



# Knighly News

The Grand Priory of the Knights Templar in England

Autumn/Winter 2024

## New Processional Sword



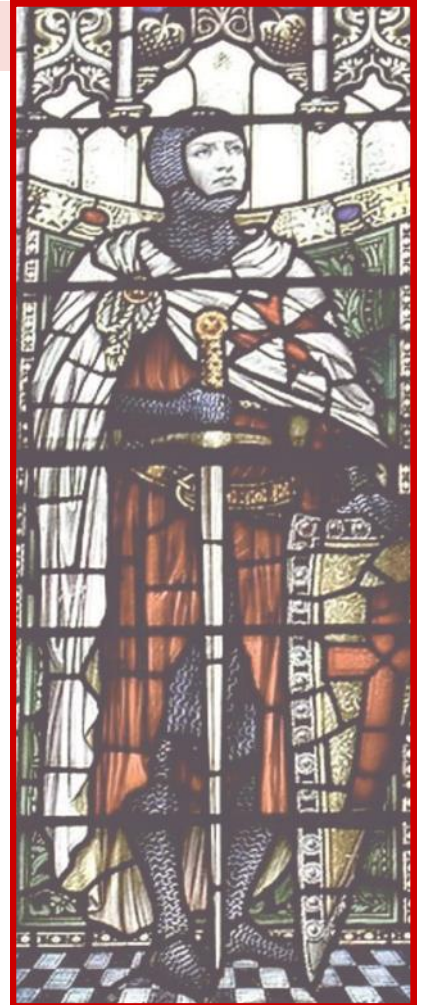
A huge shout-out to Chevalier Mark Stretton for donating the magnificent new Processional Great Sword which was made by his own fair hands, and to all those who submitted possible names for the sword which was formally and ceremonially blessed and named during our investiture ceremony.

The name of the sword is

**“OATHKEEPER”**

and the person suggesting that name was a new member, Chevalier Anthony Webster. Well done, Anthony.

What a great way to commence your Templar journey on your very first day.



## IMPORTANT DATES

Our next events will be held as follows, please ring-fence the dates them in your diaries:

**SUNDAY 26th JANUARY 2025** - Annual General Meeting -- Kettering Park Hotel, Kettering, Northants

**\*\*\* CHANGE OF DATE & VENUE \*\*\***

**SATURDAY 31<sup>st</sup> MAY 2025** – Christchurch Priory, Christchurch, Dorset.

**SATURDAY 18<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2025** – Venue to be confirmed

**SATURDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> MAY 2026** – Venue to be confirmed.

**SATURDAY 17<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2026** – Venue to be confirmed.



<https://www.osmth-england.org>

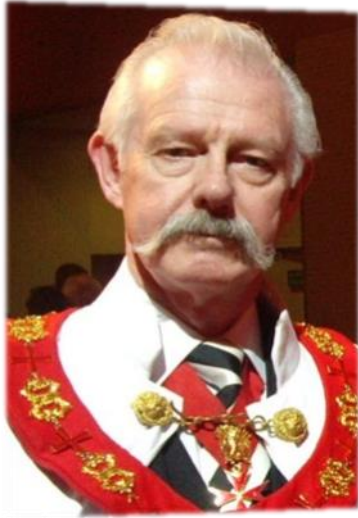


CHECK YOUR SPAM FILTERS FOR MISSING EMAILS!

## From the Grand Prior's Pen...

**K**nights, Dames and Fellow Templars, but most especially, friends, we are now in 'Winter Quarters' and time for a spot of R & R before once again girding our loins and saddling-up to charge into 2025.

2024 has been an 'interesting' year during which we have held two investitures to welcome a good number of new Templars. Regrettably, due to medical restrictions, I have been hors de combat for about a year and I thank the Deputy Grand Prior and all those who have worked so hard in my absence to ensure that everything continued and was carried-out correctly.



I was delighted to be able to return to my normal duties and to officiate at Rothley Court and Chapel where we welcomed a further three new members and this was followed by a banquet, also at Rothley Court Hotel, which is extremely convenient having all facilities in one place but, sadly, this is a rare luxury not possible in most other parts of the country and with Rothley Court being in great demand for weddings throughout the year we were very lucky to be able to use it on this occasion.

My thanks to Mark Stretton and Danny Gill for guarding our equipment in the Chapel before the investitures.

My thanks to Tina Walford-Stretton for running an excellent raffle to raise funds for our nominated charity.

My thanks to Mike Shepherd for providing a signed England Rugby shirt and a pair of Rugby boots for auction and my thanks to Bob and Jackie for bidding up to £150 to win the auction.

*Continued on Page 3*

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## Members of Chapter (Members in **bold RED** also sit on the Magisterium)

**Grand Prior – H.E. Chevalier. Paul Grant KGCTJ**

**Deputy Grand Prior and Grand Treasurer: Chevalier Ian Bates KGCTJ**

**Grand Secretary: Chevalier Dr Robert Webber KGCTJ**

**Grand Seneschal: *Vacant***

Grand Marshal and Master of Ceremonies: Chevalier Paul Tredgett KGCTJ

Grand Constable: Chevalier Danny Gill KGOTJ

Commander of the North and Warden of Benevolence: Dame Tina Walford-Stretton DGCTJ

Commander of the South: Chevalier Troy Close KGCTJ

Commander of London: Chevalier Bob Blackledge KCTJ

Commander of Hull: Chevalier Derek Granger-Brown KCTJ

Grand Sword Bearer: Chevalier Nicolai Webber KCTJ

Quartermaster: Chevalier Doug Campbell KOTJ

Warden of Regalia: Chevalier Mike Caseman-Jones KTJ

Chaplain: Reverend Chevalier Les Fraser KOTJ

Chief Steward: Chevalier Bill Straub KOTJ

Historian/Archivist: Chevalier Peter Mellon KOTJ

## From the Grand Prior's Pen (Continued)

Thanks also to Chev Doug Campbell for transporting all our equipment and setting up the chapel and taking photographs before the Friday vigil.

