



CAYNTON CAVES SHROPSHIRE

A Mystery



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PROVINCIAL MEMBERSHIP GROUP

A fascinating mystery

If you're like me, you'll love an unexplained mystery. Especially one that relates to Knights Templar!

I first came across the story of Caynton Caves in a newspaper article of March 2017 and was captivated by what I was reading.

Lying just a few feet underground this cavern, for that is what it is, provides a candle-lit glimpse into a medieval world of secrecy and ritual that will fascinate every modern Knight Templar. The caves appear to date back some 700 years to about the time that the Templars had been suppressed by the forces of avarice more commonly known as Pope Clement and Philip the King of France.

The caves are hidden in fairly dense Shropshire woodland and are accessed through a small hole that was thought originally to have been a rabbit hole; somewhat reminiscent of the hole that Alice must have fallen through in the story by Lewis Carroll!



The 'rabbit-hole' entrance to the cave at Caynton

Once inside, and the entrance is not easy to navigate, there are strange scratched symbols amongst beautifully hewn arches carved into the walls and in one corner a

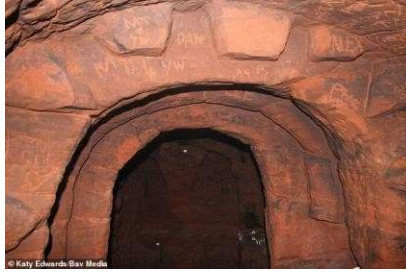
font more intricate than the other carvings.



What appears to be the centre-piece of the cave

It would seem that a photographer, Michael Scott was the first person to photograph the caves after seeing something about them on an online video

Whilst there have been some dissenting voices, most experts seem to believe that the caves were hewn out of the local sandstone rock in the 14th century about the time that the Templars first went underground; literally!



Details of one of the carved niches at the caves

Perhaps most interesting of all is the apparent proof that the caves were created and used by the Templars. In the late 1980s a local man, Mark Lawton, when exploring the caves, found a rusty old sword that he took home and kept on a window sill for about 20 years. Coming across it again some years later, he decided to take it to an expert in weaponry for it to be valued.

He approached Halls Fine Art of Shrewsbury where Caroline Dennard confirmed that she thought it was a blade of thirteenth century origin and noted that the hilt of the sword was deliberately designed with a straight cross guard perpendicular to the blade, thus creating a cross.

She also pointed out that this would serve as a constant reminder to the knight of the duties he had sworn to fulfil – sound familiar?



The sword found by Lawton

Dennard said: 'This is certainly a rare object and one which has all the hallmarks of a genuine sword from the 13th Century.'

'In populated areas knights were the only people authorised by the King to carry weapons so it is a probable assumption that this was owned and carried by a Knight - and perhaps, given the discovery in Caynton caves, even a Templar.'

The caves are carved with Romanesque archways, circular naves, pillars and niches for candles, certainly fit the bill as a base for Templar worship and rituals



Romanesque arches and niches within the caves

The photographer Scott, when describing how he found the cave, observed

‘I traipsed over a field to find it, but if you didn’t know it was there you would just walk right past it’

He added ‘it’s probably less than a meter underground, so it’s more into the field

than under it. Considering how long it's been there it's in amazing condition, it's like an underground temple'.

He also added that the cave was quite cramped and that anyone nearing six feet tall would have had to bend down to fit in it; an arch of steel must have been a challenge!



One of the cave galleries

Scott also noted that once he was inside it was completely silent and that the caves were bone dry even though it had been wet outside.

Sadly, visits to the caves are not encouraged by the landowner as he has, in the past, been plagued by visits from all sorts of cranks including wizards, warlocks and assorted pagan worshippers who have tried to claim the caves for themselves.



Passage-way within the cave

That the caves were a refuge for our historical forebears seems to be beyond doubt; whether that was from the Order's persecutors or maybe, just maybe, as a refuge from the Black death which ravaged England in the 1340s, with parallels to today!

Once we're able to go out and about again, and if you're up so an Alice-like scramble

down a hole, then the caves could be a fascinating day out.

They can be found at Caynton Hall near Beckbury in Shropshire but it would be worth checking with the Hall before making the journey there.

If you're more technically-minded, go on to Google and type in Caynton Caves; there's lots more to read about them!

I hope that this article has kept you amused during these wearisome and introverted days that we are enduring.

Why not adopt the practise of giving each other a toast every Sunday at 5pm

'To all Knights Templar wheresoever dispersed, over the face of earth or water'

If nothing else. It's a great excuse to open a bottle!

Yours in the Bonds of the Order

Provincial Second Constable