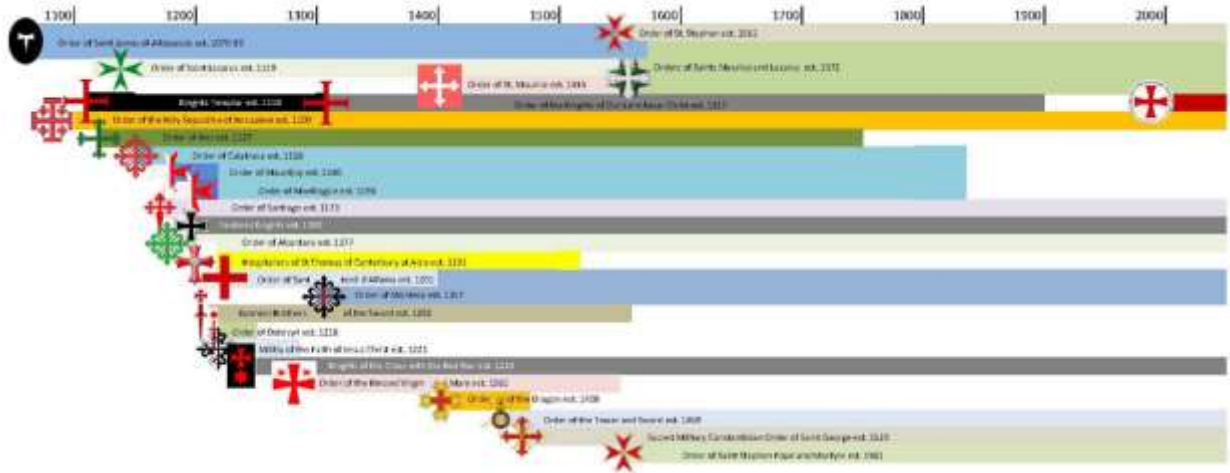Our
Hospitaller
Knight
Ancestor

Introduction

The hospitaller and military religious orders were chivalric orders with humanitarian and military purpose originally established as Catholic religious societies during the medieval Crusades for protection of Christians against violent persecution of the Islamic conquests (623–) in the Holy Land and the Iberian Peninsula, as well as by Baltic paganism in Eastern Europe. Most members, often titled Knights, were and still are laymen, and not prelates, yet cooperating with the clergy, sometimes even taking religious vows such as poverty, chastity, and obedience, according to monastic ideals. As such, it was in the military orders that the medieval concept of chivalry reached its apogee in an exceptional fusion under Just war theory of military discipline and Christian virtues.

Prominent examples include the Knights Hospitaller, and the Knights Templar in Outremer, as well as the Teutonic Knights in the Baltics, but there were others. Many military orders were suppressed by the Holy See in Rome around the end of the Middle Ages, with few new recognized establishments afterwards. A few of the institutions survived into honorific and/or charitable organizations, including the papal orders of knighthood.

While our family had a number of ancestors who fought in the Crusades, only one is known to have been a Hospitaller Knight – Henry de Rishworth. Here is his profile.

Knights Hospitallers

The Knights Hospitallers, also spelled Hospitalers, also called Order of Malta or Knights of Malta, formally (since 1961) Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes, and of Malta, previously (1113–1309) Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem, (1309–1522) Order of the Knights of Rhodes, (1530–1798) Sovereign and Military Order of the Knights of Malta, or (1834–1961) Knights Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem, is a religious military order that was founded at Jerusalem in the 11th century and that, headquartered in Rome, continues its humanitarian tasks in most parts of the modern world under several slightly different names and jurisdictions.

The Hospitallers arose in the early 11th century, at the time of the great monastic reformation, as a group of individuals associated with an Amalfitan hospital in the Muristan district of Jerusalem, dedicated to John the Baptist and founded around 1023 by Gerard Thom to provide care for sick, poor or injured pilgrims coming to the Holy Land. Some scholars, however, consider that the Amalfitan order and hospital were different from Gerard Thom's order and its hospital. The Blessed Gerard (c. 1040 – 3 September 1120) was a lay brother in the Benedictine order who was appointed as rector of the hospice in Jerusalem in 1080.

A M A L F I

The Duchy of Amalfi was a *de facto* independent state centered on the Southern Italian city of Amalfi during the 10th and 11th centuries. The city of Amalfi was founded as a trading post in 339. Its first bishop was appointed in 596.

