

SIR RICHARD BROWN, 8<sup>TH</sup> BARONET OF COLSTOUN (1801-1858):  
SAVIOUR OF THE MOST VENERABLE ORDER OF ST JOHN OF  
JERUSALEM IN THE BRITISH REALM

Dr Matthew Glozier FRHistS, FSA Scot.  
*Sydney Grammar School*



Daguerreotype image of Sir Richard Brown (with permission via Charlotte Broun).<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Studio of David Octavius Hill and Robert Anderson, Edinburgh: Collection of Glasgow University, Department of Special Collections, Hill and Adamson Collection, GUL Number: HA0699. My thanks to Charlotte D. Broun for supplying me with this image, reproduced at the beginning of Richard Broun, Younger of Colstoun, *An Account of the Revival, by Sir James Broun, of the Baronetage of Colstoun, in 1826, after a Dormancy of Fifty Years* (Presented to Malcolm David Broun OAM QC, great-grandnephew of Sir Richard Broun, 8<sup>th</sup> Baronet of Colstoun on the occasion of Father's Day, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2006), ed. and trans. by Charlotte Dorian Broun from a copy of the original manuscript, p. 1. Sir Richard wears the silver-gilt Collar of SS gifted to him by members of the Committee of the Baronetage for Privileges in 1843. He is not wearing the family's original 1686 jewel of a Baronet of Nova Scotia; its omission suggests this photograph was taken to celebrate Broun's self-assumption of the title of 'eques auratus' (knight) in the year before he inherited the Broun baronetcy. This suggestion

## INTRODUCTION

Sir Richard Broun (1801–1858) is described in his entry in the 2004 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* as a ‘pamphleteer and fraudster.’<sup>2</sup> Baronet of Colstoun and Thornydykes in Scotland, in Haddingtonshire and Berwickshire respectively, he was Chief of the Name and Arms of the ancient Scottish House of Broun. A baronet is a hereditary knight first created in England by James I and VI in 1611; those of Scotland came into being under Charles I in 1625. Sir Richard, the eldest child and first son born to James Broun and Marion Henderson, was the author of a variety of books encompassing heraldry, colonisation schemes, and railway extension, including his pioneering work on the peculiar Scottish sport of curling, an interest which he inherited from his father, who had been a passionate advocate of the leisure activity. Sir Richard was also the chief architect of the survival of the ‘revived’ British *langue* of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, of which he was a Knight Grand Cross and Grand Secretary for twenty years between 1837 and his death in 1858. He was also Honorary Secretary to the Committee of Baronets for Privileges – a group he created that later grew into today’s Standing Council of the Baronetage – and he held the same position in the Central Agricultural Society, another creation of his active civic enthusiasms.<sup>3</sup> Though they might appear disparate, these interests and activities were linked. Sir Richard’s belief system was consistent throughout his life, and while many of his interests resulted in respect, even admiration, from his peers, others were pilloried unmercifully as being too far out of step with the ‘modern’ age of industrialisation.

Born in 1801, Sir Richard Broun died unmarried and childless in December 1858. Before succeeding to the baronetcy, he endeavoured to establish the right of the eldest sons of baronets to receive the dignity of knighthood. Having been denied this honour consistently, in 1842 he assumed the title of ‘Sir’ of his own volition; the action caused his opponents to accuse ‘Mr Broun’ of being a self-styled, pretended, false knight. He inherited the family baronetcy from his father in 1844.<sup>4</sup> His brother, Sir William Broun, a solicitor in Dumfries, succeeded him as ninth baronet. It is from Sir William that the line of baronets who migrated to Australia later in the century descend. The title is currently enjoyed by Sir Wayne Hercules Broun, fourteenth baronet of Colstoun and Thornydykes. His uncle, Sir William Broun, was thirteenth baronet and father of Mrs Sheree Veron, to whom I give thanks for allowing me to consult the extensive Broun papers that reside in her possession, many of them written by Sir Richard. I also

---

is strengthened by the presence on the table of a jousting helm with open visor – this is the heraldic symbol of a knight. These observations date the picture to 1843-4.

<sup>2</sup> Anita McConnell, ‘Broun, Sir Richard, eighth baronet (1801–1858)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-3595?rskey=719pxH&result=1>. Published 23 September, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Ian Anstruther, *The Baronets’ Champion: Sir Richard Broun’s Campaigns for the Privileges of the Baronetage* (Petworth: Haggerston Press, 2006), p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Anstruther, *The Baronets’ Champion*, p. 29. Sir Richard’s father, James, died on 30 November 1844. His death was mentioned in two newspapers, *John Bull* (7 December 1844), and the *Caledonian Mercury* (5 December 1844).

acknowledge the generous encouragement of Charlotte Broun, daughter of the late Malcolm Broun OAM QC, both of whom were passionate scholars of their Broun ancestry. Finally, my intellectual debt –to the author and historian, Sir Ian Anstruther of that ilk Bt, whose biography of Sir Richard Broun, entitled *The Baronets' Champion*, has greatly informed this paper.

### *THE ORDER OF ST JOHN*

To understand Sir Richard Broun and his relationship to honorific Orders, decorations and privileges in early Victorian Britain, it is important to narrate some of the history behind his most long-lasting achievement – the revival of the Order of St John in the British Isles. Following King Henry VIII's break with Rome, in 1540 the ancient crusader era Order of St John was suppressed alongside other monastic and religious institutions all dissolved by royal edict.<sup>5</sup> The *langue* of England was restored and re-incorporated by Queen Mary I in 1557, during her short-lived attempt to revive Catholicism in England. Although its renewed existence lasted just two years – Queen Elizabeth I again confiscated all the Order's estates in 1559 – the Order was never abolished. In other words, Queen Mary's revival of the *langue* remained in force in Law.<sup>6</sup> This reality was given weight in Scotland, where the influence of the Reformation only ended the Order's activities in 1564, and then only due to the actions of the last Prior of Scotland, Sir James Sandilands. He brokered a deal with the government that resulted in his privately purchasing the Preceptory of Torphichen as a secular estate with himself raised to the Scots peerage as Lord Torphichen.<sup>7</sup>

As the effects of the Reformation took hold and both England and Scotland became increasingly certain of their adoption of Protestantism, it is tempting to assume the Catholic Order of St John had no place in British life. However, this is most surprisingly not the case. The Stuart monarchs' hierarchical attitude towards state religion and the Divine Right of Kings resulted in fertile ground for a *rapprochement* between Anglican England and the Catholic Order.<sup>8</sup> King Charles I was drawn to the pious chivalric romanticism of the Order of St John, and his personal crypto-Catholic religious views suggested the possibility for Queen Mary's extant revival of the Order in England to be honoured in a practical way with the restitution of estates. Agents of the Order entered into negotiations with the king's representatives.<sup>9</sup> The dramatic events of the English

---

<sup>5</sup> The fullest recent study is Gregory O'Malley, *The English Knights Hospitaller and the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> H. W. Fincham, *The Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem and its Grand Priory of England* (London: Venerable Order of St John, 1915), pp. 56-7; W. Rees, *A History of the Order of St John of Jerusalem* (Cardiff: Priory of Wales, 1947).

<sup>7</sup> Sir Edwin King, *The Knights of St John in the British Realm: Being the Official History of the British Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem* (London: Venerable Order of St John, 1934), p. 116.

<sup>8</sup> King, *The Knights of St John in the British Realm*, pp. 129-31.

<sup>9</sup> D. F. Allen, 'Attempts to Revive the Order of Malta in Stuart England', *The Historical Journal* 33, no. 4 (December 1990): pp. 941, 943-4.

Revolution of the 1640s destroyed all hope of the reappearance in England of a medieval order of devoutly Catholic knights. Nevertheless, under King Charles II, the Order was keen to point out that it was possible for a Catholic Order to operate in a Protestant land; Germany served as a template for how this could be done.<sup>10</sup>

The high point of optimism for a full restoration of the Order of St John in England occurred in the reign of Charles's openly Catholic brother, James II. King James welcomed the Order with open arms. His ambassador to Rome, the Earl of Castlemaine, received 'frequent visits' from the Order's agents, which 'lifted the morale of the Order.'<sup>11</sup> King James appears to have modelled his 'revived' Scottish Order on the Order of St John. The Thistle Order was an overtly Roman Catholic chivalric creation, confined to a tight-knit group of Scottish aristocrats bound together by ties of family and faith.<sup>12</sup> James's short-lived reign ensured that the fate in Britain of both the Order of St John and Roman Catholicism were sealed. However, King James's direct (though illegitimate) son, Henry FitzJames, was Grand Prior of the English *langue* in exile from 1689 to 1701.

