

# TRAVELS THROUGH TIME

Dan Jones: Crusaders (1147)

**Peter Moore:** A brief note before this episode with Dan Jones on the year 1147 and the Crusades. Dan is a brilliant speaker. We caught him at his home on a lucky free day. Instead of recording the usual hour, we left with about 90 minutes of superb historical analysis and storytelling. That's obviously far too long for one of our normal episodes and so we thought we'd give you the chance, for a little fee, to download our whole conversation. It will help to support the podcast and I promise you something quite brilliant in return if you do. If you're interested, just find the file on our feed. If not, there's a 45-minute edit here for you, as ever, for free. So without further ado, welcome to Season 2 of *Travels Through Time*, the podcast made in partnership with *History Today*, the world's leading serious history magazine.

[Intro music]

This is the first episode of our second season of *Travels Through Time*, the podcast where we examine one year in history with an expert guest in three telling scenes. Welcome back. We'll be bringing you new time travels every Tuesday right through till Christmas which, my apologies for the jolt, is just 17 weeks away. Today, we're starting with history on a grand scale. The crusading era spanned almost four centuries and stretched across a geographic area from the Holy Land to modern-day Spain but what was the point of it all? What did it mean to be a crusader in this time? Who would achieve competence and what were they fighting for? I'm going to put questions like this to today's guest. Dan Jones is a historian journalist and broadcaster. His books, including *The Plantagenets* and *The Templars*, have sold more than one million copies worldwide. Next up for Dan is *Crusaders*, an exhilarating, character-led tour through the crusading era. It's published this month. It's a pleasure to be talking to you, Dan. Welcome to *Travels Through Time*.

**Dan Jones:** Thank you very much for having me.

**Peter Moore:** Let's begin by talking generally about the Crusades. What were they and, a personal question, why did you get interested in them?

**Dan Jones:** I'll answer those questions in reverse order and say that I got interested in the Crusades - well, you can't really miss the Crusades if you write about medieval history and I've been doing that for 15 years or so now. I define the Crusades in a very broad sense which is to say not just looking at the papal sponsored missions from Western Europe, starting with the First Crusade, preached by Urban II in 1095 to go to the Holy Land. As we're going to unpack over the course of this episode, I think what's really interesting to me about the Crusades is that they could be different things to different people. They spread and they metastasised as the period went on and until 200 or 300 years after crusading began, with quite a limited focus, there was crusading going on absolutely everywhere against absolutely everyone. There was Christian on Christian crusading and not just Latin on Greek but Spanish kings fighting each other and both claiming that the war was a crusade. That's the central fascination to me of this period.

**Peter Moore:** Yeah, and I think this is what comes across with your approach, that you touched on, which is to look at the individual characters who were part of and who altogether make up this great big story. If you were to ask someone to draw their picture of what a crusader might look like, you'd get something - I imagine, in a general sense - a bit like the character in Monty Python's *Holy Grail* of a knight on horseback, carrying the great tear-shaped shield across a bleak

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landscape somewhere towards the East. Of course, there were lots of different characters involved in this story. You talk about Vikings at some point. There were obviously crusades within Europe and they don't just go towards the Holy Land. I think it's this multiplicity of voices which attracted me about your approach.

**Dan Jones:** It's about - the word is much overused these days - diversity but I think that is such a hugely important part of understanding the Crusades. Hundreds of thousands of different people were involved in this phenomenon over centuries and all of their experiences were different.

**Peter Moore:** You've gone for 1147. Do you want to tell us what's going on in terms of this grand master narrative? If we're going to look at close range at 1147, what's happening then?

