

A little Knight Templar news does you good

Staying in touch



Dear Brother Knights

In Wales, Preceptory Registrars—and many others—breathed a sigh of relief this week, when it no longer became necessary to issue summonses for meetings that were inevitably going to be abandoned owing to the Covid restrictions.

The lifting of that requirement was made possible by the

suspension of face to face KT meetings that was announced this week and it is a move that will remain in force until further notice.

Naturally, the situation will be kept under constant review and when it is legal and safe to lift the suspension we will once again with great gusto resume physical meetings.

In the meantime, please make full use of a special facility that is available to our Order and those administered from Mark Masons Hall—namely the holding of Virtual Business Meetings online.

I am keen to encourage all Preceptories to hold such Virtual Business Meetings—in place of their normal meetings -so that the domestic business of each Preceptory can be kept up to date in readiness for the time when face to face meetings can resume.

In the meantime stay safe and in good heart.
Yours in the bonds of the Order
R E Kt Paul Calderwood



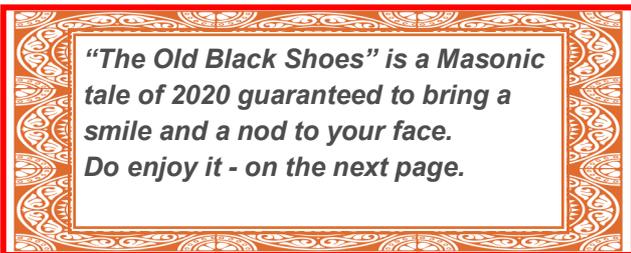
QUIZ QUESTIONS

This week's Quiz questions came from E KT Jamie Ingham Clark, a Trustee and member of the Board of the Eye Hospital:

1. When was the eye hospital in Jerusalem founded?
2. How many more times is eye disease prevalent in the Middle East than in the West?
3. How long has KT been supporting the hospital?

For the next quiz

Please send your Questions to paulcalderwood@btinternet.com



THE OLD BLACK SHOES

by R. W. Bro. Roger Pemberton, P. G. M., Shropshire



The old black shoes are looking glum
As I pass the lobby door,
“What’s wrong with you?” they seem to say,
“We’re going out no more.
We’ve taken not a single step,
Not third or even first,
And ne’er a sign we’ve seen you give,
Has Masonry been cursed?”
“It has”, I said, “by virus vile,
We have to stay at home
Until such time the plague has passed,
Then once more we can roam.
The Masons’ Halls are empty,
Regalia put away,
Gavels now stay silent,
D. Cs. hold no sway.

Volumes of the Sacred Law
On pedestals redundant,
Now Brother Jim contacts his friends
By social posts abundant.
No handshake, word or secret sign,
No friendly Festive Board,
No Tyler’s song to say Goodnight,
No organ’s well-loved chord.”
“Black shoes,” I said, “do not despair,
Our Chain is firm and strong;
Our flag of love remains unfurled
We’ll sing again our song.
And though our Brethren may have passed
To Grandeur Lodge Above,
We’ll look upon their memories
With everlasting Love,
And in their name, we’ll offer help
And soothe the burdened heart;
We’ll comfort those who are distressed,
Thus Masons play their part.

And when this crisis is resolved
We’ll sing the old refrain,
Happy to Meet, Sorry to Part,
Happy to meet again.”

THE PROVINCIAL SWORD

Another Masonic Mystery is about to be explained!

