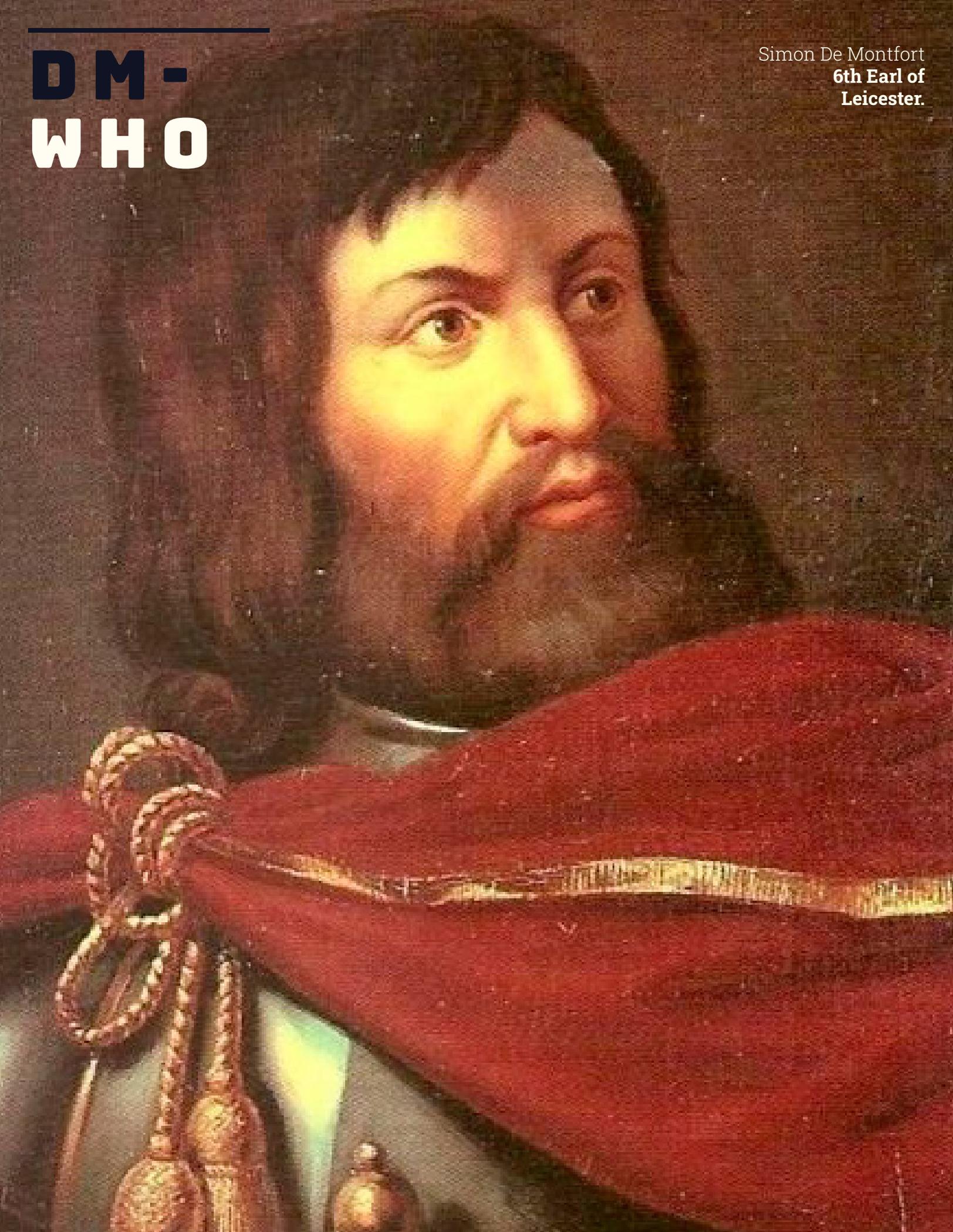


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**DM-**  
**WHO**

Simon De Montfort  
**6th Earl of  
Leicester.**





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This educational piece is fully referenced and sourced. You can find these resources and additional reading hosted at [demontfortsu.com](http://demontfortsu.com)

## **Early Life and Family**

**S**imon de Montfort was born in approximately 1208, his actual date of birth is unknown. He was the youngest son of French nobles Simon de Montfort and Alix de Montmorency. There is very little known about de Montfort when he was younger. He was first mentioned in text in 1217. When he was younger, de Montfort accompanied his parents during his father's crusades against the Albigenses. He was with his mother at the Siege of Toulouse in 1218 when his father died.

