

CHAPTER 7

The Picture Across the Water. The Foundation of Templar and Hospitalier Houses in Britain and Ireland in the Twelfth Century

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This article sets out to offer a wider context for the establishment of the Hospitallers' house at Værne/Varna by considering the foundation of Templar and Hospitalier houses just across the sea, in Britain and Ireland. These military religious orders arrived in Britain in the 1120s as the subject of royal and non-royal patronage, but did not reach Ireland until the 1170s. While the Templars seem to have relied on royalty for their initial acquisitions, the Hospitallers had a wider pool of patronage. That said, by the late twelfth century both orders were drawing on a wide pool of patronage in England, but in Wales, Ireland and Scotland their main acquisitions continued to come from prominent nobles and the Crown.

Scotland

Let us begin by considering foundations in the north of Britain – that is, nearest to Norway. The situation in the kingdom of Scotland appears

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the most straightforward, simply because least evidence survives. Yet the evidence that does exist reveals that the pattern of foundations in Scotland was similar to that elsewhere.

According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the Templars gained their first properties in England and Scotland in 1128, when Hugh de Payns, master of the Templars, met King Henry I of England in Normandy, and then went on to Scotland to meet King David I. However, it has proven difficult to identify what King Henry I and King David gave them, and exactly when King David made his endowments. The Templars' house in the village now called Temple in Midlothian was first mentioned in documents as late as 1175, but scholars have usually assumed that this was King David's foundation, and that it was established in 1128 (Cowan, Mackay & Macquarrie 1983: xviii). The Hospitaller brother John Stillingflete wrote in 1434 that King David gave Torphichen to the Hospitallers, which (if this is true) means that they obtained it between 1124 and 1153 (Cowan, Mackay & Macquarrie 1983: xxvi; Stillingflete 1673: 551). Although the Templars first visited Scotland in 1128, given that the Hospitallers did not appear as witnesses to royal documents until 1160 and the Templars' house at Temple does not appear in records until 1175, it is likely that these houses were founded in the 1140s, although they may not have been established until the early 1150s.

After these initial donations by the king, donations from leading nobles followed. According to John Stillingflete, Fergus, lord of Galloway (who called himself 'king of the Galwitians'), gave the Hospitallers the land of Galvyte or Galtway, south-east of Kirkcudbright in south Galloway (Stillingflete 1673: 551). This donation must have taken place before Fergus's fall from power in 1160. By the early thirteenth century the Thane of Callander (in Perthshire, near Stirling) had given the Templars land in Falkirk, and before 1239 Walter Bisset, lord of Aboyne, gave the Templars Maryculter on the south of the Dee – reassuring the monks of Kelso that his gift would not prejudice their rights – while by 1242 he had given them the church of Aboyne on Deeside, as around this time the bishop of Aberdeen confirmed the donation (Cowan, Mackay & Macquarrie 1983: xix, 217).

The Templars and the Hospitallers were also given by the king one toft or house site in each Scottish burgh (Perkins 1910: 215; Cowan, Mackay

& Macquarrie 1983: xviii, xxvii, lvii). The Templars and Hospitallers also held a large number of very small holdings across the lowlands and up the east coast of Scotland, which were known as ‘Temple lands’. These small properties would not have housed Templars but would have been let out to rent, and presumably were given to them by noble and non-noble patrons in return for the order’s prayers for the donor and the donor’s family. All these properties were in the drier, less mountainous parts of Scotland where arable farming could be carried on.

Although the Templars’ and Hospitallers’ ostensible reason for coming to Britain and Ireland was to recruit manpower as well as to acquire land, very little evidence survives for recruitment in these early years, and it is not possible to know whether these orders drew recruits principally from the landowning nobility or from the lesser knightly and non-knightly families (Cowan, Mackay & Macquarrie 1983: xx–xxii, xxviii–xxix).

England

In the spring of 1137, Matilda of Boulogne, queen of England, gave Cressing in Essex to the Templars. Her uncles Godfrey of Bouillon and Baldwin of Edessa had been the first two Latin rulers of the kingdom of Jerusalem, while her father Eustace had been the closest heir to the kingdom on the death of Baldwin in 1118. Matilda had a strong dynastic interest in the kingdom of Jerusalem and wanted to support the religious order which was helping to defend it. However, she did not give to the Hospital of St John. We can only speculate as to whether her family had other links with the Templars which led her to prefer the Templars over the Hospitallers: for instance, some of the early Templars, such as Godfrey of Saint Omer and Archembald of Saint Amand, came from the Low Countries and the area around Boulogne. Godfrey was a vassal of the counts of Boulogne. Matilda later gave Witham in Essex and Cowley in Oxfordshire to the Templars. All her donations were confirmed by her husband, King Stephen of England, who himself was the son of one of the leaders of the First Crusade (Davis, Cronne & Davis 1968: 310–314; Lees 1935: xxxix–xl). Although Stephen’s predecessor Henry I of England had given Hugh de Payns money in 1128 and had allowed him

