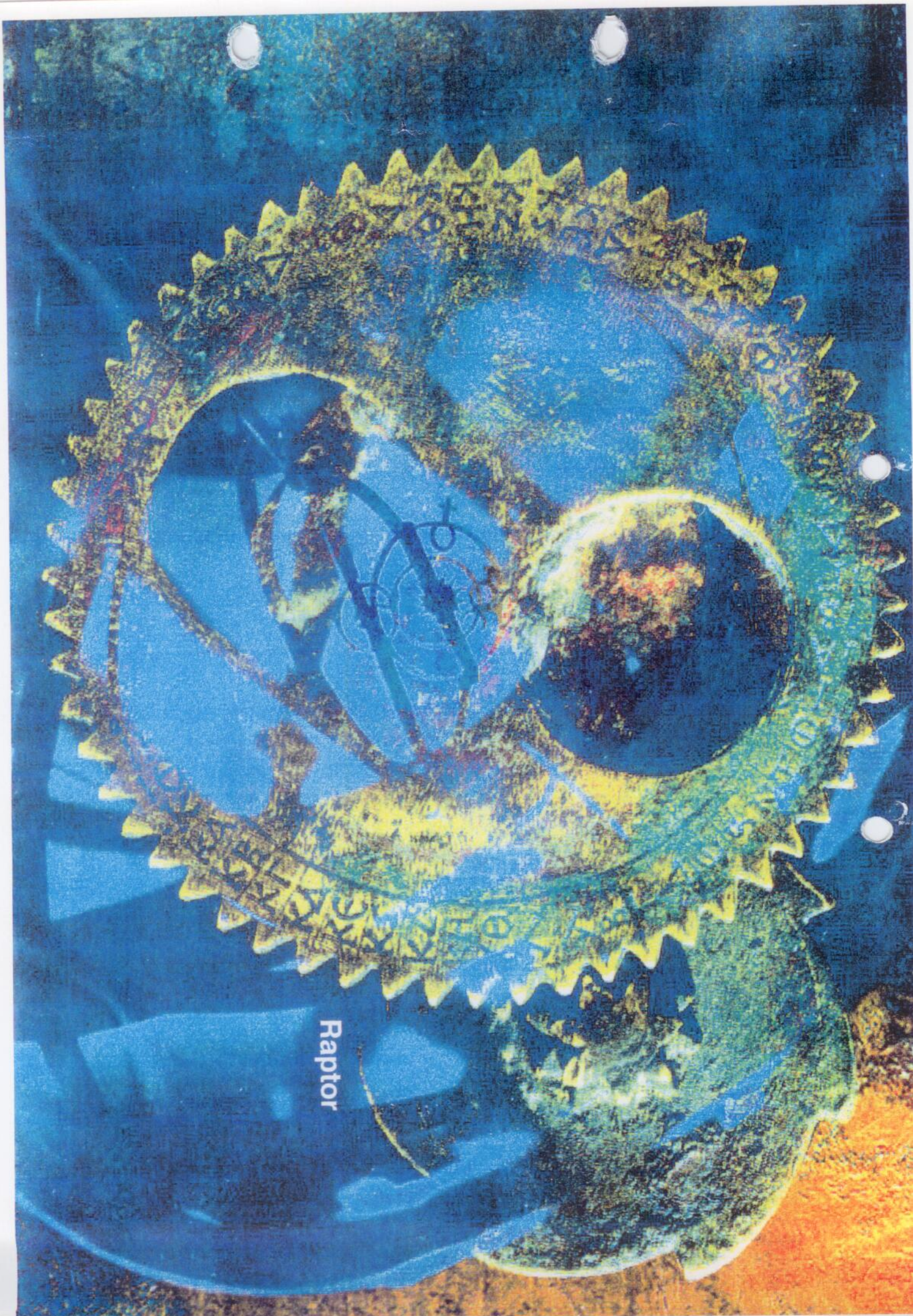


Raptor

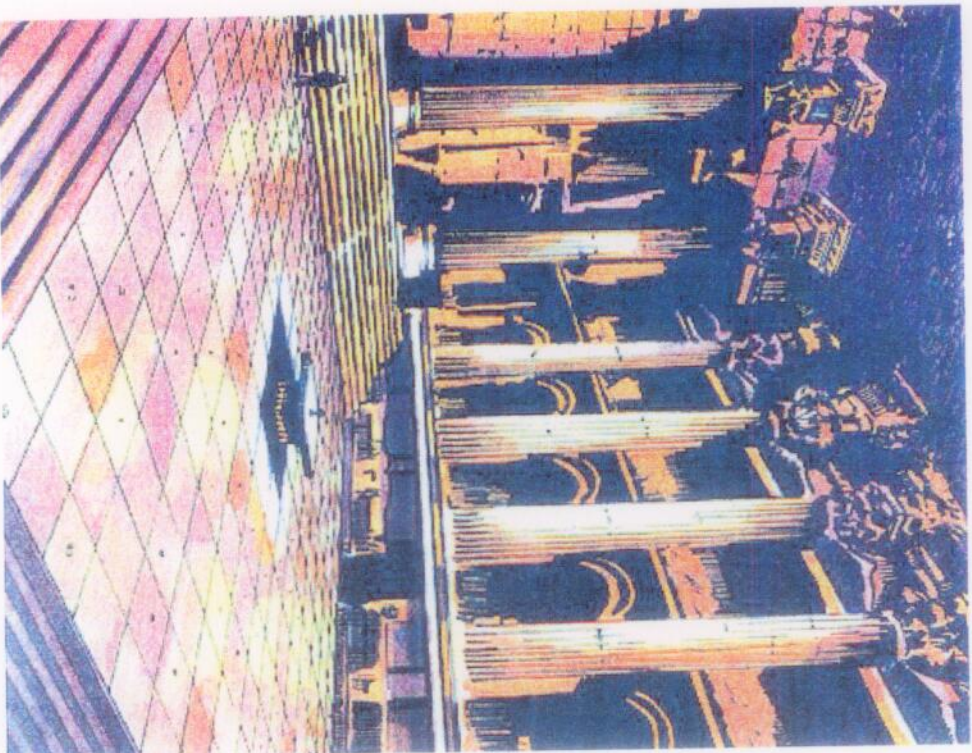


Raptor is a CD-ROM based adventure game which will place the player in the role of the plunderer. The player will be able to select a character to play from a list of nine plunderers, including both men and women. Those not chosen will appear in the game as non-player characters, all with the same objective as the player - the quest for the Holy Grail.

Players will encounter many strange creatures - some less helpful than others. Each character and creature in the game will have its own personality and will act independently, responding to the players' moves and the state of play. This will enable Raptor to develop areas of its plot algorithmically, giving a more real, living game world than has been achieved before in an adventure title. Raptor will have many solutions, and many outcomes. It will be a living story for its players.

Raptor will be presented using a mix of stunning photorealistic 3D graphics and live action video. All user commands will be intuitive, making the game very easy to learn. The game's characters and story, however, will be of such depth as to give the game long term appeal.

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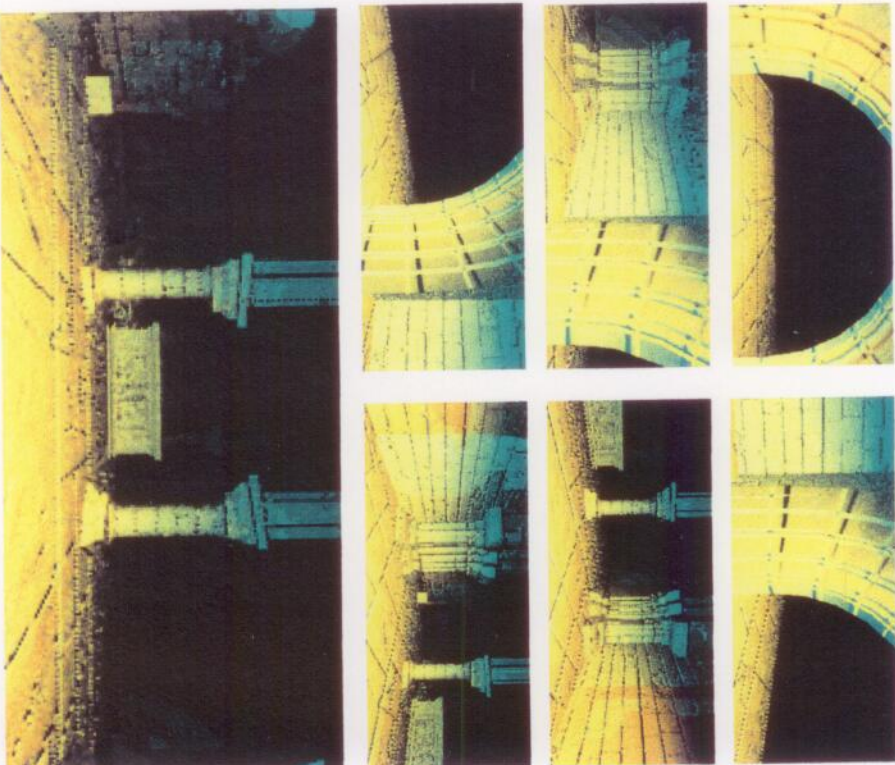


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Chapter 1 Project Overview

Graphic Features

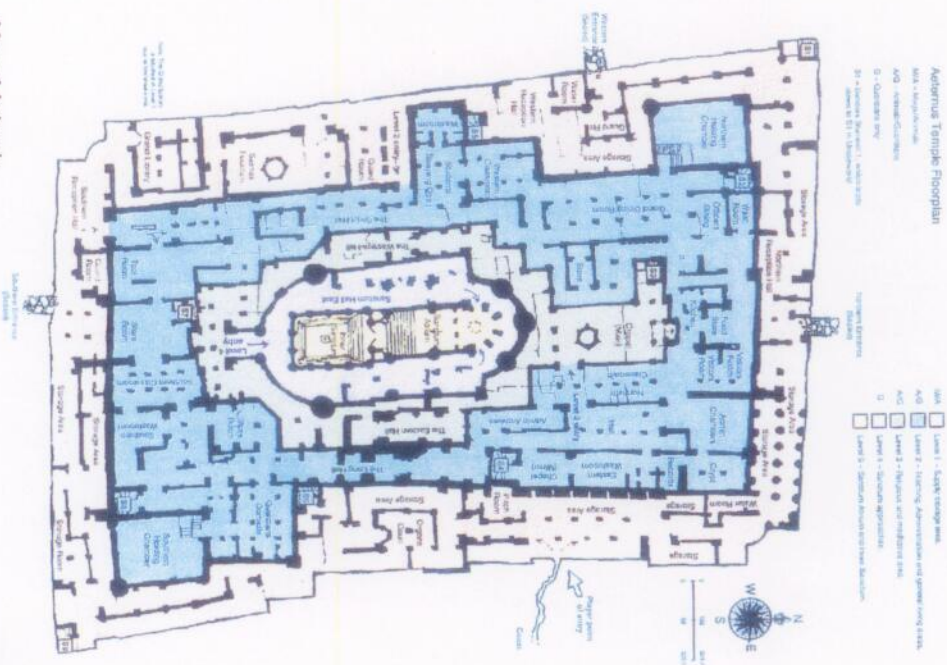
- Three-dimensional view, with 360 degrees of smooth rotation.
- High quality pre-rendered, ray-traced, texture mapped backgrounds.
- 'VideoWrap' sprites with live video texture mapped onto a 3D ray-traced model.
- Terminator-style 'Head-Up-Display' gives the player information about the surroundings.
- 3D sprite scaling and rotation.
- Lighting effects including depth cueing and silhouettes.
- 'Murpherspective' system allowing unlimited planes of movement.
- Impressive cut sequences, including visions of the future.
- High resolution SVGA graphics for head-up display and text.
- Information exchange with other raptors.
- Provides checks on health and equipment status.



Different views of the crypt in Aeternis.

Gameplay features

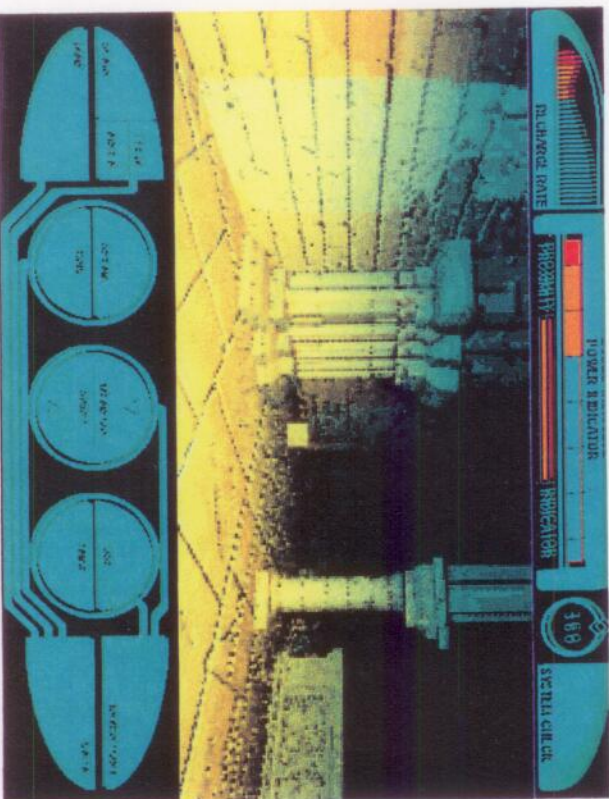
- High-granularity movement - the player can move freely around the game world.
- Intelligent, independent non-player characters (NPCs).
- Detailed histories for every character.
- Player may choose from a number of raptors to play - each with their own strengths and weaknesses.
- Deep, complex plot and background.
- Non-linear, evolving story.
- Linked puzzles with multiple solutions.
- Player learns from NPCs, and vice versa.
- Co-operation with NPCs - player must forge relationships and trust.
- Other raptors also seeking the grail.
- A wide variety of Templar Knights, ghosts and characters from the past, each with a unique personality.
- Numerous cave-dwelling creatures, some more dangerous than others.
- All dialogue spoken by real actors



Map of Aeternis

Head-up Display (HUD)

- Overlays information over the main view.
- Provides scanning facilities over a large range, identifying elements hidden from view.
- Scans other characters for weapons and other useful objects.
- Interactive 'knowledge database' allows the easy recall of acquired information.