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## **De Montfort's claim to Earldom of Leicester**

The title 'Earl of Leicester' was first created for Robert de Beaumont in 1107. The Earldom was inherited for three generations until the male line ended with Robert de Beaumont, 4th Earl of Leicester. The 4th Earl had no children at the time of his death, nor did he have any close male relatives; the title of earl could only be passed on to male heirs. Robert's lands were split between his two sisters: Amicia and Margaret. Amicia was married to Simon de Montfort III, a French noble. They had three children including Simon de Montfort IV, 5th Earl of Leicester.

De Montfort had the rights to earldom of Leicester as a male heir through his mother. But King John of England took possession of the lands and denied de Montfort the formal title of Earl as he was a French subject. The lands were given to de Montfort's cousin, Ranulph de Meschines, 4th Earl of Chester.

De Montfort IV's son Simon de Montfort, 6th Earl of Leicester wanted to formally reclaim the families title and lands in England. His older brother Amaury inherited the claim to the title and lands in 1218 when their father died. De Montfort renounced his claim to any lands in France to his older brother in return for the sole right to revive the Montfort claim to the earldom of Leicester. Amaury agreed to this.

De Montfort came to England in 1229 to claim the Earldom of Leicester. Ranulph agreed to return the title to de Montfort for money. King Henry III agreed to respect de Montfort's claim as he had no allegiance to France, after renouncing his lands and had helped the King in the English invasion of France in 1230. De Montfort was not formally styled as Earl of Leicester until 1239.

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## Expulsion of Jews from Leicester

**T**here had been an established Jewish community in Leicester since the end of the 1100s. In 1226, Ranulph obtained a royal authority for the Jews living in Leicester to live peacefully.

Just months after de Montfort had reclaimed earldom of Leicester in August 1231, he issued a charter banishing Jews from living in the town.

**“..Let it be universally known that I, for the health of my soul and the souls of my ancestors and successors, have granted, and by this my present chart confirmed, for me and my heirs in perpetuity, to my burgesses of Leicester and their heirs, that no Jew or Jewess, in my time or in the time of my heirs to the end of the world, shall within the liberty of the town of Leicester, inhabit, remain, or obtain any residence.”**

The expulsion of Jews in Leicester was fuelled by De Montfort’s hard line religious views and his belief that they were too economically powerful as moneylenders. This view will fuel his later persecution of Jews around England.

The expelled Jewish community found refuge on the lands of Montfort’s great-aunt, Margaret de Quincy. She held the other half of the lands in Leicester, most likely the areas of Belgrave, Glenfield, Desford and Whetstone. De Montfort wanted to cleanse Leicester of Jews and Margaret providing refuge to the Jewish community challenged De Montfort’s actions.

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## Marriage

De Montfort became good friends with King Henry III and was one of his closest advisors throughout the 1230's. There were some periods of hostility between the two often caused by de Montfort's financial problems and his attempts to take a French wife. He was refused these attempts as his new allegiance to England meant that he could not take a French wife.

In 1238 De Montfort married the King's sister, Eleanor of England. This was a secret marriage that came with a lot of controversy. Traditionally the barons of England would have to consent to a royal marriage. De Montfort and Eleanor's marriage went against this tradition causing upset among the noblemen. King Henry's and Eleanor's brother, Richard, 1st Earl of Cornwall, led a revolt to protest the marriage. The revolt was stopped after Henry paid off the angry nobles. There was also anger from the religious community. After the death of Eleanor's first husband, Eleanor took a vow of chastity. Eleanor's marriage to de Montfort broke this vow. The Archbishop of Canterbury also condemned the marriage. The breaking of the vow of chastity was so offensive that de Montfort had to beg the Pope to not invalidate the marriage.

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## Crusades

De Montfort joined the Barons Crusade (1234-1241) in 1240. The Baron's Crusade is considered the most successful crusade for the Christian Church in terms of territorial gains. The Crusade grew the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem to its largest size since 1187. The Crusaders managed to play the two factions of the Muslim Ayyubid dynasty against one another. They therefore made gains for King Frederick II without engaging in many battles.

De Montfort followed Richard, 1st Earl of Cornwall, and his group of English Barons and their knights. De Montfort travelled separately to the Holy Land and it is not known if he ever reached Palestine or engaged in any combat. Richard's campaign did negotiate the release of Christian prisoners, including de Montfort's older brother Amaury, in exchange for the Muslim prisoners they had captured. De Montfort left Syria in Autumn 1241.