**Dan Jones:** I thought long and hard about 1099 as the year that Jerusalem fell to the first crusaders and, in many ways, the high point of crusading achievement but 1147 is fascinating to me because it's almost 50 years since Jerusalem fell to the first crusaders. The 50th anniversary of that date is coming up and there will be, in 1149, big celebrations in Jerusalem. It's also a tipping point in the history of the crusader states. The first crusade had set up the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the County of Tripoli, the Principality of Antioch and the County of Edessa; these four Latin-ruled crusader states in Palestine and the coastal and Northern Syria. In 1144, the first of those to have been established, the County of Edessa, was partially conquered and the capital city, Edessa itself, was conquered by Imad ad-Din Zengi, a Turkic Atabeg and very powerful and quite brutal warlord, effectively. He was ruler of Aleppo and Mosul and had swept into Edessa and taken it from the hands of its Latin Christian ruler. This was a major shock to not just the crusader states in the East but to the Latin Christian world in general because the high achievement of seizing the city of Jerusalem and establishing these crusader states in the 1090s had seemed to be manifest proof of God's favour for the crusading mission. Here we are, just approaching the 50th anniversary of that achievement and wow! it all seems to be possibly starting to come apart. Shock waves have rippled out from the crusader states across the Mediterranean world and particularly Western Europe. The result of those shock waves is that there are calls going out from the pope to the great rulers of Western Europe to repeat the deeds of the First Crusade and to go and sort this business out in the East. Allied to that, there are other movements going on in crusading, which are seldom so carefully looked at by historians. The two that I want to focus on, in looking at 1147, are the beginning of what will become the Northern Crusades, or the Baltic Crusades, in the form of the Wendish Crusade which is Saxons, in the king of Germany, starting to push northeast into new non-Christian lands, claim them for themselves and call it a crusade. While at the same time, linked to the Second Crusade which is the mission to the East to go and avenge the loss of Edessa, you have a big step forward or backwards, depending on your point of view, in the Reconquista which is, again, a rather understudied second theatre of crusading. The mission on behalf of the Christian kings of northern Spain and Portugal (Iberian Peninsula) is to advance further and further south until they've claimed the whole peninsula from Islamic rule. All these three things are connected. They're not equally well-known but they have deep and important connections which tell us a lot about the nature of crusading in general and about the nature of crusading as it was changing at this really important point in the middle of the 12th century.

**Peter Moore:** Perfect. In a paraphrasing sense, we've had this great moment of the First Crusade which has been tremendously successful. Just in terms of geography, Edessa, which is the key to this era we're talking about or maybe the catalyst for the history that we're going to be talking about, sits just above Aleppo.

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**Dan Jones:** Yes, it's not far from Aleppo.

**Peter Moore:** Is it almost like a gateway? Would it be a state, or a kingdom, or a county? I'm not sure.

**Dan Jones:** It's a county. As the first crusaders came out of Asia Minor, down through the mountains and into Northern Syria, one faction had branched off east and inland towards Edessa, which had an Armenian ruler. There had been a kind of coup, effectively, in the city. It had been taken into Latin hands. It was a Western ...

**Peter Moore:** I suppose the point I'm just clarifying in my mind is whether this is vital to the route to get to Jerusalem which is, at this time in the psychology of the Western mind, the centre of the world.

**Dan Jones:** No, it's not and that's what is interesting. It isn't. If you're pushing east out through Northern Syria towards Mesopotamia, it's on the way but what's interesting about Edessa is it's the one that's going to cause you least bother if it goes, in terms of if you were to take that overland route through Asia Minor, down Northern Syria and down the coast towards Jerusalem, which wasn't the major pilgrim route as normally, you'd go by sea. That aside, in that sense, it's the least important strategically. However, it still had value, significance and importance not just because it had been the first of the crusader gains in the broader 'Holy Land' but because it was the site of sacred relics of St Thaddeus and St Thomas. It was, in and of itself, an important city.

**Peter Moore:** It disrupts this master narrative of the divinely favoured Latins or Franks. I'm not quite sure which is the best term to use.

**Dan Jones:** They're pretty much interchangeable.

**Peter Moore:** That's handy. From that, I think we've got a good contextual understanding of what's going on as 1147 gets going. Let's go from that to your first scene that we're going to look at which is in June. You've got Louis VII of France and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine. That might be a name that rings a bell in many medieval minds. They're setting out from Paris. What's happening?

