Houses Of The French Knights In Valletta

When the Council of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem decided to build the new city of Valletta on the slopes of Mount Sciberras, or Xaghriet Mewwia as it was known in the vernacular, it was proposed to divide the city into two parts, one the Collacchio for the residence of the Knights and the other to be assigned to those not forming part of the Order. The Collacchio was to include the Hospital, the Grand Master's Palace, the Treasury, the Chancery, the Bakery, the Auberges of the various Langues, and other public institutions. It was later found that in was not possible to separate the Collacchio from the reste of the city, so the choosing of sites was left open.

We find that as early as 1570 the three French Langues, namely those of Provence, France and Auvergne had acquired building sites in the new city for the purpose of erecting their Auberges thereon but, as the writer does not propose to deal with these in detail in this paper, only brief mention will be made of the Auberges in question.

On August 17, 1570, Chev. Fra Maturin d'Aux de Lescaut dit Romegas acquired on behalf of the Langue of Provence a site measuring just over 630 square canes bounded by Strada S. Giorgio (now Kingsway), Strada Pia (now Britannia Street), Strait Street and what is now known as Carts Street, and here was erected the Auberge de Provence. After the expulsion of the Order from Malta by Napoleon, this building housed the Union Club for many years and has now converted into a National Museum.

From the Records of Notary Placido Abel

1 Records of Not. Placido Abel of the 17.8.1570.

or Habel we also learn that in 1570 the French Langue acquired a site measuring 572 square canes (22 canes x 26 canes) for the purpose of building their Auberge. This site was bounded by what today are known as South Street, Scots Street, Windmill Street and Old Mint Street. On this site the first Auberge de France was erected, however, the French knights soon found out that the site was unsuitable, and in the Chapter General of April 2, 1588, insisted on transferring their Auberge to a site in South Street and to incorporate into it the house of Bali Fra Christopher le Bolver dit Montgauldry which stood at the corner formed by South Street and Old Bakery Street. Thus after only fifteen years the first Auberge was abandoned by the French knights, and on February 10, 1604, by a decision of the Chapter General, we find the old Auberge lent to the German knights until repairs were effected to their Auberge. Today, of this old Auberge, we can still see the supports for the standards of the Langue and the Religion, four windows and one rusticated pilaster, and except for the facade is nearly intact. If the interior, on the ground floor, part of the groined vault with the fleur-de-lis on the boss is still visible.

In due course, part of the premises (Nos. 2 & 3 Old Mint Street) were leased by the French Langue to the Treasury at a rent of

2 Records of Not. Placido Abel of the 19.7.1570.
3 One cane, Maltese measure equal to 2 yards 10¼ inches.
5 The writer is indebted to Chev. Vincenzo Bonello for this information.
lo Coleridge, arrived in Malta on board the "Speedwell" and lived with Dr. Stoddard. On July 6 of the same year, Coleridge, now Private Secretary to the Governor, Sir Alexander Ball, took up his residence at San Anton Palace until September 27, 1801, when he left Malta broken down in health.10

The house was then leased to Dr. Moncrieff, Judge Advocate, and Lord Byron resided here when he visited Malta in 1809. Later it became the residence of the great Maltese jurist, Sir Adrian Dingli, President of Her Majesty's Court of Appeal. In 1931 it was converted into the Central Telephone Exchange.

The Palazzo di St. Poix, which has been completely rebuilt has lost all its original charm.

Opposite the Auberge de France were three fine houses belonging to the French Langue, known as the Demandolx houses. These passed to the Monte di Pietà and Redenzione in 1800. One of these houses had the misfortune of being destroyed by a German bomb at the same time as the Palazzo di St. Poix, and on its site a building has been erected which is completely out of harmony with the two remaining houses.

