

## *CULTURE, HERITAGE, AND TOURISM: THE BORDER ABBEYS OF SCOTLAND*

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### *INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>*

This study analyses the discourses of history, tourism, and identity that are used in the marketing of the Border Abbeys Way, a 68 mile (109 kilometre) heritage walk which was opened in 2006. The Border Abbeys Way is one of Scotland's Grand Trails, and winds between the Tweed and the Teviot Rivers. It intersects with three other long-distance walks: the Southern Upland Way; Saint Cuthbert's Way; and the Cross Borders Drove Road.<sup>2</sup> The featured medieval churches that give the walk its title are Melrose Abbey, Dryburgh Abbey, Kelso Abbey, and Jedburgh Abbey. These great churches were all built during the reign of King David I of Scotland (1084-1153, reigned from 1124), the youngest son of King Malcolm Canmore and Queen (later Saint) Margaret, his Anglo-Saxon wife. David spent much of his youth in the court of his brother-in-law, Henry I of England (who married his elder sister Matilda of Scotland), and wished to bring Scotland into the international church structure and governmental culture he encountered in England.



Figure 1. Melrose Abbey, photographed by Donald Barrett, 1 October 2006.

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<sup>1</sup> This article was first a lecture presented to the Sydney Society for Scottish History on 15 September 2013, titled 'Two Scottish Cistercian Border Abbeys: Melrose and Dundrennan'. Thanks are due to my research assistant at the time, Dr Johanna Petsche, who sourced materials for the lecture and prepared the PowerPoint.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Boobyer, *The Border Abbeys Way: The Abbeys of Melrose, Dryburgh, Kelso and Jedburgh* (Kendal: Cicerone, 2019), p. 13.

After he became King of Scotland in 1124 David I established an organisational structure of government, rebuilt major castles including Edinburgh, Stirling, Berwick, and Roxburgh, and invited Anglo-Normans to settle in Scotland.<sup>3</sup> He also Normanised the Scottish church: the first of the four Border Abbeys Way churches, Kelso Abbey was founded by Tironensian monks from northern France in 1128 (they were originally invited by David I to found an abbey at Selkirk around 1113 CE). The Cistercians of Rievaulx Abbey in Yorkshire were invited by David I to found Melrose Abbey in 1136, and the first Augustinian canons arrived in Jedburgh in 1138. Dryburgh Abbey was founded in 1150 by the French order of Premonstratensian canons from Alnwick in Northumbria. While the Augustinians followed the rule of Augustine, the fifth century bishop of Hippo, all four orders were modern established in the eleventh or twelfth centuries, and were critical of the Benedictine dominance of monasticism, advocating a renewal of faith and discipline.<sup>4</sup> These foundations testify to King David's plan to modernise and internationalise the Scottish church, and to endow foundations that could play a key role in cultural, social, and spiritual development.<sup>5</sup>

This article is in three sections. The first part is a brief history of monasticism in the Christian tradition, culminating in the Cistercian reform movement and David I's foundation of multiple abbeys in Scotland. The second part is a double consideration of the uses of history and heritage in marketing the abbeys of Melrose and Dryburgh, then Kelso and Jedburgh as tourist attractions for walkers (by promoting trails such as the Border Abbeys Way) and more generally. The final section links touristic modes with contemporary spirituality: heritage tourism (as with other cultural ideas formed in opposition to Western modernity like orientalism) suggests either the appeal of the past is connected to the inauthenticity of contemporary life, or that the past is closely associated with the 'identity formation' of the tourist.<sup>6</sup> Both positions resonate with the contemporary Western desire to be 'spiritual' but not religious, which has caused many religious practices, including pilgrimage, to become decoupled from institutions, and to manifest in 'fusion' phenomena like spiritual tourism and secular pilgrimage.<sup>7</sup> The Border Abbeys Way, like Saint Cuthbert's Way which opened a decade earlier in 1996, is engaged in melding touristic attractiveness with spiritual authenticity, and celebrating Scottishness in the twenty-first century.

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<sup>3</sup> Judith A. Green, 'David I and Henry I', *The Scottish Historical Review* LXXV, 1, no. 199 (1996), pp. 1-19.

<sup>4</sup> See 'The Rule of St Augustine', *Georgetown University*, at <https://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/augustine/ruleaug.html>, accessed 16/06/2023; Kathleen Thompson, 'The Arrival of the Tironensians: Twelfth-Century Monastic Foundations in the British Isles', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 55 (2011), pp. 79-104; and Joseph A. Gribbin, *The Premonstratensian Order in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin T. Hudson, 'Kings and Church in Early Scotland', *The Scottish Historical Review* LXXIII, 2, No. 196 (1994), pp. 145-170. Hudson argues that, far from being an innovator, "David was acting in a tradition of royal interest in religious affairs that can be observed as early as the ninth century," p. 145.

<sup>6</sup> Hyounggon Kim and Tazim Jamal, 'Touristic Quest for Existential Authenticity', *Annals of Tourism Research* 34, no. 1 (2007), pp. 181-201.

<sup>7</sup> Alex Norman, *Spiritual Tourism: Travel and Religious Practice in Western Society* (London and New York: Continuum, 2011). See also Justine Digance, 'Religious and Secular Pilgrimage: Journeys Redolent with Meaning', in Dallen J. Timothy and Daniel H. Olsen (eds), *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys* (London and New York, Routledge, 2006), pp. 36-48.