to collect donations in England, it was Matilda's generosity to the order of the Temple which laid the foundations of a long and close relationship between the Templars and the kings of England. Her gifts promoted the culture of crusading and could inspire her male relatives to give generously: King Stephen not only confirmed her gifts but also apparently gave the Templars Eagle in Lincolnshire (Lees 1935: clxxx, 41, 145–147, 176–177).

The Templars' first house in London was in Holborn; they probably acquired the site in the 1130s, at the same period as they were receiving gifts from Matilda and her husband. It may or may not have been given to them by Geoffrey de Mandeville, earl of Essex, whose body was taken there after his death in 1144, which could suggest that he was the founder, but who was never specifically named as such in contemporary records (Park 2010: 68–71). In 1161 the Templars sold this site and transferred their London house to a new site by the Thames, which was known as 'New Temple'. Presumably they bought the site of New Temple, as no donor is recorded. It has, however, been suggested that the Beaumonts, earls of Leicester and hereditary stewards of England, were involved in the Templars' acquisition, as the site was partly held from them (Wilson 2010: 23). King Henry II of England may have supported the Templars' move: sometime between 1159 and 1173 he gave them a mill site on the nearby River Fleet, a messuage near Fleet Bridge and the advowson of the church of St Clement Danes nearby (Gervers 2002: 253; Hamonic 2009). He also used New Temple as a safe-deposit. The church was probably constructed in the early years of his reign, between 1159 and 1165 (Wilson 2010: 28, 38, 40).

The English monarchy continued to endow and support the Templars for the rest of their history, although they also expected service in return. The Hospitallers were not so close to the monarchy in the first half of the twelfth century. Their major house in England was not founded by the king or queen but by Joseph de Bricet and his wife Muriel de Munteni, who around 1140 together founded the Hospitallers' house at Clerkenwell as well as the neighbouring women's house of St Mary Clerkenwell (Sloane and Malcolm 2004: 42).

On the other hand, in around 1185 King Henry II of England established the house of Hospitaller sisters at Buckland in Somerset specifically

so that the various sisters of the order in England could be housed there (Struckmeyer 2006: 90). In 1434 John Stillingflete insisted that King Richard I, 'the Lionheart', held the Hospitallers in special affection and recorded that he gave them property at Dinmore in Herefordshire, hospitals at Worcester and Hereford, and various other properties in that area (Stillingflete 1673: 555).

Stillingflete was at pains to emphasize the Hospitallers' many noble patrons, although the most important patron he mentioned, the family to whom the Hospitallers owed particular favour, was the Mowbray family because of Roger de Mowbray's gifts to the Templars (Stillingflete 1673: 551). Yet Beatrice Lees, in her edition of the Templars' inquest of 1185, pointed out that even though he was a crusader Roger de Mowbray did not give the Templars large properties. The Templars received considerable estates in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, but they were always in competition with the Cistercians and the Gilbertines (a local religious order). Although the great noble families gave them small donations, the bulk of the Templars' property came from lesser noble families, landed gentry, and royal officials: the leaders of county society rather than nationally significant figures (Lees 1935: cxcviii–cc). The Hospitallers also received donations from leading churchmen: Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester (1129–1171), gave the Hospitallers Godsfield in Hampshire, which became a commandery (Doubleday & Page 1903: 187–188). I have not found similar donations from churchmen to the Templars in England in the twelfth century, although in the 1230s Bishop Robert Grosseteste of Lincoln (1235–1253) gave them Rothley church in Leicestershire – here they already owned the manor, a gift from the nobleman John de Harcourt (Hoskins and McKinley 1954: 31–32).

It is worth noting that, as in Scotland, the bulk of the Templars' properties in England lay in the east of the country, on land that was suited to growing wheat. The Hospitallers were apparently not so wedded to wheat-growing, and were more prepared to accept donations in the wetter, western parts of Britain. That said, neither order held property in Cheshire, and only the Hospitallers held property in Lancashire: a small hospital at Stidd, which they acquired before 1265 and which by 1338 was leased out with the lessee holding responsibility for paying a chaplain

to serve the hospital chapel (Knowles & Hadcock 1971: 394, 111; Farrer & Brownbill 1912: 58–59). Neither order held anything in County Durham. It is likely that the bishop of Durham did not want these privileged orders in his diocese, but that does not explain their absence from Lancashire and Cheshire – indeed, as the sixth earl of Chester, Ranulf de Blundeville (d. 1232), took part in the Fifth Crusade, we might have expected him to have endowed the military orders, who supported the crusade, with land in his county (Eales 2004).

