

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



The Temple and the Lodge

Michael Baigent & Richard Leigh

Contents

About the Book

About the Author

Also by Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh

Title Page

Dedication

List of Illustrations

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Prelude

PART ONE: ROBERT BRUCE: HEIR TO CELTIC SCOTLAND

1. Bruce and his Struggle for Power
2. Military Monks: the Knights Templar
3. Arrests and Torture
4. The Disappearance of the Templar Fleet
5. Celtic Scotland and the Grail Legends

PART TWO: SCOTLAND AND A HIDDEN TRADITION

6. The Templar Legacy in Scotland
7. The Scots Guard
8. Rosslyn
9. Freemasonry: Geometry of the Sacred

PART THREE: THE ORIGINS OF FREEMASONRY

10. The Earliest Freemasons
11. Viscount Dundee
12. The Development of Grand Lodge
13. The Masonic Jacobite Cause
14. Freemasons and Knights Templar

PART FOUR: FREEMASONRY AND AMERICAN
INDEPENDENCE

- 15. The First American Freemasons
- 16. The Emergence of Masonic Leaders
- 17. The Resistance to Britain
- 18. The War for Independence
- Interlude*
- 19. The Republic

Postscript

Picture Section

Appendices

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

Notes and References

Bibliography

Index

Copyright

About the Book

THE MOST ILLUMINATING INVESTIGATION YET
PUBLISHED OF THE EVOLUTION OF FREEMASONRY

In this enthralling historical detective story, the authors of *The Holy Blood* and *The Holy Grail* trace the flight after 1309 of the Knights Templar from Europe to Scotland, where the Templar heritage was to take root, and would be perpetuated by a network of noble families. That heritage, and the Freemasonry that arose from it, became inseparable from the Stuart cause.

The Temple and The Lodge charts the birth of Freemasonry through the survival of Templar traditions, through currents of European thought, through the mystery surrounding Rosslyn Chapel, and through an elite cadre of aristocrats attached as personal bodyguards to the French king. Pursuing freemasonry through the 17th and 18th centuries, Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh reveal its contribution to the fostering of tolerance, progressive values, and cohesion in English society, which helped to pre-empt a French-style revolution. Even more dramatically, the influence of Freemasonry emerges as a key factor in the formation of the United States of America as an embodiment of the ideal 'Masonic Republic'.

About the Author

MICHAEL BAIGENT was born in New Zealand in 1948 and obtained a degree in psychology from Canterbury University, Christchurch. Since 1976 he has lived in England.

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Also available by Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh

The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception
Secret Germany: Claus von Staffenberg and the Mystical
Crusade against Hitler
The Elixir and the Stone
The Inquisition

Also by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln

The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail
The Messianic Legacy

By Michael Baigent

From the Omens of Babylon
Ancient Traces

THE
EMPLE
AND THE
LODGE

MICHAEL BAIGENT &
RICHARD LEIGH



arrow books

Dedication

Viens au jardin
Où le lapin
Promène sa bouteille
Que l'on sache à
Sourire dans les neiges
D'antan toujours
Sans besoin de gesne;
Car l'oeil d'or
Des woïvres rouges
Là revelera
La place où se cachent
Le mot oublié
Et la pierre perdue
Et le rejecton
De l'acacia
Qui rend temoignage
Par ses racines
Déracinées et crues.

Jehan l'Ascuiz

Illustrations

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Pictures

- [1](#) Kilneuair Church, Loch Awe, Argyll.
- [2](#) Kilmartin Church, Argyll.
- [3](#) Kilmartin graves.
- [4](#) Gravestone, Kilmartin.
- [5](#) Chapel of Kilmory, Loch Sween, Argyll.
- [6](#) Stone cross, Chapel of Kilmory.
- [7](#) Undated gravestone, Kilmory.
- [8](#) Tower, church and preceptory buildings, Garway, Herefordshire.
- [9](#) Templar cross, Garway.
- [10](#) Templar gravestones, Garway.
- [11](#) Celtic figure, Garway.
- [12](#) Foundations of original Templar church, Garway.
- [13](#) Temple Church, Bristol.
- [14](#) Rosslyn Castle, near Edinburgh.
- [15](#) Rosslyn Chapel.
- [16](#) Head of the murdered apprentice, Rosslyn Chapel.
- [17](#) The Apprentice Pillar, Rosslyn Chapel.

