

An Analysis of Temple (Balantrodach)

In the above I have attempted to show what Temple (Balantrodach) looked like in the 13th century, please excuse the walls they were the hardest part to try and draw. I have also tried to explain what was what, if you wish just a plain picture without the writing sent please contact me.

Every time I try and write something about the area it changes due to finding more facts, in 1128 Hugh de Payne visited Scotland and met with King David, David being well impressed with this near middle aged Knight granted him and the pending new Order of Knights Templar the Lands of Balantrodach.

This may have been a bit of a gamble as it was not till a month later the Knights Templar Order or, Knights of the Temple of Jerusalem were properly founded, anyway it paid off for Hugh and David in the end.

Nobody knows exactly when Balantrodach was built but there is now a tiny piece of evidence that gives us a clue, there is the first historical documented evidence of the Templar's in Scotland dated 1160, this was held at St. Andrews. This document states that there were two witnesses listed, those being Richard of the Hospital of Jerusalem and Robert Brother of the Temple (The Knights Templar). It should be noted that the Hospitallers were also introduced in to Scotland at the same time.

During my research at Temple Village (Balantrodach) I wondered where the Monks had come from, history again gave me the clue, in around 1130 Melrose Abbey (Cistercian) was bursting at the seams with Monks from all over, due to this they had to find somewhere else to locate them, King David again being a God fearing man granted them the lands of Newbottle now Newbattle meaning (New Place), this new Abbey was started around 1140.

So with this in mind I feel that Balantrodach was not started until around 1150 and completed by the end of 1160, the Monks may have have been sent from Newbattle or at least Melrose to work at Balantrodach. How many Monks were there is not known and the same with the Templar's.

There was of course the Master who was Robert but how many sergeants I have no idea, there must have been quite a few between Edinburgh and Balantrodach as it is said, King David had Templar's with him both day and night, they could have travelled between the two places as the distance would only be around 15 miles. Roughly about the same time the building of Mount Lothian would have taken place, again this is supposed to have been funded by Newbattle Abbey and would have been an outlook post for Balantrodach.

Where did they get the stones to build the Chapel and Buildings I thought, the answer was very simple it was right on the doorstep, see Photo.

It is known after various Archaeological digs and Scans that a Round Tower had been there, during some digs they found around five bases for large pillars, in 2006 I discovered a piece of a Templar's burial slab now in Roslyn Chapel, in 2010 another complete slab was found after a boundary wall had been taken down I was told that the remains are still in there and exhumation was out of the question.

Where this stone slab was found would have been within the precincts of the Tower and, if the date that they guessed at is correct then it may be the resting place of Robert the first Master, at the same time another stone with a cross on it was discovered but nothing under it, this may have a Monks stone which is now in the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh.

In around 1450 Temple (Balantrodach) was supplied with a Priest and at the same time became Parochial, so here is another bit of evidence that it was still habited by the Templar's or only the Monks, but having a Priest means that the the population was growing in the area. Then the crunch came when the Reformation took over in 1560, Temple (Balantrodach) Chapel for some reason escaped a lot of damage even when the Covenanters gained control.

The reason the Tower and buildings were taken down was due to the first Laird of Temple as it was now known as, Stephen Boyd decided to build himself a house equal to that of Arniston, the stones from the Commandery buildings were used for that purpose, ten years after the house was built Boyd became bankrupt so was there a curse put on him after his deed.

The same would happen to Patrick Murray of the House of Deuchar after he became second Laird, after he died Dundas of Arniston decided to have it pulled down, he offered it as a quarry to locals to build a newer Temple village upon the hill, the first two houses were built in 1760.

When I was down recently I looked at where the latest Templar stone was found as mentioned earlier, standing where the stone is I looked at the ruined Chapel, judging the height to the base of the Chapel I was about three feet lower than the base. I realised that the Chapel we see today may be built on the original one, I posed the question to the Archaeologist and he agreed with my findings. So throughout time the Chapel has been built and rebuilt, the rebuilding work using many of the original materials, the thing I looked for most was Mason's Marks, there are none.

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