Although the Templars and Hospitallers in England and, as is discussed below, in Wales received considerable support from noble patrons, the surviving evidence indicates that they drew their recruits largely from the lesser nobility – knightly families – and free landowning families of lower social status (Forey 1986: 143–144). Interestingly, this is the same pattern as has been found for the Teutonic Order in Germany in the thirteenth century (Wojtecki 1971).

Wales

Following the pattern of donation to all religious orders in Wales, the military orders' lands were clustered in the areas of Wales which were settled by the Normans, English or Flemish: that is, south Wales and the Welsh March. Perhaps because they were less close to the kings of England than the Templars, the Hospitallers received more generous gifts in Wales, and received them before the Templars did.

The Hospitallers received their first donations of land in Wales and the Welsh March before 1150. The precise date of the Hospitallers' first acquisition is unclear. Sometime between 1176 and 1198, Bishop Peter of St Davids confirmed all the gifts to the Hospitallers within his diocese, and mentioned that his three predecessors, Wilfrid, Bernard, and David, had allowed the Hospitallers to remove any chaplain or clerk from their churches. This indicates that the Hospitallers had received responsibility for churches in south-west Wales by 1115, when Bishop Wilfrid died (Rogers Rees 1897: 106–107n9; Rees 1947: 25). Yet this was only two years after Pope Paschal II had acknowledged the Hospital of St John as a religious order; the Hospitallers did not begin to receive

gifts of land in England until after 1128 (Delaville le Roulx 1894: 29–30; Gervers 1991).

It is not impossible that the Hospitallers had received some gift in Wales by 1115, for Anthony Luttrell has shown that the Hospitallers received donations in southern France very soon after the First Crusade (Luttrell 1997: 49). However, without other evidence, it is most likely that there is an error in Bishop Peter's confirmation and that the donations in question were to another hospital order; and that the Hospitallers obtained their first properties in Wales in the 1130s and 1140s.

The Hospitallers' earliest acquisitions were in south-west Wales, and were small manors and parcels of land and churches, given by local small landowners with Norman names, such as Philip de Kemeys and Richard son of Tancred (Rees 1947: 105–106). Walter son of Wizo the Fleming gave them the property that became their commandery of Slebech in south Wales before 1161, although the exact date that they acquired it is not clear (Rees 1947: 27–28). The Hospitallers already had a fine scattering of possessions in Morgannwg and Pembrokeshire in south Wales by the time that they received the lands which formed the bases of their two centres in the Welsh March: at Dinmore in Herefordshire, in the 1180s, and at Halston in Shropshire, perhaps before 1187 (Rees 1947: 120, 127; Knowles & Hadcock 1971, 303–304).

The surviving donation charters indicate that certain families consistently gave to the Hospital. For example, William Marshal senior (d. 1219), his son Walter Marshal, earl of Pembroke (d. 1245), and Walter's great-grandson Aymer de Valence (d. 1324) all made grants to the Hospitallers at Slebech.¹

The military religious orders' particular appeal lay in their involvement in helping pilgrims to the Holy Land and in crusading campaigns. As William Marshal travelled to the Holy Land in the 1180s and joined the Order of the Temple on his deathbed (Crouch 2004), historians have generally assumed that his family's donations to the military religious orders were intended to assist their work in the Holy Land. It is also possible, however, that the family gave to these orders because they were loyal

¹ Knowles & Hadcock 1971: 193; Rees 1947: 105, 107, 117. See also Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Slebech MS 11438, and see Fenton 1903: 326.

allies who could perform useful services. For example, Walter Marshal's donation gave the Hospitallers and their men, servants and burgesses, full liberty to buy and sell all kinds of merchandise, wholesale and retail, within and outside the earl's towns and boroughs, free from all tolls and customs; this was apparently to encourage trade along the eastern Cleddau river, on which Slebech stood.²

Unlike the Templars, whose lands were on the edges of Wales, the Hospitallers also received some properties in the parts of central Wales which were only temporarily under Norman domination, and in north-west Wales, which remained under Welsh lordship.