An interesting building is that at No. 9 Scots Street which has been preserved more or less in its original state. The house belonged to Comm. Fra François de Budes Tetreouan of the Venerable Langue of France and of the Priory of Aquitaine.12 In 1633 Comm. François donated the premises to Comm. Fra Olivier de Budes Tetreouan, stipulating that after the death of Comm. Olivier they were to pass to the Noble Arnaud and the Noble Claude de Budes Tetreouan. On the decease of these the property was to be enjoyed by the descendants, in the male line, of Christopher de Budes Tetreouan, and failing these by the descendants of his sister, Monique Budes, who were related to the Religion. Failing all these, the premises were to pass to the Religion.13

On the death, outside the Convent, of

Comm. Fra Rinaldo de Budes in 1688, the Treasury took possession of the house,14 and from 1728 to 1733 we find it let to Comm. Fra Fabrizio Francome at a rent of Sc. 50 per annum.15

In virtue of a decree dated May 2, 1780, the premises were given on emphyteusis, for Sc. 130 per annum to the distinguished French geologist and mineralogist, Chev. Fra Dédot de Graet de Dolomieu, to be enjoyed by him during his lifetime and then by a person to be nominated by him, the latter, however, having to pay Sc. 140 per annum for rent. By a sentence of the Court of Appeal of May 30, 1806, the house reverted to the Government.16

Dédot de Dolomieu was born at Dolomieu (Istrie) in 1750 and was admitted into the Order of St. John during early childhood. He was one of the most brilliant members of the Langue of Auvergne, and at the age of 18 we find him Lieutenant to the Grand Marshal of the Order. Whilst on his first campaign for the French, he killed one of his enemies in a duel, was condemned to death, but pardoned by the Grand Master.17 Dolomieu took an active part in the turbulent politics of the 18th Century, and in 1779, forming part of Napoleon's expedition to Egypt, he again visited Malta. He seems to have enjoyed such high favour with Napoleon that Chev. Miari had recourse to him in the Grand Master's name asking him to intercede on behalf of the Order.

During the time that he was Lieutenant Grand Marshal of the Order, Dolomieu formed a rich collection of natural history. General Vaubois, commanding the French troops in Valletta, was so anxious to have this collection sent to France that General Graham, later Lord Lynedock, promised to send it over after the evacuation of Valletta by the French; this he did on board the vessel "Triton."18

10 Records of Notary Aloysio della Re of the 12.6.1848.
13 Records of Notary Michèl Balli of 1804/1833.
14 Records of Notary Aloysio della Re of the 12.16.1848.
15 Libreria di Stato, 1836-1840, R. Malta Lib. Treas. A 1, fo 64.
17 Libreria di Stato, 1836-1840, R. Malta Lib. Treas. A 1, fo 64.
20 Registro Beni Stabili del Tesoro «B» R. Malta Lib. Treas. A 1, fo 64.
Coleridge, arrived in Malta on board the «Speedwell» and lived with Dr. Stoddard. On July 6 of the same year, Coleridge, now Private Secretary to the Governor, Sir Alexander Ball, took up his residence at St. John’s Palace until September 27, 1801, when he left Malta broken down in health.†

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Comm. Fra Rinaldo de Budes in 1688, the Treasury took possession of the house, and from 1728 to 1733 we find it let to Comm. Fra Fabricio Francome at a rent of Sc. 50 per annum.†

In virtue of a decree dated May 2, 1780, the premises were given on emphyteusis, for Sc. 330 per annum to the distinguished French geologist and mineralogist, Chev. Fra Déodat de Garet de Dolomieu, to be enjoyed by him during his lifetime and then by a person to be nominated by him, the latter, however, having to pay Sc. 140 per annum for rent. By a sentence of the Court of Appeal of May 30, 1806, the house reverted to the Government.†

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† Records of Notary Aloysio dello Re of the 12.6.1688.
† Registro Beni Stabili del Tesoro e Fond. Lascaris R. Malta Lib. Treas. B. 96, fo. 322.
† Records of Notary Michele Balli of 30.4.1633.
which had been founded in juspatronage by Fra François de Beon de Casasus, Prior of Toulouse.31 The premises have now been converted into flats.