*MONASTICISM: BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BORDER ABBEYS*

Monasticism had been a significant force in Christianity since the fourth century, when the hermit Anthony of Egypt and his countryman Pachomius pioneered the eremitical life and living communally under a Rule in the Egyptian deserts, respectively.<sup>8</sup> The most influential monastic *Rule* is that of Benedict of Nursia (c. 480 to c. 547 CE), written in Italy around 530 and adopted by virtually all Western monks until approximately 1100 CE. The Benedictine Order, administered from the great Abbey of Cluny in southern Burgundy, was dominant until the eleventh century, when reformers objected to the luxury and absence of discipline that was evident in even the greatest monasteries of Europe. Peter Damian, visiting Cluny in 1063, “was outright scandalized over the lack of penance and mortification, particularly in food and drink.”<sup>9</sup> In 1098 three men, Stephen Harding, Robert of Molesme, and Alberic of Cîteaux, founded the Cistercian Order, named for its first monastery at Cîteaux, near Dijon in Burgundy. Cistercians (‘white monks’ because of the white outer garment they wore, whereas Benedictines were ‘black monks’) adhered to a strict application of the Benedictine Rule.

Bernard of Clairvaux, a Burgundian noble, entered Cîteaux in 1113 with thirty companions. Three years later he was selected to lead a new foundation at Clairvaux, on the border of Burgundy and Champagne.<sup>10</sup> Bernard is regarded as a second founder of the Cistercian movement, and was a key figure in the twelfth century church: he preached the Second Crusade, conducted theological battles with the philosopher Peter Abelard, and was attracted to “the current of mysticism, asceticism, liberty, spirituality, personalism which was already beginning to branch out in so many directions: one branch leading to a Francis of Assisi, another to the heresy of Albi.”<sup>11</sup> Bernard is also important for the development of Cistercian aesthetics, due to his public disagreement with Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis over the latter’s rebuilding of the venerable church in the style that would later be called ‘Gothic’. Bernard had long disapproved of St-Denis because of its political importance, whereas Suger, who was born in 1081 CE of humble origins, was placed in the powerful royal abbey church of Saint-Denis as a child oblate and loved it sincerely. He rose to the position of abbot in 1122, which he held until his death in 1151.<sup>12</sup> Suger, too, had a mystical bent, and believed that contemplating the beautiful could lead to knowledge of God. When he began to re-build St-Denis in a grand new style in 1137 he concentrated on the effects of large-scale stained-glass and furnished the church opulently. The effect of the light shining through the stained-glass windows was remarkable and unprecedented. Christian Platonists had for centuries identified light with Christ, building on the opening passage of John’s Gospel:

In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through

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<sup>8</sup> G. H. Schodde (trans.), *The Rules of Pachomius* (London and New York: T. and T. Clark, 1885), at <https://westminsterabbey.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Pachomius-Rule-english.pdf>. Accessed 16/06/2023.

<sup>9</sup> Louis J. Lekai, ‘Motives and Ideals of the Eleventh Century Monastic Renewal,’ in M. Basil Pennington (ed.), *The Cistercian Spirit: A Symposium* (Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1970), p. 33.

<sup>10</sup> Herbert Whone, *Church Monastery Cathedral: A Guide to the Symbolism of the Christian Tradition* (Compton Russell: Element, 1977), p. 46.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Merton, *The Last of the Fathers: Saint Bernard of Clairvaux and the Encyclical Letter, Doctor Mellifluous* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1954), p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St-Denis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 1.

him. All that came to be had life through him, and that life was the light of men, a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower.<sup>13</sup>

The Great Consecration of Saint-Denis in 1144 was a spectacular event, attended by King Louis VII and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine. The new style was indubitably beautiful, but the puritanical Bernard was outraged; “But we who, for the sake of Christ have deemed as dung whatever shines with beauty, enchants the ear, delights through fragrance, flatters the taste, pleases the touch – whose devotion, I ask, do we intend to incite by means of these very things?”<sup>14</sup>

The Biblical injunction to be ‘in the world but not of it’ informed the choice of sites for Cistercian monasteries, as did the motif of the desert, which had drawn the early monks away from worldly lures. Very early in the history of the Order a standard church plan was devised. This ‘Bernadine plan’ is characterised by its square-ended choir and a pair or more of barrel-vaulted rectangular chapels on each arm of the transept. Cistercian buildings are noteworthy for having no towers, turrets, or other non-essential features. Their isolated locations made it necessary for the monks to do all the manual labour involved in running the farms, building the structures and so on. This facilitated Cistercian independence from other ecclesiastical institutions.<sup>15</sup> Local builders, however, could not or would not ignore the regional styles of building, and they always managed to introduce some elements that were foreign to the Burgundian mother houses. For instance, the nave of Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire (after 1135) was not vaulted with the usual barrel but was covered with a flat wooden ceiling; it had a crossing tower, forbidden by the Cistercians after 1157, but which was characteristic of Anglo-Norman churches. As time went on, Burgundian directives were less and less binding, and if local forms were used without excessive ornamentation they were not discriminated against. Although some early Cistercian buildings have a half-Gothic appearance, the Cistercians were not architectural innovators. Roche Abbey in Yorkshire may possibly be the first Gothic building in England (c. 1160), but it is not entirely original, for architectural historians believe it derived from north-east French non-Cistercian churches.<sup>16</sup> Rib-vaulting was adopted by the Cistercians about 1150 and was common to all Cistercian buildings throughout Europe erected after this date. But the rib vault was only one component in Gothic architecture, and Cistercian churches often remained largely Romanesque, in some instances until the early years of the thirteenth century.

