



There Be Pirates Here!

A paper compiled by
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V.Em.Kt. JOHN M. STUBBS
Great Second Constable
 WEARING THE KNIGHT TEMPLAR REGALIA OF
 AN OFFICER OF THE GREAT PRIORY OF S.A.



ANTIEN, FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS

(Past Worshipful Master - Shaw-Stewart St. John Lodge No. 133 N.S.W.C.)
 (Past Worshipful Master - Houghton Lodge No.148 S.A.C.)
 (Past Worshipful Master - Lodge of Fraternity No.214 S.A.C.)
 (Order of Service, Past Deputy Grand Master, U.G.L. of N.S.W.)
 (Past Grand Steward, G.L. of S.A. & N.T.)
 (Confident of St. John 9° - G.L. of Sweden)



HOLY ROYAL ARCH CHAPTER

(Past First Principal - Kyneston R.A.C. No.105 N.S.W.C.)
 (Past First Principal - Parkside R.A.C. No.34 S.A.C.)
 (Past First Principal - Tea Tree Gully R.A.C. No.45 S.A.C.)
 (Past Grand Inspector of Workings - U.S.G.C. of N.S.W. and the A.C.T.)
 (Past Grand Scribe Nehemiah - S.G.C. of S.A. and N.T.)
 (Member - Cumberland R.A.M. No.1 - Nashville TN)



ORDER OF MARK MASTER MASONS

(Past Worshipful Mark Master - Kyneston R.A.C. No.105 N.S.W.C.)
 (Past Worshipful Mark Master - Emulation Lodge No.6 S.A.C.)
 (Past Worshipful Mark Master - Salisbury Lodge No.52 S.A.C.)
 (Past Grand Inspector of Workings - U.S.G.C. of N.S.W. and the A.C.T.)
 (Past Grand Steward, G.L. of M.M.M. of S.A. & N.T.)



ROYAL ARK MARINERS

(Past Commander Noah - Moriah Lodge and Council No.355 S.C.)



ANCIENT AND ACCEPTED SCOTTISH RITE

(Grand Inspector Inquisitor Commander 31° - Australia)
 (Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret 32° - Southern Jurisdiction - U.S.A.)



ROYAL AND SELECT MASTERS

(Past Thrice Illustrious Master - Ivanhoe Cryptic Council No.536 S.C.)
 (Past Thrice Illustrious Master - Elizabeth Council. No.6 S.A.C.)
 (Past Thrice Illustrious Master - La Hougue Bie Council No.157 E.C. - Jersey C.I.)
 (Past Deputy Grand Master - Grand Council of R.S.M. of S.A.)
 (Grand Recorder - Grand Council of R.S.M. of S.A.)
 (Recorder - Elizabeth Council No.6 S.A.C.)



ORDER OF THE SECRET MONITOR

(Past Worthy Supreme Ruler - Samuel Conclave No.5 S.A.C.)
 (Past Grand Bow Bearer - Grand Conclave for South Australia)



KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

(Past Eminent Preceptor - Percy Preceptory No.1 S.A.C.)
 (Past Eminent Preceptor - Trinity Preceptory No.7 S.A.C.)
 (Past Eminent Preceptor - St. John the Baptist Preceptory No.8 S.A.C.)
 (Past Eminent Preceptor - Loudon Castle Preceptory No.177 S.C.)
 (Great Second Constable - Great Priory of S.A.)
 (Registrar - St. John the Baptist Preceptory No.8 S.A.C.)



HOLY ROYAL ARCH KNIGHT TEMPLAR PRIESTS

(Past High Priest - Adelaide Tabernacle No.58 E.C.)
 (Past Fifth Grand Pillar - E.C.)



RED CROSS OF CONSTANTINE

(Past Most Puissant Sovereign - Way of the Cross Conclave No.1 S.A.C.)
 (Past Grand Registrar - Grand Imperial Conclave for S.A.)