- [18-19](#) Examples of 'The Green Man', Rosslyn Chapel.
- [20-2](#) Figures, Rosslyn Chapel.
- [23](#) Christ as the Divine Architect, *Bible moralisée*.
- [24](#) The Creator as Divine Architect, *Holkham Bible*.
- [25](#) Gravestone, Athlit, Israel.
- [26](#) Temple Church, near Edinburgh.
- [27-8](#) Seventeenth-century graves, Temple Church, near Edinburgh.
- [29-30](#) Swords possibly used at the initiation of Baron von Hund.
- [31](#) Sword of Alexander Deuchar.
- [32](#) English Masonic Knights Templar star jewels.
- [33](#) English Masonic Knights Templar apron.
- [34](#) Masonic sash worn by Benjamin Franklin.
- [35](#) Masonic apron worn by George Washington.
- [36](#) Map of the city of Washington, 1792.

Maps and charts

- [1](#) Scotland and Ireland at the time of Robert Bruce.
- [2](#) Genealogy showing the relationship of Robert Bruce to earlier kings of Scotland.
- [3](#) Probable Templar route into Scotland, 1307-8.
- [4](#) The French and Indian War, 1754-60.
- [5](#) The American War for Independence.

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Introduction

In Britain, during the last few years, Freemasonry has become both a favourite topic of conversation and a cherished issue of debate. Indeed, Mason-baiting bids fair to become something of a full-fledged blood sport here, rather like priest-baiting in Ireland. With scarcely disguised exuberance and a virtually audible 'Tally-ho!', the newspapers swoop on each new 'Masonic scandal', each new allegation of 'Masonic corruption'. Church synods ponder the compatibility of Freemasonry with Christianity. In order to goad political opponents, local councils propose motions that would compel Freemasons to declare themselves. At parties, Freemasonry crops up with a frequency exceeded, probably, only by Britain's intelligence services and the CIA. Television, too, has made its contribution, conducting at least one late-night symposium on the subject and actually managing to poke its cameras into the beast's ultimate lair, Grand Lodge. On failing to find a dragon, the commentators seemed to feel less relief than an aggrieved sulkiness at having somehow been cheated. In the mean time, of course, people have remained fascinated. One need only pronounce the word 'Freemasonry' in a pub, restaurant, hotel lobby or other public place to see heads twitch, faces swivel attentively, ears fine-tune themselves to eavesdrop. Each new 'exposé' is devoured with an eagerness, even a glee, usually reserved for royal gossip, or for the salacious.

This book is not an exposé. It does not address itself to the role or the activities, real or imagined, of Freemasonry

in contemporary society; it does not attempt to investigate allegations of conspiracy or corruption. Neither, of course, is it an apology for Freemasonry. We are not Freemasons ourselves, and we have no vested interest in exculpating the institution from the charges levelled against it. Our orientation has been wholly historical. We have endeavoured to track down the antecedents of Freemasonry, to establish its true origins, to chart its evolution and development, to assess its influence on British and American culture during its own formative years, culminating with the late eighteenth century. We have also tried to address the question of why Freemasonry, nowadays so instinctively regarded with suspicion, with derision, with irony and condescension, should ever have come to enjoy the currency it did - and, for that matter, still does, despite its detractors.

In the process, however, we have inevitably been obliged to confront the kind of questions that loom in the public mind today, and are so often posed by the media. Is Freemasonry corrupt? Is it - even more sinisterly - a vast international conspiracy dedicated to some obscure and (if secrecy is a barometer of villainy) nefarious end? Is it a conduit for 'perks', favours, influence and power-broking in the heart of such institutions as the City and the police? Most important of all, perhaps, is it truly inimical to Christianity? Such questions are not directly pertinent to the pages that follow, but they are of understandable general concern. It will not be inappropriate, therefore, if we offer here the answers to them that emerged in the course of our enquiries.