**Dan Jones:** What's been happening in France for the past few years, when we get to this point in June 1147, is that Louis VII, King of France, is married to Eleanor of Aquitaine, who students of Plantagenet history will know best as the wife of Henry II (her second husband). At this point, as a younger woman, she's married to Louis VII of France. Louis VII has been gearing up to go on crusade. When news of the fall of Edessa had reached Europe, it had been acted upon by Pope Eugene III. Eugene III was a Cistercian monk who had become pope. He was the first of only two Cistercians to become the pope. He had issued a papal bull calling on Western rulers, in general, to repeat the deeds of their forefathers and go and avenge the taking of Edessa. It was called *Quantum Praedecessores*. It's about saying, 'How many popes before us have told you that this is what you should be going to do?' Eugene had then readdressed the same bull specifically to Louis VII, who he knew was gearing up to go on a crusade himself. Now during the late spring, between Easter and the early summer of 1147, Louis had been finalising his preparations to leave on crusade. There had been an enormous amount of pageantry in France associated with this. At Easter, for example, Louis VII, Eugene III and the third character in this story, Bernard of Clairveaux, the great Cistercian abbot and man of wide-ranging influence across Latin Europe, had got together at the Abbey of Saint-Denis and had blessed a great new

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golden cross there. They had been thrashing out their plans for this crusade. Bernard had been on an enormous preaching tour which had kicked off at Vézelay in northern Burgundy, where he'd torn his clothes to make crosses for all the people. He'd been exhorting people across France to join this crusade. Here, in June, was the last point of that pageantry and the last point at which Louis was about to leave. On 11th June, he went to a leper colony and washed the feet of lepers, which was the absolute inversion of the might of kingship and the humblest, most penitent Christian thing a king could ceremonially do. He goes washing the feet of lepers. Eleanor of Aquitaine, his queen, is hanging around outside. It's June and it's extremely hot and she almost faints with having to put up with all this nonsense. When Louis is done washing the feet of lepers, he goes to Saint-Denis once again and takes the Oriflamme, the sacred banner of French kingship, which is always held before French royal armies as they go into battle. He takes the Oriflamme and, with that, sets out on what's going to be this momentous journey in the footsteps of the first crusaders; overland through Europe, down the Danube towards Hungary, through the Balkans to Constantinople and across Asia Minor to Syria. This is the projected route he's going to take. He's going to take with him this band of Templars who are going to guard his army. He's going to leave France as regent of Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis itself. This is the moment a great Christian king leaves his kingdom. Will he come back? Nobody knows. His wife is by his side, which is quite unusual. We see lots of manuscript depictions of this journey that they're about to take together. On a personal level, the marriage between these two people is not in a wonderful place. Will that survive the journey? All of these questions are set up in this moment.

**Peter Moore:** It seems to me like a moment full of dramatic tension. When I was reading through your descriptions of the early stages of the Crusades, it reminded me a little bit of the process of getting an American presidential election going. You've got to get your celebrity backers. You've got to win support. You've got to find finance. You've got to have some great public displays of enthusiasm. All these things seem to be coming together. I guess, of course, they happened most notably in the 1090s when you had the First Crusade. Was it the Council of Clermont? This is being repeated now two generations later, so there's a great sense of excitement there. Could I just get you to dwell on the scene for a moment? This is 12th-century Paris. What do we know about it at this time? Was it a big city already?

**Dan Jones:** It is the heart of a relatively small and relatively weak French royal kingdom in which large parts of what we now think of as greater France are held, more or less, independently. Eleanor, as Duchess of Aquitaine, had married Louis because she supposedly brought with her one of the great lordships of the French south and southwest. Normandy has been in the hands of the dukes of Normandy and will be connected with the Kingdom of England for a long time. That's the same for Anjou. The point is that large parts of France are not really under the control of the French king. Paris is appropriately smaller to a relatively small French kingdom. However, that's not to say it's without glory and without splendour. This is still where a French king, the descendent (albeit not entirely lineal) of Charlemagne, is setting out from.

**Peter Moore:** To me, it's a moment which is full of expectation and hope, isn't it? That's what we're looking at.

**Dan Jones:** It is full of expectation and hope. You're right to mention Louis' reputation as, in Eleanor's supposed words, 'a monk and not a king'. Louis hadn't been born to be a king. His elder brother was being trained for kingship and Louis was being trained for the cloister or to be a bishop. When his brother's horse tripped over a pig, when he was out riding, he was thrown from the horse and killed. Louis was bumped up in a little sort of Henry VIII style through the

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ranks of the royal family. There's not always a sense that Louis was perfectly happy with being a king himself. You were absolutely right also to say that this is a moment of high expectation.

