

Kenyon College

Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture

Volume 3

Issue 1 *Special Ottonian Issue*

Article 15

2011

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Recommended Citation

. "Mystery stone found near church linked to Knights Templar." *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 3, 1 (2010). <http://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal/vol3/iss1/15>

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DISCOVERIES

Mystery stone found near church linked to Knights Templar

A mysterious carved stone has been uncovered alongside a 12th-century church associated with the Knights Templar. What appears to be the carved top of a sarcophagus was unearthed when builders were reinforcing a wall alongside the old ruined church in Temple, Midlothian. Its date is under debate. Some date it to the 12th century (or earlier) because its inscriptions include symbols similar to those found in Viking monuments found in medieval graves and in West Highland Celtic carvings. Others, such as David Connolly, of Connolly Heritage Consultancy, believe it dates from the 13th or 14th century. He states "It is a significant site because it was the Templar Preceptory for Scotland. I think from the condition, it may once have been set inside the church – which was once much bigger... [Whoever is buried there] could be a Templar [or] he could be a Hospitaller, he could just be a knight who wanted to be buried there – but the heraldry is like nothing anyone has seen before." Historian John Ritchie noted, "It is a crude carving, quite primitive, but I have never seen anything like it in my life. It has a whole series of symbols on it and the symbols are very interesting. The symbols at the bottom look like Viking sun compasses, while the dials at the top look a little bit like a Celtic cross but with notches carved on them." However historian and author Michael Turnbull said he doubted the find was significant: "There were certainly Templars there but this might be a fake."



Re-written from

<http://news.scotsman.com/latestnews/Mystery-stone-found-near-church.5767821.jp>

by Claire Smith; Photo: Kate Chandler