



A little Knight Templar news does you good



Staying in touch

Dear Brother Knights

June and July are months when there is usually an upsurge in the number of Provincial meetings that are held in various parts of Britain.

In recent days, I and others from our province would have travelled to Derbyshire and to Kent in order to attend their provincial meetings - and later this month we

would also have represented Monmouth and South Wales at Provincial meetings in Middlesex and Surrey. But none of those meetings can take place on the usual date of course because of the pandemic.

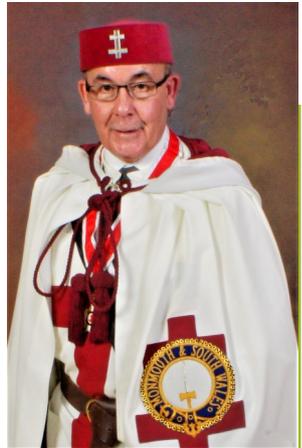
We particularly missed welcoming representatives from other provinces at our annual meeting at Bridgend in May. At the top of the page you will see a reminder of such a welcome for the Provincial Priors of Surrey, Kent, Middlesex, Warwickshire, Somerset and other Provinces.

The strength of those links – and with Bro Kts throughout the world – has been very noticeable in recent issues of this newsletter with articles coming from London and elsewhere.

This time I am very pleased to include for your enjoyment another fascinating item from the Province of West Yorkshire which is about the Templars' Treasure and the defence of the fortress at Acre.

In addition, I thought that it would be good to focus in this edition on the subject of provincial meetings generally – and to look back at our own Knight Templar Province in particular and observe how things have changed gradually.

Yours in the Bonds of the Order
R.E.Kt. Paul Calderwood



This week's Quiz was kindly devised by E Kt Peter James a former Commander of the Body Guard.

Your own questions (and the answers too) would be very welcome. Meanwhile:

1. Name the fortified French village, where the leading Templars were imprisoned and tortured before trial.
2. What was the geometrical symbol used by the Templars for Golgotha?
3. The red Templar cross, symbolises what?

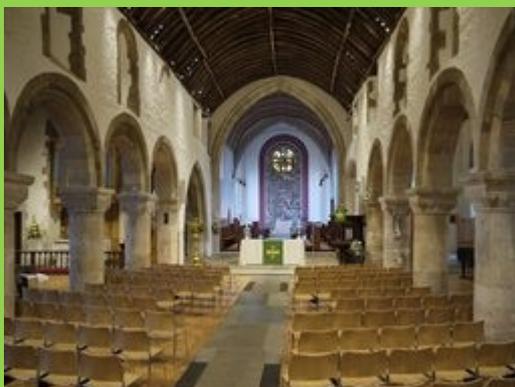
For the answers that he supplied please see the bottom of the last page.

Welsh Travelling Knights

In recent times, it has been the custom to hold the annual meeting of the Province at the same venue each year and at the same point in the calendar - but that was not always the case.

From the 1890s up until the end of the First World War the meetings were held at a different venue each year, so far as circumstances would permit, and they alternated between Bath, Weston-Super-Mare, Newport and Cardiff.

Very often the meeting was preceded by a religious service at buildings such as St Woolo's Cathedral (pictured), Bath Abbey, Llanelli Parish Church and other local churches – which must have made it a long day for those with big distances to travel.



On many such occasions the Provincial Prior would thank those steadfast Bro Kts who had travelled from West Wales every year (even during the First World War - when travel must have been difficult).

After 1918, the Taunton Masonic Hall was added as a venue for our Provincial Priory meetings - and later Frome Masonic Hall.

By 1953 the number of members within the Province (of Somerset, Monmouth and South Wales) had grown so large that it was possible to divide it into two provinces, creating the Province of Somerset and the Province of Monmouth and South Wales. The pattern of Provincial venues was of course altered as a result and the rotation became Newport, Cardiff and Llanelli.

