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Report on the Templars in Rockley and Lockeridge

During the twelfth and thirteenth century, the Knights Templars were landholders in Rockley and Lockeridge. The following is a description of their acquisitions of estates in that location and also, where possible, a description of those holding land in their neighbourhood. Three main sets of sources will be referred to in this exercise: royal records of land and its holders such as the Charter, Close and Patent Rolls; the Sandford Cartulary and the Inquest of c.1185; a survey of the Templar estates across England. The Sandford Cartulary was compiled during the last quarter of the thirteenth century, and comprises over four hundred charters pertaining to lands acquired in Oxfordshire and Wiltshire, a few of which provide us with accurate datings of the Templars' presence in our area. The Inquest of c.1185 called by its editor, Beatrice Lees, "The Domesday Book of the Order."¹ is a survey of the lands under Templar administration on the Eve of the Third Crusade. Though it has been proved to omit details of land known to have been acquired prior to this date, it is still a hugely useful and accurate guide to the extent of resources, the variety of socio-economic activities and the administrative organisation of the Temple across the country at this time. This paper will also include a brief account of the history of the Order of the Temple, its origins, growth, and eventual abolition in the papal bull of 1312, *Vox in Excelso*.

A brief history of the Temple

Before homing in on the presence of the Templars in England and Wiltshire, it is perhaps useful to know something about their origins and function in the Holy Land. There are three main accounts of the origin of the Templars written by William, bishop of Tyre in the second half of the twelfth century, Jacques de Vitry, bishop of Acre, as one of its participants, an important source for the Fifth Crusade, and Michael the Syrian, Patriarch of the Syriac Church in Antioch in the first half of the twelfth century. William of Tyre offers the following passage as his account of the order's foundation: "In the same year [which was 1118], certain pious and God fearing nobles of knightly rank, devoted to the lord, professed the wish to live perpetually in poverty, chastity and obedience. In the hands of the patriarch they professed themselves to the service of God as regular canons. Foremost and most distinguished among these men were the venerable Hugues de Payens and Godfrey de St. Omer. Since they had neither a church nor a fixed place of abode, the king granted them a temporary dwelling place in his own palace, on the north side of the Temple of the Lord. Under certain definite conditions, the

¹ *Records of the Templars in England in the Twelfth Century*, Records Of Social and Economic History, vol. IX, B. Lees, p.xxix.

canons of the Temple of the lord also gave them a square belonging to the canons near the same place where the new order might exercise the duties of its religion.”

The date of its foundation in Jacques de Vitry’s account was nine years before the Order received its official Rule at the Council of Troyes in 1128. The year 1119 though does seem a likely date for the setting up of the new order, since in the Easter of that year, a group of over one hundred pilgrims was massacred on the road to Jordan. Though not an uncommon occurrence, its timing and scale were particularly distressing and probably brought things to a head for those planning a new order designed to prevent such happenings in the future. The Knights Hospitallers, another military order whose Rule was confirmed in the Papal Bull *Pie Postulatio Voluntatis* of 1113, had already begun to set up secure houses on the pilgrimage routes for the relief of Christian travellers, and in the account of Michael the Syrian, this foundation may have been an influence on the intentions of those described by William of Tyre who set up what were to become the Brother Knights of the Temple of Solomon. Michael’s account differs from the other two in that he mentions the presence of Hugh de Payens in the East already by 1116. Malcolm Barber uncovers the partial traces of a social network rooted in feudal relations in the West, which explains a possible link in the conception of the Order. Both Hugh de Payen and Godfrey de Saint Omer were knights of Count Hugh of Champagne, the latter present in the East in 1113, returning to Champagne in the same year and perhaps discussing the idea for a military order with Hugh de Payens before he then left for the East in 1116. Hugh de Champagne also granted the land for the foundation of the Abbey of Clairvaux, the mother house of the Cistercian monks and headed by St. Bernard who influenced the Templars in forming a Rule very similar to the Cistercian one.

