

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF THE GUILD OF ST JOHN OF JERUSALEM EYE HOSPITAL GROUP

Plus: Our performance in the first quarter of 2026 and the latest from Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza.

Honours for our Chair and Gaza Staff

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*Chair & CEO Update:
Strong start in 2026 despite ongoing challenges*



St John of Jerusalem
Eye Hospital Group

JERUSALEM SCENE

Spring/Summer 2026
Treatment for all, regardless of
ethnicity, religion, or ability to pay



Patient being screened on new Hebron Outreach Service, November 2025

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St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) is a UK-registered charity that delivers sight-saving care in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. Services are delivered through two registered charities, each operating under local legal frameworks.

CHAIR AND CEO UPDATE: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Sir Andrew Cash OBE GCStJ – Chair SJEHG
(L) and Dr Ahmad Ma’ali KStJ, PhD, MPH,
BSN – Chief Executive Officer (R)



Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2026 edition of our Jerusalem Scene. Since our last update in November 2025, there have been some remarkable achievements across the Group.

The start of this year was marked by significant political and security challenges across the Holy Land following the start of the USA–Israel–Iran war in February. Despite widespread disruption, movement restrictions, and a temporary suspension of our outreach services, the Hospital Group remained fully operational and has continued progressing towards our target of treating 250,000 patients this year.

During the peak of the conflict, the number of patients attending for outpatient or surgical appointments fell by approximately 40%, largely due to safety fears and travel restrictions. Daily rocket sirens, particularly in Jerusalem, further disrupted routine activities. Following the announcement of a ceasefire on 5 April and the lifting of the state of emergency, clinical activity has gradually returned to near normal levels, especially at the Jerusalem Hospital.

Despite this, the Group still achieved a strong 27% increase in outpatient activity during the first three months of the year, compared to the same period in 2025, delivering 56,908 outpatient consultations, including screening more than 12,240 children through outreach and vision screening programmes. The number of surgeries performed, however, declined by nearly 6%, and this is mainly due to fewer referrals from the Palestinian Authority, the regional security situation, and movement restrictions.

Our work in Gaza continued despite extremely difficult conditions. Approximately 1,000 patients are being treated each week, and the renovation of two operating theatres and the day-care unit at our Gaza City hospital has been completed. Basic extraocular surgery resumed in March this year, with preparations now underway to restart sight-saving intraocular surgery once essential medical supplies become available. Around 4,500 patients remain on the surgical waiting list in Gaza. Importantly, all staff members and their families across the Group have remained safe. Find out more about our response in Gaza on pp5-6.

Across our other facilities, various clinical expansion initiatives have continued to progress positively. The Nablus Hospital demonstrated exceptional growth following its opening last year with outpatient activity increasing by 181% compared with the level previously achieved at our former clinic in Anabta. Patient numbers at Hebron Hospital have remained steady, while non-cataract surgeries have increased by 27%. Major renovation work is also moving ahead. The Kufr Aqab Centre has also seen increased activity and continues to play an important role in helping patients who are unable to reach Jerusalem. You can read more about this and other updates from the group on pp7-8.

The Group also built stronger partnerships and improved the way services work together through several Memoranda of Understanding, including agreements with the Palestinian Ministry of Health and local NGO hospitals in Gaza. These are helping to improve referrals, support joint surgical work, and strengthen medical education.

Teaching, training, and clinical governance have continued as planned. Eight medical residents and eight ophthalmic nursing students are still enrolled in specialist training programmes, while orthoptic assistant training is also progressing well to support the Group’s growing services.

Overall, despite a very challenging regional situation, the Group has remained resilient, kept services running, continued to grow clinically, and stayed focused on expanding access to high-quality eye care across Jerusalem, Gaza, Hebron, and Nablus.

These achievements reflect the dedication of our staff and the continued support of our partners, donors, friends and colleagues around the world, whose commitment to our mission in the Holy Land makes this work possible.

Thank you.

Approximately
1,000
patients are being
treated weekly in Gaza

Around
4,500
patients are awaiting
surgery in Gaza



Dr David Verity in the Jerusalem Hospital courtyard

HOSPITALLER'S REPORT

The most recent Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness (2018–2019) conducted by the St John Eye Hospital in collaboration with the International Centre for Eye Health and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine in the UK identified refractive error, cataract, and diabetic retinopathy as the principal causes of vision loss among Palestinian adults, underscoring the scale of preventable and treatable eye disease in the population.

Refractive error accounted for 45% of mild visual loss and 15% of moderate visual loss, illustrating how timely diagnosis and access to spectacles can make a significant and immediate difference to patients' lives.

Cataracts remain a major cause of severe visual impairment and blindness. While it cannot be prevented, modern surgery is highly effective, making sustained investment in accessible surgical care essential, particularly in an ageing population.

Diabetic retinopathy is especially urgent because, unlike cataracts, the damage it causes is irreversible. Early diagnosis and treatment can slow progression, but without intervention it can lead to permanent retinal damage and blindness, making screening and follow-up services critically important.

Children are likewise at risk of preventable and treatable visual loss. Early identification and treatment of conditions such as refractive error and strabismus are vital to prevent amblyopia and to protect long-term visual development.

Screening remains paramount to reducing avoidable sight loss, particularly where access to healthcare is constrained. Over the past two years, SJEHG has prioritised primary eye care and diabetic screening, with a particular emphasis on identifying and treating diabetic retinopathy in Gaza.

At a time when service delivery in Gaza and the West Bank remains under severe strain, investment in eye screening and treatment is more important than ever. The continued support of the wider family of St John and all our donors enables SJEHG to protect sight, prevent avoidable blindness, and sustain essential services for communities with urgent and ongoing need.

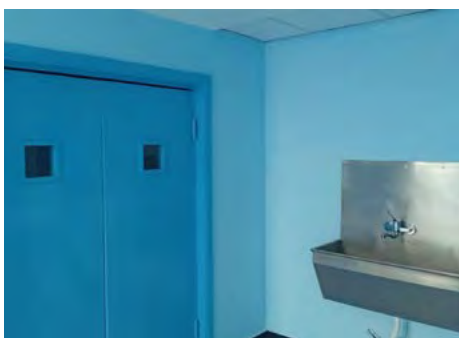
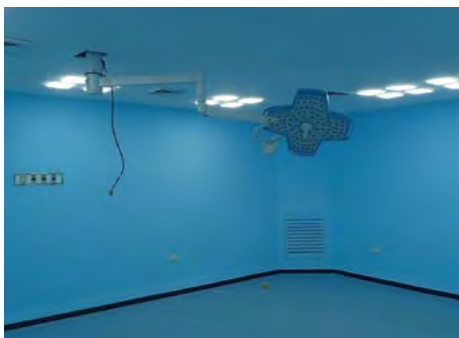
Thank you.

**Dr David Verity KStJ MD MA BM BCH FRCOphth
Hospitaller, Order of St. John**



GAZA EYE CARE SERVICES: THE WAY FORWARD

SJEHG screening at Al-Shati refugee camp, Gaza, September 2025



Gaza Hospital operating theatre renovation, January 2026

The ophthalmic healthcare system in Gaza remains severely damaged and fragmented despite the ceasefire announcement in October 2025. We have treated nearly 100,000 patients since the start of our medical intervention in April 2024, but there are still around 4,500 patients requiring major ophthalmic surgery, many of which are sight-saving interventions.

Since last October, we have successfully renovated the outpatient department at our Gaza City Hospital, which is now open five days a week. We have also refurbished our operating theatres, enabling us to resume extraocular procedures (operations involving the eyelids, surrounding tissues, eye muscles, tear system and other external eye structures) last month. We are now awaiting the supplies needed to restart cataract surgery.

