

St.Catherine's In-The-Hopes Chapel (St Catherine of Alexandria)

Just off the A702 road from Edinburgh there are the ruins of a little 14th century chapel which no one can see, sounds a bit mysterious doesn't it, where is it then and why can't we see it, is it underground, no, is it inside one of the hills, no, in fact the chapel is underwater, it is buried underwater in the Glencorse Reservoir.

King Robert the Bruce awarded Sir Henry St. Clair (Sinclair), not Sir William as many people think, a charter of Pentland Muir for his good and faithful services. In a report, a wager is also mentioned, the wager was to see who had the best hunting hounds, it seems that Sir Henry won and it was due to this the founding of St. Catherine's in the Hopes chapel came about. It would be his son another Sir William that would eventually help carry the " Bruce's " heart to the Holy Land.

The area derives its name from Glencross then latterly Glencorse as it is now known today, it is again believed that the name was chosen from an ancient stone cross that stood within the burial grounds of St. Catherine's in the Hopes church

Why this area was chosen, it chosen because it was a good catchment area for the water, the reservoir was designed by Thomas Telford in 1822 to feed fresh water to Edinburgh, the City like many others suffered from the Cholera outbreak where many of the population died.

The chapel may have suffered like all the others when the reformation came about in 1560, Reformists destroying what was not to their liking and rebuilding chapels to what suited them, such were the times.

Was it Templar I asked myself, it may well have been, when we consider that this little chapel was now within the Barony of the St.Clair (Sinclair) family, just to the North of the point is an area called Knightfield, on the map it shows Knightfield Rig, this is yet a smaller reservoir. Another question I asked myself was, who was in charge of the chapel, was it the Cistercians or the Augustinians, I have a strange feeling it was the latter, considering it is only about two miles from where the Old Pentland Church was.

Why am I thinking Templar, well it was built just before the dissolution of the Templars in 1314, and we know that the Templars were in that area, they never gave over their properties straight away, they held onto them for as long as they could, this would be their way to show defiance and would of course give them time to slip away any prized possessions they had accumulated over the years.

There is now a Kirk at Glencorse just before you come to the Army Barracks from the Edinburgh direction, the Kirk was built around 1665 St.Catherine's in the Hopes chapel and St Mary's at Mount Lothian were annexed in 1635, by the looks of it they were never really used after the reformation, they had readers but that seems to be all they had.

After the battle of Rullion Green some of the reformists who were killed may have been buried at St.Catherine's, further investigation will need to be carried out.

St.Catherine's in the Hopes Church may have come to the same fate as the Pentland church, whereby the St. Clair (Sinclair) family harassed the Minister so much that he died and that was the end of that little church which no longer exists.

St. Catherine was of noble birth and converted many to Christianity, she was eventually sentenced to death for her work, she was sentenced to die at the wheel " The St. Catherine's

Wheel “ as we know of today. It is said that when she touched the wheel it was miraculously destroyed, Emperor Maximinus had her beheaded.

There is a burn running from the North and as you cross the old stone bridge, walk on for about 100 yards and you are there, one report has stated that it lies approximately 20 meters out from the edge.

The Reservoir in its day cost £145,000 pounds, it is 51 feet at the deepest point, and it covers 20 acres, one report stated that on very hot spells when the water goes down, the bell tower has been seen to break the surface, some have claimed to hear the bell ringing.

It would be wonderful if someone with diving apparatus could go down and take photographs or if someone had a submersible machine that could do the job, this would help researchers better to do their work, let us see what is there after 185 years, it has been done elsewhere so why not here.

Visiting

It is advisable to park your vehicle at the Flotterstone Visitor Centre and walk to the reservoir.

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