However, as we know the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry and it was interesting to read the following extracts from our own Provincial history book:

“1956 – The Meeting of the Provincial Priory was held under the banner of Morganwg Preceptory but it was not held at Cardiff Masonic Temple but at the Masonic Hall in Newport. The reason for this was that a fire had damaged the Catering Department of the Cardiff Masonic Hall Company.”

“1961 – The Provincial Priory Meeting should have been held at the Masonic Temple, Cardiff but as the Temples at Cardiff and Newport were in the hands of the builders it was not possible to hold the meeting at either of these two places. It met therefore at the Masonic Hall, Llanelli under the banner of Giraldu Cambrensis Preceptory.”

It is also interesting to note that for a great many years the meeting date of the Provincial Priory was determined by the regular meeting date of the Preceptory under which the Provincial meeting was held.

During the 1970s the annual meeting was held at Aberaeron on two occasions. In the following decade it was held at Swansea on several occasions as well as at Porthcawl.

All of which brings me to the big final question which I shall leave for you to mull over and perhaps research. Where were the meetings held after 1989 and when did Bridgend become our settled venue?

Answers to me please at provprior@kt-msw.org before 15 July. I have a special prize for the winner. Enjoy the week Brother Knights.



Searching for The Templar Treasure

One of the abiding myths about our historical forebears is that they accumulated enormous wealth following some mysterious discovery at the Temple in Jerusalem.

Was it a secret connected to our Great Heavenly Captain such as the Spear of Destiny or the Shroud of Turin or was it something more ancient like the Ark of the Covenant; or maybe Dan Brown was right and it was the Holy Grail?

If it was one or more of these artifacts, the question remains where is the treasure now? An American archaeologist Dr Albert Lin has been fascinated by these questions for many years and has been given permission to explore a Templar Fortress where it is thought their treasure may have been stored. His exploration was filmed by a team from National Geographic who made a documentary about his work.

(This picture is of The Templar Hall at Acre).



Speaking on the programme, he said:

"These warrior monks are the stuff of legend, and so is their gold. During the Crusades the Knights Templar battled for God, gold and glory. Somewhere in the modern city of Acre lies their command centre, and possibly their treasure. It's the stuff of childhood dreams. I'm here to find them."

The third Crusade which is famous for the tussle between Richard the Lionheart and Saladin the Moor included a famous siege at Acre and ended in its eventual fall in 1291 marking the end of the Templar Kingdoms in the Middle East.

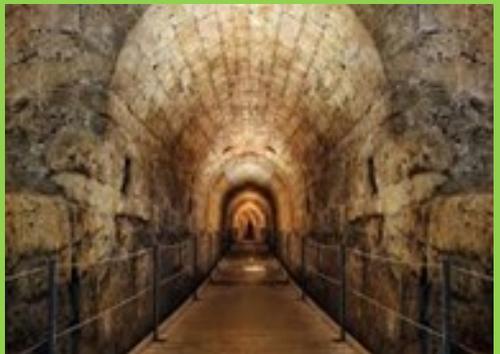
Dr Lin has been granted access to previously unknown parts of the Fortress of Acre which so dominated the coast of the Mediterranean.

Acre, modern Akko, was the major port of the Kingdom of Jerusalem jutting into the sea with huge walls to protect the landward side. Its harbour was protected by a mole, on which stood the tower of Flies (In Acre the Templars and of the Hospitallers formed separate enclaves, each capable of individual defence

The historian David Nicolle has observed: *"But even though, after the third Crusade, the Kingdom of Jerusalem now consisted of no more than a narrow coastal strip from Acre to Beirut, it remained rich and the annual revenues were greater than the normal revenues of the King of England"*

The main passageway underneath the citadel was excavated in the late 20th century and has since been opened to the public as a visitor attraction.

This passageway led from the forward tower to the Tower of Flies on the Mole and Dr Lin has dubbed this the Templar's 'treasure tower' and he believes that this secret passageway might have been used to move the Templar treasure for loading onto ships to be spirited away to greater safety.



