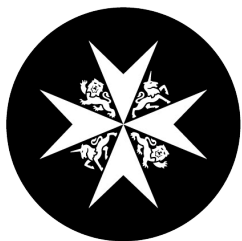


ONE ST JOHN

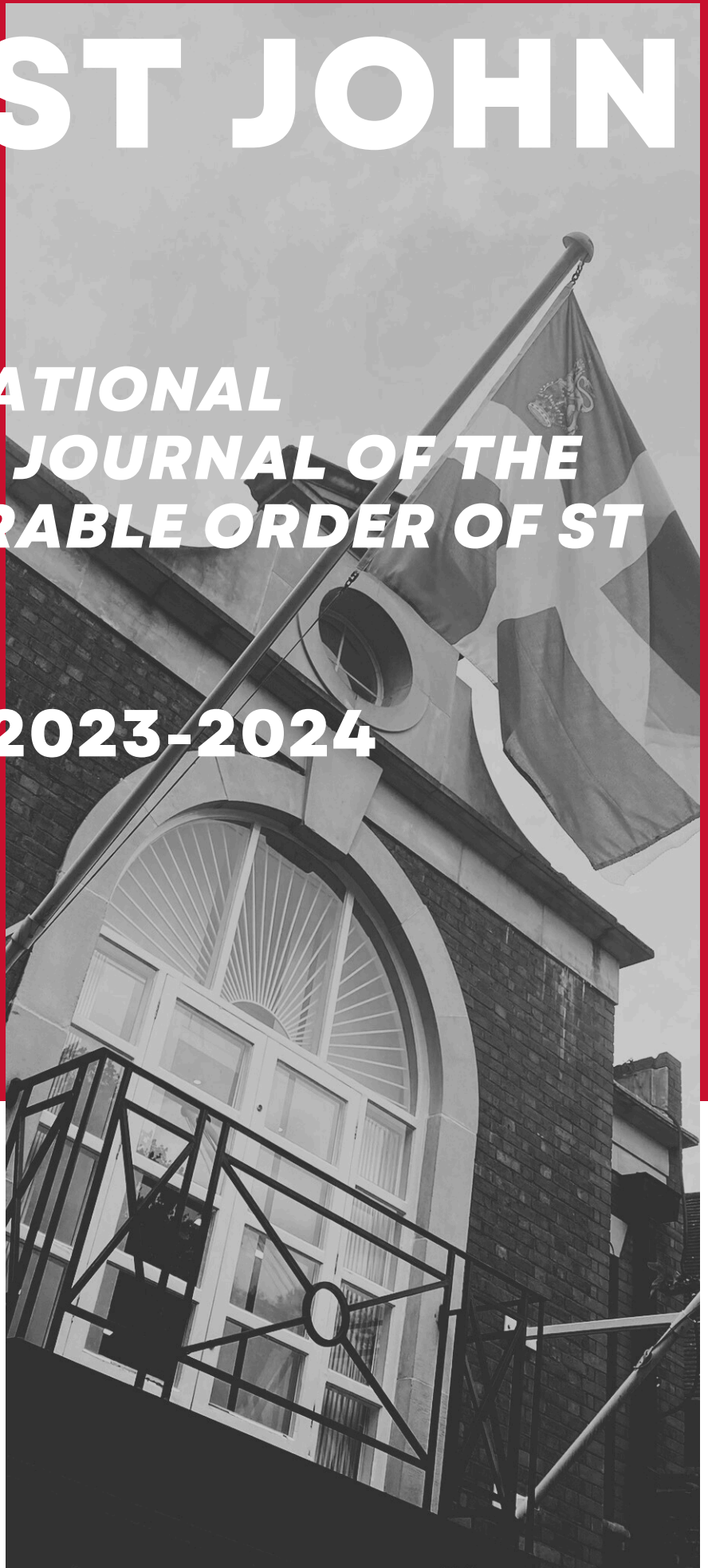
***THE INTERNATIONAL
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MOST VENERABLE ORDER OF ST
JOHN***

VOLUME 9, 2023-2024



St John

International





One St John Vol. 9 (2023/2024)

The Orders of St John (Origins and Development)

1. Reflections on term as Chancellor and Interactions with the Alliance Orders of St John and SMOM
Dr Gillian Willmore
International (Order Chancellor emerita)

2. 1023 AD – The Beginning of the Ethos of Humanitarian Care of the Order of St John
Dr David Verity
International (Hospitaller)
Dr Matthew Glozier
International (Deputy Librarian)
Australia (Priory Librarian)

3. The Orders of St John: An Overview
Dr Ian Howie-Willis
Australia

4. The Historical Antecedents of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem
Professor Anthony Mellows
International (Lord Prior emeritus)
Professor Jonathan Riley-Smith
International (Order Librarian emeritus)

5. “A Royal Founding”: How King George IV invented the insignia of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem
Dr Matthew Glozier
International (Deputy Librarian)
Australia (Priory Librarian)

6. Establishing an Order of Chivalry: the Royal Charter of 1888
Todd Skilton
International (Librarian)
New Zealand (Priory Librarian)

7. The origin and development of the motto—“Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum”: a modern invention of the Most Venerable Order of St John
Dr Matthew Glozier
International (Deputy Librarian)
Australia (Priory Librarian)



St John

Professor Peter Kurrild-Klitgaard

Denmark (International + Johanniterorden)

8. The charism of chaplaincy in the Order of St John

Rev Dr Noel Cox

New Zealand (Priory Regional Chaplain)

9. The Orders of St John: an overview of cooperation and care-provision via Johannine mutual humanitarian support in Australia

Col. (Dr) Michael Campion

Australia + SMOM

10. Why Heads of Royal Houses Denounce False Orders

Guy Stair Sainty

USA + SMOM



Welcome to this edition of *One St John*, the international Historical Journal of the Order of St John. Each year a volume has been published in electronic format on the website of St John International, the London-based governing body of the Order. From inception, the editorial team of Dr Ian Howie-Willis and Professor John Pearn gathered together and refreshed a range of interesting historical articles (many drawn from *St John History*, the annual journal of the St John Ambulance Historical Society of Australia). I joined the editorial team in 2018 and am now the sole editor of the Journal, operating with the guidance and encouraged of the Order's Librarian, Todd Skilton.

This volume, the ninth to appear in the series, continues the Journal's evolution from the previous issue. The articles appearing in this edition have been solicited from St John historians around the world, specific to a central theme. An important aspect of this development is the transition to a biennial publication schedule, so that Volume 9 spans 2023/2024.

Volume 9's theme is "the Orders of St John", the plural form referring to the Alliance of Johannine chivalric orders and encompassing the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (SMOM). While the theme is fairly broadly interpreted, Volume 9 traces the origins and development of the orders and their relationship to one another and humanitarian works in the world. As a result, this volume contains a significant amount of new research specific to that theme but ranging widely across time, place and topic.

It is important to note that the contributors to Volume 9 belong to Pories and Associations of the Order from around the world - including England and the Islands, New Zealand, and Australia. SMOM contributions come from the USA and Australia, and the Johanniterorden is represented by a Danish contributor. This means Volume 9 represents a real advancement for *One St John* towards becoming *the* key historical publication of the Most Venerable Order of St John, but one that also promises to provide an important forum for the Alliance orders and SMOM. Efforts to include a diversity of members from even wider afield are already well under way, including the aspiration to continue publishing historical articles written by members of the Alliance and SMOM.

The next two volumes of *One St John* are projected around the themes of "Women and the Order - medieval, modern, future" (Vol 10 2025/2026) and "the Order abroad - works around the world" (Vol 11 2027/2028).

To return to this current edition, "the Orders of St John" is the focus of articles by authors associated with St John International: Chancellor *emerita* Dr Gillian Willmore, Hospitaller Dr David Verity, Order Librarian Todd Skilton, and Deputy Librarian Dr Matthew Glozier. Former Lord Prior, the late Professor Anthony Mellows also appears along with past Order Librarian Prof Jonathan Riley-Smith. Priory authors include Dr Ian Howie-Willis, Rev Dr Noel Cox, Dr Michael Campion,



St John

and Guy Stair Sainty; the last two historians also representing SMOM. A special addition to this impressive contributor list is Professor Peter Kurrild-Klitgaard from Denmark, writing as a representative of the *Johanniterorden*. Each author presents a different aspect of the Johannine orders. "Origins" are the subject of articles by Anthony Mellows, David Verity, Todd Skilton, Matthew Glozier, and Ian Howie-Willis. "Cooperation" is the focus for Gillian Willmore and Peter Kurrild-Klitgaard. "Spirituality" is the subject for Michael Campion and Noel Cox. "Identity and legitimacy" is the focus for Guy Sainty.

Volume 9 of *One St John* represents a significant achievement in advancing the level of inclusion of Order members from around the globe and their valuable original research on this important theme associated with the Order's heritage. I want to thank all the contributors for their willingness to offer fresh research and perspectives and for their promptness in supplying articles of a high standard in a professional and polished manner. I hope Volume 9 brings both joy and instruction to its readers.

Dr Matthew Glozier
Editor of *One St John*
Deputy Librarian of the Order of St John
4 July 2024

1. Reminiscences of a former Chancellor – Perspective on Inter-Order Relations, 2020-2023

Dr Gillian Willmore GCStJ

The four calendar years 2020-2023 turned out to be a time of historical transition. In the Venerable Order we experienced the grief of losing our Sovereign Head, Queen Elizabeth II, for whom St John had been a lifelong personal and family priority; then the welcome of a new Sovereign Head, whom the Lord Prior visited soon after the King's accession, requesting Buckingham Palace custodians to bring out the extraordinarily beautiful St John Order insignia for the monarch and locate the mantle last worn by George VI. It was clear that Charles III was intrigued and happy with the result of this visit.



Image: The Sovereign Head's Insignia. (courtesy Priory of Scotland of the Order of St John).

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta (SMOM) wrestled radically with constitutional issues during this period. The Lord Prior wrote to offer our moral support, while respecting the integrity of unique historical and cultural processes.

Finally, after the devastating shock (in European terms) of the invasion by Russia of Ukraine in February 2022, an opportunity arose for a unique act of co-operative commitment between all five Johannine Orders. The Rhodes Project: vans bearing the arms of all five Orders, each carrying a medical doctor and a psychosocial counsellor, finding and visiting traumatised children and offering community games, kindness and integration support. More widely, those of our St John Pories who wished contributed generously to Malteser International and *Johanniter* International funds for

work on the ground in the Ukraine where St John has no footprint. The St John Priory in the United States of America and the Priory of Canada both each contributed at least USD\$20,000 in an act of fraternal solidarity. This has not gone unrecognised in terms of our core values *pro Fide et pro utilitatem hominum*. I received an email from the United Nations in New York office of the Permanent Observer of SMOM to the effect that the highest authorities in the Vatican regarded our involvement as “practical ecumenism”.

For the Venerable Order, the death on 8 September 2022 of Elizabeth II our Sovereign Head, her funeral on 19 September 2022 and the Coronation of Charles III on 6 May 2023 enabled us to participate publicly for the first time in modern history in a televised funeral and later Coronation procession. In Order robes, the Lord Prior processed in Westminster Abbey on both occasions and for the funeral he was joined by the CEO of the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital as well as a young woman volunteer member of the Chapter of the Priory of England, a member of the Moslem faith, to embody the range of our continuing commitment to diversity in volunteer engagement.

It is difficult to exaggerate the pride and interest with which Members of St John, and of the Alliance and the Sovereign Military Order watched these ceremonies on their televisions and online broadcast programmes all over the world – as I was told with great enthusiasm by the newly retired Grand Hospitaller of SMOM, in Paris a month after the event, when attending a French *Johanniter* Jubilee as a fraternal gesture on behalf of the Order. It was the Sixtieth Anniversary of the foundation of the French Commandery. I went over by Eurostar the week before St John’s Day 2023 and enjoyed memorable hospitality after an austere Calvinist communion service, met some new Knights, who when they realised I would be processing with them behind the French SMOM contingent expressed considerable interest that the Venerable Order had embraced twenty-first century realities in terms of including a woman Great Officer in our constitution and strength. The ceremonial discipline of the French *Johanniter* as our processional column was prepared in the vestry had a Napoleonic fierceness and rigour (with no linguistic concessions, as you might imagine). I was grateful for the at the time frustratingly high standards of my school French teacher in the 1960s.

As regards the theme of inclusion, SMOM and the *Nederland Orde* of the *Johanniter* have women in their governing boards but not, so far, within the ranks of Great Officers. The *Johanniter* of Sweden are contemplating this step, anticipating the eventual crowning of a future Queen of Sweden who they anticipate may not respond positively to a perception of entrenched all male privilege. Their young *Kommendator* (Governing Commander) Otto Drakenberg is setting about revising the structure of the *Johanniter Orden* in

Sweden (against articulate and entrenched odds, it has to be said). He previously represented Sweden in the Olympics as a fencer and is a dynamic and determined person. I think he will succeed.

The Sovereign Military Order, 2020-2023

A series of internal events inspired the intervention of the Pope in a radical reappraisal of the Constitution of the Sovereign Military Order. In 2021 the tenure of the Lieutenant of the Grand Master was extended from one year to an open-ended period. After the sad death of the Lieutenant of the Grand Master, Fra' Marco Luzzago, on 8 November 2022, Fra' John Dunlap was promoted to the Lieutenancy. He had received a Knighthood of the Venerable Order from the Grand Prior in London at my Installation on 8 September 2021, an event which had been delayed for over a year by Covid-19 and had to take place with the Lord Prior still confined to Australia by lockdown rules. John brought over Fra' Emmanuel Rousseau (currently SMOM Grand Commander – in effect Deputy Grand Master until 2019) and his own good friend the Permanent Observer of SMOM in the UN in New York, Ambassador Paul Beresford-Hill, whose company we greatly enjoyed and who generously contributed a leather bound volume to the Library at St John's Gate. We held a terrific self-funded dinner at the Gate in honour of my predecessor Patrick Burgess the night before the ceremony, when the Grand Prior presided and met some of our overseas confrères, both *Johanniter* and SMOM. It was a very special occasion when friendship was cemented and in the light of his later vocation to the exacting role of Grand Master, ratified by the SMOM Sovereign Council in Spring 2023, a strategically fortunate moment for inter-Order relationships. John Dunlap's knighthood was a consequence and recognition of the tireless and inspired sustained chairmanship of a joint Alliance and SMOM committee which meets twice a year (once now online) to examine the profiles of Unrecognised Orders and to resolve on appropriate joint and shared action.

The wider role and function of Chancellor of the Order in relation to the Alliance Orders

The Order Chancellor, under the Lord Prior, bears St John primary responsibility for building relationships within the Alliance Orders. These have international operational reach, in fact some global reach in the footprint of earlier colonial influence; for example the Brandenburg *Johanniter* in South and East Africa. I noticed that both the *Johanniter* and SMOM were able to attract German Government funding when I was in Kenya for example no doubt as an expression of this inheritance. The leadership of the Alliance Orders and SMOM is essentially European in nature whereas the Venerable Order always delegates to local leadership worldwide, recognising political independence as a priority within the

Commonwealth and apparently evolving fewer direct connections, if any, with British Overseas Aid.



Image: The Kenyan roadside First Responder unit historic meeting of myself as Chancellor with the Director of *Johanniter* International Susanna Wesemann on my left in the photograph (with Josefina the St John Kenya unit leader seated on my right in the photograph). The *Johanniter* International Director was sent out from Berlin by the Chancellor of the Balley Brandenburg to attend the Venerable Order Knighting of the President Uhuru Kenyatta, which was my reason for visiting St John Kenya in May 2022.

Within St John, the Order Chancellor's primary responsibilities include overseeing Venerable Order Honours and Awards, participating in the quarterly meetings of the Executive Committee and Trustees, a standing committee of Grand Council, and guaranteeing the integrity of the processes of Priories, attending their ceremonies where possible and beyond that aspiring to encourage and sustain the Order's morale, history and wider culture. In this way, an authoritative approach to our business in relation to that of the other Orders rests in the person of the Chancellor.

On appointment, in January 2020, ahead of St John's Day that year when the role came into force, I felt I had a mountain to climb so requested in March 2020 to attend as an observer, what turned out, due to Covid-19, to be the last fully in-person business meetings of the Order until December 2021. In this way nearly half my own tenure of the post was held negotiating online

ways of meeting the responsibilities of the role. The Lord Prior from his home office in Australia and I from my dining table in Durham in North East England were sometimes jointly invited to a significant online meeting; a memorable example being that of the Priory in South Africa.

I attended and addressed online the US Priory's Investiture weekend in the autumn of 2020 and thereafter signed in for their annual Investiture for three strikingly choreographed online occasions in all as well as witnessing original adaptations of remote and online ceremonial and prayer from the Priory for Wales and the Priory of England. Separately I was invited to address a fascinating and important Canadian meeting of the Commanders of the Priory's seventeen Territories. These greatly enriched wider understanding of the subtle differences of culture within the Order. I made it my business to meet every Prior and Chancellor online to hear the balance of their honours nominations with a view to maximising inclusion and balancing the interests of minority members. St John New Zealand (Hato Hone St John) with their approach to equality for their Maori speaking members, and the Canadian Inuit first aid manual (pictorial symbols replacing many words) were particularly impressive.

For 2020 and the first five months of 2021, as a consequence of Covid-19 lockdown measures in Britain and most of Europe, online constraints applied to the regular twice-a-year meetings with the Alliance and the Sovereign Military Order. For me the online world offered a wonderful excuse for requesting one-to-one Zoom prep meetings with the Secretary General of the Alliance and the Chancellor of the Brandenburg *Johanniter* as the thought of appearing online cold as the only woman (and in fact initially the only member of the Venerable Order) among a series of Zoom boxes of faces from Hungary to France without knowing anyone beforehand in the autumn of 2020 was a daunting one. Once lockdown conventions began to thaw, memorable Alliance and SMOM meetings were held in The Hague as guests of the *Nederland Orde* in October 2021 and April 2023; in Stockholm, hosted by the *Johanniter I Sverige* in April 2022 and in Rome, in the magisterial villa of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta in October 2023.



St John



Image: The group photograph of all senior figures (except our Grand Prior who submitted an apology owing to the recent funeral of Elizabeth II) in Rome in October 2023. On the left of the Lord Prior in the photograph is the Grand Master of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, on his left in the picture Prince Oscar of Prussia, head of the Balley Brandenburg *Johanniter*. "The Sovereign Military Order of Malta and the Council of the Alliance Orders of St John, Rome , 7 October 2023"

Front row: left to right

Laurent Sauquet (Commander, Johanniter Commanderie Francaise); **Otto Drakenberg** (Commander, Johanniterorden I Sverige); **Alexander von Korff** (Chancellor, Johanniterorden); **Oskar, Prince of Prussia** (Herrenmeister, Johanniterorden); **Fra' John Dunlap** (at that time Lieutenant of the Grand Master, SMOM); **Mark Compton** (Lord Prior, Most Venerable Order of St John); **Ernst Karel Greven** (Coadjutor, Johanniter Orde in Nederland); **Mgr John Armitage** (Delegate for the Prelate, SMOM); **Fra' Gottfried von Kuehnelt-Leddihn** (Grand Prior of Austria, SMOM); **Fra' Emmanuel Rousseau** (Grand Commander, SMOM); **Fra' Alessandro de Franciscis** (Grand Hospitaller, SMOM)

Second row, left to right:

Jan Willem Storm van's Gravesande (Chancellor, Johanniter Orde in Nederland); **Kristof Szabadhegy** (President of the Hungarian Association, SMOM); **Gabor Missura** (Chancellor, A Johannita Rend Magyar Tagozata (Hungary)); **Thomas Vorwerk** (Chairman of the CCG, Swiss Commandery, Johanniter); **Gillian Willmore** (Chancellor, Most Venerable Order of St John); **Peter von Sydow** (Hospitaller, Johanniterorden I Sverige (Sweden)); **Laszlo Porcsalmy** (Hospitaller, A Johannita Rend Magyar Tagozata)

(Hungary)); **Ulrich von Glaunach** (Member of the Cooperation Group, SMOM); **Martin von Walterskirchen zu Wolfstal** (President of the Swiss Association, SMOM)

Back row, left to right:

Christian Velten-Jameson (Ordre de Saint Jean, Johanniter Commanderie Francaise); **Elisa Stadlinger** (Member of the CCG, SMOM, (Austria)); **Thibault Jabouley** (Young Members Group & CCG SMOM (France)); **Peter Kurrild-Klitgaard** (Secretary General, Committee on the Orders of St John); **Mark Watson-Gandy** (Chancellor BASMOM (Britain)); **Herbert von Bose** (Commander, Johanniterorden); **Simon Boyd** (Young Members Cooperation Group, Most Venerable Order (USA)); **Mark Broughton** (Chairman, JOIN, Most Venerable Order); **Ingo von Voss** (Secretary General, Alliance of the Orders of St John); **Cristiana Dodi** (Secretariat of the Grand Hospitaller, SMOM); **Andrew Cash** (Chairman of the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group, Most Venerable Order).

The profound respect in which Tony Mellows (Lord Prior from 2008–2014) and my immediate predecessor Patrick Burgess (Chancellor from 2014–2020) had both been held became immediately clear. The Venerable Order's stock was high. As a non-lawyer I recognised that I could not contribute to the constitutional insight offered by either of them, nor to the international distinction of Tony Mellows' gifts which amounted to genius in the service of St John. Instead, from the first meeting, I put my weight behind promoting joint mutual action and developing the work originally begun by Sir Paul Lambert as Secretary-General when he had suggested a small sub-committee "mapping" all the areas of the world where each Order conducted activities. While the Venerable Order nominated a brilliant young Dame from Australia, Sally Hasler, to be present as our St John representative to add zing and insight to its activities, I also attended a number of online meetings and all those held in Europe in person. This new committee is the CCG (the Charity Co-operation Group, a subcommittee of the Alliance Co-operation Group) informally known as the Coffee and Cake Group. Its first meeting took place in Zurich in mid-September 2021, with one representative each of all five Johannine Orders (Nederland, Sweden and Balley Brandenburg *Johanniter*, ourselves and SMOM). Eventually the fruits of this committee together with strong financial backing from the Balley Brandenburg *Johanniter* and SMOM, produced The Rhodes Project mentioned above, to which every Order made a financial contribution.

Generously on Monday 20 September 2021 after the first meeting of the CCG, Chaired and hosted by Thomas Vorwerk, the Swiss Hospitaller, the Swiss Commandery of the *Johanniter* arranged a special service of prayer led both by Protestant *Johanniter* and SMOM Catholic local Prelates followed by a memorable simple though festive dinner at Bubikon, (only a few miles

outside Zurich). Commandery Bubikon was the twelfth-century stronghold of Swiss Knights of the Order of St John and the location of one of the first modern joint meetings of all five Orders, in the 1960s which is recorded in a stained-glass window which was made into a post by the International Office website as part of a Christmas greeting later that year.

Whenever I visited in my role as Chancellor after Covid-19 restrictions lifted for the remaining two years, after addressing the immediate St John task in hand, I tried to ask about or speak to SMOM or *Johanniter* representatives on principle: The Commandery of Ards, in Northern Ireland; The Priory of Scotland; The Priory for Wales, on three occasions; the Priory of England many times, including acting as the Grand Prior's representative at the memorial of Fra' Matthew Festing; the Priory of Kenya, and the Eye Hospital in Jerusalem (where we invited the CEO of the Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem, run by SMOM to a fabulous open air dinner in the old Murestan).

In Kenya in May 2022 it turned out that the *Johanniter* support and share St John-run first responder units at accident blackspots on the notoriously dangerous Nairobi to Mombasa main road. After a very memorable visit to this roadside unit, the local SMOM group took my sister and me into the local prison to visit and witness a St John trained nurse offering Covid vaccinations and to see SMOM TB and HIV work. The SMOM ambulance hub in Nairobi turned out to be staffed by key St John first aid trained people. On the diplomatic level we were invited, along with the CEO and Chancellor of St John Kenya and some senior volunteers to a lavish and unforgettable open-air lunch on the veranda of the SMOM Embassy garden where the Resident, though loyal and gracious, muttered in my ear his private views on the controversial actions of the Pope in stepping into the organisational business of the Order. I smiled and listened and thought but did not say that the same responses would have arisen in the twelfth and fourteenth centuries so that the onward trajectory of the Sovereign Military Order from the perspective of history would turn out to be resilient, its essential character unchanged. I saw the exchange of telephone numbers and smiles on the faces of both our teams and hope that the future will bring through even more synergy to the benefit of the work of both Orders.

I had been sent to Nairobi to dub the President Uhuru Kenyatta Knight for services to St John Ambulance Kenya which he had consistently and generously supported since the inception of the Priory. The Director of *Johanniter* International, Susanne Wesemann, flew out from Berlin and attended the State House ceremony at our invitation. She joined and met the *Johanniter* local volunteer team for the first time and we all joined in a memorable supper at a recognisably ex-British officers' golf club as the guests of a generous Kenyan MP, a patron of St John Kenya.



St John

These thoughts are more memoir than formal history and I hope will give the flavour of an extraordinarily rewarding chapter in office as regards our relations with the other Johannine Orders. The Editor has kindly allowed me considerable latitude in submission because of a recent illness which mercifully now seems to be lifting. Suffice it to say that whereas my first duty and tremendous privilege was always to serve the Venerable Order and try to understand the dynamics, problems and opportunities within our own Order of St John, potential for our fraternal participation in unfolding mutual relationships with the five Johannine Orders, accepting and rejoicing in many natural cultural and historical differences, offered food for thought and, I believe, a strong foundation for future work together, when and where appropriate, in the service of the sick and the poor in the global crises which lie ahead.

2. 1023 AD - the beginning of the Order of St John's ethos of humanitarian care.

Dr David Verity (Hospitalier) and Dr Matthew Glozier (Deputy Librarian)

An introduction from the Order Hospitalier, Dr David Verity:

Legend tells of a hospital in Jerusalem stretching as far back as the Maccabean era in B.C. 100, with more definitive records dating from the sacking of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Roman emperor Titus. Over half a century later, during the reign of King Antiochus V in A.D. 603, Pope Gregory I commissioned a hospital in the Christian Quarter of the Old City to care for pilgrims. However, it was the Persians, not Pope Gregory, who developed the hospital movement in the Middle East. *Bimaristan* is a Persian word (بی م ارس تان *bīmārestān*) meaning "hospital", with *Bimar-* from Middle Persian (Pahlavi) *vīmār* or *vemār*, meaning "sick" plus *-stan* as location suffix (as in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, etc). In the medieval Islamic world, the word 'Bimaristan' was used to indicate a hospital where the ill were welcomed and cared for by qualified staff. Thus, Bimeristan: *The place of the sick*.

One of the first reported Bimeristans comes from the time of Muhammad, when, at the Battle of the Trench in A.D. 627, he ordered a tent be assembled to provide medical care for wounded soldiers. Later, the first Muslim hospital service was built in the courtyard of the Prophet's mosque in the city of Madinah. 150 years later, in A.D. 707, the first formally-recognised Bimaristan was founded in Damascus by al-Waleed bin Abdel Malek, not far from the shrine of St John in the grand Umayyad Mosque. Over time, Caliphs and rulers expanded the Bimaristans to include salaried doctors and pharmacists. Of interest, the Bimaristans across the Islamic world were secular, and served people regardless of race, religion, citizenship, gender, or the ability to pay. No one was turned away, nor there was no limit to the duration of their stay.

If not impressive enough, there were separate male and female wards, equally equipped, with same-gender nurses. These wards were further divided into areas for mental disease, contagion (such as leprosy), non-contagious disease, surgery, medicine, and eye disease. The latter would have involved the management of patients with trachoma (also known as the 'Mesopotamian Scourge' and subsequently the 'Egyptian Ophthalmia'), a blinding disease which also led to the founding of John Eye Hospital over a thousand years later in 1882.

Bimaristans also served as medical schools, and as such might be considered the forebears of modern medical practice. Indeed, Middle Eastern medicine preserved, systematized and developed the medical knowledge of classical antiquity, including Hippocrates, Galen and Dioscorides. Furthermore, meticulous patient records were maintained, forming a valuable resource for managing future patients – Islamic hospitals were the first to keep such written records. Hospital facilities included modern lecture facilities, a kitchen, pharmacy, library, mosque, and a chapel. Open wounds were sterilised with leaches and dressed with honey. Food was served on platters of silver due to its antibacterial properties, and musicians employed to cheer up patients. Was there no end to their ingenuity and understanding of the human condition?

If medical regulation had an origin, it was surely in A.D. 931, when Caliph Al-Muqtadir learned of the death of one of his subjects due to a clinical error. Doubtless the unfortunate physician met an ignominious end, but the event led to the first medical licensing Board, and a Caliphate ministry of Inspection was established.

The beginning

The year A.D. 1023 is the earliest among many dates cited in published histories and online narratives as the time when a group of merchants from the Italian maritime city of Amalfi founded a hospital in Jerusalem. That hospital for Christian pilgrims became the famous centre for the activity of Blessed Gerard and his followers. In 1113, these care-givers received papal recognition as an order of the Church and in time became a military-religious Order originally known as the Knights Hospitaller. It continues to this day as one of the world's oldest and most prestigious orders of chivalry—The Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, called of Rhodes, and of Malta, otherwise known as the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. The Knights Hospitaller were among the first military-religious orders to be created by the Church, during the Crusades era in the Holy Land.* They not only survived but thrived, becoming sovereign masters of Rhodes between 1310 and 1522 and thereafter ruled Malta until 1798. The sovereign status of the Order of Malta is recognised to this day, albeit in a special category without territory.

* A handful of similar orders formed in the Holy Land include the Knights of St Lazarus (c.1098; rec.1255), Knights of the Holy Sepulchre (c.1099; rec.1113), Knights Templar (c.1118; rec.1129), Knights of St Thomas of Acre (c.1191), and the Teutonic Knights (1192).

Given this rich thousand-year history, it seems reasonable to desire to locate the origin-point of the Order's ethos of humanitarian care. Yet, oddly and frustratingly, there is no definitive, referenced investigation in English providing a start-date for the hospital that was its crucible. Other dates than 1023 are commonly to be found – typically 1048, 1063 or 1070. This raises the question: when did the hospital really begin, and is it even possible to determine this from the sources?

Joseph Delaville Le Roulx, the prominent nineteenth-century French historian of the medieval Knights Hospitaller, discussed and analysed in some detail the date for the hospital's foundation.¹ His conclusions are quoted below in translation:

We know, by distinct and concordant testimonies, that merchants of Amalfi, struck by the precarious situation of the Christians of the Holy Land, obtained [from the] Fatimid caliphs of Egypt, masters of Syria, with whom they were in frequent commercial relations, permission for the Latins to establish a church and a hospice in Jerusalem.²

This paper asserts that 1023 is the year that marks the beginning of the ethos of humanitarian care initiated by the merchants from Amalfi. Their efforts coalesced over time into the sophisticated system of hospital work pursued by the Knights Hospitaller. Here we provide the first extensive and scholarly treatment of the question to appear in English, and we give full references for our assertion by setting out the evidence from medieval writers and documents, alongside the learned opinions of historians.

French Protectorate

Long after the conclusion of the era of the Crusades, and for nearly four hundred years, France held a special status in the Ottoman Empire called the French Protectorate of Jerusalem as part of the so-called "capitulation system" in the Ottoman Empire. By 1923, the last vestiges of the protectorate exercised by France – unbroken except for the First World War – over the "Latin" Christians in the Holy Land disappeared.³ At its high-point in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the French Protectorate facilitated some intense historical and archaeological study, especially relating to the era of the Crusades. For this reason, French scholars offered the first learned opinions in favour of an early date for the beginning of the Hospitaller ethos of care in the Holy Land.

Count Melchior de Vogüé was a distinguished French archaeologist, diplomat, and member of the Académie Française. It was de Vogüé who narrowed the foundation

date of the Amalfitan hospital to sometime between 1014 and 1023.⁴ The year 1014 marked the end of the persecution of Christians by the “half-insane” Fatimid caliph, Hakim (al-Hākīm bi-Amr Allāh, 996–1021). Hakim had engaged in a wholesale persecution of Christians in the Holy Land, including the destruction of religious sites, the chief among them being the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Hakim’s era of persecution ceased in 1014, although he lived to 1021. Rebuilding began almost immediately under the patronage of Azizah, a Melkite Christian, who was one of the wives of Hakim’s father, Caliph Aziz (al-‘Azīz bi-llāh, 975-96). It is doubtful she was Hakim’s mother, but Azizah was the mother of his sister.⁵ From 1020 onwards, Nicephorus I, patriarch of Jerusalem (1020–48), directed the restoration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre alongside other Christian structures. He travelled to Constantinople in 1023 to report his progress to the Byzantine emperor, Basil II Porphyrogenitus. The work appears to have faltered a decade-and-a-half later, necessitating the negotiation of a formal agreement concluded in 1037/8 between the Byzantine emperor, Michael IV the Paphlagonian, and the Caliph Mustanşir (Abū Tamīm Ma‘ād al-Mustanşir billāh, 1036–94). Rebuilding resumed and was substantially complete by 1042.⁶



Fig. 1: (above left) Caliph Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah. (Fragment from a bathhouse. Fustat, Egypt, 11th century) © Collection of Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo.

Fig. 2: (above right) Sitt al-Mulk. (Artistic impression, ?16th century).⁷

The year 1023 is claimed as the one in which Caliph Ṣāhir (Ṣāhir li-Īzāz Dīn Allāh, 1021-36) granted formal protection to Frankish religious in Jerusalem via the instrument of a *firman*, a royal mandate or decree issued by the sovereign in an Islamic state. The French scholar, Eugène Boré, said of the Knights Hospitaller:

It is true, their ... antiquity is lost in the mists of time, but [they have existed] in a succession of uninterrupted continuity down to our own day. It would be a mistake to believe that they only settled in Jerusalem at the time of the Crusades. We find them there long before, from the year 414 of the Hegira (1023). The first testimony of their existence and the protection of Muslim princes exists in the archives of the monastery of St Saviour in Jerusalem, and has been read and verified by us in addition to many other scholars.⁸ [In his *firman* the] Sultan ... forbids molesting the “Franks” [French] religious, a word historically very remarkable here, since it proves that the Europeans were already designated by this generic name before the arrival of the Crusaders.⁹

Boré was convinced the *firman* document was genuine, and that it had been issued by Caliph Ṣāhir.¹⁰ He claimed there was also a second document, dated 1039, issued by Caliph Mustanşir, linked to his agreement with Emperor Michael IV.¹¹ The Benedictine scholar, Ursmer Berlière, and the British excavator of Jerusalem, Sir Charles Warren, both confirmed that the *firman* documents once existed in the archives of St Saviour’s convent in Jerusalem.¹² This is the administrative centre of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land.[†] However, recent enquiries have resulted in the Custody archivist confirming that today their earliest documents date from the mid-thirteenth century, soon after the Custody began.¹³

The early 1020s was the most propitious time for Christians to seek privileges in the holy city.¹⁴ This is because, in 1020, the position of regent of the Fatimid caliphate was assumed by Sitt al-Mulk, sister of the late tyrant Hakim and daughter of the Melkite Christian, Azizah. She ruled in name of Hakim’s 15-year-old son, Ali (al-Ṣāhir li-Īzāz Dīn Allāh, 1021-36). Sitt al-Mulk conducted the government of the Fatimid caliphate up to the time of her death in February 1023. Historian Thierry Bianquis calls her “a true stateswoman” who operated on an international level.¹⁵ Following Sitt al-Mulk’s death, an alliance of courtiers and officials ruled the Fatimid caliphate, in line with her policies. This regime desired to please Christians generally and the Byzantines in particular: for example, in 1028 the caliphate authorised the rebuilding of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, destroyed in 1009. This was achieved via the *firman* of 1023 issued in the name of Caliph Ṣāhir to the Byzantine

[†] The Custody of the Holy Land is a custodian priory of the Order of Friars Minor in Jerusalem, founded as the Province of the Holy Land in 1217 by St Francis of Assisi, who had recently founded the Franciscan Order in 1209.

emperor, Romanus III Argyros. It proves that the Fatimid caliphate under Sitt al-Mulk and her immediate successors pursued a program of reconciliation with Christians. Furthermore, gradually from the middle of the ninth century, the weakness of the successors of Charlemagne in the West allowed the Byzantine emperors in Constantinople to take over the task of protecting the Christians of the East. Officially transferred to Constantinople in 1021, this protectorate was exercised by them until Byzantine primacy was challenged by the Seljuk Turks fifty years later.¹⁶

In 1023, merchants from the Amalfitan colony in Constantinople[‡] were able to inhabit and build on an area of land in the Old City of Jerusalem, anciently called the Muristan.¹⁷ This district took its name from the *bīmārestān* (or hospital), that stood there. The term comes from Persian *bīmār* "sick", with the suffix denoting place, *-stān*. Both *bīmārestān* and the shorter form, *mārestān*, were applied to this district in the Old City which stood near the Holy Sepulchre.¹⁸ The Amalfitans built a church dedicated to St Mary, which took on the additional name "of the Latins" to reflect their European origin.¹⁹ They also revived the famous *bīmārestān*, which was in reality more of a hospice than a hospital. Byzantine charitable institutions of this type, called a *xenodochium* (or place of charity), are known from the fifth century. Pope Gregory the Great established a hospice near the Holy Sepulchre in the early ninth century, and it was supported by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charlemagne.²⁰ Its location was inspired by a tradition begun by St Helen,[§] who ensured that at the place of Christ's crucifixion "bread is lavished on poor people and pilgrims".²¹ Bernard the Wise, also called Bernard the Monk (fl.865), was a ninth-century Frankish pilgrim, who left the first detailed account of Charlemagne's hospice:

We reached the holy city of Jerusalem, where we stayed in the hospice of the most glorious emperor Charles. All who come to Jerusalem for reasons of devotion and who speak the Roman language are given hospitality there. Beside it there is a church in honour of St Mary.²²

Charlemagne's hospice is the structure that Hakim destroyed in 1005.²³ This all means that the Amalfi foundation in 1023 was, effectively, a renewal of a pre-

[‡] The Amalfitan presence in Constantinople dated back to at least 945 AD: Jacoby, 'Commercio e navigazione degli Amalfitani nel Mediterraneo Orientale', p. 91.

[§] Flavia Julia Helena Augusta was an empress of the Roman Empire and mother of Emperor Constantine the Great, who sent her to Jerusalem between 326 and 328, in order to locate the tomb of Christ. St Helen found the tomb, the mount on which the crucifixion occurred, and the true cross on which Christ was crucified. Based on her identification of the site, Constantine laid the foundations for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre: John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), pp. 68–9.



St John

existing tradition of worship and hospitality on the Muristan site.²⁴ It is, however, important to emphasize that the Amalfitans initiated a brand-new beginning, albeit one performing the same task in the same location.

Amalfitan merchants

A number of significant early sources support the assertion that the Muristan was entrusted to Amalfitan merchants in 1023.

Amatus Casinensis was a Benedictine monk and historian of the famous and influential Italian religious centre at the Abbey of Montecassino. He lived in the second half of the eleventh century and produced writings dated around the 1070s-80s. He is best known for his historical chronicles of this era, particularly the *History of the Normans*.²⁵ Another of his works is called the *Chronicon* and his writings are a key source for the story of the Norman conquest of Southern Italy which spanned 999 to 1139. Amatus's chronicle was written soon after 1080, making it the first of the Norman histories of Southern Italy to be composed. His expert knowledge of Italian affairs, combined with the date of the work's production, carry authority in determining the beginning of the Amalfitan hospital in Jerusalem.

