

The Provisions

The official newsletter of
Simon de Montfort 2014

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And it all comes to this, December 1264, and the act that made Montfort famous centuries down the line. A fortnight into that month, a writ was sent out under Henry's name summoning parliament to meet in January to discuss Edward's release and other business of the realm. In addition to the clergy, baronage, and knights, two 'discreet, loyal, and honest citizens and burgesses' of the towns were invited as well. They were no doubt the local oligarchs, men not inclined to making life better for ordinary folk, but it was because they lacked exalted status that their inclusion marked a significant development in parliament. Economics had replaced loyalty as the bedrock of political power. If the king wanted money, he had to deal with the people who made it, who actually had a job instead of collecting rents and squaring off in tournaments. It took a while for the focus of this parliament to realise the importance of this innovation, but when he did, Edward gave parliament the form that would endure to this day.



Edward's parliament.
Thanks, Uncle Simon.

For the time being he was locked away in Kenilworth after the failed attempt to rescue him the previous month. In all probability he was invited to the Christmas celebrations in the castle, where it was said that the Montforts were joined by 140 knights in feasting and entertainment. Most likely he didn't just sit there and sulk, rather exchanged knowing glances of 'Remember, I'm going to be king some day.' Indeed, when he escaped the following spring and raised an army, several Montfortian knights crossed over, as was so typical for that period, and were rewarded for their betrayal.

Since the English Parliament is one of those institutions without a clear and proper beginning, Montfort's summons to the burgesses has been traditionally



chosen as the founding event. [Magna Carta 800](#) will launch its celebrations on 20 January next year with an observance of the 750th anniversary of this parliament, including festivities in Odiham (left), where King John was supposedly in residence when invited by the barons to seal Magna Carta. It was also where, on 20 April 1265, Simon and Eleanor saw each other for the last time.

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