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The cover image (Kerak Castle) shows one of the gates to the town. The ditch is no longer as deep as it was during Saladin's sieges.

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Your newsletter needs you: it has always thrived on content from you, its readers. Any items of Preceptory news, history of the Orders, Ritual, Symbolism or other relevant subjects should be submitted to the Editorial Team at:

media@londonprovincekt.org

We look forward to hearing from you and remember the more we have of *your* material, the less you will have to read the contributions from us.

The start of a new masonic year



The move through Autumn into Winter is always a time of change and frenetic activity after the long lazy days of Summer. The Masonic year starts afresh, including our own Templar Provincial Meeting and the appointment of the new Officers for the year. So too do we begin a new liturgical year with Advent as we prepare for the coming of Our Lord at Christmas.

The Provincial Carol Service was a wonderful way to start the festive season and my thanks to all those who made it such a success.

Before we are swept away with parties and social gatherings, let us reflect on the key message of Freemasonry – that of being happy and communicating happiness – and offer a prayer to the Great Captain of Our Salvation for those less fortunate than ourselves, particularly all those caught up by conflict. Let us remember especially the words of Psalm 122; "Peace be within thy walls, ... peace be within thee." May you have a peaceful Advent and a Merry Christmas, and I look forward to seeing you at the Provincial Malta meeting in January.

Right Eminent Knight David James Thompson Provincial Prior for London

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Website:

https://londonknightstemplar.com/

Kerak: A Crusader Fortress over the Jordan

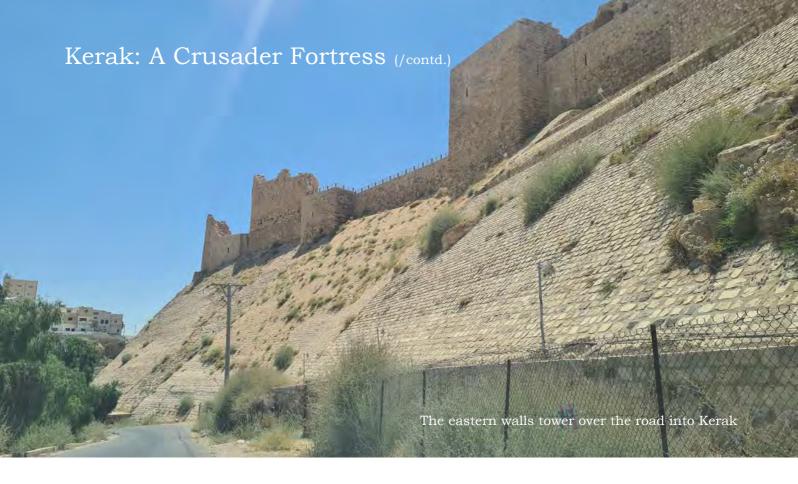
One of the largest medieval castles in the Holy Land, Kerak stands atop a deep wadi about 20km east of the Dead Sea. Towering over the Jordanian town of al-Karak (the land of Moab in Biblical times) it was constructed in the 1140s to defend the Lordship of Oultrejourdain – the Crusader settlement to the east of the river Jordan. This was the most dangerous frontier in kingdom of Jerusalem and the scene of frequent raiding, punctuated by battles and sieges for the next four decades.

Its most famous owner was Renaud de Châtillon, Prince of Antioch and Lord of Oultrejourdain from 1175 until his murder after the Battle of Hattin in 1187. He was loathed by William, Archbishop of Tyre – whose history of the Latin Kingdom is the best single source for the period – after the two men became aligned with opposing court factions in the 1180s. William depicts Renaud as an uncouth thug and glosses over his famous actions. However, Renaud's deeds are described by Muslim sources: they rate him as one of their most effective enemies. He was the archetypal Crusader, a great ally

of the Knights Templar and one of the few Christian generals to defeat Saladin in a pitched battle, at Mont Gisard. Muslim chroniclers called him Arnāt of al-Karak, 'Islam's most hated enemy'.

