

## Notes from LIG Zoom Meeting 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021

**Present: (Regular LIG)** Maureen Lloyd (ML), Wendy & Dainis Ozols, John Price, Lucy Trench, Roy & Avryl Lloyd, Carol Milward, Oliver Lewis, Juliet Lewis, Elsa Harflett, Cherry Williams, Jenny Francis, Ann & Howard Dean, Sylvia Illingsworth, Bronwen Jenkins, Sue & Keith Hodgetts, Eva Morgan, Grace Davies, Lisa Lloyd & Bruce Evans, Richard Thomas, Vivienne & Stephen Thomas

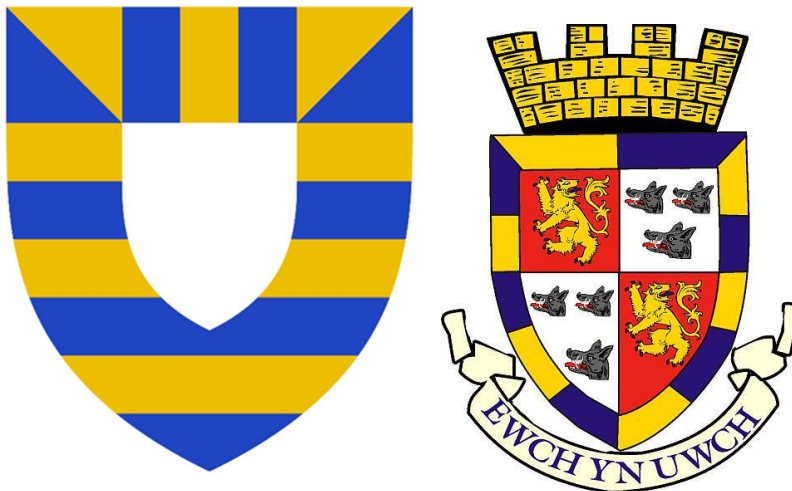
**“Visitors” (mainly from RadSoc and the Mortimer Society):** Philip Hume (Speaker), Mel Walters, Vicki Morrell, Vanessa Pawsey, Gareth Jones, Marilyn Price, Denise Bonnette-Anderson, Sue Gibb, Lynden Rees-Roberts, Noriko Horiuchi, Tony Mahalski, Jenson Jones, Lesley Frith, Bronwyn Fraley, Simon Doubleday (joining us from New York), Liz Phillips, Peter Ford, Jayne Matthews, Paul Morrison, Jane Higgins, Liz Molyneux, Barbara Joss, Denise Humphries, Ally Edwards, Henry Biggs, Ann Parkhouse, Chris Jones-Jenkins, Chris Forbes, Margaret Galliers, Caroline Eayrs, Anne Blandford, Charles ? Sue ?

ML welcomed everyone, especially members of the Radnorshire Society and Mortimer History Society, and said how fantastic it was to see such a large (and international!) audience for the first LIG meeting of 2021. She went on to introduce the speaker for the evening, Philip Hume, who is Secretary of the Mortimer History Society. Philip has written many articles and books about the Mortimer family and the Marcher Lordships and we were extremely lucky to have him as our guest speaker. The title of his talk is:

### **On the Trail of the Mortimers in Radnorshire and Herefordshire**

Philip explained that his talk would be in two parts: firstly, an overview of the history of the Mortimer family; and, secondly, the Mortimer connection with Radnorshire.

He started by showing us the coat of arms of the family and the one which was granted to Radnorshire, initially in 1536 (when it was almost identical to the Mortimer one) and the one awarded to the Council in 1954 by the College of Arms. The medieval Mortimer coat of arms has been incorporated within the design for the more recent Radnorshire coat of arms.



The family has about 500 years of history and built numerous castles and churches, as well as an abbey and a priory. The Mortimers are associated with three sites of battle and conflict, as well as many

artefacts. All of these help to piece together a comprehensive history of the family. Philip also showed us the Mortimer family tree, from Roger de Mortemer, who lived in Normandy in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, all the way through to Edward IV, who died in 1483. This family was one of the longest surviving medieval families, existing for thirteen generations.

There was no Mortimer at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. It was Ralph Mortimer, son of the Roger mentioned in the previous paragraph, who originally came to Britain and who, in 1075, was prominent in defeating the Saxon noble, Edric the Wild, after which he was rewarded with land and castles, including Wigmore. Wigmore Castle was the family's principal residence for over 250 years.

By 1086, and noted in the Domesday Book, Ralph owned over one hundred manors in twelve counties. One concentration of these was around North Herefordshire and South Shropshire and included Wigmore, Orleton, Shobdon, Leintwardine, Leintball Earls and Starkes, Pipe Aston and Pilleth. Over the next three centuries, many more lands and manors were added to the family's property, through conquest in Wales, rewards given by kings for services rendered and through strategic marriages. As a result, this family became even more powerful and important.