#### REVIVAL OF THE 'LANGUE' OF ENGLAND

The Glorious Revolution of 1688 marked the defeat of the Catholic monarch King James II and extinguished all hope for a return to England of the Order of St John. Just over 140 years after that event, a group of British gentlemen embarked on a venture that would in time result in the birth of St John Ambulance. Some background and contextual information are required in order to explain exactly how a 'revival' of the *langue* of England came to take place in 1831, because to this day there remains a strong feeling within the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem that it is, both morally and historically, a branch of the original Knights Hospitaller.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1820s the Order of St John was in disarray. It had been cast out by Napoleon from its island stronghold on Malta in 1798 and was a stateless Order, desperately clinging for survival to an insistence on its sovereign status, established by canon law from 1113 and by past domination of Rhodes. The headquarters of the Order was now on Italian soil and headed by a small band of Italian knights. However, the Order had in fact been dominated throughout its existence by French knights who had formed its backbone in terms of numbers and leadership. French knights remained the vital driving force behind the Order so that when they formed a Capitular Commission it readily came under the patronage of the restored French king, Louis XVIII, and received the blessing of the Pope. Negotiating with the Greek patriots then in rebellion against their

---

<sup>10</sup> Allen, 'Attempts to Revive the Order of Malta in Stuart England', p. 947.

<sup>11</sup> Allen, 'Attempts to Revive the Order of Malta in Stuart England', p. 947.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Glozier, 'The "Restoration" of the Order of the Thistle, the Earl of Melfort and the Catholic Court Party', *Scottish Historical Review* 79, no. 2 (October 2000): p. 233-8; Asllen, 'Attempts to Revive the Order of Malta in Stuart England', p. 951.

<sup>13</sup> This statement was made repeatedly and explicitly by the Order's official historian; King, *The Knights of St John in the British Realm*, p. vi.

Ottoman oppressors, the French knights of the Order (*via* the Capitular Commission) arranged for the Order of St John to re-occupy the Mediterranean island of Rhodes in exchange for their practical support for the Greek War of Independence.<sup>14</sup> This called for fighting personnel, which the knights were happy to supply, but the vital impediment was money. England offered compelling opportunities for raising financial capital in combination with a genuine desire expressed by many British gentlemen to become knights of the ancient Order of St John.

*THE DESIRE OF PROTESTANT BRITONS TO JOIN AN EXPLICITLY CATHOLIC CHIVALRIC ORDER*

The Romantic Movement had its origin in late-eighteenth century Germany, in direct opposition to the cerebral Age of Reason that had inspired the politically ‘rational’ movements of the American and French revolutions of the later-1700s. The devastation of much of Germany by Napoleonic French troops created a nationalist reaction that emphasized local traditions as a patriotic statement against the invaders. A Romantic revival in literature and art also took root in Britain. The novels of Sir Walter Scott inspired a rose-tinted view of the Middle Ages that built on earnest and valuable antiquarian research.<sup>15</sup> Scott himself combined literary flights of fancy with serious historical investigation, almost single-handedly creating a movement among Britain’s landed gentry and nobility which resulted in the real-life playing-out of chivalric concepts. Most notably, in Scotland Scott provided the inspiration for an actual medieval style tournament complete with antique armour purchased by the participants at huge expense. The outcome of the Eglinton Tournament of 1839 (risible in the view of many hostile observers) is best summarised in the title of a bemused modern historical study of the event: *The Knight and the Umbrella*.<sup>16</sup>

The essential point, however, is that members of the upper echelons of British society who were in possession of both money and leisure time felt compelled by genuine emotion to take part in rituals that their ancestors would have disparaged as being socially or religiously objectionable. The Oxford Movement added to the cultural attractions of literary Romanticism. By mid-century a group of Anglican theologians and scholars were dissatisfied with current practices within the Church of England and a growing evangelical trajectory. Inspired by the theological trends of the reign of King Charles I, they initiated the High Church movement within Anglicanism. Emphasising church ceremony, with bells and incense and an array of ceremonial robes and vestments, they adopted the hierarchical practices favoured by King Charles and his Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud. The most radical of them, including John

---

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Riley-Smith, ‘The Order of St John in England, 1827-1858’, in *The Military Orders: Fighting for the Faith and Caring for the Sick*, ed. Malcolm Barber (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 122-3.

<sup>15</sup> For a scholarly investigation of these trends see Elizabeth Seberry, ‘Victorian perceptions of the Military Order’, in *Military Orders*, ed. Malcom Barber (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 368-71.

<sup>16</sup> Ian Anstruther, *The Knight and the Umbrella* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1986).

Henry Newman, converted to Roman Catholicism.<sup>17</sup> If these trends had given hope to the Order of St John during the reign of the Stuarts, they certainly suggested the Order might find fertile ground for support in Britain by the 1830s.

The scene was set for the revival of the *langue* of England.<sup>18</sup> Queen Mary's charter had never been revoked, and legitimate representatives of the Catholic Order of St John took the initiative by reaching out to Protestant English gentlemen to offer them membership of their exclusive historic chivalric body. This even included members of the ultra-Protestant Orange Order.<sup>19</sup> Sadly, a series of unfortunate events then ensued. In 1830 the French monarchy was overthrown by a popular revolution at the same time as Greek independence was achieved. In truth, the British government had been hostile to assisting the Greeks and placed barriers in the way of financial support, but this left a number of British gentlemen in a dilemma. They had become Knights of the Order of St John and this 'revived' British branch wished to honour that august chivalric institution by entering into full communication with it. However, these same men soon received the disquieting news that they were not recognised as members of the Order of St John at all.<sup>20</sup>

This was a dramatic reversal of the good relations enjoyed previously by all concerned. Dire though this situation appeared, the English knights benefitted from the historical prestige retained by the Order in Britain.<sup>21</sup> The Order's prestige remained very high indeed.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the British knights could take heart from developments elsewhere. For example, in Germany the Protestant branch of the Order – the Johanniter Orden – had become a secular State Order in 1812.<sup>23</sup> In other words, change was possible, and alterations to the status of the branches of the ancient Order could occur at any time. Even the stem of the ancient Order appeared threatened by a form of Papal secularisation.<sup>24</sup> From the mid-1830s the British group included men of high honour

<sup>17</sup> Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> For a thorough analysis of this era in the history of the Order see Riley-Smith, 'The Order of St John Barber,' in *Military Orders*, ed. Malcom Barber (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 121-4.

<sup>19</sup> In 18 April 1834 the Grand Lodge of England included many 'noblemen and gentlemen' led by HRH the Duke of Cumberland and HG the Duke of Gordon; among them was the Rev. Sir Robert Peat, 'Prelate of the Sovereign Order of St John of Jerusalem': *Protestant Standard* (18 June 1870), p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> James Cheshire, 'Origins and continuity: how the Most Venerable Order developed in the period before the 1888 Royal Charter', *St John History: Proceedings of the St John Ambulance Historical Society of Australia 2007–08* 7 (June 2007–June 2008), pp. 12-21.

<sup>21</sup> *Weekly Register of Politics, Facts and General Literature* (20 December 1845), p. 298.

<sup>22</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald* (28 October 1846), p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Australian* (24 November 1846), p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Freeman's Journal* (14 November 1850), p. 3. This issue, among others affecting the modern Sovereign Order, is canvassed in H. J. A. Sire, *The Knights of Malta: A Modern Resurrection* (London: Third Millennium, 2016).

and social standing. Among them was Sir Richard Broun, who had joined in 1835 and occupied the position of Grand Secretary from 1837 to his death in 1858. Broun was also the Order's historiographer, as he wrote a book in 1837 narrating the history of the Order up to its 'restoration.' He was instrumental in recruiting friend and fellow baronet Sir Henry Dymoke Bt the Hereditary Champion of England, and Broun encouraged him to become Prior of the *langue*, in succession to the Rev Sir Robert Peat, on the occasion of Peat's death in 1837.



Gilt impressa of the Committee of the Baronetage for Privileges. It appears on the cover of Sir Richard Broun's hand-written Manuscript volume of the Broun family history and the revival of the family baronetcy, the first page of which is dated August 1828. Photograph taken by author.<sup>25</sup>

Sir Henry Dymoke occupied this leadership position for a decade until 1847, when he was succeeded as Prior by Colonel Sir Charles Montolieu Lamb Bt, Knight Marshal of the Kingdom. As is indicated by their archaic but genuine titles, these men were politically conservative romantics opposed to the kind of changes in modern Britain represented by the Great Reform Act and growing industrialisation. Sir Richard Broun and all those well-born men he recruited into leadership roles within the Order of St John were baronets. Lamb was both a Knight of Malta and a member of the Committee of the Baronetage for Privileges which Broun established at this time. In fact, Lamb was the only *bona fide* member of the Catholic Order who stayed involved in the British group. Three further members of Broun's early 'revived' Order of St John belonged to his baronets' Committee: among them can be counted Sir Joshua Colles Meredyth Bt, Sir Francis Charles Knowles Bt and Sir William Hillary Bt.<sup>26</sup> After 1865, another baronet, Sir Edmund Lechmere, became a hugely influential Secretary General of the Order of St John. He served in the position for thirty years up to his death in 1894.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> My gratitude to Mrs Sheree Veron for allowing me access to this precious and fragile document.