During our time at Rothley, I was asked if I would consider introducing a 'Ladies Bow' as a means of wearing a neck cross in evening dress and several prototypes were presented to me for consideration. As it is correct form for ladies to have a bow for such a purpose, I was happy to confirm that this will now be brought into use for those who wish to use it.

I was also pleased to announce the creation of a new Commandery, that being the Commandery of London with Chevalier Bob Blackledge being promoted and appointed as Commander of London and with a new Commandery, we also have a new Preceptory and I am pleased to announce the formation of the Preceptory of St. George with Chevalier Marcus Suitor being appointed as Preceptor of St. George. Congratulations to you both.

Congratulations also go to Jackie Bowman to be the very first recipient of the newly created insignia as a Companion of the Temple. Well deserved!

Times change; people come and go and preceptory numbers increase or diminish and such has been the case with the Preceptory of the East. Our long-standing friend, Chevalier David Venn retired recently which left the Preceptory of the East with only two members and no Preceptor and, as you will know, a minimum number for a Preceptory is three.

I have, therefore, decided to close down the Preceptory of the East and to expand the neighbouring Preceptory of the Sword to encompass that area as well as its current geographical area. In this way, the two lone members of the Preceptory of the East now come within the administration of the Preceptory of the Sword and Preceptor Mike Shepherd, boosting his numbers by two.

I continue to maintain regular close international communications with the Grand Master, the Vice Grand Master, the Grand Prior General of France, the Grand Prior of Scotland and the Grand Secretary General of the Order on your behalf and I am pleased to advise that we, the Grand Priory of England is well-thought-of internationally.

Finally, if any member has a friend who may wish to support us but who does not wish to be a full member, they will be welcome to join as a **Companion of the Temple** which does not require them to purchase any regalia. As a Companion of the Temple, they are entitled to attend all functions including Services of Investiture, dinners, banquets and social events upon payment of the usual dining fees.

Which just leaves me the most pleasant task of wishing you all, each and every one, a very  
Merry Christmas 2024 and a peaceful and prosperous New Year 2025



## **CHANGE OF DATE AND VENUE**

**Due to circumstances beyond our control, the May 2024 Investiture has been moved from Saturday 24th May 2024 to Saturday 31st May 2024, and will now be held at CHRISTCHURCH PRIORY, Dorset.**

## Advancements

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members of the Grand Priory of England:

Chevalier Frank Lloyd-Murray, KTJ (*May 2024*)

Chevalier Anthony Webster, KTJ

Chevalière Jane Appleton, KTJ

Chevalier Rexie Hermano, KTJ

Companion Jackie Bowman



**Congratulations to the following on their appointments:**

Preceptor of Halberd: Nicolai Webber, KCTJ

Stewards: Chevaliers James Gautreaux KTJ and

John Mefragata KTJ

Standard Bearers: Chevaliers Danny Gill KGOTJ,

Bob Blackledge KCTJ, Perry Futer KTJ



**Promotions:**

***The Grand Master has been graciously pleased to approve the following promotions***

Knights Commanders Tina Walford-Stretton and Troy

Close to be elevated to the rank of **Knight Grand**

**Cross** with immediate effect.

Knight Officer Nicolai Webber to be **Knight**

**Commander** with immediate effect.

## Dining & Dress Code

As an ancient, established and historic international Chivalric Order which conducts ceremonial at the highest levels, it is important that we have a formalised Dress Code, of which there are several styles, as follows:

**White Tie:** Full Evening Dress: White bow tie, wing-collared shirt, black tailcoat, black Evening Dress trousers, white Marcella waistcoat and black patent leather shoes.

**Black Tie:** Black bow tie worn with a dress-shirt, Dinner Jacket or Tuxedo, Evening Dress trousers and black shoes.

**Smart Casual:** It is understood that not all members have the more formal styles of dress and that they are expensive and worn infrequently, however, those members who do have them are encouraged to wear them according to the dress stipulated on the invitation. All others are asked to wear a dark lounge suit with a white shirt and KT tie.

**Military uniform is permitted for those authorised to wear it.** This may be Number 1 Dress Blues, Mess Dress or Service Dress. Additionally, there is a military-style Templar uniform for those who wish to have one made.

## Guard of Honour (Escort to the Colour)

We have been invited to provide four members to act as Escort to the Colour for the Paddington Branch of the Royal British Legion.

Sadly, the invitation was received just too late for us to muster four members as most were already committed to their own local Remembrance Day services and events, but we hope that this may occur again next year at which time and given sufficient notice I would be delighted for us to perform this ceremonial duty. Details will be circulated closer to the time of the event next year.

I would be grateful if Chevalier Perry Futer would give instruction to those who are selected, in the correct performance of the task. This will include coming to attention, marching, halting and standing at ease correctly and with military precision.

# Templar Chaplains by Chev. Revd. Les Fraser

Chaplains played an important role within the Templar Order as religious leaders. They were responsible for conducting religious services, providing spiritual guidance to members of the Order, and administering the sacraments. Templar chaplains were required to be ordained priests and received a salary for their services.

The duties of chaplains extended beyond religious services. They were also involved in the management of Templar properties and finances, as well as in diplomatic missions. In times of war, chaplains accompanied the Templar knights into battle and provided spiritual support to them.

