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In the Lebanon
An ancient tradition of service
Help for the homeless
Over 400 people with disabilities and their carers from 20 countries and over 250 Irish volunteers will participate in the camp, which will take place in Clongowes College, Clane, Co Kildare from 10-17 August. From sporting challenges to disco and IT cafes, treats are well along in the planning stages. ‘The spirit of the Irish will embody the spirit of the international camp,’ declares director Brendan Lawlor. For more information: www.internationalcamp2013.ie

A Force to be reckoned with

Luckily for us! When she is not organising receptions in Rome for visiting members of BASMOM, or setting up meetings at Fortescue House, or sending missives to the entire mailing list, or making visitors feel at home, or taking care of the hundreds of phone calls that ping in all day, or sorting out the IT problems, Caroline de la Force gets bored. Luckily for us there is hardly another second in her busy day. Thank you!

An accidental jubilee

by Alice Warrender

Stone Trough books 01904 670 323, Independent London Book Shops & online through Amazon & Waterstones

A remarkable journey undertaken with courage and comedy

On the night of 18th February 2011 Alice Warrender, 28, was found sprawled across Fulham Broadway, having been knocked off her bicycle. After brain surgery she began an indefinite period of recuperation at her home in Ayrshire. However she quickly grew tired of being the centre of worry and attention and resolved to walk by herself from Canterbury to Rome, following an ancient pilgrim route. Her narrative of this remarkable journey with its alternations of pain, introspection, peril and comedy, is acutely observant and comes to a moving and uplifting conclusion.

Still in the game

Travels over seventy years

by Antony Hornyold

Knightley, 330p. £16.00

As a child in the 1930s Antony Hornyold was gripped by the work of Kipling and the notion of the Great Game played out in Central Asia by Britain and Russia over centuries. Serving as a diplomat in the 1950s and 1960s he found himself participating in its continuation during postings to Iraq and Pakistan. A taste for local exploration soon saw Hornyold in scrapes that would horrify today’s Foreign Office mandarins. The self-deprecating firsthand account given here of his involvement in the Iraq Revolution of 1958, in which the British-installed monarchy was overthrown with extreme prejudice and the embassy sacked, makes not just for a thrilling read but does much to explain subsequent developments in that unhappy country.

Already widely travelled before joining the Foreign Service Hornyold thought nothing of driving across the Sahara in his ancient Ford Zephyr on return from a posting in Ghana. It was to prove useful practice for a single-handed drive across Afghanistan in 1967. Ever equipped with rod and shotgun, white dinner jacket in his kit, we find him extracting intelligence from Pakistani generals between chukkas before dancing at Flashman’s Hotel in Rawalpindi. As a player of the Great Game Hornyold proves a shrewd political analyst and an entertaining guide to local psychology. “When Uzbekistan declared its independence of Moscow the Communist Party of Uzbekistan died and was immediately resurrected as the People’s Democratic Party, while Islam Karimov, the former first secretary was sworn in as president of the new republic with his hand on the Koran. Otherwise nothing much else changed.” Hornyold’s clear style and dry wit make him entertaining international company, leaving one with curiosity about his later adventures. Characteristically the cover photograph shows him disguised as a Pathan tribesman “armed only with a fishing rod.”

Julian Allason
Antony Hornyold is donating all proceeds from the book to UNICEF’s work in Sierra Leone, Iraq and Pakistan.
Dear Members and Friends

Change and renewal: in the Church, in the world this Easter, and in the Order in Britain. We rejoice with the announcement of Pope Francis, and pray, as he did, for Pope Benedict. It is an exciting time, and these are challenging days for the Church and for the works in which the Church is engaged around the world.

Nowhere was that clearer than at the magnificent ceremonies in Rome which marked the Order’s nine hundredth anniversary this February, which you will read about here. We are heirs to a proud history and a unique one to which no other organisation can validly lay claim. There is much to be proud of – over almost a millennium the Order has cared unceasingly for society’s marginalised, for its poor, its sick, its refugees, its handicapped; day in and day out; quietly getting on with the tasks in hand.