Jacques de Vitry states that only nine knights at first comprised the Order in its first nine years, an observation perhaps not literally the case but nevertheless serving to illustrate the uncertainty of the Order in its early days. An anonymous letter written to the Order around 1130 along with an open address of St. Bernard, both aimed to bolster the sense of legitimacy among those entering it. After three requests for his help made by Hugh de Payens, St. Bernard wrote *De Laude novae militiae ad milites Templi liber* in defence of the novel concept of warrior monks. The separate and often confrontational relationship between the warrior and the monk in the immediate post Carolingian period was quite clear: the *milites* wielded power through coercion and cut themselves off from a religious life endangering their souls for the profits and pleasures of this world; those who became monks renounced their worldly power and made a discipline of poverty, stability, chastity and obedience. When the term *milites Christi* was used it originally applied in a metaphorical sense to the Benedictines who, in their formidable daily routine of singing and prayer, were depicted as waging a front-line war against devils and other sources of evil in the world. Throughout the eleventh century however, and through religious associations established in the Peace and Truce of God meetings and the reform movement, co-operation was gradually being learned by the secular and spiritual powers, the

Church on its part learning to moderate its view on violence and attempting to channel rather than condemn it², the knights in turn being educated by the Church in the limiting of their violence and the restriction of its use to special and appropriate occasions the definition of which was left to the Church. In *De Laude* Bernard developed these concepts and drew upon the new distinction made between *militia* and *malicia* to underline the appropriateness and spiritual legitimacy of the Templars as the first Order for whom fighting was part of their religious profession. Indeed Bernard made this the only ideal image of knighthood that the armed in society should aspire to, contrasting the Templar of pure motive and obedience, who fought a defensive war to protect the Church and the poor for the glory of God and the salvation of their souls, with the *malicia* or old knighthood who dressed vainly, followed idle pursuits and fought with a pride bent on personal glory and material gain. In the words of one historian, “Bernard hoped that his treatise would convert a generation of idle aristocrats”³. It is difficult to evaluate just to what extent this work of Bernard directly encouraged further recruitment to the Order or the granting of land to it. It is clear however that it firmly established a place and a clear vocation for military orders in the religious life of Christendom. Three Papal bulls cementing the legitimacy of the Templar’s vocation⁴ and endorsing its spiritual value, were issued in the late 1130s and 1140s. *Omne Datum Optimum* in 1139 authorised the use of their own priests by the Order, allowed them to build their own churches, add to their Rule and made their Master directly answerable only to the Pope. In *Milites Templi* five years later, the Order was given the lucrative right to hold services once a year in places where an interdict operated, and its benefactors were given remission of a sixth of their penance. *Militia Dei* issued in the following year confirmed many of the details of the previous two bulls, and allowed the burial of the *familia* of the Temple in its cemeteries. Support from the Papacy through these bulls and other privileges was accompanied by support and patronage of the Crown as well, in England, France and the Catalan regions. During the reign of Henry II the New Temple in London was used as a royal treasury and Templars became important international financiers and messengers for kings. One of the factors that makes the suppression and abolition of the Order of the Temple difficult to explain is that even in the late 1290s, Philip IV, the chief architect of the Templar’s suppression, was still using them as his predecessors had done to conduct important financial functions for the French treasury. Criticism of the Order by those in the Church who felt their privileges too extensive and spiritually questionable, was fanned by the appearance of a divergence between the original vision provided by Bernard and the huge network of auxiliary operations the Order was engaged in. By the mid thirteenth century, observes Malcolm Barber, “as the ideology of the Templars drew donations which provided an economic base, so the realities of the economy and the demands of the society came to affect the image.”⁵ During the trials following the arrest of the Templars in France in 1307, it was discovered that they had renounced the universal Church and the

² See I.S. Robinson, *Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ*, History 58, (1973).

³ Bulst-Thiele, The influence of St. Bernard in the formation of the Order of the Temple’ from *The Second Crusade and the Cistercians*, ed. Gervers, p.59.

⁴ It is a measure of the power of Bernard’s vision that the *De Laude* was given to soldiers of the Papal States in the mid nineteenth century. See Edward Burman, *The Templars: Knights of God*, p.36.