ORDER OF THE ALLIED MASONIC DEGREES

(Past Worshipful Master - Isaac Council No.112 E.C.)
 (Past Worshipful Master - Isaac Council No.14 V.C.)
 (Past Grand Standard Bearer - Grand Council of England)
 (Past Divisional Grand Senior Warden - Division of S.A.)
 (Past Senior Grand Deacon - Grand Council of Victoria)



ROYAL ORDER OF SCOTLAND

(Past Deputy Provincial Grand Master - Provincial Grand Lodge of S.A.)



THE WORSHIPFUL SOCIETY OF FREEMASONS

(V° Intendant, Overseer, Superintendent and Warden)



SOCIETAS ROSICRUCIANA IN ANGLIA

(Magister Honoris Causa 8°)



KNIGHTS OF THE YORK CROSS OF HONOUR

(Past Prior - New South Wales Priory No.80)

Introduction

For many years, detractors of Freemasonry, wishing to discredit the Fraternity, have concocted numerous stories and myths to further their aims. There is a body of thought that the origins of the Craft, as we now know it, lie within the medieval Knights Templar and other knightly Orders. One of these myths is that the medieval fleet of the Order of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes and Malta turned to piracy and that the traditional pirate flag, the “Skull and Cross Bones”, more commonly referred to as the “Jolly Roger”, derived from the flag flown by that Order. Sensational and fanciful as this belief may be, unfortunately, or fortunately, according to your point of view, it is historically inaccurate. In order, therefore, to debunk the myth, we must travel back in time to the seventh century of the current era and more than three hundred years before the First Crusade, in 1095, and the establishment of the Order of St. John, four years later, in 1099. Our journey begins within the Republic of Amalfi.

The Republic of Amalfi

Amalfi is situated on the northern coast of the Bay of Salerno, about 35km south-east of Naples. It is first mentioned in the sixth century and soon acquired importance as a maritime power, trading grain and slaves from its neighbouring city-states and timber and salt from Sardinia for the gold dinars minted in Egypt and Syria. This gold bought the silks of the Byzantine Empire that it resold to Western Europe. Amalfi traders enjoyed privileged positions in the Islamic ports until the early eleventh century, despite the growing tensions that existed between Christians and Muslims. The Amalfi tables (*Tavole Amalfitane*) provided a maritime code that was widely used by the Christian port cities. Merchants of Amalfi were using gold coins to purchase lands in the ninth century, while most of the other Italian states still worked in a barter economy. In the eighth and ninth centuries, while Venice was still in its infancy, it shared with Gaeta, a city-state on the coast of the Gulf of Gaeta, about 70km north-west of Naples, the Italian trade with the East.

An independent republic from the seventh century until 1075, it rivalled Pisa and Genoa in its domestic prosperity and maritime importance. In spite of some devastating setbacks, it had a population of about 70,000, reaching its peak between 980 and 1000, during the reign of Duke Manso (966-1004). Under his line of Dukes, Amalfi remained independent, except for a brief period of Salernite dependency, under Guaiman IV. In 1073, it fell to the Normans but retained many rights and became a principal Mediterranean port for the new regime. In 1131, Roger II of Sicily, a supporter of the Anti-Pope Antiochus, during his campaign against Pope Innocent II, destroyed the city because he had been refused the keys to the citadel. Sixty years later, still recovering from its Sicilian defeat, Amalfi was again sacked; this time by its commercial rivals from Pisa. A tsunami, in 1343, destroyed the port and lower town from which it never recovered its maritime importance.

Amalfi and the Order of St. John

Eight years before the city-state finally fell to the Sicilians, Amalfi received help from the navy of the Order of St. John. With their assistance, numerous attacks from the Saracens upon their merchant fleet were repulsed. In 1123, in gratitude for the assistance it had been receiving, the Amalfian merchants presented the Order with funds to rebuild the hospice at Jerusalem as well as the flag of the duchy. This flag consisted of four white spear points placed point-to-point, in the form of a cross, on a red background. This flag was adopted by the Order's navy in 1124 and, in 1125, changed the background to black and was flown from the ensign staff at the stern of each ship. Following the establishment of the Order on the island of Malta, in 1530, the cross, originally granted four centuries earlier by a now-defunct state, became known as the Maltese Cross; the name that it has kept to the present day.

