

# ***St John History***

## ***PROCEEDINGS OF THE ST JOHN AMBULANCE AUSTRALIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2003-2004***

ISSN 1445-7490

Volume No. 3, May 2004



*The St John Ambulance  
Australia Historical Society*



*Established 22 June, 2001.*



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Australia Historical Society



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### Proceedings of the St John Ambulance Australia Historical Society 2003–04

ISSN 1445-7490  
Volume 3, April 2004

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## **St John History — an introduction to the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition**



This is the third edition of the *Proceedings of the St John Ambulance Australia Historical Society*. From this edition on those nine words will be the subtitle in the name of this journal. The main title is now **St John History**. The change reflects our management committee's wish to give the journal a shorter, three-word main title.

*St John History* is the Society's principal publication. It appears annually and aims to cover the Society's important developments and events. In addition it publishes papers delivered to the Society's annual history seminars, as well as other items of historical interest.

This edition of *St John History* contains the Society's second annual report, for 2002–03, and the papers delivered to the Society's 2003 history seminar in Hobart. In addition this edition publishes reports on the library, archival and museum collections of those States/Territories that have established repositories for items of heritage value.

The Historical Society's management committee trusts that you the Society's members will find much of interest in this edition of your journal.

### **Distribution of St John History**

*St John History* is distributed free to financial members of the Society. Non-members and unfinancial members may obtain copies from the Society's Publications Officer; Or by ordering a copy (or backcopy) from our Web Site [www.stjohnambulanceaustralia.org](http://www.stjohnambulanceaustralia.org). The price could vary, and will be adjusted to the cost of production and postage in any one year.

### **Newsletter, Pro Utilitate**

*Pro Utilitate*, the newsletter of the Historical Society, appears twice annually and is distributed free to all the Society's financial members. The first edition appeared in October 2003 and the next is due out in April 2004. The newsletter borrows its name from the second of the ancient Latin mottoes of the Order of St John — *Pro utilitate hominum* ("for the service of mankind").

We thank our Publications Officer, Cheryl Langdon-Orr, for the newsletter. Its publication is made possible through her personal generosity in making available the necessary resources for its production and distribution through her company, Hovtek Pty Ltd. It also relies on her skills in graphic design and desktop publishing. The Society thanks Ms Langdon-Orr for having made a reality of the newsletter, which had previously remained but a fond hope.

### **Membership renewals, new memberships and subscriptions**

Apart from donations, the Historical Society depends entirely upon membership subscriptions for its funds.

Renewals (included with your copy of *St John History*) of membership and new memberships are therefore very important to the Society in surviving from one year to another. The Society's management committee therefore urges all current members to renew their membership for the next financial year and, if possible, to sign up one new member each. (an application form has been included with your copy of *St John History*).

In addition, New Member Application forms will soon be available electronically at the Society's Website, [www.stjohnambulanceaustralia.org](http://www.stjohnambulanceaustralia.org).

Rising costs have at last forced the management committee to raise the subscription to \$10 for members in Australia and to £10 for members in the UK. In 2003 production and distribution of this journal cost consumed about \$4.80 of every \$5 subscription, leaving little for producing the newsletter, conducting the history seminars and meeting other expenses. We have been able to meet all our obligations mainly through the generosity of donors, but could only continue doing so by increasing the membership subscriptions.



## Purpose of the Historical Society

The Historical Society's "Purposes and Objects", are spelt out in its constitution. There are 11 of these. They require the Society to:

- 1) *promote and encourage the discussion, study, research and writing of the history of St John Ambulance Australia and the Order of St John;*
- 2) *perform an educational function by enhancing and disseminating knowledge of St John history among people affiliated with St John Ambulance Australia and the wider general public;*
- 3) *complement and support the work of the parallel State/Territory St John Ambulance history and heritage societies and encourage their formation;*
- 4) *encourage and assist people undertaking research into aspects of St John history;*
- 5) *support the activities of St John Ambulance Australia with the provision of appropriate historical materials, information and advice when appropriate;*
- 6) *seek the support of St John management at national, State/Territory, regional and local levels to place high value on heritage matters, particularly in relation to library, archives and museum repositories; and, by so doing, promote interest in and knowledge of St John*
- 7) *encourage the development of a systematic approach to the preservation, cataloguing and display of items of St John heritage value;*
- 8) *work effectively to conserve the historical record as it relates to St John in appropriate archival and museological 'keeping places';*
- 9) *provide a national forum for the reporting and discussion of research into St John history, such forum taking various appropriate forms such as the regular meetings during Priory conferences, other meetings, seminars and symposia, and newsletters and/or journals;*
- 10) *raise awareness of St John history by fostering an enhanced appreciation of the St John heritage among members of the various branches of St John Ambulance Australia and the Order and the general public;*
- 11) *liaise productively with other St John Ambulance and Order of St John history groups beyond Australia, for example the St John Historical Society in the United Kingdom, and with overseas St John historians.*

## Annual Report 2002-03



***Dr Brian Fotheringham, the Historical Society's President, tabled his second annual report at the Historical Society's second annual general meeting in Hobart on Wednesday 18 June 2003. His report was as follows:***

*"In three days time our Society will be precisely two years old. Details of the background to our conception, gestation and birth can be found in the first Annual Report and I will not repeat them here. I will however just remind you of the reasons for our existence, and will comment briefly on each one."*

*1. To promote the study, research and the writing of the history of St John Ambulance Australia and the Order of St John.*

**Comment:** A year ago tomorrow marks the first anniversary of the launching of Ian Howie-Willis's book *The Zambuks*. Ian himself acknowledges that "hundreds of people" played a part in its making. Many contributed a few paragraphs of their own experiences in St John. Thus our Society's secretary, if I may take his work as a great example, has induced many St John members to put pen to paper in accordance with this first aim. Your help in promoting the sales of this book will be greatly appreciated.

*2. To provide a national forum for the reporting and discussion of research into St John history.*

**Comment:** Those of you who attended our first seminar a year ago will remember the high standard of the papers presented there. Again this year we look forward to very interesting contributions from a variety of St John personnel, and over an extraordinary range of topics. I extend, in advance, a special note of appreciation to Wendy Scurr for agreeing to speak at our seminar today. I am sure today's seminar will fulfill this second aim.



*3. To raise awareness of St John history and to foster an enhanced appreciation of St John heritage among members of the Order and of the various branches of St John Ambulance in Australia.*

**Comment:** Many of you will have received the latest Annual Report of St John Ambulance Australia, i.e., the one for the year ending 31 December 2002. In it you will find a whole page. (page 18) devoted to this Historical Society. Again we have Ian Howie-Willis to thank for this, and it surely must help raise the awareness mentioned in our third aim.

A number of our members have given special assistance to our Society in the past year and have today received certificates as a token of our sincere thanks.

Life Membership: Cheryl Langdon-Orr

Certificates of Appreciation: Charles Campbell, Mark Compton, Ruth Donaldson, Len Fiori, Ian Kaye-Eddie, Edith Khangure, Willis Marshall, Kevin Young.

*4. To encourage and assist the many people undertaking research into aspects of St John history.*

**Comment:** I'm not sure just how we have advanced in this area, except to say our membership numbers are greater than some of us expected at this stage in our development. Also members will have received the excellent 49-page document, *Proceedings for 2001-2002*, and it may well have encouraged and assisted a number of its readers.

*5. To encourage St John management at national, state/territory, regional and local levels to place high values on heritage matters, particularly in relation to library, archives and museum repositories, and to work effectively to conserve the historical record.*

**Comment:** As you will hear later in this meeting, at least one State Council has quite definitely put resources towards enhancing the storage, promotion and display of St John memorabilia. We are fortunate to have the Chancellor, Professor Willis Marshall, as our Patron and I thank him for his support. I acknowledge too the support our Society has had from the Priory Secretary, Len Fiori, and the staff of the Priory Headquarters in Canberra.

*6. To liaise productively with other St John history groups, for example with those already formed in Australia, with overseas St John Historical Societies, and with St John historians beyond Australia.*

**Comment:** Beth Dawson from Queensland must have read recently a small article about the South Australian St John Historical Society, for she kindly and promptly provided the material the South Australians were seeking. That is an interstate example of liaison. Terry Walton, who is here today, is our first overseas member, and as you have just heard, has brought with him greetings from the United Kingdom. We also have one New Zealand member, and so the Society is beginning to achieve this last aim.

In short, our Society appears to be making progress towards all its aims at its early stage and I thank you all for your support.

I thank James Byrne, our Treasurer. His report will show that we are in a satisfactory financial position, although we must consider raising the membership subscription from its present level of \$5 if we are to provide members with all the circulars, newsletters and printed Proceedings we would wish.

As you may know, I have had the privilege of being the Priory Librarian over the last several years. I have been delighted to see the transformation from the relatively arcane and quite small Library Committee to the present vibrant and much more widely influential national Historical Society. The position of Priory Librarian has been divorced from the familiar triennial appointments of other Priory Officer positions, and my term as Priory Librarian will now finish at the end of this calendar year. I think there are advantages in having the Priory Librarian as President of this Society, and will discuss the situation with whoever is chosen as Librarian for 2004 and beyond.

I thank all members of our committee, both elected and co-opted, and on behalf of all the members of the Society, particularly thank our Secretary, Ian Howie-Willis (ably assisted in the background by his wife Margaret) for his continuing hard work and enthusiasm in promoting this Society and its aims.

That concludes the report, and I have pleasure in moving that this meeting receive it.

**Brian Fotheringham (President)**



## Address to Chapter

*The Historical Society's President, Dr Brian Fotheringham, delivered the following speech as retiring Priory Librarian to the Chapter meeting of the Australian Priory of the Order of St John in Hobart on Saturday 21 June 2003.*

Chancellor, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Today is precisely the second birthday of the St John Ambulance Australia Historical Society. Those of you who have attended Priory meetings for a number of years will recall that the previous Priory Library Committee was disbanded on the recommendation of the Priory Structure Review Committee. The last Priory Library Committee meeting was held in Melbourne in June 1998. The Library Committee had been in existence for 58 years, since the formation of the Order's Commandery of Australia (Exclusive of Western Australia), i.e., some five years before the advent of the Priory of Australia.

Then followed a series of informal meetings of persons interested in the history of St John Ambulance, and from these meetings the Historical Society emerged.

The Library Committee involved very few people and its meetings were rather arcane in nature. "Arcane" is a word that librarians like to use. Its meaning remains secret. The present Historical Society has a membership of some 150 and its meetings are open to a cross-section of interested individuals. In a sense this illustrates in a tiny way the challenge and change, change and challenge theme of that excellent presentation given by our Chancellor a few days ago.

We had a good attendance at our meeting on Wednesday morning, but a modest attendance in the afternoon. We urge Priory Conference organisers to further consider reducing clashes in meeting times. Perhaps a historical segment could be built into one of the seminars.

We know St John Ambulance should look forward, but members of our Society believe it helps in going forward to know where you have been.

On behalf of the Society's committee and membership I thank you, Chancellor, for your support as Patron of our Society. We thank also Mr. Len Fiori and his staff in Canberra. It is through Len's good offices that there is a page (page 18) in the Annual Report devoted to the Historical Society. As stated before, things change, so that the contact details given for me are now out of date. Those for our hard working secretary, Dr. Ian Howie-Willis, are correct, and I urge you to contact him for membership or renewal of membership.

This my last report to Chapter as Priory Librarian. I wish to thank you all for your help to me over the years, and wish you, and St John Ambulance Australia, every success in the future.

**Brian Fotheringham (Priory Librarian)**

## Second annual general meeting — Minutes

*The following are the draft minutes of the Historical Society's second annual general meeting, held in Hobart on Wednesday 18 June 2003.*

1. **Opening:** the President, Brian Fotheringham, declared the meeting open at 10.30 a.m.
2. **Attendance:** 25 people signed the attendance register; however, various other people were present at different stages of the meeting and the History Seminar that followed.
3. **Apologies** were received from: Margaret Boulter, Alan Bromwich, Averil Chadwick, Vera Crook, Keith & Lynne Dansie, Ann & Norman Demaine, Vlas Efstathis, Nola Fairhurst, Trevor Gibson, Reg Graham, Pat McQuillen, Paul Meyers, Loredana Napoli, Dot Price, Doug Raby, Raelene & Ray Schilling, John Springhall, Michael Tyquin, Margaret Wilkinson, Gordon Young and Kevin Young.
4. **Welcome:** The President welcomed the 30 people present at the opening of the meeting. The apologies were noted. The President then read a letter from Kevin Young expressing his regret at being unable to attend and conveying his best wishes for a successful meeting.
5. **Presentation of letters of greeting:** The President welcomed to the meeting Terry Walton, a representative of the St John Historical Society at St John's Gate in the UK. He advised the meeting that Mr Walton had recently accepted a position on the management committee of the St John Ambulance Australia Historical Society as a co-opted member representing the UK. In reply, Mr Walton expressed his pleasure at being able to be present. He explained his involvement with the UK society and then read and presented letters of greeting from the following office-holders of the UK society:



I Dr E. Colin Dawson K.St.J. of Orpington, Kent, the founder of the St John Historical Society



*The President*

*The St John Ambulance Australia Historical Society*

*It gave me great pleasure this year when I heard from Edith Khangure in Perth that Australia now has its own St John Historical Society.*

*I send you my personal good wishes as well as good wishes from the Society in the United Kingdom which celebrates its twenty first birthday this year.*

*It is my regret that I am unable to be present at your meeting in 2003, but maybe I can time a visit to my brother in Perth to coincide with one of your meetings in the future.*

*Wherever the Order of St John exists its history should be explained and I have received great pleasure in learning about the Order's history from its birth during the Crusades.*

*The part that I find most interesting is the period in which the Order was re-formed in England in 1831, followed by its rapid development in the latter part of the 19th Century with the formation of St.John Ambulance Brigade.*

*You too have a wonderful history of the Order in Australia and its development to the high standards that you have achieved today.*

*I wish you all well, enjoy your history and enjoy some of ours as well !*

*My very best wishes to all your members,*

*Colin Dawson, KStJ, JP, MB, BS*

*Founder, St.John Historical Society, United Kingdom*

*20 May, 2003.*

II Ms Pamela Willis, Curator of the Library and Museum of the Order of St John, St John's Gate, Clerkenwell, London.

*LIBRARY & IMUSEUM OF THE ORDER OF ST JOHN*

*St John's Gate, Clerkenwe3l, London, EC IM 4DA*

*Tel: 0207 324 4070 Fax: 0207 336 0587*

*Email: [museum@nhq.sja.org.uk](mailto:museum@nhq.sja.org.uk)*

*Website: [www.sja.org.uk/history](http://www.sja.org.uk/history)*

*Greetings from the Museum, St John's Gate. We've been delighted to hear of all your developments and look forward to working with you all.*

*We have a range of publications available. If you'd like to know our current list, please email the museum. The old buildings are still standing — just. It's St John's Gate's 500<sup>th</sup> birthday next year — a York stone floor for the crypt, courtesy of the American Priory and a new church roof to replace the one put up after World War II. And a warm welcome to any members visiting London.*

*Best wishes,*

*Pamela Willis*

*Curator.*



6. **Presentation of Life Membership Certificate:** The President presented Ms Cheryl Langdon-Orr with the Historical Society's second Life Membership Certificate in acknowledgment of her great generosity as a benefactor to the Society. He thanked her and then announced that she had volunteered to take on two positions in the Society, first as membership secretary and second as publications officer. He called on the meeting to express its appreciation of Ms Langdon-Orr's services to the Society.
7. **Presentation of Certificates of Appreciation:** The President presented Certificates of Appreciation of the Historical Society to Professor Willis Marshall Patron), Mr Len Fiori (Priory Secretary), Ms Therese Reilly (auditor) and Mr Charles Campbell, Mr Mark Compton, Mrs Ruth Donaldson, Mr Ian Kaye-Eddie, Dr Edith Khangure and Mr Kevin Young (benefactors). He thanked them for their support of the Society then asked the meeting to express its appreciation of their efforts.
8. **Annual Report:** The President presented the second annual report of the Historical Society, which had been printed and distributed in advance. In speaking to the report he observed that in three days the Society would be two years old. He then enumerated the six main reasons for its existence and commented on the way each of the six purposes of the Society was being fulfilled. He advised the meeting that his term as Priory Librarian would finish at the end of the present calendar year, and that he would discuss with his successor the advantages for the Society in the new Priory Librarian also being the Society's President. He expressed his great pleasure at having witnessed what he described as "the transformation from the relatively arcane and quite small [former] Library Committee [of the Priory] into the present vibrant and much more widely influential national Historical Society". He concluded his report by thanking the members of the Society's management committee, elected and co-opted alike, then moved the adoption of the report. His motion was seconded by Dr Khangure. The motion was approved unanimously.
9. **Treasurer's Report:** The Treasurer, Mr James Byrne, presented the second financial report of the Historical Society, which had been printed and distributed in advance. Mr Byrne's report indicated that total income for the period from 31 May 2002 to 2 June 2002 had been \$4,045.35; total expenditure had been \$1,202.49; and the balance of income over expenditure had been \$2,842.86. Mr Byrne advised the meeting that the Society's financial records had been voluntarily audited by Ms Therese Reilly, National Manager of Finance and Personnel for St John Ambulance Australia, who had certified his statement of income and expenditure as correct. He thanked her for her assistance to the Society then thanked the donors for their generosity in contributing \$1,685 to the Society's income over the year. In referring to donations he mentioned that they had provided almost three times the revenue coming from membership subscriptions. As membership subscriptions were \$5.00 per annum, nearly all of which (\$4.81) went to producing the Society's main publication, its *Proceedings*, he suggested that the management committee should reconsider the level of the subscription. He then moved that his report be adopted. Mr Mervyn Goodall seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously. The President concluded this agenda item by thanking the Treasurer for his contribution to the meeting.
10. **Election of Office Bearers:** The President called upon the Secretary, Dr Ian Howie-Willis, to advise the meeting whether or not any nominations had been received and whether or not an election would be necessary. The Secretary said that the positions of President, Secretary and Treasurer had been filled by election at the last annual general meeting, as had the five positions for elective Committee Members (by Messrs John Blackstock and Alan Bromwich, Ms Beth Dawson, Dr Edith Khangure and Mrs Betty Stirton). No election would be necessary because according to the Society's constitution the people elected then could retain office for up to three years. He therefore suggested that the meeting endorse the present elective office holders and co-opted committee members for another year. On the motion of Mr Blackstock, seconded by Mrs Stirton, the meeting then indicated its agreement to the present management committee continuing for another year.
11. **Endorsement of Membership Secretary and Publications Officer:** The President advised the meeting that, as already mentioned, Ms Cheryl Langdon-Orr had offered to take on the responsibilities of Membership Secretary and Publications Officer. He pointed out that the Society had much to gain from her expertise in electronic communications, information technology and desk-top publishing. He also said that one of her projects as Publications Officer would be to assist in the production and distribution of a newsletter for the general membership twice annually. He then asked the meeting to endorse her appointment to the two positions. Her appointment was approved by acclamation. The President thanked the meeting for this decision. He also thanked and congratulated Ms Langdon-Orr.
12. **Reports from States & Territories:** The President called on representatives of the various States and Territories to provide the meeting with written and/or oral reports on the work being done on St John heritage matters in their respective jurisdictions. The following members then spoke on behalf of their States/Territories:
  - New South Wales — Mrs Betty Stirton
  - Victoria — Mr John Blackstock
  - Queensland — Ms Beth Dawson
  - South Australia — Dr Brian Fotheringham
  - Western Australia — Dr Edith Khangure

At the conclusion of the reports the President advised the meeting that each report would be published in the next edition of the Society's *Proceedings*. He then thanked those who had presented the reports for the thoroughness of their presentations.



## REPORTS FROM STATES/TERRITORIES

The following reports from States/Territories were presented to the Historical Society's second annual general meeting in Hobart on Wednesday 18 June 2003.

### New South Wales — Archives

What do Archivists say when asked "what do you do?" In New South Wales we are tempted to say, "Look at us, we build bridges and walls". Why? Because as archivists we are responsible for making sure:-



- A. people today can **reconstruct** yesterday
- B. people tomorrow can **reconstruct** today
- C. archives are **physically preserved and made available**

Mrs Betty Stirton , Presenting the  
NSW Report on Archives, Hobart, June 18th , 2003.

Last year was a very important year for the operations Branch in Australia and in particular to New South Wales when we celebrated 100 years since the formation of the Glebe Division. St John has a rich and interesting history and we were able to **reconstruct** the history of the Glebe Division because we had the records in our archive. Such a simple statement – **we had the records**. Dr Ian Howie-Willis reported in the *Proceedings 2001-2002* his difficulty in gaining some 50 years of history in one State as reports and minutes were missing. Pat McQuillan from Alice Springs reported she had visited her local library and read the local newspapers on microfilm to gain information about St John in Alice Springs.

For us to gain the records and photographs of Glebe Division we made a number of visits to the Division and gave talks, showed overheads and photographs and like Oliver Twist "**asked for more**". Before we left, the Officers always managed to find more boxes of information for us! The Division gave us their photographs and we had them copied at the State Library of New South Wales. The Division holds the copies and archives holds and preserves the originals. Glebe has its own headquarters and very little information had been discarded over the years.