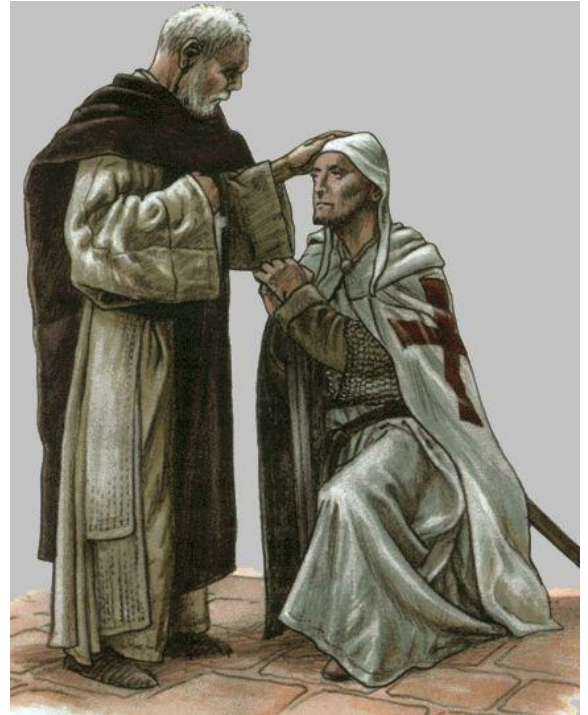
The highest-ranking chaplain within the Templar Order was the “Chaplain-General,” who oversaw the activities of all the chaplains within the Order. The position was held by a senior member of the Order and was responsible for the administration of the Templar chapels and the training of new chaplains.

The role of chaplains was integral to the functioning of the Templar Order. Their spiritual guidance was essential to the moral and ethical principles that the Order upheld.

Templar chaplains were respected members of the Order and had an important part to play in the lives of their fellow Templars.

Above is a description of the role of chaplain within Knights Templar that I found on the internet. My role is not quite the same but does fit in in as much that I am an ordained priest. I certainly see my role is of that as spiritual advisor, conducting services and administering sacraments. I do not, nor would I accept payment though.

I do feel that I need to emphasise that I am available to you all for spiritual help at any time. Please drop me a line at [chaplain@osmth-england.org](mailto:chaplain@osmth-england.org) All the officers appointed are here for you not just at investiture meetings.



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## Other Templar Groups

It has come to our attention that some members are in direct communication with other Templar groups who are not part of our legitimate Templar Order and while we cannot dictate to you who you have as friends outside this Order or with whom you communicate, you are advised that you may not under any circumstances speak on behalf of this Order or accept any role, official or unofficial with any other Order.

There are many out there who claim legitimacy but who do not have any at all and others who broke away from this Order many years ago and set themselves up as an alternative Order. This was a tragedy and it has long been my hope that there may be some form of reconciliation and I have offered the hand of friendship on more than one occasion, almost always without result.

It must be emphasised that only senior members of the Order may officially communicate directly or indirectly with other Orders and then only with permission from the Grand Master himself.

# Jacques de Molay Commemorations 2024 in Paris

by Chevalier Ian Bates, KGCTJ

I was delighted and honoured on behalf of H.E. Chev. Paul Grant to represent our Grand Priory in Paris over the weekend of 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> March and accompanied by Chev's Nancy & Troy Close and Revd. Les Fraser where we all met many international members and enjoyed fraternal hospitality.



This was a very special event as His Excellency Fr Jacques Charles Dubos was officiating for the first time as our Grand Master.

The 100 attendees were staying at the Chinagora Hotel and the weekend commenced on the Friday evening with a delightful cold buffet with musical entertainment which was followed by a solemn vigil of arms, carried out in French, where three new Knights were introduced.

The Saturday commenced with breakfast which was followed by a boat trip to commemorate the 710<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the Grand Master of the Order Jacques

de Molay to Ile de la Cite, where under a light rain shower proceeded and followed by sunshine, the Knights present presented a white rose to the waters of the Seine.

During the outward trip the Grand Master requested a conference with Chev. Richard Elms and myself where he informed me that during the Investiture that afternoon that he would be announcing the reconstitution of the Grand Priory of Wales and that Chev. Richard would be appointed Grand Prior of Wales and wished that I should be advised prior to the event and desired our support which I proffered on our behalf.

On our return from our boat trip we all partook in a pleasant Chinese lunch.

Following lunch we attended the Investiture where I was presented to our Grand Master whom welcomed the Grand Priory of England and witnessed

the appointment of the Grand

Prior of Wales and the investiture (in French) of the three new Knights into the Grand Priory of France.

The evening commenced with a reception where we presented Chev. Sissy Willery a signed copy of our photobook from our Investiture in Hereford in October last year which our past Grand Master H.E. Chev. Gerard Willery attended before he suddenly passed away shortly after. Chev. Sissy was delighted to receive this photographic memento and wished that I express her love and thanks to the members of our Grand Priory.



The evening meal and musical entertainment that followed was delightful and we sat on the same table with H.E. Chev. Ron Sinclair the Grand Prior of Scotland and four of his members who accompanied him.

The Sunday commenced with breakfast where Revd. Chev. Les and I were first in the restaurant by a good 60 & 30 minutes respectively and joined at a more sociable and reasonable time by the remaining Knights after which I attended the Grand Priors Meeting where some 35 Knights were present where the matters considered covered association structure, ritual, heraldic devices, establishing a charitable foundation and charitable projects.

My sincere thanks to Chev's Nancy, Troy and Revd. Les for their support and company throughout the weekend and recommend to all our members to attend if they are able and to support our Grand Prior at the next gathering.



## A Knight in a Phonebox by Chevalière Sandra Dunkley

Nestled on the Embankment near Blackfriars is an unassuming phone box, graced with a most enchanting stained-glass addition. This delightful surprise appeared in 2019, and its origins remain a charming enigma—intended, it seems, to bring moments of technicolour joy to those fortunate enough to notice it.

Crafted in the design of a medieval knight—perhaps nodding to the Knights Templar, who once had their London headquarters nearby—it is far from being a mere plastic insert. Instead, it stands as a fully realised piece of heavy stained glass, complete with proper lead strips and intricately decorated panes.

The sheer beauty of this creation is breathtaking, and indeed, the mystery surrounding its origin only enhances the pleasure of discovering it. Despite several researchers' efforts to uncover more by consulting all the usual sources and even reaching out to BT for comment—who say that they, too, are at a loss regarding its provenance but confirm it was neither commissioned nor approved by them (a detail that might hint at its eventual removal)—the craftsman remains a mystery.

Yet, for now, we are left with this marvellous mystery—a testament to unexpected beauty in our everyday surroundings.



