

LONDON KNIGHT

The knight and his round table, above from left: Anthony Bailey, British delegate of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George; Tony and Cherie Blair at the funeral of Pope John Paul II; the Grand Prefect of the Order of Saint George, the Duke of Calabria, with his wife, the Duchess

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GHIT LIFE

Secret Catholic orders don't just operate in novels. **William Cash** meets a man transforming an ancient sect – and making enemies in the process

There is a secretive religious order at work in London. Its reach spreads to the very highest echelons of society: the heart of New Labour, the British Royal Family and the Vatican are all under its influence. But a new, young, charismatic leader is causing ripples of discontent through the ranks of this ancient order and now powerful enemies seek to damage his good name.

It might sound like something created by the fertile mind of *The Da Vinci Code* author Dan Brown, but the difference is, this story is true.

The Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George is an ancient chivalric Catholic order, whose headquarters are in Rome; or in Madrid, according to which royal duke one believes to be the rightful heir to the long-extinct Kingdom of Two Sicilies.

Bizarre as it may sound, at the centre of this royal dispute is the 35-year-old son of an engineer who was brought up in Ruislip, Middlesex. Since he was made British and Irish delegate of the order in June 2003, he has turned what was once a tweedy group of several dozen Catholic aristocrats – Princess Michael of Kent has been a member since 1996 – into a powerful club of nearly 200 members of all ages. Many of the recent additions, awarded the Royal Order of Francis I for services to industry, science and the arts, aren't even Catholic. These include Baroness Thatcher, the Duke of Westminster, Lord Lamont and the enigmatic Islamic art collector Professor Nasser David Khalili, one of Britain's

richest men, who proudly wears his order on a turquoise silk ribbon at official functions.

All members are encouraged to donate to the order's spiritual and charitable works. According to *The Constantinian Chronicle*, British and Irish members donated £512,445 in 2003/4. The money went to Westminster Cathedral, the All Party Pro-Life Group, the Vatican and Tyburn Convent among others.

Anthony Bailey is the man responsible for this rejuvenation. He hosts starry soirees for the order, such as a candlelit dinner in February in the Gladstone Library, Whitehall. 'One hundred and forty knights, dames and guests of the Constantinians were there to meet the Cardinal Archbishop of Washington, the head of the order in the US,' he explains.

The dinner took place in secrecy, unannounced but for the rows of Bentleys double-parked outside. The guests included the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Paul Murphy; Princess Katarina of Yugoslavia; and Lord Nicholas Windsor, son of the Duke and Duchess of Kent. The host wore a Savile Row dinner jacket festooned with knightly decorations.

In addition to his knightly duties, Bailey runs Eligo International, a successful international diplomacy company he launched in 1997. Eligo (the name means 'I nominate' in Latin and was suggested to Bailey because his friend, the late Pope John Paul II, called Bailey 'the Eligo Man') advises governments and diplomatic clients on lobbying, media relations, economics, tourism and crisis management. Clients have come from countries including Peru, Bulgaria, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Yemen, Bahrain, Portugal, Mongolia, Slovenia, Egypt, Panama, Costa Rica, Andorra, Tunisia, the Philippines, Chile, Malawi, Mauritania, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Morocco.

'I also have a weakness for helping the causes of extant or exiled royal kings,' admits Bailey, as well as arranging state and official visits across the world, particularly for Arab, South American and Eastern bloc statesmen and presidents. He has worked for the exiled kings of Greece and Romania and for the Ethiopian and Portuguese royal families. He is also particularly close to Prince Khalid Al-Faisal of Saudi Arabia and helped organise 'essential elements' of Prince Charles's visit to Saudi Arabia in 2001. Other official visits that Bailey has had a hand in organising include that of Prince Michael of Kent to New York and Peru in 1994, the return to Greece of King Constantine II in 1993, and the official

visit to Mongolia of the Duke of Kent in 2002.

Through this work, Bailey has amassed a considerable fortune. Money also comes from art deals, property and private consulting. He chaired *Painting & Patronage*, two exhibitions of the paintings of the Prince of Wales and Bailey's client Prince Khalid Al-Faisal of Saudi Arabia. His fee for this was over £1 million.

