

THE BEDFORDSHIRE MALHERBES

Gordon Reeves is researching the history of the Anglo-Norman family of **Malherbe** (also spelt **Malerbe**) that flourished between the 12th and 16th centuries in various English counties. They were particularly prevalent in Bedfordshire, e.g., in Carlton, Bromham, Goldington and Kempston near Bedford; Houghton Conquest, Clophill and Stotford to the south, and the Brickhills, Hockliffe, Husborne Crawley and Tingrith toward Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable.

Gordon writes as follows:

"The archivists at County Hall have pointed me to various documents highlighting their presence in some of these locations but I have yet to make contact with any historians in the county and the monographs or more general secondary sources that they may have produced – apart from the *Victoria County History* – and would value your suggestions. Might any members of your Society have an interest in this period or this family?

Of particular note are the difficulties that arose when **Robert Malherbe** inherited the property at Hockliffe and Houghton c 1240 while under-age and came under the custody of **Roger de Scaccario**. The Annals of Dunstable refer to the forgery of a charter in 1255 by **Abraham, Jew of Norwich**, in consort with **Richard Earl of Cornwall** that stated that Robert had alienated his lands to the Jews causing Richard, by command of the king (his brother Henry III), to eject the Malherbes and their overlord **William de Beauchamp** from these manors with much strife and the imprisonment of 28 men (possibly including Robert). Apparently, this attempt failed and **Robert's nephew, John**, inherited in 1251 but being 'in great need' in 1262 obtained the sizeable sum of 125 marks from Newnham priory in exchange for land at Stotford. Another John, possibly his son, was said to be in the wardship of **Lord William Muntchensy** (at the time of a bizarre wrestling match at Dunstable in 1283 in which both parties died – one of whom was a Muntchesny man)."

Gordon would be grateful for any pointers to useful background information about these individuals or events. He is also keen to find out more about the original mill at Bromham on the Ouse that was held by **Gilbert Malherbe**, the '**miller of Bromham**', in 1342. He believes that the present one only goes back to the 17th century.

[Email Gordon](#)