

Provincial Priory of London

*K*nighly *T*opics



Issue 24

Autumn 2012

Inside this issue

<i>Provincial Priory Changes 1</i>	
<i>In case you missed it the first time</i>	2
<i>Guide to Sword Drill Part 2</i>	3-5
<i>The rise and fall of the Knights of St John</i>	6-8
<i>Diary Dates</i>	8
<i>Contacts</i>	8

Editorial

Bro Knights

I must apologise for the last issue which should have been distributed early in the year but technical difficulties in uploading prevented it. I hope this issue goes out on time. Concerning this a grand article is on page 6 by Stuart Henderson, a raconteur by anyone's standards - the subject is on Knights of Malta. Following on from the last issue we have the second part of our guide to sword drill. We also continue our series of re-publishing previous articles. Enjoy!

*George Hodge
Ithaca, Warren Lane
Finchampstead,
Wokingham,
Berkshire, RG40 4HS
Tel: 0118 973 0966
gehodge@btinternet.com*

Changes at the Top

As reported in Breaking News in the last issue of Knightly Topics Our Provincial Prior Rt E Kt Edwin Bryant Goodwin, has decided to relinquish the Office of Provincial Prior and his resignation will take effect from the end of September 2012.

The Most Excellent and Supreme Grand Master has invited V E Kt Michael C Fox, Provincial Sub-Prior of the Province of London, to be the next Provincial Prior. Mike has accepted and until he is installed as the Provincial Prior for the Province of London in October, he is the Provincial Prior Nominate.

Rt E Kt Eddie Goodwin remains the Provincial Prior for the period to the end of September 2012 and communications normally sent direct to the Provincial Prior should continue to be addressed to him. V E Kt Michael Fox, acting in his capacity as Provincial Prior Nominate and in consultations with the Knights concerned, intends to make the following Provincial Appointments for the Provincial Year 2012-2013 with effect from the Provincial Priory Meeting on Monday 1st October 2012:

As Provincial Sub-Prior: E Kt Victor Lawrence Parnis, P.Dep.Gt.SwdB.

As Provincial Vice-Chancellor: E Kt Roger Alfred William Farley, P.Gt.A-de-C.



E Kt Roger Farley

Please note that until 1st October, Victor Parnis remains as Provincial Vice-Chancellor and all Provincial correspondence should continue to be addressed to him.

Editor

In Case You Missed it the First Time!

*Continuing our new series re-publishing articles from previous issues.
The following article was included in our second issue - Autumn 2001
Editor*

Honours Should be Honoured

Each year every Preceptory in the Province is invited to submit the name of a Past Preceptor to be considered for a first appointment to Provincial Rank. The prudent Registrar will assemble a Court of Honour or Committee of Past Preceptors to decide who should be recommended for this honour. Among the factors the Preceptory are expected to consider are:

- the manner in which the Knight discharged the office of EP in the Preceptory.
- the contribution the Knight has made to the work of the Preceptory since his year in office.
- his continuing and regular attendance.

A decision having been reached, the Registrar will be instructed to submit the Knight's name to the Provincial Prior for preferment. If the Provincial Prior approves the recommendation the Knight should, in due course, receive a letter offering him an appointment and inviting him to the investiture.

A Past Preceptor who is honoured with a Provincial Office must know that the Provincial Prior and the most senior members of the Province will have given lengthy consideration to each appointment. Such honours are not conferred lightly.

However, from recent discussions it has emerged that some Provincial Officers do not appreciate that, in accepting the offer of a Provincial honour, he assumes new, albeit unspoken, duties and responsibilities. In addition to his continuing commitment to his own Preceptory, he is expected to make a useful

contribution to the continued success of the Province.

This new commitment can manifest itself in many ways. It goes without saying that the new Provincial Officer will attend the Provincial Priory at which he is to be invested but he is expected to support all future meetings. If the Provincial Officer has been honoured with an active rank he could be expected to take part in the Provincial Prior's Escort on Official Visits, or he may wish to make a private visit on such occasions to show his active support for the Province.

