



OSMTH – KNIGHTS TEMPLAR INTERNATIONAL HOLDS KEY MEETINGS IN ENGLAND

The Magistral Grand Council of OSMTH – Knights Templar International gathered for its 2005 Spring Meetings on Saturday 23rd April at Bisham Abbey, a former Preceptory of the medieval Templars on the banks of the River Thames near Marlow.

Some 100 participants attended from 12 countries across Europe and North America. 10 new members – 7 from England, 2 from Serbia and 1 from Germany – were admitted into the Order with solemn ceremony during a service in the 13th century Parish Church of All Saints, Bisham.

At a time when recently published books - and films about to be released - mean that Templars, past and present, are much in the news, the International Grand Commander, Brigadier General Patrick Rea from the USA, explained: *“OSMTH - Knights Templar International aspires to be the modern organisation the original Knights Templar could have become, if their historical development had been unbroken. Like other military-religious orders whose traditions stem from Jerusalem in the middle ages, we have long since put swords to purely ceremonial use and we have turned our attention to charitable, cultural, humanitarian and conciliation endeavours.”*

The modern Order has its origins in Paris two hundred years ago, and has long been an interdenominational pioneer, admitting members from all major Christian Churches as long ago as 1841. Today, OSMTH – Knights Templar International has been privileged to establish working relationships with senior clergy in the Anglican, Lutheran, Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches in Europe, North America and the Middle East.

The organisation also greatly values its contacts with leading figures in the Islamic and Jewish faith communities and it is active in promoting dialogue between the major faith communities. Archdeacon Ronald Matthewman, head of the Grand Priory of Canada, which was admitted as a voting member association of OSMTH – Knights Templar International at these meetings, commented: *“In our members, we look for Christians confident enough in their own faith to respect and value the faith of others.”*

OSMTH – Knights Templar International is the only part of the modern Order that is recognised as a Non-Governmental Organisation in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. This status has been earned by the efforts of its member Grand Priorities to provide humanitarian aid around the world, and to promote peace and reconciliation, especially in the Holy Land and the Middle East. The Grand Chancellor, Lieutenant-Colonel Fredrik Michelet from Norway, noted: *“A significant part of the business, that we have discussed over this weekend, has focused on how our organisation can co-operate more extensively with the United Nations and other Non-Governmental Organisations around the world.”*

On the preceding Friday, after Evensong in St George's Chapel, Andrew Carter, Warden of St George's House, Windsor Castle, made a presentation there on the work of St George's House, and OSMTH – Knights Templar International commenced discussions on the possibility of providing support for the clergy development and youth leadership courses held there.

During the Templar Discussion Forum on Saturday, Mr Sean Woods, Managing Director of the Vaynol Building Conservation Centre, accepted an Industrial Templar Grant from the Grand Priory of England & Wales to support the specialist woodcarving courses held at the Centre near Bangor in North Wales.

Mr John Reddington, Chairman, made a presentation on the work of the Templar Pilgrimage Trust, a registered charity associated with the Order, which provides grants to the young and the disabled to assist them in making pilgrimages or religious educational visits. The members of the Order in England and Wales recently donated £6,000 to expand the work of the trust. Mr Simon Le Fevre, head of the Grand Priory of England & Wales commented: *“As you might expect from an organisation whose medieval predecessors chose to support pilgrims as their first and most important task, this remains a priority for today’s Order.”*

Notes for Editors

Background Information on OSMTH – Knights Templar International

OSMTH – Knights Templar International is an interdenominational Christian and chivalric organisation that take its inspiration from the highest ideals of the Order of Knights Templar, founded by Hugh de Payens and eight companions in Jerusalem, circa 1119, to protect pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land.

Full membership is open to Christians who are willing to commit themselves to the traditions of the rule of life and the code of chivalry prepared for the medieval Order under the guidance of St Bernard of Clairvaux. Associate membership is open to others who are in sympathy with its ideals and wish to support the work of the Order.

OSMTH – Knights Templar International is an international umbrella organisation and has member Grand Pories in Austria, Canada, England & Wales, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, NATO, Serbia and the USA.

The objects of the member associations of OSMTH – Knights Templar International include:

- pursuing excellence in work and daily life to the greater glory of God;
- promoting international peace and justice;
- providing humanitarian relief to the poor, sick and needy;
- assisting persons to undertake pilgrimages;
- supporting those Christian communities at risk of discrimination or hardship;
- increasing mutual understanding between faiths;
- conserving Christian holy sites in the Holy Land;
- encouraging historical research; and
- conserving heritage sites associated with the medieval Knights Templar.

OSMTH – Knights Templar International traces its roots to a revival in Paris in 1804. It has no proof of a direct connection with the medieval Order of Knights Templar, and it looks to any organisations that do make such claims to back them up with documentary or archaeological evidence.

OSMTH – Knights Templar International is not a secret society; nor is it part of Freemasonry.

More information can be found on:

- The OSMTH – Knights Templar International website at: www.osmth.org
- The Grand Priory of England & Wales’ website at: www.templars.org.uk

For any clarifications, please contact:

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