

2021 REPORT ON KERR'S IN THE CRUSADES

Part One of
SCOTLAND'S KERRS
In
The Crusades

**Clan KERR OF THE UNITED STATES
AND NORTH AMERICA**

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About this Report

The original research for this report was scheduled to take place in old archives in and around Edinburgh, Scotland, and elsewhere in Europe in mid-2020. The Covid-19 pandemic and its associated travel restrictions seriously delayed this plan. Research already undertaken in 2019 and 2020 in the United States is considered of enough interest that it was decided to issue this initial report, and follow it up with a more in depth report in 2022.

Two Templar organizations were established in Scotland by Royal Decree around AD 1120. Their purpose was to support and keep track of those supporting Scotland's contributions to the defense of Jerusalem duration the Crusades. Both the Knights Templar and Knights of Saint John established their respective headquarters in Scotland in AD 1120 at Balantrodach and Torpichen. Each of these sites were within forty miles of each other in the Lothian borderland area, a day's ride from Edinburgh.

One hundred and ninety years later, in AD 1304 the Knights Templar's organization was closed by Vatican decree and all its records transferred to the Knights of Saint John in Scotland. This organization still exists today in Scotland.

About the Author

For the past decade the author has been the President of Clan Kerr of the United States. He is married to Margaret Carr, originally from the Lothian area of Scotland's Borderlands in the early 1700's. The idea for the research into Scotland's Kerr's, and other Scottish clans who served in the 180 years of the Crusades, first arose during a discussion with a senior member of today's Knights of Saint John in Scotland. He observed it was a fascinating question clearly worth looking into, and a subject not seriously studied until now.

The author is also a senior member of the Knights Templar, and currently their Grand Mentor for the Templar's international operations in the Holy Land.

INTRODUCTION

Scotland's Kerrs around the time of the Crusades.

Linguistic historians point out that the name Kir, originated in Jerusalem during the Old Testament era, and appears repeatedly in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joshua, Amos and Kings. It is believed they were a local Hebrew tribe entrusted to be Standard Bearers for the Jewish Kings of that era. Records coming to light in Scotland from the time of the Norman Invasion in 1066 are also now beginning to shed new light on the part of Scotland's support of the crusades to the Holy Land. A town near Edinburgh some years before the first Crusade was called Car Ham, or Carham.

Tracing one's history into Victorian era is relatively simple today as records are voluminous. However those of the tenth century, around the time of the first crusade in 1096, considerably less voluminous, still exist. "Tracing your Ancestors from 1066 to 1837," by Jonathan Oates, had this to say about Crusade-era England and Scotland: "They made records about the people in their jurisdictions, as regards the law, finance, military service, land ownership, religious affiliation and political loyalty." Jonathan Oats also describes Scotland back then as overwhelmingly rural, where most lived on the land. It clarified that most were involved in farming or fishing, while their major groupings were peasant farmers with 45% of the land, then cottars with 32%, the landless with some 9%, freemen with 13%, and the aristocracy less than 1%. It is the last two groups comprising some 14% of Scotland's people that records of their service in the Crusades probably still exist. With a population of that era of about 400,000 the above 14% would represent some 56,000 people who were spread over a span of some two hundred years.

It is important to point out the origin of the modern Clan Kerr/Carr leadership line in Scotland. Some sources refer to two brothers who appeared around 1360 in the Borderland area, and were from Lancashire in England. These two brothers who spelt their name as Kerr, are alleged to be the progenitors of Scotland's modern Borderland Clan Kerr families, known today as those of Cessford and Ferniehirst. Research indicates that for a few hundred years before the two brothers arrived, there were already many in the borderlands with variations of the words sounding like Kerr/Carr. Page 35 of Anna Ritchie's, February 1991, HMSO Edinburgh book, "Invaders of Scotland," makes what today is believed to be the first reference to a town called Car on the

Tweed River in AD 973. It was then known as Carham. Cities throughout Scotland and England with the ending 'Ham' denotes that the place is or was (historically), a town, village or place, whose name preceded the word 'ham.' This reference to this town called Carham on the Tweed River was seventy five years before the First Crusade. Until then the 'Firth of Forth' in Scotland was considered the boundary between the Scots and Angles. History indicates that after AD 973, the Lothian area was also granted to Scotland's King, Kenneth II. But in practice the ousting of Anglican power from Carham and the Lothian area had already been under way for some time. The Scottish hold on the Lothian area was later confirmed by King Malcolm II's victory at the Battle of Carham which took place in AD 1018. The Car's village mentioned on the River Tweed first mentioned in AD 973, and then again in AD 1018, is also only thirty-five miles from where the Kerr's Ferniehirst castle stands today in Scotland's Borderlands.