In the Order in Britain your newly elected Council is busy working on putting in place a strong range of active projects, and in reviewing current structures. It is an exciting time here too. We want to build an image of what the Order can do; of what the Order in this country can be known for; a niche where we are recognised for a particular kind of activity to aid those in great need. Your help, support and practical action are vital.

That is what we were founded for – to help others and to see in them our own salvation. Not for nothing have we referred to them as ‘our Lords the sick’, since at least the Middle Ages.

I wish you a fulfilling – and energetic – Order year.

Richard Fitzalan Howard
President, British Association of the Order of Malta
900 unbroken years of service

5000 gather in Rome to mark an historic anniversary

The Papal Bull

On 15th February 1113, Pope Pascal II – with the Bull Pie Postulatio Voluntatis – placed the monastic community of the Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem under the patronage of the Church, with the right to freely elect its heads, without interference from other lay or religious authorities.

It is thanks to this Bull – which represents the foundation of its independence and sovereignty – that for 900 years the Sovereign Order of Malta has been able to accomplish its humanitarian mission worldwide.
On 15 February 1113 Pope Paschal II handed down the Bull which acknowledged the hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem as an independent monastic order, with a mission to care for the poor and the sick.

Nine hundred years later – and nine hundred unbroken years of service – the Order of Malta carries on this same mission. 5000 members and volunteers acknowledged their tradition and their commitment in Rome this February. The sun shone, it was freezing cold, a long procession snaked slowly into the Basilica. In his last major ceremony – although no one knew it at the time – Pope Benedict XVI addressed the packed congregation: ‘...down the centuries, the members of your Order have given themselves completely...their lives have added radiant pages to the annals of Christian charity and protection of Christianity.’

Fra’ Matthew Festing, Prince and 79th Grand Master of the Order, in his reply noted that the Order has weathered vicissitudes which threatened its very existence. ‘But from the distance of almost a thousand years, we are still here,’ he said. ‘The mission is always the same: to continue our fight against poverty, sickness and suffering on every continent. It is a mission as necessary today as it was nine hundred years ago.’

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Paris. I went to every palace and villa the Order owns and contemplated the beauty of the Eternal City from terraces and rooftops. I discussed the rugby with a contingent from Ireland and why Rome has the best ice-cream with a seven-year old from Prague.

I learnt about the making of the excellent Order of Malta wine that we drank and how many former Grand Masters are buried on the Aventine and, to top it all, I wasn’t once begrudged my delight in and determination to discover everyone’s story.

**An incredible breadth of work**

The history of the Order of Malta is long and varied but its essence remains constant. Helping others is the simplest way to soothe one’s soul and to follow in the teachings of Christ. The Holy Father, who was kind enough to talk to us when contemplating far bigger concerns in his heart, made this very point.

Without the dedication to the sick and the poor there is no point to the Order, with the incredible breadth of work that is done in that vein, the Order has a future that looks rosy.

When I interviewed the Grand Master at the end of that very happy but very long Saturday, he agreed wholeheartedly. He was at a meeting of the young volunteers discussing their hopes for the future and he was energised and confident that the verve of the Order remains.

None of us will attend the 1000th anniversary of the Order but we can be confident that it will happen. We should take encouragement from all those great people we were surrounded by (known and unknown) and ask for the strength to follow their example. We should cleave to the friendships the Order has offered us and be thankful for the unique, global family it provides.

As a journalist I might wish I was in Rome now for the Conclave but I will be forever grateful that I was there last month. Thank goodness for the Holy Spirit.

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**Because of a belief that it helps**

Gilly Orr (inset, above) reports from behind the lens – and interviews Order visitors to Rome from just about everywhere else

**Being a journalist** is a wonderful thing if you’re interested in people and you like to travel. Being a journalist on a sabbatical is even better as there are no deadlines or nightshifts and you get to wander. Yet many will testify that I wasn’t so keen on leaving my perambulation of Africa to come to Rome. “Just another Mass,” I thought. “Friends I see all the time.” Thank goodness for the Holy Spirit.