In New South Wales we encourage all branches to have all records forwarded to archives, when there is a change of meeting place, a closure or insufficient use or space. We suggest the archive decides on the value of the records and for groups not to dispose of any items they think are not of historical value. Archivists, Historians and Librarians prefer to have the records sent to them prior to disposal:

*One Division has been functioning for many years and the boxes had been stored at the back of the building. Imagine our surprise when the contents of one box had been demolished by mice. There was no evidence of the mice having left the box, so it was a quick trip to purchase mouse food, to release the box and place the carton in the outdoor area at archives to await disposal.*

We do not claim to have all the records at archives. Unfortunately this is an impossible task for most archives and museums. From the records we were able to **reconstruct** the history of the Glebe Division.

We were able to establish the names of the 893 members of Glebe Division from 20 March 1903 to 31 December 2002 and that 668,520 hours of public duty had been completed. This averaged 748 hours per person during their membership. During the first 50 years members averaged 7 years of membership and in the second 50 years, the members averaged 6.2 years of membership.

These records are not on a data base, it was all done by painstaking hard research.

The reason information is created and kept by individuals and organizations are clearly because they think they need it now or will need it in the future. Whether this actually happens is another story. If the information has not been well managed, organized and stored, it may be lost forever.

If you collect, catalogue and preserve the right items you can then rely on efficient access to the right information and accurately document St John's activities for the future.

## Is your Historical Group well known?

To have your Historical Group known and appreciated:-

- A. ask the Operations, Training, Community Care and Ophthalmic Hospital Branches to invite members of your group to give talks so that you can encourage their records to be passed on for safe keeping and preservation.
- B. write an article about your group and have it included in mailouts from Headquarters.
- C. have a policy that your State Office advises the Historical Group when a Branch closes so that contact can be made to obtain the records. (Remember that sometimes you may need to arrange and collect the records yourself. This may be the only way you can obtain them.)

In the **Proceedings** some states have mentioned preservation, cataloguing, restoration and display cases. The following organisations are very helpful at providing a network of contacts, a forum for ideas, practical advice and training and mutual support for people involved in Archives, Libraries and Museums:-

### Australian Library and Information Association

PO Box E441, Kingston 2604

Phone (02) 6215 8222 Fax (02) 6282 2249

[www.alia.org.au](http://www.alia.org.au)

### Records Management Association

[www.rmaa.com.au](http://www.rmaa.com.au) (each state/territory has contacts)

### National Film and Sound Archive

[www.nfsa.gov.au](http://www.nfsa.gov.au) (each state/territory has contacts)

### Museums Australia

[www.museumsaustralia.org.au](http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au)

### Health and Medicine Museums (Special Interest Group of Museums Aust) <http://amol.org.au/hmm>

Email [Anna.Fairclough@vionaustralia.org.au](mailto:Anna.Fairclough@vionaustralia.org.au)

### National Archives of Australia

[www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au)

Email [archives@naa.gov.au](mailto:archives@naa.gov.au)

recordkeeping inquiries [www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/](http://www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/)

Preservation and disaster recovery inquiries (02) 6212 3420

### Australia Society of Archivists

[www.archivists.org.au](http://www.archivists.org.au)

### Pharmacy History Australia

Mr. G.C. Miller, 8 Leopold St. Nedlands WA 6009 Ph: (08) 9386 6078

Email [gcmiller@iiner.net.au](mailto:gcmiller@iiner.net.au)

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**New South Wales bridges and walls** are preserved and made available for research and we were able to assist in many areas:-

To mark the Centenary of the Australian Army Medical Corps and in particular the Ninth Australian Field Ambulance, information for Drs James Adam Dick and Selwyn Nelson was able to be supplied. (This book is now available for purchase. Look up [www.slouch-hat.com.au](http://www.slouch-hat.com.au))

The Clifton Courier Museum in Queensland honoured the late Sister Elizabeth Kenny who designed the Sylvia Stretcher. We supplied photographs of the Sylvia Stretcher. The Museum planned to build a Sylvia Stretcher for the event.

As members of the Health and Medicine Museums Interest Group, the October meeting was held at Archives. The theme was 'Developing a Display – First Aid for the Inexperienced'. Kimberely Webber from the Powerhouse Museum demonstrated how to prepare a display by undertaking research, choosing a theme, selecting objects and photographs, writing and mounting labels. St John items were used from our collection for participants to develop their hypothetical displays. A tour of our archive was also given to all the participants.

We have assisted members of the Historical Society – Brian Fotheringham, John Pearn, Beth Dawson and Ian Howie-Willis with research. Brian was researching various types of litters, John was giving a paper on female doctors during Wars and we assisted with Dr. Katie Ardill-Brice and Dr. Frances McKay. Beth assisted a relative of the late George Smith who had been a member of Mosman Division in the 1950's. Ian was the guest speaker at the Glebe Centenary Dinner and needed some additional information.

You have read Ian's report on the Glebe Centenary Dinner. This report mentions a **wall**. A copy of the wall is attached. The writing between the photographs discusses the photograph and the years involved. All photographs were copied and mounted (no original should be used for displays). The mannequins displayed uniforms from the patrol collar to World War 2 when gas masks were required. The wall was made from old archival boxes. The grouting required cardboard cut to represent bricks and attached to the boxes before the paint was applied with an inexpensive bronze spray paint.

At the dinner we were fortunate to have Mrs Audrey Church present. She is the eldest grand daughter of William Harris who was the first Superintendent of Glebe Division. Mrs Wendy Downs, the great grand daughter of William Harris was also present. Mrs Louise Minutillo, great grand daughter of Reuter Roth was present. Dr Roth was an original member of the Executive Committee of St John in New South Wales.

To thank us for our efforts, Glebe Division purchased two display mannequins for our use at Archives. We are delighted with this gift as it will save the expense of hiring the mannequins for future displays.

**Are you ready? When does your state/territory turn 100? Will you be historically prepared?**

Operations Branch registered:-

|                              |      |
|------------------------------|------|
| Western Australia            | 1904 |
| Tasmania                     | 1908 |
| Victoria                     | 1910 |
| South Australia              | 1911 |
| Queensland                   | 1915 |
| Northern Territory           | 1953 |
| Australian Capital Territory | 1988 |

**A letter from Rhonda Bignell, CEO New South Wales, May 2003.**

"I am pleased to announce that Loredana Napoli has been chosen as 'Saint of the Year' for her outstanding work that she has done in the Archives and Library service. In addition, Loredana has really put in the 'extra mile', i.e. she has contributed an enormous amount of her own time in the research and preparation of the book, *The Zambuks* which was released in 2002. She played an important role in the running of the National Conference in Sydney in June 2002, putting in many hours. Loredana has also played a proactive role in assisting with the Web redevelopment project: and a number of promotional activities. Loredana was instrumental in assisting with the magnificent displays for the Glebe Centenary dinner, again putting in lots of hours of her own time. Always willing to contribute and participate, Loredana is a very worthy winner of the Saint of the Year Award".

This award was presented at the Annual General Meeting of St John Ambulance Australia (NSW) on 29 May 2003.

**Betty Stirton**

Honorary Archivist, Archives branch  
St John Ambulance Australia (New South Wales)



## Queensland — History and Heritage Committee

The past year has been a year of progress for the History and Heritage Committee in Queensland. The committee continues to meet quarterly and committee members assist with sorting many documents in the collection regularly.

Dr Geoffrey Gray and Mrs Margaret Hunt accepted the invitation to join the Committee, their contribution is appreciated. Professor John Pearn has agreed to continue his involvement with the Committee as a consultant. The meeting times of the committee limited his ability to attend.

Ms Beth Dawson, **Presenting the Queensland Report from the History and Heritage Committee, Hobart, June 18th, 2003.**



**Preservation of Data Policy:** The preparation of this policy continues to be a concern hopefully it will be finalised in the near future.

**National Conference 2003:** A submission to the St John Queensland Executive requesting some financial assistance for a representative of the History and Heritage Committee to attend this conference received favourable consideration.

It is the Committee's wish that this will continue, in the future.

**"The Zambuks" sales:** I regret to report that the sale of this excellent publication has been slow, after the initial interest. The History and Heritage Committee's funds benefit from the sale of the book when purchased by members of the public.

**St John Queensland 2003 Conference:** This year's conference on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> October will include a session presentation arranged by the Committee as well as a static display. The committee has representation on the Conference Planning Group which is appreciated.

**Historical Management System:** This system is enabling the collection to be recorded, using different categories, which can be further developed as required.

**Display Cabinet:** The display cabinet needed to be refurbished; this was achieved with the assistance of the Deputy Commissioner, Operations Branch, his wife and another volunteer first aider. The assistance was much appreciated particularly as we did not break any glass shelves or doors in the process. The new display features items related to early St John publications, major duties which Brigade/Operations Branch have attended and memorabilia presented to St John Ambulance in Queensland, for events such as the XII the Commonwealth Games in 1982 as well as the Asia-Pacific International Conference of St John Ambulance held in Brisbane in 1994.

The Committee has invited the various Branches to suggest topics for future displays; this will highlight the scope of St John's contribution to the community.

There is keen interest in the display, frequently members of the public attending Training Branch courses, at St John House, inspect the cabinet as well as ask questions about the items.

**Celebrations:** The Committee was pleased to receive the record of the New South Wales Brigade/Operations Branch's celebration in March of the Centenary of Operations Branch in Australia.

Nundah Division of Operations Branch received the Jubilee Certificate for its fifty years service; the first to be awarded to a Division in Queensland.

!



**Items of special interest for the collection:** A number of books, uniform items, and Service and St John medals were received from the estate of the late Dr Lawrence Parker KStJ. Two interesting books, 'Sir James Cantle, A romance in Medicine' and 'Chivalry and the Wounded, The Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem (1014-1914)' were received recently.

**Restoration of the St John Stamps donated by the late Jim O'Neill OStJ:** This collection had suffered when stored some years ago; it has been restored to museum standard. The Committee thought you may enjoy viewing a photograph of this important item, which is included in this report.

{reproduced here for large scale high resolution copy please contact Publications Officer}



**Newsletter – 'In Black and White':** Two committee members, Mr Norman Demaine and Mrs Vera Crook are preparing a short article of historical interest, for the monthly newsletter prepared by the Public Relations Officer at St John House.

**[www.stjohnqld.asn.au](http://www.stjohnqld.asn.au):** The History and Heritage Committee has a section in this web site explaining our role and inviting individuals to contribute to the collection. This has resulted in some enquiries which are more like jigsaw puzzles. Researching these has necessitated the assistance of others, such as Betty Storton, whose assistance is much appreciated.

**The gallery of photographs:** The Committee is considering adding to the gallery as many of the individuals associated with St John Ambulance Association early last century, that are not currently included.

The Committee continues to receive the support of the St John Executive and State Council in Queensland, as the committee chairman attends the Council meetings to present the history and heritage Committee's quarterly report.

The Chief Executive Officer usually attends the Committee meetings and clerical support is provided for the meetings, which is of considerable assistance.

**Duplicate Items:** The collection has a number of duplicates which maybe of interest to other States. All States/Territories are invited to contact the Committee with requests for items. Recently a request from South Australia enabled our committee to assist.

**Beth Dawson** AM.DStJ

Chair, History and Heritage Committee  
St John Ambulance Australia (Queensland)

## South Australia — St John Historical Society

It gives me great pleasure to give this report as the St John Historical Society of South Australia has something really significant to relay to you.

As you may know the Society has met monthly in recent years at the St John Headquarters in Edmund Avenue, Unley, a suburb of Adelaide. The Headquarters building comprises a clever merging of two previously separate buildings, the Unley Police Station and the Unley Courthouse. Our collection of memorabilia was imprisoned in two of the free-standing lock-up Police cells at the rear of the property. There was no room to work on, or display, the items held there in captivity.

Our news is that at the beginning of this calendar year we were able to move to three dedicated ground floor rooms in the Arthur Street Ambulance Centre, also in Unley, and within easy walking distance of Headquarters. The three rooms comprise a store room/office that has been fitted out with adjustable metal storage shelves and a desk, and two generously-sized newly-carpeted display rooms. All three rooms have north-facing windows that have just been fitted-out with new curtains.

The storeroom shelving is sufficient to accommodate all our present memorabilia, and the display rooms are currently being furnished with display tables and cabinets. Our aim is to present in a logical order, historical items that illustrate the growth and development of the various activities of St John, with the particular goal of assisting St John cadets studying the History of the Order subject for their Grand Prior's Badge.

The members of the Historical Society wish to thank most sincerely the St John Council in South Australia for their very practical support. It will take us some months yet to have the museum completed, but when it is you are most welcome to visit it whenever you are in Adelaide. Our South Australian Society meets on the evening of the second Thursday in each month, and members of the Australian Historical Society are certainly invited to any of our Thursday meetings.

**Brian Fotheringham**

Chairman  
St John Historical Society of South Australia

## Victoria — Library and Museum Committee

We have now transferred the museum display from the State Headquarters in York Street South Melbourne to the former Williamstown Operations Branch hall, which was offered to the Library and Museum Committee approximately two years ago.

At the time the Library/Museum Committee's active members were unavailable due to illness or the pressures of other activities, and I wondered if we would be able to cope with the task that was before us.

The opportunity was too good to miss so I accepted the proposal.



We decided that the library should remain at the York Street Head Office, as its function as a reference centre was more appropriate at that location; and that the Museum would be created in the Williamstown hall.

At that time many other organizations were attempting to gain occupancy of the hall.

The hall itself was built in 1936 on crown land which was part of the Fearon Reserve, which was a sporting venue controlled by the then Williamstown Municipal Council. The Council paid for the building of the hall and the Williamstown St John Ambulance Brigade Division repaid half the cost of the building during the period from 1936 to 1954.

We eventually warded off all attempts by other organizations to take control of the hall, and began the process of converting the building to become the St John Museum.

The hall is situated on the beachfront location with a sporting reserve on the Eastern side of the hall and Garden Street and parkland on the Western side of the hall.

Our Library/Museum committee membership is now ten. The members are: Mrs Margaret Kentler, Dr Allan Mawdsley, Mr Mervyn Goodall, Mr George Jackson, Mr Ian Cheesewright, Mrs Gladys Blackstock, Miss Dorothy Bache and Miss Dawn Cochrane. Ms Sue Renkin, as Chief Executive Officer had been very supportive of our efforts, and has provided finance to cover the internal painting and repairs to the hall.

Approval for some future works has been given, and these will be completed when funds become available. These works are:

1. The replacement of the security fence, which surrounds the hall.
2. Provision of a ceiling in the old divisional garage. (This was an unlined building attached to the rear of the hall. Ian Cheesewright and I have converted this to a storeroom and workshop. We also installed the lining of the walls.)
3. Replacement of suitable signage on the hall facade. And ...
4. The provision of a wheelchair access ramp at the building entrance.

The layout of the historical displays in the main building is almost completed, and we are now "unofficially open".

Basically we have four main displays, covering four eras of St John in Australia. These are: the early 1900s, the 1940s, the 1960s-70s and the modern era.

The Library/Museum Committee works in close co-operation with the Victorian Community Care Branch, as most of the Library/Museum members are also members of the Community Care Branch and therefore carry out normal Community Care Branch duties as well as those for the Museum.

At the time that the Museum was transferred from York Street, South Melbourne to Williamstown, the active membership of the Museum Committee was very low, and for a time I was conducting an almost solo effort to get the new hall acquisition up and running. Mrs Margaret Kentler, who was at the time Chair of the Community Care branch, of which I was a member, suggested that assistance be provided by the Community Care Branch to permit the Museum to develop. This had benefit in two ways:

1. The Museum gained both financial assistance and manpower to assist in the development of the venue. And ...
2. A location became available for use by the Community Care Branch to hold training sessions for Community Care Branch members requiring accreditation to carry out their charitable works.

We have achieved this by making the displays in approximately one third of the hall moveable, so that this portion of the hall can be used for Community Care Branch training sessions on two or three days during the year. This scheme is working well with no problems being experienced by either the Museum or the Community care Branch committees.

Due to the work of Dr Allan Mawdsley, the text of Miss Millie Field's book, "The History of St John in Victoria", has been completed, and Miss Field is now collating suitable indices to be included in the book. The hardest part of the task of completing the book is yet to be carried out. This is the ability to complete the reproduction of photographs and documents which are to be included in the book.

Many of the original documents and photographs were destroyed as the result of the efforts of a former CEO who allowed LEAP ("learning and education assistance plan") students working under the control of a Victorian secondary college to create collages of the photographs as part of a school project. The only way that many of these photographs can now be reproduced is by copying them from the prints, which exist in the various issues of the old Victorian publication *The White Cross*.

Finally, I would like to express special thanks to Dr Allan Mawdsley, Mrs Margaret Kentler, Miss Dorothy Bache and Mr Ian Cheesewright for their efforts. Without their help the Victorian Library Museum would not have made the progress that it has been able to achieve at this time.

### **John Blackstock**

Chair, Library and Museum Committee  
St John Ambulance Australia (Victoria)



## Western Australia — Archival Resource Centre of the Commandery



Mr Harry Oxe, Hobart, June 18th, 2003;  
Who presented the Archival Resource  
Centre Report from Western Australia

**General Status:** It is with much sadness that I submit this final report for the year as the museum has officially closed prior to the sale of the St John Ambulance building in Wellington Street, Perth. All systems for loans and public access are now suspended until the museum re-opens in the planned new building at Belmont. The general status of the archives and museum is satisfactory. Individual aspects of our work are described below,

**Acquisitions:** The museum has not purchased any items this year. A number of books have been ordered from St John's Gate, London.

**Donations:** We have been most fortunate again to receive a large number of books, uniforms and other artefacts this year and cash donations. Whilst most donations come from within WA, some were from the United Kingdom and Victoria.

**Loans:** Photographs have been loaned to Mrs Ruth Donaldson and the Marketing Department. Videos and various publications including Cadet packages have been provided to Cadet divisions prior to their visiting the museum. Photographs and bibliographical material were loaned to the UK Historical Society.

**Research work:** We continue to assist members of St John and the general public with their St John information needs. We have provided information on our buildings, St John personalities, sub centres, WA local history and ambulances.

**Cataloguing:** Cataloguing the collection on the computer is ongoing and is almost complete. Although the museum has closed limited cataloguing and reference work will continue at Belmont from July 2003.

**Museum Displays:** The major theme in the museum this year was displays featuring 110 years of St John in WA, 80 years of the Ambulance Service and the Queen's golden jubilee. The Belmont display currently features material commemorating 40 years of the Convention of Ambulance Authorities in Australasia and will be replaced with a display on the history of St John nursing divisions in Perth.

**Museum Volunteers:** Our dedicated volunteers continued with regular Wednesday sessions opening the museum to the public, special openings for cadet and adult divisions, assisting with reference requests, polishing silver and general cleaning. An appreciation lunch was provided for all museum volunteers in February 2003. An afternoon tea/wake was also held in the museum on the 28<sup>th</sup> May for all the volunteers.

**Restoration:** Restoration projects this year have been limited to photographs because of the planned closure.

**St John Ambulance Australia Historical Society:** The society will again meet during the Priory Conference in Hobart in June 2003. The *Proceedings* of its last meeting in Sydney 2002 have been circulated to all members.

**Security:** The security of the St John Centre at Wellington Street continues to be provided and maintained by the WA Ambulance Service.

**Projects 2003-04:** These include:

- Ongoing cataloguing of archival library and museum items at Belmont.
- Complete data entry in the Commandery Database.
- Reviewing and updating the policy and guidelines of the Archival Resource Centre
- Supporting the SJAA Historical Society.
- Meeting any reference requests received.

**Financial Report:** Our financial situation is sound. Special thanks are due to Kevin Young for his ongoing support to the museum and the St John Ambulance Australia WA Ambulance Service.

**Summary:** Another busy year with a sad end although much progress in our archival areas was made. The collection will be placed in storage until the new building is completed, anticipated late 2004.

**Harry F. Oxe**

Honorary Commandery Librarian and Museum Curator  
St John Ambulance Australia (Western Australia)

### 13. Other business:

#### 13.1 Medallion commemorating the foundation of the Historical Society

The President announced that two Western Australian members of the management committee, Dr Edith Khangure and Mr Ian Kaye-Eddie had presented a commemorative gold medallion to the Society. Produced at the Perth Mint, the medallion is mounted in a small rectangular block of jarrah. It is about the size of a 50¢ coin. The face bears the Mint emblem. Engraved on the reverse is the inscription "To celebrate the inaugural meeting of the St John Ambulance Australia Historical Society, June 2002". The President displayed the medallion to the audience and thanked the two donors for their generosity and thoughtfulness. He said the medallion would be added to the Priory headquarters collection of memorabilia and would be displayed in the glass cabinet in the foyer of the Canberra building.

#### 13.2 Membership subscriptions and newsletter for general Society membership

Ms Dawson spoke briefly on two matters, as follows:

- First, she raised the possibility of increasing the membership subscription as suggested in the Treasurer's report.
- Second, she asked whether Queensland's offer to assist with the production and distribution of the proposed newsletter would be taken up now that Ms Langdon-Orr had been appointed as Publications Officer.

At the Secretary's suggestion both items were held over for consideration at the management committee meeting to be conducted after today's History Seminar.

14. **Closure & History Seminar:** There being no other business, the President declared the annual general meeting closed at 11.45 a.m. He then announced that the Society's annual History Seminar would begin immediately, and invited the chairperson for the first session of the seminar, Mrs Stirton, to take the chair. The seminar then proceeded, with five papers being delivered.