Ystrad Meurig in Ceredigion was donated to the Hospitallers by Roger de Clare after he recaptured Ceredigion in 1158. Rhys ap Gruffudd of Deheubarth, prince of south Wales, recovered Ceredigion in 1164 and confirmed the Hospitallers' holdings (Mortimer 2004; Pryce 2004; Pryce & Insley 2005: 166–167; Rees 1947: 28, 112, 113). There was a possible strategic advantage for him in fostering the Hospitallers' presence in this disputed region; it is also possible that he specifically wished to support the Hospitallers' work helping pilgrims to the Holy Land; while donating to a religious order connected to the crusade reinforced his status as a pre-eminent prince (Gerald of Wales 1868: 15; Rees 1947: 28, 113). As Ystrad Meurig lies on one of the pilgrim routes to St Davids, we may speculate that the Hospitallers maintained a hospice there for pilgrims – but this is only speculation.

While the Hospitallers were building up their estates at Slebech to become one of the wealthiest religious houses in Wales, the Templars received very little land within Wales. They did have estates in the borderlands of the Welsh March: they arrived in Shropshire at Lydley and nearby Cardington in the late 1150s, and at Garway in Herefordshire in the 1180s. Lydley was probably founded by William fitzAlan I. It is not clear who gave Garway to the Templars, but Stillingflete recorded that King Henry II was the donor (Stillingflete 1673: 552). Neither Garway nor Llanmadoc are mentioned in the Templars' Inquest of 1185, which dealt only with houses in England (Lees 1935: 1). King Henry II allowed

² Cardiff, Glamorgan Archives, CL/DEEDS I/3658.

the Templars to clear 2,000 acres of land ‘*in Walliis apud Garewi*’ (in Wales at Garway), and in 1189 his son Richard I confirmed them in possession of *Llangarewi, cum castellarario quod fuit Hermannii et cum omnibus pertinenciis suis* (‘the [church] enclosure at Garway with the castle that belonged to Hermann and with all its appurtenances’) (Lees 1935: 141, 142). Perhaps the kings of England valued the presence of these loyal servants in the Welsh March, as a reminder of royal authority to the Anglo-Norman Marcher lords.

The Templars’ only substantial estate in Wales itself was Llanmadoc on the Gower Peninsula. Margaret, countess of Warwick, gave the Templars the church, *vill* and land at Llanmadoc in 1156, a gift approved by her underage sons Henry, Robert and Geoffrey de Newburgh (Rees 1947: 127; Knowles & Hadcock 1971: 294; Dugdale & Dodsworth 1846: 841). We can only speculate as to why Margaret made this donation. The counts of Warwick were interested in the crusade; Margaret may have hoped that the presence of a military order on the Gower coast would help to defend this vulnerable area against the pirates in the Severn estuary, although the Templars were very reluctant to take on a similar role on Lundy Island, which was confirmed to them by King Richard I in 1189 but the brothers never took possession (Rees 1947: 54). The Gower is one of the few areas of Wales where wheat can be grown, and it is possible that this made it attractive to the Templars: in any case, at the time of the Templars’ arrests in January 1308 wheat was being grown here.³

Ireland

The Templars and Hospitallers came to Ireland because the invaders gave them lands there, but they were not part of the invasion. It is tempting to suggest that they were endowed in Ireland because the invasion itself was a crusade against the Irish – but the contemporary evidence does not support that interpretation. Some scholars have argued that Pope Hadrian IV’s bull *Laudabiliter* indicates that the invasion was a crusade, but Anne Duggan has suggested that the *Laudabiliter* that has come down to us was

3 Kew, The National Archives of the UK: SC 6/1202/3 and E 358/20 rot. 10r.

effectively a forgery by Gerald of Wales, and that in fact Pope Hadrian's original letter probably urged King Henry II to consult the Irish before taking troops to Ireland (Duggan 2007). That said, arguably all involved should have been crusading against Muslims rather than invading and conquering other Christian lands. Perhaps, as Kathryn Hurlock suggests, donations to the Templars and Hospitallers were a thank-offering for the success of the invasion (Hurlock 2011: 146).