# My Journey from the Military to a Temple Knight

by Chevalier Troy Close, KGCTJ

Throughout my military career, I acquired invaluable real-life skills that have shaped my journey and continue to inspire me. These skills, shared by many of my former military comrades, are truly priceless. The discipline to arrive on time, dressed appropriately, with the right attitude and a willingness to go above and beyond is not just taught; it is ingrained in every soldier. This ethos seamlessly transitioned into my role within the Order of the Knights Templar.



Over 36 years in the Army equipped me with profound knowledge and experience as I rose through the ranks to become a Warrant Officer. Working collaboratively as part of a team, thinking quickly on my feet, guiding those around me, and advising senior officers were all part of this enriching journey. My training included achieving Level 6 in Leadership & Management—skills that greatly benefit any future employer considering ex-service personnel.

As I approached the end of my service, I engaged with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) for resettlement support. Their workshops taught me how to translate military qualifications into civilian terms and navigate business environments outside the forces—a vital step for all transitioning service members.

Reconnecting with Paul Grant from our early days at Blackdown Barracks led me to discover the Order of Knights Templar—a path that resonated deeply due to its shared values and camaraderie akin to military life. My wife Nancy and I were honoured guests at an investiture in May 2017 at Allington Castle—an experience that solidified our decision to join this esteemed order.

As we transitioned from military life into civilian careers, focusing on logistics became clear, given its alignment with much of my Army experience. Despite initial challenges adapting without daily military camaraderie or ethos weighing heavily upon us both, confidence grew knowing CTP's guidance alongside extensive skillsets would provide competitive advantages during job application processes, too!

After attending career events while refining CVs, further exploring import/export opportunities locally around Canterbury/Whitstable areas eventually led to securing employment interviews, successfully landing a role as Export Assistant and Filtration Import/Export Coordinator over time—all thanks to largely due diligence applied throughout the transition period itself!

In parallel efforts, supporting Royal British Legion (RBL) committees helped maintain connections within the community. Continuing involvement alongside fellow brothers/sisters across various KT investitures/social gatherings provided a renewed sense of purpose and drove me forward, positively impacting others wherever possible.

Since joining Knights Templar England, initially appointed Steward before progressing to Head Steward, then Preceptor of the Lance, moving to also take on the positions of Quartermaster also simultaneously the holder of the sword. But then finally in December 23 the Grand Prior called me and asked if I would take on the position of Commander of the South which I accepted with honour. This made me responsible for guiding and welcoming new members and advising those within my Command, but holding 3 positions within the order I unfortunately had to release them for others. Now as Commander I naturally draw upon extensive leadership management experiences gained during distinguished army tenure overall, proving testament enduring value lifelong lessons learned therein!

And finally, may we all open our hearts and minds to remember that we all have a duty to ensure that the order and those organisations like the RBL and the Poppy Appeal are maintained and promoted to ensure they survive the test of time.



# Royal Throne of Kings

by Companion Stuart Millson

## Ralph Vaughan Williams and Shakespeare

Royal music, or more accurately, marches and anthems for great regal occasions, is something at which the composers of England, since Purcell's and Handel's days have excelled. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) did not quite fit into this oeuvre — Elgar, Bliss and Walton largely assuming the role during RVW's lifetime. Although writing no 'pomp and circumstance' for 'crowns imperial', he nevertheless composed for Queen Elizabeth II's coronation, but in a way that stressed the link between monarch and people; a characteristic of the musician's complex character and work, bridging ancient and modern, mystical and democratic. Where Vaughan Williams did write for monarchs is in his many incidental orchestral and vocal pieces for (or inspired by) Shakespeare's plays: Richard II, Richard III, Henry IV and V — dramas laying bare the trials and tribulations of the great Kings of old; the dark moments of their reigns and moments of celebration.

### *Greensleeves*

Ironically enough, on the strength of this latest CD release from Albion Records, it could be argued that Vaughan Williams was in fact the most prolific servant of the Royal remit of any English composer, commemorating England's battles, bloodshed, dynastic struggles, civil wars and crownings of Kings across the entire span of the country's life as a monarchy. Shakespeare being the inspiration, the disc offers us such gems as the 1913 Stratford Suite, in which Greensleeves and several other famous tunes from Tudor antiquity make an appearance.

And throughout the 72 minutes of music carefully curated and conducted by Vaughan Williams expert, Dr. James Ross, the listener will recognise folk-tunes which appear in other guises, such as Henry IV's 'Princess Royal' — also heard in the quick-march opening to the composer's jaunty Sea Songs; Halfe Hannikin (found in Sir John in Love and Fat Knight); Dowland's Pavane Lachrymae — used by Sir Granville Bantock in Old English Dances; and finally, the noble plainsong melody — which makes an appearance in the semi-final movement Sir Michael Tippett's Suite for the Birthday of Prince Charles, and in the Allan Gray film score for Powell and Pressburger classic, A Canterbury Tale — the uplifting Angelus ad Virginem.

### *Henry V*

However, what makes the recording such an exciting find, the production such a success — so atmospheric and authentic, throughout — is the use of a smaller orchestra, in this instance the poised, elegant, silvery strings (listen out for evidence of the latter quality in Track 18) of the often-overlooked Kent Sinfonia. Recorded in Kent churches, at Wye and Hythe, James Ross's players bring an atmosphere of the theatre to the proceedings, but sacrificing nothing in the expansive and spine-tingling moments in Richard II, or in Henry V's appointment with destiny in the 'vast fields of France (the seven-minute long Henry V Overture). The recording has plenty of 'air' around it, so the dry acoustic of studios and modern concert-halls is, mercifully, avoided.

A Tudorish brass sound, spot-on woodwind and martial side-drums ring out from the spaces of the mediaeval churches (always the best recording venues), whilst the choral contribution of the Albion Singers in Henry IV — there are some rich baritones there — suggests a larger number of singers than were actually present at the making of the record. Guildhall-trained soprano, Eloise Irving, also brings her magic to solo songs, such as in the famous melancholy setting from Othello: 'Sing willow, willow willow.'