In addition, we have recruited a new anaesthesia technician to support our surgical services and are currently recruiting a paediatric surgeon. This will enable us, in due course, to begin performing surgery on children and further expand the care we are able to provide.

In May, we were able to install a fully functioning elevator which has improved access for both staff and patients, and we've also been working with partners like the Palestinian Children's Relief Fund (PCRF), who have recently refurbished

several hospitals and clinics in Gaza, to discuss the rehabilitation requirements for both the ground floor of the hospital and a second operating theatre. To strengthen local collaboration, we have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a local NGO hospital. Through this partnership, the hospital will refer ophthalmic cases to us, and we will provide surgical procedures at subsidized rates, supporting greater access to care through coordinated service delivery.



Deir Al Balah Camp clinic, 2025

We are treating approximately 800-1,000 patients a week across our services in Gaza – in the main hospital, in Nuseirat Camp, and via outreach. In the first quarter of 2026, we saw 6,234 female patients and 4,581 male – including 3,237 children. These numbers show the staggering need for effective eye care in Gaza.



Eye test at Al-Shati refugee camp, Gaza, September 2025

Despite this excellent progress, we are facing a high burden of untreated conditions, including diabetic retinopathy requiring laser treatment and Avastin injections. We currently have no supplies of Avastin coming into Gaza.

Our infrastructure needs are critical – and severe. Full renovation of the Gaza Hospital building is estimated to cost around US\$3.5 million, essential ophthalmic equipment will cost US\$1.5 million, with furniture and other miscellaneous items costing a further US\$200,000. As all services currently provided in Gaza are free of charge for patients, we are relying on our supporters to help us in this crucial mission to restore full eye care services to the people of Gaza.

Our Recovery and Reinvestment Plans for Gaza

Phase 1 (0-12 months): Stabilisation

- Secure essential ophthalmic equipment dependent on availability of funding.
- Expand capacity for cataract, paediatric and emergency sight-saving surgery.
- Introduce structured care for patients with diabetic retinopathy via Laser and Avastin injections.
- Strengthen outreach and referral system.

Phase 2 (12-24 months): Functional Expansion

- Progressive reintroduction of full ophthalmic surgical suite to include retinal surgery and glaucoma treatment.
- Upgrade operating theatre capability by equipping the second operating theatre.
- Start partial renovation of hospital building.

Phase 3 (24+ months)

- Complete renovation of hospital building after securing capital funding.
- Restore full tertiary ophthalmic services to the prewar status.

Our Staff in Gaza

Our Gaza staff have been diligently providing sight-saving care for the people of Gaza since the start of the hostilities, despite unimaginable professional and personal hardships. They have been recognised for their service by the Order of St John, which you can read more about on p12. One of our nurses, Huda Tafesh, tells us about her experiences over the past 31 months:

MEET HUDA TAFESH



Huda Tafesh in our Gaza Hospital, May 2026

My name is Huda Tafesh, I'm 32 years old and a nursing graduate of the Islamic University of Gaza. I have been working at the St John Eye Hospital in Gaza since 2019 as an Ophthalmic Nurse. I love being a member of the St John family, working diligently to ensure our patients receive proper medical intervention and seeing the improvement in their quality of life.

I am a married mother of three and have always had to find balance between my work and family duties. However, I was always grateful for my beautiful, happy life.

Then the war began; the nightmare from which we haven't yet woken up. My beautiful house became a heap of rubble and my family suffered from fear, hunger, and pain. The St John Hospital in Gaza, where I spent the best of times, became broken walls. Our lives have been turned upside down.

Life became very different from what it had been before. Simple things that many people take for granted like finding food, clean water and a safe place to stay became daily concerns. As we were displaced multiple times across Gaza, the physical and emotional toll grew heavier. Yet even in these difficult circumstances, we continued to care for our patients, providing eye health services from our Gaza Hospital and through camps and clinics wherever possible, helping people access treatment despite the many obstacles they faced.

I pray that we can return to our beautiful days and continue our humanitarian mission of providing ophthalmic health care services to the people of Gaza.

DONATE



The Guild of SJEHG is currently raising funds during its centenary year to support Huda's salary, along with the work of other dedicated nurses like her.

Scan the QR code to donate or attend a Guild event in support of Huda and our nursing teams.

MEET AHMAD M FELFEL



25-year-old Ahmad M Felfel being examined at St John Eye Hospital in Gaza

Ahmad M. Felfel is a 25-year-old resident of Gaza City who has been displaced to Deir al-Balah as a result of the conflict. His family home was partially destroyed, and like many displaced families, they have received little assistance and are facing severe economic hardship. The uncertainty of daily life has also taken a significant toll on Ahmad's mental wellbeing.

Despite these challenges, Ahmad continued working in the maintenance department of Khan Younis Municipality. While carrying out his duties, he suffered a serious workplace accident when a metallic fragment penetrated his right eye. The injury caused severe pain and significantly affected his vision.

Upon examination, Dr Shadi Lafi, Consultant Ophthalmologist at SJEH in Gaza, diagnosed a metallic foreign body lodged in Ahmad's right eye. Without urgent treatment, the injury could have caused serious damage to the cornea and potentially resulted in permanent vision loss.

Dr Lafi and the medical team acted swiftly, performing the necessary procedure to safely remove the metallic foreign body from Ahmad's eye. Thanks to this timely intervention, Ahmad received the specialist care he needed to protect his sight.

Following his treatment, Ahmad expressed his gratitude to the staff and medical team at St John Eye Hospital for their care and support. He also voiced his hope that the Hospital will continue to receive the facilities, equipment and resources needed to serve displaced Palestinians and those living in camps, who often have limited access to specialist healthcare.

For patients like Ahmad, access to urgent eye care can mean the difference between preserving sight and living with permanent visual impairment.



FROM JERUSALEM AND THE WEST BANK: NEWS FROM OUR HOSPITALS AND CLINICS

Low-Vision Clinic, Jerusalem Hospital, 2026

Jerusalem Hospital

At our flagship hospital in Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem, more than 13,500 patients received care in the first three months of 2026, an encouraging rise on the same period last year and a clear sign of the hospital's vital importance to the community.

That progress came despite significant disruption. Following the outbreak of the US-Iran war, security restrictions prevented many patients from attending outpatient and surgical appointments, resulting in a small drop in the number of surgeries performed. Since the ceasefire was announced on 5 April, however, clinical activity has begun to recover across all sites, with particularly strong momentum in Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem Hospital celebrated its 65th birthday last year, and plans are progressing for the much-needed modernisation and refurbishment project, the 'Master Plan,' as outlined in the last issue of the Jerusalem Scene. The project will modernise the hospital's ageing infrastructure, improve accessibility, relocate and upgrade key clinical services, enhance sustainability through renewable energy and energy-efficient systems, and create a more comfortable environment for patients and staff. We have completed the initial survey conducted by a local engineering firm to create as-built drawings of the hospital's infrastructure and are now producing a tendering document for the next stage of planning.

We look forward to sharing progress and further updates soon.

Kufr Aqab Centre



Renovated reception area, Kufr Aqab, 2026

Our Kufr Aqab Centre continues to deliver crucial services to patients who are unable to access Sheikh Jarrah, with nearly

Across the West Bank:
News from our Hospitals and Clinics

3,000 patients treated in the first three months of this year.

The Kufr Aqab Centre has undergone significant renovations over the past year, in response to increasing demand for services. The expansion plan also included the purchase and installation of new equipment and the recruitment of additional staff to manage more complex eye conditions.

Muristan Clinic

Our smallest clinic, the Muristan, sits in the heart of Jerusalem's Old City. While modest in size, it plays an essential role for local residents, especially older people who may find it difficult to travel to Sheikh Jarrah.

We are also developing plans for a new café at the Muristan, creating a welcoming space that will generate income for the Hospital while inviting residents and visitors alike to enjoy this remarkable setting. The clinic stands on the site of the first hospital founded by the medieval Order of St John, giving the project a unique connection to the area's long history of care and hospitality.