Scotsmen in the First Crusade

Part One of this Kerr report will discuss conditions of the time in Scotland in the lead up to the First Crusade. It was a time when Scots were gradually becoming aware of circumstances in Europe leading to the call for a first Crusade in AD 1095. Jerusalem was captured four years later and it is now known that some Scotsmen were among the Crusader army that captured the city of Antioch in the Syrian district of Edessa in AD 1098. Historical crusader records make mention of Scotsmen when Jerusalem was captured a year later in AD 1099. Who were these Scotsmen?

For the next forty years after the capture of Jerusalem in AD 1099, most of the area around Jerusalem was still controlled by Moslem forces. Christian pilgrims arriving overland through Turkey and Syria, or by ship along the Palestine coast, needed protection as they visited Jerusalem and the Jordan River. The King of Jerusalem arranged for a military escort system which would eventually become known as the Poor Knights of Christ. This organization came into existence in AD 1119, some twenty years after Jerusalem was captured. The Poor Knights of Christ had their headquarters at the Al Aksar Mosque on the Temple Mount.

In 1128, Hugh de Payne's, one of the Knights from this new organization in Jerusalem, returned to France to meet with Pope Honorius and his Catholic Church clerics attending the Council of Troyes near Paris. The Church's main problem at the time were various schisms developing in the Church. Of equal concern was the Cristendom's need for more soldiers to help defend the Holy Land against the Saracens. At Troyes, Hugh de Payen's informed the Pope of the serious problems defending Jerusalem. The need for more soldiers had already been brought to the Pope's attention by Bernard de Clairveaux who was a prominent Franciscan monk at the Troyes Council. Bernard knew a special group of Catholic warriors would be needed for Jerusalem's long term defense. Bernard had already created a religious treaties outlining the need for such an order of Knights which he described in, "*The Rule of the Knights Templar.*" Bernard's treaties, "*Liber ad milites templi de laude nouvae militia,*" was an unprecedented

concept. It outlined the justification for a dedicated Catholic military order authorized to physically fight and kill the enemies of Christ and his church on the battlefields of the Holy Land. After Troyes, Bernard's 1128 Treaties spread like wildfire across Europe. The concept of 'Thou shalt not kill,' had in effect been waived for all of Europe's Christians wishing to go and kill Saracens in the Holy Land.

Following Hugh de Payen's AD 1128 meetings at Troyes, he visited England and Scotland, informing them of both conditions in Jerusalem and his discussions about Bernard's new "Rule of the Knights Templar," which was still being debated by the Vatican. In both places their monarchs immediately ordered Hugh de Payen's to establish new Templar recruiting facilities and to keep detailed records about their activities in support of the crusades to Jerusalem. The King of England offered them properties along the Thames River for their headquarters, which today is still known as Temple Church. Scotland's King David 1st also granted Hugh de Payens lands for their new headquarters at the town of Temple which is in the mid-Lothian area near Edinburgh and some thirty miles south-west of Edinburgh. This Templar headquarters became known as Balantrodach, or, the Town of Warriors in Celtic. Scots from all walks of life in the Lothian Borderlands and further north into the Highlands immediately took note of the new Templar mission.

That same year, Scotland's King David 1st also invited the Knights of Saint John, to set up their own recruiting headquarters at Torpichen in East Lothian. Torpichen is a days travel from Edinburgh and also the Knights Templa's new facilities at Balantrodach. These two Templar organizations quickly became popular among all of Scotland's social classes. The Templar's distinctive white mantles with their red or black crosses quickly attracted Scotland's skilled fighting men. They volunteered in droves to serve in Templar ranks. Within a decade new Templar Commanderies had sprang up across not only Scotland, but England, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy.

The situation in Scotland in AD 1096

The areas of England and Scotland had become more clearly defined around the time of the Norman invasion of AD 1066. A year earlier in AD 1065, a Viking army had already landed in Scotland near Edinburgh and subdued local opposition. The northern Viking army then marched south into England and had already occupied a portion of Northern England when William the Conqueror's army landed in southern England in AD 1066, and defeated the English at the Battle of Hastings. A new group of leaders were in charge in Scotland's Lothian and Borderland areas and had newfound wealth, power, and military experience. The Papal call for a crusade, only 28 years after their Scottish conquest was of great interest. Aside from the obvious riches to be

obtained from a foreign war, the crusade also included promises of divine rewards. Sigbert Gemblaux, a prominent man of the era described how these Scots responded:

“They came together from all sides with a single spirit and without animosity for Spain, Povençe, Acquitaine, pulia, and from other lands, and armed with the virtue and signed with the Holy Cross.”