The first clear mention of the Templars and Hospitallers in Ireland is in a deed witnessed by Archbishop Lorcan or Laurence O'Toole, 'Matthew the Templar', 'Ralph the Hospitaller' and others, which Paolo Virtuani has dated to 'around 1177' (Virtuani 2014: 28). Some writers have suggested that the Hospitallers took an active military role in the invasion, on the basis that one of the invaders was a Maurice de Prendergast, and in 1203 a Maurice de Prendergast was prior of Kilmainham, the Hospitallers' principal house in Ireland. Paolo Virtuani argues that the later Hospitaller is almost certainly the same man as the invader, but as the contemporary sources for the invasion do not call him 'Brother' or mention the Hospital, apparently Maurice was not a Hospitaller at the time of the invasion (Virtuani 2014: 15–21, 36; Lennox Brown 1985: 112). He could have joined the military order later in life, just as Philip de Milly, lord of Nablüs, had joined the Templars in the kingdom of Jerusalem, and Gilbert de Lacy had done in England (Barber 1994: 106; Lewis 2004).

In their classic study of religious houses in Ireland, Aubrey Gwynn and R. Neville Hadcock judged that the Templars received their important properties in Ireland between 1180 and 1200 (Gwynn & Hadcock 1970: 329). They stated that Clontarf, Crooke and Kilbarry were given by King Henry II, Cooley and Kilsaran by Margaret de Lacy and Kilcloggan by Connor O'More (Gwynn & Hadcock 1970: 330). However, in his study of the Hook Peninsula Billy Colfer reckoned that Henry II also gave the Templars Kilcloggan (Colfer 2004: 48). All the Templars' property, with the exception of Templehouse in Co. Sligo, was in the south and east of Ireland, the area most dominated by the invaders from Britain. Once again, the Templars preferred drier land suitable for wheat growing. The exception to this was their house in Sligo, situated on a strategic river

crossing and possibly given to them by a member of the Anglo-Norman de Burgh family in the thirteenth century as part of their establishing domination in the Sligo area (O'Connor & Naessens 2016: 130).

The Templars held no property in Ulster, unlike the Hospitallers, who received Castleboy (St John in Ards) at the southernmost point in Ulster from Hugh de Lacy. Otherwise the Hospitallers' Irish property, like the Templars', was concentrated in south and east Ireland and donated to them between the 1170s and 1216. Gwynn and Hadcock believed that the Hospitallers' estates were given to them by leading Anglo-Norman nobles: Walter de Lacy gave the Hospitallers Kilmainhambeg; Richard fitz Gilbert de Clare, alias Strongbow, gave them Kilmainham; Maurice fitz Gerald gave them Kiltel; Alexander de St Helena may have given them Mourne; William Marshal, earl of Pembroke, may have given them their land at Wexford; Killerig was given by Gilbert de Borard, and Ainy in County Limerick (now known as 'Hospital') by Geoffrey de Marisco or Marsh – although many of the donors and precise dates of donation are uncertain (Gwynn & Hadcock 1970: 334–342; Browne and Ó Clabaigh 2016).

The military orders also held properties in the towns of Ireland (Nicholson 2013: 113, 117–118, 122, 125). King Henry II granted the Temple and Hospital the right to have a single *hospes* or guest in each borough in England and Ireland, who was exempt from tallage and other exactions, just as they had one house site in each Scottish burgh (Perkins 1910: 215; Cowan, Mackay & Macquarrie 1983: xviii, xxvii, lvii).

It is clear that the Templars' main patron in Ireland was the king of England, whereas the Hospitallers relied on a wide range of lords from Britain for their Irish property. These orders received little or nothing from the native Irish, and did not recruit from them: their early members were drawn from Anglo-Norman and Cymro-Norman families who had settled in Ireland (Nicholson 2016: 12–14). The future histories of both orders in Ireland reflected their connection with the invaders and particularly with the king of England. Even though the Hospitallers were not endowed by the king, they came to serve the government in Dublin even more than did the Templars.

Conclusion

There are two sides to the question of how the Templars and Hospitallers built up their land holdings in Britain and Ireland. The first problem is to identify their patrons. The evidence set out here has suggested that the monarch initiated and encouraged patronage and was then followed by the high nobility and then other donors. Where the monarch did not make endowments other lords might do so – as to the Hospitallers in Wales – and in certain political circumstances this would not necessarily be a disadvantage to a religious order. So the Templars' links to the kings of England may have been a distinct disadvantage to them in Wales. Yet, given that most of the country is not suitable for arable production, perhaps this was not a problem to them.

This leads us to the other side of the question: whether the order actually wanted land. As the Templars' preference appears to have been for land where wheat could be grown, they would not have been very interested in donations of land in Wales. Their only estate west of Cardiff, at Llanmadoc in the Gower, is in one of the few parts of Wales where wheat can be grown. It may be that the Hospitallers were more willing to accept property in areas less suitable for arable farming. More adaptable than the Templars and less tied to the king of England, the Hospitallers gained donations over a wider geographical area in these islands and ultimately were by far the more successful order.

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