One has attained a measure of wisdom when, instead of exclaiming 'Et tu, Brute!', one nods ruefully and says, 'Yes, it figures.' Given human nature, it would be surprising if there were not at least some degree of corruption in public and private institutions, and if some of this corruption did not involve Freemasonry. We would argue, however, that

such corruption says less about Freemasonry itself than about the ways in which Freemasonry, like any other such structure, can be abused. Greed, self-aggrandisement, favouritism and other such ills have been endemic to human society since the emergence of civilization. They have availed themselves of, and operated through, every available channel - blood kinship, a shared past, bonds formed in school or in the armed forces, mutual interest, simple friendship, as well, of course, as race, religion and political affiliation. Freemasonry is accused, for example, of making special dispensations for its own. In the Christianised West, until very recently, a man could expect from his fellows precisely the same special dispensation simply by virtue of his membership in the 'freemasonry' of Christianity - by virtue, in other words, of not being a Hindu, a Muslim, a Buddhist or a Jew. Freemasonry is only one of many channels whereby corruption and favouritism can flourish; but if Freemasonry did not exist, corruption and favouritism would flourish all the same. Corruption and favouritism can be found in schools, in regiments, in corporations, in governmental bodies, in political parties, in sects and churches, in innumerable other organizations. None of these is in itself intrinsically reprehensible. No one would think of condemning an entire political party, or an entire church, because certain of its members were corrupt - or more sympathetically disposed towards other members than towards outsiders. No one would condemn the family as an institution because it tends to foster nepotism.

In any moral consideration of the matter, it is necessary to exercise an understanding of elementary psychology, and a modicum of common sense. Institutions are only as virtuous, or as culpable, as the individuals who compose them. If an institution can be considered corrupt in any intrinsic sense at all, it can be considered so only if it profits from the corruption of its members. This might apply to, say, a military dictatorship, to certain totalitarian

or single-party states, but it is hardly applicable to Freemasonry. No one has ever suggested that Freemasonry ever gained anything through the transgressions of its brethren. On the contrary, the transgressions of individual Freemasons are entirely selfish and self-serving. Freemasonry as a whole suffers from such transgressions, as does Christianity from the transgressions of its adherents. In the question of corruption, then, Freemasonry is not in itself a culprit, but, on the contrary, another victim of unscrupulous men who are prepared to exploit it, along with anything else, for their own ends.

A more valid question is the compatibility, or lack thereof, between Freemasonry and Christianity. By its very nature, this question, at least, implies an attempt to confront what Freemasonry actually *is*, rather than the ways in which it can be exploited or abused. Ultimately, however, this question, too, is spurious. As is well known, Freemasonry does not purport to be a religion, only to address itself to certain principles or 'truths', which might in some sense be construed as 'religious' - or perhaps 'spiritual'. It may offer a species of methodology, but it does not pretend to offer a theology. This distinction will become clearer in the pages that follow. For the moment, it will be sufficient to make two points in connection with the current antipathy towards Freemasonry on the part of the Anglican Church. Amidst the Church's present preoccupation with Freemasonry in her ranks, these points are generally overlooked. Both are crucial.

In the first place, Freemasonry and the Anglican Church have cohabited congenially since the beginning of the seventeenth century. Indeed, they have done more than cohabited. They have worked in tandem. Some of the most important Anglican ecclesiastics of the last four centuries have issued from the lodge; some of the most eloquent and influential Freemasons have issued from the ministry. At no time, prior to the last ten or fifteen years, has the Church

ever inveighed against Freemasonry, ever perceived any incompatibility between Freemasonry and its own theological principles. Freemasonry has not changed. The Church would argue that it has not changed either, at least in its fundamental tenets. Why, then, if there has never been any conflict in the past, should there be conflict now? The answer to that question, we would suggest, lies less with Freemasonry than with the attitudes and mentalities of certain contemporary churchmen.

The second point worth considering is, if anything, even more decisive. The official head of the Anglican Church is the British monarch. Since James II was deposed in 1688, the monarch's theological status or 'credentials' have never been subject to question. And yet, since the beginning of the seventeenth century, the British monarchy has also been closely involved in Freemasonry. At least six kings, as well as numerous princes of the blood and prince consorts, have been Freemasons. Would this be possible if there were indeed some theological incompatibility between Freemasonry and the Church? To argue such incompatibility is tantamount, in effect, to impugning the religious integrity of the monarchy.