**Ian Howie-Willis (Secretary)**

## **HISTORY SEMINAR 2003**

*The following papers were delivered at the Historical Society's history seminar in Hobart on Wednesday 18 June 2003.*

**The St John Ambulance experience at Port Arthur, April 1996** *by Wendy Scurr*

**St Luke and St John: The foundation and influences of the Good Samaritan in contemporary Australian life** *by John Pearn*

**Some history of First Aid, particularly in Western Australia** *by Harry Oxer*

**The father and son Commissioners** *by Dr Brian Fotheringham*

**The federal movement in St John Ambulance Australia** *by Ian Howie-Willis*

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## The St John Ambulance experience at Port Arthur, April 1996



by Wendy Scurr

*Mrs Wendy Scurr now lives at Kempton, north of Hobart, Tasmania. She has been a St John Ambulance first aider for 25 years. In 1986 she moved from Launceston in northern Tasmania to the Tasman Peninsula south-east of Hobart. After finding a job as a tourist guide at the nearby site of the former Port Arthur convict settlement, she taught first aid to her fellow workers there. Their first aid skills were severely tested on 28 April 1996 when they became caught up in the events now known as the 'Port Arthur massacre'. That day a sole gunman killed 35 people and injured more in and around the Port Arthur tourism precinct. In this paper, which was the keynote address at the Historical Society's 2003 history seminar, Wendy Scurr describes her experiences on the day of the massacre.*

My name is Wendy Scurr. My first introduction to St John Ambulance was back in 1979 when a family friend, Mr Jim Byrne, encouraged me to undertake a first aid class with Archer Division in Launceston. I went along with my friend Mrs Anna Holloway. We were both invited by the late Mr Jim Rigby to join as Divisional members. During our time in the Division we were both encouraged to take part in competitions. We were very unsure of ourselves in the beginning, never forgetting any mistakes we made. Jim Byrne was always there for us and helped out a lot. We ended up winning a few northern first aid competition titles and finally won the State Faulding pairs title in Launceston.

Fig. 1: Wendy Scurr (right), with her friend Anna Holloway, with whom she took her initial first aid course, joined Archer Division of the St John Ambulance Brigade and was admitted into membership of the Order as a Serving Sister. They are with trophies they have won as a pairs team in 1983 — the Faulding shield and the North Tasmania cup.



I was later encouraged to try my hand at instructing. We were taken to the Police Academy in Hobart for the three-day course being conducted by Mr Keiran Brown. I never thought I would get through this, but I managed. I know I would never have gone to this level without the support of these three men in particular and the other members of St John who were always there to lend a helping hand when needed.

In Hobart two years ago I met my good friend Anna at Government House, where we were both to be admitted to the Order of St John as Serving Sisters together. We were reunited again after a period of 10 years. It was a very proud moment for us both.



Fig.2: Wendy Scurr is invested into membership of the Order of St John as a Serving Sister by Sir Guy Green, Deputy Prior of the Order for Tasmania and former Chancellor of the Australian Priory of the Order, 2001.

In 1986 I left Launceston and moved to the Tasman Peninsula, where we purchased a small property. Tourism is the peninsula's main industry, its focus the convict ruins around Port Arthur. The local population numbers about 2,000 but this rises to 10,000 during summer, when the holiday homes are occupied and the tourists arrive in large numbers. The peninsula is remote from Hobart, a 1½-hour drive, although it is barely 50 kilometres in a direct line from the Hobart city centre. During my first eight years on the peninsula I worked at the Nubeena hospital, 11 kilometres northwest of Port Arthur. In 1994, I was invited to go to work at Port Arthur as a tour guide. I felt this would be a challenge I wasn't too sure if I could learn all of the history, but because I found it very interesting it wasn't too hard at all. I specialized in studying the medical side of a convict's life at Port Arthur.

So I guided all visitors who wished to learn more on this aspect of the history down there. I remember how nervous I felt when I was invited as guest speaker for the Royal Australian College of Surgeons conference in November 1995. I thought I'd never be able to teach those men anything, but I was astounded by the interest that it generated. I soon came to love the job, with its emphasis on Tasmania's grim convict era.

Despite the atmosphere of gloomy foreboding hanging over Port Arthur and the belief by many that the place is cursed, the tourists keep flocking in. The 'ghost tours' conducted at night are especially popular as many as ten a night running during the peak season. About 250,000 visitors arrive annually, this figure being made up from both day and night tours.



Fig. 3: Port Arthur in relation to Hobart: the map shows the road from Hobart to the Tasman Peninsular and Port Arthur across the narrow Eaglehawk Neck.



Isolation, a small permanent population and periodic floods of tourists crowding into widely dispersed sites are all factors combining to make knowledge of first aid more critical on the peninsula than elsewhere. With my background in first aid I was soon active in the regional community health services. There was no local St John Operations Branch, but I became president of our volunteer peninsula ambulance service, working in conjunction with the Tasmanian Ambulance Service who provided us with two ambulances. I also continued instructing St John first aid classes. In my earlier years I was working alone and training about 50 people a year. But within a couple of years this figure had doubled. I also spent time in the local school doing non-certificate courses with the pupils, topics on how to deal with any life threatening situation including CPR to the older students. It was my aim at that time to have every child who attended the Tasman District High School to have at least this level of training. In fact I had an aim to have at least one person in every home with a knowledge of first aid. Prior to the Port Arthur massacre this was fast becoming a reality. I was always on the look out for additional instructors. By now many were returning to renew certificates they had gained three years earlier I eventually had another two instructors helping to satisfy the increasing demand for training. The employees from the local fish farms, fishermen and Port Arthur site staff were also trained in Senior, Advanced and later Workplace Level 2 first aid.

After becoming an employee at Port Arthur I saw a need for the entire staff to at least have a Level 1 certificate. At that time they had several with a St John Workplace 2 certificate, but because of the large area the guides covered often escorting 50 visitors each it became very obvious that these guides needed to have at least a Level 1 St John certificate. My reasoning for this was that by the time a staff member arrived with Workplace 2, in some cases it would be too late to have a satisfactory outcome for the casualty. After approaching the management and having my proposal accepted I started teaching St John Level 1 first aid. By 28 April 1996 I had taught 90 out of the 100 staff. Port Arthur covers a large area, about 100 acres (40 hectares), including tours to the "Isle of the Dead." I had now been put in charge of training and stocking the 30 first aid boxes on the site and in the site vehicles. I gave extra tuition to the gardeners as they were often working out at Point Puer, the boys' prison, which was renowned for its other inhabitants (snakes). The same applied for the guides on the Isle of the Dead where there was a problem with jackjumper ants and European wasps. I taught these guides a little about anaphylactic shock. I made sure their kits contained the correct bandages and that they were aware of the signs and symptoms, and also informed them that if this were to happen, they would be dealing with an extreme emergency situation. I always believed this could be a major problem on the island if somebody was bitten.

Just before Easter in 1996 we had undertaken a large-scale disaster training exercise. As things soon proved, it was fortunate so many staff could practise first aid confidently.

The day of the massacre, 28 April 1996, I was working as a guide on the ferry, the "Bundeena". It was my lunch break so I was in the tourist information office eating lunch. This was where visitors congregated to obtain information, collect passes for the ferry trips and it was also the point where tourists gathered for the walking tours, so when the shooting started at 1.28 p.m. we had approximately 70 visitors waiting to be escorted on two walking tours at 1.30 p.m. We were only 20 metres from the Broad Arrow cafeteria. At first the thought that these loud noises were actually rifle shots didn't enter my head. The sounds were very muffled. I ran toward the café, intending to enter at the side entrance. The noise wasn't stopping. I was only about 12 steps from the entrance when I felt or heard something go over my right shoulder. I stopped immediately. Even at this stage I had no idea that it was actually a bullet or a fragment of a bullet that passed by me. I first thought of "Danger!" I was frozen in my tracks when a man ran down the steps of the café screaming, "Run, there's a madman shooting in there! Go!"



Fig.4: The scene in the tourist assembly area at Port Arthur shortly before the events of 28 April 1996. The tourist information kiosk is to the right of centre; the 'Broad Arrow' café, where the first shootings took place, is just out of the picture to the right. All these buildings have now been removed to make way for the memorial that now occupies the site. The bush to the rear, where Wendy Scurr and her friends hid from the shooting, has largely been cleared for a new car park.



I have no idea how long I stood out in the open. I was just looking around and thinking, "Where can I go to survive this?" I must admit I was just thinking of me at that stage. It wasn't until I turned and saw all of those people behind me, some of them elderly Americans. We started trying to move these tourists out of the area because some of them thought that this was part of a role play in the café. A staff member Mrs. Ann Hillman realizing the urgency of the situation screamed out, "MOVE!" in her best sergeant major's voice and actually shocked them back to reality. While this was going on the shooting was continuing and we were all still "sitting ducks." In total we only had about 6 staff members and 70 tourists out there. We were starting to get them to move and had to get them at least 200 metres to put the public toilet block between us and the gunman I can remember thinking we must get them "out of sight, out of mind". They still had at least another 600 metres to travel uphill to get out of the open and into the ruins of the convict church and other buildings.

I went with the crowd at first but then realised someone should alert the police. By this time it was 1.32 p.m., less than four minutes after the shooting had started. It had felt like a lifetime. I ran back into the information office and phoned the emergency number '000'. I was put straight through to the police. It was the first report that they had received about a shooting at Port Arthur. The officer I spoke to couldn't believe what I was telling him so I held the hand piece outside the door for him to hear the shooting going on himself. I'm not sure that he took me seriously even then, for the first uniformed policeman didn't arrive at the scene until 4.30 p.m. three hours after the shooting had begun. The local police officers, one from Nubeena and another from Dunally, had been unable to reach the historical precinct. They'd been investigating a drug case at Saltwater River at the time of the killings and later, as they approached Port Arthur, the gunman fired at them, keeping them pinned down in a ditch outside of Seascope cottage. The police didn't arrive in force until about 7.30 p.m. a full six hours after the shooting began. What delayed them remains a mystery. One of them later spoke to us at a meeting 12 months later and apologised for their unconscionable delay. "We let you down badly," was all he could say in explanation.

During my call to '000' the crowd had drawn back further and so by now the only ones left at the Information Office were myself and two other staff members — Sue Burgess and Steven Howard. Whilst I was ringing '000' they were both on the internal phone system speaking to other guides who were manning the historic houses, the staff in the museum and the toll booth operator. Sue was supervisor that day and it was important to let these people know what was going on so that they could gather as many people as they could and get them locked down in all of these buildings. There was a total of about 500 people there that day. The toll booth operator was busily turning cars away as they stopped to pay their entrance fee. All of these guides could hear the noise but they had no idea as to what was actually happening. As I commented earlier, Port Arthur Historic Site covers a large area. We were still only 20 metres from the café where I would say at least 50 shots had been fired at this stage. It just went on and on in there.

The three of us debated on whether to leave the information office or stay, I told them we had to leave as the building had a lot of glass in it and we had nowhere to hide. Sue grabbed a hand-held radio in the hope that we might have contact with someone else by taking it with us.

As we left the information office the gunman left the Broad Arrow café. Bullets were whizzing everywhere as we ran as fast as we could to get away. I then realised that the rifle was of a very high calibre as my husband owns a 0.308 and it sounded very similar to that outside, as the echo of the shots rang continuously around us.

I had mapped out a plan in my mind and that was to get into the Broad Arrow café as soon as possible. As the gunman kept shooting outside, murdering more people who were hiding in the area of the tourist coaches, we were running out in the open with the cover of bush and thick undergrowth beside us. It was when we couldn't hear the shots that we took cover in the bush. I can remember several times lying flat on our stomachs wondering where he was when we couldn't hear any shots.

I then became aware of the great responsibility that I was to face. Both Sue and Steven held Workplace Level 2 certificates and this was a comfort to me, but they were both very quiet and were following orders from me without question.

We heard three more shots up the road behind where we were hiding. I now know these were the shots that killed my workmate Nanette Mikac and her two daughters. We then heard more shots a little further away, these were when the gunman was killing people at the toll booth. The shots sounded as if they were coming from further and further away as the killing still went on, but now outside of the Port Arthur precinct.

We were by this time up on the hill behind the Broad Arrow café when we heard a warning call on our radio that the car the gunman had been driving had been found near the toll booth. We still had no idea where he actually was. We had to climb down a steep embankment through thick scrub to enter the Broad Arrow from the rear. Our first casualty was a young girl who was working in the kitchen area of the café. She had become separated from her workmates as they made their escape from the rear of the building. She was in a state of shock. Just whimpering and shaking. No other injuries. We took her with us as we climbed further down the hill. About halfway down the hill we came across an American tourist who had what appeared to be gunshot pellets embedded in his face, neck, chest and arm. There was very little bleeding. A couple of metres further down the hill we found a man very distressed and in a lot of pain. He had ran out of the café and was covering his head with a piece of cloth or a handkerchief. He told us he either had a bullet pass through his head or it was still in there. He wanted to show us, I told him no, keep it covered, the bleeding was controlled and he was conscious so we decided to leave the young girl with them. We told them to push themselves further under cover and wait. I had the feeling that this man wanted all our attention and in his position I would have probably have done the same thing myself. I had already started triage but I didn't realize it. I found out from then on how to be very firm and honest and how to tell white lies.



I spoke about our radio message and I told them that the gunman could be back, not to leave the area because we knew they were there and to definitely stay put. I also told the young girl not to leave them. All of this time I was thinking of what we would find in the Broad Arrow café and gift shop. I think there would have been probably as many as 60 to 70 shots in there. Up to this stage so much had occurred in just a short time span of about 20 minutes.

On arrival at the back door of the café, Sue said to me, "I wonder if the girls got out." "What girls?" I asked. "Nicole and Elizabeth," she replied. This was a situation I didn't have an answer for. I was mortified. I had just been told that Sue's daughter Nicole and Steven's wife Elizabeth had been working in the gift shop that day. On entering the café we soon discovered the dreadful truth.

Fig. 5: The scene in the tourist assembly area at Port Arthur shortly after the events of 28 April 1996. The tourist information kiosk is at the far top left of the picture; the 'Broad Arrow' café, where the first shootings took place, is to the right. The bus parking area is at the bottom right. The bodies of some of those killed are still lying where they fell.



I have never really tried to put into words the thoughts I had at that time. I have been inclined to skip over it. I don't know what happened to my mind then, but something changed. (I changed and I still haven't returned to my old self. I am a different person now.) I didn't know what to say or do. I remember I was unsure of how I would react in there. I was terrified beyond belief because I still felt sure the gunman would return. I wanted to run and hide. I didn't want to go any further. But two things made me go in there — my friends and the fact that I hadn't finished the DRABC<sup>1</sup> action plan. Funny how that keeps coming into your mind when the situation seemed hopeless. I still had only dealt with the "D" part; I still had RABC to do. I can remember thinking, 'I don't care what I see, the first thing I'm going to do is look for those two lovely girls.' Sue and Steven followed me. It was a scene that I could never have imagined. The floor was blood-soaked. Bodies and pieces of bodies were everywhere. It was so quiet. I could smell the warm blood. It was like I was walking in a horrible nightmare. I think I started to act like a robot. I was blanking it all out as I continued through this carnage until I found the bodies of the two girls. Both were lying side by side behind the gift shop counter, face down. It was so peaceful. I looked into the faces of Sue and Steven, who looked at me as if I could perform miracles and restore life to the lifeless bodies of their girls. After all, I had taught them all about first aid. How if you perform CPR<sup>2</sup> you may be able to save a life. I bent down felt for each girls pulse. I knelt down for a little while looking at their injuries. They were so horrific, they couldn't have a pulse — they had no blood left in them. Elizabeth had been shot through the heart and Nicole had been shot in the face with a large exit wound at the back of her head. Still as if in a trance, I stood up and told Steven and Sue the girls were both dead. I said I was so sorry but could do nothing for them. I have no idea how long I was in this state of mind, or how long I stood with them. It all just seemed like it was just us in there and no one else. No-one else's loved ones. It felt like a bad dream.

Then my mind seemed to clear. I started to face reality when I looked further around myself. I had to ask Sue if she could go out and back to the information office and resume her role of supervisor for the day. Also to get someone to go and check on our two men who were injured on the hill outside, along with the young staff member with them. I asked Steven to go search for as many blankets as he could find. We had only just received a new supply of blankets. They were in storage, but I didn't know where. They both left the scene. At this stage I only had six blankets available to us.

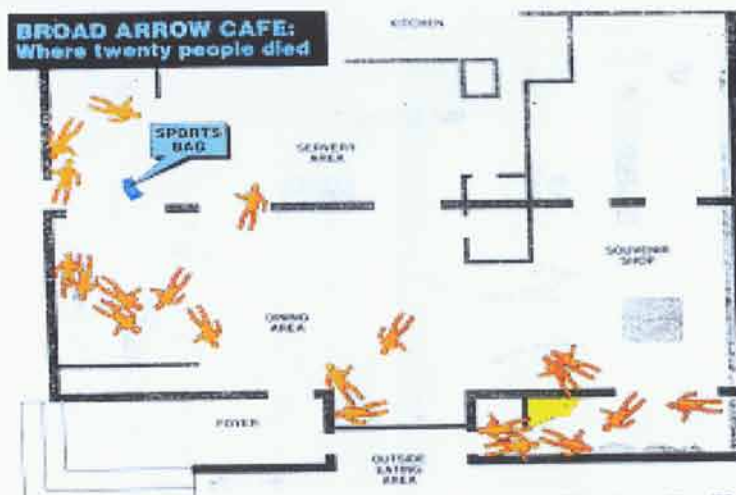


Fig.6: Floor plan of the Broad Arrow Café showing where the bodies of its 20 murdered occupants fell. In addition to the dead, 12 occupants were seriously injured, while others present were uninjured by severely traumatised.

<sup>1</sup> DRABC, a St John Ambulance first aid mnemonic reminding the first aider to check for Danger, Response [from patient], Airways, Breathing, Circulation

<sup>2</sup> CPR = cardio-pulmonary resuscitation



I started to move through the café. One of the worst situations I found was five bodies trapped behind an exit door that wouldn't open. They were obviously trapped by that door as their bodies were all piled on top of one another. I could only check the ones on top, as I couldn't move them to check the ones underneath. This was terrible and I didn't really wait around too long, as I felt trapped also. I had checked several of the bodies for signs of life. Many you didn't have to touch, you only needed to look. It was whilst I was doing this that I found a young man about 30 who was still alive. He was on his side, could barely talk and had lost a huge amount of blood. In fact there was so much blood that I couldn't find where it was coming from. I can remember listening for sucking chest wounds. He seemed agitated when I tried to move him a little. There was so much blood coming from his mouth he could not answer any questions I tried to ask him. A man walked in from outside. He was a Victorian policeman. I thought this chap wouldn't live much longer and the policeman offered to sit with him. I remember the policeman calling out that he was gurgling, I told him just to put his finger in his mouth and scoop out the blood. It was bright red so I knew it was arterial bleeding. Steven arrived back with a blanket, just one, and I asked him to cover the man. I kept on checking for survivors and found another man who was sitting on the hearth of the fireplace with his left arm very badly injured. It seemed to be just hanging. He had also been shot in the back of the head and had a head injury. His wife had grabbed some tea towels and she had the bleeding under control. He was in agony, but sitting up, very little bleeding at this stage, in extreme pain.

I walked around behind the fireplace and found another woman. She was crying loudly, terribly traumatised with terrible injuries. She was bleeding from a hole where her scapula had once been. The bullet had entered just above her heart, missed all the major blood vessels and blew out her scapula. She was saying, "He's coming back, he's coming back." I thought, "If you don't be quiet he'll know there are people alive in here and come back to finish the job!" She really upset me as I was still very frightened. I can remember finding some tea towels that someone had pulled from a clothes dryer. I used them to pack the wound and easily brought the bleeding under control. A bus driver came into the café and said the bus area was bad. One of his bus drivers was dead. Then staff member Paul Cooper came into the café. He said there was a lot of wounded at the bus area. Paul had just completed his Advanced St John Certificate. His aim was to become an instructor and that is why he had done that particular certificate. Lucky for me Paul had learned about triage in that particular course. He said he couldn't help me because there was too much down in his area. I told him to take it over and do the best he could, and "You are to take it over", I said; "this is *our responsibility* until further help arrives." So Paul went back to the bus area.

People by now were thirsty and were wanting drinks. There were people wanting to give them drinks. You had to be watching over everything around you. Shock was beginning to set in. Blankets, towels and all that was needed started to arrive at this stage, Steven had done well. But we were still alone. No outside help had arrived. A lot of the visitors were helping including two retired doctors who were among the visitors. An SRN<sup>1</sup> was helping Paul. She was well known to us and happened to be down on-site visiting her fiancé who was the skipper of the ferry "Bundeena". She had experience in emergency medicine. With no equipment at hand all of these people could do no more than a good first aider, but she was a great help everywhere.

I felt I now had enough information to ring the ambulance service. I had searched the café for more survivors, but had found none. Only three left alive in there. I talked to Peter Morgan, the ambulance controller, whom I knew. He happened to be in charge of the ambulance radio room. I must have been incoherent at the time. He was very good and started to ask me a lot of questions. I told him I had seen a lot of people with critical injuries. He asked me how many dead I'd found. I said I hadn't done a head count. "How many can you see from where you are standing?" he asked. I think I answered, "About 12," but said there were probably a lot more than that. It turned out there were 20 in that room alone. I asked for every bit of help that he could provide and that included helicopters. He said they were on the way and so were road ambulances.