For a time in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, it appears that there were no Mortimers living in England for about 30 or 40 years; the family had returned to Normandy. Certainly, Ralph Mortimer died in Normandy and his son, Hugh, did not come to England until some time after the death of his father. His early years as Lord of Wigmore coincided with The Anarchy. This was a time of civil war following the death of Henry I, when Stephen and Matilda were fighting each other for supremacy. Empress Matilda (so styled because she was married to the Holy Roman Emperor in Germany) was the daughter of Henry I. She felt that she had a claim to the throne because it was her father's dying wish that she should succeed him. Hugh led forces loyal to King Stephen in the Central Marches. This brought him into direct conflict with Josce de Dinan, Lord of Ludlow, who was supporting Matilda.

Hugh Mortimer founded Wigmore Abbey on its current site (it had been first established at Shobdon in around 1140). Due to The Anarchy, he first moved the abbey to Lye, near Aymestry, and then to the ridge at Wigmore, between the castle and the parish church, in the 1170s; it was dedicated by the Bishop of Hereford in 1179. Some time between 1181 and 1185, Hugh retired to and died at his manor of Cleobury Mortimer.

At this point, Philip explained to us that there was a tradition in the Mortimer family of naming the first son after their grandfathers. This makes the history of the family quite complicated to follow because the same names crop up in alternate generations.

Three generations later, the next Lord of Wigmore was called Roger (d 1282). His mother was Gwladus Ddu, daughter of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, Prince of Gwynedd. (This meant that he had a lineage to royalty which would be important in later claims.) Roger was responsible for establishing the Mortimers amongst the leading nobles in the land. He married Maud de Braose who was one of the co-heiresses to both the Braose family and her Mother's Marshal inheritance, and so a wealthy and important woman in her own right. At this time, there was much conflict between the barons and the Crown and, at some stage, the King's (Henry III) son, Lord Edward, was captured and imprisoned by Simon de Montfort. Roger engineered Edward's escape from captivity in 1264 and a loyal friendship developed between the two of them. At the Battle of Evesham, 1265, Roger killed Simon de Montfort and, after his body was cut up, sent his head to Maud who was at Wigmore.

Such was Edward's friendship with and trust of Roger that he was named as a trustee for Lord Edward's children and estates in 1270 and, in 1272 he became Regent, responsible for ruling the country whilst Edward I was on crusade following Henry III's death. Edward returned to England in 1274. In 1277, Roger commanded the central army in Edward I's conquest of Wales, besieging and taking Llywelyn ap Gruffud's castle at Dolforwyn. Having secured control of Maelienydd, he was rewarded with more lands and titles.

Philip then explained that he was jumping a couple of generations and the next Mortimer he talked about was Roger Mortimer, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of March. During the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Mortimers dominated the Marcher Lordships. Roger was born in 1287 and, in 1301, aged 14, he married Joan de Grenville (who was 15) at Pembridge. This was a most fortuitous marriage because Joan brought with her Ludlow Castle. Roger was a loyal servant of the Crown in England, Scotland and Ireland; by this time the monarch was King Edward II. However, Edward was known for having "favourites" in court and this led to much ill-feeling and conflict with senior earls and barons. One of these conflicts was with the Despensers, father and son. The son, Hugh, was particularly ruthless and ambitious and he managed to secure an important place at court. He singled out Roger as a rival but there was more to his hatred of Roger. This went back to the Battle of Evesham when Roger's Grandfather had killed Despenser's Grandfather and this act had not been forgiven. After much friction and conflict between the two, which caused some humiliation for King Edward, Roger was eventually tried and condemned to death in 1322. This sentence was subsequently commuted to imprisonment for life, a mistake for which Edward II would pay later. Following an audacious plan, Roger escaped the Tower in 1323 and he made his way to safety in France. Roger had formed a strong friendship with Isabella, Edward II's wife, who was unhappy in England; she was the sister of the French King, Charles IV. Isabella fled to France in 1325 and here she formed a strong alliance with Roger with the intention of ridding England of Hugh Despenser. In September 1326, Roger and Isabella landed in England with just over 1000 men, far fewer than Edward managed to summon (over 47 000). However, through very judicious tactics, their small number of supporters grew significantly, Edward's army failed to materialise and by October the King was "on the run" with Despenser and other supporters. Edward abdicated and was replaced by his son, the 14 year old Prince Edward, in 1327. Isabella served as Regent in the early part of his reign, with Roger as her ally and wielding considerable power. The young King began to distrust and dislike Roger and eventually he was executed in 1330, after which his family's fortunes changed.