**Peter Moore:** How did it go? Do you want to move from the descriptive history into the analysis a little bit?

**Dan Jones:** It was a disaster. This bit of the Second Crusade was a disaster. Conrad III, the German king, had set out a few weeks before Louis with a hundred-some miles on him in any case. They arrive in staggered stages at Constantinople where Manuel I Komnenos was the emperor. He was the grandson of Alexios, the first Komnenos, who had been the Byzantine emperor, who had called the first crusaders to come and help him rid his Christian empire of the perfidious Turks. Manuel Komnenos had done no such thing. He was a lot less happy to see these crusaders turning up, as it were, on his doorstep. However, he hurried them across the Bosphorus into Asia Minor and let them take their chances. The whole thing was a disaster. Conrad III's German crusaders went ahead, they were largely cut to pieces and returned to Constantinople with their tails between their legs. Conrad III, himself, had been very badly injured. Louis arrived and the French and German crusaders unite and set off for another bash at getting across Asia Minor and find it isn't too easy. It's very hilly and mountainous countryside. It's extremely hot in the summer and it's extremely wet when they go in the winter. In the autumn of 1147, Louis arrives in Constantinople and in January, he strikes out across Asia Minor and on 6th January, he is nearly killed as they try to cross a place called Mount Cadmus. The French crusaders are set upon by light Turkish cavalry, that specialises in breaking up the discipline of more heavily armed Frankish knights with long columns of unarmed pilgrims with them, which is what a crusader army would look like. Louis' army breaks up across Mount Cadmus and is nearly ripped to pieces. Louis, himself had to scramble on a rock and hide himself from being personally captured and potentially worse. They only survive because they hand over command of the troops to 50 Templars, under the command of a man called Gilbert, who were accompanying them. Against the background of all of this, even before Louis had reached Constantinople, he'd almost run out of money. He was sending back to Suger, in France, saying, 'Advance me some more cash. I'm running low here.' By the time they stagger towards the southern coast of Asia Minor, he's broke again and he's borrowing money off the Templars. He eventually takes ship and arrives in the Principality of Antioch, the Latin Christian state in Northern Syria. He arrives there in March really staggering and having been beaten up badly on the journey and humiliated. He's broke again and still borrowing money off the Templars. When they all convene and decide what they're actually going to do now that they're there, instead of rescuing Edessa which is, by this stage, long gone - it's been almost four years since Edessa fell - they scratch their heads and say, 'What are we going to do now we're here?' Someone comes up with a bright idea and says, 'I know what. Let's attack Damascus.' Damascus, at no stage during the crusader period or since, [*laughter*] has ever been an easy target to conquer.

**Peter Moore:** Isn't this, later, where Saladin comes from or his power base as well?

**Dan Jones:** Saladin is a Kurd and so Damascus is one of his ...

**Peter Moore:** The point I was making, more broadly, was that it is always considered a stronghold.

**Dan Jones:** Yeah, exactly. Had Damascus ever fallen into Latin Christian hands, the story of the Crusades might have gone very differently but it never did and on virtually every attempt to attack or take it, by any form of crusader army whatsoever, humiliation beckons. This has been the case in 1129. It's the case again in 1148. So there's this disastrous attempt to attack

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Damascus, which is over almost before it's begun within five days. The whole crusader army, that's been summoned from the West and arrived with kings at its head, is beaten and broken up in five days.

**Peter Moore:** This is really an inversion of the story of the First Crusade, isn't it?

**Dan Jones:** Yeah.

**Peter Moore:** That was characterised by luck, maybe, or was interpreted very much at the time as divine providence or grace that was behind them.

**Dan Jones:** There is also much more competent leadership on the First Crusade. Yes, it's impossible to read the story of the First Crusade without thinking, again and again, 'Oh my god, they did what? You don't get that lucky.' By the time the first crusaders arrived in a very fragmented and turbulent Holy Land, riven with factions of the Syrian Seljuk Sunni world and the Fatimid Shia world based in Egypt, they were battle-hardened and they were there for war. They were ready to walk through absolutely any kind of torment, discomfort or pain to achieve their goal and they'd done it the hard way. In the Second Crusade, these guys turn up thinking, 'As long as we follow the same kind of path, surely we can do this too.' The truth is you absolutely cannot and you certainly can't do it with a leader like Louis VII.