Fra François de Vion Tessenacourt, Prior of Champagne and later Grand Prior of France, owned two houses in Valletta, a large one (No. 34 Old Mint Street) and a smaller one opposite the Carmelite Church which he bequeathed in usufruct to Chev. Fra François Charles de Vion Tessenacourt, to be enjoyed during his lifetime, with the stipulation that the latter could not sell or mortgage the property in question which, after the death of Chev. François Charles, was to pass in usufruct to the Knights of the house of Vion Tessenacourt who might be residing in Malta. In the event of there being more than one Knight of the family residing in the Convent, then the property was to be enjoyed by the Knight nearest to the main line. If there were no Knights of the family in the Order, the Treasury was then to enjoy the rents, for the time being, on condition that the property was kept in a good state of repairs.

Chev. François Charles de Vion Tessenacourt died in the Sacra Infermeria of the Order on June 7, 1669. We now find the larger house occupied by the Prior of Auvergne, Fra Jacques de St. Mours, from December 19, 1674, to April 7, 1676, and by the Balbi of Mores, Fra Christopher Perot de Mallemoyen, from April 8 to October 7, 1676. On April 24, 1676, the Noble Pierre de Vion Tessenacourt was admitted into the Order and was entitled to enjoy the usufruct of these premises. After having been occupied by Chev. Fra Gerlando d’Alfano and the Nobles Schrosberg and Vestram, the house was leased, in 1685, to the Langlo d’ Alfano and the Nobles Schrosberg in Malta:.

The premises passed to another Provençal Knight, Comm. Fra François le Petit de la Guercue, Captain of the galley “Santa Maria” in 1645.32 When this Knight died outside the Convent on June 21, 1663, the Treasury took possession of the property.33 From May 17, 1668, to November 16, 1669, both houses were let to Comm. Fra Eustache Bernard d’Averes of the Langue of France, for a yearly rent of Sc. 120. The premises were then let successively to three members of the French de Fleurgny family; Chev. Fra François Octave de Fleurgny from November 17, 1669, to May 16, 1670; Chev. Fra Louis de Fleurgny from May 17, 1670 to October 31, 1670 and Chev. Fra Huges de Fleurgny Vauvilliers from November 1, 1670 to July 31, 1671. On August 1, 1671, they were taken on lease by Comm. Fra Simone Rondinelli of the Langue of Italy who held them up to January 31, 1673.

The Treasury again leased the property to Chev. Fra Huges de Fleurgny Vauvilliers and to his brother Jacques from February 1, 1673 to the end of January 1682.34 In virtue of a deed dated January 27, 1682, the premises were given on lease to Chev. Fra Louis de Fleurgny for the duration of his lifetime,35 but at the reduced rent of Sc. 110 per annum, and on January 16, 1697, it was agreed that Chev. Fra Jacques de Fleurgny Vauvilliers was also to enjoy the use of the house, during his lifetime, together with his brother, Comm. Louis.36

Louis de Fleurgny was a gallant naval commander who took part in many a naval engagement against the Moors, and was appointed Captain General of the Galleys of the Order in 1709,37 and later promoted Bali «ad honores», Bali Fra Louis de Fleurgny died in the Convent in 1716 and was interred in the Conventual Church.38 After the Fleurgny house was given on lease to Chev. Fra Boniface de Castellane of the Langue of Provence on May 14, 1720,39 though Sir Hannah Scicluna states that, before this, the brothers Jean and Charles Dou had taken the house on lease but later renounced their rights to the continuation of same.40

We now find the premises occupied by the wealthy Bali of Lessa, Fra Raimondo de Sousa y Silva. It is averred that the Grand Master was anxious to get Don Raimondo to fix his abode in Malta in order to secure his wealth for the Religion on the making of his spoglio, and with this intent, persuaded him to take the house under review on lease for his lifetime.41 However, at the request of Don Raimondo, the Treasury consented to allow him to occupy the premises on ordinary lease, and for his benefit rebuilt the palace in its present form between 1761 and 1763.

