



streets. English knights were not an exception. Sometimes the Grand Master himself was compelled to intervene.

### Post of England

Since there were only two English knights at Birgu during the Great Siege of 1565, the Post of England, which stood just behind Fort St. Angelo facing the Grand Harbour, had to be manned by Maltese soldiers and seamen from galleys. The larger part of the Post of England was pulled down in 1907 by the British Naval authorities during the construction of the breakwater. In the process, the underground slave dungeons within the bastions were also demolished. The site is now occupied by modern apartments.



Though the Langue of England was restored by Queen Mary Tudor in 1557, it was again suppressed by Queen Elizabeth I in the following year. By 1601 the Langue had practically vanished, even if the Order always looked forward to its revival.

### The Auberge of England

The English Langue selected a suitable house at Birgu to serve as its auberge. Mention of this house is found in the proceedings of the Langue in 1532 when 15 knights were in attendance. The property was actually purchased by Sir Clement West in 1534 from its Maltese owner, Caterina Abela. Sir Clement donated the house to the Langue of England a year later. A separate apartment was built next to the Auberge for the Turcopolier. It was in this latter house that Sir Oliver Starkey resided.

The Auberge was furnished with the necessary furniture and utensils. This is evident from a list of items of furniture and silverware most of which were donated to the Langue by knights between 1527-1534. After the Langue was deprived of its English properties in 1546, the Grand Master directed that an annual subvention be made for the upkeep of the Auberge. An inventory dated 1559, however, gives a poor impression of the possessions of the moribund Langue of England.

It is fortunate that both the Auberge d'Angleterre with the adjoining house of the Turcopolier and the residence of the Conventual Chaplains survived the bombings of the war. The Auberge of England is an old house with a central yard and a covered staircase built around it. The building, situated at 39-40 Majjistral Street, is public property and has been carefully restored. Much of the original 16th century features remained intact.

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**Auberge d'Angleterre**



When the Order of St. John arrived in Malta in 1530, they established themselves in the small harbour city Birgu, or in the vernacular Birgu, and officially Vittoriosa. For over forty years until the transfer of the Order's seat to the new city, Valletta, the narrow streets of Vittoriosa were thronged with Knights and their retinue from eight European nationalities or Langues. Each Langue took over or built a residence which became their respective auberges. The auberges at Vittoriosa are modest compared to the palatial buildings in the new capital city, but they are of an earlier epoch when the Order was still undecided about its future stay in Malta.

### English Knights

English noblemen vied to enrol as members of the chivalric Order and feature prominently in the early history of the Knights in Malta. The English knight Sir Richard Salford was one of the ambassadors who visited Malta after the loss of Rhodes as part of the exploratory delegation sent by the Grand Master to make recommendation on the state of the Island. Another leading Englishman was Sir William Weston who commanded the Order's flagship, the Gran Carracca Sant'Anna, the vessel that carried Grand Master L'Isle Adam to Malta in October 1530. He had the Order so much at heart that he died of heart attack in 1540 upon hearing the news of the dissolution of the Langue of England in 1540 on account of King Henry VIII's break with Rome.

English knights were active in the shipping trade from the Birgu marina: Sir Nicholas Upton was the large patron of galley in 1537 while Sir William Tyrrell sailed to Malta a year later from Marseilles bringing necessary foodstuffs. Sir Nicholas Upton distinguished himself for his bravery during Turkish raids and lost his life defending Birgu in the attack on Malta by Dragut in 1551. Like other knights he was buried in St Lawrence Conventual Church.

### Sir Oliver Starkey

Probably the English knight who left the most long lasting mark was Sir Oliver Starkey. He was one of the only two English knights who were present during the Great Siege. He was a Latinist, attended all Council meetings and

stood by Grand Master De La Vallette during the siege. He is buried alongside De La Vallette in the crypt of St John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta.

### The Langue of England

The minutes of the General Council of the Order held at Birgu contain references to the English Langue. In 1532 the Order decreed that English aspirants to the knighthood were to present proof of nobility in Malta. Various enrolments in the Langue are also mentioned. The investiture would take place either in the Conventual Church of St Lawrence at Vittoriosa or in the Order's Parish Church of St Anthony the Abbot, also at Vittoriosa.

The head of the English Langue carried the title of Turcopolier and was responsible for the Militia. In the early years of the Order's arrival at Birgu, his role led to a dispute with the Maltese Jurats regarding the supervision of the Birgu Wharf. It was resolved by passing the guard duties to another high ranking officer, the Seneschal.

English Conventual Chaplains

A provincial chapter of the Langue of England held in London at the time of the Order's arrival in Malta decreed that at least two English priests should reside in Malta as Conventual Chaplains and to serve in the Chapel of the English Langue that existed in the Church of St. Lawrence. The chaplains were not to reside in the Auberge but separately in another building which housed all the Conventual Chaplains from the other Langues together.

### Council meetings

The Council of the English Langue which always assembled at Birgu constantly discussed matters relating to its functions such as grants, awards and honours. However, the minutes also contain records of punishments given to knights who disobeyed or misbehave. There were frequent quarrels and squabbles between knights from different Langues at Birgu and these sometimes led to skirmishes in the