Ultimately, we would maintain, the current controversy surrounding Freemasonry is a storm in a teacup, a number of non-issues or spurious issues inflated far beyond the status they actually deserve. It is tempting to be flip and suggest that people have nothing better to do than manufacture such tenuous grounds for controversy. Unfortunately, they *do* have better things to do. Certainly the Anglican Church, with incipient schism in its ranks and a disastrously shrinking congregation, could deploy its energy and resources more constructively than in orchestrating crusades against a supposed enemy, which, in fact, is not an enemy at all. And while it is perfectly appropriate, even desirable, for the media to ferret out corruption, we would all be better served if the corrupt

individuals themselves were called to account, rather than the institution of which they happen to be members.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that Freemasonry itself has done little to improve its own image in the public eye. Indeed, by its obsessive secrecy and its stubborn defensiveness, it has only reinforced the conviction that it has something to hide. How little it does in fact have to hide will become apparent in the course of this book. If anything, it has more to be proud of than it does to conceal.

Prelude

Ten years ago, in the spring of 1978, while researching the Knights Templar for a projected television documentary, we became intrigued by the Order's history in Scotland. The surviving documentation was meagre, but Scotland possessed an even greater wealth of legend and tradition about the Templars than did most other places. There were also some very real mysteries - unexplained enigmas which, in the absence of reliable records, orthodox historians had scarcely attempted to account for. If we could penetrate these mysteries, if we could find even a kernel of truth behind the legends and traditions, the implications would be enormous, not only for the history of the Templars, but extending far beyond as well.

A woman we knew had recently moved with her husband to live in Aberdeen. On a visit back to London, they recounted to us a story they had heard from another man, who had worked for a time in an hotel in a small tourist community, formerly a Victorian watering spot, on the western shore of Loch Awe in the Highlands of Argyll. Loch Awe is a large inland lake some twenty-five miles from Oban. The lake itself is twenty-eight miles long and varies in width for the most part from half a mile to a mile. It is dotted with just under two dozen islands of various sizes, some natural, others man-made and formerly connected to the shore by causeways of now submerged stones and timber. Like Loch Ness, Loch Awe is supposed to contain a monster, the 'Beathach Mór', described as a large serpent-

like creature with a horse's head and twelve legs sheathed in scales.

On one of the islands, according to the story our informant had heard, there were a number of Templar graves - more than would make sense in the context of accepted history, for the Templars were not known to have been active around Argyll or the Western Highlands. On the same island, moreover, there were, supposedly, the ruins of a Templar preceptory, which did not figure in any of our lists of Templar holdings. As we received it, at third hand, the name of the island sounded something like 'Innis Shield', but we could not be sure of that, still less of the spelling.

These fragments of information, even though unconfirmed and frustratingly vague, were tantalizing. Like many researchers before us, we were familiar with nebulous accounts of bands of Templars surviving the official persecution and dissolution of their Order between 1307 and 1314. We were familiar with stories that one such enclave of knights, fleeing their tormentors on the Continent and in England, had found a refuge in Scotland and, at least for a time, had perpetuated something of their original institutions. But we were also aware that most such traditions had originated with the Freemasons of the eighteenth century, who sought to establish for themselves a pedigree extending directly back to the Templars of four centuries before. In consequence, we were extremely sceptical. We knew that no accepted evidence for any Templar survival in Scotland existed, and that even modern Freemasonry tended, in general, to dismiss all claims to the contrary as sheer invention and wishful thinking.

And yet the tale of the island in the lake continued to haunt us. We had planned a research trip to Scotland for that summer anyway, albeit far to the east. Should we not perhaps make a leisurely westward detour, if only to disprove the story we had heard and exorcize it once and

for all from our minds? Accordingly, we decided to extend our trip by a few days and return via Argyll.