It was now only 35 minutes from when the massacre had started. Our first local ambulance had arrived. We now had oxygen and suction equipment, Entonox as well. I had been well equipped with dressings and bandages, but had still not had the time to apply any. By this time I needed to do the rounds of my casualties. Graeme, my first casualty, was now able to have some oxygen. One of the local church ministers who had done two years' nursing training was now with him but had no knowledge of how to work the equipment. I started to show him how to administer oxygen to Graeme, although he didn't like the mask over his face. I then thought I must try suctioning his airway. I hoped the minister would be able to do this, but he was still unable to operate the equipment. There were only two officers with the local ambulance and they were busy elsewhere. We just didn't have enough people. I managed to suction a lot of blood from Graeme's airway and his condition improved, so we were then able to keep him calmer while giving him the large amounts of oxygen he needed. Graeme had been shot very early in the shooting in the café. He had actually been shot through the neck, the bullet nicking his carotid artery. It had also hit his cervical spine as it went through. He had been able to kink his neck in a certain position to slow the bleeding and play dead. He had partial paralysis. He had lost two-thirds of his blood supply. His life was saved initially by a Mrs Lynn Beavis, a nurse visiting the site who'd entered the Broad Arrow café before I did. She had actually found a drinking straw and sucked the blood from his airway and cleared it. I was not aware that this occurred for a long time afterwards. Lynn was very brave.

My other lady with the shoulder injury was still screaming. Her name was Caroline. The man with the arm injury was in terrible pain, as one of the retired doctors was in the process of trying to set this poor man's arm. "God, what do I do here?" I thought. The doctor wanted morphine for the man. "What do you think we are — a general hospital?" I thought. He said, "Well, I'll give him some of this Entonox." I said, "You can't do that! He's got a head injury!" I could see an argument starting to develop while the patient was still in agony, and this wasn't going to help. I told him that Entonox should not be administered to anyone with a head injury as that could be dangerous. I made sure the man's wife heard me and walked away after saying that it wouldn't be long before some morphine would be available. I didn't have time to stand and argue. I don't know what happened after that.

<sup>1</sup> SRN = State Registered Nurse



I took a look at Caroline, who was now trying to get up on her feet. She said she hadn't found her daughter Sarah. She asked me if I had seen her. I replied that I didn't think I had. She then told me Sarah was 15 and was wearing a black hat. God, I had found her but she had such bad facial injuries it was hard to recognise whether she was an adult or child. Caroline was only a few feet from her daughter, but Sarah was behind the fireplace in another room. I told her I hadn't seen Sarah. Caroline would never have stood the shock at that stage. I had to firmly tell her to keep very quiet and still or she would start bleeding again. There was a man sitting with her and trying to console her.

I then went outside to see what else I could find. I found a man and his wife hiding on the verandah of the building next door. They were very frightened of the gunman returning and killing them. The man had a piece of rag over the side of his face covering a very bad facial injury. He was staring at me so I looked at my shoulders and feet and legs. I had body parts on my shoulders, in my hair and a lot of blood on my legs. So in the middle of all of this I had to go and clean myself up. I must have looked a terrible sight. I told the man that in the event of shooting starting again he should break the windows of the cottage and try to unlock them, then get a young fit person to climb in and unlock the door to let people in. Because we were still unsure of the gunman's whereabouts, this was the only option.

When I went back into the café I started to notice some of the injuries of the dead. People were still sitting in their chairs as if eating and drinking. One couple must have been shot so quickly that she had her fingers through the handle of her coffee cup and was still sitting bolt upright; he had his knife in his right hand as if he was still alive. I can remember treading on something, it was the skull of a once very beautiful young woman. To my horror I looked at the table and found her brain lying in a bowl of chips that had been just put there by one of the young girls working in the café. She had witnessed the first five shots before she ran. There was a bullet hole in the coke machine where she had been standing, so he must have turned around to shoot her just after she left. She is still a very sick young lady. So many of the injuries were so bad that I find them hard now to describe.

Our local doctors, a husband and wife team, arrived about this time but found the task too large for them. It took about six people to look after Graeme alone, and the staff were still applying their first aid skills. I was asked by the doctor to find all the casualties, take down their names and addresses and list the injuries. This took me to other areas where I had not previously been. I then began to see the extent of this terrible shooting. One of our staff members had been shot in the thigh. She had only completed her Level 1 St John certificate a few weeks earlier. The poor girl had a terrible injury but she was so proud of herself. She had been able to stop her own bleeding by simply using her apron. Her leg, however, was going blue under the strain. I had to get the doctor to take a quick look before loosening it. By this time, we had several road ambulances and helicopters starting to ferry the injured to hospital. The last ones to go were the walking wounded who went by coach. Most were in hospital by 6 p.m.

I was concerned at one stage that there may be injured people in the thick bush behind the café. After all, we had found three casualties ourselves on the way in. I spoke to the SES<sup>1</sup> volunteers about this possibility, but as there were no police present and we didn't know where the gunman was, we didn't feel it was safe to do so. We knew it would be dark by 6 p.m. It was searched the next morning by police and fortunately no one was found.

Things just seemed to be getting worse as time went by. People were wandering in and out of the café at will. Meanwhile outside the information office where people were starting to gather, Steven who had found the blankets and realising a lot of these people were going into shock, was wrapping them up and giving out some chocolate bars that he'd found in the shop. Both he and Sue continued with their work. No one except a few staff members were aware of their own personal trauma in losing Nicole and Elizabeth. Many of these people had been in the café, and although they weren't physically injured were in quite an amount of distress. As word spread about the situation in different areas, the severity of the situation was becoming quite clear to all present. In all we would have treated, comforted and tried to console a total of approximately 100 casualties.

A lot of staff who were off-duty returned to work and tried to protect the five major crime scenes as best they could. Amazingly, all of the injured people that we found alive after the shooting survived. They survived mainly because the staff who were treating casualties were applying in most cases Level 1 first aid skills as they'd been taught to. These casualties were found in lots of different places. Many were not even shot. Some had chest pains. One lady went into premature labour. We had to be counsellors and listen to horrifying stories. We were asked to find people we knew were dead. We were asked to remove wallets, car keys from the bodies of the dead by family members or friends. I was even asked to identify one woman dead in the Broad Arrow café. We knew these were major crime scenes and that it was therefore inappropriate to interfere with them any more than necessary. The responses to our refusal to run such errands were sometimes less than amiable. This was, however, understandable but very difficult. We had also lost our workmates, our friends.

At 6.30 p.m. another three shots were fired on the site, further traumatising visitors and staff alike. Many who had not been present when the shooting had started at 1.30 p.m. became traumatised because 50 of them were locked in an administration building for at least an hour in the dark. Also present were staff who were once again being re-traumatised. At about 7.30 p.m. the police arrived in numbers to assist. It was 10 p.m. before most of the visitors had been evacuated. A few left earlier, but most had stopped to give the police their personal details for later witness statements.

A group of staff members were later taken away for a counselling session. We were kept there for an hour, the main activity being to have us recount orally what we'd just been through — the very last thing we wanted because it further traumatised us. I had my first drink and something to eat at 11.00 p.m. I couldn't get home until 1.00 a.m. the next morning. I undressed and found scalding on the tops of my legs where I had wet myself at some time.

<sup>1</sup> SES = State Emergency Service



I also had deep lacerations on the top of my left foot. I showered and finally went to bed. Sleep was impossible. My husband drove into the local hospital to get me something to help me sleep while I sat at the end of the bed with his 0.308 rifle across my knees. I was waiting for the gunman to come and get me because the last television report I had seen prior to going to bed had said he was on the loose. Soon the phone started ringing. Journalists from all over the world were wanting interviews. It was amazing. At some time during the phone calls I'd made to Hobart my name had gone out over the airwaves I guess. As my surname is not all that common, it was quite easy for them to track me down.

Because of the lacerations I'd suffered, I was advised to have tests for HIV and Hepatitis B and C. The possibility of having contracted such diseases was really the least of my worries, but just the same it was still in the back of your mind. The tests came back after several weeks — "All clear."

Within a week of what I've just described I received three letters of congratulations that I greatly appreciated. The first was from Professor John Pearn, Director of Training for St John Ambulance Australia; the second was from Sir Colin Imray, Secretary-General of the Order of St John in London; the third was from Dr Peter Sullivan, Chair for Tasmania of the St John Ambulance Training Branch. The letters in effect said, "By saving yourself in this crisis you were able to save others — in accordance with your training." While this was true, a further important point was that the lives of the survivors were saved primarily through the application of 'Level 1' first aid as taught in the basic St John course.

I must add that all of my colleagues in St John to this very day have been of great support to me. I can no longer be as useful as I would like to be, but I still try to keep my qualifications up. I would dearly love to be able to do more. I know it would be very beneficial to me, but I now suffer from chronic post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and major depression. It has taken a toll on my concentration and short-term memory and is now affecting my general health. I am only one of many Port Arthur survivors who live with PTSD, this is a crippling injury. Many are only young and were just starting their lives. One girl will never bear children because she has already gone through the menopause in her 20s. One has committed suicide. It is affecting whole families. I suppose I can say I am lucky, because before this happened I had lived 51 good years, and have a very special, supportive and loving husband, three children and now four lovely grandchildren.

In concluding I would like to say that Keiran Brown must be applauded for the way he originally taught me to instruct. He believed in using very practical skills in teaching. In turn I passed this knowledge on to my students, and that knowledge played a huge part in our success, especially our improvisation, at Port Arthur. We don't always have a fancy first aid kit with us when we need one! Thank you Keiran.

There's one other person whom I must acknowledge, and that's Lt.-Col. Don Woodland of the Salvation Army. Don is an expert on PTSD. He has provided counselling at every major disaster in Australia since Cyclone Tracy in Darwin in 1974. People who, like me, have suffered PTSD as a result of major disasters owe him much.

There are things to learn from the aftermath of Port Arthur massacre that have never been properly addressed and would be extremely beneficial in our troubled society with traumatic events becoming more prevalent-

Any first aider confronted with a traumatic event needs to be adequately debriefed, which may take some time. This will identify people at risk of developing ongoing problems. They then need to be adequately counselled by people well qualified to do so under the direction of the appropriate medical practitioners.

All first aiders need to be aware of a first contact point. This contact point is very important and could be provided by St John Ambulance for their first aiders. One simple way of letting first aiders know who the first contact is would be to include information about it in the Australian First Aid Manual.

Finally, I proffer the following observation on debriefing and counselling, which comes from my own personal experience: *"There is now some debate within the medical profession as to the benefits of debriefing. The only problems I have with debriefing and counselling are that these need to be done by people who know what they're doing."*



Wendy Scurr and Sue Burgess during 'Question Time', after the presentation of this paper in Hobart, 2003.



# St Luke and St John: The foundation and influences of the Good Samaritan in contemporary Australian life.



by John Pearn

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The fundamental ethos of St John Ambulance is that of the Good Samaritan. In a parable recounted *circa* 30 A.D. by an extraordinary Jew and recorded five decades later (*circa* 70-90 A.D.) by one of the earliest Christians, the message has had an enormous influence upon the world.

The parable, in the tenth chapter of the Gospel of St Luke, paints the explicit picture of a stranger going to the aid of a mugged and helpless victim, applying best-practice first aid, transporting him to shelter and leaving resources and directions to ensure his convalescence. Today, this is the mission statement of every ambulance service in the world, every military Medical Corps, every Life Saving and Rescue Society, and every St John Ambulance Association in more than 60 nations. This paper traces its influence in colonial and later post-Federation Australia.

Luke was a physician who was born and practised in what is today southern Turkey. He travelled to Antioch in Syria and died, probably aged 84 years, in Boeotia, near Athens. Few authors have left a biography, with a report of a simple speech, which has been more quoted. If one today were writing a book entitled "Great Speeches of the World" this one brief delivery, the Parable of the Good Samaritan, would be "up there with the best".

So pervasive and powerful has become the message contained in the parable of the Good Samaritan, that the metonymic term "Samaritan", has come to embody the whole message of rescue, treatment, transport and sustained care until a crisis has passed. Historians are interested in the evolution of this concept; and St John historians particularly seek to analyse, critically review, and to record this development of a concept which has become so pervasive that there exists a danger that it may be taken for granted.

There are few explicit references of the Good Samaritan in the surviving literary fragments of the Crusaders generally; and of the Knights Hospitaller within the Order of St John in particular. It has been summarised that:

*The Crusaders were a heterogeneous lot. They were broadly grouped into various religious orders, each with its own set of loyalties, different compositions and each with its own internal traditions. One of these was the Order of St John. This Order developed, as one of its terms of reference, the provision of hospice care for other pilgrims and crusaders; and the provision of medical and nursing care for the sick and injured. The Knights Hospitaller brought with them, from Western Europe, contemporary systems of medicine and health care <sup>1</sup>.*

The centrality of the sick or injured, and the doctrinal duty of care to such victims, nevertheless was that of the Parable of the Good Samaritan; even if the Order took its name from another founder of Christendom, the martyr John the Baptist, rather than St Luke, the physician who recorded the parable for posterity.



A toast of the Order, as a witness of the concept of duty of care to those who were stricken, was "To our Lords, the Sick".

The ethos of the Good Samaritan formed part of the doctrine of many of the derivative Orders of St John in post-Crusade and later post-medieval Europe. But it was a Prussian military surgeon who took the concept and secularised it into the form that is all-pervasive in our lives today.

Friedrich von Esmarch was the first to coin the term "Erste Hilfe", or "First Aid". His concepts originally were self-help, or self-applied first aid; with some rudimentary training for soldiers to bandage themselves if wounded in battle, if they were physically able to do so. In 1851 he invented the triangular bandage and had it issued to soldiers as the central piece of equipment in a personal first aid kit <sup>2</sup>.

After Shepherd's success with the new concept of first aid for all, even civilians, four years later in 1883 von Esmarch in Prussia established the Samaritan Society <sup>5</sup>. It was a name to be used in many derivative forms over the ensuing century. Some of these have intriguing names. The "Marie Celeste Samaritan Society" operated a staffed and custom-fitted motorised ambulance based at The London Hospital, in the impoverished and densely populated district of Whitechapel in London, in the 1930s <sup>6</sup>.

Today, the US-based charitable non-government organisation, Samaritan's Purse, goes into the world's trouble-spots and provides aid and resources for the sick and injured <sup>7</sup>. In Western Australia, the Samaritans (often called "The Sammies"), originally founded as an outreach from the Uniting Church of Australia, perform unobtrusive but essential support with the same terms of reference.

### **"Samaritan" outreach in Australia**

The Good Samaritan ethic, in the obligation it imposed on every individual to give help, without discrimination, to the injured and acutely ill, rapidly spread in many derivative forms throughout Australia after the arrival of Lord and Lady Brassey in 1887 in their motor-yacht, the *Sunbeam*. They brought the concept of the St John Ambulance Association from Britain and fired enthusiasm amongst leading citizens in the mainland Australian States. The chronology of the establishment of bodies, based on the Good Samaritan ethic, in Australia, comprises:

- 1883 The St John Ambulance Association in Australia.
- 1891 City-based municipal Ambulance Brigades (the first being the City Ambulance Transport Brigade, in Brisbane).
- 1892 Railway Ambulance Corps.
- 1894 Royal Life Saving Society (NSW Branch)
- 1894 District Nursing Services, later to be called the Royal District Nursing Service.
- 1903 The Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving Club formed.
- 1907 Surf Life Saving Association of Australia
- 1914 Australian Red Cross Society



Fig. 1: The Centenary Medallion of the Royal District Nursing Service, based in Victoria. Struck and issued in 1994, it commemorates the outreach services which have provided postnatal care to mothers and infants, in Australia since pre-Federation times. The medallion sculptor has used the symbol of camel transport to convey the concept of samaritanism; and has included a St John eight-pointed cross, symbolising the ethic of the Good Samaritan, on the side of the 1920's nursing transport vehicle.



## The Good Samaritan ethic

Historians are interested in the audit of history; and a distillation of the components of new trends and institutions within society. In this context, the Good Samaritan ethic may be analysed to contain four components:-

1. The possession of prior skills;
2. Timely aid-in-response;
3. The giving of aid in non-discriminatory fashion; and
4. The provision of resources for follow-up.

The Good Samaritan was able to apply oil and bandaging to the wounds of the victim on the Road to Jericho. Such implies prior training and without such training the spirit but not the practice of samaritanism is the best that can be hoped for. Today, one in thirty of every Australia learns a first aid course each year. One in seven Australian homes has a copy of "Australian First Aid", a successor to Shepherd's original "Aids to the Injured".

The timely going to the help of an acutely ill or injured victim is still not all pervasive throughout the world. In many countries, if an individual is injured or falls sick in a public place, bystanders will not necessarily go to their aid but will wait, sometimes for many hours, for trained ambulance officers to arrive. One of the strengths of first aid training is that it empowers bystanders with the skills needed to provide help; and research has shown that such bystanders will initiate help more quickly if they have been trained.

The core ethic in samaritanism is the non-discriminatory offering of aid. Such was included in the Geneva Conventions, from 1864, such that once, in battle, an individual is *hors de combat*, then samaritanism becomes the over-riding ethic with the provision of rescue, shelter and the provision of medical care.

The big challenge in the world today is the fourth component of samaritanism — that of the provision of resource for the treatment of care in a definitive place and resources for convalescence.

The ethic of the Good Samaritan was recorded using the example of personal samaritanism. However, by extension, the ethic is just as important at the corporate or institutional level; and perhaps even more important at the national level. Since 1946, Australia has provided military help in 61 United Nations deployments, each of these with a samaritan component. We have been less successful as a nation at the corporate level; and corporate and institutional outreach in international training programmes for first aid remains one of the major challenges for the future.

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## Some history of First Aid, particularly in Western Australia



by Harry Oxer

*Dr Harry Oxer, born in Yorkshire and educated at Cambridge University and King's College Hospital, London, specialises in anaesthesia and intensive care. After 16 years as a medical specialist with the Royal Air Force he emigrated to Western Australia in 1975. Joining the anaesthesia teaching staff at Fremantle Hospital, he also worked part-time as the Medical Director of St John Ambulance in Western Australia. He held the latter position for 26 years, 1976–2002. He has also served St John in many other positions, including Commandery Librarian, member of the Western Australian State St John Council Executive and more recently as Deputy Operations Branch Commissioner. In 2002 he was awarded the "ASM" — the Australian Ambulance Service Medal. He has also been a member of the management committee of this Historical Society for the past three years.*

### Trends, past and future. Or "As it was in the beginning, is now ..."

The earliest claimed mention of resuscitation technique is in Genesis 2:7 — "...and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." However, as this was the Deity, most discount this! The Pharaonic Egyptians had medical texts and physicians, and practiced fracture setting and skull trephining, but there are no recorded cases of resuscitation.

In I Kings 17:21 Elijah is said to have revived the son of the widow of Zarephath by mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, but the Bible is unclear as to details of technique.

Torsach wrote that mouth-to-mouth was practised widely in the 1700s, even on drowning victims.

In 1788 Moyes reported a resuscitation after a boating accident. They used rubbing, external heating, bleeding (lets out the evil humours), and fumigation — blowing tobacco smoke into the rectum (widely recommended!)



Fig. 1: "Widely recommended" in the eighteenth century: blowing tobacco smoke into the rectum.

Life Saving Societies arose in the 1700s, and in 1768 a Life Saving Society was formed in Amsterdam to save those who'd fallen into the canals. 1774 reports of this led to the formation of the Royal Humane Society in London.

The Royal Humane Society in 1774 recommended mouth-to-mouth as described by Herhold and Rafn, of Denmark. They also promoted use of a cannula and bellows to ventilate a victim. Unfortunately in a retrostep, this effective technique was replaced by chest pressure methods in 1802, (except for resuscitation of the new-born: midwives still used mouth-to-mouth).

Marshall Hall in 1857 promoted chest pressure methods, by rolling over a barrel, or jogging on a horse.



Fig. 2: In the 1770s the Royal Humane Society advocated resuscitation by a bellows attached to a cannula inserted down the throat.



Fig. 3: Marshall Hall's recommended method, 1857: rolling the patient over a barrel.



Sylvester in 1861 described his chest pressure / arm lift technique, which lasted until the 1930s! Brosch added backward head tilt, and placed a pad under the shoulders — the Sylvester-Brosch method.

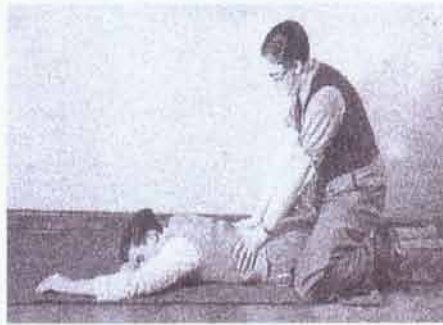


Fig. 4: The Schaefer method of resuscitation, taught in Australian schools for half a century from the early 1900s: pressure applied to the back of the prone patient.

The Schaefer method was introduced in 1903, and used a prone position, to encourage drainage, but the airway was MUCH worse! The Holger-Neilson method used the same position, but lifted the elbows to breathe in, then chest pressure to exhale. This was no good either — produced no effective ventilation, and a poor airway.

During the 1850s anaesthetists learned and used the Esmarch-Helberg manoeuvre (thrusting the jaw forwards) while giving chloroform anaesthesia. Several prominent anaesthetists in the twentieth century measured the amount of air moved during various methods of resuscitation. These included in 1936 Waters and Bennett, in the 1940s Macintosh and Mushin, and Comroe and Dripps, and in 1951 Nims. All showed that only the Dead Space was ventilated — always insufficient to achieve effective gaseous exchange.

David Elam in his epoch-making experiments in 1954 on mouth-to-mouth and mouth-to-tube methods of resuscitation, showed that exhaled air would produce better than 90% oxygen saturation, and that this was sufficient for resuscitation if supplementary oxygen was not available.