Hebron Hospital

The Hebron Hospital is also undergoing changes, with plans for improvements to the operating theatres (as well as renovations to the outpatient department and air conditioning). These will be phased developments to minimise disruption to patients and are estimated to be completed in around mid-August.

Outpatient visits are at similar levels to the same period last year, with over 3,500 patients seen in the first quarter of 2026. There has been an impressive 27% increase in major surgeries (excluding cataract) in the same period.



Hebron Hospital staff, November 2025

Nablus Hospital

Our new hospital in Nablus continues to go from strength to strength, with over 4,400 outpatient visits recorded in the first three months of 2026. Strengthening surgical capabilities in Nablus is one of our top priorities, and, so far, we have performed over 180 cataract surgeries on-site.

The Nablus Hospital provides services for the people in six northern districts of the West Bank – a combined population of around 1.3 million. For the first time, people in this region don't have to make the trip to Jerusalem to access sight-saving surgery. Around 70% of patients at the hospital are refugees and so rely on our patient relief fund to subsidise their treatment.



Waiting area, Nablus Hospital

Outreach

We are now delivering outreach services across three areas of the West Bank, as well as our hugely successful Child Vision Screening Programme, sponsored by the Priory in the USA of the Order of St John. We have a target of 50,000 children to be screened in 2026 – and in the first quarter of the year, we have already screened nearly 12,500 children.

The introduction of a new service in Hebron last year is a real boost to patients in the south of the West Bank, particularly in more remote areas. In the first three months of this year, it has already reached over 2,000 patients.



New Hebron Outreach service, November 2025

PATIENT STORIES



“The service at the hospital is 100% great!... I appreciate the staff a lot.”



“I am thankful for St John and their treatment of patients...I cannot thank St John enough.”

MEET IMAD AHMAD

Imad Ahmad is a 68-year-old retired Arabic teacher from Jaba', a village between Nablus and Jenin in the West Bank. He was initially seen by the team at the former clinic in Anabta Clinic and was referred to the new Nablus Hospital when it opened.

Imad was suffering from cataracts in both eyes, and it was particularly affecting the vision in his right eye. While he was initially scheduled for surgery in May 2026, he was delighted to be offered a new appointment in January 2026 in Jerusalem.

He was impressed with his experience with SJHEG, commenting:

“The service at the hospital is 100% great! All the doctors and staff are good; the hospital is clean and tidy. If you need to get around the nurses don't leave you and take you around the hospital and stay with you. I appreciate the staff a lot.”

Imad will be able to have his follow-up appointments in Nablus, which is closer to his home and doesn't require him to get a permit to enter Jerusalem.

Before his cataract surgery, Imad's vision had deteriorated so badly that he was forced to stop driving and could not renew his licence. Following surgery, not only is he back behind the wheel, but he now says his eyesight at 68 is better than it was at 20!

MEET HANAN ZAYED

Hanan Zayed is a 57-year-old woman from Jenin in the West Bank, who has been taking care of her deceased sisters' six children full-time for the past 13 years.

Hanan has diabetes, which was beginning to affect her eyesight, with watery eyes and impacted vision. She visited a clinic in Jenin to receive intravitreal injections for diabetic retinopathy, but treatment was expensive – something Hanan couldn't afford as an unemployed caregiver.

It hurt Hanan to see, and without treatment she likely would have gone blind. Hanan has always made sure to take care of the eyes, but she fears it could have caused major issues in her life if she had not gotten treatment – she was already struggling to read.

She was referred to our old Anabta clinic, and consequently the Nablus Hospital, once opened, to receive further treatment, at a cost Hanan could afford. The fact that she was able to be treated in Nablus was also a great help – travelling to Jerusalem would have been a tiring journey, especially with the numerous checkpoints Hanan would have had to pass through.

Hanan was enthusiastic about the service she received from SJHEG, saying:

“I am thankful for St John and their treatment of patients. The receptionist welcomed me with a warm smile, making my experience pleasant from the start. After an hour's journey it is nice to be greeted with a nice smile from the doctors, and staff. I cannot thank St John enough.”



STAFF & TRAINING NEWS

L-R: CEO Dr Ahmad Ma'ali, Sir Andrew Cash, Saeda Qawwas and Waleed Hammoudeh

Saying Goodbye to Two Long-Serving Employees

In December 2026, SJEHG Chair Sir Andrew Cash attended a very special 'Honour Ceremony' in Jerusalem to celebrate the retirement of two of the Hospital's longest-standing employees, Saeda Qawwas and Waleed Hammoudeh, who have an incredible 84 years of service to the Eye Hospital between them!

Saeda worked as a Senior Ophthalmic Nurse at our flagship hospital in Jerusalem, starting her employment in 1986. Saeda is recognized for her leadership, dedication, and strong communication skills, particularly in the field of prosthetic eye care. She was also sponsored by the Midland Shires (Leicestershire & Rutland, and Northamptonshire) County Priory Groups.

Waleed joined the Eye Hospital in 1982 as an Ophthalmic Nurse. A much-loved presence across the Group, Waleed could often be found with our outreach teams delivering essential sight-saving care in remote areas to the most underserved populations in the Holy Land.

We wish you all the best in your retirement, Saeda and Waleed, and thank you for your inspiring service!



The 2025-26 Sir Stephen Miller School of Nursing Cohort

Training News

Ophthalmic Nursing Diploma Programme

Eight students (pictured) are enrolled on the one-year postgraduate ophthalmic nursing diploma at the Sir Stephen Miller School of Nursing and are due to graduate in June 2026.

Medical Residency Programme

We currently have eight medical residents enrolled in four-year speciality training programmes at the Hospital. One resident is currently pursuing an exciting master's degree in Artificial Intelligence and Health Informatics in Ophthalmology at the University of Pennsylvania, USA.

Orthoptic Training

Our in-house orthoptic assistant training for five optometrists and nurses is progressing as planned. This one-year, hands-on training programme is designed to build orthoptic capacity and provide trained personnel to support services at our Hebron and Nablus Hospitals, as well as the Kufra Aqab Centre.

Introducing Our New Trustees

We are delighted to welcome two new trustees to the Board of SJEHG, who both further strengthen the Board's clinical expertise and governance.



Professor Sajjad Ahmad is a Consultant Ophthalmologist at Moorfields Eye Hospital and Professor of Corneal Regeneration at the Institute of Ophthalmology, University College London, as well as the Moorfields-UCL NIHR Biomedical Research Centre. He brings a wealth of experience in treating corneal conditions, cataract and refractive cases, and is particularly well known for his work in complex inflammatory ocular surface disease and ocular surface reconstruction using stem cell therapies. Alongside his clinical work, he leads a research group at UCL focused on corneal epithelial healing and limbal stem cells.

Dr Suzanne K Freitag is Director of Ophthalmic Plastic Surgery at Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary and Associate Professor at Harvard Medical School. She studied at Duke University and went on to complete medical school at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, followed by ophthalmology residency at Wills Eye Hospital, a neuro-ophthalmology fellowship at Johns Hopkins Wilmer Eye Institute, and an ophthalmic plastic surgery fellowship through Harvard and Tufts. She is the Emeritus Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Orbit* and has also given her time to surgical mission work in Uganda, Nevis and elsewhere, including volunteering at St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem.

Great to have you with us, Sajjad and Suzanne!





ACCOLADES AND AWARDS

Staff outside Gaza Hospital, May 2025 (L), Sir Andrew Cash GCStJ (R)

Appointments in the Order of St John

His Majesty the King has approved appointments in the Order of St John, with effect from both 1 January 2026 and 21 April 2026, the dates of the King's Sign Manual.