Player's head-up display

Chapter 2 Sample Game

Game Introduction and History

An animated audio-visual presentation, included with the game, outlines the history of the Raptors. This preview will be optional, so that an experienced player may by-pass it and go straight on to the game itself.

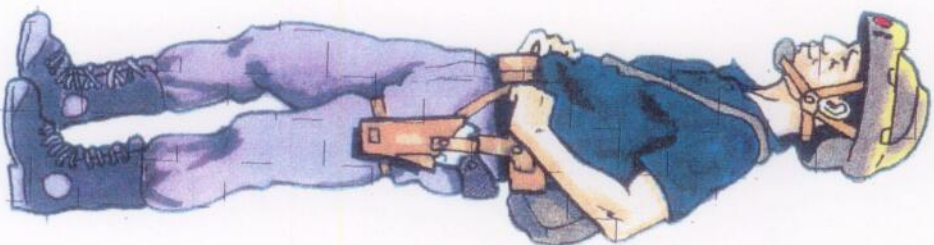
Supporting Material

Within the packaging of the game will be a sealed envelope marked 'Private - for hand delivery'. It encloses the actual letter from Colin Scott, a translated copy of Sir Richard's last Will and Testament and Sir Richard's map of the Aeternis temple complex. This will add drama to the game and help the player slip into their new role as a Raptor.

The Computer Game

After the animated title and credits sequence, the game will present the player with the character selection display. This display allows the player to see each of the eight Raptor characters, access their personal history, quality profiles and available equipment, and to decide which character they will adopt for the game.

Illustration of a player wearing the latest military equipment.



Raptor Equipment

Rope

Can be useful in many areas of the game, particularly in decayed parts of the temple. Ten metres of rope weighs 1 kg.

Gas Ball

This ball, when dropped, produces a noxious gas which will dissuade most creatures from passing through it. A player can therefore find these Gas Balls invaluable if being pursued by a predator or Guardian. Each ball has an effective deterrent time of three minutes and weighs 0.5 kg.

Concussion Stick-bomb

The strong pulse of noise the bomb produces will stun and temporarily 'blind' the sound-sensitive creatures of Aeternis. Dropped behind if being pursued or in front if being attacked, it will give a player time to get away. However, the noise it makes often brings further unwanted attention. Each stick weighs 0.25 kg.

Water Flask

The player will regularly need water in the game. Their diagnostic systems will monitor their level of dehydration, and a player will find that movement will become impaired and that they can eventually die if water is not available. The water flask can be refilled at the various fountains in Aeternis and if a player is near the canal way. Each water flask holds 2 litres of water, enough for about four hours of game-play. Each flask weighs 2.0 kg.

Food

Is hardly ever needed by a player but can be very useful for bribes with Mogs or other creatures. Each food parcel weighs 1.0 kg.

First Aid Pack

When used the first aid pack partially heals a damaged player. This can often save a player's life, and is generally considered an essential accessory. The pack weighs 1.0 kg.

Hunter/Seeker

This circuit board fits into the MS-2 Helmet and allows the user to track the nearest other helmet. This can be invaluable if needing supplies or first-aid treatment, and being in the unfortunate position of having to steal to get it. It can also be useful when tracking another player who has the Grail, saving the user the energy-consuming option of frequent strategic scans. It works by displaying an arrow on the player's viewer and relays the relative distance in digital form. The tracker's range is limited by the power available. The unit weighs 0.5 kg.

Remote sensors

These small circular tabs are in fact miniature movement sensors, which can be fixed onto a wall by a player to observe what follows, or to simply allow the player to watch their back. They can transmit up to 1000 metres, and have an operating lifetime of one hour. They start working as soon as they're placed, but only display in the corner of the player's viewer if something moves near them. They give invaluable information about what is happening around a player long after they are outside the normal effective detection range of their MS-2 Helmet. Each sensor weighs 0.3 kg.

Weaponry

There are two types of weaponry available to the player. The first is the MS-7 Sniper, a semi-automatic machine gun which can fire single or multiple shots, the second is the MS-8 Assault Rifle which is of the heavier shot-gun variety. The 'Sniper' and 'Assault' rifles both use energy-pulse projectiles and are powered from the same reserve as the MS-2 Helmet – they therefore become inoperable when the helmet runs out of energy. Both rifles weigh in at 7 kg. The 'Sniper' and 'Assault' rifles vary both in the effects of their fire-power and the amount of energy that they consume while being used. The 'Sniper' allows for more accurate shooting, with each pulse projectile using a relatively small amount of energy. The 'Assault' rifle covers a large forward area with projectiles, allowing for quick and effective shooting at close quarters. The energy cost of each shot is however substantially higher than that of the 'Sniper'.

Game Entry Sequence

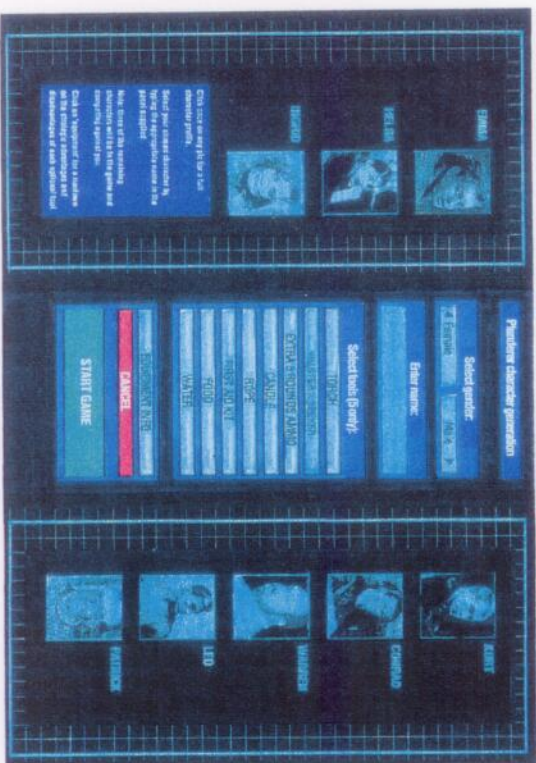
The game begins with an animated entry sequence which sets the scene for the rest of the game and introduces the player to the world of Aeternis. It will be a video sequence showing the player's viewpoint as they walk under a full moon along the cliff-tops of Dunstarburgh, down onto the shale beach and into caves and narrow passageways – following Colin Scott's footsteps into Aeternis. All the while the MS-2 Helmet is displaying last-minute statistical information, telling the player that all systems are fully operational.

At the end of the last small cave is a sledgehammer, and beside it a man-sized hole punched in the wall. The sequence takes the player through this hole and into the world of Aeternis. The player is in total control from that point on.

This sequence will be only a few minutes long. It should be shot using a hand-held video camera to give a "real-life" feel to the images and sounds being presented. Care will be taken that this sequence sits comfortably with the visual style of the game proper.

The most sensible approach then is to provide a few minutes of 'sample' game-play from selected sections of the game. This will include a representative sample from each of the five levels and a description of the end of the game. Please remember that this is just to provide a 'taste' for the game and that there are many other ways in which the game could develop.

We will assume that the player is male and has chosen to adopt the character of Kurt. The tools that are available are, first-aid utility, Hunter/Seeker utility, 3 x water flasks, 2 x gas balls, 2 x concussion sticks and 3 x remote sensors. He has also chosen the 'Assault' rifle as his weapon.



Character/Tools selection screen

Level One



Kurt is lying flat out on the floor just beside the entrance to Stairwell One. He is stunned – still conscious, but unable to move. He thinks back over the last few minutes of play – he'd decided to look at the Stairwell and been knocked out in a scuffle with a barred-in dinosaur (called a 'Leo'). Bad luck.

The Helmet is still working and the system diagnostics display informs him that the effects of the blow are wearing off – he'll be mobile again in 33 seconds. Worryingly, it also tells him that several creatures are nearby and are approaching. He is helpless! Scavengers would find a paralysed human a nice easy meal.

Fifteen seconds to go! The Helmet warns that one creature is only a metre away and coming closer. Kurt swallows – suddenly a small ugly lizard-like face comes into view and peers down at him curiously. Kurt lets out a deep sigh of relief. Eugene is scavengers but probably won't eat him alive in the time he's going to be down.

Time is up, and Kurt is thankfully mobile again. He gets to his feet which sends the Eugene (another dinosaur descendant like a small turkey) running off squealing – that isn't so good, the noises they make always attract predators. Kurt starts going south. The corridor splits in two ahead of him, and a Mog, an ape man, is standing guard on the outer corridor – that usually means that they've claimed that area as their own. He's lost enough time already and he doesn't particularly want a fight, so he heads along the left-hand corridor.

As he is moving he quickly accesses the Sensor Relay and reviews the other Raptors' helmet positions. Damn, two of them are already missing-presumably in Level Two – he is falling behind. But he also sees that Warren is just ahead of him and moving towards the next Level Two entrance. Good, he has some long-standing scores to settle with that scumbag!

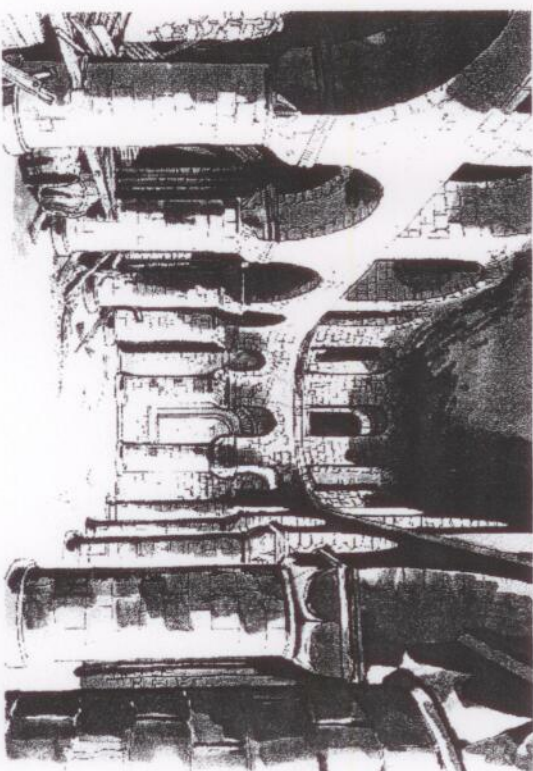
Suddenly, a Theo springs at him from the left-hand wall! It had been standing there flat and motionless, camouflaged against the wall, and his motion detector system missed it. If he hadn't been so pre-occupied with checking the other players progress he might've seen it himself – damn!

The helmet is pouring strategic information to him, but it is too late – the creature strikes out swiftly with its claws, knocking him ten feet through the air and hard against the far wall. He raises his shot-gun and fires as it runs in for the kill. Blam! It is thrown backwards by the force of the shot. Blam! Kurt fires again and it is down.

The helmet's system check bleeps and displays the bad news: Detection Systems damaged in the attack but would be auto-repaired in 4.5 minutes, and his left arm and leg are damaged and bleeding badly.

He selects his first aid kit from his satchel and activates it – at least he won't carry on losing blood now. He knows that the surrounding Gralstone will cure his physical injuries soon, but in the meantime his damaged leg will make life difficult.

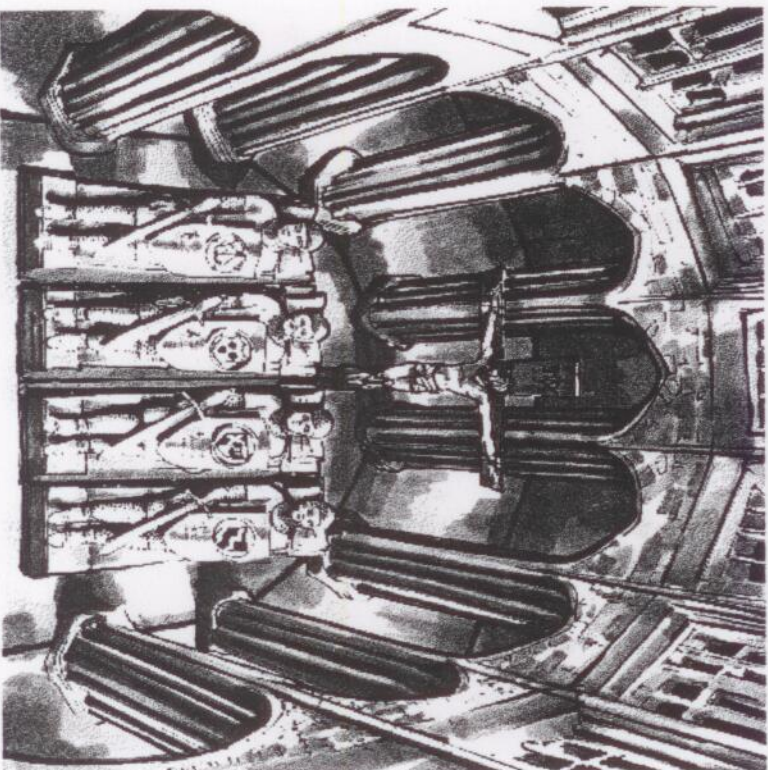
He starts moving south again. As he passes the collapsed Theo he pumps another shot into it, just out of sheer bad temper. It is a waste of energy but he is way behind the others now, and besides it felt good.



Sample architecture from level one.

Level Two

Kurt walks out of the Crypt smiling. It had taken him a while to find Tomas' ghost, and the other ghosts had tried to confuse him and put him off, but he'd persevered and located him in the end. The best part is that Tomas had finally trusted him, and told him how to access the secret tunnel in the Inner Sanctum. That would give him a huge advantage later, providing he gets to the Grail first.



A section of the crypt on level two.

He checks the other players' scanners—good, the remaining two are still in Level Two as he is. The fourth player, Warren had died about half an hour ago. Not by his hands unfortunately, but torn apart by Theos. At least he'd had the satisfaction of seeing it from a distance.

Kurt needs to cover some ground fast and is willing to take some risks. He enters the ruined mess of the Administration Chamber and looks carefully at the mural on the wall. It isn't the sort of puzzle he's after, so he walks back out into the corridor.

He starts walking south, through a large hall with broken furniture and long, ancient, decaying tapestries lining the walls. He feels he is being watched—someone or something behind the tapestries perhaps? He moves quickly through the hall and into a corridor beyond. A doorway appears on his left which he quickly ducks into, but not before casually snapping a remote sensor near the outer door-frame. He will wait here and see if he actually is being followed.