I was on my way to Kenya and the good people at Order of Malta HQ on the Via dei Condotti were already at their action stations. Days and a decision later, fresh from the Rift Valley, I stepped off a plane into the freezing Roman air and went to join them.

A big event is always fun, despite the stress, and the camaraderie was already evident. An afternoon at HQ was enough to make me realise what an enormous undertaking this particular event was. I have to admit to a ripple of fear as I grasped this fact so late.

There was little time to panic, however, and there is rarely a worry that a good Roman macchiato can’t dissolve, so I was set to work. The Communications team had sourced a fantastic camera crew, straight from central casting: scruffy, chain-smoking, laid back, indefatigable professionals who tend to tease their producer mercilessly. We were best of friends in minutes.

**Noble and compassionate and quiet**

Our employment began gently with a press conference. After years enjoying the anonymity of being a volunteering Catholic in Britain it was surprising how large the turnout was. Far less surprising was how interested the attendees were. As a small cog in the big wheel of the Order, one forgets how impressive its global works are. We are part of a thousands-strong body of people committed to doing work without praise or often remuneration because of a belief that it helps. It is noble and compassionate and quiet and the statistics being presented bore that out. I was thrilled I would get to meet all the cogs.

Over the week I talked to them all: the ambassadors, the volunteers, the Chaplains, the army corps, the youth, the drivers, the Grand Master, the dentists, and many in between.

I heard about micro-finance in Chile, soup kitchens in Cuba, clinics in Ivory Coast and homeless barges in...
24/7 service

Order of Malta First Aid Post in St. Peter’s Square goes up a notch: hundreds are treated every year; now a service 24/7

The Order has been running a first aid post in the Square of St. Peter’s in Rome since 1975. Every Wednesday and Sunday morning, Order volunteers—doctors, nurses, and first-aiders—have been on duty for the Papal ceremonies and Masses, tending to pilgrims in need, and treating hundreds per annum.

This year, the Post has gone up a notch. It opens when there are special evening events, such as a concert in the Sala Nervi. And the general hours have been extended to seven days a week, 8.30 - 4.40.

200,000 people gathered in the Square for Pope Benedict XVI’s last audience, with a number needing treatment, including a two-week old baby. Right now the Post is ready to offer service 24/7 because of the crowds for the Conclave and the Enthronement of the new Pope.

An amazing anniversary

Anton’ de Piro and the OMV were there too...

It was a great privilege to be part of the group representing the OMV in Rome for the Order of Malta’s 900th anniversary celebrations, and a terrific opportunity to see many of the different Order groups, associations and volunteer bodies represented in the 5000 people in Rome for the occasion. The OMV’s representatives, Chairman James Grew, Blair Sasada, and Tatiana Graham, along with Companions representatives, joined the procession let by the Grand Master into St Peter’s for High Mass. The Holy Father, in his address to us in the Basilica, said “Your valuable work is a living testimony of the Gospel”.

Sharing the same mission throughout the world

We also took part in a Youth Conference hosted by the Grand Hospitaller and attended by the Grand Master. It was impressive to see that throughout the world the young volunteers share exactly the same mission. The Grand Master encouraged us in our efforts, saying that we are the future of the Order, and that keeping our mission at the centre of our work is fundamental to its success.

The Order youth partied the night away in Rome – after all, how often do you get to go to a 900th birthday celebration?

OMV representatives – James Grew, Blair Sasada, Tatiana Graham, Anton’ de Piro, Emily Elwes
The golden outline of the Holy Infirmary dances in the waters of Grand Harbour, reflected against a sky of uninterrupted blue. It was not the first hospital to be established by the Knights on Malta: that had been built at Birgu, one of the Three Cities, by 1533. However the Great Siege mounted by Suleiman the Magnificent in 1565, and gallantly repelled by a defending force one quarter the number of his 30,000 invaders, convinced the Order’s Grand Master Jean Parisot de la Valette of the need for a new stronghold – and a larger, better equipped hospital.

