

## DOES THE GRAIL REALLY EXIST?

*Gina Duncan talking to William Lynhope  
about how he came to write *The Ultimate Quest*.*

It is a decade since a chance encounter with a friend – not seen for many years – set in motion a set of thought processes that led me to write ***The Ultimate Quest***. Published in 2001 – before *The Da Vinci Code* – the story also revolves around the search for the Grail. It comes, however, to a quite different conclusion.

At the time, that apparently chance meeting seemed to be just that. We chatted for a while and then he excused himself – saying he was on his way to a meeting. He did, however, suggest that perhaps we could meet up and have lunch sometime. I gave him my telephone number and off he went. As he walked away, I was left with the overwhelming impression of how much he had changed; not just his appearance, but also his manner. It is not easy to describe; the feeling was unusual, but very positive. A few days later he rang and we fixed a date to have lunch.

It was while we were sitting in a quiet corner after the meal, drinking coffee, that he told me a quite incredible story. In part, it filled in the blanks of what he had been doing for the past few years – but it went well beyond what he needed to tell me. Because I had known him quite well some years earlier, I had no reason to disbelieve him. It was, however, difficult for me to take it all in. Nevertheless he was, I am convinced, telling me what he believed to be true. The time just seemed to slip away and we were still there when the first arrivals for afternoon tea appeared.

I went away from that meeting and spent a considerable time thinking about what he had told me. It became something of a nuisance. I tried to forget about it – but it simply would not go away. I also started to wonder whether the apparent chance meeting was as casual as it had seemed at the time. I decided that the best way to cope with the continuous niggling was to fill in the enormous blanks in my knowledge. That way, I decided, I wouldn't keep getting ambushed by my subconscious with questions that I didn't know even the basic answers to. Templars, Cathars, Freemasons, Priory of Sion and Secret Societies did not, up to that moment in my life, take up much space on my brain's 'hard drive'.

So I started to read anything I could find that would fill in some of these gaps. Had it been a few years later, I could have surfed the Net and selected the bits that most interested me. But at that time, my only resources were in the form of the printed word and an occasional television programme. In some ways, I became even more confused as a result of the many pieces of conflicting evidence. Having been an undemanding bedtime reader – autobiographies and thrillers usually – my bedside table was now stacked with Gnostic Gospels, Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln, *Histories of The Knights Templar* and almost any complementary publication you can think of. I even



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remembered that I owned a copy of Peake's Commentary on the Bible – not a tome that is usually found on most bookshelves!

Over the coming months, I moved through the stages of information overload, total confusion and incredulity; not once, but several times. My normally logical thought processes at times had to be suspended. The easiest response would have been that all these conspiracy theories and secret societies were nonsense - end of story! But it wasn't that easy. There were too many pieces of evidence which, when brought together from their various sources, began to create a coherent picture. Then there were the things that I had been told quite specifically, but could find no other direct written reference to.

As you might expect, my dreams were now peppered with images from my diverse reading material. I became quite used to it and paid little attention to most of the scenarios, in which I was usually an observer. Then things changed. One night, I experienced a dream so real that some part of my brain forced me to wake up. Had I not done so, I had the overwhelming feeling that I would die. I was no longer an observer, but a central character and the burial ground in Malta through which I was walking is still quite clear in my mind. I have not dismissed the possibility, even now, that the world of dreams and reality somehow converged that night. The dream was not a nightmare – it contained no monsters or murderers – it was simply a place and a moment that created a feeling like nothing else I have previously experienced. I have thought on several occasions about trying to verify whether the place in my dream actually exists or existed, but have so far fought shy of the commitment.