He looks around him and sees that he is in a chapel of some kind. Broken pews lie partially collapsed on the stone floor and a cracked marble altar stands in front, complete with candles and the other paraphernalia of worship, but all covered with a thick layer of dust. In front of the altar lies a skeleton, huddled and partly disintegrated on the cold floor. Behind the altar, attached to the back wall is a large wooden cross, lit with a dusty light from somewhere above.

Looking right he sees the entrance to a stairwell, and left is the entrance to a darkened room. He moves left and scans the next room for danger, but there is none.

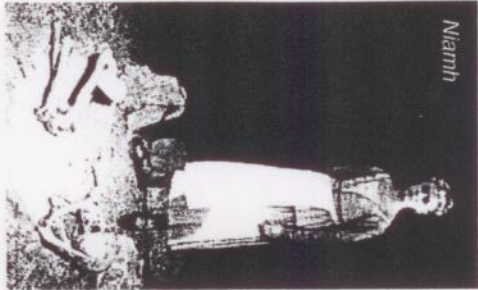
"What do you want here?" asks a female voice behind him. Kurt turns around to see a beautiful young woman standing near the pile of bones on the floor. She had not been there a second ago and his helmet, even now, remains silent. He assumes she is a ghost.

"I am lost," is Kurt's chosen reply.

"We are all lost here," she says, her voice soft but sad.

Kurt moves towards her, examining her style of clothing and her face. The clothes are definitely middle ages or earlier, perhaps Celtic. Her face is lined by brittle, faded flowers that are plaited into her golden hair. She is undoubtedly beautiful and seems real enough, but she has that terrible neutrality that most ghosts have. Kurt is sure that she is dead and, judging by the state of her dilapidated skeleton, has been for quite some time.

Niamh



"Have you chanced to see a young man, a warrior named Oisín in your wanderings?" she asks.

"No, I haven't," replies Kurt.

"If you do see him, please tell him where I am. My name is Niamh, Niamh golden hair, will you tell him?" she asks, almost pleading.

"I certainly will," says Kurt, "but can you help me in return?"

"We were together here once, a long time ago," she continues, smiling. "He left, but I know he'll come back."

"I'm sure he will, but will you help me now?" asks Kurt.

She stands there, smiling with her memories and humming a little tune, ignoring Kurt and apparently no longer interested in conversation. Kurt's detection systems flash a warning and a second later a male voice rings out. "That's

about all you'll get from her I'm afraid."

Kurt turns to see an old man walking towards him from the darkened room on the left. He is dressed in a Second World War Home Guard uniform and seems friendly and harmless. "Who are you?" Kurt asks.

"My name is Jack, Jack Sinclair. I've spent many hours trying to talk with this beautiful young lady, but she doesn't say much I'm afraid. How are you today my dear?" He says, smiling warmly at Niamh. She completely ignores him and, lost in her own world keeps humming and swaying to herself. "I've come to the rather sad conclusion that she's a ghost," whispers Jack, turning back to Kurt.

"But you're obviously not a ghost," says Kurt.

"No, not yet thank God" says Jack with a thin smile. "I wandered in here a few months ago and got lost. I don't suppose you know the way out do you?"

"Yes I do," answers Kurt.

"Thought so," says Jack. "You don't look lost. In fact you seem like a man with a mission. I would say, at a guess that you're here to take whatever it is that they're so busy guarding. Am I right?"

"That's right," says Kurt, "will you help me?"



"Of course I will my dear fellow, any enemy of those damned knights is a friend of mine. And all the better if it brings this nightmarish place to an end, that's what I say."

"Do you realise that you might die if I succeed?" says Kurt.

"I think I should have been dead many, many years ago if my deductions are correct", replies Jack, seriously.

"Your deductions are correct I'm afraid," says Kurt.

"Thought so," says Jack, sadly watching Niamh who walks off, still humming, and disappears through a wall. "How can I help?"

"I'm looking for a mural with water in its imagery. Have you seen one?" asks Kurt.

"Yes lots" says Jack. "There's a good one in the Visitors' Rooms just north of here."

"Thanks," says Kurt. "Do you want to come along?"

"No," says Jack. "I'd just slow you down. I'm off for a rest now anyway. Most of us who are still alive sleep and rest in the 'Light Room', it's safe there. You're welcome to join us there any time, if you like."

"Thank you," says Kurt. "No trouble," says Jack. "If you need me again for any reason just go there and wait - I always turn up there sooner or later."

With a wave good-bye Jack leaves the room. Kurt waits a minute and is just about to follow when the motion sensor automatically flashes onto his viewer. It shows a Theo sniffing around just outside the doorway. It has obviously followed his scent there and will enter the room any minute! Kurt accesses his satchel and activates a concussion stick in the doorway. The loud thump causes a scream of outraged pain from the Theo who rapidly retreats. Kurt moves north into the next chamber and then back out past the Administration Chambers towards the Visitors' Room.

He moves quietly into the entrance of the Visitors' Room. He can see the room and its contents clearly, but the second room at the far end is in darkness. He instructs the helmet to execute a forward scan just to be safe – nothing dangerous is found.

He moves in front of the large and beautiful tapestry that adorns the right-hand wall. Luckily there is a beam of projected light falling almost in front of it, so he can take the opportunity to re-charge as he examines the tapestry. It is an image of Christ walking on water, his left hand pointing to three stars above. It is of truly exquisite workmanship, worth at least £400,000 in the right circles thinks Kurt. But more important is the presence of water in the image, for this tells Kurt that the prize for solving this puzzle will probably involve access to the canal way. The canal way runs through this level and into the next – just what he needs to refill his remaining jerry can - the others were broken in a tussle with one of the knights.

He looks carefully at the image itself, trying to unlock the puzzle it contains. The three stars remind him of one of the riddles that Lurka had said to him earlier. He accesses the 'knowledge database', which records and stores useful pieces of information for later retrieval and re-examination. There it is, entry nine.... "Three stars at night, the one on the right will give you the key to a slippery sight." Gibberish at the time which is typical of Lurka, but now it all makes sense. He touches the right-hand star and a bright light shines forth. Kurt smiles and starts moving as told when a Theo suddenly comes from nowhere and runs through him. "Bloody phantoms" he says, his heart pounding.

He reaches the end of the room and a section of wall opens to reveal the dark and ominous tunnel of the canal way, and the inky black surface of the water. Without it, he would be dangerously low within the hour.



A sample mural from one of the walls in Aeternis

Level Three

Kurt gets to his feet, he's been stunned for about three minutes. Conrad had caught him by surprise, shot him and stolen some of his supplies.

Kurt curses himself for having been so vulnerable to attack. He doesn't particularly blame Conrad – hell, fair is fair, he would've done the same thing in his position – anyway Kurt is already planning to track him down later and steal the items back. His main problem is that he is extremely low on energy – he needs to find a light source fast.

He resumes walking down the Western Hall. Ahead of him on the far wall he can just make out the silhouette of a Theo lying in wait. It is out of range at the moment so he casually walks forward. Five steps later he fires, dropping it on the spot. "Another damned nuisance" he thinks to himself.

Suddenly his helmet flashes a warning, "EMERGENCY – LOW ENERGY WARNING!" At this point the player has the following options: 1. Divert all remaining energy to weapons systems 2. Divert all remaining energy to Light Detection Systems 3. Carry on as is. Kurt grimaced and selects option one. The overhead display on his helmet goes dead, leaving only the light amplified view that cannot be turned off.

He moves further down the long corridor, surely there will be a ray of light soon.

Suddenly a Guardian moves out from behind a column, barring his way. "Oh no, you're all I need!" says Kurt. It is Sir Tallum, one of the strongest knights, but Kurt recalls that he is the knight who is twisted with guilt over the fate of Sir Richard.

Kurt figures that the has about three shots left – not enough to take this knight out, not at this distance. He will need to stall for now, and fast!

Tallum reaches slowly into his tunic and brings out a round-bladed throwing knife. It glints menacingly in the torch light. Kurt rapidly accesses the dialogue box and starts a conversation. "Wait, I'm a friend of Sir Richard!" he says.

"Richard is dead" comes the deep reply. Tallum's voice is rough and dangerous but at least Richard's name has stopped the motion of his knife-hand.

"He is indeed dead. But I am here to fulfill his last wish," is Kurt's chosen reply. He moves cautiously one step closer.

"What was that wish?" asks Tallum, more interested now.

"He wanted the Grail to be free," says Kurt, moving forward another step.

"That much is probably true," says Tallum, "but I doubt that he wanted a cur like you to free it."

"I think I know more of Richard's will than you!" says Kurt, and moves the final step – Tallum is now in range!

"Larf! Richard never knew you – you are here to fulfill your own selfish wishes!" booms Tallum's voice as he tenses, readying for the throw.

Kurt fires! Tallum dodges aside with superhuman speed, throwing the knife in mid-jump. The spinning knife narrowly misses Kurt who rapidly fires again! This time he is successful, and the wounded Tallum flies backwards with the force of the shot. "WARNING – Last Shot" flashes across Kurt's viewer. He aims carefully and fires again – Tallum is thrown back and falls in a crumpled mess against the wall.

Kurt lets out a sigh of relief. Looking ahead, at the edge of his vision he can see a beam of light. He moves forwards to re-charge. He will have to be quick, Tallum will recover in a few minutes and he had better be well away by then.



Conrad - a Raptor



Sir Tallum - a Guardian

Level Four

Kurt has just entered Level Four and decides to take the western corridor. He is physically damaged (yet again) and is moving slowly. His navigation systems are also out for now, but that is okay – he knows where he is.

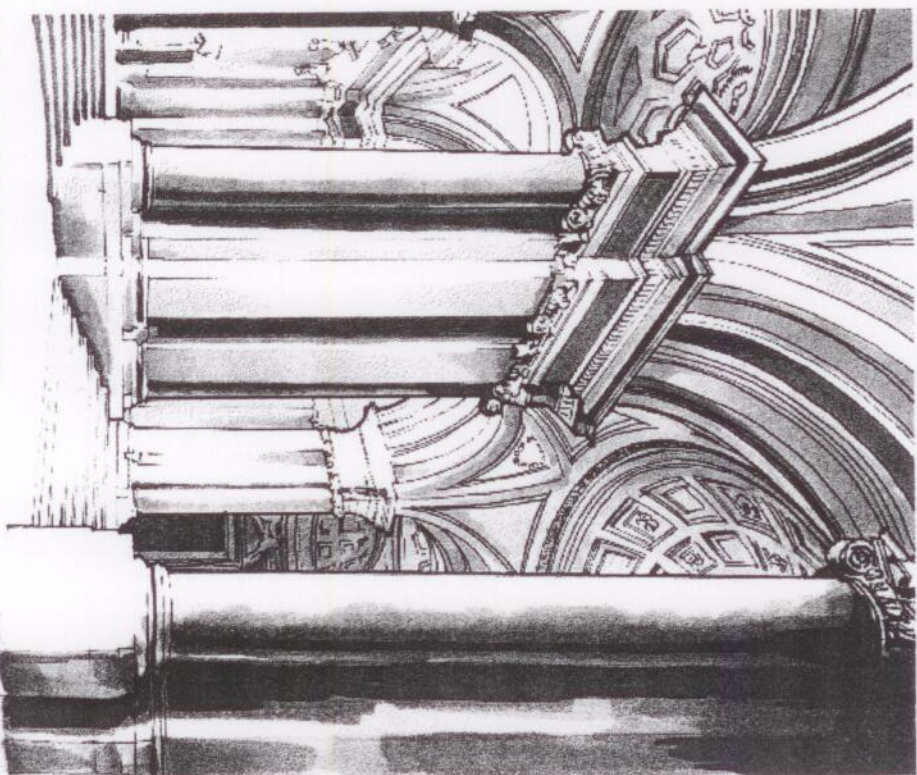
The detection systems flashes a warning, but he's already seen it himself by then – a Leo bending down and feeding about twenty metres ahead – the large predator has caught something. Kurt quickly scans the area – Conrad has been the unlucky victim.

Kurt watches in revolted fascination as the gigantic head bends down and tears another chunk of flesh from the prostrate body. He has to decide whether to try and sneak past this one while it is preoccupied, or back-track and go the other way. The trouble is that there are often two Leos on this level, so the other side is probably guarded as well.

He decides to take advantage of the situation and moves slowly forwards.

The Leos track by a combination of sound and sonar, so he has to move quietly. He has almost managed to get past it, when it suddenly raises and swivels its ugly head – it has heard something! Kurt freezes – it is only three metres away but it can't 'see' him unless he moves. A series of sonic 'pings' shatters the eerie silence, it is scanning the corridor for movement. Kurt stays motionless.

The Leo obviously suspects that something else is in the room and lets out a mighty roar that seems to shake the walls. Kurt stays still as another series of 'pings' sweep past him again. A few more tense moments of scrutiny, then the Leo turns back to resume its interrupted meal. "There is a God after all," thinks Kurt, carefully resuming his forward motion.



Architecture from level four of Aetemis

Level Five



The massive doors of the Inner Sanctum close quietly behind him. He is here at last. He's made it to the Grail! He instructs the helmet to scan the room to be certain he is alone – he is.

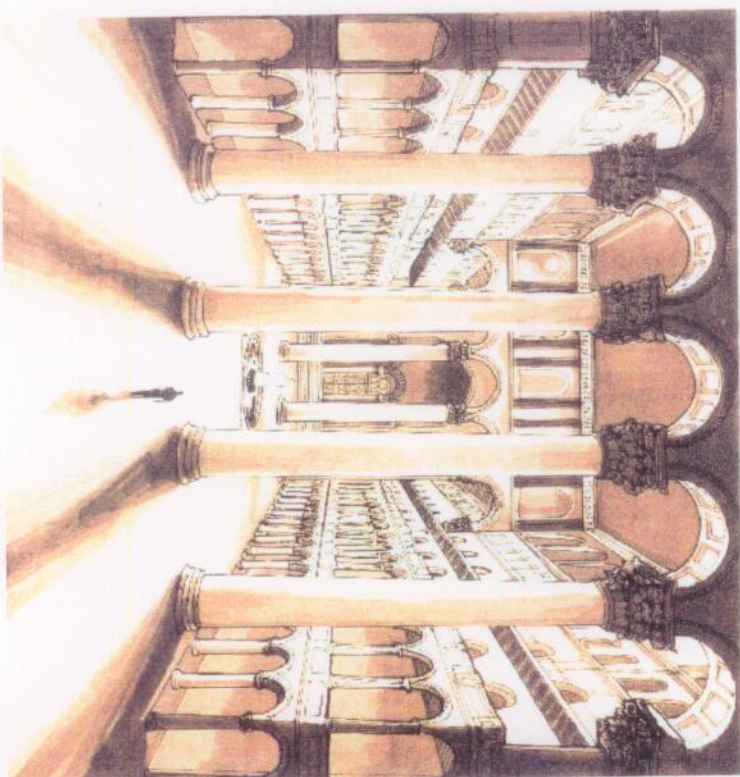
Alone – for the first time since he's entered this nightmare all those hours ago he is actually alone. Just him, this room and the Grail. Happy and relieved he moves forward to get a better view.