The Crusader movement quickly became popular in Catholic Europe as the Church hyped its need and benefits to the smallest towns and places of habitation in Scotland. According to several sources reported in MacMillian’s Higher Education, about the time:

“Crusading was a popular and widespread activity in the Middle Ages that appealed to the military elite who could fight on behalf of Christianity. And the appeal covered a wide swath of the population from emperors and kings to tanners to prostitutes.”

and:

“Many monastic scribes who never left the confines of their religious houses, let alone went to the Holy Land, were well informed on crusading events and included them in their histories, while even those living in the remotest parts of Scotland might have come into contact with land and property owned by one of the military orders. In some cases., these orders played a part in local religious life, administering the sacrament of providing hospitality and care for the sick.”

Populations of Europe at the time of the crusades were unusually small following a century of re-occurring plagues. The various country populations precise numbers are still debated today. France’s probably did not exceed twenty million, Germany’s maybe ten million, England’s about two million, and Scotland’s possibly 450,000. The size of the army of Scottish, French, and English who gathered in the Normandy area of France in AD 1096 for the First Crusade, is also still debated even todady. Prominent leaders of the time who led the various Crusader contingents, when they started out, refer to conflicting totals. Some French reports mentioned six hundred thousand men at arms. Raymond Aguiliers, a prominent French Knight’s numbers on the other hand were a hundred thousand. Godfrey of Lorraine, another well known French Knight, recalled some ten thousand knights on horse, and seventy thousand infantry. The reality was probably somewhere around one hundred thousand. This did not include a smaller crusader army which assembled nearby that year at Koeln, in Germany. The German numbers were smaller and took a more northerly route east through Austria and Hungary. History records that the German’s behavior was such that they encountered increasing resistance as they moved east,

and became so bad that their entire army was completely wiped out before it reached what is today known as Budapest on the Danube River.

By the time this first crusades southern army reached Constantinople, its was down to half those who started out from France. A few months later, when it stood before the walls of Antioch in the province of Edessa, in North Syria, their numbers were a shadow of those who had left Constantinople a year earlier. And when the Crusader army reached the walls of Jerusalem: histories of the time report their strength at one and a half thousand cavalry, and some twelve thousand infantry.

Timeline Of the Seven Crusades

The future focus of this report about Kerr's in the Crusades will seek to examine surviving records in Templar and Church archives in Scotland. As the First Crusade began there were few records repositories documenting this movement. The establishment in 1128, of two new Templar Order headquarters near Edinburgh, and just as the second crusade was getting underway, undoubtedly encouraged the need for record keeping at Balantrodach and Terpishen near Edinburgh, as both organization's function was to provide armed men to serve in the Holy Land and to maintain all manner of associated records related to the Crusading movement.

There were seven noteworthy crusades in the 196 years between AD 1095 to AD 1291. These were:

- 1st Crusade 1095 - 1101
- 2nd Crusade 1145 - 1147
- 3rd Crusade 1188 - 1192 ⁽¹⁾
- 4th Crusade 1204 - Ended at Constantinople
- 5th Crusade 1217 - Ended at Cairo
- 6th Crusade 1228 - 1239
- 7th Crusade 1249 - 1252
- 1291 - Moslem's capture and occupy Acre

(1) In AD 1187, the Crusaders Holy Land army was wiped out at the battle of Hattin. Jerusalem fell to the Saracens later that year. The four ensuing crusades between AD 1187 to 1291 failed to recapture Jerusalem, and Crusaders were finally driven out of Palestine in 1291 after the loss of Acre on the Palestine coast.

Who were the Scots that served in the Crusades

Exactly how many and who they all were may never be determined. But records of their service in the second through seventh crusades; especially at a time when the Knights Templar and those of Saint John in Scotland, were keeping detailed records about those supporting and going, may now come to light. Robert de Ross for example, was a Templar Knight prominently buried at London's Temple Church. He died on 23 December 1226, during the failed 5th Crusade which tried to capture the city of Cairo in Egypt. His remains were returned to England at the time and interred in London's Temple Church. Two years after Robert de Ross's death, the 6th Crusade began in 1228. It lasted eleven years until 1239. Robert de Ross's father is alleged to have been England's King Richard the Lionheart, who died in 1199, 27 years before his son. And the reference to "our Scots" in the First Crusade at the Battle of Antioch in AD 1198, and their subsequent whereabouts at Jerusalem, is also of significant interest." Robert the Bruce's heart is also alleged to have later been removed after death and taken on a crusade before being returned to Scotland for burial there. Initial results concerning specific Scottish clans and individual Scottish names who, 'took the cross,' and went in the first Crusade, will be researched further in Scottish Church records in 2022 and 2023. Growing support in Scotland for this follow-on research is encouraging. While the records of the Knights Templars in Scotland came to an end in AD 1312 when the Order was disbanded, it is significant to note that by the Papal Decree of 1312, all Knights Templar records at Balantrodach were transferred to Scotland's Knights of Saint John nearby at Torpichen.

