

# The Provisions

The official newsletter of  
Simon de Montfort 2014

May 2014

The beginning of May 1264 was looking rather grim for Simon de Montfort. Forced to break off the siege of Rochester, he had little choice but to leave London and seek out the king. It was nevertheless a bold and inspired move, for Henry's response was to start wearing his armour and to gather his army in and around the safety of Lewes. One can imagine that when he saw Montfort's forces moving down the South Downs towards his line in the early morning mist of 14 May, he was already a beaten man. A telling account of what the mood must have been like for the Montfortians prior to the battle can be found in Maurice Powicke's *The Thirteenth Century*. 'The highest moments in the history of a cause, as in the life of a man, transcend time and circumstance. Whatever happened at Lewes, Simon's dilemma would not be resolved. His cause was doomed to frustration. Yet a sense of beauty lingers over those days in May when the great earl waited among the woods of the Weald. High spirits and anxious forebodings, eager exultation and solemn resolve had brought bishops, friars, barons, and Londoners together in a transient mood of high purpose, giving to our annals a dignity untouched by cause and effect, or the rights and wrongs of the case.'



Overlooking Lewes. Hereabouts Montfort addressed the troops.

The Battle of Lewes Project has slated several activities to mark the 750th anniversary this month, including an open-air mystery play and retracing Simon's march over the South Downs. In all fairness, the royalist arrival in Lewes will also be remembered, in period costume no less, just as Henry would have wanted it. A commemorative guide to the various events can be downloaded [here](#). The culmination will be the unveiling of the Lewes Tapestry that has been stitched together in the tradition of the Bayeux Tapestry for the past two years with the help of 55 volunteers. Louise Wilkinson, the author of *Eleanor de Montfort, A Rebel Countess in Medieval England* will do the honours on 14 May.



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