**Peter Moore:** How do we characterise this first scene? It starts off with Louis in a moment of hope in Paris.

**Dan Jones:** It starts off with Louis in a moment of hope in Paris with his wife hanging around outside, waiting for him to get done with the pieties and set off on this great journey and it ends with a succession of military humiliations with vast debts accrued by the French crown. With Louis and Eleanor, by the time they get home, they're effectively estranged. A side note to this is that when they get to Antioch, Eleanor meets her uncle, Raymond, Prince of Antioch, and decides that he's actually a much better bet than her husband, who has not showered himself in glory at this point. Henry II, who Eleanor comes to marry as a partial result of her experiences on crusade, is offered the Kingdom of Jerusalem, late in his life and just as his grandfather had been king of Jerusalem, King Fulk. All these things are connected and I think what this episode, at the beginning of 1147, does is illustrate just how bound together East and West are in this period.

**Peter Moore:** We've been following one thread of narrative which started off in 1147 and tapered on through the progress of Louis' crusade but, of course, things are happening in parallel at the same time. Our second scene we're going to examine is in July 1147 which is a month later than our first scene, which was in Paris, of course. Now we're in Mecklenburg, modern-day Germany, and another crusading army entirely is marching against a Slavik tribespeople, known collectively as the Wends. Have I pronounced that correctly?

**Dan Jones:** The Wends? Yeah, we'll call them Wends for our purpose now.

**Peter Moore:** What are we doing now? Are we getting off the motorway of crusading history and going on to one of the A-roads to see one of the slightly lesser-known crusades that does happen concurrently, that you were talking about before?

**Dan Jones:** At this stage, yes. It's not even an A-road. It's sort of coming off the motorway of crusading and turning into a little country lane *[laughter]* but it's going to be built up into an A-

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road, as crusading history comes along. The connecting force here really is Bernard of Clairveaux. When the Second Crusade, which we've just been talking about, was being preached, Bernard of Clairveaux didn't just spend his time preaching in France. He also went to Germany because it was important to convince Conrad III, king of the Germans, that he too should be a part of this. However, during the course of Bernard's preaching tour, if you like, he goes to Frankfurt. At Frankfurt, he encounters a group of Saxon nobles who say, 'Look, we're all behind this idea of crusading. We get it. Go, fight Christ's enemies, receive remission of sins and do the Lord's work. This all sounds fantastic. However, have you not considered this, Bernard? On our doorstep, just east of here, there are quite a lot of non-Christians. They may not be Muslims but they're certainly not Christians, who we are absolutely itching to fight. Wouldn't it be just as beneficial to the Kingdom of Christ, at large, if we were just to stay here and fight them instead?' There are two ways of looking at this. My instinct is that if it were me in that situation, I might have said, 'You must be joking. Get out there and join the crusade. We're going to the Kingdom of Jerusalem and that's an end of it.' However, this is Bernard of Clairveaux and Bernard of Clairveaux takes a very broad and really quite inventive view of crusading and he is extraordinarily nimble, to the point of being disingenuous at times, in his theological thinking. Previous to this, Bernard's first great crusading project had been to help build the rule of the Templars and help the Templars get sponsorship.

**Peter Moore:** You're talking about him now and I just really want to get my pen out, if you like, and draw a great, big, black line under this name, Bernard of Clairveaux. If you're familiar with the period, you're familiar with him, of course, but he just has this massive influence at this time. Could you just, to take one step backwards, give us a little bit of an overview of him because it seems to me, from the reading that I've done, that, as a preacher, he carried enormous powers of rhetoric and persuasion.

**Dan Jones:** Oh, absolutely. Look, if you know this period, you know Bernard of Clairveaux but he's not a character who you could walk down the street and say, 'Has anybody heard of him?' However, if you'd walked down the street in the 12th century, everybody would have heard of Bernard of Clairveaux. He was born around 1090 and having been visited in a dream by the divine spirit, he decided he was going to go and become a monk. He joined up with the brand new order that was really making big strides in the early 12th century, the Cistercians: a reformed, extremely ascetic order of monasticism which shunned the grandeur of the Cluniacs, who had been the last, big, new, cool monastic order, and went in for absolute sparseness of living, hard physical labour, isolation from the world in monastic houses, built deliberately on poor, scratty land where nobody else in their right mind would think of living. Bernard, himself, was a great tormentor of his own body. He would fast to the point of starvation and he was physically extremely frail. However, what he lacked in physical presence, he made up for in this enormous written voice. He was an inveterate letter writer who would pester, harangue and cajole the kings, popes and noblemen, and not just them but the runaway nuns and aimless young men of Europe, with these letters exhorting them to improve their piety.

