JONATHAN DOVEY’S

History of Henley-in-Arden

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jonathan Dovey is the Treasurer of the Henley Civic Society and has written a series of features for *Henley NEWS on-line* about the History of Henley. This book is a compilation of these articles.

Jonathan has lived in Henley since 1982 and attended Henley J & I school and King Edward VI Grammar School, Stratford upon Avon before studying History at the University of Wales Aberystwyth. He was awarded the Arthur Gooder Memorial Award for by the Coventry Historical Association in 1996.

He has produced a thesis on Peter de Montfort, Lord of Beaudesert and regularly gives talks to local history groups on Peter de Montfort and the history of the Court Leet.
When researching the origins of a place there are usually two starting points: the Place name and the Domesday Book.

While the nearby villages of Wootton, Whitley and Ullenhall are mentioned in Domesday, Henley and Beaudesert are not entered. There is also no mention of the De Montfort family in Warwickshire. Henley is an Anglo-Saxon place name meaning a ‘High Clearing’ and was probably in existence before the Conquest while Beaudesert is Norman French and has to have a later origin.

Henley was originally part of Wootton, as in 1296 it is recorded that John de Montfort held it of Edmund de Stafford by payment of 3 shillings or a pair of scarlet hose. Beaudesert is not mentioned in Domesday Book and was therefore begun after 1086. The first mention of Henley is in the 1180’s while Beaudesert and the castle is mentioned first in 1141.

Matilda the Empress, daughter of King Henry, to Roger Earl of Warwick and to all her faithful subjects French and English of Warwickshire, greeting. Know ye that I have granted to Thurstan de Montfort that he may hold a market on Sunday at his Castle of Beaudesert.

Witness Milo de Gloucestria at Winchester

Thurstan de Montfort began building his castle at Beaudesert in around 1119 and it was certainly completed before 1140. He witnessed a charter of the Earl of Warwick that has to be dated to before 1119. Thurstan’s grandfather was Robert de Beaumont Earl of Leicester and his great uncle was Henry de Beaumont (Newburgh) Earl of Warwick. This family connection explains why Thurstan gained so much land in Warwickshire while his brother Robert received lands in Rutland. Thurstan inherited his brother’s lands in Rutland before 1140, and was still around in 1153 when he attested a charter between the Duke of Normandy and Ranulph of Chester. But Thurstan’s lineage is even more intriguing as his great grandfather was Hugh de Montfort. The chronicler Orderic Vitalis described Hugh ‘the beard’ as being the Duke of Normandy’s Constable. He fought at the Battle of Hastings and acted as joint regent with Odo of Bayeaux in 1067. In Domesday he is recorded as having over 100 manors worth around £156 making him the 31st wealthiest baron in the land. Hugh held lands in Kent, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk along with the castles of Saltwood and Haughley.

Henley was a planned market town, set out in the early 13th century when the De Montforts were granted a market charter. The town continued to thrive even though the De Montfort’s and their castle had disappeared.
**HENLEY’S FORGOTTEN MARKET HALL**

Did you know that there was once a Market Hall on the north side of the Market Cross?

Henley was a planned market town created in the 13th century. As with many such planned towns the single street axis was swollen into a cigar shape in order to accommodate the market. However infilling took place as market holders left their stalls out and these became permanent structures. The Market place was also a legitimate place to build public buildings like a church, Market Cross or Hall.

Although markets were often held in churchyards, Beaudesert held its 1141 market in the castle. Henley’s Market Charter for 1221 saw the creation of a specifically built market town for the De Montfort family. This small market town was relatively successful, as by the late 13th century we know that Henley had 69 burgesses.

The original Market Hall would have been built soon after 1221. Market Halls had an undercroft that gave some of the traders’ protection from the elements. The upper storey of the Market Hall was where merchant law was administered before the bailiff. The hall stored the standard weights and measures including the borough steelyard. It was also the meeting place for the Manorial Court or Court Leet.

The Guild of Henley was founded in the late 14th century and received substantial money from its benefactors. This wealth was used to build the present Church and Guildhall in c.1450. The King seized the Guild in 1546 and the Guild Hall was subsequently sold. In 1623 it was in the tenure of William Smith, a tanner. The Court Leet continued to use the Market Hall as their meeting place until it was taken down in c.1793, for in 1610 the court records state “no inhabitant shall license or give leave to any players to play within the Town Hall”.

The Court Leet was held at the Swan Inn during the 19th century. In 1915 Mr. Fieldhouse restored the Guildhall in which the meetings of the Court are still held.

Left – Stratford’s old Market taken down in c 1821

Right – Ledbury’s Market Hall © Rosemary Lockie
**LORD’S WASTE**

You would think that ‘Lord’s Waste’ would be confined to the dustbin of history, however it continues to be a real issue in Henley.

**What is ‘Lord’s Waste’?**

Lord’s Waste was common land where all members of the community had right of passage.

*Part of the demesne land of the manor which being uncultivated was termed the Lord’s Waste and served for public roads and for common pasture to the lord and his tenants.*


**Where is the ‘Lord’s Waste’ in Henley?**

Lord’s Waste mainly consists of the land between the pavement and the front of the properties on the high street. Originally the whole street, including the Market Place, side streets and back lanes were termed Lord’s Waste. While the responsibility for looking after road and pavement has been taken over by the Council, the remaining areas are still termed as ‘Manorial or Lord’s Waste’.

Lord’s Waste is mentioned on many occasions in the Court Leet records.