<sup>26</sup> Anstruther, *The Baronets' Champion*, pp. 135-7.

<sup>27</sup> King, *Knights of St John in the British Realm*, pp. 142-5.



The British knights, in their resolute naïveté, maintained they were genuine Knights of the Order of St John. By the late 1840s, though, the ‘Anglia’ knights nearly died out and even Richard Broun became disheartened. They did, however, renew their efforts for formal recognition by the Order of Malta in 1857 when they approached the Lieutenant of the Order in Rome through a Catholic member of their group, John James Watts. Watts proposed the establishment of a Catholic priory, which could in time encompass a Protestant branch consisting of the existing group. The Grand Lieutenant, Philippe de Colloredo-Mansfeld, was initially in favour of this plan. However, dissension within the British group proved fatal. Watts and two other members – the Roman Catholic Sir George Bowyer MP and Edmund Waterton, from an old recusant family – were received as Knights of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. Deciding to break from the English group entirely, they went on to form a British Association of the Order of Malta (founded in 1876). The knights of England were not fully rejected until 1858, when Colloredo-Mansfeld definitively repudiated the actions of the French Capitular Commission. Even then, the British group was only undone by the active connivance of its own membership.<sup>28</sup>

Sir Richard Broun’s published history, the *Hospitallaria*, re-appeared at this crisis point in the existence of the British knights, under the title *Synoptical Sketch of the Order of St John*.<sup>29</sup> Broun’s optimism concerning acceptance by the Order of Malta is evident in the fact the book named Colloredo and the Catholic Order as their superiors. The Lieutenant demanded the removal from the book of his name and references to the relationship with the Sovereign Order of Malta. Sir George Bowyer conveyed a letter of protest to Britain’s Prince Consort, Prince Albert, who (though Protestant) was a recipient of the Sovereign Order’s Cross of Devotion. The British knights had little choice but to accede to the request.<sup>30</sup> Despite all this, the republication of Broun’s book in 1857 renewed the energy and vitality of the ‘Anglia’ knights. In light of this and in combination with their rejection by Rome, it is little wonder that they pursued their own course into the future, independent of contact with the Catholic Order of Malta.<sup>31</sup> Ironically, the committee meeting that resigned itself to this course of action was chaired by a genuine Knight of Malta, the Swiss Count de Salis-Soglio, who remained involved with the group into the 1860s. Dialogue between the Orders was not renewed until the 1960s. Believing in the justness of their claims, in the spirit of Sir Richard

---

<sup>28</sup> E. D. Renwick and I. M. Williams, *A Short History of the Order of St John* (London: Venerable Order of St John, 1971), p. 57.

<sup>29</sup> Sir Richard Broun, *Synoptical Sketch of the Illustrious and Sovereign Order of Knights Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem* (London: Order of St John, 1857), p. 30.

<sup>30</sup> Museum of the Venerable Order of St John, *Minute Book of the English Langue (1837-58)* [hereafter MVO OSJ], Anglia Minutes 280, 291 ff, 297 ff, 311, 314, 321, 347, 351-2, quoted in Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 58; Riley-Smith, ‘The Order of St John in England’, in *The Military Orders*, ed. Malcom Barber (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 131.

<sup>31</sup> Riley-Smith, ‘The Order of St John in England, 1827-1858’, p. 121.



Broun (who died in 1858), the British knights persisted under the name of ‘Sovereign and Illustrious Order of St John of Jerusalem, Anglia.’<sup>32</sup>

Having separated themselves, however unwillingly, from the ancient Catholic Order of St John, the British knights returned slowly to the original purpose of the Knights Hospitaller. Influential Masonic connections and prominent annual processions through London on St John’s Day (24<sup>th</sup> June), built the respectability of the ‘The Sovereign, Military and Religious Order of St John of Jerusalem, in Anglia.’ It attracted aristocratic members, including Lord Torphichen, who was a direct descendant of the last Lord Prior of the Order in Scotland. A measure of the prominence of the British group is evident in the fact that, when the Sovereign Military Order of Malta established its own English Association in 1876, it was under the leadership of an Irish peer, the Earl of Granard, but consisted of an odd mixture of Irishmen, Maltese and Catholic foreigners. Only later did it attract English gentlemen from old recusant families. Sir George Bowyer was bitterly disappointed at the refusal of the Sovereign Order to erect a full-blown Grand Priory (which would have been an actual Order sanctioned and approved revival and continuation of the ancient *langue* of England).<sup>33</sup> In contrast to the frustration of Bowyer and his Malta knights, in the same year of 1876, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales joined the British knights. Under the leadership of the Duke of Manchester, they were already awarding a St John bravery medal to first-aiders who risked their lives ‘conferred by the Order for the reward of deeds of valour in saving life on land.’<sup>34</sup> In 1877 the St John Ambulance Association was created, calling on strong connections built on trust and a robust sense of mission. The British knights surged ahead with their own philanthropic endeavours. In 1882 the British knights established an eye hospital in Jerusalem. In 1887 the St John Ambulance Brigade came into being. Finally, on 14 May 1888, Her Majesty Queen Victoria granted a Royal Charter creating as a Royal Order of Chivalry ‘The Grand Priory of the Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England.’

### *RESTORER OR CREATOR?*

Sir Richard Broun was an inveterate creator of rules for new honorific privileges, always based, so he claimed, on ancient precedent. The outcome was many published works that narrated ancient traditions based on original manuscript source material, often illustrating uniforms, ephemera (i.e. swords, rings, gold spurs) and additaments to existing honorifics, chief among them coats-of-arms. In short, Broun was an enthusiastic antiquarian with enough education and intelligence to formulate coherent and, at times, persuasive arguments. He became the original of Benjamin Disraeli’s Sir

---

<sup>32</sup> For its view of itself see Robert Bigsby, *Memoir of the Illustrious and Sovereign Order of St John of Jerusalem ... A detailed account of its sixth or British branch, as reorganized in 1831* (Derby: Richard Keene, 1869).

<sup>33</sup> Just such a revival took place in 1993 with Frà Matthew Festing appointed first Grand Prior of England, *in* England, since Thomas Tresham (Prior 1557-9). Frà Matthew Festing served as Grand Prior of England (1993-2008), before being elected Prince and Grand Master (2008-17).

<sup>34</sup> *Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser* (2 March 1877), p. 7.

Vavasour Firebrace, a disparaging literary caricature in the novel, *Sybil, or The Two Nations* (1842), and is today remembered as ‘Sir Richard Broun, Victorian champion of the baronets against the plebeians.’<sup>35</sup> The received wisdom of academia is that Sir Richard Broun is the ‘eccentric baronet’ who lobbied unsuccessfully for many years to have numerous supposed ancient rights of his Order restored. Best known was his advocacy of the right of having the eldest sons of baronets knighted as a matter of course by the sovereign, on reaching the age of twenty-one. Against Sir Richard is his designing of fabulous costumes of splendid faux-medieval style, replete with cloaks and feathers. It should be recalled that, for a section of the British landowning elite, such interests were common and well-accepted in the early nineteenth century. One has only to visit the home of Sir Walter Scott to witness the effect on the interior design of Abbotsford of Scott’s romantic and antiquarian sensibility.

What drove such intense devotion to these peculiar interests? A strong clue is present in Sir Richard Broun’s own description of the restoration of the Broun baronetcy which he initiated in favour of his father in 1826:

Thus I had the heartfelt happiness, and satisfaction to see ... my father restored to the long dormant honours of his name, and family, and felt prouder to see him stand in his place, amongst the nobles of the Land, than if the possessions of his ancestors had become his inheritance. These had passed into other hands [he refers to the Colstoun estate], and were acquired, as others perhaps again acquired; But this was what wealth could not buy, nor power create, the acknowledged Chieftain of his race in Scotland. This gave him what the King cannot give, but what a King had given, rank and precedence over the greater part of the Baronetage, and above all the Gentry of the Empire.<sup>36</sup>

Such sentiments would lead one to assume that Sir Richard was a stickler for precedent, due process, and strict adherence to legal forms. However, he was in reality quite cavalier about the strictness with which he observed the rules that emanated from the legitimate font of honour. For example, Broun accepted readily the words of the Edinburgh solicitor, Mr John Henderson, in relation to the question of whether or not he needed to register in some law court or elsewhere his father’s succession to the baronetcy (which had been established in a regional court in their native Lochmaben):

You seem to imagine that your father’s right to the title must be recognised by Government, and gazetted, before he can take it up. This is quite a mistake. There is no formal recognition by Government required. The title rests in the nearest heir-male *ipso fure*. The Service does not confer the right, it merely proves who the person is that is entitled to it ... it is usual to put a notification of the Service into the Gazette.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> John Martin Robinson, ‘Sir Vavasour Firebrace The Baronets’ *Champion: Sir Richard Broun’s Campaigns for the Privileges of the Baronetage*, by Ian Anstruther’, *Literary Review* September 2006.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Broun, Younger of Colstoun, *An Account of the Revival, by Sir James Broun, of the Baronetage of Colstoun, in 1826, after a Dormancy of Fifty Years*, p. 20.