As we descended on Loch Awe from the north, we immediately saw, at the head of it, masked by serried firs, the large fifteenth-century Campbell castle of Kilchurn. We proceeded down the eastern side of the lake. After some fifteen miles, an island appeared to our right, perhaps fifty yards from the shore. On it stood the ruins of the thirteenth-century castle of Innis Chonnell, which was occupied, around 1308, by Robert the Bruce's close friend, ally and brother-in-law, Sir Neil Campbell, and which for the next century and a half had been Clan Campbell's primary seat. Then, when a new castle was built at Inverary, at the upper reaches of Loch Fyne, Innis Chonnell was turned into a prison for the enemies of the Campbells - or, as they had by then become, the Earls of Argyll.

A mile south of Innis Chonnell there was a smaller island, just visible from the road through the trees and shrubs fringing the shore. When we stopped, we could see the remains on it of a structure of some sort, and stones which appeared to be graves. On the opposite side of the road was the hamlet of Portinnisherrich. The island itself, according to the maps we consulted, was variously called Innis Searraiche or Innis Sea-ramhach. We promptly pole-vaulted to the conclusion that this was the 'Innis Shield' we had been seeking.

The island lay some forty yards from the shore, along which there were a number of boats, most of them obviously functional and in regular use. Hoping to rent one and row out to the island, we enquired at the general store in Portinnisherrich. There, however, we encountered a curious evasiveness. Although the area was postcard-scenic, and must have relied to at least some degree on the tourist trade, we were not made to feel in any way welcome. Why, we were asked guardedly, did we want to rent a boat? To explore the island, we replied. No boat was

available for rental, we were told; people did not rent boats. Could we hire someone, boat and all, to row us out to the island? No, we were told without any explanation or elaboration, that was not possible either.

Frustrated, and all the more convinced that Innis Searraiche must contain something of relevance, we wandered on foot along the shore. From across the intervening strip of water, the island beckoned tauntingly, almost within stone-throwing distance, yet inaccessible. We discussed the possibility of swimming out to it, and were debating the likely coldness of the water when, just north of the hamlet, we encountered an elderly couple with a tent erected beside a caravan. After an exchange of casual courtesies, they invited us to share a cup of tea with them. They, too, it transpired, came from London. For the last fifteen years or so, however, they had been coming to this spot every summer, setting up their caravan and fishing along Loch Awe.

Inside their caravan, we had to squeeze past the end of a table on to a long bench. To one side, there was a smaller table, or flat surface of some kind, used probably for preparing food. On this, an old book lay open at a page with what appeared to be an engraving of a Masonic tomb - we noted certain Masonic symbols and a skull-and-crossbones. Subsequently, we realized that what we had seen might have been a Masonic 'tracing board' of the kind used in the eighteenth century. In any case, we enquired, quite casually, about the prevalence of Freemasonry in the area - whereupon the book was quickly but discreetly closed and our query was deflected with a shrug.

We asked our hosts if they could tell us anything about the island. Not much, they replied. Yes, there were ruins of some sort out there. And yes, there were some graves, though not many. And not that old. In fact, the couple told us, most of the graves were fairly recent. But the island, they said, did seem to enjoy some sort of special

significance. They did not venture to suggest what it might be. Bodies, they reported, were sometimes brought there for burial from considerable distances - sometimes even flown across the Atlantic from the United States.

Quite clearly this had nothing to do with thirteenth-or-fourteenth-century Templars. Nevertheless, it was intriguing. It might, of course, involve nothing more than a tradition of local families, whose descendants, in accordance with some established ritual or custom, were buried in native soil. On the other hand, there might, just possibly, be something more to the matter, something pertaining perhaps to Freemasonry, which our hosts were patently loath to discuss. They had a boat of their own, which they used for fishing. We asked if we could hire it, or if they would row us out to the island. At first, they were a little reluctant, repeating their assertion that we would find nothing of interest, but at last, perhaps infected by our curiosity, the man offered to row us out while his wife prepared another pot of tea.

The island proved disappointing. It was extremely small, no more than thirty yards across. It did contain the ruins of a diminutive chapel, but these consisted of nothing more than some sections of wall jutting a few feet up from the soil. There was no way of ascertaining whether the delapidated mossy remains were indeed once a Templar chapel. They were certainly too small to have been a preceptory.