In the Templar Quiz earlier this month, E Kt Carl Davies posed a very good question about “the Provincial Sword”, namely “what is inscribed on it”, and the answer that he supplied was as follows:



The sword was presented to the Holy Palestine Preceptory no 502 at its consecration on the 1st May 1981 in Swansea By Kt Hayden Edward Jones 2nd Constable and Kt Alexander John Edward Hannan 1st Herald

I therefore posed an extra question which was how did this sword (which seemed to belong to a Preceptory) come in to use as the Provincial Sword and—thanks to a member of Holy Palestine Preceptory, the Most Eminent and Supreme Grand Master Paul Raymond Clement, we now know the answer, which is as follows:

The driving force behind the formation of Holy Palestine was Peter Glyn Williams and he charged Hayden Jones and Alex Hannan with the task of sourcing all the necessary equipment, which they did at their own expense. The Sword was bought from a Swansea trader by the name of Jack Bate who ran an agency for Masonic Regalia and publications at his home, the business was called Castle Engravers. I think he charged them £190.00 for the Sword which is remarkably cheap even back in the 1980's. The sword was meant for the Sepulchre at Swansea except that it was clearly too big, and quite honestly, not suitable. The Provincial Prior at the time asked if he could borrow it as it was not being used, and the rest, as they say, is history. I think both Hayden and Alex served as Provincial Sword Bearers so they did get the chance to carry it. I hope the Province will continue to look after it for us. The wooden case that I assume it's still kept in was made by Harry Steele, known as Uncle Harry (he was actually my wife Molly's uncle but everyone, including Grand Master Leslie called him Uncle Harry). During my 12 years as Provincial Marshal it lived under the settee in my hallway with the Provincial Banner hanging on the wall.

Christmas gift problems solved here

The “Gift of Sight Fair” is held every year so that people can buy Christmas Gifts in a way that benefits the Eye Hospital of St John in Jerusalem.

Because of Covid it will be held as an **online** fair this year from **2 to 15 Nov**. For gift ideas and full details please visit <https://www.brilliantlittlebrands.com/giftofsight>

In addition there is also a Silent Auction which you can find out about at <https://www.givegy.uk/stjohnauction/?controller=home>



The Senior Service
A Brief History of the Hospitallers : Part 3
by E Kt Tony Jones, Provincial Almoner



In 1530, the island of Malta was ceded to Philippe Villiers de L'Isle Adam, Grand Master of the Order, by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, with certain conditions attached. One of those conditions has since taken on a life of its own. Charles required an annual tribute be presented to himself, and his mother, Joanna the Mad, of Castile as monarchs of Sicily, payable on All Saints Day, 1st November each year. That tribute was a falcon: *Falco Peregrinus Brookei*, a Mediterranean region subspecies of the Peregrine Falcon, aka "The Maltese Falcon". In the 1930 novel by Dashiell Hammett, and the subsequent Humphrey Bogart film of 1941, this was a statuette made of solid gold, and encrusted with precious stones said to have been made by the Knights of St. John. It was fabulously valuable. In order to disguise it in the media story, it was coated with black enamel so appeared to be a plain statuette. Needless to say, this was purely a literary device, and the actual golden bird did not exist. Interestingly, the movie prop, said to be made of enamelled lead, disappeared after the release of the film, resurfacing in the 1980's. It was bought at auction, in 2016, for a price, including commissions, of more than \$4 million. No gold involved, certainly one of the most highly valued pieces of movie memorabilia ever.

The military conditions consisted largely of repressing the Moorish rovers in the Mediterranean and beyond, including the Barbary Pirates, and were vigorously pursued.

The ceding of Malta to the Hospitallers also included the closely neighbouring island of Gozo and the Libyan port of Tripoli. This latter was clearly a very useful, though often overlooked foothold on the "other" side of the Mediterranean as a trading post, harbour and re-supply base. Unfortunately, this territory was lost to the Ottomans in 1551.

The Hospitaller Navy now became known as the Maltese Navy and, at various times possessed and sailed Galleys, Galleons, Carracks, Frigates, Xebecs and, ultimately, Ships of the Line. Presuming the rest to be self explanatory, Carracks were ocean-going cargo vessels, and Xebecs were large, but shallow draught cargo vessels used in the Mediterranean and near surrounds. Ships of the Line were generally larger and more heavily armed than Frigates, designed to be used in the line-to-line broadside engagements which characterised many naval battles in the seventeenth to nineteenth century.