The Cistercians insisted on hard manual work and accepted no gifts other than land. They did not allow the employment of servants but, as the order attracted large numbers of uneducated men from rural districts, monks were divided into two classes: the choir-monks, who attended all church services and looked after the running of the monastery, and the lay-brothers or *conversi*, who did most of the domestic and agricultural labour on the estates.<sup>17</sup> Effectively this gave the Order an unpaid work force, free of feudal obligations. In medieval Europe this was a distinct competitive advantage; the Cistercians implemented new farming

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<sup>13</sup> Alexander Jones (ed.), *The Jerusalem Bible*, John, 1:1-5 (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1970), p. 1454.

<sup>14</sup> Panofsky, *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St-Denis*, p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Martha G. Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity: Cistercian Culture and Ecclesiastical Reform 1098-1180* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), *passim*.

<sup>16</sup> George Zarnecki, ‘The Contribution of the Orders’, in Joan Evans (ed.), *The Flowering of the Middle Ages* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), p. 57.

<sup>17</sup> Geoffrey N. Wright, *Discovering Abbeys and Priories* (Bucks, UK: Shire, 1987), p. 9.

techniques, and on the northern English and Welsh hills the Order was involved in sheep farming and wool production on a massive scale. This led to a medieval export trade that made a substantial contribution to England's prosperity through the Middle Ages.<sup>18</sup> They constructed mills and watercourses for their abbeys, mined metal ores from the Yorkshire hills, established local industries, and owned boats with which overseas trade was carried out.<sup>19</sup> Their economic success and the attraction of their austere spirituality helped to spread the Cistercian Order throughout Christendom.

In 1128, with the aid of William Giffard, Bishop of Winchester, the first English abbey was founded. This was Waverley Abbey in Surrey, the thirty-sixth Cistercian abbey to be built.<sup>20</sup> In 1129 Rein Abbey was founded near Styria, in Austria by Margrave Leopold the Strong of Styria. It was the thirty-eighth Cistercian abbey to be established and is now the oldest continuous Cistercian community in the world. The main expansion of the Order took place in the north of England and in Wales, as few Benedictine monasteries existed there, and vast areas of uncultivated land gave the Cistercians opportunities for pioneering agricultural endeavours.<sup>21</sup> It is important to understand that Cistercian monasticism was at the vanguard of the international, modern Christian culture that David I wished Scotland to participate in. Five abbeys were founded from Waverley Abbey before 1152, and thirteen were founded in Wales between 1131 and 1226. One of the great Cistercian communities in Yorkshire was Rievaulx Abbey, founded from Clairvaux in 1131. By 1143, three hundred monks had entered Rievaulx, including the renowned Aelred in 1134. From Rievaulx was founded Melrose, the first Cistercian abbey in Scotland. David I was a close friend of Aelred of Rievaulx and founded four Cistercian abbeys in Scotland, more being established later.<sup>22</sup> The location of the abbeys in the Scottish Borders is significant, too, given the contested nature of the region; medieval Border law is not a single body of legislation, but developed over time and addressed issues such as cross-border crime, the shifting allegiances of residents of towns that changed hands regularly (for example, Berwick upon Tweed), and reconciling customary practices regarding land ownership and inheritance.<sup>23</sup>

#### *HISTORY AND HERITAGE IN THE BORDER ABBEYS WAY: MELROSE AND DRYBURGH*

Victor and Edith Turner famously stated that “a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist.”<sup>24</sup> The Border Abbeys Way is marketed via strategies of heritage and history, which

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<sup>18</sup> Gordon Ewart, *Dundrennan Abbey: Archaeological investigation within the south range of a Cistercian house in Kirkcudbrightshire (Dumfries & Galloway), Scotland*, Scottish Archaeological Internet Report 1 (Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2001), p. 7.

<sup>19</sup> Wright, *Discovering Abbeys and Priors*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>20</sup> Zarnecki, ‘The Contribution of the Orders’, p. 56.

<sup>21</sup> J. S. Fletcher, *The Cistercians in Yorkshire* (London and New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge/The Macmillan Company, 1919), p. 93.

<sup>22</sup> See Mark Dilworth, ‘Scottish Cistercian Monasteries and the Reformation’, *The Innes Review* 48, no. 2 (1997), pp. 144-164 for an examination of the fates of these institutions.

<sup>23</sup> Cynthia J. Neville, *Violence, Custom and Law: The Anglo-Scottish Border Lands in the Later Middle Ages* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. ix-xi.

<sup>24</sup> Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

frame it as much more than a pleasant six-day walk through beautiful countryside or a hike for exercise. The trail is built around four major monastic sites of medieval Christianity, and several less impressive but still noteworthy churches and places of religious interest are visited on the way. Sean Slavin argues that the simple activity of walking along a pilgrimage trail is full of potential for self-transformation, which may be secular or spiritual. He notes that “the practice of walking allowed us to understand and explore a nexus between the body, self and the world.”<sup>25</sup> Given that tourist routes offer a curation of sites and (occasionally) spectacles that are perhaps closer to what David Brown terms “genuine fakes”<sup>26</sup> than the authentically historical, embodied movement through landscape and architecture may prove to be more facilitative of self-transformation.