**Peter Moore:** How does this one go? Is there a different story that plays out here?

**Dan Jones:** Let's pick up the story. We've sketched Bernard of Clairveaux. In March 1147, he's in Frankfurt and he's pitched effectively by these Saxon nobles saying, 'We don't want to go crusading on Jerusalem. We don't want to leave town but we're more than willing to go fight the Pagans just over the other side of the river.' Bernard of Clairveaux likes the idea and decides to sell it to his protegee, Pope Eugene III, who was the first of two ever Cistercian popes and he had really fallen under Bernard's spell. Bernard had a lot of sway with Eugene III. He was in touch directly with Eugene III who on 13th April, just as Eugene was about to spend Easter with Louis

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VII, decides to grant another papal bull, the Divina Dispensatione. That says, 'If you are a Saxon noble and you want to go and fight Pagans, push East and expand the boundaries of Christendom within Europe, that's totally fine. I will grant the same remission of sins for people fighting Pagans and Pagan tribespeople in northeast Europe as I will grant to everybody who is going on this crusade to the Holy Land.' That's really important and maybe a point we should emphasise a little bit more is why is everyone going on crusade? What's the personal motivation? It is because the spiritual reward is remission of sins, either partial or full. Any confessed sins that you have committed on earth will be wiped clean and your chances of getting to heaven in a timely fashion are massively increased through this penitential pilgrimage and this engagement in the Holy War. What Eugene says, via this bull in April 1147, is, 'Absolutely. The same remission of sins as going to Jerusalem now applies to fighting these tribespeople,' (who are known collectively as the Wends.) As we move forward historically, if you want to do that at this point, what we're going to see in the Baltic is a major crusading arena. The purpose will remain driving Christian archbishoprics and dioceses and Christian German lordships northeast through the Baltic. This is extremely rich trading country and it's extremely rich in natural resources. It's fairly temperate, although quite cold in the winter. By the 13th century, there will become institutionalised crusading because the Teutonic knights move in: a military order modelled on the Templars and set up in 1191 during the Siege of Acre. They move their base to modern Poland and engage in permanent crusade. Crusading has changed and it's available in different forms and different proof strengths.

**Peter Moore:** I can't let you escape this scene without asking you what became of the Wends, if you know. I don't imagine they're still in operation today, so they fell at some point.

**Dan Jones:** I don't think there are many Wends about. The difficulty, as always, is that the Wends are a non-literate Pagan tribespeople and there may not have been a bunch of people going around saying, 'We're the Wends.' The Wends are a linguistically defined group of interlinked tribespeople, including the Pomeranians, the Lithuanians, the Latts, Fins and the Livs. What actually happened in the longer term is that all of these different Slavic tribes, one by one, were ground down and absorbed into the broader Christian world. By the time we get to the 15th and 16th century, there are Christianised states throughout the Baltic and even the Grand Duchy of Lithuania converts to Christianity.

**Peter Moore:** This is the interesting thing, as you said, about 1147 because we are seeing this historical project gathering momentum, aren't we? We've looked at the first scene, which you might characterise as the big macro history and then we're seeing things play out on a smaller level. Let's go to the third of your choices then which happens in October 1147. We've got to imagine these things happening in parallel. Louis is closing in on Constantinople and the first assault on the Wends is winding down for the winter because, of course, there were crusading seasons, I suppose. This is probably a place you wouldn't immediately connect in your historical mind but we're going to go to Lisbon, right on the edge of Western Europe, modern-day Portugal, where a crusading army is about to score a major victory. What's going on?

