

Chronicle of Wigmore abbey, with copy of the Brut Chronicle, and genealogical tables of the kings of England and the house of Mortimer.

Binder's title: "Abbaye de Wigemo Mortin."

Caption title (fol. 1r): "Conuent l'abbey de Wigemore et de Mortimer."

CS 439 .f.M82W6

MS 224-v.

Wales, (in French and Latin, with some notes in English). 14th and 15th centuries.

The various sections of this MS were written down by about six different scribes during the fourteenth<sup>early</sup> (and fifteenth) centuries; in addition, a sixteenth-century hand has written a list of the names of the men who came to England with William the Conqueror (fols. 43v-44r), and there are brief entries and notes in later hands. It appears that most of the writing was done during the 14th century. The last full entry for the Mortimer family records the life of Roger, fourth earl of March, who died in 1398 (fol. 59v); the last full entry for the kings is that of Edward III, d. 1377 (fols. 36v-37r).

The contents of the MS may be grouped as follows:

- 1) an account, in Norman French, of the founding of Wigmore Abbey or priory--fols. 1-5. The castle of Wigmore, in Wales, was the chief seat of the famous Mortimer family, earls of March and Ulster, who were powerful landowners who played an important part in English politics during the 14th century.
- 2) a copy of the Brut chronicle, in Latin--fols. 7-24.
- 3) the genealogy of the kings of England from Beorhtric, King of Wessex, to Edward III, in Latin except for fols. 35v-36r, which are in French--fols. 25-37.
- 4) list of names of those who came to England with the Conqueror--fols. 43-44.

5) Genealogy of the Mortimer family, together with sketches of arms and other fragmentary entries--fols. 48-63. (in Latin)

6) miscellaneous notes in Latin and French, together with more coats of arms and the added leaf from a Latin sermon or commentary--fols. 64-69.

The entire manuscript is of considerable interest and importance for more than one reason. It was clearly designed to set forth the claim of the Mortimer family to the English throne. Moreover, it was the chief source of the account of the Abbey of Wigmore and its founders which was published by Roger Dodsworth and William Dugdale in 1661 (Monastici Anglicani. Volumen alterum de canonicis regularibus Augustinianis, pp. 213-29). It contains many well-executed ornamental initials and illustrations, including two elaborate illuminations (fols. 51v, 55v), and has the further interest of showing fine pen drawings in several stages of incompleteness, thus illustrating the processes of medieval artists. The MS was the source of a recent PhD. dissertation (Mary E. Giffin, The Wigmore Manuscript and the Mortimer family, Diss. Chicago 1939 -typewritten-); and the same author has published an article describing the MS in great detail and giving additional information on the background and dates of its composition ("A Wigmore MS at the U. of Chicago," The National Library of Wales Journal, VII, no. 4, Winter 1952--a copy of this article is in the secondary MSS file in the U. of C. library, Dept. of Special Collections). Concerning the importance of the MS, Miss Giffin writes at the conclusion of her article: "As one of the sources of the chronicle of Adam of Usk it adds considerably to our knowledge of the way in which legend was brought to bear upon political events of the fourteenth century. As Dugdale's source it is valuable for monastic history and for the history of a powerful family over a period of more than three hundred years. The account of the foundation and early years of Wigmore Abbey is an Anglo-Norman text of some importance, which awaits an editor, and the notes of the final quire will extend our knowledge of several Marcher

families and their lands."

Folio-- 32 x 25 cm.

70 vellum fols.--originally foliated.

Vellum MS formerly bound in calf, rebound (1966) in gold-tooled goatskin by The Lakeside Press. Rubricated, with ornamental initials in gold, red and blue; two illuminations.

Inside front cover bears bookplate of Thomas Philip Earl de Grey (1781-1859-- famous statesman and author) and the Wrest Park Library. Regarding the various changes in ownership of the MS during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, see the brief description of it in De Ricci, Census of medieval and renaissance MSS, I, p. 578. In 1929, Prof. John M. Manly of the Dept. of English purchased the MS for the University of Chicago Library with funds made available by Martin A. Ryerson, a trustee of the University.

JS 12 July 1968.