The first major site along the Border Abbeys Way, which begins at Tweedbank railway station, is the attractive town of Melrose, and more particularly the ruined Cistercian abbey, which is only a short distance from the Anglo-Saxon monastery of Old Melrose, which was founded by Saint Aidan in 635 CE, and was where Cuthbert became a monk in 651 CE.<sup>27</sup> The Cistercian foundation dates from 1136, but the site was holy for Christians due to the presence of Cuthbert, a charismatic spiritual leader who later became Abbot of Lindisfarne. Evangelism, preaching, and pastoral care meant Cuthbert travelled long distances: he went to Coldingham and Lindisfarne on the east coast, to Carlisle in the west, and is thought to have established churches in Scotland at Dull, St Andrews, and Edinburgh. In his later years as Bishop of Lindisfarne he lived as a hermit on the small island of Inner Farne. He died in 687 CE and was buried on Lindisfarne, where his tomb became a site of miraculous cures and other signs of his holiness.<sup>28</sup> Paul Boobyer’s attractive and useful guidebook to the Border Abbeys Way offers information about the building, noting that David I wanted his new church to be constructed on the site of Old Melrose, but changed his mind when the monks argued that the new site was better for agriculture and had the advantage of being adjacent to the Roman road. Boobyer observes that “Melrose Abbey was once on the main route between Edinburgh and England and provided travellers with lodgings and food,” a distinctly non-religious description of the activities of a religious pilgrim hostel that may seem more plausible to contemporary hikers.<sup>29</sup> There is some amusement to be had from his alliterative coupling of ‘Edinburgh’ and ‘England’; as if to imply that the Scottish city was the equivalent of the entire nation to the south. Yet this neat packaging of a small amount of information, typical of tourism advertising, leaves out much that would be of interest to the spiritual tourist or secular pilgrim.

Melrose Abbey was the first Cistercian abbey in Scotland. It was founded on Easter Monday, 23 March 1136 at the request of David I of Scotland and his son and heir, Henry. The

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<sup>25</sup> Sean Slavin, ‘Walking as Spiritual Practice: The Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela’, *Body and Society* 9 (2003), p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> David Brown, ‘Genuine Fakes’, in Tom Selwyn (ed.), *The Tourist Image: Myths and Myth-Making in Tourism* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1996), pp. 33-47.

<sup>27</sup> Carole M. Cusack, ‘History, Authenticity, and Tourism: Encountering the Medieval While Walking Saint Cuthbert’s Way’, in Alex Norman (ed.), *Journeys and Destinations: Studies in Travel, Identity, and Meaning* (Newcastle on Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2013), p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Rex Gardner notes that “[i]f we exclude the miraculous from his story [Bede’s prose *Life of Cuthbert*], of the 46 chapters in his biography we are left with only six (chapters 9, 16, 26, 37, 39,40).” See Rex Gardner, ‘Miracles of Healing in Anglo-Celtic Northumbria as Recorded by the Venerable Bede and His Contemporaries: A Reappraisal in the Light of Twentieth Century Experience’, *British Medical Journal* 287, no. 6409 (1983), p. 1927.

<sup>29</sup> Boobyer, *The Border Abbeys Way*, p. 35.

abbey was a daughter-house of the abbey of Rievaulx in Yorkshire, which was founded five years earlier. The abbey's church was dedicated to the Virgin Mary on its completion in 1146. Around this time the abbey had acquired parallel charters from David I and Henry in which their earlier donations of land and other rights were brought together and recorded for posterity.<sup>30</sup> The abbey's foundation is likely the result of David I's friendship with Aelred, son of the hereditary priest of Hexham. Aelred had been an official in David's household before becoming a monk at Rievaulx in 1134; this personal connection was certainly significant. Their decision to establish Melrose abbey can also be interpreted as a strategy in Scotland's ambitions in northern England, since Melrose was founded only months after the first campaign by David I and Henry to extend their power deep into the north of England.<sup>31</sup> It has already been noted that Melrose Abbey is a mere four kilometres from the site of the seventh century monastery at Old Melrose, which was founded by Aidan of Iona, the monk who also founded Lindisfarne. The abbey was known from the start as 'Melrose'; it was intended to reflect the continuity of Scotland's monastic tradition, rather than a 'new' start.<sup>32</sup> The name 'Melrose' had a particular magic for the church in the north of England, as it was where Cuthbert was first a novice, as testified by the Venerable Bede. Aidan as founder and abbot of Lindisfarne, and later Cuthbert as abbot of Lindisfarne were powerful, charismatic figures in the Northumbrian church. A little over fifty years before David I 'restored' Melrose there had been enthusiasm for re-founding the main Northumbrian monasteries which were known only by name from Bede's writings, in order to recreate the Northumbrian church's 'golden age' chronicled by Bede.<sup>33</sup>

David I sought to link Cuthbert's heritage to the Cistercian foundation at Melrose. Yet the abbey's innovation would have been apparent to all who visited its first stone church: it embodied the new, more austere approach to monastic life promulgated by the Order. Parts of the west front are visible to this day and indicate a building completely devoid of decoration. Excavations in 1923 revealed that Melrose was a fairly typical early Cistercian church, save for inner chapels on each transept extending further east than the other transept chapels. This unusual plan is shared with Rievaulx and Fountains Abbey, Rievaulx's sister-powerhouse of Cistercian monasticism in the north of England, which confirms the "particularly close architectural relationship between these three abbey churches."<sup>34</sup>

Stage 2 of the Border Abbeys Way starts in Newtown St Boswells, and walkers pass Dryburgh Abbey on the way to Kelso, the destination point of that section of the walk. Dryburgh Abbey is located in pleasant countryside on the banks of the River Tweed, and was founded by Hugh de Morville (with David I's assent) in 1150, and was a daughter house of the Premonstratensians of Northumberland, an order founded in Prémontré near Laon in 1120 by Norbert of Xanten, who later became Archbishop of Magdeburg.<sup>35</sup> As well as picturesque ruins, Dryburgh Abbey has significant heritage appeal, being the burial place of playwright, poet, and

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<sup>30</sup> Dauvit Broun and Julian Harrison, *Chronicle of Melrose Abbey: A Stratigraphic Edition*, Vol. 1 (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2007), pp. 1-2.