Examples:

*That every householder in Henley shall from time to time and at all times hereafter keep the part of the street at his door so far as his house extendeth unto the channel clean and passable for travellers upon pain that every one in default to forfeit 3s 4d.* (1656)

*The Jury presents George Parkes for putting a bow window on the Lord’s Waste to a house belonging to him. He is assessed to pay 6d a year Quit Rent.* (1917)

**Why is it causing problems today?**

Recently there have been problems, because no one accepts responsibility for the Lord’s Waste. The County Council have ‘after taking legal advice concluded that the land is manorial waste and are therefore not responsible for it’. Local government reforms over the last century have reduced the Court Leet to a purely ceremonial body.

However at Spaunton in Yorkshire, the Court Leet have taken responsibility of the grass verges and fine people that park on it. There have also been a number of incidents where people have bought titles and have attempted to charge people for using their ‘common land’. Paul Flynn M.P. has raised this issue in the House of Lords and Welsh Assembly.

What was once set up to enable freedom of access within a manor that everyone had an interest in and responsibility for is now causing many unforeseen problems.
Richard Jago was born at Beaudesert’s Old Parsonage house on the 1st October 1715. He was the third son of Richard Jago Snr. Rector of Beaudesert and was educated at Solihull school and University College Oxford. He was appointed the small livings of Harbury and Chesterton and was later made vicar of Snitterfield a position he held until his death. In 1771 Lord Willoughby de Broke appointed him to Kimscote in Leicestershire. His sermon that he gave at Harbury on ‘The Causes of Impenitence Considered’ was published in 1755.

“Britannia's rural charms, and tranquil scenes, far from the circling ocean, where her fleets like Guardian Spirits, which round Paradise Perform'd their nightly watch, majestic ride.”

Edgehill by Richard Jago, Book 1, lines 1-4.

However, it was Jago’s poetry that gained him his recognition and patronage. He wrote several elegies including ‘The Blackbirds’ and ‘The Goldfinches’ and the fable ‘Labour & Genius’. His greatest and longest work written in 1767 was the rambling ‘Edgehill or The Rural Prospect Delineated and Moralised’. In it he described the Warwickshire landscape observed at various times. In 1769 he composed ‘The Roundelay’ for David Garrick’s Shakespeare Jubilee.

“On Avon’s banks, where Shakespeare’s bust points out, and guards his sleeping dust; the sons of scenic mirth agree, to celebrate the Jubilee.”

The Roundelay by Richard Jago, lines 5-8.

Jago became part of Lady Luxborough’s set that included: William Somerville, William Shenstone and Richard Graves. This group were interested in landscaping and poetry and occasionally met at Barrells Hall. Somerville (1675-1742) lived at Edstone Hall and wrote about hunting and field sports. Richard Graves (1715-1804) a novelist was born in Mickleton who became rector of Claverton, near Bath. Shenstone (1714-63) was a landscape gardener and minor poet who landscaped his gardens at Leasowes (now Halesowen Golf Club). In 1744, Shenstone wrote ‘my wood grows excessively pleasant. I have an alcove, six elegies, a seat, two epitaphs, three ballads, four songs and a serpentine river to show you when you come’. Shenstone’s garden was to be seen via a route that you took around to his house. It is a mark of Shenstone’s friendship to Richard Jago that he placed a bench inscribed to him at the end of the route, next to the house.

“With leaden foot time creeps along”

Absence by Richard Jago

Richard Jago died on the 8th May 1781 at Snitterfield and was later buried in the church. He left his leasehold estate at Spernall to his second wife Margaret, while he left his freehold farm at Crowley’s Ullenhall for the benefit of his children.
A Collection of Richard Jago’s Work

Written for the Jubilee at Stratford-upon-Avon, 1769

Sisters of the tuneful train,
Attend your parent's jocund strain,
'Tis Fancy calls you; follow me
To celebrate the Jubilee.

On Avon's banks, where Shakespeare's bust
Points out, and guards his sleeping dust;
The sons of scenic mirth agree,
To celebrate the Jubilee.

Come, daughters, come, and bring with you,
Th'aerial Sprites and Fairy-crew,
And the sister Graces three,
To celebrate the Jubilee.

Hang around the sculptur'd tomb
The 'broider'd vest, the nodding plume,
And the mask of comic glee,
To celebrate the Jubilee.

From Birnam Wood, and Bosworth Field,
Bring the standard, bring the shield,
With drums and martial symphony,
To celebrate the Jubilee.

In mournful numbers now relate
Poor Desdemona's hapless fate,
With frantic deeds of jealousy,
To celebrate the Jubilee.

Nor be Windsor's Wives forgot,
With their harmless merry plot,
The whitening mead, and haunted tree,
To celebrate the Jubilee.

Now in jocund strains recite
The humours of the braggard Knight,
Fat Knight, and ancient Pistol he,
To celebrate the Jubilee.

But see in crowds the Gay, the Fair,
To the splendid scene repair,
A scene as line as fine can be,
To celebrate the Jubilee.

Absence

With leaden foot Time creeps along,
While Delia is away,
With her, nor plaintive was the song,
Nor tedious was the day.

Ah! envious power! reverse my doom,
Now double thy career;
Strain every nerve, stretch every plume,
And rest them when she's here.

Richard Jago

Edgehill or The Rural Prospect Delineated & Moralised, 1767

In the sweet contest join'd! with livelier Charms
Intent t'illumine ARDEN'S leafy Gloom!
What happy lot your cheerful walks attends!
By no scant Bound'y, nor obstructing fence,
Immur'd, or circumscrib'd; but spread at large
In open Day: Save what to cool Recess
Is destin'd voluntary, not constrain'd
By Sad Necessity, and casual state
of fickly Peace! Such as the moated Hall,
with close circumference of watry Guard,
And pensile Bridge portends! or, rear'd aloft,
And inaccessible the massy Tow'rs,
And narrow circuit of embattled Walls,
Rais'd on the Mountain-Pecipice! Such thine
O BEAudesERT! * Old MONTFORT'S lofty seat!
Haunt of my youthful steps! Where I was wont
to range, Chaunting my rude Note's to the wind,

Richard Jago
Only one member of the Warwickshire De Montfort family has a tomb that can still be visited. Elizabeth de Montacute née Montfort’s tomb is situated in Christ Church Oxford.