**Dan Jones:** In a sense, this draws a lot of what we've been talking about together: crusading arenas that aren't Jerusalem; the Second Crusade in macro terms; victories in unlikely places. In 1147, Bernard of Clairveaux is on his preaching tour and crusading fever has his Western Europe. There is an army of about 10,000 'Brits' and Flemings, mostly but a richly variegated mix of people and we know that because the ordinances for managing the army dealt with what would happen with lots of fights among the crusaders between people from different places. They set out from Dartmouth and they take this route. They sail from the southern coast of France and put ashore in Galicia in northwest Spain. They then join up with a man called Afonso



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Henriques, the Conqueror. He was born in Guimarães in what is now northern Portugal. England played a football match there the other day. He's setting up the county in what will become the Kingdom of Portugal, which is centred around Porto. The broadest situation in the Iberian Peninsula, at this point, is that the Reconquista is in full swing. Southern Spain, if you like, is ruled ultimately by the Almoravids, a Berber Islamic sect from Morocco. Previously in the century, they had taken control of most of what we call Al-Andalus, Muslim Spain. As our English and Flemish crusaders arrive on this western coast of what is now Spain and Portugal, they stop off naturally to take on water and they are implored to get involved in Afonso Henriques' mission to expand his County of Portugal, which he's in the process of converting into a kingdom of Portugal. The major target that will help him do that is the city of Lisbon, which is about 180 miles south of Porto. Al-Ushbuna is a Muslim city which is extremely well-placed.

**Peter Moore:** How long had Lisbon been a Muslim city? Do we know? Hundreds of years?

**Dan Jones:** Yeah. It's well within the broader Al-Andalus. It's not a Christian city. It's an Islamic city. It's extremely well-defended within the mouth of the River Tagus. I think it's about eight miles upriver and so it's protected from the Atlantic. It's said, at this time, to do more trade with North Africa than any other city. Now Palermo might have something to say about that but you get the picture. There is gold. There is olive oil. There are citrus fruits. It's a rich, wealthy, well-to-do city. If you're Afonso Henriques and your mission is to expand your Kingdom of Portugal, it's the vital place that you take in the South. Here come 10,000 roughnecks from England and Holland [*laughter*]. Here are just the people to help you do it. In 1142, Afonso tried his hand at Lisbon with some ships of some French pilgrims who'd been heading for the Holy Land along the same route but he'd failed to take it. Now, however, there's real firepower heading his way. In May 1147, these 10,000 crusaders set off and by 16th June, they reach Porto. By 30th June, or thereabouts, they are at Lisbon. Afonso Henriques, has marched south from Porto with an army, including - guess who? - the Templars. On 1st July, these combined troops, having disembarked their ships, storm the suburbs of Lisbon and there begins a three and a half month siege that has all the elements of siege warfare in the Middle Ages.

**Peter Moore:** How long did this siege go on for then? Until the outcome that I think we've all guessed at?

**Dan Jones:** Yeah [*laughter*]. If you're being besieged, what you need to hope for is either that the crusading army gets bored, or diseased, or hungry themselves and goes away or you're relieved, which is to say another army, from someone you're allied with, comes and helps you by driving the army away. By October of 1147, it becomes clear that there is not going to be a relief of Lisbon because the Almoravids, this Berber, North African dynasty, who are nominally in control of the whole of Al-Andalus (southern Spain), have problems of their own. Back in Morocco, a revolution is underway and another even more extreme and puritanical sect, known as the Almohads, are about to seize power within this broader cross-Gibraltar (if that's a word) world. They're not going to come and help, effectively. So on October 23rd 1147, the citizens do the only thing left to them which is sue for peace. Under the terms of siegecraft, by and large, if the city is stormed, i.e. if it falls because the besiegers take it, then all bets are off and it's there to be sacked. If there's a negotiated peace, what's supposed to happen is the citizens are allowed to leave with their possessions and their lives. There's a little bit of a grey area with Lisbon because miners had succeeded in bringing down a portion of the walls but, on the other hand, there was a sue for peace. Peace is accepted but unfortunately, it's not a peaceful transition of power. You have a degree of squabbling between the different factions of crusaders, the Portuguese, Flemish and English, who all claim a different portion of the right to plunder. What happens soon

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enough is that there is a murderous sack or maybe you could call it a massacre. We're quibbling terms. A lot of people die. The Mozarabic Bishop of Lisbon has his throat slit and so there are attacks not just on Muslims but on Christians of a different rite. It's a pretty bloody scene and what you end with, by the end of October, is that Lisbon is now in Christian hands. Some of the crusaders go off and follow the southern coast, through the Straits of Gibraltar and over winter in Italy. Others decide to stay in Lisbon for the winter because the sea lanes are now closing up. Either way, what happens is Lisbon has been taken and as it will prove in retrospect, this was really the major victory of the whole Second Crusade. This was a crusade that set out to liberate Edessa, which had fallen in 1144, was diverted to Damascus and grew a little offshoot in the Baltic. Weirdly, as it seems to us now, it's major achievement was the seizure of Lisbon.