Kerak's defences were completed in the 1160s by Philip of Milly, Lord of Nablus before he joined the Knights Templar probably after the death of his wife - in 1166. Deep dry moats and heightened towers made an already good defensive position virtually impregnable to the siege methods of the time. When he joined the Templars – and was immediately appointed as the seventh Grand Master – he transferred parts of the lordship to the Order, including a castle in what is Stephanie became Lady of Oultrejoudain, inheriting the title through her mother Isabelle. Married at eighteen to the Lord of Toron, she had two children but was widowed in 1173. She then married the former Seneschal, Miles of Plancy but he was shortly afterwards.



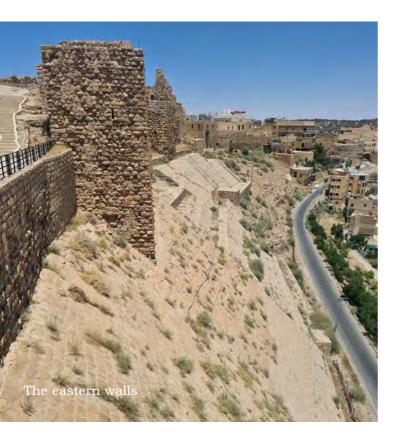


Renaud enters the story of Kerak a little later. A knight from a family of great lords in Burgundy who came to the Holy Land with the Second Crusade in 1147, Renaud remained in the Holy Land when King Louis returned to France. In 1153, Renaud married Constance, the 27-year-old widow of Prince Raymond and the ruling Princess of Antioch. Renaud took a robust line as he tried to restore the principality's fortunes, torturing the Latin Patriarch of Antioch into submission, which didn't endear him to church authorities. When the Byzantines failed to pay him the expenses they owed him, he hired a fleet and sacked Cyprus. However, in 1161 he was captured during a skirmish with Muslim raiders and spent fifteen years as a prisoner in Aleppo until ransomed. This did not improve his view of the Islamic world.

His wife died while he was a prisoner and his stepson became the new Prince of Antioch, leaving Renaud landless. On the other hand, his stepdaughter married the Byzantine Emperor and his own daughter married the King of Hungary. His royal connections were a double-edged sword: inspiring the ruler of Aleppo to demand an eye-watering ransom, but which was eventually paid by the Byzantine Empire.

Renaud returned to Jerusalem in 1177 and was granted the lordship of Hebron by King Baldwin. Not long afterwards, he married Stephanie of Milly, Lady of Montréal and Kerak. The service of 40 knights she was owed plus Renaud's 20 from Hebron, made de Châtillon the fourth most powerful vassal in the kingdom of Jerusalem. He was also, briefly, the king's executive regent. Baldwin IV was suffering from leprosy and no longer able to lead the army in battle. So when Saladin invaded in 1177, it fell to Renaud to lead the royal army. The Grand Master of the Templars, Odo de St Amand had 80 knights with him defending Gaza, which Saladin bypassed to reach Ascalon, where the rest of the Crusaders had concentrated.

Kerak: A Crusader Fortress (/contd.)



As the Christians declined battle, Saladin pressed on for Jerusalem, detaching troops to raid Ramla and Lydda. However, Renaud got word to the Templars and led the whole Christian force to attack Saladin, just as his forces reached Mont Gisard (Tell Jazar) near Ibelin, 20km south of modern Tel Aviv. Renaud's men were heavily outnumbered but caught the enemy by surprise and smashed them as they were forming up. The sultan's army was dispersed with significant casualties, indeed Saladin narrowly escaped being killed himself. Survivors were plundered and killed by the Bedouin as they fled back to Egypt. Hundreds of Christian captives were freed. The victory was seen as so important that a Benedictine Monastery was built on the site, dedicated to St Catherine of Alexandria, on whose feast day the battle took place.

During the next five years, Renaud conducted a very active defence of the kingdom's southern frontier, raiding into enemy territory and even transporting five galleys across the desert to make a naval raid along the Red Sea coast.

