FOREWORD

For many years the Knights of St. John have maintained a charitable hospital in Jerusalem. In more recent times this has been an Eye Hospital which currently cares for the eyes of patients from the West Bank and Gaza strip. This year is the 875th anniversary of the establishment of this hospital and this issue contains several articles which have resulted from the work of the hospital, together with an introduction by Sir Stephen Miller who is the Hospitaller of the Order. Sir Stewart Duke-Elder who was responsible for rebuilding the hospital on its present site, was not only hospitaller to the Order, but also President of both the Faculty of Ophthalmologists and the Ophthalmological Society of the United Kingdom from which our present College has arisen. The College of Ophthalmologists continues to have close associations with the hospital and wishes it well in the continuation of its excellent and essential work.

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The Knights of St John

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It is impossible to discuss the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem without touching on the Crusades which were central to its origin. At the end of the 11th century in the era of the first Crusade, life for the average individual in Europe was tough-going, violent, manifestly unfair and insecure. A strong and widespread belief that there was an omnipotent and merciful God in his Heaven gave a meaning to human existence which was otherwise not obvious to the average individual. The procuring of salvation was thus a general obsession occupying everyone's mind and religious discussion was constantly on the lips of people of all classes. A gateway was provided to this desirable attainment by the universal church's power to grant absolution of sins. With this background a lead from the church was likely to be accepted with enthusiasm.

In the first week of March 1095, Pope Urban II presided over a church council in

northern Italy which was attended by an embassy from the Byzantine Emperor, Alexius and he asked for help against the Turks who had advanced across Asia Minor and were within striking distance of Constantinople. This advance presented a potent threat to Christianity from the world of Islam.

Pope Urban proceeded to summon the Bishops of France, in November of that year, to a council in Clermont and there he proclaimed, for the first time, the idea of a Crusade to liberate Jerusalem from the infidels.

The response in Europe to the proclamation of a Crusade was staggering and by the Spring of 1096 Peter the Hermit was the first to be on his way with a large following of Knights and plebs, the majority of whom were motivated by genuine idealism. In support of this view it must be borne in mind that a Knight was expected to bring with him the

equipment – horses, pack animals and servants – required to fulfil his duties efficiently and many had to borrow to join the Crusade by a factor of four or five times their annual income.

The Crusaders reached Jerusalem in June 1099 and encamped round the walled city. In July 1099 Jerusalem fell and the Crusaders “all came rejoicing and weeping from an excess of gladness in order to worship at the Sepulchre of our saviour”. This expression of gladness was made following the murder of every man, woman and child of the Moslem

faith in Jerusalem. When asked why today the Order continues to support a hospital in Jerusalem where its patients, as a result of the maelstrom of history, are mainly of the Muslim faith, one is tempted to explain that this service is in part an expression of atonement for the sins of one’s forebears.

When the crusaders entered the Old City, they found there a Hospital which was set-up around 1050 by merchants from Amalfi in Italy. They had established a hospital with St. John as its Patron Saint. The eight pointed cross which is now the logo of the Order of St. John and well demonstrated on the robes of the Grand Prior, derives from the merchants of Amalfi who originally designed it as their distinguishing badge. The Anglican Order added an embellishment of lions and unicorns. This hospice was run by a monk called Gerard (Fig 1) and he remained in charge until his death. When news of the city’s capture filtered back to Europe, many wealthy European land owners made gifts of estates and money to the Hospitallers. The site of the original hospital is quite close to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is called the Muristan and is today marked by a suitable inscribed stone in a small garden (Fig 2) where the Order’s flag is hoisted at dawn each morning and lowered at dusk.

In 1113 the Hospitallers were honoured by the issue of a Papal Bull which founded the religious Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem and it proffered enormous privileges. The Master was to be elected without reference to higher authority. The Order had powers to ordain its own priests, to collect tythes and confer its own indulgences. The Grand Master was responsible only to the Pope.

