

TEDDIES TO THE HOLY LAND

Our Provincial Almoner E.Kt. John Stenton has recently travelled to Israel for a short vacation and whilst there made a pre-arranged visit to the Eye Hospital in Jerusalem with his friend Colin Payne. Colin, although not a freemason can trace his bloodline back many hundreds of years as being a descendant of the first Grand Master of Knights Templar-Hugh De Payen in the 12th century.

Knights Templar Masonry has had over 100 year's association with the Eye Hospital. John also arranged with V.W. Bro. Grahame Carr the Past DPGM to take some of the TLC teddies.

John carried the teddies in an extra large red suitcase and was initially stopped at Heathrow and politely interrogated as to the number of teddies and their destination. Several Customs officers came asking their questions until the head man arrived and took the teddies away to be scanned.

John also had to produce documentation as to where these had been supplied from and proof of purchase. John had anticipated this and calmly produced all the required documentation. The teddies were finally cleared by Customs and John, Colin and the teddies were soon in the air to Israel.

John's visit to the Eye Hospital had been arranged by the Eye Hospital's London office which is responsible for the close relationship with Knights Templar Masonry. The Hospital is recognised as 'world class', many of the staff have served for 25years or more enabling the hospital to advance at an amazing rate under extreme social and political pressure, sectarian attacks, arson and demonstrations taking place regularly.

They have a remarkable 'outreach' section with two mobile clinics serving remote areas, numerous check points have to be negotiated to get there. These mobile units have the capacity to operate straightforward procedures as well as preventative care in promoting better health.

Palestine has a very young population with 47% of the population under 25 years old with many health issues not only eyes, diabetes etc.

Mother's of children who have eye problems themselves will deny the use of spectacles for the girls because they believe it will be detrimental for their marriage proposals! The teddies were very well received by the hospital and will be faithfully applied.

The Hospitals mission statement is to provide "A centre of excellence, providing ophthalmic care to the people of the Holy Land, irrespective of race, creed, social class or ability to pay".

As Knight Templars we should all be very proud of our association with the Eye Hospital and continue to support them.