After having occupied several important posts in the Order, Bali Raimondo de Sousa y Silva died in the Convent on January 13, 1782, at the age of 94 and he too was interred in the Conventual Church.42 Following the death of the Bali of Lessa the house was occupied, from March 1, 1783 to April 1785, by several Knights among whom are the names of Fra Luca d’Argence, Fra Vincenzo Perelli and Fra Daniele Berlinghier who later represented the Order at the Congress of Vienna.

On April 7, 1781, the premises were again let as a private residence to the renowned French naval commander the Bali Pierre André Suffren de Saint-Tropez, Captain General of the Galleys of the Order in 1780, and left in usufruct to the Knight for his lifetime.
which had been founded in juspatronage by Fra François de Deon de Casaux, Prior of Toulouse. The premises have now been converted into flats.

Fra François de Vion Tessoncourt, Prior of Champagne and later Grand Prior of France, owned two houses in Valletta, a large one (No. 54 Old Mint Street) and a smaller one opposite the Carmelite Church which he bequeathed in usufruct to Chev. Fra François Charles de Vion Tessoncourt, to be enjoyed during his lifetime, with the stipulation that the latter could not sell or mortgage the property in question which, after the death of Chev. François Charles, was to pass in usufruct to the Knights of the house of Vion Tessoncourt who might be residing in Malta. In the event of there being more than one Knight of the family residing in the Convent, then the property was to be enjoyed by the Knight nearest to the main line. If there were no Knights of the family in the Order, the Treasury was then to enjoy the rents, for the time being, on condition that the property was kept in a good state of repairs.

Chev. François Charles de Vion Tessoncourt died in the Sacra Infermeria of the Order, January 13, 1675. We now find the larger house occupied by the Prior of Auvergne, Fra Jacques de St. Mours, from December 19, 1674, to April 7, 1676, and by the Bali of Morea, Fra Christopher Petor de Malmenoy, from April 8 to October 7, 1676. On April 24, 1676, the Noble Pierre de Vion Tessoncourt was admitted into the Order and was entitled to enjoy the usufruct of these premises. After having been occupied by Chev. Fra Gerlando d’Alfano and the Nobles Schrosberg and Vestrum, the house was leased, in 1685, to the Bali Charles Philip, Baron Freideac, to be enjoyed by him during his lifetime. Unfortunately it has not been possible to trace any further records regarding this property.

At the corner formed by South Street and Old Bakery Street was the palace and other property of the noble de Luscan Family. From old plans of Valletta it would seem that the premises, of which nothing remains today, were built at the beginning of the 17th Century by Fra Pierre Desparvez de Luscan, Prior of St. Giles. The St. Andrew Scott’s Church today stands on part of the site once occupied by this property.

A very fine house, still well preserved, is that at No. 108 Britannia Street, which once belonged to the Provencal Knight, Chevalier de Jean Baptiste de Gallean Chateaueneuf. In his disproprium made in Syracuse on October 11, 1634, Comm. de Gallean Chateaueneuf left this property to the Commandery of Nice with the obligation for the commander pro tempore to have two Masses celebrated every week, one for the repose of the soul of the donor and the other for the repose of all the souls in purgatory. This building is at present used as a Labour Office, and a tablet on the first floor records the disposition of Comm. de Gallean Chateaueneuf anent this house.

Over house No. 6 in St. Mark Street, is an inscription recording that the premises had been erected in 1684 by Chev. Fra Jacques de Quiqueran Beaujeu, of the Langue de Provence, and dedicated to the memory of his family to have taken an interest in the charity of this church. This palace with strong French connections is the Admiralty House (No. 53 South Street) about which Sir Hannah Scicluna has written an excellent monograph to which there is but little to add.

This palace was among the first to be erected in the new city, as we find that the site was acquired, as early as 1676, by Chev. Fra Jean de Soubirac and a far better preserved palace in the Lane of Provence, who had taken part in the Siege of Malta of 1656.