In 1183 his 18-year-old stepson Humphrey married the king's sister Isabel at Kerak castle. Many of the great and good of the kingdom attended, plus one unwelcome visitor — Saladin. The sultan led his army from Damascus on 22 October, hoping for a double triumph, the defeat of his hated enemy Renaud and the capture of highstatus hostages present for the wedding.

The population of Kerak had a last minute warning and most had time to flee the town and get inside the castle. Saladin deployed eight mangonels – large stone-throwers – and began to batter the walls. The castle was horribly overcrowded and the bombardment unremitting. Legend tell us that Saladin ordered his engineers not to aim at the part of the castle where the newlyweds were sleeping. Then again, they were potentially the most valuable hostages of all.

The kingdom's army assembled in Jerusalem and a few weeks later set off to try and break the siege. The leper king was too ill to ride but insisted on being carried on a litter. There was a heroic soul in this disease-ravaged body. Raymond of Toulouse commanded the army. Saladin's scouts were more alert this time and detected its approach. A month's bombardment had made little impression on Kerak's stout defences: while the walls were suffering under the impact, the deep dry moat below them made a formidable obstacle and the garrison was full of fight. Saladin abandoned the siege and marched back to Syria.

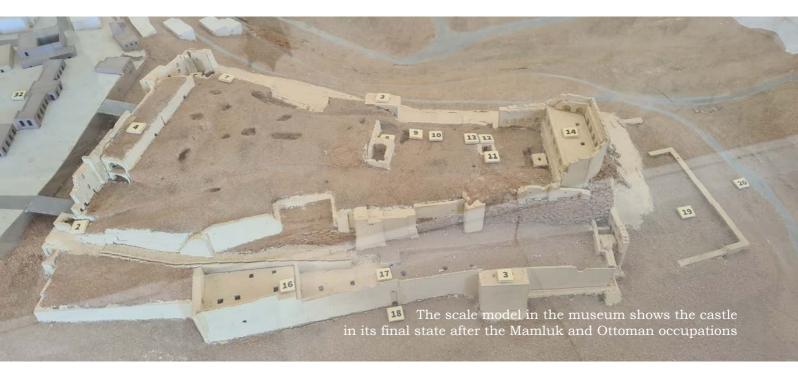
He tried again the next year, attacking at the end of August with a combined army raised from Syria, Mesopotamia and his brother's forces from Egypt (including al-Adil's pet giraffe).

Kerak: A Crusader Fortress (/contd.)

The castle was not full of guests this time, which made life a little easier for the defenders but Saladin had learned from the previous siege and built two covered walkways from which his engineers could shovel earth and rocks into the dry moat. Once again a relief force was assembled at Jerusalem including the Templars under their new acting Master, Gérard de Ridefort. Either the relief force moved faster than Saladin expected or he was again badly served by his scouts; when he realized the Crusader army was closing in, he burned his siege engines and withdrew again to Damascus.

after they surrendered, Renaud sharing their fate after refusing to convert to Islam to save his life. Angevin sources regarded him as a Christian martyr despite William of Tyre's poison pen. His men at Kerak held out for more than a year after the battle in vain hope of relief, not surrendering until April/May 1189. The Third Crusade did not reach the Holy Land until 1191.

Kerak became an important fortress for the Ayyubid dynasty and then the Mamluks but once the entire region was under Ottoman control it was no longer a military frontier.



The dry moat was re-excavated and the king gave Renaud a subsidy to cover the repair of the defences.

Four years later, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem all but destroyed in the wake of the disastrous defeat at Hattin. The surviving Templars and Hospitallers were murdered It was badly damaged during the Palestinian revolt against the Turks in 1834 but remains well worth a visit, if only to raise a glass to the memory of its implacable defenders who did indeed seal their faith with their blood under the banner of the Cross.



Snippets:

Changes afoot at the Provincial Temple Meeting

It all started with a different timetable. **LUNCHTIME!** What on earth are they thinking about? Who in their right mind is going to turn up at that time?

Then when I went along, and I saw the numbers...