As for the graves, most of them were, as we'd been told, of comparatively recent date. The earliest dated from 1732, the latest from the 1960s. Certain family names occurred - Jameson, McAllum, Sinclair. On one stone, of First World War vintage, there was a Masonic square and compasses. The island obviously had something to do with local families, some of whom, probably incidentally, were involved in Freemasonry. But there was nothing that could be construed as Templar, certainly nothing to support the

account we had heard of a Templar graveyard. If there was any mystery about the place at all, it appeared to be both local and minor.

Thwarted and frustrated, we decided to find a bed-and-breakfast for the night, collect our thoughts and, if possible, work out how the information we'd received could have been so flagrantly askew. We proceeded down the eastern shore of Loch Awe, towards the road that led to Loch Fyne and thence to Glasgow. By this time, dusk was approaching. We stopped at a village named Kilmartin past the southern end of the loch and asked where we might find a place to stay. We were directed to a large converted house a few miles beyond the town, near some ancient Celtic cairns. Having checked in there, we returned to Kilmartin for a drink at the pub.

Although larger than Portinnisherrich, Kilmartin was still little more than a hamlet, with a petrol station, a pub, a recommendable restaurant and some two dozen houses all concentrated on one side of the road. On the other side was a large parish church with a tower. The whole structure had either been built, or extensively restored, during the last century.

We did not expect to discover anything of consequence at Kilmartin. It was only idle curiosity that led us to enter the churchyard. But there, not on an island in a lake, but in the grounds of a parish church, were rank after strictly regimented rank of badly weathered flatstones. There were upwards of eighty of them. Some had sunk so deeply into the ground that the grass was already growing over them. Others were still intact and clearly defined among the more modern raised tombs and family burial plots. Many of the stones, particularly those of later date and better condition, were adorned with elaborate carvings - decorative motifs, family or clan devices, a welter of Masonic symbols. Others had been worn completely smooth. But what interested us

were those that bore no decoration save a single simple and austere straight sword.

These swords varied in size and sometimes, even if only slightly, in design. According to the practice of the time, the dead man's sword would be laid on the stone. Its outline would be incised and then chiselled. The carving would thus reflect precisely the dimensions, shape and style of the original weapon. It was this stark anonymous sword that marked the earliest of the stones, those most badly worn, weathered and eroded. On the later stones, names and dates were added to the sword, then decorative motifs, family and clan devices, Masonic symbols. There were even some women's graves. It seemed we had found the Templar graveyard we were seeking.

The sheer existence of the ranked graves in Kilmartin must surely have elicited questions from visitors other than ourselves. Who *were* the fighting men buried there? Why were there so many of them in such an out-of-the-way place? What explanations were offered by local authorities and antiquarians? The plaque at the church shed only meagre light on the matter. All it said was that the earliest of the slabs dated from around 1300, the latest from the early eighteenth century. 'Most', the plaque concluded, 'are the work of a group of sculptors working around Loch Awe in the late 14th-15th Centuries.' *What* group of sculptors? If they were known to have constituted a 'group' in any formal or organized sense, as clearly seemed to be the case, surely something more must be known about them. And was it not rather unusual for sculptors to congregate in 'groups', unless for some specific purpose or under some specific aegis - that of a royal or aristocratic court, for example, or of a religious order? In any case, if the plaque was vague about who had carved the stones, it was worse than vague about who had been buried under them. It said nothing.

Whatever the impressions conveyed by books, films and romanticised history, swords were a rare and expensive commodity in the early fourteenth century. Every fighting man did not, as a matter of course, own one. Many were too poor and had to use axes or spears. Nor, for that matter, was there much of an arms industry in Scotland at the time – and particularly in this part of Scotland. Most of the blades then in use in the country had to be imported, which made them all the more costly. Given these facts, the graves at Kilmartin could not have been those of ‘ordinary rank-and-file’ soldiery, the fourteenth-century equivalent of ‘cannon-fodder’. On the contrary, the men commemorated by the stones had to be of some social consequence – well-to-do individuals, affluent gentry, if not full-fledged knights.

But was it plausible that men of wealth and social status would be buried *anonymously*? Far more than today, prominent individuals of the fourteenth century plumed themselves on their family, their ancestry, their lineage, their pedigree; and this was particularly true in Scotland, where clan affiliations and relationships enjoyed especial significance and where identity and blood descent were given a sometimes obsessive emphasis. Such things were insistently stressed in life, and duly memorialized in death.