<sup>31</sup> Broun and Harrison, *Chronicle of Melrose Abbey: A Stratigraphic Edition*, Vol. 1, pp. 1-2.

<sup>32</sup> Anon, 'Melrose Abbey Factsheet', *BBC*, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/scottishhistory/earlychurch/trails\\_earlychurch\\_melroseabbey.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/scottishhistory/earlychurch/trails_earlychurch_melroseabbey.shtml) (archived). Accessed 16/06/2023.

<sup>33</sup> Broun and Harrison, *Chronicle of Melrose Abbey: A Stratigraphic Edition*, Vol. 1, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Broun and Harrison, *Chronicle of Melrose Abbey: A Stratigraphic Edition*, Vol. 1, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Francis Martin Geudens, 'St Norbert', *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11 (New York: Robert Appleton and Company, 1911), at <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11100b.htm>. Accessed 16/06/2023.



novelist Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), one of the most significant innovators in the creation of ‘Scottishness’, and of “Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig, commander of the British forces on the Western Front from 1915 until the end of World War I.”<sup>36</sup> Haig is a divisive figure in the twenty-first century, but the combination of Scott’s literary reputation and Haig’s high military standing, magnified by the beauty of the ruins and the fact that an earlier Celtic monastery occupied the site makes Dryburgh Abbey a marvellous candidate for heritage marketing.<sup>37</sup>



Figure 2. Dryburgh Abbey photographed by Donald Barrett, 1 October 2006.

Boobyer also draws walkers’ attention to other local landmarks, including the Dryburgh Yew, a tree planted by the monks approximately nine hundred years ago, and a nearby folly called the Temple of the Muses. This is a circular building of Classical design that housed a statue of Apollo, but now contains a statue of three nude women, the Muses. This monument was erected in honour of the Border poet James Thompson (1700-1748) in 1817. Thompson has now faded into almost complete obscurity, but he wrote *The Seasons* (1730), a highly-regarded nature poem, and also the lyrics of ‘Rule Britannia’.<sup>38</sup> There is a parallel between the poet Thompson and the saints of the Middle Ages, in that in the present age interest in poetry is low and formal religion is losing ground, but modern tourists may still engage with poets and saints, through the lens of heritage tourism.

<sup>36</sup> Boobyer, *The Border Abbeys Way*, p. 17.

<sup>37</sup> D. G. Manuel, *Dryburgh Abbey in the Light of its Historical and Ecclesiastical Setting* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922).

<sup>38</sup> David Orkin, ‘The Tweed: Take a Trip on a River Flowing With History’, *The Independent*, 21 April (2007), at <https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/uk/the-tweed-take-a-trip-on-a-river-flowing-with-history-5332911.html>. Accessed 16/06/2023.



## HISTORY AND HERITAGE IN THE BORDER ABBEYS WAY: KELSO AND JEDBURGH

Stage 2 of the Border Abbeys Way concludes in Kelso. Boobyer provides some background, noting that Kelso Abbey was David I's base in southern Scotland, but devotes little time to the ruins of Kelso Abbey, emphasising rather Floors Castle, Scotland's largest inhabited stately home.<sup>39</sup> However, his mention of David I using Kelso as a base or stronghold in the south draws attention to the Borders as a site of contestation, a frontier terrain in which Scots and English fought for sovereignty, and failing that, economic dominance. Contemporary Scotland harbours a strong independence movement, which has increased since the Brexit vote of 2016, in which the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. The Scottish Independence referendum generated conferences, artworks, and discussions that interrogated the positionality of being 'borderlands'. Filmmaker Katie Davies' interest in Borders traditions is evident in her documentary *The Laws of the Marches* (2014) which premiered at the Berwick Film Festival "Crossing Borders" to coincide with the referendum in September 2014, and was also featured at the University of Northumbria's "Borderlands" exhibition in April 2015. This work is a "three-screen looped installation ... [that] captures the ritualised performance of borders, the centuries-old Common Ridings, that take place annually across Scottish border towns such as Hawick, Jedburgh, Selkirk, and Langholm."<sup>40</sup> These are the ancient ceremonies of 'beating the bounds', and researcher Ysanne Holt records the singing of ballads, making of pronouncements (in the manner of town criers of earlier eras), and "riding out to mark the ancient boundaries of the common land."<sup>41</sup> Holt also draws attention to Hadrian's Wall, a former military boundary that still symbolically divides Scotland from England.

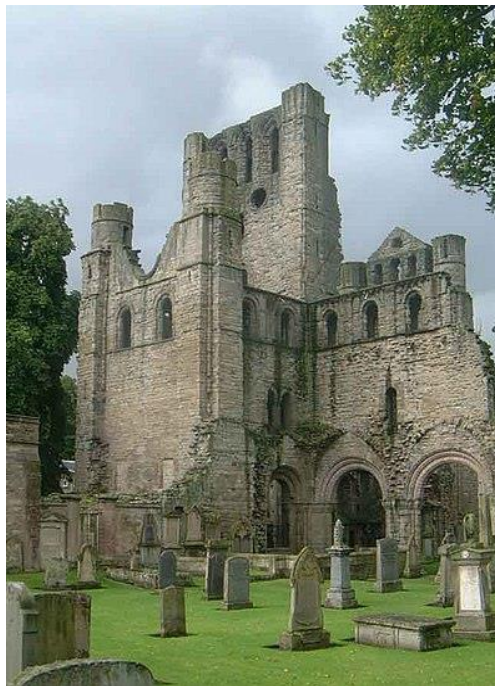


Figure 3. Kelso Abbey, reproduced under Wikimedia Commons

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<sup>39</sup> Boobyer, *The Border Abbeys Way*, p. 50.

