
The Thanes of Callendar

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While the history of the [Livingstones of Callendar](#) is well documented, little research has been undertaken on the preceding possessors of the estate, the Callendars of Callendar, although previous writers have commented upon the thanes of Callendar while discussing the role of thethane in Scotland. While it is the thanes who figure in the earliest records of Callendar, several of their descendants are also noted and the purpose of this article is to bring together references to all of the known members of the principal family of Callendar, to determine a chronology for each recognised member of it and to examine their role in the local context.

Professor Barrow tells us that "The origin of thethane is one of the unsolved problems of Scottish History".¹ What can be said with certainty is that the term *thane* comes from a Germanic source rather than a Celtic one and is recognisable in Old English *thegen*, servant, attendant, retainer, official, aristocrat, nobleman, warrior and it is notable that thanages occurred in parts of Scotland which were subject to the greatest influence of the English language. Whether or not thanage in Scotland emerged by introduction, evolution or simply as a replacement of the role of the earlier Celtic *maer* or *toisech*, is a matter for surmise. What does seem certain is that the term referred to an office rather than a dignity. That it appears to have been a hereditary one is of consequence: most offices during that period were so held and equally true of the time is that these positions were held by noble families. Any doubt that thanes belonged to the aristocratic class may be dismissed by the evidence that they were ranked immediately below earls.² It would seem that the role ofthane was essentially that of steward of a royal estate.³ However, with the introduction of Norman feudalism their role probably came into conflict with the new style of administration and so were phased out or retitled; indeed, many thanages were converted to baronies by David II and it is during his reign that Callendar first bears such a designation.

In Scotland, the earliest notices of thanes belong to the reign of David I with the earliest of these being of two in Fife: Falkland and Kellie. Just as their origin is unknown, so too is their period of introduction. A strong case has been made for the time of David I but, as the term is indubitably of English rather than Norman origin, it is more likely that they predate the reign of that king. As will be seen from the distribution map, the thanage of Callendar was one of only two south of the Forth. Equally notable is that the spread of thanages was confined to areas which were subject to the greatest English influence.⁴

The earliest mention of the Thanes of Callendar dates from the reign of King David I, that is sometime between 1124 and 1153 when, in a grant of saltwork in "kalentyr" to the Abbey of Newbattle, Thane Duncan is noted.⁵ He appears to have remained active and to have survived until sometime between 1185 and 1190, for around that time he witnessed a charter relating to the lands of Stenhouse.⁶ A



involvement in the conversion of the thanage to a barony when in fact it is this last mentioned Malcolm who is seen to be in receipt of the new title. Further evidence that it was this Malcolm who was the last thane comes from the dispute, recounted below, concerning the succession of Alwyn of Callendar. It was probably at the same time as his excambion of the Nith lands that he was granted “forty *librates* of the lands of Callendar” by King Alexander II, for in that earlier charter he resigned all rights to the lands of Calentyr. This new grant of lands in Callendar is alluded to in a royal charter to Holyrood in which the monastery received a substantial part of the remainder of the former thanage.¹¹

Malcolm was the last of the Callendars to hold the office of thane: both title and function had become outmoded through the innovations of Anglo-Norman feudalism. He was not by any means the last of the Callendars. In 1252, John of Kinross disputed the right of Alwyn of Kalentyr to enter into his patrimony by reason of “defect of birth”. To resolve the matter, a papal intervention was raised, the outcome of which was that John renounced his action regarding the legitimacy of Alwyn and also of, “*the right that he had or could have by heritable succession, or by the gift of his aunt, Ethna, against Alwyn and his heirs to the lands of Callendar and Lennox, formerly held by Malcolm, thane of Kalentar*”.¹² Alwyn, who was almost certainly the son of the last thane, was not the first of the family to bear the forename: in 1200 “domino Alwyn de Kalentyr” had witnessed a Cambuskenneth charter.¹³

The Callendars emerge once again during the Wars of Independence. Then, Sir John de Calentir was a signatory, along with others, including local notables such as Patrick Graham and John Stirling of Kerse, of the Treaty of Salisbury.¹⁴ Seven years later he signed the Ragman Roll, thereby swearing fealty to Edward.¹⁵ In that same year, 1296, he was among a group of men to whom Edward restored their lands. The inference must be that prior to signing he must have held to the Scottish cause for in the writ to the sheriff of Stirlingshire it is stated that the lands were to be restored because *John of Calentir*, along with several others “*came to the king’s peace with Malise, earl of Strathearn*”. John must have fought on the English side and been captured at the Battle of Falkirk as, in 1299, he was exchanged for Reginald le Cheyne who, presumably, had been taken by the English.¹⁶ He died some few years after his captivity: In 1303 an inquisition was held before Sir Archibald Livingston, sheriff of Stirling, regarding the lands of “*the late Sir John de Calentir*”. Local men, among whom were Gefray of Falkirk and Gilbert of Falkirk, were called to give evidence. They stated upon their oaths that Sir John had held Callendar in chief of the king doing service of one knight, that the land had an annual value of forty pounds in peacetime but at that time it was worth only eight pounds, six shillings and eight pence, that he also held the lands of Kelnsithe [Kilsyth] in chief of the Earl of Fyfe, doing the service of 10 archers, which was worth in time of peace sixty pounds but then only twelve pounds and that Alwyn, “son of the said John”, who was then 28 years of age, was his nearest heir.¹⁷