THE MALTESE CROSS

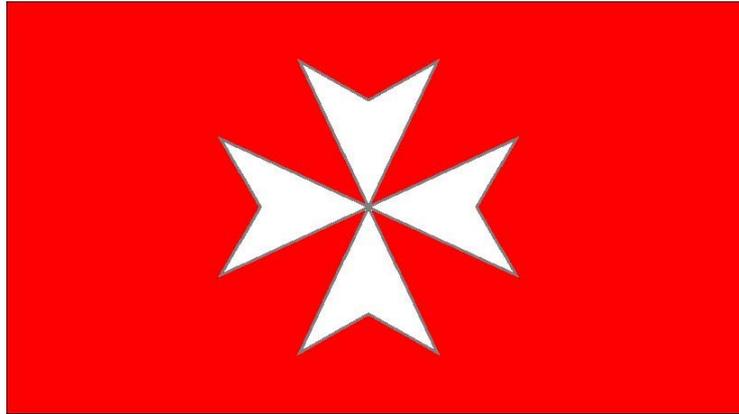


Figure A: FLAG OF THE REPUBLIC OF AMALFI

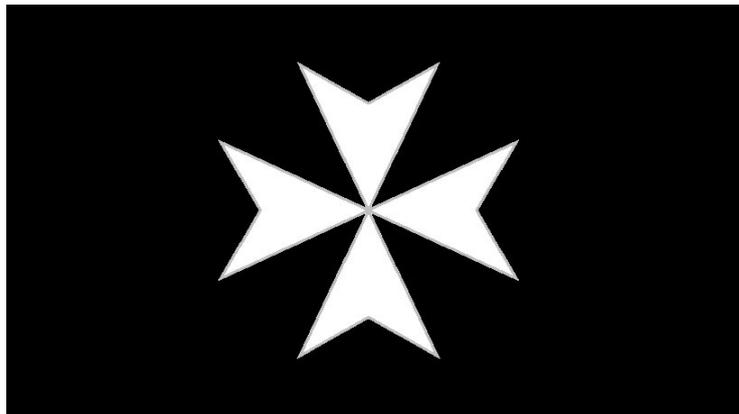


Figure B: FLAG OF THE NAVY OF THE ORDER OF ST. JOHN

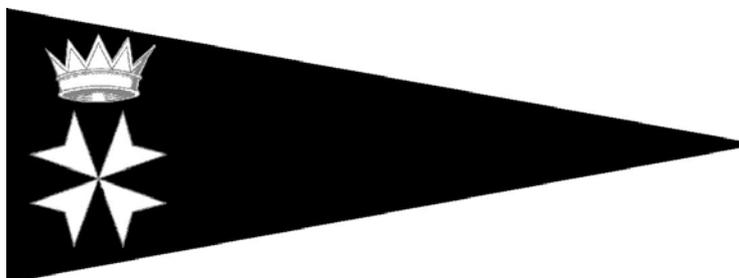


Figure C: PENNANT OF THE ADMIRAL OF ST. JOHN

BANNERS OF THE LANGUES (AFTER 1462)