He has three homes: a property in Ireland, a €2 million 18th-century villa in Sintra, Portugal, and a £2 million embassy-style apartment in Lancaster Gate, where he holds intimate dinner parties for some of the wealthiest and most influential people in the world. The most recent of these was for his great friend, the Prime Minister (and former King) of Bulgaria, at which guests included the Duke of Kent, Crown Prince Pavlos of Greece, and the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor.

Bailey always flies private or first class. 'Some of the Arab states are very nice because they have double beds on their planes,' he says. He favours navy blue Savile Row suits and is a member of Annabel's, Travellers and Soho House. A short perusal of the signed photos in his high-ceilinged drawing room – the former ballroom of the residence of the governor of the Bank of England – reveals a

circle of acquaintances including Tony Blair, Prince Charles, Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev, King Juan Carlos of Spain and, incongruously, American astronaut Buzz Aldrin.

It is no surprise, then, that Bailey and those closest to him were shocked when a harmful story was leaked to *The Sunday Times* in March. In this it was claimed that a £500,000 donation Bailey had made to the cash-strapped Labour Party had been rejected. The donation was allegedly refused after Bailey and Eligo International were investigated by Labour officials who thought he might be acting as a conduit for foreign donations, and might use the leverage he would then have in the government to influence policy in the interests of these unnamed foreigners.

'The story is not true,' insists Bailey. Not only has he got the requisite private funds to make a donation of his own, he assures me, but he also possesses a hand-written letter from Tony Blair which claims that the Labour Party was not behind the alleged leak, and goes on to express his Prime Ministerial fury at 'a very derogatory article'. 'I can't comment on this matter at the moment,' Bailey says, 'other than to say that writs have been issued and I am expecting a full apology.'

The letter from Blair is testament to Bailey's

At the centre of this royal dispute is the son of an engineer brought up in Ruislip



The social climber, from far left: Bailey donated £500,000 to the Labour Party but *The Sunday Times* reported it had been rejected; Prince Charles with Prince Khalid Al-Faisal of Saudi Arabia at the *Painting & Patronage* exhibition Bailey organised in 2001; Queen Sofia and King Juan Carlos of Spain are friends of Bailey. Centre: procession of cardinals at the inauguration of Pope Benedict XVI

extraordinary networking skills - although perhaps it was these same skills that led to the slander campaign.

For Anthony Bailey is certainly not without his detractors. One of his greatest enemies is a big force in Labour Party fundraising. In London society, there are those who claim his work and life smack of insecurity and self-promotion. So large is his chest of various medals, royal and presidential gifts and honorific titles, including his papal knighthood, that he has a large Louis XIV cabinet in his hallway devoted to exhibiting them.

Bailey doesn't come from High Catholic aristocracy or the world of international affairs - which may be why some find it so easy to look down on him. He attended the Douay Martyrs School. His father is a retired engineer and director of Nestlé, and his Irish mother comes from a family teeming with nuns, priests and mothers superior.

His first jobs included working in a pizza parlour, selling electrical appliances and selling suits in Simpsons of Piccadilly. He has two older brothers, Paul, 41, a London banker, Mark, 39, an engineer in New Zealand, and an adopted 32-year-old sister, Suzanne, who is a dental technician in Ireland.

He embarked upon his unique career aged 13 when he wrote to President Gorbachev to tell him what a great job he was doing with Glasnost.

Bailey also wrote to Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. 'Since I was very young I have been absolutely passionate about anything foreign, quirky and different,' he explains.

His first proper foray into foreign affairs came when he was studying East European Studies at the University of London in the late Eighties, and invited King Michael of Romania to address the Communist-leaning LSE. 'It was a big coup,' he says. 'King Michael was the last living Second World War head of state from Central and Eastern Europe. He had not given an interview since 1947. I think he managed to turn around a very left-wing university to recognise that exiled or deposed royal houses can still have a role to play today in their countries.' Following this success, he invited King Simeon II of Bulgaria to speak, and the two became friends.