Elizabeth was born around 1279, the daughter of Peter de Montfort 2nd (died 1287) and Maud de la Mare. She married William de Montacute in 1295 and had 4 sons and 6 daughters all of whom appear on the sides of her tomb. They were John, William, Simon, Edward, Alice, Mary, Elizabeth, Hawise, Maud and Isabella. The eldest surviving son, William was made Earl of Salisbury in 1337 and became one of the first Knights of the Garter. Simon was Bishop of Ely from 1337 to 1344. Matilda became Abbess of Barking from 1341 until 1352. Isabella became Abbess of Barking from 1352 until 1358. Elizabeth was Prioress of Holywell Nunnery, Shoreditch from 1340 to 1357.

After William de Montacute died in 1319/20, Elizabeth married Thomas de Furnivalle who died in 1332. Elizabeth died in 1354.

“Sculptured effigies of abbesses, especially of this period, are rare.”

Matthew Bloxam
In 1346, she founded a chantry to commemorate her family using land that is now part of Christ Church meadow to finance the two chantry priests.

Elizabeth acquired Stockwell Mead from her cousin and obtained a royal licence in 1345 and consent from Abingdon Abbey to give it to St. Frideswide’s Priory in exchange for a chantry. Two chantry priests were to say daily mass wearing black amices bearing the arms of Montfort and Montacute. This chantry mass continued until the Reformation.

Elizabeth de Montacute’s tomb is remarkable in what it reveals about clothing of the 14th century.

*Jonathan Dovey*

*With thanks to Jim Godfrey, Canons’ Verger, Christ Church Cathedral Oxford.*
SIR JOHN BYNG’S VISITS TO HENLEY

John Byng, later Viscount Torrington, was an enthusiastic traveller whose diaries of his travels between 1781 and 1794 were published in the 1930’s.

His first visit through Henley was on the 5th July 1781

The road to Henley in Arden is well wooded, but very flat, to Leveret Hill, which affords a pleasing and diversified view. Henley is an ill-built, mean town. From Henley we passed through Wootton, a pretty village in which stands a forlorn house of Mr. Holford’s, in a shabby condition, with a dry cascade, and not one tree around.

John Byng made a stop at Henley in July 1792.

From Leveret Hill is a gay view, and over the town of Henley. Since I was last along this road, it has been much widened and straightened; but give me the old curves to beguile the way; I love not straight Roman roads.

I put up at Henley at the Swan; - think of the inns being casemented at the first stage from Birmingham; where my old Corps the Blues, are quartered to maintain the peace. I saw them parade in the High Street, and think I never saw a regiment in worse order or looking less like soldiers, dirty, slovenly, ill-dressed, with neither fashion nor pride about them; and their horses were as dirty, and ill-dressed as their riders! Such a Corps should be instantly reformed or reduced.

Henley I dined upon some good, (uncut) cold lamb, with good cheese; after a walk over the brook to another church, Beldesert – where is a fine Saxon arch.

Henley is only a chapel of ease to Wootton, through which I passed in the evening; and would have stopped at the church, (near to which is an ugly house of Sir E Smith’s) but that it began to rain.

Here, were a crowd assembled, the remains of yesterday’s wake, and two fellows upon stools, grinning for a wager (a sport I thought disused) so happily described in the Spectator – ‘The frightfulest grinner to be the winner!’

The Birmingham Stratford road was a turnpike road in the 18th century and it seems as if some major work was done straightening this route in the 1780’s.

John Byng stayed at the (White) Swan and had food and drink for 2s 2d. The Swan is thought to be Henley’s oldest inn and was mentioned in the 14th century however much of the present building dates from the 16th and 17th century.

Mr Smith’s house is of course referring to Wootton Hall built in a Palladian style in 1687. It was obviously not a style much thought of by John Byng.

Grinning or gurning was one of the traditional ‘sports’ where people made grotesque faces. Gurning along with morris dancing, climbing the greasy pole and shin kicking were usually done at fairs. Robert Dover’s Olimpick Games carry on these traditions and take place this year on the 3rd June.

www.olimpickgames.co.uk

Further Reading:
The Torrington Diaries, containing the tours through England and Wales of the Hon. John Byng (Later Fifth Viscount Torrington) between the years 1781 and 1794. Edited by C Bruyn Andrews (1936)

Jonathan Dovey
Edward I’s reputation as a formidable king is well known. Peter de Montfort was killed by Edward at Evesham in 1265 and Edward’s stature alone brought about the death of Peter’s son William in 1294.

William was Peter de Montfort’s youngest son and as expected he went into the church. William went to Oxford University in 1261 and was incepted under the chancellorship of Thomas de Cantilupe. Thomas was a supporter of the baronial reform programme and a relative of Walter de Cantilupe the bishop of Worcester and the De Montfort family. It was therefore no surprise that William de Montfort would become part of Thomas’s household that effectively ran the administration of the diocese. It is known that many clerks and students at Oxford University took a great interest in the politics of the times and supported the barons. Clerks of the University fought under their own banner at Northampton on the baron’s side. William de Montfort was captured in Northampton alongside his father Peter who was the baronial commander there in April 1264.