There was a point – but not a eureka moment – when I had adequately sorted all the information and felt in a position to reach my own conclusions. To go through them all here would take too long. In some cases, the evidence was too strong to dismiss; in others, I had to work on the balance of probability. There are, however, a few points worth making clear:

- The Templars and their extraordinary influence were a reality. To assume that they were effectively wiped out almost as quickly as they had originally appeared and their wealth, knowledge and power suddenly lost, demands a suspension of belief. The fact is that many escaped the crusade that was launched against them and either went underground or assumed new guises.
- The most recent manifestation of the Priory of Sion (courtesy of Pierre Plantard) was almost certainly a hoax; although the organisation had undoubtedly existed for many centuries and probably still does.
- The possibility of a bloodline somehow connected back to Jesus Christ was not and is not beyond the bounds of possibility. To totally rely upon the four Gospels is to misunderstand their origins; ignore the contemporary material that was deliberately omitted from the 'authorised' bible and fail to understand what could be described as the environment during Jesus' life and the centuries of church politics following the crucifixion.



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But was the bloodline the Grail? No, not if what I had been told was correct.

The Templars not only amassed great wealth and influence, but also 'knowledge' that was hitherto unknown in European countries. One outward manifestation of this was in the building of magnificent cathedrals, such as Chartres, using techniques that had not formerly been employed in such buildings and which at the time seemed to defy construction logic. The generally unspoken 'knowledge' was even more at odds with the received wisdom of the day, not least when it came to religion. On the face of it, the Templars were soldiers of Christ; endorsed and protected by the Pope. Beneath this façade, however, there is little doubt that they had found things and learned things that were not believed (or at least admitted to) by the established church. All of this as a result of their time spent in what we now usually refer to as the Middle East during the Crusades and the contacts that they made or alliances they forged - sometimes with their apparent enemies!

The secret or esoteric societies that sprung up at the time of the Templars and in the years following their apparent destruction, all have their roots firmly embedded in the 'knowledge' the Templars acquired and brought back to Europe. But it would be wrong to assume that this was the starting point and that up until then everything had been orthodox. Indeed, it is quite likely that the founding fathers of the Knights Templar already held private beliefs at odds with the established church and that their army of protection was, in part, a cover for other objectives. Over the centuries, some of these groups have apparently disappeared; some have mutated; new and powerful ones have been created and one, at least, has changed hardly at all in eight hundred years. And that brings me back to the story that was told to me.

Having acquired a reasonably good understanding of this fascinating but sometimes complex history, I had to decide what to do with the extra information that had been made known to me as a result of that apparently chance encounter. (And I had by now concluded that I was told in expectation that I would pass it on. Why? Because I think someone had decided that the time was right to shine just a little light into a very dark corner!) However, the conversation during an informal lunch lasting a few hours, between two old acquaintances, was unlikely in itself to produce sufficient copy for a book. Nor, however earth shattering it might have appeared, was it likely to catch the imagination of a national newspaper editor; being penned by someone he had probably never heard of.

So I wrote it in such a way that it would hopefully be an interesting piece of fiction, which at least some readers would be encouraged to look beyond. I drew up a list of potential publishers (all pretty big hitters!) and sent it off to the first on my list. In less than a week, I received a letter from a senior editor registering interest. Those of you who write or aspire to be published will probably understand the significance of this.

The following week, I went up to London for what was a most encouraging meeting. There was one problem, however. The editor wanted some additional text, to create the illusion that the story could be based upon fact! I



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said that would not be too difficult to do. (He did not know then or afterwards the background against which the book had been constructed.) On the train home, on something of a high, I started to draft out a new opening chapter – closely based upon what had actually happened, but with some ambiguity and omitting a few facts. In a little over a week, the new chapter was in his possession and acknowledged as just the sort of thing he had in mind.

Things then went quiet a few weeks – as he had said they would – while he (or one of his colleagues) worked on the design of the book and obtained their first indications of print cost. Then, he said, he would be able to offer me a contract for consideration. The contract never materialised! Instead, there was a rather brief communication that he was not going to proceed. When pressed, it appears that some of his colleagues had expressed concern that the content of the book might upset some people – particularly Christians. Within just a few years, the Da Vinci Code appeared; so sensibilities had obviously changed quite dramatically!

I was fortunate in finding a smaller publisher who took on the book and made a success of it by using the selling power of the Internet. From reader comments, it is clear that some take *The Ultimate Quest* at face value, while others realise that there is much more to discover. And that was always what I intended. For many, the Grail has always been surrounded by mythology. For me (if as I was led to believe, it exists) I now know not only its history, but its purpose and true origins.



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