Although Broun expressed inordinate pride in his family's lineage and title, the meager financial position of the family is revealed in the final piece of advice given him by Henderson in relation to his father taking up the succession to the Broun baronetcy: 'I think it is a matter which should be well considered, whether in his present circumstance it would be prudent to do so.'<sup>38</sup> Poverty never inhibited any Scot's pride in his family; in the words of Sir Walter Scott: 'Every Scottishman has a pedigree. It is a national prerogative, as unalienable as his pride and his poverty.'<sup>39</sup> This applied to Richard Broun, who spent most of his life living in genteel poverty at a property called Sphinx Cottage in the London suburb of Chelsea. Interestingly, one of the family's landholdings in Scotland was called Sandersdean. It was originally called Templelands because it belonged to the Knights Templar until their suppression in 1312, when it passed into the possession of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps Sir Richard's pride in his ancestry sparked his interest in the 'revived' *langue* of England?

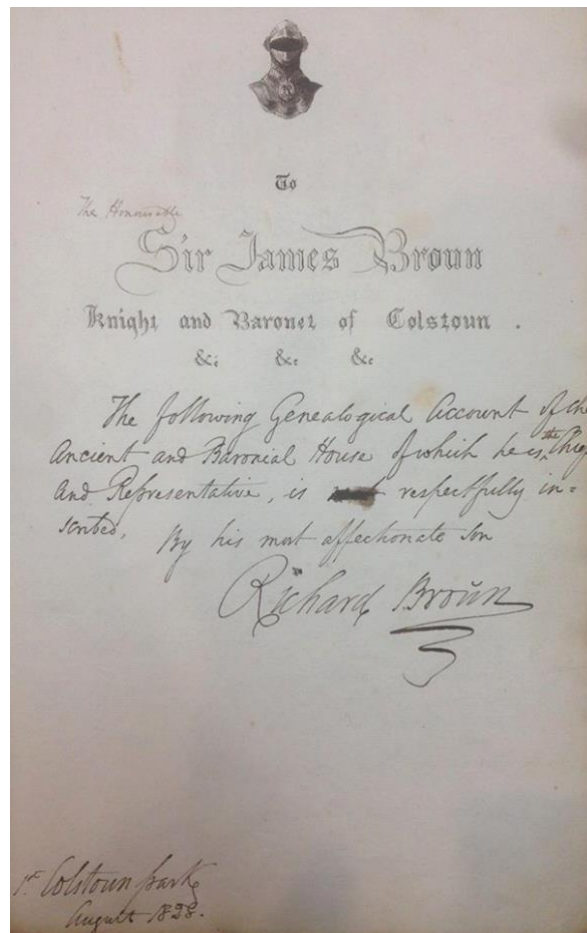
---

<sup>37</sup> John T. Henderson to Mr Richard Broun (of Edinburgh), Mayfield, Lochmaben, 17th March 1826: Broun, *An Account of the Revival, by Sir James Broun, of the Baronetage of Colstoun*, pp. 22-3.

<sup>38</sup> Henderson to Broun, as above.

<sup>39</sup> Autographical memoir (April 1808), quoted in Anstruther, *The Baronets' Champion*, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> I am grateful to Charlotte Broun for this information, which comes from an article written by Edith Broun Lindsay about the Brouns and Colstoun.

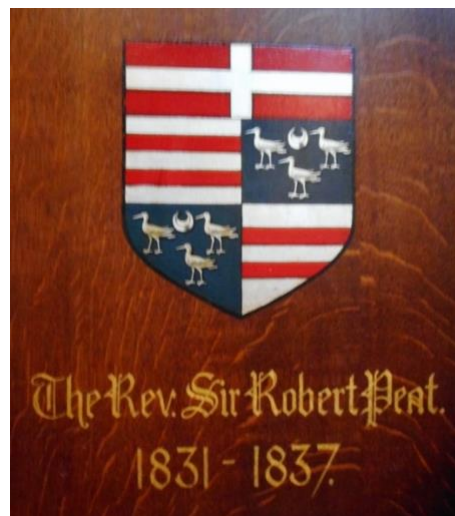


Frontispiece of Sir Richard Broun's Manuscript history of the Broun family and the revival of the family baronetcy, dated August 1828. Photograph by author.



Dr Matthew Glozier and Miss Charlotte Glozier with Sir Wayne Broun, 14<sup>th</sup> Baronet of Colstoun and Thorniedykes, 30<sup>th</sup> Chief of the Name and Arms of Broun. Photography by author.

In 1842 Richard Broun assumed the title of ‘Sir’, following the Lord Chamberlain’s rejection of his 1836 petition to be dubbed a knight in right of being the eldest son and heir of a baronet. King George IV had withdrawn this right in 1827 and Broun was unable to have it revived. Broun then assumed the title to ‘vindicate this fundamental and inalienable privilege of the eldest sons of baronets.’<sup>41</sup> Fortunately for him, he inherited the Broun baronetcy within the year and thus escaped the embarrassment of exposure as a false knight. Broun obviously felt the decision to call himself ‘Sir’ Richard was significant enough to warrant his commissioning the daguerreotype image of himself reproduced at the beginning of this paper. The image is undated in the Collection of Glasgow University, but internal evidence confirms it must have been taken in 1843-4, in the months between assuming the title ‘Sir’ and inheriting the Broun baronetcy. Sir Richard wears the silver-gilt Collar of SS gifted to him by members of the Committee of the Baronetage for Privileges in 1843. He is not wearing the family’s original jewel of a Baronet of Nova Scotia; its omission suggests this photograph was taken to celebrate Broun’s self-assumption of the title of *eques auratus* (knight) in the year before he inherited the Broun baronetcy. This theory is strengthened by the presence on the table of a jousting helm with open visor – this is the heraldic symbol of a knight. These observations date the picture to 1843-4.



Arms of the Rev. Sir Robert Peat. Photograph by author.

Sir Richard Broun’s self-assumption of knighthood is an important event because it relates directly to another self-styled knight, Sir Robert Peat, an Anglican cleric and the first Grand Prior of the revived English *Langue* of the Order of St John, ‘Anglia.’ Peat’s arms and position in the Order are still proclaimed at St John’s Gate, Clerkenwell, London, the international headquarters of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem and the ancient gatehouse of the original Catholic knights in England. However, like Richard Broun, Sir Robert was not a British knight and had no

---

<sup>41</sup> *The Gentleman’s Magazine* 177 (February 1845), p. 202.

right to the title of ‘Sir.’ He was a genuine member of the Polish Order of Saint Stanislaus, to which he had been appointed in 1790 by Stanislaw II August Poniatowski, King of Poland. Thus, he held a real, albeit foreign, knighthood and, it must be admitted, he was far from being the only man in Britain to misappropriate the title of ‘Sir’ based on holding a foreign knightly decoration. Indeed, numerous recipients of the Hanoverian Royal Guelphic Order called themselves ‘Sir’, including the prominent astronomer, Frederick William Herschel.<sup>42</sup> Like his Polish honour, Peat’s armorial bearings were also genuine, being recently quartered to show his inheritance from his mother’s ancient Heron family.<sup>43</sup>



Armorial bearings assumed by Sir Robert Peat, Grand Prior of the revived langue of the Order of St John, Anglia. Wikimedia Commons.

---

<sup>42</sup> A. Hanham and M. Hoskin, ‘The Herschel Knighthoods: Facts and Fiction’, *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 44, no. 120 (2013): pp. 149–64.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Robson, *The British Herald, or Cabinet of Armorial Bearings of the Nobility & Gentry of Great Britain & Ireland* (Sunderland: Turner & Marwood, 1830, England), pp. 270-2.



Armorial bearings attributed by Sir Richard Broun to his father, Sir James, 7th baronet. Note the Collar of SS, heraldic supporters, mantle of estate and baronet's coronet above the crest. Wikimedia Commons.