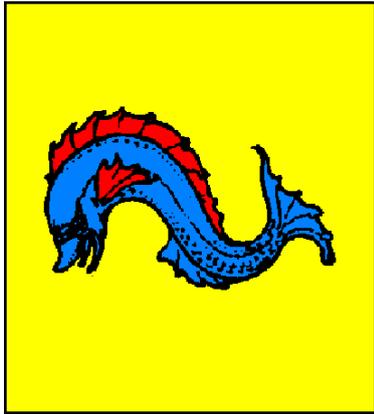


Figure D: PROVENCE

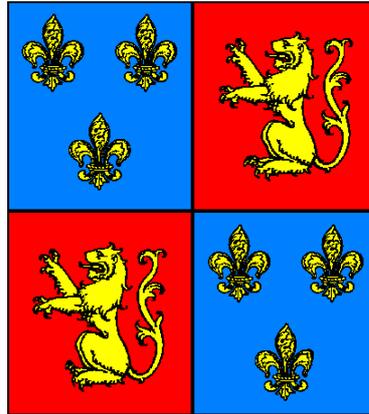


Figure E: AUVERNE

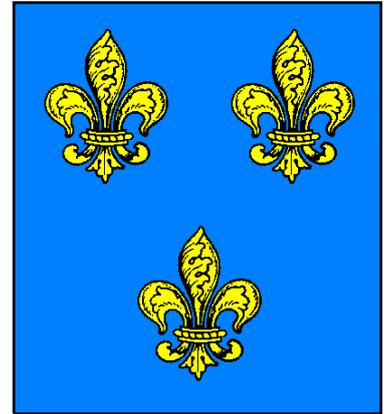


Figure F: FRANCE

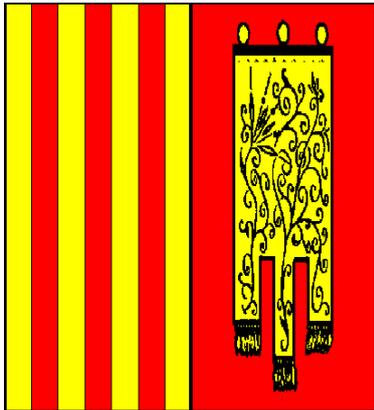


Figure G: ITALY

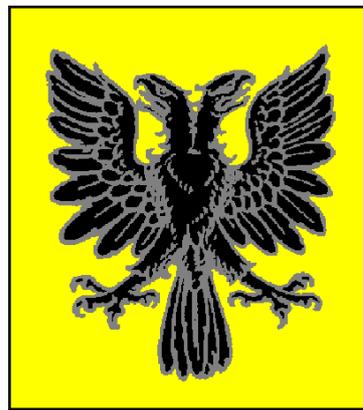


Figure H: CASTILE

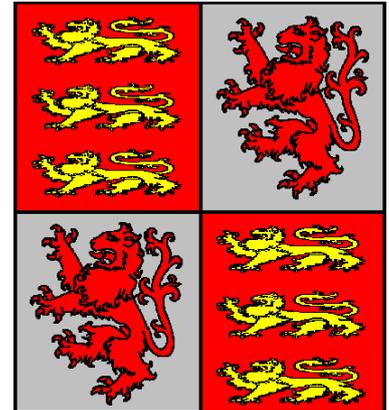


Figure I: GREAT BRITAIN

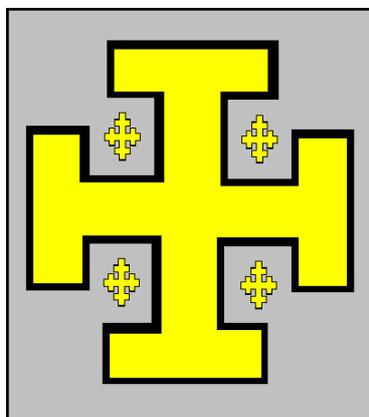


Figure J: GERMANY



Figure K: PORTUGAL

BANNERS OF THE OFFICE BEARERS

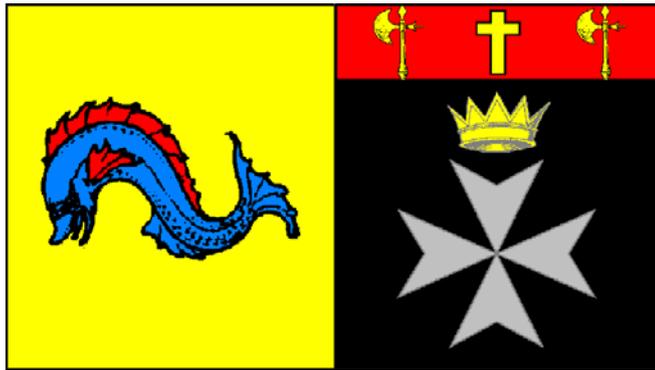


Figure L: MARESCHAL

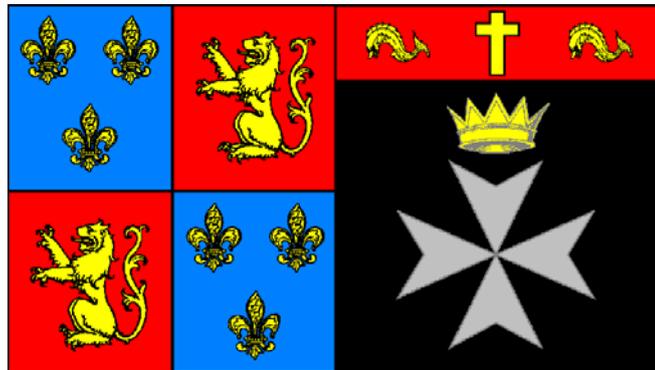


Figure M: HOSPITALLER

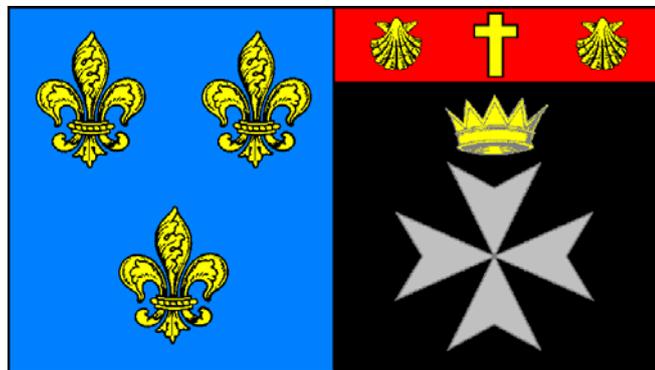


Figure N: ADMIRAL

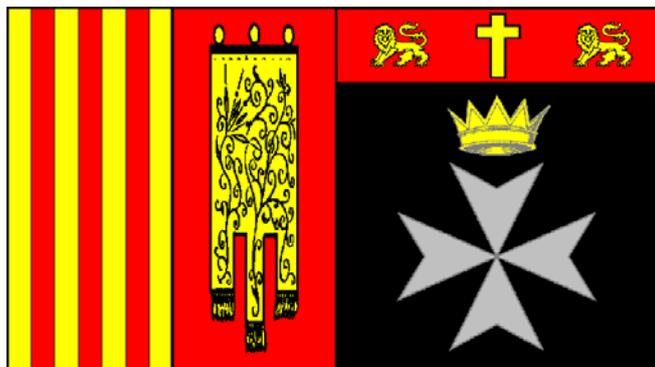


Figure O: CONSERVATOR

BANNERS OF THE OFFICE BEARERS

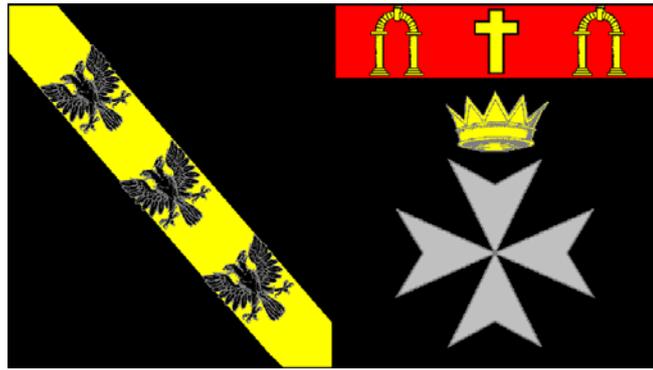


Figure P: BAILLIE

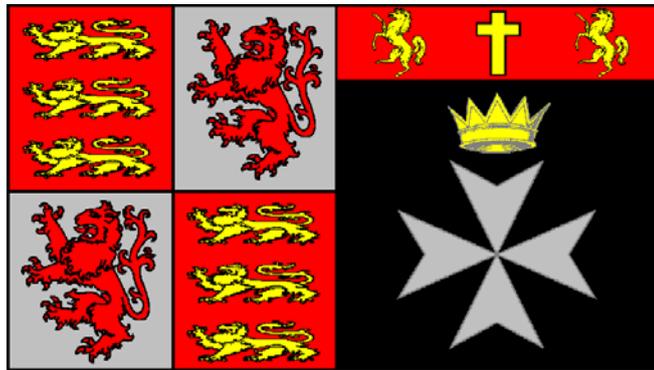


Figure Q: TURCOPOLIER

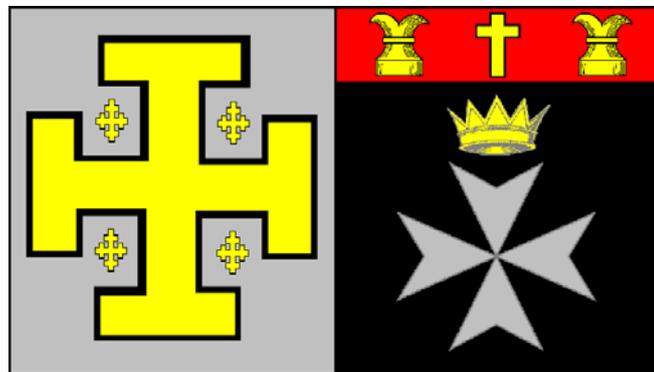


Figure R: CHANCELLOR



Figure S: TREASURER

Having, in 1131, received Papal recognition and funding as a military force for the protection of the Papacy, the Admiral of the fleet was permitted to fly, as his pennant, the “Amalfian” cross, rotated by 45° and surmounted by the Papal crown. This pennant was flown from the mainmast and established the naval tradition of an Admiral’s personal flag and thus, also, the flagship. In the late fourteenth century, when the Langues, or divisions, were established and the various Offices of the Order attached to each, the badges of