It would seem that on the site which he acquired Chev. de Soubirac built two houses, one large and one small. Later, the premises passed to another Provencal Knight, Comm. Fra François le Petit de la Guerche, Captain of the galley Santa Maria in 1675. When this Knight died outside the Convent on June 21, 1663, the Treasury took possession of the property.

From May 17, 1668, to November 16, 1669, both houses were let to Comm. Fra Eustache Bernard d’Averses, and from November 17, 1669, to May 16, 1670; Chev. Fra Louis de Fleurigny from May 17, 1670 to October 31, 1670 and Chev. Fra Hughes de Fleurigny Vuilliers from November 1, 1670 to July 31, 1671. On August 1, 1671, they were taken on lease by Comm. Fra Simone Rondinelli of the Langue of Italy who held them up to January 31, 1673.

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In virtue of a deed dated January 27, 1682, the premises were given on lease to Chev. as Commander Louis de Fleurigny for the duration of his lifetime, but at the reduced rent of 110 per annum, and on January 16, 1697, it was agreed that Chev. Fra Jacques de Fleurigny Vuilliers was also to enjoy the use of the house, during his lifetime, together with his brother, Comm. Louis.

Louis de Fleurigny was a gallant naval commander who took part in many a naval engagement against the Moors, and was appointed Captain General of the Galleys of the Order in 1709, and later promoted Balì «ad honores», Bali Fra Louis de Fleurigny died in the Convent in 1716 and was interred in the Conventual Church.

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After having occupied several important posts in the Order, Bali Raimondo de Sousa y Silva died in the Convent on January 13, 1782, at the age of 94 and he too was interred in the Conventual Church.

Following the death of the Bali of Lessa the house was occupied, from March 1, 1783 to April 1785, by several Knights among whom are the names of Fra Luca d’Argence, Fra Vincenzo Perelli and Fra Daniele Berlingneri who later represented the Order at the Congress of Vienna.

On April 7, 1781, the premises were again let as a private residence to the renowned French naval commander Bali Pierre André Suffren de Saint-Tropez, Captain General of the Galleys of the Order in 1780,
who occupied them until his death outside the Convict on December 8, 1788. After
his death they were let, on the same conditions, to his brother, Comm. Fra Paul Julien
Suffren de Saint-Tropez, until June 1, 1791, when the palace was taken on lease by Chev.
Fra Antonio Miari di Belluno, Secretary to Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch,
who occupied it at the yearly rent of Sc. 250 until 1798 when the Order was driven out
of Malta by Napoleon.

The French Republican Government offered the palace to the Bishop of Malta,
Monsignor Vincenzo Labini, as an episcopal residence for the period of his
visit to Malta, who occupied it at the yearly rent of Sc. 250 until his death outside
the Anglo-Maltese troops, Captain Alexandre Ball R.N., the house having been refused
by Canon Francesco Saverio Caruana, to whom it had been offered by the British
Commissioner in recognition of his services during the campaign against the French.

The next occupier of the palace was Mr. Alexander Macaulay, Secretary to the
Civil Commissioner, who leased it from August 1802 to June 1803 at a rent of
L. 24.15.6 per annum.

By an Order given on May 12, 1808, His Excellency the Governor ordered that the
palace be reinstated for the immediate reception of His Royal Highness the Duke of
Orléans.19

Mr. G. Darmanin Demajo relates that Louis Charles, Vicomte de Beaujolais, and his
brother, Louis Philippe, Duke of Orléans, arrived in Malta on May 16, 1808, on board the
French warship « Voltaire » and lodged in the « Casa Miari » where the Vicomte de
Beaujolais died on May 29, 1808. The Vicomte, who was a Knight of Malta, was buried
in St. John’s Conventual Church, however, before expiring he directed that his heart was to be embalmed and interred in the Church of Our Lady of Liesse in Val­
letta. The Duke of Orleans with his two sisters returned to France on January 2,
1809.