Finally, why were the earliest of the graves at Kilmartin – the anonymous graves, marked only by the straight sword – so lacking in all Christian symbolism, lacking even in anything as basic as a cross? In an age when the Church’s hegemony over Western Europe was virtually unchallenged, only tombs with effigies on them were left unadorned by Christian iconography; and such tombs were invariably placed in chapels or churches. The tombs at Kilmartin, however, were situated outdoors, were devoid of effigies, yet still lacked religious adornment. Was the hilt of the sword itself intended to denote the cross? Or were the graves those of men perceived, in one sense or another, not to have been properly Christian?

From 1296 on, Sir Neil Campbell - Bruce's friend, ally and eventual brother-in-law - had been 'Bailie' of Kilmartin and Loch Awe, and since Kilmartin itself had been one of his seats, it would have been reasonable to suppose that the earliest of the graves there were those of Sir Neil's men. But that would not serve to explain their anonymity, nor the absence of Christian symbolism. Unless, of course, the men who served under Sir Neil were not native to the area, not conventionally Christian and had some reason to keep their identities concealed, even in death.

During the course of our research, we had explored most of the ruins of Templar preceptories still surviving in England, and many of those in France, Spain and the Middle East. We were familiar, almost to the point of satiation, with the varieties of Templar sculpture, Templar devices, Templar embellishment - and, in the few instances where they could still be found, Templar graves. Those graves displayed the same characteristics as the graves in Kilmartin. They were invariably simple, austere, devoid of decoration. Frequently, though not always, they were marked by the simple straight sword. They were always anonymous. Indeed, it was the very anonymity of Templar graves that distinguished them from the elaborate inscriptions, decorations, monuments and sarcophagi of other nobles. The Templars were, after all, a monastic order, a society of warrior monks, soldier mystics. Even if only in theory, they had supposedly renounced, as individuals at least, the trappings and pretensions of the material world. When one entered the Temple, one effectively relinquished one's identity, becoming subsumed by the Order. The stark unadorned image of the straight sword was supposed to bear testimony to the ascetic, self-abnegating piety which obtained within the Order's ranks.

Historians - especially Masonic historians - had long sought either to prove or disprove, definitively, the alleged survival of the Templars in Scotland after the Order had

been officially suppressed elsewhere. But these historians had looked for (and in) documentation, not 'on the ground'. Not surprisingly, they had found no conclusive evidence one way or the other, because most of the relevant documentation had been lost, destroyed, suppressed, falsified or deliberately discredited. On the other hand, historians of Argyll, who were aware of the graves at Kilmartin, had had no reason to think of the Templars, since the Templars were not known to have been active, or even present, in the region. So far as their European bases were concerned, the Templars were strongest in France, Spain, Germany, Italy and England. Such holdings as they officially possessed in Scotland were, at least according to readily accessible records, far to the east, in the vicinity of Edinburgh and Aberdeen. There would have been no grounds for supposing an enclave of the Order to have existed in Argyll unless one were specifically looking for it. Thus, it appeared to us, the graves at Kilmartin had preserved their secret from historical researchers of both camps - chroniclers of the Templars and of Freemasonry on the one hand and, on the other, chroniclers of the immediate region, who had no reason even to think of Templars.

Needless to say, we were excited by our discovery. And we felt it to be all the more significant because it seemed to pertain not only to the Templars. There appeared to be a coherent pattern linking the earliest graves at Kilmartin (those we supposed were Templar) and the later ones, adorned with family blazons, clan devices and Masonic symbolism. The earlier graves seemed to grade gradually into the later ones - or, rather, the later ones seemed, by a process of assimilation and accretion, to have *evolved* out of the earlier. The motifs were essentially the same, only becoming more elaborately embellished with the years; the later decorations did not simply replace the straight sword, but were added to it. The graves at Kilmartin seemed to

offer their own mute but eloquent testimony to an ongoing development - to bear witness to a story spanning four centuries, from the beginning of the fourteenth to the beginning of the eighteenth. In the pub that evening, we attempted to decipher the chronicle in the stones.