⁵ M.Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of The Temple*, p.43.

faith and had taken part in secret rituals spitting, trampling and urinating on the cross, worshipping idols and kissing each other on intimate parts of the body as part of an unofficial initiation ceremony. There is no evidence that any of these allegations were true, and none of those Templars who were burnt at the stake did so as martyrs. A combination of factors contributed to the abolition of the Order including a lack of support by the Church which at this time was suffering from a weakened Papacy, the sense that after the fall of Acre and the loss of the Holy Land in 1291, the Order were redundant, and the conviction of Philip IV that the Capetian monarchy should provide the focus for spiritual leadership and that consequently it should cleanse the kingdom of any elements that threatened this leadership.⁶

The Templars in England

Across Western Europe the Temple acquired land and privileges in the wake of the Council of Troyes and well into the thirteenth century, establishing a huge network of over eight hundred and fifty religious houses known as preceptories. Such houses were not established at every site of land comprising the Templar estates but formed the administrative centres at which money, horses, military equipment and manpower were gleaned to support the Order's military activities in the East. Grants of land made to the Templars in England date back to the late 1130s during the Anarchy of Stephen's reign, the Order gaining patronage from both sides and at the highest levels. Temple Cressing in Essex was given by Stephen's wife Queen Mathilda in 1137, whilst the Empress Mathilda granted land in Shotover forest and Temple Cowley in Oxfordshire. Eight charters in the Sandford Cartulary, half of them undated, the other half dated to the period 1141-1174, deal with land granted to the Templars in Rockley and Lockeridge. The earliest of these is that of Miles, Earl of Gloucester, made Earl of Hereford by Empress Mathilda in 1141. As he died in 1143, the charter must fall between these two dates as it is as Earl of Hereford that he grants "my land of Lockeridge" to the Temple. Miles himself acquired this land as part of his inheritance from Durand, Earl of Gloucester who is known to have held two hides of it in 1086, freely from the Bishop of Winchester.⁷ Miles of Hereford was one of Henry I's 'new men risen from the dust' and had been a royal constable of Stephen until the arrival of Empress Mathilda in 1139 when he defected to her side. His position was taken by William de Beauchamp who himself appears to have later defected to Mathilda and Duke Henry's side.⁸ Between 1155-69 William granted a further two hides to the Temple at Lockeridge. A grant of land in Lockeridge from a third source is suggested in the charter of Richard of Hastings, Master of the Temple in England, who between 1164 and 1174, granted a hide to Walter of Thanet, "which Robert of Ewias gave to us". Humphrey de Bohun, the husband of Miles' daughter Margaret, inherited the honor of Hereford and along with it some continued claim in Lockeridge, of which a Richard Quintyn is known to have held one knight's fee between 1243-75⁹. A Richard Quintyn figures in one of the four undated charters

⁶ M.Barber, *The Trial of the Templars*, pp.221-247. And see R.I.Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, for a wider survey of state persecution of 'out-groups' at this time.

⁷ VCH. Wilts.vol.ii p.189.

⁸ See the seemingly conflicting opinions of RHC. Davis, *King Stephen*, p.113-4. and Lees, *Records*. p.177, n.15.

⁹ *Book of Fees*, vol.ii, p.748.

granting a meadow, a dwelling house and some land for grazing cattle to the Templars. His appearance in the Book of Fees provides a link in our efforts to date these charters as mid thirteenth century. Among the witnesses of the other three charters is the other link, lord William de Cardeuile, who stood as one of the jurors in the Skelkele hundred, whose task was to identify the fees owed to the Crown in the 1240s. A grant by Thomas de Hacy to the Templars of a meadow “that Albert my father bought at some time from Richard Quincy” is (through proof in the details of both) chronologically followed by another of half a virgate, again by Thomas in Lockeridge. In the fourth undated charter Richard Sokemond grants freedom of entry and exit to the Temple and their cattle on lands of both parties which “co-mingle”. Since none of these lands and rights are mentioned in the Inquest of 1185, along with the other evidence above, it appears sensible to date them to the 1240s or 1250s. The Templars then, established a five hide estate in the land known as Lockeridge from a number of separate sources in the twelfth century, and added to it in the following century, though this was never the full extent of the area known by that name. In the late thirteenth century a grant of land in Lockeridge (60 acres)¹⁰ was made by the Macy family to the priory of St. Margaret’s in Marlborough. In July 1294 the prior of St. Margaret’s had released to him by the king 40 acres and two messuages granted to the priory without license.¹¹