Building on these pretensions, Sir Richard Broun took it upon himself to redesign his family's Scottish armorial bearings, in order to reflect his pretensions relating to the rights of baronets. Broun believed that baronets should use a coronet, just as members of the hereditary peerage did – he advocated the diminished form used by barons (lords), his version bearing two visible pearls.<sup>44</sup> This is present in the arms he redesigned for his father, though, oddly and untraditionally, it sits above the crest. He went further still by adding supporters on either side of the shield. He surrounded the shield with the legitimate and traditional badge of a baronet of Nova Scotia (the specifically Scottish baronetcy which the Brouns held from 1686), but augmented this with an elaborate Collar of SS which he maintained was the right of baronets.<sup>45</sup> Finally, he removed the chevron, an inverted 'V' shaped pattern on the shield in order to make the Broun arms look more regal; he appears to have initiated the story that the Brouns were a branch of the French royal family. All of this was done without the authority of the Lord Lyon King of Arms, the Great Officer of State charged with regulating heraldry in Scotland. It is hardly a defense for Broun, but it can certainly be acknowledged that he was not alone in his actions. For example, Peat's arms resemble those invented by Broun – both make use of the open-visored knight's helm in addition to elaborate trappings that reference non-existent honours. In Peat's case this includes the crossed jousting spears behind his shield. The modern arms of the Broun baronets do indeed include supporters, but these are born by right of the Broun baronet being the male-line representative of

---

<sup>44</sup> Anstruther, *The Baronets' Champion*, pp. 24-6.

<sup>45</sup> The badge is described in detail in Anstruther, *The Baronets' Champion*, pp. 51-2.



his first recorded ancestor, Walterus le Brun, the Scottish baron who witnessed a charter in 1116 A.D.<sup>46</sup> The Broun baronet is chief of an ancient Scottish family and by right bears additions to his armorial bearings that only a Scottish chief may use. All the other additaments added by Sir Richard in the 1840s have long departed in the official rendering of the arms.



Arms of Broun of Colstoun, Baronet of Nova Scotia. Photographs by author.

Of particular interest to this paper are the arms designed and employed by Sir Richard Broun for his personal use as a Knight Commander and Grand Secretary of the British *Langue* of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, ‘Anglia.’ He occupied these key leadership positions for twenty years between 1837 to his death in 1858. He joined the group as a knight on 28 July 1835; became Registrar on 8 March 1837; Knight Commander and Grand Secretary on 24 June 1839; and finally, Knight Grand Cross of the Order on 24 June 1841.<sup>47</sup> His bookplate displays the remarkable armorial achievement he concocted to reflect his status within the Order. The arms do not include the Collar of SS, the baronet’s coronet above the crest, or supporters on either side of the shield. This all suggests that the bookplate dates from the period before 1843, when he received the Collar of SS and, a year later in 1844, inherited the Broun baronetcy. It also appears to pre-date Broun becoming a Knight Grand Cross as the badge beneath the shield appears to be that of a Knight or Knight Commander (although it remains unclear if the mantle of estate surrounding the arms relates to the higher grade of Grand Cross). The bookplate thus appears to be contemporary with the 1837 publication of the *Hospitallaria* or *Synoptical Sketch*, which advertised many of the accoutrements visible on and around Broun’s arms. It also set a valuable precedent for his approach to the

<sup>46</sup> An extensive genealogy of the family, published in 1884, modestly begins with Sir David Broun, Knight, Lord of Cumber-Colstoun (1272). Nevertheless, ‘Walter de Brun’ (1120) is recorded as the probable first ancestor of the family: Marshall, *Genealogical Notes Anent Some Ancient Scottish Families*, pp. 60, 80.

<sup>47</sup> Broun, *Synoptical Sketch*, p. 67.

privileges of baronets which he outlined in his 1844 *Baronetage* publication. Incidentally, all of Sir Richard's successor Broun baronets have worn (along with his Collar of SS) a white watered silk shoulder sash, edged with red, to which some of them pinned a silver Maltese Cross. The cross belonged to Sir Richard and is a rare surviving Grand Cross of the Order from 1841. Unfortunately, there are no hallmarks to date the cross, although it appears to be silver. It is significant that all of Sir Richard's collateral descendants kept together as a precious inheritance his Collar of SS, the baronet's jewel and this silver Maltese Cross.



Grand Cross breast star of the Order of St John, 'Anglia', probably dating from 1841. Photograph by author.



Sir James Lionel Broun, 11th Baronet (1875-1962), wearing Sir Richard's Collar of SS and Maltese Cross, pinned to a white and red shoulder sash. Photograph by author.

Sir Richard Broun's arms are enhanced by six references to the Order of St John.<sup>48</sup> To explain the origin of these symbols and their usage we must turn to his 1837

---

publication, the *Hospitallaria; or, A Synopsis of the rise ... of the ... Order of Knights Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem*.<sup>49</sup> Broun designed a ring, a special cap of dignity (heraldic in its inspiration), and insisted on the liberal use of the famous Maltese Cross. All of these symbols were inspired by the Order of Malta and yet they were innovations unknown in the Catholic Order, as was their usage as armorial additaments.<sup>50</sup> These inventions were pure Richard Broun. In truth their design, inspiration and usage has more in common with Masonic rites of the sort that still exist today than it does with any tradition of the Order of Malta. In fact, the ‘Knight of Malta’ uniform designed by Broun and displayed in the *Hospitallaria* bears a striking resemblance to that associated with the Masonic degree of the same name:

The regalia of the Order is composed of a cap, tunic, mantle, a breast cross, belt and sword. The mantle is of black material with tassels and the hood lining in white. ... The tunic is knee length of red material, with similar Maltese Cross in the centre of the breast. The cap is black velvet, bearing a white enamelled Maltese Cross of metal gilt on the front.<sup>51</sup>

Sir Richard Broun’s bookplate is evidence that he did more than simply theorize about the use of symbols. He put his ideas into practice both on the page and in real life. Only two images of Sir Richard exist from his lifetime. We have already seen the one from 1843-4. The second probably pre-dates it by a few years. It is preserved in the archives of the Most Venerable Order of St John and shows Broun wearing the badge of a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St John, ‘Anglia.’ The photograph was probably taken to celebrate Broun’s entry into, or elevation within, the Order, between 1835 and 1841. The badge is clearly visible around his neck, suspended from its black watered silk ribbon. Of interest is the fact that it so closely resembles the badge of a Knight of Honour and Devotion of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. This rank in the Catholic Order requires exacting proofs of noble ancestry of the type that Sir Richard could have produced. This fact emphasizes strongly the ongoing insistence by the British knights that they remained within the ambit of the international Catholic Order. The key point of difference with Sir Richard’s badge is that it contains between the arms of the white-enamelled Maltese Cross the Royal Beasts – the lion of England and the unicorn of Scotland. It is a precursor to the badge of the modern Most Venerable Order of St John. The Royal Beasts were discontinued from the badge between 1871

---

<sup>48</sup> Bookplate of a Knight Grand Cross of the ‘Order of St John, Anglia’: MS. autograph Broun of Colstoun book, in possession of Mrs Sheree Veron, daughter of Sir William Broun, 13<sup>th</sup> baronet of Colstoun.

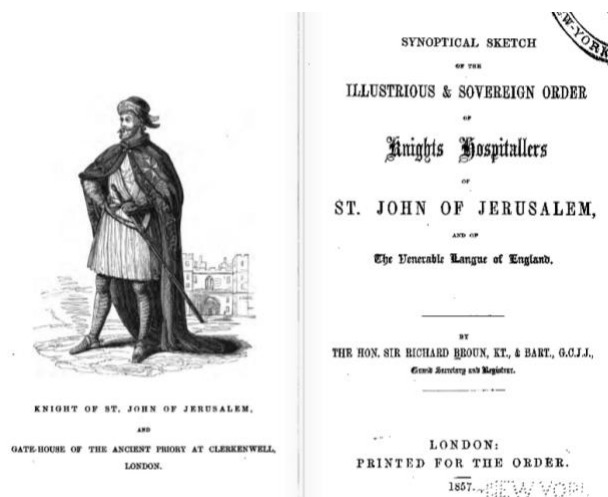
<sup>49</sup> *Hospitallaria; or, a synopsis of the rise ... privileges, insignia, &c. of the ... Order of Knights Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem; with a brief account of the Sixth or British Branch* (London: John Mortimer, 1837).

<sup>50</sup> Broun, *Synoptical Sketch*, pp. 77-8.