FIGURE 1 *Gerard Thom (c. 1040 – 3 September 1120)*

Little is known about Gerard's life; his nationality and place of birth is unknown (tradition makes him a native of either Amalfi or Lower Burgundy (Provence). He most likely was a Benedictine lay brother, possibly one of the *frates conversi* (i.e. men who joined the Order not as boys or youths but after spending part of their adult years leading a secular life) who came to the Holy Land to serve at the abbey of St. Mary of the Latins. In c. 1080, the abbot put him in charge of the Hospital of St. John in Jerusalem, which had been built on the site of the monastery of Saint John the Baptist in the 1060s in addition to the older hospice rebuilt in the 1020s.

During the Siege of Jerusalem (1099), when the Christian population had been expelled from Jerusalem, Gerard was able to remain behind with some fellow serving brothers to tend to the sick in the hospital.

After the success of the First Crusade and the establishment of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, Gerard continued his work at the hospital, now under vastly more beneficent conditions. Godfrey, the first Latin ruler of Jerusalem, gave some property to the hospital, and his successor Baldwin granted it one tenth of the spoils of a victory at the Battle of Ramla in 1101. Also in 1101, the Duke of Apulia gave a large gift to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, with the specification that one third of the gift was to go to the hospital. By 1113, the hospital was a wealthy and powerful organization within the kingdom of Jerusalem, and Gerard expanded its operations far beyond the limits of the city, establishing daughter hospitals at Bari, Otranto, Taranto, Messina, Pisa, Asti and Saint-Gilles, placed strategically along the pilgrim route to Jerusalem.

The hospital soon overshadowed the abbey of St. Mary of the Latins, which was still its nominal parent organization, and it may be that because of this, it was deemed appropriate to establish the hospital as a sovereign entity in its own right. This happened in 1113, when Pope Paschal II in *Pie Postulatio Voluntatis* recognized the hospital as a new religious order. The brothers serving in the hospital were now known as the Hospitallers of St. John, and Gerard as the Rector of the Hospital. The Order adopted a rule that adopted components from the Rule of St Benedict and the Rule of St Augustine. The Order was now independent, subject only to the papacy (and no longer subject to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem), and free to elect Gerard's successor, and free to receive and own property.

The Hospitallers and the Knights Templar became the most formidable military orders in the Holy Land. In 1248 Pope Innocent IV (1243–1254) approved a standard military dress for the Hospitallers to be worn during battle. Instead of a closed cape over their armor (which restricted their movements), they wore a red surcoat with a white cross emblazoned on it.

Many of the more substantial Christian fortifications in the Holy Land were built by the Templars and the Hospitallers. At the height of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Hospitallers held seven great forts and 140 other estates in the area. The two largest of these, their bases of power in the Kingdom and in the Principality of Antioch, were the Krak des Chevaliers and Margat in Syria. The property of the Order was divided into priories, subdivided into bailiwicks, which in turn were divided into commanderies.

As early as the late 12th century the Order had begun to achieve recognition in the Kingdom of England and Duchy of Normandy. As a result, buildings such as St John's Jerusalem and the Knights Gate, Quenington in England were built on land donated to the Order by local nobility. An Irish house was established at Kilmainham, near Dublin, and the Irish Prior was usually a key figure in Irish public life.

The Knights also received the "Land of Severin" (*Terra de Zeurino*), along with the nearby mountains, from Béla IV of Hungary, as shown by a charter of grant issued on 2 June 1247. The Banate of Severin was a march, or border province, of the Kingdom of Hungary between the Lower Danube and the Olt River, today part of Romania, and back then bordered across the Danube by a powerful Bulgarian Empire. However, the Hospitaller hold on the Banate was only brief.

When the Muslims recaptured Jerusalem in 1187, the Hospitallers removed their headquarters first to Margat and then, in 1197, to Acre. When the Crusader principalities came to an end after the fall of Acre in 1291, the Hospitallers moved to Limassol in Cyprus. In 1309 they acquired Rhodes, which they came to rule as an independent state, with right of coinage and other attributes of sovereignty. Under the Order's rule, the master (grand master from **c.** 1430) was elected for life (subject to papal confirmation) and ruled a celibate brotherhood of knights, chaplains, and serving brothers. For more than two centuries these Knights of Rhodes were the scourge of Muslim shipping on the eastern Mediterranean. They constituted the last Christian outpost in the East.

By the 15th century the Turks had succeeded the Arabs as the protagonists of militant Islam, and in 1522 Süleyman the Magnificent laid final siege to Rhodes. After six months the Knights capitulated and on January 1, 1523, sailed away with as many of the citizens as chose to follow them. For seven years the wandering Knights were without a base, but in 1530 the Holy Roman emperor Charles V gave them the Maltese archipelago in return, among other things, for the annual presentation of a falcon to his viceroy of Sicily. The superb leadership of the grand master Jean Parisot de la Valette prevented Süleyman the Magnificent from dislodging the Knights from Malta in 1565 in one of the most famous sieges in history, which ended in a Turkish disaster. What was left of the Turkish navy was permanently crippled in 1571 at the Battle of Lepanto by the combined fleets of several

European powers that included the Knights of Malta. The Knights then proceeded to build a new Maltese capital, Valletta, named after la Valette. In it they built great defense works and a hospital of grand dimensions that attracted many physically and mentally ill patients from outside Malta.

