



A little Knight Templar news does you good

In future issues

Staying in touch



Dear Brother Knights

Next month would have seen us celebrating two of the great events of the year—the annual Malta meetings of the Province and of the Great Priory in London.

This year—with no Malta ceremonies taking place—neither can happen of course but to try and fill that vacant space and to lift our spirits

I thought it would be useful to try and find out more about the Hospitallers—whose exploits we recall at our Malta meetings.

Our Provincial Almoner, E Kt Tony Jones has made a special study of this subject and he has kindly written a brief history of the Order—the first instalment of which can be enjoyed on the following pages.

The next instalment will be published in the next issue of *A Beauceant* and the final part will appear in the following edition—to conclude just before the normal meeting dates for our Provincial and Great Priory Malta meetings.

I have a feeling that next year at our various Malta meetings we are going to be very busy, catching up, and I look forward to welcoming into this wonderful Order all those Malta Candidates whose admission has had to be delayed this year.

Yours in the bonds of the Order
R E Kt Paul Calderwood



QUIZ QUESTIONS



- 1 Which Christian leader landed in Malta in 60 AD after a shipwreck ?
2. Which is the capital city of Malta ? (see photo)
3. Who seized Malta from the Hospitallers in 1798?
4. Which treaty confirmed British Rule in Malta?
5. When did Malta become independent?

The Answers are supplied on the last page.

For the next quiz
Send you Q&As to
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The Senior Service

A Brief History of the Order: Part 1

This story begins in the Eleventh century, with the Duchy of Amalfi a significant maritime power, situated in the south of modern Italy, near Salerno and just south of Naples. If we think, at all, of Amalfi today, we probably think of the Amalfi Coast and seaside holidays in the Mediterranean sunshine.

By the tenth century, Amalfi had become a de-facto independent state. Previously, however, the city and its associated land holdings were part of a larger state, the Ducatus Neapolitanus.

Once independent, having ceased to be a vassal of the Byzantine Empire, a Duke or Doge, was first elected in 958 AD. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, the population was somewhere between 50,000 and 70,000 people. In 1073, however, Amalfi was invaded by the Normans and ceased to be an independent state once again.

During its heyday, the Amalfitans were a formidable seafaring power, and are credited to be the first, in the west, to use the magnetic compass. In short, they were trading in the Mediterranean, and possibly further afield, long before the Crusades were envisioned.

Jerusalem, at that time, was controlled by the Fatimid Caliphate of Egypt, and there was an established pattern of pilgrimage to the city itself, and the other Holy Places in the Middle East. As the city was and is hugely important to the three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, provision was made for all, but this was not always peaceful or harmonious.

From 996 to 1006, Al Hakim, the Sixth Caliph was hostile to Sunni Muslims but relatively tolerant to People of the Book, i.e. Jews and Christians. However, in 1004, the celebration of Epiphany and Easter were banned, along with imbibing of wine and all other intoxicating drinks, whether made from grapes or not. This clearly created problems for Christian Rites and Jewish Festivals. Christian and Jewish women also had to wear mismatched shoes; one red, one black, for a ten year period until 1014.

From 1007 to 1012, there was greater tolerance of Sunni Muslims, and correspondingly less tolerance for People of the Book. In 1009, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was destroyed on Al Hakim's orders, along with all churches, chapels and monasteries.

From 1012 to 1021, the Al Hakim became less tolerant of the Shi'ite Muslims, despite The Caliphate's allegiance being to Isma'ili Shi'ism, an esoteric branch of Islam, and he again became more tolerant of Jews and Christians. Even to the extent of allowing those who had been forcibly converted to Islam to return to their original faith and rebuild their ruined houses of worship. In around 1017, Al Hakim founded the Druze religion and eventually disappeared, not returning from a nighttime meditation in the mountains, in 1021 and being succeeded by his son, Ali az-Zahir, the Seventh Fatimid Caliph.

In around 1023/1048 (sources differ), a collective of merchants from the Duchy of Amalfi acquired permission, from the Seventh Caliph, to re-build a hospice, previously demolished, contemporaneously with the Church of The Holy Sepulchre, along with a new chapel and monastery in Jerusalem, for the care of Christian pilgrims. Thus was born The Hospice of St. John the Almoner.

Intriguingly, most sources ascribe this to 1048, but I believe the 1023 date is more likely, as Ali az-Zahir, the Seventh Caliph, died of plague in Cairo in 1036. As the rebuilding of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is dated to 1042 under the auspices of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine IX, I think we would be on safer ground if we took the rebuilding of the Hospice of St. John the Almoner to 1048, and not the permission for the work. St. John the Baptist would not be adopted as their patron Saint until after the First Crusade in 1099.

The Christian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem has a district called the Muristan, where the first hospice or Bimaristan (Persian - hospital) was situated. The area is to the south of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The Blessed Gerard (1040-1120) was a lay Brother in the Benedictine Order. In 1170 he was made Rector of the Hospice. It would seem that he had some connection with the Convent of St. Lawrence (of interest to AMD members), in Amalfi which was partly funded by an Amalfitan merchant called Mauros and his extended family.

To the east of the re-built hospice, a new hospital was built in 1080, separated from the original hospice by a lane. Both remained under the control of the Benedictine Abbot. Towards the end of the Egyptian occupation of Jerusalem in 1099, sources indicate that there was a women's hospital, being managed by a noble Roman lady named Agnes, whilst the hospital for men was under the care of a monk known as Brother Gerard. During the siege of Jerusalem, Brother Gerard was taken prisoner by the Egyptian Governor, Iftikhar ad Dawla.

After Jerusalem fell to the Crusaders, Godfrey of Bouillon, being one of the leaders of The First Crusade, freed Gerard and provided him with extra resources for his work. Godfrey was the first ruler of the "Kingdom of Jerusalem", but declined to be crowned as he believed that only Jesus Christ himself could bear the title King of Jerusalem. He allowed himself to be titled "Princeps".

Soon after these events, Brother Gerard broke off from the Benedictines, opened the hospital to all needy patients, regardless of religion, adopted the Augustinian Rule and re-organised the Fratres Hospitalarii into a newly constituted body under the protection of St. John the Baptist, to be known as The Knights of St. John or Hospitallers of which, he was self declared as the first Grand Master.

The women's hospital remained under the control of the Benedictines.

The Order was formally confirmed in 1113 by a Papal Bull issued by Pope Paschal II, Gerard also being formally confirmed as Grand Master. At this point, the Hospitallers were still not truly a "military" monastic order. The first record of them having a Marshal (Mareschal) was not until 1126.

Gerard's successor as Grand Master, Raymond du Puy de Provence significantly enlarged the infirmary, and the progress of the order's military standing was shown by them being given their first Castellan's commission with the gift of Gibelin Castle, near Jerusalem, circa 1136, to assist them in their role as protectors of the Holy Land. Remaining Grand Master of the Order until shortly before his death in 1160, Raymond built the Hospitallers into a strong military force.

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Answers to the Quiz Questions on Page One:

- (1) *St. Paul* (2) *Valetta* (3) *Napoleon Bonaparte*
(4) *The Treaty of Paris 1814* (5) *1964*