<sup>51</sup> Keith B. Jackson, *Beyond the Craft* (London: Lewis Masonic, 1980), p. 29. I am indebted to Stephen Szabo for this reference.

and 1888, but they were restored to the angles of the Maltese Cross thereafter and remain there to this day.<sup>52</sup>

Just like the knight's badge, other remarkable continuities exist between this early time in the 'Anglia' Order and the symbols and badges later adopted and used by St John Ambulance and the Most Venerable Order of St John. For example, Broun included in his *Hospitallaria* of 1837 representations of the Maltese Cross of the Order combined with various trophies flags and mottoes. Broun's inventions have inspired current usage.



Sir Richard Broun, *Synoptical Sketch of the Illustrious Sovereign Order of Knights Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem, and of The Venerable Langue of England* (London: Venerable Order of St John, 1856). Wikimedia Commons.

Unfortunately for Sir Richard, the time and effort he put into creating, producing and wearing uniforms and decorative items left little room for the activity that would in time guarantee the survival and growth of the Most Venerable Order of St John in Britain – its humanitarian endeavours. Indeed, some historians have emphasised a potentially damning and embarrassing aspect of Broun's involvement with the Order of St John, 'Anglia' (and that of all his direct compatriots). This relates to their apparent disparagement of the ancient philanthropic motivation of the Knights Hospitaller. The historian and late Librarian of the Most Venerable Order of St John, Professor Jonathan Riley-Smith, made a study of Broun's surviving papers at the St John Ambulance headquarters at St John's Gate, Clerkenwell, in London. Those papers contain statements by Broun, expressing his attitude towards the activity of his 'Anglia' knights. Riley-Smith concluded:

Although in 1857 they announced that they would support the [Catholic] Order's plans to establish a hospital in Jerusalem, their leader, Sir Richard Broun ... was

<sup>52</sup> Charles W. Tozer, *The insignia and medals of the Grand Priory of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem* (London: J.B. Hayward & Son in association with the Orders and Medals Research Society, 1975), pp. 17-18.

still dreaming of the recovery of Rhodes [the post-crusades capital of the Knights Hospitaller, where they had been sovereign lords of the island], wrote that the hospital 'is like a recurrence of the Dark Ages, and savours of monkdom, instead of chivalry. We live in a material age, one of progress and rationality; and the Order of St John must aim at higher things than washing the feet, and healing the sores of the few thousands of persons who may think fit to pay visits to the early scenes of the Christian faith.'<sup>53</sup>

This is a very surprising quote, because it does not accord with the image we have built up of Broun. Several observations and explanations can be made about it, the first being that the Catholic Order did not establish its Bethlehem hospital in the Holy Land until 1990, building on an existing establishment run by the Daughters of Charity since 1882. It was, in fact, the Most Venerable Order of St John (the successor and inheritor of Broun's knights) that established an eye hospital in Jerusalem in 1882. The hospital was the second great Foundation of the British Order. Furthermore, Broun obviously shared the contemporary British Protestant anti-clerical prejudice against Catholic enclosed communities, as opposed to humanitarian works out in the world. This sentiment appears to lie behind his reference to 'rationality', a phrase that resonates with the Order's later focus on easing suffering in British industry via first aid training. Broun said, in relation to the intractable barrier of religion: 'We have crossed the Rubicon.'<sup>54</sup> In other words, for Broun as for so many members of the British elite, there was no going back to Rome.

Sadly, it is true that Broun himself was seen as a barrier to reconciliation between the Catholic Order and the 'Anglia' knights. The few Catholic 'Anglia' members, who eventually split from Broun's group in order to form their own local branch of the Order of Malta, put much energy into exposing Broun's oddities, including his self-assumed knighthood. By the time Broun died in December 1858, the 'Anglia' knights as a group had been libelled so thoroughly as to make them appear to be disreputable adventurers.<sup>55</sup> Finally, however, we must correct Riley-Smith on one important point: the pipe-dream of re-occupying the Holy Land and subjecting the locals to rule under the Order of St John was not Broun's idea. By contrast, it was the creation of his friend, Sir William Hillary Bt, who wrote to Broun advocating the plan, and published a pamphlet on it in 1841 entitled *Suggestions for the Christian occupation of the Holy Land as a Sovereign State by the Order of St John of Jerusalem*. It is true that Broun read out Hillary's letter at a Chapter of Council meeting of the 'Anglia' Order held on 18 December 1840, but this appears to have been the extent of his enthusiasm for Hillary's scheme (despite it

---

<sup>53</sup> MVO OSJ Anglia Minutes, 30-39, quoted in Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 58; Archives of the British Association of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta [hereafter BASMOM], Letter Book 1, 18-20, 24, quoted in Riley-Smith, 'The Order of St John in England', pp. 128-9.

<sup>54</sup> BASMOM Letter Book 1, 79, quoted in Riley-Smith, 'The Order of St John in England', p. 135.

<sup>55</sup> BASMOM Letter Book 1, 329, quoted in Riley-Smith, 'The Order of St John in England', p. 138.

having a superficial resonance with Broun's earlier enthusiasm for North American colonisation).<sup>56</sup>



Sir Richard Brown (c1835-41)<sup>57</sup>  
reproduced with permission Museum of Order of St John.

---

<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Seberry, 'Victorian Perceptions of the Military Orders', in *The Military Orders*, ed. Malcom Barber (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 368.

<sup>57</sup> Photograph printed in Jonathan Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St. John* (London: Hambledon, 1999), p. 130.



Badge of a Knight of the Order of St John, 'Anglia.'<sup>58</sup> Wikimedia Commons.



'Hospitallaria' (1837). Wikimedia Commons.

---

<sup>58</sup> Reproduced in Broun's *Synoptical Sketch* of 1857.





St John Ambulance cap badge (c.1939-45).  
Wikimedia Commons.



St John Ambulance badge  
(initiated 1887). Wikimedia  
Commons.

## Costume, Insigna, &c.



Ring.

### Cap of Dignity.

THE Cap of Dignity, or Maintenance, worn by the Knights of Saint John, and borne over their achievements as an armorial distinction, is of scarlet cloth, faced with black velvet. In front of the Cap is the eight pointed cross or star of the Order, as shewn in the woodcut.

### The Profession Ring.

This symbol of the Order, which is required to be at all times worn, is of plain massive Gold, bearing upon a circular enamelled black field the White Cross of the Order.



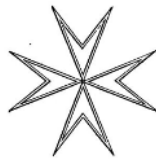
Cap of Dignity.

### The Star or Cross.

The Star or Cross of St. John, is one of eight points, symbolical of the eight Beatitudes, and also of the eight Langues, or branches of the Order.

The Stars or Crosses for the three classes of Knights are the same in shape and material, but they differ from each other in size. They are made of frosted silver with the edges burnished. The Star for Knights is of the size shewn in the wood-cut. That for Knights Commanders is a size larger; and the one for Knights Grand Crosses is still larger.

Instead of the burnished edging the Great Officers of the Langue may enrich their Cross by substituting brilliants.



Star.

Sir Richard Broun's invented ephemera for the Order of St John, Anglia (1837).<sup>59</sup> Wikimedia Commons.

<sup>59</sup> Broun, *Synoptical Sketch*, pp. 46v, 76v.

Despite all of this, Broun included in his *Hospitallaria* (second edition of 1857 (re-named the *Synoptical Sketch*) a list of the Grand Masters (and Grand Lieutenants) who ruled the Order of St John from 1118 (Raymond du Puy) to 1847 (Collredo-Mansfeld). In doing so he established a tradition that has been honoured by many authors writing on the history of the Most Venerable Order of St John.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Broun emphasised the significance of the revival of the Order in England by Queen Mary I and her consort, Philip II. He reprinted the text of their Letters Patent in full. This document, too, has been the focus of much scholarly debate in relation to the legitimacy of the revival of Broun's 'Anglia' Order. Although Broun framed his *Hospitallaria* / *Synoptical Sketch* in terms of continuity and inclusion in the Catholic Order of Malta, in the words of Riley-Smith:

These English knights of St John, having little understanding of crusade ideology or of Catholic religious life, simply could not comprehend what religious orders were about. They wanted, for example, to turn the Order of Malta into a pluriform, secularized institution.<sup>61</sup>

It must be emphasised that Broun did, indeed, created more high-minded aims for the Order than simply sailing boats up and down the Thames, waving the red flag with its white cross. His Articles for the Order of St John, 'Anglia', have a remarkable resonance with the modern, ongoing humanitarian aims of the Most Venerable Order of St John. Article VII asserts that Broun and his members were 'convinced that the revival of the British Langue of the Sovereign Order of St John of Jerusalem ... must be highly serviceable and agreeable to the Gentlemen of the United Kingdom.' The same Article expresses the aspiration that the Executive Council will 'procure for the British Langue from Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria that royal favour and consideration that the Order enjoys under other powers.'<sup>62</sup> Although Queen Victoria's favour did not eventuate until 1888, it is remarkable that the course of action advocated by Broun in 1837 was pursued with singular focus by his successors in the Order for the better part of a century. Finally, Article IX expresses sentiments that are recognisable today in the Most Venerable Order of St John and among the volunteers who represent the life-force of the humanitarian effort that is St John Ambulance:

That admission into the Order in the kingdom shall be wholly irrespective of political feeling; and whilst the British Langue – remodelled so as to place it in accordance with other aristocratic and chivalric institutions of the present day – is essentially Protestant in its character, differences in Christian faith will not of themselves form grounds of exclusion. Further, whilst the chivalry of St John in the British Dominions will ever be actuated by the warmest sentiments of loyalty and devotion to the

---

<sup>60</sup> Most prominently King, the Official Historian of the Order: E. J. King, *The Knights Hospitallers in the Holy Land* (London: Venerable Order of St John, 1931).