The Italian maritime city of Amalfi was ruled in the tenth and eleventh centuries by a series of dukes (sometimes called *dogi*, singular: *doge*). The title corresponds with the same usage in the republic of Venice, a maritime rival throughout the Middle Ages. Before the title of "Duke of Amalfi" was formally established in 957, various patricians governed the territory. Amalfi established itself among the earliest maritime trading powers and became renowned throughout the Mediterranean. It was considered for two centuries to be among the most powerful of the Italian maritime republics.

At the time of the foundation of the Amalfitan hospice in Jerusalem in 1023, Sergius II was the Patrician and Duke of Amalfi. He was the son and successor of John I, and had co-reigned with his father until the latter's death in 1007. Sergius made his own eldest son, John II, co-duke, but both of them were deposed in 1028 by his wife Maria of Capua and his younger son, Manso II. Duke Sergius and John fled to Constantinople, whence he never returned. The connection to Constantinople is significant, because by the time of their arrival there was a colony of Amalfitan merchants living there, headed by a nobleman called Mauro.

Mauro dei Maurone Comite

Amatus provides an account of a rich man from Amalfi who financed the foundation of two hospitals – one in Jerusalem and another in Antioch.²⁶ Originally written in Latin, the text of Amatus's *History of the Normans* survives only in a fourteenth-

century French translation, titled *L'Ystoire de li Normant*. The work was not only translated, but also summarized and abridged at points. Despite this, medieval scholar Kenneth Baxter Wolf suggests that the French translation is reliable.²⁷ Amatus relates the following story:

Now goes the story that ... a nobleman of Amalfi, called Mauro ... Standing aloof from the perversity of the people, his whole days were spent contemplating God, and ... [so he] funded those [pilgrims] who were going to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, [the city] where the truth of Jesus Christ had been revealed; they were received in his house and the gold donated [to them for] all necessary things, and the gold helped to complete the shining work [he] had begun; for he had created certain hospitals [both] in Antioch and in Jerusalem, [which were] sustained by the beneficity of his wealth. The fame of this man was reflected almost everywhere; the world was full of his name, so that not only those who knew him, but also those who did not know him, benefitted from his kindness.²⁸

The Amalfitan merchant, Mauro, belonged to a line of wealthy Amalfi patricians.²⁹ The *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* gives a detailed overview of him (and of his son, Pantaleon). It is worth quoting at length Paola Vitolo's biographical entry, because Mauro was the benefactor and endower of the hospital:

He was presumably born in Amalfi at the beginning of the XI century, son of Pantaleone di Mauro ... to the fourth generation of the noble Amalfi lineage of the Maurone Comite, who in the period of the independent Duchy (X-XI century) built their fortunes on trade with Byzantium and with various centres of the Syrian-Palestinian coast, weaving close relations with the highest Byzantine and Muslim political authorities. The origins of this lineage can be traced between the ninth and tenth centuries and its exponents are documented, through numerous branches, at least until the fourteenth century ... [still using] the noble title of *comes* [count]. ... [which] designated the Amalfi aristocracy in the late pre-ducial period

The eleventh century was the period of greatest splendour of the Duchy of Amalfi and its colonies; in particular that of Constantinople then reached the maximum power and its residents had positions of great prestige, finding some of them access even at [the Byzantine] court.³⁰

A biographical account of Mauro's son, Pantaleon, clearly establishes the power, wealth, influence, and religiosity, of both himself and his father:

In addition to being politicians and diplomats, interested in the freedom of their city of origin and always ready to insert it into the great international issues, Mauro and Pantaleon distinguished themselves as shrewd traders, able to manage a vast turnover for the time, open to maritime mercantile

relations throughout the Mediterranean. They also protected men of culture, including the monk John, linked to the Benedictine monastery of Mount Athos in Greece, famous translator of hagiographic works from Greek to Latin. And in particular, they were patrons of remarkable artistic works.³¹

The same biographical entry elucidates the family's patronage of religious institutions, including a cycle of bronze Byzantine doors donated to various Italian churches. It goes on to say:

Pantaleon and Mauro would have founded two hospitals in Jerusalem and Antioch; the Jerusalem one, ruled by Benedictines, is attested by Amato di Montecassino in his work written at the end of the eleventh century and became a hospice for pilgrims visiting the Holy Sepulchre.³²

Due to his focus on the Pantaleon, Gargano supposes these hospitals were established between 1063 and 1071, but Vitolo disagrees.³³ As we have seen, Amatus records Mauro as the sole patron of the hospital (merely mentioning that he was the father of Pantaleon) and Vitolo provides the best guidance for locating the correct date of Mauro's patronage. Her biography of Mauro records:

In May 1023, together with his mother and sister Regale, Mauro proceeded to the division of [his land at] Mount Norule ... among the monastery of Sts Quirico and Giulitta di Atrani, which was entitled to four fifths.³⁴

This monastery was located on the Amalfi coastline and the story highlights several important points, including: Mauro's active involvement in a religious donation in the year 1023, his devotion and sense of Christian duty, and his wealth as head of an affluent, well-established noble family of Amalfi. All of this supports the assertion that he had both the means and motivation to endow two hospitals in the Holy Land as early as 1023, the one in Jerusalem and another in Antioch. The latter location might sound unlikely, but as David Jacoby says:

The vivacity of trade in Antioch under Byzantine domination provided favourable conditions for the establishment of a permanent nucleus of Amalfitans in the city in the 11th century. Some of them resided there when Mauro ... founded a hospice for pilgrims at his own expense.³⁵

The Amalfitan residents in Antioch were traders who probably acted as intermediaries and provided lodging, storage, and transportation for merchants and their goods in transit. Jacoby sees the existence of Mauro's hospice in Antioch as evidence for a strong Amalfitan presence in the city, where they provided lodging and services to pilgrims transported on board Amalfitan ships to the Holy Land.³⁶

In addition to including rich and poor, the pilgrims must have been both male and female, although no explicit mention of women occurs in connection to the hospital until the 1080s.

As a leading member of the Amalfi colony in Constantinople, and a wealthy and influential courtier, Mauro undoubtedly met the patriarch of Jerusalem, Nicephorus I, during his visit in 1023. At this time, he would have been a young man, emphasizing the unusually pious character attributed to him by Amatus. However, contextually he was a man of his time, because it has been said:

The Amalfitans' charitable activities were conducted within the general context of a profound religious reform movement which in many parts of the Latin West involved laymen spiritually concerned with pilgrimage, with service to the poor and with hospices for them.³⁷

It is probable that Mauro was inspired by the example of St Samson the Hospitable, or Samson Xenodochus (literally "Samson who cared for strangers"), an early sixth-century physician resident in Constantinople.³⁸ A Roman patrician by birth, Samson devoted his time to serving the poor and sick of the city, where he turned his home into a free clinic, providing his patients with food and lodging as well as medical care. When he was able to cure the Byzantine emperor, Justinian the Great, of an illness, he asked as his reward assistance in establishing a hospital for the poor. With Emperor Justinian's assistance, Samson's hospital became the largest free clinic in the empire, beginning a six hundred-year tradition of service to the people of Constantinople. Samson's hospital stood right beside the great Church of Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia), built by Emperor Justinian as the Christian cathedral of Constantinople for the Byzantine Empire between 532 and 537.³⁹ This provides a fitting parallel to what Mauro achieved in the Muristan, by restoring the hospice situated next to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

Amalfitan hospice

William of Tyre based his account of the hospital's foundation on the *firman* of 1023, issued in the name of Caliph Zahir. As the pre-eminent primary source for the Crusades era, William's opinion carries great weight. He was raised in Jerusalem and became a medieval prelate and chronicler who served as archbishop of Tyre from 1175 to 1186, located in the crusaders' Latin Kingdom. William also acted as chancellor of the kingdom, in addition to being its senior cleric. Thus, he held two of the highest offices in the crusader state.

His chronicle is titled *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum* (*History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*) or *Historia Ierosolimitana* (*History of Jerusalem*). The work was translated from Latin into French soon after William's death, and thereafter into numerous other languages. It is the only source for the history of twelfth-century Jerusalem to be written by a native. Historians have long-assumed that William's statements could be taken at face value, although he was in fact deeply enmeshed in the dynastic struggle that developed during the reign of King Baldwin IV and his sister successors, Sibylla and Isabella.

Writing in 1169-73, William of Tyre refers to the hospital in the following terms:

One has in the city a church of those from Amalfi ... this church still has the name Saint Mary of the Latins; and there we have a pauper's hospital with a chapel dedicated to Saint John the Almoner. This is the St John who was Patriarch of Alexandria.⁴⁰

A more detailed, modern English translation puts it this way:

There was a monastery in the city, belonging to the people of Amalfi, which was called, as it is even yet, St Mary of the Latins. Close by, also, was a hospital with a modest chapel in honour of blessed patriarch of Alexandria, John the Almoner. This was under the charge of the abbot of the monastery just mentioned. Here aid was given at any time to wretched pilgrims who arrived under such circumstances, the expense being defrayed either by the monastery or from the offerings of the faithful. Scarcely one out of a thousand pilgrims who came was able to provide for himself. Many lost their travelling money and were so exhausted by dreadful hardships that they were barely able to reach their destinations in safety.⁴¹

Oddly, William was mistaken about the identity of the "St John" honoured by the Knights Hospitaller. The Anglo-Saxon pilgrim, Saewulf, writing in 1102, confirmed the hospital was founded in honour of St John the Baptist. He was correct, because this is the saint to whom is dedicated the ancient fourth-century late-Roman or Byzantine period church located at one corner of the Muristan. It was called *Mār Hanna*, Aramaic for St John, and was built in stages between 324–500.⁴² In fact, *Mār Hanna* had been restored by John the Almsgiver in the sixth century, but the Knights Hospitaller only ever had one patron in the form of St John the Baptist.⁴³ The above-ground church of St John that forms part of a modern Orthodox monastery dates to the eleventh century and was built by the Knights Hospitaller, while the original *Mār Hanna* forms the crypt.⁴⁴ By the time the Amalfitans took possession of the site, the ancient *Mār Hanna* structure had sunk to at least three metres beneath the

street level, with its doors and windows blocked, justifying William’s description of it as “modest”.

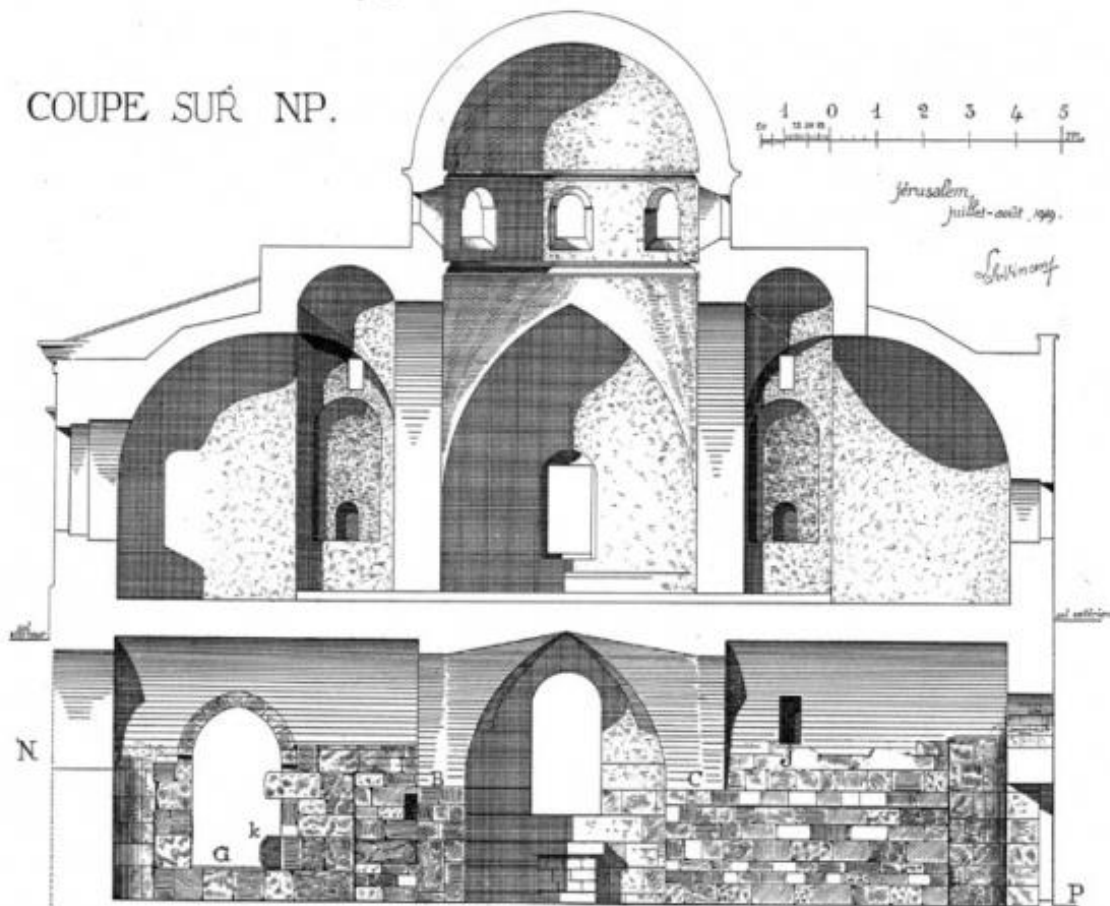


Fig. 3: Cross section of the Church of St John the Baptist, showing the upper section constructed by the Knights Hospitaller in the Crusades era. The lower church, or crypt, is the original *Mār Hanna*, constructed c.324–500 AD (reproduced from Louis-Hugues Vincent and Félix Marie Abel, *Jérusalem nouvelle: recherches de topographie, d’archéologie et d’histoire*, Vol. 2, pt. 1 (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1914), p. 644).

Of course, prior to 1099 Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land were entering Muslim-dominated territory. If they were orderly, they could count on hospitable treatment from the locals within the Islamic Empire. To aid their passage to Jerusalem, Cluniac monks built hostels along the route from Europe; several in Italy, some restricted to the sole use of the Normans. At Constantinople the Hospital of St Samson was reserved for the use of western pilgrims whereas, in Jerusalem itself, they could stay at the Hospital of St John, founded by the merchants of Amalfi.⁴⁵

It is worth quoting at length William of Tyre's well-informed observations regarding the role played by the Amalfitan merchants in establishing and maintaining the hospital:

A written order [a *firman* from the caliph] was accordingly sent to the governor of Jerusalem, directing that a very ample area at Jerusalem, in that part of the city occupied by the Christians, be designated at their request for the people of Amalfi, friends and carriers of useful articles. There they were to erect such a building as they desired. The city was divided at that time, as it is today, into four almost equal parts; of these, that quarter alone which contains the Sepulchre of the Lord, had been granted to the [Christian] faithful as the place of their abode. The rest of the city, with the Temple of the Lord, was occupied exclusively by infidels.

In accordance with the caliph's command, a place sufficiently large for the necessary buildings was set aside for the people of Amalfi. Offerings of money were collected from the merchants, and before the door of the church of the Resurrection of the Lord, barely a stone's throw away, they built a monastery in honour of the holy and glorious mother of God, the Ever-Virgin Mary. In connection with this there were suitable offices for the use of the monks and for the entertainment of guests from their own city.

When the place was finished, they brought an abbot and monks from Amalfi and established the monastery under a regular rule as a place of holy life acceptable to the Lord. Since those who had founded the place and maintained it in religion were men of the Latin race, it has been called from that time until this the monastery of the Latins. ...

During those same perilous times there also flocked thither people of other nations, both nobles and those of the middle class. As there was no approach to the Holy City except through hostile lands, pilgrims had usually exhausted their travelling money by the time they reached Jerusalem. Wretched and helpless, a prey to all the hardships of hunger, thirst, and nakedness, such pilgrims were forced to wait before the city gates until they had paid a gold coin, when they were permitted to enter the city. Even after they finally gained admission and had visited the holy places one after another, they had no means of resting even for a single day, except as it was offered in a fraternal spirit by the brothers of this monastery. All the other dwellers in Jerusalem were Saracens and infidels with the exception of the patriarch, the clergy and the miserable Syrian people. These latter were so overburdened by daily exactions of manifold corvees [forced labour] and extra services, and by work of the most menial nature, that they could scarcely breathe. They lived in the direst poverty and in continual fear of death.

Since there was no one to offer shelter to the wretched pilgrims of our faith, thus afflicted and needy to the last degree, the holy men who dwelt in the monastery of the Latins in pity took from their own means and, within the space allotted to them, built a hospital for the relief of such pilgrims. There they received these people, whether sick or well, lest they be found strangled

by night on the streets. In addition to offering shelter in the hospital, they arranged that the fragments remaining from the food supplies of the two monasteries, namely, of the monks and of the nuns, should be spared for the daily sustenance of such people. ...

This venerable foundation which thus stretched out the hand of charity to its fellow men had neither revenues nor possessions; but each year the citizens of Amalfi, both those at home and those who followed the business of trading abroad, collected money from their own numbers as a voluntary offering. This they sent to the abbot of the hospital, whoever he might be at the time, by the hands of those who were going to Jerusalem. From this money food and shelter were provided for the brethren and sisters and the remainder was used to extend some assistance to the Christian pilgrims who came to the hospital.⁴⁶

William of Tyre's account emphasizes that the Amalfitan merchants and their Benedictine monks consistently offered charity to needy pilgrims from 1023 onwards. In the words of Henry Sire:

Like every monastic house, St Mary of the Latins performed from the first a duty of hospitality to pilgrims, but in Jerusalem that proved a task that soon called for a special dedication of labour. We know that ... Mauro ... was taking steps to provide shelter for pilgrims in Antioch and Jerusalem.⁴⁷

In this way, a short time after acquiring the Muristan site, the Amalfitan merchants appear to have constructed, re-constructed, or adapted a hospital purpose-built to care for the Lord's poor sick in collaboration with the Benedictine brothers of St Mary of the Latins.

William's description is supported by an earlier account, the anonymous *Historia belli sacri*. Also called the *Historia de via Hierosolymis* or *Historia peregrinorum*, this work chronicles the First Crusade and the early years of the Crusader states, known as the Latin Kingdom. The author was a monk of the Abbey of Montecassino, and for this reason it is sometimes called the "Monte Cassino Chronicle". It covers the years 1095–1131 and the *Historia belli sacri* has been described as "a serious and careful effort to ... add ... significant information which is not found in any other source".⁴⁸ This is significant, given Mauro's connexion to Montecassino, and the account was written in an era when there were still survivors of the First Crusade.⁴⁹

An early date of foundation for the hospital is hinted at in a brief, anonymous medieval account of the life of John, Archbishop of Amalfi (c.1070–c.1082). He says that he made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem where he saw the hospital:

Here he went to Palestine for the sake of visiting the holy places, where with the highest he was received with honour by the Amalfitans; who had been in Jerusalem a few years before they had built hospitals to receive men and women, in which they were fed, and the sick were cared for, defending them from the Saracens, and to make it easier they had almost instituted a religious life.⁵⁰

Equally, Jacques de Vitry confirms that “St John’s Hospital had its beginning in the times of the Syrians and Greeks, when the Holy City was still held in bondage under the dominion of the Saracens”.⁵¹ Another early account, written by Ekkehard of Aura, confirms the hospital existed long before the First Crusade of 1099, in fact stating that assistance to pilgrims never ceased. His *Hierosolymita and World Chronicle (On the Crusades)* records that “the hospital ... had never deserted Jerusalem”.⁵² This narrative is further supported by that of Albert of Aachen who noted that, during the chaos of the siege in 1099, the Turks and Saracens spared from attack only the Holy Sepulchre and the structures in the Muristan, from which they instead exacted tribute.⁵³

Greater certainty can be located in Islamic sources. Nasir-i-Khusrau (Nāsir Khusraw Qubādiyānī Balkhī), a poet, traveller, and Persian civil administrator, described the city of Jerusalem in 1047:

The Holy City itself possesses an excellent *bīmārestān* (or hospital), which is provided for by considerable sums that were given for this purpose. Great numbers of [sick poor] people are here served with potions and lotions; for there are physicians who receive a fixed stipend, and attend at the *bīmārestān*.⁵⁴

Clearly well-established and having built a solid reputation over many years, by this time Nasir-i-Khusrau confirms that Amalfitan-sponsored Benedictine charity would have been in operation for almost a quarter-of-a-century.

Later dates

Numerous alternative dates have been proposed for the foundation of the hospital, all of them based solely on contextual factors. In part, the problem of identification includes the question as to whether the hospice of the Amalfitan abbey of St Mary of the Latins is identical with the great hospital of St John in Jerusalem.⁵⁵ For example, modern Belgian scholar, Alain Beltjens, insists there is no connection back to the hospice founded by St Gregory.⁵⁶ The most likely explanation for this apparent confusion of dates and institutions is that the hospital evolved its services in stages by rebuilding, renovating, or founding new structures in order to accommodate an expanding mission of care, pursued consistently since 1023. Whether it remained the “same” hospital in terms of administration, structure, funding sources, or patronage, remains an open question.

According to some sources, it was around 1035 that merchants from Amalfi introduced themselves to Caliph Mustanşir.⁵⁷ The fact that Nasir-i-Khusrau did not specifically mention the Amalfitans in his 1047 account has led other historians to situate the hospital’s foundation in or after 1048: for example, Beltjens says between 1048 and 1063.⁵⁸ Henry Sire suggests the hospital began “about the middle years of the century”.⁵⁹ Numerous narratives of the history of the Knights Hospitaller cite the date 1048 as the definitive year of foundation for the hospital. Some websites even claim that the Blessed Gerard administered the hospital from 1048 onwards (placing him in his mid-90s, at the youngest, at the time of his death in 1120).⁶⁰ The year 1048 has been repeated in publications ranging from the 1700s through to the twentieth century.⁶¹ This date has taken on a life of its own, encompassing numerous Masonic works which repeat 1048 in relation to the origin of the “Order of St John” referenced in a rite of Freemasonry.⁶² The origin of the date goes all the way back to the early eighteenth century when the famous Abbé Vertot wrote his comprehensive official history of the Order of Malta.⁶³ Why Vertot settled on that date is made clear by Delaville Le Roulx, who records:

The son of Daher, the great governor of Constantine X Monomachos,** came to an agreement with Michael V: with his help, they [the Christian holy places] began to be rebuilt again, which had been overthrown, and in the year 1048, with Nicephorus the patriarch presiding, they were completed.⁶⁴

The agreement referred to by Vertot occurred in 1030 and gave many Christian sects the right to rebuilt their churches (with the exception of those that had been

** Byzantine emperor from June 1042 to January 1055.

transformed into mosques).⁶⁵ The work went slowly due to a lack of resources, local troubles, and the earthquake of January 1034. Michael V was overthrown in 1042, which led to Constantine being recalled from exile. It is significant that the rebuilding of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was thought to have been finally completed in 1048.⁶⁶ As we have already said, this is a mistake, because William of Tyre wrongly attributed that date of completion to the reign of Emperor Constantine X.⁶⁷ However, Vertot accepted William's account and seems to have believed that the hospital must have been completed in tandem with the restoration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. An Amalfitan community was present in the Egyptian capital as early as the 990s, but recent scholars have conflated Vertot's narrative with the broader initiation of Latin Christian outposts in the Levant into the 1040s.⁶⁸ Regardless of vagaries with dating, all these accounts strongly suggest that the hospital was basically a re-construction of an earlier building, not an entirely new structure.

Joseph Delaville Le Roulx's early research located the building of the hospital anytime between 1048 and 1081.⁶⁹ But, after a lifetime of research, he remained unwilling to attribute a definite date of foundation, saying:

The time at which this concession was granted is rather difficult to specify; it is generally placed in the middle of the eleventh century, a rather probable date owing to a set of facts which, without particularly concerning the Amalfi foundation, apply to the general development and progress of Christian establishments in Jerusalem. What is certain is that it is limited between the end of the persecutions of Hakim in 1014 and the fall of the Egyptian domination in Syria in 1070.⁷⁰

He acknowledged the significance of the year 1023 as a beginning point, saying:

But since there are those who attach themselves to the sultan's privilege [of 1023], the judgment is not easy; it is only certain that this happened before the year 1070; for then at last the caliphs were removed from the kingdom of Egypt.⁷¹

Modern French historian, Bertrand Galimard Flavigny, places the construction of a hospice around the year 1060 or 1061.⁷² Beltjens strongly favours the same date range.⁷³ Jacoby says Mauro's hospice for pilgrims was present in Antioch "from the 1060s".⁷⁴ The nineteenth-century German scholar, Wilhelm von Heyd, credited Mauro with the foundation of the hospital, but dated its erection at some time between 1063 and 1071.⁷⁵ His reason for believing this is unclear, except that he

(incorrectly) thought Mauro died in 1071.^{††} The French archaeologists Louis-Hugues Vincent and Félix Marie Abel, favoured 1063, but provided no source for their assertion.⁷⁶ An answer can be found in Anthony Luttrell's work, where he records that 1063 marked the definitive separation of the Christian quarter of Jerusalem from the rest of the city.⁷⁷ At the very least, this marked a new administrative regime for the hospital.

The hospital was founded "probably around 1070" according to a number of leading modern British scholars, including Jonathan Riley-Smith, Desmond Seward, and Helen Nicholson.⁷⁸ Given the evidence presented in this paper, the year 1070 makes sense as a starting point for Blessed Gerard's association with the hospital, but not as its foundation.⁷⁹ The favour shown to 1070 by such prominent historians appears to be dictated by the wording of the papal bull *Pie postulatio voluntatis*, issued by Pope Paschal II on 13 February 1113. This bull established the Order of St John as we know it today and it addressed Blessed Gerard as "Founder and Warden of the hospice at Jerusalem".⁸⁰ This suggests Gerard exerted a significant influence by transforming whatever existed previously. Perhaps this indicates a definitive break with the original Amalfitan administration of the institution, precipitated by the Seljuk Turk invasion and occupation of Byzantine territory in 1070.^{‡‡} Alternatively, it might indicate an end to the patronage of the hospital by Mauro's heir, Pantaleon, who quitted Constantinople in 1087.⁸¹

Whether Gerard's origins lay in Amalfi, southern France, or Piedmont, this oblate of the Benedictine monks of St Mary of the Latins later adopted the Amalfitan cross as the badge of his new order.⁸² That act alone demonstrates a link back to Mauro's initiative in 1023, even if it was purely symbolic in nature. If the 1070s truly mark the start of the hospital, it was an unpropitious time to begin: the Seljuk Turks defeated a Byzantine army at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, gaining control of the great cities of Edessa and Antioch. By 1087 they had taken control of Jerusalem, where they despoiled the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and denied Christian pilgrims access to the holy places, thus precipitating the First Crusade of 1095-9.

At least one source claims that a new, separate hospital structure was built in 1080, to the east of the existing hospital and separated from it by a lane.⁸³ This is, perhaps, a reference to a new female ward, under the direction of Agnes, abbess of the female convent at the time of the First Crusade.⁸⁴ Henry Sire confirms: "by 1080 the

^{††} In fact, 1071 is the year in which Mauro took religious vows and retired to the monastery at Montecassino.

^{‡‡} The Amalfitan colony in Constantinople underwent a wholesale reconstitution of its status within the Byzantine Empire in 1082: Jacoby, 'Commercio e navigazione degli Amalfitani nel Mediterraneo Orientale', p. 96.

Abbey of St Mary possessed, under the shadow of its walls, a house of refuge for poor pilgrims".⁸⁵ Adrian Boase adds, it was "likely that the Crusader hospital was not new to the task of caring for and treating the ill but rather continued its already existing role".⁸⁶ The entire hospital operation remained under the control of the Benedictine abbot.

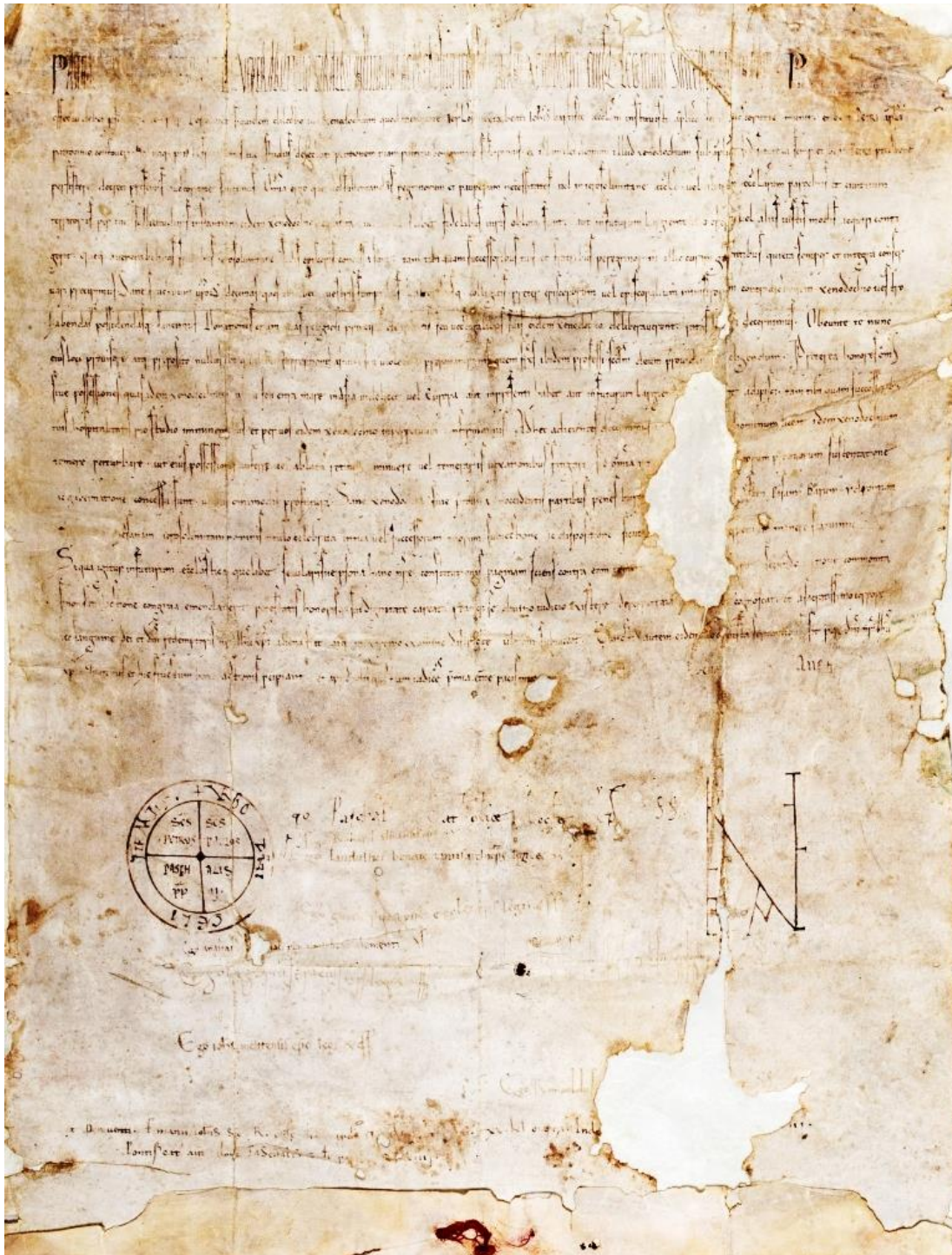


Fig. 4: Papal bull *Pie Postulatio Voluntatis* confirming the foundation of the Knights of Malta, dated 15 February 1113. © SMOM.⁸⁷

The debate about dates supports the idea that, it seems, historians of the Order of St John are reluctant to admit that its hospital, which became so illustrious, had its origins in pre-existing establishments.⁸⁸ This explains why some of the most learned historians of the modern Order favour such a late date for the foundation of its hospital. We also note their caution in accepting antique claims, due to the efforts of the medieval Knights Hospitaller to embellish their origins back as far as the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a Greek Hellenistic King of Jerusalem who ruled the Seleucid Empire from 175 BC until his death in 164 BC. Helen Nicholson is suitably disparaging of these assertions.⁸⁹

Besides all of the dates mentioned above, an even later one is sometimes suggested: that of 1086. Delaville Le Roulx was keen to catalogue, and then dismiss this date, stating:

The date of 1086, given by Sicard of Cremona, must be reported here, but does not seem to have to be admitted, because it corresponds to a troubled period, during which the installation of the Amalfitans in Jerusalem seems, if not impossible, at least improbable.⁹⁰

Sicard of Cremona wrote a few decades after William of Tyre. But while William had been brought up in the Holy Land, Sicard merely passed through in 1203 when he followed the papal legate, Cardinal Peter of Capua, to the East during the Fourth Crusade. Sicard spent little time in the Holy Land, but he appears to have felt justified in discussing Amalfitan achievements due to his cardinal bringing the body of St Andrew from Constantinople to Amalfi, of which city St Andrew is the patron saint.⁹¹ Having evangelised Greece, St Andrew was crucified in Patras, on the unique saltire-shaped cross that is, possibly, the origin of the Amalfi cross later made famous as the Maltese cross of the Order of St John.⁹² Sicard's *Chronica Universalis* was written in 1213 and ambitiously attempted to cover all history from creation.

All of these speculative claims regarding later dates contradict Amatus of Montecassino and William of Tyre, and ignore Nasir-i-Khusrau's explicit information about the hospital's funding sources from abroad (which imply Mauro's ongoing patronage). At the very least, contextually, support for the construction of a hospital seems unlikely to have occurred in the later years of the reign of Caliph Mustansir, who has been described as being "incapable", with a court dominated by military strongmen and his mother's favourite officials, and a treasury exhausted by factional in-fighting.⁹³ Furthermore, it challenges a

significant corpus of scholarship established by the French scholars who enjoyed privileged access to the Holy Land and its records, including Count Melchior de Vogüé, Eugène Boré, and Ursmer Berlière, a highly learned writer on the early Benedictines in Jerusalem. If we follow the lead of Delaville Le Roulx and consider “a set of facts” relating to the contextual realities of the eleventh-century Holy Land, we would surely consider most likely for the foundation of the hospital’s ethos of care the period of reconstruction and rapprochement immediately following the devastation of Hakim’s rule: in other words, the year 1023.

Is this reasonable? It appears to us that all of the suggested dates for the “start” of the hospital are, in fact, part of the story that began in 1023 when the Amalfitan merchants received permission to occupy the Muristan and build St Mary of the Latins, while also restoring the nearby hospice. They initiated the work of reconstruction and humanitarian care immediately, probably completing the physical structure of a rebuilt hospice at about the same time as the restoration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the early 1040s. Hospital expansion, consolidation, or administrative re-organisation may well have occurred in 1048 and again in 1063. Either of these dates (or even 1070) arguably could mark the arrival of the Blessed Gerard. Indeed, Gerard’s tenure probably represents a new beginning for the hospital, either in terms of its administration, scope of care (for example, including female patients), or a break in its relationship with the original Amalfitan patrons. The domination of the Seljuk Turks would account for a withdrawal of the Amalfitans, alongside their Byzantine patrons. This interpretation would explain the wording of the papal bull of 1113, because Blessed Gerard would have needed to raise the hospital anew from the despoliation of the Seljuks, albeit still under Benedictine control by way of continuity. Although this argument compartmentalises the hospital’s history into discrete eras, it nevertheless emphasizes an ethos of care in continuous existence since 1023.

It is worth adding that 1023 was the date accepted by Sir Edwin King, the influential official historian of the modern British Most Venerable Order of St John. He confidently affirmed that the hospital was “restored ... by the citizens of the wealthy maritime republic of Amalfi in the year 1023”.⁹⁴

Admittedly, fixing a precise date for the beginning of the Hospitaller tradition matters less than other factors. In the words of modern Italian scholar, Roberta Guzzetti:

The traditions established by the inhabitants of Amalfi, who came to settle within the Holy City, are even more important than its [the hospital’s] dating.

It was in fact the autonomous initiative of a group of laymen, who were not sponsored by either the city government or by a monastic order. However, the two institutions necessarily had to play an active role in that decision, if only because the mediator, Mauro, was well connected to both: the city of Amalfi and the Benedictines of Montecassino. This last nexus takes on an interesting nuance when one recalls that, upon their arrival in Jerusalem, the people of Amalfi settled in the Benedictine community of Santa Maria Latina: this was probably founded during the Carolingian age, and since then it was installed in a monastery south of the Holy Sepulchre, which was re-built as the Mother House of the Order.⁹⁵

Mauro and the Amalfitan merchants initiated a tradition of humanitarian care that survives today in the Holy Land in the form of Holy Family Hospital, a maternity hospital in Bethlehem operated by the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. The Order also conducts an extensive range of refugee relief and care in the region. Nearby, the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group is operated by the Most Venerable Order of St John, and strongly supported by the Order of Malta and the Alliance Orders of St John located in Germany, Sweden, and The Netherlands.

Conclusion

Amalfitan traders took charge of the ancient Hospice in Jerusalem in 1023, and in 1113 Pope Paschal II approved a Hospitaller Order which governed the establishment until their departure for Acre in 1244. As the Hospitallers travelled ever westward, they founded Hospitals across the Mediterranean basin, the most famous of all being that in Malta, justly earning the nickname 'Nurse of the Mediterranean', and operational without interruption from 1574 until 1798. Remarkably, the Hospitaller complex *in Jerusalem* continued to house pilgrims until the 16th century, when the Sultan quarried the buildings to rebuild the city walls. However, and perhaps more even more surprisingly, and against all the odds, St John Eye Hospital Group now has a clinic on the site of the ancient Hospice.

In 1925 the British Order of St John took possession of a plot near the 'Muristan' area of the Old City of Jerusalem, located on the junction of modern-day Muristan street and David Street, close to the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer. The plot was largely overlooked for centuries, guarded only by a lone monument to St John's ancient past. But in 2015 the site was developed, and on 13 October 2016 (International World Sight Day), St John once again opened its doors to patients in the Old City. It is now home to an eye clinic, a peace garden, a museum, a covered seated area for visitors, and a terrace over the souk on David Street, with commanding views of the Dome of the Rock and the Mount of Olives. All this was

achieved in collaboration with Taawon ('Welfare Association'), a leading Palestinian non-profit organization (as part of their *Old City of Jerusalem Revitalization Program*), and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

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- ⁸ "The manuscript bears all the characteristics expected of its origin, both because of the Arabic style in which it is designed, and the form of the characters devoid of all diacritical points, we have yet another piece dated 431 (1039)": Boré, *Question des Lieux Saints*, p. 5 n1.
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- ¹⁰ Boré, *Question des Lieux Saints*, p. 5.
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²⁶ *Fonti per la Storia d'Italia*, Vol. 8 (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo), p. 3.

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3. Historical Overview of the Johannine Orders

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Many Orders of St John claim descent from the mediaeval Catholic monastic military order, the Knights of St John, otherwise known as the Knights Hospitaller. First and foremost, they include the Knights' latter-day direct descendant, the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta, which remains a devoutly Catholic religious order as well as a worldwide charitable organisation with its headquarters in Rome.¹

Closely aligned with and sharing ties of mutual esteem with the Sovereign Military Order of Malta are the *Johanniters*, the Protestant Orders of St John in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and other adjacent nations, and the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, an ecumenically Christian order which has King Charles III as its Sovereign Head.²

These five Orders of St John accept each other's claims to the Hospitaller heritage. They accordingly refer to each other as the 'recognised' Orders of St John. To the extent that they enjoy a measure of official recognition in many of the countries in which they are active, that is true. For example, in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, the Most Venerable Order's awards are recognised within the honours systems of those nations.³

In addition to these five, perhaps as many as three dozen other 'orders' of St John claim descent from the original Hospitallers. These orders' avowals of authenticity are rejected by the allied and mutually-recognising five. According to the five, these others are 'self-styled' orders. At best they might be collegiate, fraternal associations of individuals who believe they maintain the Hospitaller tradition but enjoy no official recognition anywhere. Most members of the five would regard them as bogus orders of charlatans and naïfs who have misappropriated the Hospitaller legacy.⁴ Each of the five mutually recognising Orders of St John has its own distinct and separate history, which the following sections of this article outline.