After graduating, Bailey started working for the international public relations firm Burson-Marsteller. It was while working for this company on the late Pope's visit to his homeland that he met John Paul II. He subsequently met with the late Pontiff on 12 other occasions, including a breakfast audience at the Vatican and the wedding of the Pope's goddaughter, Stefania Kluger, in 1997 at the papal summer palace of Castel Gandolfo outside Rome. Bailey even

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managed to organise for the late Pope to receive his terminally ill mother after she had been diagnosed with a rare cancer. 'I don't know if he worked a miracle, but she is very much alive and well to this day,' says Bailey.

Precisely how far Bailey has come up in the world was made apparent to his mother - who has fostered abused children for more than 40 years - when she was invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace in 2000 on account of her work for children. When Prince Charles saw Bailey he pointed his umbrella at him and greeted him like an old friend. 'My mother almost passed out and has not stopped talking about it since,' says Bailey. 'My family don't understand what I do.'

But although he was brought up a Tory, and is a big fan of Baroness Thatcher, Bailey is pro-Europe, and has already raised £8 million for the government's City Academies Initiative as a member of the ministerial task force. He believes he could be extremely valuable to New Labour because of his links with Britain's wealthiest Arab, Muslim and Catholic leaders.

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Model illustrated Saab 9.3 Aero - on the road

'The Labour Party has very few sizeable donations from these groups,' says Bailey. 'I could change that overnight.'

But he is fighting on two fronts. First against the New Labour hierarchy and second against others within Catholic knightly orders. The inter-faith links and modernising changes that Bailey has brought into the British ranks of the Constantinian Order have caused swords to be drawn within the fiercely protective ranks of the Catholic knightly orders.

On the order's website, the Grand Master of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George is His Royal Highness Prince Ferdinando of Bourbon Two Sicilies, Duke of Castro, a heavyweight on the Euro-royal circuit. Where it gets tricky is that on a similar-looking Constantinian order website, the Grand Master is listed as HRH the Infante Carlos, head of the rival Sacred Constantinian Order, based in Madrid.

This rival Constantinian order is headed up in Britain by the Rolling Stones' business manager, Prince Rupert zu Loewenstein. After the Duke of Norfolk, as head of the Knights of Malta he is probably the most important lay Catholic in Britain. Just as there are two rival claimants to the dukedom of Calabria, so there are two Constantinian orders, both claiming to be legitimate and with very different members. Since Bailey has raised the profile of his Constantinian order in London, a knightly feud has resulted. Bailey says that the Madrid-based order does not have its own Vatican-appointed Ecclesiastical Counsellor as his does. And it has

far fewer British members. Those in Prince Loewenstein's camp, notably the royal genealogist Guy Stair Sainty, say that the dispute over the rightful head of the Two Sicilies house was settled in 1983 when the King of Spain found in favour of the Infante. The Italians, naturally, disagree. Sainty says the Vatican 'takes no formal position' on the matter.

But Bailey, who has risen so high from such humble beginnings, refuses to be cowed by his enemies. His next great task is to find himself the perfect diplomatic wife. His girlfriends over the years have included a three-year spell with a French countess, Isabelle de la Moussaye, a year and a half with a London-based barrister, and a year with a Portobello herbalist.

'I tend to only go out with girls recommended by close friends,' says Bailey. 'They have to be flexible, because at short notice I may have to jump on a plane to Qatar. But I'm very good at making it up, especially with trips to Sintra - which is one of the few places I know where mobile phones don't work. I do need to find someone to settle down with and have a family. But finding someone who can cope with the life I lead, and be as comfortable in a royal palace as in a homeless shelter, is not easy.'

But it would be far easier than negotiating the minefield of knights which is currently Bailey's greatest challenge.

Bailey's Roman empire, right: Bulgarian Prime Minister (and former King) Simeon Saxe-Coburg and Pope John Paul II; Prince Pavlos and Marie-Chantal of Greece; Princess Michael of Kent