The email looked largely the same, but it emphasised **12.00 Noon** as a starting time, so I had to get my armour polished and settled in place by 11.45am. That was difficult for some, as they had a role to play in the Lord Mayor's shindig, which clashed so they couldn't make it. I'll have a word at Guildhall and Mansion House and see if they can change it going forward! On the plus side, it meant that a large number of Provincial Priors and their various entourages from far afield places like Monmouth & South Wales, Durham, Warwickshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire and even Essex were now able to descend in numbers. There were loads of them, so many we couldn't seat them all on the dais! It was the largest number of guests at one of our Provincial Meetings than we have ever had. As for our own Knights, despite all of

the fuss and the unfortunate absences because of Mayoral voting, we had more Knights attending than ever before! In addition, there were the highest number of new Knights (those in their first year) that popped by to give it all a go, so reluctantly I had to shelve my initial reservations.

The processions all went ahead seamlessly and a colourful display from the Preceptory Banner team added pomp and pizazz.

We got to welcome in the new Provincial Team, say thanks to those whose tenure was now up and to congratulate those Knights getting Promotions and First Appointments. The Bodyguard put on a splendid show as always (the ability to herd cats is an obvious asset) as Knights who were getting a promotion, still sat anywhere they fancied rather

than their allocated seat! After the meeting closes the real fun begins – watching who tries to get into the Provincial Prior's drinks reception without an invitation! Crémant fizz from Berry Bros. across the road always makes it worth a try. The bar was busy, the festive board entertaining, new friendships were made and old ones renewed. By finishing earlier with a late lunch rather than a dinner, meant that many were able to come along in the first place as they were able to head back home. I was able to be home to read the young Knightlings a bedtime story of dragons disembowelling fair maidens and a plague descending on a castle under siege.

All in all, it was a great day and an excellent time for new Knights to see the Province in all its glory.

King Edward VII:

The Preceptory of Improvement

Dressing up as a 12th Century Knight and brandishing a sword is the stuff of which dreams are made of – and not just for children.

Many Knights hold our ceremonies to be the most awe-inspiring of all ceremonies in Freemasonry.

So, it is important that we deliver them accurately and with excellence; faithfully and with gusto.

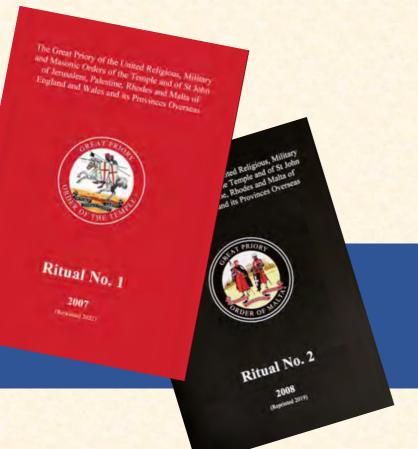
There is nothing sweeter than that first long drink after an excellent ceremony where the candidate has been amazed by the work in the Temple and those hours of practice seem as nothing to the end result. Knowing the ritual and the reasons behind certain elements and actions within it all helps to make that happen. This is the role of preceptories of improvement and here, in the Province of London, Knights are fortunate in that the King Edward VII Preceptory of Improvement meets regularly at Mark Masons' Hall.

King Edward VII, who was Grand Master of the United Orders before becoming King in 1901, whereupon he became Patron, gave his name to a new preceptory in 1902; the King Edward VII Preceptory 173. Shortly thereafter, the Grand Master's Council created a statute giving the Grand Master the power to create a Preceptory of Improvement (PoI) under his jurisdiction.

(King Edward VII seems to have had a thing for improving ritual as he was also responsible for the formation of the King Edward VII Chapter of Improvement, which was established around the same time).

The minutes of Great Priory of 12th December 1902 recorded:

"A preceptory of instruction has been formed under the auspices of the E. Kt. Imre Kiralfy and the sanction of the King Edward VII Preceptory ... and Knights in office will find a most excellent opportunity of perfecting their knowledge of our beautiful ceremonial."