The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta

As mentioned, the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta is the Order with the most direct lineal descent from the original Crusader Order of St John.

Histories of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order

Many illustrious historians have grappled with this durable Order's history. Among the first was one of its own members, the Abbé René-Aubert Vertot (1655–1735), a



French priest and historian. His monumental five-volume book was first published in French three centuries ago in 1726. The English translation of its title is: *The history of the Knights Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem: styled afterwards, the Knights of Rhodes, and at present, the Knights of Malta*. Vertot's great *History* has been published many times and in various languages. Nowadays facsimile copies are readily available online.⁵

New histories of the Hospitallers continue being published. Among the most recent is *The Knights of Malta: A Modern Reconstruction*, an official history of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order published in 2016.⁶ The author, Henry J.A. Sire, had published another authoritative history, similarly called *The Knights of Malta*, 22 years earlier.⁷ Sire's two books would be excellent launching pads for any reader wishing to specialise in Hospitaller studies.

Origins

About the mid-eleventh century, perhaps 1048 or even as early as 1023, merchants from Amalfi in Italy obtained permission from the Sultan of Egypt to build a church in Jerusalem. The church, St Mary of the Latins, occupied a precinct known as the Muristan on the western side of the city. The church was built over the remains of a section of an earlier Orthodox monastery dedicated to St John the Baptist. The new church, staffed by Benedictine monks, included a *xenodochium* or hospice for poor, sick pilgrims.⁸

By the time Crusaders captured Jerusalem during the First Crusade in July 1099, a lay brother called Gerard, possibly from Amalfi, oversaw the hospice. Gerard and his brethren found favour with the rulers of the new Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Crusader state founded soon after the city's capture. Officially encouraged and given donations of cash and land by grateful pilgrims and Crusaders returning home to Europe, the hospice prospered. It also established new hospices in Europe, commonly in the ports of embarkation for visitors to Jerusalem.⁹

On 15 February 1113 Pope Paschal II granted Gerard and the brethren autonomy as a new Order of the church, one responsible directly to the Pope himself, free from control by diocesan bishops and having the right to its own property and revenue. This was through the Bull, *Pie Postulatio Voluntatis*. Gerard was appointed as the rector or head. He remained in charge until his death in 1120. Greatly revered, he was subsequently beatified. Now remembered as the Blessed Gerard, he is seen by all Orders of St John as the main founder of the traditions they maintain.¹⁰

Gerard's successor as rector was Raymond du Puy (1083–1160), a French knight from an influential Crusader family who for some unknown reason — piety? a perceived need of expiation? — had joined the Order. It was Raymond who transformed the Order's hospice in the Muristan into an important infirmary, soon known as the 'Great Hospital'. Raymond also gave the Order a military function, recruiting other knights so that the Order could protect pilgrims and help defend



the Kingdom of Jerusalem against the Muslim forces continually attacking it. He adopted the title *Custos* or Guardian of the Order; and during his period of rule the Order acquired heraldic arms: a plain silver cross on a scarlet background, emblematic of the martyrdom of St John the Baptist, the Order's patron saint. This was in addition to the logo or badge of the Order, the eight-pointed cross of Amalfi which the brethren had used as an expression of gratitude to their original benefactors. Both the Arms and the eight-pointed cross have remained the distinctive emblems of all Orders of St John.¹¹

Changes introduced by Raymond du Puy

Under Raymond, the Order rapidly emerged as a powerful military force. As such, it manifested a new phenomenon — the monastic military order, the primary purpose of which was to defend Christendom against Islam. The knights of the Order consequently fought alongside another great contemporary monastic military order, The Poor Fellow Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon, also called the Knights Templar, founded in 1118 to protect pilgrims travelling to and from Jerusalem. The two orders fought in most of the battles by the Crusader states until their eventual expulsion from Palestine in 1291. Monuments to the monastic military orders' defence of the Crusader states are the ruins of the Crusader castles strung out across present-day Cyprus, southern Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Israel and Jordan.¹²

It was Raymond du Puy, too, who restructured the Order by dividing the brethren between clerical or religious, military or knightly and lay or 'serving brother' classes of membership.¹³ As a monastic military order, it fulfilled both religious and military functions; but it also remained dedicated to its original charitable role. Its Great Hospital remained its *raison d'être*, accommodating up to 2,000 patients. Its proud boast was that it served its clients, '*our lords the sick and poor*', without discriminating on the grounds of their religion, race or class.¹⁴

A glimpse into the Order's undertakings was left to posterity by John of Würzburg, a German priest who visited the Hospital on pilgrimage during the 1160s. He later wrote of 'the enormous multitude of sick people, both men and women who are tended and restored to health daily at a very great expense'.¹⁵ He also noted that 'this same house also maintains in its many castles many persons trained in all kinds of military exercises for the defence of the land of the Christians against the invasions of the Saracens'.¹⁶

In time the Order adopted the title of 'Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem', taking this name from both its Great Hospital and the monastery of St John the Baptist, the site of which the original *xenodochium* had occupied. The title gave rise to various contractions, including 'Order of St John', 'Knights of St John', 'Knights Hospitaller' and simply 'Hospitallers'.¹⁷



Cyprus and Rhodes

The Order retreated to Cyprus after the loss of the Holy Land by the Crusader forces. That occurred after Acre, the Crusaders' last foothold in Palestine, fell to an army of the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt in May 1291.¹⁸ The Order had maintained a presence on Cyprus since 1210, having various commercial interests there. Limassol, a city on the southern coast of the island, now became the seat of the Order's Convent or central governing authority and the site of its new hospital. The convent remained in Limassol for the next 19 years, until 1310. In that year it transferred to Rhodes. The move to Rhodes was prompted by restrictions on the Order's ability to develop new Commanderies (Order-governed estates) on Cyprus. To secure an island of its own, in 1307 the Order invaded Rhodes. The suppression of the indigenous Greek community's resistance there took three years. Rhodes would remain the Order's headquarters for 212 years, until 1522.¹⁹

During the Order's years on Cyprus, it had emerged as a naval power. It built up a fleet there to protect Christian pilgrims on the sea routes to the Holy Land. In time, during its centuries on Rhodes and later Malta, the Order maintained one of the strongest navies of the region. Its ships patrolled the Mediterranean, protecting the shipping of Christian nations and fighting the Barbary corsairs or Muslim pirates sailing out of ports along the North African coast. The Order also continued building hospitals. In Rhodes its Great Hospital became one of the grandest buildings on the island.²⁰

On Rhodes, where the Knights became known as the 'Knights of Rhodes', the Order entered a new constitutional phase because it effectively became a sovereign state ruling its own discreet territory. It remained that for most of the next five centuries, until expelled from Malta by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798. Since then it has continued as a sovereign state, albeit without territory. During the Order's time on Rhodes its head, previously the Guardian, was called the *Magister* (Latin) or Master. From 1503 he was the *Magnus Magister* or Grand Master. Within the hierarchy of the Church, he ranked as a cardinal. Whatever the title, he was effectively an elected prince and the Order was a principality, as well as a monastic military order and provider of charitable hospital services.²¹

It was also on Rhodes that the Order added an additional, linguistic, component to its organisation. Brethren sharing a common vernacular language grouped together as a *Langue* (language) and lived in their own discrete *auberge* or inn. In time there were eight *Langues*, each a separate administrative entity: Provence, Auvergne, France, Italy, Aragon, England, Germany, Castille-and-Portugal. Most *Langues* encompassed an hierarchy of national Priories (and later Grand Priories), regional Bailiwicks and local Commanderies. The *Langue* of England, for example, included the Priories of England, Ireland and Scotland.²²

Although the Order had been driven from the Holy Land, on Rhodes it remained a major irritant to the Sultans of Islam. On three occasions the Sultans sent invasion



forces against them: in 1444, 1480, and 1522. The Knights withstood the first two; but the third, under the Ottoman (Turkish) Sultan Suleiman I, remembered as Suleiman the Magnificent, defeated them. Greatly outnumbered, 100,000 to 7,000, they nevertheless held off the invasion force for six months before surrendering in 1523. Suleiman graciously allowed them to depart *'with military honours'*.²³

Throughout all its years on Cyprus and Rhodes, the Order had continually run its hospitals. Through its hospitals it continued serving its original charitable function.

Malta

After leaving Rhodes, the Knights moved first to Sicily. They spent the next seven years moving from port to port around the Mediterranean—Crete, Naples, Civita Vecchia (port of Rome), Viterbo, and Nice. Wherever they went, they continued running their hospital in converted galleys. Eventually Pope Clement VII, himself a Knight of the Order, and the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, agreed that they should be allowed to settle on Malta for the token annual rent of a falcon. They occupied the island in October 1530.²⁴

The Order retained Malta for the next 268 years, until Napoleon Bonaparte expelled the brethren in 1798. Over those centuries they transformed the cities of the island into almost impregnable fortresses. Early in their occupancy they had to withstand a four-month siege by the forces of Suleiman the Magnificent in 1565. Remembered as the 'Great Siege of Malta', it was again a struggle against a superior force. Suleiman's armada landed an army of up to 40,000 to combat which the Order had 500 Knights and perhaps 5,600 other troops, about half of them native Maltese. Various savage battles were fought, during which the Order lost about 2,500 troops while about 7,000 civilians also died. The Ottoman losses were enormous. As many as 35,000 were either killed in combat or died from disease before Suleiman's commander, Mustafa Pasha, withdrew his troops in mid-September 1565. The siege was the last great land battle fought by Crusader Knights. The Hospitallers' victory caused great rejoicing across Europe, even in Elizabeth I's fiercely anti-Catholic Protestant England.²⁵

After his great victory, the Grand Master of the Order, Jean de la Valette, built a new and more secure capital above the Grand Harbour on Malta. Named after him, Valletta has remained the capital ever since. Heavily fortified, it became one of the most spectacular cities of Europe, set atop a ridge on a promontory with views of the harbours on either side. Its most imposing buildings were the Grand Master's magnificent palace, the elaborate Co-Cathedral of St John the Baptist, the splendid *auberges* of the *Langues* and of course the great new Hospital, the *Sacra Infermeria* (Sacred Infirmary). Equally impressive were the tiers of massive walls surrounding the city. All have survived to impress the 2.6 million tourists who visit Malta each year.²⁶

The Knights' hostilities against Islam continued. Six years after the Great Siege, their navy joined those of Venice, Genoa, the Spanish Empire, the Papal States and



other lesser powers allied in the Holy League in inflicting a major defeat on the Ottoman fleet in the Battle of Lepanto. Fought off the Gulf of Patras in south-western Greece on 7 October 1571, it ended Ottoman naval dominance of the eastern Mediterranean.²⁷ The Knights' ongoing hostilities against the Barbary corsairs also continued, until their loss of Malta in 1798.²⁸

The Order's medical work developed to a high level of proficiency in the *Sacra Infermeria* or Sacred Infirmary. Begun in 1574 and extended several times, its 'Great Ward' eventually measured 155 metres long and could accommodate up to 900 patients. By the 1660s the Infirmary was widely regarded as one of the best hospitals in Europe. A teaching institution, its facilities included a 'School of Anatomy and Surgery'. This grew into a Faculty of Medicine, the specialties of which included ophthalmology and pharmacology. The Infirmary also maintained a large, separate infectious diseases hospital or *Iazzaretto* on Manoel Island in the Marsamxett Harbour on the north-western side of Valletta.²⁹

The *Sacra Infermeria* survived as a hospital into the twentieth century. After Napoleon's takeover, the French continued using it; then when British forces occupied the island in 1800, it became their Station Hospital. It served that purpose until 1918, when the building was converted for use as Malta's Police Headquarters. During World War I many sick and wounded British troops were sent there from the Mediterranean theatres of war. Under British rule, it became affectionately known as 'the Nurse of the Mediterranean'.³⁰

Impact of the Protestant Reformation

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century inflicted heavy losses on the Order, the members of which were by now widely known as the 'Knights of Malta'. The *Langue* of Germany lost its wealthy Bailiwick of Brandenburg (the province centred on Berlin) when its Knights adopted Lutheranism. The Bailiwick recognised the Grand Master in Malta as the head of the Order and continued sending its 'responsons' (annual financial contributions) there. That this anomalous arrangement caused tension became evident in 1581 when the Grand Master, Jean de la Cassière, expelled the Bailiwick's Knights from the Order when their *Herrenmeister* (Master), Martin von Hohenstein, ignored a command to appear before the Chapter (governing council) in Valletta.³¹

The *Langue* of England disappeared after King Henry VIII declared himself the head of the church in England then dissolved the monasteries and appropriated their extensive land holdings in 1539–1540. Two eminent English Knights, Brothers Thomas Dingley and David Gunson, became martyrs of the Order in 1539 when executed for refusing to acknowledge Henry as head of the church. The Hospitallers, by then among England's major landowners, lost everything in England. Much the same happened in Ireland, where the local Priory disappeared in 1540 when the last Prior retired and surrendered his Priory's estates to the Crown. Queen Mary I, Henry's resolutely Catholic daughter, revived the Priory in England in 1557, but



when succeeded the next year by her Protestant half-sister, Elizabeth I, it was suppressed again. Across the northern border, the Priory of Scotland was suppressed, and its properties surrendered to the Crown in 1564.³²

The Napoleonic Wars

Worse losses than these awaited the Order during the French Revolution, which lasted the decade from 1789 to 1799. In France, all three *Langues* of Provence, Auvergne and France were suppressed and their extensive properties confiscated in 1792. The French *Langues* had always been the Hospitallers' heartland in Europe, the major generators of the Order's wealth. Revenues fell by two-thirds. By 1797, the Order had lost all of its estates west of the Rhine, in Switzerland and northern Italy as well. The ensuing revolutionary wars destroyed the Knights' ability to defend their bastions on Malta. In June 1798, when a French fleet under Napoleon Bonaparte entered the Grand Harbour below Valletta on its way to Egypt, the Knights surrendered with barely even token resistance. They were ignominiously expelled from the island within a week.³³ The Knights dispersed. The Grand Master, Ferdinand von Hompesch, went first to Trieste in north-eastern Italy, where he re-established his headquarters. He abdicated in July the next year.³⁴

Many of the Knights found refuge in St Petersburg, where the Russian Tsar, Paul I, a great admirer of the Order, accommodated them. They elected him as Grand Master even before von Hompesch's abdication. This of course was highly irregular because they already had a Grand Master; Paul was Orthodox not Catholic; he was not a 'professed' Knight (i.e. had not taken their monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience); he was married with many children; and his appointment was not sanctioned under Catholic canon law. Paul was assassinated two years later, in March 1801, but in the meantime he had founded an Orthodox 'Russian Grand Priory' of the Order with 118 Commanderies.³⁵

Paul I's heir, Alexander I, did not wish to succeed him as Grand Master and protector of the Order. In 1803 Pope Pius VII appointed an Italian Knight, Giovanni Battista Tommasi, as the Order's 73rd Grand Master. The council of Knights in St Petersburg then dissolved itself and surrendered their authority to Tommasi. The Order moved its Convent to Catania and later Messina in Sicily. Situated close to Malta, the Knights hoped they would be allowed to return there. In 1802 the Treaty of Amiens between Britain and France had affirmed their sovereign rights over the island; however, Britain, which had by now occupied Malta, retained the island. The Knights hoped that the Treaty of Vienna in 1815, the post-Napoleonic settlement agreed to by European nations, would restore Malta to them. Those ambitions were frustrated too. After a period in Ferrara in northern Italy, in 1834, they relocated their Convent in Rome, occupying the Palazzo Malta, previously their embassy to the Holy See. It has remained their Magistral Palace ever since.³⁶



A long period of turmoil and then recovery

After the catastrophe of losing Malta, the Order had entered a 36-year period of turmoil so great that the institution emerging from it was fundamentally different from the Order of yore. The years between 1798 and 1834, when the Order transferred its Convent to Rome, were a period of great dislocation. The Order was nearly bankrupt. It had lost 90 per cent of its revenues and many of its Priors. Meanwhile, it remained generally poorly led. After Tommasi's death in 1805 after only two years in office, no more Grand Masters were appointed until Pope Leo XIII restored the Grand Magistracy in 1879. From 1805 a series of seven 'Lieutenants' had presided over its affairs; but the earlier ones lacked the authority of the former Grand Masters.³⁷

After the Lieutenancy relocated to Rome in 1834, the Order progressively re-established itself. What emerged was a new Order. It jealously guarded its sovereign statehood, but no longer fulfilled the functions implicit in the 'Military' part of its title. Instead, it focussed on its 'Hospitaller' role. Henceforth it would be a religious and humanitarian organisation.

The Order re-founded some Grand Priors, established others, and set up new Subpriors. By the twenty-first century there were six Grand Priors (Rome, Lombardy and Venice, Naples and Sicily, Bohemia, Austria, England), six Subpriors (Germany, Ireland, Spain, San Francisco, New York, Australia) and 50 National Associations. It also set up many permanent embassies, mainly in nations with large Catholic populations. By the twenty-first century the Order maintained a presence on every continent. It had diplomatic missions in over 100 nations. Through this international institutional structure, it engaged in greatly diverse charitable outreach projects. These included ambulance transport, support for the housebound elderly, disaster relief, aid to refugees, disease prevention and control of epidemics, youth development and support for marginalised communities. Some 80,000 volunteers were engaged in delivering these programs around the world.³⁸

What was perhaps most remarkable about the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order was its very survival across more than nine centuries. It had been forcibly ejected in turn from Jerusalem, Acre, Rhodes, and Malta. Sieges, wars, revolutions, and the consequent loss of its assets had often disrupted its endeavours. One golden thread, however, connected the Blessed Gerard, its first rector, and Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre del Tempio di Sanguinetto, the 80th Grand Master, who was elected in May 2018. This was the charitable imperative implicit in Christ's words to his disciples in Matthew 25:40 & 45:

Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me ... [and] inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.



Whatever else the Order had been during its long history — military power on land then on sea, great landowner, sovereign state — it remained a religious order. Giving practical expression to that Christian ideal had always been its primary purpose; and the opportunity of serving Christ himself through helping those in need remained its deeply spiritual motive force.

The *Johanniter* Orders

The word *Johanniter*, which to Anglophone ears sounds like ‘yo-han-eater’, is a peculiarly German term. It derives from ‘Johann’ and ‘Johannes’, the German forms of ‘John’. It is a short form of *Johanniterorden* or ‘Order of St John’. Preceptories of the original Order of St John were established in Germany, Austria and Bohemia from the mid-twelfth century; and by the end of that century a dozen preceptories were active in the German-speaking lands. The expansion continued during the next century as more and more preceptories were established.³⁹ A German Grand Priory or *Langue* of the Order emerged during the fourteenth century as the Hospitallers prospered in northern and central Europe.⁴⁰

The three present-day Protestant *Johanniter* Orders descend from the Catholic parent Order’s Bailiwick of Brandenburg in northern Germany, which had been founded by 1120.⁴¹ The German name of the Bailiwick is *Die Balley Brandenburg des Ritterlichen Ordens Sankt Johannis vom Spital zu Jerusalem*, which translates as ‘The Brandenburg Bailiwick of the Chivalric Order of Saint John of the Hospital in Jerusalem’.

Origins

In 1382 the German Grand Priory granted the brethren of the Bailiwick the right to elect their own *Herrenmeister* (Master of the Knights). By that stage the Bailiwick had developed into a semi-autonomous branch of the *Langue*.⁴² During the Protestant Reformation of the first half of the sixteenth century many of the preceptories within the Bailiwick adopted Lutheranism and some of the Knights married.⁴³

A Lutheran Order

In 1581 the Bailiwick was expelled from the Order; however, it continued as a separate Lutheran order in its own right. It remained a charitable institution dispensing alms to the poor. During the horrendously destructive Thirty Years War fought in central Europe 1618–1648, many of the Knights were killed and the wealth of the Bailiwick was dissipated. Following the war, the Bailiwick eventually came under the protection of the Prince Electors of Brandenburg, members of the Hohenzollern dynasty who in 1701 became the Kings of Prussia.⁴⁴ The first Hohenzollern *Herrenmeister* had been Friedrich IX, Margrave of Brandenburg (1588–1611), who had held the position for the two years before his early death.⁴⁵ The Bailiwick headquarters was the Sonnenburg Palace, 100 kilometres east of Berlin. (Sonnenburg is nowadays in Poland eight kilometres east of the border with



Germany and has been renamed Słońsk.) From 1738, however, the *Herrenmeister* lived in the *Ordenspalais* (palace of the Order) in Berlin.⁴⁶

During the eighteenth century the Bailiwick sought closer ties with the Order in Malta. The Bailiwick began sending its responsions (dues) to Malta and in 1776 sent delegates to the Chapter meeting in Valletta. Although never fully reintegrated, it reestablished its connection with the Order. *Vis-à-vis* the Order in Malta, it remained an anomalous separate confessional and administrative entity.⁴⁷

Closure and restoration

In 1812 King Frederick William III of Prussia, previously the Protector of the Bailiwick, assumed the powers of the *Herrenmeister* and the Chapter (Bailiwick governing council) and confiscated its properties. In effect he had closed the Bailiwick; but in its place he created a state order of merit, the Royal Prussian Order of St John, the insignia of which was the eight-pointed Amalfitan cross. The *Herrenmeister*, Prince August Ferdinand, another Hohenzollern, was appointed inaugural Grand Master of the order of merit. He continued living in the *Ordenspalais*. All the Knights of the former Bailiwick were granted membership in the new order of merit.⁴⁸

Frederick William III's son and successor, King Frederick William IV, restored the Bailiwick in 1852 and declared himself its Protector. At the same time, he abolished the order of merit instituted by his father. The eight *Rechtsritter* (Knights of Justice) of the original Bailiwick who were still alive became its first members. The king's younger brother, Prince Friedrich Carl Alexander, was elected *Herrenmeister*. Frederick William IV advised the Lieutenancy of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order in Rome of the restoration. The Lieutenancy accepted that the revived organisation was a continuation of the previous Bailiwick. The Bailiwick remained independent of the Catholic Lieutenants and Grand Masters in the Palazzo Malta, but has always acknowledged its historic links with the parent Order.⁴⁹

After German unification in 1871, the Prussian Hohenzollerns became the ruling dynasty in Germany. Their kings, now termed *Kaiser* (emperor), continued as Protectors of the Bailiwick. The *Herrenmeister* was customarily a member of the royal house appointed by Hohenzollern kings and emperors. After the demise of imperial Germany in 1918, the *Herrenmeister* was elected. The 37th *Herrenmeister*, Prince Oskar of Prussia, was elected in 1999 at the age of 40. Like all previous *Herrenmeisters* since 1639, he is a Hohenzollern.⁵⁰

Extension of influence

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Bailiwick extended its range of humanitarian enterprises to include hospitals, aged care homes, nurseries, first aid training and delivery, disaster relief and ambulance transport. It also established branches in neighbouring nations, including France, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland and Hungary. As of 2022, the Bailiwick maintained 17



Commanderies in Germany, one in each of Austria, Finland, France, Hungary, and Switzerland.⁵¹ As well as these, Subcommanderies were active in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Cyprus, Denmark, England, Estonia, Italy, Latvia, Namibia, Poland, the Netherlands, South Africa, the USA, and Venezuela.⁵² In addition, the Bailiwick supported the Most Venerable Order's St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital's ophthalmic programs — a welcome instance of inter-Order cooperation.⁵³

In the period following World War II the number of *Johanniterorden* increased to three when both the Netherlands and Swedish branches split from the Bailiwick to become separate Orders of St John in their own right. The former took the name *Johanniter Orde in Nederland*, while *Johanniterorden i Sverige* became the name in Sweden. Each has lineages extending back to the mediaeval Hospitallers; and each enjoys the patronage of their respective royal houses.⁵⁴

In 1961 all three joined with the Most Venerable Order in forming the Alliance of the Orders of St John, a federation of the four Orders of St John of non-Catholic tradition. In 1963 the four Alliance Orders and the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order signed a concordat of mutual esteem in which each Order acknowledged the legitimacy of the others.⁵⁵

The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem

The Most Venerable Order of St John began as one by-product of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order's disarray after its loss of Malta. The person who set in train the events leading to its formation was another by-product of the post-Napoleonic turmoil. He was a French opportunist named Pierre Hyppolyte LaPorterie (1776–1842) who used the bogus title of 'Marquis de Sainte-Croix-Molay'.⁵⁶

The intrigues of the 'Marquis de Sainte-Croix-Molay'

LaPorterie had fled revolutionary France as a teenage *émigré*. After he returned in about 1814, he began associating with surviving Knights of St John, falsely claiming to be one of them. Given the Order's confused state under the Lieutenancy of the Order in Sicily, the French Knights, the largest bloc among the remaining Knights, took control of their own affairs. To manage their corporate business, secure the return of the Order's properties in France and lobby for the return of Malta, in 1814 they established an assembly or 'Capitular Commission'. LaPorterie inveigled his way into the confidence of the Knights' leader in France, the Commander Jean-Louis de Dienne, the President of the French Capitular Commission. De Dienne welcomed LaPorterie into his circle and appointed him Chancellor of the Commission in 1820, with responsibility for its administration. One of the main tasks of the Commission was to rebuild the Order in France. To this end the Commission admitted 700 Knights into the Order in the ten years 1814–1824. The going rate of the admission fee was 2,650 Francs. In current American dollar values that was the equivalent of about \$13,640. In effect, the Commission was raising revenue by selling knighthoods.⁵⁷



As Chancellor of the Commission, LaPorterie conceived of a scheme for regaining Rhodes for the Order. This entailed helping the Greeks in their war of independence against the Ottoman Empire. In June 1823 the Commission signed a treaty with one faction of the Greek rebels. Under this agreement the rebels would cede Rhodes to the Order after its recapture, in exchange for which the Order would raise troops and 10 million francs to support the rebels. LaPorterie's scheme was opposed by the Lieutenancy in Sicily, which resented the Commission's taking unilateral action. It dismissed LaPorterie from office as Chancellor in January 1824; and it subsequently dissolved the Commission in August 1825.⁵⁸

Undeterred, LaPorterie continued pursuing his scheme for restoring Rhodes to the Order. Acting unilaterally, he renewed his attempts to raise funds for these territorial ambitions. He conceived of the idea of reviving the Order's long defunct Grand Priory of England, which would open a new funding source as newly recruited British Knights paid to join the Order; and perhaps loans might be also raised on the London money market. In the negotiations he now embarked on in England, he misrepresented himself as the 'Chancellor of the French *Langues*', which of course he no longer was. He sent an emissary to London to meet a contact there, a Scottish-born merchant, Donald Currie. The man he sent was an associate, Philippe de Chastelain, who seems to have been a genuine Knight of the Order recruited during the Bourbon Restoration but who used the bogus title 'Count'. Currie was given authority to raise £240,000 by private subscription, using this sum to raise a military force in Britain. Currie raised little money but recruited some 'Hospitallers'. To give this group an organisational framework, LaPorterie instructed Currie and de Chastelain to form a committee to revive the former Grand Priory of England. 'Articles of Convention' were drawn up in 1826–1827 to authorise the revival and the raising of funds. After much delay, the committee eventually constituted itself at a meeting on 12 January 1831. It called itself the 'Council of the English Language' (i.e. *Langue*).⁵⁹

A 'revival'?

Soon after the London meeting of 12 January 1831, Currie recruited the Rev. Sir Robert Peat (1772–1837), the rector of St Lawrence's Church in Brentford, Middlesex. Peat claimed a Polish knighthood, on the strength of which he used the title 'Sir'. A one-time chaplain to King George IV, he turned out to be an unsavoury character, a fortune-hunter who had married a much older Catholic woman for her money then abandoned her after she had settled on him an annuity of £1,000 in a pre-nuptial agreement. Peat was elected as Prior of the *Langue* on 29 January 1831. In a solemn ceremony two days later, 31 January, LaPorterie's delegate, de Chastelain, invested Peat as the Prior. With a Prior thus installed, LaPorterie, Peat, de Chastelain and the members of the 'Council of the English Language' considered that the English *Langue* had been revived. The Lieutenancy of the Order in Sicily had sanctioned none of this; and perhaps remained oblivious of it for some time to come.⁶⁰



Peat's justification for taking the Prior's oath was the Letters Patent issued by Queen Mary I and her Consort Philip II of Spain in 1557 to restore the dissolved Grand Priory of England. The Letters Patent had never been formally abrogated, which, arguably, could mean that the Grand Priory was technically still extant in a strictly legal sense. The validity of the Letters Patent as a legal instrument for reviving the Grand Priory is disputed, however. Peat's period in office was comparatively short compared with those of subsequent Grand Prior's. He died on 20 April 1837.⁶¹

After Peat's death a Scottish baronet, Sir Richard Broun (1801–1858), 8th Baronet of Colstoun, took responsibility for administering the 'revived' *Langue* as its Secretary-General. He performed his duties diligently from 1837 until his death 21 years later. Soon after taking over, he received unwelcome news, after he had sent an emissary from the *Langue* to Paris in July 1837 to meet with the Knights there. This delegate reported that 'Sainte-Croix had been engaged in fraud'.⁶²

Although realising they had been dealing with a fraudster, Broun and his confrères in the *Langue* regarded their organisation as the legitimately reconstituted Hospitaller Grand Priory of England. They entered protracted negotiations with the Lieutenancy, now permanently domiciled in Rome, with the aim of being recognised as a Protestant branch of the Order, one analogous to the *Johanniter* Bailiwick of Brandenburg. For a time, it seemed their pleas would be accepted but eventually their fond hope came to nought.⁶³

Rejection by Rome

The obstacles to the Order accepting the *Langue* were many. The irregular way the *Langue* had been created and the dubious character of those responsible were factors. The Protestantism of most of its members was another. More serious, however, were adverse reports about the *Langue* which the Lieutenancy received from two Englishmen, Sir George Bowyer and Edmund Waterton. Devout Catholics and Knights of the Order, Bowyer and Waterton regarded the *Langue* and its secretary, Broun, as fraudulent. Their advice was that the Order should reject the *Langue* and establish its own Catholic Priory in England.⁶⁴ Largely because of their representations, on 20 December 1858 the Lieutenant, Fra' Filippo di Colloredo-Mels, publicly declared that 'the Order of St John of Jerusalem ... has never been in organic connexion with the ... society [calling itself the Sovereign Order of St John of Jerusalem Anglia]'. For good measure, he followed up this declaration with a protest to the British crown about the *Langue's* pretensions.⁶⁵

Seventeen years after these events, in December 1875, the Lieutenant (and later Grand Master), Fra' Johann Baptist Ceschi a Santa Croce, established a National Association of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order in England. In time that evolved into the present Grand Priory of England of the Order.⁶⁶ This organisation represented the true revival of the Order in England.⁶⁷



A new Order of St John

Meanwhile, rebuffed by the parent Order in Rome, the would-be *Langue* might well have lapsed, but instead it reconstituted itself as a new and separate Order of St John—the Sovereign Order of St John of Jerusalem Anglia. Its fortunes were about to change for the better, however. Three years later, in 1861, it persuaded the 7th Duke of Manchester, William Drogo Montagu, to accept the position of Prior. This was a turning point because Montagu was highly influential.⁶⁸ He was not only a duke, and therefore at the apex of the British aristocracy, he was a leading Freemason and a personal friend of Albert Edward, the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII).⁶⁹

The duke brought into the new order a group of vigorous, capable, public-spirited and well-placed young men whom he probably knew through Freemasonry. Chief among them was a leading Worcestershire landowner, banker, parliamentarian, philanthropist and freemason, Sir Edmund Lechmere (1826–1894), the 3rd baronet Lechmere and the High Sheriff of Worcestershire. Lechmere served as Secretary-General of the new order for 22 years, 1868–1890. In that time, he transformed the organisation from a minor association of quaintly eccentric antiquarians into a British royal order of chivalry with the Queen as its Sovereign Head and her son and heir, the Prince of Wales, as its Grand Prior.⁷⁰ This distinction was conferred by the Royal Charter granted by Queen Victoria in 1888.

Under the Charter of 1888, granted by Her Majesty Queen Victoria, the former aspirant *Langue* became the Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem. (The additional word ‘Most’ was added before ‘Venerable’ in a 1955 revision of the Charter.)⁷¹

Royal favour was earned through the Order’s manifest good works under the Montagu and Lechmere leadership. The Order became the leader of the emergent ambulance movement. In 1877 it had established the St John Ambulance Association to provide public training in first aid, publish first aid and nursing manuals and market first aid and ambulance equipment. The name ‘St John Ambulance’ was originally that of a two-wheeled patient transport litter—a stretcher on cart-wheels—which the Order had patented in 1875. The name was soon applied to the organisation marketing the litters and providing the first aid training for those who would operate them. A decade later, in 1887, the Order founded the St John Ambulance Brigade, a uniformed and disciplined field force providing first aid services at public events such as sporting matches, street parades and ceremonial processions.

Within a short time, St John Ambulance Association training centres were springing up across Britain as citizens flocked in to avail themselves of the Association’s low-cost first aid training courses. The Association’s pocket-sized but authoritative training manual, *First Aid to the Injured*, went through dozens of editions and



hundreds of impressions. Millions were sold. By the early 1880s training centres were being established across the British Empire, in Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand and South Africa. The first of the overseas centres was in Malta in 1882. A truly great innovation, of another kind, was the St John Ophthalmic Hospital in Jerusalem. It was established in November 1882 almost solely through the efforts of Sir Edmund Lechmere and his wife, the Lady Katharine.

Effects of the Royal Charter

The Royal Charter of 1888 established the Venerable Order of St John as an official Order of St John in its own right. That in turn facilitated the rapid spreading of the Order around the globe through its St John Ambulance foundations. Through being a wholly owned subsidiary of a British royal order of chivalry, the St John Ambulance bodies gained credibility throughout the British Empire and its successor, the Commonwealth of Nations. Royal patronage conferred enormous public respect on the Order and its enterprises. Arguably, such patronage remains the Order's most precious asset.

By the early twenty-first century, Pories or independent national branches of the Order were active in Australia, Canada, England, Hong Kong, Kenya, New Zealand, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, the United States of America and Wales. In addition, lesser national 'St John Associations' were at work in about 30 other countries. In Africa these are in Ghana, Malawi, Mauritius, Nigeria, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe; in the Asia-Pacific region they are in Fiji, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka; in the Americas they are in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Bermuda, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago; and in Europe they are in Cyprus, Gibraltar, Ireland and Malta.⁷²

In these nations some 250,000 volunteers were engaged in delivering the health care services offered by the Order. The range included ambulance transport, first aid training, publication of first aid textbooks, marketing of first aid products, first aid delivery at public events, maternal and child welfare support, disaster relief, youth development, awards for conspicuous humanitarian achievement, as well as ophthalmic services to the Palestinian communities of the Occupied Territories.⁷³

Until 1998, the Order was governed by an institution known as 'The Grand Priory of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem', the head of which was Queen Elizabeth II as Sovereign Head. Her powers were delegated to a Grand Prior who has customarily been a Prince of the royal house of Windsor. The present Grand Prior is Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who assumed office in 1974 on the death of his father, the previous Grand Prior, Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester. The chief administrative officer, the Lord Prior, is directly responsible to the Grand Prior and is supported by a London-based secretariat headed by the Secretary-General of the Order. Since 2014 the secretariat has been called St John International.⁷⁴



In 1998 the management of the Order was extensively restructured. The Grand Priory was replaced by a new international governance body, the Grand Council of the Order. Unlike the former Grand Priory, the Grand Council included the Priors (heads) of the Order's Priories (or their delegates) as well as the Grand Prior, Lord Prior and the Order's other most senior portfolio office-holders. The creation of the Grand Council was a conscious attempt to internationalise the Order and shift it away from the Anglo-centrism of the former Grand Priory.⁷⁵ The general aim, as one overseas Priory Chancellor reported to his home constituency, was to introduce 'an inclusive governance system that involves the Priories directly'.⁷⁶

In the years after the granting of the Royal Charter in 1888, the Magistracy of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order in Rome did not necessarily agree that the Venerable Order had acquired legitimacy. Influential individuals within the former Order continued to regard the Venerable Order as an upstart which had appropriated its Hospitaller traditions. Eventually, however, the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order did recognise the Venerable Order as a true Order of St John. The rapprochement came in a joint declaration signed by the Lord Prior of the Most Venerable Order, John de Vere Loder, 2nd Lord Wakehurst, and the Grand Chancellor of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order, Prince Enzo di Napoli Rampolla, at St John's Gate in London on 26 November 1963.⁷⁷ The declaration was in effect a treaty of mutual recognition between the two Orders.

Meanwhile, as seen, the Most Venerable Order and the three *Johanniter* Orders of Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands had together agreed on a 'Convention of Alliance'. Representatives of the four orders formally signed the agreement establishing the Alliance at a ceremony in Nieder-Weisel, Germany, on 13 June 1961. Since then, the four Orders have been collectively known as the Alliance Orders of St John.⁷⁸ The main purpose of the Alliance was to encourage closer collaboration between the four in areas of common concern. As the relationship between them matured, the *Johanniter Ordern* began supporting the St John Eye Hospital Group.⁷⁹ In time, too, the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order also began supporting the Eye Hospital Group, for instance by helping fund the Group's Muristan Clinic, which opened in 2015.

A further manifestation of the closer working relationships between the Alliance and Sovereign Orders was the establishment in 1975 of the Committee of the Orders of St John. This collaborative body aimed to protect the heritage shared by the five mutually-recognising Orders against appropriation by the 'self-styled' or 'non-recognized' organisations which also claimed to be of the Hospitaller tradition.

The latter group, essentially collegiate and fraternal associations, freely use names, symbols, rituals and regalia very similar to those of 'the five'.⁸⁰ If nothing else, the pretensions of these groups to being genuine 'Orders of St John' create confusion. Many people join such groups wrongly believing they have become 'Knights' and



'Dames' of the recognised Orders of St John. Sadly, for them, the organisations they have joined are recognised only by the other members.

Conclusion

The history of the Orders of St John has been long, complex, convoluted, and difficult for the uninitiated to follow. The most obvious fact of their development and change across the centuries, however, has been their commitment to the charitable ethos of service to suffering humanity which the original Order came into being to fulfil. That has been the golden thread linking them with their origins in mediaeval Jerusalem before the Crusades.

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- ³⁴ SMOM, 'History: 1048 to the present', *op. cit.*; and 'Ferdinand von Hompesch zu Bolheim' in the DBpedia website, https://dbpedia.org/page/Ferdinand_von_Hompesch_zu_Bolheim.
- ³⁵ Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers*, pp. 122-125; and Sire, *The Knights of Malta: A Modern Reconstruction*, Ch. 2.
- ³⁶ SMOM, 'History: 1048 to the present', *op. cit.*; Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers*, pp. 122-125; and Sire, *The Knights of Malta: A Modern Reconstruction*, Ch. 2.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.* (both Jonathan Riley-Smith and H.J.A. Sire).
- ³⁸ Information from the 'Government', 'Humanitarian and medical works' and 'Diplomatic activities' menus of the SMOM website, www.orderofmalta.int/; accessed 22 October 2019.
- ³⁹ Sire, *The Knights of Malta*, pp. 192-195.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 195-197.
- ⁴¹ Sainty, Guy Stair, *The Orders of Saint John* (New York: American Society of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 84, 89-90.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 89.
- ⁴³ See Wienand, *Der Johanniter-Orden*.
- ⁴⁴ Sainty, *The Orders of Saint John*, pp. 89-90.
- ⁴⁵ Sire, *The Knights of Malta: A Modern Reconstruction*, Ch. 8.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers*, pp. 127-128; Sainty, *The Orders of Saint John*, p. 90.
- ⁴⁸ Sire, *The Knights of Malta: A Modern Reconstruction*, Ch. 8.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*; Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers*, pp. 127-128; Sainty, *The Orders of Saint John*, pp. 89-97.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.* (all three of Sire, Riley-Smith, and Sainty).
- ⁵² The 'Members' menu on the 'johanniter international' [sic]. website, <http://www.johanniter.org/>, accessed 22 October 2019.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁴ Sainty, *The Orders of Saint John*, pp. 108-112.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ Sire, *The Knights of Malta: A Modern Reconstruction*, pp. 147-156 *passim*.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶² *Ibid.*
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*



⁶⁵ Jonathan Riley-Smith, 'The Order of St John in England, 1827-1858' in Malcolm Barber (ed.), *The Military Orders: Fighting for the Faith and Caring for the Sick* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1994), p. 121.