Some initial references to Scots in the Crusades?

Following are a few initial references from various sources to the era surrounding Scotland's participation in the crusades. Some of these include names of Kjrs, Karre and Ker.

1. William of Malmesbury describes how the fields of Scotland and England were abandoned by farmers and houses deserted by their inhabitants, while populations of whole cities marched away to the east.
2. The King of Scotland was in Rome in 1050 spending money like seed.

3. After the Norman conquest in 1066, the seals of the Byzantine recruiting office (1088) were discovered at Winchester in England, strongly suggesting both English and Scottish pilgrims were serving in military roles in the Eastern Mediterranean at the time.
4. Lagetann the King of the Isle of Man, in the middle of the Irish Sea between Ireland and England, departed for Jerusalem around 1075.
5. King Ollyf Kjrs who reigned in Normandy in 1005, along with another family called Karre, were illustrious families who supported William the Conqueror in the Norman invasions of England in 1065 and 1066. The Kjrs and Karre families are alleged to have later become the progenitors of the Ker's in England and Scotland.
6. When King Edward 1st, became king of England 1272-1307, the celebrated chroniclers Hollinshed and Dushensne refer to Kjar's of France being the progenitors of Scotland's Ker's. Several of these were recorded on England's "Ragman Roll," for swearing fealty to King Edward 1, (also known as 'Longshanks.' They made this oath only eleven years before the final Knights Templar defeat at Acre in 1191.
7. Our Scots were lost sight of after Antioch, and only imagination can follow them to the siege of Jerusalem.
8. A Scottish source referenced the appearance of camel brought back to Scotland by a returning crusader, along with Moslem coins minted in 1097.
9. Among those who returned with Atheling was Robert son of Godwine, to whom King Edgar granted lands in Lothian on which he began to build a castle. According to Edgar, Robert (presumably) acting as a Varangian Captain, was later in charge of the Emperor's (Constantinople) fleet off Antioch in March 1098, and sailed later to Lattakiah soon thereafter.
10. Later reports put Robert (at Lothian earlier) at the siege of Ramleh (near Jerusalem) in May 1102, and captured by Saracens, taken to Babylon where he was martyred with arrows for not renouncing the name of Christ.
11. Scotland's King Alexander, around 1189, displayed his Arab steed with costly saddle, bridal and armor brought back from Turkey and the Middle East, and displayed these at Saint Andrews in Scotland.

12. John, Bishop of Glasgow, and brother of King Alexander, is believed to be the first Scottish pilgrim known to have returned from Jerusalem at the end of the first crusade, and probably accompanied Hugh de Payens visit to see Scotland's King James concerning a new Templar headquarters in Lothian.
13. When, Earl David, became Scotland's King, he displayed a strong support for the Holy Land at the time of John Bishop's return to Glasgow.
14. In 1128 England's king welcomed Hugh de Payens the Templar Grand Master. Treasures were given him by all, and in Scotland too, and by them much wealth, entirely in gold and silver which was sent to Jerusalem.
15. In the 1200's it was customary for Scotland's Knights Templar to serve as almoner to Scotland's Kings.

The Second Crusade of 1144 to 1147

The Saracen recapture in 1144 of the Crusader state of Edessa, which had been initially captured only fifty years earlier in 1097, severed the pilgrim land route from Europe to Jerusalem. It prompted Pope Eugene III, to call for the Second Crusade. Edessa and its strategic city of Antioch was a strategic loss for pilgrims travelling overland to Jerusalem. The Pope commissioned Bernard de Clairvaux, a well-known Cistercian Monk from Northern Spain, and also a highly respected biblical scholar, to preach about this new crusade. However, at the time Jerusalem was already in Christian hands, and among Europeans there seemed to be little enthusiasm for the Papal call for a second crusade. But when Bernard de Clairvaux spoke about the Holy Land publicly in France, on 31 March 1145, near Paris, and before a huge gathering including the King of France, things changed. Present were not only many of Europe's royalty and upper echelon leaders, but also the King of France. Bernard referred to huge religious 'indulgences' which God would guarantee to those who "Took the Cross" and went to fight the Saracen. Among the indulgences were absolution from all sins and guaranteed access to heaven for those who went. Bernard de Clairvaux listeners were mesmerized as he assured them:

"Hasten now to expiate your sins by victories over the infidels, and let the deliverance of the holy places be the reward for you repentance. Cursed by he who does not stain his sword with Saracen blood."