From the way the entries are arranged in the Inquest of 1185, it is clear that the Templar lands at Lockeridge were administered by a preceptory based at Rockley, in the parish of Ogbourne St. Andrew. Thomas de Hacy’s gift “to the Templars residing at Rockley” corroborates this. John Marshal, another of Henry I’s ‘new men’ who stayed loyal to Mathilda and Duke Henry and was made a constable when the latter became Henry II, gave to the Templars his land of Rockley in 1156 which in the Inquest is recorded as amounting to one hide of land. In the Charter Rolls of 1270, the Templars are mentioned as holding the tithe at Rockley. The holders of other lands comprising the area known as Rockley, as well as that known as Fifhide, can be traced across the thirteenth century through the records of the Crown. In 1274, the king gave to Eudo la Zuch seisin of several manors including that of Rockley, by virtue of his marriage to Millicent, a co-heiress of the lands left by the local tenant in chief, George de Cantilupe¹². In 1276, the assessment carried out on George de Cantilupe’s property reveals that John of Tregoz held half a knight’s fee at Rockley¹³, which by the time of his own death in 1299 had become a whole fee held of him by Nicholas Poinz. Three other fees were held of John in Norton and Fifhide, by Roger of Bavent¹⁴. John of Tregoz’s second daughter Sibyl married William de Grandisson and they were given seisin by the king in 1302 of one knight’s fee in Rockley and three in Norton and Fifhide¹⁵. By the time of William’s death in 1336, the combined area of the three

¹⁰ VCH. Wilts. p190.

¹¹ *Calendar of Fine Rolls*, vol.i, p.341

¹² *Ibid.* p17-18.

¹³ *Calendar of Inquisitions*, vol.ii, p.16. This record omits detail of the manor’s full extent including the names of tenants, but it does mention a field called ‘Rotheresdune’.

¹⁴ *Cal. of Inq.* vol.iii, p.455.

¹⁵ *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol.1296-1302, p.562.

supported a total of six and a half knight's fees, two held at Norton by Roger de Bavent, one and half at Fifhide, by his son and namesake, and three by Hugh Poinz (an heir of Nicholas) at Rockley¹⁶. The trebling of fees on the Rockley estate no doubt reflected the freeing up of land made possible by the abolition of the Order of the Temple in 1312.

Day to day life at Rockley.

From the Rule of the Order and the survey of Templar lands in England undertaken in c.1185, it is possible to construct a fairly clear picture of what daily life at the preceptory of Rockley would have been like. The popular image of a Templar is that of a knight on horseback, clad in a white tunic with a red cross, serving in the Crusades in the Holy Land. This is a pretty accurate description of only a few of the brothers of the Order. Since it was part of their vocation, the Rule contained several clauses regulating the conduct of war, that carried heavy penalties if infringed. Knights were to engage in battle according to a strict routine, particular focus put on the banner which was to be rallied behind at all times. Should that fail, they were to rally behind the banner of the Hospitallers and as a last resort any other Christian flag, but they were not to leave the battlefield whilst the conflict continued, no matter what the odds¹⁷. Other ways of serving the Order were incorporated into the Rule of the Temple and were just as important for its successful functioning. Membership of the knightly class was usually reserved for those of equivalent social standing in secular life. Many entered as sergeants often providing a military function on foot, but others brought their skills as smiths, cooks, masons and general craftsmen to bear in the support of their brothers. Sergeants, whether fighters or artisans wore a brown tunic with a red cross on it. A third group of chaplain-brothers were ordained priests who administered the sacraments and served the altar in the Templar churches that were built across Europe. Barber suggests that these chaplains played a significant part in attracting patrons in the West with their high standards of service and access to many relics that were discovered by the Order in the East. The Rule of the Order included a strict daily routine of prayer reproduced across Europe and the East, which was performed by all including, during lulls in the fighting, those with military duties. The hours were said at 4am, 6am, 8am, 11.30am, 2.30 in the afternoon and 6.30pm. Sixty Paternosters were said for the benefactors of the Order, thirty for the dead, "so that God may deliver them from the pains of Purgatory" and thirty for the living, "that God may deliver them from sin and pardon them the sins they have committed"¹⁸. At Rockley, as in the other preceptories in England, probably fewer than half a dozen brothers would have served, mostly as chaplains and craftsmen, though one or two may have been retired knights or sergeants, and several without full membership to the Order would have served as part of its *familia* rather like the *conversi* of the Cistercians. When the house passed to the Hospitallers after the abolition of the Templars in 1312, a chaplain and a bailiff were maintained

¹⁶ *Cal. of Inq.* vol.vii, p.460.