⁶⁶ Sire, *The Knights of Malta: A Modern Reconstruction*, p. 158.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers*, p. 130.

⁶⁹ Ian Howie-Willis, 'Sir Edmund Lechmere: A St John founding father who towered above all others' in *St John History: Proceedings of the St John Ambulance Historical Society of Australia*, Vol. 19 (2019), pp. 34-39.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ The events leading to the granting of the Royal Charter in 1888 are described in the many official histories of the Most Venerable Order of St John and its Priors. See for example the account by the present author: Ian Howie-Willis, *A Century for Australia: St John Ambulance in Australia 1883-1983* (Canberra: Priory in Australia of the Most Venerable Order of St John, 1983), pp. 105-118. For a shorter, more recent account see Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers*, pp. 130-139.

⁷² 'Priors and Associations' section of the St John International website, <https://www.stjohninternational.org/>; accessed 24 October 2019.

⁷³ 'What we do' section of the St John International website, <https://www.stjohninternational.org/>; accessed 24 October 2019.

⁷⁴ 'Governance' section of the St John International website, <https://www.stjohninternational.org/>; accessed 24 October 2019.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Peter G.F. Henderson in 'Chancellor's Report', *St John Ambulance Australia Annual Report 1999*, p. 1.

⁷⁷ Sir Edwin King & Sir Harry Luke, *The Knights of St John in the British Realm* (London: St John's Gate, 1967), pp. 215-216.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 230-235.

⁷⁹ Saintry, *The Orders of Saint John*, pp. 108-112.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*



4. The Historical Antecedents of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem

Prof. Anthony Mellows (past Lord Prior) and Prof. Jonathan Riley-Smith (past Librarian).

Note: the late Prof. Mellows issued his 'Historical Antecedents' statement some 21 years ago, several years before he became Lord Prior. (The late Eric Barry of Canada was still Lord Prior in 2002). A summary of his opinion appeared in a subsequent article in Vol. 12 of "St John History", the Journal of the St John Ambulance Australia Historical Society. Prof. Mellows had been the keynote speaker at the Order's first international historical symposium in 2012 in conjunction with that year's Grand Council meeting in Sydney. The symposium was conducted at the request of the then Priory Secretary/CEO of St John Ambulance Australia, Peter Le Cornu KStJ, and with the full cooperation of the then Australian Chancellor, Dr Neil Conn GCStJ. The symposium was organised by James Cheshire CStJ, now (2023) the retiring Secretary of the St John Ambulance Historical Society of Australia. As the Australian Priory Librarian at the time, and also the founding editor of "St John History", Dr Ian Howie-Willis OAM KStJ was also much involved in the symposium and chaired the opening session at which Prof. Mellows delivered his keynote paper. Although his paper appeared in "St John History" Vol. 12, it was a brief summary only. We now take the opportunity to reproduce Prof. Mellows's learned opinion in full. This paper also bears the signature of Prof. Riley-Smith, the long-time Librarian of the Order and for many years the custodian of its history and heritage.

THE ORDER OF ST JOHN THE GRAND COUNCIL HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

A. Introduction

1. This paper summarises the historical antecedents of The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem (which is referred to as "the Venerable Order").

B. Overview

2.1. The Venerable Order is one of the mutually recognised Orders of St John;

2.2. It is not the same body as the medieval Order of the Hospital of St John (which is now known as the Sovereign Military Order of Malta);

2.3. There is, nevertheless, an unbroken connection in fact with the medieval order;

2.4. Queen Victoria's Charter of 1888 did not create a new body, but recognised and reaffirmed the body which was as a matter of fact derived from the medieval order;

2.5. The Charter incorporated that body and gave it the status of an Order of Chivalry of the British Crown;

2.6. Although the connection of the incorporated body with the medieval order was originally one of fact, not of law, Queen Victoria's Charter re-characterised that connection as one of law; and

2.7. Notwithstanding that the Venerable Order is different from the medieval order, it adheres to its original ethos and ideals, namely the lordship of the poor and sick, and it shares its traditions.

3. For the purposes of this overview:

a. a connection in law is a connection which is recognised by the relevant State or other Sovereign entity having jurisdiction as being valid and effective to transfer or confer lawful authority; and

b. a connection in fact is a connection which as a matter of fact existed; which purported to transfer or confer lawful authority; but which was not at the time recognised by the relevant State or other Sovereign entity as being legally effective.

C. Origins of the Medieval Order

4.1. The body which became the medieval Order was originally known as the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem. It originated, according to tradition, in a hospice or hospital for poor pilgrims to Jerusalem which was founded in about 1080 by Benedictines of the Abbey of St. Mary of the Latins in Jerusalem and was administered by a man called Gerard. The hospice or hospital was attached to a small church dedicated to St John near to the Abbey.

4.2. The Benedictines who ran the hospital soon became known as the Hospitallers.

5. Jerusalem fell to the Crusaders in the first Crusade, in July 1099. Thereafter, the Hospitallers flourished. As an extension of their hospitaller activities, the Hospitallers developed a military wing, which might originally have comprised the knights who served as armed guards for the hospital and as escorts to visiting pilgrims. Under Gerard, the Hospitallers expressed a dedication to the poor and advanced radical ideas about how to care for them when they were sick.

D. Emergence of the Concept of a Religious Order



6. The fall of Jerusalem created the conditions for the Hospitallers to progress towards independent status, and in due course to become a religious order. However, at that time the concept of a religious order had not yet been recognised as such, and the idea of dynastic and chivalric orders only followed some centuries later.

7. The concept of a religious order emerged during the twelfth century. By the end of that century, a religious order was recognised as being a body:

- a. which had its own head, who was subject only to the Pope;
- b. which had a hierarchy of discipline;
- c. which had authority and conducted activities which transcended diocesan boundaries;
- d. which had members who were liable to be transferred from place to place; and
- e. whose members all had the same rule of life and were governed by the same statutes.

E. Recognition of the Hospitallers as a Religious Order

8.1. The Hospitallers, together with the Templars who comprised a different body which was formed in 1120, were at the forefront of the development of the concept of a religious order. So far as the Hospitallers were concerned, the first measure of fundamental significance was Pope Paschal II's Bull of 1113. In accordance with customary practice, this Bull is known by its first three words, *Pie postulatio voluntatis*.

8.2. Roman law had recognised cities, colleges and certain other bodies as corporate persons, or, as would be said later, corporations, that is legal entities separate from the individuals who comprised them. These entities could own property in their own name. This concept was gradually developed in canon law, and the Bull of 1113 constituted the Hospitallers as such an entity.

8.3. The other main significance of the Bull of 1113 was that it freed the Hospitallers from the jurisdiction of the Abbot of St. Mary the Latins, and made them subject to their own Master, although still within the overall jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

9. During the 1130s, the Hospitallers adopted a rule which permitted individuals to be transferred from one place to another, and in the 1150s they were exempted from the jurisdiction of all bishops and so became accountable solely to the Pope.

10. Accordingly, by the end of the twelfth century, the Hospitallers had all the characteristics of a religious order as that concept had by then been developed, and progressively thereafter what had originally been known as the Hospital of St

John of Jerusalem came to be known as the Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem.

F. Organisations of the Hospitallers

11.1. Support for the Hospitallers grew rapidly, and at a very early stage dependent organisations were formed outside Jerusalem.

11.2. The larger organisations were provinces, known as priories and subsequently as Grand Priories. Grand Priories were governed by Grand Priors. A Grand Prior managed the estates within the province on behalf of the Master, as well as governing the members of the Order within the province.

11.3. The smaller organisations were known as commanderies or preceptories. At the outset the commanderies were small religious communities. A commandery had its own head, who had authority over the brethren of the commandery, and who administered the estates of the commandery on behalf of the prior of the priory (or the Grand Prior of the Grand Priory) and the Master.

11.4. The Bull of 1113 recognised that the Hospitallers already had estates and members in Europe and it made these members subject to the Master.

G. The Early Hospitallers in England

12.1. The first organisation of the Hospitallers in England was a commandery which had been established in about 1140 as a commandery dependent on the Priory of St. Gilles in southern France.

12.2. A separate priory within the Order was established in England in 1185.

13.1. What was to become the Grand Priory Church was built in about 1140 and an enlarged church was consecrated in 1185.

13.2. When in the same year the English Priory of the Order was created, the buildings of the former commandery at Clerkenwell became its headquarters.

H. Members of the Order

14.1. The Order comprised brothers divided into the classes of knights, sergeants and priests.

14.2. Of these, only the priests were ordained, but the members of all three classes took vows. These were the traditional vows of obedience, poverty and celibacy, and in addition the members took the further vow to serve and recognise the lordship of the poor.



I. The Governance of the Order

15.1. The Order was governed by a Master (who subsequently became known as the Grand Master) and a central convent at the Order's headquarters. The Master came to be always a knight: he was not ordained.

15.2. The Master and the central convent were supplemented by the chapter-general which met occasionally to deal with legislation.

16.1. The brothers at the central convent were divided into seven geographically defined groups, known as *Tongues*. An eighth was added at a later date. One of these was the English *Tongue*. The headship of each *Tongue* was allotted to one of the Great Officers of the Order. In the case of the English *Tongue* it was the Turcopolier (whose responsibility as a Great Officer was to command mercenaries and to safeguard the coastal defences at headquarters, first in Rhodes and then in Malta).

16.2. The original use of the expression "*Tongues*" was confined to the brothers in the geographical groups at the headquarters of the Order. However, progressively it was extended to include the groups of brothers in their own countries.

J. 1291 to 1798

17. For present purposes it can be stated briefly that the Order left the Holy Land in 1291. Thereafter it ruled in Rhodes from 1309 to 1522, and in Malta from 1530 to 1798.

K. The Reformation

18. During the fourteenth century, the Balley Brandenburg (the Bailiwick of Brandenburg) came to have a largely autonomous position within the Order's Grand Priory of Germany. This was confirmed by the Treaty of Heimbach in 1382. At first, the members continued to follow the Roman Catholic faith, but in 1540 they accepted the Reformation, and changed to Lutheran doctrines. The Bailiwick continued to have a loose association with the Order and, under legislation of the Order, it retained the title of Johanniterorden. The King of Prussia became protector of the Bailiwick in 1701.

L. The Order in England and the Reformation

19.1. The Order was suppressed by Henry VIII in his dominions in 1540. As will be seen (in para 32), it was restored by Mary I in 1557 and expressly incorporated. Elizabeth I confiscated all of the properties of the Order in her dominions by 1559, but did not extinguish the corporate entity.



19.2. None of those acts of English Sovereigns directly affected the functions of the Order in Scotland, but the influence of the Reformation put an end to the Order's activity there in 1564 or 1565.

20. The Order became dormant in the British Isles, and the post of Turcopolier was then held in trust by the Grand Master. However, titular Grand Priors of England continued to be appointed.

M. The Fall of Malta

21. The Order was expelled from Malta in 1798. It fell into disarray and, so far as they continued to exist in recognisable form, the various constituent elements went their own ways before being reunited in a reformed and revitalised order by the middle of the nineteenth century.

N. The Order in France following the Fall of Malta

22.1. After the expulsion of the Order from Malta, the headquarters of the Order were established first in St. Petersburg, where they were from 1798 to 1801, and thereafter in Italy, first at Catania and then, in 1834, in Rome. In France, the knights of the three French *Tongues* continued to be active. Following the fall of Napoleon in 1814, they formed a Commission which, while very successful in beginning the restoration of the Order in France, arrogated to itself powers to manage the affairs of the Order as a whole.

22.2. At that time, the Pope declined to approve the appointment of a Grand Master (the first Grand Master thereafter not being appointed until 1879) and in the absence of a Grand Master the Order was headed by a Lieutenant Grand Master.

22.3. At first, the Lieutenant Grand Master appears to have given at least tacit support to the Commission formed by the French knights, but he subsequently disowned it (as did the French Government).

23. In 1821, the Commission fell into the hands of its Chancellor, who was at that time an executive officer. The then Chancellor was an adventurer who called himself the Marquis Pierre-Hippolyte de Sainte-Croix-Molay. Under his leadership, the Commission pursued an extravagant foreign policy, with a view to re-establishing the Order's powers and influence in the Mediterranean.

24. In 1824 the Lieutenant Grand Master dissolved the Commission. However, the French knights under Sainte-Croix formed the Council of the French *Tongues* and claimed the Commission's purported powers.

O. Re-establishment of the Order in England: the initial approaches



25. Still pursuing their ambitious foreign policy, the French knights authorised emissaries to open negotiations with a Scot named Donald Currie. This led, in 1827, initially to the signing of three Instruments of Convention for the raising of an expeditionary force to aid the Greeks who were in revolt against Turkish rule. These instruments provided for financial subscribers and officers in that force to become members of the Order. Both Protestants and Roman Catholics responded to the invitation.

26. In February 1830, Sainte-Croix authorised Currie and one of the emissaries to revive the English *Tongue*. A committee was formed for this purpose in January 1831, and gave executive powers to a person called Count Alexander Mortara. In the following winter, the committee recruited the Reverend Robert Peat, who had been a chaplain to King George IV.

27. Peat soon realised that Mortara was corrupt, and he set up a separate division. Mortara's group ceased to exist a few years later, but, by the time of Peat's death in 1837, his own group had been consolidated.

P. Re-establishment in England: the next phase

28. Including Sainte-Croix, many of the individuals who had been involved in the moves to re-establish the English *Tongue* were of dubious probity, or worse, but the turning point came with the involvement of Peat. He attracted a number of persons of influence, and excluded from the body anyone who was not armigerous.

29. Many members of the English group were romantic dreamers and at first achieved little, but in the 1860s there began the activities which led to the eventual establishment of the St John Ophthalmic Hospital and St John Ambulance.

30. The next major event in England was the grant by Queen Victoria of a Charter in 1888. However, reference should first be made to the grant of Letters Patent by King Philip and Queen Mary in 1557.

Q. Letters Patent of King Philip and Queen Mary

31. As has been stated, Henry VIII had suppressed the Order in England in 1540, and it remained suppressed during his lifetime.

32.1. Following the accession to the throne in 1553 of Queen Mary I, at her request the Papal Legate restored and re-established the Order in England.

32.2. This was followed by Letters Patent granted by King Philip and Queen Mary I on 2 April 1557, whereby the Order in England was incorporated under the title of the Prior and Brethren of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England.



33.1. The properties of the Order were expropriated by Elizabeth I in 1558/9. That Act did not, however, abolish the Order in England, or annul its incorporation.

33.2. Progressively, the then existing English members of the Order died, and although a few English knights were occasionally received on Malta, with the passage of time the body corporate established by the 1557 Letters Patent came to have no members. That body was not, however, dissolved, but remained inchoate.

R. The Order in England in the mid-Nineteenth Century

34.1. As has been stated, the headquarters of the Order was moved in 1834 to Rome.

34.2. The Order became known as “The Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, called of Rhodes, called of Malta”. Thereafter, it was and continues to be frequently referred to as “the Sovereign Military Order of Malta” or “the Order of Malta”.

34.3. The Order of Malta is the medieval order in its present form, and it is, therefore, a body which has been in continuous existence since the latter part of the eleventh century.

35.1. The membership of the Order of Malta had been comprised primarily of fully professed knights, that is, knights who took the full religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, but the number of these in England was diminishing.

35.2. The Order had always had lay associates. These were given knighthoods and became an important class, outnumbering the professed, by the middle of the nineteenth century. They were exclusively Roman Catholic.

36. In the meantime, the successors of Peat recruited both Catholics and Protestants.

37. Accordingly, at the time when Queen Victoria’s Charter was granted, there were in England:

a. those, exclusively Catholic, who were members of the original Order in the form of the Order of Malta; and

b. those who were members of the body which had emerged from the initiatives of the French knights and Peat.

S. Queen Victoria’s Charter

38. Queen Victoria's Charter was granted on 14 May 1888. It had three main effects.

39.1. First, it did not, and did not purport to, create a new body, but it incorporated an existing body. Indeed, a recital to the Charter refers to that body as having been in existence throughout the whole of Queen Victoria's reign. Although not expressly stated, that recital appears to refer to the group formed by Peat.

39.2. There is some parallel between on the one hand Queen Victoria's act of incorporating and recognising an unincorporated body with, on the other hand, the act, likewise of, in effect, incorporating and recognising an unincorporated body, which Pope Paschal II had done nearly eight centuries previously.

40. The second main effect of the Charter was to cause the body thereby incorporated to become an Order of the British Crown, and, accordingly, an order of chivalry.

41.1. The third main effect of the Charter is to be seen from the name of the incorporated body and its first statutes, as described below.

41.2. The name of the incorporated body was "The Grand Priory of the Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England".

41.3. The first statutes of the incorporated body were embodied in a schedule to the Charter. The Charter entrenched certain key statutes by providing that they could only be changed by a subsequent charter.

41.4. The first of the entrenched statutes provided that the incorporated body "shall be the Head of the Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England".

41.5. By the name given to the incorporated body and this entrenched statute, the Crown recognised that part of the original Order, the Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, was in England, and that the newly-incorporated body was to be its head. By the Charter, therefore, the Crown expressly recognised as a matter of English law the connection of the newly incorporated body with the original order.

42. The 1888 Charter did not refer to the Letters Patent of 1557, and it has never been determined whether the body corporate which had been established in 1557 – but which had not been further developed – was subsumed into the body corporate established in 1888.

T. Name of the Venerable Order

43. Since 1888, there have been various changes of name. The word "Venerable" was introduced by a Charter of 1926. Following the last change, in October 1999,

the name is now “The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem”.

U. Organisations of the Venerable Order

44.1. The Venerable Order established organisations in about 40 countries in various parts of the world, mainly in what is now the Commonwealth. The larger organisations are known as Pories, and the smaller are presently known as National St John Councils, but are intended to become known as St John Associations.

44.2. All members of the Venerable Order, wherever in the world they are resident, are personally members of the one corporate body. The Pories and National Councils together constitute, in effect, a federation which is governed by English law.

V. The Mutually Recognised Orders of St John

45. Reference has been made (paragraph 18) to the Bailiwick of Brandenburg. The Bailiwick was dissolved in the first decade of the nineteenth century, but in 1812 King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia founded, in honourable memory of the Bailiwick, a Prussian Royal Order of St John, as an order of merit. The insignia was the simple cross of the Order. Members of the former Bailiwick were also admitted to this Royal Order. In 1852, King Friedrich Wilhelm IV reinstated the former Bailiwick as an Order under its present name of *Balley Brandenburg des Ritterlichen Ordens St. Johannis vom Spital zu Jerusalem*, or *Johanniterorden* as it is known for short, with himself as protector. The King directed that all members of the Royal Order of St John which had been created in 1812 should be admitted as Honorary Knights in the Bailiwick. The *Johanniterorden* has remained in continuous existence since then, notwithstanding the overthrow of the monarchy in Prussia and the political turmoil of the twentieth century.

46. A Dutch Commandery of the Bailiwick of Brandenburg was constituted as an association under Dutch law by Royal Decree of 30 April 1909. It changed its constitution by Royal Decree of 5 March 1946 and thereupon became independent of the Bailiwick of Brandenburg. Its insignia are recognised by the Dutch State as one of the Ancient Chivalrous Orders.

47. A Swedish Commandery of the Bailiwick of Brandenburg had been formed in 1920. In November 1946, that commandery was established as a Swedish Order with the King of Sweden as Grand Master. The Order now stands under the High Patronage of the present King of Sweden.

48.1. Although the Bailiwick of Brandenburg, the Venerable Order, and the Dutch and Swedish Orders all trace their origins, through different routes, to the medieval Order, each of them and the Order of Malta went their own ways.



48.2. In 1961, however, the Bailiwick of Brandenburg, the Venerable Order and the Dutch and Swedish Orders formed the Alliance of the Orders of St John. In doing so they preserved their separate identities, but resolved to co-operate in their international activities.

49. In 1963, the Order of Malta and the Venerable Order signed a joint declaration “of respect and esteem”. That was followed in 1987 when the Order of Malta and the four Orders within the Alliance of the Orders of St John mutually recognised their common vocation and their devotion to a common historical tradition.

50. Numerous bodies have been established at various times in different parts of the world with names suggesting that they are orders of St John, but the Order of Malta and the Alliance Orders are the only orders which are mutually recognised.

W. Properties and Collection

51. As has been stated in paragraph 13.2., when England was established as a separate priory within the Order in 1185, its existing commandery buildings at Clerkenwell became the headquarters of the Priory. It has also been stated, in paragraph 19, that all of the Order’s properties in England were confiscated by 1559.

52. After they had been confiscated, the buildings had a chequered history. The gatehouse to the priory was used as the office of the Master of the Revels and subsequently at different times as a coffee house, a printer’s workshop and a tavern. St John’s Gate was re-acquired by the Venerable Order in 1874 and has been used by it ever since. In 1999, it was transferred to the Venerable Order’s Priory of England and the Islands.

53.1. After the Reformation, the Priory Church fell into degradation. It was, however, re-consecrated and served as the Parish Church of Saint John, Clerkenwell, between 1723 and 1929. Following the union of the benefice of St John, Clerkenwell, with that of the adjoining Saint James, Clerkenwell, the Priory Church ceased to be a parish church and in 1931 the Church of England appropriated the church as the Church of the Venerable Order, and appointed the Venerable Order to be the trustee of it.

53.2. Part of the Church was badly damaged by enemy air attack on 11 May 1941. The Order purchased the freehold from the Diocese of London in 1954 and undertook its repair.

53.3. The Church has also been transferred to the Priory of England and the Islands.



St John

54. Within St John's Gate, the Venerable Order established and maintains a Museum and Library devoted to the history of the Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem from 1100 to 1798 and of the Venerable Order, including St John Ambulance, from 1827 to the present. It is the finest specialised collection anywhere in the world outside Malta of manuscripts, books, works of art and artefacts relating to the history of the Order, the Military Orders in general, and the crusades.

55. There is no continuity of ownership of the historic buildings from pre-Reformation times. Nevertheless, the present use and ownership of the buildings by the Venerable Order and its maintenance of the collection serve to reinforce and re-affirm its adherence to the ideals and ethos of the original Order.

A.R.M.

J.S.C.R-S.

12 March 2002

[St John International Office: ARM201001]



5. “A Royal Founding”: How King George IV invented the insignia of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem

Dr Matthew Glozier

Introduction

It is remarkable that St John historians have given almost no notice to King George IV’s role in creating the insignia of the British Order of St John. It not only laid the foundation for the badge of the Order which exists today; it also inspired the earliest members to join and lead the revived English *Langue*—a body that could so easily have floundered and extinguished at its inception. The initial members had explicit knowledge of King George’s innovation in introducing the British royal beasts to the traditional insignia of the Order. They conveyed this knowledge to the earliest members of the English *Langue*, who in turn revealed it to Sir Richard Broun. Though he was a controversial and eccentric character, Sir Richard’s efforts in cataloguing and advertising the heritage of the Order of St John and its revival in Britain were an essential element in its survival. He has been described as the Order’s “saviour” due to his shepherding of it as Secretary-General over the twenty-year period spanning Peat’s death through to its apotheosis into a genuine force for humanitarian good.¹ According to the thesis presented in this article, Broun was also responsible for one of the Order’s most important symbolic aspects by evolving its outward, visible identity in the form of the insignia of the Order of St John of Jerusalem. Thus, while King George IV provided the “royal founding” for the insignia of the British manifestation of the Order of St John, it was Sir Richard Broun who consolidated its badge into a form nearly identical to the one used today. That badge is recognisable the world over as the logo for the humanitarian work of St John Ambulance specifically, and generally of the Royal Order of chivalry that oversees it.

Reviving the English *Langue*

The Rev. Sir Robert Peat, perpetual vicar of New Brentford in Middlesex and personal chaplain to King George IV, was the first Grand Prior of the revived English *Langue* of the Order of St John of Jerusalem. This unofficial body grew into what today is known as the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, an internationally recognized Royal Order of chivalry. This story begins with Peat because he was instrumental in transforming a royal fancy into a tangible historical reality. On 11 November 1830 the Rev. Sir Robert Peat was invested as a knight of St John in a ceremony held at its ancient headquarters at St John’s Gate in Clerkenwell. He was an Anglican clergyman who was said to be “highly distinguished for his



accomplished manners and gentlemanly bearing, an excellent scholar, and a warm and devoted friend”.² Sir Robert occupied the post of Grand Prior of the English *Langue* from 29 January 1831, when he was elected *ad interim* in the presence of Philippe de Chastelain (representing the Commission of the French *Langues*, a group of French knights of St John, which had initiated the revival) and Donald Currie, the Scottish Highlander resident in London who was Agent-General of the French *Langues*.^{*} Sir Robert called himself Grand Prior *de jure* from 1835 and continued in the role until his death in 1837.

This flamboyant character was styled “Sir” on the strength of having received a Polish knighthood, as a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of Saint Stanislaus, to which he had been appointed on 21 November 1790 by Stanislaw II Augustus Poniatowski, King of Poland.³ He was granted this honour in recognition of services rendered to the Polish king by a relative called John Vesey, of Warsaw, who bequeathed his estate of considerable value to Sir Robert, located at Troky near Gradno. Sir Robert obtained a Royal License from King George III on 2 October 1804, allowing him to accept and wear the insignia of the Polish Order and use the same style and title as a Knight Bachelor in Britain.⁴ Sir Robert Peat was one of a select minority of Britons who belonged to foreign orders of chivalry. There were, for example, recipients of the kingdom of Hanover’s Royal Guelphic Order, who also called themselves “Sir”. The prominent astronomer, Frederick William Herschel, was among them.⁵ There were also a handful of British knights of St John, who had received their awards from Tsar Paul of Russia during his brief period as Grand Master. Like his Polish honour and title, Sir Robert’s armorial bearings were also genuine, being recently quartered to show his inheritance from his mother’s ancient Heron family.⁶ He had attended Trinity College, Cambridge, and served as a military Chaplain during the Peninsular campaign that formed such a prominent part of the Napoleonic Wars.

Though Sir Robert was an Anglican curate, he married a wealthy Catholic lady called Jane Smith. Her fortune was less attractive than her kinship with Maria Anne Fitzherbert, the longtime companion of George, Prince of Wales, later Prince Regent, and then King George IV. Sir Robert had money of his own, but as honorary chaplain to the Prince Regent, he was desperate to develop a personal relationship with his royal patron. Sir Robert was one of a hundred honorary chaplains to King George IV. Though he had never met the king, he was devoted to him. Speaking in the third person, he declared: “Sir Robert ... showing his desire to seize every, even the most trifling, occasion of proving his attachment to the Prince”.⁷ This helps explain Sir Robert Peat’s attraction to the Order of St John, because he discovered the king and his brother, the Duke of Clarence, were connected to it. How this was possible requires some explanation

^{*} In Britain, Philippe Chastelain was commonly called “Count Philippe de Chastelain”.



Earlier revivals mooted

The medieval English *Langue* of the Order of St John had been suppressed by King Henry VIII during his Dissolution of the Monasteries. Although briefly revived by Queen Mary I, the Order fell into abeyance in England under Queen Elizabeth I. However, the English *Langue* continued to exist in theory, even receiving nominal Grand Priors (usually Jacobite descendants of the exiled King James II). In 1782, the Prince and Grand Master of the Order of St John, Emmanuel de Rohan-Polduc, created the so-called Anglo-Bavarian *Langue* in order to perpetuate the English heritage in the Order.⁸ He wrote to King George III on 8 June 1782, announcing the innovation and declaring:

Eternally attached to the English nation, we have carefully preserved everything that could recall its existence in our association, and the *Langue* has never ceased to hold its place in our Administrative and Legislative Assemblies.⁹

King George graciously acknowledged the Grand Master's announcement. In truth, there were so few British knights in the English *Langue* in exile that its obscurity demanded it be annexed to the new Bavarian creation to allow Englishmen to join "should the reception of natives of those kingdoms into the Order be renewed".¹⁰ Significantly, the new creation used George III's arms combined with those of the duke of Bavaria (rather than the old medieval arms of England alone).¹¹ The Anglo-Bavarian *Langue* would come to constitute a vital, if tenuous, bridge linking the ancient *Langue* of England to the revival of the Order of St John in Britain in 1831. Tsar Paul of Russia became the pivotal figure in forming that link.

The Anglo-Bavarian *Langue* was funded by Bavarian property confiscated by the papacy from the suppressed Jesuits.¹² The Grand Priory of Poland was added to this in 1785, the proceeds from which Tsar Paul sent to the Order. On 29 November 1798, the tsar created an Orthodox Grand Priory of Russia (to exist in parallel with the Roman Catholic knights he had acquired from the Polish Priory, based on a treaty of 1 June 1798).¹³ This Orthodox extension joined what became known as the Anglo-Bavarian-Russian *Langue*, which included among its members the Irish knight, Anthony O'Hara.¹⁴ This was, in a way, the first manifestation of a revived English *Langue* of the Order.¹⁵ Tsar Paul's actions restored some of the Order's dignity and income at a time when it was suffering the blow caused by the French Revolutionary government's confiscation of its estates in republican France.



Figure 1: Armorial bearings of the Anglo-Bavarian *Langue* (1782–1797).¹⁶

A revival of the Order of St John in Britain was first mooted by a leading British statesman in 1799, in direct response to the actions of Tsar Paul in Russia. Tsar Paul acted as Grand Master of the Order of Malta from 1799 to 1801, which was accepted by many nations internationally (but never in Rome). In 1799 he awarded the Cross of Devotion of the Order of Malta to a handful of British subjects, with the approval of King George III. Historians of the Most Venerable Order of St John have always drawn a connection between Tsar Paul's British knights of Malta, and the subsequent revival of the English *Langue* of the Order in 1831. In 1868, Dr Robert Bigsby, announced to a friend:

I have written a sketch of the later history of the Order of St John with especial reference to the English *Langue*. I begin with the cession of Malta to the French in 1798, and so down to the present time.¹⁷

In 1922, John Frederic Symons-Jeune presented a narrative that included Tsar Paul in the origin story of the British revival:

Many knights took refuge in Russia at the invitation of the Tsar, whom they elected their Grand Master. English influence [over him] was complained of as being too powerful, and one of the first decorations was conferred on Emma, Lady Hamilton. Many English gentlemen were invited to join the Order, several of whom survived to take part in the revival of the Order in England. The fall of Napoleon in 1814 removed the ban imposed on the Order in France. The French branch was revived by a Bull of Pope Pius VII in 1814 and was recognised by King Louis XVIII. Negotiations were entered into with a view of re-establishing the English branch, and in 1831, under the lead of Sir Robert Peat, that branch was formally recognised.¹⁸

The basis of these assertions goes back to 1799. This was the high-point of



Anglo-Russian amity when the British politician, Lord Grenville, instructed Sir Charles Whitworth (British ambassador to Russia) to make overtures to the Tsar, suggesting England might form its own Protestant British Grand Priory of the Order of St John (along the same lines as his Orthodox one in Russia):

[To convince Russia that Britain] had no selfish designs on [the island of] Malta, but would place that island, as already agreed upon, at the Tsar's disposition ... [Grenville] would soon propose the formation of an English branch of the Order of St John of Jerusalem. To give more effect to Whitworth's representations Lord Grenville despatched Sir Home Popham, who had won Paul's favour when negotiating the Dutch expedition earlier in the year.¹⁹

Grenville's suggestion may have been little more than a political ruse. However, this was the point at which Emma Hamilton, three Royal Navy officers, and an English diplomat in Russia all became British recipients of the Cross of Devotion of the Order of St John, received from Tsar Paul. Furthermore, during the negotiations preceding the 1802 Treaty of Amiens, Marquis Cornwallis suggested an English *Langue* might be created to counter-balance the influence on Maltese affairs exerted by the French *Langues*. The potential reality of such a creation helps to explain Treaty Clause X(2), which demanded the abolition of all three Francophone *Langues* and forbade the revival of an English one.²⁰



Figure 2: Tsar Paul, as Protector of the Order of St John (1798). © MOSJ.²¹



Figure 3: Sir Home Riggs Popham, Knight of St John. © National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth.²²

By the 1820s, all of the Tsar's British knights of Malta were dead, with the exception



of Admiral Sir William Johnston Hope. Hope died on 2 May 1831, less than four months after a “Council of the English *Langue*” was inaugurated, on 12 January. This stretches the assertion that he was an active foundational member of the revived *Langue* of England.²³ Regardless, the Tsar’s awards maintained a prominent place in the history of the body that would, in time, become the Most Venerable Order of St John.²⁴ Significantly, two items referencing Tsar Paul and his relationship to the Order of St John have a place of honour among the extensive art collection of the Museum of the Order of St John (MOSJ), at St John’s Gate, the headquarters of the Venerable Order—a portrait of Tsar Paul, wearing the cross of the Order of Malta, and the magnificent crystal pectoral cross of one of its former Grand Masters, Jean Parisot de Valette.²⁵

An American historian of the Order, Major-General Edgar Erskine Hume, suggested that a revival of the Order in England was hoped for by the Commission of the French *Langues* when it was created in 1814, the “French knights being particularly interested”.²⁶ This is why the British revivers of the English *Langue* always insisted theirs was among the six governing *Langues* of the Order of St John at this time (albeit in abeyance).²⁷ Thus, when Sir Robert Peat became the leader of the English *Langue*, he sought to establish a legal authority for its revival.

Royal interest

All of this means the Order of St John gained considerable prominence in Britain in the early 1800s. In part this explains why listed in the 1830 inventory of jewels at Windsor Castle there is “the Order worn by the Grand Master of Malta”.²⁸ It is an impressive enamelled jewel, dating from the 17th century. It is strikingly similar to one in the MOSJ collection. The jewel was gifted to the Prince Regent by Sir William Curtis (1752-1829), a close personal friend who was Lord Mayor of London 1795-6 and a key participant in George IV’s visit to Scotland, organized by Sir Walter Scott in 1822. Curtis acquired the jewel for King George, because he knew the king was interested in the Order of St John. Significantly, this badge is grouped in the Royal Collection alongside the insignia of the Sicilian Order of St Ferdinand and Merit, and with the neck-badge of a knight of Malta.



Figure 4: Badge of the Order of Malta, mid-17th century, gold and enamel | 9.0 x 7.0 cm (RCIN 441486). © Royal Collection.



Figure 5: Jewel of the Order of St John gold enamel pendant. © MOSJ.

The jewel belonged to King George IV, but it must be emphasized that nothing about his interest in the Order was straight-forward. His royal consort, Caroline of Brunswick, confirmed the unusual nature of his interest in the Order of St John. For example, during her grand tour through Italy and pilgrimage to the Holy Land between 1814 and 1820, while passing through Ferrara, Lieutenant Master Andrea di Giovanni y Centelles offered her the Cross of Devotion of the Order of St John. She was adamant that “no one but Catholics can receive it”, saying this to explain why she “could not give it to ... [the] English gentlemen” in her retinue.²⁹ Yet, at this time in Britain, a couple of naval officer and Emma Hamilton were wearing the very same award, having received it from Tsar Paul of Russia. In fact, Emma Hamilton’s award prompted a fashion among British ladies to wear Maltese crosses as jewellery.³⁰ At the same time, George, Prince of Wales’s interest in the Order of St John appears to have originated in his enthusiastic support of Sir Home Popham’s mission to Tsar Paul a decade-and-a-half earlier in 1799, for which the Tsar awarded Popham the Cross of Devotion.³¹



Figure 6: The Prince Regent commissioned this topaz and gold Maltese cross from Rundell, Bridge, and Rundell in 1816.



Tsar Paul's actions inspired an interest in the Order of St John in two British royal princes: George, Prince of Wales, and his brother, the Duke of Clarence. This made sense in early 1799, when Tsar Paul appeared to be the only monarch who could unite the Powers against Napoleon, but by 1800 his actions were politically unpalatable to Britain.³² However, while Tsar Paul remained in favour, the heir to the British throne "noticed" and offered "protection" to Sir Home Popham, during his time in St Petersburg "from a conviction of my zeal for the good of the country".³³ Popham was sent to Russia to garner support for a combined Anglo-Russian landing on the Dutch coast, aimed at harming Napoleon's forces in the Netherlands. When Popham received the Cross of Devotion from Tsar Paul it initiated strong British royal interest in the Order from 1799 onwards. In that same year George, Prince of Wales, ordered a "Maltese chain" costing £7-18-0 from jewellers, Gray and Constable.³⁴ In 1800, he acquired a "gold Maltese neck-chain" from the official Royal Goldsmiths, Rundell, Bridge, and Rundell, for which he paid £7-17-6.³⁵ In 1807, he commissioned a "fine brilliant Maltese cross" for his sister, Princess Mary, Duchess of Gloucester and Edinburgh.³⁶ In 1816, George, now Prince Regent, acquired a topaz and gold Maltese cross from Rundell, Bridge, and Rundell.³⁷ These commissions would be inexplicable without the royal interest raised in the Order by Tsar Paul.