From 1808 to 1820 the house was occupied by the British Military Authorities without
payment of rent.

On January 1, 1821, the premises were given on lease to the Naval Authorities for
twenty one years, and since that day the palace has been the official residence of the
Commander-in-Chief of the British Mediterranean Fleet.

The fine house at No. 24 Old Bakery Street belonged to Balthasar Deman­
dols, a favourite of Grand Master Lascaris, who was twice elected General of the Galleys.
In 1652 Balthasar Demandols sold his house to Grand Master Lascaris,20 but in 1736 it pass­
ed to the Cottoner Foundation through an exchange by which 22 rooms in the market
square, belonging to the Cottoner Foundation, were exchanged for 16 rooms in the
Bucceria Vecchia (Old Slaughter House) and two houses belonging to the Lascaris Foun­
dation.21 The Cottoner Foundation was instituted in 1647 by Grand Master Nicho­
las Cottoner for the maintenance of the Cottoner Fortifications.

Grand Master Adrien de Wignacourt, who died on February 4, 1697, in his disprop­
rium, ordered that two houses belonging to him were to be enjoyed jointly, during their
lifetime, by two members of his household, Comm. La Marche and Chevalier Vespi, and that after their death the houses were to revert to the Religion.22 One of these
houses is that which today bears No. 129 Old Bakery Street. This, together with

21 Stato Beni Urbani, R. Malta Lib. Treas. B. 89 fo. 7.
22 Libro Ordini 1800-1813, R. Malta Lib. Treas. B. 210 fo. 73.
who occupied them until his death outside the Convent on December 8, 1788. After his death they were let, on the same conditions, to his brother, Comm. Fra Paul-Antoine Miari di Benevento, Secretary to Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch, who occupied them until his death outside Malta this project was never effected.

The French Republican Government offered the palace to the Bishop of Malta, Monsignor Vincenzo Labini, as an episcopal seminary, but owing to the revolt of the Anglo-Maltese troops, Captain Alexander Macaulay, who occupied it at the yearly rent of £24.15.6 per annum, ordered the house be reinstated for the immediate reception of His Royal Highness the Duke of Orleans.

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The Cottoner Foundation was instituted in 1647 by Grand Master Nicho­ las Cottoner for the maintenance of the Cottoner Fortifications.

Grand Master Adrien de Wignacourt, who died on February 4, 1697, in his dispro­ prium, ordered that two houses belonging to him were to be enjoyed jointly, during their lifetime, by two members of his household, Comm. La Marche and Chevalier Vespi, and that after their death the houses were to revert to the Religion. One of these houses is that which today bears No. 129 Old Bakery Street. This, together with house No. 62 St. Christopher Street, passed to the Treasury on the death of Comm. La Marche, and we later find it in possession of the Cottoner Foundation.

From 1767 to 1779 this house was let to Chev. Desnard and from May 1778 to January 1787 to Chev. Grimaldi. The Convventual Chaplain Antonio Longo was in possession of the premises from 1787 to 1798.

In Old Bakery Street, we also find the house of Chev. Fra Daniel Brunet who died in the Convent on October 11, 1760. In his disproprium Chev. Brunet left his house (No. 107 Old Bakery Street) to the Lascaris Foundation subject to a single payment of Sc. 150 to the Prior of the Conventual Church for the celebration of Masses for the repose of his soul. Chev. Brunet had bought this house from the heirs of Andrea Scicluna for Sc. 1,010.

The Casa Brunet which for many years was the home of the Government School of Arts was converted into the Magistrates’ Court in 1916.

The Assembly of Convventual Chaplains, through a donation « inter vivos », acquired from Comm. Fra Christopher Granier, his house No. 66 Street, with a perpetual burthen of Masses for the repose of the soul of the donor. This donation was ratified by the Procurators of the Assembly on March 15, 1644. After improvements having been carried out in the house in question, it was let at Sc. 65 per annum which sum was employed in accordance with Comm. Granier’s dispositions.