With informative programme notes, excellent photography and artwork from the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society's John Francis, the CD is complete joy from start to finish: my 'album of the year'.

*CD details: Vaughan Williams, Royal Throne of Kings, Albion Records, ALBCD062.*

This article first appeared on the cultural website, The Brazen Head. [www.brazen-head.org](http://www.brazen-head.org)

# The Enigma of the Templar Seal

Adapted from an article originally published on 28th May 2024 by the Conservation Trust (UK)

One of the most fascinating and visually striking symbols associated with the Knights Templar is undoubtedly their wax seal, which depicted two knights sharing a single horse. This image is not merely a piece of artwork; it holds profound significance and is steeped in historical context.

In the Middle Ages, seals were essential tools for safeguarding important communications from forgery, much like a signature serves today. They were used by everyone—from prominent individuals to large organisations—each displaying their own distinctive seal that conveyed identity and authenticity. While seals often featured straightforward imagery that could be quickly understood, many also contained layers of meaning that spoke to deeper messages about values and beliefs.

The Templars' seal is particularly intriguing, as it invites various interpretations that reveal much about the Order's principles and ethos. Delving into the imagery of the Templar Seal offers us a glimpse into these multiple layers of meaning.



One of the most popular interpretations connects the shared horse to the Templars' vow of poverty. Although they did not live in literal deprivation, this powerful symbol likely underscored their unwavering commitment to this vow—an embodiment of unity in purpose as they dedicated themselves to spiritual pursuits over material wealth.

Another captivating perspective links this imagery to a passage from the Gospel of Matthew: one knight represents a valiant warrior while the other embodies Jesus Christ himself. This interpretation arises from Christ's profound words: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I with them." In this light, the two knights on a single horse come to represent Christ's constant presence among those who unite under his name—a beautiful testament to faith and fellowship.

Some scholars suggest yet another layer of complexity lies within these knights' representing duality within the order itself—the shared horse signifying unity between their roles as both courageous warriors defending faith and devoted monks upholding spiritual discipline. This contrast reflects an intricate balance between martial prowess and monastic serenity that characterised Templar identity.

Adding further intrigue is its inscription: originally reading "Sigillum Militum Christi," or "Seal of the Soldiers of Christ," it underwent an alteration by their 19th Grand Master, Renaud de Vichiers, in mid-13th century to "Sigillum Militum Xpisti." This change notably swapped Latin for Greek letters when referring to Christ—a subtle but significant shift! Some scholars believe this transformation invoked Emperor Constantine's vision during 312 C. E.'s Battle of Milvian Bridge—a momentous victory that ultimately led to an end to official Christian persecution in Rome.

Its exact meaning may remain elusive across varying interpretations, there's no denying its immense power as a symbol reflecting knights' ardent dedication towards lofty ideals!

This puzzling seal not only offers insight into Knights Templar identity but also illuminates its profound influence on medieval Christian history.

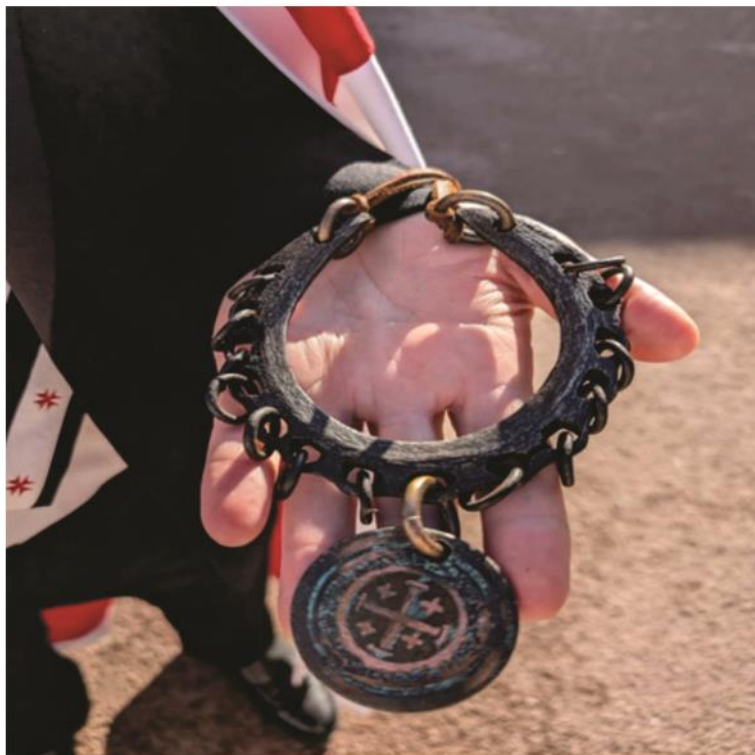
# The Pilgrimage Horseshoe

By Chevalier Warren Cruickshank, KCTJ

I am delighted to inform you that we have the blessing from His Excellency Paul Grant, the Grand Prior and Chapter, to use the horseshoe as the token of pilgrimage for the Knights Templar in England.

This fantastic piece of work created by Chevalier Doug Campbell is the centrepiece of the project. This iron horseshoe with the cross of Jerusalem medallion has thirteen rings attached, the number thirteen being synonymous with the Knights Templar. We know there are variations on the origin of the 'unlucky number thirteen'. But it belongs to us, the Knights Templar. It is ours, and we 'own' the number **Thirteen**.

So now we have thirteen rings to be filled, a pilgrimage for each ring. In 2025, when the Pilgrim Project is launched, we will require a different Templar-related site for each ring. This is where you, the Order's members, can participate. If you believe you have a Templar site you would like or think could be suitable for a pilgrimage, please put the idea forward to your Commander of the North, South or London, and they, in turn, will put forward your suggestion to the Chapter who will make a decision and have the final say on the thirteen suitable pilgrimage sites.