The new Provincial Officer, should continue to give active and positive support to his own Preceptory by attending regularly and:

- by serving in one of the key offices.
- by assisting his successors as E.P. by working parts of the ceremonies.
- by seeking out good, new members from his many contacts in Freemasonry.
- by ensuring that all new members are made to feel especially welcome in his Preceptory and, by encouraging the junior members of the Province to tread the same path as he has done.

The faithful discharge of these unspoken duties and responsibilities in both the Preceptory and the Province should, in due time, lead to a promotion in the Province and possibly Great Rank where a greater commitment is expected, since, as we all know, the higher you are elevated in rank, the greater are the duties and the more important are the services required of you.

E Kt John Green

An Illustrated Guide to Sword Drill - Part 2

The Eminent Knight Rodney L A Bancroft, TD, PGtSwdB, Marshal of The Provincial Priory of Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire, felt the need to improve the sword drill in the Province. To achieve this he decided to produce a Guide Book to teach all the aspects of sword drill and so enable Brother Knights to practise alone.

Rodney has graciously given permission to publish the contents of his guide in Knightly Topics and over the next few issues I will include a section of drill movements until the whole guide has been covered - from the method of drawing the sword to the investiture of an Officer, and a Preceptor's use of the baton.

Editor

To Order



On the command "Order"



Slight Pause



The Recover



The Carry

On the Command "**Brother Knights**" rise from the sitting position.

On the Command "**To Order**" bring the sword to the position shown above (Slight Pause) and look to the Marshal or the Knight standing nearest to the Chaplain.

Draw the sword and come to the Recover

Pause

Lower the sword to the Carry

Be Seated



The Recover.



Rotate sword and place tip of blade into scabbard.



Pause and wait for final thrust into the scabbard.

This command is given from standing 'To Order' at the 'Carry'
On the Command "**Brother Knights**" look towards the Marshal or the Knight standing nearest the Chaplain.

On the Command "**Be Seated**" raise the sword to the Recover, then locate the tip of the sword in the scabbard with the left hand, leaving the thumb and forefinger free. Drop the point of the sword into the mouth of the scabbard, guiding it with the thumb and forefinger of the left hand.

NOTE - The easiest way is to lower the tip of the sword past the mouth of the scabbard and draw the sword up until the tip of the sword can be fed into the scabbard using the thumb and forefinger of your left hand. Pause, look to the Marshal or the Knight standing nearest to the Chaplain for the timing to put the sword completely into the scabbard.

Then sit



At Ease



The order will always be given from standing at attention and from the carry.

The order is given "**Stand At Ease**", only move on the executive command "**Ease**".

Carry the left foot about twelve inches to the left, at the same time allow the sword to drop half way between the neck and point of the right shoulder by relaxing the grip of the hand on the hilt of the sword.

Prayers



Let us Pray



1 - On the words “**Let us**” Knights bring the sword to the Recover

2 - On the word “**Pray**”, drop the sword to the front until the point is twelve inches from the ground, right hand just behind the thigh, thumb uppermost. At the same time raise the left hand (covered with the mantle) to the forehead.



A-men



3 - On the command “**A**”. Drop the left hand to the side and raise the sword to the recover.

4 - On the command “**men**”, carry sword.

NOTE: In the Preceptory opening ceremony it is the A-men after the Lord’s prayer which is actioned.

The Rise and Fall of the Knights of St John

E Kt Stuart Henderson, P Gt Warden of Regalia, a Past Registrar of Mount Calvary Preceptory, tells a fascinating story of the Knights of St John.

When Jerusalem fell to the armed hosts of the First Crusade in 1099, the victorious crusaders met a most resourceful, energetic and enterprising man named Brother Gerard, superior of a hospice named after St. John the Baptist.

Brother Gerard's exceptional administrative and organizational abilities were so impressive that the kings and nobility of Europe showered his mother-house, the Hospital of St. John, with extensive endowments.