The Hospital building was palatial, capable at its height of caring for a thousand patients and in due time it became so well endowed that its standards of care and comfort were well above what was available to the pilgrims in their own homes. The first Master Gerard was wed to ideals which had a wide appeal. He taught that “the poor and sick were the Lords and the Hospitallers their serfs under the obligation to render that devotion and reverence that secular lords would receive from their followers.”

Fig. 1. *The Blessed Gerard, Founder of the Order*

Fig. 2. *The site of the Hospital established in 1099*

In 1120 Gerard died. His successor was Raymond Dupuy, a stern, clever and ruthless politician. The Order was fortunate in having two founder Masters with such different and yet essential qualities – one whose ideals appealed to a wide audience and the other who was a disciplinarian determined to lay down rigid rules and establish an Order with clearly defined tenets. The conventual life was mandatory for the Hospitallers who accepted vows of chastity, obedience and poverty. The rule enjoined them to dress humbly “for our lords the poor whose servants we acknowledge to be; go naked and meanly dressed. And shameful it would be if the serf was proud and his lord humble”.

As time went on the Order of St. John had to change its character, simply in order to survive. Gradually it was granted military power as an extension of its charitable interest in protecting and caring for pilgrims.

The Muslims proved, perhaps not unnaturally, a persistent enemy and the Crusaders could only hold Jerusalem for 88 years.

Fig. 3. *Basement of the Hospital in Acre*

When one considers the long lines of communications from Europe to the Holy Land when travel could only be made on foot, on horseback or by sailing ship it is little wonder that it was impossible to keep the fanatic Arab armies at bay. So the Latin Kingdom which was set-up in 1099 gradually became smaller and when Jerusalem was abandoned the Hospital had to move to Acre in the north. Today the ruins of this hospital in Acre are still extant (Fig. 3) with long narrow channels hewn through the cliffs leading from the basement of the building to the sea shore. These enabled the hospitallers to escape in 1291 when Acre fell to the Saracens and to seek a new home. This exit marked the end of the Latin Kingdom of the crusaders just 200 years after the capture of Jerusalem.

The Order went first to the Castle of Kolossi in Cyprus (Fig. 4) for 20 years and then to Rhodes in 1310 where it remained for 200 years. With the occupation of Rhodes the Hospitallers became a Sovereign body exercising political rule over their own territory and in due course issuing their own coinage. The Order set about building a magnificent Hospital which is still intact (Fig 5) but its main function was the policing of the Mediterranean, as a naval power, to keep Islam in check. Rhodes in 1988 presents many historical buildings in excellent shape associated with the Order of St. John. In the Rue de Chevalier with the Grand Master's

Fig. 4. *The Castle of Kolossi*

Palace at the top, a truly remarkable edifice, is a series of splendid auberges where the Knights of each of the seven tongues of the Order lived and had their sway.

In Rhodes the Order was again confronted with a constant battle against the Turks. Inevitably, the young Sultan Solieman of Turkey gathered his forces and attacked Rhodes and on 28th July 1522 he arrived with a huge army which he pitted against 2 or 3 hundred Knights and there followed one of the famous sieges of history which lasted for six months. On the 20th December 1522, when it was obvious that the Turkish assault could not fail the Grand Master capitulated to save the civil population from inevitable massacre.

The terms granted by the Turks were as honourable to the Order as they were to the chivalrous young Sultan. The Grand Master's gallant defence against overwhelming odds gained for him well-earned renown and on the first day of 1523 the Grand Master with the surviving Religious and those of the islan-

ders who chose to follow him were allowed to sail out of Rhodes harbour with the honours of war. For the next seven years the Order was without a home.

The same Grand Master L'isle Adam, visited London and was received most graciously by King Henry VIII who insisted upon hearing from him the full details of the siege and of the fall of Rhodes. His Majesty gave his approval to the proposal that the Order should re-establish itself in Malta and promised a gift of 20,000 Ducats towards expenses, a gift which was fulfilled in the form of canon.

