

Provincial Priory of London

*K*nighly *T*opics



Issue 9

Spring 2005

The Provincial Prior's Address 2004

This past year has seen some good times and inevitably some sad times. Earlier we paid our respects to those Brother Knights of this Province who have passed on and for a minute or two we were silent and held them in our thoughts.

I have mourned the passing of those Knights – they have all been known to me in some capacity or other – but perhaps you will allow me to refer especially to three Brother Knights who were particularly close to me in their support and advice over many years.

I refer to Tim Stock of the Public Schools Preceptory. Tim was a constant friend. He was a quiet but high ranking member of all the Orders but especially in the Craft and his Masonic knowledge was very extensive. He supported all the London Provinces whatever the Order.

I next refer to John Tuckey the Great Marshal for many years. John could be abrasive at times and indeed he and I did not get off to the best of starts in our relationship. But we soon overcame that.

We had many early morning telephone conversations and some were full and frank. But I could never forget his wonderful love of masonry and especially of this Order. His desire to do things properly never waned and I know that with his passing I have lost a trusted and loyal friend as have my fellow Priors and others.

And there was also Ernie Bond, father of the Bodyguard Preceptory and friend and mentor in Templar masonry to so many of us. They will all be greatly missed.

Today I have invested thirty six Knights. I wish them all well in whatever they want to do or achieve with their new status.

After some discussion with our new Marshal, I have decided that the new Provincial Officers will be offered the opportunity to join the Sub Prior and myself on our Official Visits.

The Marshal will consider a scheme and administer the details.

In the Great Priory held at Birmingham earlier in the year six Knights of this Province received a first Great Rank from the hands of our Most Eminent and Supreme Grand Master and five received well earned promotions.

Among those receiving promotion was V Em Kt Christian Pajolec who was promoted to the rank of Past Second Constable perhaps in recognition of his work in assisting the formation of the new Great Priory of France. Also among those who received a promotion was Dick Fogwill, our Bodyguard Commander, this year holding the active rank of Great Herald.

I also want to mention Bob Upton for his work as Marshal and before that as Deputy. Bob is now our First Constable as a reward for all his efforts on our behalf and I thank him most sincerely and wish him well in his Masonic work in Belgium.

Our new Marshal is Philip Brown and his team of four are all former members of our Bodyguard.

This Provincial Priory works quietly without drama and it works well to the benefit of all the members. All the Preceptories have made progress during the year and our smallest Preceptory who suffered cruel misfortune a year or two ago has now taken Candidates and has more to install in the coming year. I am so proud of them for taking their future into their own hands.

Brother Knights, keep faith in your God, keep faith in your Order and pray for peace in the World and good will overcome the forces of evil. I am sure of it.

Rt Em Kt Alfred John Day

The Hospitallers and Arab Medicine

*Louis Cattan, a member of a Paris and a London Preceptory,
researched and wrote this paper*

Around 1048 a group of Amalfi merchants from the Kingdom of Naples, who traded extensively with the Arab world, obtained from the Caliph of Egypt, the then Sovereign of Jerusalem, a concession to establish in the Christian part of Jerusalem, a hospital to treat Christian pilgrims. This was established on the site of the home of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, and the hospital was soon dedicated to John the Baptist. The monks who ran the hospital were dressed in black and wore the eight pronged white cross inspired from the Phoenician divinity Tanit. It was easily recognised by the local population and the design is still engraved on a stele existing in Lebanon. When the Crusaders arrived in Jerusalem in 1099, the brotherhood rendered great service to them and they were generously rewarded by Godefroy de Bouillon and his brother Baudoin.

In 1113 the Hospitallers were established by Pope Pascal II. It is obvious that the first monks met Arab physicians who were the most sophisticated medical practitioners of their time and well acquainted with experimental methods. Clinical and therapeutic works written in Arabic and translated into Latin found their way in Europe's best medical schools.

The massive and authoritative Canon of Medicine by Ibn Sina (Avicenna: 980 – 1037) was translated in the 12th century and served as the standard textbook for medical training in European Universities well into the 18th century.

