



OUR HOSPITALLER
KNIGHT
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INTRODUCTION

The hospitaller and military religious orders were chivalric institutions that combined humanitarian service with martial responsibility. They originated as Catholic religious societies during the medieval Crusades, established to protect Christian populations from persecution amid the expansion of Islamic rule beginning in the 7th century, as well as from pagan forces in the Baltic regions of Eastern Europe.

Their members—commonly known as knights—were typically laymen rather than ordained clergy, though they worked closely with ecclesiastical authorities. Many adopted monastic-style commitments, including vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Within these orders, the medieval ideal of chivalry reached its fullest expression, uniting military discipline with Christian virtue under the framework of just war theory.

Notable examples include the Knights Hospitaller and the Knights Templar in the Holy Land, along with the Teutonic Knights in the Baltic region, among others. By the close of the Middle Ages, many of these orders were suppressed by the Holy See, and relatively few new ones were established thereafter. Some, however, endured in modified forms as honorific or charitable institutions, including the papal orders of knighthood.

Although several ancestors are known to have participated in the Crusades, only one is known to have been affiliated with a hospitaller order: Sir Henry de Rishworth.

The Knights Hospitaller

The Knights Hospitaller—also spelled Hospitalers and commonly known as the Order of Malta or Knights of Malta—are formally designated (since 1961) as the Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes, and of Malta. Over the centuries, the Order has been known by several names, including the Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem (1113–1309), the Order of the Knights of Rhodes (1309–1522), the Sovereign and Military Order of the Knights of Malta (1530–1798), and the Knights Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem (1834–1961). Founded in Jerusalem in the 11th century, the Order remains active today, headquartered in Rome and continuing its humanitarian mission worldwide under various jurisdictions and titles.

The origins of the Hospitallers date to the early 11th century, during a period of significant monastic reform. They began as a group associated with an Amalfitan hospital in Jerusalem's Muristan district, dedicated to John the Baptist and established around 1023 to care for sick, poor, and injured pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land. While some historians distinguish this Amalfitan institution from the later Hospitaller Order, the figure most closely associated with its development is Blessed Gerard (c. 1040 – 3 September 1120), a Benedictine lay brother who became rector of the hospice in Jerusalem around 1080.

Little is definitively known about Gerard's early life, including his exact place of birth, though tradition suggests either Amalfi or Provence. Likely a member of the *fratres conversi*—laymen who joined religious life as adults—he was entrusted with managing the Hospital of St. John, built near the site of a monastery dedicated to John the Baptist. During the Siege of Jerusalem in 1099, Gerard and his fellow brothers remained in the city to care for the sick, even as much of the Christian population was expelled.

Following the success of the First Crusade and the establishment of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the hospital flourished under more favorable conditions. It received substantial patronage from rulers such as Godfrey of Bouillon and Baldwin I, as well as from European benefactors. By 1113, the institution had grown into a wealthy and influential organization, with daughter hospitals established along key pilgrimage routes across Europe and the Mediterranean.

In that same year, Pope Paschal II formally recognized the hospital as an independent religious order through the papal bull *Pie Postulatio Voluntatis*. This recognition granted the Order autonomy, placing it directly under papal authority and allowing it to elect its own leadership and manage its property. The members, now known as the Hospitallers of St. John, followed a rule combining elements of the Benedictine and Augustinian traditions.

Over time, the Order evolved into a powerful military as well as charitable institution, alongside the Knights Templar. The Hospitallers played a central role in defending the Crusader states, constructing major fortifications such as Krak des Chevaliers and Margat. Their holdings were organized into a complex administrative structure of priories, bailiwicks, and commanderies, extending across Europe.

After the fall of Jerusalem in 1187, the Order relocated its headquarters multiple times—first to Margat, then Acre, Cyprus, and eventually Rhodes, which they acquired in 1309. There, they established an independent sovereign state, maintaining naval power in the eastern Mediterranean for over two centuries. Following a prolonged siege by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, the Knights were forced to surrender Rhodes in 1522.

In 1530, Emperor Charles V granted the Order the island of Malta. Under the leadership of Grand Master Jean Parisot de la Valette, the Knights successfully resisted a major Ottoman siege in 1565, securing their position. They later developed Malta into a fortified and administratively sophisticated state, constructing the capital city of Valletta and expanding their renowned medical services.