## Provisions of Oxford

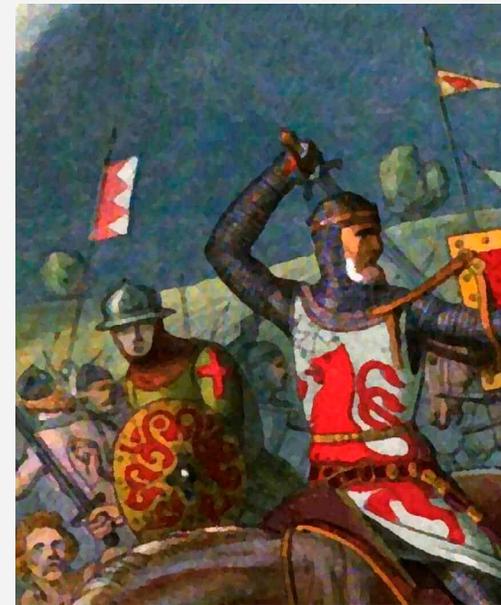
In the 1250s, Henry III had tried to reclaim Sicily from King Frederick's son Manfred. This failed and Henry left Sicily without the throne, but with a £90,000 debt to the papacy who had supported his invasion. In Spring 1258 Henry summoned a Parliament to ask the Barons to tax their people more so that Henry could raise the funds to pay off his debts. The barons had grown angry at the King over the years due to his failed invasions of France as well as Sicily and the growing debts from these failures. Led by de Montfort, the barons demanded Henry agree to a program of reforms in return for the money. These reforms were known as 'The Provisions of Oxford'. The Provisions of Oxford are regarded as England's first written constitution.

The Provisions placed the King under the authority of a 15-member council. The council was chosen by 24 men made up of 12 nominees of the king, and 12 nominees of the reformers (the barons led by de Montfort). The council would advise the King on all matters and would meet 3 times a year to consult with representatives from around the country to discuss local matters. The Provisions of Oxford were further extended under the Provisions of Westminster in 1259. However, in 1261 the Provisions were overthrown. They were annulled through a papal bull; a decree issued by the pope. The papal bull allowed Henry to be free of his oath to the Barons and the Provisions of Oxford.

## Second Barons War (1264-1267)

The Second Barons war was a civil in England between the rebel barons led by de Montfort and the royalist forces, initially led by King Henry III and then later his son Prince Edward. The war was triggered by the feud between de Montfort and King Henry III, the barons' anger at Henry's failed ventures, Henry's growing debts, and Henry breaking his oath to the Provisions of Oxford. In January 1264, King Louis of France declared to be in Henry's favour in the conflict between Henry and his barons. This, combined with the papal bull, officially annulled the Provisions of Oxford. Some barons who previously opposed Henry agreed to the decision, but the rebellious faction led by de Montfort resisted. Both sides gathered their forces for war.

The Battle of Lewes is the most important battle in de Montfort's rise to power. De Montfort's forces led a surprise dawn attack on the royalist forces while they slept. Henry was forced into a battle that he could not win and eventually had to give in to de Montfort's offer of negotiation. De Montfort effectively became the 'uncrowned King of England' after this battle.



Find out more about the individual battles and sieges

<https://magnacarta800th.com/history-of-the-magna-carta/battles/2nd-barons-war/>

## Persecution of Jews in England during the Second Barons War

In 1263 De Montfort declared that all debts to Jews should be cancelled. De Montfort used the cancellation of debts owed to Jewish people as a way to raise support for his campaign against the King. The King had previously protected the Jewish communities in England as he usually benefitted from their financial dealings. De Montfort used the cancellation of debts for his own political gains as well as for eradicating his own debts that he had incurred over the years.



De Montfort and his followers led violent attacks on Jewish communities throughout England to destroy any records of debts. An attack on Worcester's Jewish community was led by de Montfort's sons, which resulted in the death of most of the Jewish community in town. In Lincoln, Jewish homes and businesses were ransacked, the synagogue was burnt down, and the people killed. Similar attacks were undertaken in Winchester, Canterbury, Derby, Cambridge and Northampton.

The most prominent attack was in London in 1264:

**“In the week before Palm Sunday, the Jews of London were destroyed, and all their property was stolen. Many of them were stripped naked, and attacked, and afterwards murdered during the night. Five hundred of them were murdered. Those who survived were...sent to the Tower of London before the slaughter took place.”**

[National Archives](#)

Whilst De Montfort may not have participated in these attacks personally, it was his followers and allies that did it in his name and under his campaign for the cancellation of debts to Jews.



# De Montfort's Parliament

Simon called his first Parliament in June 1264. The purpose of this Parliament was to consolidate de Montfort's power in the aftermath of Lewes, rally support and provide a government for England. This would help in giving authority to the country's new leaders. Four knights from each county were summoned to this Parliament. Knights had been invited to Parliaments before to represent their respective counties in 1254 and 1261. Knights were usually called to Parliament to discuss matters of taxation; this may have been the first time they were able to protect the interests of their counties in discussion of matters of state.