Before him lies a large, illuminated chamber, towering and magnificent and bathed in a soft orange light. A large tiled floor fills the middle of the room with an ornate altar at its centre. On the altar, bathed in a sharp ray of white light is the Holy Grail. "All right" thinks Kurt – it is a fitting room for the Grail.

His helmet informs him that both physical and technical damage are healing quickly and that solar cells are rapidly re-charging - but he already knows that, this room has a warm, healing feel about it. He walks triumphantly down the steps towards the tiled floor.

A deep bell is tolling slowly and ominously, alerting the Guardians. He will have to grab the grail and head out of the temple as quickly as possible. Happily, he had already been told about the hidden guardian near the Inner Sanctum by the ghost of Colin - he wonders when his old rival would find out that he is dead.

A few minutes later and the danger is past. Kurt is nearing the entrance to the Sanctum Atrium.



The approach to the Inner Sanctum

End of Game

Kurt is running south along the north-east corridor on Level One. He has the Grail and he is only minutes away from the exit to the outside world. He has sustained some technical damage, is thirsty and is low on energy but, with a little luck he might just make it.

A Theo suddenly appears out of one of the rooms ahead and comes running towards him, but he is an expert now at hitting moving targets and easily brings it down with two shots. It catapults sideways and slides along the floor in an explosion of dust. Kurt smiles and continues his run towards victory.

He suddenly wonders what has become of Ingrid. He hasn't checked on her for some time and the deep bell that had been tolling continuously since he'd stolen the Grail would have alerted her that he'd been successful. She was probably tracking him at this very moment! He accesses the scanning options on his helmet and selects the 'Forward Scan' option. The area's plan suddenly materialises on his screen with small, moving pin-points of light showing other creature and player locations within the vicinity. His remaining energy is dropping fast, but he spots Ingrid on the other side of the exit, rushing to get there before him – she obviously plans to ambush him! He also sees with alarm that two Guardians are close behind him and gaining!

Cursing, he shuts down the Strategic Scan, he is now desperately low on energy. He has to decide whether to find a light source and partially re-charge before attempting a fight through to the exit, or to maintain the element of surprise and keep going. He decides to push on.

A minute later the exit comes into view. So does Ingrid. She is standing on the far side of the exit, her gun poised and ready to fire.

Kurt curses again, swiftly turns right and hides behind a pillar. As he waits anxiously the system check module 'beeps' and warns him that his dehydration level is approaching critical – soon his actions will become impaired. He activates his satchel and grab on the water icon – his last 0.2 litre of water gurgles away. The system diagnostics confirms that his water level is now 'satisfactory'.

A few seconds later the two Guardians approach and pound past, straight into Ingrid's fire! Two shots ring out and one of the Guardians goes down. Kurt springs out from behind the pillar and, keeping the second Guardian between himself and Ingrid, starts moving towards the exit. Another shot rings out from Ingrid and the second Guardian spins back and crashes to the floor.

In the confusion Kurt dashes for the exit, firing his last shot towards Ingrid's position. As he dashes into the tunnel he sees her reel backwards from the blow. He's done it – he's escaped with the Grail.

Triumphantly he runs down the long, winding passageway and a few minutes later, emerges into dazzling sunlight to stand on the shale beach. He'd worked hard but he'd won – what a feeling.

His elation is short-lived however as four uniformed men suddenly spring from the shadows and over-power him. One of them jabs a hypodermic into his arm and his world fades to black.



One of the many
murals within Aeternis

Epilogue

Kurt starts to regain consciousness. He's lying on a bed in a small, well-furnished room. He looks with an expert eye at the furniture, fittings, barred windows and doors and concludes that the room is a cell – a VIP cell, but a room for containment still the same.

He sits up and helps himself to a pack of cigarettes sitting on the table in front of him. The large television screen which is in-set into the opposite wall beeps into life. A well-dressed man appears on the screen. He is sitting behind a large but messy desk facing the camera. The room behind him is wood-paneled, establishment, a senior government office of some kind. A digital display in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen reads off the date and time, obviously this is an official recording. Kurt is surprised by the date, but then he remembers the Gralstone and time distortion – he has gained a year on the rest of the world.

The man begins to speak, he is obviously well-educated and cultured, but a close look at his face shows that he is tired and unshaven.

"Let me begin by apologising for the tranquilliser. Please believe me when I say that it was necessary – you had to be immobilised quickly and quietly. I know you must have many questions, but unfortunately this is a recording and not an interview – you will just have to be content with listening for now. Most of your questions will probably be answered as I go along."

"Let me start by explaining that this whole business is top secret. This is why you have been treated as you have, and why you are still being detained. It is also why I cannot tell you who I am or the exact department that I represent, but I can say that this is a government matter and that I work for the British Secret Service. You've probably guessed that much already."



Kurt wakes up in a secure hospital, having been drugged and parted from the Grall.

"I understand that you are a 'Raptor' and have been underground trying to retrieve the Holy Grall for nearly a year now. I have heard of the 'Raptor' profession of course, though I must say that you are the first I have ever met, knowingly anyway. It all sounds very exciting and dangerous, and to have succeeded means that you must be one of the best. To say congratulations may seem cruel, since we've taken the Grall from you, but we have done this for the best of reasons as you will see shortly."

"This in fact brings me to the next point I need to talk to you about. This is a fairly shocking piece of news so brace yourself – the world has changed dramatically since you've been away. About seven months ago it became obvious that the AIDS virus had mutated into a more virulent strain called AIDS2. It has swept the globe and wiped out the human population. And when I say wiped out I mean WIPEd OUT – the latest figures put the current death-toll at about 5 billion people! I'm afraid you will have to come to terms with the fact that nearly all your friends, lovers and family are probably dead or dying. I'm sorry."

"This particular strain of the virus is actually so lethal and contagious that scientific testing-bodies have concluded a 100% mortality within six months if no cure is found. We are talking total extinction here. This virus is in fact so lethally effective that many scientists believe it has been deliberately genetically engineered for its purpose. But this seems implausible when all the nations of the world have been equally affected and devastated"

The speaker rubbed his temples and paused. "But I digress, as I was saying the world has changed. Towns and villages have become all but open mass graves, with the dead lying and decaying where they fall. Related diseases are of course rampant. The cities are like some vision from hell with thousands of bodies being bulldozed into pits and burned daily. Social structure has completely collapsed. There is no police force and no army because there are no people left to run these institutions and no need for them anyway."

"Strange and exotic religions are the only growth industry these days, as people search for something to believe or have faith in. The weirdest of these is a sect called the 'New-Worlders', who believe that the AIDS2 virus is the instrument of God's will and that man's time on Earth is up. They see their holy task as helping God clear the world of man, thus preparing it for a 'new world'. They travel around in chanting groups killing any people they come across and, get this – their ranks are actually growing! This government is so crippled it cannot stop them. Anarchy rules it seems."

"You're probably having trouble coming to terms with all this, so is the rest of the world believe me, but it's all true I'm afraid. I wish it weren't. You don't have to believe me, you'll see it for yourself soon enough – I'm just trying to prepare you somewhat for the shock."

"What about a cure? you ask. We simply can't find one – and God knows we've tried. We are as far away from a cure now as we were six months ago, and that's the classified truth. That is until you came along with the Grail. It has proved positive – it cures people infected with AIDS2. Now we have to break it up and analyse its molecular structure – then we can hopefully start to synthetically reproduce it in bulk and distribute it before it's too late. That's the challenge the scientists have before them. It's a long shot but at least it's a chance."

"We have you to thank for that chance. We were tipped off by the way, that's how we knew to be on the beach when you came out. Someone called Tobias has friends high up, that's all I know."

"How long will we keep you? That I don't know. At least until after we announce the discovery, and we are considering the timing for that very carefully indeed. You can imagine the sorts of problems we'd have nationally and internationally if this got out. There are already fears that the news has somehow leaked – God help us if it has! I do know that there are rumours that the scientists may need more Grailstone to complete their tests for molecular structure, which means that you'll be debriefed very shortly on what exactly is down in those caves under Dunstanburgh."

"Once again, sorry for the rough treatment, and for taking the Grail off you and for locking you up. As you can see it was necessary. You can take some consolation in the fact you may have single-handedly saved humanity from extinction – not many people can say that."

Colin Scott's Letter

The Hand-delivered Letter from Colin Scott

Friend!

May I call you friend? OK! OK! we've had our differences but what the hell! We're professionals. It was nothing personal.

So why am I writing to you? Because - my friend - I am onto the big one. And I mean B. I. G. Numero Uno! The big bananal! The whole damned caboodiel! But, sad to say, if you have received this letter - then it has proved way too big for me.

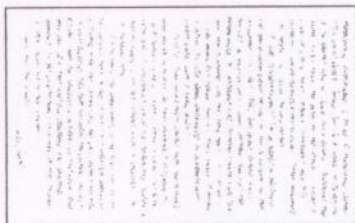
You know my obsession. God! doesn't everyone know my obsession? For over twelve years I have striven to find the Holy Grail and now - and I swear I am writing this cold bloody sober - I know where to find it.

You won't believe the story, but here goes anyway. I spent a lot of last summer researching the journals of pilgrims travelling through the Holy Lands after the First Crusade, when I came across an account of a mysterious shipment leaving Jerusalem in 1146. The shipment was escorted by twelve Templar knights so I knew this little mother was important! But oddly enough there were no other records of its arrival or departure, despite the usual fastidiousness of the Templars' book-keeping.

So - you know me - I got curious. What could warrant such a large escort and so much secrecy? A ransom? An important personage? Gold? Jewels? Much, much more!

It took me nine months searching through every goddamn library in Europe to find the next clue. It was a fragment of a transfer order for twelve knights to Dunstanburgh in Northumberland. But of course that just raised more questions. Why so many knights to such a barren place? And were these the selfsame knights as left Jerusalem?

I found the next clue in Paris. The original order had been authorised by the Templar Grand Master himself!!! So this just had to be big!



Last week I travelled to Northumberland. Ever been there? Wet and rainy and cold! And it was there that I found the final clues. In nearby Embleton graveyard I found a tombstone dated 1763 which reads: "Here lies Sir Richard of Bramley, a Crusader now in God's Holy Army." Clearing the grass away from the base of the stone I found a line of Latin text, badly corroded but still legible, which translated to read: "The answers you seek lie close to my heart."

I was dumbfounded! Sir Richard of Bramley was the exact name of one of the twelve knights on the transfer list! But 1763? 600 years after first arriving on English soil - some mistake surely! The reference to crusader was another tantalising clue, but the clincher for me was the Latin text - it was as if it had been engraved there specifically for my eyes only. I mean it would all have been meaningless to anybody who didn't know what I knew, right?

Anyway, the message was clear to me - if the answers were "...close to his heart" then it meant they were buried with him. So, next morning - when it was, appropriately, still the dead of night - I dug down to Sir Richard's coffin. In the disintegrated remains I found a lead cylinder. Inside was his testament, which I've translated, copied out and enclosed with this letter. When you've finished this, read it for yourself - it's an amazing tale.

I now knew the whereabouts of the Grail, but I'd need special tools and equipment to reach it. So I came back here to sort things out. And tonight I'm driving back to get it out.

So why am I telling you this my friend? Because I'm getting fearful and superstitious. I guess. And because nothing about this affair has been quite what it seemed. If I have not returned in five days' time this letter will be delivered in secrecy - by hand - to your address. If you receive it you will know that my sense of foreboding was not misplaced.

Now that I assume you have the letter - for God's sake help me! Or at the very least - for the sake of friendship (and personal profit!) - release the Holy Grail from its underground prison and make what fortune you can of it! Act fast! For I've arranged for identical letters to be despatched to other mutual 'friends' just in case you're busy.

Good-bye! I wish you better luck than it seems I've had.

(Signed) Colin Scott

Sir Richard's Will

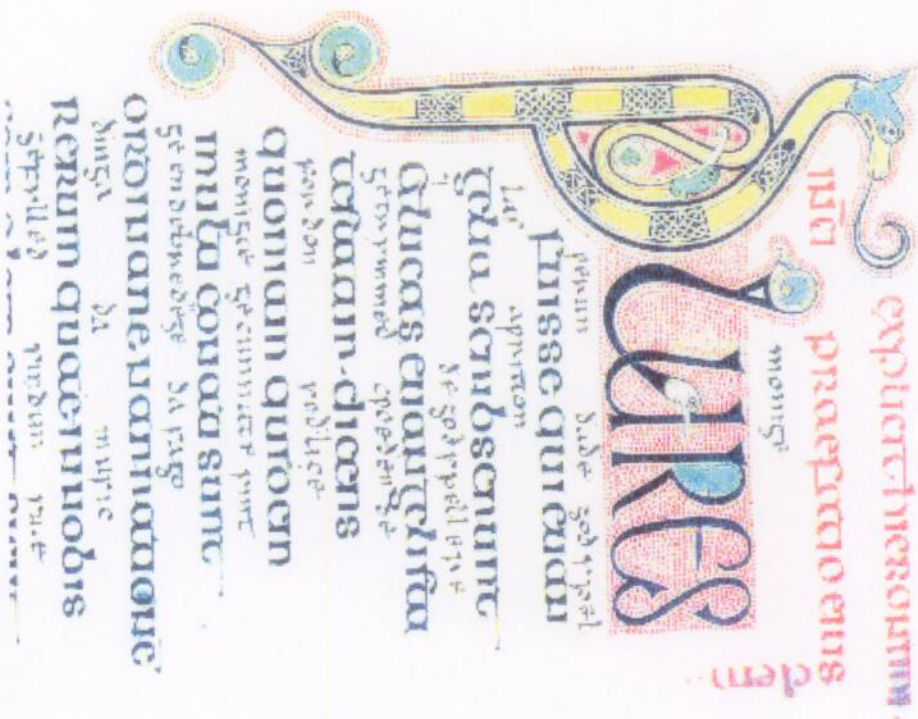
Translation of the last testament of Sir Richard of Bramley (died 1763)

This is the solemn, true and final testament of Sir Richard of Bramley, Crusader and Templar Knight. Read well, for death draws near, and what I have sorely learned must not die with me. For I beseech you, what rests in darkness must, by God's grace, be brought unto the light! I swear with solemn oaths that all which follows is true — as true as tattering memory may allow — for I have, thou must believe, lived through six centuries, two score years and three before the time of this writing.