Peter Safar in 1954 carried out landmark experiments on 20 volunteers. These included medical students, physicians, and one nurse! He paralysed the volunteers, then checked the efficacy of mouth-to-mouth techniques. He looked at positioning of the head, and airway obstruction, and documented the Triple Airway Manoeuvre (head tilt, mouth open, jaw thrust).

After this, the introduction of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation gained momentum. In January 1957 the method was adopted by US Army, on 1 March 1957 by the American Red Cross, for children, and on 2 November 1957 for adults. (A personal footnote: I qualified as a doctor in Cambridge this year!)

Åsmund Laerdal, a doll-maker from Stavanger, in Norway, in consultation with Peter Safar and others, created "Resusci-Ann", her face created from a death-mask — "The Girl from the River Seine."

For the first time, trainers used a training manikin, and taught 100 school-children the simple skills of CPR we now take for granted.

In 1957, the first manuals on mouth-to-mouth resuscitation appeared. In 1960 the first manuals teaching the A-B-C approach were published, and the film "Pulse of Life" by Dr Gordon, was a brilliant step forward, and was current for many years — much of it still is!

## Defibrillation

In 1776 Kite recommended an electric shock to restart the heart. He used a silver electrode in the stomach and one on the chest, connected to a Galvanic Pile, to be ADDED to VENTILATION!

In the 1900s internal defibrillation was regularly performed with mains electricity in animals, but never in humans. Negovsky in Russia during World War II regularly successfully defibrillated experimental dogs in his laboratory.

Claud Beck noted that heart stopped in asystole was all blue, but when the heart stopped in ventricular fibrillation, it was initially pink and 'checkered'. He coined the phrase "Hearts too young to die" — the pink ones were still oxygenated, and therefore potentially recoverable.

In the 1950s Zoll reported the first successful internal defibrillation. He used alternating current at first, later used DC current.

These truths were re-discovered at James Hopkins University, Baltimore, in 1958 by two electrical engineers, Kouwenhoven and Knickerbocker. They reported twenty cases, the first an arrest in an obese lady. They had ECG records. Thereafter they recorded a further 118 cases of defibrillation.



## Western Australia

Let us now look at the development of St John First Aid in Western Australia.

First Aid teaching varied enormously originally: there were few standards, and most lectures were given by physicians — mostly general practitioners — who taught with great public spiritedness, but with little guidance, and often little First Aid knowledge.

A "Demonstrator" would come in later with a bundle of splints and a sack of triangular bandages, and teach the practical skills, from the "little black book" (i.e. the earlier editions of the St John manual).

Significant factors in the teaching of First Aid that gathered momentum were the beginning of the St John Ambulance Association, and the Australian Red Cross, and the importation of First Aid books from England. Later the local text, *Australian First Aid*, was published, and in 1976 the Australian Resuscitation Council was formed to try to standardise what was taught by the four major teaching bodies of Australia.

The earliest First Aid course in Western Australia was held in 1892, arranged by 22 year old Mathieson Henry Jacoby, who had obtained a First Aid Certificate in Adelaide. He moved to Perth, and wrote for authority to start a centre in Western Australia. This was granted on 17 November 1891

Support was received from police, the railways, seven doctors, and the State Governor, Sir William Robinson. The first course in Western Australia comprised twenty police, ten railway workers, and two 'ordinary citizens' (one was Jacoby). The course was taught by Dr McWilliams. It seemed successful. A women's course was run, taught by Dr. Harvey. A certificate from the first course is held in the St John Western Australia Commandery Library/Museum.

However, Western Australian First Aid lapsed for six years, apparently with unpaid debts. The irrepressible Jacoby revived the Association in 1899 — with Dr McWilliams as Chairman. They traded out of debt, but with slow growth at first. The Anglican Archbishop of Perth, Charles Owen Leaver Riley (1894–1914), was an early student, and held the St John first aid medallion. He was a strong St John supporter.

When I was appointed in 1976 as the inaugural Medical Director of St John Ambulance in Western Australia, St John was teaching 6000 to 7000 students a year. There was a Training Committee for First Aid Training headed by a highly respected respiratory physician at Royal Perth Hospital, Dr Ian Thorburn. His solution to increasing this small number of trainees was to get more general practitioners to volunteer to lecture. Their teaching technique was still often the "Black Book" — at the back of a dusty hall, with a "Demonstrator" during the second hour, complete with his bundle of splints, triangular and roller bandages, dressings, and possibly even a litter.



Fig. 5: A medical practitioner lectures a public first aid class in first aid, 1950s. He teaches from the stage of the auditorium of St John Ambulance headquarters, Wellington Street, Perth, much as he himself was lectured decades earlier in medical school. Somewhere in the wings is a lay demonstrator waiting, splints and bandages at the ready, for the practical session to follow.

I asked, "What do we teach, and how? Can the doctors actually teach, or do they just lecture?"

Answering my own questions, I argued, "We need to establish *what* we want to teach — the learning objectives — not just read from 'The Book'. First we should decide what we want the public to be able to DO. Then establish what they have to know to DO IT?"

This led to further questions and answers: "How do we *know* they know — i.e. what testing is needed? Has to be tested by DOING, not by saying or writing. We need terminal objectives, enabling objectives. We need to set the standards to be achieved, and determine how they are to be tested. Then we should get our trainers AND TEACH THEM HOW TO TEACH!"



We started in the 1970s by offering training to all the doctors and nurses who taught for us. They jumped at it!

The next big step was that then we taught some LAY instructors — and even paid some! "Horrors! It'll never work! Too hard! They don't have the background knowledge."

But it *worked*! The new ideas gradually took over, because the trainers felt happier, the recipients were more confident, and we *knew* what had been taught, and to what standards.

The new ideas spread slowly to the country too.

Then we looked at what we taught. We decided that First Aid is **DOING WHAT YOU CAN WITH WHAT YOU'VE GOT!** One almost NEVER comes upon an illness or injury situation, equipped with six assorted splints, six triangular bandages, dressings, roller bandages, pads, tourniquet, splinter forceps, bee-sting removers, eye-wash, olive oil (warm), and a full delivery kit!

We therefore taught improvisation — no actual splints or bandages. We used old clothes, broom-sticks, pieces of wood, magazines, towels, and cardboard, including for their final testing. We also used common sense — removed some of the extraneous and unlikely skills from first aid (e.g. earwigs!). We abandoned the traditional "Label", "Medallion" and other "advanced" levels of certificates.

Of course at first we encountered lot's of resistance — "It'll never work!"

The Australian Resuscitation Council "discussions" began in 1976. There were fierce and often acrimonious discussions on terminology such as the "Coma Position", the "Alternative Recovery Position", and the "Lateral Position". Everyone agreed on standardisation — on *their* position!

The Heimlich manoeuvre (described in 1970) was rapidly discarded by the Resuscitation Council, but took longer to remove from teaching.

First Aid in the 1980s was a process of reviewing continually what we were doing, and trying to practice evidence-based medicine. We were continually looking for ways to help our patients, not just adding procedures for the sake of having ever more skills. "For the Service of Humanity" was our motto as well as for all of the rest of St John, but we added the important rider "with best use of resources".

In the 1980s-1990s, we refined our Senior First Aid course and teaching. We shortened and focussed the course from four to THREE days! "Horrors! We CAN'T teach Senior First Aid in *three* days!" But we did.



Fig. 6: Carol Jones (supervisor of country first aid training) teaching resuscitation techniques to Aboriginal health workers at the Marr Mooditj Foundation, 1991.

There were several *Australian First Aid* editions; and they got bigger and bigger. One even had two volumes. They were excellent reference books, but inappropriate as a text for a short course — too much to take in.

Our first answer was *Simple First Aid* by Dianne Thomsett — then the manager of First Aid training for St John in Western Australia. This little book had only 59 pages, simple cartoon illustrations, and included self-questions and answers. It was an instant success, and served us for a number of years.



First Aid in the 2000s refined the course and teaching further, and shortened and focussed the course more — from three days, to TWO days!

It was time for a new book — *New Century First Aid*, which was simpler still! It concentrated on the essentials, had only 38 pages. That included defibrillation, and how to 'Give added Oxygen to Every Sick/Injured person'. Over 80,000 copies so far have been distributed, and we are into the fourth. Edition/Revision, based on instructor and customer feedback.

"Impossible! Can't be done! Oxygen — that's advanced resuscitation! Takes eight hours! Defibrillation? Dangerous for the public! Can't teach it all in the time available."

But WE did it! AND added Oxygen. The teaching was "Simply Add Oxygen! GRAB it, turn it ON, GIVE it."

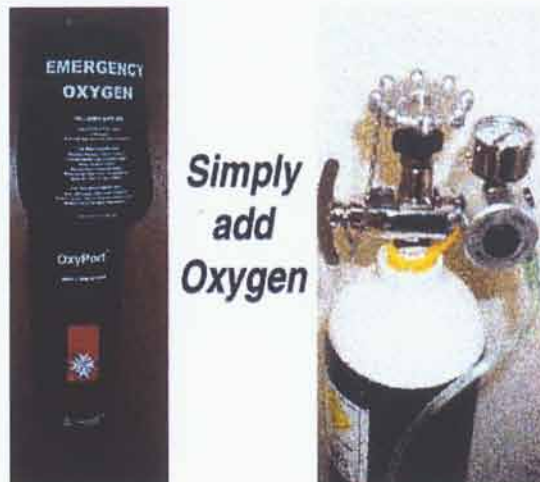


Fig. 7: We advocate a simple device with a fixed flow of 8 L/min, flows as soon as turned on.

AND we added defibrillation: — "If they look dead, GRAB it, Turn it ON, Do What it Tells You!"

**Quo Vadis? — Where to from here?**

Three vital things: Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity.

Teach principles first and best, and then add necessary detail.

If they aren't breathing, BLOW!

If they look dead, PUMP THE HEART!

Use the KISS principle — people remember simple principles. Detail frightens them: many of the public are afraid to start resuscitation in case they get it wrong.

We believe that St John Ambulance in Western Australia are leaders in Australia for excellence and effectiveness of teaching, and are possibly the only standard First Aid Course in the world teaching Oxygen and Defibrillation, *and* in a two-day course!

We have over 1000 well-trained, certified and re-accredited volunteer and paid trainers, who teach to consistently high standards. They have enthusiasm, and belief in our mission and in themselves.

THEY did it! I thank them all! *Pro utilitate hominum!*



## The father and son Commissioners



by Dr Brian Fotheringham

*Dr Brian Fotheringham is the president of the Historical Society and its founding father. He was Commissioner for the St John Ambulance Operations Branch in South Australia 1987–90, and in this period helped found the St John Historical Society of South Australia, of which he became president. He spent 13 years as the Priory Librarian to the Order of St John in Australia 1990–2003. As such, he chaired the former Priory Librarian Committee until its closure in 1998. In 1999 he convened an informal "Priory History Group", which soon evolved into the Historical Society. In this paper he reflects on his and his father's St John careers and those of Drs Sydney and Alec Dawkins, the "other" father and son Commissioners.*

### Two Commissioners in one family

My topic this morning is titled "The Father and Son Commissioners in St John". Before I can introduce this topic, you must learn a little about the Doctors Fotheringham, who have been the only father-son duo to have been Commissioners in the same State in Australia. My father, Dr Jim Fotheringham, was Commissioner of South Australia 1969–73 and I was Commissioner 1987–90.



Fig. 1: Dr Jim Fotheringham, St John Ambulance Commissioner in South Australia 1969–73.

The year before Dr Jim became Commissioner, the formation of the Operations Branch in the Northern Territory had taken place and was part of Dr Jim's responsibility. During his term as Commissioner, new Divisions were registered and there was a general increase in membership. Dr Jim must have had a modern view of the value of female members as a scheme was introduced for metropolitan members of the Nursing Divisions to drive clinic vehicles for outpatients needing to attend Government Hospitals on Saturdays. A further idea was members of Nursing Divisions to perform voluntary duty in the Communication Centre — which had always been a male domain.

I was born in Adelaide and graduated in medicine from University of Adelaide in 1966. I spent the next 35 years in South Australian public hospitals, mainly at Adelaide Children's Hospital (now the Women's and Children's Hospital), where I was the Medical Superintendent and Director of Medical Services from 1979–86. I retired from the hospital in 2001 and now work as a consultant for the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards.

My St John career has been long. (I would also like to add "distinguished" here, but that is not for me to say.) I joined the Hindmarsh Transport Division as a Probationary Surgeon in 1961. This was during the 44 year period when St John ran South Australia's Ambulance Transport Service. I was then promoted through the ranks to State Commissioner. I became Commissioner in what could be described as the NEW ERA OF ST JOHN. The new words OPERATIONS BRANCH for the St John Ambulance Brigade were introduced. The Skills Maintenance Program was gaining acceptance, casualty report forms were introduced and the Cadets had their own training syllabus. There were difficult moments during the times when the Operations Branch formally separated from the South Australian Metropolitan Ambulance Service and I had the unenviable task of withdrawing the volunteers from this service. These events proceeded as smoothly as possible due to Brian's leadership and diplomatic skills.

In 1989 I was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia and in 1990 was appointed Priory Librarian and promoted in the Order of St John as a Knight of Grace. A significant development that year was the installation of glass-front display cabinets in the foyer of Priory Headquarters. Two years later saw the installation of six stained glass windows in the foyer. These windows feature the floral emblems of each state and territory in Australia as well as the 8-pointed cross of St John.

1991 saw the beginnings of the development of the national network of State/Territory contacts on library and archival matters being established within St John. I am proud to have been the chief instigator of the events leading to the formation of this Historical Society and to have been its President for the past 3 years. This has led us to where we are today as part of the Historical Society.

In a report I produced as Priory Librarian in 1995, I wrote that "historical material relating to St John deserves to be looked after and placed in a library or archive where it can be properly preserved. Once lost, this kind of material is gone for ever". I went on to comment that "we should all invite professional archivists to view our collections and thus obtain expert advice on any measures that may be necessary".



## The other father and son Commissioners

About a year ago Ian Howie-Willis asked me to present a paper at this seminar on the father and son Commissioners in St John Ambulance in Australia. There are not many such sets: two be precise. One duo is my father and myself, about whom I have just spoken; the other is Dr Sydney Dawkins and his son, Dr Alec Dawkins. It would be quite inappropriate for me to say more about the first duo, but I am pleased to talk about the Commissioners Dawkins, hence the title of this section of my paper — "The Other Father and Son Commissioners in St John".

Sydney Letts Dawkins was born at Gawler River in the Barossa Valley district of South Australia on 2 April 1873, one of seven children of Samuel Letts Dawkins and Rebecca Dawkins (nee Wilkinson). Sydney's father, Samuel, had arrived in South Australia from the United Kingdom in 1839, less than three years after the colony of South Australia was founded. He worked as an agriculturalist at Gawler River, the home of the famous "Newbold" sheep stud.

A word or two about names: Samuel's mother's (Sydney's grandmother's) maiden name is Letts. The "Daw" of the name "Dawkins" probably derives from either "David" or the jackdaw (a bird of the crow family), and the "kin" either means "relative of" or the diminutive of "Daw" (as in manikin). No doubt had Sydney Dawkins been alive today he would have barracked for the Adelaide Crows.

Sydney Dawkins studied at Prince Alfred College in Adelaide, had some association with the University of Adelaide, where he played lacrosse with contemporaries such as Mr (later Sir) Henry Simpson Newland, and then moved to Edinburgh and graduated in medicine (MB, ChB) from the university there in 1899. The St John Historical Society of South Australia has 37 original certificates stating either that Sydney Dawkins passed various subjects in the curriculum of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Edinburgh, beginning in 1896, or acted as a clinical clerk in the wards of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. After graduation, Sydney worked as a resident medical officer at the Shoreditch Infirmary in London and then returned to Australia, working as a general practitioner at Angaston, then Hamley Bridge and then Mount Lofty, before settling in Adelaide in about 1912.

On 11 April 1901 he married Esther Marie Dorothea Roediger at St Paul's Church in the Barossa

It was while Dr Sydney Dawkins was working as a General Practitioner in the township of Hamley Bridge, about 70 kilometers north of Adelaide, that his son, Alec Letts Dawkins was born in 1905. In those pre-World War I days, Hamley Bridge was a thriving railway centre, where there was a change in the gauges of the railway lines. There were many railways employees, and in 1913 Dr Dawkins began lecturing to and examining them and members of the public for the St John Ambulance Association. Railway workers were expected to undertake first aid training. This link between the railways and St John Ambulance resulted in Dr Dawkins meeting the Railways Ambulance Officer, Mr R.V. Bulman.

At about this time Dr Dawkins moved his practice to Mount Lofty in the Adelaide Hills. He continued to give first aid lectures for St John at Mount Lofty, and also in the City of Adelaide and at Blackwood, another Adelaide hills suburb. Sydney Dawkins later became the first full-time Medical Officer of the South Australian Railways.

Mr Bulman was also the District Superintendent of the St John Ambulance Brigade in South Australia, and he introduced Dr Dawkins to Mr George Hussey, the Assistant Commissioner for St John in South Australia. (The title "Commissioner" was not introduced into South Australia until 1934.) Soon after this meeting, Dr Dawkins became the South Australian District Surgeon in 1922. Mr Hussey became very unpopular as leader of the Brigade, but hung onto the Assistant Commissioner's position until he finally resigned in 1931. Dr Dawkins then took over as Assistant Commissioner. More precisely, he became the "Acting" Assistant Commissioner, as he was not yet a Member of the Order of St John. This was remedied in the following year, 1932, when Dr Dawkins visited London, where he was admitted to the Order as a Serving Brother. His title as leader of the Brigade in South Australia was changed to Commissioner in 1934 (i.e., no longer Assistant Commissioner).

The Brigade Dr Dawkins inherited was not exactly robust. It comprised some 200 men and women. There were two Nursing Divisions that concentrated on beach attendances, and five men's Divisions that worked at the races, and any other public events. There was little coordination and no set Divisional boundaries. Dr Dawkins entertained the various suburban mayors at his house and gained their support in providing accommodation for the Divisions, as well as defining the territory to be covered by each. In addition there were country Divisions, often linked to the major rail centres in the State.

St John had held first aid competitions amongst their members for many years, but Dr Dawkins was the first to organise District-level competitions in South Australia in 1934.



Fig. 2: Dr Sydney Letts Dawkins (1873–1963), St John Ambulance Assistant Commissioner in South Australia 1931–34, Commissioner 1934–47; Commandery Commissioner of the Commandery of the Australian Commonwealth (Exclusive of Western Australia) 1941–46.



On hearing that the Englishman Colonel James Sleeman, Chief Commissioner of the Brigade Overseas, was to visit Australia, Dr Dawkins arranged for Cadet Divisions to be formed, and had them on parade when Sleeman arrived in Adelaide in 1936. The first District Cadet Camp was held in 1938/39 at Kingston Park, a suburb of Adelaide. Such camps continue to this day.

Dr Dawkins' wife Esther had died in 1928. He married his second wife, Gertrude Mary Dawkins, in 1930. When in London in 1932, Dr Dawkins and his second wife were invited to a dinner at the Hospitallers' Club. This club was for Brigade officers only. Back in Adelaide, the Dawkins established a similar club, but with wider membership. That club still functions as the very hard-working St John Auxiliary in South Australia.

Dr Dawkins' interests were not entirely focused on St John Ambulance. He was elected as a foundation member of the Wonganias, a group of "Adelaide intellectuals" from various professions who met monthly at each others houses to read a paper and discuss it.

Dr Dawkins' management style was not exactly by consensus. In 1937 he brought his wife into the Brigade at the level of District Officer, a rank usually achieved by only a few individuals after many years of voluntary work. Further, in 1940, just three years later, he promoted his wife to Lady District Superintendent, in charge of all the Nursing Divisions in South Australia. This added to tensions with, for example, District Officer Violet (Vi) Watson, and a dispute ensued that needed the diplomacy of none other than Sir Mellis Napier to resolve. Sir Mellis was Chief Justice in South Australia for 25 years, and the State's Lieutenant Governor for 34 years.

Dr Dawkins retired as Commissioner for South Australia in 1946 because of "a serious breakdown in health". In the following year he retired from the other major St John Ambulance position he had held concurrently since 1941, that of Commissioner of the Commandery of the Commonwealth of Australia, the precursor to the Priory. He was the first person to be appointed to this position.

From his first activities in St John in 1913 through to his retirement from the Brigade in 1947, Dr Sydney Dawkins KStJ, OBE, MB, BCh, JP gave outstanding service over a period of 34 years. Under his leadership the strength of the Brigade had increased many times, both in numbers of members (from 200 to 1600) and in influence. But there is more. He remained a Vice President of the Adelaide Centre of the St John Association (now called Training Branch) and when the St John Council for South Australia came into being on 2 February 1950 under the Chairmanship of Sir Mellis Napier, Dr Dawkins was one of its three Vice Presidents. His name appears in the South Australian Annual Reports of St John under this Vice Presidential heading through until and including 1955, giving a grand total of 42 years service, much of it at top levels within St John. He died in Perth, Western Australia on 17 July 1963, at the age of 90 years. His funeral was held in Stow Memorial Church, Adelaide, and his grave is in the nearby Payneham Cemetery.

There is no mention of his service to St John Ambulance or even of his death in any of the South Australian Annual Reports of the St John Council, the Association or the Brigade. The *Medical Journal of Australia* carried an obituary about Sydney Dawkins in its 2 May 1964 edition, and he was the subject of articles in the *Adelaide Advertiser* on 16 October 1959 and 17 July 1963.