¹⁷ See M. Bennett, *La Regle du Temple* as a military manual, or How to Deliver a Cavavly Charge, in *Studies in Medieval History presented to R. Allen Brown*.

¹⁸ M.Barber, *The New Knighthood*, p.208.

there.¹⁹ Visits may on occasion have been made by Knights Templars from other preceptories and perhaps even from abroad. Temple Cowley and Sandford (from 1239 on) in Oxford were two larger preceptories nearby. It is doubtful whether the lands at Rockley were used for the training of Templar recruits, since the Order is known for accepting only those reaching a certain age who were expected to have accumulated knightly skills in childhood. The house may have possessed expertise in a brother blacksmith however, and likewise for the production of pottery. Since such activities were fairly routine, it is doubtful whether it would have been considered worth committing to parchment.

Details that were committed to parchment however have been recorded in the *Inquisitio* conducted on the arrival of Geoffrey fitz Stephen as the new Master in England around 1185. The inquiry required the following pieces of information from those charged with assessing the lands under their control: the donors of lands, the possessors of lands, churches, mills, assized lands (lands assessed for rent) demesne lands and assessed rents or rents fixed by agreement. Thus, on the eve of the Third Crusade, a glimpse of the preceptory of Rockley and its estates is frozen in time. The hide of land donated by John Marshal comprises 40 acres containing nine tenants, eight holding five acres in payment of 30d. each. For a shilling, Eve held one croft, and the remaining carucate, estimated at a further 40 acres by Lees, was held in demesne. The status of such tenants is not explicitly mentioned but from the meagre amounts of land they hold it is clear that they were serfs at subsistence level. These assized rents amounted to £1 1s. though the scribe has it as 20s. and 2d. Among the appurtenances of Rockley the most significant was land at Lockeridge, where the gifts of William de Beauchamp of two hides and that of Robert Ewias of one hide are recorded. As Lees observes, the charter of William de Beauchamp gives no indication of size though it appears to have been 'rated' at two hides in the Inquest. The actual area a hide at Lockeridge covered on the ground may therefore have been smaller to that known as a hide in Rockley. This would account for the apparently over extensive estate in Lockeridge that we know as a small strip of land compared to those it shares borders with. In this area of Lockeridge there are forty assized acres shared by nine tenants, five of them holding five acres for 3s., two holding ten acres for 6s., one holding a croft and two acres for 28d. and the ninth holding a croft and one acre for 14d. Between them for an area of assized land they are recorded as owing 2s. This amounts to £1 12s. 6d., which when added to the 16s. owed by Walkelin²⁰ for the one hide gifted by Robert Ewias, makes the Lockeridge estate the main source of revenue for the preceptory across the downs at Rockley. The only other estate pertaining to Rockley set down in the survey is that of Berwick Basset, near Bradford on Avon, where one virgate of land was held by William the cleric for half a mark (approx. 7s.). During the period 1215-20, land at Chirton was granted to the order by John Marshal, the grandson of the John Marshal mentioned above, and nephew of the famous William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke. It is likely that this was incorporated into the estates managed by the Templars at Rockley.

¹⁹ Knowles and Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses*, p.237.

²⁰ This rent of 16s. for a whole hide seems particularly low when compared to land in Rockley, and would tend to reinforce the notion of the hide in Lockeridge as a fiscal term rather than an areal unit.