In Malta the Order resumed its ancient role as the chief bulwark of ancient Christendom and proved itself an effectual check upon Ottoman expansion to the West. In 1565 Sultan Solieman, now the Magnificent, who had driven the Hospitallers from Rhodes in 1522 still ruled the Turkish Empire and bitterly regretted the generous terms he had given the Knights on their departure. He despatched a huge expedition against Malta which was expected to complete once and for all the work he had begun in Rhodes 40 years earlier. General Dimitri attacked the Grand Master, Jean de la Valette (Fig. 6). The siege lasted three months against an Armada of 130 Galleys, 50 sailing ships and a great fleet of transport with a landing fortress and the Turks, failing lamentably and suffering great losses had to sail away into the Autumn fog leaving the Order intact.

Malta today is full of memorabilia of the Order of St. John. The present parliament was the Palace of the Grand Master and within it there are murals recording the great siege of 1565 which has been so well described by Ernle-Bradford.¹ In Malta a large Hospital was built by the Hospitallers; the print of 1588 shows the individual beds curtained in winter and with mosquito nets in summer. This Hospital was still in use in the 1914-18 War. Following the siege of Malta however the remnant of the tongue of England within the Order gradually withered away.

Two hundred and thirty-three years later in 1798 Napoleon Bonaparte seized Malta on his way to Egypt. The fortress of Malta was universally regarded as the most powerful in

Fig. 5. *The Hospital of St. John, Rhodes*

Fig. 6. *1631 print depicting the Siege of Malta*

Europe, but the Order's historical mission of holding the Mediterranean against militant Islam had long since become an anachronism and the loyalty of the Knights who were mostly French had been sapped by the disruptive revolution in their own country. The Grand Master at that time made no real preparation for the defence of Malta and so Napoleon carried away with him all the treasures of the Order, its silver, its gold and precious stones, many of which lie in one of the French ships, later attacked by Nelson during the Egyptian campaign and sunk in Aboukir Bay. The treasures await a deep-sea explorer.

Today the original Order of the Hospital of St. John founded by the Pope in 1113 survives in Rome as the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and is recognised as a Sovereign state with its own embassies by some 40 nations. It remains an Order of the Roman Catholic Church and although technically a military Order it now devotes itself entirely to the care of the sick. There is a small central monastery of monks in Rome who have taken their vows and there are many lay brethren throughout Europe engaged in charitable work. The hospital of St. John and Elizabeth in St. John's Wood is an example of its charitable efforts. Its Grand Master Fra. Angelo de Mojana di Cologna died in January 1988.

As far as England is concerned, the origins of the Order began in 1148 in the days of the universal church, long before the Reformation, when Mr. Jordan of Bricet, a feudal Lord, granted five acres in Clerkenwell to the Hospitallers and on these five acres Prior Walter built the Priory of the Order, a large and extensive building. The only parts to survive today are a section of the Church and the entrance gate.

Towards the end of the 14th century political discontent due to the mismanagement of the long drawn-out French war reached a climax. In the autumn of 1380 Parliament chose to increase the national revenue by a heavy and unpopular poll tax. A strong man was needed to carry out the duties of treasurer and the post was filled by the Prior of the Order of St. John, Robert Halès.

In the first days of June 1381, men from

Essex and from Kent marched on London under the direction of the notorious Watt Tyler. On the afternoon of Thursday 13th June the mob burst into the City and later that day attacked the Priory of St. John at Clerkenwell to which they set fire (Fig. 7). Watt Tyler at the head of a strong detachment of rebels then entered the Tower of London by force, seeking the two Ministers, Simon of Sudbury the Archbishop of Canterbury and Robert Hales the Prior, who were deemed responsible for the new tax. They had taken shelter in the Chapel of the Tower from which they were dragged and executed on Tower Hill. Placing the heads of the Archbishop and the Prior on pikes, the former with his mitre nailed to his brow, the "commons of England" as the rebels styled themselves paraded their trophies through the city in a short-lived triumph. Order was eventually restored and the rebel leaders having lost their heads metaphorically then

Fig. 7. 19th Century engraving of the burning of the Priory at Clerkenwell

lost them in reality on the executioner's block.