Incidentally, another Dawkins, this time Dr Dawkins' son Lindsay, is mentioned in an obituary in the St John Council of South Australia's Annual Report of 1955. Lindsay was an architect who volunteered his time to design the St John Ambulance Transport Centre at Hindmarsh, an Adelaide suburb. That is where I began in St John as a Probationary Surgeon in 1961. I remember one of the design features of that building. The radio room was at first floor level and protruded out into the spacious garage. If an ambulance was required to go out on a mission of mercy from the Hindmarsh Centre, the crew was paged over a loud speaker. The details of the job were written on a piece of paper in the radio room. The paper was then clamped in a "Bulldog" paper clip to which a string was attached, and dropped through the a hole in the floor of the radio room for the crew to collect at ground floor level on the way to their vehicle.

Sydney Dawkins died in Perth, but there was an earlier link to Western Australia, for back in 1940 he had travelled to Perth in an effort to persuade the Western Australian St John community to join the Australian Commandery. He failed!

There is another link to Western Australia. It is provided by Dr Sydney Dawkins' other son, Dr Alec Letts Dawkins. Alec was born on 9 August 1905 in Hamley Bridge, South Australia, attended Prince Alfred College (as had his father) and graduated from the University of Adelaide's Medical School in 1928. He gained his FRCS qualification in the UK in 1931, and added the FRACS qualification in 1935. Further, he gained a Master of Orthopaedic Surgery degree in Liverpool in the following year, and after a short period back in Adelaide moved to Perth, Western Australia, in 1939.



Fig. 3: Dr Alec Dawkins (1905-75), St John Ambulance Commissioner in Western Australia 1959-66; Commandery Lieutenant of the Commandery in Western Australia of the Order of St John 1969-73.



During World War II Alec Dawkins rose to the rank of Brigadier, and maintained his connections with the Army Reserve after the war, later becoming the Honorary Colonel of the Western Australian University Regiment.

Dr Alec Dawkins had first joined St John Ambulance as a Divisional Surgeon in 1932, while still in South Australia. On transferring to Perth he continued his association with St John and in 1946 became a member of the St John Ambulance Association Council. He was its President from 1949 to 1954. He stayed on the Council as Past President until 1959, when he was appointed Commissioner for the period 1959 to 1966. From 1965 to 1969 he was both Commandery Director of Ambulance and Commandery Commissioner, and from 1969 to 1973 he was the Commandery Lieutenant. Throughout all this time he remained an examiner in first aid for the Railway competitions. Dr Alec Dawkins OBE, OStJ, ED, MB, BS, FRCS, FRACS, MCh, RAAMC died on 7 August 1975, two days short of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Alec Dawkins' record of service to St John is impressive, but add to that his extraordinary work in other organisations. He was a Senior Orthopaedic Surgeon at the Royal Perth Hospital and at the Princess Margaret Hospital for Children (PMH); he was chair of the Honorary Medical Staff of both hospitals; he served on the Board of the PMH; he was an Orthopaedic Surgeon to the Department of Repatriation; he served on the Council of the British Medical Association, including a term as its President; he was a member of both the Medical and the Physiotherapy Boards in Western Australia; he was on the State Committee of the College of Surgeons and was President of the Australian Orthopaedic Association in 1965 and 1966. A remarkable record, and one bringing significant skills to St John Ambulance.

There are many examples of family involvement in St John Ambulance Australia, but very few, if any, have contributed more than Sidney and Alec Dawkins, as outlined in this brief resumé.

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#### Postscript

One of Dr Alec Dawkins' sons, John, may be known to you. Perhaps not personally, but as the former Federal Treasurer from 1991 to 1993, now living at Eden Valley in the Barossa District of South Australia, growing grapes. In these days of further reforms to tertiary education, John Dawkins is especially remembered for removing the distinction between Universities and Colleges of Advanced Education, and for introducing the HECS — the Higher Education Contribution Scheme.



# The federal movement in St John Ambulance Australia



by Ian Howie-Willis

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Like the Commonwealth of Australia, St John Ambulance Australia is a federal body. The Commonwealth is composed of six sovereign States and two self-governing Territories, each of which is represented in the federal government. Similarly, St John in Australia is composed of eight autonomous State/Territory branches, all of which are represented on a national federal administrative and decision-making body, the Priory.

The Commonwealth took 20 years to become a reality. The six former colonies that federated as States within the Commonwealth on 1 January 1901 had required time to become used to the idea of being linked together within the one nation. Along the way had been the distraction of the Federal Council for Australasia established in 1885. (Set up by an Imperial Act, and lacking executive power and independent funding, the Federal Council proved an abortive body. Sir Henry Parkes, the so-called 'Father of Federation', saw it an obstacle to true federation. He persuaded the New South Wales government not to join it, which ensured its failure.)

The federation of the State branches of St John Ambulance within the Australian Priory of the Order of St John occurred later and took longer to accomplish. Fully three decades passed after they took their first steps towards federation in 1916 and the final establishment of the Priory on 16 September 1946. As with the Commonwealth, there was a distraction along the way — the St John Central Council for Australia of 1925–32, the failure of which is described below.

## The early steps towards a federal St John structure

The first steps towards the creation of a federal St John organisation in Australia were taken early in 1916. That year the Victorian Centre of the St John Ambulance Association (Training Branch) contacted its corresponding Centres interstate to suggest the formation of a 'Federal Council' for the Association in Australia. It was an idea that possibly originated in the St John's Gate, London, headquarters of the Order of St John. At that time St John's Gate (as the headquarters were commonly known) was encouraging the St John Ambulance organisations in the other 'white' dominions of Empire — Canada, New Zealand and South Africa — to form 'Central Councils' or national boards to unify St John Ambulance effort among the various provinces within each dominion. St John's Gate endorsed the Victorian proposal in May 1916. That month Sir Herbert Perrott, secretary-general of the Order and chief secretary to the Association, notified the various Australian Association Centres that St John's Gate would 'welcome the formation of a Central Council in Australia', which it thought would assure 'the future success of the Order's undertakings'. He also said that a similar body had formed in Canada several years earlier, and sent them copies of its constitution.

Even though backed by St John's Gate, the Victorian proposal received a discouraging reception among the other State Centres. The Tasmanians agreed to it initially but then turned against it. The New South Wales Centre wanted more information before deciding one way or the other. The South Australians also wanted more information but made it clear they believed Australia wasn't yet ready for such a council. The Queensland Centre, in the process of being taken over by the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade, doesn't seem to have responded. The Western Australians were actively hostile to the idea. Joseph R. Campbell, secretary of the Western Australian Centre, wrote to Perrott to say his Centre viewed the idea with 'emphatic disfavour'. He said his Centre preferred dealing with St John's Gate direct; his State's geographical isolation from the others would nullify any benefits of the proposal; Western Australians feared 'Federal control'; and the proposal was probably a Victorian ploy for extending their influence beyond their State borders. Perrott tactfully wrote back to the other Centres to suggest that if they convened a conference to discuss the matter further they should omit Western Australia from their discussions. Seeing the idea lacked support, the Victorians dropped it.

## The Central St John Council

The next attempt to establish an Australian Central St John Council came four years later, in April 1920. This time the initiative came from New South Wales and the St John Ambulance Brigade (Operations Branch). The District Commissioner there, Dr Thomas Storie Dixon, arranged an interstate St John conference of Brigade Districts.



In organising it he was following up a suggestion made before the war by the Chief Commissioner of the Brigade Overseas, J.C. Dalton, who thought that the Australian Districts might benefit from periodically discussing their common problems. All the mainland states attended. New South Wales sent Dixson and the District secretary, B.R. Rainsford; South Australia sent its Commissioner and Senior Corps Superintendent, G.F. Hussey and R.V. Bulman; the Western Australian Commissioner, H.G. Tymms, represented his State; the Victorian District Secretary, J.H. Lord, represented Queensland by proxy; and the Commissioner and District Superintendent, George Horne and H.A. Osgood-Cannon, represented the host state, Victoria.



Fig. 1: Dr Thomas Storie Dixon KStK (1854–1932), author of the first (1918) history of St John Ambulance in Australia, Commissioner of the New South Wales District of the St John Ambulance Brigade 1914–23, president of the Central St John Council for Australia 1921–32, and also titular Australian Chief Commissioner of the Brigade 1924–32. The last of these positions was formal. Dixson had little if any power in the State Brigade Districts, at least one of which did not recognise his authority. He possibly had some moral influence and for a time attempted to fulfil an advisory role, but otherwise appears to have had little contact with the Districts under his nominal leadership. The title lapsed on his death, when the Central Council was abolished, and was not revived until the establishment of the first effective federal St John organisation in 1941 — the Commandery of the Commonwealth of Australia (Exclusive of Western Australia). Dixson was the first to promote the idea of a federal St John organisation for Australia, but it was then an idea before its time.

The delegates soon realised that they had much in common, and so it was not surprising that the conference resulted in many resolutions. Some of their proposals were so far-fetched they could probably never have been achieved; others were eventually achieved, but in 1920 were before their time. The list included these:

- a Brigade hospital
- a national St John Ambulance journal
- regular interstate first aid competitions
- making the Order's honours system more accessible to Australians and Brigade members in particular
- the creation of an Australian Priory of the Order.

After Storie Dixon's interstate Brigade conference, the State Association Centres conveyed the request for an Australian Priory to St John's Gate. The reply they received in June 1921 was not altogether what they might have wanted. Instead of a priory, St John's Gate repeated its 1916 proposal for a 'Central Council for the whole of Australia'. This led to a second interstate conference, this time of State Association Centres in October 1921, again in Melbourne. The conference agreed to form the proposed Central Council for Australia, and elected an interim executive committee to produce a draft constitution. This consisted of Storie Dixon as president, with J.H. Lord (now secretary of the Victorian Association centre) as secretary and A.H. Hansford (chairman of the Victorian Civil Ambulance Service) as treasurer.

The Central Council which Storie Dixon's committee then established was not the all-Australian body which he and St John's Gate wanted. The Association Centres and Brigade Districts in both New South Wales and Victoria each affiliated. Elsewhere the situation was more complicated. The South Australian Brigade District affiliated but the Association Centre refused to. The situation in Tasmania was also vexed: the state had separate northern (Launceston) and southern (Hobart) Association Centres. The former affiliated but the latter didn't. Queensland had an Association Centre, which affiliated, but no Brigade District. The Western Australians, predictably, declared themselves 'opposed to the scheme for centralisation' from the outset, and refused to cooperate. The inaugural meeting of the Central Council, in Sydney in June 1925, revealed what a lopsided body it was. Seven of the ten delegates were from New South Wales and Victoria. The four lesser States were unlikely to have become enthusiastic about the council when its membership was so heavily weighted in favour of the two largest.



Being so unrepresentative of the wider Australian St John movement, the Central Council was probably doomed from the outset. Its other disadvantages were its total lack of income, staff and policy-making powers. As a result it could hope to be little more than a forum for discussion; but even here it was limited. In the decades before fast interstate air travel, Australian distances created problems for the organisers of regular interstate meetings; but, even so, the council met so rarely it had little chance of achieving much. Apart from its inaugural Sydney meeting and one executive meeting, it held only one other general meeting, in Adelaide in 1928. It planned to meet again in Canberra in 1931 but never did. By this time many of the council's principal figures, already elderly at the time of the first interstate conference in 1921, were dead; and Storie Dixon, always the driving force, died in 1932.

## The Hewett delegation

St John's Gate recognised that the Australian St John bodies were reaching maturity and needed an effective national structure. This prompted the Order's executive to send a delegation to investigate. Led by Sir John Hewett, the Order's Bailiff of Egle, that is one of the Order's five principal office-holders, it toured Australia and also New Zealand in 1928–29. One of its main purposes was to investigate the Central Council for Australia. Its findings were unflattering. Hewett reported back to St John's Gate that apart from Storie Dixon and his few supporters the council had no advocates. Storie Dixon himself appeared to be one of the main problems. His personality, Hewett wrote, had proved a considerable obstacle to the council's success. He had managed to antagonise many of the interstate St John officials whose support might have assured the council's success. In Western Australia, for instance, the two principal St John figures, Dr H.G. Tymms, the Association Centre president and Brigade Commissioner, and J.R. Campbell, the Centre secretary, disliked Storie Dixon so strongly they would have nothing to do with any committee that he led. Hewett's conclusions about the council were as follows:

*We were unable to find any very clear evidence of the value of the Central Council in Australia...Its power to co-ordinate, protect, and advance the interests of the Order and the work of [St John] Ambulance within the Commonwealth — the functions it was established to exercise — must be circumscribed...It is difficult to conceive how a Council separated [by Australia's vast] distances from the Centres and Districts which it is intended to represent could function effectively, and so long as Centres and Districts do remain out of it, it cannot be regarded as representative of the interests of the Order...throughout the Commonwealth.*

Hewett's report convinced St John's Gate that the council could be abolished with little effect on the St John cause in Australia. St John's Gate did not formally disband it until 1933, the year after Storie Dixon's death. By this time the council was effectively defunct. Perhaps respect for Storie Dixon, once a tireless St John worker, caused the Order's leadership to delay the abolition for so long.



Fig. 2: Sir John Prescott Hewett, leader of the Grand Priory's delegation to Australia in 1928–29

Australia's first experiment in St John Ambulance federation had proved that a federal organisation would only work if all of the seven Association Centres and four Brigade Districts then operating in Australia agreed to join it. The Central Council had won the support from fewer than half these eleven bodies, but that did not mean a lack of federal sentiment. As Hewett had discovered, the wish for self-government and greater freedom from St John's Gate was strong among the Australian St John bodies. This was most obvious in Sydney, where he attended a conference of the State St John bodies in January 1929. One of the participants moved a motion calling for the creation of a Commandery of the Order in New South Wales. A Commandery was a lesser institution than a Priory but would still be a national self-governing body. Unfortunately the unknown mover was not granted the opportunity for airing his/her views on the matter because the chairman, Sir Philip Street (State Chief Justice and president of the state Association Centre), ruled the motion out of order. He did so on the advice of Hewett, who said his 'instructions from the Grand Prior [the Duke of Connaught] did not permit [him] to discuss this matter'.



## The Sleeman delegation

The second St John's Gate delegation to Australia, in 1935–36, discovered that in the six years since Hewett's visit federal sentiment had grown. The delegate Col. (later Sir) James Sleeman, the Chief Commissioner of the Brigade Overseas, spent much longer in Australia and toured more extensively than Hewett. Everywhere he went he found that the State St John organisations wanted greater local autonomy and freedom from regulation by St John's Gate. Whenever this matter arose, the question of an Australian Commandery hovered, begging an answer. In most States Sleeman addressed combined Association-Brigade conferences. Those participating repeatedly asked him why the South African and New Zealand St John organisations now had Commanderies, and when the Australian St John would be granted the same status. Sleeman tried to explain that St John Ambulance had evolved differently and had been ready to rise to Commandery status in those countries. In Australia, by contrast, there had often been conflict between the Association and Brigade in some States; and, as the Central Council had demonstrated, the Australian St John bodies were not yet ready to enter a federal structure. Rather lamely, he could only advise them to learn to work harmoniously together, achieving the national consensus on which a national Commandery must depend.



Fig. 3: Colonel (later Sir) James Sleeman, Commissioner-in-Chief of the St John Ambulance Brigade Overseas (i.e. in the dominions), the one-man Grand Prior's delegation to Australia in 1935–36, pictured during his visit to Perth, Western Australia, with the senior members of the Brigade's Western Australian District. Left to right are: Albert E. Fisher (District Officer), Dr Herbert G. Tymms (Commissioner), William C. Brear (District Superintendent), Sleeman, Harriet E. Parker (Lady District Officer), Dr John J. Holland (District Surgeon) and Samuel Middlewick (District Officer)

Sleeman didn't tell his audiences this, but one reason for his visit was to assess the readiness of the Australian St John bodies for the introduction of a national Commandery structure. He returned home convinced that Australia, too, should have a Commandery or, to get round the Western Australians' likely objections, Commanderies. Though publicly non-committal, in private conversation and in his correspondence he hinted to the senior St John officials in Australia that they could achieve Commandery status fairly soon. His book-length report to the Grand Prior reassured St John's Gate that the Australians could be trusted with the same degree of national autonomy already granted to the St John organisation in the other 'white' dominions.

Commandery and subsequently Priory status for the eastern states followed closely in the wake of Sleeman's tour — or at least as closely as the outbreak of the Second World War would permit — even though the Western Australians chose, yet again, to remain apart. Once the idea of a Commandery or Commanderies in Australia gained acceptance among the state St John bodies and at St John's Gate, it was only a matter of time before such organisations would be established. The event tipping the balance in Australia's favour was the war.

After Hewett's tour the matter of an Australian Commandery or Commanderies had probably been canvassed periodically among the nation's St John bodies, more especially after the formal abolition of the failed St John Central Council for Australia in 1933. During Sleeman's tour the idea set off a great flurry of correspondence between them about the possibility of their cooperating to establish a Commandery. In February 1936 while in Sydney Sleeman actually chaired an Association-Brigade conference which voted in favour of forming a New South Wales Commandery. Perhaps at his suggestion the conference also decided to discover what the St John bodies elsewhere thought about establishing a Commandery for Australia with headquarters in Canberra. The acting secretary of the state Association centre, J. Caldwell, subsequently wrote to the other state centres to elicit their views. The reply from Western Australia was, in retrospect, as predictable as it was prompt: J.R. Campbell, the Western Australian centre secretary, replied that the proposal was 'not viewed favourably'. He explained that, 'owing to our geographical situation, and for reasons of expense, it would be impracticable for Western Australia to be represented, and we cannot see that any benefit could possibly accrue to the work of the Order in this state'. His letter concluded with the remark that 'if it were essential that this centre...be attached to a Commandery, [it] would prefer that a separate establishment be created for Western Australia'.



Two months after this, in early April 1936, it was the turn of the Victorians to push the federal barrow further forward. The Brigade commissioner there, Maj.-Gen. Rupert M. Downes, wrote to the other state St John bodies to say he had spoken with Sleeman, then on the Victorian and Tasmanian leg of his tour. Sleeman had suggested that the state St John bodies should take advantage of a national conference of senior army medical officers being held in Sydney later that month. As a number of the officers were also members of the Order, Sleeman proposed that they use the occasion to discuss the formation of an Australian Commandery. As far as the Western Australians were concerned, Downes might as well have spared himself the effort of writing. Holland, the centre president, curtly responded by telegram, 'Contend no benefit can possibly accrue here. Taking no action re proposed conference. Commissioner Tymms of Brigade concurs'.

After Sleeman's return to the UK, discussion between the state St John bodies continued. The main instigator of the negotiations appears to have been Rupert Downes (1885-1945). Always a committed federalist, Downes had been a member of the former St John Central Council for Australia, and it was largely through his efforts and those of several other highly talented medical practitioners strategically located in the Association and Brigade in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia that the Australian St John bodies finally succeeded in federating. Downes was a towering figure. He had been Director General of Army Medical Services since 1934; he spent a record 24 years as Brigade Commissioner for Victoria; he had spent eight years as the Victorian Association Centre president; he chaired the Red Cross national council; and he had been president of the Victorian branch of the British Medical Association.

## The influence of Rupert Downes

The first scheme for a Commandery which Downes appears to have proposed was a 'Commandery of South East Australia' taking in just Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania'. Why the other states were excluded is not clear, except in the case of Western Australia, where the opposition continued. Indeed, so sure was Downes of that that he did not bother to inform the Western Australians of his proposal. He possibly also excluded the Queensland's St John organisation from his plans because, with no Brigade District and the Association Centre there almost wholly subsumed within the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade, he did not think it 'normal' enough for inclusion. As for New South Wales, the reasons for its exclusion are uncertain though we may speculate. Tension between the Brigade and Association had been a continuing problem there, and perhaps that represented an unwanted difficulty for the proposed Commandery. Another difficulty was that Downes appears to have been suggested Melbourne as the headquarters; and Sydney's paranoia about its southern rival was such that even to hint at a Melbourne-based Commandery would have been enough for New South Wales to withdraw from the negotiations immediately.

In March 1939, with war becoming more likely by the day, Downes travelled to the UK for discussions with his British counterparts about placing Australia's medical services on a war footing. As the St John Ambulance foundations, and more especially the Brigade, also had a military function, providing ancillary support for the medical services of the armed forces, they too figured in the planning. It was this function that finally made an Australian St John Commandery possible. In early July Downes wrote to the Australian St John bodies to tell them there was little hope of their playing their appointed wartime role unless they federated. He also visited St John's Gate and made the same point there, telling the secretary-general of the Order, Sir Percival Wilkinson, that 'it is impossible [for the Defence Department] to deal with six separate Brigades [in Australia]'. His message was plain: if the leadership of the Order wanted the Australian St John bodies to serve an effective national function in the coming conflict, they must agree to the immediate formation of an Australian Commandery. Coming from one of the most respected Australian St John figures, this was advice that no one could ignore. To add emphasis to his message Downes argued that the matter was so critical for St John that a Commandery consisting of only several states was preferable to no Commandery at all. Further, to continue negotiating with the reluctant states in hope of bringing them all into the Commandery 'would take so long that under the present conditions of urgency it might be too late'. In short, form a Commandery of several states immediately or forget about a prominent wartime role for St John Ambulance in Australia!

It was this advice that finally galvanised both St John's Gate and the state St John bodies into the action they might otherwise not have taken for years. The St John's Gate officials began drafting the regulations to bring the 'Commandery of South East Australia' into being, and the New South Wales St John bodies soon agreed to be part of the new Commandery, wherever its headquarters should be located.

