



Group of Australian and Arab masons taken in King Solomon Quarries in Egypt at the commencement of WWII. Harvey Ennis Gale occupied the chair as master on that occasion. He is seated, third from the left, holding a gavel in his right hand. Harvey (uncle of Ron) had a very distinguished military career in both world wars. Photo: Courtesy of Ronald L Gale Masonic Collection

THE DA VINCI CODE AND THE NATIONAL HISTORICAL COLLECTION

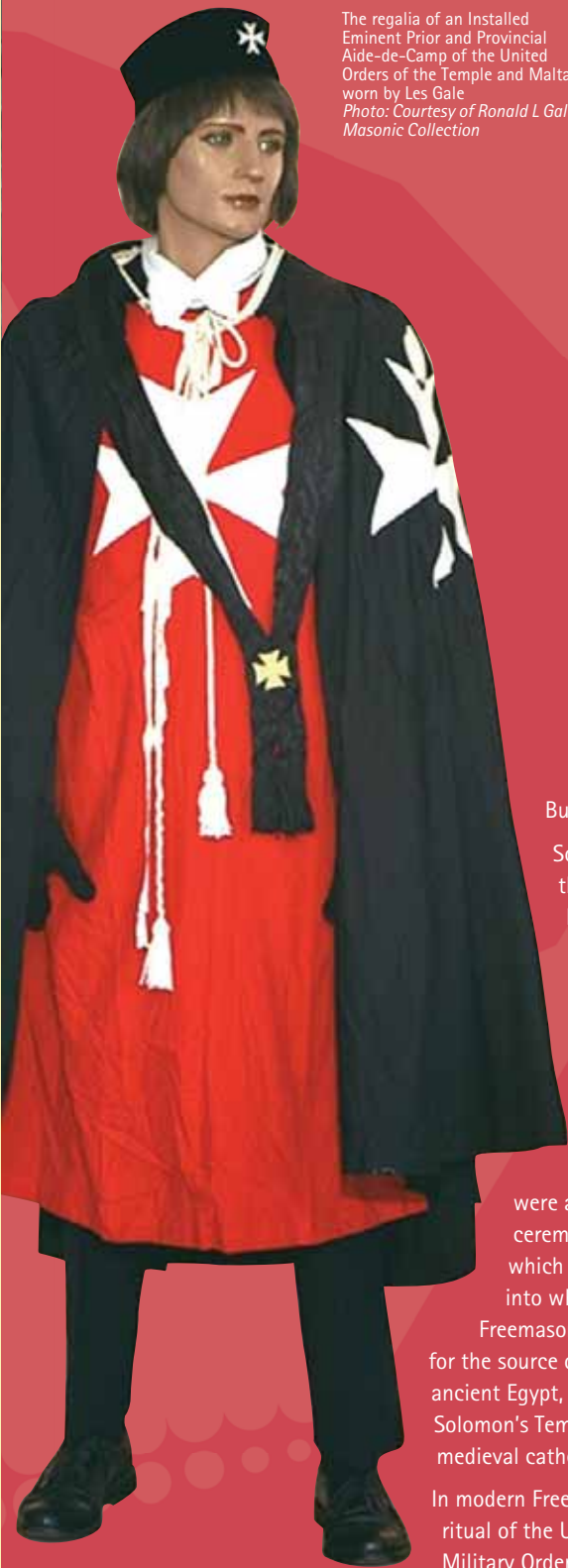
A world best-seller, a mysterious group of warrior monks and the National Historical Collection.

Dan Brown's latest novel *The Da Vinci Code* has been on the New York Time's best-seller list for well over a year, mostly at No 1. The Ronald L Gale Freemasonry Collection is one of the most significant collections in the National Historical Collection. What links them is the Knights Templar, a monastic military order formed in the aftermath of the First Crusade of 1095-99.