Thus was the King Edward VII Preceptory of Improvement, the first ever preceptory of improvement, established under the authority and licence of the Most Eminent and Supreme Grand Master and the Great Marshal was nominated as his representative to preside generally.

King Edward VII: The Preceptory of Improvement (/contd.)

Later the statute was expanded to allow Provincial Priors to create Pol's in their own Provinces. But the KEVII Pol was the original and remains the most senior of the regularly constituted Preceptories of Instruction for the Templar Order.

Preceptors of the KEVII PoI are a select group of Knights who are among the most knowledgeable about our ritual. To become a KEVII Preceptor, a Knight must first perform the role of Marshal in strict accordance with the 'stage directions' that exist within the body of the ritual. Having achieved the necessary high standard, a Knight then takes the Preceptor's chair and performs the ceremony for the installation of a new Knight in a (near) perfect manner.

Of course, ritual is not everything. One of the joys of Freemasonry is how the fraternity manages to offer something for everyone – from the discipline of ritual to the leisure of dining. There are even those who thoroughly enjoy the very necessary secretarial and treasurer duties. But for many, it is the excellence of our ritual that not only helps with both recruitment and retention but is the core of our enjoyment.

Our Templar ceremonies contain many awesome and inspiring references to our Christian Faith, and so deserve to be delivered faithfully and reverently as well as with passion and enthusiasm. Why don't you come along to the King Edward VII Preceptory of Improvement at Mark Masons' Hall – belt and sword and provided, no other regalia is required; just turn up on one of the dates below. It can form part of your daily advancement in Masonic knowledge and, who knows, you could be taking your test and joining that band of elite warriors helping to carry our ritual forward into the future.



Meetings of KEVII Pol 2024

Tuesday 9th January 2024
Tuesday 5th March 2024
Tuesday 12th March 2024 (Malta)
Monday 22nd April 2024
Wednesday 19th June 2024
Tuesday 3rd September 2024

All Knights of the Order are cordially invited.

Meetings: Mark Masons Hall at 6.00pm Regalia: Not required, swords and belts are provided,

Dress code: smart casual, no jeans or trainers.



V. E.Kt. Timothy John Wheeler G.C.T. Great Marshal.

Roscón de Reyes:

A Spanish bake to celebrate Epiphany

There is something wonderful about that moment when the three Magi bow their heads to a new born child; recognising His splendour far outweighs their earthly knowledge and status. It is a moment that we recognise in the Opening and Closing of all our meetings, when we proclaim Christ's threefold Office of Prophet, Priest and King – as acknowledged by the Magi with their gifts of myrrh, frankincense and gold.

The giving of those gifts is remembered across Europe, where presents are given not on Christmas Day but at Epiphany, Tres Reyes, Trois Rois, or Dreikönigsfest. The Spanish, French and Germans also each have their own bread or cake to celebrate the day – Roscón de Reyes, la Galette de Rois or Königskuchen.

As Knights, perhaps we too should be making that extra effort to celebrate Epiphany - by baking a special bread! The recipe below is for the Spanish Roscón de Reyes (only because the Spanish were perhaps more helpful to the Templers than the others!). The cake is in the shape of a wreath or donut to resemble a crown and decorated with candied fruit to resemble jewels. In Spain, a small figurine of Jesus s is inserted into the dough before baking to symbolise Jesus hiding from Herod.



Roscón de Reyes: A Spanish bake to celebrate Epiphany (/contd.)