Our Chair, Andrew Cash has been awarded the highest grade of the Order, the Bailiff Grand Cross (GCStJ), a remarkable achievement. Andrew is also a Trustee on the Executive Committee of the Order of St John.

We are also very proud to announce that all of our staff in Gaza have been recognised for their steadfast commitment and dedication to providing expert charitable eye care in times of unimaginable hardship.

Suhad Abu-Dhiab, one of our optometrists in Gaza, shared her reaction on receiving this honour:

"I would like to express my sincere gratitude and deep appreciation for being admitted as a Member of the Order of St John. It is a great honour to receive this distinguished recognition, and I am proud to be associated with an esteemed humanitarian institution devoted to serving humanity and advancing healthcare."

"This honour inspires me to continue serving with dedication, integrity, and compassion, and to contribute to the noble humanitarian mission upheld by the Order of St John, particularly in supporting patients and communities in need."

"I extend my heartfelt thanks to all those who made this recognition possible. I look forward to continuing my work in a manner that reflects the values of mercy, service, and humanity."

ST JOHN EYE HOSPITAL GROUP – with effect from 1 January 2026

As Bailiff Grand Cross

Sir Andrew John CASH, OBE

As Commander

Dr Waleed SHAQOURA

As Officer

Fadi AL-EJLAH

Janet MARSH

Dr Jonathan Yun-Xian

Leong THAN

As Member

Suhad ABU-DHIAB

Dr Fawzy ABU-JALHOUM

Shadi ABU-RIYALAH

Dr Hisham AL-FALEET

Dr Nour AL-GHOUL

Dr Ahmad Al-HALIMI

Foad AL-NAJJAR

Mohammad DOUGHMOSH

Dr Mahmmoud GHOUNAIM

David James THOMPSON

Harry Harding VERITY

Ahmad YAGHI

Shadi YASEEN

ST JOHN EYE HOSPITAL GROUP – with effect from 21 April 2026

As Commander

Judith MUSALLAM

As Member

Moataz AL-HASSANY

Mohammad AL-HAWWARI

Samy AL-JAZZAR

Ibraheem BA'ALOUSHA

Maysoun DABAN

No'aman E'AMAD

Dr Rashad KASSAB

Leena O'UDWAN

Mahmmoud SAAED

Huda TAFESH

Honours for our Trustees



We are also pleased to announce that one of our trustees, Mr John Macaskill KStJ, has been appointed as the next Prior of St John in the USA. John was first appointed to The Order of St John in 2012 by Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and he will begin his term as Prior on St. John's Day, 24 June 2026.



Fellow trustee Mrs Avey Bhatia OStJ RGN, MPA has been awarded an OBE for services to nursing and the NHS. Avey is Chief Nurse at Guy's and St Thomas' Trust and, alongside her role on the board of SJEHG, President of the Florence Nightingale Foundation and Honorary Vice President of The Nightingale Fellowship.

Order Hospitaller and former trustee Dr David Verity KStJ, MA (Oxon), MD (Lon), BM BCh, FRCOphth has been recognised by The Ophthalmologist magazine in their Ophthalmologist Power List 2026 as one of the world's leading ophthalmologists. The Power List showcases ophthalmology leaders and influencers whose achievements have advanced or made a significant impact in the field in the last 12-18 months.

Congratulations to all our St John people for such fantastic achievements!

ST. JOHN EYE HOSPITAL GROUP FOSTERING PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE AND PARTNERSHIPS

By Andrew Cash, Chair SJEHG

For more than 144 years, the St. John Eye Hospital Group has served as the principal provider of specialised ophthalmic care in the Holy Land, combining clinical excellence with a longstanding humanitarian mission. Throughout its history, the Hospital Group has played a central role in reducing preventable blindness and ensuring access to high-quality eye care for vulnerable communities across the region, regardless of background, religion, or nationality.

A major international milestone was achieved in 2023 when the Champalimaud Foundation recognised the Hospital Group with the prestigious Vision Award for excellence in humanitarian ophthalmic care. This recognition reflected the Group's unique ability to deliver world-class clinical services while maintaining a strong commitment to serving disadvantaged and conflict-affected populations. The award highlighted the Hospital Group's integrated model of care, which combines tertiary-level specialised services, outreach programmes to remote communities, professional training, and public health initiatives aimed at preventing blindness.

The Hospital Group has also become a recognised regional leader in innovation, education, and professional development. Its clinical teams continue to introduce advanced ophthalmic techniques and technologies while maintaining high international standards of patient care and safety. The organisation's training programmes support the development of local ophthalmologists, nurses, optometrists, and allied health professionals, helping to strengthen the regional healthcare workforce and ensure long-term sustainability of specialised eye care services.

Among the Hospital Group's most distinguished achievements is the international recognition received by

Order Hospitaller, Professor David Verity. Having dedicated more than four decades

to humanitarian ophthalmology, Professor Verity has become widely respected for both his clinical expertise and his commitment to compassionate patient care. His recent inclusion among the world's top 50 ophthalmologists by the International Ophthalmology Powerlist represents a significant global acknowledgement of his leadership in the field. This distinction not only honours his personal achievements but also reinforces the international reputation of the St. John Eye Hospital Group as a centre of excellence in ophthalmology and humanitarian healthcare.

Professor Verity's contributions extend well beyond clinical practice. He has been instrumental in strengthening professional collaboration and fostering partnerships across communities, institutions, and borders throughout the region. Through his work, the Hospital Group has expanded academic cooperation, knowledge exchange, and joint medical initiatives that promote shared healthcare objectives despite challenging political circumstances. In recognition of these efforts and his academic standing, Professor Verity was appointed Visiting Professor of Ophthalmology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2024.

The achievements of the St. John Eye Hospital Group demonstrate how medical excellence, humanitarian values, and international collaboration can together create lasting impact. Through its clinical services, outreach activities, educational programmes, and partnerships, the Hospital Group continues to advance its mission of preserving sight and improving lives throughout the Holy Land and the wider region.



“One thing you might like to know is that whenever something is needed or there is a problem, someone always says, ‘Perhaps the Ladies Guild would do it’. So we are well thought of”

Jane B Lyle, Guild member and wife of the Hospitaller, Sir Keith Lyle



A CENTURY OF SERVICE AND DEVOTION

THE GUILD OF ST JOHN OF JERUSALEM EYE HOSPITAL GROUP

Members of the Guild of SJEHG with HRH The Duke of Gloucester KG GCVO GCStJ, the Grand Prior of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, and the Lord Prior, Professor Mark Compton AM GCStJ, Chapter Hall, St John's Gate, March 2026

This year we celebrate the centenary of the Guild of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group, the largest dedicated volunteer fundraising and support group for the SJEHG. Over the past hundred years, the Guild has grown from its original format as the Ladies' Linen Guild into a vibrant modern organisation, raising both funds and awareness in support of SJEHG's remarkable work.

The Guild's story begins with the revival of the ancient linen guild tradition. As Sir Stephen Miller, former Hospitaller of the Order of St John, recalled, it "[...] began as the Ladies' Linen Guild with the object of gathering linen and clothing from the confreres of the Order and sending them to Jerusalem. At that time the Ladies' Linen Guild had active committees in Canada, Australia and New Zealand interested in the welfare of the Hospital leading to welcome donations in kind." In this way, the Guild renewed a long and inspiring tradition of practical compassion for those in need.

In 1926, according to *A Beacon of Hope* by Matthew Glazier, Ian Howie-Willis and John Pearn, '[...]106 members of the Order accompanied by assorted relatives and friends, undertook a 'Pilgrimage' to historical sites associated with the ancient Order of Knights Hospitaller.' During that memorable journey, a visit to the Eye Hospital, at that time, based on the Bethlehem Road, on 16 March inspired the creation of the new Guild. The authors write that this 'was the establishment of the Ladies' Linen Guild in England by a group of female pilgrims.' From that moment, the modern Guild was linked to the enduring charitable spirit of the original St John Hospital.