The medical knowledge of the Hospitallers was much enriched by contact with Arab doctors during the two centuries they spent in the Holy Land. The Hospitallers were innovative beyond their time: the use of individual beds unlike Europe where the sick were kept two to a bed and heavy curtains used to isolate the beds. The sick received a sheet, changed thrice weekly, a blanket, a cloak and a pair of slippers. Preventive measures were also taken on admission to hospital, the sick had to take a bath to reduce the risk of contagion and some were isolated. Such customs were little used in Europe.

Arab Physicians of the middle Ages discovered the virtues of the parasitic plant *Cynomorium coccineum* called Tarthuth in popular Arabic. Medieval Europeans called it Fungus Melitensis –Maltese Mushroom or Malta Fungus. The plant is found growing, usually ignored nowadays, in a wide swath that extends from southern Portugal and Spain across the Mediterranean region including North Africa.

Tarthuth is a highly specialized parasite with some fungus-like properties. It grows underground for most of the year feeding on the roots of saltbushes and other salt-tolerant plants. During the winter rain its extensive root system shoots fleshy red stems up through the sand and into the open air. The plant has no green colour because it is a parasite and thus needs no chlorophyll to feed itself. The leafless spikes, fully grown, range in height from about 15 to 30 centimetres. The spikes have tiny

scarlet flowers so small that they can hardly be seen individually. Tightly packed and scale-like, they look something like coarse fur. Pollinated by flies attracted by the plant's sweetish, somewhat cabbage-like aroma, the flowers eventually wither and the spike turns black.

Arab Physicians of the middle Ages considered tarthuth as "the treasure of drugs" because it had a wealth of traditional therapeutic uses, particularly as a remedy for blood disorders, digestive ailments and reproductive problems including impotence and infertility. The great early philosopher of the Arabs, the polymath Al-Kindi (800-870) compiled a medical formulary that mentions tarthuth as the main ingredient of a salve used to relieve acute itching. Al-Razi (865-925), known to Europeans as Rhazes and one of the most influential of all Arab physicians, prescribed tarthuth as a remedy for haemorrhoids as well as for nasal and uterine bleeding. The medicinal uses of tarthuth are also cited by several other respected physicians of the time. It even was used as a key ingredient in several antidotes to poison.

It was in Palestine that the monks of St. John of Jerusalem, first learned of tarthuth from their Arab counterparts and began using the plant in their treatments. When the Knights settled in Malta, they discovered a supply on the West Coast of Gozo growing on an irregular block of limestone rising from the sea, some 180 metres long and 60 metres high with a flattish, sloping top and sheer cliffs on all sides. Today,

this limestone is called Fungus Rock. On orders from the Grand Master, the Knights quickly took control of it, placed guards on the mainland and barred access to any but their own. They hacked all hedges from the sides of the islet to keep people from climbing the cliffs. Trespassers who attempted it anyway were sent to the galleys, thieves who managed to steal the mushrooms were reportedly put to death. In the 16th century tarthuth became the closely guarded treasure of the Knights Hospitaller in Malta.

Maltese Mushrooms were under the personal control of the Grand Master. The only way to reach the island's top was by a primitive and precarious cable-car rigged on ropes and pulleys and connected to

poles on the mainland. The knights harvested the precious plant each year and stored it in a watchtower on the mainland. The structure, Debra Tower, was built in 1651 to guard Fungus Rock and protect the island of Gozo from pirate raids. Once harvested, the Maltese Mushroom spikes were dried, pul-

1565, Jean Parisot de la Valette, wounded during the siege by Ottoman forces, had his wounds dressed with Maltese Mushrooms. The Grand Master recovered and returned to lead his troops to Victory against Soliman the Magnificent.

The Knights Hospitaller held Malta until 1798 when they surrendered to Napoleon. As the order lost its military mission, the Maltese Mushroom faded from therapeutic use in Europe. By the 1800's, the old herbal remedies of the Middle East - plant extracts known as galenicals - were largely eclipsed in the West by new mineral based drug treatments

Since 1992 Fungus Rock has been designated as a nature reserve. The mushroom survives drawing its nourishment

Fungus Rock - Gozo

verised and preserved in various liquids. Historians recount that in



Letters - The Temple

The article by Kt. John Barden outlining the history of the Temple Churches in London was extremely interesting, providing much information which was new to me. Perhaps he will forgive me for making a few comments about the present building.