Thomas de Cantilupe became bishop of Hereford in 1274. In 1276 William de Montfort was given a canonry and precentorship at Hereford. He was made joint guardian of the temporalities of the see of Hereford in the bishop’s absence in 1280. When Thomas died in 1282, William as a trusted member of his household became one of the executors of his will. William became dean of St Paul’s London in 1285, a position he held until his death. He held an important position within the English church and he escorted the King’s daughter to the continent early in 1294.

William held the churches of Stratford, Avening and Whitchurch in the Worcester diocese and held prebends in the London, Lincoln and Hereford dioceses. Taxation of the clergy became a source of tension in the late thirteenth century, which would lead to a crisis between Edward and Parliament in 1297. William de Montfort died just before he was about to give a speech in defence of the clergy at the Westminster Parliament of September 1294.
When Parliament was held William de Montfort, dean of St. Paul’s, London, who was the procurator in the Roman Court for the business connected with the tenth previously granted to the King of England for the defence of the Holy Land, and also the principal agent and promoter of the King’s schemes for the overthrow of the liberties of the English church, was suddenly and unexpectedly struck with pain in the presence of the King and his court and unexpectedly gave up the ghost. He was brought for burial at St. Paul’s and laid with his forebears.


In his will, William expressed the hope, and 100 marks (£66, 13s, 4d), that Thomas would be canonized. This eventually happened in 1320 after many appeals by Richard Swinfield, Thomas’s successor as Bishop.

Further Reading

St Thomas Cantilupe Bishop of Hereford: Essays in his Honour edited by Meryl Jancey, 1982
The Household Roll of Bishop Swinfield 1289-90 edited J Webb, Camden Soc. 62, 1855
**L O S T  H O U S E S  O F  H E N L E Y**

**Arden House Lane**

This cottage once stood on the corner of Arden house lane and the Stratford Road. However it was taken down and replaced by a late Victorian house that was lived in by Annie Blackwell at the turn of the century. You can see that the shaped trees have grown in the second photograph.

Many of these types of cottages were built quickly by squatters on areas of common land like the roadside verges.
The Old Parsonage House, Beaudesert

The Parsonage House was a large half-timbered property that stood to the North of Beaudesert Church. In the 1860’s, John Hannett noted:

*The Parsonage House was interesting as exemplifying the style of such residences in olden time. It was a large half-timbered gabled structure, with small low rooms, and had not been inhabited by any rector for more than a century. This has been taken down and a new rectory built a little further east, and the surroundings improved.*

This photograph shows the newly restored church and grounds with newly planted trees. This is probably the last photograph of Beaudesert’s old parsonage house still standing.
A KNIGHT’S TALE - PETER DE MONTFORT

‘This is the story of a knight whose childhood years were hard. His circle of friends had important connections and radical ideas. He was an imposing local figure and then a leading light on the national and international stage as a councillor and diplomat. And he died fighting for the cause that he believed in.’

However this is not a fictional story but the true account of Peter de Montfort Lord of Beaudesert.

Peter de Montfort was born around 1205. After his father, Thurstan, died in 1216 he was brought up by his grandfather’s family, the Cantilupes of Aston Cantlow. During the 1220’s, Henley and Beaudesert were granted a market charter that has been seen as an attempt by Peter and his guardian to set up a planned market town. The Cantilupes were also patrons of Studley Priory, to which Peter later gave land for the ‘health of his soul’. The Cantilupes were from the ‘noble stock of the barons of England’ and held positions within the King’s household from the 1200’s until the 1240’s.

In 1228, Peter married Alice de Audley and in 1236 he went on pilgrimage to Santiago, Northern Spain. During the 1240’s the Cantilupes especially Walter de Cantilupe Bishop of Worcester, became acquainted with Simon de Montfort the Earl of Leicester. Peter was also introduced to him sometime before 1248 when he went to Gascony as part of the Earl’s retinue. Although not related, Peter became a trusted aide and close friend to Earl Simon. In 1252, Peter was named as one of the few magnates that stood by the Earl at his trial over his lieutenantcy in Gascony. In 1259 Peter was named as an executor to Earl Simon’s will.

Peter’s own standing in the midlands was greatly enhanced by the decline in the Earl’s of Warwick. In 1242, John de Plessis became the Earl, but as a foreigner he had no links with the people and knights of Warwickshire. The De Montfort’s had always been one of the Earl of Warwick’s greatest tenants and Peter benefited from this decline.

Peter became part of the King’s Council and witnessed at least five charters in 1254. Peter was also made part of the King’s son’s household and was one of the magnates chosen to escort Lord Edward, later Edward I, to Spain, for his marriage to Eleanor of Castile in September 1254. King Henry III often appointed him as a diplomat or envoy to France. In 1253, 1254 and 1256 Peter was sent by the king to amend and confirm the truce between England and France. In December 1259, Peter was present at the signing of the Treaty of Paris. He was an arbitrator at the Earl of Leicester’s trial in July 1261, met the Papal Legate to try and prevent the baron’s excommunication in September 1264 and was finally used in 1265 to negotiate the Treaty of Pipton between Earl Simon and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd Prince of Wales.