Original Bethlehem Road St John Ophthalmic Hospital, 1946

Across the last century, the Guild and the SJEHG have faced, upheaval and extraordinary change with resilience and hope. The original Hospital was lost in 1948, but the work continued in the Old City of Jerusalem through the generosity of Lady Watson and Mrs Bertha Spafford Vestey, who provided buildings for clinics and inpatients. In 1960, the present hospital opened in Sheikh Jarrah and went on to build an international reputation for excellence. More recently, the network has expanded to Hebron, Gaza and Nablus, alongside an Outreach programme bringing care to patients who cannot easily travel to Jerusalem.

From the beginning, the Guild has offered thoughtful and practical support: embroidered bed linen, clothing, educational materials and other comforts for patients and staff. In time, this spirit of service blossomed into a wonderful tradition of fundraising through concerts, fairs, bridge tournaments, lectures, tours, auctions, fashion shows and dinners.



Gift Of Sight Fair, December 2021

Major events, local fundraisers and donations have been estimated to have contributed over £10,000,000 to the work of SJEHG in the Holy Land since the formation of the Guild. This is a record to truly celebrate, with this generosity helping to provide staff amenities, study grants, toys and parties for hospitalised children, and essential medical equipment.



Guild tour to the Holy Land, June 2023

Today, the Guild continues its vital mission, including supporting staff salaries in Gaza during especially unstable periods. Their work remains at the heart of the sight-saving and life-changing mission of the SJEHG, and this centenary is a joyful celebration of all that has been achieved, as well as a renewed commitment to the future.

With thanks to Geraldine Ohannessian and Georgina Brooks for their fantastic research contributing to this article.



Dr Denise Magauran, pictured left

We were deeply saddened to hear of the passing of one of the Guild's most prominent members, Dr Denise Magauran. Denise was a former Chief Surgeon at the Hospital in Jerusalem and one of our most dedicated supporters, both through the Guild and the Gloucestershire County Priory Group. You can read a full obituary of Denise's remarkable life and achievements on p20.

IF YOU HAVE ANY MEMORIES OF THE GUILD, WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR THEM!

Please email guildstjohn@sjeh.org, or call the London Office on (+44) 0207 253 2582

The Guild is hosting many exciting events this year to celebrate their centenary, following a fantastic opening reception in March at the Chapter Hall, St John's Gate (which you can read more about on p17). They would love for as many supporters as possible to join them – scan the QR code below to find out more about the events and buy tickets.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Monday 6 July

Levon Chilingirian & Friends Concert at the Priory Church, Clerkenwell

Tuesday 14 September

Lunch at Watermen's Hall, City of London

Saturday 28 November

Tribute Band Evening at the Tabernacle, Notting Hill





COMMUNITY NEWS

The Guid of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Centenary Reception, Chapter Hall, 2 March 2026

Bishop's Waltham Garden Fair



Bishop's Waltham Garden Fair, May 2026

Saba and Rick from our London offices attended the 24th annual Bishop's Waltham Garden Fair in Hampshire on 3 May 2026. Organised each year by the Bishop's Waltham Garden Fair Committee in support of SJEHG, the popular event featured more than 60 stalls offering everything from plants and garden accessories to handbags and handcrafted gifts.

All proceeds from the fair help fund the salary of SJEHG nurse Huda Said. We were delighted to welcome both longstanding supporters and new visitors to the Hospital stand, where we had the opportunity to share more about our work and mission. The day was filled with a wonderful sense of community and many engaging conversations about the impact of the Hospital's services.

Our sincere thanks go to the organisers, and especially to Joan Ferrer

and Jenny Nixon, for their hard work and dedication in making the event such a success. We are already looking forward to next year's fair.

Cookbook Project

Lyn Hunter from the Cheshire County Priory Group is developing a charity cookbook, celebrating the flavours, traditions, and stories of the Middle East with recipes from the Holy Land. This fantastic book will be sold on behalf of SJEHG and will feature recipes contributed by our community, supporters, and staff across the Holy Land, helping to raise funds and awareness for SJEHG's work. Work on the project is now underway, with plans for the cookbook to be completed later in 2026.

Chapter Hall Reception



Sarah-Jane Holden, Chair of the Guild, speaks at the Chapter Hall



Chef Radhika Howarth



Members of the Guild speaking with HRH The Duke of Gloucester

The Guild hosted a fantastic drinks reception on 2 March 2026 at Chapter Hall, St John's Gate to kick off celebrations for their centenary year. Previously known as the Ladies' Linen Guild, the Guild was formed following a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in March 1926, and they have been fundraising in support of SJEHG ever since! You can find out more about the Guild's extraordinary legacy of generosity on pp14-15.

We heard fantastic speeches from HRH The Duke of Gloucester, The Lord Prior Professor Mark Compton, SJEHG Chair Sir Andrew Cash, and Sarah-Jane Holden, Chair of the Guild. Guests also enjoyed a delicious selection of Middle Eastern canapés cooked by chef and author Radhika Howarth, alongside an historical archive of past events and fundraising initiatives. We were joined by many special guests, including Chev. Ray Cassar, member of the Maltese Association's Council, and Sasha Waddell, descendent of Dr John Waddell, the first Ophthalmologist at our Jerusalem Hospital. We are excited for an upcoming year of further events with the Guild. More info can be found in our upcoming events section.

Online CEO Briefing

Our CEO, Dr Ahmad Ma'ali, provided an on-the-ground update from Jerusalem during an online briefing held on Zoom on 31 March 2026. The event was very well attended, with supporters joining from around the world to hear the latest news from SJEHG and learn more about our plans for the future.

During the briefing, Dr Ma'ali shared valuable insights into how staff wellbeing is being supported amid ongoing challenges across the region and outlined several key strategic priorities for 2026. The session also offered participants the opportunity to hear firsthand about developments across the Hospital Group and the impact of our work on patients and communities.

The briefing was free to attend and is available to watch on the Hospital's YouTube channel: bit.ly/4e3dUO2.

SOA



SOA Masterclass, 14 March 2026

On March 14, 2026, the Ophthalmic Association of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group (SOA) held its third international Masterclass, and its second in NeuroOrbital disease.

This educational event was held in the Royal Society of Medicine in London, attended by 90 international delegates and speakers, and a further 50 online. Contributors included guest lecturer Professor Geoffrey Rose, and experts from the UK, Europe, and North America, and the Association's Vice Patron, Dr Michael Dan.

The SOA thanks the medical students, faculty, and, above all, the speakers who gave their time and expertise to support this congress.

It also acknowledges the generous support of the following organisations, without whom this educational event would not have been possible: The Macaskill Foundation, The Rowda Group Ltd, Théa Pharmaceuticals Limited, Medtronic, Scope, Altomed, Vision Engineering, and The SOA Ltd Board.

The Guild of Young Freemen Dinner

On Friday 1 May, The Guild of Young Freemen celebrated their Reunion Banquet in the splendid surroundings of Stationers' Hall. Members old and new enjoyed a memorable evening that perfectly reflected the spirit, camaraderie and enthusiasm that define the Young Freemen. During the evening, a raffle was held to raise funds for the Young Freeman's principal charity affiliations, including the SJEHG. We are delighted that the funds raised will go towards Dr Jomana Swidan's training and dedicated work with SJEHG.



The Guild of Young Freemen's Reunion Banquet at Stationer's Hall

Knights Templar



L-R: Rev. Niall Johnston, Saba Omran, Jamie Ingham-Clark, 20 May 2026

The Knights Templar's longstanding commitment to SJEHG continues to provide vital support for the Jerusalem Hospital's Orthoptics Department. On 20 May, Saba from SJEHG's London Office attended the Great Priory Meeting at Freemasons' Hall, where the Knights Templar reaffirmed their valued partnership with the Hospital Group.