This was not the first record of Alwyn for he, like his father, had signed the Ragman Roll.¹⁸ He, in turn, appears to have been succeeded by John of Kalenter whose signature is appended to a charter of Airthbeg drawn up sometime about 1340. That the succession continued at all is evidence that the Callendars must have been included in Bruce’s amnesty. John was succeeded by Patrick, who is

encountered on three occasions. Firstly in a charter of uncertain date confirming a grant of land to Henry Douglas and his spouse.¹⁹ Next in 1346 on the occasion of the granting of the lands of Callendar to his daughter Christian and her husband, Sir William Livingston.²⁰ Finally, he is described as "*the late Patrick*" in 1362 when his daughter and son-in-law were granted the lands of Kilsyth.²¹ We learn from the first of the charters to Christian and William that Patrick had been forfeited. The reason for this, it is alleged, was the Callendars' adherence to the Balliol cause. The attempted coup by Edward Balliol, son of John Balliol, with the resultant exile and reinstatement of David II, corresponds sufficiently well with Patrick's fortunes. From the profusion of Celtic forenames, a further inference might be drawn that the Callendars were native nobility, possibly kinsmen of the Earls of Lennox, who saw in the Balliols something more akin to the old royal house than they did in the Anglo-Norman Bruces, albeit there seems little to pick and choose from this end of the historical telescope.

That the Callendars also held land in Kilsyth is evident from the assize noted above as is the fact that they held it in chief of the Earl of Lennox. The origins of this holding seem to lie in grants of land there, the first of these noted in a charter of Maldouene, third Earl of Lennox, in 1217, to Malcolm, son of Duncan and Eva, the Earl's sister.²² This was probably as part of a marriage settlement for a subsequent charter was issued some time later of yet more land in Lennox, this time in favour of Malcolm and Eva but in this writ they are named as husband and wife.²³ Although Patrick of Callendar lost the Kilsyth lands at the time of his forfeiture, they were restored to Christian and her husband in 1362 and remained with their descendants.²⁴

As a footnote, it is worth remarking that we should not expect an elevated lineage, such as the Callendars were, to disappear without trace simply because the principal house descended to an heiress. While no record has as yet emerged as confirmation, it is possible that the nearest senior branch of the family may have been represented by the Callendars of Dorrator. They were lairds of that property for several centuries, from at least its earliest notice until the eighteenth century, were prominent in the service of the state and played a notable role in the local administration. It should be further noted that the lands of [Dorrator](#) were held of the superiority of the barony of Callendar.

[Notes](#)

[Appendix](#)

NOTES

- 1 Barrow, G.W.S. *Feudal Britain* p133
- 2 Duncan, A.A.M. *Scotland, The Making of the Kingdom* p 107
- 3 Barrow, G.W.S. *Feudal Britain* (London 1956) p 232
- 4 Muir, R. *Thanages*, in *An Historical Atlas of Scotland* pp 27-28
- 5 *Registrum S. Marie de Neubotle* p 162
- 6 *Regesta Regum Scottorum* ii, p 266
- 7 Scottish Records Office GD261.4.8
- 8 Cowan, I.B., et al *The Knights of St John of Jerusalem*
- 9 *Regesta Regum Scottorum* ii, p 46
- 10 Scottish Records Office GD86.1
- 11 *Liber Cartarum Sancte Crucis* p 65
- 12 Scottish Records Office RH6.50
- 13 *Registrum Monisterii S. Marie de Cambuskenneth* 81
- 14 Bain, J. *Registrum S. Marie de Neubotle* i, p 129
- 15 *ibid* ii, p 211
- 16 *ibid* ii, p 369
- 17 *ibid* ii, p1457
- 18 *ibid* ii, p 211
- 19 *The Register of the Great Seal of Scotland* I, App.2, 756
- 20 *ibid* i, App.2, 953
- 21 *ibid* i, p 108
- 22 Fraser, W. *The Lennox Charters* p 202
- 23 *ibid* p 203
- 24 *The Register of the Great Seal of Scotland* i, p 108

[Appendix](#)

APPENDIX**A CALENDAR OF CALLENDARS**

1124 x1153	[1] Thane Duncan
1185x1190	{1+2} Thane Duncan + Malcolm, son of Duncan
1190	[2] Thane Malcolm, son of Thane Duncan [*] ₋
1200	[3] [Thane?] Alwn
1226	[4] Thane P[atrick ?]
1233	[5] Malcolm, former thane of Callendar
1252	[6] Alwyn
1289	[7] John
1296	[7+8] John + Alwyn
1303	[8] Alwyn [aged 28]
c 1340	[9] John
1346	[10+11] Patrick + Christian, daughter of Patrick
1362	[11] Christian

* The assumption that [5] is a separate Malcolm from [2] is discussed in the text.