At the corner of Zachary Street with South Street stood the house (No. 55 Zachary Street) of Frai Paul Antoine de Robin Gravese, Prior of Toulouse, who died in the Convent on March 10, 1674, at the age of 89.
87 years and was interred in the Conventual Church. On June 20, 1667, the Prior of Toulouse left the usufruct of the premises to his three nephews, all Knights of the Order, Fra Riccardo, Fra Jean Francois and Fra Guyt de Robin Barbantane, directing that after their death the property was to pass to those descendants, in the male line, of Paul Antoine de Robin Barbantane, and should these fail, it was in the names of the Order and descendants of the male line of Jean de Robin Beauregard. If there were no Knights of either of these families in the Order, the property was to pass, for the time being, to the Assembly of Conventual Chaplains, subject to the celebration of a certain number of Masses.

The house was restored, in September 1819, to Chev. Etienne Claude de Barbantane Beauregard to be enjoyed by him during his lifetime. The premises have now been greatly modified. Comm. Fra Jean Marion of the Langue of Provence purchased from Maruzza Bonificio, widow of Didoaco d'Amico, house No. 6 St. Ursula Street, for the price of Sc. 2,500. Comm. Marion bequeathed the property to his sister Anna Boneu Marion, who left as her sole heir, her son, Captain Aloysio Marsiglia Marion. In 1724 Captain Marsiglia Marion, represented by Fra Melchior Alpharan, Prior of the Conventual Church, sold the premises to the Manoel Foundation. This house was later used as a home for spinsters, under the management of the Prior of the Conventual Church and a commission.

At the corner formed by Archbishop Street and Old Mint Street once stood the Courcelles Palace which, in the latter part of the 19th Century, was demolished by the building speculator and converted into a large block of flats. The palace is referred to, in the rent books of the Order, as the house of the Bali Valence; this is possibly due to its having been occupied at some time by the Bali Fransesco di Valentia. In this same book it is also recorded that the Prior of Champagne, Fra François de Courcelles Rovaij, in virtue of two deeds, donated the premises to his nephew, in the Order, Chev. Fra Albert de Roncerolles, of the Langue of France, and the Noble Tancguy de Courcelles Rovaij. They were to enjoy the use of the building as simple usufructuaries during their lifetime, it being stipulated that if only one of these nephews resided in the Convent he was to enjoy the whole usufruct.

After the death of these two Knights, the house was to pass to other professed knights and novices, in the direct line, of the Rouvaij and Roncerolles families. In the case of the extinction of both families the property was then to pass to their nearest consecutive descendants, and if there were no knights of these families in the Order, the Treasury was to enjoy the usufruct until there were such Knights. The Knights living in the Convent were always to be preferred, and if all were absent, the usufruct was then to be divided equally among them.

This house is also sometimes referred to as the « Casa Boniface », and this is undoubtedly due to its having been enjoyed by three brothers Boniface in 1760. Also in Archbishop Street, premises numbered 35/37 were once owned by the Villages families. No records exist anent this property which seems to have been completely rebuilt during the last century.

In this same street we further find the property (Nos 111/113 Archbishop Street) once belonging to Fra Jean Jacques de Verdelin, of the Languedoc. In 1546, the Grand Commander ordered that on his death the houses were to first pass to his brother, Comm. Fra Jean François de Verdelin, then to his nephews Chev. Michel and Chev. Jean Jacques, and after the death of the property was to pass to the persons mentioned in the first donation.

Grand Commander Jean Jacques de Verdelin was the nephew of Grand Master Louis de Verdelin, who was created cardinal by Pope Sixtus V, erected a column at one end of the Palace Square to commemorate the event. Time corroded the column, and Giansante relates that in 1672 Verdelin affixed an inscription to the base of this monument recording that it had been repaired by him.

Jean Jacques de Verdelin died in the Convent on April 20, 1678, at the age of 83 years, and was interred in the Conventual Church. With the Hostel of Verdelin ends the story of the « Houses Of The French Knights In Valletta ». However, it is quite possible that further patient research into the Notarial Archives and at the Royal Malta Library may reveal the existence of other houses in Valletta which were at some time owned or occupied by Knights of the three French Langues of the Order of St. John.