We are proud of a relationship that has spanned more than a century

and has played an important role in supporting our mission to provide high-quality eye care across the region. Most recently, the Knights Templar Benevolent Fund contributed £71,000 towards the opening of our new Nablus Hospital, helping to equip the Paediatric Outpatient Department with essential medical equipment.

Nigel Buckland – Kirkby to Kilimanjaro



Caption: Nigel Buckland at the summit of Lion Rock, Sri Lanka, on a training climb for his Kilimanjaro challenge

Nigel Buckland from the Knights Templar Provincial Priory of West Yorkshire has dedicated 2026 as a fundraising year for SJEHG, undertaking both physical challenges, such as climbing the Yorkshire Three Peaks in March, and hosting social evenings, including a Wine and Charcuterie Evening in May. He is also planning on climbing the UK Three Peaks in August and will be hosting a Beer and Bites Quiz Night in October.

These events are leading up to an attempt to climb Mount Kilimanjaro on Christmas Day! He has raised over £1600 of his target of £3500 so far. You can donate to Nigel's challenge and follow his progress by scanning the QR code below, linking to his Just Giving page.

Thank you Nigel for your support, and good luck on your climbs!



The Birmingham University Ophthalmic Society Bake Sale

The Birmingham University Ophthalmic Society organised a successful bake sale, raising an impressive £360 for our work in the Holy Land.

We are incredibly grateful to all the students and supporters involved for their enthusiasm, generosity, and commitment to helping provide vital eye care services to those most in need.

Upcoming Events

Friends-only Webinar

We are planning an exclusive Friends-only CEO briefing webinar later in the year, so do sign up to our Friends of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Scheme through our website to ensure you don't miss out: <https://bit.ly/3Rs8CmA>

You can find out more about the Friends Scheme on p19.

The Guild of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group

Upcoming Guild events include Evensong at the Chapel Royal, St James's Palace on 9 June, a concert featuring the world renowned violinist Levon Chilingirian and Friends at St John Priory Church on 6 July, a special lunch at Watermen's Hall on 14 September, and a tribute band evening at the Tabernacle, Notting Hill, on 28 November.

Keep up to date with our events and buy tickets directly from our website by scanning the QR code below:





JOIN A COMMUNITY COMMITTED TO SAVING SIGHT

We are proud to be a truly global charity, supported by a network of committed individuals around the world who make our sight-saving work possible.

The Friends of SJEHG is a growing community of dedicated supporters who stand alongside the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group in delivering expert eye care to those who need it most across East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza.

As a Friend, you play an essential role in this mission. Your regular support helps us restore sight, protect futures and sustain services in some of the most challenging circumstances.

Why become a Friend?

In return for your regular support, you will receive exclusive updates and opportunities to engage more closely with our work.

Becoming a Friend means:

- Providing sight-saving, life-changing treatment for children and adults
- Supporting outreach to isolated and underserved communities
- Investing in training and strengthening local healthcare systems
- Your regular support allows us to plan ahead, respond quickly, and sustain services where they are needed most.

Choose your level of support

Friends are recognised through two levels of membership:

SIGHT SUPPORTER

(£5-£80 per month / up to £1,000 annually)

As a Sight Supporter, you will receive:

- A personalised welcome email
- Jerusalem Scene newsletter twice a year
- A bespoke annual update and thank you
- Priority invitations to events, including exclusive Friends events
- Access to a complimentary "Friends Only" online CEO briefing



Scan the QR code to become a Sight Supporter

SIGHT SAVER

(£80+ per month / £1,000+ annually)

Sight Savers play an especially vital role in sustaining our services.

As a Sight Saver, you will receive:

- A personalised welcome email
- Jerusalem Scene twice a year
- Our Annual Report
- A bespoke impact update around World Sight Day
- Priority invitations to events, including exclusive Friends events
- Access to a complimentary "Friends Only" online CEO briefing
- 25% discount on tickets to all SJEHG and Guild events



Scan the QR code to become a Sight Saver

Thank you!

When you become a Friend of SJEHG, you join a legacy of care that stretches back generations – and help shape a future where preventable blindness is no longer a barrier to opportunity. We look forward to welcoming you.

LEGACIES & OBITUARIES



DR DENISE MARY MAGAURAN, DStJ

8th November, 1940 – 6th April, 2026

“Denise was sparkling with warmth, and so very, very kind. She brought such energy and fun to every occasion. She was the heart and soul of the Guild as well as a dear friend to us all.”

The words above are typical of the many tributes we have received from friends and colleagues of Denise Magauran, a wonderful person and a loyal supporter, friend and champion of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital, Jerusalem.

Denise lived a remarkable life. Born in Cheam, Surrey, she was educated at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Woldingham, before taking a medical degree at Charing Cross Hospital Medical School, London, qualifying in 1963. She quickly chose to specialise in ophthalmology, taking up surgical roles at Royal Free Hospital, London, Manchester Royal Eye Hospital, and Bart’s, London. This alone was quite an achievement: today women doctors outnumber men in the UK, but back in the 1960s women accounted for barely one-fifth of doctors, and few women were working as surgeons, or in specialist practice.

In February 1973 - aged 32, and by now a Senior Registrar at St Paul’s Eye Hospital, Liverpool - Denise came to work at the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem for the first time, beginning an association with the Hospital and the Holy Land that continued for the rest of her life.

Interestingly, it was during this year in Jerusalem that the British Journal of Ophthalmology published a scientific paper Denise had written back in England, describing the condition spontaneous hyphema in three patients. This is a serious condition where blood accumulates in the anterior (forward) chamber of the eye

without any apparent injury. It is frequently caused by diabetes and so is a condition Denise must have come across regularly in her work in Jerusalem. Like so many of the diseases we treat, spotting the condition early and acting fast is crucial for preventing further complications and possible blindness.

That year must have made a profound impression on her, for in 1992 and by this time an established Consultant, Denise returned to St John Eye Hospital, Jerusalem, first as Clinical Tutor, and then as its Chief Surgeon, a position she held until 1999. Denise was an exceptional surgeon and dedicated ophthalmologist who used her skills, expertise and deep medical knowledge to benefit so many patients being cared for in Jerusalem and the West Bank. So many tributes have been paid by colleagues who knew her from this time.

Returning from Jerusalem, Denise joined the London-based Guild – there was still a Guild operating in Jerusalem at the time - and soon after was appointed Chair, a role she undertook on two occasions. Denise always ensured that the mission to provide eye care was front and centre of the Guild’s work and was a brilliant speaker who captivated audiences with the realities of the Eye Hospital’s work, illustrating presentations with vivid anecdotes and personal experiences. Crucially, she had an overarching desire to share the successes and accomplishments of our teams, something that can too often be lost amid the perpetual challenges the Eye Hospital faces. She was a particular advocate for the mobile outreach programme and guided the Guild to support the Hospital’s nursing teams and its paediatric unit.

As one Guild colleague well puts it: “She was a bridge in many ways, linking the Hospital’s work in the occupied Palestinian territories with UK supporters and across the St John Family”.

Denise gave her time and loyal support to every Guild member and had the capacity to bring out the best in everyone. She had a delightful and infectious sense of fun, and many members of the Guild have cherished memories of enjoying laughter with her. Above all, Denise loved people and life in all its facets, and her warmth and sparkling personality enhanced all who met her.

Denise’s deep Christian faith was at the heart of all she did. Another of her Guild friends, describes this so well: “Her dedication was not only professional, but it was profoundly human and spiritual. She gave of herself with humility, courage and love, and touched so many lives through her compassion and tireless service.”