Some of the crusader knights, having fulfilled their crusading vow and having little in their own countries to encourage return, joined the company of like-minded men to form an organization, which grew rapidly and was given official status of a knightly religious Order by a papal decree in 1113.

Thus the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem was born.

Their initial military role was limited to escorting pilgrims through hostile territory, but it was soon expanded to castle defence and then to offensive action in disciplined formations. This discipline and obedience to orders made the Order of great value as a dependable instrument of military power.

All members wore the black dress with the white eight-pointed cross on the left side, until Pope Innocent IV ordered that the battle dress of the Knights should be a red coat with a white cross.

The great Saladin inflicted a crushing defeat on the Christian army, taking Jerusalem in 1187. The Christian position in the Holy Land steadily deteriorated, until the final battle at Acre in 1291 when the Holy land was lost. The Order was compelled to evacuate Palestine

Cyprus, Rhodes and Candia

The Knights now moved to their possessions in Cyprus, where they were additionally awarded the land holdings of the Templars, suppressed by the Pope and the French king in 1307-1312.

The Knights conquered Rhodes in 1309, and then persuaded the Pope to grant them title to this strategic island in 1310 with sovereign status. The Hospitallers, now known as the Knights of Rhodes, were launched on their new course of naval power and expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean.

Their galleys flying the flag of the Hospital were also preying on the shipping lanes, justified by a papal ban on trade with Moslem powers. The Knights of Rhodes prospered. The Knights fortified Rhodes until it was regarded as impregnable.

The new sultan, Mehmet the Conqueror, who had taken Constantinople besieged the city in 1480. Rhodes avoided capture, but only just. The sultan's death in 1481 delayed the fall of Rhodes for nearly half a century. The reputedly

impregnable fortress was taken by the armies of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent in December 1522.

The terms of surrender allowed the knights to depart with all the honours of war and they sailed to the castle of Candia in Crete.

Shortly thereafter (1530) they were given possession of the island of Malta by Emperor Charles V and there, now as Knights of Malta, they built another fortress.

Malta and the Great Siege

Sultan Suleiman, did not command the attacking force in person, but entrusted it to a veteran of Rhodes, Mustafa Pasha, a soldier in his seventies.

In command of Malta was Grand Master Jean Parisot de la Valette, also a veteran of the siege of Rhodes, whose stubborn, valiant defence won the day. His name lives on in the capital of Malta, Valletta.

A hot and fetid June night on the small Mediterranean island of Malta, and a Christian sentry patrolling at the foot of a fort on the Grand Harbour had spotted something drifting in the water.

The alarm was raised. More of these strange objects drifted into view, and men waded into the shallows to drag them to the shore. What they found horrified even these battle-weary veterans: wooden crosses pushed out by the enemy to float in the harbour, and crucified on each was the headless body of a Christian knight.

This was psychological warfare at its most brutal. But the Turkish commander had not counted on the mettle of his enemy - the Knights of St John, nor on the determination of their leader Grand Master Jean Parisot de la Valette, who vowed that the fort would not be taken while one last Christian lived in Malta.

The Grand Master returned a communiqué of his own: the heads of his Turkish captives were fired from his most powerful cannon direct into the Muslim lines. There would be no negotiation, no compromise, no surrender, no retreat.

The Siege of Malta in 1565 was a clash of unimaginable brutality, one of the bloodiest battles ever fought.

It was also an event that determined the course of history, for at stake was the very survival of Christianity. If vitally strategic Malta fell, the Muslim Ottoman Empire would soon dominate the Mediterranean. Even Rome would be in peril.

Malta looked doomed. The Muslims had hundreds of ships and an army tens of thousands strong. The Christians were a ragtag bunch of just a few hundred hardbitten knights and some local peasant soldiers, with a few thousand Spanish infantry. When the Ottomans departed, there were 600 men able to bear arms. The most reliable estimate puts the Ottoman army at some 40,000 men, of whom only some 15,000 eventually returned to Constantinople.