To start with, we have a few sites that will be included in the thirteen, in no particular order:

- Temple Church, London
- All Hallows by the Tower, London
- Jacques de Molay, Paris
- Jerusalem

Each pilgrimage will be recorded in a ledger and will become part of the historic archives of the Knights Templars in England alongside the Horseshoe. So go forth, my brothers and sisters, discover Templar sites across this green and pleasant land, across Europe and the Holy Land and in 2025, on a pilgrimage, we will go!

**The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Grand Priory will be held on Sunday 26th January 2025 at Kettering Park Hotel, Northamptonshire.**

**All members are encouraged to attend.**

**It is likely that a Chapter meeting will be held on the same day, so all members of Chapter should ensure their availability.**

# Debunking the Conspiracy Theorists

Adapted from an article that appears on BBC's History Channel

**F**or centuries, the Knights Templar, a militant monastic order founded in the 12th century, have been central to numerous conspiracy theories. Accused of devil-worship in their time, they have been linked to everything from the Holy Grail to claims of 'discovering' the Americas.

Let us explore these theories, including suggestions that the Templars exist today. In the late 11th century, Pope Urban II called for a crusade to reclaim the Holy Land. This resulted in an army of warriors, nobles, clerics and peasants embarking on what became known as the First Crusade. They succeeded in capturing Jerusalem and establishing four 'Crusader states'. However, these enclaves were soon vulnerable to Muslim counterattacks. Around 1119, French knights under Hugh de Payns formed 'the Knights Templar'—originally named The Poor Knights of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon—to protect Christian pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem.

Their name stemmed from their lodgings at al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem—mistakenly believed by Christians then to be Solomon's temple—provided by King Baldwin II. They adopted a monastic lifestyle marked by vows renouncing personal property while committing to obedience and celibacy; funding came from donations across Europe and papal tax exemptions.

The knights wore white mantles with red crosses while sergeants donned black tunics with similar embellishments; initially tasked with protection duties that evolved into broader military campaigns across regions by late-13th-century timespan when they commanded vast wealth and influence spanning continents beyond Europe.

Despite their power over decades since inception—a history often forgotten—they attracted many adversaries right from the start until Friday 13th October 1307 when King Philip IV orchestrated their downfall by arresting every member and seizing assets amid accusations ranging from heresy to bizarre claims of feline worship.

Ultimately, Grand Master Jacques de Molay confessed under torture before meeting his fiery end atop a Parisian stake circa 1314 AD while Pope Clement V dissolved the organisation two years earlier on March 22nd reallocating properties either Hospitallers or various rulers throughout continental Europe.

The sudden disappearance of this illustrious entity has sparked enduring fascination and speculation ever since.

The fascination with the Knights Templar highlights the power of myth and mystery. Many conspiracy theories suggest they survived their dissolution, becoming a secret group guarding ancient secrets. Even at their medieval height, critics labelled them a cult within Christendom, while accusations of satanism and blasphemy led to their persecution and left a lasting impact on collective memory.

Among these tales, none is more captivating than the legend that they discovered the Holy Grail in the 12th century. This narrative supports views of them as a secretive society with magical knowledge, allegedly wielding influence through this extraordinary relic. The allure of this story lies in its historical roots and its reflection on society's struggles with power and mystery over time.

## What is the source of this theory?

The Grail's connection to the First Crusade and the Crusader states is a captivating topic. Recent research notes that in the 12th century, discussions about the Grail were common, with some Genoese believing they had brought it back to Italy. This era of deep piety saw intense devotion to holy relics.

Many "military sightseers," as they have become known, flocked to the Holy Land in search of sacred artifacts like "the holy lance or the true cross." The quest for these relics attracted figures such as kings of Jerusalem, Hospitallers, and Templars. In such a devout society, possessing something like the Holy Grail seemed feasible.

This trade in sacred items became influential; groups like the Templars used it to encourage European rulers' crusading efforts. Their wealth from relic trading made them targets for cash-strapped monarchs like Philip IV. This wealth fuelled enduring conspiracies about their survival after elimination, with some suggesting renegade Templars fled using their fleet and regrouped outside Europe—possibly reaching distant lands like America.

While evidence shows some evaded persecution due to uneven enforcement across Europe, we know they lived openly in places like Ireland on government pensions rather than hiding.

### The reasons why the theory took hold

When the French crown initiated its witch-hunt against the Templars, it used torture to fabricate 'proof' of heresy. Many chose death over falsely incriminating themselves. Consequently, numerous individuals confessed to heresy and bizarre acts, admitting to whatever their tormentors demanded. This illustrates how torture forces people to say anything desired.

Despite this dark reality, some validity in these charges seeped into popular culture and persisted. In the Victorian era, the Templars fascinated audiences consuming novellas. In literature even the venerated Scottish historian Sir Walter Scott portrayed them as exaggerated villains.

The 19th century almost an industry of conspiracy grew up around the Templars, marked by forged documents and artefacts that sustained beliefs in an unbroken lineage of Templar traditions. Fraternal organisations like the Freemasons fuelled such theories by claiming inheritance of ancient knowledge from the Templars—merely basking in a romanticised yet misunderstood legacy.

### The evidence that debunks the theory

The enduring fascination with the Templars and the conspiracies around them largely stems from their dramatic suppression in 1312, which led to the destruction of their archives. It is likely that, like the surviving records of the Hospitallers, these lost documents would likely have been incredibly dull, lacking any sensational findings such as Holy Grail receipts.

Despite this lack of documentation, some myths can be dismissed. For instance, claims that Templars regrouped in America with a powerful fleet are unfounded; medieval ships capable of such voyages were rare and quickly became obsolete, as seen with Richard the Lionheart's fleet.

No evidence supports a mass migration of young elite soldiers from Europe during this time. Instead, many Templars appear to have been older men looking to return home or join other orders like the Hospitallers. The idea that they vanished into thin air intrigues some. One theory suggests western Scotland was a refuge for fugitive Templars; however, there's no real evidence for this claim—ironically pointing out it's one area in Britain where they had few assets. Some even try to insert an elite Templar force into accounts of Bannockburn's battle between Robert the Bruce and King Edward II in 1314. Yet contemporary records make no mention of such involvement.

