



The Provisions



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The small hamlet of Brackley was one of five tournament sites licensed by Richard I as a way of controlling the violence of knightly pretensions and profiting from it at the same time. It was here in 1249 that Richard de Clare switched sides (who would've thought) and joined the Lusignans against the native nobility, encouraged no doubt by the £3,500 Henry gave him to marry his son Gilbert to Alice Lusignan. Now in March 1264 it became the venue for a last stab at peace between the royalists and Montfortians. Henry was in nearby Oxford, building up his army and unfurling his famous red standard with the fire-breathing dragon. One of his first acts was to order the student population to be gone, lest his 'untamed chieftains' of the north showed them what it was really like to riot in the spring.



See you gentlemen in Brackley!

The initiative seems to have come from Louis, who was perhaps surprised that his award in Amiens was tantamount to war in England. He sent a trusted hand, John de Valenciennes, to hear both sides at Brackley and reach an agreement. John had been the lord of Haifa and was equally concerned about bringing aid back to the rump Christian dominions in the Holy Land. At Amiens he got Henry to promise him £500 out of his treaty money for relief back east. The talks went nowhere, however, and by the end of March Walter de Cantilupe was leading a delegation of bishops to offer Henry everything he wanted except the aliens, and even then they were willing to take Boniface back. By that time the king was ready to march and could afford to be contemptuous. As with the students, he ordered them to be gone and not return unless summoned.

'Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend!' My biography of Simon de Montfort is finished, a rather pleasant eight-month endeavor that in the end, I hope, remains more sober than heroic. The title *With All, For All: Simon de Montfort and the Rise of the English Nation* may incline towards the latter, but it was my intention to show that Montfort's lasting achievement was cultivating a movement as much about community spirit as it was about political and social reform. As for the quote from Mao Zedong above, he did something similar in China, but with decidedly different consequences.

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