That the Hospitaller Knights of St John existed at all was a minor miracle. They were a medieval relic, an order estab-

lished originally to look after ailing pilgrims to the Holy Lands during the Crusades 300 years earlier. The Knights Templar, had been extinct for two-and-a-half centuries.

They came from countries all over Europe, united by a burning desire to defend Christendom against what they perceived as the ever-encroaching tide of Islam. Yet by the 16th century, an age of the increasing power of nation states, they were viewed as an embarrassing anachronism by much of Europe.

Already the Turks had forced them from their earlier home, the island of Rhodes. Now the knights had moved to Malta - and were threatened once more.

Suleiman the Magnificent, Sultan of Turkey was the most powerful figure on the planet. His realm and absolute remit stretched from the gates of Vienna to the gardens of Babylon, from Budapest to Aden. He was one of the richest men of all time who never wore the same clothes twice and ate from solid gold plates encrusted with jewels. Suleiman controlled the greatest fighting force in the world.

The Knights of Malta lived by raiding and disrupting his Ottoman shipping routes and the last straw had been their capture of the prized ship of his powerful courtier the Chief Black Eunuch.

The Sultan did not expect undue trouble exacting his revenge. A mere 700 Knight hospitallers stood in his way. Such a rabble would be quickly cleared.

The Turkish fleet headed across the Mediterranean in March 1565. In late May 1565, the invasion force arrived - an armada of 200 ships and an army of 40,000 troops. The knights had good intelligence of their plans and had asked for assistance from the Christian armies of European nations. Every kingdom spurned their request - other than Sicily, which said that if the knights held out, help would eventually come.

Fort St. Elmo is a small star-shaped structure sited at the tip of what is now the Maltese capital Valletta on the north shore of Grand Harbour.

In late May 1565, it was where the full might of the Turk artillery was unleashed. For days the invaders pounded the tottering and crumbling edifice, reducing its limestone walls to rubble. The knights refused to yield. At night, Valette sent reinforcements from St Angelo by boat across Grand Harbour, in the knowledge they were heading to their deaths.

For 30 days, cut off and doomed, the soldiers of St Elmo held out. The Turkish general had expected the fort to fall within three.

Late at night on Friday June 22, 1565, the few hundred survivors from an original garrison of 1,500, sang hymns, offered up prayers, defiantly tolled their chapel bell and prepared to meet their end the next day.

Eventually the Ottomans took their prize. The crescent banners of the Grand Turk flew above the ruins, the heads of the knights were raised on spikes, and the crucified bodies of their officers were floated across to Fort St Angelo on the far side of the harbour.

But the Turks had lost time and up to 8,000 of their crack troops.

Summer heat was rising, disease and dysentery spread throughout the Muslim camp. Even though the princes of Europe had abandoned them, the Grand Master Valette was not about to quit.

The siege continued and the target was now St Angelo, the fortified enclave of the knights on the southern side of Grand Harbour.

The death on 23 June of skilled commander Dragut, a corsair and admiral of the Ottoman fleet, was a serious blow to the Turks. The Turks tried every twist and tactic in their military manual.

- ❖ They tunnelled beneath the Christian defences to bury gunpowder and blow the knights to bits. The Maltese responded with their own mines to blow up the tunnels and there were terrible skirmishes below ground.

- ❖ The Turks drew up siege engines. The knights removed stones at the base of the battlement walls to run out cannon through the openings they had created, and blast the siege engines to pieces.

- ❖ On several occasions those walls were breached, the Turks rushing through eager to slaughter all in their path. Triumph seemed at hand, but they found too late that the knights had set an ambush. They were slaughtered.

- ❖ The Turks rolled a giant bomb - a fiendish barrel-shaped object packed with gunpowder and musketballs - into the Christian positions. The knights promptly rolled it back and it blew a devastating hole in the massed Muslim ranks.

- ❖ It rained. Believing the gunpowder of the knights to be damp, their muskets and cannon useless, Mustapha Pasha again sent his troops forward. They were met by a hail of not only crossbow bolts, but gunfire, for Valette had anticipated such an moment, setting aside stores of dry powder.