<sup>40</sup> Ysanne Holt, 'Performing the Anglo-Scottish Border: Cultural Landscapes, Heritage and Borderland Identities', *Journal of Borderland Studies* 33, no. 1 (2018), pp. 55-56.

<sup>41</sup> Holt, 'Performing the Anglo-Scottish Border', p. 56.

Medieval border abbeys were often attacked due to the hostilities between the two nations: Kelso Abbey was burned and looted on several occasions and Melrose Abbey was frequently raided by the English kings. Melrose suffered a major attack in 1385, and in 1389 a complete rebuilding of the church and surrounding buildings was carried out. However, the survival of the lower courses of the early twelfth century west front, within the area that should have been occupied by the greatly enlarged late mediaeval nave, leaves no doubt that parts of the first, original church must have survived to the end of the Middle Ages. This indicates both that the destruction of the first church was only partial, and that its replacement was never completed.<sup>42</sup> This draws attention to another type of contestation at these heritage sites; the border abbeys were Catholic religious institutions and the Reformation in Scotland brutally disestablished monasteries and convents and dispersed the wealth of the Catholic church.<sup>43</sup> Scotland became a stridently Protestant nation with a distinctive Presbyterian national church, although in the twenty-first century the Scots are a largely secular people.<sup>44</sup>

In the nineteenth century Walter Scott recreated Scottishness in a literary form, and the legacy of Romanticism transformed its previously remote and inhospitable regions into sites of sublimity and natural beauty, while rehabilitating (to an extent) its Catholic Middle Ages through the promotion of medieval sites, including the Border abbeys. Scott, as noted above, lived at Abbotsford (a large, well-appointed house that is now a tourist attraction in its own right due to his extraordinary fame as a writer and publicist) near Melrose Abbey, and he was buried at Dryburgh Abbey.<sup>45</sup> Paul Westover assesses Scott's literary contribution to the creation of Scotland and its reception in England, noting that "[l]iterature thus emerges as a privileged repository for unifying forces, a space in which national identity is continually performed and enforced, as if in a virtual Act of Union."<sup>46</sup> One result of Scott's myth-making was a constant stream of tourists visiting Scotland from England and the British colonies, in particular America, Australia, and New Zealand, and this nineteenth century phenomenon has multiplied exponentially in the current age of affordable, convenient international travel.

Stage 3 of the Border Abbeys Way covers Kelso to Jedburgh, and contains important destinations that were integral to the national ambitions of David I. Roxburgh was his *de facto* capital, and Boobyer notes that "in the Middle Ages its importance rivalled Edinburgh, Stirling, Perth and Berwick-upon-Tweed."<sup>47</sup> However, it was destroyed in 1460 when the Scots wrested it from the English. Roxburgh now is virtually invisible; the village is gone and the remains of Roxburgh Castle, one of David I's most valuable strongholds, have been largely neglected by archaeologists and historians. Sites of interest in the area include: Wallace's Tower, a sixteenth

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<sup>42</sup> Richard Fawcett, *The Architecture of the Scottish Medieval Church 1100-1560* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 225.

<sup>43</sup> Mark Dilworth, *Monasteries and the Reformation in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Aquhories Publishing, 1995) is a study by the last Abbot of Fort Augustus, the Right Reverend Dom Gerard Mark Dilworth (1924-2004), who also served as Keeper of the of the Scottish Catholic Archives.

<sup>44</sup> Hugh MacDonald, 'Losing Our Religion: Why is Scotland More Secular than the Rest of the UK?', *The National Scot*, 26 August (2016), at <https://www.thenational.scot/news/14870174.hugh-macdonald-losing-our-religion-why-is-scotland-more-secular-than-the-rest-of-the-uk/>. Accessed 16/06/2023.

<sup>45</sup> Jim Hargan, 'Discover the Scottish Borders: Along the River Tweed with Sir Walter Scott', *British Heritage* (November 2009), pp. 24-31.

<sup>46</sup> Paul Westover, *Necromanticism: Travelling to Meet the Dead, 1750-1860* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 68.

<sup>47</sup> Boobyer, *The Border Abbeys Way*, p. 52.

century pele tower; Sunlaws Cave, where Bonnie Prince Charlie is said to have stabled his horses in 1745; and the Roxburgh Viaduct, a handsome stone structure that once carried a now demolished branch of the Waverley railway line.<sup>48</sup> After crossing the Teviot River and the Roman road Dere Street, walkers arrive in Jedburgh via a bridge over the Jed Water. Jedburgh boasts a castle and the Mary Queen of Scots Visitor Centre, as well as the magnificent ruins of Jedburgh Abbey. It is interesting, however, that despite enthusiastic marketing of the Scottish Borders region to tourists, it “remains one of the least visited regions of Scotland, along with Angus [and] Fife.”<sup>49</sup> The final three Stages (4 to 6) of the Way, from Jedburgh and Hawick, then from Hawick to Selkirk (the original proposed site of David I’s Tironensian monastery that eventually was built at Kelso), and Selkirk to Tweedbank, return full circle to the start of the walk.