Peter was appointed Warden of the Welsh March near Montgomery, Sheriff of Shropshire and Staffordshire and custodian of the castles of Bridgnorth and Shrewsbury in 1257. He was to use the revenues of these counties to keep the March in order and did not have to render any account to the Exchequer – an extraordinary exemption. He was chosen because of his experience and loyalty as well as his diplomatic skills.
In April 1258 baronial discontent with the King reached boiling point. Seven leading magnates, all experienced councillors signed a mutual oath to protect each other. This Confederation marked the beginning of what was to become the Barons’ Rebellion. The Seven Confederates were: Simon de Montfort Earl of Leicester; Earl of Gloucester; Earl of Norfolk; Peter of Savoy; John Fitz Geoffrey; Hugh Bigod; and Peter de Montfort. At the resulting Parliament at Oxford, Peter was one of the Twelve that represented the barons. Peter was elected onto the Council of 15 that ‘exercised complete control over the government and administration of the realm’\(^2\). However, the King regained control in 1261, and Earl Simon left for France.

From 1259 Peter de Montfort was granted the keeping of the town of Abergavenny for five years. Early in 1263 letters from Peter describe the disturbances in the March of Wales and how many had changed alliance from the crown to the ‘Prince of Wales’. He describes how he had spent 250 marks on keeping the castle and town fortified. On the 5\(^{th}\) March Peter led his force of 4,000 footsoldiers and 80 knights against a Welsh force of around 10,000 foot and 180 knights. He held the bridge over the Usk at Abergavenny for two days until help arrived from neighbouring marcher lords. He then forded the river to the North and engaged the Welsh army on its flank. ‘The move was daring, its results decisive’. The welsh force fled and over 300 were taken or killed.\(^3\)

Earl Simon returned in 1263 to a country in complete disorder, and met his supporters at Oxford. Louis IX King of France set up an arbitration between Henry III and the barons. Earl Simon was due to represent the barons but broke his leg and was replaced by Peter de Montfort. In January 1264, Louis IX unsurprisingly ruled in favour of Henry III. The baronial forces mustered at London and Northampton, while the King gathered a force at Oxford. On the 3\(^{rd}\) April 1264, Henry marched on the baronial forces at Northampton that was commanded by the Earl of Leicester’s son, Simon junior and Peter de Montfort. The town defences proved totally inadequate and the king’s forces captured the barons including Peter and his sons. However within a month Earl Simon had defeated the king at Lewes. Earl Simon, who was in effect controlling the country, ordered Peter to be released.

During this regime, Peter was worked hard. He was nominated onto the ruling Council of Nine, made holder of the Privy seal and supervisor of the Great seal. In May 1265, Lord Edward, the King’s son, escaped and gained support from the marcher lords. The two opposing forces met at Evesham on the 4\(^{th}\) August 1265. Peter was Earl Simon’s most experienced captain as most of his supporters were younger knights and barons. Simon’s force was routed with Edward’s death squad cutting down the leaders including Earl Simon and Peter de Montfort. Chroniclers remembered the apocalyptic August day recording that a storm cast ‘a great darkness throughout all the world’\(^4\)
Many supporters of the barons held out until 1267, especially at Kenilworth and Ely. The Sheriff of Warwickshire was unable to evaluate Peter’s lands in Warwickshire because of the resistance of the king’s enemies there. The Town of Henley was burnt down but quickly recovered for in 1295 it had 69 burgesses.

The Warwickshire De Montfort’s continued to be important Midland magnates until 1369, but never again reached the heights of Peter’s life. The Castle received a visit by the Edward II and his household for six days in January 1324. Peter’s sons continued to hold his father’s lands: Peter junior in Warwickshire and Robert in Rutland, while Peter’s youngest son, William, became Dean of St Paul’s, London.

“The support Peter de Montfort gave Earl Simon was of the first importance. While a close personal friend and follower, he also enjoyed his own power base in the Midlands and an independent career in the service of the King and his son Edward. He possessed considerable abilities as a soldier, diplomat, and councillor. It is highly significant that Simon retained the loyalty of such a man to the last.”

Jonathan Dovey, 2006

Notes
1 Acta Sanctorum, Octobris, I, 599. from St Thomas de Cantilupe Bishop of Hereford: Essays in his Honour, p.57.
2 Treharne & Sanders, Documents of the Baronial Movement of Reform & Rebellion, p.12.
3 J Beverley Smith, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd Prince of Wales, 1998, pp.149-153

Further Reading
J. C. L. Dovey, Peter de Montfort: The Role of a Leading Magnate during the Barons’ Rebellion 1258-1265, Unpublished Thesis U.W. Aberystwyth 2000
M. Jancey (ed) St Thomas Cantilupe Bishop of Hereford: Essays in his Honour, 1982
A ROMAN & SAXON BEAUDESERT?

The notion that Beaudesert and Henley had Anglo Saxon or Roman origins came from the assertion by Dugdale in the 17th Century that Beaudesert was recorded as ‘Donnele’ in the Domesday Book.

Hannett in 1863 wrote:

> At the Norman Conquest it was certified to have contained, under the name of Donnelie, (its after designation as Beldesert being given to it by one of its Norman owners,) one hide, with two ploughlands arable, six villeins and two bordars with two ploughs…

Other writings of this time stated that:

> These hills had formerly belonged to Alwold, who, lived in a hut, surrounded by a stockade on this promontory. This mountainous ground was once a Roman encampment, and at that time bore the name of Donnelie.

However the location of Donnelie was re-assessed in the 20th Century. Antiquarian Horace Round and others compiling the Victoria County Histories established that it was not Beaudesert. Donnelie is now reckoned to be Honiley by the National Archives and the latest editions of the Domesday Book. The VCH mentions that Beaudesert was incorporated into Preston Bagot in the Domesday survey.

Cooper in his Records of Beaudesert (1931) wrote:

> Beaudesert does not occur in the Domesday Book and Dugdale conjectures that the place Donnelie is identical with it, but recent investigation does not support this view.

However Cooper speculates that Beaudesert had been occupied in earlier times.