Finally, relief reached the knights - a small army from Sicily. Believing the enemy reinforcements too weak to be of any consequence, Mustapha Pasha angrily ordered his troops, who had bolted on hearing of the new arrivals, to turn back and march towards them. It was the last of his many grave blunders.

The relief force tore into the Turkish centre, putting it to flight. Rout turned to bloodbath. The once-proud Ottoman force scrambled in disarray for its ships, pursued across the island, cut down and picked off at every step. Thousands died and the waters of St Paul's Bay ran red.

Behind them they had left a scene of utter devastation.

Almost the entire garrison commanded by Jean Parisot de Valette had perished. Now, after 112 days of siege, the ragged handful of survivors limped through the blitzed wreckage of their lines.

Malta was saved, for Europe and Christianity. The Knights of St John had won. The Great Siege of Malta may have been the last action in which a force of knights won a decisive victory.

In 1607 the Grand Master of the Hospitallers was made a Prince of the Holy Roman Empire, even though the Order's territory was always south of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1630 the Grand Master was awarded ecclesiastic equality with cardinals, and the unique hybrid style *His Most Eminent Highness*, reflecting both qualities qualifying him as a true Prince of the Church.

3. After the seige

The Knights set about protecting Christian merchant shipping and freeing the captured Christian slaves that formed the basis of the Barbary Corsair's piratical trading and navies.

The Order struggled however with a reduced income.

- ❖ The exchange rate of the local currencies established in the late sixteenth century ran against them.
- ❖ The Knights' regular tributes from European nations evaporated. European states became unwilling to grant money to an institution that was perceived to be earning a healthy sum on the high seas. They had other matters in hand such as the Thirty Years War.
- ❖ Many Knights chose to serve in foreign navies with the French Navy proving the most popular destination. The French gained a quickly assembled and experienced navy to stave off

the threat of the Spanish and their Habsburg masters.

- ❖ The Knights, a Roman Catholic military order, pursued the readmission of England as one of its member states upon the succession of the Protestant Queen Elizabeth I. The English langue had been suppressed, along with monasteries, under King Henry VIII. The Order also had a German langue, which was part Protestant and part Roman Catholic. This demonstrates the new religious tolerance within the Order.

Economically hindered by the barren island they now inhabited, many Knights started raiding other ships. More and more ships were plundered, from the profits of which many Knights lived idly and luxuriously. Despite their vows of poverty, the Knights were granted the right to keep a portion of the prize money.

The Maltese authorities were now making a substantial profit policing the seas and seizing what they deemed to be infidel ships and cargoes. Many nations claimed to be victims of the Knights' over-eagerness to stop and confiscate any goods allegedly connected to the Turks

Ultimately, this rampant over-indulgence in privateering in the Mediterranean was to be the Knights' downfall.

The Knights of Malta were no longer the military outpost of a united Christendom and became another nation-state in a commercially-oriented continent soon to be overtaken by the trading nations of the North Sea, themselves adept at piracy.

It was unceremoniously dissolved by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798.

Stuart Henderson

Diary Dates 2012

Provincial Priory (Temple)	Monday 1 October
Great Priory (Malta)	Tuesday 20 November
Provincial Carol Service	TBA December
Londinium Preceptory	Wednesday 19 December

2013

Provincial Priory (Malta)	Tuesday 29 January
Great Priory (Temple)	Wednesday 15 May

Contact List

Provincial matters, rules etc	Vic Parnis, Prov Vice Chancellor	020 7937 4772
After the Provincial Meeting	Roger Farley, Prov Vice Chancellor, elect	01953 888 344
Provincial finance	Mathew Hampson, Prov Treasurer	01277 823 667
Ceremonial matters	Richard Roberts, Prov Marshal	020 8567 3657
Provincial Regalia Shop	Eric Garner, Regalia Officer	01647 440673
Knightly Topics	George Hodge, Editor	0118 973 0966