Prince Regent, Knight of St John

Following the restoration of the French monarchy in 1814, the French knights of Malta formed a Commission of the three Francophone *Langues*, consisting of France, Auvergne, and Aquitaine. Initially, they enjoyed the full patronage and encouragement of King Louis XVIII. There is evidence that, on their own authority, the Commission offered the Cross of Devotion to two British royals with the result that "His Majesty George IV accepted the Badge of the Order from the Chapter assembled in Paris", as did his brother, the Duke of Clarence.³⁸ The Prince Regent succeeded to the throne as King George IV in 1820, at which time a "badge of the Order of Malta" was listed in the royal accounts.³⁹ However, it is unclear if this badge refers to the insignia of a knight of St John, or to the enamelled jewel gifted by Sir William Curtis. No official notice was taken of an investiture of the king into the Order of St John, but there is evidence to support the assertion, including a contemporary French-manufactured badge of the Order of St John in the Royal Collection at Windsor today.⁴⁰

The French knights awarded King George membership of the Order probably in 1828, through the "extreme presumption" of the distinguished medico-botanist, Dr



Frost, an acquaintance of several members of the Royal Family and one of the first British knights of St John to be created by the French Commission.⁴¹ Frost acted as an agent for the French Commission in recruiting British gentlemen to be knights of St John into the early-1830s. Dr John Frost FRSE FSA (1803–1840), was a short-lived but highly influential physician and botanist who founded the Medico-Botanical Society of London, and was a close acquaintance of several senior members of the Royal Family. He was introduced to King George IV by Dr Robert Bree FRS, consultant for asthma to HRH the Duke of Sussex. Frost was placed as botanical tutor to HRH Prince George, Duke of Cumberland and Cambridge (later King George V of Hanover). He was Secretary to the Royal Humane Society in London between 1824 and 1830 and became personal physician to HRH the Duke of Cumberland in 1830. In 1831, Dr Frost established the “St John’s Hospital” at St John’s Gate, Clerkenwell, which he ran. His nautical interests as a member of the Royal Sailing Society led him to seek permission from the Admiralty to convert a retired naval vessel into a hospital ship in 1832, to serve the needs of retired Thames boatmen. By that time, King William IV has ascended the throne and he agreed to be Patron, proving the strength of their connection.⁴²

Regardless of exactly when King George IV received the honour, Sir Richard Broun (the earliest official historian of the Venerable Order of St John) later insisted the king:

Testified the high sense in which he held this illustrious fraternity, by never appearing in any other decoration on those occasions when he wore the Cross and Riband of a Knight Hospitaller.⁴³

Broun’s enthusiastic words should be treated with caution. However, it is a fact that King George took pride in his membership of the Order of St John, because there is incontrovertible evidence that he invented a brand new “British” version of its insignia. On 1 May 1828 the king commissioned Rundell, Bridge, and Rundell to make:

A gold enamelled Badge of the Order of Malta with Crown over & Lion & Unicorn between with broad gold Clasp & [black] Ribbon.⁴⁴

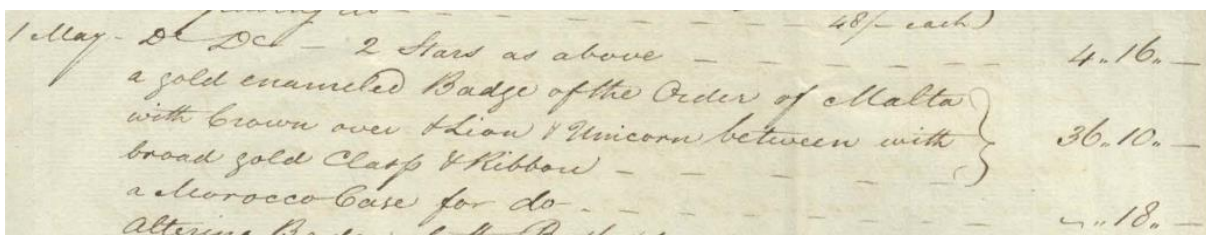




Figure 7: King George IV invented the modern British insignia of the Order of St John. This note describes the badge he commissioned for his personal use from the Royal Goldsmiths, Rundell, Bridge, and Rundell, in May 1828.⁴⁵

A morocco leather case was ordered to accompany this insignia and, on the following day of 2 May, the king ordered two “small gold enamelled Stars of the Order of Malta”.⁴⁶ The king’s design was the culmination of a series of royal commissions, stretching back almost 30 years to 1799, when Tsar Paul had inspired his interest in the Order. Now the Commission of the French *Langues* had consolidated the decades’ long appeal of the Order for the king, by making him a knight of St John.

A year later, on 18 April 1829, the Royal Goldsmith’s accounts mention “re-enamelling a star of the Order of Malta” for the king, in addition to repairing a “small gold enamelled Star of the Order of Malta”.⁴⁷ This suggests the insignia had been worn regularly enough by the king to require repairs.

Lion and Unicorn

The addition of lions and unicorns makes perfect sense, because these are the “royal beasts” representing the kingdoms of England and Scotland respectively. They formed a prominent part of the king’s royal arms and were a significant feature on a number of British royal orders of chivalry, reflecting their strong heraldic presence historically. Sir Richard Broun later explained the significance of the British royal beasts in relation to the Order of St John:

The Badge, or Jewel, worn by members of the Order of the *Langue* of England, consists of a Cross enamelled, angled alternately with the Lion and Unicorn, the national supporters of Great Britain, surmounted by a sovereign Crown. King George set the example of wearing the Badge so angled in consequence of the French Knights charging their Badge with Fleur-de-lis, the German [i.e. Austrian] Knights with Eagles, and the Spanish Knights with Castles, etc.⁴⁸

Another early historian of the Order, Dr Robert Bigsby confirmed:

The badge of the Knights and Ladies consists of a gold cross of eight points enamelled white, surmounted by a sovereign crown, and charged at the chief angles with lions and unicorns—a mode of augmentation adopted by his late Majesty King George the Fourth, who was an honorary member of one of the French *Langues*.⁴⁹



One factor that should be addressed is that the king and his brother were both committed Freemasons. It is well known that King George IV and his successor, William IV, were patrons of Symbolic Masonry. George IV was Grand Master Mason, while the Royal Arch Chapters were patronized by the Duke of Clarence (afterwards King William). Their involvement encouraged the rites of the Masonic Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitaller of St John.⁵⁰ While personal British connections with the military-religious orders remained slight, the prevailing Masonic chivalric degrees made meaningful, though purely symbolic, connections with the ancient Crusader orders, during the course of the eighteenth century.⁵¹ In the words of Antti Matikkala, a Finnish expert on orders of chivalry:

It is interesting to note that the real contacts which may be substantiated between English Freemasonry and some individual Knights of Malta were established by the Grand Lodge of England, which founded a lodge in Malta, the membership of which consisted mainly of the Knights of Malta with no British members.⁵²



Figure 8: George, Prince of Wales (later George IV) as Grand Master of Freemasons. © Brighton & Hove Museums



Figure 9: Duke of Clarence (later William IV) as Master/Ruler of the "Prince of Wales Lodge" No.259. © Museum of Freemasonry

The Malta lodge was founded in 1788 and, significantly, it later in the 1850s included William Winthrop, a prominent early American member of the revived English *Languae*. The royal brothers' commitment to Freemasonry might help explain their



interest in accepting from the French Commission the chivalric version of the “Knight Hospitaller” rite. Most importantly, however, it must be emphasized that what King George IV commissioned in 1828 was a chivalric badge, not a Masonic jewel. That is clear from the context of Rundell’s accounts, which mention the Order of the Bath directly underneath that of Malta.

Following the death of King George IV in June 1830, Rundell, Bridge, and Rundell were permitted to sell some of the orders and decorations made by them for his late Majesty, to recoup royal debts. This sale included the king’s insignia of the “British” Order of St John. The sale indicates that the late king owned a full set of insignia of the Order, including a neck badge and breast star. General Sir Charles Routledge O’Donnell purchased the king’s neck badge of the Order, with its lions and unicorns between the angles of the Maltese cross.⁵³ Sir Robert Peat bought the king’s breast star of the Order of St John.⁵⁴ Dr Robert Bigsby records:

King George the Fourth ... upon the death of that monarch, he [Peat] purchased, from Rundell and Bridge, the *crâchat* or star of the Order of St John of Jerusalem which His Majesty, as one of its members, wore.⁵⁵

It is clear that King George IV had invented specifically British insignia by including the royal beasts of England and Scotland, and this was adopted by the English *Langue*. The late king’s enthusiasm for a British version of the Order suggests what might have become of it, had he instituted it as a chivalric body along lines similar to his creation of the Royal Guelphic Order. It is important to emphasize that the late king designed a badge, he did not in any way found an organisation (although it was clearly the aspiration of the Commission of the French *Langues* to secure his royal patronage for a revival of the English *Langue*). Still, King George’s contribution was highly significant because his leadership in designing British insignia lent it enormous prestige and suggested its legitimacy in the mind of this royal *fons honorum*.[†] Robert Pearsall, one of the best-informed and most critical early members of the English *Langue*, said in 1838:

George IV wore the cross with a lion and a unicorn ... it is an important fact—because then this cross will at least have a royal founding.⁵⁶

King George’s actions appear to have inspired Sir Robert Peat to become a foundation member of the revived English *Langue* of the Order of St John because, following Rundell’s auction of the royal badge, Peat soon contacted Donald Currie, based on his interest in the late king’s membership of the Order of St John. Currie

[†] The fount of honour (Latin: *fons honorum*) is a person, who, by virtue of their official position, has the exclusive right of conferring legitimate titles of nobility and orders of chivalry on other persons.



was at that time acting as Agent General of the French Commission, charged with recruiting members in Britain. Similarly, General O'Donnell also was inspired to join the fledgling English *Langue*.

A royal relic

The paramount importance of George IV's insignia was well-understood by the early members of the English *Langue*. Sir Robert Peat appears to have bequeathed his cross to Sir John Philippart, who claimed to have in his possession "the cross worn by His late Majesty George 4th, Sir C.R. O'Donnell having His Majesty's badge".⁵⁷ In 1857, Dr Bigsby mentioned to Philippart that his correspondence with General O'Donnell had produced "a little drawing" of the late King's insignia.⁵⁸ He later mentioned to O'Donnell in a letter: "I have your very interesting account of the purchase of George IV's cross, which I once saw, in 1837, in the hands of [Donald] Currie".⁵⁹ Over 40 years later, members of the Order were still enquiring about the possibility of viewing the precious insignia.⁶⁰ The objects took on the status of revered relics of the revived English *Langue*; suggesting royal patronage, protection, and the intention to support a specifically British manifestation of the Order of St John. Following the death of Sir Charles O'Donnell, General Sir James Alexander wrote to his heir, Major O'Donnell, wanting to know if the insignia could be viewed or if it would be auctioned. He received no reply. Sadly, King George's cross and star have disappeared, but a series of early portraits and photographs prove the universal acceptance of the royal beasts as the proper badge of the "Anglican *Langue*", as some called it.



Figure 10: Early wearers of the insignia. Left to right: General Sir James Alexander (KJJ 1832; KCJJ 1842; photo 1860); Dr William Reid Clanny (KJJ 1832; KCJJ 1849); Sir Richard Broun (KJJ 1835; KCJJ 1839); Sir William Hillary (KJJ 1838; KCJJ 1841).

One of the earliest extant examples of such insignia is the neck badge that belonged to General Sir James Alexander of Westerton CB. On 24 June 1832, James Edward



Alexander joined the English *Langue*. He was then a captain in the 42nd Highlanders, and expressed “kindness and high gratitude” alongside “thanks and kindness” to Philippart “for having introduced me to the Sovereign Order of St John of Jerusalem”. He promised “by flood or field—I shall ever cherish the Black Ribbon and endeavour, however feebly, to do credit to the Maltese Cross”.⁶¹ Thereafter, Alexander was instrumental in recruiting many Scottish gentlemen, including Sir Richard Broun. In 1842, Alexander was promoted to the grade of Knight Commander of Justice, giving him the right to wear a neck badge and breast star. His surviving medals show that he acquired a breast star as new insignia. However, his neck badge is rather small, suggesting it might be an altered version of his original knight’s badge from 1832. This possibility makes his insignia particularly interesting, because it may be the oldest surviving example in existence. It displays both unicorns and lions between the angles of the cross arranged in what appears to modern eyes to be an unconventional manner.



Figure 11: medals, decorations, and awards of General Sir James Alexander of Westerton CB. © Bonhams Fine Art Auctioneers & Valuers.⁶²



Figure 12: detail of Knight Commander of Justice (Order of St John) 1842 silver-gilt neck badge and enamel breast star. As a proud Scot, General Alexander has the unicorns in first place.



Philippart had seen George IV's version of the badge possessed by Peat and, since he recruited Alexander, it is reasonable to assume he conveyed to him information about the form of the Order's insignia. Although Alexander's badge may date from 1842 (when he became a Knight Commander), it was most probably either his modified insignia as a KJ from 1832, or modelled on it, making it one of the earliest extant insignia of the English *Langue*.

Remarkably, Alexander's insignia is not unique. A similar arrangement of beasts is evident on insignia held at St John's Gate. That badge is attributed to Dr Charles Jenkins, who was made a knight of Malta by the French Commission on 5 August 1827, the date of his Letters Patent.⁶³ Among his other achievements, Dr Jenkins acted as an Assistant Surgeon in the Royal Navy in 1815, and he was later awarded the silver medal of the Royal Humane Society for Restoration of Life in 1829.⁶⁴ "Charles Edward Jenkins, KM" was Director of the Eclectic Society of London in the 1830s.⁶⁵ This "knight Commander of St John" was said to be running "a very small dispensary, called St John's British Hospital" in 1840.⁶⁶ At that time, Dr Jenkins was styled "Sir Charles Edward Jenkins, Knight of Malta" and, as late as 1859, he used the post-nominal letters "KM".⁶⁷ Jenkins's "hospital" was probably located in a front room in his residence in Great Prescott Street, Tower Hamlets, in London.⁶⁸ Jenkins and Donald Currie both belonged to the Royal Sailing Society, as did Admiral Sir Sidney Smith and Dr John Frost, all of whom were early knights of St John.⁶⁹



Figure 13: Insignia attributed to Dr Charles Jenkins, made a Knight of Malta by the Commission of the French *Langues*, under the protection of King Louis XVIII (5 August 1827). The cross measures 40mm across x 75mm to ring attachment at top of crown.⁷⁰



All this would suggest that the “Jenkins” cross is the oldest insignia in existence. However, it must be noted that there is doubt about its attribution. An article in a Masonic publication from 1903 is the first mention of Jenkins, his Letters Patent, and the insignia. The parchment and badge were grouped together by a Masonic enthusiast called Mr Walter Nickels, of Birkenhead, and described as items of antiquarian interest by W. Harry Rylands in the 1903 publication. Nickels had acquired them from a collector on the assumption they were connected.⁷¹ They were donated to the Museum of the Order of St John in the early 1900s. Based on the assumption they were all related to Jenkins, the badge and Letters Patent, along with their enormous wax seal, received a purpose-built box (probably manufactured by Fincham & Sons, under the direction of Henry Fincham the famous St John antiquary).

There are no hallmarks on the “Jenkins” insignia, although there is consensus it was probably manufactured in France by a jeweller (presumed by some to be working for the Commission of the French *Langues*).⁷² Obviously Jenkins would have acquired and worn a version of the Order’s insignia, and he might possibly have had such made in England by a jeweller in Regent Street, called John Duncomb Metcalfe, who was said to be selling them.⁷³ However, the unusual feature of this badge is the absence of unicorns and this allows speculation that this is, in fact, the cross manufactured in Paris in 1838 for Robert Pearsall. Robert Lucas de Pearsall was an early and enthusiastic member of the English *Langue*, but also an unusually critical and singularly well-informed one. He is well-remembered as a significant musical scholar, and he was also a talented linguist who lived for many years on the Continent where he enjoyed good relations with many German Knights of St John. He became a vital source of advice and information for Sir Richard Broun, in his attempt to raise the reputation and standing of the English *Langue*, and expand its membership.



Figure 13: Jenkins's Letters Patent and large seal with the probably unconnected insignia all in a box manufactured by Fincham & Sons c.1903.

When Pearsall commissioned his cross in Paris he recorded it was “not ... made quite correctly in as much as they have put all lions, instead of lions and unicorns, at the angles”.⁷⁴ It might be thought that Pearsall would have noted the unconventional modelling of the lions, had his cross resembled the one attributed to Jenkins. However, the precedent set by General Alexander's badge suggests the modelling of the royal beasts was unremarkable. It remains unknown what, if any, direction Pearsall gave to the Parisian jeweller who manufactured his cross, but it is striking how similar the lions are in their form to Alexander's badge. It is certain that Pearsall had not seen George IV's insignia.⁷⁵ If the insignia held in the MOSJ is, indeed, that made for Pearsell then its provenance is via his son or daughter, who each returned to live in London from Germany in 1857. Many of their father's effects, including his Swiss castle at Wartensee, were sold at public auction in 1858.⁷⁶



But the question must be asked: why would the beasts be modelled in this fashion? The most obvious answer appears to be that the lions between the angles of the cross resemble those on the Royal Guelphic Order, created by the Prince Regent in 1815.⁷⁷ The modelling of the British lions on the Guelphic Order was itself based on those appearing on the Order of the Bath, revived by King George I in 1725 and remodelled in 1815 by the Prince Regent when he added three classes of knights: Knights Grand Cross, Knights Commander, and Companions.

Thus, the future King George IV was involved directly in reshaping two Orders of Chivalry which each bore royal beasts of a type similar the those on two surviving very early examples of the badge of the “British” Order of St John. All of this suggests the modelling of the unicorns and lions on George IV’s badge of the Order of St John probably resembled those on General Alexander’s neck badge. This makes sense in terms of continuity with both the Guelphic Order and the Order of the Bath, with the lions having the same traditional shape but with the innovation of adding Scottish unicorns. Surely a reasonable conclusion is that the royal beasts placed on King George IV’s insignia of the Order of St John were most likely arranged in the same manner in which they appear on General Alexander’s neck badge. While it probably gives no comfort to a modern audience to recognize the similarity to the jewel worn by contemporary Masonic St John rite recipients, at least the Masonic jewels include English lions alone without any unicorns. And it gives valuable insight into the likely appearance of the first insignia of the “British” Order of St John—one with a “royal Founding” no less.



Figure 14: Royal Guelphic Order of Hanover: Grand Cross collar, 1815.⁷⁸



Figure 15: Order of the Bath: Grand Cross sash badge, by Rundell, Bridge & Rundell, London, 1814.⁷⁹



Regardless of its provenance (and it probably was Pearsall's), one striking feature of the "Jenkins" insignia in the MOSJ is the crown, which appears to be modelled on that created and used by Tsar Paul of Russia. True to character, Pearsall had probably researched the shape of the crown that Tsar Paul designed for himself as Grand Master.



Figure 16: Grand Master crown made for Tsar Paul, and the crown on the "Jenkins" cross.⁸⁰

Sir Richard Broun had never seen George IV's insignia, possessed by Sir Robert Peat, when he published his *Hospitallaria* in 1837. His relations with Peat were minimal, and although John Philippart continued to hold the position of Chancellor of the English *Langue* into the 1860s, he felt Broun as Secretary-General was basically running his own group, with little reference to its foundation members. Here is a possible explanation for why the earliest image in print of the badge of the Order—published by Broun in 1837—diverges from the insignia possessed by Alexander and the "Jenkins" cross. In short, Broun appears to have evolved it himself. If this is true, then King George IV could be said to have initiated the concept of the English and Scottish royal beasts between the angles of the Maltese cross worn by members of the "British" Order of St John; but Sir Richard Broun consolidated their form. Broun's model is the one worn by almost all the early members for whom we have an image (all of which post-date his 1837 book).



Figure 17: Illustration of the insignia of the Order of St John from Sir Richard Broun's *Hospitallaria* (published 1837).



Figure 18: Detail from Sir William Hillary's portrait (c.1841).

Broun's badge became the standard accepted model used by the English *Langue* up until 1871, at which point reforms within the Venerable Order of St John in Britain abandoned the royal beasts between the angles of the cross. They were not reinstated until Queen Victoria granted the Order a Royal Charter in 1888, and agreed to become its Sovereign Head. At that time, the royal beasts were returned to the angles of the cross, but refashioned into the familiar modern form they retain today.



Figure 19: Insignia of a Knight of the English *Langue* of the Order of St John of Jerusalem (1831–1871). © Private Coll. (originally in the Fondation Napoléon Collection, France).



Conclusion

It is surprising to realise that the British Order of St John truly had a royal founding in relation to King George IV's role in creating its insignia. He created the badge of the Order which exists today and, perhaps more importantly, inspired the earliest members to join and lead the revived English *Langue*. Peat, Philippart, and O'Donnell, had explicit knowledge of King George's innovation in introducing the British royal beasts to the traditional insignia of the Order. They shared this knowledge with the earliest members of the English *Langue*, and Sir Richard Broun advertised this heritage in his writings. As we have seen, Broun was also responsible for innovating the insignia of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, transcending the "royal founding" provided by King George IV by consolidating the badge into a form nearly identical to the one used today. That badge is recognisable the world over as the logo for the humanitarian work of St John Ambulance specifically, and generally of the Royal Order of chivalry that oversees it.

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6. Establishing an Order of Chivalry?

Todd Skilton OSTJ, JP

As an Order, we as The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem, present ourselves as a legitimate Order of Chivalry and style ourselves as a Royal Order of Chivalry. This legitimacy we argue is derived from the Royal Charter granted by Queen Victoria in 1888. This we hold as our basis for being a Royal Order of Chivalry and, therefore, being a Commonwealth honour dependant on the Crown of the United Kingdom. But what did the Royal Charter really do for the Order and did it make it (and its members) a 'legitimate' Order of Chivalry?



The fact the Order was granted a Charter is, of course, not in question – but what the effect was is still perhaps unclear and a closer reading of the Royal Charter throws up some interesting questions.

Firstly, the Order received a Royal Charter of Incorporation. The fact it was one to incorporate is rarely mentioned. This meant that the Charter took the existing body that was St John at the time and incorporated it.¹

A Royal Charter is an instrument of incorporation, which confers independent legal personality on an organisation. It is considered a prestigious way of acquiring legal personality and reflects the high status of that body. The authority for the grant of a Charter comes from the Royal Prerogative, that is to say, the grant is made by the Sovereign. An institution incorporated by Charter is, subject to the general law, giving a body the rights and powers of a natural person. Therefore, our Order can be challenged in court. However, this honour isn't unique to the Order of St John. Nearly 1,000 Royal Charters have been granted and this includes commercial companies, treaties over foreign lands and universities.²



Nowhere in the Royal Charter does it explicitly say that the incorporation created an Order of Chivalry or Knighthood. This means the Order of St John was not explicitly conferred the privilege of having its own honours system. The Charter does, however, explicitly state it has created a body corporate with an existing membership grade arrangement, expressly permitting the existing practices of conferring membership in different grades to continue.³

This meant that the various Grades of the Order were not an honour, but were rather similar to a “rank” internal to the organisation. This almost certainly explains why the Sovereign did not sign the appointment diplomas and why being a member of the Order did not confer “any rank, style, title dignity, or appellation or social precedence whatsoever”.⁴ In effect, the Order was a private corporate body, which grants badges of rank to its members.

When the author first became associated with St John, he asked existing members why the Order was not assigned formal precedence. The answer received was that as a “working Order”, it has humility. Looking critically at this concept, it seems doubtful. The Order was operating very well prior to the granting of the Charter and, therefore, there was potentially no need to incorporate, let alone through a Royal Charter. Furthermore, it was only on the third attempt that the Order was successful in receiving the grant of the Charter.⁵

The Order’s Charter was granted at a time when social precedence was very important. It was probable that the existing Crown Orders of Knighthood were not going to have an organisation disrupt a well-functioning society. Especially an organisation that was a private body corporate, which granted unofficial badges to its members indicating their rank in the organisation.

However, one definite effect of the Royal Charter was to cause admission to membership of the Order be widely perceived to be the conferment of an honour, which by virtue of the support of the Royal Family, granted social status.⁶ This also likely had the added benefit of encouraging fundraising and support for the objectives of the Order.

The author would suggest too this is why the Sovereign Head does not approve appointments in our Order, but rather sanctions them.⁷ The authority for the award isn’t coming from the Crown, but rather the authority vested in the Body Corporate. The Queen operates in a range of capacities – The Queen of the United Kingdom, The Queen of Australia, etc. The Sovereign’s role in St John is another example of this, Sovereign Head of the body corporate that is St John.

However, despite being a body corporate with the limitations that this imposed on the Order, the Order was an organisation with some very influential friends, who permitted Members of the Order to wear their rank badges like an Order of Chivalry.⁸



St John

LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S OFFICE,

March 11, 1889.

The Queen has been graciously pleased to allow the Members and Honorary Associates of the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, in England, to wear generally the Insignia of their respective grades in the said Order, as provided for in the Royal Charter of Incorporation of the 14th May 1838.

LATHOM,

Lord Chamberlain.

The most obvious demonstration of this was the gazetting of a notice stating the Queen was pleased to permit Members and Honorary Associates of the Order to wear generally the Insignia of their respective grades.⁹ It is also well illustrated by Queen Victoria writing to her eldest son, Albert Edward, the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) and then Grand Prior of the Order, asking him to, if possible, give her the Order of St John and make her a Dame Chevalier or Lady of Justice due to her interest "it all". Queen Victoria was of course already a member of the Order and as the Sovereign Head was the leading member, but still had a desire to be involved.¹⁰

Order appointments were first published in the London Gazette on 27 March 1896, when a full list of current Members was published.¹¹ Despite this, the authority to wear the insignia wasn't clear cut and it took significant lobbying to ensure the position for Order insignia in the Order of Wear is where it is today, instead of lower in the Order of Wear.¹²

The establishment of the Order of St John can be compared and contrasted with two other instances of the period.





The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire

The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire was established in 1917. Rather than being incorporated as a body corporate, the Order of Knighthood was established by Letters Patent. Letters Patent are an open document from the Sovereign, which can be used to express the Sovereign's will.¹³ The language used in the Letters Patent which created the Order is very different to that in the Order of St John's Royal Charter of Incorporation. The language makes it very clear that from the outset it is termed and considered as an Order of Chivalry.¹⁴

An example of this is that the Letters Patent assigned social precedence and a clear position within the Order of Wear alongside other Orders and Decorations from the day it was introduced. There is no doubt from the language used in the Letters Patent that it is an Order of Chivalry, with the authority completely vested in the Crown. There is no ambiguity, which is a marked difference from that of the Royal Charter pertaining to the Order of St John.



League of Mercy

The League of Mercy was a charitable organisation which raised funds and recruited a large number of volunteers to aid the sick and suffering at charity hospitals. It had considerable membership from high society.¹⁵

The League of Mercy was established 13 March 1899 by Royal Charter of incorporation on the representations of HRH The Prince of Wales who was appointed the first Grand President. The Senior Officers were the Patron and Sovereign (originally Queen Victoria), the Grand President (originally Edward, Prince of Wales) who were supported by other officers.



The Royal Charter instituted the award of a decoration known as the Order of Mercy, to be bestowed on those whose names were approved and sanctioned by the Sovereign. Similar to that of the Order of St John, it was deemed that the award of the Order didn't carry rank, dignity or social precedence. However similar to the Order of St John, it was accorded a place in the Order of Wear after the Service Medal of the Order of St John. Which despite objections from Members was never altered, with the decision being made in 1933 that the Order was actually a decoration and there it would stay. The League returned its Royal Charter in 1947, following the founding of the National Health Service. The League of Mercy was re-founded as a United Kingdom registered charity in 1999 and operates without a Royal Charter. Therefore the insignia awarded by the charity is not able to be officially worn.

A Heraldic View

The Order of St John was discussed in the 1909 book *A Complete Guide to Heraldry*. This publication notes that: "The Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England does not rank with other orders or decorations, inasmuch as it was initiated without royal intervention, and carries no precedence or titular rank." Noting the involvement of the Royal family had increased its social status it concedes that "The order is, however, now recognised to a certain extent, and its insignia is worn at court by duly appointed authority." Of most interest in this publication was the note that the Crown had gradually become to acquire a right of veto, which would probably result in the order becoming recognised but continue to be gifted by the crown.¹⁶

A Republic?

The official status of the Order is of particular interest and relevance for any Priorities or Associations where HM Queen Elizabeth is Head of State should that country become a republic. The question arises: would there be a guaranteed right to continue to wear the Order insignia? The author's assessment is that the Order and the Membership in those countries would need to tread very carefully and not make assumptions.

The case could simply be made that the Order of St John is a body corporate in the United Kingdom, operating (currently) under a 1955 Royal Charter granted by the Queen of the United Kingdom, which the Queen of the United Kingdom granted permission to wear its internal badges. As a totally independent country, with no constitutional dependence upon or link to the United Kingdom, the actions of a body corporate registered in England have no bearing. Each individual nation treats and authorising the wearing of Order insignia in its own unique way. Therefore, a flick of the pen in an Order of Wear document for example, could remove the right to wear the insignia at all.



There are, of a course, also a range of other scenarios which are permitted under modern Order Statutes and Regulations which would be preferred courses of action. The Order could maintain its position in the Order of Wear and the newly appointed Head of State could sanction appointments on behalf of the Sovereign Head. Or the Order could be treated as a Commonwealth honour and may be permitted to be accepted and worn in this fashion. In the United States of America, approval is given by each individual service as to whether the Order insignia may be worn in its uniform.

Conclusion

The Order of St John holds a unique place in the honours systems of the United Kingdom, Commonwealth countries and Republics around the globe where the Order and its foundations operate. The granting of the Royal Charter of Incorporation provided the means for an international healthcare charity to grow and better humanity. It also provided the means to recognise individuals in a unique fashion, something which we are still coming to understand today.

References

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³ Charter of Incorporation and Amended Statutes [1888], published by the Grand Priory of the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England, p. 9.

⁴ Charter of Incorporation and Amended Statutes [1888], published by the Grand Priory of the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England, p. 27.

⁵ Professor Mellows, p. 4, *St John History*, Vol. 12.

⁶ The Order of St. John; Report of the Order Honours Review Group, dated 14 December 2005, para 2.8, p. 15

⁷ Charter of Incorporation and Amended Statutes [1888], published by the Grand Priory of the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England, p. 13.

⁸ Arthur Charles Fox-Davies, *A Complete Guide to Heraldry* (1909), p. 568 (available at https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/A_Complete_Guide_to_Heraldry).

⁹ *Edinburgh Gazette*, No. 10029 (15 March 1889), p. 233 and *London Gazette* (12 March 1889).

¹⁰ Professor Mellows, p. 5, *St John History*, Vol. 12.

¹¹ *London Gazette* (Friday March 27, 1896), No. 26725, p. 1959.

¹² Charles W. Tozer, *The Insignia and Medals of the Grand Priory of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem* (London: J.B. Hayward & Son/Orders and Medals Research Society, 1975), p. 23.

¹³ Royal Collection Trust, <https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes/exhibitions/hrh-the-prince-of-wales-an-exhibition-to-celebrate-his-sixtieth-birthday/windsor-castle-drawings-gallery/letters-patent-for-the-creation-of-charles-duke-of-cornwall-as-prince-of-wales-and-earl-of-chester>

¹⁴ *The London Gazette* (2nd supplement), No. 30250 (24 August 1917), pp. 8791–8999.

¹⁵ J.M.A. Tamplin and A.F. Flatow, 'The League of Mercy and its Order', *The Miscellany of Honours*, No. 1 (The Orders and Medals Research Society, 1979), pp. 4-16.

¹⁶ Fox-Davies, *A Complete Guide to Heraldry*, . 568.

7. The origin and development of the motto—“Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum” A modern invention of the Most Venerable Order of St John

Dr Matthew Glozier and Prof. Peter Kurrild-Klitgaard

The motto of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem is “Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum”. It translates as “For the Faith, for the Service of Humanity”. This aim has been the continuous guiding inspiration for the voluntary humanitarian care given by members of the Venerable Order from its revival in the early 1830s.

Many histories of the Venerable Order, published in book form or online, state the motto comes from the ancient Knights Hospitaller. That group of medieval warriors grew from a hospital for Christian pilgrims located in Jerusalem, which became the famous centre for the activity of Blessed Gerard and his followers. In 1113, these care-givers received papal recognition as an order of the Church and in time became a military-religious Order originally known as the Knights Hospitaller. It continues to this day as one of the world’s oldest and most prestigious orders of chivalry—The Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, called of Rhodes, and of Malta, otherwise known as the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (SMOM). The Knights Hospitaller were among the first military-religious orders to be created by the Church, during the Crusades era in the Holy Land.* The Knights Hospitaller not only survived but thrived, becoming sovereign masters of Rhodes between 1310 and 1522 and thereafter ruled Malta until 1798 and the Principality of Heitersheim until 1806. The sovereign status of the SMOM is widely recognised to this day, albeit in a special category without territory.

The Venerable Order of St John claims a spiritual descent from the ancient Knights Hospitaller. However, as shall become evident here, it is incorrect to say those medieval knights invented and used the motto: “Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum”. This paper explores the history of these inspiring words, and links their origin explicitly to the revival of the Order of St John in Britain in the early 1830s and the subsequent humanitarian work pursued by the British members of the Venerable Order.

Origins

The medieval writer, William of Tyre, said of Blessed Gerard that “he was a man of venerable life, renowned for his piety”, who “long rendered devoted service to the poor”.¹ Gerard’s efforts were recognised by Pope Paschal II who issued the papal

* A handful of similar orders formed in the Holy Land include the Knights of St Lazarus (c.1098; rec.1255), Knights Templar (c.1118; rec.1129), Knights of St Thomas of Acre (c.1191), and the Teutonic Knights (1192).



bull *Pie postulatio voluntatis*, on 13 February 1113. This bull established the Order of St John as we know it today and it addressed Blessed Gerard as “Founder and Warden of the hospice at Jerusalem”.² Gerard died in 1120, having overseen a huge expansion in the hospital care offered by his institution in Jerusalem. His successor, Raymond du Puy, introduced the Order’s Rule, which highlighted the guiding aim of the Knights Hospitaller as *obsequium pauperum*. This Latin phrase translates as “in the service of the poor”, which reflected the charism pioneered by Blessed Gerard. Raymond du Puy’s Rule went further, by linking *obsequium pauperum* explicitly to the three religious vows taken by the brother knights of the Order: chastity, poverty, and obedience. As Henry Sire has observed:

It is to Raymond du Puy that we must attribute the addition of *tuitio fidei*, the protection of the Faith, to the original duty of *obsequium pauperum*, the service of the poor. By the end of his magistracy [in 1160] the two had reached approximately equal importance in the Order’s work.³

It must be emphasized that both Latin phrases described the duties of brother knights, representing the charism of the Knights Hospitaller as a military-religious order of the Church. Importantly, the phrases were not mottoes in the modern sense of the word. This means the phrases never appeared in heraldic images of the Order’s arms, on seals, or in any other artistic displays. Yet, the phrases were well-known, often repeated, and lay at the heart of the mission of the brother knights.

For this reason, historians have suggested alternative and different interpretations of the origins of the Latin phrases *obsequium pauperum* and *tuitio fidei*. For example, Sir Edwin King, the prominent official historian of the Venerable Order of St John, insisted:

At some later date, after the loss of Jerusalem, when the Order was completely militarised, the following words were here added—and *the defence of the Catholic Faith*. It seems very probable that this addition was made by the Master Alfonso of Portugal (1203-1206).⁴

Fernando Afonso of Portugal (1135–1207) was the twelfth Grand Master of the Knights Hospitaller, serving between 1202 and 1206. His father was Afonso Henriques, the first ruler of the Kingdom of Portugal. Grand Master Afonso’s royal father spent many years engaged in the Reconquista, a crusade against the Moors in Portugal, possibly providing a reason for him to adopt the *tuitio fidei* sentiment for the brother knights. The assertion that he invented *tuitio fidei* appears to be linked to his promulgation of a new statute drawn up during a General Chapter held at Margat. If this is indeed the case, it was inauspicious because the knights generally reproached Grand Master Afonso for the statute, leading to his resignation as Grand Master in 1206.

Regardless of the precise origin-point for the Latin phrases, historian Anthony Luttrell has pointed out that the knights were not monks, rather more like canons. Their original principal and ongoing purpose was, and remains, “*Tuitio Fidei et Obsequium Pauperum*”, not warfare. In fact, it was not until the mid-1100s that the Hospitallers assumed a directly military role in the Holy Land.⁵ Even today, the diplomatic representatives of the SMOM wear an impressive military uniform, including a sword, adorned with their famous badge of the Maltese cross. Yet it is the tradition of humanitarian care which has sustained the knights over the course of their thousand-year existence. That tradition was revived explicitly in Rome in 1834 when they began managing a hospital. Thirty years later they re-established a hospice in the Holy Land at Tantur, just outside Jerusalem. Today the SMOM conducts humanitarian relief worldwide. In the words of H.M.E.H. Fra’ John Dunlap, 81st Grand Master of the SMOM:

There are many challenges that await us, but united in the awareness of our mission of *Tuitio Fidei et Obsequium Pauperum* (witnessing the faith, helping the poor), I am sure that we will be able to face them together united and cohesively, in the same spirit that guided Blessed Gerard, founder of the Order over 900 years ago.⁶

In fact, the nearest thing to a motto possessed by the Knights Hospitaller was the words “*Infirmis servire, firmissimum regnare*”.⁷ The literal translation is: “To serve the weak, to rule the strongest”.⁸ In truth, this motto might not be very old. Certainly, it appears in the sixteenth-century on an engraving made by Philippe Thomassin, showing the *Sacra Infirmeria* (Sacred Hospital) on Malta.⁹ However, this may be its first appearance, which dates it to the era of the occupation of the island of Malta between 1530 and 1798.



St John



Figure 1: (left) Sixteenth-century engraving of the *Sacra Infirmaria* on Malta made by Filippus Thommasinus (1588).¹⁰

Figure 2: (above) Gold 10 Scudi coin issued by the SMOM (2011). © Private Collection.

The motto has survived in the memory of the SMOM to this day. For example, the SMOM issued a commemorative stamp in 1966, which incorporated the motto alongside the famous medieval seal of the Order.¹¹ According to the Museum of the Venerable Order of St John at St John's Gate in Clerkenwell, London, the Grand Master's seal—or leaden bulla—was the oldest seal of the Knights Hospitaller, and was used initially as its Great Seal. The Master's bulla remained in use, basically unchanged, from the twelfth century until the loss of Malta in 1798. The general design of the seal featured, on the reverse, the depicted of a dead body lying before a tabernacle. The surrounding legend identifies the HOSPITALIS IHERUSALEM, suggesting the image represents a patient in the original Muristan-based hospital in Jerusalem.



Figure 3: SMOM commemorative 4 Grani stamp (1966). © Private Collection.



Figure 4: Gold 10 Scudi coin issued by the SMOM (1996). © Private Collection.

The only other SMOM usage we have located occurs on two gold 10 Scudi coins, dating from 1996 and 2011. Each bears the profile of the SMOM Grand Master on the obverse, and an image of John the Baptist serving the poor sick on the reverse. The first shows H.M.E.H. Fra' Andrew Bertie and second H.M.E.H. Fra' Matthew Festing.

Pro Fide

In the church of Sant'Onofrio al Gianicolo (Saint Onophrius on the Janiculum) in Rome there is an elaborate memorial to the famous Renaissance poet, Torquato Tasso. It features a shield bearing the arms of the SMOM surmounted by the motto "Pro Fide", meaning "for the Faith". Tasso, who died in 1595, was never a knight of the Order, but he is best known for his poem *Gerusalemme Liberata* ("Jerusalem Delivered", 1575; first published in 1581), in which he depicts a highly imaginative version of the combat between Christians and Muslims at the end of the First Crusade, during the 1099 Siege of Jerusalem.