Thereafter the Knights continued as a territorial sovereign state in Malta but gradually gave up warfare and turned wholly to territorial administration and to medical care. In 1798, however, their reign in Malta came to an end, when Napoleon, on his way to Egypt, occupied the island. The Order's return to Malta was provided for in the Treaty of Amiens (1802) but eliminated by the Treaty of Paris (1814), which assigned Malta to Great Britain.

In 1834, the Order settled in Rome. Hospital work, the original work of the Order, became once again its main concern. The Order's hospital and welfare activities, undertaken on a considerable scale in World War I, were greatly intensified and expanded in World War II under the Grand Master Fra' Ludovico Chigi Albani della Rovere (Grand Master 1931–1951).

The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta, better known as the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (SMOM) sovereign status is recognized by membership in numerous international bodies and observer status at the United Nations and others.

The Order maintains diplomatic relations with 107 countries, official relations with 6 others and with the European Union, permanent observer missions to the United Nations and its specialized agencies, and delegations or representations to many other international organizations. It issues its own passports, currency, stamps and even vehicle registration plates. The Sovereign Military Order of Malta has a permanent presence in 120 countries, with 12 Grand Priories and Sub-Priories and 47 national Associations, as well as numerous hospitals, medical centers, day care centers, first aid corps, and specialist foundations, which operate in 120 countries. Its 13,500 members and 80,000 volunteers and over 42,000 medical personnel – doctors, nurses and paramedics – are dedicated to the care of the poor, the sick, the elderly, the disabled, the homeless, terminal patients, lepers, and all those who suffer. The Order is especially involved in helping victims of armed conflicts and natural disasters by providing medical assistance, caring for refugees, and distributing medicines and basic equipment for survival.

FIGURE 2
Arms of the Order of Malta

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta established a mission in Malta, after signing an agreement with the Maltese Government which granted the Order the exclusive use of Fort St. Angelo for a term of 99 years. Today, after restoration, the Fort hosts historical and cultural activities related to the Order of Malta.

Lineage

Henry de Rishworth
  Alice Rocaforti
Robert de Rishworth
  Christine de Coldley
Nicholas de Rishworth
  Helen Norwode
Henry de Rishworth
  Alicia
John de Rishworth
  Joyce Neville
John Rishworth
  Miss Lucy
John Rishworth
  Janet Keith
John Waterhouse
  Agnes Rishworth
Robert Waterhouse
  Sibil Savili
Richard Waterhouse
  Sibbell Royd
John Ramsdell
  Susan Waterhous
John Ramsdell
  Unknown
James Adams
  Priscilla Ramsdell
James Adams, II
  Honor Hall
James Hall
  Honor Anner
Samuel Pendleton
  Phebe Hall
Simeon Franklin Crumb
  Harriet Pendleton
Simeon Pendleton Crumb
  Mary Ann Fitzgerald Shaw
Edward Franklin Crumb
  Caroline
Simeon Franklin Crumb
  Mary Matilda Warner
Harry A. Crum
  Bertha D Hostmeyer
Alfred Arthur Crum
  Gladys Mae Linder
Peter Edward Heineman
  Doris Jean Crum
Peter Lea Heineman

It is suggested that the Rishworth family history begins in Halifax where Thomas Rishworth, who was living about 963 A.D., had a daughter Ann, born in Rishworth about 1009 A.D. Ann apparently rose to the position of Vicar or Rector of Halifax, although no evidence has been found as yet..

Ann married Adam de Copley, who was slain when William the Conqueror laid siege to York in 1070. Adam and Ann had a son Hugh Talva de Copley, who married Margaret, daughter of Richard de Liversedge.

R I S H W O R T H

Rishworth is a village in Calderdale, West Yorkshire, England.

The Crusades mainly occurred during the 12th Century. It is said that King Richard I bestowed a gift on a Rishworth Knight for services rendered in the Christian/Moslem Holy Wars in the Middle East. Although no evidence appears to be located, the Rishworth Coat of Arms seems to bear this out, apparently having its origin in the 12th Century. (There are variations of the Rishworth Coat of Arms).

Sir Henry de Rishworth (Elias[25],

Elyas[26], William[27]) was born in 1250 in Rishworth, West Yorkshire and died in 1307 in West Riding, Yorkshire. He married **Alice Rocaforti** born 1260 died 1307. They had one child: **Robert de Rishworth.** No other information on Sir John is known.