The Western Australians, however, remained unimpressed by Downes's arguments. Their Brigade commissioner, H.G. Tymms, wrote a long letter to Downes in London saying he had not previously heard of the proposed Commandery, but his opposition to any Australian federal structure for the Order was 'no different today than it was when the late Dr Storie Dixon created the Central Council for Australia'. Tymms then recounted the well-known reasons why his state would never join an Australian Commandery — 'owing to our isolation...impracticable to participate', 'cost of sending representatives to meetings...prohibitive', 'Commandery in eastern Australia not of any advantage to Western Australia', 'no disability [for Western Australia] through dealing direct with St John's Gate', 'little likelihood of our supporting the establishment of a federal Commandery which would control the work...in Western Australia', 'only satisfactory solution would be to form two separate Commanderies, one for the eastern states and another for Western Australia' and so on. He also reminded Downes that the St John bodies were civilian organisations and so he should not expect to herd them behind the military medical services in the event of a war, which (though Tymms did not know it) was now less than five weeks away.



Exasperated, and with the outbreak of war now only eight days away, Downes wrote back to Tymms saying 'the Brigade in England is in very close touch with the War Office'. He also pointed out that if the Australian Brigade districts failed to federate within a Commandery 'Red Cross would entirely swamp St John'. The reference to the Red Cross was to a some time St John ally which was also a traditional rival in first aid teaching, general practical patriotic activity and the provision of ancillary health care services to the armed forces. With its well established world wide reputation — in contrast to that of St John, which was limited to the Empire — the Red Cross was to be feared as it always enjoyed a higher public profile than either the Association or the Brigade. So real indeed was the danger of the Defence Department relying solely on Red Cross for its ancillary medical services and excluding the St John bodies that Downes concluded his letter by pointing out that this was 'the only reason I am keen for a Commandery'.

### The Commandery of the Commonwealth of Australia (Exclusive of Western Australia)

It was the outbreak of war on 3 September 1939 that finally pushed St John's Gate and Australia's St John bodies to establish the Australian Commandery which they had now been discussing continuously for over four years. At St John's Gate the drafting of a constitution for a 'Commandery for South Eastern Australia and Tasmania' based on Melbourne and including New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria, was completed. The Chapter General of the Order approved the draft on 17 November 1939. Possibly the secretary-general, Wilkinson, then referred the constitution to the Australian St John bodies for comment, though no record of this appears to have survived in the archives. The next record on file is a letter dated 5 February 1940 from Wilkinson to the Governors of the four participating states — Sir Winston Dugan in Victoria, the state in which the headquarters were proposed, Lord Wakehurst (John de Vere Loder, later a Lord Prior of the Order) in New South Wales, Sir Malcolm Barclay-Harvey in South Australia, and Sir Ernest Clark in Tasmania — calling for their comments on the draft constitution and asking them to discuss it together. Presumably their comment was required as Dugan would become the 'Knight Commander' or formal head of the Commandery while each of the others would become 'Deputy Knights Commander' in their respective states. All that now remained to be done to bring the Commandery into being was for the four governors to agree to the constitution then make appointments to the various 'portfolio' positions on the Commandery's governing council, and finally for the Order at St John's Gate to set its seal upon the constitution.

As the Commandery would have a ceremonial as well as an administrative function, Wilkinson also set down the number and rank of members of the Order permitted within its membership. The quota would be 22 Knights and 7 Dames, 45 Commander Brothers and 15 Commander Sisters, 90 Officer Brothers and 30 Officer Sisters, but no limit on the number in the lowest grade — Serving Brothers and Sisters. The arithmetic of the quota calls for comment. With a total of 209 members above the rank of Serving Brother/Sister spread among the four participating states, the average number for each was only about 52, though New South Wales and Victoria as the larger states might be expected to claim the lion's share. With St John workers numbered in their thousands, the small size of the quota clearly emphasised the Order's exclusivity. The selectiveness of its higher grades was underlined by the fact that there would only be half as many Commanders as Officers and the number of Knights would be half that of Commanders. On average there could be only five or six Knights and one or two Dames in each state, and it would plainly be more difficult for women to rise in the Order as men would outnumber them three to one in the higher grades. (The gross imbalance in the ratio between the sexes was allowed to continue until 1974, when the Order's statutes were finally amended to reflect the reality that women were at least as likely as men to become loyal St John workers.)

With an Australian Commandery now seemingly almost a *fait accompli*, the eastern states made a final attempt to draw in the Western Australians. The governors dispatched the Brigade commissioner in South Australia, Dr S.L. Dawkins, to Perth to plead personally with the Association president, Dr J.J. Holland, and the Brigade commissioner, Dr J.R. Donaldson there. He met them and their support staff at a conference on 23 April 1940, but he might as well have remained at home in Adelaide for they remained as obdurate as ever. They told him that if he cared to suggest forming a South Australian Commandery they might consider joining it, but anything based on Melbourne or Sydney was too far away to bother with. And in the meantime, as Holland pointed out, they thought 'the relationship with London [was] so cordial that [they] would not like to break it'.

The next step towards the Commandery came two months later when the Governors of the three southeastern mainland States, Dugan, Wakehurst and Barclay-Harvey, happened to be together in Melbourne in June 1940. They invited the Brigade Commissioners of Victoria and New South Wales, Downes and Dr Hugh Poate, and also the two states' Association Centre presidents, Dr John Newman-Morris and Dr Athol Mobbs, to meet them to sort out the final details. What resulted from this meeting was a somewhat different Commandery than the one proposed under the draft constitution — one based with headquarters in Sydney rather than Melbourne, including Queensland as well as the four southeastern states, and with the Governor-General, Lord Gowrie, as the Knight Commander. The reason for the shift to Sydney was that after Lord Gowrie agreed to become Knight Commander it became necessary for him and the Commandery's administrative head, the Commandery Lieutenant, to have ready access to each other. As he lived in Canberra and the designated Commandery Lieutenant, Poate, in Sydney, plainly the headquarters would be more conveniently placed in Sydney.

Once Lord Gowrie agreed to accept the position of Knight Commander he took a prominent part in the final negotiations to bring the Commandery into being. Apart from choosing Poate as his Commandery Lieutenant, his earliest action was to convene a meeting between himself, Poate, Wakehurst, Dugan and the Governor of Queensland, Sir Leslie Orme Wilson, in Admiralty



House, Sydney, on 22 May 1941 to reach final agreement on the constitution. By this stage a year and a half had passed since the Chapter-General of the Order had approved its first draft. In the meantime, of course, the shape and form of the Commandery had altered, wartime restrictions on travel and communications (including 'lost and delayed overseas mail') had hampered negotiations, both Association and Brigade had been frantically busy struggling to meet their wartime commitments with depleted staff, the Governors had had many patriotic duties to perform, and a number of the interested Association and Brigade officials, of whom Downes and Poate were the more prominent, were senior military officers engaged in active wartime service. Amidst all this the Order's London officials had been greatly distracted by the events of the war, and St John's Gate itself had taken a direct hit during a bombing raid that demolished the chapel.



Fig. 4: Lord Gowrie, inaugural Knight Commander of the Commandery of the Commonwealth of Australia (Exclusive of Western Australia)

Poate was an obvious choice as Commandery Lieutenant, even though the Brigade in Australia was then almost bursting with eminent talent. Other likely contenders would have been Rupert Downes and Maj.-Gen. Samuel Burston (1888–1960, head of the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF's medical services; later the Brigade District Commissioner in South Australia 1946–47 and then Chief Commissioner 1947–56), but both were currently preoccupied with their wartime army commitments overseas. As we will see, Poate would become the Priory Chancellor in 1947 and eventually the first Australian elevated to the highly select company of Bailiffs Grand Cross of the Order. Sadly, very few St John Ambulance people who worked with him are still alive; but a charming 1947 portrait of him by Joshua Smith hangs in the foyer of the Priory headquarters in Canberra. There, robed in the mantle of a Bailiff Grand Cross and smiling enigmatically, he continues watching over the affairs of the institution that is his best monument.



Fig. 5: Sir Hugh Poate as Sub-Prior (Chancellor) of the Priory — the 1947 portrait by Joshua Smith hanging in the foyer of the Priory building in Canberra



Gowrie's entry into the negotiations towards the creation of the Commandery had the effect of hastening progress towards that elusive goal. After all the interruptions resulting from the war, Gowrie was impatient 'to reach finality'. His meeting with Poate and the three State Governors, Dugan, Wakehurst and Barclay-Harvey, on 22 May 1941 was the turning point. After agreeing that the Commandery should be established without further ado, the meeting decided to request a series of minor amendments to the draft constitution. The same day it dispatched a telegram to St John's Gate seeking authority to institute the Commandery. The necessary approval arrived from the secretary-general, Wilkinson, within three weeks, on 10 June. Given the nature of the previous delays, this was surprisingly prompt action. The next steps — the appointment of executive officers, approval of the constitutional amendments, formation of a governing council and the summoning of the inaugural meeting — took rather longer. Gowrie had nominated his executive officers by the end of July after further consultations with Poate and the five State Governors. There were eight of these, each with their own 'portfolios'. Apart from Poate, the Commandery Lieutenant (administrator), they were:

- Director of Ambulance (responsible for the Association) — Dr Wilfred Vickers (Brigade Assistant Commissioner in New South Wales)
- Commandery Commissioner (responsible for the Brigade) — Dr Sydney L. Dawkins (Brigade Commissioner in South Australia)
- Hospitaller and Almoner (responsible for the Ophthalmic Hospital) — Brig. R.M. Stodart (Association Centre treasurer in Queensland)
- Treasurer — Dr (later Sir) John Newman-Morris (Association Centre chairman in Victoria)
- Director of Ceremonies (responsible for the Commandery's ceremonial and heraldic undertakings, including admissions into and promotions within the Order) — Dr Thomas H. Goddard (Association Centre chairman and Brigade Commissioner in Southern Tasmania)
- Chaplain — the Most Rev. Howard Mowll (Anglican Primate of Australia, Archbishop of Sydney)
- Commandery Secretary — Commander R. Griffiths Bowen (Association Centre secretary in New South Wales, previously a council member of the Western Australian Centre).

Sadly, the one name missing from the list was that of Rupert Downes. His military career had often taken him overseas during the three years between March 1939 and March 1942. His travels had been mainly around the allied military medical establishments in the UK, India, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), Malaya, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Papua New Guinea. In the meantime he had also travelled Australia continually as he had developed further the nation's network of military hospitals. As his biographer aptly noted, 'the great [repatriation] hospitals such as Concord [in Sydney] and Heidelberg [in Melbourne] are Rupert Downes's memorial.' Downes died as the Australian Commandery was preparing for its rise to Priory status. Nearing retirement in early 1945, he had been invited to write the official medical history of Australia in the Second World War. On 5<sup>th</sup> March that year he was flying to Papua New Guinea in connection with this assignment when his plane crashed into the sea off Cairns. Everyone on board was killed. He was buried in the Cairns War Cemetery. Apart from Poate, who had come on the scene later, he had done more than anyone else of the early spadework needed to clear the way for the foundation of the Australian Commandery. If he had not been so wholly engaged with the war, I strongly suspect he would have been first choice for Commandery Lieutenant and if not that then Chief Commissioner.

St John's Gate returned the approved revised constitution for the Commandery on 24 October 1941. The main change of subsequent interest was the enormously long, quaintly cumbersome title to be conferred on the new body — 'The Commandery of the Australian Commonwealth (Exclusive of Western Australia) of the Grand Priory in the British Realm of the Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem'. The name said much about recent St John history in Australia, and more especially about the intransigence of the Order's Western Australian fraction.

Gowrie now, on 5 November, telegraphed Wilkinson at St John's Gate for permission for the Commandery to begin operations. He received a reply in the affirmative on 11 November. His next step was to invite the Association and Brigade organisations in each of the States to select two delegates each, who, with the eight executive officers, would become the Commandery Council, that is the Commandery's policy-making body. I will not list all their names here, for the council's membership totalled 26 and their names and constituencies are set out in my earlier book, *A Century for Australia*. Suffice to say that they were a distinguished company of highly talented, wholly committed St John workers whose collective of years dedicated service to St John Ambulance probably amounted to four or five centuries. They congregated for the first time as The Commandery of the Commonwealth of Australia (Exclusive of Western Australia) in a formal ceremonial meeting at Admiralty House, Sydney, on Monday 19 January 1942 with Gowrie chairing the proceedings.

After introductory speeches from Gowrie and Wakehurst — the former said the Commandery would 'save a great deal of time and correspondence', the latter that 'most useful...central control had now been established' — the council got down to business immediately. It began by setting up a series of five standing committees to prosecute Commandery business — Finance, Ambulance, Hospitaller and Almoner, Library and Investigation. The functions of the committees represented the odd mixture of supra-state



concerns which had made the Commandery a necessity. Some of these, as represented by 'Finance', were largely administrative. Some, particularly 'Ambulance', were largely to do with policy making in the areas of major concern, that is the Association and Brigade; and as Ambulance was divided into separate Association and Brigade subcommittees it might be expected that this committee would develop and implement unifying national policies for the state Association centres and Brigade districts. 'Hospitaller and Almoner' was concerned with providing support for the Ophthalmic Hospital in Jerusalem and in promoting its cause among the state St John bodies, few among which would so far have had any dealings with the hospital. Both 'Library' and 'Investigation' were concerned with the ceremonial aspect of St John life. 'Library' was largely intended to establish a museum capacity, preserve the St John documentary record and develop a repository of literary and textual works reflecting on the Order's history. 'Investigation' was concerned with supervising the admission of new members of the Order and promoting those deemed worthy of advancement through its ranks, all in accordance with the membership quotas ordained by St John's Gate.

The Commandery council did not meet again for more than six months, until 3 August 1942. The delay probably reflected the momentous events which had overtaken the nation in the intervening period. The Pacific War had burst upon Australia in the weeks preceding the first council meeting. The very day after the meeting the Japanese had captured Rabaul, the main town in Australia's New Guinea territory, and four weeks later began launching air raids against Darwin and other northern Australian towns. By mid-February and following the fall of Singapore, an entire Australian army division (some 20,000 troops) had been captured in Malaya. Over succeeding weeks the Japanese advanced to Australia's very doorstep, occupying all the administrative centres on the north coast of the Papua-New Guinea mainland. As the council gathered for the second time Australia was still under the most dire threat it has ever faced as the Japanese pushed nearer to Port Moresby along the Kokoda track following the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942, when the combined USA and Australian navies had turned back an invasion fleet bound for Port Moresby. In the meantime St John activity levels had risen to heights no state Association or Brigade organisation would have believed possible even a year before. Under the circumstances, it was perhaps surprising that any meeting of the Commandery council at all could have been held.

The second meeting of the Commandery council, held over two days in both Admiralty and Government Houses, also did serious business. It received a financial statement indicating that donations from the state St John bodies and various individuals now totalled a healthy £331 (a sum equivalent to about \$16,000 in the values of the late 1990s). It set up a Joint Federal Council with the Red Cross to help coordinate their first aid training and field service activities — a body which promised much but in the end delivered little. It considered possible amendments to the Association's first aid manual, *First Aid to the Injured*, the British emphasis of which most Australians using it found 'not wholly suitable...in Australia', and agreed that representatives of the Commanderies in the dominions should be included on any committee for its revision. At the government's request the council appointed three representatives to a publications committee producing a handbook called *First Aid in Civil Defence* for the Department of Home Security. It voted to introduce regular national first aid competitions for both adult and cadet divisions of the Brigade. It received useful reports from the Commanderies of New Zealand and South Africa on how those bodies operated. (These, perhaps, allowed council members to reflect that while they had only just formed a Commandery their cousins in the other dominions had long enjoyed full autonomy.) An item of business which no doubt thrilled everyone present was an announcement about the receipt of 'two portions of stone from the ruined Chapel of the Order at Clerkenwell, sent by Colonel Sleeman, and of two magnificent photographs of the Chapel before and after its destruction during the present war'. (These artefacts eventually found their way to the Australian Priory headquarters which opened in Canberra in 1968.) And finally the council made 25 recommendations on a matter dear to the hearts of all who had spent years toiling voluntarily to advance the Order's cause — membership admissions and promotions. In addition they recommended 'recognition' for 12 other people, which meant either the Order's service medal for St John workers or a formal, printed 'vote of thanks' for people who had assisted the organisation.

Over the next year the Commandery settled into the routines required by its oddly juxtaposed financial, administrative and ceremonial functions. Its finances were assured by an exceptionally generous establishment grant from the Grand Priory in London. It had ended its first year with a handy credit balance of £395 (= \$19,300 early 2000s), and apart from the honorarium of the Commandery secretary, Griffiths Bowen, it had few expenses at first. Printing, stationery, postage, telegrams and petty cash amounted to less than £23 in the first year. Office accommodation, at 225 Macquarie Street, Sydney, came rent-free, as this was probably donated by Poate. The main sources of income were donations and 'oblations', that is an annual fee expected of all members of the Order of the grade of Officer and above. Neither of these revenue items was particularly large or reliable, however, and so the Grand Priory's grant, £1,000 or about \$61,000 in the late 1990s, saved the Commandery from potential embarrassment.

The most important event during the Commandery's second year was the initial meeting of the Commandery Chapter on 25 June 1943, timed to follow the feast day of the Order's patron saint, St John the Baptist, 24 June. In the Order's Commanderies and Pories the Chapter is the chief governing body. It consists of all members of the Order of the grade of Commander and above living within the area of the Commandery's or Priory's jurisdiction, plus a quota of 'representative officers' of lower rank comprising no more than a third of the other members. Its powers include the drafting of regulations, the approval of recommendations coming from the standing committees and other subcommittees, and making recommendations to the Knight-Commander or Prior about membership admissions and promotions or potential recipients of the Order's other awards. In practice, though not in theory, it tends to be a ceremonial body which lays emphasis more on the ritual formality of meeting than on the business it contracts. Thus, its robed members proceed to their meeting in a capitial procession behind their ceremonial sword and banner; they rarely meet more than once a year; they hear reports in silence, usually without questioning what they hear; most often they



refrain from engaging in debate and usually 'rubber-stamp' the recommendations made by the standing committees; and they seldom dispute proposals for membership admissions and promotions. The effective power of the Order is exercised by the Commandery or Priory executive council and the standing committees rather than the Chapter. It is they that undertake the real work of the Commandery or Priory, which is to oversee the activity of the Order's four Australian foundations — Association/Training Branch, Brigade/Operations Branch, Community Care Branch and Ophthalmic Hospital. Whether or not those participating in the inaugural meeting of the Chapter of the Commandery of the Commonwealth of Australia (Exclusive of Western Australia) recognised all this is now unknown: most if not all of them have since died. All, however, would certainly have agreed with Poate, whose second annual report as Commandery Lieutenant reminded them that the meeting formed 'a milestone in our progress'.

The Western Australians, too, might have agreed that the Commandery's creation was a milestone. At the same time, they probably felt resentful that it was one the five eastern states had passed first. Convinced they merited a Commandery of their own, they had peremptorily rejected all invitations by the eastern States to participate in any federal body. But now, as suggested by the paranthetical words of the Commandery's title, 'Exclusive of Western Australia', a door seemed to have closed against them. The door soon opened, for on 29 June 1941 Wilkinson informed them that they too would eventually be granted their own Commandery, when the Commandery in the eastern States became a Priory — an event already being planned. This assurance came in a telegram to Holland despatched a fortnight after Gowrie had been instructed to proceed with establishing the Commandery for the eastern states.

The brevity of these two telegrams obscures the fact that the Western Australians had put in months of lobbying at St John's Gate to secure their own Commandery. Wilkinson's telegram had been in response to a long, rambling letter Holland had sent four months earlier to plead for a local Commandery. At the same time (as seen above), Holland had secured the support of Sleeman in an effort to influence St John's Gate. He had also tried to obtain Hewett's help, but the latter was gravely ill. (He died soon afterwards.) Holland's letter, dated 25 February 1941, encapsulates the Western Australians' view of themselves. It is now of interest because it not only states the Western Australian case but conveys the sense of obsequious deference the Western Australian St John bodies customarily adopted towards St John's Gate officials when seeking to preserve what they imagined were their special privileges. Holland's letter was a variegated mix of flattery, supplication, cajolery, boasting, snobbery and appeals to authority. But perhaps such tactics by St John bodies in remote corners of the Empire were necessary to impress the Order's 'Establishment' at St John's Gate. And, as we will see in the next section, they produced the results the Western Australians wanted, though not as soon as desired. Wilkinson responded in writing to Holland's letter after a long delay — a full six months, due largely to the disruptions of the war, which had left 'St John's Gate...now nearly an island site, owing to the bombing and fires on surrounding buildings'. He told Holland that 'the work of the Order in Western Australia is fully recognised...but it is felt that it would be incorrect to establish it as a Commandery until the Commandery which includes all the remaining States and Dependencies of the Commonwealth has been firmly established and is functioning satisfactorily'.

## The Priory in Australia and the Commandery in Western Australia

The Commandery of the Commonwealth of Australia (Exclusive of Western Australia) had a short life. As we have just seen, St John's Gate only intended that it should be a stepping stone towards an Australian Priory. It lasted only five years, and in that time it had shown the state St John bodies they could operate effectively and advantageously within a national structure. It had also proved that point to the St John's Gate hierarchy, which had meanwhile decided that all four Commanderies in the dominions — Australian, Canadian, New Zealand and South African — should become Priories. Their numerical strength warranted their enhanced status; and during the war they had demonstrated their ability to preserve the dignity of the Order while acting independently. But it was their meritorious wartime service in particular which had gained them respect among the Order's leadership. To St John's Gate the granting of Priory status was an appropriate reward for their wartime efforts in the cause of Empire. All four were consequently upgraded as soon as practicable after the war had ended.

