

In the Footsteps of William Marshal (1147-1219)

Magna Carta centenary 1215-2015 www.magnacarta800th.com

Travelling down by train to Manchester recently, a fellow traveller came to sit by me at Preston. He revealed that he was a Professor of History at one of the regional Universities and we chatted about the wealth of local historical provenance in the North West. As his speciality was Industrial England he admitted to knowing less about the Cartmel Peninsula than perhaps he should. He had never been inside Cartmel Priory Church! And even as an academic historian, he appeared to be unaware of the name and influence of William Marshal. I have to admit to being unsurprised - this ignorance about the founder of Cartmel Priory is quite common. How many of our own congregation and certainly of the visiting general public to this wonderful building had previously heard of him before entering through its Norman porch which forms the South doorway.

So who was this man? And why should we acknowledge his life at this time?

A man of faith, legendary loyalty and military accomplishments, he grew up in the royal Norman court of Henry II, under the care of Eleanor of Aquitaine, to whose sons the princes Henry, Richard and John he became a tutor especially in chivalry and martial arts. Subsequently it is said that he became a hero at tournaments and was known as the greatest soldier of his age. He travelled for three years as a soldier and crusader through the Holy Land. On his return, now in middle age, he was granted, in marriage, the hand of the teenage Isabel de Clare, daughter of the King of Leinster, Richard Strongbow. Through her he inherited Pembroke Castle and Chepstow Castle as well as extensive lands in Ireland. He was also granted the keeping of the large royal estate of Cartmel, where in thanks to God in 1189 he decided to found his Priory of Cartmel, one of three known foundations set up by him. William Marshall remained as close and loyal counsel for the young King Richard Lion Heart and after Richard's death for his brother, the unpopular King John. Differences, indeed hostility, between King John and his Barons, including William Marshal, eventually led to the instigation of a Charter of Rights culminating in the sealing of Magna Carta, the basis of law and justice to this day in the western world, at Runnymede on 15 June 1215... When King John died in 1216, it was William Marshal who was named by the major Barons as Lord Regent of England during the childhood of the nine year old King Henry III. In 1217 he re-issued Magna Carta of which he is a signatory as one of the witnessing Barons. As he approached his death, he was invested into the order of Knights Templar, dying in his old family home in Berkshire but buried at the Crusaders' Temple Church in London.

Justifiably, we who live on the Cartmel Peninsula and those who worship in the Priory Church of St Mary and St Michael might wish to see acknowledgment of William Marshal's memory centre stage of the Magna Carta celebrations in 2015. Accordingly in early Spring time 2015 a Church holiday is being planned in the year which commemorates 800 years

since the signing of Magna Carta at Runnymede in 1215 and its update in 1217. *Still in the early days of planning*, this trip will be by coach (Bibby's Coaches of Ingleton have been most helpful in getting some shape into the planning) and is likely to entail travelling over 5 days.

It will take us via Chepstow and Tintern Abbey, where William's wife and mother in law were buried, to Newport for our first overnight stay. On the following morning we drive to Fishguard and join the afternoon ferry sailing to Rosslare (yes! These footsteps lead firmly into Ireland). We stay two nights in Waterford from where we can visit the two other known churches founded by William Marshal, one of which is still a busy, functioning Catholic church in Duiske in County Kilkenny and the other is now only a ruin called Tintern Parva in County Wexford. We are also invited to make a visit to Ireland's celebrated Ros Tapestry www.rostapestry.com which I am told is a unique and relatively modern attraction but Ireland's own Bayeux Tapestry. Described as "a massive community project, it is dedicated to the production of 15 historical panels, embroidered by a team of over 100 volunteers, depicting events around the Anglo-Norman arrival in the south east of Ireland" It brings a significant part of Irish heritage to life and 3 of the 15 panels depict moments in the life of William Marshal ! We spend our 4th night in Bray and manage to have some free time in Dublin before catching the Stena Line ferry from Dun Laoghaire to Holyhead from where we motor home.

Cost: The Director of Bibby's, Andy Ingram, who has been very helpful in plotting our travels, says" I think you can safely say it will be **over £400.00** in 2015." He has asked us to bear in mind

1. The rate of VAT is under review for all tourism services after Dec 2013
2. A fluctuating exchange rate

At this stage I should welcome some expression of interest from anyone who thinks they might like to join the party on this once in a lifetime opportunity.

The minutiae of organisation can be approached when we know how many people are likely to wish to travel! In the first instance I should be grateful if potential participants **would send me an e-mail** at amonkman@btinternet.com

n.b.all the organisation will be done on the internet by e-mail. If you do not have e-mail, please ring me on the no. below so that I can enter your details myself. Alternatively please nominate a friend who can communicate by e-mail on your behalf!

Many thanks

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