

Commemorative Order of St. Thomas of Acon



Presentation of the certificate.

Worthy Knight Sir.....of (*With the kind permission of the Worthy Master,*)
I have much pleasure in presenting you with your certificate that proves you to be a member of the Commemorative Order of St. Thomas of Acon.

You will notice that the certificate is similar in many respects to other certificates you have received. At the top of the certificate is the title of the order and below is shown your nomen. Will you please check that your nomen is correct. (*Pause*) You will also note that the certificate is signed by the Grand Secretary and bears the Grand Seal of the Commemorative Order.

The unusual item on the certificate is the “Scallop shell” shown in large relief as a background to the certificate. You have come across the Scallop shell in the past. When you entered the Knight Templar Preceptory for the first time, you wore a pilgrim’s habit and cocked hat which had the Scallop shell pinned to it. The Scallop shell is the emblem of a pilgrim. The history of the wearing of Scallop shells is an interesting one.

In the time after the crucifixion of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the disciples travelled over the surrounding area spreading the word of our Lord. James the brother of Jesus was one of them; and on his death he was placed in an open boat without sail or rudder and was pushed out to sea. After seven days the boat having been guided by wind and tides arrived on the shores of Galicia.

The boat was found on the shore by the locals and the body was removed and taken to Compostela in Northern Spain for the traditional rites and burial. This site soon became known as the final resting place of St. James and the local Christians made regular pilgrimages to Compostela to pay their respects at the grave.

During the period of the crusades, the armies of Northern Europe came close by this holy site on their way to the Holy Land. It became the custom to set up camp nearby and for them to visit the Holy place. Only Kings and Lords could afford the holy relics to take away with them. The poor people went to the sea shore nearby and at the point that the boat was originally found, they observed that the area was covered with Scallop shells. These they fixed to their hat and cloak and quickly became the emblem of a pilgrim.

This research was carried out by Right Eminent Reverend Barker Cryer the well-known masonic historian who lived in York.

An important part of being a member of this Commemorative Order is a pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral. This takes place once a year at an agreed date and each Sir Knight is expected to make at least one pilgrimage to pay his respect to St. Thomas Becket, who was the Archbishop of Canterbury. A short but moving service is held in the Crypt and is so relevant to the Order.

All that remains is for you to sign the certificate at the secretaries table and I will present it to you. (*After signing*) I now present you with your certificate and wish you many happy years in this Commemorative Order.