> It is possible that it was first fortified by an early British tribe as it is adjacent to this ancient track, Edge Lane. At a later date it was most likely to be fortified by the Romans as they had a Station at Camp Hill, a couple of miles northwards which was connected with the castle by the above mentioned track. It is also known that the Romans had a station at Camp Hill, which also lies on Edge Lane, so it is possible that they also used this natural vantage point.

However there is no evidence to back up these claims. The NMR for Camp Hill reveals that it was considered to be Roman by Hannett, Cromwellian by Rev. Bell and ignored by the VCH. The Field investigator in 1968 commented that ‘this feature is situated on a hillside. It is completely devoid of any defensive qualities and is undoubtedly a quarry’.

The Archaeological dig upon Beaudesert ‘Mount’ found nothing earlier than Norman in date. The majority of pottery finds were from the 12th and 13th centuries. There have been no finds from the Saxon or Roman period in the Beaudesert area to support the claim that there was a settlement.

Camp Hill From Hannett’s, Forest of Arden
Therefore the early history of Beaudesert is not quite as attractive as Dugdale, Hannett and others had so poetically written. Instead Beaudesert and Henley highlight how later settlements impact upon earlier landscapes. Beaudesert was formed out of areas of woodland and forest hence its name Beautiful Waste. Henley was obtained from the manor of Wootton by the De Montfort family in lieu of either 3 shillings or a pair of scarlet hose. The smallness of the planned town borough and the way in which the town burgage plots were marked out using the original ridge and furrow highlight its later formation over open fields.

Sources:
Dugdale, W. – *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, 1656
Hannett, J. – *The Forest of Arden*, 1863
Bell, Rev G. E. – *Some Baron’s of Arden*, c.1900
Cooper, W. – *Records of Beaudesert*, 1931
VCH – *Henley, Beaudesert*, 1945
NMR Monument – *Id 331117, NMR No. SP16 NE1*, RCHME, 2000
Time Team Interim Report – *Beaudesert Castle*, 2001
PRO – Domesday Book,
[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/domesday.asp](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/domesday.asp)
THE STRANGE CASE OF JOAN DE CRUDDESHALE

In January 1285 the Assize court held at Warwick heard an extraordinary case brought by Joan de Cruddeshale against the rector of Preston Bagot, Peter of Leycester.¹

Entry in the Warwickshire Eyre of Joan de Cruddeshale’s case

She was travelling home to Cruddeshale² along the king’s highway when outside the house of the Nicholus le Warrener at Preston Bagot she was captured and led away to the castle at Henley where she was held against her will. She was held there from the Monday after the feast of St Peter & Paul (29th June) until the Thursday after the feast of St James (25th July). Amongst the items that were taken from her were a clasp or buckle (firmaculum) worth 2s, a silk veil (peplum cerico) worth 18d, a belt (zona) worth 12d and a silk purse (bursa cerico) worth 12d containing 2s worth of silver.³


She accused the following of committing the crime:

John Sparkes of Henley and Lettice his wife, William Gollifrey of Henley, Adam of Hynestoke, Nicholas de Leicester, Roger de la Lee, Thomas Sparkes, Ralph de Leicester servant of Peter of Leicester, William ... a servant of Peter of Leycester, William the chaplain of Preston Bagot, Thomas de Stokes and his son Richard, Richard Baron, Thomas Bygod and Alice his wife, John Clerk and his wife Agnes, Ralph Truman, Thomas Longbridge, Alan the clerk of Peter of Leycester.

Peter de Leyc’ rector of Preston Bagot

She blamed Peter of Leycester the rector of Preston Bagot of organising her capture but the accused were acquitted due to a technicality and were exonerated by the local jury. Peter of Leycester (d.1304) was a notorious pluralist and had been clerk to the bishop of Worcester. He was made rector of Preston Bagot by Peter de Montfort of Beaudesert in 1275. But by 1287 he was very much out of favour with the bishop of Worcester as he was stated to have committed the vice of ingratitude.⁴
It is impossible to discover whether or not this incident actually occurred as the case was thrown out because of a technicality not because it didn’t happen. At this time gang robbery was rife, often targeting merchants and often supported by or involving: knights and the clergy. In 1280 Henry Bagot of Ullenhall was robbed of £10 worth of grain by a gang of ten led by Ralph the Barber. And Peter de Montfort was involved in a skirmish at Garthorpe in February 1265 where he and 12 others including his two sons were pardoned for killing William Gorham of Stapelford.

If the incident did occur then it raises some questions that cannot easily be answered. How did this gang manage to hold Joan in Henley Castle for about a month without the cooperation of at least the constable or even the De Montfort family themselves? Is this evidence of an organised gang that operated in the area with the support of the De Montfort family? Who was Joan de Cruddeshale and was there a specific reason for targeting her? Perhaps she had committed a crime at the local market? But what is known is that this wasn’t an isolated case of criminal activity in Warwickshire in the 13th century.

Notes

1 Public Records Office: Just1/956 – Warwickshire Eyre of 1285
2 Cruddeshale is an unidentified place mentioned with Bearley & Wilmcote in the Warwickshire Feet of Fines in 1334.
3 It is possible that Joan was travelling back from the Market at Henley which was held on Mondays
4 Episcopal Register of Bishop Godfrey Giffard 1268-1301
5 R H Hilton, A Medieval Society, p.253
6 Calendar of Patent Rolls Henry III 1258-66, p.408 & p.479

Thanks to Mairi Macdonald for help in reading the Warwickshire Eyre entry.

Jonathan Dovey
HENLEY’S MARKET CROSS

You may have seen in the local press, reference to the dilemma, which confronts the Joint Parish Council over the future of the ancient Market Cross.