And as one of Denise’s close friends eloquently and poignantly writes “Denise has left a hole beyond our imagination in all our lives – and is already sorely missed. It is as if a light has been extinguished”. Another friend writes: “Such a beautiful person. The world needs more people like her”.

We would like to close with these words from Dr Ahmad Ma’ali, CEO of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group:

“Denise was a dear friend and a highly respected colleague who took great pride in the work we undertake and the many achievements of the Hospital Group. She knew almost all members of staff, regardless of their titles or positions and was deeply loved. Her dedication, kindness, and genuine interest in people left a lasting impression on everyone who had the privilege of working with her. She will be greatly missed by all of us, and I personally will miss her warm humour, light-hearted jokes, and ever-present smile”.

Denise died at home in April.

Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum

The London Office would like to thank all those who contacted us with their special memories of Denise and words of condolence. With thanks to Dr Rick Warner for compiling this obituary.

“All who know the Eye Hospital knew Denise. She was a dear friend and highly respected colleague who gave her time and energy selflessly to the Hospital, decade after decade. Her dedication, kindness, and genuine interest in people left a lasting impression. We were all privileged to work with her: she inspired generations and embodied the ethos of St John. She will be greatly missed by us all.”

Prof David H Verity, KStJ, Order Hospitaller

Visiting Research Fellow to St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem under the direction of Dr Magauran from 1992 to 1993

NAZAR BANNAYAN OBE KStJ



3 October 1934 - 27 January 2026

Nazar Bannayan was a man devoted to service through his lifelong dedication to St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem and his deep involvement in his Armenian community.

His first love was photography: he was a technical innovator with the eye of an artist, setting up one of the first studios in the Old City of Jerusalem. He became involved in St John originally as a photographer for a research programme into Trachoma in 1953. He then made a training film for nurses in the Hospital campaign to encourage young local women to take up the profession: considered an innovation at the time. He subsequently was asked to become Assistant Superintendent and took over the complete administration of the Hospital in 1977, a role he undertook with skill, empathy, and, in the words of a medical colleague, "a moral compass and a big heart."

Nazar read four alphabets, spoke five languages and could negotiate fluently in all of them, simultaneously, if necessary. He started his day greeting the patients, some travelling in great discomfort from villages throughout the country. He consulted with the staff from the surgeons to the Matron, sisters, nurses, cooks and gardeners. His office door was always

open and his welcome and concern were always genuine.

His knowledge of the Hospital was forensic since he was there from the opening in 1960 and had worked under the administrations of the British Mandate, the Jordanian Government and finally, the Israelis. He had the experience, skill and understanding to explain and advise visiting doctors, volunteers and the dignitaries visiting the Hospital and Jerusalem from the Administration in London, donors from America, and well-wishers from everywhere.

Nazar was active outside the Hospital too. On the death of his father he inherited, unwillingly, the title of Mukhtar, the head of the Armenian community resident in the Old City of Jerusalem for hundreds of years. Such was his humility, he rejected the honour and passed it on to a cousin, preferring to deeply involve himself on a purely personal level in the Armenian Parisiradz Club: an organisation actively preserving Armenian culture and community cohesion in the complexity of Jerusalem society, and the Jinishian Memorial Foundation, a humanitarian non-profit in the service of the Armenian community in Jerusalem.

But he was happiest in a garden. He landscaped the grounds of the hospital in Jerusalem. He planted fruit trees, flower beds, a vegetable garden, which was so prolific it fed the entire hospital staff, with the surplus sold locally to raise funds for the Hospital. There was an annual olive harvest. The citrus trees produced the fruits for St John Marmalade, made in the Hospital and sold as a boost to in-house fundraising. In May 1994 an article was dedicated to the garden in the magazine of the Chelsea Flower Show.

Among many other landscaping projects, he created a rose garden in Jericho, a Convent garden for the Greek Patriarch, and a roof garden in Ramallah complete with vines. His own roof garden, however, was meticulously

planned and planted by Marianne, his wife. Among the spires, minarets and domed houses of the Greek Quarter, this was a haven for him, Marianne, family and friends of all generations. Most famously on the Holy Orthodox Easter Saturday this was the only place to celebrate, surrounded by the church bells, scout bands, musical guests and the scent of lemon trees.

It's impossible to sum up such a man in words. He was spiritual, a bon vivant, a great storyteller, a man of great integrity, loyalty, curiosity and generosity. He is irreplaceable.

With thanks to Geraldine Ohanessian for providing this obituary.



**THE RT HON BARONESS
EMERTON OF TUNBRIDGE
WELLS AND CLERKENWELL,
DBE GCStJ FRCN DL**

1935 – 2026



Audrey Emerton was four when she contracted measles and then whooping cough, leading to bilateral mastoiditis, a severe ear infection. She almost lost her hearing and, during three months in hospital in 1940, temporarily lost the ability to walk. Yet from that confinement came a vocation: relying on nurses inspired her to join their profession.

Her head teacher said nursing was unsuitable for a girl of such "delicate health" and that she would not amount to much. Audrey later enjoyed proving her wrong when they had tea in the House of Lords many years later!

She began her nursing career at St George's Hospital as a State Registered Nurse in 1953. In 1958 she became a State Registered Midwife and gained the Sister's Diploma in 1964. Audrey then became a Tutor rising to Senior Tutor again at St George's Hospital.

After roles in nursing, teaching and management, she was appointed Regional Nursing Officer for South East Thames Regional Health Authority in 1973 and,

in 1985, became Regional Director of Nursing, responsible for 30,000 nurses until her retirement in 1991.

She chaired the UK Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting until 1993, then became a Non-Executive Director and, from 1994 to 2000, Chair of Brighton Health Care NHS Trust. On her retirement, the Medical School Building was named the Audrey Emerton Building in her honour.

As an administrator, she oversaw the closure of Darenth Park Hospital in Kent in 1988. With 1,500 residents, many of whom had lived there for decades, she developed individual community placements to ensure suitable accommodation and support. The experience deepened her conviction that social care was essential within the NHS, a cause she championed throughout her life.

Audrey joined St John Ambulance as a cadet aged 11 in 1946 and completed more than 79 years of service to the Order. "It was the making of me," she later said. She served in many roles, including Area and County Nursing Officer and Commissioner in Kent, before becoming Chief Nursing Officer at National HQ and Chair of the Medical Board in 1988. On the formation of the Priory of England and the Islands, she was appointed Chancellor and Chief Commander. Professor Mark Compton AM GCStJ, the Lord Prior of the Order of St John, called her "a true icon of our Order, dedicating her life to serve others."

When the Eye Hospital was going through some challenging times, she was appointed the Nursing Advisor to the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem advising the Hospital Board on changes to consolidate the lifesaving work to the poorest people in the Holy Land. She continued her support for this outstanding part of St John for the rest of her life.

Audrey was appointed a Dame Grand Cross of the Order of St John, one of only 35 worldwide in 2004. She held four honorary Doctorates from Universities of Kent, Central England, Brighton and St George's. She was a Fellow of the Royal College of Nursing. And was admitted as a Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (DBE) in 1989 and then entered the House of Lords as a Crossbench Peer in 1997.

In 2020, the Royal College of Nursing awarded Audrey its first lifetime achievement award, an honour that surprised and humbled her - "I have only spent my career doing what I had been trained to do and what I wanted to do," she said.

She was President of the Florence Nightingale Foundation, and, in her final year, the Dean of Westminster Abbey invited her to deliver the address at the Annual Commemoration Service. She spoke with characteristic thought and challenge, grounding nursing in the principles of the Christian faith. The Dean, so impressed, invited her back to preach the following Sunday and joked that she might consider a change of career!

Audrey served others not only nationally but personally. When friends were unwell, she called daily with support, advice and encouragement; she was forever the Matron.