Brown's novel opens with the murder of an art curator in the Louvre. Three more murders follow as the two chief suspects, symbologist Robert Langdon and cryptologist Sophie Neveu, flee to England. All is revealed in the book's final scenes at Rosslyn Chapel, about eleven kilometres south of Edinburgh in Scotland.

The novel is a fast-moving murder thriller that also takes the reader on a journey through the beginnings of Christianity, the life of Mary Magdalene, the search for the Holy Grail and the story of the Knights Templar.

The Knights Templar, or Poor Knights of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon, was founded about 1118 to protect pilgrims travelling the road from Europe to Jerusalem. From a small group of poor knights the Templars quickly grew to become one of the most influential forces in European politics. Their Paris Temple was the centre of Europe's money market. They were also rumoured to practice strange rites in their secret meetings. The power of Templars was destroyed by King Philip IV of France in 1307, and the order was dissolved by Pope Clement V in 1312. To all intents and purposes the Templars then disappeared from history.



The regalia of an Installed Eminent Prior and Provincial Aide-de-Camp of the United Orders of the Temple and Malta worn by Les Gale
 Photo: Courtesy of Ronald L Gale Masonic Collection



The regalia of an Installed Eminent Preceptor and Aide-de-Camp of the United Orders of the Temple and Malta worn by Les Gale. Photo: Courtesy of Ronald L Gale Masonic Collection



Ron and Ngaire Gale. Ron is wearing the regalia of a Junior Grand warden in office. Photo: Courtesy of Ronald L Gale Masonic Collection

But did they?

Some researchers seeking the origins of Freemasonry have looked at the story of a small group of Templars who escaped from France in 1307 and made their way to western Scotland where they found refuge in Rosslyn Castle. Here they were able to maintain their ceremonies and practices which gradually evolved into what we know today as

Freemasonry. Others have looked for the source of Masonic thought in ancient Egypt, the construction of King Solomon's Temple or the building of medieval cathedrals.

In modern Freemasonry, the forms and ritual of the United Religious and Military Order of the Temple and St John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes and Malta (the United Orders of the Temple and Malta for short) are founded on the history and traditions of the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitaller. Part of the regalia, for example, reflects the white tunics with red crosses that the original Templars wore over their chain mail. There are examples of the regalia and mantles from these orders in the Ronald L Gale Freemasonry collection.

This collection includes the regalia of three members of the Gale family who were active Freemasons in Maclean, Boggabri, Gunnedah, Wollongong, Sydney, Perth and north Queensland. Associated certificates and Masonic bibles are housed in the Mitchell Library. Six men from four generations of the Gale family have been Freemasons. Arthur Gale (1867-1930) was initiated into Freemasonry in 1910. He was followed by his three sons, including Les, a grandson Ron, and a great-grandson John.

Les Gale (1898-1977) was initiated into Lodge Nandewar at Boggabri in 1928 and subsequently served as Worshipful Master of Lodge Zion at Gunnedah in 1937 and of Lodge St Ives in 1955. He was a member of the appendant orders of Rose Croix, Secret Monitor and Royal Arch. Les was admitted a Knight Templar in the St Swithin Preceptory in 1961, installed Eminent Preceptor Et Eminent Prior in 1968 and appointed Provincial Aide-de-Camp in 1974.

Les initiated his son Ron (b.1928) into Lodge Zion at Gunnedah in 1951. Ron's distinguished life in the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales saw him occupy several senior offices, culminating in his election as Junior Grand Warden in 1978. He was also a member of the committee that opened the new Sydney Masonic Centre in 1979. Ron recently celebrated over fifty years as a Mason.

The wonderful collection donated by Ron includes over seventy-five items of regalia worn by himself, his father and his grandfather. It also includes evening wear and accessories worn by his wife Ngaire when accompanying Ron to Masonic social functions.

The Ronald L Gale Collection of Masonic regalia is one of the best documented collections in the National Historical Collection. It has tremendous potential for both research and for display. 🗨

Denis Shephard, Curator, Australian Culture and Society