Figure 4. Jedburgh Abbey, reproduced under Wikimedia Commons

The imbrication of tourism and pilgrimage that has gained traction in the past three decades has been researched intensively by Marion Bowman, who has conducted long-term projects focused on the ‘New Age’ or alternative spirituality centre of Glastonbury. Recently she has turned her attention to a phenomenon she terms ‘caminoisation’ (which refers to the revitalisation of the Camino de Santiago, the medieval Catholic pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain). The Way of Saint James has emerged in contemporary secular culture as a UNESCO World Heritage site that Bowman and Tiina Sepp call “an example *par excellence* of meta-movement, the heritagisation of religion and the spiritualisation of heritage,

<sup>48</sup> Boobyer, *The Border Abbeys Way*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>49</sup> Kalyan Bhandari, ‘Imagining the Scottish Nation: Tourism and Homeland Nationalism in Scotland’, *Current Issues in Tourism* 19, no. 9 (2016), p. 919.

demonstrating the multivalence and malleability of contemporary European pilgrimage.”<sup>50</sup> The trappings of the Camino (pilgrim passports, waymarked trails, modern confraternities, medieval Christian churches to visit and saints’ cults to participate in - regardless of whether the pilgrim-tourist is Catholic, or even Christian - and souvenirs that shade into religious paraphernalia, such as statuettes, icons, bottles of holy water or soil from sacred sites, and so on) have been eagerly embraced by heritage tourism bodies throughout the world. Bowman has also written on the rehabilitation of pilgrimage in Scotland, focused on the Fife Pilgrim Way (launched in July 2019), arguing that this instance of caminoisation is connected to “Scotland’s complex identity politics, Celticism, sectarianism, pro-European sentiments, and a pragmatic reassessment of and reengagement with Scotland’s fragmented pilgrimage past.”<sup>51</sup>

Many of Bowman’s points are relevant to the Border Abbeys Way, though it is not explicitly framed as a pilgrimage. She notes that the tradition of pilgrimage in Scotland reaches back to the mission of Ninian at Whithorn, Dumfriesshire in the fourth century CE,<sup>52</sup> and that in the early Middle Ages St Andrews emerged as a pilgrimage centre due to the relics of the national saint allegedly being brought to Scotland from Greece by the legendary Saint Rule (Regulus) in the fourth century, or by the historical Bishop Acca of Hexham (c. 660-740/2) in the eighth century, according to other authorities. In the eleventh century Saint Margaret, Queen of Scotland, endowed the route to St Andrews by building pilgrim hostels, and was buried in Dunfermline Abbey, itself a pilgrim destination due to its status as a royal necropolis.<sup>53</sup> Bowman’s emphasis on ‘Celtic’ Christianity, which is seen to be mystical, environmental, and non-dogmatic, manifests in the Border abbeys, particularly Melrose, through the charismatic saints Aidan and Cuthbert, both trained in the Irish tradition, though Cuthbert accepted the Roman tonsure and Easter date after the Synod of Whitby in 664 CE. The following section discusses the relationship of these new ‘pilgrimage-tourism’ routes with post-denominational and esoteric Christianities, non-aligned, eclectic alternative spiritualities, Pagans and Druids.

## TOURISM, PILGRIMAGE AND SPIRITUALITY: CONTEMPORARY TRENDS

The roots of contemporary spiritual tourism lie in the emergence of mass travel in the nineteenth century, though some scholars would point to the often less than holy activities of medieval pilgrims, either undermine pilgrimage as a legitimate religious activity or to push back the origins of tourism to the Middle Ages. Religious pilgrimage was a journey from the profane to the sacred, which necessitated a collectively recognised location of the sacred. Yet, the nineteenth century invented new ways for people to encounter history, landscapes, and their own identity-formation, which included travel and “the touristic appreciation of heritage sites.”<sup>54</sup> In secular contexts, individual travellers engaged dynamically with meaning, and appreciated stories and sites that were outside traditional institutional narratives. In the twentieth century, David Lyon argued that identity and meaning were crafted by individuals

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<sup>50</sup> Marion Bowman and Tiina Sepp, ‘Caminoisation and Cathedrals: Replication, the Heritagisation of Religion, and the Spiritualisation of Heritage’, *Religion* 49, no. 1 (2019), p. 81.

<sup>51</sup> Marion Bowman, “‘Rehabilitating’ Pilgrimage in Scotland: Heritage, Protestant Pilgrimage, and Caledonian Caminos’, *Numen* 67, nos 5-6 (2020), p. 453.

<sup>52</sup> Daphne Brooke, *Wildmen and Holy Places: St Ninian, Whithorn and the Medieval Realm of Galloway* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994).

<sup>53</sup> Bowman, “‘Rehabilitating’ Pilgrimage in Scotland’, p. 455.

