They were also instructed in medieval healthcare and were made aware of the need to check their four humours: blood, black bile, yellow bile and phlegm. Thankfully there was no intervention necessary!

A visit to the man-at-arms enabled them to get their hands on weapons and armour that were essential for any soldier preparing for battle. Lunchtime started with an exhibition of medieval dancing, which was rudely interrupted when a fully armoured knight clamoured for entrance to the castle. The knight had come to demand the release of his comrade, Hugh Mortimer, who was imprisoned there. The Lord of the Castle

robustly refused, which led to combat between his man-at-arms and the armoured knight. Eventually, it was agreed that the knight would return with a ransom to secure Hugh Mortimer's release.

Why we do it

The Society's Schools Programme contributes to one of the Society's key objectives; to spark an interest in medieval history – especially the history of the Marches and the Mortimers – among the young. "We're aware of how pressured the school curriculum can be," says Society Secretary, Philip Hume, and the Middle Ages are sometimes lost between the Romans and the Tudors! We hope this programme helps to fill the gap."

MHS Trustee and educationalist, Kathy Cowell attended the Living History Day for the first time this year and was "impressed by the quality of the activities on offer." Several teachers complimented us on the quality of the day and the hard work we'd put into it. One remarked, "I was so happy to hear all our children talking among themselves about how much they'd enjoyed it – I can't wait to do some lovely lessons linked to our experiences from today's trip!"

Job done!



Long bows – the weapon of choice!

For your bookshelf

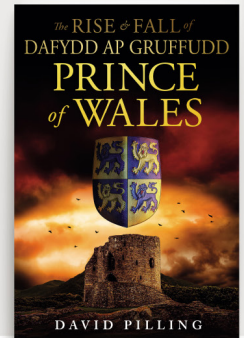
Four titles for summer reading,

The Rise and Fall of Dafydd ap Gruffudd, Prince of Wales

By **David Pilling**

Dafydd ap Gruffudd is one of the most controversial figures in Welsh history, remembered for his alliance with Edward I's and for actions that helped bring about the conquest of Wales by the English Crown. This biography seeks to tell his side of the story – how he was side-lined by his brothers, deprived of his inheritance and forced into an alliance with England. And how a return to the fold of his countrymen brought about his eventual defeat and brutal execution.

Published independently and available from Amazon for in paperback £7.99 and for Kindle £2.99.

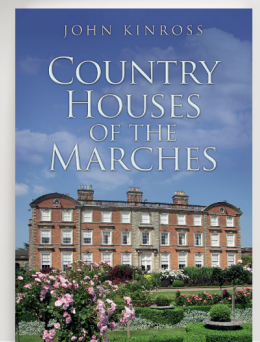


Country Houses of the Marches

By **John Kinross**

This fascinating exploration of the historic country houses of Herefordshire, Shropshire and the Welsh Borders is a must for anyone planning a day out on the March. In an area characterised by natural beauty, these houses are among the finest in Britain. Some, such as Powis Castle, are built on ancient fortress sites others typify generational wealth – from the Georgian glory of Berrington Hall or Victorian opulence on a grand scale at Stokesay Court. One for the coffee table.

Publishing with Amberley Publishing on 22 August 2022. Pre-order now at www.amberley-books.com for just £14.39.

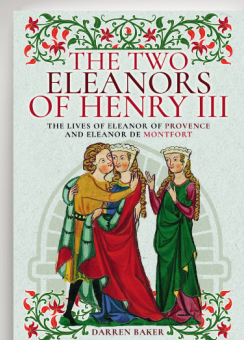


The Two Eleanors of Henry III

By **Darren Baker**

An examination of two Eleanors in Henry III's life – his wife, Eleanor of Provence and his sister, who married the French parvenue Simon de Montfort. This marriage bound these four characters together at a time of profound change. The relationship between these two sisters-in-law, close but doomed, reflects not only the turbulence and tragedy of their times but also their brilliance and splendour.

Published by Pen and Sword. Purchase online from www.pen-and-sword.co.uk at for £25.



Rogues, Rebels and Mavericks of the Middle Ages

By **John Brunton**

From Vlad the Impaler and Tomas de Torquemada to Eustace the Monk and Reynald of Châtillon, this collection of mini-biographies illuminate the middle ages through their darkest characters. Some are downright baddies, others compelling anti-heroes, all are remarkable. Their stories bring to life an age of chivalry, peasant revolts, crusading, heresy, sorcery and philosophy.

Published by Amberley. Buy at www.amberley-books.com for just £18.