Parish Council Questionnaire (July 1980)

Recently there have been calls for the Market cross to be restored or replaced, yet this issue has been going on since 1979 when the cross was described as beyond repair. The Parish Council gave formal notice of their intention to remove the cross in December 1979 and set out to try and find somewhere to store the old cross and come up with a design for a replacement. With recent concerns about the cross, it is worth looking back at the history of the cross and the issues of restoration.

Market or Poultry crosses came relatively late in the history of markets. Although they are difficult to date, not many were built before the 15th century. Their intention was to link together market transactions with a sense of morality. They were frequently highly decorated, stepped pillars rather than true crosses. Later on they became arcaded roofed shelters combining the cross with the market hall. Unfortunately many were pulled down as towns developed. All three of the market crosses in Stratford have gone: Bridge Street, Rother Street and the White cross next to the Guild chapel. They became a convenient place for making announcements and for displaying public penance so stocks were often placed nearby.

Today Henley’s Market cross is a mere shadow of its former glory.

“The Market Cross is now more important for its historical significance than its physical qualities, as well as being listed it is also an ancient monument.”

(Henley in Arden Conservation Area Study, October 1992)

The exact date of the cross cannot be found but it could have been erected in the mid 15th century at the time Ralph Boteler obtained a Charter from Henry VI. Since around this time Ralph Boteler re-founded the guild and the present St John’s church was built. However it could have been put up at the time of the original founding of the guild in the late 14th century. The cross originally had four niches with carvings of the Rood, Trinity, St Peter and possibly the Virgin and Child. William Cooper described the Market cross as one of the few still existing in this county and is of exceptional interest.
In 1979 the parish council was concerned at the state of the cross and obtained an inspection by the Area Superintendent of Works from the Department of the Environment. The report was that the cross was beyond repair and should be replaced with the original repositioned under cover. There was concern that there was to be no say in its removal from the people of Henley or the Ancient Monument Society or similar bodies. Formal notice of the intention to remove the cross was given in December 1979. Originally the Area Superintendent of Works had suggested a replica of the cross being built, but soon the Parish Council had mooted the idea of a more modern design.

“The councillors believe that a stone cross (not necessarily an exact replica of the old cross) is likely to be the most acceptable idea.”

The questionnaire was weighted in order to obtain an answer that the Council wished to hear. The various designs and costs highlight that the council would have preferred a simple plain cross. However this would not be symbolic of Henley’s past and would not reflect on the importance and exceptional interest of the old cross. An absurd example for a replacement cross was that of an ‘Ice Cream’ as reported in the Stratford Herald in September 1980.

However it was the suggestion by the Parish Council that the cross be moved to Warwick Museum or another museum that caused outrage amongst locals especially a consortium of local businesses. By 1983 a new treatment to preserve the stone was described as a feasible alternative by the Area Superintendent especially since further legislation had been passed in 1979 concerning the protection of Ancient Monuments.

The events of the early 1980’s helped prevent further deterioration to the cross. However it also highlighted the main issues: whether it is better to keep the remains since they have historical importance or whether to replace them with a new cross. Surely a listed ancient monument should be restored as a historic building like a cathedral is restored, by replacing the stone carvings. What should be done with the original cross since the cost of storage and conservation is likely to be high? With the subject of the Market Cross once again in the limelight the lessons of the past should be given careful consideration.

Notes

Minutes of the Market Cross Sub-Committee, June 1980 – Dec 1981, JPC
Unpublished Letters to & from the JPC Clerk 1979-1984
Your Heritage Market Cross Questionnaire 1980, JPC
The Oxford Companion to Local and Family History, D Hey, 1998
The Making of Our Towns, W Savage, 1952
Henley in Arden, W Cooper, 1992
THE TOWN CRIER

Recently it was reported in the local newspapers that Stratford had appointed its first Town Crier for over a hundred years. Stratford Town Clerk said, ‘It means we can introduce a traditional figure back into the town who we think will be popular with visitors and residents’.

You would have thought that in an ancient borough like Henley, the position of Town Crier would have been long established. However the first mention of a Town Crier in Henley was only in 1917.

This is not as surprising as you might think, as the title of Town Crier came relatively late for an officer of a manorial court. The first records that mention a Town Crier come from the late 15th and early 16th centuries: 1467 in Bristol, 1540 in Chester, 1553 in Stratford. They became commonplace by the 17th and 18th centuries at a time when ironically the importance of manorial courts started to decline. However the duties performed by the Crier do go back to the establishment of manorial courts.

Originally the Bailiff or Reeve was the person in charge of the manor for the lord. As time went on and the manor grew, the Bailiff was able to delegate responsibilities to other officers. Under the Bailiff or Chief Tithingman came Tithingmen, Pledges, Messors, and Beadles. The types of officers developed differently depending upon the geography and makeup of the manor. Specific officers such as Haywards, Cowherds, Ale Tasters, Butter Weighers, Brook Lookers and Shamble Wardens were created. These inconsistencies explain why it can be difficult to identify specific manorial officers especially as titles were also interchangeable.

In 1996 Stratford’s council had argued that the Beadle was not the town crier despite contradicting a council minute of 1857. However the Old English for a herald or crier is Bedelli or Beadle. In the Warwickshire Hundred Rolls of 1279 there are 21 manors in the Stoneleigh and Kineton Hundreds that mention the name Bedell. The Beadle seems to have been the officer that took on responsibilities that would later be those of the constable and crier. The constable was also a slightly later officer whose duties were originally performed by Tithingmen who raised the ‘hue and cry’. The Beadle summoned the tenants to the court, collected fines and enforced the orders of the court. When courts obtained symbols of their power like a mace and began to build their own meeting places, the Beadle took on the duties of bearing the mace and taking care of the hall. The first mention of a Beadle in the records of Henley was in 1799. Since 1845 until 1893 there was a Beadle and Mace Bearer, whilst since 1917 there has been a Town Crier and Mace Bearer.