Philip then ran quickly through the next five generations of Mortimers: Edmund, Roger's son, who died in 1331; Roger, who inherited aged 3 and died aged 32; Edmund who inherited aged 8 and died aged 29; Roger, who inherited aged 7 and died aged 24; and, Edmund, who inherited aged 7 and died aged 34. The last Edmund was the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of March. This succession takes the family up to 1425. Since they all inherited young and died young, they had no opportunity to make their mark. Furthermore, they were always seen as a threat to the throne. Through (the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of March) Edmund's marriage to Philippa, the only child of Lionel, the second surviving son of Edward III, the Mortimers had a strong claim to the throne.

In 1402, whilst the last Edmund in the list (5<sup>th</sup> Earl of March) was still a child, his uncle, Sir Edmund Mortimer was involved in the Battle of Pilleth. Owain Glyndwr had begun to threaten the Central Wales and so Sir Edmund was charged with raising an army of men from Herefordshire and Maelienydd, in order to move against him. On 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 1402, the two armies met at Bryn Glas at Pilleth, with Glyndwr's troops in the strong position at the top of the hill. As a result of trying to attack uphill, and also because Glyndwr had hidden some archers in a valley to the left of the hill who

emerged during the battle to attack Mortimer's right flank, Mortimer's army was defeated and Sir Edmund was captured. However, he was well treated, and when the king, out of his fear of the Mortimers, refused to ransom him, eventually he sided with Owain Glyndwr and even married his daughter, Catherine. Sir Edmund Mortimer was now in a position against the King, Henry IV. His nephew, Edmund, died childless in 1425 and so the Mortimer inheritance passed to his nephew, Richard Duke of York, the son of his sister Anne. Richard (Plantagenet) was the father of Edward IV and thus, in 1461, when Edward was crowned, a Mortimer descendent succeeded to the throne of England, having won it in battle. Edward had been brought up at Ludlow Castle, one of the Mortimers' many properties.



Site of the Battle of Bryn Glas at Pilleth

The second part of Philip's talk was about the **Mortimer connection with Radnorshire**.

In 1066, the area we now know as Radnorshire was called Rhwng Gwy a Hafren, literally "between the Wye and the Severn". It consisted of Maelienydd, Gwerthrynion, Cwmwd Deuddwr, Elfael, Radnor, Builth and Ceri. This was a very important area and the land was fought over between the Welsh and the Normans.

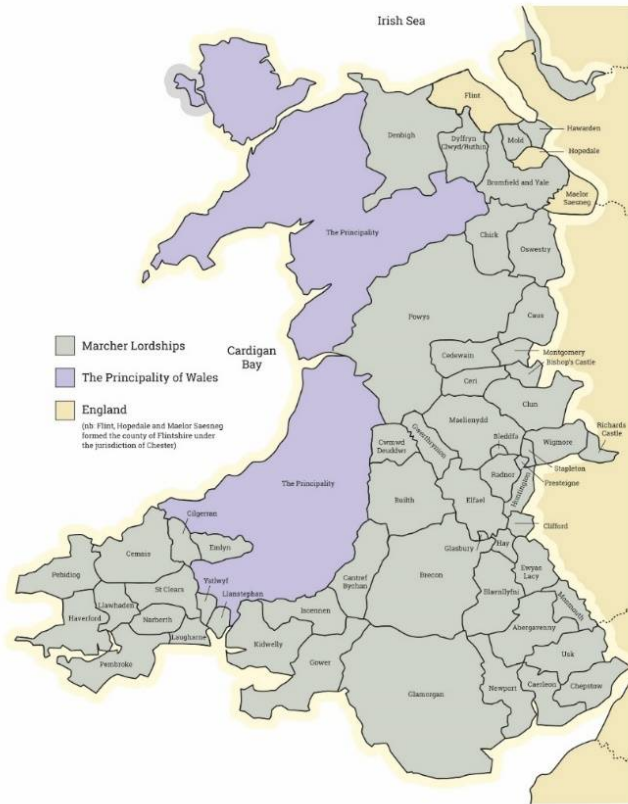
**Maelienydd** was first conquered by the Mortimers in the 1090s. By the 1130s it had been regained by the native Welsh rulers only to be retaken by Hugh Mortimer in 1144. Once again, the Welsh rulers took control in the 1150s. In 1195, Roger Mortimer regained control. However, in 1215, Llewelyn ap Iorwerth took control, but lost Maelienydd to Ralph Mortimer in 1241. Between c 1090s and 1242, the caput (this is a Latin word meaning "head") and court of Maelienydd were at Cymaron Castle. Ralph Mortimer (d. 1246) gave responsibility of rebuilding Knucklas Castle to his 11 year old son, Roger (d. 1282), in 1242. He was also given the task of building Cefnlllys Castle in the same year. This castle was later taken by Llewelyn ap Gruffudd in 1262. A second castle was built by Roger Mortimer after 1267, following the Treaty of Montgomery. This Treaty acknowledged Llewelyn's title as Prince of Wales, thus he was at the height of his powers. Llewelyn complained to the King about Roger Mortimer's behaviour, but this came to nought. When Llewelyn was defeated in Wales by Edward I, the Mortimer

control of this part of the Marches became secure. So, Malienydd was “conquered by the sword, .....eventually”.