<sup>54</sup> Cusack, ‘History, Authenticity, and Tourism’, p. 8.

and groups from a *melange* of free-floating symbols and stories.<sup>55</sup> Lyon notes that pilgrimage and tourism overlap; pilgrims and tourists are not always separable; tourists may utilise religious traditions and sites for multiple purposes, religious, spiritual, and secular. Thus, touristic phenomena may be read through a religious lens and vice versa. Justine Digance's idea of 'pilgrimages' as "journeys redolent with meaning" is of particular significance here.<sup>56</sup>

Walking the Border Abbeys Way (or any trail that draws significantly on medieval Christianity or historical national identity in Scotland) will be viewed as simply walking, spiritual tourism, secular pilgrimage, or religious pilgrimage depending on the orientation of the walker. The majority of walkers are not religious in a traditional Christian sense; decades of research on the Camino de Santiago has established that beyond a doubt.<sup>57</sup> The Border Abbeys Way is not an actual medieval pilgrim route, but rather a modern creation that exists to bring tourists (though specifically a subset who enjoy nature, walking or cycling, and eschew more materialist and momentary touristic activities, like bus tours with photography stops and souvenir shops). Alex Norman has termed these people who are engaged with self-discovery, the crafting of identity, and the cultivation of virtue (whether ecological, exercise based, or volunteering) 'spiritual tourists'. Still, arguably encountering formerly Christian landscapes and buildings may afford even the most secular walker an experience of the past, with its deep faith in Catholic Christianity and the Christian God. Paul Chambers has noted that Britain is now dotted with redundant Christian churches and other religious structures, and he insightfully observes that if identity is bound up with materiality (with things), "as those artefacts decay and become redundant or are given over to other uses, identities may well be revised in the light of these material changes."<sup>58</sup>

The attraction of 'Celtic' Christianity is part of a widespread tendency since the nineteenth century to posit a range of non-normative, mystical, subversive Christianities which have survived outside of the stranglehold of orthodox churches, Catholic and Protestant. This is a modern myth that is intimately related to the belief that Paganism and Witchcraft were legitimate religions that went underground during the conversion of Europe in the early Middle Ages and re-emerged in the mid-twentieth century when Gerald Brousseau Gardner (1884-1964) founded Wicca.<sup>59</sup> Gardner was a friend of Philip Ross Nichols (1902-1975), also known as 'Nuinn', who founded the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids (OBOD) in 1949. Both men were also Freemasons, members of the Ancient British Church, and enthusiasts for all things Celtic, Gardner incorporating the festivals of the ancient Celts into the Wiccan 'Wheel of the Year', and Nichols adopting it for the OBOD. These overlaps between esoteric, non-mainstream Christian groups (for example, modern 'Celtic' Christian spirituality)<sup>60</sup> and Pagan organizations like Wicca and Druidry are examples of Lyons' idea of free-floating, disembedded religious and spiritual symbols that are drawn upon by modern alternative

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<sup>55</sup> David Lyon, *Jesus in Disneyland: Religion in Postmodern Times* (Oxford: Polity 2002 [2000]), pp. 74-76.

<sup>56</sup> Digance, 'Religious and Secular Pilgrimage', pp. 36-48.

<sup>57</sup> Norman, *Spiritual Tourism*, p. 57.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Chambers, 'Sacred Landscapes, Redundant Chapels and Carpet Warehouses: The Religious Heritage of South-West Wales', in Elisabeth Arweck and William Keenan (eds), *Materializing Religion: Expression, Performance and Ritual* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), p. 26.

<sup>59</sup> Carole M. Cusack, 'The Return of the Goddess: Mythology, Witchcraft and Feminist Spirituality,' in Murphy Pizza and James R. Lewis (eds), *Handbook of Contemporary Paganism* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2009), pp. 335-362.

<sup>60</sup> Mary Low, *Celtic Christianity and Nature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996).

religionists, New Age spiritualities, and secular people in the process of identity-formation. Medieval ruins, like Neolithic monuments, are popular sites for such spiritual seekers to visit, and to appreciate in the landscape; rock musician and amateur antiquarian Julian Cope (b. 1957) argues that heritage and preservation are vital, and linked to the protection of the landscape from ecological destruction, as prehistoric monuments and the landscape they have occupied for millennia are “sacred” because “they are ancient, part of our heritage and should be protected.”<sup>61</sup> He does not explicitly address Christian sites, but ruined churches and pilgrim ways are appreciated by a wide range of people who are not religious for precisely the same reason; their antiquity and rootedness in cultural heritage and the land.

### CONCLUSION

This article has discussed history, tourism, and identity-formation with reference to the Border Abbeys Way, a heritage walk opened in 2006. It has been argued that the medieval Christian tradition of pilgrimage has been revived across Europe in secular modernity, with the Camino de Santiago being the premier example. Melrose Abbey, Dryburgh Abbey, Kelso Abbey, and Jedburgh Abbey, great churches built during the reign of the Scottish King David I (1084-1153) are brought together in the Border Abbeys Way, a six-day walk that invites hikers to encounter both the beautiful landscape of the Borders and Scotland’s Catholic past, albeit in a non-religious way. Marion Bowman’s recent research into the Fife Pilgrim Way, opened in 2019, indicates that a more explicitly religious appreciation of Scottish pilgrimage traditions is emerging in the twenty-first century, with the Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum (SPRF) being founded in 2012 to restore ancient pilgrimage routes and develop new ones. These routes are for all walkers, religious, spiritual, and secular, and reflect specifically Scottish contexts and concerns, resisting the charge of wholesale caminoisation in favour of a nuanced appreciation of walking in the footsteps of past pilgrims, expressing pro-Europe sentiments through links with pilgrimage trails on the continent, and a desire to learn about and preserve Scottish heritage, material, cultural and intangible.<sup>62</sup> This is a developing new field of research in Scottish Studies, and one that promises much for the future.

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<sup>61</sup> Jenny Blain and Robert J. Wallis, ‘Sacred Sites, Contested Rites/Rights: Contemporary Pagan Engagements with the Past’, *Journal of Material Culture* 9, no. 3 (2004), pp. 237–261.

<sup>62</sup> Bowman, “‘Rehabilitating’ Pilgrimage in Scotland’, pp. 477-479.