these offices, which included the Maltese Cross surmounted by the Papal crown, were attached to the flags of the Langues to form personal banners of the Officers. These banners have been retained as the personal emblems of the same Office bearers of the Order, even though the Langues have long since disappeared.

The Navy of St. John

The Order of St. John, as did the Knights Templar and other orders of Crusading knights, first hired individual armed merchant ships to transport pilgrims to the Holy Land. In 1101, due to increased traffic and trade, the profits from which were going into the coffers of these merchants, Genoan builders were commissioned to produce twenty vessels that were to become the merchant fleet for the Order of St. John. This fleet finally came into full service in 1103. However, the constant and ever-increasing harassment of this fleet by the Saracens and others caused the Knights of the Order to adapt to naval warfare. They, therefore, again employed the shipbuilders of Genoa, as well as those of Taranto, to build a fleet of forty fighting galleons and, thus, in 1112, the navy of the Order of St. John was commissioned. The navy became an integral part of the organisation.

This navy took part in many battles, including defending the island of Rhodes from numerous attacks. During one of these attacks, in 1315, this time by the Ottoman Turks, the heroism of a young naval captain was recognised. Heavily outnumbered, having only four ships at his command against an invasion force of eighteen, Amadeus V, Count of Savoy, using tactics that later became the inspiration for other commanders, such as Sir Francis Drake, completely routed the superior Turkish fleet. For his bravery, the Grand Master of the Order ordered that the Count’s personal banner of St. John be embellished with the letters, “F, E, R and T”, one in each quarter; they being the initial letters of the phrase, “*Fortitudo Ejus Rhodum Tenuit*” - “His courage preserved Rhodes”. To this day, the descendants of Count Amadeus bear this device on their Arms.



Figure T: ARMS OF THE COUNTS OF SAVOY

The last major battle in which the navy of the Order of St. John took part was the battle of Lepanto, in 1571. The navy joined forces with fleets of other Catholic European States to completely destroy that of the Ottoman Turks, which victory ultimately led to the end of the Ottoman Empire. This battle was the last of its kind, in that the victorious force was made up of a number of small, independently owned fleets. Since the reign of Alfred the Great, Great Britain had always had a permanent naval force, ready to repel invaders, control the seaways and, with the rise of colonial expansion, other nations began to see such a necessity. If one event proved this necessity, it was the defeat, in 1588, of the Spanish Armada, which lacked the discipline and command of the English regular fleet. The navy of the Order of St. John was, therefore, after a glorious history, spanning four-and-a-half centuries, decommissioned on 15th May 1575.