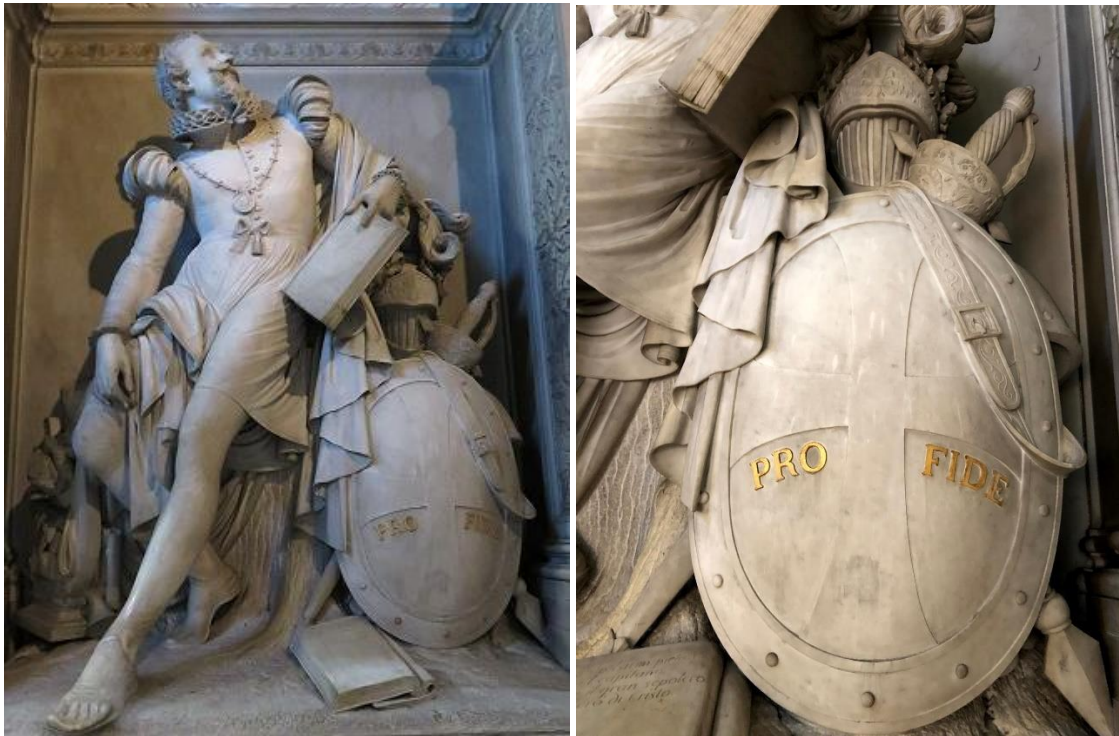


Figure 5: Monument to Torquato Tasso in the Church of Sant'Onofrio al Gianicolo (Rome). Note the trophy of arms and Knight Hospitaller shield bearing the motto "Pro Fide"¹²

The poem contains numerous examples of actions motivated "for the Faith":

The stay and staff of his declining eild,
 Longed to be among these squadrons fair
 Who *for Christ's faith* here serve with spear and shield;
 No weariness, no storms of sea or air,
 No such contents as crowns and sceptres yield.¹³

Tasso gives the First Crusade paladin, Godfrey de Bouillon, the following words, in recollection of hearing Pope Urban's message to re-take Jerusalem, delivered at the Council of Claremont in 1095:

To this he answered thus, "You know," he said,
 "In Clarimont by mighty Urban's hand
 When I was girded with this noble blade,
For Christ's true faith to fight in every land,
 To God even then a secret vow I made,
 Not as a captain here this day to stand
 And give directions, but with shield and sword
 To fight, to win, or die for Christ my Lord".¹⁴

In a passage fit for a Knight of Malta, Tasso says:

“Young knight,” quoth he, “take with good luck this sword,
Your just, strong, valiant hand in battle shall
Employ it long, *for Christ’s true faith* and word.”¹⁵

Given the Christian-Muslim antagonism contained in his poem, Tasso might possibly have been inspired to use the phrase by a work published in Austria in 1548. The book by Bartholomaeo Georgievits was entitled *Pro fide christiana cum Turca disputationis habitae et mysterio sanctiss(imae) Trinitatis* (For the Christian faith, with the discussion held with the Turks and the mystery of the Holy Trinity).¹⁶ Indeed, the word “Fide” appeared on the coinage of the knights in their new home on Malta.



Figure 6: 4 Tari Maltese Coin bearing the word “Fide” between the angles of the cross (1567).¹⁷

Cardinal Bonifazio Bevilacqua Aldobrandini erected the monument to Tasso in 1608, following the poet’s death. Cardinal Bevilacqua had no discernible link to the SMOM, but was no-doubt inspired by Tasso’s sentiments in the poem, linked to the tangible demonstration of faith made by the Knights of Malta during the Great Siege of 1565. Their successful defence of Malta against the Ottoman Empire won them fame across Europe, and this was reinforced vigorously six years later at the Battle of Lepanto. This naval engagement took place on 7 October 1571 when a fleet of the Holy League, a coalition of Catholic states arranged by Pope Pius V and including the SMOM, inflicted a crushing defeat on the navy of the Ottoman Empire in the Gulf of Patras.¹⁸ Fittingly, Sant’Onofrio is today the official church of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, which traces its origins to Godfrey de Bouillon and the First Crusade.

There is no mention of the motto in John Black’s 1810 *Life of Torquato Tasso*.¹⁹ Knowledge of the motto came to Britain via the romantic poet, Lord Byron. In the catalogue of Byron’s books, sold to clear his debts in 1816, there appear no fewer than four editions of Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata*.²⁰ Byron visited Tasso’s tomb in Rome the following year, which inspired him to write a poem narrating the period of time Tasso spent in the St Anna mental hospital in Ferrara.²¹ Byron’s *Lament of Tasso* appeared that same year of 1817.²² Byron’s impact is evident in later poetry

that explicitly linked “Pro Fide” to Tasso. For example, in 1869 Thomas D’Arcy McGee (an Irish-Canadian politician, Catholic spokesman, journalist, poet, and a Father of Canadian Confederation), wrote:

With nodding casque, and crest,
And shield, on which we trace the line,
The key-note of his song divine,
“Pro Fide!” Tasso lies.²³

To further reinforce the link between Tasso and the Crusades, an 1882 heraldic publication proclaimed:

Tasso, Ariosto, and other poets, contemporary with different periods of the crusades, have exemplified the splendid banners and armorial ensigns, borne by the nobles who participated in those romantic expeditions.²⁴

The connexion between Byron and Tasso appears to explain the adoption of the “Pro Fide” motto by the Venerable Order of St John, under the circumstances described below.

Inspired by the traditions of the Knights Hospitaller, a revival of the ancient English *Langue* of the medieval order took place in 1831. This is the origin of the modern British the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem. Professor Anthony Mellows, a former Lord Prior of the Venerable Order, has said:

It is also well-known that in the mid-1820s the French knights (who were the majority of the surviving members of the original Order) supported by those in Spain and Portugal, sought to raise an expeditionary force to aid the Greeks, who were in revolt against the Turks. These knights offered membership of the Order to those who were willing to fund that force or to serve as officers in it. This offer was made irrespective of religious denomination and affiliation. These approaches were followed in 1831 by a formal approach to revive the English *Langue* ... both Protestants and Roman Catholics were appointed to the revived body. ... So for part of the nineteenth century in England both Protestants and Roman Catholics were being admitted to the revived body, and Roman Catholics alone were being admitted to the Order of Malta.²⁵

The Venerable Order of St John initiated first-aid training in 1876; established its famous eye hospital in Jerusalem in 1882; and founded the St John Ambulance Brigade in 1887. These actions were the culmination of fifty years’ growth in a humanitarian ethos which coalesced around the well-known motto: “Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum”. However, the SMOM’s Grand Commander, H.E. Fra’ Emmanuel Rousseau (who is responsible for their archives) has confirmed there is no known

evidence of the mottoes ever having been used by SMOM.²⁶



Figure 7: Printed letterhead detail from a hand-written note by Donald Currie, Agent-General for the revived England *Langue* of the Order of St John (26 September 1832). © MOSJ.²⁷

From the start, the English group made use of heraldic imagery drawing on the rich history of the Knights Hospitaller. One of the earliest examples of this occurs in the form of printed stationary bearing a letter head of the Venerable Order's arms, crowned, with the addition of a scroll bearing the name of the Venerable Order.

Pro Fide in England

The earliest appearance in Britain of the motto "Pro Fide" is contained in a printed Letters Patent document held at the Museum of the Venerable Order of St John at Clerkenwell in London. Dating from 1832, it was one of a batch of documents ordered by Sir John Philippart, at the request of the Rev. Sir Robert Peat. These two gentlemen were, respectively, the initial Chancellor and the first Grand Prior of the revived English *Langue* of the Venerable Order of St John. Philippart, a knight of the Swedish Order of Vasa and the Order of the Polar Star, joined the Venerable Order on 11 November 1830.²⁸ On the same day the Rev. Sir Robert Peat was invested. Peat was an Anglican clergyman who was vicar of the parish of New Brentford in Middlesex and a chaplain to H.M. King George IV.²⁹ He occupied the post of Grand Prior of the English *Langue* from 29 January 1831, when he was elected *ad interim* in the presence of Philippe de Chastelain and Donald Currie, the Agent-General of the French *Langues*. Peat continued in the role until his death in 1837.



Figure 8: Detail of the Letters Patent admitting General Sir Charles O'Donnell to be a knight of the revived English *Langue* of the Venerable Order of St John (15 September 1832). © MOSJ.³⁰

The initial patents used in Britain between 1827 and 1831 lacked any motto and either Peat or Philippart might have caused one to be added to the batch ordered in 1832. No discussion on this point is evident in their correspondence preserved at the Museum, but not long before-hand David Brewster's 1830 *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia* explicitly linked Byron to Tasso and his monument in Sant'Onofrio.³¹ The patents include a heraldic image, showing the red shield of the Order with its silver cross. On either side stands a Knight Hospitaller, each holding flags embroidered with battle honours from the Crusades era. The illustration is accompanied by a scroll bearing the words "Pro Fide", in the manner of a motto. The first public appearance of the motto "Pro Fide" was in the book written in 1837 by Sir Richard Broun, a Scottish baronet, who had joined the Venerable Order in 1835 and was from the start a highly enthusiastic member. Broun's publication was called *Hospitallaria*, in reference to the care traditions of the Knights Hospitaller.



Figure 9: Robert Pearsall’s design for an heraldic badge for Venerable Order members, including their personal crest between the motto “Pro Fide” and cross of the English *Langue* and with the armiger’s motto on a scroll. Pearsall had this image engraved on a sword blade he commissioned in Birmingham in 1837. The sword was designed to form part of a full-dress uniform, modelled on that worn by German *Johanniterorden* knights.³²

Broun was not alone in favouring the motto: for example, it appears in a sketch for a somewhat fanciful sword-blade engraving designed by Robert Lucas Pearsell in 1837. His design included an heraldic badge for Venerable Order members, incorporating their personal crest between the motto “Pro Fide” at the top, the badge of the English *Langue*, and the armiger’s own motto on a scroll. Pearsall had this image engraved on a sword blade he commissioned in Birmingham in 1837. The sword was designed to form part of a full-dress uniform for English members, modelled on that worn by the German knights of the *Johanniterorden*.

Interestingly, the heraldic depiction contained in the 1832 patents and in Broun’s work is a reproduction of the basic format used by the Commission of the French *Langues*, but with the novel addition of the new Latin motto. The resuscitation of the Order of St John in France had occurred in 1814, when a Commission of the three ancient French *Langues* of the Order was created with the support of King

Louis XVIII and the pope. Philippe de Chastelain was appointed representative from the French Commission to Britain. He had previously acted in the same capacity to the Hellenic government fighting for its freedom from the Ottoman Empire in Greece. Chastelain was the nominal chancellery secretary for the *Langues* of Spain and Portugal, which the French Commission also represented.

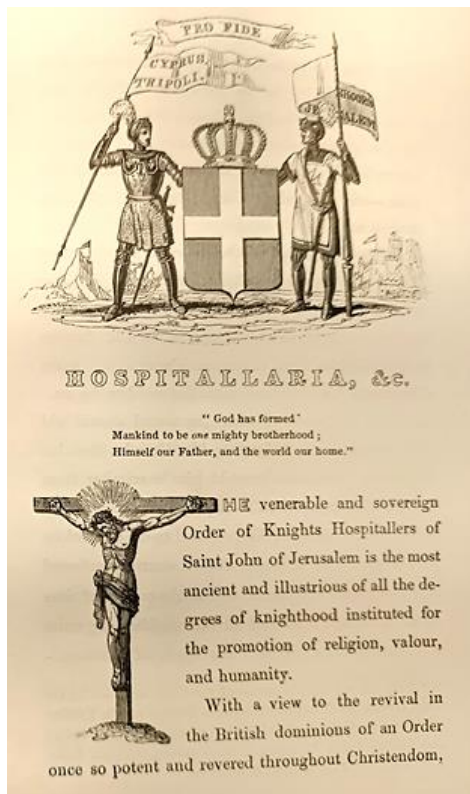


Fig. 10: Broun's *Hospitallaria* (1837), p. 1.

The example below is a detail from the Letters Patent, confirming knighthood within the Order of St John to Dr Charles Edward Jenkins in 1827. Jenkins was among the first Britons to be admitted to the Order by the French knights. The document is signed by Chastelain.



Fig. 11: Detail from Letters Patent, confirming knighthood within the Order of St John to Dr Charles Edward Jenkins (5 August 1827). © MOSJ.

Sir Richard Broun re-published an updated and greatly expanded version of his original book twenty years after its first appearance. Retitled *Synoptical Sketch* it appeared in 1857 and was published just prior to his death. One of the many additions he included in the later version is a detailed description of the arms of the Venerable Order in England. According to Broun: “The Motto of the Venerable Order “Pro Fide”, or “Pour la Foy” is displayed on a scroll over all”.³³ However, the only images in the book to bear a motto include simply the words “Pro Fide”.



Fig. 12: Armorial bearings of the Order of St John, draped with a scroll of the motto “Pro Fide”. Included in Broun’s *Synoptical Sketch* (1857), p. 88v.



Fig. 13: Impressed armorial letter-stamp from c.1863.³⁴

Apparently invented by either Peat or Philippart, and championed by Broun, the English knights of St John appear to have used the Latin “Pro Fide” motto consistently almost from the start of their existence. Their pride in the motto, and their consistent use of it, is demonstrated by an impressed armorial letter-stamp from c.1863.

It is important to emphasize that the motto “Pro Fide” stood in isolation as the Venerable Order’s only motto for about the first thirty years of the revived English *Langue*.

Pro Utilitate Hominum

The second component of the Venerable Order’s famous motto—“Pro Utilitate Hominum”—was attached to “Pro Fide” sometime during the 1860s. Its literal meaning is “for the benefit of people”, but its specific usage in the Order of St John is “for the benefit of humanity”. The phrase has appeared in Latin texts since ancient times, but never in connection with the Knights Hospitaller.³⁵

The phrase appeared for the first time in English in connexion to the Venerable Order of St John in 1852. In that year, an Irish Knight of Malta called John Taaffe published a general history of the Knights Hospitaller. Taaffe included the following statement, relating to the evolution of the SMOM as a humanitarian organisation:

Seeing it undertakes to merit its restoration by doing that which none can do half as well (nor at all)—modifying itself to the time—(again in advance of its age, as almost always)—practically useful to mankind and civilization, in the words of its princely Norman founder, *pro utilitate hominum*, true and primitive scope of its institution, the Order of St John of Jerusalem is restored thus.³⁶

Taaffe was referring to the recent revival of SMOM hospital care in the decade-and-a-half prior to publication, since its move to Rome in 1834. He knew this well because he had spent a great deal of time living in Italy, where his Irish father, John

Taaffe (1789-1862), was a Knight of Malta within the Grand Priory of Rome.³⁷ The elder Taaffe had founded a rare family commandery in 1839.³⁸ This dignity of the SMOM was later held by his son, also John Taaffe (c.1820-1911), already mentioned, who was zealous for the restoration of the Order's full sovereignty and published his history of it in 1852 in part to advertise its good works.³⁹ Of course, it was not until 1872 that the Holy Father again appointed a Grand Master, the first since 1805. This event marked the full restitution of the Order's standing in the eyes of the Church and internationally.

Taaffe appears to have coined an original phrase by referring to the Order's work as being in "the service of humanity". It is interesting that he used this phrase in relation to the original Catholic Order, rather than its British Protestant offshoot. Since Taaffe was known personally to a number of members of the British Venerable Order, and his book was read avidly by them as an authority on the history of the Knights Hospitaller, we feel emboldened to suggest that Taaffe is the origin of this element of the modern motto of the Venerable Order. However, if this is indeed true, the motto took some time to be adopted by the Venerable Order; for example, Whitworth Porter, a member of the British group, published his own history of the Venerable Order in 1858, just a few years after Taaffe's book appeared. Porter repeats the original motto invented in 1832—"Pro Fide—Pour La Foi"—but nowhere in his book does he mention the Latin phrase "Pro Utilitate Hominum".⁴⁰

Taaffe never belonged to the British group (although he was related to a gentleman who did),[†] nor did he influence its decision-making processes in any way personally. Instead, the adoption of his motto appears to have been the initiative of the Venerable Order's Secretary-General, Sir Edmund Lechmere. Under the active influence of Sir Edmund Lechmere, the Venerable Order of St John transformed itself into an influential and impressive humanitarian organisation through the course of the 1870s. It achieved a number of milestones in first aid training, the provision of hospital care, ambulance transport, and recognition of selfless acts of bravery. Lechmere was Secretary General for twenty years from 1866 to 1888; Receiver-General (1873-1882); and later Chancellor of the Venerable Order (1890-1894).

[†] His cousin was Peter John Fane de Salis, 5th Count de Salis-Soglio, Count of the Holy Roman Empire, DL JP (1799-1870), a soldier and landowner in Middlesex (UK) and in County Limerick and Armagh in Ireland. He was a Knight of Devotion of the SMOM in addition to being Grand Prior of Ireland and a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St John (1858).



Fig. 14: Initial design for a bravery medal for the Order of St John, sketch commissioned by Sir Edmund Lechmere in 1867 from J.S. & A.B. Wyon, engravers, of Regent Street, London. © MOSJ.⁴¹

One must wait until 1867 in order to discover the first clear link between “Pro Utilitate Hominum” and the Venerable Order. In that year, Sir Edmund Lechmere created the initial design for a bravery medal to be issued by the Venerable Order of St John. The origin of the idea of a medal is explained in an Order publication from a decade later:

The want of some system of rewards for acts of bravery upon land, and the supplying of this want, being a work closely connected with the objects of the Order as expressed in its motto—“Pro Utilitate Hominum”—steps were at once taken to act upon the suggestion thus made [by Lechmere], and to secure the best means by which it might be practically adopted.⁴²

Sir Edmund Lechmere commissioned the sketch for the medal from J.S. & A.B. Wyon, engravers, of Regent Street, London. Lechmere was involved intimately in the design: for example, his hand-written notes on the design suggest he wanted a ring suspension, in place of the bar shown in the image. He also suggested the addition of the words “of Jerusalem” as a suffix to “Order of St John” in the inscription. The words on the obverse, surrounding a Maltese cross, say “For services in the cause of humanity”. In other words, the direct English translation of “Pro Utilitate Hominum”. This is the point at which the Venerable Order appears to have adopted the Latin motto, which seems to have been the direct initiative of Sir Edmund Lechmere.

Lechmere’s championing of the Latin motto is undoubtedly the reason it appears in the 1869 official history of the Venerable Order, written by Dr Robert Bigsby. It is worth quoting Bigsby at length, because he authored the first printed text to articulate the importance of the new motto to the Order in Britain.

The Knights of St John, as Champions of the Cross, during the Crusades, were the chief support of the throne of Jerusalem; for two centuries, at Rhodes,



they were the sword and buckler of Christendom against Paynim[‡] aggression; at Malta, they were long the victorious opponents of the Turks. True, they have lost the latter island, and been stripped of other possessions. But the Order of St John existed in Palestine “pro utilitate hominum”, before it owned so much as one of the 28,000 manors dispersed over Christendom, which for centuries raised it to the consideration of a third-rate European power; and its chivalric and moral existence was no more affected by the loss of Malta and its dependencies, than it was affected by the loss of the Grand-Priory of Clerkenwell, the loss of Rhodes, or the loss of the Holy Land come and go ... But as the Order was greater in Rhodes than it was at Jerusalem, and more powerful in Malta than it was at Rhodes; so the phase of the Order [revived in Britain] in the reign of Victoria may become greater and more powerful than it was in the olden time, provided that there be still so much chivalry left as shall enable the sixth *Langue* to raise again the banner of St John, and make it a rallying point for the cultivation of the Hospitaller virtues—charity, benevolence, and brotherly concord—the worthiest to which any Order or Society of men can direct their efforts.⁴³

Fittingly, Bigsby added a statement supporting the aptness of the motto:

It is the mission of the revived *Langue* of England to enforce this grand but forgotten fact upon the aristocratic mind, and urgently to stimulate the rising youth to emulate in spirit, in worth, and in energy, the Knights Hospitallers of old.⁴⁴

Bigsby’s aspirations for the motto to resonate with the British public (or at least its higher echelons) was well-founded. Evidence that Bigsby and Lechmere were making an impact on the British public appeared in 1871, just a couple of years after the publication of Bigsby’s history. An article in *The Lancet*, Britain’s premier medical professional journal, proclaimed: “Under the watchword ‘Pro utilitate hominum’ this Order has acquitted itself to the admiration of Christendom”.⁴⁵

“Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum”

By the early 1870s, it appears the time was ripe to unite this persuasive statement of purpose to the original religious claim of the Venerable Order. The year 1874 marks the first appearance of the full motto of the modern Venerable Order of St John. The Annual Report to Chapter General of the Order for 1874 not only included the combined total motto, but linked it explicitly to the humanitarian purpose of the Order:

No one would have been more interested in the scheme in which we are now engaged—that of forming an Association for providing trained nurses for the

[‡] Non-Christian, especially Muslim.

sick poor—than our late Hon. Associate, Mr Brett.⁵ No one would have more gladly aided us with his valuable experience on this subject, and his death is a real loss to the Order, which felt proud of numbering among its Associates one whose whole life was a realization of our mottoes, “Pro Fide”, “Pro Utilitate Hominum”.⁴⁶

These sentiments obviously resonated with the senior leadership of the Order because, in 1876 the Annual Report included for the first time a title image uniting the two mottoes.⁴⁷



Fig. 15: Title page of the 1875 report *Hospitalier Work*, the published anniversary address on the Feast of St John the Baptist, delivered to members of the Order of St John at the Chapel Royal, Savoy, by the Rev. Albert A. Wood.⁴⁸



Fig. 16: Title page of the British Order of St John’s 1876 Annual Report, which included the novel innovation of combining for the first time the two mottoes associated with the British Order of St John since the 1830 and 1860s respectively.⁴⁹

⁵ Major Reginald Best Brett, Knight of Justice of the Order (1857).

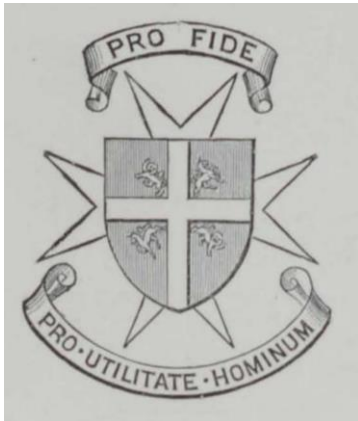


Fig. 17: Title page of the British Order of St John’s 1895 Annual Report, apparently the first time this badge appeared post-Royal Charter of 1888.⁵⁰

Lechmere remained attached to his motto as the primary expression of the Venerable Order’s mission, with the result that the combined mottoes did not yet solidify in the public imagination. For example, Lechmere wrote a letter to the editor of *The Monthly Packet* in February 1876:

The Order of St John still exists, but not in Malta ... but instead of being a mere title it is actively engaged in carrying out its motto, “Pro utilitate hominum”. ... With regard to its work, I may mention that it is engaged in Hospitaller work both in London and in the country. ... It has been the means of introducing an ambulance for conveying sick and injured persons and has recently instituted a system of honorary rewards for bravery in saving life on land, especially in mining and colliery accidents.⁵¹

In the same year of 1876 an article in another popular journal recorded:

The device of the Order, “Pro utilitate hominum!” as identified with and represented by an unceasing course of practical charity, is ever to be regarded as its password to the sympathy and approval of the Christian ... public. Charity, in the widest sense of the word, is its motto and true meaning, whose results may be briefly described as a binding together of national feeling and action in one grand, soul pervading union of chivalric fellowship.⁵²

Clearly, the humanitarian motto on its own continued to carry much greater weight than did the heavily religious phrase championed originally by Peat, Philippart, and Broun. For example, with reference to the establishment of its famous eye hospital in Jerusalem, the Venerable Order’s Annual Report of 1881 stated:

Bearing in mind the noble motto of the Order, *pro utilitate hominum*, your Committee desires to combine with the Hospice, a dispensary for the treatment of ophthalmia, the scourge of Syria, and especially of the district round Jerusalem, for which disease no special Hospital exists in or near Jerusalem.⁵³

This accounts for the appearance of the “pro utilitate hominum” motto alone in those parts of the then British Empire where St John first aid training took root. For example, the earliest reference to the Venerable Order’s motto in New Zealand occurs in 1887, while in Australia it is 1892.⁵⁴

By the middle of the decade of the 1880s, however, both mottoes combined could be found in use by the Venerable Order, and with reference to it. For example, in 1884 Frank Fellows, a Knight of Grace of the Venerable Order of St John, published a collection of poems bearing the subtitle: “Pro fide, pro utilitate hominum”.⁵⁵ Similarly, in 1886 an article in *The Lancet* highlighted the early achievements of the Jerusalem eye hospital, saying:

Our readers are aware that we take a lively interest in all charitable and religious uses of Medicine among less favoured nations, all the more so where all mere sectarianism and proselytizing are kept in abeyance. With this disposition we have read with great pleasure last year’s report of the Eye Hospital established in Jerusalem by the Order of St John ... Frequently Christians, Jews, and Mahommedans have occupied the same ward, verifying the noble aim of the Order, “Pro fide, pro utilitate hominum”.⁵⁶

Indeed, it was Lechmere and the humanitarian works of the Venerable Order promoted by him that resonated so strongly with the British public. These good works were the chief reason Queen Victoria granted the Venerable Order a Royal Charter in 1888, and agreed to take on the position of its Sovereign Head. In the words of one commentator from that time:

There is no doubt that it [the Order] has devoted itself most energetically to the accomplishment of the services indicated by its motto, “Pro utilitate hominum”. In strict accordance with the original work of the Order, it undertakes especially the care, and if it may be, the cure, of the sick and wounded of all classes and nations in peace as well as in war, and by means of its well-organised Ambulance Department, it has done most excellent service in alleviating suffering and sickness in various parts of the world.⁵⁷

In the Royal Charter granted by Queen Victoria on 14th of May 1888 the two mottoes, as they were then explicitly described, were for the first time given official standing, as it was specified in paragraph 46 of the statutes that “The Mottoes of the Oder shall be “Pro Fide”, “Pro Utilitate Hominum”.

In the era following the Royal Charter, the combined mottoes of the Venerable Order appear consistently as its unique identifier. For example, the 1893 edition of *Chambers’ Encyclopædia* noted: “The motto of the order was ‘Pro fide’, with the later addition of ‘Pro utilitate hominum’”.⁵⁸ This useful confirmation of the evolution of the motto was echoed for decades afterwards. One among many works appeared

in 1927, stating: “Their motto was ‘Pro fide’, to which ‘Pro utilitate hominum’ has been added”.⁵⁹ Typical of the acceptance and use of the full motto is a reference made in 1931 to the mission of the Venerable Order, which insisted “the maintenance of hospitals for the relief of friend and foe, is deeply imprinted in the history of centuries; and the motto of the Venerable Order, ‘Pro fide, Pro utilitate hominum’, has through the ages established a tradition which has had a remarkable influence on the success of the modern movement, as expressed by the St John Ambulance Association”.⁶⁰



Fig. 18: Arms of the Venerable Order of St John as used between 1888 and 1926. © MOSJ.

In the twentieth century, this sentiment became the orthodoxy of the Venerable Order and was inculcated into its members. Just one example among many is provided in the *St John Cadet* magazine of 1954, which included a poem entitled “The Knights of Old”. The poem’s fourth stanza contains the words:

*St John Cadets—to us comes
 “Pro Fide—For the Faith’
 Pro Utilitate Hominum—
 For service of Mankind”.
 This is our motto grand
 Inspired by Knights of old,
 May we like them, each take our stand
 And in the cause be bold.*⁶¹

Predictably, this enthusiastic engagement with the motto had the effect of obscuring the reality that it was a quite recent invention, and purely British by birth. Typical of the misconceptions attached to this reality is the sentiment expressed in relation to the centenary of St John Ambulance in Canada:

St John Ambulance can truly say that its work today is the same as it was ten centuries ago when the Knights Hospitallers of the Order adopted their motto “pro utilitate hominum”—For the Service of Mankind.⁶²

As we observed at the start of this paper, the guiding aim for the voluntary humanitarian care given by members of the Venerable Order of St John has existed since its revival in the early 1830s. However, the motto it evolved to describe this sentiment is linked only loosely to the mission of the medieval Knights Hospitaller. For this reason it is all the more interesting to see the motto mistakenly attributed to the brother knights of old in a modern plaque which appears outside St Peter's (Catholic) Church, in Aberdeen, Scotland.



Fig. 19: Modern plaque commemorating the medieval hospital that once stood on the site of St Peter's (Catholic) Church, Aberdeen, Scotland (located on the outer wall of a passage to the east of the church grounds on Justice Street, Castlegate).⁶³

The plaque was almost certainly made by H. & J. Bryce—Brassfounders in Drum's Lane, Aberdeen, and bears the stylistic design imprint of James Fenton Wyness, FRIBA FSAScot (1903-1974), an Aberdonian architect, antiquarian, and historical author. Wyness's practice was small and confined to conservation projects and memorials. His great interest was in the military-religious orders, especially the Knights Templar and Knights Hospitaller: for example, he was the prime mover in the purchase of Templar's Park, Maryculter, where he restored the buildings. In 1954, Wyness heralded his discovery of St John's Well "which is to be re-erected on the frontage of 24 Albyn Place, the headquarters of the Committee of the Order [of St John] in Aberdeen".⁶⁴ He also donated to the Venerable Order's library an article outlining his research on the Knights of St John in Deeside and, a decade later in 1964, he acted as Honorary Secretary of the Aberdeen Committee of the Scottish Priory of St John.⁶⁵ Wyness became a Knight of Grace of the Venerable Order in 1965, and was subsequently re-classified to Knight of Justice after receiving a grant-of-arms in 1971.⁶⁶ Sometime between 1965 and 1971, he caused the plaque to be erected, probably with the approval and encouragement of Canon Alexander MacWilliam, the incumbent at St Peter's Catholic Church.⁶⁷

Fenton Wyness was meticulous in his historical research and, in this case, he appears to have been guided by Dr Alexander Walker who believed that the Catholic chapel built in Justice Street in 1804 sat on the site of a Templar church, later owned by the Knights Hospitaller. Walker came of a distinguished family of local antiquarians and was profoundly interested in the preservation of old buildings and historical records in Aberdeen and was for many years a Dean of Guild. Walker's opinion was based on an account written by James Gordon, parson of Rothiemay, in 1661.⁶⁸ However, in the words of Duncan McAra, Librarian of the Priory in Scotland of the Venerable Order of St John: "The plaque has the hallmark of an unofficial – and inaccurate – attribution".⁶⁹ Regardless of the veracity of the historical claims for the site, it is fascinating to see that Wyness conflated medieval history with modern realities by intruding the motto of the Venerable Order of St John into the historical narrative of the Knights Hospitaller. The conclusion must be that Wemyss accepted the motto as a genuine, original attribute of the brother knights.



Figure 20: The badge of office of the Matron of the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital (1928).⁷⁰

Remarkably, Fenton Wyness's plaque is not the sole modern homage by members of the Venerable Order of St John to their spiritual ancestors the Knights Hospitaller. In Jerusalem, the British Order of St John adopted a Matron's uniform at its famous eye hospital in 1922.⁷¹ The Venerable Order re-designed this uniform in 1928, at which time a fabric Maltese cross was removed from her dress and replaced by a special neck badge. The official badge, sanctioned by Chapter-General, was presented by an anonymous donor for the Matron to wear on special occasions.⁷² The badge was silver with black and white enamel elements, notably the cross of the Venerable Order of St John. Written on the badge was the word "Matron" and a motto in Latin: *Infirmiss Servire* ("Serve the Sick"). The badge appears to have been the creation of Colonel John Thomas Woolrych Perowne, Secretary of the Venerable Order (1919-1921), Registrar (1926-1932), and Hospitaller (1933-1946). No doubt his choice of motto was influenced by its mention in the history of the Venerable Order of St John published by Bedford and Holbeche in 1902 and referenced earlier in this article.

Modern usage

In contemporary times the Venerable Order of St John has further formalised its use of the motto. It has been registered as a trademark in both the Latin and an English version (“For the faith and in the service of humanity”). Furthermore, the armorial bearings of the Venerable Order have in some cases received further protection by non-English heraldic authorities, including on 16 September 1999 when the Canadian Heraldic Authority granted the Venerable Order’s Priory of Canada arms, flag, and a badge, including the two mottoes “Pro Fide” and “Pro Utilitate Hominum”.⁷³ In 1961 the mutually recognised orders of Saint John established the so-called “Alliance of Knightly Orders of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem known as Orders of St John”, or simply the “St John Alliance”,⁷⁴ consisting of the Most Venerable Order of St. John, the Swedish Order of St John (*Johanniterorden i Sverige*, with H.M. the King of Sweden as High Protector), the Dutch Order of St John (*Johanniter Orde in Nederland*, with H.R.H. the Prince Consort of the Netherlands as Land Commander), the Bailiwick of Brandenburg of the Order of St John (*Die Balley Brandenburg des ritterlichen Ordens St Johanns vom Spital zu Jerusalem*, with H.R.H. Prince Wilhelm Karl of Prussia as *Herrenmeister*), and the four autonomous commanderies of the latter (Finland, France, Switzerland and Hungary).⁷⁵ In 1963 a joint declaration of mutual recognition and respect was made between the SMOM and the Most Venerable Order of St John.⁷⁶ In 1987 in a further joint declaration the five orders recognised each other, including the SMOM recognising the legitimacy of the Venerable Order of St John on the basis of its standing as a British royal order of chivalry,⁷⁷ and in 2004 it further acknowledged that the two, as well as the other members of the Alliance “stemming from the same root, are orders of chivalry as well as being Christian confraternities”.⁷⁸

From this international collaboration the Venerable Order’s motto seems to have spread to its confrères. Certainly, from here it is now used by the Swedish Order of St John;⁷⁹ the exact date when the Swedish *Johanniter* began using “Pro fide; pro utilitate hominum” is unclear, but certainly from no later than 1980 when the Order’s statutes (§1) specified this as its motto.⁸⁰ (In contrast, the two other members of the St John Alliance, the German and Dutch *Johanniter*, do not seem to use the motto(es).)

Unfortunately, one of the unintended consequences of the great success and prestige of the five mutually recognised Johannine orders has been the appearance of a large number of mimic orders, who with more or less fantastic claims posit themselves as parts of the same tradition. These groups often call themselves “Sovereign Order of St John”, “Knights Hospitaller”, “Knights of Malta” or some combinations thereof and claim, through often convoluted and poorly undocumented histories to be continuations of the non-Catholic Grand Priory of Russia of the SMOM that briefly existed in the beginning of the nineteenth century or to be under the protection of this or that claimant to formerly existing thrones.⁸¹

All such groups are unrecognised as orders of chivalry of the Johannine tradition by the five orders and the countries from which they claim to originate. The current ubiquity of the motto has led to its retrospective, but mistaken, application to the ancient Knights Hospitaller in addition to its adoption by some of these self-styled groups. For example, one of the groups that has come to use the motto is the so-called “Grand Priory of Malta” of one of the many organisations using the name “Order of St John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller” and claiming protection by the Royal House of Yugoslavia.⁸² As this paper has demonstrated, this usage is anachronistic and illogical given the fancifully claimed origin of this group.

Conclusion

As established in the present study there is no ancient usage by the Knights Hospitaller of the twin Latin mottoes of “Pro fide” and “Pro utilitate hominum”, or the combination thereof. While the sentiments, of course, are old, the origin of the specific expressions appears to be in the nineteenth century and in connection with the Venerable Order of Saint John: “Pro fide” c.1832, “Pro utilitate hominum” c.1852/1867 and the combination of the two no later than 1874. Only from the Venerable Order’s Royal Charter of 1888 do the twin mottoes obtain any formalised recognition and continuous use as part of a recognised Royal Order of Chivalry.



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8. The Charism of Chaplaincy in the Order of St John

Noel Cox

Introduction

The Order of St John, in its early united form, and since its post-Reformation division, has a rich history that dates back over nine centuries. Throughout its existence, priests and chaplains have played a significant role in the life of the Order, providing spiritual guidance and support to its members, and manifesting the charism of the Order. The following is a brief account of the role of priests and chaplains in the Order, in the context of this charism.

The Hospitallers, formally (since 1961) the Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes, and of Malta, is a religious military Order that was founded at Jerusalem in the eleventh century and that, headquartered in Rome, continues its humanitarian tasks in most parts of the modern world under several slightly different names and jurisdictions. A Convention of Alliance in 1961 linked the Sovereign and Military Order of Malta with Orders which were, to a greater or lesser degree offshoots of the parent Order. These are the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem (of which the Order in New Zealand is a part),¹ the *Johanniterorden*,² and the Swedish and Dutch Orders of St John.³

The Sovereign Military Order of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta, is a unique international confraternity. It is the only organisation currently recognised, albeit controversially, by a plurality of countries, as sovereign or quasi-sovereign. Crucially, for the purposes of this article, the Order is also the possessor of a millennium-long charism.⁴ This tradition is also to be seen in the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, or Order of St John, as it today operates in the Commonwealth and several predominantly English-speaking countries outside the Commonwealth.

This article will offer a brief account of the history of the chaplaincy, or clerical brethren, of the Hospitaller Order, in particular its role in upholding and embodying the charism of the Order, and how that charism is manifested today, with particular emphasis in the present time upon the charism of the Most Venerable Order in the Priory of New Zealand.

The historical background

The major features of the long history of the Order are well known. In the early eleventh century a hospice (or hospital, as it was then known⁵), served by a lay fraternity, was founded or possibly restored in the city of Jerusalem. Its staff were bound by oath to serve the poor of the Holy Land, whatever their religion, and from wherever they came. The hospital, early funded by merchants from the Italian city of Amalfi, was later dedicated to St John the Baptist.



After the Christian conquest of Jerusalem in 1099 during the First Crusade, the hospital's superior, a monk named Gerard, intensified his work in Jerusalem and also founded hostels in Provençal and Italian cities on the route to the Holy Land. The friars who worked in these institutions had not formed a religious order but performed their service under the *prepositus* Gerard.⁶ Initially, the monastic community in Jerusalem lived by the Rule of St Benedict and then later by what was known as the 'Rule of the Hospital', which in turn was influenced by the Rule of St Augustine. The hospital, known as the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, was dedicated to providing care to sick and injured pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. Initially, it had a primarily lay composition, but as the institution grew, the presence of priests became essential for the provision of spiritual care to patients and the spiritual formation of the Order's own members.⁷ This was however also in the context of an institution whose early principles and practice included ministering to all, irrespective of race, religion or class.⁸

Following the successful expansion of the enterprise, the hospital was formally recognised on 5 February 1113 by the Bull *Pie Postulatio Voluntatis* of Pope Paschal II as an autonomous religious body, dedicated to serving the poor and sick.⁹ It not yet an order as that term was later understood,¹⁰ the word order (or *ordo*) meaning a rule.¹¹ It was, first and foremost, a religious charitable (eleemosynary) institution, whose members were bound to serve God and humanity in a rule of common life.¹²

In its early years the Order remained purely charitable in character. Over time, however, it also took on a military character as it sought to defend Christian pilgrims and crusaders in the Holy Land. The exact time this occurred is now uncertain but was likely in the c.1130s,¹³ possibly between 1126 and 1140. In 1137 the Hospitallers accepted the custody of the newly fortified castle of Bait Jibrin, and the Order's military role in the Holy Lands steadily grew under the leadership of the second grand master, Raymond du Puy, who had succeeded Gerard in 1120. Du Puy also substituted the Augustinian rule for the Benedictine, as more suited to the practical work of a hospital,¹⁴ and began building the power of the organisation.

The military Orders grew out of the tradition of monasticism, during the Gregorian reforms, with a common focus on service to others, voluntary poverty, and interior spirituality. But this was to take, broadly, two distinct paths. These were the monastic, according to the Rule of St Benedict (such as the Templers), whose monks pursued inner perfection, and the canonical, according to the Rule of St Augustine (such as St John), whose canons sought a more public apostolate, in services to churches and charities.¹⁵ Thus the maintenance of hospitals for Christian, Jew and Muslim alike, and the provision of castles and armed forces, were not as discordant as might at first appear to be the case.