Dr Lin and his team used LiDAR technology, and scanned the area of the site that was the key fortress for the Templars during the Third Crusade. The technology uses lasers and detectors to scan the earth without disturbing any artefacts. Scans revealed more secret passageways and a guardhouse hidden beneath the modern city.

As well as the passageways, the team of archaeologists discovered the remnants of the warriors' lavish fortress headquarters. According to Dr Lin, the work has revealed how the knights moved gold to their fabled "Treasure Tower".



"But the tower is buried beneath metres of dirt and rock and it is not clear if there will be a future excavation". Dr Lin added: "The Templar's hidden tunnels snaked beneath the streets.... They secretly transported gold to the Acre fortress' crowning glory, its Treasure Tower."

The entrance to the newly discovered caverns and passageways is through an old doorway behind a shopping area. The first descent is into the crypt of the Old Templar Church and a ladder takes the explorer a further 30 feet down a shaft into hidden passages exposed by Dr Lin's survey.

Dr Lin was filmed when first exploring these passages with local archaeologist, Eleazar, and was heard to say *"so we're standing where real medieval Knights Templar hung out"*, after coming to terms with the 'fingernails down the blackboard' moment of American vernacular his sense of awe at where he found himself was palpable

As they moved through the tunnels, Eleazar pointed out that three 25,000-gallon underground water tanks have been excavated so far and he believes there are many more awaiting discovery. (This picture shows A column-head in one of Acre's newly discovered underground passageways).



For us modern-day Templars there is an ancillary question to be considered. Is Dr Lin right when he says that he thinks the Templar treasure is still buried at Acre or was it carried away from the Mole area just before Acre fell in 1291.

Tantalisingly for us, if it was taken from Acre, where did it go? A clue to its mysterious location may lie in the final days of the Order in 1307. It is recorded that the Templars had a fleet of 18 ships based at La Rochelle and that this fleet left laden with knights and treasures just before the issue of the warrant for the arrest of Order.

This information is, however, based on a single testimony from Jean de Chalon who says that he *"heard people talking that Gerard de Villiers had put to sea with 18 galleys....and the whole treasury"*.

The destination of the fleet was reputed to be Scotland which may explain the legend of Rosslyn Chapel.

Yet another legend suggests that the fleet headed for north America and made landfall at Nova Scotia at a small island known as Oak Island. But these are stories for another day!

If you have access to Netflix, you may like to watch a series called 'Knightfall' which begins in Acre at its final fall and suggests that the treasure stored there was none other than the Holy Grail itself; an entertaining series but based upon known Templar facts!

Brother knights, once more: To all Knights Templar wheresoever dispersed, over the face of earth or water'

Yours in the Bonds of the Order

E Kt Paul Eustace Provincial Second Constable (West Yorkshire)

Great Friendship or two knights on one horse

As you will have noticed, the main theme of this issue of our newsletter has been the friendships that we have formed though the United Orders - not just in our own Preceptory but also with the members of other Preceptories and other Provinces at events like the meeting of Provincial Priory.

Concern for each other is a key part of that experience and I am especially pleased to pass on the recent good news from St David's Preceptory at Narbeth.



Like many Masonic groups, St David's has suffered a number of serious health issues in recent months, not least when two of its senior members went in to hospital but the news is that both of them are now home and on the road to recovery.

However, in sending our good wishes to E Kts John Everett and Mike Davies, I urge you to avoid troubling their families with your enquiries at this time but to communicate via the Almoner E Kt John Watson at pgawwales@gmail.com

Our Almoners are doing sterling work especially in phoning round and checking up on others (as we are all encouraged to do) but have you ever thought about who checks up on the Almoners?

The Provincial Almoner E KT Tony Jones is always keen to hear from you. His phone number is 07834 625950.

Answers to the Page One Quiz:

1. Domme
2. A Triangle, surmounted with a cross
3. Martyrdom