In the round Church, the bases of six original pillars are clearly visible. These once supported a central platform, like that over the grotto beneath the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. (Just outside Segovia in Spain there is a well preserved Temple Church with the central platform still intact which is well worth a visit). The

original altar was on top of the platform and it was there that the services were held. Those performing vigils, prior to installation as a Knight, spent the night kneeling in prayer on this platform. Legend has it that this platform served another purpose, enabling knights taking communion prior to warfare to ride round the central platform and receive it without dismounting; no doubt the high western doors assisted in this. The large choir in which the services are now held is a comparatively modern addition. To this day the incumbent priest is still titled The Master of the Temple.

The present Church is a 'peculiar'; the

Parish Church being situated on the opposite side of Fleet Street. Hence no weddings, funerals, etc., can be conducted in the Temple Church without the express permission of the Parish Church. Similarly any such services are generally restricted to the modern occupants of the Inns.

Recently for several years the Temple Church has been used by the Grand Priory of England and Wales of the Military and Hospitaller Order of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem for its Autumn Investiture

With all best wishes.

Yours in the Bonds of the Order

Letters - Gift of Knights

I hope the Provincial Prior enjoys the gift of the two pewter figures pictured in the current edition of Knightly Topics. I have a pair of these myself and I thought the Knights might be interested in learning a little more about them.

On the left, with the conical helm, is William Wallace leaning on his Great Sword (Clay Mor). On the right, with the crowned helm, is Robert the Bruce. The originals, which are larger than life, stand in niches either side of the drawbridge at Edinburgh Castle. These were probably made in the mid Victorian period and date from the rekindling of interest in all things Scottish sparked when Prince Albert bought Balmoral and began holidaying in Scotland and wearing Tartan. This interest was further stimulated by the writings of Sir Walter Scott.

Despite Mel Gibson's film portrayal of

Wallace as a kilted wode-painted Highlander, Wallace was in fact a Lowlander. Born in Elderslie about two miles from the Clyde and about twelve miles from Glasgow. Wallace was a younger son of a minor knight.

Wallace was a supreme guerrilla fighter and fought for Scottish freedom against terrific odds. At the time, most Scottish Lords held English lands as well as Scottish seats. As the line of a popular song puts it "*they were Bought and Sold for English Gold*". Having no lands Wallace could not be bought and could not be subdued. In the end those Scottish Lords were to betray him to the English. He was tried in Westminster Hall and executed at Smithfield. Ironically he was found guilty of treason, which as a Scot and therefore a foreigner, was one crime he could not have committed

Robert the Bruce, or *De Bruce* was of

French descent. His London home Bruce Castle is in north Tottenham, though later rebuilt it still stands and, being used as an archive and museum, is open to the public. Bruce had problems with his neighbours, notably a feud with the De Bohan family who lived about four miles away near Southgate. Early on the morning of the battle of Bannockburn, Bruce was reviewing the battlefield. Dressed in his mail and mounted on a pony he encountered a fully armoured De Bohan who set his lance in rest and charged. The more nimble pony avoided the war-horse and standing up in the stirrups Bruce clove De Bohan's helm and head to the shoulders. His comment afterwards, "I have ruined my good axe!"

The figures are therefore Scotland's greatest hero and most famous King. Regrettably neither were Templars.

Best Wishes



Dates to Meet - 2005

Great Priory (Temple)	Wednesday 18 May
Londinium Preceptory	Friday 1 July
Provincial Priory (Temple)	Thursday 29 September
Great Priory (Malta)	Tuesday 15 November

Contact List

This list is to enable you to contact the correct person for any query you may have:

Provincial matters, rules etc	Mike Fox, Prov Vice Chancellor	01322 864 299
Provincial finance	Glyn Hughes, Prov Treasurer	01923823395
Provincial Priory history	Simon Brookman, Prov Archivist	07970 951 371
Regalia	George Hodge, Prov Registrar	0118 973 0966