INGREDIENTS

- 480 g plain flour
- ½ teaspoon of salt
- 28 g dry baker's yeast
- 80 ml milk
- 80 ml water
- 90 g butter

- 75 g sugar
- Rind of 1 large orange
- 2 large eggs
- 15 ml brandy or rum
- 1 egg white
- 2 cups assorted candied fruit

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. In a small bowl, mix the yeast into the lukewarm milk and water with a spoonful of the sugar and leave to sit for 15 minutes or until the yeast starts to bubble.
- 2. Sift the flour and salt into a large mixing bowl, and make a well in the middle. Pour the yeast mixture into the flour.
- 3. Scrape in just enough flour from around the well to create a thick batter, sprinkle some extra flour on top, and cover with a kitchen towel. Leave the bowl in a warm place for around 15 minutes, or until the batter is doughy and sponge-like.
- 4. In another bowl, use an electric beater to combine the butter and sugar until creamy.
- 5. Once the dough is appropriately spongy, add the eggs, brandy, orange rind, and a splash of water to it. Mix well, until the dough is elastic and a bit sticky.
- 6. Add the butter and sugar mixture to the dough and mix until smooth then shape it into a hall
- 7. Keeping the dough in the large mixing bowl, cover it once more with a kitchen towel and leave in a warm place away from draft. As the dough proves, it will double in size. This can take anywhere between 1 to 2 hours depending on the strength of the yeast culture.
- 8. While the dough rises, grease a large baking sheet for later use.
- 9. Once the dough has doubled in size, punch down the dough and place it on a lightly floured countertop or cutting board.
- 10. You need to knead the dough for two or three minutes, and then roll it into a large rectangle; roughly 60cm by 15cm.
- 11. Next, roll the dough inwards from the long edge to create a sausage shape. Bring the ends together to create a donut shape, then place on the baking sheet. Want to add the bean? Do it now by poking it within the dough.
- 12. Cover the dough with plastic wrap and leave in a warm place for one hour to double in size.
- 13. Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F).
- 14. Once the dough has risen, lightly beat the remaining egg white and brush it across the top. Cover the cake with the assorted dried fruits, pushing gently so they do not fall off of the cake while it is baking.
- 15. Bake for 30 minutes or until golden. Cool on the rack before serving.



A partnership

between the Province and the St. John Eye Hospital Group

As the Provincial Prior said at our Provincial meeting in September, we all know that the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) is our Order's preferred charity but few of our Knights have a wide knowledge of the Eye Hospital Group's magnificent work.

For many years, the Province has worked closely with the St. John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG), having organised visits for groups and individuals in conjunction with Pilgrimages to the Holy Land, sponsoring initiatives within the UK, and many fund raising activities. Consequently, we have built up a camaraderie with nurses, theatre staff, senior board members and Trustees alike and yet many knights have little or no knowledge of the magnificent work that the SJEHG team carries out.

So how can we improve this situation?

Well, the Provincial Prior went on to announce the creation of 'London Support', which will be formally launched by the Chairman of the SJEHG Trustees at our Provincial Malta meeting on 29 January 2024.

What is London Support?

Put simply, it is the result of the Province's increasingly close relationship with SJEHG over the past few years. The Prelate has a long history of engagement in the Holy Land and he has been accompanied over recent years by the Vice-Chancellor on visits to the main SJEHG campus as well as other clinics. One of our knights, Jamie Ingham Clark, is a Trustee and the Provincial Prior now serves on the Trustees Audit and Risk Committee.



Over the past year, the Provincial Executive have agreed a strategic plan for the relationship between the Province and SJEHG and, in consequence, we have collaborated closely with the Senior Leadership Team in Jerusalem to develop a series of resources designed to increase awareness of SJEHG's work amongst Preceptories, Knights and their families and friends.

The Provincial strategy aims to:

- Deepen the Province's direct relationship with SJEHG, both in the Holy Land and through the Trustees in London;
- Creation of a Provincial facility to support well-informed champions for SJEHG throughout the Province; and
- Encourage a more informed approach to the distribution of financial support for both the immediate and strategic needs of SJEHG, which is preferably, although not necessarily, recurring.



https://londonknightstemplar.com/sjehg-london-supporter-network



This strategy is not focussed on fundraising but, rather, is designed to increase your knowledge, and that of your families, of the work of SJEHG as the Order's sole official charity thereby ensuring that such charitable donations as the Province, our Preceptories and individual Knights choose to make, serve to deepen our partnership with SJEHG.