<sup>61</sup> Riley-Smith, *The Crusades, Christianity, and Islam*, p. 58.

<sup>62</sup> Broun, *Synoptical Sketch*, pp. 44-45.

reigning Sovereign, and by fidelity to the British Constitution in Church and State, its objects will pre-eminently be the promotion of the Cause of Charity, and of the Hospitaller Virtues which presided over the Order at its inception in Palestine.<sup>63</sup>

In short, the ‘Anglia’ knights were out of step with the Catholic ‘parent’ Order and were already, from the very start of their ‘revival’ venture, setting a different course for themselves. This was a course that would result in the global humanitarian effort of St John Ambulance. All of this has a bearing on Sir Richard Broun’s activities generally.

For the Committee of Privileges for Baronets, Sir Richard Broun similarly designed an elaborate uniform, including a fancy feathered hat, a ring and special sword, in addition to robes. According to Broun, baronets were entitled to various additional honours, titles and distinctions, including the appellation of ‘The Honourable’, a Collar of SS, a badge, robes, a coronet and heraldic supporters to their arms.<sup>64</sup> Their uniform was to be a white hat and plume of feathers, a dark-green dress coat, a belt, a scarf, a pennon (flag), a gold thumb-ring and gilt spurs (being knights). Although this might all sound ridiculous, it was in order to fight for the recognition of these items that Broun succeeded in gathering about him sufficient fellow baronets to form a Committee for Privileges, with himself as Honorary Secretary. They then, in the words of one hostile contemporary ‘besieged the Crown in all possible ways for a concession of those preposterous and unfounded claims.’<sup>65</sup> Government approval was beyond Broun’s control, but what he could dictate and guide informally was information about baronets, as well as their choices about how to display their armorial bearings. This explains his *Baronetage*, a book which was designed to act as a register of existing baronets and their dates of creation. It was also designed to be an active advertisement for the pretensions of the baronetcy as a grade of the hereditary nobility of Great Britain. This was broadcast in the subtitle to his *Baronetage*, which he described as *Being a Genealogical Account of the Families forming the Sixth Degree of Dignity Hereditary or High Nobility in the British Empire*. In reality, baronets have never been counted as members of the British aristocracy, but in Broun’s mind it was absolutely so – thus his invention of the baronet’s coronet with two pearls visible (four in total around the diadem), as a sub-species of the coronet used by barons (lords), which had four visible pearls (and eight in total). In Broun’s words:

The Committee having heard the exposition made by the Honourable Secretary, and deliberated upon the same, unanimously passed a series of resolutions, to the effect, that the Arms of the applying Baronets should be registered in the books of the Order, with the exterior heraldic ornaments above ornamented ; that the precedent should exemplify the mode whereby in future to charge exteriorly the arms of all other applying Baronets of the several creations ; and that from this rule the Arms of such-

---

<sup>63</sup> Broun, *Synoptical Sketch*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>64</sup> Anstruther, *The Baronets’ Champion*, p. 19.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Broun’s Baronetage’, *The Spectator* (15 April 1843), p. 16.

applying Baronets should form exceptions as have either heretofore carried supporters, or who represent.<sup>66</sup>

In a sense Broun's 1844 *Baronetage* represents the zenith of his publishing career. His literary *œuvre* had begun humbly with a book about the sport of curling, published in Dumfries in 1830. Broun's father, Sir James, had been closely associated with curling in their local Dumfriess area in the 1820s.<sup>67</sup> Broun's grandfather, the Rev. Richard Broun, had also been heavily involved in the sport and its administration in the same place.<sup>68</sup> Sir Richard, too, seems to have had a genuine passion for the sport as he dedicated his book to the office-bearers and members of the Lochmaben Curling Society. His is one of the earliest books on the rules, techniques and lore of the game and it established a pattern that Broun followed through his life, whereby he spread his ideas in print, which consolidated the formation of an interest group, which then grew in respectability, attracting an increasingly influential membership. For example, following the publication of the book in 1830, in 1838 the Grand Caledonian Curling Club was formed by delegates from clubs throughout Scotland as a governing body for the sport. Sir Richard Broun was one of its founders. In 1843, Prince Albert became patron, whereupon its name was changed to the Royal Caledonian Curling Club. Significantly, in his book Broun dwells on the ceremonial aspects attached to the initiation of new members into some of the ancient curling societies.<sup>69</sup> In fact, rules were the inspiration of Broun's next foray into publishing; his short book advocating reforms for better government, published in 1834.<sup>70</sup> This tendency is visible in his next book – *Case of the honourable the baronets of Scotland and Nova Scotia: shewing their rights and privileges, dignatorial and territorial* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood & London: J. Mortimer, 1836).

---

<sup>66</sup> Sir Richard Broun, *The Baronetage for 1844: Being a Genealogical Account of the Families forming the Sixth Degree of Dignity Hereditary or High Nobility in the British Empire* (London, 1844).

<sup>67</sup> Lynne J. M. Longmore (ed.), *The Minute Book of the Lochmaben Curling Society, 1823–1863* (Dumfries: Sources in Local History European Ethnological Research Centre, 1863), pp. 24, 30-1

<sup>68</sup> Longmore, *The Minute Book of the Lochmaben Curling Society*, pp. 24, 30-1.

<sup>69</sup> Richard Broun, *Memorabilia Curliana Mabenensia* (Dumfries: J. Sinclair, 1830), p. 67.

<sup>70</sup> R. Broun, *Appeal to our Rulers and Ruled, in behalf of a Consolidation of the Post Office, Boards and Mechanical Conveyance for the Service of the State* (London: John Mortimer, 1834).

I have the honor to be  
to Edward  
your most obedient  
humble servant  
Richard Broun  
Bart

Autograph letter from Sir Richard Broun Bt to fellow baronet, Sir Edward G. E. L. Bulwer-Lytton Bt, Sphinx Lodge, Chelsea, 2 October 1858, written two months before his death.<sup>71</sup>  
Photograph by author.

Richard Broun soon abandoned reforms for better local governance in favour of grander schemes that drew together themes of imperial expansion, albeit seen through Broun's peculiar prism of historical specificity. In short, Broun took up the idea of realizing the imperial ambitions of his sub-strata of the Scottish *noblesse* – basically, Broun wanted to see the baronets of Nova Scotia take up the land claims paid for by their ancestors. This involved nothing less than ‘the whole question of the rights and objectives of the Baronets of Scotland and Nova Scotia’ *via* the formation of the Central Agricultural Society of Great Britain and Ireland in 1837.<sup>72</sup> Broun drew into the scheme a fellow enthusiast, Thomas Rolph. Broun aimed to revive the land claims of the baronets and Rolph the systematic colonisation of British North America. The British American Association was formally established in 1842 with the Duke of Argyll as president, induced to join by claims the scheme would relieve the economic distress of so many Scots; strengthen British influence in North America; and promote a well-organized system of emigration under the direction of the Consultative Council of the Association. Unlike contemporary emigration schemes promoted by evangelical Christians, this one promoted the strengthening of existing ties between landlords and their tenantry. The scheme was explicitly paternalistic and feudal in intent. The

---

<sup>71</sup> Colonial Despatches: The colonial despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871, 10130, CO 60/2, p. 476; registered 4 October @ [https://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/imageBrowser.htm?image=co\\_60\\_02\\_00476v.jpg](https://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/imageBrowser.htm?image=co_60_02_00476v.jpg) (accessed 3 October 2017).