Despite its military role – explicitly sanctioned by the Pope in 1191¹⁶ – the Order always maintained a strong commitment to its hospitaller tradition, and priests



continued to be an integral part of its structure, providing sacramental and pastoral care to members and patients alike.¹⁷ It also retained its commitment to serving 'Our Lords, the sick and the poor' irrespective of creed.¹⁸

As the importance of the Order grew, it was made autonomous by both the Patriarch and the King of Jerusalem.¹⁹ In 1154 it acquired independence from episcopal control,²⁰ with the issuing of the bull '*Christiane Fidei Religio*' by Pope Anastasius IV. Thereafter the Order spread outwards from Jerusalem, particularly to western Europe, where the Order's estates provided funds to operate the expensive and extensive medical facilities in the Holy Land, and also new recruits for the Order. As the Order expanded its presence throughout Europe, it established various commanderies and priories in different countries, each acting as autonomous entities under the overall authority of the Grand Master. Each of these entities had its own chaplaincy, with priests serving in pastoral roles and providing spiritual guidance to the members of the Order in their respective regions.²¹

Despite this dispersal of its activities, the Order had one convent (initially and until the fall of the Crusaders States, in the Holy Land), but they erected a hospital wherever they went. Eventually there were hospitals, or houses of the Order, throughout Europe.²² It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that it is to the Order of Malta that we owe the survival of a public hospital service through the European middle ages.²³

The Order acquired wealth and lands and combined the task of tending the sick with defending the Crusader kingdom. Along with the Templars, the Hospitallers became the most formidable military order in the Holy Land. The military Orders gradually replaced the Frankish feudal aristocracy as the leading landlords in Syria. On the death of Baldwin II, King of Jerusalem, in 1185, the castles of the kingdom were placed in the custody of the two military Orders.

But unlike the Templars, who uneasily combined a dual nature of a contemplative Cistercian monastic tradition and warfare, the Hospitallers successfully combined canonical, non-monastic care for the sick and poor, with (the then) necessary military activity.²⁴ The Hospitallers were never a purely military body, and they also allowed women to become affiliated – if not full – members.²⁵

The Hospitallers therefore maintained the service of the poor on two fronts. They provided hospitals on their estates in Europe, and the Levant, while they protected the poor from their castles and fastnesses in Palestine, and later on Rhodes and Malta.²⁶ Reflecting this, Grand Master Raymond du Puy divided the members of the Order into three classes, namely Priests (*capellani*), Knights of Justice (*milites*) and Serjens or Serving Brothers (*servientes*).²⁷ Yet, even after 1180 their statutes were silent on matters military.²⁸ In 1206, Knights were constituted as a separate class, next to Chaplains and Sergeants.²⁹



When the Muslims recaptured Jerusalem in 1187, the Hospitallers removed their headquarters first to Margat and then, in 1197, to Acre. When the Crusader principalities came to an end after the fall of Acre in 1291,³⁰ the Hospitallers moved to Limassol in Cyprus. In 1309 they moved again, this time to Rhodes (which they seized from the Eastern Roman empire), which was to remain their home until 1523. After a brief time on the Venetian island of Crete and elsewhere, in 1530 they reformed on Malta,³¹ their home till their remaining military, political and economic power was finally broken with the arrival of the French in 1798.³² Meanwhile, the mid-sixteenth century the Reformation led to the cessation of operations in the British Isles, and elsewhere.³³

On Rhodes and later on Malta – though not, apparently, on Crete – the Order had acquired and exercised sovereign authority, ruling the islands, at least in the early centuries, with an efficiency and vigour which was to prove generally to the advantage of the native inhabitants. Not the least of the Order's responsibilities was maintaining a small fleet for the suppression of piracy in the Mediterranean.

Attempts were occasionally made after 1798 to regain territory for the Order,³⁴ but none succeeded. Although lacking a territorial base, the Order continued to maintain hospitals, as it still does. For a few years it also retained its public status in Germany as a member of the Holy Roman Empire, with voting rights in the College of Princes, and retained a vote in the College of Princes of the Empire,³⁵ until those bodies in their turn fell under the wheels of the advancing French juggernaut, and the Holy Roman Empire collapsed with the abdication of Francis II in 1806.

Later in the nineteenth century, the Order faced a period of decline, which led to its dissolution in various European countries where it had not already lapsed during the Reformation. Due to its grievously weakened condition, the Order remained for some time in danger of total disbanding, despite its ongoing hospitaller function. As a sign of its weakness, it lacked a permanent head for nearly a century, and it was governed by Lieutenant Grand Masters until 1871. Only in 1879 did the Holy See authorise the election of a new Grand Master.³⁶ In that latter year, Pope Leo XIII officially recognised the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and restored its sovereignty, albeit one juridically dependent upon the Holy See. This restoration of relative normality reaffirmed the Order's commitment to its hospitaller and religious traditions, with priests and chaplains continuing to play a vital role in providing spiritual support to the members.³⁷

Even today its military character is not entirely extinct, with the Military Corps of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta (*Corpo speciale volontario ausiliario dell' Esercito Italiano dell' Associazione dei cavalieri italiani del Sovrano militare Ordine di Malta, Corpo Militare: EI-SMOM*), founded 1877, from 1909 a fully integrated part of the Italian army. Today it comprises mainly medical officers.³⁸



The charism of the Order of Malta and Alliance Orders

Despite the political and military vicissitudes through which the Order passed, especially from 1187 to 1291, and then from 1798, the Order retained its hospitaller function. This was, however, but one aspect and manifestation of a broader eleemosynary function, the care of the sick and poor, in the service of God and humanity. This forms the overarching charism of the Order. Charism, in the context of religious and spiritual communities, refers to a special gift or grace bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon individuals, groups, or orders within the Church. The word charism denotes the gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit on any member of the body of Christ for the building up of the community and the fulfilment of its calling.³⁹ It is a unique quality or characteristic that defines the identity, mission, and spirituality of a particular religious community or movement.

The charism of a religious community or order may manifest in various forms, such as a particular focus on prayer, service to the poor, education, missionary work, contemplation, advocacy for social justice, or a combination of these and other aspects. It sets them apart and gives them a specific mission or purpose within the broader context of the Church.

For the Hospitallers, the profession of the three vows (of poverty, chastity and obedience⁴⁰) – for the first time cited together explicitly in a rule – came at the time Raymond du Puy's Rule,⁴¹ issued sometime between 1137 and 1153;⁴² it is unlikely the first hospitallers were professed.⁴³ Unlike the monastic monks and nuns, the brethren of the Order of St John were not bound by a vow of stability,⁴⁴ and therefore were not confined to one house.

In the 1160s-70s the Order underwent something of a crisis of conscience, to reconcile welfare and warfare. Yet the distinction was not, in theory at least, so great as it might appear to us from the perspective of the twenty-first century. Hospitals were, in the twelfth century, places of shelter rather than necessarily places of cure; the Hospitallers were there to protect the poor not cure the sick,⁴⁵ although the two functions were easily – and early – conflated. Holistic care for God's children included protection, but also medical or nursing care, and where appropriate, spiritual care.

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta, and its successor Alliance Orders, has a distinct charism that encompasses several key elements. The first is the hospitaller charism. The Order of St John of Jerusalem was initially established as a religious order dedicated to caring for the sick and providing hospitality to pilgrims in the Holy Land during the Crusades. This hospitaller charism remains a fundamental aspect of the Order's identity and mission. The members of the Order, known as the Knights Hospitaller, were and are committed to serving the sick, the poor, and the marginalised, inspired by the Christian virtue of charity. They provide medical assistance, humanitarian aid, and support to those in need, both within the context of military campaigns



and in peacetime. This is reflected in the second of the mottos of the Venerable Order – ‘*Pro Utilitate Hominum*’ (for the service of humanity).

The second aspect of the charism of the Order is chivalry and the defence of the faith. This is reflected in the first motto, ‘*Pro fide*’ (for the faith), and – for all the Alliance Orders – in their attributes as orders of chivalry. The Knights Hospitaller were renowned for their chivalric traditions and military service. They were committed to defending the Christian faith and protecting the interests of pilgrims and Christians in the Holy Land, though this was often, though not invariably, subordinate to the hospital charism, the original purpose of the institution. The Order’s charism includes a dedication to the virtues of courage, honour, and selfless service in the defence of faith and the promotion of justice and peace. Its Christian members are committed to living out their Christian beliefs and fostering a vibrant spiritual life. The Order provides for the spiritual needs of its members through religious services, sacraments, and spiritual guidance. It upholds the teachings and values of the Church while respecting the religious freedom of individuals of different faiths.

In 1999 The Venerable Order became an ‘inclusive Christian Order,’ meaning that individuals of no faith or a non-Christian could become members. This was a necessary change given the reality of an increasingly secular society. However, to ensure that sight was not lost of the *Pro Fide* part of the motto of the Order it was agreed that the Order would develop a consciously pastoral chaplaincy, to strengthen what had largely become a ceremonial role for chaplains.

The elder sister – or perhaps mother – of the Alliance Orders, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, also possesses a unique sovereign and diplomatic status. It still maintains diplomatic relations with various countries and international organisations, allowing it to pursue its humanitarian and diplomatic missions worldwide. This supports the exercise of the charism of the Order. The special charisma of the Order of Malta is the protection of the faith and the service of the poor (*‘tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum’*) – similar, but not identical to the Venerable Order’s ‘*Pro fide*’ and ‘*Pro Utilitate Hominum*’. This was re-affirmed in 2022, in a papal decree, dissolving the Sovereign Council, revoking the High Officers, and promulgating a new Constitutional Charter and Code.

Chaplains in the original foundation

From the earliest time clients of the Hospitallers received a mixture of spiritual, physical and medical attention, in keeping with the charism of the nascent Order.⁴⁶ The existence of clerical brethren was sanctioned in 1154.⁴⁷ The original statutes of the Order, in the time of Roger de Moulins, only specify the care of the sick, as the role of the brethren. It is only in the time of the ninth Grand Master, Fernando Afonso of Portugal (c.1200) that military service is specified. The brethren were then divided into the military brethren, the



brethren infirmarians, and the brethren chaplains, although the first mention of military brethren (brethren at arms) had been in the 1181 statutes.⁴⁸

Due to the developments in political and military affairs in the Holy Land, it is not surprising that, as de Palma noted, 'there are very few studies on the Order of Malta's spirituality compared to the vast range of research on its political, military, charitable, diplomatic and economic activities and on legal and canon law implications'.⁴⁹

The chaplains were full members of the Order, though not perhaps present in the very early days. After the Order assumed the 'Rule of the Hospital', and was recognised by the Pope, the position of clerical members was strengthened. With this recognition, priests were officially incorporated into the ranks of the Order, reinforcing the religious nature of the institution.⁵⁰ The Augustinian Order, also known as the Order of Saint Augustine, survives as a separate Catholic religious order that traces its origins back to the teachings of Saint Augustine of Hippo in the fourth century. Religious members included both friars and nuns. The friars were priests and brothers who lived in community and engaged in pastoral work, education, research, and other ministries. The nuns lived a contemplative life dedicated to prayer, often in enclosed convents.

According to Canon Law the Order of Malta is a lay religious order, where some of its members are religious – they have professed the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience – and others have just taken the special promise of obedience. The great majority of the knights and dames are lay members. Bishops and priests are generally admitted as chaplains of the Order of Malta. The priests of the Order of Malta today are ranked as Honorary Canons, as in the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. Even today the Order of Malta retains several convents for nuns, at St Jean d'Acre in the Salinas de Añana and Zamora districts in Spain and that of St Ursula on Malta.

Chaplains today in the Order of Malta and the Venerable Order of St John

In the present day, priests and chaplains in the Order of Malta continue to serve in various capacities. They offer spiritual guidance to the members of the Order, perform religious services, administer sacraments, and accompany the Order's humanitarian activities worldwide. The spiritual and pastoral care provided by priests and chaplains remain essential to the Order's mission of serving the sick and the needy.

A similar charism is at work today in the Venerable Order, although this took some time to be revived following the restoration of the order in England in the early nineteenth century, after a long absence since 1564. It is perhaps unsurprising that the founding knights of the restored Order in England included such individuals as the Reverend Sir Robert Peat. Philippe de Castellane and Donald Currie were authorised by the Council of the French *Langues* of the Order of Malta to form the Council of the English Langue, which was duly inaugurated on 12 January 1831, under the executive control of



Alejandro, conde de Mortara.⁵¹ Peat was appointed Prior *ad interim*, an office he held until his death in 1837.⁵² Regretfully, Peat's successor, Sir Henry Dymoke (1838-47), failed in his efforts to obtain the recognition of the Order of Malta, by now based in Rome, and so the revived Order of St John asserted its independence in the 1830s;⁵³ the separate presence of the Order of Malta, sanctioned by the Grand Magistry, began in England in the nineteenth century. But the first aid, and hospitaller, work of St John grew imbued with a charisma derived from the dual motto of the Order. This was preserved, if not strengthened, when the Venerable Order was established as a royal Order.

Following the 1999 re-emphasis of the religious nature of the ethos of the Venerable Order, work has been done to strengthen chaplaincy. This has been particularly noticeable in New Zealand. To strengthen the Order's commitment to *Pro Fide*, successive Priory Deans have worked at recruiting chaplains for St John (since 2023 operating under the brand of Hato Hone St John) across the whole of New Zealand, and with the support of St John management have developed a support network for the chaplains, including a biennial national conference for professional development, and mutual support and encouragement. St John chaplains are becoming professional emergency service chaplains able to work along-side operational members of St John in local or national emergencies.⁵⁴

Chaplaincy in St John in New Zealand has developed its own structure which enables its chaplains to become increasingly integrated within the wider St John family. There is a Chaplaincy Leadership Team which includes the Priory Dean and three Regional Chaplains. The Regional Chaplains are supported by District Chaplains, who in turn provide support for the Area Chaplains. The chaplains are available to all members of St John, their families and members of the public while in St John care, and can provide a variety of pastoral and spiritual services.⁵⁵

Caring ministry and service based on Christian faith are at the heart of the life and work of St John. To strengthen the first part of the joint motto, *Pro Fide*, St John in New Zealand, through chaplaincy, aims to strengthen the Christian identity of the organisation as a unique component within the wide spectrum of diverse charitable agencies in New Zealand society. For people of faith chaplaincy reminds them that the service all members of St John offer – in whatever task or role – is a work offered to God from whom all life derives.⁵⁶

All of the Hato Hone St John chaplains are volunteers and are committed to maintaining the professional standards of best practice. Chaplains are members in good standing in their national churches, have a theological qualification and a history of good pastoral practice.⁵⁷

Hato Hone St John aims to provide a chaplaincy service to all area committees and stations throughout New Zealand, whilst realising that this goal may be difficult to achieve in some remote areas. The chaplaincy service and programme form an integral part of Hato Hone St John, New Zealand.⁵⁸



St John Chaplaincy has a distinctive character and four aspects to its work. These are, pastoral care, which is the assistance chaplains offer to people in need, whether the need is physical, emotional, mental or spiritual; liturgical – public, formal worship, so that chaplains provide leadership and advice for all public and private ceremonial occasions for Hato Hone St John including investiture services, youth enrolment services, chapter prayers and the blessings of individuals, vehicles, and buildings; spiritual care, which concerns the inner life, how individuals understand their own ethically and committed existence, and the way they act and react habitually to this understanding; and lastly, prophetic, ensuring that Hato Hone St John remains faithful to its foundations and ethos, as expressed in its motto, vision and values.⁵⁹ This is the contemporary charism of the chaplaincy of St John.

Conclusion

Priests and chaplains have been an integral part of the Order of Malta and the descendant Alliance Orders, particularly the Venerable Order of St John, throughout its history. From the origins of the hospitaller tradition to the present day, they have provided spiritual care, guidance, and pastoral support to the members of the Order, reinforcing its commitment to both the military and hospitaller aspects of its mission.

Chaplaincy in the Order of St John has always reflected the nature of the Order in its particular time and setting. While the Reformation ended the operation of the Order of St John in the British Isles, elsewhere in Europe it continued, albeit in a similarly enfeebled state, compared to its height in the time of the Crusades. The nuns of the Order of Malta, however, kept alive something of the charism of the early institution, and the weakened military and political power of the Order ensured it turned its focus once more to the hospitaller function. In this setting the chaplains retained an active role.

After a prolonged period in which the newly restored presence of the hospitallers in the British Isles relegated clerical brethren to largely ceremonial functions, in the late twentieth century an attempt was made to revive the charism of the Order. This largely took the form of strengthening the role of the chaplaincy, so that they assumed pastoral and prophetic functions, as a reminder of the holistic care which the founders of the Order took of its patients, irrespective of creed or race, but inspired by a charism of service to humanity and to the faith.

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³ The Venerable Order of St John in the Netherlands was established in 1909, and recognized in 1946. The Venerable Order of St John in Sweden was established in 1920.

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⁵ Myra Struckmeyer, 'Female Hospitallers in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries' (University of North Carolina PhD thesis, 2006), p. 42.

⁶ Luigi Michele de Palma, 'The Spirituality of the Order of Saint John' in 'Service to Neighbour as a Testimony of Faith', *Journal of Spirituality*, Vol. 16 (2017), pp. 59–100 (72). In Latin, 'prepositus' is the past participle of the verb 'praeponere,' which means 'to place before' or 'to put in charge.' In ecclesiastical contexts, 'prepositus' can refer to a person who has been appointed as a superior or head of a religious community or order.

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¹⁴ Struckmeyer, 'Female Hospitallers', p. 48; see also T. Miller, 'The Knights of Saint John and the Hospitals of the Latin West', *Speculum*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (1978), p. 717.

¹⁵ Brodman, 'Rule and Identity', pp. 384–385.

¹⁶ H. J. Hoegen Dijkhof, 'The legitimacy of Orders of St John: a historical and legal analysis and case study of a para-religious phenomenon' (Leiden University PhD thesis, 2006), p. 305.

¹⁷ C. Tyerman, *God's war: A new history of the Crusades* (London: Penguin, 2006).

¹⁸ *The Rule, Statutes and Customs of the Hospitallers*, ed. & trans. King.

¹⁹ de Palma, 'The Spirituality of the Order of Saint John', pp. 74–75.

²⁰ Struckmeyer, 'Female Hospitallers', p. 48.

²¹ J.-B.-Alban de Villeneuve-Bargemont, *History of the Sovereign Order of St John of Jerusalem* (London: D. & J. Sadlier & Company, 1844).

²² In 1130 the Order was granted freedom from tolls (Lünig, *Codex Italiae Diplomaticus*, Vol. 4, p. 1451); in 1144 it was placed under the protection of the Holy See (*Magn. Bull.*, Vol 2, p. 471); and 1190 placed under the protection of the Emperor (Lünig, *Codex Italiae Diplomaticus*, Vol. 4 (Johann Christoph Lochner Frankfurt, 1725-35), p. 1455).

²³ Timothy Miller, 'The Knights of St John and the Hospitals of the Latin West', *Speculum*, Vol. 53 (1978), pp. 720–722.

²⁴ de Palma, 'The Spirituality of the Order of Saint John', p. 92; following Brodman, 'Rule and Identity', pp. 383–400; James W. Brodman, *Charity and Welfare: Hospitals and the Poor in Medieval Catalonia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

²⁵ Struckmeyer, 'Female Hospitallers'.

²⁶ see Jonathan Riley-Smith, 'The Military-Religious Orders: Their History and Continuing Relevance', *Traditio Melitensis*, Vol. 7 (2005), pp. 31–39.

²⁷ Dijkhof, 'The legitimacy of Orders of St John', p. 84.

²⁸ Brodman, 'Rule and Identity', p. 386; *The Rule, Statutes and Customs of the Hospitallers*, ed. King, pp. 20, 26.

²⁹ Statutes of Margat, cited in Dijkhof, 'The legitimacy of Orders of St John'; Brodman, 'Rule and Identity', p. 387.

³⁰ Some survived, namely the Principality of Tyre (to 1297); Lordship of Sidon (1298), and more distant, the Kingdom of Cyprus (1489); Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).



³¹ On 24 March 1530 Emperor Charles V granted the Order the island in his capacity as King of Sicily, *'in feudum perpetuum, nobile, liberum et francum'*. This was confirmed by Papal Bull of 1 May 1530 (*Magn. Bull.*, Vol 4, p. 140).

³² This was implemented by convention of 12 June 1798, in which the Order renounced in favour of the French Republic its rights of property and sovereignty in and over the islands of Malta, Gozo and Comino; Georg Martens, *Recueil Des Principaux Traités*, Vol 4 (2nd ed., Göttingen: Dieterich, 1817-35), pp. 322, 324.

³³ In England, the old Order was effectively disbanded in 1540. It was revived by letters patent on 2 April 1557, and never subsequently abolished, though suppressed by Elizabeth I in 1564. Titular grand priors were appointed from the 1560s till 1815 by the Grand Master or (later) Lieutenant Grand Master in Malta (and after 1798, wherever they were temporarily based). A new Grand Priory was established in 1994.

³⁴ In 1806 Gustav IV, King of Sweden, offered the dispossessed Order Gothland. This offer was however rejected; Alessandro Visconti, 'La sovranità dell'Ordine di Malta nel diritto Italiano', *Rivista di diritto privato*, Vol. 6 (1936), pp. 195-205.

³⁵ Martens, *Recueil Des Principaux Traités*, Vol 7, § 32, sub 59.

³⁶ The former requirement that the election of a new Grand Master be approved by the Holy See has since disappeared (*Constitutional Charter and Code*, art 13).

³⁷ M. Fraher, *The Order of Malta: A portrait* (London: Profile Books, 2016); This can be interpreted as a sign that the Holy See did not wish to have a role in the governance of the Order that can be seen as infringing its sovereignty – even if that sovereignty is only functional.

³⁸ It is now regulated under Decreto legislativo n. 66 del 2010, titolo V, art. 1761.

³⁹ Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* ('Lima report') (World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1982), Faith and Order Paper No 111, para 7(a).

⁴⁰ Struckmeyer, 'Female Hospitallers', p. 66.

⁴¹ de Palma, 'The Spirituality of the Order of Saint John', p. 78.

⁴² Struckmeyer, 'Female Hospitallers', p. 59.

⁴³ Struckmeyer, 'Female Hospitallers', p. 66.

⁴⁴ Struckmeyer, 'Female Hospitallers', p. 60.

⁴⁵ Brodman, 'Rule and Identity', pp. 399-400.

⁴⁶ Struckmeyer, 'Female Hospitallers', p. 86.

⁴⁷ Struckmeyer, 'Female Hospitallers', p. 67.

⁴⁸ Struckmeyer, 'Female Hospitallers', p. 59.

⁴⁹ de Palma, 'The Spirituality of the Order of Saint John', p. 71.

⁵⁰ J. Delaville Le Roulx, *Les Hospitaliers en Terre Sainte et à Chypre* (Émile Bouillon, Leroux, 1904).

⁵¹ Mas J. Ellul, *The Sword and the Green Cross: The Saga of the Knights of Saint Lazarus from the Crusades to the 21st Century* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2011), p. 304.

⁵² Sir Edwin King, *The Grand Priory of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England* (London: Order of St John, 1924), p. 113.

⁵³ Charles W. Tozer, *The Insignia and Medals of the Grand Priory of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem* (London: J.B. Hayward & Son, 1975), p. 78. The revival of the Order in England in the early nineteenth century was not recognised as a branch of the Order. This revival was led initially by French Knights of Malta, as part of an abortive plan to raise military and naval forces to aid the oppressed Greeks gain their freedom from the Ottoman empire. For the history of the Order in England, see Sir Edwin King, *The Knights of St John in the British Realm* (3rd ed, London: Order of St John, 1967).

⁵⁴ *Chaplaincy Handbook* (Auckland: Order of St John, 2018).

⁵⁵ *Chaplaincy Handbook* (Auckland: Order of St John, 2018).

⁵⁶ *Chaplaincy Handbook* (Auckland: Order of St John, 2018).

⁵⁷ *Chaplaincy Handbook* (Auckland: Order of St John, 2018).

⁵⁸ *Chaplaincy Handbook* (Auckland: Order of St John, 2018).

⁵⁹ *Chaplaincy Handbook* (Auckland: Order of St John, 2018).

9. Johannine Mutual Humanitarian Support in Australia

COLONEL (Dr.) Michael J. Campion, RAAMC, CStJ, KMG(Ob), KC*HS.

The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem is a working order of charitably minded men and women whose philanthropy is expressed principally through its two foundations, the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem and St John Ambulance. The Order is a British royal order of chivalry constituted by royal charter from Queen Victoria in 1888 and dedicated to St John the Baptist.

His Majesty King Charles III is at the apex of the Order of Saint John as its Sovereign Head, followed by the Grand Prior, since 1975, Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester. He, along with the four or five other Great Officers—the Lord Prior of St John, who acts as the lieutenant of and deputy to the Grand Prior (currently Mark Compton, AM, GCStJ, an Australian, serves as the second Australian to be elected Lord Prior following Neil Conn, AO, GCStJ); the Prelate, who is an Anglican bishop; the Deputy Lord Prior (or more than one depending on the Grand Prior's needs), who acts accordingly as a lieutenant and deputy to the Lord Prior; and the Sub-Prelate, who has interests in the commanderies and associations of the organisation—as well as the Priors and Chancellors of each of the order's eight priories and the Hospitaller make up the Grand Council.

The charism of the Order traces its origins back to the Knights Hospitaller in the Middle Ages.

There are other four other Orders of St John which are recognised as orders of knighthood, all descending from the Knights Hospitaller. Due to the enormous prestige of the ancient Knights Hospitaller there are also many “false orders” around the world that incorporate in their names “St John” or “of Malta” giving them very similar names to the recognised orders and often have very well intentioned and devoted members that attempt to emulate the hospitaller tradition.

The recognised Orders are distinguished from other national orders by their origins in the Christian faith and their traditions of lay Christian Orders. The four Orders of St John of Jerusalem are associated in the Alliance of the Orders of St John and share the same historic tradition and the same mission: giving assistance to the sick and the poor.

What lends them legitimacy and facilitates mutual recognition is that they are headed by the sovereign authorities of the countries they are based in.

Alliance Orders of St John

The five Orders of St John together maintain a website that delves into their common history, charitable activities and projects developed jointly today:

<https://ordersofsaintjohn.org>

The four Orders of St John are recognised by the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (SMOM), the direct Roman Catholic descendant of the original medieval Knights Hospitaller.

Increasingly in recent decades cooperation has flourished between the Alliance members and SMOM. This paper focusses on one local Australian manifestation of cooperation.

Sovereign Military Order of Malta

During the 19th and 20th centuries, the SMOM thoroughly updated its statutes, Constitutional Charter and Code. The loss of the island of Malta in 1797 meant the end of the ancient internal subdivision into *Langues* (tongues). The consequent reorganization of the Order coincided with the creation of the National Associations, which were focussed largely on the provision of humanitarian aid. The first to be founded was the German Association in 1859, followed in 1875 by the British and in 1877 by the Italian Association. The American Association of the Order was formed in 1924, the first in the Americas and the first in the New World. The Australian Association was formed in 1974 and celebrates its 50th Anniversary next year.

By the second half of the 19th century, the Order's original mission of medical and social assistance was its main focus, intensifying during the last century thanks to the work of the Grand Priories and National Associations in many countries worldwide. Large-scale Hospitaller and charitable works were carried out during World War I and during World War II under Grand Master Fra' Ludovico Chigi Albani della Rovere (1931-1951). Under Grand Masters Fra' Angelo de Mojana of Cologne (1962-1988) and Fra' Andrew Bertie (1988-2008), the Order's activities grew until they reached the furthestmost regions of the world. It now conducts one of the world's largest NGO's Malteser International.

Bailiwick of Brandenburg of St John and Jerusalem

The Order of St John in Germany, founded on its Grand Priory, the Bailiwick of Brandenburg, always maintained friendly relations with the Sovereign Order of Malta. It was suppressed by the King of Prussia in 1811-1812 and reconstituted as the Royal Prussian Order of St John, an order of merit. In 1852, the Order regained the name of Bailiwick of Brandenburg as an independent organization directly under the Crown with a humanitarian ethos.

It is present in a number of European countries, Canada, the United States and has a small representation in Australia. It works in Germany with hospitals and nursing homes. It is responsible for an important ambulance service – the 'Johanniter Unfallhilfe'. It has independent affiliations in Finland, France, Hungary and Switzerland.

www.johanniter.org

Order of St John of the Netherlands

The Order of St John spread from Germany across the Netherlands and in 1909, an affiliation was created in the Kingdom of Holland. In 1946, the entity separated from the German Order and was annexed to the Dutch Crown, but not as a State Order.

This Order currently runs hospitals and hospices and collaborates with the Sovereign Order of Malta in various charitable activities.

www.johanniter.nl

Order of St John of Sweden

The Order of St John in Scandinavia was likewise initially attached to the Bailiwick of Brandenburg and was re-organised in 1920 under the protection of the Swedish Crown.

It became independent from the German Order in 1946, under the protection of the king of Sweden. Today, this Order provides care for the elderly and the sick and collaborates with Swedish hospitals, with charitable organisations and with Christian communities.

It is also involved in international activities on behalf of refugees and political prisoners.

www.johanniterorden.se

Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem

The Knights of Saint John in Britain were revived in 1831, but without official recognition from the Pope or from the SMOM. With the support and patronage of senior members of the Royal family, the Order of St John in Britain grew its membership over the ensuing decades.

The Royal Charter of 1888 created the present order of chivalry and in 1961 it played a role, together with the Protestant Continental branches of the original Order of St John (the "Johanniter Orders" in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and elsewhere), in the establishment of the Alliance of the Orders of Saint John of Jerusalem. It finally received (through an agreement in 1963) collateral recognition by the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. Its most recent Royal Charter was granted in 1955, with a supplemental charter issued in 1974, recognizing the worldwide scope of the organisation by setting its present name. In 1999, the order received special consultative status from the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

The Order has priories and associations in some 40 countries, mostly English-speaking, throughout the Commonwealth of Nations, Hong Kong, the Republic of Ireland, and the United States of America. The Order's worldwide mission "to

prevent and relieve sickness and injury, and to act to enhance the health and well-being of people anywhere in the world." Except via appointment to certain government or ecclesiastical offices in some realms, membership is by invitation only and individuals may not petition for admission.

The Order of St John is perhaps best known for the health organisations it founded and continues to run, including St John Ambulance and St John Eye Hospital Group. As with the order, the memberships and work of these organizations are not constricted by denomination or religion. The order is a constituent member of the Alliance of the Orders of Saint John of Jerusalem. Its headquarters are in London and it is a registered charity under English law. Among all the Orders of St John, this is the only one that has no religious restrictions in its admission procedure.

www.orderofstjohn.org

Pius X Aboriginal Corporation, Moree, NSW, Australia

The Pius X Aboriginal Mission was established in Moree in the 1950's as a joint project of the Federal Government and the Catholic Church. In addition to providing housing for Aboriginal people, Pius X Aboriginal Mission has provided health services and organized education access for Aboriginal children for over 70 years. Although there was much poverty on the Mission, there was also much happiness, particularly centred around the Church and the Community Hall. The services and activities held at the Mission were for indigenous and non-indigenous families. Through the leadership of the then Mission Priest, Fr Richard Shanahan and the Daughters of Charity Nuns, many well-attended community activities were held for both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families of the Moree District.

Thirty-seven years ago the ownership and management of the Pius X Mission was transferred to the Pius X Aboriginal Corporation. The management of its services has been vested in the Aboriginal people of the region. The Corporation developed, in addition to medical services, capabilities in mental health, drug and alcohol programs, dentistry, podiatry, optometry, hearing screening, eye screening, HIV/AIDS Sexual Health screening and treatment, employment services as well as a superb preschool, community hall and youth programs. The Chapel still remains at the spiritual and physical heart of the Corporation. The Community Hall remains a greatly valued-resource being used for activities as varied as wakes and weddings and teaching programmes for local medical and nursing professionals.

The widely acclaimed "Graniators Program" involved 40 to 60 year-old grandmothers identifying potentially troublesome youth. With a mixture of "tough love" and "gentle persuasion", they encourage wayward youngsters into more constructive activities. Young people with leadership qualities are carefully selected into the Indigenous Education Program conducted and funded within the most prestigious Sydney and regional private boarding schools. Although the school fees

are largely covered, parents are expected to pay a relatively small but pre-agreed stipend towards the education and support of their children.

The Pius X Aboriginal Corporation has become a model for Aboriginal management of their facilities and for developing programs to meet the needs of indigenous and non-indigenous people in rural and remote New South Wales and beyond. It has also provided an outstanding mechanism for the Aboriginal people of Moree and North-West NSW to make a significant contribution to the community at large.

Many North-Western NSW towns have been seriously traumatised by the pain of recognising and rectifying the mistakes of the past. The work of the Pius X Aboriginal Corporation in Moree is a shining example of modern progress towards mending this divide. The current leadership of the Corporation willingly acknowledge that, despite their often disadvantaged upbringing at a time of poor race relations, the greatly improved community access to education and health services which they achieved through Pius X Aboriginal Corporation has been integral to the current demonstrated ability to manage and develop their services in such an exemplary manner.

The Pius X Aboriginal Corporation over the past decade has funded and built an extremely high quality, comprehensive health care facility, the Pius X Clinic, which is among the finest such facilities in New South Wales. The Pius X Clinic provides health services to the regional Aboriginal community free of charge. The Pius X Clinic is a fully accredited day-stay surgical facility and the Clinic has all the facilities to provide modern day-stay surgery. It has state-of-the-art sterilizing equipment and a highly skilled nursing staff. It has two full time General Practitioners and the monthly services of visiting Ear, Nose and Throat Specialists from St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney and Gynaecological Specialists from the Royal Hospital for Women in Sydney. General medical specialties are covered by regular visits of specialists from Tamworth and Newcastle. These services provide care to the regional Aboriginal population but many non-Aboriginal people are also referred from throughout the North-West of New South Wales to access specialist care across a wide range of specialties within the Pius X Clinic.

At a personal level, it has been a great privilege for me to assist in the further development of these health services. My father, Dr John Campion, established these services with his partner, Dr John Egan, setting up the clinic at Pius X in 1954 and with both serving for over 30 years as general practitioner/surgeons to the community. The Aboriginal community of Moree and beyond hastily and affectionately confirm this contribution.

St John Ambulance Australia and ophthalmic care

Through the work of its members over the decades, St John Ambulance Australia has developed iconic stature in the Australian community for its humanitarian and charitable works "for the relief of the suffering of the sick, the injured or wounded in



times of peace and in times of war or disaster irrespective of race, class or creed". Within the cities and towns of New South Wales, the rich Australian traditions of community and volunteerism are exemplified in the work of the members of St John Ambulance Australia.

The traditions of neighbour helping neighbour, of self-help and service are intrinsically entwined with our perceptions of that which is archetypically Australian. These traditions are enshrined in the universal and enduring work of St John Ambulance Australia within our communities. St John Ambulance Australia volunteers also work in a number of Community Care Programs including a remedial reading program in schools and in support of the school immunization program, helping to attend children receiving their vaccinations.

Although the inspiring work of the St John Ambulance volunteers in First Aid Services is well recognized in the community, it is much less well known that, over the past 130 years, St John Ambulance volunteers in Australia have raised funds for the support of the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem. This Hospital, in particular in recent times through its Outreach Program, cares for some of the world's poorest people, most of them Palestinian children, afflicted by decades of war and neglect.

It is one of those quirks of history, that through British control of Palestine, the British Order of St John, the Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, gained ownership of the original site in the Old City of Jerusalem of the Hospital of the Order of St John. Located on the Muristan (Turkish word for Hospital), this is one of the most important sites in the world for those of us who love and serve the Military and Hospitaller traditions of the Order of St John. The Order's Hospital was built just outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem to provide more space. It is another quirk of history that the Hospital is an Eye Hospital!

St John Ambulance Australia (NSW) supports entirely the salary of an Outreach Nurse, Mr Ameer Badawi, who is employed by the Hospital in an Outreach role to the villages of the West Bank. The achievement through the work of the Hospital is recognized and valued by all people of good will, regardless of religion. The work of the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem, under a Christian banner, in a Jewish state, caring for some of the world's poorest Moslems remains a lasting beacon of the greatest traditions of charitable work. It embodies the two founding principles of St John Ambulance, 'Pro Fide' (For the Faith) and 'Pro Utilitate Hominem' (For the Service of Mankind).

To bring this valuable outreach and charism closer to home, over the past eighteen years, the Ophthalmic Hospital Branch of St John Ambulance Australia (NSW) has raised significant funds to establish a comprehensive eye care service in the Pius X Clinic.

In my previous role as National Hospitaller for St John Ambulance Australia, I was responsible for the Australian efforts in support of the St John Eye Hospital in

Jerusalem. There are many synergies in the efforts of the both the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem and the Pius X St John Eye Clinic in Moree. Both provide greatly valued, free, central and Outreach services to extremely needy populations with very high levels of eye pathology. Both do so regardless of race, religion or ability to pay.

Pius X St John Eye Clinic

A critical area of need for the Pius X Aboriginal Corporation has been to address the high incidence of eye disease in the rural and remote communities of New South Wales, particularly among the Aboriginal population. Eye health among Aboriginal people in Australia is at third world levels. Common and relatively simple conditions such as cataract and pterygium have often progressed to the point that sight is occluded in the affected eye(s) by the time patients are diagnosed and present for surgical intervention. Equality has been axiomatic in Australian health care for decades with all supposedly having free access to medical and surgical intervention for serious health problems. In the discipline of eye care for rural and remote communities, this is not the case with people having to travel long distances for even basic care.

There was until relatively recently no comprehensive eye service available to Moree, or to North Western NSW generally. Patients had to travel long distances to regional centres such as Tamworth, Newcastle and Toowoomba or to Sydney and Brisbane. Many patients, often the most in need, either could not afford or were not prepared to travel these distances. Many languished for years on waiting lists during which time the eye pathology advanced often to the point where it was no longer remedial.

In March 2006, the CEO of Pius X Aboriginal Corporation, Ms Donna Taylor approached me at one of my regular, monthly visits to the Clinic to provide women's health specialist services, to enquire as to whether I could help the Clinic establish a comprehensive Eye Clinic. Aboriginal people served by Pius X were suffering from very high levels of eye pathology. Unless they could afford private care and were prepared to travel long distances, they were unable to access adequate medical support. Over the past 18 years, a comprehensive eye care service has been established and conducted by the Ophthalmic Hospital Branch of St John Ambulance NSW in the Pius X Clinic with the support of St John Ambulance Australia.

On 4 August 2006, the NSW Health Minister, Mr John Hatzistergos, announced the establishment of eye surgery services for the people of North-Western NSW, based in Moree. This new program, initiated by St John Ambulance Australia NSW, saw the establishment and funding of the Pius X St John Eye Clinic within the Pius X Aboriginal Corporation in Moree. The establishment of the Pius X St John Eye Clinic represented a partnership between Pius X Aboriginal Corporation, St John Ambulance Australia NSW, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (ATSIH), NSW Health Service and Moree District Hospital, Sydney Eye Hospital and Department of



Ophthalmology, University of Sydney, Prince of Wales Hospital and Department of Ophthalmology, University of New South Wales.

St John Ambulance Australia NSW initially secured the guaranteed services of leading Ophthalmologists, prepared to travel to Moree to conduct the services even if funding was not available to cover their costs. St John Ambulance Australia NSW then raised the funds needed for the purchase of sophisticated equipment for the Clinic to permit the establishment of the eye service. With the specialist coverage guaranteed, ATSIH initially contributed over \$200,000 to help fund the specialist visits and NSW Health over \$220,000 to the establishment of the surgical program both at Pius X and at Moree District Hospital. This support has continued. St John Ambulance Australia (NSW) has raised \$350,000 for the purchase of “state-of-the-art” diagnostic and laser treatment equipment for the Clinic.