**Peter Moore:** We've gone from Paris to Germany and we've ended up at Lisbon. Funnily enough, we never actually got to Jerusalem which was the destination that people always wanted to get to but we didn't get there.

**Dan Jones:** [*Laughter*] That's the story of 1147, I'm afraid.

**Peter Moore:** Exactly, and never quite getting up there but ending up somewhere else. Thank you. That's been a wonderful tour through the year. I've got a bit of supplementary business for you. I can't remember if I reminded you about this before, so let me throw this at you like a boomerang and see if it comes back. If you could bring one tangible object back from the year 1147 to have with you - you could maybe have it in this nice house in Staines somewhere if you could make some room - what would you like?

**Dan Jones:** I've been thinking about this and I had some rather grandiose thoughts about maybe taking the Oriflamme but that would upset a lot of people. What would any good crusader want? I'll tell you what they would want. It would be a sliver of the True Cross. In Jerusalem, where we didn't visit, unfortunately, although we set out in that direction at the beginning, was the greatest relic in the Christian world. It was a large portion of Christ's cross and this was lost to Saladin at the Battle of Hattin and never recovered. If you were a particularly dignified, or worthy, or just lucky crusader and you made it to Jerusalem and you palled up with whoever the king of Jerusalem was at this point... if you were really nice to him, then he might get down to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and shave you off the tiniest, little pencil shaving of Christ's cross itself. You could then take it home and commission a grand reliquary out of precious metals and god knows what, in whatever shape took your fancy but probably that of a cross, which would display this treasure. You would then have brought home the greatest knick-knack, the greatest trinket, that you possibly could have and wherever you displayed it would forever be a part of Jerusalem. Greedy as that is, but you did offer, I'll take just the merest little shaving of the True Cross please because I'm going to make it to Jerusalem.

**Peter Moore:** I love that idea. I love the idea of somewhere in Staines having a shard of the True Cross. I wonder if you'd be a bit more productive at your writing desk if it just there above you. Thank you very much, Dan. That's been a terrific tour through the time. A few words left for the book. Has it taken you years and years or did it come together in a whirl of excitement?

**Dan Jones:** I always have several books kind of bubbling around in my mind at once. I'd been thinking about it for probably more than a decade and working on parts of it intensely for the last four years. The writing was quick but the thinking was slow. I think that's always got to be the way it is.

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**Peter Moore:** Thank you very much for sharing this with us. I've been reading the book and been engrossed with it over the weekend and it charges along like so many of your other books does. I'm sure it will be, as I said right at the beginning, an exhilarating tour for any reader who is interested in the time. Thank you very much, Dan Jones.

**Dan Jones:** Thanks for having me.

**Artemis Irvine:** Hello, I'm Artemis and I work on the *Travels Through Time* podcast. We hope you enjoyed that conversation. I was particularly interested in Dan's explanation of why people went on crusades and also the revelation that the Crusades encompassed conflicts against not just Muslims but Pagans and other Christians as well. You can check out our new website at [tttpodcast.com](http://tttpodcast.com) where you can find links to episodes from Season 1 and Season 2 of *Travels Through Time*. Don't forget to visit our pages on [historytoday.com](http://historytoday.com) where you can find articles from their archive, written by experts for the world's leading serious history magazine. For example, for more information on what Dan and Peter were discussing in today's episode, you can read *The Crusades: A Complete History* by Jonathan Phillips or *Why Didn't the Crusades Succeed?* by Harry Munt. Also available to read is an obituary of England's only pope, who allegedly died in 1159 from choking on a fly in his wine. That's *The Death of Adrian IV* by Richard Cavendish. That's it for this episode. We'll be back next Tuesday, 10th September for a trip to 1934 and the fractious London streets with the bestselling author Thomas Harding. Till next time, goodbye.

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