

## **Brief Documented History of St George's Anglican Church, Tunis**

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### **Protestant Graveyard**

A Protestant graveyard came to be established on a plot of land just outside Carthage Gate of the old Medina, Tunis – a plot of land reputedly given by Hammuda Pasha Bey (1631-59) to the British Consul Thomas Campion around 1645.<sup>1</sup> The cemetery remained in use, under the administration of the British consul throughout the eighteenth century and most of the nineteenth. The last official burial took place in 1885. There are 114 tombstones, the oldest dating from 1648 and the latest dating from 1906.<sup>2</sup>

### **St George's Cemetery**

The earliest reference to the cemetery's dedication to St George occurs in 1804 when the consuls of Britain, the United States, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands divided between them the cost of repairing its boundary wall. One interesting tombstone is that of Colonel Sir Thomas Reade, British Consul-General in Tunis for 23 years, who died in 1849. His epitaph records that “nobly employing in the cause of humanity his personal influence with Hamet Pasha Bey, he prevailed upon His Highness to abolish slavery and give freedom to every slave throughout his dominions “ – a freedom that was brought about in 1845. The central stone in the cemetery is dedicated to John Howard Payne, formerly American Consul in Tunisia, celebrated for his poem “Home, sweet home.” The poet's remains were buried in the cemetery in 1852, but the body was exhumed and transported to Washington in 1883 for re-burial there.

### **English Chaplaincy**

The English chaplaincy in Tunis was begun in 1860 by the Rev William Fenner, a missionary working with the Church Mission to the Jews (CMJ). CMJ had begun its work in Tunis in 1833 at the hands of Dr Ferdinand Christian Ewald, a Hebrew Christian, who began a regular Sunday service. Ewald returned, ill, to England in 1841. Rev E.A. Page worked in Tunis 1853 to 1856 when he died of cholera. Rev William Fenner arrived in Tunis in 1860, re-opening a Boys School in 1861 and starting a Girls School 1862. He died of diphtheria in 1874. Rev E.B. Frankel superintended the work in Tunis until his retirement in 1881. It was during his ministry that the first English Church of St Augustine was built. Rev H.C. Riechardt followed Rev Frankel until 1888 when he was followed by Rev C. Frederick W. Flad.

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<sup>1</sup> This constitutes the best-known version concerning the origin of the cemetery that stood on the site of the current St George's Anglican Church in Tunis. Problematically, Campion evidently did not arrive in Tunis until 1655 – he stayed until his death in 1661 (and was buried in the cemetery). The oldest tombstone in the cemetery (that of an English merchant named Samuel Webbe) dates from 1648.

<sup>2</sup> See below, footnote 3.

## **St Augustine's Church**

An Anglican church (iron structure) dedicated to St Augustine was built in 1877 (at a different site in Tunis, on the west side of rue d'Espagne) by the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity amongst the Jews. The land for this church had been donated by the Bey Mohamed Es-Sadok to the British Consul-General in 1874. Prior to this, Anglican worship had taken place in private houses.

## **St Augustine's Church & St George's Cemetery at Tunis**

In the 1880s the municipality instructed Protestants (and Catholics) to use the new municipal cemetery for Europeans outside Bab al-Khadra - so no further burials were made in St George's cemetery from that time.<sup>3</sup>

In March 1891, responsibility for the St George's cemetery and the church of St Augustine (two different sites) was passed to a new committee of St Augustine's church (previously the cemetery had been managed by a committee of the British community in Tunis with some financial assistance from the British government). The new committee consisted of a delegate from the bishop of Gibraltar, the chaplain and a member of the British community. Before taking on responsibility for the management of the cemetery, the committee requested that it first be put into a secure state. The British government made a financial contribution lasting four years. Then, in 1894 (4<sup>th</sup> December) the British consul-general, with the authorisation of the British foreign secretary, appointed three trustees to manage St Augustine's church and St George's cemetery.

... Whereas certain persons hereinafter called the subscribers contributed divers sums of money for the building of an English Church at Tunis, named by them on its completion St Augustine's Church; and whereas the subscribers aforesaid expressly stipulated at a meeting held on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 1877 that the said church so erected by them be maintained and preserved as an English Episcopal Church for the celebration of the Established Church of England and for no other use, object or employment whatsoever ...

*The trustees are given responsibility for St Augustine's Church and for St George's Cemetery and express permission*

... even to sell this said land [*the land on which stands St Augustine's Church*], on condition, however, that in case of such sale the proceeds would be employed for the erection of a stone church in the grounds of St George's Cemetery or elsewhere ...

In accordance with the terms of the trust, the trustees subsequently sold St Augustine's church and its land and used the proceeds plus other donations to build a new church on the site of the cemetery.

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<sup>3</sup> The last burial in St George's cemetery officially took place in 1885, while the first Protestant burial recorded in the new cemetery occurred in 1886. It is possible that two further (illegal) interments were made in St George's cemetery in 1902 (Helene Flad, wife of the Rev Cameron F.W. Flad) and 1906 (Elizabeth Hoss, sister of Helene Flad and sister-in-law of the Rev Cameron F.W. Flad). Rev Flad was largely responsible for selling St Augustine's church and raising the funds necessary for building St George's church, Church House and the school buildings at 4 Place de Poitiers.

## **St George's Anglican Church**

The new Anglican church, dedicated to St George, was built on part of the cemetery site in 1899-1901. The church was built of cut stone and modelled upon the English Church at Patras in the Greek Peloponnese. It consists of chancel, nave, porch and vestry. It possesses a belfry, but has never had a bell. The seating capacity is about 100. It was consecrated by the Bishop of Gibraltar in February 1901 and Rev Cameron Flad was its first Chaplain. The first service held in the new church was a memorial service to Queen Victoria. In 1902 a marble pulpit was erected in the church in memory of three former missionary clergy of CMJ.