Simon's second Parliament was called in January 1265 and lasted till March; the longest Parliament in de Montfort's rule. He summoned a small group of 23 anti-royal barons, a larger body of religious leaders, heads of religious houses and other churchmen, two knights from each county, and four freemen from York, Lincoln and other unnamed towns as well as four men from the 'Cinque Ports': Hastings, New Romney, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich. The knights and freemen that were sent were elected through the local courts. At the 1265 Parliament matters of state such as enforcing the Provisions of Westminster and promising judicial help to those who felt they were suffering from unfair feudal lordship was discussed. However, this Parliament was a tactical move by de Montfort to try to gain support, not a belief in equity.

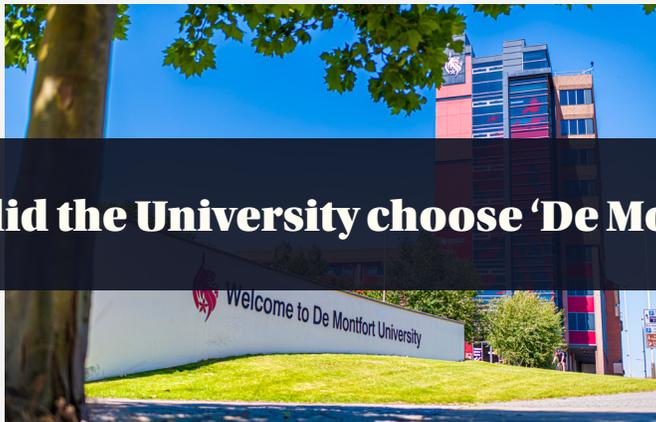
Freemen or burgesses (ordinary men that were not classed as serfs) had been invited to Parliaments before, but these invites were limited, and it never became the standard. De Montfort's invite of elected 'ordinary' men to Parliament set a precedent for all future Parliaments to have elected representatives from towns present.

## De Montfort's Demise

De Montfort's Parliament was not popular among all the barons. Many of the barons grew resentful of de Montfort's growing power and his growing personal fortune. Gilbert de Clare, the Earl of Gloucester, the most powerful baron and de Montfort's ally at the Battle of Lewes began to distance himself from de Montfort and finally deserted de Montfort's cause after his brother and de Montfort's sons fell out. Prince Edward escaped de Montfort's imprisonment in May 1265 and raised a considerable army. Prince Edward moved south where he met de Montfort at the town of Evesham.

On the morning of August 4th, 1265, de Montfort's forces met Prince Edward's on the battlefield. De Montfort led his men into a massacre; they were outnumbered 3 to 1. De Montfort and his son, Henry, were both killed in the battle. De Montfort was mutilated and dismembered by King Henry's men. [Read more about the battle.](#)

In the aftermath of the battle, all rebel barons were disinherited (the act of taking away their lands and titles for the heirs), and any uprising were dealt with quickly. A siege took place at Kenilworth Castle (Henry had given de Montfort Kenilworth Castle in 1244), but this was quickly dealt with. The Battle of Evesham and its aftermath ended any baronial opposition in the reign of Henry III and England entered a period of unity and progress.



## Why did the University choose 'De Montfort'?

In 1992, the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 was passed. This act made changes to the funding and administration to further and higher education in England and Wales. The result of this was that 35 polytechnics were allowed to adopt the university title and change their names; Leicester Polytechnic HEC was one of those. The name needed to be inclusive of the other campuses that were being incorporated into the university at the time in Milton Keynes, Bedford and Lincoln, so a name incorporating just Leicester could not be used. Leicester Polytechnic decided on 'De Montfort University'.

The Directors of the University at the time decided against a broad regional name such as 'The University of Central England', as they felt this would be misleading and may compromise other institutions in the area. They wrote to the privy council at the time suggesting no universities should adopt broad regional names. However, there are numerous universities in the U.K. with 'broad regional names' such as, University of West of England and University of East Anglia. De Montfort was accepted as they felt it would acknowledge the university's roots in Leicester as well as 'celebrate the first Parliamentary system'.

The university did consult numerous people and groups at the time including The Board of Deputies of British Jews. The board had no objections to the name and thanked the university for considering their feelings around de Montfort's anti-Semitic behaviour. The university's Board of Directors had no formal objections to adopting the 'De Montfort' name for the university.

There were objections to the name change from the Leicester Jewish Community. Rabbi Chaim Ingram, a leading figure in Leicester's Jewish Community at the time, said that naming the university after de Montfort was insensitive. He believed that because the university stood for 'understanding and tolerance', it should not be named after a known anti-Semite.

