

# MARCH MEETING

## First Speaker The Knights Templar

A talk by Simon Le Fevre

Reported by Terry Sutton

An artist's impression of the possible design of the Knights Templar farm that once prospered on the hills above Temple Ewell was screened at our packed public meeting at St Mary's parish centre in March.

Guest speaker, Simon Le Fevre, told how the hilltop centre, the Templar's preceptory, included a farm which grew grain and produced wool from sheep that were sold to help build up the organisation's fortunes, which eventually led to its suppression and demise.

Simon gave a run down on the history of the creation of the Knights Templar by nine knights, whose vow was to protect Christians visiting the Holy Land. In 1128 the Templars were recognised by the Pope as a military and monastic order of chivalry.

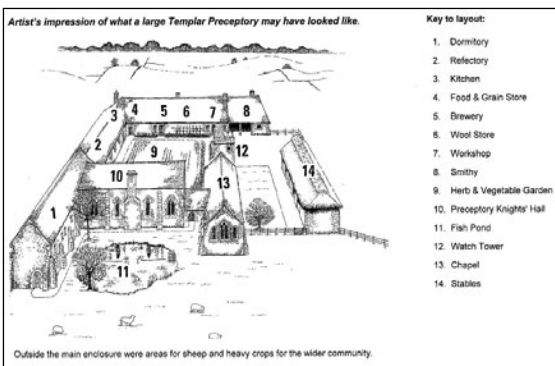
The Templars first came to the British Isles in 1128 and over two centuries their preceptories and farms were woven into medieval life. The Templars and their followers not only prayed: they farmed. And their income revenue helped finance their military colleagues safeguarding Christians in the Holy Land.

Mr Le Fevre told his audience that the centre above Temple Ewell was not the only Dover base for the Templars. They also had a

little round chapel on the Western Heights (the remains of which are still there) which, suggested Mr Le Fevre, could also have acted as a lookout post in association with the Templars' fleet of ships.

Over the years the fortunes of the Knights Templar prospered so much that they were able to open banks and issue what would now be described as cheques, which could be cashed in the Holy Land and elsewhere. They also provided loans to European monarchs, but early in the 14th century they declined to provide a loan to King Philip of France, who was running short of money!

Philip was so offended that in 1307 he ordered the arrest of a number of the leaders of the Templars and in 1312, with the agreement of the Pope, ordered the suppression of the Order. The following year some of the leaders were burnt at the stake in Paris for alleged heresy offences.



Mr Le Fevre detailed the modern day legacy of the medieval order, including the formation in 1982 of the Templar Pilgrimage Trust launched by the Order of the Temple of Jerusalem, and the Templar Heritage Trust, tasked with increasing the history and understanding of the Knights Templar.

*The Knights Templar or the medieval Order of "The Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon" (Pauperes commilitones Christi templique Salomonic) was founded in 1119 by nine Frankish Crusaders led by Hugues de Payens, whose aim was to protect pilgrims visiting Christian shrines in*

*Jerusalem. This holy brotherhood lived under austere vows of poverty and chastity, according to the rule of St Bernard of Clairvaux. They can be well described as a band of fighting monks. The order comprised four ranks: servants, chaplains, sergeants, and knights, the latter wearing white surcoats with the red cross of St. George. In 1147 Pope Eugenius III ordered them to bear the familiar eight pointed cross, which is said to be older in history than the St George's cross. By the 13th century there were as many as 20,000 knights. King Baldwin II of Jerusalem gave the Order its headquarters on Temple Mount, hence the popular name, "Knights Templar".*

*Editor*

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS **Sheila Cope**

It is pleasing to know that these reports are read by someone. In my last report I mentioned that we have no system of cross-referencing old Newsletters and, more in hope than expectation, asked whether any member would be willing to take on such a mammoth task. To my great surprise and pleasure, Paul Skelton came forward and offered to do the job. Having completed it in two or three weeks, he said:

"After joining the society a couple of years ago, I was most pleased to learn that the Society still had a complete set of old newsletters going back to the very first. Even better when Sheila Cope offered to pass them on to an interested party for the possible creation of a reference or master index of contents. What an opportunity for me to see what I have missed, I thought, and so offered my services to take on this no mean task. However, not wanting to do this with pen and paper, I took to computerisation to do the task for me, and have just converted them all into

searchable digital files that fit onto one DVD."

So there it is! The Committee is most grateful to Paul and has yet to decide how to make the best use of this valuable resource but it will undoubtedly contribute towards our marketing strategy and advertise what The Dover Society and the town itself has to offer.

Thanks, as always, to all those members who have paid their subscriptions on time. I am currently sending out reminders to the rest and hope that once our membership list has been transferred to a database then that particular task will take hours rather than days.

There are 473 of us at present including 15 welcome new members:- Toby Oakes, Barry O'Brien, Nicholas Lockhart, Graham & Vanessa Fitcher, David & Judith Smith, Jeff Howe, Melvyn Durrant, Graham Leadbeater, Brian & Christine Walton, Joanna Walton and Gary & Anita Jordan