In the year of our Lord, 1146 I was to be found a young Crusader knight in Jerusalem. In the days of my sojourn in that holy city a wondrous discovery was made — and thence kept secret by the leaders of our order - for they had found the cup employed by Joseph of Arimitha to catch the blood of our Lord whilst he was pinioned on the cross. 'Twas the Holy Grail! Full strange it was, fashioned of a mysterious stone that glowed warmly in the dark. And yet, I vouchsafe to say, it remained ever cold to the touch. Particular powers it had - for sick men brought before it were quickly made whole, while yet it stopped the ageing of men so that none grew older in its presence. This I solemnly swear has truth, for verily I am the living proof of it.

Those knowing more than I, and receiving furtive reports, commanded that the holy treasure be removed unto French soil, and I was chosen to be one of twelve entrusted with the sacred task. I lack the time to relate of our adventures, but following numerous misfortunes and miraculous escapes we entered into the safety of Paris in the spring of the year 1148.

The Grail did not rest there. Hugues de Payens, the Grand Master of our Order, determined that it must remain under Templar control. Spies informed him that Paris harboured no safety and so secret plans were laid to transport our prize to the wild and barren coasts of Northumbria. There it might be hidden far from the penetrating gaze of those who served other masters, both secular and ecclesiastical.



Facsimile of Sir Richard's will

I, and my eleven brethren became — like the blessed apostles — knights of the Grail. Before departing Paris, we swore to protect the Grail in perpetuity, sloughing off all thoughts of friends and family, and dismissing all our earthly pasts in order to preserve the Grail for the glory of God, and the high dignity of our sacred order.

Embarking at nightfall, we escorted the Grail across the German Sea to the secret Templar stronghold at Dunstanburgh. This massy fortress, far from the eyes of strangers, yet with easy access to the turbulent sea suited the plans of our superiors. For it was devised to excavate a subterranean temple — the most holy of holies — for to house the Grail, and this was to be accomplished in the vast network of little-known caves beneath the castle's crags.

The labour, hard and unforgiving, fell to one hundred and sixty-four wretches culled from the dregs of the Barbary ports. Food and fitters were shipped in from Templar warehouses scattered amidst the thronging coastal ports and so work began on the temple of 'Aeternis' that would house and protect the Grail forever.

Long years lingered into decades but the work proceeded. The slaves — for slaves they were — never left the confines of our underground temple. Yet did they not sicken, for we did all retain our health and ceased to grow old. For that we did acknowledge the powers of the Grail. And so the temple did proceed — awesome and beautiful in the darkness.

It was fifty-four years before the temple was complete. At its heart, in the secret inner Sanctum, lay the Grail, glowing in glory. Surrounding it lay a series of levels, consisting of chambers, vaults, kitchens, dormitories and a library. For our Grand Master had plans for the Grail and for the world that we were not privy to yet.

The task completed, the bonded men were shackled to the deck of a boat bound for the Carthaginian coast and freedom. That boat was scuttled on the orders of our superior. All drowned.

For we who remained, year succumbed to year, punctuated only by the freezing seasons of the north, and rare visits from our Templar masters seeking the solace and sacrament of the Grail. We were aware that vast plans were afoot but knew not what they were.

We twelve, drawn down by the Grail, spent more and more of our time in the feeble darkness underground, held quick in the thrall of the Grail. And so we fell under some deeper magic. We wanted not food nor water but craved only the warmth and familiarity of that secret place. Time ceased within that stony womb and all the harshness of the world forgot.

But, as I later learned, elsewhere the dream was faltering. The Templar order — and the very reason for our solitary task — was being insidiously destroyed.

We received one final message from our Master, "Protect and hide the Grail, forever if necessary. One day we will return and we will have need of it." We concealed the temple entrances and locked the doors behind us. We turned our backs on the treacherous world of man and retreated into darkness — to carry out our oath, and protect the Grail for eternity.

Again we entered the peculiar dream state — but deeper this time. Much time passed. Then the changes began; we noticed that we could now see where before we could not, that we no longer found our surroundings to be cold or uncomfortable and that the speed of our movements had increased many-fold. We honoured and praised the Grail for these gifts.

But then other changes began, unwelcome changes that affected each brother individually, twisting the mind and causing great confusion, despair and pulling of hair. With time this pain did pass, but left behind men who were almost unrecognisable from the men I had known and fought with. Some were now mad, others quiet and grim, all changed.

So it was that a rift came between us, for some of us, including myself wanted the torment to end and for the Grail to be freed. The others saw this as the work of Satan — a vile temptation set to destroy the sanctity of their oath. Yet I saw that they were truly as men possessed, ever more greedy for the power of the Grail and obdurate in opposition to its release. Their contention held, and the Grail remained hidden — but our small brotherhood was riven with dissent and mistrust.

Then came a time of great chaos and sadness. For the outer level of the temple had become corrupted and holed and suddenly the creatures from below flooded through into the temple! Thus was our greatest fear realised, for these hellish creatures quickly occupied every empty chamber and corridor. We laboured hard and long to stop the flow but to no avail. Our leader, Tobias emerged from his long solitude in the library and finally stopped the flood, by ways and means that defy description — for I tell you that he had changed greatly and become a man of vast unnatural powers!

But while he was occupied with these tasks, an argument did develop between the two factions of knights. Each blamed the other for the rift and two died in the fight that followed. I escaped death but knew that the temple was no longer a place of sanctuary for me. There was naught left but flight.

Chapter 3 The History

The history behind the Holy Grail, and more importantly the Grail stone that it comes from, is essential in understanding the gameplay and the range of exotic characters and creatures that exist within it. The simplest way to present this history is by chronological order.

Mesozoic Era

(150 million years ago)

A medium-sized meteorite enters the Earth's atmosphere. As it blazes a fiery path towards the Earth's surface it breaks into two roughly equal segments. One impacts with an area that will one day be known as Istanbul, Turkey – the other on a stretch of coastline that will one day be known as Dunstanburgh, Northumberland, England.

The Istanbul meteorite fragments on impact and with such force that it 'peppers' the soil to a depth of up to 60 metres underground. The Istanbul site does not come into this story.

The Dunstanburgh segment however, survives the initial impact but fragments deep underground, scattering itself into an existing and extensive cave system. Time passes. Such creatures that blunder or find their way into these deep caves are nurtured and changed by the strange meteoric rock that surrounds them; they cease to age, do not sicken, and heal rapidly from their wounds. Their metabolic need for food decreases and they develop the capability to evolve rapidly to meet new environmental demands.

Animals that enter this exotic, subterranean zoo tend to stay, and a complicated food chain evolves. Those that later leave quickly sicken and age – they return or die.

Many millennia go by.

2000 BC

Aryan Celts from north-eastern and central Europe sweep southward and westward throughout India and Europe – a vast unstoppable migration. Led by their chiefs and their Druid priests, this swarm of humanity, made up of dozens of individual tribes takes everything in its path.

So it is that one of these tribes, the Helventii, pass through the area of present-day Istanbul. The Druid priests, using divining methods lost to us now, detect and unearth a one kilogram nugget of this meteoric rock. They are intrigued by its luminous quality and astounded when they discover its effects on humans (i.e. stops ageing, promotes health and healing).

They continue their westward migration. The rock is skillfully fashioned into the shape of a goblet which, with time, becomes integrated into their religious ceremonies (the cup is filled with mead and passed among the tribe, thus passing on the qualities of the stone, though in a much diluted form. Interestingly it will fulfil a similar function much later in Christian times).

The secret of its existence is passed among the Druidic priests, who call it 'Leithum al Gwanned' – the 'Cup of Life'. Two thousand years later this same cup will become known as the Holy Grail.

(Note: the legend of the 'Elixir Vitae', or the elixir of eternal youth, sought for so long by later alchemists comes directly from these events, though in a distorted form. The legend was wrongly interpreted to make the liquid responsible for eternal youth, rather than the cup containing it.)

1900 BC

Another Celtic tribe, the Solenta, pushing through into England comes across the second impact site in Dunstanburgh. The Druids, eager to retrieve more of the valuable rock, order miners into the caves, but each attempt is driven back by the ferocity of the animals. Reluctantly the site is abandoned, but mention of its existence passes into Celtic oral history.

25 AD

This same cup, by unknown means (though probably as a gift) comes into the hands of Jesus of Nazareth. It is probably used during the so-called miracles of healing and at the Last Supper.

Its history after this time is not known, although it is believed to have travelled with the disciples for many years, and was reputedly brought to England by Joseph of Arimathea in 45AD. (The belief of its continued presence in the British Isles was obviously central to the Arthurian Legends of later times.)

At some time around 80-90 AD it was brought back to Jerusalem for permanent concealment.

1099 AD

The Holy Crusades and Crusader armies under the leadership of Godfrey of Bouillon at last bring Jerusalem under Christian control.

1120 AD

A group of knights led by Hugh de Payens, concerned over the continual robbing of pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem, form the order of the Templar Knights. They quickly gain notoriety for their selfless bravery and receive papal support, gifts of land, and titles.

They rapidly become a major financial and military power, with outposts ranging throughout all of Europe and the Holy Lands.

1146 AD

The Templars uncover the hiding place of the Holy Grail in Jerusalem and secretly smuggle it back to Paris. It arrives safely with its 12 knight escort in the spring of 1148.

Plans are made by the Templars which, if successful, will see them become the new rulers of the Western world.

Extensive research is carried out by Templar scholars into the history of the Grail and the Celts. The Dunstanburgh connection is uncovered and the team sent to investigate excitedly confirm the reports.

1153 AD

Twelve Templar Knights are sent to Dunstanburgh in north-east England with the Holy Grail to supervise the construction of a huge, subterranean Temple complex. Slaves and supplies are brought in night after night from French coastal ports.

The Temple was named 'Aeternis' and took 47 years to complete. Twenty metres underground at the centre of this complex construction lay the Holy Grail, a point of worship and the source of well-being and longevity for all those within. Around this 'Inner Sanctum' lay a maze of corridors, dormitories, chapels, a library, kitchen and teaching chambers.

Under this complex, accessed by barred stairwells is 'Underworld'. Here lie the ancient, deeper caves, complete with their menagerie of exotic and dangerous wildlife – and their original quota of scattered Grailstone. The environment within these caves is too dangerous for any man to survive, so access tunnels were constructed around their perimeters.

Why did the Templars go to this expense and trouble? Because Europe was in a mess; the papacy had become nothing more than a corrupt and powerful terrorist organisation, and barbaric, illiterate feudal kings squandered their peoples' wealth in cycles of perpetual conflict. These wasteful struggles for control had been going on for hundreds of years with no end in sight.

The time had come for a new world order, one that would responsibly control both the spiritual and financial aspects of European society. One that would forever break the stranglehold of the Popes, and bring the feudal kings to heel. The Templar plan was both bold and simple, and the site of Dunstanburgh was central to its success. Aeternis was designed to fulfil three main functions:

1. To house and train a new breed of immortal priests who, with the help of Grailstone, would establish a new world order under the control of the Templars
2. To provide a platform from which to explore the cave systems under Aeternis, with a view to extracting all the remaining Grailstone within them
3. To house the most sacred of religious relics, the Holy Grail, which they would also use as a symbol of divine approval for their new religious dynasty.

Although many hundreds of Templars were involved in its implementation, the plan in its entirety was known only to the Grand Master himself, Jacques de Molay.

1200 AD

The Templar hierarchy suddenly discovers that Constantinople is the original site of the Holy Grail. The plans for the first shipment of recruits to Dunstanburgh are halted while the implications of this discovery are fed into the overall plan.

1203 AD

The Fourth Crusades are diverted (by Templar manipulations in Venice) from their objective in the Holy Lands and stand before the Christian city of Constantinople. After a fierce but brief struggle the city falls.

The Templars however, despite the most intensive search, find no evidence of Grailstone.

1307 AD

The Templar order suddenly falls! The Pope, suspicious of the pillage of Constantinople, and hearing other reports of peculiar Templar activity has contrived with King Philip IV the Fair of France to destroy their power. Templars are arrested and false confessions of immoral activities are extracted under torture. All Templar wealth and property within the Christian world is seized.

Templar knights are arrested en masse, imprisoned and tortured.

The Guardian knights of Aeternis receive one last message from their Grand-Master before he is arrested – "Protect and hide the Grail, forever if necessary. One day we will return and we will have need of it."

The 12 knights of the Grail turn their backs on the world of men. Barring and concealing the entrances of Aeternis behind them, they descend into the eternal night.

1314 AD

The last Grand-Master of the Templar order, Jacques de Molay is burnt at the stake in Paris. Despite the harshest torture he dies without revealing the true nature of the Templar plans, or the existence of the temple of Aeternis at Dunstanburgh.

1753 AD

In Aeternis the Grailstone was proving to have other unforeseen, long-term properties. Firstly, it created a gradually increasing 'slow-down' field that affects all living metabolisms around it. Secondly, it has profound long-term effects upon the human psyche, promoting mental adaptation and growth which can be either positive or negative depending upon the individual concerned.

For some of the knights these effects were beneficial, for the rest they were catastrophically negative.

Gradually a huge rift appeared within the brotherhood, largely orchestrated by one knight named Mailik. The crisis of 1753 pushed the pressure between these two uneven factions to a bloody breaking point; it started when outer parts of the temple, which had fallen into disrepair, suddenly cracked and opened, giving the animals below the access to Aeternis they had long been waiting for. They literally flooded into the empty corridors and chambers, happy to have at last escaped the crowded and perilous conditions below.