By sundown on 31 March 1145, tens of thousands had come forward and volunteered to go. They proved their intent by placing pieces of cloth on their clothing with the symbol of the cross on it. In the weeks that followed tens of thousands more volunteered and the crusade's leaders made preparations to leave for Jerusalem.

Where are Scotland's Crusader-Era Records today?

In Scotland?

What is apparent today, without conclusive proof to disprove it, is that during some 180 years of the Crusades, the Knights Templar organization in Scotland accumulated a substantial archive at Balantradach which were then transferred nearby to the Knights of Saint John at Torpishen. A 350 page 1932 Master's thesis by Alan Denis Macquarrie, at the University of Edinburgh, entitled, "The Impact of the Crusading Movement in Scotland, 1095–1560," contains hundreds of references to the Templars and their holdings in Scotland. But Macquarrie's Thesis only examined the Templar's economic aspects, and only alludes tangentially to a few of the Templars he came across during his research. It is likely substantial references will be found among Scotland's church archives and those of libraries.

In France?

France's King arrested the French Knights Templar on Friday, September 13th 1307, on false charges of heresy and devil worship. He also confiscated all their assets he could lay his hands on. History today reports that France's Templar leadership clearly knew in advance about the King's intent to arrest them, and were able to slip away with much of their wealth which left French ports before their arrest

In Vatican Archives?

In 1992, after almost exactly nine hundred years, some critical Templar Records from France mysteriously appeared in secret Vatican Archives. The Vatican explained way the matter because they had been accidentally misfiled the documents in AD 1312. In fact the Vatican researcher was amazed at the mistake which is highly unusual in their archives going back into history. AD 1312 was the year Order of the Knights Templar were officially disbanded by Papal decree and ordered all Templar records anywhere in Europe to be transferred to the Knights of Saint John. At the time the Knights of Saint John had significant Pories and Preceptories throughout Europe, in England, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Scotland and Spain, in addition to others in the Mediterranean. The death of many Knights Templar records across Europe today poses the possibility that many, or all, might have been ordered transferred to the Catholic Church in these countries, who still maintain them, destroyed them, or transferred them to the Vatican in Rome. Some of those from France have now surfaced in the Vatican. The

whereabouts of the others has been a hotly debated question in the last two decades, especially those concerning significant assets?

Elsewhere?

Many French Templars were also able to avoid capture and are known to have found refuge in Portugal and Scotland (see Knights Templar town of Temple created in Lothian in AD 1128, also known as Balantrodach). For five years following AD 1307 France tortured its Knights Templar without luck concerning the missing wealth. In AD 1312, the Vatican ended the French investigation and decided the Knights Templar were not guilty of heresy, ordered the Order closed, and all records in Europe moved to the Knights of Saint John. The above events, some nine hundred years later, have now led to a series of new books about the Templars, with titles like: Holy Blood, Holy Grail; The Monks of War; The Long Lost Treasure of the Knights Templar; Templars and Assassins; and The Murdered Magicians. The sudden appearance of the misfiled Vatican documents in 1992 has started a heated debate, behind closed doors, not only within the Catholic Church, but also academia about false accusations of heresy used to justify, condemn, and close down their organization in AD 1312?

Summary

The rapid conversion of historic archives to electronic format and their availability to researchers on the internet today is creating a new database of long overlooked and forgotten information. The loss of Acre to the Knights Templar in AD 1291, and accurate histories about the Templars subsequent arrest and disbanding in 1312 is still confused.

Where are the records of a hundred and eighty years of Balantrodach documents entrusted to the Knights of Saint John nine hundred years ago? Where are other records from around Europe? Can the Catholic Church be encouraged to share some of its knowledge in Vatican archives? The Topkapi archives in Istanbul are known to contain significant records dating back to the birth of Mohammed and subsequent crusader-era histories. Msgr. David McRoberts' 1969 essay, "Scottish Pilgrims to the Holy Land," describes the above era as opening up a new and hitherto unimaginable vista, and, that no one until now, has attempted to gather together the records of the actual names of Scotland's pilgrim traffic to and from Jerusalem, which would have been maintained at the times by the above two Templar Orders in Scotland during the Crusades.

A Forthcoming Part Two of "Scotland's Kerr's in the Crusades," in 2022 will seek to explore the above questions further.