The online resources include general information, details of personalities and case studies, facts and figures and tips on how to give presentations. The aim is to make sure that you have information that is correct, current and consistent and the site is publicly available at:

https://londonknightstemplar.com/sjehg-londonsupporter-network/.

As well as online resources, we have produced a booklet on the work of the Eye Hospital and this will be given to all new Knights in the Province when they receive their Great Priory certificate.

As a Province, we also work closely with The Guild of St John Eye Hospital Group (previously known as the Ladies' Linen Guild), which was established in 1926. Originally set up as a sewing guild for wives of the members of the Order of St John so that they too could contribute to the work of the Hospital, the committee has evolved over the years to become the London-based volunteer fundraising group for SJEHG. Recent support has seen the Province sponsoring the Guild's Annual Gift of Sight Fair as well as the Guild providing a speaker for Preceptory meetings.

The Chair of SJEHG Trustees, along with the Most Venerable Order's Almoner, have accepted an invitation to speak at the dinner following Provincial Priory of Malta meeting on 29 January 2024. This will be a fantastic opportunity to hear directly from the Trustees about recent developments and also about the high regard in which the Order, and London in particular, is held by the whole staff team at SJEHG. Do, please, keep an eye out for the email notification when bookings open and make sure that you do not miss this special event.







Top: The booklet for new Knights in the Province of London

Middle: The Provincial Prelate with Dr Ahmad Ma'Ali, CEO of SJEHG

Bottom: The Vice-Chancellor in the Operating Theatre at SJEHG Jerusalem

London Support:



How it can be of help to you













https://londonknightstemplar.com/sjehg-london-supporter-network

We hope to increase the awareness of the work and success of the Hospital in Jerusalem by providing current, consistent and correct information relating to the patients it cares for, its people and the services it provides.

You make a difference, and your future fundraising efforts will benefit from a greater level of understanding and enthusiasm.

We help to get that understanding **first hand**.

The website contains all the information you need in easy to navigate sections which provides a central repository that you can access easily. Take a look at the information available on the next page..

General information



Facts and Figures



People



A wealth of information

How to donate, mission statements, glossary, maps, Tree of Hope, videos, stats on patients and operations, causes and predisposing factors of eye diseases, DNA research papers, shopping lists, profiles, strategy papers, in conversation with..., interviews, case studies, Jerusalem Scene, KT publications, bibliography, speaker profiles, presenting tips and tricks, 5 & 10 minute talks, 30 & 45 minute lectures and presentations, what to say and how to say it.

Presenting



Newsletters





The Provincial Carol Service was held on Saturday 2rd
December at St. Botolph's without Bishopsgate.

This year we had some 70 members of the Provincial family and their guests in attendance.

The congregation took part in a traditional service of nine lessons and carols but this year, instead of the church organist, the Provincial Organist, E. Kt Christopher Bamford Damp, tinkled the ivories and provided a delightful mix of seasonal music before the service started. It is always a pleasure to be at St Botolph's and the Rector and his entire team were as welcoming as ever.

As always, the Provincial Prior's Bodyguard were central to the occasion and provided ushers, vergers and the offertory team. Although their dignity and bearing is always exemplary, this year they increased their profile by carrying Great Priory church wands and the Province is grateful to the Great Marshall for his permission to use these.







able to attend central London on a

of post-service refreshments

weekday December evening and the cost

Experimentally, the service was moved to noon on a Saturday to allow the possibility of attendees heading off festive shopping or to a matinée in the West End. The Provincial Registrar, in collaboration with the Prelate and Vice-Chancellor, sourced a 'cheaper but cheerful' lunch of fish and chips followed by chocolate brownies; fear not, the wine was not forgotten, this is a KT event after all!

The alms collected amounted to £400 and will be sent to the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group's emergency appeal. The London Support team has asked us to remind you that it is still possible to contribute to the Provincial donation by scanning the QR code overleaf. A recording of the Carol Service can be viewed at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fqdiXkBUwc

The Provincial Carol Service 2023 (/contd.)









KT1066

To make a donation scan with phone camera to open or visit URL

https://gtap.uk/kt1066