Frantically the Guardians tried to find and block the cracks, but the animals kept flooding in from other openings. Tobias (the Guardian Commander-in-Chief) managed to secure the situation but it was too late, the empty rooms and corridors of Aeternis had new and dangerous tenants - and they were there to stay. Tobias had managed to intervene quickly enough however to stop the larger predators from getting through, but in the melee one of the knights, Claude Lancelot was killed by a dinosaur-like animal known as a Theo.

While Tobias was absorbed in controlling this disaster a new one loomed, for each faction within the brotherhood blamed the other for the breach - two knights died in the fight that followed and a third, Richard of Bramley was forced to flee the temple. Tobias was again too late to stop the disaster, but he managed to pacify the remaining knights.

Meanwhile Mailik, who had been instrumental in the killings, decided it was time to also leave the temple - but not empty handed - he would take the Grail. However, he had no idea of Tobias's abilities and was blocked by a wall of flame. He escaped instead with the entire store of 8 kg of extracted Grail stone - 600 years of work - and Tobias, by now totally exhausted from his exertions, was powerless to stop him.

Richard of Bramley, removed from the Grailstone, died shortly afterwards above-ground, but not before leaving clues that would one day lead to the coming of the Raptors.

Chapter 4 The Guardians

Twelve of the foremost knights of the Templar order descended into Aeternis and sealed it from the world in 1307 AD. In the six hundred years since four have died and one has fled above-ground. Those still alive and carrying out their tasks are: Tobias de Treece (Commander in Chief), Edgar 'the Axe', William Oakeshield, Phillip de Beavaux, Odro 'the Raven', Tallum Broadhand and Geffrye of Bayeaux. They are detailed more fully on the following pages. The dead are: Vincent 'the Innocent' and Ewart of Cloyes (both murdered in the plot led by Maillik in 1753), Richard of Bramley (who escaped this same plot only to die shortly afterwards above-ground in Embleton) and Claude Lancet (cornered and killed by a dinosaur known as a Theo shortly after the animal invasion of the same year).

These dead knights still haunt the ancient corridors, suspended from final rest by the strange properties of the surrounding Grailstone. Confused and caught in an unnatural state of being they find it difficult to focus on 'reality' or to carry out lengthy, logical conversations with the living. It is therefore not necessary at this point to go into any detail regarding their individual personalities. The remaining knight still to be considered is Maillik. He fled the temple at the height of the unrest of 1763 AGT (or Above Ground Time) treacherously stealing the entire store of Grailstone – 8 kilograms – which had taken the knights 600 years of dangerous, exhaustive labour to extract from the cave systems below. He remains very much alive and prosperous, an immortal and evil influence upon the world who has caused, and continues to cause, great harm to mankind. He does not appear directly, but his shadow tails on the whole game.

There are a few other issues to be discussed before we delve into the individual personalities of the knights themselves – issues regarding their combined history, shared suffering and the brotherhood that binds them. Firstly it must be noted that these knights were exceptional in their time – the Templars themselves were an elite force of knights, but these twelve were the elite within the elite. They fought side by side through many dangerous campaigns in the Holy Lands and eventually formed their own group, complete with secret hand-signals and customised weapons. They even had a secret name, known only to themselves and the Templar hierarchy: 'the Brotherhood of the Round Knives', a name derived from their favourite weapon of Saracen design – the round-bladed throwing knife. That they were exceptional can be seen by the fact that they were given the task of transporting the greatest treasure the Templars possessed – the Holy Grail – from Jerusalem to the relative safety of Paris, a dangerous and demanding task for the times which they accomplished efficiently, speedily and with imagination.

That was 600 years ago - 600 years of self-imposed confinement, extreme solitude and exposure to Grailstone. They are no longer human – this is an essential fact to remember when dealing with them. Although almost alien now in many ways, certain aspects of their humanity still survive and can be reached with patience. Physically, they have adapted perfectly to their roles as guardians in a dark and dangerous world – they have acute hearing and awareness, their eyes have changed to allow them to see in the semi-dark and their reflexes have become extraordinarily fast. Mentally they have not fared so well, for Grailstone affects the balance of the mind, exaggerating the negative and positive aspects to an unnatural degree. So, for the knights, the anxiety they felt over the safety of the Grail and the importance of their constant vigil was increased beyond the tolerances of their minds – and one by one they became insane. Other aspects of their individual personalities have also been distorted and exaggerated unnaturally, as the following pages will show. The above however does not apply to Tobias, who alone has been changed positively by the Grailstone.

Distorted and twisted as they are, they all still retain a sense of honour and an allegiance to their task which goes deeper than their individual insanity to the very core of their beings. They are the last remnants of the Knights Templar – an order that was once strong enough to challenge the power of Popes and kings, that dared to assail the entire world.

Tobias de Treece



All his life Tobias has been an inquisitive and intelligent man who has pursued learning. As a result he has become that rare combination of scholar, monk and warrior. He was therefore delighted at the quality, breadth and scale of the Grand Library which was finally created within the newly-completed temple. After the temple was sealed in 1307 he became increasingly reclusive, finally withdrawing permanently to the library where he indulged himself to the full in studying the ancient texts. The Grailstone aided and exaggerated this thirst for knowledge and, over a long period of time, had dramatic effects on his mental and psychic capabilities.

In time, he became a man of immense powers, able to detect and influence events and incidents far beyond the realm of Aeternis. Several times, unknown to the others and for reasons of his own, he even rejoined the world of men temporarily. This is why he appears much older than the other knights. Eventually the depth of his learning enabled him to sense the forces and the fabric of the universe itself – and through the swirling eddies of space and time he glimpsed a tragedy coming to humanity of immense proportions! Try as he might he could only glimpse the merest outline of this tragedy, but it was enough to show him that humanity was rapidly approaching possible extinction.

Weeks of intense meditation and concentrated effort revealed no further details, but his heightened senses divined a number of essential truths; that the Grail (and more importantly Grailstone) was central to avoiding this total catastrophe; that Aeternis would continue to protect the Grail until the time came for its release; that the time for release would be determined when someone was eventually able to successfully negotiate the 'test' of Aeternis and steal the Grail; and that other 'false' thieves would make this attempt and fail.

With all this on his mind it's not surprising then that Tobias overlooked some important developments that were taking place under his very nose. Tobias has wisely never told his comrades of his vision of the future, or his foreseeing of the thief to come (except Geoffrey) – it would only cloud their judgement and impair their part in the test.

As Tobias is such a central character it is worth summarising the above before we go on: Tobias is physically extremely powerful and extremely intelligent; he has foreseen the future; he controls Aeternis and has shaped it to his beliefs; he believes that the Grail can save humanity and that Aeternis is the testing-ground for a thief who will free the Grail.

Edgar 'the Axe'



Edgar is one of the more erratic and dangerous Guardians that a player will encounter within Aeternis. Because the Templar knights were both warriors and monks, the Grailstone has simply magnified these aspects of Edgar's personality to the exclusion of everything else. He therefore has a completely fractured personality, swinging between two extremely different personae every few minutes; sometimes he is a kindly and tolerant priest, and the next moment he is a cold and merciless killer. It is only in his mode of priest that a player will get by him without violence, so a player must learn to see the signs of change when dealing with him – and act swiftly when the time is right. He can be easily recognised by his long-axe which he wields with brutal efficiency at close quarters. Like the others, he prefers the round-bladed throwing knife for longer-distance killing.

The easiest way past him is to ransom his most treasured possession – an ornate silver torc given to him by his sister when she renounced the world to enter a convent. Both sides of his personality treasure the torc as much as the Grail itself. Note however that he bitterly hates being bested and will relentlessly track any player who has outwitted him.

William Oakenshield

William is primarily a soldier. Dedicated to the military arts he is highly skilled in performing the disciplined and bloody acts of warfare. Six and a half feet tall and weighing 18 stone, he is by far the largest, strongest and most brutish of the knights. The Grailstone has combined his sheer physical power with highly tuned reflexes to produce a warrior with almost superhuman abilities.

Because he has disciplined himself into becoming the ultimate soldier, he is almost unbeatable in combat. He combines strength with speed, being fast and lithe enough to dodge most projectiles, or to block them with his shield.

Of yeoman stock, he was once a man of simple yet honest principles, who believed with absolute certainty in the sanctity of his task as protector of the Grail. Pledging life and limb he instead paid with his mind as the Grailstone concentrated and accentuated this belief and caused his mind to discard everything else, reducing him from a sentient human being to the level of an automaton.

This 'Super-Guardian' however is flawed, and his weakness lies in the unnatural rigidity of his mind. In his 'tunnel-vision' world he has reduced all issues to their simplest components, sees all things in black and white – friend or foe. Consequently, by lying or talking in riddles, a clever player can confuse William long enough to slip past him.

He is easily recognised by his sheer size, his unflinching gaze, and his shield, and he is an exceptional marksman with the round knife. Like a large and deadly shadow he quietly patrols the corridors of Aeternis, quickly and efficiently dispatching the poor unfortunates he discovers.



Phillip de Beavaux



Phillip's indecisiveness has been magnified by the Grailstone so that he is now plagued, almost incessantly, by extreme doubts about, well ... about everything really. Like a lost soul he patrols the darkened corridors arguing with himself and muttering things like "...perhaps Richard and the others had been right all those years ago, after all it was that black-hearted Malik who had spoken against them ... the same Malik who later deserted his brothers and the Grail for the freedom and pleasures of the outer world ... and yet perhaps Malik had the right idea after all, and that he, Phillip, was a prize fool for hanging around on this perpetual fool's errand! But he had given his solemn oath ... and there was no denying the power of the Grail ... but what if ..."

In short Phillip no longer knows what he believes and so his mind swirls in constant circles of indecision and inaction. This does not mean that he is harmless however, in fact quite the contrary – he still has a job to do, but the player will find Phillip easy to deal with if he/she directs the conversation towards these ever-present doubts. In fact, by persevering sympathetically with this conversational relationship the player may find that Phillip will become a friend, which can be of considerable help later.

Odro 'the Raven'



Odro is demented and violent, the last of a long line of Norse berserkers. Like the others he deeply cherishes the Grail, but Odro expresses his love in a very curious way. He sees the Grail as a gift from God, and its life-giving properties as a gift of love.

Love for Odro is a feminine thing and therefore, in the twisted logic of his mind, the Grail is the embodiment of the feminine side of God's persona. He therefore has a much deeper love for the Grail than the other knights, a love that is constantly frustrated by his physical mutations. For, like the other knights, his eyes are now so sensitive to light that he can no longer enter the

comparative brightness of the Inner Sanctum without experiencing extreme pain, even when masking his face.

Denied access to the one thing he craves most, Odro's mind swings from deep love to utter frustration, which is reflected in his often erratic and violent actions. He is therefore completely merciless with anyone he believes has come to steal the Grail, but the gentler side of his nature will prevail if he believes (or is led to believe) that the player has stumbled into the Temple by accident and is merely trying to find the way out. Odro knows what it is to be lost, and may direct a player towards an exit. The player is then free to double back behind him and continue with the quest. If he sees the player doing this, or comes upon the same player later in the game he will know that he has been tricked, and will pursue that player with frightful vengeance until one of them falls. His treasured possession is a large silver chalice, which some believe he stole from the treasury in Hexham. This chalice sits beside his Spartan bunk in the Guardians' domicile.

Tallum Broadhand



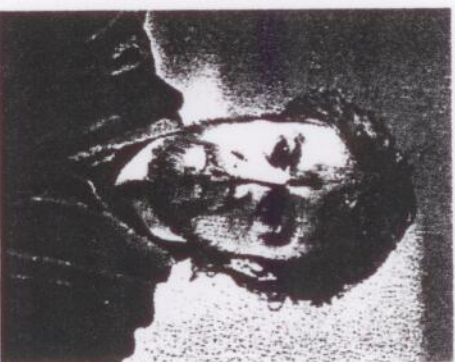
Tallum is a cousin of William Oakenshield and was once a close friend and confidant of the late Richard of Bramley. He secretly shared Richard's doubts about the sanctity of their task, but never publicly stated these views for fear of reprisals from the others – particularly his cousin William whom he then greatly admired and slightly feared.

Thus Tallum was aware beforehand of the planned attack orchestrated by Mallik in 1753 and, although he took no part in it, he did nothing to prevent it. More importantly (and to his eternal shame) he did not forewarn Richard of the coming attack. He thus blames himself for Richard's

death and believes himself to be both a coward and a traitor. Sadly the Grailstone built on this negativity and destroyed him, leaving an empty shell of a man, completely consumed by guilt and bitterness.

Tallum is now a killing machine. He seeks only death in battle – an honourable exit from a dishonourable life. Totally devoid of humanity he is the most alien of the knights, inhuman and frightening in the intensity of his anger and his passion for destruction. The only way a player can pass Tallum without violence is to mention Richard's name, or to imply that he/she is carrying out his dying wishes. Tallum might see this as a chance to right the wrong he thinks he has done, and may be of dramatic assistance, particularly against William Oakenshield, whom he now secretly hates and blames for all his problems.

Geffrye of Bayeaux



Geffrye is a warrior/artist and his role within the brotherhood has been to oversee the aesthetic development of the Temple. He is second in authority only to Tobias, and is responsible for the architectural style and 'feel' of Aeternis. His duty was to make Aeternis a fitting home for the Holy Grail, and an awesome reflection of the power of the new Templar order.

Engaging and friendly, he is the only knight to have responded well to Tobias' patient care and treatment, and has made a complete recovery back to mental normality. A friendship developed between these two during this long period of rehabilitation, perhaps inevitable considering they were the

only two sane humans left in Aeternis. Tobias eventually confided to Geffrye his secret vision of the future, and the important future role of Aeternis and Grailstone.

Together they talked for many hours about the defensive structure of Aeternis, not with a view to making it more impregnable, but to making it a 'righteous' testing ground for the thieves to come. For they believed that only a person of strength, cunning intelligence and, above all, humanity would know how best to use the Grail after its release. Their concern with Aeternis was that at present it was more a test of physical abilities only, favouring physical strength over intellect.

