

**BOOK REVIEW BY THE WORTHY PRECEPTOR, WOR. BRO. JOSEPH LYND**

**"The Secret Scroll"** by Andrew Sinclair, published by Birlinn Ltd.

Like many readers of the Lectern I was fascinated by the lecture given in Cairns last year by the visiting ANZMRC lecturer, Bro. Bob Cooper from Edinburgh. His lecture on the Kirkwall Scroll had whetted my appetite for more information, so you can imagine my delight at finding the above book in a bookshop in Cairns Central.

I was to be disappointed however, because this book did not turn out to be what I had hoped. I found it hard to read because of the author's ponderous style of writing and the fact that he hardly mentions anything about the Kirkwall Scroll until at least three quarters of the way through the book.

Sinclair, who claims to be a distant relative of the St. Clairs of Roslyn, spends most of the book on irrelevant topics such as Gnosticism, Mary Magdalen and Roslyn Chapel. Perhaps the subject he devotes most time to is the sea voyages of Sir Henry St. Clair in the late fourteenth century.

These voyages include the discovery and colonization of part of North America, a good hundred years before Christopher Columbus sailed to the New World. In his discovery of Nova Scotia and New England, Sir Henry was helped by a Venetian navigator and mapmaker called Antonio Zen, or so Andrew Sinclair claims. This is backed up by lots of so-called evidence, which to say the least is flimsy.

But getting back to the Kirkwall Scroll, which —The Secret Scroll"" is supposed to be about, this is a hanging parchment in a Masonic Lodge in the town of Kirkwall on the Orkney Isles. It is illustrated by many Masonic and some Templar symbols. However after reading this book I am still unsure of its origins. A good example of Sinclair bringing in something completely unrelated is his description of a wall chart derived from the Boyne Society, which is now in the Ulster Museum in Belfast.

The Boyne Society was a precursor to the Orange Order and was set up shortly after the victory of King William the Third over James the Second at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. But what has this to do with the Kirkwall Scroll? Nothing, I suspect, but a good way to pad out the book. This book took me ages to read and I only finished it because of my determination to do so. Perhaps I should have stopped after the first chapter and saved myself a lot of tedium!