By contrast, **Radnor** was gained by the Mortimers through marriage. In the 1090s, the Lordship of Radnor had been granted to the de Braose family. Between the 1180s and the 1260s, Radnor Castle changed hands, in violent circumstances, and eight times in one 81 year period; it was also destroyed on four occasions. In 1230, Ralph Mortimer married Gwladus Ddu, widow of Reginald de Braose and, in 1235, Ralph was given custody of Radnor. His son, Roger, married Maud de Braose, daughter of and heiress to William de Braose, and this brought Radnor into the Mortimer family. In 1264, Radnor Castle and town were burned to the ground by the forces of Llewelyn ap Gruffudd and Simon de Montford. However, this property was regained by Roger Mortimer in 1267 and then remained in Mortimer possession.

**Elfael** was “gained by marriage and the sword” and “lost in the courts”. In the 1190s, Elfael was taken by the Tosny family; they were Lords of Clifford. By 1144, some have wrongly thought that the Mortimers had conquered Elfael. However, because of the absence of the Tosny family in Normandy, the de Braose family had managed to “insert” themselves in the cantref. 1230 saw the fall of the de Braose family and, by 1231, Elfael Is Mynydd was held by Henry III, who rebuilt the castle at Painscastle in stone. In 1231, Elfael Is Mynydd was granted to Ralph Tosny. At the same time, Elfael Uwch Mynydd was held by Llewelyn ap Iorwerth and he held it until his death in 1140. In 1247, Roger Mortimer married the heiress Maud de Braose and claimed (without success) Elfael in the right of his wife. In 1257, Elfael Uwch Mynydd was granted to Roger by the Lord Edward, later Edward I. In 1260, Elfael Uwch Mynydd fell to Llewelyn ap Gruffudd and, by 1263, Llewelyn had also gained control of Elfael Is Mynydd, but not Painscastle. The Treaty of Pipton in 1265 confirmed Llewelyn’s control and he seized and destroyed Painscastle. A royal inquisition of 1277 gave Elfael Is Mynydd to the Tosny family and Elfael Uwch Mynydd to the Mortimers. So, in 1282, Elfael Uwch Mynydd became part of the dowry of Maud de Braose after the death of her husband, Roger. Throughout the 1290s, the Tosnys contested the rights of the Mortimers through the courts in numerous legal cases and, by 1292, a royal inquisition found that Maud “held nothing in Elfael Uwch Mynydd”. This is how Elfael was lost to the Mortimers.

The powers of the Marcher Lords can be illustrated in the map on the next page. They controlled much of Wales and the borderlands. The Lords had the power to: build castles without royal permission; raise armies and wage war in Wales; administer criminal and civil justice by establishing their own courts, appointing judges and raising fines; establish boroughs and grant charters; and, claim salvage and treasure trove.



Malienydd, Gwerthrynion, Cwmwd Deuddwr and Radnor remained in the ownership of the Mortimers until 1425, when they were inherited by Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York. In 1461, when a Mortimer grandson, Edward IV, succeeded to the throne, the Mortimer inheritance was subsumed into the Crown Estates. Finally, in 1536, Acts in Wales abolished the powers of the Marcher Lords, and the districts were incorporated into the new county of Radnorshire (see information about the coat of arms at the beginning of the notes).

At the end of his talk, Philip mentioned two publications which might be of interest to people:

On the Trail of the Mortimers by Philip Hume, Published by Logaston Press, and

The Welsh Marcher Lordships: 1. Central and North, also by Philip Hume, and due to be published by Logaston Press on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021. This can be pre-ordered on the Logaston website at a discount price of £14.50 with free p+p by entering the code MHS21

He also referred people to the Mortimer History Society website:

<https://mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk/>

Here there is a great wealth of information about the Mortimers and the work of the Society, as well as details about membership. This website proved extremely helpful to the author of these notes.

Finally, he drew everyone's attention to a free, half-day virtual conference scheduled for Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> February, 2021, 2pm – 4.45pm. The theme of the conference is: "Cherchez la Femme: Queenship, Law and Marriage in Medieval Wales and its March". Details can be found on the Society's website.

ML thanked Philip for his extremely interesting talk. There is much to learn about this very powerful family and the Marcher Lords in general and we are very grateful to Philip for giving so generously of his time to share some of his extensive knowledge of the topic with us. We look forward to his second talk for LIG later in the year.



Ludlow Castle