For many days they pondered and agonised over the seemingly pre-destined fate of humanity, and the possible consequences of interference in such a delicate scheme. Eventually however they came to a decision. They would combine Tobias' magical abilities with Geffrye's artistic craftsmanship to construct a series of puzzles and tests. These would be placed around the Temple, and would be designed to test the intelligence (or otherwise) of each contender. Rewards for correct answers would vary depending upon the room and the complexity of the puzzle; but all would relate to further puzzles closer to the grail, and give inside information, sometimes regarding secret passages, short-cuts or chambers.

Chapter 5 Aeternis and its inhabitants

Overview

The subterranean temple of Aeternis was built within existing, extensive cave systems under the monastery of Dunstanburgh, Northumberland, England in 1200 A.D. It was constructed in total secrecy and with great expense by the Knights Templar to fulfil three main functions:

1. To house and train a new breed of immortal priests who, with the help of Grailstone, would establish a new world order under the control of the Templars.
2. To provide a platform from which to explore the remaining cave systems under Aeternis, and to extract all the remaining Grailstone scattered within them.
3. To house the most sacred of religious relics, the Holy Grail, which they would also use as a symbol of divine approval for their new religious dynasty.

The Templars failed in these endeavours for reasons already stated. The Temple was sealed and hidden from the world, its Guardians told to protect the Grail and keep it under Templar control – forever if necessary.

It would be nearly 800 years before its existence was uncovered, drawing the high-tech thieves known as Raptors down upon it.

(Note: Aeternis is derived from the Latin for Eternal.)

Metabolic Distortion

Grailstone has many profound and strange effects upon living metabolic systems. These effects occur wherever Grailstone exists in any quantity (as is the case within the confines of Aeternis) and gradually increases with the passing of time.

One such effect is to drastically slow down all metabolic processes. An individual is not even aware of this slow-down because the other living things around him have been affected in exactly the same way, so that comparatively speaking everything appears to be normal. If this individual, however, were able to see the outside world, he would be dismayed to see it flying by at an extraordinary rate. These fields of metabolic distortion vary throughout Aeternis, but the present-time, general rule of thumb is one hour underground equals one month above ground. Hence a gameplay of twelve hours would mean that one year will have passed in real time.

Another bizarre aspect of this distortion is that it seems to affect mechanical devices such as timepieces in exactly the same way, making them also conform to local 'time-fields'. Like so many other aspects of Grailstone the reason for this phenomenon is simply not known.

Aeternus Temple Floorplan

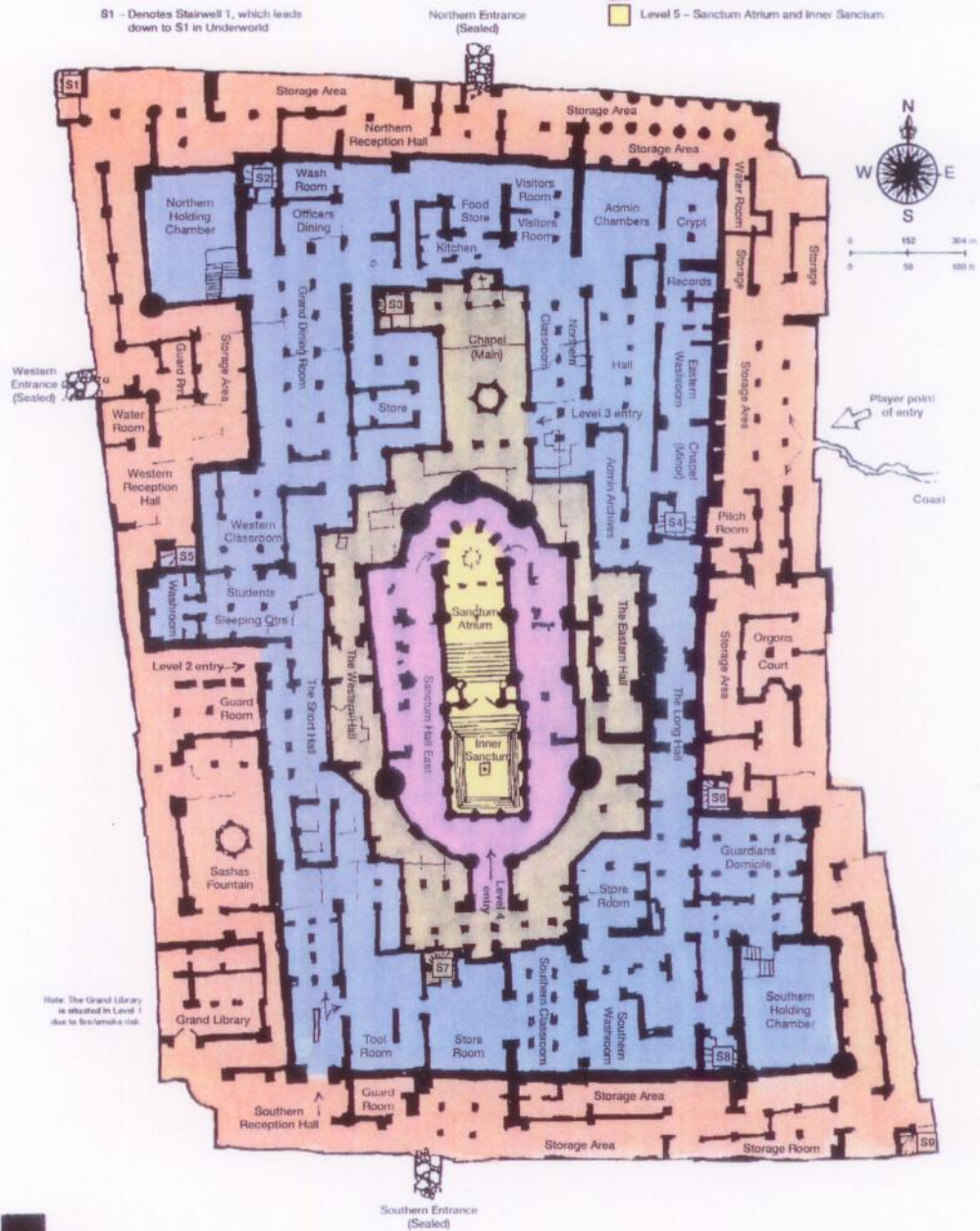
M/A - Mogs/Animals

A/G - Animals/Guardians

G - Guardians only

S1 - Denotes Stairwell 1, which leads down to S1 in Underworld

- M/A Level 1 - Supply storage area.
- A/G Level 2 - Teaching, Administration and general living areas.
- A/G Level 3 - Religious and meditative area.
- G Level 4 - Sanctum approaches.
- Level 5 - Sanctum Atrium and Inner Sanctum.



Detailed map of the temple system of Aeternis.

Aeternis – a closer look

The Temple of Aeternis is a cold, shabby place – full of debris, tattered tapestries, cracked walls and broken, ancient furniture. An occasional flaming torch punctures the darkness, but it is still a world ruled by eternal night. Yet it retains a certain dark and majestic beauty which, despite the ravages of time, somehow manages still to reflect the pride and strength of the men who built it.

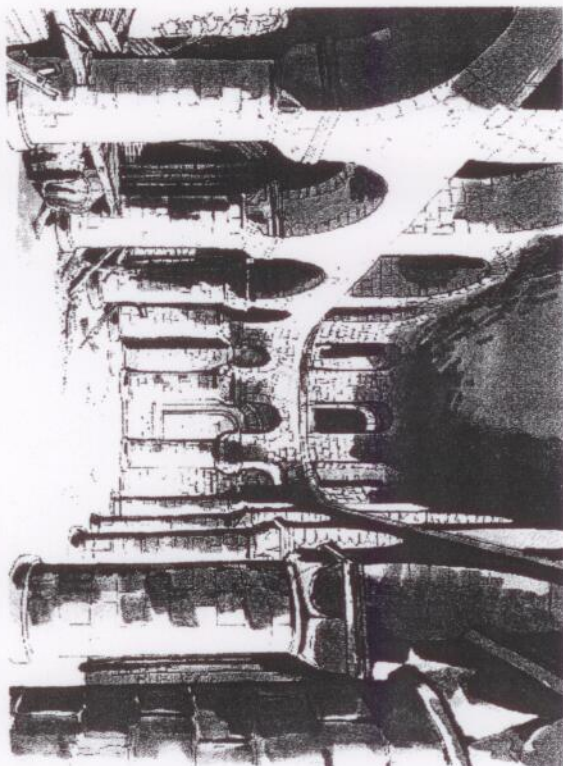
It is no place for the living, yet it abounds with life; all adapted and sustained perpetually by the Grail and the surrounding Grailstone. Every mouldy room and wind-swept corridor is home to some exotic form (or forms) of life, all perfectly adapted to survive and prosper in this harsh and unnatural environment.

Structurally the complex is divided into five individually secure but connected levels. All five levels are in an advanced state of disrepair and are in fact disintegrating. This degradation is not uniform, and seems to be at its worst in the outer level – i.e. the Inner Sanctum which houses the Grail is the area of the temple least affected. This of course perplexes and troubles the Guardians who believe that only nine years have passed since their interment – they do not realise that the Temple is simply showing its true age of nearly 800 years.

There are nine stairwells within Aeternis, each is a spiral staircase that leads to Underworld (Underworld is detailed later in this chapter). At the bottom of each staircase is a locked, heavy iron gate.

The puzzles are an essential, integral part of the gameplay, and provide much of the entertainment in Raptor. As has already been mentioned, the puzzles are intended to provide a test for the character, supplied and overseen by Tobias, and he might take an active part in some of them, offering hints to a humane and 'Christian' player, or opposing the player in hidden ways.

The following is a more detailed look at the five levels involved:



A storage chamber in level one

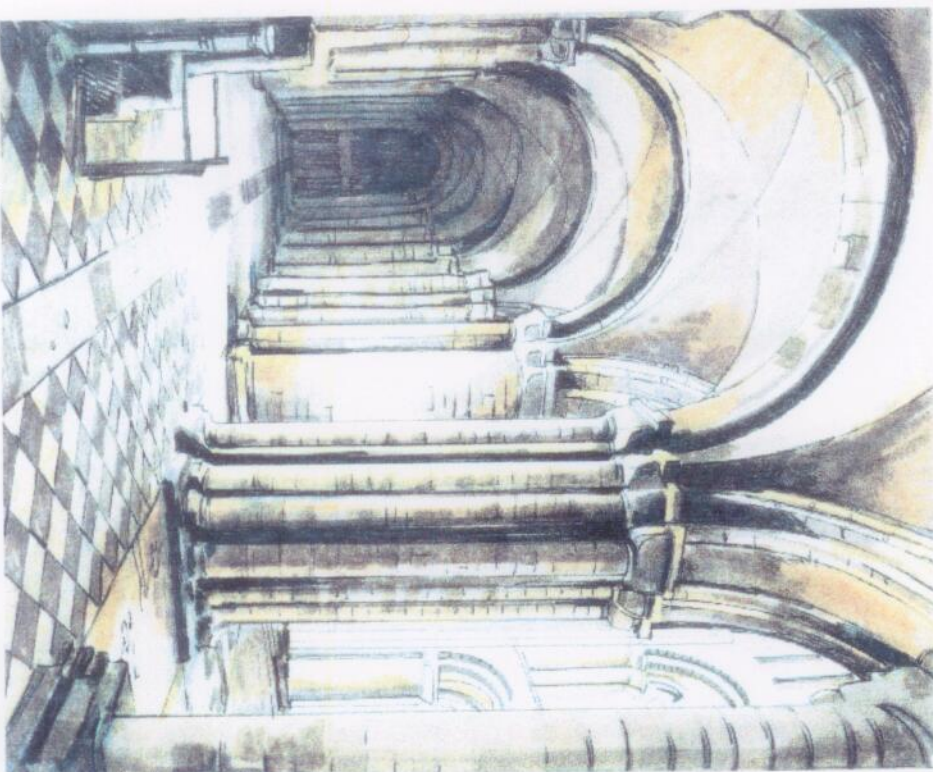
Level One

is the outer level of the Temple and is the one in which a player first enters the game. Its original purpose was supply and storage, but the long corridors are now full of empty barrels and broken crates – the contents long since used or moved by the Guardians to safer locations. In fact the Guardians rarely patrol this outer level now, preferring to concentrate their efforts within the inner, more strategically crucial levels.

Another reason the Guardians avoid this level is the large concentration of animals who find the disused storage areas a perfect habitat for breeding. Also, the original cracks that gave the animals entry to Aeternis occurred here on this most aged level – another reason for the large animal numbers.

Although very hazardous itself, Level One provides a good introduction for new players to test their skills, become familiar with their technical systems and weapons, and start to build up some knowledge about the temple, before proceeding to the truly arduous inner levels. There are also many rooms for them to explore, ghosts for them to converse with and dangerous creatures to negotiate before they reach the access points to the next level.

Note that the doors to the Grand Library (situated on this level) will be locked to the player at this early stage of the game. Entry may be permitted later and by other means if the player proves himself worthy. Note also that fewer and simpler puzzles occur on this level and the bias is towards dealing with the creatures.