Thus the massively fortified city of Valetta and the Sacra Infermeria came to be planned and built on the Xiberras peninsula. The Hospital’s purpose was never purely military; rather it was intended to extend the Order of St John of Jerusalem’s mission to ‘Our Lords the Sick’, a commitment already four centuries in execution. At its completion in 1575 the Holy Infirmary was amongst the largest hospitals in Christendom, and according to some authorities the most surgically advanced. The principal ward is over 500 feet in length and could accommodate 914 patients.

The sick were cared for by knights and serving brothers of the Order observing a regime of hygiene remarkably enlightened for the time, with meals served on carefully washed silver plates to limit the transmission of disease. After the founding of a School of Anatomy and Surgery by Grand Master Nicholas Cotter in 1676 technical skills progressed rapidly, drawing the surprise and admiration of the surgeon with whom I visited. “If you were going to survive having a limb amputated, this would be the place,” he remarked drily. Some ingenious prosthetic limbs tailored to amputees at this period are on display, provoking amusement in a party of visiting school children.

The Infirmary remained in medical use right up until 1950, operated by Napoleonic forces for the two years of the French occupation following the Knights’ withdrawal from Malta in 1798, continuing as a station hospital during British rule. Indeed it served as a casualty station during World War II until bombed. The marvellous building subsequently underwent sympathetic restoration and has now been converted into the Mediterranean Conference Centre and a museum, the wards open to inspection.

Exploiting its echoing wards today one cannot fail to be inspired by the skill and dedication of the Knights and their assistants at a time when to be poor and sick all too often amounted to a death sentence. The devoted hospitaller work by members of the Maltese Association provokes reflection upon the continuity of the Order’s mission on the island upon which St Paul was shipwrecked and first preached the Gospel. Standing at the entrance to the Infirmary my eye travels around Grand Harbour to Fort Sant’Angelo guarding its entrance. From the highest bastion the flag of the Order can just be seen snapping in the breeze indicating its continuing presence – a reminder of an ancient tradition of service.

Stuart relic presented to the Pontifical Scots College, Rome

A piece of the lace rochet (surplice) that once belonged to Henry Benedict, Cardinal Duke of York, and brother of Bonnie Prince Charlie was donated by Lady Monckton to the Scots College, in memory of her late husband, Major-General Viscount Monckton of Brenchley. The relic was presented in February to the Rector of the Scots College, the Revd. John Hughes by the Grand Prior of the British Order of Malta, Ian Scott of Ardross who was accompanied by the Hon. Mrs Susan Buchan of Auchmacoy and Fra’ Duncan Gallie, member of the Sovereign Council.

The college was established by Clement VIII in 1600 to educate young Scots Catholics. It has closed only twice since then – when the French invaded Rome in 1798 and again during the Second World War. For two hundred years Jesuits and Italian secular clergy directed the College, but since 1800 the Rectors have all been Scots secular priests.

Sacra Infermeria, Malta

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An ancient tradition of Service

An astonishing relic of the Order’s hospitaller works Julian Allason visits the Sacra Infermeria, Valetta, Malta

© VIEWINGMALTA.COM

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By mid 20th century the Chapel had fallen into disrepair, the Cemetery overgrown, but in 1996 the local British community was invited to assume responsibility for the cemetery. In 2000, with the support of the Portuguese army, memorials were unveiled to the regiments that had fought at Badajoz and Albuera. The cemetery was well-ordered, but the Chapel in bad repair. We raised funds to restore it, with donations including from the Grand Magistry in Rome and colleagues in Portugal. In 2011 the Grand Master, Fra’ Matthew Festing attended Mass there.