As well as listing the tenants of the Rockley who hold the majority of the land granted to the Order, the survey details the customs of service they are expected to deliver. The list of services indicates a mix of arable and pastoral farming, and the use of some ancient words to describe measurements of corn (eg. *mina*, *stricas*), Lees takes to indicate “pre-Conquest precedent”.²¹ At Rockley one woman from each five acre tenancy is required each day to milk, shear and wash the sheep, and to provide the brothers with a loaf of bread and butter produced from the milk. Two men are required at harvest to provide three boon works, and to mow in the meadow known as Petrosun (Parsley) as well as various measures of corn delivered according to the conditions of the season. They are also required to provide merchet and one of the best cattle, four hens and 1d. per pig each year, at the feast of St. Martin. The customs at Lockeridge appear to have been under dispute at the time of going to parchment. The tenants seem to have collectively denied the legitimacy of a number of the customs including giving three strikes of corn, 5d. or one sheep, and the payment of 1d. for one pig each year. The scribe insists that these services were imposed on the baillia “through Alfred Cat. and Serichum White”,²² before the brothers took them. Unfortunately we have no way of knowing which side of the dispute prevailed, though the incident itself perhaps provides a familiar perspective on English labour relations.

Discussion

The question of motivation behind specific donations to the Order of the Temple is, as with explanations for the patronage of other religious orders, problematic. Contained in every charter is the ‘pro anima’ clause formally reflecting a seemingly general understanding that the transaction affirmed an important- for want of a better word- ‘spiritual’ relationship between giver and receiver. There is no detail about how the religious house will undertake to save the soul of the donor from the pains of purgatory, and no attempt is made at evaluating the spiritual merit attached to any particular transaction. Clearly it would suit any religious order to be vague on such matters but the patrons themselves don’t seem to have needed reassurance with any kind of crude tariff system. The gesture of gifting the land itself was where the meaning of the relationship was contained. Barbara Rosenwein, in her study of the tenth and eleventh century charters of Cluny, calls this the ‘social meaning’ of the transaction, by which she focuses on the concept of gift exchange as a means of encouraging neighbourliness between donors through the monastery. In this thesis, land becomes loaded with a social significance above and beyond any economic utility it may possess. Since our concerns focus on a society for which economic transactions and the cultivation of land for profit are more highly developed²³, this insight offered by Rosenwein needs modifying. It is clear from numerous charters that sales of land were disguised as gifts or that land could be given to free the donor from debt or to establish a kind of pension to fall back on in old age. In this way the social or religious function of the

²¹ *Records of the Templars*, p.cxxxii.

²² *Ibid.* p.57.

²³ L.K.Little, *Religious Poverty and The Profit Economy*, Ch.1.

Templar preceptory, could easily merge into the provision of an economic or financial service. Among the *familia* of the Temple were many widows and orphans for which the deceased donor had provided in his making of a charter. The kind of men donating land to the Temple in Rockley and Lockeridge seem to have been the *nouveau riches*, knights from humble origins whose concerns might be to acquire connections among and to assimilate themselves with the larger and longer established aristocratic families. Since their gain was a potential loss to the older families, the exercise was a delicate one, requiring the consolidation of acquisitions, whilst at the same time showing the signs of good neighbourliness. To give land to an order or better still to found a religious house would perhaps represent one such way of declaring your good intentions. John Marshal was of humble origin and became the castellan at Marlborough, as was Miles of Hereford, both acquiring honours for their family line by steering a judicious course through the uncertainties of Stephen's reign. John had risen socially through his military prowess first and foremost, and so to associate himself with the Knights Templars, "the aristocratic fascination of his day",²⁴ was perhaps a logical and wise move. As was often the case with the patronage of elite families, John Marshal's patronage began a tradition of gift giving to the Temple, his family continuing to reaffirm their links with the order into the thirteenth century. William Marshal, the most famous English knight of his day, and about whom an epic poem was written, visited the Holy Land and was buried as a Templar at the New Temple in London, entering the Order in a pre-arranged undertaking when on his death bed. John Marshal's grandson and namesake, the nephew of William, gave land to the Temple at Chirton in Wiltshire in the second decade of the thirteenth century, which was no doubt incorporated into the estates administered by the Rockley preceptory. Though charters were held in private hands it is clear they were meant to be publicly read out, as if those who made the charter were present in the future. From this observation it clear that any analysis of motivation in any particular example of gift giving to a religious house, whether ostensibly for the salvation of souls or the removal of financial hardship, expressed a transaction of social significance.

²⁴ D.Crouch, *William Marshal: Court, Career and Chivalry in the Angevin Empire*, p.20.