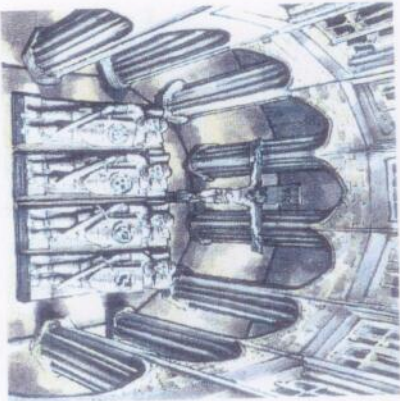
A corridor in level one

Level Two

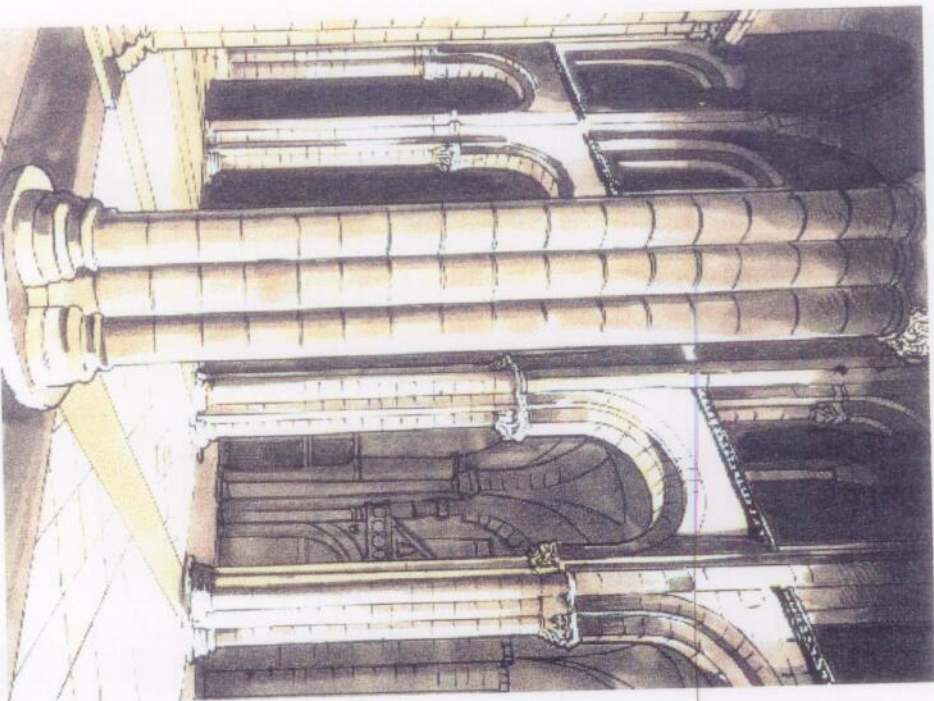
Is the main testing-ground of the temple. Originally designed as the general living, education and administration area, it contains numerous rooms for the player to explore, many with puzzles to tax the player's intelligence and logical thinking.

It is in this area that the player will come across patrolling Guardians for the first time and will learn to converse with them, fight them or run from them. The two Holding Chambers are also within this level, which the player will undoubtedly become all too familiar with as the game proceeds. It is also on this level that the player will first encounter living people who have stumbled into Aeternis over the centuries and miraculously survived. They furtively dodge from place to place avoiding trouble, and may befriend the player if they chance to meet and form a friendly relationship. These poor souls cannot find their way out and have no idea that the era they belong to has long since passed. They are detailed more fully later in this chapter.

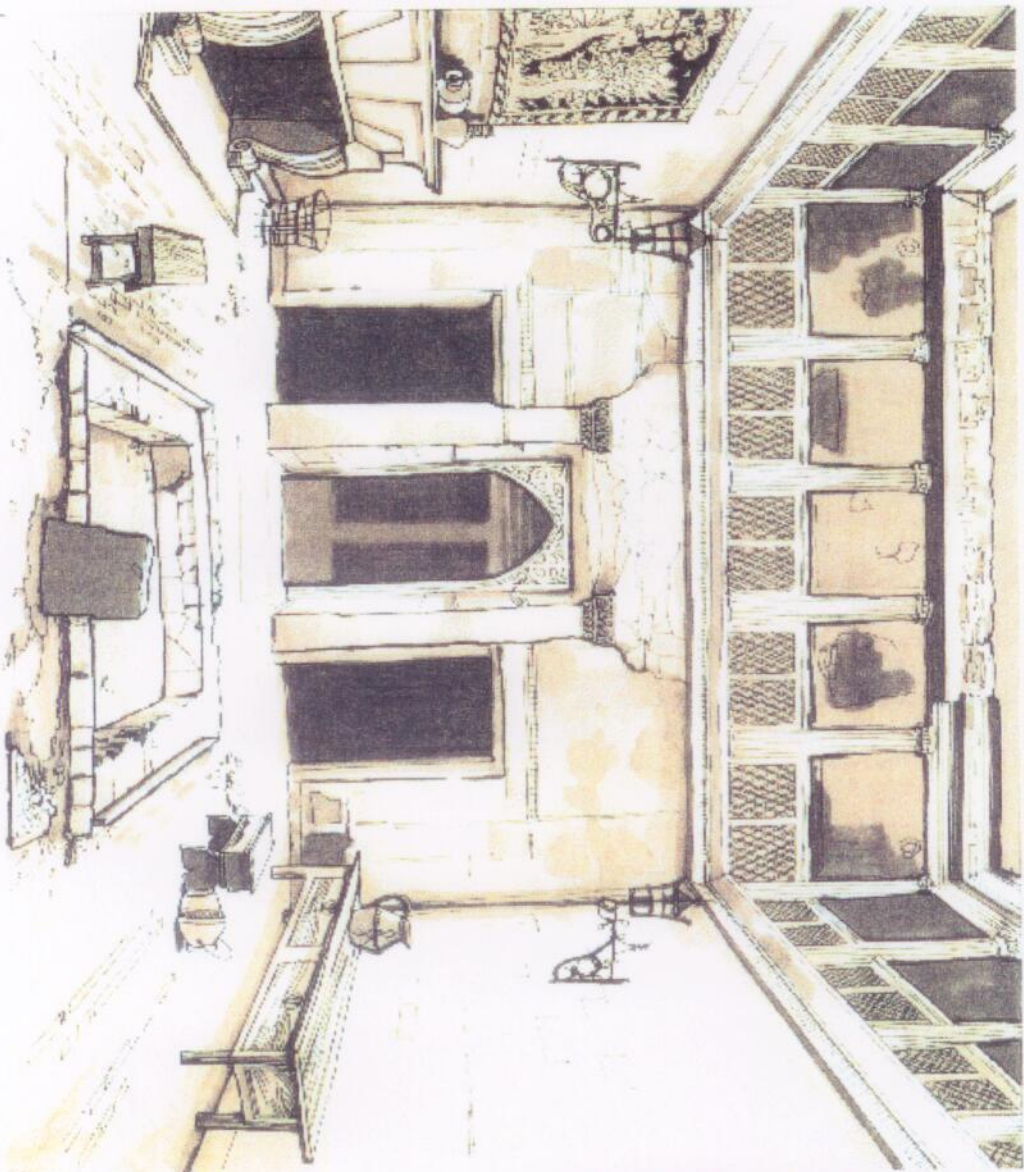
There are more ghosts to encounter here too, particularly in or near the Workers Crypt, and not all are friendly or helpful (also detailed later).



A section of the crypt

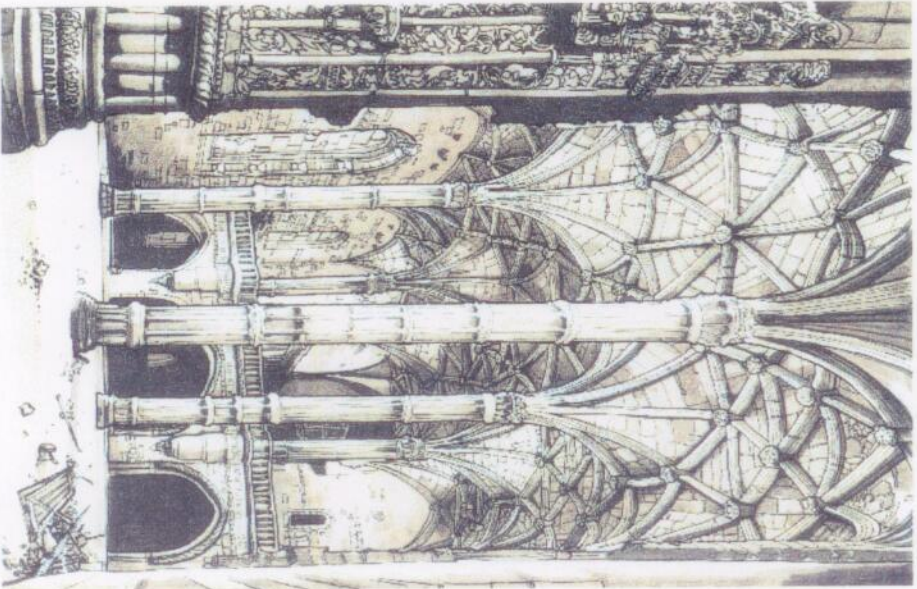


A corridor in level two

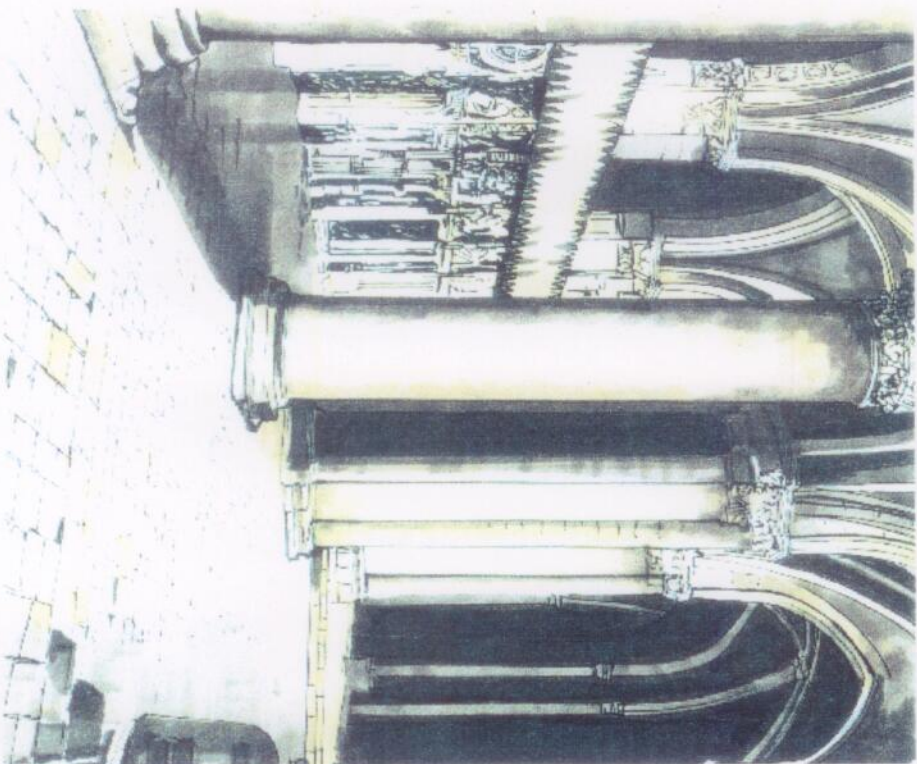


A washroom

A stream also flows through this level in a south-easterly direction from the top north-east corner. It is ducted and guided by a tunnel system that runs right through this level and into the next. There are also a substantial number of strange creatures that dwell on this level. Though not as numerous as those on Level 1, they are by necessity smarter, harder and more predatory. Level 2 is where much of the action of the game takes place. With both hostile animals and demented Guardians actively tracking the player, it is a difficult and dangerous place. A player who can survive here has proved themselves befitting the name Raptor and worthy to enter the next level.



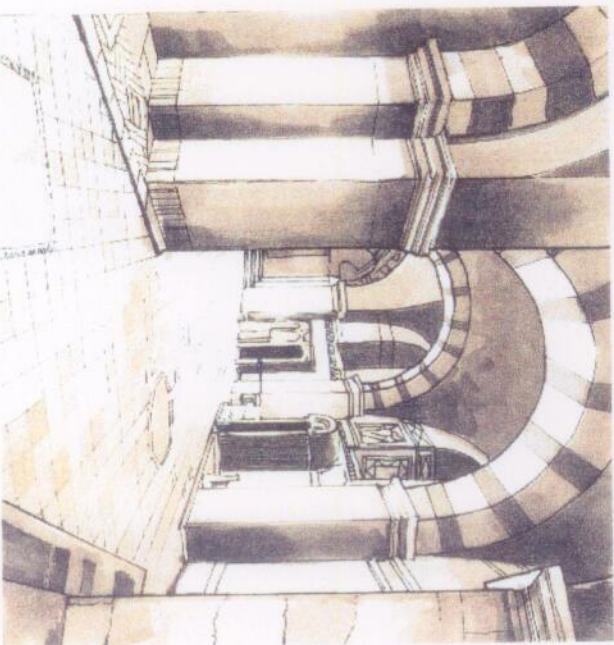
The feasting hall on level two



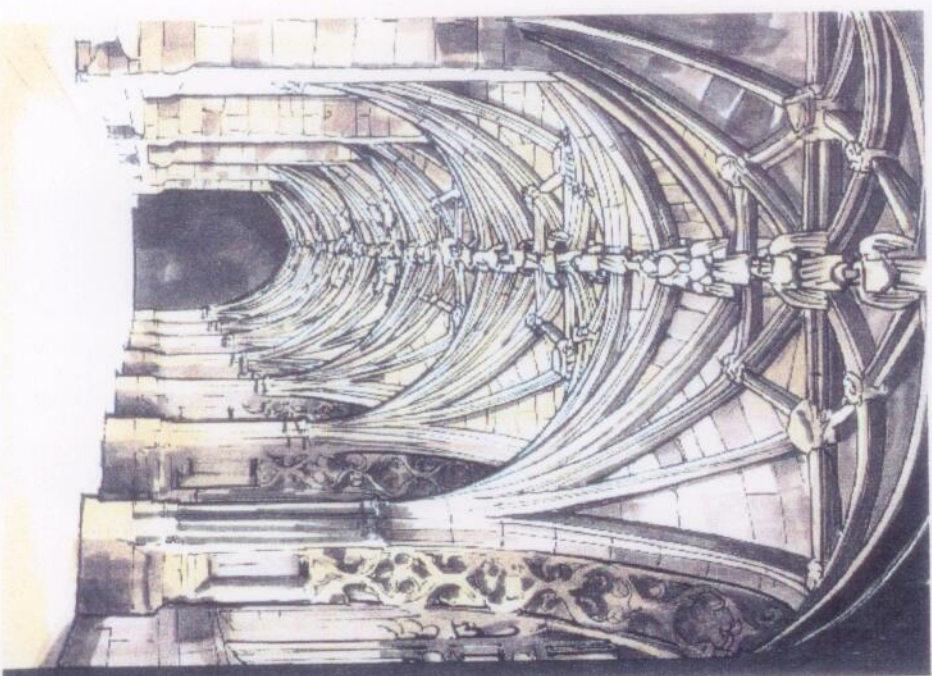
Part of the main hall

Level 3

Was designed to be the religious, ceremonial and meditative area of the temple. It therefore consists of large, impressive, high-ceilinged chambers and long, dark corridors.



A corridor on level three.



A corridor on level three, leading to the Grail's sanctuary.