

This is the ninth of an occasional series of articles by David Stone about incidents in the history of Swanton Morley and its church

WILLIAM DE MORLEY

I am afraid that this article slightly overlaps with my previous one on the early Morleys, but it does summarise most of what I know about this William de Morley. The first that we hear of William is in 1288, by which time King Edward I was well established on the throne. On October 23, 1288, he was appointed to the custody of the lands of John d'Avyllers, deceased, tenant-in-chief. We do not know where those lands were, but they may well have been close to his other lands at Roydon and Morley.

His marriage

It is necessary now to take a short diversion and to look at the family into which William de Morley married.

The de Montalt family.

The family came from Monte Alto, or Montalt, which is now called Mold and is in Flintshire. They were hereditary seneschals of Chester and lords of Mold. In 1267 Robert de Montalt held the castle, the mound of which still stands. *It should be noted that, as well as estates in Hawarden and Coventry Robert had inherited Castle Rising in Norfolk.*

Now this Robert de Montalt had two sons Roger de Montalt, and Robert; he also had a daughter, Isabel. During the reign of Edward I, Roger served in the Gascon wars. In 1295 he was summoned to Parliament as a baron, thus becoming the 1st Baron Montalt. He married Julian, daughter of Roger de Clifford, but they had no surviving children. When he died in 1297, what lands he had passed to his brother Robert, while the barony became extinct. However, the de Montalt barony was recreated in 1299 for this young Robert de Montalt

But Robert de Montalt also died without issue in June 1329 and the barony of Montalt again became extinct. It will be shown elsewhere that his extensive lands passed to his mother, Emma de Montalt, who later surrendered them to Isabella, Queen Consort of England, mother of Edward III.

We do not know when William de Morley married Isabel the sister and heir of Robert de Montalt (d.1329), who is mentioned above, but we do know that they had a son, Robert. However, Isabel died and, some time before October 1295 (see below), William married a lady called Cicely. So, William's hopes of inheriting the Montalt's estates came to nothing, because Isabel died before her mother, Emma.

His visits to Gascony

In 1294 William took part in an abortive expedition to Gascony, in the company of the above Roger de Montalt, and under the command of the Earl of Richmond. He served there again in the campaigns of 1295 and 1296. There are various Calendar Rolls, which mention these visits, including the following one from October 1295.

“Grant to William de Morleye, who is going to Gascony on the king's service, of the custody, for as long as he remains there on the kings's service, of the manor of Saham, late of Ralph de Tony, tenant in chief, which is in the king's hands by reason of the minority of the heir, and Cicely, his wife, is to stay there during his absence if she choose.”

I wonder if Cicely did choose to live in Saham Toney while William was away?

His service in Scotland

We shall now look at William de Morley's service in Scotland and a little bit of background will probably be helpful here.

Background to the wars in Scotland

In 1286 Alexander, King of Scots, died when he fell off a cliff. The successor to his throne was his three-year-old granddaughter, Margaret. She was the daughter of the King of Norway, but she was a sickly girl and she died in Orkney on the way back to Scotland. It was after her death that Edward I made his claims of overlordship of Scotland. However, these claims were not accepted by the Guardians of Scotland, so Edward got every claimant to the throne to swear fealty to him for the throne of Scotland. Eventually John Balliol was crowned in 1292, but he then refused to acknowledge Edward as his overlord. In 1295 Edward gave the Scots an ultimatum. He wanted every man of rank to attend him on his forthcoming invasion of France. This was one step too far, and instead the Scots signed a treaty of mutual aid with France. In consequence, Edward invaded Scotland instead. England and Scotland would henceforth be in almost constant conflict for the next 300 years.

Edward began his invasion of 1296 at Berwick, which soon fell. He then routed the main Scottish army at Dunbar, when it was on its way back from raiding the north of England. Having subjugated Scotland, Edward now demanded that all nobles and landowners swear fealty to him. However, in 1297, William Wallace led a rising. John de Warenne, Earl of Surrey, marched north from Berwick and was heavily defeated at Stirling Bridge. Wallace was then knighted and put in sole command of the Scottish troops. Throughout the rest of 1297, Wallace ravaged the Border lands of England for corn and cattle. Such a turn of events brought Edward I back from his negotiations in France with King Philip. However, by early 1298 he had made peace with Philip IV, ending Scotland's hope of support from France.

Edward I then prepared a formidable force from all over his realm. Eight earls joined him: the Marshal, the Constable, Ralph de Monthermer, Arundel, Guy of Warwick and the young Earls of Lancaster and Pembroke, each bringing their own large contingents of minor knights and infantry, swelling his host to a monstrous size. This huge army eventually met Wallace at Falkirk in July 1298. It was a bitterly hard-fought affair, but it eventually resulted in a resounding victory for the English.

William went north in the company of Ralph de Monthermer, Earl of Gloucester and Hertford and both survived the battle. Note that the arms of both men appear on the *Falkirk Roll*, which, it is generally accepted, was composed shortly after the Battle of Falkirk.



Morley
*Argent a lion
rampant double
queued sable*



Monthermer
*Or an eagle
displayed vert*

Although William was summoned for service in Scotland in each year following, up to 1301, there does not seem to have been much action in the years immediately following Falkirk.

He was summoned to Parliament from 29 December 1299 to 3 November 1306 (which was after his death!). By these writs directed at *Willelmo de Morle* he is held to have become Lord Morley. We know that he died before the end of 1302, because this was the date when his widow and heirs were 'assesses to the Aid'. He was buried in the Lady Chapel of Roydon church. (Remember, the heart of his father, Robert, was buried in the same church.)

His widow, Cicely, was still living in 1316.

It was William's son, Robert de Morley I, who was eventually to acquire the manor of Swanton after his marriage to Hawyse Marshall.