A large part of the initial support came from three major benefactors, The Arrowfield Foundation for the purchase of a superb retinal laser with attendant delivery systems for the treatment of diabetic retinopathy, a serious problem for Aboriginal men and women, City Tattersall's' Club, Sydney, in memory of Dr John Champion, towards the purchase of a corneal laser for the treatment of corneal opacity after cataract surgery, a serious problem for rural people of both indigenous and non-indigenous backgrounds, and Mr Peter and Mrs Catherine Campbell for the purchase of the most modern cataract diagnostic equipment (the latest IOL Master, one of only two in service in Australia at the time of purchase). Many other equally valuable smaller donations were received and continue to be received from within and without St John Ambulance Australia for the ongoing support of the St John Pius X Eye Clinic in Moree.

The acquisition of this equipment permitted much needed operative procedures to be conducted in the Clinic. Previously, no such services were available elsewhere in the rural North-Western region of NSW. This program has established the Pius X St John Eye Care Clinic as the foremost rural eye care clinic in regional NSW and is a worthy recognition of the already pioneering and innovative achievements of the Pius X Aboriginal Corporation in caring for the needs of Aboriginal people and also the wider community in Northern NSW.

In Nov 2007, large fund-raising dinner was conducted by St John Ambulance Australia NSW in recognition of the twenty years of achievement of the Pius X Aboriginal Corporation to raise funds for a bus and equipment to travel to the more remote and smaller Aboriginal communities in the North-West such as Toomelah, Mungindi, Wee-Waa and Terry-Hie-Hie to conduct screening clinics for serious eye pathology.

Mr Alan Jones AO was Guest Speaker with Mr Carl Stephanovic as Master of Ceremonies. This Outreach eye screening program is established with St John volunteers being funded to travel to Moree and beyond to conduct the screening.

More recently, the St John Ambulance Australia NSW Ophthalmic branch has received a sizeable bequest to establish a Foundation to help with the ongoing support of the eye programs in Moree and Jerusalem.

The Pius X St John Eye Clinic in Moree began seeing patients in October 2006 and the first surgical lists were performed in December 2006. There have now been well over 300 operating lists conducted through this program at Moree District Hospital. There has been over 1000 operations conducted, particularly cataract surgery.

This has been the first significant eye surgery conducted in the region in many years. The outpatient assessments and minor treatment procedures are all conducted at the Pius X St John Eye Clinic. The Clinic has a 60% Aboriginal mix and this has been reflected in the surgery lists. Pius X has a long history of open access to the non-Aboriginal population. This is continued in the Pius X St John Eye Clinic services. The comprehensive eye service now established within Pius X Clinic is a valuable resource for both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of North-West New South Wales.

The Pius X St John Eye Clinic is one of the main means by which the Pius X Aboriginal Corporation, in addition to providing advanced eye care to one of the most needy and poor indigenous populations in New South Wales, also provides a greatly valued outreach to the broader non-indigenous population of Northern NSW. Sceptics of the modern programs at Pius X attempted to dismiss the services for non-indigenous people on the loathsome grounds that “white folk won’t go down to the Mission”; yet in the 1950’s, 60’s and 70’s non-indigenous families in their scores attended wonderful services and activities in the Aboriginal community. This helped build a huge pride in the wider community about the values that the organisation represents.

St John of God

In the general community, there is often confusion between the chivalric Order of St John and the religious Order of St John of God. They are of course unrelated. The Brothers of Saint John of God are members of a Hospitaller Religious Order of the Catholic Church. They, and their lay Co-workers, provide health and social services assisting persons affected by poverty, illness, homelessness, disabilities and other unmet basic human needs.

St John of God Health Care is one of the largest Catholic providers of health care services in Australia, being established in Western Australia in 1895, when eight sisters travelled from Ireland to Australia to care for people in Western Australia

The foundation of the Brotherhood was inspired by the actions and teachings of Saint John of God who died in Spain in 1550. He was born João Cidade in Portugal in 1495. From the age of eight he lived in Spain where he was called Juan Ciudad. Starting off his working life as a shepherd, he later became a soldier and an itinerant



book peddler. Eventually he settled down in the southern Spanish city of Granada in 1538. There, he experienced a religious conversion that led him to undertake acts of penance that were seen by many as signs of mental illness – for which he was hospitalised. Hence the reason that St John of God Health Care generally, and in Australia specifically, has a particular focus on mental health, reflected in the psychiatric services in Burwood and Richmond in Sydney.

Before he died, at the age of 55, his dedication to the poor, sick and needy of society brought him to be known throughout Spain as both “John of God” and “The Father of the Poor”. The religious institute in his name is known as the Hospitaller Order of St John of God and has operated over 450 health and social centres and services in 54 countries. The professed Brothers of the Order, which numbered almost one thousand world-wide, were the nucleus of the wider group of followers of St John of God, made up of some 90,000 persons throughout the world.

Tragically, in the English-speaking world, and in Australia and Ireland particularly, the Brothers of the Order and some of the lay teachers were among the worst offenders in the 20th century Church child abuse scandal, particularly in the child orphanages run by the Order. Although the many hospitals and health care facilities conducted in the name of the Order continue to offer excellent services under lay management, the male religious Order, particularly in Australia and Ireland, is almost extinct.

In Australia, the psychiatric hospitals, other facilities and many services conducted by the Order have merged with St John of God Australia Ltd. This was an existing corporate entity. It was established as a completely separate and autonomous body by the Sisters of Saint John of God and has been operating St John of God Health Care across Australia now for many years.

10. Why Heads of Royal Houses Denounce False Orders

Guy Stair Sainty

The historic Order of St John had a presence across much of Western Europe and following the Protestant Reformation, although it was entirely suppressed in England and Scotland, the members of the bailiwick of Brandenburg, part of the *Langue* of Germany, had converted but maintained their chivalric structures.

Following the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, the ancient military hospitaller Order managed to survive, thanks in no small part to the Russian Emperor Paul I, whose son, Alexander I by 1811, however, had been forced by the financial demands of the war to dissolve the two Russian grand priories (one Catholic, the other non-Catholic). In Spain the Order was converted into a national Order, as the second highest ranking Order while during the rest of the 19th century it gradually rebuilt the membership but with a purely hospitaller mission while maintaining its historic military structure.

Various 19th century national revivals and support for branches of the ancient Order from individual sovereigns were largely thanks to:

- the king of Prussia (later German Emperor), restored the traditional character of the bailiwick of Brandenburg in 1852.
- Queen Victoria, in Great Britain, transformed the Venerable Order of St John into a British royal order of chivalry by granting it her Royal Charter in 1888.
- the Queen Regent of Spain, Maria Cristina (for Alfonso XIII), restored in Spain in 1889 what had in 1808 become a Spanish royal Order as part of the Order of Malta, and;
- the sovereigns of the Netherlands and Sweden gave their protection to commanderies of the German *Johanniter* Order established in their countries (and, since 1945, autonomous with their own statutes and self-government). In 2010 a sub-commandery was re-founded in Denmark, but attached to the Bailiwick.

The role of several sovereigns in supporting a revival or re-establishment of the Order of St John in their kingdoms led to former reigning sovereigns, their heirs or more often junior members of their families, being invited to support what turned out to be false Orders, pretending to the title. So in the case of Yugoslavia (where certain religious relics of the Order were taken during the Russian revolution), a junior prince of the family has assumed the title of grand master claiming his pseudo-order to be under the protection of the royal house. Other self-styled Orders have also claimed the same, basing this on an act by the late King Peter, made without advice in direct conflict with the constitutional powers of the king. Junior members of the imperial house of Russia, and more recently morganatic descendants with no claim to membership of the dynasty, have also been

persuaded to give their names in support of one or other self-styled Order, claiming a direct relationship with the long extinct Russian grand priories.

As a result of the proliferation of self-styled orders calling themselves “of St John” or “of Malta” and claiming the protection of certain royal house, the current Heads of those dynasties have felt compelled to issue statements denying these claims.

In the two cases mentioned above, Crown Prince Alexander of Yugoslavia and Serbia has written to deny that any Order of St John or Malta is under the protection of his royal house.

Grand Duchess Maria Wladimirovna of Russia has issued a clear statement, as head of the Imperial House condemning the so-called “Russian” grand priories and the late King Michael of Romania issued a statement in support of the legitimacy of the SMOM and denying the claims of a self-styled Order which had claimed him as “protector”.

Appendix I: HRH Crown Prince Alexander II of Serbia: official statement of recognition of the SMOM and Alliance Orders of St John (2023).¹



Statement by:
HRH Crown Prince Alexander II of Serbia
The Royal Palace
Belgrade 11000
Serbia

As Head of the Royal House of Serbia and Yugoslavia as the only son and heir of His late Majesty King Peter II of Yugoslavia, I hereby confirm that I recognise the legitimacy of the following chivalric institutions: the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta, with its Grand Magistry at 68 Via Condotti, Rome 00187, Italy and whose present Grand Master is (to be elected on 3 May) ; the Most Venerable Order of St John of Jerusalem, of which the Sovereign Head is His Majesty King Charles III of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland with its international headquarters at St John House, 3 Charterhouse Mews, London EC1M 6BB, United Kingdom; the Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem Bailiwick of Brandenburg (Johanniterorden), whose Herrenmeister is HRH Prince Oscar of Prussia and whose General-Secretariat is at Finckensteinallee 111, Berlin 12205, Germany; the Johanniter Orde in Nederlande, under the Protection of the Dutch Crown and whose Commandery headquarters are at Lange Voorhout 48, Den Haag 2514 EG, The Netherlands; and the Johanniterorden i Sverige, under the Protection of the Swedish Crown, and whose Commandery headquarters are at the Riddarhuset, Riddarhustorget 10, Stockholm 111 28, Sweden.

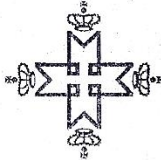
The royal authority and succession of Our royal house is defined in Chapter V of the Royal Yugoslav Constitution of 3 September 1931, by which my late father His Majesty King Peter II succeeded his father, King Alexander I, and by whose article 36 I became Crown Prince at my birth and succeeded my father as Head of the Royal House at his death on 3 November 1970. The requirements of Article 34 of the Constitution not having been fulfilled in regard to any acts that purported to accord the Protection of the Royal House of Serbia or Yugoslavia, to any charter or constitution of any so-called Order of St John or of Malta, I hereby confirm that no such Order is or ever was under the Protection of the Royal House of Yugoslavia and any claim to this effect is without merit or substance. I can also confirm that no member of the Royal House, as a Prince or Princess of Yugoslavia or Serbia, had or has any authority to act as grand master or hold any other office in such Orders or offer any protection to such in the name of Our royal house.

HRH Crown Prince Alexander

Belgrade 3 May 2023

THE ROYAL PALACE, BELGRADE, SERBIA
TELEPHONE: +381 11 306 4000 FAX: +381 11 306 4040
hrh@royal.rs www.royal.rs

Appendix II: HM the late King Michael I of Romania: official statement of recognition of the SMOM and condemnation of an "Order of St John" claiming to operate under his Protection (2010).²



To: His Most Eminent Highness Fra' Matthew Festing,
Prince and Grand Master of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of
St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta,
Most Humble Guardian of the Poor of Jesus Christ.

68 Via Condotti
00120 Roma
Italy

October 11, 2010

Dear Fra' Matthew,

I have been informed of the activities of some organisations which either claim to be related to the Sovereign Order, or allege to follow in one way or another in your Order's traditions and insignia.

I am writing in order to make it clear that I have always considered the Sovereign Military Order of Malta as the **only** institution which is subject to international law in this field, and the only repository of the noble and ancient traditions begun in the 11th Century.

I also wish to express my deepest appreciation for the humanitarian contribution which the Order makes to crises around the world, and for the personal kindness and consideration which the Order has shown towards myself, my wife Queen Anne and my daughter, Crown Princess Margarita. We cherish our Knighthood of the Order Pro Merito Melitensi, and will continue doing so.

If you deem fit, I have no objection to the circulation of this letter to any interested party, as proof of my enduring and exclusive support for the Order which you so admirably lead.

I remain, your Most Excellent Highness' good cousin,

Michael

Appendix III: HRH Alexander, Crown Prince of Yugoslavia: official statement of condemnation of an “Order of St John” claiming to operate under his Protection (2009).³

26 October 2009

Archivist, Senior Researcher Nils G. Bartholdy, M.A. The Danish National Archives
Rigsdagsgården 9
DK-1218 Copenhagen K Denmark

Dear Mr Bartholdy

It has been brought to my attention that an organisation claiming the protection of my Royal House has established a branch in Denmark.

As Head of the Royal House of Yugoslavia I wish to make it absolutely clear that I have never given my protection to any organisation claiming to be an Order of St John or to any organisation that styles itself “Sovereign Order”, “Ecumenical Order” or any other combination of such names associated with Malta or St John.

No member of my Royal House is authorised to represent him or herself as being able to act in the name of the Royal House of Yugoslavia and I have not authorised Prince Karl- Vladimir of Yugoslavia or any other member of my Royal House to give their protection or to be associated in any other way with an organisation calling itself an Order of St John, or for that matter any other Order. The laws of my Royal House do not permit a junior member of the House to assume the authority of the Head of the House so Prince Karl-Vladimir’s actions have no legal basis and are an abuse of his position.

I authorise you to place this letter in the Danish National Archives and other such official archives in which it should be retained.

I remain, Sir

Yours sincerely

Alexander, Crown Prince of Yugoslavia

Appendix IV: An Official Statement from the Chancellery of the Head of the Russian Imperial House, H.I.H. the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia, on the activities of organizations which falsely refer to themselves as the “Order of Malta”.⁴

The Chancellery of the Russian Imperial House occasionally receives inquiries from individuals and organizations about its relationship to groups that refer to themselves as the “Order of St John of Jerusalem,” including so called “Orthodox” and “Russian” “Orders of Malta,” “Priories,” “Commanderies,” and so on.

In each such instance, it is necessary to clarify that no one has the legal right to use modified names or symbols of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta (hereinafter referred to as the Sovereign Order of Malta), which has a unquestionable historical and legal continuity from the moment of its founding, and which is recognized as a sovereign entity under international law, and which maintains diplomatic relations with more than 100 States around the world.

The Orthodox Russian Grand Priory was founded by Emperor Paul I in 1798 and was abolished by Emperor Alexander I in 1817. Since then no legitimate authority has reestablished it. Local attempts to revive its activities on a legal basis have not been successful, and all “Orthodox Order of St John” organizations are illegitimate and offer a means of deception, including the trafficking in false “knighthoods.”

Unfortunately, sometimes members of ancient Russian noble families, some of whose ancestors were members of the genuine Sovereign Order of Malta, have taken part (presumably out of ignorance or carelessness) in the activities of some of these pseudo-Order of Malta organizations. This is especially regrettable because it discredits historic traditional values, and damages the good name of these ancient families and the reputations of their descendants in Russia and the world over.

Therefore, taking into account the long-standing historical and friendly relationship between the Russian Imperial House and the Sovereign Order of Malta, the Chancellery of the Head of the Russian Imperial House considers it necessary to provide the following detailed clarification of the legal and historical position of the Sovereign Order of Malta over the centuries.

The birth of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta dates back to 1048, when Merchants



from the ancient Marine Republic of Amalfi obtained from the Caliph of Egypt the authorisation to build a church and monastery in Jerusalem in honour of St John the Baptist and Forerunner of God. In 1070, the Order built a hospice and hospital at their monastery of St John for pilgrims coming to the Holy Land.

In 1113, during the tenure of the first Master, Blessed Gerard, Pope Paschal II placed the Order under the aegis of the Church, granting it the right freely to elect its superiors without interference from other lay or religious authorities. By virtue of the Papal Bull, the Hospital became a lay-religious order. The second Master, Raymond du Puy, transformed the originally monastic order into a religious military order. From this point on, the Order added a military role to its previous charitable and medical functions. Its members were divided into three categories: knights engaged in the military struggle to liberate the Lord's Sepulchre, chaplains who performed religious services, and the brethren who ministered to the needs of pilgrims, the sick, the wounded, and so on.

Gradually, the Order of St John, which enjoyed the special patronage of the Popes of Rome, grew in fame and became a wealthy and influential organization, owning properties in many Catholic countries of Europe. After the defeat of the Crusaders and the capture of Jerusalem in 1189 by Sultan Saladin, the seat of the Order of St John moved to Acre, then to Cyprus in 1291, and then to the island of Rhodes in 1310. The members of the Order were then called the Knights of Rhodes. They fought against the Turks but, in the end, in 1522, during the tenure of Grand Master Philippe de Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, the knights were driven from Rhodes after a long and stubborn resistance against Sultan Suleiman II.

In 1530, Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and King of Spain, gave the islands of Malta, Comino and Gozo to the Order of St John. Since then, the members of the Order began to be called Knights of Malta, a name they continue to be known by to this day.

During the Reformation, the Sovereign Order of Malta lost its possessions in those countries that adopted various forms of Protestantism (England, the Netherlands, and the nations of Scandinavia). But the greatest blow that fate delivered to the Sovereign Order of Malta was the loss of its citadel — the islands of Malta — and the threat to its very existence during the French Revolution and the subsequent revolutionary and Napoleonic wars in Europe. It was at this difficult moment that the Sovereign Order of Malta received life-sustaining support from the Russian Empire.



Relations between the Knights of Malta and Russia existed even before the accession to the throne of the House of Romanoff, and diplomatic ties between Russia and the Order were established during the reign of Peter I the Great.

The first contact between the two was in 1697, when the courtier (*stol'nik*) P.A. Tolstoi visited Malta to offer his congratulations to the newly-elected Grand Master, Ramon Perellos y Roccaful. In 1698, on instructions from Tsar Peter I, the boyar B.P. Sheremetev travelled through Europe in an attempt to form an alliance of Christian states against the Ottoman Empire, visiting Pope Innocent XII; the Doge of Venice, Silvestro Valiero; and other rulers, including Ramon Perellos y Roccaful of the Sovereign Order of Malta, who twice received Sheremetev in audience. In recognition of his respect for Russia, the Grand Master presented the tsar's emissary with a diamond encrusted insignia of the Order of Malta, and so B.P. Sheremetev became the first Russian Orthodox honorary knight of the Roman Catholic Order of Malta.

Since then, diplomatic relations between the Russian Empire and the Sovereign Order of Malta were maintained and continued to evolve. During the reign of Catherine II the Great, a military alliance was formed, though there were never at that time any directly coordinated military operations. Even so, Russian sailors trained on the Sovereign Order of Malta's ships, and several knights of the Order volunteered to enter Russian service. Among these volunteers was the famous Count Giulio de Litta, who rose to the rank of a Russian Vice-Admiral and was awarded the Russian Order of St George IV Class.

It was Count de Litta who led the Sovereign Order of Malta's negotiations with Russia during the reign of Emperor Paul I, who ascended the throne after the death of his mother in 1796. Europe at that time was being rocked by war, which had broken out after the French Revolution in 1789. In 1792, the French National Convention deprived the Order of its properties inside France, which greatly depleted the Order's resources. The knights of the Order turned to Russia for protection and patronage. In turn, the Emperor Paul I, who was enchanted by the romance of the chivalric order, became interested in the idea of creating out of the Sovereign Order of Malta an outpost of Christian civilization in Europe, which would stand in opposition to the spread of anti-Christian revolution. Filled with these lofty ideals, Paul I enthusiastically agreed to become the Order's patron.

Originally, the idea was to create Priories in the Russian Empire to provide financial support for the Order, and to name the Russian



emperor the patron of the Sovereign Order of Malta. In January 1797, a convention containing these provisions was signed.

When, in 1798, the revolutionary army of France under the command of General Napoleon Bonaparte seized the island of Malta, Emperor Paul I was extremely outraged and offended. Given these circumstances, Paul I ordered the Russian naval squadron in the Mediterranean Sea, which was commanded by Admiral St Feodor Feodorovich Ushakov, to “act in concert with the Turks and the English against the French, who are a violent race, and who have exterminated within the boundaries of their nation the Christian Faith and all laws established by God.” In this way, there arose the paradoxical situation where the defence of the Catholic Order of Malta was taken up, at least on the level of pleas and exhortations, by Russian Orthodox, English Protestants, and Muslim Turks, the last of these being most extraordinary given the fact that the Knights of Malta had for so many centuries fought against them.

Meanwhile, the Knights of Malta deposed Ferdinand von Hompesch zu Bolheim, who had been ineffective as the Grand Master of the Order, and they decided on October 27, 1798, to recognize Paul I not only as Protector of the Order, but as its 72nd Grand Master.

Strictly speaking, the election of the Orthodox and married Emperor Paul I as Grand Master of a Catholic Order, and the creation of an Orthodox Priory, contradict the Charter of the Order, which could be modified only with the approval of the Pope of Rome. These actions thus violated both the Order’s own internal laws and international law, and were only possible because of the extraordinary circumstances of a Europe that was plagued by revolution and war.

Of course, these acts were entirely legal in the Russian Empire inasmuch as the Emperor holds the Supreme Power and is the very source of law. However, in order for the Sovereign Order of Malta to be able to continue its mission in the global arena, all these decisions had to be later recognized as legal on an international level.

It is possible that, through persistent diplomatic efforts, this international recognition would have been obtained in time, if not for the tragic death of Paul I and the subsequent reversal of his policy on the Sovereign Order of Malta by his son and successor, Emperor Alexander I.

In any case, Count Giulio de Litta was unable to convince Pope Pius VI and his advisors to recognize Emperor Paul I as Grand Master. The next Pope, Pius VII, who was elected in 1800, also refused to recognize Paul I’s election as Grand Master.



Nevertheless, on November 13, 1798, Emperor Paul I accepted the position of Grand Master, and on November 29, 1798, he added the Order of Malta to the Chapter of Russian Orders of Chivalry. Moreover, the insignia of the Order became part of Russia's State symbols and began to be depicted on the State Coat of Arms and State Seal. Paul I intended to make the title of Grand Master hereditary in his own House, and he included it in the list of his full titles as Emperor of Russia.

Both Russian Priorities of the Order — the Orthodox and Catholic ones — received significant properties in Russia, the incomes from which went to supporting the Order's various activities. With the permission of the Emperor, the knights were permitted to establish noble (that is, hereditary) commanderies, the founders of which and their heirs were required to pay a tithe to the treasury of the Order. Persons not of the required ancient noble ancestry could become honorary commanders and knights of the Order, and others of common birth could be received as Donats.

For a short period, the Order of Malta became the most prestigious order in the Russian Empire. But on March 11, 1801, Emperor Paul I fell victim to a conspiracy and was murdered. His son, Alexander I, issued a Manifesto on March 16, 1801, in which he took on the title of Protector of the Order and gave his permission for St Petersburg to be the "main headquarters of the Sovereign Order of Malta until such time as circumstances permit the selection of a Grand Master in accordance with its ancient statutes and decrees" [*Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*, hereafter PSZ, № 17794]. The notion of a hereditary Grand Master was immediately rejected by the new Emperor. The insignia of the Order of Malta were quickly removed from the State symbols of the Russian Empire [see the Imperial decree "Concerning the use of the State Coat of Arms without the Cross of the Order of St John of Jerusalem," in PSZ, № 19850]. In an effort to resolve the issues with the Order in Russia as quickly as possible, Emperor Alexander I insisted that, if the election of a new Grand Master could not be conducted fully in accord with the Order's "ancient statutes and decrees," then the Pope would decide who the next Grand Master would be. In 1803, Pope Pius VII appointed Giovanni Battista Tommasi as Grand Master. That same year, Emperor Alexander I resigned as Protector of the Sovereign Order of Malta.

On February 26, 1810, Emperor Alexander I stripped the Order of Malta of its wealth and palace in Russia [see the Imperial decree to General-Field Marshall Count N.I. Saltykov "Concerning the disposition of funds of the Order of St John of Jerusalem," in PSZ, № 24134]. In essence, it was



then, in 1810, that one can consider the Russian Orthodox Priory and generally of all activity of the Sovereign Order of Malta in the Russian Empire to have ended. Later decrees concerning Emperor Paul I's abandoned "Maltese project" merely follow up on or clarify decisions about the Order that had been made earlier.

On November 20, 1811, by a decree issued by the Senate entitled "Concerning the noble estates of family in the Commandery of the Order of St John of Jerusalem," the noble (hereditary) Commandery was abolished [see PSZ, № 24882]. On January 20, 1817, a Policy Statement by the Council of Ministers, which was approved by the Emperor, entitled "Concerning the disallowance of those who have received the Order of St John of Jerusalem at the present time to wear said Order" [PSZ, № 26626] set forth the final terms under which the Sovereign Order of Malta would exist in the Russian Empire. Honorary knights and commanders of the Sovereign Order of Malta, who had received this honour previously, would not be deprived of membership of the Order, but it was also clarified that "after the death of commanders of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, their heirs will not inherit membership in the Order and will not wear its insignia, inasmuch as the Order no longer exists in the Russian Empire." Henceforth, the Sovereign Order of Malta was viewed in Russia as an exclusively foreign Order. Eventually, subjects of the Russian Empire who were knights of the Order of Malta "at the present time" were no longer allowed even to wear its insignia.

As for the history of the Sovereign Order of Malta subsequently, events developed in the following way:

After the death of Giovanni Battista Tommasi in 1805, the Knights of Malta attempted to elect their next Grand Master. But Giuseppe Caracciolo, who had been elected Grand Master by the knights, was not confirmed by Pope Pius VII and was therefore not recognized as Grand Master, even on a *de facto* level. In 1805, Pius VII appointed Innico Maria Guevara-Suardo as Lieutenant of the Order. Lieutenants, rather than Grand Masters, governed the Order until 1879, when Lieutenant Giovanni Battista Ceschi a Santa Croce was confirmed as Grand Master by Pope Leo XIII.

Attempts by the Sovereign Order of Malta to return to Malta after the collapse of Napoleonic France were unsuccessful. The island was handed over to England by the Congress of Vienna in 1815.

However, despite all the blows of fate that struck it in the 18th and 19th centuries, the Sovereign Order of Malta preserved its sovereign rights and was recognized as an entity under international law by the



Congresses of the Holy Alliance in Aachen (1818) and Verona (1822), and was also recognized as such in numerous other international treaties.

In the 19th century, the Order settled in Rome (in 1834, in the Magistral Palace on the Via Condotti) and came to include four Priories: Rome, Venice, Naples, and Prague.

Relations between the Sovereign Order of Malta and the Russian Empire up until the revolution of 1917 were friendly and mutually respectful. Emperors Alexander I, Nicholas I, Alexander III, and Nicholas II were all Bailiffs Grand Cross of Honour and Devotion of the Order of Malta. Emperor Alexander II was the only Russian monarch of the 19th century who was not a knight of the Order of Malta, but with his permission, his heir — Tsesarevich and Grand Duke Alexander Alexandrovich, the future Alexander III (in December 1875) — and then two of his other sons — Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich and Pavel Alexandrovich (in February 1881) — were made knights of the Order of Malta. In February 1891, with the permission of Emperor Alexander III, the Tsesarevich and Grand Duke Nicholas Alexandrovich, the future Holy Royal Passion-Bearer Emperor Nicholas II, was made a Bailiff Grand Cross of Honour and Devotion. In April 1896, the Holy Royal Passion-Bearer Empress Alexandra Feodorovna was made a Dame Grand Cross of Honour and Devotion.

In accepting the title of Bailiff of the Order of Malta, the Russian Emperors wholly recognized the legitimate continuity and all the historical rights of the Sovereign Order of Malta.

After the revolution of 1917, relations between the exiled Russian Imperial House and the Order of Malta was for a time necessarily carried out through semi-official and personal correspondence and face-to-face contacts. Full and official relations were restored by H.I.H. Grand Duke Wladimir Kirillovich, the Head of the Russian Imperial House, and Grand Master Angelo de Mojana di Cologna, who headed the Sovereign Order of Malta from 1962 to 1988.

In 1961, Grand Master Angelo de Mojana di Cologna revived the tradition of elevating the Heads of the Russian Imperial House to the rank of Bailiff Grand Cross of Honour and Devotion of the Sovereign Order of Malta. Grand Duke Wladimir Kirillovich accepted the title of Bailiff, and his wife, Grand Duchess Leonida Georgievna, accepted the title Dame Grand Cross of Merit. In 1963, Grand Master Angelo de Mojana di Cologna was awarded the highest Russian order of chivalry, the Imperial Order of St Andrew the First-Called.



In 1994, there was a symbolic exchange of honours between Grand Master Andrew Bertie, who led the Sovereign Order of Malta from 1988 to 2008, and the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia, who inherited the rights and responsibilities of Head of the Russian Imperial House on the death of her father in 1992. The Grand Master became a knight of the Imperial Order of St Andrew the First-Called, and the Grand Duchess became a Dame Grand Cross of Honour and Devotion of the Sovereign Order of Malta.

On April 3, 2014, the Head of the Russian Imperial House, H.I.H. Grand Duchess Maria of Russia, and her son and heir, H.I.H. the Tsesarevich and Grand Duke George of Russia, met in Rome at the Magistral Palace with Grand Master Matthew Festing, who has led the Sovereign Order of Malta since the passing of Andrew Bertie in 2008. The Grand Duchess awarded him the Imperial Order of St Andrew the First-Called, and the Grand Master made Grand Duke George of Russia a Bailiff Grand Cross of Honour and Devotion.

Of course, the cooperation between the Russian Imperial House and the Sovereign Order of Malta is not limited to ceremonial indications of mutual honor and recognition. As far back as the 1990s, the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia and Grand Duchess Leonida Georgievna were able to offer substantial charitable aid to medical institutions in Russia thanks to the assistance of the Sovereign Order of Malta.

Collaboration between the House of Romanoff and the Sovereign Order of Malta on a range of charitable endeavours continues to grow and evolve today.

As for the Russian Orthodox Grand Priory, it existed only for a few years and ceased entirely to exist during the reign of Emperor Alexander I. There were some residual hints in court ceremonies of a “Maltese” presence in Russia, including the red liveries at the Imperial Court and the miniature Maltese Cross worn by the graduates of the Corps des Pages academy, which was located in the Vorontsov Palace, which had been confiscated from the Order of Malta in 1810 — none of which constitutes “proof” of an on-going “hidden” or “secret” continuation of the former Orthodox Priory of the Order of Malta. Some writers who attempt to make a case for the continuation of the Order of Malta in Russia fail to distinguish between the Commander’s Cross of the Order of Malta and the Prussian Order “Pour le Mérite.” They present photographs of Emperor Alexander II wearing the “Pour le Mérite” as proof of their fantastical theories of the “continuation of the Russian Orthodox Grand Priory” — Alexander II, who was the only emperor after Paul I who was not a member of the Order of Malta!



A Public Policy Statement from the Council of Ministers, affirmed by the Emperor and dated January 20, 1817, clearly states that the Order of Malta “does not exist in Russia” [PSZ, № 26626]. However, after the revolution of 1917, there was an attempt by Russian emigrants to revive the Orthodox Chapter of the Order of Malta that had been abolished over a century earlier. Several descendants of the (formerly) hereditary noble Commanders — all members of Russian aristocratic families — sought to restore the Orthodox Russian Grand Priory, citing their desire to take “actions founded on self-denial and sacrifice.” They sought approval not from the Head of the Russian Imperial House, the Emperor-in-Exile Kirill I, and not even from the Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich, who was recognized as a political “leader” by a certain part of the Russian emigration, but from a member of the most junior branch of the House of Romanoff, Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich, who was asked to take the life-long title of “Grand Prior of Russia”, and to take steps to resurrect the “Russian Grand Priory.”

Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich was favourably disposed to this undertaking, but refrained from taking the title “Grand Prior” and limited himself only to offering his patronage to the newly-formed organization. The Orthodox Priory of the Order of Malta displayed discretion, naming their association not the “Russian Grand Priory” (as they had originally proposed to do), but the “Russian Philanthropic Association of the Descendants of the Hereditary Commanders of the Sovereign Order of Malta.” As this name implies, the members of this organization were not claiming to be “hereditary Commanders” themselves, and understood that, without the approval of the Sovereign Order of Malta, they could only become a purely memorial association of descendants of Commanders, and not themselves be Commanders of a “Orthodox Russian Grand Priory.” They did not claim to be Knights of Malta. In 1929, the members of the “Russian Philanthropic Association of the Descendants of the Hereditary Commanders of the Sovereign Order of Malta” worked through Baron M. Taube to attempt to “obtain the permission of the Grand Master of the Sovereign Order of Malta in Rome to recreate the Russian branch of the said Order” [Letter of September 29, 1929, from Baron M. Taube].

In response to this request, the Secretary of the Sovereign Order of Malta, Baron Bistrem, on instructions from Grand Master Ludovico Chigi Albani della Rovere, in a letter dated February 13, 1932, unequivocally rejected the idea, emphasizing that members of the Sovereign Order of Malta must belong to the Roman Catholic Church.

As a historical memorial association of descendants, the “Russian Philanthropic Association of the Descendants of the Hereditary



Commanders of the Sovereign Order of Malta" had every right to exist, and it enjoyed the support of Grand Duke Andrei Wladimirovich, who became the organization's patron after the death of Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich in 1933, and later, the support of the Head of the Russian Imperial House, H.I.H. the Grand Duke Wladimir Kirillovich. The Sovereign Order of Malta itself also had a positive relationship with the descendants of Russian Orthodox Commanders of the Order, as organized as "Russian Philanthropic Association of the Descendants of the Hereditary Commanders of the Sovereign Order of Malta." The Secretary of the Union of Noble Descendants of Commanders, Iu.S. Rtishev, even was made a Knight of Honour and Devotion, and so became a member of the Sovereign Order of Malta.

Unfortunately, in 1973 the formerly measured and entirely reasonable position of the "Union of Descendants of the Hereditary Commanders and Knights of the Grand Priory of the Russian Order of Malta" were abandoned. Count N.A. Bobrinskii, who was living in the USA in the 1970s, formed an association called the "Sovereign Order of the Orthodox Knights-Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem," and began calling himself "Grand Prior." The Head of the Russian Imperial House, H.I.H. the Grand Duke Wladimir Kirillovich, did not approve this action. The Grand Duke's position did not disturb the members of this new organization, who had embarked on a completely new and arbitrary course of fiction that led them away from the historical Order of Malta. A "Protector" for this new organization was found in the person of Prince-of-the-Imperial-Blood Andrei Alexandrovich, a member of the most junior branch of the House of Romanoff who then was not on good terms with the lawful Head of the Dynasty. After his death, Prince Andrei Alexandrovich's younger brother, Prince-of-the-Imperial-Blood Vasilii Alexandrovich, became the new "Protector." And when Prince Vasilii died, Andrei Alexandrovich's son, Mikhail Andreevich Romanoff (who was born of Prince Andrei's morganatic marriage with Elisabetta von Frederici, born Princess Ruffo), became the organization's "Protector."

The so-called "Sovereign Order of the Orthodox Knights-Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem" has never had any continuity with the Orthodox Russian Grand Priory, which was abolished more than 150 years earlier by Emperor Alexander I. This alleged "revival" received no sanction from either the Grand Master of the Sovereign Order of Malta, or from the Head of the Russian Imperial House. The so-called "Protectors" of this organization after its re-founding in the 1970s were not individuals who by right could have held the position of Protectors of the Order of Malta; instead, they were simply the first people who, out of a careless disregard for the historical facts, agreed to participate in this illegitimate enterprise out of ambition and the need for money.

Soon a whole gallery of exotic organizations appeared all calling themselves the “Russian Order of Malta.” At best, these were fanciful mock associations, and at worst, fraudulent societies trading in false “passports of the Sovereign Order of Malta,” false “knighthoods,” and other fraudulent “activities.” Particularly harmful have been those cases when the names and emblems of the Sovereign Order of Malta have been exploited for financial gain and political purposes, especially when dishonourable and irresponsible persons, claiming themselves to be representatives of the Order, have interfered in internal political conflicts in various countries. Unfortunately, the activities of these fraudulent “Orders of Malta” have sometimes led to ill feelings toward the genuine Sovereign Order of Malta, which has complicated its important and vast charitable activities around the globe. The Sovereign Order of Malta avoids assiduously any politicization of its activities and enjoys and deserves the respect it has earned from governments, traditional religious groups, royal dynasties, and other reputable historical institutions.

In conclusion, the following points should be emphasized:

1. The founding of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta occurred before the formal schism of the Church into the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church in 1054, but all of its history and activities are connected with the Roman Catholic Church. Pope Paschal II formally recognized the Order and placed it under his protection in 1113. In this way, the Sovereign Order of Malta has always been and remains a Catholic Order. All assertions that the Order of Malta is “non-denominational” and “inter-confessional,” or that it is “Masonic” and so on, are absurd and do not stand up to scrutiny.

2. Emperor Paul I of Russia was elected to the position of Grand Master at the most critical moment in the history of the Order of Malta. He saved it from destruction and sought to make it not only an Order of Chivalry of the Russian Empire, but also an influential global force in the struggle for the values of Christian civilization that are common to Orthodox and Catholics. That election, however, never received the necessary legal confirmation on an international level. Some violations of procedures in his election (for example, the inability of a large number of electors to participate in the election, as required by the Statute of the Order) could be considered insignificant and not affecting the legitimacy of the outcome of the election, especially in view of the extreme situation in a Europe that was then being torn apart by revolution and war. Even so, the lack of any formal



recognition of the legality of the election of Paul I by Pope Pius VI and Pius VII makes it impossible to consider him Grand Master *de jure*. He is properly honoured as the Protector of the Order and as *de facto* Grand Master only.

3. The Orthodox Grand Priory of Russia, and the activities of the Order of Malta inside the Russian Empire, were entirely abolished in 1817 by Emperor Alexander I, and there has not been any legitimate restoration.

4. Attempts by descendants of the Russian Orthodox Noble (hereditary) Commanders of the Order of Malta to revive the "Orthodox Grand Priory of Russia" after 1917 have not been successful. The historical memorial association that was established after the Russian Revolution was formed legitimately and for a time even enjoyed the support of the Russian Imperial House and the Sovereign Order of Malta. However, unauthorized actions by this organization in the 1970s deprived it of recognition from the House of Romanoff and the Sovereign Order of Malta.

5. All so-called "Orthodox" and other false "Orders of Malta" are, at best, a kind of childish game and, at worst, a source of fraud and political provocation. The philanthropic slogans of such organizations serve only as a cover for harmful activities. Belonging to a false order conveys no rights or duties of any sort, and certainly none of the rights or duties belonging to genuine knights of the Sovereign Order of Malta.

6. Protestant Orders of St John (in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Great Britain) share the same historic tradition and the same mission of the Sovereign Order of Malta: giving assistance to the sick and the poor. These four orders have gained recognition by virtue of their having been instituted by the legitimate hereditary sovereigns of these nations, and by the subsequent recognition of them by the Sovereign Order of Malta. There is no possible comparison between these Protestant Orders of St John and the clearly false "Orthodox Orders of Malta."

7. Any person who elects to enter one of the false "Orders of Malta" or who supports any contact with them, risks becoming a victim of deception and of suffering reputation or financial loss.

All questions relating to the legitimate Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta, which maintains formal and friendly relations with the Russian Imperial House, should be directed to the following address:

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A.N. Zakatov

Director of Chancellery of H.I.H.

Moscow

April 30, 2014.

¹ Letter supplied by author.

² Letter supplied by author.

³ Letter supplied by author.

⁴ A.N. Zakatov, Director of Chancellery of HIH, 'An official statement from the Chancellery of the Head of the Russian Imperial House, HIH the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia, on the activities of organizations which falsely refer to themselves as the "Order of Malta"' (Moscow, 16 July 2014) @ <http://imperialhouse.ru/en/interest/interest.html> (accessed 4 July 2020).



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