In 1924 (15<sup>th</sup> April) a new deed of trust was drawn up because the 1894 trust deed contained no provision for the replacement of trustees and all original trustees had either died or left Tunis. The drawing up of this new trust deed was initiated by the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on behalf of the British Government "as owner of the said Anglican Church and Cemetery of St George". New trustees were appointed and the British consul-General in Tunisia

... do hereby grant possession of the said Church and Cemetery of St George to the said Trustees to hold for His Britannic Majesty King George V, his heirs and successors nevertheless upon trust to be administered to the best of their ability and in order that the said St George's Church shall be used, maintained and preserved as an Anglican Episcopal Church for the celebration of the services and ceremonies of the Established Church of England and for no other use, object or employment whatsoever, and in order that the said cemetery and the monuments therein shall be maintained and preserved in manner befitting their historical interest and for no other use, object or employment whatsoever.

Provision was made in this deed of trust for the appointment of replacement trustees.

## **Charity Registration of St George's Church and Cemetery**

In 1967 (6<sup>th</sup> December) the St George's Church and Cemetery Trust was registered with the British Charities Commission (registration 254418):

St George's Church shall be used, maintained and preserved as an Anglican Episcopal Church for the celebration of the services and ceremonies of the Established Church of England and for no other use, object or employment whatsoever, and in order that the said cemetery and the monuments therein shall be maintained and preserved in manner befitting their historical interest and for no other use, object or employment whatsoever.

## **New Trust Deed**

In 1971 (3<sup>rd</sup> June) a new trust deed was ordered to be made by the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. This new trust deed revoked the Deed of Trust of April 1924 (describing it as "in the nature of a licence for the user of these properties") and replaced it, establishing three *ex officio* trustees plus permission for more to be appointed by those *ex officio* trustees:

Possession of the said St George's Church and Cemetery is hereby granted to the Trustees for the time being of the Trust to hold for her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II,

her heirs and successors upon trust to be administered to the best of their ability and in order particularly that the said St George's Church shall be used, maintained and preserved for the celebration of the services and ceremonies of the Established Church of England, Episcopal Church of the United States or such other services and ceremonies of the Christian religion as the Trustees may in their discretion authorise.

### **Formation of the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East**

In 1976 (6<sup>th</sup> January), the Archbishop of Canterbury – Frederick Donald – recognised the Central Synod of the Episcopal Church in the Middle East, under its approved Constitution, as replacing him in spiritual and episcopal jurisdiction in the Archbishopric of Jerusalem:

We have agreed to relinquish Our Metropolitan Jurisdiction over the said Archbishopric in Jerusalem to the intent that the Central Synod of the Episcopal Church in the Middle East shall exercise the said jurisdiction hitherto possessed by us.

The Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa is one of the four constituent dioceses making up the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. Donald's relinquishing of jurisdiction transferred oversight of governance and worship in the churches within the dioceses making up the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East to the Central Synod of that province.

In 2006 (23<sup>rd</sup> May) a document of declaration and certification was issued by the legal advisor to the Archbishop of Canterbury clarifying from his own knowledge and from records in his possession the status of the Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa, an intrinsic part of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East:

The Right Reverend Mouneer Hanna Anis is the Bishop of the Diocese, and as such he represents the Diocese and all the Episcopal or Anglican churches under his jurisdiction before the governments of the countries of this region. These churches include churches in Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Djibouti according to the list attached...

Property and church buildings belonging to the Episcopal or Anglican Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa are administered by the said Diocese which is legally responsible for such properties before the legal authorities in each country.

The document from Archbishop Rowan's legal advisor was notarized by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the British government (28<sup>th</sup> July, 2006). St George's, Tunis is listed in the schedule as one of the churches of the Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa.

Sources:

*Church of England Newspaper* for March 30, 1961

*CMJ Quarterly* for April to June 1971

*North of the Sahara* CMJ Publication, n.d.

*An Expatriate Community in Tunis 1648-1885* Denys Pringle, BAR International Series 1811, 2008.

*Les Monuments et la Mémoire* Pierre Soumille & Jean Peyras, Centre de Recherches Littéraires et Historiques de l'Université de La Réunion, No.8, Editions L'Harmattan, Paris, 1993.

Chaplains/Ministers of St George's Anglican Church, Tunis

|            |                               |
|------------|-------------------------------|
| 1901-1914  | Rev Cameron Frederick W. Flad |
| 1914-1933  | Rev H.C. Burrough             |
| 1933-1936  | Rev L.F. Rice                 |
| 1936-1938  | Rev F. Le N. Bower            |
| 1938-1956  | Ven Isaac Dunbar              |
| 1960-1967  | Rev Ron W. Oswald             |
| 1968-1969  | Ven Isaac Dunbar              |
| 1970-1971  | Rev Basil Pitt                |
| 1972-1978  | Rev Derek Eaton               |
| 1979-1982  | Rev Russell Avery             |
| 1982-1986  | Rev Dan Sealy                 |
| 1987-1991  | Rev Patrick Blair             |
| 1991-1992  | Rev Ian Watts                 |
| 1993-1995  | Rev Paul Chandler             |
| 1996-      | Rev David Grigor              |
| 1997?-1998 | Rev Howard Morton             |
| 1999-2000  | Rev Geoff Holt                |
| 2000-2007  | Rev Gerald Brulotte           |
| 2008-      | Rt Rev Dr Bill Musk           |