The Order's sovereignty in Malta ended in 1798 when Napoleon occupied the island. Although treaties briefly proposed restoring their rule, Malta ultimately came under British control. In 1834, the Order reestablished its headquarters in Rome, where it refocused on its original mission of medical and humanitarian aid.

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, particularly during the World Wars, the Order expanded its hospital and relief operations significantly. Under leaders such as Grand Master Fra' Ludovico Chigi Albani della Rovere, it reaffirmed its longstanding commitment to caring for the sick and vulnerable, a mission it continues to uphold globally today.



It has been suggested that the origins of the Rishworth family can be traced to Halifax, where Thomas Rishworth was living around 963 A.D. He is believed to have had a daughter, Ann, born in Rishworth circa 1009 A.D. Some accounts claim that Ann later attained the position of vicar or rector of Halifax, although no documentary evidence has yet been identified to substantiate this assertion.

Ann is said to have married Adam de Copley, who was reportedly killed during William the Conqueror's campaign in the north, including the siege of York in 1070. Their union is believed to have produced a son, Hugh Talva de Copley, who subsequently married Margaret, the daughter of Richard de Liversedge.



The Crusades, which primarily took place during the 12th century, are also associated in family tradition with the Rishworth lineage. According to these accounts, King Richard I is said to have granted recognition or a gift to a Rishworth knight for services rendered during the Christian-

Muslim conflicts in the Holy Land. While no definitive evidence has been found to confirm this tradition, it is sometimes suggested that the Rishworth coat of arms, believed to date from the 12th century, reflects this historical association.

Sir Henry de Rishworth (1250-1307)

Henry de Rishworth was born in Rishworth, West Yorkshire, and died in West Riding, Yorkshire. He married Alice Rocaforti (1260-1307), and they had at least one child, Robert de Rishworth. No other information is known.

LINEAGE *from* SIR HENRY DE RISHWORTH

24. Henry de Rishworth
m. Alice Rocaforti
23. Robert de Rishworth
m. Christine de Coldley
22. Nicholas de Rishworth
m. Helen Norwode
21. Henry de Rishworth
m. Alicia
20. John de Rishworth
m. Joyce Neville
19. John Rishworth
m. Miss Lucy
18. John Rishworth
m. Janet Keith
17. John Waterhouse
m. Agnes Rishworth
16. Robert Waterhouse
m. Sibil Savili
15. Richard Waterhouse
m. Sibbell Royd
14. John Ramsdell
m. Susan Waterhouse
13. John Ramsdell
m. Unknown
12. James Adams
m. Priscilla Ramsdell
11. James Adams, II
m. Honor Hall
10. James Hall
m. Honor Anner
9. Samuel Pendleton
m. Phebe Hall
8. Simeon Franklin Crum
m. Harriet Pendleton
7. Simeon Pendleton Crum
m. Mary Ann Fitzgerald Shaw
6. Edward Franklin Crum
m. Caroline
5. Simeon Franklin Crum
m. Mary Matilda Warner
4. Harry A. Crum
m. Bertha D. Hostmeyer
3. Alfred Arthur Crum
m. Gladys Mae Linder
2. Peter Edward Heineman
m. Doris Jean Crum
1. Peter Lea Heineman



The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta, commonly known as the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (SMOM), is a sovereign entity whose international status is recognized through its membership and observer roles in numerous international organizations, including the United Nations.

The Order maintains diplomatic relations with 107 countries, official relations with six additional states and the European Union, and holds permanent observer status at the United Nations and several of its specialized agencies. It is also represented in many other international bodies through delegations and missions. In addition, the Order issues its own passports, currency, postage stamps, and vehicle registration plates, reflecting its sovereign functions.

Operationally, the Order has a global presence in approximately 120 countries. This includes 12 Grand Pories and Sub-Pories, 47 national associations, and a wide network of hospitals, medical centers, day-care facilities, first aid corps, and specialized foundations. Its humanitarian work is supported by approximately 13,500 members, 80,000 volunteers, and over 42,000 medical professionals, including doctors, nurses, and paramedics. These teams provide care for vulnerable populations such as the poor, sick, elderly, disabled, homeless, terminally ill, and those affected by leprosy. The Order is also actively engaged in emergency response efforts, offering medical assistance, refugee support, and the distribution of essential medicines and supplies during armed conflicts and natural disasters.

In Malta, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta established a mission following an agreement with the Maltese Government granting the Order exclusive use of Fort St. Angelo for 99 years. The restored fort now serves as a venue for historical and cultural activities related to the Order's heritage and mission.