When King Dom Sancho II took the fortress of Elvas from the Moors in 1228, he was supported by the Knights Hospitaller from Albuquerque, led by their Prior D. Rodrigo. The point at which they broke through the lines was a very steep and stony area, Corujeira — the ‘Place of the Owls’. Since the fight had been severe, the knights raised an altar at the spot. The altar became a hermitage and then over the centuries a sizeable church and the centre of festivities connected with St John the Baptist. An historic site lives again

When in 1640 the Portuguese decided to break away from the Spanish crown, (with whom they had been joined for sixty years) the landward fortifications needed urgent modernisation. The old mediaeval walls were trebled in thickness and a series of bastions added.

At Corujeira, the Church of St John the Baptist was right on the battlements, but rather than destroy it, the new bastion was built around it, surrounding the chancel completely.

On 9th February 1840 an earthquake demolished most of the church, leaving just the chancel. Rebuilding was not successful and eventually the façade we see today was erected.

However in 1811 Elvas had become the allied base for the siege operations to recapture the Spanish fortress of Badajoz from the French. The first siege had barely got under way when Marshal Soult moved from Seville to relieve his garrison. The Allied commander, Marshal Beresford, took his Anglo-Portuguese army 20 kilometres south to the village of Albuera, where he was joined by a strong Spanish contingent.

The battle fought there on 16th May 1811 was one of the bloodiest of the whole war. Casualties on both sides were massive, but it was the Napoleonic troops who left the field. The Allies, however, were too exhausted to pursue them.

Burial of a British hero
Early in the battle, Major General Hoghton, at the head of his Brigade, was killed in the opening exchanges of fire. In every other engagement in the Peninsular War, those killed in battle were buried where they fell, no matter what their rank, but on this occasion and perhaps due to his close friendship with the two Wellesleys, General Hoghton’s body was brought the 40 kilometres to Elvas. As he was a Protestant, the clergy would not allow him burial in the public cemetery, so the Military Governor of Elvas allocated the Bastion of St. Joao de Corujeira. The place has been known ever since as ‘The English Cemetery’. That General Hoghton was recognised as one of the heroes of the Peninsular War is shown by the erection of a memorial in St Paul’s Cathedral, paid for by public subscription.

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Beguiling Beirut
Throughout our 14 days in Lebanon, we hosted over 40 guests (20 male, 20 female). In between times we managed visits to explore the intricate architecture of Beit a Dine, and absorbing, abundant, beguiling Beirut, a mélange of multi-cultural and ever changing attitudes, epitomised perhaps by the daily change in direction of the motorway.

We are off again this summer for another two-week camp and I hope there will be many more to come.

The Lebanese Association of the Order runs camps for mentally and physically disabled guests from care homes in the mountains around Beirut, and last summer an OMV group took part for the first time. The project was initiated some years ago by the Lebanese and German Associations.

The Lebanese team is truly admirable. They dedicate their time to helping others. They are pioneers in changing attitudes towards the disabled in their country, due entirely to their experiences and love of their friends, the guests. Now others are getting involved, including teams from France and Belgium.

The overriding power of love
I remember contemplating, in one of the few moments of peace and quiet, the strange sounding ‘mufradat’ (vocabulary) which our Lebanese friends had kindly supplied. The phrases: “need loo?”, “want food?”, “tea or coffee?”, “how are you?” and “stop!” saved many a tricky situation and aided our guests to be fed and made comfortable. But that was very limited communication, and I came to value the overriding power of love which can cross even the toughest language barrier and establish a real relationship of trust and affection. I realised that the help and love we could give was totally alien to them. When we visited Deir el Salib, where the camp’s guests live, we all experienced a realisation of the benefit of our work – and only then could appreciate the true value of it.

Memories of Chabrouh sustain the guests the whole, monotonous year
At the Order of Malta camp at Chabrouh we learned how to care for our guests, for their comforts and what they enjoy. Most special for me was when I received even their smallest gesture of gratitude. I realised that the help and love we could give was totally alien to them. We learned, too
Having never worked with disabled people, I found it challenging to communicate and interact with my first guest. But through working with this stubborn yet infinitely charming man I learned to appreciate what we can all offer to our fellow men and women: time, patience, love.

