



A SCOTTISH ABBEY REFUGE

A Theory



MAY 14, 2020
PROVINCIAL MEMBERSHIP GROUP

Is this the place?

In our last Knights Templar News, we left the fabled Templar treasure having escaped from the clutches of Philip IV of France just as he was about to arrest and murder many knights of the Templar Order in 1307.

Many believe that gold, silver and secret religious treasures stored in Paris were smuggled out of the city in hay carts on the eve of the crackdown. During the Templar trials, a brother named Jean de Chalon testified that the Preceptor of the French Templars, Gerard de Villiers, had been tipped off about the imminent arrests and led over 50 horses out of Paris, before 'setting out to sea with 18 galleys'.

Where did this fleet actually set out from? The port city of La Rochelle is a favoured candidate, although some speculate the ships escaped via the Seine. The destination of these ships has been debated for generations. Did they find asylum in Scotland, as some writers have pondered? According to one highly controversial line of thought, these escaping Templars may have helped Robert the Bruce beat the English forces in the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314.

The quest to track down the 'lost fleet', and the associated riches, continues. As Sean Martin, author of *The Knights Templar*, puts it: 'How many Templar ships sailed from La Rochelle in the autumn of 1307 is unknown – what they were carrying likewise – but one thing is known: the Templar fleet vanished utterly.'

Now, two historians and treasure collectors, Carl Cookson & Hamilton White are hoping their investigation will shed light on what became of the fleeing knights and their mysterious hidden marvels. And maybe, just maybe, they'll prove that the relics that they have collected over 20 odd years (the so-called Tomar Hoard) were once among the treasures that the Templars smuggled away before Philip IV could lay his hands on them.

Hamilton and Carl believe they have at last discovered what everyone else has been looking for – a treasure trove of artefacts which reveal who the Templars were, how they worshipped, and why they were targeted, imprisoned and wiped out by Papal decree in 1307.

Let's suppose for a moment that the fleet did set sail for Scotland and landed in a remote area of the countryside so as to escape detection. The fleet would

have arrived in late 1307 or early 1308 which is much too early for any connection to the fabled Chapel at Rosslyn in Midlothian which was not built until the 15th century.



The interior of Rosslyn Chapel with its ornate carvings and tracery

This site is, however, particularly significant for those who believe it to be the link between the Knights Templar and Scottish Freemasonry.

The chapel is famed for its many intricate carvings, some apparently being Templar and Masonic symbols; and do the carvings imply a kind of crosspollination between the exiled knights and the Scottish masons? Could the chapel really have been the repository of the fabled Templar treasures smuggled out of France on the eve of the mass arrests?



A Wintry exterior of Rosslyn Chapel

However, others have speculated that prior to the alleged treasures being kept at Rosslyn, the exiled Templars originally sought refuge at another site, Kilwinning Abbey in Ayrshire. Unlike Rosslyn, this structure did exist at the time of the Templars' fall.

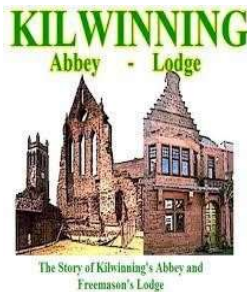


The ruined Chapter House at Kilwinning

Fascinatingly, Kilwinning is also home to Lodge Mother Kilwinning, reckoned to be the oldest Masonic lodge in the world. According to Mother Kilwinning Lodge's own site *"This old and ancient*

Lodge of freemasons dates back to the building of Kilwinning Abbey around the year 1140, the ruins of which still stand behind the Lodge to this day”.

“The first meeting place of the Lodge of Kilwinning took place in the Chapter House within the Abbey grounds and remained there until the Scottish Reformation in 1560”.



The front cover from an historical work about the Abbey and Lodge by James Brook

Kilwinning has therefore been suggested as the place where Templars and operative masons potentially came into contact.

Did Templars in Scotland influence operative masons, who in turn passed on the Templars’ esoteric wisdom, secrets and traditions to the earliest speculative Freemasons? It’s one of the great puzzles of the past which will always intrigue us. But the true extent of the connection, if any such connection even exists, may never be proven.

Such stories about fleeing Templars finding sanctuary in Scotland have persisted for centuries, with some 18th Century Scots alleging that members of the Order had brought secret treasure from the Holy Land with them. One such account came from a Scottish exile in Germany named George Frederick Johnson. As the historian Peter Partner, author of *The Murdered Magicians: Templars and their Myth*, tells us, Johnson played a key role in changing the way we imagine Templars, from ‘unlearned and fanatical soldier-monks to that of enlightened and wise knightly seers, who had used their sojourn in the East to recover its profoundest secrets.’

Now that Cookson and White have set themselves the task of uncovering these links and of proving that their artefacts were indeed part of the fabled Templar treasure then we may be, just may be, about to find out!

But even if they can’t prove such a link, the treasures that they believe were part of the Templar hoard bear testimony to the stories of Templar wealth and manufacturing prowess;



A rare obsidian chalice with clear Templar markings



A carved Marble ornament from the 12th century



A Templar helm made in the 13th century



One of the most fascinating pieces from the Hoard. This ornate item could have been made in the early 13th Century and is 29cm tall. Several characters are depicted on the box, possibly St George and Jesus Christ, but in Monk's Robes.



The item sure to be the favourite of every modern-day Masonic Knight Templar. This blade is 95.5cm long with several crosses visible and is a simple but elegant piece.

I hope that this article has given you cause for thought and not a little excitement at the prospect of a link between Medieval Templars and Freemasonry being investigated.

Brother Knights, once more;

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

Yours in the Bonds of the Order

Provincial Second Constable

*Thursday the 14th Day of May in the year of our Heavenly Captain
2020*