In today's digital age amplifying misinformation, historians face an urgent task: clarifying historical truths based on solid evidence is crucial. He acknowledges how easily fantasies can be projected onto enigmatic figures like the Templars—a "blank piece of paper" inviting endless speculation.

But, **we** are here and only too willing to assist!

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## The Last Templar © Darum Skald (2024)

**I**n the streets of Paris, lights fading glow  
An old knight sits, his beard like snow,  
His mantle bears a cross in crimson hue  
A symbol of the life he once knew.

His eyes grow dim, recalling days of yore,  
Fighting, what was worth fighting for.  
When his horse and brothers fought by his side,  
In Jerusalem, swords swung, his honour held high  
He watched each comrade fade from sight.  
Each one fighting bravely, with all their might.

Places lost to time, faces left his mind,  
Yet in his heart, their spirits never died,  
He recalls the days of strength in his arm,  
With valour in battle, he felt no harm.  
Through ages worn, he'd shown his might,  
A pride he carries at such great height.

He longs to see those friends long past,  
To reunite with angels, he is the last,  
Awaiting eternal peace, in God's such grace,  
To join his brothers in that Holy place.

## Ranks & Appointments

Some members can be confused by the difference between Ranks and Appointments.

A **Rank** is the level of seniority which you have achieved, and an **Appointment** is a task for which you have responsibility, as follows:

### RANKS:

- Knight or Dame
- Knight or Dame Officer
- Knight or Dame Commander
- Knight or Dame Grand Officer
- Knight or Dame Grand Cross

### APPOINTMENTS:

Grand Prior  
Prior  
Chancellor  
Seneschal  
Secretary  
Marshal  
Treasurer  
Chaplain  
Warden of Regalia  
Area Commander  
Preceptor  
Steward

## Templar Fayre

### MUSHROOMS

Although in Britain people distrusted funghi and mushrooms because they were associated with witchcraft and evil. This was also reflected in the names they were given, such as Devil's Fingers, Witches' Butter or Satan's bolete. However, over the Channel they certainly did eat them frequently, so it is likely that mushrooms were part of the Knights Templar diet.

This recipe comes from a French cookbook *Le Ménagier de Paris* (the Housekeeper of Paris) which is a French medieval guidebook from 1393 on a woman's proper behaviour in marriage and running a household. It even included sexual advice!

The 19th century translation into English of this allegedly 11th century recipe reads:

*Mushrooms of one night are the best, if they are small, red inside, and closed at the top: and they should be peeled and then washed in hot water and parboiled, and if you wish to put them in a pasty add oil, cheese and spice powder.*

### Mushroom Pasties

- 450g home-made or bought short crust pastry, thawed if frozen
- 450g button mushrooms
- Pinch of salt
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 50g Cheddar cheese, grated
- ½ tsp salt
- ⅛ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp dry mustard powder
- 1 egg, beaten

Use two-thirds of the pastry to line small, deep pans. Chill while making the filling.

Preheat the oven to 200°C.

Trim off and discard the bottoms of the mushroom stems, then dip the mushrooms in boiling salted water, holding them in a sieve. Drain them, pat dry, then chop or slice them. Put them in a bowl and mix them with the oil, cheese and seasonings.

Fill the mixture into the pastry cases. Roll out the remaining pastry and use it to make lids for the pasties. Seal the lids with beaten egg. Decorate the tops with pastry trimmings and brush with the remaining egg.

Make a small crosscut in the centre of each lid. Bake the little pies in the oven for 15–18 minutes. Serve warm.

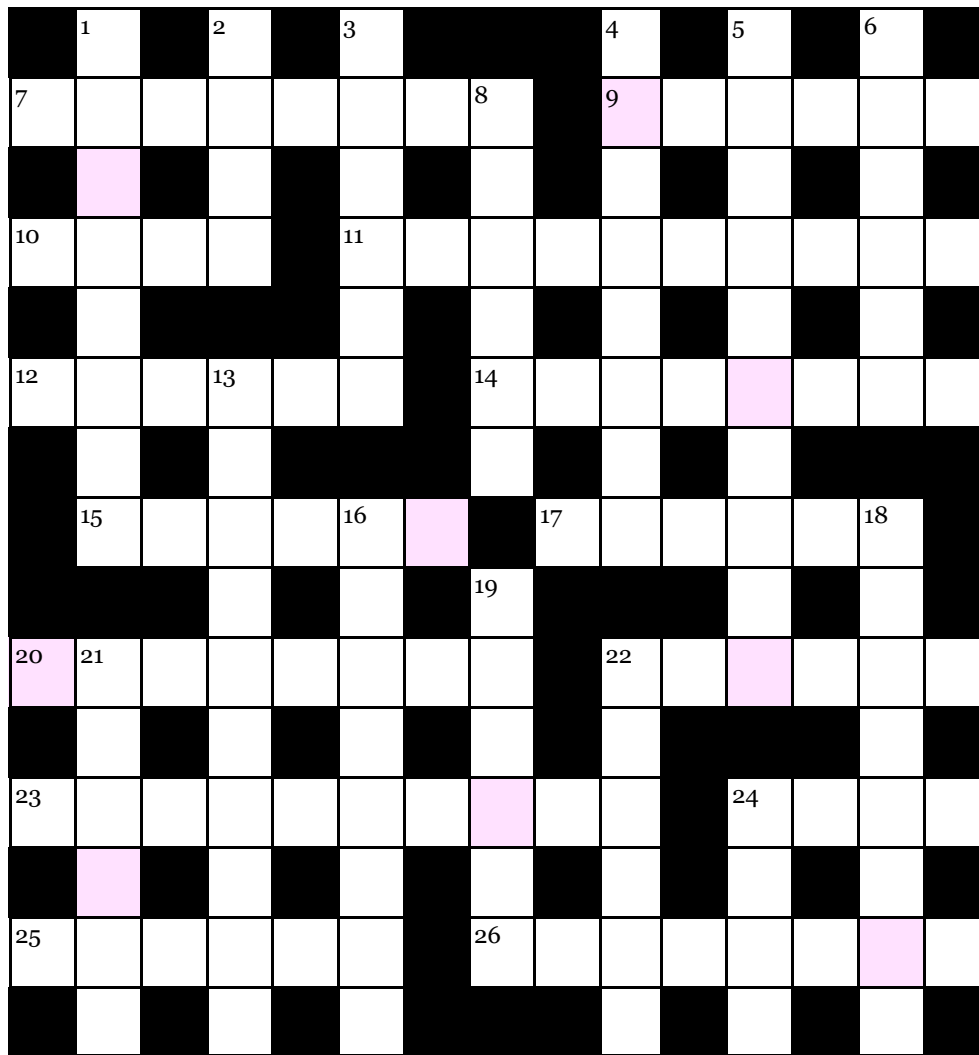
Members are reminded that wherever possible our annual investitures are scheduled for weekend closest to 24th May\* each year (the anniversary of the death of Hugues de Payen, our first Grand Master) and the weekend immediately after the 13th October (Templar Remembrance Day) to facilitate planning and to maximise attendance.