The Beadle in a Quarter Sessions’ Court would make the triple cry of “Oyez” (Anglo-Norman French for “hear ye”). The Beadle or Town Crier would call for silence by making a single cry of “Oyez” at a manorial court and a triple cry of “Oyez” at a Leet Court.
HENLEY’S MEDIEVAL HOSPITAL

In 1448 the Bishop of Worcester granted an indulgence to anyone who made a contribution towards the newly built hospital or house of alms.

On the 28th day of the month of January 1448 the reverend father in his manor of Alvechurch granted forty days indulgence to all his subjects and others, the diocesans … who [should contribute] any of their goods, etc., to the new building and support of the hospital or house of alms within the town of Henley in Arden, for the refreshment of poor people and pilgrims there assembling, newly erected, etc., for three years from the date of these presents consecutively reckoned and so long to endure.

Unfortunately little is known about this institution. However Dugdale writing in the 17th century mentioned that there used to be a hospital for the relief of the poor.

‘Some think that the Gild house, situated on the North side of the chapel, is the hospital house spoken of, for in the chapel before mentioned there was a Gild founded by Ralph Boteler’.

Hannett in the 19th century in his book ‘The Forest of Arden’, wrote:

‘The site of this hospital is unknown, though by some it is thought probable that the old timber built house now a butchers shop, opposite to the county police station, formed part of it’.

Hannett thought that ‘The Gables’ was the hospital as it was built in the 15th century. In 1863 the house was a butchers shop before Hannett himself bought it in 1869.
A medieval hospital or house of alms was formed by a charitable institution like a Guild. Hospitals were modelled upon the dormitories of a monastic house. They contained a long hall that could be divided, a chapel and a separate room or house for the wardens or priests. The Lord Leycester in Warwick is a nearby example of a medieval hospital. It housed a hospital, chapel, guildhall, reception rooms and a great hall. In Stratford, Abingdon and Banbury the hospital was incorporated into a Guildhall or School. While at Yarmouth the Hospital of St Mary was established upon part of the original marketplace.

Using these examples it looks highly likely that the hospital in Henley would have been placed near the Guildhall and Chapel. William Cooper even suggests that it may have been under the same roof as the Guild since it was built in the mid 15th century. In many cases the occupants of a hospital had to attend daily services in the chapel. The Lady Chapel or Chapel of the Gild embraced the entire North aisle of St John’s Church and were entered to via the North door. This suggests that the hospital lay to the North of the Church perhaps surrounding a courtyard like the Lord Leycester Hospital in Warwick.
THE PARK’S OF HENLEY

The town of Henley was literally surrounded by parks in the middle ages. To the East was the Little Park and Castle while to the North and West was the Great Park of Henley.

Parks were created in order to keep deer and other forms of animal within the lord’s lands. They would often contain woodland, grassland, fishponds, rabbit warrens and a stud farm for horses. The boundaries of the park would have to be substantial in order to keep in the deer. Fences of tall oak stakes and hedges with high banks and ditches were in constant need of repair. A parker was employed to look after the park and a lodge was often built for him within the park.

In a Fine roll of 1240 between Peter de Montfort’s attorney and Brice of Henley it states that ‘Brice and his heirs should go once a year with Peter de Montfort and his heirs to chase in their wood in Warwickshire’. Ten years later Peter was granted a charter of Freewarren in all his lands including Henley and Beaudesert. In 1296 a park is mentioned in the extent of John de Montfort’s lands in Henley. Also in 1296 the park of Edmund de Stafford in Henley was broken into and hunted in carrying away his deer. Thirty years later in 1326 there is mention of a messuage called Parksshepene and 300 acres of wood within the Great Park.

The Account Roll of John Chamberleyn, Constable of the Castle in 1411 gives us a more detailed glimpse of the parks. 53s 4d was received of the pasture of the Great Park, and the same amount was received for the Park of Beaudesert. Repairs were done to the castle portico by using timber from the parks. The hedges within the park were in need of repair as were the palings around the park and a padlock bought for the door. John Chamberleyn was also paid as the parker of the Beaudesert Park while John Ive was parker of the Great Park.
The herbage of the Little Park was valued at £6 in 1487 and was retained in the king’s hands for the support of his colts and mares and was called the stud. Between 1477 and 1547 there was a Master of the Hunt, Master of the Game and a Keeper of the Parks. When they were disparked in 1547, the Great Park was let for £26 13s 4d and the Little Park for £19. In a survey of 1608 the Little Park was described as being of approximately 200 acres, fenced with spikes and ditches but not technically empaled.

Specially constructed rabbit warrens were popular in the 13th century and streams were diverted and dams built to create large fishponds. The 1608 survey mentions a rabbit warren while the outline of the large fishpond can still be seen today.

Within the Little Park in 1608 there was barn and lodge of three bays. Perhaps the building shown on the 1695 map of the former Park is the lodge mentioned. In 1682 all the land situated in Beaudesert and Henley that were formerly imparked and known as Henley Park were sold off by Thomas Spencer and Alice Franck to Richard Holmes, John Morrell, Simon Kempson, John Hopkins, Thomas Payn and Richard Bartlam for £4357 10s. The lands were then divided between the six. We know that Richard Holmes’ lands included Bromley Meadow and The Great Rail, Park Hill as he released them to John Ferrers in 1720.