Could we really have stumbled upon an enclave of refugee Templars who, on the dissolution of their Order, had found a haven in what was then the wilderness of Argyll? Might they have taken in yet more refugees from abroad? Argyll, though difficult to reach by land in the early fourteenth century, was readily accessible by sea, and the Templars possessed a substantial fleet which was never found by their persecutors in Europe. Had the green, forest-shagged hills and glens around us once housed an entire community of white-mantled knights, like a 'lost tribe' or 'lost city' in an adventure story; and had the Order here perpetuated itself, its rituals and observances? But if it were to perpetuate itself beyond a single generation, the knights would have had to secularize - or, at least, would have had to abrogate their vow of chastity, and marry. Was this perhaps part of the process to which the stones bore witness - the gradual intermarriage of refugee Templars and members of the clan system? And out of that alliance between the Templars and the clans of Argyll, might there have originated one of the skeins that were to lead to later Freemasonry? In the stones of Kilmartin, might we not perhaps be confronted by a concrete answer to one of the most perplexing questions in European history - the origins and development of Freemasonry itself?

We did not include any of what we had discovered in our film, which had, by that time, already been partially scripted. Its orientation, moreover, was primarily towards the Templars in the Holy Land and France. And if our findings in Scotland proved valid, they would, we felt, warrant a film of their own. For the moment, however, all

we had was a plausible theory, with, in the absence of immediately accessible documentation, no way of confirming it.

In the mean time, other projects, other commitments, had begun to intervene, and our discoveries in Scotland were shunted ever further into the background. We did not lose sight of them, however. They continued to haunt us, and to exercise a hold on our imaginations. During the ensuing nine years, we proceeded, if only in a desultory manner, to gather additional information.

We consulted the work of Marion Campbell, probably the region's most prominent local historian, and established a personal correspondence with her. She advised us to be wary of any premature conclusions, but she was intrigued by our theory. If there were no records of the Templars holding land in Argyll, she said, this was more likely to indicate an absence of records than an absence of Templars. And she found it indeed possible that the arrival of Templars in the region might explain the sudden appearance of the anonymous straight sword amid the more traditional, more familiar Celtic embellishments and motifs.¹

We also consulted such additional published work as existed on the stones at Kilmartin, from the researches of nineteenth-century antiquarians to a more recent opus, published in 1977 under the auspices of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.² To our disappointment, most such material concentrated primarily on the later, more elaborately embellished stones. The earlier stones, marked by the single anonymous straight sword, were largely ignored, if only because nothing was known about them and no one had anything much to say. Nevertheless, certain important facts did emerge. We learned from Marion Campbell, for example, that the stones in the churchyard at Kilmartin had not originally been situated there. Some had been inside

the church - or, rather, inside a much earlier church. Others had been scattered throughout the surrounding countryside and only later relocated. We also learned that Kilmartin was not the only such graveyard in the region. In fact, there were no fewer than sixteen. But Kilmartin did seem to have the greatest concentration of older stones, marked by the anonymous straight sword.

Only three firm conclusions could be drawn. The first was that the background of the carvings, and especially the older carvings, remained a mystery. The second, on which virtually everyone agreed, was that these earlier carvings dated from the beginning of the fourteenth century - the time of Robert the Bruce in Scotland and the suppression of the Knights Templar elsewhere in Europe. The third conclusion was that the graves with the anonymous straight sword represented a *new* style, a new development, in the region, which had appeared suddenly and inexplicably, although Templar holdings elsewhere had been using the design prior to its sudden appearance in Argyll. We had already seen it, in a context pre-dating the earliest stones at Kilmartin, as close to home as Temple Garway, in Herefordshire, which *was* indisputably Templar.³

In *Incised Effigial Slabs in Latin Christendom* (1976), the late F. A. Greenhill published the results of a lifetime spent tabulating medieval graves all over Europe, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, from Riga to Cyprus. Among the 4460 graves he lists and describes, he found some without inscriptions, but they were extremely rare. Military gravestones were even rarer. In England, for example, he had found only four, not counting the one at Garway, of which he was unaware. In Ireland, he had found only one. In all of Scotland *except* Argyll, he had again found only one. In Argyll, he had found sixty anonymous military gravestones. It was thus clear that the concentration of stones at Kilmartin and adjacent sites was genuinely