Audrey lived the mottos of the Order for all her life – they were her guiding principles: Pro Fide - Pro Utilitate Hominum, for faith and for the service of humanity.

May she rest in peace and rise in glory!

With thanks to Andrew Latham KStJ DL for providing this obituary.



CORINNA, LADY HAMILTON OF DALZELL, DStJ DL

1941 – 2025



Ann Anastasia Corinna Helena Hamilton was born to Bob and Ismene Dixon in 1941. In 1948 her father became the youngest British Ambassador ever and was posted to Czechoslovakia and from there to New York as the UK's permanent representative to the United Nations. In 1960 he became the UK's Ambassador in Paris.

Corinna was now old enough now to attend dinners and to be fully involved in embassy life and took on the role of her mother's social secretary. She developed exceptional social skills for entertaining and hospitality for people like HM Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, HRH Prince Charles and Princess Anne and stars of stage and screen such as Charlie Chaplin, Rudolf Nureyev and Salvador Dali.

She continued to use her entertaining skills for the many organisations and charities she supported, especially St John, until her death. Her annual hosting of Surrey's Fellowship tea party, raising funds for the St John Eye Hospital Group, is just one example of her generosity that raised many thousands of pounds.

In 1967 Corinna married James Hamilton, 4th Baron Hamilton, and they had four sons and eleven grandchildren. In 1978 they moved from London to Betchworth, Surrey and in 1980 took on Betchworth House and the estate.

Her father-in-law, 3rd Baron Hamilton GCVO MC, was Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for Surrey and was President of the St John Council and encouraged Corinna to get involved with the Order of St John in Surrey.

In 1981 Corinna was appointed to the Council of the Order of St John in Surrey. She became County Vice-President of St John Ambulance 1990 and became County President in 1994. When she was County President, she was very involved and active in the County supporting volunteers and in fundraising, especially with the appeal to build the County HQ.

In 2002, she became Chief President for the Priory of England and the Islands and served for six years visiting every county in England and the Islands, encouraging and supporting the local divisions and volunteers to whom she was deeply devoted.

She served on Chapter of the Priory of England and the Islands for many years and after finishing in that role she returned to Chair the County Priory Group in Surrey. She continued to support the Fellowship locally and nationally and worked to support the St John Eye Hospital Group mainly through the Guild until her death.

Lady Hamilton was a former High Sheriff for Surrey, a school Governor and was vice-chairman of The Acorns County First School, the first Federal

school in Surrey combining Betchworth and Leigh Schools. In 1990 she was made a Governor of Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People and was on the Executive and Management Committees, as well involved in fund-raising. She was a member of the East Surrey branch of the Mental Health Foundation.

For 44 years she remained a devoted servant of the Order and all its works until her death. She lived the Order's mottoes – Pro Fide, for the faith, and Pro Utilitate Hominum, for the service of humanity.

May she rest in peace and rise in glory!

With thanks to Andrew Latham KStJ DL for providing this obituary.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF TAMI TARAZI



It is with deep sorrow and heartfelt remembrance that we honour the life and legacy of our dear colleague, Tami Tarazi, who passed away in January following the birth of her first son.

Tami was a valued member of the SJEHG for nearly a decade, during which she left an enduring mark on all who had the privilege of working alongside her. From the very beginning of her journey with the Hospital Group, Tami distinguished herself through her dedication, professionalism, and strong sense of purpose. She was widely respected for her reliability, collaborative spirit, and her ability to bring warmth and positivity to the workplace.

Reflecting on her career, David Dahdal, Director of Development & Grants, says:

“I had the privilege of hiring Tami shortly after she graduated from university, and it was truly remarkable to witness her growth over the years into a dedicated and highly capable professional. Tami represented integrity, commitment, and kindness in all that she did. She was deeply aligned with the charitable mission of our work, always demonstrating genuine compassion for the underprivileged patients we serve. With love and dedication, she consistently went the extra

mile to support those in need, ensuring that everyone who sought care at the hospital felt supported and valued. She was greatly respected by her colleagues and made a lasting contribution not only to our work, but to the spirit of our team.”

Beyond her professional achievements, Tami will be remembered for her gentle nature, her humility, and her genuine care for others. She built meaningful relationships across the organization, leaving behind a legacy of compassion and respect.

Her sister, Hania Tarazi, beautifully captured Tami’s spirit:

“Tami was full of life; always lively, radiant, and carrying a positive energy that touched everyone around her. She had just begun a beautiful new chapter in her life, filled with hope, love, and dreams for her young family.”

Tami’s passing is a deep loss to our entire community. While we mourn her absence, we also celebrate her lasting impact and the many lives she touched.

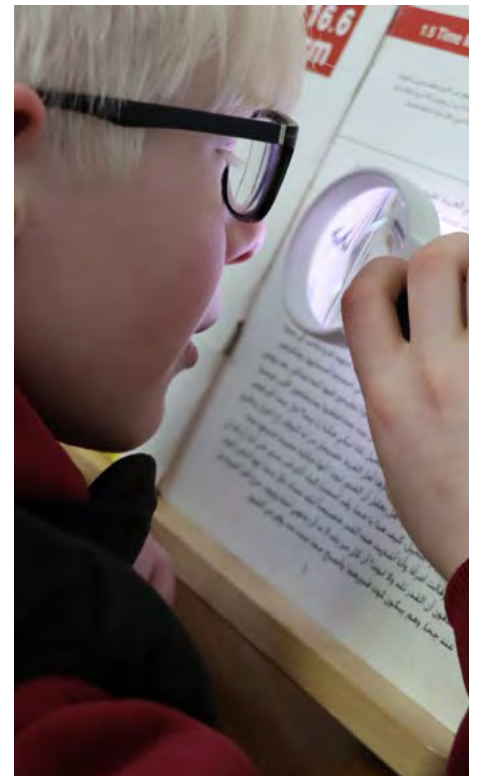
Our thoughts and prayers are with her family, especially her infant son, during this difficult time.

May she rest in eternal peace.

The St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group were deeply saddened to hear of the passing on February 22, 2026, of Dr John Ferguson-Smith KStJ, former Hospitaller of the Priory of Scotland of the Order of St John, aged 77 years.

We were also saddened to hear of the passing on May 4, 2025, of Margaret Elaine Stead from the Cray Valley St John Fellowship, aged 84 years.

We thank them both for their service, and may they rest in peace.



Help our vital work by leaving a gift in your Will

One of the most profound ways you can support the work of SJEHG long into the future is to consider leaving a gift to us in your Will. This is a very special way of giving and means that as well as looking after those closest to you, you can achieve some incredible things after you have gone. You don't need to leave a large amount to make a real difference, and we will be hugely grateful.

If you have any questions about leaving a gift in your Will to SJEHG, or making a gift in memory of a loved one, please visit

www.stjohnseyehospital.org/leave-a-gift-in-your-will/



MERCHANDISE

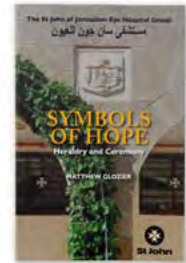
Shop now at www.stjohnseyehospital.org/shop or use the order form on page 26.



SJEHG Silk Tie



Lapel Pin Badge



Symbols of Hope by Matthew Glozier (Paperback)



A Beacon of Hope by Matthew Glozier, Ian Howie-Willis & John Pearn (Paperback)



Mobile Outreach Van Model



Portable Charger



SJEHG Umbrella



Tote Bag (Black)



Tote Bag (Cream)



Flashlight Pen



SJEHG Pen



SJEHG Notebook

MERCHANDISE

Item	Cost Per Unit	Number of	Total (£)
A Beacon of Hope (Paperback)	£36		
Flashlight Pen	£5.50		
Lapel Pin Badge	£5		
Mobile Outreach Van [model]	£10		
Portable Charger	£10		
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