

## **HERITAGE HUB SOURCE LIST BORDER REIVERS**

### **The Marches**

“The Marches” was the name given to the three areas (east, middle and west) on either side of the border between Scotland and England, with wardens assigned to each to administer justice and uphold the law. Local landowners, known to the monarch, his advisors and politicians normally gained the position of warden. This did lead to some exploitation of position and favours to friends and connections in the area. The nature of relations between the two countries meant Border clashes happened frequently and the wardens presided over arbitration of boundaries of estates of land and the perambulation of the marches. The practice of legally recording boundaries took place all over Scotland, not just in the Scottish Borders.

### **Romanticised Reivers**

“To reive” means to rob or plunder. The idea of the Border Reiver has been ‘romanticised’ over time making it sound like most people from certain families were involved in swashbuckling activities, as described in ballads and the works of Sir Walter Scott. However, most people tracing ‘Reiver’ ancestors will not find evidence of their own family’s involvement. They will have been ordinary people who lived or worked on the land, ordinary soldiers, attendants or servants. Most Reivers did come from humble backgrounds. Normally only those with money, power and political involvement were mentioned in documentation. Remember that every family name has different strands and different stories and so what may have been described as an official clan or family history is normally only that of the landed family with that name, not necessarily of your ancestor.

### **Surviving Evidence**

Many of the documents that were created at the time and still survive relate to the legal recording of ownership of land, or to the monarch’s attempts at suppressing disorder on the Border. Other records may be contained within Estate records that cover Border areas and show the perspective from the families that held power locally. There is no evidence that lists were drawn up of people involved in reiving for any of the landed families. The only evidence for individuals that may exist is when they were caught and tried for crimes.

### **Evidence at the National Archives UK**

Documents found held at The National Archives UK at Kew ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)) are normally within State Papers Foreign or State Papers Scottish. Many are reports sent to monarchs from their ambassadors or spies. One example is the drowning of Reivers at Hawick in July 1562:

*‘Wrote last upon the 6th. The Earl of Mar arrived at Hawick on Thursday about ten o'clock; and having compassed the town round about, being himself in the market place, he made proclamation that no man on pain of death should receive a thief into his house, whereupon fifty-three were taken, of whom twenty were acquitted by the assize and the rest condemned. Twenty-two were presently drowned there for lack of trees and halters; six hanged at Edinburgh yesterday; four by the Master of Maxwell's own men sent unto him to be executed; and the rest presently in the castle of Edinburgh at the Queen's will. The example hereof is very good. There is another journey proposed, in which there is no less hope of good success, except that the*

*thieves assure themselves to be received in England. It will shortly be written to the Council that order may be given to the Wardens to the contrary. The thieves of Teviotdale and Liddesdale are enemies to all virtue, and in them the Earl Bothwell most trusts.'*

Ref: SP 52/7, item no. 60 (pencil number, top right) Randolph to Cecil 8 July 1562  
 Transcription from : 'Elizabeth: July 1562, 1-10', Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Elizabeth, Volume 5: 1562 (1867), pp. 141-151. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=71919> (Date accessed: 20 March 2009).

### **Evidence at the National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh**

(<http://www.nas.gov.uk/onlineCatalogue/>)

Listed below are just some of the examples of documents relating to what is commonly described as 'Border Reiving'.

GD149/265/Part 1/f 5	Queen Elizabeth to James VI, concerning a proposed meeting of commissioners to remedy Border outrages. 1578 November 10. Queen Elizabeth to the Earl of Morton, Regent, sending Robert Bowes, treasurer of Berwick, as ambassador. 1577 November 17. Robert Bowes, governor of Berwick, to the Earl of Morton, Regent, forewarning of his arrival with messages from the Queen. 1577/8 March 17	17 Nov 1577- 17 Mar 1578
SP6/62	Articles of agreement between English and Scottish commissioners for the suppression of disorder on the Borders. At Carlisle. Signed by English and Scottish commissioners.	5 May 1597
SP13/30	Draft letters (3) by the Lords of Council to James Leremont of Darsy, Scottish ambassador to King Henry VIII, giving details of English infringements of the <b>Border</b> truce; asking that these be represented to King Henry VIII for redress; willingness of King James V to have a firm peace on the Borders, had appointed the Earl of Huntly as his lieutenant on the Borders and any forces sent there were for defence only.	c 1541-1542
AD1/83	Copy indenture (in Scots) narrating disputes between Patrick, Earl Bothvile, Lord Halis, warden of the west marches, admiral of Scotland, Walter Ker of Sesfurd, Patrick Home of Fastcastell and Mr Richard Lawsons, commissioners of the king of Scotland, on one part, and Thomas, earl of Surrey, vice-warden of the marches of Ingland towards Scotland, Sir Thomas Dercy, Sir William Tyler, Sir Richard Chomeley, and John of Clartynton (?), commissioners of the king of Ingland, on other part, concerning exchange of fugitives accused of crimes on the borders	7 Aug 1498
CS96/1/177	Instruments on riding of the marches etc. of Chirnsyid and Cokburnispeth commonty, Sheriffdom of Berwick	1569-1679
GD40/7/21	Commission under the Quarter Seal to Sir Thomas Ker of Phairnihirst as justiciar of the Middle Marches	18 Jun 1584

GD40/2/9/31	Attested minutes of a warden meeting held at Hekspethgaitheid by Bothwell and Sir Walter Ker of Cesfurde, Warden Principal of the Middle Marches of Scotland, and Northumberland, Warden Principal for the part of England	10 Oct 1559
GD40/2/9/54	Bond by Sir Henrye Carye, Knight of the Garter, Baron of Hunsdon, Governor of Berwick and Warden of the East Marches, to Sir Thomas Carr of Farneherst, to make redress or deliver the defaulter upon notice given	5 Dec 1571
GD40/2/9/72	Bond by Bukcluche and other inhabitants of the Middle Marches to assist Sir Thomas Ker of Pharnyhurst as Warden and Justice of the said March	[c 18 Mar 1584/1585]
GD40/2/10/51	Exemption to Sir Thomas Ker of Phairnihirst from the wardenry of William Ker of Cesfuird, Warden of the Middle Marches, following upon his petition of grievances	5 Sep 1584
GD40/2/10/58	Notarial Instrument to the effect that John Mow of that ilk refused to subscribe a General Bond concerning dutiful obedience and assistance to Sir Thomas Ker of Phairnihirst as Warden of the Middle Marches	28 Mar 1585
GD40/7/8	Signet letters for proclamation of appointment of Andrew Ker of Farnyherst as Warden of the Middle Marches; with execution endorsed, 2 Dec. 1538	26 Nov 1538
GD220/2/1/135	Letters by King James V to the sheriffs of Dumbarton and Renfrew, and to the Stewart of Menteith, commanding them to assist the said John Earl of Leuenax, Warden of the East Marches, and Lieutenant within the bounds of Lothian, the Merse, and Teviotdale, in keeping good rule therein.	22 Jan 1523

#### **Evidence in the Scottish Borders**

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- > Moffat, Alistair. *The Reivers: The Story of the Border Reivers*. Edinburgh: Birlinn Press, 2007.
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- > Sadler, John. *Raiders and Reivers: Being an Introduction to the Legends and History of the Borders*. Hexham: Ergo Press, 2006.
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