Both the Australian Priory and the Western Australian Commandery came into official existence on 18 September 1946. That was the day on which Henry, Duke of Gloucester, signed warrants to transform the Australian Commandery into a Priory and to create the Western Australian Commandery. Two days earlier Sir Edwin King, the Chancellor (and a historian) of the Order, and Brig. W.G.B. Barne, Wilkinson's replacement as secretary-general, had set the seal of Order upon the separate regulations of the new Priory and Commandery, which took the long formal titles *The Priory in Australia* and *The Commandery in Western Australia of the Grand Priory in the British Realm of the Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem*. The regulations of the Priory, effectively the constitution, were a slightly modified version of those of the former Commandery, with appropriate adjustments for changes in terminology. For example, instead of a Knight Commander there was a Prior and a Sub-Prior (called Chancellor after the new Royal Charter of 1955) instead of a Commandery Lieutenant; The Commandery Commissioner became the Priory Commissioner; a new executive position, Registrar, responsible for admissions and promotions in the Order and maintenance of the membership roll, was created; and a permanent salaried Priory Secretary was installed. And one new standing committee was created — 'Registrar', charged with maintaining the Priory's membership roll, and a 'list of services of members'. Otherwise the constitution remained the same. The regulations of the Western Australian Commandery were simply those of the former Australian Commandery with 'Western Australia' substituted for 'the Commonwealth' in the appropriate places.





Fig.6: The Grand Prior, Henry, Duke of Gloucester, presents the ceremonial sword to Lord Wakehurst, Knight Commander, 27 April 1945

The main change in the Priory's constitution was the insertion of a new phrase to create a Commandery in Western Australia within, and not outside, the Priory: This was not exactly what the Western Australians had hoped for. Their preference was a 'stand alone' Commandery, answerable only to the Grand Priory in the UK, not a body within and dependent upon the Australian Priory.

Most of the executive officers from the Australian Commandery continued on as executive officers in the Priory. Poate became Sub-Prior (later called Chancellor); Mowll continued as Chaplain, Newman-Morris as Treasurer (later called Receiver General). Goddard (previously Director of Ceremonies) became Director of Ambulance. Sir Hugh Poynter from Sydney, a later Director of Ceremonies in the Commandery, continued in the Priory in the same position. The position of Registrar went to R. Griffiths Bowen, who, now full time, also continued as Secretary. The new faces were Maj.-Gen. Samuel Burston from Victoria, who became Priory Commissioner (later called Chief Commissioner); Maj.-Gen. F.A. Maguire from New South Wales, the new Hospitaller and Almoner; and Dr Charles E.C. Wilson of South Australia, who became Librarian.



Figs. 7 & 8: Lord Wakehurst (left), second Knight Commander of the Commandery of the Commonwealth of Australia (Exclusive of Western Australia) and Sir Winston Dugan, first Prior of the Australian Priory of the Order of St John

At the Priory's ceremonial summit, Sir Winston Dugan took the position of Prior, while the Deputy Priors were the state Governors — Lt.-Gen. (later Sir) John Northcott in New South Wales, Lt.-Gen. Sir John Lavarack in Queensland, Lt.-Gen. Sir Willoughby Norrie in South Australia and Admiral Sir Hugh Binney in Tasmania. All were Knights of the Order. The reason for this lay in the constitution: because Priors and Knights Commander and their deputies were required to be Knights of the Order, it was obliged to admit the Governors into membership as Knights if it wished to enjoy vice-regal patronage. (As most Governors are not already members of the Order on taking up their duties, they are admitted soon after their swearing in — a practice begun during the period of the Commandery. For the Governors, becoming a Knight or Dame of the Order has consequently become one of the minor perquisites of office.)



With Dugan as Prior, it was to be the only time during the next 57 years that a Governor-General would not be the Prior. The reason for this anomaly was that the Grand Prior of the Order, Henry Windsor, the Duke of Gloucester, also happened to be the current Governor-General. The only member of the Royal Family ever to hold the position, he had arrived in Australia in early 1945 and remained until January 1947. To have become Prior in Australia would have placed him in the odd situation of having to issue proclamations to himself. Not even the grandiloquent, archaic, regal phraseology of the Order's official proclamations could have hidden the comic quality of such a situation. Further, and because preserving the dignity of its Royal heads is a sacred trust for the Order, Henry presumably had to be spared from participating in such a farce. Dugan, by now the most senior of the Governors, became the foundation Prior instead.

The St John ceremonies in which Henry took part all occurred within his first six months in office. The first came five weeks after his arrival when a delegation from the Commandery visited him at Admiralty House, Sydney, on 9 March 1945 to present him with an address of welcome. Six weeks after that, on 27 April 1945, he attended a special Chapter meeting at St Andrew's (Anglican) Cathedral, Sydney, to hand over a ceremonial sword to the Commandery. During his presentation speech he spoke of recent events and of what the sword signified: In accepting the gift, Lord Wakehurst, who had just succeeded Lord Gowrie as Knight Commander, spoke of the significance of the occasion: After that, Henry took part in only one more ceremony of the Order in Australia. This was two months later when he attended the church service at St Andrew's Cathedral on St John the Baptist's Day, 24 June 1945, to unveil a memorial tablet and a piece of Clerkenwell stone which had recently been incorporated in the wall of one of the cathedral's side chapels. A congregation of 600 people watched him perform this short ceremony.

The formation of the Priory in Australia occurred two months after Henry's return to the UK at the end of his two years as Governor-General. (On the evening before his departure in January 1947 Henry had invested Hugh Poate as a Member of the Royal Victorian Order 'in recognition of services rendered to the Royal Family whilst in Australia'.) The news that St John's Gate had approved the upgrading of the Commandery as a Priory had been announced several months earlier at a meeting of the Commandery council in Adelaide on 2 November 1946, seven weeks after the council of the Grand Priory had sanctioned it.



Fig. 9: The inception of the Priory in Australia, 6 March 1947: Lord Bledisloe (right front) hands the warrant from the Grand Prior to the Governor of New South Wales, Lieutenant-General (later Sir) John Northcott. The others are, left-right, Sir John Lavarack, Archbishop Mowll, Sir Sam Burston and Dr C.E.C. Wilson.

The ceremony marking the inception of the Priory took place at a special inaugural meeting of the Priory Chapter in the Chapter House of St Andrew's Cathedral on Friday 6 March 1947. The main business of the Chapter meeting was to receive the Grand Prior's warrant declaring the former Commandery to be a Priory. (An inscribed parchment with Henry's arms illuminated in the top left corner and the Order's in the top right, it was subsequently framed and now hangs in the Priory headquarters in Canberra.) An envoy of the Grand Prior, Viscount Bledisloe, attended the meeting to hand the warrant over. (Bledisloe, a former Governor-General of New Zealand, is now remembered in Australia for the trophy he donated for annual rugby union contests between Australia and New Zealand.) The Director of Ceremonies, Sir Hugh Poynter, later described the ceremony thus:

*The Capitular Procession of Priory Chapter, whose members wore the robes of the Order and carried the Regalia, proceeded from the Diocesan Church House to the Cathedral, where the Sub-Prelate, His Grace Archbishop H. Mowll...conducted prayers laid down by Grand Priory. The Cathedral Choir, with the organ, rendered the Hospitallers' Hymn,...thus adding considerably to the impressiveness of the ceremony. The Procession then entered the Chapter House and awaited the entry of the Envoy. Owing to illness of the Prior,...Sir Winston Dugan,...the Deputy Prior [of] New South Wales,...Lieut.-General John Northcott,...acted as Presiding Officer. The Envoy was admitted and, having been presented with due ceremony by the Director of Ceremonies, Sir Hugh Poynter,...delivered the Message from His Royal Highness the Grand Prior. The Envoy then read and presented a Warrant embodying the act of Chapter-General constituting the Priory in Australia and, at the same time, inducted...Lieut.-General Northcott...as Deputy Prior. He also proclaimed...Sir Winston Dugan,...Acting Governor-General of Australia, as the first Prior of the Priory in Australia. The Envoy, Deputy Prior, Members of the Executive and Chapter carried out their duties in a very dignified manner and the procedures as laid down in the printed Order of Service and Ceremony was most impressive.<sup>43</sup>*



The ceremony to mark the inauguration of the Western Australian Commandery took place in Perth seven weeks later, on 23 April 1947. The Sub-Prior, Hugh Poate, travelled to Western Australia specially for the ceremony, the climax of which came when he invested the state Chief Justice, Sir John Dwyer, as Knight Commander and Dr John Holland as Commandery Lieutenant.



Fig. 10: The inauguration of the Commandery in Western Australia of the Order of St John, 23 April 1947: Hugh Poate (right), the Sub-Prior, is about to instal Sir John Dwyer (third from left) as Knight Commander. Looking on are Dr H.G. Tymms (left), Dr J.J. Holland (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) and J.R. Campbell (next to Poate). The banner behind Dr Holland reveals something of the Western Australians' lack of familiarity with the Order's ritual: the eight-point cross on the banner is not that of the Order.

Another two months later, the first ordinary meeting of the Priory Chapter took place, on Saturday 14 June 1947. The venue was again Sydney and the Chapter House of St Andrew's Cathedral. The following day Mowll conducted the first of the Priory's annual church services, during which Archdeacon S.M. Johnstone, a Chaplain of the Order and the composer of the Hospitallers' Hymn, preached the sermon. It was a large service, attended by representatives of the Red Cross Society, armed services, state government, civic authorities, members of the Order and various members of the local St John Ambulance bodies. It was not of course the first of such occasions but the fourth: the former Commandery had also conducted annual church services.

The practice of an annual church service had begun in 1944, the third year of the Commandery. The annual services have continued ever since, and represent the culmination of the annual Priory conferences held every June on rotation in each of Australia's eight capital cities. Conducted on the Sunday as near as possible to 24 June, the feast day of St John the Baptist, they are the main regular religious observation of what is otherwise an effectively secular organisation. Originally held in the Anglican cathedrals of the capital cities, from the mid- 1970s they have also occasionally been held in the central churches of other principal denominations — Presbyterian and Methodist — in keeping with the ecumenical spirit of the age. The annual church services of the Western Australian Commandery have been even more ecumenical, with the venues including Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Salvation Army churches. One reason prompting this development at the Priory level was the involvement of the dean of an Anglican cathedral in promoting a 'non-recognised' order of St John. A chaplain of the latter, he had let it conduct its services in the cathedral, had participated in its investitures and had installed its banner there —which in the view of the Priory disqualified that particular cathedral. The dean's actions, so the Priory management reasoned, might cause confusion, leading the public to associate St John Ambulance and the 'big-O' 'recognised' Order with the 'small-o' 'non-recognised' ones.

## Subsequent milestones

As the Priory advanced further into the post-war decades, it assumed increasingly greater importance in the affairs of the State St John bodies. Under the leadership of successive Priors, Chancellors and Priory Secretaries, it had the effect of both standardising and unifying the effort of the Order's foundations in the States. This could be seen in many directions. The Brigade's acceptance of Priory-ordained regulations, the adoption of a standard black and white uniform, and the institution of annual interstate first aid competitions gave that foundation a sense of unity and common national purpose it had not previously enjoyed. The Association, too, gained greatly from having one national forum rather than only six separate, isolated parochial bodies. A generation after its formation, for example, the Priory was serving as an effective administrative facility that made possible the production of a series of first aid and health care text books. Chief among these was *Australian First Aid*, the first edition of which the Priory published in 1969. A manual conceived and produced in Australia, it was the Australian successor to Surgeon-Major Peter Shepherd's original 1878 *Aids for Cases of Injuries and Sudden Illnesses*. Without the unifying national structure afforded by the Priory, the six separate State Association Centres might never have got to the point of agreeing on what such a text book should contain.

The creation of the Priory was a great federal milestone for the Australian St John Ambulance branches. It was not the only milestone, however, and others lay ahead.



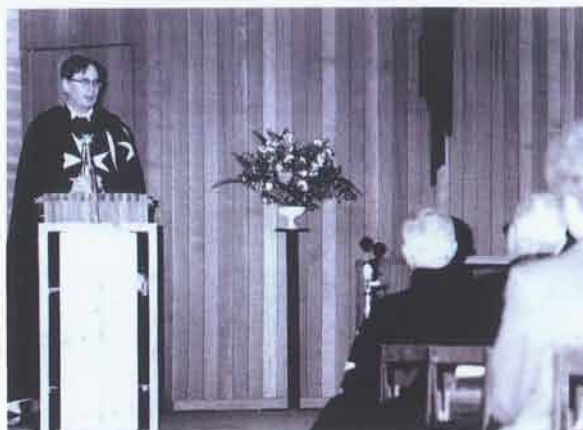


Fig. 11: The fifth Grand Prior of the Order, Richard Duke of Gloucester, addresses a church parade of South Australian members of the Order in Ti Tree Gully, Adelaide, 1993 (photograph provided by David Heard). Even in an era when Australia's republicans perhaps outnumber its monarchists, such visits by the Order's royal leaders and by the representatives of its new international Grand Council affirm the Australian's Priory's continuing links with the international St John Ambulance community.

One way of viewing St John Ambulance history in Australia over the past 87 years is to see it as a prolonged attempt to establish and then refine a federal structure especially suited to Australia's experience of vast distances and widely dispersed centres of population. That the federal structure is evolutionary, and has progressively changed to take account of emerging needs, can be seen in the major milestones towards an efficiently functioning federal organisation. The milestones include:

1. the interstate conferences in the early 1920s leading to the ultimately futile attempt 1925–32 to establish a St John Central Council for Australia
2. the visits to each of the six State St John branches during the 1920s and 30s of the two delegations from the Order's London headquarters at St John's Gate — Sir John Hewett's in 1928–29 and Col. James Sleeman's in 1936–37
3. the creation in 1941 of the Commandery of the Commonwealth of Australia (Exclusive of Western Australia)
4. the upgrading of the Commandery to full Priory status in 1947
5. the establishment of State St John Councils during the 1950s and 60s to bring together the various fractions of the State St John branches under the same executive umbrella
6. the opening in 1968 of the purpose-built national Priory headquarters in Canberra Avenue, Forrest, Australian Capital Territory, the foundation stone for which had been laid in 1966 by Lord Wakehurst, who had returned to Australia in his guise as Lord Prior of the Order
7. the restructuring of the Priory in 1987, with its consequent adoption of new names ('St John Ambulance Australia', 'Training Branch', 'Operations Branch') and the creation of the Community Care Branch
8. the Priory review and subsequent restructure of 1997–98, which led to a 'corporatised' model of Priory governance that was promoted by a Structure Review Committee between 1998 and 2001
9. the review of staffing and functions of the Australian Office of St John Ambulance Australia (i.e. the Priory Headquarters) in 2001–02
10. and finally the meeting in the Priory headquarters building in Canberra in early May 2003 of the Order's international Grand Council. The meeting extended over 2½ days, during which time the Priory's senior officers hosted for the first time their counterparts in the other Priorities as well as the Order's international leadership.

With the exception of the last of these, each of the first nine developments listed above was a step towards a more efficiently functioning federal structure. The eighth and ninth deserve some comment because their effects are still fresh in memory. Indeed the recommendations of the ninth have only been bedded down in the past 6½ months, the consequent changes including the loss of the managerial positions in marketing and communications and the absorption of these functions elsewhere in the Australian Office. During this review there had been talk of closing the office altogether. I was personally appalled at this suggestion. So appalled in fact that I chose to include the following comment in the epilogue to *The Zambuks*, the centenary history of the St John Ambulance Operations Branch published in 2002:



As St John entered the twenty-first century the threat of...disasters loomed. One was in the area of governance. In asserting its national status, as it began doing via its Structure Review Committee in 2000–01, the Priory faced the possibility of alienating those States and Territories that retained their St John ambulance services — Western Australia and the Northern Territory. The Structure Review Committee conducted its inquiries to the accompaniment of mutterings in some Western Australian and Northern Territorian quarters about the possibility of either seceding from St John altogether or forming a Priory of their own.

Other grumbles of discontent came from people beyond Canberra who thought that the St John national headquarters there had grown too large, powerful and costly. There were even murmurs to the effect that the headquarters should be shut down and its functions farmed out among the States. Those doing the murmuring were perhaps unaware of the possibility that, if they had their way, future generations of St John workers would condemn them for tearing down an amenity that previous generations had toiled to erect.

If closure of the Priory headquarters in Canberra would be a reverse milestone — a step backwards from federation — could there be others? Possibly: the one most to be feared is that St John or one of its branches might close in one of the States or Territories. There has been a St John organisation present in each of Australia's six States continuously since 1928 and in the two mainland Territories since the early 1950s. If one of these were to collapse that would therefore be a significant retreat for an organisation claiming to be a national institution.

## Conclusion

There will inevitably be further reviews aimed at making the structure work better for the benefit of the States and Territories. I hope that the future reviewers and restructurers will remember this point about the judgement of history as they determine our organisation's future directions.

My advice to future reviewers would be to reflect on the history of St John federalism in this nation. The federal imperative has been an immensely powerful influence in shaping the St John organisation in Australia over the past nine decades. Given the strong Australian federal tradition in both government and voluntary organisations, the reviewers might expect that federalism in St John will continue. They should also recognise, however, that federalism is a finely balanced mechanism. It must function between two opposed forces: first, it must accommodate and contain the centrifugal tendencies of the States and Territories; second, it cannot allow its centralising, gravitational pull to inhibit State and Territory-level autonomy.

My concluding observation is that Australia's federal St John organisation has generally succeeded in balancing these two forces. It has consequently served the St John community and the wider public well in the 62 years since it was created. I trust that it will continue doing so. I guess it will — unless of course wreckers should emerge in the years ahead to undo what Thomas Storie Dixon, Rupert Downes, Hugh Poate, Lord Gowrie and our other 'fathers of federation' spent their best years creating.

## Notes on sources

This paper draws mainly on previously published work, much of it is the author's own. It derives from his five books on St John Ambulance Australia, the information of which it re-interprets. Each of these books has extensive notes on sources. The five books are:

- Ian Howie-Willis, *A Century for Australia: St John Ambulance in Australia 1883-1983*, Priory of the Order of St John in Australia, Canberra, 1983
- Ian Howie-Willis, *South Australians and St John Ambulance 1885-1985: The Centenary History of the Order of St John in South Australia*, St John Council for South Australia, Adelaide, 1985
- Ian Howie-Willis, *St John, Ambulances and Western Australia: A Centenary Anthology*, St John Ambulance Australia (Western Australia) Inc., Perth 1992
- Edith Khangure and Ian Howie-Willis, *Reflections and Directions: A History of the Commandery of the Order of St John in Western Australia, 1947–1997*, St John Ambulance Australia (Western Australia) Inc., Perth, 1997
- Ian Howie-Willis, *The Zambuks: The Uniformed first aid volunteers of St John Ambulance Australia, 1901–2002*, St John Ambulance Australia, Canberra, 2003.



A useful early short history of St John Ambulance in Australia is the 1918 pamphlet by Dr T. Storie Dixson, *A Short History of the St. John Ambulance Brigade in Australia, more especially in New South Wales* (St John Ambulance Brigade, Sydney, 1918). Copies are held in the Marrickville archives of St John Ambulance Australia (NSW) and the library of the national office of St John Ambulance Australia in Canberra.

The published reports of the Hewett and Sleeman delegations are the main sources for the events surrounding the Australian tours that these delegations made in the 1920s and 1930s. These reports are as follows:

- J.P. Hewett and L. Atkinson, *Report to Chapter-General by the Delegation authorised under the direction of HRH the Grand Prior to visit the Dominions of Australia and New Zealand 1928–29* (Grand Priory in the British Realm of the Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, London, 1929)
- J.L. Sleeman, *Report on the Inspectional Tour of Australia* (Grand Priory in the British Realm of the Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, London, 1936).

Copies of both documents are held in the Priory library of St John Ambulance Australia, Canberra. The delegations are also covered at length in Howie-Willis (1983), *op. cit.*, pp. 321–42.

A valuable set of documents relating to the establishment of, first, the Commandery of the Commonwealth of Australia (Exclusive of Western Australia) and, second, the Australian Priory and Western Australian Commandery is the file 'Steps leading to the creation of the Commandery in Western Australia' in the archives of St John Ambulance Australia (WA) Inc., Belmont, Perth, Western Australia.

Additional information for this paper is found in the *Annual Reports* of the Commandery of the Australian Commonwealth 1941–1943 and of the Priory in Australia 1946–47.

This material is summarised in the fiftieth anniversary history of the Commandery of Western Australia — Edith Khangure and Ian Howie-Willis (1997), *op. cit.*, pp. 48–67.

The most accessible information on the establishment of the State St John Councils is in Howie-Willis (1983), *op. cit.*, pp. 420–28.

The biographical information on Rupert Downes is from the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* volume 8 (Melbourne University Press, 1981, pp. 332–4).



### Images Information Volume 3, April 2004:

■ All Figures included in Papers published here and presented at the History Seminar 2003 held in Hobart at the National Conference were originally presented in various formats by the authors in their presentations.

■ Additional photographs used are from the 2003 AGM and History Seminar (C Langdon-Orr 2003)



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***St John History - Proceedings of the St John Ambulance Australia Historical Society*** is published annually (April) and is mailed gratis to all financial member of the Society.

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ISSN 1445-7490

