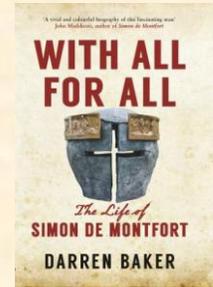




The Provisions

The official newsletter of
Simon de Montfort 2014



Finis

A little over two years ago I was finishing up my initial research for a biography about Simon de Montfort. At that time Leicester was all excited, as well it should have been, because 1265 would mark the 750th anniversary of Montfort, the earl of Leicester, bringing about a revolutionary change in English government that led to Parliament as we know it today. And yet all this excitement was about the recent discovery of the bones of Richard III. Having dug them up in Leicester, the locals dismissed any notion of returning them to York, where he is generally associated with, and went to work on plans to stage a grand royal reburial.



When it dawned on me that they were actually serious, I started the Provisions newsletter as a way to keep Simon and his legacy in the public eye amidst this rapidly growing carnival atmosphere. The idea was to rally the faithful and give credit where credit's due. A new 'common enterprise' you might say. Twenty-six issues on and this battle has been won by Richard hands down. Today he lies in stately honour, his bones like relics to the new faithful. The best that can be hoped for Simon is that spectators don't wince too much when they go to re-enact his death at Evesham this summer.

Despite this also being the year of Magna Carta 800, the Richard thing and the baby-watch thing make it clear that royalty will always have a treasured place in the hearts of people everywhere. And that gets to the crux of the real problem with Montfort. When all is said and done, there's something about his challenge to king and authority, for the sake of his oath to the Provisions of Oxford, that seems to offend the British sense of decency. It's worse in his case because he wasn't English to begin with. No right-minded politician or academic would dare suggest that it's his foreignness that rubs them the wrong way, but with an election coming up and immigration at the top of the agenda, Leicester and the establishment are no doubt happy to fawn over the safe bet. Richard wasn't a local boy either, but local enough.

For all that, the Provisions newsletter was successful in the sense that every release only convinced me that much more of Simon de Montfort's place in the pantheon of



great Europeans, all the simple matter of the constitutional monarchy he imposed on the kingdom in 1264. In doing so, he helped set the cornerstone of that beautiful building along the Thames, where the two main parties meet every week to call each other names and otherwise violate every rule of British decency. Maybe that's why he can't get a break in his adopted country today.

Lastly, it was also a success in just being a plain labour of love and pleasure all the way. Hope you enjoyed it as well...Darren Baker