The first full OMV Camp to Lebanon succeeded because of the enthusiasm and dedication of Ellie Coward and her team. The camp would also not have been possible without the generous hospitality and efficiency of the Lebanese Association.

FOR ME, THE MEMORIES HELP ME APPRECIATE HOW MUCH MY TIME CAN BENEFIT OTHERS.

OMY go on pilgrimage with guests – Sarah Hewett and guest Emma Harles; James Grew and a guest
Help for the homeless

Paul Letman, Chairman of the Companions of the Order of Malta, reveals exciting initiatives

WHilst Companions continue to do many different wonderful things at home, not least volunteering at and supporting their local OSJCT care homes, as well as developing charitable projects abroad, this is an update on our work to help the homeless.

First up: our hugely successful Christmas Parcels initiative. Hundreds of items were purchased and packed into some 160 parcels – from woolly hats, scarves and gloves, to wash kits, small gifts and chocolates. Led by Oliver Heggs we then took these to the streets of London, around Lincoln’s Inn Fields and Temple Place, and they went like hot cakes. As I walked up to the meeting point I saw one of the recipients already wearing the hat and keenly wrapping the other things up in his haversack. It was a poignant reminder of what such items can mean, and seeing the help that with our subscription income, sponsorship monies and donations the Companions of the Order can offer.

Soup runs in London, Oxford, Glasgow, Brighton

In London after the success of our work in Soho, we are also now looking for new premises in which we can re-establish our Open House. However, in the meantime a group of Companions are joining up with an existing soup run, operating out of St James’ Spanish Place. That is not to say though that Companions have stopped working in Soho – a number continue devotedly their efforts in cooking for the homeless.

Further afield, at Oxford University the Companions have taken to the streets of the city to operate their own soup run. In Glasgow under the inspiring leadership of Liam Devlin, our Scottish Companions have just started their own soup kitchen to do the same. The plan is to move this in short order to a central Glasgow location, where following the Open House format we can provide more than just food, and offer more personal contact and companionship.

In the South East, Companions led by Jamie O’Meara are looking to support a local soup run in Brighton.

Though much of this work is still in its infancy, this all bodes well for the Companions and our mission together with BASMOM and the OMV to ‘practise our faith and to practise charity’.

For more information: www.orderofmalta.org.uk/companions

The Orders of St John Homes Care Trust runs 71 Homes across four counties, caring for over 3,000 elderly and infirm. For more information: www.osjct.co.uk

From carer to qualified nurse – a personal experience

The Homes Care Trust initiative trains carers

THREE YEARS AGO I was a care leader at the Orders of St John Homes Care Trust’s (OSJCT) Salmonsbury House. Now I am a qualified nurse at Jubilee Lodge, Bourton-on-the-Water. All this is thanks to the Trust’s initiative to train carers to become nurses.

After further nursing experience, I will be returning to OSJCT in about 12 months, but until then I will be working the wards with my peers at an acute hospital. I shall still visit Jubilee Lodge during this time as I want to stay in close touch with them.

When we finished our studies, the 2009 cohort organised a graduation ball at Worcester racecourse, with a champagne reception, delicious food and good company – a very enjoyable occasion after lots of hard work. We all celebrated our graduation awards at Worcester Cathedral on 8 November, complete with mortar board and gown!

Do it – you won’t regret it!

I still can’t believe I have completed this course and there are many people to thank – especially the course tutors and the Care Quality Director who helped me to stay focused and have been there for me all the way through the past three years. I’m very grateful to them all. Finally, my advice to any member of staff who has the opportunity to undertake this training is to do it – I’m sure you won’t regret it!

Yvonne Carter, OSJCT nurse

The Orders of St John Homes Care Trust runs 71 Homes across four counties, caring for over 3,000 elderly and infirm. For more information: www.osjct.co.uk