**PLEASE TRY TO KEEP THESE WEEKENDS FREE OF OTHER COMMITMENTS!**

\* Unless circumstances demand change

# The Knightly News Prize Crossword #7

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## ACROSS

7. Shapely goons act? (8)
9. Escargots by another name (6)
10. Rubbish Chinese yacht (4)
11. Competes on game shows? (10)
12. Disgusting purveyor of food? (6)
14. Determined again (8)
15. Official order (6)
17. Detestably vile (6)
20. Perhaps her pilot landed here? (8)
22. Bird of the finch family (6)
23. Infrequent use of side table (10)
24. Tiller, or knightly hat (4)
25. Twin brother of Artemis (6)
26. Refrains from ringing us with chores (8)

## DOWN

1. Something happened (8)
2. Channel Island's cutty? (4)
3. Agree (6)
4. Estimated tax (8)
5. Slap on a ton of baggy trousers? (10)
6. Brief look (6)
8. Miscellaneous item (6)
13. Riding a bike around and around. (10)
16. Come on, it could be a smiley (8)
18. Knight, protected from harm (8)
19. In Macbeth, Nick is from another culture (6)
21. Break free or get away from (6)
22. Drinking lounge in an Oslo party (6)
24. Fisherman's catch (4)

Find the nine-letter word in the pink squares that relates to the Knights Templar and submit it to the Grand Secretary to enter a free prize draw.

[secretary@osmth-england.org.uk](mailto:secretary@osmth-england.org.uk)

## OSMTH ENGLAND WHO'S WHO

for the benefit of our new members, the Officers of our Order are as follows:

(\*) Denotes Chapter Member

### GRAND PRIOR \*

H.E. Chev. Paul Grant

### GRAND TREASURER and DEPUTY GRAND PRIOR \*

Chev. Ian Bates

### GRAND SECRETARY \*

Chev. Dr. Robert Webber

### GRAND CONSTABLE \*

Chev. Danny Gill

### GRAND MARSHAL \*

Chev. Paul Tredgett

### CHAPLAIN

Revd. Chev. Les Fraser

### GRAND SWORD BEARER

Chev. Nicolai Webber

### COMMANDER OF THE NORTH \*

Chev. Tina Walford-Stretton

### COMMANDER OF THE SOUTH \*

Chev. Troy Close

### WARDEN OF REGALIA \*

Chev. Mike Caseman-Jones

### WARDEN OF BENEVOLENCE

Chev. Tina Walford-Stretton

### HISTORIAN/ARCHIVIST

Chev. Dr Peter Mellon

### CHIEF STEWARD

Chev. Bill Straub

## PRECEPTORS

### Axe:

Chev. Simon McIlwaine, KOTJ

### Gauntlet:

Chev. Zain Carter, KTJ

### Halberd

Chev. Nicolai Webber, KCTJ

### Helm:

*Vacant*

### Lance:

Chev. Jeff Charlton, KTJ

### St George (London)

Chev. Marcus Sutor, KOTJ

### Shield

Chev. Mark Stretton, KCTJ

### Spur

*Vacant*

### Sword

Chev. Mike Shepherd, KCTJ

## Charity Update

Chevalière Tina Walton-Stretton

Three of us attended the Samuels Charity Ball in Milton Keynes enjoying dinner and hearing about the new projects for the Charity. We were presented with a framed Certificate of appreciation for our donation of £1,000 and we also introduced a Psychotherapy Graduate who was looking for appropriate settings



to do some volunteer work, to the Director, who is progressing his interest with their new project of working with children in their homes after discharge from hospital with a life limiting condition preventing their return to normal school life.

If you attended the AGM, you will have seen another raffle together with an auction for a signed football shirt which combined with our May Investiture raised around £1,000 this year.

Doug Campbell our QM donated two Forging Days to Samuels Charity, and these were auctioned at their events directly raising a total of £440 this year towards

the charity. We would like to thank Doug for donating his expert and valuable time for the charity.

If anyone has a skill that can be turned into a training day and given to Samuels to auction at their next event, or any high value and unique item that we can auction, please send details to Tina so this can be incorporated at our Investitures or Samuels fund raising events next year.

Further to our fund raising achievements this year together with an allocation from previous years, we are proposing to send a further £2,000 to Samuels before Christmas.



## Compline

**REMEMBER THAT WE HOLD A REGULAR  
ONLINE COMPLINE ON SUNDAY EVENINGS.**

**Contact the Chaplain for details.  
chaplain@osmth-england.org**

**For details of our Order, please visit our website: [www.osmth-england.org](http://www.osmth-england.org)  
Or contact our Secretary at: [secretary@osmth-england.org](mailto:secretary@osmth-england.org)**