Piracy and the “Jolly Roger”

While privateers are shown, in mid-seventeenth century Dutch paintings, flying a red flag, the first written record of how this flag was to be used, occurred in 1694, when an English Admiralty law made the flying of a red flag, known as a “Red Jack”, mandatory for privateers to distinguish them from Navy ships. It was this red flag that became known as the “Jolly Roger” - the first reference to this came from two pirates: Bartholomew Roberts, in June 1721 and Francis Sprigg, in December 1723. “Jolly Roger” is a corruption of the French, “*Jolie Rouge*”, which means ‘pretty, or beautiful, red’ - a tongue-in-cheek reference to the deeds done by buccaneers and the like. Sir Henry Morgan, whose career began as an English privateer, was one of the exceptions to this ‘rule’ of flying the red flag. At the height of his notorious raids in the West Indies, he always sailed under English colours.

The first references to a black flag are contained in records of privateer actions that are dated from 1697, more than a century after the decommissioning of the navy of the Order of St. John. However, according to the leading historical revisionist and note Holocaust denier, David Hatcher Childress, the “... *famous Knight Templar, King Roger II of Sicily, flew the pennant of the Knights of St. John in his acts of piracy against legitimate Mediterranean shipping and gave his name to that pennant.*” How an excommunicated (by Pope Innocent II) soldier of fortune and enemy of the Papacy could ever be considered to be a member of the fiercely loyal and religious order of Knights Templar simply beggars belief.

While pirates used the red, or bloody, flag as frequently as black flags, there was a distinction between the two. In the mid-eighteenth century, Captain Richard Hawkins confirmed that pirates gave quarter beneath the black flag, while no quarter was given beneath the red flag. Just as variations on the black “Jolly Roger” design existed, red flags sometimes incorporated yellow stripes or images symbolic of death. Henry Avery was the earliest of these pirates to embellish the simple red flag. Avery, who was born in Plymouth in 1653, disappeared from records in 1696 and was most famous for being one of the few major pirate captains to retire with his loot, without ever being arrested. He apparently lived his final years, in the Dutch West Indies in relative comfort.



Figure U: FLAG OF HENRY AVERY



Figure V: FLAG OF EDWARD ENGLAND

With the end of the war of the Spanish Succession, in 1714, many privateers turned to piracy. They still used red and black flags, but now they decorated them with their own designs. Edward England, for example, flew three different flags: from his mainmast, the black that has become synonymous with all pirates, namely, the “Skull and Crossed Bones”; from his foremast a red variation of the same and, from his ensign staff the flag of Great Britain - the Union flag of England and Scotland. The first record of the infamous black flag being used by pirates is an entry in a log book held by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Dated 6th December 1687, it describes the flag’s use by pirates, not aboard a ship, but on land:

“And we put down our white flag and raised a red flag with a Skull head on it and two crossed bones (all in white and in the middle of the flag) and then we marched on.”

Despite its prominence in popular culture, only four pirate captains ever flew the black flag with the skull and crossed bones: Edward England, John Taylor, Sean Bellamy and John Martel. Generally, it was a plain black flag that was flown.

Conclusion

Not all pirates flew the flag that we have come to know as the “Jolly Roger” and, as shown, even what we have come to accept is inaccurate. Many pirates flew flags of their own peculiar design and, yes, some did incorporate the use of the skull and crossed bones. However, there is absolutely no evidence that has ever come to light to support that the flag, made famous by these brigands, ever had its origins from within the glorious navy of the Order of St. John.

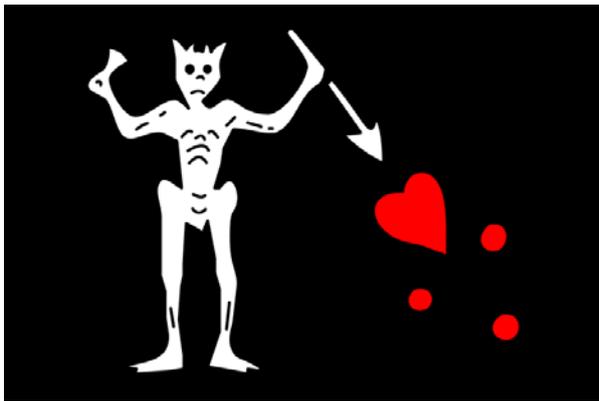


Figure W: FLAG OF EDWARD TEACH (BLACKBEARD)



Figure X: FLAG OF CHRISTOPHER CONDENT



Figure Y: FLAG OF JACK RACKHAM

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