<sup>72</sup> A full account of the scheme can be found in Anstruther, *The Baronets' Champion*, pp. 30-4.

subsequent story of the scheme is an unfortunate one, as it discredited Broun and embarrassed Argyll.<sup>73</sup>

It is curious to contemplate the possibility of an intellectual trajectory, beginning with curling and travelling through the revival in Britain of the ancient Order of St John and culminating in Broun's *Baronetage* of 1844, yet that is what we appear to have in the form of Broun's growing intellectual commitment to the development of ever-more complex systems of rules and privileged entitlements based in part of existing (if obscure) precedent and partly the creation of his own fertile imagination. That same mind conceived plans that went beyond the realm of family pedigrees. By the end of his life, Broun was advocating truly ambitious and very modern schemes. One involved the building of a railway dedicated to transporting corpses to their burial outside of London, necessitated by the restrictions imposed by the Burials Act (1851), whereby new graves were prohibited in built-up areas of London.<sup>74</sup> Inspired by Broun's idea, two temporary stations were opened at Brookwood: a 'South Station' for Anglican burials and a 'North Station' for all other religious denominations. London's main 'Necropolis Station' opened in November 1854 at Waterloo.<sup>75</sup> The noted architect, Sydney Smith, designed an elaborate Gothic edifice for the Brookwood stations, but his plans were too costly to be realised. Smith's designs did, however, inspire the New South Wales Rookwood Mortuary Station, constructed in Sydney in 1855 to transport corpses the 14 miles to the cemetery near Parramatta to the west of the city. It is pleasing to think of there being an echo of Sir Richard Broun in the City of Sydney today.

Another Broun scheme had empire-wide dimensions, involving 'European & Asiatic intercourse *via* British Columbia, by means of a main through Trunk Railway from the Atlantic to the Pacific ... [a] great national undertaking.'<sup>76</sup> Broun wrote a letter to the Colonial Secretary just two months before his death. He had been advocating for the scheme since 1852 when he addressed a letter to The Rt. Hon. the Earl of Derby on what he termed the 'Imperial Halifax and Quebec Railway and Anglo-Asian Steam Transit Project.' Sir Richard published a pamphlet with that same title in that year.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> James M. Cameron, *A study of the factors that assisted and directed Scottish emigration to Upper Canada, 1815-1855*, Vol. 2 (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 1971), pp. 310-13; Frances Morehouse, *Migration from the United Kingdom to North America 1840-1850* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Manchester, 1921), p. 73-8; Wilbur S. Shepperson, *British Emigration to North America – Projects and Opinions in the Early Victorian Period* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957), pp. 45-46.

<sup>74</sup> Sir Richard Broun, *Extramural Sepulture: Synopsis of the London Necropolis and National Mausoleum at Woking in the County of Surrey* (London: T. Saunders, 1851).

<sup>75</sup> Christian Wolmar, *Fire and Steam: A New History of the Railways in Britain* (London: Atlantic, 2007), n.p.

<sup>76</sup> Colonial Despatches: The colonial despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871, 10130, CO 60/2, p. 476.

<sup>77</sup> Sir Richard Broun, *Imperial Halifax and Quebec Railway and Anglo-Asian Steam Transit Project* (London: T. Saunders, 1852).

The idea seemed to combine two older designs – the necropolis railway and the reoccupation of North America by the Nova Scotia baronets. Neither was realised at the time of Broun’s death in December 1858.



Sydney Smith’s design for a Gothic railway station at Brookwood Cemetery, Sir Richard Broun’s projected ‘London Necropolis’ and ‘National Memorial.’<sup>78</sup> Reproduced with permission from National Library of Australia.



Funeral train at the Gothic Mortuary Station (1867), Regent Street, Redfern, Sydney, en-route to Rookwood Cemetery. In 1957 the chapel was dismantled and moved to Canberra, ACT, where it was re-erected (with modifications) as All Saints Anglican Church in Ainslie. In 2006 the annual ACT St John Ambulance church service was conducted there.<sup>79</sup> Reproduced with permission from National Library of Australia.

---

<sup>78</sup> Image reproduced in Anstruther, *The Baronets’ Champion*, plate IX.

<sup>79</sup> National Library of Australia, NLA.pic-vn4543863-v.



For an understanding of Sir Richard's character and focus at this time of his death, it is instructive to examine his St John's Day address, delivered on Thursday, 24 June 1858, being the Anniversary Festival of St John the Baptist and the occasion of a Chapter General of the 'Venerable British Langue of the Sovereign and Illustrious Order of St John of Jerusalem.' The event took place at the ancient Gate House of the Priory at Clerkenwell and Sir Richard Broun, as Grand Secretary, read the following report which contains such an interesting elision of historical romanticism and contemporary British imperial sentiment with a genuine humanitarian vision for the usefulness of the Order to humanity. Broun predicts the Order's move towards Royal protection and the Order's creation of its great Eye Hospital foundation in Jerusalem:

The ... *Synoptical Sketch*, lately printed, contains an exposition of the general views and principles of the *Langue*. Nevertheless ... as this assemblage is held within the ancient precincts of the Grand Priory of England for the first time after a lapse of 300 years ... publicly to inaugurate its mission ... The Order of St John, unlike all other knightly fraternities, is a supreme sovereign institution in itself, wholly independent of crowns, princes, potentates, and governments; and the venerable *Langue* of England (which embraces all those parts of the whole habitable globe which own submission to the flag of England), whatever may be its numerical strength or the resources of its treasury, is a commanding, moral, intellectual, and social power, as one of the original and integral component parts of an eight-branched whole, founded for as noble, enduring, and useful purposes as any that can occupy humanity ... Since the formal revival of our *Langue* nearly thirty years have passed ... and within that period it has enrolled a chivalry of about 140 members, of whom upwards of 100 are now alive. Consolidated, therefore, by progression of time, and already both respectable and strong in point of numbers and social influence, the period has now assuredly arrived — if, indeed, the Order on British soil is ever destined again to play a conspicuous part as an institute of utility here and throughout the Christian world—for the *Langue* to be up, and vigorously take the field. ... A Donat Fund must now be formed, and contributions to it collected, not merely by appeals to the members of the *Langue* themselves, but to the religious and benevolent of all ranks and creeds. By a late Turkish *firman*, it is made allowable for Christians to acquire rights of soil within the dominions of the Sublime Porte ... [which] would materially [aid] the grand and glorious work of re-civilizing the East. . . . The occasion, likewise, is most opportune for putting an unanimous ordinance upon record, expressive of the unswerving loyalty and attachment of this great Protestant branch of the Fraternity of Saint John to our most Gracious Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria, and to all established institutions in Church and State, not only in this chief home-seat of the free, but within all lands that are surrounded by the Christian pale ... and for unanimously, earnestly, and publicly proclaiming the objects of the revived *Langue* of England to be — 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will to the whole family of man!.'<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> *Court Circular* (3 July 1858); *Constitutional Press* (3 July 1858); *Clerkenwell News* (10 July 1858); R. Bigsby, *Memoir of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem: From the Capitulation of Malta in 1798 to the present period; and presenting a more detailed account of its Sixth or British branch, as reorganized in 1831* (Derby: R. Keene, 1869), pp. 125-6.

## CONCLUSION

Broun's biographer, Sir Ian Anstruther of that ilk Bt, concludes his study of Sir Richard by observing: 'He never had the income or land commensurate with his baronetcy ... and it was probably this that made him eager to boost the attributes of the title as much as possible.'<sup>81</sup> This does indeed appear to have been a central motivator for Sir Richard. However, even had he enjoyed considerable wealth, it is doubtful he would have forgotten his claims and schemes. After all, many of his fellow baronets were very wealthy men indeed, but they lent Broun their full support. The same is true of his friends in the Order of St John, 'Anglia', who included the well-off Sir William Hillary, an eccentric baronet who was also a thrice-decorated life-saving hero. Broun was an arch-conservative and quixotic romantic, but it was his single-minded focus on ratifying systems and rules that accounts for much of his life's effort. Colonel Pixley, the Secretary of the Standing Council of the Baronetage, writing about Broun in 1901, acknowledged the huge support lent to Sir Richard by his fellow baronets. Pixley regretted, however, 'that a pugnacious attitude was adopted.'<sup>82</sup> This aspect of Broun's personality is recognisable in all his undertakings. The flip side of his determination is visible in his achievements. He did so much to revive and to sustain the Order of St John in Britain. Without his tireless enthusiasm it would certainly have languished and disappeared. It was Broun who kept it going administratively as Grand Secretary, endlessly writing letters of instruction and encouragement; and it was Broun who arranged for so many of his baronet friends to take up senior positions in the 'Anglia' Order. Ultimately, Broun's effort resulted in the Order achieving its apotheosis as a Royal Order of Chivalry in 1888 as the Most Venerable Order of St John, on its way towards becoming the global humanitarian body that is today. Broun's presence remains within the Order, just as it does among the baronets and it is these achievements that make Sir Richard Broun truly worthy of celebration.

---

<sup>81</sup> Anstruther, *The Baronets' Champion*, p. 52.

<sup>82</sup> Anstruther, *The Baronets' Champion*, p. 52.