By 1400 the Priory was restored and rebuilt.

In 1534 the Pope excommunicated Henry VIII who, in his turn, denied the Pope supremacy over the Church in England and His Majesty assumed for himself the title of Supreme Head, whereupon the newly established Anglican Church dutifully conceded the divorce which had been denied him by Rome. The final stage of the quarrel was in 1536 when Pope Paul III had the temerity to issue a Bull deposing the King. This of course embarrassed the Knights of the religious orders who were staunch supporters of Papal supremacy. It was impossible for the King however, to permit the existence in England

of an Order so powerful and so highly organised unless it was prepared to renounce its loyalty to his most determined enemy. In 1540 Parliament passed an act dissolving the Order in England and conferring its rich estates upon the Crown including large tracts of real estate in London and the Knights were forbidden to use its habits or wear its badges.

In 1546 Henry VIII signed a document authorising demolition of the Priory Church, a copy of which document is in the Archives at St. John's Gate, but before demolition could begin, His Majesty died. Eventually the whole of the Priory was confiscated by Queen Elizabeth I on her accession and the stones of the Priory were used to build Somerset House in the Strand. From that date St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell, had a most varied career. By the end of the 18th century it had become an inn known as "The Old Jerusalem Tavern" and by the first half of the 19th century it had fallen into disrepair and was in danger of demolition. Fortunately it was saved from this fate by private purchase by Sir Edmund Lechmere. St. John's Gate today stands substantially as it was built in 1504. The Library and Museum are rich in manuscripts, printed books, paintings, furniture, silver and other works of art, connected with the Order. The Museum includes one of the most important collections in existence of coins and medals of the Crusaders. Visitors are always welcome.

Early in the 19th century some 300 years after destruction of the Order in England by Act of Parliament, there was a move to revive the English tongue of the Order of St. John in England but the question of revival was complicated by the Sovereign Military Order that the proposition of a non-Roman Catholic branch in England was not viewed with sympathy. After a long period of fruitless negotiation a new British Anglican Order was established in 1858. This new Anglican Order is today the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John on Mount Scopus. Happily in these ecumenical days the relationship of the two Orders is most cordial.

A spirit of charity was the inspiration of the new orders' work as its motto "Pro utili-

Fig. 8. *St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell – The Gate of the Priory*

tate hominum” indicates. The work of adapting it to the requirements of the 19th century and of establishing it firmly as a popular national institution in the United Kingdom was accomplished during the long term of office of Sir Edmund Lechmere its active Secretary General. Indeed it was he who personally bought St. John’s Gate and in 1874 returned it to the Order. This formative period was one of rapid progress. It saw the creation of the British Order’s three foundations – the Ophthalmic Hospital in Jerusalem as we know it today, the St. John Ambulance Association which is responsible for widespread instruction in First Aid and the St. John Ambulance Brigade which is a uniformed branch of the Order providing voluntary First Aid at thousands of public functions. The emphasis is on voluntary first aid – Brigade members receive no payment and even have to purchase their own uniforms. 61,000 volunteers worked 4,237,000 hours in 1987 and performed 297,000 items of service, a magnificent record which defies criticism.

The charitable labours of the Order attracted Royal attention in 1876 when the Princess of Wales, accepted membership and thenceforth it received the active support of many members of the Royal Family leading to the granting of a Royal Charter in 1888. Queen Victoria then became its Sovereign Head and Patron and her eldest son, later King Edward VII became its Grand Prior and thus a new Anglican Order of Chivalry was established, and like all British orders of chivalry it has the prefix “The Most Venerable”.