From the thirteenth to the eighteenth century, the Order's seafaring adventurers participated in many engagements, and acquitted themselves very well until the latter period of their existence when they attracted negative notices for corsairing, or privateering. This was largely due to a shortage of funds, but there was some concern that captains were fitting out their own ships from profit, and not passing on all of their gains through the proper channels, whilst not always targeting the appropriate shipping.

The Hospitaller/Maltese Navy was considered to have reached its peak in 1680 under the Grand Master Gregorio Carafa, and were disbanded following the French invasion of Malta under Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798. Most of the Maltese ships were seconded into the French Navy.

In 1800, the British took possession of Malta where there were 3 remaining Maltese/Hospitaller ships. Two were broken up; the third, the San Giovanni, which the French had captured on the stocks in 1798 and launched and commissioned as Athenien was captured by The Royal Navy at or prior to the sur-render of Valletta, on 4 September of that year, and took her into service as Athenienne. She was wrecked near Sicily, with great loss of life, in 1806. HMS Athenienne was a 64-gun ship of the line. Thus demonstrating the extent to which the Hospitaller/Maltese Navy had progressed from its early twelfth century beginnings with mediaeval Galleys.

Hence we see the depth of the Order's involvement in the realms of sea power. The Hospitallers being proven the Senior Service in time and occupation.

During the Hospitallers tenure of Malta, other things were happening in Europe. In 1538 and 1540, the remaining Pories of the Order in England were dissolved by Henry VIII as part of the overall dissolution of the monasteries. Protestant reform in Germany and elsewhere also affected the Order's outlook on the world. Thus, in Protestant Europe the order fragmented.

In other parts of Europe and elsewhere, the Order fared somewhat better, becoming The Sovereign Military Order of Malta, the Catholic order of descent. This organisation is current, based in Rome, is regarded as a sovereign State, and has Observer Status at the UN.

In England and Wales, we have The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, also known as St. John International, which runs St. John's Ambulance and The St. John Eye Hospital which our Masonic Order supports with substantial charitable donations.

One final thing that has always intrigued me: The Jolly Roger, the Pirate's flag. In what follows, I can only give you speculation, fond imaginings and circumstantial information.

I cannot, now, find a source, however, at some time in the past I had an association in my mind relating the Templar Beauceant, a black and white battle standard, with the idea of the Jolly Roger being the maritime equivalent. Clearly wishful thinking, however. There was the story of one Roger de Flor, a Templar Sea Captain, expelled from the Order, who used such a flag. This story seems to have little modern support.

Looking at the Hospitallers, though, we know they fought many engagements with the Barbary Pirates, for whom there is some support in having used plain black standards and the skull and crossbones flag. In the seventeenth century, there was genuine concern at the Hospitallers ships having taken up corsairing, or privateering and behaving at times little better than the Muslim corsairs of the day. Who is to say that the Hospitaller captains did not also use the flag to confuse coastal Installations and other shipping as to their identity and intent.

Indeed. In 1625, Muslim corsairs mounted a raid on Cornwall. Yes, Cornwall, England, and they flew a green flag with a skull motif. They were looking for Christian slaves; a great commodity in the slave markets of the Middle East. All this is interesting, but how, I wondered did the Jolly Roger make it into the pirates lore of the Caribbean.??

Well now. From 1651 to 1665, the Order of Saint John ruled four islands in the Caribbean. On 21 May 1651 it acquired the islands of Saint Barthelemy, Saint Christopher, Saint Croix and Saint Martin.

These were purchased from the French Compagnie des lies de l'Amerique which had just been dissolved. In 1665, the four islands were sold to the French West India Company.

These dates, of course, have some resonance with other events in the Caribbean which may be relevant or not.

This was not a particularly enlightening period in the history of our great Order, but maybe, just maybe it provides a smoking gun on the flag. You'll just have to make up your own mind.

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The answers to the Quiz Questions on page one are as follows:

.1. 1882 2. Ten 3. More than 100 years