The largest of these houses is the « Hostel de Verdelin » which is also known as the « Casa delle Colombe » from groups of doves which adorn the exterior. In 1662 Jean Jacques de Verdelin donated the premises to his brother, Paul, and after him to his eldest son and then to the primogenital descendants in the male line, ad infinitum, bearing the name Verdelin. Failing these and then those of the female line, the houses were to revert to the Religion. In the deed the donor reserved the right of revoking the donation. After the death of Jean Jacques de Verdelin, the donors were to pay a Spanish doublon to the Religion by way of recognition. Further, the Grand Commander ordered that if there were Knights of his family in the Order, the rents were then to be divided equally between the person entitled to the primogeniture and the Knights in question. Finally the donor stipulated that on receiving the doublon the Order was to inspect the premises and ascertain that they were kept in a good state of repair.

On August 30, 1670, Verdelin altered his donation and ordered that on his death the houses were first to pass to his brother, Comm. Fra Jean François de Verdelin, then to his nephews Chev. Michel and Chev. Jean Jacques, and after the death of the property was to pass to the persons mentioned in the first donation.

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L'acteur rappelle que le Conseil de l'Ordre, en décidant de construire une ville nouvelle sur les versants du Mont Sceberras, se proposa de diviser La Valette en deux parties, dont l'une, appelée « Collachio », était destinée à la résidence des Chevaliers et l'autre à la population locale. Plus tard le gouvernement de l'Ordre devait se rendre compte que le « Collachio » ne suffisait pas à abriter l'Hôpital, le palais du Grand Maître et les autres édifices de l'Ordre. Aussi les trois Langues des Chevaliers, la Ligue de France, et d'Auvergne, construiraient-elles leurs résidences dans la partie nouvelle de La Valette. De ces trois Auberges françaises une seule subsiste, celle de la Ligue de France. Les maisons de chacune de ces Langues se groupaient autour de leur propre Auberge. L'acteur mentionne ici les différentes maisons ayant appartenu aux Chevaliers de France:
87 years and was interred in the Conventual Church.61

On June 20, 1667, the Prior of Toulouse left the usufruct of the premises to his three nephews, all Knights of the Order, Fra Riccard, Fra Jean François and Fra Guys de Robin Barbantane, directing that after their death the property was to pass to those descendants, in the male line, of Paul Antoine de Robin Barbantane, and should these fail, it was to pass to the next memers of the Order descendants of the male line of Jean de Robin Beauregard. If there were no Knights of either of these families in the Order, the property was to pass, for the time being, to the Assembly of Conventual Chapters, subject to the collection of a certain number of Masses.62

The house was restored, in September 1819, to Chev. Etienne Claude Barbantane, and should these fail, it was to pass to those members of the Knights of either of these families in the Order, as the house of the Bali Val­lence.63 This is possibly due to its having been used as a building for the construction of a new church.64

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Jean Jacques de Verdelin died in the Con­vent on April 20, 1678, at the age of 83 years, and was interred in the Conventual Church.68

With the Hostel de Verdelin ends the story of the «Houses Of The French Knights In Valletta»; however, it is quite possible that further patient research into the Nota­rial Archives and at the Royal Malta Library may reveal the existence of other houses in Valletta which were at some time owned or occupied by Knights of the three French Langues of the Order of St. John.

61 Pietro Paolo Caruana, op. cit., Tav. XL
64 Libro Maestro Famiglia Giovani Bona­vita of the 4.1.1699.
68 Libro Beni Stabili del Tesoro «B», R. Malta Lib. Tres. A. 1, fo. 64.
69 Comptes Giovanni Cantar: Malta Illus­trata, Lib. I, Not. 1 XXIX.
70 Pietro Paolo Caruana, op. cit., Tav. XIV.