As far as the St. John Ophthalmic Hospital in Jerusalem is concerned, it was set-up under the inspiration of Her Majesty who had a keen desire to establish a British presence in what was to her The Holy Land. His Royal Highness Edward, the Prince of Wales negotiated, personally a site with the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and together in 1882 they chose a building on the Bethlehem Road, just south of Jerusalem which contained 18 rooms on 6 acres of land at a cost of £1,200 of which £900 was given by the Sultan. It took a considerable sum of money to adapt the building so as to make it suitable for a

Fig. 9. *The out-patient waiting room*

Fig. 10. *The wards*

Fig. 11. *The kitchens*

Fig. 12. *The laundry*

Hospital and by that time the Order had little in reserve. A meeting was held in the Jerusalem Chambers at Westminster Abbey to decide on the next step. Fortunately Lady Lechmere was one of the committee and she offered a cheque for £100. This immediately gave new heart to the committee and with this large sum its members could afford to employ and dispatch a surgeon to Jerusalem. The Hospital was restricted to ophthalmology because of the high incidence of eye disease in the Middle East. It proved an immediate success attracting patients in large numbers from many surrounding countries.

Sir Edmund Lechmere visited Jerusalem in 1887, 5 years after the foundation of the Hospital and in the Archives at St. John's Gate are preserved personal letters from the Heads in Jerusalem of the three great religions expressing gratitude in most felicitous terms for the services offered to their people and blessing the Order for its magnificent work. This building continued as a Hospital from 1882 until 1948 with a short break during the first world war when the Turks converted it into an ammunition dump and before leaving they destroyed half of the building but it was quickly repaired and reopened by General Allenby. It began work again in 1919. In 1948 this hospital was abandoned but it still stands as a small hotel on which a preservation order has been placed by Teddy Kollek, the Mayor of Jerusalem with specific instructions that the crests of the Priors and logo of the Order shall remain untouched. For the next twelve years the Order made use of two houses it owned in the Old City, one belonging to Sir John Strathearn and the other one called Watson House. In 1960 the present building was opened in East Jerusalem. The conditions of work were extremely congested during that period for there were still many poor people in dire need of help. They flocked to this makeshift hospital in large numbers. It has

always been the policy of the Hospital, opened in 1882, to treat anyone in need of care without regard to class, colour, creed or ability to pay. Politics and religion are abandoned at the entrance just as "Hope" is abandoned on crossing the Bridge of Sighs in Venice.

The present hospital which was opened in 1960 has 80 beds and was built in a compound which includes a Sisters' Home, Nurses' Home, Warden's House, Matron's Bungalow and four flats for the young surgeons who spend a year there. The present building was financed largely as a result of the efforts of Sir Stewart Duke-Elder who persuaded many of the oil companies to underwrite the costs. Today the Hospital copes with 50,000 out-patients per annum and of these 5,000 patients are submitted for major surgery. This excludes much lid surgery carried out in the Hayward out-patient theatre. The Hospital is in local charge of a Warden who is a permanent officer and at the moment is Group Captain A. Morgan late of the Royal Air Force. There is a whole-time surgeon in charge of the Outreach programme, and there are three temporary surgeons who come for a period of a year. Canada and Australia provide surgical help and we frequently have a surgeon from the Armed Services of the United Kingdom or from the American Society of the Order of St. John which underwrites the children's ward and provides with corneal tissue for keratoplasty.

The guiding principle behind this great hospital is solely humanitarian. It depends entirely on voluntary support in the sum of £1.4 million sterling per annum. The figures of the Out-patient department, wards, kitchens and laundry (Figs 9–12) give the reader a glimpse of its presentation to the outside world but an assessment of its true worth to its patients can only be appreciated by a personal visit including a sojourn to one of the villages with the outreach team.