

The Provisions

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1 September 1264 came and went without the papal legate getting any closer to England, yet he resisted excommunicating the lot of Montfortians. His ultimate aim was to use his powers of persuasion, rather than those of his office, to bear down on the English bishops, who were the bedrock of Montfort's spiritual support. He got his chance on 24 September when three of them appeared before him at Boulogne. The bishops of Worcester and London held their ground, but John Gervais of Winchester cracked and begged the legate to forgive him (he would die at the papal court in 1268, still seeking absolution). Some progress was made when Henry of Almain was released from captivity to assist in the negotiations. The fate of hostages like him was a major sticking point and the bishops had to put up a bond of nearly £14,000 to make sure he came back. He almost didn't after his party was suddenly set upon by a mob, leaving nine of them dead before it was over. The reason behind the attack remains a mystery, but Queen Eleanor was clearly unhappy that he was the hostage freed and not Edward. Her son didn't even figure in the latest round of proposals. Angry enough to launch the invasion by this point, her hand was stayed, some believe, by the legate himself.



It would not be the last time Henry of Almain was attacked



More bizarre artwork depicting Montfort can be found in the BBC series [This Sceptered Isle](#), which has him looking like a Bourbon king with an overinflated sense of self-importance. This image in fact was tracked down to a French source, where it was meant to represent the other Simon, his father, around the time of Muret in 1213. Whoever it's supposed to be, the full-plated armour suggests he had been transported back in time to conduct his great mission. No stranger to bogus claims, the BBC also trumpets Montfort's role in founding the House of Commons before posing this question: 'Did you know that the de Montforts were one of the families who first came to England with William the Conqueror in 1066?' Sure, but that was Peter de Montfort's family, not Simon's. Sorry, no relation.

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